

## The Dinton men who helped a King lose his head.

There were 59 signatories on the death warrant of King Charles I. Two of these were men from Dinton, Simon Mayne and Sir Richard Ingoldsby.



A copy of Simon Mayne's signature taken from a document in Dinton parish church records of 1653.

Simon Mayne was born in Dinton Hall in 1612 and at a very early age of five inherited Dinton Hall and all the estates in 1617 on the death of his father. Many years later as an adult Simon eventually became a magistrate in Buckinghamshire, member of the Long parliament for Aylesbury and one of the judges at the trial of King Charles I. The other Dinton regicide was Sir Richard Ingoldsby, known locally as Colonel 'Dick' who lived in Waldridge manor. The third Dinton man involved was John Bigg, born in 1629 and was employed as a clerk by Simon Mayne and Richard Ingoldsby.

It is believed that John Bigg was one of the executioners of Charles on the 30<sup>th</sup> January 1649. No-one knows who actually carried out the deed as all five executioners who were present on the scaffold were hooded to hide their identity. However, John Bigg worked at Dinton Hall, and Oliver Cromwell did visit Dinton Hall on occasions. In 1645 after the battle of Naseby the victorious Cromwell stayed in Dinton Hall and left his sword as a gift for Simon Mayne. The sword remained in Dinton for over 300 years. John Bigg was young and probably strong and was therefore a good candidate for the job as executioner.

On a cold winter's day in January King Charles walked from St. James Palace to Whitehall and around 2 o'clock in the afternoon a hooded man severed his head with a single blow. With the Puritans in complete control of England the return to a monarchy seemed remote but it was to happen and it did. In 1660 the monarchy was restored and Charles II was now King of England.

Retribution was to follow and most of the signatories were hounded to death. Cromwell had already died in 1658 and Mayne retired to Dinton Hall and hid many times in a secret chamber to evade the royalists. An ordinary staircase had been modified with hinges so that the lower 3 or 4 steps could easily be raised to reveal an entrance to a passage which led to the upper part of the mansion concealed between two large chimney stacks. Mayne hid here for long periods and in June 1660 he surrendered himself to the Sergeant at Arms and four months later at his trial at the Old Bailey he was found guilty of regicide and sentenced to death.

Due to his 'ill health' Simon Mayne was unable to walk to the scaffold for execution and he died in the Tower of London on the 13<sup>th</sup> April 1661. His body was returned to Dinton by his friends and was interred in Dinton Church on the 18<sup>th</sup> April 1661. After his death Dinton Hall and all his estates were taken by the royalists but later returned to the Mayne family and his son Simon was permitted to live there. In 1725 his grandson (yet another Simon) sold Dinton Hall with all the estates to John Vanhattam.

Richard Ingoldsby (Colonel 'Dick') and related by marriage to Oliver Cromwell got off much lighter and was now enjoying life! Although he signed the death warrant he claimed that Cromwell himself had guided his hand to make his signature. This was accepted and at the coronation of Charles II he was created a Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath (KCB). During the years to come Sir Richard represented Aylesbury in four parliaments before death came in 1685.

The last man from Dinton, John Bigg now 32 years old and his old employer dead, this well educated man became a recluse. It is suggested that it was either out of remorse for what he had been party to or out of fear of the retribution that might follow. I suggest it was the latter! He lived with help from the local people who supplied him with food and bits of leather which he used to repair his boots by continually adding these small pieces of leather to them. He loved leather! On his belt he carried three bottles, one containing strong beer, one containing weak beer and the third one containing milk. He lived for several years in a cave in Dinton but would often spend the summer months in Kimble. He lived like this for some 36 years and some of the local women and children were afraid of him. He died in 1696 and was buried on the 14<sup>th</sup> April of that year in Dinton Church. His boots are now displayed in the Ashmolean museum in Oxford.



The entry showing the burial of John Bigg on 4<sup>th</sup> April 1696 copied from Dinton church records.



JOHN BIGG, THE DINTON HERMIT.  
BORN 1664. DIED 1696.

So, by 1696 the three Dinton men who helped King Charles I to lose his head were now all dead but the legends behind the Dinton Hermit still linger on. People still ask who was the Dinton Hermit?

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