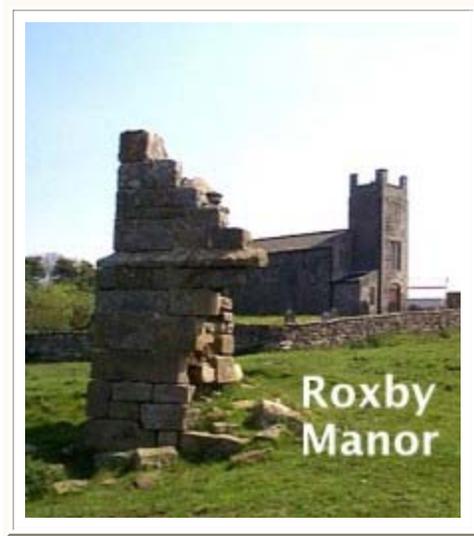


The Tangled Web of Castle Leavington



Walter married Alice and Castle Leavington became the Boynton castle. It was one of very few castles in the family *tree*. Then Elizabeth married Henry and the castle became a Gascoigne castle. Walter and Alice married in about 1350, and the castle passed to Elizabeth's Gascoigne heir in 1545. So, it was in the Boynton family for most of 190 years.

Wealth was land; land was wealth. The landed gentry inherited land and traded land. What happened between 1350 and 1545 might have been simple -- father to son for several generations -- but it was not. It is a story of the tangled web of inheritance.

Begin with Alice: Alice was landed gentry. Her grandfather, Nicholas de Meynell, had acquired the castle and land by providing military assistance to the king. The archbishop of Canterbury tried to get the castle when her grandfather died, but the king said no. When her father died in 1350 Alice was it, she was the only living child, and Castle Leavington became hers.

In rapid succession Alice married Robert de Bolton, Walter Boynton and John de Percy. The men in her life did not have much staying power. She and Walter had a son: Walter. She and John de Percy had two children: William and Margaret.

That left inheritance in a mess. So, in the 1370s the families, Thomas Boynton and the Percys, got together with Alice and parceled out the estate. The Boyntons were to get Castle Leavington. The Percys were to get the land and manor at Tanton; perhaps other land. When Alice died in 1387 the castle went to Walter.

Unfortunately, Walter did not live long; he died in 1391 or 1392, and he died without heir. So much for Boynton heirs to the Castle.

Next William de Percy moved in. But he did not last long, either; he only made it to 1396. And he died without heir except his sister, Margaret.

Margaret and her husband, Thomas Blanfront, took over the castle. By the 1430s their son, John, had died without heir. There was no heir!

So the Boyntons stepped in again since they had *reversion* rights to the castle. This time it was Christopher. Who was Christopher? By what right did he claim inheritance of the castle?

**Walter de
Boynton**

Thomas, who negotiated in 1370s

Thomas, son of Thomas and father of Christopher

Christopher, who took over castle

Walter, who married Alice

Walter, who inherited the castle

Walter de Boynton had two sons: Walter and Thomas. Walter [who married Alice] had a son Walter who inherited the castle and died without heir. Walter [who married Alice] had a brother Thomas. After Walter [who married Alice] died, it was Thomas who stepped in to assert the family rights and split up the estate in the 1370s. When the Percy claims to inheriting the castle ended without heir Christopher -- who was the son of Thomas who was the son of Thomas [Walter's brother] -- stepped in and the Boynton family got Castle Leavington again and the Percy family retained their land. I have never been very good with numbering cousins, but this was a pretty distant relationship -- at least by contemporary standards.

Just one more bit of complexity; here is the list of inheritors of the castle that was established when they were working this all out.

and licence for them to grant the same to Christopher Boynton and Joan his wife and the heirs of their bodies, with successive remainders to the heirs of Christopher's body, to Robert Danby and Elizabeth his wife and the heirs of their bodies, to the heirs of Elizabeth's body, to the heirs of the body of Thomas Boynton, knight, and to the heirs of the body of John Conyers of Horneby, with the remainder over to the right heirs of Christopher Boynton. [**Calendar of Patent Rolls, Henry VI, 1441-1446, vol. IV**, For His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1908, p. 280-281.]

That is the document of the Crown that sets up the line of inheritance -- just in case Christopher and Joan die without heir. Why the Danbys? Why the Conyers? Don't ask. It is more complicated to trace the connections than it is worth.

Now, Christopher and his wife Joan had the castle. They did not live there; Walter [the inheritor] was the last to live in the castle. But they managed the land.

Christopher did not last very long after acquiring the castle; he died in 1451. But Joan outlived him by more than thirty years. She died in 1488 at which point Castle Leavington passed to her grandson Henry. Henry's father had died in 1476 so the castle skipped a generation.

Henry's only child and heir was Elizabeth who married Henry Gascoigne and then Thomas Hilton. When Elizabeth died her heir was Richard, the son of Henry Gascoigne, who got the castle in 1545.

Castle Leavington was now Gascoigne family property.

Is there a moral? A bunch: If you hold land you are an attractive marriage partner. Don't die without heir; that throws the whole system into a tizzy. Don't die without male heir if you want to keep the wealth in the family.

Well, those were the morals of their day. Our day is not the same, and our morals, also, are not the same.

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The documents used to trace the movement of Castle Leavington from one family to another are available as [the pedigree](#). The [story of the castle](#), including a walking tour, is also available.