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WICKHAM COURT AND THE HEYDONS

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THE manor of West Wickham in Kent came into the hands of the Heydon family of Baconsthorpe, Norfolk, in the latter years of the fifteenth century. The Heydons, a family which could be classed among the lesser gentry in the earlier part of the century, were in the ascendant in the social scale. The accumulation of manors was a sign of prosperity, and many hitherto obscure families were climbing into prominence by converting the wealth they had obtained through lucrative legal posts into real estate. The story of the purchase of West Wickham by the Heydons and of its sale by them just over a century later provides a useful example of the varying fortunes of a family of the gentry at this date, for less is known about the gentry as a class than of the nobility.

John Heydon had prospered as a private lawyer, and his son Henry was the first of the family to be knighted. Henry's father made a good match for him, marrying him into the house of Boleyn, or Bullen, a family which was advancing even more rapidly to prominence. The lady chosen was a daughter of Sir Geoffrey Boleyn, a wealthy mercer who, in 1457, was elected Lord Mayor of London. Sir Geoffrey's grandson married Elizabeth Howard, a daughter of the Duke of Norfolk; his great-granddaughter, Henry Heydon's great-niece, was to be queen of England.

It was probably through the influence of his wife's relations that Henry Heydon decided to settle in Kent, for the Boleyns were well established in that county. The attraction of this part of the country was its nearness to the capital, and to the main highway from London to Canterbury and Dover.¹

The manor of West Wickham had changed hands several times within the few decades before Henry purchased it.² In the reign of

¹ The Heydons also had a London house, in the parish of the Greyfriars.

² Cf. article in *Arch. Cant.*, Vol. XIII, pp. 256 ff. by Colonel J. Farnaby Lennard.

Richard II it had belonged to Sir Robert Belknap, Lord Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, who had forfeited it to the Crown when he fell into disgrace. Such was the uncertainty of tenure at this period that Henry's son, Sir John Heydon, had to meet a claim to the property by a descendant of Sir Robert, restored to royal favour by Henry VIII.³

Thomas Squerry of Westerham had, at one time, been lord of West Wickham, and at the beginning of the reign of Edward IV his heir had had a struggle to regain some of his lands which had been claimed as escheating to the Crown at Thomas's death. On the 8th July in the second year of Edward IV we find the entry in the Close Rolls ordering the escheator in the county of Kent to "remove the king's hand from a hundred acres in Farnborough and Bromley, delivering to the issue of John Squerry", since it had been proved by inquisition that Thomas Squerry had died seised.⁴

West Wickham manor passed to a daughter of Thomas, Isabel Galyon⁵ and, presumably after her death,⁶ to John Squerry who sold it to John Trevillian who sold it, in May 1468, to Richard Scrope for three hundred marks. The estate included lands, rents and services in "Westwykham, Hees, [Hayes], Farnburgh, Bromley, Bekenham, Cobham and Lewesham."⁷ A copy of Trevillian's quitclaim is preserved among the West Wickham manorial papers at Maidstone.⁸ Ambrose Cresacre and Roger Copley are mentioned as trustees, the latter being a cousin of Henry's wife.

Richard Scrope bought the manor of Keston also, paying Thomas Tregarthen a hundred pounds for it at about the same time, the bargain including various other rents and services Tregarthen held in West Wickham, Hayes, Farnborough, Beckenham, Bromley, "Codam", [Cobham], and Lewisham. This included sixteen acres of meadow called Dokmede in the parish of Hayes, West Wickham and Farnborough; the wood and close called Le Fryth in West Wickham and Beckenham was also purchased by Scrope and his trustees.⁹

In the following year, that is on the 25th October, 1469, "Richard Scrope finally sold all his right, interest and title in the manors of West Wykham, Bastan or Kestan, and Southcourt in the county of Kent, to Harry Heydon". By indenture he charged "all his feoffees of the

³ F. Blomefield : *History of Norfolk*, VI, p. 506.

⁴ *Cal. Cl. Rolls* 2 Ed. IV, I, pp. 115-16.

⁵ As stated in a Concordat in the Lennard MSS. (K.A.O.) ref. U.312 T1/3.

⁶ By a charter of 1412 West Wickham was to revert to Isabel, with remainder to her brother John. (A copy of this Close Roll entry is at Beckenham Public Library.)

⁷ *Cal. Cl. Rolls* 8 Ed. IV, II, p. 14.

⁸ Lennard MSS. U.312 T.1.

⁹ *Cal. Cl. Rolls*, 8 and 9 Ed. IV, II, pp. 14 and 70.



Wickham Court from the south-east.



The Heydon shield and dragon over the main door at Wickham Court.

foresaid manors enfeoffed to his use that they make such estate and be demesned in this behalf as feoffees of the said Harry".¹⁰

Quitclaims are filed on the Close Rolls of these years from various previous claimants to rights and services in West Wickham, Baston, Keston or Southcourt. John Squerry's quitclaim is dated 1466, that of Richard Scrope was given on the 11th October, 1469, two weeks before the indenture witnessing the sale, and John Squerry junior gave a quitclaim in 1476.

A significant point about the last quitclaim is that the name heading the list of Henry Heydon's trustees is that of the Duke of Buckingham, a great-nephew of the Duchess of York. From this piece of evidence it might be permissible to presume that the Duke was the patron to whom much of Henry's advancement was due. He was a young man with influence at the court of Edward IV, and was made high steward of England two years later.

Having established his position as lord of the manor of West Wickham, Henry set about building a new manor house. The old house was either in disrepair, or else its size and tone were not sufficiently prepossessing for his rising status. He chose red brick as a suitable material, instead of flint as was usual in Norfolk, for since the thirteenth century bricks had been imported from Flanders,¹¹ and in Henry's day they were being made in England. There were brick and tile kilns at this time at Dover and Sandwich, and nearer home, at Dartford and Woolwich. At Sandwich bricks cost 4s. a hundred in 1463.¹² Bricks being more lasting than soft stone, they have preserved for us many beautiful buildings of this period, such as the lovely gate-houses of Christ's College, St. John's and Trinity Colleges, Cambridge, and those at Windsor and Hampton Court. Now that importation was no longer necessary they were less expensive and less rare.

The bricks of Wickham Court were laid in the so-called English bond, though brick-laying had been learnt from the Flemings; lime was used for the mortar and the cornices were faced with free-stone blocks. The plan was square, the rooms being built round an open court-yard, and at each angle of the house was placed an octagonal tower, in which were spiral staircases leading to the upper rooms. The exterior of the house presented a formidable appearance, having no windows except narrow slits to light the stairs in the turrets, and wickets through which defenders could shoot with cross-bows or hand-guns.

Apart from the features which were characteristic of the period,

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 82. Hasted gives 1467 as the date of Henry's purchase of West Wickham, but no evidence has been found to confirm this.

¹¹ L. F. Salzman: *Building in England down to 1540*, p. 140.

¹² *V. C. H. Kent*, III, pp. 393-4.

such as the octagonal turret with the spiral stairs, Henry's house was quite different in appearance from the family seat which his father had built at Baconsthorpe. The red brick effect was a pleasing change from the Norfolk flint, besides which Henry had four turrets, whereas his father had only two. This was probably because his father's house was intended to be the gate-house of a much larger construction, to be built later, with curtain walls and bastions on every side, and surrounded by a moat, whereas Wickham Court was a smaller affair, and all its defence had to be contained within this one square building. So Henry had three wickets put in each turret, some at standing and some at kneeling level, so that both cross-bows and hand-guns could be used, and every line of approach could be observed. The doorway, too, was guarded by a machicolation, and the walls were embattled.¹³

It may seem strange that Henry's new manor house should be fortified, as was also the great Hall which he was later to complete at Baconsthorpe, for the days of building castles and fortified houses were almost over. Many manor houses of the fifteenth century were built for comfort and no longer for defence. The times were prosperous in many ways, and Henry's Norfolk neighbours, the Pastons, have left us in their correspondence a wealth of tit-bits about daily life which show that the country gentry carried on their affairs in comparative peace, in spite of intermittent civil war.

The Heydons played their part in the struggle between the Lancastrians and the Yorkists, Henry's father being a Lancastrian. A close follower of the Duke of Suffolk, who for a time held Henry VI's government in his hands, John Heydon held various lucrative offices in the Duchy of Lancaster,¹⁴ and even after the downfall of the Duke, was said to be "cherished by the King".¹⁵

But for young Henry Heydon the future lay with the house of York; he was, in fact, to obtain the position of controller of the household of Edward IV's widowed mother, Cicely Neville, Duchess of York. He showed his loyalty by displaying the royal arms of Edward and his queen, Elizabeth Woodville, in a prominent position in his new manor, perhaps in the church; for much of the Heydon glass now in the Court was brought there from the church in the nineteenth century. The "Royal Window" is still to be seen among other beautiful fifteenth

¹³ According to Clinch. Cf. article by Col. J. Farnaby Lennard in *Arch. Cant.* Vol. XIII, pp. 256 ff. The present finish to the walls and turrets is modern. There exists an eighteenth century print which shows the turrets of Wickham Court with extinguisher tops, in contemporary French chateau style. But as cases are known of licences granted to crenellate in brick in the fifteenth century (Salzman, *op. cit.* p. 143) Henry's house may well have been embattled.

¹⁴ P.R.O. D.L. 28/5/2 f. 117 V. and 37/13/126. cf. also R. Somerville: *The Duchy of Lancaster*, pp. 453 and 594.

¹⁵ *The Paston Letters*, ed. J. Gairdner, Supplement, p. 40.

WICKHAM COURT AND THE HEYDONS

century stained glass in the banqueting hall. The royal arms are set in quarries worked with the white rose of York in flowering suns, the badge of Edward IV. Cicely Neville's coat of arms is shown also, and that of Edward's sister, the Duchess of Suffolk.¹⁶

Nevertheless it was not for fear of a Lancastrian attack on his manor that Henry fortified his new house. The Heydons were as keen on a good fight as any man and they were always ready to take up arms with their own party ; but these battles mainly concerned the nobility, and the homes of the lesser gentry were not affected by them.

For this reason the fortified appearance of Wickham Court has puzzled the present-day visitor. Siege warfare, of course, died out with the advent of cannon, and small houses such as this would never be sufficiently important to become a centre for any large-scale operation. So it has been assumed that the fortified exterior of these late fifteenth century manor houses was a sham ; that they were designed for social display, either by contemporary architects, or even by more recent restorers.

That this was not so is clearly proved by the experiences of the Heydon family. Henry's father was an adventurous gentleman, and took a prominent part in the local quarrels which flourished in the last years of the Lancastrian regime. The Paston letters give a vivid description of more than one armed attack on a neighbour's house in which John Heydon was at least indirectly involved, and they describe too, how a manor house was prepared for one such attack by the provision of wickets at both standing and kneeling level, so that hand-guns as well as cross-bows could be used.¹⁷ For indeed possession was nine-tenths of the law when an assize of "novel disseisin" was likely to be almost impossible to obtain, and the more general "oyer and determiner", likewise dependent on the king's writ, was at times equally unlikely to materialize.

Though Henry Heydon was only a boy at this time, these incidents help to explain his conservative choice of a fortified manor house, both at West Wickham and later at Baconsthorpe, for when kings sat insecurely on their thrones even small men might become defiant of authority, so that local magistrates could no longer keep order and shrewd men, like Henry Heydon, were showing a necessary prudence when they determined to make themselves as secure as might be within their homes.

West Wickham manor house stood on high ground, in a favourable position for defence, dominating the surrounding country-side. Behind

¹⁶ Cf. article on the glass at Wickham Court by Reverend D. Ingram Hill and C. R. Counce, F.S.A. in the *Journal of the British Society of Master Glass-Painters*, Vol. XI, No. 2. 1952-3.

¹⁷ *The Paston Letters*, I., pp. 82, 106 and 144.

WICKHAM COURT AND THE HEYDONS

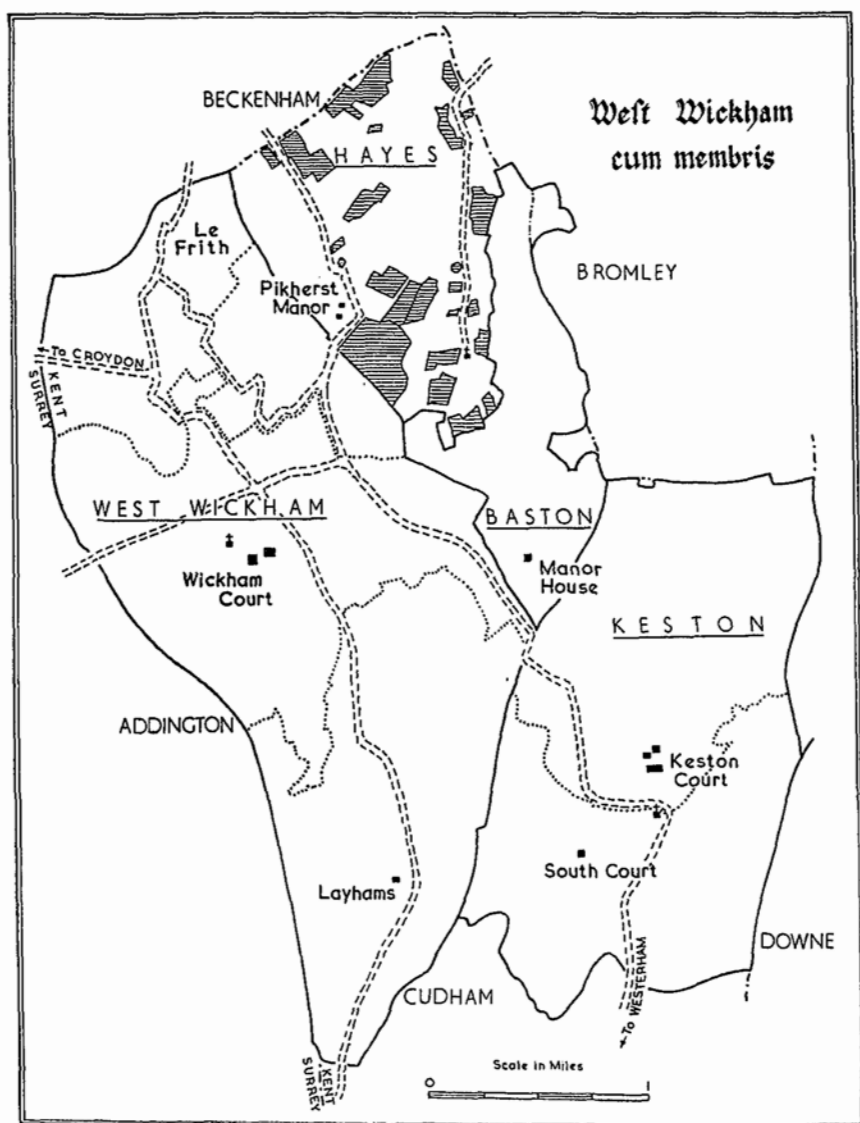


FIG. 1.
Map of West Wickham Manor 'cum membris'.

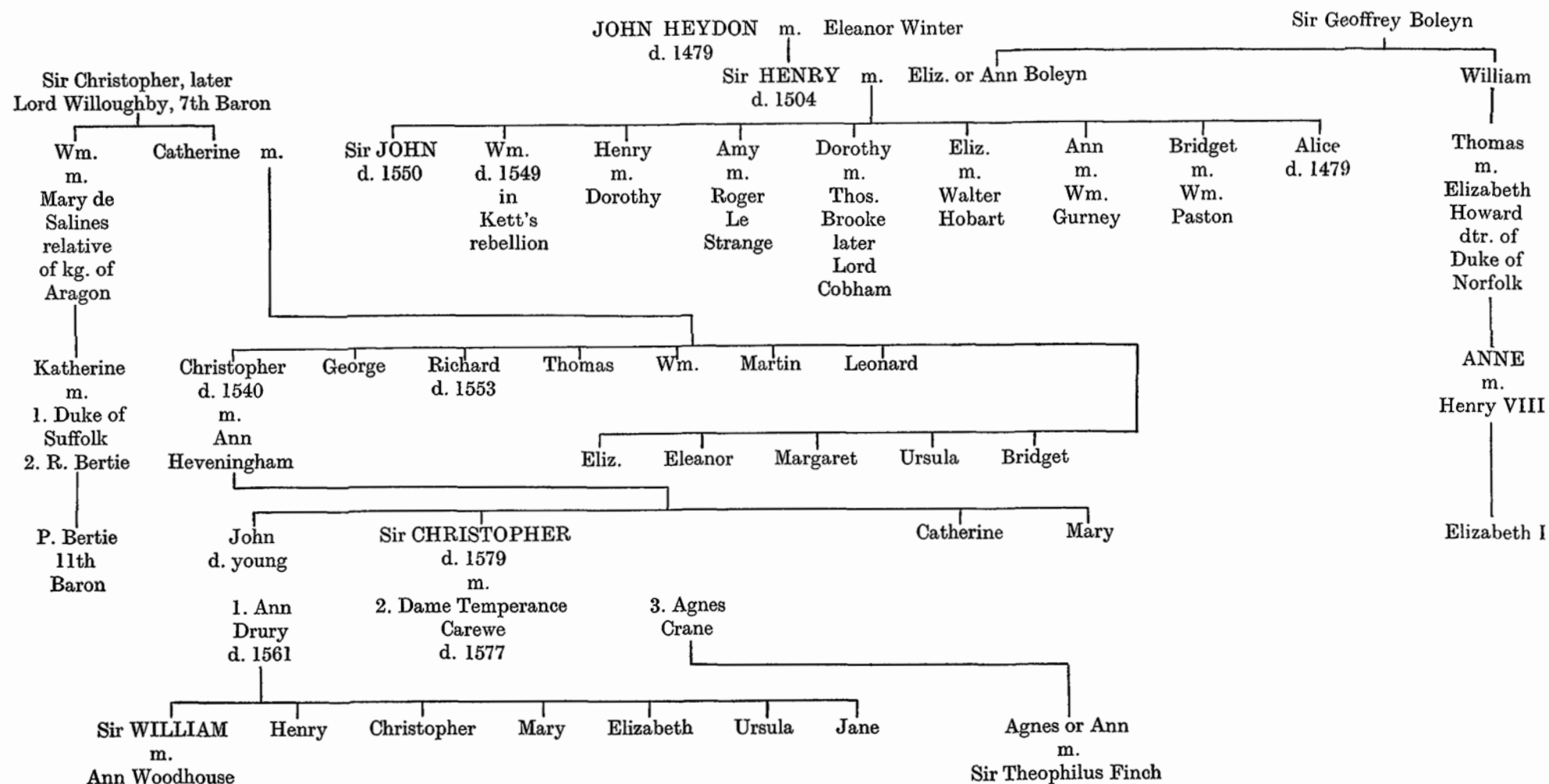


FIG. 2. Genealogical Table of the Heydon Family.

the hills to the north was Beckenham, and the direct route from London ; a little further north, running parallel to the southern bank of the Thames, was the much travelled route from the capital to Rochester, Canterbury and Dover. Over the woody hills to the east and south-east lay the manors of Hayes and Keston, both now acknowledging Henry as their over-lord, while on the west and south-west ran the boundary of Surrey, and just round the bend of the hill, the manor of Addington with its church of St. Mary in the diocese of Canterbury.

But West Wickham church, standing there on the hill beside Henry's new manor-house, was in the diocese of Rochester. It was an old church, and its dilapidated condition contrasted strongly with the fine new brick of the Court. Henry was soon to rebuild it.

At the entrance to the house the family coats of arms were cut in the free-stone above the door. On the left was the Heydon coat, and on the right Henry's coat impaling that of his wife. Her's was a quarterly coat showing both her father's and her mother's families.¹⁸

All the windows of the house over-looked the interior court-yard. Glass windows were a new and expensive luxury at this time. When they first came in they were often made on moveable frames, so that they could be stored away when the family was not in residence. Of the stained glass windows now in the banqueting hall at Wickham Court, those that could have been placed in this way in the original windows looking on to the inside court would be those of the royal window by which Henry showed his loyalty to the House of York, and those of Henry himself and Anne. The rest must have been put in later, when their children grew up and married, and others commemorate later marriages still. It is known that some of these windows were at one time in the church, and therefore it is possible that none of them ever graced the banqueting hall in Henry's day. On the other hand the glass now in the church at Baconsthorpe was originally in the windows of the Heydons' house nearby.

The ground floor rooms consisted of a low room leading into the dining hall, and two or three other rooms on the remaining sides of the square, one leading out of the other. All were stone-flagged, covered with some sort of matting, or else strewn with rushes. There were wide open hearths, set in the walls, with andirons on which logs could be piled. All larger houses had chimneys now, though smaller dwellings still had the fire in the centre of the room. The brickwork of the chimneys at Wickham Court shows that they were part of the original building.

¹⁸ The Baconsthorpe Heydons bore a shield quarterly argent and gules, a cross engrailed, counterchanged. Lady Anne Heydon's arms were quarterly 1 and 4 Boleyn : argent, a chevron gules, between 3 bulls' heads couped sable ; 2 and 3 Hoo : quarterly sable and argent.

Over the fire-place in the banqueting hall the initials H and A were so well and deeply carved in the stone that they still bear a handsome witness to the pride of this young couple in their new home. The love-knots entwined around their initials in the quarries of the Heydon window must also date from this time, as also the diagonal strips showing the Heydon motto: "Regardes que suyst de virtue null male".¹⁹

The walls and ceilings were all timbered and plastered. The upper rooms were reached by spiral staircases in the turrets, now removed, and here again each room opened into the next, giving access to the corner stairs.

While Lady Anne Heydon was occupied in the house, directing the household and bringing up a family of at least nine children, Henry would ride from one part of his estate to another, viewing all and discussing with his steward the various assets or problems. He would find the country more hilly and more tree-covered than Norfolk, and not so well watered. Its more varied landscape may have made for pleasant riding, but it was not so fertile in grain or sheep. Kent wool was the poorest in the country. The district produced good cattle, however, and good poultry, and already in those days was noted for its apples. Cherries, pears, plums and chestnuts all grew well,—Lambarde says better, and more delicious than in any other part of the realm. The horses, he tells us, mares, oxen, kine and sheep were all large. There was plenty of mast of oak, beech, and chestnut for them. Hawking and hunting were carried on mainly for recreation, but conies were caught for profit, since the nearness of London provided Kent with a good market. It was, in fact, the convenient position of this part of Kent which made it so attractive to the gentry. The land was dear and was owned largely by wealthy gentry, lawyers, or merchants.²⁰

Accounts for the West Wickham estates were kept by Henry's bailiffs, and a few of these survive, though all for the latter years of his life, after his father's death, when he had inherited all the Heydon estates and so was spending more of his time in Norfolk than in Kent. There is a series of accounts for the years 1493 to 1499, when Clement Tuyslee, the bailiff, was collector of rents and profits of court, and Robert Fermour was receiver of rents from leaseholders and all other profits accruing to the manor.²¹

The greatest regular source of income was the rent of leaseholders, which ranged between £55 6s. 8d. and £59 19s. 0d. per annum. Sale

¹⁹ Which might perhaps be rendered as: "Make him your model who follows virtue, never evil."

²⁰ W. Lambarde: *Perambulation of Kent*, 1650 ed. pp. 4-8.

²¹ Lennard MSS. Maidstone (K.A.O.) U.312., M.14 A. Photographs and typescript translations by F. P. Watts of this series of bailiff's accounts are in the keeping of G. W. Tooke, Q.C.

of timber was sometimes a big item, but this varied considerably from year to year. In 1493 it was £95 16s. 8d., whereas in 1495 it was only £2 16s. 8d. Some years the return under this heading was nil. A little grain was sold, to tenants or other local people, mostly barley, with some wheat and rye, but the most this came to was £5 12s. 3d.

Although there was no trading in sheep or cattle on a large scale, Henry had sheep, cows and horses, and there is an occasional mention of the sale to a tenant of a sheep from the lord's flock, or two horses for the mill.

Besides cornfields, the lord had meadows of hay which was mown for him by various tenants. In 1493 Robert Charles was paid 8s. for mowing the whole of the lord's great meadow according to custom, and John Aleyn carried and stacked the hay, though no payment is recorded for him. Sometimes this hay was used by the lord, and sometimes it was sold to the tenants. In 1493 the first herbage was reserved for the lord's use, and the second herbage, which was usually sold to the tenants for 20s. was given by Henry to John Stockton, the rector. The general impression is that only as much of the demesne land as was necessary for the upkeep of the lord's household was reserved for his use, and the rest was leased out, though woods growing on the leased lands were usually reserved to the lord.

During these years most of the demesne land was leased out, together with warren of rabbits; the dovecote within the interior site of the manor was let to Clement Tuyslee for 13s. 4d. There was a written agreement that the lessees should leave the warren and dovecote well stocked with rabbits and pigeons, male and female, at the end of the term of the lease. The lord's horse-mill was sometimes leased out. In 1493 John Comporte had it for 16s. 8d. for half a year. He had to keep it in repair and work it and he paid the lord 23s. 4d. for two mill-horses. The sub-manors of Baston and Keston were also farmed out, usually for terms of seven years.

When the lord and his family were not in residence the site of the manor house itself was leased out. In 1494 and again in 1496 no rent was collected for the interior site of the manor, with the orchard, because they were reserved for the use of the lord's household, though in the latter year Henry granted the herbage, or right to graze cattle in the orchard to Clement Tuyslee without any payment.

The rents of copyholders only came to £12 0s. 4½d. and this was always the same. In addition to these fixed rents Clement Tuyslee had to collect certain customary rents in kind, which he usually sold, and was charged with their value at the end of the term of the account. The sum with which he was charged, 7s. 4d., remained the same over all this period, and indeed for another fifty years to come, though it was meant to be the value of nine geese, sixteen hens, sixty-three eggs

and three apples. There was also a rose-garland to be collected, which was not valued. In 1493 the price of a goose was reckoned at 4d., a hen at 3d., and hens' eggs sixteen a penny.

When the lord was in residence these rents of movables were used for his household. For the year 1498 to 1499 it was recorded that all the capons, geese, hens and eggs were used for the lord's household at Wickham. Henry also claimed twenty-four rabbits each year from the lessee of the warren, and twelve pigeons from the lessee of the dovecote.

The profits of the manor courts varied from a few pence to thirty shillings or so. In 1493 they were only 6d., and that came from the sale of a stray beast, which, not having been claimed, was sold to Andrew Litilgrene for 12d. The collector was allowed to keep half of the profit by custom, "so he says".

The following year the profits amounted to 30s. 11d., and in 1504 there was a profit of 25s. 2d.²² There were usually four courts held in the year, two at West Wickham and two at Keston, with one view of frank pledge in each place. The Court Baron dealt with matters arising out of land tenure, such as paying rents, heriotts and reliefs. In 1504 15d. was levied in fines for default of court, there was a fine of 6s. 8d. for damage done to the lord's wood by straying cattle and a heriott of a mare was claimed for the lord because of the death of Richard Moundford. At the Court Leet, or criminal court, the holding of which was an ancient privilege of the lord of West Wickham, three men were fined 40d. each for an assault on William Causton, the chief lessee of the demesne; John Heron, a Croydon baker, was fined 4d. for selling bread contrary to the assise, and several people were fined 5d. each for breaking the assise of ale. The sale of stray animals which had remained in the bailiff's custody unclaimed for a year and a day brought in 4s.

The regular collection of rents, fines and other dues was important to any landlord if his manors were to be profitable. An amusing incident recounted in the Paston Letters in 1472 shows what an interest was taken in these dues by a landowner or his steward, besides throwing an interesting sidelight on Henry's character.²³

A Norfolk friend of his, William Gurney, acting for the Bishop of Winchester, whose bailiff he was, announced his intention of holding a manor court at Saxthorpe. Now it so happened that this manor was one of those claimed by Sir John Paston as executor to Sir John Fastolf. When John's brother, John Paston the youngest, heard of Gurney's intention, he made sure of being present at the appointed time, to prevent Gurney collecting the rents from the tenants, which he claimed

²² Lennard MSS. U.312, M.13/1.

²³ *Paston Letters*, III, p. 35.

on his brother's behalf. The tenants arrived, Gurney opened the court, and was proceeding with the business when John Paston burst in and called on him to stop. An argument followed, each claiming the right of his respective lord to the manor and its dues. Eventually William tried to ignore the interruption and continue the court. But John was equally determined to prevent him. As William dealt with the tenants and began to enter the accounts on the roll, John stood beside him and blotted each word the bailiff wrote with his finger. William, exasperated, adjourned the court, and announced the next court for Holy Rood Day (3rd May—the feast of the finding of the true cross), when he would collect the rents.

Apprehensive of the outcome, William told his friend Henry Heydon, of what happened. Henry turned up at William's next court accompanied by an armed band. John Paston, writing to his brother, said, "Yowng Heydon had reysd as many men as he kowd mak in harneys to have help Gornay".²⁴ It had the desired effect. Paston was peaceful and the court proceeded without interruption.

As Henry acquired more responsible positions these routine matters would be left more and more in the hands of his bailiffs. After the death of his father in 1479 he had the responsibility of the extensive family estates in Norfolk, and we have various references to his affairs. At Easter time in 1482 a certain T. Cryne, evidently one of his bailiffs, wrote to John Paston explaining that he could not come to Norwich at that time, because he had to attend "Maister Heydon's courtes and letes" which began on Thursday of "Esterne weke; this entails view of the half-yere of the household accompts, the closyng up fynally of th'accomptes of all bailliers, so that the resceyvour make his fynall accompte, fourteen days or more".²⁵

Henry Heydon had been trained in the law, and had started his career as steward of the estates of the priory of Norwich. In 1472 we find him holding the Court of Pie-powder on the Monday after Pentecost, a court which dealt with cases arising in connection with the priory's annual fair.²⁶ He was clearly a young man of character, and caused quite a stir in the neighbourhood. "Heydon son hathe borowght the sydd stowtly her this Christemas, and when he rides he hathe four or five men with him in clothing,"²⁷ wrote Margaret Paston, and two years later, "Young Heyden reyseth much pepyl in the sokyn and in other place".²⁸

He was to rise eventually to positions of trust. In the later years

²⁴ *Paston Letters*, III, p. 41.

²⁵ *Ibid.* III, p. 291.

²⁶ *Select cases on the Law Merchant*, Ed. C. Gross, Selden Society, I, p. 126. (Contributed by E. O. Hogben).

²⁷ *Paston Letters*, II, p. 125.

²⁸ *Ibid.* II, pp. 203-4.

of his life he held the double responsibility of steward or controller of the household of the Duchess of York, and chief bailiff of the honour of Eye. Cicely, Duchess of York, was a daughter of the great Neville family, and aunt of Warwick the "King-maker". When her husband, Richard, Duke of York, was slain at the battle of Wakefield in 1460, she was allowed to keep most of his lands. Her chief residence was at Berkhamstead; Fotheringay Castle was hers, she and her husband were both buried at Fotheringay, and in London she had Baynard Castle. As mother of King Edward IV and widow of the head of the House of York, "Cecilli, the Kyng's mooder and late wyf unto Richard rightfull Kyng of England" as she styled herself,²⁹ she kept a truly royal household, and her chief steward would have to be a man of standing.

Likewise the administration of the estates of the honour of Eye was no small affair. This vast feudal holding, one of the largest collections of estates to be allotted to a single tenant-in-chief at the Norman conquest, comprised at one time as many as two hundred and sixty manors in various parts of the country. The title of chief bailiff, like that of steward of the household may have been mainly honorary, but we catch a glimpse of the work Henry did from the surviving accounts for the lands of the Duchess of York. He received a fee, for instance, of £6 13s. 4d. per annum for his duties as chief steward of the Duchess's manor of Walsingham Parva, and another of a hundred shillings per annum as steward of Southfryth in Kent, Surrey and Sussex.³⁰

Henry's service to the House of York was recognized in 1483, when he was summoned to receive knighthood at the coronation of Edward V.³¹ Deprived of the honour by the sudden deposition of the two sons of Edward IV, his name was omitted from the list of those to be knighted by Richard III. Two years later, however, he was created a Knight of the Bath at the coronation of Henry VII.³²

Sir Henry Heydon was a generous benefactor to the Church. At Salthouse in Norfolk he built a new church, at Kelling he restored the existing one; and the rebuilding of the church of St. John the Baptist at West Wickham was his work. He was indeed a great builder; for six years he was occupied in the construction of the castle-like family home of Woodhall at Baconsthorpe.

The great house he built at Baconsthorpe is today no more than a ruin. It was to prove too big and too expensive to keep up. The

²⁹ Cf. Essay by C. A. J. Armstrong: "The Piety of Cicely, Duchess of York" in *Essays in honour of Hilaire Belloc's 72nd Birthday*, Ed. D. Woodruff, p. 76.

³⁰ Westminster Abbey archives, No. 12179.

³¹ Rymer: *Faederæ*, V, p. 131; *Grants of Edward V*, Camden Society, 60.

³² W. A. Shaw: *The Knights of England*, I, p. 141.

curtain walls enclosed a court-yard of three-quarters of an acre, and were defended by turrets and bastions from fifteen to twenty feet high. The walls were two feet six inches thick, with splayed openings for bow slits. There was an elaborate gateway with a stone vault springing from stone corbels ; there was an inner and an outer gatehouse.

There is no doubt that the Heydons could now be considered among the top ranks of the gentry. As Henry's children grew up the question of making suitable matches for them was of primary importance. We gather, from a letter of John Paston to his brother written before 1480, that Henry was getting anxious about the matter. He had, apparently, been trying, without success, to interest a young man named John Barney.

"Yong Heydon," wrote John Paston, "laborythe alle that he can to mary on of hys daughtyr to yonge John Barney".³³

This may have been only idle gossip, of course, and in fact Henry does not appear to have had any difficulty in finding advantageous partners for his numerous offspring. His eldest daughter, Amy, was easily settled, for her father married her to his ward, Roger Le Strange, the son of an old friend, Sir Henry Le Strange, who had died in 1476. Henry Heydon had obtained from the Crown the custody of all the Le Strange estates during the minority of the heir.³⁴

John Heydon, Henry's eldest son, married, on 27th August, 1490,³⁵ Catherine Willoughby, the daughter of Sir Christopher, afterwards Lord Willoughby of Eresby, a wealthy land-owner and a great courtier. His son and heir, Catherine's eldest brother, married a lady-in-waiting of Queen Catherine, a Spanish lady who had come over from Aragon with her mistress.

As for Henry's other daughters, Dorothy married Thomas Brooke, son of John Brooke, Lord Cobham. Lord Cobham had as his second wife Margaret Neville, niece of the Duchess of York. Elizabeth Heydon was married to the son of one of Henry's Norfolk friends, Walter Hobart, and Ann married William Gurney's son, William.³⁶

One daughter, Alice, had died in 1479 and was buried in the church at Baconsthorpe,³⁷ and the youngest girl, Bridget, married William Paston, the son of Sir John Paston the youngest.

Henry had each of these marriages commemorated in painted glass ; the windows in the banqueting hall at Wickham Court show the arms of John (the Heydon coat impaling that of Willoughby), and each of

³³ *Paston Letters*, III, p. 82.

³⁴ *Materials Illustrative of the reign of Henry VII*, I, p. 598. (Liber Recept. Scaccarii.)

³⁵ A. Jessop : Notebook, XIV, p. 60. (Norwich Public Library.)

³⁶ F. Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, vi, p. 506.

³⁷ There was formerly a brass commemorating her in the church. Cf. Bryant, *History of the Parishes of the Hundred of South Erpingham*, p. 43.

his five sisters. No shields are preserved for John's two brothers. For William we have no evidence that he ever married, and Henry was still single and under-age at his father's death. He married later, a lady named Dorothy who outlived him and as a widow was left an annuity by her brother-in-law.³⁸

Sir Henry, in the last years of his life, continued his interest in the home he had built at West Wickham. He had rebuilt the church of St. John the Baptist, and had windows painted by Flemish glass painters in London representing the patron saints of his family, St. Anne, St. Dorothy, St. Catherine and St. Christopher. The curious window showing Sir Henry himself as a skeleton, kneeling on tiles of pattern similar to those still to be seen at the entrance to the sanctuary, may well have been executed at his own command. At his side are the Heydon shield and mantling, and above his head a scroll bears the words "*Ne reminiscaris dne delicta nra vel parentum nostror*"—"Remember not, O Lord, our sins, nor the sins of our fathers".

There was once a window at Baconsthorpe showing Lady Anne Heydon kneeling with a prayer book and rosary, and the Bullen coat of arms was there to prove her identity. These two glasses were a witness to the peaceful days, before the great religious upheaval so soon to be stirring, days when Anne told her beads in peace, and Henry was confident that the churches he had built for the glory of God would stand him in good stead at the day of judgment. The Heydons of those days delighted in honouring their patron saints, and considered it a bounden duty to pray for their dead. They followed the usual practice of leaving exact instructions for masses to be said for them after their death. Henry left over £40 to various priests, for masses for his soul and the souls of his parents and benefactors, besides an annuity of £6 for the same intention. £40 were assigned also for masses for his father.

Sir Henry Heydon made his last will and testament on the 20th February, 1504,³⁹ and he died in the following month. He left his lands entailed on the legitimate male heirs of his eldest son. His executors, of whom his brother-in-law William Boleyn was the chief, were to have the ordering of the estate for four years, and were to see to the cattle and grain of his manors for the first year in the most profitable way, selling the wool of his sheep for the upkeep of his household at Baconsthorpe, or any other place, presumably wherever his widow might choose to reside, for it was on the condition that she remained unmarried for the year. After that year, John was to have the use of the grain.

³⁸ P.C.C. Reg. Bucke, f. 33. This Henry is frequently confused with a Henry Heydon of Hertfordshire who married an heiress of manors in Berkshire, Gloucester and Surrey.

³⁹ P.C.C. Reg. Holgrave, f. 23.

If Anne should remarry she was to leave Baconsthorpe. The household stuff, utensils, brewing vessels and chapel apparel were to be divided between John and his mother, Anne having the first choice.

Henry left bequests to the poor, to lepers, to friars and nuns. West Wickham was granted 40s. to be given to the poor among the tenants, and Hayes and Keston received a similar sum. 20s. was allotted to Keston Church for vestments, books and other necessities and there were several bequests to Norfolk churches and chapels. The highway from London to West Wickham was to be repaired by Henry's executors as an alms deed for the repose of the soul of Isabell Galion,⁴⁰ and £10 was left to one Selby of Mallyng in Kent for the manor of Oxwyk, for Henry had paid Selby for that manor, "but not to the value of my conscience".

Henry's silver plate, books and horses were divided among his family, and his household servants were each left a fixed sum according to their standing. John's two younger brothers were provided with incomes of £40 a year from specified manors in Norfolk.

Anne did not remarry, but kept a household at Wickham Court and another in one of the Norfolk manors, once John came into the family seat at Baconsthorpe. After Sir Henry's death the manor court at West Wickham was held in Anne's name⁴¹ and in her will she left her household stuff at Wickham to John.⁴² She also left money for the repair of the church⁴³ and for the poor of West Wickham parish, naming them before the poor of the Norfolk parishes she likewise wished to benefice. She lived another six years, dying some time between the 17th December, 1509, when she made her will, and the 16th May, 1510, when it was proved. She left 4d. weekly for life to the anchoress at the church of St. Julian in Norwich and to her daughter Dorothy she left three goblets, a psalter covered with blue velvet, a pair of beads of gold and a gold chain. Several of her grandchildren also received bequests.

So West Wickham came to John and a new era began. In the fifteenth century the first John Heydon had built up a considerable property in Norfolk by dint of careful husbandry and shrewd opportunism in his legal profession. Henry added West Wickham to the inheritance, and brought the family into the ranks of knighthood, crowning his efforts by marrying two of his children into the baronage. The Heydons were now gentlemen of standing, and Sir Henry's eldest son was in a position to enjoy the life of an easy-going courtier. No longer was he struggling to win a place for himself in the shire. His

⁴⁰ Isabell was the daughter of Thomas Squerry, one time lord of West Wickham, so this may have been in fulfilment of an obligation.

⁴¹ Lennard MSS. U.312, M.13/1.

⁴² P.C.C. Reg. Bennett, f. 28.

⁴³ 10s. for the repair of the north aisle.

estates were now so large and prosperous that the head of the family could afford to leave the business of making a career to his younger sons, while he himself waited on the king, rode to the wars or went about the king's business at home. No salary or fee was received for local government offices ; it was expected of a knight that his means would be sufficient to enable him to serve his king in war or peace out of his own income. Sir John Heydon like his father and grandfather before him, served on Commissions of the Peace, and he was four times nominated sheriff for Norfolk. In 1512 he sailed to the French wars in the " Anne of Greenwich ", and two years later was attendant on the king's sister, the Princess Mary, when she went to France to marry Louis XII. His cousin Mary Boleyn was one of the ladies-in-waiting appointed for the new French queen. Sir John Heydon was also present at the meeting known as the " Field of cloth of gold ". Wearing the costume of a Knight of the Bath, he had been instructed to bring a suite of ten attendants and four horses. He was one of those appointed to attend the king at his interview with the king of France. Then, again, he was present at the meeting of Henry VIII and the emperor at Gravelines. In 1536 he was required to bring a hundred and fifty men into the field to help put down the northern rebellion, which is proof enough of his wealth and standing.⁴⁴

The Heydons of the fifteenth century had relied on remunerative posts rather than lands for the accumulation of wealth. Indeed the purchase of land was rather a method of investing capital, but such a profitable one that once their estates were consolidated they were to become a sufficient source of wealth in themselves. From Sir Henry's will we see that the sale of wool from the Heydon sheep could be relied upon for the upkeep of the household at Baconsthorpe for the year. The sheep of his various manors were also used as a convenient means of providing for his younger sons. His second son, William, was to have the sheep on his manors of Hockham and Illington, plus £40 a year from certain lands. But sheep were not the exclusive product of the estates. Henry's cattle and grain were to be sold by his executors in the most profitable way, and on the West Wickham lands timber was the most valuable produce.

It would seem that most of their Norfolk lands were exploited directly by the Heydons themselves, while in Kent the greater part even of the demesne land was leased out. Although no manorial records have been found for the Norfolk estates there is sufficient chance evidence from other sources to give us a fairly reliable picture of their prosperity. When Sir John came to make his will in 1544 he left to his heir grain, mylche neat, horses and plough for the upkeep of the

⁴⁴ Cf. *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII* for the Patent Roll entries, Sheriff Rolls, Admiral's Account, etc. Vol. I. i, 662, II. p. 1408, III, i, 241, 325, XI, 233.

household at Baconsthorpe.⁴⁵ He does not mention sheep, however, but reckoned that his bequests of over £400, debts, unspecified, and annuities worth £80 a year would be found by his executors out of his leases. It would seem, therefore, that John the courtier had been farming out the greater part of his lands.

Though Sir John was occupied with affairs of wider import than his own estates, he did not abandon the personal relationship which was still customary between lord of the manor and tenant or bailiff. In his will he left John Causton, the chief lessee at West Wickham, 20s. and to Hugh Brickett the bailiff he left 5 marcs.

There is a memorial of Sir John's connection with Wickham Court in the painted glass. Just as his father had displayed his loyalty to the house of York so John could boast of a blood relationship with the Crown of England, by erecting a window showing the arms of Anne Boleyn for the years that she was queen, together with the arms of Henry VIII and Anne's royal cipher. This cipher, a crowned falcon holding a sceptre and standing on a tree-stump, with the motto "Mihi et meae" was used also by her daughter Elizabeth I.

But it was one of Sir John's younger sons who was the most intimately connected with Wickham Court during these years. Richard had been trained in the law and his career can be traced in the Black Books of Lincoln's Inn, where he was admitted on the 23rd December, 1522, probably at about sixteen or seventeen years of age.⁴⁶ He was called to the bar in 1529. He entered fully into the social life of the Inn, and in 1528 he was one of a group of young members put out of the commons for "excess crying and shouting in their past revels within the Term".⁴⁷

Richard eventually became a successful lawyer, and Sir John made use of his son's residence in London to entrust him with the management of his Kentish estates. In 1527 Richard was present at West Wickham manor court, together with the steward Edward Eysh and the bailiff Hugh Brickett; there is an entry in the bailiff's account for this year which shows that Richard was in receipt of an annuity of £10 out of the issues of West Wickham manor, and his younger brother Martin of another of £6 13s. 4d. These sums were paid them by the lessee of the exterior site of the manor, Henry Causton. Hugh Brickett rode to Baconsthorpe this year to settle his account with Sir John, and claimed 6s. 8d. for the expenses entailed on the journey.⁴⁸

By 1530 Richard had taken over the management of the estates, and Brickett was rendering his account to him, and received his wages

⁴⁵ P.C.C. Reg. Bucke, f.33.

⁴⁶ *Lincoln's Inn Admissions*, I. p. 41.

⁴⁷ *Black Books*, Vol. 1. Pp. 225, 222.

⁴⁸ Lennard MSS. U.312, M.17.

from him, though Edward Eysh was still acting as steward.⁴⁹ By now Martin's annuity had been raised to £10 like his brother's, so perhaps he had come of age within the last three years.

It would seem that Richard resided at Wickham Court some of the time during this period, as the hay of the lord's great meadow, usually leased out, was reserved for the lord's use, and certain lands and buildings within the site of the manor, including the millhouse, were also marked as "not leased out this year". For the year 1539 we have an account of Richard's showing him acting as steward for his father; he had made good profit from the sale of wood that year, viz. £82 13s. 4d.⁵⁰

Richard died a wealthy bachelor in 1553. Besides his activities as a private lawyer he had invested in land on his own account, having purchased the estates of Weybourne Abbey. He had eighty sheep grazing in Kent when he made his will, forty of which, twenty ewes and twenty wethers, he left to the farmer, Thomas Philipps, and another twenty ewes to the bailiff, Hugh Brickett.⁵¹ Five stone of his wool was stored at West Wickham, too. Old John Causton and his wife were given twenty shillings, and then to Anthony Causton was left Richard's "doblett of canvas" and ten shillings. Richard also had sheep in Norfolk, and barley and wheat growing on his nephew's land there. He had corn, too, growing on the lands of Weybourne Abbey, though he had sold this estate to his nephew six years before.

Sir John's eldest son, Christopher, had died before his father, so it was to his grandson, also named Christopher, that the Heydon lands passed at Sir John's death in 1550. Sir Christopher was a genial and sociable man, of easy conscience with regard to the constant religious changes, and famed for his lavish hospitality. He was not an able administrator, however, and it would seem that he was trying, as one of the two deputy lieutenants of the county, to keep up appearances beyond his means. He kept a household of eighty servants at Baconsthorpe,⁵² and ran a coach with two 'grey-stoned' horses⁵³ at a time when coaches were still a rare and expensive luxury.

Up to the middle of the sixteenth century there is no doubt that the Heydons were flourishing. But during Sir Christopher's life-time we begin to find occasional intimation that all was not well. The land shortage which was becoming generally acute at this time, because of the increasing population and the growing appreciation of the merits of progressive husbandry, was making itself felt in at least one part of the Heydon estates. The Star Chamber records give us some details

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, M.18/19.

⁵⁰ Lennard MSS. U.312, M.35A.

⁵¹ P.C.C., Tashe, f.31.

⁵² B.M. Lansdowne 67/3.

⁵³ P.C.C. Arundel f.25.

of a dispute between Sir Christopher and the inhabitants of Salthouse and Kelling, who were challenging his monopoly of the sheep-walks in these townships, within which he was said to have from six to seven hundred acres of land.⁵⁴ They were claiming the right to graze three hundred sheep on the fold-courses, but Christopher produced a witness who could remember that Sir Henry had insisted that any sheep the townfolk wanted to graze should be put into his flocks at the rate of 1½d. a wether and a gyld ewe, and 2d. a ewe having a lamb, with which the townfolk had been quite content. Christopher's difficulty in maintaining his ancient rights was no doubt increased by the break in the tradition during the time that his grandfather had let the lands out to farm.

For such clashing of respective rights Christopher cannot be held responsible. Indeed the dispute over the sheep-walks provides evidence that he was attempting to exploit his lands to the full. In Kent, however, there is record, among the manorial papers, of serious neglect during the years following Richard's death.

Sir Christopher had always taken an interest in his lands in Kent. He was well-known in the neighbourhood and was still remembered some thirty years after his death for his zealous drilling of the local militia during one of the scares caused by threat of Spanish invasion. Camden wrote, in 1610, when discussing the earth-works on the hill above Coney Hall farm,—“As for the other small intrenchment not farre of by W. Wickham, it was cast in fresh memorie when old Sir Christopher Heydon, a man then of great command in these parts, trained the country people”.⁵⁵

In his time, too, a further addition was made to the collection of stained glass at West Wickham—the Heydon coat impaling that of Christopher's second wife, Dame Temperance Carewe, which could also be said to commemorate the period when his brother-in-law, Dr. Matthew Carewe, resided at the Court.⁵⁶

In 1561 Christopher added to his lands in Kent by the purchase from Sir Percival Hart of some 210 acres of heath at Baston,⁵⁷ but six years later there were complaints that the West Wickham estate was being allowed to deteriorate. Perhaps Christopher's Carewe brothers-in-law had a better eye to business than he; perhaps Matthew Carewe, the archdeacon, was already considering leasing Wickham Court. At all events in 1567, a year or two before Matthew took out the lease,

⁵⁴ P.R.O. Star Chamber 3, III/42.

⁵⁵ W. Camden: *Britannia*—1610 ed. transl. by Philémon Holland, p. 326.

⁵⁶ Lennard MSS. U.312. M.35A. shows Dr. Matthew Carewe as chief lessee from c. 1577 to 1585 and later. Cf. also Rochester Episcopal Register, V. p. 131, where an entry dated 30th January, 1572 mentions Matthew Carewe as possessing the advowson of West Wickham church.

⁵⁷ Lennard MSS. U.312 T.7.

Thomas Carewe and others carried out a survey of the woods belonging to West Wickham manor, and reported to Christopher that they were in a serious state of decay. Much valuable timber was being spoiled by unwise felling, by the unrestricted pasturing of cattle and by the game of coney, for all of which the farmer and the bailiff were blamed.⁵⁸

If Sir Christopher had been allowing such neglect on his Kent estates, it is quite possible that his Norfolk lands were also being left to deteriorate in certain respects. However that may be it seems clear that he was allowing debts to accumulate at a time when the East Anglian fields and pastures were still a potential source of wealth. It is true that there was a certain slackening in the demand for wool about the middle of the century, but mutton for the table was in increasing demand and corn and beef were also greatly needed for town consumption. The Heydons' estates should have been more than paying their way.

It is difficult now to estimate to what extent Sir Christopher was to blame for the decline in the Heydon finances. He continued to live lavishly and to give an appearance of prosperity, holding as he did the foremost position among the gentry in the shire. But he left to his son an estate so encumbered with liabilities that Sir William, a man far more unstable and irresponsible than Sir Christopher, was never able to restore the family status. In his will Christopher stipulated that his lands in Kent should be sold to meet the costs of his debts and legacies.⁵⁹ It was natural that the West Wickham estates should be the first to go if sale of land was necessary. Useful though they had been, so conveniently near to London, yet they had always been an isolated group of manors, having little bearing on the family's Norfolk activities, and their loss would not greatly affect the local prestige of their house, so dearly prized and so essential to success as that was.

Sir William Heydon sold West Wickham to John Lennard in 1580 for some £2,700,⁶⁰ and so ended the Heydon connection with Wickham Court. A far more serious decline in their financial position followed during William's lifetime,⁶¹ ending in the complete break-up of their estates and the loss of their position among the top ranks of the gentry. Once their financial impotency became known the gateway to promotion was closed to them, for the government depended on men of means to bear the burden of office. Hope of recovery became more remote until the civil war completed their ruin.

This was long after they had severed all connection with Wickham Court, yet the period during which the Heydons were lords of West

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, U.312, M.32.

⁵⁹ P.C.C. Reg. Arundel f.25.

⁶⁰ Lennard MSS. U.312, M.35A.

⁶¹ Cf. a statement of their financial position in Sir William Heydon's petition to the queen dated 1591, B. M. Lans. 67/3.

WICKHAM COURT AND THE HEYDONS

Wickham coincides with and illustrates their rise in wealth and social prestige, and the sale of the property was the first step towards the loss of their lands caused by, and itself causing their decline.

The story of West Wickham 'cum membris' at this period illustrates, too, the place of a small group of manors in the economy of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and puts into a personal setting the various factors underlying the comparatively frequent changes in ownership of such properties at this time.

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The map of West Wickham 'cum membris' was drawn by Geoffrey W. Tookey, from the map of Bernard F. Davis, compiled from manorial records, etc. in 1932, and transcribed by E. K. Roberts in 1952 from the printed map by Grout Engraving Co. Ltd., Bromley.

The photographs are by Norman Piper.

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE REFERENCES

<i>Arch. Cant.</i>	<i>Archæologia Cantiana.</i>
B.M.	British Museum.
Cal.Cl.Rolls	Calendar of Close Rolls.
D.L.	Duchy of Lancaster Accounts.
K.A.O.	Kent Archives Office.
P.C.C.	Prerogative Court of Canterbury.
P.R.O.	Public Record Office.
V.C.H.	Victoria County History.