



The Friends of Markenfield

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Message from the Chairman

I am delighted to report that Lord Crathorne has agreed to become the new President of The Friends of Markenfield. He has been Vice-President since our foundation and attends many events. He also gave a fascinating talk on the role of Lord Lieutenant, having held the position in North Yorkshire from 1999 to 2014. He is one of 92 hereditary peers in the House of Lords. He read Fine Art at Cambridge and his career has been very much based on his interest in the Arts. He currently serves on the Lord Speaker's Advisory Panel on Works of Art and has agreed to talk about this little known collection at our AGM.

You may be aware that Caroline Eason, a long-standing member of the Council of Friends, suffered a serious stroke in July. She is now in Thistle Hill care home in Knaresborough. Although she is unable to move much, or speak, she does understand all that is being said; and I do keep her up to date with Markenfield news.

Drone over Markenfield

Back in March 2015 Dr Chris Gaffney and his team from the Department of Archaeological Services, University of Bradford, had investigated the supposed site of the lost village of Markenfield; with regrettably no results. After the dry and hot summer of 2018 a number of historical sites were reporting the appearance of dried areas in grass fields, indicating the presence below of the remains of long-forgotten features - and The Friends thought that this would be an excellent time to renew the search at Markenfield.



Image: Adam Webster

On 22nd August, Adam Webster came to Markenfield, complete with his professional drone, to take aerial photographs of the whole of the Markenfield Estate. Adam's main work is taking moving footage for TV programmes - in particular police car chases!

Well over 100 detailed images were taken, together with excellent video footage, but the mediaeval village and any associated buildings could not be seen. Maybe the weather had not been quite so hot and dry in Yorkshire as it had been further south. What did show up very well were the mediaeval roads, and associated crossroads, in the 'Lumps and Bumps Field' to the south of the Hall. We are pleased to say that the Black Swans completely ignored the intrusion into their air-space, but the cows were very inquisitive... Dr Keith Jones.



Christmas at Markenfield, last year in aid of St Wilfrid's Ripon non-denominational Community Centre & Restoration Appeal, raised in the region of £1,100. A big thank you to all from St Wilfrid's and from The Friends who helped make it the great success that it was.

The Friends have now offered to take on the organisation and the running of 'Christmas' each year, with all profits going to a nominated charity. It is hoped that this year's charity will be Venice in Peril, in honour of The Friends' late President Lord Norwich.



Andrew Coulson

It is with great sadness that we report the premature death at age 65 of Andrew Coulson, who had been an active member of the friends' Council in 2008-09 and 2012-15. Although he originally trained as a vet, he had a thirst for knowledge in many fields and was a veritable polymath.

His most significant contribution to Markenfield was towards solving the mysteries of the "Missing Years", following the confiscation of Markenfield by the Crown after the 1569 Rebellion. It was Andrew who first discovered Queen Elizabeth's Letter Patent of 1571, granting Markenfield to Sir Henry Gates and his heirs and not, as most history books tell us, to Sir Thomas Egerton.

THE FRIENDS OF MARKENFIELD ARCHIVE & RESEARCH GROUP



Those who visited the Hall last year would have seen the Caroline Norton exhibition in the Great Hall - lovingly laid out in the new display boxes funded by The Friends. You may remember that we tentatively entered the exhibition in the Women's History Network & The History Press Community History competition... no - we didn't win - but we did make the shortlist! In her email, Prof. Maggie Andrews said:

*"Thank you for submitting your entry to the WHN Community Prize. I am pleased to tell you that your project made it to our **shortlist**, a considerable achievement in a year of very strong entries.*



"You did not win the top prize but our judging panel was impressed by many aspects of your project. We thought the volunteers had done some lovely research work on a very small budget and had genuinely brought the archive to light through the new display in the Hall. One of our judges noted, 'I had never heard of Caroline Norton or Markenfield before. I'm now glad I have and am inspired to find out more'. We liked the fact that Caroline Norton and her legacy was included in the Hall tour and that there was a 'palpable feeling of pride that the Hall has a connection to such a woman'"

The extraordinary court case to annul Thomas Markenfield and Isabell Ingilby's childhood marriage

Eleanor's research has continued unabated over the winter, this time concentrating on Thomas Markenfield and his marriage to Isabell Ingilby. Eleanor is in the process of writing up her findings, but has prepared the following piece for The Friends:

Although approaching research methodically is to be recommended, serendipity also plays its part. My chance finding happened when I took a family history magazine to read while waiting for a hospital appointment. There, in the waiting room, I came across a nugget of information about Thomas Markenfield and his wife, Isabell - a fact that I have never heard mentioned in connection with the Markenfields of Markenfield Hall.

Following the published sources back to the original record, I was led to the Consistory Court of Chester. On 19th January 1558/9, Thomas Markenfield brought a case before the court seeking a 'divorce' (strictly speaking, an annulment) from Isabell Ingilby. This was news to me and my astonishment only grew as the case was outlined.

It was claimed that Thomas and Isabell had been 'married' as children. Thomas was not 14 at the time of this 'marriage' and Isabell not 12, so they must have been 13 and 11 at the most. I believe their 'marriage' was probably a betrothal but it was seen as a binding precursor to marriage and the parties could not walk away from it. Although Thomas and Isabell, being children at the time of their 'marriage', would not have been expected to enter into a union in the fullest sense immediately, once they reached the age of consent, 14 for a boy or 12 for a girl, it was expected that they would ratify the marriage. The court would take living together, kissing or exchanging gifts as evidence of ratification, so the case had to demonstrate that no such acts had taken place. It was also recommended that cases for annulment were presented as soon as the parties reached consent.

Here, there was a potential problem with the Markenfield case. In January 1558/9, Thomas Markenfield was about 26 years old. If he had 'married' at the age of 13, he would have reached the age of consent a year or so later, c1546, but he did not go to court then, and instead waited another 12-13 years before doing so. Why did he do that? I don't know but it may have made his case more difficult.

So, Thomas waited for years to bring a case and in that time it was claimed he never consummated the marriage. To underline just how vehemently Thomas was opposed to the 'marriage' with Isabell, Thomas was reported to have said, upon reaching the age of consent:

'...that he could not fantasie..the said Isabell as his wife...nor so wold not take her or vse her as his wife...that he was Compelled bie his frend[es] to marie the said Isabell...'

This evidence came from George Norton of Wath, one of the two witnesses whose depositions make up the case. George added that Thomas and Isabell had not lived together for 8 or 9 years. The other witness, Matthew Redman of Harwood (*sic*) had heard similar stories:

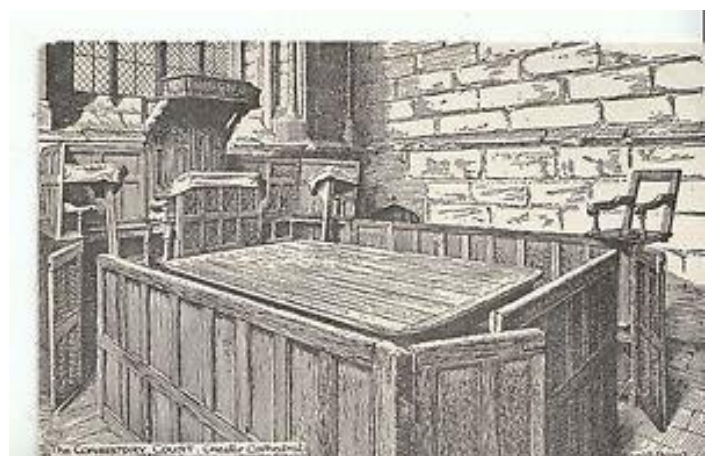


Image: the Consistory Court of Chester

‘...the said Thom[a]s m[er]kinfeld neu[er] fauored Isabell Inglebie articulate as his wife and that for the space of this iiiij^{or} yeres as before he has deposed they said Thoma[a]s & Isabell haue not Cumpanied together as man and wife’

Both witnesses had family connections with the Markenfields and George was probably Thomas’s cousin. Unfortunately, we don’t hear the voices of Thomas and Isabell themselves.

Another strand of the case was the issue of consanguinity. The two deponents outlined what they knew of the family connections between Thomas and Isabell, which showed that the couple were second cousins. The problem was that the interpretation of the laws on the matter at that time was not clear. There were, for instance, two different methods of calculating consanguinity. Henry VIII’s marriages to Catherine of Aragon and Anne of Cleves had not helped, either. Eventually, Archbishop Parker issued new guidance but that was after the Markenfield case.

The case ends abruptly. Nothing is said of the outcome and we are left guessing. But later records refer to Isabell as Thomas’ wife which suggests that the case was unsuccessful.

We are now left with trying to work out what part this failed marriage played in the story of Thomas and his family. In the summer following the case, Thomas went abroad and did not return till 1568. I think the failed marriage and the court’s decision must have played its part in that extended absence from home. Why was Thomas so opposed to the match with Isabell? The case does not say, but surely Thomas’ parents had arranged the match so did his dogged opposition to it harm family relationships? The case also came to court just after Elizabeth had come to the throne. Perhaps Thomas was not expecting that. He may have hoped to be dealing with a Catholic court but found himself in a Protestant court instead, so complicating matters greatly. Did it cause him to harden his beliefs?

And what of children? If the marriage was unconsummated by January 1558/9, and Thomas went away for 9 years that summer, is it likely that he consummated the marriage in those six months before departing? How likely is it that he ever had a family?

These are just a few of the questions I have been asking myself since finding the case that morning in the hospital waiting room. The childhood marriage and the Chester court case may well have cast a very long shadow over Thomas’s life. It is therefore worth reconsidering Thomas’s actions in the light of the case in an attempt to better understand the man and his life - and this is just the start.

Notes:

The magazine article was:

Norton, E. [no date]. More than wives and witches. *Discover Your Ancestors*. Issue 6, pp.60-65.

Elizabeth Norton’s source for the Markenfield mention in the magazine article was:

Jarman, E.K.M. *Justice and Conciliation in a Tudor Church Court: The Consistory Court of Chester, September 1558-March 1559*. 2012: Record Society of Lancashire and Chester

Kate Jarman was the first person to bring the case to print, as far as I am aware. The court case original documents are:

Consistory Court of Chester Deposition Book EDC 2/6 f.236r-237v (Merkinfeld suit). [Manuscript]. At: Chester Record Office, Chester, England

In the court case, the names are spelt: Thomas Merkinfeld and Isabell Ingleby. I have modernised them for the article.

Eleanor Hart.