

On the Family of Fitzjames.

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IT may be interesting to the Members of the Somersetshire Archæological Society, and to others, to hear something about the old families who were the chief land owners in Bruton and its neighbourhood in the 16th and 17th centuries. My own researches have been confined almost exclusively to the Wills in the Prerogative Court—a rich mine of information for those who desire to investigate with accuracy the history of the County Families of England. I am not going to inflict on your patient hearing any detailed pedigree of those families to which I am about to refer, which would, in a paper like this, be wearisome and uninteresting; but I will endeavour to give you a brief account of them, introducing, now and then, a few extracts from their Wills, which may be illustrative of the names, manners, customs, dress, personal ornaments, furniture, modes of speech and of the spelling of those times, as well as some references to Historical facts and incidents.

I can tell you nothing as to the foundation, history, or suppression of Bruton Abbey—that subject I must leave to others. Old Wills rather, and such like private documents, to my mind, invest with a living and human interest the memories of those men and women, who, in particular neighbourhoods, lived, and wooed, and married, and inherited or acquired property, and acted their parts among their neighbours—oftentimes wisely and well—and were more or less personally concerned in the great events of their times, and then passed away. Their burials are too often unrecorded by any sepulchral stone in our old country Churches, and are only noted in the old Parochial

Registers, but, in many cases, they left behind them memorials of their goodness and generosity.

The first name that will occur to the minds of Bruton men is that of Hugh Sexey, the founder of the Hospital. According to the inscriptions on the Hospital, Hugh Sexey filled the office of Auditor of the Imprest to Queen Elizabeth and James I. Phelps, in his *History of Somerset*, says "He was a native of Bruton—born of humble parents—and having attained a little learning at the Grammar School, by upright and steady conduct he rose into public notice, and eventually obtained a high official position under the Crown, having meanwhile acquired considerable property in the counties of Somerset and Gloucestershire." No mention of the Hospital is made in his Will, but it seems that during his life he conveyed certain manors and estates to Sir Lawrence Hyde and others, upon trust, that the said estates should be employed to such charitable and good uses as he should by any writing or will appoint. The Deed of Incorporation is an indenture dated Dec. 10, 1638, almost twenty years after his death. All that I can tell you of his personal history is that, in 1611 he married, at Cloford, Somerset, Dec. 19, Ursula Champernoun, a step-daughter of Thomas Horner, Esq.; she proved his Will, Aug. 21, 1619. He describes himself as of St. Giles Cripplegate, London; mentions his wife, Ursula, and his Manor of Blackford, Somerset; and Thomas Bancke, and Ann, his wife—"my kinswoman." This is all; he had evidently no children. The only monument he left is "Hugh Sexey's Hospital."

We next come to the Fitzjames family, to members of which the Bruton Grammar School owes its foundation. It was not established by bequests of land or money, but by gifts in the lifetime of its founders. The documents connected with its foundation are still extant, and are published in the Charity Commissioners' Reports. The foundation deed of the school is an indenture dated Sept. 24, 11th Henry VIII (1520), the parties to the deed being Richard Fitzjames, Bishop of London;

John Fitzjames, and John Edmondess, Clerk, D.D., on the 1st part; Richard, Abbot of Glastonbury, Somerset, on the 2nd part; Richard Pers, Prior of the Charter House, Witham, Somerset, on the 3rd part; and William Gilbert, Abbot of Brewton, Somerset, on the 4th part. But I do not wish now to dwell on the Grammar School, but on the Fitzjames family.

The first of the family about whom anything definite is known, is mentioned in *The Herald's Visitation of the County of Somerset*. James Fitzjames lived in the 15th century, and married Eleanor Draycot, the heiress of Redlynch, which place became henceforth the residence of the Fitzjames family.

They had three sons. The eldest son, John Fitzjames, who was aged 42 in 1485, died 1510. He styles himself in his Will, which is in Latin, "Senior, of Redlynch." He desires burial in the Priory Church of Bruton; leaves a spice plate to "my dear Brother Richard, Bishop of London," and a silver bowl to "each of my daughters." "Unum ciphum argenteum, vocatum, 'a bolle.'" He makes Isabella, his wife, and John Fitzjames, his son, executors; proved Dec. 10, 1510. His widow, Isabella Fitzjames, who was his second wife and a widow, made her Will Feb. 22, 1527. She bequeathes money "to the Chapel of St. Peters at Redlynch;" "to my daughter Lady Fitzjames, a girdle of gold harneysed with gold;" "to my daughter Elizabeth Fitzjames the younger, a gowne of chamlett, purfilled with crymson velvett;" "to my son Hugh Malet of Corypoole, a goblett gilte, bering arms of liberts' heds;" "to my godson Thomas Malet, a goblett gilte with the arms of Portcullis and the Rose, and 6 sylver spoonys;" "to my daughter Isabel Malet, a 'nutte,' gilte, with a cover to the same, and a Mary Mawdelyn box with a cover;" "to my son Thomas Michel, 2 counterpoynts, on with the image of our Ladie, the other with dyvers ymagery work;" "to my daughter Jane Michell, a gowne of chamlett, furred with shanks;" "to my Lord of Bruton, a cruet of silver and gilt to serve him at his masse;" "to the Prior of Charterhouse" (Witham?) "an ale cuppe of sylver;" "to every

Chanon of the House of Bruton, being a Prest, 20d., to every novys, 8d.—one of the Chanons to sing at my later husband's sulter daily within the Monastery, praying for his soule, and my soule, and for all my good friends' soules." In a codicil, she says, "My cosin Alice Storke shall have my best bonet and a frontlet of tawny velvet; Joan Compton, daughter of the said Alice, my best worsted kirtle; and William Clements, scolar of Oxford, shall have a peir of blankets, a bollster, and 26s. 8d. in money to his exhibicion." Proved Oct. 23, 1527.

Another brother of this John Fitzjames was the ancestor of another branch of this family, who eventually settled in Dorsetshire.

The third brother was Richard Fitzjames, who was Warden of Merton College, Oxford; consecrated to the see of Rochester, May 17, 1497; translated, by bull of Pope Julius II, Nov. 29, 1503, to Chichester; and again translated to the Bishopric of London, Aug. 2, 1506. He died Jan. 15, 1521-2. There is much about this man of historical interest. I am sorry to say he took an active part in the prosecution of the Protestants, in the reign of Henry VIII. He assisted in the foundation of Bruton Grammar School. In his Will, dated April 11, 1518, part of which is in Latin, he desires to be buried "in the nave of my Cathedral Church of St. Paule, London, under the altar of St. Paul of my own foundation, or in the belfry, under the tomb of marble lately erected and prepared by me." And then follows, among other legacies, a kind and thoughtful request:—"I woll that my paire of portatyves in my Chapell in my Place of London, myn organs also beyng and standing in my Chapells within my 3 Manors of Fullham, Hadham, and Wykeham, shall there stand styll and remayn to my successor, the next Bisshop of London, that they may be used there to the house and service of God. Item: I woll that all my baking and brewing vessells and instruments and things necessary and belonging therto, bedsteds, tabills, trestells, formys, stolyes, cupboards, presses, locks, keys, bolts, cheyres, and chares, except Flanders

chayres covered with red lether, being and standing in the Place at London and in my manors aforesaid, shall there stand still and remain fully, freely and hooly, to my said successor and to his use, that he shall not find the howses bayre of such things when he shall come into them, as I found them bayre at my coming to the same." Proved May 22, 1522.

We come now to his nephew, Sir John Fitzjames, Chief Justice of the King's Bench, who died 1542. I do not enter into his legal history, as that is fully given in Foss's *Lives of the Judges*. He was the chief founder of the Bruton Grammar School. He was the son of the first John Fitzjames of Redlynch. He married as his second wife, by whom he had no issue, Elizabeth Coningsby, widow of Sir Richard Berkeley, of Stoke Gifford, near Bristol. She died four years after her husband. There is nothing specially to remark on in her Will: her legacies are chiefly to members of the Berkeley family. She wishes to be buried near her husband at Brewton. There is something rather touching in the devout words with which the Chief Justice commences his Will. Oct. 23, 30 Henry VIII. "I desire the good Lord, my Redeemer and Maker, that by the mediacion of the most blessed Mother, the Virgin Marie, of St. Anthony, St. Christopher, with all the Hollye Companye of Hevyn, that *in manus tuas Domine commendo spiritum meum* may be the beginning and ending of this my present testament and last will." His funeral must have been an imposing one, if all his directions were carried out. He wishes to be buried "in the Church of Brewton, or elsewhere as shall be thought convenient by my Ex^{rs}. 15 masses of the 5 wounds of our Lord, by 15 most honest and best disposed Priests, that for so short a time may be gotten, 2s. to each for their labour and pains. 12 poor men shall kneale about my Herse every day at the time of the Dirige and Masses, every of them to have a torch in their hands, and there to pray for my soul and all Christian souls, and to have a blake gowne, and every day 4d. in money, until the said moneth be passed. 6s. 8d. to be given to every Parish Church through

which Parish my Body shall be carried towards my burying, and if it rest in the Church one night, 20s." Then "to my wife, Plate of the value of £100, such as she will choose for herself, also the best beds of down at Redlinch, and two pairs of sheets, &c., and jewels and oxen and all my sheep at Smalden &c." Certain pieces of plate "to the person who shall have Redlinch." He speaks of "his cousins Nicholas and Aldred Fitzjames;" bequeaths 40s. to the Fraternities of our Lady in the Parish Church of Brewton. To my cosin Nicholas Fitzjames, my "Great Boke of Statutes," to remain as an implement in the House of Redlinch. To every of the Charter Houses of Witham and Hinton, £3 6s. 8d. to pray for me. To Sir John Horsey, my 2 dozen *trangers* of sylver & parcell gilte, that cost me beyond £40, & my shaving bason of sylver. To Gyles Penye, the cupp that was used to drink claret wyne in; and many other bequests. The Will was proved May 12, 1542.

John Fitzjames, his eldest son, died 1534, before his father, without issue. His wife, who was Elizabeth Baskett, leaves an interesting Will, dated Sept. 1, 1550, desiring to be buried in the Church of St. John Baptist, Brewham, and bequeaths "8d. to every householder of the Parishes of Combe and Horsington, so that they take paynes to goo with my corpus to see yt buried, and the same sum to every lame and blind person in the said parishes. To my cousin Aldred Fitzjames, a sperver of a trussing bedd of yellow and tawny sarcenet and curtayns of the same, and my third gette ale cup & my best damask draper clothe." She adds, "Proclamation to be made in the Towns of Bruton & Sherbourn that persons are to come forward and prove their debts. Half of my residue to be bestowed on mending highways, and on prisoners, and to the marriage of the poor." Proved Feb. 6, 1549-50.

I must not omit a curious Will of George George, gent., of Westoke in Batcombe, Somerset, Aug. 4, 1539. In it he says, among other things "Item, where Elisabeth Ffyzthjames doath owe unto me fowre pounds sterling, delyvered by way of lone to

Maister John Ffizthjames her late Husbonde, in the Chamber of the Halle in William North's House at Bruton, in the presens of John Saly, his own servant, and as yet ys belonginge unto her Mysteriship, of the which £4, for the great goodness that I found in his Maistershipp (Jesu pardone the soule) and in her also, I am content to remyte and forgive the one half, so that she be required to paie the other half, and do not delaye to paie yt."

I think Sir John Fitzjames had another son, James Fitzjames, who was a priest, Chancellor of Wells, Prebendary of St. Paul's, Rector of St. Clement Dane, and Rector of North Cadbury. He died 1541. Sir John had also two married daughters—Christian, wife of Robt. Moreton, and Joan, who married, first, John Marshall of Ivythorne, and secondly, Sir James Perceval of Weston-in-Gordano; but the Redlynch estates passed to Nicholas Fitzjames, first cousin of the Judge, who died March 10, 1550. All that I find recorded of him is that he, along with "John Sydenham and Thomas Horner was diligent to serve the King in the Suppression of the Monasteries." He was also High Sheriff for Somerset, 1545.

The eldest son and heir of Nicholas Fitzjames was Robert, who married Joane Arundell, who was buried in Bruton Church, Feb. 25, 1563. They had only one daughter, so the Redlynch estates went to the second son, Sir James Fitzjames, who was knighted 1553, "the morrow after Queen Mary's Coronation." He married at St. Martin's, Ludgate Hill, London, Dec. 9, 1574, Jane, daughter of Sir John Newton, Kt., of East Harptree, Somerset, and widow of Hugh Cartwright of Kent, by whom he had no children. He made his Will, Aug. 25, 1579, and directs, that during the widowhood of his wife, "she shall have the use and occupacion of all the brasse and pewter vessell in my house at Redlinch, and of all the furniture of the guilte chamber there, the utter tower chamber, the chamber over the parlour, the Stourton chamber, my Lady Barkeley's chamber, and the chamber over the buttery, and of the three new Testers

of imbroderings that were last made." He was High Sheriff for Somerset and Dorset in 1560. He was mixed up in the matter of the murder of the Hartgills by Lord Stourton in 1557, and is often mentioned in the interesting account of that sad tragedy given by Canon Jackson in the 8th volume of the *Wilts Magazine*.

His widow, Lady Jane Fitzjames, made her Will in 1594; it was proved Feb. 12, 1595-6. She desires to be buried in the Church of Town Malling, Kent, by my Brother and Sister Ellyot, "with somme little copper upon it."

Her sister, Ellynor Elliot, who was also a Newton, made her Will in 1588, and makes "my Right Worshipfull, my Lady and Sister, Lady Dame Jane Fitzjames, executrix, and for her pains I doe give, as a declaration and for a remembrance of systerly love and affection towards her, a fine *tike* of a feather bedd."

We now come to Richard Fitzjames of Redlinch, the younger brother and heir of Sir James, who married Mary, daughter of Sir William Francis, Kt., of Combe Florey, Somerset. He was buried in Bruton Church, Nov. 12, 1595. His widow was also buried there, March 14, 1607; and administration of his effects was granted to his son, John Fitzjames, July 3, 1598.

His son, John Fitzjames, married Joane, daughter of Sir John Younge, Kt., of Bristol.

His daughter, Mary, married George Prater, Esq., of Nunney Castle.

His son, James, I cannot follow out.

It is evident that all the family were much mixed up in the Popish plots in the latter days of Queen Elizabeth. References to them are frequent in the *State Papers*:—"Sept. 4, 1591. Thomas Kelway of Rockbourne, writes to Lord Burghly certain information concerning John Fitzjames, touched, as he hears, with concealment of Babington treason." "Dec. 31, 1597. Elliot persuaded Fitzjames and Prater, both of Somerset, to join the King (of Spain)." "Sept., 1598. There are English soldiers who are enemies to our Queen's religion and State—

Prater and Fitzjames, Gentlemen of Somerset—who came over with Elliott, and have 20 ducats a month. Also John Fitzjames of Redlynch, came aboard, and said ‘his Brother James would go with Ellyot.’” “July 6, 1606. Fitzjames said, ‘There may come a puffed which may send some high enough, and low enough to hell, ere long.’”

Many other suspicious acts and sayings are recorded in the *State Papers*; relative to these Fitzjames. What eventually became of them, I cannot trace out. All that I know about the Manor of Redlynch is, that it passed to the family of the Gorges.

In 1632 Sir Robert Gorges, Kt., settled the capital messuage, parks, &c., of Redlynch and Stoke Holloway, Somerset, on his son, Thomas Gorges, on his marriage with Margaret Poyntz.

Thomas Poyntz died 1638, *s.p.* The Lady Mary Gorges, widow of Sir Robert, was buried in Bruton Church, Jan. 31, 1648.

Some of the Fitzjames are afterwards found at Charlton Mackrel, and some in London; but I have not been able to discover a single lineal male descendant, at the present day, of the Fitzjames family.

We come, lastly, to Aldred Fitzjames, the ancestor of the Dorsetshire family. He was brother of Nicholas Fitzjames, and held lands in various parts of Somerset. His Will was proved Feb. 13, 1554-5. He left four children. His wife was Joan Culpepper of Kent. She married, secondly, John Leweston, of Leweston, Dorset, who died 1584, but left his estates in Dorset to his stepson, Sir John Fitzjames, the eldest son of Aldred Fitzjames. Leweston thus became the seat of the family.

Sir John Fitzjames married Joan Trenchard, sister of Sir George Trenchard, and died May 16, 1625, aged 77. The Manor of Long Burton, Dorset, was granted to him by Sir Walter Raleigh, 36th Elizabeth. His eldest son, Leweston Fitzjames, was M.P. for Bridport, 39th Elizabeth. He married Eleanor, daughter of Sir Henry Winston of Standish, Gloucestershire. They had several children. In his Will, June 30, 1636, he desires to be

“buried in chancel of Long Burton,” and adds “to my ever loving and chaste wife, my apparell, jewels, &c., except her wedding ring, which, having formerly been transmitted to me by myn ancestors, I desire may be left to my eldest son or daughter as shall be unmarried at my death, when it shall please God to send this my present wife a second husband, or to take her out of this world a widow. To my daughter Joan, who is not otherwise provided for, 1000 pieces, of 22 shillings a piece, which my ex^{ts} shall find ready pursed up, with a label, and her name written thereon. My younger children I have provided for by way of conveyance.” Proved May 16, 1638.

His widow, Eleanor, did not marry again, but died 1650. She leaves in her Will many legacies:—“To my daughter Joane, my roape of perles; to my daughter Dionis, my transparent diamond; to my daughter Sarah, other jewels, and ‘£50 in shipp angels.’” Proved Aug. 29, 1650.

Their son, Sir John Fitzjames, took the Royalist side in the Civil Wars, and his estates, valued in 1641 at £120 per annum, were sequestrated. He was knighted at the Restoration, in 1660, and was elected three times M.P. for Poole, Dorset. He married Margaret, daughter of Nathaniel Stephens, Esq., of Eastington, Gloucestershire, who died 1685, aged 71. He died 1670. His Will was proved Sept. 19, 1670. He had a brother, Sir Henry Fitzjames, who died 1686, without issue, having married Jane Stint, he being her fourth husband.

Sir John was the last male heir of the Dorset estates. His eldest son, John, having predeceased him, was buried in the Temple Church, London, Dec. 19, 1669.

There were other children, but all the estates became eventually vested in his daughter Grace Fitzjames, who married Sir George Strode, Kt., Serjt. at Law, whose Will was proved April 18, 1702. They lived at Leweston, and had one daughter and heiress, Grace Strode, who married Henry Thynne, Esq. It was at Leweston, while Mr. and Mrs. Thynne lived there, that Bishop Ken was on a visit, March, 1711, when he was seized with his

fatal illness. He had just strength enough to move to Longleat, where he expired. Henry Thynne had by Grace Strode one daughter, Frances, who married the Earl of Hertford, the father of a Duchess of Northumberland; and thus the Leweston estates came to the Percy family.

In the 3rd Report of the Historical MSS. Commission it is mentioned that, in the library of the present Duke of Northumberland are several books, MSS., and letters, of the Fitzjames family; but I forbear quoting from these, as my paper has already proved too long, I fear, for your patient but kind attention.
