

LOUISE LUCAS AND HER BOOK OF LUCAS FAMILY HISTORY

A talk by Peter Must at the Society's Open Meeting on 20 March 2024

In October 2022 John and Sue Beach gave to the Wokingham Society a hand-written and beautifully illustrated book by Louise Cecilia Bazalgette Lucas Lucas, which had come down to John through his great aunt Annie Beach's marriage to a member of the Lucas family.

The book's title page shows that Louise Lucas had compiled the book in 1886 and had given it to her brother Henry Frederick. It also demonstrates the intricate quality of Louise's illustrations.

Louise was born on 26 April 1863 in Rusholme, Manchester. Her father St John Welles Lucas was a general practitioner, descended from five generations of Lucases living in Lincolnshire. Her mother was Louisa Bazalgette, daughter of Joseph William Bazalgette, a Naval Captain who served in the Napoleonic Wars before retiring to marry Theresa Philo Pilton and produce 12 children between them.

Louise's grandfather was Jean Louis Bazalgette (known as Louis) from a hamlet of that name in the South of France. He came to England in the 1770s and established himself as a tailor to the aristocracy, most prominently the Prince of Wales and the Duke of York. His business acumen enabled him to buy a country estate and to increase his income by lending to his well-heeled clientele.

Louisa Bazalgette's brother (thus Louise Lucas's uncle), was the famous Victorian civil engineer Sir Joseph Bazalgette.

Louise's brother Henry Frederick (whom she called Fred) became a noted animal painter (especially of horses), having originally trained as an architect.

On 20 September 1892 Louise married Rev. Joseph Stratton at St Mary the Boltons, Brompton. He was 50 and she was 37. In July 1889 Rev Stratton was appointed Master of the Henry Lucas Hospital, Chapel Green, Wokingham, and it was here that Louise joined him after their marriage.

Was Louise related to Henry Lucas? We need to turn to her book, in which she chronicled her ancestors from the earliest records in the 13th century. At that point they were just Lucas or FitzLucas, living in or near Bury St Edmunds and serving as bailiffs or aldermen.

The first with a first name was Edmund Lucas, who in March 1360 married Elixabeth, the daughter of Sir Thomas Morieux, of Lavenham, Suffolk.

The Lucases were on their way up. Within a century we come to Thomas, born around 1460, who became Secretary to Jasper Tudor, Earl of Pembroke and Duke of Bedford, uncle to Henry VII. Thomas rose to be appointed a Privy Councillor and, in 1504, Solicitor General to King Henry.

Thomas's son John, born around 1510, settled in Colchester, where he was the Town Clerk and Master of Requests to Edward VI. Being a great gambler, he won at dice from the Earl of Oxford the wardship of Roydon, near Harwich in Essex

John's son Thomas, born 1531, inherited St John's Abbey, Colchester, bought by his father in 1548, and built a manor house in the grounds. He had an 'imperious and violent temper' but was nonetheless elected MP in 1556. Thomas was recorder of Colchester and high sheriff of Essex in 1568 and was knighted in 1571. He died on 10 September 1611.

His son Thomas, born about 1559, was also knighted. He was High Sheriff of Essex in 1617. He married Elizabeth Leighton in August 1604. In 1597 he had killed in a duel Sir William Brooke, who

had insulted Elizabeth, then pregnant with their illegitimate son Thomas. He fled abroad until pardoned by James I in 1603. Sir Thomas died on 25 September 1625. After their marriage Thomas and Elizabeth had other children, including Charles who was born in 1613. After graduating from Christ's College Cambridge in 1628 Charles joined the Army, commanding a troop of cavalry in the army of Charles I, who knighted him at the start of the Civil War. In early 1644 he was made Lieutenant-General of the Duke of Newcastle's Northern Army. In 1646 he was captured at the Battle of Stow-on-the-Wold and gave his word not to take up arms again.

In March 1648 he swore an oath of allegiance to Parliament but, when the Second Civil War started in May, he broke both oaths and, with local troops, he seized Colchester for the Royalists and held it for three months before surrendering to the besieging Parliamentary force and being taken into custody. Sir Charles was tried and sentenced to death for breaking his oath. He was executed by firing squad on 28 August.

Charles's brother John (1606-1671) was an ardent Royalist. He was appointed to the household of the Prince of Wales but in 1642 he was imprisoned and his house at St John's Abbey was plundered. In 1644 Charles I made him Lord Lucas, Baron of Shenfield. He had married Anne Nevill in 1628, but, having no sons, their daughter Mary, wife of the Earl of Kent, was created Baroness Lucas of Crudwell by Charles at her father's request. The Baronacy of Shenfield passed to other relatives but died out after the third generation. Thereafter the Lucases moved to Lincolnshire and joined the professional classes.

When her husband Joseph Stratton died in 1917 Louise moved to Fairfield Road in Wokingham, where she died in 1950. But in 1932 she had written to her brother Fred: "You will see that Henry Lucas of Bury St Edmunds (2nd son of Thomas Lucas of Saxham, Suffolk, Solicitor General to Edward VI) by his first wife had Edward Lucas (7th son) of Thriplow Manor, Cambridge, father of the founder of Henry Lucas' Hospital, Wokingham, Berks". Case proved!

The Wokingham Society arranged for Louise's book to be repaired and digitised by the Royal Berkshire Archives, where it has been deposited. The Society now has the digitised version on its website as an eBook.