

AN EARLY HEADMASTER OF IPSWICH SCHOOL

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When W. E. Potter (now a science master of many years' standing at Bryanston School in Dorset) and myself were assembling material for a history of our old school,¹ just after the last war, I was mainly responsible for the earlier centuries. One headmaster, John Barkley (1586 – 1604), is described on page 45 as 'something of a mystery'. His name was found written as Barclay, Bartley and even Bartlett. Though he was apparently a graduate, his university could not be traced. Yet he was described, in borough archives and in his will,² as 'gent.', he lived at Stoke Hall on the outskirts of Ipswich, and his wife Elizabeth, giving evidence in a lawsuit,³ said that she was previously the widow of Philip Wentworth, Esq., a younger son of the first Lord Wentworth. His will mentioned a brother Rowland, and in a footnote I suggested a possible connexion with a Worcestershire family in which this Christian name was common. This clue should have been followed up, no doubt, but with so much to collect on five and a half centuries of school history one had not much time for by-paths.

Before the history was published I had moved to Gloucestershire, to remain there for twenty years as county archivist, but it never occurred to me to connect this East Anglian schoolmaster with the ancient and historic family of Berkeley, of Berkeley Castle in Gloucestershire, with whose records I became increasingly familiar. Indeed, I fear I had forgotten his existence.

Quite recently the mystery has solved itself. I am the lucky possessor of a copy of *The Lives of the Berkeleys*, written in the early 1600s by the family's steward, a delightful character named John Smith of Nibley, but never printed until the 1880s. In these two engaging volumes many branches of the family are traced in detail. James, Lord Berkeley, who held the peerage from 1417 to 1463, had, says Smith, 'three wives (if not fower), a good or ill hap that had not formerly befallen any of his ancestors'. By his second wife Isabel, eldest daughter of Thomas Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk, James had four sons. The fourth, Thomas, is described by Smith as 'stock-father of the Berkeleys commonly called of Worcestershire and of Herefordshire'.⁴ Thomas was, in fact, the ancestor of the Berkeleys of Spetchley in Worcestershire, the branch of the family which today owns Berkeley Castle, having come into it after the death of their remote cousin the last Earl of Berkeley in 1942.

This Thomas Berkeley had a son Richard and a grandson William, Mayor of Hereford, who had no less than fifteen children. One of these, John, the sixth son of eight, was 'a fellow in New Colledge in Oxford, from whence he went to Ipswich where hee dyed'.⁵ The *Alumni Oxonienses*, while not connecting him with Ipswich or with school-teaching, confirms that a John Berkeley, of Hereford, was a Fellow of New College from 1562 – 1575, taking the degree of Bachelor of Civil Law in 1570. The family historian provides the names of his younger brothers Edward and Rowland. Edward, 'a Mercer in London and benefactor to that Company' (says Smith), died rich and childless in 1601, leaving £400, a substantial sum then, to his brother John, and a total of £600 among John's children Edward, William, Edmund and Mary, from which money was to be advanced for their apprenticeship if needed.⁶ The will of John 'Barkley', made in 1602 two years before his death, relates only to 'those £400 which were bequeathed to me by... my brother Edward Barkley'; he seems to have died intestate so far as any other property was concerned. John made Rowland, the eighth and youngest brother, his executor — though he declined to act — and it is from this Rowland that the Berkeleys of Spetchley are descended.

There can be little or no doubt, it seems, that John 'Barkley', Fellow of New College and later Master of Queen Elizabeth's School in Ipswich during the last years of her reign and the first years of James I, was — in keeping with his wife's aristocratic first marriage — a great-great grandson, in direct male descent, of a holder of the 13th-century barony of Berkeley, and a great-great-great grandson of a Duke of Norfolk. His three sons, who were not to receive their inheritance

until they reached the ripe age of twenty-seven, were most likely educated by their father at Ipswich School.⁷

Anyone, I feel, might be pleased to claim James, Lord Berkeley as an ancestor. It was he, as Smith of Nibley quotes from Court of Common Pleas proceedings in 18 Henry VI (1439 – 40), to whom one David Woodburne and others were sent by his opponent Viscount Lisle, to serve him with a subpoena to appear in Chancery. ‘Instead of obeying the proces, this Lord James not only beat the parties, but will he nill he inforced the said David to eat the subpoena, wax and parchment.’⁸

Notes

- ¹ Gray and Potter, 1950.
- ² Made 1602, proved 1604 (P.R.O., Prob. 11/104).
- ³ Ipswich Borough deposition book no. 2 (S.R.O.I., C5/18).
- ⁴ Maclean 1883 – 85, II, 83.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, 87.
- ⁶ P.R.O., Prob. 11/98/83.
- ⁷ My old school-friend Wallace Morfey has been pursuing this, and has now found the baptism of ‘Edward, son of John Barckley als. Bartlet’ on 25 July 1586 in the register of St Mary Stoke, Ipswich. He suggests that this might be the Edward Barclay who graduated B.A. from Trinity College, Cambridge in 1605 (Venn 1922, I, 82; no school or matriculation recorded).
- ⁸ Common Plea Rolls, 18 Hen. VI: Mich. term, 126, 421, 567; Trin. term, 279; Easter term, 180 (quoted in Maclean 1883 – 85, II, 59).

References

Printed works

- Gray, I. E. and Potter, W. E., 1950. *Ipswich School 1400 – 1950*. Ipswich.
- Maclean, Sir J. (ed.), 1883 – 85. *The Berkeley Manuscripts. The Lives of the Berkeleys... of Berkeley in the County of Gloucester, from 1066 – 1618... by John Smith of Nibley* (2 vols). Gloucester.
- Venn, J. and J. A. (comp.), 1922. *Alumni Cantabrigienses*, Part I, Vol. I. Cambridge.

Abbreviations for MSS.

- P.R.O. Public Record Office.
- S.R.O.I. Suffolk Record Office, Ipswich branch.