

New book questions background of Ulverston's comic son Stan Laurel (From The Westmorland Gazette)

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A NEW book about Ulverston-born comic genius Stan Laurel claims he could have been the grandson of a wealthy, philandering solicitor.

Danny Lawrence's biography 'The Making of Stan Laurel' explores the possibility that the actor's father Arthur Jefferson was the illegitimate son of Wolverhampton lawyer Colonel Alexander Gough.

Mr Lawrence reveals research by Gough family descendents which shows that Col Gough left Stan's father a bequest of £500 in his 1892 will.

Although a pillar of his local community, Alexander Gough was said to have 'enjoyed the company of two and possibly three mistresses' and was the father of, or considered himself to be responsible for, at least six children.

When he died, around the time Stan was born, the colonel left a fortune of £20,000 – equivalent to around £20m in today's money as measured over the past 120 years.

Mr Lawrence suggests that on this basis, the £500 left to Stan's father was equivalent to £500,000 in today's money – a bequest that enabled Stan's father to establish 'an influential role for himself in the theatrical world'.

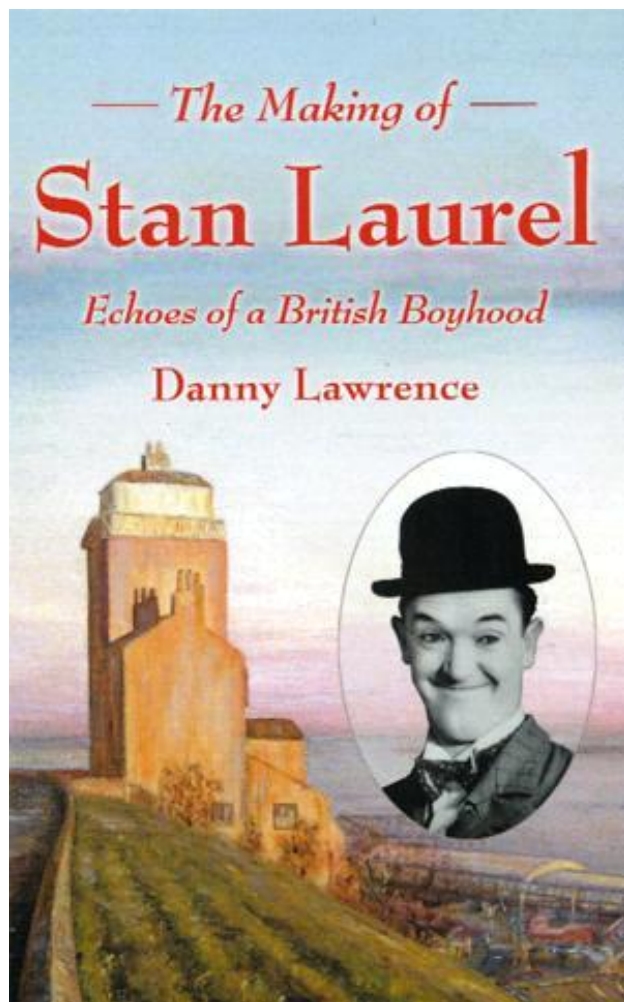
One conclusion that could be drawn from the revelation is that Stan's subsequent career in entertainment may have been made possible or was in some way influenced by the legacy.

However, despite researching Victorian census records, Mr Lawrence has been unable to confirm the link between the colonel and Stan's father.

And he also is unable to solve another mystery – why the 1891 census does not record the future comedian, then nine-months-old, as living with his grandparents in Ulverston.

In his book, Mr Lawrence appeals for help to solve this mystery.

The Making of Stan Laurel: Echoes of a British Boyhood by Danny Lawrence is published by McFarland and Co.



COMIC ICON Danny Lawrence's new book