

Contributions from the Court Rolls of the Manor of Little Chester.

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IN the reign of Edward I., the Manor of Little Chester was the property of the Deans of Lincoln, and passed out of their hands into those of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners only in 1845, on the death of the then Dean. Down to 1865, the manor was held by successive lessees. The following list of them is derived from the notes and titles on the Rolls:—

Francis Curzon, 1562—1566.

John Bullock, 1590.

Baptist Trott, 1623.

John Bullock, 1630—1633.

Sir John Fitz Herbert, Kt., Robert Holt, Elijah Woodroffe and Godfrey Froggatt, 1642.

Robert Holt, and Godfrey Froggatt, 1663—1666.

Sir John Curzon, Kt. and Bt., 1667.

Simon Degge, afterwards Sir Simon Degge, Kt., 1668—1702.

Simon Degge, 1703—1729.

Elizabeth Degge, jun., Spinster, 1730—1731.

John Hay, and Elizabeth his wife, 1731—1736.

Elizabeth Hay, widow, 1738.

Simon Degge, 1739—1751.

Robert Taylor, and the Trustees under his Will, 1755—1763.

William, Duke of Devonshire, 1764—1811.

William Spencer, Duke of Devonshire, 1812—1858.

William, Duke of Devonshire, 1859—1865.

The following extracts from the Court Rolls are, perhaps, in themselves of little interest, but they may suggest the value of the evidence afforded by manorial documents to family and parish history.

The existing Court Rolls of the Manor of Little Chester date only from 1642, but in Roll "A" there is a number of notes made by a former lord of the manor from copies of a very much earlier date which had come into his hands. The older Rolls must have long since disappeared. In the seventeenth century many copyholders prescribed for 'fines certain,' supporting their claims by the production of ancient copies; and the lord, although disputing the sufficiency and even the genuineness of the evidence, seems to have had no original records to which to refer.

"Things observable in the survey in the black booke at Lincolne":—

"The Deane had then a wood at Eyton."

"The copyhold rents are said to be £18 - 4 - 10."

"The Deane was patron of the Collegiate church of Alsaints, & had the gift of the prebends & spirituall jurisdiction."

"The Piscary was then valued at 8/- per ann."

"He had upon the death of the m^r of every house the best plow & Irons, a brasse pot, & a peece of cloth."

"He had the custody of infants till 25."

"He had 5/4 of every corrupt woman."

It is noticeable that no names are recorded during the period of the Puritan administration. To a sequestration at that time, reference is made in several places. Sir John Curzon was one of the Committee of Sequestrators appointed by Parliament for the County of Derby, but it is probably not in this capacity that his name appears in the foregoing list.

Sir Simon Degge, on taking up the manor, asserted the rights of the lord with characteristic energy, and to the industry of him or his steward, the preservation of all that remains of the

early records is due; but in an unfortunate dispute with his copyholders upon the adjustment of their fines, he was altogether defeated.

The rights to heriots and wardship are not referred to elsewhere than in this extract from the Lincoln Black Book. In 1329 the Little Eaton estate comprised a water mill and a quarry. The rental for Michaelmas, 1638, is upon the Rolls, and includes "The Parke," "Eaton milne," "fishing Eaton and Colebrooke," "outwood every other yeare," and "the quarry." Several entries from 1487 onwards, relate to grants of the fishing not only on the brook but down the river, "from Duffield bridge to the Cleats in Little Chester." The mill has passed into other hands, and will be mentioned again. The Parks farm, and disused quarries, the lords still hold. The "outwoods-common" was enclosed and allotted under an Act of 1787. Other open fields in Little Eaton held by copy, were the "Chapel Field"—which lay to the north west of the present church, and which by its name carries the establishment of the chapelry back, at all events, before 1636—the "Furlong Field," and the "Flaxholme" or "Boat Meadow."

"Anno' 4^o.H. vij. (A.D. 1489). Grante to Thomas Stanley, part of Colebrooke, to be turned out of it course, and to erect a milne in the 'More' above 'Jack Darleigh brige' in Eyton: rent 2^s"

The remains of this tiny mill still exist: a footpath to the "Moor" from the highway passes over the old sluice, where the water is now dammed for the supply of the bleach mills lower down. The old mill is empty, and roofless, and its walls hastening to decay. In the days of its prosperity it was not provided with more than two pairs of stones, if so many, but sufficient, no doubt, for the wants of the little community.

To the bridge—now extended over the Derby Canal Company's Tramway and the Midland Railway—"Jack of Darley" still gives his name. On the Rolls it is often described as "Glandford" or "Granford" Bridge.

From a Roll fairly ingrossed of the 10th of Hen. VII.

(A.D. 1495), it appears that "The Bayley & Burgesses of Derby were presented for inclosing Chester Greene, and were under a payne of Ct. (*court*) to throw it open." The same Roll records a presentment dealing with "the keeper of Eytton Parke for cutting downe & selling the wood." It does not appear when the Little Eaton demesne was disparked; possibly when the lords lost their rights of warren. Over the adjoining lands the privileges of a buck-leap still prevail.

In 1548, a presentment was made that John Hey had entered upon two cottages, and a close known as "milne Ey" "belonging to the Capell of Quarne." One of these cottages is described as "the Chapell house & chapell yard." The same circumstance is no doubt referred to in the following entry:—

"Chapell of Quarne

"A Roll proving 2 cottages & the lands to them are pt. of the man^r & ought to pay 4^s & 8^d per ann.

"3 E. 6. John Hey entered into the chappel, & chapell yard, & 2 cottages, the milne Ey, & 'Little More,' & the 4 pt of a oxgang, & pasture for a cow in Heymore."

"7 April 1630. A license to Thomas Saunders to erect a Cottage & enclose 40 virgates at the damme's head in little Eaton: 12^d rent for 21 yeares."

This was the dam belonging to the lord's mill (now the Bleach Mill), and was formed of the widened brook course. It has been replaced by a pond fed from the brook above Stanley's mill. Some old cottages lately belonging to the lords still stand on Mill-green below the dam.

"The plague was in Derby 1637."

There is nothing to explain this entry. As the Derby Assizes were kept in Fryer's close on one occasion, it is possible that the Customary Court was not held at Little Chester.

In the particulars of a Court held on 25th April, 1642, the following presentments are recorded:—

"Wee present Sir John Harpur^{kt} who doth owe suit & service to this Court, & did not appeare, & thereupon amerce him - iiii^d

"Wee present William Raynor Thomas Bakewill for the like, & amerce either of them iii^d

"Wee present John Walker for not sending *his* *daugh** to lead Comon worke to the highwayes & amerce him xii^d

"Wee present Francis Gorse for eating other men's grasse with his cattle in the corne feilds of Quarne, & amerce him xii^d

"We present James Chatborne, Luke Vallance, Thomas Pearson, Willm Taborer, sen., & Willm. Taborer, jun., for the like offence, & amerce every of them severally. xii^d"

Below the entry are the signatures of three of the jury, and the several marks of the other nine. These amercements are not usually recorded with the transactions of the copyhold courts, probably because separate suit rolls were kept. Preceding them is a list of suitors for whom *essoin* (or excuse) was made; and being with the king in arms at York, Sir John Harpur might well have had himself excused. A few years later, under the Parliament's Ordinance, he compounded for his estates with the more substantial fine of £4,000.

"3 May 1645 John Willymot surrendered a cott: and a rood of land to Edward Willymot in 'milne close' between a holy and oller: fine vi^d"

John Willymot was tenant of the lord's mill in 1638, and it is probable that the mill and kiln, erected (as subsequent entries show) upon this rood of land, were additions to, or occupied with, the old mill. The buildings have for some time been used as bleachworks. *Hollies* and *alders* still flourish on the spot.

John Hieron, who held the Rectory of Breadsall on the presentation of Sir John Gell, and was ejected for nonconformity in 1662, lived for some time at Little Eaton. His daughter Anna Taylor, his son Joseph, and his grandson John, were copyholders in the Manor. The name Hieron or Hyron appears upon the Rolls late in the seventeenth century, and a plantation held by John the younger,

* (? His daughter.) The sole management of horses, etc., was more frequently entrusted to women during the past than at present. A woman in Shirland Lane has for years fetched coals from Morton Colliery for the cottagers in the vicinity. This may be the case of a daughter doing her best for an invalid father.—(ED.)

is still known as "Hieron's Wood." With the bankruptcy of John Hieron Radford of Little Eaton, Tanner, and the admittance to his house and tanyard of the assignees' purchaser in 1822, the name passes away.

On 19th April, 1788, Joshua Reeve surrendered to trustees a small piece of land in Little Eaton, "In trust that they should and might erect and build thereon a Chappel or Building for publick divine worship." The old chapel had been for some time in a ruinous condition, and used as a blacksmith's shop; but in 1791, a new chapel was erected on its site, and the trustees' land was disposed of to a purchaser. In a preface to a Baptismal Register of 1791, it is said that the patronage of the curacy of Little Eaton was with the Deans of Lincoln in consideration of their having given the remains and site of the old church: but the incumbent of the parish church of S. Alkmund's nominates at the present time.

The recent development of this manor may perhaps be attributed to the highway passing through it to the coal-fields on the north. The Rolls tell of the coming of the Derby Canal and Tramway in 1798. It was here that Outram laid the first stone sleepers, and here possibly some of the fragments from Horsley Castle to which Mr. Kerry referred in a recent Journal have found their way. By the Canal Company's Act of 1793, no stone was to be taken from the castle hill without the consent of the Earl of Chesterfield.

There is no record of the turnpike road brought through the manor in 1802. It followed in part an old highway known as "Lee Lane" and "Wind Arse Road," but deviations were made over adjoining copyholds and the lords seem to have been somewhat unmindful of their interests in allowing these to pass unnoticed. The first of the North Midland Railway purchases was made in 1845; the Ripley Branch followed in 1855; and in 1882, the Great Northern Railway enfranchised a small tenement at Little Chester for their Derby and Nottingham line.