

# OUR HIDDEN PAST

## ROGER LEA'S WALKS

**Reproduction of the notes Roger Lea made to accompany a series of walks which he led c.1980/90s for the Sutton Coldfield Local History Research Group, comprising:**

**Ashfurlong and High Heath, Hill and Little Sutton, Newhall Valley and Langley, Peddimore and Wigginshill, and Wyndley Manor and Maney**



Janet Jordan  
Sutton Coldfield Local History Research Group  
April 2021

# OUR HIDDEN PAST

## Ashfurlong and High Heath

Reproduced from the notes Roger Lea made to accompany this walk  
c. 1980/90s

### Ashfurlong Corner

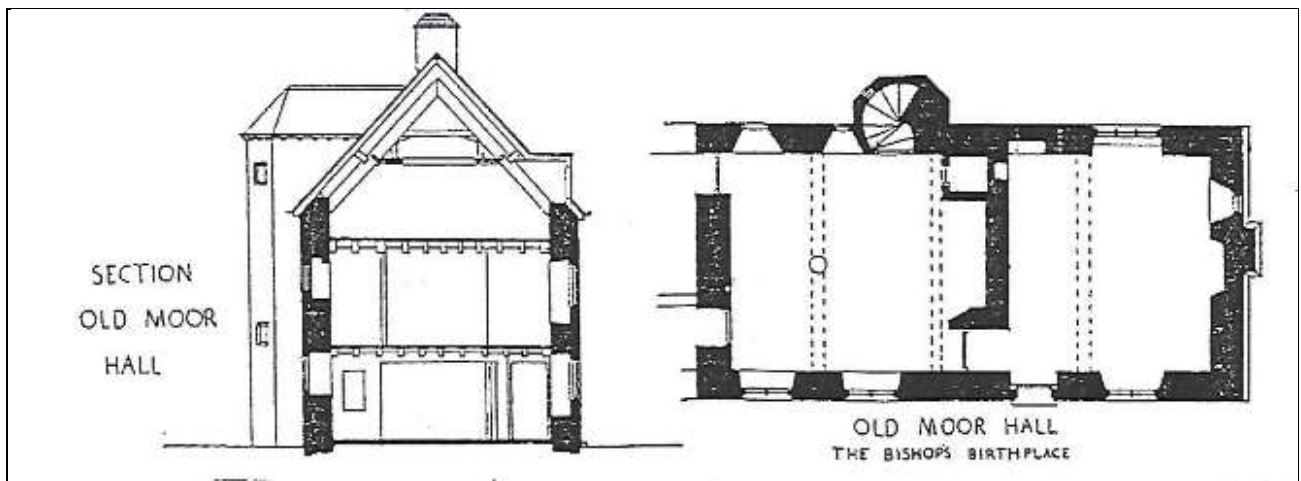
Tamworth Road was a turnpike road operated by a profit-making trust from 1807, and there was a toll gate at Ashfurlong Corner in addition to the one at the Lichfield Road junction. Ashfurlong clinic is on the site of a Bishop Vesey stone house, demolished in the 1960's. In medieval times, and up to the 1850's, Sutton was administered in five Quarters, - Great Sutton; Maney and the Wylde; Hill and Little Sutton; Walmley and Beyond the Woods; and Moor and Ashfurlong; - the last extending from Little Sutton to Penns, and containing most of the big houses - Moor Hall, New Hall and Langley Hall, and later Ashfurlong Hall and Penns Hall. The lodge to Moor Hall is 20th century, and mirrors the lodge to Ashfurlong Hall on the other side of Weeford Road.

### Moor Hall

The hall built by Bishop Vesey was improved in the 18th century by the owner Andrew Hacket, but it was demolished to make way for the present building, which bears the date 1905 on the tower.

### Moor Hall Farm

Bishop Vesey's birthplace, although this has been disputed, perhaps because of some 16th century stylistic features - these could well have been the result of modernisation of the existing building, however. Bishop Vesey was born either in 1452 or c.1461, his name being John Harman. His father died in 1470, just when the Earl of Warwick had been beheaded for supporting Henry VI against Edward IV in the wars of the roses, leaving his manors impoverished and insecure. If Vesey was then 18, as head of the family he would have had pressing responsibilities; however, if he was 8 he may have lived in the household of his cousins, the Veseys of Chimney, Oxfordshire. Either way, he entered Magdalen College, Oxford in 1482, and was there when the boy scholar Thomas Wolsey came up in 1485. One of his key preferments was to the Queen's household in 1489, where the future Henry VIII was born 2 years later. Vesey rose to high office under Henry VIII and Wolsey, and was at the centre of the new renaissance learning, working alongside Thomas More (*Utopia* 1517). When he turned his attention to Sutton in the 1520's, he had the wealth and power to transfer Sutton according to his own wishes.



Taken from *The Bishop Vesey Houses and Other Old Buildings in Sutton Coldfield* by Philip Chatwin and Edgar Harcourt, reprinted from *Birmingham Archaeological Society Transactions* 1941 and 1942, Vol LXIV, University Press, Oxford

## Shepherds Pool

There was a pool here, probably formed by the extraction of marl to improve soil quality, but also by the causeway carrying Weeford Road. Although the commons started here, grazed by innumerable sheep, the pool is probably named after a local family rather than an arcadian meeting place for Strephon and Chloe.

## Fox Hill Farm

When Ashfurlong Hall was converted into a gentleman's residence in the 1790's by Mr. Vaughton, its farming activities ceased and a park was laid out. However, it was another century before Fox Hill Farm was built, the fields being farmed from Moor Hall Farm in the 19th century.

## Ashfurlong Nursery

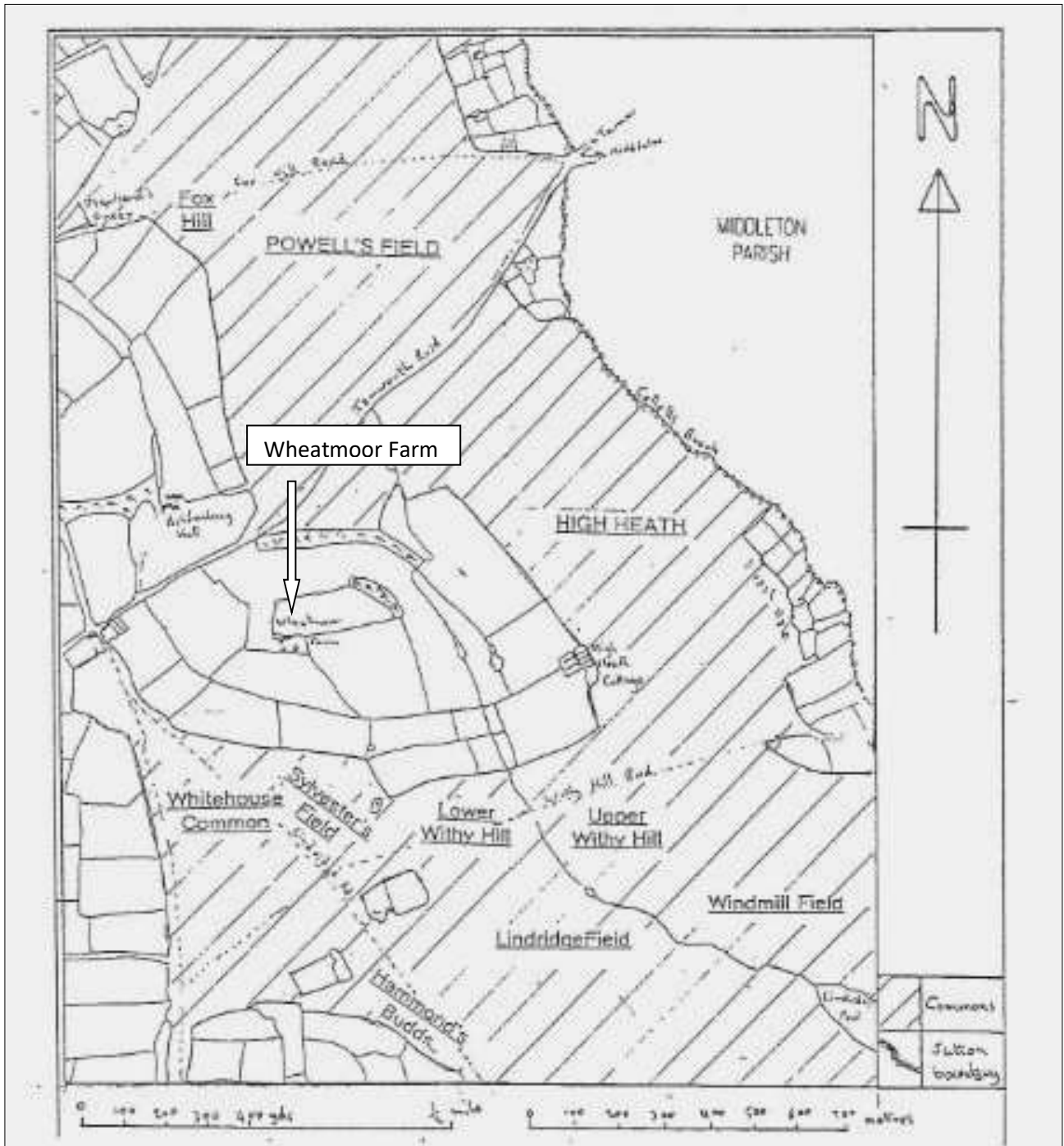
The large walled gardens of Ashfurlong Hall were a late 19th century development. The deefile adjacent to the cottage was probably a quarry for stone for building.

## Tamworth Road

When the commons were enclosed, some of the land was sold to defray the expenses of the Enclosure Commission. A Birmingham gentleman, Mr Valentine, purchased 67 acres on the area between Fox Hill Road and Tamworth Road, known as Powells Field, where he set up in style. An amateur of the arts, he established the manufacture of decorative tiles, but after only a few years he went bankrupt, and the kiln beside the house has not been used since he left in 1836.

## Wheatmoor

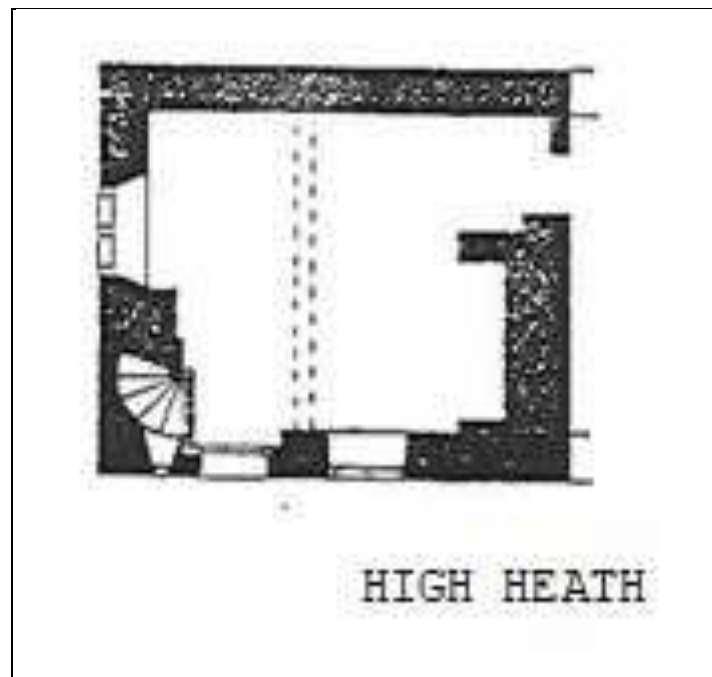
One of the clauses of the Borough Charter of 1528 entitled anyone building a house on the commons and taking in up to 60 acres of land to keep it in return for a small rent to the Corporation. Wheatmoor may have been established as a result of this, as there is a sixty-acre group of fields next to the farm, and Ashfurlong may be another. However, such land may have been in cultivation at various times in the past, falling out of use when demand was low.



The eastern commons of Sutton Coldfield showing Powells Field and Wheatmoor Farm . The base map is the Corn Rent map of 1824. (Taken from *The Story of Sutton Coldfield* by Roger Lea, Pub. 2003 by Sutton Publishing Limited) Page 89)

## High Heath Cottage

This is the smallest of the surviving Vesey houses, and the only explanation for its isolated and exposed site is the policing of remote parts of Sutton recorded by Dugdale in reference to Muffins Den. The house has one room on each of its three storeys and a spiral stone staircase in the corner next to the door. The small windows lighting this staircase have sometimes been described as loopholes, suggesting a defensive function. Although all the windows seems small today, some of them were large by contemporary standards, and may have been designed to let in enough light for the knitting of kerseys, pieces of woollen cloth which were England's largest export in the 1530's. Over 40 of the 51 houses attributed to Vesey by Dugdale are unaccounted for, but many of them may be in the High Street encased in more fashionable brick and hidden behind Georgian facades.



Taken from *The Bishop Vesey Houses and Other Old Buildings in Sutton Coldfield* by Philip Chatwin and Edgar Harcourt, reprinted from *Birmingham Archaeological Society Transactions* 1941 and 1942, Vol LXIV, University Press, Oxford

## Swash Dale

Also known as Swarfs Vale, this was an isolated area of tiny fields and cottages on the parish boundary, and a likely hideout for highwaymen in the 16th century; London Road is just across Collett's Brook, and it is overlooked by the stone house. High Heath Farm Cottage was previously two cottages, the further one having a large window was a weavers' house in 1851.

## Wheatmoor Farm

An example of 19th century stone cladding to raise the status of a brick farmhouse.



## Ashfurlong Hall

Various stages of building can be distinguished at the back of the Hall, with a strong possibility that the earliest stage is a Vesey stone house - however, in a paper read to the Vesey Society in 1893 by Riland Bedford, it is suggested that in this case Vesey enlarged an existing house. The outbuildings housed all the facilities necessary to a country gentleman, but not farming. In 1861 Dr Colmore lived here, employing 2 nurses, a cook, a housemaid, a gardener and a laundress; in 1881 it was Ashfurlong Hall Classical School, with 34 boy boarders aged between 7 and 20, but in 1901 it was the residence of Colonel Wilkinson with a full complement of servants and gardeners

SUTTON COLDFIELD.

---

ASHFURLONG HALL

Classical and Commercial Boarding School,

*(In union with Trinity College, London.)*

The above School is delightfully situated in its own Park and Grounds of Fifty Acres, on the Tamworth Road, about One Mile distant from the Sutton Stations of the London and North Western and Midland Railways.

The course of study is adapted to the requirements of candidates for the principal competitive Examinations as well as for pupils intended for professional and commercial life.

There is a native French Master. Mons. Gilmer attends weekly for Dancing and Calisthenics, and Professor Skinner for Fencing and Drill.

Each boy has a separate bed. A portion of the Park is laid out as a Cricket Ground, and Lawn Tennis and other Athletic games are provided.

PRINCIPAL—

M. W. WILSON,

*Hon. Mem. Trinity College, London.*

Taken from *Sutton Coldfield - A History and a Guide* by Elizer Edwards, 1880

After which, ere long, the Mercate being utterly forsaken, the Town fell much to ruin; and the Mannour place was totally pulled down by one *Wington*, who being employed as an Officer there for the King, made use of most of the timber for himself, selling the incire fabrick of the Hall unto the Marq. *Dorset*, which was set up at *Wadgate* in *Leicestershire*. And in this decayed condition did *Sutton* continue, till that *John Harman*, alias *Pesly*, Bishop of *Exeter*, bearing a great affection thereto, in respect it was the place of his birth, having obtained of the King in 19. H. 8. certain parcells of Inclosure here, called *Boye crofts*, and *Herthe pards*, and more than xl. acres of wast, with Licence to inclose it, the next year ensuing procured Letters Pat. <sup>4</sup> dated 16. Dec. for the making it a Corporation, by the name of a *Warden and Societie*, to consist of xxiii. persons besides the Warden: as also another yearly *feate* on *Simon and Jude's* day, with a weekly *Mercate* upon the Munday (the Tuesday *Mercate* being discontinued) together with a Common Hall or *Moore Hall*, for their assemblies, a Clerk of the *Mercate*, and a Steward, and one or two Sergeants at Mace; the Warden for the time being to be Coroner within the same Corporation; and that no Shiriff nor Bailiff shall meddle within their Liberties: granting besides unto them the whole Town and Mannour of *Sutton Colfield*; as also the *Chase* and Park, to hold to them and their successors for ever in Fee ferm, at the Rent of *lviii l. per an.* in which sort it continueth till this day.

Concerning the parentage of this *John Harman*, I find that he was born in this Lordship, and of a Family residing here, his Father's name being *Will. Harman*, and his Mother's *Joane*, daughter unto *Henry Squier* of *Handsworth* in *Staffordshire* (from which *Henry* is also descended my singular friend *M<sup>r</sup> Scipio Squyer*, now one of the Vice-Chamberlains in the Exchequer, a Gentleman of great knowledge in Antiquities, and a special furtherer of this worke). The first mention that I have seen of the said *John Harman*, is in 11. H. 7. where the King grants unto him, by the name of *John Harman* D<sup>r</sup> of Law, the free Chapell of *S. Blase*, situate within this his Mannour of *Sutton* in *Colfield*, with all the lands and possessions thereunto belonging, for life: by which Pat. recitall is made, that the same Chapell, &c. was formerly granted also for life, unto one *John Harman* Priest in 20. H. 6. to celebrate Divine Service therein according to the Ordination of the Founders thereof; and confirm'd to him by *George Duke of Clarence* (in right of his Earldome of *Warwick*) 12. Off. 11. E. 4. and then, viz. 11. H. 7. surrendered to the King, and cancell'd to make way for this grant: of which Chapell, all I have seen else, is only, that in 2. E. 3. the King, in respect of the then Earl of *Warwick's* minority, confer'd it upon *Thomas de Hampton* Clerk, as a Donative.

But I return to *John Harman*. He was afterwards, viz. in 22. H. 7. Vicar of *St. Michael's* Church in *Cobentree*: next Dean of the Royal Chapell at *Windsor* to K. H. 8. *Homo cui nec eruditio deerat, nec prudentia; morum porro commitate insignis perhibetur* (saith *Godwyn*) for which his abilities, being highly esteemed of the King, he was employed on sundry Embassies, made Tutor to the Lady *Marie* (then the King's onely Daughter) and President of *Wales*; and after the death of *Hugh Oldham* Bishop of *Exeter*, advanced to that See, being consecrated 6. Dec. an. 1519. (11. H. 8.) To this town he bore a speciall

affection; and besides the procuring it to be incorporated (as I have said) bestow'd very great cost, aswell for ornament as enriching thereof; *sc.* The Moot Hall, with a Prison under it, and a Mercate place, he built, at the charge of xxxvi. l. vi. s. d. Inclosed all the Coppices called the *seven Heys*, and set up Gates and Locks to them, at xliii. l. ii. s. vi. d. Paved the whole Town, at xli. iii. s. viii. d. Scored the Park with Mares, Colts, and Horses at xli. l. Gave to the ditching and Quick-setting thereof at one time xvi. l. viii. s. x. d. And at another x. l. xvi. s. viii. d. Paid for weights and Balances, and the Warden's expences at the first Leet xli. s. for the Organs in the Church (an. 22. H. 8.) xliii. l. ii. s. viii. d. For building of two Iles to the Church (an. 25. H. 8.) XCii. l. xii. s. ii. d. Besides the finishing of them iiii. l. vi. s. xi. d. Built the School and endow'd it, as I shall further shew anon. Destroy'd the *Chafe* for the benefit of the Poor, who for xx. d. per an. had keeping for their Cows; and gave a meadow for Hay to the poor Widows, appointing the Coppices to be for Fewell to the Inhabitants.

Nay, so great a desire had he, that it should increase in people and wealth; not doubting but that the barrenness of the soil would give an edge unto Industrie, that building a Li. stone Houles within the precincts of the Lordship, he began to set up a trade of Cloathing there, in making *Kerseyes*, in imitation of *Devonshire*, which he saw had much enrich that County: but so much did he impoverish his Bishoprick, to do these things, that (as *Godwyn* observes) what was so founded upon Sacriledge, thrived but little: for this Cloathing trade being soon neglected, his design therein came to nothing: neither had that better success wherewith he advanced his kindred, which continued not to them for three generations. The later part of his days he spent here at *Sutton*, having built from the ground, a very fair House (North East near a mile from the Town) called *Hooge Hall*; where he lived very hospitably, having of his retinue Cxl. men in Scarlet Caps and Gowns, his Household expences then amounting to 1500 l. per an. (which was no small summe at that time) To *Bulstom* he sent xx. able men with K. H. 8. and Cl. with them; and twice as many to *Northwich* feild, giving also money extraordinary with them, for their support, in case any fell sick by the way: and afterwards, in recompence of their service, bestowed on them lands and livings.

And for prevention of Robberies, which were in those days frequent upon the Road over *Bassett's Heath* (leading from *Litchfield* towards *London*) he erected a House, upon a piece of Wast called *Cotymore*, containing nine acres of ground, lying in a kind of desert place, near to *Canwell-yate*; which place, as by an Autograph I have seen, was deservedly called *Larvum spelunca & receptaculum*, wherein he placed one of his own domestique Servants to reside, paying ii. s. yearly at *Michaelmas* to himself and his heirs, and xviii. d. to the Warden and Fellowship of *Sutton*, and their Successors. At his own proper costs he also built two Stone Bridges within 3. miles of *Sutton*; viz. at *Curdworth*, and *Water Dyon*: and for that purpose (as the tradition is) pulled down the remainder of the ancient Mannour House (which stood about a furlong Westwards from the Church) And departing this world at the age of Ciii. years, lyeth buried on the North side of the Chancell here at *Sutton*, having a fair Monument there, with his statue mitted and vested for the Altar, as I shall shew anon.

DUGDALE - THE ANTIQUITIES OF WARWICKSHIRE p. 913-4

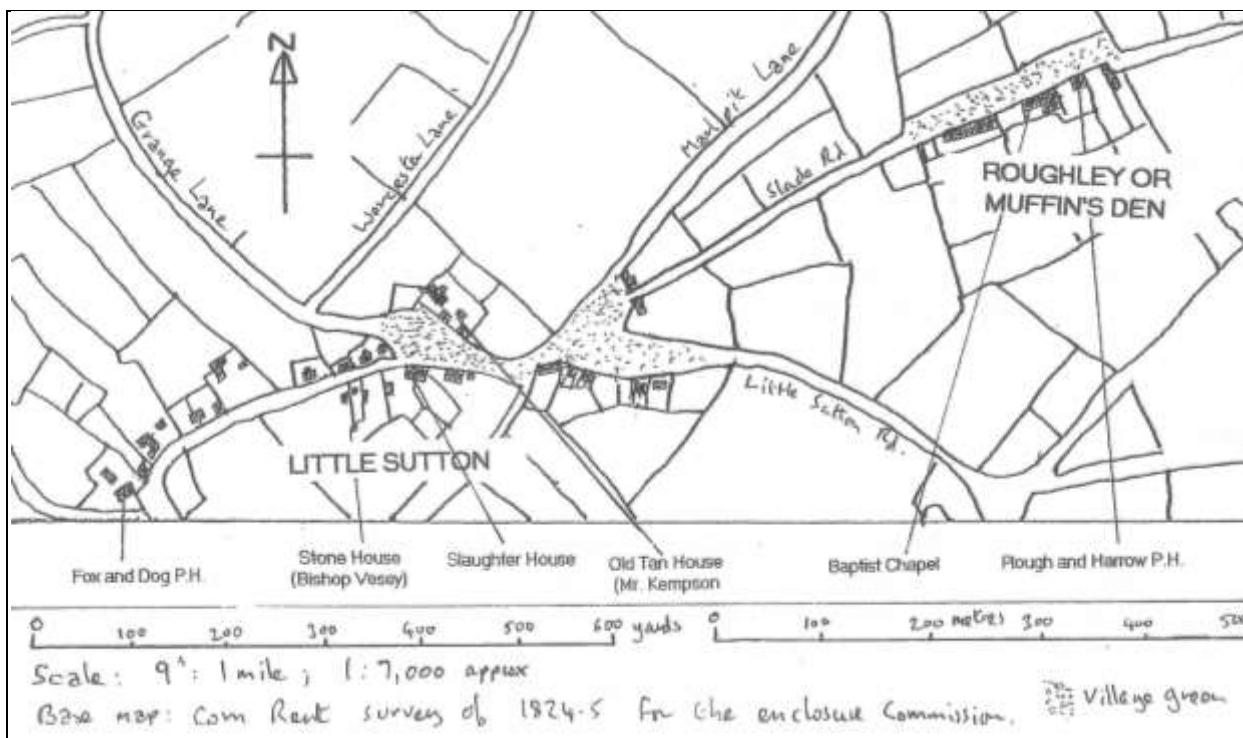
# OUR HIDDEN PAST

## Hill and Little Sutton

Reproduced from the notes Roger Lea made to accompany this walk c.1980/90s  
(Also Companion Leaflet attached)

### Roughley

This area had a rough reputation in Bishop Vesey's time (1530's). This part of Sutton seems to have been particularly attractive to new settlers, or squatters, finding a place to live where they could scrape a living by selling their labour and carrying on their trade. The Hearth Tax returns of the 1670's show that Sutton had a higher than average number of gentry, but also a much higher than average proportion of poor people, perhaps reflecting Sutton's relative hospitality to homeless newcomers. A baptist church was founded here in 1770, a form of worship which particularly flourished in areas of independent-minded artisans and craftsmen, although the 1861 census shows a preponderance of agricultural labourers in Little Sutton and Roughley, 17 of the household heads were craftsmen. The 1824 map shows rows of cottages with a public house fronting a broad area of common land.



Roughley and Little Sutton in 1824



## Marlpit Lane

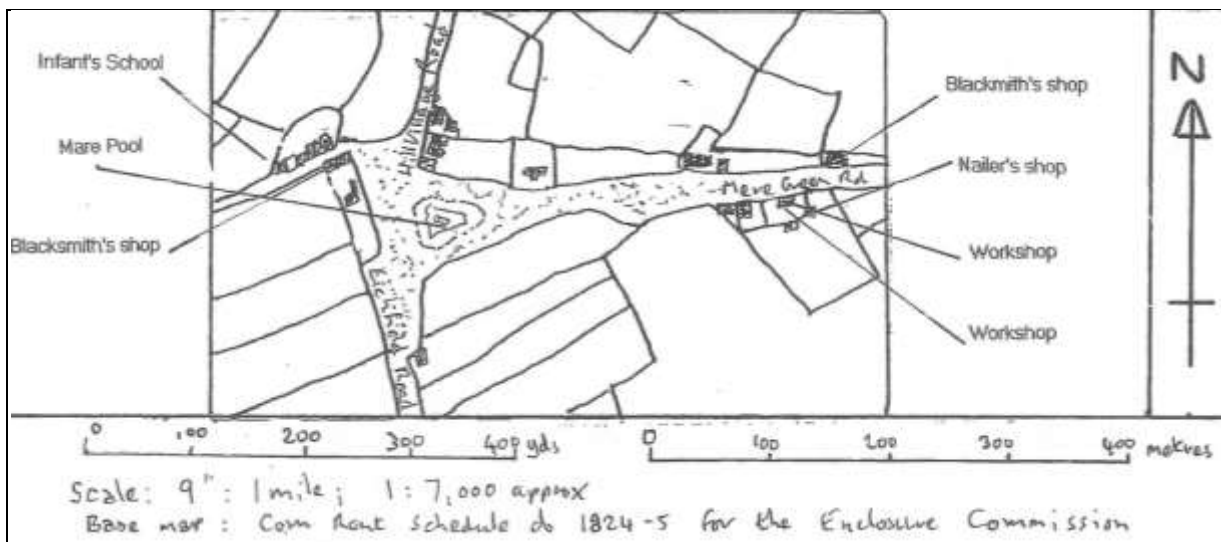
This is the eastern end of the medieval village of Little Sutton, which straggled for a quarter of a mile along Little Sutton Road with an irregular village green. A document of 1569 listing the strips of land held in the three open fields shows that the medieval system was still in force, although it refers to blocks of the fields that had already been fenced off by their owners. This village, referred to as a township in some old documents, with its field system, was probably already in existence at the Norman Conquest, whereas Roughley is probably a 13th or 16th century accretion.

## Fox and Dogs

This is the western end of Little Sutton, no trace of which remains except the road pattern. Until 1824, when the present line of Little Sutton Lane was set out, there was only a very indirect trackway in that direction, and in 1569 the present Mere Green Road appears to have been merely the central dividing hedge of an open field. When the commons were enclosed in the 1820's all the roads through Little Sutton were reduced to a width of 30 feet, and the rest of the former green allotted to entitled owners. The present broad verges derive more from modern town planning than any pattern.

## St James Church

The first of the satellite churches, was built in the 1830's having its own parish from 1857. This end of Mere Green was a settlement similar to Roughley until the 19th century, with tradesmen's premises predominating.



Mere Green in 1824

## Mere Green

At one time there was a sizeable pool here, probably formed by the extraction of marl to spread on the fields to improve soil quality. The surrounding open space gave good access to the pool, which took its name from the neighbouring Mare Field. By 1826 the pool had been drained, the open

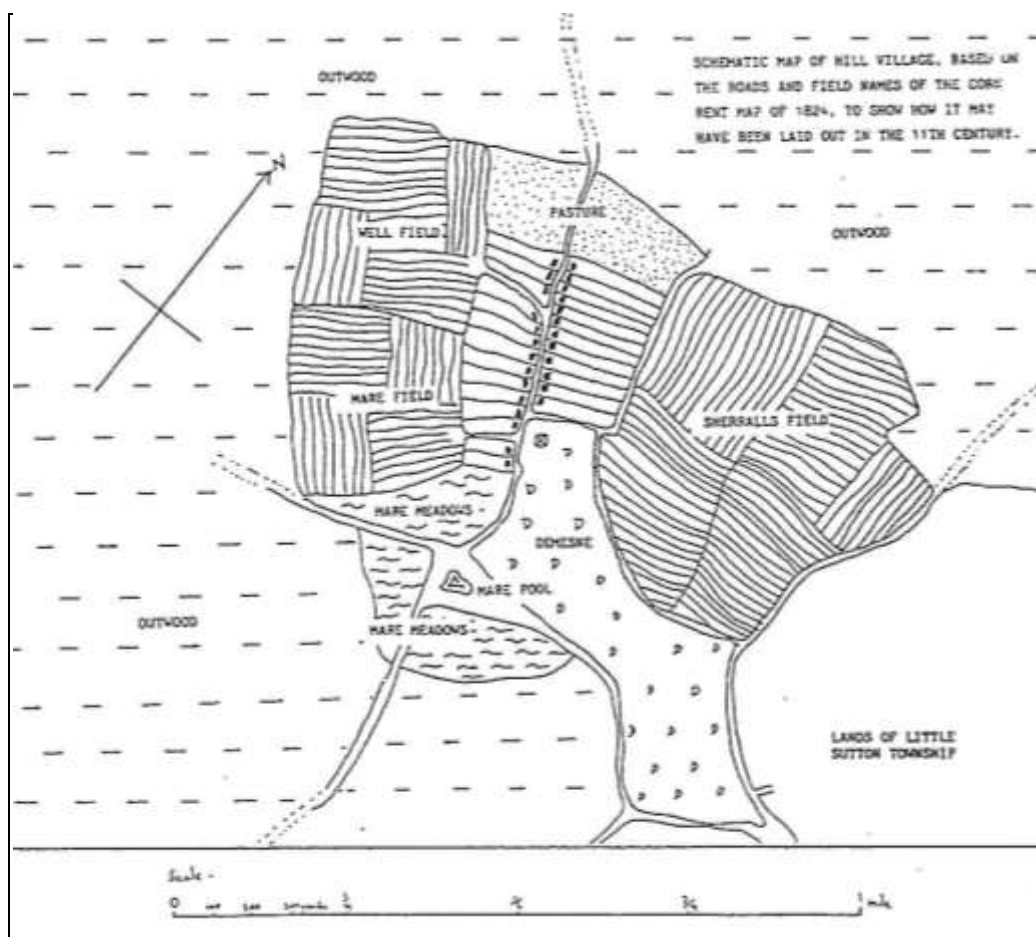
space allotted to owners, and the first school had been built. In 1827, the new Lichfield Turnpike road had been cut, bypassing Hill Village, and enhancing the importance of Mere Green as a centre.

## Malt House

This and the Barley Mow pub which faced it were at the southern end of Hill Village. The malt house had that name in the middle of the last century, so presumably had that function - it is probably a timber-framed house with the stone wall added because the material happened to be available when repairs were needed, as at the Smithy at Maney.

## Sherifoot Lane

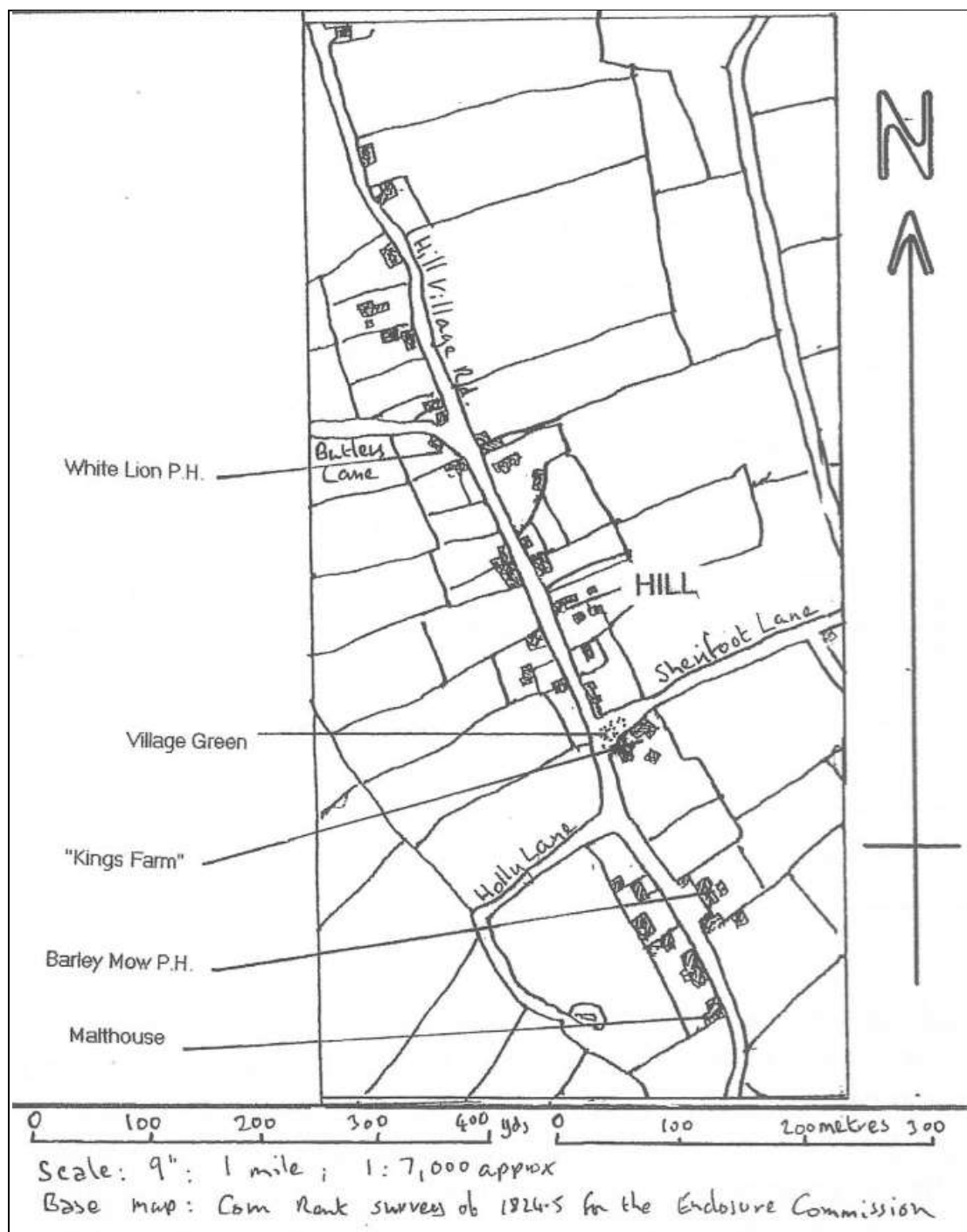
Hill was a nucleated village probably already established by the Norman Conquest. It is aligned along Hill Village Road, the original route to Lichfield, with the three lanes leading to the three open fields, Butlers Lane to Warr Field, Holly Lane to Mare Field, and Sherifoot Lane to Sherralls Field. The schematic plan shows how it may have been planned, if it was planned, with room for expansion. The clustering of settlement at the centre of the field system was a late Anglo-Saxon development reflecting the co-operative activity of ploughing when several households would contribute to the ox-team.



From *Scenes from Sutton's Past*, Page 21

The cumbersome arrangement of the plough made it economic to plough the whole open field rather than a few individual strips, although each household would be able to identify its own strip.

The plough team did not work in straight lines but described a shallow inverted 'S' shape, known as the aratral curve - strips followed this curve, which can be seen in fields where the ridge-and-furrow pattern survives.



Hill Village in 1824

These village maps are based on the 1824-5 *Corn Rent Survey*, but with added information from the 1856 *Parochial Valuation*. They appear in Vol 7 of the *SCLHRG'S Proceedings*

Just along Sherifoot Lane a Roman pottery kiln was found in 1987, showing that the site may have been continuously occupied from Roman Times. Tower Road took its name from a tower built in 1893 by a local eccentric, Hugh Lewis, of 5 storeys, 50' high, of which the base forms part of the wall opposite Sherifoot Lane.

## Footpath

This marks the northern end of the old Hill village, being the edge of a former commons, and set out at the time of Enclosure with a specified width of four feet. The wall alongside is attributable to Hugh Lewis, who is supposed to have given some of the many unemployed people passing that way to seek work in Birmingham a free meal in return for an hour's bricklaying.

## Hillwood Road

Laid out across former commons by order of the Enclosure Commissioner, to be 30 feet wide.

## Manorial Farm

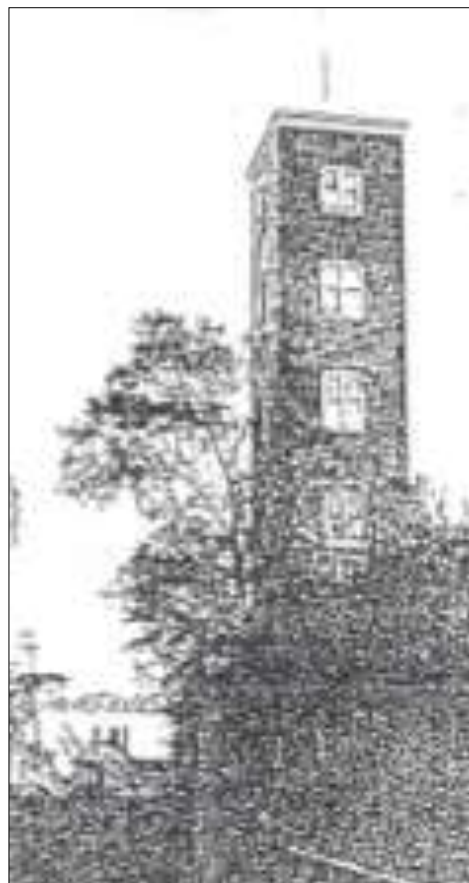
Set up by the Corporation of Sutton in 1836 on land allotted to them by the Enclosure Commission to extinguish their right to manorial (feudal) dues. In 1811, 6 households lived in rudimentary houses beyond the footpath, an area known as Kendricks Well. The footpath follows the north boundary of Sherralls Field, one of the former open fields of Hill village; when corn was growing in the field, each household was responsible for keeping a length of the boundary hedge in good repair.

## Hill Wood

A deed of 1549 leases Hill Wood Coppice to Smallwood, he being to maintain the ditch and bank. Hill Wood earlier referred to a large tract of land, the northern quarter of Sutton Chase, with a keeper to whom huntsmen had to apply for permission. The overgrown hedge here contains a number of different tree species, and a rule of thumb for determining the age of a hedge is to multiply the number of free species in a 30 metre stretch by 100 years.

## Grange Lane

Looking across towards Sherifoot Lane it is still possible to distinguish a long thin field next to the Dugdale Crescent allotments. This is part of a field shown on the Corn Rent Map (1824) as "Longlands", a field owned separately in five longitudinal strips - a fossil remnant of the medieval divisions of the open field, perhaps called longlands because most of the strips were shorter. The slightly curved shape of this remaining field preserves the aratral curve of the medieval ox-plough. It is probably only a matter of time before this too is obliterated.



For an account of the Tower, and Hugh Lewis, see FENTIMAN - *a Hill Village Scrap Book* in Sutton Reference Library



## **Little Sutton Field**

This is the northern boundary of Shadwall Field, one of the open fields of medieval Little Sutton. In 1569, these fields were being farmed by some 20 households, and Little Sutton had probably always been a hamlet of about 20 houses. At the south side of Little Sutton, the establishment of Moor Hall Park in the 1520's probably curtailed one of the fields, and so the trend towards consolidating holdings and moving the farmhouse to the centre of the land had begun by 1569, such consolidated holdings being described as "several" i.e. fenced off or severed from the rest of the open field. Such are Hillside Farm and Dale Farm, to the south of Little Sutton stood Townwell Farm until the 1950's. The fields beyond the boundary were probably brought into cultivation piecemeal as demand for agricultural products grew, their field names in 1824 - The Riddings, Pill Ridding, Hill Wood Piece - are of the kind given to land added on to a farm.

## **Worcester Lane**

This corner of Shadwall Field, known as Woodstiles, was laid out in small fields, with a strip at the side of the road which may have been intended for the establishment of cottages and gardens, such as Woodstiles cottage. In the 1920's the City of Birmingham established smallholdings in this area as part of their Canwell Estate, and the much-altered buildings are still recognisable.

## **Duttons Lane**

This forms the boundary of the land which formerly pertained to Marlpit Hall (the hedge on the south is older than the hedge on the north). Marlpit has stood on the site of the nearest house in Marlpit Lane, and was occupied in the 1620's by a retired East India Company ships captain, Water Peyton. There is no record of it being the house of the local squire, but the relationship of the land to the rest of the Little Sutton fields suggest that it may once have been the demesne estate.

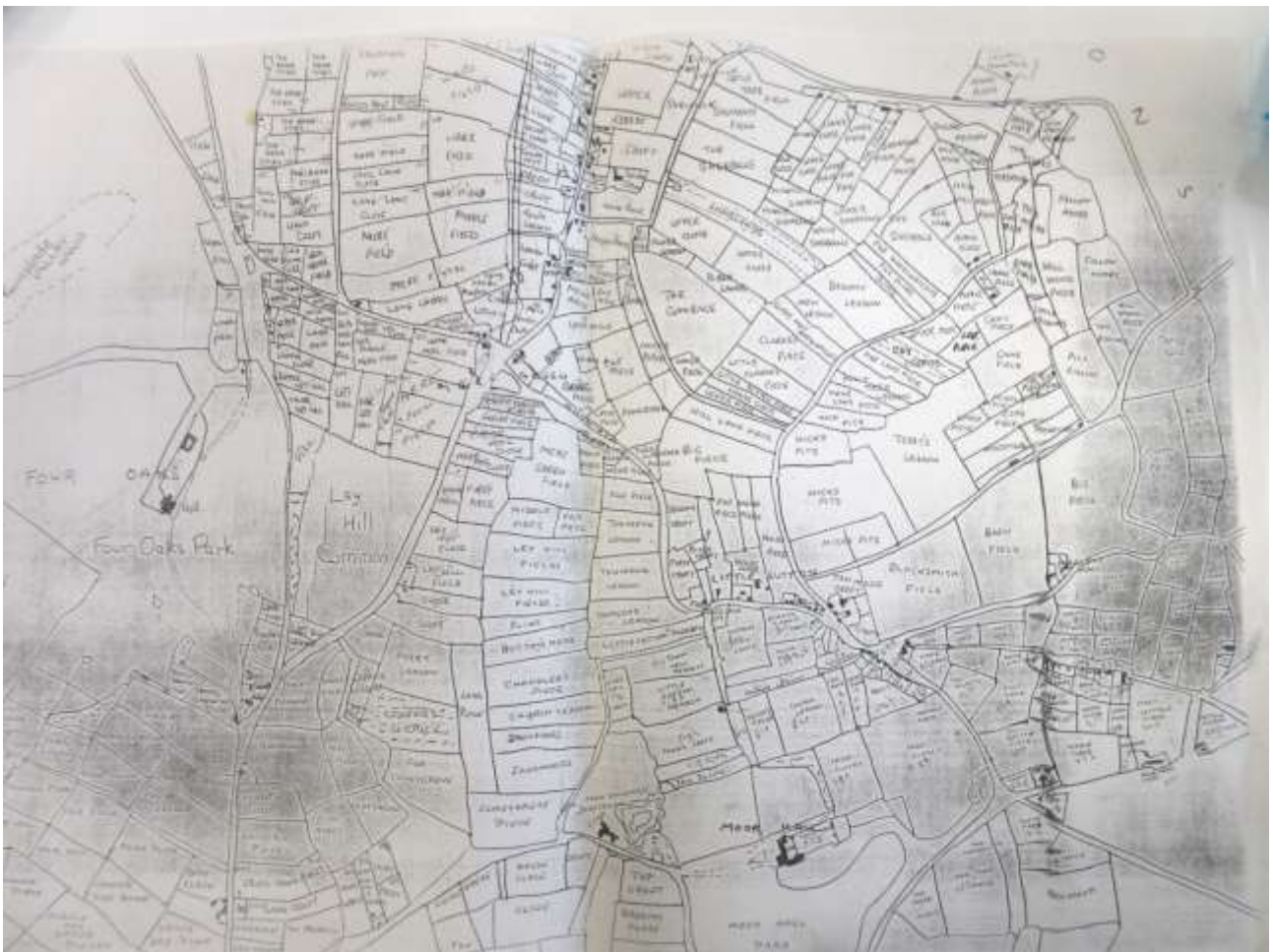
## **Muffins Den**

It is alleged that the initials of highwaymen are carved into the beams of this house, being only a mile away from a lonely stretch of the London road and near the county boundary. Bishop Vesey is supposed to have built the stone house in Weeford Road opposite to bring order to this part of Sutton, installing a retainer or relative to restrain offenders. He also enclosed the field which is now being built on.

*Janet Jordan  
April 2021*

## Companion Leaflet

Reproduced from the notes Roger Lea made to accompany this walk.






*Map showing Stages 1 to 30 of Walk*



1. Mere Green.
  - i. Not a centre of any importance until 100 years ago. The Barley Mow replaced a pub of the same name which stood in Hill Village Road, which was the main road until the new road was cut in 1827.
  - ii. The 1826 school in Mere Green Road was built on the site of Mare Pool after it had been drained.
2. The older houses in Hill Village Road are mostly 18th and 19th century, but this was the site of the Medieval village, and houses and cottages have probably been rebuilt many times. The stone part of "The Malthouse" is possibly older.
3. The sizable brick wall incorporates the base of the Tower, a five-storey building about 50 feet high and about 18' x 12', built by a local eccentric Mr. Hugh Lewis in about 1893 and demolished 20 years later.
4. The road pattern follows medieval field boundaries.
5. Plots of land on Sherifoot Lane were sold on strict conditions relating to the type of house to be built, and with a penalty if building was delayed.
6. A Roman pottery kiln was unearthed in 1987.
7. Hillwood Road was laid out by the Enclosure Commissioner in 1826.
8. Early settlement on the south side of the road was by 'squatters' on the commons adjacent to the cultivated land.
9. Manorial Farm, established on part of the commons allotted to the Corporation of Sutton in lieu of Manorial income which the Enclosure Act discontinued.
- 10 In 1811 six households lived in tumbledown cottages in this area.
- 11 The footpath follows the boundary of a medieval open field of the village of Hill, Sherralls Field.
12. The overgrown hedge can be dated by counting the number of different tree species in a 30 metre length, and multiplying by 100 - the answer is its age in years.
13. The bank is probably the boundary of Hill Wood, anciently managed as a coppice.
14. Strip cultivation of the open fields has been 'Fossilised' by a hedged strip visible across the valley.
15. The boundary of Little Sutton Field, an open field of the medieval township of Little Sutton.
16. Woodstiles cottage, built on a pre-enclosure encroachment at the edge of the road.
- 17 1920's smallholders houses built by Birmingham Corporation.
- 18 Duttons Lane - the hedge on the right is older than the one on the left.
- 19 The last house in Marlipit Lane is on the site of Marlipit Hall, occupied in 1623 by a retired captain of the East India Company.
20. Duttons Lane becomes an enclosure road
21. A variety of styles and dates of speculative and farm cottages and houses.
- 22.

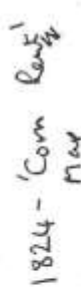
### *Stages 1 to 21 of the Walk*



- 
22. 19th Century Canwell Estate cottages
  23. 19th century Canwell Estate smallholder's houses.
  24. The stream below is Collett's Brook, the Sutton boundary; the area between Slade Lane and the brook was settled by a multitude of piecemeal holdings, consolidated at the time of the Enclosure by Lord Wenlock of Canwell Hall.
  25. Fox Hill House, a country house built on enclosed common land
  26. Fox Hill kiln, built by the first owner of Fox Hill House for firing decorative tiles and pottery - the business failed.
  27. Roughley School, at one time there were 45 children.
  28. Vesey Grange, a much-altered Vesey Stone House.
  29. Muffins Den, a modernised cottage formerly the haunt of highwaymen.
  30. Site of a 19th century Baptist Chapel, reflecting the local community of small farmers and tradesmen which once flourished in the area.

S

*Stages 22 to 30 of the Walk*



Janet Jordan  
April 2021

# OUR HIDDEN PAST

## Newhall Valley and Langley

Reproduced from the notes Roger Lea made to accompany this walk c.1980/90s

### Walmley village

This busy centre was much slower to develop than Boldmere although they were both uninhabited stretches of common land dotted with sheep until the commons were enclosed in the 1820's.

### Wincelle

Wincelle is an alternative older spelling of Wigginshill, which is where this house used to stand. It was to be replaced by a modern building on its site, the frame was carefully dismantled and re-erected here in 1910 for Mr Walter Wilkinson, then owner of New Hall. As a general rule, the closer the timber framing of the building, the older it is, so this one is usually dated to the 16th century.

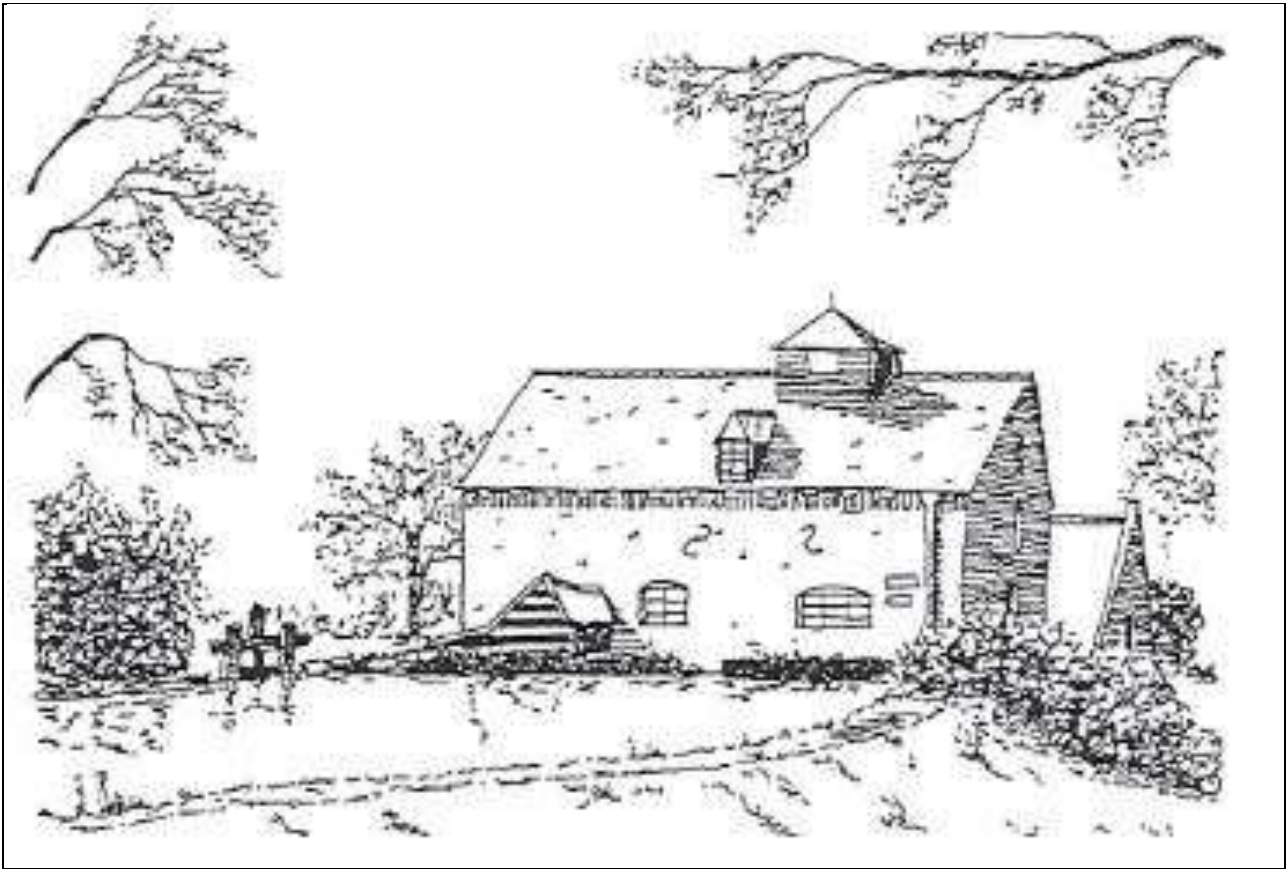


The partly dismantled 'Wincelle' photographed at Wigginshill by Sir J.B. Stone in 1910

### New Hall Mill

Visible from the road is a Vesey stone house, formerly known as the fordkeepers cottage. New Hall Mill in its present form dates from the 19th century, but the site is much older, probably 16th

century, as the town mill in the centre of Sutton seems to have had a monopoly of corn-grinding until then, so some features such as the leat and pool may date from then - the name of a local field "Mill Meadow" appears in a document of 1586. Parts of earlier mills are incorporated in the present building.



Drawing of New Hall Mill by the late Ken Williams

## Footpath

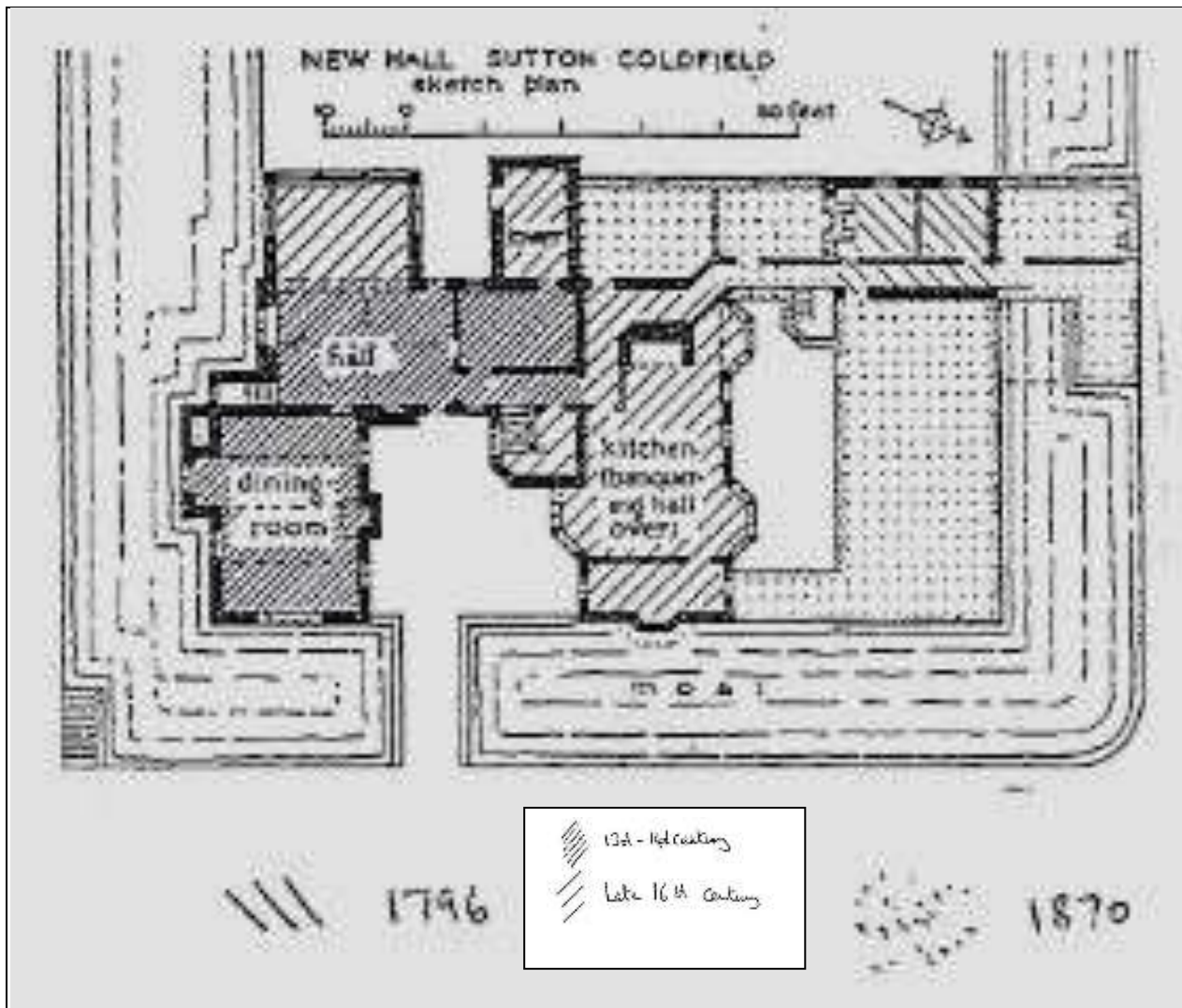
The bank on the south of the path is probably a medieval boundary between the land of New Hall and the common land or outwood and so may date from the 12th or 13th century. On the other side of the bank the land pertained to New Shipton Farm, where a recent archaeological survey used the dendrochronology method to ascertain that the oaks used in the cruck trusses of the barn had been felled in 1435. The track leads to Warren House Farm, a much altered Vesey stone house. This may have been built on a newly-enclosed 60-acre section of the commons under the clause of the 1528 Charter; by 1586 it was part of the New Hall lands, but the track from the mill to the farm was made in the 19th century.

## New Hall

An estate established by the Earl of Warwick in the 12th or 13th century centred on a moated hall. The hall was extended in the Elizabethan period and again in 1796 and 1870, and converted into a hotel in the 1980's. The land attached to New Hall was extended in Medieval times by assarting and later by taking in of common land and purchase of adjacent fields, so that some 300 acres was in cultivation by the mid-19th century, when the farmland was rationalised into two units based at



Warren House and the new Blabbs Farm (now demolished), and farming activity removed from the vicinity of New Hall itself. Most of the stone for the building was probably quarried nearby.



Sketch plan of New Hall from *The Victoria History of the County of Warwick*, Vol 4

## Walmley Road

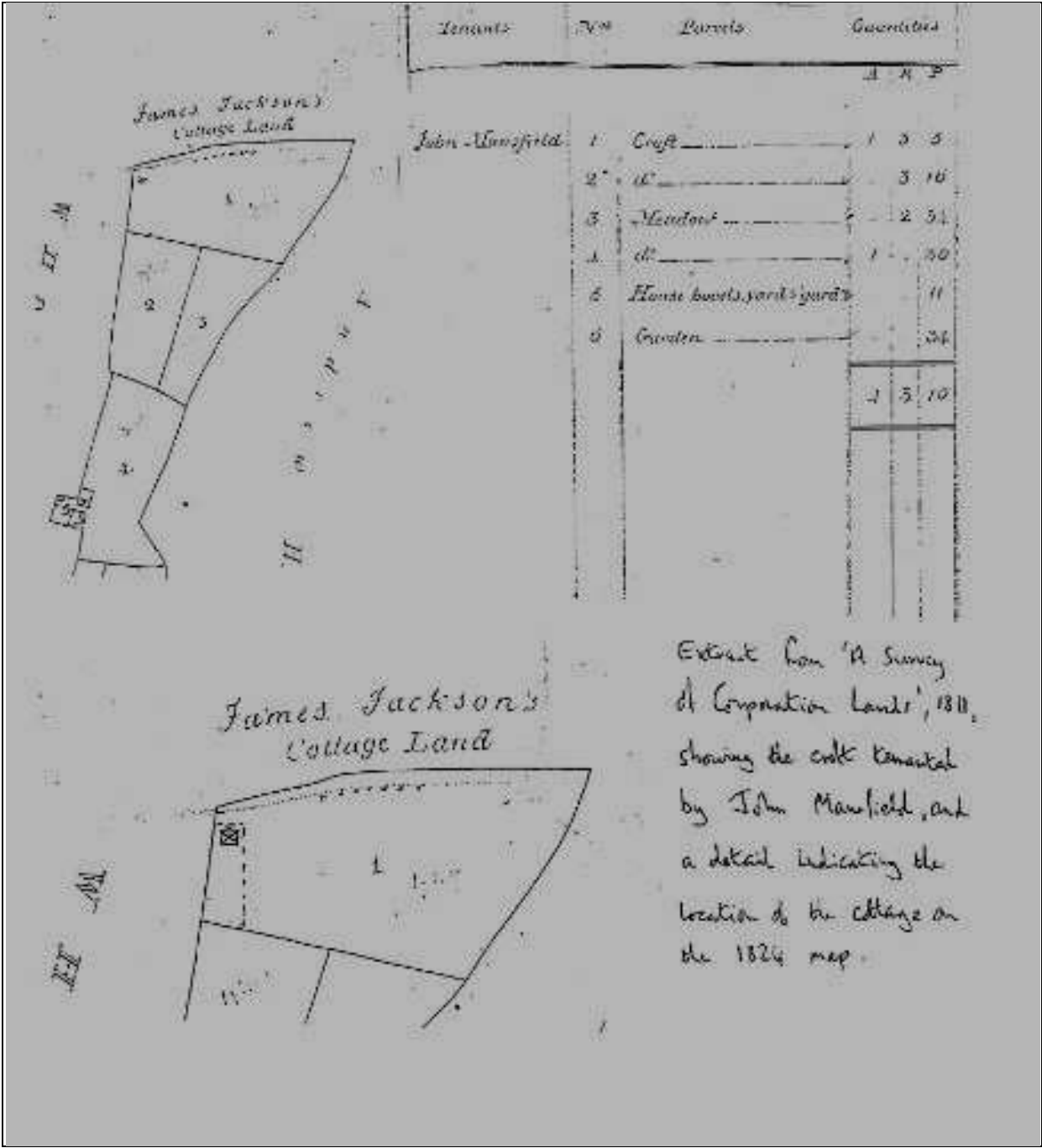
This road was laid out by the Enclosure Commission, 30 feet wide, just beyond the boundary of the New Hall land, and the thin strip of common land between the road and the New Hall land was allotted to New Hall and added to the ditch and bank feature to form a boundary plantation, serving the triple purpose of marking the boundary, landscaping the estate, and providing cover for game. The ditch and bank feature is probably medieval and may be an early boundary of New Hall Estate or of a lost deer park, but I favour a different explanation: the 1586 deed refers to a coneygree or purpose-built rabbit warren, of which this may be the remains (cf. the nearby Warren House Farm) which may date from the 13th century, long before the neighbouring fields were cultivated.

# Springfield Road

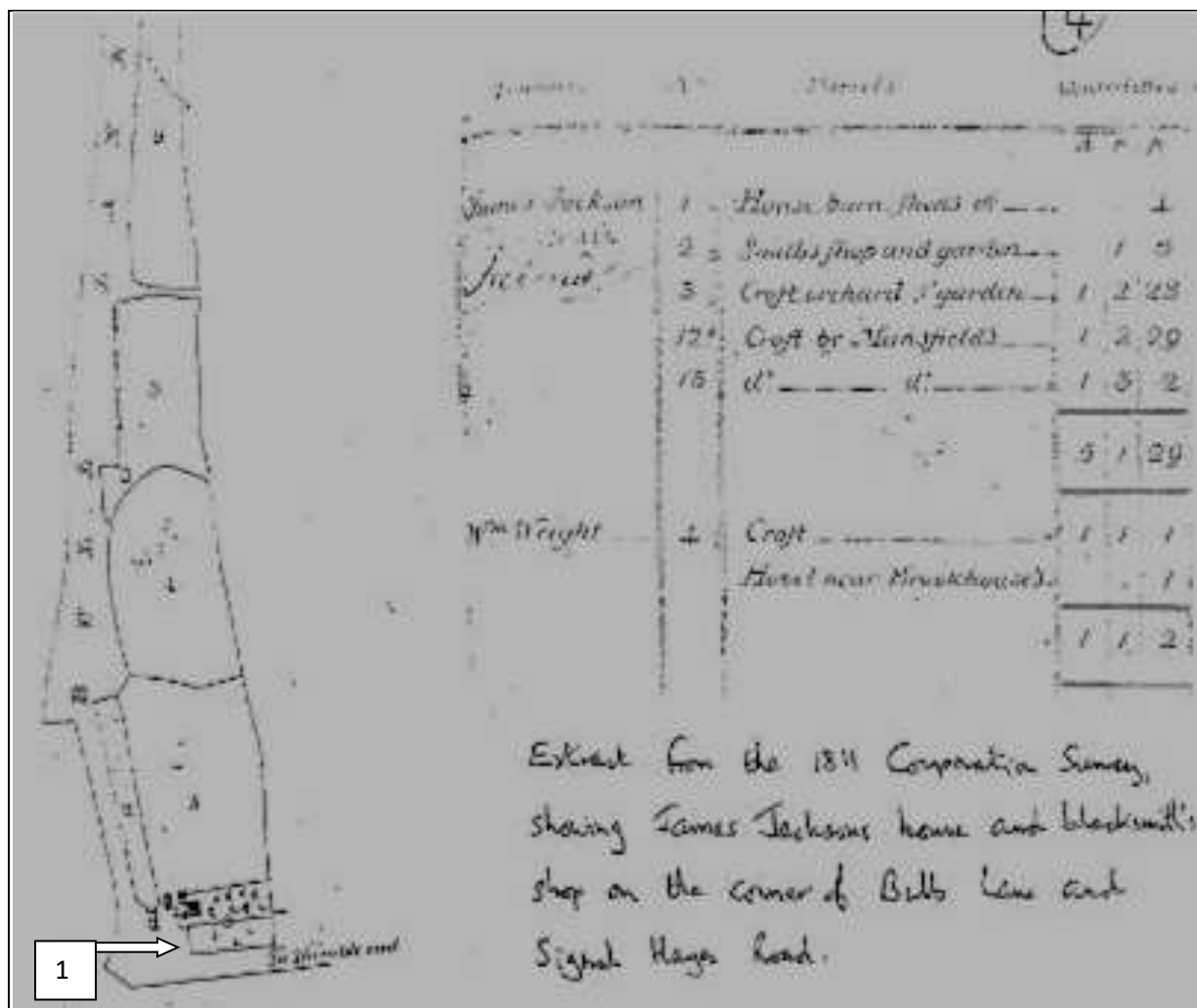
An enclosure road laid out across part of the former commons known as Spring Field.

## Croft

This small field was part of a small holding developed out of the commons, based on a cottage now Springfield Farm kennels, simply described as crofts. The 1824 survey shows a cottage in one corner, but this does not appear on any other map or in the rentals for cottages of that time.



Extract from *A Survey of Corporation Lands*, 1811 (Ref: QSH 31.85 Sutton Coldfield Library), showing the croft tenanted by John Mansfield, and a detail indicating the location of the cottage on the 1824 map.



Extract from the 1811 Corporation Survey (Ref QSH 31.85, Sutton Coldfield Reference Library), showing James Jackson's house and Blacksmith's shop on the corner of Bulls Lane and Signal Hays Road (No. 1 on the plan)

## Fox Hollies Road

Another enclosure road, crossing part of the common known as Signal Hayes Field. The old Bulls Lane can still be seen, now severed by the Sutton By-pass; it used to be very wide, and the 1811 survey shows how the verges had been taken in by cottagers

## Langley Hall

The site of a 12th century moated hall which may have been even grander than the Manor House itself. In the 13th century it belonged to the De Berefordes, who held high office under Edward I, II and III. Chatwin and Harcourt comment - "Edmund obtained a licence to crenellate his house at Langley as a protection in 1327; presumably therefore it was a substantial building, surrounded by a stone wall, within the moat, and probably had a few towers such as may be seen at Maxstoke." In the 17th century it belonged to the Pudseys (there is a fine Pudsey monument in Sutton Parish Church), but it was demolished by 1820 (when Sir Robert Peel was its owner) and parts of the moat and fish ponds are all that remain to be seen. The stable block and outbuildings of early 18th century date (attributed to Sir William Wilson) have now been converted into dwellings.

Janet Jordan  
April 2021

# OUR HIDDEN PAST

## Peddimore and Wigginshill

Reproduced from the notes Roger Lea made to accompany this walk c.1980/90s

### Minworth (not in Sutton)

The -worth Saxon names tend to be early, and indicate a settlement of the village green type. This and Curdworth are on the better-drained gravelly soils near the Tame.

### The Birmingham and Fazeley Canal

This opened 11th August 1789, although the problems caused by faulty workmanship (collapsing locks, leaking sides, unsafe bridges) were not finally resolved until 1822.

The stream forming the Sutton boundary required a very wide embankment to carry the canal across the shallow valley. To the south was the hamlet of Greaves, which seems to have shared an open field system with the hamlet of Wigginshill in medieval times.

Near Wigginshill Lane Bridge (note name-plate and grooving by hawsers) was a boat-yard. To the north is Hurst Green Farm, where earthworks and an adjacent field-name of "Moat Piece" are indicative of a moated site, perhaps a 12th or 13th century grant or assart.



Extract from *A plan of an intended navigable canal from Birmingham in the County of Warwick to Fazeley in the County of Stafford surveyed in the year 1763 by John Snape* (Warwick CRO, copy in Sutton Library).

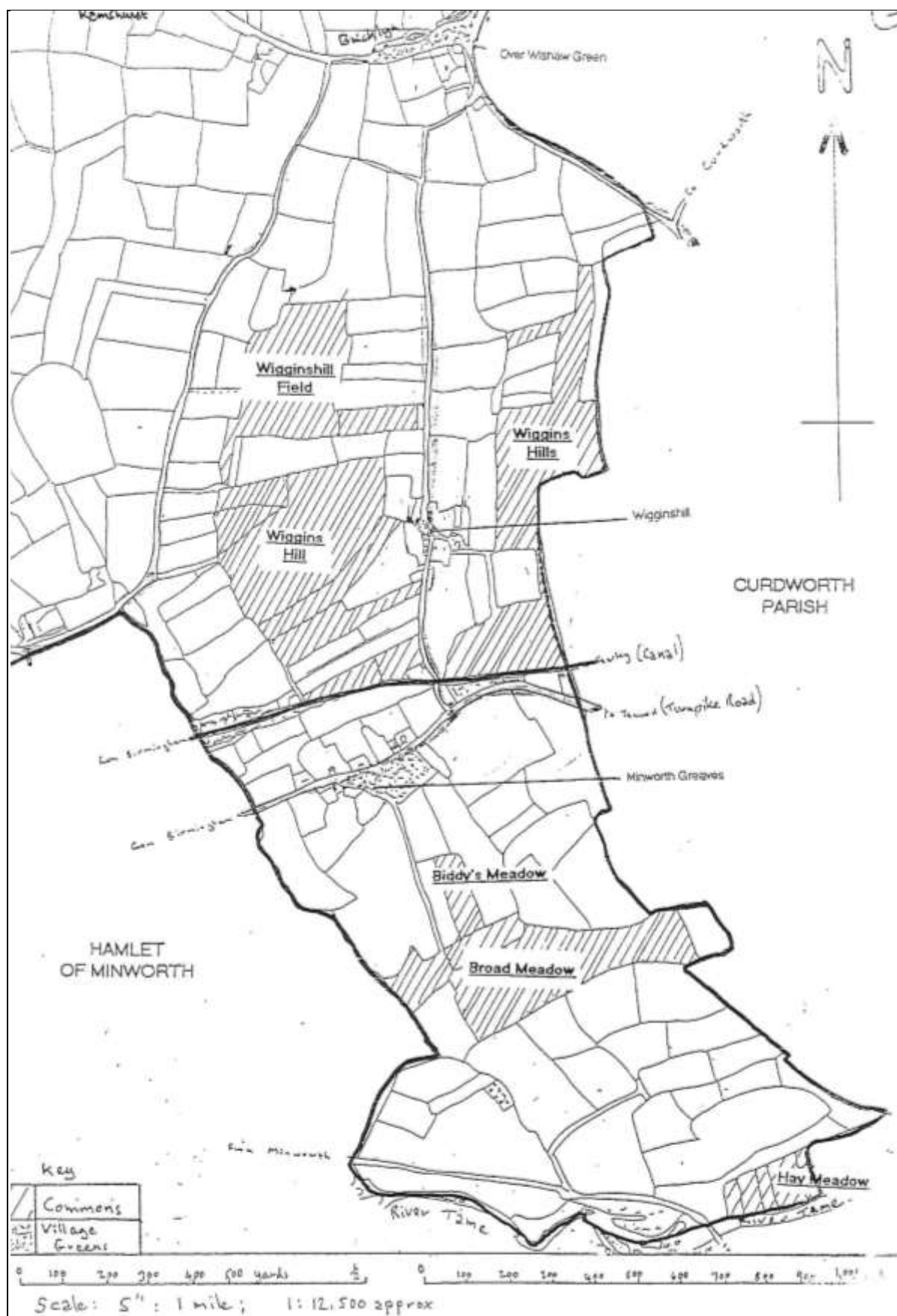




Wiginshill - Quaker meeting house 1910 (Burial ground was in front of the house) Sutton Photo W111



Wiginshill - the Old Barn 1910, Sutton Photo Reference Library W113.



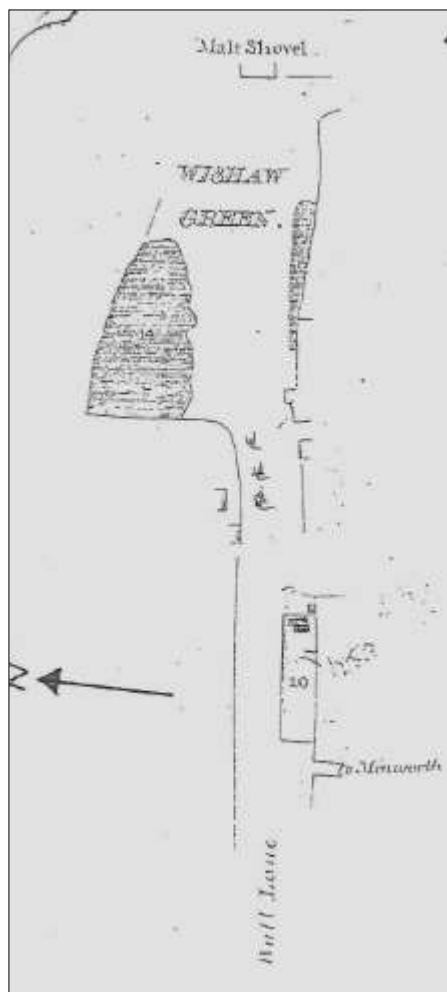
Base Map: Corn Rent Survey of 1824-5 for the Enclosure Commission

## Wigginshill

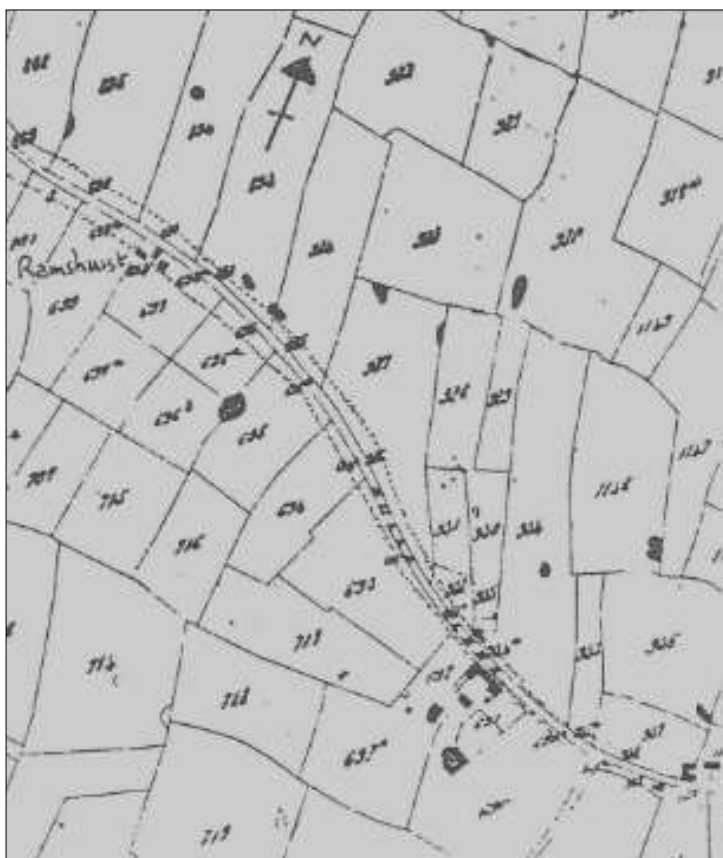
A settlement mentioned in Domesday, probably never much bigger than now, although a timber framed house was removed in 1910 and re-erected in Wylde Green Road (Wincelle). It had a field system, possibly shared with Greaves, and paid one third of its tithes to the rector of Curdworth. It is strategically placed on a spur overlooking the Tame valley, which would have been a preferred trackway onto the higher ground from the river. A Quaker meeting house was established here in the 18th century, long since converted into houses - the interesting collection of building is Grade II listed. This part of Sutton was outside the ring of commons, and was called "Walmley and Beyond the Woods". Not having any nearby commons for grazing, etc., it seems that parts of the old open fields were converted to commons when the strip system was abandoned, giving this part of Sutton its own separate character.

## Hermitage Farm

The small settlement of Over Green is mostly in Wishaw - when the Sutton boundary was defined in 1825 it was found to pass through the Cock Inn, so that the bar was partly in Sutton and partly in Wishaw, - "proceeding to the centre door of the Cock Public House occupied by John Sandon thence through the kitchen and house in an oblique direction southward and then passing by the back of a malthouse." The village green extended north of Bulls Lane, and included a sizeable marlpit; just to the north of that, Hermitage Farm is a moated site, although the building is mostly late 18th century/early 19th century.



1811 Survey of Corporation Lands, showing the eastern end of Bull's Lane. The Cock Inn was then the "Malt Shovel"



Bulls Lane, 1856 Valuation Survey, showing the former road verges incorporated into fields. Note the long fields with gently curving boundaries top left, and square fields top right.



## Bulls Lane

A charter of 1240 refers to Bulls Lane as a great road leading towards Langley, while the area to the North, referred to as Bur Hale, had recently been assarted. The deed refers to many other assarts, a practice theoretically illegal in Forests, whereby uncultivated land or "outwood" was ploughed up for crops and enclosed. It could be legalised by the owner of the forest or chase (the Earl of Warwick owned Sutton Chase), usually at a price, and the rights of local inhabitants to depasture their cattle in the outwood also had to be compensated. Some of the assarts north of Bulls Lane probably reclaimed land that had been cultivated in the past, and some of the fields may have re-used field boundaries of the Roman period, being characteristically square in shape; some of the other hedgerows describe the aratral curve characteristic of medieval ploughing. The road was redefined by the Enclosure Commissioner and the surplus verges were allotted, but signs of the old ditch and bank boundary of the earlier wide road can sometimes be seen. Ramshurst to the south is described in a deed of 1207 as being in Sutton Woods, indicating that this part of the Chase still had tree cover at that time.

## Fair View Farm and Cottages

The farm is a good example of vernacular architecture, showing signs of timber-framing, and different periods of construction. The converted barns were also timber-framed, and retain some original features. The row of cottages opposite were probably built for farm workers in the early 19th century when there was a general trend to improve rural housing.

*Quitclaim by Henry de Acellis to Thomas de Newburgh, earl of Warwick, of all the assarts made in Sutton Coldfield (Warw) before 1 November 1240, except for common pasture for his animals and cattle, and those of his heirs and his tenants, with free access to these and other assarts when the crops have been carried. The earl will make assarts only in certain places; he quitclaims to Henry, his heirs and their tenants 3 days' service annually due to him in his chase, and gives Henry an assart to hold at an annual rent of 20d.*

[3 November, 1240]

Hec est finalis conventio facta in crastino Animarum anno regni regis Henrici filii regis Johannis vicesimo quinto apud Coventre, inter Thomam comitem de Warr' et Henricum de Acellis, videlicet quod idem Henricus queta clamavit eidem comiti et heredibus suis omnia essarta que fecit et que facta sunt in Sutton', usque ad festum Omnium Sanctorum anno predicto: assarta que Willelmus de Ebristeston', Johannes le ferrur, Adam de Berhull', Simon de Bereford [et] Johannes Coket fecerunt in Breclinstre et in Blakemor, et que Simon alias Simonio fecit inter Langeley et Hanekeciestrete, et que Walterus Fundu, Ricardus le forester, Willelmus de Covintre, Robertus Cleed, Galfridus de Warneley [et] Johannes pistor fecerunt in Wyttemor. Ita quod predictus Henricus et heredes sui nichil decetero in predictis assartis exigere potuerunt, (nich<sup>e</sup>) nisi tantomodo communam ab<sup>i</sup> omnimodo animalia et pecora sua et tenentium suorum, exceptis capris quam habebunt, cum libero ingressu et egressu in eis et in aliis assartis in eadem villa, exceptis assartis Simonis filii Simonis, et Simonis de Bereford, cum fructes in eis crescentes inde fuerint amoti ut blada et fena. Et idem comes nullatenus essartabit vel assartari faciet a Wynler Desleye usque ad Ravenssley inter Wyshawe et ulteriorem costeram de (Hauer<sup>e</sup>) Hauksnest', nisi Langeley Knolles ad opus eiusdem comitis et heredum suorum et sex acras et dimidiam ad opus Margarete filie Willelmi Clement, et decem acras ad opus Willelmi del Hull', et quatuor acras et dimidiam ad opus Willelmi de parco, et sex acras ad opus Alexandri de Cruddeworth', et decem acras ad opus Nicholai de Cruddeworth', et quatuor acras ad opus Walteri de Bereford. Et pro hac queta clamatione, relaxavit predictus comes predicto Henrico et heredibus suis et tenentibus suis quolibet anno tres dies de servitio sibi debito in chacia sua, scilicet in unaquaque chacia sua unum die. Et dedit eidem Henrico totum essartum suum in Burbale juxta assartum Walteri de Bereford, sicut clauditur inter duas magnas vias versus Langeley. Habendum et tenendum eidem Henrico



## Fox Covert

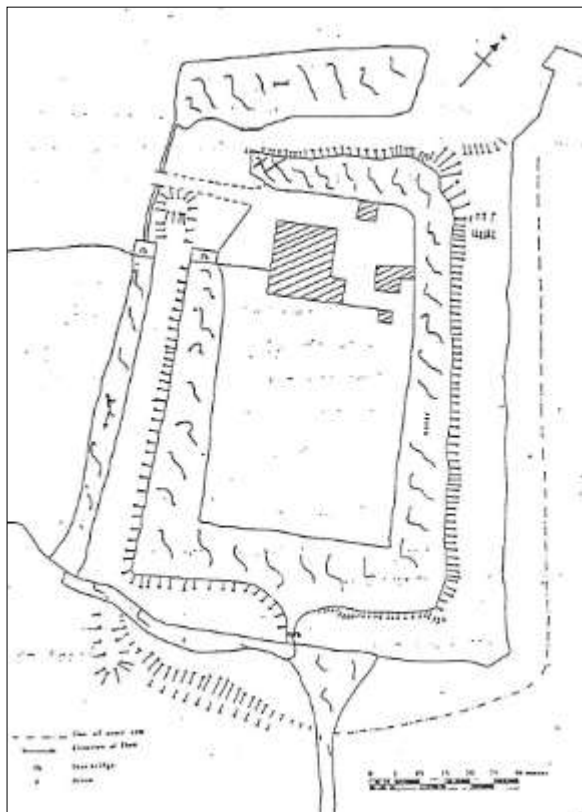
Recorded as ancient woodland, this is shown on the Corn Rent Map (1824) as Ash Pit Hill, probably not a site of early industry but referring to a pond (pit) with ash trees.

## Peddimore Hall and Moat

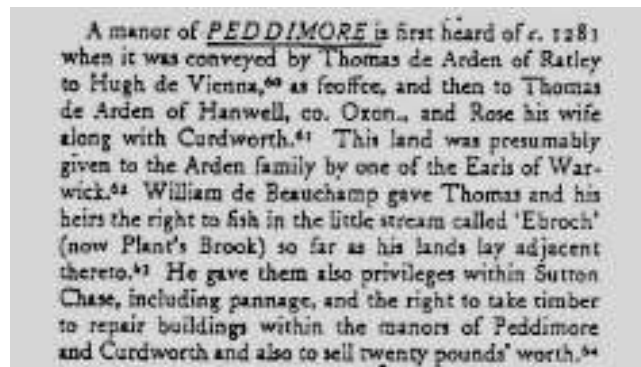
The Hall belonged to the Arden Family in the middle ages, probably dating from the 12th century, when moats were in fashion. The spoil excavated from the moat was used to build up a platform on which the house was built, with some outbuildings and yards so that the cattle could be accommodated within the moat if necessary. The outer moat may have served as a fish pond. It was ruinous in 1640 (Dugdale), the present house is probably c.1660, possibly by William Wilson. It was repaired or maybe substantially rebuilt early in the 19th century.

## Approach Road

This road has retained its uneven width (compare Bulls Lane). To the East of the road a 17th century survey of Peddimore lists three large fields, West Green Leaz, Moat Meadow, and East Green Leaz, of 7.5, 18.5, and 12 acres, the two outer ones being arable. Later field divisions are marked by a few surviving trees. Ridge and furrow can sometimes be distinguished in the small field near the house.



Plan of Peddimore Hall Moat - from *Peddimore Hall - A moated site in Sutton Coldfield* by Deborah Spolton 1977



*Victoria County History*, Vol. 4 p.240



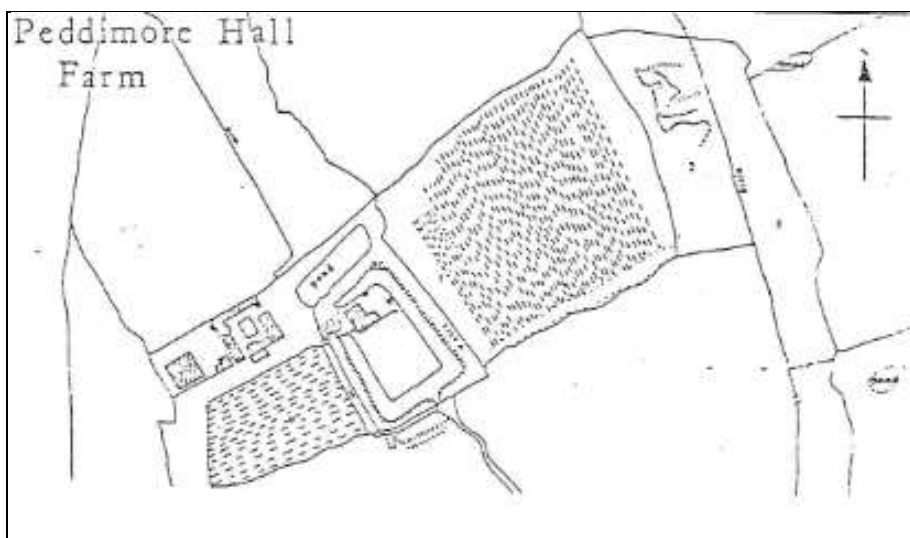
Extract from a map of Minworth, c. 1585 (public Record Office) (copy in Sutton Library)



Peddimore Hall c.1790, from the *Aylesford Collection*, Birmingham Reference Library.

And further, the earl granted to Thomas and Boese, and their heirs, liberty to make improvements of their waste within the said manors, according to the Sutton measure, to the extent of twenty acres only, and to enclose them according to the custom of the chase, so that does with their fawns might leap over the hedges; and that they might reduce the same land to tillage in several places, as they should think fit, to the least damage to the chase, and most advantage to themselves; saving to the commoners their common of pasture when the corn was off; and lastly, that the said Thomas and his heirs might peaceably hold in and enjoy four acres and half of the waste from which they had received the crop before this date, which was at Minworth, 1287.

Bracken, *Forest and Chase of Sutton Coldfield*, 1860



Spolton, 1977 - showing ridge & furrow ploughing patterns.

Janet Jordan  
April 2021

# OUR HIDDEN PAST

## Wyndley Manor and Maney

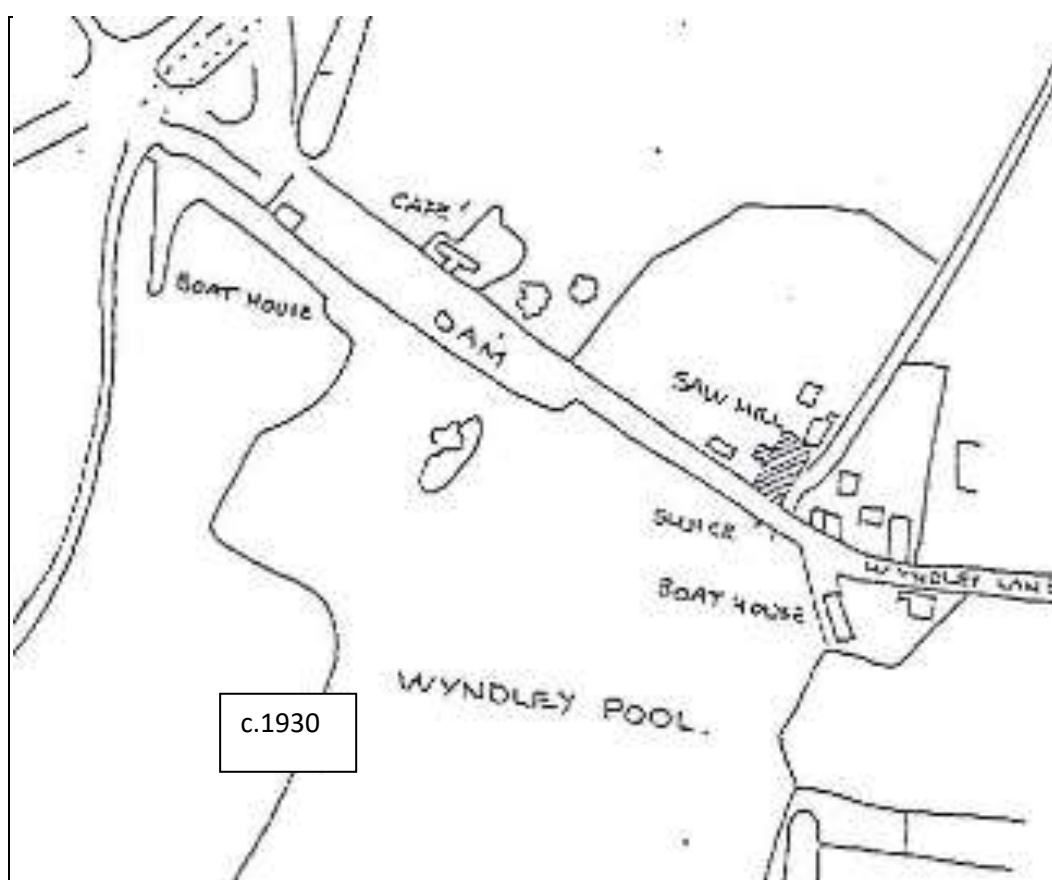
Reproduced from the notes Roger Lea made to accompany this walk c.1980/90s

### WyndleyPool Dam

*Leland's Itinerary, c.1540.* "Some say Richard Beauchampe Erle of Warwike in Henry V dayes made five goodly pool there with the great and costly heddes of stone; the Mille Poole, Crosse Poole, Wyndle Poole, Kopers Poole, Bracebridge Poole, all five in the parke." The pool may have been made earlier than this, and may have been to stock fish rather than to drive a mill.

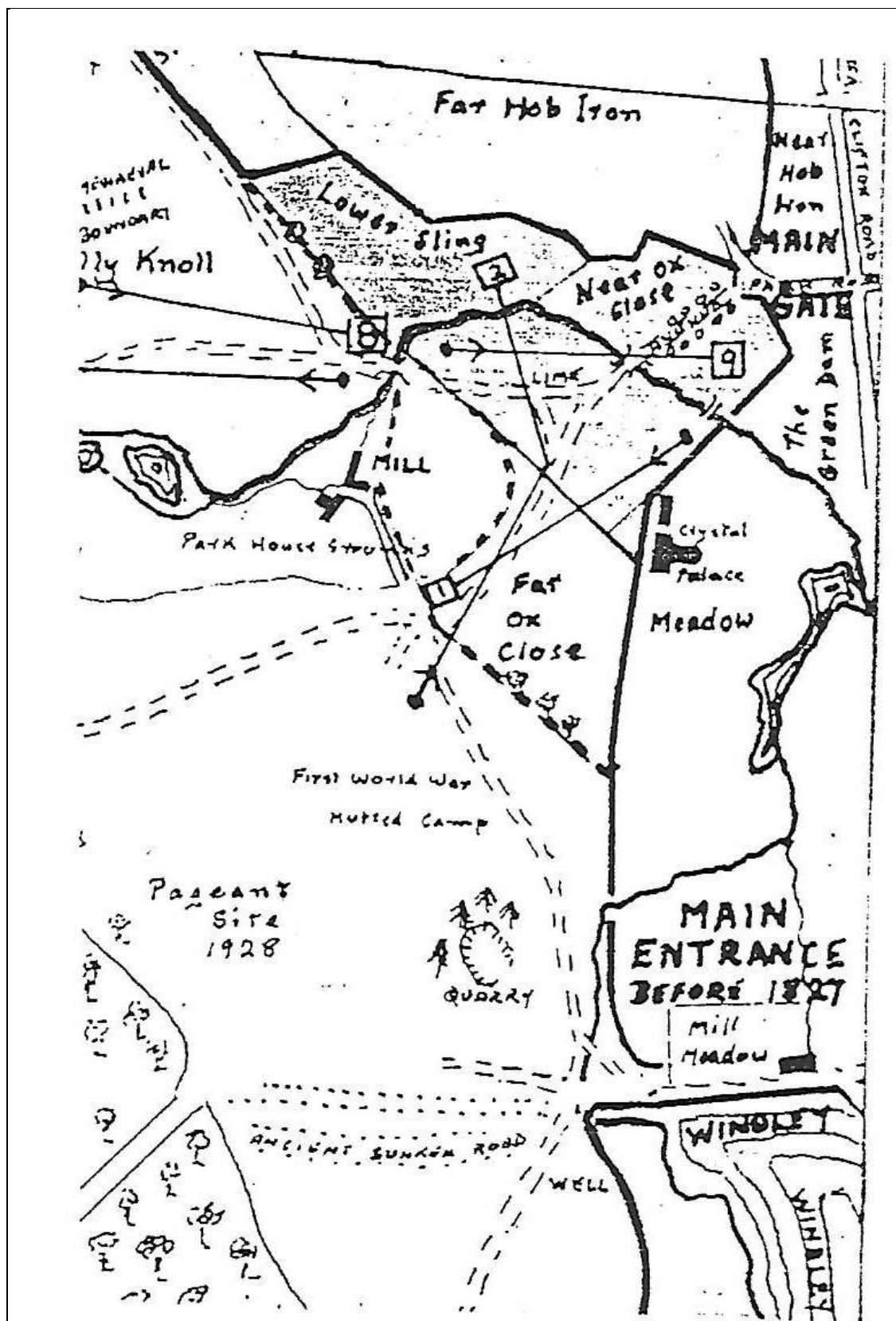
A mill is first mentioned in 1576. The dam was broken by a freak storm and flash flood in 1668. In the early 18th century the mill was a blade mill, and in 1778 there were two mills at Wyndley. By 1840 it was a saw mill.

Wyndley dam was formerly the main entrance to the Park from Sutton, until in 1826 a number of fields at Meadow Platt were added to the park and Park Road was built to give access at Town Gate.



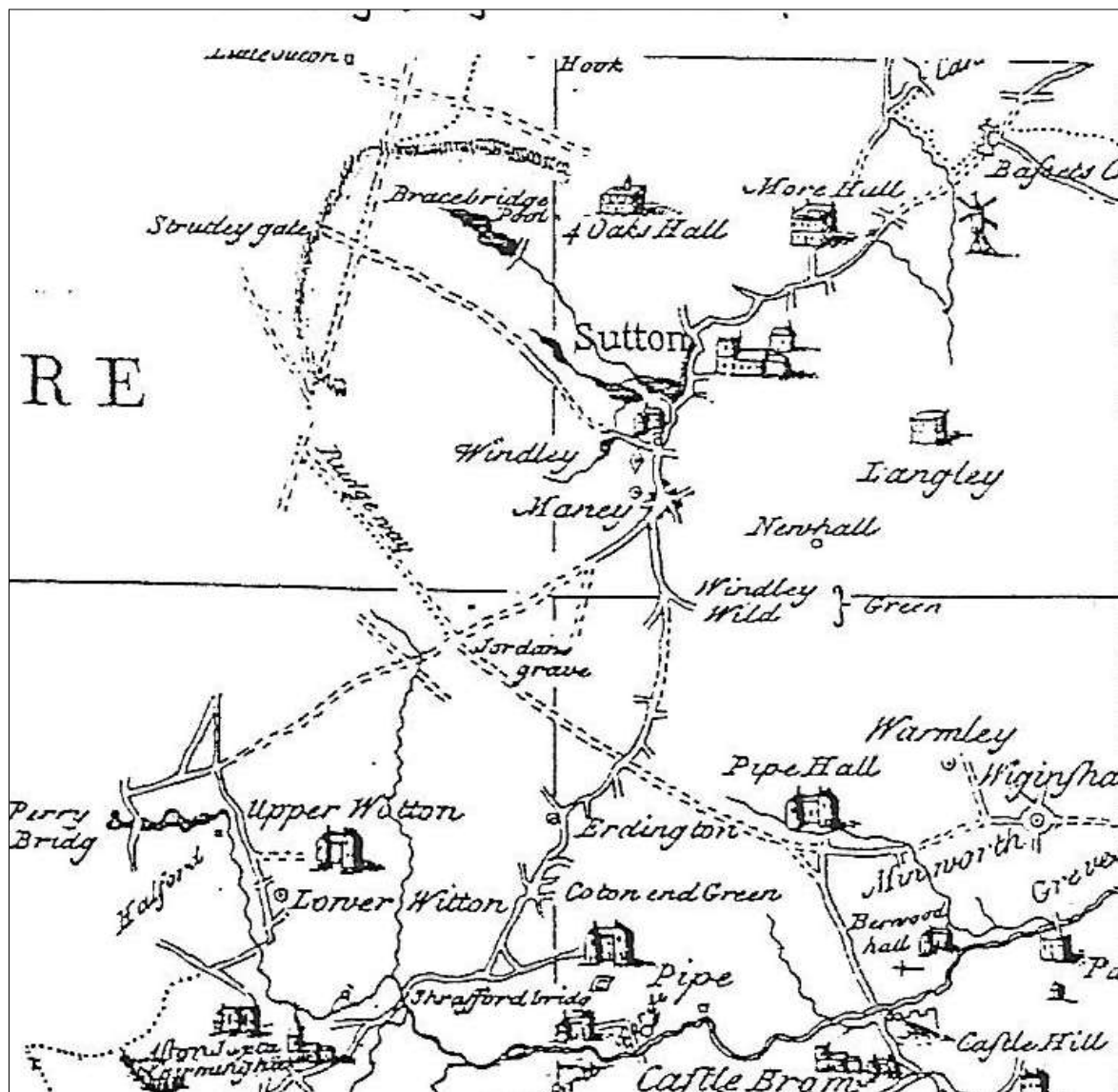
K.J. Williams - Wyndley Water Mill





N.G. Evans. A version of this map is published in *Scenes from Sutton's Past*  
 Note the fields (named 'New Ox Close', etc.) separating park from town. The numbers refer to holes in Sutton's first golf course.





From *A Map of Hemlingford Hundred in 1725* by Hen Beighton FRS 1729  
in Dugdale, *Antiquities of Warwickshire*, 1730 ed.

## Inside the Park

The landscape in the park possibly gives an idea of the appearance of the pre-conquest landscape of much of the surrounding area, with managed woodland and wood-pasture predominating - if left ungrazed, trees would soon cover the whole of it.

Maps of Warwickshire of the early eighteenth century by Beighton and Jeffreys show a road through the Park from Wyndley to Streetly.

## Holly Hurst

The ditch and bank boundaries plotted by Mike Hodder give a possible explanation of Sutton Park; the boundaries enclosing Holly Hurst and Wyndley Pool (probably extending to include the Manor) being the twelfth century deer park, while the other boundaries may relate to the extent of the park when it was leased to Sir Ralph Bracebridge in the 15th century, the woods were enclosed with ditches and banks by Bishop Vesey c. 1530. Bishop Vesey also enclosed the whole park with

ditches and Banks. timber and wood were an important resource in the past, and woodland was already being carefully managed and conserved at the time of the Norman Conquest.

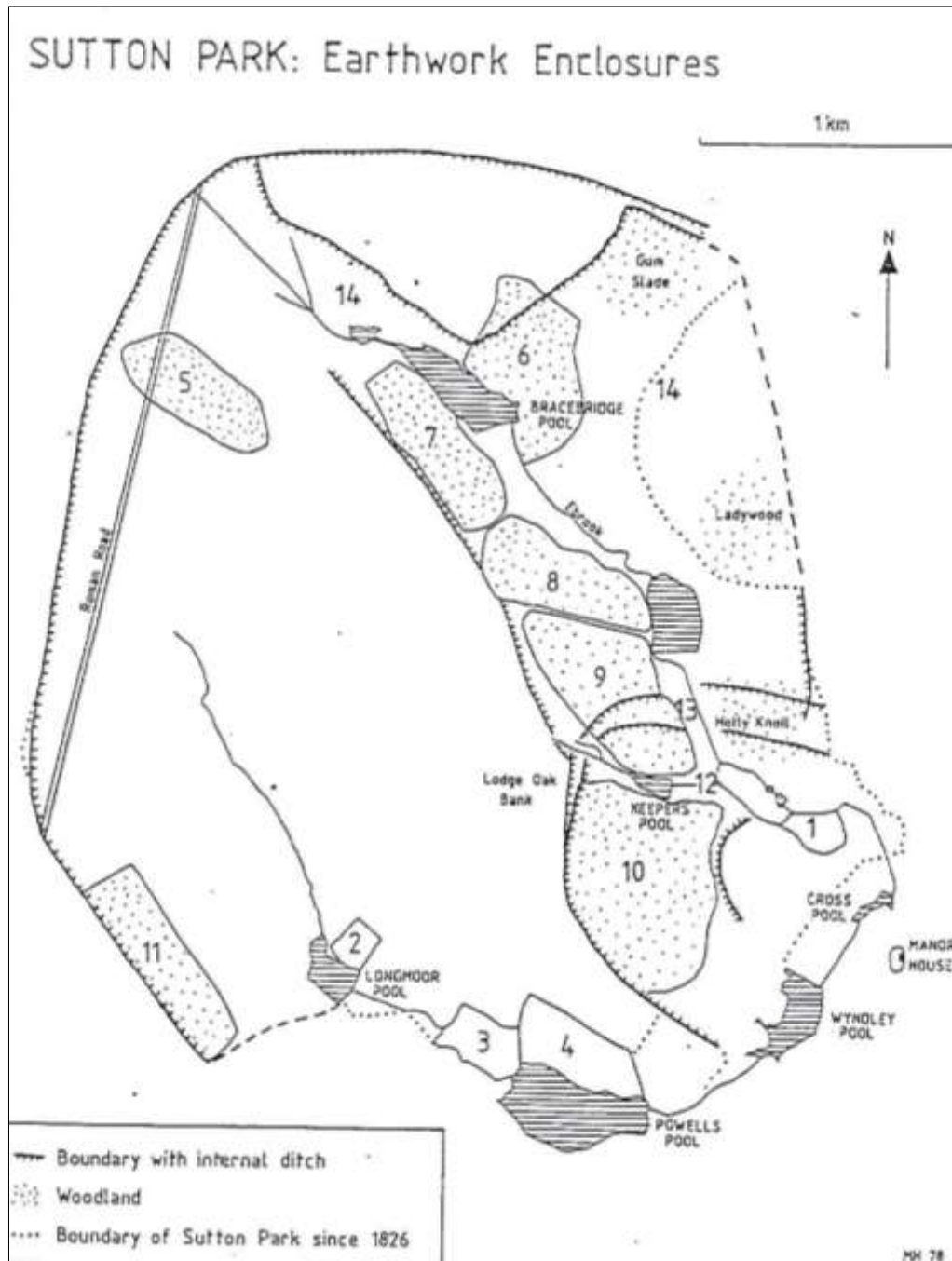


Fig. 5 Sutton Park: position of enclosures. The Woodland enclosures are: 5 Streetly Wood: 6, Pool Hollies: 7, Darnel Hurst: 8, Upper Nut Hurst: 9, Lower Nut Hurst: 10, Holly Hurst: 11, Westwood Coppice

Plan by Mike Hodder, 1978.

The Park boundary in 1530 probably continued the curving line at Banners Gate south of Monmouth Drive to Wyndley Pool (see article by N.G. Evans in *Scenes from Sutton's Past*)

## **Pageant Site**

Traces of the 1928 Pageant and the various encampments in the two world wars could easily be mistaken for prehistoric features. Note the route of the old road across the park and the commemorative planting of avenues of trees.

## **Park House**

The site of a blade mill from at least 1597, although the first mill was demolished and a new one built. Before 1826 it was necessary to approach the mill from Wyndley Gate, and the loaded wagons and packhorses gouged out a sunken road. The mill pool may have been supplied by a leat similar to the one at New Hall Mill rather than a large pool like Wyndley; the flume led under the cottages to join the E Brook.

## **Bridge over the E Brook**

From here some of the oak trees which are all that remain of the hedges of the fields added to the park in 1826 can be seen. In spite of extensive efforts to improve drainage, the brookside is still swampy in places.

## **The Green Dam**

Norman Evans speculates that this was made to divert the E Brook away from the former pool after the 1668 storm, when the town Pool was drained, to improve the meadows. However, it could be a more ancient feature. The name "Wyndley" could be associated with an ancient saltway, which may have been routed from Droitwich through Salford Bridge and on to Lichfield and Tamworth. This may have been an early causeway across the swampy valley, superseded by The Parade when the Town Mill was established and the Lord of the Manor made his deer park. The Parade could be a medieval by-pass. There was a footpath along here from Great Sutton to the Horse and Jockey Inn in the 18th century.

## **Cross Pool**

This is not the Cross Pool of Leland, but an ornamental pool made when this area was set out as the Promenade Gardens in the 12860's - however, it may be on the site of the earlier pool.

## **Wyndley Lane**

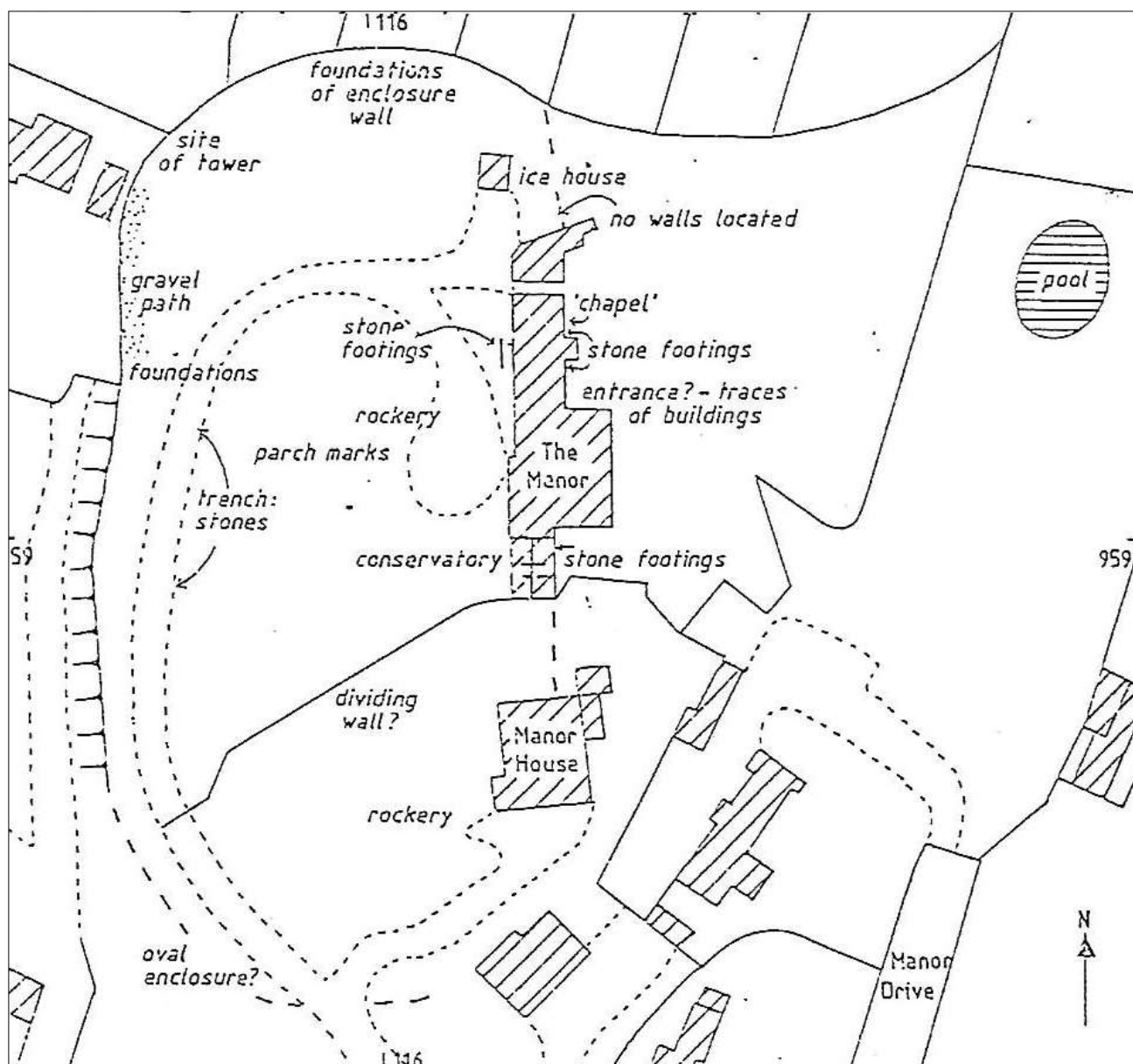
Here is exposed the sandstone of the lower Keuper period of the Triassic age, a soft stone unsuitable for building but being an excellent aquifer, it occurs in a broad band from Mere Green to Bromsgrove. Wyndley Lane has cut through it in one direction but in the other direction our speculative salt way could have exposed it. Wyndley Lane provided access to the deer park from the Manor, and later to Sutton Park from Sutton, and linked with the ancient route through the park to Streetly.

## **Manor site**

The present building may be as late as 1820. There is speculation that there was a hunting lodge or other important building on this site as early as the seventh century, but there is no documentary or archaeological evidence until the 11th century, when the Chapel of St Blaize seems to have been built where the north end of the present house is. The manor house was probably to the south of

this, extended further with a handsome timber hall in the 15th century. The whole probably received a facelift in the fourteenth century as a number of ceramic floor-tiles from that date have been found. The manor had a curtain wall with at least one tower and a fortified gateway, the large oval shape of this enclosure, about 80 metres by 50 metres, being visible to Miss Bracken when she visited the site in the 1850's. It had fallen into disrepair by 1470 and was demolished in the 1520's, the timber being re-used at Bradgate Hall in Leics. and much of the stone being incorporated in local structures such as Curdworth Bridge and the old tythe barn.

The site is a dominating one, commanding views over the (deer) park, and was defensible on three sides; it seems to relate to Maney rather than to Sutton



Plan of the Manor site by Mike Hodder, 1977

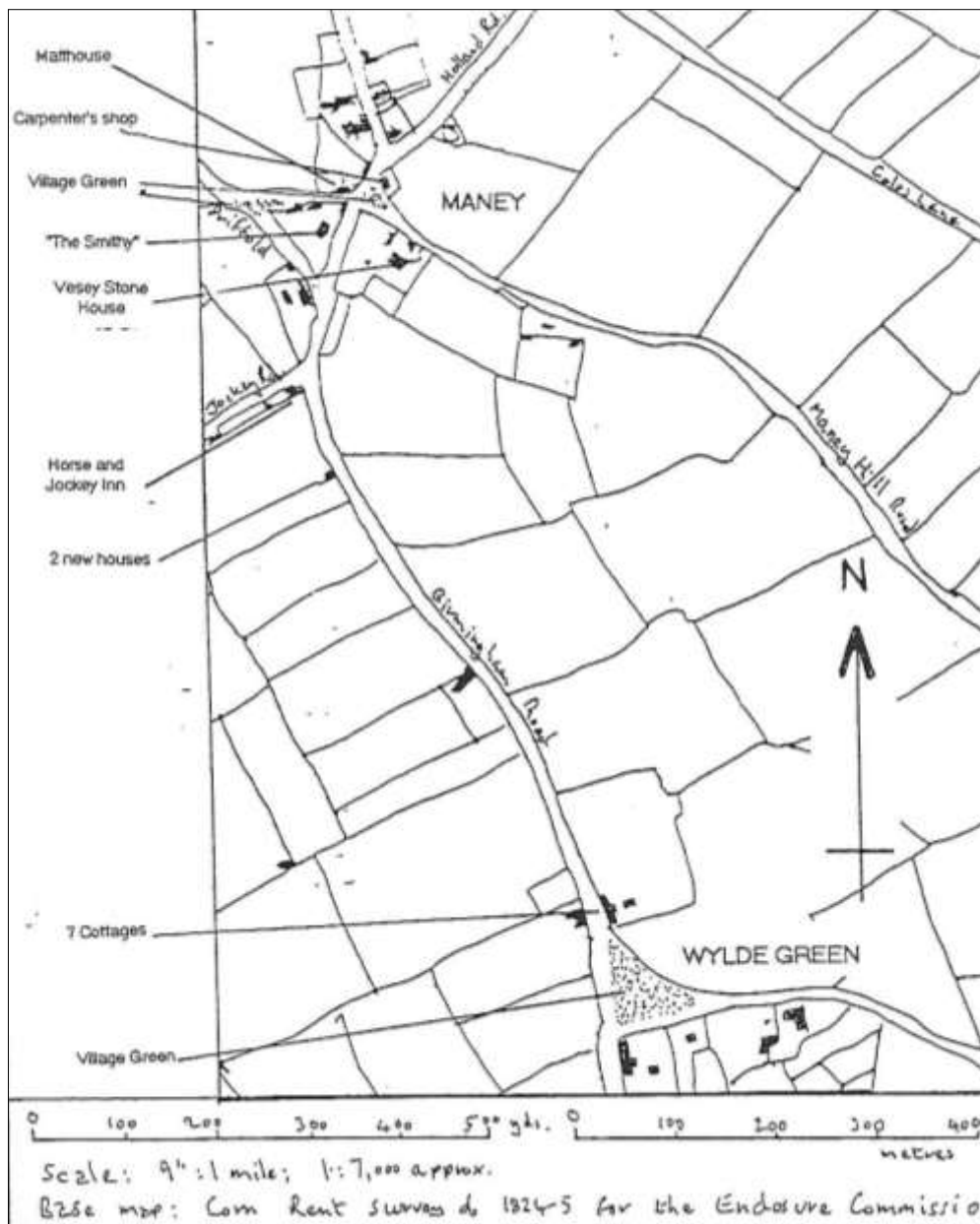


## Smithy

The medieval village of Maney had a field system mainly to the south and east, with meadows to the north-east. It probably had a sizeable green extending from the present Bodington Gardens to the Odeon and including the site of the Stone House; the Smithy and the Stone house were probably built on this green in the 15th and 16th centuries, after the decline of the feudal system and the introduction of new farming methods. The Smithy has a cruck frame at one end with brick nogging, and its stone wall may be later - compare with the Stone House opposite.

## Digby Road

If there was a salt way, where would its course have been here?



Maney in 1824, R. Lea 1996. One of the medieval Open Fields, "Middle Maney Field" lay between Coles Lane and Maney Hill Road

Janet Jordan  
April 2021