



The Engineer, 15 March 1895.

To those interested in Levantine history, Hyde Clarke is perhaps best known as the author of an article about the British colony at Smyrna, which originally appeared in the *Levant Herald* in 1860 [1]. It seems that he had only arrived in Turkey a few months before this, but the article suggests he was already quite familiar with the recent history of the colony and he refers to his father having known Isaac Morier (1750-1817), the first consul-general in Turkey.

In directories for 1847 and 1848 [2], Hyde Clarke is described as being the 'eldest son of H. Clarke, Esq., of Sandford House', but in the record of his baptism on 16 January 1816 at the London church of St Giles without Cripplegate, he is shown as Henry Hyde Clarke, born on 14 December 1815, the son of Henry Clarke, clerk, and his wife Susannah, of the Barbican. He seems to have dropped the 'Henry' and, during his adult life, was usually known simply as 'Hyde Clarke'.

An earlier researcher [3] suggested 'Sandford House' might refer to Sandford Manor House in Fulham but apparently did not follow this up. However, I have found that in 1824 the Sandford Manor House estate was bought by the Imperial Gas Company, whose company clerk was called Henry Clarke.

There is a biographical article about Henry Clarke in the history of the Clockmakers' Company [4], from which I quote the following extracts.

HENRY CLARKE. Son of John Clarke, Citizen [of London] and Goldsmith. Born 4th November, 1780. Admitted to the Freedom of the Goldsmiths' Company, 3rd March, 1803. Upon the decease of his Father he was taken under the paternal care of Mr. Isaac Rogers, and continued closely associated with him throughout a long active life. Under his auspices he had every opportunity of acquiring a thorough practical knowledge of many branches of Science, the run of a good Laboratory, and a well-selected Library. He became associated with him in mining operations in Cornwall and Wales, and they succeeded in introducing several improvements in smelting, etc. While thus engaged he became acquainted with Richard Trevithick, the subsequently celebrated Engineer, whom he assisted in carrying out some important scientific investigations. His business connection brought him into association with the principal men of Smyrna, Turkey, etc.

The history goes on to describe how he helped in sorting out the finances and other affairs of the Clockmakers' Company, for which he was admitted to that Company as an Honorary Freeman on 3 August 1812. It then continues:

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In 1818, he founded the Imperial Gas Company, which became one of the most successful in the metropolis. In 1820-21, in connection with several friends, he took active measures and had preliminary surveys made for promoting the Atlantic and Pacific Ship Canal for connecting the two Oceans by the Lake of Nicaragua. He served the office of Warden of the [Clockmakers'] Company in 1822-26. His sympathy with the Portuguese in their misfortunes led him to spend much of his time on the Continent, assisting the Emperor Don Pedro, Generals Lafayette, Mina, Saldanha, and others, with his great experience and advice at that critical juncture. He subsequently visited the United States. He died in 1865, the Father of the Company, aged 84. A portrait of him is preserved in the Company's Collection.

The history also has an article about Isaac Rogers, explaining that he and his father were members of the Levant Company and carried on an extensive trade with Smyrna and others parts of Turkey. They specialised in clocks and watches in an oriental style. In 1760, the elder Isaac Rogers brought a case against the Levant Company for refusing to admit him [5]. He had paid the entry fee but refused to take the prescribed oath because he was a Quaker. He won his case and was finally admitted to the Company on 11 July 1760; his son was admitted on 1 November 1776.

Despite the respectful tone of the Clockmaker's history, in 1826 both Clarke and the younger Isaac Rogers were found to have been involved in serious financial fraud at the Imperial Gas Company. In 1825 Clarke's brother Joseph lent the gas company £10,000 to pay a dividend, after accusations about Henry's financial management [7]. The Clarke brothers were also implicated in alleged frauds connected with a mining company in Peru, another at Arigna in Ireland [6], and other questionable financial dealings.

Hyde Clarke himself was a tireless self-promoter and some alleged episodes of his early career must be accepted with reservation. For example, his obituary in *The Times* [8] said that:

... he was employed in diplomatic affairs early in life, being engaged on missions in connexion with the Spanish and Portuguese Wars of Succession.

According to another obituary [9]:

His first engineering work was in a military sphere – in Spain and Portugal during the Wars of Succession, he being attached to the Duke of Saldanha during the whole of the campaign – and although he never had the advantage of engineering training, he made so much use of his opportunities that he immediately, on his return to England, succeeded in obtaining much civil engineering work.

Now the Portuguese Civil War, to which this refers, lasted from 1828 until May 1834, when Hyde Clarke would have been only 18 years old. It seems more likely that he simply accompanied his father while he was 'assisting' Saldanha, who was not created a duke until 1846.

The Times continued:

In 1836 he planned, as engineer, and also surveyed, the Glasgow and South-Western Railway, with the Morecambe Bay Embankment, and he was also concerned with the development of Barrow. ...

He founded the London and County Bank in 1836.

All this at the age of twenty?

The details are not clear, but the basic story of the railway seems to be as follows. Hyde Clarke had been employed by a committee at Whitehaven

who were interested in building an embankment across Morecambe Bay for running a railway line to Scotland. Clarke himself hired John Rooke [10] to carry out a survey for this purpose and submitted a report. The Whitehaven committee subsequently engaged Messrs Hague and Rastrick, both experienced engineers, who submitted their own reports, which confirmed much of what Clarke had suggested. He accused Rastrick of plagiarism and more than 15 years later was still complaining that he had not been paid [11].

As regards the bank, it was indeed set up in 1836 as the 'Surrey, Kent, and Sussex Banking Company' and changed its name to 'London and County' in 1839. The prospectuses published in *The Times* and elsewhere do not show any members of the Clarke family among the directors or officials, but perhaps Henry or Joseph Clarke was involved in some way.

In 1838, Hyde Clarke was apparently a member of a deputation from the Society for Promoting Practical Design, which presented Lord John Russell with an address to the Queen, calling for cartoons by Raphael to be moved from Hampton Court to 'the metropolis' [12]. In 1839 he wrote an article about Richard Trevithick, no doubt using much information from his father [13]. On 8 November 1845 he was admitted to the Freedom of the Clockmakers' Company.

In 1844 he had become editor of the *Railway Register*, and over the next few years he acquired or edited a number of other journals dealing with finance and engineering, also writing an *English Grammar* and contributions on a number of other topics. These included economic development in India; in 1849 he was commissioned to report on a telegraph system there and in 1857, on behalf of the promoters of several railway companies, he produced a report on the desirability of the extension of hill settlements for Europeans, to be linked by railways.

On the return for the census of 30 March 1851, Hyde Clarke described himself as 'Turkey merchant and editor', which suggests that he had maintained his father's interest in the Levant. Staying with him at the time of the census was a young widow, Maria Mildred Eaton, whom he apparently married later that year. Their son, Henry Harcourt Hyde Clarke, was born on 29 May 1852, and a daughter, Edgiva Mildred Harcourt Hyde Clarke, followed in 1855.

A few years later, the scene shifts to the Levant. Even before the outbreak of the American Civil War, Lancashire cotton manufacturers were becoming anxious about relying on supplies from the United States. One possible alternative source was Turkey, which also being considered for railway expansion. Hyde Clarke was engaged as an agent of the Smyrna-Aidin Railway Company, which was also interested in promoting cotton growing [14], and by 1860 he was in Constantinople on behalf of the company [15]. As consulting engineer, the company had appointed Edwin Clark (properly spelt without an -e), a Member of the Institution of Civil Engineers and former associate of Robert Stephenson. He was an almost exact contemporary, but no relation, of Hyde Clarke, with whom he may sometimes be confused.

In 1862 the Turkish authorities established the Imperial Cotton Commission and Hyde Clarke was appointed as its vice-president in charge of operations. The Commission met every Tuesday at the English Club in Smyrna and, once established there, Hyde Clarke seems to have conceived it to be his duty to spread culture in the expatriate community. He became president of the Smyrna Literary and Scientific Institution, and at the end of 1862 he founded the grandly titled 'Academy of Anatolia' and became its president, although he soon found that it had 'dwindled since its first year' [16]. He was also active in masonic affairs. He became Deputy Grand Master of the Provincial Grand Lodge of Turkey, he was a founding member of a lodge in Alexandria that was named after him, and he belonged to other lodges in Constantinople [17]. He also found time to publish a short Turkish phrase book [18]. There is a small contemporary photograph of him by Pascal Sebah of Constantinople [19]. By the end of the 1860s he was back in London.

Since his *English Grammar*, he had produced a stream of publications dealing with language and prehistory. On the by-line of these appeared a growing list of learned societies to which he belonged and honours which had been bestowed upon him – one of the most extreme examples was a book of 1877, on which these were spread over no less than eight lines of small type on the title page [20]. Initially his ideas were no more fantastic than others current at the time, but by 1895 *The Times*' obituary commented: 'While his views on many subjects were undoubtedly original, most of his generalizations failed to commend themselves as sound to really scientific philologists.' For example, he thought it probable that 'the so called Greeks of Asia Minor are the descendants of the Iberians, as the Basques of Spain are.' [21] He also satisfied himself that the Sumerians had colonised Mexico and the Hittites ('Khita') had colonised Peru – discoveries that are occasionally cited by modern believers in the lost continent of Atlantis. However, his numerous writings on financial and economic matters and engineering do still appear to have some lasting value.

In 1875, his daughter Edgiva married Frederick Barclay Hanbury, the son of a banker, and they later had nine children. They were divorced in 1896 and Edgiva died in 1918. On 8 July 1873 Hyde Clarke's son Henry was admitted to the Freedom of the Clockmakers' Company, and in 1888 Henry married Louisa Mertens, the daughter of a solicitor. At first they lived with Hyde Clarke and his wife Maria. Young Henry took to drink and became increasingly violent towards his wife. Maria died in 1892 and the following year Henry was declared bankrupt. When Hyde Clarke himself died in 1895, leaving him nothing in his will, Henry abandoned his wife. She obtained a divorce from him in 1901; there were no children of that marriage [22]. Probate of Hyde Clarke's will was granted to Annie Abigail Lawson, a widow, perhaps his housekeeper. His effects were valued at £867 15s 6d; later in 1895 his library was sold at Christie's for £2,598 [23]. Mention of a hitherto unknown branch of the family came in the *Montreal Gazette* of 16 February 1935. Their columnist 'The Raconteur' refers to receiving a letter from a Mrs Mackenzie of Montreal who complained that he had not mentioned her great-uncle, Henry Hyde Clarke, 'a distinguished member of the council of the Newspaper Press Fund and an editor of the *Civil Engineer and Architect's Journal*.'

Unlike his father or his uncle, Hyde Clarke seems to never have been guilty of any financial misconduct. In fact he himself alleged that the committee of the Anthropological Society was guilty of this, and for doing so, he was expelled from the society – but it appears that his expulsion was cancelled [24]. When the Anthropological Society and the Ethnological Society were merged to form the Anthropological Institute, he went on to serve on its committee for many years. Because of his many interests, it is difficult to give a fair assessment of him now, more than a century after his death. He was certainly a man of considerable importance in his time – but perhaps he was not quite so important as he thought he was.

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