

## PARISH HISTORY - Digory Gordge

The first Digory Gordge (Digory I) we know of was a merchant privateer in Cornwall. Digory died in about 1645.

Digory I's fourth child (and only son) was also christened Digory Gordge (Digory II). He was born in Cornwall in 1629. He married Elizabeth and became a farmer in Stanton St Gabriel (at Westhay Farm, which was then known as West Gabriel's) and a Customs Agent by the age of 30. Most likely, he was granted the farm (which had been ransacked during the civil war) for his services to Cromwell's Parliament. He died in 1708 and was buried at Whitchurch Canonicorum.

Digory II's eldest son was also christened Digory Gordge in 1659 (Digory III). He took over his father's farm and ran it with his wife Ann. But he only outlived his father by seven years and was buried at Whitchurch Canonicorum in 1715.

Digory III's eldest son was also christened Digory Gordge in 1694 (Digory IV). He took over the family farm at Westhay and also became a customs officer. He died in 1755 and he too was buried at Whitchurch.

Digory IV's eldest nephew was christened Digory Gordge (Digory V). He was born and died in Charmouth (just outside the parish of Stanton St Gabriel) and was prosecuted in 1765 for aiding and abetting smugglers. The parish council seems to have paid his fine.

Digory Gordge (VI) may have been his son. He was parish clerk in Charmouth for 56 years and his gravestone can still be seen in St Andrew's churchyard. He died in 1861 at the age of 76 and lived for many years at the corner of Barrs Lane and the Street in a cottage called "Streets", which was the village post office until recently.

In 1903, at the age of 94, a Digory Gordge (possibly Digory VII, pictured here) was interviewed in the South Wales Evening Post. He told how, as a boy, he smuggled tubs of French brandy and once hid with his brother in a church and heard the preventive men shouting 'Where be they? Which way be they gone?'

The smugglers who the Digory Gordges were either trying to stop or trying to help (or both) were largely based at nearby Chideock and marked the hills above their favoured landfalls with copses of trees, to

make navigation easier (the copses can be seen quite easily from the sea when there is even a sliver of a moon). These copses grew on Stonebarrow and at Seatown, Eype's Mouth and Stanton St Gabriel.



*[The information on Digory Gordge VI comes from Neil Mattingley's wonderful local history site, freshford.com. The image comes from wikitree and was uploaded by Sarah (Euren) Jordan.]*