

Letters from Dr A H Cooke to R C L Powys-Lybbe re early Lybbes

Letter 1

Mapledurham Vicarage

28 July 1924

Dear Mr Powys-Lybbe

I have taken advantage of a very wet day to do a certain amount of work on the documents you have been so good as to entrust to me.

It was first necessary to go through the whole lot & eliminate all those which had apparently no direct connection with the Lybbe family. This took out one half of the whole lot.

Then we put the remainder into chronological order classifying them into 5 groups, according as they bore reference to

1. Richard Lybbe, lord of Hardwick 1527-1599
2. Richard Lybbe, " " 1599-1653
3. Anthony Lybbe, " " 1653-1674
4. Richard Lybbe " " 1674-1715
5. Richard Lybbe " " 11715-1722

A sixth group takes in documents relating to Twysden & Powys.

Only 4 documents belong to group (1). The earliest of these, dated 18 Oct 1569, is sufficiently startling, for in it Richard Lybbe conveys away to John Ockham of Reading, [New page] Richard Rolte of Reading & John Raymond of London, "all his property in Reading, New & Old Windsor and Easthampstead in Berks, all his property in Whitchurch, Upsden & North Stokes, all his property in Tavistock, Tamerton and Lamerton in Devon, all his property in St Dominic & Bellington in Cornwall, and all other property he possesses in he counties of Berks, Oxon, Devon and Cornwall! Rather a clean sweep. But I am inclined to think that this is probably an instance of one of those sham conveyances, made for some purpose or other payments in the middles ages, and set right again by a re-conveyance, shortly afterwards, of the whole of the same property to its original owner.

It will take me some time to work through the lot, that I can see very clearly. Lady Rose was delighted at the idea of getting the Hardwick estate maps, and the "stag traveller etc", or any documents you like to give her. She is tremendously interested in the whole business but is off with the children for their summer holiday this week so you may not hear from her yet. Thanking you againd for your kindness to me the other day.

Yours very truly

A.H. Cooke

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Letter 2

Mapledurham Vicarage, 30 Dec 1924

Dear Mr Powys-Lybbe

I have been looking into the wills of the earlier members of the Lybbe family, and some curious facts emerge:

1. Will of Richard Lybbe of Tavistock, dec 1504 (father of the R.L. who purchased Hardwick q525, dec 1527)

A brief document. He leaves to each of his sons, Richard, John, William and Robert, "unum sarcem de Tarsotokes". To John he also leaves "unum de bale mader". His wife, Joanna, is his residuary legatee and sole executrix. No further details of any importance.

Tavistock, in those days, used to manufacture a kind of serge. I take it that R.L. was in the trade, and that he was a dyer as well, as he leaves John a bale of madder. A sack or shirt is not much of a legacy, but it seems to be all be bequeathed to his sons.

2. Will of William Lybbe (dec. 1526)

leaves his brothers John and Robert 10£ apiece, and xls to his brother Leonard Yeo (*i.e. brother in law, his mother Joanne was a Yeo - a good Devon name). This brother Richard is residuary legatee.

3. Will of Richard Lybbe of Hardwick (who was buried in Shinfield), dec 1527.

* [poss in RCLP-L's hand] half brother his mother Joan m. 2nd Nicholas Yeo of Heanton RP-L

[New page] A voluminous document: many small legacies for masses etc, for the benefit of his soul, esp. for Shinfield & Englefield. It comes out that his brother John is in holy orders, & has debts at Oxford. All his children, Richard, Mary & Elizabeth, are under age at his death. Provision for his son Richard to succeed him. Provision of a jointure for his wife Brigitte out of rents of Hardwick, Stoke & Upsden. Apparently he has a sister who married John Sowle (?) and had a son John. (Brigite must have been an heiress). He leaves Alice Preston 20 marks (Alice Preston was Alice Cruchefield, and married -- Preston before 1519, in which year she was 16. She was one of those who sold Hardwick to Rich. Lybbe)

4. Will of Richard Lybbe son of the above, dec 1500. He has heaps of money, & leaves £100 apiece to his 6 unmarried daughters (no letting us know that 2 were already married).

He confesses the startling fact that his son John is illegitimate, "begotten by him on his wife before their espousals". He leaves him a farm at Uplambourne. Mrs Climenson's genealogical tree quite obscures this fact, & makes John seem the youngest child of the 10. The will being very long, I have not noted all the details.

5. Will of Joanna Lybbe, widow of the above Richard Lybbe dec. 1614.

A most valuable will - she mentions all her children over and over again, often giving order of birth, with their husbands' names, and with their families. All the dau's [sic] have been married (you see they had £100 apiece), except little Susan. She writes of John, & calls him her loving son. It looks as if they had agreed to treat him as equal to the rest, but of course they cannot legitimatise him. Her son Richard is her sole executor. Many interesting legacies of plate, linen, etc.

I thought it might interest you to hear all this.

Yours very truly

A H Cooke

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Letter 3

Mapledurham Vicarage

4 Jan 1825

Dear Mr Lybbe

Since writing to you a few days ago I have discovered two or three more facts which I think should interest you.

1. The Richard Lybbe who died 1504 and who made the extraordinary will, leaving each of his four sons "unum parcum de Tavestokes", was Mayor of Tavistock 1497, and had a good number of houses & gardens in the town. This makes his will more astonishing than ever.
2. His son Richard Lybbe who bought Hardwick 1526 and died 1527, was M.P. for Tavistock 1515!!
3. From 1403 to about 1605 there is news of many Lybbes of Tavistock, some of them being called "warden", which probably meant churchwarden.

Thus it is plain that they were a wealthy and respected family, occupying high positions.

Yours very truly

A H Cooke

[New page]

Extract from letter of J J Alexander, Grammar School, Tavistock

1.Jan.25

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"The Lybbe family can be traced in Tavistock during the XV and XVI centuries as property owners. There is a John 1403. Richard (warden) 1407. William 1423. John 1426. Thomas 1460-8. John 1468, son & hr of Thoams. John senr & John jnr 1469. Richard 1476 & 1488. Richard mayor 1497. Richard, John & Richard jun 1500. Richard M.P. 1515. William c. 1535. Heir of Richard 1535. John (warden) 1549. Anniv of Richard 1538. Thomasin widow & Thomas her son 1554. Thomas (mast of the Twon) 1568-1600 (d. about 1605). There are about 7 generations here. Richard (mayor) appears to be in the 4th - he died 1504. His son Richard appears to be in he 5th & he was M.P. for Tavistock ... "

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### Letter 4

Mapledurham Vicarage, Reading: 24 Nov 1926

Dear Mr Powys-Lybbe

I was so sorry to hear from lady Rose this morning that you had been obliged to retire to a nursing home for a while. I hope sincerely that you will soon be well again.

I have been, for some weeks, on the point of writing to you to tell you something about what I have found in your two chests. Not much that was ancient .... but there was one packet of documents from the 1500's & one or two other loose, lying at the bottom which proved of interest.

I think the best is a rental (?) of Goring Pryory i.e. of the suppressed nunnery (1536) - dated 1536 - It mentions the names of the bailiff, Thomas Taylor, whom the king's Council put in after the Confiscation and also that of John Stoner, Sergt-at-arms, who rented the demesne, mill, weir, passage, ferry, etc. Several nice fresh (?) references which I have been able to identify. Altogether well worth publishing, after I have been to the Record office to glean further pertinent information.

[New page]

Then there is a nice list of the Rec (?) tithes from Whitchurch in 1648 or 9 (I forget which) in which a Richard Lybbe is prominent. And there is a delightful reference to the abolishing of deans & Canon and suchlike refuse decreed by the enlightened Commonwealth a few years previously.

There is a good document too, which looks like a marriage settlement of Richard Lybbe I (dated 1524 or 5 (i.e. before he bought Hardwick) & Bridget Justice. He gives her all his land in Devon & Cornwall - so he didnt dispose of them when he came up this-ward.

There are also one of two documents which mention the Hawe's of Hawe Farm, in which Lady Rose is interested.

By the way, Hugh Smith of Whitchurch, who came over to tea yesterday, told me that Chalk-mile wood (beyond Coombe End Farm and Hafnell Farm) is the only piece of ground now owned by Lybbe (? yourself) in Goring. is this the case? I should like to know, if you don't mind telling me. With kind remembrance.

Yours very truly

A H Cooke