

...and highly
 ...ough as the
 ...oreton—when he
 ... (now Woodchester
 ... moved from it to his seat
 ... presented a magnificent
 ... eight feet one inch long by
 ... five-and-a-half inches high,
 ... great value, by Snyders—represent-
 ... a wolf attacked by dogs, whilst
 ... standing over a dead roe-deer. Lord
 Ducie placed this picture in the hands
 of seven gentleman, upon a written
 trust to put it up for exhibition in the
 large room of the building, so long as
 it should be open for public meetings.

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An Auctioneer's Prophecy

It would appear that Mr. Robins, who frequently becomes lyrical in his enthusiasm for the attractions of Woodchester Park, did not find an immediate purchaser at the auction sale, because two years elapsed before Mr. William Leigh acquired the property. Among many other inducements for prospective buyers were the following :

The offices, within and without, are quite commensurate. There is standing for eight carriages, eighteen stalls, besides loose boxes; and this is independent of the hunting establishment, which is perfect. The Church preferment includes two valuable advowsons, with Woodchester and Frocester, £600 a year, and two superior Parsonage Houses. Connected with it is the entire village of Nymfield (sic), wherein are sixty-six houses, and the Ducie Arms, with political influence extending over twelve hundred honest yeomen."

Mr. Robins, who would appear to have been an optimist as well as an experienced auctioneer, ventures into the rather hazardous realms of prophecy when he says :

It may be safely affirmed that if hospitality be one of the characteristics of Woodchester, the representation of the County will follow, as a matter of course, with the Lord Lieutenanty to follow.

* * *

Mr. W. Leigh's Purchase

The subsequent history of Woodchester Park is recorded by Mr. Marmont, whose whole life has been spent in the immediate neighbourhood. He tells us that the estate—

having been for over 200 years the property of the Ducie family, was, in 1843, advertised for sale by the then Earl and in 1845 was purchased by William Leigh, Esq., of Little Aston, Staffs. Mr. Leigh, who had previously been received into the communion of the Roman Church, finding on his new estate no church for the members of his own communion, at once took steps to provide one and built the beautiful church at Woodchester which he subsequently gave to the Dominican Order, who added to it all the domiciliary and collegiate buildings and it then became for many years the headquarters of the Order which hitherto had had no home in England since the Reformation.

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End of the Old Mansion

When Mr. Leigh purchased the estate, continues Mr. Marmont, there was standing upon it a fine

Woodchester Park

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We are indebted to Mr. Basil Marmont, of Windsoregge House, Inchbrook, for some interesting information concerning the beautiful estate of Woodchester Park. The recent rumours of a possible sale of this property to Barnwood House Mental Hospital has not materialised, and it was again opened to the public on August Bank Holiday, thus affording to residents and visitors the opportunity of seeing the unfinished mansion and the richly wooded grounds. Mr. Marmont, who sends for our inspection the cutting of an ornate auctioneer's advertisement dated June 6th, 1843, tells us that it was in 1845 that Mr. William Leigh of Little Aston, Staffs., purchased the property from Lord Ducie. This suggests that Lord Ducie must either have remained in residence some years after the sale or the date given by Paul Hawkins Fisher referred to a gift made after he had gone to Tortworth.

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An Auction Sale of 1843

According to the auction sale advertisement of 1843 the original mansion in Woodchester Park cost about £100,000. Mr. George Robins, the London auctioneer, announced of the house :

It is planned to accommodate the first nobleman in the land; seventy guests have found repose and comfort here on one night. Windows of painted glass give it a dim, religious light, in fact, everything is in perfect keeping within. As taste will sometimes differ, Mr. Robins would observe that that outward form is not incapable of improvement; and in the spirit of candour that influences all his announcements, he would add, that a Thousand Pounds would benefit the exterior, by giving it a more imposing appearance, and which cannot be denied to an abode that is seated in a park which for its variety and beauty is not to be surpassed throughout the globe, wherein the woodland scenery and ornamental waters are ever and anon contending for the supremacy. "Here swell the vales, the woods and prospects rise."

* * *

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Lord Ducie's Parting Gift

Fisher's reference to Lord Ducie's removal from Woodchester to Tortworth is made in his account of the

End of the Old Mansion

When Mr. Leigh purchased the estate, continues Mr. Marmont, there was, standing upon it, a fine mansion, built by Matthew, Lord Ducie, in the time of George I., who also constructed the chain of five fine lakes. This mansion had on several occasions entertained Royalty, notably in 1750 and 1788, but Mr. Leigh's next step was to utterly demolish it and commence the building on the site, of the present unfinished shell which only serves as a melancholy memorial to departed thousands!

Building went on in a very leisurely "day work" manner for over 14 years till towards the end of the 60's all work ceased and Mr. Leigh dying in January 1873, was buried in the crypt of the church he had built. His son and successor William, the father of the present owners, was living in Australia at the time of his father's death and came home to take possession, but he never did anything towards the finishing of his father's intended new home. He spent a lot of money in making what was formerly Lord Ducie's head-gardener's house into a home for himself and family. He died in Oct., 1906, and is also buried in the crypt at Woodchester R.C. Church. The date on the clock in the tower of the unfinished mansion is "Anno Do 1858."