



Left: Three members of Windsor Dedworth Manor Townswomens Guild carry the Chiltern and Castle Federation Banner through Windsor in the Queen's Golden Jubilee Parade June 2002. Left to right: Margaret Wagg, Penny Paramore and Pat Jones. See page 18

Who Do You Think You Are? The Life of James Thomas Bedborough Stonemason, Builder and Property Magnate

In December 2008 the Windsor Local History Group was approached by researchers for the BBC Television programme *Who do You Think You Are?* with a view to including a feature on the 19th century Windsor personality James Thomas Bedborough who was the great great great great-grandfather of TV presenter Davina McCall. This was to be the start of a voyage of discovery both for me as a historical researcher and was also to form part of an emotional journey for Davina as she slowly pieced together the genealogical jigsaw of her newly-discovered Windsor ancestors.

The research carried out on James Thomas Bedborough showed him to be a builder, politician philanthropist and entrepreneur who could truly be described as the 'man of the moment' and was involved in many aspects of Windsor life. Bedborough, who started his career as a simple stonemason's apprentice, was to accumulate a vast property empire, but by his death in 1860 was unable to leave his family any income. This led both to legal battles and also family tragedies – and remained unsettled for over seventeen years. In this article we consider Bedborough's career as Stonemason and builder and how he became a great property developer and owner.

Early Family History

James Thomas Bedborough was born into a family who for at least three generations had been stonemasons. On 17 October 1787 James Thomas Bedborough was born to Thomas and Mary Bedborough in the Parish of St Sepulchre, London and was christened the following year on 15 June 1788. At this time his father Thomas would have been a jobbing stonemason working in London (although he kept a home in Windsor) and James Thomas was destined to follow in his father's footsteps. Nothing is known of his youth but in 1804 he began his apprenticeship aged 16 as a stonemason to his father Thomas Bedborough. James Thomas's grandfather and great grandfather had all been stonemasons going back to the beginning of the eighteenth century.