

## Kilmersdon Manor-House

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BY THE RT. HON. LORD HYLTON, F.S.A.

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KILMERSDON MANOR-HOUSE, standing in a small walled court, entered between piers, faces the ancient disused highway running westward, which crossed the brook by a ford some fifty yards below the house. My parish *History* published in 1910 contains some few references to an earlier house on this site, but the book being now out of print the present notes are offered chiefly concerning the family of Shute, to members of which the existing building is due.

Carved upon its gables are the date 1664 and initials T. S., for Thomas Shute I, whose name will be found at the top of the accompanying pedigree, and is entered in a Manorial Rental of 1674 as then aged 47. His copyhold for his own life and that of his brother Richard aged 42 included 168 acres, at a reserved rent of £3 10s. 6d.; another leasehold of 26 acres on the lives of himself, his brothers John, aged 44, and Richard, paid a rent of £2; and during the lives of Richard, and of his own wife Katherine, aged 41, Thomas held another 'living' at Waterside,—73 acres, reserved rent £1 0s. 6d.

He was probably thus considered the chief tenant of the Manor, being 'Foreman of the Homage' at the Court-Baron of 22 April, and 15 October 1685, 1686, 1687, 1688, 1689, 1690, after which a gap appears in the court rolls until 10 January 1698, when Thos. Shute obtained a new lease of 99 years for three lives, paying a fine of £300.

A presentment at the Court-Baron 9 April 1713, states the death of 'Thomas Shute Junr' aged about 42, who was the



KILMERSDON MANOR HOUSE

*From a Photograph by the Very Rev, Father E. Horne, F.S.A.*

second life in the copyhold tenement his widowe now liveth in, and no heriot, he dying before his father, the purchaser', whom he just predeceased. The death of Thomas Shute Sen<sup>r</sup> is presented at the same court, on whose demise came due several heriots, 'compounded by the Lord for six Guineys, and Richard Shute, son of the deceased, is the next taker after his mother, Mrs. Katherine Shute, as to the copyhold estate, wherin ye Widowe of Thos. Shute Jun<sup>r</sup> now liveth'. The younger of these ladies now evidently thought it prudent to renew the lease, and accordingly on 10 December 1713, she paid £40, surrendered her father-in-law's last lease of 1698, and obtained a fresh one for the lives of herself, her son, and her daughter Katherine. The older widow died in 1715. Mary, the younger, 12 January 1723, being succeeded at the Manor-House by her son, Thomas Shute III, baptised at Kilmersdon in 1707 and thus left an orphan at the age of sixteen. He secured, 18 December 1735, a fresh lease of his tenement, and the insertion of his cousin James' name, buying the latter's reversionary interest. It was probably then that he modernised the eastern side of his habitation by building a wainscoted parlour, and chamber above, with sash windows, and loftier ceilings than his grandfather's house possessed. His will, dated 31 August 1760, speaks of his sister Mary as having been a spinster; desires his interment in the parish church in his grandfather's grave 'between the porch and the gallery', and devised his copyhold to James of Mells, son of his uncle Richard Shute of Whatley. This James was the life inserted in the copyhold of 1735, his father having been baptised at Kilmersdon 26 August 1672, and his mother seemingly being older, he must have been an elderly man when he moved from Mells to Kilmersdon. There is some mystery attaching to his wives. His will, dated 21 September 1772, proved after his death in 1783, names his wife Philippa, presumably mother of 'Thomas son of James and *Phillis* Shute, bapt. 1 July 1771' (Kilmersdon P.R.), but he was a widower when he married 'Mary Evans', 29 May 1783. Tradition says that she was the youthful maid-servant whom he then espoused in order to spite the Lord of the Manor, to whom on his death the copyhold would otherwise have reverted, and that though too feeble to walk, the infirm old man

was wheeled the short distance from his house to the church, where his nuptials were then celebrated. It is certain that he only survived the ceremony two months, dying in August of the same year. His will expressed the wish to be buried in his family vault at Whatley, but the registers there are defective and no record remains of his interment, whilst the monument, erected to his parents' memory in the same church, has equally disappeared, though the inscription is preserved in Collinson's *History*. Mrs. James Shute, so recently a bride, became entitled by the 'Custom of the Manor' to enjoy her late husband's copyhold during her widowhood, which she continued to do for thirty-six years, until at length in the year 1819 she released her tenancy to the Lord of the Manor in consideration of an annuity of £100. It has proved impossible to find out how much longer she survived.

The objectionable system under which such tricks as that could be played, less for the widow's benefit than to defraud the owner, henceforth ceased to exist.

Some small freeholds in Kilmersdon were in the hands of James Shute's nephew Henry as late as 1830, whilst the family name is perpetuated by an earlier Henry's foundation of a Free School, still enjoying a rent charge out of his former estate in the parish.

#### PEDIGREE OF THE SHUTE FAMILY

I. THOMAS SHUTE, *b. c.* 1627, *m.* 24 Aug. 1658, *P.R.*,<sup>1</sup> Katherine, *dau.* of [? Rev. Jas.] Ashton. He *d.* before Apl. 1713, *C.R.*,<sup>2</sup> *bur.* Kilmersdon Ch. She *d.* 'at Midsummer 1715', *C.R.* Had issue,

1. Katherine, *bap.* 31 Mch. 1661, *P.R.* 2. James, *bap.* 11 Feb. 1663, *bur.* 2 Mch. 1688, *P.R.* 3. Thomas II, *bap.* 19 Oct. 1666, *P.R.*, *m.* 7 Jan. 1705 Mary, *dau.* . . . Hole. He *d.* before Apl. 1713, *C.R.*. She *d.* 12 Jan. 1723, *C.R.* Had issue, (a) Mary, *d.* unmarried before 1760, and (b) Thomas III, *b.* 23 Sep. 1707, *P.R.* Will proved P.C.C. 16 Mch. 1763. 4. Richard

<sup>1</sup> P.R. Parish Register of Kilmersdon.

<sup>2</sup> C.R. Court Roll, Manor of Kilmersdon.

*hap.* 16 Aug. 1672, *P.R.*, *m.* Philippa . . . He *d.* 3 Apl. 1757, monumental inscription formerly in Whatley Ch. She *d.* 12 Feb. 1737, aged 62. Had issue, (*a*) James, *m.* 1st Philippa . . . (*sic* in husband's will, Phillis in *P.R.*) and 2nd *m.* 29 May 1783, *P.R.*, Mary Evans of Kilmersdon, living in 1821. He *d.* Aug. 1783. Had issue, by 1st wife, Thomas IV, *hap.* 1 July 1771, *P.R.*, *d.* 7 Sep. 1823, unmarried. (*b*) Henry, *m.* Mary Philippa, of Mells. His will prov. P.C.C. 7 Sep. 1785. She, a legatee in will of Thos. II, had issue, Rev. Henry, of Stapylton, *m.* Mary Devey (mar. settl. 24 July 1788), and had one *s.* Henry, of Oriel Coll. Oxford, 1808, living in 1830.

II. JOHN SHUTE, *b. c.* 1630, *C.R.* (styled Captain in a deed), *m.* ? . . . Had issue. 1. John, *m.* . . . and had issue, (*a*) Mary, = . . . Prigg; (*b*) Elizabeth, *m.* Geo. Adams of Bristol. These two were heirs of their uncle Henry. 2. Rev. Henry, *b.* 1655; Wadham Coll. Oxford, 4 Dec. 1674, B.A. 1678, *d.* 3 Nov. 1722. Will dated 1719, proved P.C.C. 1723. Curate, St. Andrew's Holborn.

III. RICHARD SHUTE, *b. c.* 1632, *d.* before 5 Apl. 1687, *C.R.*