

The Deddington area in historical records—an occasional series

In this series we shall look at a variety of historical records, explaining their origins and significance and trying whenever possible to cite local examples. The first of the series looks at some medieval legal records. This issue of 224 gives a very brief and general introduction to the subject. In the next issue we shall reproduce some actual records featuring people from our area.

There were a number of distinct legal systems in the Middle Ages. The Royal Justice was dispensed through the common law and prerogative courts. The two other most important systems were those of the church and of the customary courts. Ecclesiastical courts dealt with a distinct law (canon law) relating to a particular group, the clergy. They took cognizance of the laity in a limited range of cases involving testamentary disputes and immorality. The customary courts were primarily of two types: communal courts, and the private feudal courts of the manor. Those courts dispensed law derived from custom, ie local convention, as distinct from the common law of the King's courts.

Circuit courts

Justices in Eyre

They were so known from the Latin word *iterare*, to journey. The General Eyre was established as part of Henry II's law reforms following the civil war of the 1150s. In essence, the King had to restore royal authority and honour his coronation oath by maintaining peace. People in the

countryside became accustomed to something new—the sudden rounding up of criminals. But it was not only cases of violence and robbery that were to be brought before the royal courts. The King encouraged disputes over land (and one can readily imagine how many of those there were after the civil war) to be brought to him. The taking of criminals, the hearing of disputes, and the investigations of officials brought royal justice to the localities. Central to the reforms was the jury, a body of neighbours summoned to give upon oath a true answer to some question. Note that the prerequisite for serving on a jury was that you knew what had happened and the persons involved—the very thing that would exclude you today.

Eyre commissions were issued to four to six justices, two or three of whom were usually justices from the central courts, others men of influence and standing locally or nationally. The Sheriff was ordered to summon prelates, magnates, knights, freeholders, four men and the reeve from townships, twelve men from the boroughs, and all others who ought to attend. They must have been large and impressive assemblies: 4-5,000 people attended the Wiltshire eyre of 1249.

The eyre was the principal agency of royal justice in later twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Eventually it fell victim to the growing quantity of business with which it had to deal. It became unwieldy and inefficient. It wasn't, for instance, very good at detecting and punishing crime: it was too slow, and vested interests interfered with justice. The thirteenth-century chronicler, Matthew Paris, tells the story of successive Hampshire juries that refused to speak against highway robbers who had attacked merchants near Winchester. Henry III had to imprison and threaten to hang two ju-

ries before a presentment was brought in. By the first quarter of the fourteenth century the eyre was no longer regarded as an integral part of the civil and criminal administration of the shires. Redundant, the general eyre was finally abandoned in 1331.

Assizes

Some of the functions of the eyre were devolved upon the assizes and other commissions. Commissions of assize, comprising two justices sitting with two knights of the shire, were regular by the end Henry III's reign in 1272. A network of assize circuits provided brief sessions in one shire town before moving on to the next. The assizes tried to avoid the backlog of business that so bedevilled the eyre, and they aimed to reduce congestion in the central courts.

Commissions of the Peace

From 1461 sheriffs were required to send indictments to the Justices of the Peace. Thereafter JPs (who included clergymen from 1424) were increasingly loaded with responsibility by government. In the fifteenth century they lost powers in criminal matters to the Justices of Assize, but they were increasingly important as civil administrators.

Household courts

The king's court ('curia regis'), which initially travelled with the king, began a process of separation

2002-03 season

We start the new season on 11th September at the Windmill Centre.

Make a note in your diaries and look out for the new season's programme.

Why 224?

For the curious: 224, the title of this newsletter, is taken from the sheet number used by the draughtsmen of the Ordnance Survey in the early years of the 19th century to identify the individual drawings made by the surveyors for the first edition one inch maps. For more information see 224 March 2000.

under Henry II. The Court of the Exchequer was split off, then, under Henry III, two further courts emerged, known as the Court of King's Bench (dealing with criminal business, appeals from lower courts, and encroachments on royal prerogative or revenues) and the Court of Common Pleas (dealing with civil business). Eventually the courts settled at Westminster.

Finally, and briefly, something about the litigants in royal courts. Who had access to the law? It has been calculated that in the Court of Common Pleas in the 1330s as many as one in every two hundred of the population was involved in litigation.

That is remarkable, especially bearing in mind that married women, children, and most peasants had no independent status at common law. It seems that the gentry and the more substantial free peasantry dominated in the courts. Bear in mind that most people in this part of the world were unfree peasants, known as villeins. They were not slaves, but they were unfree in that the lord of the manor controlled their lives to a considerable extent. More of this in a later edition of 224. Suffice it to say for now that they had no access to royal courts. They had to attend the manor court, from which they had no right of appeal. You will not be

surprised to hear that unfree peasants frequently pooled their savings, hiring attorneys in attempts to persuade royal courts to hear their cases, but only in the sixteenth century did they succeed in gaining access to the common law.

Chris Day

Next issue: What happened to Richard le Enveyse, who was caught stealing wax from Deddington church in 1241 and claimed sanctuary there? What had Adam the Draper been up to that involved investigation by the courts? All will be revealed in the next issue of 224!

1952-2002: The Golden Jubilee, three memories of the accession of Queen Elizabeth II

We are grateful to two of our members for their highly personal memories of 50 years ago. Geoff Todd, in passing, reminds us that in commemorating the accession of the Queen we did so, not on that anniversary, but on the 49th anniversary of the Coronation.

The Queen's accession

Like many a young lad in the early 50s if you wanted something—be it a bike, extra bits for a model railway or whatever—you had to go out and earn some money yourself. No doubt like some other readers I had a paper round. Up at 6 o'clock each morning to eat the proper breakfast my mother would insist upon so as to be at the shop just before seven to check over any delivery changes before leaving the shop promptly upon the hour. As lads we could not start our rounds any earlier, but woe betide us if we were late—come rain, snow or shine.

Fortunately for me the newspapers were somewhat thinner and therefore less heavy than the vast volumes printed now. The titles we know today were mostly available with the addition of the *News Chronicle* and *Daily Herald*. The format of some were different with the *Daily Express* and *Daily Mail* both being broadsheets while the front page of *The Times* bore no news or pictures, just notices, but the back page always showed better pictures than any of its competitors.

The reproduction of photographs (there was no colour then) was much inferior to the splendidly clear and even photographs of to-

day. The reason I mention photographs is because of the lasting memory I will always have of our young Queen Elizabeth II arriving back at London Airport from Africa after hearing of the death of her father, King George VI, and of pictures on subsequent days of the Lying in State of the late King and finally of his funeral procession. Some of the papers were edged in black while others used purple as a token of respect.

The delivery of the morning papers gave my customers their first glimpse of what had been happening those sad February days of 1952. They had heard of the event through the medium of the wireless but few, if any, would have seen the happenings on television as it was still a novelty. It was the Queen's Coronation the following year which caused a surge in television sales. Most people then had to rely upon their newspaper, wireless or go to the cinema to see the week's newsreel.

At five shillings (25p) a week I saved up for my new Coventry Eagle bike, finished up with a large Triang railway layout (still boxed in my loft) and had enough in my pocket to go to the pictures quite regularly.

Being a paper boy had its happy moments as well!

Geoff Todd

Of cabbages and kings (sausages)

The news had reached us, on the Grapevine, that the butcher, OUR butcher was selling sausages. Off points, that means ration books were not required. Mind you, I am not talking of the sort of sausages we eat nowadays. These, especially if they were not 'on points' or part of the weekly ration were something else again, grey, gristly and tasteless, but they made a sort of meal and at that time seemed desirable enough for standing in a queue.

My friend Lucy and I had taken up our positions sometime before and found ourselves about midway, say ten in front and ten behind. It was not a very good position and supplies were likely to run out before we reached the counter.

It was 1952 then and queueing had become a way of life during the postwar years. At the worst time, we had lined up for all extras, fish, potatoes, for bread, anything else eatable. By now things were easier but special things were still scarce.

It is interesting to recall that at that

time we went to live in Northern Ireland for a while. Their stance as regards rationing was eccentric but wonderful. Sugar was obtained from 'over the border', as much as one wanted. Cheese didn't count as food, so it was not rationed. Meat was expensive and most people couldn't afford it, so that wasn't rationed. Special cuts, like pork fillets were kept out of sight in a shoe box under the Butcher's counter. Eggs, well, there were farms all around, so it was easy to get on your bike and fetch some. Oh yes, we did have ration books, but the whole thing was not taken very seriously.

But in England we were still queuing: we were still queueing for extras and were prepared to stand for ages in some awful line, watching the person in front with hostile anxiety. Stepping out of line, queue dodging, bribery or soft words in the Fishmonger's ear were not countenanced, quick reprisals would follow.

One got to know the mood and the feeling of the line up. Rumours flowed back and forth, was the supply running out? What were the chances of success? I look back at those times, and can't remember any anger if we had to turn back empty handed. Too bad! But worth a try.

I remember standing there, and suddenly the queue became restless, there was shuffling and whispering. Had the butcher or a cus-

tommer stepped out of line? Then we heard, and the message was passed on 'Have you heard the news?' Of course we thought that the sausages had run out, but no: 'The King has died, the Princess is coming home to be Queen'.

Lucy's anxious comment was typical for one who has lived through shortages: 'I wonder if the Americans will send her some Nylon stockings for her Coronation?' They did.

Marianne Elsley

The Coronation summer of 1953

I was 10 years old, about to leave my village school and enter the larger world of the Grammar School. In my village school, we were working on a project, The New Elizabethans. The world felt different, more promising, in a way. But perhaps this was just down to my change of schools. Our school was near an Elizabethan Manor House, Beddington Grange, the former home of the Carews. We were visiting the House at least once a week, measuring the remains of the Knot Garden. Our plan was to recreate it on a smaller scale as a permanent memorial to the Coronation, in the garden of our school. In today's terms, a lot of what we were learning would be classed as Citizenship, about being caring, responsible members of society.

At school, we had a grand Fancy Dress Parade, the last day we were at school before the Coronation. The fancy dress costumes were very patriotic. I went as Boadicea. Someone else was Britannia, there was an Elizabeth I, a Queen Victoria, John Bull, Beefeaters. This was followed by a party, to which we all brought contributions, and games. We had some Elizabethan games, I remember a Quintain, and bowls. We also had a decorated bike competition for the boys and a Coronation doll competition for the girls.

Three ambitious boys joined their bikes together and decorated it as the Coronation coach, using cardboard cutouts. Unfortunately, it bent at the third bike. The winning bike, I remember was a chariot, with a Britannia figure on the saddle. The dolls were dressed in copies of what we thought the Queen's robes would look like, complete with cardboard crowns.

After this, Coronation Day was disappointing. We had a new 9" television and the neighbours in. The screen was too small and grey to see clearly and the ceremony was boring, to a 10 year old who wasn't allowed to move from her seat. People brought refreshments, but Paste sandwiches seemed to prevail. The lemonade was made from powder and the jellies tasted of gelatin. On top of it all, it rained, and I couldn't play out when the television programme had finished.

Moira Byast

Deddington Manor

(Concluded from April's 224)

In 1844 a new project was started—an ice-house was built in a spinney to the north west of the house. It is a brick built egg-shaped structure going about 15ft below ground level. An enclosed passageway leads to it at ground level and there were originally two doors set at intervals to retain the temperature. It is set in a mound under the trees, again to keep cool, has a drain at the base, stone retaining walls round the entrance, and stone pavings to the entrance and passage-way. It is still, 157 years later, in excellent condition, and was once again almost certainly copied from the one at Aynhoe Park which has recently

been restored and is almost identical. At the time ice was collected from local farmer's ponds in December to fill the ice house, and be brought from there up to the house.

There does not appear to have been any more major work to the house for some considerable time. Risley resigned as the vicar in 1848 but continued to live in the house, still acting as a magistrate and as self-appointed squire until his death in 1869. His eldest son, who was unmarried, inherited the house, leasing it in 1900 to a Colonel Murray who bought it in 1908 following the death of two of Risley's sons. The house passed to various members of the Murray family, and at some time after the First World War the small addition to the south-east cor-

ner was built on. It comprised a cloakroom on the ground floor with a room above that was converted to a bathroom off one of the bedrooms in the 1930s. Again this construction matched almost exactly the original. The drainage system was tackled at this time, with pipes running through the fields to a brick filtration plant of sorts in the far spinney.

The house was sold in 1928 to a Colonel Beckwith Smith, and it was he who changed the name in 1930 to Deddington Manor, its name ever since. Two years later he sold it to Major & Mrs Roberts, who remained there until 1946. Major Roberts built a new bathroom and installed a vast boiler in the cellar with gratings above it in the hall

and at the bottom of the staircase which circulated warm air throughout the house. He enjoyed brick-laying and built (mostly himself) a potting shed and various storage areas in the walled kitchen garden, including a shelved apple house, potato storage and a melon house. He also did a lot of refurbishment to the stables and buildings around the stable yard, including making a double garage, and there was accommodation for a groom over the garage block and tack room. During the war soldiers were billeted in the old hay loft, and the nursery wing over the kitchen end of the house was used by Mrs Roberts as a skin hospital for evacuee children.



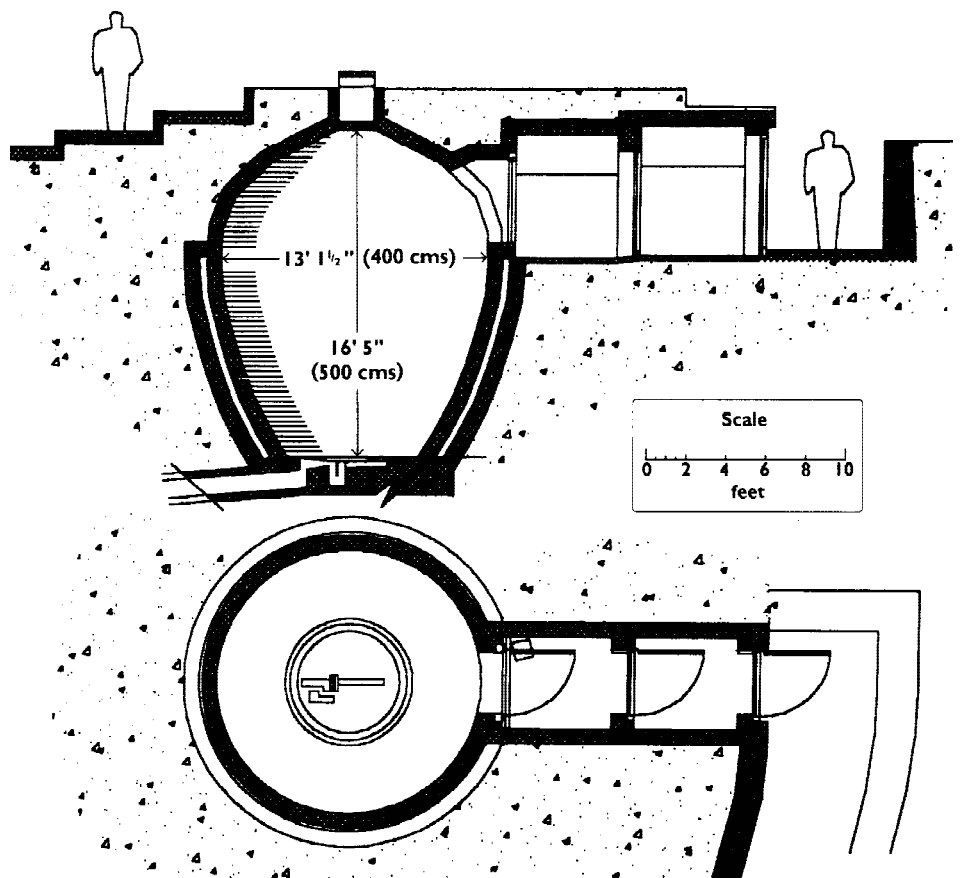
Rear elevation of Deddington Manor from the south west

Following Major Roberts' death the house was sold to Major & Mrs Spence. Little seems to have been done to the house during their time here and it was in a poor state when it was sold to Captain and Mrs Cryer in 1969 on the death of Mrs Spence. The Cryers converted the nursery wing into a self-contained flat with a new entrance door on to New Street in 1970, which explains the date stone here. They also re-wired and redecorated the house and put in central heating, and it was this newly modernised house that my husband and I were lucky enough to buy in 1977 and move into with our four children. They have now flown the nest, but we are still here nearly 25 years later—the house, walls and ice house are all listed buildings and we have done little but maintain them during our time here. We feel privileged to have lived in such a gracious and historic home.

Buffy Heywood

Postscript: I am grateful to Mrs Primrose Buckle (nee Roberts) for the information she has given me about their time here and for allowing me to use copies of her old photographs.

We are grateful to Peter Smith and



A section and plan of an ice house (Aynhoe Park).

Tim Buxbaum, the author and illustrator of *A personal account of the restoration of the icehouse at Aynhoe Park*

for permission to use the diagram on this page.

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