

‘Abraham Tovey (1687-1759) – matross, master gunner and mastermind of Scilly’s defences’

Allan Brodie English Heritage

People who live in Scilly and visit the islands will have passed through the Garrison Gate that bears the initials ‘AT’ and the date 1742. ¹ **Figure 1** Abraham Tovey, Master Gunner and Store Keeper since 1714, had the temerity to place his initials alongside those of King George II and Francis, 2nd Earl of Godolphin, Governor of the Islands from 1733 until 1766 and this has led some people to the conclusion that he extended the Garrison Walls, terminating in 1742. In fact the date marks nothing more than the widening of the gate, a necessary step to allow men and materials to pass through during the extension of the walls.

Nevertheless, Tovey was a central figure in their construction, but he also managed the affairs of the Board of Ordnance’s on the islands from 1714 until his son succeeded him in 1757, and commanded Scilly’s six gunners. This article will examine his time on the islands, but it will begin by exploring his early life, which can be traced back to his service in Spain from 1706 until 1713, and perhaps to his birth in Wiltshire. It is possible to follow some of the steps in his early military career through the pay records and lists of items of uniform issued to soldiers in the artillery train fighting in Spain and by tracing his commanding officer’s activities it is possible at times to locate where he was based during the War of Spanish Succession. ²

¹ This article arose from a project undertaken by the Research Department of English, the aim of which was to record and analyse the fortifications of Scilly. *Defending Scilly* (English Heritage 2011) describes the story of the threats that the islands have faced and the structures built to deal with them between 1500 and 1945. Mark Bowden was my partner in this research project and assisted with the preparation of this paper. I would also like to thank Paul Pattison and Barry Jones of English Heritage, Amanda Martin of the Isles of Scilly Museum and Eleanor Breen and Trevor Kirk from the Council of the Isles of Scilly for their assistance with drafting this paper. Mike Hesketh Roberts took the excellent terrestrial photographs and Damian Grady was responsible for the stunning aerial photography for the project.

² National Archives WO 54/678 - unless separately referenced, the records regarding Abraham Tovey between 1706 and 1713 come from this source.

Once Tovey arrived in Scilly, his career can be followed, at least in outline, from the records of payments to him by the Board of Ordnance and the bills he submitted for work carried out. Occasionally more detail can be gleaned about his life, including an extraordinary conflict with the commanding officer of the troops based on the islands in the 1730s. The end of his life and some of the details of his family can be found in his will, and those of his children, and these reveal that at least some of his progeny chose to follow their father's career in the recently-created Royal Regiment of Artillery.

Tovey in Spain

In military history, the name Abraham Tovey is usually associated with the Lieutenant Colonel of the Royal Regiment of Artillery who died during the siege of Gibraltar in 1781, but this is not the Tovey whose initials appear above the Garrison Gate. Scilly's Tovey is first mentioned in connection with the islands on 2 October 1714, but before this he had been a soldier fighting in Spain.³ In the records of the International Genealogical Index the only person who conforms with a late-17th century date of birth is an Abraham Tovy, whose birth was registered on 12 December 1687 at Kingswood in Wiltshire.⁴

The earliest reference in military records to Tovey occurs in 1706 when as a matross in the artillery train in Spain he was issued with a hat. This means that he was replacing one that he had already received, as no other pieces of uniform were issued during that year. A matross' role was to assist the gunners in loading, firing and sponging the guns, as well as general duties including providing protection for the artillery pieces from any infantry attack.

Tovey was in Spain as England was fighting in the War of Spanish Succession that broke out on 4 May 1702, less than two months after Queen Anne's accession. This conflict pitched England (Britain after 1707), the Holy

³ National Archives WO47/27, 63.

⁴ International Genealogical Index

http://www.familysearch.org/Eng/Search/ancestorsearchresults.asp?last_name=Tovee This small settlement near Wotton-under-Edge has been part of Gloucestershire since 1844.

Roman Empire, the Dutch Republic, Portugal and Savoy against France and Spain in a struggle for the Spanish throne.⁵ Although Philip V, the candidate of France and Spain ended the war as monarch, he had to concede any rights to the French throne, thus removing the threat of a unified Franco-Spanish Bourbon state dominating Europe.

Initially, English forces fought in the Low Countries, but in 1703 a force was assembled to fight in Portugal, including a small artillery train.⁶ This consisted of two officers, twenty gunners, six engineers, five bombardiers and ten miners armed with only five sakers and a 5¼ pounder.⁷ This expedition was not sent until the following year, but it was soon realised that it lacked firepower, specialised artillery officers and matrosses. Therefore, in 1705 it was reorganised and reinforced with a captain, a lieutenant, a fireworker, a surgeon, forty-two matrosses and some NCOs, and six mountain 3-pounders were added to its firepower.⁸

In May 1706 11,000 men under Earl Rivers were ordered to sail in a fleet commanded by Sir Cloudesley Shovel on a futile scheme to invade France, a fleet that ended up by October at Lisbon, where it remained for a few months.⁹ Included in this force was a substantial artillery train led by a colonel, who commanded four engineers, two sub-engineers, a paymaster, a surgeon and assistant, a captain, a lieutenant, two gentlemen of the ordnance, three sergeants, three corporals, thirty-two gunners and sixty-four matrosses as well as a host of miners, labourers etc. This train was armed with twenty 24-pounders, four 12-pounders, six culverins, four demi-culverins, six sakers, and sixty coehorn mortars. Despite efforts by the Portuguese to retain the force

⁵ Portugal was briefly allied with France and Spain at the outbreak, but soon switched sides. Henry Kamen *The War of Succession in Spain 1700-15* London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson 1969, 9.

⁶ Henry Kamen *The War of Succession in Spain 1700-15* London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson 1969, 9; Arthur Parnell *The War of Succession in Spain: During the Reign of Queen Anne, 1702 – 1711* London: George Bell and Sons 1905, 42; David Chandler *The Art of Warfare in the Age of Marlborough* London: Batsford 1976, 168.

⁷ David Chandler *The Art of Warfare in the Age of Marlborough* London: Batsford 1976, 168.

⁸ Francis Duncan *History of the Royal Regiment of Artillery* London: John Murray 1872, 66.

⁹ Arthur Parnell *The War of Succession in Spain: During the Reign of Queen Anne, 1702 – 1711* London: George Bell and Sons 1905, 204; Francis Duncan *History of the Royal Regiment of Artillery* London: John Murray 1872, 67-8.

under Earl Rivers' command, it sailed again to Alicante where it landed on 8 February 1707.¹⁰

In 1707 a single combined artillery train was created commanded by a colonel, a lieutenant-colonel, a major, a comptroller, a paymaster and his assistant, with a range of support staff such as engineers and a wagonmaster.¹¹ The train was divided into two companies, each commanded by a captain with a lieutenant, a gentleman of the ordnance, three sergeants, three corporals, twenty gunners, forty matrosses and two drummers.

Tovey's first mention as a matross in 1706 suggests two possibilities, namely that he arrived in 1705 in the contingent of forty-two matrosses added to the original train, or that he formed part of the 1706 expedition. The lone reference to the issue of a hat is the only direct evidence on which to base a decision. Therefore, he had outgrown, worn out or lost a hat that he had been issued a year before, or had he mislaid or perhaps lost overboard ship his newly issued hat? Fanciful speculation aside, in 1707 Tovey was in a company that was operating in the Tarragona and Tortosa area and therefore it is more likely that he had arrived as part of the 1705 reinforcements.

Records of monies paid to maintain the artillery train in Spain and Portugal occasionally contain a reference to where the recipients were based or where they had travelled from. A lowly-soldier like Tovey cannot be followed in this type of document, but some of the movements of his commanding officers can be traced. Tovey was originally in the First Company, commanded by Colonel Michael Richards with Lieutenant Colonel Albrecht Borgard as his second in command.¹² His company commander was Captain Richard Silver with his Lieutenant being Francis Blyton while Francis Hull had the rank of Gentleman of the Ordnance. On 18 September 1707 a payment was made to Captain Silvers (sic) at Tortosa and a second payment there was made on 16 November 1707. On 24 January 1707/8 Silver was paid for moving from Tarragona to Barcelona, and on 20 March 1707/8 he was paid for moving

¹⁰ National Archives WO 54/678.

¹¹ Francis Duncan *History of the Royal Regiment of Artillery* London: John Murray 1872, 68-9; David Chandler *The Art of Warfare in the Age of Marlborough* London: Batsford 1976, 168.

¹² National Archives WO 54/678.

from Tarragona to Tortosa. On 11 July 1708 Tortosa fell to the Bourbon forces after a month-long siege.¹³

In 1707 Tovey was issued with a new pair of stockings, a pair of shoes and a hat suitable for a matross, but in clothing records for the period from 25 March 1707 to 22 March 1708 he was also provided with a new coat, waistcoat, breeches, a hat, four pairs of shoes and three pairs of blue stockings as he had been promoted to the rank of gunner.¹⁴ His promotion seems to have taken place on 30 October 1707 when he first appears in pay records as a gunner. On 6 September 1708 Tovey was discharged as a gunner and promoted to the rank of corporal and on 5 November 1708 he transferred from the First Company to the Second Company, which was commanded by Captain George Bradbury, with his Lieutenant Daniel Harquin and Gentleman of the Ordnance Thomas Pattison.

The lists of items of uniform issued to the artillery train in Spain between 1706 and 1713 are fairly complete, but there is a definite gap in the records during which Abraham Tovey does not appear. This occurs between 22 March 1709, when he is a corporal and 13 August 1710 when he had become a sergeant in Captain Bradbury's Company. Why does he disappear from these records? If a soldier had been captured, this is recorded in pay records, so was he injured and if he remained in Spain why was he not paid? His absence from the records of the artillery train may be due to him returning to England after spending three years in Spain.

On 13 August 1710 Tovey was first mentioned as a sergeant under Captain Bradbury and by 1712 he was listed as the senior sergeant of the company. Pay records show that for 1713 he was only paid for 283 days, meaning he was discharged on 9 October 1713. The Treaty of Utrecht, which was signed on 11 April 1713, had marked the official end of the War of Spanish

¹³ Henry Kamen *The War of Succession in Spain 1700-15* London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson 1969, 20.

¹⁴ Four pairs of shoes seem excessive and probably represent a mistake in the ledger.

Succession, and so by October Tovey was able to be released, presumably to make his way back to Britain.¹⁵

Tovey in Scilly 1714 - 40

The first reference to Abraham Tovey in Scilly occurs in a Board of Ordnance minute book on 2 October 1714:

‘That Capt’n Abra’m Tovey’s Letter, of ye 14th Sep’br last, w’th an Acc’t of ye Remains of stores, in his Maj’y’s Garrison’s at Island of Scilly, be referred to Mr Ayres to make his Report upon, to ye Board, what Number of Guns he thinks ought to be Mounted there, and what Condition those places where in, when he was last there.¹⁶

This entry suggests that he had arrived recently and was being asked to appraise the situation on the islands. A year later Tovey’s financial room for manoeuvre was outlined:

‘that hes not to Exceed 40s in small repairs before he gives the Board an Acct, for wch he must give his reasons by the first post, otherwise ‘t will not be allowed; Approve his getting 30 small Arm’s repaired for the Service of the Invalids, but not to enter into any further Expence till Coll Lilly’s report – is made –¹⁷

On 1 August 1714 George I became King, and the new Whig Government came to power in March 1714/5.¹⁸ One of their first actions was to try to deal with the limitations of the Board of Ordnance, which had only been enjoying limited success in construction projects in the years before 1714.¹⁹ Seven

¹⁵ Henry Kamen *The War of Succession in Spain 1700-15* London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson 1969, 24.

¹⁶ National Archives WO47/27, 2 October 1714, 63.

¹⁷ National Archives WO47/28, 365 - 20 December 1715.

¹⁸ Basil Williams *The Whig Supremacy 1714-1760* Oxford: Clarendon Press 1992, 155-6.

¹⁹ Howard Tomlinson ‘The Ordnance Office and the King’s forts, 1660-1714’ *JSAH* vol 16, 1973, 5-25, 20.

engineers were dispatched to complete surveys of their allotted regions as part of the reforms undertaken by the Duke of Marlborough and therefore Christian Lilly visited the Isles of Scilly as part of his investigation into the fortifications of the Plymouth Division.²⁰ The manuscript he compiled is now deposited in the British Library. It consists of a short introduction, a number of architectural drawings of proposed buildings inside the Garrison and a table outlining in detail the work that would be required to make the fortifications serviceable. **Figure 2**

Lilly concluded that the buildings within the Garrison were in a poor state of repair. He said that:

‘for besides what Accommodations and Conveniences are in the Castle, it Self, there has been two large Storehouses, Severall Guard-houses, and many Barracks, with other Offices fitt to receive and accommodate, a Considerable number of men, all of which have been built at great Expence, but are now so many heaps of Ruines.’²¹

The castle required repairs totalling £121 9s 9d and the three barracks or ‘little lodging rooms’ on the ramparts of the castle were ruinous and needed to be repaired. **Figure 3** Lilly also suggested converting the old guard house and store house into barracks with 20 bedsteads, presumably the buildings flanking the Garrison Gate. He also felt that there was a need for more accommodation to house a further 120 men and he provided a design for this barrack building, though this was never built.²² Lilly proposed the construction of a Storehouse overlooking Newman’s Rock.²³ This five-bay, stone building

²⁰ Whitworth Porter *History of the Corps of Royal Engineers* Chatham: The Institution of Royal Engineers 1951 reprint I, 145; N Barker ‘The Building Practice of the English Board of Ordnance, 1680-1720’ in John Bold and Edward Chaney (ed) *English Architecture Public and Private* London: Hambledon Press, 1993, 199-214, 199; ‘Survey of the Fortifications in Plymouth Division by Col. Christian Lily 1714-1717’ British Library King’s Manuscript 45. Dictionary of National Biography Online; National Archives WO47/28, 77.

²¹ ‘Survey of the Fortifications in Plymouth Division by Col. Christian Lily 1714-1717’ British Library King’s Manuscript 45, 5r.

²² ‘Survey of the Fortifications in Plymouth Division by Col. Christian Lily 1714-1717’ British Library King’s Manuscript 45, 5v, 9r.

²³ ‘Survey of the Fortifications in Plymouth Division by Col. Christian Lily 1714-1717’ British Library King’s Manuscript 45, f14 plan and elevation of storehouse.

was built and survives today as Newman House. In style it is very similar to the buildings flanking the slightly earlier gate of Pendennis Castle. Lilly also concluded that the Master Gunner, Abraham Tovey, should have his own house within the Garrison rather than having to live in Hugh Town.²⁴ He proposed a small three-bay, lobby-entry house containing two rooms on the ground floor with a central stair leading to an attic that probably also contained two rooms. This house is now the White House. In 1750 Robert Heath described Tovey's house: 'Under the hill, towards the North Part of the Garrison, stands a convenient Dwelling, in which resides Mr Abraham Tovey, Master-Gunner'.²⁵ It contains 'good Apartments, Yards, Garden, Out-houses, and Cellars, (well stored) also a little House that stands under the Hill, betwixt his Dwelling-House (next the Sea) and the parade above it.'²⁶

After addressing the buildings within the Garrison, Lilly turned his attention to the walls and earthworks. He estimated that the total cost of the work would be £598 1s 7d for Sodwork and £375 1s 5d for earthwork, but if some materials were reused, the total cost could be reduced to £879 7s 7 ¾d. Some parts of the stone walls also required significant repairs. The left flank and most of the face of Newman's Battery had disappeared, and to repair this would cost £93 12s. The south-west corner of the Lower Benham Bastion had collapsed, leaving a large breach between 40ft and 50ft long, a repair that would cost £40 to correct. This battery today may still bear the evidence of where this major repair took place, though it has certainly also been repaired more recently. **Figure 4**

Lilly also provided a detailed breakdown of the work required and the state of the guns on the Garrison. These ranged from a handful of 3-pounders to two 12-pounders and three 16-pounders. As well as these probably relatively modern guns, Lilly recorded the presence of more archaic types of gun, including eight culverins, twenty demi-culverins, twenty-four minions and seven sakers. He had to recommend providing 101 new gun carriages, an

²⁴ 'Survey of the Fortifications in Plymouth Division by Col. Christian Lily 1714-1717' British Library King's Manuscript 45, f16r plan and elevation of Master Gunner's house.

²⁵ Robert Heath A Natural and Historical Account of the Islands of Scilly ...' London 1750, 72.

²⁶ Robert Heath A Natural and Historical Account of the Islands of Scilly ...' London 1750, 73.

indication of the poor state of maintenance of the pieces of artillery and he estimated that £620 0s 9d would be needed to provide the new carriages. On 5 August 1718 Portsmouth was instructed to provide Scilly with oak carriages mounted on plank wheels for three 18-pounders, fourteen 9-pounders, eleven 5¼-pounders and eighteen 4-pounders.²⁷ The provision of forty-six new carriages falls short of the 101 recommended by Lilly, but probably reflects the true number of reasonably, serviceable pieces of artillery available on the islands.

In total Lilly had suggested that £3,914 1s 3d would be the whole cost of his scheme, but the barracks, which would have cost £1,304 3s 2½d, was not built.²⁸ On 13 March 1715/6 £1,000 was allocated to Scilly, and on 18 May 1716 a separate instruction was given to him to spend £825 19s 3¼d, with a further large request for an imprest to pay a bill of £456 21s (sic) dated 23 August 1716.²⁹ In total Lilly had suggested that £3,914 1s 3d would be the whole cost of his scheme, but the barracks, which would have cost £1,304 3s 2½d, was not built.³⁰

Lilly had carried out the survey in 1715, but his submissions for expenses demonstrate that he did not return to the islands until 1717. On 25 July 1715 he paid Captain Chadwick £3 4s 6d for his passage from Plymouth and two days later he paid a further £1 9s 6d for boat hire to take him to Tresco to inspect the island and the harbour. On 3 September 1715 Lilly paid the Master of a Collier for his passage from Scilly to Falmouth, marking his completion of the survey of the islands.³¹ Thereafter, Tovey was presumably left in charge of the repairs and renewal of the earthworks and he may have supervised the construction of buildings, though the quality of the structures and the presence of buildings with similar details at Pendennis, suggests

²⁷ National Archives WO47/31, 214.

²⁸ 'Survey of the Fortifications in Plymouth Division by Col. Christian Lily 1714-1717' British Library King's Manuscript 45, f12 plan and elevation of proposed barracks.

²⁹ National Archives WO47/29, 62; National Archives WO47/29, 119; WO48/56 no pagination.

³⁰ 'Survey of the Fortifications in Plymouth Division by Col. Christian Lily 1714-1717' British Library King's Manuscript 45, f12 plan and elevation of proposed barracks.

³¹ National Archives WO51/96, f72v- f73r.

external help.³² Work was presumably concentrated in the summer months, as is suggested in a letter dated 11 April 1717: 'A letter to the Lords of ye Adm'ty to desire they will Order ye Cap'tn of his Maj'ts Shipe yt attends ye Station of Scilly, to Transport the Engineer & Workmen to & from hence, that are employed upon the works & repairs of that place, this summer, for want of w'ch ye last year not Half what was designed performed.'³³

In 1717 Lilly returned to the islands presumably to supervise the completion of the works. On 2 September 1717 he had spent £3 4s 6d travelling to Scilly from Plymouth and back with 'Artificers'.³⁴ As this was a two-way trip, no date for his return is recorded, but on 15 November 1717 he hired a horse to ride from Plymouth to Falmouth, demonstrating that he had returned from Scilly.³⁵ Contained within the same bill submitted by Lilly was a £35 14s payment to James Fawcett 'for his Assistance in Surveying & Writing 204 days at 3s 6d' and Isaac Pearson was paid £8 6s 6d for his assistance in carrying the chain between 22 August and 11 December.³⁶ Fawcett and Pearson were presumably surveying the island's defences and perhaps they were responsible for the beautiful plan of the Garrison contained within Lilly's manuscript.³⁷

After 1717 Scilly returned to being a minor player in the Ordnance papers. Lilly's work was complete by the end of the year and thereafter Abraham Tovey submitted his bills and drew imprests to cover minor repairs annually or twice-annually. As Storekeeper he managed the everyday needs of the garrison and carried out minor repairs to buildings, and wearing his other hat he normally managed six gunners.³⁸ These soldiers were sometimes a

³² Tovey's high status in the 1717 is suggested in a brief entry in an Ordnance register in which he is permitted to lodge in the Castle until the 'small house is built for him'. National Archives WO47/30, 142.

³³ National Archives WO47/30,100.

³⁴ National Archives WO51/100, 191.

³⁵ National Archives WO51/100, 191.

³⁶ National Archives WO51/100, 191.

³⁷ 'Survey of the Fortifications in Plymouth Division by Col. Christian Lily 1714-1717' British Library King's Manuscript 45.

³⁸ National Archives WO55/509, 36, 1 October 1727; WO54/204 no pagination, 4 April 1735.

handful and during 1717 Tovey was asked to keep them under tighter control.³⁹

In the 1720s and 1730s Tovey normally confined his work to minor repairs, but in a bill dated 31 December 1728 he included £44 'To Building 32 Perch & ½ of Masonry Worke on Sadlers Battery' and 'Cutting 909 ft of Moor Stone and Laying 1596ft for ditto'.⁴⁰ This was the battery sometimes known as Mount Holles, located in front of the Garrison gate, and in the 1738/9 survey of the defences it was described as follows: 'Saddlers Battery has 11 Guns serv'ble but on uns'ble Carriages, the Battery is in good Order.'⁴¹ Despite being 'in good Order' it was not maintained as part of the new defences in the 1740s.

Little emerges from Ordnance papers about everyday life on the Garrison, but a couple of incidents suggest that Tovey may not have got on with everyone on the islands. On 20 January 1720 he complained that Ensign Hanning had allowed women and children to sleep in the barracks and that other abuses taking place included 'feeding their Hogg & Poultry therein'.⁴² By 11 February 1720 this dispute had escalated to the Secretary of War's desk, though he seems to have ignored it, and the last time that this incident was mentioned was on 13 September 1723 when Tovey complained that Hanning had locked him up.⁴³

A more serious dispute broke out in the late 1720s and early 1730s and it demonstrates that Abraham Tovey enjoyed a difficult relationship with at least one commander of the military forces on the islands. Tovey was responsible for his six gunners, the provision of stores to the garrison and the maintenance of fortifications, but this authority potentially put him into conflict with the commanding officer of the infantry garrisoning Scilly. In the British Library there is a printed testimony published by Tovey in response to

³⁹ National Archives WO47/30, 142, 195, 202.

⁴⁰ National Archives WO51/124, 11v.

⁴¹ National Archives WO55/350, 45.

⁴² National Archives WO55/347, 260.

⁴³ National Archives WO55/347, 265, 341.

charges laid against him by Captain Lloyd.⁴⁴ While it purports to be a dispassionate record of events, it actually presents Tovey's perspective on the case.

This dispute began in 1728 over a disagreement about small repairs to Captain Lloyd's house, but Tovey's testimonial suggests that the real problem was that Lloyd did not follow the written procedures needed by the Board of Ordnance, and instead issued verbal orders that Tovey was expected to obey. 'The Captain calls him Rebellious, abuses him, gives him the Lie, calls him Rascal and Scoundrel, threatens to beat him' - following these heated outbursts, Tovey carried out the work, but only after Lloyd agreed to pay the cost if the Board of Ordnance did not pay. Inevitably, it did not pay and Lloyd was tardy in reimbursing Tovey. In January 1732/3 a new row broke out about the gunners not firing a salute in reply to Captain Lloyd's signal and a few days later a soldier, William Fulton, stabbed Tovey between the eyes. Frustratingly the bottom of the page of the pamphlet is missing and so the outcome of this incident is not recorded.

Matters escalated during 1733. In May Tovey was arrested by a corporal sent by the Captain. He was accused of 'shewing Strangers the nakedness of the garrison'. In fact he seems to have walked around the fortifications with Captain Atkins, the captain of a naval vessel moored offshore and Tovey was soon at liberty, if he had ever been arrested. In August 1733 Captain Lloyd denied Tovey use of the well beside his house, a well that belonged to the garrison and therefore Tovey had to bring water some distance from another well that was stagnant. In January 1732/3 Captain Lloyd had apparently allowed Tovey to enclose land beside his house where he created a vegetable garden, but in September 1733 Lloyd ordered that its gates should be pulled down and the garden destroyed. Tovey argued that there was no need to do this as these wooden gates were wide enough to allow any guns or vehicles to pass through. To prevent animals from eating his produce Tovey threw some 'Chichester Wheaten Flower' on his plants, leading Lloyd

⁴⁴ The Case of Abraham Tovey Store-Keeper and Master Gunner, for the Honourable Board of His Majesty's Ordnance, in the Islands of Scilly 1733 British Library 1418.k.38. (1).

to arrest him on charges of spreading poison. Tovey seems to have been held under house arrest for five months and his wife who was 'lame and helpless' was forbidden to have a maid to attend her. Tovey attributed her early death to this and he recorded that on her death bed she apparently blamed Lloyd for her condition. As Tovey was under arrest he had to attend his wife's funeral under guard.

Tovey wished to be tried in Scilly where people would support his testimony, but instead his case was to be heard in front of the Duke of Argyll and the Board of Ordnance requested that the Lieutenant-Governor Major Bennett should attend the hearing. The bill submitted to the Board of Ordnance for Abraham Tovey's costs in relation to the hearing has survived:⁴⁵

'Scilly Island 2 November 1734

To Abraham Tovey for the following Disbursements at this place between the 8 April 1734 and the date above

Passage of the Master Gunner & 3 Witness's to London, provisions &c	5 5 –
Maintenance of the said Witness while in Town 210 days	62 14 –
Passage of 4 other Evidences to London	4 4 –
Maintenance of Do 50 days	20 - -
Passage of the Master Gun'r back to Scilly	7 7 –
Master Gunners Extraordinary Expence in the said Business	13 2 6

⁴⁵ National Archives WO51/135, 118.

The amount of money expended on this case demonstrates how far the conflict between Tovey and Lloyd had escalated. Although the official outcome has not been found, the records regarding the maintenance of the Garrison show that Tovey returned to the islands and continued with his work, presumably exonerated, and by the end of the 1730s Captain Charles Jeffreyson had replaced Lloyd in command of forces on the islands.

Tovey and the Garrison Walls

The plaque above the gate into the Garrison bears the date 1742 and three sets of initials, those of King George II, Francis, 2nd Earl of Godolphin, Governor of the Islands and Abraham Tovey. The Master Gunner was placing himself alongside these nationally-important figures and presumably it was an accolade that was agreed by the Governor and the commanding officer of the infantry on the islands. Far from this marking the end of the building programme, it seems only to commemorate the widening of the gate to allow work to proceed on the extension of the Garrison Walls. It is not the intention here to provide great detail about the reconstruction programme of the walls between 1741 and 1746, as this has been published in an English Heritage book *Defending Scilly* and will be explored in greater detail in a separate article and an English Heritage Research Department report.⁴⁶ However, it is necessary to assess Tovey's involvement in the largest building project ever undertaken in Scilly.

The Garrison Walls enclose an area of land called the Garrison. **Figure 5** This was the smaller of the pair of islands that form St Mary's with a sandbank between the two landmasses, similar in form to the pairing of St Agnes and The Gugh. The defences are roughly oval in plan, with their maximum

⁴⁶ Mark Bowden and Allan Brodie *Defending Scilly* Swindon: English Heritage 2011.

distance from north to south being approximately 900m, while the distance from east to west is around 600m. These walls and earthworks measured approximately 2.5km in length and enclosed almost 40 hectares.

In the 1590s the first section of wall running from the northern tip of the Garrison to the pair of Benham Batteries, was designed to prevent troops landed on the beach below from attacking Star Castle and this measured around 500m in length. During the Civil War earthwork defences were created around the rest of the Garrison and fragments of these survive at the southern end of the Garrison, with a long stretch of breastwork and a number of batteries survives along the west side, where walls were never built to replace them. In 1715 Christian Lilly had recommended that the earthwork defences and the early section of stone walls should be repaired and renewed, but despite these repairs the defences were still in a poor state by the late 1730s when the new commanding officer of Scilly, Captain Charles Jeffreyson produced a lengthy and damning report detailing how the earthworks needed to be replaced. Frances Godolphin submitted this report to the Lords of the Privy Council who ordered that Thomas Armstrong, an 'Engineer in Ordinary', should assess the work that was needed. His report does not seem to survive, but the events that followed clearly demonstrate that he concurred with Jeffreyson's report, and in 1741 building work began in earnest.

Work proceeded broadly clockwise from the Broom Batteries on the east side southwards to Morning Point, where the walls turned westwards through Woolpack, Bartholomew and Boscawen Batteries until they terminated abruptly in 1746 at Steval Point. Each year's work can be followed using evidence found in Board of Ordnance registers, in a series of maps of the Garrison and by examining the fabric of the walls. This demonstrates that all the work was of good quality, but in the later years of the building campaign, particularly from 1744 to 1746, the stonework of the walls was of a higher quality. The change in the finish of the work seems to coincide with responsibility shifting from Abraham Tovey to men from the mainland working for the Board of Ordnance, as well as the use of an outside contractor and supplier of stone.

In most years between 1714 and 1740 Abraham Tovey submitted bills for payments ranging from a few pounds to perhaps £100, but in 1741 Abraham Tovey submitted a bewildering range of financial documents. He drew advances of money worth £746 and he submitted bills to this value, a process call vacating. He also vacated a further £60, the imprest for which seems to be missing from the ledgers. Additionally he also submitted other major bills. On 30 September 1741 the ledger stated that:

‘To Ditto [Abraham Tovey] the Sum of One thousand two hundred & thirty one pounds two shillings & 1d being so much by him disbursed for Materials, and Pay to Artificers and labourers in carrying on the several Works at St Marys Island at Scilly, pursuant to the Honble Boards Orders & Mr Thomas Armstrongs Estimate between 1st of March 1741-2 and the date above ...’⁴⁷

On the same day another bill for £167 4s 2d was paid to Abraham Tovey, though rather frustratingly there is confusion within the entries about the date of the works covered.⁴⁸ Although the ledger entries are clear, they seem to cover work taking place after the date the bill was paid! To add further to the confusion Tovey’s bill for £843 17s 10d, which was considered on 30 September 1741, is scored out and a few days later on 5 October 1741 a bill for the same amount was dealt with.

Although there is some confusion over the detail of the expenditure, it is clear that Tovey was spending hundreds of pounds in 1741. In 1742 Tovey drew and vacated imprests worth £1,195, though some of the large bill entered in the register as being from 1741 could belong to this year.

⁴⁷ National Archives WO51/151, 189.

⁴⁸ National Archives WO51/151, 190.

In 1743 Tovey drew and vacated imprests worth £1,600, but at the end of 1743 he was paid £1,269 10s 7½d for work itemised in a bill documenting the works done to that date:⁴⁹

'To Abraham Tovey Master Gunner at Scilly the Sum of One thousand two hundred & sixty nine pounds, ten shillings & 9d being so much by him disbursed in the Islands of Scilly on His Majestys Service between the 1st of January 1742-3 and the Date above as by Vouchers (viz)

Paid Masons for raising the Curtains and Battery and Parrapet of King Charles Battery & Paying the Smiths Work ...	£153 12s 0½d
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Paid Do for Cleaving and Cutting Morestone taking up and new Setting the Gunstone, & paying the Smiths Work	£170 3s 4d
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Paid Do for building the Curtain from Lower Broom Battery to Morning Point Battery & paying Smiths Work &c	£160 19s 11d
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Paid Do for new building the Woolpack Battery & setting the Gunstone &c and paying the Blacksmith's Work &c	£131 8s 9½d
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Paid Labourers for raising Stones for the Curtains &c	£50 8s 0d
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Paid Do for raising Stones for King Charles Battery	£22 8s 0d
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Paid Do for carrying back the Gunstone &c	£16 9s 0d
---	-----------

Paid Do for filling up the Battery on the inside and Carrying in the Gunstone &c	£46 13s 0d
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Paid Do for raising the Roads & tending the Masons in their several Employments &c	£29 8s 0d
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⁴⁹ National Archives WO51/154, 61 - Bill dated 31st December 1743.

Paid Do for raising the Roads, beating Lime, bringing Clay & making Mortar &c	£19 11s 0d
Paid Do for raising and carrying Stones to build the Curtain from the Lower Broom to the Morning Point Battery &c	£44 15s 6d
Paid Do for raising and carrying Stones to build part of the Curtain from Morning Point to the Woolpack Battery	£35 10s 0d
Paid Do for beating & carrying Lime for ruffcasting & pointing also raising & carrying Stones	£43 14s 0d
Paid Do for carrying back the old Gunstone from the Woolpack Battery & also for clearing for a Foundation	£66 12s 0d
Paid Do for raising & carrying Stones to New build the Woolpack Battery quenching and beating Lime etc	£32 10s 0d
Paid Do for carrying the Gunstone to be new set & filling up the Battery on the inside &c	£12 19s 0d
Paid Carpenters for mending Handbarrows Wheelbarrows & making a Platform for the Gunner's Exercise &c	£16 9s 6d
Paid Gunners, Glaziers, Gunsmiths, Cooper, Chimneysweeper and for looking after Tresco Castle &c	£14 8s 9d
Paid for Materials	£170 1s 6½d
Total	£1238 11s 4½d
To the remittance of £1238.11.4 ½ at 6d per pound	£30 19s 3d

Total

£1269 10s 7½d'

In 1743 William Horneck spent some time in Scilly and perhaps his presence prompted Tovey to submit this detailed bill. Horneck was a very senior engineer, having been appointed as Director of Engineers in 1742, the second highest rank.⁵⁰ Tovey's bill and contemporary maps reveal that since the campaign began, work had been undertaken from Lower Broom on the east side to Woolpack at the southernmost point of the Garrison, as well as from King Charles to Newman's Platform along the northern part. The bill is also instructive as it reveals that the stone for the building work had been quarried on the island. It is unclear whether Woolpack and the works in the south-eastern half of the Garrison were completed, but Kane William Horneck's Map of 1744 reveals that during that year work had reached a short distance to the west of Redan B, about 200m west of Woolpack, where there is a clear joint in the masonry.

During 1744 Tovey did not draw any imprests, but at the end of the year he submitted a bill for £1,474 16s 0d.⁵¹ He itemised it according to the type of workmen and by the part of the year in which the expenses were accrued, but unfortunately he did not specify it in the same detail as in the previous year.

Until 1744 Abraham Tovey seems to have been largely unchecked in his management of the building programme. However, from 1745-7 a number of new names appear in the Ordnance accounts, including engineers, overseers and two men who seem to have been drafted in to deal with the complex finances. Nevertheless, in 1745 Tovey still drew imprests worth £500, while William Redstone who was described as the 'Assistant Storekeeper at Plymouth & Paymaster to the Works at Scilly Island' drew over £1,100.⁵² In 1746 Tovey took a secondary role, receiving only £37 16s 11d for 'Incident Charges' while Nicholas Mercator who was the 'Pay Master to the Works at Islands of Scilly' during that year drew imprests worth £850 and also

⁵⁰ National Archives WO55/508, 108.

⁵¹ National Archives WO51/159, 54 Bill dated 31 December 1744.

⁵² WO51/157, 123;WO48/86, 511ff.

submitted a bill for £826 9s 1d.⁵³ Isaac Tovey, Abraham's son, took on the role of Overseer of Works in 1745 and John Hargrave exercised this responsibility from 1746 until early 1747, by which time work had finished completely.⁵⁴ **Figure 6**

Although Abraham Tovey was perhaps relegated to a secondary role during the later years of the building project, his overall contribution was nevertheless significant. Robert Heath writing in 1750 was impressed by what Tovey had achieved:

'He has greatly improved the Garrison-Roads, as well as the Batteries, by making them convenient for removing Cannon upon, which before was done with the utmost Difficulty. One of which Roads he has almost compleated round the Line, next the several Batteries of Cannon, and has caused Part of it to be hewn thro' a vast Rock, or Quarry-Substance, where before it was impassable.'⁵⁵

After the completion of the Garrison Walls, Tovey's previous freedom to act largely unsupervised by the centralised administration of the Board of Ordnance seems to have been slightly tempered. In April 1750 a storm damaged two small, old buildings, apparently those flanking the gate and Tovey had estimated that 20,000 slates would be needed.⁵⁶ The letter to the Ordnance, not written by Tovey, also noted:

'And that the Parapet has been falling ever since Tovey built it, being mostly stone laid in Earth without Lime and so close to the Edge of the Cliff that as that is undermined it must fall in Course, but that it would be cheaper to build a new Parapet more retired upon the Land than to secure this by building against the Sea.'

⁵³ National Archives WO51/161, 132; WO48/87, 482, 486, 488.

⁵⁴ National Archives WO51/164, 135, 137; National Archives WO47/34, f149r -18 April 1749 Order 'That the Master Gunner at Scilly Island get the necessary Repairs done to the Star Castle House, the Charge of which will be allowed in his Disbursements, and that his son Isaac have Leave to live in the house until the Governour's Return.'

⁵⁵ Heath 1750, 73-4.

⁵⁶ National Archives WO 47/35, 315, 377.

The roof repairs were accepted and on 31 July 1750 Kane William Horneck agreed to the purchase of the slates, but the repair to the parapet was put on hold until he had inspected the proposed work later in the year.⁵⁷ Repairs to the Master Gunner's House and Barracks were also carried out in 1750, with £55 15d 7d being paid to 'James Murch Hellier, his bill for helling, and days work performed on the repairs'.⁵⁸

Abraham Tovey – A Postscript

Abraham Tovey's will was proved on 23 February 1759 at which date he was said to have died recently.⁵⁹ His will dates from a few years earlier, 13 April 1751, when he described that 'being Sick and weak in Body but of perfect mind' he had decided that he should make a will.⁶⁰ His wife was alive when he wrote his final testament, suggesting he had remarried.

He entrusted the execution of his will to his daughter Winnifred Cork, although he had four sons, Michael, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. His will mentions his sister Mary Bishop who lived in Glastonbury and there are two small provisions for Mary Mitchell and Mistress Jane Clark. The Mitchell name recurs in documents related to Isaac Tovey's death, as before his death in 1767 he had appointed John Mitchell, described as a merchant in Penzance, as a guardian for his children.⁶¹ However, there were other Mitchells in the Tovey family's past. In a warrant dated 1 October 1727, issued following the accession of George II, Abraham Tovey was re-appointed Master Gunner while James and John Mitchell were recorded as gunners.⁶² James died in 1728, but on 1 October 1739 Justinian Mitchell became one of the gunners, under Abraham Tovey's command.

⁵⁷ National Archives WO 47/35, 378; WO 47/36, 69.

⁵⁸ National Archives WO51/176, 148.

⁵⁹ Cornwall Record Office AP/T/2795/2.

⁶⁰ Cornwall Record Office AP/T/2795/1.

⁶¹ Cornwall Record Office AP/T/2949/1 2 March 1767.

⁶² National Archives WO55/509, 36.

Abraham Tovey's will named his four sons and it seems that most of his children followed their father's choice of career. On 1 February 1734 Isaac Tovey was appointed as a gunner under his father's command.⁶³ In 1745, during the construction of the Garrison Walls he was described as the Overseer of Works, but in the following year John Hargrave carried out the same function. In the late 1740s Isaac seems to have begun to succeed his father, at least in terms of maintaining the buildings of the Garrison. On 24 May 1748 Isaac was ordered by the Board of Ordnance to repair the barrack bedding, a task that might have been expected to be done by his father and on 10th March 1748/9 the Ordnance Minutes recorded that: 'Ordered That Abraham Tovey late Contractor be Allowed and Paid for what is due to him to the time his contract expired, And that the doing of the Repairs &c to the Garrison and Barracks be referred to the Surveyor General.'⁶⁴ A week later father and son were both reporting in a letter to the Board of Ordnance on the fabric of the Garrison: 'From Abraham and Isaac Tovey setting forth the Damage done to the Barracks and Works in Scilly Island, by the late Storms and Inundations.'⁶⁵ On 18 April 1749 it is clear that Abraham was still the Master Gunner, but his son was allowed to stay in the newly-repaired Star Castle until the Governor of the islands needed it.⁶⁶ A warrant dated 20 December 1757 finally appointed Isaac as the Master Gunner of Scilly, in succession to his father.⁶⁷

In Board of Ordnance records there are also references to an Abraham Tovey and a Jacob Tovey serving in the artillery. Abraham was appointed as a matross in the Royal Regiment of Artillery on 5 May 1734, serving under Brigadier Albert Borgard, who had been one of the commanders of the artillery train in Spain when his father served there.⁶⁸ By 1738 he had risen to

⁶³ National Archives WO55/509, 36, WO54/204 no pagination.

⁶⁴ National Archives WO55/539, 161; WO47/34, f73r.

⁶⁵ National Archives WO47/34, f87r 17th March 1748.

⁶⁶ National Archives WO47/34, f149r -18 April 1749 Order 'That the Master Gunner at Scilly Island get the necessary Repairs done to the Star Castle House, the Charge of which will be allowed in his Disbursements, and that his son Isaac have Leave to live in the house until the Governour's Return.'

⁶⁷ WO54/239, 31.

⁶⁸ National Archives WO55/509, 161.

be a gunner and by 1740 he was recorded as a corporal.⁶⁹ It may prove possible to follow most of the steps of the rest of his career through the records of the Royal Artillery, but this would require a separate article. However, two decades later Captain Tovey was prominent in the Seven Years War; in 1759 he was in command of an artillery company at the Battle of Minden in north-west Germany and he served during the siege of Belleisle in 1761.⁷⁰ Abraham Tovey died in 1781 during the siege of Gibraltar and his will was proved on 6 February 1782.⁷¹ He has sometimes been confused with Abraham Tovey, the subject of this article, but as has already been demonstrated Scilly's Abraham had died in 1759. However, the Lieutenant Colonel was Abraham's son, the boy who began his career as a matross in 1734. In Lieutenant Colonel Tovey's will he left money to his sister Winifred Cork, who was the wife of William Cork on the Islands of Scilly and as mentioned above Abraham senior had entrusted the execution of his will to his daughter Winnifred Cork, proving the connection between the two Abrahams.

Jacob Tovey also began his career as a matross on 16 June 1737 and by 1740 he seems to have risen to the rank of corporal.⁷² His progress thereafter is unclear in military records, but in the National Archives there is a will proved on 20 October 1761, written by Jacob Tovey 'Gentleman of Bombay'.⁷³ A reference in the proof of the will to 'Abraham Tovey the natural and lawful brother' suggests that after a brief career in the artillery Jacob ventured abroad to enjoy a successful business career.

The life of anyone as humble as a simple artillery man would be difficult to follow in the early 18th century, but in Abraham Tovey's case it is fortunate that records of his military service and his work for the Ordnance have survived. And on St Mary's the walls of the Garrison, and particularly its gate serve as a concrete reminder of his colourful and long career.

⁶⁹ National Archives WO55/509, 184; WO55/512, 118.

⁷⁰ Francis Duncan *History of the Royal Regiment of Artillery* London: John Murray 1872, 206ff and 230.

⁷¹ National Archives Prob 11/1088.

⁷² National Archives WO55/509, 180; WO55/136, 136.

⁷³ National Archives Prob 11/870, f41v – 42r.

Figure 1 - It is debateable whether Abraham Tovey actually deserved the accolade of having his initials placed alongside the King's and the Governor's above the Garrison Gate, but it celebrates his long life on Scilly, as well as his role in the extension of the Garrison Walls. [DP085284]

Figure 2 - This map of 1715 by Colonel Christian Lilly shows Star Castle at the top and at the southern end of the Garrison can be seen the 'old Fort'. Around the Garrison can be seen the walls that existed (shown with a red outer line) with earthworks shown in black. Above is a view of the Garrison from approximately where Harry's Walls was built. [© British Library Board (British Library King's Manuscript 45)]

Figure 3 - This aerial photograph of Star Castle (1593-4) shows the castle in the centre with a narrow passage around it. Outside this is the ramparts and the whole site is surrounded by a dry ditch. [NMR 23939/036]

Figure 4 - Lower Benham Battery was built on the shore to prevent any enemy forces outflanking the new Garrison Walls. However, its location by the seashore means that it has had to be regularly repaired and rebuilt, at least from the early 18th century. [DP022418]

Figure 5 - From the late 16th century it was realised that a heavily-fortified Garrison on St Mary's could guarantee control of the waters around the islands. In the 1740s new walls were built around large parts of it while in c 1900 6-inch gun batteries surrounded by earthworks were set into the hillside. [NMR 26571/028]

Figure 6 - This 1810 copy of a 1746 map shows the walls as they exist today, but the final stretch of wall from the wrongly labelled Bartholomew's Battery (actually Colonel George Boscawen's Battery) to Steval Point is shown in yellow, as if not complete. [*National Monuments Record*]