

MANORIAL HERITAGE REGISTRY HISTORICAL RECORD EXTRACT

MHR-M-0003031 • MANOR

Sileham

Evidence status: Unverified

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Location: Kent

Associated places: Kent

LORDSHIP / TITLE ASSOCIATIONS

- Lordship of Sileham | Associated | Reign of Edward I (1272 1307) | Provisional

ABOUT THE MANOR

THE FIRST record we have of the Lordship of Sileham occurs during the reign of Edward I (1272-1307)

when it is recorded as being in the possession of Walter Auberie. It seems likely to have been in

the hands of this family for a number of previous generations. Soon afterwards it came by the

marriage of Agnes Auberie to Peter de Meredale. This union produced two sons, William and Roger who

were joint heirs of Sileham. This form of inheritance, in which the estate was passed equally to all

the sons was known as Gavelkind, and was a practice peculiar to Kent. There seems to have been some

sort of family difficulty since in 1313 Peter de Meredale is recorded as appearing at an assize as

plaintiff against his eldest son William in order to recover a messuage of the Lordship of Sileham.

This was composed of 20 acres and 16s rental of land in Rainham and Hartlip.

How this family argument was settled is not known because the next time Sileham appears in the

records it is in the possession of the Donet family. They purchased it after the death of Roger de

Raynham in 1332. At the inquisition into Raynham's death it was found that he held in demesne

as of a fee, in the parish of Raynham, one messuage, 50 acres of land, and 10 acres of wood, of the

tenure of gavelkind of the king by the service of 4s 8d.; John Donet died in 1357 and Sileham

passed to his son John. He lived for a further six years before it passed to his, unnamed son. James

Donet was recorded as holding the Lordship at his death on 22 February 1409 but he here the male

line became extinct so it came to his sole daughter and heiress, Margerie.

Margerie was married to John St Leger of Ulcomb so Sileham came this family. It then

remained with them for a number of generations before it came to Ralph St Leger in the 1470s. Ralph was succeeded by his son Anthony, who was born around 1496. This St Leger was one of the first Englishman to go on what would later be termed, the Grand Tour. He was educated in Italy and returned to England as a young man to take up the legal profession at Grays Inn. His education and cosmopolitan refinement meant that he rapidly became a regular attendee at court and was a favourite of the young Henry VIII (1509-1547). He was present at the marriage of Princess Mary at Paris in 1514 and then became one of the suite of Lord Abergavenny. There is evidence that he took an active part of the downfall of Cardinal Wolsey and he attached himself to his successor, Thomas Cromwell. In this role he was an aggressive administrator of the Dissolution of the monasteries which began in earnest in 1535. St Leger seems to have been involved in many of the great events which occurred during Henry's reign. He was a member of the jury of Kent which found against Anne Boleyn in 1536 and in the same year accompanied the King on his expedition against the northern, Catholic uprising, known as the Pilgrimage of Grace. When Henry's attention turned to Ireland St Leger was chosen to head a commission for the order and establishment to be taken touching the whole (sic) state of our lande to a due civillite and obedience, and the advancement of the public weale of the same. He arrived in Dublin in September and immediately had the army dissolved. He set out on a tour of the provinces under English control, known as the Pale, and gave orders that any grievances should be heard. The discretion with which the commission set about its work was much admired and St Leger came to the conclusion that Ireland would be much easier gained than retained. On his return to England the following year he was appointed to the Privy Council and then knighted. In the October 1538 he went to Brussels to organise safe passage for Anne of Cleves, whom he personally escorted to England. His work in Ireland was rewarded in 1540 when he was made Lord Deputy of the province and appointment which is widely seen as opening a new epoch in the history of Ireland as the English now discarded the old method of trying to rule through the great Irish families and instead moved to a more direct control. The English judicial and administrative system

was to be imposed and St Leger was judged the most able man to carry out this task. On reaching Ireland he attempted to pacify the Irish by promising that they could keep their lands in return for the introduction of knight s service for land tenures. The only noticeable threat came from the O Toole clan, who St Leger promptly forced into submission. He then erected a Parliament in Dublin and his policies began to bear fruit. Ireland was as quiet as anyone could remember. However St Leger was regarded jealously by some, and one of his officials, Robert Cowley slipped to England to complain to the King about St Leger s supposed maladministration. After subduing the ever rebellious O Neil clan St Leger then placed an Irishman, the Earl of Desmond as head of the government and all went well until St Leger was recalled to England in 1544. This was a signal to arms and several uprisings sprang up but on his return these died out at once. Problems arose in 1551 when he was asked to tell the Irish Parliament that the English Liturgy was to be imposed instead of the Latin. St Leger was a Catholic and his speech was regarded by the more Protestant members as being somewhat half-hearted. A Campaign began to oust him and a commission was appointed by King Edward to look into the matter. St Leger was forced to come to to face the Privy Council. He easily rebutted any charges against him and remained as lord-deputy until 1556 when his enemies finally forced him to resign over a dubious charge of falsifying his account. Sir Anthony died in 1559 and the Lordship of Sileham was then sold to Sir Thomas Cheney, knight of the Garter. From him it was later sold to John Tufton, whose son, Nicholas was created earl of Thanet. The Lordship his remained in the possession of the Tufton family until the present day and the current representative of the family, Lord Hothfield, is the Lord of the Manor of Sileham and the Vendor. Sileham lies in the parish of Rainham, on the River Medway, two miles from Gillingham. Catalogue sourceLot #37 of Manorial Services Auction - 2004 UNPUBLISHED/ABORTED - Stephen Johnson

OWNERSHIP / HOLDER ACCOUNT

Historical holder / succession informationSir Thomas Cheney, knight of the Garter1559 • sold_to •

historical_holder_or_transfereeSource wording: Sir Anthony died in 1559 and the Lordship of Sileham

was then sold to Sir Thomas Cheney, knight of the Garter. Tufton family until the present day and the current representative of the family, Lord Hothfield [source claim requiring identity review]lord_of_manor • historical_holder_or_transfereeSource wording: The Lordship his remained in the possession of the Tufton family until the present day and the current representative of the family, Lord Hothfield, is the Lord of the Manor of Sileham and the Vendor.

CONVEYANCE / DESCENT

- 1559 | Sir Thomas Cheney, knight of the Garter | sold_to | | Lot #37 of Manorial Services Auction - 2004 UNPUBLISHED/ABORTED - Stephen Johnson
- Reign of Edward I (1272 1307) | Walter Auberie | | Manor And Title |
- | Peter de Meredale | marriage settlement or descent, unspecified | Manor And Title |
- | William de Meredale and Roger de Meredale | descent under gavelkind | Manor And Title |
- After 1332 - 1357 | John Donet | purchase | Manor And Title |
- 1357 | John Donet (son of John Donet) | descent | Manor And Title |
- Approximately 1363 | Unnamed son of John Donet | descent | Manor And Title |
- - 22 February 1409 | James Donet | descent | Manor And Title |
- 22 February 1409 | Margerie Donet | descent | Manor And Title |
- | John St Leger of Ulcomb | marriage and descent | Manor And Title |
- 1470s | Ralph St Leger | descent | Manor And Title |
- - 1559 | Sir Anthony St Leger | descent | Manor And Title |
- | John Tufton | sale | Manor And Title |

RECORDED RIGHTS

- Gavelkind tenure: The supplied record describes Sileham holdings in Kent as held by gavelkind, a customary form of inheritance in which land was divided among sons; this is a tenure or succession custom rather than a separately established manorial franchise.

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