

SOME CATHOLIC FAMILIES OF GLOUCESTERSHIRE IN THE 18th CENTURY

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The position of Catholics in the County of Gloucestershire in the 18th century differs negligibly from that of other counties at the same period. The enforcing of the standing Acts of Parliament varied with the times or opinion of the local magistrates. There had been many Acts of Parliament incapacitating Catholics from taking any official position in the land owing to the Oath of Supremacy, the Acts of 1559, 1563, 1581, and 1606 were still in use, 12 pence for every non-attendance at the Anglican Service besides £20 per month, with £10 per month for each of their servants not attending church. They were not allowed to vote or to become M.P.s, and after 1675 were not allowed to take their seats in the House of Lords, they were not able to become schoolmasters or teachers of any kind, to practice at the Bar, become physicians, to keep arms, or own a horse worth more than £5. Priests were still made subject to life imprisonment and a reward of £100 was offered to any informer who had secured the conviction of a priest for saying Mass, this last penalty being abolished with the First Catholic Relief Act of 1778

Thus it came about that the only places of Catholic life centered around the houses of county gentry who still held to their faith and who had sufficient means to do so, this subjected all Catholics to a long strain of inactivity. One naturally finds a lot of intermarriage in these families and finds too families emigrating and dying out completely, owing to lack of money to keep up with the perpetual fines. In the Catholic Relief Act of 1791 Catholic chapels became legal on registration, but it was the Catholic Emancipation of 1829 which removed nearly all the obstacles and Catholics could once more play their part in the life of their country.

At intervals these people had been compelled to register their names and estates both to let the authorities know their wealth and to know where they were. The Compton Census of 1676 gives no names but gives the numbers at 128, presumably all adults. The Register of Dissenters (Papists) 1735, again numbers but no names, 255.

But the main source of our present research has been 'The Register Book of Papists in the County of Gloucestershire pursuant to the Statute of the 1st King George 1716 obliging papists to register their names and real estate and kept by the Clerk of the Peace' which is now in the County Record Office, and the list of "Papists and Reputed Papists", written in the back of the Quarter Session Book Vol. IV, also in the County Record Office. The former book gives the number as 51, all owners of property in Gloucestershire but not all resident, as more often they had estates of varying sizes in several counties acquired by intermarriage. The latter list gives 251 persons, mostly in the Forest of Dean area.

Two names in the list with property nearest to Gloucester were Mary Smith, widow of Samuel Smith, from whom she inherited property in Berkeley,

and Jane Hynson, widow of William Hynson, late of Badgeworth, both of Coopers Hill, Brockworth. Jane had property of a house called the Day House which I have discovered as being Coopers Hill House. Jane and Mary were probably related and possibly lived together but I have not found out if this was so.

The next family nearest to Gloucester is that of Sir Walter Compton whose family came into possession of the Manor of Hartpury during the reign of King Henry VIII. Sir Walter of the Register having no male heirs the estate came at a later date to the Gordon-Cannings - the Cannings of Foxcote, Warwickshire, whose ancestor Francis Canning registered estate and lands in Ebrington and Illmington, Gloucestershire. The family of Gordon-Cannings were great benefactors to the Catholic Church of St. Peters in Gloucester in the early 19th century. Their names are on the alter rails of the Lady Chapel and the needlework kneeler there is one that was worked by Mrs. Gordon-Canning, the mother of Mrs. Gwyn-Halford, at whose death the estate was sold and it became the County Farm Institute, so severing the long link between it and St. Peters Church.

Within a few miles of Hartpury is Deerhurst, where Mary Cassey of St. Martin in the Fields, London, registered the Manor of Whitfield, more or less the last of the estate held by the Casseys since John Cassey, Lord Chief Baron of the Exchequer died seized of the Manor of Deerhurst in the first year of the reign of Henry IV and whose well known brasses are in Deerhurst Church together with their dog Terri at their feet.

The Jerninghams of Cossey Norfolk, held the Manor of Fainswick, which had come down to them through Sir William Kingston, Constable of the Tower, to whom it was granted by King Henry VIII after the death of Thomas Cromwell who had obtained it from Viscount Lisle. At the time of the Registration it was in the hands of Sir Francis Jerningham of Cossey, his son John, registered as of Fainswick and doubtless lived at what is now known as the Lodge, the old house near Sheepscombe.

The family of Faston had settled in Horton, when the ancestral mansion of their estate at Appleton, Norfolk, which they had held from the 15th century, was destroyed by fire in 1708. They were related to many great families of the day, the Tichbournes, Lord Clifford, Lord Baltimore, and Lord Somerset of Fauntley Court, Gloucestershire, whose widow married John Faston who registered the estate of Horton. This centre of Catholic life laid the foundations for the Mission at Chipping Sodbury.

The last Abbot of Tewkesbury Abbey was, in 1541, made the first Bishop of Gloucester, and it was this same family that Joseph Wakeman of St. Giles in the Fields and Henry Wakeman his brother registered their estates of Ashton under Hill and Beckford. The former held life estate at Beckford, but dying in 1720 the estate came to another brother Benedict Wakeman. Their mother had been the daughter of Benedict Hall of High Meadow whose estates were registered at Newland and Rurdean. Anne Hind of Beckford was a sister of these Wakemans. William the last of the Wakemans of Beckford died in January 1836 aged 96 years. After his death the

remnants of the Catholic congregation with a few Catholics from Tewkesbury became the start of the Mission Church of St. Benedict at Kemerton.

There were two John Vaughans who registered their estates, one of Hunsome, owning the Manor of Ruardean which had belonged to the Abbey of Flaxley and had come to the Vaughans through the Baynhams.

John Vaughan of Courtfield Monmouth, had for his estate in Gloucestershire the Manor of Abenhall and property in Ruardean, English Bicknor and Lydbrook which is on the opposite bank of the Wye from Courtfield, the ancestral home of the Vaughans. Cardinal Herbert Vaughan who was born in Gloucester while his parents were on a visit to the city, lived at Courtfield with his brothers and sisters. John Vaughan of Ruardean's mother, Dame Joan Vaughan, was the daughter of Thomas Baynham of Clearwell and Mary, daughter of Sir William Winter of Lydney. She was imprisoned in Gloucester Castle for harbouring a priest, John Broughton, who was her chaplain and steward. When her friends petitioned the King, Charles I sent "to stay Execution upon the said Joan Vaughan until our further pleasure be declared". One supposes that she was fined, as in a statement of accounts of rents received on 14 November 1641 is a memorandum, "The Charge of her Gloucestershire troubles, was payed out of her Jewells and Plate, Pawned by herself for it".

Robert Brent of Lark Stoke and his five daughters, Margaret, Mary, Frances Brent, Elizabeth Conquest and Anne Lytcott registered an estate at Illmington, Gloucestershire, inherited possibly through the Canning family to whom they were related. He had been a Magistrate in the reign of King James II but in 1689 a reward of £200 was offered for his apprehension, while his wife Catherine was actually imprisoned. She died in 1706 and was buried at St. Pancras, London. A daughter Catherine married into the Bartlett family of Hill End, Worcestershire, who had property in Gloucestershire, and this family of Bartlett also married into the Vaughan family.

At Lydney an estate was registered by Thomas Nevill, who married the widow of Sir Charles Winter, Dame Frances Winter, the last of that interesting family of Lydney, one of the most fascinating families of the county. Another important Catholic family was the Webbs of Hatherop, of whom more details are given below.

Our interest in the Webb family stemmed from the fact that they were responsible for founding the first Catholic Mission in Gloucester after the Reformation. Miss Mary Webb, daughter of Sir John Webb, 5th Bart. and his wife Mary (Salvin) died at Clifton, Bristol, on September 30th, 1787, leaving £1000 for this purpose.

The Webb papers held at the Gloucestershire Record Office deal principally with their estate at Hatherop, though their largest estate was at Great Canford in Dorset. They also owned estates at Branston, Northampton, Cdstock, Wilts, in Lincolnshire, Sussex and Yorkshire and many

other places including five houses in London.

A very rough pedigree included in the Webb papers shows them to be descended from a William Webb of Salisbury in the reign of Henry VIII. He was married to Catherine daughter of John Barrow Esq. By marriage, his son, John, seems to have obtained the Manor of Odstock, Wilts. and his other son, William Paines Place, Motcombe, Dorset. Both John and William's sons, also John and William, according to the pedigree became Knights.

In the early part of James I's reign Sir John Webb purchased Great Canford, Dorset for £14,000. He married first a daughter of Falconer of Oxfordshire by whom he had no issue. His second wife was Catherine, daughter of Sir John Tresham, Knight, of Rushton, Northants by whom he had three sons, Sir John Webb created a baronet, in 1644 for services to the Royal Cause in the Civil War, Major General Webb died of wounds received at the battle of Newbury 1643, and Thomas, died without issue.

Sir John Webb, Bart, married Mary daughter of Sir John Caryll of Hastings; she died in 1661 and Sir John in 1680. Their son, Sir John Webb, 2nd Bart, of Odstock obtained the Manor of Hathrop upon his marriage to Mary, sister and sole heiress of John and William Blomer of Hathrop.

The Manor of Hathrop had been purchased by John Blomer, yeoman of Hathrop in 1552. He belonged to an ancient Westmoreland family settled about this time at Cowley in the County. William Blomer purchased the Manor of Eastleach Turville in 1595 and was Lord of the Manor of Hathrop in 1608. His grandchildren, John and William died unmarried in 1685 and 1686 aged 56 and 53 years respectively, leaving Mary in sole possession. She first married Richard Draycott of Fainsley, Staffs. Her son and daughter of this marriage died without issue, so that Sir John Webb her son by her second marriage succeeded to this Manor and estate. Lady Mary Webb died on March 29th, 1709, aged 74. In the Compton Census of 1676 nine Catholics are listed at Hathrop.

The 3rd baronet married Barbara, one of the daughters and co-heiresses of John, Lord Bellasyse of Worlaby, second son of Lord Viscount Fauconberg, named in the Titus Oates revelations and committed to the Tower in 1672 but afterwards released. Barbara was one of four daughters by his third wife Lady Anne Powlett, daughter of the Marquess of Winchester.

Sir John's estates at Hatherop are given in great detail in the Register of Papists Estates. He was entitled to graze 600 sheep on Hatherop Common free of tythe and 660 tythable on Common and Common fields, which must have been a great boon when wool was such a valuable commodity. This Sir John Webb and his lady must be the ones included in the list of Papists and reputed Papists at the end of the Quarter Sessions Order Book for 1714-1724. In the Register of Dissenters of 1735 there are fifty Catholics at Hatherop and "Mass at Mr. Webbs".

The principal claim to fame of the third baronet will undoubtedly be as father-in-law to the ill-fated James Radcliffe, Earl of Derwentwater, who lost his head on Tower Hill, after the 1715 Jacobite Rebellion. The Earl married Sir John Webb's daughter, Anne Maria on July 10th, 1712, and they resided at Hatherop for two years after their marriage. His son John Webb,

married Mabella youngest daughter of Sir Henry Joseph Tichbourne, Bart. Their marriage settlement of 1723 is included in the Webb papers. There is also a marriage settlement of John Webb and the Hon. Mrs. Elizabeth Roper, March 24th, 1729. She was the daughter of Henry Lord Teynham, dec. and granddaughter of Philip, late Viscount Strangford. John Webb pre-deceased his father without issue, and his brother Sir Thomas became 4th baronet after his father died in France in 1745. In his will, which was proved in 1763, he asks to be buried privately at a cost of not more than £20, and settles his estates on his eldest son who became the fifth baronet and the father of "our" Miss Mary Webb. He married Miss Mary Salvin eldest daughter of Thomas Salvin of Easingwold, Yorkshire, (one of the heiresses of the ancient Barony of Mauley). Sir John's will leaves most of his property to his granddaughter, Lady Barbara Ashley. His only daughter to marry and have issue was Barbara Webb who married Anthony, 5th Earl of Shaftesbury on July 17th, 1786. Their only daughter married the Hon. William Francis Spencer Ponsonby, 3rd son of the 3rd Earl of Bessborough created Baron de Mauley 1838, his wife's right through her Mother. Her ladyship died June 5th, 1844. A deed to raise money for the erection of a Manor House under the marriage settlement of Baron de Mauley and Lady Barbara Ashley Cooper is included in the papers.

It may be of interest that Mass is still said each month in St. Peter's Church, Gloucester for Mary Webb and throughout the year for other members of the Webb family.

H. Crisp

V. Ferry

#### References

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| Glos. R.C., Q/SO 4  | Quarter Sessions order book, 1714-24.   |
| Glos. R.O., Q/RNc 1 | Register of Papists' estates, 1717-19.  |
| Glos. R.O., D540    | Webb family archives, particularly pedigree, wills and marriage settlements (D540/F2-5) |