

MANORIAL HERITAGE REGISTRY HISTORICAL RECORD EXTRACT

MHR-M-0002624 • MANOR
Berkhampstead

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Location: Hertfordshire
Associated places: Hertfordshire

LORDSHIP / TITLE ASSOCIATIONS
- Honor of Berkhampstead | Associated | 1068 | Provisional

ABOUT THE MANOR

THIS HONOR, or Feudal Barony, and Manor of Great Berkhampstead gained momentous prominence soon after the Battle of Hastings in 1066. It was here, according to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, that after the battle and the death of King Harold Archbishop Aldred of York and the people of London met and chose Edgar Aethling (Aethling = throne-worthy) as King, as a consequence of which William of Normandy marched north-west from Hastings, crossing the Thames at Wallingford, and arrived outside Berkhampstead. The remaining Saxon nobles, the Aethling, the Archbishop, and Earls Edwin and Morcar, seeing their weak position from necessity submitted when the greatest harm had been done; and it was very imprudent that it was not done earlier, as God would not better it for our sins, and they gave hostages and swore oaths to him (William); and he promised them that he would be a kind lord to them . A few days later, William was in London where he was crowned King. Berkhampstead had belonged to Thegn Admer Atule in the reign of Edward the Confessor and, because of its importance as a cross-roads between London and the Midlands, William placed it in the safe hands of his half brother Robert, Count of Mortain, to whom he granted the Earldom of Cornwall with some 700 other Lordships in 1068. The Domesday entry records a rare vineyard. The Count of Mortain holds Berkhampstead. It is assessed at 13 hides. There is land for 26 ploughteams. In demesne six hides, and there are three ploughteams, and there could be three others. There, a priest with 14 villeins and 15 bordars have 12 ploughteams, and there could be another eight. There, six serfs, and a certain ditcher has half a

hide, and Ranulph, a serving man of the Count, one virgate. In the burhium of this vill 52 burgesses who render £4 from toll, and they have half a hide, and two mills yielding 20s. There, two arpents of vineyard. Meadow for eight ploughteams. Pasture for the livestock of the vill. Wood for 1,000 swine and 5s. In all it is worth £16. When he received it £20. In the time of King Edward, £24.

Count Robert married Maud, daughter of Robert de Montgomery, Earl of Shrewsbury, and by her had an only son William, a young man of arrogant and malevolent disposition. When Count William rebelled against his sovereign Henry I in 1104, all of his lands were confiscated and granted to Randulph, the King's Chancellor. Berkhamstead Castle was razed and Randulph rebuilt it. In 1123, after spending Christmas at Dunstable, King Henry purposed to visit his Chancellor at Berkhamstead. Randulph felt a look-out so that he might go out to meet the King's cavalcade, and when the signal was given, the Chancellor rushed forward, up a hill, suffered a heart attack, fell down, and a monk rode over him. He died a few days later. It was granted to Reginald de Dunstanvill, Earl of Cornwall, an illegitimate son of Henry I. Although Reginald survived till 1175, he must have surrendered Berkhamstead, for we find Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, holding of the Crown in 1155-6. On the Archbishop's fall from grace in 1160, Henry II granted a lease to William of Windsor, and in 1174 a new lease was granted to William de Mandeville, Earl of Essex, who seems to have held it until his death in 1189. The following year, Richard I granted it in dower to his Queen, Berengaria, who held it until the accession of John in 1199. John put his sister-in-law out. Berengaria seems to have petitioned Innocent III in Rome, who placed the Honor and all the lands the ex-Queen should have held, under interdict until the King made restitution. This was not effected until 1215 when John paid off his sister-in-law and granted Berkhamstead to his second wife, Queen Isabella. Isabella was living at Berkhamstead Castle the following year when the King died, shortly after which Isabella remarried Hugh, Count de la Marche. The couple placed Hugh de Nazia, one of their knights, in charge of Berkhamstead, but Hugh de Burgh, the effective Regent of England during the minority of Henry III, not wishing to leave so important a place in the hands of a

foreigner,
took it into Crown custody.

In 1225 the castle and Honour were granted to Richard, Earl of Cornwall, second son of King John.

This Prince was elected King of the Romans at Aachen in 1256 and was duly crowned as such, but was

never able to make good his claim to the imperial title. Holy Roman Emperor. Earl Richard and his

wife, Isabella, spent most of their time when in England at Berkhamstead and she died here in 1243.

Earl Richard's son, Edmund, by his second wife, Sanchia de Provence, was born at Berkhamstead in

1249. Richard was succeeded in the Honour by Edmund in 1272. The young Earl had obtained what was

supposed to be a drop of Christ's blood in Saxony and founded a priory at Ashridge, a Manor within

the Honour, to commemorate this.

Edmund died childless in 1300 and his cousin, Edward I, granted it to his second wife Margaret of

France. She was dispossessed by her stepson Edward II, who gave it to his favourite Piers Gaveston.

The King eventually relented and Margaret was confirmed in possession until her death in 1317 after

which Edward granted it to his wife Isabella. In 1329 Edward III granted Berkhamstead to John of

Eltham, his brother, who died in 1336 without issue. The following year the King granted the Honor

to his eldest son Edward, Prince of Wales (the Black Prince), who resided here for some time towards

the latter years of his life.

In 1360 John, King of France, captured by the English at Poitiers in 1356, was imprisoned here in

great state. From this date the Honor followed the descent of the Duchy of Cornwall and passed

successively to the eldest son of the reigning monarch until 1863. In the reign of Richard II,

Geoffrey Chaucer, was Keeper of the Royal Castles, although it is not known whether he visited

Berkhamstead. There were exceptions.

In 1469, Edward IV granted the Honor to his mother, Cecily, Duchess of York, who resided at the

castle. Proud Cis, as she was known, was the grand-daughter of John of Gaunt. She became the

wife of Richard, Duke of York, killed at the Second Battle of St Albans in 1459. Her son, Edward IV,

and grandsons, Edward V and Richard, Duke of York, all died (in the case of the latter Two Princes

in the Tower, murdered) in 1483. The other son, Richard III, was killed two years later at

the Battle of Bosworth. The third son, George, Duke of Clarence, was drowned in a butt of Malmsey in 1478. With the accession of Henry VII in 1485, she saw the marriage of her daughter, Elizabeth of York, to the King and died at Berkhamstead in 1495. In 1509 it was granted as a jointure to Katherine of Aragon and then to Anne Boleyn and then Jane Seymour. In 1550 Edward VI granted it to his sister Elizabeth for life and on her accession she leased Berkhamstead to Sir Thomas Benger and later to Sir Edward Carey and his wife, who built the house now known as Berkhamstead Place. With the accession of James I in 1603, the Honor finally became part of the Duchy of Cornwall and was held by each successive Prince of Wales until Edward Prince of Wales, later Edward VII. The Brownlows, who had succeeded to the great Bridgewater estates at Ashridge and Berkhamstead in 1856, took over the lease of the Honor, granted by the Duchy of Cornwall in 1761 to the Egerton Dukes of Bridgewater. Six years later, the Honor was purchased by the trustees of John, second Earl Brownlow, for £43,642. Berkhamstead station inserted a private entrance for the Earl in 1867. The Manor and Seignorial Borough of Berkhamstead (as distinct from the Honor) was a liberty outside the jurisdiction of the Sheriff and the Lord of the Manor appears to have had the fishery in any brook, water, or river within the Manor from a place called Bulbourne Head and along the river within the Manor to King s Langley Park, without the bounds of the Manor but within the Honor. Rights, customs and incidentsThe Manor and Seignorial Borough of Berkhamstead (as distinct from the Honor) was a liberty outside the jurisdiction of the Sheriff and the Lord of the Manor appears to have had the fishery in any brook, water, or river within the Manor from a place called Bulbourne Head and along the river within the Manor to King s Langley Park, without the bounds of the Manor but within the Honor.

Catalogue sourceLot #26 Manorial Auctioneers Partnership October 1990
Associated manorial documents / archive referencesCourt Rolls 1400, 1424-30, 1633-4 PROCourt Books
1448-51Estreats 1647-49Survey of theManor & Honor 1608 & CommonwealthExtent or Survey
1356Rental 1541, 1554-5Survey 1614Accts with D of Cornwall Manors 14th-16th cCourt Roll

1447Collector s Accts 1498-9Court Roll I(Honor) 1437Deputy Stewards Accts 1735-44Rental post
 1732Ministers Accts 1542-73, 1618-9 D of Cornwall OfficeReceivers Accts 1442-1661Surveys 1619, 1690,
 1783Court Rolls 1498, 1507, 1633-4 PROPortmote Roll 1399Court Books 1533-36Estreats 1670-2Court
 Rolls 1496, 1498, 1501Portmote Roll 1446-47 Hertford ROCopy of Court Rolls 1787, 1788, 1789, 1790-1810Copy of Court Roll ndCourt Rolls 1786-1810Quit Rents 1775Acct Book ofRents & Tenants
 c1754Acct of certain reliefsreceived at Courts 1740 Northants & Bucks RO

OWNERSHIP / HOLDER ACCOUNT

Berkhampstead was held before the Conquest by the thegn Admer Atule. After 1066 it was granted by William I to Robert, Count of Mortain. Following the forfeiture of Count William of Mortain in 1104, it passed through royal grants and leases, including to Randolph the King's Chancellor, Reginald de Dunstanvill, Thomas Becket, William of Windsor and William de Mandeville. It was later associated with Queen Berengaria, Queen Isabella, Richard, Earl of Cornwall, Edmund, Earl of Cornwall, and successive members of the English royal family. From the later fourteenth century the Honor generally followed the descent of the Duchy of Cornwall, subject to royal grants and life interests, including grants to Cecily, Duchess of York, and the queens Katherine of Aragon, Anne Boleyn and Jane Seymour. In the later sixteenth century it was leased to Sir Thomas Benger and subsequently to Sir Edward Carey and his wife. The registry description states that the Honor became part of the Duchy of Cornwall in 1603, was leased to the Egerton Dukes of Bridgewater in 1761, and was purchased by trustees of John, second Earl Brownlow, in 1867.

CONVEYANCE / DESCENT

- 1068 - 1104 | Robert, Count of Mortain | royal grant | Manor And Title |
- 1104 - 1123 | Randolph, the King's Chancellor | royal grant | Manor And Title |
- 1155 - 1156 | Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury | crown holding | Manor And Title |
- 1174 - 1189 | William de Mandeville, Earl of Essex | lease | Manor And Title |
- 1190 - 1199 | Berengaria, Queen of England | dower grant | Manor And Title |
- 1215 - 1216 | Isabella, Queen of England | royal grant | Manor And Title |
- 1225 - 1272 | Richard, Earl of Cornwall | royal grant | Manor And Title |
- 1272 - 1300 | Edmund, Earl of Cornwall | inheritance | Manor And Title |
- 1300 - 1317 | Margaret of France, Queen of England | royal grant | Manor And Title |
- 1317 | Isabella, Queen of England | royal grant | Manor And Title |
- 1329 - 1336 | John of Eltham | royal grant | Manor And Title |
- 1336 | Edward, Prince of Wales (the Black Prince) | royal grant | Manor And Title |
- 1469 | Cecily, Duchess of York | royal grant | Manor And Title |

- 1509 | Katherine of Aragon | jointure grant | Manor And Title |
- | Sir Thomas Benger | lease | Manor Property |
- - 1603 | Sir Edward Carey and his wife | lease | Manor Property |
- 1603 | Duchy of Cornwall | constitutional descent | Lordship Title |
- 1761 | Egerton Dukes of Bridgewater | lease | Manor And Title |
- 1867 | Trustees of John, second Earl Brownlow | purchase | Manor And Title |
- 1090 - 1104 | William, Count of Mortain | inheritance and forfeiture | Manor And Title |
- 1533 - 1536 | Anne Boleyn | jointure grant | Manor And Title |
- 1536 - 1537 | Jane Seymour | jointure grant | Manor And Title |
- 1550 - 1558 | Elizabeth I | life grant | Manor And Title |

RECORDED RIGHTS

- Liberty or exemption from the jurisdiction of the sheriff: The Manor and Seignorial Borough of Berkhamstead is described as a liberty outside the sheriff's jurisdiction.
- Fishery: The lord of the Manor appears to have had the fishery in brooks, waters or rivers from Bulbourne Head along the river within the Manor to King's Langley Park, although that park lay outside the Manor and within the Honor.
- Seignorial borough jurisdiction: The registry description distinguishes the Manor and Seignorial Borough from the wider Honor.

RESEARCH GAPS / WANTED EVIDENCE

- [OPEN] The precise parish boundary and the separate legal descent of the Manor as distinct from the Honor require source verification. | Wanted: Source-backed evidence resolving this point
- [OPEN] The dates and legal instruments for several royal grants, leases and life interests are incomplete. | Wanted: Source-backed evidence resolving this point
- [OPEN] The status and later descent of the Honor after the 1867 purchase are not established here. | Wanted: Source-backed evidence resolving this point
- [OPEN] The extent and continuity of the fishery right require verification from the relevant manorial records. | Wanted: Source-backed evidence resolving this point

DISCLAIMER

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