

William Norwood of Leckhampton Court

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William Norwood (1548-1632), the Lord of the Manor of Leckhampton and for a time High Sheriff of Gloucestershire and Lord of the Manor of Cheltenham, would seem to have been, at least for a period, a Catholic recusant. He was the son of Henry Norwood and Catherine, the daughter of Sir Roger Throgmorton. William married Elizabeth Lygon, a daughter of Lord Beauchamp of Madresfield, near Malvern, who bore him eleven children. Eve Andrew and Canon Eric Brewin, in their booklet entitled 'Leckhampton through the Ages', briefly trace the fortunes of the Norwood Family of Leckhampton Court. It would seem that William prospered greatly through his marriage and it is probably with this money that Leckhampton Court was greatly extended and embellished.

In the year 1577 William is mentioned, with Henry Hatheway and his wife, in a list of recusants compiled by Bishop Cheyney of Gloucester. Four years later, 'Norwood of Symoninn', who lived at Leckhampton Court, assisted Vergtegan who was in charge of a printing press at Smithfield, London, to escape. Vergtegan had printed 'The true Report of the Death and Martyrdom of M. Campion' (December 1581), which was written by the Blessed Thomas Alfield, son of Robert Alfield, the master of the King's School at Gloucester. Alfield was arrested with others for this publication and was sent to the Tower where he was racked. It is interesting to note that when Campion was arrested at Lyefield, prior to his trial and execution, he was in the company of William Webley of Droyscourt, Brockworth. Webley was

arrested and taken to London where he was imprisoned. A week later he was released on promising to attend Anglican services. He was buried at Brockworth in 1614.

The arrest and subsequent torture of Alfield may well have persuaded William Norwood to attend Anglican worship for I have not found any other references to his recusancy. In 1598 he erected a fine brass depicting his family in the Parish Church at Leckhampton.

There is, however, one further recusant connection for his grandson, Francis Norwood, who succeeded William at the Court in 1632, is mentioned in the will of Walter Hanslepp of Warwick, which was proved in 1654. Walter left property in Berkswell, Warwickshire, to Francis Norwood of Leckhampton and his heirs, 'only in trust to and for the sole and only use of my godson, Roger Hanslepp, and his heirs male of his body ... And for want of such issue, then to his brother, Francis Hanslepp.'

Roger Hanslepp was born at Up Hatherley in 1642. He was the son of one Roger Hanslepp by his first wife. In 1661 he studied at Douai, France, and fourteen years later he was ordained priest for the English Mission. During the Titus Oates Plot he was convicted at Gloucester for execution on 28th May 1679. The sentence was, in the event, not carried out for in his father's will, which was proved in 1685, he was left property called Mather Bustede and 'all my Latin books.'

Hanslepp used the alias name of Norwood and, in a recusant list for the Diocese of Gloucester for 1714, he is listed as a priest at Leckhampton. The only other papist in Leckhampton at that time being Hannah Pitt. The Norwoods were probably not so sympathetic towards Catholicism by this time for William's great-grandson, the son of Francis Norwood, Thomas had become Rector of Leckhampton in 1707.

Sources

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