

On the 28 Feb 1556, Lord Stourton was arraigned at Westminster Hall before the judges and several of the council. It was long before he would answer to the charge laid against him, till at last the Lord Chief Justice declared to him that he must be pressed to death, according to the laws of the land, if he would not answer; after which he made answer, and was convicted, and condemned to be hanged, together with his four men, for the following murders.

In the reign of Edward VI, William Lord Stourton, having charge of one of the King's places near Boulogne, died; and shortly after his death, Charles, Lord Stourton, his son and heir, went to Kilmington, to the house of William Hartgill, Esq., where Elizabeth, his mother, sojourned, and earnestly persuaded William Hartgill to be a means that Dame Elizabeth should enter into a bond to him, in a great sum of money, that she should not marry; which the said William Hartgill refused, unless Lord Stourton would assign some yearly portion for his mother to live upon. Dame Elizabeth was half sister of John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland.

In discoursing on this matter Lord Stourton quarrelled with William Hartgill; and on Whitsunday, in the morning, he went to Kilmington Church with several men, with bows and arrows, and guns; and when he arrived at the church door, John Hartgill, son of William, being told of the said Lord Stourton's coming, went out of the church, drew his sword, and ran to his father's house adjoining the churchyard side. Several arrows were shot at him in passing, but he was not hurt. His father and mother were forced to go up into the tower of the church with two or three of their servants for safety. When John Hartgill arrived at his father's house he took his long-bow and arrow, bent a cross bow, charged a gun, and caused a woman to bring the cross-bow and gun after him, and he with his long-bow came forth and drove away the said Lord Charles and his men from the house, and from about the church, except half-a-score that had entered the church, among whom one was hurt in the shoulder with a hail shot. His father advised him to take his horse and ride up to the court, and tell the council how he had been used. On Monday, towards evening, he reported to the honourable council how his father had been dealt with, whereupon they sent down Sir Thomas Speak, High Sheriff of Somerset, not only to deliver the captives, but to bring with him the said Charles Lord Stourton, who, when he came, was committed to the Fleet, where he remained but for a short time.

It appeared that as soon as John Hartgill had set off towards London, Lord Stourton's men returned to the church of Kilmington, and about Mr Hartgill's house, and continued about there till the arrival of the sheriff, which was on Wednesday; during which time William Hartgill's wife was permitted to go home on Whitsunday, towards night. But in the meantime Lord Stourton's men went to the pasture of William Hartgill, took his riding gelding, and carried him to Stourton Park pales and shot him with a cross bow, reporting that Hartgill had been hunting in his park upon the gelding. Thus Lord Stourton continued his malice throughout King Edward's reign, and with violence took from William Hartgill all his corn, cattle, etc.

On the death of King Edward, William Hartgill and his son petitioned Queen Mary and her council for redress, her Majesty being then at Basing End, in Hampshire. The council called Lord Stourton and William Hartgill before them, and Lord Stourton promised that if William Hartgill and his son would come to his house, and desire his good will, they should not only have it, but also be restored to their goods and cattle; where upon his promise, made in such presence, they

took John Dackcombe, Esq., with them to witness their submission. When they came near Stourton House, in a lane half-a-dozen of Lord Stourton's men rushed forth, and letting Mr Dackcombe and William Hartgill pass them, they stepped before John Hartgill, and when he turned his horse to ride away, six others of the said lord's men beset him before and behind; and, before he could draw his sword and get from his horse, wounded him in three or four places, and left him for dead. Nevertheless, in half-an-hour, he recovered himself, got upon his horse, and took refuge in the house of Richard Mumpesson of Maiden Bradley, gent.

This at last became a subject of Star Chamber inquiry, and Lord Stourton was fined in a certain sum to be paid to the Hartgills, and imprisoned in the Fleet, whence he obtained licence, upon some pretence, to retire to his house in the country, and took an opportunity to murder both the Hartgills.

Within three or four days after his arrival at Stourton Caundle he sent advice to the Hartgills that he was ready to pay them the sums of money as ordered by the Star Chamber, and to end all disputes between them.

They agreed to meet him at Kilminster church on Monday after Twelfth Day, at ten o'clock; and Lord Stourton came accordingly to Kilminster, accompanied by fifteen or sixteen of his servants, sundry tenants, and some gentle, men and justices, to the number of sixty. He went to the church house and sent word to the Hartgills, who were in the church, that the church was no place to talk of worldly matters, and that he thought the church house a fitter place. The Hartgills came out of the church; but fearing ill, refuse to enter into any covered place, the church excepted; whereupon it was proposed that a table should be set upon the open green, which was done accordingly.

Lord Stourton laid thereupon a cap-case and a purse, as though he intended to make payment, and calling the two Hartgills, said that the council had ordered him to pay them a certain sum of money, every penny of which they should have. Marry, he would first know them to be true men; and then laid hands upon them, saying, "I arrest you of felony" ; on which his men, to the number of ten or twelve, by violence thrust them into the church house, where, with his own hand, the lord took from them their purses. Then having in readiness two cords, he delivered them to his man to bind the Hartgills; and to the younger of the Hartgills, when bound, he gave a blow in his face, and coming out of the house with his sword, and finding at the door young Hartgill's wife, he kicked at her, and gave her such a stroke with his sword between her neck and head, that she fell to the ground nearly dead. From hence he caused the two Hartgills to be conveyed to the parsonage of Kilminster, where they were kept with their arms bound behind them, and without meat or drink. About one o'clock in the morning they were conveyed to a house called Bonham near Stourton; and arriving on Tuesday about three in the morning, they were laid, fast bound, in separate places, without meat, drink, or fire, or anything to lie upon.

About ten o'clock Lord Stourton sent to Bonham, William Farree, Roger Gough, John Welshman and Macute Jacob, commanding them to convey to the Hartgills to a place appointed, and warning them, that in case they should make any noise, to kill them at once. These four brought them into a close adjoining Stourton, and knocked them on the head with two clubs, till the

murderers thought they had been dead (his lordship in the meantime standing at the gallery door, which was but a small distance from the place). This done, they wrapped themselves in their own gowns, and carried the bodies through a garden into his lordship's gallery, and from thence into a place at the end, his lordship bearing the candle before them. Being not quite dead, they groaned much, especially old Hartgill. When William Farree, one of the murderers, swearing by God's blood they were not yet dead, his lordship himself ordered their throats to be cut, lest a French priest, lying near to the place, might hear them; and William Farree took out his knife and cut both their throats, Lord Stourton standing by with the candle in his hand. One of the murderers then said: "Ah! my lord, this is a pitiful sight. Had I thought what I now think before the thing was done, your whole land should not have won me to consent to such an act". His lordship answered: "What a faint- hearted knave is this: is it any more than ridding us of two knaves that, living, were troublesome both to God's love and man's? There is no more account to be made of them than the killing of two sheep". Then their bodies were tumbled into a dungeon; and after Henry Sims and Roger Gough had been let down with cords, for there were no steps, they dug a pit and buried them together; Lord Stourton often calling to them from above to make speed.

The bodies were afterwards taken up by Sir Anthony Hungerford, and were found in the same apparel that they were taken in, buried very deep, covered first with earth, then two courses of thick paving, and finally with chips and shavings of timber, above the quantity of two cartloads.

In the examination of the atrocities of Lord Stourton it appeared that he had caused, not long before, a barn of one Thomas Chaffin to be set on fire by three of his servants; and then against Chaffin, for saying it was not done without the knowledge of the said Lord Stourton, or some of his servants, he brought an action, and recovering a hundred pounds damage, he took for the payment out of his pasture by force twelve hundred sheep, with the wool upon their backs, and all the oxen, kine, horses and mares that he could find. On another occasion, from one Willoughby he caused to be taken, for his pleasure, a whole team of oxen, whereof two were found fattening in the stall of his house when he was apprehended.

On the 2 Mar Lord Stourton and four of his servants rode from the Tower with Sir Robert Oxenbridge, the lieutenant, with certain of the guards, through London towards Salisbury. The first night they lay at Hounslow, the next day they went to Staines, thence to Basingstoke, and to Salisbury.

Lord Stourton was accordingly executed on the 6 Mar, in the market place at Salisbury, and his four men in the country near the place where the murder was committed; and previous to his death he made great lamentation for his wilful and impious deeds.

<http://www.tudorplace.com.ar/Bios/CharlesStourton%288BStourton%29.htm>