

## **THE BROWN[E] FAMILY IN CASTLE RISING.**

### **FIVE GENERATIONS IN THE TOWN FROM THE EARLY SEVENTEENTH CENTURY UNTIL THE LATE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.**

The Brown family were associated with Castle Rising longer than most, and we are fortunate in having a lot of information about them. Below are extracts from the wills of four members of the family, preserved in the Norfolk Record Office.

The tentative Brown's family tree has been drawn using information from these wills together with that from the Castle Rising parish records of baptisms, marriages and deaths and the lists of those men and boys who attended the annual Leet Court. Reference to it may clarify the family relationships.

#### **WILL OF JOHN BROWNE OF CASTLE RISING. (NRO, O.W.2/43)**

**John Browne** Husbandman of Castle Rising. 1664.

“I give to Richard Browne my sonne. My best bed and bedstead as it stands and a cupboard and a frame table, four (*illegible*), two butter stools. Two chairs, a brassyer [*brass pot*], a kettle and a form. I give unto my godsonne, John Brown, my bible, and to give all the rest of my goods to Frances, my wife” .....

#### **WILL OF JAMES BROWNE OF CASTLE RISING. (NRO, O.W.2/76)**

**James Browne**, Taylor of Castle Rising. Feb. 1681.

I give to my loving wife Catherine Browne her dwelling in where she now liveth in the house and premises thereunto belonging for us during the (*illegible*) .....of all my goods and chattels..... that the money that is made of my goods is to pay for my debts and funeral expenses and the overplus to be equally divided between my two children Ann and Christian.

*[The will was difficult to read but it seems as if Christian had two children, Jane and William, and Ann also had two children, Charles and P---- .]Thus James was a grandfather at his death in 1681 .*

#### **WILL OF RICHARD BROWN OF CASTLE RISING. (NRO, O.W. 3/45)**

**Richard (Ricus) Browne** Labourer of Castle Rising. 1719.

I give unto my sons John Brown, Richard Brown, James Brown and Henry Brown and my daughter Mary Brown to all and every of whom, the sum of 5 shillings to be paid by my *executors(?)* within one year of my death.

I give to my wife Ann Brown all my stock of cows, bullocks, calves and all my goods and chattels belonging to me, also all the Bills, Bonds, Ril(?) and (*illegible*).

This ?day of Jul 1719

Witness James Brown

Richard R Brown

## **WILL OF ANN BROWNE of CASTLE RISING. (NRO, O.W.3/52)**

**Ann Brown** widow of Castle Rising 1723

I Ann Brown of Castle Rising

I give and bequeath unto John Brown of Castle Rising, the sum of 5s.

I give and bequeath unto Mary Walker my daughter, the sum of 5s.

I give and bequeath unto Henry Brown my third son, the sum of 5s.

All the rest of my goods, cattle and chattels whatsoever I give unto James Brown, my second son and his heirs forever.

Witnesses John Green and Francis Clarke.

These wills help to give a glimpse of life in Castle Rising more than 250 years ago. We can see something of the important possessions of the people of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century – a few livestock, furniture and what seems to us, small amounts of money. But they also tell us of the family relationships, which when added to the information from the Leet Court and the parish church records help to build a fairly confident picture of the family through five generations, and to show that they played an important role in the organisation of the village.

This branch of the Brown family can be traced in the village from at least 1642, the year when John Brown's name first appears in the earliest preserved records of the Castle Rising Leet Court. They last appear in the second half of the eighteenth century.

**John**, a husbandman (a farmer holding his land by copyhold or leasehold tenure) first appeared in the earliest surviving Leet Court books in 1642 and he was present on at least seven occasions. He doesn't seem to have volunteered for any of the Leet court duties such as constable, hog-ringer, dyke-reeve or sergeant-at-arms. John Brown died in 1664 and left a widow, **Frances**. In the will he mentions only one son, **Richard**, but at John's death, **James**

seems not to have lived in the village (being absent from the Leet court between 1658 and 1671) and **Thomas** would probably still be a child. In John's will he gives to **Richard** "my best bed and bedstead as it stands, a cupboard and a frame table, two butter stands, two chairs, a brassyer (brass pot), a kettle and a form". He gives the rest of his belongings to his wife **Frances**. There is no mention of farm equipment and animals in the will, although he was a husbandman; perhaps they were included in "*the rest of his belongings*". Or alternatively he may no longer have been farming when he died.

There are three recorded Browns attending the Leet Court\* in the second half of the seventeenth century and were most likely sons of **John**. The eldest was probably **James** who attended in 1656 and 1657 and again between 1671 and 1681 but was absent for many years including 1664, the year of his father's death and 1666, the year when all male residents of the village were documented. Perhaps he was away learning his trade during the intervening years, since at his death, his will records him as a tailor. James was married to **Catherine** and at the time of his death they had two adult children, **Ann** and **Christian** Both **Ann** and **Christian** are recorded as having two children so we know that James was a grand-father when he died in 1681.

**John's** second son, **Richard** is mentioned in his will. He was recorded at the Leet Court on 27 occasions, intermittently at first but then more regularly; twice he acted as constable. In these records he was often referred to as Ricus, the Latinised name for **Richard**.

**John's** youngest son to attend the Leet Court was **Thomas**, who was present for three successive years 1673, 1674 and 1675, but then no more. Perhaps he had died or left the village. The births, marriages and burials for the late 17<sup>th</sup> century are missing but we know that **Richard** was buried in Castle Rising in 1719, a date corroborated by his will (O.W.3/45) written in July 1719 shortly before his death and recorded above. Although he is described as a labourer he owned some cattle which most probably grazed in the common day and night marsh of the village. He left these to his wife.

Richard's wife **Ann** died in 1723 and she also was buried in Castle Rising churchyard. On **Richard's** death there were five children, **John**, **Richard jnr.**, **James**, **Henry** and **Mary**, but during the next four years prior to Ann's death died their son **Richard jnr.** must have died and their daughter **Mary** had married to become **Mary** Walker. There is no evidence of her marriage in Castle Rising, nor of any subsequent children, **Richard's** three surviving boys followed the family tradition and attended the Leet Court regularly. **John** attended 6 times between 1719 and 1727, and was constable on his first attendance and again in 1721. **James** his younger brother actually appeared for the first time at the Leet Court earlier than his brother, appearing for the first time under his Latinised name Jacobus in 1715. He attended 6 times until his last appearance in 1725. He died in 1728 and his death is recorded in the Castle Rising burials. The youngest brother, **Henry**, appeared in the Leet Court records on 21 occasions, the first being earlier than his elder brother in 1722 and the last being in 1760 shortly before his copyhold burgage was surrendered in 1762., presumably on his death. He lived to what then must have been the ripe old age of over 50. He was Pinder, or Hog-ringer

on two occasions, a position which required that rings be put in the nostrils of the pigs using the common land.

All three of Richard Brown's sons married and remained in the village; **John** married **Rebecca** Whitehouse of King's Lynn and they had two sons, **Samuel**, born in 1723 and **Richard**, in 1729. **James** married **Elizabeth** but before their first son **James jnr.** was baptised in 1728, **James** had sadly died. His burial is documented in the parish records. **Henry's wife was called** Katherine, presumably not a Castle Rising girl for there is no record of the marriage in the Parish records., but they settled in the village and had five sons, Henry, Henry, **Richard**, Henry and **John** and a daughter Hanna in the village during the years 1734 to 1745. It is apparent that their two first-born, both called Henry, did not survive beyond childhood.

We know for certain that two of **Henry** and **Katherine's** children survived to adulthood. **Richard** married Lydia Thaxter of Castle Rising. **John** who married **Ann** Bostell had four children **Mary**, **David**, **George** and **David** between the years 1770 to 1778. David's birth in 1778 marks the last record of the five generations of the Brown family, which lived in Castle Rising for at least 114 years

- No women attended the Leet Court.