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Holkham Hall, Wells-next-the-Sea, MS 685

The notes collected by William Heveningham in Holkham Hall, MS 685, are prison writings, but they make almost no mention of the author's long incarceration in Windsor Castle, and the reader is told nothing of the reason for his imprisonment: his participation, as a judge, in the trial and execution of Charles I. The interest of William Heveningham's notebook lies rather in his efforts to keep up with the world from which he was excluded, by collating information that might help his family maintain and improve his estates, which were centred on the village of Ketteringham in Norfolk. This manuscript gives a fascinating insight into the range of interests comprehended within the early modern concept of husbandry, including the practical arts associated with maintaining a gentleman's household. It has much to offer scholars who are interested in the reception of experimental natural philosophy, and it may also interest historians looking for insights into the worldly concerns of the gentlemen who sat in judgment of the King.

William Heveningham (1604-1678) was first elected an MP for the Short Parliament in 1640 and was returned to the Long Parliament in the same year. A Presbyterian and a church elder of the Dunwich classis, he nevertheless showed sufficient sympathy with the Independents to survive Pride's Purge, and was named a judge for Charles I's trial. He refused to sign the King's death warrant, but later swore his approval of the King's trial and execution. He prospered during the interregnum, buying up confiscated royalist and episcopal properties, and serving on two republican councils of state. He became Vice-Admiral of Suffolk in 1651. At the Restoration, Heveningham surrendered to the crown and pleaded for mercy. Notwithstanding his claims to have opposed the execution of Charles I and to have provided help to royalists through the 1650s (including financial support for Sir George Booth's royalist rising in 1659), he was sentenced to death in October 1660. Only after two years, several petitions, and lobbying by his wife's relatives, was his death sentence commuted to imprisonment, which he served until his natural death in 1678. Though his estates had been confiscated in 1660, this punishment was commuted too: in 1661 they were put in trust for his wife. The great majority (if not all) of the memoranda in Holkham Hall, MS 685, date from the period of Heveningham's imprisonment.

Heveningham's memoranda show his concern to manage and improve the family's estates. They include entries concerning the legal history of his properties, advice on the collection and accounting of rents, and notes on a broad range of farming practices. These entries may reflect anxieties about whether his estates would be transmitted to his wife and heirs, or were being maintained to the advantage of his family by trustees. The notes on husbandry suggest a parallel concern to transmit advice on the improvement of the properties that might be recovered to his family. He collated information on the questions to ask when buying land, as well the latest agricultural techniques, and practical knowledge that would be useful in the day-to-day

running of a gentleman's estate. Holkham Hall, MS 685, will be of value to scholars who are interested in Baconian scientific practices and the influence of the Royal Society. Heveningham supplements advice on planting trees from John Evelyn's *Sylva, or, A Discourse of Forest Trees* (1664) with experiential knowledge of his own (f. 77v). In several places he records information provided by acquaintances concerning the improvement of agricultural practices. Diverse methods for improving property are recorded: not only planting trees, but improving crop yields (f. 18r) and raising ducks and pigeons (ff. 33v-34r). Heveningham also apparently had enough access to court circles to record experimental medical knowledge that had been circulated by Prince Rupert (f. 107r). Heveningham's practice of recording such useful information suggests that he was influenced by the scientific ethos promoted by the Royal Society, particularly the Society's aim to collate empirical knowledge gathered through correspondence. Holkham Hall, MS 685, shows that even a man of no great birth, in prison and disgrace, could gain access to the far-reaching networks through which such knowledge was exchanged: Heveningham records agricultural methods used across the south of England and in France (ff. 18r, 21r-22r, 101r-102v). These memoranda offer insights into the milieu of Restoration Baconianism, but it may also be worth asking to what extent Heveningham's work with the interregnum governments could have brought him into contact with the precursors of the Royal Society's correspondence networks – the Baconian reformer Samuel Hartlib had attempted to set up an 'Office of Address' in order to gather practical knowledge for public benefit, and had won support from the republican and protectoral governments.¹

Holkham Hall, MS 685, indicates that the practical knowledge seen as useful to the government of a gentleman's estate extended to skills for use in the household. We find methods for removing stains from different kinds of cloths (f. 110r), techniques for preparing venison (f. 33r), advice on carpentry (f. 108r), and even for making fake pearls (f. 110r). The running of the estate and the household cannot be easily separated in this manuscript, and historians of the family may find that Heveningham's notes throw light on the interactions of empirical science with changing familial roles. Of similar interest may be Heveningham's notes concerning the regulation of personal and family worship, and moral advice for his children (f. 117r-v). Heveningham's practicality extends to marriage advice for his sons: 'Mary no woman but who you Can Love & like; but to be extraordinary in Love is Folly & madnes' (f. 117r). Much of the advice is fairly conventional, but some entries transmit lessons gained by bitter experience of the recent political revolutions: 'In Great Actions with Draw your selfe upon pretence of Busines or Sicknes & meadell not in them' (f. 117r). They invite comparison with other examples of written 'advice to children', especially such as were composed by figures who had become involved with the political upheavals of this period: perhaps the copious, and much-revised notebooks of experiential moral wisdom produced by Bulstrode Whitelocke for his children, which are now in the collection of the Marquis of Bath at Longleat House (and indeed, the 'Preciptes of Wm Heueningham of Heueningham in the Contie of Suff Collected & obserued by him; which he Leues to his sonne For His Betteir Directions in this Lyfe' in

¹ Charles Webster, *The Great Instauration: Science, Medicine, and Reform, 1626-1660* (London: Duckworth, 1975), pp. 67–77.

another manuscript associated with Heveningham: Holkham Hall, MS 684). Such comparisons could throw new light on interactions between the political and domestic spheres of mid-century culture, and illuminate a neglected genre through which memories of the civil war and interregnum were transmitted to later generations.

The more courtly memoranda in Heveningham's notebook are intriguing. The only reference to life at Windsor Castle is a bill for washing linen 'Att Wisor 1664' (f. 108v). That this includes napkins and tablecloths suggests that he was yet capable of putting on some kind of entertainment. The notes that Heveningham took from Kenelm Digby's unpublished autobiographical romance *Loose Fantasies* are the first known evidence of the circulation of Digby's manuscript: they are dated 1669; four years after Digby's death (ff. 7v-10v).² Digby was a Roman Catholic courtier, diplomat, poet, and scholar, and an early convert to experimental natural philosophy. His learning and works in natural philosophy won him fame and a place among the founders of the Royal Society, but more surprisingly, given his religion, he also kept company with Cromwell and the Protectorate's grandees, and acted as a go-between during Cromwell's negotiations with Mazarin during the period 1654-56. Heveningham's interest in Digby's romance perhaps grew from social contact with Digby during the years when both men worked for the interregnum governments. Heveningham's notes from *Loose Fancies* condense episodes in the courtship between Theagenes and Stelliana (under which names, as Heveningham's notes make clear, are figured Digby himself and his wife Lady Venetia Digby). They also show significant variants when compared to the autograph manuscript of *Loose Fantasies* in the British library (MS Harley 6758). Further comparison between these manuscripts may reveal more about the composition of Digby's romance, or about the ways in which the seventeenth-century *roman a clef* was read and circulated. Interesting too are the notes which Heveningham took from an account of The Duke of Buckingham's embassy to France in 1670, and his lavish reception at Versailles by Louis XIV (f. 115r-v). It is here that Heveningham's politics may finally creep into the notebook, for Buckingham's treatment by Louis surprised many, including Buckingham himself, who had expected his negotiations towards an Anglo-French treaty to be harder work than they turned out to be. Little did Buckingham know that his embassy and his treaty were just the cover-story. Charles II had already agreed most of the now-notorious Treaty of Dover secretly, including a clause which agreed that in return for a subsidy from France (which would circumvent Charles II's dependence upon Parliament) Charles would convert to Catholicism and declare war on the Dutch. Though this secret clause would not emerge for many years to come, Buckingham's magnificent reception in France was suspicious to say the least, and many who feared what might result from the alliance of Charles and Louis would, like Heveningham, have picked over descriptions of Buckingham's treatment, perhaps seeking to augur the rapidly-changing political winds from the details of Louis' banquets and iconographic water pageants.

Holkham Hall, MS 685, appears to have been assembled as a book of memoranda in which Heveningham collected his first thoughts on topics, and

² Kenelm Digby, *Loose Fantasies*, ed. Vittorio Gabrieli (Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1968), p. xi.

was probably not intended for others to read. The writing is often very cursive, and relatively little effort has been made to edit the notes. The organisation of the volume is in places loosely topical, but closer analysis may reveal more about Heveningham's memorial practice and suggest whether the book provided the basis for a more orderly volume of family records and advice, or whether it served as a memorial aid for visits by his wife and children.

Bibliography

Digby, Kenelm, *Loose Fantasies*, ed. Vittorio Gabrieli (Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1968)

Webster, Charles, *The Great Instauration: Science, Medicine, and Reform, 1626-1660* (London: Duckworth, 1975)

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