

1576

Dissolution of the Manor of Eardisland

Page 43 of Duncumb's manuscript notes¹ of circa 1804 records, under the heading:

Parish of Eardisland

19 Eliz pt 4 R 152 pardon granted for alienation of manor of Eardisland lands elsewhere by Thomas Hanford to William Whittington & heirs

The regnal year *19 Eliz* referred to was 17th November 1576 to 16th November 1577. This makes it possible, indeed likely, that the alienation of the Manor of Eardisland referred to is the one catalogued at HRO² at reference B16/1.

At catalogue level³ the wording is:

EARDISLAND

Bargain and Sale enrolled. B 16/1

23rd November, 19 Elizabeth.

(1) Thomas Hanford of Wollashull, Worcestershire, esq., and Kenard Delaber of Sowtham, co. Gloucester, gent.

(2) William Whittington, gent., one of the sons of Alexander Whittington, gent., of Hom Lacy co. Herefs., esq.,

Consideration: 2400

All that capital house of the manor of Eardisland at Eardisland with appurtenants, the site of the manor and all demesne lands, profits, commodities, emoluments and hereditaments with their appurtenants belonging to the site or used and occupied with it, now in tenure of one John Wever, gent, by lease made by Queen Mary for a period yet enduring.

And all houses, edifices, buildings, meadows, pastures, moors, feedings, commons, lands, tenements and hereditaments in the Lordship of Eardisland now in the occupation of John Wever and to the site of the said manor and demesne lands only belonging, and used or occupied with the same. And all woods, underwoods on the premises. And the reversion of the premises.

Reserved to the grantor - free access to one parcel of the premises called the Olde Hill Howse in Eardisland for keeping the Courts of the Leet and Courts Baron there twice a year at their will and pleasure. Also the issues, fines, perquisites and profits of the Courts.

To William Whittington to his use.

As previously identified, *23rd November, 19 Elizabeth* was 23rd November 1576. Hanford and Delaber had held the manor since 1st September 1570.⁴ There is no shortage, in a variety of sources, of information about Hanford and Delaber and their business dealings, but

¹ In Hereford Library when I photocopied. Now at HRO at a reference not yet available, but likely to be in the catalogue sequence CF/- .

² Herefordshire Record Office.

³ I have not attempted the document itself.

⁴ Longleat Schedule from their computer database.

nothing to assist the intended thrust of this Paper. As indicated by the catalogue wording, neither was from this immediate vicinity. Of the two, Whittington was the more local. A considerable amount of information about the Herefordshire branch of the Whittington family is extant, but I have seen nothing that would help with this particular Paper.

The transaction was concluded for the sum of £400. The National Archives website gives an equivalent value *in 2005's money*⁵ of £69,556 (1570) and then £59,724 (1580). Values at intermediate years are not given.

In more detail, then, what did Whittington get for his money?

All that capital house of the manor of Eardisland at Earsland with appurtenants,...

Capital house in this context is, in modern parlance “Manor House”. But it must be stressed that this document, HRO B16/1, is NOT referring to the building currently known as “The Old Manor House”. The first use of that naming dates to 1934.⁶ It is well documented that that building was the “Porch House”. No lords of the manor ever lived there, nor is there any indication that manorial courts were ever held there.

The *Capital house* referred to in HRO B16/1 was the residential building of the present day Court House farm, across the road from the Dovecote/Village Shop.⁷



In 1934 The Royal Commission said of it:

^a(6) COURT HOUSE, 140 yards N.N.W. of the church, is of two storeys with attics; the walls are of stone with some timber-framing, and the roofs are slate-covered. It was built probably late in the 16th century, but has been extensively altered in the 18th and 19th centuries and extended towards the S.W. Inside the building are some exposed ceiling-beams.

Condition—Good.

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⁵ This is the most recent year listed.

⁶ RCHM Herefordshire, Volume 3, page 48.

⁷ If further evidence of this were to be required, it can be supplied by the fact that the whole run of documents at HRO B16/1 to B16/116, headed in the HRO initial summary as “The Court House, Eardisland” was donated to HRO by the family still resident there.

⁸ RCHME, Herefordshire. Volume 3. 1934. Page 48.

Whether the oldest part of this is residual of the actual building referred to in B16/1 or a slightly later replacement/rebuild of it is open to discussion by buildings experts.

And so back to the text of B16/1 and what Whittington got for his money:

manor of Eardisland at Earsland Whether or not anything can/should be read into these spellings is open to discussion. I have worked up a dated schedule of many spellings of 'Eardisland', as we now spell it. The document which is the subject of this Paper has the earliest instance of the spelling *Eardisland*, the next most recent not occurring until 1679. *Earsland(e)* first occurs in 1575 followed by a further 18 instances (19 if this 1576 document is included), the most recent being in 1802.⁹

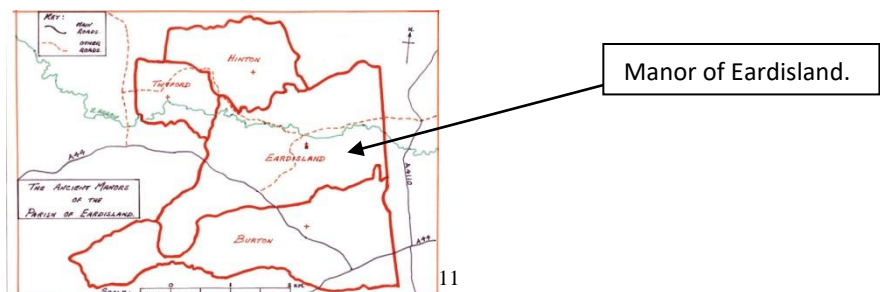
appurtenants ie. what normally appertained to it: likely to be referring to outbuildings, barns, equipment etc.

As well as the *capital house* Whittington had also bought *the site of the manor and all demesne lands* ...the full wording has already been included on page 1 of this Paper. But it all came with a sitting tenant, John Wever.¹⁰ And not only was there a sitting tenant, but specific exclusions were stipulated. *Reserved to the Grantor* was access to the place where manorial Courts were held and, no doubt much more important to Hanford and Delaber, the financial income to be gained from the holding of such courts.

Hanford and Delaber had split up the manor of Eardisland (dissolved it) into its constituent parts. They sold off a lot of the land to Whittington, including the land previously reserved to the use of the lord of the manor himself, but retained the income from the holding of the manorial courts and therefore, arguably, the freehold (in modern parlance) of the copyhold land of the customary tenants of the manor. From this much of the income would have derived in the form of the various fees payable in the event of (for example) death and then the resultant re-allocation of the holding, even if to a close relative of the deceased.

Is it possible to establish the geographical extent of what Whittington purchased?

Document HRO B16/1 gives no further detail, nor indeed have I been able to establish, with any degree of accuracy, the position of the manor boundary itself. Unlike the separate, adjoining manors of Burton, and Hinton, for the manor of Eardisland there is no written description. But there is no doubt that manorial Eardisland lay to the south and east of the manor of Hinton, north of the manor of Burton and east of the manor of Twyford. It is safe to believe that its eastern boundary was the parish boundary.



⁹ In the Poll Books for the County Election of 1802 [HRO B60/1-11 and 18] the vast majority of those entitled to vote described their 'Place of Residence' and/or 'Place of Freehold' as being *Eardesland*. Only three of the 56 names included (56 if two versions of the same record are taken together) use the spelling *Earsland*. The individuals so doing were James Kinnersley, John Cole and William Davies.

¹⁰ I shall deal with John Wever and the implications of his tenancy in a separate Paper.

¹¹ Diagram drawn by Graham Simpson from details I supplied to him.

This Paper is intended to explore the situation here in 1576, this far from the one document, HRO B16/1,¹² which is the first of 116 documents under that catalogue reference. Document B16/2 is dated 12th May 1614 and it may be that a detailed analysis of the considerable amount of information in it will enable some of the so far unanswered questions in these pages to be resolved.

A separate Paper about the year 1614 in Eardisland, covering HRO B16/2 and anything else specific or firmly identifiable to that year, will be attempted.

.....*FINIS*.....

¹² There is, as my files stand at present, one other reference, dated 19 Elizabeth, which could just be from calendar year 1576, but bearing in mind the actual Regnal dates is much more likely to have been in calendar year 1577. This is a pardon to Hanford for having alienated the Manor, impliedly without prior consent. Otherwise I have no specific references to 1576 and will not, certainly not at this stage, attempt to deduce from records dated soon before and soon after, what might then have been the situation elsewhere in the parish.