

THE EYRES OF HASSOP, 1470-1640*

By ROSAMOND MEREDITH

I. THE FIRST HUNDRED YEARS

1. *Tenth and youngest son*

IN Hathersage church is the altar tomb of Robert Eyre of Padley (died 20 March 1459/60) and of Joan his wife (died 9 March 1463/4). The memorial brasses show Robert and Joan and below them their ten sons and four daughters. Under each child is its name, the tenth and youngest son being Stephen, progenitor of the Eyres of Hassop.¹

It must have seemed unlikely that the progeny of the tenth son would become the pre-eminent branch of the family descending from Robert Eyre of Padley. Yet by the 17th century they had acquired both wealth and local eminence, and surviving all other lines they continued at Hassop until the death in 1853 of Lady Dorothy Eyre. By that time the family had become a legend as Roman Catholics, royalists and (with less reason) Jacobites.

The Derbyshire Eyres are distinguished as an honourable gentry family which can be traced back to the Middle Ages in one locality and never acquired in their own persons a peerage or even a baronetcy. This is perhaps fortunate. All too often, the families whose records survive are just those who had risen above the ordinary run of landed gentry to high public office and high-sounding titles, their personal eminence thus making them untypical of the class from which they sprang. However, during the 17th and 18th centuries the Eyres were connected by marriage with a considerable number of peers — Carrington, Cullen, Derwentwater, Dormer, Fauconberg, Fingall, Stafford and Widdrington — and they themselves claimed in 1814 to be the rightful holders of the earldom of Newburgh.

The brass of Robert Eyre of Padley, Stephen's father, on the tomb at Hathersage shows him in plate armour with his sword, and above him his arms and those of his wife.² It was thus, as a member of the knightly and armorial class that he doubtless wished to be remembered. Historians, however, would find it more useful if he had recorded his business connections. These can now only be very partially pieced together. He was succeeded at Padley by a son and a grandson, both named Robert, who were, successively, stewards for the Derbyshire and possibly Nottinghamshire estates of the earls of Shrewsbury.

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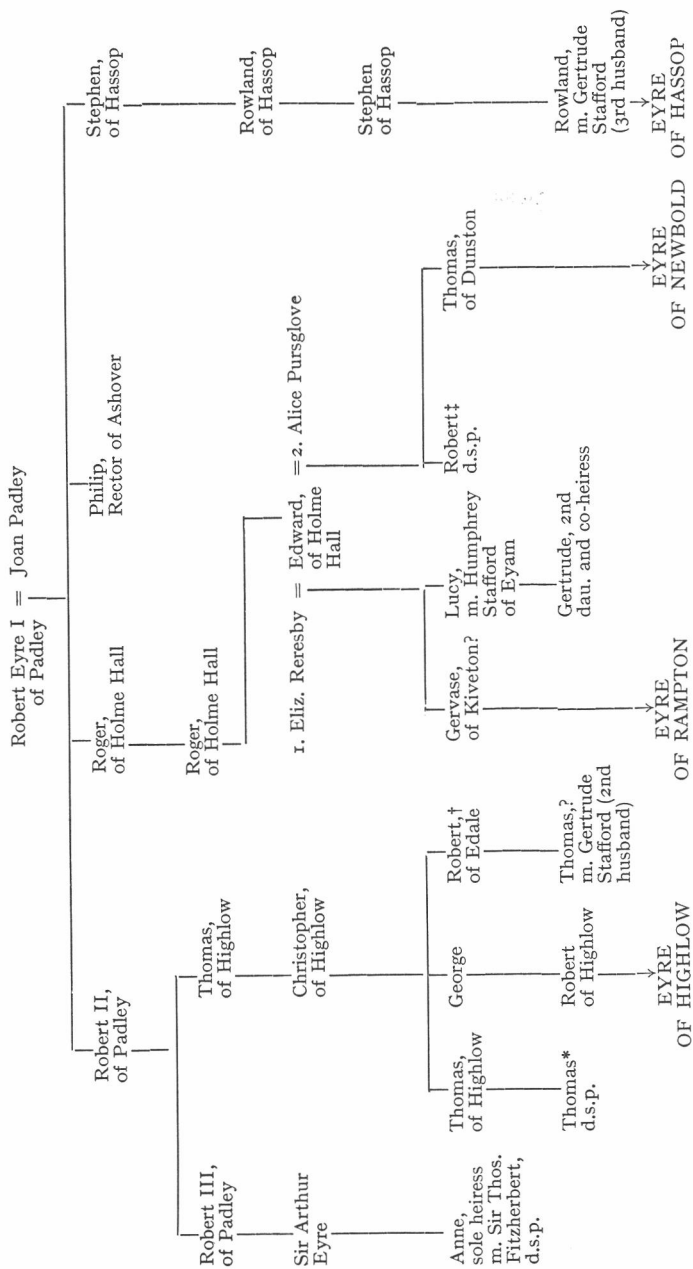
In 1483 the earl of Shrewsbury held by Robert Eyre his seneschal two great courts by usurpation at Baslow.³ This was Robert Eyre II. In 1474, he presented to the rectory of Eyam as one of the feoffees of the lordship of Eyam for John, earl of Shrewsbury, an infant, the other feoffees being Thomas Everingham and John Wormhill, knight.⁴ The Everinghams are known to have been seneschals of the Shrewsburys' Sheffield estates, and it may be assumed that Eyre held a similar position in Derbyshire. The sudden death of the third earl of Shrewsbury in 1473, leaving a young son for many years a minor, must have enhanced the seneschal's position, which Robert II had inherited from his father. The Eyres held a fourth part of the manor of Hathersage of the earls of Shrewsbury,⁵ and it is possible that Robert I acquired his wife and with her the manor of Padley through the same influence.

John Talbot, later created first earl of Shrewsbury, had succeeded to the lordship of Hallamshire in right of his wife in 1406 when he can have been barely of age.⁶ He was governor of Ireland before he was thirty and soon began to make a name for himself in the French wars. Robert Eyre I, subsequently of Padley, was probably some years younger. As a younger son he had his own position to make in the world and he may have served abroad in his youth. Neither he nor his father is in Joseph Hunter's list of officers who fought at Agincourt,⁷ and it is very doubtful whether the Eyres saw much war service. The first earl of Shrewsbury's entire career was spent fighting abroad; he was killed at the battle of Châtillon with one of his sons in 1453. The second earl was killed on the Lancastrian side with his brother Christopher at the battle of Northampton in 1460. But the duty of the steward was to look after the estates for his heir, not to fall at his lord's side on the battlefield.

The Shrewsbury manors were not the only ones of which the Padley Eyres were stewards. In the roll of the court of Holmesfield held on Thursday in the week of Pentecost, 1480, Robert Eyre II, esquire, is named as the seneschal.⁸ The lord of the manor was Francis, Lord Lovell, grandson of William, Lord Lovell, who had married, in 1422, Alice Deincourt, sister and co-heir and eventually sole heir of the last Lord Deincourt. She brought to the Lovells an ample inheritance which included the manors of Blankney and Branston in Lincolnshire and Holmesfield and Elmton, with other property, in Scarsdale. Alice was nurse or governess to Prince Edward, son of Henry VI; her husband's estates were at Titchmarsh in Nottinghamshire and Minster Lovell in Oxfordshire.⁹ They could give little attention to their Derbyshire estates so the steward's office was important. That it had been held by Robert Eyre I of Padley is probable, for his eldest son, the steward named above, was married to a Lincolnshire bride, Elizabeth, daughter of Thomas Fitzwilliam of Mablethorpe by his wife Margaret Dymock, daughter of Sir Thomas Dymock of Scrivelsby (died 1422).¹⁰ This marriage was undoubtedly arranged through the Eyres' connections with the Deincourt manors in Lincolnshire.

Francis, Lord Lovell was high in favour with Richard III and was killed at or after the battle of Stoke, where he fought with the Yorkist rebels in 1487. He was attainted and his manors forfeited; probably Robert Eyre lost his stewardship.

BRANCHES OF THE EYRE FAMILY
 descended from Robert Eyre of Padley
 and mentioned in the text



* Married Ann, dau. of Lionel Reresby.
 † Married 1. Jane, dau. of Thomas Reresby and widow of Thomas Gascoigne of Burghwallis
 2. Margery Draycott, widow of (1) Anthony Babington and (2) Edward Stafford.
 ‡ Probably the Robert Eyre who married Ann, dau. of Thomas Reresby and sister of Jane above.

Only by chance references in surviving court rolls are the Eyres' connections with these manors known. They may well have held similar positions in others. With the Plumpton, lords of many manors in the High Peak, they certainly had business connections. They appear as witnesses and trustees in Plumpton deeds, especially when Sir William or Robert Plumpton was at Darley.¹¹ By the time of Robert Eyre III the position of his family was approaching equality with Sir Robert Plumpton's, and a marriage was arranged between his son and heir, Arthur, and Plumpton's daughter, Margaret, a child.¹²

"To my right worshipfull brother, Sir Robart Plompton, kt. these be delivered.

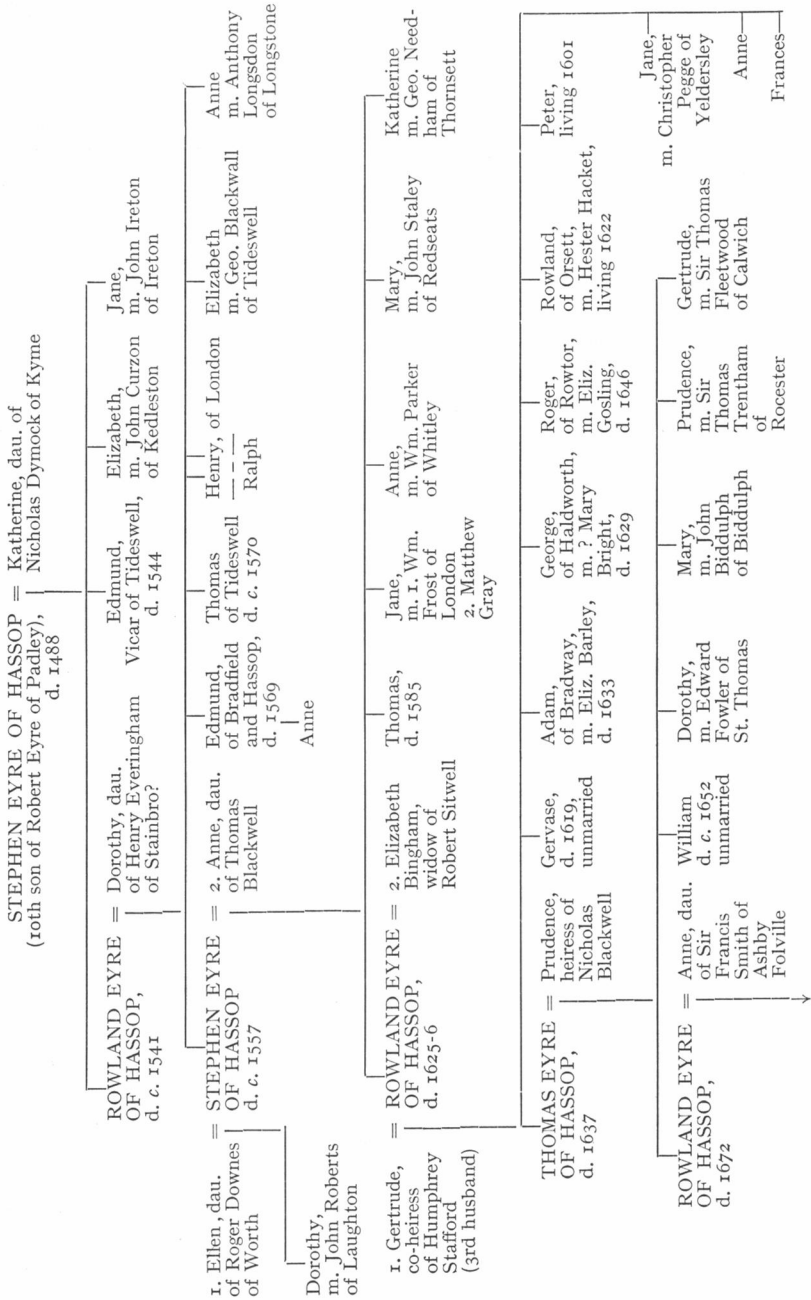
Right Worshipfull Brother, I recomend me unto you, and to my lady your wyfe, and to my daughter and to yours, with all my other cousins your childred, desiring to heare of your welfaire and thers both, which I besech Jesu preserve unto your most harts comforth; evermore thanking you and my gud lady, your wyfe, of the great and worshipful chere I and my kynsmen had with you. Brother, ye be remembered how the writings of the covnaunte of marage of my son and your daughter, as it be not made upp by the 'vise of learned counsell; wherfore, if it please you to apoynt any day, and please about the beginyng of Lenten, when that I myght wayt upon you, I wilbe glad to wayt upon you, and a learned man with me: and all such promyse as I have made on my party shalbe well and trewly performed, with the grace of Jesu, for ye shall find me ever one man. Also, brother, I pray you that ye wold send me by my servant, William Bewott, this bringer, the payment which I shold have of you att Candlemas last past, for I have put myselfe unto more charge, since I was with you, then I had before. For I have maryed another of my daughters, and I have begon to make a wall about my parke that I shewed you I was mynded to do, which, I trust, when ye see it, ye will like it well. Praying you not to fale herin, as my trust is in you, and to give credence to this bringer. No more but Jesu preserve you. Written at Padley on St. Valentyne day with the hand of your brother,

[1499/1500]

Robart Eyr."

Such were the family connections of Stephen Eyre's nearest relatives. The younger members of the family looked to the head of the house to find them jobs of manorial management or otherwise provide for them. The date of Stephen's birth is not known, but as his next brother, Edmund, was already married in 1463 and his eldest brother, Robert, was still living in 1496,¹³ it may be assumed that Robert Eyre I's family was born roughly between 1420 and 1445, Stephen perhaps in the early 1440s. He was thus still a youth when his father died, and it fell to Robert Eyre II to make provision for his youngest brothers. Philip, the seventh son, was presented to the rectory of Ashover in 1471, the patron being the earl of Shrewsbury for that turn.¹⁴ Stephen became bailiff of the earl of Westmorland's manor of Ashford,¹⁵ and he may have held a similar position on the Plumpton manors. His brother also provided him with a wife. Very little is known about this Katherine said to be the daughter of Nicholas Dymock of Kyme. As a Dymock, she was no doubt related to Robert Eyre II's wife, and may have been living in her household. That her father was connected with the Deincourt manors of Blankney and Branston and thus with Robert Eyre is also likely; Kyme

THE EYRES OF HASSOP
to the time of the Civil War



is only about six miles from the former. There is only one known Nicholas Dymock, a younger son of the King's Champion Thomas Dymock and thus brother of Margaret, mentioned above. This Nicholas had a daughter and heiress, Alice, who married Charles Angevine and inherited from her father the half-manor of Hebden.¹⁶ Katherine could have been a considerably younger and illegitimate sister, but this is mere surmise.

The first documentary record of Stephen however occurs in a different context. On 8 February 1471/2 letters patent of Edward IV were granted to him, pardoning him for a long list of offences including riot, robbery, murder, rebellion and insurrection committed before 30 September 1471. This handsome document survives among the Eyre muniments.¹⁷ It was enrolled in the Pardon Roll for 1471-2, swollen that year to the vast length of twenty-three membranes, and containing the names of hundreds of persons similarly pardoned, who had been in some way involved (as Stephen must have been) in the uprisings connected with Warwick's invasion, Edward IV's flight to Holland in October 1470, and his subsequent return and triumph over the Lancastrians at Barnet and Tewkesbury.¹⁸ The Eyres' patrons were all Lancastrians at this time. In Lincolnshire in March 1470, there was a rising involving the Dymocks; Sir Thomas Dymock and his brother-in-law Lord Welles were executed by Edward's orders before the battle of Stamford at which the king defeated the rebels.¹⁹ In August, a petty rising by Lord Fitz-Hugh involved the youthful Lord Lovell.²⁰ Sir William Plumpton received a pardon in similar terms to Stephen Eyre's, dated 2 December 1471²¹; he had probably been concerned in commotions which took place in the north on the landing of Queen Margaret there, and most likely Stephen Eyre was implicated with him.

In his pardon Stephen described as "late of Padley" was still living at his brother's house there. On 1 February 1478/80 the manor of Hassop was leased to him by Sir William and Robert Plumpton for twelve years from the preceding Michaelmas.²² The manor included, besides the hall, lands, demesnes, meadows and the chapel. The annual rent was £7. 3s. 4d. Hassop henceforth was the family home. Stephen appears to have been in comfortable circumstances. In his only surviving letter to Sir Robert Plumpton he expresses himself ready to advance him money if the terms are satisfactory and he knows when it will be repaid.²³ In 1486, Stephen and Katherine Eyre founded the Guild of the Blessed Virgin Mary at Great Longstone. After his death, a window with the Eyre arms was erected in Longstone church, with the words, "Orate pro bono statu Stephani Eyre et Katarine uxoris eius", possibly by his own directions.²⁴

Stephen's will does not survive, but he settled his land to uses of his will on 24 January 1487/8, the trustees being Robert Eyre, junior, George Leche, Robert Shakerley, Richard Blackwall, and John Eyre of Crookhill.²⁵ He died shortly afterwards. He was probably under fifty, and his children still quite young. That he left them well provided for is clear from the marriages subsequently arranged for his daughters. His brother Philip, the rector of Ashover, was probably the chief agent in uniting the child Elizabeth, his

niece, and John, the young son and heir of Richard Curzon of Kedleston; he may have augmented her dowry, which can hardly for such a match have been less than 100 marks.²⁶ The bride and bridegroom were both children at the time of the marriage in 1491, and Philip was trustee of the settlement.²⁷ Twelve years later the younger daughter, Jane, married the Curzons' neighbour, John Ireton of Ireton, two of the trustees of the settlement being her brothers, Rowland and Edmund Eyre.²⁸

Through a family connection with the Meverells of Throwley,²⁹ who held the manor and advowson of Tideswell, Stephen's younger son, Edmund, was presented to the rectory of Tideswell. He was there at least as early as 1501³⁰ and was probably well under thirty when he obtained this preferment. He held it till his death about 1544.

The lease of the manor of Hassop was renewed to Dame Katherine, Stephen's widow, on 9 January 1488/9, and again to her on 28 July 1498 for 21 years.³¹ She was living in 1504, when she was fined fourpence in Baslow manor court for collecting fern in Bubnell Dale.³² The date of her death is not known.

I. I. References

- ¹ Some genealogies give a first son, Robert, and a youngest son, John, who both died in infancy, making Stephen the eleventh of twelve sons.
- ² *Argent, on a chevron sable three quatrefoils or*, for Eyre; *argent, three horse barnacles open at the top sable*, for Padley. Only the Padley arms remain. The shield which bore the Eyre arms has disappeared, as has the third shield which displayed Eyre impaling Padley. J. C. Cox, *Derbyshire Churches*, II, 232.
- ³ *D.A.J.*, XXIII (1901), 31.
- ⁴ Cox, II, 190.
- ⁵ Inquisition post mortem of Robert Eyre, d. 1504, *Cal. I.P.M., Henry VII*, III, no. 819.
- ⁶ J. Hunter, *Hallamshire*, ed. A. Gatty, 62.
- ⁷ J. Hunter, *Agincourt . . . an authentic list of the commanders of the English host . . .* 1850.
- ⁸ *D.A.J.*, XX (1898), 54-5.
- ⁹ G. E. Cokayne, *Complete Peerage*, 1910-59.
- ¹⁰ Margaret Fitzwilliam was buried in Lincoln Cathedral in 1463. Inscription in F. Peck, *Desiderata Curiosa*, 1778 ed., 298.
- ¹¹ e.g. Robert Eyre was a witness of the important marriage settlement between Robert Plumpton and Elizabeth Clifford in 1446, *Plumpton Cartulary*, no. 531 (Add. MSS. 32, 113); Bagshawe Collection (hereafter Bag. C.) 1008 in Sheffield City Library (S.C.L.). Robert and Stephen Eyre were both trustees appointed to hold the manor of Darley in 1479, *Plumpton Cartulary* no. 694.
- ¹² T. Stapleton, ed., *Plumpton Correspondence, Camden Soc.*, vol. 4, Letter CXI, 143. The original letter book from which it was transcribed cannot now be located. See "The Missing Manuscripts of the Plumpton Letters", in *Notes and Queries*, 1958, 140-1.
- ¹³ Bag. C. 1758, 1851.
- ¹⁴ Cox, IV, 443.
- ¹⁵ G. T. Wright, *Great Longstone Records, Appendices*, 279. Stephen had a deputy, William Decon, which suggests that he himself had other important business.
- ¹⁶ *Lincolnshire pedigrees, Harleian Society*, LV, 1202-4. For Alice's marriage and inheritance see I.P.M. on her son, William Angevine of Ashby by Horncastle, *Cal. I.P.M., Henry VII*, II, nos. 327 and 335.
- ¹⁷ Bag. C. 2782.
- ¹⁸ C.67/48. 11 Edward IV, 1471-2.
- ¹⁹ *Chronicle of the Rebellion in Lincolnshire, Camden Soc.*, vol. 39 (2).
- ²⁰ A general pardon was granted to him, his young wife and two sisters, 10 September 1470. *Cal. Patent Rolls*, 1467-77, 215.
- ²¹ *Plumpton Cartulary*, no. 578.
- ²² *Plumpton Cartulary*, no. 695.
- ²³ *Plumpton Correspondence, Letter XXI*, 58.
- ²⁴ Harleian MSS. 1093: "The Visitation of Derbyshire made by Richard St. George, Esq. in 1611 together with the visitation made in 1569 and enlarged with some other additions."
- ²⁵ Bag. C. 1033.
- ²⁶ The dowry of Elizabeth Fitzwilliam of Aldwark who married Sir Thomas Wortley in 1493 was 100 marks (S.C.L., Wharcliffe Muniments, 639). Sir Robert Plumpton's daughter, who married Arthur Eyre, brought a dowry of 250 marks (*Plumpton Correspondence*, 144 n.).
- ²⁷ The I.P.M. of Richard Curzon, taken in 1507, gives the age of his son John as 24 at that date (*Cal. I.P.M., Henry VII*, vol. 3, no. 1040). In the pedigrees of Curzon this John is confused with an older John Curzon whose widow, Joan, is mentioned in this inquisition. The I.P.M. of John (son of Richard) gives details of his marriage to Elizabeth Eyre (C.142/27, no. 93).
- ²⁸ I.P.M. of John Ireton, E.150/751, no. 1.
- ²⁹ Jane, daughter of Robert Eyre II, married Thomas Meverell of Throwley, Staffs.
- ³⁰ J. M. J. Fletcher, "The Vicars of Tideswell", *D.A.J.*, XXXIX (1917), 90.
- ³¹ *Plumpton Cartulary*, no. 751, p. 208v; *Hassop Evidence Book*, I, 6.
- ³² *D.A.J.*, XXIII (1901), 38.

2. *The manor of Hassop*

When Stephen Eyre was granted the lease of Hassop in 1480, it formed part of the Derbyshire inheritance of Sir William Plumpton of Plumpton (born 1404), which had come to him by the marriage of his father, Sir Robert Plumpton, to Alice, the infant daughter and heiress of Sir Godfrey Foljambe who died, aged 21, in 1388. Alice's inheritance included the manors of Darley, Stanton, Edensor, Pilsley, Hassop, Wormhill, Chelmorton and Ockbrook, in Derbyshire, together with property in many other places in the High Peak, all of which had been the estate of her great-grandfather, Sir Godfrey Foljambe the elder, second baron of the exchequer, who died in 1377. This branch of the family is sometimes called Foljambe of Hassop, and it appears that the first Sir Godfrey actually lived at Hassop manor. When he and his wife Avena¹ founded the chantry chapel of the Holy Cross in Bakewell church, the confirmation deed ordained that the chaplain was to be in constant residence at the chantry and "that he be not three days away without the licence of the lord of Hassop for the time being, if the lord reside there".²

After this Sir Godfrey's death, his widow held Hassop as part of her jointure, and in the inquisition taken after her death in 1382 the following particulars are given: "The site and manor house are worth nothing yearly, without reprise. 12 acres of land, value p.a. 16s. 8d. Meadow, value p.a. 13s. 4d. Pasture, value p.a. 13s. 4d. Rents, value p.a. 26s. 8d." The manor was held of the duke of Lancaster, as of his manor of Stertindon, by knight service and a rent of 5s. a year.³

After the death of Alice's father the lords of Hassop ceased to live there. The manor was held in lease by a succession of tenants, those named in a boulder of 1432 being the Lord Furnival, Sir Roger Leech and Thomas Foljambe of Walton, none of whom is likely to have lived at the hall. The tenant immediately prior to Stephen Eyre was Thomas Wild, who held the manor, without the chapel, at the will of the lord and probably occupied the hall. There were Wilds living at Abney in the 15th century; John Wylde of Abney made several grants in trust in the 1470s to his brother Thomas, who was probably the same man as the tenant of Hassop.⁴ Stephen Eyre's position as tenant was a rather superior one to his, as Stephen had a lease for ten years and also held the chapel. The true value of the manor was given in 1479 as £13. 4s. 9d. plus the court income of 6s. 8d., but the value given on the inquisition the following year, taken after the death of Sir William Plumpton, was £7; it was held by fealty and a rent of three shillings.⁵ The following rental of the manor in 1474 was made five years before Stephen entered on the tenancy⁶:

Hassop

Rentale factum ibidem in vigilia Omnium Sanctorum Anno regni regis Edwardii quarti post conquestum xiii			
Domina Margareta Stafford tenet libere villam de Rouland per servicium militare et facit sectam Curie domino de Hassop de tribus septimanis in tres. Et redditus per Annum.	xxs.		xd.
			Summa xxs. xd.
Thomas Wild tenet manerium ibidem cum pertinentiis ad voluntatem domini nuper in tenura Willelmi Jakson. Et redditus per Annum.	vii li.	vis.	viiid.
Henricus Haslom tenet ad voluntatem domini ibidem l messuagium cum pertinentiis. Et redditus per Annum.		—	
Henricus Berdehagh tenet l messuagium ibidem cum pertinentiis. Et redditus per Annum.		xxs.	
Rogerus Waterhous tenet l messuagium cum pertinentiis ibidem nuper in tenura Milicente Baker. Et redditus per Annum.		xiiis.	
Robertus Frensh tenet l messuagium cum pertinentiis ibidem. Et redditus per Annum.		xis.	vid.
Ricardus Berdghagh tenet l messuagium cum pertinentiis ibidem. Et redditus per Annum.		xiiis.	id.
Thomas Jakson tenet l messuagium cum pertinentiis ibidem. Et redditus per Annum.		xxiis.	iiid.
Idem Thomas tenet Le Lowe ibidem. Et redditus per Annum.		iiis.	iiid.
Tenentes manerii et ville ibidem tenent le Tuft. Et redditus per Annum.		iis.	
Johannes Haslome tenet Capellam cum pertinentiis. Et redditus per Annum.		iiis.	
	Summa	xii li.	viiis. xid.
	Summa totalis	xiii li.	ixs. ixid.

[The words in italics were added in a different hand.]

A boulder of the manor written in 1432 was still at Hassop in the mid-19th century, together with an ancient map; both have now been lost but a poor 19th-century copy of the former is available. The original parchment was endorsed, *Delivered unto Rolland Eyer of Hasoppe, this bounddare at Plompton by the hande of me, William Plompton*. No doubt it was given to the Rowland Eyre who occupied the manor of Hassop about 1589 and, in a version revised by him in accordance with his own knowledge, was recited in his petition in a chancery case at that time. The two versions are given below. The boundary of the old lordship was that shown on a map drawn in 1752 and corresponded to the modern civil parish boundary except on the south-east, where it followed the course of the stream and excluded Birchill. Some of the names are now lost, but the stream that formed the old

boundary of the village is still called Rymas (*Rymblys*) Brook; the name is derived from *rima*=*border*,⁷ which suggests a very ancient boundary. "Towst" survives in Toost wood; the area called the Towst in the bounders appears to have been somewhat to the south of this. The boles must have been on the rising ground between Hassop and Bramley, and the name is evidence that lead-smelting was carried on there in the 15th century.

Bounder of 1432⁸

We Thomas Foljambe the elder, esquire, of the shire of Derby [*and eleven others*] . . . do declare openly by these present letters the meres and bounds of the Lordship of Hassop right as we have heard our ancestors say and many old men of this county, and right as Godfrey Foljambe, knight the elder and I, Thomas Foljambe and the Lord Furnivall and Roger Leeche, knight and many others have used and occupied to [their profit?] without any interruption that ever we heard or knew. For to begin at the way that lyeth to Tideswell betwixt Hassop and Bramley, holding that way, and on to a ditch that goeth over Cockerfieldlowe, and so to an [on whorth?] stone that stands in a pryme gap in the double ditch end, holding ever West to a stone and so to the stones that stand by the wayside that lyeth betwixt Bakewell and Stoney Middleton, the which stones Will Lemyng, [Gervase?] Dobbe of Longstone and Harry Jackson of Hassop set for their [hyr?] betwixt the lordship of Ashford and the lordship of Hassop; holding up the high way to Pekelowe cross and so down to a mere stone that stands in the [outgate?] betwixt Hassop and Roland and so down to pye wall and to an ash that stands in Roland close end, holding down after the mere stones and as the water runs to Hassop Ryse, and so to the stone bridge and down to the hayforth, and so after Rymblys to the toyst betwixt Hassop and Byrchills and from Chesterfield way to Hassop Dyke and the Boyls and so to the way where we began these meres. And in record that we have known it, occupied and used and old men here say in this form as we have here reported, to these present letters we have put to our seals, the date the sixth of August, the year of Grace MCCCCXXXII and the year of the reign of King Henry the Sixth, after the conquest the tenth.'

(Twelve seals appended to original parchment)

Chancery petition c. 1589⁹

Rowland Eyre, the petitioner, declares "he knoweth all the boundes, lymyttes and meyses of the same lordshippe of Hassoppe and that he hath seen a certeyne wrytyng mentionyng & settinge forthe the boundes, lymyttes & meares of the same lordship . . . viz. Backedale heade and so by west to a dytche at Cockerfeildlowe, from thence to a stonne standyng in prymme gappe at double dytches, and from that place to the standyng stones sett by Dobbe, Lymyng & Jackson and so to Peake lowe crosse, and from thence to a stonne lyinge at Rowland towneheade, and then to a well [*torn*] alias wall at the nether end of Roland towne, and so to an Ashe at [*torn*] Rowland clos[e—] and downe after to Hassopee Ryse and as the water runneth to the stonne [brydge and] from the stonne brydge to a place called heyforde, now called towste Ford, and so followes the rymbels to a towste betweene Hassoppe & Byrchills, and so after to Chesterfeild gate [whi]ch ys [*torn*] wheate lands lane, and from thence to a dytche which is called bole edge toppe [and] so [to the] place where he begonned fyrst."

Six months after he had leased Hassop to Stephen Eyre in 1480, Sir William

Plumpton died. He left a troubled inheritance to his son Robert. The struggle that followed had its repercussions on the Eyres and the subsequent descent of the manor was of importance to them as tenants and eventual purchasers of Hassop. It is therefore outlined here.¹⁰

Sir William's two sons by his wife Elizabeth Stapleton had both predeceased him. The second son, who was killed (it is thought) at Towton in 1461, left two infant daughters. Their governance and marriage were disposed of by their grandfather to Brian Rowcliffe, third baron of the exchequer, and Henry Sothill for considerable sums, with the intention that they should be married to the son and heir of each family. Sir William Plumpton was supposedly a widower, approaching sixty, and although provision was made in the agreement with Sothill for any future wife of his, the prospective fathers-in-law of the two young heiresses probably gambled on the chance of Sir William's dying without a legitimate son. They were accordingly disconcerted when Sir William publicly acknowledged that Joan Wintringham, supposedly his mistress, had in fact long been his wife and that her son Robert was his heir male. The marriage was recognized by the church in 1472, and the Plumpton estates were conveyed to trustees for descent in the male line. Though legal proceedings were begun by Rowcliffe on behalf of the heirs general (the two granddaughters), after Sir William's death an arrangement was reached which left Sir Robert Plumpton the Plumpton and Spofforth, Yorks., estates and the chief Plumpton manors in Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire — Darley, Stanton, Hassop and Kinoulton.

This was the position about 1500 when Henry VII's minister Empson married his daughter Jane to Sir Henry Sothill's son and heir and recommenced legal proceedings on behalf of Sir William Plumpton's heirs general, which aimed at depriving Sir Robert of the whole inheritance. This bitter struggle was waged in the early years of the 16th century in the courts, with the usual device of empanelling juries, and in the field, where both sides attempted to collect the rents and maltreated the rent collectors of the opposing faction. Robert Eyre III was naturally involved in the Plumpton interest and tried to win the earl of Shrewsbury's support.¹¹

"To my right worshipfull brother, Sir Robart Plumpton, kt. these be delivered.

Right worshipfull brother, I recomend me unto you. Brother, I have received your letter, be the which I perceived ye be mynded to be with my lord of Schrewsbury on munday next, be noune of the day; and that ye wold have me to meet you by the way. Brother, my lord is at Wynfeld, and my lady both, and I wilbe glad to wayte upon you at Hegham, a myle from Wynfeld, or els at Chesterfeld, whether it please you. Brother, I am afrad lese this labour be vayne, for in certayne I caused all the labour to be made possible at this tyme, both to my lord and to my lady, and he wold not be turned; for he myght not, and keepe his truth and promyse made afore. Notwithstanding, sithe ye be comyng on your way, I thinke it is well done, ye to speake with my lord yourselfe, as prevely as ye can; and thus Jesu kepe you. At Padley, the sunday next afore the feast of St. John Baptise.

Your loving brother,

Robart Eyre, esquire."

Shortly afterwards Eyre who was doing his best to control the jury appointed for the Derby assize writes:

“. . . I have sent you part the names of the enpannell for Suttell and Rocliffe, which be in the end of the Hye Peyke, of the which divers have promysed me not to appere, and moe I trust for to stoppe. Marveling ye sent nobody to Darby for to take you lodging, for Emson hath taken much lodging for him, as I am enfirmid. Also I shall wate one you at Nottingham one sunday next, except ye comand me contrary, praying you to send me answer shortly.

Your loving brother,

Robert Eyre, esquire.”

[September 1501]

Hassop, where Dame Katherine Eyre, Stephen's widow, was now lady of the manor as Plumpton's tenant, seems to have been treated as a local headquarters:

“To our right worshipful master, Sir Robart Plompton, kt. be this letter delyvered in hast.

After most lowly and all due recomendations, we lowly recomend us unto your good mastership; certyfying you, that as fare as we can understand or know, John Rocliffe and John Sothell ar come to Kynreston place, and ther purpose to tary and abyde, to such tyme as they thinke tyme convenient for to enter into your liflods in this country, and take distor [distress]. And we have bene at dyverse places of your liflods, and finde your tenants well disposed toward you; and sithen, the most part of gentleman in this country, and especyally the Eyres, so that ye wold come yourselfe and be sene amongst your tenants and frynds, the which were to them a singler pleasure and comfort, and to yourselfe a great strength. And to bring with you not over the number of xx horse at the most, and such as may have your advise and counsell to take derecton, the which may be to the suerty of your lyflod and tenants. And if ye can gett master Mydleton, bryng him with you, or Richard Grene, or some other, and come to Hassop, for we have desevered us, and some departed tham. And with the grace of Jesu, and ye come betwixt this and tuesday, that all things shalbe to your harts comfort in tyme to come . . . And Sir, bryng with you money convenient for your expenses, for as yet . . . here be now [noe] rent teyned. Now over to you at this tyme, who the holy Trenety have you in his keping.

By your servant,

Robinit Plompton, with other moe.

[1501]

Sir Robert Plumpton was no match for Empson and soon lost all he had. After Empson's fall the battle was renewed, and at the end of his life Plumpton was able to hand on to his successors the manor of Plumpton and most of the Spofforth estate. The Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire estates however became the property of the descendants of the two co-heiresses and were held in undivided moieties. The Rowcliffe moiety descended through the marriage of the heiress, Anne Rowcliffe, to Sir Ingram Clifford; the Sothill moiety, through twin daughters of Henry Sothill, to Sir John Constable and Sir William Drury. None of these persons resided in Derbyshire, but they continued to hold the property. It was nearly fifty years before Constable and Drury disposed of their moiety and nearly ninety before the Clifford moiety was sold. Meanwhile the Eyres continued, rather obscurely, as tenants of the two moieties of the manor of Hassop.

It may have been due to the loss of the Plumpton's patronage and the death of Robert Eyre III in 1504 that the fortunes of the Hassop Eyres appear to have declined, and little is known of them or who were their patrons during the next fifty years or more. Lead and wool were constant factors in Derbyshire economy throughout the period under review, though it is seldom that these prosaic foundations of their wealth have been allowed to obtrude into family histories. It is very likely that the Eyres of Hassop were engaged in this business in a modest way, as they were later on a much more successful scale. The little information that can be pieced together about them during this period of obscurity is recorded in the following chapter.

I. 2. References

¹ Avena appears with her husband as party to a deed in Feb. 1344/5 (Bag. C. 1532). In this document her name is spelt indifferently (in the genitive) Avyne and Avine. In medieval script the latter spelling differs from "Anne" simply by containing five minims instead of four. There can be no doubt that it was she, and not an unknown former wife Anne, who with Sir Godfrey was founder of the chantry in 1344. The well-known Foljambe monument in Bakewell church shows Sir Godfrey with one wife and there is not the slightest evidence that he had any other.

² Family and estate details from *Plumpton Correspondence*, Introduction and Nichols' *Collectanea topographica et genealogica*, I, 91.

³ Nichols, I, 91.

⁴ C. E. B. Bowles' MS. catalogue of family deeds, p. 257^b (now in S.C.L.). The Abney deeds do not now exist.

⁵ Add. MSS. 6698.

⁶ Bag. C. 340.

⁷ K. Cameron, *The place-names of Derbyshire*, 15.

⁸ Bag. C. 1030. Copy made by "J.W." on 12 October 1844. He had only a partial ability to read 15th-century script.

⁹ Bag. C. 2795 (34), 6-7.

¹⁰ The following account is summarized from Stapleton's introduction to *The Plumpton Correspondence*.

¹¹ *Plumpton Correspondence*, Letter CXXV, 158; CXXVII, 160; CXXIII, 155.

3. Relatives and patrons

Rowland, Stephen's and Katherine's son, had been admitted to his father's copyhold estate in the manor of Ashford on 24 April 1489,¹ but his mother appears to have been the lessee of the manor of Hassop until her death; there is no positive evidence of her son's tenure before 1536.² Although Rowland became pre-eminently the family name of the Eyres of Hassop, very little is known of the first Rowland, and nothing explains why he bore this name of romance. He married Dorothy Everingham, who is said to have been the daughter of Henry Everingham of Stainborough, steward of the earl of Shrewsbury's Sheffield estates. The post-nuptial settlement was dated 20 January 1512/13, when Rowland was probably over forty. By it he settled his messuages and lands in Castleton, Hope and Handsworth Woodhouse, all inherited from his father, as were his other properties at Staveley Netherthorpe, Holmesfield and Ashford. He added to his copyhold estates in Ashford in 1516, though the vendor appears to have been doubtful about getting his money, and with his brother the vicar of Tideswell acquired from the dean and chapter of Lichfield a lease of Litton and the tithes of corn and hay in Hassop, Great Longstone and Rowland.³ He had however to mortgage his

property at Handsworth Woodhouse, which was subsequently the subject of a lawsuit, and was summoned concerning a debt of £3 in the Court of Common Pleas in 1519; he sold his Staveley Netherthorpe lands to the creditor, Thomas Webster of Wingerworth, the following year.⁴ His eldest son Stephen, however, made a respectable marriage, his bride being Ellen Downes of Poynton and Worth in Cheshire.⁵ She brought him a dowry of 80 marks, but the marriage was of little permanent significance as she died soon after, leaving one daughter, named Dorothy.

Stephen's second wife was Anne Blackwall. The Blackwalls of Blackwell in Taddington had risen through the law at the end of the 15th century, Robert Blackwall being a master in chancery and Richard a serjeant-at-law. Richard died in 1505, leaving a family of six sons and five daughters.⁶ The Eyres intermarried with descendants of two of the sons, and the Staffords also appear to have been related to them by marriage. Anne Blackwall and her sister Ellen (married to Thomas Hurt of Shirley) were daughters and co-heirs of Thomas, Richard Blackwall's third son, and Agnes Blount.⁷ Thomas divided his lands at Priestcliffe, Taddington and at Favell Head in Alstonfield between his two daughters about 1547, and resided alternately at Hassop and Shirley. He died at Shirley in July 1554 leaving his personal possessions to his daughters and grandchildren.⁸

Stephen's own father had died about 1542, and his uncle Edmund vicar of Tideswell in 1544. The latter had held the cure for over forty years though for much of that time he was non-resident. His most distinguished exparishioner was Robert Pursglove, suffragan bishop of Hull. Born at Tideswell about 1500 and said to have been educated at Dean Colet's school at St. Paul's, Pursglove had a distinguished career at Oxford and became prior of Guisborough priory in Cleveland in 1536 as Thomas Cromwell's nominee; at its dissolution in 1540 he arranged its handing over to the royal commissioners. He was granted a pension of £166. 13s. 4d. per annum as ex-prior and consecrated suffragan bishop of Hull in 1538. He continued in office under Edward VI and in 1550 was made archdeacon of Nottingham.⁹ He acquired for himself the manor of Ugthorpe, one of the monastic possessions of Guisborough, through the agency of Rowland Shakerley,¹⁰ citizen and grocer of London, and doubtless also a close relation of the Shakerley lords of the manor of Little Longstone, near Tideswell. Pursglove did well by his family and friends at Tideswell. Adam Pursglove was given a lease of the conventual property in the parish of St. Helen's, York, in 1530,¹¹ and his family settled at Hutton in the parish of Ugthorpe. Another Tideswell man, Christopher Bagshawe of Wormhill, settled at Hinderwell, a parish adjoining Ugthorpe.¹² One of Rowland Eyre's younger sons, Thomas, probably through his uncle Edmund's recommendation, appears as Thomas Ayre, "gentilman and servante unto Robert, Bushope of Hull and Canon Residentiarie within the said Metropolitane churche of Yorke" on 21 November 1547, when he was granted a lease of the tithes of Dunsforth appertaining to the church of York.¹³ He subsequently settled at Tideswell during the bishop's retirement there.

Pursglove was a typical Henrician prelate in the tradition of Wolsey and

Gardiner. He "lived in sumptuous style, being served at table by gentlemen only"¹⁴; his subsequent interest in education suggests that he took the sons of gentlemen into his household for their education and his own personal service, as was common practice in the great episcopal households of the early Tudors. During Mary's reign Rowland Eyre, Stephen's son and Thomas's nephew, may have been one such youth, before he went up to Cambridge and matriculated at St. John's College in the Lent Term 1557/8.¹⁵ His residence there coincided with the Marian reaction, Cardinal Pole's visitation and the burning of the remains of the dead protestant scholars Bucer and Fagius for heresy on Market Hill.

In 1547 Sir William Drury and John Constable had disposed of their Derbyshire estates, which they held as joint tenants, including their moiety of the manor of Hassop, which Stephen Eyre purchased.¹⁶ The purchase price is not known, but he seems to have had difficulty in raising it, for he sold part of his wife's property to his brother-in-law for £20, and mortgaged the Ox Pasture at Hassop for another £20.¹⁷ He was presumably dead when his younger brother Edmund obtained from Sir Ingram Clifford a renewal of the lease of the other moiety of Hassop in 1557.¹⁸ On 12 November 1558, Stephen's widow and his son Rowland redeemed the Ox Pasture.¹⁹ Many years afterwards Rowland recalled how he had stood there with his mother when David Griffith, the mortgagee, "came upon this land and gave up the seisin and possession" to them and they received the same.²⁰ For the next ten years, momentous for English history, all record is lost of the young heir of Hassop.

While Edmund Eyre lived, he appears to have acted as head of the family. He resided at Hassop as his own master there for he speaks in his will of "my parlor at Hassoppe . . . where I use to lye when I am there" and of his coffers, chairs, stools and the tester over his bed there. Sir Ingram Clifford granted him several advantageous leases; besides a long lease of the moiety of Hassop, he held a moiety of the manor of Edensor for sixty years²¹ and a rent charge of £5 out of the manor of Darley. He appears from his will to have been a man of business, but he does not reveal its nature or whom he served.²² He was probably engaged in the wool and lead trade. He held the tithes of wool, lambs, corn and hay of Bradfield, and two of his nieces, Stephen's daughters, probably through his agency, were married to London haberdashers and factors — Dorothy to John Roberts, who appears to have been connected with the Wakefield trade and was also a haberdasher, and Jane to William Frost, another London haberdasher, probably of the Derbyshire Frost family.

He may have conducted Clifford's Derbyshire affairs, and his will suggests that he possibly had business connections with Thomas Sutton of Over Haddon and King's Mead, the earl of Shrewsbury's receiver, whom he appointed one of the overseers of his will. Mistress Sutton he calls his cousin, as he does also her brothers Nicholas and Robert Bagshaw of Farewell, likewise overseers of the will.²³ Edmund Eyre was buried at Chesterfield on 24 May 1560.²⁴ His will laid down in considerable detail how his property was to be divided between his own illegitimate daughter Anne and the children of his elder brother, Stephen.

The Eyres of Hassop were still very minor gentry when he died, and there was every likelihood that they would sink to a position little distinguished from yeomen. It was his nephew the second Rowland who raised the family to wealth and prosperity. He was just reaching manhood at Elizabeth's accession. He died, over eighty, when Charles I was on the throne.

I. 3. References

- ¹ Harl. MSS. 5809.
- ² In his son's marriage settlement, dated 22 August 1536, Rowland is stated to hold the lease of Hassop of Sir William Drury, John Constable and Brian Rowcliffe. Bag. C. 2611.
- ³ Bag. C. 2609; 2387, 2304, 1406; 1408; 1414.
- ⁴ Bag. C. 2567, 2786, 2388. C.1/982/82, 83.
- ⁵ Marriage settlement dated 22 August 1536. Bag. C. 2611.
- ⁶ Brass in Taddington church. Cox, II, 117.
- ⁷ Thomas and Agnes were already married in January 1505/6. Bag. C. 1312.
- ⁸ Bag. C. 1252. Will proved at Lichfield, July 1554.
- ⁹ J. M. J. Fletcher, "Bishop Pursglove of Tideswell", *D.A.J.*, XXXII (1910), 1-32.
- ¹⁰ *V.C.H. York, North Riding*, II, 397.
- ¹¹ Conventional leases, Yorks. no. 226, quoted in *Cartulary of Gisburne Priory*, II, xlvi. *Surtees Soc.*, LXXXIX.
- ¹² Will of John Pursglove of Huton, York wills, vol. 23, f. 552; will of Christopher Bagshawe of Hinderwell, York wills, vol. 25, f. 1418. *H.M.C. 9th Report, Part 1 Appendix*, 48-9.
- ¹³ York, Dean and Chapter Library, D/C Register 1543/87, f. 36. That this Thomas Ayre is the member of the Hassop family is made clear by a chancery case between Thomas and his brother Edmund about this or another Dunsforth lease — actually in the case it is the parsonage and rectory of Dunsforth. C.3/75/10.
- ¹⁴ Cox, II, 305.
- ¹⁵ J. and J. A. Venn, ed., *Alumni Cantabrigienses*, 1922-54, Part I, vol. I, 61.
- ¹⁶ Drury and Constable conveyed the whole estates to four grantees, Bag. C. 1015. The grantees' conveyance to Eyre is listed in *Hassop Evidence Book*, I, no. 8.
- ¹⁷ Bag. C. 1252; 1038.
- ¹⁸ In the diocesan registers at Lichfield, administration of the goods of a Stephen Eyre was granted on 10 and 21 November 1558. This Stephen is said to be "of Tamworth" and it seems unlikely that he was Stephen Eyre of Hassop.
- ¹⁹ Bag. C. 1040.
- ²⁰ St. Ch. 5/16/41, *Eyre v. Blackwall*.
- ²¹ CP 25(2)/68/569 no. 8; Edmund Eyre's will, P.C.C. Holney 33; CP 25(2)/68/569 no. 9.
- ²² There is nothing to suggest that he was the same person as Edmund Eyre, appointed, with Thomas Clark, as registrar to the newly established High Commission at York in 1561. *Cal. S.P.D. Addenda 1547-05*, 510. The latter was probably the Edmund Ayre who matriculated at St. John's College, Cambridge, 1544, was Fellow of Trinity, 1546, and admitted to Gray's Inn, 1553. *Alumni Cantab.*, Pt. 1, vol. I, 60. In any case Edmund Eyre never acted under the appointment.
- ²³ Edmund Eyre's will, P.C.C. Holney 33. By a clerk's error Sutton's name is given as "Dutton" in the P.C.C. Register. Thomas Sutton's will (P.C.C. Holney 18) makes it clear that he is the person referred to.
- ²⁴ The date of his burial is wrongly transcribed as 24 May 1568 in J. P. Yeatman, *Feudal Derbyshire*, section 4, 421.

II. THE FORTUNES OF ROWLAND EYRE II

I. *Servant of John Manners*

The chief factors in Rowland Eyre's rise to wealth were his first marriage and his exploitation of local lead resources. Behind all this, however, was his position as a favoured servant of John Manners of Haddon¹ who, through his marriage to Dorothy Vernon, had inherited the Derbyshire estates of the Vernons, when Rowland was in his early twenties.

Neither the date when Rowland became John Manners' servant nor the exact nature of his employment can be given with any accuracy. For the most part, information must be pieced together from a few surviving Haddon account books. Two exist for the years 1564/5, one of which contains

Manners' own accounts while he was living at Ayleston before Sir George Vernon's death; in neither is there any mention of Rowland Eyre. In the accounts of Francis Leeming, Manners' chamberlain, for the years 1578-81/2, Eyre makes a number of appearances, but few of them are at all revealing.² Entries such as the following suggest that Manners often sent Leeming money for current payments by Eyre's hand:

"Received since December 1581 for the use of my master:
Received of Rolande Eyre the xxiiiith day of December 1581 xl li."

The sum supplied is frequently £20. Rowland also spent money on his master's behalf, and he too must have rendered accounts to Manners, countersigned in his master's own hand but long since lost. In June 1581 Leeming records:

"Delyvered to Mr. Collumble & Mr. Rolande Eire at severall tymes
clxxxxvi li. xiiis. iiiid."

On one occasion payments became somewhat confused:

"Item delyvered to Shackersley the xxvith of June x li. v li. whereof was in my accomptes & the other iii li. was your own, viz. of Mr. Rolande Eyre xls. [of] which he ought you xxviis. viiid., the other xiiis. iiiid. he paid for a nightcapp for Mr. John iis. & xs. iiiid. for the stillitorie."

The following entry suggests that Manners was playing the ball-game pall-mall with Rowland:

"Item to your selfe at mall and what you gave to Eyre xviiid."

Leeming paid the household wages every quarter, but Eyre was too important a person to appear on his list. From September 1581, however, Jane Eyre, undoubtedly Rowland's eldest daughter, aged about ten or eleven, received a quarterly payment of 15s. She was probably waiting-maid to Manners' daughter Grace, for in September 1581 £5. 1s. 10½d. was paid to Steven Lane for gowns for Mistress Grace and Jane Eyre.

One of the few plain statements of Eyre's position is contained in Manners' lease to him of two corn mills at Baslow in November 1581, where he is described as "servant to the said John and Dorothy" Manners. On the dorse of the original lease is a memorandum, written in Eyre's hand, "that anno domini 1597 my maister Mr John Manners had a greay Trottinge Geldinge of mee, the price xx pounds, in which yeare he was Sherriffe of Derbeshire, in parte of payment of threescore pounds which I should paye for other xx yeares after the ende of the yeares of this lease bee expired, as Mr George Maners. Roger Rooe, and divers others doe know".³

Judging from the number of occasions when Manners settled Rowland's business for him, at some trouble to himself, he must have been a favourite with his exceedingly dull but conscientious master. A few years before the latter's death he wrote "on the behalfe of this bearer my old servant Row. Eyre" to one of the judges who was to try the suit depending between Eyre and Alsop, asking "that you would be pleased to let my said servant have your honours favour so far forth as the honestie and Justice of his case shall [allow] upon the hearing therof".⁴

As an example of Manners' confidence in Rowland there is the deed of trust of St. John's Hospital, Bakewell. From this it appears that he made Rowland one of his trustees, in 1594, for certain lands for securing an annuity given to the hospital by Roger Manners, his brother.⁵ Roger, who was well-known at Haddon, was for many years an esquire of the body to Queen Elizabeth; though he seems to have retired from the royal service at the queen's death, it was very probably through his influence that Rowland's sixth son, Rowland, became a gentleman of the Presence Chamber early in King James I's reign.⁶ Eyre's close connection with the Manners family during these years is the background to all his other activities.

II. 1. References

- ¹ Second son of the first earl of Rutland. He died in 1611.
² Belvoir muniments, no. 72, ff. 11, 29, 16, 40, 19.
³ Belvoir muniments. Baslow 4834.
⁴ Belvoir muniments, XV (49^a). Draft, on the back of another letter assigned to the year 1607.
⁵ The deed is transcribed in *The Reliquary*, IV, 117. The other trustees were Roger Manners, Roger Columbelle and George Boune, probably a London lawyer.
⁶ Information supplied to the Heralds by Rowland Eyre, senior, in 1604. It is doubtful whether Rowland Eyre, junior, held the appointment long. He married a London wife, Hester, daughter and heiress of Thomas Hacket and niece of Cuthbert Hacket, alderman of the city of London. In 1617 he was living on his wife's property at Orsett, Essex, and in November 1622 he was a prisoner in the Fleet for debt, having been there several years. C.2 Jas. I E.7/15.

2. *The Stafford Marriage*

The marriages of the four daughters and heiresses of Humphrey Stafford of Eyam provide one of the set pieces of Derbyshire genealogy. Except in the case of Anne, the third daughter, however, little beyond the bare facts are generally known. Not even the date of Rowland Eyre's marriage to Gertrude, the second daughter, has been recorded.

Humphrey Stafford died before his wife, and before his younger brother, Rowland, made his will in October 1556. From this document it appears that Humphrey left his widow, Lucy, the mother of five young daughters, and that she soon followed her husband to the grave, entrusting her children to her brother-in-law.¹ When he too died about December 1556, the children's grandmother, Anne Stafford, became their guardian until her death in 1560. The youngest child, Dorothy, was then dead. The other four were still quite young, the eldest, Alice, probably being in her 'teens and already married or contracted in marriage to John Savage of Castleton.² Anne Stafford made Thomas Savage (Alice's father-in-law) and Robert Eyre (probably Robert Eyre of Edale) guardians and supervisors of her granddaughters and their property until they came of age.³

The inheritance of the Staffords had been built up during the preceding century through fortunate marriages.⁴ When Humphrey died he held, in Derbyshire, the manor of Rowland and extensive property in Eyam, Foolow, Hucklow, Calver, Bakewell, Youlgrave and Longstone.⁵ The Stafford property in Hertfordshire and elsewhere did not come to Humphrey's daughters, and the value of their inheritance has probably been exaggerated. It would have

made a very splendid portion for one daughter; divided among four, it endowed each with sufficient landed estates to make her an attractive proposition to a Derbyshire esquire.

Before their grandmother's death nothing is heard of any question of wardship of the four heiresses, but it appears that shortly afterwards the earl of Shrewsbury claimed them as his wards, either by grant from the crown or through his right of private wardship, for on 11 October 1562 he sold the wardship and marriage of Anne, the third daughter, to Robert Eyre of Edale, bailiff of the High Peak, who was his Derbyshire steward⁶ and possibly the same person that Anne Stafford had named in her will. His wife Jane, daughter of Thomas Reresby and widow of Thomas Gascoigne, was Lucy Stafford's cousin.⁷ Eyre made a contract on 12 April 1565 with Godfrey Bradshaw of Bradshaw, that Anne should be married to Godfrey's son Francis before 7 May. Bradshaw paid Eyre £70 for the transaction on 4 May, probably the day of the marriage. Francis was then nine years old, and Anne probably about fourteen.⁸ In the contract, Godfrey Bradshaw undertook to settle on the two children lands in Chapel-en-le-Frith of the annual value of £5. 6s. 8d. and within four years settle his estate in their favour. Nothing was said about Anne's own inheritance at this stage.

Gertrude, the second daughter and Rowland Eyre's future wife, had been married to Thomas Woodruffe before 13 July 1564, when he died.⁹ He had inherited the estates in Great Hucklow of his great-uncle Thomas Woodruffe of Hope, woolman of London. Young Thomas Woodruffe's heir was his uncle, Nicholas Woodruffe, aged thirty-two at his nephew's death, and it can be assumed that Thomas was only a youth. No mention is made of his young wife or of any settlement in the inquisition post mortem, and it appears that none had been made. They had probably been married only a few months.

By October 1565 Gertrude was already married again and her husband was Thomas Eyre of Edale, undoubtedly Robert Eyre's son.¹⁰ Although she was heiress to a goodly inheritance, Gertrude appears at this stage to have been left without any jointure. To provide her with suitable maintenance arbitrators were appointed, perhaps on an official commission, as the names suggest that it may have been held in Chesterfield. On the deed of settlement the following endorsement, now partly illegible, can be made out:

"... unto Edward Armestronge for and to the use of the within named Thomas and Gertrude in the presence of us Hughe Charnock(?), Edmund Burton, Adam Eyre, John Oxley. This [—] done by the advice and consell of us [Nicholas] Powtrell & Ryc. Horpur for quyetness and frendship [—] and Contynte between the parties upon the equity of the matter".¹¹

The settlement provided, as Gertrude's dowry, rent charges of £7 and 26s. 8d. out of the Woodruffe property, to be hers for life. Gertrude cannot have been more than twenty at the time and was probably less; her expectation of life may well have been forty years. As there is no reason to think the Woodruffes had received any of her inheritance, it seems to have been an arrangement with little justification.

Before long, Thomas Eyre of Edale also died, and Gertrude was once more a childless widow. She was probably by this time of age and was soon married for the third time, her husband being Rowland Eyre. With her former father-in-law and his elder brother's family, the Eyres of Highlow, a close connection continued. They were, of course, Rowland's distant cousins through their common descent from Robert Eyre of Padley I. The date of the marriage must have been about 1569.¹² To her new husband's home Gertrude brought the Woodruffe deed, settling £8. 6s. 8d. a year on her. It is still among the Eyre muniments.

It was not until the 1570s that a division of the Stafford property between the heiresses and their husbands was made.¹³ By this time the fourth heiress, Katherine, was married to Rowland Morewood. In the deeds Rowland is treated as representing Gertrude, and no mention is made of either previous husband. In Michaelmas term 1572, Rowland and Gertrude levied a fine of their fourth part of the (as yet undivided) Stafford estates to two trustees.¹⁴ In January 1575/6, Eyam Hall and certain lands in Eyam, Foolow, Bretton and Hucklow were granted to Francis and Anne Bradshaw as their portion by the other three brothers-in-law.¹⁵ Presumably similar deeds conveyed their portions to John Savage and Rowland Morewood. Over Eyre's share there was dissention. He was plainly determined to have for himself the manor of Rowland, which adjoined Hassop and with its lead-mines was obviously the most valuable single part of the estate. Legal proceedings were begun, and John Manners and several others were directed to hold an inquiry. Manners was clearly the most important and forceful of the commissioners and was probably already Eyre's master and patron. Under the award Eyre kept the manor of Rowland, but had to compensate Bradshaw by a payment of £60. The receipt for this sum states that it was paid under the partition of the estate made by John Manners, sheriff of the county of Derby.¹⁶ Whether or not Morewood and Savage received any compensation does not appear. Eyre, in any case, obtained the major share of the inheritance.

In addition to Gertrude's landed property, the Woodruffe annuity continued for a time to be paid to her. About 1580, according to Eyre's account, the payments ceased. In 1587 he began to take action to distrain for the money due. The usual running war of the moors followed, Eyre's men driving off cattle and the Woodruffes attempting rescues. In one particularly hot encounter on 10 November 1591, when the Woodruffe supporters had been braced up with "certeyn ale and drinke at Hope", a man was killed. Rowland took the opportunity provided by this breach of the peace to petition the Star Chamber.¹⁷ A process out of the court served on Edmund Woodruffe so terrified him that he agreed to give Eyre eleven score and ten pounds, by which agreement, Woodruffe said, he was utterly undone and never able "to stand upon his head" again. The bond of Edmund and Nicholas Woodruffe to abide by this arbitration, dated 26 March 1592, survives in the muniments. The arbitrators were John Staley of Redseats, nephew to both parties, and Nicholas Booth.¹⁸ It must have been at this point that Gilbert, earl of Shrewsbury, wrote to his uncle, John Manners:

"The bearer Edmond Woodruffe of Hope . . . complains to me of hard proceedings against him by your servant Rowland Eyre, who vexes him with multiplied suits. I entreat you to cause Eyre to desist from his persecutions, and to see that the matters be heard and ended by certain gentlemen who are to be chosen indifferently, yourself, if possible to be one of the number."¹⁹

Their award to Eyre of a lump sum of £230 seems to have been exceedingly favourable to him, as Gertrude was by now over forty. The Woodruffes must have cursed the day nearly thirty years before when she was married into their family. The whole business is typical of Eyre and his methods and forms a fitting prelude to the account of the making of the Eyre inheritance by him and his son Thomas. Gertrude's only Stafford relatives were her sisters. With the Bradshaws at least she and her husband seem to have been on friendly terms, and there are references to Bradshaw and Morewood cousins in later generations. On the mother's side Gertrude came of the Eyres of Holme Hall, Chesterfield, descended from Robert Eyre I of Padley, by his fourth son, Roger. Gertrude's mother, Lucy Eyre, was the daughter of Edward Eyre of Holme Hall (who died in 1558) by his wife, Elizabeth Reresby. Edward had been bailiff of Tideswell, and as his second wife he married Alice Pursglove of Tideswell, a much younger sister or possibly a niece of Bishop Pursglove. Lucy Eyre's brother of the whole blood, Anthony, had the family estates at Kiveton in Yorkshire and held property in Norton, Derbyshire.²⁰ With Anthony's son, Gervase, Gertrude's first cousin and nearest male relative, Rowland seems to have been on intimate terms. By his second wife, Edward Eyre had two sons, Robert and Thomas, to whom he left the leases of Holme and Dunston Halls respectively. His widow, Alice, was living in 1599, so that it is unlikely they were born much before 1540 and were thus nearly Rowland's contemporaries, though of an earlier generation.²¹

In 1580 a family event of importance took place, which shows Rowland very much identified with his wife's maternal relations, who were, of course, more distantly his own. Bishop Pursglove, deprived of his bishopric under Elizabeth, and reported in 1561 to be "very wealthy and stiff in Papistry and of estimation in the country", had been living in retirement, supervising the foundation of his grammar schools at Tideswell and Guisborough. In the latter years of his life he appears to have lived at Dunston Hall, the house of his nephew.²² On 31 March 1580, he made his will, of which Gervase and Rowland Eyre were witnesses.²³ This document shows him, even in retirement, keeping some state. He occupied the chamber over the dining-parlour, hung with his own "fyne Arras having Imagery uppon yt and the Storie of Christes passion"; his bedding included a large bed-covering, "having the Picture of a Bisshoppe uppon yt"; for his table he had a "standinge Cuppe of sylver gilte with a Cover", other silver gilt goblets and cups and a set of twelve apostle spoons, all of which may have come from his old priory of Guisborough. All these possessions with a silver gilt basin and ewer and three candlesticks were left to his nephews. To Rowland and Gervase, as the representatives of the elder branch of Edward Eyre's family (not directly related to the bishop), he left the supervision of his charitable bequests and

instructions for his funeral, in acknowledgement of which services they were each to have a cushion of blue tissue:

"And towcheinge the bestowinge of my worldlye gooddes I have alreadye delyvered Fourtie poundes to my lovinge and trustie Friendes Gervase Eyre of Keeton in the Countye of York and Rowlande Eyre of Hassope in the Countie of Darbye Esquiers, theie to bestowe the saide Fourtie poundes amongeeste the poore people and for the necessarye Charges of my Funerall at the daye of my buriall in suche places and order as is declared in twoe Billes indented made betwixte me the saide Robarte, Jarvase and Rowlande subscribed withe oure handes, and sealed withe oure Seales bearinge Date the eleventh Daie of Marche laste paste."

This deed is not unfortunately in the Eyre muniments. Among other things, it no doubt mentioned the memorial brass probably ordered by himself, now in Tideswell church, showing Pursglove in the eucharistic vestments he had worn as bishop.

These transactions show clearly the direction in which Rowland's religious sympathies lay. The situation however was very fluid for many years to come. Thomas and Robert Eyre were before long in trouble for their recusancy, but Gervase's family, the Eyres of Rampton, had settled down to conformity before the Civil War. For two generations the Hassop Eyres continued to be outwardly respectable church-going papists.

II. 2. References

- ¹ Proved at Lichfield, 16 January 1556/7.
- ² Son of Thomas Savage of Castleton Spital.
- ³ Anne Stafford's will, proved at Lichfield 31 August 1560; will dated 5 June 1560.
- ⁴ C. E. B. Bowles, "The Staffords of Eyam", *D.A.J.*, XXX (1908), 261-94.
- ⁵ In the fine of 1572 it consists of 20 messuages, 20 tofts, a watermill, a colubary, 200 acres of land, 100 acres of meadow, 300 acres of heath and moor. Bag. C. 1170.
- ⁶ *V.C.H. Derbyshire*, I, 410.
- ⁷ The pedigree of Reresby in J. Hunter, *South Yorkshire*, II, 39, does not give Jane's second husband, but that Robert Eyre's wife was Thomas Gascoigne's widow is clear from *Requests* 284/19.
- ⁸ Wolley Charters XII, 41, given in full in *D.A.J.*, XXV (1903), 62-3; Bowles Deeds 99, 97, in S.C.L.
- ⁹ I.P.M. taken 20 April 1565. C.142/142, no. 62.
- ¹⁰ Eliz. St. Ch. 5, bundle 2, no. 14. *Eyre v. Woodruffe*; Bag. C. 1512.
- ¹¹ Bag. C. 1512 (endorsement).
- ¹² Gertrude's eldest son, Thomas, gave his age as about 63 in 1632.
- ¹³ The bond that Francis and Anne should enjoy a full fourth part of the estate, by which Savage, Eyre and Morewood (the other three husbands) were bound in £500, dated by Bowles 23 July 1567, is in fact 23 July 1577. Bowles Deeds 108.
- ¹⁴ Bag. C. 1170A and B.
- ¹⁵ Wolley deed XII, 46.
- ¹⁶ Bag. C. 1167.
- ¹⁷ The above account is taken from the petition, St. Ch. 5 Eliz., bundle 2, no. 14, *Eyre v. Woodruffe*.
- ¹⁸ St. Ch. 8 Jas. I, bundle 134/18, *Eyre v. Alsop*; Bag. C. 2741. John Staley's mother was Rowland's sister Mary. His father's sister was the wife of Edmund Woodruffe the elder.
- ¹⁹ *H.M.C. Report (24) Rutland*, I, 299, letter dated 8 May 1592.
- ²⁰ J. Hunter, *Familiae Minorum Gentium*, 555-60.
- ²¹ On Robert Eyre's death, administration was granted to his mother, Mrs. Alice Fletcher, 16 April 1599. Lichfield Diocesan Act Book, IX, f. 251.
- ²² He executed several deeds while living at Dunston. *H.M.C. 9th Report, Part I, Appendix*, 48-9.
- ²³ P.C.C. 32 Arundel, printed in *The Reliquary*, XVIII, 223.

3. *Lord of the manor of Hassop*

When Edmund Eyre died in 1569, the Eyres had been at Hassop ninety years, but were still lords of half the manor only; this moiety was held by Rowland as heir of Stephen, his father. By leaving the lease of the Clifford moiety to Thomas and Katherine, his younger nephew and youngest niece, Edmund apparently intended that it should remain divided.

He reckoned, however, without his elder nephew, Rowland. Less than two months after their uncle's death "Thomas Eyre of London", as he is called in the deed, assigned to his brother Rowland all his right in the manor of Hassop derived under their uncle Edmund's will.¹ There is no means of knowing how much money Rowland paid him for it. In after years Thomas obviously thought Rowland had the best of the bargain and aired his grievance to his sister Jane. After Thomas's death, Jane and her husband, William Frost the London haberdasher, filed a petition in the Court of Requests, as his executors. They alleged that Edmund Eyre "in his time set down many wills," but by a last nuncupative will he gave to Thomas all his term of years in the lease of Hassop. They claimed that Rowland unlawfully held the property.²

A local commission of Roger Columbell of Darley and Henry Bagshawe took Rowland's answer at Hassop on 5 April 1585.³ He had no difficulty in showing that by a deed of 4 July 1569 "upon good considerations" Thomas had assigned him all right and title in the lease. He made the whole case look frivolous and even claimed costs of £4. 16s. 2d. against his brother-in-law. In fact, Rowland had undoubtedly hurried the business through with undue haste, before Edmund's will was proved.⁴ Nothing came of Jane's petition to hold the half part of the manor.

Katherine was Rowland's youngest and probably his only sister unmarried at the time of Edmund Eyre's death. On 22 March 1569/70, he paid her her portion, in return for the assignment of her rights in their uncle's lease.⁵ She was no doubt already contracted to marry one of the Needhams of Cowlow and Thornsett,⁶ but whether her intended husband was the elder brother, Ottywell, or the younger, George whom she afterwards married, is not clear. Ottywell was probably already in poor health and died soon after making his will on 25 December 1570. By this he laid down that his executors "with such part and portion of my rents, issues and profyttes . . . as they think necessary and convenient, shall bringe uppe, imploy & bestowe upon my said brother George yearly unto such tyme as he shall atteyn and come unto the age of *xxi* years, in and about his vertuous educa[tion] & learning in the universytye or other Schole wheare & in what place my executors . . . shall thinke most meet, necessary & convenient".⁷ Katherine's was the best marriage made by any of Stephen Eyre's daughters, but the young husband proved a wastrel and some twenty years later was lamenting that "in the course of my youth I have . . . lapped myself in greate debtes & danger, a thinge so burdenous unto me as that yt doth keepe me in continuall coogitation & affliction".⁸

Rowland was not without his own difficulties. The purchase of the lease and his marriage had cost money. He borrowed £40 from his uncle Thomas Eyre of Tideswell⁹ and an unspecified sum from John Shemelde, the Sheffield butcher who had married Rowland's widowed cousin Anne, Edmund's daughter. This loan was secured on the assignment of the lease of Hassop which he apparently did not redeem until 13 January 1583/4.¹⁰ From then on, as servant of John Manners, from the produce of his lead mines and later as the farmer of the queen's mines, Rowland appears to have flourished; he was never short of a few hundred pounds in cash or in lead to lend, on the security of a good mortgage, to a spendthrift squire, relative or humble yeoman-miner.

In 1578 Sir Ingram Clifford died. He had inherited the half manor of Hassop, of which Rowland now held the lease, with the other Derbyshire property of the Rowcliffes, through his first wife, Anne Rowcliffe, and he left it to his own heirs, his nephews the earl of Cumberland and Francis Clifford. Like the other moiety, it had twice descended through heiresses since the death of Sir William Plumpton. The wildly extravagant earl of Cumberland soon made arrangements for a commission of four persons to dispose of the Derbyshire property.¹¹ There were several hitches before Rowland Eyre purchased the moiety of Hassop. After Dame Anne Clifford's death without children, the heirs of Brian Rowcliffe had challenged her right to leave the property to her husband Sir Ingram, and doubt about his title probably still remained.¹² There was also an obscure question of the rights of the lord of the manor to enclose certain land, which Rowland wanted settled before making the purchase, and so once again he referred the matter to John Manners. To the latter, Anthony Wright of Great Longstone, who must have been acting as steward for the Cliffords, wrote an incoherent letter on the subject while encamped with the forces mustered on Rotherham Moor to defend England against the Armada, which had already set sail from Cadiz¹³:

"May it please your right worshipful Mr. shippe (after the Remembraunce of my most bounden dewtie) to be advertissed that my good freind Mr. Rolland Eire hath written to me to know wether one parcell of grownd called the Brekes lately inclosed out of some part of the waste belonging and parcell of the manor of Hassopp was not to be excepted as severall and inclosed ground when the book that passed between Mr. Clyfford and the Tennants of Hassoppe was brought to me to allow of, yea or nay. Trewly I once thought to have excepted that ground by speciall name in their purchase and had good Remembraunce to have so done though I was then in grete payne and yet in thend knowing that I might except the same breke and all inclosed improvements in general words did use general words as may appear by there book and therfor the breke being inclosed at the time of the agrement between Mr. Clyfforde and the tennants of Hassop me thinks it ought not now to come in question. Mr. Clyfford did of his worship that few men would have done to there tennants to grant them Common where they had none by law before, wherefore I wold wish them contented, for if I should be deposed I must depose that I told them that the Improvement called Brekes was to be for the Lord his use And that Hassop is a manor and was in King Henry the sixth his dayes. Mr. George Allen of Stanton and Mr. Columbelle or thone of them can shew your worship who saw and I think copied an old Court

Roll amongst others of a court kept at Hassop in that tyme. Thus muche I am bolde to signifie to your worship desiringe pardon that I have so trobled the same with so Rude scribenge upon my knee sett upon the grownde where the Lord Darce and others now traversinge and appoyntyng soldiers. And so humbly reast. Rotheram More, the last of May, 1588.

Your worships ever to command

I most humbly make pardon
of paper for I had no more
[Written on a single sheet]

Anthonye Wright."

From this letter and from the case which Rowland subsequently brought in the Star Chamber¹⁴ the matter appears to have been as follows. The Bretche, Breke or Breache was part of the Nortley Field which is shown as Norclay or Narclay on the map of Hassop in 1752.¹⁵ The position of the small closes of which Norclay was composed, adjoining and interlocking with Hassop Common, suggests that they were enclosures and improved land taken from the common. Though the shape of the fields rather suggests old strips, the closes were in fact pasture. Rowland had apparently enclosed with dry walling the part called the Bretche, and as lord of half the manor and lessee of the other half held that his land was excluded from the tenants' right of common grazing over the remainder of the area. The question was complicated by the fact that in 1547, when Drury and Constable had disposed of their half part of the Hassop property, several of the tenants had purchased the moieties of their freeholds.¹⁶ These well-to-do freeholders of whom Thurstan Lowe, the Plattes, the Harrisons and Frenches *alias* Harvey were the chief, were determined to assert their rights. On 24 February and 5 March 1588/9 several gaps were made in the enclosing wall. The prime movers in this were the Frenches. Richard French *alias* Harvye, aged 67 years or thereabouts, admitted that he "badde his wief goe to the said place with one other person And pull downe a gappe & goe through the same to the Comon & pull down a nother and so come whome". French's two daughters, Katherine and Anne, spinsters in their thirties, also had a hand in the matter, as did Elizabeth Platts, spinster. On 26 March, Eyre determined to bring matters to a head. In French's words, "Katheryn and Anne Frenche *alias* Harvie by the commandement of their saide father who had his sheepe goyng and feedinge upon the said pasture called the Breche, And who also had notice and understandinge that the said complainant went and entended to dryve his cattell owte and frome the said grounde and them to ympounde and deteigne, came in peaceable maner to keepe their fathers said cattell upon the saied pasture, as well and lawful was for them to doe". When Eyre's servants, Roger Baylie and John Croslye, began driving off the sheep, a gang of freeholders, mainly women, including French's wife and two daughters, Harrison's wife and daughter Gertrude, Widow Wilson and two daughters, Thurstan Lowe's wife and daughter Mary, "all of Hassop, labourers and womenfolk", set upon them and themselves took and drove the sheep away.

Though one can attach too much meaning to the legal insults both sides hurled at each other in such cases, Eyre's relations with the freeholders at

this time seem to have been as bad as could be. Margaret French, Elizabeth Platts and Grace Harrison in their joint and several answers describe Eyre as one "who being as these defendents thincke a man verye covetous & extremelye impatient of their neighbourhood, thinkinge to engrosse their whole lyvinge unto his owne hands, usethe most indirect & unchristian practises to wearye the said defendents & other the poore tenaunts out of their owne, not only by wrongfull enclosinge of the said Breache but also by breakinge down the walls of his owne severall [i.e. enclosed land] of purpose to trayne in there cattell into his groundes, which notwithstandinge, the said Rowland Eyre hathe fourteen severall actions or thereabouts dependinge in the Kings Benche agaynst the poore husbandes of these deponents & prosecutethe the same to the great trouble & molestation of the said poore people contrary to all right equitye & conscience".

Eyre also had a chancery case in progress with some of the freeholders, concerning the lands in Backdale, Bole Edge and Norcliff. Under an injunction of the court in this case John Manners made an award in the dispute by which "the mines in those places were reserved to Mr. Eyre & his heirs".¹⁷

It was thus not until 1590 that Eyre at last completed the purchase of Clifford's moiety of the manor. The property was conveyed to him by deeds dated 13 and 14 July of that year.¹⁸ From the bond for performance of covenants in £1,000, bearing the same date, it appears that the purchase price was £500. In the Michaelmas term following the business was completed by the levying of a fine.¹⁹ Thereafter Hassop passed from father to son through eight generations in two hundred years, in a succession unbroken even by a minority.

During the ten years following the purchase of the manor Rowland built a new hall at Hassop, and in 1600 obtained from the crown the right of holding a court leet there. Very little is known of the old hall, though a detailed architectural examination of the present building would probably reveal some of the old structure incorporated in it. The Eyre family moved out completely while the new hall was built. In 1590 Rowland had acquired the lease of Dethick Hall from Edward Stafford, esquire, and his wife, Margery, who held it for the term of her life, as the widow of Anthony Babington, who had been executed only five years previously.²⁰ The Eyres moved into Dethick Hall about 1594. Thomas Eyre was meanwhile living with his wife's parents at Hampstall Ridware. Few deeds survive for the next two years, as Rowland was presumably occupied with building. There are, however, several in which he is described as "Rowland Eyre of Dethick".

No building records survive among the muniments. The house Rowland erected was no doubt substantially the same as that described by the parliamentary surveyors in 1652²¹:

"All that Capitall Messuage or Mansionhouse with the appurtenances commonly called Hassopp Hall . . . consisting of a portall of Fower Roomes, a Hall, a Parlor wainscotted, a buttery and two cellars, a kitching, Larder and Pastery belowe staires, a small dyning Roome wainscotted, a Nursery of Two Roomes and one and twenty lodging Roomes wherof wainscotted and three Closesets (above stairs) built of stone and caded

with Leade, a Bakehouse, Brewhouse with a Store Chamber and Meale Chamber overhead, a dairy and Poultry, with severall lodging Roomes for servants and conveniences for each office; alsoe Two Stables of three bay of building, a Barne of Fower bay and Eleaven bay of outhousing.

On the South and West adioyning to the said house there is a garden and Orchard conteyning two acres, one roode and tenne pole. On the East side thereof Two Courtyards conteyning one Acre and one roode, which said Mannor house with the scite thereof is encompassed with the Park comonly called Hassopp parke hereafter mentioned Southwest and North and bounded with the Towne streete East and conteyne by estimation Five acres, tenn pole more or lesse."

In the early years of the 17th century Rowland gave his attention to decorating the new house. According to one of the heraldic visitations four stained-glass windows, with the date "R.E. 1607", adorned the dining-room, bearing the arms of Eyre, Padley, Stafford and Blackwall²² with the Eyre crest and the mottoes: *Veritas Temporis* and *Filia neminem Metue Inocens*. The set of nine small portraits of the Eyre family on wooden panels, listed in the Hassop sale catalogue, may date from this period. Rowland Eyre was obviously aware of his family traditions and gave commendably full information to the heralds in 1604. No inventory of Hassop Hall survives. When the contents of the Hall were sold in 1919, there was some fine Jacobean oak there, probably including some of the original furniture of the new house. In a later age this had been superseded by 18th-century furniture; in the main rooms Sheraton and Chippendale prevailed at the time of the sale. The Hall, too, was transformed in outward appearance, but the evidence suggests that Rowland spent his wealth lavishly on the family mansion.

* * * * *

Only rarely are glimpses of the manorial economy in Rowland's day obtained, chiefly from witnesses in legal cases, and particularly from the hostile evidence of Thurstan Lowe.²³ Lowe maintained that Stephen Eyre's purchase of the moiety of Hassop in 1547 gave him no manorial rights, but that his property was strictly comparable to that of the other freeholders; he may well have been correct, but as the deed of 19 December 1547 is missing there is no means of knowing exactly what was conveyed to Stephen. Hassop lies below the uplands of Longstone Moor, mainly between 500 and 700 ft. above sea level. From its eastern boundary the land undulates gradually down to the Derwent at Bubnell, a mile away. The area on the old map of 1752 was 823 acres. Today the land is under grass and though it can never have been very good arable, it was good pasture, and there was little waste in the manor, only about 100 acres. Lowe stated that he and his neighbours had calculated, without Eyre's "privity", that the commons would support after the rate of only ten sheep per oxgang of arable and that the freeholders had eight and a half oxgangs and Eyre eight and a half oxgangs, joined with Hassop Hall. The rest of the manor was presumably under meadow and pasture. For a moor rent of 2s. the Eyres had long had right of common on Longstone Moor of the manor of Ashford, a privilege

no doubt dating from the time when the first Stephen Eyre was the earl of Westmorland's bailiff of Ashford.

In the 1620s it was stated that Thomas Eyre, Rowland's son, "usuallie wintred all his sheepe in his Manor of Hassoppe, which he somered in Longston Moore and may winter ther above a 1000 sheepe. The plaintiff [Thomas] and his Father have for 24 yeares usuallie somered on Longston Moores about 1000 sheepe . . . The plaintiffs Father had usuallie 3 flockes kept on the Moores, heathes and Comon of Ashford". They were out on the moor from about May till Martlemas, i.e. Martinmas, 11 November. Thomas Eyre had apparently made considerable increases in his stock, but even so it is clear that he and his father had long been big sheep-farmers. Rowland's father, Stephen Eyre, according to Lowe, had summered quite a small flock upon the waste of Hassop, sometimes 60, sometimes 100, and sometimes 160 sheep.

As a stock-farmer, Rowland Eyre was naturally an encloser or depopulator within his own property, and it was said he "hath decayed all the tenements and farms in Rowland save that one Merrill [Eyre's servant George Merrell] and one Bland hath some part there". About 1570 there had been ten farms in Rowland of which nine kept tillage, but at the time of the statement there were but three draughts kept. Rowland Eyre had also taken a cow pasture and a field called Flitt lands from the farmers.

Eyre was only following the fashion, for the countess of Shrewsbury had done the same in her manor of Ashford. Here Eyre was on the other side: when she made enclosures on Ashford Moor, he and divers freeholders pulled down the wall. This was probably in the 1580s, and it had lain open ever since. He had not scrupled, however, to take a lease of some of the enclosed land himself at one stage.

The Eyres did not run all their sheep in the home area, but held various distant commons at different times. They also kept cattle, for in Thomas Eyre's marriage agreement in 1593 his father undertook to grant him eight oxen, twelve kine and two hundred cows, with the lease of half the manor.²⁴ He may, however, have kept the cows on the pastures they held in the Trent valley at Maveson and Hampstall Ridware. Derbyshire cattle, black with large white horns, black-tipped, were famous at this time, the meadows on the banks of the Dove sharing, with some few others, pride of place among the grazing grounds of England. Everything suggests that by the beginning of the 17th century the Eyres were exceedingly prosperous stock-farmers.

II. 3. References

- ¹ *Hassop Evidence Book I*, 2, no. 10.
- ² *Requests* 2/143/30. Petition.
- ³ *Requests* 2/143/30. Eyre's answer.
- ⁴ Will proved 10 July 1571, P.C.C. 33 Holney.
- ⁵ *Hassop Evidence Book I*, 3, no. 11.
- ⁶ Sons of William Needham by his wife Margaret, daughter and heiress of Nicholas Garlick of Thornsett, who died in 1564. See Garlick's will, Bag. C. 2019.
- ⁷ Bag. C. 2027; this is a copy of part of the will, P.C.C. 32 Holney.
- ⁸ Bag. C. 2026. His brother-in-law Rowland and several others, with George Manners as coadjutor, were appointed to take charge of his affairs.

⁹ Thomas Eyre of Tideswell's will, P.C.C. 23 Holney.

¹⁰ *Hassop Evidence Book I*, 3, no. 12(b). 26 Eliz. may however be the copyist's mistake for 16 Eliz.

¹¹ Bag. C. 696; the end page contains a copy of the letters of attorney for this purpose, dated 4 July 1584; Sir Ingram Clifford's will was proved 6 July 1579, P.C.C. 31 Bakon.

¹² There is a copy of a quitclaim of Marmaduke Constable of Wassend, E. Riding, one of the Rowcliffe heirs, dated 1 October 1591, Bag. C. 1026. This outlines the claims put forward on behalf of Rowcliffe's right heirs.

¹³ Bag. C. 1046.

¹⁴ St. Ch. 5/12/14, *Eyre v. French*.

¹⁵ Bag. C. 1056A: "... land called the Bretche lying in the same [i.e. Nortley] field".

¹⁶ Bag. C. 1034-1036.

¹⁷ *Hassop Evidence Book I*, 3, nos. 17 and 18. The injunction is dated 12 February 31 Eliz., but the award does not appear to have been made until 36 Eliz. This document is unfortunately missing with the rest of the Hassop evidences.

¹⁸ *Hassop Evidence Book I*, 3, nos. 13, 14.

¹⁹ Bag. C. 1027. CP 25(2)/103/1233, no. 16.

²⁰ CP 25(2)/103/1230-4, no. 7.

²¹ Bag. C. 359 (vii), 2.

²² Add. MSS. 6675, quoted in Sir G. Sitwell, *The Story of the Sitwells*, 144. The Padley arms are there given as *Or, 3 pincers sable*.

²³ Bag. C. 2795.

²⁴ Bag. C. 2613.

4. *Farmer of the Queen's lead mines*

The gentry families of Derbyshire were, for the size of the county, exceedingly numerous and many bore well-known names. In the heraldic visitations all have the air of living independently on their landed estates. This appearance is misleading. It was not from the county's bare soil that they drew their wealth, but from the veins of lead beneath its surface. Lead and to a lesser extent wool were the economic basis of their gentility.

In Derbyshire west of the Derwent and north of Ashbourne, the carboniferous limestone is exposed over much of the area except for a thin covering of soil. Throughout the carboniferous limestone, veins of lead occur irregularly, as rakes (that is, in vertical fissures resulting from a fault or widening of the joints) or as pipes (that is, in mineral-filled cavities or caverns between the horizontal layers of rock, reaching the surface only by one or more leaders). Certain notable veins run for long distances across country; north of the Hassop district "the master vein . . . is known as the High Rake and the Deep Rake (or Longstone Edge vein) in its west and east ranges respectively. It runs nearly due east . . . and is double, with much white calc spar and having the appearance of a strong fault . . . The rake in many places is 14 yards in width, as it must also have been on the surface, judging from the great size of the old open workings along all this part of its course".¹ Most of the main vein in this area underlies Longstone Common, the mines in Hassop and Rowland having been worked on a series of small rakes and scrins which run down the hillside from the main vein in a general easterly direction; the workings here are very steeply inclined. By the famous inquest of 1288 the king, as lord of the manor of the High Peak and Wirksworth, received every thirteenth dish of ore and the right of pre-emption, rights termed respectively lot and cope. The two manors became part of the great duchy of Lancaster in the reign of Edward III, and so remained, even though the duchy was reunited to the crown in 1399. Not all the district within the

Hundred of the High Peak was within the king's field for purposes of lead mining. Hassop, Rowland and Calver were customary liberties not so included and therefore not subject to the royalties of lot and cope. "In the 14th and 15th centuries the [lead] industry was in full swing and gave employment to a large number of persons. The miners themselves were generally poor men, who under the peculiar system in force in the High Peak and Wirksworth owned small mining properties in which they worked. They sold their lead to a wealthier class, who combined the functions of smelters and merchants. These were very often wealthy enough to finance the miners. They smelted the lead not very far from the mines and carried it to Derby and Chesterfield for sale. The industry made many *nouveaux riches* in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and it was not considered beneath the dignity of the landed gentry in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries when they had grown more inclined to peaceful pursuits".²

When the Eyres first mined lead at Hassop cannot be ascertained. The existence of boles at Hassop in the 15th century has already been noted. The compiler of the Eyre Evidence Book in 1768 comments "the mineral rights of the Lordship appear very antient" and quotes an undated charter (now missing) of Nicholas, son and heir of Peter Peverel, "whereby he grants for a certain sum of money to John of Calfour, son of Ralph (*inter alia*) all his mines in the village and fee of Hassop and all his rights and royalties in Minerals in the vill and Territories of Hassop aforesaid. Also a dish and the pleas and all rights and commodities in all things and places to the said mines or minerals or to himself belonging". Though Hassop was not part of the king's field, "in the wastes and commons an antient custom of Mining hath obtained similar in most instances with the customs in the Kings Manor de Alto Pecco . . . In the antient inclosures of Hassop & Rowland the Mining hath been by agreement with the freeholders". When, in later times, the three manors of Hassop, Rowland and Calver were all the property of the Eyres, they were "united under one Court, one Barmaster, one four-&-twenty or Jury & one dish".³

It is highly probable that the first Stephen Eyre of Hassop was engaged in the lead trade, as was his neighbour, Robert Shakerley, who held half the manor of Little Longstone and entered into a bond in 1505 to supply the earl of Shrewsbury with sixty fothers of lead.⁴ Stephen's nephew, Roger Eyre of Holme Hall, feoffator of his uncle's estate under the terms of his will, certainly was. In 1505 at Holmesfield Great Court held on 28 May "came Roger Eyre of Holm, esquire⁵ and John Eyre, gentleman, his brother, and took of the lady [of the manor] two places of land and one house rebuilt, situated between the said two places of land in the demesne of Holmesfield upon a hill called Hewod, upon which they might place, have and occupy two boles with 'Smeltyng Ovynz' and 'Wesshyng trolls' suitable for the said boles".⁶ Roger had some business connection with Lenton Priory (his will directs he shall be buried at the priory if he dies there), and he was probably farmer or collector of the priory's tithe of lead ore, which he smelted at Holmesfield.⁷

The leadmining activities of the Eyres' important and near neighbours, the Vernons of Haddon, in the earlier 16th century, are illustrated in several documents. In his will, in January 1514/15, Sir Henry Vernon directs:

"that all the blakework at my boles go to the performyng of my wyll except the bole wallys and as moche blakeworke as wyll kever the to blokkys of the bole or brenne honest agayne

Item yff there be nott sufficient lafte of my goods to perform my wyll then I wyll that myne executors shall take ytt up of all my Ore and mynes in every place not withstandyng any bequest made before."⁸

Among the steward's accounts of Sir Henry's grandson, Sir George Vernon of Haddon, are the following entries relating to the transport and sale of his lead:

1550/1

"Item delivered unto James Ragge the vii of Marche for the Caryege of oyre frome bonshall daylle yend unto haddon for three scoyre & fower loads of oyre wyche sayde oyre was brought to Haddon with sixe scoyre & xii horses after iid the horse for the caryege of the seyde ore wyche comythe to xxiis. iid."

1550

"Item also payde the 11th daye of Septembre aforsseyde unto Roger Gregorey of Stockwythe for the Caryege of xviii pyssis of leade by watter frome Stockwythe to hulle ixs."

"Item for Chargs of myselffe & James Ragge & my Man to hulle for vii dayes begynenge the xxvi of August . . . for dyvers matters there to be done as concernyng my Masters leayde & . . . also gyvyn unto the waye Master for ys Rewarde & other for the Whaing of the saide leade for my Mr.s most avantyge the some of

xxiiiis. iiiid."⁹

The first record in Queen Elizabeth's reign of Rowland Eyre as a lead smelter occurs in connection with John Manners, the Vernons' successor at Haddon. Between 1579 and 1584 a series of cases was brought in the Court of Exchequer by William Humfrey, Master of the Queen's Mint, and subsequently by his widow, against a number of Derbyshire gentlemen and miners.¹⁰ Named in several of these bills were John Manners, Roger Columbello of Darley and Rowland Eyre of Hassop (both Manners' servants), Paul Tracy (lord of the manor of Calver in right of his wife, the heiress Anne Shakerley) and a number of others. In 1568 the Queen had incorporated the Company of Mineral and Battery Works for working the non-precious metals in England, with Humfrey as one of the leading patentees. Humfrey's main interest was in the working of lead, and under the patent all persons were forbidden to employ the practices, devices, engines, tools or implements invented and used by him for this purpose. Humfrey set up a lead smelting mill on the Strelleys' manor at Beauchief and was soon having trouble with "infringers" of his patent rights. The processes for which he appears to have claimed these rights were basically two. One was a simple mechanical process involving the use of a fine wire sieve which was partially filled with small ore and forced quickly downwards in a rub of water. The water flowing

through the holes in the sieve separated the heavy particles composed of rich ore from the lighter limestone rock particles which remained on top when the sieve was lifted out of the water. This device, which needed considerable dexterity in handling, was particularly valuable in working over the old hillocks or waste.

The second development was the smelting furnace. The old boles, which continued for many years to be used side by side with furnaces, depended on the wind for blast. Built on the tops of hills, they were surrounded by a stone wall on three sides and open to the prevailing wind on the fourth. Alternating layers of tree trunks and lead ore were then built up, and the firing started with small wood on the windward side. The method was wasteful both of fuel and metal as much of the latter was left in the slag; it appears to have been for the re-smelting of the richer slag or "black work" that furnaces were first used. In the smelting furnace the blast was supplied artificially by bellows worked by men's feet or by water power. Humfrey maintained that his furnaces were constructed and worked on an improved method, and in 1574 he was already accusing the earl of Shrewsbury of equipping his new melting-house "with furnaces and stampers like unto mine" and complaining that the earl's carpenter and melter were spying on his processes.¹¹ In February 1581, Eyre, Columbello and Tracy, together with Ralph Heathcote, were named for the first time as infringers of his rights regarding the furnace. A final bill put forward in Hilary term 1584, on behalf of Humfrey's widow and son-in-law, named John Manners, Paul Tracy, William Kniveton, Roger Columbello, Francis Rowleston, James Linacre, Anthony Gell, Rowland Eyre and several others as having set up furnaces.

Between these two dates several commissions made diligent local enquiry, visiting various furnaces and boles. In August 1581, they reported on a visit to Calver, where Paul Tracy had a smelting furnace run by his servant and barmaster, Robert More.

"And upon view and survey of the same and seinge the same wourke, we might well perceave that as well the house and two furnaces and two paire of Bellowes . . . as the workmanship, meltinge of the ewer & makinge of lead there were made and wrought in the same order and maner as it is at Beauchiffe without any apparent difference, savinge onely the bellowes at Calvar are blowen by mens feete, & without water."

According to the evidence of Humfrey's clerk at Beauchief the following persons were using his master's methods: "Sr Godfrey Fuliambe Knight, Raffe Heathcott, George Heathcott, Paule Tracie, John Manners esquire, Mr Eire of Hassop with Mr Columbello & — Burton of Hounsfild".¹²

The defendants maintained that Humfrey's processes were not new. Roger Columbello copied out the answer made to Mrs. Humfrey's petition in Hilary term 1584 in his notebook under the heading: "Our answer to Alis Humfrey". It stated:

The defendants, "have used and doe use to melt thyre ewre into leyde accordyng to the order now used in that contrye and as yt hath bene long tyme practysed and put in use in dyvers places of thysse parts before the said letters patentes so graunted to

the said homfrey and shutt of the said pretended priviledg mencyoned in the said byll and long before the said homfrey and shutt or eyther of them were to any of the defendants knowne or hard of to have any dealinge in lead mynes.

The defendants say that as they are credyibly informed the mylne which the said Humfrey used in that Cuntrye for meltyng of ewre into leyd was not hys devyse, but the devyse of one Burcote who long ago devysed & used the same within the seyde countye of Darbye and the same Burcote also, as these defendants be in lyke manner informed, devysed dyvers yron and wyre syves which he used in and about the sayd mylne so by hym devised."¹⁴

On all major points the defendants proved their case and nothing further seems to have been heard of infringement.

The adoption of the new methods made possible the rapid expansion of the lead-smelting business among smaller men. This fact was lamented by the earl of Shrewsbury's servants, Booth and Barker, in a letter to him on 8 May 1585. It appears that Shrewsbury had hoped to acquire Humfrey's privilege for himself:

"If it had pleased God the priviledg had taken place, so manie evell disposed people had not bene burners as there are & like to be, for now everie miner that hath a good grove wilbe a burner & the Lord of the Feld [Shrewsbury] shall not have their ourre but by force."¹⁵

These proceedings show Rowland Eyre as one of the new lead smelting interest in the county. His furnace was probably a joint undertaking with Columbell and Burton at Holmesfield. One aspect of his and his sons' lead business over the next generation is their quest for more and better smelting facilities. They seem to have favoured particularly the Dronfield district, half-way to the lead market of Chesterfield. The old Hassop boles were now out-of-date.

In 1586 Eyre obtained from Peter Barley "one smylting hows or furnes with two wheles & two harthes buylded, erected & made for smylting of lead by water blast, sett lying & being within the lymytes, boundes & territoryes of Barley near unto a certain place there called Lee Brygge", together with a parcel of land there "intended to be had & used for the necessarye lying & bestowing therein of suche lead & slagge as shall from tyme to tyme be made or smelted at the said smelting hows". Barley undertook to "well & suffycyentlye furnysh the said smelting hows or furnes with convenyent water wheles, harthes, ovens & bellows & all manner of towls, implements, furnytur & thinges (except the smelter onelye) necessarye & nedefull to be had, used or occupied in, for or about the smelting or making of lead by water blast"; and also to provide "suffycyent charcole & kylndryed wood commonly called whyte cole as shall be from tyme to tyme nedefull or requisite to & for smylting & making into lead of all suche lead ore & slagges as he the said Roland . . . shall convey or carye" to the smelting-house. In return, Barley was to have 10s. for every fother of lead weighing 20½ cwt. of such weight as is usually used at Kingston upon Hull.¹⁶ From Rowland's point of view it was an ideal arrangement and it was many years before he was so well suited again, after the loss of Barlow manor.

In 1594 he was smelting at Totlely, though there is no indication of the precise spot. From 1607 Thomas Eyre and probably his brothers Gervase and Adam, all sons of Rowland, were using Dickfield Bridge mill at Horsleygate in the manor of Holmesfield.¹⁶ In Holmesfield manor court in 1615 the jury presented, "that the smoke of two leade Mylnes now in the tenure of Mr. Thomas Eyre and Mr. Gervaise Eyre hath done some hurte within a woode called Smeakclyffe and that the wayer made for the use of the Nether Leade Milne is made in the water-course".¹⁷ In 1613 Thomas Eyre acquired Calver manor, and from 1616 onwards his lead ore was delivered to him at his smelting mill there. Gervase continued to smelt in Horsleygate. Adam was using a forge near Holmesfield Lydgate, "lately in the possession of John Moore deceased", in January 1608/9. From its position, this must at one time have been a bole.¹⁸ The Eyres may have been the tenants whom John Moore was ordered in Holmesfield manor court to give notice to quit "thould smyltinge house at Lydgate".¹⁹

During the 1590s Rowland Eyre made frequent appearances in the Court of Duchy Chamber, bringing cases as "Her Majesty's farmer of the mynes of leade called Lott and Cope within the High Peake in her Majesty's County of Derby within Her Majesty's feildes there. And also Bearge Maister within the said High Peake to see her Majesty's measure for the selling of leade by the usuall dishe truelie to be observed".²⁰ It had long been the practice of the crown to let to farm the royalties of lot and cope. The farmer was not an official of the duchy in the sense that the barmaster was, and the two positions had not usually been held together by one individual. The succession to the office of barmaster was very confused in Elizabeth's reign²¹ and that of farmer by no means clear, but certain facts seem to emerge from duchy cases of a later date. From a duchy decree²² it appears that at one time, "Fitzherbert a recusant was farmer to the Duchie of the lott and cope of the High Peak"; there is in fact an undated grant to him of the pasture called Obholmes and Fairholmes in Bradwell, fishing in the Wye and mines of lead called lot and cope, for twenty-one years at a rent of £14. 12s. 8d.²³ On 17 June 1580 a demise and grant of the mines of lead with lot and cope in the hundred of High Peak, was made to Thomas Moreton or Mortaine and others (said to be Fitzherbert's servants) for thirty-one years.²⁴ On 8 May 1595 the lease was granted to Peter Proby, in reversion, for forty years from the expiration of Moreton's lease. Proby's interest was subsequently assigned to Rowland Eyre and was due to expire in 1651.²⁵ It appears that through his servants Sir Thomas Fitzherbert still held the farm at the time of his death in 1591, and that it was probably assigned to Eyre by Thomas Fitzherbert the nephew shortly after the uncle's death.²⁶ Proby may well have assigned Eyre his reversionary interest soon after he obtained it. It seems fairly clear that Rowland Eyre never had a direct grant from the crown, but that he held the farm from the early 1590s and later claimed the barmastership.

His son Thomas had a duchy lease of the barmastership in the lordship of the High Peak, Wynnlands and Hartington, and also the office with pre-emption of lead there, on 16 June 1608, for twenty-one years at a rent

of 20s. and a payment of £5.²⁷ Only six years later, however, on 24 November 1614, the office of barmaster in the hundred of High Peak with pre-emption of the leadmines there was re-granted to Thomas Eyre, Rowland and William Eyre, his sons, for their lives and the life of the longer liver.²⁸ It was held by Rowland Eyre the cavalier by virtue of this grant at the time of the Civil War. It is doubtful whether Rowland, Thomas's father, ever very effectively held the barmastership. The earls of Shrewsbury, probably by virtue of the office of steward of the High Peak, had assumed the right to appoint the barmaster during Elizabeth's reign, and the position was allowed to go by default until challenged by the Eyres. Several persons are named in duchy cases as having been barmaster of the High Peak at one time or another. In evidence in 1618 it was stated that about fifty years previously Henry Lowe was bailiff to the earl of Shrewsbury and also barmaster; subsequently, up to 1588, Anthony Blackwell held the latter office; Thurstan Allen and Anthony Tunsted are named in depositions in another case.²⁹ In November 1595, Robert Eyre, Shrewsbury's deputy steward, held a barmoot court at Castleton.³⁰ The crux of the matter, however, was the position held by Arthur Barker against whom Rowland Eyre brought his case at the beginning of 1599 in the Duchy Chamber³¹:

"Informeth this honorable courte John Brograve Esquier, her majesties Attorney of the seyd Courte of the Duchie of Lancaster by the relation of Roland Eyre . . . that one Arthure Barker hath intruded himselfe into the offyce of Bergemaister within the seyd High Peake in the Quenes Majesties feild there and useth the same offyce of Bergemaister of mere wronge and without warrante thereunto. And the seyd Arthure Barker hath yevelie for dyvers and sundry yeares had and taken of many myners within the same Peake and in the Quenes feilde aforesayd, foure dyshes of Oare, every dyshe of oare beinge worth twelwe pence, for the whyche he hath shewed the same myners favour and will not measure their Oare at such deyes and places as yt ought to be, neither doth he [lake?] that the true measure of her majestie for measuringe of Oare be trewlie observed and kept, to the grett hindrance of her majesties sayd Farmer and in shorte tyme will tend to the disenheritance of her majestie, her heyres or successors".

The information further states that Barker fails to hold the barmoot court and takes many loads of ore not lawfully measured and sold according to the custom of the mines; his factors also buy up lead for him to the number of three or four hundred loads, for the most part unlawfully.

To these accusations, Barker answered that³² ". . . one John Bullocke of Darley in the countie of Darbie, esquier, is farmer to her majestie of the forth part of the lott and copp there and one George French farmer of an other fourth part thereof in four partes to be devided, so that if the said relator be farmer to anie part of the said lott and copp it is but of a moietie . . . thereof". He denied that Eyre was barmaster, "for this defendent verely thinketh that the right honorable Gilbert now Earle of Shrowesburie and his honorable ancestors have had and inioyed by graunt from her maiestie and her highnes progenitors, dukes of Lancaster, for manie yeares past, the mynes of lead oare within the high peake . . . and allso have and hath had the

nominating, placing and displacing of the Steward, Bearemaisters or bearg-maisters and all other officers for anie office concerning or belonging to the said mynes”.

Barker claimed he had held the office by the appointment of the sixth earl of Shrewsbury for about twenty-six years until recently Eyre

“having, as is supposed, about foure or fyve yeares agoe obtayned a graunt of some part of the said lott and copp from some of her majesties farmers therof hath gone about with wrongfull suites and troubles . . . thereby seeking to bring in divers innovations and to rayse divers exactions to himselfe, as namely to have the pre-emption as by the said information may appeare, which this defendant taketh to be but an innovation and exaction raysed by the said relator, under pretence of which tyttle the relator claymeth to have the buying of all the lead oare gotten in the said mynes at such pryces as himself liketh . . .

the dish for the true measuring of lead oare in the said high peake within her majesties said feild there hath bene for verie manie yeares together made by the auncestors of the said now Earle and kept by the bearmaister by them appointed”.

In a subsequent case in 1615/16 one question concerned Arthur Barker’s appointment as barmaster.³³ A deponent stated “that he saw Arthur Barker sworne barmaster at Castleton in the Peake about 20 years ago (the said Arthur Barker having been barmaster there before that tyme) and was put from the said office and then came to the said office againe”.³⁴ Martin Hallam stated “that the barmaistership is now granted from the king unto Thomas Eyre esquier . . . And that the right honorable Gilbert, now Earle of Shrewsbury, about the tyme mentioned in this Interrogation pretended to have the placing and appointing of the barmaister & bailiff within the hundred of the high peake but by what title he knoweth not, unlesse yt were by prescription”.

Another question in the same case asked, “Whether hath nott the Lott and Cope within the Manor fee and hundred of Highe Peake bene little esteemed or of small worth and lett or graunted to some person or persons which did nott or durst nott serve for a demaunde some part thereof: if yea to whom was it lett and how long since”. Few of the deponents answered this question, but William Furnes of Calver, aged 80, said that many years ago it “was of little worth & then granted as he heard to Sir Thomas Fitzherberte who was a recusant”.

From the above evidence it is clear that both the office and the farm had been allowed to decay. Fitzherbert, owing to his imprisonment, had obtained little from the farm, the old undoubted right of pre-emption had fallen into disuse, the ore was not being measured by the barmaster and the royalty of the thirteenth dish was thus being lost. While Barker had been using his position for his own ends or the earl’s, the lead trade had been rapidly expanding, but the crown was reaping little profit from this development. One example of this increased production must suffice: in 1615 Anthony Wilson of Eyam, aged seventy, said there were forty more groves in Stony Middleton than there had been forty years previously; fifty years ago there were only six.³⁵

Rowland Eyre petitioned in the duchy court against Edward Jackson for not "answering" the lot and cope in 1596.³⁶ In several other cases six to ten persons are named together in one bill on the charge of digging and buying lead ore to their own use without paying the royalties.³⁷ The cope claimed in these cases was the 4d. a dish to be paid for the right to sell where they would. The persons against whom Eyre brought his cases were for the most part lead merchants rather than miners — that is, the purchaser not the seller was to pay the royalty. The defence usually took two lines: to deny that lead ore was subject to the right of pre-emption; and to deny that the lead was in fact bought in the queen's field. "The said rakes", runs a typical answer, "are parcel of the manor of Ashford, belonging to the Countess Dowager of Shrewsbury, and she has the lot and cope of all oare digged there".³⁸ Thus Eyre was pitted against the earls of Shrewsbury and their claims as stewards on the one hand, and on the other against the claims to hold private liberties put forward by the countess. In the next generation the Eyres brought other cases against the claims of her descendants, the Cavendishes, to private liberties in the manors of Ashford, Little Longstone, Great Hucklow, Stony Middleton, Eyam and Foolow,³⁹ where they challenged the right of the crown's farmer not only to lot and cope but in Longstone to the valuable Wye fishing. On other fronts, as will be seen, these two great families blocked the Eyre's line of advancement, forestalling their purchase of desirable manors and challenging them over rights of common.

Rowland's sons, in particular, seem to have had some success in their attempts to enforce their rights as king's farmers against the Cavendishes.⁴⁰ It is, however, difficult to reach any very sure conclusion, for after the Civil War the barmastership and lot and cope in the High Peak were leased by the Eyre family to the Devonshires. In 1716 and 1732 the duke had direct grants of these from the crown, and so they passed completely out of Eyre possession. To the Devonshires, the question of liberties thus became an academic matter. Ashford, Eyam and Foolow were certainly recognized as separate liberties.

In spite of Cavendish opposition, when the syndicate of Rowland Eyre and his three sons, Thomas, Gervase and Adam, was in operation they must have formed a considerable lead interest. Rowland seems to have confined his activities to his own lead by the reign of James I. Thomas held the barmastership, and leased the rights of king's farmer to his brother Adam, who also mined lead in various places and worked a smelting mill in Dronfield. Adam's daughter married Strelley's heir, though whether that family was still working Humfrey's Beauchief mill is not clear. Thomas's mill was at Calver, and Gervase, when he died at Horsleygate, left legacies to his two smelters and three wood colliers there.⁴¹

At a slightly later date Thomas Eyre was able to employ capital for his lead mining activities and thus on occasion became the banker for neighbours and relatives with £100 or so to invest. The portion of Roger, the young son of Edward Eyre of Dunston and his wife Margaret Draycott, is a case in point. In 1618 John Draycott, Margaret's brother, and Thomas Eyre had

each taken charge of £300 to be invested for raising the portion. Eyre found soon afterwards that he could not employ the money, as he told Draycott when they met at the house of Eyre's son-in-law, Edward Fowler. Draycott therefore wrote to Hassop to Mrs. Eyre to ask her to send him the money⁴²:

“Good Cosen,

I meett your goodman att St. Thomas, who tould me there was 200 £ in your custody which is to be employed for the use & benifitt of my brother Eares sonn, which in regard my cosen himselve nott findinge such profit to be now rayسد by his mynes as he expected wished me to send for the said mony & this letter shalbe booth your warrantye & discharg & soe with many thankes for my most kinde welcum when I was last with you . . .

John Dreycott.

Paynesly, Januery xxvi, 1619.

postscript. I have already provided one thatt will allowe a sufficient rate for the mony, therefore I intreatt to senditt by this berer my man . . .”

Lead was undoubtedly the Eyres' chief road to wealth. No accounts survive among their papers. There is, however, a chancery case in which Rowland Eyre claims to have committed to George Staynewoodde, his kinsman, “many several Foders of leade amountinge to the value of £2,000 of lawful money of England at the least to be by him sould for and to the most profit and advantage”. On one particular occasion Eyre gave him forty-one fothers and a hundred pigs of lead.⁴³ Even with this one man he appears to have been dealing on a fairly large scale.

Staynwood (or Steynrod) was one of a group of persons Eyre dealt with for the transport and export of his lead.⁴⁴ Edward More of Dore was another; John and Robert More, no doubt of the same family, have already been mentioned. Jeffrey Roberts, another of Eyre's kinsmen, was also engaged with him in lead sales and property speculations in London and Derbyshire.⁴⁵ The lead was transported by land to Bawtry and Stockwith and thence by the Idle to the Humber. The Eyres had connections with a family named Abbott in Stockwith, and at one time held a house in Bawtry.⁴⁶ One way in which the troublesome overland journey was dealt with is demonstrated in a bond by which John Kent and Thomas Whitticar were bound to Thomas Eyre in £10 to convey and carry at their own costs ten fothers of lead from Horsleygate to the town of Bawtry.⁴⁷ They no doubt owed Eyre money.

During the latter part of Elizabeth's reign there was a constant feud between the London and Derbyshire merchants on the one hand and the city of Hull on the other. In a petition to Lord Burleigh in 1596 the mayor and burgesses complained of “the forestalling, ingrossing trade of pre-emption used (now of late years) by certain merchants of the city of London, and others who have their factors and ledgers continuing in Derbyshire, who do buy in effect all the lead that is there burnt or smelted; who have by indirect means, procured a balk, and scales and weights to be set up at a place called Bawtry, and there do weigh the lead and ship it in keels to this port and so to London, without taking up or weighing the same at the afore-

said port, as it has been accustomed".⁴⁸ No names are given in the proceedings recorded, but the Eyres were no doubt affected by the Star Chamber's decision in favour of Hull's privileges. The struggle continued intermittently during the 17th century.

It was especially through the lead trade that Rowland and Thomas Eyre procured their family's advancement. Thomas, as barmaster and farmer, was evidently in some sense regarded as an authority in mining matters for it was to him, in 1633, that Sir Henry Agard wrote, on behalf of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, asking him to recommend a man skilful in leadmining, for a leadmine in Lancashire to be worked for the king's use. Sir Henry's letter, dated 16 April, addressed "To my much esteemed and worthy good frend Thomas Eyre, Esq., at Snelston", reads⁴⁹:

"Good Mr. Eyre, Mr. Chanclor of the Duchey dissireth me to helpe him to a Skilfull man that hath Judgment in Leadmines, for nowe in Lancisheire they have some hope of a Leadmine and nowe are very busie in the workeinge of ore for the King's use. Mr. Chanclor is wilinge to alowe 20 per annum yearely to a Skillfull Mynor to overlooke the workemen and pay them there wadgis. I pray you, if you can helpe me to Such a man that is honest and Skilfull in those workes, you will doe me a great favor and Mr. Chanclor shall give you thanks withall."

On 11 May 1632, in response to a petition of the Plumbers' Company of London to the Privy Council, complaining of great abuses used in falsifying pigs of lead, their lordships ordered the attorney-general to call all the parties and "Thomas Ayres, gent." before him. They were to examine the abuses, which the lead merchants blamed upon the smelters, who falsified the pigs "to pleasure the Myners", and report to the council.⁵⁵ Eyre was clearly called in to give expert advice in the matter.

The lot and cope and barmastership in the High Peak later in the century were held to be worth many times more than the rent.⁵⁶ The value was probably due in large measure to the energy of the Eyre family in pressing the crown's claims with their own in the reigns of Elizabeth and James I.

II. 4. References

- ¹ *Memoirs of the Geological Survey: The Geology of North Derbyshire*. 1887, 138.
- ² *V.C.H. Derbyshire*. II, 331.
- ³ *Hassop Evidence Book I*, 7A.
- ⁴ Midland District Archives of the Archbishop of Birmingham. Weston Coney deeds, C.D. 60.
- ⁵ Son of Roger and grandson of Robert Eyre of Padley I. There appears to have been no Thomas Eyre (as stated in *F.M.G.*) between the two Rogers.
- ⁶ *D.A.J.*, XX (1898), 71. The position of early boles in Dronfield is discussed by G. H. B. Ward in *Sheffield Clarion Ramblers Handbook*. 1953-4, 74.
- ⁷ See *V.C.H. Derbyshire*. II, 323, for history of Lenton's title of lead ore.
- ⁸ G. Le Blanc Smith, *Haddon*, 94-103.
- ⁹ G. Le Blanc Smith, 110, 114.
- ¹⁰ These cases have recently been dealt with in some detail by M. B. Donald, in *Elizabethan Monopolies, the history of the Company of Mineral and Battery Works, 1568-1604*, 1961. Section 9 of this book relates to Humfrey and Derbyshire. Unfortunately the author quotes largely from the documents but fails to indicate that he has made many omissions from the originals.
- ¹¹ Letter from Humfrey to the earl of Shrewsbury, 12 April 1574, dated from Beauchief. Lansdowne MSS. 18/49.
- ¹² E.178/611. Burton's Christian name blank in MS.
- ¹³ Add. MSS. 6702 (*Columbell's Commonplace Book*), f. 57 verso.
- ¹⁴ Bacon Frank Muniments, 2/78, in S.C.L.
- ¹⁵ Portland deeds, DDP 42/10, in Notts. Co. Record Office.

- ¹⁶ Bag. C. 1366A, 358.
- ¹⁷ 27 April 1615, Holmesfield Court Roll, M.D. 197, in S.C.L. Smeakley wood comes down to Millthorpe Brook just above Dickfield Bridge. Dickfield Lane is marked on Fairbank's map of c. 1820 (Dro 59L, in S.C.L.).
- ¹⁸ Bag. C. 1514. G. H. B. Ward locates it N. of Robin Hood Inn, towards Fanshaw Gate, *S.C.R. Handbook*, 1953-4.
- ¹⁹ 2 May 1598, Holmesfield Court Roll, M.D. 197.
- ²⁰ D.L. 179/66, dated 5 February 1598/9; up to about that date he appears as farmer only, not barmaster.
- ²¹ *V.C.H. Derbyshire*, II, 330. Sir R. Somerville, *The Duchy of Lancaster*, 555, gives the name of no barmaster after 1559, when it was John Asshenhurst (for Wirksworth only).
- ²² Modern copy, Bag. C. 3435. 16 James I.
- ²³ P.R.O. Index 17596, 203.
- ²⁴ E.317, f. 3: Survey of Lott and Copp in the High Peak. July 1650. The pasture and fishing were leased to Moreton by a separate lease in 1580/1 (P.R.O. Index 17596, 207), and to Thomas Eyre in 1597 (D.L. 42/37A, f. 9(v)).
- ²⁵ E.317. In the context, Rowland Eyre the cavalier appears to be referred to in this document, but in fact his grandfather is the Rowland intended.
- ²⁶ Bag. C. 2509, a mortgage from Fitzherbert to Eyre, 4 November 1595, refers to an indenture of even date, granting to Eyre a lead mine in the Queen's Field called Lott and Cope and a Duchy of Lancaster lease.
- ²⁷ D.L. 42/49.
- ²⁸ E.317.
- ²⁹ D.L. 4/68/50; D.L. 4/64/12.
- ³⁰ D.L. 1/175/W1: in this case Richard Ward complained that Rowland Eyre had deprived him of certain groves at Taddington, and that Robert Eyre, Rowland's near kinsman, had settled the matter in the barmoot court in Rowland's favour.
- ³¹ D.L. 1/179/66.
- ³² D.L. 1/187/10.
- ³³ D.L. 4/64/12.
- ³⁴ Another witness, Stephen Jackson, said that Barker was sworn at the Chamber of the Forest in the Peak 40 years since and he was the first barmaster he knew to be sworn. This may refer to the oath of supremacy.
- ³⁵ D.L. 4/64/12. Depositions of Anthony Wilson of Eyam.
- ³⁶ D.L. 1/177/5.
- ³⁷ e.g. D.L. 1/181/24; D.L. 1/179/66; D.L. 1/177/E2.
- ³⁸ D.L. 1/160/E1. Answer of Wm. Lawnte and Nicholas Redferne.
- ³⁹ Little Longstone, D.L. 4/68/50; Gt. Hucklow, D.L. 5/28/59; Stony Middleton, etc., D.L. 4/64/12.
- ⁴⁰ Decrees in the Duchy Court: D.L. 5/28, 566, concerning fishing in the R. Wye and lot and cope at One Ash Grange; D.L. 5/29, 59, concerning lot and cope at Great Hucklow.
- ⁴¹ P.C.C. 50 Soame.
- ⁴² Roger Eyre's settlement, Bag. C. 2287; Draycott's letter, Bag. C. 1791.
- ⁴³ C.2 James I, E.5/18, 19.
- ⁴⁴ George Steynrod was the eldest son of Thomas Steynrod of Dronfield, whose will was proved at Lichfield 10 May 1598. He describes himself as "yeoman", but he was also a tanner. See Portland MSS. DDP. 71/1.
- ⁴⁵ Evidence in various chancery cases, e.g. C.2 James I, E.4/15.
- ⁴⁶ Bag. C. 2742; 2628.
- ⁴⁷ Bag. C. 358 (1611).
- ⁴⁸ J. Tickell, *History of Kingston upon Hull*, 1796, 260.
- ⁴⁹ R. Sharpe France, ed., "The Thieveley Lead Mines". *Lancs. and Cheshire Rec. Soc.*, CII, no. 98.
- ⁵⁰ There is no doubt that Thomas Eyre of Hassop is the person indicated. Bag. C. 2795 is a copy of the P.C. minute.
- ⁵¹ *V.C.H. Derbyshire*, II, 335. In 1683 said to be worth £5,000 more than the rent, but this seems an impossibly large amount and comes from the doubtful source of the Wolley MSS. In 1733, two-thirds of the lot and cope and barmastership of Wirksworth was leased for £433. 6s. 8d. (Glover, I, Appendix, 33).

5. *The Eyre estate, 1570-1603*

The expansion of the Derbyshire lead trade in the 16th century brought wealth to many in the county from the earl of Shrewsbury downwards. Gentlemen made fortunes and the more pushing yeomen and tradesmen rose to prosperity. When many wished to invest their money in real property, land hunger became acute in the county. In so competitive a society some families rose and added broad acres to their inheritance, whilst others fell behind in the struggle. The real property market itself afforded one field of money-making.

The Eyres are typical of a gentry family building up a middle-sized estate, roughly between the years 1570 and 1640. They acquired it in small lots from the lowest classes of landowners, husbandmen and small yeoman farmers, in larger properties from local gentry families on the decline, and from one spendthrift peer. They were too late to benefit from the dissolution of the monasteries — one of the Shakerleys bought the manor of Calver, next to Hassop, previously one of the possessions of Newstead Priory — and they did not acquire anything from the local nobility. The earl of Shrewsbury, the countess and the Cavendishes, who in one family but by no means harmonious alliance represented both the old and the new nobility, were the Eyres' determined rivals in the case of every manor, other than Hassop, they attempted to purchase. Long and troublesome lawsuits stemmed from these rivalries and form, in retrospect, the highlights of their struggle for landed property. In the categories devised by the protagonists in the gentry controversy the Cavendishes would probably be classed with the rising gentry, rather than with the nobility.¹ In the local setting, however, it seems natural to place them among the latter, at least after the marriage of Bess of Hardwick to the earl of Shrewsbury in 1568.

In the real property market of the Elizabethan and early Stuart period, direct purchase was probably the exception rather than the rule. Every variety of bond, mortgage and security was used by those with money to obtain a hold over those with land. As lead merchants, the Eyres were able to bring pressure to bear on the small yeoman-miner who sold lead in a fluctuating market. A loan on security, to be repaid in fothers of lead, seems to have been a normal way in which they conducted business. When the lead was not forthcoming the period of the loan was extended, further securities were taken and probably never redeemed. There may have been several of these dismal little histories: details of such a case at Tideswell survive. The property was a comparatively small one yet the combined forces of Rowland Eyre and his sons were brought to bear on it.

In 1569, John Leech of Tideswell, husbandman, settled on his son Richard cottages and land in Tideswell, Litton and Baslow.² No details are known of the Baslow property, but that in Tideswell and Litton was later described as "two messuages, one cottage, one toft, three gardens and ten acres of land, eight acres of meadow, twenty-five acres of pasture and one hundred acres of common". Thirty years later Richard ran into difficulties and mortgaged the Litton property to Gervase Eyre for £120, to be redeemed on

payment of twenty fothers of good Peak lead delivered at the smelting mill of John More near Holmesfield Lydgate on the following 20 December and 24 March. On neither of the days did he fulfil his obligations, for on 20 December 1599 he conveyed a property in Litton to one Thomas Standon for an unspecified sum, and on 23 March 1600, Robert Allen, who was apparently Leech's father-in-law, entered into a bond to Eyre in £200. Ten days later Leech himself became further bound to Eyre in £140, the bond being witnessed by Rowland's sons Gervase, Adam and George and his servant George Merell. In July he mortgaged the Litton property, and that at Baslow was conveyed to Eyre, for on 12 January 1600/1 Robert Allen set down the following details:

"A note what leade is owinge lby Rich. Leeche to Rolande Eyre sett downe by Roberte Alen . . .

iii fothers of lead when you bought baslowe.

A bargaine betwixt Mr. Eare & Richard Leich & Robert Allen first for x fothers of lead to be delivered at midsomer was ii year,

fyve fothers at St James daye folowinge, fower at michaellmas folowinge & six at St Andrewes daye folowinge,

ii fothers of leade which was bargained for before Marten Halom at Tyddeswall,

iii fothers of borrowed lead which was Robert Allens."

It was probably about six months later that Leech wrote the following pathetic letter to Eyre³:

"To the worshipfull Rowland Eyre at Hassop, Esq.

Cravinge your worshipes favour & good countenance in all thinges & especially I moste humblie beceche you & in harte doe earnestlie requeste you this one requeste, A benefite unto me, And not preiudiciall to your Worship. I need not to rehearse & declare Unto your worship A thinge that is manifeste alreadie, that is, that I have mortgaged & condicionally enfeoffed your said worship of & in one mesuage in Lytton with all the lands theireunto belonginge, which said Feoffement and mortgage is alreadie broken & defeated And the said mesuage & landes in your owne power And at your owne disposition & freindlie pleasure, All which premisses, I have through my owne follie, leude spendinge & unfortunate bargains utterlie wasted & sinisterly consumed, yet not so, but through your worshipes favour, space & time I can clearlie absolutlie aswell redeeme & recover the said mesuage & lande into my owne handes & former estate, As also paie & discharge to your worship all thinges els whatsoever to your owne contentment & well likeinge, my leud spending & sinister bargaynes I have utterlie renounced & forsaken, And have betaken my selfe to worldlie affaires & carefull husbandrie, as the world can alredie wittenes & testifie. Moreover my wief & children & all my kinsfolke & frendes doe earnestlie require your worship to fore-bear & desiste to sue & prosecute the extremitie & rigour of the law, for the premisses aforesaid untill the feaste of candlemas now nexte insuyinge, At which time I will either redeeme & recover the said premisses from your worshipes handes, god willinge, or els not onely I myselfe But also my wief & children & all my freindes wilbe verie willinge & desirous that your worship shall have the said premisses with as firme assurance as I myselfe had And with verie willinge mynde of them all. So that your said worship will either make me a lease either for lives or yeres, At your one iudgment

At the feaste aforesaid. In tender consideracon of all which premisses may it please your worship to graunte us the said feaste to paie you at, and not onlie I But my wief & children & all my frendes (accordinge to our duties) will daillie praie unto Almightye god for your good worship longe to endure & continew.

Your pore Orator
Richard Leeche."

There are notes of other negotiations, but the last that is heard of Richard Leech is in the following memorandum drafted in a neat secretary hand which was probably Adam Eyre's:

"Memorandum that upon the xxiii of December 1603 there hath bene a reckoninge betwixte Rich. Leeche and Rolande Eyre in the presence of these persons whose names are underwryten. And the said Richard Leeche doth acknowledge and confesse that hee oweth unto the sayd Rolande Eyre and his sones the whole and just some of 233*l* viis. of lawfull Englishe money. For the true payment of which hee stode bounde unto them; and hath forfeited his lande. Yett neverthesse the sayd Rolande Eyre is contented that if the sayd Richarde Leeche doth paye him att the six yeares end after x*l* in the hundreth and the sayd some of 233*l* that then hee shall have the lande in Litton and Tydswall againe to himselfe and his heires. And also to paye yearlie during the sayd tyme xiii*l* vis. viiid. . . . And the sayd Rychard his wife his sones and his father in law are contented that yf they doe faile of the payment of the sayd rents at the sayde dayes, That then the sayd Rolande and his sones shall maike the best of it that they can and expell them and put them forthe. And moreover the sayd Richard or his assignees shall pay one hen at Candlemas and one capon at Easter yerlie during the sayd terme. Memorandum that the true meaninge is that the rent received is to be made but after x*l* in the hundred if it bee redeemed."

There can be little doubt the Eyres eventually obtained the whole property though the title deeds have survived for Litton only.⁴ Some years later a hostile witness in another lawsuit, Richard Slack, gave it as his opinion "that the said Rowland Eyre hath by hard and unconcionable dealinge come to the greater part of his wealth and saith that he hath hard one Edward Crichley complayne and saye to the said Rowland that he had unconcionable taken a farme from him in Tidswall worth twenty poundes a yeare which he and his father had long tyme possessed, to whom Mr. Rowland Eyre smylyngley: thou art a poore fellowe, yt is noe matter what thou saieste".⁵

But Rowland aimed at higher game than Richard Leech. His interests as mortgagee covered several Derbyshire manors, and though few of these transactions are recorded in the Hassop muniments some at least can be traced elsewhere, particularly in Roger Columbells's notebook⁶ for they sometimes acted together.

On 23 June 1590 Francis Babington of Kingston, brother and heir of Anthony, mortgaged to Godfrey, son of Roger Columbells, and Thomas, son and heir of Rowland Eyre, the lordship of Lea in Derbyshire, to be redeemed on repayment of £460. The previous day Rowland had taken up the assignment of certain closes in Kingston, Notts., formerly mortgaged by Henry Babington; his acquisition of Dethick for the life of Babington's widow has already been noted. Another property in which he was interested was Edward

Beresford's manor of Birchover; he must have acquired this at a subsequent date, for it was Birchover, otherwise Rowtor Hall, that he eventually left to his son Roger.

Columbell also copied out a draft mortgage of the moiety of the manor of Little Longstone to be made by Thomas Shakerley to Rowland Eyre, and Rowland was clearly most anxious to acquire this property adjoining Hassop. Shakerley was already bound to him in a statute staple in £1,000 when he mortgaged the half manor for £500 in May 1595; it was evidently unlikely that he would be able to redeem it by paying off the principal in the south porch of Great Longstone church within a year. Then the unlooked for happened — the countess of Shrewsbury came forward with the money and presumably with better terms of sale. In Trinity term 1596 the indenture of fine between the countess of Shrewsbury and Thomas Shakerley and his wife Feiles indicates that the countess had completed the purchase.⁷ Eyre was not content to lose his prey so easily and brought a chancery suit against Shakerley for withholding the deeds from him.⁸ The result can hardly have been satisfactory to Rowland for Little Longstone remained in the possession of the countess.

Eyre's most ambitious effort was his attempt to obtain the manor of Barlow.⁹ It is an extremely well-documented story. Nearly all the deeds exist either among the Eyre or Portland muniments; some of the chancery depositions and the decree survive; among the Talbot and Rutland papers several letters relate to it; and in Arthur Mower's memoranda details are recorded from the Barley point of view.¹⁰ The tale has been partly told, mainly from the Mower memoranda, in *Barlow Family Records*,¹¹ but there the issue is treated as one between Rowland Eyre and James Barley. Eyre's real opponent was the old earl of Shrewsbury. Though Eyre was deprived of his main prize, he managed to wrest from Shrewsbury a rent charge of £100 out of the manor, which was still being paid in the 18th century. Uncomfortably as umpire between the two stood John Manners, Eyre's patron and Shrewsbury's brother-in-law.

The manor of Barlow comprised nearly 1,900 acres to the north-west of Chesterfield. Coal mines, an iron smithy and a lead smelting mill were or had been worked there. Both the earl and Eyre were very much alive to these potentialities. The Barleys in the 16th century were an unhealthy family, probably consumptive. Their wives were correspondingly long-lived. When Peter Barley came into the estate in 1568 and for most of his life, he was burdened with the jointures of three well-dowered widows: his grandmother, widow of Arthur Barley (d. 1533), married William Fox and died in 1585; his mother, widow of George Barley (d. 1568), married Denys Beresford and died in 1583; and his aunt, Bess of Hardwick, widow of Robert Barley (d. 1544), married the earl of Shrewsbury and died in 1607, having enjoyed her widow's jointure for over sixty years. In addition, Peter himself was a bad manager and had already started on the road of loan, mortgage and statute staple before he turned to Eyre for ready money. In May 1584, he conveyed to Eyre the right to pasture stock on the wastes and

moors of the manor of Barlow. The consideration money is not given in the deed, but it was probably a perfectly genuine transaction, and in the final settlement this grant was specifically allowed to stand by the earl.¹² The nearness of Barlow commons to Chesterfield market must have made it a valuable acquisition to Eyre as a stockman. Two years later he advanced a sum of money, secured on a rent charge of 40 marks out of certain lands of the manor,¹³ and purchased (for £300 as he said) the assignment of a similar rent charge of £20 from Henry Wigley. In November 1586, he acquired the Barlow lead smelting mill for "causes and considerations" not stated. Between July and December 1587, Barley mortgaged away to Eyre most of what was left of his Barlow property culminating in the alienation of the chief rents and the entire manor on 21 December to Gervase Eyre for £64.¹⁴ There are confusing references to other deeds including a statute merchant to George Moor in £2,000 and the conveyance of lands called the Hill Tops, including tithes, to Eyre.

When, some years later, James Barley brought a case against Eyre for defrauding him of his inheritance, the main point at issue was what Eyre had paid Barley and what in fact the property was worth. Eyre maintained that he had paid in all £2,000, but in few, if any, of the deeds was the money frankly stated and the receipt written in. One transaction involved the advance of capital in terms of fothers of lead, and in the crucial conveyance of the manor a chain of gold formed part of the consideration money. In this business Eyre, as he was inclined to do, overreached himself, and there is little doubt that he met Barley, ill and drunk, on the way to his father-in-law's for Christmas and compelled him to sign a deed which he was barely capable of understanding. Eyre maintained that so little of the property in fact remained to be conveyed that its value was negligible. Actually this may have been so, but potentially the value was considerable, and no one knew this better than Eyre.

In the new year, Peter Barley returned to Derbyshire. Being very ill, and aware of the financial confusion he was leaving to his young brother James, on 11 March 1587/8 he made a lease of the manor for twenty-one years to George Blunt, Edward Beresford and Roger Columbelle for the purpose of paying off his debts.¹⁵ He died the following month. As a result of the lease, when James Barley inherited the hall, "Mr. Blount entered of the demains and smithies and coal dellfs . . . until the debts was paid which was as it was reported £2,500 and had all the indentures from Mr. Peter Barley in consideration of discharging of these debts".¹⁶

The following autumn, Eyre, counting on his prior mortgage, took possession of the whole manor¹⁷:

"Memorandum that the within named Jervis Eyre on the sixteenth daye of September in the yeare within wrytten in the presence of these whose names are subscribed, entered into a litle Close, parcell of the mannor of Barlowe adioyninge to a Close, called High Field, in the name of the whole Mannor & claymed the same Close & Mannor in his owne right to him & his heirs & afterwards came fourth of the sayd Close & sealed this presente wrytinge. And afterwards the same Jervis & Thomas

Eyre his brother within named wente into the same Close & then & there the sayd Jervis delivered these presents to the sayd Thomas his brother as his deed & gave unto the sayd Thomas possession & seison thereof in the name of the sayd Mannor & of the Lands, tenements & hereditaments thereunto belonginge, accordinge to the forme & effecte of these presents, and afterwards the sayd Jervis went from thence into Barlow Lees & there made lyke clayme & entrye & delivered possession thereof unto the sayd Thomas. And afterwards wente unto the Mannor house of Barlowe aforesayd & entered unto the same quietlye & demaunded the same house & mannor in his owne righte & then the said Jervis wente throughe the hall of the sayd Mannor into the garden & orcherd & there gathered plumbes, and afterward the sayd Jervis Eyre tooke there lyke possession as aforesayd & gave liverye & seison thereof to his sayd brother Thomas in the presence of Nicholas Blackwall, Symon Hanson & Henry Buxton with others.

Note that in the Close aforesayd there standeth a lytle house wherein one Richard Berry dwelleth, which Berrye wee mett with & he tould us he dwelled in the same litle house & Close & we also mett with one Richard Hancockes who told us the name of highe feld & that the same was then in thoccupacon of one Raff Whildon.

Note that the sayd Thomas Eyre the same daye & yeare made his entrye into the sayd Close called Highe Field & into an other Close called Milne Field & into a Barne adioyninge to the Church yarde & then & there claymed the same & all other lands & tenements which he lately purchased of one Peeter Barlowe Esquier.

Note that the sayd daye & yeare Rowlande Eyre of Hassoppe in the County of Derby gent. made his entrye upon the Common or waste grounds belonginge to the sayd Mannor of Barlowe & pulled heath & digged a Turffe or Clodd & claymed intereste of Common therein to him & his heirs & brought whome some of the same heath to Hassoppe & burned the same in his Parlor.

Note that the same daye & yeare the sayd Rowlande Eyre entered into a litle Close adioyninge to the Over High Filde & there tooke possession of certayne tythes & there took a tythe sheafe of Barley in the name of all his tythes & gave the same, parte of the same tythe sheaf, to his horse & gave other parte thereof to others there present.

Note also that the daye & yeare above sayd the sayd Rowlande Eyre wente to the Smiltinge house & there made his clayme thereunto & digged a Clodd upon the banck betwixte the dame & Milne & lykewyse broke one of the sclate stones that covered the said Milne house & tooke the same clayminge the same Milne & Dame in his owne Righte to him & his heires."

Blunt and his co-trustees were undoubtedly taken aback when they learned of Eyre's claims, and Columbello appears to have contracted out at once. They made no attempt to pay Eyre the sums owing, "so when they had given Mr. Eyre all these advantages and broken their days and paid nothing, but kept all to their own uses, at our lady day 1589 Mr. Eyre impounded us the freeholders for our chief rents . . . and at May day entered into the demains of Hall and put in Cattle and took in Beasts to joyce . . . and by means of these forfeitures that he had made and the assured friendship of his master, Mr. John Manners of Haddon . . . I thought all way good that he did or who durst again say it."¹⁸

To extricate themselves from an impossible situation Blunt and Beresford made over their rights to the earl of Shrewsbury to act as their bailiff and

receiver.¹⁹ "Then my lord entered into Hall at Barley and sent one Philip Slad and one Edward Bramhall, being his men, to keep possession. And they did drive out Mr. Eyres goods of ground and kept them out, and they lay in the lanes and commons until he was forced to fetch them away and did so."²⁰

The uneven duel between Shrewsbury and Eyre, both determined to have the manor, was now joined. During the summer each of them tried to coax James Barley to part with his remaining rights as mortgagor, Eyre with the promise of his daughter Jane's hand, Shrewsbury with other property at Buxton or Bamford in exchange. Two letters from Francis Leek to the earl give details of these negotiations:

"Maie yt please your Ryght honorable Lordshypp, accordyng to your honors directions I sent for Mr James Barloe who dyd com to me thys mornyng (as he said) from Hassoppe, Rolande Eirs howse. He seemeth verie resolute to lyve and die the ownere of Barloe and tolde me that rolande eyre had offered hym lardgelye with hys doghter and lykewyse dyd make repetition of hys jorney to London and the hope he had of mariage with Mr Gascoines doghter, but yn the end I leyed before hym Eyres dealynges as well to his brother as hym self and Thomas Barloe did affyrme the same and shewed hys cosen James that Eyre practised with him and Mr Fenton suche uncontentionable practises against James as they dyd greatlye dyslyke of, affyrmyng that James was fytt to have onelye a longe cote. Wherupon he fell in suche a rage against Roland Eyre at hys departure from me as that he wolde take hede of hys bad practises and that he wolde weyte upon your Lordeshype hymself and both compleyn of Eyre and lykwyse delyver to your Lordeshyppe hys full mynde, but what daie he was not resolved. Your Lordeshyppe shall fynde hym a most wavyngye mynded man and therefore must take hym as occasion shalbe offered for no man lvyngye can undertake to performe hys promyses, such ys hys greate unconstantie and yt ys harde to deal with such a person as can not be drawn to understande hys own case and, syspectyng everie man, can carrie no resolution what maie be best for hym self. Thus with all dewtie I take my leave. Sutton, thys thyrde of July, 1589."²¹

". . . My cosen James Barloe ys gone thys mornyng to weyte upon your Lordshyppe. Yt seameth upon the surveye of your landes at Buxtus [Buxton?] yt dothe not amoute to such a valewe as your Lordshyppe expected. He desyrethe Bamforthe greatlye. I knowe your Lordship dothe further see unto those causes then I can conceyve yett my opinion is styll that your Lordeshyppe shall doe most honorable to satysfie his earnest desyre and hys frendes motion which ys to have Bamforthe and £1000 & yf your Lordshypp yelde to his owne request yt must nedes steve all slanderous speches whatsoever, sence the motion procedes from Mr Barloe and hys frendes, your Lordeshyppe must allwaies perdon me to wryte and speake my mynde plainelie for I am and wylbe at your comandements. Thus most humblie I take my leave. Suton this 12 of July, 1589."²²

In September Shrewsbury discussed Rowland Eyre's case with Manners, and backed up by the latter Rowland now faced the old earl. Manners wrote as follows²³:

According to the talke I had with your Lordship I have told Rowland Eir (though I had not therof spoken unto him then) how I had offered unto your Lordship that

he shold wayte upon you at Sheffield of Fryday next and to bringe thether some Counsellor with him and show his estat touching Barley unto your Lordship and that you wold have their for you either Mr Waterhowse or Mr. Bamford for their oppynion in the Law, because you be not well perswaded of his good title theirt. Wherupon he hath bein forth himself to gett a cownsellor to come with him unto your Lordship and this morning he came to me again and saith he cannot procure none to go with him to your Lordship, Baxter whom I wold have brought with me for him hath soch Busynes in Staffordsher as he cannot be had befor Fryday come sevenight. Forther my Lord I have had som spech with him at Length in this matter and I fynd that he is assowredly persuaded his right is very good and will not graunte unto me yet to yeld his estat unto your Lordship for money. Therein I wold be glad to know your pleasour whether you will have him to be with you of Fryday come sevenight or not because he cannot have any conseller to come with him of Fryday next . . . From Haddon this xviiith of September, 1589.

Shrewsbury replied from Sheffield that he would expect Manners on the day suggested to act as judge between him and Eyre. He trusted his brother-in-law would not be aggrieved if he handled Eyre "as his deeds deserve".²⁴

Manners accompanied Eyre to Sheffield as arranged, and articles of agreement were drawn up by which Rowland undertook to convey to the earl the annuities, the smelting-house, the tithes of corn and hay and the manor of Barlow; in return the earl assured to Rowland an annuity of £100 out of the premises.²⁵ Rowland had rejected a straight offer of £2,000. Manners was the first witness.

The articles were delivered to "one Farmer of the Middle Temple to draw a book" according to their true intent and meaning, but as Eyre and the earl's counsel failed to agree proceedings were drawn out until the following summer.²⁶ Shrewsbury was meanwhile carrying out alterations at Barlow Hall. In the chronological notes of the whole business,²⁷ probably drawn up for Earl Gilbert a few years later, are these entries:

28 July, 1590 [altered to 1589, but the former must be the correct date]. "Rolande Eyre & my ould Lorde were agreed of the Booke of Barley without anie bonnds to be made by my lord".

29 Sept., 1590 "The covenants between my lorde & Rolande Eyre were sealed at Handsworth".

These official notes record what must have been an odd conference, with the old earl on his death bed (he died in November), and Eyre constrained against his will to commit himself to the final deed "at the specyall request and desire of the right Worshipfull John Manners and Roger Manners esquires" as the deed stated²⁸; the words were no doubt written in to salve Eyre's pride.

Shrewsbury had taken possession the previous month: "my lord came to Barlow on Thursday at night being the Twentieth of August to give notice to the freeholders and inhabitants to attend of his lordship of Saturday the 22nd of August 1590 to meet Mr Manners to walk the bounds and mears of the Moors between Brampton, Baslow, Holmesfield and as and so did my lord in his horse litter, being old and weak, and went to every mear as nigh

as he could in his horselitter".²⁹ No fine had been levied when the earl died, and there is little doubt that Rowland "having a great desyer to have the said manor", as Earl Gilbert put it, still hoped for a more favourable outcome. Earl Gilbert, however, took the matter to law, in December 1596 a conveyance was made and in April 1598 the fine levied.³⁰ Eyre had not heard the last of Barlow however, for James Barley now brought a case against him, Blunt and Columbelle for defrauding him of his inheritance some twelve years previously. The value of the manor, the fothers of lead and the chain of gold were mulled over again and the sordid scene in the alehouse reviewed. Barley added the touching plea that Eyre had first encouraged and then dashed the budding affection between himself and Jane Eyre; he had at the time been negotiating for the hand of Mr. Gascoigne's daughter. Eyre had to pay £200, and a further sum of £250 was ordered to be paid on 22 March 1604/5. Barley nursed his grievance and in 1624, when Eyre was over eighty and Barley himself must have been in his sixties, he drew up another petition. Rowland's "humble answer" to this is among the Eyre muniments, endorsed by the lord chancellor: "I doe finde that this cause is not fitt to be rehearde. 19 Nov. 1624".³¹ Immediately Rowland died Barley made one last effort; on 16 May 1626, he petitioned the house of lords, praying that Eyre's son should be ordered to make restitution; no action seems to have been taken by the peers.³²

Though the Barlow manor case thus loomed large at intervals during Rowland Eyre's life, he was at the same time actively acquiring other property. If manors were not available, mills, mines, rights of pasturage and duchy leases, as well as landed property, were desirable. Besides the manor of Hassop he purchased of the earl of Cumberland farms, rents and rights in the reputed manors of Wormhill and Chelmorton, and then claimed to hold manors there. In Wormhill, the manorial mill was purchased from sundry persons who held it in fourth parts; he also acquired from the crown the right to hold a court leet there. The Eyres' rights to the mill and a manor there were the subject of numerous legal cases up to the eve of the Civil War. Baslow mills were also held by lease from John Manners.³³

In 1593 a marriage was arranged between Rowland's eldest son Thomas and Prudence, the daughter of Nicholas Blackwall, Eyre's second cousin,³⁴ who had been his chief witness of the elaborate pantomime of taking seisin of the manor of Barlow. Nicholas, a former student of Clement's Inn, followed the legal profession. He was, for a short time, 1586-8, clerk of the peace for Staffordshire³⁵ and later a clerk in the office of Edmund Keddesmister, one of the six clerks of chancery. It was not a spectacular marriage, but Prudence was his only child and was to inherit all his property in Taddington, Sterndale, Cowlow and elsewhere in Derbyshire, the annual rental being about £150. Nicholas lived on Sir Thomas Fitzherbert's manor at Hampstall Ridware, and there the young couple also resided after their marriage, until the death of Prudence's mother.³⁶

Nicholas acted in some legal capacity for Sir Thomas during the latter's long imprisonment for recusancy and appears to have attempted to reconcile

Fitzherbert's recalcitrant nephew and heir with him. As heir expectant to his uncle, however, young Thomas had involved himself in financial difficulties before he succeeded to the estate on a doubtful title by the setting aside of Fitzherbert's will. The property was then dispersed by mortgages and assignments of leases, with no lack of persons anxious to acquire a share. Eyre held a mortgage of a lead mine in the queen's field, meadows in Mave-son and Hampstall Ridware and probably other Staffordshire property, afterwards sold. From the same source came the duchy lease of Howe Grange and its sheep pastures near Brassington. Nicholas himself farmed the mill at Hampstall. Young Thomas Fitzherbert, however, had not scrupled to raise conflicting mortgages, and there were other claimants on Fitzherbert's Staffordshire property. At the Staffordshire sessions in 1598-9, a number of persons were presented for riotously expelling both Blackwall and Eyre from their properties.³⁷ These disputes were more than the usual actions of trespass and must somehow have been linked up with the old blood-feud of Thomas Fitzherbert against his uncle. Thomas Eyre was wounded in one of the attacks on the mill. In January 1599, Nicholas Blackwall was a dying man, but whether from natural causes or by the hands of the desperadoes he feared is not clear.³⁸

Undoubtedly much other property passed through Eyre's hands. He held securities on his Needham brother-in-law's manors, and he and the dubious Geoffrey Roberts were also involved in the Ealing property of Rowland's sister, Jane Frost. Even his own family was not immune from his propensity to make money.

It is difficult to take the exact measure of Eyre, half ruffian, half man of business, unabashed by judge or peer, thick-skinned to a degree, yet full of family pride, trusted in his own circle and well able to make himself the discreet servant or agreeable companion when he chose. By the early years of the 17th century it was said that his yearly revenues were valued at £1,000; by reason of his "abilitie" (i.e. his financial means), his boast was believed when he said in the Alsop case that he would spend a great sum before Alsop should have a groat of him.³⁹ This case arose out of his second marriage, which in itself was primarily a further attempt to increase the family estates and is the subject of the next chapter.

To be concluded in the next volume

II. 5. References

- ¹ R. H. Tawney in "The rise of the gentry", *Econ.H.R.*, XI (1941) and 2nd series VII (1954), counts the creations of the first two Stuarts as gentry.
- ² Bag. C. 2080. The following details are taken from Bag. C. 2082-89.
- ³ Bag. C. 2089: letter and the memorandum following.
- ⁴ The Eyre property at Baslow and Tideswell was probably sold in the 18th century. Few deeds survive for any of their property in these places.
- ⁵ St. Ch. 8, Jas. I, 134/8. Eyre *v.* Alsop. Richard Slack's deposition.
- ⁶ Add MSS. 6702, ff. 35, 27, 45; *The Reliquary*, XXVI, 126.
- ⁷ Portland MSS. DDP. 114/39.
- ⁸ C.2 Eliz. E.5/20. Eyre *v.* Shakerley.
- ⁹ The old spelling is almost invariably "Barley", both for the place and the family. Here the place-name is given in the modern form, Barlow, except in quotations from the original documents, but the family name has been retained as Barley.
- ¹⁰ Add. MSS. 6671, ff. 158-167. Partly transcribed in *D.A.J.*, XXXIV (1912), 103-4. The document is a copy and I suspect in some places inaccurate. Original not known.
- ¹¹ By Sir Montague Barlow, 1932, 18-25.
- ¹² Bag. C. 2232.
- ¹³ 11 May 1586. Portland MSS. DDP. 42/9.
- ¹⁴ This controversial deed has not been found. The other deeds are quoted in Bag. C. 2235.
- ¹⁵ Quoted in Portland MSS. DDP. 42/15.
- ¹⁶ Mower memoranda. The debts appear to be underestimated.
- ¹⁷ Bag. C. 356 (copy). The year date of this document is not given in the extant copy, but must have been 1588.
- ¹⁸ Mower memoranda.
- ¹⁹ Portland MSS. DDP. 42/15. 22 May 1589.
- ²⁰ Mower memoranda.
- ²¹ Talbot papers, at the College of Arms, vol. G, 474.
- ²² Talbot papers, vol. G, 476.
- ²³ Talbot papers, vol. G, 501.
- ²⁴ *H.M.C. Report* (24) *Ruiland*, I, 276.
- ²⁵ Bag. C. 2234, dated 27 September 1589.
- ²⁶ C.2 Eliz. S.2/43.
- ²⁷ Portland MSS. DDP. 42/17.
- ²⁸ Portland MSS. DDP. 42/50.
- ²⁹ Mower memoranda.
- ³⁰ C.2 Eliz. S.2/43; Bag. C. 2235; Portland MSS. DDP. 42/54.
- ³¹ Bag. C. 356 is a contemporary copy of the chancery decree.
- ³² *H.M.C. 4th Report* [3] *House of Lords' MSS.*, p. 12. He states he was defrauded of the manor and other lands which were given to petitioner's ancestors "by William the Conqueror, after the battle of Hastings"!
- ³³ See Bag. C. 1028A; 1952-1955; 2797. Belvoir Muniments, Baslow 4807.
- ³⁴ Settlement dated 10 September 1593, Bag. C. 2613.
- ³⁵ The dates given in *The Clerks of the Counties*, ed. E. Stephens, 1961, 158, are 1586-87. In his examination on 22 June 1588, however, Blackwall is stated to be the Clerk of the Peace.
- ³⁶ Her mother was Sanchia St. Andrew, daughter of John St. Andrew of Gotham, Notts., and Katherine Wells of Hoarcross, Staffs. Sanchia's first husband was Robert Salt of Yoxall (died in 1564, will proved at Lichfield, 1564), by whom she had daughters Anne and Mary.
- ³⁷ Sessions Rolls, published in *Staffs. Record Society*, 1935, 41 and 65.
- ³⁸ See Nicholas Blackwall's petition to the lord chancellor, Bag. C. 2798(7). Nicholas Blackwall's will is dated 28 Jan. 1598/9 and was proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury 6 February, 1598/9, Bag. C. 2510A.
- ³⁹ St. Ch. 8, James I 134/18, Eyre *v.* Alsop.