

Court Rolls and Manors.

We wish to draw the attention of all our members and all members of the Berkshire Archæological Society to the following letter, which the Master of the Rolls has recently addressed to the daily and weekly press. We hope all those who are able will assist Sir Ernest Pollock in his task. A complete list of all the manors in the kingdom will indeed be an historical record of the greatest interest to all archæologists, and we shall look forward to the time when the Master of the Rolls will be able to say he has completed his list.

Owing to the passing of the Law of Property Amendment Act, the Master of the Rolls has charge of old Court Rolls and documents relating to manors. These are not to be removed from the custody of the lords of manor, but it is feared that they may be destroyed as "old lumber" and of no value. In the past many have been lost or doomed to destruction. We remember a great burning of papers in a solicitor's garden lasting a whole fortnight, when, doubtless, countless documents of immense value for the tracing of the descent of manors were ruthlessly destroyed. Court Rolls are often hidden away in the offices of agents or family solicitors or strong rooms, and forgotten. It is important to discover where these are kept, and the Master of the Rolls earnestly requests that they may be safely preserved and recorded.

With regard to Court Rolls in Berkshire, the following are in the Public Record Office :—Brightwell and Harwell, Woodhay, Wargrave, Waltham, Upton, Windsor Chapter. In the Land Revenue Office : Steventon, East Hendred, the Honor of Wallingford, Cookham and Bray, Windsor (1431-3). In the British Museum : Hampstead Marshall (1538), Letcombe (1402), Shilton (1436-1470), Sparsholt (1446), Woolley in White Waltham (1378, etc.), and Winkfield (1648).

The Court Rolls of Lord Braybrookes' manor in Hurst are carefully kept in Messrs. Blandys' office, in Reading. These rolls relate to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and the office of steward of the manor has been held by the Blandy family since 1789. We should be glad to know of the location of many such manorial records, and trust the readers of this journal will be so good as to send us the information.

COURT ROLLS AND MANORS.

'SIR,—By virtue of the Law of Property (Amendment) Act, 1924 (15 Geo. V., Ch. 5, Sched. 2), which comes into force on January 1st, 1926, all manorial documents, though remaining the property and at present in the possession of the lord of the manor, are placed under the charge and superintendence of the Master of the Rolls. He is empowered to make such inquiries as he may think fit for the purpose of ascertaining that manorial documents are in proper custody and are being properly preserved; with a further duty, if it is not so, to require them to be handed over to suitable custody.

'For the purpose of carrying out these duties it is necessary for me to have a list as complete as possible of the manors in England and Wales; but no such list appears to be in existence, and I am therefore taking steps to have one compiled, and have already received co-operation from many quarters, including the Law Society. Valuable lists have been received from the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, the Duchy of Lancaster and the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, and others are being prepared. The information thus received has made it possible to start work upon a register. There are, however, a large number of manors which will not be traced without further help.

'May I, therefore, through you, ask the lords or the stewards of all manors to be good enough to assist me in this matter by supplying the desired information to me at the Public Record Office, Chancery Lane, *viz.*, the names of the manor and of the county and of the parish in which it is situated, and the names and addresses of the lord and steward.

'I would add that information is desired not only as to manors still in existence, but also as to extinct manors, of which Court rolls or other manorial documents are still preserved.

'The register, when completed, will undoubtedly form an interesting historical record of manors, and their ownership down to the present time.—Yours, etc.,

'ERNEST M. POLLOCK.'

'Public Record Office, Chancery Lane,
'London, W.C. 2.'