

Kings Bromley Historians

Sarah Holte (née Newton) and Aston Hall

Sarah Newton was born in 1724, the fifth child of Samuel (referred to herein as Samuel(2)) Newton of Kings Bromley and Elizabeth Fowler, daughter of Charles Fowler of Pendeford and Sarah Fowler sole heiress of Robert Leveson of Wolverhampton. Samuel(2) and Elizabeth married on July 31st 1715 at Tettenhall.

The Newton family fortune had been established by her great-grandfather Samuel(1) Newton (see Appendix 1) who, coming from a relatively obscure background in S. Wingfield, Derbyshire, had begun buying land in Barbados in the 1650s. In the 1673 census (Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, Vol 7) he was listed as one of the 'Eminent Planters' in Barbados, owning 400 acres. In 1674 (Puckrein, 1984) he is credited with owning 581 acres. In his record of the excavation of the Newton slave burial ground, Handler (Handler, 1999) records that originally there were two 'Newtons' plantations: the upper and the lower. While landownings obviously changed over time, Samuel(1) Newton was clearly a major figure in the 'plantocracy' of Barbados. Governor Atkins in the 1670s (State Papers) in letters to the Colonial Office singled him out, along with Thomas Codrington, as one of the wealthiest planters. From 1672 until his death in 1684 he was on the Council (the unelected body that advised the Governor) of Barbados and he was Officer in Charge of the cavalry of the Militia.

In 1679 Samuel(1) Newton bought Kings Bromley manor, along with 153 acres in Kings Bromley parish, from John Agard for £3306. The manor stayed in the family until Sarah and her elder sister Elizabeth both died in 1794, at which time Elizabeth (who died after Sarah) bequeathed it mainly to her first cousins once 1 John and Thomas Lane. By the time of this bequest the Newton estate, which had been jointly owned by Sarah and Elizabeth after the death of their brother John (2) in 1783, consisted of ~2000 acres in Kings Bromley, ~500 acres in Derbyshire, two plantations in Barbados – Newtons and Seawells - and at least £22500 in money. Sarah's father, Samuel(2) Newton, rebuilt Kings Bromley manor on the site of the old manor in 1756 (see Appendix 2).

As well as her older brother John(2) and older sister Elizabeth, Sarah had another older sister Mary who married Edward Harper who was the 3rd son of Sir John Harper (4th baronet [1680 – 1741] and builder of Calke Abbey) and brother of Sir Henry Harper (5th baronet [1708-1748]). There was a tradition of linking the wealth of the Newtons with aristocratic connections: her grandfather John(1) Newton had married Mary Vernon, daughter of Sir Thomas Vernon of Twickenham Park and sister of Catherine, the third wife of George Vernon, builder of Sudbury Hall. Sarah, in her turn, married Sir Lister Holte of Aston in 1755.

The record that we have of Sarah's marriage is gained from the book 'A History of the Holtes of Aston' written by Alfred Davidson in 1854 (see Appendix 5). He was writing for the descendants of Anne Holte (née Jesson). Fairclough (1994) in his book 'The Grand Old Mansion', (relevant extracts of which are given in Appendix 4), borrows freely from Davidson. Sir Lister Holte and his brother Charles had been close in their youth, but their relationship soured after Charles married Anne and Lister married Sarah. That Anne and Sarah did not get on is, from Davidson's account, abundantly clear: however, given the partisan nature of his viewpoint, it should not necessarily be concluded that all the fault lay with Sarah. Davidson presents Sarah as having a malign and controlling influence on Sir Lister. The upshot of the feud between the two ladies was that when it was clear that Sir Lister would have no heir, a will was created that disinherited the natural heir Anne Elizabeth, daughter of Charles and Anne, with a complex entail. Charles died in 1782. Under the terms of the will the Holte estate would fall first to Heneage Legge, nephew of Sir Lister's first wife Anne, failing that to Lewis Bagot and failing that to Wriotheshly Digby. Only if all three of these gentlemen produced no issue should the estate revert to Anne Holte and descendants. This entail is recorded (see Appendix 5) on a small mural tablet to Sir Lister's memory in Aston church put up by Elizabeth Newton in 1794 – 24 years after his death. While the tablet purports to be in the memory of Sir Lister, it was

put up just after Sarah's death and says virtually nothing about Sarah or Sir Lister and a great deal about the entail. It is difficult to see it in any other light than a record of the bitterness existing between the Newtons and Anne Holte's family. Also, under the terms of the will, Sarah would continue to receive the annuity of £1500 that she had received from the will of Sir Lister (and the use of Aston Hall as dowager for life). So, on inheriting in 1782 Heneage Legge could not take up residence in Aston Hall until Sarah died in 1794.

As fate would have it, Lewis Bagot died without issue and in 1817 Heneage Legge and Wriothesley Digby both heirless, agreed a settlement, confirmed by private Act of Parliament, which, while compensating them both, settled the estate on Anne Elizabeth. Anne Elizabeth was now married to the feckless Abraham Bracebridge who was mired in debt.

Sarah Holte's will, Appendix 7, basically leaves everything to her unmarried sister Elizabeth apart from the complicated issue of Mount Alleyne estate and a couple of small benefactions. It is very clear from Davidson/Fairclough that the two sisters were very close and spent a lot of time together at Bath and Kings Bromley. We also know that they bought land together in Kings Bromley – (D/D/02/18, SRO D357/A/20 – the 'Antrobus' Pedigree). Something of Sarah Holte's character can be gathered from her repeated insistence that the small legacy of £100 that she left to Barbara Wingfield should not go to her husband John Wingfield. She was clearly someone with marked opinions.

Friendship continued between Heneage Legge and the Newtons and Lanes. It was Heneage Legge who advised Elizabeth Newton to quickly produce her will in 1794, in order that her inheritance (Newtons, Seawells, lands in Staffordshire and Derbyshire, and money) was safe from any claim from Catherine Seymour and her son John. The Lane brothers, John and Thomas, were, on the death of Elizabeth, the ultimate inheritors of the Newton wealth. John Lane's son, John Newton Lane, was born at Aston Hall in 1800. Today, Villa Park, the home stadium of Aston Villa, stands on land that was part of the gardens of Aston Hall in the days of the Holtes.

The Tilly Kettle painting of Sarah Holte reproduced in Fairclough is the only picture that we have of any of the Newtons and he records it in 1984 as being in a private collection. An internet search on www.artprice.com records a picture of 'Lady Holte, in pearls, wearing a blue dress holding an ostrich feather, size 29" by 25", 76cm by 63.5 cm' (clearly this painting) as having been sold on 14th Dec. 1999. Without subscribing to the site no further information was available so we do not know the current owners or whether we could obtain a good print. The paintings of Sir Lister Holte by Gainsborough and of Anne Holte by Romney shown in Fairclough reproduced in Appendix 4 are now at Aston Hall. Davidson writes (Appendix 5, p.54 that the [pictures] 'of Sir Lister & Lady Sarah are at Mr. Lane's, of Kings Bromley Manor'. Davidson was writing in 1854 at which time John Newton Lane was Lord of the Manor. It is reasonable to assume that these paintings are the Gainsborough and Kettle ones.

Sarah Holte died on 1st April 1894 aged 70. Her will, proved at the Canterbury Probate Court and obtained through the National Archive is shown in Appendix 7 along with a transcription by Ken Bowcock and legal notes by Boris Wojtan.

Allan Howard

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Appendix 1: The Newton Family Tree

Col Samuel(1) Newton of KB & Ba

b. S.Wingfield [1621-1684]

(bought KB Manor in 1679 from **John Agard** & trustees)

m Barbara+ [?- 1694]

John(1) Newton+ of KB [1667-1706]

Sheriff of Staffordshire 1690

m Mary Vernon+[1670-1728]

4th d of Thomas Vernon of Twickenham Park, London

Sarah= Richard Bate of Foston Hall & Ba

JP and High Sheriff of Derbyshire 1705

Samuel(2) Newton + of KB [1695-1771]

Sheriff of Staffordshire 1728

m Elizabeth Fowler+[1694-1776]

(rebuilt KB manor in 1756)

Thomas of KB

[1701-?]

Mary+

[?-1772]

Barbara

m Thomas Fowler
b of Elizabeth

Anna Catharina

m John Arden
(g/son was John Arden
vicar of KB)

Joanna

Elizabeth

Martha

John(2) Newton + of KB

[1717-1783]

m 1 Elizabeth Alleyne ¹ of Ba 1740

d of Reynold Alleyne

m 2 Catherine Seymour [?- 1783]

d of Lord Francis Seymour

Samuel+ [1730]

d. aged 1

Mary [1713-1761]

m Edward Harper of Calke²

Elizabeth +[1719-1794]

Sarah [1724 -1794]

m, 1755, Sir Lister Holte of Aston³

+ indicates buried in All Saints, Kings Bromley. Bold type indicates Lord of the Manor. b.= born, d=daughter, m=married, d.=died, Ba=Barbados

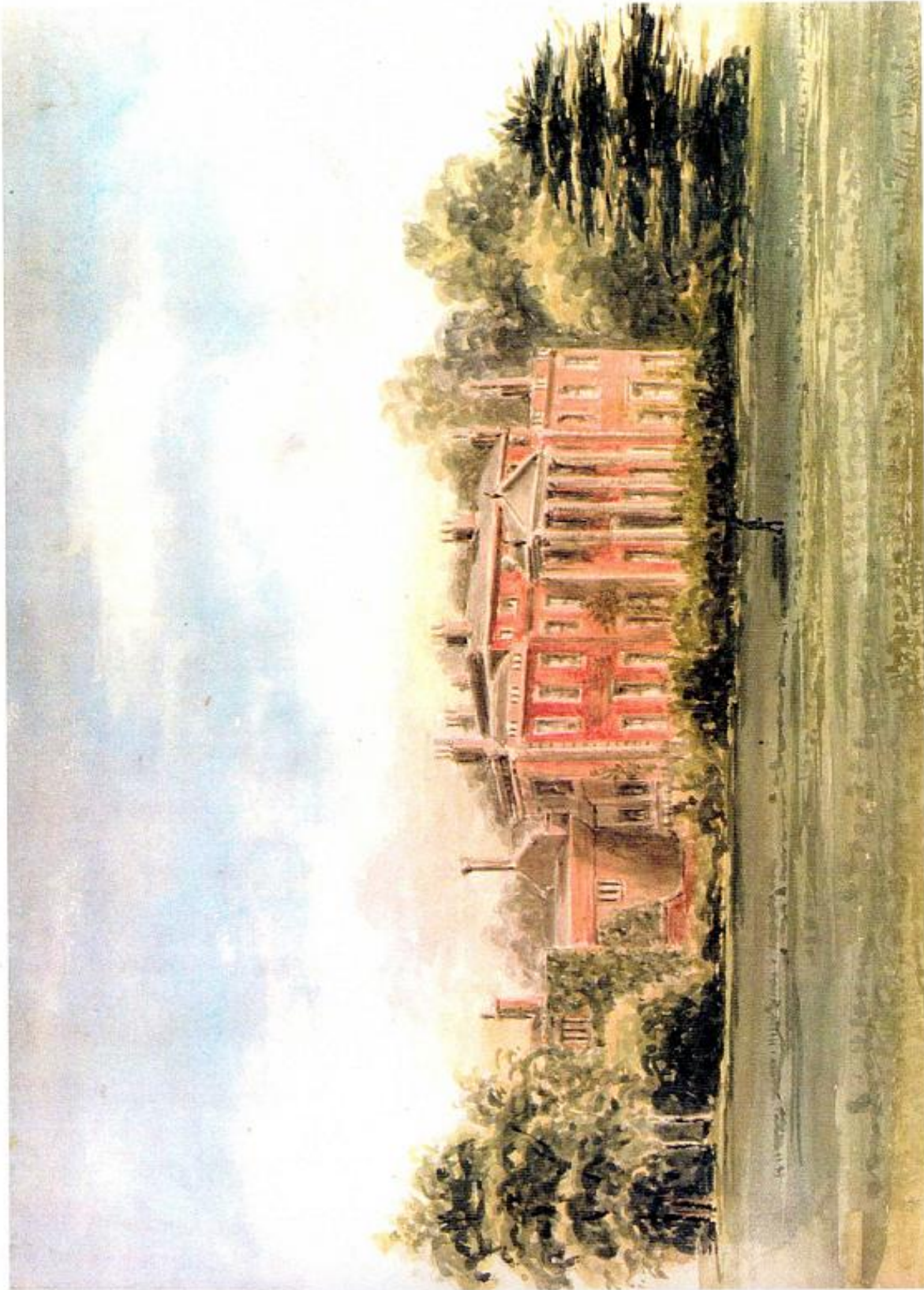
1.Elizabeth Alleyne was the sister of Judith Alleyne. On Judith's death she inherited Mount Alleyne plantation which she brought to the marriage. On John (2)'s death the plantation reverted to the Alleyne family, specifically John Gay Alleyne

2.Edward Harper was the 3rd son of Sir John Harper (4th baronet ,builder of Calke Abbey) and brother of Sir Henry Harper (5thbaronet1701-1748))

3.Sir Lister Holte had previously married first Lady Anne Legge[d. 1740] and second Mary Harper [d.1752] the sister of the Edward Harper that Mary Newton, eldest sister of Sarah & Elizabeth had married.

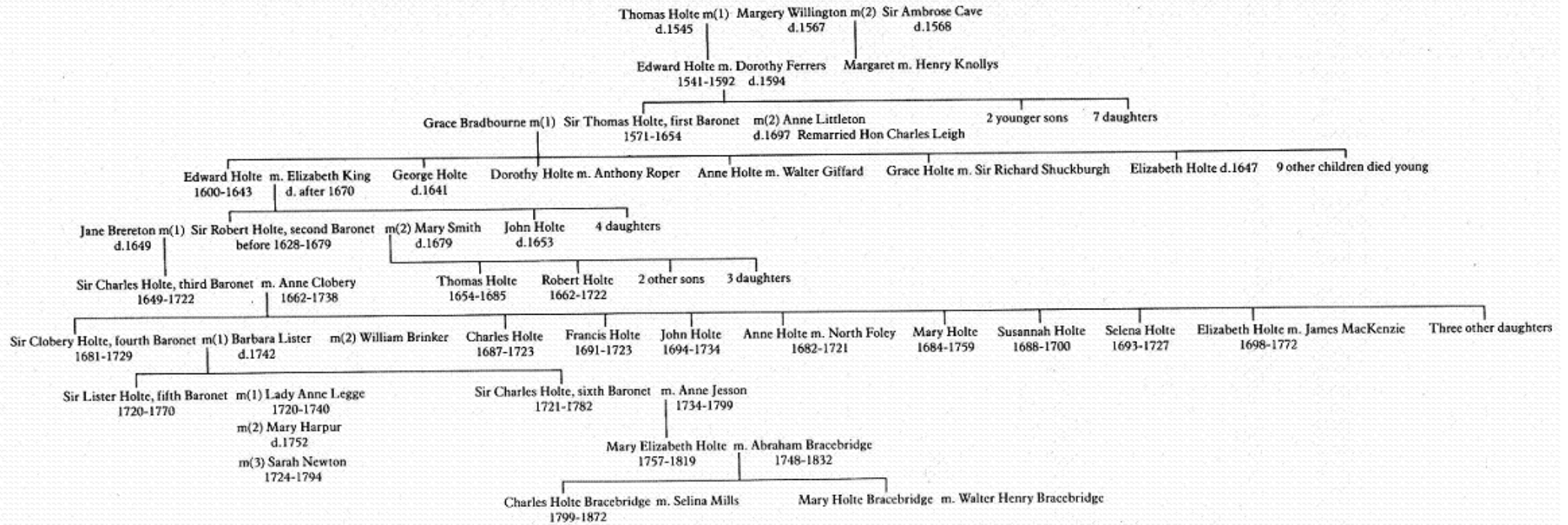
Appendix 2: Kings Bromley Hall

Kings Bromley Hall was built on the site of the old hall by Sarah's father Samuel(2) in 1756, when Sarah was 31. This painting, taken from Butcher, 2004, is by Susan Anne Vincent Lane who married John Henry Bagot Lane (Lord of the Manor, 1860-1886) and is dated, from the absence of the water tower, sometime before 1874. The hall was demolished in 1938: the only remaining feature is the water tower, which has been incorporated into a private house.

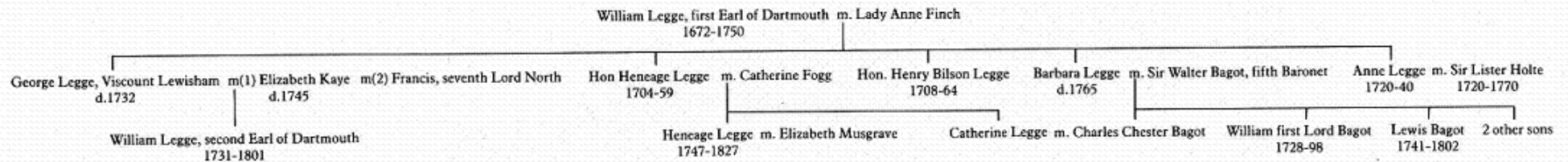


Appendix 3: The Holte and Legge Family Trees (taken from Fairclough, 1984)

THE HOLTES



THE LEGGES



Appendix 4: Chapter 3, Fairclough, 1984: 'The Grand Old Mansion'

Chapter 3

Holtes, Newtons, Legges and Bracebridges 1722-1817

Although Sir Thomas, Sir Robert and Sir Charles Holte were regular visitors to London, they owed their position in the world to their estates and to their place in the cousinhood that made up the Warwickshire gentry. They spent most of their time at Aston Hall, where as Justices of the Peace and landlords they exercised their authority throughout Aston parish and beyond. In the eighteenth century the family's local importance was less, in practical terms, despite a spectacular growth in their rent rolls. One reason for this was a fundamental change in the way that the aristocracy and gentry lived their lives. As transport became quicker and safer the Holtes spent less time on their estates. They were often in London, and as many of them suffered from rather ill-defined poor health they were early and enthusiastic patrons of the fashionable spa town of Bath.

Sir Clobery Holte was forty when he inherited. He was a kindly and intelligent man who had in the 1690s stayed on at Magdalen College, Oxford, to take his degree of Master of Arts. The University retained an affection for him, creating him a Doctor of Civil Law in 1721. He was wealthy, as the estate was in good order and burdened only with the payment of his mother's jointure, as his younger brothers and sisters had been provided for. His claim to the Brereton properties, worth about £1,500 a year, was upheld in 1727. However, his marriage to Barbara Lister proved an unhappy failure, and he quarrelled bitterly with his wife over what he regarded as her extravagance. Bishop Hough of Worcester wrote to another in their circle:

The Widow Lady Holte is now at Hartlebury with her two grandsons who both have measles, but in a favourable manner and are likely to do very well. Indeed they are fine boys, beautiful, sensible and well-behaved; and I wish poor Sir Clobery may long be happy in them; for I know of no other domestic comfort that he is likely to enjoy. His estate is much increased, but he seems to have no pleasure in it, and his lady (whom I am told he passionately loves) seldom is at home, or satisfied when she is there.¹

A few weeks later, on 24th July 1729, Clobery died at the age of forty-seven.

He had appointed his own mother the guardian of his sons Lister and Charles, leaving his wife a derisory £10 in addition to the jointure settled on her at their marriage, and with a number of Birmingham tradesmen trying to obtain payment for books, trinkets and other goods.² She soon married again, but continued to be known as Lady Holte until her death in 1742. Her mother-in-law clearly hated and distrusted her, and in 1735 conveyed part of the estate to trustees 'upon trust that . . . they should permit the said Sir Lister Holte to receive the rents and profits of the said trust during so long a time . . . as the said Sir Lister Holte should not permit the said Barbara, wife of the said William Brinker, to reside more than seven days successively, or for a longer time than fourteen days within . . . 365 days in the mansion house called Aston Hall, nor with the said Sir Lister Holte in any other place'.³

Sir Lister Holte was to be the owner of Aston Hall for the next forty years, but in 1729 he was nine years old. His grandmother proved an anxious guardian — Bishop Hough again:



21 *Lister and Charles Holte in the late 1720s.*

Towards the end of the last summer, smallpox came into this neighbourhood (Hartlebury, near Kidderminster) . . . It was very fatal in some families, and the Lady Holte fetched her grandchildren from this school, for fear of infection; after Christmas she sent them hither again, when we thought the disease had taken leave of us, but it broke out afresh in two or three houses, and on Saturday her coach returned for the young gentlemen.⁴

Soon after the brothers went to Eton, and then to Magdalen College, Oxford. Lady Holte died in February 1738, having nominated the Earl of Dartmouth as one of the boys' guardians:

Sir Lister Holte is now as much master of his estate as a gentleman under age can be. He is eighteen and lives at Oxford in a very respectable manner. I take his lands to be not less than £4,000 per annum; and if he has no money, I believe he has no considerable debt. He is not to be called a proper man, but is really very agreeable, and if Lord Dartmouth thinks fit to bestow his daughter upon him, everybody in that neighbourhood thinks it may be very convenient and a happy match on both sides.⁵

The daughter was Lady Anne Legge, the Dartmouths' youngest child, also eighteen years old. Her father felt that they were both too young and should wait until Lister reached his majority. A year later Lady North, visiting Sandwell Park, the Dartmouths' house, reported to her mother Lady Kaye:

The first thing I saw was Sir Lister Holte, who I find is here every day, and as much with Lady Anne as he pleases, rides out with her etc., but that it is ever to be a match is yet a secret to me, but I conclude it must be so or they would not suffer it to go on so. I am sure Lady Bab* durst not have done so, even in the week before she was married. He was grown and improved, but sadly awkward and says 'My Lady'. She looks happy with him & I hope will be so. We go to Birmingham today, and tomorrow Holtes in abundance are to be here.⁶

*The Dartmouths' elder daughter Barbara, who married Sir Walter Bngot of Blithfield.

At the end of the week she was able to add to her previous letter:

22 *Sir Lister Holte.*

The Earl and Countess have opened their minds to me about Sir Lister, who I find most excessively pressing to have the affair concluded, but the Earl's scruples are that it must appear odd and ill of his side, being his guardian, to marry him to his daughter before he comes of age, but that can only be to quite strangers, for whoever knows anything of the family knows it was what his grandfather, grandmother and father always intended and that Lord Dartmouth was left his guardian only to prevent him falling into other hands that might dispose of him otherwise; besides it is my firm opinion that if it is not done in a public manner soon they will make an end of it themselves. He is most violently fond of her, & never easy when he is out of the house, & she seems quite as well pleased with him. He mends upon knowing & a little good company would soon make him very well for he seems sensible of his bad education & very good natured.⁷

Lord Dartmouth gave way and they were married that October, but in June 1740, eight months later, Anne Holte died at Aston of smallpox. According to their friends the whole Dartmouth family was shattered by this unexpected disaster and Sir Lister was distraught with grief.⁸ Bishop Hough wrote rather sententiously to Lady Kaye:

Lady Anne Holte . . . is happier than the best of her friends can wish her . . . Poor Sir Lister is the object, the only proper object, of our pity! for I really think, there is not a more sorrowful Widower than himself. He was to my knowledge a true lover before marriage; and as the lady's good qualities opened upon him, they heightened his esteem; every day he discovered some-

thing that was new cause of endearment and to be unexpectedly deprived of all at once is a trial too great for a young philosopher. Indeed I am extremely concerned for him, his relations are apprehensive his present situation may make too deep an impression upon his fancy, and think it is not advisable for him to continue in the melancholy scene.⁹

He never forgot her, and for the rest of his life he wore a diamond ring containing a lock of her hair.¹⁰

Despite his wife's death Sir Lister remained close to the Legge family, and Lord Dartmouth's influence in South Staffordshire probably helped him to a seat in Parliament the following year. He was just twenty-one when he was elected one of the two MPs for Lichfield in June 1741. He had spent £400 to free Lichfield market of tolls, and had contributed another £100 to the building of the new Town Hall, and he and his fellow Tory candidate, George Vernon of Sudbury Hall, Derbyshire (member since 1731), were returned unopposed.¹¹ Once elected, Sir Lister attended the Commons fairly regularly,^{*} and voted consistently against the Whig administrations of Walpole, Carteret and Pelham,¹² but he was not a Jacobite, and contributed to the suppression of the 1745 rebellion. He stood again in the election of August 1747, but unfortunately for him there had been a political revolution in Staffordshire since 1741, when the county had returned six Tories and two 'Patriots', but only two Whigs.¹³ In December 1744 Lord Gower, whose parliamentary influence in the county was paramount, had gone over to the ministry, and in the 1747 election the Tories were routed. The fight for Lichfield was one of the roughest elections of the eighteenth century. The *Morning Advertiser* reported:

There has been a great contest between the populace about the choice of their candidates, one party espousing the interest of George Venables Vernon, Esq., a gentleman who has been Member for Lichfield in the Country Interest with Sir Lister Holte, and the other the Hon. Leveson Gower and Mr. Anson, the new candidates; when the party of the latter was at last defeated and drove out of the town with much bloodshed on both sides.¹⁴

When it came to votes the result was different; Gower (275), Anson (272), Holte (237) and Vernon (229). The Tories had been unable to match the money put up by Lord Gower and by Admiral Lord Anson, but they did their best. Their shared election expenses were £1,173, but Sir Lister paid his agent, a Lichfield attorney called Joseph Adey, another £105 9s 4d. 'to myself and two clerks, in Soliciting of your Election for three months together and doing little or no other business all the time and my extraordinary expence in keeping in a manner open house for your voters'.¹⁵ He also bought up all the burgage plots (properties conferring a vote on their owner) he could find, eventually owning thirteen.¹⁶ In July 1747 he spent over £300 on the Angel Inn and two houses alone, and in September borrowed £6,000 from one of his backers, Samuel Hill of Shenstone.¹⁷ As the Tories had most of the popular vote, small though that was, and public opinion on their side, they took their defeat badly. When the Duke of Bedford came to the Lichfield races in September he was horsewhipped by a farmer, and a few days later there was a great Tory demonstration described in a letter to Lord Anson:

On Wednesday morning the party began to draw together, and in the afternoon about one hundred and fifty of the Burton mobb, most of 'em in Plaid waistcoats, Plaid Ribbons round their Hatts, and some of them white cocades [all Jacobite emblems] entered the town in a body . . . About the same time came in another Party of the Birmingham people, most of 'em in the same dress, with Sir

*He took a town house in Clifford Street, Piccadilly.



23 Sarah Newton.

Lyster and some of the Warwickshire gentlemen . . . As we had been severely threatened, we had reason to apprehend a great deal of mischief from such a meeting, but having no opposition they behaved in general peaceably, and did no other damage than the breaking the arm of a poor soldier, an Out Pensioner, for crying out 'God Bless His Majesty King George. Down with ye Plaids' . . .¹⁸

This was the end of Lister's parliamentary career and he did not stand again.

Sir Lister had remarried in July 1742.* Mary Harpur brought with her a large portion of £10,000, and she was well-connected. Her father, Sir John Harpur, had died in 1741 leaving her brother Sir Henry the master of Calke Abbey, a large Baroque house in Derbyshire, and an income of £7,000 a year. He was elected MP for Worcester in 1744 and for Tamworth in 1747, and married a daughter of the Duke of Rutland.¹⁹ Mary Harpur was said to be 'possessed of all the valuable accomplishments that adorn her sex',²⁰ but little is known of this Lady Holte who died suddenly of apoplexy in July 1752.²¹ Both marriages had been childless, and three years later Sir Lister took a third wife. Sarah Newton was the younger daughter of Samuel Newton, squire of Kings Bromley, near Lichfield, an estate of about 2,500 acres bought by the Newtons in the late seventeenth century with a fortune made in the West Indies.²² Her portion was only £2,000, but though not as grand a match as its predecessors the marriage was suitable enough, and the Newtons had supported Sir Lister in the Lichfield election. His younger brother Charles had also married shortly before. His marriage to Anne Jesson had been promoted by his aunt, Mary Holte,

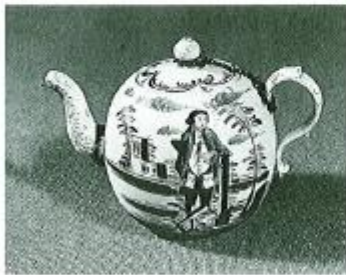
*He celebrated his marriage by buying nearly £200 of new plate from the royal goldsmith, George Wickes.



24 Sir Charles Holte, sixth baronet, painted by Thomas Gainsborough in the early 1770s.

a neighbour of the Jessons who lived at Langley Hall, near Sutton Coldfield. The result of these two weddings was far-reaching, as the two brides were to divide the family into hostile camps. Alfred Davidson was quite sure that the malign influence of Sarah Newton lay at the bottom of this:

The character of Lady Holte and her sister-in-law were not congenial. The former was haughty, cold and selfish; and the high spirit and keen wit of the latter could ill brook the assumption of superiority indulged in by Lady Holte. The foundation of discontent being thus laid, an open quarrel soon ensued, the effect of which speedily became apparent. By an indenture of May 10th and 11th 1758 Sir Lister . . . made a settlement of his estate by which his infant niece was cut off from any participation therein . . . But though Sir Lister had been induced to make this unjust disposition the affection of more than thirty years duration between himself and his brother was not eradicated. Charles resided at Coleshill Hall, only ten miles from Aston, and occasionally at Erdington . . . only a mile distance; and so fond was Sir Lister of his brother's company that he exacted of him when at Erdington, to spend his evenings at Aston, and he was in the habit of entering the dining room when Lady Holte withdrew.²³



25 Wedgwood creamware teapot, inscribed 'success to Sir Charles Holte' and commemorating the Warwickshire election of 1774.

Davidson was far from impartial. His book was dedicated to Charles Holte Bracebridge, Charles's grandson, and was written with his help and largely from materials he supplied. Nevertheless there was something rather sinister about Lady Holte's domination of her husband. In the 1760s his health began to break up, and according to Davidson 'He yielded himself more and more to the influence of his



26 Anne Jesson, painted by George Romney in 1783.

wife'.²⁴ A new steward, Ralph Pickstock, appointed in 1768, was clearly a dependent of hers, and there was a feeling in Birmingham that his doctors were his 'body guards'.²⁵

The rift in the family grew steadily from 1758. The year before Anne Holte had produced a daughter, Mary Elizabeth, but her sister-in-law remained childless. Sir Lister Holte then settled his estates on his own son(s), if any, in default on his brother Charles and his heirs male, which was usual enough, but if neither brother left a son, all the properties passed to Lewis Bagot, the youngest son of Sir Walter Bagot of Blithfield and then to his male children, in default to Heneage Legge and then to Wriothesley Digby (a grandson of the fifth Lord Digby) on the same terms. Bagot and Legge were both nephews of his first wife and the Digbys had been neighbours and allies of the Holtes for the last two and a half centuries. Only if none of them had a male heir did the estates revert to the right heir, Sir Lister's niece. A woman's property passed to her husband on marriage in the eighteenth century, unless it was vested in trustees, and her status in society was still one of subordination, but it was decidedly eccentric to disinherit a niece in favour of three young men (in 1758 they were all under eighteen), none of whom was a blood relation.* Charles Holte's resentment must have been considerable, but another source of friction was his inability after his marriage to live within his income, and his last letter to his brother (undated but probably written around 1768) suggests that this was the cause of their final estrangement:

Tho' I had no expectations from the many instances I have lately received of the loss of your affection, ... that you would be moved to assist me with any inconvenience to yourself yet I hoped a refusal in a less cruel manner; You tell me you spend your

*In 1783 Hutton called it 'one of the most unaccountable assignments that ever resulted from human weakness'. (*A History of Birmingham* ... p.296).

income & it is with difficulty if you do not exceed it, & yet you wonder, nay you upbraid me as if I were guilty of the greatest crime that I find £400 per ann. too little, have you not more than a thousand for every hundred & yet I am not worthy to be called your Brother because I cannot live on £400: . . . I had thought you had been acquainted with every particular of my marriage articles, the more than indifference you have shown me since your last marriage must have been the reason why I never troubled you by mentioning the particulars . . . Alex. Jesson is the only surviving trustee. He is out of the Kingdom under difficulties therefore cannot act in the Trust which will oblige me to file a Bill in Chancery for leave to choose another trustee unless you would have been so kind as to pay the three thousand & exchange your bond which I now have for six. You say that if you thought your advice would have any weight in my *family* you should desire us to live in some cheaper country — the neighbourhood of London is not proper.* Give me leave to say that if at any time you had condescended to interest yourself, your will would have been a law to *me and every one of my family* but before I fixed here, I wrote to you desiring your opinion and advice; I mentioned my thoughts of going to France: you answered you knew nothing of either my inclinations or necessities (tho' I had acquainted you with every particular not a month before at Aston). You did not point out any place or object to any, & upon the whole I had but too much reason to think it was totally indifferent to you where I lived or if I lived at all.²⁶

In 1769 Anne Holte made a final approach to Elizabeth Newton, Lady Holte's sister, who was then living with them in Bath, but received the reply:

. . . I have communicated the contents of your letter to Sir Lister and Lady Holte: they bid me say that as you so well know the reason of the shyness you complain of, they think all explanations unnecessary, and are determined not to make any alterations in the present situation of affairs.²⁷

There, with Anne Holte declaring she did 'not know, or even guess wherein [she] had offended Sir Lister and Lady Holte',²⁸ all correspondence ended, and had not been restored when Sir Lister Holte died at Aston Hall on Sunday, 8th April 1770.

Sir Lister had made his will the October before.²⁹ He left his widow Aston Hall, the park and five adjoining meadows for her life. Under their marriage settlement she was entitled to an annuity of £700, but he increased this to £1,500 a year. He made her an absolute gift of most of his jewels, the furniture of their apartment and of the green drawing room, his wines and spirits and all his horses and carriages as well as £1,000 in cash. His brother, now Sir Charles, inherited his library and any money left over after the payment of his debts, legacies and funeral expenses, as well as the estates for life. Failing a male heir, everything was to pass on Charles's death to Heneage Legge, and then to Lewis Bagot and Wriothsley Digby. Charles was prevented from increasing his wife's jointure to more than £500 a year, but he could raise £10,000 from the estate towards his daughter's marriage portion. The executors were Sarah Holte, her brother John Newton, and Fettiplace Nott. Relations between Sir Charles and the executors were extremely bad. When they sold the furniture at Brereton (as the will empowered them to do), they also stripped out all the fixtures in the house so that 'not a lock, a bolt, shelf or peg was left as belonging to the inheritance',³⁰ obliging Sir Charles to buy them back. The widowed Lady Holte lived on until 1794 and used Aston Hall only intermittently. Her unmarried sister Elizabeth inherited the Kings

*Probably Hampstead where he had a house in 1770.

Bromley estate and its large mid-eighteenth-century house on their brother's death, and they spent much of their time there.⁴

Sir Lister's early death transformed his brother's life at the age of forty-eight. From being an impoverished younger son living on the edge of debt and moving between London, Warwickshire and Shrewsbury (where he had lodgings for a while) he had become a great landowner with a gross income of over £7,000 a year. Despite Lady Holte's annuity he could afford to take a large fashionable London house at 6 Portman Square, and as well as adding a new kitchen and a 'great room' to Erdington Hall, he rented Freeford Hall, near Lichfield. In 1774 he was persuaded to stand for Parliament as one of the two members for Warwickshire. His support came mostly from the Northern part of the county. Birmingham was not enfranchised as a Parliamentary borough until 1832, but a good many of its inhabitants were qualified to vote for the county, and hoped to defeat the alternative candidate, John Mordaunt. Sir Charles was seen as the man most likely to serve 'this populous and commercial town'.³¹ The sitting member was not opposed, but there was a stiff fight for the vacant seat. Sir Charles stood on the ticket of 'Holte and Independence', and with strong support from Birmingham. William Hutton noted in his diary 'rode with my son to Warwick, to vote, at my own expense, for Sir Charles Holte as a member for the County. The only time I ever did, or will vote for a member of a self-interested Parliament.'³² After a ten-day poll Sir Charles was returned with a majority of fifty-eight. He made a public entry into Birmingham 'attended by upwards of 700 gentry and freeholders' on 2nd November, '[an] amazing concourse of persons assembled on this joyful occasion . . . Amid every mark of respect which could be paid by a generous and free people to an independent representative', Sir Charles made his way to the Swan Hotel 'where the entertainment provided for him by the freeholders [the voters] was genteel and well-conducted'.³³ In the Commons he voted with the opposition to the North government, but he was not a regular attender at the House and apparently never spoke there.³⁴ He did not stand again in 1780, as:

The bad state of health under which Sir Charles had long laboured, incapacitating him from the arduous duty of inspecting, with necessary vigilance and attention, the various interests of an opulent, respectable and commercial county, he intimated towards the conclusion of the last Parliament a positive determination to resign.³⁵

Sir Charles's only child, Mary Elizabeth Holte, had only a remote chance of inheriting his estates, but she had a large portion and she would inherit all his personal possessions, which made her an attractive marriage proposition. She married at the age of eighteen in 1775, and one imagines that she made her own choice as her husband was the eldest son of Abraham Bracebridge of Atherstone near Rugby, a Warwickshire squire with a small estate and a rather unsavoury reputation. Abraham Bracebridge the younger was nearly ten years older than his wife, and he was to prove a disaster, destroying the estates that the Holtes had built up over four centuries, for despite his plausibility he was irresponsible in his financial dealing, and selfish, extravagant and dishonest. Fortunately for Sir Charles this lay in the future. He provided his daughter with a portion of £20,000, and he repaired and improved Brereton Hall, letting the house, park and home farm to Abraham Bracebridge at the artificially low rent of £121 a year.³⁶ A grand-daughter was born in 1776 and christened Mary Holte Bracebridge. During the last few years of his life, despite his poor health, Sir Charles continued to divide his time between Portman Square, Bath, Eastbourne, Brereton, Atherstone and Erdington, but it was in London that he died on 12th March 1782.³⁷ His body was

*They chose a cousin, John Lane, as their principal heir. He was subsequently on good terms with Heneage Legge, and his eldest son was born at Aston in 1800.



27 Aston Hall from the East in the early nineteenth century.

brought back to Aston and was buried in the family vault on the evening of 24th March. The baronetcy died with him, and the estates passed under the terms of his brother's will to Heneage Legge.* He left his widow his jewels and plate, the contents of Brereton Hall, Erdington Hall and No. 6 Portman Square, his horses, coaches and farm stock, and 'the household goods, linen, pictures, furniture and effects [at Aston Hall] given me by the will of my late Brother Sir Lister Holte deceased after his wife's decease', as well as an immediate £500.³⁸ Anything else the executors were to sell, and they were to invest the proceeds, together with the arrears of rent paid after his death, in securities, paying the interest to his wife. Anne Holte then went to live with the Bracebridges who took a smaller house in Stanhope Street, Mayfair. She had a number of admirers. Richard Lovell Edgworth described her as 'a woman of much knowledge of the world and great firmness of character'.† A Miss Florry, the daughter of a Cleobury Mortimer ironmaster, was deeply devoted to her, writing in her diary 'Went to Shrewsbury to Mr Holtes . . . 'Kept up a constant correspondence with Lady Holte, whose friendship was unbounded — went constantly there wherever they resided — Erdington, 4 Oaks, Freeford and Brereton. While I lived in Moor House Lady H frequently drove me in her phaeton on a Saturday'. In 1798 Lady Holte and Mrs Bracebridge took her off to Bath with them, and urged her to come and share Redland House, near Bristol, which they rented shortly before Lady Holte's death. On March 26th 1799 she 'went . . . to Aston to see Lady H inter'd. Wished more solemnity. My reflections not to be described.'³⁹

When Heneage Legge inherited the Holte estate in 1782 he was in the odd position of being unable to live at either Aston or Brereton, but he took a house at Idlicot in the South of the county. He had a town house in Hill Street off Berkeley Square, but soon moved to a larger one in Grosvenor Square. He was thirty-five, and had been married since 1768 to Elizabeth Musgrave, the daughter of a Cumberland baronet, but they had no children. Even before he inherited, he was comfortably off, for his father (the first Earl of Dartmouth's second son) had had a successful legal career, and was a baron of the exchequer (high court judge) from 1740 until his death in 1759. His mother had been a City heiress. However, the Holte estates were to climb rapidly in value with the Birmingham building boom of the 1780s, making him a very wealthy man. In 1794 Lady (Sarah) Holte died bringing him Aston Hall and another £1,500 a year, but he continued to spend most of his time in London or in Bath, making

*Except for a few acres in Handsworth which, being in Staffordshire, were mistakenly not mentioned in the will.

†She had helped promote his second marriage to her friend Elizabeth Sneyd in 1780, by inviting both to Brereton. The Edgeworths spent the summer of 1781 at Davenport Hall, near Brereton, where they passed many of their evenings with the Holtes. Edgworth admired the house and made use of the 'excellent' library. *Memoirs of Richard Lovell Edgworth begun by himself and concluded by his daughter Maria Edgworth* (London 1820) vol. I pp. 379-84.

short visits to Aston during the summer months. He had also inherited, as tenant of Brereton Hall, Abraham Bracebridge who wrote him long and disingenuous letters about subletting the house, and behaved dubiously over the sale of timber on that estate (or so Legge suspected). He also kept pestering Legge about outlying Holte properties, which he felt might not be covered by the provisions of Sir Lister's will, making a claim to the Lapworth estate in 1796, 1802 and 1807, and to the Staffordshire part of Aston Park in 1797.⁴⁰ Henceage Legge seems to have been a conscientious, if largely absentee, landlord, and performed the usual public duties expected of his class (he was High Sheriff in 1802, and held a commission in the Warwickshire Yeomanry during the Napoleonic wars*). Wriothlesley Digby, who lived at Meriden Hall near Coventry, also kept an eye on the running of the estate for him and during the thirty-five years of their stewardship its value more than doubled. Abraham Bracebridge, on the other hand, was running into financial difficulties by 1791.⁴¹ Legge, Bagot and Digby had jointly confirmed his lease of Brereton Hall for life, and in 1789 added some farm land and agreed to extend the lease to his nominee after his death, which was some compensation for his wife's exclusion from the inheritance. In 1791 he mortgaged both leases for £7,000. He had also taken control of Lady Holte's affairs in 1782, and by September 1792 he was unable to produce £2,000 of her money. By 1798, following unsuccessful business speculations, he and his brother Walter Bracebridge owed over £55,000 to various creditors, and he had to mortgage part of the Atherstone estate, his London house and his remaining capital. That mortgage also included an arrangement to clear the debt by selling part of the Holte estates in Warwickshire if these should come to Bracebridge during the next nine years, or the reversion (the right to it after Legge, Bagot and Digby) if they did not. It was now becoming apparent that either Mary Elizabeth Bracebridge or her son Charles (born 1799) would eventually inherit, as neither Legge, Bagot† nor Digby had an heir. Unfortunately these expectations enabled Abraham Bracebridge to raise almost any sum on their security. In 1800 he embarked on a partnership with two promoters, Samuel Phelps and Richard Troward. Phelps and Co. built themselves a manufactory in Lambeth, and set out to exploit their patent to make soap out of kelp. Off went Bracebridge to Ireland in search of supplies.⁴² However, the firm soon ran into trouble. A banker, Thomas Hammersley, promised an investment which he never in fact made, and in 1807 introduced the original partners to two financiers, Sir William Paxton and Sir Charles Cockerell. They joined the firm, and put about £95,000 into it, but in 1808 they and Hammersley took up their right to withdraw and convert their investment into a loan which had to be paid back with interest, as it was clear that the soap business was never going to make that kind of money. The reversion of the Cheshire estates was charged with £60,000 and the Lambeth premises mortgaged. In 1809 Mrs Bracebridge subjected the reversion of the Warwickshire estates to debts of £110,000 and in the following year conveyed the reversion of the entire Warwickshire and Cheshire estate to trustees to sell all or part and pay off the favoured creditors of Phelps and Co. As the mortgage of 1798 was still outstanding, Bracebridge incurred penalties of £45,000, not much less than the original debt. The trustees could now either sell the reversion to the whole estate (which would fetch less than its estimated value of over £600,000 as no-one knew how long Legge and Digby might live, and there was the remote possibility that one of them might yet produce an heir), or negotiate with the life tenants to sell part of the estate outright in the hopes of saving the remainder. This they started to do in 1812. All sorts of combinations were suggested, and Bracebridge at one point hoped to save Brereton. Henceage Legge was unwilling to see the whole Warwickshire estate

*Which he helped to raise in 1794. To Harris singing at the Hall upon enrollment of the Yeomanry £1 1s. 0d. and other payments (B.L. Archives MSS 250937).

†Lewis Bagot died in 1802.

sold in preference, as he wrote in 1814 to Walter Henry Bracebridge:

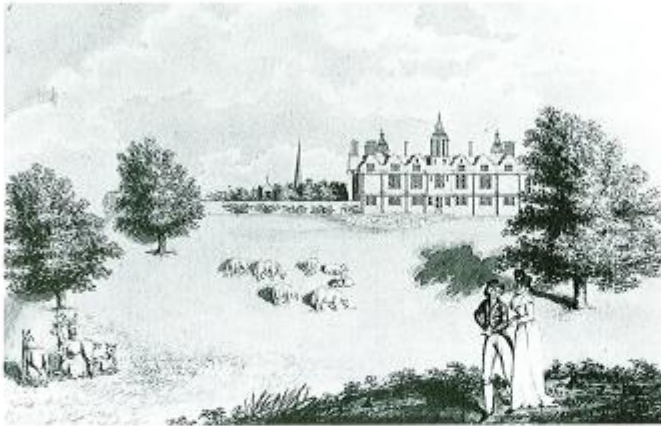
At the time I first became acquainted with the state of Mr Bracebridge's affairs I was, for various reasons, unwilling to surrender. In the first place I considered that Property with its Magnificent Domain, as the original seat of the Holte family, & that as the Guardian of it, I was bound to preserve it, if possible to the right Heirs and descendents. Secondly, I thought (as I do now) that the Environs of a great and flourishing manufacturing town would make such rapid Progress in value, that it is impossible to calculate to what height such a Rental might in progress of time be extended & lastly I suspected that the wish to preserve Brereton in preference to Aston was merely the object of one who had never considered the interest of any Body but himself, & had consequently no Right to expect the sacrifice of my Pride, Happiness and comfort for the Distant Re-establishment of his own. Now I consider the scene as changed. My immediate successor [Wriothesley Digby] has declared that the possession of Aston is no object to him & that he would in no case become the Inhabitant of it; it appears on Calculation that the sale of the Warwickshire Estate might go so far towards the Discharge of the enormous Debt for which it is already pledged, that the Cheshire might ultimately be preserved (as I heartily wish it may, tho' I cannot but have great doubts upon the subject) & as I find . . . that it is the real wish of Mrs Bracebridge . . . I no longer consider myself at liberty to withhold my Consent.⁴³

In the event Legge's doubts were justified, as the Brereton estates had to be included in the final settlement reached in 1817.

In order to overturn Sir Lister Holte's will, the settlement had to be confirmed by a Private Act of Parliament which received the Royal Assent on 10th July 1817. Under it the entire estate was divided between eight schedules. Schedule 'A' was made up of Aston Hall and Park, various bits of land in Aston parish, and about one-third of the Brereton estate, with a rental of £4,423 a year, which were to be sold to pay the creditors' costs and to clear the estate of another mortgage and various annuities. Heneage Legge was compensated for his surrender with the absolute possession of schedule 'B', most of the manors of Duddeston and Nechells, rented at £4,452.* Wriothesley Digby was compensated for the loss of his expectations with the manor of Erdington and lands in Bordesley and Sutton Coldfield which formed schedule 'C', worth £1,898 a year. Schedule 'D' comprised Brereton Hall and the rest of the Cheshire estate with a rental of £2,591, and was to be sold for the benefit of the creditors under the 1798 mortgage and others. The next schedule, 'E', was the Lapworth estate (rental £1,046) which was allotted to Paxton, Cockerell and Greenwood, the principal creditors of Phelps and Co., and schedule 'F', lands in Aston, the advowson of Aston and Brereton, and tithes on part of Aston parish (worth £1,638 a year), was to be sold to pay off the firm's other creditors. 185 acres in Erdington and Saltley, Schedule 'G', went to William Wilson Currey, as the assignee of Walter Henry Bracebridge who had married his cousin Mary Holte Bracebridge in 1803. Lastly schedule 'H', three farms in Erdington rented at just under £250 a year, were to be sold for the benefit of Mary Elizabeth Bracebridge by her trustees, Currey and Wriothesley Digby, who were also made responsible for what remained of her husband's property. Bracebridge's debts had consumed all the rest of an estate with a rental of £16,578 a year, a vast income in 1817 when £300 or £400 represented genteel comfort. His creditors were not paid in full, so only his lawyers and perhaps Legge and Digby actually gained anything.† Before the crash Bracebridge had lived in the grand manner as the squire of Brereton 'one of the first places in the county'.⁴⁴ He had also enlarged

*As he lived until 1827 he lost a gross sum of about £170,000.

†Part of the Erdington estate was eventually willed back to Mary Holte Bracebridge.

28 *The West front in 1802.*

Atherstone Hall, and cut a fine figure as Captain-Commandant of Atherstone Volunteers, and a Deputy Lieutenant of the County. His wife's trustees were now to pay him an income from some shares in a life assurance company, while she received separately the rents of the Atherstone estate. Even after all that had happened the Bracebridges were trying, in 1818, to buy a house that they were renting 'to be had for half its value'. The trustees put a stop to this, and also convinced them that they would have to pay off out of their income a debt of £500 incurred by improving 'this most enviable residence'.⁴⁵

'Poor Mrs Bracebridge' died in 1819 and was buried at Atherstone 'the property now being alienated, there was . . . no object in depositing her with her ancestors at Aston'.⁴⁶ Currey and Digby worried about her husband's influence upon her son Charles, but he was to turn out the antithesis of his parent, who eventually died in 1832, having outlived both Digby and Legge. Heneage Legge died in January 1827 at Putney House on the edge of London, which he had owned since the turn of the century.⁴⁷ Charles Holte Bracebridge became a passionate Hellenist, a philanthropist, and a founder member of the Social Science Association. He became involved in prison reform, and he and his wife accompanied Florence Nightingale to the Crimean War; she later declared 'without such assistance Scutari would have been impossible'. In addition to owning 'a celebrated stud of half-Arab horses' Bracebridge espoused a number of strange causes. One of his successes was to recover for the Waldensians of Savoy the English pension granted them by Oliver Cromwell in recognition of their sufferings (celebrated in Milton's sonnet 'Avenge, Oh Lord, thy slaughter'd Saints . . .')⁴⁸ When Aston Hall and Park were opened to the public in 1858 he announced that he took as much pleasure in assisting to make this arrangement as if the property had continued to belong to him and when he died childless in 1872 he bequeathed to the Corporation of Birmingham a number of the Holte heirlooms. But this is just a coda, for the story of the Holte family should end in 1817 with the break-up of the estate.

A HISTORY
OF THE
HOLTES OF ASTON,

BARONETS;

WITH A DESCRIPTION OF THE FAMILY MANSION,

ASTON HALL, WARWICKSHIRE,

BY

ALFRED DAVIDSON.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS FROM DRAWINGS

BY

ALLEN E. EVERITT.

BIRMINGHAM:

E. EVERITT, 66, NEW STREET.

1854.

TO
CHARLES HOLTE BRACEBRIDGE, ESQ.,

OF
ATHERSTONE HALL, WARWICKSHIRE,

THIS
BRIEF HISTORY

OF HIS
MATERNAL ANCESTORS

IS
RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED.

XX.—SIR LISTER HOLTE succeeded his father. From an entry in his grandfather's Latin Bible, it appears he was born on the 26th of April, (no year is stated,) and from the register, that he was baptized on the 28th of the same month, 1720. The following entry respecting his brother also occurs:—"Charles, the second, was born 24 Nov., 1721; his Godfathers, the Rev. Father in God, John Hough, Ld. Bishop of Worcester, Will. Bromley, of Bagington, Esq., and Mrs. Cartwright, wife of Tho. Cartwright, of Aynho, Northampton, Esq." The entry is not in the handwriting of Sir Charles.

Sir Lister and his brother were, as boys and young men, devotedly attached to each other. They were at school together when young, and afterwards studied at Magdalen College, Oxford; and, for years, were scarcely ever separated. One of Bishop Hough's letters, (p. 229,) dated February 11th, 1737-8, addressed to Lady Lewisham, refers to Sir Lister, and shows the affection, strong in death, entertained by his grandmother:—

"The widow Lady Holte died on Tuesday last, and, I am told, has engaged the Earl of Dartmouth in the affairs of the Aston Family, as far as he will please to concern himself in them. Sir Lister Holte is now as much master of his estate as a gentleman under age can be. He is eighteen, and lives at Oxford in a very respectable manner. I take his lands to be not less than £4,000 per annum; he is * * * really very agreeable, and if Lord Dartmouth thinks fit to bestow his daughter upon him, everybody in that neighbourhood thinks it may be convenient, and a happy match on both sides."

The articles of agreement for marriage with the lady referred to—Lady Anne Legge—are dated October 5th, 1739, but, as Sir Lister was not of age, no settlement could be made; it was agreed, however, that when he attained his majority he should settle a jointure of £1,500 on his lady, her fortune being £6,000; but no settlement was ever made, the lamented death of the young wife obviating the necessity for one. The marriage was solemnised in the month of October, 1739. She died at the end of June, 1740, and was buried at Aston on the 2nd of July. Worthy Bishop Hough, in a letter to Lady Kaye, (p. 241,) thus refers to this melancholy event:—

"You are troubled, Madam, for the loss of Lady Ann Holte, and I believe so young a person could not be more universally deplored than she has been, but she is happier than the best of her friends can wish her; it is only the weakness of human nature, in spite of their judgments, that moves their passions on her account. Poor Sir Lister is the object, the only proper object, of our pity! for I really think there is not a more sorrowful widower than himself."

He was, to my knowledge, a true lover before marriage; and as the lady's good qualities opened upon him, they heightened his esteem; every day discovered something that was a new cause of endearment; and to be unexpectedly deprived of all at once, is a trial too great for a young philosopher. Indeed, I am extremely concerned for him; his relations are apprehensive his present situation may make too deep impression upon his fancy, and think it not advisable for him to continue in the melancholy scene. I am by no means a friend to those excursions that our nobility and gentry make into foreign countries, at their first setting out in the world; but, upon this occasion, I think it is convenient for a gentleman to go from home; and when he mourns in good earnest, it is well if any place can give him ease."

Sir Lister early mingled in the political world. On the 25th of June, 1741, he was elected Member of Parliament for the city of Lichfield. In the same year he purchased the market tolls, the property of the Corporation, and gave them for the common benefit of the city. He also contributed towards the erection of a market house.* His liberality, however, was not duly appreciated, for at the next election, in August, 1747, he was rejected by a majority of thirty-five votes, the successful candidates being—Gower, 278; Anson, 272; and the unsuccessful—Holte, 237; Vernon, 220.

Sir Lister, about the middle of July, 1742, married Mary, the younger daughter of Sir John Harpur, Bart., of Calke, Derbyshire; she is described by a local paper of the day as "a lady of great fortune, and possessed of all the valuable accomplishments that adorn her sex."† From a deed, dated July 16th and 17th, we find that her fortune was £10,000, and £2,000 additional on the death of her mother; that her jointure was £1,000 per annum; and there was a proviso, that if she died before Sir Lister, he might charge the property burdened with her jointure with £400 per annum for another wife. Some difficulties arose in the course of making this settlement, and Charles Holte came forward to remove the obstacles that were in the way, and at once proffered his consent to any fresh settlement of the Family estate that might be considered necessary. The deed for this purpose is dated June 30th, 1742, and is briefly as follows:—By indenture between Sir Lister, of the first part; Richard Bannister, of St. Dunstan in the West, London, gentleman, and Francis Musson, of the parish of St. Giles, Lincoln's Inn Fields, London, gentleman, of the second part; and William Noel, of the Inner Temple, London, Esq., and John Eardley Wilmott, of the Inner Temple, London, Esq., of the third part; it is witnessed that for the "docking, cutting off, and barring of all entails and estates tail" theretofore made or limited of the several manors and hereditaments thereinafter mentioned, and of all reversions and remainders thereon dependent or expectant, and also in consideration of the sum of 10s., the said Sir Lister Holte did grant, bargain, and sell unto the said Richard Bannister and Francis Musson, their heirs and assigns, the estates named in the indenture, to hold the said manors, hereditaments, and premises to the said Richard Bannister and Francis Musson, their heirs and assigns, for ever, to their only proper use and behoof, for ever, to the intent and purpose that they might be and become perfect tenants of the immediate freehold and inheritance of all and every the premises, until a good and perfect common recovery, with double voucher, might be perfected of the said manors, hereditaments, and other premises, in which the said William Noel and J. E. Wilmott should be demandants, the said Richard Bannister and Francis Musson tenants, and the said Sir Lister Holte vouchee, who should vouch the common voucher. Declaration that immediately after such common recovery should be perfected of the premises, as aforesaid, the said common recovery and the execution thereof, and the recited indenture, should enure to the only proper use and behoof of Sir Lister, his heirs and assigns, for ever, and to and for no other use, intent, or purpose whatsoever. The deed was attested by two witnesses as to the execution by Sir Lister, and Messrs. Bannister, Musson, and Noel, and by one witness as to the execution by Mr. Wilmott. It was also enrolled in the Common Pleas, (Roll 6,) in Trinity Term, 16 Geo. 2, (1742;) and in the same term there was an exemplification of recovery, Noel and Wilmott being demandants, Bannister and Musson tenants, and Sir Lister first voucher, who vouched over the common vouchee.

* "In October, 1741, Sir Lister Holt, Bart., one of the Members of Parliament for the city, gave £500 to the Corporation, desiring that £100 of that sum should be applied to exonerate the markets from toll, and that the remaining £400 should be applied towards rebuilding, altering, or making additions to the Town Hall. It was therefore ordered at Common Hall, October 27th, 'That this city shall, from Christmas next, be discharged from all tolls whatsoever upon market days, except pidgeage.'"—*Harewood's Lichfield*, p. 356.

† *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, July 26th, 1742.

Mr. Hutton, in his brief allusion to the Family, speaks of Sir Lister having starved his brother into compliance, and of having wantonly cut off the entail, and given away the estate; and, in making Sir Lister's father apostrophise him from the tomb, adds, "The ungenerous attorney, instead of making your absurd will, ought to have apprised you of our sentiments, which exactly coincide with those of the world, or how could the tale affect a stranger?" An attention to facts and dates will show Mr. Hutton's errors. Charles was born November 24th, 1721; the deed was dated June 30th, 1742, before he had attained his majority. Consequently, he could not do any legal act, however willing he might be to do so. And as to being "starved into compliance," under his father's marriage settlement he was heir to £4,000, and to £4,000 more left him by his grandmother, who was entitled to raise that sum should she survive her husband, which she did, the indenture being dated January 10th, 1720. The same lady also bequeathed to him a farm at Lapworth, worth £104 per annum; and he also received additional property under her will, as well as having expectations from his aunt Mary, who was possessed of a considerable fortune, which ultimately came to her two nephews, in 1758; so that had the force spoken of been used, he would, besides his own resources, have received powerful assistance from his aunt, in resisting it. The truth is that Mr. Hutton has proceeded on the assumption that the entail was cut off in 1769, and has confounded events which did occur about that time with the abrogation of the entail, and has thus gone astray himself, and misled his readers likewise. Great injustice has also thus been done to the character of Sir Lister, in ascribing to him the application of improper means which he never resorted to. The brothers continued on the most affectionate terms, and this, too, shows the incorrectness of the statement.

In 1745, when the great grandson of him who had been received with such distinguished honour at Aston, a century before, was in full retreat northwards, Sir Lister was so zealous in furnishing horses to pursue him, that he supplied 250 from his own stables and parks; and to so great an excess did his loyalty run, that he even sent his own carriage horses. His zeal would, perhaps, have shone to more advantage, had he accompanied his stud. The date of this chivalrous transaction was Sunday, December 8th, and was, as it richly deserved to be, chronicled in a *Gazette* extraordinary.

In 1755, Charles Holte married Ann, the daughter of Pudsey Jesson, Esq., of Langley, Warwickshire, the articles of marriage being dated May 19th, and the marriage took place the same day. Sir Lister, however, had previously been called to part with his second wife, she having been buried at Aston, July 25th, 1752. His domestic afflictions increased his yearning towards his faithful and tender brother, who loved him with an affection as pure and disinterested as one relative could feel for another; and, with a view to promote his brother's happiness, Charles, entirely regardless of his own pecuniary prospects, recommended a third marriage. Unfortunately, however, he did not approve of the lady selected—Sarah, the younger daughter of Samuel Newton, Esq., of King's Bromley, Staffordshire. The articles of agreement for marriage were dated June 20th, 1755, Miss Newton's fortune being £2,000; and the marriage took place in July. By an indenture of lease and release, dated July 19th and 20th, 1756, Sir Lister settled an annuity on his wife of £700.

The characters of Lady Holte and her sister-in-law were not congenial. The former was haughty, cold, and selfish; and the high spirit and keen wit of the latter could ill brook the assumption of superiority indulged in by Lady Holte. The foundation of discontent being thus laid, an open quarrel soon ensued, the effects of which speedily became apparent. By an indenture of May 10th and 11th, 1758, Sir Lister took advantage of the power conferred on him by the deed of June 30th, 1742, and made a settlement of his estate by which his infant niece was cut off from any participation therein. The estates were settled, first, to Sir Lister, and his heirs male; in default, to Charles, his brother, and his assigns, for life; with remainder to the first and other sons of Charles; in default, to Lewis Bagot, Esq., son of Sir William Bagot, of Blithfield, with remainder to his first and other sons, in tail male; in default, to Heneage Legge, Esq., with like remainders; and in default,

to Wriothlesley Digby, Esq., with like remainders; and, in default of issue to all these, with remainder to his own right heirs for ever. There was also a proviso to Mr. Charles Holte, to grant an annuity to his wife of £200, as an addition to the jointure already made by him; and, in the event of his surviving, and marrying a second time, power was given to grant such wife an annuity of £700. There was also a proviso empowering him to raise £10,000 for portions for his female or younger children.

But, though Sir Lister had been induced to make this unjust disposition, the affection of more than thirty years' duration between himself and his brother was not eradicated. Charles resided at Coleshill Hall, only ten miles from Aston, and occasionally also at Erdington Hall, belonging to the Family estate, only a mile distant; and so fond was Sir Lister of his brother's company, that he exacted of him, when at Erdington, to spend his evenings at Aston; and he was in the habit of entering the dining room when Lady Holte withdrew.

After his rejection by the electors of Lichfield, in 1747, Sir Lister does not appear to have taken a prominent part in public affairs, and he is only found to have occupied one official position—that of High Sheriff of Cheshire, in 1767. The indenture made by him, with John Wilson, gentleman, of Sandbach, the Under Sheriff, is still preserved at Atherstone. As years and infirmities increased,* Sir Lister (though not an old man) yielded himself more and more to the influence and management of his wife. Being advised by his physicians to visit Bath for his health, he there spent a considerable portion of his time. At this period, there is every reason to believe letters from his brother were withheld from him, and all kindly intercourse was gradually broken off. The two last letters from Sir Lister and his brother are of a very painful character, and show that the former was then entirely alienated from the earthly relative who loved him best, and coldly, and, indeed, reproachfully, refused him pecuniary assistance.† The following letters closed the communication for ever between the two branches of the Family. The first is from Miss Newton, the sister of Lady Holte, to Mrs. Holte: we copy from the original:—

"DEAR MADAM,—I have received your favour, which needed no apology, for was it in my power I should with great pleasure do you any service I could. I have communicated the contents of your letter to Sir Lister and Lady Holte: they bid me say, that as you so well know the reason of the shyness you complain of, they think all explanations unnecessary, and are determined not to make any alteration in the present situation of affairs. This subject is too disagreeable to dwell upon any longer, so will conclude myself,

"Madam, your most obedient servant,
"E. NEWTON.

"Bath, May ye 8th, 1769."

To this epistle Mrs. Holte sent the following emphatic reply. Our copy is from the original draft, in which one or two insertions and erasures by another hand, probably that of her husband, occur. The letter is undated:—

"DEAR MADAM,—Your obliging letter demands my most sincere thanks, both for the trouble you have been so good to take, and the desire you express to serve me if it was in your power. All that remains for me is to lament that I have, it seems, offended past forgiveness, and that an intercourse of even distant civilities cannot be restored. I must, in justice to myself, and duty to my husband and child, protest to you and all the world, was it necessary, as I mean to answer it to the Almighty at that day when every secret shall be discovered, that I do not know, or even guess, wherein I have offended Sir Lister and Lady Holte. That they may never experience the want of that justice they desire to me is the sincere wish of,

"Madam, your obliged and obedient servant,
"ANN HOLTE."

More than fourscore years have elapsed since these letters were written, and yet the melancholy interest attaching to them, as snapping the last link of the ch 'n, only increases as time rolls on. The solemn asseveration of Mrs. Holte, and the final sentence of her affecting letter, are worthy of one whose high spirit bore her so bravely through her numerous trials.

* In his curious and unpublished work, entitled "Memorandums from Memory: all trifles, and of ancient date," Hutton gives the following:—"November 10, 1769.—Watched all night with John Ryland, Esq., he having broke his thigh the 7th. Dr. Farrott remarked 'that Sir Lister Holte was not the man he used to be.' I was on the point of asking, but durst not, if he was one of his body guards."

† This is the fact referred to by Hutton, in his reference to the entail.

On the 11th of October, 1763, the indenture of the 10th and 11th of May, 1758, was revoked, and the revocation is endorsed on the latter deed. On the day following the revocation, (12th October,) Sir Lister made his will. To his wife he left Aston Hall and manor for life, with an additional annuity of £800, his furniture, (except the books,) plate, jewels, &c., also for life, with remainder to his brother; all his ready money, the furniture of certain rooms, horses, farm stock, wine, &c., with £1,000 in money, to Lady Holte absolutely; the books and other personalty to Charles, his brother, after his debts, funeral expenses, and a year's wages to his servants, should have been paid. The real estate is then left to his brother for life, subject to payment of Lady Holte's annuity, and liquidation of any deficiency in the personal estate for payment of debts. In default of male issue to Sir Charles, the estate was to revert to Mr. Legge, and his heirs; in default, to Mr. Bagot; in default, to Mr. Digby; and in default, to the heirs general. There were also provisoes as to the annuity for Sir Charles's wife, and portions for his female or younger children, as in the indenture of 1758. The executors were Lady Sarah Holte, John Newton, Esq., her brother, and Fettiplace Nott, Esq. A codicil, leaving a few legacies, was added on the 6th of April, and Sir Lister died about eight o'clock in the evening of Sunday, the 8th of April, 1770, at Aston Hall. The will was proved on the 18th of May following, by all the executors, in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury. A small mural tablet to Sir Lister's memory bears the following inscription:—

To the memory of
Sir LISTER HOLTE, Baronet.
He married,
1st, Lady Anne Legge, youngest daughter of William, Earl of Dartmouth;
2nd, Mary, youngest daughter of Sir John Harpur, Bart., of Calke, in the county of Derby;
Lastly, Sarah, youngest daughter of Samuel Newton, Esq., of King's Bromley, in
the county of Stafford.
She died 1st April, MDCCLXXV., aged 70.
Sir Lister died without issue 8th April, MDCCLXX., aged 50.
His real estates, after the death of
Charles, his surviving brother,
he entailed successively on Henage Legge, Esq., and Lewis Bagot, Bishop of St.
Asaph,
Nephews of his first wife,
and Wriotheshy Digby, Esq., of Meriden, in this county,
on failure of whose respective issue he gave the same to his own right heirs for
ever.
This monument was erected MDCCLXXV.,
as a memorial of his virtues,
and in compliance with the wishes of his Widow,
by her affectionate sister,
Elizabeth Newton.

The total acreage of the property, as appearing in the above schedules, is 8,914A. 2R. 23P., and the rentals, £16,557 0s. 9d. Large though the annual income was at the time of the compilation of the schedules, the property in the neighbourhood of Birmingham has enormously increased in value since that period. The leases of building land in schedule B are generally for ninety-nine years, the dates commencing in 1788, and extending to 1815. Brereton Hall, also, leased to Mr. Bracebridge at £700 a year, must have been worth considerably more than that sum. The Aston property originally extended from the junction of Birmingham parish, at the termination of Prospect Row, to beyond Erdington Hall, and from Nechells and Saltley to the Custard House and Hay Mill Brook. To any one acquainted with the localities here mentioned, the immense extent of the possessions will be at once apparent. The total value of the whole estates was estimated in 1816, by a somewhat hasty survey, at £600,000.

After the passing of the Act, Mr. Legge quitted the Hall for his beautiful villa at Putney, where he died in January, 1827, and the furniture was offered for sale by auction. Before this, however, numerous articles of interest were removed to Atherstone Hall, and little remained to excite the attention of the curious. The pictures of the Duke of Rutland, Sir Clobery Holte, Sir Lister and Charles Holte, when children, King Charles the First and his Family, Lord Crewe, Lady Harpur, Sir John Harpur, Bishop King, and others, as well as David and Goliath, having been left at Aston, were, through the neglect of an order for packing them, dispersed at the sale. Mr. Hamper purchased the David and Goliath, and Mrs. Armishaw, of Aston, has possession of the portraits of Sir Lister and his brother. The portrait of the first Lord Brereton, with an ancient picture of Brereton Hall; the fifth Lord Brereton; King Charles and his Queen; Queen Anne; Queen Elizabeth; a delicate and curious Holbein of Edward the Sixth; a duplicate of the Earl of Strafford and his secretary, Sir R. Willoughby; a duplicate portrait of Sir Thomas Holte; and a few others, (two of which are supposed to be Breretons,) in addition to those mentioned in a previous page, are now in Mr. Bracebridge's possession. The picture of Dr. Hough, the famous President of Magdalen College, and Bishop of Worcester, is lost; and that of Dr. King, Bishop of London, was transferred (by Mr. Legge, with leave) to the collection of the Bishop of London, at Fulham. Portraits of Sir Robert, of his son, Sir Charles, and of Lady Clobery, are in the possession of Mr. W. H. Bracebridge; those of Sir Lister and Lady Sarah are at Mr. Lane's, of King's Bromley Manor; and a head of Lady Anne, the first wife of Sir Lister, is at Sandwell Hall, the property of the Earl of Dartmouth. Three half-lengths of young ladies, probably daughters of Sir Charles, are in possession of Mr. Roderick, of New Street; and one, also a female, in that of Mr. Jones, likewise of New Street. The portrait of Sir Thomas Holte, a large full length, was presented by Mr. Legge to Mr. Josiah Robins, who conducted the sale, and is now in possession of his widow, at Allesley Hall, near Coventry, whose courtesy in permitting it to be copied for the use of this work we have pleasure in acknowledging. Mrs. Robins also possesses a small half-length of the "good Lady Brereton;" a three-quarter of Lady Caroline Jones; a three-quarter of a lady, attributed to Lely; a three-quarter, supposed to have been intended for Locke or Milton; a group of flowers and fruit; and also a game piece.

* The amount of tax redeemed was £247 9s. 6d., the price paid £9,074 1s. 8d. in the Three per Cent. Consols, or Reduced Bank Annuities; payment to be made in sixteen instalments. The deed is dated April 24th, 1790.

Appendix 6: Portraits from Aston Hall

Sir Lister Holte by Thomas Gainsborough: this portrait was at KB Hall in 1854



Anne Jesson, later Lady Holte, wife of Charles Holte, by George Romney



Appendix 7: The Will of Sarah Holte

The Will of Dame Sarah Holte, made 15th March 1784.

Sarah Newton was born in 1724 and was the third daughter of Samuel and Elizabeth Newton of Kings Bromley. She married Lister Holte at All Saints, Kings Bromley on 30 June 1755. Lister had firstly married Anne Legge who died in 1740, then Mary Harpur of Calke Abbey in about 1749 but Mary died in 1752. Lister himself died in 1770 and so Sarah was a widow for over twenty years before she died in 1794.

Dame Sarah Holte This is the last Will and Testament of me Dame Sarah Holte of Aston Hall near Birmingham in the County of Warwick Widow. First I will order and Direct that all my Just Debts and funeral Expenses shall be paid and discharged by my Executors hereinafter named out of my personal Estate and likewise my late Brother John Newton Esquire Deceased did in and by his last will and Testament bearing Date the twenty eighth Day of August in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty two give and Devise all his Lands Plantations and Benefits in the Parish of Saint James in the Island of Barbadoes called Mount Allague to a Trustee herein named to the use of Sir John Bay Alleyne of the said Island of Barbadoes Baronet and his Heirs for his Life with Remainder to a Trustee to possess contingent Remainders with Remainder to the first and other Sons of the said Sir John Bay Alleyne in Tail with Remainder to the use of all my and every the Daughter and Daughters of the said Sir John Bay Alleyne in Tail as Coheirs in common with Remainder to the use of me the said Dame Sarah Holte and my Sister Elizabeth Newton and to my and her Heirs and Heirs for ever as Coheirs in common Now I give and Devise all my undivided Moiety or half part and all other my part and share of and in the said Lands plantations and Benefits in the said plantation and Benefits in the said Parish of Saint James in the Island of Barbadoes to be held to the said Sir John Bay Alleyne for his Life as aforesaid and all my Estate and Interest therein in Reversion &c. Remainder or otherwise unto my Sister Elizabeth Newton and her Heirs for and during her natural Life and from and after her Decease to give and Devise the same unto and to the use of the Honourable Edward Bourne Esquire Brother to the Right Honourable Jacob Pleydell Bourne the present Earl of Radnor and to the Heirs and Heirs of the said Edward

Bequeath for use also of Give and Bequeath to Thomas
Howler of Bedford in the County of Stafford Esquire the
sum of one hundred pounds of lawful money of Great
Britain to be paid to the said Thomas Howler out of my
personal Estate within six Months next after my
Decease in Trust for the several separate use and benefit
of Barbara the wife of the said John Wingfield
of Salop in the County of Salop Clerk and afterwards
the said John Wingfield shall not intermeddle in
notwithstanding coverture nor shall the same be liable
to his Debts or Engagements and I desire the said
Thomas Howler his Executors Adors and Assigns either
to set out the same at Interest and pay and apply the
Interest thereof or to pay and apply all or any part
of the principal sum of one hundred pounds for the
sole and separate use use and benefit of the said
Barbara Wingfield in such manner and at such time
or times as she the said Barbara Wingfield shall by
any writing or bequeathment here and notwithstanding
coverture direct or appoint and I do declare that the
direct and indirects of the said Barbara alone without
her said husband shall from time to time be a sufficient
discharge to the said Thomas Howler his Executors
Adors and Assigns for all or any part of the principal
or Interest aforesaid notwithstanding her coverture it
being my intent that the same or any part thereof
shall not be liable to the Debts or Controul of the
said John Wingfield also in case the said Barbara
Wingfield shall die before she has received the whole
of the said principal and interest then in Trust
to pay and apply the same in such manner as the
said Barbara shall by any writing under her hand
notwithstanding coverture direct or appoint and for
want thereof to pay the same to Thomas Howler
or the heirs of the said Barbara Wingfield his Executors
and Adors also I Give and Bequeath to Sarah
my daughter of Thomas Howler of aforesaid my
Duties the sum of fifty pounds to be paid to her out of
my personal Estate within six Months after my Decease
also I Give and Bequeath to each of my servants as
shall have lived in my service twelve Months
preceeding my Death one years wages besides what
shall be due to each of them and a diet of Murthering
and to every other of my servants who shall not have
lived with me twelve Months I Give a diet of Murthering
only and I Give Devise and Bequeath all the Rest
and Residue of my Manors and houses farms Estates
Plantations Lands Tenements Hereditaments and
Shares of Manors and houses farms Estates Plantations
Lands Tenements Hereditaments and Real Estates whatsoever
in England of Great Britain and the said Island of
Barbadoes unto and to the use of my said Elizabeth

Director her heirs and assigns for ever and I give
 and bequeath all my household goods and furniture
 pictures plate jewels Jewels Jewels Jewels for
 money stock of cattle horses and oxen and all
 the best and choice of my personal estate of what
 nature or kind soever which I shall be possessed of
 or any way in it had unto at the time of my Decease
 unto my said sister Elizabeth Director her Executors &
 Administrators and assigns and I constitute and appoint my
 said sister Elizabeth Director the Executrix of this my
 last will and Testament and I revoke all former
 wills by me made In witness whereof I the said
 Dame Sarah Holte the Testatrix have to this my
 last will and Testament contained in this and one
 hundred and six sheets of paper and to a Duplicate thereof
 set up hand at the bottom of the preceding sheet
 and my hand and seal to this record and last is
 given the twentieth day of March in the twentieth
 fourth year of the reign of our sovereign Lord
 George the third by the Grace of God of Great
 Britain France and Ireland King Defender of the
 Faith and in the year of our Lord one thousand seven
 hundred and eighty four J. Hole Esq. signed in
 witness hereunto and declared by the said Dame Sarah
 Holte the Testatrix as and for her last will and
 Testament in the presence of us who have subscribed
 our names as witnesses thereto at the request of and
 in the presence of the said Testatrix and of each other
 Charles Simpson & Wm. Gilbert & Thos. Caley Esq.

This Will was proved at London the
 twentieth ninth day of April in the year of our Lord
 one thousand seven hundred and eighty four before
 the Right Honourable Sir William Wynne Knight
 Lord of Chancery Master of the High Court of Chancery
 and one of the Justices of the said Court constituted
 by the Oath of Elizabeth Director the sister
 of the Deceased and the said Executrix named in the
 said will to whom administration of all and singular
 the goods chattels and credits of the said Deceased was
 granted having been first sworn by Commission duly
 to administer in

This is the last Will and Testament of me Dame Sarah Holte of Aston Hall near Birmingham in the County of Warwick Widow First I will order and Direct that all my Just Debts and Funeral Expences shall be paid and discharged by my Executrix hereinafter named out of my Personal Estate and Whereas my late Brother John Newton Esquire Deceased did in and by his last Will and Testament bearing Date the twenty eighth Day of August in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty two give and Devise all his Lands Plantations and Hereditis in the Parish of Saint James in the Island of Barbadoes called Mount Alleyne to a Trustee therein named To the use of Sir John Gay Alleyne of the said Island of Barbadoes Baronet and his Assigns for his Life with Remainder to a Trustee to preserve Contingent Remainders with Remainder to the use of the first and other Sons of the said Sir John Gay Alleyne in Tail with Remainder to the use of all and every the Daughter and Daughters of the said Sir John Gay Alleyne in Tail as Tenants in Common with Remainder to the use of me the said Dame Sarah Holte and my Sister Elizabeth Newton and

to my and her Heirs and Assigns for ever as Tenants in Common Now I Give and Devise all my undivided Moiety or half part and all other my part and share of and in the said Lands Plantations and Hereditis in the said Parish of Saint James in the Island of Barbadoes so Devised to the said Sir John Gay Alleyne for his Life as aforesaid and all my Estate and Interest therein in Reversion Remainder or otherwise unto my Sister Elizabeth Newton and her Assigns for and during her natural Life and from and after her Decease I Give and Devise the same unto and to the use of the Honourable Edward Bouverie Esquire Brother to the Right Honourable Jacob Pleydell Bouverie the present Earl of Radnor and to the Heirs and Assigns of the said Edward Bouverie for ever Also I Give and Bequeath to Thomas Fowler of Pedford in the County of Stafford Esquire the Sum of one hundred pounds of lawful Money of Great Britain to be paid to the said Thomas Fowler out of my Personal Estate within six Months next after my Decease In Trust for the sole and separate use and benefit of Barbara the wife of the Reverend John Wingfield of Salop in the County of Salop Clerk and wherewith he the said John Wingfield shall not intermeddle notwithstanding Coverture nor shall the same be liable to his Debts or Engagements and I desire the said Thomas Fowler his Executors Administrators and Assigns either to set out the same at Interest and pay and apply the Interest thereof or to pay and apply all or any part of the Principal Sum of one hundred Pounds for the sole and separate use and benefit of the said Barbara Wingfield in such manner and at such time or times as she the said Barbara Wingfield shall by any writing or writings under her hand notwithstanding Coverture direct or appoint and I do declare that the Receipt and Receipts of the said Barbara alone without her said Husband shall from time to time be a sufficient discharge to the said Thomas Fowler his Executors Administrators and Assigns for all or any part of the Principal or Interest Money notwithstanding her Coverture it being my intent that the same or any part thereof shall not be liable to the Debts or Controul of the said John Wingfield Also in case the said Barbara Wingfield shall die before she has received the whole of the said Principal and Interest Then In Trust to pay and apply the same in such manner as the said Barbara shall by any Writing under her hand notwithstanding Coverture direct or appoint and for want thereof to pay the same to Thomas Heath Nephew of the said Barbara Wingfield his Executors and Administrators Also I Give and Bequeath to Sarah Hart Daughter of Thomas Hart of Aston aforesaid my Butler the Sum of Fifty Pounds to be paid to her out of my Personal Estate within six Months after my Decease Also I Give and Bequeath to such of my Servants as shall have lived in my Service twelve Months preceding my Death one years wages besides what shall be due to each of them and a Suit of Mourning and to every other of my Servants who shall not have lived with me twelve Months I Give a suit of Mourning only And I Give Devise and Bequeath all the Rest and Residue of my Manors Messuages Farms Estates Plantations Lands Tenements Tythes and Hereditis and shares of Manors Messuages Farms Estates Plantations Lands Tenements Hereditis and Real Estates whatsoever in the Kingdom of Great Britain and the said Island of Barbadoes unto and to the use of my said Sister Elizabeth Newton her Heirs and Assigns for ever and I Give and Bequeath all my Household Goods and Furniture Pictures plate Jewels Trinkets Moneys Securities for Money Stock of Cattle Instore and outstore and all the Rest and Residue of my Personal Estate of what nature or kind soever which I shall be possessed of or any ways intituled unto at the time of my Decease unto my said Sister Elizabeth Newton her Executors Administrators and Assigns and I constitute and appoint my said Sister Elizabeth Newton sole Executrix of this my last Will and Testament and I revoke all former Wills by me made In Witness whereof I the said Dame Sarah Holte the Testatrix have to this my last Will and Testament contained in this and one preceeding sheet of paper and to a Duplicate thereof set my hand at the bottom of the preceeding sheet and my hand and Seal to this second and last sheet the Fifteenth day of March in the twenty Fourth year of the Reign of our Sovereign Lord George the third by the Grace of God of Great Britain France and Ireland King Defender of the Faith and in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty Four S Holte Signed Sealed Published and Declared by the said Dame Sarah Holte the Testatrix as and for her last Will and Testament in the presence of us who have subscribed our names as Witnesses thereto at the request of and in the presence of the said Testatrix and of each other Char Simpson Wm Gilbert Fras Oakey Fini

This Will was proved at London the twenty ninth Day of April in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and ninety Four before the Right Honourable Sir William Wynne Knight Doctor of Laws Master Keeper or Commissary of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury lawfully constituted by the Oath of Elizabeth Newton Spinster the Sister of the Deceased and the sole Executrix named in the said Will to whom Administration of all and singular the Goods Chattels and Credits of the said Deceased was granted having been first sworn by Commission duly to Administer.

Explanation of the fate of Mount Alleyne Estate by Boris Wojtan:

The really short answer is that the Honourable Edward Bouverie Esq (brother to the Right Hon Jacob Pleydell Bouverie Earl of Radnor) ends up with Mount Alleyne estate.

The longer answer is as follows:

Trust law has changed a lot since then. Nowadays the legal title is always completely separate from any beneficial entitlement. For example, it is quite common for someone to leave their share in the matrimonial home to their children as far as the legal title is concerned, but to make sure that the surviving spouse can live in the house for the rest of their life which is a benefit to that surviving spouse.

In this Will which was drawn up in 1784 and then 'proved' or activated 10 years later, the same sort of effect is apparent – ie letting people use it for their life time but then ultimately the property goes to someone else – except that they talk about those life time 'beneficiaries' as owning the property legally eg by saying things like tenants in common.

So – when Sarah Holte's (SH) brother (JN) died ... SH inherited something from him. I say 'something', because we are talking about land & property that will ultimately come to her or anyone who inherits from her when she dies, but at the time of her death she may not actually have that land or property yet. So think of it more like a 'right' to get the land someday.

What JN says in his will is that Sir John Gay Alleyne (JGA) will be allowed to use the Barbados property (ie the Lands, Plantations and Heredits – you would have to find his Will to figure out exactly what that comprises) for his lifetime. If JGA dies then his sons can use it for their lifetimes and if they die or there are none then JGA's daughters can use it for their lifetimes.

Where you see in 'Tail' I think this is probably just the concept of including offspring that are not born at the time the will is written, but I am not 100% sure.

Once JGA and any sons or daughters of JGA have died off the Barbados property passes to SH and her sister Elizabeth Newton (EN) who is also the executrix of SH's Will. They would hold the Barbados property in a more absolute way 'forever' and in equal halves (or 'Moieties').

So essentially, SH ends up with half the Barbados property - either the actual land and legal title to it or the right to get it once JGA and any of his offspring have died off.

In JH's Will, SH leaves her half of the Mount Alleyne property to her sister EN to enjoy for the rest of her lifetime and then to Edward Bouverie absolutely. Assuming Edward survives JGA and any offspring of JGA and he survives EN then he gets his hands on the Barbados property. If there are any pesky survivors out of that lot still enjoying the benefit of the Barbados property for their lifetimes at the time of Edward's death, Edward can still pass that 'right' to get the land on to his heirs who will simply have to wait until the pesky survivors have died out.

Note by Allan Howard:

In order to sort out who actually inherited Mount Alleyne, we would have to find out when John Gay Alleyne died and if he had surviving children.

In order to find out more about the, rather odd seeming, descent of Mount Alleyne, we need to have a look at the will of John(2) Newton, which we have a copy of from The Staffordshire Record Office (D357/K/3/1-4), and are in the process of transcribing and the marriage settlement of John(2) Newton and Elizabeth Alleyne which is in the Newton Papers, Senate House, London MS523/970, the abstract of which is:

“2 Oct 1740. Agreement made before John Newton's marriage between himself, James Halsall, Reynold Alleyne and George Hannay, concerning land and property in Barbados, and Kings Bromley, Staffs. and in Derbyshire. With a letter from Theo. Lovett of Lichfield and a list of slaves on Samuel Newton's plantation, 8 June 1740.”