

**Links: Rebellion/public disorder; poaching and the death penalty; William Cobbett**

**Source: The History of Farnham Park by Pat Heather**

**Page 51 – 53:** These pages cover the rise of poaching gangs in Hampshire in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century – THE WALTHAM BLACKS who raided the Alice Holt Forest among other forests in the north of the county. The Waltham Blacks disguised themselves by blackening their faces and carried pistols. One such local man, known as Black Will and others were aided and abetted by the owner of the Fox alehouse at the Bourne.

The Bishop of Winchester's forest at Farnham Park was raided by masked men with guns in 1717 and twice in 1721, once having shot and wounded a keeper. One gang paraded their kill of 11 deer through the town on market day, shooting cattle, destroying and burning buildings and timber as they went. The troops were called out to restore order. Two of these men were sentenced to serve time, first in the pillory and then a year in prison and with a fine of £20.

An Act of Parliament was passed in 1723, known as THE BLACK ACT or THE WALTHAM BLACK ACT which imposed 50 capital crimes including stealing deer, robbing warrens or fishponds, cutting down trees, pulling down hop vines or blackening one's face.

Despite this threat of a death penalty, the Fox alehouse gang with Black Will in 1730 went to Farnham Park armed with "Guns, a mathook and other weapons with a full intent to break into the Lodge". This was where the Park Keeper had taken a dog and other goods, claimed during a raid on Black Will's house.

DANIEL DEFOE refers to Farnham's poachers being unkind to the bishops who had always been 'good benefactors to the town'.

### **HALE - pubs, sewerage and annexation 1900-1908**

**Sources:** 'Edwardian Farnham' by Ewbank Smith

(Pages 25-26)

"Possessing twice its quota for pubs, Farnham's contribution to the national problem was generous..... What was left after the hoppers and brewerymen had completely satisfied themselves as to the quality of the brew was distributed between the town's forty-five pubs....."

With some 300-odd years of pickling in the stuff behind them, Farnham folk had acquired the habit of getting quietly and unobtrusively tight without making much of a nuisance of themselves.....The arrival of the soldiers of the Queen at Aldershot Camp in the mid-1880s changed all that. Standards fell. SHOCKING SCENES OF DRUNKENNESS AND DEBAUCHERY, to quote one writer, WERE ENACTED IN THE TOWN. Drunk-in-charge –of-horse-and-cart charges proliferated before the Bench. **The natives of Hale**, spoiling for a fight, swarmed down across the Park to engage troops in running battle....." [Ref: 6 Hale]

**“SOME MEMORIES” by Christine Stevens. SOURCE; 1970 Farnham Museum Society Newsletter Vol.2 (Research – rebellion, disorder – 21<sup>st</sup> century link to banking crisis)**

[ Christine Stevens (a namesake or relative of James Stevens?) was living at Clermont, in Nutshell Lane at the time of writing and known to the Cooper family at No 4]

“James Stevens, born in 1773, married Eliza Watts Wilkinson, 1804. James was a wool merchant and hop grower, and lived all his life in Farnham.

As was the custom he went to sell his hops at the famous Weyhill fair in Hampshire, riding over with his samples. One year, on his return journey (with purchase money for his hops) some men jumped out at him, trying to seize his bridle. James put spurs to his horse and rode off. The next year he took pistols with him, and this became his habit. His neighbours, knowing this, came to him and asked him if he would take their cash with him. After a while this became a heavy responsibility and so he determined to start a bank, which he did, the **first bank in Farnham**, but linked to a London bank.

All was well until the “Forties” when all over the country there were **banking risks** and some failed.

Stevens heard there would be a run on the bank one Monday morning. He knew it was secure financially, but a sudden run could not be met without more cash from London, which could not arrive before Monday. To meet the crisis he called on one or two friends, explained the position and they promised to help.

By the Monday he had several sacks filled with corn with gold sovereigns on top and sure enough, there was a queue outside the bank on Monday morning. The doors were open as usual, and as the clients applied for their money, the clerks ladled it out. Then one of his friends came along and said, in effect, “No need to panic, there seems plenty here, I shall leave mine alone.” Others followed and the crisis was averted. Later the cash came down from London.

Shortly after this, Stevens maintained he was a hop grower, not a banker, and sold his bank to a Mr. Knight, and it became ‘**Knight’s Bank**’, which was built on the east side of Castle Street at the bottom, a very tall building with high chimneys. When pulled down one (or more?) of the chimneys was re-erected at the Bush Hotel.

Mr. Knight was the father of **Mr. John Henry Knight**, the inventor of one of the first motor cars, now at the Montagu Motor Museum at Beaulieu.

On another occasion, **Bishop Sumner** incurred the dislike of the Farnham townsfolk (probably because he reproved them for their conduct on ‘Hop Sunday’). They therefore determined to burn his effigy on Nov. 5<sup>th</sup>.

“What, burn the Bishop! This will never do!” said Stevens. He then approached a carter and asked him if he would like to earn a sovereign. This he was very willing to do, so at night, the effigy was stolen, put in a farm cart covered with straw and driven into the stable yard of 62 Castle Street and there buried it in the garden. This effective measure is referred to in the life of Bishop Sumner.”

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**“MEMOIRS” - extracts from Louisa Gibson’s memoirs** (Mrs Gibson (1817-1899) was the daughter of **Bishop Sumner**, the last of the Prince Bishops)

**Source: Farnham Museum Society Newsletter 1976**

“I must not forget the events of 1830, the year of the **Agricultural Riots**. Farnham shared in the excitement of the country. For some reason or other Bishops were extremely unpopular. The Bishop of Bristol’s Palace was burnt down. The maid who waited on my sister Sophy and myself used to tell us all the gossip she could hear as to what was said of my father, and how they threatened to burn down the Castle at Farnham.

One evening while my father and mother were at dinner a message was brought in that there was a crowd outside the Castle gates and they wished to speak to my father. Mr. Jacob and a brother of my mother’s, my uncle Robert, were there, and they at once got up and prepared to go out. I think one or two of the menservants went with them. My father went first, followed by this small bodyguard, and as soon as they had passed through the lodge the gates were shut behind them. The mob was civil, my father spoke kindly to them, and they soon dispersed, much to the relief of my mother and all of us.

Watchmen patrolled the terrace all night. I remember looking out of the windows to see them, rather enjoying the excitement and feeling as if we were living in a story.

An effigy was made of my father and was hung up in the market place. It was to be burned at night, but a young man, **William Stevens**, who lived in Castle Street, went very early in the morning, cut it down and carried it to his father’s house, hacked it in pieces and buried all in the garden. All day long the house was besieged by people coming to ask for the effigy. He always answered the bell himself and saying “It is cut up and buried” in answer to their demand, shut the door in their faces.

By degrees this excitement calmed down about us, but there were incendiary fires for some months longer in many places, the labourers being extremely indignant at machines being introduced which enabled the farmers to employ fewer men.”