

## SHORTER CONTRIBUTION

### AN ELIZABETHAN SWAN-UPPER FOR THE DEBEN ESTUARY

by David Allen and John Blatchly

It was N.F. Ticehurst who in the 1920s wrote a series of articles, mostly in *British Birds*, on swans, swan-marks, and the ancient laws and rights affecting those who were entitled to their own game of swans. He contributed an article entitled 'The Swan-marks of Suffolk' to Volume XXI of our *Proceedings* in 1932 – we still dealt then in Natural History – which included three plates illustrating 85 marks of ownership in Broadland and Fenland Suffolk. By these terms he meant the north-eastern portion of the county drained by the Waveney and a small area in the north-west adjoining the fenlands of Norfolk and Cambridgeshire. These came under a Deputy Swan-master for the counties of Norfolk and Suffolk who exercised his authority throughout the area without regard for county boundaries. Ticehurst wrote: 'With regard to the rest of the county and the rivers entering the sea between Southwold and Harwich, we have practically no information at all.'

In the course of cataloguing the Iveagh manuscripts recently secured for Suffolk and at present available to researchers in the Ipswich branch of the Suffolk Record Office, a document<sup>1</sup> has emerged which throws light where before there was none. In the Craven Ord Collections for the Hundreds of Carlford and Colneis there is a single sheet of paper signed by Edward Clere, Esquire, of Blickling in 1576 (he was knighted in 1578 and made Sheriff in 1580), who was Deputy Swan-master for the two counties (though he gives himself a slightly grander title as we shall see) delegating his authority in the Deben estuary for a two-year period to his first cousin John Tyrrell, Esquire, of Gipping. John Tyrrell's father Sir John and Edward Clere's mother Anne were son and daughter respectively of Sir Thomas Tyrrell and his wife Joan.

Having delivered the charge on one side of the sheet, Clere fills the verso with swan-marks which he hopes will be useful to his deputy. A good many of them are those of noblemen attainted for treason or of dissolved religious houses; the swans in either case would in the first instance become crown property. All the marks from 2.7 to 4.3 below (and possibly from 1.8 to 2.6 also) belonged to the Clere family, acquired at various times by inheritance, gift or purchase. Not a single 'live' Suffolk mark is illustrated, indication that John Tyrrell was appointed for just two purposes: to look for unmarked (or double-marked) swans for the crown, swans forfeit to the crown, and for swans bearing one of the many Clere marks which might have strayed south. One may infer from this document that Edward Clere and his father Sir John before him (he died in 1557) were remarkably acquisitive in game of swans. In his will (PCC 23 Bucke, proved 25 August 1551), Sir John's father-in-law Sir Thomas Tyrrell makes colourful reference to the former's meanness and grasping pursuit of other commodities. Whether in his tour of duty John Tyrrell placed any mark of self-ownership on any game we cannot tell; Ticehurst does not illustrate a Tyrrell mark in any of his articles.

The text of the document follows.<sup>2</sup> (Original capitalization and spelling have been retained, except that *i*, *j*, *u* and *v* have been given their modern values. Abbreviations have been silently extended, and punctuation slightly modernized.)

This writing witnessith that I, Edward Clere of Blickling in the Countie of Norfolk, Esquier, cheife Swanner for the Quene's Majestie in Norfolk and Suffolk, Have Deputed my loving frend John Tirrell esquier, for me and in my name to uppe and oversee what game of owld swannes or young Cignettes lie or be in or upon the waters,

Rivers, streames or Crekes lieng and extending by or from Felixstow, Bawdesey, Alderton, Brightwell, Henley,<sup>3</sup> Romshot,<sup>4</sup> Shatsham,<sup>5</sup> Sutton in the Countie of Suffolk, And to take up for me and in my name within the limittes aforesaid all manner of wilde swannes and the birdes and game of the same, all overlaid swannes of swanmarkes, All young of any the Queene's auntient markes, and of markes late belonging to any howse of religion or place suppressed or concealed, and of all markes late belonging to any person or persons heretofore attained or convicted of high treason, petie treason, misprison of treason, praemunire or owlarie, And of [*recte* all] manner of game of persons having markes not allowed or allowable, And the game of such persons as may not dispend v markes by the year of auntient rent of freehold, And all straglers, And to foresee that no Poulter or fysherman be owner, deputie or fearmour to any swanmarke, and that no swannes or Cigarettes of any person to be taken up without vewing, and not to suffer any two persons to use or occupie one marke, but therein as the antiquitie of the marke be provid, so the same by him onely to be used, and to take up all unknowne game and the Cigarettes of the same, and to plucke the fethers and stalkes of swannes, And that my said deputie Do not assigne or appoint any other person under hym without warrant under his owne handes, And that he do punishe and present all suche persons as by any meane offend or disturbe the said game, And finally to deale in the execution of the said office in as large and ample manner as any swanner for the Kyng or Queene's Majestie heretofore have lawfully Done or might do and as fully as I might do if I were personally present; This my present warrant to endure for [two *overwritten*] whole yeare[s *overwritten*] next ensuing the date hereof. Signed with my owne hand the xxiii<sup>ti</sup> daye of May, 1576.

[*signed*] Edward Clere

Those which yow find overlaid, Lay this marke<sup>6</sup> one the bill or Legge of them And lette the booke yow make sett owte which of the markes (noted on the backside of this warrant) yow finde in the Lymitte appoynted to yow, and where that game kepith the haunte.

The said word two was my own entreye ... [*missing*] before my delivery of this writing. 12 July ... [*signed*] Edward Clere

The swan-marks Clere illustrated (see Pl. VII) were as follows:

- |     |  |                            |
|-----|--|----------------------------|
| 1.1 | the crowne [to be newly marked thus]   |                            |
| 1.2 | the king   | N1 [an ancient Royal mark] |
| 1.3 | the Duke of Norff <sup>r</sup> atteynted of treson   |                            |
| 1.4 | the Duke of Suff <sup>r</sup> his liberties entaylid in the crowne   | S26                        |
| 1.5 | the Erle of Surr <sup>r</sup> atteynted of treson [in 1547]  | N57                        |
|     | [this mark for his estate of the manor of Halvergate]  |                            |
| 1.6 | the Erle of Surr <sup>r</sup> atteynted of treson  | N172                       |
|     | [see Ticehurst's comments (1927-28) about this mark]   |                            |
| 1.7 | the Lo. Morle[y] now in the Q. handes  | S5 laterally inverted      |
| 1.8 | the prior of St Olaves supprest  | cf S33                     |
| 2.1 | the La. of Billockby [this and the next two were originally medieval bequests of swans to maintain lights in the Lady chapels of these churches] | N30                        |
| 2.2 | the La. of Acle [a Clere was patron here in 1531]  | N29                        |
| 2.3 | the La. of Hickling  | N31                        |
| 2.4 | the prior of Ingham  | N27                        |
| 2.5 | the p[ri]or of <i>erased</i>   |                            |
| 2.6 | [the Abbott of St] Bennett [the Cleres had an interest in this Abbey's manors]   | N19                        |
| 2.7 | Ormesby Hall marke   |                            |
| 2.8 | Noryes Baniardes   |                            |
| 2.9 | old B[lickling?] manor   |                            |
| 3.1 | Blickling newe mannour   |                            |
| 3.2 | Sir Jo. Clere  | N142                       |
| 3.3 | Stalham Hall [manor] in Burgh [in Flegg; belonged to Sir John Clere]   | N77                        |
| 3.4 | Topies coter[?] Jo. Clere  | cf N78                     |
| 3.5 | the abbott of Langley purchased by J. Clere  | cf N24                     |
|     | [this and the next passed after the dissolution to the Duke of Norfolk]  |                            |
| 3.6 | the convent marke of Langley purchased by E.C.   | cf N23                     |
| 3.7 | Martham Hall marke [this and the next owned by E.C. in succession to Hugh Ellis]   | N65                        |
| 3.8 | Cobhams [College manor]  | N64                        |
| 4.1 | Faviles marke gyven to E.C.  |                            |
| 4.2 | Sir Ric. Fulmerstons marke [of Thetford, E.C.'s 1st wife's father d. 1567]   |                            |
| 4.3 | the Channons marke of Thetford [from R.F. to E.C.]   |                            |

*Notes*

- 1 HD 1538/5, f. 55. It will eventually be housed at the Bury St Edmunds branch of the Record Office, retaining the present reference number.
- 2 Published by permission of the Suffolk Record Office.
- 3 Hemley.
- 4 Ramsholt.
- 5 Shottisham.
- 6 Resembling E lying on its spine.

*References*

- (N) Ticehurst, N.F., 1927-28. 'The Swan-Marks of East Norfolk', *Trans. Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Soc.*, Vol. XII, Part 4.
- (S) Ticehurst, N.F., 1932. 'The Swan-Marks of Suffolk', *Proc. Suffolk Inst. Archaeol.*, XXI.