

Searching for the site of the Old Rectory, Sutton Coldfield (Prior to 1701)

Until a few years ago, there had never been any question amongst Sutton Historians as to the whereabouts of the site of the Old Rectory, prior to 1701, which was the date when Reverend John Riland decided that he would like a new Parsonage built in today's Rectory Park. This particular building was demolished in 1935/6.

For almost 200 years, people accepted that the buildings we know as No. 1-5 Coleshill Street, which overlook the Vesey Gardens in front of Holy Trinity Parish Church, was the Old Rectory. Some old maps depict it there facing a former row of houses and pubs.

This belief seems primarily to have been instigated by a comment made by the respected Sutton historian, Agnes Bracken, on page 80 of her book 'History of the Forest and Chase of Sutton Coldfield', 1860¹. Here, she quoted from an inventory in an old terrier of 1612 which listed "a parsonage house, with barns, stables, oxhouses, all in good repair", to which she added in brackets "(supposed to have been the house and buildings now possessed and occupied by V. Holbeche, esq)".



1-5 Coleshill Street, overlooking Vesey Gardens¹

Vincent Holbeche did then live at No 1-5 Coleshill Street in the mid-1800s.

On page 123 of her book, Agnes Bracken also gave details of a certificate of 1671 showing the value of estates in the parish. It stated that Mr William Watson, rector, was assessed for the parsonage at the highest value figure for Sutton Coldfield of £120, on a par with Langley Hall. New Hall was assessed at £113 and one can see that No. 1-5 Coleshill Street is not in that category. It is also unlikely that these houses were even built in 1671.

To compound matters, when Rev. W.K. Riland Bedford, MA. wrote his book "Three Hundred Years of a Family Living, being a History of the Rilands of Sutton Coldfield", 1889², on page 19 and perhaps under the influence of Agnes Bracken's supposition he referred to this figure of £120 in the 1671 valuation of the parish, assuming it applied to the "Rectory House ... in the main street of the little town close to the Church, having a good garden towards the east, abutting on to pleasant pasture fields".

These long-held beliefs, however, were finally dispelled by the discovery in 2011 by George Demidowicz, a former Conservation Officer for Coventry and Birmingham, who had been investigating the history of buildings in the Sutton Coldfield High Street Conservation Area.

He had found documents showing the property to have been known as "The Swan" in 1700 and was privately owned, the Rectory at the time being somewhere near Rectory Park. The Coleshill Street house was purchased in the eighteenth century by the then Rector, R.B. Riland, and was clearly shown on a handsome plan drawn by the local surveyor, John Snape.



Extract from Snape's 1763 Survey of the Property of Mary Riland²

George remarked that this document entitled “Snape’s 1763 Survey of the Property of Mary Riland”, was thought to be missing, but he had come across it in the archives.³

It is well known that a new Rectory was built in Rectory Park in 1701 by Rev. John Riland. This was pulled down in 1936, but the site of any former building prior to 1701 has still been somewhat of a mystery.



The 1701 Rectory, Rectory Park³

However, there seems to be a straightforward explanation, which can be shown using the following Glebe Terriers for 1612⁴, 1698⁵ and 1705⁶. These documents were prepared at the bishops’ visitations and form a survey of the sources of the rector’s income, giving details of landholdings, etc. Unfortunately, they give little details of the parsonage houses.

When one compares the field names both before and after the 1701 Rectory was built, there appears to be a remarkable similarity in these names and it seems highly likely that the Old Rectory was knocked down and replaced by the new one on the original site of the Old Rectory.

Perhaps one day, archaeology may provide evidence of this!

N.B. A base map dated 1761, for comparison, taken from Rev. W.K. Riland Bedford’s book “Three Hundred Years of a Family Living, being a History of the Rilands of Sutton Coldfield”, 1889, is included at the end of the article.²

Janet Jordan
June 2026

Transcript of Terrier 1612

Extracted from the Registry of the Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry

*A trew Terrier or Inventorie of the Glebe Landes and Meadowes
belonging unto the Personage of Sutton Coldfylde*

There is a Personage house with Barnes Stables Oxehouses and other buildings all in good repair and some newly built.

There are two crtyards and two gardeins

There are six closes appteyning, viz

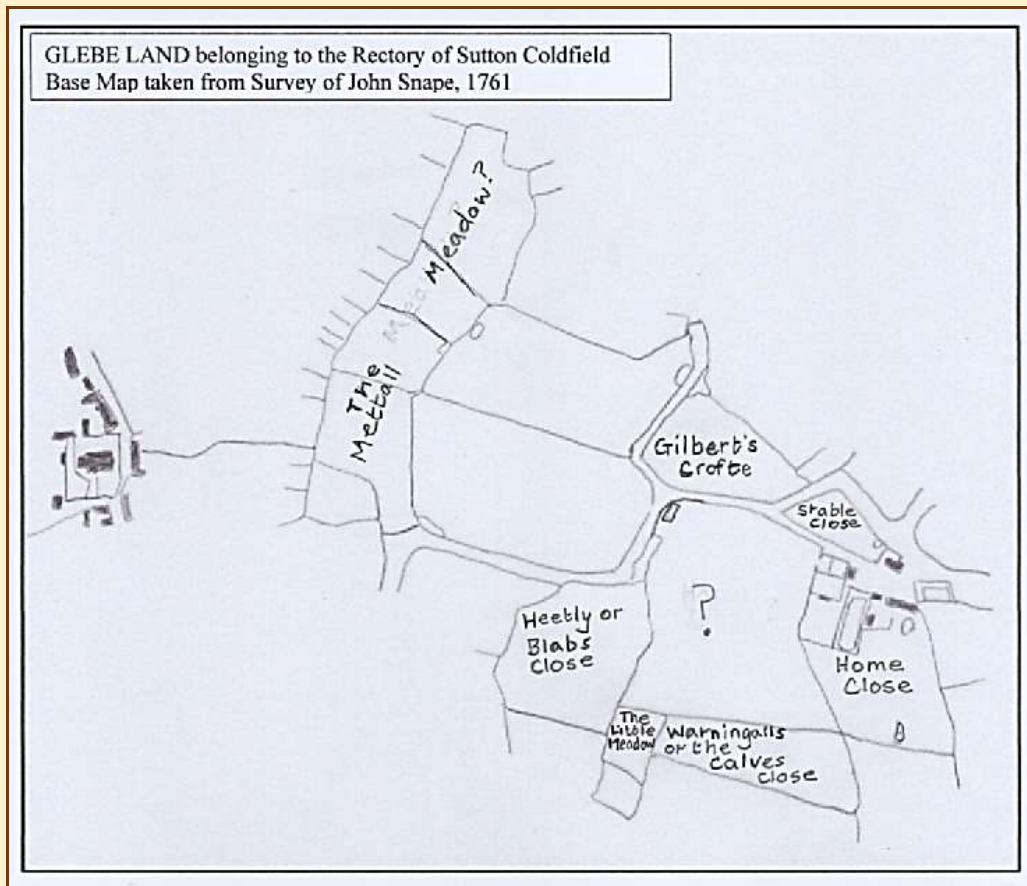
*One called the **Home Close**, another called the **Stable Close**, the third **Heetly or the Blabs Close**, the fourth **Warningalls or the Calves Close**, the fifth **Gilberts Crofts**, the Sixth the **Mettall**.*

*There are two meadowes, the one a **little Meadowe** lyeing between the Calves Close and the Blabs Close, the other lyeing between the Mettall and certaine of the Towne backsides.*

There is also one dole of meadowing lyeing in Water Orton Meadowes between Robt. Taverners dole and the three Swaths of Thoms Pearsons of Curdworth –

All the Lands and Meadowes (excepting the dole) doe lye together separted onely by one lane leading from the Comon belonging to Sutton called the Blabs towards Middleton – Roger Eliot Rector

Suggested position of above mentioned closes in 1612



Transcript of Terrier 1698

Extracted from the Registry of the Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry

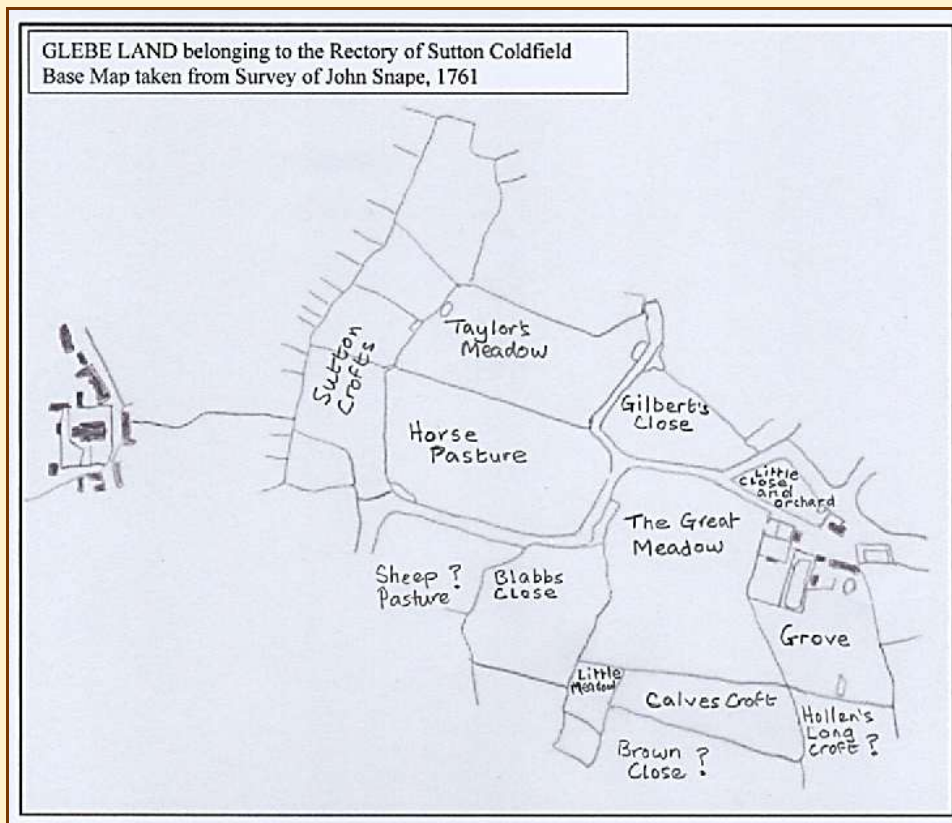
A Terrier of the House Outhouses Barnes Gleab lands Tyths and other profits belonging to the Rector of the Rectory and Parish Church of Sutton Coldfield in the County of Warwick and Diocess of Lichfield and Coventry and also what wages belong to the Clerk of the s^d parish Church made by Mr John Ryland Rector and Thomas Gold and John Veasey Churchwardens according to a Book of Articles given them by the R^t Reverend Father in God W^m L^d B^p of the Diocess of Coventry & Lichfield at his Visitation held in the parish Church of Coleshill in the s^d County of Warwick the fourth day of August Anno Domini 1698 and exhibited into the s^d Bp^s Consistory in the Cathedrall Church of Lich. the seventeenth day of January Anno Domini juxta Computaconem Ecclesia Anglianae 1698 as followeth viz:-

Impris The Dwelling house and outhouses belonging to the s^d Rectory contain twenty five bays of building.

The Names of the Meadows and Closes called the Glebe Lands belonging to the s^d Rectory as followeth.

Item **Great Meadow** containeing eight acres and three roods, **Little Meadow** one acre and three roods, **Brown Close** nine acres, **Little Close and Orchard** two acres and three roods, **Blabbs Close** seven acres and one rood, **Hors Pasture** ten acres and three roods, **Gilbert's Close** four acres and two roodes, **Grove** four acres and two roodes, **Calves Croft** three acres and three roodes, **Sheep Pasture** eight acres and two roods. y^e **Horse Pasture** is bounded on y^e W by Sutton Crofts .N. by Taylor's Meadow, y^e **Grove** is bounded by **Hollens Long Croft**, y^e other bound upon one another.

Suggested position of above mentioned closes in 1698



Transcript of Terrier 1705

(N.B. The new Rectory was built in 1701 by Rev^d John Riland)

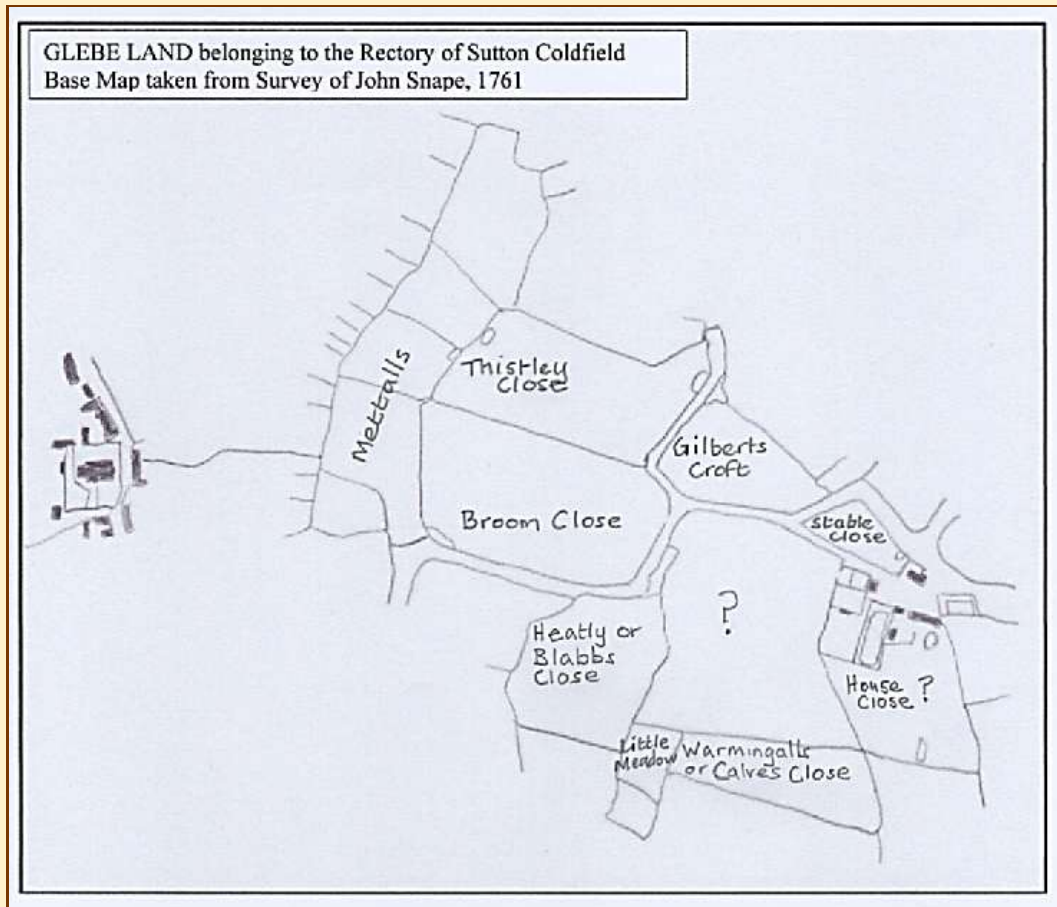
Extracted from the Registry of the Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry

A true Inventory or Terrier of y^e Glebe Lands & Meadows belonging to y^e Parsonage of Sutton Coldfield, Apr.20:1705

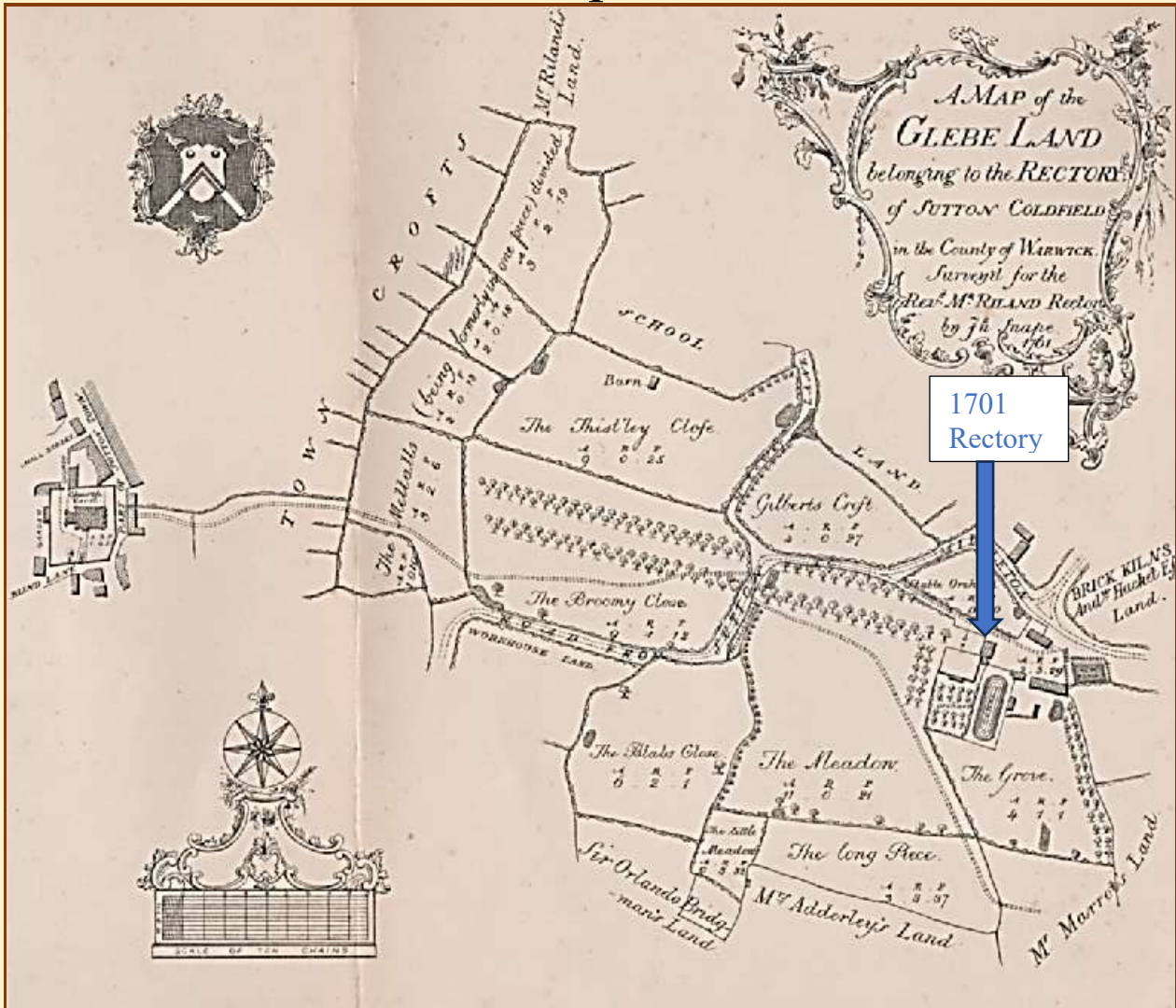
*There is a Parsonage house, all new built, two Stables and a Chamber over them two bayes of Barning & a Coach house all new built wth brick and cover'de with Tyles, there are twelve more Bayes of Barnes w^{ch} are most of the them new built wth Bricks up to the Wall plates. There are these following closes appteyning viz. One called the **House Close** another call'd **Stable Close** ye third call'd **Heatly or ye Blabbs Close** ye fourth **Warmingalls or y^e Calves Close** the fifth **Gilberts Croft**, y^e sixth y^e **Mettalls** y^e 7th the **Broom Close** y^e 8th y^e **Thistly Close** y^e 9th y^e **Little Meadow**. There is one dole of meadowing lying in Water Orton Meadow between a dole w^{ch} was formerly Robt Tavernors & y^e 3 Swaths of Thomas Pearsons of Cudworth y^e s^d Dole is now in y^e possession of Mr Edw Homer. All the Glebe Lands (excepting the Dole lye together, seperated only by one Lane leading from y^e Common belonging to Sutton call'd y^e Blabbs, towards Middleton*

*John Riland, Rect^r, Thomas Abell and Thomas Martin, Churchwardens
Exam'd 11th July 1822, Wm. Mott D. Reg.*

Suggested position of above mentioned closes in 1705



A Map of the Glebe Land belonging to the Rectory of Sutton Coldfield in the County of Warwick. Surveyed for the Rev^d M^r Riland, Rector by John Snape, 1761.



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<i>The Mettalls.</i>	12 1 26
<i>The Thistley Clofe.</i>	9 0 25
<i>The Broomy Clofe.</i>	9 1 12
<i>The Blais Clofe.</i>	6 2 1
<i>The Meadows.</i>	11 0 21
<i>The little Meadows.</i>	0 3 32
<i>The long Piece.</i>	3 3 37
<i>The Grove.</i>	4 7 1
<i>The Stable Orchard.</i>	1 0 30
<i>The Gilberts Croft.</i>	4 0 27
<i>The Orchard, Garden Yard, Building Canal, &c.</i>	2 3 39
<i>The Church Yard.</i>	1 0 23
<i>Area 67 0 24</i>	

Map taken from
THREE HUNDRED YEARS
of a
FAMILY LIVING
being a history of the
RILANDS OF SUTTON COLDFIELD
by the
REV. W.K. RILAND BEDFORD, M.A.

1889



Sources:

- 1 Agnes Bracken, *History of the Forest and Chase of Sutton Coldfield*, 1860, Sutton Coldfield Library (Ref: QSH 97SUT), now at Birmingham Archives being re-catalogued.
- 2 Rev. WK Riland Bedford, *Three Hundred Years of a Family Living*, Cornish Brothers, 1889, Sutton Coldfield Library (Ref: SH78.1RIL), now at Birmingham Archives being re-catalogued.
- 3 www.sclhrg.org.uk/newsletters and ancillary papers, page 2, 29th November 2011
- 4 Photocopy of Transcript originally at Sutton Coldfield Library (Reference unknown). Now at Birmingham Archives being re-catalogued.
- 5 Photocopy of a Transcript originally at Sutton Coldfield Library, (Ref: QSH 97SUT). Now at Birmingham Archives (Ref: MS3069/13/1/1686)
- 6 Photocopy of a Transcript originally at Sutton Coldfield Library (Reference unknown). Now at Birmingham Archives being re-catalogued.

Illustrations

- 1 Photograph, Keith Jordan, 1997
- 2 www.sclhrg.org.uk, History Spot, The Holbeche Swan
- 3 Taken from *Newspaper cuttings, Sutton Coldfield, Vol 7, 1929-1942*, Birmingham Mail 24.06.1936, originally at Sutton Coldfield Library and now at Birmingham Archives, being re-catalogued.