

## CHAPTER II.

### 1. FYNCHAM, IN THE 12TH AND 13TH CENTURIES.

In the course of time the Normans settled themselves firmly in their new possessions. Their original grants were further subdivided by sale and inheritance. Manor houses of imposing appearance were erected, and a variety of tenures, common rights, &c., sprang up, as the titles of the several lordships became established and recognized. Already by the time of Henry III. there were thirteen defined and distinct lordships in Fyncham. Little more than the names of these can now be traced, and what is known of the history of one or two of them, bare and scanty as it is, represents in many points that of the others.

1. FYNCHAM HALL was a very considerable manor, which gave name and residence to the family who for about 500 years occupied the chief position in the village. *Nigellus de Fyncham*, in the reign of William II., was lord, and gave the title of his demesne to Castleacre Priory.<sup>1</sup> The history of Nigellus will be investigated when we come to speak of the origin and pedigree of the Fincham family. This manor continued with them, as already intimated, through a long succession of many generations, until William Fincham conveyed it A.D. 1572 to Charles Cornwallis, Esq., afterwards Sir Charles, who had married his sister Ann. Cornwallis conveyed it to Thomas Gawsell, Esq., in the 28th of Elizabeth, 1586 ; and from him it came to

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<sup>1</sup> Harl. M.S. 2110, part 2, fol. 79, 79b. Br. Mus.

Francis Gawdy,<sup>1</sup> a judge, in the 32nd of the said Queen, and of whom further in the note below. From Gawdy it went, by the marriage of his grand-daughter, to the Earl of Warwick ; thence in 1620 to Sir Thomas Cheek and the Lady Essex his wife ; and thence to Sir Ralph Hare, of Stow Bardolf, Baronet, in whose family it continues. This manor has received in its passage to its present possessor, Sir Thomas, numerous additions, by purchase or otherwise, until no less than 12 out of 13 original manors in Fincham have become amalgamated in one estate.

2. TALBOT'S HALL was also a considerable manor, and took its name from the family of Talbot, who held it of the Earl Warren. To them belonged originally the patronage of the Church of St. Michael in Fincham. Talbot gave it to the Priory of Castle Acre. His deed is *sans date*, witnessed by John, Bishop of Norwich, and others. Sir Samson Talbot confirmed this grant, anno circa 1246. This manor in the 7th of Edward VI. came to Thomas Drury, but most of the demesne lands were separated from it before this. Soon after it came to the Finchams, and thence to Sir Ralf Hare, Baronet, as in Fincham Hall.<sup>2</sup> The manor house of Talbot's Hall remains, and is now possessed by Mr. AyImer, but with only a reputed manorial title.

3. LITTLEWELL HALL was also a manor held of the Earls Warren, by William de Littlewell, before the

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<sup>1</sup> Francis Gawdy became Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, August 25, 1605. He was Lord of the Manor of Wallington and Thorpland, and is thus mentioned for his sacrilegious avarice by Sir Henry Spelman : "Dying suddenly in London, he was "brought down to be buried at Wallington ; but having made his appropriate church "a hay, house or a dog kennel, his dead corpse for many days could find no place of "burial, but growing very offensive was at last conveyed to the church of South "Runcton, and there buried without any ceremony ; and no stone or memorial was "there ever for him." Hist. of Sacrilege p. 251. The Register of Runcton, however, has this : "An. 1605. My lorde Gawdy was buried the 27 day of Februarie, in ye "chancell, by Humfry Melton, parson of Runcton holme." Note. The year (1605) not terminating until March 25, reconciles the above dates.

<sup>2</sup> So Blomefield, *Hist. of Norf.*, vol. iii.

reign of Henry III. The site of it was on the left hand of the road towards Downham. It passed through many hands, until in 1489 it came, with a right of fishery in Little-port, &c., &c., to the family of Fincham, and thence, being united with their other manors, to Sir Ralf Hare, Bart., as before.

4. COOMB'S Manor. Richard. de la Combe was Lord in the beginning of the reign of Henry III. It was held also of the Earls Warren. In the 16th Henry VI, John Stourton and others were pardoned for purchasing this manor without license of the Dean of Wells. The Bexwells were afterwards Lords, and Francis Bexwell sold it to Charles Cornwallis, from whom it eventually came, through the Finchams, to Sir Ralf Hare.

5. BENEFELD'S Manor. John de Benefeld was Lord in the reign of Henry III, under the Earl Warren. In the reign of Edward II, it was valued at £9 2s. 4½d. per annum. It came ultimately to the Finchams, and so to the Hare family.

6. NEWLAND'S Manor. In the reign of Henry III, Ralf Newland was Lord, holding of the Earl Warren a messuage and six acres of land. In the 6th Henry IV, John de Fincham was possessed of it, from which family it came with the rest to the Hares.

7. NEW HALL, or NELE'S HALL, Manor. John, son of John of New Hall, was Lord in the 7th Edward II ; and in 33rd Henry VIII, John Fincham died possessed of it. William Fincham sold it in 1570 ; and being united to the others it went with them also to the Hares.

8. BURNHAM HALL. Philip de Burnham held a lordship here under the Earl Warren. He and Emma his wife, and William his son and heir, gave to the monks of Castle-acre his mill in this town, with the site thereof, &c. Afterwards it came to the Grandcourts. But in the 25th Edward III, John de Fincham was Lord, and from that family it came to the Hares.

Each of the above manors, it seems, derived its origin from the estates of the Earl Warren, but there are neither traces nor traditions of the respective localities of any one of the last five.

9. FAIR'S-WELL Manor was part of the Barony of Wormegay, founded by Hermerus. The Lords Bardolf were tenants-in-chief. It was in the Trusbutt family in the reign of Richard II. From them it passed to the Guybons of Thursford, in Norfolk, one of whom sold it about 1720 to Richard Warner, Esquire, of Elmham. It is now the property of Mr. Calthrop, of London. Its site was on the road leading to Stoke Ferry.

10. CURPLE'S Manor was also held of the Lords Bardolf, by the Curples, in the reign of Henry III. They were connected by marriage with the Talbots, one of whom married Robert de Cawston, whose daughter Alice married John de Fincham, who by her became possessed of this manor. It is now united with the other manors of Sir Thomas Hare. The manor house was near the rectory, on the west.

11. GRANDCOURT Manor was so called from Roger Grandcourt, who possessed it in the time of Henry III. It was held of William de Calthorp and Cecilia his wife, who inherited it from the Bardolfs of Wormegay. In the 3rd Henry IV, it was possessed by John de Fincham, and was sold by William Fincham in 1570, and so passed with Fincham Hall to its present possessor.

12. BROTHER'S HALL was held by Simon de Brothers-Hall, in the 24th Henry III, probably of the Lords Bardolf of Wormegay, though the tenure does not appear from any known evidences. Its history is very similar to that of Talbot's, with which it stands connected in the Inclosure Act of 1772.

The following note, from the Court Rolls at Stow, applies to this and seven or eight other of these manors,

and is dated anno 1606 : “These manors are so confusedly “mixed together, that the demesnes and tenements are hardly “to be distinguished the one from the other.” An additional cloud of 250 years has completed their obscurity.

13. BAINARD'S HALL, the last to be mentioned, derived its origin from Ralf Lord Bainard, who had a grant here from the Conqueror. It was situated opposite the present rectory. It was lost to the family by his grandson William Bainard taking part with the Earl of Mayne in France against Henry I, and was held by the Fitz-walter family in the time of Edward III, and was then valued at £6 13s. 4d. From them it came to the Finchams, and was conveyed by William Fincham to his brother-in-law Cornwallis, and so went with Fincham Hall.

Not only is the name and site of Bainard's Hall familiar to the inhabitants of Fincham, but *Banyard*, from the Norman *Baignard*, is now a common surname here and in the neighbourhood.

PLAYTER'S HALL, the residence of Mr. Hebgin, was most probably the site of one of the foregoing ancient manors, perhaps Grandcourt's or Brother's Hall. It takes its present name from an owner early in the 17th century, as appears from an old Field Book of 1635 : “Capital messuage “nuper Edmundi Playter, Gent.”

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## 2. FINCHAM, FROM THE 14TH CENTURY.

There are extant at Stow some ancient private terriers and surveys, which, together with more recent maps, &c., afford interesting evidence of the progressive developement and improvement of the parish. These, I shall notice in chronological order :

1320. There are terriers of the lands of Adam de Fincham, in the early part of the 14th century, written in Latin legal phraseology, and scarcely legible. But they seem to be merely either registers of purchase, or bare descriptions of abuttals, and consequently possessing but little interest.
1460. The earliest local terrier that I have really examined is an old roll in Latin, 22 feet in length, written about the end of the reign of Henry VI. It is a record of the lands of John Fincham, of Fincham Hall, taken out of 103 ancient agricultural divisions, called *Quarantenas*,<sup>1</sup> or furlongs, each containing some 30 or 40 small pieces, from half a rood to three acres. All over these furlongs lie the lands of the said Lord, amounting to about 400 pieces. Having with no little difficulty got through these 22 feet on one side, the reader is thus directed to about half as many more on the other, “respice plus in tergo de residuo istius “Terrarii.” From this terrier we may infer that the quantity of land now under cultivation was considerably more than double what it was at the Conquest, viz., about 1850 acres, including pasture.
1575. In the 17th of Elizabeth, June 14th, a perambulation and survey of the parish was made, and the results are very carefully entered in a *Field Book* (in Latin), and verified on oath by 13 resident tenants of Charles Cornwallis, Esq., then Lord of Fincham Hall. They divided the parish into four quarters, or *precincts*, formed

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<sup>1</sup> Although *Quarantena* means *forty*, the number of acres signified by this measure in these surveys cannot be more than 15 or 20, according to the known total acreage. So a ship's *quarantine* may vary from five days to forty.

1575. by the intersection of the two principal roads of the village, the one called "East-gate" passing through the main street to Swaffham, the other the "Walsingham Way" towards Marham. These four divisions contained 135 Quarantenas, an increase of 32 upon the total mentioned in the last terrier. The commons, however, are not noticed in this survey. There must have been now about 2000 acres of land under cultivation.

In Quar. 49, of this survey, containing nearly all the houses and tenements on the south side of the village, occur amongst others the following :-

*d.* "Waste ground called *chapel hille*, late *All Saints*."

This lies opposite the church, and is now called *the hill*, and was the site of one of those numerous *Free Chapels*, which were dissolved by Edward VI. They were so called because they were built upon ancient crown lands, and were independent of the parish church, and exempt from all ecclesiastical jurisdiction. There were nearly 3000 of them in England.<sup>1</sup>

*e.* "William Bacon holds on the west a house called *the guilds house*."

There were 900 of these guilds in Norfolk, but this one is not included in Mr. Taylor's list. It was dedicated to St. John, as appears from the Subsidy Rolls in the Record Office. It was valued at 40 shillings in 1525. A guild was a society formed for the cause of trade, charity, and religion, -- a body corporate licensed by the crown, -- and had power to purchase lands, build chapels, and make public processions.

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<sup>1</sup> See Taylor's *Index Monasticus* for Norfolk, p. xvi.

1575. Their charities were extensive, and in some respects they resembled modern benefit societies. Almost every parish contained one, having its patron saint, its chapel, and its guild hall.<sup>1</sup>

*f.* “*Chirche-Lane towards All-Stoke brigge.*”

This is now called *Swan Lane*, and is continued by a footpath to the ancient Priory of St. Wynwaloe, or Wynhold, situated in Wereham, on the borders of this parish. Wynwaloe was a British saint, and flourished about A.D. 550. His body was enshrined in a French monastery, to which this Priory was a cell ; and hence the term *alien*, as applied to monasteries. His anniversary, occurs on the third of March, and this being a season often of cold and stormy weather originated the following old rhyme, so frequently quoted in this county :

“First comes David, next comes Chad,  
“And then comes Winnold, as if he were mad.”

1636. In the 11th of Charles I, another more complete survey was made. with Field Book, written in English, a very neat and valuable MS. It divides the parish into 106 portions, viz.:- 92 Quarantenas in the open fields, and 14 groups of old Inclosures ; and mentions six separate Commons, or Common Pastures, containing 713 acres. Every piece of land in the parish is here mentioned, together with all the tenements, but no totals, except the Commons as above. There do not appear to have been any further inclosures made, or any increase of arable land, since the last survey. A map corresponding with the Field Book shews two churches at this time.

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<sup>1</sup> See Taylor's *Index Monasticus* for Norfolk, p. xvi. and 71.

1772. The next survey of the parish was made in the 12th of George III, at the time of the Inclosure, by special Act of Parliament. The Commissioners' Award bears date Oct. 6th, 1773, and is preserved in the iron chest at the Rectory.<sup>1</sup> By this inclosure immense benefits were derived to the parish. Its rental was soon doubled. As stated in the Act, there were 2450 acres in the common fields and open lands, mostly arable, ant] separated into no less than 1560 pieces. These, of course had all of them their balks and boundaries, which were waste. They lay in four great divisions called *fields*, viz., the *North, Lang-holme* or *Sand-pit, East Row* or *Wroe*,<sup>2</sup> and *South* field respectively. Besides which there were other 202 old inclosures about the village. These 1762 pieces of land were reduced in number to about 380, and at the present time are still fewer. Hence we see at once the value of an inclosure. A great number of wastes and driftways are brought under cultivation, not to mention the very obvious advantage of farming lands in close proximity to each other.

But further, all these open fields were subject to various rights of sheep-walk, shackage, &c., in the several lords of manors, and their tenants ; and other large portions were *Common*, on which the inhabitants generally had certain rights and privileges. These latter were called the Great Common or West Heath and Besnell, Hungate<sup>3</sup> Common, Cow Pasture, Mere Common and Broadwater.

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<sup>1</sup> There exists also a large old map 7ft. by 4ft., of a date previous to the inclosure, and used for its purposes, by drawing the new fence lines across the old ones ; but I find no proper Inclosure Map.

<sup>2</sup> "The Wroe, a grove of wood by Barton Common, East." – Field Book of 1636.  
– Wro = a corner. – *Halliwell's Dict.*

<sup>3</sup> Hungate is the same as Hundred-gate. It supplied a family name. The Parish Register has this : "Christened Peter and William Hungat, sones of Thomas, 1543."

1772. All these rights and privileges were adjusted and settled to the mutual advantage of all parties. To the poor was awarded a farm of 54 acres, to meet their claims, then valued at £36 per annum. An allotment also was set out “as and for public sand, gravel, stone “and chalk pits,” for the use of all proprietors and their tenants in the parish.

The expenses of the inclosure amounted to £1016 18s., and were paid by the proprietors, who had also to raise the fences.<sup>1</sup>

The rights of sheep-walk, fold-course, shackage, &c., had become serious impediments to the progress of agriculture everywhere, and sources of endless annoyances and litigation. Take an example from the Court Books of the manor of Fairswell : “1578. John Bardans and John Styward were “presented for bringing yeir flock into ye field of “ffincham called .... .., and there did damnifye as “well ye lands of ye lord of ye maner, as of his “tenants, where of right yey ought not to be, yefore “fined iiii d, and commanded not to doe soe any “more.” “subpœna 6d.”

Again, in 1581, “the lord of this maner sold a “Borepigge to Henry Jerves, whiche was taken “within the liberty of this maner as an estray, and “kept a yeare or more.” Estrays could not be sold until after proclamation in the church, and the market town adjoining, nor until they had been kept at least a year and a day. They belonged to the lord only by grant from the king.

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<sup>1</sup> By the *General Inclosure Act* this enormous expense is very greatly reduced. The average expenses of the proceedings in 2485 cases of inclosure, exchange, &c., up to the end of the year 1860, confirmed and disposed of by the Commissioners, were only £15 18s. 7d., that is, up to the time of their being dealt with by Parliament in a general and annual Act. Of these, 532 were public inclosures, embracing 347,943 acres. -- See Commissioners' Report for 1861.

