

Extract paper on Soberton (British History)

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The manor of FLEXLAND or RUSSELL FLEXLAND was in origin a sub-manor dependent on the manor of Soberton belonging to the abbot and convent of Beaulieu, and as late as 1462 was said to be held of the abbot and convent by the rent of a pound of pepper. (fn. 101) At the close of the thirteenth century the manor was held by Ralph Russell, who, with the consent of Martha his wife, granted to the abbey six acres of land which he held of it in Soberton. (fn. 102) He seems to have been succeeded by Geoffrey Russell, whose lands in Flexland of the annual value of four marks three shillings were forfeited for his rebellion towards the close of the reign of Henry III. (fn. 103) The Russells, however, must have ultimately regained possession of their property in Flexland, for in 1308 John Russell, son and heir of Sir William Russell, released to Sir John de Drokensford, bishop of Bath and Wells (1309–29), all his right in a messuage and lands in Flexland and in all other lands in Hampshire that his mother Alice was holding in dower of his inheritance. (fn. 104) On the death of Sir John de Drokensford, Russell Flexland passed to his brother Philip. (fn. 105) Philip de Drokensford, son and heir of the latter, died in 1355, leaving a son and heir John, who seems to have died a year or two afterwards without issue. (fn. 106)

In 1371 Walter de Mildecombe and Margaret his wife dealt by fine with half the manor which Sir Maurice le Bruyn and Margaret his wife were then holding for the life of Margaret. (fn. 107) It is possible that Margaret wife of Sir Maurice le Bruyn was the widow of John de Drokensford, as she held the moiety for life only, but it is more probable that she was sister and heir of John, (fn. 108) and that the moieties of the manor were entailed upon her daughters and co-heirs by a former husband, John de Clyvedon, (fn. 109) viz. (1) Margaret wife of Walter de Mildecombe, and (2) Margaret who married first John St. Loe and second Sir Peter Courtenay, seventh son of Hugh de Courtenay, earl of Devon. (fn. 110) If such was the case, Margaret wife of Walter de Mildecombe probably died without issue, for Sir Peter Courtenay at his death, in 1405, was seised of the whole manor in right of his wife Margaret. (fn. 111) On her death some years later, Flexland passed to her grandson William, Lord Botreaux, (fn. 112) son and heir of William, Lord Botreaux, and her daughter Elizabeth. (fn. 113) He died in 1462 seised of the manor of Flexland, together with the hamlet of Soberton, parcel of the manor. (fn. 114) His heir was his daughter Margaret, widow of Sir Robert Hungerford, who after her father's death usually styled herself Margaret, Lady Botreaux. She afterwards married Sir Thomas Burgh, and joined with him in 1464 in granting the manor of Flexland to John Mervyn, (fn. 115) who was one of her confidential friends, trustees, and general managers, (fn. 116) while the next year she conveyed a messuage, 100 acres of land, 8 acres of meadow, 80 acres of pasture, 20 acres of wood, and 40s. rent in Flexland Russell and Soberton to other trustees. (fn. 117) Soon afterwards the manor was settled on William Warbleton and Margery his wife in fee-tail, with contingent remainder to Elizabeth Syfrewast, aunt of William, for life, with remainder in fee-tail to Agnes wife of Miles Skulle and daughter of Elizabeth, with contingent remainder to Margaret Breknok wife of David Breknok, and Sybil widow of Thomas Rykys, sisters of Agnes. (fn. 118) William died seised of the manor in 1469, the following being returned as his heirs—(1) his cousin Henry Puttenham son and heir of his aunt Margaret Puttenham, aged sixty and more, (2) his cousins Margaret Breknok and Sybil Rykys, aged forty and more, and thirty-six and more, respectively, and (3) his second cousin William Skulle son and heir of his cousin Agnes Skulle, aged thirty and more. (fn. 119) In accordance with the settlement Flexland descended to William Skulle, who was seised of it in 1484. (fn. 120) The history of the manor for some time after this is obscure, but it eventually fell into the hands of William Dale, who conveyed it with the other Soberton manors to Walter Bonham and Alice his wife, (fn. 121) who in their turn sold it to Thomas Wriothsley, earl of Southampton, in 1549. (fn. 122) Since this date its descent has been identical with that of the chief manor of Soberton (q.v. supra). The site of the manor is marked by Russell's Farm and Russell's Wood in the east of the parish.