

OLD-TIME HALE

THE CHURCH

THE MANOR

THE VILLAGE

THE SCHOOL

THE "CHILDE OF HALE"

Etc



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by Charles Poole



PRICE ONE SHILLING

OLD HUTT IN HALEWOOD

THE Charter Roll in the possession of Colonel Ireland-Blackburne, of Hale Hall, contains much valuable information as to the origin of his ancestors, the Irelands of Old Hutt. Mr. William Fergusson Irvine, F.S.A., made a thorough examination of the Roll some years ago and embodied the result of his researches in a paper entitled, "The Origin of the Irelands of Hale," which he read before the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire in 1900. We have ventured to quote rather freely from his paper. "In 1185, Henry II attempted to make a complete conquest of Ireland, and sent his son John over to conduct the campaign. Among his followers seems to have gone young Richard of Walton, probably in a



OLD HUTT (1882)

clerical capacity. Of his exploits in Ireland we know nothing, but for some reason he earned the distinctive name of Meath, so that Richard of Walton becomes henceforth Richard of Meath. In July, 1200, he is a Clerk of the Exchequer, and from this fact we know that he must have taken orders. A favourite with King John, he received at this time a grant of the royal lands in Walton and three years later a grant of the Manor of Hale to hold by the ancient ferm of 90s. with an increase of 50s. . . . This grant of Hale was finally confirmed to Richard of Meath in 1227 by Henry III." Richard of Meath married Cecilia of Columbers and enfeoffed to her his estate, "to hold it after the death of his brother, Henry de Walton, whom he thereby constituted his heir." Accordingly Cecily, on her

husband's death, became sub-tenant of Hale under Henry de Walton ("Final Concords," by Wm. Farrer, Vol. 39 of the Record Society). She had four sons and two daughters, namely, Richard, Geoffrey, Adam, Henry, Cecilia and Edusa. "Richard, Geoffrey and Adam seem to have died soon, but Henry, the fourth son, appears to have enjoyed the property for some time, though once more the surname is changed, and instead of being Henry of Meath, he becomes Henry of Hale. Henry seems to have died about 1260 or 1261." The property then descended to Cecilia, who had married Sir John de Woolfall, and Edusa, as co-heiresses. On the death of Edusa, her son Adam, who was then residing in Ireland, successfully maintained a suit for a moiety of the estates and came to reside at Hale. "It is curious to think," remarks Mr. Irvine, "that the fact of his being on a sojourn in the sister isle at the time of his coming into the property should have had the effect of stamping the name of Ireland on his descendants to all time. . . . But his entry into Hale was not in the nature of a triumphal procession: he seems to have met with bitter opposition, especially from his cousins, the Walton's, and many and lengthy are the documents relating to the various suits he brought to vindicate his right. At first he simply held the Manor of Hale as sub-tenant, or rather two-thirds of it (the Waltons apparently having purchased one-third from Cecilia of Woolfall)." Henry de Walton, to whom Richard de Meath had granted the reversion of the Manor of Hale on the death of Cecilia de Columbers and her heirs, "had a son William who had a son Richard. The said Richard being a minor at his father's death, his wardship fell to Robert de Ferrers as chief lord, who sold the wardship of the heir and of his estates and also the lordship over the estates—thus creating a mesne tenancy—to one Nicholas de la Huse, a Wiltshire man, who afterwards sold the wardship and the lordship of the land of the heir to Robert de Holland" (Final Concords). The Robert de Holland had a daughter Avena, also called Avice, to whom Adam Ireland successfully paid court, the celebration of their nuptials taking place some time before 1286. As a consequence of that union, and certain grants of land resulting from it, Adam Ireland acquired the reversion of his estate and thus became absolute owner of the Manor of Hale. He and his descendants continued to enjoy the Hale estates and to make the Hutt their home for a period of upwards of three centuries. The arms of the Ireland family were six fleur-de-lis with the motto "Come jeo fus." The crest was a dove with a sprig of olive in its beak.

From "Hale and Orford" by the late Mr. William Beamont, we have obtained the following particulars of this family:—John de Ireland, son of Adam Ireland, died about the year 1331 and was succeeded by his son, David, on whose death John Ireland, his son, succeeded to the Hutte and Hale estates. About the year 1380 he obtained from Pope Urban VI a licence to found in the chapel of Hale a chantry, which he endowed. About this time he seems to have rebuilt in a more substantial manner the old moated mansion of the Irelands at the Hutte. In the interval between 1360 and 1380 he was absent for a while in Spain. After his return he remained for the rest of his life at Hale and died in August, 1401. William de Ireland, who next succeeded to the estates of Hale and the Hutte, was born in 1347, and came to his inheritance in 1401. In the Wars of the Roses, he probably espoused the Lancastrian side. Upon his death, about 1436, he was succeeded in his estates by his only son and heir, John Ireland, Esquire, lord of the Hutte and Hale. Pope John XXIII, at the instigation of John Leyot, curate of Hale Chapel, granted a formal bull, the original of which is still preserved at Hale Hall. This bull, which is very long, and is given in a translated form in Gregson's "Fragments," contains a notice of some of the events and circumstances of Hale at that day. William Ireland died at Hale in 1431, and was followed by his son, John de Ireland, who died in 1462, and was buried at Hale. John de Ireland, his successor, died on 20th July, 1545, leaving daughter, Margery, but no male issue, in consequence of which the family estate passed to his younger brother, Thomas, who lived until 1566. His son, Thomas, was the next in succession, and married Margaret, the daughter of Sir Richard Bold, of Bold, knight. Dying in 1568, he was followed by his son, George de Ireland. About the year 1568, George de Ireland held a command in the Queen's forces, and afterwards, when the Queen was troubled by the rising of the two rebel lords in the north, and also when the Spanish Armada threatened, he was again employed in her service in a similar capacity. George de Ireland died in 1595 and was succeeded by his eldest son John Ireland. In 1603 he filled the office of High Sheriff of Lancashire, and met King James I on his entrance into England, presenting His Majesty with a loyal address, congratulating him on becoming King of England. He died in 1613 and was followed by his nephew, John, then

a boy of thirteen years, son of his brother, Sir Gilbert. Sir Gilbert, who was knighted on the accession of King James I, was living at Crowton when his brother died. The house at the Hutte, which, after standing for centuries, had been the scene of much splendour in its time, had now begun to show marks of age. Instead of removing to it, Sir Gilbert built a new house at Hale on the site where the present hall stands. The new house was no sooner habitable than he moved into it. In Sir Gilbert Ireland's lifetime was born John Middleton, the "Child of Hale." Sir Gilbert left six children of whom John, the eldest, succeeded him. John Ireland married the daughter of Sir Thomas Hayes, knight, silversmith and Lord Mayor of London. Up to the time of this John Ireland, the Hutte had continued to be their family residence, but it had now become uninhabitable through its age, though some of its rooms, and particularly its dining hall, were palatial in their dimensions; and John Ireland, on coming into possession, thought it desirable to rebuild Hale Hall. He died at the latter place on 5th May, 1633,



OLD HUTT

leaving his son and heir, called Gilbert after his grandfather. More will be said of him when we come to deal with the history of Hale Hall. Gilbert's mother took for her second husband, Hugh Rigby, a barrister of Lincoln's Inn, afterwards Recorder of Liverpool, who was living at the Hutte when the writer of "Iter Lancastrense" (Rev. Richard James, B.D.), paid him a visit in 1636:—

To Rigby, of ye Hut, where to our cheere,
We plentie had of clarett, ale and beere.
(Lines 381-2.)

"What now remains of the Old Hutte," writes Mr. J. Paul Rylands, F.S.A., in "Views of the Old Halls of Lancashire and Cheshire," "stands upon flat ground, lying rather low, in a secluded spot among woods, far from the public road, a mile to the north of the river Mersey and about a mile and a half north-west of the picturesque village of Hale. It is approached from a solitary bye-road, through a large court-yard, lying to the west of a moat, within which the gate-house, the subject of our engraving, and some ivy-clad ruins may still be seen. At the present time the court-yard is entered at its north-westerly corner; and

it was from a spot near to this point that our view was taken by Mr. Phillips in 1822. Most of the trees represented in the picture, however, and among them a giant oak which grew to the right of the gate-house, have disappeared. In this court-yard there are, among other modern erections, two substantial buildings of stone and brick, with lofts above, lighted by stone-mullioned square windows, and over the doorway of one of them, a stable, the builder's name:—

John Irelande,
1603,

is carved in bold letters. The principal entrance to the court-yard when it was enclosed for protection, was past the end of this stable, through a large gate, the traces of which may still be seen, and so, across the yard, in a perfectly straight line, to the drawbridge and gate-house. Passing onwards we come to a flower garden, close by the causeway which has replaced the old drawbridge; and here, almost hidden by the flowers and serving the purpose of an edging to the beds,



YARD BEHIND OLD HUTT

are a number of iron cannon-balls, found not many years ago. A few steps across the causeway, past the old stone seats at either side, we enter the brick-built gate-house, with stone quoins and dressings, its flanks and gables being of timber framing with a coved cornice. All of these have been much repaired, and the decayed timber and brickwork have been renewed, where required, on the old lines. The building was formerly roofed with heavy stone slabs, which are now replaced by tiles. High up, between the upper and lower stone-mullioned windows, is a stone carved with two shields of the armorial bearings of the families of Ireland and Handford, commemorating William Ireland and Ellen his wife, who probably built a former gate-house in the first decade of the fifteenth century. Higher up still, to the right and left, are two other carved stones, the one bearing the arms of Molyneux and Haydock on separate shields side by side, and the other a chevron between three fleurs-de-lis, a coat-of-arms which has been called the ancient one of the Irelands by some authorities, and by others attributed to a possibly imaginary family named Hutt. Though the passage through the gate-house, once a paved way, is now converted into living rooms of the farm, and the

building itself has been repaired, this old structure still retains much of its original appearance, and is a striking and picturesque object in the landscape, rearing its head among woods, fields and meadows, and dwarfing its more modern neighbours. In a bedroom, over the entrance to the gate-house, the name:—

John Ireland,
1608,

is carved upon a plain but massive stone mantelpiece. Out of this room two very small rooms open to the front, to the right and left, lighted by circular look-out holes (now glazed), three in number, two in the front wall and one in that to the north, which could be used as port-holes for fire-arms in case of attack, but are too far apart to serve as chain ports for a drawbridge. In the engraving these are represented as being overgrown with ivy, since removed. Going through the gate-house, we find ourselves within an oblong area of about an acre in extent, surrounded by the moat. Immediately in front of us, and occupying the very centre of the area, is the most ancient and interesting remnant of the Old Hutt, a red-sandstone pointed Gothic doorway, belonging to the decorated style of architecture. Two immense stones form the centre order of the arch, and the hood-mould terminates at either side in ornaments; that to the left is quite defaced, but, like the other one, has probably been a grotesque face. Here we have evidence of the erection of a building of importance, perhaps the work of Adam de Ireland and Avena his wife, about the year 1300, and that this doorway formed the entrance to the great hall there can be very little doubt. Other relics belonging to the same period are a portion of the tracery of a large pointed window showing parts of two tre-foil lights and a circle filled with tracery, and also a fine and peculiar piece of a jamb moulding. Passing to our right in what is now a cabbage-garden, we find all else of the Hutt that remains above ground: a piece of masonry, partly stone and partly brick built, of the Jacobean period, in which there is a large stone-mullioned transom window of eight lights, with square tops, and, in the wall close by, a carved stone mantelpiece, doubtless erected by John Ireland about the year 1608, when he rebuilt the gate-house; or by his brother, Sir Gilbert Ireland, of Crowton, who succeeded to the family estates on John's death in 1614."

To supplement Mr. Ryland's excellent description of the Old Hutt, we find in Gregson's "Fragments of Lancashire" the following reference to it:—"This building, like Speke Hall, lies low, but, if it be possible, is more secluded, in a flat country, surrounded by a vast quantity of wood, and no public road passing near it, its situation is suited to the hostile times in which it was built, when this part of the country was subjected to the incursions of the Scots."

In the small paved yard behind the gate-house is a horse-block of stone, which, from its worn appearance, has weathered many centuries, and may even be as old as the ruined fragments of the Hutt. Where the Hutt stood is now a plot of open ground, overgrown with long coarse grass, and such common plants as usually flourish in neglected spots.

On the death of Sir Gilbert Ireland in 1626 an inventory of his goods was taken, which mentions the rooms within the Hutt in number exceeding thirty. An inventory of the goods belonging to Hugh Rigby, who, it will be remembered, died at the Hutt in 1642, mentions further rooms to the number of twelve. It also states that in "the clock-house there were eleven old pikes, Scotch bills, and other old things. . . . In the armour-house were equipments for six pikemen and six musqueteers. There was also plate of the value of £46, pewter, glasses, etc., and one drinking horn set in silver, gilded, with a whistle at the end, worth £3, which had belonged to John Ireland. There were also swans, cygnets, etc." ("Hutt in Hale Wood," by Mr. J. Paul Rylands).

"A careful examination of the ruins has enabled Mr. E. W. Cox, with the aid of these inventories and some old drawings, to ascertain the proportions and general arrangement of the Hutt as it existed from 1300 to 1642, with a fair degree of certainty. The mansion of the thirteenth century probably consisted of a great hall, which would be a one-storey building, and two wings, running out from the great hall in an easterly direction, each wing being two storeys high. The wing to the north would contain the solar, or withdrawing room, the knight's chamber, and the family apartments; and the southern wing the kitchens, offices and servants' rooms. The Gothic archway already mentioned formed the entrance to the great hall on its westerly side at the south end, next to the

kitchen wing; and there would be a large wooden screen, partially shutting off the hall from the passage which led through the south end of the great hall into the open place or court-yard at the easterly side, and also communicated with the kitchen. The great hall is traditionally said to have measured 100 feet long by 30 feet wide; the width is, no doubt, correct, but the length, there can be little doubt, included the solar and the middle chamber. If there was a domestic chapel, which is far from improbable though we have no actual record of one, it would be at the extreme end of the family wing at the corner of the moat, and would thus have an east window. When John Ireland set about his building operations at the beginning of the seventeenth century, we cannot doubt that parts of the Old Hutt were in a more or less ruinous state, and that he pulled down some of them and left others standing, utilising them as parts of his restored and altered building. He probably made the old Gothic arch serve the purpose of a front door, reduced the size of the great hall to suit it to the requirements of the time, when feasting large numbers of retainers and others had become a thing of the past, left the kitchen standing, and in the old servants' wing built a banqueting-hall, or great parlour, lighted by the window already referred to and by a very fine bay-window looking east, which fell into the moat early in the present (19th) century. Above this there would be the sleeping apartments for the family, and the old family wing would probably be occupied by the servants" ("Hutt in Hale Wood").

The last of the Irelands to live at the Hutt was Sir Gilbert Ireland, who removed to Hale Hall about the middle of the seventeenth century. Since his day the Hutt has been occupied as a farmhouse.