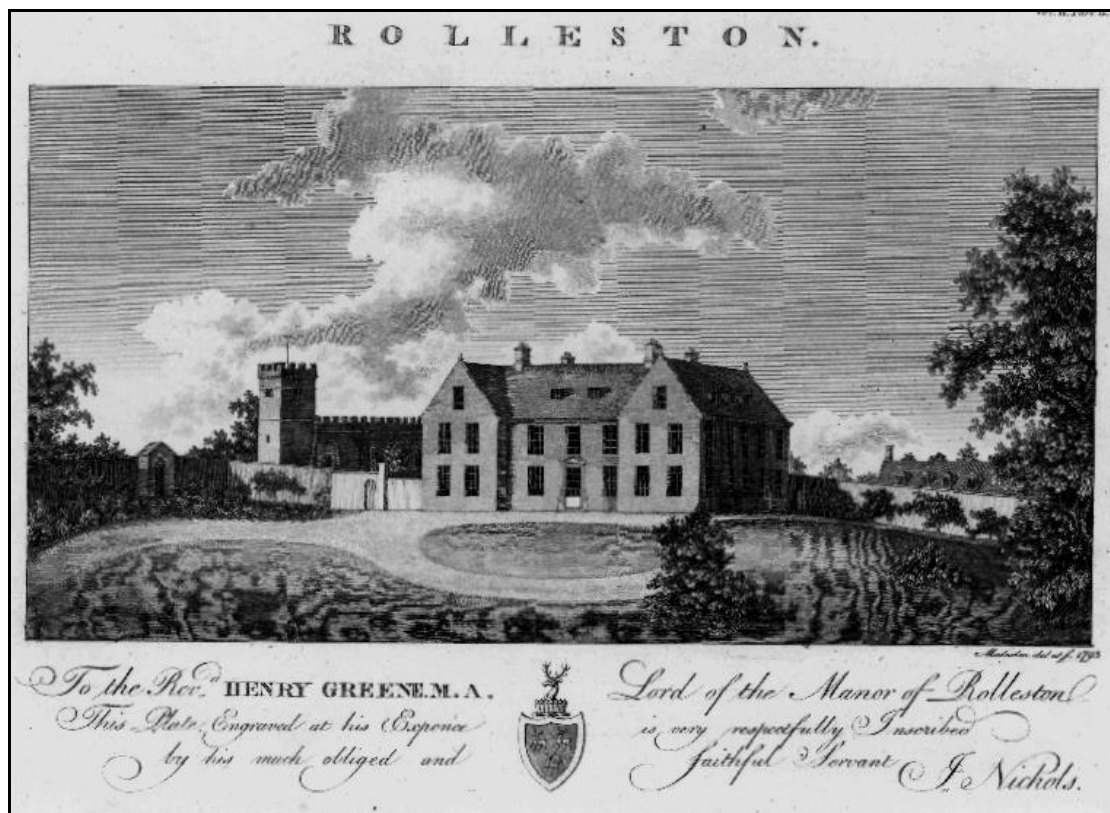


'HOW IT ALL STARTED'

THE THOMAS HARLEY OSGATHORPE CHARITY -
ORIGINALLY REFERRED TO AS 'OSGATHORPE
HOSPITAL'



BY SAMUEL T STEWART - OCTOBER 2023

FRONT COVER PHOTOGRAPH

See page 7 for further information

COMPLIMENTARY READING - These are all free to download and read on the author's website under the village of Osgathorpe.

Website address - samuelstewart.com

- **FROM ASGOTPORP TO OSGATHORPE**
- **HOW OSGATHORPE LOST ITS THOMAS HARLEY ENDOWED GRAMMAR SCHOOL**
- **JOHN ALLSOPP 1650 TO 1683 AND HIS BEQUEATHMENT TO OSGATHORPE**
- **THE MANOR HOUSE AT DONNINGTON LE HEATH OWNED FOR OVER 300 YEARS BY THOMAS HARLEY & THE 'THOMAS HARLEY OSGATHORPE CHARITY'**
- **SALE OF LAND IN THE PARISH OF COALVILLE BY THE 'THOMAS HARLEY OSGATHORPE CHARITY'**

RESEARCH SOURCES

The information therein has been cross checked between the various sources to ensure that the correct information has been recorded as far as is possible

- **BHO BRITISH HISTORY ONLINE**
- **LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND CHURCHES**
- **OPEN DOMESDAY BY ANNA POWELL-SMITH**
- **THOMAS HARLEY CHARITY ARCHIVES**

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The purpose of this publication is to add some clarity to the instructions given in Thomas Harley's will with regard to the Manor of Rolleston and the original formation of what eventually became know as the 'Thomas Harley Osgathorpe Charity', referred to initially as 'Osgathorpe Hospital'.

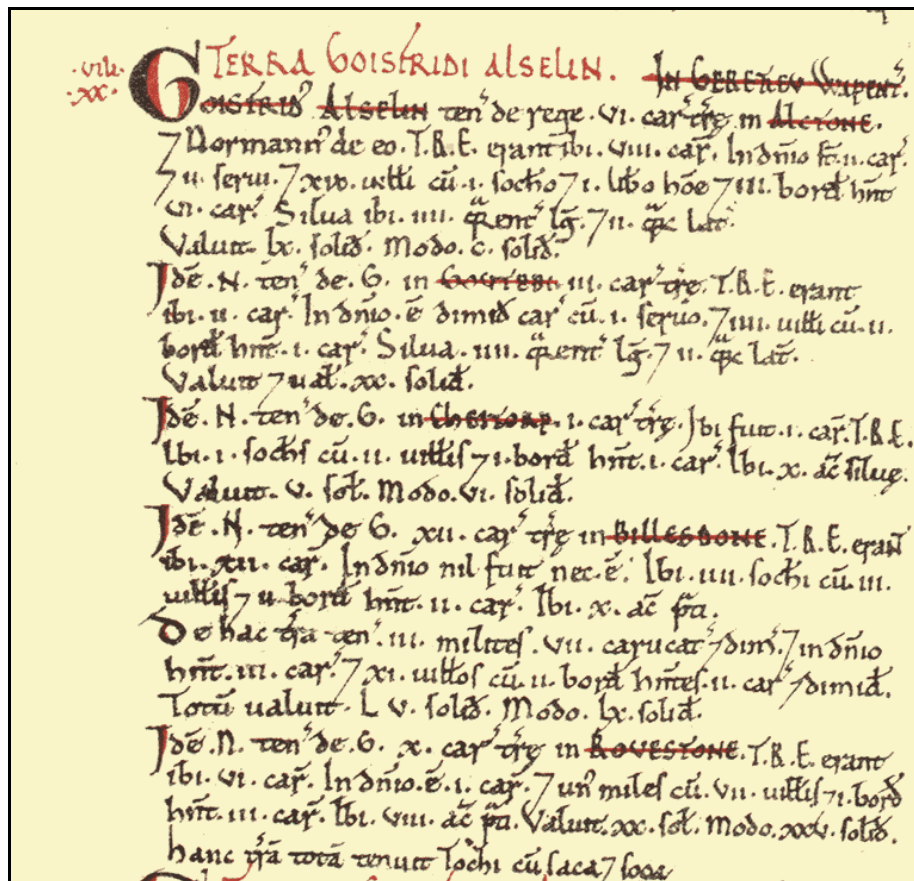
There are Rolleston's in the counties of Leics, Notts, and Staffs and it has proved difficult to actually locate the particular one referred to in Thomas Harley's will due to it being written in old English. However, the puzzle has now been solved, so it is perhaps appropriate if some background information on this ancient hamlet of Rolleston is provided :-

Rolleston (formerly Rovestone as recorded in the Domesday Book) is currently a small village and parish near to the village of Billesdon, about 7 miles to the east of Leicester.

In 1831, Rolleston contained 100 acres, 31 inhabitants, 8 houses and its expenditure in poor rates was £52 19s. John Marius Wilson's 'Imperial Gazetteer of England and Wales 1870-72' tells us that in 1871, Rolleston for centuries, had been a Chapelry, village and Township within the parish of Billesdon, Leicester. It became a parish in its own right sometime between 1872 and 1881.

It is mentioned in the Domesday Book as shown below in the last paragraph - Information taken from 'OPEN DOMESDAY' by Anna Powell-Smith.

Before the Conquest, ROLLESTON formed part of an estate in the neighbourhood of Billesdon which belonged to the Saxon landholder, Tochi. After 1066 it passed with the rest of his land to Geoffrey Alselin, from whom Norman of Hallaton was holding Rolleston in 1086.



INFORMATION FROM DOMESDAY BOOK

Land of Goisfridi (Geoffrey) Alselin

Households

19 villagers. 1 freeman. 1 freeman. 3 smallholders. 2 slaves.

Land and resources

Ploughland: 8 ploughlands. 2 lord's plough teams. 6 men's plough teams.

Other resources: Woodland 4 * 2 furlongs.

Valuation

Annual value to lord: 5 pounds in 1086; 3 pounds when acquired by the 1086 owner.

Owners

Tenant-in-chief in 1086: Geoffrey Alselin.

Lord in 1086: Norman <of Hallaton>.

Lord in 1066: Toki (son of Auti).

The descent of the manor of Rolleston in the 12th century has not been traced, but it seems likely that by the beginning of the 13th century the overlordship had passed to the Bardolf family who had succeeded to the land of Geoffrey de Alselin in Hallaton. The descent of the overlordship can be traced from William Bardolf (d. 1276) to William, Lord Bardolf (d. 1386), after whom it appears to have lapsed. The Crevequer family are known to have been mesne lords of this fee in Rolleston between 1199 and c. 1280. In 1199 Robert de Crevequer established his right to a knight's fee in Rolleston against the claim of his tenant, Robert de Beauchamp. Hamon de Crevequer, probably Robert's son, was holding 2 knight's fees in Billesdon in 1236, and in 1260 was reported to be the tenant of Adam de Everingham for the land of his own tenant in Rolleston, Ralph de Beauchamp. By 1261, Hamon's son, Robert de Crevequer, was in possession. In 1279 he was reported to be holding 2½ carucates in Rolleston with 3 virgates in chief, but by 1292 the mesne lord of this fee was William de Kirkby (d. 1302) who held of Hugh Bardolf. Kirkby's estate was divided between his four sisters and their respective husbands. One of these, Maud de Houby, was reported in 1302 to be holding ¼ knight's fee in Rolleston, but all the heirs of William de Kirkby appear to have retained some interest in the manor; their interest has not been traced after 1342.

The tenants in demesne of this manor in Rolleston were in the 13th century the Beauchamp family, and in the early 14th century the Wedon family. The first known demesne tenant is Robert de Beauchamp in 1199. In 1292 the manor of Rolleston was held for ¼ knight's fee by William de Beauchamp from William de Kirkby who held of Hugh Bardolf, but by 1328 it was in the hands of Ralph de Wedon. Ralph was assessed for ¼ knight's fee in Rolleston in 1346.

Between 1365 and 1433 the demesne tenants of the manor of Rolleston were members of the Cheyne family, who secured possession through arrangements which were made by John de Cobham, Lord Cobham. The latter, who came of age in 1346, was apparently enfeoffed as lord of Rolleston by Ralph de Wedon. In 1359, before leaving for the war in France, Cobham, who had received the manor for life from the king, enfeoffed Robert Bertram of Bothall (Northumb.), probably as a

trustee, and in 1362 the manor formed part of a settlement made for Lord Cobham's mother. Robert Bertram granted the manor to Robert de Ruddestane, Rector of Bothall, who in 1365 issued letters of attorney giving seisin to Thomas Cheyne. The heir of Ralph de Wedon quitclaimed any rights he might have in Rolleston to Hugh Cheyne, probably Thomas's son, in 1375. Hugh Cheyne died in 1390 seised of the manor of Rolleston which he held from John de Cobham. In 1377 an inquiry had been made into the legality of Cheyne's title, and the jury had agreed that Cheyne was possessed of the manor, although they did not know by what right. Hugh Cheyne was succeeded by his nephew Roger who recovered the manor from his uncle's feoffees in 1392. John Cheyne, perhaps Roger's son, was lord of the manor in 1428.

In 1433 John Cheyne sold the manor to Sir John Popham, to whom Thomas Wedon, one of the heirs of Ralph Wedon, released his rights. Popham still held the manor in 1451 but in 1458 he granted it to the London Charterhouse, which held it until the Dissolution. In 1546 it was granted by Henry VIII to Richard and Joan Dixon of Illston. It descended in this family until the death of William Dixon in 1628, and shortly after was sold to William Sharpe (d. July 18th 1658), who was recorded as being a Gentleman of Rolleston, Esq. ***As we can read later, it was William Sharpe who mortgaged or assigned the manor of Rolleston to Thomas Harley, of Osgathorpe, but more about that later.*** It was subsequently bought by Henry Greene (d. 1680), whose family had held land at Rolleston since the early 17th century and remained in possession of it until the death of its last member in 1861. It was then held for a short time by the Heap family of King's Norton, but about 1890 was purchased by Victor Albert Spencer, Lord Churchill. Shortly after the First World War it was purchased by Herman Alfred Stern, Lord Michelham, who sold it in 1940 to G. Sonderman. Sonderman's daughter, Mrs. F. W. Eske, succeeded him and owned the estate in 1959.

In 1271, Roger de Quincy , Earl of Winton, held a fee.

In 1279, the mesne lord paid scutage to William Bardolf and Adam de Everingham for the lands of his tenant in Rolleston

In 1275 William Bardolf held a fee

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In 1301 William Kirkeby held 24 Virgates and a mill.

In 1313, Alan le Zouch held part of a fee

In 1320 Thomas Bardolf held a fee

In 1329 Robert Holand and Matilda, his wife, held part of a fee

In 1336 Theobald Veridun held a fee

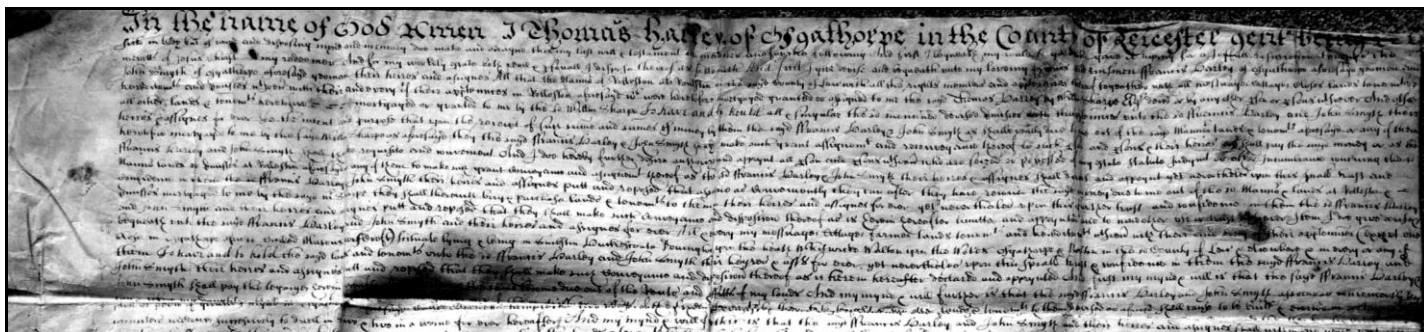
In 1377 John Cobham, son of the Countess of Norfolk and marshall held the manor

In 1454, William lovel and Alice, his wife, held a fee

In 1458, John Popham held the manor

In 1460, William Baron gave the manor to the Priory of the Salvation of God, or the Charter House, London, which held it until the dissolution.

In 1546 it was granted by Henry VIII to Richard and Joan Dixon of Illston. It descended in this family until the death of William Dixon in 1628, and shortly after was sold to William Sharpe (d. 1658). It was subsequently bought by Henry Greene (d. 1680).



Extract from the start of Thomas Harley's will dated the 11th day of June 1670

The first few lines of the will reads as follows, although it is difficult to decipher all the words where a question mark has been inserted :-

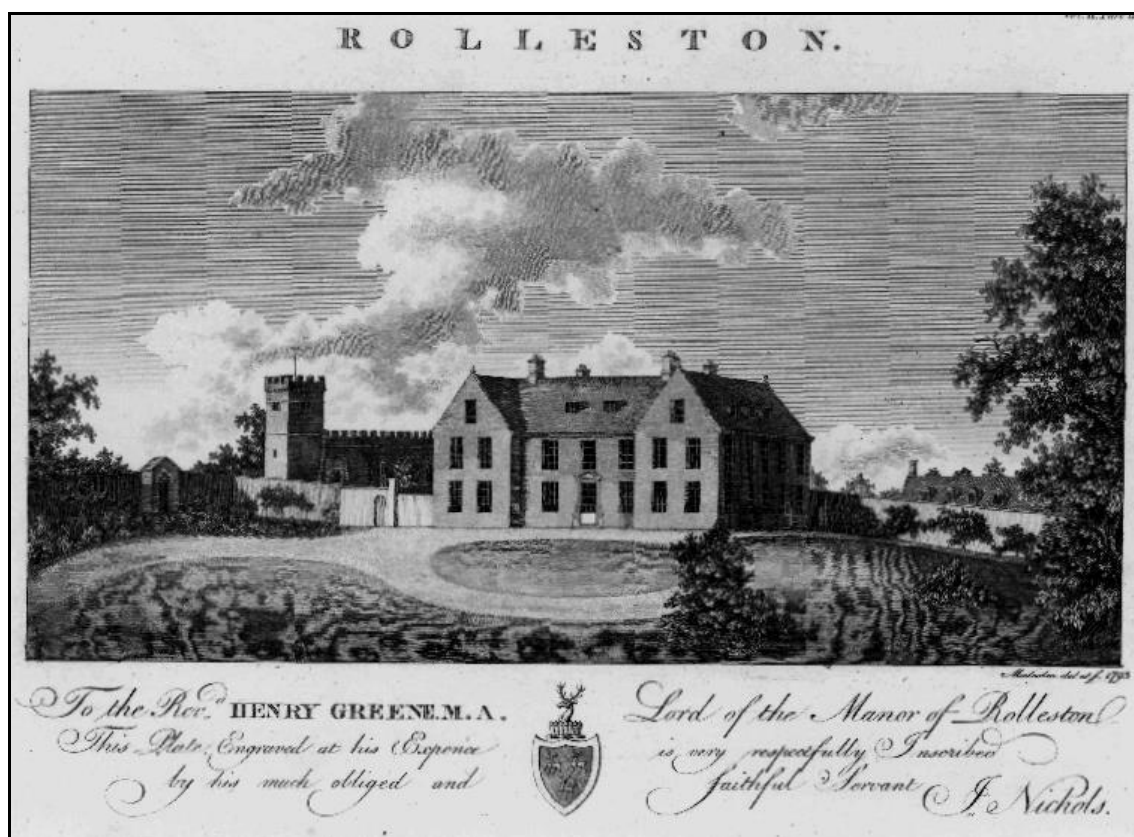
IN THE NAME OF GOD AMEN I THOMAS HARLEY OF OSGATHORPE IN THE COUNTY OF LEICESTER, GENT being firm in body but of sound and ? mind and memory do make and ordain this my last will and testament in manner and form the following. First I bequeath unto my loving ? Francis Harley of Osgathorpe, aforesaid Yeoman and John Smyth (subsequently recorded as John Smith) of Osgathorpe aforesaid yeoman their heirs and assigns all that the Manor of Rolleston, at Billesdon, in the said county of Leicester with all the rights ? and appurtenances thereof together with all messuages, cottages, closes, lands, tenements, premises whatsoever in Rolleston ? with their and every of their appurtenances in Rolleston aforesaid which were heretofore mortgaged, granted and assigned to me the said Thomas Harley by William Sharpe Esquire or by any other person or persons whatsoever and any other lands and tenements heretofore mortgaged or granted to me by the said William Sharpe to have and to hold all and singular.....

The will only refers to the Manor of Rolleston and does not mention any of his other lands held at Donington le Heath, Hugglescote, Snibston, Whitwick and Osgathorpe etc. Therefore the Manor of Rolleston was the basis on which the Thomas Harley Osgathorpe Charity, originally named 'Osgathorpe Hospital' was formed.

The will goes on to direct Francis Harley and John Smith as trustees, to use the rents and profits from the sale of Rolleston Manor to build two houses of three bays each, one for a school room and schoolmaster's house, the other as a dwelling for six poor minister's widows. These to be constructed on the strip of land opposite St. Mary's church with the curious name of 'Brewetts Hempleck'. Upon completion, eight persons would manage the investments to create an annual income of £100 - £40 for the Schoolmaster's salary and £10 per widow. Francis Harley and John Smith would nominate schoolmasters and widows until Mary Harley reached the age of eighteen, when she and her legal heirs would assume that responsibility. If she died, or her legally born heirs died, the function would pass to Francis Harley and his heirs. The Churchwardens would intervene if the responsible person lapsed in duty. For the £40 salary the schoolmaster was required to teach basic education, reading, writing, and arithmetic, to a maximum of fifty pupils, also the classics and mathematics if required and keep the school room and house in good repair. Thirteen years later, in 1683, an 'Indenture of Lease and Release' was made between Francis Harley and John Smith and six other persons. It stated that they had, in pursuance of the Will, built the six bays of buildings, plus outbuildings, on 'Brewett's Hempleck', made as a school room

and schoolmaster's house and the other for six poor minister's widows. It went onto detail the transfer of holdings to the trustees, with a long list of the properties, many named, such as: 'Tweene Town's Close', or 'Hornebuckles Orlesbreach' and 'Donington Cow Pasture'. The list ended with a small piece called 'North Orchard', purchased to enlarge the rear of the schoolmaster's house.

William Sharpe died on July 18th 1658, eight years after he had rebuilt the free school at Billesdon, so he had evidently mortgaged / assigned the Manor of Rolleston to Thomas Harley prior to his death. The manor was next purchased by Henry Greene who died in 1680, so it is not unreasonable to assume that Francis Harley and John Smith, as the only trustees, sold the Manor to him, although the author has not located any evidence to support this. The Greene family had held land at Rolleston since the early 17th century and remained in possession of it until the death of its last member in 1861.



The above 1793 engraving was presented to Henry Greene M.A., who was lord of the manor at that time. The Chapel of St. John the Baptist actually stood within the grounds of Rolleston Hall which is not there any more. The hall was thought to be faced in lime stone originally. We have no evidence to support whether it was part of the manorial lands and properties assigned to Thomas Harley.

The small chapel consists of a west tower, and nave and chancel all in one. The tower is the oldest part of the church dating to the 13th century but the top stage with its battlements dates from the restoration in 1740. Before the 1740 restoration there was a monumental slab to one of the Sharpe family and reports of a cross in the churchyard. The font is plain and octagonal. There was a further restoration in 1899 when the windows were replaced. In 1962, the Church was again completely restored by Erica Eske. There are some plaques memorials to various members of the Churchill family on the walls.