

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT

In the Middle Ages Dummer was governed through the manorial courts of East and West Dummer and the hundred court of Bermondspit which met in Nutley. Dummer formed part of the lower tithing of Bermondspit hundred, the hundreds being subdivisions of the county which had their own courts and officers. It had locally chosen tithing men to report infringements of the peace and to administer taxation demands. This was a role filled by prominent men in the community such as Richard Penton a tithingman in the 17th century who was a free tenant with land in both East and West Dummer.<sup>1</sup> All persons between 12 years and 70 years of age were required to attend the court with specific notifications issued to those charged with offences, the overseers of the poor and the churchwardens.<sup>2</sup> In September 1673 the tithingmen of Dummer were summoned to a court leet or sheriffs tourn by the steward of the Bermondspit court with demands for a year's 'Lady' or 'Laudy' money of 5s. 1d., payable by 15 tenants, and for payment of Vicontiel money, a tax collected for the crown.<sup>3</sup> This suggests some overlap in the work of the courts with the hundred court also serving as a leet court, a type of disciplinary court also held by manorial lords.

### Manorial Courts 1530-1730

A series of court rolls from the manors of East and West Dummer survive from the period 1537-1729, all of which appear to be courts baron.<sup>4</sup> The earliest of the 34 rolls is for a court held in 1537 by William Dummer lord of the manor of West Dummer.<sup>5</sup> Even after the manors came into common ownership separate courts were held for the two manors, although they took place on the same day and were presided over by the same steward. The main purpose of the courts was to state the customs of the manor relating to both land tenure and land use and to enforce payment of all monies and performance of services due to the lord.

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<sup>1</sup> HRO, 44M69/G3/145/29; 55M67/M14.

<sup>2</sup> HRO, 55M67/M2; 44M69/G3/145/2; 44M69/G3/145/29.

<sup>3</sup> HRO, 55M67/M2. Lady money may refer to Lady Day 25th March, a quarter day.

<sup>4</sup> HRO, 55M67/3-37.

<sup>5</sup> HRO, 55M67/M30.

Details of land tenure - who held what, by what means and what dues and services were owed - was essential information for the administration of the manor and from time to time was captured by a court of survey. One held for East Dummer in 1655 listed five freeholders, nine copyholders and two tenants with an indenture of lease.<sup>6</sup> A manorial lord could impose entry payments when new tenants entered the manor and a heriot or best beast when an heir to a deceased tenant took over a tenancy. Thus in 1666 when William Vice sold a messuage and land the new owner not only had to swear an oath of fealty to the lord but pay 6s. annually and a heriot of an ox or bull to the value of 30s.<sup>7</sup> whilst in 1680 William Soper, a free tenant in West Dummer, having died, his son William inherited paying the heriot of a cow to the value of 25s.<sup>8</sup> The survey of 1655 for East Dummer shows that changes had occurred from the 'best beast' heriot to monetary payments which varied from £8 to £60, a trend common across the country.

Much of the work of the Dummer courts baron was concerned with agricultural routines associated with the common open fields and commons until 1743 thus the records provide detailed information on farming practices in this period.<sup>9</sup> The courts appointed officers including haywards whose duties were stated in 1688 'to look to the common hedges ... and to the corn and fetch the beasts at evenings'. John Redding, William Bye and William Lover were named as the lord's haywards in 1615 and were empowered to impound the cattle of any person breaking the court's orders. To encourage the haywards in their duties they were allowed to retain one third of the fees paid for the cattle to be released.<sup>10</sup> Other positions such as supervisors of the sheep and cattle on the commons were required to ensure that numbers of animals did not exceed that agreed and the holders were rewarded by receiving the fine of 6*d.* for each animal over the limit, with 6*d.* also paid to the lord.<sup>11</sup> Afferers (assessors) decided the amount of fines for various infringements. In 1609 it was agreed Walter Madgewicke and John Cooper should assess and allot how much every tenant of East Dummer should pay towards the making of a common

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<sup>6</sup> HRO, 55M67/M29.

<sup>7</sup> HRO, 65M72/PZ3.

<sup>8</sup> HRO, 65M72/PZ3.

<sup>9</sup> Above, Economic History.

<sup>10</sup> HRO, 55M67/M16.

<sup>11</sup> HRO, 55M67/M11.

gate called Salt Gate, a sum to be paid promptly with a penalty for refusal of 3s. 8d; co-operation within the manor was essential for its way of life.<sup>12</sup>

Co-operation also existed between the manorial lords as shown in 1554 when William Dummer, lord of West Dummer, with the consent of William Dale, lord of East Dummer, agreed the numbers of animals to be pastured on a yard land<sup>13</sup> and again in 1583 when William Dummer and John Millingate, lord of East Dummer, agreed orders to be kept 'for the common weal, quietness and profit of the tenants and inhabitants of the said parish'.<sup>14</sup> The same court ordered that the three farmers of the parish should pay towards a national tax called the 'fifteenths'. Presumably this referred to the demesne farms of the three manors. In 1666 the tenants of all three manors within the parish were ordered 'to meet at the walnut tree by the church on Tuesday in Rogation week to set out the bounds in difference between party and party'.<sup>15</sup> No court records have been found for the third manor, the Grange. Its inhabitants may have become subject to the West Dummer court once the two manors were in common ownership. As elsewhere, the manorial courts declined following enclosure of the common fields and commons (1743) as the need for communal legislation no longer existed.

## Parish government and officers

Churchwardens and overseers of the poor played an increasingly important role in parish government from the 17th century onwards. What was known as the 'parish vestry' – meetings held in the church vestry (where there was one) and chaired by the rector – dealt with the administration of poor relief, maintenance of highways and other secular affairs as well as church business. Churchwardens' accounts illustrate the width of their responsibilities from paying for ditching at Salt Gate in 1731, mending the Down Gate in 1736 and supporting 12 vagrants passing through the parish in 1749.<sup>16</sup> The vestry minutes of 1886 record the appointments of Mr P. Budd

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<sup>12</sup> HRO, 55M67/M8.

<sup>13</sup> HRO, 55M67/E1.

<sup>14</sup> HRO, 55M67/M35.

<sup>15</sup> HRO, 55M67/M15.

<sup>16</sup> HRO, 65M72/PZ1.

and Mr R. Edward Cobden as overseers for the coming year and Mr M. Batting as Guardian.<sup>17</sup> Poor relief had been removed from parish responsibilities after 1834 so the only extant account books of the overseers for the period of 1922-7 are of more limited interest, payments being made to the Poor Law Union rather than to individuals.<sup>18</sup>

Dummer and Kempshott civil parish was established under the Local Government Act of 1894. Five parish councillors were elected in that year who to an extent represented the broader social status of those involved in local politics: Charles Butt (58) carpenter, Tower Hill Cottage, Thomas Chivers (43) farm labourer, Down Lane, H. Complin, William John Cooper (43) farmer, Grange Farm House and Robert Lockwood (43) retired army captain, Dummer House.<sup>19</sup> In 1913 the five parish councillors were: Montague Billimore (46) florist, Clump House, Thomas Chivers (60) hedger, Dummer, George Page (61) master blacksmith, Dummer, Revd George Jones (69) rector, Sir Richard Rycroft (51) Major, Hants Carabiniers, Dummer House.<sup>20</sup> On both occasions therefore those elected included a spread of occupations and social status offering a wide representation of the community, something that had been hoped for in the creation of this new style of parish government.

During the 20th century the work of the council involved planning and environmental issues as well as the development of leisure facilities. Concerns included telephone and postal facilities, bus services, the problems caused by increasing motor traffic through the village and the impact of the M3 motorway slicing through the north of the parish.<sup>21</sup> The parish council was re-named 'Dummer' to reflect the 1989 transfer of Kempshott to Basingstoke borough.

In 2019 the parish council still consisted of only five members and a clerk despite the wide fluctuations in population that had occurred since 2000. As well as reporting to an annual parish assembly, quarterly newsletters kept parishioners well-informed of

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<sup>17</sup> HRO, 65M72/PZ1.

<sup>18</sup> HRO, 68M72/DU20.

<sup>19</sup> *Hants & Berks Gaz.*, 8 Dec. 1894; *Census*, 1891.

<sup>20</sup> *Hants & Berks Gaz.*, 22 Mar. 1913; *Census*, 1911; *Hants Year Book*, 1912.

<sup>21</sup> Parish council minutes, unpubl.

the council's activities. Whilst responsibility for the Beggarwood ward had transferred to Basingstoke in May 2003, a major consideration related to other housing developments north of the motorway and whether the boundary between the parish and the borough of Basingstoke should be redrawn to reflect the realities of the urban/rural divide.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Julian Jones, *Annual Parish Newsletters, 2003-17*, unpubl.