

JOURNAL

Thomas Isham (1656–1681)

Sir Justinian Isham (1610–1675), Baronet Isham, devoted much of his life to studying the natural sciences, becoming a member of the Royal Society in 1663. Married twice, he had three children by his first wife Jane Garrard and, after her death, four more with his second wife, Vere Leigh. They resided on the family estate at at Lamport Hall (Northamptonshire). Sir Justinian promised his son Thomas a reward if the boy kept a diary, and Thomas wrote a sentence or two in Latin every day for three years.

- 1 Nov 1671 My father first taught me the way to draw parallel lines and to divide a straight line. Father was godfather to the son of John Hanbury Esquire, and the name given the child was John.
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- 2 Nov 1671 Thomas Hagady was married. William, the eldest son of Mr. Baxter, having lost his ribbon, or wedding favour, shed tears.
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- 3 Nov 1671 Our dog Toss was shut up to breed with Beauty, the little bitch of Mr. Richardson, which is so called from its handsome appearance.
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- 4 Nov 1671 Mr. Guy came here and dined with us, and said he would send twenty apple trees to my father as a gift.
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- 5 Nov 1671 The rustic feasts were celebrated according to custom. Father promised me £6 a year if I would describe whatever happened on each day.
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- 6 Nov 1671 Sir William Craven and his wife, the daughter of Gilbert Clerke, Esquire, of Watford, dined with us. Mr. Wikes came with his hounds and challenged ours to a coursing match, but the beaters could not find a hare. A very large hog was killed the same day.
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- 7 Nov 1671 William Smith returned from London and said John Chapman, our bailiff, had sold all the beasts. When asked whether he brought any other news, he said, being hindered by other business, he had not sought after news, adding a rustic proverb — “Go day, come day, God send Sunday.”
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- 8 Nov 1671 John Chapman returned home. The same day, labourers with a team removed stones out of the orchard and carried them away to mend the highways.
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- 9 Nov 1671 A great fall of snow fell and covered the ground with a white clothing. We finished the first book of Caesar’s *Commentaries*. The hound Sissa had eleven puppies, which were, however, all drowned early the next day.
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- 10 Nov 1671 Jeremiah Bullivant came and told my father he was going on Monday to the Countess of Sunderland’s. The carpenter made new shelves to put Parish or Justices’ books on. Taffy, brother Justinian’s white cock, which was at Thomas Pole’s, having had one of his spurs violently wrenched off, died, which proved that the people of Houghton were indeed rustic and altogether ignorant of grammar not to remember the trite saying “Never lay hands on a white cock.”
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- 20 Nov 1671 News was brought that Dr. Langham of Walgrave was made a knight. Our cook, who had said he would give to Holland five shillings if he should play dice with the Doctor, lost control over himself and played again. The same day a row of cherries was planted, where, while we were inspecting the workmen, we found two shillings and, not being able to discover whose they were, we divided them among the workmen. Cook having returned from Mr. Guy the lawyer’s, brought twelve apple trees, which ought to be planted tomorrow.
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- 21 Nov 1671 This day Thomas Nuns measured the fields near Haybrig, and near the spring commonly called Rodewell. A stray horse was found in Scaldwell Field and pounded for three weeks. It was brought here as no one could make good a claim to it. News came of the death of Lord Fairfax.
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- 22 Nov 1671 Mr. Wright dined with us and at dinner asked for beer, which he did not see brought to him. Whilst talking with my Mother and taking his hat off lowly, he threw the ale over the table and wet the guests who sat near him, and specially that celebrated man Alexander Charles Curtis, Doctor of Medicine, to whom he made many excuses, and whom he invited to his house in the most friendly way.
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- 23 Nov 1671 Cook went to Olney to buy all sorts of trees to plant in our new orchard.
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- 24 Nov 1671 The trees were planted in the orchard in five straight rows.
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- 29 Nov 1671 Lewis set out for Windsor.
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- 30 Nov 1671 The corpse of Sir John Gell, Knight, of Cheshire, passed through the village, conveyed in a carriage. Malser's wife had a daughter today. White pruned the hanging branches of the apple trees. Twigden's ferrets were nearly killed by a marten, which hid in a cave near the Mount.
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- 1 Dec 1671 Twigden went to Blueberries and only caught four rabbits.
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- 2 Dec 1671 A stranger woman on her journey died here and was buried in the churchyard.
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- 3 Dec 1671 Malser's daughter died in the night. Mr. Maidwell preached at our house. Lewis returned from Windsor, his business having failed.
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- 4 Dec 1671 It was reported that a girl travelling from London to Leicester was found dead in a ditch near Creaton.
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- 5 Dec 1671 A girl, well-dressed enough, called and said she could make all kinds of female dresses, and offered her services to mother.
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- 14 Dec 1671 Mr. Whitlaw, a Scotchman, the schoolmaster of Hilborough, dined here and amongst other matters said that the master of Shrewsbury School had been barred out by his scholars and, whilst trying to enter again through the window, had been shot in the arm with a bullet by one of the scholars. He also said that the daughter of Stephen Langham, Esquire, was about to marry Mr. Stiles of Kent today.
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- 20 Dec 1671 Today we challenged the Maidwell men to a cockfight. Two oxen were killed for Christmas. Dr. Alexander Charles Curtis, Doctor of Medicine, went to Watford to see Mr. Clerk.
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- 21 Dec 1671 Mr. Wykes this day married the daughter and heiress of Mr. Clerk of Loddington. They were married at Old by Mr. Ward, where they dined. Mr. Guy came here to dinner and said the Duke of Somerset had died of smallpox. Robert went to Twigden's to ask him to come and catch rabbits, but he found him confined to his bed, so he could not come. Mr. Maidwell came tonight.
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- 22 Dec 1671 Mr. Wasey the Painter, with his brother Newton, Clergyman of Harrington, dined here.
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- 23 Dec 1671 We heard that Mr. Berriman, Clerk of Beddington, had died, and on his heart being dissected a stone was found in it.
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- 24 Dec 1671 Mr. Maidwell preached to the people.
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- 25 Dec 1671 The poor of Lamport and Houghton came to dinner. Mr. Maidwell preached.
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- 26 Dec 1671 The Daventry musicians came, being hired to exercise their art. Mr. Green the elder of Marston came and said his wife was very ill. The labourers of Lamport and Houghton came to dinner.
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- 27 Dec 1671 The better class inhabitants were asked to dinner. The Countess of Sunderland had a daughter. Mr. Ward dined with us.
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- 14 Mar 1672 Daniel Baxter¹ went to London to be apprenticed to an apothecary by name Joseph Edward, a citizen known for his prudence and probity. Daniel's eldest sister Katherine went with him and will return before Easter Day. Mr. Baxter agreed for £40 and to find him in three suits of clothes. Mr. Maidwell came here and preached on Sunday. After dinner a messenger from Northampton brought the news that his brother Thomas Maidwell had burned his leg (the messenger knew not how), but wished his brother to go to him, who at once mounted his horse and set out to Northampton. Dr. Curtis was very angry with Mr. Green's man because he turned his back upon him.
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- 15 Mar 1672 This day I am fifteen years old.
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- 19 Apr 1671 War being begun against Holland, many soldiers were enrolled in town and country. Today 33 men passed near our place for London to fight the Dutch, to escort whom ten armed men, Horse and Foot, were assigned. One of the conductors was Abraham, the brother of Edward Freeman. When they arrived near Brixworth, they lay on the grass and had dinner brought from the town, bread and cheese, and plenty of strong ale. But as much as possible they are kept out of towns, lest they run away through narrow alleys or hide themselves.....
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- 5 Sep 1671 We went to Rothwell races. The course is well-situated in a plain between the hills, 2000 yards in length, 500 in breadth; they go twice round before they reach the goal. Four horses ran—first, Lord Exeter's, ridden by Colonel Lisle; second, Lord Cullen's, which he rode himself; third, Lord Brudenell's, steered by Mr. Washburn; and fourth, Lord Sherard's, ridden by Earl Westmoreland. The prize, two silver candlesticks, being placed before them, they got on their horses and holding their reins, await the signal. When the shrill horn sounded, they started off without delay and bounded for the goal. Shouts rent the air. Cullen at first rode far ahead of the rest, next to him Westmoreland, third Lisle, Washburn following. They reach the plain and lay themselves down in their stroke. At length Earl Westmoreland came up and won. Then the shouting and hum of the people made the whole amphitheatre to resound. Then, whilst they rest their limbs and wipe the foam off the horses, Mr. Mulcher of Finedon and Lord Cullen's servant, Somers, dispute which should carve the venison which Mulcher brought. When this course or heat was ended, the jockeys again start from the post and go neck and neck for some distance with doubtful prospect when, at last, Lisle came in first. Now then the last heat came, in which three only contended, Washburn having been distanced. The others took their places again under the excitement of glory and start at the signal given. Lisle is far ahead and mad with excitement, but when in expectation of bearing the palm, crowding against someone, he unfortunately fell. Pleasant hope then came to the two last, Westmoreland and Cullen. The former takes the lead and, quicker than success itself, presses with bent thong and is first at the goal, flying amid the applause and murmur of success, for the hills resounded with their shout. I rode the brown horse and as soon as I reached the course, a veterinary came and offered £18 for my horse, so he went to my father, who would not accept it.
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- 6 Sep 1671 We hear that the Dutch have taken five English merchantmen and sunk two others.

¹ son of Thomas Baxter, rector of Lamport

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- 7 Sep 1671 The boys shouted, according to custom, after all the crops were gathered in.
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- 8 Sep 1671 A woman, deaf and dumb, wanted my father to put his name down on her petition, but he refused and gave her six-pence.
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- 9 Sep 1671 Northampton fair was held; everything very cheap.
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- 10 Sep 1671 A Mr. Gray came and counted out eighteen guineas¹ for the brown horse. A Scotch dwarf, four feet high, came. Cousin Isham of Barby, with wife and son, came. Mr. Eyre came. Lord Montague went to Sir James Langham's, and took with him his nephew and Dr. Hollehead, and a Frenchman who taught his nephew, and there met Sir W. Hazlewood, who had come to Codsbrooke to say good-bye to Sir James Langham, for he was shortly going to London. On our return he invited us, and Sir James Langham accompanied him. Having entered the dining-room, as he speaks Latin well, he discoursed with sister Mary and praised her very much. He said Richardson spoke of her knowing Tully, Virgil, and Buchanan well. Lord Montague said there had been a quarrel between his daughter and Lady Sunderland, and his daughter had sent her children from Althorpe to remain with him for a time, but would soon go to London. He afterwards left, for he had it in his mind to visit Sir Edward Nicolls.
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- 11 Sep 1671 John Chapman brought a young mastiff from London. There was no news further than all spoke of peace. He said Alexander Charles Curtis, Doctor of Medicine, would willingly return, for he had neither patients to cure nor pupils to teach. Cousin Polton, with son and two daughters, came and brought a bust. Mr. Green came.
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- 12 Sep 1671 Mrs. Spratt went to Weldon.
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- 13 Sep 1671 Valentine Wood found four hares, two of which we caught and killed with Mr. Sanders, about four o'clock. Mr. Tyrrell fell from his horse.
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- 14 Sep 1671 There are to be new horse races at Harlestone the Thursday after Michaelmas day.
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- 15 Sep 1671 Mr. Clerk came and said he had a mind to winter at Manselum.
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- 16 Sep 1671 Sir William Fermor, with his relation Spencer, came and asked father for one of Della's puppies.
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- 17 Sep 1671 Harris a blacksmith of Brixworth died.
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- 18 Sep 1671 This day Smith the butcher roasted an ox whole at Queen's Cross, not far from Northampton. He was poor and reduced to desperation, and thus hoped to relieve his broken fortune and so had plenty of beer brought to the spot. The ox was fastened to a pole, and two wheels were fixed on each end, by which it was turned. We went to see it, but before we got there it was nearly eaten up. We asked the butcher to cut us off a little piece, but it smelt so bad that on account of its filthy state we could scarce bring ourselves to taste a bit. I believe it to have arisen from the juice of the wood, for they said that the part farthest off was quite good. On our return Lewis received a letter from Mr. Grimstone, saying that uncle Christopher Leigh died about ten o'clock on Sunday, of the stone. Father went with Mr. Clerk to Mr. Wykes'. Mrs. Mansin and daughter came.
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- 19 Sep 1671 Father bought a black horse of Stanchison for £9. There is great talk that the Mayor of Northampton is going to give a grand entertainment for having been the first elected outside the borough as chief magistrate. He thus enters office. He has invited all the neighbouring gentry and nobility, and many from all parts of England, wishing to make himself popular with the inhabitants of Northampton. He had a horse race at Harlestone. The Petty Sessions were held at Walgrave.
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Robert Isham, ed. *The Journal of Thomas Isham of Lamport* (Norwich: Miller and Leavins, 1875):17–20.

¹ £18