

History of the Manor House, Shrivenham

By Neil B. Maw

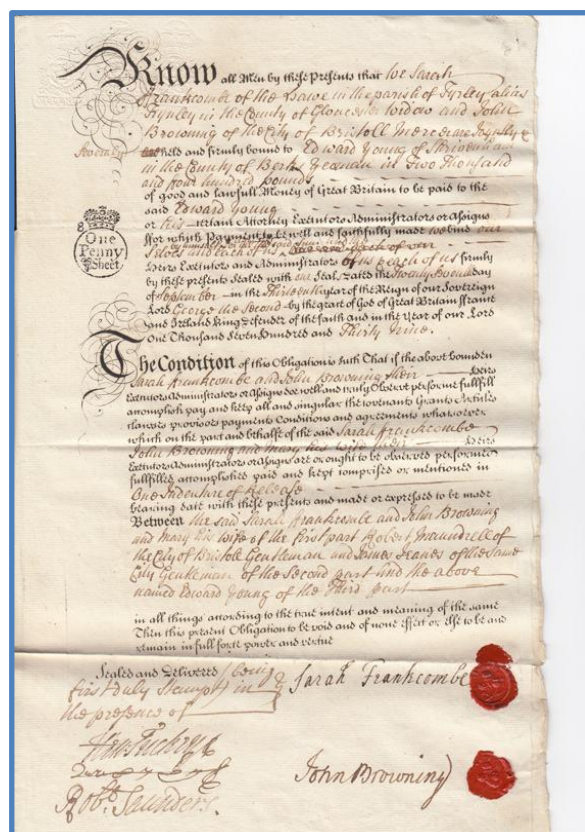


The Manor House in Shrivenham was typically located in historical terms, being next door to the church. It's likely that a principal dwelling had stood there since the Norman invasion of 1066, initially with buildings of a wooden structure. There were several known 'Manors' in Shrivenham and it is possible that the Manor House at this location was part of the Manor of Stallpits, but we have no documentary evidence to confirm it.

The earliest confirmation of a notable house at this location is from 1658, in an Indenture drawn up by John Wildman, a notorious 17th century resident of Shrivenham. Wildman had purchased the manors of Shrivenham Stallpits, Salop, Claycourt and Beckett from his friend Henry (Harry) Marten in 1657 for £9300. (BCA D/EZ/7/59). In 1658 he required that all Leaseholders and Copyholders should produce their documentation at the relevant Manor Court meeting and at the same time instigated a Decree from the Court of Chancery in London to enable the fields of Shrivenham to become enclosed. (See SHS N825). A document acquired by Shrivenham Heritage Society described the sale of a property. *'Now this Indenture witnesseth that John Wildman for and in consideration of the sum of £200 paid to him in hand by John Ridley the receipt whereof the said John Wildman doth by these presents acknowledge.'* It then goes further to describe the location of, *'all that messuage or tenement with the*

subsequent record of him in any of the Shrivenham parish registers for marriage, baptism of children or death. There is, however, a death recorded in Highworth of a John Ridley in 1734. This could explain the lack of information in Shrivenham and the timing matches information in subsequent documentation.

An Indenture dated 1739 formed part of a batch of documents acquired by Shrivenham Heritage Society in April 2021 (See SHS N913). Details within the document named various people, one or more of them likely to have been devised the Manor House and land by John Ridley in 1734. The Indenture confirmed that Edward Young purchased the property in September 1739 for £1200 and the money was loaned to him by way of a Bond, (mortgage) by Sarah Francombe and John Browning (See below). The 'Release' stated, 'All the premises are in Shrivenham and formerly belonged to John Ridley, since to Richard Browning (which messuage or tenement, lands and premises to be hereby granted and released, were late in the possession of Richard Dodd, Yeoman, deceased and now of Bridgett Dodd his widow as tenant to Sarah Frankcombe and John Browning and Mary his wife together premises, gardens etc...' And unusually, it also stated the location as, 'the Church Yard lying on the East part and the highway lying on the West.'



Berkley William Fairthorne (born.2/3/1870 died. Aug 1949) made a sworn statement in 1912 concerning the provenance of the Fairthorne Estate upon which he was securing loans and leading to a sale in 1922. Of the Manor House and associated premises, he stated that it was formerly owned by Edward Young who devised it in his Will to his nephew, Amariah Fairthorne (died 1826 Will PROB 11/1719/223). He in turn left the property to his nephew John Fairthorne (Berkley's grandfather). John's Will dated 24th October 1860 devised the property to Amariah William Fairthorne (Berkley's father). Upon the death of his father on 5th June 1907 all the Fairthorne Estate passed to Berkley. At the time of making the statement, he was residing near Abingdon.

A complete survey and valuation of the Fairthorne Estate was carried out in July 1920 and an auction took place at the Goddard Arms, Swindon on 24th July 1922 (See SHS N798 for more information). An Indenture dated 28th November 1922 conveyed the Manor House and grounds from Berkley Fairthorne to Colin William Smith for the price of £4000. A sentence in the Indenture stated of the mansion house, '*formerly in the occupation of Frederick Shelley, then of George James Hedges Wilson.*'

He didn't stay there for long as another Indenture dated 24th June 1926 conveyed the same property to William Herbert Parsons, but the price isn't known. Anthony Dallin Parsons was the son of William & Emily Parsons (See photos below). He was a military man and by the age of 47 was a Major. In 1965 he made a statutory declaration in support of some family conveyancing of Fern House (also referred to as Fern Cottage) in Manor Lane, Shrivenham, also purchased by his father. He stated in the declaration that his parents moved away from Shrivenham in 1942, and his father died in 1946.



A newspaper advertisement appeared in 1950 declaring that an auction was imminent to sell the property. (Gloucestershire Echo 29th June 1950). The Electoral Register for Shrivenham in 1958 listed that the Manor House was occupied by Edward and Margaret Eyre-Williams, and it could only be assumed that they purchased the property at the auction in 1950. We have a written account by David Moore who in 1963, being a military man himself of the rank of Second Lieutenant, identified the owner as Major Eyre-Williams. David's article explains that the Manor House was at that time, divided into three flats. We also have some photographs donated to us by Sarah Lowe who informed that her parents lived in a part of the house in the 1950s (See SHS N209).

At this point the Manor House was close to the point of disappearing completely. Although we don't have any documentary evidence to date, it is within living memory to suggest that Major Eyre-Williams sold the house to a developer in the latter part of the 1960s, before it was subsequently demolished. The modern housing estate called Manor Close now occupies the space where the house and gardens once stood.

The best photograph we have of the house was sent to us by Brian Hickson. His wife is related to the Parson family, and it was also from that source that Shrivenham Heritage Society now hold all the documents that made up the deeds for the property. Although we

know for certain that a substantial house stood at this location in the 17th century, the photograph shows a property that has been significantly altered. There is an interesting note on a brown envelope within the deed documents that states, *'The Manor House, Shrivenham, before the new wing was added about 1910 when occupied by the Fairthorne family.'*

