

## Notes on the Braybrooke family of Brightwalton.

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On the wall of the central court of the Victoria and Albert Museum at South Kensington hangs a part of an Elizabethan tapestry map some 20 feet square shewing several of the counties of England. The towns and villages are indicated by name and a church; of these a church with a spire and the name "Brickelton" mark the position of the village of Brightwalton in Berkshire. The phonetic rendering in the map of the vernacular pronunciation of the name, which still obtains, shows that the colloquial designation "Brickelton" is centuries old. The mediaeval church has been destroyed but the spire shown in the tapestry is perpetuated by the broach spire with squinches which rises above the west bay of the south aisle of the present church built in 1862.

A few relics of the old church are preserved, including the remains of two brasses which are fixed on the west wall of the south aisle beneath the spire. A figure of a man—John Newman *d.* 1517—is all that is left of one. A single shield is the scanty remains of the other, a memorial to James Braybrooke who died in 1590. This memorial consisted of the figures of a man, his wife, two groups, viz. three sons, three daughters, and four shields. The remaining shield is 6 by 5½ inches; the hatching shows that it was formerly enamelled in armorial tinctures, every vestige of which has disappeared. The engraving shows seven masles, three, three and one with two roses between first and second rows.

The Braybrooke family was associated with Brightwalton for nearly the whole of the 16th century. The first to settle in Berkshire was James Braybrooke who owed his position and success in life to the favour of King Henry VII. In 1490 he was page of the King's chamber and received a grant of the keeping of all the lands late of William Salvan of co. York, in the King's hands by the minority of the kinsman and heir Ralph Salvan. He became gentleman of the Privy chamber, Escheator of Suffolk, and had many profitable posts and gifts. In 1492 he had the

grant of a manor in Norfolk similar to that of 1490 ; these were temporary posts ceasing on the heir attaining his majority.

The grant of the office of Verger of the Castle, Town and Port of Sandwich, and later that of Bailiff, was for life. In 1503 he resigned this probably on account of receiving something better.

In 1496 he was granted the keeping of lands in Norfolk because of the idiotcy of John, son and heir of John Chapman. In 1497 he became Ranger of Groveley Forest, co. Wilts. The ancient office of Ranger was honourable and granted by patent; the holder was responsible for the King's interests and watched over the deer and prevented trespasses. Grants of lands forfeited to the King was a usual way of rewarding faithful service and in 1497 William Smith and James Braybrooke were given the lands once owned by Roger and Richard Woodhouse. On 25 October 1501 James Braybrooke was granted for life the lucrative office of weigher of wool in the port of Southampton. For three or four centuries wool was the principal export from England ; the trade was subjected to strict regulations and was the chief source of the royal revenue ; the number of markets was limited and special ports were assigned for the export trade. It was felony for any but the authorized merchants to deal in the staple goods. In fact so intricate and involved were the rules regulating the trade that they were frequently broken unwittingly by numerous people who were pardoned " en masse " ; in 1505, in spite of his official position, James Braybrooke had to be included in a list of about 400 people pardoned for all offences against acts regulating trade, *in re* wool.

What was probably the great event of his life took place in 1504-5 when he was sent to Naples with Francis Martyn and John Style, to visit the young Queen. The embassy was a matrimonial mission, evidently with a view to the marriage of Prince Arthur, elder son of Henry VII., with the young Queen. The secret instructions given to the envoys are recorded in Sir H. James's National MSS. They are amusing and tell the envoys to try and get speech of the Queen fasting to see

if she has ill breath, etc. The result of the trip to Naples was nil.

On 7th March 1504-5 James Braybrooke was granted armorial bearings; "argent, seven mascles conjunct three, three and one, azure, between the first and second rows two roses, gules. Crest, a maiden's head proper hair or, garlanded with violets and leaves." Motto, *Firma nobis fides*. The crest may allude to his mission to Naples; and the red roses to adherence and service to the House of Lancaster.

James Braybrooke's parentage and descent are unknown. In the grant of arms he is styled "of Suffolk," of which for a time he was Escheator. It is likely that he was a native of the county; the name is common in Suffolk and with its variants appears for centuries, but with very few exceptions there is no one of importance. That he was granted arms shows that he did not claim connection with the great family of Braybrooke who were so prominent in the 14th century. Henry VII. was served by new men, the old feudal nobility was nearly killed off or in ruined disgrace. The King selected men of inferior or mean origin on whom he could rely and who were not of influence to be troublesome; James Braybrooke was of that sort. Possibly Braybrooke's settlement in Berkshire was due to his marriage with Margery, daughter of . . . Woodcock of Shinfield. This lady was the widow of Thomas Humphrey by whom she had two children John and Joan. By her second husband she had two sons, Thomas and Richard, and two daughters; Elizabeth who married Henry Brounker of Melksham; and Margaret who married John Hogan.

James Braybrooke's will is dated 10 Feb. 1508 and was proved 28 March 1509, that is six weeks later, so that he must have died shortly after making his will. At his death he enjoyed two corrodies in the monasteries of Hyde and Cicester and the Rangership of Groveley Forest, which were on 13 May granted by the King to Wm. Tyler, groom of the chamber. He was also bailiff of Patyngnam, co. Stafford; portreeve of the hundreds of Middleton and Merton, co. Kent; bailiff of Sandwich, and receiver of Calais.

James Braybrooke was Master of the Swans on the Thames and all the waters running thereinto ; at his death the office was given—rather appropriately—to a Clerk of the “ Signet,” George Ashby.

In 1507 Braybrooke was granted for life the office of Keeper of the Park of Foly John in Windsor Forest. He also received as a gift from Henry VII. the manor and lordship of Brokdyshe in Burston, co. Norfolk, at the annual rent of one red rose ; but Henry VIII. granted it—during pleasure—to John Sharp, groom of the chamber. However, in 1511, the King made Richard Braybrooke, a son of his father’s old servant, groom of the chamber, which is all that is known of him at present, except that his father left him 20 marks and his house in London with the contents and “ the yeres I have in it.”

James Braybrooke’s will is an interesting document (P.C.C.12 Bennett). He is described as of “ Abendon,” and desires to be buried at the Abbey church there, “ as my tomb is made in the Lady Chapel.” He leaves money to the mother church, alms houses, and to a priest “ to sing for me at St. Katherin’s altar in St. Elyn’s (Helen’s) church. To the parish church of Kyngeston Bagpuze, as my sister Agnes lyeth there, my blacke damaske gowne lyned with sarcenett, to make a goodly vestment there for the soules of my sister and Anne Gillyngton to be prayed for.” His wife to have the wardship of John Hogan during his noonage. “ I will that he be offered marriage to one of my daughters in a due time of his age ; and if that he refuse them all, and Joane Humfrey my wife’s daughter also ; that then I will that the marriage of him that so refuseth be sold with their advantages that shall grow by the course of the lawe for his so refusing, to the use of my wife and she to bestowe it amongs my children and for the helth of my soul.”

“ To John Whityng, esq. a gowne of tawney chamelett, broded with velvet and lyned with blake sarcenett.”

At his death all the testator’s children were minors, he mentions Margret to whom £40 and my gilt and p’cel gilt plate ; Elizabeth £40 and plate ; Thomas £40 and plate ; his step-son

John Humfrey money or goods value £40. To his eldest sister Alice £40.

My wife and son Thomas to have all my "fermys" both of Wotton, Blakegrove, and Sandeford. If any of the children die the portions to be expended on St. Elyn's, Abendon, and repairing of high-ways. To the poor of Abendon 5 markes. To Richard Braynche and his wife £40."

James Braybrooke's widow married again. Her third husband was Richard Harcourte who predeceased her; no children are recorded by this union. Her will is dated 8 May 1523, evidently made during illness as it was proved 19 June following (P.C.C.10 Bodfelde).

"Margery Harcourte, widow, of Abendon (formerly Braybroke and Humfrey). To be buried in the Lady Chapel of the monastery of Abendon with James Braybroke, sumtyme my husband. A chaleys with the corporals to the monastery, an honest prest to syng and pray for me and Thomas Humfrey, Jamys Braybroke, and Richard Harcourte sumtyme my husbands. Also £6 to a prest to pray for one year at St. Elyn's for the three husbands. To St. Elyn's 40s. Bequests to St. Nicolas church and to Austin Friars, Oxford. To my daughter Elizabeth Braybroke £40. Bequests to my son (in-law) Olyver Wellesburne and his daughters Margery and ffrysworth, a goblet of silver, and to Joane. Mentions the five children of her daughter Margaret (lately dead) wife of John Hogan. To my son Thomas Braybroke all his father's lands."

Thomas Braybrooke of "Abendon" (son and heir of James) married Katherine daughter of William Barker. He made his will "being hole of mynde and perfyett of mynde and perfytt of memory, nevertheless syke of body," on the 28 October 1541, died and was buried in St. Helen's, Abendon, and the will was proved 26 January 1541 (P.C.C.I. Spert.)

"Thomas Hyde gent." was overseer of this will; and one witness was William Druet "the brotherhood priest my gostly father."

Thomas Braybrooke had several children; we know of William, the eldest who died without children; James, of

whom hereafter ; Jane who married Thomas Bassett, " dockter of phissicke," at Sutton Courtenay 30 July 1564, and had two sons, William and Christopher ; Margrett who married first William Andrews at Sutton 27 Nov. 1558, and secondly John Fettiplace of Sparsholt. John Braybrooke of Sutton Courtenay who was there buried 22 Sept. 1588. He made his will " beinge sicke of bodye " 12 Sept. 1588 ; he left 2/6 to the parish church, and 20/- to the poor of Sutton. He leaves bequests to each of his nephews and nieces, whom he calls his " cousins " ; and to four god-children. About twenty-five names are mentioned in the will, which was proved in the Archdeaconry Court of Berks 25 Sept. The son and heir of Thomas was James Braybrooke of Brightwalton, where he rented the Manor House. He married Martha, widow of Humfrey Cheney (who died childless in 1557 ; he lived at Lyford) at Sutton Courtenay on 27 April 1559 ; she was daughter of John Yate of Lyford and his wife Joan, daughter and heiress of Richard Goddard of Upham co. Wilts. Between 1561 and 1568 they had six children baptized at Sutton and at least one more born elsewhere.

James Braybrooke died 8 May 1590 ; his will was proved on the 22 May (P.C.C. 32 Drury). It is worth quoting at some length. He leaves his soul to the mercy of GOD, and desires burial in the north part of the chancel of Brightwalton church. " To the said church £4 ; to repair of the belles 5s. ; to every poor householder that hath no plough a bushell of breadcorn and one of malt. At his burial £3 to the poor. To Abendon, Wantage, and Newbury 6/8 each. To sister Grey a silver spoon with acorn, and to each of her children a sheep. To sister Bassett a spoon. To sister Fettiplace a spoon and her two daughters a qr. of barley each. To cosyn Huelles my gowne furred with grey jeunettes. To Roger Bowell 40s. and a qr. of barley. To every my men and maid servants ½qr. of barley. To John my man a yeres wages. To William my son, two beste saltes with the cover, my beste standinge cuppe and one of the cuppes I bought of brother — and my silver cuppe with the portcullis and one of Thomas Porter's cuppes and a dozen silver spoons. To my son Edward £200 and a feather bed with furniture. To son

Robert £200 and the bed he useth. To daughter Elizabeth £200. Daughter Martha to be bound upon the ferme, and 200 merkes. Wife to have the use of the farm at Brightwalton for her life and use of plate, jewells and stock. To John Braybrooke £5 besides the £10 I owe him. To William Bassett 40s. when 21. Sons Edward and Robert 5 marks yearly." The *Inquisition post mortem* shows that he held a moiety of the manor of Marston, and the manor of Fowlescot with appurtenances, and 24 messuages, 500 acres of arable, 40 of meadow, 300 of pasture, and 110 acres of wood etc. etc. ; that his son and heir William was 28 years of age and living at Brightwalton, and that Marston was held of the Queen as of her manor of Hendred, in free soccage. The other moiety went to Henry, Lord Norreys of Rycot.

James Braybrooke appears to have been highly esteemed and trusted by his contemporaries, judging by the frequency with which he is mentioned in the wills of his neighbours, as overseer or executor. The shield on the wall of the tower is all that is extant of his brass in the church. He was succeeded by his son William, who married Margrett, daughter of Richard Midlemore of Edgbaston Co. Warwick. William Braybrooke only survived his father two years, dying 30 May 1592, not more than 30 years old. He left an only child Richard.

Richard Braybrooke was married twice. First to Christian, daughter of Barton Palmer of South Stoke co. Oxon, secondly to Catherine, daughter of William Eyston of East Hendred, by whom he had a daughter Lucy who married Ben. Winchcombe of Cheam, co. Surrey and died childless. By his first wife Richard had three children, James who was 2 years old in 1623 and probably died young ; Mary who also must have died young ; and Margret, who married Humphrey Hide of Wick and had six children and was left a widow in 1652.

Richard Braybrooke left Brightwalton and is described in various legal documents as of Kidlington co. Oxon, and Long Crendon co. Bucks, and of Marlston co. Berks. He lived in troubled times and must have had a worried life.

To begin, a bill in Chancery date 6 Feb. 1620.

Richard Braybrooke complains that whereas, Henry, Lord Norris (now deceased) and James Braybrooke (plaintiff's grandfather) were long seized in demesne as of fee simple as tenants in common of the manor of Marleston co. Berks and desiring to divide the manor between them, and so to do about 40 years ago agreed that two commissioners make the division. They allotted to James Braybrooke,  $\frac{1}{2}$  the manor house, the great park of 7 acres, the little park, and many other parcels amounting to about 250 acres, the remainder to Lord Norris. James Braybrooke conveyed his part to Martha his wife in jointure; the reversion came to William son and heir of James. At William's death the property came to the plaintiff, Richard, who married Christian Palmer about three years since and settled the premises upon her as jointure.

The part allotted to Lord Norris descended to Francis, Lord Norris who conveyed it to William Smith, who again conveyed it to Richard Wightwicke of Ilsley co. Berks. clerk, who makes claims under colour that the said partition was not made as aforesaid. Braybrooke says that as the old leases expired he has not leased out the lands as they formerly were, but has improved them, so that by many great charges which he has been at, they are better and of greater value than in his grandfather's time.

As a royalist and a papist Richard Braybrooke was early in trouble during the Civil-war time and Commonwealth. In 1647 he was sequestered for delinquency; in the Royalist Composition Papers he is described as of Long Crendon, co. Bucks. and Marleston, co. Berks.

In 1642, William Sumner of Ashington bought for £500 from Braybrooke a ten years' lease of Lovendon Manor in Long Crendon. In 1650 Sumner complained to the committee for compounding that since he had reference to compound the county committee had let the estate to Henry Alnut and though enquiry was ordered the petitioner was dispossessed in 1651. In June 1651, Braybrooke died, and Sumner begged reference to his title for the estate was sequestered for delinquency.



In 1652 the estate was leased to Alnut for six years at £50 per ann. In 1653 Sumner begged to receive the rents until his debt was satisfied for which Braybrooke entered into a recognizance for £1,000. He also complained that the committee had seized and sold his personal estate worth £50 on pretence of a debt due to Braybrooke.

Henry Alnut of Weston, co. Oxford, stated that he bought Lovendon Manor from Braybrooke for £1,600 in hand and £150 a year, and is not allowed the benefit of his purchase; as Braybrooke was sequestered for recusancy only, the crime ought to die with him.

In 1654 Alnut again complains that he is disturbed in his possession, the county committee threatening to levy three years' rents.

The committee for compounding not being so satisfied as to give judgment in either case, directed the county committee of Oxford to certify touching Braybrooke's delinquency, it appearing that he was sequestered 13 March 1647, but no fact of delinquency named.

It was finally decided that Braybrooke was a recusant only; Alnut's claim was allowed and the sequestration discharged in Dec. 1654. after proceedings lasting seven years.

But the foregoing was only a part of the trouble suffered by this unfortunate papist recusant.

In March 1652 Humphrey Hide of Wick, Sutton Courtenay, begged discharge of the estate come to him by the death in June of Richard Braybrooke (died June 1651), whose daughter Margaret he had married, of which two-thirds were sequestered for Braybrooke's recusancy. The claim was allowed and the sequestration discharged.

Hide died shortly after, and in June 1653 James Heron of Abingdon and William Keates of Finmere begged discharge of the moiety of " Fullescott " Manor leased to them by Margaret Hyde, widow, for 14 years, in trust, to pay her father's (Rich. Braybrooke) debts and portions for her five children and the

one she went with, if a daughter, of £300 each. But two-thirds of the lands were seized because she refused to take the oath of abjuration.

Another of the family, exact relationship not known, William Braybrooke of Long Crendon, a papist, was certified for compounding in 1647, his estate before the wars valued at £150.

Fined and sequestrated out of existence the family vanished.

The writer of the foregoing article wishes to express his grateful thanks to Mr. Harvey Bloom for his aid in connection with certain details, particularly the Chancery Suit, the *Inq. post mortem* and the will of James Braybrooke (1590).