

## VII.—THE MANOR AND TOWER OF BITCHFIELD.

[Read on 27th July, 1921.]

## I.—THE MANOR.

By J. C. HODGSON, M.A., a Vice-President.

The manor and township of Bitchfield lies on the northern confines of the extensive parish of Stamfordham ; it is bounded by Belsay on the north, by Ogle on the east, by Black Heddon on the west, and by Newham and Black Heddon on the south. It has an area of 738 acres, ordnance survey, and in 1911, it had a population of 22.

A member of the great barony of Bywell—which consisted of estates carved out of the large possessions of the official earls of Northumberland, and conferred by William Rufus upon Guy de Baliol—Bechefeld was given by the latter with his daughter Hawis in marriage to William Bertram, lord of Mitford, to be held in socage and apparently by the payment of 7s. 11d. a year to the castle of Bywell for castle ward and cornage.<sup>1</sup> This William Bertram, with Hawis his wife, was the founder of the priory of Brinkburn, and, as such, was buried in the church there. Under various spellings, such as Bethefeld, Bécfeld, Bichefeld, Bechfeld, the place occurs in documents of the thirteenth century.<sup>2</sup> In that period the manorial rights were acquired by the Middletons of Belsay, and on 11th September, 1270, Richard de Middleton had a grant of free warren in Bechefeld.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Testa de Nevill. Hodgson, *Northumberland*, part III, vol. I, p. 212 ; new *History of Northumberland*, VI, pp. 21, 85.

<sup>2</sup> Hodgson, *Northumberland*, part III, vol. I, pp. 45, 46, 59, 70, 87, 146, 212.

<sup>3</sup> *Cal. Charter Rolls, 1257-1300*, p. 153.

On the 22nd August, 1271, Denise de Bechefeld was riding home from Newcastle in the company of her uncle, John de Papingham, and had reached Milburn moor, when they were attacked by a band of men headed by William de Sweethope, who abducted the lady and carried her off to Jedburgh, to compel her to marry his son. She was the daughter of John de Witton and widow of Gilbert de Ba<sup>4</sup> who had farmed four bovates of land in Bitchfield, which holding after his death had been purchased by his widow, who thus obtained a local name or designation. The lady was not be compelled to marry against her will; and preserving her liberty and property brought an action against her captor at the Northumberland Assizes in 1279.<sup>5</sup> She was still living in 1296.

BECHFELD SUBSIDY ROLL, 1296.

Summa bonorum Henrici Long	£1	11	10	unde regi	0	2	10½
„ Willelmi Newcomon	1	2	8	„	0	2	0½
„ Johannis de Seton	2	6	0	„	0	4	2¼
„ Willelmi Stark	2	7	4	„	0	4	3¼
„ Warini de Swethop	1	6	4	„	0	2	4½
„ Ade de Pel(s)ow	1	6	8	„	0	2	5
„ Dionis de Bechefeld	2	4	4	„	0	4	0½

Summa hujus ville £12 5s. 2d. Unde dno regi 22s. 3½d.

Warin de Swethop whose name is entered on the subsidy roll was a near kinsman of William de Sweethope and was apparently a priest; for at an ordination held at Corbridge by Richard Kellawe, bishop of Durham, 17 December, 1334, Walter de Sweethope was ordained deacon on a title given him by Warin de Sweethope of Bitchfield. This Walter subsequently became

<sup>4</sup> Query—a contraction for Bathon; cf. Duke of Northumberland's Transcript of Assize Roll; *ex inf.* Sir A. E. Middleton.

<sup>5</sup> *Northumberland Assize Rolls*, pp. 198, 350, 369 (88 Surtees Soc. publ.); cf. Bates, *Northumberland*, p. 145, and new *History of Northumberland*, IV, pp. 408-410, where there is a pedigree of Sweethope.

vicar of Middleham.<sup>6</sup> This record raises an inference that there may have been a chapel at Bitchfield. If this were so, it would explain the name of two enclosures near the tower which, down to the middle of the seventeenth century, were known as the 'Easter Chapel Close' and the 'Wester Chapel Close.'<sup>7</sup>

The collectors of the Aid in 1346 account for the payment of 10*l.* received from Mary de St. Paul, countess of Pembroke, issuing out of the barony of Baliol and out of its members, of which Bechefeld was one.<sup>8</sup>

The Middletons of Belsay, who had apparently bought out the rights of all of the free tenants, continued to hold Bitchfield until the end of the fifteenth or beginning of the sixteenth century, when Sir John Middleton sold it to John and Alice Harbottle, or to one of them, whose daughter Margery was married to Sir John Fenwick of Fenwick and Wallington.<sup>9</sup>

In May, 1529, Sir John Fenwick and Margery his wife conveyed to their second son, Roger Fenwick, certain lands in Bitchfield and Black Heddon; and on 16th May, 1532, the same Roger had a grant from his father of the manor of Prestwick with lands in Bitchfield.<sup>10</sup> What is known of the descendants of Roger Fenwick is compressed into the accompanying pedigree.

Roger Fenwick who succeeded his father before 1600, inherited with the property his father's feud with his neighbour, Thomas Swinburne of Capheaton. Both agreed to submit their difference to Thomas Middleton and Ralph Errington. The arbitrators evidently thought there was much to be said on both sides, and, in their award, made at Bolam on the 2nd March,

<sup>6</sup> *Bp. Kellawe's Register*, III, pp. 156, 163, 194, 438; cf. *new History of Northumberland*, IV, p. 410.

<sup>7</sup> Map or plan of Bitchfield, in possession of Sir A. E. Middleton, made in 1674 by Thomas Forster, surveyor for Henry Grey, 'armiger.'

<sup>8</sup> *Cal. Feudal Aids*, IV, p. 53.

<sup>9</sup> Hodgson, *Northumberland*, part II, vol. I, p. 255. <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

1600-1—preserved at Belsáy—gave no damages to either party, but ordered that ‘ the said suet depending and now in contraversie . . . . shall utterly and absolutely end and surcease without further demand or question . . . . and that they shall as freinds agree and be at unity forgett all grevaunces.’

In 1602 Roger Fenwick purchased from Edward Gallon one third part of Trewick.<sup>11</sup> By his wife Mabel, whose maiden name has not been ascertained, he had (perhaps with other) issue four sons, Robert, John, George, and William. On the 1st April, 1617, he released Bitchfield to his eldest son, Robert. He died shortly before the 4th January, 1618-9, when an inventory of his goods was taken in the presence of his widow Mabel, his son Robert, and others. On the 15th of the same month administration of his personal estate was committed to his widow, and to his son Robert, the latter being of full age. The executors did not render their account until the 6th December, 1622.<sup>12</sup>

Robert Fenwick of Bitchfield on the 21st July, 1620, made a settlement previous to his marriage with Jane Myers of Longley, co. York, widow of Robert Myers, to secure to her 100*l.* per annum as jointure if and when she should become his widow.<sup>13</sup> The leading trustee of the settlement was William Ramsden of Longley hall near Huddersfield, who may have been the lady's father or brother. He was ancestor of the present baronet of the name. This Robert Fenwick has with some probability been identified with the Robert Fenwick, sometimes described as of Bedlington, a member of parliament during the Commonwealth, who burnt his fingers in his purchases of the lands of the suppressed

<sup>11</sup> Sir A. E. Middleton's Bitchfield deeds.

<sup>12</sup> Raine, *Test. Dunelm.*

<sup>13</sup> Sir A. E. Middleton's Bitchfield deeds.

see of Durham.<sup>14</sup> Be this as it may, Robert Fenwick sold his patrimonial estate of Bitchfield, 20th July, 1630, to Edward Grey of Morpeth castle.<sup>15</sup>

John Fenwick, son of Roger Fenwick of Bitchfield, was apprenticed 31st May, 1612, to Robert Bewick of Newcastle, boothman. The date of his admission to the Merchants' Company has not been ascertained, but his son of the same name was admitted to the freedom of the company 19th January, 1655, by patrimony.<sup>16</sup> He may with some probability be identified with John Fenwick of Newcastle, the Covenanter, known in local history as lieutenant colonel John Fenwick, author of the autobiographical tract, 'Christ Ruling in the Midst of his Enemies' published in London in 1643. By resolution of the House of Commons, 2nd July, 1650, he was made master of Sherburn house, near Durham, with reversion to his son of the same name.<sup>17</sup>

Edward Grey, the purchaser of Bitchfield, was the second son of Sir Edward Grey of Howick. Having married into the Roman Catholic family of Widdrington, and being a royalist, he was sequestered as a papist delinquent and a recusant. He submitted himself in 1644, and in 1646 petitioned for the discharge of his estate from sequestration, or for leave to compound. His estate comprised Bitchfield of the yearly value of 130*l.*; lands in

<sup>14</sup> Welford, *Royalist Compositions*, p. xvii (111 Surtees Soc. publ.). In an unproved pedigree, which has not been printed, the Rev. John Hodgson also identified Robert Fenwick of Bitchfield with the person of that name who 21 Jan., 1649, purchased the bishop of Durham's manor of Bedlington. He matches him with Jane daughter of the Rev. James Wilsford, prebendary of Stillington, York., to which union he ascribes a family of five sons and a daughter. Robert Fenwick of Bedlington, some time a member of parliament, was a painstaking genealogist, devoting much attention to the pedigree of the Fenwicks, of Northumberland. His MSS., or some of them, are stated to be preserved in the College of Heralds (*cf.* Rev. John Hodgson *Hist. Northumberland*, II, II, 351). He was a friend of Dodsworth, and, it is stated, retired to Wilsford, presumably the place of that name in Lincolnshire.

<sup>15</sup> Sir A. E. Middleton's Bitchfield deeds.

<sup>16</sup> Dendy, *Newcastle Merchant Adventurers*, II, pp. 234, 277 (101 Surtees Soc. publ.).

<sup>17</sup> See Memoir, Welford, *Men of Mark*, II, pp. 215-220.

Little Harle, 70*l.*; at Hepscoth, 36*l.*; Learmouth mill, 30*l.*; the tithes of Carham, 17*l.*; West Hartford (in the parish of Woodhorn), 47*l.*; rent charges out of Milburn-grange and Newham of 40*l.* and 10*l.*, and a rent charge out of Edington, 20*l.*<sup>18</sup>

While Edward Grey's estates lay under sequestration he had married his daughter Mary to Thomas Riddell, afterwards of Fenham and Swinburn, agreeing to give a marriage portion of 1200*l.* Having, as he alleged, hidden a large sum of money in the ground during the Civil Wars, and being unable to find it, he gave his son-in-law 500*l.* by means of a rent charge, and by deed dated 6th April, 1657, he gave West Hartford to his grandson, Thomas Riddell, in satisfaction of the remaining 700*l.* This arrangement his heir, Henry Grey, in 1681 attempted, but without success, to overturn.<sup>19</sup>

Dying in 1658, Edward Grey was buried in Morpeth church, his will being dated 27th January, 1657-8.<sup>20</sup> He was succeeded by his second, but eldest surviving son, Henry Grey, who in 1663 was rated for Bitchfield at 150*l.* per annum, for Little Harle at 120*l.*, for Harelaw at 20*l.*, for Hepscoth at 20*l.*, for High Church and Loansdean, Morpeth, at 30*l.*, and for a moiety of Elwick tithes at 22*l.*<sup>21</sup>

On the 4th June, 1680, Henry Grey sold Bitchfield to Sir James Clavering of Axwell, the first baronet, the consideration paid being 1590*l.*<sup>22</sup> His grandson, Sir James Clavering,<sup>23</sup> sixth

<sup>18</sup> Welford, *Royalist Compositions*, p. 217.

<sup>19</sup> New *History of Northumberland*, ix, p. 290.

<sup>20</sup> Raine, *Test. Dunelm.*

<sup>21</sup> Hodgson, *Northumberland*, part iii, vol. 1; p. 336.

<sup>22</sup> Sir A. E. Middleton's Bitchfield deeds.

<sup>23</sup> Edward Shafto, second son of John Shafto, of Little Bavington seems to have held either the farm or the house of Bitchfield as a tenant of the Claverings. As Edward Shafto of Bitchfield, gent., he, 21 February, 1700-1, took out a licence to marry Miss Mary Delaval, spinster, who was a daughter of George Delaval of Dissington, by his wife Mary and sister of Henry Grey of Bitchfield; and he is similarly described in the register of St. Andrew's, Newcastle, where he was married on the 4 March, following. From the match spring all the later Shaftos of Little Bavington of whom (an incomplete) pedigree may be found in the new *History of Northumberland*, iv, p. 147.

FENWICK OF BITCHFIELD.\*

John Fenwick of Fenwick and Wallington <sup>(b)</sup> living 1529 <sup>(b)</sup> = Margery, dau. of John and Alice Harbottle <sup>(b)</sup>, living 1529 <sup>(b)</sup>

Roger Fenwick i. <sup>(b)</sup> of Bitchfield, second son, to whom in 1532 his father and mother gave = Ursula, dau. of John Heron of Chipchase <sup>(g)</sup> <sup>(f)</sup> Bitchfield and Black Heddon <sup>(b)</sup>, and to whom his father gave the manor of Prestwick <sup>(b)</sup>

Roger Fenwick ii. of Bitchfield = Margaret, dau. of Sir Henry Widdrington by his wife Margaret, dau. of Sir Henry Percy <sup>(c)</sup>, born before 26 Aug., 1518 <sup>(c)</sup>

William Fenwick of Bitchfield <sup>(d)</sup> <sup>(h)</sup>, = Eleanor dau. of Sir John Delaval of Seaton Delaval <sup>(d)</sup>, mar. sett. 21 Oct. 1554 <sup>(h)</sup>; with her husband was named in her father's will 4 Dec., 1562 <sup>(e)</sup>

Anthony Fenwick who in 1589 received lands in Eachwick from his father, Roger Fenwick of Bitchfield <sup>(e)</sup>

Robert Fenwick, born before 1564 <sup>(d)</sup> = Roger Fenwick iii. of Bitchfield, party to arbitration bond 2 March, 1600/1 <sup>(a)</sup>, released Bitchfield 1 April, 1617, to his son Robert <sup>(a)</sup>. Administration of personal estate granted 15 Jan., 1618, to Robert the son and to Mabel the widow <sup>(i)</sup> = Mabel..... living 15 Jan., 1618 <sup>(i)</sup>, and again 20 July, 1630, in enjoyment of an annuity payable out of Bitchfield <sup>(a)</sup> Agnes, born before 1564 <sup>(d)</sup>

Robert Fenwick of Bitchfield, to whom his father, 1 April, 1617, released Bitchfield <sup>(a)</sup>; stated to be of full age, in administration to his father's estate <sup>(i)</sup>. Mar. settlement 21 July, 1620 <sup>(a)</sup>. With consent of his wife Jane, sold Bitchfield 20 July, 1630 <sup>(a)</sup>.

= Jane, widow of Robert Myers, of Longley, near Huddersfield <sup>(a)</sup>, party to fine 27 Apl., 1631 <sup>(a)</sup>.

John Fenwick of Newcastle, app. 31 May, 1612, to Robt. Bewick, boothman <sup>(k)</sup>, died circa 1670 <sup>(k)</sup> [a lieutenant-colonel in the army of the Commonwealth; appointed by resolution of House of Commons 2 July, 1650, to be master of Sherburn house, with reversion to his son of the same name <sup>(a)</sup>]

= [Jane, dau. of John Hall of Newcastle <sup>(g)</sup>]

George Fenwick of Newcastle, app. 1 Aug., 1618, to Robt. Bewick, boothman, admitted free of Merch. Co., 1628 <sup>(k)</sup>, died circa 1675 <sup>(k)</sup>, 1674, Oct. 14, George Fenwick, merchant, bur. <sup>(m)</sup>

= Catherine, wife of Mr. George Fenwick, merchant, bur. 20 Aug., 1657 <sup>(m)</sup>

William Fenwick, living 20 July, 1630, in enjoyment of an annuity out of Bitchfield <sup>(a)</sup>

Dorothy, wife of ..... Ogle of Kirkley <sup>(g)</sup>

Grace, wife of Charles Mitford <sup>(g)</sup>

[Anne, dau. of Henry Lawson of Newcastle, mar. 26 Sept., 1654 <sup>(m)</sup>.]

= John Fenwick, bapt. 3 Dec. 1628 <sup>(l)</sup>, as son of John Fenwick <sup>(l)</sup>, admitted free of Merch. Co. 19 Jan., 1655, by patrimony <sup>(k)</sup>, adm. to Gray's Inn 6 Nov., 1648, to whom his father resigned the Mastership of Sherburn House, but he was ejected in 1660.

= Barbara, dau. of Charles Wren of Binchester, by his wife Peregrina, dau. of Ralph Fetherstonhalgh of Stanhope; mar. 12 June, 1681, at Bishop Auckland <sup>(p)</sup>

Joseph Fenwick, bapt. 5 Aug., 1630 <sup>(l)</sup>, bur. 5 Feb., 1630/1 <sup>(l)</sup>

Joshua Fenwick, bapt. 7 June, 1635 <sup>(l)</sup>, adm. free of Merch. Co. 30 June, 1658, by patrimony <sup>(k)</sup>

Elizabeth, bapt. 23 Feb., 1631/2 <sup>(l)</sup>, bur. 21 June 1634 <sup>(l)</sup>  
Abigail, bapt. 13 Oct., 1633 <sup>(l)</sup>, bur. 17 June, 1634 <sup>(l)</sup>

Perhaps other children.

<sup>(a)</sup> Sir A. E. Middleton's Bitchfield deeds.

<sup>(b)</sup> Pedigree of Fenwick of Wallington in Rev. John Hodgson's *Hist. of Northumberland*, pt. II, vol. i, p. 255.

<sup>(c)</sup> Pedigree of Widdrington, *ibid.*, pt. II, vol. III, p. 235.

<sup>(d)</sup> Flower's *Visitation 1563-1564*, p. 98 (16 Harl. Soc. publ.)

<sup>(e)</sup> *Durham Wills and Inventories*, p. 204 (2 Surtees Soc. publ.)

<sup>(f)</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 35, 58n (38 Surtees Soc. publ.)

<sup>(g)</sup> *New Hist. Northumberland*, IV, p. 340.

<sup>(h)</sup> *Ibid.* IX, p. 169.

<sup>(i)</sup> Raine *Test. Dunelm.*

<sup>(k)</sup> Dendy, *Newcastle Merchant Adventures* (101 Surtees Soc. publ.)

<sup>(l)</sup> All Saints Register, Newcastle.

<sup>(m)</sup> St. Nicholas's Register, Newcastle.

<sup>(n)</sup> Memoir of Lieut.-Col. Fenwick; Welford, *Men of Mark*, vol. II, p. 215.

<sup>(o)</sup> Bates 'Heddon on the Wall' (*Arch. Ael.*, 2 ser. XI), p. 266.

<sup>(p)</sup> *cf.* pedigree of Wren, *North Country Diaries*, p. 207 (124 Surtees Soc. publ.)

<sup>(q)</sup> An unproved pedigree in the Rev. John Hodgson's collection.

<sup>(r)</sup> *cf.* St. George's *Visitation of Northumberland* in 1615, ed. Marshall, p. 25.

\* As the various pedigrees of Fenwick, recorded in the Herald's Visitations are confused and discordant, the Rev. John Hodgson's pedigree of Fenwick of Wallington, printed in his *History of Northumberland*, part II, vol. I, p. 254, has been followed with the insertion of a second Roger Fenwick, as Generation III, who matched Margaret, daughter of Sir Henry Widdrington. It is, however, possible that Miss Widdrington may have been a second wife of Roger Fenwick I.





## GREY OF BITCHFIELD

Edward Grey of Bitchfield (a), second son of Sir Edward Grey of Howick (a) purchased Bitchfield = Margaret, dau. of Sir Henry Widdrington (a),  
 20 July, 1630 (e); a papist delinquent in 1646 (d); was then seised of lands in Bitchfield, Little administration of personal estate 18 Oct. 1661 (c)  
 Harle, Hepscoot, Learmouth and West Hartford; also of Carham tithes (d); buried 7 July, 1658 (f);  
 will dated 27 Jan., 1657/8 (c)

Edward Grey = Elizabeth,  
 of Bitchfield (a), died in his father's (a) life-time, bur. 16 Jan., 1650/1 (f)

dau. of Gawin Rutherford of Rudchester (a) bur. 8 Dec., 1657 (f)

Dorothy, daughter of William Wytham of Cliffe (a), Yorks., mar. 28 Jan., 1656/7, at Richmond, Yorks., died 21 May, 1662, bur. in the Galilee of Durham Cathedral M.I.

Henry Grey of Bitchfield (a), for which place with Little Harle, Harelaw, Hepscoot, Morpeth High Church and Loansdean, he was rated in 1663 (g) (f). Entered his pedigree 24 Aug., 1666, in Dugdale's Visitation of Northumberland, was then 32 years of age (a). Sold Bitchfield in 1680. Died Durham, bur. 13 July, 1710 (h)

Troth, dau. of John Swinburn of Capheaton (a) bur. 22 Jan., 1708/9 (h)

William Grey (a)  
 Charles Grey (a)  
 named in his father's will (c)  
 Francis Grey (d)

All three dead before 24 Aug., 1666 (a)

Mary, wife of Thomas Rid-dell of Fenham (a), mar. circa Sept., 1655, with whom her father agreed to give a portion of £1,200 (i)

Margaret, wife of George Delaval (a) of Dissington. mar. circa 1661. She was buried 3 October, 1709, at St. Nicholas's, Newcastle

Catherine, wife of John Ramsay (a), bond of marriage 22 Aug., 1664, he being described as of Kingston, Middlesex; he being lay rector of that parish; afterwards of East Lilburn [bur. 1 May, 1722, at Bewick Chapel]. Elizabeth (a) to whom her father gave an interest in the tithes of Elwick in Bamburghshire (c)

Edward Grey, died young before 24 Aug., 1666 (a)  
 Margaret, died young before 24 Aug., 1666 (a)

William Grey, son and heir, was aged 7 years and 10 months, when his father, 24 Aug., 1666, registered his pedigree in Dugdale's Visitation of Northumberland (a)

Charles Grey, died young before 24 Aug., 1666 (a)

Thomas Grey, died young before 24 Aug., 1666 (a)

- (a) Dugdale, *Visitation of Northumberland*, 1666
- (b) cf Rev. John Hodgson's *Hist. Northumberland*, pt. II, vol. II, p. 439n
- (c) *New History of Northumberland*, vol. II, p. 356
- (d) Welford, p. 217 (3 Surtees Soc. publ.)
- (e) Sir A. E. Middleton's *Deeds*
- (f) Morpeth Registers
- (g) Rev. John Hodgson's *Hist. Northumberland*, pt. III, vol. I, p. 336.
- (h) St. Oswald's Durham Register
- (i) *New History of Northumberland*, IX, p. 290

The following entries cannot be applied:—  
 1664/5, January 10, Edward Gray, son of Edward Gray of Bitchfield, bapt.—Stamfordham Register.  
 1695/6, January, Edward Gray, son of Edward Gray, bapt. *Ibid.*  
 1679, March 31, George Gray of Bitchfield, [buried in] quire of Stanerton in woollen. *Ibid.*

baronet had dealings with the place, by way of mortgage, in 1743; and his grandson, Charles John Clavering, generally described as of Ridlamhope, sold the property in 1802 to Sir Charles Monk of Belsay. The latter died in 1867 when it descended to his grandson, the present Sir Arthur Edward Middleton, baronet, in whose posterity may it long rest!

## II.—THE TOWER.

By JOSEPH OSWALD and W. PARKER BREWIS, F.S.A.

In 'Border Holds,' Mr. Bates includes this tower in a list of those he attributes in a general way to the fifteenth century, in default of documentary evidence relating to their early history.

It is situated in a lonely position, accessible by field roads only, one mile south of Belsay tower. Like the latter and the tower at Halton a later dwelling-house has been built against it. At Bitchfield this is on the east side of the tower and probably dates from the close of the seventeenth century, although differing characteristics of the walling point to more than one building effort. The lower storey of the south front contains an entrance door and three windows on each side of it having architraves and other embellishments of considerable architectural merit. There is some internal woodwork of similar character. The formal garden in front of the house has south, east, and west gateways of some pretensions, the latter two being similar. The coping of the garden wall is somewhat elaborate, consisting of two ashlar courses, splayed, with roll on top. The back of the house has two very massive chimney stacks. Inside the eastern room on the ground floor (now the kitchen) there exists in the east wall a blocked-up door opening with stone head bearing the inscription R F 1622 I F. This stone probably came from an earlier building and was inserted thus for preservation. Sir Arthur Middleton, the owner, says 'against that wall a small