

PETITION TO PARLIAMENT FROM THE BOROUGH OF WOTTON
BASSET, IN THE REIGN OF CHARLES I. RELATIVE TO THE
RIGHT OF THE BURGESSES TO FREE COMMON OF PASTURE IN
FASTERNE GREAT PARK.

This document is here printed from a contemporary printed broadside now forming part of Mr. Britton's collections for the History of Wiltshire deposited in the museum of the Wiltshire Archæological and Natural History Society at Devizes. It is without date, but from internal evidence it appears to have been prepared in the reign of Charles I. There is no notice of it in the Journals of the House; but the substance of it was published in the Wiltshire volume of the Beauties of England and Wales. The superstitious notion, so gravely asserted, that a storm was always in readiness to drive away Sir Francis Englefield's cattle from the poor man's pasture, is a remarkable example of the credulity of the age.

Sir Francis Englefield, the grantee of Wotton Basset, was a great favourite of Queen Mary, and Master of the Court of Wards. His nephew Sir Francis was created a Baronet in 1612, being then styled of Wotton Basset; and it was his son Sir Francis, the second Baronet, who was living when this Petition was written.

TO THE RIGHT HONORABLE
HOUSE OF PARLIAMENT NOW ASSEMBLED.

The humble Petition of the Mayor and Free Tenants
of the Borrough of Wootton Basset in the Countie
of Wilts.

Humbly sheweth to this Honorable House,

That whereas the Mayor and free Tenants of the said Borrough, by relation of our Ancient predecessors, had and did hold unto them free common of pasture for the feeding of all manner of Ruther-Beasts as Cowes, &c. Without stint were they never so many, in and through FASTERNE great Park, which said Park contained by estimation 2000 Acres of ground or upwards; and in the second and third yeere of the Raigne of King Philip and Queen Mary, the manner of Wootton Basset aforesaid came by Pattent into the hands and possession of one Sir Francis Englefield Knight, who in short time after he was thereof possessed did inclose the said Park; and in consideration of the Common

of Pasture, that the free Tenants of the Borrough had in the said Park, did grant, condescend, and leave out unto the said free Tenants of the said Borrough, to use as common amongst them that parcell of the said great Park, which formerly was and now is called or known by the name of Wotton Lawnd, which was but a small portion to that priviledge that they had before for it, doth not containe by estimation above 100 Acres; but the free Tenants being therewith contented, the Mayor and free Tenants did equally stint the said ground or Common as followeth (that is to say) to the Mayor of the Town for the time being two Cowes feeding, and to the Constable one cowes feeding, and to every Inhabitant of the said Borrough, each and every of them one Cowes feeding and no more, as well the poore as the rich, and every one to make and maintaine a certaine parcell^a of bound set forth to every person; and ever after that inclosure for the space of fifty and six yeers, or neere thereabout, any Messuage Burgage or Tenant that was bought or sold within the said Borrough, did alwayes buy and sell the said Cowes Leaze together with the said Messuage or Burgage as part and member of the same, as doth and may appcare by divers Deeds which are yet to be seen; and about which time as we have been informed and do verily believe that Sir Francis Englefield, heire of the aforesaid Sir Francis Englefield, did by some meanes gaine the Charter of our Towne into his hands, and as lately we have heard, that his successors now keepeth it; and we do believe that at the same time, he did likewise gaine the Deed of the said Common; and he thereby knowing that the Towne had nothing to shew for their Right of Common but by prescription, did begin suits in Law with the said free Tenants for their Common, and did vex them with so many suits in Law, for the space of seven or eight yeers at the least, & never suffer any one to come to tryal in all that space, but did divers times attempt to gaine the possession thereof by putting in of divers sorts of Cattell, insomuch that at the length, when his servants did put in Cowes by force into the said Common, many times and present upon the putting of them in, the Lord in his mercy did send thunder and lightning from heaven, which did make the Cattell of the said Sir Francis Englefield to run so violent

^a Not "parallel," as printed in the Beauties of England and Wales.

out of the said ground, that at one time one of the Beasts were killed therewith; and it was so often, that people that were not there in presence to see it, when it did thunder would say that Sir Francis Englefield's men were putting in their Cattell into the Lawnd, and so it was; and as soone as those Cattel were gone forth, it would presently be very calme and faire, and the Cattell of the Towne would never stir but follow their feeding as at other times, and never offer to move out of the way but follow their feeding; and this did continue so long, he being too powerfull for them, that the said Free Tenants were not able to wage Law any longer, for one Iohn Rosier, one of the free Tenants, was thereby enforced to sell all his Land (to the value of 500*l*). with following the suits in Law, and many others were thereby impoverished, and were thereby enforced to yeeld up their right and take a Lease of their said Common of the said Sir Francis Englefield for terme of his life; And the said Mayor and free Tenants hath now lost their right of Common in the said Lawnd neare about twenty yeeres, which this now Sir Francis Englefield his heires and his trustees now detaineth from them.

Likewise the said Sir Francis Englefield hath taken away their shops or shambles standing in the middle of the street in the Market-place from the Towne, and hath given them to a stranger that liveth not in the Town, and he detaineth them from the Town; and likewise he hath taken away certaine Garden grounds, which are taken out of a hye street, and detaineth them from the Town; and he hath altered and doth seekē wayes and meanes to take the Election of the Mayor of our Town to himselfe; for, whereas the Mayor is chosen at the Lawday, and the Jury did ever make choise of two men of the Town, and the Lord of the Manner was to appoint one of them to serve; which the Lord of the Manner have refused, and caused one to stay in two yeers together divers times, which is a breach of our custome.

And as for our Common we doe verily believe, that no corporation in England so much is wronged as we are, for we are put out of all the Common that ever we had, and hath not so much as one foot of Common left unto us, nor never shall have any, we are thereby grown so in poverty, unless it please God to move the hearts of this Honorable House to commiserate our cause; and to enact something for us, that we may enjoy our Right againe.

And we your Orators shall be ever bound to pray for
your healths and prosperity in the Lord.

Jeffery Skeat Mayor.	Ralph Faulckner.
John Say.	Oliver Lancton.
Timothy Crippes Senior.	John Hollister.
John Smith.	William Gilnor.
Charles Morris.	Elinor Hendly widdow.
John Rosier.	Alice Massee widdow.
Francis Crippes.	Ione Prater widdow.
John Menth.	Crissett Masling widdow.
Robert Parsons.	William Harbert.
William Harding.	Jeffery Rosier.
Thomas Harding.	Daniel Rosier.
Vincent Short.	

Divers hands more we might have had, but that
many of them doth rent Bargaines of the Lord
of the Manner, and they are fearfull that they
shall be put forth of their Bargaines, and then
they shall not tell how to live, otherwise they
would have set to their hands.

MEMORANDA IN HERALDRY.

By PETER LE NEVE, Norroy King of Arms.

THE MSS. from which these memoranda are extracted consist of five oblong volumes, now in the possession of George A. Carthew, Esq. F.S.A., of East Dereham, Norfolk. They are formed of the pocket-books in which Peter Le Neve entered such matters as occurred to his daily observation, either as hints for his professional business, or as materials for his collections. Many entries are marked as having been "posted" to his Pedigrees, to his catalogue and pedigrees of Knights, now in the British Museum (MS. Harl. 5801), or to those relating to Baronets, now in the College of Arms. After his death, these "Memoranda" came, with his other papers, into the hands of his executor, "honest Tom Martin," the historian of Thetford, who married his widow, and who appears to have had them bound. By him they were given to the Rev. Thomas Carthew, F.S.A. of Woodbridge abbey, the grandfather of the present owner.

Mr. Carthew communicated to the Gentleman's Magazine a few years