



Parish News

Oaksey

Link with Royalty

The interesting fact has recently been discovered that her Majesty the Queen of England is directly associated through her ancestors with the little Wiltshire village of Oaksey, near Malmesbury.

In a letter on the subject, the Rev H A Watts, rector of Oaksey, and formerly the much respected headmaster of the Bristol Cathedral School, stated that when he went to Oaksey he set about writing a guide to the village. He went on browsing and gaining more local history and discovered a most interesting family connection of H M the Queen with Oaksey, which had been added to the guide.

The rector proceeds, "The village of Oaksey has its roots deep in the past. It appears in Domesday Book as Wochesie, a name probably derived from 'Wuxi', a wattled sheepfold. The transition from Wochesie to Oaksey, phonetically similar, would not be difficult, and this seems a more likely derivative than that the name was given later because of the abundance of oak trees in the parish. Nowadays at any rate there do not appear to be more oak trees here than elsewhere."

The Manor of Oaksey

"At the time Domesday Book was compiled (1086) the Manor belonged to Brictric, a Saxon Thane, whose father owned it in the reign of Edward the Confessor. Some centuries later (c.1330) the Manor passed into the hands of the de Bohuns and afterwards by marriage to Henry Bolingbroke, son of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster.

When Bolingbroke deposed Richard II and came to the throne as Henry IV, the Manor of Oaksey was merged with Crown property. It again changed hands for, in the sixteenth century, Sir Edward Poole whose name still survives in Poole Keynes, a neighbouring village, owned it. About 1710 it was bought by Sir Robert Westley who left it to his daughter, Mrs Adamson, whose son sold it to James Harris, first Earl of Malmesbury.

The Earl of Malmesbury re-sold it in 1801 to Francis Webb Esq., who left it to his daughter, Mrs Salisbury, in 1841.”

The Queen’s Interest

“The Manor of Oaksey,” writes Mr Watts, “was at one time the property of Henry Bolingbroke and retained by him when he became King James I, is also said to have had a hunting lodge in the parish. Besides these links with the Crown, I have quite recently discovered a most interesting modern link with our present Queen.

“Francis Webb, Esq., Lord of the Manor of Oaksey, 1801-14, was the great, great, great grandfather of Her Majesty on the maternal side. I cannot find that Francis lived here. He was living in the Close, Salisbury at the time of his death, and left the Manor by will to his daughter Frances, who had married Thomas Salisbury in 1795.”

“Their daughter, Ann Caroline, married Capt Edwyn Burnaby, and the daughter of that marriage, Caroline Louise, married the Rev Charles William Frederick Cavendish Bentinck. Nina Cecilia, a daughter of this marriage, married Claude George Bowes Lyon and was mother of the Queen.”

“I submitted this link with Oaksey“ adds Mr Watts, “to the Queen’s private secretary and received from him an assurance of her Majesty’s interest and good wishes.”

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