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**Bristol and the Rev. Dr. Thos. White's Essex Estates**

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BRISTOL AND THE REV. DR. THOS.  
WHITE'S ESSEX ESTATES.

By WILFRID LEIGHTON.

A CLOSE and very interesting though little known connection has existed between Bristol and a remote corner of the county of Essex for nearly three hundred years. For this connection we are indebted to the Rev. Thomas White, D.D., who occupies a prominent place on the roll of Bristol benefactors. Very little is known of Dr. White's parentage, though we are told that he was a kinsman of the "Whites of Bedfordshire" and the son of John White, a Clothier of Temple Street, Bristol,<sup>1</sup> where he was born in 1550. He matriculated at Oxford in 1566 as a student of Magdalen Hall (now Hertford College), and graduated B.A. in 1570. Entering the Church about 1573, preferment came to him very rapidly, and in an age of pluralists he held the Rectory of St. Dunstan's in the West, London, and was a Prebendary of St. Paul's, Chancellor of Salisbury, Canon of Oxford and Canon of Windsor. By the enjoyment of these appointments he accumulated a considerable fortune which enabled him to found Temple Hospital, Bristol, during his life; and as he left no issue, though twice married, he made further generous benefactions to various charities at his death, which took place in 1624.

His Will is dated 20th February, 1622-3, and is a very wordy document. Amongst the numerous bequests, one of the most interesting is a legacy to St. Dunstan's in the West for the purpose that there should be read every Sunday in the afternoon a Lecture at three or four o'clock,

<sup>1</sup> *Dict. Nat. Biography*, LXI, p. 78.

to the intent, to use his own words :—" that the poor prisoners of Newgate may be manacled and sparrd in Iron Chains hand to hand, men by themselves and Women by themselves, in long Iron Chains made for that purpose, and so by some of their under Officers to be brought thither the lower way next Newgate nor annoy any of them, So that the Air for Health of Body the preaching for their Souls, their Sight for example to the People and Youth."<sup>1</sup> He also, by his Will, founded and endowed Sion College in London, an incorporation of London Clergymen, the history of whose institution with its valuable Library has been written by the late Canon Pearce.<sup>2</sup> The particular bequest with which we are interested reads as follows :—

Item I do give unto the Mayor and Commons of Bristowe by what name soever called either out of my lands or in so much of my land to be made sure unto them for ever one hundred pounds a Year to the End that they shall appoint Overseers yearly to amend the High Ways leading unto the City of Bristowe within the Compass of five miles thereof every travelling and Market Way And also the Highways that are most used from Bristowe unto the Baths and towards Oxford ten miles in length to be repaired continually and to begin where there is most need and when it shall please God that they be reasonably repaired that then until there be cause of more repair I would have them upon good bond and Assurance to lend freely unto any two poor Tradesmen for two whole Years thirty pounds apiece and unto four poor maidens of honest fame and account toward marriage or not, yet to help them against such a time to give them ten pounds apiece not to be repaid and so continually to keep a due course either in repairing when need shall be employed the hundred pounds as I have limited herein for ever and not otherwise as my trust is they will "<sup>2</sup>

On Dr. White's death it was found that he was possessed with other lands of the Fee Simple of the Manor or Lordship of Bradwell with Pilton Fec in Essex, and out of this estate, upon the joint petition of his Executors, John Simpson and John Keeling with the Corporation of Bristol, one annuity of £100 and one annuity of £40 were granted

<sup>1</sup> The Life of the Rev. Thomas White, D.D. W. A. Sampson, p. 13, *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup> *Sion College and Library.* E. H. Pearce, M.A., 1913.

and assigned to the Mayor, Burgesses and Commonalty of Bristol and their successors for ever by letters patent dated 5th January, 2nd of Charles I (1626). The second sum mentioned was a reversionary bequest to Temple Hospital, Bristol, for maintaining two more poor people, subject to the life interest of George White, the brother of the Testator. Out of the same Estate certain further annual sums were charged under bequests to the Lecturer of St. Paul's and the President and Fellows of Sion College, a complication which subsequently brought into being a partnership in estate-management which continues to this day.

Bradwell Manor has an interesting history. It was granted by Richard II to Alecia Perrers and subsequently by Henry IV to his son John, it having reverted to the Crown by the treason of Thomas, Lord Bardolph, in 1405. Henry VIII granted it to Anne of Cleves and it was assigned by Mary to the Duchy of Lancaster. James I granted it in 1604 to Walter Mildmay who sold it to Dr. White.<sup>1</sup> It forms part of the Parish of Bradwell by the Sea, situated on the east coast on a promontory at the mouth of the River Blackwater. In the Parish, but not in the Manor, is an extremely interesting Church, St. Peter-on-the-Wall, for many years used as a barn but recently re-consecrated, and which was erected by St. Cedd in the seventh Century on the site of the old Roman Fort of Othona

Situated in such a remote and inaccessible part of the country and subject to the inroads of the sea, the Estate appears to have been insufficient at the time of Dr. White's death to provide the Annuities charged upon it, and payments were in arrear even as early as 1634. As time went on, matters became worse, and apparently reached a climax about 1670, when there was constant correspondence between Sir John Knight, Mayor of Bristol, Richard Aldworth, the Town Clerk, and the Governors

<sup>1</sup> *Sion College and Library*, p. 127.

of Sion College, who were jointly concerned in safeguarding their respective interests. As a result of these negotiations, it was agreed that the Annuitants should enter into actual possession of the lands. This arrangement was not carried through very speedily, for in 1672 the Bristol partners wrote to Dr. Bell, the President of the College :—

Wee are very sensible of the obstruccons that haue been in the settlement . . . . . It semeth out not agreeing as to the p'son that is to be Intrusted with the receipt thereof, and to make the deduccons and portions and abatements have hindered the p'fecting of the Conveyances.

There is an expectancy of a considerable Sallery which will be too much to abate out of the good uses, and for that the trouble is not like to be much."

A London Agent is suggested " Mr. Chamberlain in Watling Street . . . att the Signe of the Swan there," and presumably all differences were adjusted, as by an indenture dated 27th June, 1672, the Estate was conveyed by John Greene and John Baynes to certain Trustees nominated by the Mayor, Burgesses, etc. of Bristol and the President and Fellows of the College,<sup>2</sup> and by a further indenture entered into on the 27th February, 1672-3, which recites very fully the conditions which had arisen, and the impossibility of paying the Annuities referred to besides the Crown Rent of £75 per annum, it was agreed that out of every £103 received out of the Estate, £70 should be remitted to Bristol, £28 to Sion College and £5 to St. Paul's. The new owners did not escape the troubles which beset landlords ; some tenants were good, some were bad. Of the latter kind was one Smith, of Bradwell Hall Farm, who in 1691 was reported to be " in the West Country to raise money," and who was subsequently found to be in Chelmsford Gaol for debt, and " also about a bastard child." Later he was a prisoner in the King's Bench, when his landlords allowed him £5 on account of his " necessity and occasions," and the Farm was re-let to Francis Moss.

On the 7th July, 1693, the widow of the latter, Bridget Moss, writes to Sir Richard Hart, who had been Mayor of Bristol in 1690.

“ Sur Richard Hart,

I received your Letter one the 6 of July and this is to satisfie your Lordship that I will come to London at micelmasse and clear my years rent. I wold have bine with you according to your desier, onely it is a bissy time with me now. As for any wood I have not cut downs any but where I make hedge and ditch which is for my expences on the premises. As for wood I sell non but such underwood and bushes as my Lease aloweth, making noe strip and wast. I scorne to abuse the farme for I have land of my owne & I would not be willingly saruid so myself. The woods are well fenced in, it cost me betweene forty and fifty shillings to fence them in, for their was not any fence at my coming to the farm. It hath cost me forty pounds in repaiers this yeare or more, which I am alowed but 25 pounds by you. I will be at London as aforesaid with out faile, so with my saruice to Sur Richard Hart and Doctor Williams president I rest your tenant,

Bridgett Mosse.”<sup>1</sup>

The following year Sir Richard Hart was asked to petition the Queen Dowager for some allowance “ by loss that was by the late inundation of the sea,” and as a result, an abatement of £30 was made in the Crown rent. In 1697 Mrs. Moss paid £80 for Bradwell Hall, but was allowed an abatement and for “ trophy money ” £4 6s. in all. John Young paid £100 for Hockley Farm and £33 8s. 6d. was received for fines and quit-rents on the Manor. After payment of further allowances and heavy expenses (post-ages alone cost £5) only £111 11s. 8d. was left for division, of which Bristol had £75 16s. 8d., Sion College £30 6s. 8d., and St. Paul's £5 8s. 4d., the statement being endorsed “ this is a true account, delivered Robert Yate, Esq., for the City of Bristol, 14th May, 1698, Edward Green, Cler. Sion College.”<sup>2</sup> Two-sevenths of the Corporation's share were always applied to Temple Hospital on account of the

<sup>1</sup> *Sion College and Library*, p. 136.

<sup>2</sup> MSS. *Bristol Municipal Charities*.

bequest to that Institution, and the remainder, as we have seen, was to be used primarily for the repair of roads round Bristol. Some idea of the nature of the latter may be gained from a Resolution of the Court of Aldermen in 1624, when it was ordered that these "causeways" should be six feet in breadth and no more. In 1647, the "London Way" was under repair, and 1s. was paid to John Roggers, pitcher, "for his time spent to view, where was most neede to doe first." The wages of a labourer were 10d. per day, while a load of stone cost 4s. The total amount spent on the "London Way" in that year was £21 3s. 8d., the "Oxford Way" £29 14s. 7d. including £2 to the "Wayreaves of Horfield" for mending their road, while £3 16s. 4d. was spent on the "Bathe Waye." In 1656 £4 went to "Durdham Down Causeway," and the same year digging 110 loads of stone cost £1 16s. 8d., and hauling them £3 5s. Until the passing of the Turnpike Acts, Dr. White's money was expended on main roads only, but subsequently on roads which did not come under these Acts. In these days of road-traction, it is interesting to find that under an Act of 1691, local surveyors were instructed to make highways between market-towns "eight feet wide at least," while the minimum breadth for "causeways for horses" was fixed at "three feet." In 1663, a journey to London occupied three days in the summer and considerably more in winter. At the beginning of the following century so-called "flying coaches" managed the journey in two days, by starting at 2 o'clock in the morning. Latimer records<sup>1</sup> that in 1702, when Queen Anne visited Bristol, the royal party had to make a detour to Kingswood by Newton St. Loe, the main road from Bath being impassable, while her Consort a little later, in another part of the country, when travelling from Windsor to Petworth, had a much more trying experience, nearly every carriage in the procession being overturned

<sup>1</sup> *The Annals of Bristol, 18th cent.*, p. 22.

at least twice. The road from Brislington to Bristol was frequently reported to the City Council as being dangerous to life, while in 1729 one of the local newspapers states that several travellers were obliged to swim their horses in order to reach the City "as had the Bath coach for a considerable way." There does not appear to have been any great improvement in the art of road-making until Mr. McAdam introduced his system early in the nineteenth Century, and possibly many are unaware that the inventor of Macadamizing was appointed in 1815 as general surveyor of the roads administered by the Bristol Turnpike Trustees. The last appropriation of Dr. White's money to the repair of roads was in January, 1860, when £5 3s. 11d. was paid to the Local Board for half the cost of repairing the footway to Bedminster.

As time went on, the income of the Essex estates increased, but there was still trouble with the Tenants. One of the latter was the Rev. Sir Henry Bate Dudley Bart., one of the earliest Editors of the "Morning Post." He first applied for the tenancy of the Hall Farm in 1792, when the Trustees were inclined to consider his application favourably, on account of his reputation for the "spirited management of the estates on his hands." Of him, Johnson said to Boswell, "Sir, I will not allow this man merit . . . . I will indeed allow his courage." Sir Bate Dudley also rented the Sporting Rights of Bradwell and was appointed "Gamekeeper of the Manor." In that capacity he writes in 1806 :—

"That there is but little game on the Manor is true and the causes of it these 1. A succession of bad breeding seasons; 2d. the depredations committed by the large quantity of foxes turned out by Capt. Hay [the tenant then living at the "Manor House" in the Parish], and 3dly. the unfair sporting of various Officers who come down to Bradwell Hall, in the absence of Capt. Hay (who, I believe, does not reside in Bradwell himself three weeks in the year). The pheasants are so much destroyed by the foxes, that my Farm of East Hall, where I could

have seen 50 brace at feed by the side of a cover, scarcely one is to be found. . . . The only day I have shot at Bradwell Hall this year, I was treated rather roughly by Mrs. Hay for presuming to come on the Manor Farm of which I had the College Deputation. . . . The game, I should hope, would soon get up now Capt. Hay's foxhounds are dropped, if he will restrain the visitors at his house within the limits of fair sporting."<sup>1</sup>

In 1821 he excuses himself for non-payment of rent as "being in close residence at Ely" of which he had been appointed canon in 1817.

The amount expended on the repair of roads round Bristol had gradually decreased, and between 1773 and 1819 over £3,000 accumulated in the hands of the Corporation, the average annual income between 1813 and 1819 having been nearly £500. In 1821 the Corporation petitioned the Court of Chancery for a Scheme for the disposal of the accumulations, when their application was referred to the Master, who found that the income was considerably in excess of that required for the repair of roads, and as for the other provisions of Dr. White's Will, there had never been any applications for the Loans to Tradesmen, there being other loan-charities administered by the Corporation, nor had there been any applications for Marriage-Portions, while the Mayor and Corporation were of the opinion that such gifts, as the report rather quaintly states "would be attended with ill effects and that they would unsettle the minds of young women from service and habits of industry, and would afford an inducement to designing or improper persons to marry them without being sufficient afterwards to render them any effectual assistance." As the buildings of Dr. White's other Bristol Charity, Temple Hospital, were considerably out of repair, it was desired by the Corporation that the accumulations should be applied in reinstating and extending them, that the annual amount expended on highways should be £200 per annum, and that Loans and Marriage-Portions should

<sup>1</sup> *Sion College and Library*, p. 144.

be dropped, the surplus income being used to increase the number of almspeople.

The Master in his Report disapproved of these proposals, so far as they related to the Road-Money, Loans to Tradesmen and Marriage-Portions. So the Corporation amended their application, and an Order of the Court of Chancery was finally made on the 6th June, 1822, authorising the application of the income of the Trust, as to £100 to Roads, £60 to Loans to Tradesmen and £40 to Marriage-Portions ; the greater part of the balance of any year's income to be used in augmenting the pay of the inmates and increasing the number of Almspeople in Temple Hospital. As regards the Corporation's scruples on the desirability of granting-marriage gifts, the Master in his Report suggested that " it might be proper to limit the benefit to such poor young women, who were of industrious and prudent habits, as by certificate that they had lived in service five years at least in the same family, or steadily pursued for the same period some honest means of gaining a living, and that the intended marriage was a prudent one, the proposed husband being an industrious person of good moral character."<sup>1</sup> Four marriage-portions of £10 each are still granted yearly under this Order ; but the competition for these gifts is not very great. Perhaps some of the conditions are too stringent for the twentieth century.

As regards Temple Hospital, only a portion of the accumulations of income referred to was expended on repairing and extending the Almshouse, as it was subsequently found that £1,000, which had been previously set aside for acquiring an adjoining building site, would not be required.

In 1836 the Trustees of the Municipal Charities were appointed by the Court of Chancery to succeed the old Corporation in the administration of the Charities, with the exception of Temple Hospital, and investigations

<sup>1</sup> Hare's *Report*, 1871, p. 96.

made by the new body discovered that in 1769 a sum of £229 7s. of Dr. White's money had been appropriated by the Corporation, and never returned, while in 1822, £1,467 11s. 8d. had been charged to the Charity on account of the defalcation of the then City Chamberlain, who had died in embarrassed circumstances. These sums with interest, £3,869 8s. 7d. in all, were recovered from the Corporation in 1840, and the Trustees were again in possession of a considerable surplus. Seventeen years later, after consulting the Charity Commissioners, an Act of Parliament<sup>1</sup> was obtained, by which a portion of the fresh accumulations was applied to Temple Hospital, and the remainder invested for educational purposes. In the event of the sum set aside for roads, loans and gifts not being absorbed, the annual surplus was to go to Bristol Grammar School.

We have seen that the payments for the repair of Highways gradually dropped. Loans of £30 to Tradesmen were, after the Order of 1822, continued for a number of years—in 1869 there were seven loans outstanding; but the demand for this class of charity decreased and finally ceased. By subsequent Orders of the Charity Commissioners both these charities were finally abolished, and the annual sum of £160 which had been appropriated to them by the Act, is now wholly under the jurisdiction of the Board of Education, while the remainder of the income derived from Bristol's share of the Estates, subject to the amount set aside for marriage-portions, and certain other limitations, goes to Temple Hospital. Frequent reference has been made to the latter Institution, which still flourishes, and is controlled by Governors appointed by the Corporation. Its history was incorporated in the life of Dr. White,<sup>2</sup> which one of the members of our Society,

<sup>1</sup> 21, 22. Vic. cap., 31.

<sup>2</sup> *Life of the Rev. Thomas White, D.D.* W. A. Sampson, 1912.

the late Mr. Walter Adam Sampson, wrote shortly before his death a few years ago. Largely supported by a separate endowment, its connection with the Essex Estates was never so close as that of the other Bristol Charities founded by Dr. White.

We have seen that the income of the Estate was insufficient at the time of his death to provide the annuities charged upon it, while subsequently it increased to such an extent as to admit of substantial accumulations of the surplus, but it has been left to our own time to witness the most violent fluctuation in annual values. During the prosperous agricultural period of the last century the gross income increased, until in 1875 it was nearly £1,200 per annum, while during the subsequent period of depression it sank between 1879 and 1894 to £450, out of which the expenses of the upkeep of the estate had to be paid. When, after the Great War, land values again appreciated, the Trustees felt that sentimental considerations must not prevent them carrying out their duties to the Charities interested, and in conjunction, and with the concurrence of the Fellows of Sion College, the two freehold farms; Bradwell Hall Farm, 357 acres, and Hockley Farm, 417 acres, were offered for sale by auction in 1919. Although both failed to find purchasers at the time, Hockley Farm was sold shortly afterwards; while Bradwell Hall Farm was sold in 1920 to the Tenant, Mr. John Coster Chillingworth, whose family had held both farms for over eighty years. The capital sums realised by these sales provide nearly twice the net annual income previously received.

Bristol's connection with the Essex Estates is not entirely severed, the lordship of the Manor still remains, and copyhold tenants are still fairly numerous. Meetings of the Manor Court are held in Bradwell biennially, when the Lords attend, and the proceedings are opened by a

proclamation read by the Steward.<sup>1</sup> Hardly a year passes without a copyhold being enfranchised, and when the total number remaining falls to two, the Manor will cease to be a Manor proper and become a "reputed manor," and the old manorial customs will no longer be necessary, and the old associations will have passed away.

<sup>1</sup> The proclamation and oath used at the Court are as follows—

MANOR of BRADWELL NEAR THE SEA with PILTON FEE.

PROCLAMATION ON OPENING COURT.

OYEZ OYEZ All manner of persons that have anything to do at the General Court Baron and Customary Court of the Trustees of the Bristol Charities and the President and Fellows of Sion College, here about to be holden in and for the Manor of Bradwell near the Sea with Pilton Fee draw nigh and give your attendance and you shall be heard.

OATH of the HOMAGE.

You as the Homagers shall well and truly present all such matters and things as are presentable at this Court as the same are already known to you or during the sitting of this Court shall come to your knowledge. You shall present nothing out of hatred or malice nor shall you conceal anything out of fear, favour, or affection, but in all things present the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, according to the best of your information and belief. So help you God.

PROCLAMATION of DEATH.

OYEZ OYEZ Let the heir of .....or such other person or persons as claim right or title to the tenements holden of this Manor whercof he died seized, come into Court and take admittance thereto, otherwise the same shall be seized into the hands of the Lords for want of a tenant. This is the 1st Proclamation.

PROCLAMATION ON DISMISSING COURT.

OYEZ OYEZ All manner of persons have leave to depart hence, keeping their day and hour on a new summons. God save the King and the Lords of the Manor.