

The Manor Farm of Shrivenham Salopp

By Neil B. Maw



Without going deeper into the origins of Manors, it is prudent here to state that the manorial system in England began when the victorious King William (the Conqueror) took possession of the country in 1066. Following the infamous battle he systematically subdivided the country into estates of varying sizes, assisted in his decision making from the information he gleaned after the great survey of 1085, that became known as Domesday. He kept lands for himself and gave other lands to major Barons as a reward for their loyalty. But he took care not to grant any Baron large blocks of land that could be used to nurture a power base, instead smaller estates widely dispersed.

At the beginning of the 16th century the Manor of Shrivenham Salopp was owned by the Fettiplace family. Their origins are obscure but are likely to stem back quite close to King William. They owned many Manors, some of which were in the villages surrounding Shrivenham, such as Fernham and Compton Beauchamp, but the likelihood that they ever lived in Shrivenham is probably none. Documents in the Royal Berkshire Archives (RBA) show that the tenancy of Salopp Farm, known as 'Leasehold', was sold to Thomas Stratton, Yeoman, in 1589 (D/EPB/T42). An Indenture dated 20th April that year described '*all that the scite (sic) Capital Messuage Farm and demesne lands called Salopp Farm.*' The wording is a typical description for the principal farm belonging to the Manor. Included in several documents are schedules that identify earlier indentures whereby Bessells Fettiplace and Richard his brother had Let Salopp Farm as early as 1544 to Thomas Stratton (the elder), Yeoman. The indenture in 1589 described that the lands that made up Salopp Farm were later divided between Thomas Stratton and Thomas Blagrove to contain approximately 47 acres each. Other indentures dated 1616, 1629 and 1634 relate that leases to the farm were in the hands of William Blagrove and John Pleydell.



The names being quoted in this collection of documents are from prominent families of Shrivenham, all in the class of 'Gentlemen.' It's from a time when there was a wide distinction between the classes and it was the gentry who purchased properties such as farms. But where was Salopp Farm located? Research carried out by the heritage society has determined that it was hidden in plain sight, in the middle of the village. The location that was the old Shrivenham Primary School and playgrounds was the farm itself. The location that was the old Shrivenham Primary School and playgrounds was the farm itself. The principal farmhouse stood where modern day Manor Close now stands. The map extract below shows the extent of it.



It's easier to understand the layout of it when looking at the map from circa 1900 above, but more difficult with the modern layout and the main building gone in its entirety. It is even more difficult to imagine how it might have looked 350 years ago but with the help of AI we can project how it may have appeared below. The so called 'Manor House' that was demolished in the 1960s was a mixture of styles, ranging from

the early 19th century to the mid 20th. (See SHS listing N209 for photo). It can be justified to suspect that there must have been an earlier house but without documentary evidence we can only assume that it was timber-framed.



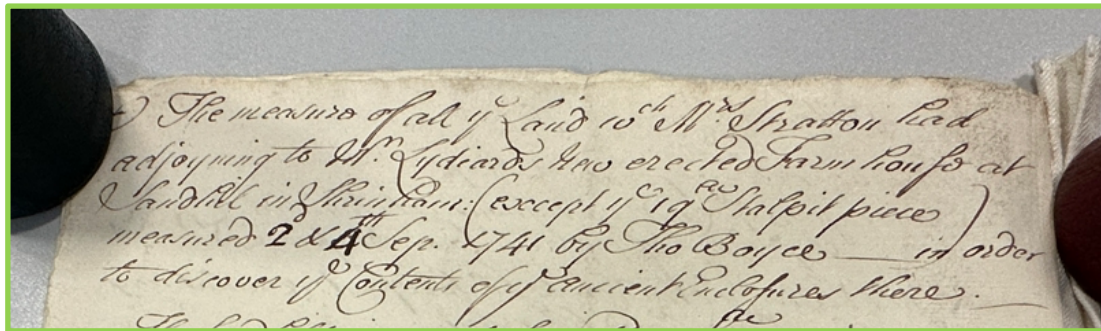
The lands that were associated with the farm were mainly to the north of the farmhouse and consisted of 172 acres, plus some scattered others. This was later split into two halves of about 47 acres each. At the farmyard we have gleaned more detail of what was added. Just on the edge of what is now Manor Lane, a large, red brick, 18th century farmhouse was built and is still there today called Fern House, below.



This building bears a similar resemblance to another farmhouse at Sandhill Farm, Shrivenham, below. (See Listing No N995). And recent research has shown that both buildings are associated with the same family name of Liddiard.



A small entry within the bundle of notes provided the clue to the origins of the farmhouse at Sandhill with the wording, '*The measure of all the land which Mrs Stratton had adjoining to Mr Liddiard's new erected Farmhouse at Sandhill in Shrinham.*' (sic) (RBA D/EPB/T49/5). The measurement made was dated to 1741 so it's justified giving the house building date as 1740.



Stylistically, the farmhouse that is Fern House at Salopp Farm would fit in with a similar date and there is evidence to support the suggestion that the Strattons and Liddiards were involved with the building of it. Within the RS Neale collection at the Bath & NE Somerset Archives at Bath, (BA) there is a Lease & Release conveyance dated 28th June 1765 that gives the information on the farm and lands, '*formerly the inheritance of Thomas Stratton of Shrivenham, Gent, deceased and since of William Stratton, Gent, his nephew, also deceased, and afterwards descended to and vested in Mary the wife of William Liddiard of the City of London, Draper, who were daughters and co-heirs of William Stratton.*' (BA 0473/2/20).

Further information of the buildings on Salopp Farm come from a document that explained how four cottages were moved from a locale called Barnacles on the edge of Beckett Estate and rebuilt on the edge of the farm. (Below). It's uncertain when the move took place but we have copies of the original document to confirm that the cottages were built by William Wildman Lord Viscount Barrington in the 1753 and allocated for the use of the poor of the village. (See SHS N425 for details). The cottages would have certainly been occupied by workers on the farm.



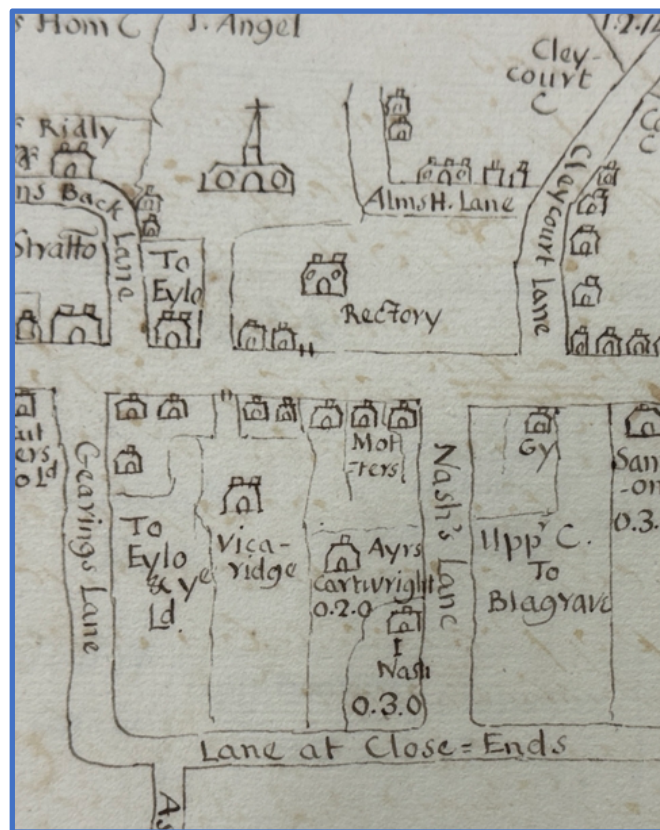
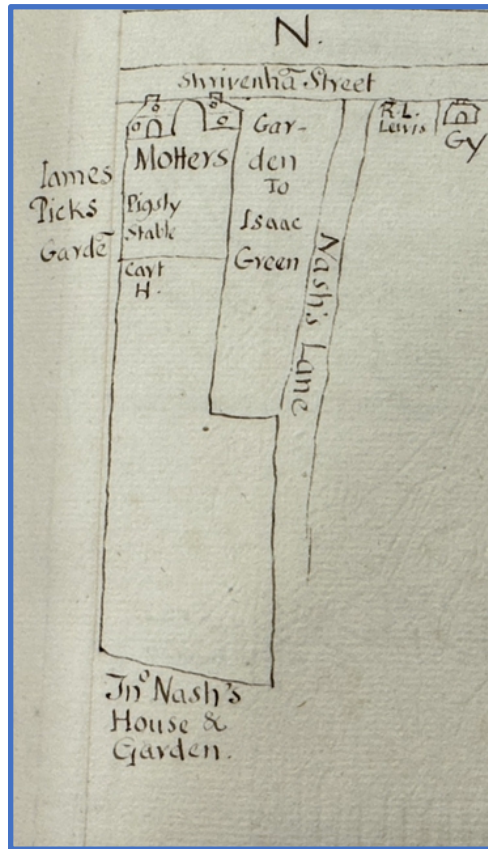
Another document dated 7th January 1626 referred to a property in Shrivenham village known as '*Mottardes*'. It's mentioned again in a later indenture of 1702 but shortened to *Motters*, 'in Shrivenham with about 12 acres of land to the same belonging.' (RBA D/EPB/T42). This property along with another called '*Ducknest*' were associated with and belonging to Salopp Farm. Shrivenham Heritage has carried out more research on this.

It was in the early part of the 17th century that the name Motters appeared in the Shrivenham documentary record. There is a bundle of documents in the Royal Berkshire Archives at Reading that form part of the collection of the Pleydell-Bouverie family (D/EPB/T42/ 9). They are mainly concerned with the farm called Salop, the earliest having references to 1544. Shrivenham Salop was one of the ancient Manors, along with Beckett, Stallpits and Rectory. But it's from 1626 that a deal between John Stratton and John Pleydell, both of Shrivenham, mention a property called '*Mottardes*'. The description added that it had a '*Curtilage*' (an area around the building that formed a boundary considered to be part of it) a '*Barkside*' and a '*Barton Room*', which of the period translates to

an area and building used by workers as a tool store, workshop, vehicles and perhaps workers accommodation. It was set in half an acre of ground but had attached to it '*half a yardland*' which is more difficult to define. Across the country there were huge variations in the size of a yardland (also called a Virgate) and it also varied over time. But other known instances in Shrivenham at the same time, suggest that it was around 10 acres.

But more of a problem and the bane of every rural historical researcher is location. The nature of a village meant that its occupants were intimately knowledgeable of the people and terrain and therefore placing in writing the exact location of a property was not necessary. Sometimes attempts were made to define it by the lawyers' clerks, but they can be confusing. So, the discovery of a map, however small, can often solve many mysteries. The administration of the Pleydell-Bouverie estate at Coleshill produced a large amount of documentation, and with it the occasional map. In Deed Book Ref D/EPB/E158/1 from circa 1750 there is one such hand-drawn map on page 71. (Below). Here the name '*Motters*' is clear and depicts a building with an archway; but it's dated about a century later and doesn't exactly match '*Mottardes*.' Fortunately, another document in the batch dated 1703 made it clear that by then it was called '*Motters*.' The source of the name is an enigma but probably stuck after a person of that name. There was a Motter family in Shrivenham in the late 16th and early 17th centuries but we know little about them.

The same document revealed other information, that the land at this location had other properties nearby, two messuages (houses) called '*Slatehouse*' and '*Fords*,' both belonging to Salop Farm. The second extract from the deed book map (Below) will make it clear as to the location – the corner of present day Hazells Lane and High St (D/EPB/E158/1. Page 77)



In trying to make sense of all this information from over three centuries earlier it's clear that the area concerned is fronted by today's old Thatched Shop and the old Men's Institute buildings. However, to understand how it was, it's necessary to remove out of mind, all the buildings standing there today, and not only those fronting the high street but all the way down the bottom to the junction of Vicarage Lane. Standing opposite and facing the Men's Institute building, may have looked like the picture below – an AI generated image and next, the area being researched.





The name Slatehouse is interesting in that early research on the water mill at Coleshill also had a property of the same name and similarly to this, was separate and distinct from the mill building. Some of the wording suggested that it was associated with the large mill pond and referenced a '*Washing Place*'. It's likely that the washing was not people but more likely sheep. Wool fetched a much better price if it was clean and there are many recorded instances of large scale washing of sheep before they were shorn. So how might this fit in here at this site? The society has a large collection of maps and the Tithe Map from 1838 immediately suggested where the washing place may have been along with the Slatehouse. (Extract below).



The above clearly shows a blue coloured pond at the bottom of today's Hazells Lane and isn't surprising when the land slopes gently down from the large pond that was at the bottom of the old Vicarage Garden and is still there today. Even a map of the 1920s showed that both ponds were still there then. (Below).



If the Slatehouse was associated with the water, then the premises called Fords adjacent to it may have been so named because it was near to a stream that ran across what is today Vicarage Lane to fill the pond. The Indenture dated 14th December 1637 recorded Henry Marten as one of the parties who sold the two properties for £80 to Oliver Pleydell. It's highly likely that it was Henry junior, the son of Sir Henry, sometimes called Harry, the Regicide who signed the death warrant of King Charles I. Curiously, one of the occupiers was written as Xpian (Christian) Marten, widow, deceased, but we have no idea who she was.

As we discover more about Shrivenham history, it becomes clear at just how small the village was pre 20th century. It's also clear that the largest pieces of land clustered around the area of the church was owned by the wealthiest of people. Very few of the working-class villagers would have lived in cottages built of rubble stone with thatched roofs which would have been regarded slightly higher in status. Those at the lowest of social status, the vast majority, must have lived in properties made of wood – dare it be suggested – shanty towns – SHS Listing N685 is a classic example.