

From the *Transactions* of the  
Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society

## **Brimpsfield Castle and Its Owners**

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1895-97, Vol. 20, 233-240

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## BRIMPSFIELD CASTLE AND ITS OWNERS.

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THE manor of Brimpsfield, which at the time of the Survey, 1086, included Cranham, belonged in the time of Edward the Confessor to Duns, a Saxon thane, who held it of Earl Harold, the last Saxon king. It was taxed at nine hides, or about 2,000 acres. It was farmed with fifteen ploughs, three of which were used for the lord's land. There was a parish priest, and therefore also, no doubt, a parish church, and two mills on the Froome, in the Cranham valley. It yielded £12 to the King. It was held in 1086 by Osbern Giffard, whom Mr. Ellis believes to have been a son of Walter Giffard, lord of Longueville, who fought at Hastings and was made Earl of Buckinghamshire by the Conqueror.<sup>1</sup> Osbern Giffard also held the manors of Stoke Giffard and Rockhampton, and a hide in Oldbury on the hill. The Benedictine monks of St. Stephen's Abbey, Fontenay, Normandy, in 1086 held land given to them by him at Middleton, and either he or one of his successors gave them land at Brimpsfield, on which they constructed a priory or cell. The parish church became attached to this priory, and also the advowson of the living. The sobriquet of "Giffard," which seems to have been given first to Walter de Longueville, meant in old Norman French a person with fat cheeks and double chin, and hence a cook, because that employment has a tendency to develop such exaggerations of the human features. The pedigree of the Brimpsfield Giffards is made very perplexing by the fact that at least four Helias Giffards held the manor in succession. Osbern was dead in 1096, as

<sup>1</sup> *Trans. B. and G.A.S.*, vol. iv., p. 159.

Helias Giffard I. in that year gave part of his wood, called Buckholt, to St. Peter's Abbey, Gloucester, and William II. confirmed the gift.<sup>1</sup> In 1121 Helyas Giffard, who is believed to be the same Helyas, his wife Ala and son Helias gave Buckholt to the same monastery.<sup>2</sup>

Helias Giffard II., who married Bertha, sister of Walter de Clifford and acquired with her great possessions, gave to St. Peter's the church of St. Mary, Boyton, and the church of St. George, Orcheston, in Wilts, and the chapel of St. Andrew, Winterbourne, in Dorset.<sup>3</sup>

He was present at the Chapter House of St. Peter's Abbey when the Archbishop of York and the Abbot of Gloucester on the 15th December, 1157, settled a long-standing dispute between them relating to Standish and other manors.<sup>4</sup>

About the year 1165, when his wife Bertha was yet alive, he gave Cranham to the abbey and entered the monastery as a monk.<sup>5</sup>

Helias Giffard III., son of Helias and Bertha, paid a fine on taking possession of the manor in 1165-6.<sup>6</sup>

In 1165, with the consent of his mother, he gave Abbot Hammeline eight *libratae* of land in Ullingswick, Herefordshire, in exchange for Cranham.<sup>7</sup> Later on the monks of St. Peter's gave up all claim to the churches of Orcheston and Winterbourne on his confirming their right in Boyton church.<sup>8</sup> In 1180 he made a grant of wood, out of Buckholt, to the brethren of St. Sepulchre's Leper Hospital at Gloucester. He died in 1190, leaving his son Thomas or his grandson Helias his heir. His wife was called Maud.

In 1201-2 Helias Giffard IV. was a minor in the custody of William, Earl Marshal. He was the son of Thomas and the grandson of Helias Giffard III.

In 1210 he was with King John in Ireland.

<sup>1</sup> *Hist. et Cart. Monast. S. Petri Gloucestriae*, vol. I., pp. 63, 62.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*, I., 124.    <sup>3</sup> *Id.*, I., 206.    <sup>4</sup> *Id.*, I., 106.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*, I., 244; I., 69; I., 117.

<sup>6</sup> *Rot. Pip.* 5 *Hen.* 2.    <sup>7</sup> *Id.*, I., 117.    <sup>8</sup> *Id.*, 208.

In 1214 the Barons under Robert FitzWalter rose in rebellion against John, and compelled him in the following year to sign the Great Charter at Runnymede. Helias sided with the Barons and took up arms with them.

In 1216 he and his brother Osbert were excommunicated by the Pope for rebellion against John, and imprisoned. Brimpsfield Castle was seized by the King, and all the lands of Helias in Wilts, Northants, and Gloucestershire were granted to Bartholomew Peche.

In 1216 John died at Newark, and Helias, giving his allegiance to the young king Henry III., who was crowned at Gloucester in that year, his lands were restored to him.

In 1221 the Abbot of Gloucester complained that Helias Giffard had erected a scaffold and was hanging his own men at Brimpsfield to the detriment of the Abbot.

In 1225-29 Helias confirmed a grant by his brother Osbert to the Hospital of St. Bartholomew, Gloucester, of land called Hullitemed, in Brimpsfield, for the health of his soul and the health of the souls of his three wives, Isabella, Alice, and Ysend.<sup>1</sup>

About 1230 he granted to his kinsman, Nicholas Caleway, land called Grofruge, in Brimpsfield, and Caleway gave it to St. Bartholomew's.<sup>2</sup> Helias died in 1248-9, leaving his son John his heir.

John Giffard, the next lord of Brimpsfield, is described by the chronicler Rishanger as a soldier of great courage and no less integrity. The history of Brimpsfield Castle becomes now very interesting, locally and nationally. It was probably built soon after the Conquest on the site of a Saxon fortress. It is said to have had a massive central tower and four smaller towers at the angles. All that remains to mark its site is a deep mound with outer bank, surrounding an area of several acres.

During the reign of Henry III. the Welsh, under their brave princes Llewelyn ap Jorwerth and Llewelyn ap Griffith,

<sup>1</sup> *Calendar of Records of Corporation of Gloucester*, p. 120.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*, p. 155.

made frequent attempts to throw off their allegiance to the English Crown and to regain their liberty. Henry III. made several expeditions into Wales with varying success. John Giffard took part in these in 1246-7-8.

In 1261 he was made Governor of St. Briavel's Castle, and Warden of the Forest of Dean, at that time a post of great danger and responsibility on the Welsh marches.

In 1263 Simon de Montfort, the great patriot Earl of Leicester, rose at the head of the barons to drive the hated foreigners, who filled well-nigh every office, from the realm; John Giffard and the Earl of Gloucester joined de Montfort, and these three became the leading spirits of the movement. Robert of Gloucester, a monk of St. Peter's Abbey, is the principal authority for this period of English history, and his chronicle, from its many references to Gloucester and the neighbourhood, is exceedingly interesting to the local historian. It is evident that he was an eye-witness of the stirring events which he describes as taking place in the years 1263-4-5. Henry III. had made a French knight, Sir Maci de Basile, Sheriff of Gloucestershire and Constable of Gloucester Castle, whilst the barons had given the shrievalty to Sir William Traci, a Gloucestershire knight. On Sir William attempting to hold his court, Sir Maci came down upon him with an armed force, dragged him through the mire and imprisoned him in the Castle. Whereupon Sir Roger de Clifford and his kinsman Sir John Giffard besieged and took Gloucester Castle, and led Sir Maci a prisoner into the Welsh Marches. Then Sir John raided Sir Maci's manor of Sherston, and drove all the live stock to Brimpsfield Castle. Sir Roger de Clifford, returning to the royal party, gave Gloucester Castle into their hands, and there was constant warfare between Gloucester and Brimpsfield. The Constable of Gloucester held a hundred court at Quedgeley and summoned Sir John as a rebel before him. Sir John came with an armed force, and slew some and dispersed the rest of the Constable's men.

In February, 1262-3, Sir John Giffard and Sir John de

Balun came to the gates of Gloucester, riding on woolpacks and covered with Welsh mantles as if they were merchants, but when they were admitted, threw aside their cloaks, leaped from their horses, and stood before the astonished porters armed from head to foot. The porters threw down their keys in alarm and fled, and the knights admitted Sir Simon de Montfort, Sir Henry his son, and many more. So the city was taken, but the castle remained in the hands of the King's party. Then came Prince Edward on Ash-Wednesday and assailed the west gate, but was driven back. Turning into the castle mead and seeing one of the Abbot's vessels sailing to Tewkesbury, he seized it and crossed in it to the castle. There were daily contests between the two forces till the Bishop of Worcester and the Abbot of Gloucester mediated between them and obtained a truce. The barons' party withdrew from Gloucester on condition that Prince Edward should do no injury to the burgesses; but as soon as his foes were gone he broke the truce, imprisoned the principal citizens, and hanged the unfortunate porters who admitted Giffard and de Balun. Then soon after was fought the battle of Lewes, in which Sir John Giffard was taken prisoner at the first onset; but the barons won the day, and the King and the Prince were captured. Those who escaped took refuge in Bristol Castle.

A quarrel between Sir Simon de Montfort on the one side and the Earl of Gloucester and Sir John Giffard on the other arose concerning the ransom of Richard, King of the Romans and other prisoners taken at Lewes, and the latter joined the King's party.

After Easter Sir Simon de Montfort, accompanied by his prisoners, Henry III. and Prince Edward, marching to Hereford, remained several days at Gloucester. The Earl of Gloucester encamped in the forest which then extended from Iron Acton to the suburbs of Gloucester, whilst Sir John Giffard kindled a fire on a hill called Erdland, probably High Broadridge,—where the single ash-tree, like a mighty ship in full sail, now forms such a striking landmark,—to

assure the Prince that friends were nigh at hand if he could effect his escape. From thence Montfort marched to Hereford, where Prince Edward succeeded in eluding his captors and joining De Clare and Giffard. Gloucester was taken, and all the bridges and shipping destroyed with a view to preventing Montfort from crossing the Severn. On Sunday, the 2nd of August, however, he crossed below Worcester, and on the following Tuesday the Battle of Evesham, so fatal to the cause of English liberty, was fought, and was won by the Prince and his supporters. De Montfort was slain and hundreds of his allies perished with him. The castle of Brimpsfield had been held by way of security for the fidelity of Giffard to the King, but it was now restored to him and he was pardoned for his rebellion.

But Sir John, brave as he was in the tented field, was as yet a bachelor. He was not to remain so long. In 1270 Maud Longespee, widow of the son of the Earl of Salisbury, made complaint to the King that Sir John Giffard had carried her off by force from her manor of Kaneford and was detaining her at his castle of Brimpsfield. Giffard, nothing daunted, pleaded that the lady was willing though coy, and the King forgave him on condition that he paid her 300 marks for marrying without royal consent. Maud made the best of the situation and they lived happily together till her death. Sir John married twice again—Alice Maltravers, and then in 1285 Margaret Neville, by whom he had a son, John Giffard, who succeeded him.

In 1282 he took part in the expedition against Llewellyn, Prince of Wales. In 1283 Sir John founded a cell or college at Oxford—Gloucester Hall, now Worcester College—as a residence for the young Benedictine students from Gloucester, Winchcombe, Malmesbury, and other abbeys and priories of that order. This, he said, he did for the health of his soul and for the health of his wife's soul, Maud Longespee.<sup>1</sup>

In 1285 Giffard bought the manor of Side from Simon Caleway, his kinsman, and settled it on his third wife,

<sup>1</sup> *Hist. et Cart.*, vol. I., p. 32.

Margaret Neville. He was summoned to Parliament as a Baron of the Realm from 1295 to 1298, in which latter year he died a peaceful death at his manor of Boyton, in Wilts, and was buried at the Abbey Church of Malmesbury, leaving his son John, a boy of thirteen, in ward.

John Giffard II., with his brother Edmund, visited the dying Abbot of Gloucester, John Gamages, in 1306, just as he, John Giffard, came of age.<sup>1</sup>

In 1316 he granted the privilege of free pasture in Buckholt to St. Peter's Abbey.

He sided with Thomas, Earl of Lancaster, and so indeed did almost all the Gloucestershire nobility and gentry, in his struggle with the Despencers; and like his leader he was taken prisoner at the Battle of Boroughbridge, in 1322. Lancaster was executed at Pontefract. Giffard was brought to Gloucester, tried and condemned as a traitor, drawn on a hurdle outside the town gates, hanged on a gallows, and his body cut in quarters. In the previous year, when Edward II. was at Cirencester, on his march to the north, incensed because Giffard had waylaid and rifled some royal carriages which were proceeding into Wales by the Ermin Street, he had ordered Brimpsfield Castle to be destroyed;<sup>2</sup> and so thoroughly was his order obeyed that in 1327 it was described as utterly ruined, and so Leland found it when he visited Gloucestershire in 1540. It was never rebuilt. Of course on the death of John Giffard his manors were confiscated by the Crown. Edward II. gave them to the younger Despencer, and, on his attainder, they were conferred on John Maltravers, as a reward for murdering the King at Berkeley Castle!

On his death they were granted to Maurice, Lord Berkeley, for his life;<sup>3</sup> then to Lionel, Duke of Clarence, the third son of Edward III. By the marriage of his daughter and heiress they passed to the Earls of March and reverted to the Crown in the reign of Henry VIII, who gave Brimpsfield to Queen Katherine of Arragon. In the reign of

<sup>1</sup> *Hist. et Cart.*, I., 38.

<sup>2</sup> *Lives of the Berkeleys*, vol. I., p. 233.

*Id.*, p. 249.

Edward VI. it was granted to Sir John Bridges, afterwards Lord Chandos. In the reign of Elizabeth it was sold to the Sandys family of Miserden, who again sold it to Dr. John Gilbert, Archbishop of York, and it passed with his daughter in marriage to Lord Mount Edgecumbe. He sold it to the Pitts. It is now the property of Mr. Wait.

As John Giffard II. died *s.p.* the barony of Brimpsfield devolved upon his half-sisters, the daughters of John Giffard I. by Maud de Clifford, widow of William de Longespee, Earl of Salisbury; namely, Catherine, grandmother of James de Aldithle, and Alianora, mother of John, son of Fulke le Strange. But the barony was in abeyance between the two co-heiresses, and was never granted to either of them or their descendants.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Banks' *Baronies in Fee*, p. 223.