

The GREENWOOD family had its earliest proven beginnings in the 15th century in the tiny village of Hardwick-cum-Weedon just over a mile south of Whitchurch in the heart of Buckinghamshire and close to the centre of England. Buckinghamshire is peculiarly shaped, 45 miles long and only 18 miles wide with a circumference of 138 miles, containing 110,400 acres. According to the Poll Tax of 1377 the population was then only 14,672. Forests of beech, oak and ash covered much of the county providing food and shelter for herds of deer.

Hardwick is in the hundred of Cotslow, in the deanery of Muresley, and on the main road from Buckingham in the north and to Amersham in the south. The manor belonged to the WYLMARCH family, but owing to a partition between two co-heiresses in that family, the manor became divided into half, one of which was sold to William of Wickham, Bishop of Exeter, and by him made part of the endowment of New College, Oxford. The other half went to the family of BOTTREAU, by whom it was sold in 1460 to the BRECKNOCKS, and by them to the LEE family in 1642. It was a descendant of that family - Lord LEE of BETHAM - who gave *Chequers* to the nation as a permanent country residence for the Prime Ministers of England.

Weedon was a hamlet in the parish of Hardwick containing 1,700 acres. The manor was held by the MOELS family and, later, by the COBHAMS. Sir John COBHAM gave the manor to the Crown during the reign of Edward III, and the manor house was known as

The population of Hardwick-cum-Weedon in the 15th century was approximately 250, consisting of some thirty families inhabiting no more than about forty houses of wood, stone and daub.

The manor court rolls are now held at New College, Oxford archives and I hold some copies, but as the entries are in mediaeval Latin I have had to have relevant extracts translated professionally. The first GREENWOOD extract is dated 1460 and reads as

In this court John GRENEWODE came and took from the Lord one messuage and one acre of land (about eleven acres) with appurtenances and one quarter of land with appurtenances formerly in the tenure of Robert WATTS to hold for himself and his family according to the custom of the manor for the old rent, customs and services, and he gave the

Lord as an entry fine 3 capons (castrated chickens) and did homage and he will give the Lord a heriot (fine) at his death of 5 shillings.'

The second extract is dated 13 December 1464 and is taken from the Weedon court roll and reads as follows:

'To this court came Thomas KENDALE of Weedon to claim for himself one half acre of meadow situate there with the appurtenances called Slo-Dole, and he says that it belongs to the tenure of the said William GRENEHODE. And upon this the adjournment for all the homage there for the determination whether the said half acre of meadow belongs to the tenure of the said Thomas KENDALE or the tenure of the said William GRENEHODE. The aforesaid claim to be against the next court.'

There is then a gap of some 49 years before another John GREENWOOD (probably the grandson of the John GRENEWODE of the 1460 Court Roll) appears as a juror of the Manor Court of 1530. This John had a younger brother, William, who was listed in the Muster Rolls of 1525, and assessed at 20 shillings in goods in the Lay Subsidy Rolls of 1525. Twenty shillings in the early 16th century would be equivalent to about £400 today, so this William was a copyholder or manorial tenant of some substance. This meant that he was a tenant of part of the manorial common fields, and he toiled collectively with other tenants and drew his share in proportion to the amount of land he held. In a wholly agricultural district the only way one could improve one's lot was to get more land and thus a bigger share of the crops. In the 16th century the most practical way of doing this was to marry someone with more land and then eventually to combine the two holdings. It is almost certain that William married well, but whoever she was she bore him a son also name William in 15309. This William II was married in 1552 to an Elizabeth, and he moved some ten miles south to do so at Cuddington.

Cuddington is in the hundred of Aylesbury and the deanery of Wendover. It lies about six miles west of Aylesbury just off the main road to Thame in Oxfordshire. The manor was held by the GODWYN family, but in the reign of Elizabeth I it was conveyed to the TYRINGHAMS. James HOLYMAN, the 2nd Bishop of Bristol, was a native of this village.

William II and Elizabeth had three sons, named Thomas, John and Richard and when William died in March 1585 the sons inherited just over 50 acres of land apiece. William's will was written in English, instead of the usual Latin of those days. The date was 25 March 1585 and reads literally as follows:

'In the name of God, Amen, I William GREENEWOODE, husbandman, of Cuddington in the county of Buckingham being sicke in body but in good and perfect remembrance (God be therefore thancked) doe make this my last will and testament in manner and forme following

First I commend my soule into the hands of allmightye God my creator, hoping to be saved only by Christ my redeemer, and my body to be buried in the churchyarde of Cuddington aforesayde. Item, I geve and bequeath to my sonne Rycharde GREENEWOODE the one ende of my house wherein hee now dwelleth during his naturall life and if Alyce his wife by then lyving the passadge to my well to fetch water at all times for his necessary use with part of the forehouse as hee hath had it heretofore, with the going for 3 or 4 hennes or a pigge or such licke and hee to keep the house in reperation, hee to enjoye the same in maner aforsyde, the sayde house to remayne to my sonne John after his death. Item, I geve William GREENEWOODE my godson, the sonne of Rycharde 10 sh. of money to be delivered to him by my sonne John when hee shall come to the age of 16 years. Item, I geve and bequeath to my sonne John all my hould in Cuddington wherein I now dwell, with the roode of meade and all other thinges thereto belonginge, after the death of my wife and shee to have it during her life. Item, I geve and bequeath to Elizabeth my wife all my goodes chattels and all whatsoever unbequeathed. Item, I make my sonne John my solle and wholle executor, to see

my debtes payed and my body buried and all fulfilled accordingly, in witsse hereofe this my last will and testament datedd 25 March 1585 Elizabeth 28 in the presence of John GIBBENE, vicar, John HOLLYMAN the elder, Rycharde HOLYMAN, John STRATON, Robert BARNARD and John HARRIS.'

Then translated from Latin there is the following:

'This testament was proved before s William SMITH, Doctor of Law, Commissary and Official of the Archdeaconry of Bucks the 26 April 1586 and commission for the administration of the goods of the said deceased was granted to the executor named in the testament, being first sworn.'

The eldest son Thomas is not mentioned perhaps because he had left the village and married a rich widow. In any event Thomas had been baptised at Cuddington in 1553 and in 1574 he married at Haddenham Margaret BARNARD widow of Richard BARNARD of Haddenham and daughter of John HOLYMAN of Cuddington. This marriage brought Thomas possession of a house at Church End, Haddenham and 35 1/2 acres of land. When his young brother died later he acquired another house at Church End plus a further 23 1/2 acres. So much is clear from a Haddenham Rent Roll of 1606.

Thomas GREENWOOD, as he is later described, was the founder of our Haddenham branch who lived in the parish for over 200 years until 1791 when they moved south. But that is another story.

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