

MANORIAL HERITAGE REGISTRY HISTORICAL RECORD EXTRACT

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Willington or Wylyngton

Evidence status: Unverified

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Location: Willington, Bedfordshire

LORDSHIP / TITLE ASSOCIATIONS

- Willington or Wylyngton | Associated | | Unverified

OWNERSHIP / HOLDER ACCOUNT

In 1086 Hugh de Beauchamp held WILLINGTON MANOR, assessed at 10 hides. It had formerly belonged to

Aschil and to eight sokemen. This manor follows the same descent as the other Beauchamp property,

and on the subdivision of the barony in 1265 passed to Maud de Beauchamp, wife of Roger de Mowbray,

who died in 1266. She married a second husband, Roger Lestrangle, who survived her, holding Willington till his death in 1311, when John de Mowbray, his wife's grandson, succeeded to the

manor. He settled it for life, in 1316, on William de Braose, whose elder daughter Aliva he had

married. In 1322 John de Mowbray was hanged at York for joining in Lancaster's rebellion against

Edward II. His lands escheated to the Crown, and Hugh le Despenser the younger was granted the

reversion of the manor of Willington for himself and his wife. On the accession of Edward III,

however, John de Mowbray's estates were restored to his son John de Mowbray, who in 1328 acknowledged the rights of his mother's second husband, Sir Richard de Peshale, in Willington Manor.

Three times the latter lodged a complaint against John de Mowbray once in 1329 and twice in

1332 for breaking into his manor of Willington. In 1329 he stated that the raiders drove off

twenty-four horses, sixty oxen, twelve cows, five hundred sheep, two hundred swine (worth in all

£300), and 'carried away his goods.' On the second occasion the horses and other animals driven off

are stated to be worth 500 marks. De Peshale further complained that the raiders 'mowed his crops,

fished his stews, carried away the fish and crops,' with other goods (sacks of wool and various

kinds of grain are enumerated), 'and assaulted his servants.' During their second raid in 1332 the

raiders, in addition to similar offences, are said to have taken from Sir Richard's servants 'some writs of the king which he had sued forth and trampled them under foot.' In 1362, after the death of John de Mowbray, the right of Elizabeth, his second wife, in Willington Manor was recognized. In 1366 John de Mowbray, son of the abovementioned John, complained that Elizabeth his father's widow had committed waste by destroying the trees, digging up the land and allowing the buildings to fall to decay. Amongst the items mentioned are two courts, two dwellings, four rooms, two kitchens, two granges and various outbuildings, two houses called 'Yathous,' two dovecots and one chapel. Some thousands of trees are also enumerated, including oaks, ashes, elms, hazels and white thorns, apple trees, pear trees, plum trees and cherry trees. Elizabeth replied that one dwelling was pulled down because it was unsafe and the other was blown down in a gale, the cottages were pulled down because the tenants had died of the plague, probably the plague of 1362, which was felt severely in Bedfordshire. John de Mowbray recovered damages against Elizabeth, estimated at £938 18s. An inquisition on Elizabeth's estates was held at Willington in 1376 on account of the minority of the next heir, John de Mowbray, son of the lastmentioned John de Mowbray, who had died in 1368. John de Mowbray, who was created Earl of Nottingham at the coronation of Richard II in 1377, was succeeded in 1383 by his brother Thomas de Mowbray, subsequently Duke of Norfolk and Earl Marshal. He was banished by Richard II in 1399 and died shortly afterwards. Thomas his son and heir was a minor and the custody of Willington Manor was granted to Sir Thomas de Rempston. Thomas de Mowbray was executed for high treason in 1405, and the manor passed to his brother John de Mowbray, who died in 1432 and was succeeded by his only son John. After the latter's death in 1461 his son, another John de Mowbray, entered into possession of the manor. He died in or about the year 1476. Anne Mowbray his daughter and heir was the last of the direct line of Mowbrays. At her death in 1483 the manor passed to the Howard family as in the case of Stotfold (q.v.). When the Norfolk estates were forfeited after the battle of Bosworth Field, Willington Manor was granted by Henry VII to John de Vere Earl of Oxford and to his heirs male. In 1489, however, Thomas Howard, the representative of the Norfolk family, was released from prison and restored to his earldom of Surrey. The

forfeited estates, which had been granted to the Earl of Oxford, were restored to him. The Earl of Surrey was created Duke of Norfolk in 1514 for his services at Flodden Field. He was succeeded by his son Thomas Duke of Norfolk in 1524, who sold Willington in 1529 to Sir John Gostwick, whose ancestors in Willington can be traced back to 1209. Gostwick's letters to Cromwell show that he made use of court influence to his own advantage by appropriating to himself adjacent lands and properties belonging to dissolved priories. Two of these letters are dated at Willington. After the death of Sir John Gostwick in 1545 the manor of Willington passed first to his son William, who died in the same year, and then to his brother William, who died in 1549. Both left directions that their bodies were to be buried in Willington Church; that of the former in the chancel, that of the latter 'in the aisle of the Chapel lately builded.' William especially bequeathed 'one Turkey Carpet to Robert, my son, to have after the death of Anne, my Wife.' To another son he left certain feather beds. An inquisition was taken in 1581 on the estates of John Gostwick, the son of William. His son William, who was sheriff for the county of Bedford in 1595 and was created a baronet by James I in 1611, died in 1615, leaving a son and heir Edward. There is an account of a visit paid by Archbishop Williams, when Bishop of Lincoln, 'to the mansionplace of Sir Gostwick in Bedfordshire' for the purpose of hallowing a chapel there. This Sir Edward Gostwick died in 1630, and there is a laudatory inscription to him and his wife on a conspicuous monument in Willington Church. His son and heir Edward is mentioned by Archbishop Williams as having been born deaf and dumb but yet able 'to enter into the marriage state with a young lady of a great and prudent family.' Edward Gostwick was succeeded, probably about 1665, by his second son William, who was Sheriff of Bedfordshire 1679 80 and member for the county from 1698 to 1713. He was succeeded in 1719 20 by his grandson William, who sold the manor of Willington in 1731 to Sarah Duchess of Marlborough. In 1779 it was purchased by the Duke of Bedford, and remained in the possession of the Dukes of Bedford until 1902, when it was sold to George and James Keeble of Peterborough. Further alienation has since taken place and

the property has been broken up, Colonel Frank Shuttleworth of Old Warden and Messrs. Mark Young of Sandy being now the principal landowners in Willington.

CONVEYANCE / DESCENT

- Attested 1086 | Hugh de Beauchamp | Recorded holder | |
- 1265 | Maud de Beauchamp | Passed | |
- | An inquisition on Elizabeth's estates | Recorded holder | |
- | Sir Thomas de Rempston | Grant | |
- 1405 | John de Mowbray | Passed | |
- 1483 | the Howard family as in the case of Stotfold (q.v.) | Passed | |
- | John de Vere Earl of Oxford and to his heirs male | Grant | |
- | the Earl of Oxford | Grant | |
- | Thomas Duke of Norfolk | Succession | |
- 1529 | Sir John Gostwick | Sale | |
- | be buried in Willington Church | Devise | |
- 1719 1720 | Sarah Duchess of Marlborough | Sale | |
- 1779 | the Duke of Bedford | Purchase | |
- 1902 | George and James Keeble of Peterborough | Sale | |

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