

## **An Introduction to the History and Archaeology of Hapton in the Middle Ages**

This introductory survey outlines the history of Hapton in the medieval period (which is sometimes called the Middle Ages) and ran from the time of the Norman Conquest in 1066 to about 1500 A.D. It is an abridged version of the information contained in the study by Bluestone Archaeology entitled '*Hapton Heritage – a landscape history and village survey*' which was carried out during 2013 and 2014.

We know very little about Hapton before the Norman Conquest and our knowledge of that time has to be based on things like place-names and any archaeological evidence that we are able to find. The place-name Hapton is derived from the Anglo-Saxon *heap* and *tun-* 'the settlement by the hill' which clearly refers to its location at the foot of Hameldon and probably indicates that it was named by the Anglo-Saxon settlers who moved into the area after the Romans left about 400 A.D. A number of early place-names in the immediate locality ending in 'ham' such as Habergham, Padiham and Altham may indicate the first areas of settlement by Anglo-Saxon coming down the Calder Valley. '-ton' endings are likely to be later perhaps suggesting a 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of settlement or clearance of woodland. An intriguing aspect of Hapton's history is the search for the lost hamlet of Birtwisle. This name is also of Anglo-Saxon origin and means '*the tongue of land between two streams belonging to Bridd.*'

By the time of the Norman Conquest Hapton was a township of the ancient Parish of Whalley within the Blackburn Hundred (often referred to as Blackburnshire) which was one of the half dozen or so large administrative areas into which Lancashire was divided by that time. Hapton was not mentioned in Domesday Book, which was compiled for William the Conqueror in 1086 although neighbouring Huncoat was. The first known owners of Hapton were the de Lacy family who were the Norman Lords of Clitheroe and who built the castle there. The de Lacy's also owned large tracts of land in Yorkshire which they ruled from another great castle at Pontefract.

The first documentary reference to Hapton is from sometime before 1193 when Robert de Lacy, who died in that year, confirmed the grant of the manor of Hapton to a family called the de Arches and also granted the manor of Birtwisle to the de Longvilers family (A manor was an estate which also included judicial rights over its inhabitants). Both of these new Lords already had estates in Yorkshire which they also held from the de Lacys and were probably absentee landlords leaving these Lancashire manors to be administered by local families who adopted the surnames 'de Hapton' and 'de Birtwisle'. It is interesting to note that the grant of Hapton by the de Lacy's included the right to keep the venison caught there which seems to suggest that at that time deer was being hunted freely across the land rather than being confined to parks or forests. However the grant of Birtwisle excluded 'the forest and wild beasts therein'. Both of these provisos give some indication *that* the area was still wild enough to be regarded as significant hunting grounds.

In the Middle Ages one common way of acquiring land (and therefore wealth) was by marrying an heiress whose estates then became her husband's and sometime

between 1242 and 1284 Maud de Arches married Thomas de Alta Ripa alias Dautrey who thus acquired Hapton from his wife's family. Like the de Arches the Dautreys were also vassals of the de Lacy's from whom they held the Lordship of Carlton in Craven. In about 1303 Thomas Dautrey tried to sell the manor of Hapton to Gilbert de la Legh who already held an important position locally as he was the chief *instaurator* (or stockmaster) in charge of the large number of cattle ranches (or *vaccaries*) that the de Lacy's had created in the Forest areas of east Lancashire where they used to hunt their deer. Unfortunately this transaction was agreed without the permission of Henry de Lacy Earl of Lincoln who, like other great Lords, would vet such acquisitions to make sure that those serving under them, like Gilbert de Legh, could not become too powerful by acquiring more land. As a result Henry de Lacy confiscated Hapton and gave it too another of his followers, Edmund Talbot of Bashall in the Ribble Valley. Gilbert de la Legh also lost his position as *instaurator*.

Edmund Talbot, the new lord of Hapton, was already the Steward of the Honor of Clitheroe (Whitaker 1876. 59) and in 1304 he was further rewarded when King Edward I granted him a charter of free warren (ie the right to hunt small animals but not deer) in his demesne lands of Bashall, Mitton and Hapton. This was in return for Edmund's service to the King in the wars against the Scots and demonstrates that Edmund was high in the favour of both the King and the latter's great friend, Henry de Lacy. However this did Edmund little good as in 1313, a few years after the deaths of the King and the Earl, he was murdered *at Hapton*, allegedly by Adam de Clitheroe who was in turn high in the favour of the new king Edward II.

By 1322 another Gilbert de la Legh , grandson of the above, had regained his grandfather's position as the Instaurator of Blackburnshire (Cunliffe Shaw 1956, 366) and during the disturbed time following the execution of Thomas Earl of Lancaster he was kidnapped by one Wm Dautrey and held at Holbeck near Leeds until ransomed for £20 (Holt 1983, 102; Cunliffe Shaw 1956, 246). However in 1324 he was fined at the Colne Halmote for allowing the escape of animals from the forest of Trawden and at the Clitheroe Halmote for allowing the escape of 67 pigs (Whitaker 1876. 59) which seems to suggest either dereliction of duty or evidence of the lawless times in which he lived. In any event in 1328 Gilbert finally succeeded in acquiring the manor of Hapton ironically by purchase from Edmund Talbot's son John (who by now was Constable of Lincoln Castle) for 320 marks. The deed for this transfer is available for study in the Towneley collection at the Lancashire Record Office under reference DDTO 0/2/43. It is reproduced in the full report along with a recent translation from the original Latin by Ms Diana Spelman.

In 1388 Hapton passed to Gilbert de la Legh's great grandson John who had married Cecily, the daughter of Richard de Towneley. John adopted Towneley as his surname and succeeded to the whole inheritance of Hapton and Towneley. From thereon Hapton and Towneley passed down through John and Cicily's descendants until the Hapton Estate was sold off in the 1920s.

It seems clear that there must have been an administrative centre and possibly a residence for the Lords of Hapton in the township (both the murder of Edmund Talbot and the grant of the charter transferring the manor from John de Talbot to Gilbert de la Legh took place at Hapton and it is unlikely that the latter at least took place in open countryside!). No such place has been identified in the documents that have come down to us although some remains at a site overlooking Castle Clough have long been accepted as being Hapton Castle and have been designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) by English Heritage. Some further credence for the authenticity of this site has been uncovered by this study in the form of a map of Hapton from a survey by Hamilton in 1661 which names the field adjacent to the remains as 'Castle Field'. However this could just as easily refer to the site of Hapton Hall which is situated at the other end of the field .

Nowadays the remains amount to a small stretch of stone walling some 4m long and 1m wide and about 400mm high. Even a local resident who would have seen it in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century only remembered it as being some 3ft (914mm) high . It is unfortunate that the Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) Description refers to the building still being inhabited in 1667 but in ruins by 1725 as these details actually apply to the equally interesting site of Hapton Tower which is discussed in another essay on *Hapton Tower and Deer Park*.

The SAM entry describes the remains as being located on a small plateau immediately to the east of the rocky ravine of Castle Clough and comprising a roughly oval level platform measuring approximately 40m north-south by 30m east-west and bounded on the south and east sides by a substantial dry ditch up to 14m wide and 4m deep which has been infilled on the north and part of the east sides. On the west side, immediately above the ravine, the monument's defences consist of an earthen bank up to 2m wide by 1m high and an internal ditch c.1m wide. A detailed topographical survey carried out by Andre Burn of Ecus Ltd with the help of the Hapton Heritage Group generally accords with this description but adds significantly more detail and demonstrates the complex nature of the earthworks. The full report of this survey -*HAPTON CASTLE, LANCASHIRE - LEVEL 2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY*- can also be found on the Hapton Heritage Group website at [www.haptonheritage.co.uk](http://www.haptonheritage.co.uk).

Most medieval settlements of any substance had a corn mill which was clearly of primary importance to the inhabitants who would have grown their own grain, sometimes on a communal basis or as required by the Lord of the Manor, and would need a mill for producing flour to use in baking their own bread. We know from the documentary evidence that Hapton in fact had two mills but their whereabouts remains unknown. However in the northwest of England most mills were driven by water wheels and would have needed access to a good water supply. Mill Lane which leads down to Castle Clough therefore looks an ideal site for such an operation.

There is another interesting documentary reference to Peter the Miller whose son Adam sold a parcel of land to the Towneleys in 1314. In the deed Peter the Miller is referred to as 'Petride Molinar' which is from the Latin for 'miller'. At the east end of Hapton is a bridge over the canal which is now called Molly Wood Bridge

on the modern 1:25000 OS Explorer map OL21 and which may be an unexpected reference to this medieval miller.

Another major landholding in Hapton was Birtwisle which was regarded as a separate manor in the medieval period and sometime before 1193 was granted by Robert de Lacy to the de Longvilers family who also already had estates in Yorkshire. However by 1311 the manor had been acquired by John de Lacy of Cromwellbottom, near Halifax, who was presumably a cadet branch of the main De Lacy line. In 1356 John de Lacy's descendent Henry sold his Birtwisle holding to yet another Gilbert de la Legh who was the grandson of the one who finally acquired Hapton and the uncle of John, who changed his name to Towneley. And in 1361 Henry's widow, Joan de Lacy, gave her dower lands in Birtwisle to Gilbert at 25s. rent thus uniting at least part of Birtwisle.

Another part of Birtwisle was held by the family of that name and this connection continued until Joan, the daughter of Adam de Birtwisle, and her husband Nicholas de Kighley (Keighley?) who sometime after 1354 gave lands in Birtwisle to the same Gilbert de la Legh mentioned above and in 1394 they sold another part of their estate to John de Towneley the latter's nephew thus reuniting Birtwisle with Hapton.

The location of Birtwisle has been something of a mystery until now but this study has uncovered a number of clues. It is probable that Birtwisle was located in the southeast quadrant of Hapton as it is associated in the documentary sources with Nutshaw and this is certainly where Nutshaw Hill lies. Furthermore on Hamilton's map of 1661 he shows 'Birtwisle Edge' as apparently on the escarpment edge now known as Hapton Scout which would suggest the Birtwisle itself lay below this. To the north of the site of Hapton Tower (National Grid Reference SD 8081 2983 -see separate paper) is a cluster of earthworks and ridge and furrow field systems which are associated with farming in the medieval period and similar features have been noted south of the Tower. It seems possible that these may be associated with the manor of Birtwisle situated as it is on a tongue of land (as its name implies) between Hapton and Habergham Cloughs.

More information about this intriguing part of Hapton can be found in the companion Essay on Hapton Tower and Deer Park and in the main study '*Hapton Heritage – a landscape history and village survey*'. Bibliographic references can also be found in the main study.

Further information about the Birtwisle family is contained in a separate paper by Brenda Hayman which is also available on the website.