

CHAPTER VI
THE MANORS

'The backbone of a Parish History is the descent of the Manor.'—*The Times*, 8th December 1927.

THE history of a village is to a large extent the history of the Manor, and it is the Manors that will form the subject-matter of the present chapter. And by the Manor be it understood the land with all its rights, dues, and appurtenances, belonging by lawful possession to an individual owner, known as the Lord of the Manor, the Seignior, or, as in Anglo-Saxon times, the Thane.

To speak in anything like detail of the manorial system, of the courts, the customs—many and often quaint—of the laws and by-laws attaching to the ancient manor, would be beyond the limits of this chapter and irrelevant to its purpose. In early days manors varied considerably in extent and size. They were not infrequently held together, and carried with them a large rent-roll. The ancient houses belonging to the manors were well staffed by subordinates acting under and in dependence on the lord, and included his bailiff, his steward, cowherd, his shepherd and wagoner, tithing-man, carpenter, and smith. The Church stood geographically in proximity and otherwise in close relationship to the Manor. The Lord of the Manor was frequently the founder of the Church, and thereby acquired the patronage of the benefice. Manor-houses are everywhere to

be found throughout the country. Some of these with their chapels, &c., are striking residences, whilst others are of less pretentious character.

With reference to the origin of Manors, Pertains, in his *Treatise on the Laws of England*, writes: 'All lands were originally derived from the Crown, and the beginning of the Manor was when the King gave a thousand acres of land, or a greater or less parcel of ground, unto one of his subjects and to his heirs which tenure is knight service at least.'

With the coming of William the Conqueror, the manorial system was reorganized by the Norman king on a feudal basis, and, as it would seem from the Domesday Book, at the time of his death manors were acquired by Norman holders, or overlords. The lordship of a manor was often spoken of as a barony.

The following account of Shrevenham as given in Domesday Book (1066) may here be mentioned as having historic interest, and by way of preface to anything that may be said about the manors:

'The King holds Scrivenham in demesne, King Edward held it. There are 46 hides. There is land for 33 ploughs. On the demesne there are 4 ploughs and there 80 villeins and 17 borderers with 30 ploughs. . . . In the Manor are two mills worth twenty shillings, and 240 acres of meadow and wood land to render (*sic*) 20 swine. In the time of King Edward it was worth 35 pounds, and afterwards 20, now 45 pounds.'¹

So far as can be ascertained, it would appear that Shrevenham was comprised of four manors,

¹ William the Conqueror held many manors in Berkshire. Thus from earliest times it has been a royal county.

and, in addition to these, an estate known as Fowers Mill, the four manors being:

1. Shrivenham Salop.
2. Shrivenham Stalpits.
3. The Manor of Becket.
4. The Rectory Manor.

Accordingly it will be the aim of this chapter to record as far as may be possible the history of these several manors.

Manor of Shrivenham Salop

As forming part of the royal demesne the Manor remained vested in the Crown from 1086 until 1200. King John—in this year—granted it to Geoffrey Count of Perche, in part payment of a rent of £1,000 assigned to him by the King. The Count sided with the French in the struggle of the reign of Henry III, and was killed in the battle of Lincoln in 1217, and once more by forfeiture the Manor came into possession of the Crown. The custody of it was granted to Henry de Trumbleville, and later to Robert de Bras (Drus). Shortly afterwards, during the minority of the King, the Bishop of Chalons is said to have come to England and laid claim to the lands of the late Geoffrey Count of Perche. These he sold to William Marshal, Earl of Pembroke, and William Longspée, Earl of Salisbury, custodians of the realm, who kept the Manor to their own use.

William Marshal, Earl of Pembroke, granted his moiety of Shrivenham (afterwards known as the Manor of Salop) to Warin Monchesney, in free marriage with his daughter Joan. The issue

of the marriage (Joan Monchesney) married a William de Valence. He was a half-brother to the King, and, in right of his wife's mother, was given the title of Earl of Pembroke.

In 1257 the Earl received a grant of a weekly market on Thursday, and a Fair on the 'Vigil, Feast, and Morrow' of S. Mary Magdalene. Joan de Valence survived both her husband and two elder sons (John and William). At her death, in 1307, her third son Aylmer succeeded her. Aylmer died in the year 1324. He left a widow Mary (foundress of Pembroke College, Cambridge). They left no male issue, and his heirs were the children of his sister, Isabel (who had married John, Lord Hastings), and Joan, wife of John Comyn of Badenoch. Shrivenham fell to Elizabeth, daughter of the latter. She married Richard Talbot, who afterwards became Lord Talbot.

The descent of Shrivenham then followed that of the Barony of Talbot and Earldom of Shrewsbury until the year 1507. At this date George, Earl of Shrewsbury, and Anne his wife, conveyed the manor to Sir John Fettiplace, who died seised of it in 1523. His posthumous son, Nicholas, died when six months old, and the ownership thus devolved upon his daughter Katherine, at the age of four. In due course she married Sir Francis Englefield, and in 1544 the Manor was settled upon them and their heirs. Being a pronounced Roman Catholic, Sir Francis from motives of prudence left England on the succession of Queen Elizabeth, leaving Thomas Stafford and John Yate as trustees of the Manor. Queen Elizabeth, notwithstanding, gave the lands into the custody

of George Fettiplace, and litigation ensued. Katherine, wife of George Fettiplace, predeceased her husband in 1579, and John Fettiplace succeeded, and in turn Bessel Fettiplace, who conveyed the Manor to Sir Henry Unton in 1588, who at the same time owned the Manors of Faringdon and Hatford (Berks.) and other Manors. Sir Henry Unton died in 1596, and the Manor was vested by an Act of Parliament in his daughter Cecilia and her husband John Wentworth (of Gosfield, co. Essex). It was afterwards sold by their son, Sir John Wentworth, Bt., in 1615 to Dame Dorothy Moore. Through her it passed by purchase in 1624 to Henry Rolt, who in 1635 sold Shrevenham Salop, together with Clay Court (Bourton), to Sir Henry Martin, and from that date the Manors followed the descent of Becket.

2. *Manor of Shrevenham Stalpits*

The moiety of Shrevenham acquired by William Longspée, Earl of Salisbury, was held after his death by Ela, his widow.¹ His son, William Longspée, received a grant in 1229 confirming the possession. It is said that he enfeoffed two tenants, viz. Reynold de Whitchurch and Adam de Hautrey. The lands granted to Reynold became the Manor of Stalpits.² The overlordship descended through Margaret Longspée, granddaughter of William, Earl of Salisbury (*ob.* 1250),

¹ Ela, Countess of Salisbury, founded Lacock Abbey in Wiltshire and became its Abbess, whilst at the same time she was also High Sheriff of the County.

² Stalpitts and Stapulputt (fourteenth century), Stalpittys (sixteenth century).

and wife of Henry, Earl of Lincoln, to their daughter Alice. Alice married, as her first husband, Thomas, Earl of Lancaster, and secondly, Ebulo le Strange. She, in 1325, with her second husband, conveyed certain Knights' fees, including Stalpits Manor, to Hugh le Despenser. After his forfeiture this fee seems to have been acquired by John de Warrenne, Earl of Surrey, for his widow was returned as overlord of Stalpits in 1348 and in 1350. At her death the rent from this Manor was assigned to Queen Philippa as guardian of Edmund de Longley, the King's son, to whom the lands of the Earl of Surrey had been granted. In 1378, in 1392, and in 1396, the Manor here was held by John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster. In 1276 the Manor was said to be held by Giles de Clifford. In the same year Reynold, son of Giles de Clifford, received from Ralph de Wylington and his wife Johanna, and in 1424 was returned as held of the King, as of the Duchy of Lancaster. The immediate tenancy of the Manor descended from Reynold de Whitchurch, his daughter and heiress Eva. She, and her husband Giles de Clifford, appear as overlords of land in Shrevenham hundred in 1259. This they quit-claimed to William and Joan de Valence, lords of Shrevenham Salop, receiving in return a quit-claim of the plot of land where the Manor of Stalpitts was built.

It appears that Joan de Chambernun, mother of Ralph de Willington, was daughter of Eva and William de Chambernun. It is possible therefore from the devolution of the Manor that the daughter of de Whitchurch married first, William

de Chambernun, by whom she had a daughter, Joan, who married first, Ralph de Wylington the elder, and afterwards Giles de Clifford. Certainly Joan de Chambernun held the Manor in 1284, and before 1310 it had descended to John de Wylington, son of Ralph and Julianna. This latter holder enfeoffed his son (Ralph) of the manor in 1321, and joined the rebel barons. In spite of this precaution the lands were confiscated after Boroughbridge, but in 1323 were restored to Ralph, who died seised of it in 1348, leaving a life-interest to Ralph's widow. On her death in 1349 she was succeeded by John, the son of Henry de Wylington, and, being a minor, John Laundels was made custodian of the land; John de Wylington died in 1378, and, after passing successively to an infant son Ralph, who died at the age of seven, and to his brother John de Wylington, who was a minor and an idiot, his lands were seised into the King's hands. John died in 1396, his heirs being his sister Isabella (wife of William Beaumont) and John Wroth (son of his sister Margaret). In 1414 the Manor of Stalpits was held by Isabella Beaumont, who died seised of it ten years later. At the inquest on the death of her son (Sir Thomas Beaumont) there are no returns furnished for Berkshire, nor on the death of his son William in 1453. In 1500, or 1501, Hugh Beaumont, another member of this family, and Elizabeth his wife, John Bassett and Elizabeth his wife, and others, released their rights in the manor to Richard, Bishop of Durham, Giles, Lord Daubeney, and certain others, including Richard Empson. These transactions were apparently for

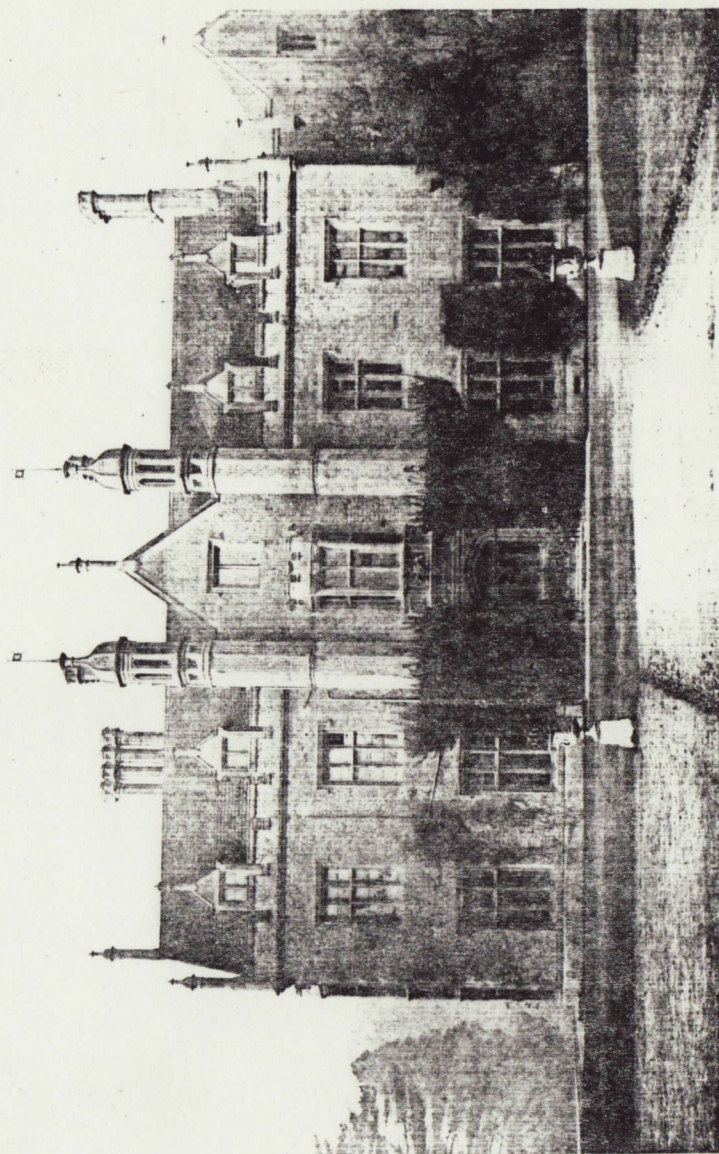
assurance of title, and the feoffees were representing the interests of Edward Courtenay, Earl of Devon. In 1471 Isabella Courtenay was returned as overlord, and Edward Courtenay, afterwards Earl of Devon, in 1476. He died in 1509. He was followed in possession of the Manor by his son Henry (Marquess of Exeter) in 1525, who conveyed the manor to John Russell and others (1530), and in the interests possibly of Thomas Unton, who died seised of it in 1533, leaving a son, Alexander, who died in 1546, when the estate came into the possession of Sir William Essex. The descent of the Manor then follows that of Becket Manor.

3. *The Manor of Becket*¹

This manor was held in 1086 by one William, Count of Evreux. It was given by him to the Priory of Noyon, a cell to St. Evroul, and was confirmed by his successor, Simon, Count of Evreux, about the middle of the twelfth century. In 1202 the Prior of Noyon received a quit-claim of five hides in Becket from Gilbert Martel. Soon afterwards, as it would seem, the Manor was granted by the Prior at fee farm to Walter de Becket, whose successor, John de Becket, granted it in 1367 to his younger brother Walter for life, and at Walter's death (in 1375) to his son and heir John, who in turn was succeeded by Oliver de Becket, from whom it passed in succession to John de Becket. In 1424 Maud Merfield held the Manor, by whom it was conveyed to John

¹ Becote (eleventh century), Buccot, Bockate (thirteenth century), Bewcote, Bowcote (seventeenth century).

Shottesbrook and his wife Alice. Their daughter Elizabeth, and her husband John Rogers, of Benham Vallenge, followed in possession of the Manor, which after them was held successively by their son Thomas (1471), Thomas Rogers his son, and Margaret his widow (1488), and his daughter Elizabeth, wife of Sir William Essex in 1518, from whom in 1552 it passed to their son Thomas and his descendants. In 1581 the Manor was leased by the then possessor, Jane, widow of Thomas Essex, to Edward Unton. In 1621 the Manor, together with that of Stalpits, was conveyed to Joseph Glover and Robert Pemberton. In 1633 Glover and his family, with others, sold their rights in the Manor to Sir Henry Martin, the judge, whose son Henry, one of the regicides, parted with the land that his father had acquired to pay his debts. In 1652 Becket, with Shrivensham Salop and Clay Court (Bourton), was bought by Sir George Pratt, of Coleshill, and shortly afterwards sold by him to John Wildman. Towards the end of a life of political intrigue, carried on during the Commonwealth and the three successive reigns, Wildman was made Postmaster-General in 1689, and was knighted in 1692. He died in 1693, and was buried in Shrivensham Church. His son, John Wildman, adopted John Shute as his heir, who becoming the heir of Francis Barrington took that name in 1716. In 1720 he was created Viscount Barrington. He died in 1734 and was buried in Shrivensham Church. His successors in the title held the manor until 1928, when it was sold by the present, and ninth, Viscount. By such sale the Manor has been



BECKET MANOR HOUSE

broken up, and has now passed into the possession of various owners, the Manor House with pleasure-grounds, and immediately adjoining land, becoming by purchase the property of the present Viscountess Barrington.

4. *The Rectory Manor*

As stated in a former chapter,¹ the Rectory Manor in 1086 consisted of five hides, and was granted, together with the Church, by Henry I to the Abbey of Cirencester. The Manor comprised the hamlet of Longcot, and lands in Watchfield, Bourton, and Becket. The estate was increased by grants from Henry Sturmy, William of Wykeham, and others, made before the Statute of Mortmain (1279). In 1346 the Abbot had a house here. At the dissolution of the monasteries the site of the Manor or Rectory and the demesne lands were held by William Pleydell, of Coleshill, under a lease to himself and to his sons, made by the Abbot in 1535. In 1585 this lease was renewed by the Crown for twenty-one years to John, son of Thomas, who was the sixth son of William Pleydell, and in 1593 was renewed for the same term of years. In 1606 a grant of the property was made in fee to Robert Morgan and Thomas Butler, probably in trust for John Pleydell, who in turn made settlement on his son Oliver Pleydell. Oliver Pleydell's son and heir was Thomas Pleydell, of Shrivenham, whose son Thomas Pleydell, of Coleshill, dealt with the site of the Rectory Manor, as well as with the Rectorial tithes in 1701 and 1714. A son, Sir Mark Stuart

¹ Chapter II, The Church, p. 14.

Pleydell, Bart., succeeded him in 1727 (*ob.* 1768). He had a daughter Harriet, who predeceased him, and who married William Bouverie, who was afterwards Lord William Bouverie of Coleshill, and Earl of Radnor. The son who succeeded him—Jacob, second Earl of Radnor—inherited the estates and took the name of Pleydell Bouverie. He dealt with the Manor by recovery in 1800. In 1814 the site of the Manor and the Rectory were—with Shrivenham Salop and the other Manors—in the possession of Viscount Barrington.

5. *Fowersmill*

The estate known as Fowersmill (Fayersmill) originated in a grant made in 1188 by King Henry II to Reynold de Fower (Focarius, or Stoker) of land to the value of 25*s.* 4*d.* in Shrivenham. This land was held by Reynold and his descendants by service of making the fire in the King's chamber. Later the condition of tenure was altered to the presentation to the King of two capons whenever he passed over the bridge of Fowers Mill.¹

Robert de Fower obtained a writ of Mort d'ancestor for a mill and five virgates of land in Shrivenham in 1214. In 1261 the property was held by Reynold de Fower. In 1316 John, a son of Reynold, conveyed the property to Aylmer de Valence, Earl of Pembroke, retaining a life interest in it. Richard Talbot and his wife Elizabeth, co-heir of the Earl of Pembroke, were holding the lands of Reynold de Fower in 1345. Soon afterwards, as it seems, these lands were acquired

¹ See Chapter I, The Village, p. 3.

by John Laundells. He had a grant of free warren in Shrivenham in 1359, and died seised of the estate called Fayers Mill in 1361, leaving an heir John (of Bampton, Oxon.). By him it was conveyed in 1367 to John de Becket. His heir (of the same name) parted with Fayers Mill to John Warneford, who in turn settled it upon his son Richard in 1392. A son Richard succeeded him. From this time onwards there seems to be no evidence to be obtained in regard to the property, until about 1640 a Thomas Warneford died 'Seised of a messuage, watermill and land in Shrivenham'. He left a son Edmund. An Edward Warneford dealt with the same property in 1707. In 1902 the Warneford estates passed by purchase into the hands of the present owner, Lord Banbury of Southam.