Chapter 1

A Brief History of

Aston and its Manor

 It is not the intention of the author, however interesting as it might be to provide a concise and detailed narration of Aston Manor’s history but rather, to give to the reader a sense of continuity. This chapter is therefore more of an introduction to the area, providing for a very brief and general overview of its passage through time. There is certainly much more to its history than is stated here, indeed it is quite reasonable to believe that a totally new study might well be justified. Therefore, should the reader wish to delve deeper into the Manor’s past then the references provided here might act as a worthwhile guide.

 Aston or Enstone as it was known during the Saxon period was originally settled by the Anglian people and was held at the time of the Norman invasion by Edwine, grandson of Leofric of Coventry,[[1]](#footnote-1) nephew of the famous Hereward The Wake[[2]](#footnote-2) and his wife, the immortal Lady Godiva. Luckily for him, because he had been reluctant to support King Harold, the victorious Norman regime allowed him to retain his lands, but only upon him, publicly, submitting to William’s authority. Yet, despite affirming his loyalty he chose, in 1068 to rise in rebellion. The result of this action was inevitably defeat and, as a punishment his right of tenure was withdrawn, his lands including Enstone passing into the control of a Ansculf of Picquigny who was born in about 1014 in Picquigny, near Amiens, Normandy, France.[[3]](#footnote-3) This individual probably fought at The Battle of Hastings and was, quite likely, a mercenary soldier. For he, like many of those who aided William against the Anglo-Saxons of England were, though of noble lineage not of Norman birth, perhaps agreeing to assist in the invasion of this country in the hope of gaining riches. As a result of his service he was granted the royal title of Lord of the Manor of Englefield, Englefield meaning "Anglo" or "English-Field", being named after the field of battle where the Anglo-Saxons were victorious over the invading Vikings in 870.[[4]](#footnote-4)

 Amongst other lands that he received were more than eighty manors throughout the following counties of England: Worcestershire, Warwickshire, Staffordshire, Northampton, Rutland, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire, Oxfordshire, Middlesex and Surrey, these together forming what was titled the Barony of Dudley. That these ‘gifts’ were so scattered was, in essence part of a fundamental political policy of William, in, that though he was generous by scattering the gifts over a wide area, he ensured that no one individual could, in theory construct a power base from which to challenge his right of kingship. Ansculf himself, always mindful of danger to his position also took precautions to protect both himself and his land. In order to enforce his authority he constructed or at least began a fortification of earth and timber called a ‘Motte and Bailey Castle’ at what was his centre of power, Dudley. It is on the site of this fortification that the present Dudley Castle now stands. This construction was first mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086 but, by this time the castle and the lands of the Barony was in control of his son William fitz Ansculf as it would seem that he passed on sometime after 1068.[[5]](#footnote-5)

 William fitz Ansculf, apart from holding Enstone also held lands we can today can recognise as being part of the modern day Birmingham area: Barr, Perry and Handsworth in Offlow Hundred of Staffordshire; Witton, Erdington, Edgbaston in Warwickshire and Northfield and Selly in Worcestershire.[[6]](#footnote-6) Indeed so powerful was this individual that his name and the fame associated with it have been passed down in local lore, which allowed ballads to be written about him, including the following which contains clear reference to the area of Enstone:

From Dudley towers, upstanding stark,

On Dudley hill, that thou may'st mark.

The corn-strewn vale, where, far away,

De Berming-ham doth ov/n thy sway.

From place to place, through golden corn,

Thou ridest to thy vassals, sworn.

To serve thee, each bold knight in wait,

To greet thee at his portal gate.

And Saxon Godmund holds of thee,

His Estone lands in knightly fee.

From Hardintone to Doddestone,

To Echels' towers thou ridest on.

From Bordesley unto Saluthley,

Each goodly mansion greeteth thee.

From Bromwic unto Arden's Hall,

Thou hold'st the subject lords in thrall.

And Staunchel the stern Saxon yet,

Holds Witone at thy loving let.

And Ceboldstone the Norman Drew-,

Doth hold in trust and feudal due.

And Hanneworth, Pirie, and Barr,

Herald thine outer lands afar. [[7]](#footnote-7)

 The area of Enstone, according to the Doomsday book comprised of an estate of eight hides of land, and three miles of wood, with 44 unnamed residents (one being a priest), and 1,200 acres in cultivated land, a church, a mill and was described as follows:

“This place, like that of Erdington, belonged to the Earls of Mercia in the Saxon times; and, at the conquest, was the property of the unfortunate Edwine. Fitz-Ausculf became his successor in this, and in other lands: the survey calls it eight hides, valued at 5\_l\_. per annum; a mill, 3s. and a wood, three miles long, and half a mile broad. The mill, I make no doubt, stood where a mill now stands, near Sawford-bridge,”[[8]](#footnote-8)

whilst the actual Manor house of Enstone was believed to have been located some one hundred yards north of the church:

“One hundred yards north of the church, stood the Hall; probably erected by Godmund [the Saxon Lord of the Manor at Domesday]. Or his family; the situation shews the extreme of bad taste – one would think, he endeavoured to lay his house under the water. The trenches are obliterated by the floods, so as to render the place unobserved by the stranger; it is difficult to chose a worse, except he had put his house under the earth. I believe there was never more than one house erected on the sport, and that was one too much.”[[9]](#footnote-9)

Also mentioned are many of the areas of the Birmingham district that we recognise today: Duddeston, Bordesley, Saltley, Castle Bromwich, Little Bromwich and Water Orton. Additionally included were the sub-manors of Nechells, Heybarnes, Park Hall and Ward End.[[10]](#footnote-10) However, after the passing of Ansculf it was owned by various individuals until, in 1203, in the reign of King John it became the property of a Thomas de Erdington. It would be reasonable to believe that the granting of the Manor was, in no small way due to the fact that he was one of the Barons who supported and remained loyal to the monarchy during the time of the Magna Carta crisis[[11]](#footnote-11) and was:

‘to be held by him for the services of a pair of gilt spurs or the price of them paid at Easter for all services and demands whatsoever.’[[12]](#footnote-12)

 Around the year 1218 however the area of Enstone/Aston, along with other properties were granted, via Royal Proclamation by the then monarch Henry III to Thomas’s widow Rohese de Cochfelde. The reason why this should have happened is not known. However the following verse clearly indicates that despite Thomas having attained an influential position at Court, being Chamberlain to King John as well as attaining an Ambassadorship to The Emir Murmelius of Morocco he had perhaps either fallen out of favour, or, more likely simply grew tired of the rigours and intrigues of Court life. Whatever the reason he chose to leave its splendour and pomp and take up a monastic life, choosing a life of seclusion and contemplation, becoming a Monk at Worcester and passing away, it is believed on 20th March, 1218:

O sometime friend of Royal John,

Lordly Knight of Erdington.

Brother Thomas, thou dost dwell,

Humbly in thy white-walled cell.

Thy state, Christ's Cross upon the wall,

Thy wooden couch and table all.

Thy greatest joy to stand and wait,

On strangers at God's gate.

No word of the great world without,

Doth tempt thee. No, nor doubt.

Only life's little things and small,

Have any joys at all.[[13]](#footnote-13)

Upon the death of Rohese de Cochfielde the property was then transferred, firstly to a Phillip de Assells and then again to the Erdington family through the personages of Giles de Erdington[[14]](#footnote-14) and then onto a Henry de Erdington. Upon the latter’s passing it came under the control of a Thomas de Maidenach, who, among other rights claimed the: ‘assize of beer, gallows, infighter and outfangthef, with a Court Leet,’ the assize of gallows presumably being the right to hang persons in the Manor.[[15]](#footnote-15) It was at this time that the boundaries of the Manor began to become more clearly defined and which can be identified as relating more or less to that of the period under consideration here. At his death however the property passed firstly to the Grimsarwe family and then in 1367 to one which is particularly associated with the area, the Holtes.[[16]](#footnote-16)

 The first mention of this important family comes towards the end of the 13th century when an indication is made of a Henry Holte, who, it would seem had at least one son Hugh, this gentleman passing away in 1322. However, in 1331 a Simon del Holte of Birmingham, most probably the son of Hugh Holte purchased the manor of Nechells and, in turn, in 1365 his son John atte Holte added further to the wealth of the family by purchasing for a sum of ‘forty marks’ the adjoining manor of Duddeston, In regards to Aston however it was in 1367 that, by ‘gift’ the Manor and its lands were transferred into the name of Holte via the marriage of a Maud de Grimsarwe to a John Atte Holte, Wool Dealer of Birmingham.

 However, upon his demise without issue the estate including the lands of Aston Manor were bequeathed to his uncle Walter Holte who, in 1377 with his wife Margery, daughter of Sir William Bagot took possession. Upon his death the widow, wishing to ensure that the Holte family retained ownership endowed the land to the custody of, amongst others John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster and her father who promised surety. However, on grounds unknown a petition was presented to the House of Lords which disputed the Holte ownership, this being brought by a John Drayton on behalf of a Richard Lonches and his wife Elizabeth, However, for reasons unrecorded Margery retained tenure. In response the petitioners appealed, but when the case was heard by a Sheriff’s Court Sir William Bagot, no doubt supported by the Duke used force to prevent a judgement being delivered. The case was apparently never resolved and the ownership of the estate remained in dispute though the Holte name, via a John Holte, presumably son of Walter and Margery retained possession. Little is known of this particular member of the family except that he probably resided in Yardley, Birmingham and sired only one child, a son named Audomar. This boy, upon gaining the property sadly did not enjoy a lengthy relationship with the area, being disposed by no less than William, his uncle, the youngest son of Walter.

 That William could have achieved such an act can be put down to the fact that he may well have supported Henry IV’s (illegal) claim to the throne, and his gaining of the Manor property was his reward. Yet, a little while later Sir William Bagot initiated proceedings to gain the estate, on the basis of the agreement he had with his daughter. That he was able to make such a demand was, in reality astonishing as he had previously chosen to throw his weight of support behind the then reigning monarch, Richard II (1367-1399) in, what turned out to be an unsuccessful attempt to retain the throne, against Henry Bolingbroke, later to be Henry IV. Upon the latter gaining the crown Bagot found himself the subject of the new Monarch’s wrath, being placed in The Tower of London. Surprisingly however he found himself in 1403 in favour with Henry, so much so that he was elected Knight of the Shire of Warwickshire, this allowing him to resurrect a claim to the Manor. Yet, despite this advance he was never granted his lifelong wish, passing away in 1407. Upon his passing Audomar Holte himself resurrected a claim, providing for a paradoxical situation of two Holte’s, from the same family being in dispute for the same property. At last, the problem was resolved. Audomar, it would appear relinquished his right of ownership upon receiving some inducement, what this was however is unknown!! The argument that had blighted the family Holte was now over, William Holte now had sole control of the estate.

 During his lifetime he was a major figure within Worcestershire society and held the position of Sheriff of the County. However, he did not have any children and, because his ownership had been granted by the Crown for the duration of his life only the succession again became a problem. Fortunately, John Holte, his nephew resurrected a claim. The result was that the Crown granted him ‘for himself and his heirs to be held for the chief Lord of the fee, and not of the King ‘*in capeta’.* The result was that the line of inheritance had been continued.[[17]](#footnote-17)

 John Holte, like many of this predecessors attained high office, both within the counties of Leicestershire and Warwickshire, being in 1438 appointed ‘Escheator’.[[18]](#footnote-18) Additionally he also gained the position of ‘Esquire of the Body’, to the then monarch Henry VI. Upon the rebellion in 1460 of Richard Neville, Duke of Warwick (The King Maker) he was granted the position of Ranger of Sutton Chase, which came with the praise:

“of our special favour and in consideration of the daily and constant service which our humble servant John Holte esquire to our household gives”[[19]](#footnote-19)

Perhaps though, his greatest triumph was that he achieved, via petition, the removal of many of the legal costs that the estate had incurred during the times of disputed ownership. In so doing he also finally ended the burden that constant claims had imposed on the estate. From this time onwards the family would enjoy a secure and uninterrupted sequence of direct inheritance.

 He was followed by his son Thomas, who, like his forebears was untitled, but was undoubtedly during his life an individual of some stature, as can be evidenced by a brass memorial within Aston Parish Church which alludes to him being "Justice of North Wales, and Lord of this town of Aston." During his lifetime Thomas managed to accumulate a considerably large fortune, principally it must be supposed through being an agent for Thomas Cromwell, who under Henry VIII was entrusted with the dissolution of the monasteries. Allied to the fact that he was supposed to have been an extremely proficient lawyer this connection allowed him to benefit from the policy of dismantling the religious institutions of the day. Indeed, after his passing, on 23rd March, 1545 his property was valued at what must be considered a considerable sum of money for the time, being £270 6s. 2d.[[20]](#footnote-20) The inventory for the residence which was located at Duddeston Hall stated that it contained, amongst many various other items:

‘thirteen sleeping apartments, viz., "the chambur over the buttrie, the chappel chambur, the maydes' chambur, the great chambur, the inner chambur, to the great chambur, the yatehouse chambur, the inner chambur to the same, the geston chambur, the crosse chambur, the inner chambur to the same, the clark's chambur the yoemen's chambur, and the hyne's chambur." The other apartments were "the hawle, the plece, the storehouse, the galarye, the butterye, the ketchyn, the larderhowse, the dey-howse, the bakhowse, the bultinge howse, and the yeling howse," --the "chappell" being also part of the Hall. The principal bedrooms were hung with splendid hangings, those of the great chamber being "of gaye colors, blewe and redde," the other articles in accordance therewith, the contents of this one room being valued at xiij li. xiv. s. iiijd. (£13 14s. 4d.) The household linen comprised "22 damaske and two diapur table clothes" worth 4s; ten dozen table napkins (40s.); a dozen "fyne towells," 20s.; a dozen "course towells" 6s. 8d.; thirty pair "fyne shetes" £5; twenty-three pair "course shetes" £3; and twenty-six "pillow beres" 20/-. The kitchen contained "potts, chafornes, skymmers, skellets, cressets, gredires, frying pannys, chfying dishes, a brazon morter with a pestell, stone morters, strykinge knives, broches, racks, brandards, cobberds, pot-hangings, hocks, a rack of iron, bowles, and payles." The live stock classed among the "moveable goods, consisted of 19 oxen, 28 kyne, 17 young beste, 24 young calves, 12 gots, 4 geldings, 2 mares, 2 naggs and a colte, 229 shepe, 12 swyne, a crane, a turkey cok, and a henne with 3 chekyns"--the lot being valued at £86 0s. 8d.’

The fact that Thomas had also concluded a most favourable marriage, one that almost certainly contained within it an element of financial consideration must also have contributed greatly to his wealth. This, to a daughter of another eminent local family, the Winnington's allowed for a considerable amount of land to be added to his estate:

“the townes, villages, and fields of Aston, next Byrmyngham, and Wytton, Mellton Mowlberye (in Leicestershire), Hanseworthe (which lands did late belonge to the dissolved chambur of Aston), and also the Priory, or Free Chappell of Byrmyngham, with the lands and tenements belonging thereto, within Byrmyngham aforesaid, and the lordship or manor of the same, within the lordship of Dudeston, together with the lands and tenements, within the lordship of Nechells, Salteley, sometime belonging to the late dissolved Guild of Derytenne," as well as lands at Horborne, Haleshowen, Norfielde and Smithewicke.[[21]](#footnote-21)

His passing thus left a considerable estate to a son Edward (1541-1592). Again, perhaps as one might expect from such a family with localised influence he attained high office, being Justice of The Peace for Warwickshire and High Sheriff in 1583. Significantly for the future development of Aston Manor, the then monarch, Queen Elizabeth I on 1st July 1573 gave to Thomas: “for considerations expressed the Rectory of Aston for a term of twenty one years after the expiration of a term of sixty years granted to one Phillip Hobley.”[[22]](#footnote-22) It could be recognised that perhaps more than any other Holte this individual laid a financial foundation that gave to the family a base upon which they could use to lever themselves into the higher echelons of the nation. After his passing, his last resting place being in St. Peter and St. Paul, his son Thomas Holte (1571-1654) gained the estate. Thus, after passing through successive generations of the family[[23]](#footnote-23) it finally came under the control of this individual, the most notable of all the Holte personages.[[24]](#footnote-24) It was he who would gain immortality, being responsible for the erection of the magnificent Aston Hall and the establishing of its parkland.[[25]](#footnote-25) However, prior to establishing himself within Aston Manor, his family seat was located at Duddeston Manor, though their traditional family resting place is within St. Peter and St. Paul, Aston, the oldest reminder relating to William Holte.[[26]](#footnote-26)

 Having inherited the estate at a very early age, he had, by his twentieth birthday already become the Sheriff of Warwickshire and was a prominent member of the gentlemanly class that were so influential during this period of time. Throughout his life a fervent monarchist he was one of those who took the opportunity to welcome James I to England after he had made his passage, in 1603 from Scotland to ascend the throne, a task that led him to be rewarded with a knighthood from a grateful King, which was followed in 1611 by a Baronetcy. This latter honour, it would appear was, in fact, a reward for participating in what appears to have been a rather ingenious scheme to benefit the Royal coffers. For, in an effort to subdue what was, at the time a troublesome Ireland it had as its basis a reliance on the ‘weakness of human nature’:

“the ‘Royal Soloman’ offered a title of Baronetcy to every gentleman possessed of an annual income of £1,000, who, at the least was descended from a father and grandfather bearing arms, and was willing to maintain for the defence of Ireland and, ‘especially for the security of the province of Ulster’ for three years ‘thirty foot soldiers in the King’s army after the rate of 8d sterling per day’, which amounted in the whole to the sum of £1,095.”

 Mindful of the ridicule that might be inspired by the fact that, to all intents and purposes the title had been purchased the Royal Commission of 1611 which had instigated the scheme stated that these subsidies should be “solemnly separated from all other treasures of the Kingdom, and kept apart by themselves and wholly converted to this public and memorable work.”[[27]](#footnote-27) It would appear that Thomas, ambitious and ever aware of his social position eagerly took advantage of the opportunity and, along with another ninety three other gentlemen obtained baronetcys, being granted the title ‘1st Baronet Holte of Aston’ on the 25th November, 1611[[28]](#footnote-28). Indeed such was the mercenary notion of the scheme that the King actually issued a receipt for Sir Thomas’s first payment, which ended with the simple term - £365 paid!![[29]](#footnote-29) It would thus appear that at forty seven years of age and being both the leading member of an influential Warwickshire family and a member of the nation’s aristocracy he came to realize that a clear and concise expression of his elevated social position was required. After earlier purchasing, in 1599 the Rectory of Aston for nearly £2,000 he had it demolished and upon the land that it stood provided for this expression, the majestic Jacobean Aston Hall, Inigo Jones being accredited with the design.[[30]](#footnote-30) He commenced its construction in 1618, finally completing the task in 1635 though he actually took up residence some four years earlier with his family, which included a son Edward. The site was chosen, it is believed for its attractive view of both the Church of St. Peter and St. Paul and the village.

 Unfortunately, his allegiance to James successor, Charles I during the English Civil War led him to suffer considerable financial penalties that were imposed by the victorious Parliamentarians. In suffering he may possibly have drawn solace from the fact that not only had he actually entertained Charles at the Hall in the October of 1642, but also engaged in military action in support of him. For, on Boxing Day, 1643, the Hall with Sir Thomas within its walls was attacked and besieged by a large party of Parliamentarian sympathisers from Birmingham accompanied by some regular Parliamentarian soldiers. However, due to the fact that he managed to enlist the aid of a number of Royalist musketeers from Dudley Castle, he successfully repulsed the attacking force for some three days. This defence, though perhaps valiant was, in truth futile, for despite killing a number of the enemy he was forced to surrender. The cost of his defiance was high. The Hall was ransacked, he himself was imprisoned, and, with the heavy fines that were additionally imposed his loyalty to Charles could well have cost him, an estimated £20,000.[[31]](#footnote-31)



A view of Aston Hall and its grounds possibly taken sometime in the mid 20th century. [[32]](#footnote-32)

 He, of course, may well have drawn strength from the fact that he shared a common cause with many other important figures of the day, including for example Winston Churchill, father of John Churchill later to become the immortal Duke of Marlborough. However, despite the relative impoverishment that ensued he did retain the Hall and its grounds and upon his death his grandson, Robert Holte succeeded him, gaining the title of 2nd Baronet and, of course, the Manor of Aston.[[33]](#footnote-33)

 That his grandson could inherit was due to the fact that Sir Thomas and his one remaining son, Edward had sadly argued over the latter’s marriage. Due that he had chosen to marry, without his father’s permission, Elizabeth, daughter of John King, the incumbent Bishop of [London](file:///C%3A%5Cdna%5Ch2g2%5CA6681062) caused Sir Thomas to reject both his son and his bride. Despite the fact that he was the only remaining off-spring from two marriages, which produced no less than fifteen children, the last, George passing away in 1641 and obviously his heir he chose to disinherit him. So strongly, it would seem did Sir Thomas feel about what he obviously viewed as Edward’s flagrant disobedience that not only did he refuse to sanction the union by giving his blessing but also, for some considerable time even rejecting the pleadings for reconciliation from the then monarch Charles I that, for the good of the family agreement should reached.[[34]](#footnote-34) So strongly did Charles appear to feel about the matter that he was even driven to send a personal letter to Sir Thomas, in the hope of affording a reconciliation:

“Charles R

Trusty and well beloved, Wee greet you all. We have taken knowledge of a marriage between your son and a daughter of the late Bishop of London, and your dislike thereof, so far expressed as to threaten a disinheritance of your sonne: of whom wee have heard very well, as having many good parts that make him able to doe us service, and fitt rather to bee cherished of all good encouragements than expressed with a heavy hand. Where is no greater cause of offence against him, and the interest wee have in all our subjects, and especially in families of the best quality, giveth us to interpose in this where a severe proceeding against your sonne would endanger the overthrow of your house, whereof there are so many examples, and leave that tytle of honour which much descend upon him by our late father’s gratious grants, contemptable, when it would fall upon one, deprived by the act of the state and means to support it. For the match, We consider and may well hope that a blessing and many comforts will follow the daughter of soo reverend and good a man, whose other children are in soo hopeful wayes and soo well disposed, and an alliance with them cannot be a disparagement,-and what equalitie you may think of between your sonne and her, for estate or otherwise. Wee will be ready to supply our grace and assistance, in giving him advancement and impartinge our favour to him in such ways as his good parts are capable of. Wee doe therefore recommende it to you that you do not only forbeare any act against your sonne in respect of him match, but that you restore him into your former favour and good opinion, wherein Wee doubt not our mediation upon grounds of much reason and indifference will so far prevaile with you, that Wee shall cause to accept graciously your answer, which Wee expect you return unto Us with all conveniency. Given at our Courts at Hampton, the 7th day of August, in the third year of our reign,”[[35]](#footnote-35)

Despite this plea it would seem that Sir Thomas remained steadfast in his determination never to forgive his only remaining child or to accept the existence of either the wife or children of the union. In his Will he therefore made no mention of his son’s wife or children, thus ensuring that no reconciliation could be possible. In regards to Edward however, his omission from the document was sadly due to the fact that he had succumbed sometime earlier, on 28th August, 1643, aged 43 years of age to a fever contracted while engaged in the defence of Oxford, this, after surviving wounds at The Battle of Edge Hill. However, it would seem that as Sir Thomas Holte neared his end, perhaps after a realisation that the name of the family and its wealth and influence could be lost agreed to allow his grandson Robert, son of Edward and Elizabeth to inherit the title and lands.[[36]](#footnote-36) In an old Birmingham ballad this rejection was recorded as:

Once, and never again, doth man,

Love alas he must, though a father ban.

Stout Sir Thomas, the rede is read,

The son of thy youth is dead.

Twenty winters have flown,

Still thou nursest thy pride alone.

Though the King of his grace beseech and plot,

For the son of thy youth, thou hearkenest not.

Though thine heart in the dark of the night hath cried,

Thou hast eaten thy heart with thy pride.

Seven days agone in the Kingly train,

Thy son had come to his home again.

Alack ! that thou turned'st thy face away,

Nor spake to thy son that day. [[37]](#footnote-37)

 Unfortunately Edward’s son, Sir Robert Holte (1628-1679), inherited an estate on 14th December, 1654 impoverished by the impositions of the Civil War and, despite being Member of Parliament for Warwickshire from 1661 and a Deputy Lieutenant of the County he was plagued with financial difficulties throughout most of his life. However, his financial situation was somewhat alleviated via his marriage to a daughter of Lord Brereton, though the wealth that this union brought to him did not totally solve his financial problems. In an obvious response to these he was forced to mortgage much of his property. This and the fact that he was generally financially imprudent led him to be drawn further and further into debt and to eventually suffer a judicial judgement, brought by one of his many creditors, a individual named Edward Prideaux. As a result after he was found against he was incarcerated in the notorious Fleet Prison, London. However, after The House of Commons denied him Parliamentary privilege, refusing to set aside the punishment he did manage to gain his freedom. For, after a Parliamentary Commission had been appointed to look into the matter it decreed that he:

“[Sir Robert Holte] be delivered out of the custody of the Warden of The Fleet to attend the service of this House’ and that ‘this Sir Robert Holte be delivered from custody by sending the Sergeant at Arms attending this house with the Mace to bring him to the service of this House.”[[38]](#footnote-38)

The matter however does not appear to have ended, for the complainant, Prideaux once again, on 22nd March, 1676 sought judgement via the presenting of another petition against Robert for restitution but, according to the House of Commons Records nothing appears to have been decided. Given this, it is perhaps safe to assume that some sort of agreement was made which suited both parties, perhaps one that relieved Robert, in this case of any chance of being taken again to court.[[39]](#footnote-39) It can only be surmised that he, after all his troubles was content to live out his days quietly, passing away in London and being buried in St. Clements Danes Church.[[40]](#footnote-40)

 After his demise, on 3rd October, 1679, aged 54 years he was succeeded by his son, Sir Charles Holte (1649-1722) who, apart from siring no less than twelve children was also an eminent Lecturer of Music at Oxford. In addition to his musical abilities this gentleman also seemingly had a great interest in medicine. In 1701, for example he described what has been identified as the classic clinical and post-mortem findings of an infant related hernia condition to the Royal Society of London.[[41]](#footnote-41) As a result of this and other published medical works he was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Medicine. Evidently considerably more financially competent that his father he managed to return the estate to solvency and, like him also becoming, in 1682 the Member of Parliament for Warwickshire as well has holding the positions of Commissioner of The Peace and twice Deputy Lord Lieutenant for the County in 1683 and 1686. In pursuing financial solvency he took the dramatic step of actually petitioning the House of Commons to set aside certain debts which his late father had incurred, undoubtedly on the basis that they were not legally binding. Yet despite fundamentally failing to succeed in this ambition he still managed to keep the estate intact, substantially reducing the debt it was carrying.[[42]](#footnote-42) However, despite this success it might be believed that his latter years were not particularly successful. For, after the abdication of James II he held no further public office, presumably living out the remaining day of his life quietly, finally passing away and being laid to rest in St. Peter and St. Paul, Aston.[[43]](#footnote-43)

He was succeeded by Sir Clobery Holte (1681-1729) whose tenure of the estate was brief, only lasting some seven years. It appears that this gentleman’s personal life was marred by what must be considered a far from ideal marriage. It would seem that for a considerable portion of this union he seems to have lived apart from his wife, Barbara (nee Lister) of Northampton, she preferring Northampton to Warwickshire. That there was so little between them, despite the fact that they produced two offspring, one being a Lister Holte who inherited the manor upon his father’s demise can be evidenced by the fact that, in his Will he left her only £10!!

 Sir Lister Holte (1720-1770),[[44]](#footnote-44) like his grandfather pursued a political career, being elected Member of Parliament for Lichfield in 1741. One notable achievement accomplished during his tenure as the Member for the City was that he purchased and then gifted to the City its Market Tolls, ensuring as it did considerable financial advantage. However, this act of generosity did not seemingly endear him to the voting population for he was then unseated, losing the next election, thus ending his connection with public service. During his time as the Lord of The Manor he chose not to reside at Aston Hall, preferring rather the leafy glades of Erdington and Erdington Hall which he also owned.[[45]](#footnote-45) Unfortunately, though marrying twice he never had children so that on his passing he left no direct heirs[[46]](#footnote-46) allowing his youngest brother, Sir Charles Holte (1721-1782), to inherit.[[47]](#footnote-47) He too was laid to rest in St. Peter and St. Paul though his actual demise occurred in London.

 Like his brother, this member of the lineage also elected not to reside in the Hall, allowing, for most of the period through a clause in his Will The Dowager Lady Holte, his mother to reside in the Hall for the rest of her natural life. Unfortunately, at his death, in London on 12th March, 1782 he left only one child, a daughter Mary Elizabeth who had married a Abraham Bracebridge Esq. of Atherstone thus providing a situation which both allowed the Manor to pass out of the control of the Holte family and to end the Baronetcy that so adorned the name.[[48]](#footnote-48) The estate therefore passed, along with a dowry of some £20,000 to the Bracebridge name. Sadly, upon the demise of the Lady Dowager in 1817 the property was divided, passing into the ownership of three prominent Midlands families who were connected to the Holte lineage.[[49]](#footnote-49) Under this arrangement the Hall and its parkland passed into the control of a Mr. Heneage Legge.

 Yet, despite the attractiveness of the Hall and its grounds this gentleman, did not find any appeal in residing in the County of Warwickshire, preferring a home in Putney, London, selling, in 1817 some of the most prized pieces of furniture and farming stock and removing many fine pieces of art to Atherstone Hall, the sale raising, it is recorded, for the furniture some £2,150 whilst for the farming stock £1,201.[[50]](#footnote-50) It would also seem that in this year Parliamentary approval was obtained for the disposal of the what had been the Holte estate, being some 8,914 acres, which produced an annual rental of £16,557 0s 9d.[[51]](#footnote-51)

 The family argument that had seemingly raged over the ownership of the estate was however finally settled when, via legal judgement based upon the ‘settlements’ made by Sir Lister Holte the property was allowed to be disposed of. The result of this was that Mr. Legge allowed the Hall and parkland attached to it to become the property of a Mr. Abraham Bracebridge (husband of Mary, only child of Sir Charles Holte).[[52]](#footnote-52) This new Lord of the Manor was, unfortunately seemingly unable to meet the financial demands that the property must have imposed, poor business acumen eventually forcing him to sell the estate, much of it being parcelled up into small sections, the total acreage area being disposed of being some 1,530 acres. The area of Aston Manor, including Aston Hall, is recorded, in 1816 as stretching from Prospect Row to Erdington and from Nechells to Hay Mill Brook and worth some £600,000,[[53]](#footnote-53) £34,094,327 using the retail price index, as at 2007.[[54]](#footnote-54)

 The result of the failure of the last resident to meet the demands of the estate led it inevitably to be available for purchase. Eventually, on 15th April 1818 the actual Hall and part of the grounds were purchased by a Messrs Greenway, Greaves and Whitehead, Bankers of Warwick.[[55]](#footnote-55) A little while later, on 5th October, the Hall and some 200 acres of land stocked with the remaining 200 head of prize deer were advertised as being available ‘to be Let on Lease or to yearly tenants, together in four or five lots.’ The days when the succulent promise of venison so readily available was such an attraction to the ‘poachers’ of the area that rewards were offered for their capture were over. The industrial age had claimed another victim. Further to this development it would also appear that the new owners were prepared, in pursuit of a quick sale, and of course profit to even consider a sub-dividing of the Hall, making it effectively, in the modern idiom a ‘multi-occupancy’ property. Indeed the North Wing was actually advertised, to would-be owners as a desirable dwelling:

“consisting of two patios to the terrace, on the ground floor a very desirable drawing room and four bedrooms on the chamber floor, various other rooms and farm buildings and land from 30 to 50 acres, ‘if required’.”[[56]](#footnote-56)

However, happily the aim of sub-dividing the Hall never reached fruition. It would seem that this failure allied to what seems to have been a general lack of interest in the Hall and its greatly reduced parkland resulted in the property actually becoming leasehold. It was through this opportunity that a tenant, Mr. James Watt, (1769-1848) son of the famous engineer and director of the Soho Foundry came to take up residence, and, by right of tenure to claim the title ‘Lord of The Manor.’[[57]](#footnote-57) This offspring of the famous industrialist resided, it would seem happily in the Hall for the remainder of his life, often lavishly entertaining. One of the many individuals who graced the building was the noted novelist Washington Irving who it is believed used the location as his inspiration for his noted work ‘Bracebridge Hall’.[[58]](#footnote-58)

 Despite the fact that this gentleman never actually ‘owned’ the Manor did not prevent him from making additions to the Hall. Indeed he was responsible for renovating several of the fine rooms of the building, work which even today can be viewed. However, following his passing and the necessary disposal of some his possessions, he evidently had a such a fine library that Sotheby’s was engaged to auction it[[59]](#footnote-59) a Mr. James Shaw took up occupancy, but he remained in-situ for, it would appear only a very short time. Upon the termination of his lease it left the Hall unoccupied.[[60]](#footnote-60) Eventually on 6th August, 1850 the Mayor of Birmingham, William Lucy announced that he, as representative of the town had been offered the Hall and its parkland, only about fifty per cent remaining from the original extent, for £150,000 in order that it become a place of public recreation. The effect of this offer, its refusal, its eventual acceptance and the developments that it inspired, which are related in Chapter 4 were to ensure that from this time onwards no other private individual would again have the honour to carry the title of Lord of the Manor of Aston Hall.

 However, James Shaw was not the last individual who could have the privilege of being able to state that Aston Hall was his residence. For, as will be indicated later the passing of this gentleman triggered a desire to have the building and park that surrounded it made into a public social amenity. As a result of this ambition coming to fruition the Birmingham council decided to introduce what, in effect was the position of Director of Amenities for the town. This individual, upon his appointment would be burdened with the not inconsiderable responsibility of controlling and maintaining the town’s museums, swimming baths and parkland, including that of Aston Manor and the Hall, within which he was officially allowed to reside. No record can be found as to how many individuals might have filled this post but it can be established that a Mr. Alfred Rodway spent many years in the position, from approximately 1864 until his passing in 1885, after which time the remaining family left the area.



Aston Hall, the birthplace of Philip Rodway, 1876 [[61]](#footnote-61)



 Mr. Alfred Rodway with wife as at 1864 [[62]](#footnote-62)

Father of thirteen children he was responsible for amongst other things the planting of ivy to make every trunk of every felled tree within Birmingham’s parkland more attractive. What is interesting however, in relation to Aston Hall was that his last child Philip Rodway was delivered into this world, on Trafalgar Day, 21st October, 1876, by none other than Dr. Conan Doyle. It was this child who would later become one of the driving forces of the theatre in Birmingham.[[63]](#footnote-63)

 By this time industrialisation and urbanisation were beginning to have a profound impact upon the area. Of particular relevance was the London and North Western Railway Company. Formed as a result of a merger between The London & Birmingham and The Manchester & Birmingham Railway Companies in 1846 this amalgamation provided for the largest stock company in the United Kingdom.[[64]](#footnote-64) Such was its expanse that it served many of the nations largest cities, including not only Birmingham but London, Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, Glasgow and Edinburgh. Despite the fact that James Watt Jnr, amongst others was particularly antagonistic towards the development of the parkland, Parliament, in its wisdom granted the necessary permissions for the company to intrude onto the grounds. After initially purchasing a sizeable portion it quickly developed the railway infrastructure that can still be seen today. (for a view of Aston as at 1833 see Map 1).[[65]](#footnote-65)

 In so doing they effectively destroyed much which had, for many years adorned the area, including a great many of the fine trees that had been planted generations previously. This development also might perhaps be identified as being the trigger for much of the industrial expansion that quickly followed, Park Lane, Lozells Road, and Thimble Mill Lane being just three examples which allowed the area of Aston Manor to be described, at 1871 as being “an extensive, well built and scattered village edging Birmingham.”[[66]](#footnote-66) However, these new thoroughfares were not always maintained in the best of conditions:

‘Sir, Will you kindly allow me through your offices to draw the attention of the Highway Board of the Manor of Aston to the neglected state of the gravel walk upon the left side of High Street (coming into town). It is full of ruts made by the rain reaching from Whitehead Street corner to near the Royal Exchange Wine Vaults. With the exception of a few places partially bricked, it does seem strange to those living, like myself, for the last fourteen years in this, which is the main thoroughfare and withal one of the oldest in the Manor, that so little has been done to this particular part for many years which is unaccountable. Apologising for troubling you, I am, Sir, Yours RSN 53 High Street, Aston Manor.’[[67]](#footnote-67)

The such a complaint could be made was fundamentally due to the fact that the area had suffered, what in effect was a dramatic and sustained uncontrolled industrial development, a process which, as Jones states, by 1890 could enable Aston Manor to be described as:

“a shut-in town of endless brick and slate cliffs. Whether in-filled sporadically in the mid-1800’s by cottage rows and florid Georgian houses, or by uniform tunnel back terraces and overdressed villas during the next three decades, the end result was the same - unbroken facades for hundreds of yards, steadily blackening in the sooty atmosphere.”[[68]](#footnote-68)

That the Manor was indeed in such a poor and run-down condition can perhaps be verified further by letters that appeared, with apparent regularity in the local press. However, one of these, one that might be considered somewhat unusual appeared in the Aston Chronicle during August of 1885 when the author who chose to call himself ‘Sanitas’ proposed the pertinent question: “Is Aston a Dirty Town?” The correspondent, in this contribution certainly does makes a clear reference to the state of some of the footpaths, though here his remarks are, somewhat unusually primarily aimed at the householders as much as the local authority. In commenting on the fact that many of the householders of the Manor were seemingly failing to sustain a decent level of public decency, in that they were failing to sweep the footpaths outside their homes he demanded an answer from the governing authorities as to whether there were any steps that could be taken to remedy the situation:

“whether there any bye-laws to enforce upon householders the necessity of being cleanly in their habits” and that “Aston should

take upon herself the responsibilities of a well-ordered town.”[[69]](#footnote-69)

 Nevertheless, whilst such debates occupied the thoughts of many there was a recognition by the Governing Fathers of the Manor that a more sophisticated, political structure was needed to both accommodate and control the many changes that were occurring within the area.[[70]](#footnote-70) Perhaps one of the most profound developments, and one that is still recognisable today was the division, in 1878 of the area into Wards, these being: Reservoir; Brook; Park; Six Ways; Lozells and Villa. These were, at 1888 as follows:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Ward | Areas in Acres | Number of Houses occupied | Number of House void | Number of Houses building | Total | Population |
| Reservoir | 245 |  2,698 | 174 |  37 |  2,909 | 13,760 |
| Brook | 136 |  1,696 |  91 |  13 |  1,800 |  8,650 |
| Park | 225 |  2,510 |  89 | \_ |  2,599 | 12,800 |
| Six Ways |  125 |  1,740 |  88 |  45 |  1,873 |  8,874 |
| Lozells |  94 |  2,632 | 108 |  23 |  2,763 | 13,423 |
| Villa | 118 |  1,626 |  84 |  38 |  1,738 |  8,293 |
| Totals | 943 | 12,902 | 634 | 146 | 13,682 | 65,800 |

This table is amended and taken from H. A. Botwood, and presents a view as at 1888.[[71]](#footnote-71)

However the expansion of the Manor and its increasingly sophisticated organisation could not preclude it from a very real threat to its existence. For its location, being adjacent to the major urban area of Birmingham effectively provided a barrier to any expansion that this town clearly desired. It quickly became apparent to many of the Manor that her larger neighbour was, from as early as the late 1870s actively campaigning to absorb Aston Manor and it is equally clear that there were those from within the area who were bitterly against the very idea. The Daily Gazette, for example in an editorial of 1875 was clear in its support of the Manor. In advocating that all its people should attend a meeting and thus support the proposed seeking of Incorporation, a move that was necessary it was believed to ensure the area’s independence a writer stated that:

“The rapid and continued growth of the residential population of the Manor certainly seems fully to justify the steps that are now being taken to obtain an improved and more manageable form of government and there can be no doubt that the proposed Incorporation would be a great boom.”[[72]](#footnote-72)

From another publication, The Aston Chronicle*,* under a heading of ‘Incorporation of Aston’ camean equally supportive but more virulent article. In an attack upon the tactics being employed by the Town of Birmingham to force the issue it stated angrily that:

“Really, some people appear to think that Aston people are a lot of simpletons that can be scared with any bugbear; for the Birmingham Gas Company has has threatened to stop the supply of gas to Aston unless the Aston Local Board of Health agree to sign a one sided and most unfair contract which they propose, but Mr. Alderman Brinsley very properly declared that such a course is more than the Gas Company dare attempt to do. And now with reference to Aston Park messrs L. P & G assert that ‘the people of Aston must prepare themselves, as part of a price of separate incorporation, either to give up the enjoyment of the park or else to purchase and maintain it themselves.”[[73]](#footnote-73)

Not content with this, fourteen days later the same publication provided another less than veiled attack on the Manor’s neighbour. On this occasion it not only called into question the burden of the rates but also the desirability of some of its inhabitants:

“Tradesmen, publicans and especially the public at large should work for Incorporation if they mean to avoid annexation, and it scarcely needs to be mentioned that if the boundary of Birmingham gets extended around Aston we shall be pested with those public house Inspectors, in addition to having the heavy financial burdens of Birmingham laid on our backs. We do not wish to argue that such inspectors are not wanted in Birmingham, where many drunken roughs, unprincipled beer sellers and drunken policemen are to be found. We heartily hope that the appointment will answer the purpose for which it was intended and be productive of much good. But this we know and affirm, namely that such inspectors are not needed in Aston, for it is very evident that drunkards have no encouragement at any public house here, and even when extra hours are extended the public maintain their sobriety with remarkable few exceptions which are effectively looked after by our vigilant police, and, if Birmingham would keep its miscreants within its own boundaries, the business of the Aston Police Court would be very much reduced.”[[74]](#footnote-74)

Given the tone of these comments it would seem that those of the Manor who wished to remain outside of Birmingham had set upon a course of resistance within which the niceties of balanced argument were set aside. Indeed the whole discussion was becoming so bitter that, upon the result of a petition that was compiled to judge the mood of the Manor’s population, which indicated a bias towards Birmingham The Aston Chronicle pronounced:

“the declared majority will be readily reduced to a minority, inasmuch as a large number of the reputed signatures are in the same handwriting, many are attested by marks and a large number are written in pencil.”[[75]](#footnote-75)

However, such utterances did not deter those who just as passionately thought otherwise. Perhaps one of the most persuasive points of view put forward by those of the Birmingham camp was one published in the December of 1875 under the heading of ‘The Cost of Incorporation.’ Within this argument messrs James Lewis, William Parker and William Graham chose to attack what, in reality was the foundation of the Aston Manor stance, the issue of the rates. In providing the point that the assimilation of Aston Manor into Birmingham was, without doubt the best option for the future it stated that:

The incorporation is sought because there are many of the necessary enjoyments, conveniences, and even necessities of healthy town life which can be realised in no other way. These advantages, however must be paid for; the cleverest Corporation will not be able to get them without cost. What we want the people of Aston to consider is whether separate incorporation is the only way, the most perfect way, or even the cheapest way of obtaining the objects in view. We believe that it is neither one nor the other.

In regards to Aston Hall and its parkland, by reiterating the fact that Birmingham owned and maintained the site (see chapter 5) it attempted to draw the Astonians attention to the fact that if Aston Manor did decide to become independent then they would have to make a particular important decision, this being whether to either lose its usage or bear the cost of purchase. Additionally it was pointed out that the very make up of its population was, in the main, working class. As it was considered this social group subscribed little to the overall rate contribution it would make it extremely difficult for the governing authority of Aston Manor to provide all the facilities which they would certainly require. It was also pointed out that these were already in existence within Birmingham. Finally, and seemingly in an attitude of reconciliation, given the tone of the arguments being made in other quarters it was stated:

“A great city must be made up of many parts. The foundation of its greatness, as the justification of its very existence, must be the possession of a large, an active, and above all, a free industrial population. To this primary elements in municipal greatness the accession of Aston to Birmingham would enormously add.”[[76]](#footnote-76)

In an attempt to end the arguments an official enquiry, before a Major Donnelly into the petitions of householders of Aston Manor in regards to Incorporation was inaugurated.[[77]](#footnote-77) Yet, despite this attempt to resolve the matter Aston Manor again failed to provide what was considered a successful argument. Whatever the merits of either sides campaign the eventual result, for Aston Manor was disappointment. A formal request for Incorporation was rejected, leaving both Aston and the Birmingham camps still locked in dispute. The ensuing years provided little respite, with many of the Manor still convinced that her larger neighbour still retained a determination to annexe their area. It was not surprising then that pointed remarks still continued to be made though the pages of local newspapers. One correspondent using the name ’Bordesley’ would sarcastically write, within the very publication that had made such anti-Birmingham retorts earlier, perhaps the newspaper‘s attempt to provide a unbiased approach:

Sir, I was considerably amused to see in your last issue a letter asking if the Birmingham Police could be induced to play in Aston Park. Now, considering that Birmingham already finds you with a Park, Hospitals, Art Gallery, Museum, Institute, Town Hall and many other institutions, all of which the inhabitants of Aston use in common with Birmingham ratepayers and in addition to this is a very large ratepayer itself towards Aston expenditure, it may be considered that our generosity knows no limits and that we shall joyfully increase our borough force to administer to the delectation of the musical instincts of Astonians. I should have thought, however, in view of your recent contemptuous refusal of amalgamation with Birmingham that even Aston coolness would have forborne to encroach further upon Birmingham’s good nature, but it seems that Aston will take all it can get from the mother town even at the expense of admitting its own lack of either musical talent or local enterprise.”[[78]](#footnote-78)

It would seem that the vexed question as to what extent Birmingham should contribute to the Manor was one that had been raised previously. For nearly a year earlier an Astonian had written to a columnist who wrote under the pseudonym of ‘Lounger’ that there: “was no earthly reason why the Police Band should not give us an occasional performance.” The writer, describing himself as a ‘family man’ considered such ‘free provision’ was important as he, like many others could not afford the entrance charges made to many concerts held on the Lower Grounds:

“Although we are near enough to our big neighbour in all conscience, it’s a ’far cry’ to Birmingham and I can only trust something will be done.”[[79]](#footnote-79)

The arguments were now becoming ever increasingly vitriolic. The local press within the Manor appears to have returned, if the tones of their editorials are taken as any guide to a firm anti-Birmingham stance. In one, The Birmingham and Aston Chronicle of January of 1888, the editor made the comment about those of the Manor who supported annexation:

“loud, cocksure are the long tongued Birminghamites in our midst, Astonians in name but Brums in heart.”

and posed the question that”

“We have to consider whether we shall form an outlying district of a borough with a debt approaching to ten millions, or in the near future have a ‘tight little’ borough of our own with little or no debt at all - for our small debt will in all probability be paid by 1893; whether or rates are to be doubled and our property reassessed or our rates kept down and in a few years reduced; whether or independent life is to be destroyed or to blossom into stronger and fuller development.”[[80]](#footnote-80)

 It would seem that articles like these eventually brought the matter to a head, when, late in 1888 and into the early months of the following year Birmingham convened an Official Inquiry into The Incorporation of Aston Manor. It was hoped that a general consensus could be attained as to whether there was, in fact, any value in annexing the Manor into Birmingham. This investigation, in interviewing numerous individuals allowed them to air their views on the subject. It would seem that many who spoke viewed the annexation of Aston Manor as not being, at least in the short term in Birmingham’s best interest. It was reported that a Mr. Young, speaking of the maintenance of Aston Park in particular and of the Manor in general stated:

“it would not be fair for Birmingham to pay the whole cost of the maintenance of Aston Park and the Manor was too poor to bear any considerable portion of the expense. In no sense could Aston be regarded as separate from Birmingham. On one boundary there was a windmill break and on the other a dried up water course. The population of Birmingham immediately adjourning the Manor of Aston was of about the same class as that in Aston. They were artisans, clerks and managers perhaps. The only professional men in the Manor were doctors. He was of the opinion that annexation would be advantage to both Birmingham and Aston. He considered the Aston Reference Library to be most defective. He had found it necessary to go to Birmingham to see the file of newspapers.”

It was also stated that, in the opinion of many Aston Manor was not sufficiently wealthy to support the dignity of a Corporation! It was inferred that the working class, who obviously were in the majority had very little interest in the public life of their location. One such Astonian, a Mr. Joseph C. Tilloson, who, in support of Birmingham was scathing in regards to the governing of his area. This individual, a Refreshment House Keeper (a publican?) put forward the view that he was fundamentally against Incorporation: “because he thought they (Aston Manor) would then be governed in a more intelligent fashion than at present.” On a lighter note though a Mr. H. Young, perhaps a relative of the previously quoted speaker put forward a rather unlikely, but amusing scenerio which he perceived would clearly illustrate, what he considered the absurdness of the two locations being separate entities:

“Some time ago a man living on the boundary assaulted his wife and the woman did not know whether to go to Aston or Birmingham for the police. The boundary line went right down her bedroom and the woman did not know whether the half of the bed she lay on was in Birmingham or Aston.”[[81]](#footnote-81)

Nevertheless such views do not appear to have greatly affected the ambitions of those of the Manor who supported the notion of Incorporation. For, at around the time of the inquiry a Ratepayers Union meeting was held in the Manor and the following resolution proposed:

“That this Executive Committee of the Aston Manor Ratepayers union hereby expresses its approval of the Aston Local Board in its determination to oppose the attempt of Birmingham to annex Aston Manor to the borough and promises in the name of the Union to give every support to the action of the Board to maintain the integrity of the Manor!”[[82]](#footnote-82)

This opposition quickly found its external expression via a petition to ‘The Queen’s Most Excellent Majesty in Council.’ Reported on in the 24th November, 1888 issue of the Birmingham and Aston Chronicle it proposed that if:

“Your Majesty, by the advice of your Privy Council thinks fit by Charter to create such town or towns or district or any part thereof in the charter with or without any adjoining place a municipal borough and to incorporate the inhabitants thereof, it shall be lawful for your Majesty by the charter to extend to that municipal borough and the inhabitants thereof so incorporated the provisions of the Municipal Corporation Acts.”

Within this document were listed what were considered the relevant factors that would allow the area to have an advanced status, including, amongst others

“That the district contains thirty miles of streets of which twenty eight miles are sewered, kerbed, channelled and the footpaths thereof paved; that there are erected within the district to the Local Board twelve schools, affording under the administration of the Aston School Board for upwards of 11,000 children and that the Local Board have provided and have now under their control Public Offices and Buildings erected at a cost of £,20,324 an Infectious Diseases Hospital, erected at a cost of £7,287, a Free Library and Branch, a Fire Brigade, a depot for the removal and treatment for the night soil of the district and a complete and efficient system of sewerage and house drainage carried out at a cost of £55,000.”[[83]](#footnote-83)

However, due to the opposition of Birmingham, extolling as it did its ambitions to annex the Manor the petition was rejected by the government. This set-back however did not deter those who desired independence, the campaign continuing as determinedly as ever. Yet, as is ever the case there was another side to the coin. For, as much as those who sought incorporation praised the virtues of Aston Manor there were others who saw the situation differently. For, at the very time that the enthusiastic incorporationists were compiling their petition there were those who were equally active in opposing it. To represent those who believed progress lay within Birmingham a body was set up called ‘The Anti-Incorporation Association.’ This, containing as it did several of the leading political figures of the Manor including members of the Local Board, via a Mr. Simons prepared and presented a counter petition containing some four thousand signatures. However, bizarrely, when the petition were sent for inspection it was found that nearly two thousand names appeared on both this document and one that had been compiled by the Incorporationists. This conflict resulted in the whole matter being handed to the Privy Council who immediately ordered yet another enquiry. It was at this that many again voiced their opposition including a Mr. Richard Chamberlain and a Mr. R. P. Yates who provided a description of Aston Manor as being an important centre of manufacturing. Yet, despite the passion within which the Manor’s case was presented the voices of Birmingham proved more effective. Individuals such as Sir Thomas Martineau and other leading members of the Birmingham Corporation seem to have been more persuasive. At last, after both civil and legal arguments had been presented the situation eventually reached what many must have considered to have been the final conclusion. Disappointingly for those of Aston Manor, despite what certainly appears to have been yet another impassioned plea for Incorporation, the following decision was received on 8th April, 1889 by the Manor petitioners from a C. L. Peel of the Privy Council which confirmed their worst fears:

“The Lords of the Council have had under their consideration the petition of inhabitant householders of the Manor of Aston praying for the grant of a municipal charter of incorporation, and I am directed to acquaint you with the information of the petitioners, that their Lordships have not found themselves able to recommend Her Majesty to grant the charter prayed for.”[[84]](#footnote-84)

 This decision must have come as a great disappointment to those who sought an independent Aston Manor. For despite what appears to have been a most concise and detailed application the power and influence of her larger neighbour had again proved too strong. Yet, in spite of this set back the ambition of those who sought independence, remained strong. Almost immediately considerations for a further application were inaugurated. It was in the light of this that the local press yet again took up the cause. In advocating yet another attempt they took the position that believed:

“Aston is undoubtedly rapidly increasing in population, it is certainly increasing in riches.”[[85]](#footnote-85)

and

“The Aston of today is in every way ripe for Incorporation and there is little doubt a charger would have been granted on the last application but for the dog in the manger spirit which characterised the opposition of our larger neighbour and that of a few insignificant local residents who were unable to discover any other means of publicity than by showing their dislike for the district in which to vent their own inconvenience, they resided.”[[86]](#footnote-86)

This obvious enthusiasm was, however, at times tempered by perhaps a more pragmatic approach. Elements of the local press for example demanded of the Local Board immediate action to sort out what were clearly recognisable problems.

One matter that certainly drew the press’s particular attention was that concerning the installation of electrical lighting. Noting that the standard of gas lighting within the Manor, supplied as it was from Birmingham and how useful it was:

“to those gentlemen who when the sun has sunk to rest make up their living by cracking cribs, or to use a phase more readily understood ‘burgle’ and rob the dwelling of unsuspecting citizens. But for the fact that slight glimmer of light is to be seen inside each of the lamps in the district it would be difficult to believe that the illuminate was Corporation gas and yet it would be an insult to compare it to the old-fashioned oil lamps which obtained a few years ago and which are even now to be seen at some of the country railway stations such as Blushton on The Posh. We will even go so far as to assert that a good candle is often more brilliant than the gas with which the inhabitants of the Manor are supplied in order to lighten their darkness and illuminate their homes.”

A demand was thus made for the purchasing of the equipment that would enable the Manor to enjoy good quality electrical lighting. In so advising the newspaper also drew attention to the advantage of not only general costs but more significant, politically, of independence from their neighbour:

“A district with a population fast approached 100,000 [a slight exaggeration] ought to be independent off an adjoining district for its light.”[[87]](#footnote-87)

 AA Another of the most pressing demands that were made concerned the many hundreds of ‘Middens’ that were utilised by the majority of the population being described, undoubtedly accurately as ‘disease cultivators.’ It was noted that, if the removal of such unhealthy items occurred alongside the eradication of the inadequacies of the housing stock it would eliminate a substantial plank upon which those of Birmingham rested their case. They would not be able to accuse Astonians, as was the case in the last enquiry:

“[that we were] compelled to tip our ashes and other dry refuse onto vacant pieces of land on which, as we pointed out last week, streets have been made and houses built, which people, anxious to enjoy the pure atmosphere of Aston, look upon in the light of suburban residences.”[[88]](#footnote-88)

Additionally, The Medical Officer of Health, Mr. May, in a report some four years after the last Incorporation failure forcibly drew attention to another aspect of what was seen as the inadequacies of the local housing stock, citing that:

“during the year a house to house inspection has been made of two streets, the number of houses visited being 373 and the number of nuisances discovered 244. This means that two thirds of the population are living in unhealthy dwellings.”[[89]](#footnote-89)

Whether or not these perceived difficulties were confronted cannot be confirmed but it would seem that for those who sought Incorporation the moment was again at hand when yet another attempt could be made. Given all the signs it must have seemed that the time was ripe for success. It was thus in 1902 that Aston Manor submitted a new Petition of Incorporation, providing not only the plea but also, again, statistical evidence of Aston Manor’s suitability for such a grant. Among many of the items mentioned relating to the educational and social provision of the area included details of the public baths and the Free Library. It was also stated, in one of the later paragraphs that the reason for the optimism was that:

“that no opposition will now be offered by the City of Birmingham to the application of your Petitioners, there being no desire to extend the boundaries of the City in the direction of Aston Manor and that an arrangement had been effected between the two governing authorities whereby in the event of a Charter being obtained for Aston Manor the District shall contribute to Birmingham one half of the maintenance of Aston Hall and Park.”[[90]](#footnote-90)

It must have been an extremely optimistic Aston Manor who awaited the decision of the powers in London who were responsible for the verdict. They must have felt that they would soon be independent and self-governing. However, when the decision became known it was not all that they had hoped for. Though they had certainly gained a modicum of success, unfortunately they had not been totally successful. For whilst the Manor had not been able to obtain ‘total’ independence it was granted what might be considered an interim independent status, of becoming an Incorporated Borough. As a result, from 17th August, 1903 Aston Manor proudly became ‘The Borough of Aston Manor.’ Despite what might have been, for many a great disappointment, they could certainly console themselves with the fact that the first step towards a status of total independence had been attained.

The celebrations of this advance were certainly were not long in coming. Almost immediately the jubilant Aston Manor Fathers announced that a public celebration would be enacted, this to take place on 2nd September, 1903. This occasion, provided for the local population, and indeed anyone who simply wished to enjoy themselves a fine day of entertainment. Commencing with a grand procession which was led by the Olde Silver and Aston Waterworks bands it wound itself around the Manor, finally concluding in the Park. Accompanying these were representatives of the local police, various tableaux and decorated vehicles representing the many trades and callings of the area. So as to pay homage to the artisans and famous persons, both past and present there were also representations of individuals and callings associated with the Manor. Such historical luminaries as King Charles I and Sir Thomas Holte paraded alongside ‘Firemen of old times,’ ‘Lamp Lighters,’ and ’Woodmen and Deer Keepers’, these clearly alluding to the ’Old Park Life in Merrie England.’ There was also amongst the parading throng a Mr. Walter de Arden, an ancestor of the Bard who, in the carrying of a shield upon which was emblazoned for all to see the Arms of the Borough of Aston Manor, illustrated clearly the pride in not only Aston Manor’s news status but also of the continuing historical connection with The County of Warwickshire.



The Arms used by Aston UDC and then by the Borough of

Aston Manor before they applied for a grant of Arms. The motto being ‘Rejoicing in Humility’ [[91]](#footnote-91)

Finally came the representatives of the modern day Manor, including the nurses and ambulances from Aston Manor Hospital and the various Friendly Societies which were established in the area. Also included within this section of the procession were the children of Aston Manor, all with flags and aboard decorated vehicles, all to the accompaniment of music provided by the St. Mary’s School and Gem Street School Bands.[[92]](#footnote-92) Upon the arrival at the Park, and, after what must have been the obligatory speeches the rest of the day and evening was taken up by a ‘Grand Fete’. This element of the celebrations contained a musical contribution from not only the bands previously mentioned but also additionally from a local company, the Joseph Riley & Sons Band. Added to this was a multitude of other entertainment, including not only dancing by the ‘Little Lorraine Lasses’, presumably a group of local youngsters, but also exhibitions of gymnastics by the Aston Higher Elementary School and Aston Police. Given the fact that the local fire brigade were also there to give an exhibition of marching, horse riding skills, ladder work, demonstrations of the use of the ‘Chemical engine’ and finally an exciting rendition of a rescue from a burning house must have provided the audience with a great days entertainment. The children were obviously not forgotten, for throughout the day there were several Punch and Judy Shows available, provided by the ever popular Bailey’s ‘Royal Punch and Judy’ and a ‘Professor Trevirro’.

 The day however was not allowed to fizzle out. For, in conclusion there was a grand variety entertainment performed by artists whom it would seem were hired from local music hall venues. Amongst these were Yvette’s Hippodrome Trained Horses and Ponies; Sandford and Lyons ‘Have you see our ‘Arriet’ and Charlie Mildare, The Whistling Comedian who was billed as the ‘Human Parrot’, all from the Gaiety, Birmingham and several artists from the Tivoli and Hippodrome, also from that city. Among these latter artists presented was a Mr. N. Kioto, a wonderful ‘Japanese Contortionist,’ all of these acts performing on a platform established on the Bevington Road boundary of the Park.’ Last and not least came the finale, a grand firework display. Containing, as it did many spectacular representations, including a revolving Maypole and cascade of golden fire it ended with a truly patriotic flourish, a large portrait of the King being displayed in fire emblazoned with the motto ‘God Bless Our King.’[[93]](#footnote-93) However, despite the extravagant celebrations that had been presented and obviously enjoyed by the population perhaps the crowning glory, at least for those individuals who had campaigned so ardently for Incorporation came, when on 22nd March, 1904 via ‘Letters Patent’ the newly emboldened Borough of Aston Manor was granted a new Coat of Arms, this being authorised by a Mr. G. E.

Cockayne, Clarenceux King of Arms, London, replacing the older emblem.



 The Arms of the Borough of Aston Manor [[94]](#footnote-94)



 Presumed alternative Arms of the Borough of Aston Manor [[95]](#footnote-95)

It must have seemed to those who had sought Incorporation that nothing could now prevent them from attaining their ultimate ambition, a truly independent Aston Manor.

Yet it was, even at this time of celebration, clearly recognised by many that Birmingham despite its previous claims to have fixed its boundaries still harboured intentions of pursuing a policy of absorption. Even the advance of status did not prevent a vehement defence of the Manor’s independence, perhaps personified by the 30th January, 1909 editorial leader of the Aston News when, in a scathing attack on the ambitions of Birmingham it stated, amongst other things that:

 “The idea underlying the unjustifiable attack on the surrounding neighbourhood is that Birmingham shall become the second city of the realm, but this ambition of Birmingham will not atone to the districts for the loss of their independence and municipal control.” and “The great argument after all in favour of Aston retaining its independence is that whatever may be raised by way of the rates in Aston is expended on Aston, and it is for the ratepayers themselves to control the expenditure in their own borough. It must be borne in mind that all control will be lost if Aston shall become an insignificant section of an enlarged Birmingham. It is safe to assume that no inconsiderable share of what is raised in Aston will be expanded in the centre of Birmingham and upon the great schemes which the ambitions of future members of the Corporation may

initiate. If there is much ground for uncertainty as to Aston benefitting by any profits of the City’s undertakings there can be no question whatsoever Aston will have to share the losses of some of the City’s large undertakings.”[[96]](#footnote-96)

However, despite the passion and enthusiasm which accompanied these arguments they could not, in any way truly negate the ambitions of Birmingham in its determination to expand. Though the City did not particularly covet the area, Aston Manor nevertheless had always loomed large in their ambitions simply because of the significance of its very location. For as map 2 indicates it was, in reality a barrier to those areas that it did, for example Handsworth and Erdington. It was thus clearly recognised by both sides of the significance of the Manor in regards to the future of Birmingham. The fact that it was constrained in size allied to an increasing population limited the means by which it could accommodate the demands of its residents. The situation was that Aston Manor had, in regards to the provision of essential services to accept, however unwillingly increased assistance in providing adequate services. Despite a somewhat futile attempt to absorb the area of Erdington into its borders it was clear that there was little that could be done but to accept what was, in reality an inevitable outcome, absorption. Aston Manor realistically could not provide the economic structure to service a increasingly demanding and complex urban environment. It must have been obvious to those who had campaigned for the cause of Aston Manor that another petition for Incorporation would be fruitless. The now City of Birmingham (it did not gain the City status until 1889) was thus finally able to expand. From the November of 1911 onwards Aston Manor became yet another suburb within a Greater City of Birmingham, one of many that this ever demanding and expanding monolith had and was to eagerly devour. (see map 2).[[97]](#footnote-97) The ending of Aston Manor however, though regretted drew an air of optimism from the local press. In reporting that, at the final Mayoral banquet the atmosphere was one of a ‘realisation that the glory days of Aston had gone forever’ it was also noted that there was an attitude that to dwell on the past would not be advantageous. The areas future lay now within a Greater Birmingham.[[98]](#footnote-98)

Aston Manor, as a locality had thus ceased to exist. It was now and presumably always will be a part of a Greater Birmingham. However, though its identity has been removed its real heart had not. For, though we can no longer refer to Aston Manor as a definitive location there are indicators which will forever remind succeeding generations of its existence. Dominant is the magnificent Hall and park grounds, still resplendent even after the massive industrialisation and urbanisation which have affected the area. This building, noted nationwide for its architectural splendour is a clear sign post to the past, forever keeping the name of Holte prominent.[[99]](#footnote-99) With its splendid chimneys and roof adornments it is a beacon amongst the all-to-familiar, drab looking skyline of Birmingham. Of course for many it is the nearby Aston Villa football club and its famous claret and blue shirts which carries the past with it. Famous throughout the world it is too a constant reminder of the past glories of Aston Manor. However, much else can be seen that points to an earlier period, the names of the streets and roads, the clock at Villa Cross which bears the coat of arms of the ancient Borough, and of course the inns and taverns. Perhaps though the least noticed but nonetheless emphatic indication of the past can be found at what is now the Vehicle Museum on Witton Lane. Here, on the side of the building that used to house the areas transport company is a stone wall display which still proudly proclaims, for all to see the name of *Aston Manor*. All are evidence of a time when persons could truly speak of being Astonians!

1. A. Williams, *Leofric, Earl of Mercia* , Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Oxford:

Oxford University Press, 2004. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. P. Rex, *Hereward: the last Englishman,* Chalford: Tempus, 2005, pp54-59 and Chp 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Picquigny is a village in the Department of the Somme, situated on the banks of the River Somme, north-east of Amiens, France. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Reimert Family History, [*http://www.reimert.org/genealogy/database*](http://www.reimert.org/genealogy/database/) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Discover Dudley, [*www.discoverdudley.org.uk/Dudley\_town.htm*](http://www.discoverdudley.org.uk/Dudley_town.htm) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. see The Norman Conquest: Domesday Book, *www.bgfl.org/bgfl/custom/resources* [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. E. M. Rudland, Ballads of Old Birmingham, London: David Nutt, 1915, see *www.archive.org/stream/balladsofoldbirm00rudl* [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. C. J. Power, *The Doomsday Book and Birmingham, Erdington, Edgbaston,*

 *Aston and Witton,* 1929. Birmingham: History Acc. No. 361461. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. W. Hutton, *‘History of Birmingham’,* 1782, [*http://www.gutenberg.org/files/13926/13926-8.txt*](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/13926/13926-8.txt) p306. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. J. M. Jones, *‘Manors of Aston Parish’,* Birmingham: City of Birmingham Education

Department, 1978, p1. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. For a list of the Barons who supported King John see: *Magna Carta: Barons+who+were+Loyal+to+the+King/qx/knowledgebase.htm* [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. H. A. Botwood, ‘*A History of Aston Manor, Past and Present’,*

Birmingham: Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, 1987, p2. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. E. M. Rudland, Ballads of Old Birmingham, London: David Nutt, 1915, see [*www.archive.org/stream/balladsofoldbirm00rudl*](http://www.archive.org/stream/balladsofoldbirm00rudl)*,* No. 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. For the lineage of Giles de Erdington, son of Thomas see *www.axlines.org/family/submit/family.php* [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. H. A. Botwood, ‘*A History of Aston Manor, Past and Present‘,*

Birmingham:Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, 1987, p2. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. For an examination of the Holte family see [*http://www.holtancestry.co.uk/*](http://www.holtancestry.co.uk/) and Appendix i. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. A. Davidson, *A History of The Holtes of Aston, Baronets*, Birmingham: E. Everitt,

1854, pp10-11. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. This position was one that was responsible for the collection of properties into the

Crown’s possession which did not have legal heirs. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. A.Davidson, *A History of The Holtes of Aston, Baronets*, Birmingham: E. Everitt, 1854, p12. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. This figure is worth £82,700 using the retail price index using the retail price index. These figures are based upon a comparative price index for the latest year available, 2008,

 See L. H. Officer, "Purchasing Power of British Pounds from 1264 to Present ," MeasuringWorth, 2009. [http://www.measuringworth.com/ppoweruk/](file:///C%3A%5CDocuments%20and%20Settings%5CJen%5CDesktop%5Cindex.php) [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. A. Davidson, *A History of The Holtes of Aston, Baronets*, Birmingham: E. Everitt, 1854. See

 also Rental of Estates of Thomas Holte of Aston juxta Birmingham in Aston Duddeston

 (Dodeston) and Nechylles (Nechells). Manuscript, 14th June 24 Henry VIII, 1532. Archives

 Deeds vol. 488, Accession 413517. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. A. Davidson, *A History of The Holtes of Aston, Baronets*, Birmingham: E. Everitt, 1854, p17. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. See Appendix i. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. W. B. Stephens, ed., *Victoria County History,* [*A History of the County of Warwick:*](file:///C%3A%5CDocuments%20and%20Settings%5CJen%5CDesktop%5Csource.aspx%3Fpubid%3D104)

Volume 7,*The City of Birmingham,* pp58-72. Victorian County History, 1964 and S.Wright, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography:* ‘*Holte, Sir Thomas, first baronet 1570/71–1654’*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. For a brief but interesting summary of his life see [*www.bbc.co.uk/dna/h2g2/A18355836*](http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/h2g2/A18355836) [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. A. Davidson, *A History of The Holtes of Aston, Baronets*, Birmingham: E. Everitt, 1854.

 . [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. A. Davidson, *A History of The Holtes of Aston, Baronets*, Birmingham: E. Everitt, 1854,

p26. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. G. E. Cokayne, editor. *The Complete Baronetage*. 5 vols (c. 1900). Reprint,Gloucester:

Alan Sutton Publishing, 1983. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. A. Davidson, *A History of The Holte’s of Aston, Baronets*, Birmingham: E. Everitt, 1854,

p18. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. M. Leapman, Inigo: The Troubled Life of Inigo Jones, Architect of the English Renaissance,

 London: Hedline Book Publishing, 2003. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. This figure is worth £2,780,000 using the retail price index. These figures are based upon a comparative price index for the latest year available, 2008. see L. H.Officer, Purchasing

Power of British Pounds from 1264 to Present, MeasuringWorth, 2009. [*http://www.measuringworth.com*](file:///C%3A%5CDocuments%20and%20Settings%5CJen%5CDesktop%5Cindex.php)  [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. For other pictures[*www.astonbrook-through-*](http://www.astonbrook-through-)*astonmanor.co.uk/gallery* [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. See *BBC H2G2, www.bbc.co.uk/dna/h2g2/A18355836* [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. For a further insight into the character of this man and the often told story of the

murder of the Cook see A. Davidson, *A History of The Holte’s of Aston, Baronets*, Birmingham: E. Everitt, 1854, pp24-25. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. A. Davidson, *A History of The Holte’s of Aston, Baronets*, Birmingham: E.

Everitt, 1854, p19. The transcription is exactly how it appears in the volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. For an inventory of Sir Thomas Holte’s possessions at the time of his passing see *A True*

*And perfect inventory on all and singular goods and chattells of Sir Thomas Holte,*

*deceased, 20th November 1654,* Archives Deeds vol 330 Acc. No. 347952. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. E. M. Rudland, Ballads of Old Birmingham, London: David Nutt, 1915, see [*www.archive.org/stream/balladsofoldbirm00rudl*](http://www.archive.org/stream/balladsofoldbirm00rudl)No. 84. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. H. A. Botwood, *A History of Aston Manor, Past and Present,* Birmingham: Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, 1987, p5. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Journals of The House of Commons, vol ix, pp384, 387, 411, 460, 461 and 472.

 *www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx* [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. G.E. Cokayne ; with Vicary Gibbs, H.A. Doubleday, Geoffrey H. White, Duncan

Warrand And Lord Howard de Walden, ed., *The Complete Peerage of England, Scotland,*

*Ireland, Great Britain and the United Kingdom, Extant, Extinct or Dormant, new ed.*, 13

vols. (1910-1959; reprint in 6 vol., Gloucester: Alan Sutton Publishing, 2000), vol. II, p301. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Sir Charles Holte, *http://emedicine.medscape.com/article/407519-overview.* [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. A. Davidson, A History of The Holtes of Aston, Baronets, Birmingham: E. Everitt, 1854,

 pp332-34. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. George Edward Cokayne, ed., *The Complete Baronetage*, 5 volumes (no date, c1900); reprint, Gloucester: Alan Sutton Publishing, 1983, volume I, p105 [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. G. E. Cockayne with Vicary Gibbs, H. A. Doubleday, Geoffrey H. White, Duncan Warrand

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45. Plan of Aston Manor, J. Tomlinson, 1758, Map Drawer 233, Accession No. 373483. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. J. Tomlinson, *Plan of Aston Manor in the County of Warwick belonging to Sir Lister*

*Holte, Bart,* 1758. Archives Acc. No. 371055. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. A fine painting by Thomas Gainsborough can be viewed in of this gentleman in The

Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, Accession No. 1885P3181. G. E. Cokayne ; with

Vicary Gibbs, H. A. Doubleday, Geoffrey H. White, Duncan Warrand and Lord Howard

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*the United Kingdom, Extant, Extinct or Dormant, new ed.*, 13 volumes 1910-1959; reprint

in 6 volumes, Gloucester: Alan Sutton Publishing, 2000), volume II, p301. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. See *Aston Hall*, *A collection of manuscript documents relating to Aston Hall and its*

 *owners 1618-1827*. Archives 2235, Accession No. 259648. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. For an appraisal of the goods owned by Lady Holte as at 1794 see *An inventory of sundry fixtures, the property of Lady Holte at Aston Hall. Taken and appraised, April 1794*

by R.Winstanley, London. Archive Deeds vol 337, Acc. No. 349828. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. A. Davidson, A History of The Holtes of Aston, Baronets, Birmingham: E. Everitt, 1854,

 pp332-34. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. This figure can be estaimated as being worth some £969,000 using the retail price index as at

 2008. See Officer, L. H., Purchasing Power of British Pounds from 1264 to Present, MeasuringWorth, 2009. [*http://www.measuringworth.com*](file:///C%3A%5CDocuments%20and%20Settings%5CJen%5CDesktop%5Cindex.php) [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. J. M. Jones, *Manors of Aston Parish,* Birmingham: City of Birmingham Education Department, 1978, p17. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. H. A. Botwood, *A History of Aston Manor, Past and Present,* Birmingham: Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, 1987, p15. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Officer, L. H., Purchasing Power of British Pounds from 1264 to Present, MeasuringWorth, 2009. [*http://www.measuringworth.com*](file:///C%3A%5CDocuments%20and%20Settings%5CJen%5CDesktop%5Cindex.php) [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. For a history of this bank see *http://www.banking-history.co.uk/greenways.html*. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. J. M. Jones, *Manors of Aston Parish,* Birmingham: City of Birmingham Education

Department, 1978, pp54-55. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. E. Robinson, *An English Jacobin: James Watt, Junior, 1769-1848*, in Cambridge

Historical Journal, Vol. 11, No. 3, pp349-355 England: [Cambridge University Press](http://www.jstor.org/action/showPublisher?publisherCode=cup).,

1955. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. W. Irving, Bracebridge Hall or The Humorists, USA: Sleepy Hollow Restorations, 1978. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Sotheby & Co. Catalogue of the principal portion of the library of James Watt jnr.,

 of Aston Hall. 1849. L78.1 Accession No. 442582. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
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61. From a pen and ink drawing by Albert Rodway, 1871, see P. Rodway and L. Slingsby,

 Philip Rodway and *The Tale of Two Theatres by his two daughters, with reference to*

 *Aston Hall, 1*934, L78.1 ROD, Accession No. 426685. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. P. Rodway and L. Slingsby, *Philip Rodway and The Tale of TwoTheatres. By his two daughters with reference to Aston Hall,* 1934. L78.1 ROD Acc. No. 426685. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Philip Rodway became the manager of both The Theatre Royal and The Prince of Wales Theatre, Birmingham, see footnote 63. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. London & North Western Railway Society, *History of the LNWR*, . [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Map 8, Aston in 1833 after Walker in J. M Jones, *Manors of Aston Parish: An*

*introduction to the Historical Geography of Aston* M*anor*, Birmingham: Birmingham

Education Dept.,1978.See also *Plan of land at Aston, adjoining Aston Park and The*

 *Birmingham to Liverpool Railway,* Ludlow & Bayliss, surveyors, 1847 Apperture card,

Accession 383164. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. F. White, *The History & Gazetter of Warwickshire*, England: Sheffield Ltd., 1874, p1400. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle,* 14th March, 1876. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Map 9 in J. M. Jones, *‘Manors of Aston Parish’, An introduction to the Historical Geography of Aston Manor,* Birmingham: Birmingham: Education Dept., 1978. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle*, 29th August, 1885. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. For a summary of the early changes in Aston Manor see ‘Part II, The Early Government of

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Birmingham: Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, 1987. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
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 Museum and Art Gallery, 1987, p37. See also *Map of The District of Aston Manor,*

 *published by Order of The Local Board*, W. A. Davies, surveyor. Scale 12 inches to 1

 mile. Coloured to show Wards,1894. Map Drawer 117, Accession No. 172737. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. *Daily Gazette,* 21st October, 1875. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle*, 18th December, 1875. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle*, 8th January, 1876. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle*, 5th February, 1876. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Cost of Incorporation. An appeal to the ratepayers of Aston, 1875. Lp30.1

 Accession No. 143136. For and answer to this and other questions see Annexation and its

 consequences Lp30.1 Accession No. 143155. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. Cost of Official Enquiry before Major Donnelly, Commissioner into the Petition of

 inhabitant householders for the Incorporation of Aston Manor.

 LF30.1, Accession No. 279100. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle*, 1st May, 1886. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle*, 27th June, 1885. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle*, 21st January, 1888. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. *Birmingham Gazette* 17th January, 1889. Also see *Aston Incorporation, Newspaper Cuttings ,*

 *Aston Incorporation Inquiry, 1988/89*, Birmingham History K/2, Accession No. 233498. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. H. A. Botwood, *A History of Aston Manor, Past and Present,* part iv The Movement for

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1 [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle*, 24th November, 1888. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. H. A. Botwood, *A History of Aston Manor, Past and Present,* part iv The

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85. *Birmingham and Aston Chronicle*, 17th August, 1889. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. *Aston News*, 18th July, 1891. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. *Aston News*, 30th July, 1892. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. H. A. Botwood, *A History of Aston Manor, Past and Present,* part iv The Movement

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89. *Aston News*, 25th February, 1893. See also *Health of Aston Manor, Report on the Health of*

 *Aston Manor,* Annual Reports, 1874-1881 and 1883-1911, 38 vols. L45.09 Accession 259195. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. *Incorporation of Aston Manor, Copy of Petition, statistical and other information*,

 1901-02, LF30.1 Accession No. 169228. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. These arms were those used prior to the granting of the new status and were utilised until

 1904 when a new Coat of Arms for the Borough were granted. There is also another Coat of Arms that was used by the Aston Local Board until 1894 which in fact is the Holte Arms, see Item 32, *Birmingham*

See *Coats of Arms,* LF77.6. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. Why Gem Street School should be represented is unknown as Gem Street was actually

 outside of the Borough boundaries. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. *Celebration of the Reception of the Charter of Incorporation for Aston Manor*, 1903.

 Lp30.1 Accession No. 177539. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. This emblem containing: A Quarterly Azure and or a Cross Moline between three Crosses

patty fitchy in the first and fourth quarters and two Lions Passant in the second and third all

counter charged has a crest of a Squirrel cracking a Nut proper. All are surmounted with the motto ‘Rejoicing in Humility’ which was retained from the previous emblem. See Item 19, 9 Birmingham Coat of Arms, LF77.6. It replaced the Arms illustrated on p42. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. H. C. Fox-Davies, *The Book of Public Arms*, London, 2nd edition, 1915. Though is recorded

 in this volume as the new Coat of Arms of Aston Manor, replacing the one indicated earlier

 on p42 no evidence can be found of its usage. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. *Aston News,* 30th January, 1909. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. *Incorporation of Aston Manor into The City of Birmingham, Local Government Act, 1894. Local Government Board Order No. 31859*, made under the Provisions of the Local Government Act, 1894 outlined in the Statues Revised, vol XII, 1894 and T. L. Renshaw, *Birmingham, It‘s Rise and Progress,* Birmingham: Cornish Brothers, 1932, p127. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. *Aston News*, 11th November, 1911. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. For a glimpse at some of the architectural features of Aston Hall see *Birmingham Architectural Association Sketch Book, 1877-1878.* LF56.06 Acc. No. 37668. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)