

FURTHER LIGHT ON THE SCHOLES

SINCE the paper on The Scholes was published in Vol. 113 of TRANSACTIONS (pp. 43-64), there has been deposited at the Lancashire Record Office a small collection of documents (DDX/458), ten of which provide some further information about the property.

The earliest of these documents show that the Standish family had, in fact, come into possession of The Scholes by the start of the fifteenth century, that its members were living there in the 1530s, if not before, and that they continued to live there until 1625 and perhaps until 1628, when they finally sold the property. In an entail dated 27 March 1402, The Scholes was settled upon Ralph of Standish and Cicely his wife, with remainder in tail male to their sons Hondkyn, Robert, Lawrence, William, Nicholas, Henry and Gilbert, then to Dakyn and John, bastard sons of Ralph. On 16 June 1532, John Standish, described as "of the Scollez, gentleman", agreed with his son and heir, George, that when the latter should request it, he would convey to trustees lands there worth 40s. a year, to the use of whoever William, George's son, should marry. On 17 December 1623, another William Standish, describing himself as "of Scoules gentleman", leased, and on 4 March 1624-5 sold, six acres of land there to John Alcock of Eccleston, gentleman. But on 8 August 1628 this same William ended his family's connexion of two hundred years by selling the hall which they had re-built and "some parte of the demayne landes" to Oliver Lyme of Prescot. The actual conveyance is missing but the bond for performance of covenants has survived.

Oliver Lyme died in 1631 and his widow continued to live at The Scholes until her death three years later. This much was known. An account of income and expenditure for the estate in 1639 now shows that the Lymes were still in possession five years later. But there is still a complete blank in our knowledge from then until 1662, when the hearth tax returns give Elizabeth Alcock as the occupier. A deed of 20 June 1670, whereby Thomas Litherland of Prescot, gentleman (then on his deathbed) conveyed the hall of Scholes, 30 "large" acres of demesne, and other specified properties in Rainford and Hardshaw to his brother, Ralph, of Newton-in-Makerfield and another trustee, now suggests that the property had already passed to the

Litherland family by the early 1660s, for Thomas Litherland was father of Mary, the wife of Richard Alcock, and Elizabeth Alcock was Richard Alcock's mother.

The last document in the collection shows that John Hurst came into possession of The Scholes in 1676. It was conveyed to him on 27 December of that year for £820, he being then described as of Ashton-in-Makerfield, yeoman. We still do not know, however, when he went to live at The Scholes. As was noticed in the paper (p. 55), Edward Alcock, who was paying hearth tax for The Scholes in 1673, was buried on 21 March 1678-9, and the earliest evidence that John Hurst was in residence is to be found in the baptism of his son at Prescot on 10 October 1680. The mysterious datestone of 1681 which contains the initials J H E—John Hurst and his wife Elizabeth—comes no nearer to being explained.

John Williamson of Roby Hall, who, according to the Land Tax returns, had come into possession of The Scholes by 1781, was married to Elizabeth Roberts, a granddaughter of Catherine Cobham, one of the second John Hurst's joint co-heiresses.

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