

Notes on W.H. Hyett

(Taken from Gloucestershire Biographical Notes- William Henry Hyett F.R.S 1795-1877)

- ❖ Born 2 September 1795. Son of the Rev. Henry Cay Adams of Shrewsbury
- ❖ 1813 upon the death of Benjamin Hyett Esquire who had married into the Adams family, William succeeded to the estates in Painswick, Badgeworth, Bulley and other Gloucestershire parishes, and assumed the name and arms of the Hyett family in lieu of Adams (see D6/F4 for Hyett pedigree with coat of arms)
- ❖ Became a prominent figure in County affairs
- ❖ Married Anne Jane in 1821 and had 56 years of wedded life. Father of Francis Adams Hyett
- ❖ 1829 became Mayor of Gloucester
- ❖ The Reform Bill of 1832 created the Electoral Borough of Stroud, giving its inhabitants the right to return two members to Parliament. Stroud referred to as 'one of the most politically intelligent districts in the county at that time, one of the most independent and Liberal.
- ❖ There were three candidates for the elections; David Ricardo of Minchinhampton, Mr Poulett Scrope of Castle Combe, Wilts, and Mr Hyett. Hyett was elected by a majority of 400 over his colleague. Out of the 152 voters in the Painswick district all but one voted for Hyett. The reason for this one was that he was not satisfied with Hyett's views of the question of Negro emancipation.
- ❖ Hyett was initially a Whig but he became dissatisfied with the party and gradually moved towards more Conservative thinking. He soon retired from public political life.
- ❖ Became involved in agricultural issues, education and literature; 1844 helped get the Free School built, and in 1846 the new National School of Painswick. 1866 contributed to the founding of the Gloucestershire Eye Institute. 1868 (at the age of 73) he published a volume of poems called 'Flowers of the South, from the Hortus Siccus of an Old Collector.' (B322/7265)
- ❖ Died early in 1877

D6/F32/23: 17 September 1831 (draft letter)

"...it appears to me that a gradual abolition will be most conducive both to the interests of the present possessors of a very important part of our colonies (which by the way is and ought to be a secondary consideration) as well as to the real happiness and comforts of the slaves- which is of the first importance. While a sudden abolition would inevitably ruin a very large branch of our commerce both in the West Indies and in

England- and would probably entail upon the slave population present starvation with the addition of rebellion and bloodshed...”

D6/F32/68: 28 July 1833 (draft letter- justifying actions)

“...I cannot avoid regretting that the Antislavery Society thought it necessary to pass a Resolution at the last meeting...’That the delegates should be summoned to London to watch the conduct of Representatives- such suspicions and pressings are unworthy after all- I mean the suspects as well as the suspected- and it is to this conduct that I have always dismissed...”

P.S Pray observe that I am not associating with any Bristolian Slave owner- but am simply come down here to pass the Saturday and Sunday with my wife and family who are upon a visit to her father and mother who have nothing on earth to do with the production of sugar-“

D6/F37: 19 September 1832 (very clear statement)

“...I was called upon to present myself as a Candidate, in consequence of your knowledge of my “public and private character”;- and not holding vague and general political professions in any very high estimation, I have presumed to rest my claims to your support upon that knowledge, and have therefore, abstained from publishing any political creed...”

-states that he has changed his mind as he doesn’t want this action to be misinterpreted into reluctance.

-looks at “...the immediate amelioration of the conditions of the Slave...and the ultimate abolition of slavery, as questions of the deepest anxiety...”

-gives the arguments of both for and against the abolition

“...It has been proposed, then, that the negro should be permitted by law to buy off a day’s freedom in every week every succeeding year until he is entirely free...By paying 1/5 of his value every year...he will compensate his master and during the process of voluntary labour, which he will have undergone in the acquisition of his freedom, he will also have acquired such habits as will render him a useful labourer to his future employer, and an active and beneficial member of a flourishing community... If it shall be objected that the labour he must undergo...is an injustice, the answer is ready:- This is an evil more than counterbalanced by those habits of voluntary industry which must be attendant upon his future life.”

(the first day) “...let that be purchased by the state;- and if with two week-days at his own disposal, either to cultivate his own grounds, or to work for hire, he is unwilling to attempt his own liberation, it must be admitted, either that he is not very miserable, or that he is unfit for freedom.”

“I believe that such an intermediate course as that which I have detailed is more wise, as regards the Mother Country and the Colony, more just towards the Planter, and more humane towards the Slave.”