

THE HOME COUNTIES MAGAZINE

*Devoted to the Topography of London,
Middlesex, Essex, Herts, Bucks,
Berks, Surrey, and Kent*

Edited by W. PALEY BAILDON, F.S.A.

VOLUME XI. 1909

LONDON: GEORGE BELL AND SONS
York House, Portugal Street, W.C.

THE EARLY HISTORY OF LITTLE BERKHAMSTEAD, HERTS.

By C. E. Johnston.

The village of little Berkhamstead is on a hill south of the Lea Valley, between Hertford and Hatfield, some 375 feet above the sea level. Its name (in Anglo-Saxon, *Beorhhamstede*, the homestead-on-the-hill) well describes its position. In common with neighbouring parishes, its lands run from the high ground down to the river in the valley below, which forms its northern boundary: on the west it is bounded by Bayford Parish, on the east by Essendon, and on the south by Hatfield. The present area of the parish is 1586½ acres, but there was formerly an outlying portion of about 108 acres at Claypits Farm, on the road to Broxbourne; this is now in the civil parish of Bayford, but still pays tithe to Little Berkhamstead.

Though never of much importance, Little Berkhamstead is a place of great antiquity; it belonged to the alms of King Edward the Confessor, and all the kings his predecessors, and was assessed at five hides, which just before the Norman Conquest were divided amongst three holders: Semar, a priest, held two hides; Leuefa (Leofgifu), a widow, held two; and Wilfric Werden, one; it was then worth 100 shillings yearly.

It is now held ¹ that it was here or near by, and not at Great Berkhamstead, that William the Conqueror, after his encircling movement round London subsequent to the Battle of Hastings, met Edgar Atheling and the Saxon leaders from London and received their submission. This incident took place near *Beorcham*, just as London came in sight. It would certainly seem that the invading army passed through Little Berkhamstead, as its yearly value was reduced to 50 shillings, when the Conqueror bestowed it on one of his followers, Harduin d'Eschalers, ² and this would, no doubt, be due to waste and pillage, as by 1086 the value was once more 100 shillings.

The fief which Harduin received from the Conqueror lay in Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire, and the *caput* of his barony

¹ *English Historical Review*, January, 1898.

² The Latinized form of the name was *de Escalariis*, or *Scalariis*, which historians converted into de Scalers; it was derived, perhaps, from Ecalles in Normandy.

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was in Cambridgeshire; in Hertfordshire his lands were assessed at some 40 hides, besides 14 houses in the borough of Hertford; it was a characteristic of his scattered estates that he displaced a great number of small holders. He and his wife, Odel, gave the Manor of Bramfield, Herts, to the Abbey of St. Albans. Hardion died, it is said, in 1086, and he left his fief in equal shares to his two sons, Richard and Hugh; they were each, it appears, responsible for the services of fifteen knights, so that Harduin must have held his fief for thirty knights.

Little Berkhamstead fell to the share of Hugh d'Eschalers, the younger son, and he gave the church of Little Berkhamstead and those of Reed and Wyddial, Herts, and Whaddon, Cambs (all inherited from his father), to the Cluniac Priory of St. Pancras at Lewes, where he eventually became a monk, on which his son, Henry, succeeded to his lands and confirmed the grant to the Priory, adding thereto 10 shillings rent in Whaddon. ¹ Henry in his turn was succeeded by his son, Hugh, who also confirmed the grants to the Priory.

Meanwhile the elder branch of the family was represented by William d'Eschalers, son of Stephen and grandson of Richard, and second cousin, therefore, of Hugh; William considered that, as descendant of the elder son, he had a right to all his great grandfather, Harduin's, lands, and a grand Assize ² was accordingly held between the cousins about the end of the twelfth century concerning 2 carucates of lands in Whaddon, 3 in Reed, 3 in Wyddial, and 2 in Berkhamstead, and the services of sundry knights. The jury found that when Henry I died, in 1135, Harduin's sons each held the lands he had left them, and that these lands had since descended from father to son in each case. Hugh, therefore, won the day.

Hugh d'Eschalers appears in the *Testa de Nevill*, under "Serjeanties in the time of Henry III," as holding Berkhamstead for one knight's fee, ³ which pertained to his barony. He had three sons, Henry, Geoffrey, and John. Henry succeeded his father, and went to Palestine, assigning the Manor of Wyddial to his wife Maude, for her maintenance in his absence. In 1220 she complained that she was much vexed in her tenure of the manor by Jews, to whom her husband

¹ Cartulary of Lewes in the Cottonian MSS.

² *Abbreviatio Placitorum*, 7 Rioc. 1 to 9 John.

³ Note that the assessment of the manor is no longer 5 hides, but one knight's fee, or 2 carucates.

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was in debt (probably for his crusading outfit), and the sheriff was directed to have the vexation stopped. ¹

Henry d'Eschalers died in Palestine, and in 1221 his brother, Geoffrey, did homage and paid £100 relief for his lands. An interesting, but far from estimable, person now comes for a brief space into the history of the manor: in 1223 Geoffrey d'Eschalers (his younger brother, John, consenting) granted ² to Falkes de Breauté for 10 marks of silver the Manor of Little Berkhamstead in demesnes and rents, in villeinage, homage, and freemen's services, and all other appurtenances, to hold for ever of Geoffrey and his heirs, at a yearly rental of a pair of gilt spurs or sixpence at Easter for all service save foreign service.

Falkes de Breauté was a Norman of low origin, who had secured the favour of King John; he should have been banished on the signing of Magna Carta, but was instead raised to greater power for his services to John against the Barons. He was given to wife Margaret, daughter and heiress of Warine Fitz Gerald and widow of Baldwin de Redvers of Devon, with the custody of his stepson, young Baldwin de Redvers. This marriage and wardship gave him a great position, and he further obtained the custody of several castles and the shrievalty of six counties. He was thus in a position of great power at the beginning of Henry III's reign. He committed so many excesses that it could no longer be tolerated, and Hubert de Burgh, the justiciar, demanded the restoration of the castles, honours, and wardships pertaining to the Crown, which Falkes had in his possession. It was only on a threat of excommunication that he complied. He was then tried, found guilty of more than thirty acts of wrongful disseisin, and sentenced to pay a heavy fine. This so incensed him that he seized one of the justices who had given the sentence, and imprisoned him in Bedford Castle, then held by his brother, William de Breauté. Falkes himself retreated to Wales; he was excommunicated and his lands were seized; this was in June, 1224. Bedford Castle was captured in the following August, after a desperate defence, and William de Breauté was hanged. Soon after Falkes was captured and threw himself on the King's mercy, pleading his services to King John. By a deed dated August 25, 1224, Falkes made complete submission and surrendered all his estates; his wife pleaded that she had been

¹ Close Rolls.

² *Pedes Finium*, 7 Hen, III, Herts, No. 63.

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married to him against her will'; she was granted a divorce and her own estates were restored to her. In 1225 Falkes was sentenced to banishment from England for ever, and his ex-communication was removed. He set out for Rome to solicit the Pope's intervention, and Honorius III wrote to the King and to the Archbishop of Canterbury on his behalf; ¹ but nothing came of it, as in 1226 Falkes died abroad. His fall was the end of the influence in England of the foreigners brought in by King John. ²

Little Berkhamstead thus came into the hands of the King; Henry III promptly restored to Thomas Saut of Cheverel rents of 2 marks and 2 pence in Berkhamstead, which had been granted him by Henry d'Eschalers, and of which he had been wrongfully disseised by Falkes de Breauté. ³ In April, 1225, orders were sent ⁴ to the Sheriff of Herts to pull down without delay Falkes' houses at Little Berkhamstead, and to cart them to Hertford Castle, where they were to be re-erected. In the following July the King granted Falkes' land there, during pleasure, to John Marescall for his maintenance in the King's service; and in August, Falkes' houses having been removed to Hertford Castle, the sheriff was directed to leave the ancient hall and ancient chapel, brewery and stable (*veterem Aulam et veterem Capellam, bracinum et marescalciam*) till further orders, and not to allow any waste or destruction of the houses, meadows, or corn belonging there, and to let the King know the expense incurred in tilling and sowing the land.

On July 18, 1226, orders were given that at a convenient season the stable-house (*domum marescalcie*) of Little Berkhamstead should be removed to Hertford and erected in a suitable place within the castle. On July 30 the sheriff was directed (notwithstanding the order to take into the King's hands the land of Little Berkhamstead which John Marescall had of the King's bailiff) to allow the said John to have his own goods and chattels there, and to harvest the corn which he had had sown there, and to have the labour due in that vill for harvesting corn that autumn. The same day orders were sent to the sheriff to give seisin of the said land to Nicholas de Moeles, to whom the King had granted it, during pleasure, for his maintenance in the King's service.

¹ Papal Letters, 1226.

² For further details about Falkes, see Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora* and *D. N. B.*

³ Close Rolls, 1224.

⁴ Close Rolls.

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Two years later (August 11, 1228) the King granted the manor to Nicholas de Moeles and his heirs entirely; unfortunately the membrane on which the grant is enrolled is defective and the terms of the grant cannot be exactly ascertained. From the old *Calendar of Charter Rolls* (published in 1803) we learn that it was a grant to Nicholas de Moeles of all the land in Little Berkhamstead formerly held by Falkes de Breauté, and Chauncy, in his *Antiquities of Hertfordshire* (1700), states that the manor was granted to Nicholas, "to hold of the King in fee or to whom he should give or assign the same, rendering yearly to the King at Easter a pair of gilt spurs, or sixpence, for all services, and that their tenants of the land shall be quit from all suits at the County and Hundred Court:" this tallied with the parts of the original grant still remaining. The exemption of the tenants from suits at the Hundred and County Courts was a privilege of tenants in royal manors.

It will be seen that Geoffrey d'Eschalers's right to the manor appears to have been forfeited as well as Falkes', and the heirs of Nicholas de Moeles certainly held it of the King in chief; but in the *Testa de Nevill*, amongst knights who were tenants-in-chief in other counties but not in Herts, we find Nicholas de Moeles holding Little Berkhamstead, value £10; and in 1235 Nicholas de Moeles of Berkhamstead paid one mark scutage at Hertford by Walter Marescall, his steward, for one knight's fee *of the fee of Geoffrey d'Eschalers*. It would seem that some question about this may have arisen later, as, in 1252, an inquisition was held to find out whether Falkes' two carucates of land in Little Berkhamstead had been in the King's hands for a year and a day or not, and of whom he held that land; the jury found that it had been in the King's hands for a year and a day, and that the land was held of Geoffrey d'Eschalers.¹ A felon's lands were forfeited to the Crown for a year and a day, on the principle that the overlord had not exercised due care in the choice of a tenant, and afterwards the lands reverted to the overlord, but in this case the d'Eschalers family certainly ceased to have any right to the manor by the time of Nicholas de Moeles' son, and the grant to Nicholas was made direct by the King.

The exact origin of Nicholas de Moeles is uncertain. The lordship of Moels (now Meulles) in Normandy had belonged

¹ Cussans in his *History of Hertfordshire* quotes this as an inquisition post mortem on Falkes de Breauté.

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to Baldwin FitzGilbert, Sheriff of Devon after the Conquest, who was sometimes styled Baldwin de Moeles: a Roger de Moeles was a tenant of his in Devon in 1086 and a Roger de Moeles appears in the Devonshire Pipe Roll of 1140. Nicholas (or Colin, as he was also called) first appears in 1215 in the King's service; on one occasion he is called "King's clerk," and he was often employed in confidential affairs. In 1225 he was sent with some ecclesiastical dignitaries on a mission to the Duke of Austria, and the following year he was sent to Poitou to Earl Richard, the King's brother, and remained in Gascony till 1227. In 1229 he is called *miles noster familiaris*. The same year the King sent to the custodians of the bishopric of Ely to allow Nicholas de Moles six beeches and four oaks from Hatfield Park, for timber, perhaps for replacing the buildings at Little Berkhamstead, which had been removed to Hertford Castle.

Nicholas had grants of various manors from the King, amongst others Kind'g Kerswell and Diptford, Devon. Some time before 1231 he married Hawise, daughter of James de Newmarch, who brought to him the manors of Cadbury and Maperton, Somerset. By this marriage he had apparently two sons, Roger and James, and two daughters, Maud, who married Richard del Ortiay, and Agnes, who married William de Braose.

He had been made Sheriff of Hampshire and Warden of Winchester Castle in 1228, but he had to surrender the Shrievalty in 1232 to Peter des Roches, Bishop of Winchester, Henry III's worthless favourite; he regained it, however, on the Bishop's dismissal from power in 1234, and he was also given charge of the Channel Islands.

At the coronation of Eleanor of Provence, Henry's queen, in 1236, Nicholas de Moeles and Richard Siward, *militēs strenui*, carried the royal sceptres, "not by right, as there is no right to this service, but by the King's choice." Later, he was further favoured, as his son, James, was allowed to be educated with Prince Edward.

In 1242 he accompanied the King to Poitou, and was sent on an unsuccessful mission to Louis IX, to arrange a truce. From 1243 to 1245 he was Seneschal of Gascony, and waged a successful war against Thibaut, King of Navarre. In 1251, he was sent to Gascony to investigate charges against Simon de Montfort. He was governor of various castles at different times, and in 1258 was Warden of the Cinque Ports. The last

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mention of him ¹ is in 1263, and he must have died before 1268, as in that year his son, Roger de Moeles, had a grant of a weekly market and a fair at King's Kerswell, Devon, which had belonged to Nicholas. We may assume that Little Berkhamstead cannot have seen very much of Nicholas de Moeles, as he was so constantly employed in the King's service: it was, moreover, the only manor which he held in that part of the country.

In 1274 an inquisition taken at Hertford ² found that Nicholas had made encroachment at Little Berkhamstead by appropriating to himself half an acre of land of the King's desmesne (presumably in the adjoining royal manors of Bayford or Essendon), "which his son now holds," and that Roger de Moeles had made encroachment by cutting down ten trees on a boundary (*divisa*) of the King's between Essendon and Berkhamstead. Further, Walter de Essex, while sheriff, had taken two of Roger's horses, worth two marks, and still retained them, contrary to the King's command.

In 1278 complaint was made before the Justices Itinerant that the men of Little Berkhamstead and Hertingfordbury were wont to fish in the water of Little Berkhamstead (*i.e.* the River Lea) with fishing-nets, but that Roger de Moeles now for ten years elapsed has restrained them. ³

Roger de Moeles fought in the Welsh wars of Edward I. He had free warren in his demesne lands at Little Berkhamstead in 1290; and, by inquisition taken after his death in 1295, it was found that he held the manor in chief of the King, by the service of a pair of gilt spurs, worth sixpence, and that John de Moeles, aged twenty-six, was his son and heir. The latter was summoned to Parliament as a baron by writ: he married a daughter of Lord Grey de Ruthyn (?), named apparently Maude, ⁴ and had three sons, Nicholas, Roger, and John. On his death in 1310 he was succeeded by Nicholas, who was just of age, and who was also summoned to Parliament by writ. This Nicholas married Margaret Courtenay, sister of the Earl of Devon, and in 1313 settled the manor of Little Berkhamstead on himself and his wife for their lives, with remainder, in default of issue between them,

¹ See *D. N. B.* and Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora*, for further details concerning Nicholas de Moeles. Matthew Paris calls him *miles strnuissimus et circumspectus*.

² Hundred Rolls.

³ Assize Rolls.

⁴ Feet of Fines, Somerset, 1303.

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to his right heirs,¹ so that, on his death without issue in 1316, his widow succeeded to Little Berkhamstead in addition to manors in Devon and Somerset assigned her by the King as Dower.² The remainder of his lands went to his brother,³ Roger, who, however, died without issue in 1325, leaving a widow, Alice (daughter and heiress of William le Prouz), and was succeeded by the third brother, John. There were thus two widows to be provided for out of the estates, and John de Moeles' inheritance was somewhat curtailed on that account: Margaret, widow of Nicholas, at all events survived him, but we need not follow her history, as in 1328 she exchanged the manor of Little Berkhamstead with John de Moeles for some of his lands in Devonshire.⁴

John de Moeles did homage for his brother's lands in September, 1325;⁵ he married Joan, daughter of Sir Richard Lovel of Castle Cary, who had had custody of his lands for the short period till he came of age. Sir John de Moeles, who had been made a Knight of the Bath, died in 1337, leaving two daughters to divide his property. The elder daughter, Muriel, aged fifteen, was already married to Thomas de Courtenay, younger son of the Earl of Devon, and her pour-party of inheritance was delivered to her and her husband. Little Berkhamstead fell to the portion of Isabel, the younger daughter, aged thirteen, who, being heiress of a tenant-in-chief, under age and unmarried, became a ward of the King. That same year, however, she married, without the King's leave, William de Botreaux, an elderly man, who was the owner of many manors in the south-west of England, chiefly in Cornwall,⁶ Devon, and Somerset; the King, therefore, refused to give up her lands and gave the custody of them to Thomas de Ferrers to hold until she should come of age.⁷ It was not, however, till 1347 that seisin of her pourparty was given to her and her husband, including Little Berkhamstead.⁸

William de Botreaux died in 1349, leaving a son William, aged twelve, and the King thus again had the wardship of the heir to Little Berkhamstead, the custody of which he gave to William Volant for 25 marks yearly during William's minority.⁹

¹ *Ped. Fin. Herts, and Inq. ad quod damnum*, 6 Edw. II.lose Rolls.

² Close Rolls.

³ He has been erroneously stated to be son of Nicholas.

⁴ Patent Rolls.

⁵ Close Rolls, 1337.

⁶ The name of this family survives in Boscastle, originally Botreaux Castle, in Cornwall.

⁷ Close Rolls, 1337.

⁸ Close Rolls, 1347.

⁹ *Rot. Orig. Abbrev.*

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William de Botreaux, the younger, made proof of age in 1359, and had livery of his lands: he married Elizabeth, daughter of Sir Ralph D'Aubeny, and had four sons, William, Thomas, Ralph, and John. In 1375 he granted the manor of Little Berkhamstead to Edmund de Hyndon for twelve years, at the annual rent of a rose at Midsummer: and later in the same year an inquisition ¹ at Hertford found that Sir William de Botreaux might, without prejudice to the King, grant the manor (valued at 100 shillings yearly) to Edmund de Hyndon for life and for a year after Edmund's death to the executors of his will, to hold of the King by the usual services, the manor to revert afterwards wholly to de Botreaux and his heirs. Hyndon's tenure ceased in or before 1384, as in that year Sir William granted ² the manor, excepting 100 acres of woodland, to William Framelyngham, Citizen and Skinner of London, for ten years, at an annual rent of a rose at Midsummer for the first six years, and after that 20 marks yearly; and in 1385 he extended the lease to twenty years in all. It was no doubt more profitable to lease manors than to work them, in view of the labour troubles due to the Black Death and the Peasants' Revolt.

In 1385 Sir William de Botreaux settled Little Berkhamstead on himself and his wife, with remainder to his sons, and, in default of them or their heirs, to his sister Elizabeth, wife of Robert de Palton. ³ At Sir William's death, in 1391, it was found that William Framelyngham held the manor, then worth £10 yearly, the hundred acres of woodland being worth 2s. yearly. The eldest son, Sir William de Botreaux, who was aged twenty-three and more in 1391, had married Elizabeth, daughter and heiress of John de St. Lo; he died in 1394, leaving a son, William, aged five, and with this last William ended the senior male line of the family, as he had only a daughter, Margaret, who married Sir Robert Hungerford, second Baron Hungerford, and carried the Botreaux estates into that family.

Little Berkhamstead, however, passed into other hands, for in 1402 it was found ⁴ that John Norbury, Esquire, held the manor of the King in socage *sine medio*, and that it was worth £18 a year, and he paid 18s. towards the aid for marrying the

¹ *Inq. ad quod damnum*, 49 Ed. III.

² *Inq. post mortem*, 15 Ric. II, Sir William de Botreaux.

³ Feet of Fines (Divers Counties), 1385.

⁴ Lay Subsidies, Herts, 120-54.

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King's eldest daughter, Blanche. Exactly when or by what means Norbury got possession of the manor is not clear. It was still held by the de Botreaux family in 1399, as is shown by a suit recorded in the last *De Banco* Roll of Richard II's reign, brought by the King, as guardian of William de Botreaux, with reference to the advowson of Little Berkhamstead.

John Norbury ¹ was a cadet of a Cheshire family, ² and was a squire to John of Gaunt. He was one of the three English captains mentioned in Froissart's *Chronicle*, who in 1385 arrived at Lisbon from Bordeaux with "three great ships of men of war and English archers, good men of arms and well used in the feats of war," and rendered valiant aid to King John of Portugal against the King of Castile at the battle of Aljubarrota.

In 1387 Norbury acquired the manor of Bedwell ³ in Essendon, which adjoins Little Berkhamstead: Essendon was a royal manor which had been granted to John of Gaunt by Edward III. In 1390 he accompanied Henry, Earl of Derby, son of John of Gaunt, on the "Crusade" of the Teutonic Knights against Lithuania. The following year he was Knight of the Shire for Hertfordshire, and was then receiving £20 a year as squire to the Earl of Derby. He accompanied Henry on his banishment in 1398; and was in attendance on him in Paris in June 1399; the following month he landed in Yorkshire with Henry, who ostensibly came to claim his father's estates and soon collected an army. Richard II surrendered to Henry on August 19, and on September 3 Norbury was appointed Treasurer of the Exchequer during pleasure. ⁴ The King was lodged in the Tower of London, where Norbury was one of the witnesses of his abdication; and on September 30, when Henry was accepted as King by Parliament, Norbury's appointment as treasurer was confirmed. Later he received a grant of £40 yearly, the office of Keeper of the King's Privy Wardrobe within the Tower, the Castle and Lordship of Ledes, Kent, the Captaincy of Guisnes Castle in Normandy, and a manor and castle in Ireland, and Ralph, Earl of Westmorland, granted him £60 yearly. ⁴

In February, 1400, Norbury was a commissioner for holding special courts of inquiry into cases of treason in London and the neighbourhood. ⁴ In May, 1401, he vacated the office of

¹ The name was also spelt Northbury or Northbery.

² Ormerod's *History of Cheshire*.

³ Ancient Deeds, P.R.O.

⁴ Patent Rolls.

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Treasurer, but he remained high in the King's favour, and in 1404 was one of seven commoners in the Privy Council. In 1405 he was recommended, with others, to the King's favour by the Commons for his "*bon et gréable service*" in joining in Henry's adventure in 1399. In 1406 he was sent on an embassy to France with Henry Beaufort, Bishop of Winchester; in this year he vacated the Captaincy of Guisnes. He had amassed wealth, as he advanced £1,000, a considerable sum then, for the pay of the Guisnes garrison, and he lent the King £3,000 more in 1407 and 1408.

It was doubtless through Henry's favour, as guardian of William de Botreaux, that Norbury had been able to acquire the manor of Little Berkhamstead. In 1406 he had license ¹ to inclose 800 acres of land and wood in his manors of Bedwell and Little Berkhamstead with palings, a wall, hedge, or ditch, at his will, and make thereof a park, and stock it with wild and other animals; together with free warren in all his demesne lands in Essendon and Little Berkhamstead, so that no one should hunt there without permission, under penalty of £10 fine to the King.

Norbury's first wife was named Petronilla (or Parnel); by her he had two daughters--Joan, married to Nicholas Usk, Treasurer to John of Gaunt, and the other married to William Parker, a London alderman; for the last Norbury negotiated a second marriage, in 1404, with Sir Richard St. Maur. Some time between 1405 and 1410 Norbury married Elizabeth, elder sister of Sir Ralph Boteler of Sudeley, and widow of Sir William Heron, Lord Say, who usually styled herself Elizabeth, Lady Say; by this marriage he had two sons, Henry, godson of Henry IV, and John.

Norbury was a witness to Henry IV's will, made in 1409. In 1412 he was assessed for a subsidy on £100, yearly value of land in Sawbridgeworth, Essendon, Little Berkhamstead, Hoddesdon, and Cheshunt in Herts. ² The land in Sawbridgeworth, an ancient possession of the Says, perhaps came to him with his second wife. In this year he was granted the alien priory of Lewisham and Greenwich for life, with remainder to his two sons for their lives, during the war with France, and also the manor and advowson of Cheshunt, Herts, with remainder to his wife and their sons. In 1415 Sir William

¹ Charter Rolls, 7 Hen. IV.

² Lay Subsidies, Essex and Herts, 240-261, 13 Hen. IV.

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Botreaux conveyed the manor of Little Berkhamstead ¹ to John Norbury and others, and the heirs of John Norbury, for 300 silver marks; this was presumably simply a confirmation of Norbury's title, Sir William Botreaux having been under age when Norbury first acquired it.

The date of John Norbury's death is uncertain. He was buried beside his first wife in an alabaster tomb in the Greyfriars' Church, London, where he was described as *valens armiger, strenuus et probus vir, quondam magnus thesaurarius Regni Anglie*, and his wife as *devotissima mater ordinis*.²

It is not clear who succeeded to the manor of Little Berkhamstead; his son, Sir Henry Norbury, does not appear in connection with it, and there are few records, about it at this time. It probably passed to his widow, Elizabeth, Lady Say, for her life; she afterwards married Sir John Montgomery of Faulkbourne, Essex (d.1449), to whom she bore two sons and a daughter; she was godmother of Edward IV, and, on his accession to the throne, had the manor of Cheshunt confirmed to her for life. She died in 1464, and was buried at Erbury in Warwickshire. In 1465 her grandson, John Norbury, son of Sir Henry, succeeded to the lands which had been his grandfather's.³

From this it would appear that Sir Henry Norbury was dead; he had been in the French wars under Somerset, and was taken prisoner at Formigny in 1450, but was exchanged for the surrender of Vire, of which town he was captain; in 1455 he was a commissioner for raising money in Surrey for the defence of Calais. His connection with Surrey was through his marriage to Anne Croyser, heiress of the manor of Stoke d'Abernon. He and his wife were buried in the Norbury tomb in the Greyfriars' Church, as was also his younger brother, John, who seems to have been in Henry VI's household.

In 1466 Sir John Norbury conveyed the manor of Bedwell, together with 620 acres of land, and 40s. rent in Essendon, Hatfield, Bayford, North Mimms, Northaw, and Cheshunt, by recovery,⁴ to Sir John Say, Speaker of the House of Commons, who must have bought the manor of Little Berkhamstead from him about the same time, and also acquired from Robert Lowthe the adjacent manors of Hornbeamgate and Blounts,

¹ *Ped. Fin.* (Divers Counties), 3 Hen. V, No.33.

² *Coll. Top. et Gen.*, vol. v, MS. of inscriptions in Greyfriars' Church.

³ Patent Rolls.

⁴ De Banco Roll, No. 818, Hilary, 5 Edw. IV, m. 278d.

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and the advowson of the Lowthe's Chantry in Hatfield Church; these last two manors became practically incorporated with Bedwell under the name of Bedwell Lowthes. Sir John Say thus acquired a compact group of manors, of which Bedwell was apparently the head, and provided the lord's residence; there is a fine rental of these manors at the Record Office, taken for Sir John Say in 1468.

John Say began his career in the King's household, where he was King's Serjeant and Yeoman of the Chamber in 1444, when he was appointed Coroner of the Marshalsea with a grant of £10 a year; in 1445 he became Keeper of the Privy Palace of Westminster, with an allowance of 6d. a day. He married Elizabeth, daughter of Lawrence Cheyney, Esq., of Fen Ditton, Cambs, and widow of Sir Frederick Tilney, ¹ of Boston, Lincs; it was no doubt through this connection that Say was elected M.P. for Cambridge in 1447 and 1449; in the latter year he was Speaker of the House of Commons.

In 1448 Say acquired, through trustees, a group of manors in Broxbourne, Hoddesdon, Amwell, Wormley, and Cheshunt, Herts, centred round the manor of Baas, which became his principal residence; the site of the old manor house can be seen near Blase Hill, just outside Broxbournebury Park.

John Say was one of the unpopular courtiers against whom the insurgents under Cade, in 1450, directed their displeasure, and in the "Dirge of the Commons of Kent" two lines were devoted to him:

John Say synge *Dominus regit me*
Nichyll michi deerit ² for owt that I can se.

He was one of those indicted of treason at the Guildhall after Cade's entry into London, but was acquitted; and in 1451, "John Say, late of London, Squier," was amongst those presented to the King by the Commons for misbehaviour, with the request that he would remove them from about his person and forbid them coming within twelve miles of the Court; Henry consented to banish some of them from his presence for a year, but insisted on retaining those accustomed to attend on him personally. Say was Knight of the Shire for Herts in 1453 and 1455, and was a commissioner for raising money in Herts for the defence of Calais in 1455. He trimmed when

¹ By her first marriage she was great-grandmother of Anne Boleyn.

² Psalm xxiii.

EARLY HISTORY OF LITTLE BERKHAMSTEAD.

Edward IV came to the throne, and was made a Knight of the Bath in 1465, at the coronation of Elizabeth Woodville; he was again Knight of the Shire for Herts and Speaker of the House of Commons in 1463 and 1467.

Sir John Say was certainly related to the Barons Say, whose senior male line died out in 1382, but the exact connection has not been established; the Says had held for many generations the manor of Sawbridgeworth, Herts, which passed to the Herons by marriage; in 1468 John Heron died possessed of that manor, without known heirs, and leaving a widow who had a life interest in it, and the trustees of the manor conveyed the reversion of it to Sir John Say and others. Various conjectures have been made as to Say's parentage; he probably came of a junior branch of the Barons Say, and may have been son of William Say, who was King's Serjeant and Yeoman Usher of the Chamber to Henry VI, 1422-55. He had two brothers, William and Thomas; William, who was described as *de foris Aldgate, London*, was Fellow of New College, Oxford, from 1426 to 1442, Prebendary of St. Paul's, 1447, and Dean of St. Paul's from 1457 till his death in 1468; he was a Privy Councillor in 1464, and was Rector of the Fraternity in the Shrolds of Jesus Chapel at St. Paul's, where he was buried.

Lady Say died in 1473, and was buried in Broxbourne Church in a Purbeck marble tomb, on which are brass figures of her and Sir John Say. The legend describes her as "a woman of noble blode and most noble in gode maners." Sir John Say married secondly, in 1477, the widow of Lord Wenlock, and died on April 12, 1478, survived for a few months by his second wife. He was buried in Broxbourne Church. He died possessed of ten manors and other lands in Herts, seven manors in Essex, three in Norfolk, and one in Rutlandshire; he left three sons and four married daughters, and was succeeded by his eldest son, William who had been in the household of his uncle, Dean Say, as appears by the latter's will.

William Say was Sheriff of Herts in 1482-3, and was made a Knight of the Bath by Richard III on the Sunday before his coronation. He married Genevieve, daughter and heiress of John Hill, of Spaxton, Somerset, by whom he had two surviving children--Elizabeth, who married William Blount, fourth Lord Mountjoy, the friend and pupil of Erasmus, and Mary, who married Henry Bouchier, second Earl of Essex.

EARLY HISTORY OF LITTLE BERKHAMSTEAD.

In 1506 Sir William Say settled ¹ the manors of Bedwell and Little Berkhamstead and other property after his death on Lord Mountjoy (whose wife was then dead), with remainder to Lord Mountjoy's daughter Gertrude.

Sir William Say died in 1529, and was buried in a chapel which he had built at Broxbourne Church; he left by will 13s.4d. to the poor of Little Berkhamstead, and a vestment of the value of 20s. to the Church.

Lord Mountjoy died in 1535, and Bedwell and Little Berkhamstead passed to his daughter Gertrude, wife of Henry Courtenay, Marquis of Exeter, first cousin of Henry VIII. The Marquis was executed for high treason in 1539; his widow was also attained, and her lands were forfeited; she was pardoned in 1540, died in 1557, and lies buried in Wimborne Minster. Bedwell and Little Berkhamstead were never restored to her, and remained for a time in the possession of the Crown.

¹ Close Roll 370, No. 10, 1st July, 21 Hen. VII