

The Recorded History of Hassop

REACHES BACK 900 years to Domesday Book

HETESOPE in the Book of Winchester: to give Domesday its correct title - was the Manor and principal residence of the FOLJAMBES who remained until the reign of Richard III (1377-1399). The infant heiress to Hassop became a ward of the King. He sold her for 50 marks to Sir John Leake, who speedily made one hundred per cent profit by re-selling her at a price of 100 marks to Sir William Plumpton, who wished to secure her as a wife for his son. The matrix for England was still that unceasing power struggle between the Barons and the only real power was the possession of land. The Foljambe heiress was eleven months old when her covenant of marriage was made, and her considerable dowry of Hassop with a dozen other Lordships and moieties in twenty townships passed to the PLUMPTON family.

At the close of the 15th Century, they sold Hassop to Catherine, widow of Stephen EYRE. From 1498 at the time of the purchase, the Eyre family who were Roman Catholic and staunch Jacobean moved into that testing period of religious persecution. Throughout the reign of Elizabeth I they suffered a great deal in consequence, emerging steadfast. They were among those few Catholic families of the nobility who did not switch sides as a temporary expedient.

The Civil War in 1643 was another time of trial for the family, and Rowland Eyre turned his home into a Royalist garrison. It was the scene of several skirmishes and after the Parliamentary victory, the captured property was only redeemed at a cost of £21,000. Rowland's father had dismantled much of the old Hall and replaced it with the present one.

In 1814 Francis Eyre, a direct

descendant of Stephen, succeeded to the title Earl of Newburgh. Born into an age when it was fashionable for Noblemen and their sons to follow the Byronic grand tour of Europe, Francis left his mark on the rapidly changing face of Britain with the unusual Catholic church built 1816-1818 in the severest Classical



Revival style, its front resembling an Etruscan temple, the interior with a coved coffered ceiling - it has an underground passage to the Hall. Improvements to modernise the Hall and some alterations in the Neo-Classical mould were carried out a few years later. The estate passed to Dorothy, sister of Francis, in 1852, and a year afterwards to her widower, Colonel Charles LESLIE.

The Hall bought from the Leslie's in 1919 by Colonel W. K. STEPHENSON (later Sir Henry Stephenson Bt) eventually became the home of his son Sir Francis Stephenson Bt and it was purchased by the present owner, Mr. Thomas W. CHAPMAN, in 1975.

Hassop Hall is linked to only five families since that inventory of Domesday Book, there are remarkably intact records with specific dating of days and years.

Time has set Hassop as a tranquil backdrop to ages when a woman was worthless except as her Lord's chattel, when it needed great courage to hold fast to a faith, and when Civil War blighted this lovely countryside. With the opening of a contemporary chapter there is not surprisingly a determination to conserve and care for this outstanding heritage. Endlessly interesting; bound up with history; a place with many tales to tell; still a home - Hassop Hall is somewhere to find a welcome.