

BIDSTON CHURCH, c. 1850

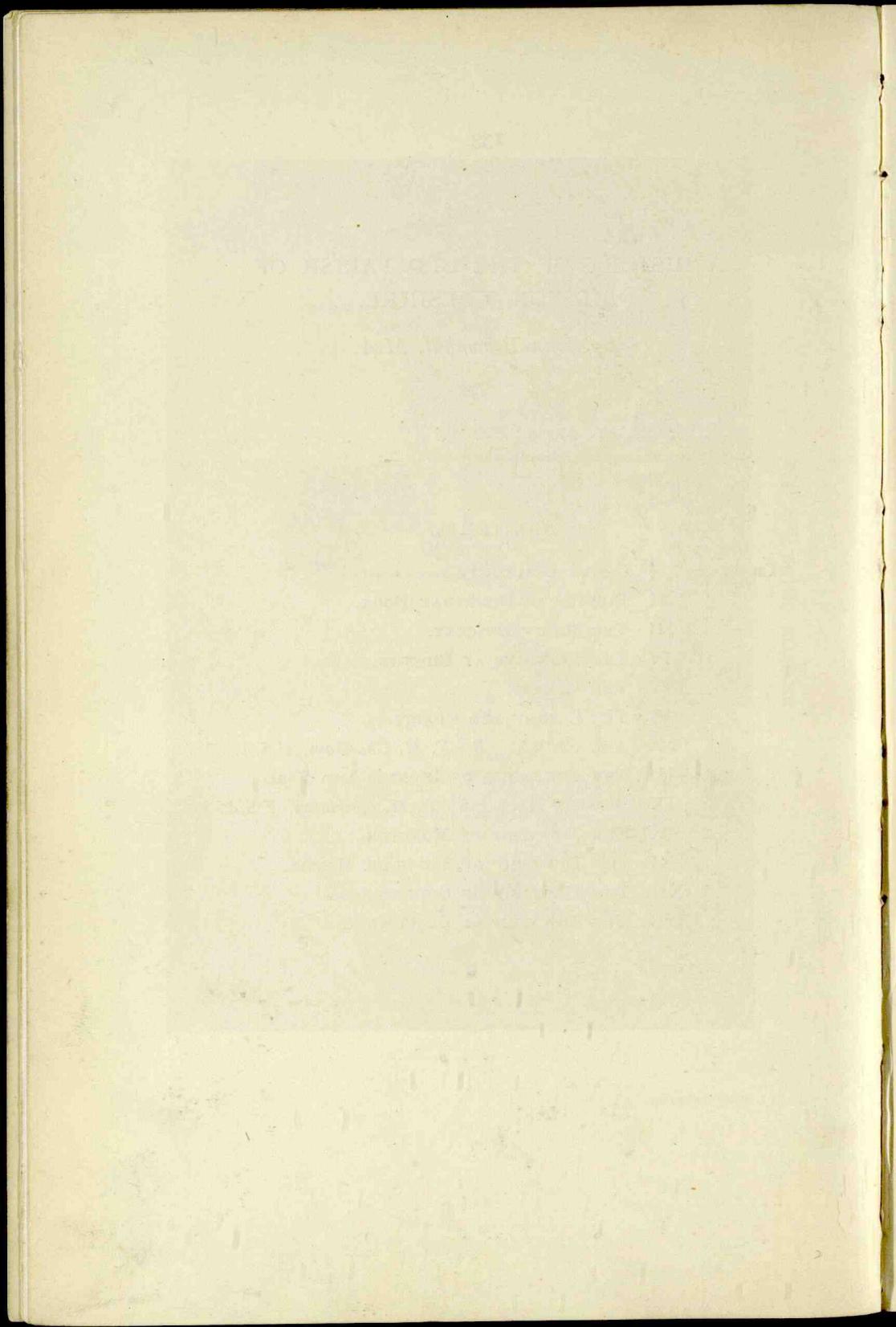
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A HISTORY OF THE OLD PARISH OF
 BIDSTON, CHESHIRE.

By John Brownbill, M.A.

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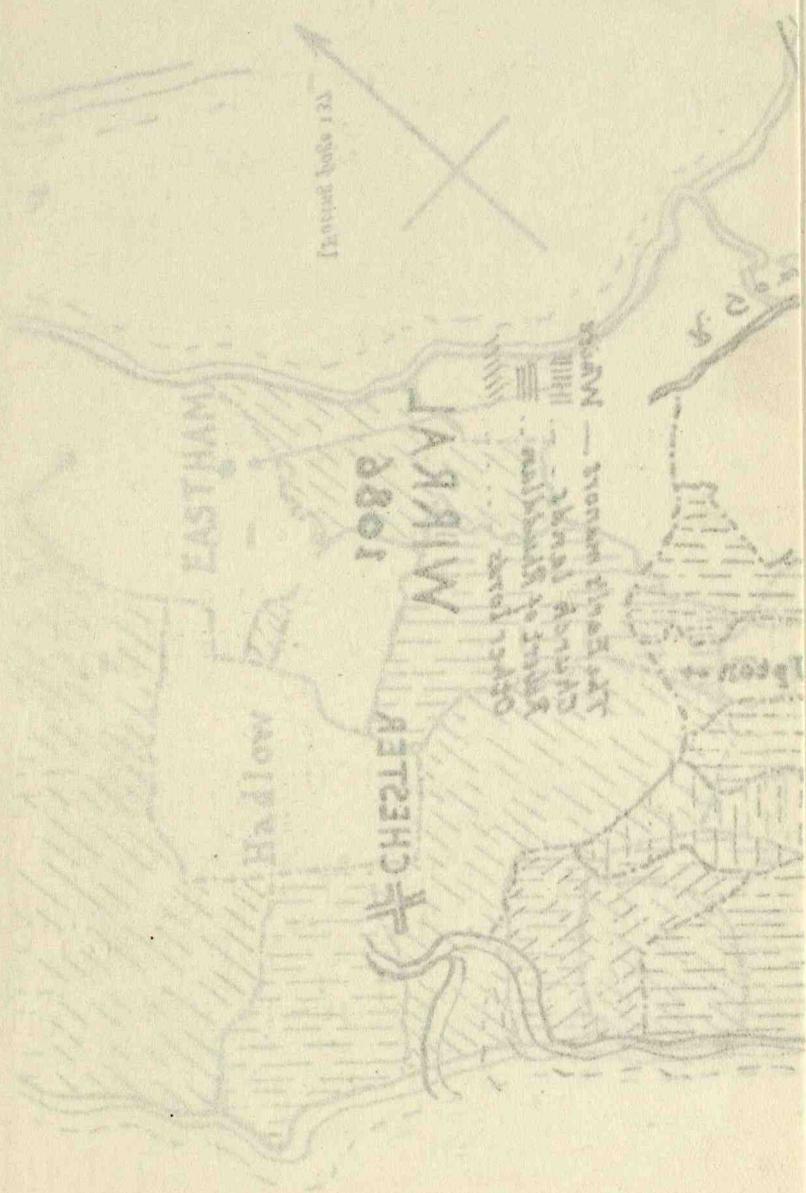
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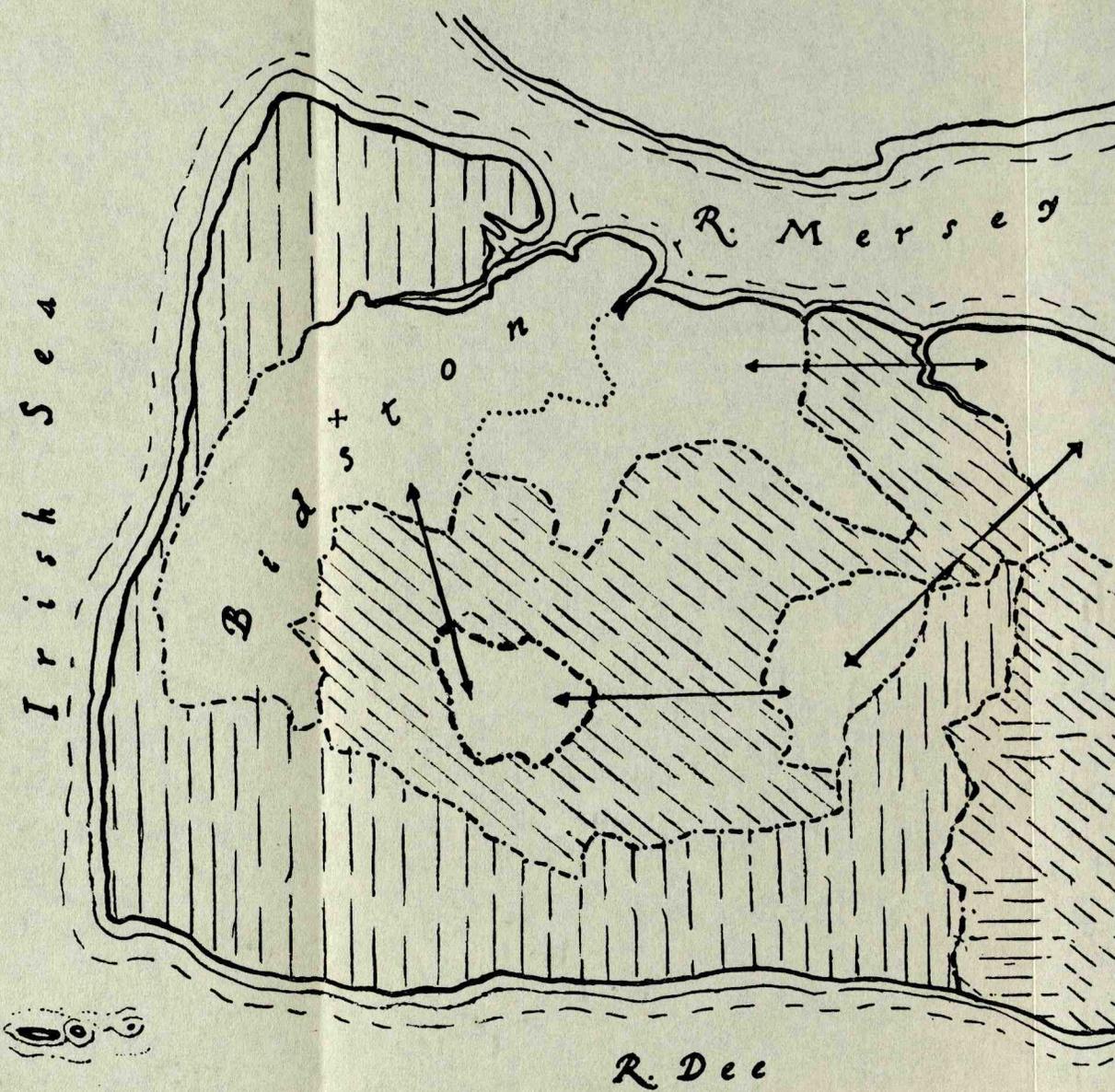
This history was compiled for Mr. E. B. Royden, by whom it has been presented to the Society. The MS. was completed shortly before Mr. Brownbill's death in May 1931, and has therefore not had the benefit of his final oversight and revision. The accounts of the Church and Hall were written for Mr. Royden by Mr. F. H. Cheetham, F.S.A. It has not been found possible to include more than a few of the many illustrations contemplated. The original proposal included an Appendix of Documents, but as many of these have been already printed, this part of the history has been abandoned. A note below will show the documents which it was proposed to print.

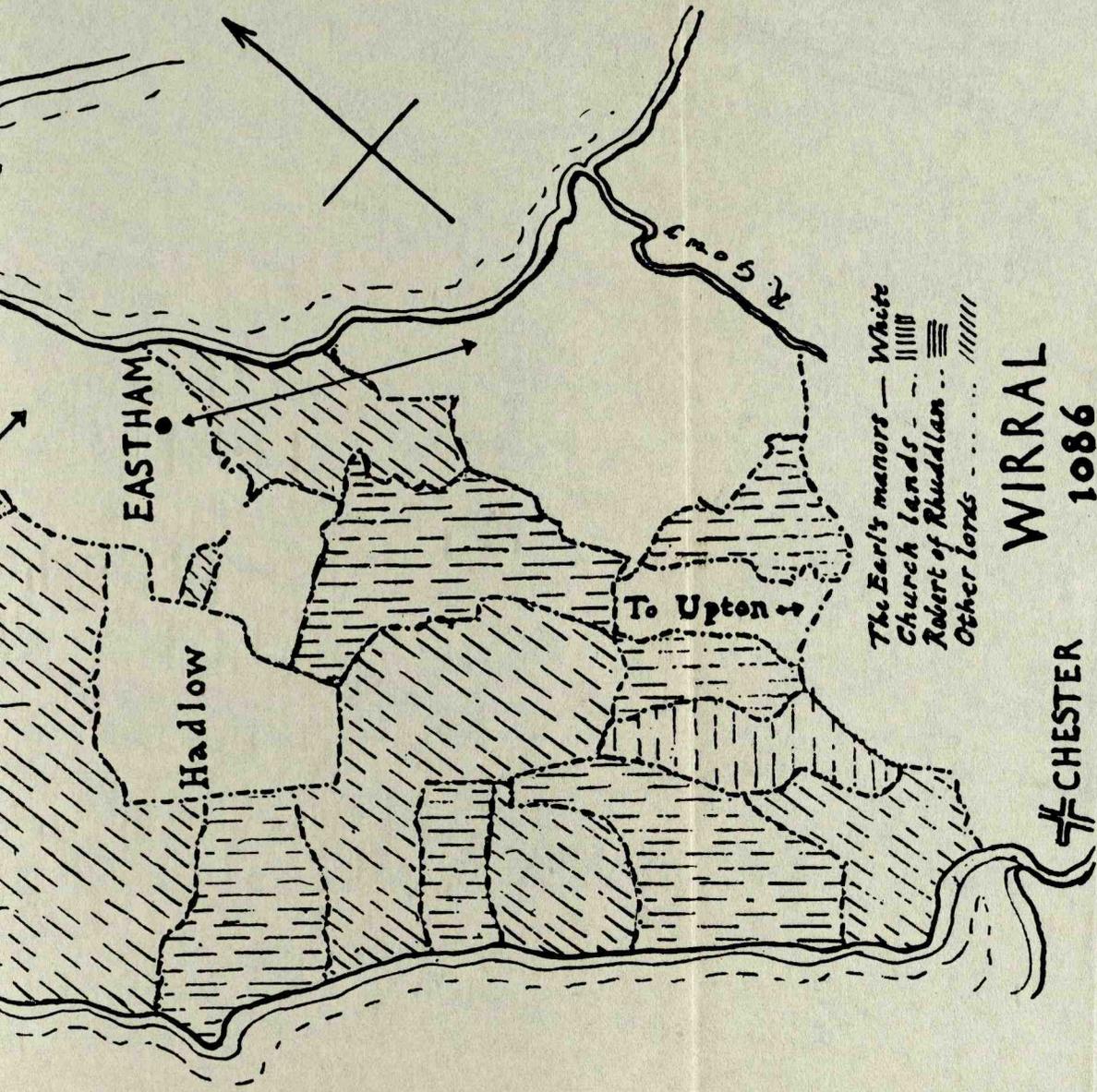
1. The Derby Rental of 1521, printed, with notes, by Mr. W. F. Irvine, M.A., F.S.A., in the *Cheshire Sheaf*, III, vol. 4, pp. 23, etc.
2. Bidston Subsidy Rolls, 1545 and 1625, printed by Mr. Irvine in *Wirral Notes and Queries*, i, 47, 73.
3. Protestation of 1642 for Bidston.
4. Sequestrators' Accounts for Wirral-Bidston entries.
5. Hearth Tax Roll 1663, printed by F. C. Beazley, F.S.A., in the *Cheshire Sheaf*, III, vol. 8, p. 12.
6. Churchwarden's Accounts, 1767-71.
7. Rectorial Tithes, 1775. (See Gastrell, *Notitia Cestr.* (Cheth. Soc.),
8. Inscriptions in Churchyard, copied by F. C. Beazley, F.S.A. His notes are in the Library of the Society of Genealogists.
9. *The Kingston Survey*, 1665. This is in the possession of Lady Alwyne Compton-Vyner, by whose permission rotograph copies were made for Mr. Royden. One copy has been presented to the Birkenhead Public Library and another to the Athenæum Library, Liverpool. The Survey is a volume of some 40 pages, including plans, and the tenants' holdings, with field names and acreages, are given, with references to numbers on the plans. The Survey is entitled "A Survey of the Mannor of Bidstone . . . belonging

unto the Right Hon. John Lord Kingston . . . by Thomas Taylor 1665. The chief plans and Surveys are as follows:—

- Prospect of the manor house of Bidston, with plan of the house and garden.
- Plan of Deer Park and meadows (part of the demesnes).
- Do. of Village and north end.
- Do. of Poulton-cum-Seacombe.
- Do. of the Lord's Moss.
- Do. of part of demesne land.
- Plans of lands in Childer Thornton and Ford.
- Do. of lands in Poulton Lancelyn and Thingwall.
- Plan of lands in Wallasey.
- Do. of lands in Moreton, with names of freeholders.
- Do. of Saughall Massie.
- Do. of whole Bidston Estate, with date 1656, and sketches of Bidston Hall, Sir Ph. Egerton's house (Leasowe Castle), Mr. Coventry's house, Overchurch, etc.
- Plans of later additions (enclosed from common lands).



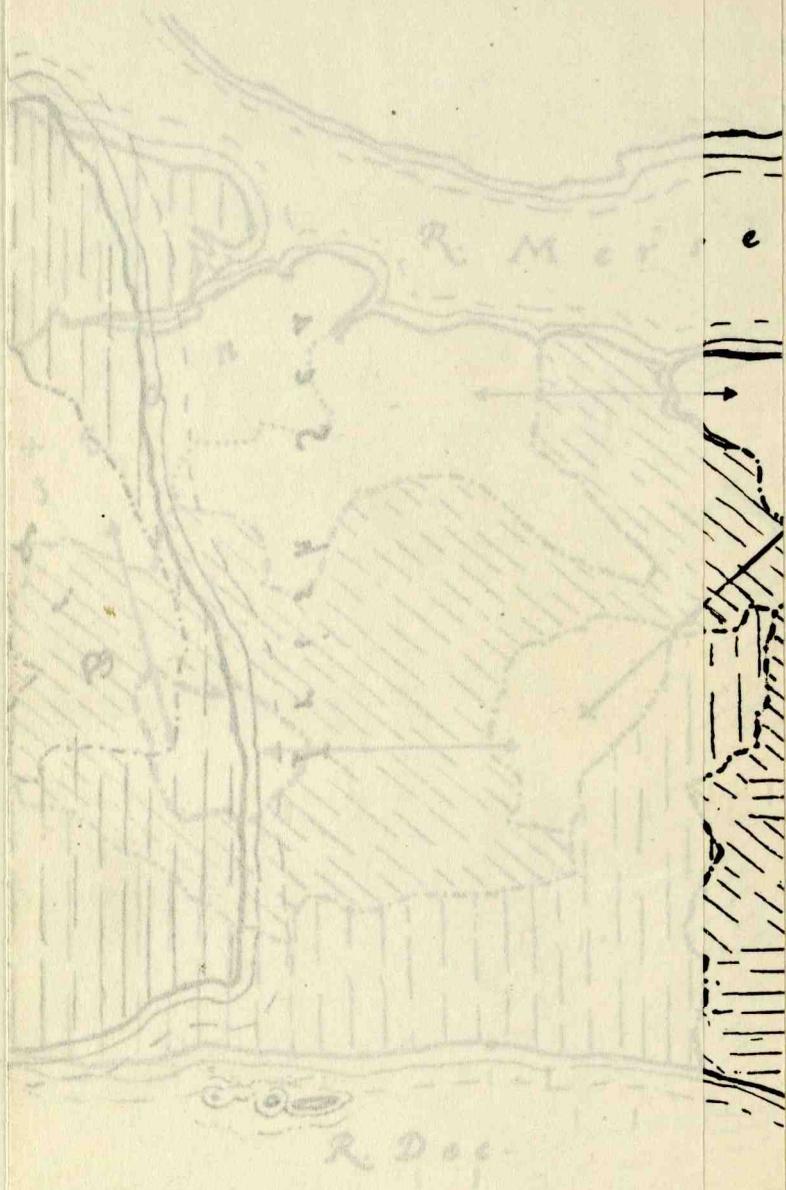




The Earl's manors — White
 Church lands - - - - -
 Robert of Rhuddlan
 Other lords

WIRRAL
1086

CHESTER



CHAPTER I.

GENERAL ACCOUNT.

THE parish of Bidston originally comprised the townships of Bidston in the centre, Moreton and Saughall Massie to the west, Claughton and Birkenhead to the east; the modern parish consists of Bidston with a small part of Claughton and Birkenhead. The parish boundary was walked in 1885. The old parish, therefore, reached half-way across the northern end of Wirral, from the bounds of West Kirby to the Mersey, with a land acreage of about 4,800, but it did not extend to the sea on the north, a small strip of land, partly in West Kirby and partly in Wallasey, intervening. This strip, very narrow at present, was probably a much broader expanse when the parish limits first became fixed; otherwise it is difficult to imagine why Bidston did not go out to the coast. Great inroads have been made by the sea in the past, but these are now checked by the embankments of Wallasey and Hoylake.

The chief physical feature is Bidston Hill, 230 ft. high, a ridge projecting northward till it ends abruptly near Wallasey Pool. On the east side it slopes gradually down to the Mersey; on the west it descends sharply into the central Wirral vale. The physical division corresponds in this case with the manorial history; for the eastern side was given to the priory of Birkenhead, and has in the last century become covered with houses, part of the borough of Birkenhead, while the Mascys and their successors retained the western side, which has remained rural till recently, though in a short time it also may become urban. Happily the greater part of the summit of the hill and its wooded western slope has been secured for the

public. Occasionally, as in 1895 and 1901, the heather and gorse catch fire.

On the western or rural portion, the general slope is northward, ending in the carrs and mossland along the Birket stream and Wallasey Pool. The Fender and Arrowe brooks flow northward through this part to join the Birket coming eastward from West Kirby.

The parish has little connexion with the general history of the country, and until the rise of Birkenhead was almost unknown. Bidston is not named in the earlier Directories. The manorial history and what little is known of the church will be found in the following chapters.

There are few or no archæological remains.¹ A bridge which was discovered beneath the surface in Birkenhead, near the old edge of Wallasey Pool, was probably Roman.

In 1320, Maud, widow of John de Warwyk of Upton was charged with obstructing various roadways, viz. a path at Gildewalleby from Woodchurch to Bedeston, a way in the Newefeld from Moreton to the Ford, a path in the New Meadow from Salghall to Bedeston, a way called Lodeway and Rodeway in the Oulnegrenefeld by the house of Robert the Miller, a way at Sondbrok between Moreton and Upton, and a path from Salghall to Jamismulne in Upton.² Presumably all the obstructions were made within Upton, but the list is useful as showing that there were then public ways between Woodchurch and Bidston, Moreton and Ford, and Saughall Massie and Bidston, as there are to-day. The Sandbrook forms the boundary between Upton and Moreton.

The coroners' presentments entered on the Chester Plea Rolls occasionally give notice of accidents or crimes in the parish. Thus William del Wodeland was killed at Moreton in 1327.³ Richard the Herdemon was accidentally

¹ A fine chisel or axehead, of green stone, found recently, is now in the cottage formerly the "Ring o' Bells."

² Chester Plea R. 33, m. 20.

³ Chester Plea R. 39, m. 14d.

drowned in a marlpit at Saughall Massie in 1350,¹ and John, son of John the Smith of Ford was drowned in a marlpit at Ford in the next year.² In 1408 Thomas Gills made an attack on Richard de Wolton at Claughton, and Richard ran to shelter under a cart and in self-defence struck Thomas with a stick and so killed him ; at Moreton, Roger Cort killed Tile Tynker.³

Other classes of records give some fragments of the acts and grievances of the bygone inhabitants. Henry earl (duke) of Lancaster during his tenure of the lordship (1345-61) was said in 1347 to have cut turves on the " Falles " of Bidston and in 80 acres of the moss ; he also enclosed 6 acres in Bidston wood.⁴ His predecessors, Sir Hamon de Mascy, Oliver de Ingham and Roger Le Strange, had from time to time cut down a hundred oaks in Bidston wood and twenty in Wolveston.⁵ Two Bidston men had entered the forest of Wirral at Bidston carr and killed a hind.⁶ In 1346 William de Stanlegh, forester of Wirral, brought to Chester Castle, a doe found dead in the wood of Budeston ; it was not known by whom it had been killed, and the township was amerced 6s. 8d. This fine was, however, pardoned at the instance of the earl of Lancaster.⁷ The township of Moreton was in 1359 fined for not appearing fully at the judge's eyre in Wirral.⁸

The forester and his claims were not popular. In 1353 the inhabitants complained that every year he took " great sums " from Bidston and other townships for feeding their sheep in the woods there.⁹ Wirral was disforested in 1376, and the fines paid by the townships include : ¹⁰

¹ Chester Plea R. 62, m. 21.

² *Ibid.*, 63, m. 23A.

³ *Ibid.*, 111, mm. 9, 15.

⁴ Chester Forest R. 4, mm. 12d. 13.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 3, m. 5.

⁶ *Ibid.*, m. 7.

⁷ Chester Plea R. 58, m. 6.

⁸ Chester Eyre R. 4, m. 36.

⁹ Chester Plea R. 65, m. 4.

¹⁰ *Trans. Hist. Soc. Lancs. & Ches.*, lix, 175, 176. Henry le Bruyn (see Moreton) also paid in Pensby.

	£	s.	d.
Claughton cum Grange	2	16	0
Budeston cum le Forde	2	8	0
Moreton	3	9	0
Salghale Mascy	2	6	0
Budeston cum le Forde by the hands of John Dyconson	0	12	0
Salghale Mascy by the hands of Robert Baunvile	0	11	6
Claghton cum les Granges	0	14	0
Morton by the hands of Henry le Bruyn	0	17	3

The record is defective, so that the totals cannot be ascertained.

The Mise, established about 1400, as a standard for the contributions of the various townships in Cheshire, was thus assessed on the parish of Bidston, Birkenhead, as the seat of a monastery, not being rated :

	£	s.	d.
Budestone cum le Foarde, dominus pro dimidia	0	16	0
Claughton cum le Grange, „ „ dimidia	0	19	2
Moreton „ „ tercia	1	3	2
Salghall Massey „ „ dimidia	0	15	2
	<hr/>		
	£3	13	6

We should have expected that at Bidston, where there were no free tenants, the lord would have been responsible for the whole. Possibly there were tenants on lease or other conditions, such as Richard de Norton and James Strangways, who in 1419 complained that a great number of people from Wallasey had trespassed on their several fishery at Buddeston.¹

A record of the Chester musters of 1544 has been preserved. It shows that, out of 546 bowmen and billmen in the hundred of Wirral appearing, Claughton supplied 13, Moreton 18, Saughall 13 and Bidston 8—52 in all.²

¹ Chester Plea R. 123, m. 45*d*.

² *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xix (2), App. 484. The average is 13 each, but Moreton has 5 extra and Bidston 5 less.

During the Civil War Wirral was at first held by the Royalists, but a correspondent wrote thus to the Duke of Ormond on 23 September 1644, from Chester: ¹

This last night the enemy possessed themselves of Berkett House in Worrall, wherein we had a small garrison for the securing of the passage from hence to Liverpool, which will now be much more straitened than formerly and I am afraid will not long hold out.

Liverpool had been recaptured by Prince Rupert in May 1644, but was again lost in November. The dominant men in Bidston, the Earl of Derby and Sir Thomas Powell, were zealous Royalists, and their lands were seized in 1644 when the Cheshire Parliamentarians, under Sir William Brereton, became strong enough to do so. The local conditions may be realised from the following note in the Sequestration Accounts of 1644 and 1645: ²

For the residue of the demesne grounds att Birkenhead that could not be sett in the yeare aforesaid by reasoun of the greate wante and scarcitie of cattle that were at that saide tyme in our countrey in regard of the enemyes great plunder, it was thought fitt and convenient to be ordered by the Governor and the rest of the Committees at Hootton, that our neighbouringe friends in the upper division of the hundred of Wirral, whose habitations were not farre distant from the enemyes quarters att Chester, should have libertie and license graunted unto them to bringe their cattle into the said demesne lands att Birkett aforesaid for the better securinge and preservinge of their said cattle from the said plunder of the aforesaid enemye. And alsoe Captaine John Glegge his troops quarteringe in Claughton Grange neare adjoyninge unto Birkett aforesaid (being in the moneth of July) were all greased in and uppon the said demesne grounds.

The Civil War, as will be seen, led to the loss of Bidston to the Earl of Derby, and the Powells also must have been greatly impoverished.

In the time of Charles II the inhabitants of Bidston-with-Ford were presented for not repairing a place there

¹ T. Carte, *Ormond Letters*, i, 65.

² Harl. MS. 2018, f. 37.

called the Foarde Hill (1663), and later (1681) for not repairing the highway between Chester and Reedes Bridge [in Moreton]; also, at the same date, the inhabitants of Bidston and the lordship of Birket Wood were presented for not repairing the road between Wallasey Pool and Claughton.¹

In Adams's *Index Villaris* (1690) four townships are mentioned: *Bidston*, with Lord Kingston as lord of the manor (showing that the author's information was behind the times), *Moreton*, "the seat of a baronet" (referring to Mockbeggar Hall, in Leasowe, outside the township), *Saughall Massie*, and *Birkenhead*, "the seat of a baronet."

A copy of the Poll Book for the parliamentary election for Cheshire in 1727 had been preserved, and the following are the details so far as the parish of Bidston is concerned. The candidates were Sir Robert Salusbury Cotton on the Tory side and Charles Cholmondeley and John Crewe on the Whig; Cotton headed the poll with 3,348 votes, and Cholmondeley, also elected, had 2,820; Crewe was 223 behind him. Birkenhead, Claughton and Bidston are not recorded; probably there were no qualified voters in these townships. Samuel Johnson, however, who voted for Cotton in Wallasey, lived in Bidston, apparently in a house near the present Wirral golf course. In Moreton Joseph Edwards, Joseph Nangreave, Thomas Stanford and John Webster voted for Cotton, Thomas Robinson voted for the two opposition candidates, but George Wilson divided his votes, one for Cotton and one for Cholmondeley. Thomas Ansdale did the same in Saughall Massie, where Thomas Harrison plumped for Cotton.²

Early in the eighteenth century the encroachments of the sea appear to have caused alarm, even in Moreton, which did not extend to the actual sea coast. The

¹ Chester Crown Books, 5, ff. 14, 212.

² *Cheshire Sheaf*, III, ii, 45; iii, 69, 74, 84.

following entry by Mr. Vyner in the Kingston Survey may be cited :

August the 24, 1743. I R.V. being at Bidstone and some of the tenants having expressed an apprehension that the sea gathered fast upon the Leasow I obtained from Hoff [Hough], the heir of the Meols family, a sight of the Map of his Estate and of his common called the Claryl,¹ which we guess to have been made about 1690. And by the scale, which we concluded to be of Perches though not said to be so, it appeared that from the Reed nooke to a stone by the Sea side on the left of Mockbeggar Hall, parting as there said, Wallazey common from the Claryll, it was in length 80 perches.

From the edge of a line to be drawn across the triangular piece of common belonging to Moreton and left out upon the inclosure thereof, as we guess made about 1688, perpendicularly cutting it, to a stone at the edge of the sea parting Mr. Hoff's Claryll from Meols common, after the same manner it is 80 perches or thereabouts.

From the West end of Meols inclosures in Meolstown streight to the sea we find it by the same map 55 perches.

A further reference to the danger from the sea occurs in the will of Thomas (son of Jeremiah) Wilson of Moreton, dated 1775. He ordered that "the closes of land called the Two Goods Ovens and the Two Pasture Gates, being my share of Moreton Pasture, be sold by my executors; but if the Two Pasture Gates cannot be sold by reason of the encroachment of the sea," a close called the Marled Heaps was to be sold.

In 1771 the first Bidston Lighthouse, an octagonal tower, was built by the Corporation of Liverpool.² In war time the keeper was expected to "give alarm upon any intelligence of an enemy," and subsequently the Government established a chain of stations, furnished with semaphore signals, from Bidston to Holyhead. This lasted until

¹ Leasowe lighthouse stands on this ground.

² A note added in the Kingston Survey states that a rent of £1 a year from 18 July 1771 was due for the Lighthouse. The Corporation was succeeded in the management by the Mersey Dock Board in 1857.

1815. The telegraph service at Bidston, to give notice of the arrival of ships, was established in 1763; 58 flag-staffs were in use in 1795, and in course of time about a hundred signalling poles were erected, extending from some distance north of the lighthouse down to and beyond the windmill. Some of these were public, but most belonged to merchant houses in Liverpool, who thus secured early notice of the arrival of their vessels off the port. They lasted till about 1840 when the electric telegraph superseded the old systems. The existing lighthouse was built in 1872, a little to the north of the old one, and continued in use from 12 April 1873 until 9 October 1913. The Observatory adjoining it was built in 1866.

The signal poles were a conspicuous feature of the view by 1785, when a performance at a Manchester theatre was advertised to conclude thus: ¹

An exact representation of the Vessels coming round the Rock—Bidstone Lighthouse—The Ceremony of the Signals—A view of the Fort and River Mersey—with the Landing of Harlequin at Liverpool.

About 1765, says Dr. Hume, the country people used to assemble and catch eels in the bog-holes and carry them in tubs to Liverpool to be exchanged for flour; and he adds: "During the month of October 1865 the process of spearing for eels was going on in the Birket, while a working-man was explaining to me that in one place the bog was 15 feet deep." ²

Dr. Hume has given an account of the old-time life of Bidston people, derived from account books in the hands of John Urmson of Bidston Lighthouse (1870), extending over some generations of the Warton and Urmson families, say from 1760 to 1827; and also from personal recollections. ³ In that period the roads were bad, repaired with

¹ *Cheshire Sheaf*, III, ii, 117.

² *Trans. Hist. Soc.*, xviii, 17.

³ *Trans. Hist. Soc.*, xxvii, 131.

shingle from the shore, and the use of saddle and pillion was common, but pillions were disused about 1830. The accounts from 1760 to 1780 show that in a Moreton farmer's household the yearly wages of a labourer were £4 to £5 15s., a boy £1 to £3, a woman £2 10s. to £3 5s. and a "wench" £1 5s. They record payments at cock-fights, Upton fair (in April), prison-bar play, drawing for the militia, the court (perhaps the manor court at Bidston), dancing master, "neck-cutting" or harvest home, and "merry nights," or social gatherings, where the guests paid a small sum for the benefit of the persons providing the entertainment.

The "cake play" came after harvest. "In those days, people gleaned after the reapers, and the grain so procured was made into flour, which the wife of some respectable labouring man baked into cakes. These were played for, at a nominal value, in some private house, never the ale-house," and yielded a few shillings profit to the cake-maker. At "prison-bars" different townships contended against each other and thus led to a public assembly of the country-side; the contests concluded with a fight. The horse races were at Upton in the Big Croft; but there were foot races and donkey races at Oxton. "A cocking at Will Corf's" is mentioned in 1784, and in 1874 the cock-pit was still to be seen on the side of Bidston Hill. A house on the eastern slope of the hill below the Observa-
 tory bears the inscription ^C W E, supposed to be for some
 1775
 of the Corf family.¹ Cockfights were usual at Easter or Whitsuntide.

"Neck-cutting" is thus described: "The last few stalks of grain were plaited, as they grew, into a band of three strands, and the reapers threw their sickles at this; the one who finally cut it down was the winner." Accidents, however, were frequent, and the custom died out.

¹ *Wirral N. & Q.*, i., 33.

There was an "egging" at Easter. At a "sewing" the young women assembled to work thus in the afternoon and the young men joined them after the day's work was over. An entertainment followed.

The farmers carted coals gratuitously for the local blacksmith, and he in return sharpened pickaxes and other tools free. On the day of bringing home the coals (the "coaling"), bread and cheese and ale were given to the men, and the evening often wound up with a dance.

"Gutet Tuesday," or Shrove Tuesday, was followed next day by "Furmety day," when frumenty, or shelled wheat boiled in new milk, was eaten. "Rushbearing" seems to have taken place on 26 May.¹ This may have had something to do with the dedication of the parish church, which is unknown. Other local phrases and words are explained in the article quoted. The "push plough" was pressed forward by the breast of the man who guided it, not drawn by horses or oxen. It was suited for certain parts of Bidston Moss and used chiefly in winter. In 1874 it was still used in brickfields for peeling the sod away. "Feighing" was taking the sod from the marl; "fending" was clearing the watercourses or fenders. A curious entry was "Pade for stoping the say, 7 men . . . 8s." This was not on the coast, but at Wallasey Pool, which sometimes flooded the marsh.

Prices of produce are of course given regularly. Gorse cost 2s. a load and had a double use; if withered, it was burned to heat the oven; if green, it was beaten on a stone, mixed with oats, and given to the horses, being supposed to make their coats silky. Later, a gorse mill was erected for crushing it.

There are some references to schools and teaching.

¹ Perhaps the day of St. Augustine of Canterbury, or a festival of St. Chad.

Apparently a master went round, giving lessons in the evenings and lodging at the farmers' houses. In 1827 a school lay of 1s. 6d. was imposed. One of the farmer's daughters was sent to a boarding school; eight guineas a year was paid for her board and 15s. for her education; her dancing-master charged £1.

Dr. Hume gives an account of one of the families who had kept these account books, and it is interesting as showing how they migrated, and are found first in one township and then in another. The John Warton who begins the pedigree seems to be the John who was baptized at Bidston 28 April 1730, as son of John and Margery Warton of Bidston. He married Ellen Stanley of Leasoweside, and had a son Thomas and four daughters. He lived as a farmer at Moreton, but had a leasehold property at Bidston, to which he removed when his son took over the Moreton farm. From the Kingston Survey it would appear that this was the tenement of Arthur Parbolt in 1665, the house being situated to the north of the church, in School Lane.

The son, Thomas Warton, who was twice married, left a numerous family. After a while he left the Moreton farm and went to Claughton, and lived there even when after his father's death he kept on the Bidston farm. In 1820 he rented the whole of the marsh and lived in a cottage there, until in 1825 he settled down in his father's house. One of his sons, William Warton, was the owner of the account books in 1870.

It was about 1820 that the change in the fortunes of the two sides of the parish began, Bidston remaining rural, while Birkenhead became a little suburb of Liverpool, "across the Water," and quickly expanded into a considerable town. The figures of the earlier Census returns are :

	1801.	1811.	1821.	1831.
Bidston	199	198	257	251
Moreton	210	230	273	247
Saughall Massie.	98	117	165	143
Birkenhead	110	105	200	2,569
Claughton ¹	67	88	119	224

In the 1801 Census all were engaged in agriculture, except the following: Trades and handicrafts—Bidston 13, Moreton 5, Saughall 1, Birkenhead 44, Claughton 2; but under the heading “all others” there are 143 in Bidston, i.e. more than two-thirds of the people, and 8 in Birkenhead. The figures in Bidston township may perhaps be explained by supposing that the enumerator included all the females (100) in the “all others”; but even then 43 of the 99 males would be in this unemployed class, a high proportion of aged men, boys, and “retired” or “gentlemen,” in a place where there were only about 30 dwellings.

Although in 1768 the churchwardens paid 4s. for “killing two foxes,” and in 1767 they gave 3s. to the “Noc-torum folks” for a she-fox caught in the park, game was preserved in Bidston for nearly a century later. A lively account of a fox-hunt at Bidston was contributed by G. W. B. to a periodical called *The Sportsman* in 1847. As it mentions Sir Thomas Stanley, who died in 1841, it must be a reminiscence of some ten years earlier. The writer tells us that, while staying in a Liverpool hotel to await the result of a trial, he learnt that there was to be a meet at Bidston and found also that a friend was one of those going to take part. At his suggestion he hired a horse and crossed the river by the steamer to Woodside, and he and the party from Liverpool were soon riding slowly towards Bidston lighthouse. The side visible from Liverpool was bare of trees and he had been entirely sceptical

¹ Part of Claughton was in Woodchurch, but the whole appears to be reckoned in Bidston in the first Census returns. The returns of 1811 and 1821 were usually not fresh enumerations.

as to any "cover," but on arriving at the top of the hill he found there were "two sides to a hill as well as two sides to a question":

As I rode along the hill, I thought I had never beheld so beautiful, so interesting and so varied a sight. I was at the foot of the lighthouse, and above me, in the balcony, was a well-dressed group of ladies, who had just quitted their carriages to obtain a more commanding view.

After describing the view and noticing the telegraph and the shipping poles, he continues:

The cover occupies the whole of the west side of the hill, from the summit to the base; it is about two furlongs in length and from five to six hundred yards in breadth, thickly planted and well furnished with underwood. Two or three dykes, running from top to bottom, divide it into sections. . . . Along the top of the hill runs a wall, defending the cover, but not too high to prevent the pedestrians from looking over and enjoying the whole. Along the wall is a narrow carriage way, generally the position chosen by the horsemen and lady amateurs.

He says that "game of all kinds started to view," mentioning pheasants, woodcocks and hares. No fox was found till the extreme end of the cover was reached. The huntsman sounded his horn and the pack followed:

The game was now afoot, and though completely screened from the dogs by the thick underwood, was plainly visible to all on the brow of the hill; and it was curious to see him turning and doubling, misleading the pack to the edge of the wood as if he had actually gone off, then passing between two or three dogs, still keeping himself invisible. Playing with them thus for a while, so as to confuse them, he went straight down the whole length of the cover pursued closely by the dogs. . . . No sooner had he arrived at the [north] end than he hurriedly retraced his steps. . . . Reynard lost not a moment at the south end; time was precious; and already the dogs had detected the dodge and with shouts of triumph were coming again full speed. He cleared the wall at one bound, breaking cover most beautifully. . . . The worthy baronet, for whom we all waited, at this moment gave his horse head; and I cleared the hedge and was soon at the side of the huntsman. The pace was actually killing for the time;

but after a run of two miles Reynard sheltered himself in a wood. It was not long before we came to a place called Bromborough ; but the huntsman desired me to turn aside from fox and hounds and take the road, unless I preferred swimming an arm of the sea.

The fox was pursued to Eastham, but was prevented from taking refuge in the wood and made for Hooton, where he was killed. The hounds were Sir Thomas Stanley's.

Some years later Albert Smith introduced Bidston into his romance of *Christopher Tadpole*, published in 1847-8. The hero, a boy who had spent most of his life in a salt-mine in mid-Cheshire, is being conducted by his rescuer, the showman Hickory, along the top of Bidston Hill :

They were travelling along a bold headland, on the ridge of which their path lay. Hitherto they had gone for some little distance over broken ground, encumbered with large blocks of stone, and dug into deep quarries and pits that it required some little caution to avoid in the failing light ; but now they had arrived at a beaten track and all was smooth before them. It was not yet so dark that Christopher could not observe the extensive panorama around him, although the horizon was already veiled in shade. But his attention was principally attracted by a swarm of lights that he was looking down upon on his right, the like of which he had never before witnessed.

They rose, bright and twinkling, even in the last gleam of day, one above the other, until the most distant and the faintest appeared to mingle with the peeping stars that one by one were coming out in the blue air. Their reflection gleamed and quivered in a great water that flowed between them and the headland ; and they spangled the banks in long array, until they got so hazy at the far-off points that they caught the eye only at intervals. But they were not all stationary. Upon the shore, and on the water, they moved along, crossing and recrossing one another, and mixing with the general mass, until all appeared to be endowed with bewildering motion.

"That's a larger mine than we've got," said Christopher, as he looked in wonderment at the illumination, his only idea of a number of lights being connected with the working of the mines.

"It isn't a mine," replied Hickory, "as you shall see to-morrow. That's a great town, and those are the lamps. It's Liverpool."

As far as Christopher's knowledge was concerned, it might have

been Kamschatka. But the sight was so riveting that he could not take his eyes from it, scarcely even to notice the lighthouse under whose very walls they passed, with its array of signal masts that looked as if somebody was either preparing a great display of fireworks or making ready to set sails and carry the entire hill, lighthouse, telegraph and all, out to sea, upon the first fair wind. . . .

Whilst Hickory was talking, he led the donkey from the ridge, and they descended towards a small nest of houses, as the hill shut out the expanse of view and the cluster of lights that had fixed Christopher's attention. Hickory's spirits seemed to rise as he got lower : mercurial, indeed, in their property. . . . Nor did he stop [singing] until he arrived at the entrance of the hamlet.

It was a little quiet, grey village—so very grey, indeed, and venerable, and quaint, that no flaunting red brick had dared to show itself and break the uniform tint of its gabled antiquity. The houses were grey, and the wall-fences were grey, and so was the church tower. So also was the pedestal of the sundial in the graveyard, that mutely spoke its lesson on corroding time to all who cared to heed it. And the old grange, with its mullioned windows and ivy-covered gateway, was the greyest of all ; there was scarcely any surmising as to when it had been a green, damp level young house. None could have given the information but the church tower ; and when that spoke, it was but of the newly past, the fleeting present, or the call to the future Heaven.

Hickory led his little companion by the church, and at last they stopped at a small hostel, with which he seemed to be well acquainted. There was yet light enough for the sign to attract Christopher's attention. It represented a party of industrious individuals, one of whom was as grey as the village, performing certain of those triple-bob complications with ropes and bells, the achievement of which we at times read of in the newspapers, with as clear a notion of what task has been surmounted as though the chief actors in it had squared the circle, boxed the compass backwards, composed a fugue, or tried to pull down our sublimest creed to a peppery squabble of ecclesiastical stonework and linen-drapery.

And on the other side was quite a different picture. There was the lighthouse they had passed ; and all the firework poles and a windmill ; and two huntsmen going up hill like mad ; and one more, who was not going to be beaten at any price, coming in at the side ; and the fox at the top ; all very exciting to behold, but withal calculated to confuse the mind of the casual traveller, as to the exact simple sign to be made out from all this pictorial display.

Hickory, however, said, "Here's the *Ring o' Bells* at Bidston," and asked Christopher to make out the reading, especially the "first rate poetry": and Christopher read:

SIMON CROFT.

Walk in, my friends, and taste my beer and liquor;
If your pockets be well stored you'll find it come the quicker.
But want of that has caused both grief and sorrow;
Therefore you must pay to-day; I will trust to-morrow.

They put up for the night there, and there follows a description of the "low-roofed room" in which they sat, where Christopher was "lost in admiration of the scroll-work chalked on the floor." Mr. Irvine writes: "This pretty custom of adorning the stone floors of the farm-houses in Bidston is still [1893] kept up, but it is not done with chalk, as Smith imagined. The stone is of a light colour, and a pattern is traced on it with elder and dock leaves, which leave a dark green stain, the result being remarkably effective."¹

This inn was the little house seen beyond the church in the almost contemporary view of Bidston church reproduced in the present volume. It still exists, but is no longer a public house. Albert Smith, according to Mrs. Gamlin, "had one gratifying recollection of the neighbourhood [of Birkenhead], the "Ham and Egg Shop" in old Bidston village, in reality the village inn, the *Ring o' Bells*, which obtained its notoriety from the tasty manner in which the ham and eggs were served."²

Birkenhead having grown into a town, in 1833 a Board of Improvement Commissioners was appointed to govern it and the associated township of Claughton. The rest of the parish was not much affected for many years, the building of houses at first extending along the river side both north and south, and not inland. In 1866 was opened the railway from Docks station, in Bidston, on the boundary of Birkenhead, to Hoylake and West Kirby,

¹ *Trans. Hist. Soc.*, xlv. 73.

² *Memories of Birkenhead*, 8.

with stations at Bidston, Leasowe, Moreton and Meols¹ within the parish; then in 1884 the line from Chester and North Wales to Seacombe was begun, having a station called Upton at Ford and a junction with the other line at Bidston station. The Mersey Tunnel was opened in 1886, and by connecting with the older lines has had a great effect on building in Wirral. The Census returns will show the changes:

	1841.	1861.	1881.	1891.	1901.	1911.	1921
Bidston . . .	291	282	270	254	465	969	899
Moreton . . .	330	361	424	464	597	970	4,029
Saughall Massie .	152	202	191	189	186	210	315

Bidston Hill had hitherto been a great open space, with fine sea breezes and magnificent views, but about 1880 sites for building were needed and many houses were erected, so that it was feared that a favourite resort would be lost to the public use. However, by liberal private subscriptions and help from the Birkenhead Corporation, a large part of the hill top was acquired by 1897, and a great part of the wooded slopes to the west and north has since from time to time been secured, and on 28 March 1914, King George visited the place and opened the last extension. The following is a detailed record of the acquisitions, which amount to nearly 100 acres in all:

Land.	Date of purchase.	Price.
a. r. p.		
24 0 11	. . 1894 27 April	£5,800
22 1 36	. . 1897 2 Sept.	6,450
1 0 30	. . 1897 „	300
14 1 27	. . 1897 24 Nov.	5,000
4 2 5 $\frac{1}{2}$. . 1900 30 April	2,260
22 0 13 ²	. . 1908 2 Nov.	10,500
8 0 16	. . 1914 28 May	5,000
<hr/>		
96 3 18 $\frac{1}{2}$		<hr/> £35,310 <hr/>

¹ By recent changes of boundaries this station is now in Meols.

² Known as Taylor's Wood.

The following description, written by E.Q. thirty years ago, shows what has been secured :

Bidston Hill commands a view of the valleys of the Mersey and Dee. To the east is the Mersey. In the foreground is Birkenhead, which though a separate, large and important community [distinct from Liverpool] looks from here like part of an immense city which a river has divided into two unequal parts. The scene is often obscured by smoke, arising from such a concentration of life and activity ; yet occasionally, in early morn, or after a storm of wind and rain from the west, to certain minds is peculiar and attractive. The configuration of the valley through which the Mersey flows, its varying breadth, the course it takes, and the vast communities on its banks, may then be seen. Some idea of the extent of Liverpool and the nature of its site can be realised, and many of its principal buildings, crowned with spire, dome or tower, distinguished ; also the mass which crowds the ground, ever rising eastward of the river, and extending in breadth a distance of six or eight miles from Walton Hill on the north to Mossley Hill on the south, and far beyond.

Whoever prefers natural scenery needs only to turn his back and look to the west, when all is changed.

There lies before him a valley ten or twelve miles broad—a sea of green, broken here and there by a church, group of cattle, farmhouse or clump of trees, from within which a tiny mere may glisten, and everywhere hedgerows separating the fields and making them look like garden plots, on all which the light is ever playing and, in giving them different shades, almost making them to assume different forms. The eye ranges over the valley and beyond the Dee—the course of which can only be guessed, for the banks are too high for the river to be seen, except where it joins the sea at Hilbre Island—and up the mountain slopes in Wales, which the sunlight makes to look beautiful and wonderfully distinct though twenty miles away ; and far away in the distance to the mountain ranges in which are Moel Siabod and Snowdon, with Penmaenmawr and the Ormesheads, like their outriders, running into the sea.

Away northwards stretches the Lancashire coast towards Blackpool, with Black Combe in Cumberland sometimes visible. Even the Isle of Man has been seen. Of course here, as everywhere else, the views are more or less distinct and extensive, depending on atmospheric conditions, but are never without interest, and never

without the spectator feeling that on Bidston a pure and bracing air is all around him in which the " odour of brine from the ocean " may mingle with that from the pines on the slopes below.

All lovers of what is beautiful and interesting may pray that this home and studio of nature be never closed, but that the views of hill, valley, city and sea, which are favourable to, and often produce, the feeling of rest and peace, may be ever open, equally to the man of toil as of leisure.

CHAPTER II.

BIDSTON IN DOMESDAY BOOK.

ORMEROD begins his account of the parish by stating that all of its four townships are "omitted in the Domesday Survey." As he makes similar statements about other townships, it is needful to say that "omitted" should in practically every case be altered to "not mentioned by name." The lands are there, but included in the record of other townships or manors. There were in Cheshire in 1086, when Domesday Book was compiled, only two tenants in chief in the county—the bishop, with whom went the canons of St. Werburgh's, and the earl; and they appear to have rendered a very complete account of their demesne estates and the lands held by their under-tenants.

From its later history the parish of Bidston is readily identified with the 7 hides which Hamon [de Mascy] held in 1086 of the Earl of Chester in the great manor of Eastham, which seems originally to have occupied most of the Mersey side of Wirral. The annexed sketch map will show roughly how the hundred was at the date of the Survey partitioned between the bishop and the canons of St. Werburgh, the Earl and his tenants, Robert of Rhuddlan and other lay lords. Eastham, as it then was, not the township or even the parish of later days, is thus described in the great Survey:

Earl Hugh holds ESTHAM. Earl Edwin held it in the time of King Edward [1066]. There are 22 hides that pay gold, and land for as many ploughs. In the demesne are 2 ploughs and 4 serfs; and there are 14 villeins and 10 bordars with 6 ploughs. There is a mill, and 2 radmans and a priest.

Of the land of the manor

Mundret holds 2 hides [Stoak and Arrowe],

Hugh 2 hides [Brimstage and Oxton],

William 1 hide [Whitby],

Walter $\frac{1}{2}$ hide [Netherpool],

Hamon 7 hides [Bidston parish].

Robert 1 hide [qy. part of Tranmere].

Robert $\frac{1}{2}$ hide [qy. rest of Tranmere].

In demesne there are 4 ploughs and 8 oxmen (*bovarii*), and there are 22 villeins, 11 bordars, 5 radmans and 2 Frenchmen, with 9 ploughs.

The whole manor was worth £24 clear annual value in King Edward's time, and afterwards £4. The earl's demesne is now worth £4, and his men's land 112s. [i.e. £9 12s. in all, less than half the value in 1066].

The suggestions made by Professor Tait¹ and others as to the position of the subtenants' lands are inserted above in square brackets, but it may be worth while to indicate how the identifications are established, or at least rendered probable.

Mundret was the farmer of the city of Chester, rendering to the earl £70 yearly and a mark of gold, so that he must have been a "substantial man." In addition he farmed all the earl's pleas in the county and hundred courts for a further £50 and a mark of gold. He held 1 hide in the manor of Upton by Chester, 1 hide at Chowley and $\frac{1}{2}$ hide at Bartington. He also held of the Earl a manor in Suffolk called Sotterley, where his heir in the time of Henry III was Edmund de Sotterley,² and as an Edmund de Soterlegh occurs also at Stoak and Arrowe in Wirral³ it would seem that these townships formed the 2 hides "in Eastham" which Mundret had in 1086. One of the links between Mundret and Edmund may be the Gilbert son of Mundrei who attested an early grant to St. Wer-

¹ *Domesday Survey of Cheshire* (Chet. Soc.), 111

² Farrer, *Honors and Knight's Fees*, ii, 237.

³ Stewart-Brown, *Chester County Court R.* (Chet. Soc.), p. xlvii; Ormerod, ii, 387, 526.

burgh's Abbey.¹ The other manors held by Mundret do not give any assistance.

Hugh is identified with Hugh Fitz Norman, whose descendants had Brimstage and Oxton. The other Hughs named in Domesday Book do not seem to have held unidentified lands in Eastham district. William is taken to be William Malbank, whose descendants are later found to be lords of Whitby; and Walter to be Walter de Vernon, the only Walter occurring in the Cheshire Domesday. Netherpool is suggested as Walter's $\frac{1}{2}$ hide, because Walter de Vernon had several manors in the neighbourhood, and Netherpool from its size is suitable.

Hamon de Mascy is the only Hamon named in Cheshire in 1086, and as his descendants were lords of Bidston, and as the size of the parish justifies so high an assessment as 7 hides, the identification may be regarded as certain. In the case of the two Roberts, however, the identification of the land with Tranmere is speculative merely. It lies adjacent to Bidston, and appears anciently to have been held in two parts—two-thirds and one-third, corresponding to the hide and $\frac{1}{3}$ hide of the Survey. In later times the larger division had the Praers family of Crewe for overlords, but no *Robert de Praers* occurs in Cheshire in 1086. The smaller part may have been held by Robert of Rhuddlan, who held extensively in Wirral, being lord of Wallasey. The chief early family in Tranmere were the "Walenses," who may have come in from Wallasey under Robert de Rhuddlan's lordship.

After 1086 considerable changes were made in the ownership of lands in Wirral, but they do not seem to have affected Bidston, though they had much to do with the history of the other portions of Eastham, the new abbey of St. Werburgh being endowed with some of the Earl's manors there.

The brief summary in Domesday Book does not enable

¹ Tait, *Chartul. of Chester Abbey* (Chet. Soc.), 234.

us to determine how many of the Frenchmen, radmans, etc., were then settled in Bidston parish, or how many of the ploughs were at work on the land there; but it may be noticed that the clear value of the 14 hides held by the Earl's men was 112s., an average of 8s. a hide, so that the value of Bidston would be a moiety, i.e. 56s. a year, with possibly a moiety also of the cultivators—20; two ploughs on the demesne, at Bidston itself, and four or five on the later townships, Claughton with Wolton, Moreton and Saughall Massie. Birkenhead, as a settlement, probably did not exist till the monastery was established there. The summary leaves us without any indication of Hamon's predecessor in this manor.

CHAPTER III.

THE MASCY DESCENT.

HAMON DE MASCY appears to have obtained the release of Bidston from its dependence on Eastham and attached it to his great lordship of Dunham in north Cheshire, which he held "by barony," rendering the service of 5 knights' fees. Had it not been so released, Bidston would have had the abbot of Chester as superior lord after Eastham had been granted to the abbey. It is, however, in later days always regarded as appurtenant to Dunham.

Though the Mascys¹ rank as one of the important Cheshire families, the descent of these barons of Dunham is unfortunately very obscure, so that only a conjectural account can be given of it. The fact that most, if not all, of them were named Hamon renders it difficult to decide which of the line is referred to in any particular charter or pleading. Sir Peter Leycester was an excellent antiquary and his pedigree has been generally followed. He had access to the family documents surviving in the seventeenth century, but as he gives six descents only in 260 years it is clear that two or three generations must have been omitted somewhere, and in other respects his account is misleading.

Ormerod (i, 520-2) reprints Leycester's descent of the Mascys, and additional charters for evidence are to be found in other parts of the *History of Cheshire*; the following version is based upon it, though it can be regarded as no more than a "working hypothesis."

¹ Professor Tait says that Massy, S.W. of Neufchâtel (Seine Infér.), has the best claim to be considered the original home of the family. There is, however, a place called Macey in the Manche, not far from Earl Hugh's lordship of Avranches.

Hamon I occurs in Domesday Book (1086) as lord of Dunham Massey and other manors in north-east Cheshire and of Puddington in Wirral; also in the unnamed holdings in Eastham and Upton by Chester. In or before 1119 he gave his part of Northenden and its church to St. Werburgh's abbey, with the consent of his heirs, who are, however, not named.¹ He or a successor of the name, gave a "flodyeard" or fishing-station at Puddington to the same abbey.²

Robert de Mascy, who attested one of the charters of Earl Randle I (1121-9),³ may have been his son and heir; the name seems to have been a favourite one in the family. Robert de Mascy (probably the same man) and Simon his brother gave 8 bovates of land in Backford to the abbey of Chester in the days of Earl Randle II (1129-53).⁴

Hamon II, probably grandson or great-grandson of Hamon I, appears in the days of the next earl, Hugh II (or Kyvelioc, 1153-81), attesting that earl's grant of Longdendale to William de Nevill and Amabil his wife.⁵ His mother appears to have been an heiress in Derbyshire and Lincolnshire, for Hamon de Mascy gave to Hugh, son of Hugh de Dutton, land in Sutterby and Brassington, held of the earl of Ferrers, which his mother had had.⁶ This Hamon, like his lord the earl, rebelled against Henry II in 1173 and held his castles of Dunham and Ullerswood (in Bowdon) against the King.⁷ He incurred a heavy fine, but paid the debt off somewhat quickly, probably by the sale of his manors in Wiltshire.⁸ A son of his (unnamed)

¹ *Chartul. of Chester Abbey* (Chet. Soc.), 40. In another version "sons" appear in place of "heirs"; *ibid.*, 57.

² *Ibid.*, 247.

³ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 59.

⁵ *Cal. Patent Rolls, 1317-21*, p. 245 (in an inspeximus).

⁶ Harl. MS. 2074, f. 77. It is difficult to assign this charter to the later Hamon, whose title was disputed (see below).

⁷ *Benedict of Peterboro'* (Rolls Ser.), i, 48. Geoffrey de Costentin was another Cheshire rebel, holding his castle of Stockport.

⁸ *Pipe Roll, 20 Hen. II* (Pipe Roll Soc.), 106, and later rolls. He was fined in Lancashire and Staffordshire as well as in Wilts. See Farrer, *Honors and Knights' Fees*, ii, 288.

is mentioned in 1182.¹ He died about December 1185,² and his lands remained for some three years in the King's hands,³ either because of some doubt as to the heir, or because this heir was a minor. He must have been the founder of Birkenhead Priory, though this founder is usually called Hamon III, because some of the stone work in the existing building is assigned to the first half of the reign of Henry II.⁴ Unfortunately no foundation charter is known, though the names of the priors are recorded from the days of Richard I.

About 1180 Hamon de Maci granted a man named Wolfetnote to an ancestor of the Traffords of Trafford near Manchester,⁵ the witnesses to the charter including the following Mascys: Robert, Roger son of Hamon, Hugh, and Geoffrey son of Richard. A very interesting charter is printed by Ormerod, by which Hamon de Mascy notifies to all his men, French or English, clerks or laymen, his confirmation to Robert, son of Waltheof, of lands in Etechels, Bredbury and Brinnington (near Stockport) to be held as to part by the service of half a knight's fee and as to the rest by the service of carrying the lord's bed, arms or clothing when the earl of Chester should make an expedition into Wales. Robert was also to be liable to pay an "aid" towards Hamon's ransom—perhaps an allusion to the events of 1173—and towards making his eldest son a knight or towards his daughter's marriage portion. The witnesses include Ralph the chaplain of Spondon.⁶ Another charter confirmed Bramhall, etc., to Matthew de Bromale, who was to hold by the service of a breastplate only, other claims to villein services being

¹ *Pipe R.*, 28 Hen. II, 16.

² *Pipe R.*, 32 Hen. II, 150, etc.

³ *Pipe R.*, 33 and 34 Hen. II, and Ric. I.

⁴ R. Stewart-Brown, *Birkenhead Priory*, 84. Mr. Stewart-Brown (p. 10) thinks that the charter of Hamon de Mascy granting the monks of Birkenhead the right to elect their prior freely was granted by Hamon II. It is usually ascribed to Hamo V.

⁵ *Cheshire Sheaf*, III, iii, 118.

⁶ Ormerod, iii, 789.

released.¹ The next Hamon confirmed his father's charter (above), his deed being witnessed by Hamon son of Hamon de Mascy, Hugh and Robert de Maci, William and Roger, brothers of the lord [Hamon]. Thus the descent of Hamon II, Hamon III and Hamon IV is attested.

Hamon III was probably the son of the last Hamon. His mother was the Agatha de Mascy² (or, de Theray) who acquired a moiety of Bowdon and gave it to her younger son Robert, with the assent of her eldest son, Sir Hamon de Masey.³ Hamon's legitimacy was denied by one Gilbert de Turribus, who in 1194 and later claimed the late Hamon's lands in Spondon, Chaddesden, and Brassington in Derbyshire and Stretford in Lancashire.⁴ Gilbert was prosecuting his claim in 1199, when he asserted that Hamon the younger had been declared a bastard in the Court Christian—i.e. in the bishop's or archdeacon's court;⁵ and in 1230 he was claiming other land, at Sutterby, Lincs.⁶ In this last claim he may have had some success, as Thomas de Turribus was tenant in 1242-3.⁷ Hamon de Mascy gave a moiety of Bollington with Agnes his daughter, to Geoffrey, son of Geoffrey de Dutton;⁸ and this is noteworthy because it is assigned to Hamon "the second" in a plea of 1398;⁹ this plea indicates that the numbering of the Hamons is of old standing. About 1208 he married Cecily, widow of William Gernet, chief forester of Lancaster; and he died

¹ *Ibid.*, iii, 823. Roger and Robert de Mascy were witnesses.

² Leycester erroneously makes Agatha the wife of Hamon III.

³ Ormerod, i, 512. Hamon de Mascy gave part of Toft to Arnold de Toft, Robert, brother of Hamon, being one of the witnesses; others were Hugh de Mascy and Simon his son; *ibid.*, i, 1501.

⁴ *R. of King's Court* (Pipe Roll Soc. xiv), 22, 24, 32. The chaplain of Spondon was witness to a charter cited above in the text.

⁵ *R. de Oblatis*, 29.

⁶ *Pipe R.*, 14 Hen. III (Pipe R. Soc.), 295.

⁷ *Book of Fees*, 1056.

⁸ Harl. MS. 2074, f. 72d. Leycester assigns this charter to the beginning of Henry III's reign; Ormerod i, 540.

⁹ Chester Plea R. 102, m. 25.

before 1225, when Cecily was the wife of William le Vilein; she was still living in 1252.¹

Hamon IV must have been under age in 1225, if he was the son of *Hamon III* by Cecily. He was taking part in county business as early as 1231.² In 1245 he was ordered to be at Chester ready to do service with men and horses in a campaign against the Welsh.³ About the same time he granted land in Backford to Stanlow Abbey, a gift confirmed later by his son *Hamon*.⁴ He was lord of Etchells in 1247.⁵ It was probably this Sir *Hamon* who granted 60 waggon-loads of turf yearly from the mosses of Bidston and Saughall Massie to Abbot Thomas [de Capenhurst] and his successors, with leave to dry the same on the land and to carry them away to their manors of Greasby and Irby.⁶ He also married a Cecily,⁷ who as his widow was lady of the manor of Bidston in 1272.⁸ He died about 1270, leaving a son, *Hamon*, and a daughter, Cecily, who married Thomas de Orreby of Gawsworth, ancestors of the Fittons of the same place.

Hamon V was under age on succeeding, having been born about 1255, as appears from the date of his livery. His wardship was granted to James de Audley (Lord Audley), on whose death in 1272 it passed to Alice de Beauchamp, widow of a Devonshire knight named Humphrey de Beauchamp.⁹ *Hamon* had livery of his inheritance in November 1277;¹⁰ about which time, as son and

¹ Farrer, *Lancs. Inqs. and Extentis* (Rec. Soc. Lancs. and Ches.), i, 119, 188-9.

² Harl. MS. 2079, ff. 11, etc.; *Anct. Deeds* (P.R.O.), A 10814; Ormerod, i, 501. In some respects it would make the descents easier if *Hamon IV* were a mistaken combination of two successive *Hamons*.

³ *Cal. Welsh Rolls*, 456.

⁴ *Whalley Coucher* (Chet. Soc.), 822-8. The son confirmed for his own welfare and his wife's.

⁵ *Cal. Inq. p.m.* i, no. 125.

⁶ *Chart. of Chester Abbey* (Chet. Soc.), 375.

⁷ As widow of *Hamon* she had in 1275 license to grant land to a house of lepers at Langford; *Cal. Patent R.*, 1272-81, p. 104.

⁸ *Ches. Sheaf*, III, xx, 24.

⁹ *Cal. Fine R.*, i, 15; *Abbrev. Plac.*, 264; *Cal. Misc. Inqs.*, i, 950.

¹⁰ *Cal. Fine R.*, i, 84.

heir of Hamon de Mascy "the fourth," he granted the advowson of Bowdon church to Birkenhead Priory.¹ In a suit as to this advowson in 1274, while the heir was still a minor, the jury had decided that his grandfather Hamon had presented William de Masey, who had recently died, to the church of Bowdon in the time of Henry III.² The grandfather was presumably Hamon III, so that William must have been rector for fifty years. In 1278 Hamon de Mascy released the tenants of Matthew de Bromale from being impleaded in the Dunham Massey courts.³ He occurs frequently from this time onward as taking part in the court proceedings at Chester⁴ or having suits there,⁵ or as witness to deeds.⁶ He is described as a knight as early as 1280.⁷ In 1282 he was engaged in the Welsh war, taking part in the defence of Caergwrle castle, with three esquires.⁸

The services due to the King in time of war from the men of Cheshire were the subject of inquiry in May 1288, and it was recorded that Hamon de Mascy held 5 knights' fees in chief by finding for each fee a horse fully equipped, or two horses not equipped, within Cheshire, and doing service according to the Great Charter of Cheshire with all his men holding lands; and if an army should invade the county, or should the castle of Chester be besieged, then on being summoned he must come with his whole force in order to repel the attacks.⁹ In 1290 he obtained a charter for a market at Altrincham every Tuesday and a yearly fair there at the Assumption of St. Mary (14-16 August); but these dates were altered in 1318 at the

¹ R. Stewart-Brown, *Birkenhead Priory*, 65.

² *Ibid.*, 66.

³ Ormerod, iii, 823; *Coram Rege R.* 16, m. 67.

⁴ *Cheshire Sheaf*, III, xiv, 3.

⁵ *Chester County Court R.* (Chet. Soc.), 46, etc. In a plea in 1307-8 Hamon de Mascy defended his right to certain land on the ground that his father Hamon de Mascy had held the same; Ormerod, i, 522.

⁶ E.g. *Cal. Close R.*, 1296-1302, p. 84; *Anct. Deeds* (P.R.O.), A 11044.

⁷ *Whalley Coucher*, 390. ⁸ *Cheshire Sheaf*, III, viii, 71.

⁹ *Chester County Court R.*, 109.

request of Oliver de Ingham, Hamon being still alive.¹ In 1293 he was invited to be present at Bristol at the marriage of the King's daughter Eleanor with Henry, count of Bar.² About that time the bishop had some suit against "Monsieur Hamon," and when the sheriff summoned a jury to try the matter, Hamon challenged every man on the panel, alleging that the sheriff had picked them to favour the bishop.³ In 1297 and again in 1301 he was one of those summoned to choose fit men in Cheshire and lead them against the Scots.⁴ He was lord of Backford in 1307⁵; and had the King's licence in 1309 to make a settlement of his manors of Dunham, etc., including Bidston and Saughall, in favour of himself and his heirs male, with remainder to Robert de Holand and his heirs.⁶ This was probably a form of mortgage. Robert de Holand, the favourite of the Earl of Lancaster, was the justice of Chester at the time. Nothing seems to have resulted from this licence.

It has been stated above that his wardship had been held by Dame Alice de Beauchamp.⁷ She married him to one of her daughters, Isabel. But it fell out that Isabel died suddenly on the marriage day.⁸ As the marriage had not been consummated Hamon appears to have considered—and no doubt he took competent advice at the time—that he was at liberty to marry her sister Mary,⁹ and they lived as man and wife for some years, having at least four children, Hamon, Cecily, Denise and Isabel. At length they appear to have been warned that the legality of their union was doubtful, and, according to Leycester, a divorce was procured. As late, however, as

¹ *Cal. Charter R.*, ii, 370; iii, 4–11. ² *Cheshire Sheaf*, III, xvii, 102.

³ *R. of Parit.*, ii, 400.

⁴ *Cal. Patent R.*, 1292–1301, pp. 324, 598.

⁵ *Cal. Inq. p.m.*, v, no. 25.

⁶ *Cal. Patent R.* 1292–1301, p. 153.

⁷ She died in 1317; *Cal. Inq. p.m.*, vi, no. 118.

⁸ Sir Peter Leycester (who assigns the marriage to Hamon VI) is the authority for this statement. It is not known where he found it, but probably among the family records at Dunham Massey.

⁹ Leycester in error calls her Alice.

June 1309 Mary called herself *wife* of Sir Hamon de Mascy, in acknowledging the receipt of an allowance from him.¹ Such an allowance may imply that she was living apart from her husband. In 1314 his wife was named Alice²; she was probably the Alice, daughter of Sir Eustace de Whitney, of Whitney in Herefordshire, who is the only wife assigned to Hamon V by Sir Peter Leycester. By her he seems to have had a daughter Alice, but this is not certain.

It is here that the story becomes confused. While Leycester says that Hamon V married Alice—his only wife—he gives to his son Hamon VI the two Beauchamp sisters and a third wife Joan. The questions are: Was there a Hamon VI? and if so, who was Joan his wife or the last wife of Hamon V? Mr. W. H. B. Bird, who in the *Genealogist* cleared up a number of points in the story,³ believed that *all* the wives mentioned were to be assigned to Hamon V, whom he made the last of the line. In this case Hamon VI would be the son named above, whose legitimacy and that of his sisters was afterwards disputed, and who died before his father. In any case the last Hamon died about 1334, and the suits about the inheritance lasted a century, the final partition being made in 1433. It might have been thought that such a prolonged contest would have established the facts, but the matters in dispute do not seem to have required a clear display of the pedigree.

It is difficult to decide whether Hamon V took another wife, Joan, a young widow, in his old age—he would be

¹ Harl. MS. 2112, f. 175d. This reference is due to Mr. Bird. Mary was living in London.

² *Deputy Keeper's Report*, xxvii, 107; in a fine about the manors of Backford and Kelsall.

³ *Genealogist*, N.S., xvi, 16-23, 201-206. Mr. Bird was unable to find any reason why Sir Thomas Stanley and William Chantrell each received a fourth part of what in 1433 remained of the barony of Dunham; nor was he able to clear the descent in all respects. He ignored the possibility of sales by the heirs and of family agreements during the long dispute.

over 60; or whether it was his son Hamon VI who married Joan, and being invested by his father with the whole barony, sold it to Oliver de Ingham even in his father's lifetime. This last supposition seems so improbable that Mr. Bird's solution may be accepted: that it was Hamon V who married Joan, said to be sister of Sir William de Clinton, created earl of Huntingdon in 1337, and certainly widow of Edmund de Deyncourt of Elmton in Derbyshire. By a settlement made in June, 1317, Hamon de Mascy and Joan his wife had an interest for her life (in remainder) in this manor.¹ Then Leycester's statement of the course of events may be corrected thus: after the death of Hamon de Mascy the [bastard] son without issue, Sir Hamon [V, not VI] . . . married Joan de Clinton, and by the counsel of this Joan he sold the reversion of the whole manor of Dunham, with its appurtenances, after the death of himself and Joan his wife, in case they had no issue, to Oliver de Ingham, then judge of Chester; for which reversion Oliver gave him 1,000 marks, as well as an annual rent of 40 marks for his life. This was in 1316.²

The arrangements were differently described in 1378, when Roger Le Strange obtained the king's pardon for the various alienations which had been made without licence:

Hamon de Mascy, knt., granted Dunham, etc. (including Bidston, Saughall, Moreton and the advowson of Birkenhead priory), to Richard Trestell and Adam Drake, and this was confirmed by a fine.

Adam, the feoffee, afterwards granted the same to Hamon de Mascy and Joan his wife and the issue of Hamon, with remainder to Oliver de Ingham, in fee simple.³

¹ *Cal. Patent R.*, 1313-17, p. 672. It may be noted that the Hamon who married Joan is rarely, if ever, styled Sir.

² So Leycester; but Ingham was not justice of Chester till 1321. He was summoned to Parliament in 1328, and is called Lord Ingham.

³ *Cal. Patent R.*, 1377-81, p. 164.

The dates are not given and the fine mentioned is not now among the Cheshire fines. There is one, however, dated 1321-2, by which Hamon de Mascy and Joan his wife obtained from Adam de Macclesfield, chaplain, the manors of Dunham, Bidston, etc., and various lands.¹ This Adam is probably the Adam Drake named above, and would be the survivor of the original feoffees. The transaction was probably at first a mortgage to Ingham.

In 1326-7 Hamon and Joan claimed her dower in the Deyncurt lands on the death of the elder Edmund de Deyncurt, grandfather of her former husband.² Early in 1328 Joan died.³ Hamon de Mascy was summoned for service against the Scots as late as 21 March 1332/3,⁴ but this is the latest reference to him as living.

Sir Hamon de Mascy the elder died before 2 February 1333/4, when the escheator took possession in the usual manner of the manors of Dunham by Bowdon, Hale, Altrincham, Bodestan, Moreton and Salghall Mascy and the advowson of the priory of Birkenhead; on 18 February the whole was delivered to Oliver de Ingham.⁵ In April 1334 the executors of the will of Hamon de Mascy were sued for a debt; one of them was Hamon, son of Hamon de Mascy—it is not said “son of the *said* Hamon.”⁶ Though Ingham’s title was recognised by the escheator without demur, his bailiff had disputes with some of the tenants; in July 1336 he was endeavouring to establish certain rights in Ashton on Mersey which the tenant resisted, and cited the fine above, Hamon and Joan

¹ *Dep. Keeper's Rep.*, xxvii, 119. At the same time Oliver de Ingham came to an agreement with Hamon de Mascy about lands in Tatton, etc.

² *Cal. Inq. p.m.*, vi, no. 746; *Cal. Close R.*, 1327-30, pp. 52, 53, 105.

³ *Cal. Inq. p.m.*, vii, no. 123.

⁴ *Foedera*, ii, 856.

⁵ *Ministers' Accts. (P.R.O.)*, 1241-12. The inquisitions printed below give the date incorrectly, one as 1331 and the other as 1344 (18 Edw. III for 8 Edw. III).

⁶ *Chester Plea R.* 45, m. 9d. A Hamon de Mascy of Tatton was escheator in 1332; *Cal. Fine R.*, iv, 335.

having died without issue and Oliver having entered in virtue of the remainder therein appointed.¹

Ingham, who had been summoned to Parliament as a baron in 1328, was at the time seneschal of Aquitaine. His tenure of the Dunham barony was brief, for he died in 1344, leaving two coheirs—Mary (aged 9), daughter of his daughter Elizabeth by John Curzon, and Joan (aged 26), his own daughter, then second wife of Roger (lord) Lestrangle of Knockyn and afterwards wife of Miles de Stapleton.² Dunham came into the possession of Lestrangle apparently in right of his wife, as appears by the inquisition cited later, but the course of events shows clearly enough that the real purchaser of the estate was the husband, and that Ingham had in this matter been acting for him. Joan bore no children to Lestrangle, and her issue by Stapleton were Ingham's sole heirs; yet they made no claim to Dunham, as they would have done if Ingham had been the owner in his own right. There are no deeds known; but probably Dunham was settled on him for life, with remainder to Roger Lestrangle and his issue by Joan, and a further remainder to Roger's heirs; Ingham's life interest would enable him to supplement the purchase money advanced by Lestrangle, and perhaps afford him some profit; he would naturally also have given a marriage portion to Joan.

The heirs of Sir Hamon de Mascy had been treated unjustly in his sale to Ingham without their concurrence, and on the latter's death they at once put in claims. Lestrangle, however, secured the intervention of Henry de Lancaster, then Earl of Derby, and later (1352) first Duke of Lancaster, a wealthy and popular nobleman. The Earl, no doubt with Lestrangle's money, purchased from the daughters of Hamon V and their representatives their

¹ Chester Plea R. 47, m. 20. Several similar pleas are entered on the same roll. It was not unusual for a new lord on entering to make claims for services, etc., and for the tenants to refuse them.

² *Cal. Inq. p.m.*, viii, no. 529.

shares in Dunham, etc. First, in 1345 he acquired the shares of

Cecily wife of John Fitton of Bollin
Thomas LeStrange of Knockyn and Lucy his wife,
Randle de Dutton and Margaret his wife.
Richard de Bradshagh (of Pennington, Lancs.) and Cecily his wife,
Alice sister of Cecily, and
Thomas de Hakeford and Katherine his wife.¹

The first Cecily was a daughter of Hamon V ; Lucy, Katherine, the second Cecily and Alice were daughters of Denise ; and Margaret was daughter of Isabel, Denise and Isabel being sisters of the first Cecily. Then in 1347 he acquired the right of Hamon de Hilond, son and heir of Alice, the other daughter and coheir of Hamon V.² Having also made an agreement in 1345 with Roger and Joan Lestrangle, the Earl became fully seised of Dunham and its dependencies. In all the fines it is added that " Hugh son of Hugh de Gretolre puts in his claim." He was probably the heir at that time of Cecily the sister of Sir Hamon, and his heir if the daughters should be declared illegitimate. He does not appear again, but his intervention shows that the proceedings were being watched.

The completing stage was reached in 1355, when the possessor, as Duke of Lancaster, obtained licence to settle these estates on himself for life, with remainder to Roger Lestrangle and his heirs.³ This Roger was the son and

¹ So in *Dep. Keeper's Rep.*, xxviii, 44. The Chester fines (Jan. 1344/5) give the deforciant as William de Hyde and Katherine his wife, Maud sister of Katherine, Thomas Lestrangle of Knockyn, Randle de Dutton, Richard de Bradshawe ; in the following month we have Cecily widow of John Fitton of Bolyn, and the others as in the text. See also *Cal. Patent R.*, 1377-81, p. 164. Isabel is said to have had another daughter named Katherine, grandmother of Joan wife of Robert le Grosvenor of Hulme in 1386 ; Wrottesley, *Peds. from Plea Roll*, 169, 170. It is possible there is some mistake here, as the chronology is difficult and the Grosvenor claim does not seem to have been pursued.

² Harl. MS. 2074, f. 71d. The surname Hilond comes from Leycester.

³ *Dep. Keeper's Rep.*, xxxvi, 278.

heir of the former Roger, who had died in 1349; he came into possession of Dunham, etc., in 1361¹ on the Duke's death; and died in 1382, holding Dunham Massey, Bidston, Moreton, Saughall Massie, etc.² He was succeeded by his son John, who died in 1398, as is shown below.

It is obvious that the Lestranges acquired Dunham, with Bidston and other members of the barony, by purchase from the daughters and coheirs of Hamon de Masey V through the good offices of the Duke of Lancaster. Mr. Bird gives reason for supposing that these coheirs had yielded their rights under pressure, and might be expected to reassert them at any time. The following inquisitions, already alluded to, which are the only ones extant, show an attack on those rights from another quarter. Their legitimacy, and with it their rights of inheritance, was formally called in question by Thomas Fitton of Gaws-worth, as grandson and heir of Cecily the sister and (as he asserted) sole heir of Hamon V.

The first inquisition was taken before the escheator at the church of St. Mary on the Hill, Chester, on 24 May 1375, at the instance of the above Thomas Fitton. It is not an ordinary inquisition *post mortem*, and being made forty years after the death of Sir Hamon is not satisfactory evidence. It states:

The jurors say on oath that Hamon de Masey of Dunham, chivaler, lord of Dunham, died seised in his demesne, as of fee, of the manor and lordships of Dunham held of the King in chief, by knight service and died without heir of his body; and had a certain sister named Cecily who had married Thomas de Orreby, and they had issue a daughter Isabel, who married Thomas Fiton of Gouseworth and had issue a son, Thomas Fiton, who now is heir of the said Hamon de Masey. But if Hamon had other sisters or heirs of their issue surviving the jurors know not. The said

¹ Bedeston was one of the manors assigned to the duke's daughter Blanche; *Cal. Fine R.*, vii, 164.

² Chester Inq. p.m., file 9 (6 Ric. II, no. 3).

manor is worth yearly £100. The said Hamon died 34 years ago, after whose death Oliver de Ingham entered and occupied the manor and lordship for a long time, but how long they know not. And afterwards Roger Lestraunge of Knokyn, father of Roger Lestraunge who now is, occupied the same, but how long they know not. And afterwards Henry, late Duke of Lancaster. occupied the same for a long time, but how long they know not, And after the death of Henry, Duke of Lancaster, Roger Lestraunge of Knokyn, who now is, entered into the same and has taken the profits etc., for 14 years and more last past. And they say that the aforesaid Thomas Fiton is aged 50 years.¹

According to Mr. Bird, who gives the evidence in detail, the action had no decisive result. In 1378, as already stated, Roger Lestrangle made fine with the King as Earl of Chester concerning the various alienations which had been made by Hamon V without licence, paying £100 and having the barony restored to him in fee simple.² Aline, the widow of Roger Lestrangle, had her dower in Dunham and Bidston with its appurtenances in Moreton and Saughall; ³ and on her death in 1386 John, the son of Roger, obtained livery.⁴ In this year Fitton brought fresh suits, John Lestrangle being now the defendant; but the suit was probably collusive, Fitton being satisfied out of court, for though the decision was in his favour he immediately released all his claim to Lestrangle, and no more is heard of it. On the question of the legitimacy of the daughters of Hamon V, different juries had returned contradictory verdicts, but their descendants appear to have kept their claim alive, so that the man in possession must have been left uneasy.

On 24 June 1397 John Lestrangle sold the manor of Bidston, with Saughall Massie and lands in Moreton, to

¹ Chester Inq. p.m., bdle. 7 (Edward III). Here the death of Sir Hamon is placed about 1341. As already shown, Oliver de Ingham died in 1344; Roger Lestrangle in 1349 but had surrendered Dunham in 1345; and Henry, duke of Lancaster in 1361, or fourteen years before this inquisition was made, as it states correctly.

² *Cal. Pat. R.*, 1377-81, p. 164.

³ *Dep. Keeper's Report*, xxix, 54.

⁴ *Dep. Keeper's Report*, xxxvi, 485.

John Stanley of Lathom, ancestor of the Earls of Derby.¹ From this time Bidston no longer appears among the Dunham manors in dispute, and, in the absence of evidence, we must conjecture that Stanley had previously made an arrangement with the Masey claimants, possibly buying out the claim of one of the coheirs and receiving Bidston; otherwise his heir would have had to join in the final partition of Dunham in 1433.

It may be useful to give a short account of the later history, following Mr. Bird's exposition already quoted. Nearly thirty years later the representatives of Sir Hamon's daughters renewed their claims, and in consequence the following inquisition was taken at Middlewich on 24 September 1425 before the escheator.² It introduces Hamon the bastard, identified above as Leicester's Hamon VI, who is represented as having succeeded his father. Oliver de Ingham is not named, nor yet the duke of Lancaster, and the result is obviously less trustworthy than that of the earlier inquisition; the date given for Sir Hamon's death, viz. 30 September 1344, is ten years too late. Richard Lestrangle's father, John son of Roger, is omitted. This John, as appears by an inquisition above cited, died 16 June 1398; Richard was 19 years of age in 1401.³

The jurors say on oath that Hamo de Masey, Knight, lord of the manor of Dunham Masey, was seised in his demesne as of fee of the entire manor of Dunham Masey with the appurtenances—which said manor is held of the King as Earl of Chester in chief by knight's service and is worth yearly in all issues, beyond reprises, £50—and this manor he gave and granted to Hamo, his bastard son, without the King's licence, to have to him and his heirs for ever. By virtue of which gift and grant the same Hamo the Bastard was seised thereof in his demesne as of fee and died

¹ Chester Inq. p.m., file 19 (2 Hen. IV, no. 3).

² Chester Inq. p.m., file 33 (4 Hen. VI).

³ *Ibid.*, file 19 (2 Hen. IV, no. 3).

thereof seised in Gascony, in the parts beyond the sea, without heirs of his body.

And the jurors say that after the death of the aforesaid Hamo the Bastard, a certain Roger Lestraunge of Knokyn the elder, entered into the said manor and took the issues and profits thereof all his life ; and after his death his son Roger entered into the same and took the issues and profits during his life ; and after his death Richard Lestraunge, son of Roger son of Roger, entered and took the issues, etc., until the day of the taking of this inquisition, but by what title the jurors know not.

They say that the aforesaid Hamo de Mascy, Knight, died in the morrow of Michaelmas, 18 Edward III.¹

Richard Lestrangle's title was thus recognised, but he seems to have judged it best to make a final settlement with the claimants out of Court. So in 1428 Richard Lestrangle of Knockyn and Constance his wife granted to Richard Radcliffe of Radcliffe and others the manors of Dunham, Altrincham and Hale, reserving to themselves a life rent of 100 marks a year.² Five years later the feoffees, having divided the estate into four parts, gave two parts (including Dunham) to Sir Robert Booth and Dulcia his wife, another part to Sir Thomas Stanley and Joan his wife and Henry Byrom, and the remaining quarter to William Chantrell and Thomas de Bold.³ From 1433 therefore the Booths and their successors have been barons of Dunham. Their connexion by blood may be recorded concisely as follows : Sir Robert Booth married Dulcia (or Dowse), daughter and coheir of Sir William Venables of Bollin (d. 1421), who was son and heir of Richard Venables of Bollin and Joan his wife ; Joan was sister and heir of Peter Fitton, son of Hamon, son of Richard, son of John Fitton by

¹ Chester Inq. p.m., bde. 33 (Henry VI).

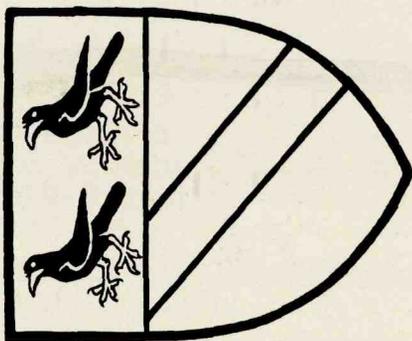
² *Dep. Keeper's Rep.*, xxxvii, 690.

³ *Ibid.* The details will be found in Mr. Bird's articles already referred to. Booth had a double share on account of an earlier arrangement with Sir Edmund Trafford, who had married Dulcia's sister Alice. See Earwaker, *East Cheshire*, i, 52. The Booths used the Mascy coat as their own. Bold and Byrom probably acted as trustees ; they do not appear to have claimed anything.

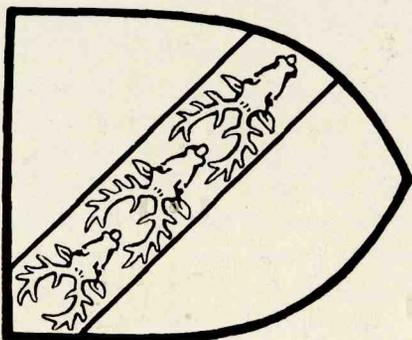
Cecily daughter and coheir of Sir Hamon Mascy V. The lordship continued in the male line of Booth till 1758, when Sir George Booth, Earl of Warrington, Baron Delamere and a baronet, died leaving a daughter and heir, Mary, who had married Harry Grey, fourth Earl of Stamford. In their descendants it still continues.

The partition is unsatisfactory to the local historian, because the reasons for giving shares to Stanley and Chantrell are unrecorded and unknown. At first sight it would appear that the four shares represent one for each of the daughters of Hamon de Mascy V; but two of the shares (those of Booth) both derive from one daughter, so that the other two quarters probably derive from another. It has just been suggested that Bidston (which was not brought into this final division) represents a third daughter's share sold, with the consent of the other coheirs, to Sir John Stanley; and one daughter's share may have lapsed through failure of descendants. Chantrell's share was derived from his mother Margaret, whose name is not known; Sir Thomas Stanley's share was probably a purchase from the other coheir, because his father was still living in 1433, and his wife Joan, daughter and heir of Goushill, is not known to have had any connexion with the Mascys. A sixteenth-century record of the Stanley quarterings gives ninety coats, but there is no Mascy among them, though there is an Ingham.¹

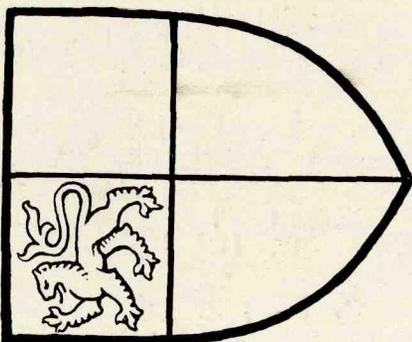
¹ Harl. MS. 1067, f. 24b.



VYNER



STANLEY



MASSEY

ARMORIAL BEARINGS OF MANORIAL LORDS



1871

CHAPTER IV.

THE STANLEYS AT BIDSTON.

It may be imagined that Sir John Stanley acquired Bidston because his family home was at Storeton close by ; but however that may be, the first use he made of it was to form a deer park there. Matthew de Litherland, John de Leyland, chaplain, and Thomas del More of Liverpool, obviously feoffees of Stanley, in 1407 desired to be allowed to enclose a park of 800 acres on the demesne adjacent to the manor of Bidston in the towns of Bidston, Ford, Moreton and Saughall Massie, and to have free warren there.¹ The size of the proposed park is noteworthy ; there would appear to have been a design to enclose all the vacant lands in the townships named. The park actually enclosed, on the west side of Bidston Hill, mainly between the village and Ford, but extending also to the north-west, was actually about 455 ac., according to the survey of 1665, of which the Deer Park proper occupied 160 ac. Part of the dry stone wall which enclosed it is still in position, and is known locally as the " Penny-a-day Dyke," the traditional payment to those who built it. It is 4 ft. thick at the base, and in some places still over 6 ft. high.²

The purchaser was succeeded by his son, another Sir John ; and he by his son Sir Thomas Stanley, the first Lord Stanley (cr. 1456). When he died on 20 February 1458/9 it was found that he held the manor of Bidston of the Earl of Chester by knight's service ; it was worth £20 a year ; he also held lands in Saughall Massie of Sir Robert Booth and John Chantrell in socage ; a fourth

¹ *Recog. Roll*, in *Dep. Keeper's Rep.*, xxxvi.

² *Wirral N. and Q.*, ii, 8.

part of the manor of Dunham Massey jointly with Joan his wife and Henry Byron (Booth and Chantrell being lords of the other moiety and fourth part); and lands in Childer Thornton, Thingwall, Pensby, and Larton.¹ The estate descended to his son Thomas, the 1st Earl of Derby (cr. 1485), who died in 1504.² His son George had married Joan, daughter and heir of John leStrange, Lord Strange of Knockyn, who was grandson of the John who had sold Bidston in 1397. Sir George Stanley became Lord Strange in right of his wife, being summoned to Parliament from 1482 until his death in 1497. His son Thomas therefore succeeded his grandfather as 2nd Earl of Derby. An appointment by him, dated 26 November 1508, of William Stanley as steward of the manors of Bidston and Neston is recorded.³ The Earl, dying 23 May 1521, was followed by his son Edward, 3rd Earl. Being a minor, Edward became ward to the King, and his estates were administered by royal officials. This accounts for the rental of the Derby estates in 1521, which gives a very full account of them at that time. The portion relating to Wirral has been printed,⁴ and the details for Bidston, Moreton and Saughall will be found in the accounts of the townships below.

So far as appears from the surviving records, the Stanleys saw little of Bidston except when they came to hunt there. Henry, Earl of Derby, who succeeded his father Edward in 1572, appointed Thomas Egerton, the solicitor-general and afterwards Lord Chancellor (Lord Brackley), master of his game within his park of Bidston, deer being specially named; the fee was an annuity of 5 marks for life, with one buck of season in summer and

¹ *Dep. Keeper's Rep.*, xxxvii, 676.

² His widow, Margaret, Countess of Richmond, held this manor till her death in 1507. It is very unlikely that she ever lived there; *ibid.* Its yearly value was stated to be £48 5s. 1d.

³ Stanley Charter, 1590, John Rylands Library, Manchester.

⁴ *Cheshire Sheaf*, III, iv, 23, etc., with notes by Mr. W. F. Irvine.

one doe of season in winter to be taken from the said park.¹ In the printed *Stanley Papers* are several references to "my lord" about that time riding to Bidston from Knowsley and returning after staying there a day or two.² Earl Henry was succeeded in 1593 by his son Ferdinand,³ who in a few months time was followed by his brother William (April 1594 to September 1642).

The new earl, known as the "Wandering Earl" from stories of his travels in Europe as popularised in a ballad called "Sir William Stanley's Garland," printed in Halliwell's *Palatine Anthology*, and sometimes put forward as the true author of "Shakespeare's plays," on the ground of a contemporary statement that he busied himself in penning comedies for the common players,⁴ was deforciant to a fine relating to his manors, including Bidston, in April 1596.⁵ In October 1596 he made John Egerton, of Egerton, and of Leasowe Castle, who afterwards married one of the late Earl's daughters, his bailiff for his manors and lands in Wirral, including Bidston and Neston, during pleasure.⁶ It appeared that a little earlier the Earl's mother (Margaret Clifford), who had dower there, had demised Bidston manor house, park, wind mill, etc., to William Lusher for twenty-one years, and that Lusher assured the same to one Christopher Themelthorpe of Gray's Inn. Egerton actually took possession in 1597 and Themelthorpe died in June 1600, his widow being left to dispute possession in 1604, when as Margaret, wife of Anthony Randall of Davenport, she put in her claim in the Chester court.⁷ The Egerton claim seems to have failed, for though Sir John in 1597 claimed the hall against

¹ *Egerton Papers* (Camd. Soc.), 96.

² *Stanley Papers* (Chet. Soc.), 52, 68, 76.

³ He is commemorated locally by the tower of Leasowe Castle, long known as Mockbeggar Hall, which he built in 1593; *Trans. Hist. Soc.* lxxiii, 132. On his death the baronies of Strange of Knockyn and Stanley fell into abeyance.

⁴ *Genealogist*, N.S., vii, 205.

⁵ Chester Fines, Apl. 38 Eliz.

⁶ *Ancient Deeds* (P.R.O.), A 11217, C 8288.

⁷ Chester Exchequer Deps., 15/23.

William Fells, Margaret his wife, Stephen Fells, John Morye and Themelthorpe,¹ we find that Richard Kellie of London, acting on the lease of August 1596 granted by the Countess Margaret and William Earl of Derby her son, demised to William Fells of Arrowse, yeoman, on 10 May 1609,

The manor house of Bidston and the court and orchard, one close environed about with a stone wall, with the park and land called Bidston Park, etc., the windmill standing on the east side of the park upon the commons thereunto belonging,

during the term of this lease; at a rent of £140 and a chief rent of £38 5s. 8d. to the Earl. The tenant was to keep all the houses, etc., in good repair, and to have liberty to marl "a close or pasture called the Middle Close, wherein the cross standeth, containing 16 ac."² He was also bound to find pasture for two geldings, and lodgings within the manor house for Kellie when he should have occasion to go there.³

The lease to Lusher would expire in 1617, and after that the Earl himself seems to have resided frequently at Bidston.⁴ He was vouchee in a recovery of the manor in 1615.⁵ Possibly he built the present house. At any rate William Webb, in his "Itinerary" of Wirral, written in 1622, says:

¹ *Dep. Keeper's Rep.*, xxxix, 166. Some notes of the dispute, which lasted some years, will be found in Harl. MS. 2095, ff. 13, 17. [There are also numerous references to the Egerton claim in the Hatfield (Salisbury) MSS. (*Hist. MSS. Comm.*), including (in vol. 12) a letter of 1602, which refers to the wrongs done to the Earl and shows that for six years Egerton had paid no rent, and had carried away all the red deer in the Park. Mr. E. B. Goodacre of Beach House, Orrell Mount, Wigan, communicated the above to Mr. Royden after Mr. Brownbill's death.] In 1606 a sharp order was given to the judges to make a settlement of the matter; *Cal. S.P. Dom. Jas. I*, Addenda 480.

² This cross seems to have disappeared by 1665, as it is not marked on the Kingston plan.

³ *Wirral N. & Q.* i, 44.

⁴ He was certainly there in Aug. 1622; *Cal. S.P. Dom.* 1619-23, p. 438. Acts of Parlt. were passed 4 and 7 Jas. I regulating the descent of the Stanleys' estate.

⁵ Chester Recoveries, Sept., 13 Jas. I.

And so we come to Bidston, a goodly house, demesne and park of the right honourable William Earl of Derby ; which, though it is less than many other seats which his honour hath wherein to make his residences when he is so pleased, yet for the pleasant situation of this, and the variety of noble delight appendant to it, his lordship seems much to affect the same, and enlargeth the conveniences therein for his pleasure and abode many ways ; which, with craving pardon for my bold collection, I suppose his honour doth out of his honourable love to this our country, that we might have the more of his presence here, where he bears the great places of his majesty's lord lieutenant in the causes military, and the prince's highness chamberlain of the county palatine, as his noble and worthy ancestors have done before him.¹

The old summer-house on the bowling green of the hall was built in the shape of an ace of clubs, the village tradition being that the estate was lost and won on an ace of clubs.² This banqueting house or summer-house was, like the church and the mill, shown on the old maps (1689 and 1737) as a guide to mariners approaching Liverpool. The summer-house was taken down about a century ago.

The Earl, after his wife's death early in 1627, "willing to retire himself from troubles, was contented to make much of himself, reserving £1,000 a year, and putting the rest of his estate to venture" in the hands of his son and heir,³ the famous "Martyr Earl" James, known as Lord Strange because he was summoned to Parliament by that title in 1628 and till his father's death, on the mistaken belief that the barony of Strange had descended to him. A little earlier, no doubt in view of his father's retirement

¹ Ormerod, ii, 360.

² Mrs. Gamlin, *Memories of Birkenhead*, 9, has a variant of this story, connecting the loss and recovery with a bottle of wine, commemorated by the two "stone decanters" on the gateway of the hall.

³ *Stanley Legislation* (Manx Soc.), 38 ; a narrative by James lord Derby. The phrase "make much of himself" seems to mean "make the care of himself his main business." A recovery concerning the manors of Bidston, etc. in Sept. 1628 was effected, William Earl of Derby and James Lord Strange being the vouchees ; Chester Recoveries, Sept., 4, Chas. I. Seacome, *House of Stanley*, gives the date of resignation, 11 Aug. 1637, but this seems ten years too late.

from public life, Lord Strange had been joined with him as Lord Lieutenant of Lancashire and Cheshire and Chamberlain of Chester. His public career is well known. He was one of the earliest to join Charles I in 1642; remained a steady Royalist till he shared in the battle and defeat of Charles II at Worcester on 3 September 1651; and being captured on his way north from that "crowning mercy," as Cromwell called it, was executed at Bolton 15 October 1651.

He does not appear much in connection with Bidston, as his father was living either there or at Chester till September 1642, but in 1626 he had married Charlotte de la Trémoille, and Bidston was one of the manors assured to her as part of her dowry.¹ He perhaps built the old school in 1636. The Earl's estates had quickly been seized by the Parliament, and he was at first excluded from pardon, but afterwards allowed to compound at a moiety, and petitioned accordingly on 22 January 1648/9, just before the execution of Charles I. His estates included—

The manors of Beddeston, Upton and Northwich, with the judges' fines, lead fines, salthouses and divers messuages, lands and tenements in Moreton, Saughall Massie and elsewhere in the county of Chester, consisting of demesnes, chief and improved rents, amounting yearly to £468 4s. 1d.²

The Earl's petition was granted and he was allowed to compound at a fine of £15,572. His renewed rebellion put an end to the composition, but after his death the widowed countess petitioned for her dowry, on 27 January 1651/2, all the estates settled on her having been sequestered on account of her husband's "delinquency."³ Her petition was granted on 17 June, but early next year she was herself adjudged a "delinquent," and considering that her resistance to the Parliament had been even more

¹ Mr. Irvine notes that "the advowson of the church of Bidston" was wrongly included in the list of properties; *Trans. Hist. Soc.*, xlv, 41.

² *Royalist Comp. Papers* (Re. Soc. Lancs. and Ches.), ii, 123.

³ Mr. Irvine gives the documents, *loc. cit.*, 40-48.

animated than that of the Earl it is surprising she had not been accused earlier. The authorities perhaps took a strictly legal view; that she had been acting under her lord's influence, and as he had been sufficiently punished there was no bar to her claim.

One Robert Massey of Warrington, draper, interfered. From his name it is possible that he was a descendant of the old lords of Bidston.¹ He had sent goods to the value of £700 to Ireland in 1650, but the ship had been captured off the Isle of Man by "a long boat" of the Earl of Derby's and carried to the island, where the Earl declared it confiscated as the property of rebels; took a fifteenth part for the King (i.e. Charles II) and a tenth for himself, giving the remainder to the capturer. Massey complained to the Parliamentary authorities at Liverpool, and his story appears to have aroused other complaints against the countess as an active royalist, who had kept the Isle of Man against the Parliament. At last, in October 1653, an act was passed allowing her to compound at the rate of five years' purchase for estates held in fee simple, four years for those in tail, three years for those for one life, and so on. But Massey was to have £1,000 for his losses. The Bidston estate, held by her for life, was valued thus:

	£	s.	d.
The demesnes in 1640 were worth yearly	250	0	0
The Old Rents were then	44	14	7½

The fine imposed upon her was £8,000, and by 1 November she had paid half of it and found security for the rest.²

Bidston, however, was not recovered. In December 1650 one Lancelot Granger had applied for a seven years lease of the manors of Bidston and Upton, then under sequestration for the Earl's "delinquency"³; and in July 1653 George Steele of Sandbach made a like petition

¹ Mr. Irvine tells the story in full in the article above cited.

² *Royalist Comp. Papers* (Lancs. and Chr. Rec. Soc.), ii, 179, 186.

³ *Cal. Com. for Compounding*, ii, 1113.

for the manor of Bidston (if the countess should so long live), then under sequestration for the countess's "delinquency."¹ As will be seen, this was some months before she was allowed to compound. But before this, in October 1652, John Manley, citizen and skinner of London, had contracted for the purchase of Lord Derby's manor, and then in June 1653 assigned his right to William Steele² of Gray's Inn, Recorder of London, who paid the purchase money.

Before the act allowing the countess to compound had been passed, Steele had already made an agreement with her, and Charles, Earl of Derby (the heir) and his wife the Lady Dorothy Helena, by which (on 1 September 1653) they agreed to levy a fine to secure to him the manor of Bidston, with its appurtenances, woods, ways, waters, fishings, commons, courts leet and baron, royalties, liberties, etc., and all lands in Bidston, Wallasey, Saughall Massie, Moreton, Thingwall, Poulton-cum-Seacombe, Poulton Lancelyn and Childer Thornton—the manor of Upton excepted, that not being part of Bidston—reserving the life estate of the countess-dowager. The Earl undertook to do everything necessary to assure Steele's title.³ The fine was levied accordingly,⁴ and the countess resigned her life interest to Steele,⁵ who could thus enter into possession at once. In the following year he purchased Upton.⁶

In the time of Charles II an attempt seems to have been made to secure the restoration to the Earl of Derby of numerous manors and lands which had been sold in the commonwealth period, Hawarden and Bidston among others; but nothing came of it.

¹ Com. for Compounding G 139, f. 553. An order was given to survey. William Steele concurred in the petition. He had purchased the reversion after the Countess's death; *ibid.*

² *Royalist Comp. Papers*, ii, 232; Com. for Compounding, G 18, f. 947.

³ Add. Charter (B.M.) 53695.

⁴ Chester Fines, Sept. 1653.

⁵ Add. Charter 53696.

⁶ Com. for Compounding G 18, f. 947.

The intervention of John Manley in the sale of the manor has been mentioned. In a petition to the Commissioner of the Great Seal¹ in May 1653 he alleged that one William Cox, a London merchant, had secured leave to contract for Bidston, and sold his option to Manley for £50. The latter, on inquiry, found the estate was not "in possession," for whatever part was not already on lease to tenants was charged with Lady Derby's jointure; and so he refused to go on with the purchase. He had not paid the £50 in cash, but had given the usual bond for double the amount, and now found that Cox intended to sue him for the full £100. Cox replied that Manley had known all about the conditions, and had actually signed a contract for the purchase of the estate from the Commonwealth Trustees, and at the very time of petitioning was either in possession or had transferred his right to other persons "for very great profit and consideration." The £50 he claimed had been spent in procuring surveys and in other expenses, and he therefore intended to prosecute his claim, for Manley must have gained £200 on the whole.²

William Steele, the new lord of Bidston, was a son of Richard Steele of Sandbach, and it has been thought that he was a kinsman, perhaps grandfather, of Sir Richard Steele, the famous essayist (born 1672); no connexion has, however, been proved. He was admitted to Gray's Inn in 1631 and became a competent lawyer. In 1649 he was recorder of London, and was one of those appointed to act for the Commons in the trial of Charles I, but was too ill to appear. In 1654, the year after his purchase of Bidston, he was one of the members for the city of London, and was serjeant-at-law; in 1655 Chief Baron of the Exchequer, and in 1656, Lord Chancellor of Ireland. He resided chiefly in Ireland till 1659, but was nominated as one of Cromwell's House of Lords in 1657 and took part

¹ Who stood in the place of the former Lord Chancellor.

² Chancery Proceedings, Bridges 379/126.

in proclaiming Richard Cromwell as Protector in 1658. In 1659 he was placed on the Committee of Safety, but did not act. Having been thus intimately connected with the Cromwellian regime he judged it best to take refuge in Holland on the restoration of Charles II; but he was not impeached among the regicides, and soon afterwards returned to England or Ireland. He was twice married and died about 1680. Some thought him a man "of great prudence and uncorrupted integrity," while others regarded him as "proud, crafty and insincere."¹

He held Bidston less than ten years, selling it on 29 April 1662, to Sir John King of Boyle Abbey, co. Roscommon, who had been created Baron Kingston in the peerage of Ireland in September 1660. He had served the Parliament in Ireland, being made a knight by Henry Cromwell in 1658, but had actively promoted the Restoration, and was therefore rewarded with the peerage; he had other offices, being governor of Connaught in 1666. He died in 1676,² leaving sons Robert and John, who succeeded him. This peerage became extinct on the death of James Lord Kingston in 1701, but the heir male of the family, Sir Edward King, was made Earl of Kingston in 1768, and this title is still in existence.

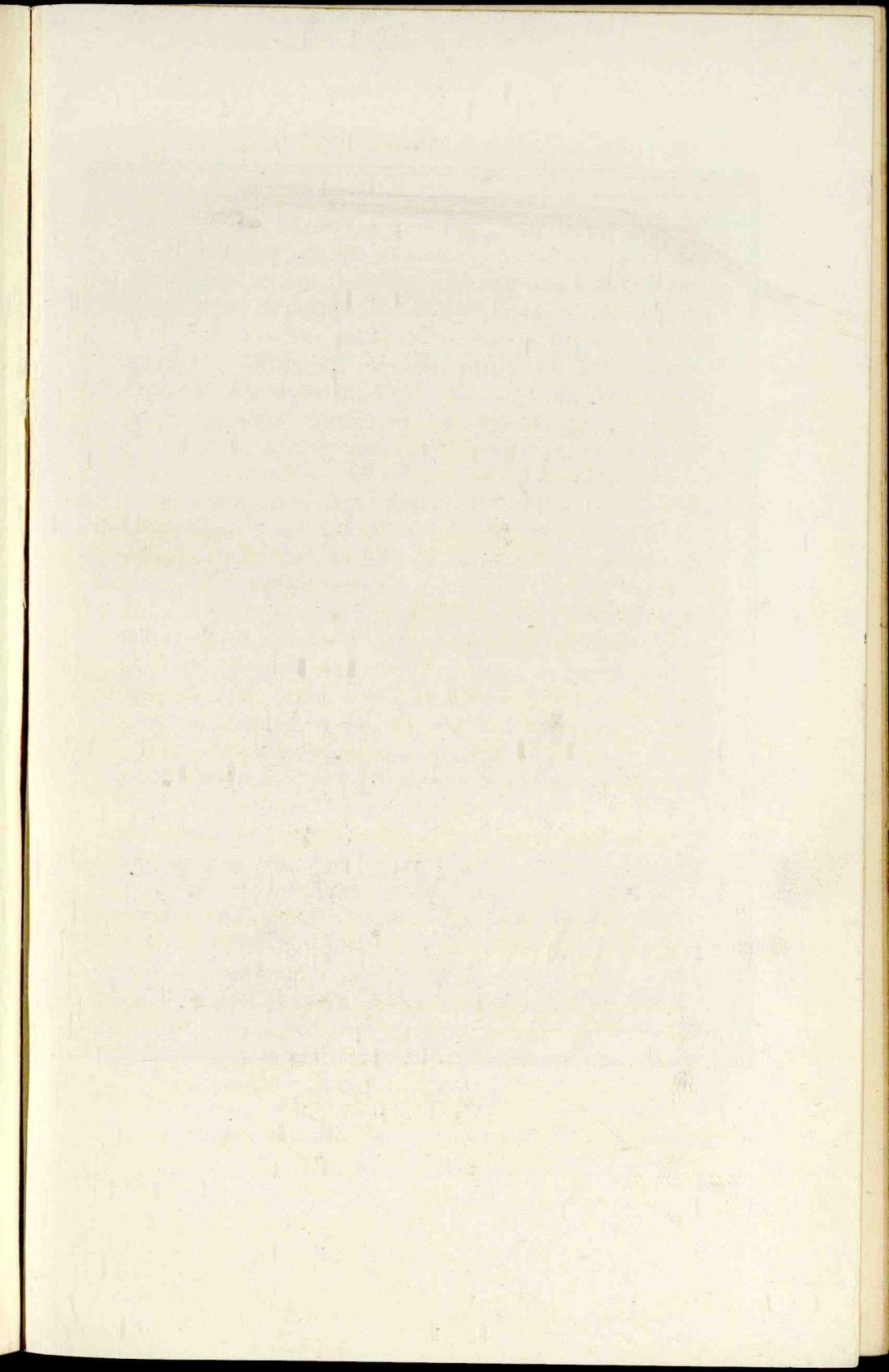
Lord Kingston's ownership of Bidston is noteworthy chiefly for the careful Survey made for him in 1665 which, with the plans which accompany it, has been used in the present work. Randle Holme in 1668 noted that Lord Kingston was lord of Bidston, and that there was no other freeholder there or at Ford.³ The estate was heavily mortgaged, and in 1680 Sir Robert Vyner acquired a title in it, and the purchase appears to have been completed by his nephew and grand-nephew.⁴

¹ Foss, *Judges*, vi, 490; Aitken, *Steele*, i, 349.

² There is an account of him in *D.N.B.*

³ Harl. MS. 2010, f. 14.

⁴ *Trans. Hist. Soc.*, xlv, 49.





SIR ROBERT VYNER

CHAPTER V.
THE VYNERS.

SIR ROBERT VYNER, the new lord of Bidston, sprang from the family of Vyner of North Cerney, Glos., and Eathorpe, Warwickshire. He was a younger son of William Vyner of the latter place, and was apprenticed in the Goldsmiths Company, London, to his uncle Sir Thomas Vyner, who had had the honour of a double knighthood—by Cromwell in 1654 and by Charles II in 1660. Sir Thomas was lord mayor in 1653-4, created baronet in 1661, and died in 1665, when the title descended to his son Sir George Vyner; dying in 1673, Sir George was succeeded by his son Thomas, who died unmarried in 1683, when this baronetcy expired.¹

Sir Robert appears to have been a consistent Royalist, for he was one of those who were to be members of the proposed order of Knights of the Royal Oak. His estate was then supposed to give him an income of £3,500 a year. He made the new regalia used for the coronation of Charles II (23 April 1661), the old having been destroyed, and these ornaments are still in use; they cost nearly £32,000. From 1660 to 1670 he was a master of the Mint. He was made a knight at Whitehall in 1665, and a baronet 10 May 1666. In the city of London he was alderman from 1666; sheriff in the same year and lord mayor 1674, celebrating his accession with a pageant of great magnificence, known as the "Goldsmiths' Jubilee"; and this in spite of the fact that his fortune had been greatly impaired by the closing of the Exchequer in 1672. The King dined with him on this occasion; and he next year erected an equestrian statue to the King at Stocks Market,

¹ G.E.C., *Complete Baronetage*, iii, 216.

where the Mansion House now stands. It was of white marble and he had "bought it a bargain at Leghorn."¹ A correspondent of the *Spectator* (no. 462) gives the following reminiscence :

Sir Robert was a very loyal man, and (if you will allow the expression) very fond of his Sovereign ; but what with the joy he felt at heart for the honour done him by his Prince, and through the warmth he was in with continual toasting healths to the Royal Family, his lordship grew a little fond of his Majesty and entered into a familiarity not altogether so graceful in so public a place. The King understood very well how to extricate himself on all kinds of difficulties, and with a hint to the company to avoid ceremony, stole off and made towards his coach, which stood ready for him in Guildhall Yard. But the mayor liked his company so well, and was grown so intimate, that he pursued him hastily and catching him fast by the hand, cried out with a vehement oath and accent, " Sir, you shall stay and take t'other bottle." The airy Monarch looked kindly at him over his shoulder, and with a smile and graceful air—for I saw him at the time and do now—repeated this line of the old song—

He that's drunk is as great as a King
and immediately turned back and complied with his landlord.

The statue of Charles II was thus described in 1708 : " In armour, with head uncovered, on horseback, all carved in marble. Erected on a large and lofty pedestal about 18 ft. high. . . . Represented as trampling on an enemy with his horses' feet." ²

He married, in 1665, Mary, widow of Sir Thomas Hyde, bart., and daughter of John Whitchurch, with a fortune of £100,000 ; she died 1 January 1674/5,³ and Sir Robert

¹ The statue was meant for John Sobieski (king of Poland) trampling on a Turk, and Sobieski was made into Charles and the Turk into Cromwell ; *Spectator*, no. 462.

² Hatton, *New View of London*, 800.

³ January 1, [Friday]. My Lady Mary, late wife to Sir Robert Vynor, now Lord Mayor of London, sickened on Munday last and died Jan. 1, 1674/5, a great loss to Sir Robert Vynor, she having during her life £2,000 per ann; and her only daughter by Mr. Hide having £4,000 per ann. (he being her former husband). Her funerall on Tuesday, Janua. 19, from Goldsmith's Hall to St. Mary Woolnoth in Lombard Street.

(*Smith's Obituary* (Camd. Soc.), 104.)

on 2 September 1688, at Windsor Castle. Both were buried at St. Mary Woolnoth in the city. There were no surviving children,¹ and the title became extinct.² There are numerous allusions to him in Pepys' *Diary*, mainly about the moneys Sir Robert had to provide for the Navy, as banker. As a goldsmith he supplied Pepys with plate. The Diarist thought Lady Vyner "a very handsome woman." Sir Robert had a country house called Swakeleys at Ickenham, near Uxbridge, where Pepys went to stay with him on 7 September 1665 in the time of his prosperity, when "no man in England lived in greater plenty than he, and when he commanded both King and council with the credit he gave them."

The following notice, from a memoir drawn up for the King soon after the Restoration, gives a favourable idea of his character :³

Sir Robert Vynor and Sir Joseph Sheldon, sheriffs of London together, in which time they contracted an extraordinary friendship, which they have greatly improved to the service of the king and the advantage of the city.

Sir Robert Vynor hath as large a soul and hath done, and did design, as great and charitable acts in London as any person, if the necessary shutting up of the Exchequer had not restrained him.

The King hath not two persons that do more passionately love his interest than these, nor have a greater interest, in the most substantial citizens of London. They are men of good abilities and very sober and discreet in the management of business.

On 10 February 1669/70 Sir Robert Vyner was admitted to Gray's Inn. In May 1683 Sir Robert sent to his "honoured friend" the rector of Ickenham a paten and flagon for the use of the parishioners, to be employed for the first time at the Communion service on the coming Whitsunday.⁴

¹ A son Charles was baptized at Ickenham in 1666 and died in 1688.

² G.E.C. *Complete Baronetage*, iv, 31; Granger.

³ *Genl. Mag.* (1769), xxxix, 516.

⁴ Sloane MS. 2717, f. 43.

How he acquired Bidston is not clear. According to the story related by one of the family,¹ Lord Kingston, having purchased Bidston from Steele with money borrowed from him, in 1665 borrowed another £1,600 from Sir Robert Vyner, and accepted a judgment for £4,000 against him by way of giving security. Steele and Lord Kingston having died (in 1680 and 1676) and Steele's heirs claiming their money, Sir Robert engaged to pay off the mortgage and so stepped into the position of owner. The mortgage had not been paid off at his death, and his will, dated 29 August 1688, makes no reference to this estate. The following is an abstract of it :²

I desire to be buried in my vault in the church of St. Mary Woolnoth in Lombard Street, London.

I desire my houses in London, my manors of Swakeleys and Colum, my mansion house and other houses and lands in the said manors, co., Middlesex and my manors of Keggworth and Frollsworth, co. Leicester, be sold to pay my creditors ; and to make up their full debt, whatsoever more was due to them to be assigned by the executors to them on His Majesty's patent for perpetual interest at 6 per cent. charged upon the hereditary part of the excise granted to testator and his assigns. Of the residue a fourth part to my executors ; to my two nephews, Thomas and Robert Vyner, sons of my brother Samuel, £100 each ; and the residue to my four nieces, Mrs. Millington, her sister Frances Vyner, Mrs. Elizabeth Snell and Mrs. Honor Leigh, and my nephews, Mr. Thomas Leigh and Mr. John Snell, equally.

Legacies to Christ's Hospital, St. Bartholomew's, St. Thomas, and Bethlehem Hospital.

Executors :—my kinsmen, Francis Millington, of London, Esqr., Thomas Vyner Esqr. son of Dr. Thomas Vyner, late Dean of Gloucester deceased.

ROBT. VYNER.

Witnesses :—Tho. Leeke, Martha Leeke, Tho. Muddiman.

Proved :—4 October, 1688, by Thomas Vyner, Esqr., nephew, and one of the executors named ; on 2 November, 1688, Francis Millington, the other executor, renounced.

¹ Vyner, by C. J. Vyner (1888).

² P.C.C. Exton, 143 ; *Cheshire Sheaf*, III, i, 113.

From this will it appears that the interest of the two sons of Sir Robert's eldest brother Samuel Vyner of Eathorpe was limited to £100 each. The executor, Captain Thomas Vyner, had considerable difficulties in dealing with the estate, the creditors being many and the estate being heavily burdened. He accordingly in 1699 obtained the following Act of Parliament to force the creditors to come to some agreement with him.¹

Whereas Sir Robert Vyner, late of London, Knt. and Bart., died indebted to several persons in great sums, which by reason of the stop of payments in the Exchequer in 1671 he became unable to pay and whereas by his will bearing date 29 August, 1688, he made provision for payment of his debts by sale of his lands, etc., appointing his nephew Thomas Vyner and Francis Millington, Esqrs., executors (the latter renouncing executorship and since dying) and whereas by suits of the creditors, Thomas has been unable to dispose of the lands, it is now enacted that it may be lawful for the executors, administrators, guardians and trustees of any persons entitled to any debts from the said Sir Robert Vyner to execute articles of agreement and take the satisfaction therein agreed to be paid and if two thirds of the creditors on or before 23 October, 1699, have sealed the said agreement, it shall pass for all creditors [etc. as to payment of creditors].

And whereas there are divers accounts between the said Sir Robert Vyner and Bridget Hide,² now wife of Peregrine, Marquess of Carmarthen, son and heir apparent of Thomas, Duke of Leeds, President of the Privy Council, touching the profit of the lands of the said Bridget received by Sir Robert during her minority and also certain articles between Sir Robert and the Duke of Leeds bearing date 24 June, 1680 (the Duke being then Thomas Earl of Danby, Knt.), all agreements in the same are declared null and void and the executor of Sir Robert's estate is acquitted thereof; the bond bearing date 1 February, 1677, in £5,000 for payment of £2,500 executed by Sir Robert to Sir Ralph Knight, Knt., deceased, in trust for the said Duke of Leeds, to remain in force.

Though Bidston is not named, the mortgagees would no doubt be among the creditors who came to an arrange-

¹ Private Acts, 11 Will. III, no. 19.

² Daughter of Lady Vyner by her former husband.

ment with the executor. No details are known. Colonel Thomas Vyner became a brigadier in 1706,¹ and died in 1707 at Rome. He married Anne . . .² He was member for Grimsby in 1699 and 1701. In his will, dated 4 February 1706/7, he describes himself as "of Swakeleys, esquire"; the codicil is dated at Frankfort 14 September 1707. The following is an abstract: ³

I desire to be buried in the vault of Ickenham parish church. Debts of Sir Robert Vyner and my debts to be paid.

I bequeath my manor of Swakeley to my son Robert, in tail male; in default of such issue to my cousin Thomas Vyner of EThorpe, co. Warwick Esqr. in tail male, in default to my sister Snell for life and my nephew Robert Snell, he then to take the name of Vyner.

To my mother the income of the Rectory of Northlidge. To Thomas Vyner and his wife and others [named] £10 each. To my wife [not named] £100.

Residuary legatee and executor:—my said nephew, Robert Snell, of the Inner Temple, London, Esqr., he to be guardian and trustee for my said son until his age of 21.

A monument to be erected near the vault where my uncle, Sir Robert Vyner is buried in St. Mary Woolnoth Church, Lombard Street and £100 to be expended thereon.

THO. VYNER.

Witnesses:—John Crosier, George Laye, Edward Atkinson.

Proved:—16 July, 1708, by executor to whom administration of all goods, etc., granted, the admon. granted to Anne Vyner, the relict, first revoked.

Codicil:—Robert Viner, in my will I have made no provision for your mother, as I designed before I left England. I command you to all[ow] her £100 a year out of the Posthouse.

The executor had not been able to conclude the whole of his trust, for it was his son Robert—who, it may be noticed, was under age when the will was made, and therefore born in or after 1686—who finally paid off the

¹ Luttrell's *Diaries*, vi, 47.

² In the *Gent. Mag*, 1736, it is stated that Mrs. Anne Vyner, relict of Robert Vyner, Esq., died in Conduit Street on 20 April. Robert seems to be a mistake for Thomas.

³ P.C.C. Barrett, 51; Young, 269.

mortgage and so obtained possession of the Bidston estate.¹ The family at Eathorpe, as descendants of the eldest brother of Sir Robert Vyner, were discontented with the way in which the executor and the younger Robert had managed the business, as is evident from the following letter to Mrs. Vyner of Eathorp in November 1726 :²

Your husband was the heir and Captain Vyner the executor of Sir Robert, who left an estate in Lincolnshire not devised by the will of Sir Robert and [which] would therefore have descended to your husband as heir had not Captain Vyner got assignments of several judgments affecting the estate and threatened to extend them unless your husband would agree to convey to him : which he did, in consideration of the Captain paying him £7,000, being a debt due from Sir Robert to your husband, as he was executor to his brother Robin Vyner the goldsmith.³ When your husband received the last £2,000 your husband levied a fine to confirm the estate to the Captain,⁴ and his son (as I have been informed) upon his marriage suffered a recovery,⁵ for it was entailed on your husband, and settled it on his present wife. . . . As to Lord Anglesey's debt, it was vested in the Captain as executor of Sir Robert, and your husband had no claim.

PS.—I have heard my cousin Vyner often talk of the right he had to an estate in Ireland and Cheshire, but could never understand how he made it out, and am sure there were no articles or agreement between them but what related to the Lincolnshire estate.

The "estate in Cheshire" is no doubt Bidston and its appurtenances. As the writer, who seems to have been well acquainted with the circumstances, could not make out how his "cousin Vyner" claimed it, it is scarcely likely there was any fraud in Captain Vyner's action, as was alleged by the author of the *Vyner* pamphlet referred to. The lady addressed was the widow of Thomas Vyner of Eathorpe, who died in 1710, perhaps before Robert Vyner the younger was of age. There was perhaps a

¹ *Vyner*, as before.

² Add Ms. 33,319, f. 96.

³ Robin or Robert Vyner, brother of Thomas of Eathorp, died in 1690.

⁴ In 1701.

⁵ In 1716.

suggestion of discontent remaining in 1766, when Thomas Vyner's son, the Rev. Thomas Vyner, rector of Authorpe, Lincs., died, and Robert Vyner wrote to the widow at Eathorpe :

Your mother has favoured me with a letter on the melancholy occasion of Mr. Vyner's death, for which I am very sincerely sorry. I cannot appoint anyone to Authorp in trust for Mr. Vyner's son, having only alternate right. I am sorry Mr. Vyner's circumstances were so narrow as Mrs. Adam represents. His father received very considerable sums—especially at one payment £6,000, besides others to a large amount.¹

All that can be gathered from the narrative is that in the course of his arrangement with Sir Robert's creditors (of whom Thomas of Eathorpe was one), Captain Thomas obtained a surrender of all claims by various payments in cash, and that his son Robert paid off the remaining mortgage on Bidston, and held it in his own right. He is distinguished as having actually visited this distant manor, for notes of his in the Kingston Survey, show that he was there in 1721 and 1743.

He was member for Great Grimsby in 1710, and was knight of the shire for Lincoln in six parliaments between 1724 and 1760. In 1730 he spoke in the debate on the Address, in favour of the amendment, but this was defeated, Walpole having a majority of 262 against 129.² Horace Walpole in 1759 wrote : " We had a scrap of a debate on Friday [26 Jan.], on the Prussian and Hessian Treaties. Old Vyner opposed the first, in pity to that *poor woman*, as he called her, the Empress Queen," Maria Theresa.³ On 12 November 1760 Vyner wrote thus to the Duke of Newcastle about the parliamentary election expected on the accession of George III : ⁴

¹ Add. Ms. 33319, f. 98. The son mentioned, another Thomas, became prebendary of Canterbury and died in 1804.

² *Earl of Carlisle's MSS.* (Hist. MSS. Com.), 64.

³ Walpole's *Letters*, iv, 233.

⁴ Add. Mss. 32914, f. 297.

You must have heard of the division in the county of Lincoln, of which I was in no manner the cause. One side has set up Lord Brownlow Bertie and Mr. Whichcot, and the other Sir John Thorold and myself. I presume to request the continuance of your favour.

He was not, however, elected again, Bertie and Whichcote being returned in 1761 instead of Vyner and Whichcote.

He was twice married.¹ He died 10 April 1777 at his house in Conduit Street, Hanover Square,² being nearly 90 years of age. His will, dated 28 March 1776, was proved on 12 April, 1777, by Robert the son and executor.³ It has a noteworthy reference to the Bidston estates.

Whereas on the marriage of my son, Robert, I conveyed to him the perpetual advowson of the Rectory of Withorum *alias* Withern, co. Lincoln, he to nominate my cousin, Thomas Vyner, late of Thorpe, co. Warw., since deceased, to the first vacancy, I now wish him to nominate one of the sons of said Thomas, and to the rectory of Authorp, co. Lincoln.

The manors of Gothby and Tupholme and lands, etc., in various places, co. Linc. to feoffees, in use for my son Robert, with contingent remainders to my grandson Robert Vyner, only son of my said son, in tail male, to other sons of my son, to his daughters, issue of grandson, Thomas Vyner, eldest son of late cousin, Thomas Vyner, clerk, in tail male. To the children of the said Thomas Vyner clerk, £100. My cousin Thomas Vyner, now of Oxford, to be presented to said living, or his brother Robert Vyner, the younger.

Whereas a great part of my lands at Bidston in Cheshire is let out to tenants for 99 years, I empower my son and whoever shall be seized of any estate in possession of the said lands at Bidstone to renew the said leases as often as any life shall cease.

Residuary legatee and executor:—my son, Robert.

ROBERT VYNER.

Witnesses:—Thomas Mildmay Cockayne, James Pemberton Leach, John Badge.

¹ Licence by Bishop of London, 9 May 1716 to marry Margaret Style of Wateringbury, Kent.

² *Gent. Mag.*, 1777.

³ P.C.C. Collier, 189.

The son Robert succeeded accordingly. He sat in various parliaments—for Oakhampton, 1754; Lincoln city 1774 and 1780, and Thirsk 1785 and 1790. Some letters to him in 1779 and 1781 from the Earl of Liverpool have been preserved.¹ He died in Conduit Street, 19 August 1799.²

His son Robert succeeded him. He was knight of the shire for Lincoln from 1794 to 1802, when he retired from the representation on account of declining health. He had a country seat at Elsham, Lincs., and a town house in Dover Street. He made a continental tour in 1783, visiting Vienna, Dresden and Berlin and returning to England by way of Hanover and Holland.³ He was sheriff of Lincolnshire in 1804, and appears to have been nominated for Cheshire in 1810 (as Robert Vyner of Bidston, Esq.), but acted for three weeks only in February. He died at Gautby, Lincs., on 13 March in that year, aged 48. In 1786 he married Theodosia, daughter of the Earl of Ashburnham, by whom he left nine children.⁴

He was succeeded by his eldest son, another Robert Vyner. On a recovery of the Cheshire estates made in 1827 the manor or reputed manor of Bidston was settled on Robert Vyner and his heirs.⁵

In the Eyes survey of 1828⁶ it is stated:

The land on the edge of Wallasey Pool belongs to Robert Vyner, lord of the manor, for which he holds courts. These lands have a mound or embankment to prevent the tidal water flowing beyond, as formerly. They covered 3,000 ac. in this and the adjoining township of Wallasey Leasowe.

Some years ago Mr. Vyner erected an embankment or roadway across the Pool, connecting his lands in Bidston with Poulton-cum-

¹ Add. MSS. 38306, f. 135; 38307, f. 100; 38308, f. 90.

² *Gent. Mag.*

³ Letters to Sir R. M. Keith; Add. MS. 35528, ff. 137, 203.

⁴ *Gent. Mag.*

⁵ Chester Recoveries Apl. 8 Ges. IV.

⁶ *Trans. Hist. Soc.*, xxii. 187.

Seacombe; but in consequence of objections that it interfered with the full action of the tide, it was taken down, and it does not appear that he has attempted the exercise of any other right on the strand.

In 1830 he purchased from the Crown the foreshore of Wallasey Pool, anticipating that it might be wanted for docks; and when the Crown afterwards sold the foreshore rights to the Birkenhead Dock Trustees, he vindicated his prior title after long suits, receiving compensation from the Mersey Dock Board in 1863.¹ He is also remembered locally for taking possession of the Hoylake Railway in 1870, because he had not been paid for his land. About 1850 it was sought to make Bidston hill an immense quarry, but Mr. Vyner refused the offer made him.² He laid out the Rhododendron Garden on the north slope of Bidston Hill. The story is that he proposed to build a large house there and began with the garden. He intended to marry Miss Boodee of Leasowe Castle and was greatly chagrined when she married Sir Edward Cust instead, and threw up his schemes for the big house and is said never to have visited Bidston afterwards. He died, unmarried, 27 September 1872, having bequeathed Bidston, etc., to his nephew Henry Frederic Clare Vyner of Newby Hall, near Ripon, son of his brother Henry by Mary Gertrude Robin-

¹ *Vyner.* At the trial in June 1863 plaintiff claimed the soil of the Great Float as his freehold, while the Dock Board said the acts for constructing the docks at least gave them the right of exclusive possession. The judges were unanimous in deciding for the claimant, who had made the purchase in 1830, long before the Crown had (in 1844) agreed to sell and the Commissioners of Woods and Forests (in 1853) had actually conveyed the Crown right. Nothing in the Dock Acts took away Vyner's right, and the Birkenhead Trustees who sold to the Liverpool Corporation could convey no more than they had. There had been no concealment of Vyner's claims, for his lawyers had in 1845 given the Birkenhead Commissioners clear notice of his rights. The Liverpool Corporation had, however, bought and spent great sums on the docks in the belief that they were absolute owners. As it was, however, they must buy out Mr. Vyner. *Times* report, 6 June 1863.

² On Teesdale's map of 1828 "railway" is marked, showing a line from a quarry on the top of the hill to Wallasey Pool.

son, daughter of the 2nd Earl de Grey. In 1873 the Cheshire estate was of 3,224 acres in extent, with a rental of £5,292. The heir died 11 November 1882, having by his will left his estates to his brother Robert Charles de Grey Vyner,¹ subject to an annuity of £4,000 to his sister Henrietta Marchioness of Ripon for her life. The Bidston estates were released from liability for this in 1888; the Marchioness died in 1907.

The new lord of the manor was born in 1842 and educated at Eton, and served in the Grenadier Guards till his marriage. For many years he occupied a prominent position on the Turf, his horse Minting being a famous racer, carrying off the Grand Prix at Paris. Locally Mr. Vyner won the Chester Gold Cup in 1874 with Organist. He was also interested in coursing. It was during his lordship that Bidston grew rapidly as a residential district. At one time he had a house on Bidston Hill and occasionally lived there. He also laid out several new roads. In 1865 he married Eleanor, daughter of the Rev. S. D. Shafto (she died in 1913). He died at his London residence, Egerton Crescent, on 19 March 1915, and was buried at Newby Park on 23 March. He had two daughters—Mary Evelyn Violet, who married in 1886 Lord Alwyne Frederick Compton (who died in 1911); and Violet Aline, who married in 1890 the 5th Earl of Rosslyn. He left his estates in Cheshire and Lincolnshire to the elder daughter, on condition that she took the name of Vyner, which she did accordingly in 1916.

Lady Alwyne Frederick Compton-Vyner is the present lady of the manor. Her son and heir apparent, Edward Robert Francis, born 1891, is also heir presumptive to the Marquisate of Northampton.

In 1814 courts were still held annually for the manor of

¹Another brother, Frederick Grantham Vyner, was murdered by Greek brigands 21 April 1870.

Bidston, with its dependencies. A considerable part of the estates was held on leases for lives at nominal rents ; the rest, 1,530 ac., was let for £3,332 a year, or nearly £2 4s. an acre (stat.).¹

(To be continued.)

¹ Ormerod, ii, 470.

