

LANDOWNERSHIP

Landownership in the parish was dominated by the manor of Norton, but there were also the rectorial manor of Wooney and small estates and freeholds. In 1489 Richard Burton of Taunton left lands and tenements in Norton for the use of his wife.¹ The priory of Taunton held demesne lands in the parish until 1549,² and land belonged to the parish of St Mary Magdalene in Taunton.³ It has been asserted that there was a manor of Norton Veel, separate to the principal manor of Norton, but there is no conclusive evidence for such a manor in the parish.⁴

By the time of the Domesday survey the bishops of Winchester held substantial estates in and around Taunton. Norton Fitzwarren was part of those estates in the Liberty or Outfaring, held indirectly of the bishop, but still subject to certain dues and services.⁵ Norton rendered services to the bishop of Winchester in 1194–5⁶ and until 1342–3, but after that date the payment of dues appears to have lapsed.⁷ Much of the Outfaring land was granted away by bishops during the medieval period and became lay property but Norton was probably alienated like Bradford on Tone to the Count of Mortain before 1086.⁸

NORTON MANOR

Norton may have been among the lands in Somerset granted in 882 by Alfred, king of the Saxons, to his thegn Æthelstan.⁹ In 1066 Norton Fitzwarren was held by Osmund, and it paid

¹ Weaver, *Som. Med. Wills*, 280–2.

² *Cal. Pat.* 1549–51, 53.

³ *Cal. Pat.* 1580–2, 258.

⁴ Collinson, *History of Somerset*, III, 271–2; E. Jerboul, ‘The Valley of the Tone’, *A General Account of West Somerset* (1873), 67.

⁵ *Domesday*, 234; Gathercole, *Archaeological Assessment of Taunton*, 2; *VCH Som.* I. 406.

⁶ *Placit. in Domo Capit. Abbrev.* 4.

⁷ *Feudal Aids*, IV, 335; Dickinson, *Kirby’s Quest Som.*, 78; *Glos. Archives*, MF1418 (Berkeley Castle Muniments BCM/A/3/14/1 (GAR386)).

⁸ T. Hunt, *The Medieval Customs of Taunton Manor* (*Som. Rec. Soc.* 66), xi; Gathercole, *Archaeological Assessment of Taunton*, 2–3.

⁹ H. P. R. Finberg, *The Early Charters of Wessex* (Leicester, 1964), 127; G. B. Grundy, ‘The Saxon charters of Somerset’, *PSANHS* 77, appendix 142–9.

geld for 5 hides. By 1086 it was part of the estates of the Count of Mortain and was held by Alvred.¹⁰ This Alvred was Aluredus Pincerna, Alured or Alfred the Butler, the wealthiest of the Count of Mortain's tenants, with most of his land being held in south-west England.¹¹ His estate at Chiselborough, and presumably that of Norton, descended through the family to his great-grandson John, surnamed de Montague (de Monte Acuto, de Montacute, d. 1228).¹² In 1210 John held manors including those of Norton and Chiselborough of the king, the rent for Norton being £7 4s. 1d.¹³ The manor of Norton was held by him in 1212 for one knight's fee of the honour of Mortain.¹⁴

After John de Montague's death in 1228 his estates descended through his daughter Katherine (d. 1242) and brother William de Montague (d. 1246) to William's daughters Margery (d. 1257) and Isabel (or Isabella, d. 1285), who inherited the whole of her father's estates on her sister's death. She married, firstly, Ralph de la Haye (d. 1254), secondly Thomas de Audeham (de Aldeham) (d. 1276) and thirdly Richard de Pevensey (de Pevenes, Pevensell).¹⁵ Katherine de Montague appears to have granted several of her estates to John de Gatesden.¹⁶

John de Gatesden (d. 1258) had made an agreement with Thomas de Audeham and Isabel for manors including that at Norton. He left a young daughter Margaret.¹⁷ In 1262 Henry III granted to Peter de Chauvent (de Chavent) the custody of 50 librates of the land of John de Gatesden (de Gatesdon) in Norton Fitzwarren and Bradford on Tone, to hold until

¹⁰ Domesday, 251.

¹¹ K. S. B. Keats-Rohan, Domesday People: A Prosography of Persons Occuring in English Documents 1066–1166: 1. Domesday Book (Woodbridge, 1999), 143.

¹² I. J. Sanders, English Baronies (Oxford, 1960), 34.

¹³ Pipe R 1210 (PRS n.s. 26), 56; Pipe R 1212 (PRS n.s. 30), 120.

¹⁴ Book of Fees, I, 84.

¹⁵ Sanders, English Baronies, 34.

¹⁶ e.g. Cal. Inq. Misc., I, p. 406; Cur. Reg. R., 1243–5, p. 6

¹⁷ Green, Feet of Fines 1196–1307, 383–4; Cal. Inq. p.m., I, p. 126.

John's heirs should come of age.¹⁸ The manor was still in the hands of Peter de Chauvent and Thomas de Audeham in 1265.¹⁹

It was later alleged that John de Gatesden's daughter and heir Margaret and her husband John de Camoys had not adhered to the terms of the agreement made between her father and Thomas de Audeham, and in 1279 John and Margaret acknowledged the right of Isabel to the manor at Norton. Isabel and her husband Richard de Pevensey then granted it to John and Margaret and the heirs of Margaret to hold of them and the heirs of Isabel.²⁰

Lady Isabel de la Haye died in 1285 leaving a son Baldwin de Audeham (d. 1291), who was succeeded in the honor of Chiselborough by his son Francis (d. 1327), and then by Francis' nephew, John de St Clair (d. c.1335) and his son Sir Philip.²¹ The manor of Norton was subject to an intermediary lordship of the manor of Chiselborough by service of a fee of Mortain.²² That mesne lordship continued in the St Clair family and in 1419, when Thomas St Clair, then a minor, had a knight's fee at Norton worth £60 a year as part of his manor of Chiselborough.²³ After Thomas St Clair's death in 1435, his manors were taken into the King's hands as his three daughters were minors and the Chiselborough mesne lordship over Norton appears to have lapsed.²⁴

By 1284–5 Robert le Veel held one fee of the honour of Mortain in Norton, which was held of the king, but the origins of his lordship are unknown.²⁵ Although he had two sons by her, John de Camoys (d. c. 1300) assigned his wife Margaret and her goods and estate to Sir William Paynel, with whom she was living and who married her immediately after John's

¹⁸ Cal. Pat. 1258–66, 220–1; http://www.finerollshenry3.org.uk/content/calendar/roll_059.html (accessed 28 June 2017). A librate was a piece of land worth one pound a year. OED.

¹⁹ T. S. Holmes (ed.), The Registers of Walter Gifford, Bishop of Bath and Wells, 1265–6, and of Henry Bowett, Bishop of Bath and Wells, 1401–7 (Som. Rec. Soc. 13), 10.

²⁰ Green, Feet of Fines 1196–1307, 383–4.

²¹ Sanders, English Baronies, 34; Cal. Inq. p.m. VII, p. 471; XVI, p. 175.

²² Cal. Inq. p.m. VII, p. 473.

²³ Cal. Inq. p.m. XXI, p. 96.

²⁴ Cal. Inq. p.m. XXIII, p. 299; XXIV, pp. 182–3; XXV, p. 457; Cal. Pat. 1441–1446, 443; J. Gage, The History and Antiquities of Hengrave in Suffolk (London, 1822), 226–7.

²⁵ Feudal Aids, IV, 284; Dickinson, Kirby's Quest Som., 20.

death.²⁶ In 1302 William Paynel acknowledged the right of Hawysia, widow of Robert le Veel, to the manor of Norton and she granted it to William and Margaret and Margaret's right heirs.²⁷ Margaret died in 1311²⁸ and in 1314 William Paynel sold Norton manor to Walter Stapeldon, bishop of Exeter, and his brother Richard of north Devon and Richard's heirs, for £100. Bishop Walter held the park and in 1324 the manor and advowson were settled on Richard and Walter.²⁹ Richard Stapeldon and his heirs were granted free warren in all their demesne lands in Norton in 1314.³⁰ In 1327 Richard Stapeldon was assessed at 10s., the highest amount in Norton Fitzwarren.³¹ Sir Richard (fl. 1329—31)³² reputedly gave Norton manor, excepting two messuages, 20 a. of land and 3 r. of meadow, to his brother Thomas, a canon in the cathedral church at Exeter, for life. After Thomas's death the manor, excepting the two messuages and land, should have passed in fee tail to Richard's son, also Richard.³³ It was presumably the younger Richard who was described as of Norton when he married Eleanor Stawell at Cothelstone in 1333.³⁴

Peter le Veel, son of Bogo, son of Robert le Veel and Hawysia,³⁵ disputed the ownership of the manor by the Stapeldons and in 1331 he brought a case against Richard Stapeldon³⁶ and in 1333 sued his brother Thomas de Stapeldon for the manor of Norton.³⁷ His

²⁶ Complete Peerage, II, 506; undated deed transcr. in Burke, Extinct Peerage, 106; Cal. Close, 1296-1302, 494.

²⁷ Green, Feet of Fines 1196-1307, 319.

²⁸ Complete Peerage, II, 506.

²⁹ E. Green (ed.), Feet of Fines 1307-1346 (Som. Rec. Soc. 12), 51, 93; below, econ. hist. Walter was murdered 15 Oct. 1326: ODNB Walter Stapeldon, accessed 3 July 2108. The two brothers founded Stapeldon Hall, later Exeter College, Oxford.

³⁰ Cal. Chart. 1300-26, 239.

³¹ Dickinson, Kirby's Quest Som., 144-5.

³² There is no truth in the often repeated story (e.g J. Prince, The Worthies of Devon (London; 1810), 726) that he was also murdered in 1326: TNA, SC 8/159/7942; C. Worthy, 'A Memoir of Bishop Stapledon' Trans. Devonshire Assocn VIII, 1876), 451; Cornwall Feet of Fines I (Devon and Cornw. Rec. Soc. 1914), 432; A. Watkin, Glastonbury Cart. II. (Som. Rec. Soc. 63, 1952), p. 388.

³³ Cal. Pat. 1391-1396, 359.

³⁴ T. S. Holmes, Register of Bishop Ralph of Shrewsbury (Som. Rec. Soc. 9, 1895), 156.

³⁵ 'Berkeley Castle Muniments: The Veel Estate', <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk> (accessed 24 Jan. 2018). Peter's mother was Joan Fitzwarren.

³⁶ TNA, CP 40/284, m. 134d.

³⁷ G. Wrottesley, Pedigrees from the Plea Rolls (London, c.1905), 20; TNA, CP 40/296, m. 301d.

case rested on a claim that Walter de la Hyde, probably father of Hawise, had given the manor of Norton to his grandparents.³⁸ Peter le Veel appears to have succeeded in his suit against Thomas Stapeldon³⁹ but in 1343 he drowned leaving his son and heir Peter a minor in the king's ward as the lord of Chiselborough was also a minor.⁴⁰ His widow Katherine, daughter of Sir John de Clevedon, claimed to hold a third of the manor as part of her dower estate.⁴¹ However, despite the earlier judgment Sir Richard Stapeldon attempted to obtain possession of the manor in 1343, carrying away trees and other property but appears to have failed to gain possession.⁴² after the death of her son John le Veel without issue, Katherine (d.1386), who had married Thomas, Lord Berkeley (d. 1361), exchanged her dower for other land with her stepson Peter and his son Thomas in 1384.⁴³ In 1385 trustees settled the manor on Sir Peter le Veel and his wife Eleanor and four others in trust for them and the heirs of Eleanor.⁴⁴ In 1386 Peter and Eleanor sold 1 a.in a field called 'Wiklonde' in Norton Veel manor to the prior and convent of Charterhouse, London.⁴⁵

When Peter died in 1391 his heir was his son Thomas but under the 1385 settlement Norton should have passed to Henry, his son by Eleanor.⁴⁶ Possibly taking advantage of the situation Richard Stapeldon gained possession of the manor and in 1393 John le Veel, presumably brother of Thomas, with some companions entered the manor by force and expelled Stapeldon's men and servants.⁴⁷ Enquiries into the case were still ongoing in 1397–

³⁸ Wrottesley, Pedigrees from the Plea Rolls, 20.

³⁹ Cal. Pat. 1391–1396, 359.

⁴⁰ Cal. Close 1343–6, 174; Cal. Inq. p.m. VIII, pp. 311–12; Cal. Pat. 1343–5, 14, 20, 99; Green, Feet of Fines 1196–1307, 383–4.

⁴¹ 'Berkeley Castle Muniments: The Veel Estate', <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk> (accessed 24 Jan. 2018).

⁴² Cal. Pat. 1343–45, 14, 99; Cal. Inq. p.m. VIII, pp. 311–12.

⁴³ 'Berkeley Castle Muniments: The Veel Estate'.

⁴⁴ B. Wells-Furby, The Berkeley Estate 1281–1417: its economy and development (Bristol, 2012), 33; E. Green (ed.), Feet of Fines 1347–99 (Som. Rec. Soc. 12), 129.

⁴⁵ Cal. Pat. 1381–5, 308; Green, Feet of Fines 1347–99, 132; Cal. Close 1385–9, 155, 252.

⁴⁶ 'Berkeley Castle Muniments: The Veel Estate'; Cal. Pat. 1391–6, 245.

⁴⁷ Cal. Pat. 1391–1396, 359.

8.⁴⁸ In 1401 another assault was made on the manor, thrusting out the servants of Richard, son of Richard Stapeldon and fixing iron bars before the gates.⁴⁹ However, the Veel family were unsuccessful in their attempts to regain the manor. The younger Richard Stapeldon died c. 1396 leaving a widow Margaret⁵⁰ and a daughter Thomasine who married Sir Richard Hankeford (d. 1419) of Annery in Devon, son of Sir William Hankeford (d. 1423), Chief Justice of the King's Bench.⁵¹

Richard Hankeford was in possession of the manor by 1404⁵² and in 1412 he held lands in Norton, valued at £40.⁵³ After the death of his wife Thomasine he held her estates for life.⁵⁴ On his death in 1419 his son, also Richard (d. 1431), inherited the Norton estate. By his first wife Elizabeth, daughter of Fulk, Lord Fitzwarren, the younger Richard inherited further estates, Lord Fitzwarren's son Fulk having died a minor without issue. By Elizabeth's daughter Thomasine the manor of Norton and the title of Lord Fitzwarren would come by marriage to William Bouchier, ancestor of the Earl of Bath.⁵⁵

When Sir Richard Hankeford died in 1431, the reversion of the manor of Norton Fitzwarren, after the death of Anne, his second wife, was to his daughters by Elizabeth.⁵⁶ Anne died in 1457, having remarried twice.⁵⁷ Thomasine (d. 1453), the only surviving child of Richard by Elizabeth,⁵⁸ married, before 3 August 1437, William Bourghchier, styled 'de fitz Waryn' by 1449.⁵⁹ Their son and heir Fulk Bouchier, Lord Fitzwarren (1445–79)

⁴⁸ Cal. Close 1396–1399, 198, 301, 311.

⁴⁹ Cal. Close 1399–1402, 287–8.

⁵⁰ Cal. Pat. 1396–1399, 30.

⁵¹ G. E. C., The Complete Peerage, vol. V (2nd ed.), (London, 1926), 504–5; Prince, Worthies of Devon, 462, 726.

⁵² Holmes, Registers of Gifford and Bowett, 52.

⁵³ Feudal Aids, VI, 514.

⁵⁴ Cal. Inq. p.m. XXI, p. 96.

⁵⁵ ODNB, Sir Wm Hankeford [Hankford], accessed 24 Jan. 2018; G. E. C., Complete Peerage, vol. V, 504–5; Particular Description Som., 45–6; Prince, Worthies of Devon, 462.

⁵⁶ Cal. Inq. p.m. XXII, 299; Cal. Inq. p.m. XXIV, 182–3; Cal. Close 1429–1435, 87; 1461–1468, 4.

⁵⁷ G. E. C., Complete Peerage, vol. V, 507.

⁵⁸ Cal. Inq. p.m. XXIV, pp. 182–3; Cal. Close 1429–1435, 87.

⁵⁹ G. E. C., Complete Peerage, vol. V, 507–8.

inherited his mother's lands upon his father's death in 1469. He married Elizabeth (d. 1516), sister and co-heir of John, Lord Dinham (or Dynham), and in 1472 settled the manor on his wife and her heirs.⁶⁰ After Fulk Bouchier's death in 1479 his widow Elizabeth married secondly John Sapcott (d. 1501) and thirdly Sir Thomas Brandon (d. 1510).⁶¹ When Elizabeth died in 1516 her heir was her son John Bouchier, Lord Fitzwarren (d. 1539), created Earl of Bath in 1536.⁶² The manor descended with the Earls of Bath like Huntspill until the beginning of the 18th century.⁶³

Upon the death of Edward Bouchier, fourth Earl of Bath (d. 1637), the earldom devolved on his cousin Henry, but the barony of Fitzwarren became extinct. Norton descended to Edward's three daughters Elizabeth, Dorothy and Anne Bouchier, minors.⁶⁴ Elizabeth married Basil Feilding, Earl of Denbigh, but died without issue. Dorothy married Sir Thomas Grey, heir apparent of Henry, Earl of Stamford and their son Thomas (d. 1720) inherited the earldom of Stamford. Anne married firstly James Cranfield, Earl of Middlesex, who died without surviving male issue, and secondly Sir Chichester Wrey, by whom she had a son, Bouchier (c.1653–96).⁶⁵

By 1684 Sir Bouchier Wrey and Thomas, Earl of Stamford, held as tenants in common various manors, including Huntspill, Norton Fitzwarren and Nunnington. They had agreed to divide the substantial estate between them, Stamford believing that the manor of Norton Fitzwarren should be part of his portion, in exchange for other manors.⁶⁶ Stamford's

⁶⁰ G. E. C., *Complete Peerage*, vol. V, 508–9; *Cal. Close* 1468–1476, 253–4.

⁶¹ H. Maxwell-Lyte (ed.), *Registers of Robert Stillington and Richard Fox* (Som. Rec. Soc. 52), 60, 65, 117–18, 134, 148, 193; G. E. C., *Complete Peerage*, vol. V, 510.

⁶² G. E. C., *Complete Peerage*, vol. V, 510–11.

⁶³ H. Maxwell-Lyte (ed.), *The Registers of Oliver King Bishop of Bath and Wells 1496–1503 and Hadrian de Castello Bishop of Bath and Wells 1503–1518* (Som. Rec. Soc. 54), 140; Maxwell-Lyte (ed.), *Registers of Wolsey, Clerke, Knyght and Bourne*, 9, 70, 97; *VCH Som.* VIII, 97–8.

⁶⁴ M. J. Hawkins, (ed.), *Sales of Wards in Somerset, 1603–1641* (Som. Rec. Soc. 67), 161–4; G. E. C., *Complete Peerage*, vol. V, 511–12.

⁶⁵ G. E. C., *Complete Peerage*, vol. V, 512; *ODNB*, Wrey, Sir Bouchier, fourth baronet, accessed 26 Jan. 2018.

⁶⁶ TNA, C 8/271/74.

sole lordship of the manor did not last long. He heavily mortgaged his estates, and under a Chancery decree of 1693–4 the manor was sold to James Grove, husband of his sister Anne, who had possession of the manor by 1697.⁶⁷

Grove still held the manor in 1700, which by 1702 included land in Staplegrove.⁶⁸ In 1705 Grove, or his trustees, sold the manor to Simon Welman (d. 1707) of London, doctor of physic.⁶⁹ Welman, by his will proved in 1708, left all his manors to his brother Isaac (d. 1715) of Poundisford Park, Pitminster.⁷⁰ Isaac Welman left the manor of Norton Fitzwarren to his sons Simon (1683–1716) and Thomas (1693–1757). Simon's son and heir Isaac (1710–83), on attaining his majority in 1730, shared the profits of the manor with his uncle Thomas.⁷¹ In 1755 Elizabeth, only child and heir of Thomas, married William Hawker of Luppit in Devon, and the moiety of the manor enjoyed by her father was conveyed to her and her husband William Hawker for their lives, and after their deaths to the children of the marriage.⁷² A final agreement between Isaac Welman and William Hawker of 1758 gave the manorial holdings as 30 a. of orchards, 300 a. of land, 200 a. of meadow, 200 a. of pasture, with messuages, cottages, barns, stables and gardens, a yearly rent of £3 9s. 4d., and common of pasture within the parish.⁷³

In the 1780s the manor belonged to Isaac Welman of Poundisford Park and William Hawker of Poundisford Lodge, Pitminster. Leases were no longer renewed as lives dropped.⁷⁴ By 1791 the manor of Norton was in the hands of William Hawker and Thomas Welman (1746–1829) heir of his father Isaac.⁷⁵

⁶⁷ TNA, C 8/375/54; C 8/449/4; C 8/357/175; VCH Som. VIII. 97–8; G. E. C., Complete Peerage, vol. V, 512.

⁶⁸ TNA, C 8/360/65; SHC, DD\X/KIT/1.

⁶⁹ SHC, DD\WN/3/4; Burke's Landed Gentry (1894 edn), 2170.

⁷⁰ TNA, PROB 11/501/179; Burke's Land. Gent. (1894), 2170.

⁷¹ SHC, DD\WN/3/1; Burke's Land. Gent. (1894), 2170.

⁷² SHC, DD\WN/3/1; SHC, DD\HLM/8, cases for opinion 1790.

⁷³ SHC, DD\WN/3/2.

⁷⁴ McDermott and Berry, Rack's Survey, 277.

⁷⁵ Collinson, Hist. Som., III, 272; SHC, Q\REL/35/14; Burke's Land. Gent. (1894), 2170.

William Hawker died in 1806, leaving his moiety of the manor to his unmarried daughter Ann. His will referred to lands and tenements in Norton Fitzwarren purchased by himself, presumably to augment the manorial holdings in his own right, in addition to the moiety settled on him at his marriage. He desired Ann not to issue long leases.⁷⁶ In 1808 a deed of partition of William Hawker's estates, including Norton, was drawn up between his three daughters: Mary, wife of Revd James Camplin of Crowcombe, Elizabeth, wife of William Helyar of East Coker, and Ann Hawker,⁷⁷ but the moiety of the manor remained with Ann. Ann Hawker, by her will of 1834, left the moiety of the manor to her surviving sister Mary Bernard (formerly Camplin) for life, along with all other property in the parish left to her by her father's will or which she had purchased since. After Mary's death the Norton Fitzwarren lands were to be divided between her son William Bernard and three of her daughters.⁷⁸

The other moiety of the manor descended with the Welman family. In 1811 Thomas Welman (d. 1829) had held the lordship of the manor with Ann Hawker.⁷⁹ He married, as his second wife, the Hon. Charlotte Margaretta Noel (d. 1869), and had one son by her, Charles Noel Welman. The widowed Charlotte Margaretta married Thomas Thompson in 1839.⁸⁰

In 1840 the manor estate was owned by Mary Bernard and the Hon. Charlotte Margaretta Thompson.⁸¹ In 1842 Charles Noel Welman and Mary's son William Bernard drew lots for the division of the manor, with Welman winning the first lot, giving him the lordship of the manor and 271 a. in the northern part of the estate. Bernard received 223 a. in the southern part of the estate.⁸² Welman had ambitions to extend his estate in the parish, and

⁷⁶ TNA, PROB 11/1444/205; SHC, DD\HLM/10, will Wm Hawker.

⁷⁷ SHC, DD\HLM/10, deed of partition 1808.

⁷⁸ TNA, PROB 11/1840/120; SHC, DD\HLM/10, will and codicils Ann Hawker.

⁷⁹ SHC, Q\RDD/34.

⁸⁰ *Burke's Land. Gent.* (1894), 2170; J. J. Howard, *Visitation of England and Wales*, vol. 3 (s.l., 1895), 33.

⁸¹ SHC, D\D\Rt/A/141.

⁸² SHC, A\CXP/1.

in 1842 approached Sir John Slade regarding the purchase of some of his lands, though it is not clear if anything came of this.⁸³ In 1849 Bernard sold 74 a. of his share to Sir John Slade, when according to an abstract of Bernard's title, he still held a moiety of the manor.⁸⁴ If Bernard had retained a moiety, it appears to have been acquired by Welman by 1856 whose mother retained a life interest in the estate, since in 1856 Charlotte Margaretta Thompson and Charles Noel Welman were jointly lords of the manor.⁸⁵ By 1861 the manor comprised 466 a. 1 r. 29 p. of land in Norton Fitzwarren, with further holdings in the parishes of Bishops Lydeard, Seavington St Mary, Ilton and Meare.⁸⁶ A comparison of the partition map of 1842 and Welman's exchange of part of his Norton lands in 1871 shows that Welman had, by 1871, augmented his share of 1842 with further acquisitions.⁸⁷ In 1871 Welman exchanged about 101 a. of land in Norton Fitzwarren, held in fee simple, for c. 89 a. of land held in trust for him as tenant for life in Seavington St Mary.⁸⁸

Welman appears to have suffered a reversal in his fortunes by the 1880s. In 1883 he offered to sell c.26 a. of land near the railway line to Wyndham Slade.⁸⁹ The Norton Manor estate was offered for sale by auction in 1885, the sale including the manor house and six farms, the whole comprising 941 a. in the parishes of Norton Fitzwarren, Bishop's Lydeard, Kingston, Staplegrove and the detached portion of Taunton St James. Although the rent from the estate was valued at upwards of £2,250, the rights and rents of the manor itself amounted to just £4 1s. 10d. per annum. Of the six farms, Fitzroy, Ford and Yard farms were wholly or partly in the parish of Norton Fitzwarren, and all were worked on yearly tenancies.⁹⁰ The estate included lands acquired by purchase or exchange after 1861.⁹¹

⁸³ SHC, DD\SLM/15, md of land Mr Welman wishes to have at Norton, 1842.

⁸⁴ SHC, DD\SLM/6, abstract of the title, 1849; accounts, 1849–50.

⁸⁵ SHC, Q\RUP/255.

⁸⁶ SHC, DD\CA/99.

⁸⁷ SHC, A\CXP/1; TNA, MAF 11/840.

⁸⁸ TNA, MAF 11/840; SHC, DD\CH/125/13.

⁸⁹ SHC, DD\SLM/15, envelope 'Morse's Farm' letter 3 Oct. 1883 Welman to Slade.

⁹⁰ SHC, DD\X\DEV/1; SHC, DD\MK/101/20.

⁹¹ SHC, DD\MK/101/20.

In 1889 the manor estate was sold for £38,000; the family solicitor protesting at so low a sum being accepted.⁹² One report stated that Welman had paid £78,000 for the estate, but had mortgaged it, and foreclosure on one mortgage had forced the sale.⁹³ The estate was sold to Wilfred Marshall (d. 1904), who took up residence c.1891.⁹⁴ In 1893 he purchased the ancient hill fort of Norton Camp, part of a sale of 212 a. of houses and lands belonging to the late Revd J. P. Hewett, though he did not purchase the entirety of Hewett's estate.⁹⁵

Marshall was actively involved in the life of the parish, most notably financing the building of the Village Club in 1896–7.⁹⁶ His widow married Capt. William Hartley Maud of the Somerset Light Infantry in 1906.⁹⁷ In 1907 Norton Manor was advertised for sale by auction. The estate, with the manor house and 17 cottages, comprised nearly 600 a., about two-thirds the extent of the estate in the 1880s.⁹⁸ The estate failed to reach its reserve price of £32,500 at auction, but was subsequently bought with the hill fort by the Hon. Francis Bowes Lyon.⁹⁹ The Bowes Lyons sold Norton Manor estate in 1911, as a freehold manorial estate of 360 a. with the lordship of the manor.¹⁰⁰ It was purchased by Henry King Sturdee (d. 1922) who was in occupation by April 1913.¹⁰¹ Sturdee, an American, became a naturalised British citizen in 1914.¹⁰² The estate was put up for auction by the executors of his widow in 1929 including the residence of Norton Manor with its grounds and a farm, in total 405 a. The reserve price of £30,000 was not reached, and the estate was sold privately.¹⁰³ It was

⁹² Taunton Courier, 25 Dec. 1889, 6.

⁹³ Taunton Courier, 17 Sept. 1890, 5.

⁹⁴ W. G. Marshall (1904), Nat. Probate Cal.: accessed 26 Jan. 2018; Taunton Courier, 17 Sept. 1890, 5.

⁹⁵ Taunton Courier, 6 Sept. 1893, 1; 27 Sept. 1893, 5. See Wooney.

⁹⁶ SHC, A\BLZ/1/1.

⁹⁷ Shepton Mallet Jnl., 20 Jul. 1906, 8.

⁹⁸ SHC, DD\X\COS/6.

⁹⁹ Taunton Courier, 21 Aug. 1907, 30 Oct. 1907; Western Daily Press, 29 Aug. 1908, 5.

¹⁰⁰ Western Morning News, 24 Jun. 1911, 1.

¹⁰¹ H. K. Sturdee (1922), Nat. Probate Cal., accessed 27 Feb. 2018; Taunton Courier, 2 Apr. 1913, 4.

¹⁰² TNA, HO 144/1154/211880; TNA, HO 334/75/207.

¹⁰³ Taunton Courier, 22 May 1929, 7.

purchased by Mr T. S. Penny, a freeman of the borough of Taunton, and his son Alderman F. W. Penny.¹⁰⁴

In 1939 the Norton Manor estate was acquired by the War Office, and the house and grounds were used as a training camp.¹⁰⁵ Much of the remainder of the estate is assumed to have become military camps that reverted to civilian use at some point after the Second World War. Some of the estate may have been earlier sold by Penny, or leased by the War Office, as allotment holders paying rent to Thomas Penny in the 1930s were by 1941 paying rent to Sydney King, a local farmer.¹⁰⁶ The house and grounds remained in military hands after the Second World War, and since 1983 have been home to 40 Commando Royal Marines.¹⁰⁷

Manor house

The original manor house is supposed to have been Norton Court, situated beside the parish church.¹⁰⁸ The country residence of Norton Manor was built by Charles Noel Welman in 1842–3, 1 m. north west of the village. Pevsner describes it as ‘an unexciting Tudor style of buff brick with diaper patterning’, with shallow gables and mullion-and-transom windows.¹⁰⁹ The clay for the bricks was reputedly found on the estate.¹¹⁰ The house was extensively renovated for Wilfred Marshall in 1890–1, and a stable wing added.¹¹¹ On the sale of the house in 1929 it was advertised as having 17 bed and dressing rooms, five bathrooms,

¹⁰⁴ Taunton Courier, 11 Sept. 1929, 5.

¹⁰⁵ SHC, A\DQO/303/31; Western Daily Press, 22 May 1939, 6.

¹⁰⁶ SHC, D\PC\n.fitz/4/1/1; D\PC\n.fitz/4/2/7: King.

¹⁰⁷ SHC, A\DQO/303/31.

¹⁰⁸ See Norton Court.

¹⁰⁹ J. Orbach and N. Pevsner, Somerset: South and West (London, 2014), 499–500.

¹¹⁰ Taunton Courier, 18 Sept. 1929, 10.

¹¹¹ Taunton Courier, 17 Sept. 1890, 5; Somerset HER, 40573.

reception rooms, and offices.¹¹² When the estate was requisitioned in 1939 the house became the officers' mess.¹¹³

NORTON COURT ESTATE

In 1588 Robert Clevehanger transferred to James Clarke (d. 1612) of the Middle Temple, London, the messuage known as Court Place, then in the tenure of the said James, together with 60 a. of land known as Norton Park.¹¹⁴ Clarke was already a major taxpayer in the parish by the time of the 1581 subsidy returns.¹¹⁵ The estate descended to his son James (d. 1621), who had married Jane Broughton of Wembdon in 1604. The estate passed to their son Robert (d. c.1658).¹¹⁶ In 1653 Robert and Frances Clarke of Sandford in Wembdon sold Court Place with land and premises in the parishes of Norton Fitzwarren and Staplegrove for £2,250 to James Prowse of Stoke St Mary and his wife Philippa.¹¹⁷ Court Place descended to John Prowse (d. 1684).¹¹⁸ In 1690 Court Place and 132 a. of meadow, pasture and arable land in the parish, together with freehold and leasehold lands and tenements in Norton Fitzwarren and Staplegrove, were part of the marriage settlement of James Prowse with Mary Aysh of South Petherton.¹¹⁹ The house and estate were still liable to a rent of £2 15s. payable to the manor in 1705.¹²⁰

After the death of James Prowse in 1711 the estate descended through the Prowse family.¹²¹ John Prowse owned Court farm by 1806, leasing it to Ambrose Willy, when it was

¹¹² Devon and Exeter Gaz., 3 May 1929, 2.

¹¹³ SHC, A\DQO/303/31; Western Daily Press, 22 May 1939, 6.

¹¹⁴ SHC, A\EIK/18; SHC, D\P\n.fitz/2/1/1.

¹¹⁵ A. J. Webb (ed.), Two Tudor Subsidy Assessments for the County of Somerset: 1558 and 1581–82 (Som. Rec. Soc. 88), 122.

¹¹⁶ SHC, D\P\n.fitz/2/1/1; VCH Som. VI. 328.

¹¹⁷ SHC, DD\V\TAR/18/7; Hants. RO, 7M54/196/10.

¹¹⁸ 5th Rep. Com. Char., 475.

¹¹⁹ SHC, DD\DP/35/2.

¹²⁰ SHC, DD\WN/3/4.

¹²¹ SHC, D\P\n.fitz/2/1/1.

assessed at £17 1s. for land tax.¹²² By 1821 the estate was in the hands of two sisters surnamed Prowse.¹²³

The estate, or part of it, passed into the Hewett family after the marriage in 1824 of Mary Prowse with William Hewett.¹²⁴ By 1828 Court farm was held by William Hewett, Elizabeth Prowse and Ann Hawker, though it does not appear to have been part of Ann Hawker's manorial holdings.¹²⁵ After the sale of the family brewery and the death of William's son William Henry Hewett, who had inherited the estate, the house passed out of Hewett hands, but the estate remained with the family.¹²⁶ The will of William Henry (d. 1881) left the estate to his wife Frances Mary (d. 1916) for life.¹²⁷ In 1919 it was owned by their son Herbert T. Hewett.¹²⁸ By 1928 the estate was held by their daughter Florence Ethel Hewett of London. In that year she sold the estate, by now comprising a total area of about 188 a., including a farmhouse and four cottages. Some of the land adjoined the Minehead and Milverton roads, and was described as desirable building land, an indication of the growth of Taunton's suburbs.¹²⁹

Norton Court

Court Place, later Norton Court, and previously known as the Barton, was built c. 1600.¹³⁰ It is supposed to have been the manor house, but there is no evidence that the lords of the manor, the Earls of Bath at period of its probable construction, were ever resident. In 1633 Thomas Gerard commented that it had been leased out to tenants and as a result 'is hardly

¹²² SHC, Q\REL/35/14.

¹²³ 5th Rep. Com. Char., 475.

¹²⁴ SHC, D\P\n.fitz/2/1/4, 5 May 1824.

¹²⁵ SHC, Q\REL/35/14.

¹²⁶ See Norton Court

¹²⁷ SHC, DD\CH/106/4; F. M. Hewett (1916) Nat. Probate Cal.: accessed 27 Feb. 2018.

¹²⁸ SHC, D\R\ta/14/13/1.

¹²⁹ SHC, DD\BRO/4/7.

¹³⁰ Orbach and Pevsner, Som.: South and West, 499–500; SHC, DD\V/TAR/18/7.

tenantable'.¹³¹ As the Barton it was in the hands of John Prowse in 1767.¹³² It was described in the 1780s as an 'ancient farm house', belonging to one Prowse.¹³³

The house was described in 2000 as being late 16th or early 17th century, enlarged and extensively altered c.1840. If there was an earlier, medieval, house on the site no trace of it now remains. It has been suggested that the first phase of Norton Court consisted of a two-storied T-shaped house, possibly with a Court Room for the manor court on the ground floor of the north wing. A plaster ceiling dated to c.1600 survives in the parlour. The second phase, c.1840, saw the front façade altered and the building extended. Much of the building of c.1600 was lost in this redevelopment, but some window features survive, and parts of the roof are dated to c.1600.¹³⁴

The 19th century alterations were for the Hewetts, then owners of the village brewery.¹³⁵ William Hewett (d. 1853) was in occupation in 1851.¹³⁶ His son, William Henry Hewett, inherited the property.¹³⁷ By 1887 William Henry's widow was living at Burnhill House, another property in the village. A military school was operating from Norton Court in 1887.¹³⁸ By 1889 Norton Court was the residence of the head brewer.¹³⁹ In 1933 Norton Court was the home of Mr Stephen Arnold, director of the brewery.¹⁴⁰ It was requisitioned during the Second World War.¹⁴¹ In 1946 Norton Court was purchased by Somerset County Council, who planned to convert the property into three flats for their own employees, to the

¹³¹ Particular Description Som., 45–6.

¹³² SHC, Q\REL/35/14.

¹³³ McDermott and Berry, Rack's Surve, 277.

¹³⁴ SHC, DD\V\TAR/18/7.

¹³⁵ Orbach and Pevsner, Som.: South and West, 499–500. For brewery see econ. hist.

¹³⁶ TNA, HO 107/1923; SHC, D\D\ra/27.

¹³⁷ TNA, PROB 11/2178/477; SHC, DD\CH/106/4.

¹³⁸ Goodman's Dir. Taunton (1887), 237; Morning Post (London), 13 May 1887, 1.

¹³⁹ Taunton Courier, 7 Aug. 1889, 5.

¹⁴⁰ Taunton Courier, 8 Feb. 1933, 10.

¹⁴¹ SHC, A\BVF/1/2.

concern of the parish council who complained that this deprived the village of badly-needed accommodation.¹⁴² By 2000 the property was again in private hands as a single dwelling.¹⁴³

MANOR OF WOONEY

By 1626 the rectory had 8 a. of glebe land, and the rector was lord of the manor of Wooney. The manorial holding consisted of ten tenements with a total of 76 a., and six cottages lying along the street near the church.¹⁴⁴ The ten tenements were described in 1637 as being situated in Langford.¹⁴⁵ In 1717 James Minifie of Staplgrove, merchant, paid the Hon. George Doddington £400 for the advowson, parsonage house and glebe lands with other houses, lands and tenements. James Minifie by his will of 1722 left the glebe lands and manors, presumably meaning the manor of Wooney, to his son, also James.¹⁴⁶ The younger James Minifie became rector of Norton Fitzwarren in 1742 and died in 1768. In 1772 his surviving children conveyed the manor of Wooney to William Hawker.¹⁴⁷

In 1847 Hawker's daughter Mary Bernard, together with other family members who had inherited a share in the manor of Wooney under the terms of Hawker's will, sold the same to Thomas Arbuthnot Whitter for £4,500, to hold in trust for the Revd Arthur Anstey.¹⁴⁸ The following year Whitter and Anstey conveyed the advowson, presumably including the rights of the manor of Wooney, to William Hewett of Norton Fitzwarren.¹⁴⁹

The copyhold manor of Wooney, with the advowson, parsonage house and about 7 ½ a. of glebe land had previously been advertised for sale in 1840, and again in 1841.¹⁵⁰ If a sale took place, it does not appear to have affected the rights of the rector to the manor, as in

¹⁴² SHC, D\PC\n.fitz/4/2/7.

¹⁴³ SHC, DD\V\TAR/18/7.

¹⁴⁴ SHC, D\P\n.fitz/3/1/3.

¹⁴⁵ SHC, D\D\rg/387/2.

¹⁴⁶ SHC, D\P\n.fitz/3/4/1. For advowson see rel. hist.

¹⁴⁷ SHC, D\P\n.fitz/3/4/1.

¹⁴⁸ SHC, D\P\n.fitz/3/4/1.

¹⁴⁹ SHC, D\D\ra/27.

¹⁵⁰ Dorset Co. Chron. and Som.Gaz., 23 Apr. 1840, 1; Taunton Courier, 27 Jan. 1841, 1.

1851 the Revd J. Guerin, rector, reported that the manor belonged to the rector and had 74 a. and 18 tenements.¹⁵¹

John Prowse Hewett was admitted to the rectory in 1864, after the death of Guerin, by the patronage of his mother Mary, widow of William Hewett.¹⁵² In 1875 Mary Hewett died, leaving the manor of Wooney to John Prowse Hewett.¹⁵³ In 1882 Hewett exchanged some 3 a. of land in the parish belonging to the manor of Wooney with a similar acreage in the parish belonging to Charles Noel Welman, then lord of the manor of Norton Fitzwarren.¹⁵⁴

John Prowse Hewett, on his death in 1891, left the manor of Wooney, together with all leasehold or lifehold lands purchased by him and held of the manor, to his wife Elizabeth for life, if she should remain unmarried, and after her death to such of his sons as she should appoint, if ordained a minister in the Church of England.¹⁵⁵ Their son William Prowse Hewett became rector of Norton Fitzwarren in 1892, succeeding his father.¹⁵⁶ He died intestate and a bachelor in 1923, his brother George Upcott Hewett being his heir at law.¹⁵⁷

It is possible that part of the former rectorial holdings were sold in 1893, when houses and land, in all 212 a. were sold by order of the trustees of the will of the late Revd J. P. Hewett.¹⁵⁸ By 1918 the glebe land and the remaining manorial lands and property had become intermixed, and they were sold at auction in 1919.¹⁵⁹

MANOR OF PINKSMOOR

¹⁵¹ TNA, HO 129/315, 55; SHC, D\D\ra/27.

¹⁵² SHC, D\D\breg/38.

¹⁵³ SHC, DD\CH/28.

¹⁵⁴ TNA, MAF 11/141/5651.

¹⁵⁵ SHC, DD\CH/28.

¹⁵⁶ SHC, D\D\breg/41.

¹⁵⁷ SHC, D\D\ra/27.

¹⁵⁸ Taunton Courier, 6 Sept. 1893, 1.

¹⁵⁹ SHC, D\P\n.fitz/3/1/2; Taunton Courier, 22 Jan. 1919, 4.

In 1659 James Prowse the elder settled houses and lands of the manor of Pinksmoor (Pinxmore) in Wellington and Norton Fitzwarren on his son James, on the occasion of his marriage to Anne Fanshawe.¹⁶⁰

By 1741 the manor of Pinksmoor was held by George Prowse. In his will of that year he left a life interest in the property to his widow Eleanor. In 1744, following Eleanor's death, the property at Norton Fitzwarren, consisting of 74 a. of land and the ownership of Norton Mills, was sold to James Minifie of Staplegrove.¹⁶¹ These lands had earlier been part of the manor of Norton on its sale to Simon Welman in 1705.¹⁶²

Nothing further is known of the manor of Pinksmoor in Norton Fitzwarren. In 1757 Minifie sold the mills to John Duntz.¹⁶³ By 1776 the 74 a. of land, known as Morses farm, was in the ownership of William Hawker, joint lord of the manor of Norton.¹⁶⁴

MONTYS COURT

General Sir John Slade (1762–1859), son of John Slade (d. 1801) of Maunsel Grange, Somerset, served under Wellington in the Peninsular War.¹⁶⁵ By 1840 he owned Wey farm and Montys farm in Norton Fitzwarren,¹⁶⁶ and by 1856 he was one of the major landowners in the parish outside of the manor.¹⁶⁷

A farm may have been situated at Wey in 1327, when Johanne atte Wey was assessed for the lay subsidy.¹⁶⁸ In 1705 Wey (Way) farm was in the possession of John Butson or his undertenants, and was one of the properties excepted in the sale of the manor in that year.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁰ SHC, DD\SR/2/1/23; SHC, DD\SR/2/1/25; SHC, DD\SR/2/1/26.

¹⁶¹ SHC, DD\CH/122/5, 3 Jul. 1744.

¹⁶² SHC, DD\WN/3/4.

¹⁶³ See econ. hist., mills.

¹⁶⁴ SHC, DD\CH/122/5.

¹⁶⁵ ODNB, Slade, Sir John, first baronet (accessed 26 Feb. 2018).

¹⁶⁶ *Burke's Peerage* (1868 edn), 1013; SHC, D\D\Rt/A/141.

¹⁶⁷ SHC, Q\RUP/255.

¹⁶⁸ Dickinson, *Kirby's Quest Som.*, 144–5.

¹⁶⁹ SHC, DD\WN/3/4.

By 1834 Wey (Way) farm, in the parishes of Norton and Hillfarrance, was in the hands of Abraham Turner, gentleman, of Norton Fitzwarren, who sold the farm to Slade for £9,000.¹⁷⁰ It had been sold out of the Slade holdings by 1919, when, as a farm of just over 125 a., it was owned and occupied by James Tazewell.¹⁷¹

In 1835 Slade contracted to buy Montys (Muntys) farm from Mrs Margaretta Thomas Gardner. The extent of the farm in 1736 had been one messuage, one garden, three orchards, 18 a. of land and 4 a. of meadow, with appurtenances.¹⁷² It was still not a large farm a century later, having 21 a. 0 r. 19 p., including a dwelling house and farm buildings with two orchards, for which Slade paid £1,560.¹⁷³ It remained in the hands of the Slade family in 1919 as a farm of 83 a. 1 r. 23 p., leased to a tenant.¹⁷⁴

Sir John Slade made other purchases of land in Norton Fitzwarren, including the purchase in 1849–50 of 74 a. belonging to William Bernard, for which he paid £3,545.¹⁷⁵

Sir John Slade's son Wyndham Slade (d. 1910) inherited Montys Court and the estate. On the death of Wyndham's son Wyndham Neave Slade in 1941 without issue, the estate passed to Wyndham Neave's nephew, Major Cecil Mitford (d. 1986), on condition that he change his name to Mitford-Slade. The estate was inherited by his son, Major Anthony Mitford-Slade (d. 2017).¹⁷⁶

Montys Court was built for General Sir John Slade, c.1840, in a Tudor style, one mile west of the village.¹⁷⁷ It may have been let to tenants initially, but they had vacated the house by February 1844.¹⁷⁸ By August 1844 'Muntys Court' was described as the new seat of Sir

¹⁷⁰ SHC, DD\SLM/6, agreement for Way Farm, 1834.

¹⁷¹ SHC, D\R\ta/14/13/1.

¹⁷² SHC, DD\SLM/6, abstract of title of Mrs Margaretta Thomas Gardner, 1835.

¹⁷³ SHC, DD\SLM/11–12, 4 Apr. 1835.

¹⁷⁴ SHC, D\R\ta/14/13/1.

¹⁷⁵ SHC, DD\SLM/6, abstract of title, 1849; account, 1849–50.

¹⁷⁶ London Gaz., 9 Nov. 2017, 20828.

¹⁷⁷ Orbach and Pevsner, Som.t: South and West, 499–500.

¹⁷⁸ Taunton Courier, 1 Dec. 1841, 6; 28 Feb. 1844, 1; 13 Mar. 1844, 1.

John Slade.¹⁷⁹ Montys Court was sold in 2009, Major Mitford-Slade and his wife moving to a house on the estate.¹⁸⁰

FORD

In 1086 Alvred held Ford of the count of Mortain. Theodric had held it in the time of King Edmund. It paid dues to the bishop of Winchester at Taunton.¹⁸¹ William, Count of Mortain, granted land at ‘Melebire, Widedumbe, Ford and Denewoldesham’ to the Cluniac priory of Montacute between 1091–1106, which grant was confirmed by the king in 1135–7, and again in 1152–8.¹⁸² The grant does not appear in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, and so may be presumed lost by 1535.¹⁸³ In 1242–3, ‘Wudeton’ et Forde’ were held of the king, and paid 2 fees of ‘Mortoing’, presumably Mortain.¹⁸⁴ Adam atte Ford was assessed at 6d. in 1327.¹⁸⁵

In 1833 Ford farm was held by Samuel Kebby Shattock, gentleman, and Samuel Shattock, probably the same man, owned the farm at the time of the tithe apportionment in 1840.¹⁸⁶ It was part of the proposed sale of the manor of Norton in 1885, and may be assumed to have been sold with the rest of the manor in 1889.¹⁸⁷ By 1919 it was a farm of 95 a., owned and occupied by Charles Saunders.¹⁸⁸

VENHAMPTON (FENHAMPTON)

¹⁷⁹ Taunton Courier, 14 Aug. 1844, 4.

¹⁸⁰ Burke's Peerage (1868 edn), 1013; W. Slade (1910), *Nat. Probate Cal.*, accessed 4 Mar. 2018; The Times, 17 Feb. 1941, 7; C. T. Mitford-Slade (1986), *Nat. Probate Cal.*, accessed 2 Mar. 2018; Daily Telegraph, 20 May 2009, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/property/period-property/5330134/Period-property-Time-catches-up-with-Montys.html>, (accessed 5 Dec. 2017).

¹⁸¹ Domesday, 234, 251; VCH Som. I. 406.

¹⁸² Cartularies of Bruton and Montacute (*Som. Rec. Soc.* 8), 19-20, 122, 123–6.

¹⁸³ Valor Eccl. I, 172.

¹⁸⁴ Book of Fees, II, 752.

¹⁸⁵ Dickinson, Kirby's Quest, 144–5.

¹⁸⁶ SHC, DD\CH/110/7; SHC, tithe award.

¹⁸⁷ SHC, DD\MK/101/20; Taunton Courier, 25 Dec. 1889, 6.

¹⁸⁸ SHC, D\R\ta/14/13/1.

In 1326 Alice, wife of William de Stapeldon, and John, son of William, gave twenty pounds sterling to William Wyioun and his wife Cristiana for a messuage, 40 a. of land and 5 a. of meadow in Venhampton (Fenhampton) to hold to them and the heirs of Alice. In 1331 John de Stapeldon and Cecilia his wife gave Robert de Pavely and his wife Alice twenty marcs of silver for a messuage, 50 a. of land and 5 a. of meadow, in Venhampton. Robert and Alice granted the tenement to John and Cecilia to hold to them and their heirs, and the issue of Robert and Alice and the heirs of Alice. If John and Cecilia died without issue, the property would revert to Robert and Alice and the heirs of Alice.¹⁸⁹

John de Stapeldon had died by 1342, his wife Cecilia and son and heir Robert, a minor, surviving him. The land at Venhampton was held of Walter de Meriet, by service of 20s. 1d. yearly, and doing suit at the bishop of Winchester's court at Taunton.¹⁹⁰ It came to Robert de Orchard in 1378 as part of the settlement made on his marriage with Mary Manyngford.¹⁹¹ In c.1413 Venhampton passed to William, son and heir either of Robert de Orchard or another Robert.¹⁹² In 1422 the lands at Venhampton were held by Joan, widow of William Orchard, when Philip Cary and his wife Christine took possession of them.¹⁹³ In 1428 Philip Cary and his wife Christine granted to John Mulys various parcels of land, including that at Venhampton.¹⁹⁴ In 1447 John Gambon and William Northlegh quitclaimed to Walter Portman and his wife Christine and her heirs land at Venhampton.¹⁹⁵ In 1472 the land at Venhampton belonging to Cristina Portman, deceased, widow of Walter, was demised to her son John Portman.¹⁹⁶ John Portman died in 1486, his son and heir John then being a minor.¹⁹⁷

¹⁸⁹ Green, *Feet of Fines 1307–1346*, 106, 157.

¹⁹⁰ *Cal. Inq. p.m.* VIII, pp. 239–62, 251–2.

¹⁹¹ SHC, DD\PM/5/2/5.

¹⁹² *Cal. Inq. p.m.* XX, pp. 28–9.

¹⁹³ SHC, DD\PM/5/2/6.

¹⁹⁴ SHC, DD\PM/5/2/7.

¹⁹⁵ SHC, DD\PM/5/2/12.

¹⁹⁶ *Cal. Close* 1468–1476, pp. 235–6.

¹⁹⁷ *Cal. Inq. p.m. Hen. VII*, I., pp. 89–90.

John died in 1521, leaving as his eldest son and heir William (1497/8–1557), knighted in 1547.¹⁹⁸ Sir William was succeeded by his son Sir Henry Portman (d. 1590), who was in turn succeeded by his son Sir John Portman (d. 1612).¹⁹⁹ On his death Sir John left estates in Somerset and other counties, including 30 a. of land and 20 a. of pasture, with appurtenances, in West Monkton and Venhampton. His son, Sir Henry, (d. 1621) was a minor at his father's death. The West Monkton and Venhampton property was held of Humphrey Quick, gentleman, of the manor of West Monkton.²⁰⁰

In 1840 land at Venhampton was owned by Mary Bernard, though it was not part of her joint manorial holding with the Hon. Charlotte Margareta Thompson.²⁰¹

LANGFORD

In 1219 Ailmer de Langeford held ½ virgate of land in Norton, which his name suggests may have been in Langford.²⁰² Ten tenements of the manor of Wooney were situated in the tithing in 1637.²⁰³ In 1919, when the manor of Wooney was sold, the sale was described as the 'Langford Sale'.²⁰⁴ In 1941 a small farm of 17 a., Giffords farm, was situated at Langford, and run as part of Rapshill farm, Kingston.²⁰⁵

FITZROY

The small settlement of Fitzroy was described in 1791 as being situated 1¼ m. north of the village with one farm and three cottages.²⁰⁶ In 1660, as 'Fritzay', it had been held by

¹⁹⁸ ODNB, Sir Wm Portman, accessed 26 Jan. 2018.

¹⁹⁹ Burke's Peerage (1868 edn), 895.

²⁰⁰ Hawkins, Sales of Wards, 137–43; Burke's Peerage (1868), 895.

²⁰¹ SHC, tithe award.

²⁰² Green, Feet of Fines 1196–1307, 39–40.

²⁰³ SHC, D\D\rg/387/2.

²⁰⁴ SHC, D\P\n.fitz/3/1/2.

²⁰⁵ TNA, MAF 32/146/272.

²⁰⁶ Collinson, Hist. Som., III, 271.

Katherine Davidge, widow.²⁰⁷ John Thomas the elder was described as of Fitzroy in 1742.²⁰⁸

It may have been part of the manor estate; it was certainly so by 1790, when it was ‘Fritzey’, a farm of 40 a.²⁰⁹ Fitzroy farm was still part of the manor in 1885, by which time it extended to 195 a. in the parishes of Norton Fitzwarren and Kingston St Mary.²¹⁰ By 1919 the farm, or at least that part of it in the parish of Norton Fitzwarren, comprised 87 a. 3 r. 14 p. of land. It was in the ownership and occupation of William Henry Burston, and no longer part of the manor.²¹¹ In 1929 the farm, totalling about 190 a. in the parishes of Norton and Kingston St Mary, was sold after the death of Burston. Like the Norton Court estate sale of 1928, some of the land adjoined the Minehead road, and was advertised as potential development land.²¹² Fitzroy House is a late 18th century brick house, Grade II listed, with late 19th and early 20th century additions.²¹³

OTHER ESTATES

In 1549 the priory at Taunton was recorded as having held demesne lands in Norton Fitzwarren. These lands, with many other lands formerly held by the priory, were granted to Thomas More and his heirs.²¹⁴ In 1582 a grant of concealed lands was made to Theophilus Adams and James Woodshawe of London. The lands included land in Norton Fitzwarren given for lamps in the church of St Mary Magdalen, Taunton.²¹⁵

The manor of Norton appears to have been the dominant landholding in the parish, but from the evidence of separate estates at Ford, Fitzroy, Venhampton and Langford,²¹⁶ as

²⁰⁷ Cal. SP Dom. 1670 with Addenda 1660–70, 651.

²⁰⁸ M. Siraut, Somerset Wills (Som. Rec. Soc. 89), 238.

²⁰⁹ SHC, DD\HLM/8, cases for opinion 1790.

²¹⁰ SHC, DD\MK/101/20.

²¹¹ SHC, D\R\ta/14/13/1.

²¹² SHC, A\BNK/1/1/22; SHC, DD\BRO/4/7.

²¹³ Somerset HER, 40575.

²¹⁴ Cal. Pat. 1549–51, 53.

²¹⁵ Cal. Pat. 1580–2, 258.

²¹⁶ See intro., settlement.

well as the Norton Court estate and the rectorial manor of Wooney, it was not the sole estate in the village before the 19th century. The land tax returns of 1766–1832 are further evidence for many smaller estates and freeholds in the parish.²¹⁷

In 1746 the marriage settlement of Margaret Luttrell and Henry Fownes included the land in Bishop's Lydeard, Heathfield and Norton Fitzwarren known as Norhams, otherwise Northams, and Heathfield farm.²¹⁸ In 1803 the manor of Heathfield and the lands in Bishop's Lydeard and Norton Fitzwarren were transferred to John Perring.²¹⁹

The small estate of Pen Elm is situated on the main Taunton to Minehead road. In 1873 it was to be sold at auction, comprising a dwelling house with stables, coach house, gardens and orchard, and three cottages with gardens, totalling about 2 a., with 3 a. of arable land on the opposite side of the road.²²⁰ In 1905 it was sold at auction as five lots, comprising the residence of Pen Elm Cottage with about 1 ½ a., four dwelling houses with gardens (one with a shop) and over 2 a. of pasture land on the opposite side of the road.²²¹

²¹⁷ SHC, Q\REL/35/14.

²¹⁸ SHC, DD\L/2/2/7/24.

²¹⁹ SHC, DD\L/2/3/13/1–4.

²²⁰ West Somerset Free Press, 11 Oct. 1873, 1.

²²¹ Taunton Courier 28 Jun. 1905, 1.