

MUSEUM of ENGLISH RURAL LIFE

A
History of
WHITEKNIGHTS

The UNIVERSITY of READING

1957

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by

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The UNIVERSITY of READING

22 MARCH 1957

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my thanks to all those who have helped in preparing this account of Whiteknights and its owners, in particular to Professor A. Aspinall for calling my attention to George Agar-Ellis's unpublished diary and lending me his copy of it, to Mrs A. F. Clark for introducing me to sources of information in the Reading County Borough Library and elsewhere, to Miss A. M. Kirkus for her never-failing help in the University Library, and to Miss N. R. Rich for kindly typing my manuscript. I am also grateful to the Public Record Office for their permission to reproduce the certificate relating to the free chapel of Earley Whiteknights.

E. S.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Cal. Pat. *for* Calendar of Patent Rolls
Cal. Close *for* Calendar of Close Rolls
Cal. Fine *for* Calendar of Fine Rolls

I N T R O D U C T I O N

There is nobody better fitted to write this book than Mr Smith. As a historian he has patiently and thoroughly undertaken the enquiries and researches which it has demanded; as Registrar of the University of Reading he was intimately concerned in the University's acquisition of Whiteknights Park; and as a man with a deep affection for English country he has the personal feeling which lights up for him, and for his reader, the story he has to tell.

The development of the Park as the new home of a growing University is a considerable task. All of us who are engaged upon it have constantly before our minds the determination that we will not damage the beauty of our surroundings but rather that we will, in every way we can, enhance it and increase it. There are few things more serene than a stretch of English parkland. There are few things more lively than a residential university. Here we have the opportunity to bring the two together, and to build, against a background of rolling slopes and noble trees, a home for generations of busy and vigorous young people.

At this particular moment in our story Mr Smith's book is a timely reminder of the centuries-long history of the site itself. Its history as the site of the University of Reading is for those coming generations to make.

J. F. Wolfenden

MANOR of EARLEY REGIS
otherwise EARLEY WHITEKNIGHTS in the
County of Berks

I GEORGE KENNET POLLOCK, *Gentleman, the Steward of the Manor of Earley Regis, otherwise Earley Whiteknights in the County of Berks, under the authority given to me by virtue of a certain Indenture bearing date the fifteenth day of June in the Year of our Lord One thousand Eight hundred and thirty nine, made between James Wright Nokes, Esquire, Lord of the said Manor of the first part, John Beardmore, Esquire, of the second part, and myself George Kennet Pollock, of the third part, do hereby appoint you John Ward to be the Bailiff of the said Manor, and require you to give notice within the said Manor, that the Court Leet and Court Baron of the Lord of the said Manor, will be this day holden at the House known by the name of the Three Tuns Public House within the said Manor, and to warn all Resiants and Tenants of the said Manor personally to be and appear and to do and perform their Suit and Service, and pay their Quit Rents, Fines and other duties as of right they ought to perform and render at such courts respectively, and then and there to make and return their several presentments and to perambulate the boundaries of the said Manor according to the ancient Custom thereof, and present the same to be duly entered upon the said Manor. And be you here also personally with the names of the persons you have so summoned bringing with you also this precept. Dated this Eleventh day of May 1840.*

*To John Ward, Gardener
Whiteknights*

*G. K. Pollock,
Steward¹*

¹ Court Rolls of the Manor of Earley Regis.

This formal notice summoned what proved to be, for the manor of Earley Whiteknights, the last meeting associated with a jurisdiction which had been in operation since the middle ages. Manorial courts generally throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had declined in power and significance as their activities were superseded by those of the more effectively organised justices of the peace in the towns and in the country at large. The manorial court of Earley Whiteknights had survived much longer than the majority of similar bodies but it, too, had now outlived its usefulness. Its last meeting in 1840 signalled the end of its functions, judicial, economic and governmental, and marked the virtual disappearance of what still remained of the medieval organisation of the community whose interests it had served.

The meeting, thus summoned, was attended by fourteen persons, sworn as the jury and homage of the court, who, as was the practice in such bodies, were presided over by the Steward. The court, so constituted, proceeded 'with a great many other persons' to perambulate the bounds of the whole manor, beginning at their customary starting point 'the House called the Marquis of Granby Public House' standing in the London Road opposite to where the thirty-eighth milestone stands', their main object being to ascertain whether any encroachments had been made upon the external boundaries of the manor by persons from without or upon the internal boundaries by freeholders, leaseholders or others from within.

The route followed by the jury is now difficult, if not impossible, to trace in detail as many of the landmarks mentioned in the report on the perambulation can no longer be identified. In general, from north to south the manor was about three and a half miles in length and, omitting the narrower southern tip, averaged rather less than a mile in width from east to west. The northern boundary was defined by about a quarter of a mile of the river Kennet and nearly a mile of the river Thames, measured from the junction of the two streams; the river Loddon marked the southern limit of the manorial lands, while the general direction of the east and west boundaries was almost due north and south.

The name 'Whiteknights' does not appear to have come into general use in association with the manor until towards the end of the fourteenth century, but there is no doubt that, so designated, the manor is con-

¹ In earlier perambulations it is called the Booth or Gallows Tavern.

tinuous in point of time with that of Earley to which there are numerous references in preceding years. From the time of the Norman conquest the name Earley is found in a great variety of forms. In the Domesday survey it appears as Herlei, while in the sixteenth century, in the records of the Augmentation Office, it is given as Arley; Erlegh, Ere, Arle, Ereleye, Early and Erleigh are only some of the forms in which it was rendered in the intervening years.

THE ERLEGHS
c. 1160-1362

In the latter part of the twelfth century, throughout the thirteenth and during the greater part of the fourteenth century, the manor was held direct from the King by successive generations of a family who appear to have taken their name from their place of residence. They were evidently a family of considerable substance, possessing lands in Somerset as well as in Berkshire, of knightly rank, and of a standing sufficient to render themselves liable to be called upon to fill highly important offices under the Crown. In 1251, for example, Henry de Erlegh was responsible, as sheriff, for the counties of Somerset and Dorset, and at the same time was constable of the castles of Corfe and Shyreburn (Sherborne), as is evident from a royal mandate, issued from Westminster on the 21st October in that year, instructing him to deliver them to Ellis de Rabayn.¹

In course of time the manor descended to Philip, the son of a Henry de Erlegh, probably identical with the beforementioned Henry. Philip, however, died prematurely in the early part of 1275, leaving an infant son, John, during whose minority the manor, in accordance with feudal practice, reverted to the Crown. Two orders concerning the property were thereupon issued from Westminster addressed to 'the escheator this side of the Trent'. The first instructed him to assign a dower to Philip's widow, Roesia, subject to her taking an oath not to marry without the King's consent,² while the second directed him to take into the King's hands the lands of Philip de Erlegh, tenant-in-chief, to inquire as to their yearly value and to find the name and age of the heir.³ Roesia's oath seems to have sat lightly upon her, as in 1282 she and Geoffrey de Wroxhale

¹ Cal. Pat., 1247-58, p. 113.

² Cal. Close, 1272-79, p. 165.

³ *Ibid.*

Whiteknights 1776
from Governor
Pownall's drawing



1776

WHITE - KNIGHTS -
The Seat of Sir Alex. Boscawen Bart.
Drawn on Original Drawing by Genl. Pownall
1776 & engraved by W. B. & J. G. 1776.

were pardoned, on paying a fine of £20, of their trespass in intermarrying without licence.¹

It was unlikely that a manor house so conveniently placed between London and the west country would remain unused for long, and even more improbable that the officers of the Crown would forgo the opportunity it presented for adding to the royal revenue. Among English ecclesiastics in the reign of Edward I none had a greater reputation for learning than Thomas Cantilupe, sometime Chancellor of the University of Oxford, and the last Englishman to be canonised before the Reformation, who, in 1275, had been appointed to the bishopric of Hereford. As a member of the King's Council he was obliged to undertake frequent journeys between his diocese and Westminster, and having, as he said, no lodging wherein he could conveniently stay in coming to the King from his parts, or in returning, he requested the King 'to commit to him, until the heirs of Henry² de Erleg, tenant in chief, come of age, the manor of Erleg near Rading'.³ Thomas of Hereford had to pay dearly for the amenity he sought, but this was no insuperable obstacle to a rich baron's son who, when a student in Paris, received personal visits from the French King and fed poor scholars with the remnants from his table.⁴ For a 'fine' of two hundred pounds and an annual payment of sixteen marks the royal consent was obtained.⁵ At a later date Cantilupe was empowered to include in his will the custody of 'Erleye', during the minority of the heir, as well as his grain and goods in the said manor.⁶ No doubt the manor house of Earley proved a particularly convenient headquarters for the Bishop during the Council of Reading in 1279 when he organised and led the opposition to Archbishop Peckham on the hotly debated question of pluralities.

In 1292 the heir to the estate having come of age made his formal homage to the King, whereupon an instruction was issued to the Treasurer and Barons of the Exchequer in virtue of which John de Erlegh entered into his inheritance.⁷ Some years later the recording of an order

¹ Cal. Fine, 1272-1307, p. 160.

² This is a mistake for Philip.

³ Cal. Close, 1272-79, p. 268.

⁴ Tout, *Political History of England, 1216-1377*, p. 93.

⁵ Cal. Close, 1272-79, p. 299 and p. 460.

⁶ Cal. Pat., 1272-81, p. 367.

⁷ Cal. Close, 1288-96, p. 353.

to suspend a demand which had been made upon him for the payment of scutage reveals that towards the end of the century John de Erlegh was serving with the King's army in Scotland.¹ One further incident of his life remains on record. In 1314 he sought and obtained for a fee of twenty shillings a licence to transfer to Richard Kymberle, parson of the chapel of St Nicholas, Erle, and his successors seven and a half acres of land in Erle to make provision for the celebration of divine service in the said chapel for all Christian souls.² It is highly probable that this same benefactor of the chapel was identical with the *Johannes de Arle dictus Whythknyght*³ whose soubriquet from before the end of the fourteenth century has been permanently associated with the name of the manor.

For the greater part of the fourteenth century the manor continued in the hands of the Erlegh family but their long connection with it, which had extended over two hundred years, ended soon after 1360. For the next eighty years or more its history is complicated and at times difficult to trace. Settlement followed upon settlement in rapid succession. Sometimes by sale, more often as the result of marriage, the manor came under the control of various owners, some of them strangers to Berkshire, who, unfortunately, appear to have left, either in local or national records, little trace of themselves or their influence.

HENRY de ALDRYNGTON and OTHERS

1362-1446

In or shortly after 1362 the manor was sold to Henry de Aldryngton, a man apparently of considerable means, who about the same time was investing in property in Thatcham. He married a wealthy heiress, Elizabeth Loveday, and died in 1375. In Goring church his memory is still kept alive by a brass, the survival of which for more than three centuries was a source of satisfaction to the antiquary Thomas Hearne when he saw it as long ago as 1717; it reads—

*Icy gist Henri de Aldryngton q̄ morust le xxviij iō de August lan de
ḡce mcccclxxv dieu de salme eit m̄cy.*

Henry's son and heir, John de Aldryngton, granted the reversion of the manor, subject to his mother's life interest in it, to John Olney of Weston

¹ Cal. Close, 1302-07, p. 360.

² Cal. Pat., 1313-17, p. 159.

³ Feudal Aids, I, 70.

and Richard Bruns of Harwell. Elizabeth, however, about three years after the death of Henry de Aldryngton, married another husband, John de Shilford, a merchant of London, who later became for a time lord of the manor of Colthrop near Thatcham.¹ As a consequence of this marriage John Olney and Richard Bruns renounced their interest in the manor in favour of John de Shilford and his wife Elizabeth, and the heirs of John. By a curious omission the renunciation was made without the royal licence with the consequence that, before it was ratified, John and Elizabeth, in January, 1393, were compelled to pay to the King a fine of one hundred shillings and sue pardon for the trespass they had committed.² They were careful not to repeat their error later in the same year as they paid into the royal revenue the sum of twenty shillings for a licence to settle the manor on themselves in fee-tail, making provision for it to pass in due course to their daughter Constance and her husband Thomas Overeye, described as a citizen and clothier of London,³ and the heirs of Constance.⁴ Having two daughters, but no son, Thomas and Constance in 1413 obtained for five marks a licence settling the manor of 'Erlegh Whiteknyghtes' upon themselves for life with remainder to their elder daughter Agnes and her husband John Beke, and the heirs of John.⁵ Thomas Overeye died in 1431. His son-in-law, John Beke, either predeceased him or did not long survive him as Agnes took unto herself another husband, William Bisshopeston. These events led to still further settlements. In 1443 Agnes and her second husband renounced the manor in favour of Thomas, the son of John Beke, while three years later Thomas Beke and his wife Isabel obtained a licence settling the manor on themselves and their heirs.⁶

THE BEKES

1446-1606

Thomas Beke (sometimes Bek, Beck, Beek, or Beake), who thus inherited Whiteknights, belonged to a family in whose unbroken possession the manor continued for more than a hundred and fifty years. Already they were of some significance in life in Berkshire. In 1410, John

¹ Barfield, *Thatcham and its Manors*, I, 347.

² Cal. Pat., 1391-96, p. 221.

³ Barfield, *Thatcham and its Manors*, I, 347.

⁴ Cal. Pat., 1391-96, p. 321.

⁵ Cal. Pat., 1408-13, p. 464.

⁶ Cal. Pat., 1446-52, p. 24.

Beke, the father of Thomas, was one of four commissioners appointed by letters patent issued by Henry IV to inquire about the goods of a Simon Hasilden of Newbury 'who lately made forfeiture to the King for treason against the royal majesty'.¹ Four years later he was granted, apparently as a reward for his services to the Crown, the wardenship of the hospital of St Mary Magdalen by Redyng, a foundation for lepers, established by the second Abbot of Reading before the middle of the twelfth century. Like many similar charities, the hospital had practically ceased to function because of the decline in the numbers affected by the disease, with the result that the wardenship had become almost a sinecure. In the patent relating to his appointment to this office, John Beke is described as 'the King's servant'² but the particular capacity in which he served is not revealed.

In public affairs, Thomas Beke was at least as active as his father. He was three times mayor of Reading, in 1458-59, 1462-63 and 1476-77, and was one of the two representatives of the borough in each of the parliaments of 1451 and 1461.³ Thomas's son, Marmaduke, did not live long enough to possess the manor, but his grandson, another Thomas, who inherited it on the death of his mother, Isabel, in 1501 appears to have concerned himself closely with the public life of his time. No event in the reign of Henry VIII proved so nearly disastrous to the throne as the Pilgrimage of Grace under the guiding genius of Robert Aske. Although Aske's major activities were confined to Yorkshire, the manifestos which he issued were disseminated much further afield. Some reached Reading and were a cause of alarm to the local authorities who, no doubt, had been warned by an apprehensive government to be on the alert. In consequence we find Thomas Beke together with Abbot Hugh Faringdon, the Mayor of Reading and two other citizens occupied on 2 December, 1536, in examining the vicar of St Giles who appears to have come under suspicion. The report of the proceedings revealed an attempt to enlist the sympathy of the influential Beke family in the rebel cause.

Sir Richard Snowe, vicar of St. Gyles, Reading, says that on the 28 Nov., Richard Turner sent him a copy of a letter made by Robert

¹ Cal. Pat., 1408-13, p. 226.

² Cal. Pat., 1413-16, p. 236.

³ *Berkshire Archæological Journal*, xxxvi, p. 80.

*Aske, to deliver to John Eynon, a priest of the church, to make a copy of. On St. Andrew's day last, he gave a copy to Nich. Strystram, son-in-law to Thomas Beke the King's servant, to be delivered to his father-in-law and also to his uncle John Beke, one of the baileys of Reading.*¹

'The King's servant' died the year before his royal master, and the manor passed to Thomas's son, Marmaduke. As the latter had no children it was inherited in 1552 by his nephew Henry and from him, in default of a male heir, by his daughter Elizabeth who married Hugh Speke.

The close personal ties of the Beke family with Whiteknights had, however, weakened. Henry, after his marriage to Jane Lewkenor, never lived there, preferring a more modest establishment at Hartley Court which he also owned. The association was finally broken in 1606 when Hugh and Elizabeth Speke conveyed the manor to Francis Englefield of Wootton Bassett in Wiltshire.

Of Henry Beke's achievements in life there appears to be no record, but in death he has the rare, if not unique, distinction of having two memorials in the same church. On the north side of the nave of Shinfield church a stone inscribed by an unskilled hand records,

HERE LYETH BEREED THE BODI OF
MASTER HENRY BEKE ESSQVIER WHO
DESESED THE 23 MAY 1580

In marked contrast, on the wall of the south aisle, not its original place, is the second memorial, erected the year after Elizabeth Speke's death, having kneeling figures, beautifully designed and executed, of a knight in armour with a veiled woman at his side, and behind the latter a second but younger woman also kneeling. Below appears the inscription—

ANº DÑI 1627
Hic pater HENRICUS, mater IANA, et filia ELIZA
Effinguntur, adest Urnula sola patris,
BEAKE nomen patrum, domus Hartley-curia, mater
ROGERO LEWKENOR milite nata fuit,
GEORGIUS extruxit Monumenta (enatus ELIZA:
Filius HUGONII SPEKE) pia jussa matris.

¹ *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII*, xi, p. 498.

THE CHAPEL.

1220-1548

Although its site is unknown and no traces of it have so far been identified, there is ample evidence that a chapel formerly existed in the manor of Whiteknights. In 1535, with the hope of increasing the revenues of the Crown by additional income from first-fruits and tenths, an Act¹ was passed under which commissioners were appointed to examine and report upon the value of every benefice of whatsoever kind from archbishoprics to free chapels. The results of the inquiry were assembled according to dioceses in a general report known as the *Valor Ecclesiasticus*. In this report, under the diocese of Salisbury and the parish of Sonning,² there appears the following brief entry—

Liba capella Alborū Milit' in Sonnyng p ann' clare valet s d
xxxij iij

Earlier references to this free chapel of Whiteknights also exist. In 1446, when Thomas Beke and his wife obtained a licence to settle their heritage on themselves and their heirs, the licence included both 'the manor of Erlegh White Knyghtes and the advowson of the chapel thereof'.³ Again, in 1415 there is on record a ratification by the Crown of the estate which one, Thomas Morton, possessed as 'prebendary of Landogy (Llandygydd) in Wales, in the diocese of St David's and warden of the free chapel of Whyteknyghtes by Redyng, co. Berks',⁴ while it has already been noted that in 1314 John de Erlegh gave seven and a half acres of land as an endowment, to provide an extension of the services of this selfsame chapel. Nearly a hundred years earlier, in 1224, William de Wanda, Dean of Salisbury, included in a visitation of Sonning the chapel of John de Erleg, dedicated to St Nicholas, when he reprimanded the chaplain for including in his ministrations ordinary persons in the parish of Sonning,⁵ presumably referring to parishioners not resident on the manorial lands. The earliest known reference to this chapel appears to be in 1220 when, on the occasion of a similar visitation, it was found to have no minister.⁶

¹ 26 Henry VIII, c. 3.

² The Archdeaconry of Berks, including the parish of Sonning, remained in the diocese of Salisbury until 1836 when it was transferred to the diocese of Oxford.

³ Cal. Pat., 1446-52, p. 24.

⁴ Cal. Pat., 1413-16, p. 332.

⁵ The Register of S. Osmund (Rolls Series), I, p. 307.

⁶ *Ibid.*, I, p. 277.

That there was a close connection between the chapel of Earley Whiteknights and the leper hospital in Reading is hardly open to doubt, but there are obscurities in the precise nature of their relationship. According to Coates,¹ citing from the Woolascot manuscripts, the hospital owned, among other properties, a house at Earley Whiteknights from which it was entitled to the rents and to a heriot when due. Again, the wardenship of the leper hospital which was granted by Henry V to John Beke in 1414 and which became a hereditary trust in that family, included the advowson of the free chapel of Earley Whiteknights. This is evident not only from the fact that the advowson was inherited by John Beke's son, Thomas, and included in the settlement of the latter's estate in 1446, but also from a document to which reference will presently be made showing that the chapel, until its dissolution in the middle of the sixteenth century, continued in the possession of the Beke family.

The disendowment of many smaller ecclesiastical foundations followed almost inevitably upon the dissolution of the monasteries. A statute passed in 1545, after stating that the property of colleges, chantries and free chapels had been misapplied in various ways and that founders or donors and in some cases priests or wardens had converted endowments to their own use, declared that where such fraudulent practice had taken place, the foundations were dissolved and the possessions forfeited to the King. Had it not been for the death of Henry VIII, which took place in January, 1547, the chapel of Earley Whiteknights would have come under the operation of this Act as it had been dissolved in 1536 by Thomas Beke without the royal licence.² Like most other free chapels, however, it remained for the time being undisturbed, but in the first year of the reign of Edward VI another Act was passed under which commissioners were appointed to certify the names of all chantries and free chapels, the names of their founders, and the value of their lands, and also to make inventories of their jewels, plate and ornaments. The certification was to be made to the Court of the Augmentation of the King's Revenues, an office instituted in 1536 to deal with the revenues accruing from the dissolution of the monasteries. Among the commissioners appointed jointly for the counties of Berkshire and Southampton was Roger Amyce³ (later

¹ Coates, *The History and Antiquities of Reading*, p. 278.

² *Ibid.*

³ Cal. Pat., 1548-9, p. 136.

Sir Roger Amyce); his certificate relating to the free chapel of Earley Whiteknights survives in the Public Record Office¹ and is reproduced on page 12. Transcribed, it reads—

Com Berk Founded by the auncestors of Thom̄s Beke wⁱⁿ
his manor of whiteknights whereunto
The Free Chapell appteyneth three piddells of arable lande,
of Arley white cont by estim' V acr', one Acre of arable
knights in land lyeinge in Erley felde and all
Sunnyng the tithes of the said manor of white
 knights w^t the appurtenances now in the
 tenure of Hugh Beke incumbente
 having nothings ell towards his lyvinge
 is of the clere yearly value of . . .

xxxiijs iiijd

*Memord' ther is neither leade bells chalice nor other
Ornaments by the testemony of the incumbente
and others uppon their othes*

*Per Rogerum Amyce
Supervis'*

The ultimate fate of the chapel is unknown but it is recorded that on 9 August, 1548, the Crown sold to Henry Polsted and William More 'the late free chapel of Arley Whyteknights in Sonnyng, Berks, the three pightels or pieces of land and one acre of arable land in Erley Felde, lately in tenure of Hugh Beke, late incumbent, and belonging to the said free chapel, also the tithes of sheaves, grain and hay and all other tithes of the manor and lands of Whiteknyghtes which tithes belonged to the said chapel.'²

THE ENGLEFIELDS

1606-1798

The manor of Earley Whiteknights which was acquired by Francis Englefield in 1606 continued in the unbroken possession of his family for nearly two hundred years. They had long been settled in Berkshire, and as early as the twelfth century were lords of the manor of Englefield. Burke's *Extinct and Dormant Baronetcies* mentions their claim to much greater antiquity, dating their tenure as far back as the reign of King Egbert, early in the ninth century.

From time to time members of the family had appeared prominently

¹ E.315/68 fo. 55.

² Cal. Pat., 1548-49, p. 60.

on the political stage. Sir Roger Englefield was one of the knights of the shire for the county of Berks in the parliaments of 1307 and 1312. Thomas, who was knighted on the occasion of the marriage of Prince Arthur to Catherine of Aragon in 1501, and who died in 1514, filled the office of Speaker of the house of commons in 1497 and again in the first parliament of the reign of Henry VIII in 1510. His son and heir, another Sir Thomas, was eminent as a justice of the court of common pleas and was one of the judges who served on the commission appointed to try the four commoners accused of high treason on account of their alleged complicity in the crimes attributed by Henry VIII to his queen, Anne Boleyn.

Perhaps the most outstanding member of the family was the last-named Sir Thomas's eldest son, Francis, who succeeded to the Englefield inheritance in 1537 and was knighted ten years later. Living in stormy political and religious times he was an uncompromising supporter of pre-reformation beliefs and practices. He was sheriff of Berkshire and Oxfordshire at the time of the death of Henry VIII. In the reign of Edward VI he was a faithful and confidential servant of the Princess Mary, and for a short time suffered imprisonment in the Tower for defying an order of the privy council to issue instructions to discontinue the forbidden practice of saying mass in the Princess's house. When Mary succeeded to the throne, Sir Francis Englefield was given high office in her household as well as being sworn a member of her privy council; in four parliaments of her reign he sat in the house of commons as one of the knights of the shire for the county of Berks. On Mary's death in 1558 Englefield refused the oath of allegiance to Elizabeth and sought refuge overseas. Residing mainly in Brussels or Madrid, he became one of the most restless and mischievous of the English exiles. A centre of trouble to Elizabethan statesmen, he corresponded with the Pope and with Philip II of Spain in the interest of Mary, Queen of Scots, the quasi-competitor for the English throne. Intimate with the leading English jesuits like Robert Parsons and William (afterwards Cardinal) Allen, he was undoubtedly aware of Throckmorton's plot directed against the life of Elizabeth, and his interest in it may well have been of a more active and sinister kind. The consequences of this abortive plot were disastrous to the Englefield inheritance. Throughout his long exile, which up to that time had extended over twenty-five years, and was to continue for the remainder of

his life, Sir Francis Englefield had been allowed to retain his vast estates, although the evidence of his being permitted to enjoy the revenues from them is contradictory. At last, having exasperated parliament by his unrelenting antagonism to Elizabeth and his active support of her rival the Queen of the Scots, Sir Francis, in 1585, was attainted and convicted of high treason, and his manors, lands and other possessions forfeited to the Crown. He had, however, previously made over his manor and estate of Englefield to his nephew with the consequence that the legality of the forfeiture was called into question. The matter became the subject of a prolonged law-suit giving rise to controversial legal points, which were never resolved; a special Act¹ passed in the ensuing parliament, however, confirmed the forfeiture.

Sir Francis Englefield died, without issue, at Valladolid about 1596, the precise date of his death not being known. The line of succession passed to his brother John, lord of the manor of Wootton Bassett in Wiltshire, whose son, Francis, was the nephew whom the turbulent uncle had in vain attempted to benefit. Deprived by Elizabeth of all the lands in Berkshire which, almost from time immemorial, had been in the possession of his forbears, Francis Englefield, after a break of twenty years, re-established in 1606 the long-standing family association with the county by purchasing, in conjunction with William Woolascot of Brimpton, the manor of Earley Whiteknights. Woolascot's connection with the property, however, was not of long duration as, in 1619, he sold his interest in it for the sum of £5,600 to Englefield who thus became its sole proprietor. In the meantime, in 1612, a baronetcy, the new order of hereditary knighthood which had been instituted in the previous year by James I, was conferred upon him. At his death in 1631, Sir Francis Englefield bequeathed the manor to his fifth (sometimes described as the third or fourth, according to the number surviving at the time) son, Anthony, who appears to have kept himself free from political entanglements in the long drawn out struggle between king and parliament, notwithstanding that part of the army of the Earl of Essex was in all probability encamped near the western boundary of his manor when Reading was besieged by parliamentary forces in 1643. A tablet, in black marble, to Anthony's memory is still to be found on the wall of the sixteenth century chapel built on the north side of the chancel of Englefield church;

¹ 35 Eliz. c. 5.

it reads

Hic infra jacet Antonius
Englefyld de white knights
in hoc Com: Armig: Francisci
Englefyld Barronetti Filius
Quintus qui obiit 14^o die
novembris Anno Domini
1667
Actatis suæ 61.
Requiescat in pace

Anthony Englefield who died in 1667 was succeeded at Whiteknights by his son, another Anthony, who survived until 1711. While living quietly and giving no offence to the government, he was, like others of his family who preceded and followed him, a staunch Roman catholic. Within a relatively short distance of Whiteknights lived another family, by tradition and practice also Roman catholic, the Blounts, whose forefathers had built the magnificent Elizabethan house by the side of the Thames at Mapledurham, and had there established themselves at the end of the sixteenth century. It was natural that the two families, having much in common, should become closely associated with one another. A daughter of the second Anthony Englefield of Whiteknights had married Lister Blount who, at the turn of the seventeenth century, was the owner and occupant of Mapledurham House. According to his granddaughter, a frequent visitor at Whiteknights, whose name, with that of her sister, appears frequently in the correspondence of some of the more distinguished contemporary writers, Anthony Englefield was a great lover of poetry and poets.¹ Hospitably disposed, he attracted to Whiteknights some of the leading literary figures of his generation. William Wycherley, the Restoration dramatist, who was now well advanced in years and had long ceased to write for the theatre, was a frequent visitor, while John Gay was not a stranger to Englefield's company. At Binfield, on the road through Windsor Forest, and less than ten miles away, was young Alexander Pope, another Roman catholic, already, although still in his youth, possessed of a devouring ambition for recognition in the world of letters. The friendly interest of Anthony Englefield inevitably attracted Pope from his loneliness at Binfield to the congenial atmosphere of Whiteknights where, probably in 1704, he first met Wycherley.² The meeting was mutually advantageous; on the one hand Pope's lively genius aided

¹ Sherburn, *The Early Career of Alexander Pope*, p. 48.

² Courthope, *The Life of Alexander Pope*, p. 73.

Wycherley's declining powers as a writer of verse, while, by Wycherley's patronage, Pope gained an early introduction to literary circles in London which otherwise might have been long delayed.

Significant as was his meeting with Wycherley, the society at Whiteknights had a still more important influence on the life of Pope for it was here at their grandfather's house that he first met Teresa and Martha (Patty) Blount, the two daughters of Lister Blount of Mapledurham. The nature of Pope's friendship for the two sisters has puzzled many writers. While seemingly at first attracted more to the elder, Teresa, his devotion later turned to Martha. With her he maintained a correspondence which ended only with his life; he dedicated to her his 'Epistle on Women' (1735) and made her a substantial beneficiary under his will. There is no doubt that many of the earlier meetings between Pope and the two sisters took place at Whiteknights, conveniently situated as it was nearly half-way between Mapledurham and Binfield, but after 1711, when Anthony Englefield died and was succeeded by his eldest surviving son, Henry, the atmosphere at Whiteknights seemed to Pope to be less cordial. Writing to his friend and co-religionist, John Caryl, on 8 January, 1712-13, he says—

It is a common practice now for ladies to contract friendships as the great folks in ancient times entered into leagues. They sacrificed a poor animal betwixt them, and commenced inviolable allies, ipso facto. So now they pull some harmless little creature into pieces, and worry his character together very comfortably. Mrs Nelson and Mrs Englefield have served me thus, the former of whom has done me all the ill offices that lay in her way, particularly with Mrs W.(eston) and at Whiteknights.¹

To the same correspondent on 12 June, 1713, he writes—

One word, however, of a private trifle. Honest Mr Englefield has not shown the least common civility to my father and mother by sending, or inquiring of them from our nearest neighbours, his visitants, or any otherwise, these five months. I take the hint as I ought in respect to those who gave me being, and he shall be as much a stranger to me as he desires.²

¹ Elwin and Courthope, *The Works of Alexander Pope*, VI, p. 179.

² *Ibid.*, p. 186.

But the discouraging attitude of the new owner of Whiteknights did not interrupt Pope's friendship with the daughters of Lister Blount, nor did his visits to the neighbourhood of Reading altogether cease for we find him writing to 'Teresa on 7 August, 1716--

*I will wait on you at Whiteknights in a fortnight or three weeks. . .*¹

The removal of the poet to London, followed by the sudden death of Henry Englefield in 1720, brought to an end the connection between Whiteknights and the life of Pope.

Henry Englefield's son, another Henry, who acquired Whiteknights in 1720, eight years later also inherited the title held by his distant cousin, Sir Charles Englefield, who died *sine prole*, succeeding him as sixth baronet. Save that he was married twice, the second time to Catharine, daughter of Sir Charles Bucke, baronet, and by her had five children, little is recorded of Sir Henry's life. The disabilities imposed upon him by his religion prevented him from taking part in public affairs, but in the cause of Roman catholicism he was not less ardent than his predecessors. At a time when a priest could be fined £200 and, indeed, was still liable to the penalties of high treason for saying mass,² Sir Henry installed a chaplain at Whiteknights who surreptitiously served the needs of his co-religionists in Reading and its immediate neighbourhood. That the chaplain was established in the household by 1734 is evident, for in that year Father Clifton of the Order of St Francis died at Whiteknights leaving 'my bridle, saddle, whip, boots, spurs and spatterdashes to my successor, if a Brother of the Province'.³ Later, his ministrations were probably continued by Charles Englefield, a brother of Sir Henry, who had entered the Order of St Francis, and who eventually died at Douai in 1767.

No adequate description of Whiteknights Park in the eighteenth century appears to be on record. To Horace Walpole, who visited it in 1753, it seemed unimpressive. Writing to John Shute on 4 August in that year he described the buildings as 'very insignificant' and the house 'far from good'. He added, however, 'There is a pretty view of Reading seen under a rude arch, and the water is well disposed'.⁴ It is not until 1776 that we get our first idea of the appearance of Whiteknights from a pictorial

¹ Elwin and Courthope, *The Works of Alexander Pope*, ix, p. 266.

² 27 Eliz. c. 2.

³ Eppstein, *History of the Faith in an English Town*, p. 35.

⁴ *Letters of Horace Walpole*, ed. Toynbee, III, p. 177.

representation. Among Sir Henry Englefield's visitors was Thomas Pownall, well known in his generation, and subsequently, as Governor Pownall. A politician and antiquary, he had had a varied career. Residence at Trinity College, Cambridge, had been followed by a place in the office of the Board of Trade; in or about 1753 he was nominated lieutenant-governor of New Jersey and four years later became governor of Massachusetts. Then followed a period of campaigning against the French after which, his manners being unsuited to the gravity of the New England puritans, he was transferred to South Carolina. Returning to England, he became, in 1767, member of parliament for Tregony and later, from 1774 to 1780, represented Minehead. As a writer on political and economic subjects, his most influential work was his book *The Administration of the Colonies*. It is to Thomas Pownall that we are indebted for the drawing from which the earliest known illustration of Whiteknights was taken; the engraving is reproduced on page 4.

Sir Henry Englefield died in 1780 and was succeeded at Whiteknights by the eldest of his five children, Henry Charles, who, at the age of twenty-eight, became the seventh and last baronet of the Englefield line. The latest Sir Henry attained a degree of distinction to which his family predecessors could make no claim. Disabled as a Roman catholic, by legislation, from sitting in parliament or holding any civil, military or naval office under the Crown, he devoted himself to scientific and antiquarian studies, and left his mark on both. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1778 and in the following year he was made a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, becoming for a short time its president after the death of the first Marquis Townshend, his predecessor in that office. Even in an age when scholars rarely confined their studies to a single subject, Englefield's lively and versatile mind ranged over a remarkably wide field. To the Royal Society he submitted communications, 'On the appearance of the Soil on opening a Well' and 'Observations on the variation of Light in the Star Algol'. Of five papers he wrote for the Royal Institution, three were on astronomy and two on physics. He was an active member of the Linnean Society and a contributor to mathematical discussions in Tilloch's *Philosophical Magazine*, a journal established in 1797 and intended for the publication of new discoveries and inventions. His memoir¹ describes him as an excellent chemist and

¹ *The Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. 92, p. 293.

An engraving of
Whiteknights,
1798



Printed & Sold by J. G. S. & Co. in the Strand, London.

Whiteknights, Windsor, the Seat of the Marquis of Buckingham, &c. &c. &c. by the Engraver's Assistance of the Rev. Mr. P. B. & Co.

records that he was awarded the gold medal of the Society of Arts for his 'Discovery of a Lake from Madder'. As an antiquarian his contributions to *Archæologia* included articles on the abbeys of Reading and of Romsey, Roman remains at Cirencester, ancient buildings at York, and Lincoln castle, and ranged as far afield as gothic architecture in Italy and Sicily. A scheme for publishing a series of engravings and descriptions of English cathedrals, which the Society of Antiquaries began with Sir Henry's guidance, was discontinued before it was complete.¹

By his will dated 1778, Sir Henry Englefield, the sixth baronet, had left the manor of Whiteknights to his sons Henry Charles and Francis Michael in fee-tail successively. The latter had died childless, and in 1798, the former, being himself unmarried, conveyed the estate to Henry Byam Martin, who, in the same year, released it to the Marquis of Blandford. Sir Henry Charles Englefield left Whiteknights and lived in London where he died on 21 March, 1822, when the baronetcy became extinct.

THE MARQUIS OF BLANDFORD

1798-1819

A period of intense activity in the development of Whiteknights Park followed almost immediately upon the conveyance of the manor to the Marquis of Blandford who, on the death of his father in 1817, became fifth Duke of Marlborough. Educated at Eton and Christ Church, admitted to the degree of Doctor of Civil Law at Oxford in 1792, member of parliament first for Oxfordshire and later for Tregony, the Marquis undoubtedly possessed literary and artistic tastes of no ordinary kind but combined with these qualities a wild extravagance and an eccentricity of character for which he was notorious in the circles in which he moved.

Regardless of the cost, the Marquis spent immense sums of money in converting his new estate into an ornamental garden which, according to a contemporary opinion, had few rivals in the kingdom. Flowering shrubs, rare trees and exotic plants were collected from all parts of the world and introduced on a lavish scale to adorn the lawns and embellish the paths. It was at this time that the Wilderness, the area in the south-east of the Park, was designed and planted. Open walks, umbrageous paths and secluded bowers were contrived, an American border and a French garden were laid out, while a variety of rustic pavilions, fountains,

¹ A list of the works of Sir Henry Englefield is given in *The Gentleman's Magazine* (1822), vol. 92, p. 294 and p. 420.

grottoes and Grecian urns were some of the extravagances of the future Duke of Marlborough.

The scale on which the gardens were planned attracted many visitors both from home and abroad. A laudatory and detailed account of the grounds, illustrated by numerous engravings, in folio, was written by Mrs Hofland, the novelist, and appeared as '*A Descriptive Account of the Mansion and Gardens of Whiteknights*' published in 1819. But the activities of the Marquis were not without critics. Writing to her father on 29 May, 1807, Mary Russell Mitford expresses her disapproval, if not contempt--

I am very happy to have seen Lord Blandford's . . . as I should, if I had not, always have fancied it something superior. In good truth, I was greatly disappointed. The park, as they call it (if about eighty acres, without deer, can be called a park), is level, flat, and uninteresting; the trees are ill clumped; the walk round it is entirely unvaried, and the piece of water looks like a large duck pond, from the termination not being concealed. If the hothouses were placed together instead of being dispersed they might make a respectable appearance; but, as it is, they bear evident marks of being built at different times (whenever, I suppose, he could borrow money for the purpose) and without any regular plan. Their contents might be interesting to a botanist, but gave me no pleasure. The thing I best liked was the garden in which the conservatory is situated; the shrubs there are really very fine, particularly the azaleas, and the American honeysuckles both pink and yellow; the rhododendrons are superb.¹

By 1807, however, the date of Miss Mitford's visit, little of the new planting could have reached maturity; from her reference to the flatness and uninteresting nature of the landscape it would appear that her attention was confined to the north-eastern area, while the full extent of the park and the elaborate planning of the Wilderness apparently escaped her observation.

The activities of the eccentric Blandford were by no means limited to his interest in landscape gardening. An ardent bibliophile, he assembled at Whiteknights a library which was numbered among the most famous

¹ *The Life of Mary Russell Mitford*, ed. I.'Estrange, I, p. 66.

private collections of its day. It was especially rich in early illuminated missals; it included rare works from the presses of fifteenth and early sixteenth century English and foreign printers, collections of poetry and prose by Italian, French and Spanish authors, as well as much that was rare and curious in almost every branch of literature. The setting was made worthy of the library; Titian and Tintoretto, Holbein and Rubens, Vandyke, Kneller, Gainsborough and Romney were among the distinguished painters whose works adorned the walls of the eighteenth century mansion in which it was housed.

But expenditure on so lavish a scale brought inevitable retribution. As early as 1814 difficulties were already being anticipated by Blandford's friends and acquaintances. The observant George Agar-Ellis, first Baron Dover, a cousin of the Marquis, entered in his diary, as yet unpublished, under the date 14 December, 1814—

Rode with my Father and Blackstone – We talked of Lord Blandford's folly – He is in debt more than ever, & it is hardly possible for him to avoid an execution at Whiteknights

Agar-Ellis was a frequent visitor at, and familiar with, a number of the most famous English country houses. His impressions of Whiteknights where, according to his diary, he was a guest on 29 October, 1815, are therefore of particular interest. He writes—

Fine day. – Walked all over this very wonderful and beautiful place. – It resembles 'Timon's Villa' mentioned by Pope, in the sums that have been thrown away upon it. The wood – the Botanical garden – the conservatories – the grotto – fountain &c &c are all beautiful. – What a pity that all this must go to creditors. – A bailiff is now in the house; and unless Lord B. can raise several thousand pounds immediately, there will shortly be a great crash. – Lord B. shewed us his library, valued at six and thirty thousand pounds. – Full of all sorts of bibliomaniac curiosities – Among these the famous Boccaccio, & the Bedford Missal are pre-eminent (the former cost £2260, the latter £700). – He has also got a collection of jewels. – Rings – Snuff Boxes & Watches that exceed all belief. – Recommended Lady Blandford to remove all her valuables from Whiteknights, as, whenever an execution comes (& come it must 'aut serius aut citius') they will be liable to be seized with the furniture &c.

The Marquis, however, succeeded in postponing the threatened catastrophe for on 1 March, 1816, the diary records--

Lord Blandford has borrowed fifty thousand pounds on Post Obits from Crasus Farquhar (a rich West Indian) -- He is consequently very much up in the world--

Little more than twelve months elapsed before financial difficulties were again acute; the entry for 21 April, 1817, includes --

Talked with Shaftesbury upon the subject of the Duke of Marlborough's¹ affairs, which are in a bad way as he owes considerably more than £600,000 -- He, Shaftesbury, seems thoroughly tired of being his trustee, as well he may be -- but to use the late Dss. of M's phrase, 'he has made his bed, & he must lie upon it'.

The end was inevitable, and two years later the whole of the contents of the house and grounds including the magnificent library were dispersed. On 17 June, 1819, Agar-Ellis wrote--

Went to see the Duke of Marlborough's unique copy of the Valdarfer Boccaccio, printed in 1471, sold by auction at Evans's, where the rest of his library is also selling -- The Duke of M. bought it at the Roxburghe sale for £2260. It was sold for 876 guineas to Longman the bookseller. -- Lord Spencer bid as far as 805 guineas--²

The copy of the Decameron which had attracted the attention of Agar-Ellis was printed by Christophorus Valdarfer who worked in Venice until late in 1471 when he transferred his press to Milan. The book was bought by the Duke of Marlborough in 1812 and was the subject of a special note in the sale catalogue--

Notwithstanding the publicity of the extraordinary sum which this Book produced at the Roxburghe Sale all researches throughout Europe to procure another copy have proved entirely fruitless. This Volume continues to be THE ONLY KNOWN PERFECT COPY OF THIS EDITION, and is, in all probability, the only copy which will ever be offered for public sale. Its unparalleled rarity, however, is not its only recommendation, as it contains many

¹ The Marquis of Blandford succeeded to the Dukedom of Marlborough on 29 January, 1817.

² The book was bought by Longman for Earl Spencer; it is now in the John Ryland Library, Manchester.

important Readings which have not been followed in any subsequent Edition.

Quite apart from the unique copy of the Decameron, the sale of the Duke of Marlborough's library was a noteworthy event in the literary world. It occupied no less than twenty-three days; the printed catalogue filled two hundred and twenty pages and included sixteen publications which had issued from Caxton's press, eight from that of Pynson and twenty from Wynkyn de Worde, while the works of contemporary craftsmen in Italy, Spain, France and Germany were well represented. A copy on vellum of the first edition of Luther's translation of the Bible, printed in Wittenberg in 1541, was but one of the many rarities which stimulated the interest of bibliophiles in this remarkable sale.

The Bedford Missal, which had interested Agar-Ellis when he visited Whiteknights in 1815, and which ultimately found its way to the British Museum, was conspicuous by its absence. An explanation appears in a letter from Miss Mitford addressed to Sir William Elford and dated 9 November, 1819—

Our great Berkshire Bibliomaniac (he of the Boccaccio and the Bedford missal – in other words, the Duke of Marlborough) has had all the contents of Whiteknights sold a fortnight ago, very much against his will, poor man! The rariss: books were all gone before – all sold at Evans's, with the sole exception of the aforesaid missal, which the Duke, by an admirable trick of legerdemain, contrived to extract from the locked case that contained it, leaving the said case for the solace of the sheriff's officers. Nothing in sleight of hand has been heard of equal to this abstraction – or rather this abduction – since the escape of the man from the quart bottle. Except the Bedford missal, the poor Duke saved nothing. Everything was sold – plants, pictures, bridges, garden seats, novels and all.

After commenting on the capricious prices for which various articles of furniture were sold, Miss Mitford, in the same letter, turns her attention to the sale of the paintings—

The pictures were very good and very bad. Many of them had been taken in discounting bills. . . This being known threw a suspicion over the really original paintings, which (added to their being wretchedly hung amongst all manner of cross-lights, the highly-

finished small pictures high up, and the large ones close to the eye – together with the auctioneer coming from Reading who was as ignorant as all people are who live in, or within five miles of, that town) reduced the value from the £10,000 that was expected to under £2,000. You may imagine what wood the man of the hammer is made of when I tell you that, in selling a very fine head of Christ, by Guido – an undoubted and ascertained original – he never said one word of the picture or the master, but talked grandly and eloquently of the frame. I am very glad of this incredible ignorance, since it let poor Edmund Havill (a Reading artist) into an excellent bargain, and Mr. Hofland, I hope, into something still better. He has bought several pictures, particularly an exceedingly beautiful L. Caracci.¹

The eighteenth century house, deserted by the Duke, who withdrew to a corner of Blenheim, survived until 1840, when it was pulled down, but the gardens at Whiteknights still continued to exercise their fascination. 'The Great Western Railway Companion' published in that year devoted considerable space to directing the attention of the patrons of Brunel's new railway to the amenities of 'one of the most perfect specimens of landscape gardening'.

THE CHOLMELEYS AND OTHERS

1819–1849

The confusion following upon the sale by the mortgagees of the contents of the house and park at Whiteknights and the problems resulting from the financial recklessness of the fifth Duke of Marlborough were not easily resolved. For some time it was even uncertain upon whom the right of ownership of the manor legally devolved. In 1782 Teresa-Anne, the surviving daughter of Sir Henry Englefield, the sixth baronet, had married Francis Cholmeley of Brandsby in the county of York.² Both his parents having died in the intervening years, their only son and heir, Francis Cholmeley, advanced a claim to the Whiteknights estate and, after prolonged litigation which continued until 1823, his claim was

¹ *The Life of Mary Russell Mitford*, ed. L'Estrange, II, pp. 74–75.

² *The Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. 53, p. 262.

upheld. Sixteen years later Francis and his wife Barbara sold the house and manor to James Wright Nokes for £24,600. In the terms of the conveyance of the property it is interesting to note that with 'the manor or the reputed manor of Earley Regis or Whiteknights' there were transferred to the new owner, as late as 1839, all the rights and appurtenances associated with courts leet and courts baron, together with the perquisites and profits of the courts, view of frankpledge, heriots, fines and amerciaments, as well as the goods and chattels of felons and fugitives, felons of themselves, outlawed persons, deodands, waifs and estrays.¹

The latest owner of the manor appears to have been the first of a number of speculators whose successive attempts to exploit Whiteknights Park extended over the next ten years. Their schemes, however, never secured sufficient public support and were abandoned in turn. Of these schemes one was thus speciously advertised—

Among many projected improvements which will contribute largely to the benefit of the town we are gratified to observe the flattering prospects of the company formed for the creation of villas on the 'White Knights Estate' which bids fair to rival, if not excel, anything of the kind in the kingdom. The shares have been eagerly bought up, chiefly by residents in the metropolis, to whom the celebrity and permanent attraction of its Gardens and Ornamental Lake are alone sufficient inducements for the investment of capital; and we hail, with anticipation of increased prosperity to the town and neighbourhood, the commencement of an undertaking which is as praiseworthy to the projectors as it must be ultimately beneficial to the shareholders and the public.²

THE GOLDSMIDS

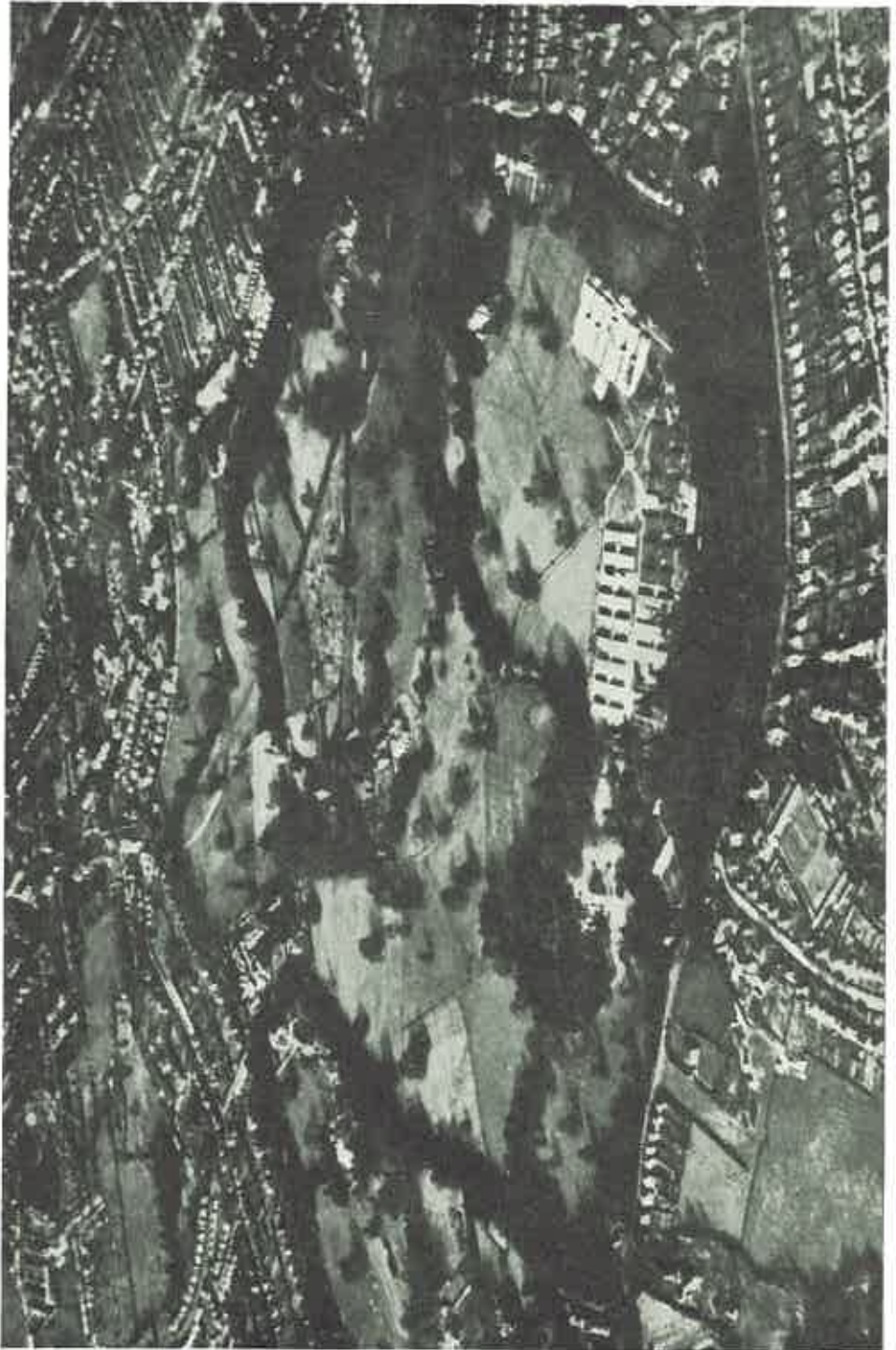
1849-1947

It is profitless to pursue in detail the depressing record of unsuccessful projects, with their almost inevitable sequels of mortgages and bankruptcies, which marked the decade from 1839. At the end of this period the manor and lands of Whiteknights were conveyed to Sir Isaac Lyon Goldsmid in whose family they remained until they were acquired by

¹ Conveyance, dated 15 June, 1839.

² Snare's *Berkshire Directory*, 1847 edition, Reading, VIII.

An aerial view
of the Park
in 1950



the University in 1947. Goldsmid, who was a leading member of a London firm of bullion brokers, had won for himself a high reputation in national and international finance and in doing so had amassed a considerable fortune. After the first reform act he was *persona grata* to successive governments, and in recognition of his public services he was created a baronet in 1841, being the first Jew upon whom such an honour was conferred. But Goldsmid's interests were by no means limited to finance. The political emancipation of the Jews and public education were causes on which he expended both his time and wealth. His was the driving force that led to the introduction of the Jewish Disabilities Bill in the house of commons in 1830 and again, more successfully, three years later in the first reformed parliament.¹ From the very outset Goldsmid was associated with the enterprise which led to the foundation of the University of London, afterwards University College, London. He was the first man who proved both able and willing to give the originator of the plan, Thomas Campbell, the poet, the practical assistance he required by bringing him into touch with Henry (afterwards Lord) Brougham.² At more than one crisis in its early history Goldsmid rendered timely help to the scheme. When it was threatened with disaster because the Provisional Committee was unable to provide the minimum capital necessary to buy the Gower Street site, it was Goldsmid who acquired it, at his own risk and that of two of his colleagues whom he persuaded to share the responsibility, and held it until London University was in a position to take it from him.³ He lived until 1859, long enough to see the Jewish Disabilities Bill pass into law, and University College, London, survive its struggles for existence.

When Goldsmid acquired the manor and lands of Whiteknights he was already over sixty years of age and too deeply engaged in other enterprises to take part in Reading affairs, but his son Francis Henry, who succeeded both to the baronetcy and the manor, closely identified himself with the political life of the town. In his early years he worked in cooperation with his father in his efforts to remove the political disabilities of the Jews. He was called to the bar in 1833, being the first member of the Jewish faith who attained that position,⁴ later becoming the first

¹ The Bill was rejected by the house of lords.

² Hale Belot, *University College, London, 1826-1926*, p. 17.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

⁴ *The Times*, 4 May, 1878.

Jewish Queen's Counsel. A munificent benefactor of University College, London,¹ he was also a magistrate and deputy lieutenant for Berkshire. In 1860, when a casual vacancy arose, Sir Francis Goldsmid was elected a member of parliament for Reading and continued to represent the constituency in the house of commons for the remainder of his life. He met his death in 1878 as the result of an accident which occurred as he stepped from a train at Waterloo station.

Among his numerous activities Whiteknights was not neglected. The manor house having been destroyed and as, apart from cottages, no other residence existed on the site, in 1867 the Park was divided into six leaseholds on which were built the houses that we know today; one of them is now occupied by the Museum of English Rural Life. The fact that all these leases were due to terminate not later than 1958 proved in the event to be singularly fortunate for the University.²

The near approach of the end of the war of 1939-45 presented the University with problems of unusual magnitude. Its buildings were small and its site restricted, and in consequence it seemed doubtful whether it would be able to take its rightful part in the national schemes for the extension of university education which H. M. Government intended to promote. Nevertheless, plans were already well advanced for utilising to its utmost limit the London Road site when an unexpected possibility of development on an adequate scale suddenly presented itself. On 25 July, 1946, during the course of negotiations for obtaining a small plot of land on the edge of Whiteknights Park on which to build a new hall of residence, the question was informally asked as to whether the University would be interested in an offer by the owners to sell the freehold of the whole estate. The acquisition of a site of approximately three hundred acres would solve the major problems of space for an almost indefinite time. The disadvantages, including the gradual removing of the University piecemeal to such a site, were obvious, but in the view of both Council and Senate they were far outweighed by the advantages. Local Authorities concerned with problems of town and country planning gave their consent to the reservation of Whiteknights for University purposes, and H. M. Treasury on the advice of the University Grants Committee promised financial aid on a generous scale. After the necessary

¹ Hale Belot, *University College, London, 1826-1926*, p. 374.

² The house known as 'The Wilderness' was pulled down in 1950.

negotiations with the vendors, the then Vice-Chancellor, Sir Frank Stenton, whose unfaltering support was mainly responsible for bringing the scheme to a successful issue, reported to the Yearly Meeting of the Court held on 26 February, 1947, 'I am now able to inform the Court that yesterday afternoon the freehold of the entire Whiteknights Park Estate was purchased by the University.'

*The layout of this book
has been designed in the
University of Reading School of Art
by ROGER O. DENNING
and printed at
THE BROADWATER PRESS
Welwyn Garden City, Herts*

