

The Burdett Family and Anchor Church

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Playing a significant role in the history of Anchor Church, the Burdett family is responsible for modifying and preserving the structure of the hermitage as we see it today.

Family Origins

The Burdett family was a Baronetcy created in February 1619 by King James I. A Baronetcy is an honorary title given to a family member to raise the family standing and rank but was also done as way of raising money for the crown in creating alliances with wealthy families such as the Burdetts. They were based in Bramcote, a small village in the Rugby district of Warwickshire lying three miles south-east of Nuneaton.

While the Baronetcy starts with Sir Thomas Burdett, the family's royal and political ties go back to Sir William Burdett who was a Knight of the Shire of Leicestershire in 1297. The family would go on to be a 'political powerhouse' (albeit a fairly quiet one in history), producing multiple High Sheriffs and MPs in every generation for the next 500 years.

Anchor Church

The Burdetts held their family seat from the 18th century at Foremarke Hall, a half-mile's walk from Anchor Church. At this time, Sir Robert Burdett, the 4th Baronet of the family, is known to have taken advantage of this fantastic part of the landscape and began using Anchor Church for entertaining his wealthy friends.

Part of this included making modifications to Anchor Church to make it more accessible for Sir Robert and his friends — particularly important when we consider that high fashion of the time was not the nimble tracksuits of today but rather finely tailored 3-piece suits for the men and extravagant flowing dresses for the women which were usually structured in some way. Even the most 'athletic' of high fashion at this time would not be that which you would wish to scrape upon a rocky frame and so Sir Robert Burdett had the doorways widened for ease of access. He also would have had the interior furnished for comfort.

Thomas Smith's *A View of Anchor Church* is probably the best way to understand how the Church would have been used as it is a beautiful piece showing a Burdett party commissioned in 1745. As you can see, the whole space is used inside and out for entertaining likely featuring musicians, drinks, and any other 18th century pastimes of the rich you can imagine. Anchor Church continued to be used by the family for entertaining well into the 19th century, with each passing generation residing at Foremarke Hall.



(Thomas Smith of Derby, *A View of Anchor Church*. Published 1745. Picture taken from the Royal Academy of Arts)

Foremarke Hall, the Family Home

Foremarke Hall was built in 1760 commission by Sir Robert, the 4th Baronet, on an estate within Foremarke acquired by the First Baronet, Sir Thomas, in his marriage to the Heiress of Francis. The Hall sits only a half-mile away from Anchor Church and is a stately home of the Burdett family to this day and is currently owned by the 9th Baronet of the family, Sir Paul Andrew Burdett.

In 1835, Foremarke Hall appears in Pigot and Co's National Commercial Directory and is described as “the beautiful seat of Sir Francis Burdett, most judiciously and romantically placed, amidst scenery of a rich, bold, and varied character, upon the southern banks of the Trent — the hanging hills being crowned by thriving plantations. The house is spacious, and its appearance imposing to a considerable degree; the pleasure-grounds are very tasteful, and lead down a valley, through finely wooded avenues to the banks of the river.”

References

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Thomas Smith of Derby, A View of Anchor Church. Published 1745. Picture taken from the Royal Academy of Arts <https://www.royalacademy.org.uk/art-artists/work-of-art/a-view-of-anchor-church>

Pigot and Co's National Commercial Directory, comprising a classification of the merchants, bankers, professional gentlemen, manufacturers and traders ... in the counties of Derby, Hereford, Leicester, Lincoln, Monmouth, Nottingham, Rutland, Salop, Stafford, Warwick and Worcester; and also ... Wales. [1835]
<https://specialcollections.le.ac.uk/digital/collection/p16445coll14/id/217464> Page 65 specifically for Foremark hall

List of Baronetcys and year of issue (web archive link)

[web.archive.org/web/20191024070600/http://www.leighrayment.com/baronetage/baronetsB6.htm](http://www.leighrayment.com/baronetage/baronetsB6.htm)

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