

Nancy Brown, Confidential Servant to the Ingram Family - Lyme Regis Cemetery

<https://www.lymeregismuseumresearchteam.co.uk>

Graham Davies & Greg Cattell, March 2020

This table top tomb is located on the northern boundary of section C (C261-23) in Lyme Regis cemetery. The authors discovered that a servant was buried alongside members of a family, which she had served for upwards of 70 years. Such an unusual finding needed further investigation.



In Memory of
NANCY BROWN
 Born at Middleton in Teesdale
 November 15th 1795
 Died at Lyme Regis
 April 27th 1890
 For upwards of 70 years
 a confidential servant
 in the family of the late
 H.F. Ingram Esq
 of Poulett House
 Interred in the vault beneath
 by the express wishes of his
 surviving relatives

Sacred to the Memory of
GREAM HUGHES INGRAM
 only son of
HUGHES FRANCIS INGRAM ESQ and RUTH GRACE
 his wife
 He was born at Yotes Court in the county of Kent
 May 13th A.D. 1850
 And died at Eton College, July 8th A.D. 1867
 "Blessed are the Pure in Heart for they shall see God"

Also Sacred to the Memory of
MARGARET INGRAM
 of Poulett House
 who died February 1st 1884 aged 74 years
"Blessed are the Dead which died in the Lord"
 REV XIV

Hughes Francis Ingram Esq came to live in Poulett House (today's Hotel Alexandra), Lyme Regis in 1860. The 65 year old widower, a 'landed proprietor and fundholder', was accompanied by his younger sister, Margaret, and his 10 year old son Greem. The household staff comprised seven servants including a housekeeper (Miss Ann Brown), nurse (Miss Mary Nash), cook, housemaid, kitchen maid, butler (James Martin) and footman. The three named servants had served their master at his home in Yotes Court, Mereworth in Kent (1851 census). In addition, there would have been gardeners and a groom/coachman who lived in the town. We note in the census records that the 'confidential servant' Miss Brown is usually referred to as 'Ann' rather than 'Nancy'.

Mr Ingram was a successful business man, initially based in Halifax, a multi-millionaire in today's values, which included freehold shares in the Aire and Calder Navigation.

The newspapers help to paint a picture of the family's life in Lyme Regis. Initially renting his residence, Ingram purchased Poulett House and adjoining grounds in 1867 at auction from Mr Hawkshaw for £3,000. The annual bazaar in aid of the funds of the Church Schools was held in August, weather permitting, in the grounds of Poulett House. The success of these bazaars was attributed to the exertions of the proprietor's sister, Miss Ingram. In 1865, 'Master Ingram' also took part superintending the sale of pictures, among which were oil paintings of local subjects by his aunt. The following year, the Ingrams exhibited their collection of paintings, chiefly by the old Italian masters, in the servants' hall, which proved a great attraction.

Gream Hughes Ingram, died of rheumatic fever in July 1867 whilst at Eaton. The interment took place on July 16th at Lyme Regis cemetery. In respect to the memory of the deceased, most of the shops on the line of route were closed.

Hughes Francis Ingram died at Poulett House on 11th April 1883. He is buried in his wife's grave at St Lawrence Church, Mereworth, Kent.

Margaret Ingram died on 1st February 1884 and is buried in the 'family grave' in Lyme cemetery.

Poulett House was disposed of in March 1884 by private treaty by the executors. The purchaser was the Rev E Peek.

Miss Ann/Nancy Brown (Housekeeper), Miss Mary Tomkins (Cook) and Mr James Martin (Butler) had all been servants at Poulett House throughout the Ingram's time at Lyme Regis.

Following the death of Miss Ingram, Mr Martin married Miss Tomkins and settled in a little house at Cobb Hamlet. James Martin was a trusted and faithful butler to Mr Ingram for many years. He had travelled far and wide with his master, visiting the fields of Waterloo, Venice, Naples, Genoa and Paris &c. For a few years, Mr Martin was a Lyme Regis town councillor, and for over ten years acted as treasurer of the Montagu Lodge, 663, of Freemasons. James died in 1892, Mary in 1902, and they are buried in Lyme cemetery.

Miss Brown gave over 70 years of service to the Ingram family. The final leg of this journey in Lyme Regis is documented in the census records from 1861 to 1881, where she is housekeeper at Poulett House.

The 1851 census record describes Mr Ingram's household at Yotes Court, Mereworth, Kent. Now a widower, he lives with his young son, Gream, his sister Margaret, two in-law relatives, and eleven servants, including Miss Brown as housekeeper. Mr Ingram married Ruth Grace Strode in 1849, but she died on 8th June 1850 following the birth of their son, and is buried in St Lawrence Church burial ground, Mereworth. It was assumed that the family lived here until their move to Lyme Regis, but an 1858 directory for Mereworth records a Mr Williams living at Yokes (sic) Court.

The beginning of this story is at Staindrop Hall, County Durham where Hughes Francis Ingram (1796) and his siblings were born and lived with their parents, John and Frances Ingram. It will have been this household to which the young Miss Brown came as a servant. In the 1881 census for Lyme Regis, Nancy Brown, housekeeper at Poulett House, is incorrectly described as being born at Staindrop.

There are gaps in Nancy Brown's story yet to be resolved.

References

Ancestry.co.uk
British Newspaper Archive
LRM Research Team's Cemetery Project
Website of St Lawrence Church, Mereworth