

HOLT OF ASHWORTH HALL

Notes by Lector 1st December 1905.

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The recent contribution to "Notes and Queries" in reference to inscribed stones reminded me of having somewhere read of a stone over the door of a barn at Ashworth Hall bearing the inscription "RH 1601". This is the oldest inscription of the kind in the Heywood district that I have found recorded, and it has suggested to me the giving of a few particulars which may perhaps induce some better informed reared to favour us with what I think has not yet been attempted – a good historical sketch of Ashworth.

"R.H. 1601" no doubt has reference to the Robert Holt who was at that time head of the family at Ashworth Hall. The Holts of Ashworth were connections of the Holts of Stubley, of Gristlehurst, and of Bridge Hall near Heap Bridge; and for many generations they were one of the most influential families on this side of the county. The Robert Holt of three centuries ago was seized in fee of the manor and hamlet of Ashworth; also of the capital messuages, ten cottages, twenty gardens, twenty orchards, one grain water-mill, four fulling mills, two hundred acres of land,, eighty acres of meadow, two hundred acres of pasture, one hundred acres of wood and underwood, two hundred acres of moor, moss, and turbary in Ashworth, Wolstenholme, Marcroft Yate, Cheesden, Bamford, Middleton, and Spotland; and ten messuages, two cottages, ten gardens, one hundred acres of land, twenty acres of meadow, one hundred acres of pasture, and one hundred acres of moor, moss, furze, and heath in Butterworth.

The Holts appear to have been settled in Ashworth at lease as far back as the fifteenth century, for I find that about the year 1477 Oliver Holt. Gentleman of Ashworth, son and heir of Richard Holt (by his wife Margaret, daughter of James Cheetham, gentleman of Nuthurst), married Constance, daughter of James Holt of Gristlehurst Hall. The Robert Holt

whom I connect with the inscribed stone of 1601 had a son Robert, who was married at Middleton Church on October 28th 1594, to Mary, daughter (by first wife) of Sir Robert Holt Assheton of Middleton of Middleton Hall, and died about fifteen years and two months afterwards. Robert Holt the elder survived his son, dying on 31st July 1624. Robert the younger had a son Richard (born in march 1597), who married Mary , daughter of William Assheton, Clegg Hall, and sister of Theophilus and William Assheton of Rochdale. Richard Holt, however, died (June 1623) four years before his grandfather, and was only eleven months old at the time of his father's death – the record in Dugdale's Visitation of 1664, it may be noted, making the younger Richard two or three years older than he really was. This last named Richard married , and had a number of children.

Some of the Holt connections are very interesting. For instance, on June 7th 1585, Mary, daughter of Robert Holt of Ashworth, was married to Thomas, son of John Greenhalgh of Brandlesome (by his wife Alice, daughter of Robert Holt of Stubley). This Thomas Greenhalgh predeceased his wife, and she married again, becoming the second wife of Sir Richard (who died on December 27th 1617), and afterwards resided at Radcliffe Tower or Manor House. By his first marriage (with a daughter of Sir John Byron of Clayton), Sir Richard Assheton had a daughter Mary, who as already shown, was married to Robert Holt the younger of Ashworth in 1594, and died in August 1600. The aforementioned Thomas Greenhalgh (whose father survived him by some years , dying in January 1615) was the father of John Greenhalgh of Brandlestone, who was a notable Royalist, and acted as Governor of the Isle on Man for Lord Derby from 1640 until 1651, when he died from wounds received in fighting for Charles II. This Captian John Greenhalgh

was married three times. His second wife Mary , to whom he was married at Ashworth Chapel on December 8th 1620 was the widow of the aforesaid Richard Holt the elder who died at Ashworth Hall only six months previously. By his first marriage (with Alice daughter of the rev. William Massie, rector of Wilmslow , who dies a few days before Richard Holt) John Greenhalgh had a daughter, Jane, who married Richard Holt of Ashworth to whom reference is made in the "Life of Humphrey Cheetham" (Cheetham ~Society's Publications) by Captian Greenhalgh from the founder the famous Hospital and ??? in Manel ???, as follows:-

January 1635 John Grenehalgh of Brandlesome Esq. pays off £30 and asks permission to pay another £30 in month , same interest; but on the 30th March he borrows £60 and sends security. 18th December 1638, he again borrows £250 and his bondsmen are Savile Radcliffe of Todmorden, Esq. and Henry Byrom of Byrom Esq. Mr Greenhalgh paid use for three and half years for £250 - £70. On the 20th December 1640, he again borrows £300, his bonds being Mrs Marie Assheton of Middleton, Richard Holt of Ashworth Esq. and Edward Rawsthorne of New Hall Esq. "Use hath been paid for this sum for two years £48."

Various sums were advanced to Richard Holt of Ashworth Esq. so that on the 16th October 1647 ,he writes to Humphrey Cheetham on the sale of Cobbs Nabb, in Bury parish, in order to recoup him to him (Holt's) father-in-law Captain Grenehalgh , then with Lord Derby in the Isle of Man. On the 21st November 1648 Mr Grenehalgh, writing to Mr. Cheetham from Castle Rushen says "For the earnest desire I have that anything that pertains to me or my pore house should rather be put into your hands than any man's living, son Holt's hands excepteth, having ever found you not only upright and just in your dealing but so conscionable and respective of your friend, as also to deal really and freely with you because I desire

from my heart to further my son Holt in the best manner I may that he may not be compelled either to break off his sister 's marriage or to gain money on harder terms than is meet for me that god knows have been so great a sufferer in those troublesome times therefore good loving Sir, let me entreat me you on fair and reasonable terms to furnish him with money. Thus sir assuring you of my good health and heartedly desiring yours with remembrance of my wife and my own love and service to you and to my cousin James Warmesly, I remain as I think myself sincerely bound sir yours affectionate friend to serve you. "

In the following year Brandlesome itself was in the possession of Humphrey Cheetham, and he paid Mr Richard Holt for seed, corn, hay, oats, etc. delivered to him there. In January 1650 , Mr Holt raised money on his lands in Butterworth in Rochdale to repay Humphrey Cheetham and in April he writes "I am still willing to mortgage my lands in Butterworth to you only I beseech you ???sed so fare to consider my condition as to lay down some considerable some more than you formerly offered."

Captain Greenhalgh was a great Grandson of Thomas Greenhalgh of Brandlesome (who died on July 18th 1576) by the first wife , Anne a daughter of Robert Labrey of Manchester, sergeant-at arms to king Henry VII. This Mrs Anne Greenhalgh was the sister of Alice Labrey, wife of Stephen Hulme whose son Robert married Alice daughter of Robert Holt of Ashworth; and this Robert Hulme and his wife, Alice Holt were great-grandparents of William Hulme founder of the noble educational charity which bears his honoured name, One of Captain John Greenhalgh's daughters, Alice (born at Ashworth on December 10th, 1610), was twice married: her first husband was Theophilus Holt of Gristlehurst, and her second was Peter Heywood of Heywood Hall.