

VCH Leicestershire draft text

LEIRE**Manors and Estates**

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VICTORIA
COUNTY
HISTORY

Leicestershire

There were three landholders in 1086: Robert Despenser held five carucates of land, Robert de Bucy held two carucates and the Bishop of Lincoln held one carucate.¹ All had tenants, but the only demesne mentioned in 1086 was held by Robert Despenser, and this was the only holding for which evidence of manorial courts survives. By 1279, these three holdings were in the hands of Philip Marmion, Ralph Basset of Weldon and the bishop.²

Robert Despenser

Robert Despenser's manors and lands in several counties came into the hands of Roger Marmion (died c. 1130), although records do not survive to show how or when this occurred.³ The manor of Leire appears to have been among these holdings. Roger's lands passed to his son Robert (d. 1144), Robert's son (d. c. 1181), grandson (d. by 1218) and great-grandson (d. c. 1242), all called Robert, and then to the latter Robert's son Philip.⁴ Following the death of Philip Marmion in 1291, his lands were divided into four equal parts and inherited by his three surviving daughters, Joan the wife of William de Morteyn, Maud the wife of Ralph le Butler and Joan the wife of Thomas de Ludlow, and Philip's granddaughter Joan, the daughter of his deceased daughter Mazera. The latter Joan later married Alexander de Freville.⁵ This holding passed to Joan and Alexander's male descendants. Baldwin Fryvell held land in Leire at his death in 1387 by part of a knight's fee, which was held by the earl of Pembroke (John de Hastings).⁶ His direct heirs, also called Baldwin, held land in Leire at their deaths in 1400 and 1418.⁷

Further sub-tenancies had been created by 1279, when John, son of William de Leire held two virgates of John de Hastings by a quarter of a knight's fee, who held them of Philip Marmion, who held them of the abbot of Peterborough, who held them of the king.⁸ The lowest of the mesne lords in this chain, Thomas of Leire, is described as lord of Leire in a grant of c. 1210 from Thomas to his son, the rector of Leire.⁹ The family regularly appears in property transactions in the 13th century. In 1212, William, son of Thomas of Leire, was holding one virgate plus 14 a. of land, three messuages and a mill when he disposed of part of this holding to Thomas Ses.¹⁰ William's widow Agnes acquired 3 a. in 1221 and one third of half a virgate in 1236, the latter transaction probably relating to her

¹ A. Williams and G.H. Martin (eds.), *Domesday Book: A Complete Translation* (London, 2002), 629, 639, 641.

² J. Nichols, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester*, IV, 240.

³ J.H. Round, *Feudal England*, (New York, 1964 edn.), 144-5, 155-9; V. Gibbs, H.A. Doubleday and Lord Howard de Walden (eds), *The Complete Peerage of England, Scotland, Ireland, Great Britain and the United Kingdom* (1910-38), VIII, 505.

⁴ Gibbs, Doubleday and Howard, *Complete Peerage*, VIII, 507.

⁵ *Ibid.*, VIII, 507, 512, 513.

⁶ *Cal. Inq. p.m.*, XVI, 220.

⁷ *Ibid.*, XXI, 38.

⁸ Nichols, *History*, IV, 240

⁹ TNA, E 326/2275; Nichols, *History*, IV, 240.

¹⁰ Summary of fine in G.F. Farnham, *Leicestershire Medieval Village Notes* (Leicester, c. 1928), III, 178.

dower.¹¹ The family also made several donations of land to Leicester Abbey.¹² A later William de Leyre was called upon in 1247 by the abbot of Leicester to warrant whether Nicholas Lubho should do suit at Henry de Hastings' court of Burbage, Barwell and Nailstone for his holding of a virgate and 7 selions of land and a messuage in Leire, which Nicholas held of the abbot, who held of William de Leyre. This is the earliest record linking Leire with the manor court of Burbage, and it was held that Nicholas would do suit at Easter and Michaelmas.¹³ In 1287, John de Hastings granted to John, son of William de Leire, a life interest in a messuage, 5 a. of land and 3 roods of meadow in Leire, with reversion to John de Hastings.¹⁴ After the death of John son of William de Leyre, two transactions in 1297 and 1299 secured to his widow, Agnes, one third of a messuage and virgate and one third of three roods of land, all in Leire.¹⁵

There may have been no reversion to de Hastings on the other land held by the de Leire family. John de Hastings had become Baron Hastings by a writ of 1290,¹⁶ and on his death in 1313, he held half a knight's fee in Leire, which was held by John de Leyre.¹⁷ His lands and the barony devolved upon his son John de Hastings (d. 1325), although the only property in Leire which this John appears to have held at his death was the advowson of the church.¹⁸ John's heir was his son Lawrence, who assumed the name of Earl of Pembroke in 1339 with the confirmation of the king, his grandmother Isabel (wife of the first Baron Hastings) having been the sister and co-heir of Aymer de Valence, Earl of Pembroke, who had died without issue in 1324.¹⁹ The arms of Hastings and of Hastings quartered with Valence were displayed in Leire church.²⁰ Lawrence de Hastings was assessed for one-sixth of a knight's fee in Leire in 1346,²¹ and while no property in Leire is mentioned within the inquisition taken on Lawrence's death in 1348,²² when Lawrence's son John died in 1375, a list of properties he had disposed of 'long before his death' included a moiety of a knight's fee in Leire, held by John de Leyre.²³ This disposal may have been within the family, as his widow later married the Earl of Arundel,²⁴ who was seised of a moiety of a knight's fee on his death in 1397, held by John de Leire.²⁵

The de Leyre family have not been traced in any records after 1397, and it may be that the male line died out. The Earl of Arundel's estate was forfeited for treason, but his holding in Leire appears to have come back into the de Hastings family. The heir of John de Hastings, also John, was a minor in 1375, and had not yet come of age at his death in 1389 without issue.²⁶ Although there is no mention of Leire within the inquisition taken on his death, the manor of Burbage is listed.²⁷ The de

¹¹ Summary of fines in *ibid.*, III, 178.

¹² Nichols, *History*, IV, 241.

¹³ Summary of fine in *ibid.*, III, 178.

¹⁴ Summary of fines in *ibid.*, III, 179.

¹⁵ Summary from De Banco rolls 119 and 131 in *ibid.*, III, 179.

¹⁶ Gibbs, Doubleday and Howard, *Complete Peerage*, VI, 346-8.

¹⁷ *Cal. Inq. p.m.* V, 236.

¹⁸ *Cal. Inq. p.m.* VI, 390.

¹⁹ Gibbs, Doubleday and Howard, *Complete Peerage*, VI, 351, X, 388.

²⁰ W. Burton, *The Description of Leicestershire* (1777 edn.), 146; Nichols, *History and Antiquities*, IV, 243.

²¹ Nichols, *History*, IV, 241

²² *Cal. Inq. p.m.* IX, 115, 118.

²³ *Cal. Inq. p.m.* XIV, 158.

²⁴ Gibbs, Doubleday and Howard, *Complete Peerage*, X, 396-7; I, 244-5.

²⁵ *Cal. Inq. p.m.* XVII, 359.

²⁶ Gibbs, Doubleday and Howard, *Complete Peerage*, X, 395-7; VI, 152.

²⁷ *Cal. Inq. p.m.* XVI, 358-9.

Hastings family had been lords of the manor of Burbage since c. 1150,²⁸ the holdings of John de Leyre in Leire are mentioned within an extent of the manor of Burbage in 1289,²⁹ and the earliest surviving manorial records for Leire itself, from 1462, indicate that these two manors had the same lord and the business for both appears to have been transacted at the same court.³⁰

John's heir was held to be Reynold de Grey of Ruthin (d. 1440),³¹ whose own heir was his grandson Edmund, Lord Grey of Ruthin (d. 1490), created earl of Kent in 1465.³² The manor of Leire remained in the hands of the Earls of Kent and their descendants, although there does not appear to have been any significant landholding in Leire by this period. Edmund (d. 1490),³³ was succeeded by his son George (d. 1503),³⁴ and George by his son Richard, the 3rd earl (d. 1523).³⁵ The 4th earl was Richard's half-brother Henry (d. 1562),³⁶ whose own son predeceased him,³⁷ so the title and estate passed to Henry's grandson Reynold, who was of full age (d. 1573).³⁸ The 6th and 7th earls were Reynold's younger brothers Henry (d. 1615),³⁹ and Charles (d. 1623), the latter aged about 70 when he inherited, with licence to enter without proof of age.⁴⁰ An inquisition post mortem taken in 1626, following the death of Charles, included the manor of Leire as part of the 7th earl's estate, but does not indicate how much land he had there.⁴¹ The 8th earl Henry, the only son and heir of Charles, died without issue in 1639. The earldom passed to a distant cousin Anthony (whose grandfather, also Anthony, had been the brother of the fourth earl), while the barony of Grey of Ruthin devolved on his nephew Charles Longueville.⁴² The manor of Leire descended with the earldom.

Anthony, the 9th earl, died in 1643.⁴³ The title and estate passed to his son Henry (d. 1651),⁴⁴ and then to Henry's son Anthony, the 11th earl (d. 1702).⁴⁵ A schedule of his lands in Leire was drawn up in 1663, the year of his marriage. Although the acreage is not given, he held 47 lands in the open fields, one ley, meadows and one close of pasture, known as Hall Close.⁴⁶ Anthony married Anne who, a few weeks later and at the request of her father Baron Lucas of Shenfield, was created Baroness Lucas of Crudwell, a title which could pass down the female line.⁴⁷ The 12th earl, and last in the line, was their only son Henry, created marquis in 1706 and Duke of Kent in 1710. He died in 1740 with no surviving male issue.⁴⁸ Two weeks before his death he had been created Marquis Grey, a title which could pass to his granddaughter Jemima (the only surviving child of Anthony's eldest

²⁸ Nichols, *History*, IV, 445.

²⁹ ROLLR, DE 40/47.

³⁰ Beds RO, L26/1031

³¹ *Cal. Inq. p.m.* XVI, 350; Gibbs, Doubleday and Howard, *Complete Peerage*, VI, 354

³² Gibbs, Doubleday and Howard, *Complete Peerage*, VI, 160.

³³ *Ibid.*, VII, 164-5.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 166-7.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 168-9.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 169-70

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 170

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 170-1.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 172.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 173.

⁴¹ Beds RO, L22/17, Inquisition post mortem taken 23 Sep 1626

⁴² *Ibid.*, 173-5.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 175.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 175-6.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 176-7.

⁴⁶ Beds. RO, L26/1120, Terrier of the Earl of Kent's lands, 1663

⁴⁷ Gibbs, Doubleday and Howard, *Complete Peerage*, VII, 176; VIII, 241-2.

⁴⁸ Gibbs, Doubleday and Howard, *Complete Peerage*, VII, 177.

daughter) and her male heirs.⁴⁹ Jemima also became Baroness Lucas of Crudwell. She had no male issue, and on her death in 1797 the marquissate of Grey became extinct; her eldest daughter Amabel became Baroness Lucas of Crudwell,⁵⁰ who held the lordships of the manors of Leire, Burbage and Sketchley in 1810.⁵¹ Upon final enclosure of the remaining open fields in the village in 1780, she was allotted less than 18 a.⁵² Amabel died in 1833, but had no children, and the titles and estate devolved upon her nephew Thomas (d. 1859).⁵³ Thomas died in 1859 with no surviving sons. The barony devolved to his daughter Anne (d. 1880),⁵⁴ who also inherited the lordship of the manor. Anne had married George, the 6th Earl Cowper, in 1833.⁵⁵ George died in 1856, and the title and estate devolved on their son Francis, 7th Earl Cowper, who became 8th Baron Lucas of Crudwell on the death of his mother in 1880, and died without issue in 1905.⁵⁶ The lordship of the manor was inherited by the sister of the 7th Earl Cowper, Lady Amabel Cowper, the wife of Admiral Lord Walter Kerr. Their heir was their son Andrew (d. 1929), then his son Peter, who became 12th Marquis of Lothian following the death of his cousin.⁵⁷ The manor was sold by public auction in 1997.⁵⁸

Robert de Bucy

One of Robert of Bucy's daughters married Ralph Bassett of Weldon.⁵⁹ His father Richard had married Maud, the daughter of Geva, who had founded a priory at Canwell (Staffs.).⁶⁰ By 1279, land held by Ralph Basset by service of one quarter of a knight's fee, was held by Canwell priory.⁶¹ This priory had been one of a number of institutions scheduled for dissolution by Cardinal Wolsey in 1524 in order to found Cardinal College,⁶² and land at Leire was included within the property conveyed to Wolsey in 1526.⁶³ After Wolsey fell from favour, Canwell's possessions reverted to the king in 1530.⁶⁴ By 1554, these lands in Leire were held by Sir John Parrott (or Perrot),⁶⁵ but no surviving records enable them to be traced from that date.

Bishop of Lincoln

By 1279, Hugh Despenser held four virgates of the Bishop of Lincoln in free tenure, and four virgates, possibly the same land, were held of the bishop in 1296 by the prior of the Hospital of St John of

⁴⁹ Gibbs, Doubleday and Howard, *Complete Peerage*, VII, 178; VI, 118.

⁵⁰ Gibbs, Doubleday and Howard, *Complete Peerage*, VI, 118-9; VIII, 243.

⁵¹ Nichols, *History*, IV, 243.

⁵² Beds. RO, L26/1123, Particulars of an estate of Amabell, Baroness Lucas, 1798

⁵³ Gibbs, Doubleday and Howard, *Complete Peerage*, VIII, 243

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 243.

⁵⁵ Gibbs, Doubleday and Howard, *Complete Peerage*, III, 486.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 486-7.

⁵⁷ Statutory declaration on sale of lordship at auction, in private hands. <http://www.melbournehall.com/owners-layout> (accessed 23 July 2014); J. Reed, 'Kerr, Antonella Reuss, marchioness of Lothian (1922-2007)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn., Jan. 2011 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/98549, accessed 22 July 2014].

⁵⁸ Conveyance between the Marquis of Lothian and M.A.C. Horne, 8 Aug 1997

⁵⁹ J.G. Henderson, *The Ancestry of Chamberlain and Grant*, (2000), II, 83

⁶⁰ *VCH Staffs.* III, 213.

⁶¹ Nichols, *History*, IV, 240

⁶² *VCH Staffs.* III, 215

⁶³ *L&P Hen. VIII*, 4 (1), 848.

⁶⁴ *VCH Staffs.* III, 215

⁶⁵ Nichols, *History*, IV, 242

Jerusalem in England.⁶⁶ Any holding by the Knights Hospitallers would have been transferred to the crown in 1540.⁶⁷ No land in Leire was held by the bishop of Lincoln in 1535.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Nichols, *History*, IV, 240

⁶⁷ *VCH Leics.* II, 33.

⁶⁸ *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, IV, 8-28.