

LORDS OF THE MANOR OF HITCHAM BUCKS.

Fifth Edition

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The lords of the manor administered the locality, originally at the pleasure of their overlord, but later the manorial rights could be purchased and were more secure. Many of the dates listed here are approximate, as few accurate records exist. The lords of the manor latterly lived at Hitcham House. which was situated on the north-east side of the church. but is now long gone. All that is left is a line of sweet chestnut trees and a walled garden. The Grenvilles lived at Dropmore House. The Hanburys lived at Blythwood.

PRE- NORMAN CONQUEST (-1066)

1066 **Haming or Hamingus of Marlow**, under Edward the Confessor

SEIZED BY THE NORMAN CONQUERORS (1066-1231)

The Anglo-Saxon Wigod held the manor of Wallingford pre-conquest. In 1066 he co-operated with William the Conqueror and married his daughter to the Norman Robert D'Oyly, thereby saving his estate. Robert's daughter Matilde D'Oyly married Miles Crispin of Neufles, south of Caen, Normandy, and so Crispin became the local lord. Crispin supported William II in the 1088 rebellion further increasing his holdings.

1086 **Ralf and Roger FitzSiegfrid**, under Miles Crispin (1060-1107) of Wallingford who now owned 88 manors. There was a Miles Crispin born 1034, presumably this Miles' father.

1107 **Matilde D'Oyly-Crispin**, widow of Miles Crispin. She next married the much-younger Brian Fitzcount. They had no children so the Wallingford estates passed to Henry, later Henry II, son of Queen Matilda (1102-1167)

“On Miles' death the Lord King Henry I gave the said Matilda [D'Oyly-Crispin] to Brian Fitzcount together with her inheritance. He had no heirs from her. The same Brian, and the aforementioned Matilda his wife, gave themselves to religion in the time of King

Stephen, and the Lord Henry, (son of the Empress Matilda, who was by that time Duke of Normandy), seized the said honour of Wallingford". [Ref 8]

- 1154 **Prince Henry (1133-1189)**, later Henry II, best known for murdering Thomas a Becket, became lord of Wallingford which included Hitcham.

Somehow between 1189 and 1231 the estates of Wallingford, including Hitcham passed from Henry II to the Neyrnut family. This covers the period of the absentee Richard I on a ruinously-expensive crusade, King John who had to sign Magna Carta and the boy-king Henry III, so disposal of royal land was to be expected. Some time after 1227 the Wallingford estate passed to the Earl of Cornwall and he seems to have appointed Lords of the Manor, such as Miles Neyrnut. Before this time the King effectively owned all land and his barons were mere tenants. From this time the royal property rights waned and the local lords had increasing ownership rights on their property.

Medieval succession rules are worth mentioning here. In Continental Europe under Salic Law no female could inherit anything, and all estates were divided equally between the male children, leading to fratricidal squabbles. In England females could and did inherit, though the eldest son took precedence. One historian has noticed that property inherited by a parent was almost always passed intact to the first-born son only, whereas property acquired during the life of the parent was often split between the siblings, both male and female.

THE NEYRNUT-BEAUCHAMP-RAMSEY-CLARKE FAMILY (1231-1660)

The Neyrnut family owned large swathes of Buckinghamshire including Wallingford and north to Aylesbury including Pitstone and Ashridge.

- 1231 **Miles Neyrnut** (1211-) who married Maude, daughter of Geoffrey de Bella-Aqua or Beaulieu, *though another source has Miles Neyrnut as son of Matilde de Bell'Aqua (daughter of Geoffrey de Bella-Aqua) obtaining the manor in 1204.* [Ref 8]

1234 **Miles Neyrnut**, under Bishop of Carlisle and then Richard Earl of Cornwall

1247 **Miles Neyrnut**, son

1285 **Isabel Neyrnut**, widow who married Reginald Beauchamp

TRANSFERRED TO THE BEAUCHAMP FAMILY BY MARRIAGE

1292 **Miles Beauchamp-Neyrnut** (1271-1338), son of Richard de Beauchamp, under Edmund Earl of Cornwall. He used both of his surnames randomly. One of Miles' sons Sir John Neyrnut was born in Burnham in 1304.

1338 **Amice Peveral de Beauchamp**, widow

Referring to a manor near Wycombe in 1338, "The manor held as of the right of Amice, widow of Miles de Beauchamp, who still survives of the heirs of Giles de Badlemere by service of half a knight's fee. The said Amice held that manor of the grant of Hugh Peveral her father to hold to her and the heirs of her body for ever. Miles, (son of Richard de Bello Campo, who was son of the aforesaid Miles), aged 23 years and more is his next heir."

[According to the arms quartering, Amice's mother could be an Arden of Warwick]

1346 **Miles Beauchamp** (1316-), grandson

1350 **Sir John Beauchamp**, brother of the Earl of Warwick, under the Black Prince (1330-1376)

1369 **Margaret Beauchamp**, widow

1377 **Isabel Beauchamp**, daughter, married the son of Adam Ramsey, under Richard II. Isabel Beauchamp was the niece of Richard Beauchamp 12th Earl of Warwick. Adam Ramsey was esquire (squire, a trainee knight) to the Black Prince in Gascony in 1363 and also served Richard II. [Ref 7] His son could therefore be considered a suitable match.

TRANSFERRED TO THE RAMSEY FAMILY BY MARRIAGE

1391 **Nicholas Ramsey**, son, under Edmund Langley, Duke of York

1488 **Thomas Ramsey** (-1499), who married Margaret Danvers, daughter of Lord Chief Justice Sir William Danvers.

Margaret Danvers-Ramsey, his wife (-1515)

1515 **Thomas Ramsey**, her son (1502-1524)

Parnell Baldwin-Ramsey, his wife (-1527) (daughter of Lord Chief Justice Sir John Baldwin (-1545)). Parnell later married Edward Borlase (-1544). Parnell had an aunt Alice Baldwin (-1546) who was the last Abbess of Burnham Abbey. The Baldwins seem to be descended from or related to the important Hampden family of Buckinghamshire and this is reflected on the use of the Hampden arms to indicate a Baldwin mother on Elizabeth Ramsey's arms.

1527 **Elizabeth Ramsey**, her daughter (1524-1598) married 1536 to Nicholas Clarke of North Weston, Thame (1506-1551/3)

Elizabeth Ramsey was the only child of Thomas Ramsey (1502-1524) and Parnell Baldwin (-1527). In his will Sir John Baldwin left £10 to grand-daughter Elizabeth Ramsey who he names as 'his cousin Elizabeth Clerke'.

1561 **Elizabeth Ramsey and Roger Alford** (1526-1580)

Widow Elizabeth Ramsey married Roger Alford who was the loyal servant of Sir William Cecil who enabled him to become a member of Parliament and to acquire some wealth, including land in Bray.

TRANSFERRED TO THE CLARKE FAMILY BY MARRIAGE

1580 **Elizabeth Ramsey (-Clarke-Alford)**, widow (1524-1598)

1598 **Sir William Clarke**, son (c1550-1624) and his wife Margaret Bourn [see more notes on Sir William Clarke below]

William Clarke son (1574-1626), and his wife Ursula widow of Sir Francis Verney, but disinherited by his father in 1619, though he may have held the manor from 1625 to 1626.

1616 **Hercules Clarke** brother (-1630), under James I

1630 **Francis Clarke** brother (-1631) and his wife Grisell Woodroffe (-1659)

John Clarke (1625-1667) as ward of Lady Grisell Clarke (-1659)

1645 **Sir John Clarke, in his own right** (1625-1667) and his wife Philadelphia Carr (1626-1698)

SOLD TO CHARLES DOE (1660-1670), APPROVED BY AN ACT OF PARLIAMENT

“House of Commons Journal Volume 8: 18 December 1660
Pages 213-215 :

Concerning Doe's Estate.

An ingrossed Bill for confirming the Sale of the Manor of Hitcham, sold to Charles Doe by Sir John Clark Knight, and for disposing and settling the Estate of Sir John Clarke, was this Day read the Third time; and, on the Question, passed.

That the Title of this Bill be, An Act for confirming the Sale of the Manor of Hitcham, sold to Charles Doe by Sir John Clarke, Knight and Baronet, and for settling and disposing other the Lands of the said Sir John Clarke, and Dame Philadelphia his Wife.

This to be sent to the Lords for their Concurrence: And the Lord Angier is to carry it to the Lords.”

1660 **Sir Charles Doe** (-1671), who had bought Upton in 1635. Doe was Sheriff of London in 1665 and was instrumental in saving the treasures of the Goldsmiths Company during the Great Fire of 1666 by having the treasures moved to a house in Edmonton. He also used debris from the Great Fire to link two islands in Taplow, Warborough Island and Glen Island, near Boulter's Lock.

There is this an intriguing letter from a Dr Worthington to a Dr Ingelo dated Oct 19th 1667 that reads : “When you come to London this term, pray use your best diligence and interest to end the business with Sir Charles Doe. It is now a year at least since he had the money. He hath promised from time to time it should be paid, but hath not performed. “

John Doe (-1678) son, seems to have acted for his father from 1667 until he sold the manor, on his father's death in 1670-1. It could well be that Charles was unwell from 1667 accounting for the anguish expressed in the letter above. Charles' widow, Lady Judith had in 1671 passed everything to John. In 1676 John was in dispute with another goldsmith Richard Hodilow over the estate of Thomas Steane. Dame Judith, as she was later known, died in 1692 having survived both her son John and her grandson William. [Ref 6]

SOLD TO EDWARD FULHAM (1670-1673)

1670 **Dr Edward Fulham** was professor of moral philosophy at Oxford from 1633, Canon of Windsor 1660-1694 and chaplain to Charles II.

SOLD TO EDWARD NICHOLAS (1673-1704)

1673 **Edward Nicholas** (1625-1696). In 1696 Edward Nicholas, secretary of state to both Charles I and Charles II, was buried at Hitcham. He had been MP for Old Sarum in 1661. He had been overseas during the Civil War, returned at the Restoration but disagreed with the Glorious Revolution and was forced to resign his posts in 1691 in favour of his son. [Ref 4]

Edward's burial is of additional interest because there was a fine that had to be paid.

"Ed. Nicholas Esq was buried in linnen at Hitcham ye 23rd of May 1696 p(enalised). ye five pounds for not being buried in woollen according to law, was thus disposed of vis fifty shillings to William Martyn the informer and fifty shillings to ye poore of ye Parish of Hitcham. April 22 1697 Geo Evans, rector" [Ref 3].

1696 Sir **John Nicholas** (1624-1705), son, was MP for Ripon from 1661 to 1679. He was married to Penelope, daughter of the Earl of Northampton.

SOLD TO STEPHEN WESTON (1704-1713)

- 1704 **Bishop Stephen Weston DD** (1665-1742) who was a master at Eton, Canon of Ely 1715-1717, Vicar of Mapledurham 1716 and Bishop of Exeter from 1724 allegedly through the influence of his former pupil at Eton Robert Walpole.

SOLD TO SAMUEL TRAVERS (1713-1714)

- 1713 **Samuel Travers** (1655-1725). From a Puritan family, his father had a 'living' at a parish in Cornwall until he was ejected in the purge of 1662. So Samuel became a lawyer, and MP for Bossiney Cornwall and for New Windsor from 1690 to 1725 and surveyor-general of the Crown lands from 1693 to 1710.

SOLD TO THE FREIND FAMILY (1714-1781)

- 1714 **Rev William Freind**, rector of Croughton (linked to Hitcham), bought the manor in 1714 but ran out of money.

John Freind (1675-1728) was physician to Queen Caroline and third son of William Freind rector of Croughton. In 1714 John Freind bought the manor of Hitcham from his indebted brother. He was born in Northamptonshire in 1675, and after graduating he became a doctor as well as Member of Parliament. He was put in the Tower of London in 1722 on suspicion of Jacobite sympathies where he started his famous book 'The History of Physick'. In 1726 he became physician to Queen Caroline He died 1728 and is buried at Hitcham but there is a monument to him in Westminster Abbey.

John Freind, son (-1750)

William Freind (1715-1766), cousin, son of Robert Freind, was Dean of Canterbury from 1760 to 1766.

- 1761 **Robert Freind**, his son d 1780

Rev William Maximilian Freind, brother

SOLD TO THE GRENVILLE-FORTESCUE FAMILY (1781-present)

1781 **William Wyndham, 1st Baron Grenville** (1759-1834) PM 1806-7
buried at St Peters Burnham, built Dropmore House 1790s [see
more notes on William Wyndham below]

Anne, Lady Grenville, his widow (-1864)

TRANSFERRED TO THE FORTESCUE FAMILY BY MARRIAGE

1864 **George Matthew Fortescue** (1791-1877), her nephew-in-law

1877 **John Bevill Fortescue** (1850-1938)

John Bevill Fortescue was the son of Hon. George Matthew Fortescue and Lady Louisa Elizabeth Ryder. He was born on the 1st of November 1850, and baptised on the 29th of Dec 1850, at Boconnoc, Cornwall. . He married Dorothy Augusta Hoste, daughter of Admiral Sir William Legge George Hoste, 2nd Bt. and Caroline Dorothy Prideaux-Brune, on the 26th of August 1891 at St. George Hanover Square, London, England. He died on the 27th of May 1938 at the age of 87 at Dropmore, Burnham, Buckinghamshire.

From 1866 the **Hanbury family**, though not lords of the manor, had lived at Blythwood now called Hitcham House and have been the principal benefactors of the parish. The family made its fortune in iron, tobacco, brewing and banking.



SIR WILLIAM CLARKE

The Clarke family fortune was made in 1513 when John Clarke (-1539) captured the Duc de Longueville, one of the French generals, at the Siege of Therouanne. Clarke was knighted and was allowed a reference to the Duc's arms to be placed in the top right of his armorial shield. John's son Nicholas married the wealthy Elizabeth Ramsey.

Sir William Clerke or Clarke was born around 1550 in North Weston near Thame son of Nicholas Clerke (-1551) and Elizabeth Ramsey and grandson of John Clerke of North Weston (-1539).

Sir William Clarke died 1624 and the church contains an elaborate 17th C alabaster memorial. He married Margaret Bourn, daughter of Sir John Bourne of Holt Castle, Worcs. Under the new floor are commemorative plaques and slabs to Sir William Clarke's family, including to his daughter Dorothy who married Thomas Garrard, son of the lord of Dorney, to the extreme displeasure of both sets of parents. Thomas Garrard's sister Martha married Sir James Palmer.

“Thomas Garrard had married Dorothy, daughter of Sir William Clarke of Hitcham against the wish of his father, who by his will forgave his son's 'unkind disobedience' and says that his wife will reward Thomas and Dorothy if they alter their 'untaymed courses of undutifull cariage' towards her. Thomas Garrard had occasion to regret his obstinacy in marrying. His father in law and wife combined to thrust him out of his inheritance, called him rogue and rascal, and refused to admit him into Weston, Sir William Clarke's house in Hitcham. When he called there his wife sent him a message 'that if he lay in the streets and starved, he should not have a groat for his releife of her.' In 1616 Thomas Garrard brought an action to recover Dorney estate and to prevent the further waste and destruction of the woods, and stated that he was willing to receive his wife, though she had led 'a kind of eloped life' for 6 years. Their family troubles were doubtless the cause of the sale of Dorney by Thomas Garrard and his brothers in 1624 to Thomas and Richard Palmer who appear to have been acting as trustees for James Palmer, husband of his sister Martha.”

Dorney Court has remained in the male line of the Palmer family ever since

Sir William Clarke is mentioned several times by letter-writer John Chamberlain, and not with much affection. John Chamberlain (1553-1628) was a name in the City and a prodigious and gossipy letter writer of this period who wrote regularly to his friend Dudley Carleton [(1574-1632) later Viscount Dorchester] at the English embassy in Paris. He clearly had little time for Sir William Clarke but it is impossible to judge Sir William by just one source.

Letter from John Chamberlain in London to Dudley Carleton, assistant to the English Ambassador in Paris, October 2nd 1602.

*“The Quenes progres went not far – first to Cheswicke to Sir William Russells, then to Ambrose Coppings [at Hillingdon] who because he had been a Master of Art, intertained her himselfe with a Latin oration. Then to Harvel [Harefield] to the Lord Kepers [Sir Thomas Egerton] , so to Sir William Clarkes at Burnham , **who so behaved himselfe that he pleased no body , but gave occasion to have his miserie and vanitie spread far and wide**, then to Otelands where she continues till the seventh of this moneth that she come to Richmond. The cause that withheld her from the Erle of Hartfords and the Lord Cheife Justices were the fowle weather and a generall infection of the small pockes spred over all the countrie.”*
[Ref 1, p 150]

Letter from John Chamberlain in London to Sir Dudley Carleton in Paris, July 15th 1619

“Sir William Clerks eldest sonne (without his fathers privitie) is lately married to the Lady Varney [Ursula St Barbe widow of Sir Francis Varney who died 1615], widow of him that turn’d Turke [to become hopelessly obstinate, after a famous play of 1612] and though there be no great inequalite between them either for wealth or yeares (he being fowre or five and fortie [born 1575] and she two ot three and thirtie) yet the old knight is so much offended that he threatens to disinherit him, and hath vowed they shall never come within his doores.”[Ref 2, p252]

Letter from John Chamberlain in London to Sir Dudley Carleton in Paris, Dec 4th 1624

“The season hath been very sickly and taken away many, as the Lord Willoughbies mother, the Young Lady Yelverton that brought her husband better than a thousand pounds land a yeare and died in child-bed leaving a sonne, the Lady Garret of Dorney [wife of Sir William Garrard], Sir Noel Caron who died this week of palsey and they say made the Prince [later Charles I] his heir, Sir Richard Spenser, and Sir William Clarke is either gon or at least at the last cast.” [Ref 2, p590]

Letter from John Chamberlain in London to Sir Dudley Carleton in Paris, Feb 12th 1625

“Sir William Clarke is gon at last, though at great leisure. I heare not of any great legacies but left all in a manner to his sonne Will [who died the following year] that is out of danger of being a warde.; wold you thincke that, in his greatest weaknes, meanes was made with some importunitie that he should marrie the French Lady Cary [Thomasine, Widow of Sir George Carew, ambassador to France 1605-9] But he had the grace to

hold out, et ut vixit sic morixit [corrupted Latin for 'as in life so in death']. "[Ref 2, p599]

The memorials in Hitcham Church form an interesting footnote. The memorial to Elizabeth Ramsey-Clarke-Alford shows her armorial shield featuring the Neyrnut, Beauchamp and Ramsey elements, as well as three more elements thus far unidentified. The large monument to Sir William Clarke her son shows prominently the armorial shield of his step-father Roger Alford, with whom the otherwise irascible Sir William must have had a good relationship.

WILLIAM WYNDHAM, 1st BARON GRENVILLE

William Wyndham (1759-1834) was the third son of George Grenville, Prime Minister from 1763 to 1765, nephew of William Pitt, Prime Minister 1766 to 1768, and cousin of William Pitt the younger, Prime Minister 1804 to 1806. The family was also extremely close to the Palmerstons. It was almost inevitable then that he too would be Prime Minister (from 1806 to 1807) in what was known as the 'government of all the talents'.

The Grenville family owned large tracts of Buckinghamshire and also 'owned' the parliamentary seat of Buckingham.

As the third son, William was relatively poor though his wife Anne Pitt's inheritance of the Pitt estate in Boconnoc, Cornwall helped in later life. In the meantime, by becoming simultaneously Paymaster-General and Auditor of the Exchequer and Ranger of Hyde Park which all carried good salaries and scope for useful perquisites he was able to build a fairly modest, by his standards, house at Dropmore with a fine library of books.

He had purchased the lordship of the manor of Hitcham in 1781 and built Dropmore House in the 1790s.

He died 1834 and was buried at St Peter's Burnham and was succeeded as lord of the manor by his wife Anne Pitt, Lady Grenville. William Wyndham and Anne Pitt died childless so the manor and the property, including the valuable Boconnoc estate, passed to his nephew George Fortescue in 1864.

Inside St Peters Church Burnham is a plaque in memory of William Wyndham and his kin. This is close to his burial site inside the church was has only recently been re-identified, having been covered over a few years ago. In Burnham Park there is a stone memorial to him.

CREDITS

The list above depends heavily on the following secondary sources.

"A history of the County of Buckingham vol 3" ed Wm Page, Victoria County History London 1925 pp 231-235 (British History Online)

"Ye oulde storie of Hitcham; the little grey church on the windy hill". Rev CHD Grimes, 1926

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Ref 4 : www.historyofparliamentonline.org

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Alan Woodley, 15th March 2023