

The Manor of Bourne
and
the Manor of Bourne Abbots

The Lord of the Manor was a title prevalent throughout England in times past but has now fallen into disuse. It is not a peerage and does not carry any parliamentary rights but merely indicates that the owner of a manor or area of land had certain local rights, and was not generally used socially.

The etymology of the English word lord goes back to Old English hlaf-weard (loaf-guardian) reflecting the Dark Age duty of a superior to provide food for his followers. The female equivalent is Lady, which might come from words meaning loaf-kneader.

Literally, the word lord means one who has power and authority such as a master, ruler, governor, prince or proprietor, as of a manor, or one of whom a fee or estate is held, the male owner of feudal land, as the lord of the soil or the lord of the manor. Although no longer used, documents still exist referring to various English Lordships of the Manor and the titles are frequently sold at auction as a curiosity but no land is now involved, most having been sold on to private interests.

There were originally two manors for this town in the Middle Ages, the Manor of Bourne and the Manor of Bourne Abbots.

The Manor of Bourne was in the hands of the Wake family for a substantial part of the mediaeval period and was formed from two separate holdings that are described in the Domesday Book. William de Rullos was the Lord of Bourne during the reign of Henry I (1100-1135) and soon after this, the manor passed to Baldwin Fitzgilbert who had married William's niece Adelina and he therefore came into the possession of Bourne by the right of his wife.

Their daughter was Emma and on her marriage to Hugh Wake, he had become Lord of Bourne by 1166. The manor remained in the possession of the Wakes until the 14th century and among the various members of the family who held lands in the area was Thomas Wake (1297-1349), a baron who played a significant part in the political affairs of the time. He had succeeded his father when only three years old and for some years was a royal ward although the King, Edward II (1307-1327) eventually allowed him full possession of his lands when he was twenty years old.

Thomas had large estates in Lincolnshire and also some manors in Rutland. He married

Blanche, daughter of Henry of Lancaster and a great-great-granddaughter of Henry III. Thomas held various important posts during his lifetime, including Constable of the Tower of London and Governor of the Channel Islands, and was a man of power and influence, spending little time in Bourne although it is reputed that he received King Edward III as a guest at Bourne Castle in the spring of 1330.

Thomas Wake died in 1349 and his widow, Lady Blanche, lived on for many years and when she died in 1380, the manor passed into the family of Sir Thomas Holland. He was the first husband of Joan, daughter of Thomas Wake's sister Margaret, who had died in 1360. The following year Joan achieved some renown by marrying Edward, the Black Prince, and became known as "the fair maid of Kent" because of her beauty.

The manor lands at Bourne passed to Joan but, as Princess of Wales, she lived mainly in France with her husband and had little contact with Bourne even when in England. This was towards the end of her own life because she died in 1385 and the manor remained with the Holland family for a short time but by 1445 it was in the hands of Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Somerset. It later passed to Henry VIII and eventually came into the possession of William Heckington whose daughter Jane married Richard Cecil. By this union, the Manor of Bourne passed into the Cecil family and remained in the hands of successive earls of Exeter down to modern times.

The Manor of Bourne Abbots appeared with the foundation of the Abbey and having successive abbots as lord but the manor passed into secular hands after the dissolution of the abbey in 1536 giving wealthy landowners the opportunity to increase their holdings of farms and houses in Bourne, Cawthorpe and Dyke. Among those who seized the opportunity was Thomas Trollope who was farming at Cawthorpe, near Bourne, in 1543. He was also improving his status by trade and in 1561 set up a mill to produce canvas and linen clothes.

The Trollopes continued to prosper and came into possession of the manor of Bourne Abbots early in the 17th century. In 1621, the family purchased the manor of Casewick, near Stamford, and twenty years after, Thomas Trollope's great-grandson, also Thomas Trollope, was made a baronet. He died in 1654 and the manor of Bourne Abbots passed to his nephew Sir William Trollope and then his son Thomas Trollope. When he died in 1761, his nephew George Pochin inherited the estates and in 1764 built the Abbey House but spent little time there. On his death in 1798, the manorial estate was inherited by his sister Mary Pochin and when she died in 1804, ownership passed to his widow, Eleanor Frances Pochin. She died in 1823 and trustees took over manorial lands.

There being no male successor to the Pochin estate, the Lordship of the Manor fell vacant but the evidence indicates that a substantial part of the manorial lands and title were purchased

over a period by James Digby and his son, also James, successive tenants of the Red Hall.

The Digby family took over the Red Hall in the 18th century, probably around 1730 when James Digby, a gentleman, is recorded as a deputy steward to the Manor of Bourne Abbots at a session of the manorial court in October of that year and from then onwards, there are numerous references to him and his descendants in the manorial records.

James Digby died in 1751 leaving four sons, John, the eldest, with James, George and Richard. James outlived them all and went to live at the Red Hall, inheriting property from each of their estates when they died. In 1796, he married Catherine Hyde, daughter of the Vicar of Bourne, the Rev Humphrey Hyde, but there were no children. He became a Deputy Lieutenant of Lincolnshire and Justice of the Peace. During his lifetime, he amassed a considerable amount of property in the parish estimated to be worth £200,000 and it is safe to assume that he had also become Lord of the Manor of Bourne Abbots by the time he died in 1811.

The bulk of his estates passed to his sister Henrietta, the widow of George Pouncefort, of Brickhill Manor, Buckinghamshire, but the Red Hall and a portion of James Digby's lands remained in the possession of Catherine who played an influential part in the life of Bourne and although there was no title in the family, preferred to be known as Lady Catherine, having gained the prestige of Lady of the Manor, her husband having bought the manorial lands during his lifetime.

In 1820, Mrs Henrietta Pouncefort died intestate and her only child succeeded to the estates. He was Philip Pouncefort Duncomb, also of Brickhill Manor, who also inherited the Red Hall and extensive manorial lands including more than 222 acres in the Manor of Bourne Abbots with ten cottages and houses.

In 1836, his aunt, Catherine Digby, still living at the Red Hall, died and the hall itself then came into his possession together with lands formerly owned by James Digby which Catherine had held during her lifetime. In the same year as her death, the land owned by her husband in the Manor of the Bourne Abbots that had been bequeathed to her during her lifetime was then made over to Philip Pouncefort Duncomb and being the first male successor since George Pochin had died in 1798, he subsequently became Lord of the Manor.

In 1849, Philip Pouncefort Duncomb died and the property and estates were inherited by his son of the same name, Philip Pouncefort Duncomb, who also lived at the family seat, Brickhill Manor, Buckinghamshire, and was knighted circa 1850.

In 1854, the Bourne Burial Board paid £420 to Sir Philip Pouncefort Duncomb as Lord of the Manor of Bourne Abbots for 3½ acres of land in South Road for use as a cemetery which was then freed from all manorial ties but a condition of sale was that a substantial brick wall should be erected around it to keep it separate from his existing holdings, a wall that still stands today.

In 1860, he sold the Red Hall to the railway company for use as the stationmaster's house and booking hall.

His grandson Sir Edward Philip Digby Pauncefort Duncombe inherited the residue of the estate in 1898 (a final "e" had been added to the family name by this date) but he too was withdrawing from Bourne because in the same year, the land which the family held as tenants of Bourne Abbots were freed from all manorial ties on payment of £600 to William Ann Pochin. It is therefore assumed that William Pochin had become Lord of the Manor of Bourne Abbots by this time.

A previous historian, J D Birkbeck, has suggested that he held the lordship from 1844 although another reference in his book *A History of Bourne* (1970) confirms that Sir Philip Pauncefort Duncomb was Lord of the Manor in 1854. This is borne out by William White, the indefatigable recorder of Lincolnshire life, who states quite categorically in his volume for 1892-93, that the Lord of the Manor at the time of the sale of the land for the cemetery in 1854 was undoubtedly Sir Philip Pauncefort Duncomb.

In 1901, William Ann Pochin (born 1810) died at the family seat at Barkby Hall in Leicestershire, aged 91. There is little doubt that his activities in Bourne were secondary to the work that occupied him in Leicestershire where, in 1871, he owned 2,252 acres which was rented out at a total income of £4,462 a year. Nevertheless, he has made his mark on the town and several buildings for which he was responsible still bear date stones and the initials W A P.

His manorial estates were subsequently held by his son George William Pochin, of Rearsby, Leicestershire, who served in Bourne as a county magistrate during the early years of the 20th century, and his grandson, Victor Robert Pochin, but as with similar titles throughout England, the title of Lord of the Manor of Bourne Abbots became defunct circa 1930 as the large land holdings of past times were dispersed into private ownership. Social changes brought about by the Great War of 1914-18 had altered the administration of rural England forever.

A MOTTO FOR POSTERITY

Joan, the fair maid of Kent, unwittingly left a memorial to posterity. An old story, now supported by strong evidence, tells how after his victory at Crecy in 1346, Edward III desired to create an order of chivalry dedicated to St George and to consist of the king and 26 of his principal knights. For the badge of the new order, the king chose a lady's garter, dropped accidentally at a ball at Calais by the fair maid of Kent. As he fastened it around his knee, the king is said to have uttered the immortal words: "Honi soit qui mal y pense". When he returned from Calais, he obtained for himself and the first knights of the order, twelve garters of royal blue embroidered with the words and with the cross of St George.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

MANOR COURT: The annual Court of the Manor of Bourne of which the Marquis of Exeter is Lord, was held at the Town Hall on Wednesday last, and a large amount of business was transacted. The customary dinner was afterwards held at the Bull Hotel and partaken of by about forty gentlemen. Josh. Phillips, Esq., steward, occupied the chair, and J P Baker, Esq., the vice. The pinders etc had also a dinner provided for them. - news item from the Grantham Journal, Saturday 5th August 1876.

The annual great Court Baron and Customary Court of W A Pochin Esq., Lord of the Manor of Bourne Abbots, was held at the Angel Hotel on Wednesday last before S W Andrews Esq., and a jury composed of copyholders, of whom Mr Henry Bott was foreman. After the transaction of the usual routine business, the steward gave and presided at the customary dinner to which twenty-one gentlemen sat down. - news item from the Grantham Journal, Saturday 4th June 1887.

The annual court leet and great court baron of the Marquis of Exeter, for the Manor of Bourne, with its members, was held on Tuesday. Mr Joseph Phillips, of Stamford, steward, presided. Messrs John Tipler, William Stubley and Thomas Starkey were appointed pinders for Bourne, and Mr C Coulson re-appointed town crier, an office which he has now held for seventeen years.

The members afterwards dined at the Angel Hotel. - news item from the Stamford Mercury, Friday 22nd June 1888.

Note: Compiled with the help of references from
History, Gazetteer and Directory of Lincolnshire by William White (1892-93)
Bourne and People Associated with Bourne by John T Swift (1925)
A History of Bourne by J D Birkbeck (1970)
and elsewhere.