

## Sir Thomas Holte 1571 - 1654

### His Family Background

The Holtes were a wealthy, land-owning family of some importance in Warwickshire. Their ancestors had owned land in the area several hundred years and it had been considerably added to with the acquisition of monastic land during the Reformation.. The Holtes served as High Sheriffs, Justices of the Peace and Deputy Lieutenants for the county. They had influential friends and relatives both locally and in London.

### Early Life

Thomas Holte was born and brought up at the family home at Duddeston. He was well educated: attending Oxford University and picking up a knowledge of the law at the Inns of Court. He was described by his great grandson (Sir Charles Holte) as 'a man well read in most parts of learning, and versed in several languages'. His father died when Thomas was only 21, and as his successor Thomas did much to further the family fortunes.

### Knight and Baronet

Thomas Holte was amongst those who received a knighthood from James I as the king made his way from Scotland to London to claim his throne in 1603. In 1611 Sir Thomas was able to buy the title of baronet (James I sold these new titles in order to raise money to quell trouble in Ireland). Sir Thomas now outranked all the local families. He felt a grander home should be built to reflect both his wealth and status - Aston Hall.

### Wife and Family

Sir Thomas married twice. His first wife, Grace Bradbourne bore him fifteen children. Only six survived to adulthood. Grace died in 1627. The baronet's contacts at Court served him

well and he managed to obtain a post for his eldest surviving son, Edward, in the King's household.

During his time in London Edward met and married (without his father's permission) Elizabeth King. Sir Thomas disinherited his son and remained fixed in this resolve despite attempts at reconciliation, even by the king! When Sir Thomas' only other remaining son, George, died in 1641 he re-married, determined to beget a son and cut Edward out. His second wife, Anne Littleton, gave birth to a boy, Charles, but he only lived to three. In fact Sir Thomas out-lived all but one daughter. Edward died in 1643 at Oxford. In his last years Sir Thomas was persuaded to leave his estates and Aston Hall to Edward's son, Robert. Sir Thomas Holte died at what was an incredible age for those times - eighty three!

### **Character**

Sir Thomas Holte was clever, shrewd and ambitious. He amassed money and land to add to his inheritance. There is also evidence that he was also obstinate, aggressive and violent. In 1606 William Ascrick of Birmingham claimed '..Sir Thomas tooke a cleever and hytt hys cooke with the same cleever .. and clave hys heade that the one side thereof fell upone one of his shoulders, and the other syde on the other shoulder..' Ascrick was sued for slander and Sir Thomas awarded damages. The verdict, however, was overturned on appeal. Sir Thomas was vindictive quarrelling with his son, Edward, for twenty years over his marriage. He tried to ruin him. And it was rumoured Sir Thomas locked up a daughter because she refused to marry her father's choice of husband. The story goes that she starved to death.

