



John Aubrey, 1626-1697

Captain Thomas Stump, of Malmsbury

Tis pity the strange adventures of him should be forgotten. He was the eldest sonn of Mr. Will. Stump, rector of Yatton Keynell ; was a boy of a most daring spirit ; he would climbe towers and trees most dangerously ; nay, he would walke on the battlements of die tower there. He had too much spirit to be a scholar, and about sixteen went in a voyage with his uncle, since Sir Thomas Ivy, to Guyana, in anno 1633, or 1632. When the ship put in some where there, four or five of them straggled into the countrey too far, and in the interim the wind served, and the sailes were hoist, and the stragglers left behind. It was not long before the wild people seized on them and strip't them, and those that had beards they knocked their braines out, and (as I remember) did eat them; but the queen saved T. Stump, and the other boy. Stump threw himself into the river Oronoque to have drowned himself, but could not sinke; he is very full chested. The other youth shortly died. He lived with them till 1636 or 1637. His narrations are very strange and pleasant ; but so many yeares since have made me almost forgett all. He sayes there is incomparable finite there, and that it may be termed the paradise of the world. He says that the spondyles of the backbones of the huge serpents there are used to sit on, as our women sitt upon butts. He taught them to build hovills, and to thatch and wattle. I wish I had a good account of his abode there; he is fide dignus. I never heard of any man that lived so long among those salvages. A ship then sayling by, a Portuguese, he swam to it; and they took him up and made use of him for a seaboy. As he was sayling near Cornwall he stole out of a port-hole and swam to shore; and so begged to his father's in Wiltshire. When he came home, nobody knew him, and they would not own him: only Jo. Harris the carpenter knew him. At last he recounted so many circumstances that he was owned, and in 1642 had a commission for a Captain of Foot in Charles the First's army.

From book "The Natural History of Wiltshire", by John Aubrey, c. 1668.