

Redlynch & District Local History Society

The Earls of Radnor and their Country Estates

by Steve Hobbs

Longford Castle has been the home of the Earls of Radnor for nearly 300 years. The original castle was built in the late 16th century to a Swedish triangular design, two engravings showed the design dated 1647. In 1717 a merchant named Edward des Bouverie was riding past the castle, fell in love with the building and had enough money in his saddle bags to buy it.



The family were wealthy merchants with ties to various parts of the world, for example The East India Company, dealing in cotton silks, opium and other commodities. The family gradually bought land, eventually having extensive holdings, many in North Wiltshire, as well as South Wiltshire and Folkstone.

Steve went on to talk about the archives of the estate including the personal household and land accounts. These accounts list in great detail the purchasing of art, furniture and artefacts for filling their other building as well as the castle which gradually acquired additional wings changing the overall shape. The last major changes were in the 19th century by Anthony Salvin. The accounts are full of information such as clothing worn, food eaten lists of paintings bought, as well as money was given to good causes and very personal activities example when teeth were scaled and bleeding. In these accounts details of many local trades people and their employers can be found. In the accounts of 1796 there are details of the accounts for building a gallery in Odstock church.

In 1806 the manor of Downton was acquired and all the documents pertaining to the manor were inserted into the estate accounts; some of these concerned the Manor Court which managed the activities of the Manor and the Downton Borough dating back to the 15th century. The water meadows of Downton and their care are listed in detail. These records are considered to be some of the best in their detail now available at the history centre in Chippenham (archives@wiltshire.gov.uk) in catalogues 490 and 1946.

Our next event is a free guided walk around Nomansland with Stephen Ings, meeting at the memorial at 7pm Tuesday 5 June,