

II.

THE OWNERS OF DENBY OLD HALL.

 BY THE REV. R. J. BURTON, M.A.



TO obviate the necessity of continual reference to authorities, it may be well to state, at the outset, the chief sources of information. For the de Rossel and Lowe families, Lysons and Glover have been used, and as the information is already in print, a mere outline is here given for the purpose of shewing the continuous ownership. For the Wilmot family, Glover is used to a limited extent; for the rest of the facts relating to that family, and for the information about the Robey family and others, the Society is indebted to the kindness of Miss Gregory, who holds the chief interest in the estate, and has submitted a valuable collection of interesting documents. A few details have been added from "A Pedigree of the Roby Family," compiled by Mr. H. J. Roby. I am also indebted to Mr. J. T. Perry, of Nottingham, for kindness in this matter.

THE ESTATE.

First, as to the particular property the ownership of which is to be considered.

The manor of Denby was early divided, and the smaller portion was held for a considerable time by the Greys of Codnor. This latter estate eventually acquired the name of Park Hall, and is clearly distinguished as separate from the manor of Denby held by the de Rossels.

The latter manor contained a park* in the time of Henry III., and apparently this park, or some portion of it, is the estate now known as the "Old Hall" estate. The Robeys usually described themselves as of "Denby Park"; and the "messuage house" mentioned in a Chancery action about the year 1666 "was undoubtedly within the park and was *formerly the Keeper's Lodge*."

THE OWNERS.

From the Domesday Survey it appears that Osmund held the manor of Denby in Saxon times, when the value was one hundred shillings. In the course of the Norman invasion, the manor suffered severely, decreasing in value to twenty shillings. It was then given, together with the neighbouring manor of Horsley, and other manors in Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire, to a Norman, Ralph de Burun, under whom it was held by "a knight of Ralph's." The name of this knight is not given; but in or about the reign of Henry I. the estate was held under the de Burun family by Patrick de Rossel. Taking into consideration the very limited space of time between the Domesday Survey and the reign of Henry I., it seems probable that the "knight of Ralph's"† was a member of the de Rossel family. But as evidence is lacking, this suggestion remains merely a conjecture. From this period onwards to the reign of Henry VI., the de Rossel family held the manor. In 19 Edward II., William de Rossel held the right of free-warren; and in the same reign Richard, Lord Grey, of Codnor, acquired a small manor in Denby known, later, as Park Hall (part of the ancient manor) in right of gift from William de Rossel and William Bernack, who were styled kinsmen and co-heirs of John de Denby. In the reign of Henry VI. the family became extinct in the male line.

*A park was a place of privilege for wild beasts of venery and other wild beasts of the forest and chase. It differs from a forest in that a subject may hold a park by prescription or royal grant. It differs from a chase because a park must be enclosed.—*Wharton*.

† *Miles Radulfi*.

THE LOWE FAMILY.

Lawrence Lowe, Esq., Sergeant-at-Law and a retainer of William, Lord Hastings, married the heiress of the last de Rossel, and thus became possessed of the ancient manor.

Their son, Humphrey, married Margaret, daughter of Thomas Cokaine, of Ashbourn, and had issue Clement and Vincent.

Vincent, who married Jane, daughter of Sir Thomas Cokaine, of Ashbourn, became heir of his brother Clement, who left no male issue. This Vincent purchased the estate of Park Hall, and thus re-united the two parts of the old manor. Of his children, Francis, Jasper, Anthony, George, Jane and Anne, Francis inherited Denby, but dying without issue, was succeeded by Jasper.

Jasper, who had inherited the Park Hall estate, thus became owner of the whole of the Denby properties. He married Dorothy, daughter of William Sacheverell, of Stanton, and was succeeded by his eldest son, Patrick, who appears in the Muster Roll for 1599-1600 as "Patrick Lowe of Denby esquire."* Patrick married Jane, daughter of Sir John Harpur, of Swarkstone, and had issue Vincent, who married Anne Cavendish, and is described under Denby in the Roll of Freeholders for 1633 as "Vincencius Lowe *Armiger*"; and Isabel, who married Sir John Zouch, of Codnor.

WILMOT.

In 4 Charles I., Robert Wilmot, of Chaddesden, purchased from the above-mentioned Vincent Lowe and others "all that pasture ground lying in Denby, called Denby Parke, enclosed with a pale," and by indenture of feoffment, dated Aug. 2nd, 4 Charles I., it was conveyed to him in fee. At that time the title "park" was more than a mere name surviving from ancient times, as deer still grazed and were hunted on the estate, and it had the reputation and privileges of a park. The messuage house was the keeper's lodge, and the keeper in *Patrick Lowe's* time (possibly the last of the keepers) was a man named Nicholas Ottiwell.

* Vol. XVII., p. 40, of this *Journal*.

This Robert Wilmot married Dorothy, daughter of Lawrence Shrigley, of Shrigley, co. Chester, and had issue five sons and two daughters. On the death of the eldest son, Robert, the second son, Edward, became heir to the estates.

Edward Wilmot, D.D., was the incumbent of All Saints' Derby, and married Dorothy, daughter of Sir George Gresley, of Drakelow, Bart. Their children were Robert, Edward, and Dorothy.

Robert died unmarried, and was succeeded in the Chad-desden estates by his brother Edward. The Denby estate, within a few days after it was purchased by the first Robert Wilmot, had been leased to Vincent Lowe at the rent of £100 a year, and about the same time the estate, apparently, was disparked. This lease expiring in 1666, Robert Wilmot, grandson of the original purchaser, leased the estate to William Barker for five years, dating from November 1st, 1666. Upon this an action was commenced in Chancery as to the extent of the estate, namely, whether Salterwood was part of Denby Park or was not included in the purchase as being distinct from the park.

In 1678, 1679, 1680, there was a dispute as to the trusteeship of lands in Chaddesden, Morley, Breadsall, and Spondon, which lands had been left by this Robert Wilmot to Henry Mellor, of Derby, and George Gresley, of Lullington, as trustees for his brother Edward and his children, and, after them, for the children of his sister Dorothy.*

ROBEY.

THOMAS.—Dorothy Wilmot before mentioned married Thomas, son of Robert Roby, of Castle Donington, co. Leicester, and by this marriage the Denby estate passed into the tenure of the Roby family. The Denby branch, which was the elder branch, described themselves as of Denby Park, and adopted the spelling "Robey."

* *Hist. MSS. Commission Report IX. Part II., p. 120b.*

Thomas Robey was born at Castle Donington on Oct. 27th, 1598, and died Jan. 18th, 1679. He was Gentleman Sewer Extraordinary to Queen Henrietta Maria and Justice of the Peace for the county of Leicester.

By a will dated Oct. 27th, 1677, concerning his personal estate only, "having already made another will concerning my reall Estate of Inheritance of all my Lands in Darbyshire bearing equal date with these presents," he desired to be buried in the Parish Church of Castle Donington as his executrix should think fit. Amongst his bequests were £10 for the poor of Castle Donington as his executrix should think fit, twenty shillings apiece to two relatives and two "loving neighbours," "to buy them rings," ten shillings apiece to all hired men and maid-servants living with him at his decease. As to the unspecified estate, he left "all the rest of his goods chattells and cattell whatsoever in the Realme of England" to his "deare and loving wife Dorothy Robey."

Thomas Robey married twice, Dorothy Wilmot being his second wife. She died November 17th, 1680, and was buried at Castle Donington. In her will, dated August 11th, 1680, she speaks of moneys to be raised by sale of lands in Litchurch, Osmaston, Derby, Normanton, and Chaddesden under her husband's will for her children. The rents of the lands of her three daughters, Sybil, Elizabeth, and Mary, in Murden Grange, co. Stafford, to be applied to their maintenance and education to the age of fourteen.

Thomas and Dorothy Robey had four sons and seven daughters. Of these, Wilmot, Thomas, and Barbarah died young.

Edward, baptized February 26th, 1661, died October 11th, 1720, and was buried at Castle Donington. He is described in his will as of Kegworth, co. Leicester.

Dorothy, baptized March 6th, 1662, died unmarried about twenty years of age in 1682.

Nicholas, baptized July 23rd, 1663, was buried August 1st, 1682. By his will, wherein he is described as of Lullington,

co. Derby, he bequeathed to his brother Robert all the lands left to him by his uncle, Robert Wilmot.

Katharine married Henry Pearson, of Nottingham, attorney-at-law.

Elizabeth married Richard Coke, of Trusley.

Of Sybil and Mary nothing is known.

ROBERT.—Robert, the third but eldest surviving son, was baptized at Castle Donington January 26th, 1659, and died at Denby Old Hall November 10th, 1714. He was buried at Castle Donington. He married twice: first, in 1683, Grace, daughter of Sir Thomas Gresley, Bart., by whom he had four sons and three daughters. She died October 29th, 1709, aged fifty-seven, and was buried at Castle Donington. The second marriage, in 1711, with Ann Kilbourn, by whom he had a posthumous son, Nicholas, does not affect the Denby succession.

This Robert Robey is described as of Castle Donington and Denby Old Hall.

In 1689 the tithes of Denby were leased to him by Robert Wilmot, of Spondon, from February 2nd of that year for three years. In consideration, he was to pay yearly the sum of £34.

In his will, dated November 8th, 1714, he shews great affection and partiality for, and confidence in, his second son, Robert, to whom he left the greatest share of his estate—all the freehold tenements and hereditaments “wherein I have any estate of inheritance *or have any power to dispose of*,” and also all copyhold lands and tenements. “A considerable sum of money” was charged on the estate coming to his eldest son Thomas for the younger children’s portions. The greatest sum possible was to be raised, and of that, one-third was bequeathed to the third son, Edward, and the remainder to Robert. He left £400 to his wife, Ann, which was to be paid out of his legacy by Robert, who was further appointed residuary legatee and sole executor.

The children of Robert and Grace Robey were Frances, Elizabeth (who married Thomas Bentley), Thomas, Robert,

Grace, Robert, and Edward. Frances, Robert and Grace died while infants.

THOMAS.—The Denby estate was inherited by Thomas, who was baptized April 4th, 1688. He soon proved that his father's lack of confidence was only too well justified. A spendthrift with an unenviable reputation, he ran through his estates at Breedon and Hose, co. Leicester, and Pinxton, co. Derby, sold the tithes of Diseworth and the old family estate at Castle Donington, and mortgaged the Denby estate. He seems to have squandered every penny he could raise.

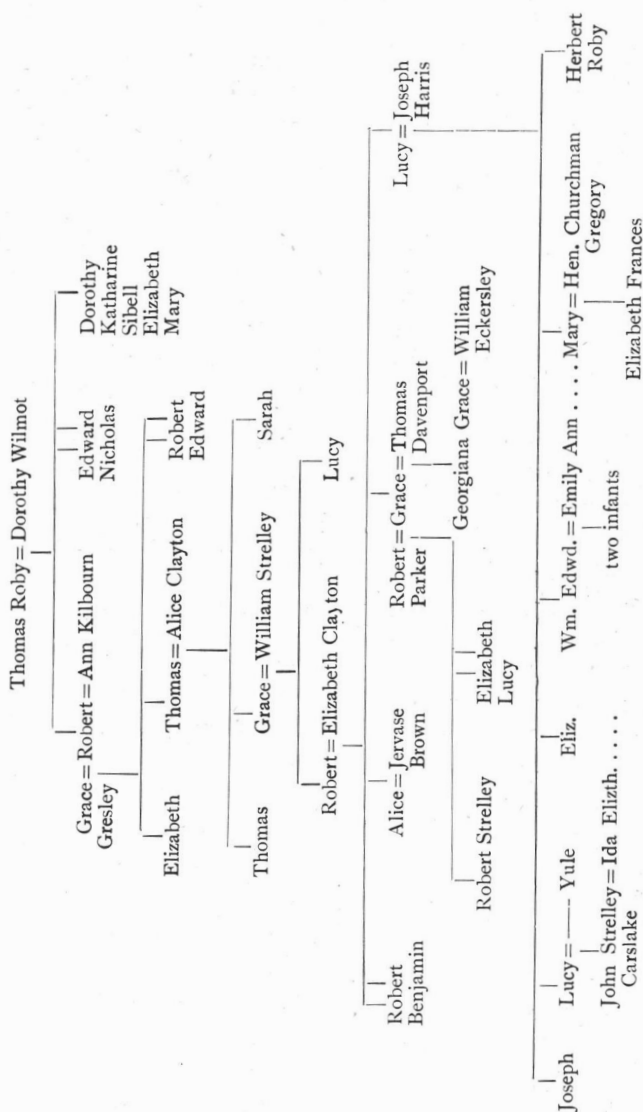
By a deed, April 18th, 1726, he injudiciously leased the coal mines at Denby to John Fletcher for ninety-nine years, receiving one shilling for every stack load of hard coal and sixpence for every stack of soft coal. In connection with this lease, the following note in the Heanor parish registers is of some interest:—

"January 24th, 1740.—Wm. Fletcher and others, owners of the collieries of Heanor, Smalley and Denby, have been accused of monopolising re-sale of coal, stoutly deny imputation and offer to supply any persons with coals at 2s. 6d. to 3s. od. per ton, for 40 years to come, and to give security for performance of the same."

Thomas Robey lived to the advanced age of ninety years, and died at Oakerthorpe, a house belonging to his son-in-law, February 17th, 1776. He was buried on the north side of Heanor churchyard, where his sandstone altar-shaped tombstone bears this inscription:—

"Tho^s Robee Esq: of
Denby departed this Life
February 17th in the Year of
owr Lord 1776. Aged 90."

He married, about August, 1714, Alice, daughter of Richard Clayton, of Codnor Breach. She was born March 5th, 1695, died April 24th, 1762, and was buried with her ancestors at Heanor. Early in married life the husband's evil ways caused domestic unhappiness, and eventually separation.



The children of this marriage were Thomas, Grace and Sarah.

Sarah died unmarried about twenty years of age, and was buried on May 16th, 1738, at Heanor.

THOMAS.—Thomas, of Denby Old Hall, was baptized April 19th, 1716, at Castle Donington. He seems to have been very like his father in the peculiar bent of his mind and habits, but of a worse disposition in that he apparently possessed a morose temper. After being educated as an attorney he emigrated to America, and after an absence of some seven years he died unmarried in Philadelphia, December 21st, 1763: that was before his father. By his will, made March 7th, 1754, "when last at Gravesend," and two codicils, March 26th, 1755, and November 8th, 1763 (the latter made at Philadelphia), he bequeaths his estates at Denby, Pinxton, Normanton, Heage, and elsewhere in Great Britain to *his friend* Francis Green, attorney, of Clement's Inn, co. Middlesex.

Grace, who by survivorship became heir general to her father, was buried at Heanor, April 16th, 1805, aged ninety, in the same grave as her father and her daughter Lucy, who predeceased her. She married at Tutbury, co. Stafford, June 27th, 1738, William Strelley, of Oakerthorpe.* He died in 1796 and was buried at Pentrich.

STRELLEY.

The children of William and Grace Strelley were Robert and Lucy.

Lucy died unmarried March 24th, 1784, aged forty-one, and was buried at Heanor as above mentioned.

Robert, therefore, eventually inherited the whole of his mother's third-share in the Denby and other estates: to this he added the other two-thirds by purchase from Francis Green, the devisee of his uncle Thomas Robey. He was born at Denby Old Hall, August 17th, 1739, died August 31st, 1813, and was buried at Pentrich.

* For an account of the Strelley family see vol. xiv. of this *Journal*.

The coal lease became a matter of law in 1772, when the Strelleys disputed the colliery rights of Francis Green under Thomas Robey's will. At that time John Barber was representative of the original lessee and sold his lease to Mr. Lowe.

In 1774 Francis Green, of Wigwell Hall, Wirksworth, and Robert Strelley, then of Wirksworth, sold timber on the estates at Denby, Pinxton, Normanton, and Heage to Richard Lowe, of King Street, St. Pancras, Covent Garden, co. Middlesex.

Robert Strelley seems to have made great efforts to free the impoverished estates, which had suffered so severely through the dissipations of his spendthrift grandfather.

He married Elizabeth, daughter and co-heiress of Richard Clayton, the younger, of Codnor Breach, who brought to him the Waingroves estate. Elizabeth Clayton was born November 14th, 1746, and died November 21st, 1833.

The children of Robert and Elizabeth Strelley were Robert, Benjamin, Alice, Jemima, Grace, and Lucy.

Thomas dying unmarried, Benjamin inherited the Oakerthorpe and Waingroves estates.

The Denby estate was bequeathed to the daughters in equal shares.

Alice married the Rev. Jervase Brown and died without issue about 1822.

Jemima married Benjamin Pattison and died September 23rd, 1849, aged seventy-four. She had one son, Douglas Strelley, who pre-deceased her, dying, unmarried, July 13th, 1837, aged eighteen.

Grace married twice: first at Pentrich, Robert Parker, of Whalley, co. Lancaster. The children of this marriage were Robert Strelley, Elizabeth, and Lucy. Robert Strelley Parker made an interesting collection of documents and notes relating to Denby and the neighbourhood, which is now in the possession of Miss Gregory. Secondly, at All Saints', Loughborough, she married Thomas Davenport, by whom she had one daughter, Georgiana Grace. This daughter married, at Denby, William Eckersley, of Brookhouse, St. Helens, co. Lancaster. The

three children of the first marriage died unmarried, and in later years Robert Strelley Parker and his sister, Mrs. Eckersley, who had no issue, lived at the Old Hall. They made disentailing deeds, and their share in the estate (inherited from their mother, Grace) came by bequest to their cousin Mary, daughter of Lucy Strelley.

Lucy married Joseph Harris and had three sons and three daughters. Of these the eldest child, Joseph Strelley, the third, Elizabeth, and the youngest, Herbert Roby, died unmarried.

Lucy, the second child, married ——— Yule, and had a son, John Strelley Carslake, who married, but died without issue June 8th, 1886.

William Edward went to Australia, where he married, and has issue, two children (infants).

Mary married Henry Churchman Gregory, and it is to their only daughter, Elizabeth Frances, that the Society is indebted for much of the information in this article.

In Miss Gregory's possession are a few interesting relics of the families who have held Denby Old Hall.

An oil painting of uncertain identity, but there is good reason to believe the supposition correct that it is a portrait of Grace, wife of William Strelley.

A handsome carved oak chair, bearing the initials R. S., which belonged to Robert Strelley, as also did a *silver* saucepan, some four or five inches high.

An interesting relic of Lucy, sister of Robert Strelley, is a silver "patch box." It is a round box about three inches in diameter and bears her name with the date 1769.

The portraits at Oakerthorpe include one of Grace Gresley, wife of Robert Robey, and others of Robert Strelley and his wife, Elizabeth Clayton.