

CHAPTER 13 - THE HONOUR OF PEVEREL

Description

I think it desirable that somewhere in this history a brief description should be given of the Honour (or Lordship) of Peverel which, at the height of its power, had jurisdiction over some 127 towns and villages in Nottinghamshire and 120 in Derbyshire.

Originally granted by William the Conqueror to William Peverel it was taken into the King's hands in the 12th century. Just how it was constituted during the middle ages we do not know, but during the later Tudor period and the Stewart period preceding the puritans it had at its head a High Steward, with a deputy-the Learned Steward as well as two Chief Bailiffs, sub bailiffs and a Coroner. The Courts were held for many years within Nottingham Castle (prior to its demolition by Cromwell) and here Also was the prison serving the Honour.

Two courts; Tourn and View of Frankpledge

There were anciently attached to the Honour two Courts, one comprising a Tourn and one with a View of Frankpledge; both were Courts of Record whereof the former had jurisdiction to hear and determine all felonies, (death of man excepted), and common nuisances. It was held twice a year and all the tenants of the Honour owing sit to it were bound to attend; the Tevereys held their Stapleford inheritance of the King by doing suit to this Court. The View of Frankpledge had jurisdiction over those matters which were exempt from the Tourn and met once every three weeks attended by those tenants of the Honour who owed suit and service to it. The Heriz family had held their lands of the King by doing suit and service at this Court. It was the land which owed suit and it was the land which he held that determined a man's duty of attending the Courts; on the presence of the suitors depended the work of these Courts although in some instances suit could be performed by deputy and sometimes commuted for money.

There no records to show that Stapleford ever had a Court Baron of its own and it certainly never had a Court Leet; the functions which such assemblies would have exercised was embodied in the Courts of that larger 'manor'-the Honour of Peverel-and by the early 17th century these were known as Court for Trial of Actions, Court of Synod, or Assembly and the Court of Chancery or Equity, as well as the General Sessions and Gaol Delivery. There is also reference to Courts Baron and Courts Leet and it was at the latter-with its View of Frankpledge-that the Thirdborrows of the towns within the Honour paid over the Common Fine, at Easter and Michaelmas,

along with monies for suit fine and make presentments for infringements of the Assize of Bread and Ale as well as for breaking the King's peace.

View of Frankpledge

Two examples from the reign of Elizabeth I are as follows: -

“Court with a View of Frankpledge held at Nottingham castle Tuesday after Michaelmas 13 Elizabeth “(2nd October 1571)

Stableford: Richard Walker, Peter Chambers, Roger Storer and William Sidebothome took the oath of Frankpledge and paid the common fine of 12 shillings. They presented the wife of John Jenynes as a common breweress of beer, (fined 2 pence), and Helen Wright as a baker of coarse bread (made from oats for consumption by horses; the offender in this case would be contravening the assize of bread) and a breweress of beer. (fined 4 pence).¹

“Court with a View of Frankpledge heard at Nottingham Castle 18th April 29 Elizabeth I (1587) before Richard Repington, the Steward’s Chaplain.”

Stapleforde: Peter Chambers, Roger Storer, William Walker and Mills Farrand took the oath of frankpledge and presented for the common fine of 4s 6d now due. They paid the fine of sit of court for Reginald Hollingworth 12d owed at this time, and for Thomas Meere, 3d, and for William Greisley 3d. They also presented that Miles Farrand made an affray against Anthony (-); penalty 4d. They presented that Richard Tow (Toule) made an affray and attacked John Dumnes, a common vintner of Stapleford; penalty 2s. They also presented that Edmund Burton and Nicholas Taylor of the town of Nottingham, common bakers, sold their wares in Stapleford contrary to the assize; penalty 2d. They presented that Thomas Hutchinson, William Walker, Miles Farrands, Walter Needham and William Hornebuckell, common brewers, broke the assize; penalty 2d (each).²

The breaking of the assizes of bread and ale was such a common occurrence that the penalty was not looked upon as a punishment either by the imposer or the imposed upon but more as an accepted form of revenue.

The Peverel Court continued to be held long after the events related above; for some time at Nottingham later at Basford, Lenton, and finally Radford where the last sitting was held in November 1849 being formally abolished on the 31st December of that year in pursuance of an Act 12 and 13 Victoria.

¹ Index of Court Rolls (PRO) Portfolio 196 No 77. [SC 2/196/77]

² Index of Court Rolls (PRO) Portfolio 196 N o. 84 [SC 2/ 196/84]

