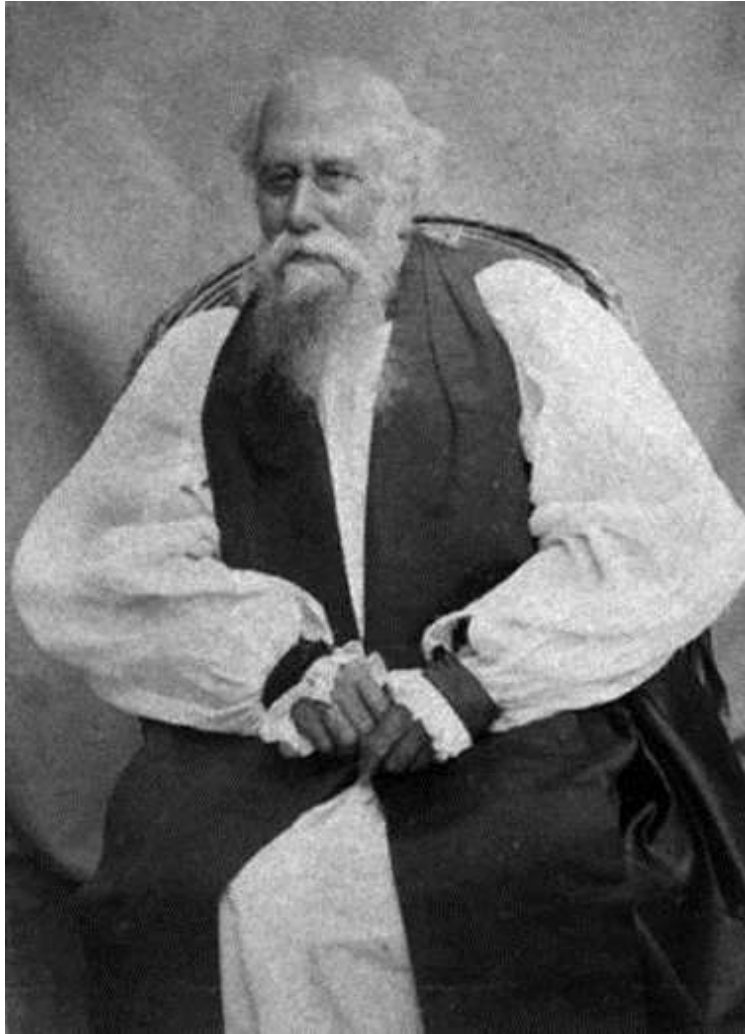


DECEIVING BISHOP WELBY*

By Ian Bruce & Ed Longley

Serving St Helena as its bishop for a record 37 years, Thomas Earle Welby's entry into the Church followed an eleven-year career in the army. Then he married, resigned from the military and travelled to Canada to work as a missionary. After his ordination there, he served as a rector in the diocese of Toronto. He next fulfilled a similar role in Lincolnshire before his appointment as an archdeacon in South Africa. Finally, in 1862, at the age of 52, he was selected as St Helena's second bishop.¹



Bishop Thomas Earle Welby

During his lengthy period of service, Welby employed eighteen clergymen as vicars of the island's four parishes.² Most worked with total integrity but there were at least two exceptions: The Reverends Barraclough and Lambert each impressed their venerable bishop, but both also sought to deceive him. In neither case did it end well for them.

The Ladder:

This story describes the consequences arising from the misuse of a churchyard ladder. The facts were first uncovered after reading an 1899 copy of the St Helena Guardian newspaper which carried a verbatim report of an extraordinary court case. Canon Barraclough, the vicar of St Paul's, complained he had not only been physically prevented from taking his rightful place in the church but also assaulted by his own Churchwarden, Homfray Welby Solomon.³

* This is an edited version of an article that appeared in *Wirebird*, Issue No 50, 2021.

Three lay magistrates sat on the bench - the retailer and entrepreneur William Alexander Thorpe⁴, the merchant Robert Galbraith Short⁵ and a senior civil servant, Robert Randal Bruce⁶. Thorpe seems to have presided and fully lived up to his reputation as a bully. The proceedings were conflicted both by Thorpe's friendship with Barraclough and his sharp competition with Solomon's businesses. The newspaper described the ill-tempered way the case was heard and the unseemly bickering between the magistrates.

Tuesday 24th January 1899

POLICE COURT:

Before Messrs W. A. Thorpe R. G. Short and R. R. Bruce.

Edwin A Barraclough (*Vicar and Canon of St. Paul's*) vs. *Homfray Welby Solomon* [*the defendant*], for obstructing and assaulting the Plaintiff in the execution of his duty as Vicar and Canon of St Paul's Cathedral Church on the 15th instant contrary to 23 and 24 Vic., c. 32, s. 2.

Defendant pleaded not guilty.

Mr W. J. Williams for Defendant: *I object to the constitution of the Court; this being an ordinary assault case it should be taken by the Police Magistrate. I further protest against Mr Thorpe being on the Bench, as owing to his personal friendship for the Plaintiff his judgement is liable to be biased.*

Mr Thorpe ordered him to be silent and said no notice would be taken of objection and cautioned him.

Mr Bruce recommended that objection be noted.

Mr Short approved.

Mr Williams: *Is this Court commissioned to try the assault case only or whether to go into the matter which led to the assault?*

Mr Thorpe: *We are going to sift the matter to the bottom and again cautioned Mr Williams.*

Edwin A. Barraclough sworn: *On the 15th of this month, Sunday, at 10:45, I went to St Paul's Church. I walked up the centre side to enter the Vestry, when I was met by the Defendant close to the Vestry door and he stood with his arms outstretched across the doorway. I said to him I am the Vicar and I wish to go into the Vestry, or words to that effect. I had in my hand a Mandamus from the Supreme Court[†], which I opened and shewed him. I tried to enter the Vestry but he pushed me away. I then [being] close to the Vestry door put on my cassock and surplice. While I was doing that he went round me towards the Chancel steps and then I went to go into the Chancel to sit in my proper seat. He then stood across the Chancel holding onto the pews on either side. I asked him to get out of the way as I had a perfect right to go and sit in my lawful seat. He said to me you can't go as I am only doing what I am told to do. I said to him I have a perfect right by the law to occupy that by this Mandamus, and I again held it up to him as I attempted to go up the steps, when he put his arms around me.*

During part of this time Archdeacon Fogg came out of the Vestry and I said to him I have come into this Church in accordance with the order of this Mandamus, which I held up to him. His reply was, I can't allow you, or something to that effect, that it will be better for you to go away. He then went back into the Vestry and closed the door. All this took place before the Service had commenced. I ought to mention that Policeman Kennedy was fetched in and stood on the Chancel steps, with Defendant in centre and Lewis Constantine on the other side; the entrance to Chancel was entirely barred. Then the Choir came up the Church to begin the Service, and from 11 o'clock to about 1 o'clock did these three people surround me and prevent my taking my lawful seat. These are the facts of the case correctly as I can possibly state them.

Cross-examined by Mr Thorpe: *Did you consider yourself a prisoner while surrounded by the three persons named? A. I did in one sense as I was not allowed to go into the Chancel. Q. Did the Defendant push you away? A. He not only pushed me but seized hold of me. Q. What did the Policeman do? A. I said to the P.C. will you read this document. (The Mandamus was produced and handed to Mr Thorpe.)*

Mr Williams protested against Mandamus being entered.

[†] As will be later explained, the Mandamus was an order made by St Helena's Supreme Court confirming Canon Barraclough's right to act as the Vicar of St Paul's.

Cross-examination continued: Is this Mandamus still in force? A. It is, there is no time limit to a Mandamus. Q. Have you been restored according to the Mandamus to the benefit as Vicar of St Paul's. A. I have not, it is practically a dead letter. Q. Did you stay during the Service? A. I sat down during the Service. Q. Did you consider yourself in custody all that time? A. I considered I was prevented from occupying my lawful position.

By Mr Short: *You say you are Vicar of St Paul's, are you recognised as such by the congregation? A. I cannot say. Q. When did you last officiate there? A. I have not officiated since last October 12 months. I have been to England since then and have been to the Church twice, once I was assaulted and once threatened with assault.*

By Mr Bruce: *When you went to St. Paul's Church you went under the power of the Mandamus? A. Yes, and under that power I was assaulted.*

Mr Bruce: *After hearing Canon Barraclough's complaint I am of opinion that this Court has no jurisdiction in the matter before us, for because it would be exceeding its power to adjudicate in a case where the Supreme Court has issued a Mandamus which is still in force as far as we know, and in consequence of the Plaintiff attempting to perform his duties thereunder an alleged assault was committed; the charge in my opinion evolves itself into one that should be dealt with by the Supreme Court. I therefore object as one of the Bench to hear the case as I am of opinion it is not in the power of an inferior Court to interfere with any order that may be issued by a higher Court.*

Mr Thorpe: *I entirely disagree with you.*

Mr Short: *I agree with Mr Bruce.*

Mr Thorpe: *This is a case of assault. It is the bounden duty of this Bench to support the action and in carrying out the law as laid down by the Supreme Court of this Island on pain and penalty of the forfeiture of our office as Magistrates of the Peace.*

Canon Barraclough: *It is absurd; the duty of this Court is to see that the peace is kept.*

Mr Bruce: *I am of opinion that the Mandamus not being obeyed, it is your duty to go to the Court where the Mandamus was issued.*

Mr Thorpe: *We have full jurisdiction two JPs being required only to settle an assault case. You refuse, Mr Short to continue with this case?*

Mr Bruce: *Mr Short agrees for the reason I have put in writing to object to proceed with the case.*

Mr Short: *Yes.*

Mr Thorpe: *Shut up, Bruce, shut up, Mr Short can speak for himself.*

Mr Bruce: *I will not, I have as much right to speak as you.*

Mr Thorpe: *You have not, I am sorry to have been associated with you two gentlemen to-day.*

Mr Short: *Thank you.*

Mr Thorpe: *The Court stands adjourned.*

Mr Bruce and Mr Short *agreed that the case was dismissed.*

Canon Barraclough *applied for costs. Not granted.*

Why was Canon Barraclough physically prevented from taking his rightful place in his own parish church? A partial explanation comes from Edward Cannan's history of the South Atlantic island churches: "Barraclough had represented himself as a single man, but it was later alleged that he had been married and had been accused of adultery in a divorce suit in 1893".⁷

Cannan was being discrete because this was far from being a simple case of adultery. When first appointed vicar of St Paul's Cathedral Church in July 1894, Barraclough said he was 33, single and to have an exemplary record. Educated at Leeds Grammar School and All Saints College in Cambridge he was ordained in 1882. Prior to arriving at St Helena, he had been Vicar of All Saint's Church at West Haddon, Northamptonshire for five years.⁸



John Wordsworth, Bishop of Salisbury

Barraclough worked diligently at St Paul's organising the renovation of the Cathedral. He cleaned its walls, installed new lamps and moved the organ back to its old position near the Chancel.⁹ Bishop Welby was sufficiently impressed to appoint him as Canon in November 1895. Over a two-year period, Barraclough conducted 141 baptisms, 27 marriages and 111 burials. He then left the island in October 1897 to start his next post as vicar of St Katharine's Church at Savernake, near Marlborough in the Diocese of Salisbury.

This new appointment was the idea of Bishop Welby. In October 1896 he suffered the death of his wife Mary Anne. Her burial by Barraclough at St Paul's was a solemn occasion, all shops and offices closing on the day by order of the government.¹⁰ In deep mourning, Welby turned his mind to find a way by which Caroline, one of his daughters, could join him from England. She was married to the Reverend Francis William Carré, vicar of Savernake. Welby suggested that Barraclough and Carré might like to swap positions.¹¹ All parties agreeing to this arrangement, Barraclough sailed to England to assume his new duties.

Savernake fell into the ministry of John Wordsworth,¹² Bishop of Salisbury. He had a long memory, and well recalled the name of Barraclough in connection with a disgraceful affair that had several years earlier blackened the reputation of the Church.

West Haddon is a small and quiet Northamptonshire village on the outskirts of Earl Spencer's estate where little of great consequence ever happens – except in 1891. According to the later testimony of a 17-year-old villager called Fred Gammage, in late June or early July 1891 at about a quarter to eleven at night, he was startled to see his vicar walking through the darkened village carrying a churchyard ladder. Curious to know what was happening, Fred followed, and next saw Barraclough prop the ladder against a house, climb up and enter the open bedroom window of Mrs Amy Louise Underwood. Her husband was away in South Africa. Fred must have been a patient observer because he was also able to report Barraclough's parochial visit took three hours to complete before he descended back down the ladder, carrying it back to the churchyard.

One of the more startling aspects of this activity was that Vicar Barraclough was due to marry a Miss Lucy Eagland a few days later at Burley, Yorkshire on 7 July. The marriage duly took place and the happy couple arrived back at West Haddon on 24 July. Yet, late at night later that month, Fred

once again saw Barraclough shining up the ladder to meet up with Mrs Underwood. Anyone who has lived in a small community will know how rapidly gossip passes around a village, so this time Fred was accompanied by other villagers, one of whom crept up and removed the ladder, forcing the vicar to leave through the downstairs scullery.

Unsurprisingly, the Barraclough marriage was short-lived. Lucy moved to her sister's house in London within nine months. She later testified that Barraclough visited her there and confessed "he had got Mrs Underwood into



All Saints Church, West Haddon

trouble and must see her out of it", promising "there would be no further immoral relations between them". This did not stop Lucy from filing for divorce, all the squalid details being sensationally reported in the national and local press.¹³ At the court hearing held in January 1893 Lucy claimed he often absented himself at night and had a violent temper, several times physically assaulting her and threatening her with a gun. He had also taken all her money. She also hinted at something worse, claiming Barraclough "used to be frequently about with the choir boys".

This application for divorce was granted, as was a second in May 1893 between Barraclough's lover Amy Underwood and her husband William. The latter had been a farmer with 300 acres of land at West Haddon and had married Amy Heygate in May 1885. Unfortunately, his annual tenancy was terminated four years later.¹⁴ By then the marriage seems to have been going badly because, having decided to emigrate to the Cape Colony for a new life, William asked Amy to accompany him but "[.] she declined and he certainly did not press her too much". Amy moved into her brother's house in the village. This was crowded at night – according to the 1891 census, there were seven occupants – and it was against this house Barraclough was seen propping his ladder late at night. William Underwood only discovered details of Amy's affair after returning to West Haddon, his venture at the Cape having failed.

Amy was described in court as a grass widow. A Putney landlady testified that Amy arrived at her lodgings in March 1892 and was visited by Barraclough three to four times a week. Initially giving her name as Unwin, Amy only admitted it was Underwood after giving birth to Barraclough's child in August 1892. The fate of this baby is unknown. Following her divorce, Lucy Barraclough reverted to her maiden name and eventually remarried in 1899, dying in London in March 1930 aged 64. Amy Underhill remarried in 1901 quoting both her married and maiden names and died in Northampton in 1955 aged 90.

Bishop Welby was deceived. He knew nothing of this story before appointing Barraclough as vicar of St Paul's at St Helena. His scheme for Barraclough to swap roles with his son-in-law at Savernake was entirely innocent but Bishop Wordsworth took a more jaundiced view, and unfairly accused Welby of cynically seeking the company of a daughter whilst removing a disreputable priest. He could understand a lack of honesty by Barraclough but not by Welby:

It is fair to him [Barracrough] to say that if there is any want of candour in the matter the blame must be equally shared by the Bishop of St Helena. I do not know that he was bound to confess his past life if his present Bishop did not think it necessary to allude to it.¹⁵

The Archdeacon of the South African town of George [Western Cape], Peter Parry Fogg, happened to be visiting St Helena when revelations of Barracrough's past arrived from England. He was a friend of Bishop Welby and an ultra-conservative. For example, he ferociously opposed Darwinism from an extreme racist standpoint, asserting black races were too degraded to have a common ancestry with whites.¹⁶ Outraged when Barracrough returned to the island to reassume his post as vicar of St Paul's, Fogg launched an aggressive preventative campaign. He instructed the Churchwarden, Homfray Welby Solomon, to send Barracrough's name to a Diocesan or Ecclesiastical Court for dismissal. This belligerent stance worried at least one clergyman, the Reverend Edwin Heron Dodgson, youngest brother of Lewis Carroll, who detected an absence of Christian forgiveness. Worried at his colleagues' eagerness to throw the first stone, he commented in a letter to Welby's son-in-law Francis Carré at Savernake: "You and I may not have fallen in the same way, but we may be as great sinners - if not worse - in God's sight".¹⁷

The Diocesan Court duly blocked Barracrough's appointment as vicar of St Paul's. It is not known whether it also stripped him of his title as a Canon - he certainly continued to use this title for the rest of his life. Barracrough next raised the stakes by appealing to the island's Supreme Court. Governor Sterndale (acting as chief justice) ruled that the Diocesan Court's action was illegal and issued a Mandamus to this effect. Commenting on Sterndale's involvement, Geoffrey Kitching later wrote, "It is unfortunate that in its early days, his administration should have been marred by the unseemly dispute between the clergy and their aged and universally beloved Bishop, when the Supreme Court of the Island did not find it possible to avoid being involved in the litigation".¹⁸

Looking to overturn this judgement, Bishop Welby next launched an appeal to the Privy Council in London.¹⁹ However, all his plans ended on 6 January 1899. That day, whilst his carriage was travelling from Jamestown up Ladder Hill, his horse shied at some object and took fright. The coachman jumped down to control the horse whilst Welby took hold of the reins. The horse managed to turn the carriage around the narrow track and then careered back down the hill. After hurtling about 200 yards down the slope, Welby was thrown off and instantly killed.²⁰ He was buried the next day next to his wife at St Paul's. This time Barracrough was excluded from the service, Archdeacon Fogg officiating instead.²¹

As the senior clergyman on the island, Fogg appointed himself as the island's Vicar-General [the Bishop's administrative deputy] and grimly pursued his campaign. He instructed Homfray Solomon, churchwarden of St Paul's, to block Barracrough's access inside the church. Armed with the Supreme Court's Mandamus, Barracrough tried to gain entry on 15 January. Then came the unseemly struggle and accusations of assault against Solomon at the Court case described above.

A few weeks later, a brake was applied to Archdeacon Fogg's campaign. In February 1899 he was replaced by the Reverend J. Watkins Williams. The Archbishop of Cape Town, William West Jones, wrote he had decided against proceeding with the Privy Council appeal but at the same time instructed Williams to withdraw it at the last possible moment, thereby maintaining maximum leverage on Barracrough. This calculation worked because Barracrough gave up the fight and left the island for good, travelling to Sri Lanka as a forces Chaplain at Colombo (1900-2). Here he is known to have run a side business as a money lender to colonial civil servants and the military.²²

The aftermath may not come as a total surprise. Returning to England, Barracrough was appointed Curate at the Norfolk village of Denton (1902-3). In June 1903 he was accused of abusing several children - two girls and four boys.²³ Failing to appear at one of the Magistrate hearings a police warrant was issued, which provides a pen portrait: *Age 48, height 5 ft. 9 in., complexion swarthy, hair, moustache, and beard (trimmed) dark, turning grey, eyes blue; dress, black Norfolk jacket suit, white clerical collar,*

clerical hat or peak cap. A clerk in Holy Orders. The magistrates finally decided only a single charge relating to one of the girls should go forward to trial. This was held several months later when he was found not guilty. Having garnered considerable local public support, this judgement was met with applause in court and by cheering crowds when Barraclough's train arrived back at Denton.²⁴ His next movements have been tracked to Bagby (1906-7)²⁵, Presteign (1910-11), Bromsgrove (1916)²⁶ and as Curate at Atherstone in Warwickshire (1919-20). Here, he was charged with "improper conduct" with a 17-year-old boy. The magistrates dismissed the case and then also made a similar decision to complaints from two other boys.²⁷ Barraclough next moved to Walton, Somerset (1921-34) and then nearby to Clevedon where he died in January 1934 aged 75.

The Disappearance:

Our investigation into the mysterious disappearance of the Reverend Lambert from Jamestown began after the following advertisement in the Personal Column of the London Evening Standard on 8 December 1902 was seen.

LAMBERT.—If the Rev. JOSEPH CHRISTOPHER LAMBERT, formerly of St. James's Church, Jamestown, St. Helena, who left there on or about the 15th day of May, 1886, will Communicate with Messrs. Sparks and Rickards, solicitors, of 32, Walbrook, in the City of London, he will HEAR SOMETHING to his ADVANTAGE. Should this Meet the Eye of any Person who knows of the death of the said Joseph Christopher Lambert, and will furnish INFORMATION as to the same, he will be REWARDED.

Although we now know what happened to Lambert in Jamestown on 15 May 1886, much of what then followed remains a mystery. What is certain is that he too deceived Bishop Welby, albeit very differently from Barraclough.

Joseph Christopher Lambert was born in Yorkshire in 1840, the oldest surviving child of the Rev. Alfred Lambert and his wife Jane. His father served as Vicar at St Paul's church at Monk Bretton near Barnsley for 44 years until his death. The church was central to the family, all four sons entering the clergy.

The only glimpses we have of Joseph growing up at Monk Bretton come from the 1841 and 1851 censuses as a baby and then as a schoolboy. However, in 1860 at the age of 20, he arrived at St Helena to work as Assistant Schoolmaster at Jamestown's Head School at a salary of £70 per annum. What led to this appointment is entirely unknown. Dorothy Evans' schooling history suggests he was instructing a small group of 46 boys at a school headed by the Rev. George Bennett.²⁸ Bennett and his brother (also a clergyman) had arrived on the island some years earlier and Lambert soon took over the running of the school when George Bennett took a year's leave of absence.²⁹

Two years later, in 1862 Lambert married a young St Helenian, Johanna Mary Fitzpatrick. She had already suffered a difficult childhood having lost her father at the age of two and being orphaned when her mother died four years later. A dark shadow was to continue to follow Johanna and most of her children in the years to come. News of the marriage was sent back to England with notices placed in several national and Yorkshire newspapers, for example:

Lambert – Fitzpatrick - On the 12th March, at the Cathedral Church at St Helena, by the Rev. Canon Bennett, Joseph C. Lambert, Esq. R.A.M. [Royal Academy of Music], Colonial Service, eldest son of Rev A. Lambert, of Monk Bretton, Yorks, to Miss Johanna Mary, only daughter of the late E. Fitzpatrick, Esq., of St Helena and niece of late H. Y. Weston, Esq., sheriff.³⁰

It will become evident that Lambert was both an able musician and an artist, but it would be remarkable if he was indeed appointed as member of the Royal Academy of Music when still a teenager before arriving at St Helena. Investigations revealed the truth - he only attended the Academy between February and April 1859 before ending his studies and leaving.³¹ This is the earliest sign of the lie by which Lambert was to live his future life.

Johanna may have been reluctant to leave the island, which perhaps explains why the couple continued to live on the island after Lambert was replaced at the school by W. Thompson in December 1862.³² He described himself as a merchant when his first child Mary Margaret Lambert was baptised at St Paul's a month later, this possibly reflecting his membership of Jamestown's Freemasons (Lodge 718, from January 1862)³³ where he would have mixed with several island merchants and traders. He had strong Masonic connection thereafter, even after entering the Anglican Church, and his registration at Lodges and baptism church records have considerably helped to track his later travels.

After leaving St Helena, they lived at Barrow in Furness³⁴ before returning to the island in December 1866. He had no stated trade and may have been hoping to find work. If so, he was unsuccessful because a year later he was back in England and living in Co. Durham working as an organist (1867) and then Hemsworth in the West Riding (1868) where he claimed to be Professor of Music. No such university appointment has been traced and it is presumed he based this title on his two-month stint at the Royal College of Music. He next moved to Spalding (1874).

Then then came several critical moves. He first enrolled as an undergraduate at Cambridge University. After only attending 13 days (albeit over two terms), he left and in October 1874 registered at Oxford University.³⁵ Once again, he only attended a few days before leaving and sailing to India. It is uncertain whether his took his family with him. Arriving at Madras, in November 1874 he registered at the local Masonic lodge. Here he said he was working as "the Cathedral organist" – presumably at St George's Anglican Cathedral at Madras.

Lambert's attendance of just a few days at Cambridge University and then at Oxford surely had no purpose other than supplying him with paperwork that added credence to his later claims of high academic achievement.

We believe Lambert now entered the Anglican Church as a clergyman, going through a genuine period of training. Maybe this was at Madras Cathedral. By the time he left, he seems to have progressed to the first stage of ordination as a Deacon.³⁶ After India, he was always known as the Reverend Lambert.

The earliest mention of Lambert's return to St Helena was found in Benjamin Grant's description of the Chubbs Spring House garden, the wall and plants of which were devastated by a severe flood:

[...] nearly the whole of the garden ground was destroyed in the space of half an hour. The Rev. J. C. Lambert, F.R.G.S. [Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society], the proprietor, who had then recently arrived from India, planted over 350 young gutta percha trees and India rubber and vanilla vines, which he had brought especially for trial in this garden, not very long before the flood; but they met the same fate as the wall and were all swept into the sea.³⁷

This flood occurred on 14 April 1878.³⁸ Lambert is known to have re-registered with the Masons in Jamestown before the flood, on 2 February, so perhaps he arrived soon before that, giving him time to set out all his plants before the flood destroyed them.

Grant's description offers new insights into Lambert's interests – it seems he was a keen botanist and geologist. His fellowship of the Royal Geographical Society stands as the one and only genuine claim made by Lambert - albeit he was not elected as a fellow until 1880.³⁹

Having returned to St Helena, Lambert soon re-registered with Jamestown's Masons. He omitted all mention of a trade and so was presumably unemployed. However, a month after the flood, on 27

May 1878, Noel Janisch resigned as Master of the Head School and Lambert was appointed in his place.

Another year passed before Bishop Welby took Lambert into his team as Curate in Charge at St James Church. Lambert conducted his first baptism on 18 June 1879. Three days later, the Forces Chaplain Henry Whitehead wrote a letter of recommendation to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG), of which he was himself a member. As will be seen, the SPG certainly funded Lambert up to the time of his disappearance. More significantly, the letter shows just how far Bishop Welby and his colleagues were taken in by Lambert's claims:

. . . The new Deacon, Mr Lambert, is the master of the Head School. Some time ago he expressed a desire to enter Holy Orders and has ever since been in preparation. He is the son of a beneficed clergyman and his two brothers are priests. He has received a classical education and is a Doctor of Music of St John's, Cambridge. He is a tried man here and well known to the Bishop and Clergy.⁴⁰

The Rev. J.C. Hands inducted Lambert to the Vicarage on 22 July 1879 and he was ordained as a priest a year later in May 1880. Over a seven-year period, he conducted 343 baptisms, 40 marriages and 86 burials, mainly at St James Church.

The earliest proof that Johanna and her family were living with Lambert comes from the record of the baptism at St James Church of his newly born son Robert Charles Alfred in December 1881. Robert was later killed at the battle of the Somme in 1916.

All the evidence suggests Lambert was gifted, both as a musician and an artist and it is not obvious why he was so driven to exaggerate his qualifications. Several examples of his drawings can be found, for example, the several illustrations used in Grant's book describing St Helena.



Lambert's image of the Heart-shaped Waterfall

Another example of Lambert's sketches was of the Empress Eugénie (widow of Napoleon III) when she visited St Helena on 12 July 1882. These were featured in the Illustrated London News and then,

a century later, used in a celebratory series of stamps.⁴¹ With such obvious talent, Lambert's fantastic claims seem entirely pointless.



In addition to his duties as Vicar of St James Church, Lambert was still being employed as Master of the Head School. By 1884 the number of pupils had dwindled to only eleven so in January 1885 the island government closed the school, Lambert receiving a small annual pension of £15-15s.

Events came to a crisis with the disappearance of Lambert in May 1886. His last recorded service was a baptism at St James on 12 May and he went missing three days later.

This was the starting point of this investigation. At its start, it was suspected he killed himself – would-be suicides can discreetly jump off cliffs at several quiet locations, their bodies never to be seen again. However, a search at Jamestown Archives soon dispelled all such thoughts. The 20 May 1886 edition of the St Helena Guardian newspaper showed Lambert secretly stole onto a ship, abandoning both his family and career at St Helena.

The ship Aphrodita, of Liverpool, Capt. Lambert [sic, should be Lang], which arrived here on the 28th February with cargo on fire, having reshipped the cargo that it was necessary to land and effected the repairs needed, sailed for her port of destination – Liverpool – on Saturday last the 15th inst. The Rev. J. C. Lambert left the Island in this vessel rather suddenly and very quietly. Another section of the same paper added the following: [...] we shall briefly add that though the Rev. Lambert left the Island clandestinely, we cannot but say that, being a man of great talent, his loss will be felt in our small community. He had his faults; and who has not?

The Aphrodita was a 1,627-ton merchant sailing ship built and registered at Liverpool and commanded by Captain W. Lang. It had called at St Helena on a voyage from the Philippines to England with its cargo on fire. The ship finally arrived at Liverpool on 28 May. Unless Lambert did a Robert Maxwell and fell off the ship before docking, this must also be where he disembarked.

All trace of him then disappears at Liverpool. An exhaustive search has failed to find him in England or anywhere else after *Aphrodita* docked.

Was Lambert running from a situation he had created or one that befell him? He certainly deceived Bishop Welby but was he caught? There is at least one other possibility – that Lambert’s marriage had deteriorated beyond the point he could accept.

The truth is revealed in a letter written by Bishop Welby to the SPG’s Secretary on 5 June 1886.⁴² This does not mention Lambert’s deceptions, but it may be significant that this merely refers to him as being a Reverend or a Mr, not as Dr or Professor:

My dear Mr Jackson

I take the earliest opportunity of a mail to England to inform you that on the night of Saturday the 15th of last month the Rev. J. C. Lambert, a missionary of the Society & Vicar of St James, Jamestown, left this island secretly by the ship *Aphrodite*, bound for Liverpool. He had not given me any intimation whatever of his intended departure, nor did he leave any letter explanatory of his conduct; he appears to have carefully made arrangements for his voyage by taking with him all his clothes & by sending on board cases containing books, photographic apparatus etc, etc; so that it is quite clear that he was not taken away against his will in consequence of having delayed his return until the ship was under way; he was seen on deck by the Custom [...] officer, who left this ship in this last boat & asked him to return with him in that boat - Mr Lambert declined to do so and went below.

He has left his wife & six children (5 daughters & a son about 4 years old) without any provision for their support: he took with him all the money which he had, & the property which he has left (furniture, etc.) must be sold to pay his debts, which will probably be just met by the amount of the sale. For the last three years quarrels have been frequent & disgraceful between him & his wife - very great shame is to be attached to her as well as to him. Latterly he had become negligent in the performance of his duties. I had been obliged to speak & to write to him more than once about his negligence. His mind was I think at times affected - his hatred of his wife & daughters had become intense & I have no doubt as to his purpose in leaving St Helena being to rid himself entirely of them & never to let them know where he may be found. This deplorable termination of his ministry distresses me, but for the sake of the Church on many accounts, his departure is not to be regretted.

The portion of the Society's grant, which was apportioned to Mr Lambert, I propose to reserve towards the expense of the passage of a clergyman, whom I must now endeavour to obtain to fill his vacant post.

I am my dear Mr Jackson

Yours faithfully

T. E. [Thomas Earle] St Helena

Given the known size and closeness of Lambert’s family, it would be surprising if he contacted none of them but there is no record this ever happened. Indeed, on 25 June, Lambert’s brother Claud Alfred Lambert contacted the SPG asking, “Can you tell me the whereabouts of my brother Rev. J. C. Lambert, Jamestown, St Helena? I have not heard of him for some time”. The SPG’s reply was presumably based on Bishop Welby’s letter because three days later he wrote, “Many thanks for your kind note. I sincerely trust that some satisfactory explanation of the enclosure will soon be made. It is very distressing to all concerned”.

Lambert almost certainly assumed a new identity, which was easier to do in the 1880s than it is today. With his background of past deceptions, he may have found this easier to do than most. Effectively, the mystery of Lambert's disappearance has transferred from St Helena to Liverpool.

One year after Lambert's disappearance, on 18 May 1887, Johanna gave birth to an illegitimate daughter, May Fitzpatrick Lambert. The father was not named, and the baby died and was buried four days later. It is not known when this relationship began and whether it was a factor in the breakup of Lambert's marriage or a later consequence of his physical and financial abandonment of his family. What is certain is that the aftermath of Lambert's disappearance was traumatic for his family. We neither know how far Bishop Welby helped them (he certainly wanted to withhold Lambert's SPG funds) nor how willingly Johanna left St Helena. The family sailed to England and in the years 1891-4 Johanna, her daughters and son were individually or jointly recorded as regularly entering London workhouses. Her daughter Alice Jane died in 1892 aged only 25. Johanna is not thought to have had any family in England that could help her. Maybe Lambert's family eventually came to her aid because by the time of the 1901 census Johanna and two children had moved to Eastbourne, another daughter marrying and living in London. They probably received none of Lambert's small pension following the closure of the Head School in 1884 - Blue Book records show provision being made over a fifteen-year period until 1899 but if his location was unknown, maybe this was just a bookkeeping exercise, with no money being paid.

Johanna waited sixteen years until December 1902 before newspaper appeals were placed for Lambert's location. An explanation for this delay comes from the terms of his father's will. The Rev. Alfred Lambert died at Monk Bretton just a few days before Lambert slipped out from St Helena – this news would have been slow to arrive at the island, so the timing was coincidental. Lambert's mother had died seven years earlier, and his father remarried a second time in 1883. He left everything to his new wife, but she only died in May 1902. Her estate was left to Lambert and two of his sisters. In other words, Johanna only launched an appeal for Lambert's location following the death of his stepmother.

Probate was granted to Johanna on 27 May 1903 for her husband's £700 inheritance and it was assumed he died intestate at "someplace unknown" on or after 15 May 1886. Johanna must have known Lambert was still alive when he left St Helena, but perhaps she was unaware of what happened afterwards. Her successful claim to Lambert's inheritance did not generate a death certificate - until very recent times with the enactment of the Presumption of Death Act 2013, no single legislation in England and Wales dealt with the presumption of death of a missing person and, as illustrated by the Lord Lucan case in the 1970s, it was difficult and sometimes impossible to obtain a death certificate without a body.

Johanna and her son Robert, who worked as a gardener, moved to the outskirts of Eastbourne (Polegate village). She died on 12 June 1916 aged 71, Hailsham local authorities paying for her burial. She was survived by her son Robert, but he was killed five months later at the Battle of the Somme. Born a St Helenian, he is not included on any island monument, but is remembered at two locations - inside St John's Church in Polegate and in France at Puchvillers military cemetery where the headstone carries the inscription:

Private Robert Charles Alfred Lambert G/115841
Royal Sussex Regiment
Safe with Thee
*Son of the late Rev. Joseph Christopher and Johanna Mary Lambert.*⁴³

All internet references were accessed in February 2020. Most URLs are quoted below in condensed tinyurl format. St Helena church records were sourced from the Friends of St Helena website. Grateful thanks are given to Karen Henry at Jamestown's Archives, to Lucy McCann, Senior Archivist at

the Bodleian Library, who extracted a number of SPG letters and to John Pinfold for alerting us to their existence.

¹ Thomas Earle Welby, the second son of the 2nd Baronet of Denton Manor, Lincolnshire, was born at Clifton, Gloucestershire, in 1810. His family could trace their lineage directly back to Edward III. He joined the army aged 16 as an ensign in the 26th Foot in 1826, became a lieutenant in 1829 and then a lieutenant in the 13th Light Dragoons in 1830. He both married and resigned from the army in 1837 and next worked as a missionary in Canada. He was ordained in the diocese of Toronto before his appointment as the rector first of Sandwich in Western Canada (from 1842) and then of Newton-near-Folkingham in Lincolnshire (from 1847). Appointed as archdeacon in the Diocese of George, South Africa in 1856, he moved to St Helena as the island's second bishop six years later. The Marquis of Raineval, *The Plantagenet Roll of the Blood Royal, Being a Complete Table of All the Descendants Now Living of Edward III., King of England, Part 1* (Melville & Co: London, 1911), 49, <https://tinyurl.com/y7pghl82>; 'Person Page', n.d., <https://tinyurl.com/3mfjrcnc>; Edward Cannan, *Churches of the South Atlantic Islands, 1502-1991*. (Oswestry: Anthony Nelson, 1992), 56].

² Cannan, *Churches of the South Atlantic Islands*, Appendix E, 296-7.

³ Homfray Welby Solomon was the grandson of Bishop Welby, born 3 April 1877, son of Saul and Katherine Solomon née Walcot.

⁴ Ian Bruce and Nick Thorpe, 'William A Thorpe, 1842-1918', *Wirebird: The Journal of the Friends of St Helena* 43 (2014): 4.

⁵ Robert Galbraith Short, variously described as a farmer and merchant, was appointed the island's Sheriff in 1892.

⁶ Robert R. Bruce, 'Memories of the Early Island Civil Service', *Wirebird: The Journal of the Friends of St Helena* 36 (2008): 16-21.

⁷ Cannan, *Churches of the South Atlantic Islands*, 132.

⁸ Cambridge University Alumni; Church of England. Church Commissioners, *Crockford's Clerical Directory, Crockford's Clerical Directory*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1932), 68.

⁹ Cannan, *Churches of the South Atlantic Islands*, 132.

¹⁰ Cannan, 62. Mary Ann Welby is celebrated by a brass plaque inside St Paul's Church and reads: *Sacred to the memory of / Mary Anne WELBY / wife of the / Right Revd Lord Bishop / of St Helena, / October 27th 1896. / Her children called her blessed. Her gravestone is inscribed: In loving memory of / Mary Anne / wife of Thomas Earle WELBY D.D. / Bishop of St Helena / Born November 20th 1819 / Died October the 27th 1896 / Neither death nor life shall be able to separate / us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

¹¹ Bishop Welby's Caroline daughter first married Charles Henry Fowler at St Helena in 1867 and was widowed there in 1877. She then married Francis William Carré at Dublin in 1884.

¹² John Wordsworth, Wikipedia: <https://tinyurl.com/yxs5jzw2>. The poet William Wordsworth was his great uncle.

¹³ Barraclough V. Barraclough, *The Times*, 25 January 1893, 14; The Barraclough Divorce Case. Shocking Allegations of Cruelty and Immorality, *Northampton Mercury*, 27 January 1893, 3; 'A Local Divorce Case', *Northampton Mercury*, 28 April 1893, 8; 5 May 1893, 7.

¹⁴ 'West Haddon Hall Estate', *Northampton Mercury*, 2 April 1887, 4; 'Church House Farm, West Haddon. Notice of Sale', *Northampton Mercury*, 31 August 1889, 4

¹⁵ Cannan, *Churches of the South Atlantic Islands*, 132.

¹⁶ Peter Parry Fogg: He fiercely opposed Darwinian theory, arguing it was "absurd" because it was self-contradictory, "baseless" because of its lack of evidence and "monstrous" because it undermined religious teaching. Arguing against the theory of human evolution he maintained that among "the races of Africa" were some of the "lowest specimens of humanity and almost side by side with them is found man's pretended ancestor, the gorilla". He argued that the degradation of black races was incompatible with the idea of progressive human evolution. [David N. Livingstone, 'Debating Darwin at the Cape', *Journal of Historical Geography* 52 (1 April 2016): 7-8.] He died in 1920.

¹⁷ Cannan, *Churches of the South Atlantic Islands*, 115.

¹⁸ G. C. Kitching, *A Handbook and Gazetteer of the Island of St Helena Including a Short History of the Island under the Crown 1834-1902* (St. Helena: GC Kitching, 1937), 123.

¹⁹ 'St Helena, Diocese of: Letters on Legal Proceedings against Barraclough (Edwin Arthur), Vicar of St Paul, St Helena' (1899), F. Temple 60, ff. 9-12, Lambeth Palace Library.

²⁰ Cannan, *Churches of the South Atlantic Islands*, 62.

²¹ Bishop Welby's grave reads *Thomas Earle WELBY D.D. / second son of Sir William Earle WELBY, Bart. / of Denton Hall Grantham Lincolnshire. / Born 11th of July 1810 / Died 6th January 1899 / Bishop of St Helena from 1862 - 99. / and member of Council. / Thy light is come and the glory of the Lord is risen. A gateway was also erected in Bishop Welby's memory at St Paul's church by Homfray Solomon in 1945.*

²² Sued man, *Dundee Courier*, 3 June 1923, 5.

²³ Serious charges against a Denton Curate, Remarkable Scenes in Court, *Norwich Mercury*, 18 July 1903, 2.

²⁴ The Denton Scandal, Charge against a clergyman, Verdict of "Not Guilty", *Eastern Daily Press*, 22 October 1903, 8.

²⁵ Crockford's Clerical Directory, 1932, 68.

²⁶ Kelly's Directory of Staffordshire, Worcestershire & Warwickshire, 1916, Part 3: Worcestershire, Private Residents, 1916, 345.

²⁷ Serious charge against Curate, *The Times*, March 4, 1920, 11; Charges against Atherstone Curate, *Tamworth Herald*, 13 March 1920, 3.

²⁸ Dorothy Evans, *Schooling in the South Atlantic Islands, 1661-1992* (Oswestry: Anthony Nelson, 1994), 65; This source created some confusion because it suggests he was using the title "Reverend" in 1860 but this is wrong and, for example, is not supported by the Blue Book record. It would be another 28 years before he was ordained as a Deacon.

²⁹ Evans, 63; Colin Fox, 'The Reverend George Bennett', *Wirebird: The Journal of the Friends of St Helena* 48 (2019): 77; The 1860 Blue Book shows George Bennett began service as Head on 30 November 1854.

³⁰ Morning Post, 8 May 1862, p8. According to his headstone, Henry Yates Weston was killed a couple of months before this marriage, "dying of an accident on the way to the consecration of St Matthew's Church, Hutts Gate".

³¹ Email response from the Librarian at the Royal Academy of Music to Ed Longley on 29 May 2020: *I can confirm that Joseph Christopher Lambert does appear in our register of students in 1859, when he was aged 18. He appears to have had quite a short life at the Academy, as his entry date is 28 February 1859 and his exit date is April 1859. He studied piano with William Dorrell (1810-1896).*

³² *St Helena: Almanack and Annual Register*, 1913, 51.

³³ Thomas V. Webb, 'Five Days from Anywhere (Masonry in St. Helena)', 1990. This states Lodge 718 was the third to be formed on the island. Originally identified as Lodge 718 in 1843, it was renumbered as Lodge 488 in 1863. The Lodge acquired its present buildings on Napoleon Street in 1846.

³⁴ Census records of the second child, Augusta Mary Castle née Lambert, show she was born around 1865 but no record exists for her birth at either St Helena or the UK. She respectively named her place of birth as St Helena, Lincolnshire and Barrow in Furness in the 1891, 1901 and 1911 censuses. Perhaps she was born during the sea passage from St Helena to England.

³⁵ Cambridge University Alumni: Five days of the Easter term (April-June) and eight days of Michaelmas (October-December), source: <https://tinyurl.com/erd1hgn9>. Oxford University Alumni, Registered as John (not Joseph) Christopher Lambert in October 1874, source: <https://tinyurl.com/3nuofxjm>.

³⁶ According to [Evans, *Schooling in the South Atlantic Islands, 1661-1992*, 85.] Lambert worked as a teacher in India in the period 1861-1878 (no source provided). Given Lambert's known itinerary elsewhere during those years, this must be wrong.

³⁷ Benjamin Grant, *A Few Notes on St Helena and Descriptive Guide to Which Is Added Some Remarks on the Island as a Health Resort; Captain Oliver's Geology of the Island and Numerous Appendices* (St Helena: B Grant, 1881), 68–69.

³⁸ *St Helena Almanack*, 68.

³⁹ William Clowes Stamford, *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, vol. 50 (London: John Murray, 1880), LXXXV, <https://tinyurl.com/rdrqjvv>.

⁴⁰ Extract of a handwritten letter from the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts to the Archivist at St John's College on 20 August 1946. Cannan did not include Lambert in his list of SPG-missionaries, so White-head's recommendation seems to have come to nothing [Cannan, *Churches of the South Atlantic Islands*, Appendix E, 295.]

⁴¹ 'The Empress Eugenie at St Helena. (Landing on the Island of St. Helena and Visit the Tomb of Napoleon I).', *The Illustrated London News* 77, no. 2149 (7 August 1880): 128; 'St Helena Commemorates 1880 Visit of Empress Eugenie', *St Helena and Dependencies Philatelic Society Newsletter* 4, no. 2 (April 1980): 13–14.

⁴² 'Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, USPG D77, St Helena', June 1886, <https://tinyurl.com/uct9b2rp>.

⁴³ <https://tinyurl.com/4hpuptvm>.