



Parting Letter from Mr. Sotheron Estcourt to His Tenants at Bishops Cannings

It has for some time been known in the neighbourhood that the Estates, which the family of Mr. Estcourt have so long held at Bishops Cannings, were about to change hands. The following copy of a letter, which Mr. Estcourt has sent to his principal tenants at Cannings, will show that this property has now been transferred to the Crown. Previous to the transfer Mr. Estcourt very generously appropriated a tithe-rent charge of £278 a year for the perpetual augmentation of the incumbencies of Cannings, Southbroom, and Chittoe.

Estcourt, 30th December, 1858

I address you for the last time as your landlord. Yesterday I signed the papers by which the estate at Cannings, which has long been held by my family, under a lease from the See of Salisbury, is transferred to another owner; and I wish, in this letter, to tell you shortly how this change has occurred, and, as landlord, to bid you farewell.

You are aware that I held the estate for a term of three lives. The custom of the Manor was this: when one of these lives happened to drop, upon payment of a fine, another life was inserted. More than five years ago, I had occasion to apply for a renewal of the lease, when I found that leave would no longer be given. A body of Ecclesiastical Commissioners had been placed, by Parliament, in the stead of the Bishop, and their course was to refuse renewals, and to let leases run out. It became plain, therefore, that my lease, which had been considered by all parties, hitherto, as a permanent interest, was converted into a merely temporary occupation, which would end in the course of a few years. This was a condition of matters, very unsatisfactory to me, very awkward to the tenants, very uncertain to the parish: it would keep the real ownership in a state of doubtful duration, and so would be likely to postpone indefinitely all measures of improvement, which would lead to a permanent outlay. The inconvenience is obvious, but it has occupied more than five years to bring a long negotiation to a close with the Bishop, The Ecclesiastical Commissioners, and the office of Woods and Forests. The result, however, is that by a joint transaction, between all the parties who shared the ownership, the estate has been made freehold, and has been sold to the Crown.

I have taken the opportunity to appropriate, for the benefit of the parish a tithe rent-charge of £287 a-year, as a free gift. Having consulted the Bishop, I have applied that sum for the perpetual augmentation of the Incumbencies of Cannings, Southbroom, and Chittoe, and to an endowment of £20 a-year to the National School at Cannings.

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My regret at closing my long connection with the tenants is much lessened by considering that the separation has been rendered inevitable by the change of the tenure effected by Parliament, and that you will henceforth become occupiers under the Crown, which has always borne the character of a good, considerate, and improving landlord.

The ties of mutual regard which long acquaintance has knit between us, need not be severed though we shall no longer have a rent-day to bring us together. I feel that my attachment to the spot and all its inhabitants, my satisfaction at their welfare and progress, will remain as warm and as strong as when I had a right to interfere in their concerns.

I hope to hear that greater encouragement will be given to all kinds of improvements, under a landlord possessed of greater means than mine; and I shall rejoice at every opportunity of shewing that my interest in the parish still subsists, though the estate has passed into other hands.

I am, my dear Sir, yours very faithfully,

T. SOTHERON ESTCOURT.

The following is a copy of the reply of the Tenants:-

(Copy)

Bishops Cannings, January 8th, 1859

DEAR SIR.

We beg to thank you for the very kind manner in which you have communicated to us the result of the long pending negotiation respecting the Manor of Bishop's Cannings.

We regret exceedingly that anything should have occurred to separate the connection which has so long and so amicably existed; and we cannot allow this opportunity to pass without expressing our united acknowledgements for the many acts of kindness and liberality we have uniformly received from yourself and family, and which will ever be remembered by us with the greatest gratitude and respect; and for the further proof of your consideration in the transfer of the property to the Crown, who, we understand, are likely to deal fairly and liberally with us.

The very generous act by which you have given up so large a portion of the tithes for the perpetual endowment of the churches and school of this parish, demands and deserves our warmest thanks. We cannot but feel gratified by your kind expression, that you will still continue to take an interest in our welfare, and beg to subscribe ourselves, dear Sir, most respectfully,

Your obliged and grateful Servants.

[Here follows a list of the principal tenants]

Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette, 13 January 1859 Page 3

OPC Note

The list of tenants names is not printed in the newspaper