

## THE SHARDELOES MUNIMENTS

## INTRODUCTORY NOTE

By the generous courtesy of Capt. T. Tyrwhitt-Drake, the editor has been familiar with the Shardeletes papers for the last eight years or more, and during the second half of that time they have been wholly in his custody. Some short and desultory notes from them have appeared in the *Records* from time to time; but some of the more important matters of local topographical interest, which have not been published before, seem to deserve appearance in these pages.

The papers altogether may weigh nearly half a ton, but many relate to properties outside Bucks, and from them enough have been selected and annotated to form the basis of a volume which may one day be published, if circumstances ever become more favourable for printing.

Early charters and manorial rolls of the Bucks estates prior to the 18th century are lacking; the latest reference to three trunks full of them is found about 1720, when they were deposited in the Temple Church.

It is proposed, by the kind permission of Captain Tyrwhitt-Drake, to print here three or four papers, of which the first, dealing with the Tothill family, is given below; it will be followed with others upon Weedon Hill Manor (founded on a very fine rental of early 17th century); upon the history of the acquisition of the Borough, and upon the rectory and almshouses.

Even if some of these are not final and complete, they will be found to correct published errors in some cases and to add to the knowledge of anyone who wishes to deal with the history of Amersham in future.

## THE TOTHILL FAMILY OF SHARDELOES

Our county historians have not been very fortunate in their references in the Tothill family; Lysons (1806) begins with William, and calls him an eminent lawyer in Queen Elizabeth's time; Lipscomb mentions that he was of the Six Clerks in Chancery,<sup>1</sup> Neither mentions his father Richard, and it was left to the *Victoria County History* to tell us that Richard had bought Mantells in Little Missenden, and Wedon Hill in Amersham parish in 1575; and even that valuable work does not mention that he was by no means unknown to fame; he was a printer who held a patent for "all duly authorized books on common law," and in 1557 he issued the collection called *Tottel's Miscellianes*, whilst in the next year (N.S.) he produced the first issue of Tusser's *Hundreth good Pointes of Husbandrie*, the title-page showing that it was "imprinted at London in Flete Strete, within Temple barre, at the sygne of the Hand and Starre, by Richard Totell, the third day of February. An. 1557." No doubt this printing was very remunerative, because when he died in 1593 he left considerable property in Bucks and Devon, in addition to "one messuage formerly divided into two, situated in Fleet Street," which he had made over to his son William in 1592.<sup>2</sup> In 1594, the patent for law books, which Richard had held for life since 1559, was granted to Charles Yetswiert, who also succeeded to the Hand and Star; but the business carried on there passed in 1598 to John Jaggard,<sup>3</sup> the uncle of that Isaac, whose name appears, with that of Ed. Blount, on the most famous of Folios, for which wise men gave a guinea in 1623. John himself printed the second edition of Bacon's *Essaies*

1 Unluckily he also adds that he had the "extraordinary number of 33 children;" probably the real number was 3, but having been duplicated somehow the absurdity has been often repeated: even the Rev. W. Hastings Kelke, in *Records*, vol. II, p. 339, accepted that and other statements without hesitation.

2 H. R. Plomer: *Abstracts from the wills of English printers*, 1903, p. 34; actually it is an *inquisitio post mortem*, not a will.

3 Arber's *Registers of the Stationers' Company*, vol. II, p. 16.

in 1606, whilst "dwelling in Fleete Streete at the hand and Starre neere Temple barre," and the fourth in 1613. It is thought that he died before his brother William, Isaac's father, for his widow entered a book at Stationer's Hall in January, 1625.<sup>4</sup>

A paper at Shardeloes undated, but belonging to the time of Queen Anne, refers to the Fleet Street property then belonging to the Drakes; it evidently adjoined the Hand and Star:—

The Young Divell Tavern and Richard's Coffee-house were formerly one house, and belonged in Q. Elizabeth's time to Mr. Tothill, but in that Raigne the Tavern was sold away by Mr. Tothill.<sup>5</sup>

There is a very confused book relating to the estate of William Tothill in the writing of Francis Drake, his son-in-law; this has a note of the tenants in Fleet Street at Michaelmas 1624, and amongst them is Mrs. Jaggarde, whose rent was £10 p.a. This looks very like the widow of John Jaggard, but her name does not recur in the book.

William Tothill, son and heir of Richard, was born in 1557 and added to the wealth he had inherited by professing the law rather than printing it; he became one of the Six Clerks in Chancery, a very remunerative office, their duty being "to receive and file all bills, answers, replications, and other records in causes on the equity side of the Court of Chancery . . . . to certify to the Court the state of the proceedings in the various causes. . . . In addition they made out . . . . Patents for Ambassadors, Sheriff's Patents, &c."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> *Dictionary of Printers and Booksellers*, by Dr. R. B. McKerrow, 1910, p. 152.

<sup>5</sup> The Young Devil Tavern earned a place in history as the meeting place of the Society of Antiquaries when revived by Humphrey Wanley, Peter le Neve, and their friends. The draft minutes of meetings held at the Tavern are in Harleian MS., 7055, and have often been printed;—see *Letters of Eminent Literary Men*, 1843, p. 101; they were re-produced in facsimile in *Proceedings of the Soc. of Antiq.*, 1916, XXIX, p. 137.

Richard's Tavern was so called from Richard Tower, who was tenant in 1680 according to Timbs, *Curiosities of London*, p. 264.

<sup>6</sup> S. R. Scargill Bird's *Guide to Documents in P.R.O.*, 1908, p. 8.

One of Mr. Tothill's colleagues in office was William Perryman, who had married his sister Anne; in the executor's book mentioned above it is shown that Mr. Perryman owed his brother-in-law £100 at the time William Tothill died.

While this paper was about to be printed some important matter became public regarding William Tothill. Alan Keen, Ltd., dealers in old MSS., are offering 48 volumes for sale which came from Shardeloes more than twenty years ago, in the days of the last owner. An elaborate brochure describing these volumes states that some are commonplace books, made up of transcriptions from various sources, and these are said to have been written by Wm. Tothill for no less a person than Francis Bacon; indeed, on p. 7 Tothill is called Bacon's "clerk and servant." We have seen that Wm. Tothill inherited very considerable property from his father, including Weedon Hill Manor; he was admitted to the Middle Temple in 1576, when Bacon was only 15, he long held the extremely lucrative position of one of the Six Clerks in Chancery; he was able to purchase Shardeloes in 1595; unless therefore when he was very young it is difficult to see when he can have undertaken this work of drudgery. On p. 13 of the brochure a so-called "pedigree of the owners" is given as follows:—

- (1) Wm. Tothill, died 1627.
- (2) Richd. Drake, „ 1603.
- (3) Joan Drake, „ 1625.

William Tothill married Catherine, daughter of Sir John Denham, one of the barons of the Exchequer, and was therefore brother-in-law of the poet chiefly remembered for *Coopers Hill*. Whether the number of their children was 3 or 33, it is certain that when William died in 1626 he left no son and only two daughters; Catherine, of whom he says in his will "having bin from hir infancy taken with a palsy, and being thereby very weake & in-

ferme of body, unfitt to be trobled with the managing of any estate, and unfitt also for marriadge, whereby to have hope of any issue of her body;"—and Joan, of whom a good deal is about to be said. As so often happens, Catherine the invalid went on living for quite a normal time, and when her nephew Sir William Drake went abroad during the Interregnum he granted a lease of Shardeloes on very favourable terms to his steward James Perrott; this was 1 Nov. 1649 and obliged Perrott to live in the house and provide "good, wholesome, and sufficient dyett for three persons," one of whom was Miss Katherine Tohill; the rent was to be increased if she "shall happen to depart this life." Lipscomb adds to his absurdities by making Catherine marry twice and have six children!<sup>8</sup>

As to Joan, whose marriage established the Drakes at Shardeloes, we learn from a pamphlet to be quoted shortly that she did not choose her husband herself, and as the widow in *Hudibras* asks:

What did ever heiress yet,

By being born to lordships, get?

The husband chosen for her was Francis Drake, son of Richard, who was of the family living at Ash in Devon, and himself an equerry to Queen Elizabeth; he was able to acquire the manor of Esher, Surrey, where an elaborate mural monument which bears his kneeling effigy, is in the church.<sup>9</sup> The son Francis was a "gentleman pensioner, which at that period formed a distinguished branch of the Royal household." He was admitted a member of the Inner Temple in 1597, and was called a "worthy, fine gentleman of good birth, parts, and fortunes;" the account he kept as executor of Wm. Tohill shows that he was a complete muddler, largely concerning himself with counting and re-counting bags of gold, and helping himself from that convenient supply. Before being censorious however we must remember that he had to endure a very great deal from his unfortunate wife, whose

<sup>8</sup> Vol. III, p. 154, footnote.

<sup>9</sup> *Some account of Rd. Drake of Esher Place*, by Sir Wm. R. Drake, 1879.

strange history (as being the last of the Tothills), must be told more fully than in Lipscomb's version.

There is quite a small library of pamphlets about her case, which to-day would be called a psychopathic one of some interest. One of them has a longish title beginning *Trodden Down Strength*;<sup>10</sup> she is called "the daughter of that worthy Gentleman William Totle Esquire, his only Heire apparent, being likely to have enjoyed all his fortunes, which were very great." This is not quite correct, as we have seen that she had a sister Catherine, still the nameless "relater" saw a very great deal of her and describes her well:

She was of a low, well compacted stature, of a lively browne complexion, having a full, nimble, quick, sparrow-hawke eye, of a naturall joviall constitution, accidentally melancholy, full of love, curteisie, mercy and meekenesse, affable in conversation, with a deep and nimble, quick, pleasant, present wit, tender-hearted, free and bountifull, in nothing covetous but of grace.

Later on we are told that

God's providence and her parents' pleasure appointed unto her a Match, but such a one (though he was a worthy fine Gentleman of good birth, parts and fortunes), yet whom at first shee could not affect, so as she was married against her will (a great over-sight in parents) which first bred in her the foundation of those stormes and tempests which in time were in danger to have overthrown her. Not long after her marriage she was brought to bed of a daughter, a dear daughter unto her, because in that delivery being much wronged by her Midwiffe shee was ever after troubled with fumes and scurvie vapors mounting up into her head, which bred in her for the most part a continuall head-ach

<sup>10</sup> Printed for Stephen Pillkington in 1647; it was reprinted, apparently verbatim, in another pamphlet called *The Firebrand taken out of the Fire, or the Wonderfull History, Case, and Cure of Mrs. Drake, sometime the wife of Francis Drake, &c.* This was printed by Tho. Mathewes in 1654.

like unto a megrum, together with somewhat like unto a fire continually burning at her stomack, which no physick could remove.

One of the results of this was that "she swallowed down many great pins, so to have dispatch't herselfe, all which by God's mercy without hurting passed through her." At another time she ate forty oranges, but "these proved excellent medicine unto her."

The unfortunate lady then persuaded herself that she was eternally damned, having committed "the sin against the Holy Ghost"; and the first of a succession of divines was called in to attempt a rescue. This was the Rev. John Dod, of Canons Ashby, afterwards a considerable theological writer and usually styled "The Decalogist,"<sup>11</sup> his position was no sinecure, for

once shee being a bed and he at prayer, she, to make him leave off, took a bed-staffe and threatened to knock him on the head, but did not.

It is not to be wondered that Mr. Dod varied his ministrations by returning home each alternate month. The next to tackle her case was Dr. James Usher, the famous chronologist and afterwards Primate of Ireland; and succeeding him came "Mr. John Forbs, Minister at Middleborrow for the Merchants." It so happened that the cure of Esher, which belonged to Mr. Drake, was a donative, which meant that no formal presentation or induction by the ordinary was necessary, and there was then at Cambridge Mr. Hooker, "a great scholar, an acute Disputant, a strong learned, a wise modest man, every way rarely qualified;" he was "a nonconformitant in judgement," and consequently anxious to escape the oaths of a presentation. He therefore accepted the living being

<sup>11</sup> For a long account of him see Baker's *History of Northants*, 1822, vol. I, p. 388.

persuaded by Mr. Dod to accept of that poore living of 40<sup>l</sup> per annum, Mr. Drake being a worthy wel-beloved Gentleman, and able to procure his liberty and retaine him still in the same. This worthy man accepted of the place, having withall his dyet and lodging at Esher, Mr. Drake's house.

Eventually Mr. Hooker married Mrs. Drake's "Waiting-woman," and was "cal'd to be Lecturer at Chemsford in Essex," finally going to New England.

Still another good minister was Mr. Wetherell, of "Waltham on Thames," "whom she went constantly to heare."

Her next fancy was that she was going to die, and resolved that this should be at her Father's house, and "lie with her kindred and friends at Ammersum":

So shee being resolute, the next day with two of her men shee departed for her Father's House, where being arrived, they wondering that she came so without her Husband, shee in plaine termes told them that shee alwayes had resolved to die at Shardlois.

After arrival her views entirely changed, she first talked without pause day and night for days on end "whereby her spirits were both much spent and tyred out." A few days later

about eight of the clock in the morning we were strangely enterrupted by a strange and uncouth outcry which proceeded from her, I am assured the like was never heard or read of before.

The poor lady had turned round entirely and was now as convinced of her salvation as she had been previously of her damnation. After a few days in this state she "caused herself to be dressed from top to toe all in white," that they might see how "she would be laid in the grave." A tablet to her memory in the Drake Chapel at Amersham Church alludes lightly to her sufferings from "Sathan's malice," and calls her "the pattern of all virtues of a Gracious Woman and Wife." She died on 18 April, 1625.

One other statement frequently repeated both before and since Lipscomb (but not by him) is that Queen Elizabeth visited Mr. Tothill at Shardeloes; the first printed appearance of this legend is in Britton and Brayley,<sup>12</sup> where it is said:

from some memorandums in the possession of Mr. Drake it appears that the old manor house was the occasional residence of Queen Elizabeth.

Lysons says,<sup>13</sup> more moderately, that:

William Tothill esq. an eminent lawyer in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, had the honour of entertaining her Majesty at Shardeloes in one of her progresses.

If we turn to Nichols's *Progresses of Queen Elizabeth* we find no record of such a visit,<sup>14</sup> though she was at Chenies in 1570 and 1576 (years before 1595 when Wm. Tothill acquired Shardeloes).

The germ of this story clearly lies in the "memorandums" to which Britton and Brayley refer, and these may possibly be a very lengthy account left by the Rev. B. Robertshaw, the rector of Amersham 1728-1744, in which he put down all that he knew about the Drakes and Shardeloes. He was an admirable rector and excellent man in every way, but no antiquary or historian, what he has to say on this subject is as follows:—

Queen Elizabeth in one of her progresses (a thing usual in that age) staid with him [Wm. Tothill] at Shardeloes some time, as I have been told, & I y<sup>e</sup> rather believe it because I myself remember to have seen formerly several old Doors belonging to that house, on one of which was painted in great white letters: The Presence Room, on another y<sup>e</sup> Royal bedchamber, The Guard Room, &c. I believe y<sup>e</sup> Doors may be now all destroy'd, but they were as I remember little old Doors.

<sup>12</sup> *Beauties of England and Wales*, 1801, vol. I, p. 361.

<sup>13</sup> *Magna Britannia*, 1806, p. 496.

<sup>14</sup> In the edition of 1823, vol. III, p. 660, it is indeed mentioned, but only with Lysons as the authority; it is not part of the original text. Lysons is also quoted by E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, 1923, vol. IV, p. 81.

The complete rebuilding of the house since Mr. Robertshaw's day would have effectually removed all such evidence, which is certainly important, but there is a possible explanation of a Royal visit which was yet not Queen Elizabeth's. In the muddled account book of Wm. Tothill's estate already quoted is a note of some jewellery made on or about 6 Decr. 1626; one item reads:

'One great ring with diamondes given by the Queen.'

Since Elizabeth had then been dead over 23 years it is unlikely that she would have been called simply "the Queen"; from 1603 to 1619 Anne of Denmark, consort of James I, was Queen, and it is not at all impossible that it was she who had stayed at Shardeles and bestowed on her host the great ring with diamonds,<sup>15</sup> particularly as Henrietta Maria had only been Queen for a year when Mr. Tothill died.

The Rev. W. Hastings Kelke, in the article quoted above, added something to the legend by saying that "Queen Elizabeth is said to have presented to Wm. Tothill the portraits of herself and her Chancellor, Sir Christopher Hatton, still remaining here." Although the two portraits still exist, we can only be certain that the Hatton portrait was in the old house. Upon the death of Mountagu Drake in 1698 an extremely full inventory of the contents of the house was made, and some of the pictures are named; thus in the Great Hall there were "3 large pictures of Sr. Francis Drake, Lord Chancellor Hatton, & Sr. Walter Rawley." The first two of these can be recognized, no other portraits are named (unless we count "1 large picture of St. John Baptist head"), and it is most improbable that so conspicuous a picture as the Queen Elizabeth would have been ignored if it had been in the house at the time. The matter is admittedly of little importance, but it is thought that the few new facts here collected deserve to be printed in the hope that they may discourage future topographers from relying on a legend.

<sup>15</sup> William Hakewill, the very able lawyer who revived the dormant boroughs of Amersham, Wendover, and Great Marlow, and himself sat for Amersham, was solicitor general to Queen Anne (of Denmark), and certainly a friend of Wm. Tothill.