

# MAISEMORE COURT AND THE FAMILIES WHO LIVED THERE

## PART II

### By Betty Chamberlayne

#### THE INVENTORY OF 1726

In 1726, when he was fifty eight years, old William Pembruge went through all the rooms in the house and made a detailed inventory of his goods. By this time his three children were married, the eldest, William had been widowed and Edmund was living in Chipping Campden, Katherine who had been born when her mother died had married William Fletcher of Maisemore in 1716, and then tragedy had struck the family again, and she too died in childbirth, leaving three small children. Among the articles mentioned in the inventory is '*One silk Christening banner, embroidered with silver and gold*', which must have been a most sad reminder of the past.

The rooms listed in the house were one brewhouse, kitchen, parlour, hall and pantry, seven chambers (bedrooms) and garrets where there were '*three old beds, glasses to cover cucumber frames, stacks of boards, sum lumber and pretty many apples*'.

The following are some of the other items that he mentions.

#### **In the Kitchen**

5 spits, a carbine [a short firearm], a case of pistols and a jack, candlesticks and a candelconce, brass, iron and some tin cooking pots and pans. 1 great tubb. A candlebox, flourbox, pepperbox and saltbox. Bellows, tongues and fire shovle.

#### **In the Parlour**

1 large oake table. A couch of Turkey work [cross stitched woollen canvas work], 1 large looking glass, 7 cane chairs,

#### **In the Hall**

1 large oaken table, 6 old Turkey chairs and other chairs, and a clock with a case.

#### **In the Pantry**

A sett of china dishes and saucers, tea pots and coffee dishes. Glass decanters, wine glasses and drinking glasses. Earthenware plates, cups, pots and pudding pans.

#### **Also downstairs**

Garden tools, Bridle houlsters, a long Gun and Swords

#### **Upstairs in William's chamber**

A bedstead, bed boulder and coverlid. A sett of red and white curtains and valience [a fringe of short curtains attached to the headpiece of a bed], 2

window curtains. 1 looking glass. 8 chairs. A great chest with linen including 16 pairs of sheets, 26 towels and a ferbeloe for the table in the best chamber Among his wearing apparel 12 shirts, sleeves, ruffles, cravetts and 11 pairs of gloves. Also kept in his bedroom were the silver items which included a large silver cup with two handles and thirteen spoons.

Everything in the house is what might be expected, except that there were an extraordinary number of chairs, 58 altogether including 12 cane ones in the best bedroom!

In 1733 William arranged a trust to settle how his family were to benefit from his property. He made Edmund his heir, and strangely William the elder son only received an allowance of £16 a year. This was to be paid to him monthly at the house of John Pembruge, one of the trustees '*into his own proper hands and not into the hands of any other person who may claim the same by virtue of any agreement or otherwise*'.

Betty and William Fletcher, his two grandchildren, were to receive £250 and £50 respectively when they became twenty-one, and until then Betty was also to have an allowance of £10 a year for her education and maintenance.

William's will, made in 1734, contained similar provisions, but with some additions and it explained why his son William received so little, he was thought unfit to take charge of the estates. As well as his £16 a year from the Maisemore property he was given £20 a year from what was owned in Hereford, and these same were intended to be a full satisfaction of his interest in them '*in regard of his undutifulness to me, and on account of his improvident folleys and extravagant course of living*'. However some concern for him was shown in that Edward was allowed to spend £10 a year from the annuity he had to pay him to buy him clothes, and he was also left all the furniture in the chamber over the brewhouse. [In 1726 this had been 1 table 6 Red say chairs, 1 pair Chinese window curtains and valiens, and a fyre shovle and a pair of tongues]. He was living in Maisemore in 1741, but later on he went to Twyning, the parish his mother had come from, and where his father's sister Joanna lived after her marriage. He died there in 1754.

As well as the Maisemore estate William owned a large house and eight small ones in Hereford, which he left to Edmund, and concerning the money for Betty Fletcher, he said her father was not to meddle, or have anything to do with it. His last bequests were to his servants, one called Sarah Fowler received £10 and others who were living with him at the time of his death had 40s. (£2) each. He died on 13 April 1738 aged 70.

### EDMUND PEMBRUGE

In 1718 or 1719 Edmund Pembruge married a widow called Anne Lane. She had two children, and her first husband had been Zachariah Lane a wealthy mercer of Chipping Campden. Edmund and Anne had four children and they lived in Campden for about twenty years, until after William Pembruge's death. Then in 1741 Edmund was granted a lease of a moiety of the manor of Maisemore by the Bishop, and in Herefordshire he owned farms in Longtown near the Black Mountains and the houses in Hereford city.

The other moiety of the manor which had been held by Gregory Wilsheire, and had later been granted to Nicholas Webb, came in 1720 to his widow Joyce Webb, and the smaller part of the house that did not belong to the Pembruges. She did not occupy it, but lived in Barton Street, a residential area in the 18th century.

Edmund lived at the Court for about twelve years, and when he came to make his will his wife and all his children had died so he devised his real and personal estate to William Fletcher, his brother-in-law and legal heir. It was the same William Fletcher who had been told by William Pembruge not to meddle with Betty Fletcher's allowance. He came of an old Maisemore family who were small farmers, somewhat lower down the social scale than the Pembruges. They held about 15 acres of copyhold land and lived at Overton by a lane which used to run down to Dent's Lane in Hartpur, and was closed when the main road was made.

It was strange that Edmund Pembruge did not know that William Fletcher, who he thought was living in Barton Street, was in fact already dead. After his wife Katherine Pembruge died he had made a second marriage to a Mary Cooke of Maisemore and they had three children. He died in 1753. Edmund's son also named Edmund had stayed on in Campden, and died in 1756 when he was thirty years old, leaving large debts, but making his father his sole legatee, and so legally

responsible for what was owed. Edmund senior had not paid these debts when he died, but in his will he left the several houses he owned in Hereford city for this purpose, and directed that William Fletcher should see to it, and be allowed to keep the surplus, if any!

Edmund made a codicil to his will a short while before he died in which he set down the precise arrangements he wanted for his funeral at Maisemore. Six gentlemen including two clergymen and John Guise and John Pitt, MP were to carry the pall, they were each to receive gold rings, gloves, scarves and hatbands, as were the Rev. James Pitt and the Rev. John Arnold. Mrs. Pitt (Betty Fletcher), the wife of the Rev. James Pitt was to have a pair of gloves and a ring. Five named men from the village were to be carriers and each of them was to have a silk hatband and a pair of gloves. The joiner who was to make his coffin was mentioned, and even the man, who was to engrave his name on a monument in the church. Lastly *Whereas I have by my will given my servant maid 40s. (£2) which is not sufficient to answer the purpose intended, I give such servantmaid £3 more to buy her a suit of mourning'*. He died on October 27 1766 aged 78.



Maisemore Court

### THE PITTS

When Edmund Pembruge died, the next in line to inherit the estate was his niece Betty Fletcher, and as she was married it came to her husband the Rev. James Pitt, a member of a distinguished family in Gloucester at that time. They gave their name to Pitt Street, near the Cathedral. The Rev. James' father, also called James was the Bishop's steward and secretary and said to be the Bishop's favourite. His brother John was Tory M.P. for Gloucester for many years, another brother Nicholas served in the Navy, and Jane his youngest sister was married to

William Roberts, the headmaster of Eton College. James Pitt senior, while he was the Bishop's steward had acquired a great deal of property, both leasehold and copyhold, in several parishes, including the Persh Farm in Maisemore. For this in 1757 his executors *'paid for adding one life to the lease only £20, made upon no calculation of annual value, but sett down at a small sum in commiseration of the unfortunate fate of Mr. Pitt's brother who was blown up in a man of war'*. This refers to Nicholas who had been a chaplain on H.M.S. St. Albans which was sunk in the Seven Years War with France.

James Pitt, the steward, foresaw there might be difficulties in sharing out his property after his death, and to prevent this he arranged that his sons should each give him a bond of £4,000 to be paid if they could not agree. He said he would have preferred them to have shares as equal as possible. The Rev. James refused to sign at the time, and his father then added a clause which said that those who did not do so would be disinherited; he must have agreed to sign the bond later on. Meanwhile James left all his property to his wife and gave her power to dispose of it among the children as she wished. He died when he was 52 years old, just a few weeks before his friend the Bishop.

Rachel Pitt, James' widow, a descendant of the Guise family lived on for another 22 years. In her will, after asserting at length the powers that were given her for the disposal of his estates, she said that she had already appointed certain parts of them to her sons James and John, and the residue she left to Jane Roberts.

The Rev. James Pitt after graduating at Oxford became the incumbent of Maisemore for a short while and then in 1750 was inducted into the benefices of Taynton in Oxfordshire and Great Barrington in Gloucestershire, parishes a few miles apart. He married Betty Fletcher the granddaughter of William Pembruge in January 1750/51 and their two sons William and James were born in Taynton in 1752 and 1759.

In December 1766, after the death of Edmund Pembruge, James was granted the lease of the moiety of the manor and the family came to live at Maisemore and he officiated as minister of the church. He leased out all the farms to two tenants, Thomas White and Thomas Vallender. He died in March 1784, and his wife died three months later, they are both buried at Maisemore.

## WILLIAM PITT

William Pitt was thirty two years old when his father died, and was living in College Green in Gloucester where he practised as an attorney and was a Proctor at the Consistory Court. His first wife Elizabeth Arnold had died in 1779 when their baby daughter was born. She was baptised in the Cathedral and named Elizabeth, and her mother was buried in the South Cloisters where there is a memorial to her.

Afterwards William married again to a Sarah Smith the sixteen year old daughter of Robert Smith, a Gloucester mercer who settled £3,000 on her as a marriage portion, £1,000 was paid at the time of the marriage and the rest after the deaths of her father and mother. William and Sarah had two children, James and Harriet who were both baptised in the Cathedral.

After the Rev. James Pitt died it might have been expected that William, the eldest son, would have taken over his father's lease of the estate, but this did not take place. It was granted by the Bishop to James, the younger son, a fellow of Oriel College Oxford for three lives, his own, William's and that of Samuel Dauncey, a family friend. William already had leases for about 170 acres (71 ha.), made up of various small farms in Maisemore. The rent of the moiety of the manor, or Court Estate as it was called was still £11-3s-4d (£11.17p), plus heriots and entry fees, but it was worth much more, and in 1756 James sold his interest in it to William for £2640, and by 1790 William was farming it all himself.

The other moiety of the manor which had been held by Joyce Webb, passed by inheritance to her nephew Nicholas Hyett, and in 1777 to his son Benjamin Hyett of Painswick.

About this time considerable alterations were made at Maisemore Court, in the Georgian style. Inside walls were taken down and rebuilt to give new rooms, and a new staircase was made in the middle of the house with a glass dome above. Two of the main rooms were oak panelled and there were plasterwork overmantels, new fireplaces upstairs and down, sash windows and new doors to replace the Tudor ones. Also at this time the stable block next to the garden was built.

In 1796 William's eldest daughter was married at Maisemore to a Robert Smith of Painswick, and in the same year his brother, then the Rev. James Pitt became Rector of Cranham and Brimpsfield, he was married to his cousin Mary Pitt, the only child of John Pitt, the MP for Gloucester. Sadly two

years later William and Sarah's son James died. He was only seventeen years old, and in the Burial Register it was said he died of cachexy. This is a rather vague term indicating a chronically ill wasting and declining condition, possibly tuberculosis.

Sarah's father had died in 1790 leaving her his silver coffee pot and waiter, with a choice of household goods to the value of £40, and the residue after the death of her mother. But her mother outlived her, and Sarah died in 1802 aged 41. A notice in the Journal said she was much respected and lamented.

William lived three more years and died in November 1805 when there was an appreciative obituary notice in the Journal that bears out all that is known about him. It said *'Died on Tuesday last at his house in College Green aged 53, William Pitt Esq. of Maisemore near this city. In his manner he was plain and unaffected, in his dealings just and honest. His great delight was in agricultural pursuits till he was prevented from attending to them by his infirmities. For nearly the last four years he was confined to his bed, and*

dressmaker.

When William Pitt was ill and bedridden in Gloucester, Maisemore Court was left unoccupied. Particulars of the estate drawn up in 1806 describe it as a good house, built of stone and roughcast and tiled, having four good rooms, with a good kitchen, back kitchen and brewhouse on the ground floor. A drawing room and four good bedrooms and dressing closets on the next floor, and cheese chamber and garrets above, all in good repair, considering that the house has been so long uninhabited.

## THE GOODRICH FAMILY

Harriet Pitt married William Goodrich in 1803, when she was twenty years old and he was twenty four. They were married at the church of St. Mary de Lode in Gloucester which was close to her father's house in College Green where she had been living and where he was confined by illness. William came from Egwsilan in Glamorgan and was the eldest son of John Goodrich who had been sheriff of Glamorgan in 1799 and w.l.o provided



The Panelled Room

*under the pressure of a most severe illness supported himself with the utmost patience and resignation'. He was buried at Maisemore.*

Apart from a legacy of £20 to a Sarah Foster, William left all his property between his two sons-in-law, Robert Smith and William Goodrich who had married his daughter Harriet. Surprisingly Sarah Foster's name is found again, this time as a witness to the Goodrich marriage settlement, in which she was described as a mantua maker, or

two farms and two collieries in the village of Egwsilan for the marriage settlement. William put £5,000 in trust for them, explaining that much of it had come from Harriet's mother, as Elizabeth her half sister had only been given £2,600.

After William Pitt's death William and Harriet went to live at Maisemore Court, and it was there that the first seven of their fourteen children were born, but it is evident that William soon became troubled by the financial difficulties that were to continue for the rest of his life.

In March 1806 he took over the whole of William

Pitt's estate paying Robert Smith £4,500 for his half share. He then began to sell off some of the leases of outlying parts of the property, starting in 1807 with 14 acres (5.8 ha.) of land at Spring Hill, and this with the sale of three leases for lives at Woolridge, High Redding Hill and in Maisemore Meadow in 1808 raised £7,255.

In 1810 Benjamin Hyett who owned the other moiety of the estate died, and as he had no children or near relatives he left Painswick House, then a small Georgian mansion to Francis Adams who had been a cousin to his second wife, and the rest of his property he left to her son William Adams, then aged eleven. Painswick House had very little land around it, and when the opportunity occurred in 1813 of buying some, the Trustees decided to do this, and sell the Maisemore estate to pay for it.

The price was £9,900. William Goodrich, John Merret Stephens and Richard Naylor bought it between them with Goodrich having the main part, and Naylor who owned Persh Farm at that time had about 12 acres (5 ha.). Merret Stephens, a Gloucester banker, had about 70 acres (29 ha.), which, with the 62 acres (26 ha.) he bought from William Goodrich for £4,400, formed what was then to be the Maisemore Park estate.

The capital sums which had to be found to pay Robert Smith and the Hyett family were huge, but there should have been no difficulty about it, and they could well have been obtained by the sale of the leases and land and money from William Pitt. But many of the things which happened during the life of William Goodrich present more questions than answers. There seems to be no obvious explanation for the family's move to Wotton House in Gloucester in 1814, a building very comparable with Maisemore Court in size, and it is also mysterious that the baptisms of the seven younger children cannot be found. The five eldest were baptised at Maisemore, all in one day in 1810, and the youngest, Augustus, was baptised at St. John the Baptist in Gloucester in 1826. He only lived three months and was buried at Maisemore with two other babies who died as infants.

In 1817, when William was in need of ready money again he mortgaged 40 acres (17 ha.) of his Leadon meadows for £1,400 for six months. This went on and there were more mortgages and sales of leases of much of the land, even after he had inherited the estate of his cousin Mary Pitt in 1837. She had been the daughter of John Pitt the M.P. and an extremely wealthy woman owning many houses in Gloucester including Paddock House in Pitt Street and farms in Haresfield. Quedgeley,

Churchdown, Cranham and Brimpsfield.

The first mortgagees had been substantial farmers from round about, but the later ones were people of independent means, most of whom lived near to William at Wotton House in Horton Road. Miss Harriet and Miss Maria Hopkinson both lived at Wotton Court at the top of Wotton Pitch, their brother was nearby at Colebridge on the Cheltenham Road, and James Walters lived at Barnwood House. In time, most of the Maisemore estate was made over to these people. It is of interest that James Walters, who had been a wealthy landowner and benefactor to Barnwood, and who was married to the sister of William Hyett, had, when he died in 1858, himself become bankrupt with debts of £14,000.

One bizarre and unsubstantiated explanation of William's situation could be that he had gambled in some way, perhaps with dice or cards and that when he lost he had to use his land to pay.

In 1834 the family moved to Matson House, and in 1840 after staying in Rome for a while '*for his health*' he came back to live at Montpellier Terrace in Cheltenham.

He made his will in 1844, saying that there might be mortgages and money borrowed on bonds owing, and admitting that what he had received from his marriage settlement had been meant for the use of his wife and younger children '*he had already had for his own use*'. He left his estates to his sons James and £5,000 to each of the other three sons, £3,000 to each of his six daughters, and an annuity of £500 and his personal property to his wife. A year later in a codicil all these legacies were reduced by about one fifth, and in some cases changed to annuities. He became ill and paralysed and died at Lansdown Terrace in Cheltenham in September 1845 at the age of seventy. He was buried at Maisemore. His wife Harriet moved to Bryanstan Square in London where she lived until she was ninety two, and in 1851 her six daughters were with her, and at that time all unmarried and in their late thirties and forties.

After the Goodrichs left Maisemore Court in 1814, various people lived in the house, including the Rev. George Hodson, the Bishop's chaplain who was there from 1821-1824. Bishop Ryder and Hodson were close friends and shared similar evangelical views. They had both been at Bristol before coming to Gloucester and when Ryder moved on to the larger diocese of Lichfield and Coventry, Hodson went there too. While at Maisemore Hodson took in private pupils to prepare them for university and one of them was

Samuel, the son of his friend William Wilberforce, the reformer who helped bring in the Act which ended the Slave Trade. One of Hodson's children who was born at Maisemore was William who became a famous soldier in India at the time of the Mutiny, and who raised the regiment called Hodson's Horse.

## JAMES GOODRICH

William Goodrich's eldest son was William John Pitt Goodrich who was born in Maisemore in 1809. On leaving school he went to Oxford University and, after graduating at Oriel College, he was called to the Bar at the Inner Temple in 1837. At that time he married Emma Thornhill of Cheltenham, but only a year later he died in London when the cause of death was said to be brain fever, perhaps meningitis.

So James, his younger brother, followed his father and inherited the heavily mortgaged estate. The annuities had to be paid to his mother and sisters and also to Emma Thornhill as part of her marriage settlement, and some attempts were made to pay the legacies, but Edward the youngest brother had died in 1856 before he had received his full share. The other brothers were Octavius who went into the church and was vicar of Humber in Herefordshire and Arthur a solicitor who was living at Maisemore with James in 1851.

In 1840 James married Mary Wynne the only child of Richard and Sarah Wynne of Eyarth House in Denbighshire, and for a few years they went there to live with them, whilst they let Maisemore Court. Their two eldest children were born at Eyarth and then in 1844 they came back to Maisemore, where eight more children were born. James appeared to have been a typical Victorian gentleman, at one time a magistrate and he was also a Lieutenant in the 83rd Regiment of Foot. In 1858 he gave the land on which the new Church of England School at Maisemore was built.

In 1855 the Rev. Bartlett Goodrich<sup>1</sup> one of the lives in the term of leases died, and for new ones to be granted the former ones had to be surrendered to the Bishop in the name of James Goodrich. Agreements were made with the mortgagees and this was done and James was given the new leases. Soon after this, in 1869 another agreement was made, this time with the Ecclesiastical Commissioners<sup>2</sup> and it was for them to buy the whole estate for about £27,000, and at the same time James was given a lease of Maisemore Court and 8 acres (3.3 ha.) of adjoining land for the next

forty years. Unfortunately there is nothing now to show what lies behind all this, unless perhaps they just wanted to be free of the mortgages.

They stayed on for a few years, and lived in some style, for in 1861 they had a parlourmaid, nurse, undernurse, cook, kitchen maid, governess and a coachman with his wife and four children also living in the house.

However, not long after, the decision was made for them to leave for good and go back to Eyarth to live with Richard and Sarah Wynne, Mary Goodrich's elderly parents. It brought to an end the story of the family who had lived at Maisemore for so long, leaving behind them only their memorials in the church to be a reminder of them.

## References

- 1 younger brother of William Goodrich
- 2 a body set up in 1836 to manage the estates of the Church of England

## Notes

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Herefordshire Record Office  
Hampshire Record Office  
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Brian Frith

Betty Chamberlayne has provided pedigree charts for the families described which, unfortunately, we are unable to reproduce here. However, if you would like a copy please write with a SAE to Elizabeth Bourne at the GRCC, address on front cover. (Ed.)