

The King's House at Thetford.

COMMUNICATED BY

H. F. KILLICK.

Additional note to volume xvi., p. 21.

Since writing an account of the King's House at Thetford, I have made some further efforts to trace, if possible, the devolution of the property from the Crown to the Wodehouse family, and have ascertained some facts which appear to throw considerable light on the subject. I have found in the Record Office a Royal Grant, bearing date 8th March, 1628, by which King Charles I. grants the property to Andrew Pitcarne, Esq., one of the grooms of his Majesty's bedchamber.

The grant is in State Papers (Domestic), Charles I., Warrant Books, vol. xxvi., No. 28. It bears the sign manual of King Charles, and is in Latin.

The material parts of it may be translated as follows:—

“The King to All to whom these presents shall come greeting. Know ye that We as well for and in consideration of the good, true, faithful and acceptable service heretofore done and rendered to us by our beloved servant, Andrew Pitcarne, Esq., one of the Grooms of our Bedchamber, for us our heirs and successors do give and grant to the aforesaid Andrew Pitcarne, his heirs and assigns for ever, All that Our messuage tenement

or Mansion House situate and being in Thetford in our County of Norfolk, now or late in the tenure, occupation, or custody of Dame Anne Barwick, wife of William Barwick, Knight, and of John Barwick their son, or either of them, and all and singular the orchards, appleyards, yards and gardens to the said messuage, tenement, or Mansion House adjoining or belonging, with all their appurtenances; also All and singular all manner of woods, underwoods, and trees growing and being of, in, or upon the premises, or any part thereof, and all the land, ground and soil of the same woods, underwoods and trees; also all and singular the Rents and yearly profits whatsoever reserved upon any demise or grant of the premises heretofore made. To hold the said premises to the said Andrew Pitcarne, his heirs and assigns, to the use of the said Andrew Pitcarne, his heirs and assigns for ever. To hold of us, Our heirs or successors as of our Manor of East Greenwich in our County of Kent, by fealty only, in free and common socage, and not in Chief or by Knight's service, and paying therefor yearly to us, Our heirs and successors, ten shillings of lawful money of England, to be paid yearly for ever, at the Receipt of the Exchequer at Westminster, at the Feast of St Michael the Archangel and the Annunciation of the Blessed Mary the Virgin, by equal portions."

The amount of rent to be inserted in the grant was left originally blank, but was assumed to be in pounds, the words being [] "libras," or pounds. The blank was filled up by another hand with the figure "decem" or ten, the word "libras" struck out, and the word "solidos" or shillings introduced.

At the foot of the record is the following note, which explains the alteration:—

"May it please your most Excellent Majesty. This containeth yo^r Ma^{tes} graunt unto Andrew Pitcarne, Esq.,

one of the Grooms of your Majesty's Bedchamber, and his heirs of a House in Thetford in the County of Norfolk, with a tenure in socage. The Rent to be reserved upon this Graunt is by speciall direçon from the Lord Treasurer left to bee inserted by your royal Ma^{tie}. And is done by Warrant from the Lord Treasurer.

R. Heath."

Then the indorsement is "Let it be done at Westminster on the 8th day of March."—3 Car. I. (1628).

This document makes several matters clear. It entirely disproves the story told by Blomefield and accepted by Martin of the gift of the house by King James to Sir Philip Wodehouse.

It explains the existence of the rent of 10s. mentioned in the Deed of Conveyance of 5th April, 1780, to Mr. Cole, as payable to the Manor of East Greenwich, and this makes the identity of the property quite clear as that which was bought by King James from Sir William and Lady Barwick.

It also shews that the property passed from the Crown by gift, though not to the Wodehouse family. We may assume, I think, that in this house Sir Thomas Wodehouse resided in August, 1630, when Sir John Wentworth addressed there his letter to Captain Wodehouse.

Who then was Andrew Pitcarne, and can we learn anything about him which may explain a transfer of the property from him to the Wodehouse family? He is not mentioned, as far as I can discover, in the pages of history, certainly not by Mr. Gardiner, but I have been able to learn a good deal about him from frequent references to him in the State Papers, and the story they tell seems to me so interesting, not only in relation to the King's House at Thetford, but as affording an insight into the immediate surroundings of our early Stuart Sovereigns, that I venture to give it as I find it.

Queen Elizabeth died on the 24th March, 1603, and King James shortly afterwards made a stately progress from Edinburgh to London, where he arrived on the 3rd May in that year. Many of the nobility and gentry of England met him on the way, and amongst them Sir Phillip Wodehouse and his son Thomas, who, as Blomefield tells us, was knighted by King James at Sir George Seymour's house in Northamptonshire. Many of James' servants and retainers accompanied him, and we hear the name of Pitcarne as early as June, 1603, for on the 21st of that month there was a warrant for the entertainment of Patrick Pitcarne as Groom of the Chamber, and another on the 19th October, for a yearly livery to him. Then Andrew Pitcarne was Groom of the Bedchamber in 1623, for he was so described in a grant to him in that year of an annuity of £200, on the surrender of annuities of similar amount granted to William Snelling and Elizabeth his wife.

It seems probable that Andrew was younger brother or son to Patrick, and was thus introduced into his Majesty's service, and enabled to obtain his share of the good things that were going, which, as will be seen, he was quite willing to do, and capable of doing. James I. died 27th March, 1625, but Andrew seems to have been high in favour with Charles I., for on 4th May, 1625, Attorney-General Coventry was instructed to prepare a grant to Andrew Pitcarne of the place of Master of the Hawks, and on the 16th of the same month, he was further instructed to prepare six grants of pensions of £500 each to the Grooms of the Bedchamber, Andrew Pitcarne amongst them.

The grant of the pension was completed with all speed on the 25th May, 1625, and from it I should infer that Andrew had been for some time in the service of King James, as so substantial a pension was conferred upon him.

On the 27th July, 1626, he received a grant for life of the office of Master Surveyor and Keeper of his Majesty's hawks, his fee being £30 a month, and 10s. a day for hawks' meat.

He was evidently a confidential servant, for on 9th April, 1627, Mr. Secretary Conway sends a letter to Mr. Pitcarne requesting him to present it to his Majesty for signature.

On 19th February, 1628, there was a grant of denization to Andrew Pitcarne, one of the Grooms of the Bedchamber and Master Falconer. This, which naturalized him as an Englishman, was obviously with a view to the grant to him of the King's House at Thetford, which was dated the 8th March following.

There are several references to his duties as Master Falconer.

He writes on the 2nd March, 1628, to Secretary Conway asking for a pass to bring over some hawks to England; and again on the 14th April, 1630, complaining of want of meat for the king's hawks at Theobald's; and on the 12th August as to the desirability of getting some hawks from Barbary.

On the 22nd March, 1628, Sir R. Thornton writes to Mr. Pitcarne, Master of the king's hawks, stating that Coston, who dwells in his Majesty's duck house at Kennet near Newmarket, says that the late king gave him the house for life, and he will not be removed except he be torn in pieces; and the letter suggests forcible removal.

On 23rd July, 1628, there is a warrant to pay Andrew Pitcarne, Groom of the Bedchamber, £2,000 as the King's gift. He seems, therefore, to have been richly rewarded, and now we find that he was active in other directions, for he appears to have associated himself with Sir Arthur Mainwaring in various enterprises, and in 1632 there is a petition to King Charles from Henry Gibb, that Mainwaring and Pitcarne sought to entitle his

Majesty to lands in the Bishopric of Durham, bought from the late king, and to obtain a grant to themselves, and he prays that he may be allowed quietly to enjoy them.

Then on 14th March, 1632, the pair get a grant of the unpaid revenue from Recusants in the hands of the sheriffs, etc., and in 1634 they petition the king, stating that nothing was paid for coals burnt in salt pans, which may be well rated at 12*d.* the chaldron, and they pray that 12*d.* a chaldron may be granted to them for a term of years at a rent.

In 1635 we find the same pair busy in another way, for on the 16th April, at a meeting of the Commissioners for Trade (his Majesty present), Lord Collington reported on the business of powder. His Majesty told the Commissioners that Sir Arthur Mainwaring and Mr. Pitcarne will serve powder within half a year at 8*d.* per lb. Other offers appear to have been available at 7*d.* per lb., but on June 6th they laid before the Council proposals as to the manufacture of gunpowder at 8*d.* per lb., stating that they could supply 240 lasts yearly.

By grant dated 28th March, 1636, Sir A. Mainwaring and Pitcarne received in reversion the lucrative office of Clerk of the Crown in Chancery.

In the same year Pitcarne petitions the king, pointing out overcharges made on the re-sale of surplus gunpowder bought from the king's magazines, and prays for a grant to him of a monopoly of the sale of surplus powder.

Then, lastly, there is a petition on 4th October, 1637, to the king from George Kirke and Andrew Pitcarne, setting forth frauds on the revenue by goldsmiths, which they had discovered and disclosed, and requesting reward. On this there is a minute that his Majesty grants *these his ancient servants*, for their pains in discovering the frauds of goldsmiths, seven-twelfths of the profits arising to the Crown from the discovery.

There is nothing to connect Pitcarne, personally, with Thetford. He would know and probably visit it as Grand Falconer. He was a trusted and possibly a faithful servant, but seems to have formed one of the many greedy and rapacious officials who followed the Stuarts to the south. His acquisition of the king's house at Thetford cannot have been for occupation, and he probably disposed of it without delay. That Sir Thomas Wodehouse was the purchaser seems reasonable and probable, and thus the ownership of the property by his family is accounted for.

The origin of the rent-charge of 10s. being thus made clear, it may be that the small rent of 5*d.*, payable to the Manor of Thetford, was reserved on a grant of the property by the Crown at some earlier date, which is consistent with the fact that the site may have been that of the capital messuage mentioned in the inquisition on the death of John, Earl Warrenne (*Blomfield*, p. 308).