

A NORTH MEOLS DOCUMENT
OF 1716.

By F. H. Cheetham, F.S.A.

THE document here printed was till lately in the old Town's chest, at the parish church of St. Cuthbert, North Meols (Churchtown, Southport), but with other township papers was in February, 1931, transferred to the custody of the Southport Corporation, and is now at the Southport Town Hall. It is written on the first page of a sheet of paper folded into two leaves of 12 by 8 inches. The outer edge of the first leaf is slightly broken, and some of the words are therefore imperfect, but they are easily read and are here restored in italics.

The document, as will be seen, is addressed to the Inhabitants of the Parish of North Meols, and conveys to them the decision of five Deputy Lieutenants of the County of Lancaster in the matter of a dispute, or difference, between the Townships of North Meols and Birkdale (which together constituted the Parish of North Meols) touching their respective shares in the payment of the Militia Tax levied on the parish by the County. For County purposes the parish was the unit of local government, but in respect to its own affairs each township was governed by its Vestry and nominated its own officers. The two North Meols Townships differed considerably in extent and population, the area of North Meols being 8,467 acres, and that of Birkdale 2,214 acres.¹ The population in 1716 can only be conjectured,

¹ *V.C.H. Lancs.*, iii, 230, 237.

but in 1811 North Meols Township had 2,496 inhabitants and Birkdale 371.¹

The dispute had apparently been referred to the Deputy Lieutenants for settlement, five of whom, as already stated, sign the document, their seals being opposed to the body of the writing in the positions indicated. The seals are in an excellent state of preservation and the writing is clear and distinct.

The document, which is dated 30 November, 1716, is as follows :

Com. Pal. Lancs.

Upon hearing the difference between the Inhabitants of Northmeales and Birkdale in the said County touching the Soldiers Ley for the Militia, Wee whose names are subscribed Deputy Lieutenants appointed (among *others*) by the Lord Lieutenant of the said County upon full Examination of the matter do hereby order appoint and direct the Inhabitants of Birkdale aforesaid to bear and pay one full fifth part (in five to be divided) of all Leys Taxes & Charges already Charged & hereafter to be laid & Charged upon Account of or in any wise relating to the *Militia* foot soldiers raised or to be raised within *the* whole parish of Northmeales Given under *our* hands & Seals this Thirtieth day of November Anno ReR^s Georgii Magn. Brit. tertio. Anno. Dom. 1716

To all & every the Inhabitants
of the Parish of North
Meales These

EDW^D STANLEY
HENRY BROOKE
W^M CASE
ROB^T MAWDESLEY
SAM : CROOKE

¹ Farrer, *Hist. of North Meols*, 4. There is no return available for Birkdale in 1801. The population of North Meols Township in that year was 2,076.

The five signatories were, Sir Edward Stanley, of Bickerstaffe, baronet ; Henry Brooke, of Astley, Chorley, esquire ; William Case, of Whiston, Prescott, esquire ; Robert Mawdesley, of Mawdesley, Croston, esquire ; and Samuel Croke, of Crook, Whittle-le-Woods, esquire.

SIR EDWARD STANLEY, of Bickerstaffe, 5th baronet, was the son of Sir Thomas Stanley, bt., M.P. for Preston, in which town he was born in 1689. He was High Sheriff of Lancashire in 1722, and Knight of the Shire from 1727 till February, 1735-6, when he succeeded to the Earldom of Derby on the death of the 10th Earl without issue. He died at Knowsley in 1776 at the age of eighty-seven and was buried at Ormskirk.

Seal: the Stanley crest (eagle and child).

HENRY BROOKE of Astley, Chorley, died in September, 1718, in his forty-sixth year (M.I. in Ormskirk church, where he is buried).

Seal: arms of Brooke (or, a cross engrailed per pale gules and sable, with crescent for difference).

WILLIAM CASE, of Whiston, Prescott, registered a Papist's estate in 1717.¹

Seal: arms and crest of Case, with helm and mantling. (Argent on a bend engrailed gules, cotised sable, three buckles or. Crest: a cubit arm vested ermine, cuffed azure, holding in the hand proper a round buckle or.)

ROBERT MAWDESLEY was the son of Alexander Mawdesley, of Mawdesley Hall, in the parish of Croston. He was born in 1662, was High Sheriff of Lancashire in 1720, and died in 1727.

Seal: arms and crest of Mawdesley, with helm and mantling (sable on a chevron between three hammers² argent as many annulets of the field). Crest: an eagle displayed sable semée of annulets argent and holding in the beak a hammer).

SAMUEL CROOKE, of Crook, Whittle-le-Woods, in the

¹ *V.C.H. Lancs.*, iii, 352.

² Sometimes described as pickaxes.

parish of Leyland, was High Sheriff of Lancashire in 1717 and was killed near Preston in a duel in August, 1722.¹

Seal: a unicorn's head crest. (This is not the crest of Crook, which is a Cornish chough. The signatory may possibly have used the signet belonging to some kinsman or friend on this occasion.)

¹ See *Trans. Hist. Soc. Lancs. & Ches.* (1926), 78, 62.