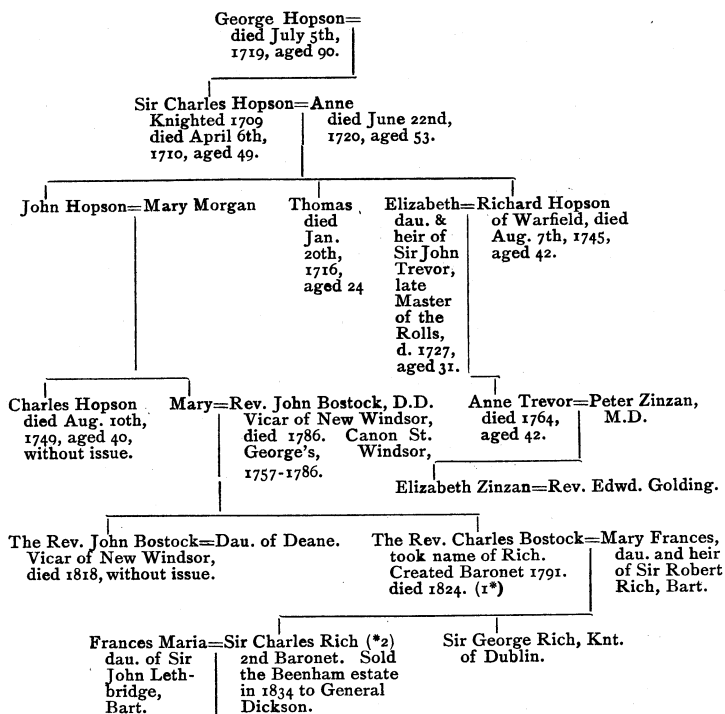


Beenham House and Manor.

By Mary Sharp.

(Continued from page 18).

DESCENT OF THE HOPSON, BOSTOCK AND RICH FAMILIES, from Tablets in Beenham Church and other sources.



1* *2 See notes on the descent of Hopson, Bostock and Rich families at end of this Chapter.—J.H.C.

During the time of their joint possession of the two estates a notable change took place affecting the agricultural interests of the parish. The system of common or open fields, already described, (vol. xx., 17) as existing at Beenham came to an end, and to us of the present day it seems almost inconceivable that it should have lasted so long. To show how early the disadvantages of this system

were felt we may quote some verses from a poem published by Thomas Tusser in 1557, entitled "Five Hundred Points of Good Husbandry" :—

The Countrie enclosed I praise.
 The t'other delighteth not me,
 For nothing the wealth it doth raise,
 To such as inferior be.
 How both of them partly I knowe,
 Here somewhat I mind for to show.

.

Where all things in common doth rest
 Corne field with the pasture and meade,
 Though common ye doo for the best,
 Yet what doth it stand ye in steade ?
 There common as commoners do,
 As good else to cobble a shoe.

.

Then, in order to show the advantages of the enclosed country :—

" More plenty of mutton and biefe,
 Corn, butter and cheese of the best,
 More wealth any where (to be brieve),
 More people, more handsome and prest,
 Where find ye ? (go search any coast)
 Than there where enclosure is most.

More work for the labouring man,
 As well in the towne as the field :
 Or thereof (devise if ye can)
 More profit what countries do yield ?
 More seldom where see ye the poore,
 Go begging from doore unto doore ? "

These considerations had naturally become more urgent during the long Napoleonic wars of the early nineteenth century, which, though they did not altogether, as their promoter desired, destroy British trade, still had the effect of enhancing the price of food and the consequent distress of the poorer classes. A passage may be quoted from a letter from Sir Charles Rich in 1804 as significant of the feeling of the time ; writing to Dr. Douglas, the then incumbent, who had apparently asked him for the loan of a county map, he says :—

“ I can have no objection to sending you the map, but as there must very soon be a meeting respecting the Enclosure to which I have reason to hope that the trustees of the Downshire property may be induced to agree, I should then bring it with me.”

Accordingly in 1811 a Private Act was passed for the benefit of the two Parishes of Beenham and Padworth. The two were thus bracketed together for the reason, as is explained in the preamble to the Act “ that the lands and grounds of the respective proprietors in the open and common fields, common meadows and common pastures, lie dispersed in small parcels . . . and are intermixed with each other and the common rights are so blended together that it has been found very difficult to ascertain the boundaries of the said parishes.” (See memoranda in Parish Registers).

It was therefore decided that it would be advantageous to the several owners and proprietors, “ if the same were divided into and allotted amongst them according to their respective rights and interests.” Thereupon Commissioners were appointed and empowered to turn and stop every carriage road or way, either in the open fields or enclosed grounds, though an appeal might be made against their decision at Quarter Sessions.

Also, before allotting the lands, they were to search for peat or peat earth and to make allowance for its value. The lay Rector and the Vicar were to be allotted lands in lieu of their tithes issuing from the open fields, and also from old enclosures, such lands to be henceforth tithe free. Owners of ancient enclosures, not entitled to allotments large enough to admit of giving land in lieu of tithes, were to pay a yearly corn rent.

Padworth Common was not to be enclosed, nor were parts of the open fields called Aldermaston East Mead, Woolhampton Common Field, alias Inglefield. These last were not to be included in the Enclosure except as to tithes.

Beenham Farm being in the hands of several joint owners and tenants no division was to be made without the consent in writing of all of them.

Proprietors (except the lay Rector and Vicar of Beenham) were to pay for fencing and enclosing their allotments.

The Commissioners finally accomplished their task and allotments were awarded to the following land owners :—

Sir Charles Rich, the lay Rector.

The Rev. John Bushnell, the Vicar.

The Rev. John Bostock.

The devisees of Winchcomb Henry Hartley, Esq.

The Rev. W. H. H. Hartley.

William Congreve, Esq.

Sir William Elford, Thomas Ryder, Samuel Kent, and
William, Richard and John Stephens, joint proprietors
of Beenham Farm.

William, Richard and John Stephens.

Charles Stock.

Anne Webb.

Robert Webb.

Thomas Carter.

Joseph Cave.

James Warman.

And further, at the request of the persons entitled to the Lands and Hereditaments called Beenham Farm, division was made to Sir William Elford, Thomas Ryder and Samuel Kent in lieu of their undivided third parts of the farm out of the 22 acres with the nine allotments awarded to them ; one plot consisting of the homestead, gardens and pasture, called Beenham Farm and the private roads leading thereto.

All these allotments and boundaries are particularly described on a map attached to the Award, which, with a copy of the Award itself, was ordered to be deposited in the Parish Church of Beenham.

But little now remains to be recorded to bring the history up to date. The Rev. John Bostock died leaving no children and was buried at Beenham on the 5th of June, 1815. On the occasion of his funeral Mr. John Bushnell, the then vicar, has left a note that the pulpit and desk in the church were hung with black cloth, and adds "N.B.—I gave the covering to the desk, tho' my own, to the Clerk."

Sir Charles Rich, brother to John Bostock, then became the sole owner of the estate, including the land he had himself purchased from Mrs. Lybbe Powys, and also what he then inherited through his grandmother, the heiress of the Hopson family, by her marriage with Dr. Bostock. He subsequently purchased the manor, late the property of Reading Abbey, and also added the old Manor Farm and its appurtenances to his possessions, of which we now hear for the last time as a separate estate. It was he who built the present mansion known as Beenham House. It stands very much on the site of the older one. It has undoubtedly superior advan-

tages in respect of size and contains a fine suite of sitting rooms, but it is to be regretted that no print exists to give us the opportunity of further comparison.

The Beenham Estate, as Sir Charles Rich left it at his death in 1824, was sold by his son, the second baronet, in 1834 to General, then Colonel, Dickson, a retired Indian officer. If report says true, he had not many country tastes, and though he lived there he did not do much to improve or beautify his property. The flower garden consisted of a narrow strip in front of the sitting rooms, about twelve feet wide, for he is said to have remarked that the only flower he cared for was a cauliflower. Nevertheless he was anxious to establish his descendants as a county family. By his will the estate was strictly entailed on his two sons and their children and then on the descendants of his daughters. He died in 1848 and an inscription on a slab in the Parish Church gives an account of his career :—

Sacred to the Memory of General Dickson, C.B.,
of the Hon^{ble}. E.I.C. Service, Colonel of the
Sixth Light Infantry, Madras. He was actively
employed for thirty years, was present at the
Siege of Seringapatam, at the taking of the
Island of Java, and in many other actions,
and was honourably distinguished for his brave
and meritorious conduct.

He departed this life at his residence Beenham
House in this Parish, on the 11th of Sept., 1848,
aged 69 years.

An inscription on a brass plate records :—

“The clock in the Tower of this Church was erected
in affectionate memory of Harriet Dickson [his wife],
whose remains are interred in the Churchyard,
by her two surviving children, Harriet Eliza Neeld
and William Thomas Dickson, A.D. 1877.”

General Dickson's sons were both colonels in the army. They never lived at Beenham House.

At the death of the eldest, Colonel Samuel Dickson, without children, the estate passed to his younger brother, Thomas, but the house was always let to tenants, and as soon as his nephew, the son of Lady Neeld, came of age the entail was cut off and the property was sold.

Only once again did a member of the Dickson family claim his right as a parishioner. On the 7th of August, 1909, a full military funeral procession arrived at the quiet country station of Aldermaston, with a detachment of Lancers, headed by an officer, bearing on a gun carriage the last remains of their Colonel Commandant. They bore him up the pretty wooded lane to the vault where his brother and his father had been laid before him and fired a volley over his grave, and the story of his family at Beenham was ended.

A tablet has been put up inside the Church to his memory :—

In loving Memory of
Lieut. Gen^l William Thomas Dickson C.B.
of Beenham House
Hon^r. Col^l XVI (Queen's) Lancers
In which Regiment he served for
22 years and which he commanded
from 1862 to 1869.

Born 1830. Died 1909.

The new owner, the late Mr. Henry Waring, did much to enlarge and improve the property. He built a fine block of stables at the top of the hill and altered the approach to the house through the park. He also re-faced and strengthened the fabric of the house itself and enlarged the gardens. To the estate he added the farm and its appurtenances, now known as Hall Place, which he purchased from the devisees of Henry Wincheombe Hartley. This outlying freehold is several times referred to in the Parish Books as being "formerly Hildesley's," that is, that it had once been in the possession of the ancient family of that name who occupied an important position in the parish both before and after the time of the Reformation. The actual date of the change of ownership seems implied in the returns for the hearth tax in Beenham in 1663. A double return exists for that same year; in the first a certain house with six hearths is charged against Mr. Hildesley, and in the second return Sir Henry Winchcomb, Bart., is taxed for the same, Mr. Hildesley's name being omitted. This Sir Henry Winchcomb was the ancestor of the Hartley family.

From 1740 and onwards the farm had been continuously in the occupation as tenant farmers of the Iremonger family, a curious instance of a length of tenure of at least 150 years. They therefore ranked among some of the oldest parishioners. A very interesting series of finely carved tombstones, dating from 1741, preserves their memory in Beenham Churchyard.

(To be continued.)

* NOTES ON THE DESCENT OF THE HOPSON, BOSTOCK
AND RICH FAMILIES.

1. The Rev. Charles Bostock was of Shirley, Hants, second and youngest son of above, born 1752 at Windsor, matriculated St. John's College, Oxford, 30th June, 1768. B.C.L. 1776, D.C.L. 1780. Took by Royal License, 23rd December, 1790, the name of Rich. Created a Baronet 28th July, 1791. "It is to be observed that this creation was nearly eight years before the Baronetcy of Rich (1676), which was held by his wife's father, became extinct by the death of her uncle (Sir George Rich), the sixth and last Baronet, 8th Jan., 1799."—Complete Baronetage, iv., 72-74. He married, as in text, Mary Frances, daughter and heiress of Lieut.-General Sir Robert Rich, Bart. (baronetcy created 24th Jan., 1676), of Roos Hall, Suffolk, Claxton Abbey, Norfolk, and Waverley Abbey, Surrey. Her mother Mary, daughter of Peter Ludlow, of Ardsallagh, Co. Meath, Ireland, whose son Peter was created Earl of Ludlow, and the Rev. Chas. Bostock sold Roos Hall and Waverley Abbey in 1812. He died at Shirley, Hants, 12th Sept., 1824, and was buried in South Audley Street Chapel, London. His widow, who was born 31st May, 1755, died 20th May, 1833, in Upper Grosvenor Street, London, and was buried in South Audley Street Chapel.

2. Sir Charles Rich, who sold Beenham (1834), was born 10th April, 1784. Sheriff of Hampshire 1826-27. Married 6th Nov., 1806, Frances Maria, second and youngest daughter of Sir John Lethbridge, Bart. She died at Tunbridge Wells 20th Feb., 1852. He died at Wallington, Surrey, 22nd Oct., 1857.—J. HAUTENVILLE-COPE.

Mapledurham, Oxfordshire.

THE following short description is from notes made many years ago, so may be worthy of appearing in print:—

The house stands low, almost on the river bank, and is surrounded by magnificent trees. Especially noticeable is the grand avenue opposite the house. Mapledurham is the finest old house in Oxfordshire, a County singularly devoid of old houses, that is, houses dating back to the Elizabethan period. True, there are old houses, but these have been restored after a period of neglect, so that the original furniture and fittings do not remain.

What struck me most inside the house were the family portraits, especially the two immense full-length pictures in the dining room. That on the right, a lady in a black velvet dress with a ruff and long