

## SOCIAL HISTORY

### Social Structure and Character

In 1086 across the 13 manors, including Brooksby, held by earl Hugh there was a mixture of free and unfree peasants comprising 31 sokemen, 37 villans, 15 bordars and one slave, but the social composition of the tenants within Brooksby is unknown.<sup>1</sup> There were two bordars on countess Judith's manor.<sup>2</sup>

The Villiers family, lords of the manor, were dominant in terms of their status and wealth from at least 1327 until 1708. Six people were assessed for a total of £1 tax in 1327 and 1332. John Villers in 1327, and Geoffrey Villiers in 1332, were assessed at 6s., 30 per cent of the total. The other five people were assessed for sums of between 1s. 6d. and 4s.<sup>3</sup>

In the poll tax of 1379, Richard Villiers, esquire, was assessed at 3s. 4d. and Margaret, his widowed step-mother, was assessed for the same amount, presumably for her dower, and recorded with the status of franklin (a wealthy freeholder). The other 18 individuals or married couples paid 4d. each making a total of 12s. 8d., thus Richard and Margaret were assessed for just over half the total.<sup>4</sup> The family dominance is evident from indications that Richard or his father John were responsible for some enclosure in the parish in this period, and Richard's great-great-grandson appears to have completed the enclosure of the parish in 1492.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> P. Morgan (ed.), *Domesday Book* (1979), 237a, 43, 1, p. 648.

<sup>2</sup> P. Morgan (ed.), *Domesday Book* (1979), 236c 40, 36, p. 647.

<sup>3</sup> *Assoc. Architect. Soc. Rpt and Papers*, XX (1889–90), 148; G.F. Farnham, *Medieval Village Notes* (Leicester, 1933), VI, 254, citing TNA, 179/133/2.

<sup>4</sup> C.C. Fenwick, *The Poll Taxes of 1377, 1379 and 1381, part 1 Bedfordshire-Lincolnshire* (Oxford, 1998), 487.

<sup>5</sup> Above, *Economic History*.

By 1603, and perhaps well before, there was only one household in the parish, in Brooksby Hall.<sup>6</sup> In 1666, Sir George Villiers was assessed for tax on 18 hearths, which was the only assessment in the parish.<sup>7</sup>

Some of the land was 'occupied' by Francis Barford, gentleman 'of Brooksby' at his death in 1668, when he had belongings worth £73 10s. 0d., including a farm, and a property with a hall, parlour, chamber and buttery.<sup>8</sup> His widow Anne was also 'of Brooksby' when she died in 1686.<sup>9</sup> When Francis Barford died, Sir George Villiers (d. 1699) was spending most of his time in London,<sup>10</sup> and Barford may have been a tenant of part of the Hall or one of its associated buildings.

Residents who left wills after the estate was sold to Nathan Wright in 1708 include Jacob Duick, a shepherd (d. 1727),<sup>11</sup> Mary Underwood (d. 1754),<sup>12</sup> and George and Richard Hives, both millers (d. 1776 and 1781).<sup>13</sup> Most of the land was rented out, in 19 lots c.1720,<sup>14</sup> and c.16 lots in 1773.<sup>15</sup> In 1834, all the land was rented to people in neighbouring parishes, and there were only two houses, the Hall and the miller's house.<sup>16</sup>

From 1708, the owners often let the manor house to wealthy tenants, including c.1831–2 James T. Brudenell (d.1868) 7th earl of Cardigan, who led the charge of the Light Brigade in the Crimean War, and Sarah Wilson (née Churchill), aunt of Sir Winston Churchill, who was one of the first female war correspondents.<sup>17</sup> She was sent to the Boer War in South Africa in 1900 by the *Daily Mail* to report

---

<sup>6</sup> A. Dyer and D.M. Palliser (eds), *The Diocesan Population Returns for 1563 and 1603* (Oxford, 2005), 382n.

<sup>7</sup> G.F. Farnham, *Medieval Village Notes*, VI, 263, citing TNA, E 172/332.

<sup>8</sup> ROLLR, PR/1/67/144.

<sup>9</sup> ROLLR, PR/1/88/74.

<sup>10</sup> J. Nichols, *History and Antiquities of County of Leicester*, III (1800), 194.

<sup>11</sup> ROLLR, Wills and Probate 1727 A-M.

<sup>12</sup> ROLLR, Wills and Probate 1754 I-Z.

<sup>13</sup> ROLLR, Wills and Probate 1776 A-O and 1781 A-O.

<sup>14</sup> Above, Economic History.

<sup>15</sup> ROLLR, QS 62/57/1-52, land tax.

<sup>16</sup> *Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws* (Parl. Papers 1834 (44), xxix), p. 104-5.

<sup>17</sup> S. Wilson, *South African Memories Social, Warlike and Sporting from Diaries Written at the Time* (1909), pages not numbered.

on the Siege of Mafeking,<sup>18</sup> and returned home to a hero's welcome, including a triumphant procession from Brooksby railway station to the Hall, accompanied by a brass band and cheering crowds.<sup>19</sup>

From 1846, a small number of residents were employed by Midland Railway Company.<sup>20</sup> Also during the 19th century, the land was combined into discrete blocks with tenants living in three newly-built farm houses.<sup>21</sup> Following the 1904 sale of the Brooksby estate, the tenants were encouraged to buy their farms.<sup>22</sup>

Brooksby Hall and its immediate estate including Hall Farm (186 a.) was an important employer of servants, eleven at the Hall in 1901.<sup>23</sup> Only two of these were born locally. Hall Farm was the residence of the farm bailiff. John Thomas Marshall, farmer at Brooksby Grange Farm, also had an agricultural labourer living on his farm. The Hall, under the tenancy then ownership of Admiral Beatty and followed by his son, continued to employ servants through to the Second World War, when up to 60 guests were accommodated at the Hall during the fox hunting season of the Quorn.<sup>24</sup> During the First and Second World Wars the Hall became a convalescent hospital for wounded personnel.<sup>25</sup>

David Beatty was Vice Admiral at the Battle of Jutland in 1916. He was created Admiral and became the 1st Earl Beatty in 1919.<sup>26</sup> On his return to Brooksby that year he was also given a hero's welcome, with a parade from the railway station to the Hall.<sup>27</sup> The flag from his ship hung in

---

<sup>18</sup> S. Wilson, *South African Memories Social, Warlike and Sporting from Diaries Written at the Time* (1909).

<sup>19</sup> *Daily Mail*, 4 Aug. 1900, p. 3.

<sup>20</sup> Above, Economic History, Transport Services; TNA, HO 107/2091/39; RG 9/2299/18.

<sup>21</sup> Above, Parish of Brooksby, Settlement.

<sup>22</sup> ROLLR, DE 688/30, sale of Brooksby Manor 1904.

<sup>23</sup> TNA, RG 13/3012, 1901 census.

<sup>24</sup> ROLLR, 8D 62/Box68/3 (Box 630).

<sup>25</sup> J.R. Hubbard, *Brooksby*, (1977), 59, 74; ROLLR, 8D62/Box68/3 (Box 630).

<sup>26</sup> *ODNB*, s.v. 'Beatty, David, first Earl Beatty' (accessed 30 Mar. 2020).

<sup>27</sup> *London Illustrated News*, 22 Feb. 1919, p. 10

Brooksby Church.<sup>28</sup> In 1907, and again in the 1920s, Beatty and his American-born wife Ethel lived mainly at Dingley (Northants.).<sup>29</sup> Earl Beatty was afforded a state funeral, and burial in St Paul's Cathedral.<sup>30</sup>

Since 1945 the Agricultural College has dominated the parish.<sup>31</sup>

### Community Activities

The church has provided a meeting place for parishioners and other local people at Sunday services.<sup>32</sup> In the 19th and early 20th centuries the Hall also hosted social events for the local community. In 1879, there was a garden fete to raise funds for the restoration of the church spire.<sup>33</sup> In 1900, Lady Sarah Wilson celebrated her homecoming from the Boer War by inviting local school children and teachers from Brooksby, Hoby and Rotherby to the Hall, where they had a meal and played games.<sup>34</sup> In the late 19th century, there was an annual fishing match on the banks of the River Wreake at Brooksby by kind permission of Ernest Chaplin.<sup>35</sup> Brooksby also had a football team in 1912.<sup>36</sup>

### Education

---

<sup>28</sup> Viewed by the author, 2020.

<sup>29</sup> *Nottingham Evening Post*, 6 Dec. 1907, p.3; J. R Hubbard, *Brooksby* (1977), 59.

<sup>30</sup> *ODNB*, s.v. 'Beatty, David, first Earl Beatty' (accessed 30 Mar. 2020).

<sup>31</sup> Above, Landownership; below, Education.

<sup>32</sup> Below, Religious History.

<sup>33</sup> *Leicester Chronicle*, 13 Sept. 1879; below, Religious History.

<sup>34</sup> *Grantham Journal*, 18 Aug. 1900.

<sup>35</sup> *Leicester Chronicle* 19 Sept. 1891.

<sup>36</sup> *Daily Mail*, 30 June 1915, p. 3.

The 19th-century population was served by a school in Hoby, one mile away,<sup>37</sup> and another at Rotherby, half a mile away.<sup>38</sup> The National School in Hoby was designated to serve Brooksby in 1871.<sup>39</sup> This school closed in 1969, when students were transferred to the school at Rotherby, then to Frisby on the Wreake in 1975.<sup>40</sup> The transfer of children from Hoby School to Melton Mowbray at age 11 started in the 1930s.<sup>41</sup>

### **Agricultural College**

Leicestershire and Rutland County Councils purchased Brooksby Hall from the second Earl Beatty in 1945, for £20,000.<sup>42</sup> The building became a training centre in farming for ex-servicemen, overseen by the Leicestershire Agricultural Executive Committee.<sup>43</sup> In 1950 the two county councils bought the rest of the Hall estate including Hall Farm, and Spinney Farm, which had been run by the War Agricultural Executive Committee during the war. The training centre was converted to Brooksby Hall Farm Institute in 1950.<sup>44</sup> In 1955 a new steading was constructed by the College at Spinney Farm, particularly to house the dairy herd.<sup>45</sup> In 1970–1 the horticultural department moved to the new Spinney Campus on the south side of Melton Road and the engineering department followed.<sup>46</sup> On the main campus around the Hall new buildings were constructed for residential, teaching and administrative uses. These include Paget Hall in 1958, Robert Bakewell Hall in 1961, the Library/Lecture block, Beatty Court

---

<sup>37</sup> *Abstract of Answers and Returns on the State of Education in England and Wales 1833* (Parl. Papers 1835 (62) xli), 23.

<sup>38</sup> *Abstract of Answers and Returns on the State of Education in England and Wales 1833* (Parl. Papers 1835 (62) xli), 23.

<sup>39</sup> For example, *Committee of Council of Education: Report, Appendix 1873-4* (Parl. Papers 1874 (18) xviii, 1, 659), 565.

<sup>40</sup> Oral testimony of Hoby residents.

<sup>41</sup> J.K. Penstone, *Sarson School Melton Mowbray: the First Twenty-Five Years* (1976), 10.

<sup>42</sup> *ODNB*, s.v. 'Beatty, David, first Earl Beatty' (accessed 30 Mar. 2020); J.R. Hubbard, *Brooksby* (1977), 59.

<sup>43</sup> J.R. Hubbard, *Brooksby* (1977), 59.

<sup>44</sup> J.R. Hubbard, *Brooksby* (1977), 75.

<sup>45</sup> J.R. Hubbard, *Brooksby* (1977), 81.

<sup>46</sup> J.R. Hubbard, *Brooksby* (1977), 81.

and Longwill Court in 1970.<sup>47</sup> In 1966 the defunct railway station was purchased and the nearby buildings across the road were converted into a piggery.<sup>48</sup>

The College gained independence from local authority control in 1993.<sup>49</sup> In 2019 there were 93 residential Further Education students under the age of 19.<sup>50</sup> However most students were expected to live at home or if over 18 find accommodation nearby. To get to the college they could provide their own daily transport, or use the buses on four dedicated routes to the College and five more dedicated routes to the Melton campus, from where there were frequent public buses to Brooksby. The Further Education courses at the Brooksby campus, aimed at 16 to 18 year olds, were mostly full-time for one or two years up to level three and included agriculture, animal care, construction and joinery, countryside management, equine courses, floristry, horticulture, land-based service engineering, motor vehicle engineering, mathematics, English and sport. Apprenticeships combined attendance at workplaces and the college and lasted from 12 to 18 months. For older students there were foundation and full degree courses in animal management science, equine performance science and sports science.<sup>51</sup> From 1994, the college offered short courses for the general public, including dog training and grooming, equine pursuits, animal photography, floristry, horticulture, tree felling, fork lift truck operation, and use of pesticides.<sup>52</sup> At the last inspection in 2016 OFSTED rated Brooksby Melton College as 'good'.<sup>53</sup>

Spinney Campus (8.5 a.) closed in 2012.<sup>54</sup> Replacement greenhouses, teaching buildings and sports areas opened in 2015, to the west of the main campus.<sup>55</sup>

---

<sup>47</sup> J.R. Hubbard, *Brooksby* (1977), 71.

<sup>48</sup> J.R. Hubbard, *Brooksby* (1977), 83, 86.

<sup>49</sup> Statutory instrument no. 2029 (1992).

<sup>50</sup> OFSTED inspection report for Brooksby College December 2019.

<sup>51</sup> Brooksby Melton College, *Further Education Guide 2019/20*.

<sup>52</sup> *Brooksby Melton College, Further Education Course Guide 2019-20*.

<https://www.brooksbymelton.ac.uk/commercial/brooksby-hall/> (accessed 10 Mar. 2020)

<sup>53</sup> <https://www.brooksbymelton.ac.uk/bmc-continues-impress-ofsted/> (accessed 14 May 2021).

<sup>54</sup> <https://rmets.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/wea.2162> (accessed 15 Feb. 2020)

<sup>55</sup> Melton Mowbray Borough Council, planning application 14/00816/REM (Oct. 2014).

The College merged with Melton Mowbray College of Further Education in 2000, to become part of Brooksby Melton College.<sup>56</sup> A further amalgamation occurred with Stephenson College in Coalville in 2020.<sup>57</sup> In February of that year, before the Covid-19 pandemic, the Brooksby, Melton Mowbray and Coalville colleges shared approximately 10,000 students, and the aims were to provide a wider range of courses across the county and beyond and to attract even more students.<sup>58</sup>



*New buildings opened in 2015 at the Agricultural College*

Between 1994 and 1999 Spiders pre-school provided education for Brooksby children under the statutory school age.

## **Social Welfare**

## **Charities**

---

<sup>56</sup>

<https://www.aoc.co.uk/sites/default/files/College%20Mergers%20List%201993%20to%202018%20updated%2015%20Feb%202018.pdf> (accessed 30 Mar. 2020)

<sup>57</sup> <https://www.brooksbymelton.ac.uk/bmc-stephenson-merger/> (accessed 30 Mar. 2020)

<sup>58</sup> Announcements on BMC website 30 May 2019 and 4 February 2020..

Brooksby had no charities for the poor.<sup>59</sup>

Since 1967 the Agricultural College set up charities to assist the students, but all had been removed from the register of charities by 2010.<sup>60</sup> They included the Ted Stearn Trust, removed in 2010, and an annual prize for the best Ordinary National Diploma student, awarded by Loughborough Agricultural Society and removed in 1992.

### Poor Relief

No poor relief was paid in 1776<sup>61</sup>, 1783–5<sup>62</sup> or 1818.<sup>63</sup> Out-relief of £8 16s. 6d. was provided to one resident in 1803.<sup>64</sup>

In 1834, the Poor Law commissioner was ‘astonished’ to find that widow Ives, the overseer, was paying £5 8s. 0d. annually in poor relief in a parish with only two houses, the mill, where she lived, and the Hall. This was paid to T. Walton for the rent of a house in Hinckley. He had gained a legal settlement at Brooksby when in service at ‘the squire’s house’.<sup>65</sup> In 1836, the constable paid widow Walton 2s. 6d. per week for seven weeks.<sup>66</sup> In 1837 widow Walton received 2s. 6d. per week and ‘Young Walton’ 2s. 9d. per week, for seven weeks in both cases, despite Brooksby falling within Melton Mowbray Poor Law union from 1836, with the Union workhouse built in Melton that year.<sup>67</sup>

---

<sup>59</sup> *Abstract of returns to the Home Secretary pursuant to the Local Tax Return Act, etc. 1864–5* (Parl. Papers 1866 (411), lv.293), p.476

<sup>60</sup> [www.charity-commission.gov.uk](http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk) (accessed 26 May 2019).

<sup>61</sup> *Report of the Committee appointed to inspect and consider the Returns made by the Overseers of the Poor, together with Abstracts of the said Returns of Overseers* (Parl. Papers 1776-7 (9), p. 382.

<sup>62</sup> J. Nichols, *History and Antiquities of County of Leicester*, III (1800), 194.

<sup>63</sup> *Select Committee on the Education of the Poor: Digest of Parochial Returns 1818* (Parl. Papers 1818 (82), xix), p. 224.

<sup>64</sup> *Abstract of Answers and Returns under Act for Procuring Rates Relative to the Expense and Maintenance of the Poor in England* (Parl. Papers 1803–4 (175)), p. 260.

<sup>65</sup> *Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws* (Parl. Papers 1834 (44) xix), p. 104–105.

<sup>66</sup> ROLLR, DE 2193/16.

<sup>67</sup> <http://www.workhouses.org.uk/MeltonMowbray/> (accessed 31 Jan. 2021).