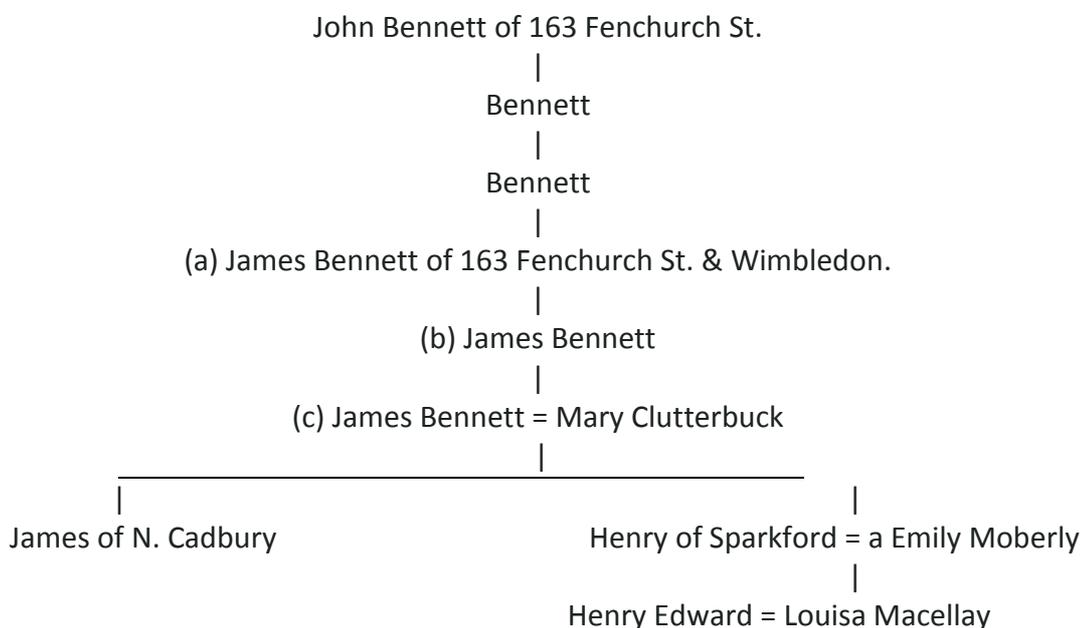


The Bennetts of North Cadbury
From Somerset Records Office - Ref T/PH/gmn1



The Bennetts of 163 Fenchuch St. lived above their warehouse, for they were East India Merchants - probably Members of that Company. Their house was noted for its fine chimney pieces.

The Rev. J. A. Bennett gives their pedigree thus:-



James Bennett (b) was a wealthy merchant, not a little proud of his wealth, of whom the tale is told that he exacted a promise from his son James (c) that he would marry no one possessed of less than £10,000. When James the Younger fell hopelessly in love with the beautiful but penniless Mary Clutterbuck (called, on account of her devastating beauty, 'Queen of the Scilly

Isles' whereof her Father was Governor), he overcame the difficulty by writing a cheque for that amount, placing it in an envelope which he put into her hand. This she held unopened while he hastened into his proposal and was accepted. When he confessed his engagement to the elder James and was questioned as to her dowry, he replied "£10,000, Sir", and all was well! I always hope the envelope and its contents were really hers!

When 'Mrs Mary Clutterbuck was first introduced to the house in Fenchurch St. she is said to have been amazed at its grandeur and wealth, for her young husband took her there as a surprise. "Oh, James", exclaimed she "whose house is this?" "Yours, my dear", was his delighted reply.

The elder James (b) already owned a country house in Wimbledon, but his son, James (c) came down into Somerset. I have a copy of a notice in the 'Gentlemen's Magazine' previous to his purchase of the Cadbury Estate and House from the Newman Family in 1790 or 92, which speaks of 'James Bennett of Sparkford'.¹

The Cadbury Estate included Sparkford. Cadbury House (as then it was called, though the present owners have altered its title to Cadbury Court), was built by Sir Francis Hastings who was buried in N. Cadbury in 1610. It seems more likely that he modified and added to an existing house than that he really founded it. The Heraldic glass still in the House belongs chiefly to the Hastings Family. (See. Som. Arch. Proceedings, 1890). On the death of Sir Francis, North Cadbury was sold to Sir Matthew Evans [*or Ewens*], by his family to the Newmans, by them to James Bennett, whose arms (now replaced by the present owner) were over the entrance door, in the form given above.

The Estate includes the famous earthwork of Cadbury Castle, the true Camelot - see Som. Arch. Pro. 1890. In 1799 James was High Sheriff of the county, and contrary to custom, rode with his javelin men to meet the Judge, instead of going in his carriage.

He greatly altered the House giving it a Georgian front and roofing in the space between its wings. For a fuller account see Som. Arch. 1890. Somewhat happily his money, it is said, ran out when the South front was finished, so that the older and more picturesque North front remains.

Another somewhat vandalised deed attributed to him was the planting of the great trenches of Cadbury Castle, which now though perhaps more beautiful and wealthy in primroses, are less open to Archaeological investigation, than before.

¹ A reference to James Bennett of Sparkford prior to 1792 seems unlikely. Rev. Henry Bennett was appointed Rector of Sparkford in 1836 following the death of his predecessor Edwin Sandys Newman, being succeeded in turn by Charles William Bennett from 1874 until 1899.

There was however an earlier Bennett connection with Cadbury: In her 1752 will, Dorothy Newman, wife of Francis Newman (1691-1768), she made special provision of £500 to be paid to "Susannah Bennett now resident with me at Cadbury". Perhaps Susannah was related to the Bennetts of London and it was through her that they came to know (and later own) the Newman estates of Cadbury and Sparkford.