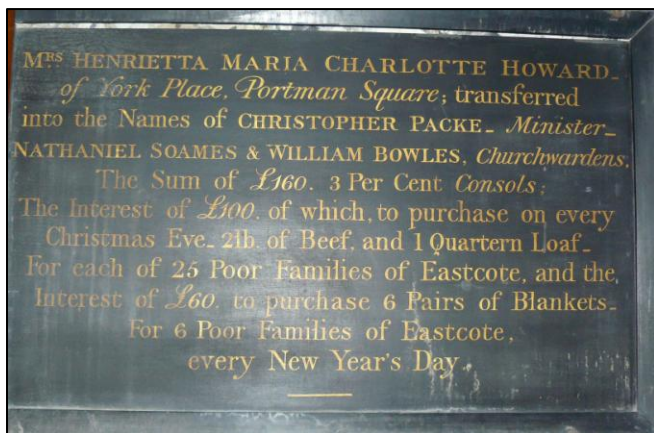


Why did Henrietta Maria Charlotte Howard of Portman Square create a charity for the poor of Eastcote?

by Eileen M. Bowlt

A board hanging in the tower at St Martin's Church, Ruislip reads:

'Mrs Henrietta Maria Charlotte Howard of York Place, Portman Square transferred into the names of Christopher Packe, Minister, Nathaniel Soames & William Bowles, Churchwardens, the sum of £160 3 per cent consols the interest of £100 of which, to be used to purchase on every Christmas Eve 2lb beef and 1 quartern loaf for each of 25 poor families of Eastcote, and the interest of £60 to purchase 6 pairs of Blankets for 6 poor families of Eastcote every New Year's Day.'
(A quartern loaf weighs 4 pounds)



St Martin's Church Plaque

This became classified by the Charity Commissioners as one of the non-ecclesiastical charities relating to the parish of Ruislip in 1897 and since 1993 has been included in the Ruislip Combined Charity.

Why was a lady living in Portman Square, Marylebone, interested in the poor of Eastcote? Why, one wonders does the board in St Martin's give no date for this gift?

Christopher Packe was vicar 1834-78. Nathaniel Soames and William Bowles were churchwardens together in 1847 and 1848.ⁱ As it turns out, I found that Henrietta died in September 1847 (see Fig. below), so the charity probably dates from 1848, although Churchwardens' accounts for that period make no reference to any of the parish charities.

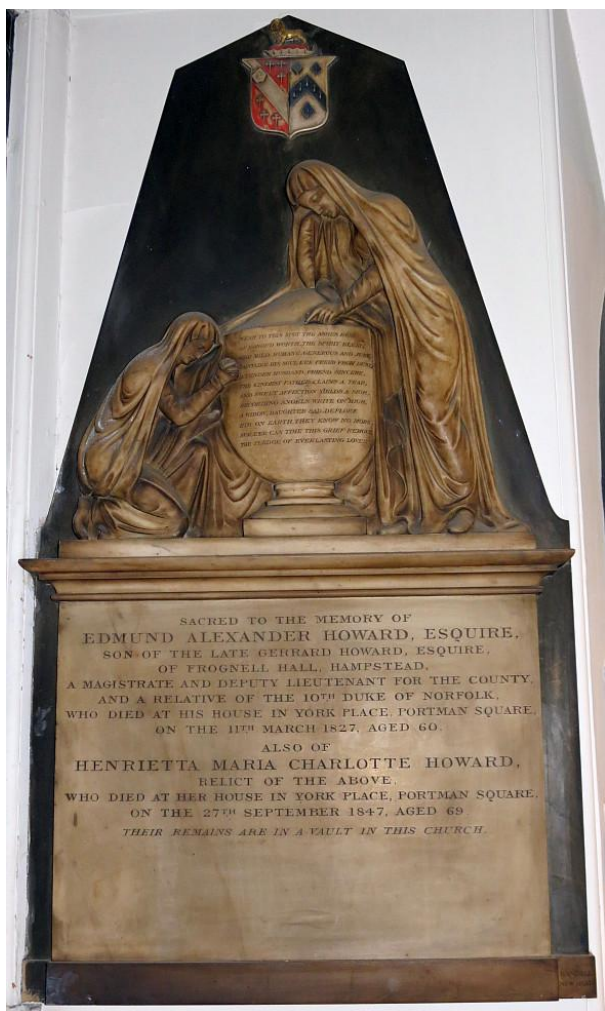
The Howards

A church is always a good place to find information about people, so I started with St Marylebone Church on Marylebone Road, which was built between 1813-1. Inside there is a handsome monument to Edmund Alexander Howard Esq and 'his relict', Henrietta Maria Charlotte Howard. He died 11 March 1827 aged 60 and she having survived him by 20 years, died 27 September 1847 aged 69. There is a great deal of other information on the monument mainly about the husband. He was son of Gerhard Howard of Frognell Hall, Hampstead and 'a relative of the 10th Duke of Norfolk'. Howard is the family name of the Dukes of Norfolk. The holder of the title is the premier Duke in the English Peerage and Earl Marshal of England which is why Edmund or possibly Henrietta and their only child, wanted the relationship mentioned on his tomb. He, himself had been a magistrate and Deputy Lieutenant of the County of Middlesex.

Above the plaque which exhibits these facts, is an urn upon which a eulogy is inscribed, with two female figures, presumably his widow and daughter, leaning upon it. See monument below.

An unproved will

Armed with the date of Henrietta's death, her willⁱⁱ was easy to find at the National Archives. It was signed and witnessed on the 16 April 1847. The daughter, Charlotte Rebecca Howard was named as sole executrix, but for whatever reason she never sought probate. Owing to this omission the Eastcote charity may not have been activated until after the daughter's will had been proved in February 1855. However, Henrietta's own will casts some light upon local connections. It reveals that Henrietta, in her lifetime, had given £100 to the Minister and Churchwardens of the Parish of Pinner and now directed that £60 in 3% consols should be added, to be expended by providing blankets to 6 poor families every New Year's Day and £50 to Rev William Burrow, Curate of Pinner.



St Marylebone Church Monument
(© Bob Speel)

She also directed that a further £100 should be given after her decease, to 'the Minister and Churchwardens of Eastcote near Pinner', for beef and a quartern loaf for 25 families of Eastcote and 6 pair of blankets' every New Years Day.

Eastcote was not a parish in its own right and the clergy referred to must be those of St Martin's. It looks as though Henrietta knew more about Pinner than Ruislip. She also seems to have been in easy circumstances financially. Her husband's will shows that this was indeed the case.

Edmund Alexander Howard's six page willⁱⁱⁱ was signed 30 Jan 1822. Probate was granted 27 March 1827, some 16 days after his death. Henrietta Maria Charlotte Howard was his sole executrix. He turns out to have been a man of considerable property situated in several of the better areas of late 18th century London and in the City and Southwark as well. He left all his messuages, tenements, ground and hereditaments in the Borough of Southwark to his wife for her natural life 'and immediately after her decease I

give and devise the same... to my daughter, Charlotte Rebecca (by my said wife who was formerly named Henrietta Charlotte Shaw, spinster) for and during the term of her natural life.' Further property also went to his wife – leases of property in Kensington Square, the house in York Square where they lived, sums of money in Stock Government Security and an annuity of £36 for her own absolute benefit.

He stipulated that all premises left to his daughter 'should not be liable to debts or intermeddling of any husband or husbands with whom she may hereafter happen to marry.' He set out the succession of the property from his daughter down to her seventh son, followed in default of sons by the eldest daughters. Any sons of his daughter who came into possession of the Southwark property were to obtain a Royal Grant and permission to take the name Howard. He was clearly trying to establish a Howard succession. His daughter was also to have various freehold properties, in Warwick Lane, Cannon Street, Wood Street and Cheapside, Leicester Square and Manchester Street, Manchester Square, 'also my freehold estate at Pinner.' So here is the Pinner connection. It is a little unfortunate that this elaborate planning came to nothing because his daughter never married.

The Pinner connection

I am grateful to Patricia Clarke, Pinner historian, for the following information.

1acre 1rood 26perches of land where St Luke's Catholic Church now stands near the junction of Love Lane and Bridge Street, was acquired by a John Shaw in April 1808 through a rather roundabout inheritance, and mortgaged the same day to Edmund Alexander Howard of Kensington Square for six months. He had married Henrietta Charlotte Shaw at St Clement Danes on 15 June 1785^{iv}, so it seems likely that John Shaw was a relative of hers. John Shaw surrendered the land to Charlotte Rebecca Howard, spinster of York Place St Marylebone in April 1810^v. I have not been able to find any information about her date of birth or baptism, but she is likely to have been born in the early 1780s as it turns out that she was illegitimate, and would probably have been in her twenties at the time of the gift. Significantly the building on the land was called Norfolk Cottage, another reference to the Ducal family.

The land was described in the surrender as ‘my messuage situate in the bottom end of Pinner Town late in the occupation of John Scott and the edifice called the Meeting House which stands upon the Lord’s waste’. So it was Edmund and Henrietta’s daughter who owned the land in Pinner. Miss Howard enfranchised the property in 1841, when it was said to have been empty for a long time. She was reported as wishing to replace it with 21 almshouses for the widows of officers who had served in the Royal Navy, British Army or of clergymen.^{vi} She allocated £47,000 for this purpose in her will of 1854^{vii}.

Unfortunately her will was challenged after her death in 1854 by Howard claimants and a case in Chancery was heard, in January 1856.^{viii} Had they not read ‘Bleak House’? There was also an Inquisition undertaken by the House of Commons in 1857^{ix}. Proof (undisclosed) that Charlotte was born illegitimate was brought and as she died unmarried she had no heirs of her body. The costs of the Chancery hearing were ordered to be taken out of her personal account, leaving insufficient for the payment of all her legacies. Money was found for the Poor of Pinner and the Blind Poor of Marylebone, but only three almshouses were built.

Henrietta and her daughter were both clearly of a benevolent disposition. Henrietta’s benevolence led to the foundation of Mrs Howard’s Bread Charity^x at Pinner as well as the one at Ruislip Church for the Eastcote poor. Charlotte Rebecca, writing her will, proposed a charity for the Blind of St Marylebone as well as the Pinner almshouses.

Oddities

It is slightly odd, but perhaps understandable before registration of births was introduced in 1837, how imprecise people seem to have been about ages in the 18th and 19th centuries. Perhaps rather less fuss was made of children’s birthdays. Edmund Alexander Howard was baptised 20 January 1764 at St Paul’s Covent Garden^{xi} and therefore must have been at least 63 when he died in March 1827. His monument gives his age as 60. More remarkably his widow is said on the monument to have died at the age of 69 in 1847, but as she was born in January 1763 and baptised at St John’s, Hampstead,^{xii} she must have been over 80. Also if the daughter was born before the marriage of her parents in 1785 she must have been about 70 at the time of her death in 1854, but documents mention her being about 60. The main puzzle is why the parents left their wedding so late. Could one or other of them have been entangled in another relationship?

Results of research

I now know a good deal about Henrietta Maria Charlotte Howard, but do not really know why she chose to favour the poor of Eastcote. I can only suggest that while going to and fro around Norfolk Cottage, Henrietta came across poverty in Eastcote and decided to do something about it.

ⁱ London Metropolitan Archives: DRO19 /B1/1, Churchwardens’ Accounts 1839-191

ⁱⁱ TNA Prob 11 2200/290

ⁱⁱⁱ TNA Prob 11 1723/ 349

^{iv} Ancestry

^v LMA: Acc 0076/1440

^{vi} LMA: 0076/1963

^{vii} TNA: Prob 11/2206/182

^{viii} LMA:DRO8/F5/6/3

^{ix} TNA C217 11 22

^x DRO8/F5/6

^{xi} Ancestry

^{xii} Ancestry