

Richard Preston

### Clement Hoare and the Shirley Vineyard, 1838-44

Clement Hoare was a viticulturist, social reformer and visionary. He was baptized at Sidlesham – a parish in Sussex halfway between Chichester and Selsey – on 4 October 1789, the second son of Joseph and Elizabeth (*nee* Stedman) who had married at Sidlesham on 11 September 1787. He may have been named after his maternal grandfather, Clement Stedman. Joseph and Elizabeth had four other sons, all baptized at Sidlesham: Joseph (baptized 7 October 1787), William (5 January 1794), James (18 September 1796) and George (26 August 1798). Joseph *pere* was a blacksmith, a calling followed by his eldest and youngest sons: Joseph who remained in Sidlesham all his life and George who was to move along the coast to Bosham. Joseph senior was dead by 1805. His widow lived in Sidlesham until her death in September 1838. Clement was apprenticed on 17 July 1805 to John Taylor, a loriner (maker of small iron ware, particularly bits for horse's bridles and spurs) of London. Presumably unsuited to the work, he later became a country schoolmaster, running a boys' day school in Sidlesham. He was remembered as "a 'fellow of infinite jest', an agreeable, jovial, and well-informed man" (recollections of Charles Roach Smith, apprenticed to Chichester chemist John Follett between 1822 and 1827: *Gentleman's Magazine*, April 1866). Clement was an active supporter of the Chichester Mechanics' Institution from its founding in 1829, lecturing to the parent body on Geography (August 1829) and the Equation of Time ("a subject which although difficult and abstruse, he rendered clear and intelligible by the mode in which he treated it": *Hampshire Telegraph*, 14 March 1836) and on Astronomy (March 1837) and the cultivation of the vine (October 1835) to branch institutions at Selsey and Bognor. He published, as a single folio, *An account of all the solar eclipses that will be visible in England until the year 1999, etc* [1825?] and in 1829 the more substantial *Orthographical exercises, with a brief introduction to the study of grammar etc*. An aim of the latter was to simplify the complexities of grammar as it was taught.

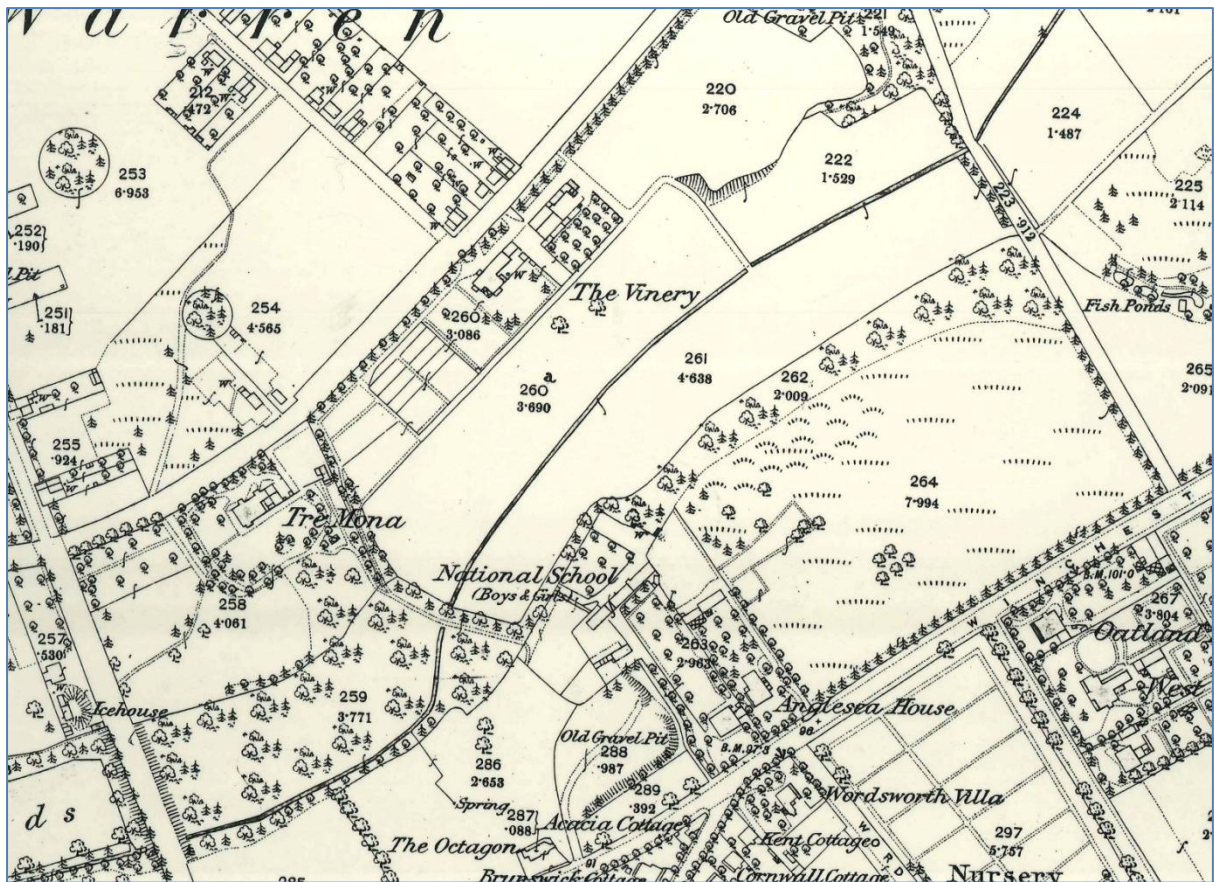
Although perhaps a polymath by instinct, it is for his dedicated, almost compulsive work on the culture of the vine that Clement Hoare is best remembered. The open air cultivation of the vine was a neglected branch of horticulture in the early nineteenth century. Hoare believed that with proper management it could be reinstated to what it had been – in his historical interpretation – in Roman and medieval times: a staple crop of the southern counties. Between 1825 and 1830 he conducted a systematic series of scientific experiments on vines of various ages to ascertain a system of pruning that would guarantee the optimum yield of grapes. The mathematical precision required clearly fits in with his interest in solar eclipses and the nature of time. The problem was overcropping. The answer was what he called 'long or renewed pruning', cutting out nine-tenths of the current year's shoots and all those of the preceding years so that the vines mature just as many grapes as they can possibly ripen and no more. This was a revolutionary approach to plant physiology and horticultural practice, "so different from what is required for other fruit trees that few persons have the courage to attempt it" (quoted in John Claudius Loudon, *The suburban horticulturist*, 1842). The results, including tables of scales, were published in June 1835 as *A practical treatise on the*

*cultivation of the grape vine upon open walls*. For the best results, its principles were to be followed without the slightest deviation.

The southern downs around Chichester were ideal locations to test the new practices. Hoare was one of the founders of the Chichester Society for encouraging the growth of out-door grapes, *aliter* the Society for Cultivating the Vine in the Open Air. Annual grape shows – in the Anchor (1833, 1838), the Dolphin (1835, 1836) and the Swan (1837) – reinforced a commonality of interest, excited competition between growers, helped to disseminate best practice (prize winners were under an obligation to answer any questions put to them) and above all promoted the views of its inspiring genius. An influential and energetic coterie of society members grew around Hoare. William Charles Newland, mayor of Chichester in 1824 and 1841, a city magistrate from 1836, pro-Reform Whig, political ally of the locally dominant Lennox family and chairman of the West Sussex Agricultural Society, was one of the society's co-founders. His latent interest in wine growing, developed during travels in Spain, France and Portugal, had been released by hearing one of Hoare's lectures. It was Newland who encouraged Hoare to publish the *Treatise*, "decidedly [according to Hoare] against his own wish" (*Hampshire Advertiser*, 5 November 1836). William Mason and his son William Hayley Mason, booksellers and printers, were part publishers (with Longmans) of the *Treatise*. Two other active members, Henry Watson and John Elliott, we shall meet later. The society attracted more than a local clientele. Visitors from Portsmouth, Havant, Southampton, Cheltenham and London were noted in 1837 and 1838. The meetings were reported in the metropolitan press and in the monthly *Gardener's Magazine* published by John Claudius Loudon, whose views on cottage gardens heavily resonated with those of his spiritual protégé. Hoare's personal influence grew correspondingly. In November 1837 he claimed to have inspected "not less than 2000 vines" on the south coast between Brighton and Southampton (*Hampshire Advertiser*, 25 November 1837). A year later he claimed to have visited "more than one thousand grape vines lately" within a forty-mile radius of Chichester in Sussex and Hampshire. The *Treatise*, outrageously puffed by Loudon, was a bestseller. The first edition had sold out within a year. By November 1836 Hoare was drowned by "numerous applications which he could not supply" and 300 copies of a second edition were already engaged by Longmans, now sole publisher (*Hampshire Advertiser*, 5 November 1836). The second edition was published in February 1837, followed by a third in July 1841 and a fourth in 1845. The first American edition was published in Boston in 1837.

An underlying theme of Clement Hoare's work was that the vine is the poor man's fruit, its cultivation a potential salve to the apparently unyielding poverty of the vast mass of the agricultural poor. He saw the ubiquitous rural cottage as a source of economic strength, arguing that every moderately-sized dwelling house, having a garden and a little walling attached to it, could with ease be made to produce annually a quarter of a ton of grapes, with sufficient space remaining for the production of other fruit. The crop could be worth half the amount of the cottage's rental. Rural poverty was confronted daily by Hoare as a village schoolmaster and he had long addressed its cure. In 1818 he founded the Sidlesham Benefit Society, destined to become one of the largest friendly societies in the district. In 1837 it had a membership of 103, of whom 80 were agricultural labourers. Its annual meeting that year

attracted a reporter from the *Hampshire Advertiser* (13 May 1837). The following month Hoare gave evidence before the Select Committee on the Poor Law Amendment Act on the operation of the new act in the Westhampnett Union (which included Sidlesham). Questioned at length by Lord John Russell and Sir James Graham, he navigated a narrow line between support for the principles of the 1834 act and condemnation of its practical effects. On the one hand the act was a force for moral good and sobriety. He particularly welcomed the subsequent closure of one of the beer shops in Sidlesham. On the other hand he saw the abolition of out-door relief as a major cause of the growing indebtedness of the rural poor. A penny clothing society, with Hoare as secretary, was established in Sidlesham in 1836 to address the needs of this new underclass.



Section of the OS 1:2500 sheet 65:2, 1883 (surveyed 1866-7) showing the area north of Winchester Road in Shirley

Shirley Vineyard was the physical expression of Clement Hoare’s philosophy. It was an answer to those sceptics – and there were many – who doubted that vines could be grown on a commercial scale in England and who believed that his method of pruning was incompatible with established horticultural practice. The vineyard was also to be a centre of research, refining and extending his hitherto necessarily small-scale experiments in Sussex. The location on Shirley Common was in itself provocative, a confirmation of his assertion in the opening pages of the *Treatise* that “there are many thousands of acres of poor land, that are of little value in an agricultural point of view, but on which vines would flourish and produce abundant crops of grapes and yield a most profitable return”. The Shirley adventure

was announced by a bald statement in the *Hampshire Independent*, 20 October 1838 that Hoare has taken twenty acres of land on Shirley Common to form an extensive vineyard. The site was the north-western slope of a gravel bank above the Hollybrook, land which until now had supported “little else but heath, dwarf furze, and brambles” (John Claudius Loudon, *Gardener’s Magazine*, November 1843, p 600). Its transformation into a terraced vineyard, with low brick walls rising one above the other, took over a year. Peat, sand and gravel were taken from what used to be the Upper Pond on Shirley Common (*Hampshire Advertiser*, 30 November 1839) and a reference in the same newspaper, 31 July 1841 suggests that Hoare had his own brickyard in Shirley. The initial preparation was by unemployed labourers: a form of work creation in times of severe economic distress. A dinner for friends, builders, tradesmen and workmen held at the Yeoman in East Street, Southampton on 15 November 1839 was addressed by Richard Andrews. Not yet a town councillor, he was nevertheless one of the leading businessmen in the town and a political bedfellow of Clement Hoare (both were liberals). He looked forward to a time in the near future when Shirley Common would, “instead of being barren, become fruitful, and be as much a source of attraction to the inhabitants of Southampton, as their railroad and other public works”. Clement Hoare struck a more defensive note, pointing to “a succession of adverse seasons” since beginning the work and the prejudice which in the present age invariably obstructs all “projects for the useful application of scientific discoveries”.

The architect for the works was John Elliott. He was an architect, surveyor and civil engineer in Chichester. His previous commissions included Chichester Corn Exchange (1832), the rebuilt church of St Thomas à Becket, Pagham (1836), greatly enlarged workhouses at Westhampnett, Thakeham and Pulborough (1835) and the east wing of Goodwood House for the 5<sup>th</sup> Duke of Richmond (1838-9). He was a past curator of the Chichester Mechanics’ Institution, secretary of the Chichester Philosophical and Literary Society and a former member of the Chichester Grape Society. At the society’s 1838 general meeting he had advocated a direct rail link between Chichester and London so that grapes, “soon from their extensive cultivation here to be an article of commerce”, could be speedily transported to the metropolis (*Hampshire Advertiser*, 17 November 1838). He was a strong believer in better housing for the rural poor. He was also architect for Hoare’s new house above the vineyard. Identified as Vine Hill House in the 1841 census and as Vine House in the 1843 *Post Office directory of Southampton and neighbourhood*, it was more commonly known as the Vinery. Designed in the classical style, it comprised three sitting rooms, four principal bedrooms and three large attics. A conservatory wrapped around the southern and western elevations. A photograph, dated c.1925, is reproduced in A G K Leonard, *More stories of Southampton streets*, 1989, page 109. Further material on John Elliott – including his bankruptcy in October 1843 following his losses as builder of Christ Church, Worthing and his later work in Southampton – can be seen online on the forthcoming *A-Z of Southampton’s History*.

The first vine was planted on 25 April 1840 (*Hampshire Independent*, 2 May 1840). The 1841 census sees Clement Hoare at home with Elizabeth Hoare (c.30 years old and so far unidentified) and his 18-year old nephew Charles Hoare as “assistant”. The son of Joseph Hoare (a fellow vine enthusiast), Charles was later to return to Sidlesham as a gardener and

nurseryman. His younger brother Clement Hoare (baptized 10 February 1818) succeeded Clement senior as head of the day school in Sidlesham. Sales catalogues of the Vinery suggest an enviable lifestyle, with “lofty four-post bedsteads, furnitures and bedding, mahogany wing wardrobe, chests of drawers, dressing and wash commodes, with marble tops, toilet glasses, handsome Brussels carpets, solid rosewood couches, chairs, loo, card and occasional stand and quarto tables, chimney glass in ornamental frame, large size globes; suites of Damask window curtains and fittings, and general assortment of useful furniture” (*Hampshire Advertiser*, 10 February 1844). To this can be added the cultural refinement of a 6-octave cabinet piano-forte and 50 volumes of “valuable books” (*Hampshire Independent*, 23 March 1844). Publicity was an essential part of Clement’s programme. He gave a series of three lectures on the cultivation of the vine to Winchester Mechanics’ Institution in March/April 1840, with the rallying cry that “no spot in England possessed higher local advantages, both as regards its latitude and the nature of its soil” (*Hampshire Independent*, 28 March 1840). This was followed by two lectures to Southampton Mechanics’ Institution in December 1841, the latter to “a very crowded and respectable audience” (*Hampshire Independent*, 11 December 1841). John Claudius Loudon visited Shirley vineyard in late autumn 1843 (‘Hints for the improvement of the town of Southampton, with a short notice of the vineyard at Shirley’ in *Gardener’s Magazine*, November 1843). He was in Southampton to promote designs for a new general cemetery. It was a bad experience. The plans were poorly received and ultimately rejected. He was confined as an invalid for most of his month-long stay in miserable lodgings in Bernard Street. The trip to Shirley was one of his few explorations beyond the High Street and the shoreline. The vineyard – “a very interesting place” - was an oasis of hope in a desert of despair and disillusion. “The principle of the concentration of the sap is carried by Mr Hoare to an extreme degree; and it will not be surprising to us if he effects a great revolution in grape-growing, both in the open air and under glass” (*ibid*, pp 599-600). He found that White Muscadine and Black Hamburgh were the two principal types of grape grown. Loudon’s ill-humour probably accounts for his skewed aside on the architecture of Southampton that “with the exception of the buildings at the railway station [by William Tite], and the villa of Mr Hoare at Shirley, we really cannot refer to one as a specimen of good taste” (*ibid*, p 595).

This was a valedictory accolade. The dismemberment of the vineyard began in February 1844 with the first of a series of enforced sales under execution of the Sheriff of Hampshire. It was an untimely end for the auspices had initially been positive. The vineyard followed the essential criteria laid down in the *Treatise*. It faced south-east, was on dry, porous soil and was sheltered from the biting winds by a pine wood planted on the opposite bank. It was at the centre of a fast-growing semi-urban population, the new belt of conifers praised, in patrician style, by Loudon as “shutting out the rising village” of Shirley. The original purpose was to showcase the Sidlesham experiments, to show “by example the capabilities of the grape vine on open walls, when cultivated in conformity to the principles laid down in his *Treatise*” (preface to the third edition, dated Shirley Vineyard 1 July 1841). A nursery was established for the propagation of those varieties best adapted for the open wall and for glass. It was hoped that this would be a much-needed source of revenue. “Strong healthy vine plants of vigorous growth, warranted true of their respective sorts,” ready for delivery “from 2s 6d

to 10s each, according to their age” were advertised in the *Hampshire Advertiser*, 16 July 1842. A catalogue of 2 September 1844 listed 48 varieties, four times the number advertised from his Sidlesham nurseries in July 1836. However, a continuing programme of experimentation sapped whatever financial resources Hoare possessed. At Sidlesham he had concentrated on the relatively straight-forward cultivation of vines on open walls. At Shirley he diversified into the more expensive, and socially more exclusive, cultivation of vines under glass. The 1842 nursery advertisement, as we have seen, refers to both types of cultivation. Loudon observed “glazed pits, and larger glazed structures” in the vineyard (*Gardener’s Magazine*, November 1843) and glass lights and pits were amongst the assets auctioned in November 1844. More problematic were experiments in progress when Loudon visited the nursery to grow vines in a mass of dry materials to the exclusion of soil. This entailed construction of rows of round hollow brick columns around which the vines could be trained. It was a bold, long-term experiment involving sizable set-up costs, but with potentially large rewards: “he flatters himself that this will ultimately be one of the greatest improvements ever yet introduced into the horticultural practice of this country” (*Gardener’s Magazine*, November 1843, p 600). Hoare was bankrupt before the results of the trials could be made public. *A descriptive account of an improved method of planting and managing the roots of grape vines* was published by Longmans in July 1844, five months after the first enforced sale of his assets. Publication was financed by Hoare himself (*Oxford dictionary of national biography*), indicative perhaps of a lack of faith on the part of Longmans. Its appearance “at once met the condemnation it merited” (*Cottage Gardener*, 2, 1849, quoted in *ODNB*).

Clement Hoare left Shirley in April 1845. His vineyard was already but a memory. “All the notoriously valuable Vine Plants” had been sold under an execution of the Sheriff of Hampshire at auction on 4 and 5 December 1844, together with the “excellent household furniture, house fixtures, Glazed Sliding Slashes, Pony, Bay Horse, powerful Cart Horse, four-wheel chaise, light and rave carts, bricks, brick-making implements, sand, gravel, *etc*” (*Hampshire Independent*, 30 November 1844). This was a stay of execution following postponement of the original auction scheduled for 28 March and advertised in the *Hampshire Advertiser*, 10 February 1844. The Vinery itself, late in the occupation of Clement Hoare, was put up for sale in early 1845, together with its walled and kitchen gardens, excellent pasture land, stables, *etc*. Its location was its selling point: “well calculated for a respectable family desirous of establishing themselves in an agreeable and highly healthy neighbourhood; indeed, few situations in the county of Hants, so abounding with beautiful scenery, can compete with it, either for an invalid requiring a dry and invigorating atmosphere free from a too piercing cold, or for one who delights in beautiful prospects” (*Hampshire Advertiser*, 18 January 1845). The Vinery was on the market again in December 1852. Its grounds were now a mixed allotment, supporting five cows, two sows and a boar, a pony and Cochin China fowls and planted with potatoes, mangel wurzels, swedes and cabbages (*Hampshire Independent*, 18 and 25 December 1852).

Clement Hoare died on 18 August 1849 at Ponsonby Terrace, Vauxhall, aged 60 years: “heart-subdued he was sunk before his time to the grave” (*Cottage Gardener*, *ibid*). It is

possible that he had moved to London to be near two of his relatives: his brother James, a tailor in Manchester Square (just north of Oxford Street), and his sister-in-law Susan, widow of William who had been a tailor and draper in Henrietta Street, Covent Garden. Clement had been one of two trustees of William's will, dated 7 June 1838 and proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury. The co-trustees were charged with carrying on the drapery business "for the sole benefit and advantage" of the widow. Clement Hoare was buried in St Paul's churchyard, Covent Garden.

Interest in Shirley vineyard was briefly resurrected in the mid/late 1860s. The historical status of the English vineyard was then a matter of lively debate. Those who argued for the vitality of English viticulture in medieval times were led by Charles Roach Smith, a controversial but influential archaeologist (see entry in *Oxford dictionary of national biography*) who in 1861 had established a small vineyard in Kent to prove that vines could flourish in the English climate. The untimely failure of perhaps the only significant nineteenth-century English vineyard was a serious obstacle to those on Roach Smith's side of the argument. In an attempt to prove the viability of Hoare's experiments, Roach Smith visited the largely-hidden remains of Shirley vineyard in the autumn of 1865. He was accompanied by J Adkins Barton of Park Lodge, Bedford Place. Conversations with those who had known Hoare reassured Roach Smith that the reasons for the failure were specific and not endemic. He concluded that Hoare had "invested a large sum of money (chiefly borrowed) in buying land, in building, and in other expensive speculations; and before the Vineyard could make him any adequate returns he was 'sold up'" (*Collectanea Antiqua*, volume 6, 1868). Roach Smith interpreted this as a vindication of his argument, although in contravention of the current historical orthodoxy. "Mr Hoare failed, but his vineyard did not fail" (*Gentleman's Magazine*, April 1866).

It would be misleading to end on an insular note. The South Australian wine-growing industry owed much to the promotional work of Henry Watson, former Chichester agent to the South Australian Commissioners and a colleague of Hoare in the Chichester Grape Society, who had emigrated to Adelaide in 1839. Watson set up as a commission agent with his brother-in-law John Barton Hack, a former Chichester resident who had moved to South Australia three years earlier and is credited with planting the first vines in the colony at Chichester Gardens in north Adelaide. A lecture by Henry Watson on the cultivation of the grape vine before the South Australian Literary Association on 9 October 1840 could, with geographical references and priorities changed, have been given before the Chichester Grape Society. He spoke of the social benefits to the country labourer and the mechanic of training vines on the walls of their unwhitewashed cottages. He offered to subsidise the import of vine cuttings from other colonies and to pay a premium for the best bunch of grapes grown in the colony. But, above all, he eulogized the work of "my preceptor", Clement Hoare, whose experiments on the fruit-bearing capabilities of the vine he saw as the basis of the colony's nascent wine-growing industry (*South Australian Register*, 10 October 1840). Newspapers in both South Australia and New South Wales carried positive articles on the horticultural precepts of Clement Hoare up to the 1870s.