

D4/20 PROJECT.

HRO D4/20 is a Feoffment of 6th June, 4 James I (1606), both parties to it being resident in this parish.

The land which is the subject of this feoffment is quoted as being in *Ersland*, but my interest was first aroused by the fact that the initial summary in the HRO catalogueing mentions...*(boundaries specified) of which some part is for use as an access way.*

Such emphasis on there being detail of boundaries to be found in the document, in conjunction with an access way and the proximity of the river Arrow (which is also mentioned in the catalogue summary), arising as it did whilst I was deep in the writing of my “Mills” Paper, set me wondering what a study of the document itself might reveal.

Being unable to read the script myself, I was fortunate that Sue Hubbard, retired County Archivist, was prepared to do a transcript for me – which she very soon did.

The ‘Description of the land’ within the document does indeed contain a wealth of detail. To establish exactly what is being referred to is the objective of this project.

The first sentence of the description includes reference to William Whittington having rights/interests in a dwelling house and other specified assets, being the property which he was selling to Francis Parlar.

Is enough known about Whittington and his family to identify the property from earlier, or indeed from later references to it in the possession of the Whittington family? The answer (was)...”Perhaps, Yes”.¹

I have references to the Whittington family in Herefordshire starting in 1424, but not in Eardisland until c.1450. This is followed by two Inquisitions Post Mortem (1527 and 1550) and a Will (1565) which may, or more likely may not, reveal the location of any lands the Whittington family may have held in Eardisland at those dates. The first two of these are, at HRO level, brief and unclear transcripts of records that nowadays are probably at PRO/TNA; the third I have seen at HRO.² Whilst in English I was unable to read the script. Bearing in mind that it is the Will of “Alexander Whittington of Notgrove, Gloucestershire” it is unlikely that, even if it does evidence that he held land in Herefordshire, it would include enough detail to identify the land in “D4/20”. This last comment also applies to the two IPMs and I will therefore discount them for the purpose of this Paper.

In 1576, [23rd November, 19 ELIZABETH = 23 Nov. 1576], William Whittington purchased from Thomas Hanford of Wollashull, Worcestershire and Kenard Delaber of Sowtham, Gloucestershire:

All that capital house of the manor of Eardisland at Earsland with appurtenants, the site of the manor and all demesne lands.....

Certain important aspects were reserved to the grantor, but nothing that affects the purpose of this Paper³, nor is there, on that occasion, any further descriptive detail of the land.

¹ After collating and considering a lot of accumulated material about the Whittingtons, the answer later turned out to be “No”! However, to record here some of what I looked at is nevertheless relevant.

² HRO F78/IV/283.

³ This point is dealt with in my Paper “The Dissolution of the Manor of Eardisland”.

William Whittington died in 1607 or 1608. In his Will [Probate granted in 1608] he gave *...the land in Eardsland that I bought of Henry Nichols unto my wife during her life and after her decease to my brother Rowland during his life and after his life I give and bequeath the same to John Whittington of Home and his heirs for ever...* But other than clarifying how Henry Nichols came into the picture this leaves us no closer to establishing exactly where the land described in HRO D4/20 was positioned.

Can an examination of everything else I have about the Nichols family help?.....No.
And so back to a further analysis of the transcript of this document.

In 1614,[12th May 12 JAMES I] John Whittington of Notgrove, Co. Glos. sold to Francis Corne of Broughton, co. Salop, gent and Thomas Bennetthe younger , of London *The Capital Messuage and tenement called the Court of Eardisland.....* This time there is a long and detailed account of the land included with several field names and names of those holding the land described etc. There is a little positional information but nothing to help towards the identity of the land specified in HRO D4/20. The Niccoles family is very briefly mentioned but,again, with no detail: *The premises being or reputed to be parcels of the demesnes of Eardisland and one Nicholls lands and one Bedfords lands.*⁴

In HRO D4/20 the next person mentioned is *Francis Parlar of Ersland, yeoman.* who was the beneficiary under the terms of the feoffment. Thirteen years later, on Nov.4 1619, Francis Parlor granted land with a similar description [James Bullock again being mentioned] to John Baker and John Bird, yeomen.⁵ Parlor held other land/buildings in the parish but *butting and leading on the highway to Pembridge*⁶ – impliedly nowhere near the river.

Taking it for the moment that the land granted to Baker and Bird was the same as, or at least part of, that which passed from Whittington to Parlor in 1606, can it be traced further from records of the Baker or Bird families? In both cases the answer is no.

Other family names arise in the land transactions of the families I have already mentioned herein, but within the details I already hold for them [Bedford, Holdar and Taylor, and land known as ‘Streamford’] there is nothing specific enough to assist with the aim of this particular Paper.

I am left with two of my chronological schedules, those relating to the Parlar and to the Bullock families – and the satisfaction that I have left no stone unturned in attempting to knit in detail from other, previously thought possibly relevant, families.

Within my schedules for the Bullock and Parlar families it is only the Grant of Nov. 4th 1619(Parlar to Baker and Bird), which I have already briefly mentioned, which is in any way relevant. Comparison of the description of the land granted thereby with the Feoffment of 6th June 1606 (Whittington to Parlor)⁷ is now the way forward.

⁴ HRO B16/2.

⁵ HRO ‘Deeds IA/95’.

⁶ HRO A38/1.

⁷ HRO D4/20, being the document which is the subject of this Paper.

The 1619 Grant is “...of a messuage and a close in the lordship of Earsland, co. Hereford, and in the tenure of the said grantor [Parlor] , having the lands late of James Bullocke on the east and west, the rivulet of Arrow on the south, and the Kings way on the north...”

The comparable parts of the 1606 feoffment are:

“...mansion or dwelling house.....yard or backside doth stretch itself from the king’s highway that leadeth to Leominster on the north part to the river of Arrow on the south part, and stretcheth itself on the west part from the orchard of James Bullock deceased to a close of the said James on the west part.”

Logically the second *west part* should read *east part* – but I quote what the transcript details. If logic were to prevail, then it does seem that the land of the 1619 Grant is at least part of the 1606 feoffment. But other than that the 1619 Grant is of no further assistance because I do not know the exact whereabouts or extent of James Bullock’s land. As a result this exploration now depends solely upon the remainder of the 1606 feoffment and the Memorandum of Agreement endorsed thereon.

First ‘the broad picture’. The land in question was described as being between the road from Eardisland to Leominster and the river and therefore was, impliedly, east of the bridge.



It can be seen that there are two areas which fit the description, separated by a short length of river where it comes very close to the road. The illustration above dates to 1844⁸. The current Ordnance Survey map shows a similar, but still identifiably different, situation. Exactly what line river and road took in 1606 I am unable to demonstrate. The wording of the 1606 document, up to this point, does nothing to help decide which of these two possible/likely areas of land is referred to.

⁸ Tithe Map.

The document next moves to identify land which is not to be included:

Except and reserved out of the said yard or backside all that land which lyeth between the river of Arrow and the north part of a new ditch lately made by the said William Whittington. And also except and reserved out of the said yard and backside all that ridge of land which stretcheth itself along by the said yard or orchard of the said James Bullock on the west part of the said yard or backside along the river of Arrow and so along from the south end of the said ridge or land five yards from the bank of the said river of Arrow round about to the said new ditch. Which said land excepted must be sufficient for a wain with oxen and people to carry and carriage from the King's highway aforesaid to the weir and banks of the said river of Arrow;...

Does this additional detail of what was not included in the feoffment help identify the exact position of the land?

The exact position-No.

The likely approximate position-Yes.

It is clear from the context that land on or close to the north bank of the river and east of the bridge is being referred to. Two possible areas are illustrated on the previous page of this.

The text mentions *a new ditch* and a *ridge of land* in relation to it. The ridge of land: *stretches itself.....along the river of Arrow*

but the next several words do nothing but add confusion to a close analysis such as this:

and so along.....to.....said new ditch.

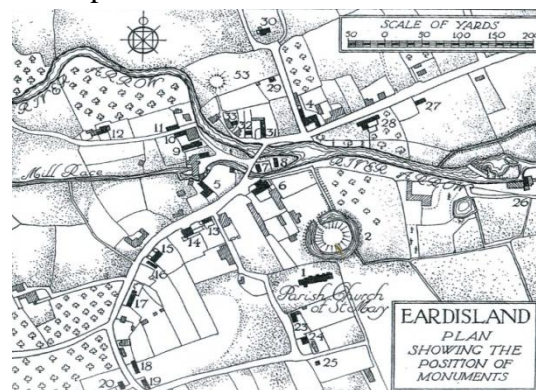
Furthermore, on the reverse side of document D4/20 is a *Memorandum* which includes the wording:

.....forty apple trees....., which trees are to be planted, preserved and kept in the parcel of land which lyeth between the new ditch and the river of Arrow,...

Another historian of Eardisland has estimated that about 1/4 acre would be needed to accomodate the forty apple trees.

The wording of this Memorandum places the *new ditch* approximately parallel with the river for far enough for this planting of trees to be possible.

Whilst neither the 1832 OS Map nor the Tithe Map in 1844 show enough detail for a feature such as this to be included, the 1886 OS 6 inch map may be what the RCHM had in mind when they formulated this plan:



Is this the D4/20 ditch or perhaps a later feature based on it?

This confusion is to some extent dispelled by:

Which said land excepted must be sufficient for a wain with oxen and people to carry and carriage from the king's highway aforesaid to the weir and banks of the said river of Arrow

in that it is probable that the position of the weir has not changed much, if at all, between then and now. However it also raises the question why it should be required to secure an access for a *wain with oxen and people.....to the weir and banks of the said river of Arrow* .

I think it extremely unlikely that the answer is so that they could somehow use the top of the weir to cross the river [surely not with a *wain with oxen*].

A much more likely meaning is that it refers to the area near to the weir and something to which access was needed downstream of the weir but still on the same [north] bank of the river. This I believe to have been a watermill, as is indeed referred to in the final words of the document:

and all trees growing in or upon the banks of the said river of Arrow excepted and all other things which shall be convenient and needful to be had for the use of his mill and water course of the said mill for ever the ridge, ditch and water course excepted to the said William Whittington his heirs and assigns for ever.

This Paper set out to examine the document in sufficient detail to establish whether or not it has any relevance to my Paper about Watermills on the river Arrow in this parish.

It is now clear that it does.

The document which is the subject of this Paper refers to land between the road to Leominster from Eardisland and the river Arrow. Wherever the bridge was at that time the land described is likely to have been to the east of it, towards Leominster, and thus downstream of the bridge, north of the river. The last few lines of the transcript identify the presence of a mill and associated watercourse somewhere on this wedge of land, but not how far downstream of the bridge it was. The weir [assuming in the same place, or nearly, as at present] gives some suggestion of how far downstream of the bridge the mill referred to in the document must have been- and all this places it gratifyingly close to where I have earlier positioned one of the mills discussed in my Paper on that subject.⁹

In that Paper I illustrate its possible position, based on various documentary references of which I had note before I came across the one which is the subject of this Paper, "D4/20". Whether or not I have placed it correctly in my other Paper is only likely to be able to be firmly established by a full archaeological investigation of the area; and even then the chance of identifying the site with certainty would be very slim.

..... *Finis*

⁹ Mill number 1. *Schorlemull*.

