

Norreys Armorial Glass

in Mallow “Castle”, County Cork, Ireland



The Norreys of Ockwells Coat:
argent a chevron between three ravens' heads sable

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Introduction

The Norreys family and their descendants, the Jephsons, have left a valuable heritage legacy in Mallow, County Cork, Ireland, that includes two buildings – one a ruinous C16th castle and the other a mansion restored in the C19th by Denham Jephson who put up, in a two-light window, armorial glass relating to his family.



Mallow castle built by Sir Thomas Norreys in the late C16th



The mansion rebuilt in the mid-C19th by Sir (Charles) Denham Orlando Jephson-Norreys



The southeast front of the mansion – the armorial glass is in the ground floor window to the right of the door (photo courtesy R O'Byrne)



Norreys armorial glass in the C19th mansion at Mallow. L: Norris of Speke quartering Norreys of Ockwells. R: Norreys impaling Merbrooke. (photo courtesy of D.Noonan)

The two armorials are for, firstly, Norris of Speke quartering Norreys of Ockwells, and secondly John Norreys Esq (d.1466) impaling the coat of his first wife, Alice Merbrooke (d.ca 1450). The latter is a replica of an armorial achievement in the great hall of C15th Ockwells Manor house, Berkshire, a Grade I listed building that has always been in private hands. This achievement is one of eighteen (one is lost) put up by John Norreys Esq in the mid C15th when he built the house. The Norreys family had held the land since 1268 when Richard le Norreys, Coci (Cook) to queen Eleanor of Provence, wife of Henry III, had been granted *Ocholt*, (now Ockwells), a purpesture (land cleared for cultivation) in Windsor Forest.¹



East front of Ockwells Manor House, Berkshire

The Norreys Family and Mallow

In the C16th the descendants of John Norreys Esq, Sir John and Sir Thomas Norreys, were both employed in Ireland by Elizabeth I. She wanted to have firm control of Ireland because she feared that her enemy, the Spanish and Catholic king, Philip, would send forces to Ireland and would use them to attack England.

The Norreys brothers were among the sons of Sir Henry Norreys whose father, also Henry, was executed by Henry VIII for supposed adultery with Anne Boleyn. Sir Henry is said to have been ennobled by Elizabeth I because of his father's support of her mother, Anne Boleyn. This makes both brothers the great-great-great-grandsons of John Norreys Esq of Ockwells and his first wife Alice Merbrooke.

Mallow Castle in County Cork was rebuilt in the C16th by Sir Thomas Norreys, then Vice President, to create a suitable residence for the Lord President of Munster by converting an Irish castle tower.² His brother, Sir John Norreys, an experienced soldier, had arrived to assume the office of Lord President in 1584.³ Munster was a vast area in south west Ireland

¹ CPR 1266-1272, p190.

² Nolan p81.

³ Ibid pp6-69. He was also appointed Lord General in Ireland (ibid 161) replacing the Anglo-Irish Lord, Thomas Butler, 10th Earl of Ormond (Black Tom) who had brought a rebellion by Gerald Fitzgerald 15th Earl of Desmond to an end in November 1583 and had been welcomed back in the English court as a conquering hero in

that included Limerick and Cork. Mallow was ceded to the Presidency in 1587, and Sir John turned the management of it over to his brother.⁴ Thomas in 1585 had taken over his brother's duties as President and would be knighted three years later in recognition of these duties.⁵ Sir John left Ireland in 1586 to take charge of an expedition to the Low Countries not returning to Ireland till 1595, and by then a sick man. Sir John continued to hold the Presidency⁶ until his death in 1597, said to be in his brother's castle at Mallow,⁷ though a memorial tablet for him in the parish church at Yattendon, Berkshire (see below), claims that he died at his estate there.



Yattendon parish church, restored by John Norreys Esq in the mid C15th

Sir John had been involved in the development of Munster as a “plantation” area where land was allocated to magnates who chose English settlers to develop it and where he might obtain some of these lands for himself.⁸ The holdings of the Norreys brothers were apparently treated as a single unit. In 1591 Sir Thomas is credited with 11,000 acres while Sir John's name does not appear.⁹ Some of this land seems to have remained with the family over many generations. The chief products of Munster were cattle and dairy products but wars had

1585 (Kirwan pp 60-61). Desmond had ruled Munster prior to rebelling. As a result of rebellion in 1579-80 Munster had been left a desolate waste (Nolan p67). Ormond is thought to have been disappointed that the Queen had appointed another (Norreys) to govern the subdued province (ibid p71).

⁴ Nolan p79.

⁵ Ibid pp79-80.

⁶ Sir John saw no difficulty in either he or Thomas holding dual offices for he designated his brother as captain of a company in the Netherlands which he administered in Thomas's absence (ibid p79).

⁷ Ibid pp238-9.

⁸ Ibid p67 et seq.

⁹ Ibid p81. It is suggested that the Earl of Ormond provided an effective shield protecting the plantation of Munster from the Gaelic lords of Ulster and Connaught. See Nolan, p74, who mistakenly identifies him as James - actually this was Thomas Butler the 10th earl. Thomas was made a Knight of the Garter by Elizabeth I in c.1588. Interestingly, Thomas's ancestor in the C15th was known to the ancestor of the Norreys brothers. Armorial glass in the great hall of Ockwells Manor, Berkshire, built by John Norreys Esq (d.1466), includes the achievement of James Butler the 4th Earl of Ormond (d.1452) - see tree in Kirwan p. xix.

reduced the province's herd. Norreys wanted to establish some profitable enterprise for the province since it remained a desolate waste and its poverty had to be addressed.¹⁰

A monument (right) in memory of Sir John Norreys, restored by a distant descendent, Norreys Bertie (d.1766), a Tory politician, is in the parish church at Yattendon. The monument details his military career including that he was “...next in Ireland under Walter, Earl of Essex” and later “..in 30 Eliz [1587-8] being then President of the Council in the Province of Munster in Ireland, he had a Commission bearing date II Oct. giving authority to constitute such Principal Office as well by Sea and Land as he should think fit for withstanding all Hostile attempts and for the defence and Protection of that Realm”.



Sir Thomas Norreys, builder of the original Mallow Castle, had a daughter Elizabeth who married Sir John Jephson. By the end of the C17th the castle, dating from the 1590s, had been abandoned when the Jephsons converted a stable block to the immediate north into a residence.¹¹ By the mid-C19th this mansion was evidently in need of restoration and it was rebuilt by the Jephson's descendent, known as Denham Jephson, the London architect Edward Blore suggesting adding the tower in 1837.¹² In July 1838 Denham was created a baronet of Mallow in the County of Cork and later that month assumed by royal licence the additional surname of Norreys, becoming Sir (Charles) Denham Orlando Jephson-Norreys, 1st Baronet.¹³ He continued to represent Mallow in Parliament until 1859 and died in 1888 with no surviving sons.¹⁴

In his rebuilt house, I think he installed the armorial glass to celebrate his ancestors, specifically John Norreys Esq and his first wife, Alice Merbrooke, whose armorial achievement on which the Mallow armorial is based, is still extant in Ockwells Manor House, Berkshire.

The other achievement at Mallow, which quarters the Norris family of Speke with that of the Norreys of Ockwells, relates to the pedigree produced at the end of the C16th for Lord Henry Norreys of Rycote by the College of Arms. The herald, having in 1567 produced a pedigree

¹⁰ Ibid p75.

¹¹ O'Byrne R, 2017.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ See Wikipedia for him. Acc: Oct 2019.

¹⁴ For his parliamentary career see <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1820-1832/member/jephson-charles-1799-1888>.

for the Norris family of Speke, used it to create a supposed ancestral line for Lord Henry Norreys for which there is no evidence.¹⁵



Left: The armorial achievement of John Norreys Esq and his first wife, Alice Merbrooke at Ockwells. Right: The illustration of the same achievement in Lysons Magna Britannia for Berkshire (1813).

I originally thought Sir Charles might have visited Ockwells but by about 1838 it was in use as a farmhouse and tenanted. I now think he had the achievement copied from the illustration in Lysons *Magna Britannia for Berkshire* published in 1813. The give-away is the more ferrety face of the beaver supporters in the Mallow armorial, and plumage in the bird crest, as in the Lysons illustration; and Lysons also showed red mantling whilst now at Ockwells it is blue. This change to the colour of the mantling in the original glass probably occurred when the glass was taken out before 1849 by a past owner of Ockwells, Charles Pascoe Grenfell, and stored at his residence, Taplow Court, Buckinghamshire. Other features of the Ockwells armorial – the Norreys badge of three golden distaffs and his motto, *feythfully serve* – are replicated at Mallow.

¹⁵ See pedigree in Raines pp85-86; for discussion see Maidenhead Civic Society Newsletter Jan 2005 p7-10 (<http://www.maidenheadcivicsoc.org.uk/group/2086/Newsletters/NJan05.pdf>) .

A comment from the Athenaeum magazine in 1867 is apt: *“If the heralds are right, the descent from the cook is an heraldic myth; but I distrust the heralds, and have reason to believe that the most noted and most noble branch of the Norreys family - that of Ockwells, Yattendon and of Ricote, did really descend from Richard de Norreys, cook to the Queen of Henry the Third, and that the separation of this branch from that of Speke - if they were ever connected - must have taken place prior to 1257; but this belief involves another, viz. that heralds in ancient days “cooked” their visitations and family pedigrees as thoroughly as the directors of our days do their accounts, and that, unless where fortified by charters, wills, deeds, or other instruments, or by historical facts, they are not to be relied on.”*

The identity of the glazier of the Mallow armorials is not known at present. Before I realised the Lysons’ drawing has been copied I wondered whether Thomas Willement, Queen Victoria’s glazier, was responsible. He had visited Ockwells in 1838 making drawings of the glass and using its designs to inspire his glazing of the window near the tomb of Henry VI in St George’s Chapel. He had also made replicas of the Ockwells armorials for Henry VI and Margaret of Anjou.¹⁶ He would not have needed to rely on a Lysons illustration.

The Norreys Legacy

Mallow Town Park lies to the southwest of Mallow Castle and was originally part of the overall demesne of Mallow Castle. The park was given to the people of Mallow for use as an amenity in 1907 by the then owner of Mallow Castle, Katherine Jephson-Norreys, and was subsequently purchased by Cork County Council in 2015.¹⁷

The Norreys family and their descendants have left a legacy at Mallow that is currently an integral part of plans to develop a network connecting the Town Park to the Mallow Castle Demesne and the Victorian Spa House (also built by Sir Charles), aimed at enhancing Mallow’s overall potential as a major tourist and visitor destination for the north Cork region. Cork County Council’s masterplan for Mallow Castle has already seen works undertaken to improve access to the Castle and its gardens and parklands. Future work will include new paths, a designated deer viewing platform¹⁸ and other facilities with the aim of creating a long-life local heritage, amenity, recreational and tourism asset for Mallow and the surrounding area.¹⁹

¹⁶ See Maidenhead Civic Society Newsletter Feb 2018 pp16&17

(<http://www.maidenheadcivicsoc.org.uk/group/2086/Newsletters/NFeb18.pdf>) .

¹⁷ Browne 2019.

¹⁸ Another historic link to Sir Thomas Norreys is the herd of white deer at Mallow Castle. These are descended from a pair of white deer sent to Sir Thomas by Queen Elizabeth I to celebrate the baptism of his daughter Elizabeth, who must have been named for the queen.

¹⁹ Browne 2019.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Daniel Noonan and Robert O'Byrne for allowing me to use their photos and my husband Brian for again being my editor.

Maidenhead Civic Society has a long standing interest in the heritage of the Maidenhead area and has supported the study of the history, in particular, of several of the listed buildings from the medieval period. This has proved useful when commenting on planning issues concerning them.

The buildings are:-

Ockwells Manor – a C15th manor house built by John Norreys (Norys), Esquire to the Body of Henry VI, which has important armorial glass in the Great Hall.

Bisham “Abbey” – originally a preceptory of the Knights Templar that was added to by William Montacute, Earl of Salisbury in the C14th when he founded a priory on the site. Subsequent owners made further alterations. The priory was demolished during the dissolution of the monasteries. Henry VIII re-established the priory as an abbey that only lasted six months but the name has stuck.

St. John the Baptist Church, Shottesbrooke – also C14th, and the finest decorated period church in Berkshire, part of a college founded by Sir William Trussell.

There are links between these buildings, with representatives of the same families (Beauchamp, Montacute, Mortimer, Neville and Trussell) occurring in the armorial glass. The study of Bisham “Abbey” complements in particular the study of St. John the Baptist Church at Shottesbrooke. The Shottesbrooke Church was contemporary with Bisham Priory Church, lost in the C16th.

Bisham “Abbey” is in the ownership of Sport England and Ockwells Manor is in private hands. Both are inaccessible to the general public except on special occasions. To increase awareness of these magnificent local heritage buildings Maidenhead Civic Society has designed and produced presentations that provide virtual tours of both buildings. For further information contact the Society via the website www.maidenheadcivicsoc.org.uk or by email to info@maidenheadcivicsog.org.uk.

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November 2019