

THE BEDFORDSHIRE "P's":

There now follows a precis of the talk which was given to the members who attended the A.G.M. at Ampthill. It was given by Peter Perrett who would like to thank Joyce Gibbs and Hilda Marson for obtaining much of the data from which it was composed.

"Some members may wonder why Bedfordshire was chosen as a venue for this years A.G.M. as it would appear that the area has little to do with the armigerous or more famous "P's". Admittedly we have quite a number of members whose roots lie in the County, and also the opportunity was taken of arranging a location that was more central than last year at Narberth, with the hope that the members scattered all round the London area and the south-east would find the journey more amenable than the long trek to the furthest corner of South Wales.

We have been in for a surprise, because there would appear to be a great deal of relevance in choosing this area. Those of you who attended the AGM at Narberth will recall that Roger Turvey, who gave us such a vivid account of the Pembrokeshire Perrotts, expressed his doubts as to the long held belief that this most famous of all the Perrott branches had settled in Pembroke soon after the Norman Conquest, although he could not find any satisfactory documentation that this was the case. Barnwell, whose 'Perrot Notes' we have been serialising in the Society Journals, states that the Perrotts were said to have arrived in Pembroke C1112, as "all the Flemings in the country were gathered, with other foreigners, and settled between Tenby and Haverfordwest". It was only in 1235 to 1240 that Janet Mortimer could have been of age to marry Andrew Perrot, the first one to be well documented, which is more than a century after Andrew's father is said to have existed. Hence Roger Turvey's scepticism of the early pedigree. He thought it more likely that the Kent "P's" were the eldest on record.

Turning now to Bedfordshire again, Joyce Gibbs has extracted much data from the PRO and printed books. In addition the Mormon's I.G.I. for the county of Bedfordshire is one of the best covered counties. Of the 135 parishes in the county, only 13 have not been included in the latest IGI print-out we have. (1984) Most of the parish registers have survived from the early to mid 1500's and where they start in the early 1600's the Mormons have included details from Bishop's Transcripts from earlier dates. Lastly the wills and admons from the county seem to have survived in greater numbers than usual for other counties the membership is interested in. There is also a Victoria County History for the county which is a mine of information and well documented as to where the various deeds and records may be found that were used to compile the history.

The Society also has data concerning the Perots of Kent and it is quite clear from this data that they and the Bedfordshire Perots are of the same family. The only mentions so far found of a "P" in the Domesday Book occurs in Bedfordshire, Essex, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire. As far as Beds is concerned the family held land at Streatley, about 7 miles to the South East of Ampthill, at Beeston, Wyboston and Northill. At future times the family added to their holdings more lands at Radwell, Carlton, Harlington, Pulloxhill - where we shall be having lunch tomorrow - besides other lands in neighbouring Bucks. Land holdings in other Eastern counties included Hawkwell, Essex; Sawston and Babraham, Cambridgeshire. Glenham, Sf.

It is not until the reign of Henry I that mention is made of the family having lands in Kent. These were at Knowlton, Ringleton, Archeslowe, and later at Sandown and Worth. However, the references in both counties are of the same person on many occasions. As far as Kent is concerned there were "P's" at Knowlton well into the 1500's, but whether descendants of the original family requires investigation. Other references tend to support the contention that this was Pirot/Perot the knight who came with

William of Normandy in 1066 and, like the others who came with him, were well rewarded after the victory at Hastings.

The christian name of the first Perot, or as it is recorded in ancient documents - Piroto, is at present unknown, but his son who succeeded him was called Alan, son of Piroto, and he is mentioned as the holder of the Kent lands as well as all those in Bedfordshire and adjoining counties mentioned above. He was succeeded by another Alan who is mentioned as a benefactor of St. Albans church. Next comes Ralph - when the name now becomes firmly established as Perot - who was either the brother or the father of the second Alan due to the dates of recorded deeds. He gave lands to the Abbey of Colchester.

As seems to be the general case with early pedigrees only the son who succeeded is given and this happens well into the 1500's generally. (We have seen this in regard to John Perrot of Herefordshire whose pedigree of descendants only shows one son, but from his will we have found that there were in fact nine, plus a base son and yet another child in the womb.) However, Ralph 1 was succeeded by Ralph 2, his son, and there is now mention of two other sons, William Perot and John Perot who held the family lands at Pulloxhill in 1166, precisely 100 years after the Conquest. No doubt all these generations had other sons and daughters who may be the ancestors of the "P's" of Bedfordshire who appear later on. This Ralph II held 17 Knight's fees in 1166 and made generous benefactions, amongst them to Woburn Abbey which he entered in 1194 as a monk.

Ralph III succeeded in 1195 and held the main Perot fiefs until his death in 1222. He was succeeded by Richard, his eldest son, and on his death in 1227 by his brother Ralph IV. who died in 1252. We know of two sons of his. his successor Ralph V, born c1226, and Henry who was the sheriff of Kent in 1278. The Inquisition Post Mortem taken on Ralph IV's death shows Ralph V as a knight and aged 26 or more in 1252. He served in the campaign in Wales under Henry III in 1257, attended the King in France in 1259, and was summoned for service in Wales in 1263. The wars with the Welsh had been continuous since the Conquest and it is quite possible that other sons of this family may have been involved and were the ancestors of the more well known Pembrokeshire Perrots as suggested by Roger Turvey last year.

Ralph V was one of the barons that allied himself with Simon de Montford, and was taken prisoner in April 1264 when the King, Henry III, took the town of Northampton. Henry's defeat at Lewes later that year released the Northampton prisoners. When war broke out again the following year Simon de Montford's son Simon was with Sir Ralph Perot and they were besieged at Kenilworth. The following year Simon de Montford senior lost his life at the battle of Evesham and his son and Sir Ralph were able to escape from Kenilworth - Simon going to France whilst Sir Ralph became one of the 'dispossessed' and went to the Isle of Ely where they lived by harrying the countryside around. Eventually they were pardoned and Ralph returned to Bedfordshire. After further troubles he appears as a prisoner in the Tower of London for debts, 1274-6. Further service was in Wales 1277 and 1282, (and 1283,) Gascony in 1294, Scotland 1296-8, at 70 years of age!!

He married Cassandra, thought to be the daughter of Sir Giles de Argenyein, who bore him five sons at least. One was called Simon probably after Simon de Montford. Others were Reginald who acquired the Harlington property on Ralph's death in 1305. Another was Thomas who became a professor of civil law in 1324 and died 1329, Alan of whom nothing is known and Ralph who had served with his father in Wales in 1277. This Ralph (the VI) died before his father and when Reginald died he was succeeded by yet another Ralph (the VIIth) who was Ralph VI's son. He was alive in 1336 and a reference to a Ralph Perot in 1346 is thought to be the same person. There are mentions of other members of this family in Bedfordshire but not much is known after the mid 1350's at present. In 1428 there is a

reference to a Perot holding land at Eaton Socon and a Thomas Perot in 1538. John Perot, the brother of Ralph Perot II had descendants as well as the main line and is fairly well documentd down to 1262. No doubt other sons who are not mentioned because they were not direct heirs were owners of smaller areas of land as likewise the other sons of the main line. Possibly the Black Death of 1349 is the reason for lack of data.

The next mention of the Bedfordshire Perrotts begin with the wills that were proved in the Bedfordshire church courts and the P.C.C. wills. At about the same time as these we see the beginning of the parish registers. Other clues that the "P's" were people of some standing is shown in the various Heralds Visitations of Bedfordshire, where they appear in many of the pedigrees of well connected families. They do not appear to have claimed any arms in the various visitations which is strange as later on the Perrotts of Huntingdonshire claimed the usual Perrot arms of the 3 pears and we have been able to prove that this branch were in fact the descendants of the Bedfordshire Perrott/Parrotts, and may have been connected with the Perrots of Bellbroughton in Worcestershire, which I will refer to later on.

The earliest Bedfordshire wills, both church court and P.C.C. are for Luton. This is lucky as the earliest registers for this town do not start until 1602 - the first ones having been lost. It is possible to make a rough list of families from these wills though obviously many names and some branches will be missing. What is certain is that these "P's" were very wealthy for those days. They had many acres of freehold land as well as copyhold, and also many houses and tenements, orchards, pasture and the like. Their bequests in money was in tens of pounds rather than pence.

The possible armigerous connections with the usual "Three Pears" coat of arms take three forms. Firstly, there is a chapter in Perrot Notes, which has been serialised in the Journal, concerning the Huntingdonshire Perrotts. This will appear in the next issue but it states that a family of Perrot who lived at Old Weston in that county bore the usual coat of arms. It starts with a Henry Perrot but from whence he came is not known. Barnwell goes on to tabulate the descendants of this Perrot. However, the will of a Thomas Parrott of Shitlington (now called Shillington - perhaps for obvious reasons!!) provide the answer. This Thomas made his will in 1613 and was an extremely wealthy man besides siring many sons, six of whom were living in 1613 with a total of 14 grandsons and 14 granddaughters on the male side alone. The total monetary bequests come to £1390 to his kin besides large bequests to others. The land - mostly given in acres - totals 267 acres plus many other areas mentioned where the acreage is not given. He still owned much land in Luton and 210 acres in Old Weston which went to two of his sons, Richard and Robert.

A series of Feet of Fines for Hunts, extracted at the PRO by Joyce Gibbs, mentions five occasions between 1580 and 1601 when a Thomas Parratt, Gent, let his lands there to various tenants, including areas at Brington and Bythorne. It is not possible to tie up these acreages with his will as they are not all denoted. However he owned farmhouses and tenements as well as the land. Luckily Bishops Transcripts exist for the parish of Old Weston and it is possible to tie up the connection very easily.

Thomas left the lands and farms at Old Weston to his sons Robert and Richard in two separate bequests of approximately half each. Barnwell states that the first recorded there was a Henry Perrott with the three pears coat. Richard was unmarried at the time of his father's will, being the youngest son. However he did marry and in 1622 a son Henry was baptised to him. We know the children of Robert the other son to whom the lands in Old Weston were left, from his will. He moved from there back to Meppershall, the parish adjacent to Shillington and died there. Some of his children were born at Old Weston and complete the names mentioned in Thomas's will.

This Henry Perrott left a will dated 1677 and styles himself 'Gentleman'. His three sons still living then were named Richard, Thomas and Henry. It is 99% safe to say that this branch of the armigerous "P's" descend from Thomas Parrott of Shillington, Beds. Note the name Richard - probably after his father, Thomas - after his grandfather? ,and Henry, after himself. No doubt further investigation into the deeds, etc, of Huntingdon would turn up further proof.

The possibility that there is a connection with this particular Bedfordshire branch of "P's" and the armigerous ones elsewhere is, secondly, (and I have been a long time getting there) is from some data on the Worcester-shire Perrotts of Bellbroughton. This states that in the Add. MSS, B.M. 5533, is a pedigree of a family of Parrott, claiming descent from the Bell Hall stock. It commences with Robert Parrrott, of Lillington, Beds, who is stated to have been the son of ".....Parrott of Bell Hall in County Hereford" the Hereford has then been altered to Hertford. This Robert had issue Nicholas, of Cadicot, Co. Herts, who, by Frances his wife, daughter of Edward Wren of Cadicot, was father of Joseph Parrott of London, who married Mary, daughter ofBromley, of County Notts, and with whom the pedigree terminates.

I have found the marriage of Nicholas and Frances Wren in the IGI and this took place on 12.10.1589. at Codicote, Herts. I cannot find a birth of a Nicholas to a Robert in Beds but there is one on 19.8.1565. at Cheshunt. Unfortunately not stated is the father's christian name. It would need further investigation to see if there is any substance in the allegation. Assuming the date of baptism is around 1565 and that this Nicholas was an eldest child of the Robert mentioned then Robert would have been born around 1540. assuming he was 25 when Nicholas was born.

This would make him a son of Roger Perrot of the Worcestershire branch. It is, therefore, worthy of note that there is a will of a Roger Perot of Luton, dated 1535, which mentions sons named Roger, Robert, and also one named Humphrey which is a much repeated Bellbroughton name. This Roger was the son of a John Perot who also made a will in 1525 so the dates of the earlier supposition are very close. Other sons were William, Henry and Thomas. It is the names of Roger and Humphrey that make one wonder if there is some truth in the claim to the Perrott arms. Later, in 1637 at Shillington, the name Humphrey is given to one of the descendants of Thomas Parrott whose will of 1613 I have mentioned before. I think a further investigation of all these pointers would be a worthwhile project. Perhaps our Chairman, John Perrott, would see if he can find any further data in the Bodlean Library at Oxford.

You will have seen on the map of Bedfordshire that I have marked where there were "P's" in the 1500's. By using the IGI and wills it is fairly evident that they spread out over the surrounding areas over the next two or three centuries and it is probable that, with a certain amount of research, it should be possible to tie in most of our Bedfordshire "P" members with those of the few parishes where they were alive and thriving in the 1500's.

I cannot finish without referring to the Reynold/Reginald Perot who held the manor of Plaitford and other lands in the area in the mid 1300's. We know from his Inquisition Post-Mortem that his heir was a Ralph Perot. Reference to the pedigrees shown on the board will show that Reginald was a name connected with the Bedfordshire "P's" and the fact that he was connected with a long line of Ralphs practically back to the Conquest makes one wonder if he was not a descendant of this line. Perhaps also the ancestor of all the Wiltshire Perretts that followed. Food for thought anyway.

Finally, the "P's" of Beds are well documented in the CRO & PRO indexes. Early on they were all 'Gentlemen' or Yeomen farmers. Over the years they branched out to many trades and professions, very typical of the "P's" of this world. Let us think of them today, they may well be the ancestors of most of us in this hall. At present I cant prove it.