

## ***MAISEMORE COURT AND THE FAMILIES WHO LIVED THERE*** ***PART I***

*by Betty Chamberlayne*

**T**he earliest record of Maisemore is the gift of the manor to St. Peter's Abbey in 1101 by Henry I and this presupposes that there was already in existence an estate organised on feudal lines. The Abbey continued to hold it, leasing it out to tenants until the Dissolution of the monasteries when it passed to the new bishopric.

### *The Cecils*

By the 16th Century there were Cicells or Cecils at Maisemore. They were a branch of the family who had a small estate at Altyrennis in south west Hertfordshire. One of them, David Cecil, was a supporter of Henry Tudor in his struggles before he became Henry VII, and

later he was chosen to be a Yeoman of the Guard. He settled at Stamford in Northamptonshire, and prospered there, marrying a daughter of the Mayor. He was able to get a position at Court for his son Richard who also made an advantageous marriage, and his only son William became Lord Burghley, Minister of State and friend and adviser of Queen Elizabeth.

Among the archives of Lord Salisbury at Hatfield House there is a pedigree of the Cecils in Burghley's own hand. It shows Burghley to have been a great grandson of Richard Cecil of Altyrennis, and 'a Robarte Cecil of Macemore' in Gloucestershire to have been a grandson of that Richard. He is listed in the Subsidy Rolls for Maisemore for 1524/5 as being worth £13.0.0 (annually) and paying 6s.6d. (32½p) tax and his son William who followed him was worth £20.0.0 in 1542/3 and paid 11s.4d. (57p) tax. The Lay Subsidies were granted to the sovereign as income, often in time of war when he required extra funds, and were a tax on land and goods.

On September 8 1545 William Cecil made his will saying he was 'Fermer of the Courte of Maysmore and syke in body but whole of mynde and remembrance'; he had only a few more weeks to live. In the usual way at that time he bequeathed his 'soule to Almighty God and to our blessed Lady Saynt Mary' and to 'all the company of heven and four pence to the hyeghe altar of the Parish Church'. Then 'I geve and bequeth the resydue of all my goods moveable and immoveable to Ysabel my wyffe yf she do not marry whom I make and ordeyne my soul executrix willing and bynding her to kepe my mother during hurr lyffe after an honeste sorte and to bring up my children and heir after her discreycon'. It may be taken that his heir was the William Cecil who inherited the property and who was described in documents as William the Elder.

### *The Queen and the Manor*

From the early 17th Century very many records survive concerning Maisemore and one of them which is especially interesting is a tripartite indenture of 1613. Referring back to those who held property in former years it stated that the manor which had been held and occupied by William Cecil the Elder, was on October 26 1568 leased from the Bishop by Queen Elizabeth for 99 years. On November 6 1569, only a year later, the Queen relinquished her claim to the property and assigned it back to William for the remainder of the lease. When the lease was confirmed to William the Younger it was said to have been done in consideration

of his service in 'her Grace's Warrs'; the Chancery Rolls refer to wars in France, Scotland and Ireland.

This is most interesting because in the Calendar of State Papers it is recorded that in the letter of 15 October 1568 from the Bishop to Minister Cecil he said 'he was willing to let the farm at Maisemore to Mr. Cecil'. The Minister must have asked the Bishop if he would do this before the Queen had taken the lease, and she must also have agreed to give it up afterwards. At this period when kinship was very significant it would not have been unusual for Burghley to help his family to obtain a long lease; as Secretary of State he was in a position of great influence, and it appears that this was what he did. The rather incompetent family at Altyrennis had frequently petitioned and obtained help from him.

### *William the Elder and William the Younger*

William the Elder who held the manor in 1568 was listed in the Subsidy Rolls of 1562/3 as being worth £18 and paying 24s. (£1.20p) tax. Burghley's pedigree shows that he married a daughter of Timothy Porter of Warwickshire, and this is borne out by an entry in the Maisemore registers of 1560 of the marriage of William Cecil and Agnes Porter. She was probably the mother of William Cecil the Younger, and was also the Anne, wife of William Cecil who was buried in 1565. [Agnes was used as a variant of the name Anne.] William then married Theobald of Hartpury, who after his death, because he had not made a will, was granted the administration of his goods by the Prerogative Court of Canterbury on 22 August 1586. This was not carried out at the time, and she then married Augustine Badger of Maisemore, but before anything was done about it she died and was buried on April 12, 1590. On April 13, 1590 the administration of goods was granted to William's brother Richard. Richard must also have been in charge in 1593 when a subsidy was levied, for the property was valued to him at £16, and 16s.4d. (82p) was paid in tax.

In the tripartite indenture of 1613 William the Younger, as heir, had inherited the property and in 1592, probably at the time of his marriage, he had set up a trust naming William Baughan of Charlton Kings and Richard Cecil, his uncle, the trustees. It was to be in favour of himself and any children who might be born to him with the proviso that his wife Jane should have a life interest in a moiety of the estate after his death, and if there were no children it was to go to Richard Cecil.

By 1613 William the Younger had died and Jane his widow was married to Richard Boyle. Richard Cecil had also died, and William Baughan was arranging for the terms of the will to be carried out, which were for Richard and Jane Boyle to have their moiety and the other half to be divided between Anthony and Jane Pembruge and Edward and Anne Suekley. William and Jane Cecil must have married about April 1592 and Jane and Anne must have been the daughters born to them before or soon after William died in 1594/5, for on 10 April 1595 the administration of his goods was granted to his widow, by then Jane Boyle, and by 1613 Jane Cecil was married to Anthony Pembruge, and Anne to Edward Suekley and they had come into their inheritance.

### *The Boyles*

Jane Cecil's second husband Richard Boyle had come from an important family in Herefordshire, his father James having been Mayor of Hereford three times and High Sheriff of the county in 1587. Later, in 1620 a cousin Richard Boyle was created Earl of Cork, and his son Robert was the chemist who worked on the expansion of gases and gave his name to Boyle's Law.

Jane and Richard had four children who were baptised at Maisemore between 1603 and 1607. They were James, Thomas, Joan and John and there was also a daughter Isabel who had been born before the local registers were kept, and who married Anthony Wye of Lypiatt in 1616.

Richard's father James Boyle, who had been a capmaker in Hereford, died in 1593 and bequeathed to Richard the residue of his property, his leases, goods and chattels. Anne Boyle his mother lived until 1602, and in her will she stated that Richard had owed her various sums of money over many years, including £5 that he borrowed 'on goinge to London', some rent that he should have collected for her, and other unpaid loans. In all it amounted to £130 3s.4d. (£130.17p).



Maisemore Court from the east - approx. 1930

She did not leave him anything, but provided he paid certain sums to one of his sisters and a niece he was to be acquitted of the debts, 'for the trewe zeal and metherlie love and affection I always did and doo beare unto him'.

In 1608 Smith's *Men and Armour* records that Richard Boyle of Maisemore, gentleman, was able to provide 'one corslet fur' [nished] - a piece of armour, a breastplate made of metal and leather, 'one calyver' - a gun (smaller than a musket), 'one headpiece' - a helmet and 'fewer helberts'. These were fearsome looking weapons, a combination of spear and battleaxe, with handles five to seven feet long. He also had five servants in the muster.

By 1616 it had been decided exactly how they were going to divide up the estate, house and lands between the Boyles and the Pembruges, and another gentleman called John Borough who must have bought the interest of Edward and Anne Suekley. There are no more references to them.

### *Dividing the Inheritance*

It had been agreed to divide the 'newe mansion house' and that Richard and Jane Boyle should have 'the parlour, the chamber next to the buttery, the buttery, the little seller, the chamber over the parlour, the chamber over the buttery, the two houses of office, and the cocklofts'. They also had the two new gardens and the dovehouse as well as half the farmbuildings, the old farmhouse and half the land, about 250 acres (104ha.).

Because of the extensive alterations to the house in the late 18th century it is not possible now to place the rooms that are mentioned, but we can come to some general conclusions. The oldest part of the house, the west side, may well have been there during the lifetime of William and Ysabel in 1545 and been the medieval hall, and then this was added to, to make the new mansion house of 1616. This must have been built by William Cecil the Younger, and his unexpected death and the establishment of the trust, meant it had to be divided so soon afterwards. There are still some Tudor windows at the Old Court and in the attics and cellars and in the south and east walls beneath the stucco and plaster. Internally some of the walls are timber framed and others must have been removed in the refurbishment in the 18th century.

For about forty years there had always been children growing up in the house, first Jane and Anne Cecil, then the Boyles and a little later Jane Pembruge's own family of five, all born between 1613 and 1622. Possibly the Wyes also lived there, for two of their daughters aged 16 and 17 were buried at Maisemore in 1633 and 1634.

Anthony and Jane Pembruge's part of the house was 'the hall, the chamber over the hall, the little chamber adjoining the hall eastwards, the cocklofts over the chamber over the hall, the cockloft over the porch, with half the great seller eastwards and right of entry through the buttery'.

All seems to have gone without incident until Richard Boyle died in 1633, a few weeks after making his will. He left 'To my beloved wife my best bed with all the furniture belonging to it in the chamber over the parlour. To James Boyle my son £300, to Thomas Boyle another son £200, to Joan my daughter £200. To the poor of Maisemore £3. To the curate of the parish 10s. (50p). All the rest of my goods cattle, household stuff, come, hay, money plate, jewels whatsoever to be equally divided between my two sons and daughter'.

His wife Jane was already well provided for by her first husband, as she received half the income of the estate for her lifetime. She lived on to be an old lady and died in 1648. In the Survey of the Manor in 1647 she had been described as an ancient widow, and there is a curious item in the City of Gloucester expense accounts which may well refer to her. It was at the time of the siege of Gloucester in 1643 when there was a payment of 2s.6d. (12½p) 'for hauling a load of salt petre liquor

from Mrs Boyle's pigeonhouse, for making gunpowder'. There are similar records of pigeon manure being bought from Tuffley and Longford. The ownership of dovecotes had been restricted to manor estates, and so the Mrs Boyle in question must have been a widow who possessed one within easy distance from Gloucester. There are no records of other Boyles near Gloucester.

### *The Pembruges*

The Pembruges like the Boyles came from Herefordshire. They can be traced back to the time of Henry I and were a prominent family in the county for several centuries. One branch gave their name to Pembridge Castle.

Anthony Pembruge of Wellington who married Jane Cecil was born in 1586. He was the son of another Anthony and his wife Griswold, and he went to Oriol College, Oxford in 1604. When his father died he left his interest in the leases of some property for his son's 'better mayntenance at the Inns of Courte at his books where he is now settled'. In 1615 he became a barrister-at-law at the Inner Temple, as his father had been, and he would have been likely to have known John Borough who studied at Gray's Inn, and was the third party in the 1616 indenture.

John Borough, who later became Garter King of Arms, was more interested in history than the legal profession, and became Keeper of Records at the Tower of London. He went with the King to Scotland during the Civil War and compiled accounts of various conferences between the Royalists and the Parliamentarians. He had a small part of the estate at Maisemore - in the house he had the kitchen, the larder, the entry with the chambers and cocklofts above, and half the great cellar westwards. Of the land he had Uppingham and five acres in Cowleaze; these were large meadows lying against the Severn and stretching from the Upper Parting to Longridge Leys under High Redding Hill.

Although Anthony Pembruge became a barrister in 1615 it is not known if he continued with his legal career. His family lived at Maisemore; his five children were baptised there. He also spent time in Herefordshire where he had property, including a large house in the City of Hereford in Hungery Street, near St. Peter's Church. This was where he was taken ill, with only time to make a nuncupative will (one made orally and later written down and confirmed by reliable

witnesses) before he died on 30 November 1641. Anthony his eldest son lawfully inherited his estate, and the other children Philip, Thomas (vicar of Corse 1662-1687) and Jane received £100 each. As well as furniture the inventory of goods in the house show it to have been well appointed and that there were many curtains and cushions, much linen, brass and pewter ware and some silver dishes and spoons. He had 'a deske, chayre and certaine bookes in his studdie'. It was all valued at £95 8s.2d. (£95.41p).

Following her husband's death Jane Pembruge now had control of her share of the estate, and in 1648 when her mother, who had a life interest in the property, died, a new arrangement had to be made.

Jane and her son Anthony took over the part of the house which had been Jane Boyles, with the addition of a new kitchen, and all her land. By this time there was only one shared office and each party had one half of the garden. It seems that when the house was divided between members of the family they had used the garden together, but now it was separated 'down to the young pyppen tree, and up to the pippen tree by the sun dyall post'.

In 1653 Jane leased her property to Henry Mercer, a yeoman of Gloucester, keeping for her own use, perhaps for the storage of furniture, the room over the parlour called the 'Matted Chamber' ('hung with tapestry'), and allowing the Hall to be in common use between them.

The lease was for three years with the right to renew it for three more if he chose to do so, and the rent was £180 a year. No pasture was to be ploughed up and planted with corn or tobacco, and no hay, straw or manure was to be sold off the farm. A new lease made in 1660 was for six years, and the rent was £175 a year.

The goods left in the house were mainly shelves and cupboards, although in the hall there was panelling, and an oaken plank table board, a long form of 'hart of oake' and two inlaid joined chairs. The men's chamber had 'one bedstead matt and cord', but the maids had to make do with one old bedstead, two side cupboards, a trundle bed and an old presse (a large cupboard) without any doors to it.

Gregory Wilsheire who held a lease of the other moiety of the manor was a clothier in London, but earlier many of his family who were concerned in the clothing trade had lived in Gloucester. In 1661 he sublet his moiety, part of the house and about 260 acres of land (108ha.) to Nicholas Webb, an apothecary for six years at a rent of £140 a year and 'one good Fleetch of Bacon'.

While the house and land were leased to Henry Mercer, Jane Pembruge and her son went to live in Sandhurst, not far from her half-sister Joan Boyle who was married to William Purlewent of Braun. Anthony Pembruge was married to Mary Kent, the daughter of a Hampshire landowner, and two of their children were christened in Sandhurst, but they moved back to Maisemore in 1662 when their daughter Joanna was born. Mary Kent's brother Edward had died when he

was quite a young man, and in his will he left £20 each to his nieces Jane and Mary Pembruge of Bengrove (Bengrove, also called Coverdine, was a large moated, stone and timber framed mansion taken down in the early 19th century). They were then little girls of two and three years old.

It is not known when Jane Pembruge died, but it must have been between 1660 and 1668, a time when there were many omissions in the Parish Registers. In 1668 the original 99 year lease of the manor had run out, and a new one was granted by the Bishop to Anthony Pembruge and



Maisemore Court from the south - approx. 1970

Gregory Wilsheire, this time for 21 years only. The reserved rent could not be increased and so stayed at £21.6s.8d. (£21.33p) per year. Also at this time a new trust was set up with Richard Kent, Anthony's brother-in-law and Philip Pembruge, his brother, the trustees.

Mary Pembruge died in 1672 and Anthony in 1696 when he was 78. His memorial in the church says he was a man of upright character, faithful to the King, gentle to children and generous to his family.

### *William Pembruge*

Anthony, the eldest of the family, died suddenly when he was twenty-one, and so William born in 1668 inherited the estate. When he was seventeen he went up to Wadham College, Oxford, but he did not stay to take his degree and when he was twenty-one he was married. His wife was Katherine, the daughter of Kemmet Freeman who had copyhold land at Maisemore although the family were established in Twyning and her mother was descended from the wealthy Tracy family of Toddington.

William and Katherine had two sons, and then when a daughter was born in 1690, Katherine tragically died. The baby was christened at Maisemore and named Katherine on the same day that her mother was buried in Gloucester Cathedral, where William had a memorial

put up to her in the south aisle. It is in Latin, and speaks of her as the most excellent and best of wives, so charming, so talented and so good, and laments his own deep sorrow and grief.

On her marriage Katherine had brought a dowry of £600 which was invested in property in Hereford, and it had been arranged that this was to be used for the benefit of the younger children, but after her death her sister Mary Harwood persuaded William to make it over to her in the form of bonds, and she was to administer it for them. Later William wished to regain control of the money and Mary Harwood agreed to give it up, but afterwards she said she would not, and in 1695 he had to go to law to recover it, before the Master of the Rolls at the Court of Chancery. He declared that she had taken advantage of him when he was 'inflicted for the loss of his wife', and Mary Harwood said she was only acting on behalf of the children. In the end she gave in and agreed that she would deliver up the bonds, and William resettled the money on Edmund his younger son and Katherine his daughter.

The next part of Betty Chamberlayne's story begins with a wonderfully interesting inventory of Maisemore Court in 1726. (Ed.)