

## Inquisitions post mortem

- Sworn enquiries into the lands held at their deaths by direct tenants of the crown (tenants-in-chief)
- Survive from about 1236 to 1660 (when feudal tenures were abolished) in more-or-less continuous series at the National Archives
- Usually created by *escheator*
- Designed to record and enforce royal feudal rights, especially
  - *Wardship*, when a tenant died and their heir was not of full legal age
  - *Primer seisin and relief*, when an heir was of full age
- Related documents:
  - *Proofs of age*
  - *Assignments of dower*

### William Melsham.

**Inquisition** taken at Devizes, 17th March, 15 Charles I [1640], before John Sevir, gent., by virtue of his office, after the death of William Melsham, by the oath of Thomas Sloper, gent., John Worsdale, Robert Heskins, Thomas Withers, John Briant, John Eyles, Edward Hope, Christopher Pullen, Walter Mayo, Walter Reade, Giles Mills, William Roberts, and Ambrose Seley, who say that

William Melsham was seised of one cottage and one acre of land in Langley Burrell, lately purchased of Anna Wastfeild, widow, and John Wastfeild her son; one close of meadow and pasture containing 11 acres, lately enclosed out of a ground in Langley Burrell called Oldbury, lately purchased of Robert Shawe, gent.; 6 acres of land in the east field there, purchased of Charles Essington, yeoman, whereof 5 acres abut upon the north part of the ground there called the Greate gore, and the other acre adjoins the north part of the said 5 acres; a pasture called Whites there, containing 8 acres, lately purchased of John Wastfeild, senior; one pasture there, called Little gore, containing 4 acres, lately purchased of Hugh Wastfield, yeoman; and 5 messuages lying at the ease end of the borough of Chippenham.

So seised, the said William Melsham made his will 7th August, 1634, and thereby devised to John, son of Henry Melsham, his son, and to his heirs for ever, the said premises purchased of the said Anne and John Wastfield. He also bequeathed to the said John, his grandson, an annuity of £5, to be paid out of the said ground called Whites. He bequeathed to the said Henry, his son, the premises called Oldbury and the Gore, those purchased of Charles Essington and those called Whites, to hold the same for his life.

The close called Oldbury is held of the King as of his Duchy of Lancaster by knight's service, and is worth per annum, clear, 5s. The cottage and all other the premises in Langley Burrell are held of Henry White, gent., as of his manor of Langley Burrell, by fealty, suit at court, and a yearly rent, and are worth per annum, clear, 20s.; of whom and by what services the messuages lying at the ease end of Chippenham are held the jorors know not; they are worth per annum, clear, 10s.

William Melsham died 27th November last past; Henry Melsham is his son and next heir, and was then aged 35 years and more.

**Inq. p.m., 15 Charles I, pt. 29, No. 17.**

**"Abstracts of Wiltshire Inquisitions Post Mortem," 1901, edited by George S. Fry & Edw. Alex Fry.**