

ANCESTRY AND FAMILY TRADITION

THE BOWKERS OF LANCASHIRE

NOTE. Certain names have been given numbers or letters by which they may be easily found in the pedigree at the end of this section.

THE Bowkers of Tharfield in South Africa, and of Deckhams Hall, in Gateshead, Durham, were originally a Lancashire family and lived in that county for many generations. There were several families, probably springing from the same stock, residing at Bradford and at Blakeley in the parish of Manchester. We know that at Blakeley our ancestors paid rates and rented seats in the chapel during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and at the present day may still be found in the vicinity at Bowker Bank Farm and Bowker Vale Railway Station.

(i) Ralph Bowker, whose name appears in the Subsidy Roll of 1541 was residing in Blakeley and so was (4) Thomas Bowker, born about 1635, from whom we have an unbroken pedigree to our own time. These early members of the family appear from their wills (of which we have had numerous extracts made) to have been mostly yeomen and husbandmen, and as the city grew, their descendants became city dwellers engaged in trade. Gradually becoming prosperous, some of them owned ships and acquired considerable wealth.

Unfortunately our knowledge of the early Bowkers leaves much to be desired. Funds did not permit of an exhaustive research such as would have done justice to a book of this nature. We were able to examine the papers of a certain Miss Booker, who died a few years ago, leaving a mass of material which was placed at our disposal and proved most useful. Unfortunately the records of the Manchester Court Baron have been lost or destroyed, and it is therefore unlikely that one would be able to construct an early Bowker pedigree. The name is variously spelt Bouker, Booker, and Bowker in wills and documents, but in no case did we see it spelt Bouchier in the four centuries covered by this research.

Grandsons of (4) Thomas Bowker of Blakeley, born about 1635, were (6) Thomas (illegitimate), baptized 1688; (A) John d.s.p., (B) Houlden, baptized 1701/2, and (C) Benjamin, baptized in 1706. The male line became extinct in the families of Houlden and Benjamin, so they do not concern us very much, but about these two men there is a lot of information that we have not been able to substantiate. According to Miles Bowker of Tharfield, Ben was the eldest and held the position of High Bailiff of Manchester for most of his life. With his brother Houlden he is said to have espoused the Stuart cause, and after the Rebellion of 1745 both were imprisoned in the Tower of London and had to mortgage large estates and pay a huge fine to obtain their release. Ben is also said to have been buried in St. Margaret's, Westminster, but we could find no record of this, nor does he appear to have been a High Bailiff, although his name appears as a minor official in the printed records of the Manchester Court Leet. That he ever possessed considerable wealth is also doubtful. He was the youngest, not the eldest son. There is evidence that his wife's mother, Elizabeth Illingworth, whose will was proved on the 11th March 1760, was fairly well off, and that *she* was buried, or asked to be buried, in Westminster Abbey. She left considerable property to her daughter (D) Zenobia Bowker and to her granddaughters. Ben left no will, but we obtained an abstract of the administration which says:

'On 5th Decr. 1749. Administration of the goods and chattels of Benjamin Bowker, late of Manchester, in the County of Lancashire, was granted to Zenobia Ann Bowker, widow the relict, she having been first sworn, etc. Prerogative Court of Canterbury, Admon. Act Book. Decr. 1749. Lancs. Seat 1.'

From the administration it seems likely that Benjamin died in Manchester and he is probably buried there. Houlden Bowker may have possessed considerable wealth, but this was squandered by his only son (E) Robert, who died young, at Greenwich, without issue. Miles Bowker, the 1820 settler, mentions a small estate in Northampton which he had inherited from his great-uncle Houlden. (The name Houlden or Holden, according to Phillimore & Co., is probably derived from the Illingworth family. In this case the Bowkers and Illingworths may have been related in some way earlier than the marriage between Zenobia and Benjamin Bowker.)

To return to (6) Thomas, from whom we are all descended, his baptism is given in the Manchester Cathedral Register, and is

recorded thus: 'Baptised. 28th October, 1688 Thomas son of Thomas Bowker—baseborn.' His mother's name is not recorded.

This child, who grew up to be a 'wild man of loose manners', to quote what is recorded of him, was a great nuisance to his relatives. Being illegitimate, he may have been despised and neglected by his brothers and their mother, and he was certainly a wastrel. His brothers procured for him the position of Deputy Governor, or Jailer (probably the latter) of Lancaster Castle, where some time not long afterwards he deserted his wife and family, and absconded with the wife of one of the debtors to spend the rest of his life in London.

Thomas had married Miss Elizabeth Brabbin, daughter of a Major Brabbin who had served in Bonny Prince Charlie's army. The marriage took place at Wigan, where Thomas gave his name as Joseph Bowker of Manchester. There were two children of the marriage, a daughter and (7) Thomas Bowker (born in 1726?), afterwards of Deckhams Hall, Gateshead, Durham, the father of Miles of Tharfield.

Thomas was educated at the expense of a wealthy old maiden lady named Minchin, who put him to school at Clitheroe Castle. She used to carry the lad about in her carriage and called him 'her heir'. Then one day young Spanking Roger (afterwards Maj.-Gen. Aytoun) appeared on the scene, married Miss Minchin, and soon broke her heart and her fortune. Thomas was sent to his Uncle Greatex and later entered into partnership with his cousin. They manufactured woollens and owned ships, and Thomas prospered. He considerably improved his economic and social position by marrying a wealthy Miss Monkhouse of Bloan, Westmorland. (8) Miles of Tharfield refers to her often as 'my ever dear Mother' and describes her as an excellent and clever woman.

We do not know exactly when Thomas purchased Deckhams Hall, but it must have been sometime after his marriage, as we know that a lot of money was spent on improvements and entertainment. It may have been at Deckhams that Miles was born, but there is no record of the baptism of any of his sons (who afterwards went to South Africa) in the Gateshead Parish Church. There are other local churches where it is possible that these baptisms may have taken place, but we have not pursued the matter further.

Deckhams Hall was demolished in 1934 to make room for modern residences. In the July of that year R. B. M.-B. and his

family were motoring through Gateshead on the way to Scotland. Half-way through the town he asked a policeman whether he had ever heard of Deckhams Hall. 'Oh yes,' he replied. 'Turn back and take the first street to your left. It is on the bare top of the hill beyond the last houses. The property now belongs to Lord "X" and the Hall is being demolished.'

Finding Deckhams was as easy as that. The hall had been built on the summit of the hill, with an all-round view: Gateshead to the south, smoky Newcastle beyond the Tyne to the north, and eastward the great river with its hundreds of ships—colliers carrying coals to all the world.

Little remained of this once fair mansion of the Bowkers. All the walls had been taken down a few days before we got there, but we got a fair idea of the extent and shape of the building from its massive stone foundations. Like many houses of that period, it was not very large on the ground floor, but it probably stood several stories high. The main reception hall was distinguishable by its large fireplace, and it was easy to imagine Miles and Anna Maria Bowker in their happy younger days before they broke away from the homeland to establish a great 'clan' beneath the splendours of the Southern Cross. One could see Miles's father and his excellent spouse entertaining their friends in their new home with no knowledge that their son and his sons would help develop another great country on the other side of the world.

In the *Gentleman's Magazine*, dated June 1759, there appeared a brief article about the ancient family of Bouchier, Earls of Eu and Essex, and a crude woodcut showing the Bouchier arms and crest.

'One day, when I was reading in it', wrote Miles Bowker in his memoirs, 'my father happened to overlook it, and just observed that the families spoken of there were our ancestry and that was our name, and this was the only time I ever heard him speak of his family, which he considered had treated him very ill.'

Miles goes on to say :

'I hold the ancient silver seals of this family [the Bouchiers] (my great grandfather being the lineal heir, collaterally of the Earldom of Essex, then in abeyance, as well as the heir male to the family of Bernres, now gone to a Colonel Wilson) sent to my father after the death of his two uncles, as the head of the family. His Uncle Benjamin left three daughters. . . . Holden had only

one son who died without issue. I sold a small estate in Northampton that came by Holden and sought to recover other large properties both of Holden's and Major Brabbin's, in London, Manchester and near Preston, but in vain—the mortgage possessors had held them beyond the time allowed by the Statute of Limitation. These mortgages were to discharge the amercements on account of their attachment to the Stuarts.

In the above quoted extracts from Miles Bowker's writings it will be noticed that he states that *his great-grandfather* was the lineal heir of the Bouchiers of Essex and Berners. Referring elsewhere to this ancestry Miles states that his great-grandfather farmed or managed the Duke of York's wine licences and Post Office concerns in the Duchy of Lancaster, and continued in this service after the Duke came to the throne as James II. (*Note*: Miles's great-grandfather Thomas was born in 1666. He would have been only 22 years of age in 1688 when James II abdicated. To us it seems more likely that Miles meant his great-great-grandfather, Thomas Bowker, who was born about 1635; see Pedigree. The parentage of *this* Thomas Bowker (No. 4 in the pedigree) has *not* been established.) Presumably he was the son of (3) Ralph Bowker of Bradford in the parish of Manchester, where the Bowkers were domiciled from ancient times, but on the contrary his surname may have been Bouchier, corrupted as tradition says to Bowker for political reasons. In that case it is possible that he was descended from James, Humphrey, or George, one of the three natural sons of John, 2nd Baron Berners (see 'The Bouchiers'). This view, we may add, was held by Miles Bowker himself, who could not reconcile the conduct of the Bowkers, whom we are told were supporters of the lost Stuart cause, with the radical views of Sir John Bouchier of Hanging-Grimston in Yorkshire, who was one of the signatories of the death warrant of King Charles I.

It must not be overlooked, however, that Sir John was a rigid independent. His ancestor was James the eldest son of Lord Berners, above mentioned (see 'The Bouchiers').

There is also the family of Ann Bouchier, heiress of Henry, 2nd Earl of Essex, who married William, Lord Parr of Kendall. In 1542 her children were made illegitimate by Act of Parliament. What became of these unfortunate but true descendants of the Earls of Essex (and of the Plantagenet kings!) we do not know, but it is more likely that they used the surname of Bouchier than the patronymic of their mother's husband who had

disowned them. The arms of Bouchier may have been handed down by them, in spite of their bend sinister, as happened in the Beddingborough family.

Miles Bowker's biography is given elsewhere in this book, so in this chapter we need only add what we know about him before he emigrated to the Cape. He was born in 1764, but where his baptism is recorded we have not discovered. Miles was a successful sheep farmer in the Cheviot Hills when he fell in love with Anna Mitford, daughter of John Mitford of Mitford Castle, a family of great antiquity coeval with Edward the Confessor. Their marriage took place in 1800 at Mitford Church, near Morpeth, Northumberland. We have a photographic facsimile from the church register which reads:

'Miles Bowker, Bachelor and Anna Maria Mitford, Minor, both of this Parish, were married in this Church (by Licence) this 8th.

Day of

March 1800. By me Henry Hogarth, Curate.

This Marriage was solemnized

between us

Miles Bowker

Anna Maria Mitford

In the presence of us,

Mary Mitford

John Mitford.'

Some time after his marriage Miles left the north to farm merino sheep at a place called Cherborough Park in Devon. He did well, with a fine flock, but after eight years merinos 'went out of fashion', so he leased Manor Farm from the Earl of Pembroke. According to Miles's son Thomas Holden, this farm was very near the town or village of South Newton in Wiltshire, but we cannot find a place of that name and feel sure it must have been South Newington. During their three years' sojourn at Manor Farm Miles and Anna, with already an extensive family of eight sons and a daughter, decided to give the younger generation the benefits of a life in the Colonial Empire and emigrate to the Cape of Good Hope under Earl Bathurst's Scheme. When the time came for departure they travelled overland in carts and farm wagons from Manor Farm to Portsmouth, taking with them what personal effects, furniture, and farm machinery they deemed essential for settlement in South Africa.

(F) Benjamin Bowker, Miles's only brother, was probably his partner in the shipping business they had inherited from their father. He was a kind and considerate man, and when the Euro-

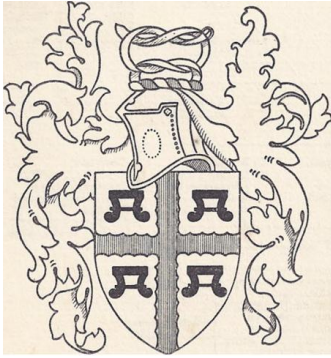
pean trade was ruined by the Napoleonic Wars he would not discharge his old or faithful servants, though he could ill afford to retain them. He, too, became a sheep farmer in the Cheviots, but the call of the sea must have been in his blood as later he joined a ship called the *Leocadia* (probably as Master). He was drowned off the Baltic coast, leaving an only son, (G) John Harrison Bowker (Harrison may have been his mother's name), a lieutenant in the Royal Navy. We know nothing about him except that he wanted his uncle, Miles, to claim the then abeyant Barony of Berners, and made some inquiries at the College of Heralds relative to this and the ancient Bouchier seals. His four sons were most unfortunate; all or most of them were commissioned in the Indian Army, and they all died young without issue. (J) Oswald Bouchier Bowker was actually on his way home, on leave, but died just before or just after reaching England.

The only member of John Harrison Bowker's family to reach a ripe age was the daughter, (H) Elizabeth Margaret, lifelong friend of our mother. She never married, but lived comfortably well off, until the time of her death, the 3rd March 1916. She was buried at Hammersmith, where two of her brothers are also interred.

Thus it will be seen that the Bowkers, so numerous in South Africa, are extinct in the male line in England, unless some of the present generation have returned there in recent times. That there are collateral branches of the family in Lancashire is most probable, but these relationships have long been forgotten.

Relative to the pedigrees that follow this chapter are the following references:

1. *History of Black ley Chapel*, by Rev. John Booker, F.S.A. (1854)-'
2. Registers of Blakeley, Lanes.
3. Will of John Bowker, proved 1652. Prerogative Court of Canterbury.
4. Transcripts of the Manchester Cathedral Registers, in the Manchester Public Library.
5. Parts of Miles Bowker's Memoirs, transcribed by Mary L. Mitford-Barberton.
6. Will of Elizabeth Illingworth, proved 1759. (P.C.C.)
7. Admon. of Benjamin Bowker, 1749. (P.C.C.)
8. Registers of St. George's, Hanover Square, London.
9. Registers of Westminster Abbey.
- o. *The Barbers of the Peak*, by I. Mitford-Barberton, 1934.
1. Letters of Eliz. Margaret Bowker, daughter of John Harrison Bowker.



THE BOURCHIERS

When Thomas Bowker of Deckhams Hall told his son Miles that the Bowker name was originally Bourchier (the Essex family), one may jump to the conclusion that he invented the whole story. But we must not forget that Thomas was sent the ancient silver seals of Bourchier when he became the head of the family after the death, without issue, of Houlden's only son Robert. These seals, treasured and handed down from generation to generation by the head of the Bowker family, are the same or similar to those used by Sir John Bourchier the Regicide, more of whom later. That Miles Bowker the 1820 settler was convinced that he had a claim to the Barony of Berners (then abeyant) is borne out by the fact that he drafted a petition in October 1829 to His Majesty (George IV) asking for recognition and at least a partial restoration of the Bourchier property and honours. The petition was never presented; Miles was dissuaded from doing so by his wife's kinsmen Lord Redesdale and Colonel Mitford.

There are, or were, many Bourchier families, and Burke's *General Armory* gives eleven coats of arms for the name spelt that way. Then there are coats under variations of the spelling. But the Bowkers have always claimed to belong to the illustrious family of Norman descent, one of whom, we believe, was a Count Bourchier buried in Battle Abbey. The arms of this family seem to date from one of the Crusades and are very ancient. Those borne by the first Earl of Eu and by all his descendants are those used by the Bowkers today, viz. *Argent*, a cross engrailed *gules*, between four water bougets *sable*. The crest or Bourchier knot (also described as a badge) was of later date. It is engraved on the tomb of Archbishop Bourchier in Canterbury Cathedral, and it was also used by his brother Lord Berners in the reign of Edward IV (1461-83).

The original Barony of Bourchier dates from the reign of Edward III. Robert Bourchier, who fought at Crecy and was after-

wards Chancellor, was summoned to Parliament as a peer in 1342. He lived at Stansted Hall in Essex, the home of his ancestors, and died of the plague in 1349. (There are magnificent Bouchier tombs at Little Easton, Essex.) The barony went to his eldest son, Bartholomew, Lord Bouchier, whose only daughter, Elizabeth, though twice married, had no issue. Sir William, the second son of the 1st Baron, was the father of William Bouchier, Constable of the Tower, who was created Earl of Eu, in Normandy, in 1419 (by Henry V). He allied himself to the Plantagenet Kings by marrying Ann, the only surviving daughter and heir of Thomas of Woodstock, Duke of Gloucester. Ann was descended through her mother, Eleanor de Bohun, from the ancient and illustrious family that had held the Earldoms of Hereford, Essex, and Northampton. The 1st Earl of Eu had four sons. (See (a), (b), (c), and (d), below.)

(a) Henry Bouchier, 2nd Earl of Eu, married Isabel, sister of Richard, Duke of York. In 1461 he was created Earl of Essex, which title remained in the Bouchier family until 1539, when Henry the 2nd Earl died from injuries received in a tournament. This Henry, a most valiant knight, had the principal command at the Battle of Blackheath. In the famous tournament held by Henry VIII in 1516 he answered all comers. Later he was at the Field of the Cloth of Gold. On his death the Earldom of Essex and the Viscounty of Bouchier expired and he was succeeded in the Barony of Bouchier by his only daughter, Ann, who married Lord Parr of Kendall. They had several children, all of whom were made illegitimate by Act of Parliament in 1542. The Earldom of Essex was revived, later, in the Devereux family (where the Barony of Bouchier was also merged), they being descended from Cicely Bouchier, a daughter of the 1st Earl.

(b) Thomas Bouchier, Cardinal, and Archbishop of Canterbury, died in 1486. 'He was', says Weaver, 'preferred to the Bishopric of Worcester, from whence he was translated to Ely and lastly enthroned in this chair of Canterbury, where he sat for thirty years, and lived after the time of his first consecration fifty-one years. I find not that ever an Englishman continued so long a bishop, or that any archbishop, either before or after him, in 800 years enjoyed that place so long.' He erected a magnificent monument to himself in Canterbury Cathedral.

(c) William Bouchier, Lord Fitzwarine, *jure uxoris*, from whom descended John Bouchier, created Earl of Bath in 1536 by Henry VIII. Afterwards the earldom became extinct and the Barony of Fitzwarine has been abeyant since 1636. A co-heir to the barony is Sir Bouchier Wrey, Baronet, creation (E) 1628, of Trebich, Cornwall, and there are, or were, other claimants.

(d) Sir John Bouchier, KG., summoned to Parliament as Baron de Berners in 1455, was the father of the celebrated Sir Humphrey Bouchier, killed at the Battle of Barnet in 1471. The latter was buried in the Chapel of St. Edmund, Westminster Abbey, where there was once a magnificent tomb, now much damaged, but worth seeing.¹ The 2nd Baron, John Bouchier, by command of King Henry VIII, translated the *Chronicles* of Sir John Froissart into English, as well as a number of other works, and acquired considerable fame by his learning. After his death the barony became abeyant, but it is now held by a direct descendant of Jane, his eldest daughter, who died in 1561. John Bouchier also left three illegitimate sons, James, Humphrey, and George, who all used the name and arms of Bouchier. From James, the eldest, descended the Bouchiers of Beddingborough (or Benningborough?) in Yorkshire, also Arthur Bouchier, the famous actor. We extract from Nobel's *Cromwell re* this family:

"The Bouchiers of Benningborough are descended from James Bouchier eldest natural son of John Bouchier, Lord Berners: Sir John Bouchier, of Hanging-Grimston, in Yorkshire, knt, 2nd. son of Sir Ralph Bouchier, of Benningborough, knt. was a rigid independent, and one of the king's judges : happy for himself, he died just before his trial would have taken place; he was old and infirm, and had surrendered himself within the time limited by the proclamation: he died at the house of one of his daughters, where he obtained permission to remain, instead of going to the Tower: his relations pressing him much to express his sorrow for the part he had acted respecting the king's death, he rose up from his chair, which he had not done for some days before without assistance, and exerting himself, said "It was a just act: God and all good men, will own it" : having said which, he calmly sat down again and soon after expired. He was no relation to the protector Oliver's wife, as appears by his seal in the warrant for k. Cha. I's execution.'

The Bouchier family, allied by the marriage of Elizabeth Bouchier to Oliver Cromwell, the Lord Protector, were apparently of different origin. To quote Nobel again:

'The protector married, aug. 22, 1620, at St. Giles's church, Cripplegate, London, Eliz. daughter of Sir Ja. Bouchier, of Felstead, in Essex, knt. She is generally represented as descended from the Earls of Essex of that name; but this is so far from being the case, that Sylvanus Morgan acquaints us, sir Ja. was of so new a family, that he had his coat of arms granted him in Oct. 1610, viz. sable three ounces passant in pale, or, spotted; this may be the reason why the protectress's arms are never seen with her husband's. . . . they were, however, upon the escutcheons used at the prot. Oliver's funeral.'

Besides Elizabeth Cromwell, Sir James Bouchier (who is also described as of Little-Stambridge, in Essex, and of Tower Hill in London) had several sons. These gentlemen, described as 'brothers of Oliver Cromwell's wife', appear in a manuscript of the Suffolk gentry, in the parish of Whepsted, within four miles of Bury.

Though of 'so new a family', where can we find two finer characters in history than Sir Henry Cromwell, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, and his weak but noble-hearted brother Richard, Lord Protector, sons of Elizabeth Cromwell; nor must we forget that worthy lady, their sister, Mrs. Claypoole.

¹ Translation of the Latin inscription from the tomb of Sir Humphrey Bouchier buried in the Chapel of St. Edmund in Westminster Abbey:

'Behold here lies a warrior, eager for fierce war. He fought at Barnet like a son of Aecus. As a soldier he became covered with wounds. He fell by force. War brought him his hurt. His arms reddened, tinged all over with blood.

'Alas 1 for the sorrow of that tearful day. Verily he fell on the day on which Christ rose from the dead.

Humphrey Bouchier sprang from the noble line of Edward the King third of that name. He was son and chief heir of John, Lord Berners. The fourth Edward indeed took the triumph of the battle in which Humphrey perished.

'As a true servant of the King, he was carver at the table of Elizabeth the wife of the King. So his merit grew with honour to himself. This man was conspicuous in arms once and dear to the Britons.

'Make your prayers that he may live in the Heavens.'

Note: The Battle of Barnet was fought in Hertfordshire in 1471 during the Wars of the Roses, when the houses of York and Lancaster were fighting for the crown of England.