

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

THE LORD OF THE MANOR, especially if he had industrial interests, had not to weather the economic crises which pursued both labourer and tenant farmer till quite recent times. Indeed it was not till the 20's that land in our Parish began to be sold from the big estates; and the Burton Court Estate, the last to go, was not sold till 1950.

It has been rather difficult to get a picture of the life of the Big House 100 years ago. We do know, however, that manorial courts were held within the period, the last being held on October 4th, 1873, and mention of Homagers, Copyholders and Jurors make one realise how great has been the transition, within the period under review. Even so, as recently as 1930 Mr Clowes held what she described as "a small and 'private' Court", following upon the legislation which "extinguished manorial rights". She goes on to say: "Only two old Copyholders were agreeable, but later they all did pay me what was my due and their final payment, except Miss Brown of Lower Burton, who insisted upon paying 11/4d. per annum until she died." When we read this among some Burton Court papers in the City Library, Hereford, we were very much touched by the picture of this elderly lady, her husband dead and her only son killed in the Great War, resigning herself to an age of vast change which she probably knew marked the end of the manor and its power in the community.

That the Manor had immense powers cannot be doubted. The Clowes family bought Burton Court in 1863, and there they reigned as head of the community till the death of Mrs. Clowes (daughter-in-law of the first squire) in 1949. All through our Parish Magazines there is evidence of their power and their leadership, as well as of their generosity, and the following account of the coming-of-age of our last squire, in 1874, is interesting:

"On the last day of August Eardisland was very gay, celebrating the birthday and coming-of-age of Mr. P.L. Clowes. In the week previous there were special festivities at Burton Court, and a brilliant Ball on the 28th; but Monday the 31st may be called the great Home Day, and great indeed was the gathering of tenantry, parishioners and neighbours... A large meeting had been held in the Village Schoolroom, to arrange in what way the tenants and parishioners should best show their respect and regard to the young heir of Burton; and it was decided that an address of congratulation should be presented to him, and a good supply of meat should be provided and distributed the same day among the poor of the parish... On Monday morning, soon after 8 o'clock, two substantial beeves... were mounted in two waggons, decked with ribbons and other decorations and, headed by Leo-

To face Page 22.



Burton Court.



Col. Clowes and Lt. Clowes  
1917

To face Page 23.



Mrs Clowes at Burton Court.  
1936.

Total ages 101 years.



Mrs Clowes with Warren Peter Clowes,  
1902.



Mrs Clowes at Burton Court,  
1936.

Total ages 101  
years

minster Volunteer Band, were carried in triumph to Burton Court; Mr. Powell and Mr. Yeld, with many other gentlemen, accompanying the procession on horseback. Here some hearty English cheers were given for him whom all delighted to honour, and the procession then moved on towards the village, being joined by J. Clowes, Esq. and his son... After passing through the village and some rounds of cheers given on the Arrow bridge, the beeves were unloaded... quickly cut up... and distributed among the cottagers - every family receiving 4 lbs. of meat, with 1 lb. in addition for each child. At half-past one a dinner was given by Mr. Clowes to tenants and parishioners numbering about 100, in the Schoolroom, and a substantial and happy feast it was... Soon after 4 o'clock all adjourned to Burton Court, where a large party was regaled with tea, after which the Address was presented, signed by the Vicar and 78 parishioners and neighbours.

Another presentation of an address... was then made... on behalf of the tenantry, tradesmen and friends... and this memorable day concluded with an exciting chase in pursuit of a couple of Welsh sheep, and dancing upon the lawn at Burton Court till a late hour... The Church bells rang out merry peals, and the coming-of-age of P.L. Clowes, Esq. will long be held in pleasant remembrance..." (Church Magazine, September 1874).

The next big event in the history of the family occurred in 1895, and is recorded thus in our Magazine:

"Wednesday, September 18th, will be long remembered at Eardisland as the day of the marriage of Major Clowes, 8th Hussars, to Miss Warren, at All Saints' Church, Leighton Buzzard. By the thoughtful kindness of Major Clowes and Mrs. Clowes, the wives of the tenantry and others on the Burton Court Estate, with the widows and schoolchildren, were entertained in the afternoon with Tea; and at 7 o'clock in the evening an enjoyable dinner was given to the tenants and residents in the village and neighbourhood, to the number of 60, in the Schoolroom. During the joyous day the Church bells rang merry peals. Flags were hoisted and a cannon fired from time to time, and at midnight a large bonfire was lighted at Burton Court. The day was beautiful and bright and may the old saying prove true, as we cannot doubt, 'Happy is the Bride whom the sun shines on!'"

Later the Court was to be let to strangers for a time, while Col. Clowes did his military service, which included service in the Boer War. (It is said, incidentally, that Mrs. Clowes lived in South Africa near her husband during that War.) The next entry of interest relating to the Clowes family occurs in November, 1901, and refers to the "home-coming of Col. and Mrs. Clowes and their small son, after nearly 2 years' distinguished service in South Africa. He was heartily welcomed by our inhabitants who, after taking the horses from his carriage, drew him - together with Mrs. Clowes and their little son - to the old bridge, where an Address... was presented by the Vicar. Col. Clowes responded with much feeling, and after "God Save the King" had been sung the company went on to Burton Court, the schoolchildren giving their welcome by singing 'Home, Sweet Home' before the house." The small son - their only child - was to see service in the 1914-18 War, being killed on active service when only 20 years of age. But for this very tragic event it is possible that we should still have a Squire in Eardisland.

Throughout the period the Parish enjoyed many privileges at

the hands of their squires. Almost all the village activities were inspired and financed by them: the Lending Library, the Reading Room, the Cricket Club, the Tennis Club, concerts, lectures, Coal Charity - the list is endless, and one cannot read the old Church Magazines without being aware of their leadership. Every year they gave a party at Burton Court for the schoolchildren and occasionally for the unfortunate children from Weobley Union; and it is said that it was the tragic picture of the Workhouse children which inspired Mrs. Clowes to provide a Nurse for our village. We know how deeply interested she was in all nursing services, and she was awarded the M.B.E. for her work for the British Red Cross Society. During the last War she took a lead in everything connected with the war effort, and many people remember the wonderful fetes and sales of work at Burton Court over a period of many years.

There can be no doubt that in its heyday Burton Court was quite a power in the County, and until quite recent times a big staff was kept and entertaining was frequent. (A dinner was given on the Autumn Rent Day to the tenants, right up till the last War. After paying the rent in one room the tenants (14 in number) adjourned to the Dining-room for a wonderful repast.) The indoor staff consisted of a Butler, 3 pantry-men, 2 footmen, and a Hallboy; 3 housemaids, a Cook, a kitchenmaid, a scullery-maid and a pot-boy. A Lady's Maid was also kept. The outdoor staff was made up of a Head Gardener and 2 under-gardeners; a Head Groom and 2 under-grooms, and a Stable-boy. There was also a laundry-maid, who lived in a cottage on the Estate.

Members of the family hunted three times weekly during the season. They often had visitors, the servants wearing black livery and their guests' servants also being in attendance. A Ball was given every year, and At Homes and Musical Evenings were frequent. Big parties were also organised in the shooting season; beaters were engaged for those occasions and regaled with beer and a big iron pot of stew, prepared in the Court kitchens. There was always a Keeper on the staff to reart he birds for the shoots.

The Court did, of course, provide employment for a great number of people. The Head Groom was provided with a free cottage and a salary of 26/- weekly; his perquisites being free milk (skimmed), manure for his garden, and £5 worth of coal per year. Every Christmas the Head Groom, and Head Gardener and the Butler were presented with 2 shirts and 10/- each as a Christmas Box, their wives being given 2 pairs of black stockings. The Head Gardener also had a free cottage, free vegetables, and £5 worth of coal. An Estate Carpenter was also kept.

In addition to the Brougham horses, 8 to 12 hunters and hacks were kept. Many can remember the beautiful horses at the Court, and Mrs. Clowes driving out in her brougham, the little girls curtsying and the boys saluting as she passed. She also took an active interest in the running of her house, visiting the Cook every morning in her kitchen and supervising menus and culinary arrangements generally.

The kitchen premises were vast. Latterly, however, work was to some extent cut down, a modern cooking stove was introduced, and electricity installed, after some opposition originally from Mrs. Clowes, who preferred to stick to her acetylene gas plant for lighting, and to immense boilers for central heating.

The Home Farm was always a great source of interest to Mrs. Clowes, and there are many who took as much pride as she did in her black animals: Berkshire Black pigs, black sheep, and black Welsh cattle. The farm staff consisted of a Bailiff, a waggoner, a cowman, and a Farm boy. The farm supplied to some extent the needs of the kitchens, bacon being smoked on the premises and the sheep slaughtered when required.

The remnants of the old servants still live in their cottages, rent-free for their life-time. But to all intents and purposes the Great House has gone, sold by Public Auction for £3,500, being far too big for anyone's requirements. With its sale an age has passed.