

VCH Draft Text

Parish: **WELBY**

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LANDHOLDINGS

There were two tenants-in-chief for Welby in 1086: Geoffrey de Wirce (de la Guerche), who was also the lord of Melton and held seven carucates and two bovates of land, and Countess Judith, niece of King William I, who held eight carucates and two bovates.¹ For much of the medieval period, the Mowbray and Segrave families were lords of the manor that had been held in 1086 by de Wirce. This was purchased by William Digby in 1573. The Assheby family became lords of the second manor by the 14th century. The second manor came to the Digby family through a marriage in the late 15th century, uniting the two manors. This enabled the Digbys to inclose the land for pasture, and depopulate the village.

Garendon abbey, near Loughborough, was also a significant landholder in the medieval period following gifts of land, mostly by tenants of the Mowbray/Segrave manor. The abbey built a grange in Welby. After the dissolution, their land was acquired by the earls of Rutland. It is not known when they sold this land, but by 1774 the entire parish was owned by the lords of the manor.

The manor of Geoffrey de Wirce, to 1604

Geoffrey de Wirce held seven carucates and two bovates of land in Welby in 1086.² When he died, his Melton estate, including Welby, was divided between Robert de Mowbray, earl of Northumbria, and Nigel d'Aubigny.³ Robert de Mowbray was imprisoned and forfeited his estates for a rebellion in

¹ A. Williams and G.H. Martin (eds.), *Domesday Book: A Complete Translation* (London, 2002), 644, 646, 647.

² Williams and Martin, *Domesday*, 644.

³ D. Greenway (ed.), *Charters of the Honour of Mowbray 1107-1191* (London, 1972), xlv.

1095. His marriage to Maud was annulled, and she married d'Aubigny, to whom the king granted Mowbray's forfeited lands, uniting the two portions. D'Aubigny and Maud had no children, and their marriage was annulled. D'Aubigny married again, to Gundreda de Gournai.⁴ Their son Roger took the name Mowbray. D'Aubigny died in 1129, by which time much of his estate, probably including Welby, had been sub-infeudated.⁵

Overlordship

In c.1130, Roger de Mowbray (c.1120-1188), the son of Nigel d'Aubigny, held nine carucates in Welby, suggesting he may have acquired some of the land within the Domesday manor of Countess Judith, which had substantially reduced in size.⁶ It has been shown elsewhere that Mowbray was one of four men who were granted lands in this period that had previously been held by Countess Judith.⁷

Nigel d'Aubigny granted part of his estate to Robert de Ayvill, and from later records this grant included Welby manor.⁸ In the first half of the 13th century, Robert granted all his lands in Welby with the services of all but one of his free men to Stephen de Segrave.⁹ The overlordship remained with the Mowbrays until the late 15th century. Roger de Mowbray (d. 1188) was succeeded by his son Nigel (d. 1191), then by Nigel's son William (d. 1224), then William's two sons in turn, Nigel (d. 1230) and Roger (d. 1266). Roger was succeeded by his son, also Roger (d. 1297), who was created 1st baron Mowbray. From Lord Mowbray, the overlordship passed to his son John (d. 1322), to John's son, also John, 3rd baron (d. 1361), then his son, also John, the 4th baron (d. 1368). He married Elizabeth Segrave, uniting the manor and overlordship.¹⁰

⁴ ODNB, s.v. 'Mowbray, Robert de, earl of Northumbria (d. 1115/1125)', accessed 29 Jan. 2018.

⁵ ODNB, s.v. 'Mowbray, Sir Roger de (d. 1188)', accessed 29 Jan. 2018.

⁶ C.F. Slade, *The Leicestershire Survey, c. 1130* (Leicester, 1956), 20.

⁷ C.A. Newman, *The Anglo-Norman Nobility in the Reign of Henry I: The Second Generation* (Philadelphia, 1988), 124

⁸ R. Thoroton (J. Throsby, ed.) *History of Nottinghamshire*, III (1796), 216–19.

⁹ B. Wells-Furby, *A Catalogue of the Medieval Muniments at Berkeley Castle*, II (Bristol, 2004), 778 (document D5/50/4, BL Harl. MS 4748, f. 16d).

¹⁰ *Complete Peerage* (1936 edn), IX, 369–85; The Mowbray pedigree is clearly laid out in B. Wells-Furby, *A Catalogue of the Medieval Muniments at Berkeley Castle*, I (Bristol, 2004), lvii.

Manor

Stephen de Segrave was granted the manor by Robert de Ayvill in the early 13th century.¹¹ He also acquired other land and interests in the village. These included a farm of the mill from Garendon abbey, for which rent was acquitted,¹² and leases over two carucates of land from Lenton priory (Notts): one carucate direct from Lenton and the second carucate under an assignment of a lease granted by Lenton to Arnold de Twiford (these are briefly calendared in the catalogue, and it is possible the two charters relate to the same carucate).¹³ Lenton priory later granted the latter to Arnold's widow Katherine.¹⁴ Stephen's grandson Nicholas de Segrave died in 1295 possessed of freeholder rents in Welby, held of John Deyvill (De Ayvill), totalling £4 5s. 10d. annually.¹⁵ Nicholas's heir was his eldest son John, who settled the lands in Welby on his son Stephen and Stephen's wife Alice.¹⁶ On Stephen's death in 1325, Stephen and Alice were receiving annual rents of £4 11s. 1½d. from their Welby land,¹⁷ and John's widow successfully asserted her claim to one-third.¹⁸ The Segrave family does not appear to have been resident after the death of Stephen, as the name does not appear in the lay subsidy lists of 1327 or 1332.¹⁹

Stephen's heir was his son John, who held 'the hamlet' of Welby in demesne at his death in 1353, of John de Mowbray (3rd baron, d. 1361) for knight service.²⁰ John Segrave had married Margaret, countess of Norfolk. His heir was his daughter Elizabeth, who had married John Mowbray, 4th baron,

¹¹ The Segrave pedigree is in B. Wells-Furby, *A Catalogue of the Medieval Muniments at Berkeley Castle*, I (Bristol, 2004), lvii.

¹² Wells-Furby, *Catalogue*, II, 778 (document D5/50/3; BL Harl. MS 4748, f. 16d); 734 (document D5/17/3, BL Harl. MS 4748, f. 16d).

¹³ Wells-Furby, *Catalogue*, II, 778 (documents D5/50/5, BL Harl. MS 4748, f. 16d; D5/50/6). Nichols, *History*, II, 284.

¹⁴ Wells-Furby, *Catalogue*, II, 778 (document D5/50/6, BL Harl. MS 4748, f. 16d).

¹⁵ *Cal. Inq. p.m.* III, p. 192.

¹⁶ Wells-Furby, *Catalogue*, II, 710–11, 714 (document D5/1/8).

¹⁷ *Cal. Inq. p.m.* VI, p. 433; *Cal. Close* 1323–7, 453.

¹⁸ *Cal. Close* 1327–30, 178.

¹⁹ G.F. Farnham, *Medieval Village Notes*, IV, 271, citing TNA, 179/133/1 and 2, lay subsidies 1327 and 1332.

²⁰ *Cal. Inq. p.m.* X, p. 109; Nichols, *History*, II, 284 citing BL, MS Add. 37671, f. 22, rental roll of John de Segrave.

in 1349. After the death of John Segrave, and of his widow Margaret, this holding came to Elizabeth and was thus united with the overlordship of John Mowbray.²¹

Elizabeth Mowbray, née Segrave, died in 1368, shortly before her husband. Their two sons inherited in turn, first John, created earl of Nottingham in 1377, who died unmarried in 1383, then Thomas, who was created first duke of Norfolk in 1397.²² Thomas died in exile and with his dukedom repealed in 1399, holding one knight's fee in Welby.²³ His heir was his eldest son Thomas, executed for rebellion in 1405. Thomas was succeeded by his brother John, to whom the dukedom was restored in 1425.²⁴ John was succeeded in 1432 by his son John, 3rd duke. He died in 1461, leaving one son, also John.²⁵

The long period in which the Mowbrays were tenants-in-chief of Welby manor ended with the death without male issue of John Mowbray, 4th duke of Norfolk, in 1476.²⁶ At his death, his daughter and sole heir Anne was aged three. Edward IV saw a way of securing the future of his second son Richard, aged just two, by arranging for Anne and Richard to be married. William Berkeley, grandson of Thomas, first duke of Norfolk, and one of the heirs general of Anne Mowbray, agreed to make over his potential inheritance from Anne in favour of the young Prince Richard for life, and then to Richard's heirs and the heirs of Edward IV, with a reversion to William Berkeley and his heirs.²⁷ Anne died in 1481 before the arrangements were finalised, but Berkeley confirmed his renunciation on those terms in 1483.²⁸ Following the death of Edward IV later that year, and with the young Richard imprisoned in the tower (or dead), in 1484 Berkeley made over to Richard III and his male heirs all

²¹ *ODNB*, s.v. 'Mowbray, John, fourth Lord Mowbray' (accessed 9 Nov 2017); *Cal. Close* 1349–54, 566; Wells-Furby, *Catalogue*, II, 712–13.

²² *ODNB*, s.v. 'Mowbray, John, fourth Lord Mowbray' (accessed 9 Nov 2017).

²³ *Cal. Inq. p.m.* XVIII, p. 274; *ODNB*, s.v. 'Mowbray, Thomas, first duke of Norfolk'; Nichols, *History*, II, 285.

²⁴ *ODNB*, s.v. 'Mowbray, Thomas, first duke of Norfolk' (accessed 16 Aug. 2018); *ODNB*, s.v. 'Mowbray, John, second duke of Norfolk' (accessed 16 Aug. 2018).

²⁵ *ODNB*, s.v. 'Mowbray, John, second duke of Norfolk' (accessed 16 Aug. 2018).

²⁶ *ODNB*, s.v. 'Mowbray, John, fourth duke of Norfolk' (accessed 31 Oct 2017).

²⁷ *ODNB*, s.v. 'Berkeley, William, marquess of Berkeley (1426–1492), magnate' (accessed 31 Oct 2017);

ODNB, s.v. 'Mowbray, John, fourth duke of Norfolk' (accessed 31 Oct 2017); Smyth, *The Berkeley Manuscripts*, I (Gloucester, 1833), xlvi–xlix.

²⁸ J. Smyth (J. Maclean, ed.), *The Berkeley Manuscripts*, I (Gloucester, 1833), xlvi–xlix.

his Leicestershire manors and estates which had been held by John Mowbray, 4th duke of Norfolk, to take effect after the death of Berkley's wife, with remainder to Berkeley and his heirs.²⁹

After Richard III was killed at Bosworth in 1485, Berkeley made over the estates to Henry VII and his male heirs, with reversion to his own heirs.³⁰ The last male heir of Henry VII was Edward VI, who died in 1553, when the lands, including Melton Mowbray and Welby, were returned to the Berkeley family. The head of the family at this date was Henry Berkeley, 7th baron Berkeley.³¹ In 1573, Lord Berkeley sold all his holdings in Welby (including – by mistake – the feudal tenure) to William Digby, the lord of the other manor in the village, and his heirs for £160, effectively merging the manors.³² The Welby land comprised one messuage, one cottage, three tofts, a dovehouse, garden and orchard, 200 a. of arable, 20 a. of meadow, 100 a. of pasture, 2 a. of wood, 100 a. of furze and heath and 2s. rent.³³

The Manor of Countess Judith, to 1604

In 1086, Hugh Burdet held six carucates and two bovates of land in Welby (c.780 a.), of Countess Judith.³⁴ Godwine held a further one carucate and two bovates of the countess, and Ralph held half a carucate of Countess Judith.³⁵ The two smaller holdings cannot be traced in later records.

Overlordship

Countess Judith's heir was her daughter, Maud, who married Simon de Senlis (St Liz), with whom she had two sons. After Simon's death, by 1113, she married David, earl of Huntingdon, and king of Scotland from 1124. The lands acquired by David through this marriage came to be known as the honor of Huntingdon.³⁶ In c.1130, King David was recorded as holding three carucates in Welby, a

²⁹ *Cal. Close* 1476–85, pp. 399–400.

³⁰ Smyth, *Berkeley Manuscripts*, II (Gloucester, 1833), 130.

³¹ *Complete Peerage*, II, (1936 Edn), 138.

³² Smyth, *Berkeley Manuscripts*, II, 358.

³³ Farnham, *Medieval Village Notes*, IV, 275, citing Fine, Mich. 15/16 Eliz.

³⁴ Williams and Martin, *Domesday*, 646.

³⁵ Williams and Martin, *Domesday*, 647.

³⁶ *ODNB* s.v. 'David I (c.1085–1153) king of Scots', accessed 11 Jul. 2014.

substantial reduction in the size of the manor held by Countess Judith. The main beneficiary of this land transaction was Roger de Mowbray, who acquired an additional one carucate and two bovates of land in the same period.³⁷

Maud died in 1131.³⁸ David would have retained Maud's property by Courtesy of England until his death in 1153, when it would have passed to Maud's heir, her son Simon through her marriage to Simon de Senlis, and in due course to the heirs of Simon (II). However, but David's descendants through Maud appear to have retained an interest in the lands in the honor even after David's death, although Simon and his descendants appear to have pursued their claim, and also held them from time to time, depending on which family was in the political ascendant.

King David invaded England in 1136 in support of his niece, the empress Matilda, and relinquished the honor of Huntingdon in favour of his (and Maud's) son, Henry.³⁹ Simon de Senlis (II) fought on the opposing side in the civil war, for King Stephen, and was rewarded with the honor of Huntingdon after Prince Henry's death in 1152. Simon de Senlis (II) died in 1153.⁴⁰ King Stephen died the following year, and in 1157 King Henry II gave the honour of Huntingdon to King Malcolm IV of Scotland, the son and heir of Prince Henry.⁴¹ Following Malcolm's death in 1165, unmarried, Henry II recognised Malcolm's younger brother William 'The Lion' as earl of Huntingdon.⁴² William was deprived of the honor in 1174, when he invaded England, and it was given by Henry II to Simon de Senlis (III), the son of Simon (II).⁴³ Simon (III) died in 1184, leaving no children.⁴⁴ The earldom and honor of Huntingdon were restored to William 'The Lion' in 1185, who immediately resigned them in favour of his younger brother, David of Scotland, who received the title earl of Huntingdon.⁴⁵ There

³⁷ C.F. Slade, *The Leicestershire Survey, c. 1130* (Leicester, 1956), 20.

³⁸ ODNB s.v. 'David I (c.1085–1153) King of Scots', accessed 11 Jul. 2014.

³⁹ W. Farrer, *Honors and Knights' Fees* (1924), II, 297; ODNB s.v. 'Henry, earl of Northumberland (c.1115–1152)', accessed 20 Aug. 2018.

⁴⁰ W. Farrer, *Honors and Knights' Fees* (1924), II, 297; *Complete Peerage* (1936 edn), VI, 643.

⁴¹ W. Farrer, *Honors and Knights' Fees* (1924), II, 298; M. F. Moore, *The Lands of the Scottish Kings in England* (1915), xi, 3.

⁴² *Complete Peerage* (1936 edn), VI, 644–5.

⁴³ W. Farrer, *Honors and Knights' Fees* (1924), II, 299; *Complete Peerage* (1936 edn), VI, 645.

⁴⁴ *Complete Peerage* (1936 edn), VI, 645–6.

⁴⁵ ODNB, s.v., 'David, earl of Huntingdon and lord of Garioch (1152–1219)', accessed 20 Aug. 2018.

is no mention of Welby in a study of David's English estates, it was just a minor holding within a large honor.⁴⁶ David died in 1219, leaving one surviving son, John the Scot, and three daughters. John was created earl of Chester in 1232, and died in 1237, leaving no children.⁴⁷ His coheirs were his three surviving sisters Isabel (married Robert de Brus), Maud (died unmarried), Ada (married Henry de Hastings) and the two daughters of his eldest sister Margaret, viz. Christian (who married William de Forz) and Devorgild (who married John de Balliol).⁴⁸

The honor of Huntingdon was unique in English baronies for the range of liberties and immunities that were conferred on the tenants. A grant of Henry I determined that no levies, scutage or aids would ever be demanded, and this was renewed by Henry III in 1232, although later exceptions were sometimes made. In consequence, the honor appears infrequently in records, making it difficult to trace its descent, or that of the manors beneath.⁴⁹

In the division of the lands within the honor to the five co-heirs in 1237, it appears that Welby fell to Isabel. In 1243, Sysonby and Welby were noted as held by Hugh de Pirariis of Isabel de Brus.⁵⁰ Curiously, in 1235 Hugh de Pereres had been said to hold this of the fee of Mowbray, which is presumably an error.⁵¹ The successors to Isabel's estates were her son, grandson and great grandson, all called Robert, the last-named being King Robert I of Scotland, popularly known as Robert the Bruce (1274-1329). After his death, the Bruce portion of the honor of Huntingdon, including Welby went to the English Crown.⁵² In 1346 John Segrave, James Beler and John Zouche were assessed at 20 shillings for half a knight's fee in Welby of the 'Fee of Huntingdon', for the knighting of Edward III's eldest son, Edward of Woodstock.⁵³ From 1346 onwards the honor of

⁴⁶ K.J. Stringer, *Earl David of Huntingdon, 1152–1219: A Study in Anglo-Scottish History* (Edinburgh, 1985), 104–48.

⁴⁷ *Complete Peerage* (1936 edn), VI, 646–7.

⁴⁸ *Complete Peerage* (1936 edn), III, 169–70.

⁴⁹ W. Farrer, *Honors and Knights' Fees* (1924), II, 300.

⁵⁰ *Book of Fees*, II, 952.

⁵¹ *Book of Fees*, I, 519.

⁵² M. F. Moore, *The Lands of the Scottish Kings in England* (1915), xi, 12.

⁵³ Nichols, *History*, II, 284, citing Rot. Aux. 20 Edw. III. The Leicestershire assessment for this taxation is not listed in *Feudal Aids*, III, nor in the TNA catalogue of taxation lists.

Huntingdon is not mentioned again in connection with Welby. By then the honor had been 'dismembered'.⁵⁴

The overlordship of part of the Welby lands had been acquired by Thomas, second baron Wake. He died in 1349, when John de Perys was holding a knight's fee from him in Welby, Sysonby and Little Dalby.⁵⁵ John was presumably a relation of Hugh de Pirariis or Pereres, who held lands in Welby and Sysonby in 1235 and 1243. Lord Wake's heir was his sister Margaret, the widow of Edmund, earl of Kent. She also died in 1349.⁵⁶ John de Perys continued to hold the knight's fee in those villages when John, earl of Kent, the son of Edmund and Margaret, died in 1352.⁵⁷ This holding was clearly not the manor of Welby, which was held as shown below. By 1361 the overlordship of this holding had been acquired by John de Mowbray.⁵⁸

Manor

Welby was one of four Leicestershire manors held by Hugh Burdet in 1086 of Countess Judith, the others being Rearsby, Sysonby and Lowesby. The largest of these was Lowesby; Welby was the second largest.⁵⁹

Hugh was succeeded by his son William, a major landholder. William held most of his lands from the honor of Leicester, and although he was not an officer of the earl of Leicester, he regularly attested charters in the Leicester honor court. He concurrently also developed a close relationship with the earls of Huntingdon, and by 1162, King Malcolm IV of Scotland had appointed William as his English steward. When the earldom was restored to Simon de Senlis (III) in 1174, William joined the following of the new earl.⁶⁰ William's heir was his son Hugh.⁶¹ The Burdets are then less well

⁵⁴ W. Farrer, *Honors and Knights' Fees* (1924), II, 301.

⁵⁵ *Cal. Inq. p.m.* IX, p. 207.

⁵⁶ *Complete Peerage* (1936 edn), VII, 146–7; *ibid.*, XII, 302–4.

⁵⁷ *Cal. Inq. p.m.*, X, p. 52.

⁵⁸ *Cal. Inq. p.m.*, XI, p. 141.

⁵⁹ Williams and Martin, *Domesday*, 646.

⁶⁰ D. Crouch, *The Beaumont Twins: The Roots and Branches of Power in the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, 1986), 127–129, 156–7.

⁶¹ D. Crouch, *The Beaumont Twins: The Roots and Branches of Power in the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, 1986), 175.

recorded, although (another) William Burdet was held land in Welby, Lowesby, Rearsby, Sysonby and Brooksby in 1235, of the fee of Huntingdon.⁶² William was probably Hugh's son.⁶³

There are several subsequent references to the Burdet family and their landholdings, but not in Welby.⁶⁴ It appears that in the mid or late 13th century the Burdets had sub-infeudated the manor of Welby to the Assheby family. In 1332, Robert de Assheby the younger was said to hold the manor of Welby of Edmund Burdet of Lowesby (presumably a descendant of Hugh Burdet of Lowesby and Welby), by knight's service.⁶⁵ The Assheby family were first recorded in Welby in 1327, when Robert de Assheby was assessed for the third highest amount of tax in the hamlet.⁶⁶ Margery de Assheby had the second highest tax assessment in 1332.⁶⁷ Richard Assheby was described as the squire of Welby in 1381.⁶⁸

This manor remained with the Assheby family, and was settled with eight messuages in Welby by Richard de Assheby and his wife Agnes on William Assheby and his wife Joan in 1399.⁶⁹ Joan Assheby (possibly not the same Joan) died in 1459 holding the manor of Welby, leaving two daughters and co-heirs, Agnes, the wife of John Sheldon, and Christina, the wife of Richard Nicholson of Chesleston (probably Cheseldon, Dby). The manor of Welby was not divided between them, as would be usual by law and custom, as Richard and Christina would not permit any partition to be made.⁷⁰

Following the death of John Sheldon, Agnes married Rowland Digby, son of Sir Everard Digby of Tilton on the Hill and Stoke Dry (Rutl.).⁷¹ There has been some confusion about the year of Rowland's death, largely because the probate of his will says 1520, although that is in a later hand. It

⁶² *Feudal Aids*, I, 519.

⁶³ W. Farrer, *Honors and Knights' Fees* (1924), II, 330–31.

⁶⁴ W. Farrer, *Honors and Knights' Fees* (1924), II, 331–3.

⁶⁵ Farnham, *Medieval Village Notes*, IV, 272, citing CP 40/292, m. 157.

⁶⁶ W.G.D. Fletcher, 'The earliest Leicestershire lay subsidy roll', *AAS R&P*, XIX (1887–8), 229.

⁶⁷ Farnham, *Medieval Village Notes*, IV, 271, citing TNA, E 179/133/2.

⁶⁸ Fenwick (ed.), *Poll Taxes*, 603–4.

⁶⁹ Farnham, *Medieval Village Notes*, IV, 273 citing Fine, 22 Richard II.

⁷⁰ Farnham, *Medieval Village Notes*, IV, 273, citing TNA, CP 40/793, m. 243d.

⁷¹ Nichols, *History*, II, 285; W. Camden (J. Fetherston, ed.), *The Visitation of the County of Leicester in the year 1619* (1870), 40.

was later filed as 1520, and the date was recorded as 1520 by Farnham; the document itself is dated 1527.⁷² Rowland's name appears in the 1524 taxation list for the village.⁷³

At Agnes' death in 1529, she held the manor of Welby, with 600 a. of land in Welby and Asfordby, of William Asheby in socage (for a monetary rent). Her heir was her son John Digby.⁷⁴ John died in 1556, holding the manor of Welby of John Asshby, although only one message and 88 a. of arable, meadow and pasture in Welby is noted. John's will had specified that his widow Jane should have one third of the manor and one third of the lands as dower, with the remainder held in trust for all his children until they were of full age, then passing to his eldest surviving son. John's eldest son in 1556 was William.⁷⁵ John's widow Jane and his son William were taxpayers in Welby in 1572.⁷⁶ In due course, William inherited the manor outright, and also purchased the Mowbray/Segrave manor, uniting in his hands the two Welby manors.⁷⁷

The manor from 1604

William Digby died in 1604, holding Welby manor (in reality, the two manors), with total land of 670 a. His heir was his son Thomas.⁷⁸ In 1617, Thomas sold the manor, with 933 a. of land, to George Bennett of London, of the salter's company, for £10,200.⁷⁹ This was only 240 a. less than the whole area of the parish in 1839.⁸⁰ Thomas claimed he needed the money to settle his debts.⁸¹ These may have been incurred to support other family members. Simon Digby, Rowland's great-nephew, had been attainted for treason in 1580 for his part in the plot to replace Queen Elizabeth by Mary Queen

⁷² ROLLR, Wills 1520 (3); G.F. Farnham, *Quorndon Records* (1912), 371.

⁷³ Farnham, *Medieval Village Notes*, IV, 274, citing TNA E179/133/108, lay subsidy 1524.

⁷⁴ Farnham, *Medieval Village Notes*, IV, 274, citing TNA, E 150/1133/4 inq. p.m. Agnes Digby.

⁷⁵ TNA, PROB 11/38/66; Farnham, *Medieval Village Notes*, IV, 274, citing TNA C142/110/118, inq. p.m. John Digby.

⁷⁶ Farnham, *Medieval Village Notes*, IV, 275, citing lay subsidy TNA, E 179/134/204 (this reference is for 1571; the 1572 subsidy for Welby is at E 179/134/203).

⁷⁷ See above.

⁷⁸ Farnham, *Medieval Village Notes*, 275, citing TNA C142/287/19 inq. p.m. William Digby.

⁷⁹ Farnham, *Medieval Village Notes*, 276–7, citing TNA, CP 25/2/314/15JAS1TRIN, fine roll 1617, C 142/476/145, inq. p. m. George Bennett (1631) and C 3/400/93 chancery pleadings; TNA, C 3/334/5 Bennett v Worrall.

⁸⁰ ROLLR, DE 748/1, tithe map and apportionment 1839.

⁸¹ TNA, C 3/334/5 Bennett v Worrall.

of Scots.⁸² Sir Everard Digby of Stoke Dry was executed for treason for his part in the Gunpowder Plot in 1605.⁸³ Another contemporary, Thomas Digby, late of Welby, had been outlawed.⁸⁴

George Bennett, the new lord of the manor in 1617, had been an alderman in London and sheriff of London in 1615.⁸⁵ He faced a claim by Edward Cason for a share of the manor, Cason claiming that he had been party to the purchase, but Bennett successfully argued that it was never intended for Cason to be owner.⁸⁶ In 1626, George settled his properties, including the manor of Welby and 1,810 a. of land in Welby, Melton, Asfordby and Sysonby, on his son George (II), George (II)'s intended wife Susan Cotton and their heirs.⁸⁷ George (II) died in 1631, and his son and heir George (III) inherited.⁸⁸ George (III) married Elizabeth, daughter of Oliver St John, 5th baron St John of Bletso, who was slain at the battle of Edgehill in 1642.⁸⁹ Elizabeth's mother had moved to Welby by 1669, and was buried that year in Melton Mowbray.⁹⁰ George (III) died in 1656.⁹¹

The eldest son and heir of George (III) was St John Bennett (b. 1651), who was High Sherriff of Leicestershire in 1679 and 1692.⁹² He had five children: Thomas, St John, George, Elizabeth and Mary.⁹³ St John Bennett (I) died in c.1713. The manor and land were inherited by his eldest son and heir, Thomas, who was Member of Parliament for Nottinghamshire from 1732 until his death in 1738.⁹⁴ In his will, Thomas bequeathed a life interest in the manor and land at Welby to his sister Elizabeth, which would pass after her death to their cousin Chiverton Hartopp and his male heirs, or

⁸² Nichols, *History*, II, 282–3, quoting records from the Court of Exchequer; *Cat. of Ancient Deeds*, IV, 282–3.

⁸³ J. Burke, *A Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Commoners of Great Britain and Ireland* (1838), 460–1.

⁸⁴ TNA E178/4007, 1606–14, possessions of Thomas Digby, late of Welby, outlaw (document not seen).

⁸⁵ A.P. Beaven, *The Aldermen of the City of London temp. Henry III-1912* (1908), 47–75; A. Green and R.T. Schadla-Hall, 'Building of Quenby Hall', *Trans. LAHS*, 74 (2000), 25.

⁸⁶ TNA, C 2/JasI/B28/65, Bennett v Cason; C 6/11/89 Digby v Bennett.

⁸⁷ ROLLR, 44'28/700.

⁸⁸ Farnham, *Medieval Village Notes*, IV, 276–7 citing TNA, C 142/476/145, inq. p. m. George Bennett.

⁸⁹ Nichols, *History*, II, 285.

⁹⁰ TNA, PROB 11/330/18 will of Hon. Arabella, Lady St John; ROLLR, DG 36/2, parish register, Melton Mowbray.

⁹¹ ROLLR, DG 36/2, parish register, Melton Mowbray, TNA, PROB 11/254/36 will of George Bennett.

⁹² Nichols, *History*, II, 285.

⁹³ Bennett monument in St Mary's church, Melton Mowbray. Nichols adds a sixth daughter, Anne, but his information appears incorrect: Nichols, *History*, II, 285.

⁹⁴ *Hist. Parl. Commons 1715–74*, I, 454.

for want of male heirs, to cousin Robert Hacker and male heirs, or for want of heirs, to Robert's brother Rowland Hacker and male heirs.⁹⁵ Chiverton was the son of St John (I)'s sister Arabella, who had married Thomas Hartopp of Quorndon.⁹⁶

Elizabeth Bennett never lived in Welby. She had received a bequest in the will of Sir Richard Myddelton which was conditional upon her living with his unmarried daughter Mary Myddelton in north Wales.⁹⁷ She was living in Croesnewydd in Denbigh, north Wales when she made her will in 1752, and died in 1752 or 1753.⁹⁸ Chiverton Hartopp died in 1759.⁹⁹ It appears that Chiverton left no sons, and Robert Hacker had already died, in 1739, leaving just daughters.¹⁰⁰ Rowland Hacker appears also to have died without leaving any sons. Litigation ensued, and it was generally agreed that Thomas Bennett's will was genuine, with witnesses recognising the writing. The outcome of the case is not clear in the court records, but the manor and estate at Welby came to Chiverton's daughter Mary.¹⁰¹ She had married Richard, Viscount Howe in 1758 (who became Earl Howe in 1797).¹⁰²

It is said that Earl Howe sold the manor and land to Peter Godfrey, but it is difficult to verify whether the Godfrey family owned the manor, or just the land.¹⁰³ In 1774, all the land in the parish was owned by William and David Godfrey.¹⁰⁴ It remained in the family until at least 1839, passing

⁹⁵ Notts. Arch. PR/NW, will of Thomas Bennett.

⁹⁶ H. Hartopp, *Leicestershire and Rutland Notes and Queries*, II (1893), 235-6.; monument to Thomas Hartopp of Quorndon in Rotherby parish church.

⁹⁷ TNA, C 11/27/8/29

⁹⁸ TNA, PROB 11/802/384, will of Elizabeth Bennett; H. Hartopp, *Leicestershire and Rutland Notes and Queries*, II (1893), 235-6.

⁹⁹ ROLLR, DG 36/37, parish register, Melton Mowbray.

¹⁰⁰ ROLLR, Leics wills, 1739, C-Z.

¹⁰¹ TNA, C 11/422/20; C 11/281/12.

¹⁰² H. Hartopp, *Leicestershire and Rutland Notes and Queries*, II (1893), 236; The authors are very grateful to Edward Beaumont for his assistance with the Bennett/Hartopp section of this chapter.

¹⁰³ W. White, *Hist. Gaz. and Dir. Leics. & Rutl.* (Sheffield, 1846), 247.

¹⁰⁴ ROLLR, QS 62/327, land tax 1774; H. Hartopp, *Leicestershire and Rutland Notes and Queries*, II (1893), 236.

through the joint hands of William and John Godfrey,¹⁰⁵ then Peter,¹⁰⁶ and finally Edward Godfrey, owner from 1837 until at least 1839.¹⁰⁷

It is suggested that Lord Huntingtower (William Manners, heir apparent to the earl of Dysart) owned the manor in 1831, but that cannot be verified.¹⁰⁸ Both land and manor were said to be held by Sir William Earle Welby, bart. (1829-1898) of Denton Manor in Lincolnshire in 1846.¹⁰⁹ In 1861 he changed his surname to Welby-Gregory at the request in the will of Gregory Gregory of nearby Harlaxton Hall.¹¹⁰ He was succeeded by Sir Charles Glynne Earle Welby (1865-1938), who dropped the Gregory addition.¹¹¹ Sir Charles was lord of the manor in 1925,¹¹² but some of the land had been sold to Holwell Iron Co. Ltd. in 1875.¹¹³ By 1941, all the land was owned by Stanton Iron Works Company and the farmers of the parish.¹¹⁴

Manor House

The manor house was c.200 m. north-east of the church.¹¹⁵ Its rooms were listed in a probate inventory taken in 1632, following the death of George Bennett (I). Mention of a 'turrett in the old building' suggests a rebuilding, perhaps by Bennett. The substantial property included a hall, parlour, little parlour, dairy, larder, kitchen, brewhouse, two lower rooms next to the garden, a gallery and at least ten chambers, including one at the end of the gallery and more than one 'in the yard' for servants. A gatehouse had a garrett over it and there was a little court. Outbuildings included a lime

¹⁰⁵ ROLLR, QS 62/327, land tax 1774, 1798 and 1807; Hartopp, *Leics and Rutland Notes and Queries*, 236.

¹⁰⁶ ROLLR, QS 62/327, land tax 1774, 1820–32; Hartopp, *Leics and Rutland Notes and Queries*, 236.

¹⁰⁷ ROLLR, QS 27/2/132, parish revaluation 1837: DE 748/1, tithe map and apportionment 1839.

¹⁰⁸ J. Curtis, *A Topographical History of the County of Leicester* (1831), 182.

¹⁰⁹ W. White, *Hist. Gaz. and Dir. Leics. & Rutl.* (Sheffield, 1846), 247.

¹¹⁰ *ODNB*, s.v. 'Welby, Victoria Alexandrina Maria Louisa' (accessed 1 Nov 2017).

¹¹¹ *ODNB*, s.v. 'Welby, Victoria Alexandrina Maria Louisa' (accessed 1 Nov 2017); Debrett's *House of Commons and Judicial Bench* (1901), 156; *Kelly's Dir. Leics. & Rutl.* (1916), 643.

¹¹² *Kelly's Dir. Leics. & Rutl.* (1925), 698.

¹¹³ *Holwell Works Centenary 1875-1975*, 1 (booklet, copy at ROLLR, L671).

¹¹⁴ *Kelly's Dir. Leics. & Rutl.* (1941), 1107.

¹¹⁵ R.F. Hartley, *The Medieval Earthworks of North-east Leicestershire* (Leicester, 1987), 46.

house, wool house and mills.¹¹⁶ Dame Elisabeth Bennett, the widow of George (III), was taxed on 24 hearths in 1664.¹¹⁷ Earthworks at the site suggest the gardens had parterres and terrace walks.¹¹⁸

Thomas Bennett, who died in 1738, may have been its last resident owner.¹¹⁹ It is not clear whether the house was empty or rented out in the lifetime of his sister Elizabeth, who lived in Croesnewydd in north Wales in 1752.¹²⁰ The Godfreys, who owned the whole parish from 1774 to at least 1839, were not residents, and the house may have been ruinous when they rented it with 88 a. of surrounding fields to Thomas Sykes in 1839. Sykes was not listed in the 1841 census of Welby.¹²¹

Part of the house was still visible in an aerial photograph of 1957, when there was a rectangular walled garden on the south side of the building.¹²² In 1961, the *Leicester Advertiser* described a field besides the church with the remnants of a stone house.¹²³ Around that time, according to Mr Hobill, the remainder of the hall was derelict, so he decided to completely demolish it, as it attracted young people to use it as a play area even though it was in a dangerous condition.¹²⁴ In 2018 the site was completely grassed over and there was little evidence of the former presence of the building.¹²⁵

Welby Grange

Several tenants gave, sold or let a total of almost six carucates of land (c.720 a) in Welby and Sysonby to Garendon abbey, near Loughborough, which had been founded in 1133.¹²⁶ The largest single gift was from Geoffrey Haget, of four carucates (c.480a.) of land in Welby of the fee of

¹¹⁶ ROLLR, PR/I/35/6.

¹¹⁷ TNA, E179/251/4/2, cited in Farnham, *Medieval Village Notes*, IV, 278.

¹¹⁸ R.F. Hartley, *The Medieval Earthworks of North-east Leicestershire* (Leicester, 1987), 46; Leics & Rut HER, MLE 8862.

¹¹⁹ Nichols, *History and Antiquities*, 285; Monument in St Mary's Church, Melton Mowbray.

¹²⁰ TNA, PROB 11/802/384, will of Elizabeth Bennett; H. Hartopp, *Leicestershire and Rutland Notes and Queries*, 2 (1893), 235-6.

¹²¹ ROLLR, DE 748/1, tithe map and apportionment; TNA, HO 107/588/4, Census 1841

¹²² F. Hartley, *Medieval Earthworks of North-East Leicestershire* (1987), aerial photograph, 80.

¹²³ *Leicester Advertiser*, 17 Nov. 1961.

¹²⁴ Personal testimony of Mr Hobill.

¹²⁵ Viewed by author.

¹²⁶ Nichols, *History*, II, App. 136-8, transcription of BL, Lansd. MS 415, Garendon Abbey Cartulary; *VCH Leics* II, 5.

Mowbray, and Roger and Nigel de Mowbray both signed charters to confirm this.¹²⁷ Robert de Harewell (or Hernutt, or Henault) gave one bovate of land in Welby adjacent to Haget's gift.¹²⁸ Nigel de Alebi (Welby) gave half a carucate of land, but it is not clear if it was all in Welby.¹²⁹ Other land was leased or purchased including half a carucate from William de Pereres and half a carucate from Thomas de Sysonby. This created a large estate, with pasture for 200 sheep, and a grange was built.¹³⁰ By the end of the 15th century the abbey had leased the grange to Rowland Digby, the lord of the manor, at £4 annually.¹³¹ By 1514, annual rental income had increased to £5, but this had reduced to £3 by 1535.¹³²

Garendon abbey was dissolved in 1536.¹³³ Former Garendon land and granges, including Welby, were granted to Thomas, earl of Rutland in 1541.¹³⁴ In his will of 1542, the earl left these lands in dower for his second wife, Eleanor, who died in 1551.¹³⁵ It is not clear when the earls, or later dukes, of Rutland sold the Welby grange and its land, but by 1774 the entire parish was owned by William and David Godfrey, then the lords of the manor.¹³⁶

The modern Welby Grange Farm is probably on the site of Welby Grange.¹³⁷

The Rectory

Welby was a chapel of ease to St Mary's church in Melton Mowbray. The rectors of Melton Mowbray had no glebe land in Welby, but received all the tithes from Welby and their other three

¹²⁷ Nichols, *History*, II, App. 136–7, transcription of BL, Lansd. MS 415.

¹²⁸ Nichols, *History*, II, App. 136, 138, transcription of BL, Lansd. MS 415.

¹²⁹ Nichols, *History*, II, App. 136–7, transcription of BL, Lansd. MS 415.

¹³⁰ Nichols, *History*, II, App. 136–8, transcription of BL, Lansd. MS 415; *Cal. Pat.* 1216–25, 522; *HMC Rutland IV*, p. 4.

¹³¹ ROLLR, DE 40/26 Garendon Abbey rental (undated, late 15thc).

¹³² S. Jack, 'Monastic lands in Leicestershire and their administration at the eve of the Dissolution', *Trans. LAHS*, 41 (1965–6), 23, citing TNA, SC 6/HENVIII/1825, mm.19–25d; *Valor Ecclesiasticus* (ed. Caley and Hunter, Records Commission, 1810–34), IV, 173.

¹³³ *VCH Leics.* II, 6.

¹³⁴ *L & P Hen. VIII*, XVI, 325.

¹³⁵ N.H. Nicolas, *Testamenta Vetusta* (1826), III, 719–20; *ODNB*, s.v. 'Manners, Thomas, first earl of Rutland', accessed 3 Jan. 2018.

¹³⁶ ROLLR, QS 62/327, land tax 1773.

¹³⁷ See Introduction (chapter).

chapelries as well as from the mother parish. At some point between 1276 and 1297 Melton Mowbray church was appropriated by Roger de Mowbray to the prior and convent of Lewes, without a licence. The prior and convent received a pardon for this in 1325,¹³⁸ although there appears to have been confirmation of the arrangement by Bishop Oliver Sutton in 1285.¹³⁹

Lewes Priory was dissolved in 1537.¹⁴⁰ The rectory of Melton Mowbray with its tithes from Welby went to Thomas Cromwell. After the execution of Cromwell in 1540 the rectory reverted to the Crown.¹⁴¹ It had been leased by Lewes priory in 1532 for 55 years to William Gonson.¹⁴² He was the brother of Melton Mowbray's vicar, Bartholomew Gonson.¹⁴³ William committed suicide in 1544. The residual term of the lease was restored by the crown in 1545 to William's son Anthony.¹⁴⁴

William Digby, lord of Welby Manor, through his will of 1604, left his son Thomas a life interest in the great tithes, which were then to pass to Thomas's oldest son William and to William's male heirs, or for want of heirs to Thomas's second son and his male heirs, and so on through Thomas's subsequent sons.¹⁴⁵ The tithes were sold with the manor in 1617, and George Bennett (I) became the next owner.¹⁴⁶ The Welby great tithes remained with subsequent lords of the manor.¹⁴⁷

¹³⁸ W.P.W. Phillimore (ed.), *Rotuli Hugonis de Welles 1209-1235*, I (Lincoln Rec. Soc. 3, 1912), 269.

¹³⁹ Nichols, *History*, II, 250, citing reports temp. Edw. III, f. 532, p.1; *Justice of the Peace and Local Government*, VIII (1844), 43.

¹⁴⁰ *VCH Sussex* II, 69.

¹⁴¹ *L & P Hen. VIII*, XIII (1), pp. 99, 138–9.

¹⁴² *L & P Hen. VIII*, XX (1), p. 56.

¹⁴³ *ODNB*, s.v. 'William Gonson', accessed 6 Nov 2017.

¹⁴⁴ *L & P Hen. VIII*, XX (1), p. 56.

¹⁴⁵ TNA, PROB 11/104/331, will of William Digby.

¹⁴⁶ TNA, C 2/JasI/B28/65, Bennett v Cason.

¹⁴⁷ Farnham, *Medieval Village Notes*, IV, 276, citing TNA, CP 25/2/4314/15JAS1TRIN (1617), transfer of property from Thomas Digby to George Bennett (I); Nichols, *History*, II, 285; ROLLR, DE 748/1, tithe map and apportionment 1839; ROLLR, DE 748/3, altered tithe apportionment 1901.