

## **Robert 2nd Viscount Jocelyn, 1st Earl of Roden (1721? – 1797)**

*The story of the First Earl, owner of Hyde Hall, and some of his family*

*This article is the fifth in my series of 'follow-ups' to my earlier article of November 2018 entitled 'Hyde Hall/Great Hyde Hall', in which I have been writing about the residents and owners of Hyde Hall, especially the Jocelyn family.*



*Robert's father, the 1st Viscount Jocelyn*

Robert Jocelyn was the only son of Robert the 1st Viscount Jocelyn (who was the subject of an earlier article dated December 2018) and his first wife Charlotte (Anderson).

All existing records show that he was supposedly born in the year 1731 and baptised 31 July of that year and I have used that date myself in my earlier article on the 1st Viscount. However, there is no extant original document, all current records being transcripts. Bearing in mind that Robert's parents definitely married in 1720, and taking into account his subsequent education and Parliamentary history, especially the dates of his matriculation at Oxford University and when he first became an MP, it would appear that he was really born in the year 1721 and the date was later wrongly transcribed. It is even possible that this was deliberate. The exact marriage date of his parents is unknown. Was this an attempt to legitimise an otherwise untimely birth?

Robert was educated at Harrow before attending Exeter College, Oxford University, where he matriculated on 17 October 1740. Robert subsequently went on to study law at Lincoln's Inn for a short while.

In 1743, Robert returned to Ireland, where he was to spend most of his life. He is known to have been in Sawbridgeworth for the funeral of his father in December 1756 and the presentation of a bust of his father to Great St. Mary's (probably about 1786), but there is no evidence that he ever stayed at Hyde Hall, even after he inherited the Hyde Hall estate from his cousin in 1785.



*Bust of Robert's father in Great St. Mary's church*

In 1743 Robert entered Irish politics and became the MP for Old Leighlin, County Carlow in the Irish House of Commons, a position he was to hold until 1756. Robert became the Auditor General of the Irish Exchequer in 1750. A position which he held until his death.

On 11 December 1752, Robert married Anne Hamilton, who was the daughter of James Hamilton, 1st Earl Clanbrassill. They had 12 children together, five sons and seven daughters.

On 3 December 1756, upon the death of his father, Robert became 2nd Viscount Jocelyn and on 1 December 1771 he was created 1st Earl of Roden of High Roding, County Tipperary (yes, High Roding is in Essex, but not necessarily for peerage purposes) in the peerage of Ireland.

On 24 April 1778, Robert became the 5th Baronet of Hyde Hall upon the death of his cousin Conyers Jocelyn. However, he did not inherit Hyde Hall itself until the subsequent death of his cousin Winnefred Jocelyn in 1785.

At this point in history, from the time of the 1st Viscount to the 2nd Earl, the Jocelyn family became major landowners in Ireland, a situation which continued until very recently. Robert himself had Brockley Park House built at Stradball, County Laois (now a nursing home) and, additionally, the family owned further lands, especially at Castlewellan, County Down and Dundalk, County Louth and, as we will see later, were to inherit Bryansford House.



*Brockley Park House*

The family actually owned the freehold of the town of Dundalk. This included ground rents, manorial rights, common land and the freehold of the highways. This freehold was finally sold at auction by the 10th Earl in 2006 to an undisclosed buyer.

On 21 June 1797, Robert died in Ireland at York Street, Dublin. He was buried at the church of St. Peter, also in Dublin, and was succeeded as Earl of Roden by his eldest son, also called Robert.



*Church of St. Peter, Dublin in the 19th century*

Robert's widow Anne survived him and died on 16 April 1802 (some records say 1803) and was buried in the family vault at Dundalk. In 1798 she inherited Bryansford House, Tollymore Park, County Down from her brother James, who had died without issue. This large house was subsequently inherited, upon her death, along with the title Earl Clanbrassill, by her eldest son Robert, the 2nd Earl of Roden. It was built in 1730, was sold to the Ministry of Agriculture in 1941 and was demolished in 1952. The former estate is now parkland.



*Bryansford House prior to demolition*

## The sons of Robert and Anne

Although nothing to do with Sawbridgeworth, it is of interest to have a quick look at the lives of the sons of Robert and Anne Hamilton. The sons of landed gentry in the 18th century usually followed one of three professions: they would purchase a commission in the Army, a seat in Parliament or they would go into the clergy. This family were no exception.

Robert, the eldest son was commissioned into the Army and his notorious life is to be covered in the next article in the series. James, the second son died young.

George (b. 1763) and John (b. 1769) both went into politics. George was MP for Dundalk from 1783 until 1798 before handing the seat over to John, who was MP for Dundalk from 1798 to 1800. Later, John became MP for Louth until 1809. at which time he passed the seat on to his nephew (keeping it in the family).

Percy, the third surviving son, joined the clergy and had a very interesting and scandalous life. Percy was homosexual at a time when this was illegal and 'buggery' was both a criminal offence and against all the teachings of the Church.



*Percy Jocelyn (1764 – 1843)*

After graduating from Trinity College, Dublin, Percy became Rector of Tamlaght, eventually becoming Bishop of Clogher.

In 1811, Percy's brother John's coachman, James Byrne, accused Percy of 'taking indecent familiarities' with him (buggery). Percy then sued James for criminal libel, which resulted in James being sentenced to two years' imprisonment and public floggings. This, it later transpired, was a gross miscarriage of justice; James Byrne had been telling the truth. On 19 July 1822, Percy was caught in the act of buggery with a Grenadier Guardsman in the back room of the White Lion public house near the Haymarket in London. He was arrested and bail was set at £1,000. This was paid by his elder brother Robert, but Percy immediately absconded to France. His case never came to trial. Percy was defrocked in his absence by the Church for 'Sodomitical' practices, but the resulting scandal spawned many cartoons and ribald rhymes (with apologies for the language).

*The Devil to prove the Church was a farce  
Went out to catch a bugger.  
He baited his hook with a soldier's arse  
And pulled up the Bishop of Clogher.*



*A cartoon of the time*

It used to be thought that Percy ended his days living under an assumed name in Edinburgh. Much later though, the Jocelyn family vault at Kilcoo, Bryansford, County Down was opened, and there was one more coffin inside than the number of grave markers. Furthermore, the extra coffin was unnamed. It is likely, therefore, that Percy continued to live with his family there, but kept a very low profile.

## REFERENCES

Barker, G (1892). *Jocelyn, Robert (1688? – 1756)*. Smith, Elder & Co. London.

[www.crafftsppeerage.co.uk](http://www.crafftsppeerage.co.uk)

[www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)

Great St. Mary's Church. [www.sawbridgeworthchurch.com](http://www.sawbridgeworthchurch.com) Hertfordshire County Council, *Great Hyde Hall*. [www.hertfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk)

Historic England. *Great Hyde Hall*. [www.historicengland.org.uk](http://www.historicengland.org.uk)

Page, W (ed) (1912), *A History of the County of Hertford, Volume 3* pp332-347. Victoria County History.

[www.thepeerage.com](http://www.thepeerage.com) pp. 22692-11

Wikipedia.

Flt Lt Douglas Coe BSc RAFVR(T) Ret'd.  
January 2019.