

**ABSTRACTS OF DORSET
INQUISITIONES POST MORTEM:
RETURNED INTO THE COURT OF
CHANCERY IN THE REIGN OF
KING CHARLES THE FIRST**

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Abstracts of Dorset Inquisitiones Post Mortem: Returned Into the Court of chancery in the reign of King Charles the first by Edward Alexander Fry

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EDWARD ALEXANDER FRY

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ABSTRACTS
OF
DORSET
Inquisitiones Post Mortem

RETURNED INTO THE COURT OF CHANCERY IN THE REIGN OF

KING CHARLES THE FIRST.

EDITED BY
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AND
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INTRODUCTION.

THE following abstracts of Inquisitiones post mortem are taken from those that are still extant in the Public Record Office, London, for the county of Dorset, from the commencement of the reign of King Charles I. The original documents are in Latin, and the advantage of these readable English abstracts, which supply all the information which the originals themselves contain, will be generally appreciated. They are taken from the Series known as "Chancery Inquisitions," and have been collated whenever necessary with the transcripts sent into the Court of Wards and Liveries.

It will be convenient to give some particulars respecting these Inquisitions or inquests, which it must be borne in mind are quite distinct from the inquests still taken by the coroner in order to ascertain causes of death. Inquisitiones post mortem were concerned only with the property held "in chief" by the deceased, and were requisite in order to ascertain the feudal rights which accrued to the Crown upon the death of any tenant in chief. Until the practical abolition of the service of knight serjeantry in 1645—it was not formally abolished until the accession of King Charles the Second in 1660—the Crown was entitled to levy certain feudal exactions, into the details of which it is hardly requisite to enter here. When the heir-at-law was a minor he became a ward of the Crown. This was turned into a source of profit, being often sold for hard cash, for it was a privilege of considerable value, meaning the right not only to receive the rents and profits of the property during the ward's minority, but also the right of finding a spouse for the youthful heir. When the heir attained his majority he then became the subject of further feudal exactions, for on suing out his ousterlemain, that is, delivery to him by the Crown of the lands for which he was in ward, he

had to make certain payments, and bring forward strict proof that he had attained his full age of twenty-one years. Amongst the *Inquisitiones post mortem* are still to be found some few of these Inquisitions known as proofs of age, *probatio etatis*—usually very interesting documents on account of the evidence of the witnesses who were examined in order to show how they knew that the heir had attained his majority. Amongst the *Inquisitiones post mortem* are also some taken *virtute officii*, others *ad quod damnum*, besides those dealing with the property of lunatics and idiots.

The proceedings which followed upon the death of a tenant in chief were as follows: a writ styled the writ of *diem clausit extremum*, which was a mediæval synonym for *obit*, was issued out of the Court of Chancery; this was directed usually to the escheator or feodary of the county in which the deceased was presumed to have possessed lands. It commanded him to hold an inquest and to summon a jury for the purpose of an inquiry which was directed to the following points:—

1. Of what lands the deceased died possessed.
2. Of whom and by what services the same were held.
3. The date of his death.
4. The name and age of the heir-at-law.

Following the directions contained in the writ the escheator or feodary summoned a jury, who in accordance with the evidence placed before them gave their verdict upon oath; the return was engrossed upon parchment, and in due course delivered into the Court of Chancery and there filed. During the inquiry the dealings that the deceased had had with his property came under review, and this necessitated inquiry into family settlements and trusts affecting them, and consequently we often find such documents, including wills, are recited very fully, thus affording information of the highest value to the genealogist.

The officials in the Chancery in due course forwarded a copy of the inquisition into the King's Exchequer, so that the officers there might collect the accruing feudal dues. Occasionally the jury made an insufficient or inaccurate return and then a further writ, known as the writ *ad melius inquirendum*, was directed to the escheator requiring him to hold a second inquest for ascertaining the facts omitted. Sometimes this process had to be repeated a second or third time.

In the reign of Henry VIII in consequence of the alleged extortions on the part of the Crown officials, and the practice

which had grown up of compelling landowners who were not tenants *in capite* to sue out their ousterlemains, the Court of Wards and Liveries was created for the sole purpose of attending to the business arising from these Inquisitions. To this Court also were sent transcripts of the Inquisitiones post mortem. Consequently until the thirty-fifth year of Henry VIII there are two sets, the original returns known as the Chancery series and the transcripts or the Exchequer series, while after that date must be added a third, the Wards and Liveries series. The existence of these three sets of transcripts is a fortunate circumstance, as sometimes they enable us to make good the deficiencies in the Chancery series.

These abstracts have been prepared by Miss Walford, of London, and every reliance can be placed on their accuracy.

EDWARD ALEXANDER FRY.

January, 1894.

ABSTRACTS
OF THE
Inquisitiones Post Mortem,
RELATING TO THE
COUNTY OF DORSET,
RETURNED INTO THE HIGH COURT OF CHANCERY.
CHARLES I.

No. I.

Edmund Bowyer, esquire.

Inquisition taken at Blandford Forum, 30th August, 1 Charles I [1625], before *Anthony Dennett, gent.*, escheator, after the death of *Edmund Bowyer, esq.*, by the oath of *William Clarke, gent.*, *William Dackombe, gent.*, *John Rogers, gent.*, *Thomas Phillipps, John Chepman, Thomas Fill, Richard Chepman, Richard Rogers, Thomas Forde, Thomas Morren, Thomas Hayne, Thomas Stawell, Henry Compion, William Wear,* and *William Gates*, who say that

Edmund Bowyer was seised of the manor and lordship of Crayford Magna with its rights, members and liberties; of the manor and lordship of Spettisburie; the advowsons, free gifts and right of patronage of the rectories and churches of Crayford Magna and Spettisburie; all tithes of sheaves, grains, wheat and hay, and all other tithes whatsoever in Spettisburie and Charleton, to the late Priory of Witham formerly belonging; 2 messuages and tenements in St. Collis, Sydling, Whitchurche and Alton, and all lands, tenements and hereditaments to the same belonging; the manor and lordship of Beere with all its rights and members in Beere, Canyngton, Fidington, Stockland, Oterhampton and Edgestocke, in county Somerset; the manor of Edgestocke; the manor of Stockland

Lowell in county Somerset; the 6th part of the manor of West Luccombe in county Somerset; 16 messuages in Bridgwater, Mooreland, North Petherton, West Newton, Stoke under Hamden and Chaton in county Somerset, and all the lands and tenements to the same belonging; 2 messuages in Coninge *alias* Conydge in county Somerset; and one messuage and tenement in Spaxton in county Somerset.

The said *Edmund Bowyer* was likewise seised of the manor, capital messuage and farm of Deane *alias* Deene; 2 acres of meadow in Shapwicke; and 40 acres of land and pasture and 5 acres of wood in Tarrant Keynston.

So seised, the said *Edmund*, by indenture dated 30th September, 19 James I [1621], for certain considerations therein specified, agreed with *Thomas Bowyer*, one of his sons, that he (*Edmund*) should be seised of the premises last recited to the use of himself for life; after his decease to the use of the said *Thomas Bowyer* and his heirs, and for default, to the use of the said *Edmund Bowyer* and his heirs for ever.

The manors and lordships of Crayford Magna and Spettisbury, the advowsons of the rectories and churches of Crayford Magna and Spettisbury, and the tithes in Spettisbury and Charleton are held of the King as of his manor of East Greenwich in county Kent, in free and common socage by fealty, paying yearly for the said manor of Crayford Magna £6 19s. 11½d., and for the said manor of Spettisbury £37 18s. 3d.; they are worth per annum, clear, £6 13s. 4d. The 2 messuages in St. Collis, Sidling, Witchurch and Aulton are held of *John Tregonwell*, esq., as of his manor of Milton Abbas, in free and common socage, and are worth per annum, clear, 2s. 6d. The manor of Beere is held of the King in chief by the service of the 20th part of a knight's fee, and is worth per annum, clear, £6 13s. 4d. The manor of Edgestocke is held of the King as of his said manor of East Greenwich in free socage by fealty only, and is worth per annum, clear, 20s. The manor of Stockland Lowell is held of *George Luttrell*, esq., as of his Castle of Dunstar in county Somerset, in free socage by fealty only, and is worth per annum, clear, 5s. The 6th part of the manor of West Luccombe is held of the lord or lords of the Castle of Barum in county Somerset as of their said Castle, by fealty only in free socage, and is worth per annum, clear, 5s. The 16 messuages in Bridgwater, Mooreland, etc., are held of the King as of his said manor of East Greenwich, in free and common socage by fealty only, and are worth per annum, clear, 20s. The premises in Conydge and Spaxton are held of the lord or lords of the manor of Stockland Lowell as of their manor of Stockland Lowell, by fealty, suit at court and the rent of one grain of pepper, and are worth per annum, clear, 6s. The manor of Deane and the 2 acres of meadow in Shapwicke are held of the King as of his Duchy of Lancaster, by fealty and the yearly rent of 27s. 6d., and are worth per annum, clear,

£7 6s. 8d. The premises in Tarrant Keynston are held of *Thomas Lord Arundel of Warder* as of his manor of Tarrant Keynston, by fealty and the yearly rent of 5s., and are worth per annum, clear, 3s. 4d.

Edmund Bowyer died at Rawston 16th January last past; *Edmund Bowyer*, esq., is his son and heir, and was then aged 22 years and more. The said *Thomas Bowyer* still survives at Blandford Forum.

Inq. p.m., 1 *Charles I*, part 2, No. 42.

No. II.

John Game, gentleman.

Delivered into Court 18th January, 1 *Charles I*.

Inquisition taken at Shirborne, 4th September, 15 James I [1617], before *Robert Hill*, esq., escheator, by virtue of his office, after the death of *John Game*, gent., by the oath of *Humphrey Stickland*, gent., *John Starr*, *Ellis Meuse*, *Richard Cooth*, *George Morgan*, *Richard Cuffe*, *Arthur Hooper*, *Walter Tucker*, *Walter Albond*, *Arthur Sampson*, *William Game*, *John Chapman*, *John Winchell*, *Richard Foster*, and *Robert Aust*, who say that

John Game was seised of one messuage called Collhagh lying within the parish of Lodder in county Dorset, which is held of *Henry Wade*, gent., as of his manor of Allington in county Dorset, in socage, by fealty, suit at court, and the yearly rent of 2s., and is worth per annum, clear, 20s.

John Game died 7th August last past; *John Game* is his son and next heir, and was then aged 30 years and more.

Inq. p.m., 1 *Charles I*, v. o. No. 40.

No. III.

Robert Mellor, knight.

Inquisition taken at Blandford Forum, 29th August, 1 *Charles I* [1625], before *Anthony Dennet*, gent., escheator, after the death of *Robert Mellor*, knight, by the oath of the same jurors as No. 1, who say that

Robert Mellor was seised of the manor of Winterborne Caine *alias* Cayne; the advowson of the church of Winterborne Caine; the manor of Faringdon *alias* Winterborne Faringdon *alias* Winterborne Germaine; the advowson of the church of Faringdon; the manor, capital messuage and farm of Little Brede *alias* Little Bredy; the advowsons of the