

DODDERSHALL, IN THE PARISH OF QUANTON.

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It has devolved upon me to give a brief historical and descriptive account of the fine old manorial mansion in which we are now assembled. I must first, however, congratulate the members of our Society upon the kind invitation and courteous reception given them by our worthy host and hostess, the representatives of the family which has held this manor for the last three hundred and sixty years. This entertainment is an act of liberality on their part for the encouragement of archæological science, for which I feel personally indebted, and for which, I think, we must all confess that the thanks of the Society are due.

In giving you some notices of this manor-house,* in days long gone by, it will not be necessary for me to go over the ground which has been trodden by Lyson, Lipscombe, and other county historians, but I shall confine my remarks chiefly to the information given me by its present possessor.

On approaching the house, we cannot but be struck with its ancient appearance and the seclusion of its site. The rude doorways and studded doors, the old mullioned windows, the curious gables, and the immense stacks of chimneys without; the huge oak timbers, the low ceilings, the capacious fireplaces, and the grotesque carvings within—all betoken the architecture of bygone times. This interesting example of domestic architecture of the middle ages is situated in a fertile tract of land bordering the ancient forest of Bernwood, which occupied an extensive portion of the north-western part of the county. Its pleasing situation, convenient distance from the surrounding villages, apparent isolation from modern associations, and the picturesque seclusion of the spot, give to it a singular charm, and raise in the mind of the visitor a feel-

* The common name for a house was *manor* (French, *manoire*, Latin *manerium*, from *manere*), without any apparent distinction of character or dimensions.

ing of interest in the history as well as in the preservation of the structure. I say preservation of the structure, for many mansions which were once the ornaments of the provinces, have long since disappeared, and others are passing fast away under the ravages of fire or the leveling influence of railways, or by the joint agencies of neglect and of well-intentioned but injudicious alterations and repairs, frequently obliterating the ancient features under the plea of restoration. In view, however, of this sequestered spot, a railroad has now been constructed, and its swift train, *ponderibus librata suis*, will soon glide past this manor, and many a hitherto-unfrequented house and village.

Dr. Lipscombe, in his county history, states that the first mention of Doddershall was in the reign of King John, when it was in the possession of the ancient family of the Cranfords; but amongst the old deeds preserved here, and beautifully and chronologically arranged by Mr. Thorpe of the British Museum, there are several as early as the reign of Henry I., in which mention is made thereof. The following transcript of one of these deeds may serve as a specimen of the others. It has no date, as is the case with many of the earlier ones, but from the style of the writing, Mr. Thorpe has fixed its date, and has marked it "Temp: Henry I":—

"Michael Cranford, to John, son of Michael the young, of Dodereshulle Grant for his service and 40s. sterling, six and a-half acres, and one rood of arable land in the fields of Dodereshulle, he paying yearly a rent of one silver penny for the same.

"Witnesses,

"The Lord Robert Mallet, John Carbonel, William the Hunter of Westcote, Robert of Totherwycke, Richard of Warmodestone, Richard of Totherwycke, W. Barkulfe," and others.

The Cranfords, who occasionally took the name of Dodereshall, kept possession of the estate until 1479, when Richard Cranford conveyed all his rights to John le Knight and Robert Bruce, and in 1503 it passed by purchase to Thomas Pigott, Esq., Serjeant-at-law, of Whaddon. Dr. Lipscombe says that "Mr. Serjeant Pigott's ancestors had migrated out of Yorkshire, where they had been established soon after the Norman Conquest, and in the contest between the houses of York and Lancaster following the fortunes of Queen Margaret, had settled at Whaddon." The fact is, the Pigotts, long settled in

Yorkshire, were Yorkists, and through the interest of Richard, Duke of York, father of Edward IV., a Pigott married his ward, Margaret, daughter of John Gifford, the heiress of Whaddon, and thus became hereditary Ranger of the Chase. He was afterwards slain with his great patron at the battle of Wakefield, December 23rd, 1460. The manor of Doddershall, having been settled by Mr. Serjeant Pigott upon his second wife, Elizabeth, at her marriage, for life, was left, according to the *Testamenta Vetusta*, to his son, William Pigott, with remainder to his other sons, the will being proved 1520. It continued in possession of his descendants until the year 1704, when on failure of issue, it passed to that branch of the family which had been long settled at Chetwynd in Shropshire. The beautifully-illuminated pedigree on vellum, compiled from the time of the Conqueror to the reign of Queen Elizabeth, was the principal link which led to the estate being left to this younger branch of the family, and passing from the Pigotts of Waddon to the descendants of the Pigotts of Shropshire. A very singular circumstance occurred respecting this pedigree. At the time of the French Revolution, the representative of the Pigotts of Chetwynd, thinking that a new order of things had arisen, sold his property, and invested the proceeds in French assignats and American securities, and lost it all. He afterwards married a Swiss lady of a good family at Geneva, with whom, about forty years ago, the brother of our worthy host, and subsequently his cousin, became acquainted. This venerable lady handed to the latter a counterpart, in excellent preservation, of the original pedigree now exhibited, and which had been an heirloom in the Chetwynd branch of the family from A.D. 1600 to the time when, through the improvidence of the owner, that fine estate was sold to the father of its present possessor, Mr. Burton Burrowes, after having belonged to the Pigotts for five centuries.

It may be presumed that from a very early period there has been a residence here, erected, probably, in consequence of the existence of a fine spring of clear water in the cellar on the south-west side of the present building, a rare and valuable possession in the deep bed of clay, comprising this district. Indeed, the name itself, "Doddershall," seems to prove this, for the termination,

hall, is evidently derived from the Anglo-Saxon *heal*, a castle or mansion, and *Dodder*, or *Dodere*, may be a proper name, whence *Dodder's Hall*, or *Doddershall*.

History informs us that the Conqueror retained the neighbouring manor of Brill, distant six miles, as a royal demesne, in like manner as it had been held under Edward the Confessor, that King John afterwards kept at Brill the Christmas of 1205, and that Henry II. held a court there in 1160 (when Becket attended him as Chancellor) and 1162. From these facts, and the circumstance that at this early period all the estates in the adjacent parishes were held by persons of high rank and wide possessions; and from the existence in the immediate vicinity of the extensive forest of Bernwode (some hundreds of acres of which still remain), affording ample scope for the pleasures of the chase, and supplying food for swine and abundance of fuel, it may fairly be assumed that there has been a manor-house here of some importance from a very remote period. This supposition is confirmed by the following interesting fact:—Some excavations, about seven years since, were made for a new foundation, when the workmen came upon the crown of a bricked arch, which they had much difficulty in breaking through. The aperture disclosed a passage four feet wide and seven feet high, running diagonally under the present building, and choked up with rubbish. This occurred late in the autumn, and during Mr. Pigott's absence; the workmen, therefore, having attained their object, did not explore the passage, but closed it up, having taken out a few relics which are now exhibited, and which seem to indicate a Romano-British period.

The present mansion, with its four corners facing the cardinal points of the compass, is apparently of very different dates. Originally it was composed of three sides of a courtyard, leaving the south-west side, which is now built upon, open with terraces down to the water or moat. It was upon this open side that the spring of water, now forming a well in the cellar, was situated; probably there may have been an inner moat, on this side, supplied by the spring, and used as a means of defence against invasion. The building on this side is of more modern architecture than any other part, the spouting to the same bearing date 1689. The north-west side, which possessed

a clock-tower in its centre, has been pulled down. The south-east side is evidently the oldest part, and was probably erected about the time of Edward III. or Richard II., as may be conjectured from the costume of the two rude effigies carved on the medallions built in the wall of the chimney, which are supposed to represent Richard II. and his Queen, Ann of Bohemia. The position of the mansion at that period, with its characteristic stack of chimneys and the deer park studded with large elm-trees, is correctly delineated on the ancient map of the north-west boundary of the forest of Bernwode, which bears the date 1529, soon after the acquisition of the estate by the Pigotts. This map certainly marks the antiquity of the south-east side of the present building, which contains the old hall and the appropriate library over it. Any one with a limited knowledge of domestic architecture can mentally reconstruct the north-west side of this very interesting manorial mansion, repeople this ancient hall and the courtyard with the old domestics and armed retainers, and restore the fabric in all its feudal splendour and magnificence. Enjoying ourselves as we have done at the festive board of its worthy owner, and assembled in this hall, imagination can picture to itself his ancestors of many generations sitting here, according to the custom of the times, with all their guests and dependants at their daily feasts. The furniture of this old hall, which was then the dining chamber, was simple and scanty of its kind, consisting probably only of standing tables, or tables on trussels, and wooden forms for seats. As to the comfort of a boarded floor and carpet, so indispensable in the present day, such a thing was never thought of; but there were the capacious fire-place, with its massive andirons supporting the burning logs of wood in the winter season, betokening genuine English hospitality, and the stone floor as you now see them in their primitive simplicity. The hall was formerly hung with old armour of all descriptions—interesting memorials of days long gone by and of the civil wars—but the greater part was disposed of by auction in accordance with the will of the eccentric Lady Say and Sele, relict of the great uncle of the present owner, to whom his personalty was left.

The principal documents, which are worthy of inspection, and to which I have alluded, are—



South East View of Doddershall House.

1. The interesting collection of ancient deeds dating from the time of Henry I.

2. The ancient map of the north-west boundary of the forest of Bernwode, bearing date 1529.

3. The emblazoned pedigree on vellum, compiled in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, under the direction of Sir E. Phillips, her Master of the Rolls, who married a Pigott, and dated 1585.

4. A pardon, under the Great Seal, which was granted to Sir Richard Pigott after the restoration of Charles II.

During the formation of the railway to which I have alluded, several interesting articles have been discovered. These are now exhibited, and have been presented to the Society by Mr. S. G. Payne—viz., mediæval bottle, gilt spur, bridle cutter, two bullets, buckle, leaden coin, and the boss of a fibula. The discovery of the figured gilt spur tends to confirm the description given of Quanton, that it has been a place of some note in former days, insomuch that races were held in the “open field.” There is a singular account of the different reception of two noblemen at these races, given in “A Tour through the whole Island of Great Britain,” by a Gentleman, 1725, vol. ii., letter iii., page 21 :—

“It was my hap formerly to be at Aylesbury, where there was a mighty confluence of Noblemen and Gentlemen, at a famouse Horse Race at Quanton Meadow, not far off, where was then the late Duke of Monmouth, and a great many Persons of the First Rank, and a prodigious concourse of people.

“I had Occasion to be there again in the late Queen’s Reign ; and when the same Horse Race, which is continu’d yearly, happen’d again, and then there was the late Duke of Marlborough and a like Concourse of Persons of Quality ; but the reception of the two Dukes was mightily differing, the last Duke finding some Reasons to withdraw from a Publick Meeting, where he saw he was not like to be used as he thought he had deserved.”

This description which I have had the pleasure of reading to you may not have much to recommend it to your notice ; the interest it may have excited may be ascribed very much to the gaiety of the scene before us, to the kind hospitality we have been receiving, and to our presence within this fine old manorial mansion which is the subject of this paper.