



The Markenfield Irregular

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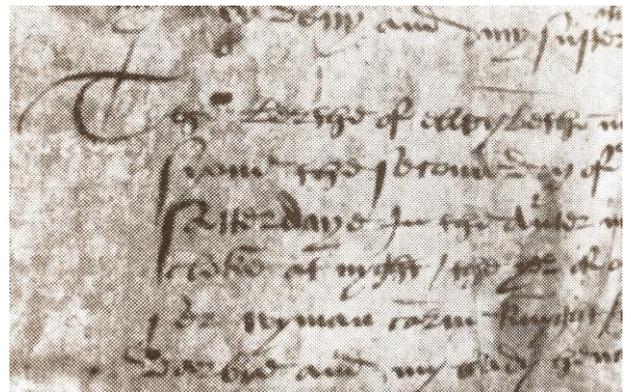
No, not Markenfield



Notice put up by the 1st Duke of Wellington at Stratfield Saye House about 1820

A DISCOVERY. Property forfeited during the 1569 Rising of the North was disposed of to loyal and trusted advisors to Queen Elizabeth. Markenfield was such a property - the Markenfield family having taken such a leading role in the rebellion - and was gifted first for a fixed 21 years to Laurence Meres and then, in perpetuity, to Sir Henry Gates, MP. (1515 - 1589).

Alan Robiette has discovered that Trinity College Dublin has a manuscript New Testament, in Wycliffe's English translation, which dates probably from the early 15th century and once belonged to Gates. This retains his handwritten notes on the flyleaves, recording the births of all his children - down to the hour of the day, as well as the date and place of each birth - and the names of their godparents. In his own words:



"The berthe of my chylderne, the ouer and the daye, w the names of the godfathers and mothers wrytten w my none hande

The berthe of Mary my furst dauter the xiiij daye of October, the Wyche was tusdaye, in the aufter nowne, betux vj and vij of the cloke, the dayt of oure lorde god a thousande v houndere xliiij, at the Syone nonerye: godfathers, Cramer archebushop of Canterbury; godmothers, my Lady Deny and my suster Mary Gate."

And so on for all of his eight children. Henry's choice of godparents is particularly interesting, and shows what an adroit politician he must have been. Although some members of his own family do get a look in, most of the godparents read like a roll-call of the great and powerful in the Tudor courts: from Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, via a formidable list of major and minor nobility - and their wives, in the case of the godmothers - to Frances Brandon (mother of Lady Jane Grey) and the young Princess Elizabeth, soon to become Elizabeth I. It is very obvious also how carefully Henry made his choices according to who was in and out of favour in the three successive reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI and Mary I over which his children's birthdates ranged.

This increases the fascination with what has become known as "the missing years" of Markenfield's history which, thanks to Alan's and Andrew Coulson's research, is now much better understood. But it

was Henry's son in law who later carried away "79 boxes of evidence, 1 little coffer and 2 littell bagges by Commission, to deliver the same unto the Exchequer". This was over a dispute as to ownership of Markenfield following its confiscation by the Crown, and sounds as though it could possibly have comprised Markenfield's entire mediaeval archive. As the papers went "into the exchequer" our researchers have been searching hard in the National Archives to trace them - so far without success.

SOME DATES. Our Open Days in 2017 will be: Sunday 30 April to Sunday 14 May and Sunday 11 to Sunday 25 June.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO JOIN OUR TEAM OF VOLUNTEERS? With the increase in the number of visitors over the years, as Markenfield became better known, we would welcome any new Stewards. It is quite fun. The great art of a Steward is in guessing if people want to be spoken to, or left alone with the guidebook or notes - you will also be very much part of an extended family. We are planning a series of study sessions next spring for all new Stewards and existing Stewards would be welcome to attend for a refresher course.

Another of our stalwart-volunteers, Maryon Dougill, recently asked if she could have copies of the very earliest Irregulars in order to complete her collection. We were more than happy to oblige and the first ever Irregular, dated March 2002, brought a smile to our faces:

Over the thirty days of opening in 2001 we had 1,663 visitors paying at the door.
If you add that to the 459 who came as part of the twelve organized groups,
that comes to 2,122 - not bad for a little house like ours.

How times have changed. In 2016 we had 2,637 visitors through the door on our now-32 open afternoons. We haven't added up all those who came on tours yet as we still have a few to go, but we have 53 of them in the diary this year. The 2002 Irregular goes on to say:

"Many remarked, or wrote in later, of the warmth of the welcome as well as the fascination of the house. It was astonishing (but in a way, quite pleasing) that many who live within five miles of Markenfield had never heard of the house. Its sense of privacy and fragility are important."

Despite the increase in numbers we truly believe that the privacy and fragility - as well as still being important - are firmly intact. The remark we get in the Visitors' book more than any other is some variation of "this is a lived-in home, not a museum". Various worthy and generous grant-giving bodies have from time to time indicated that they would like the house to be more institutionalised - though they would never use that term. This Markenfield will always resist this.



THE E-REGULAR. The Friends of Markenfield have been hard at work trying to gather as many of their members' email addresses as possible in a bid to cut down on printing and postage costs - and the Hall is going to follow suit. We do have a lot of email addresses already but we really need your permission to begin using them for this purpose. Each mailing costs on average £535 and when they're sent out four or five times a year that soon adds up. Of course we do realise that there are people who don't use email - or simply don't like it - and we will continue to post copies to those who want to receive things that way. Those who do sign up for the E-mail version will simply receive a link (or links) to download a copy from the Hall's website - you can even print it off yourself if you want!