

# The Old Hutte at Halewood

by  
Charles R. Band



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F 790

LEBROOK  
W. S. BIRD  
24 SWARTING STREET

1914

15480



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LIVERPOOL  
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Situated about eight miles from Liverpool, on the road to Hale, and some distance from the public highway, it was well screened from observation by the wood, by which (somewhat like Speke Hall) it was surrounded. A narrow lane branching off, and continuing for some distance from, the main road, led directly into a large yard enclosed by stables and barns. Straight

ahead was the drawbridge over the wide and deep moat.\* A massive gatehouse, constructed of brick, with red sandstone dressings and a central rounded archway, over which were two stories containing four-light transomed and square-headed mullioned windows, provided access into a capacious courtyard surrounded on three sides by stables and other outbuildings, across which, some forty yards further on, was the main building; the entrance doorway of which—a beautiful red stone Norman-looking archway covered with ivy—yet remains. Beyond was the great mansion, with its magnificent Banqueting Hall over one hundred feet in length and thirty feet in breadth, which has, no doubt, been the scene in its time of much splendour. The chapel (a necessary appendage

\* The drawbridge "has long since passed into the limbo of things forgotten, together with the portcullis, which in a desperate state of domestic affairs would have been ordered to fall at express speed. There is, I believe, only one moated house in England which still keeps, and in working order too, one of these silent witnesses to the insecurity of the times. Immovable stone has everywhere else taken the place of the wooden structures whose sole reason for existing lay in their capacity of being moved up and down with the utmost speed and at a moment's notice. If anything went wrong with that lift of the Middle Ages, assailant and assailed were likely to enter the house together and fighting hand to hand."—*Moated Houses*, 49, 50.

to these moated houses in early days) stood by the quadrangular moat which entirely surrounded the dwelling.

To most people it will come somewhat as a surprise to be reminded that the Hutte was one of the most imposing and important mansions in South Lancashire; that this was the case is shown by the Hearth Taxes of 1662, from which we learn that while Hale Hall had 17 hearths, Speke Hall 21 hearths, the Hutte was taxed for 22 hearths.

Unfortunately this great house is no longer in existence, but as it crumbled to ruins and became uninhabitable, the great three-story gatehouse which formed the entrance, was built up and added to on both sides to serve as a residence for the family.

The additions consist of a low wing on the left or west side of the gatehouse, which is covered with ivy and looks very old, and of some more modern-looking houses on the eastern side. The older additions were made by William Ireland about the year 1411.

The curious and interesting building resulting from these additions is still standing and habitable, having been kept in good repair.

The archway of the old gatehouse, yet perfect and strong, has been converted into a drawing-room; and the massive oak beams within testify to the tremendous strength of a building which had to bear the strain of raising and lowering the stupendous weight of the ancient drawbridge and portcullis. Four stone shields—bearing the arms of William Ireland, of Ellyn his wife (relict of Sir John Stanley and daughter of Sir John Handford), and also of Molyneux—are yet to be seen between the two principal, and on either side of the upper, windows. Through the ports on each side of and considerably above the outer archway passed the chains which lowered and elevated the massive drawbridge. The small rooms at either side of the gateway were at one time probably guardrooms. Above these are others—measuring five feet by five-and-a-half feet, and six-and-a-half feet in height, still in their primitive state—lighted now by the glazed holes of the drawbridge chains.

Behind the gatehouse, is the ancient stone arch with moulded head and jambs, and in the yard the old horse-block worn into hollows and rounded-off corners. Of the hall only a short length of one side and the base of the stonework of a mullioned window now remain.

Beyond this, and nearer to the moat, is a fireplace of probably sixteenth century work, with carved stone front and side pieces, and, behind, the remains of its once massive chimney. The moat, part of it still filled with water, surrounds nearly the whole of the site and gatehouse, and the farm buildings of stone and timber construction, on the north-west side of the moat, although many centuries old, are yet in good repair and daily use.

In the western range is a very old building comprising barns and stables, the upper portion of which, about eight years ago, consisted of heavy timber crocks on a strong stone base. The uppermost section has recently been entirely replaced by a much loftier brick "restoration" with slated roof.

On one of the stone doorheads is inscribed the

name IOHN I ELANDE with the date 1608.\*

The principal bedroom is immediately above the archway, and contains a fine stone Tudor mantelpiece, on which is carved

IOHN IRELANDE  
1608

The open doorways of the little chambers previously mentioned, in which at one time the chains of the drawbridge were coiled—on either side of the large window of this apartment—yet remain in their original condition.

So far as the writer is aware, no significance has heretofore been attached to these inscriptions. In 1608-9, John Ireland and John Birchall were, by special Patent from King James I., declared joint Governors of the Isle of Man, and in the following year, John Ireland was Lieutenant and Captain. It is extremely probable that on John

\* It is somewhat unusual to find in an authoritative work like the *Victoria County History of Lancaster* such an error as there occurs. The statement is made that "on a stone doorhead in the western range is a date, partly hidden by a beam, 16 . . . , and the name IOHN IRELANDE." The actual fact, however, is that the inscription reads IOHN I ELANDE (the R detrited), 1608 (the date being perfectly legible).

Ireland receiving intimation of this distinguished appointment, late in the year 1608, it was considered of sufficient importance to justify the recording of the date in some such durable manner.

John Ireland died at the Hutte in 1611, and his will, proved at York the same year, read as follows:

"John Ireland of the Hutt, co. Lancaster, Esquire. My late father George Ireland. To Katharine my wife (inter alia) my best sommer nagge, my best winter geldinge, my best guilt bowle, one of my three silver cuppes or bowles made by one Holme, nowe or lately a goldsmyth in Knowesley; one broade silver bowle or cuppe or forty shillings waight or thereabouts, one standinge cuppe garnished with silver and guilte made by the sayde Holme, called the best nutt, one chayne of golde of the price of £20 or thereabouts, one border of gould which was sometymes my mothers. My very good Lord and Master the Earle of Derby; my great great grandfather

John Birkenhead Esq. My wife to have my stuffe of Roby Hall. To Gilbert Ireland my brother (and heire apparent) my plate of silver and guilt, one chaine of gold, one sealinge ringe or signett of arms that was my fathers, together with the horne of Crotonn. To my well beloved cosen and deare frend Robert Hesketh of Rufforth, co. Lancaster, Esq. and to my brother George Ireland, gent, £20 each and a gold ring, and to Robert Hesketh my diamond ring and to my brother George my ringe with deathe's head upon both (sides or ends?) which I daylie and usually weare upon my fingers."

Not many years were to elapse before the Irelands abandoned their old home as a family residence, for in 1636 we find Richard James, author of the *Iter Lancastriense*, describing his going from Speke,

"To Rigby of ye Hutt, where to our cheere  
Wee plenty had of claret, ale and beer."

This was Hugh Rigby, of Lincoln's Inn, second son of Edward Rigby of Burgh and

Dorothy Anderton.

Two years before James penned his lines, Rigby's acknowledged legal ability had resulted in his elevation to the office of Recorder of Liverpool. The old town book tells us that on 28th July, 1634,

"Thomas Molyneux Esq., Recorder of this Corporacon, came voluntarily and loveingly, and did desire this howse to disburden him of that chardge, and did desire that the howse would (in respect of his age) take no discortesie at him: and he hartily desireth that the howse would elect Hugh Rigby Esq. to be his successor, and to have the fees due to the Recorder, which was accordingly done."

The entry was signed by the Mayor (John Moore) and eight others.

At an Assize Court held at Lancaster in March, 1637, an indictment was preferred against Thomas Bicksteth (Mayor of Liverpool in the preceding year), and his officers, for a forcible entry. The Court ordered

"that the said inhabitants of Liv'poole shall

some tyme betweene this and the end of Trinitie terme next, p'duce charters before the Lord Vernon. And yf it appeare they have not such priviledge as they alledge, Then they are to pay such costs as those whoe p'secute the said Indictm<sup>ts</sup> have beene put to at theis Assizes in their attendance about the same, and in the mean tyme the p'secution of the said Indictm<sup>ts</sup> to cease."

In the following month the charters were produced to the Court, when it was

"ordained by the Court that a writ 'de procedendo' be issued to the Mayor, Bailiffs and Burgesses of the Borough of Liverpool, touching the recognizances and indictment preferred by Joseph Rose, any prior rule or certificate to the contrary notwithstanding. And it is further ordered that no writ of 'certiorari' be authorised in any proceeding against the said Mayor, Bailiffs and Burgesses; and this as appears by the charters freely granted by divers Kings of the realm of England exhibited by Mr. Hugh Rigby."

The Recorder's opinions were frequently in demand—one, relative to the election of John Winstanley in 1641, running as follows:

"Upon full and deliberate considerac'n of the said order and of the Statute of Sexto of Edwd. the Sixt, I doe conceive that the Corporaco'n may eyther for a som'e in grosse or for the before menc'on'd som'e of Ten Pounds, grant the office to Mr. Winstanley or any other of theyre Towne Clarkes, for these reasons: Firste, I conceive a Corporac'n is not w<sup>th</sup> in y<sup>e</sup> lawe. Secondlie, that admitinge a Corporac'n was w<sup>th</sup> in y<sup>e</sup> lawe, yet in regard the[y] have the said office to grant, I doe conceive they are w<sup>th</sup> in the Exception of the Statute; so that the said Corporac'n may grant the said Office for any tearme or estate that the Corporac'n doth please."

John Winstanley was appointed Town Clerk of Liverpool in 1641, and in addition Solicitor to the Corporation in 1657; and was removed from office in 1662 by the Government Commissioners,



although he had signed the Declaration and taken the oath.

Rigby died in 1642, and on the 21st September it was recorded that

“The Recorder's place being voyde by the death of Mr. Hugh Rigby late Recorder here, a generall and free elec'on was made of Mr. William Langton Esq. who was accordingly sworne a ffree Burgesse, Recorder of this Corporac'n and one of the Com'on Councell here.”

He died without leaving a Will, and the inventory of his property, made on 23rd September, gives us some idea of the construction and dimensions of the Hutte.

Articles are mentioned as being in the barn, kill, kitchen, brewhouse, mealhouse, carthouse, backhouse, workhouse, cellar, great parlour, dry-house, little parlour, porch chamber, knight's chamber, mid chamber, little gallery, buttery, chamber over the schoolhouse, chamber over the gatehouse, larder, dry larder, clockhouse and Mrs. Rigby's chamber and clockhouse.

The Hutte also contained an armourhouse, in which were “equipments for six pikemen and six musqueteers, with other old furniture for that purpose,” and in addition it is recorded that the estate had large numbers of geese, swans, cygnets and turkeys.

The gatehouse residence, now a substantial farmhouse in the occupation of Mr. Horton, is known as the Old Hutte Farm. It is a curious and unique building, and has the appearance from some points of view of two houses, standing one upon the other. This peculiarity was, perhaps, the origin of its old name “Haut.”

This short account of the Hutte and two of its noted occupiers will, it is hoped, lead many to feel interested in an ancient building which appears to be but little known, even to the inhabitants of the great city of Liverpool.

