

Catalogue of the Documents in the Exchequer at Taunton Castle.

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THE following Catalogue was made in 1907, during which year, by the kind permission of the Steward of the Manor of Taunton and Taunton Deane, I was allowed to spend a good deal of time in the Exchequer, and to do something towards the sorting out and arrangement of the documents therein contained. As is well known the Exchequer consists of the two rooms over the Inner Gateway of the Castle. It is not connected internally with the rest of the Castle, but is approached by a separate staircase. It served as the office of the Clerk of the Castle, and the Tenants of the Manor have by custom the right to the use of it as a depository for the manorial records.

An account of the Manor and its customs by Mr. W. Arthur Jones will be found in Vol. XVIII of the Society's *Proceedings* (1872). Here it must be sufficient to say that the Bishops of Winchester were Lords of the Manor which consisted of (a) The Outfaring division, (b) The Infaring division, or the Five Hundreds of Taunton Deane, and (c) The Hundred of Taunton Borough. Tenements in the last-named Hundred were ancient freeholds subject only to a Rent of Assize. In the Infaring division tenements were of customary freehold tenure, and were transferable by Surrender, the payment of the fine "certain" operating as an admittance. A Surrender could be (a) an Absolute Surrender, or alienation outright of the tenant's interest; (b) a Dormant Surrender, made to the uses of his will; (c) a Surrender in peril of death; or (d) a

Conditional Surrender—one which became void on the condition named in it being fulfilled, *e.g.* on payment of money borrowed on the security of the land. The “Three-weeken” Courts, which were in the nature of Courts Baron, were held, as might be surmised, every three weeks. The Lawday Courts were held twice a year at Hock-tide and Martinmas. For an account of the Court Leet of Taunton Borough, the reader is referred to a paper by Mr. H. Byard Sheppard, the Steward of the Manor, entitled “Courts Leet and the Court Leet of the Borough of Taunton,” which is printed in Vol. LV of the Society’s *Proceedings* (1909).

The various records in connection with alienation of, and admittance to, tenements held of the Manor were formerly kept in duplicate, one for the tenants being filed at the “Checquer of Taunton Castle,” and the other for the Lord at the “Checquer of Wolnesdy” at Winchester. The records prior to the sixteenth century were kept at Winchester, and some years since were deposited at the Public Record Office.

It will be noticed that among the documents below mentioned, there are some which belong, not to the manor, but to the Archdeacon’s Court. Probably the explanation of this is that at one time the Clerk of the Castle was also Clerk to the Archdeaconry, and in that way the Archidiaconal papers found their way into his office at the Exchequer.

OUTER ROOM.

A. COURT BOOKS.

(i) *TAUNTON DEANE. Infaring Division. Lawday Court Books.*

Five Volumes :—I, 1569–80 ; II, 1580–1609 ; III, 1651–73 ; IV, 1675–88 ; V, 1701–73.

Notes : Vols. I and II contain (1) Tythingmen of the different Hundreds sworn in ; (2) Presentments of the Tythingmen ; (3) The names of the Grand Jury ; and (4) Jury Presentments.

Vols. III–V do not contain the Grand Jury lists, nor the and V parts are not properly filled in ; the missing parts are Presentments. These books are merely the record of the

appearance and swearing in of the Tythingmen. In Vols. IV however supplied by "Complete Proceedings at Courts" (Shelf V, Inner Room), "Loose Presentments" (Shelf U, Inner Room), and "Petitions" (Shelf R, Inner Room): *cf.* also "Reeves' Accounts" (Shelves A—I, Inner Room).

(ii) *TAUNTON DEANE. Infaring Division. Three-weeken Court Books.*

Twelve Volumes:—I, 1564–66; II, 1567–69; III, 1574–84; IV, 1584–1601; V, 1614–31; VI, 1631–38; VII, 1641–46; VIII, 1648–51; IX, 1651–62; X, 1662–71; XI, 1701–18; XII, 1714–46.

Notes: Vol. X is imperfect, and Vol. XI is not properly filled in.

Contents:—Tythingmen's Presentments, including the presentment of deaths. According to Custom XIII, 1647, the Tythingmen had to present deaths at the next Three-weeken Court or before the next Lawday. The heir was to come in and make his entry at the Lawday or before it. If he failed to do so, the land was to be proclaimed at that, and the two succeeding Lawdays, after which the land was to escheat to the Lord as in "locage," but was redeemable on payment of a treble fine.

The Three-weeken Courts were held regularly on the whole. See also "Complete Proceedings" (Shelf W, Inner Room), and "Loose Presentments" (Shelf U, Inner Room).

(iii) *TAUNTON DEANE. Outfaring Division.*

Seven Volumes:—I, 1585–1610; II, 1610–22; III, 1622–32; IV, 1632–54; V, 1654–80; VI, 1680–88; VII, 1708–1842.

Notes: These volumes contain (a) records of Lawday Courts:—Lists of Jury; Presentments; Tythingmen sworn; Presentment of wills, etc. No Jury Presentments are entered after 1650. (b) Records of Three-weeken Courts:—Tythingmen's Presentments; Actions between tenants for debt, trespass, etc. These Courts were held fairly regularly until 1680. In Vol. VI the records are irregular, and in Vol. VII there is no record of Three-weeken Courts.

From 1733 the entries are made in English. The title "Hun' Taunton' ffor'" was misread. The contracted word "ffor'" was taken to stand for "forensicum" (belonging to the market), instead of "forinsecum" (from without), and hence the mistaken title "The Hundred of Taunton Market" appears in the place of "The Hundred of Taunton Outfaring." See also "Complete Proceedings" (Shelf W, Inner Room); "Loose Presentments" (Shelf U, Inner Room); and "Petitions" (Shelf R, Inner Room). *Cf.* also "Reeves' Accounts" (Shelves A—I, Inner Room), where accounts of the Outfaring division are entered under the title of "Taunton Liberty."

(iv) *TAUNTON BOROUGH.*

Ten Volumes:—I, 1568–77; II, 1585–1607; III, 1611–22; IV, 1622–30; V, 1630–39; VI, 1639–52; VII, 1652–65; VIII, 1665–79; IX, 1707–27; X, 1739–1825.

Notes: Vol. I is injured by damp and the ink is much faded. Vol. X is imperfect.

These volumes contain (a) records of Courts Leet:—The Jury; Officers elected—2 Constables, 2 Reeves, 2 Bailiffs, 6 Aldermen, 2 Keepers of Green Skins, 3 Sealers and Overseers of Leather, 2 Keepers of the Cornhill, 2 Keepers of the Shambles, 2 Ale-tasters, 8 Overseers of the Sewers; Prices of Corn and Beer; Presentments. After 1637 no proceedings of the Courts, beyond the names of the Officers elected, are entered. (b) Records of Three-weeken Courts:—Aldermen's Presentments and Actions for debt and trespass. There are no entries of these Courts after 1721.

See also "Complete Proceedings" (Shelf W, Inner Room); and "Loose Presentments" (Shelf U, Inner Room). *Cf.* also "Reeves' Accounts" (Shelves A—I, Inner Room).

B. AUDIT BOOKS.

Four Volumes, 1623–1757. Some years are missing, but deficiencies are supplied by the "Reeves' Accounts" (Shelves A—I, Inner Room), which are practically the same.

C. FEE BOOK.

One Volume, 1626-46 ; 1648-55 ; 1691-2 ; 1720 ; 1723.
Fees on Surrenders, etc. Details of Fees due to the Steward and to the Clerk of the Castle and collected in the Borough, Outfaring and Infaring Courts are given at the end of each year.

D. ACCOUNT BOOK.

One Volume, 1663-75 and 1707. Chiefly accounts of money lent.

E. BOOKS OF SURRENDERS.

- (a) *All kinds of Surrenders.* Two Volumes, 1567-84.
- (b) *Mortgage Surrenders.* Thirty Volumes, 1583-1661 ; 1664-1712 ; and Poundisford Mortgage Surrenders, 1712-98.
- (c) *Absolute and Conditional Surrenders and Discharges.* Eleven Volumes, 1584-1712.
- (d) "*Black Books.*" Five Volumes, 1612-1712 ; containing Dormant and Conditional Surrenders in force for more than one year.

See also "Loose Surrenders" (Shelves S and T, Inner Room).

F. BOOKS OF FINES.

Nineteen Volumes :—1550-1641 (11 vols.) ; 1645-6 (1 vol.) ; 1648-65 (3 vols.) ; 1667-91 (3 vols., some years missing) ; Duplicates and Rimpton Fines (1 vol.).

These volumes contain Fines paid on admittance of tenants ; Licences to let for more than a year and a day ; Licences to act as Guardians. They are made up to the two Lawday Courts in each year.

See also "Fine Papers" (Shelf M, Inner Room), and "Reeves' Accounts" (Shelves A-I, Inner Room), where the Fines are all entered.

G. BOOKS OF THE MANOR OF TAUNTON (LATE) PRIORY.

Note : The records of this manor, which was quite distinct from the Manor of Taunton and Taunton Deane, were also deposited in the Exchequer. The lands in this manor were held in accordance with the customs of the Manor of Taunton Deane.

- (a) *Lawday Court Book*. One Volume, 1605–37 (?)—imperfect.
- (b) *Mortgage Surrenders*. Four Volumes, 1605–10 ; 1612–1704.
- (c) *Absolute and Conditional Surrenders and Entries*. Three Volumes, 1577–1605 ; 1612–1712 ; 1815–25 (Absolute Surrenders only).
- (d) “*Black Book*.” One Volume, 1612–1707.
- (e) *Books of Fines*. Three Volumes, 1563–1672.
- (f) *Papers*. Rentals and Surveys ; Surrenders, etc., collected in packets according to tenements ; two rolls of “*Reeves’ Accounts*,” 1616 and 1618. One Court Roll, 1430.

INNER ROOM.

SHELVES A—I, *Reeves’ Accounts*, 1419–1745. These are fairly complete. The Five Hundreds of Taunton Deane (*viz.* Holway, Hull, Poundisford, Staplegrove and Nailsbourne), together with Taunton Castle, Taunton Borough, Taunton Liberty (Outfaring) and Otterford are accounted for. From 1419 to 1660 the accounts of the several Hundreds are bound together in one Roll. After 1660 there is a separate Roll for each Hundred. A Catalogue of the Rolls will be found in Shelf A.

SHELF J. *Letters*. The majority of them are written to Mr. William Harvey (Deputy Steward, *c.* 1700). Among them are private letters to him from his children ; also bits of their copy-books.

- SHELF K. Few papers relating to other manors, *e.g.* Tiverton and Muchelney.
- SHELF L. Wills, etc.
- SHELF M. *Fine Papers.* Name of payer and amount alone mentioned. Mention of Heriots, 1674–1854.
- SHELF N. *Precepts.*
- SHELF O. *Inventories* of goods belonging to deceased persons, 1610–1757; Administrators' Accounts, 1637–1737. These are probably Archdeacon's Court Papers.
- SHELF P. I. Powers of Attorney. II. Attachments.
- SHELF Q. Few papers relating to *Heriots*.
- SHELF R. *Petitions.*
- SHELVES S, T. *Loose Surrenders.*
- SHELF U. *Loose Presentments.* Jury Lists, etc.
Also :—Taunton Deane Presentments, 1754–1884.
Taunton Borough Presentments, 1763–1886.
Taunton Outfaring Presentments, 1757–1843.
- SHELF V. *Complete Proceedings at Courts.* Taunton Deane Lawday Courts, 1580, 1610–1753 (some missing).
- SHELF W. *Complete Proceedings at Courts.* Taunton Deane Three-weeken Courts, 1619–22.
Outfaring Courts, 1655, 1657–59, 1661, 1683, 1692–96, 1735–55.
Taunton Borough Courts, 1635, 1649, 1650, 1662, 1696–1701, 1712–21, 1735.
- SHELF X. *Miscellaneous.*
I. Rough Drafts; Accounts; Receipts, etc.; Accounts of Lord's Rents.
II. Enclosure Cases; Certificates admitting to build houses upon the Lord's waste.
- SHELF Y. *Miscellaneous.*
I. Printed matter; Pieces of Books, etc.
II. Indices; Lists of tenants who owe Suit of Court; Survey of 1568; Customaries; Inspeximus.
- SHELF Z. *Rentals, etc.*

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