

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

Warkworth

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1930, Vol. 52, 265-274

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WARKWORTH

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It may seem a far cry from Gloucestershire to Northamptonshire, and a word must be said to justify the appearance of this paper in our *Transactions*. Not the least interesting of the places mentioned in the Programme of the Summer Meeting of 1930 was Warkworth near Banbury, but owing to its inaccessibility it was seen by only a few members. It may, therefore, be worth while to make its antiquities and associations more widely known by the following notes on its history.*

THE low, rounded hill, crowned by a very ordinary looking church and some farm buildings, which meets the eye soon after you have crossed the Cherwell at Banbury and entered Northamptonshire does not suggest that Warkworth possesses any attraction for the antiquary or the student of social history. And yet to that site there clings a story which, if not romantic, is of unusual interest and variety. As late as the early years of the last century a great mansion stood beside the church, commanding a wide prospect over the uplands of North Oxfordshire. And it had a long history behind it. The site may originally have been chosen for defensive reasons; and in later times, even to the end, the house was known as the Castle, though it was never of sufficient importance to be confused with its more famous namesake in Northumberland. How it began we do not know, but it formed part of the Bishop of Lincoln's great manor of Banbury, and in the 12th century it was the home of a family which took its name

* I have to thank Lt.-Col. H. K. Stephenson, D.S.O., the present owner of Hassop Hall, the Rev. S. F. Leadley Brown, rector of Warkworth, and Mr Wilfred Drake, for information which I have utilized in this paper.

from the place—Warkworths of Warkworth. We only hear of them when they were coming to an end, for we are told that somewhere about 1200 a coheirress of Warkworth married John de Lyons and carried the estate to that family.¹ From him, who naturally bore as his arms: argent a lion rampant gules, descended a line of squires and knights who succeeded one another till near the end of the 14th century. They seem to have appropriated the eastern end of the north aisle of the church as their chapel, for in two recesses of its wall lie the effigies of a mail-clad, cross-legged knight and his lady, who may reasonably be identified as Sir John de Lyons who died about 1312, and his wife Margery, heiress of the Oakleys of Oakley.² Opposite to them, and under the arch which opens into the nave is the tomb of his son, also Sir John, which takes a high place among mid-fourteenth century monuments. The life-like effigy, in rich armour with lion faces at the elbows, lies on a high tomb-chest, the sides of which are sculptured with the family heraldry and figures of mourning relatives in the rather emotional attitudes of grief characteristic of the 'weepers' of the period.³ It would be in connexion with his tomb, and therefore, perhaps, an approximate indication of its date, that in 1346 he founded a chantry here for two secular priests.⁴ Such a sumptuous monument, of London make,⁵ might suggest that the man it

¹ For the pedigrees of the Warkworth families see G. Baker, *History and Antiquities of the County of Northampton* (London, 1822-30), I, 738 ff.

² A. Hartshorne in *Victoria County History of Northants*, I, 399.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 404. Prior and Gardner, *Medieval Figure-sculpture*, 365 ff. F. H. Crossley, *English Church Monuments*, 238, 239, 129, and figured pp. 215, 137.

⁴ Baker, *Northants*, I, 476. *Calendar of Patent Rolls, Edward III*, vol. VII, p. 72. The conveyance was to the prior and convent of Chacombe (Northants), who were to provide the chantry priests. In 1358 Sir John de Lyons and Sir John Trymenel founded a chantry in the chapel of the Hospital of St. Leonard of lepers in Banbury. *Cal. Patent Rolls, Edward III*, XI, 14.

⁵ Prior and Gardner, *op. cit.* 678.

commemorated had a distinguished career. But in the records of the period he appears only as a country gentleman of some local importance, taking his share of the judicial and administrative work of Northamptonshire and the adjoining counties.⁶ He left a son and a daughter, but the son, the last John de Lyons, died without issue in 1385, and the inheritance passed to the son of his sister Elizabeth who had married Sir Nicholas Chetwode of Chetwode in Buckinghamshire. The Chetwodes evidently made Warkworth their principal residence, and several of their brasses (15th cent.) remain in the church.⁷ At one time an heiress carried the property to the Wodhull family, but in the 16th century a Richard Chetwode married his cousin Agnes the heiress of the Wodhulls, and so recovered both Chetwode and Warkworth for the old name. With their son, Sir Richard Chetwode, the immemorial connexion of this stock with Warkworth was to come to an end. But before that happened a great change had been made in the appearance of the place. A drawing⁸ made about the time of the destruction of the house in 1806 represents a stately structure in the style of the great houses of the age of Elizabeth, but with an entrance flanked by half round towers pierced with cruciform loops, which must have been much older. In other words the castellated De Lyons manor house was transformed into a rather grand Elizabethan mansion, perhaps in emulation of its great neighbour, Broughton Castle.⁹ The date is given approximately by the year

⁶ See the Calendars of Patent Rolls and Close Rolls, Edward III. 'John de Lyouns' first appears in 1327 as witness to a Northamptonshire deed (*Cal. Close Rolls, Ed. III, 1, 88*). From 1341 onwards he is 'John de Lyouns chivaler', and the last mention of him is in 1366 (*Cal. Pat. Rolls, XIII, 356*). From about 1345 onwards there are mentions of 'John de Lyouns' (e.g., *Cal. Close, VIII, 257*), who will be his son; last mentioned in 1383 (*Cal. Pat. Richard II, II*).

⁷ Mill Stephenson, *Monumental Brasses*, 391.

⁸ Reproduced *Journ. Derbyshire Arch. Soc.* XXXI (1909), 191.

⁹ See p. 35-7 of this volume.

1595 inscribed on a stone with the Chetwode arms which once surmounted the entrance, and is one of the few surviving relics of the place.¹⁰ Another and more unusual evidence of its former splendour is a series of heraldic shields in glass which once, after the fashion of the day, adorned the windows of the gallery, where they were noted by the Oxford antiquary, Antony Wood, when he saw the house in 1659.¹¹ They have survived because they were carried off to Hassop Hall in Derbyshire by the Eyres, the last owners of Warkworth, when the house was pulled down, and till recently remained there. Fortunately, while still at Hassop, they were described and illustrated by Mr A. P. Shaw for the *Journal* of the Derbyshire Archaeological Society,¹² and so we learn that they form three distinct sets. The largest of these (13 in number) consists of oval panels with shields or badges framed by elaborate and characteristic arabesques in the style of the 16th century. Two represent Sir Richard Chetwode and his family, but most of the others appear to belong to prominent nobles who lived under Elizabeth. This is confirmed by the fact that four of the ovals contain royal Tudor badges, one being that of Anne Bullen, regularly used by Elizabeth, the falcon with sceptre and crown on a tree stump with roses.¹³ At one time there must have been, as was right and proper, the royal arms of Elizabeth herself as a sort of centre piece, but only the supporters have survived, the gold lion and red dragon which she inherited from her father.¹⁴ Another set consists of rounds or medallions,

¹⁰ Baker, *Northants*, I, 741. Now at the Home Farm.

¹¹ *Athenae Oxonienses* (ed. P. Bliss), I, p. xxxvi.

¹² *Journal Derb. Arch. Soc.*, xxxi (1909), 191 ff; xxxii (1910), 182 ff. There are photographs showing the glass as it was in the windows of Hassop Hall, and folding pedigrees explaining the quarterings of the shields.

¹³ T. Willement, *Regal Heraldry*, p. 82.

¹⁴ Willement says (p. 82) that Elizabeth's dragon was sometimes gold, not red.

being shields surrounded by the Garter, and mostly surmounted by coronets. They tell the same tale, for all the Garter Knights belong to the reign of Elizabeth, and the latest of them appears to be Robert Radcliffe, 1st Earl of Sussex, who got his Garter in 1599. It will be noticed that this is quite consistent with the date 1595 over the door of the house, for the glass would naturally be put in during the next few years. The third set is a series of plain shields, some with numerous quarterings, as in the other cases. Two of them belong to Sir Richard Chetwode himself, and the others, as before, represent eminent contemporaries, for the most part peers. If we ask what was the meaning of the whole series, Mr Shaw pointed out that in a few cases there was an actual, if remote, connexion between the Chetwodes and the families represented in the glass. The others may be due to personal acquaintance or contact, or to the desire to recognize the great powers of the day. If we knew more about the Chetwodes and their relations with the great world, the reasons for the selection of this noble company might become more apparent.¹⁵

Everything, then, goes to prove that the rebuilding and decoration of Warkworth were the work of Sir Richard Chetwode at the very end of the 16th century. It is with something of a shock of surprise that we learn that he sold it in 1629. One cannot help wondering whether he had overspent himself on his grand mansion, and whether his ambition to be in the fashion and remodel

¹⁵ We must be grateful to Mr Shaw for the conscientious way in which he performed the laborious task of tracing out the family connexions represented by the quarterings on the shields, but his work evidently requires a little revision. Thus, he did not recognize the badge of Queen Anne Bullen, afterwards used by Elizabeth, and he assigns the Clinton shield to William, Earl of Huntingdon, whose title became extinct at his death in 1354. But his presence in this company of 16th century peers would be anomalous, and it is probable that the arms are those of Edward Lord Clinton (1512-85), an important figure in the reign of Henry VIII and his successors, created Earl of Lincoln by Elizabeth in 1572.

his house, like so many of the nobles and squires of the day, had landed him in financial difficulties which had to be relieved by the sale of the estate with its expensive 'castle'. He would be the more easily reconciled to such a course by the fact that, as already mentioned, his mother had brought with her the original family property of Chetwode in Buckinghamshire, so that he was not left without a home. Henceforward he was only Sir Richard Chetwode of Chetwode, as his representative Sir Philip Chetwode is today.

The purchaser was Philip Holman from London, and with him begins an entirely new chapter in the history of Warkworth.¹⁶ He is described by Antony Wood as a 'scrivener', which may mean a notary; but perhaps he belonged to the lucrative profession of a 'money scrivener' or money-lender, for he was evidently a rich man, as he gave £14,000 for the property, a large sum in those days. Nor was Warkworth his only investment in land, for in 1621 he had bought the manor of Huntington, including Kington, in Herefordshire, though he never showed any intention of living there.¹⁷ But now he set up as a country gentleman at Warkworth, and according to Wood built part of the house, perhaps as a completion of what Sir Richard Chetwode may have left unfinished. He was buried in Warkworth church in 1669, and his is the first of the white marble gravestones which form the memorial of the Holmans. His eldest son George was brought up like a gentleman and sent on the Grand Tour. He came back a Roman Catholic, and in 1659 when Antony Wood called at Warkworth he found him lately returned from his travels and 'a

¹⁶ The Holmans appear to have come from Devonshire, and are found in the Visitations of London and the Home Counties. *Harleian Soc.* xv, 391; XLIII, 95, 153. Berry, *Surrey Genealogies*, 70, 71.

¹⁷ Duncumb, *History of the County of Hereford, Hundred of Huntington* by M. G. Watkins (Hereford, 1897), 59, 68. These properties descended to the heirs of the Holmans (see below), and were sold by them in 1749.

melancholy and bigotted convert'.¹⁸ He evidently did not feel at home in the Puritan atmosphere of Banbury, for he went abroad again and lived in Paris, even after his father's death. Meanwhile his younger brother John was active at home, represented Banbury in Parliament, and was created a baronet in 1663, but died without issue in 1700. At the time of the Titus Oates Plot (1680) George Holman's name was reported as a Northamptonshire Papist, but his brother managed to get him passed over by saying that he did not know that he was a Papist, that he was abroad in Paris and had been so for thirty years, and that he had often heard him express his hatred to the Jesuits.¹⁹ Evidently at this time there was no Catholicism at Warkworth, and, indeed, not long before, in 1673, when the church of St. Benet Fink in the City was rebuilt,²⁰ George Holman, because his grandfather had been buried there in 1597, gave £1,000 for the ornaments of the church, among which were two silver flagons 'for the use of the Communicants' inscribed with his name and the Holman arms, which also appeared in the east window. Moreover we are told that he offered to give the organ, and that the parish in gratitude presented to him and his heirs for ever two pews and a vault. At this time he must have become less 'bigoted' than Antony Wood perhaps unfairly describes him, and the writer in the *Gentleman's Magazine* (1836) who records most of the above details, not unnaturally calls him 'an enlightened Roman Catholic'.²¹ Probably what stiffened

¹⁸ *Athenae Oxonienses* (ed. P. Bliss), I, p. xxxvi.

¹⁹ *11th Report, Historical MSS Commission*, App. II, p. 228, quoted by Mrs Bryan Stapleton, *History of Catholic Missions in Oxfordshire* (London 1906), 34.

²⁰ St. Benet Fink, on the south side of Threadneedle Street opposite the entrance to Old Broad Street, disappeared when the Royal Exchange was rebuilt in 1842-4. The parish was united to that of St. Michael's Cornhill.

²¹ *Gentleman's Magazine*, New ser., v part I (1836), 256. G. Godwin and J. Britton, *The Churches of London* (London 1839), II, 2.

George Holman in his adopted religion was his marriage, for in Paris, well on in middle life, he found a wife in Lady Anastasia Howard who belonged to a family which had suffered for its hereditary faith. Her father was that William Viscount Stafford, one of the victims of Titus Oates, who was unjustly executed as a traitor in 1680. James II in 1688 created his son Earl, and his widow Countess of Stafford, with corresponding rank for the daughters. After the marriage, which took place about 1687,²² George Holman and Lady Anastasia seem to have lived regularly at Warkworth. Part of the house was probably altered or brought up to date about this time, for we are told that when John Danvers of Prescott was enlarging his house towards the end of the 17th century, he bought out of Warkworth House the fine oak panelling which adorns one of the rooms.²³ Perhaps it was turned out as old fashioned, to be replaced by something more in accordance with Lady Anastasia's Parisian taste. What is more important, Warkworth now became a Catholic centre,²⁴ which was rather a new thing in this Puritan district, hitherto dominated by the Fiennes and Copes, and the very Protestant town of Banbury. There was a chapel in the house and a resident chaplain: one of them was Alban Butler (1716-73), author of the well-known *Lives of the Saints*.²⁵ As usual, it attracted a population which found there provision for its religion. When the estate was sold early in the

²² Mrs Bryan Stapleton, *op. cit.* p. 35.

²³ Macnamara, *History of the Danvers Family*, 211, 297.

²⁴ 'By far the most important Roman Catholic centre in Northamptonshire'. *V. C. H. Northants*, II, 67. It is an exaggeration of Mrs Bryan Stapleton's to say that Warkworth was a Catholic centre for 150 years (*op. cit.* 38) for there is no evidence that there was a chapel before about 1690.

²⁵ He belonged to another Catholic family at Aston-le-Walls, some 10 miles to the north, the home of the Butlers, afterwards represented early in the 17th century by the Plowdens. Mrs Bryan Stapleton, *op. cit.* 313 ff. *V. C. H. Northants*, II, 66.

19th century all the principal tenants were Roman Catholics.²⁶ The Holmans were masters in their own estate, and made no concealment of their religion in the memorials they put up in the parish church, where, as was their right, they were buried. A range of splendid white marble grave-slabs, now set at the east end of the nave, with richly mantled escutcheons and eulogistic Latin epitaphs, composed no doubt by the chaplain for the time being, tells us something about them. The earliest, after that of Philip Holman (1669) which is plainer than the others, are those of George Holman who died in 1698, and his son Charles who died as a young man in 1717. Both end with the medieval formula: 'Cuius animae propitiatur Deus'. There is no memorial of Lady Anastasia, who survived her husband till 1719: she probably retired to Paris and died there. George's eldest son William was educated at Douai. A large marble monument in the south transept has a long Latin eulogy of his virtues and beneficence beginning with a description of him as 'orthodoxae fidei tenacissimus'. His first wife was a German baroness, Maria Alexandrina Sophia daughter of Francis Egon Baron von Gymnich, of an ancient Rhineland family, who was in the service of the Elector Palatine. Her epitaph says that her virtues, kindness, and candour made her universally liked. She died after a long illness in 1726 aged 35, and William Holman married again (Mary Wells), but died childless in 1740 leaving his two sisters or their descendants as his coheirs. Anne, the younger, had married her cousin William 2nd Earl of Stafford, a Jacobite who died in France in 1734. The Countess must have died at Warkworth (1725), for hers is one of the marble grave-slabs in the church. Her elder sister Mary married Thomas Eyre of Hassop (Derbyshire), and Warkworth passed to their younger son Francis. His son, also Francis

²⁶ Bryan Stapleton, 37.

Eyre, soon after succeeding his father (d. 1804) at Warkworth and also at Hassop, sold the former in 1805, when the estate was broken up and the house demolished. The family portraits and heraldic glass were removed, as we have seen, to Hassop Hall.²⁷ As in duty bound to his co-religionists, Francis Eyre built a chapel close by, in Overthorpe, to replace the Castle chapel. It disappeared in 1838 when the Roman Catholic church of St. John in Banbury was founded.²⁸

Francis Eyre, who sold Warkworth, being the son of Mary youngest daughter of Charlotte, Countess of Newburgh in her own right, by her second husband Charles Radcliffe (titular) Earl of Derwentwater who was beheaded after the Forty-Five, erroneously assumed in 1814 the title of Earl of Newburgh, as did his two sons and daughter; but they all died (Mary Dorothea, the last, in 1853) without issue,²⁹ and with them came to an end the line founded by Philip Holman at Warkworth. The peerage had really passed to the Italian family of Giustiniani-Bandini (Roman Princes), whose claim was allowed by the House of Lords in 1858.

²⁷ Bryan Stapleton, 37, referring to Foley *Records of the English Province of the Society of Jesus*, iv, 625.

²⁸ Beesley, *Banbury*, II, 558. Bryan Stapleton, 39.

²⁹ In contemporary editions of Burke's *Peerage* (e.g., the 12th, 1850, which lies before me) the claim is assumed without question.