

ANCESTRY OF CHIEF-JUSTICE HOLT

To the Editor HERALD and GENEALOGIST edited by John Gough Nichols

Sir, There is little doubt that Sir John Holt, the eminent Chief-Justice, was descended from the family of that name long seated at Gristlehurst, Lancashire, but some obscurity exists as to the precise course of descent. Sir John's father, Sir Thomas Holt, Serjeant-at-Law, entered his pedigree at the Visitation of Berkshire, in 1664. He there states himself to be the sole surviving son of Rowland Holt of London, merchant, by Mary, daughter of Alderman Thomas Buckner, which Rowland was tenth son of John Holt of Lancashire, by a daughter Cary, of the county of Bucks. Rowland Holt died in 1634, and administration of his effects was granted to his relict Mary. He is described as of New Windsor, in Berkshire, but no further particulars of him are given.

With regard to John Holt of Lancashire, who heads the pedigree, I am desirous of obtaining some authentic information. Sir Bernard Burke in his 'Landed Gentry' (subject Wilson of Redgrave) asserts that he was the only son of John Holt (by a daughter of Scofield of Woodrold, in Lancashire), who was the fifth son of Francis Holt of Gristlehurst. No proof, however, is given of this assertion, and hitherto I have been unable to find anything to support it. In the copy of Le Neve's Pedigrees of Knights at the College of Arms the above descent, indeed, suggested in pencil (whether by Le Neve or by some later hand I know not), but of course, an entry so made carried with it no authority.

It is never an easy matter to trace the cadets of great families, and in the case before us the visitation Pedigrees of the Holts of Gristlehurst afford no assistance whatever. The descent of the eldest son is alone carried out, and his younger brothers are left to take care of themselves; the Heralds in this respect following, perhaps, the example of the head of the house.

I should be glad to learn who is the present representative of the ancient family of Holt of Gristlehurst, and to whom the ancestral seat now belongs.