

Medieval Lives in Castleton and Hope

Report on the historical research for the Medieval common people in Castleton and Hope villages. Produced as part of the Lives of the Common People project, January 2012 - July 2013.

By

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Abstract

The period covered by this document extends over nearly 600 years from the Norman Conquest to the English Civil War. In focusing on the lot of the common people of Castleton and Hope, it provides a backcloth in terms of the land that they occupied, and some of the most important influences in their day-to-day lives. They raised their families in unpredictable circumstances affected by the vagaries of climate and disease. In what was already a difficult existence, they also had to contend with the constraints of forest rule and the onerous burden of taxation. The church and the lead-mining industry both played a central part in these two North Derbyshire communities.

The scene is set with William the Conqueror's great Domesday survey and a discussion of the differences between the two villages in terms of land areas, taxable value and administration as described for 1066 and 1086. At the time of the Norman Conquest Hope was a larger and much more important settlement than Castleton, but within 20 years of the Conquest was apparently declining in economic status whilst Castleton was growing.

Hopedale within the Royal Forest of Peak was the home of Hope and Castleton villages and so Forest Law was central to the people that lived and worked there. The section on the Royal Forest describes the hierarchy that protected it and made rulings on apparently frequent misdemeanours including those of "vert and venison" that generated yet another source of income for the Crown.

Hope had a Saxon church and Castleton's St Edmund's Church dates from at least early Norman times. Both institutions played a very large part in the daily life of the community not least in the tithes that were collected over hundreds of years. The differences in the ways the two churches developed are discussed, pointing out their divergent jurisdiction from the second half of the 12th century, and the difficulties that faced parishioners during the Reformation and the Commonwealth.

Following on from the topic of church tithes, the many and varied forms of taxing subjects, from the early taxes such as "geld", "heriot" and "scutage", to Elizabethan Poor Law and Charles's use of Ship Money to raise funds during the period when parliament was abolished are discussed. Each type of tax is thoroughly explained and placed into general context, and reference is made to certain very good records for Hope and Castleton that are available on e.g. the Poll taxes and the Exchequer Lay Subsidies. These provide insights into the incomes, occupations, and continuity of names over the 600-year period of the project.

Chapter 5 on Crime and Punishments specifically covers examples from the Derbyshire Eyres of 1281 and the Forest Rolls relating to Castleton and Hope, explaining concepts such as "frankpledge", "englishry" and "murdrum". The earlier chapter on the Peak Forest provides the context for crimes concerning brewing and baking, and we see an important function of the village church as a place of sanctuary.

High rates of violent crime would have been part of everyday life for the common man. Apart from the taxes imposed to fund them, the impacts of war were intermittent. Chapter 6 describes in some detail the Scottish Wars of Edward II (in which the High Peak was required to raise 300 archers), musters for a possible Spanish invasion under Elizabeth I and events during the Civil War, with reference to some important local characters.

Land transactions are some of the most widely surviving documents from our period of research and provide us with significant information on the fortunes of local families, including their social rankings, where they lived and what lands they held. The section on Hope focuses on three historic properties including for example King's Hague which has links to the Eyres, a family prominent in the area for more than 700 years. A few original land transfer documents dating from the early 1300s are held at local archives, others came from a variety of immensely valuable transcripts compiled by antiquarians in the 19th/20th century. As well as family names we found evidence of place names that are still in use today; in particular records of field names have value in providing evidence of the medieval open fields of both Castleton and Hope.

The history of both villages is inextricably linked to the industry of lead mining, as well as to agriculture. A detailed account of the mines, the life of the miners who worked them and the gentry that exploited them has been compiled. Mining in the Hope Valley is thought to go back to Saxon times; Odin Mine beneath Mam Tor was the earliest named mine in the area for which we have records (1280). The laws relating to mining are described in some depth.

A few prominent local surnames are discussed, with a thorough treatment of the Woodroffe family of Hope. Many of our local names originated from occupations, and only became hereditary in the 1300s. Occupations in the Castleton area as listed in the 1381 poll tax and Court Rolls, and the laws governing brewers, bakers and butchers are discussed

Finally the document concludes with an analysis of wills and inventories from 1547 for Castleton and from 1620 for Hope, up until 1650. Whilst these do not strictly span the medieval period they make the link to early modern times in the Hope Valley and tell us a great deal about the social history of the ordinary people who lived and died there.

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Introduction

This report is the result of the documentary research conducted as part of Castleton and Hope Historical Societies' Lives of the Medieval Common People Project. Members of the project documentary research group undertook research between February 2012 and April 2013 with the aim of identifying evidence for the lives of the more ordinary residents of the two parishes for the period between the Norman Conquest in 1066 and the English Civil War of 1642-51.

The group searched documents in Derbyshire Record Office, Lichfield Archives, Sheffield Archives and the National Archives, as well as printed transcripts of court rolls in the University of Sheffield. Types of documents included wills and inventories, land deeds, historical maps, close, fine and patent rolls, inquisitions and other court and ecclesiastical records. The study area was the modern parishes of Castleton and Hope, though Hope was a much larger area during the medieval period and it is difficult to identify references to the modern parish rather than the wider area.

The following chapters are the result of this monumental task, undertaken in less than 18 months. The report is ordered into chapters which seem best to convey the results of the research and help to give insights into how the ordinary people of Hope and Castleton lived in Medieval society.

The Archive consists of all documents retrieved, with details of source, reference number, brief extract of content, and the type of record made (either digital or photocopy) which has been stored for future consultation as an Excel file. A file of paper "slips" recording this information was also kept because not everyone has access to a computer or is able to work with online material.

All digital images are stored in a separate archive which is available for consultation, by request through the societies' web sites.

Many of the photocopied documents have been digitised, a task which we hope to complete over the next year, when they will be available for consultation by request through the societies' web sites.

The final documentary report was written by the named individuals and expertly put together under the general editorship of Bill Bevan

The project and this report were funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The original Report is stored as a paper copy and digitally at the Derbyshire Record Office in Matlock.

In 2018 a digital version was prepared for the new Website of the Hope Historical Society when it was decided to separate the full script into topic sessions. All references are stored in part six and a table referencing the Figures has been added to this section, which includes the original and now invalid page numbering system.



Figure 1. Location of Castleton and Hope. Grid Ref SK173835, Hope Village.