

NOTES ON CORRESPONDENCE RELATING TO HIGH WYCOMBE.

[By E. LIONEL REYNOLDS.]

Amongst some old documents in my possession relating to the Borough of Chepping Wycombe are three letters which I think may be of interest and worthy of record.

The first two letters were addressed to John, Earl of Shelburne, by his agent at High Wycombe, and the third letter to his son William, Earl of Shelburne, first Marquess of Lansdowne.

John, Earl of Shelburne, succeeded to the Loakes Estate at High Wycombe on the death of his maternal uncle in 1751, and the estate remained in his family until the year 1798, when his son disposed of it (except the advowson of the Vicarage) to Robert, first Lord Carrington, who demolished the Manor House and erected the present building (now Wycombe Abbey School) on the site.

The following extract from the first letter is of interest, as it gives an amusing account of a "Hay Harvest Home" entertainment provided for the Mayor, Aldermen, and Burgesses of the Ancient Borough by the Earl of Shelburne's Agent, and, judging from numerous entries in the Corporation Rolls of about the same date which are also in my possession, I feel satisfied that the Mayor and Aldermen at any rate did ample justice to the refreshments provided:—

MY LORD.

.
Old Mr. HARRISES House with two Gardens and the Walnut Tree Orchard is sold to one Halie for

220 I told Mr. Peck of your Lordships desire for the orchard and wished him to buy it, the meadow by St Mary Street is soon to be sold I hope he won't let that go to another.



TOWN-HALL, HIGH WYCOMBE

The Gray mare have deceived our knowing ones, but as she took the Quakers horse last night, hope she'll bring a fole next season the young stone colt is the prettyst I ever saw.

I am charmed with the pretty behaviour of Mrs. Pratt and the Miss Places, they are extremely civil to Mrs Auld and me they are in good health and I think that they like their situation.

Old Cleek the Burgess is dead.

As it have been a custom with our Esqr the present Mayor and Jo^s Shrimpton (1) to have people to Drink strong Beer and smoke Tobacco and play at chuck at Hay Harvest Home I had several hints given me, on which I had the stable by the wheel meadow clean'd out Boards all round for Seats, and Boards for the gouty peopl's feet to rest upon and Boards in the middle for a Table and Treated the Mayor and most of the Aldermen and Burgesses &c. with 3 Dozen of Strong Beer as good they said, as ever they drank, some mild Beer, half a Grofs of Pips, and 3/4 of a pound of Tobacco, all highly pleas'd with the entertainment.

Last Monday I was told that Taylor us'd to sell the Garden Stuff to Lovel's Widow, and she sold them to the Towns people, I have been with Lovel, she owns it, and told me that she thought Taylor had been on the same footing with her husband now. I told her that in respect to her Husband I sh'd overlook this fault, but if ever she brought any thing out of your Lordship's garden, knowing it to be stole, I sh'd send her to Ailsbury. Mrs Auld's duty attend your Lordship and I am my Lord

Your Lordships Dutiful and obt
humble Servt

SAM^L AULD.

July 30th, 1756.

Mrs Pratt and Miss Places compliments attend your Lordship, they are all well and I hope soon

(1) Mayor of Wycombe 1740, 1753, 1763, and 1775.

to see your Lp: at Loaks. I dont hear one word of Lady Shelburne's coming to Loaks.

I have made a pretty watring place for yr Lordships Horses and Farmer woosters pretty near the corner house in Eldridgs meadow."

The following extract from another letter refers to the building of the Guildhall, which was erected at the expense of John Earl of Shelburne in 1757 on the site of an old timbered building erected in 1604.

The accompanying illustration showing the Guildhall is from an old water-colour drawing in the possession of the writer's mother.

"MY LORD,

I hope your Lordship had a pleasant journey and found everything at Bowood answerable to your Lordships expectation.

The Roof of the Market House is up and part of the Cornish, which looks very pretty and adds beauty to the whole structure, in short everyone is charmed with it, even Jos Shrimpton is in raptures, who till now, never spoke one pleasing word about it. to-day he's mad to have the Roof particularly the East and North Fronts cover'd with glaz'd Tiles, and told me that Glaz'd Tiles were to be sold at Gerrards-Cross for little more than the common price for Plain. I immediately sent and had one of the Tiles brought to me, the maker has non at present of that sort, neither is he desirous of making any more, but if he shou'd will have 32^s p thousand which is double the price of plain Tiles. there is no more Glaz'd then what appears in sight, which is about 3 or 4 Inchs neither are they so well Glaz'd as the Plain Tiles and the maker says it is not possible to do them better. Dormer⁽²⁾ tells me that there must be some new Tiles bought if so, and that handsome plain Glaz'd Tiles could be bought at little more than the coomon plain probably it may induce your Lordship to have them. however Mr. Keen⁽³⁾ is

(2) A Bricklayer.

(3) Probably the architect.

expected here to day and to morrow and shall
 heare what he says about it

Since your Lordship went from Loaks we have
 been employ'd in weeding the quick set, the
 kitchen Garden Plowing the antelope⁽⁴⁾ meadow
 and are now began to geather apples, to morrow
 I purpose to begin on the walk where the fence
 is to be plac'd under the wood.

We have no news here about the Fleet, in short
 time I think we may expect to hear where they
 are gon.

My good Lady Shelburne was so kind to give
 me an invitation to Dine with Her Ladship every
 day, where I have the hon^r to drink your Lord-
 ship's health.

The pretty Miss Hort continues her daily employ
 of feeding the Colts and swans, this day without
 the knowledge of Miss I pinioned a wing of each
 of the young ones. All here is well and may
 pleasure and happiness attend your Lordship on
 your journey and a quick return is the prayer of
 your Lordships Dutiful, permit me to say loving

SAMUEL AULD.

High Wycombe.

4 oct^r 1757.

The third letter refers to the erection of the hand-
 some iron gates at the entrance of the Manor House
 in St. Mary Street which were in 1770⁽⁵⁾ removed to
 the south entrance of the Parish Church, where they
 now stand. Reference is also made to a visit by
 "Capability" Brown, the celebrated landscape gar-
 dener, who from a lowly position rose to be head
 gardener at Stowe, and subsequently practised as an
 architect:—

MY LORD.

Boyce the man sent here some months past by
 Mr Ryeves, of whom I told your Lordship, came

(4) The Antelope Inn adjoined "The Red Lion" in the High
 Street, and was subsequently converted into the Royal Military
 College.

(5) RECORDS OF BUCKS, Vol. VII., p. 270.



IRON GATES. Now at S. Approach to Church

here last Saturday and stayed till Wednesday. He and old Field have been over the Lands and enquired of some of the neighbours the value of the woods, meadows, and arable.

I did not see him. I hope your Lordship either has or will get an exact copy of Mrs. Arsdells Surrender to Henry Earl of Shelburne, for by that they must abide. They are grasping at more than what in my opinion is in the copy of the Court Roll that I gave to your Lordship.

The Tall handsome Elm that grew a little way of Loaks, was Blown down last Sunday night (I dont mean the great Elm in the Courtyard) as also 6 Beeches in Rye field wood which I shall sell and place to the acct of wood cut before of the same Land, also one Beech in Lowground wood, 2 Do in Burlings, 1 Do in Fennels and a young Elm almost blown down which I have set upright.

The Iron Gates is up and much esteem'd by our neighbours as being a great ornament to the Town. I wish your Lordship wd make them a visit. I have regulated the Ground near the Gates. The rest I leave to Mr Brown.

When he come's I shall accommodate him according to your Lordship's direction to me to Day. I hope to profit by him. Jack Clark (6) was Buried last Sunday.

I am, my Lord

Your Lordships most obt & very

Humble Serv^t

SAM^L AULD.

High Wycombe

Octo^r 8th 1762.

(6) Mayor of Wycombe 1738 and 1747.