

The History of Emsworth and Warblington

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Warblington Castle

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The ancient name of Emsworth was Newtibrigge, and, although it is not mentioned in the Domesday book (1088) there is evidence that the town is of considerable antiquity in the fact that in the time of Henry II (1154-1160) the fishery of Emsworth paid a rent or royalty to the King and that in the year 1231 King Henry III granted to Herbert Fitzherbert, who then held the Manor, a charter to hold a Market and Fair at Emsworth. Two fairs were held in the market place, one on Easter Monday and one on July 16th. It was proved in recent years that this Royal decree still holds good when a pedlar was charged at Havant police court for illegally offering his wares in Emsworth Square. By lucky chance for the man it happened to be July 16th, one of the two days in the year when King Henry III's decree held good. In 1567 it was called Emilsworth or Emmesworth and in the Parish Register of Westbourne from 1550 to 1600 it is written Emmesworth.

The Court Leet of the manor of Warblington and Emsworth has, of course, long ceased to be held but nearly 350 years ago the following entries are to be found in the Court Rolls:

9 April – 20 James (1623)

The homage present that the stocks within the tything of Emsworth are out of repair; therefore it is commanded the inhabitants there that they sufficiently repair the stocks aforesaid, on this side the feast of Philip and James next ensuing, under penalty of 6s. 8d.

But on 24 September 1623 we find that:

The homage present that the inhabitants of Emsworth have not repaired the stocks in accordance to the order made 6s. 8d. and the inhabitants are commanded to repair the aforesaid stocks on that side of the Feast of All Saints next ensuing under penalty of 13s. 4d.

9 October – 3 Charles – (1628)

The homage present that John Smyth encroached on the Highway at Emsworth therefore he is in mercy 3s. 4d. and is commanded to level the encroachment aforesaid, before the feast of All Saints next ensuing, under penalty of 10s. They also present that the wife of the said John Smyth Is a common scold. Therefore she is adjudged punished by the Tumbrell. (The Tumbrell was a low trolley which was used as a punishment of disgrace. For crimes of great infamy the wrongdoer was fastened to the Tumbrell by an iron chain and carried bare headed through the streets.)

12 October – 5 Charles (1632)

It was ordered that the inhabitants shall not place any sea ore in the streets under penalty in every case of 6s. 8d.

Records of 1917 give a description of fishing at Emsworth:

The fisheries are comprised in two arms of the sea distinguished by the names the eastern and western harbours and were formerly of great value to those habitants upon the coast who exercised the employment of fishing and who enabled support their families, without assistance from the parish by profit of their boats. But from the destruction which of late years has been made in the spawn and fry of fish bred in these harbours, and

the fisheries are now becoming profitable, the loss of which is felt by the public as well as the individuals employed in the fishery. And for this there can be no remedy, unless the legislature passes and act to regulate the period of fishery and the size of the fish caught, as applicable to these harbours.

The oldest fisherman in the place has the care of the boomage or fixed booms denote the channel, for which he received 1/- annually from each vessel belonging to the port and the like sum from every strange vessel that enters the harbour.

At about this period the fisherman probably lived in huts on the site which came known as Seaside and South Street where were also very old cottages, possibly made from materials from Warblington Castle.

Emsworth from a very early period was noted for its oysters which had an established reputation as long ago as 1307, but this source of wealth has now entirely disappeared – the derelict smacks and trawlers at the entrance to Dolphin Lake tell their own story tale. Shipbuilding was a flourishing trade from the time of George II when Mrs. Jewell, who lived to be 105, recorded that her grandfather, John King started a shipbuilding yard at the bottom of Sware Lane which is now known as King Street. Some of the ships built were so large that the water was not deep enough to float them when rigged, and they had to be towed to deeper water to be fitted out. Most of the ships built at the time were colliers, carrying seaborne coal. Mr King also had a contract to supply boats and barges for Naval ships and also belaying pins, hand spikes, and capstan bars, which had to be 16 feet in length and be made out of wood without a knot. The boats for Nelson's *Victory* were built at Emsworth and the biscuits supplied to the Navy were baked in the huge kitchen of Lumley Mill. Emsworth's harbour and quay must have presented a bustling

scene in those days when visited by small trading ships from all over the world. A resident now living in Emsworth has told how, as a boy, he lived in the old Anchor Inn at the end of South Street, and remembers seeing Lascars in the bar with coloured handkerchiefs round their heads, and big gold earrings and as a boy attended the burial of the body of an unknown Lascar which was found floating in the harbour.

In the 18th and 19th Centuries smugglers did a roaring trade in brandy, tobacco, wine and silks which were stored in dark cellars, underground passages and hidden rooms of the old houses of Emsworth. The trade grew to such an extent that a gunboat known as the *Griper* was moored at the mouth of the harbour with power to search all incoming ships. The records of 1917 state that at Emsworth and Itchenor two revenue cutters were stationed and they were so diligent in the discharge of their duties that very few contraband goods were dispersed through this part of the country in comparison to an earlier period when smuggling was carried on with greater impunity.

During the reign of George II and George III, the terror of the Press Gang cast a cloud over the life of Emsworth. Her sons with the sea in their veins were what the Navy wanted and many women lost their men certainly for years, perhaps for ever.

The main road from Portsmouth to Chichester passed through Emsworth and in the year 1751 it may be imagined that it was in not much better repair than that at Bedhampton where it was reported to be:

Very ruinous, miry, deep, broken and in much decay for want of due repair of the same; so that the liege subjects of our Lord the

King, through the same way with their horses, coaches, carts and carriages could not, nor can go, return, pass ride and labour without great danger of their lives and the loss of their goods, to the great damage and common nuisance of all the liege subjects of our Lord the King.

From the evidence given in the indictment which followed it was shown that this high road, which was the chief channel of communication between the West of England and Kent, was a lane deep with ruts, and so narrow as to allow only cart or other vehicle. Sidings were made at every two or three hundred yards to allow carriages to pass each other.

In those days the only public conveyance between Portsmouth and Chichester was a stage waggon twice a week and 16 cwt. of flour was deemed a fair load for two horses. This state of things becoming unsupportable, an Act of Parliament was passed in 1762 for repairing and widening the road between Cosham and Chichester, the preamble reciting *that the roads were in many parts so ruinous and deep in the season, that the carriages could not pass without great danger and difficulty.* At this time Queen Street was known Mill Lane having only two or three houses, and the course of the road into Sussex, after reaching the bottom of Dolphin Hill made a detour to the left of the flour mill and crossed the creek at about the point where the footbridge to Lumley is returning to Hermitage on the opposite side.

In pursuance of the Act, the estuary was spanned by roadway and arch, but this was frequently submerged at spring tides, and later a raised footpath was to the great comfort and convenience of pedestrians.

Although the population of Emsworth had long outstripped that of its mother parish it continued to be a hamlet of Warblington until in 1790 St Patrick's chapel was erected in the Square as a 'chapel of ease' for Emsworth by a company of proprietary shareholders at a cost of about £1,370. Here Church of England services were conducted, until, after being discussed for some years, the church dedicated to St James was erected in 1840 at the cost of about £1,500 raised by subscriptions and grants. It was in 1856 and a chancel was added in 1891, at a cost of £2,500 after the services of Sir Arthur Bloomfield, the famous diocesan architect, had been enlisted.

St James was described as:

A neat structure, in the Norman style built of flint stone dressings. It has not special interest, having been built when a debased style of church architecture. The church has several mural monuments, one of which is in memory of a late curate who was drowned in the harbour in 1858, together with three other gentlemen by the upsetting of a pleasure boat during a sudden squall of wind.

By the liberality of the Rector and Patron of Warblington it was constituted a separate parish in 1858 and endowed with part of the tithes in addition to £50 a year with which he had previously endowed the perpetual curacy.

The Rectory house situated on the Havant road was erected in 1846 at a cost £1,300 which was raised by a subscription and grant. The Church school with teacher's residence was built in 1863 at a

cost of £1,400 defrayed by the Rector, the Rev. Henry Winter Sheppard, M.A. who held the living from 1844 to 1899.

The Baptist chapel in North Street was erected in 1848 although it is recorded that *the cause was started and services held for three years previously in the house occupied by Mr. Agate, grocer.*

Emsworth Harbour has had a few distinguished visitors. Charles II when in hiding with his friend Col. Gunter of Racton came to the beach to try to persuade some of the fishermen to take him over to France. Princess Amelis, a daughter George III came for the sea bathing and had a bathing machine specially built at the end of Bath Road.

In February 1842 under a triumphal arch at Hermitage Bridge the Duke of Wellington presented an address of welcome to Queen Victoria and the Prince Consort who then drove up through Queen Street, the Square and Havant Road. Queen Street was renamed in honour of that occasion.

King Edward VII and George VI frequently drove through Emsworth on their way from Goodwood races to the Cowes Regatta.

Warblington Castle

In 1514 Warblington Manor was granted to Margaret of Salisbury, the wife Sir Richard de la Pole K.G. who lived here and probably rebuilt the house. The Countess of Salisbury stood very near the throne and would have been the rightful Queen of England had Henry VIII died without an heir. After his secret marriage to Anne Boleyn Henry VIII visited Warblington to demand that the Countess should give up the royal jewels which she had in her keeping for Princess Mary, because he wanted them for the new Queen. The Countess who was companion and governess to the Princes

refused to part with the jewels. Her opposition angered the King and probably hastened her removal to the Tower of London where two years later she was executed. The executioner recorded in his diary that the Countess refused to lay her head on the block saying that she was of Royal descent no traitor to the crown. He also records that he had to hack her head off as best he could and did it 'very slovenly'.

Edward VI was advised by his physicians to try if the sea air at Warblington would do him good. Writing in 1552 when he was 15 years old he says *we went to Warblington, a faire house of Sir Richard Cotton's*. The sea air does not seem to have had the desired effect as the young King died the following year.

Queen Elizabeth I also paid a visit to the Cotton family. Sir George Cotton was at that time Comptroller of the Royal Household. He was a staunch Roman Catholic, but remained a Royalist in spite of having been fined £250 a year from 1587 to 1607, a sum equivalent to £260,000 in our money, for not attending his parish church. The Cottons remained loyal to the Crown and suffered for their loyalty by having the 'faire house of Warblington' burnt to the ground by Cromwell's troops.

In 1643 the castle was destroyed by Cromwell, when it appeared to have fallen into ruin after being dismantled (the lead roof was used for bullets). Stones were carried off to Havant, Emsworth and to help build some of the old houses in Warblington Street, Portsmouth.

In Margaret's time the castle foamed a quadrangle, deeply moated on every side, with entrances from the west over a drawbridge and

beneath an arched gateway flanked with turrets at each corner - a porter's lodge to the south and an armoury to the north.

The south quadrangle comprised the chapel (42 feet by 32 feet) and the Great Hall (58 feet by 32 feet) communicating at one end with a small cellar and at the other end the buttery, kitchen, cellar and brewery, and from thence the dishes were conveyed to the buttery hatch within the screen of the hall.

The state apartments were at the northern quadrangle and a gallery and sleeping rooms above. The stone facing came from the Isle of Wight but the mouldings and ornamental parts were fine fine grained stone from Caen in Normandy. It was in this state when destroyed by Cromwell's army.

Before the civil war it was described as:

Moated about, built square la length 200 feet, with a green court within the buildings round the court with a fine gallery and divers chambers of great count and four towers cover with lead, with a great spacious hall, parlour and great chamber and all other houses of office necessary for such a house, with a very fine chapel within the said house and the place covered with stones and a very spacious garden with pleasant walks adjoining and near to the said place groves of trees, two orchards and two little meadows, plots containing eight acres and a fair fish pond near the stables and outhouse.

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