

## An Outline of the Manorial History of Shepton Mallet and Croscombe.

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### SHEPTON MALLET.

SHEPTON, which is now a flourishing little town, was at one time part of Pilton, which is now a small country village. Pilton was given to the monks of Glastonbury by King Ina, and the Abbot continued to be the overlord of Shepton until the dissolution of the monasteries.

At the time of the Domesday Survey of 1086, Shepton was held under Glastonbury by Roger de Corcelle, son of William de Corcelle, who came from Courseulles in Normandy. He had large possessions in Somerset, some held direct under the Crown, others, like Shepton, under a mesne lord. The fact that several of his manors passed to the Malet family has given rise to a theory that his daughter married Robert Malet, but the fact has not been established.

Without going into the intricacies of the Malet pedigree, it is fairly safe to say that Shepton formed part of the estate which William Malet is known to have held of the Abbot of Glastonbury in 1166. Another William Malet, who succeeded in 1196, was one of the barons who extorted the Great Charter from King John in 1215. He died soon after, leaving two daughters his co-heiresses. Mabel the elder married Hugh de Vivonne. Helouise the younger married firstly Nicholas Poyntz and secondly, in 1221, Robert de Muscegros. In the consequent partition of the Malet estates, Shepton passed to

the elder daughter. It was sometimes called Shepton Vivonne, but its earlier name of Shepton Malet has prevailed.

The elder son of Hugh and Mabel de Vivonne was known as William le Fort. He was living in 1252. He has issue four daughters :—

Joan, who married Reynold Fitz Piers.

Sibyl, who married Guy de Rochechouart.

Mabel, who married Fulk de Archiac.

Cecily, who married John de Beauchamp.

Between these four ladies the manor was divided and also the advowson, so that each in turn would get the right of presenting a rector as vacancies might arise. This complicated arrangement, however, did not last very long. In 1300, the Rochechouarts sold their quarter to the Beauchamps ; and there is reason to believe that, some twenty or thirty years later, a son of the Archiacs sold his quarter to a representative of the senior co-heiress. At any rate, the manor came to be held in moieties and the advowson to be exercised alternately by the two families.

The husband of the eldest co-heiress of William le Fort was known simply as Reynold Fitz Piers, and his sons were known as Fitz Reynold. Eventually his descendants acquired the hereditary surname of Fitz Herbert. On the death of Edmund Fitz Herbert without issue in 1387, his moiety of Shepton Malet passed to his sister Alice, the relict of Sir Thomas West. By the marriage of her son Thomas to the only daughter of Roger La Warr, her descendants became Lords De La Warr, and one of them presented a parson to the church of Shepton Malet as late as 1566.

Turning now to the other moiety of the manor and advowson of Shepton Malet, we find that it belonged successively to four Johns de Beauchamp. The last of these died without issue in 1361, and his sister Cecily de Turberville sold her rights therein to Sir Matthew de Gournai. After the death of his relict's second husband, Sir John Tiptoft, it passed to the Crown, and

under an arrangement sanctioned by Parliament in 1421, it was united to the Duchy of Cornwall. Although granted by Henry VI to the Marquess of Dorset, and by his rival, Edward IV, to the Earl of Huntingdon, it was definitely reunited to the Duchy of Cornwall by Act of Parliament in 1495.

#### CROSCOMBE.

Like the adjoining manor of Shepton, Coriscome or Corscombe, now called Croscombe, belonged to the monks of Glastonbury before the Norman Conquest. At the time of the Domesday Survey, Roger de Corcelle held it of the Abbot, and it went with Shepton until the death of William Malet, in or soon after 1215. At the partition of his estates, Corscombe was assigned, with Curry Malet, to his younger daughter Helouise, who married firstly Nicholas Poyntz and secondly Robert de Muscegros. From her it passed to her descendants by her first husband, but, before long, a Poyntz made a feoffment of the manor and advowson, reserving the mesne lordship and a nominal rent of a shilling.

In 1249, a widow named Agatha de Meisy held the manor of Corscombe in dower, with remainder to Grecia de Meisy, presumably her daughter, and the latter sold her rights to Ellis Cotele. In 1284, Ellis Cotele was returned as holding under Hugh Poyntz, who in turn held under the Abbot of Glastonbury. Sir William Cotele was in possession in 1303, and Maud his relict in 1325. Although this lady survived until 1334, her son, Sir Ellis Cotele, presented parsons to the church in 1329 and 1332. By his marriage with Margery, sister and co-heiress of Thomas Peverel, he acquired considerable property in Devonshire. He died in 1336, leaving a daughter Edith the wife of Oliver de Dinan. Corscombe, however, did not pass to her. By an arrangement made in 1326, this manor and that of Cotelescombe, co. Gloucester, were settled on Sir Ellis Cotele for life, with remainder to John

of Palton and Joan his wife in tail, and reversion to the heirs of Ellis. The terms of this limitation suggest that Joan of Palton was a near relation of Sir Ellis Cotele, perhaps his sister. Furthermore, when his issue came to an end in his great-granddaughter, Dame Margaret Asthorpe, the Cotele estate passed to Robert Palton as her heir.

This Robert Palton appears to have been the great-grandson of the John and Joan already mentioned. His arms and those of his wife Elizabeth Botreaux are to be seen in the manor-house at Croscombe. Subject to her right of dower, the estate passed at his death without issue, in 1400, to his brother William, then just twenty-one years of age, the last of the race. The arms of Sir William Palton are also to be seen at the manor-house impaled with those of Wellington, his first wife Elizabeth having been a co-heiress of the Wellington family, although her father's surname was Wroth. In 1448, the manor and advowson were settled on him and his second wife Anne. After his death two years later, this lady brought them to her second husband, Richard Densell of Filleigh, co. Devon, who presented parsons in 1456 and 1464. Some information about the Palton chantry has been given already in the Proceedings of this Society.<sup>1</sup>

Richard and Anne Densell had an only daughter Elizabeth, who married firstly Martin Fortescue and secondly Sir Richard Pomeroy. By some family arrangement, of which the details have still to be found, Croscombe passed to the issue of the second marriage, Sir Edward Pomeroy of Berry Pomeroy co. Devon, being described as lord of the manor of Croscombe in 1519. After this, however, it went to the issue of the first marriage and it descended in the Fortescue family until the middle of the eighteenth century, when it was sold by Hugh Fortescue, Lord Clinton. The Fortescue arms are to be seen in the church and in the manor-house.

1. Vol. xxxiv, pt. i, p. 68 *et seq.*