

AA I AA THE ANGLO-AMERICAN ISHAM ANCESTRY ASSOCIATION

Meeting Sir Gyles Isham

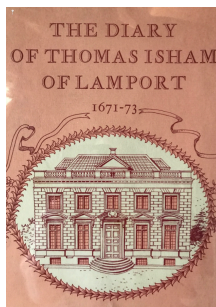


I visited Lamport Hall late in the summer of 1975. Prior to that trip to Europe, I admit to a very casual reading of Brainard's history of *Ishams in England and America* and though aware of Lamport, I was vague about it's proximity to the town of Isham which I intended to see. I knew nothing of Sir Gyles or what he was up to there.

The driver of my hitched ride out of Northampton asked me where I was going. In the interests of being understood, I said Isham with a short initial vowel because it is so often mispronounced by unfamiliar people. "Oh," he said, "we say Isham in these parts", pronouncing it correctly as family members do.

Enquiries in the town led me to a Mrs Tynan who offered me a sherry and when she learned of my interest in the origins of the name and that I had never seen Lamport Hall, insisted on ringing her friend with a car. Then the two elderly dears took me there. "You wouldn't happen to be Sir Gyles' heir?" she enquired.

I arrived at Lamport Hall a long-haired ragamuffin with a backpack but was received very graciously by Gyles. He was in a suit, dignified – but warmly welcoming. He explained that he was preparing to set up Lamport Hall as a private trust and there was a lot to attend to including 'dry rot' in upper floors and a valuation of all the art and furniture. I was given a tour. He seemed impressed that I especially liked the sideboard with paintings from the story of Jonah. As it happened, an art valuer was there during my visit and also people setting up for a musical ensemble - an event planned for that evening.



He sat me down in the library next to the large globe that features in the photographs and introduced me to his newly published translation of the young Thomas Isham's Latin diary from the 17th century. In particular Sir Gyles explained his annotation about the likely identity of John Isham from whom most American Ishams are descended. He speculated that the 'mutineer' who appears in two diary entries was John who, following his failed welcome at Lamport, sailed on to America and appeared as a land owner in Massachusetts in the latter part of the century. (If nothing else the dates would fit.) I still have the copy of the Thomas diary Gyles signed for me before I left.

Sir Gyles arranged for the art valuer to give me a ride. I departed in a shiny Jaguar, my backpack strapped above the boot, convertible top down – and the Northamptonshire countryside flashing by.

Steve Isham (Stephen E. Isham) December 28, 2016