

FOREWORD

IN presenting this volume I should like to pay my warm and sincere tribute to those excellent antiquaries and historians who in the past have recorded in such detail the history of the ancient manor of Gawsworth.

The village and its old buildings have always evoked high praise from its chroniclers. The spell of Gawsworth is something which is not easy to define, but the beauty of the old world village and its romantic history is known and loved far beyond the boundaries of Cheshire.

Dr. George Ormerod, in his monumental history of the county published in 1819, incorporated all the relevant information contributed by Sir Peter Leycester and other early writers concerning Gawsworth.

Thomas Helsby in his revised edition of Ormerod adds a little to the picture, but it was left to the splendid work of John Earwaker, and in a lesser degree to James Croston, to complete in fullest measure the history of the manor and its manorial lords. Both these antiquaries flourished in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, and much of the present volume incorporates their material with little change in the form of presentation.

Earwaker was the brilliant trained historian, and Croston the diligent antiquary. Both loved East Cheshire, and their writings and conclusions are rarely at variance with each other.

It would be unworthy not to extend praise to Joseph Lynch, who was present on many occasions when Edward Massie was engaged in his all too drastic "restoration" of the church a century ago. Lynch's Gawsworth handbook is interesting although unreliable, and the many theories he advanced have been re-printed by later writers with exasperating frequency. Posterity, however, will always be grateful for his unsuccessful efforts to preserve the ancient wall frescoes when these were uncovered in 1851. The tragedy of it all was that Lynch, in his old age, was allowed to perish in the Macclesfield workhouse.

I must now refer to that splendid band of local enthusiasts who wrote unceasingly of their affection for Gawsworth earlier this century. In the warmest terms of praise I mention Charles Beswick, John Earles

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and Walter Smith. In poems, in newspaper articles and in many unpublished manuscripts they poured out their love of the village—all without thought of financial reward.

Coward, whose work I admire enormously, never seemed quite to capture the spirit of Gawsworth in his Cheshire books, and my friend and wise counsellor, the late Fred Crossley, in his splendid architectural paper on Gawsworth Church was misled by Lynch into believing there had at one time been a south aisle to the church.

In 1924 the Rev. Herbert E. Polehampton published his own delightful history of the Parish. It is a most valuable contribution to the story of Gawsworth, altogether worthy of the fine priest and countryman who was Rector of Gawsworth from 1904 to 1925, and I have drawn on his material extensively.

To the Hon. Mrs. Fitzroy Newdegate, and her son Humphrey Fitzroy Newdegate, I should like to convey my thanks for their most generous hospitality and kind permission to quote from the Arbury muniments, now deposited in the County Record Office at Warwick. Many of the Fitton letters, so splendidly edited by Lady Fitzroy Newdigate Newdegate, possessing Gawsworth interest, have been reprinted in this volume, together with Lady Newdegate's original comments.

I also wish to thank Lord Cranborne and Lady Ashbrook for a good deal of information about the Dutton family, which materially assisted the chapter dealing with the tragic duel fought between the Duke of Hamilton and Lord Mohun.

In recent years several partial transcripts of the Gawsworth Registers have been circulated, and to correct the mistakes noticed in these extracts I was very pleased when Dr. Robert Dickinson accepted the invitation of the Rector and myself to undertake an edited transcription of the Registers, from their commencement in 1557 to the year 1837. The work is fully indexed and copies are available from the Ancient Monuments Society, Clifford's Inn, London.

The Rev. William Edgar Clarke, F.S.A., is to be congratulated on the paper he completed recently, dealing with the involved heraldry displayed in Gawsworth. Interpreting the many coats emblazoned on the Fitton tombs, the ancient glass and tapestry, has called for much research, and a number of false tinctures noticed in the restored shields have been corrected. It is a pleasure to place on record the happy and harmonious

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manner in which the Rector of Gawsworth and myself have worked together in all matters relating to the church and parish, and restoring and recovering the beauty of Gawsworth has given us both much pleasure.

Many friends living in the village, and members of old Gawsworth families resident elsewhere, have helped enormously by allowing me to see their old records, and describing their early memories of the manor. I should particularly like to mention Mr. Fred Smith, who placed at my disposal all the local material relating to Gawsworth left to him by the late Rev. H. E. Polehampton.

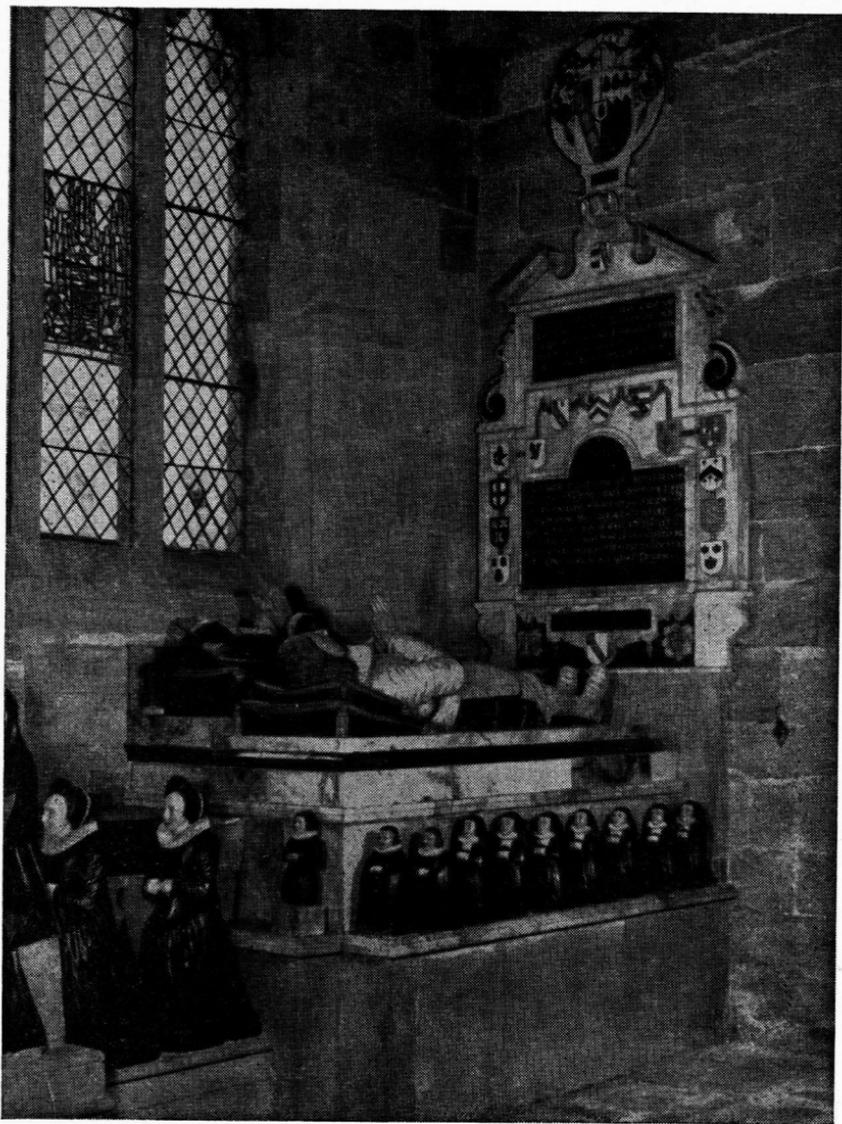
Needless to say Gawsworth has been photographed by professional and amateur alike from every angle, and making a selection to illustrate this volume has not been easy. The frontispiece I have re-used from Old Cheshire Churches, painted by the late Percy Lancaster, R.I., A.R.E., R.C.A. It has also been a pleasure to print from the original blocks many of the delightful pencil drawings accomplished by Mr. Bernard Miller, and to re-use some of the excellent series of pen and ink drawings of Gawsworth by the talented local artist Mr. Richard Riseley, which I have delighted in sending to my friends in recent years. I have to thank Mr. Herbert Allibone for many things, not the least being the recovery of Samuel Johnson's self portrait, reproduced in this volume.

Finally I should like to thank Sir James Mann, K.C.V.O., for his guidance in so many matters relating to Gawsworth, particularly in the restoration of the Fitton memorials, and Mrs. Hyde who prepared the manuscript for publishing.

RAYMOND RICHARDS,

Gawsworth Old Rectory.

1957.



After Restoration. The magnificent Tomb of Sir Edward Fitton, the first Baronet, who died in 1619, and his wife Anne, the daughter of James Barratt of Tenby. The two kneeling figures in front of the tomb chest are Anne and Mary Fitton, the daughters of Sir Edward and Dame Alice Fitton.