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**Some Account of Sir Robert atkyns the Younger and Other-  
Members of the Atkyns Family**

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SOME ACCOUNT OF  
SIR ROBERT ATKYNS THE YOUNGER  
AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE ATKYNS FAMILY.

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THE bi-centenary of the publication of the first History of Gloucestershire seems an appropriate time for some record in our *Transactions* of the author of *The Ancient and Present State of Glostershire*, which was published in 1712, a few months after his death. During the past two hundred years everyone in search of matter relating to the history of the County of Gloucester has been indebted to the industry and research of Sir Robert Atkyns, while later writers have acknowledged his work as one of the principal sources of their own labours. The members of our Society, and contributors to the *Transactions*, should have special interest in one who helped so much in laying the foundation of the historical record of the county, and a further reason for bringing together the particulars now presented is the fact that the existing biographical notices of Sir Robert Atkyns the elder, and of his eldest son, vary considerably in their statements. The birthplace of neither is known, though the *Dictionary of National Biography* states that Sir Robert the elder was born in Gloucestershire. There appears to be no actual evidence for this, though the family connection with the county might make it very probable. A writer in the *Gentleman's Magazine* (1817, pt. i. p. 414) says that "Saperton was the birthplace, residence, and burial-place of Sir Robert Atkins the historian." As the Manor of Sapperton did not come into the family's possession until 1660, nor that of Nether Swell until 1659,



Robertus Atkins, Miles.

it does not seem probable that his birth occurred at either of these places.

Not only was Sir Robert Atkyns' History the first work of any importance which related to the history of Gloucestershire, but it was also one of the earliest of any of the County Histories. It may, perhaps, be said to have encouraged the production of similar works, for, while in the ninety years preceding its issue only seven histories of any note appeared, the ensuing seven years witnessed the publication of Morton's *Northamptonshire* (1712), Thoresby's *Leeds* (1715), Ashmole's *Berks* (1719), Aubrey's *Surrey* (1718-19), and Harris's *Kent* (1719), and to none of these do Atkyns' *Glostershire* yield in respect of matter or general format.

Some reference to Sir Robert's immediate ancestors may be of interest. The family for very many years had a close connexion with Gloucestershire, and included several members who were eminent in the legal profession. Sir Robert Atkyns the elder wrote that "he himself and his three immediate ancestors, having been of the profession for near two hundred years, and in judicial places, and (thro' the blessing of Almighty God) have prospered by it," and the History records that one of the name and family had presided in some of the Courts of Judicature above three hundred years. The record of the family is carried back to Thomas Atkyns, who lived in the reign of Edward III, and died in 1401. His son Richard followed the profession of the law in Monmouthshire. Sir Robert the younger's grandfather, Sir Edward (1587-1669), his paternal uncle, Sir Edward (1630-1698), and his father were Barons of the Exchequer, his uncle and father having been Chief Barons. The family seat was at Tuffley, near Gloucester, one David Atkyns, a prominent merchant of Chepstow, moving there some time before his death in 1552, and it continued in the possession of the family until 1660, when Sir Robert the elder purchased the Manor of Sapperton. A year earlier he had acquired the Manor of Nether Swell. Views of both these seats are included in the History. Richard Atkyns, Lord of the

Manors of Tuffley and Hempsted, and owner of other lands in Gloucestershire, who died November 8th, 1610, is returned in Smith's *Men and Armour for Gloucestershire* (1608) as furnishing one corslet. He was interred at Hempsted Church, where his wife had been buried in 1594. The monumental effigy to Richard Atkyns in the church is described in our *Transactions* (vol. xxxi. pp. 230-2). Sir Edward Atkyns, grandfather of Sir Robert the younger, was born in 1587 at Hensington, in Oxfordshire, and in due course was admitted a student of Lincoln's Inn, eventually becoming Governor of the Society and "autumn reader." Though appointed Baron of the Exchequer on October 7th, 1640, effect was not given to the royal patent, and the Commons, after demanding that "Mr. Serjeant Atkyns should be made justice of the King's Bench," created him, by their own order, to the post, which he held until August, 1648, when he was removed to the Court of Common Pleas. At the Restoration Sir Edward was again (1660) appointed a Baron of the Exchequer, and knighted. Sir Edward witnessed the Great Fire of London in 1666, and wrote a vivid description of it to Sir Robert, saying "how little some are concerned in this sad calamity." He died on October 9th, 1669, at Albury Hall, Hertfordshire. Sir Edward married twice, his first wife being Ursula, daughter of Sir Thomas Dacres, by whom he had two sons, Robert and Edward, both of whom are referred to below, and three daughters. By the second wife, Frances, daughter of John Berry, there was no issue.

Sir Edward Atkyns' elder son Robert, father of the county historian, is generally stated to have been born in 1621, though so far as I am aware the day is not given by any authority. Sir Robert's will, dated May 27th, 1708, gives, however, the exact date, and proves that 1620, and not 1621, was the year of his birth. In his opening sentences he says, "Being on the 29 Day of April last 1707 entred into the fourscore & eighth year of my age," thus indicating that he had completed 87 years, and consequently was born April 29th, 1620.

After education at one of the Universities, Robert, in accordance with family tradition, chose the law for his profession, was admitted to Lincoln's Inn in 1638, and called to the Bar in 1645. He was appointed Recorder of Evesham in 1659. Entering Parliament November 19th, 1656, as Member for Carmarthen County, he represented that constituency until the dissolution on February 4th, 1657-8, and also sat for East Looe from 1661 to 1673. Williams states that he sat for Evesham in the Parliament of 1659, and for Middlesex, 1680-1, while Foss states that he sat for Penryn in 1661, but none of these elections are recorded in the official *Return of Members*.

Sir Robert was made Knight of the Bath at the Coronation of Charles II, April 23rd, 1661, and about the same time appointed Recorder of Bristol. In April, 1672, he was appointed Judge of the Court of Common Pleas, but retired in May, 1679, owing, it is thought, to differences with the party in power. A contemporary speaks of him as a zealous promoter of the Revolution. He himself mentions several instances why he had given offence to those in authority. His attitude towards his opponents may be seen in his refusal to accept a sum of £500 which the King had sent him, for he replied to Lord Clifford, who had told him of the intention, "I thank you, I will not accept anything for my attendance in Parliament. I did take occasion upon this to advise my country that those who took pensions were not fit to be sent up to Parliament again." His political opinions appear to have brought him into further trouble, with the result that in December, 1682, he was forced to resign his Recordership of Bristol. In "An Account of Armes and Ammunition taken from dangerous and disaffected persons in 1684" the name of Sir Robert Atkyns, of Lower Swell, is given. From him were taken 6 swords, 1 hanger, 2 cases of pistols, 2 blunderbusses, 1 "fowling" gun, 1 birding gun. Sir Robert was associated with several prominent trials, notably of Lord Russell, and in 1695 of Sir William Williams, the Speaker of the House of

Commons, who was indicted for printing and publishing Dangerfield's libel upon the Duke of York, brother to Charles II. From information in Sir Robert Atkyns' letters Howell states that this case was argued by Sir Robert on behalf of Sir William Williams, he having volunteered his assistance in the conduct of this cause as one which concerned every Commoner in England, although he was at that time resident in the country, and had so completely retired from the profession that he was obliged to borrow a gown in which to appear in court. The State Papers record that in 1689 his opinion was sought by William III "as to how best this present convention may be turned into a Parliament." In April, 1689, he was appointed Judge of the Exchequer, this being the first promotion of judges made by King William and Queen Mary, and in October of the same year he became Speaker of the House of Lords, which post he held until March, 1693. In October, 1694, he retired from the Bench, owing, it is said, to his disgust at not being appointed Master of the Rolls, and spent the remainder of his life at Sapperton Hall, where he died February 12th, 1709-10, within a few weeks of his 90th birthday.

Sir Robert the younger, in his *Glostershire* (1712, p. 638) states that his father "dyed 1709 Aged 88 years," and nearly all biographical notices give this year, without indicating that it should be read as old style, viz. 1709-10. A codicil (the third) to Sir Robert the elder's will was signed by him on May 24th, 1709, proving conclusively that he did not die in February of that year. No one except Foster (*Alumni Oxon.*) gives the exact day correctly. The parish register at Sapperton records that Sir Robert "dyed February 12 and was buried February 23, 1709," i.e. 1709-10. Luttrell states that he died "aged about 90 . . . after about half an hour's indisposition."

Sir Robert married (1) Mary, daughter of Sir George Clerk, of Watford, in Northamptonshire, who died March 2nd, 1680-1, and (2) on April 28th, 1681, Anne, daughter of Sir Thomas

Dacres, who died October 9th, 1712. In the marriage licence Anne's age is given as 21, while Sir Robert must have been in in his 61st year.

Though it is stated in the *Dictionary of National Biography* and elsewhere that Sir Robert had only the one son, there is ample proof that this is an error. The first and best authority proves to be Sir Robert himself, for in his will he refers to "my late Son Edwd. Atkyns, and several of my children by my now wife Dame Ann Atkyns." A case relating to the Atkyns estates at Lower Swell, heard at the bar of the House of Lords, January 24th, 1758, contains much information relating to the family. Here, it may be noted, Sir Robert the younger is described as the eldest son and heir apparent to his father. Edward Atkyns is not mentioned, but in 1698 it is clear that he had a son, Robert, who is described as "nephew and heir-at-law" to Sir Robert the younger.

Le Neve's pedigree of Atkyns of Saperton (*Pedigrees of Knights*, Harleian Society, 1873) traces the family from David Atkyns, who died in 1552, to the grandchildren of Sir Robert Atkyns the elder, and in view of the general acceptance that Sir Robert the younger and Anne his half-sister were the only children, this pedigree is rather striking. The appendix to this paper includes entries from registers of four sons and three daughters, while Le Neve gives two more sons, one named Thomas.

Sir Robert, in his will described as "of Loverswell," owned considerable lands in Gloucestershire, including the Manors of Lower Swell, Sapperton, Pinbury, Cotes, and Daglingworth. He also owned lands in Middlesex. His interest in those living on his Gloucestershire estates is shown by provision being made by him for teaching poor children in Sapperton and Lower Swell "to read and say and answer to the Church Catechism and to do such work as they may be capable of in order to enable them in time to work for their living." He also left money for the benefit of Stow-in-the-Wold, "to be employed for the setting the Poor to work when there shall be a workhouse

set apart for that purpose," stipulating that the workhouse must be erected within two years of his death.

In *Gloucestershire Notes and Queries* (vol. iii. p. 513) is a copy of an interesting letter, written in 1691, from Sir Robert to his friend Mr. Lysons, in which he refers to investments in lands. He says he would rather "deal for large farmes well tenanted and in repair, for manors are chargeable and yield uncertain incomes." Apparently he wished to sell an estate at Eldersfield, and was anxious to buy another on the Cotswolds, near Swell or Sapperton, "where I may easily resort to it, if it please God I live, and return home ye same day, and see to ye management of it."

Daniel Roberts, in his life of his father, John Roberts, a farmer at Siddington in the time of Charles II, relates a quarrel which arose between Sir John Guise and Sir Robert Atkyns as they were gaming at Perrot's Brook, near Cirencester. Sir John demanded satisfaction, and though the friends of both men pacified them for a time, Sir John's anger broke out afresh, and he insisted on the apology which Sir Robert offered being made before all in the house. This Sir Robert felt was beneath him, with the result that Sir John said, "Then draw, and you shall die like a dog." Though drawing his sword, Sir Robert was unwilling to hurt, and merely pricked Sir John in the arm, asking him to take that for satisfaction, saying he could have had him elsewhere, but was unwilling to do further mischief. This did not satisfy his opponent, and both set to, with the result that Sir John was run through the body and thought to be mortally wounded. He recovered, however, and represented the county in Parliament 1679-81, and again 1689-95. After Sir Matthew Hale, another eminent judge and native of Gloucestershire, there was no more learned lawyer of his time, and there was none more honest, than Sir Robert Atkyns. Atkyns' chief writings are contained in his *Parliamentary and Political Tracts*, published in 1734; he wrote also *An Enquiry into the Jurisdiction of the Chancery*

in *Causes of Equity*, 1695, and a *Treatise of the True and Ancient Jurisdiction of the House of Peers*.

Sir Edward Atkyns, born in 1630, son of the Sir Edward already mentioned, and brother of Sir Robert, was also a student of Lincoln's Inn. Called to the Bar in 1653, he became "autumn reader" at his Inn of Court, and in 1679 was made serjeant-at-law. In the same year he was raised to the Bench as a Baron of the Exchequer and knighted. He was one of the judges who tried Lord Stafford and other Catholic peers for high treason. In 1686 he became Lord Chief Baron, but owing to his refusal to take the oath of allegiance to William III, resigned his office and retired to his seat at Pickenham, in Norfolk. Sir Edward died in London, October, 1698.

Another member of the family, Richard Atkyns, is noted for his attempt to antedate the establishment of printing in England. Born at Tuffleigh, near Gloucester, in 1615, he was educated at the Crypt Grammar School, Gloucester. A Royalist, he suffered much during the Civil Wars, but at the Restoration was appointed Deputy-Lieutenant for the County. He almost ruined himself in the endeavour to prove, with a view to ultimate personal advantage, that the right of printing law books was vested in the king, and in 1664 published his *Original and Growth of Printing in England*. Atkyns affirmed that printing was first practised at Oxford in 1468, some six years before the recognised date of its introduction into England. His assertion has long since been discredited, researches having proved that the date on the book—*Expositio Sancti Jeronimi*—to which this supposition was assigned is probably due to the omission of an "X" by the printer; and it has been shown that no other book was printed at Oxford until 1479. Richard wrote also *The Vindication of Richard Atkyns, Esquire. As also a Relation of several passages in the Western War, wherein He was concern'd. Together, With certain Sighs or Ejaculations at the End of every chapter. Dedicated to His particular Friends. And intended to no other.*

1669. In this scarce work he observes, "Few people are the better for Vindications but that he has no choice unless to suffer in Name, Family and Credit." The book gives an interesting account of the part taken by Atkyns in the Civil Wars, and relates certain domestic matters and his vindication of himself in connexion with them.

Before proceeding to Sir Robert Atkyns the younger some information concerning Edward Atkyns, his brother and the second son of Sir Robert the elder, may be given. Edward is not mentioned in any biographical notice. The reference to him in Sir Robert's will is given in the earlier part of this paper.

In *Marriage Allegations for Marriage Licences issued by the Vicar-General of the Archbishop of Canterbury* (Harleian Society, 1886) occurs the entry—

1676-7. Feb. 8. Edward Atkyns [*sic* subs.], of Lincoln's Inn, Esq., Bachr, abt 23, & Mrs Agnes Atkins, of St Giles in Fields, Spr, abt 18; consent of father Sr Richard Atkins, of Hadham, co. Herts, Bart.; at St Andrew's, Holborn, or Lincoln's Inn Chapel.

From this it may be assumed that Edward Atkyns was born about 1653 or 1654, and Agnes Atkins about 1658 or 1659. Agnes was daughter of Sir Richard Atkins (son of Sir Richard Atkins, Kt.) of Clapham, who was created baronet in 1660 and died 1689. Sir Richard had ten children, two dying in child-birth. The eldest, Annabella, born 1651, died in Paris, unmarried, January 1st, 1670; Rebecca, born 1652, died June 10th, 1661; Henry, born 1653, died in 1677; a second son, Richard, succeeded to the title; and there were also four other daughters, among whom was Agnes. Burke (*Extinct Baronetcies*, 1844) gives the family as Atkins of Clapham, the Manor of Clapham having been sold to one Henry Atkins, physician to James I. (J. W. Grover's *Old Clapham*, 1887). The family was originally connected with Hertfordshire. Burke states that Agnes married "Edward Atkins, esq. brother

of Sir Robert Atkins," and this is also shown in Manning and Bray's *Surrey* (iii. 362).

Mr. Grover includes in his book an interesting account of the discovery by him in 1885 of the Atkins (of Clapham) monuments on the site of the old church at Clapham, and their subsequent restoration and placing in the north transept of St. Paul's, Clapham. The old church, which was removed in 1814, is described and illustrated in *Gentleman's Magazine* (vol. 85, pt. 2, pp. 489-491). This account records the inscriptions on the monuments; among them is one not given in Grover's book, which commemorates several members of the family, including—

"Agnes, Edvardo Atkyns Armo filio 2do genito  
Roberti Atkyns de Superton [*sic* for Sapperton] in  
Com. Glouc. Militis Balnei, se connubio junxit."

By this marriage Edward Atkyns, according to Le Neve (*Pedigrees of Knights*, Harl. Soc., 1873) had a son named Robert and a daughter named Annabella. The latter married June 7th, 1705, the Hon. Henry Bridges, second son of James, 8th Lord Chandos (*Chester's Reg. West. Abbey*, Harl. Soc., 1876). In the note to this entry Mr. Chester states that Annabella was daughter of "Edward Atkyns, Esq., Barrister-at-Law (second son of Sir Robert Atkins, Kt., Lord Chief Baron of the Exchequer) by Annabella, dau. of Sir Richard Atkins, second Bart. of Clapham, Surrey," and that she was buried at Whitchurch, August 24th, 1763, aged 84. This would make the year of her birth 1679, and proves the statement as to the marriage of Annabella to Edward Atkyns to be wrong, for I have shown that Richard, the second baronet, could not have been born before 1654, and though he did have a daughter named Annabella, she was probably not born before (say) 1674. Also, as appears above, the Annabella of the first baronet died unmarried. Le Neve (*ante*) states that Edward Atkyns married "Annabella, dr of Sir Richd Atkins, of Surrey, Bt." but the marriage licence and the inscription on the monument

at Clapham are conclusive evidence that in both cases the name should have been Agnes. Wotton in his *Baronetage*, records the marriage as with Agnes. Edward Atkyns was buried at Sapperton, December 28th, 1682; a son, also named Edward, who died in infancy was buried there in 1680.

From information contained in the print of the House of Lord's case of 1758, it appears that in 1698 Robert Atkyns, already mentioned as the nephew and heir-at-law of Sir Robert the younger, showed signs of lunacy, and certain properties were in consequence leased to the sons of Ann Tracy, daughter of Sir Robert the elder by his second wife. In 1708 Robert was still apprehended to be a lunatic, but on the death of his uncle, Sir Robert the younger, November 29th, 1711, without issue, he entered into possession of the Atkyns property at Lower Swell. As he was defendant in the trial for ejection which ensued on behalf of Ann Tracy's sons, it is evident that he had not been declared a lunatic. He continued in possession of the estates until his death in 1735 (Bigland, *Continuations*, pt. iv.). Two daughters, Elizabeth and Ann, are named as defendants in the trial of 1758.

In *Notes and Queries* (11th Series, v., p. 448,) is an extract from an indenture at Blakesware, dated August 14th, 1702, in which Robert, and Edward his father, are mentioned.

We come now to the immediate object of this notice, Sir Robert Atkyns the younger, "the learned son of a learned father." As already stated, neither the place nor the exact date of his birth appear to be known, but according to the inscription in Sapperton Church he died in 1711, aged 65, which might make the year 1646, and this is given by Kippis, Chalmers, Malcolm, and the *Gentleman's Magazine*, while the *Dictionary of National Biography* gives the year as 1647. Again, both Kippis and Chalmers record the date of his death as October 29th, while in the House of Lords' case of 1758 November 9th is printed; but the Sapperton inscription is clearly November 29th, and I have ascertained that this is the date in the church register. Sir Robert had a half-brother

also named Robert who lived a few months only and this has led to the statement that Anne, Sir Robert the elder's second wife, was the mother of the county historian, though seeing that this marriage did not take place until 1681, the mistake is obvious.

Robert was educated with great care by his father, and matriculated on March 14th, 1662-3, at St. Edmund Hall, Oxford. He was called to the Bar at Lincoln's Inn in 1664, and according to Hickes became very proficient in the laws and history of his country, which later stood him in good stead in writing his *History of Gloucestershire*. From a letter written by Sir Robert to Kippis it appears that his uprightness and learning caused his neighbours to make him arbitrator of differences which he was generally successful in settling. He married July 6th, 1669, Louisa, daughter of Sir George Carteret, of Haws, in Bedfordshire. The marriage allegation (*Marriage Licences: Canterbury*, Harl. Soc., 1886, p. 166) is as follows—

1669. July 5. Sir Robert Atkins, of Lincoln's Inn, Kt., Bachr, abt 21 (his father's consent), & Mrs Lovise de Carterett, of Lincoln's Inn, Fields, Middx., Spr, abt 15 (consent of father Sir George de Carterett, Kt.); at St Andrew's, Holborn.

Carteret was a friend of Pepys, and the Diarist records, under date July 24th, 1665: "Up and home and . . . to Sir George Carteret's . . . and took coach and six horses nobly for Dagenhams, himself and lady and their little daughter Louisonne and myself in the coach." "Louisonne" was Louisa Marguerite Carteret, afterwards wife of Sir Robert Atkyns. Sir Robert resided for the most part at Pinbury House, in the parish of Duntisbourne Rous, which was purchased by his father at the time of the Restoration, and remained in the family until the sale of the manor to Lord Bathurst in 1786. An illustrated description of Pinbury is

given in *Country Life*, April 30th, 1910. Robert was knighted by Charles II on his visit to Bristol, September 5th, 1663. In April, 1672, he was appointed Receiver-General of "several rates and impositions on proceedings at law" in the room of his father, with Fabian Phillips as his assistant, and in May of the following year was appointed Comptroller of a new department for general control and inspection of the accounts of all sums arising from these rates and proceedings. Fabian Phillips became Deputy-Comptroller, with an "entering clerk" and a messenger completing the establishment.

Sir Robert was returned as Member for Cirencester in three Parliaments: February 11th, 1679; August 19th, 1679; and February, 1680-1. In 1671 he had, according to Williams, unsuccessfully petitioned against the return of Henry Powle. On March 18th, 1684-5, he was returned for the County of Gloucester, representing it until the dissolution of Parliament, July 2nd, 1687.

In 1691 he, with Henry Hawley, acquired the Island of Sark, held by Sir Philip Carteret from the Crown *in capite*, it having been given to Helier Carteret, an ancestor of Sir Philip, by letters patent in 7 Elizabeth in which was a clause forbidding alienation of the Island without licence. In October, 1691, instructions were issued by the Attorney-General to prepare a warrant granting licence to Sir Philip Carteret to alienate the Island with all its liberties, etc., thereunto belonging.

Sir Robert died at Westminster on November 29th, 1711, the year previous to the publication of his History, and was buried on December 12th at Sapperton, where there is a monument to his memory, the inscription on which is significant of the esteem in which he was held. A copy of this inscription was added to the second edition of the History by his executors, and as it also appears in Bigland, in *Gloucestershire Notes and Queries* (vol. iv. 347-8), and in Rudder, there is no occasion for repetition here excepting to give the last few lines. They read as follows—

“ He left behind him Louise Lady Atkyns, Daughter of Sir George Carteret, of Hawns in Bedfordshire, his most dear and sorrowful Widow, who erected this monument to his memory, though He left behind him one more durable, THE ANCIENT AND PRESENT STATE OF GLOSTERSHIRE. This lady who was altogether worthy of so Good and Great a Man, was Her-Self Interred in the same Vault with him. She died the 2d. day of Dec. 1716, Aged 63.”

The effigy of Sir Robert in Sapperton Church is described in our *Transactions* (vol. xxv. p. 157).

Sapperton Church, the main part of which dates from the time of Anne, contains some fine oak panelling, furniture, and woodwork removed from Sapperton House when this was demolished about 1730, on its purchase by Allen, Lord Bathurst from the Atkyns family. Lord Bathurst also used some of the stone for building, and writes to Pope that he has brought “ a great quantity of good hewn stone from the old house at Saperton to the great centre in Oakley Wood.” The manor house stood on a delightful position overlooking the valley towards Chalford, and the doorway into the church used as the family entrance may be traced in the north wall of the nave. Pinbury House, occupied by Sir Robert Atkyns the younger during his father’s lifetime, is about a mile from the church.

In the British Museum is a copy of—

A Catalogue of the Library of the late Sir Robert Atkins of Pinbury-Park in the County of Gloucester, Kt. And of another learned Gentleman lately deceased. Being a Choice Collection of Valuable Books in most faculties, viz. Divinity, Statute, Common and Civil-Law, History, Poetry, Books of Prints, Classicks cum Not. Var. & in Usum Delph. &c., most of them of the Best Editions, and several large Paper; Which will begin to be Sold (the Price being mark’d in each Book) on Thursday the 11th

of this Instant July, 1717, at Nine of the Clock in the Morning at Exeter-Exchange in the Strand.

As the two libraries are not separated in any way it is impossible to distinguish Sir Robert's, though there are many books which suggest themselves as suited to his tastes. In all there were 1084 lots, these being arranged in folio, quarto, and octavo, and further divided into foreign and English sections. Those in foreign tongues include Greek, Latin, French, Italian and Spanish, while there are a number of legal works, these being probably part of the library of Sir Robert Atkyns' father. The only topographical works are Atkyns' *Gloustershire*, Chauncey's *Hertfordshire*, and Wright's *Rutland*.

A mural tablet in the south transept of Westminster Abbey, put up by a later Edward Atkyns, commemorates the three members of the family who became Barons of the Exchequer: Sir Edward, who died 1669, and his sons Edward and Robert, and also of Sir Robert the younger. The inscriptions are of interest, and as they have not been recorded elsewhere are now given:—

To the Memory

Of Sir Edward Atkyns, one of the Barons of the Exchequer in the Reigns of King Charles the first and second: He was a person of such integrity, that he resisted the many advantages and honours offered him by the cheifs of the grand Rebellion. He departed this Life in 1669. Aged 82 years.

Of

Sir Robert Atkyns, his eldest Son, created Knight of the Bath, at the Coronation of King Charles the 2d. Afterwards Lord Cheif Baron of the Exchequer under King William, and Speaker of the House of Lords, in Several Parliaments; which places he fill'd with distinguished Abilities and Dignity as his learned Writings abundantly prove. He died 1709. Aged 88 years.

Of

Sir Edward Atkyns his youngest Son, Lord Cheif Baron of the Exchequer ; which Office he discharg'd with great honour & integrity, But retired upon the Revolution from publick business, to his seat in Norfolk, where he was revered for his Piety to God and Humanity to Men : He employed himself in reconciling Differences among his Neighbours, in which he obtained so great a Character that few would refuse the most difficult Cause to his Decision ; and the most litigious would not appeal from it. He died 1698. Aged 68 years.

And of

Sir Robert Atkyns eldest Son of Sir Robert abovementioned, a Gentleman versed in Polite Literature and in the Antiquities of this Country, of which his History of Gloucestershire is a Proof. He died 1711. Aged 65 years.

Among the church plate of St. Matthew, Coates, is a paten engraved with the Atkyns Arms, impaling Carteret, lettered "The Gift of the Lady Louise Atkyns Widdow of Sr Robert Atkyns to the Parish Church of Coats in Gloster-shire Anno 1716."

Sir Robert's inclination towards writing the History of the County may have been determined by the proposals of Abel Wantner, a citizen of Gloucester, and inhabitant of Minchinhampton, who in 1686 invited subscriptions for a History of the City and County, for which he had collected materials. Some specimen pages of this and a list of subscribers (among whom was Sir Robert Atkyns) were issued, but the work was not proceeded with. However this may be, it is to Richard Parsons, Chancellor of the Diocese of Gloucester, 1677-1711, that we really owe the basis of Atkyns' History. Parsons had made collections for such a history, but in consequence of

age and declining health transferred all his manuscripts to Sir Robert. One may assume that he would not have done this had he not felt his work would be in sympathetic and well-qualified hands; and though some authorities hint that Sir Robert used the material without giving sufficient acknowledgment to the original compiler, the ultimate result was a work which does him the greatest credit, and one that must always be regarded as the most important of our Gloucestershire books.

In the preface to the History, Atkyns states that—

“ Dr. Parsons, late Chancellor of Gloucester, designed to publish an account of the Diocese, but was prevented by the state of his health, and that the present work is published by a lay hand, whose true and hearty love for his Country excited him to this performance, and with pious affection submits this book to his neighbours and countrymen.”

The transcripts of the grants and charters collected by Parsons were used, though not especially acknowledged, and perhaps Rawlinson, Gough and Fosbroke had some ground for the observations made with reference to Sir Robert's own share in the preparation of the work.

The complete History was issued by Atkyns' executors in 1712, the year after his death. The published price was £5 5s., but the value of the book was soon increased by reason of a disastrous fire which occurred at Bowyer's, the printer, on January 29th, 1712-13, most of the copies being burnt. Many of those which were saved bear evidence of this fire in the scorched margins which are almost invariably to be found in them. It is stated in *The Manual of Gloucestershire Literature*, that when Rudder, in 1767, issued proposals for printing his History of the County, a copy of Atkyns' was worth £21. Rudder himself records that it “ was well received by the county.” No pains were spared in the publishing of

this History, and it won the commendation of Richard Gough, the topographer, for the excellence of its printing and general production. In 1768 a second edition, edited by William Herbert, was issued, though beyond the correction of a few clerical errors this was a reprint of the earlier issue.

Nichols states that there were some copies on royal paper "for the curious." Here it may be noted that in recent years the prices realised for the first edition of the History at auction sales have fluctuated from £52 for the Beckford copy sold in 1882 to as low as £4 8s. in 1905, the average for thirty copies recorded (eliminating faulty copies) in *Book-Prices Current*, 1887-1911, being £16. In the second decade of this period the average per copy was £10 less than that realised in 1887-1896. The second edition has realised as much at £15 (Niblett copy, 1883), and £15 10s. in 1888, the average of twenty-seven ordinary paper copies recorded in *Book-Prices Current* being £6, while eight large paper copies averaged £8 each. There were two issues of the first edition, the vignettes on the title varying. In the one usually seen there is a figure of Mercury on a scroll between two birds, while the other, which is scarce, has two flying cupids. A copy of the latter was sold in Gloucester in 1908 for £15.

The History is familiar enough to students of Gloucestershire literature, but those who have not had occasion to use it may find a short description of its contents of interest. Printed in folio size, the volume contains title, preface, and advertisement, the author's epitaph, his preparatory observations, and general history or description of Gloucestershire; then an account of the history of Gloucester followed by the parishes of the County, arranged in alphabetical order, from Abbenhall to Yate, excepting that Sevenhampton is placed at the end. An index completes the work, which contains in all some 440 leaves, the text being printed in double columns. The second edition was printed in a smaller type, with correspondingly fewer pages.

The work is illustrated with a fine portrait of Sir Robert Atkyns, engraved by Van der Gucht ; eight plates of coats of arms of Gloucestershire families and of the Bishopric and City of Gloucester ; a map of the county ; views of Gloucester city, the west prospect of Gloucester, and Gloucester Cathedral ; and a series of plates of sixty-one county seats, engraved, and with one exception—that of Badminton—drawn by Kip. A print of Hempsted Court, etched by Kip from a drawing by Robins, was prepared, but it was not included in the History, and is extremely scarce. Lowndes states that all the plates were sold to a brazier in Cambridge as old copper and destroyed. The views of the county seats are valuable and interesting from an antiquarian point of view, as in many cases they record architectural features long since altered, and in some instances houses now destroyed. Both Sapperton and Nether Swell, the seats of the elder Sir Robert, have been demolished. Gough found fault with Sir Robert for adding so many views and prospects, but the present-time collector and archæologist would be ill disposed to accord blame in this respect.

Mr. F. A. Hyett and Canon Bazeley, in their County Bibliography—which gives minute collations and much valuable information relating to both editions of the History—discuss the question as to these plates being specially executed for the History, or whether they were engraved in the first place for Kip's *Britannia Illustrata*, in Volume II (published 1709), of which sixty-two of the sixty-four plates appeared. They incline to the opinion that Atkyns requested Kip to draw and engrave the plates, and to supply a certain number of impressions, at the same time giving Kip permission to use them for his own works if he wished. There is evidence for this, inasmuch as the same plates were used for the 1768 edition, and it is reasonable to suppose that had they belonged to Atkyns they would have been on Bowyer's premises at the time of the fire and so destroyed, while the portrait of Atkyns,

certainly engraved for the History, did not appear in the second edition, which may be attributed to the loss of the plate in the fire.

The parochial information given by Atkyns includes the ownership and descent of the manors,—these being specially acknowledged by Rudder as of service to him in preparing his own History—some description of the churches, and the values of the livings. The number of houses and the approximate population, the average yearly births and deaths, and payments made for Royal Aid, Land Tax, and Poll Tax—the latter being for the years 1692 and 1694 respectively—are stated. There are also lists of the patrons of the livings, with their incumbents from the time of the Reformation, the history of the principal families, and an account of the charities.

Despite the somewhat grudging praise of later topographical writers, the immense labour which the compilation of this History must have involved calls for the fullest credit being given to Sir Robert Atkyns for causing it to be printed, and his wife's testimony that it would be his best memorial is indeed true.

That there are errors in the work is indisputable, but to Sir Robert we owe the first record of our county history, and when the difficulty of securing reliable information in the present time of far greater facility and opportunity for research is considered, it will be apparent that two hundred years ago it was infinitely greater.

Atkyns himself realised the difficulties of his task and liability to err, for after reciting the contents of his History, he says:—

“ It is all writ in the short style of a Diary, which makes it plain and easy. A work of this nature which consists of so great variety of names and numerical figures, and especially in the first attempt, must have many Errors; and it had been more advisable to have ended this Account about fifty or sixty years since, and not to have carried

it on to this present time ; for when there is a necessity to depend upon Message-Information, we must then expect many mistakes, which will be open to any Man's Discovery : But no Man can impute the least Partiality to any one Line ; let that cover a multitude of Faults. May the Gréat God, who is the Author of Peace, and Lover of Concord, evermore bless this County in all Peace and Happiness."

Rudder's *History of Gloucestershire*, published in 1779, while making corrections in Atkyns' records, and adding later information, was based upon his predecessor's work, and owed a great deal to his labours.

In addition to the portrait of Sir Robert issued with the first edition of the History, there is one published by Richardson in 1812, which was included in the notice in Malcolm's *Lives of the Topographers* (1824). This plate, which is of indifferent execution, makes a curious mistake in Sir Robert's age, the inscription reading "Ob. 1711. Aet. 54."

## APPENDIX.

### *Entries in the Parish Registers of Sapperton and Nether Swell relating to the Atkyns Family.*

[I have to acknowledge permission given by the Rector of Sapperton for access to the Registers, and also the kindness of the Rev. T. A. Garnett in giving me every facility for taking extracts from the Registers of Nether Swell.—R.A.]

#### SAPPERTON.

##### *Baptism.*

1. 1680. July ye 4. Edwd : ye son of Edw. Atkyns by Agnes.

##### *Burials.*

2. 1680. July 20 buried Edwd ye son of Edw Atkyns Esqr.
3. 1680-1. March ye 12 Buryed Mary ye wife of Sir Robt Atkyns Kt of ye Bath.

4. 1682. December ye 28 buried Edward Atkyns Esq.
5. 1685. Elizabeth the daughter of Sr Robert Atkyns the Elder and his Lady was buried Novembr the 24th.
6. 1686-7. Robert the son of Sr Robert Atkyns senior and Knight of the bath [*sic*] was buried March the 19th.
7. 1687. Frances the daughter of Sr Robert Atkyns Knight of the Bath and his Lady was buried November the 3d.
8. 1693. William the son of Sr Robert Atkyns senior, Knight of the Bath, and Ld chiefe Baron of the Exchequer, and his Lady, was buried November the 6th.
9. 1709-10. The Honble Sr. Robert Atkyns Knight of the Bath and sometime Lord Chief Baron of the Exchequer dyed February 12 & was buried Feby 23 : 1709.
10. 1711. Sir Robert Atkyns Knight Dyed Novembr 29 : buried Decembr 12 : 1711.
11. 1712. The Honrble Ann Lady Atkyns buried Octobr. 16, 1712.
12. 1716. The Honrb. Lovise Lady Atkyns buried Dec. 7.

#### NETHER SWELL.

13. 1685. Elizabeth the daughter of Sr. Robt. Atkyns Knight of the Bath by Dame Anne his wife was baptised [*ye 2nd day*] of July, 1685.
14. 1686. Robert Atkyns ye son of Sr. Robert Atkyns Kt of ye Bath by Dame Anne his wife was baptized on Wednesday ye nineteenth day of May in ye second year of King James ye Second and in the year of our Lord God one thousand six hundred eighty and six.

15. 1686-7. Robert the Sone of Sr Robert Atkyns Kt of the Bath by Dame A[anne] His wife departed March the 18th Day one thousand six hundred eighty six.
16. 1699. Anne Atkyns the daughter of S. Robert Atkyns, Knight of ye Bath, by Dame Anne his wife, was married to John Tracy of Stanway in this County of Gloucester, esq., on Monday the Seventh day of August, in the Year of Our Lord Christ 1699, in Ye Church of Lower Swell, by Mr Callow, Ye Vicar of Ye said Church, who had christened Ye said Anne in Ye same parish on Thursday the 8th of November in the year 1683.
- Written by the said Robert Atkyns, being in the 79th. year of his age, without spectacles. Blessed bee God!
17. 1739. Elizabeth ye wife of Mr. Robert Atkins was Bur ye 10th of October.

## NOTES.

- 1 and 4. Edward Atkyns was the second son of Sir Robert Atkyns the elder by Mary his first wife.
3. The first wife of Sir Robert Atkyns the elder.
5. See No. 13 for baptism.
6. Robert, half-brother to Robert the historian. See Nos. 14, 15.
9. Sir Robert Atkyns the elder.
10. Sir Robert Atkyns the younger.
11. The second wife of Sir Robert Atkyns the elder.
12. The wife of Sir Robert Atkyns the younger.
16. For her children see below.
17. Robert Atkyns, the son of Edward, second son of Sir Robert Atkyns the elder, by Mary.

The register of Nether Swell also contains several entries relating to children of Anne Tracy (see No. 16 above).

All but one are entered together on the last leaf of the first book, and were written and signed by Sir Robert Atkyns the elder. The first is given here in full.

1703. John Tracy the son of John Tracy of Stanway in ye County of Glou'ster Esq by Anne his wife was born at Lower Swell in the said County on the five and twentieth day of August 1703 and was baptized ye seven and twentieth of ye same moneth at Lower Swell aforesaid by Mr. Callow ye Vicar of Lower Swell aforesaid.

ROBERT ATKYNS.

1704-5. Anne Tracy, born "on Wednesday, ye seventeenth day of January 170 $\frac{5}{4}$ ," baptised 24 January.

1705-6. Robert and John Tracy, born 10 January "170 $\frac{6}{5}$ ," baptised 20 January.

1707. Fferdinando Tracy, born 16 November, baptised 30 November.

1709. Edward Tracy, born Saturday 25 June, "baptized the Wednesday following."

The next birth occurred after the death of Sir Robert Atkyns the elder, and is entered in its proper order in the register.

1710. Catherine the daughter of John Tracy, born 18 June, baptised 28 June.