

Part One.

The Churchyard Fence Lists.

The 1570 Fence List.

The mid-16th century was a traumatic period for churches up and down the land and Broomfield was no exception. At first the Church was loyal to Rome, then in 1533 Henry VIII had himself declared supreme head of the Church in England and new decrees were announced. The church brought in the appropriate changes. Fourteen years later Henry died and under Edward VI new laws were passed; shrines, images and stone altars had to be removed, an English prayer book was introduced. The church duly made the changes. Then, in 1553, Edward died and his Catholic sister Mary became queen; it was back to square one. Altars were rebuilt, images replaced, mass books and crosses had to be purchased. Once again Broomfield's vicar and churchwardens set to and made the changes, but it wasn't to last, for five years later Mary died and her Protestant sister Elizabeth came to the throne.

Elizabeth steered a moderate, middle course in things religious but more changes were inevitable. The poor churchwardens must have wondered when it would all end. In 1563 Broomfield's churchwardens were charged at the Ecclesiastical Court with permitting the bells to be rung "at Halloweentide or at other times unlawful". The superstitious ringing of the bells on Holy Days or the eve of All Souls was no longer permitted.

St. Mary's, Broomfield, like other Essex churches, came under the jurisdiction of the Archdeacon of Essex who from time to time visited his churches to see that all was in order. Often things weren't, especially during the religious turmoil of the 16th century. Repairs were needed, missing items had to be bought, and it may have been one of these visits that triggered action on the churchyard fence for in October 1569 a list was drawn up by the churchwardens to set down once and for all the responsibility for keeping the fence in good repair. The list identified the responsible property, the present occupant, and the precise bit of fence to be maintained. Robert Wood of Butlers was churchwarden at the time and he noted that the record was in accordance "with ancient custom", so the properties named on the list must have been there for a very long time before 1569.

The list was put to the parishioners and two of them objected, perhaps because they thought they had been given an unfair or incorrect length of fence to maintain. This resulted in representations being made to the Archdeacon's court when it met at Great Baddow. Robert Wood went to the court to answer "in the defence of the parish against Richard Evered and William Noke for their parts of fencing". On his return to Broomfield churchwarden Wood claimed the sum of sixpence from the parish for the cost of his dinner at Baddow.

Richard Evered still had to look after about twelve feet of fence but William Noke doesn't appear on the final list. If Richard were partially successful, in having his original length reduced, then Robert Wood would have had to make it up somewhere else; of course Richard may just have lost his appeal.

If William Noke was successful, and it seems at first sight that he was, then someone else must have been given his share, or maybe it was split over several properties.

There is another possibility. It isn't clear from the list whether it was the owner or the occupant who was responsible. In most cases this may have come to the same thing and in cases where it wasn't, as at Patching Hall and the Parsonage, it may have depended on the terms of the lease. Is it likely that Richard Evered was the owner and William Noke the occupant of the property in question and the dispute was over who was responsible if the lease was silent on the matter? Almost certainly not, because Richard Evered's property was in the north west corner of the parish and another record states that William Noke's land was adjacent to Robert Wood's, which was in the centre of the parish.

William Noke, or Nokes, was an interesting character judging by contemporary records. Not of a Broomfield family, no one of that or similar name appears on either the 1524 or 1544 tax lists for Broomfield, or in the pre-1570 parish records. A John Noke was a taxpayer in Chignal St James in 1524 and this could have been William's father. William Noke also owned property in Chelmsford and Writtle, and he must have been living in Chelmsford between 1539 and 1562 because his children were baptised in St Mary's church in Chelmsford during that period. Eight children of William and Joan Noke were baptised there; Joan (1539), William (1541), Edward (1545), Susan (1548), Richard (1550), Ann (1553), Francis (1555) and Elizabeth

(1562). Among the witnesses to the baptism of Francis was Lady Rich of Leez so William seems to have had influential connections. The Chelmsford register also records the burial of two of Noke's servants, John "a servant of Noks" in 1550 and Christopher "servant to William Nokys" in 1553. Noke would have known the family of Broomfield's churchwarden Robert Wood whilst he was in Chelmsford; he was a witness to the baptism of Wood's son William at Chelmsford in 1557.

In the same year that the churchyard fence list came into operation Noke was summoned before the Quarter Sessions in Chelmsford "For giving excess wages to Richard Tanner, his man, to the amount of 53/4d by the year, and to Alice Nevell, his maidservant, to the amount of 33/11d by the year". Both servants had good Broomfield names. Four years later, in 1574, he was up before the court again. "William Nookes of Broomfield does retain singlemen in his service of other towns and does retain them by the day and week to do his work and be not in covenant with them by the year, to the great hindrance of other poor men".

In view of Noke's apparent affluence it is surprising that he appears to have successfully appealed against inclusion on the 1570 fence list. But this may not be so. Two of the properties on that fence list aren't accompanied by the name of an owner or occupier, Patching Hall and the Parsonage. It is known that John Brett was at Patching Hall at that time and Robert Eton had leased the Parsonage from the owner, Lord Rich. This might be a clue. Robert Eton lived at Springfield Hall and he also held

the lease of Springfield Dukes so it is very likely that he leased the Parsonage for its farmland and sub-let the house. Noke might have argued that it was the owner or main lessee and not he who was responsible for the fence. If he was at the Parsonage, and this seems likely, it could account for his name not being on the 1570 list. It might also account for his knowing the owner's wife sufficiently for her to be at his daughter's baptism. Eventually William Noke had a permanent spot in Broomfield for he died in 1583 and was buried in Broomfield churchyard (near the disputed bit of fence, I wonder?). There is no mention of a wife or widow in the Broomfield registers.

The fence list, dated the 2nd October in the eleventh year of the reign of our sovereign lady Elizabeth (1569), was duly entered into the parish register. It was certified as being allowed from the 21st May 1570 and bears the names of Robert Wood, John Brett, John Poole, William Rambe, and the vicar, William Thornton. Little could they have imagined that it would still be read more than 400 years later.

The 1570 list served its purpose for over 100 years. Repairs probably weren't an everyday occurrence and being a paling fence they wouldn't have been costly. From time to time it became necessary to update the list by noting a change of occupant of one of the properties. This was done by writing the new name in the margin against the property concerned. Over the years nearly every property acquired a marginal note and sometimes more than one.

The churchyard fence list may now be redundant as far as

maintaining the fence is concerned (is such a document now legally enforceable?), but it is an invaluable aid when researching the history of Broomfield's buildings because, surprisingly, most of the buildings named on that list can still be identified today. And furthermore, it wasn't the only fence list.

The 1678 Fence List.

The 1570 list served for more than one hundred years because it was the properties that determined the responsibility and not the people, but in 1678 a new list was drawn up. It was written into the churchwarden's account book and at the top of the list was written:

"A noate of the ffencing of the Churchyard of Broomfield according to a noate in the beginning of the booke taken the eleaventh yeare of Queen Elizabeth"

There is no explanation in the account book for the new list and the existing vestry minutes only go back to 1687 so it's not known what prompted it. Certainly there had been more changes of occupancy. Most of the properties were now occupied by people whose names differed from the marginal notes of the old list and there wasn't room for many more alterations. One such newcomer was Thomas Woollard, a native of Chignal St. James, who had arrived in the village and was farming at Broomfield Hall. It was he who in 1700 left the property since known as Woollards on Church Green for the benefit of the poor of Broomfield for ever. In 1673 he was appointed churchwarden and his influence might have played a part in revising the list. Whatever the reason, the churchwardens took care to keep the new list in the same order as the old one.

Thirty-four properties, either buildings or land, had featured on the 1570 list; the two tenements of Lewgers shared a

piece of fence as did Patching Hall and Wood Hall, so there were thirty-two separate sections of fence. The 1678 list had thirty-three sections. There were subtle changes. The two tenements of Lewgers on the 1570 list had by 1678 come under separate owners, William Attwood and Mr. Finch, so they now got separate entries and the one-rod section became two half-rod sections. Sewell's Land, which may have been gifted to the church in the 14th century, had still been known by that name in 1570 but in 1678 it was referred to as the Church Land.

The churchwardens were at pains to see that the properties kept their customary position on the list. At one point the writer started to enter Swan House one place too soon and had to cross it out. It seems that those responsible were also being a little cautious for whereas the 1570 list had been quite definite as to the length allocated to each property the 1678 list inserted "by estimation" against each entry. Someone must have felt the need to check up on the actual length of the churchyard fence for at the bottom of the 1678 list there are two columns of figures corresponding to the individual entries. Here the rods have been converted into yards, feet and inches. The addition is correct though it's not clear why, under the correct "yards" totals of 82 and 60 for each of the two columns, is written 4920 instead of 142. 4920 is 82 times 60, whereas the correct total of 142 is 82 plus 60. It looks as though the writer multiplied instead of added! Across the page, away from these columns, is written "145.2.6" as if somebody had measured the fence and found a small difference between the actual total length and the sum of the individual allocated lengths.

The 1687 Fence List.

In 1687 a new list was drawn up. The first one lasted for more than one hundred years and now there were two within the space of ten years! This was almost certainly due to a visitation by Archdeacon Turner in 1686. Perhaps coincidentally, Broomfield had acquired a new vicar in the previous year, the young and energetic Thomas Cox, who was to be the incumbent for almost 49 years. He and Thomas Woollard were in attendance at the visitation. Many things had been let slip, some more significant than others. Several repairs to the church were needed, there was a great crack in the wall, a buttress needed repairing, and a window was missing some glass. Less spectacular, some pages of the bible had come loose and needed to be fastened, a new prayer book was to be obtained for Revd. Cox and the old one passed to the clerk, and a green cloth was needed for the communion table. Among the shortcomings needed to be put right in and around the church, the report ordered that "the fences of ye Churchyard be repaired by those to whom they belong".

It's rather surprising to find that the 1678 list hadn't resulted in the fence being put into good repair especially if someone had gone to the trouble of measuring it all out at the time. It is possible it was in good repair in 1678 and had deteriorated over the next nine years. Perhaps weather or vandals had broken the fence in the meantime. Whatever the reason, action was called for and the churchwardens had to see to it. The archdeacon had also decided that the "trees and elder

about the church" were to be cut down and the rubbish removed out of the churchyard.

The new list again reflected the changes that had taken place since the last list, over what was a very short timescale. The property that had hitherto been known as "sometime John atte Well's" now became "the Well House" and the Smith family home at How Tye, Parsonage Green was "now Mr Coxes". Priors quickly got a marginal note with the arrival there of the Manwood family. Altogether there were a dozen changes of owner or occupier in the space of nine years, seemingly a remarkable turnover in such a very short time.

As with the earlier lists, the occupants of the Parsonage, Patching Hall and Broomfield Hall weren't shown. Tenants would have occupied all these and presumably it was a condition of the tenancies as to whether the occupier or owner took on the responsibility for the appropriate bit of fence. One would like to think that things now settled down, there are no marginal notes against the 1687 entries and perhaps there was no quibbling over who was responsible.



Part of page one of the 1687 list

The 1735 Fence List.

Thomas Cox died in January 1734 and from 1734 to 1738 the Rev. Philip Morant, the celebrated historian of Essex, was vicar of Broomfield. He used the parish register to set down a history of the church and around the same time he re-wrote the churchyard fence list, again bringing the occupants up to date. He hasn't dated his list but it looks to be during the earlier part of his incumbency, and it must be between 1734 and 1738, so 1735 is a reasonable date for it.

Morant's list was a cursory affair, quite unlike the

previous ones and without the meticulous detail that might have been expected of such an eminent historian. Of course, he was then in the early stages of his career, more than thirty years were to pass before he produced his definitive "History and Antiquities of the County of Essex", and his list may have been little more than an update made for his own interest rather than prompted by another visitation from the archdeacon. In writing it up he gives it a different title, "The Fence of Broomfield Churchyard, settled by the Archdeacon and Parishioners A.D. 1570".

If Morant's list was ever used it would have meant some changes to the bit of fence apportioned to most of the properties because he didn't keep exactly to the established order. Lewgers, which had been one unit in 1570 and two in 1678 and 1686, was now back to one again. The third property on the old

lists had, like the Pulling House, belonged to the Freeman family, and Morant included it with the Pulling House on his list. More significantly, he moved the Parsonage way up the order so if this list was ever used most properties would now have a different bit of fence to look after. Morant surely made a mistake here and it is doubtful if the 1735 list was ever used to determine responsibility because the next re-write, in 1843, put the Parsonage back to where it belonged.

Morant also cut out most of the verbiage that had appeared on the earlier lists, reducing it to a simple list of property names, owners/occupants, and length of fence to be maintained. Nor was he as diligent as earlier writers in naming the people responsible and in addition to the Parsonage, Patching Hall and Broomfield Hall, he put no names against Belsted Hall, Swan House, or Brownings.

Perhaps the most interesting thing about Morant's list is that in abbreviating the titles of the various properties he gives them the name which would have been in use in 1735, and so instead of "The tenement sometime Brownes and now....." Morant merely wrote "The Angel". Woollards also made its appearance in the same way, as did two properties less easily recognised, Rambes and Ostlers. And a property which had hitherto been only identified by the owner or occupier's name was now Walnut Trees in Great Waltham, right on the Broomfield border and with some of its land in Broomfield. This was the property which Richard Evered owned when he made his objection to the original list in 1569 and raises the possibility that his case was that the house wasn't in Broomfield and therefore not liable. But some of the land was and so he was liable.

Less than thirty years after Morant made his list someone made a rough sketch of Broomfield church. Signed "R.G." and dated 1763 the church, though crudely drawn, is still recognizable today. The fence is also shown and the vertical lines suggest it was still of wood paling construction.

Like the 1570 list Morant's effort also lasted for more than one hundred years, the next and final revision taking place in 1843. So for nearly 300 years the buildings of Broomfield had kept their means of identification. And who knows for how long before 1570? Now, more than 400 years since that first list was drawn up, several of the buildings have been demolished and a few can no longer be recognised under the names given to them, but most are still there and many still bear their same name.

The Manor of Bromfield Church-yard
 leased by the Archdeacon of Bathwicke
 2nd 6th 1570

✓ Freeman's - the Stile - 4 f. 2. 1/2 a Rod, now a Rod
 ✓ Wells - M^r Marsh - a Rod. And all the East side

Entrisles - Aug. Finch - a Rod.
 Botlers - M^r Scratton - a Rod.
 Lewgers - M^r Lake - a Rod.
 Priors - M^r Manwood - 2 Rod.
 Branch-horse - M^r Lee - 1/2 a Rod.
 Belsted hall - a Rod, & half.
 The Parish's land - the Church-gate, & ^{down} Church-gate.
 Waterhouse - M^r Marsh - 1/2 a Rod. See over the Church-gate.
 x The Angel - M^r Manwood - 1/2 a Rod.
 Swan-house - 4 foot & a half.
 The Parsonage - a Rod.
 Glovers - M^r Brice's - a Rod.
 Rambs - D^o - half a Rod.
 Brownings - 1/2 a Rod.
 Offlers - M^r Manwood - 6 feet.
 Woodlands - The Parish - 1/2 a Rod.
 Aylett - M^r Marsh - 1/2 a Rod.
 Larsons - W^m Marriage - a Rod.
 Tracy's - Jo. Bodey - a Rod.
 Choppins - Jo. Stoves - a Rod.
 Sprichells - M^r Barrey - a Rod.
 Gubert

Morant's list of c1735 was a much more cursory affair.

The 1843 Fence List.

The final (to date) revision of the churchyard fence list took place in 1843. It seems to have been at the instigation of the churchwarden, Mr Joseph Wells. Mr Wells produced a paper setting down the list as he now saw it, taking into account the changes that had taken place since the last list was produced. Three notes appear at the head of the new list, viz:

"Copy of Mr Wells' paper, respecting the Church Yard Fence".

"An Acct of the Church Yard Fence, as settled and agreed upon in 1843 by Mr Wells on the part of the Church, with the parishioners"

"N.B. Two or three changes of occupancy having occurred, the names are altered".

This is a much more formalised list of four columns; there is a sequential number, used for the first time, the title of the property and its occupant, the length of fence for which it was responsible, and the owner. Mr Wells sensibly ironed out a few anomalies that had built up over the years. The Freeman family had lived at the Pulling House and had separate entries for that house, another property once known as Podinges, and their adjacent land. Now the other property (Podinges) had become known as Wood House land (thus helping to identify it), and the land adjacent to the Pulling House was by 1843 shown as a market garden.

Woollards had become the Parish Workhouse but by

1843 it had been converted into four small cottages for the use of the poor. Clearly it was inappropriate for them to have responsibility for the churchyard fence so Woollards' spot was allocated to the relatively new property, Broomfield Lodge. Less obviously, and rather confusingly, Mr Wells shuffled the later order about somewhat. On the plus side for later researchers he gave the owners and occupiers of Patching Hall, Broomfield Hall, the Parsonage, Belsted Hall, Swan House, Walnut Trees, and Brownings, which Morant had omitted.

By 1843 the Christy family was established in Broomfield. The head of a branch of the family, Thomas Christy, was a devout Quaker who over the next thirty years had several differences with both the church and the Wells family who lived at Broomfield Lodge. He bought the Plough public house (now the Gables) from the Chelmsford brewers Wells and Perry purely in order to close it down and quibbled with Wells over the price. He waged a fervent campaign against the vicar's proposals to build a church school in Broomfield (the Quakers had already provided a non-denominational school in the village), and he strongly objected to paying the tithe on his property to the church. However, there is no record of him objecting to his being made responsible for Glovers, which he is shown as occupying, and a couple of cottages, Burnt House and Cocks. The latter was most probably the house once belonging to the Smith family at Parsonage Green which had become Mr Cox's on the 1678 list.

Thomas Christy's main residence, Brooklands, was not on the 1843 list. At first sight this is odd because it had been recently built on the site of Entwistles, alias Biglands, which had always been present on the fence lists and was indeed still there but shown as being in the ownership of the Finch family. In 1843 Susannah and Mary Finch were the owners of the property adjacent to Brooklands, now known as The Gables, as well as property opposite Brooklands. However, Entwistles property was on both sides of the road so perhaps the Biglands length of fence may have been given to the Finch sisters because the original house was on their side.

A drawing of Broomfield church, dated 1856, shows that at that date the churchyard still had its wooden paling fence. By the 1870s, however, an early photograph shows that the paling fence had gone, replaced for some of its length at least by the flint stone wall that is there today. Given a more permanent structure, the need for constant repair had gone and with it the need for the Broomfield properties to share the responsibility for such repairs.

And so the list of 1843 was the last of its kind. The lists give a valuable insight into the buildings of Broomfield over a very long time span, going back more than 400 years, enabling some sort of picture to be built up of those properties. They also say something of the people who were living in Broomfield over that same time span, how frequently those properties changed hands, and where the people came from and to where they moved.

Copy of Mr. Wells' paper respecting the Churchyard Fence, -
 "An Act of the Churchyard Fence, as settled and agreed upon in 1843 by Mr. Wells on the
 part of the Church, with the Parishioners."
 In two or three changes of sections having remained, the names are attached.

No.	Description	Length	Owner
1.	The Tenement called Pelling House, adjoining the Church Yard at the south east corner, maketh and repairs	4 1/2 Feet	Hannah Midgley.
2.	Milk House maketh from No. 1, towards the west, fence and small gate.	1 1/2 Rod.	Mr & Mrs Harringer.
3.	Woodhouse land, now occupied by Joseph Wells, from No. 2, westward, maketh	The large gate	Thomas Hedges.
4.	Biglands, or Salswatha, occupied by Mr W. Frick maketh from No. 3 westward.	1 1/2 Rod.	Robert and Susannah May Frick.
5.	Butler's mansion, occupied by Mr Deabrook maketh from No. 4	1 1/2 Rod.	Ebra Seabrook
6.	Butlers, occupied by Mr James Christy, maketh from No. 5	half a Rod.	James Christy.
7.	Brownings, occupied by Mr James Christy, maketh from No. 6	half Rod.	James Christy.
8.	Priory, occupied by Mr W. Bolt, maketh from No. 7	one Rod.	Thomas Christy.
9.	Spinch House, or King's Arms (Mr D. Bolt) maketh from No. 8	four and a half Rods.	Orlando Bolt.
10.	Belsham Halls (two farms) maketh in equal proportions, occupied by the Proprietors	one Rod & a half	1 Belt and 1 Belt & a half
11.	The Church land, occupied by J. W. Bolt, maketh the fence from the gate, and also the gate.	half Rod.	Mr Church.
12.	The water house and mill, occupied by Capt. W. W. Brown, maketh from No. 11	half Rod.	

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No.	Original Ten, John Handman, market from 1844	Buyer	Original Ten
12	Swan House, occupied by Dr. Thomas Schick, market from 1818	John A. Kelly	James G. White
13	Gleason, now occupied by Dr. James White, market from 1818	John A. Kelly	James G. White
14	Swan House, and Cook's, now Dr. Thomas Schick's college, market from 1818	John A. Kelly	James G. White
15	Phalanx, occupied by Captain W., market from 1818	John A. Kelly	James G. White
16	Overfield Lodge, now occupied by Dr. James White, market from 1818	John A. Kelly	James G. White
17	St. George's, now occupied by Dr. James White, market from 1818	John A. Kelly	James G. White
18	St. George's, now occupied by Dr. James White, market from 1818	John A. Kelly	James G. White
19	St. George's, now occupied by Dr. James White, market from 1818	John A. Kelly	James G. White
20	St. George's, now occupied by Dr. James White, market from 1818	John A. Kelly	James G. White
21	St. George's, now occupied by Dr. James White, market from 1818	John A. Kelly	James G. White
22	St. George's, now occupied by Dr. James White, market from 1818	John A. Kelly	James G. White
23	St. George's, now occupied by Dr. James White, market from 1818	John A. Kelly	James G. White
24	St. George's, now occupied by Dr. James White, market from 1818	John A. Kelly	James G. White
25	St. George's, now occupied by Dr. James White, market from 1818	John A. Kelly	James G. White
26	St. George's, now occupied by Dr. James White, market from 1818	John A. Kelly	James G. White
27	St. George's, now occupied by Dr. James White, market from 1818	John A. Kelly	James G. White
28	St. George's, now occupied by Dr. James White, market from 1818	John A. Kelly	James G. White
29	St. George's, now occupied by Dr. James White, market from 1818	John A. Kelly	James G. White
30	St. George's, now occupied by Dr. James White, market from 1818	John A. Kelly	James G. White
31	St. George's, now occupied by Dr. James White, market from 1818	John A. Kelly	James G. White

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Part Two.

The People of Broomfield.

The early records.

The earliest Broomfield names that have come down to us aren't very informative. The first written mention was in 1086 or thereabouts, the Domesday Book, and gives the names of the holders of the manors as they had been in 1066 before the Normans arrived, and who held the manors on behalf of their lords in 1086. The 1066 residents of Patching Hall, Broomfield Hall and Belsted Hall were Saxons. Three shared the lands of Patching Hall; they were Edward, Segar, and Borda. Saulfus (Seawolf?) was at Broomfield Hall and Godric Poinc was at Belsted Hall.

By 1086 Walter held Broomfield Hall and part of Patching Hall for his lord Geoffrey de Mandeville, while Ralph, son of Tuold, and Picot held the other two parts of Patching Hall, owing allegiance to Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, and to Robert Gernon. Belstead Hall was also split, part being held by Richard for William de Warren, and part belonged to Robert, son of Gobert.

Geoffrey de Mandeville, William de Warren, Robert Gernon and Bishop Odo were all powerful Norman landowners who each possessed a number of manors. The Broomfield bits were just a part of their real estate and they had no particular attachment to Broomfield. For the lower orders surnames weren't yet fixed and names like Richard and Walter don't help

in establishing families then living in Broomfield. The rather unusual name of Picot did live on, his part of the manor of Patching Hall was for long afterwards known as Patching Picot.

Very occasionally a name occurs in early records relating to Broomfield, perhaps referring to a conveyance of land, but between 1288 and 1291 inquiries were made into the state of the church and its ornaments and the names of several parishioners were appended to the reports. Some weren't long lasting Broomfield names, e.g. Selers, Lucas, Poynter, le Despenser, Fixton, but some did reappear - Appleton, Benyt, Faber, Church, Fulke, Smyth, and Wheeler.

In 1319 a tax was imposed on all lay householders, i.e. excluding the Church. The very poor were also exempt. The tax gatherers compiled lists of the taxpayers in each village and the list for Broomfield is perhaps the first roll call of villagers with recognizable surnames. Some of these names also give an indication of the antiquity of the origins of Broomfield's buildings.

The biggest taxpayers were, not surprisingly, the Lord Thomas de Mandeville (for Broomfield Hall) and Isabel de Patchying (for Patching Hall). John at Melne (Mill), Robert at Welle, Walter le Wheeler, and Lanisande can be identified with Broomfield Mill, the Well House, Wheelers, and Lanzens, all names which appear on the fence lists. And Sewal de Brumfield may well be the fellow who gave land to the church, also mentioned on the fence lists. Other names on the tax list, Isabella Sarich (Surridge?), John Oplton (Appleton), Walter Benyt (Bennett), William Sparke, Ralph at Berne (Barn), Geoffrey le Bailiff and Sewal le Palmer don't seem to have left a

lasting impression, and Annabel le Smythe (Smith) had a name so common that it may or may not have been related to later Smiths in Broomfield. Henry Rauf 's (Rolfe) surname does crop up again, on the 1570 fence list.

Even at this early date there were connections with neighbouring villages. In 1319 Ralph Chopyn was at Chignal, Abel le Boteler was at Springfield, and Robert Partrich was at Great Waltham; and Chobbings, Butlers and Partridge Green all had their bit of Broomfield's churchyard fence to look after.

In 1327 a tax was levied for the defence of the realm against the Scots, another lay subsidy like the 1319 one. With a gap of only eight years several of the 1319 names appear again. Lawrence Faber and John Church, whose surname had been on the church reports of forty years earlier, but were missing from the 1319 tax list, turn up again in 1327. A couple of new names appeared, John Baldwin and William atte Priors. The former didn't leave his name to Broomfield but William would have been living at the property of the Priory of Blackmore, which later appeared on the fence lists as Priors.

As far back as the 14th century Broomfield was an attractive place for the merchants and professional men of nearby Chelmsford. In 1362 Richard Stacey, a Chelmsford attorney, bought a house and land in Broomfield, the origin of Stacey's Farm. He obviously kept his papers at the house, or so the local peasantry must have thought, for in the peasant's revolt of 1381 they broke into his house with the intention of destroying his charters and documents. In 1402 Richard Glover, the son of Robert Glover of Chelmsford bought a house and 7 acres of land from Robert Fowler; this became known as

Glovers. Richard's father was, as the name implies, a glove maker. He had premises in Chelmsford High Street. In 1388 the father had been accused before the justices of the King's Bench of buying twenty sacks of wool using false balances, getting sixteen pounds of wool per sack and paying for only fourteen. It didn't seem to affect his prosperity and when he died he left a charge on his property to pay for prayers to be said for his soul. His Chelmsford property was on the site of what became Bond's department store and is now Debenhams.

Adam Gynes was a Chelmsford ropemaker and a prominent citizen of the town. He was a chief pledge at the manor court for at least 28 years. In 1419 he was chosen to supervise all victuals sold in the market, an early market inspector, and in 1421 he was chosen to be constable. Adam owned valuable property on a prestigious site in the High Street near the market cross (now the site of Duffield solicitors). At some time a member of the Gynes family moved to Broomfield for in 1482 Andrew Gynes left a bequest for the repair of the passing bell in Broomfield church and in 1570 Henry Gynes was at the Well House.

The Scraffields were another Chelmsford family who moved out to Broomfield. When Simon Scraffield died in 1557 he left a bequest of 26/8d a year from his land for the "lame and bedrid" of Chelmsford. He had property on what later became the corner of New London Road and High Street, now a jeweller's shop. The family also owned land in Springfield and along Broomfield Road, the latter being the present site of the Quaker burial ground and the petrol station at the corner of Swiss Avenue. By 1524 a member of the family, William Scraffield, had bought the property in Broomfield

known then as Nevilles and now known as Scravels.

One of the most prominent Chelmsford families for around 300 years, perhaps second only to the Mildmays, was that of Wallenger. Hilda Grieve, in her definitive history of Chelmsford, *The Sleepers and the Shadows*, makes many references to the Wallengers. Their family mansion stood in a prominent position facing the conduit in the town centre; it was replaced by the Corn Exchange and now by the precinct and Chancellor Hall. By 1570 Thomas Wallenger was the owner of Priors in Broomfield.

What made Broomfield so appealing to Chelmsfordians? As early as the 14th century Chelmsford's town centre was filling up and a pretty noisome place it was becoming, with drainage flowing down the middle of the high street, and shopkeepers and stallholders leaving their refuse in the road outside their premises. Broomfield on the other hand offered space, room for a larger house with acres of land, and still within easy reach of the business in Chelmsford. But although some Chelmsford merchants left their names for posterity with their acquisition of property in Broomfield they rarely founded a line that was to last through the ages.

Baptismata.

Thomas Poole was baptised the 1st day of January.
 Joane Welle was bap. the 2nd day of January.
 Richard Freeman was baptised the 3rd day of January.
 Muriel West was bap. the 2nd day of February.
 Rose Court was baptised the 5th of February.
 Alice Hammet was bap. the 4th of March.
 John Bonner was baptised the 22nd of June. 1546
 Elizabeth A Dool was bap. the 14th of September.
 Joane Scrabill was bap. the 25th of September.
 Joane Wapler was bap. the 8th of November.
 John Bretton was baptised the same day of November.

Sepult.

Richard Scrabill was buried the 13th day of August.
 Thomas A Dool was buried the 22nd of August.
 John Walle was buried the 15th day of September.
 Thomas Bigland was buried the 7th day of October. 1547.
 Anne Baker was buried the 7th day of October.
 Elizabeth Walle was buried the 12th day of November.
 John Cording was buried the 20th of November.
 John Dales was buried the 7th day of September.

Nuptie 1547.

John Bonner was married unto Joane Dool the 12th of September.
 Richard Steven was married unto Joane Walle the 28th of June.

Bap: 1547.

Ann Biglam was baptised the 15th day of October. 1547.
 Richard Kere was baptised the 16th of October. 1548.

Broomfield's parish register. Part of page 1 (1546-1547)

Several of the prominent names of the period - Poole, Scravell, Bigland, Bretton, Bonner - appear on this page.

The 16th Century - All Change.

The Broomfield parish registers date from 1546 and from then on it is possible to get a good idea of the family names in the village. Shortly before the registers started the lay subsidies, more tax gathering, for 1524 and 1544, help to set the scene for the arrival of the registers. In 1524 there were 36 entries on the Broomfield tax list and 32 different surnames. The names were almost entirely different to those of 1319 and 1327, only Wheeler and the ubiquitous Smith were still present. Twenty years later there were 41 entries and 28 different names on the tax list, and of the 32 names of 1524 21 no longer appear. In other words, only eleven of the 32 tax-paying family names present in 1524 were there, or at any rate paying tax, 20 years later.

The tax-payers were likely to be the occupants of the larger properties in Broomfield and so it might be expected that the names on the 1544 tax list would be very similar to those on the 1570 churchyard fence list. And yet of the 28 names in 1544 only six are on the fence list 26 years later; Lewger (Lewgers), Poole (Partridge Green), Rambe (Parsonage Green), Goodeve (Crouch House/Kings Arms), Wollward/Hayward (Ayletts), and Choppin (Chobbings).

The pattern of change continued. There were 21 different names on the 1570 fence list, excluding Lord Rich of Leez and the vicar, William Thornton, but only two of these, Boosey and Poole, are on a Broomfield tax list for 1636, less than 70 years later. There were two other names present at both dates. The occupant of Patching Hall wasn't named in 1570 but the Brett family was living there then and they were

still there in 1636. And the Wollward family regularly appeared in the parish register as “Wollward alias Hayward”. In 1570 there was a Wollward on the list and in 1636 there was a Hayward. Poole is the only surname to appear on the 1524 and 1544 tax lists, the 1570 fence list and the 1636 tax list. Broomfield seems to have been a rather unsettled community.

Not all the residents of Broomfield had their names recorded on the tax lists. There was a means test of sorts and those adjudged too poor didn't pay and so weren't listed. So maybe it was only the relatively wealthy who came and went while the lesser folk stayed put. The parish registers didn't discriminate, however, and a more settled pattern might have been expected from the folk who weren't so able to move from place to place. Yet a detailed look at the registers suggests otherwise.

Using the parish registers to analyse the occurrence of names is an inexact method. Marriages were typically at the bride's church so the groom may have been from another parish. Occasionally both parties came from outside the parish. Births and deaths were more reliable indicators, though here too there were outsiders from time to time. Sometimes travelling folk, as they were known, gave birth or died in the parish. Sometimes a person was buried in Broomfield because his or her ancestors had been buried there. What follows is therefore not completely accurate but in the first 25 years of the parish register (1546-1570) there were some 89 different surnames that could refer to people living in Broomfield. During the next 25 years there were 74 different names of which 37, just 50%, had occurred in the first 25-year period.

Among the names in these first two periods there are some familiar ones from the various tax and fence lists; Poole (Partridge Green), Freeman (Pulling House, now Bromfields/Vineries), Rambe (Parsonage Green), Smith (How Tye), Wood (Butlers), Hayward alias Wollward (Ayletts), Neville (Swan House), Brett (Patching Hall), Putto (Water House/Mill). The Boosey family was in Broomfield by 1570 but didn't appear in the register until 1572. Some significant pre-1571 names, Bigland, Scravell, Welde, Choppin, Lewger, don't occur in the second 25-year period, nor do they re-occur later, so those families had either died out or left the parish. Some of the property owners could of course have been absentee landlords, perhaps living in Chelmsford or the Walthams. The great majority of names in the register of that period weren't on the fence list but this is only to be expected because the labourers would have far outnumbered the merchants and gentry.

An Expanding

Community.

Three names, which never turned up on the tax lists, or on the fence lists, were nevertheless regular contributors to the parish register. Turner first appeared in 1551, Clarke in 1552, and Harris in 1553. All three names might have been long established by then for it could well be that they didn't have any births or deaths in the short period from the start of the registers in 1546 to 1551-3. And all three names continued to appear, right up to the 20th century and now into the 21st. One of them, Harris, turns up far more often than any other and by the 19th century had split into several branches within the parish.

The Broomfield parish registers are not a completely reliable guide to the parishioners. One category of resident, though with an unbroken presence in Broomfield from the 17th century up to the present day, scarcely gets a mention in the registers. These were the Quakers, or Society of Friends, dissidents who had their own records and their own burial ground and it so happens that the Marriage family, for centuries one of Broomfield's most prominent families, were Quakers. Late in the 18th century the Gopsill and Jesper families arrived in Broomfield. By the early years of the 19th century another prominent Quaker family, the Christys, joined them. Other families who came to live in Broomfield, the Warners, Claytons, Impeys and Botts, were Quakers too. All of which meant that many records of baptism, marriage and burial in Broomfield escaped the church registers.

Any record of the history of Broomfield's buildings and its people would be incomplete without noting the part in village life played by the Quakers. The Marriage family has at some time been associated with at least 9 of the 32 properties on the 1570 churchyard fence list; Broomfield Hall, Broomfield Mill, Partridge Green, Lanzens, Parsonage, Well House, Ayletts, Scravels and Chobbings. The Christy family was also associated with 9: Patching Hall, Gutters, Glovers, Scravels, Priors, Brooklands, Cocks, Brownings, and Butlers. And the Gopsill family were associated with Swan House, Pulling House, Partridge Green, and the Kings Arms.

Outdwellers always played a part in the affairs of Broomfield. The lords of the manors, the Warrens, Gernons, de Mandevilles, Bouchiers, the Lords Rich, and the Olmius family, Lords Waltham, had their seats elsewhere; and apart from a branch of the de Mandevilles who were for a time at Broomfield Hall, it is unlikely that they ever lived in Broomfield. The Everard and Tufnell families were based at Langleys in Great Waltham and at various times owned property in Broomfield; William Everard was at Staceys in 1570, Sir Richard Everard owned Hunwickes (Broomfield Place) and some of the land belonging to the Tufnells Walnut Tree Farm lay in Broomfield.

The pattern of change continued with the passing years. In the 25 years from 1653 to 1678, when another churchyard fence list was drawn up, of 66 different surnames no less than 48 were new. In the next 25-year period, of 89 different surnames there were again 48 newcomers. Into the 18th century the number of different names, and the number of entries in the registers, increased, no doubt reflecting an increase

in the population. There were 108 different surnames probably attributable to Broomfield residents in the 25 years from 1729 to 1754 of which 59, over half, were recent additions. Of that 108 only 16 had occurred in the period 1546 to 1570. Moving forward to the end of the century the changes become even more dramatic; for another 25 year period, 1788-1812, of 158 surnames 112 were recent additions and of those 158 only 11 had occurred in the 50 years from 1546 to 1596.

What then is a typical Broomfield surname? This is a difficult question to answer because there has for centuries been a movement of people around adjacent communities, between Broomfield, Chignal, Springfield, Great Waltham, Little Waltham and of course Chelmsford. The merchants and gentry and their children buying or leasing new property, the labourers moving to where work was available. The same names occur again and again in these adjacent parishes.

In the 16th century Bigland, Bonner, Boosey, Bretton, Brett, Clarke, Devenish, Force, Harris, Hayward alias Wollward, Hunwicke, Motley, Nevill, Poole, Ramb, Rolfe, Smith alias Salmon, Turner and Wealde were among the established names. In the next century there was, amongst others, Allen, Ashby, Barnard, Brightman, Browne, Emson, Godsave alias Goodeve, Ostler, Stokes, Stonard, Stubbings, Turnidge, Vincent, Westwood and Woollard.

Some Broomfield names.



Walter Harris
Tunbridge

Thomas



Donald Clark
Fred Turner

During the 18th century the Gopsill and Marriage families became established in Broomfield and amongst other names new to the registers were Bright, Choate, Cornell, Hawkes, Hill and Hills, Middleditch, Perry, Pitts, Sorrell and Wright. And around the turn of that century and into the 19th century the number of entries in the parish registers grew and more new names appeared; Bateman, Bradley, Dowsett, Hardy, Jiggins, Playle, Skingley, Suckling, Tunbridge and Wilkinson to name but a few.

Copeman, Ellis, Hagger, Ketley, Parsons and Wells became established names.

For centuries Broomfield's population would most probably have been stable, conditioned by the available land and the available work. There were 36 tenants on the Broomfield manors in 1066 and 33 twenty years later. If each tenancy represented a family then Broomfield may have had a population of around 150. The tax returns of 1319 and 1327 give 17 and 14 taxpayers but this doesn't give any indication of how many didn't pay tax. Nevertheless there is no feeling of a dramatic increase in the population. There may have been a dip around 1348-49 when the Black Death struck but this was probably made good by the end of that century.

The decay of the manorial system changed the nature of land tenure; the yeoman farmers rather than the lord of the manor employed labourers in the fields but while farming remained labour intensive, and the major occupation in the parish, the population needed to support it would have remained steady. The taxpayers on the returns for 1524 and 1544 do show a significant increase over those of the 14th century, 36 and 42 respectively, and these are roughly comparable to the

properties on the 1570 fence list. Since the labourer in his cottage wasn't on the 1570 list it can be fairly assumed that the number of families then living in Broomfield was much larger. The 89 different surnames, which occur over a 25-year, span at that time may suggest around 100 families - more than one family might have had the same surname - giving a population of around 400.

Infant mortality rates may have fluctuated slightly over the years but until the advances in medicine in the 19th century there was a steady incidence of infant burials in the register. The increase in wealth over the centuries and the social status that went with it no doubt increased the demand for servants, maids, cooks, footmen, gardeners, etc., and this may have contributed to a rise in the population although by 1801 it was still only 467. Ten years later, still before mechanisation had an effect on those working the land, Broomfield's population had risen to 543 and there then followed a period of significant increase until by 1851 the population stood at 851, occupying 180 houses. Over the next forty years it steadied out somewhat and in 1891 it was just under 900.

The 20th century saw a more rapid increase despite the reduction in numbers working on the land. The new industries in Chelmsford were hungry for labour and Broomfield was conveniently close. By 1915 the vicar was quoted in a local newspaper as saying that billeting 600 soldiers in a village of 1,200 souls was "far too many" and by 1931 the population had risen to 1,396. There was a dip in the 1930s when the Broomfield boundary was moved from Kings Road to the bottom of Gutters Hill. Land in the south of the parish, and a chunk of its population, moved into Chelmsford, but this was

only a temporary setback for by 1951 the population was up to 2,317. As time passed Broomfield proved to be very convenient for commuting to London from Chelmsford railway station and by 1971 the population had reached 3,844. In 1991 3,911 people were living in 1,382 dwellings in the parish and the acreage of Broomfield stood at 747 hectares, or 1,846 acres.

Other significant factors helped to swell the population. Broomfield Hospital, originally built for tuberculosis patients in the 1930s, became a major general hospital, replacing smaller units in the county, and staff needed accommodation. The general increase in demand for housing throughout the south-east of the country was felt in Broomfield and new developments, as well as infilling, took place.

The second half of the 20th century saw the population, and its diversity, proceed apace. The electoral roll for the year 2000 recorded just over 1,250 different surnames in Broomfield, a far cry from the 89 of the 16th century or even the 158 of the early 19th century. As to its diversity, Broomfield had become truly cosmopolitan due largely to the people staffing the hospital, with names from all over the world. And in the parish in general the names represented all parts of the United Kingdom. Before 1812 the Celtic fringe had not reached Broomfield, not a single Mac in 270 years of parish registers, yet by 2000 there were 29 separate names bearing the Mac or Mc prefix.

The spelling of names in the parish registers depended on the whim or the competence of the vicar at the time and in the early registers the same family might have had their name recorded in several different ways. Some would have stuck and so on the electoral roll for 2000 there are several instances where slightly different surnames have a common root, e.g. Bower(s), Brooke(s), Brown(e), Burrell(s), Clark(e), Cook(e), Davi(e)s, Down(e)s, Dunn(e), Gard(i)ner, Gower(s), Griffith(s), Hall(s), Hill(s), Humphrey(s), Knight(s), Lyon(s), Moore(s), Nichol(l)s, Rollin(g)son, Sa(u)nders, Spark(e)s, Wood(s).

The common Broomfield names of the 16th century that occurred consistently thereafter were still the common names of 2000, with 33 Smith residences, 16 Clark(e)s, 14 Turners, and 8 Harrises. Other common names in 2000 with long Broomfield connections were Wood(s) 12 residences, Hill(s) 11, Brown(e) 9, Stubbings and Wright 7, Edwards, Ellis, Scott and Taylor 6. Such long running surnames are now but a small minority of the total population and such is the mobility of the population that this trend is unlikely to be reversed.

Christian names have to some extent varied with the fashion of the times, although in the earlier records it is apparent that some names were associated with their families, children bearing the same Christian names as the parents or grandparents. To what extent the names reflected the dedication of the local church is, so far as girls are concerned, a matter of speculation. Mary has always been a popular girls name and this popularity, together with Elizabeth, is revealed in the parish registers. It may or may not have been because the church was dedicated to St Mary.

Boys names followed the same family trend as the girls, with William, John and Thomas being very common. However there is one significant difference. Broomfield church was originally dedicated to St Lawrence and a chapel to St Lawrence was for centuries a part of the church. This name was never widely popular and after 1700 ceases to feature in the registers but it does occur frequently in the early entries, particularly among the old Broomfield families, and was used by them for several generations. The Smith (alias Salmon) family of How Tye (alias Parsonage Green), the Glasscocks at Priors, the Pooles at Partridge Green, the Puttos at the Mill; Porter, Binder, Rochell, Choppin, and Polley all had a Lawrence or two in their family. This must surely have been associated with the church's dedication. Now it seems that fashion is the main consideration.

* * * * *

More Broomfield names.





George **Parsons**

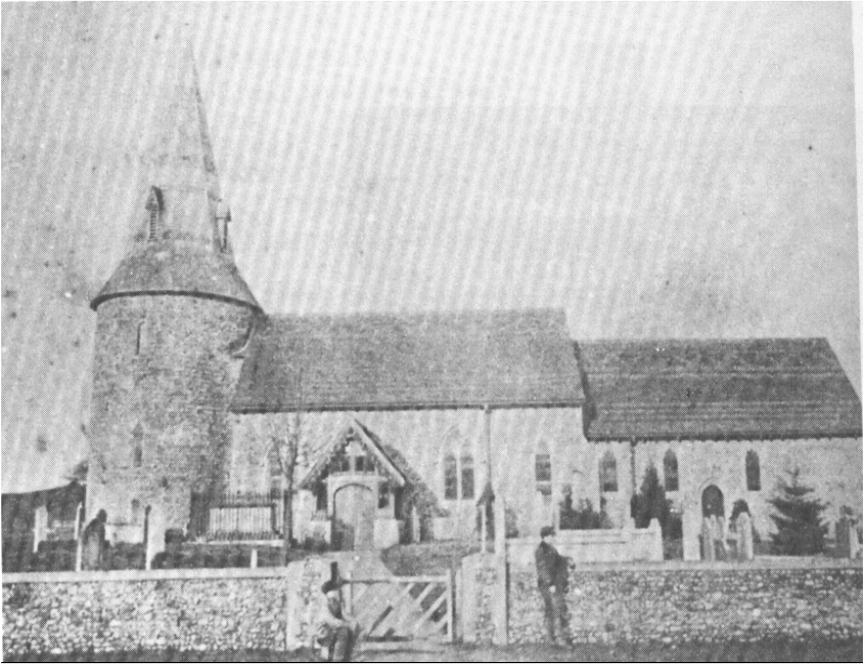
Walter **Hagger**

Part Three.

The Buildings of Broomfield.

1.

Broomfield Parish Church.



Once dedicated to St Leonard, and for long St Mary's church, it is now the church of St Mary and St Leonard.

The church doesn't get a mention on the churchyard

fence lists but it is central to Broomfield's story besides being the oldest building in the parish. Its history goes back to Norman times, some would say even earlier.

There has been speculation that the present church was built on the site of an earlier Saxon church but to date no firm evidence has emerged to support this. Broomfield Hall, adjacent to the church, was a Saxon manor and certainly Christianity reached Essex with the arrival of the Celtic monk Cedd from Northumbria in 654 A.D. However, by 870 the pagan Danes had arrived and, although the Saxons remained, Essex became a part of the Danelaw. Subsequently the Saxons reasserted themselves but there is little evidence of widespread church building before the Norman Conquest of 1066. Having said that, some experts have suggested that many more churches have an Anglo-Saxon origin than was formerly appreciated. Nevertheless it seems that only about 20 churches in Essex have evidence to show that they were established before the Conquest and Broomfield isn't one of them.

At the time of the Conquest Saulf (Seawolf) held Broomfield Hall, almost certainly as a vassal of Ansgar the Staller. Since this was but one of many manors owned by Ansgar, and not his main hall, he probably wouldn't have had need of a church here. Ansgar had larger holdings at (Saffron) Walden and at (Great) Waltham yet neither seems to show evidence of a Saxon foundation, nor is there any mention of a church at Broomfield in Domesday.

The Saxons were well established in Essex long before the Conquest, especially along the river valleys, and the Broomfield area was no exception, but a settlement doesn't necessarily imply a church or chapel. Edwards (A History of Essex) suggests that many Saxon churches were probably built of wood and thus have not survived and it is just possible that Broomfield was one of them. . If they had been built of stone then surely the Christian Normans would not have needed to raze them to the ground and then rebuilt them. Curiously, Professor J F Potter cites among other pointers to Saxon churches "a chancel narrower than the nave by the wall thickness" and Broomfield's is just that! However, the rest of what appears to be the original structure is characteristically Norman so the origins of the church remain a matter of opinion. And in any case the labourers who did the work, albeit to Norman designs, were probably for the most part Saxons.

Experts have dated the oldest part of the building to the end of the 11th century. This is the nave and a part of the present chancel, and as is apparent from the merest glance at its external south wall much use was made of Roman building tiles. There is also a piece of a Roman hypocaust clearly visible in the south wall. There is so much Roman tile in the wall that Frederick Chancellor, architect, amateur archaeologist, and Chelmsford's first mayor (and someone who should have known better) postulated that it was part of a Roman building. A fellow member of the Essex Archaeological Society demolished this theory by pointing out that the mortar between the Roman tiles was the same as the rest of the Norman building!

There is a story, still told by villagers within living memory, and still passed on today, that the workmen started to build the church on the high ground at the top of New Barn Lane but as soon as the day's work was done and the men departed a dragon removed the stones and took them to their present site. The men tried again and again but always with the same result. Finally they took the hint and built the church where it is today. Remarkably, the Roman tiles came from the remains of a villa which once stood in a field at the top of New Barn Lane, a field known as Dragons Foot. As Doug Shipman commented in his guide to the church, it was astonishing to find that the story, no doubt muddled over so many years, had been handed down by word of mouth for 900 years.

Another feature of the original building still to be seen today is the pudding stone built into, and protruding from, the south wall of the nave. Why it was put there in such a fashion remains a mystery. Could it not have been accommodated lengthwise in the wall so as not to protrude? The builders could no doubt have broken it into more conveniently sized pieces had they chosen. Such a large stone may once have been used as a route marker, an early milestone, or perhaps in some pre-Christian worship, before finding its final home in the church wall. Whatever its significance the builders took care not to break it and to place it in a prominent protruding position.

It has been traditionally thought that this pudding stone was a stranger to Essex, brought down in the Ice Age, but this is now known not to be the case. Essex pudding stones, or ferricretes, occur readily in flood plain gravels and normal soil hard pan formation and Ken Newman has discovered that there are in fact at least four in the walls of Broomfield church, two

large ones (including the protruding example) and two smaller pieces. The second large puddingstone can be seen (not protruding!) at the base of the tower nearest to the porch. If the dating of the various parts of the church were correct this would have been put there perhaps 50 years after its more famous companion.

It was probably in the first half of the 12th century that the then lord of the manor, Walter de Mandeville, had the round tower built on to the church. Here is more speculation, why a round tower? Essex is a county notably deficient in building stone and the usual mix of flint and rubble doesn't make for good corners. The first builders used many of the available Roman building tiles to make the corners of the nave and chancel. So it is suggested that building a round tower overcame the problem of making even more corners. It did, and this is probably the answer, and yet in a century of much building in Essex there weren't many round buildings. Of the half-dozen churches in the county with such towers only three, Broomfield, Great Leighs and Lamarsh, are Norman, though there were once at least four more, at Arkesden, Birchanger, South Ockendon and West Thurrock.

The tower has narrow windows with Norman rounded heads, and jambs of Roman tiles. Some have since been repaired with bricks. A hole was knocked through the west wall of the nave to give access to the new tower and the entrance was given a semi-circular head which has since been much restored.

For some 300 years the church remained externally largely unaltered. In its early days it was dedicated to St

Leonard; a deed of 1261-2 refers to Thomas de Wymondham as the parson of St Leonard's, Broomfield. There was for centuries a small chapel on the north side of the nave dedicated to that saint and Broomfield's medieval fair was also dedicated to St Leonard. At the end of the 12th century the church acquired its fine font, probably made of Burnack stone. Each face of the bowl has three shallow panels with pointed heads; already the old Norman semi-circular arch was giving way to the pointed arch. Its central cylindrical pier is modern.

Around 1340 the most easterly window in the south wall of the nave was replaced and the new window was given the then fashionable pointed arch - no attempt was made in those days to match the existing design. Two grotesque heads decorate the outside of this window.

During the first half of the 15th century major building works were put in hand. The chancel was lengthened and a large window was inserted into the new east wall. The end of the original chancel can easily be seen today, marked by a line of Roman building tiles that once formed the corner. The extension was built of matching material and amongst the re-used rubble from the old east wall was a carved head which the builder incorporated face outwards into the new wall. Generations of villagers have known this as the Devil's head and the story goes that if you walk seven times round a nearby table tomb (widdershins, at midnight?) the devil himself will appear.

That century also saw the addition of an octagonal spire to the previously plain tower, a porch to protect the south door of the nave, and a holy water stoup was fixed to the wall just to the right of the door. It may be that around this time the

church was given its present dedication to St Mary. Certainly by 1504 it was being referred to as St Mary's church though there was still a chapel dedicated to St Leonard. By 1566 the old chapel was in disrepair and it seems that it was pulled down and the timber and lead sold but by then there was another, more modern, north chapel.

Less desirable changes took place in the 1640s. Civil War raged. By 1648 the Royalists had been crushed, and Cromwell was in charge. On the 30th January 1649 Charles I was beheaded. The Church of England was abolished and churches everywhere felt the impact. Stained glass and ornaments were smashed, books were burnt, and it may have been at this time that the stoup by the door at Broomfield was broken and the font thrown out. Two hundred years later the font turned up again and is now back in its rightful place in the church.

A memento of those troubled times is a bible in the ownership of Broomfield church, now entrusted to the care of the Essex Record Office. Bound in crimson velvet and embroidered with the Royal arms and cipher, it was given by Charles I to his librarian, Patrick Younge. On the King's death Younge prudently retired to live out his last days with his daughter and son-in-law at the Parsonage in Broomfield and it was Patrick's granddaughter, Sarah Attwood, who gave the bible to the church. Patrick Younge is buried in the church in front of the altar, his grave marked by a slab of black marble.



The embroidered velvet cover of King Charles I bible.

By the 1730s the church had acquired a vestry. Morant noted that it was at the north west corner. This north side of the church had long been troublesome, it was here that the old chapels, one demolished in the 1560s, stood. Around 1818 the north wall of the nave was removed, timber pillars were installed to support the roof and a narrow north aisle created with brick wall, timber framed windows, and a door. It wasn't a success.



St Mary's church, Broomfield. 1822

The Victorian age ushered in a period of building and rebuilding. Churches were everywhere restored and often over-restored. Broomfield felt the impact of this wave of enthusiasm and in Broomfield's case it was probably beneficial. The rebuilding of the north side of the church in 1870 was largely necessary because of the rotten state of the timbers that had been put there earlier in the century, and the Victorians made a thorough job of it. A new north aisle was built, together with the present vestry, sweeping away all that remained of St Leonard's chapel. The nave got a new roof with new timbers and the old dormer windows in the roof were removed. The porch was renewed and the lych gate built.

What we see today from the south side is a Norman nave and tower and part of the chancel as far as the line of Roman

building tiles, an extended chancel and spire of the 15th century, and a 19th century porch and lych gate. The view from the north side was largely 19th century, plus of course the Norman tower and 15th century spire. Now all is changed again for there is a new hall, appropriately named St. Leonard's Hall, added to the north side of the church. Completed in 1998, sensibly using matching material, the old window from the north wall of the nave was removed and fitted into the new north wall of the church hall. A quatrefoil was broken in the move and a new, identical, one was made to replace it. In a hundred or so years from now it will no doubt have weathered to match the rest of the window.

The churchyard, if the 1766 drawing reproduced on the front cover is reliable, was almost all on the south side of the church. However, this wasn't so. The measurements given on the 1570 fence list and nicely totalled on the 1678 fence list are a better guide. Ayletts was responsible for the first length of fence going north from the southwest corner and this coincides with the second column of figures on the 1678 list. The apportionments going north amount to 82 yards 1 foot 3 inches, so this was the length of the churchyard in 1678, as it had been in 1570, and no doubt for long before that. The 1766 drawing gives a misleading perspective; the churchyard must have extended further to the north of the church than it did to the south. The measurements on the fence lists agree with the 1846 Tithe map and the 1875 Ordnance Survey.

The churchyard was extended in 1905, taking in a portion of Pot Ash field to the north. Its original length is still marked by a line of trees across the site. No doubt it will be extended again in due course, taking in yet more of that field.

Its original paling fence had largely gone by the early 19th century. It looks from the 1766 drawing that it may still have been there at that date though the hatching along the south side is difficult to interpret. Another, more skilled drawing, made in 1822, shows what appears to be a flint wall along the south side, from the gate westwards. The short length from the gate to the boundary of the Pulling House (Bromfields) was still a wooden fence.

This isn't a full description of Broomfield's parish church, nor does it attempt to tell the story of its furnishings and fittings and the many gifts made to the church over the years. Brian Kettle's booklet of 1960 and Doug Shipman's chronological guide of 1986 are invaluable sources of further information. Perhaps one day someone will put it all together and tell the complete story. This brief chapter sets the scene for what follows, the story of the buildings that centuries ago agreed to share the responsibility for maintaining Broomfield's churchyard fence.

2.

The Pulling House, now Bromfields and The Vineries.



The Royal Commission on Historical Monuments assigned this building on Church Green to the early 16th century. The Commission stated that it had been built on a half-H shaped plan with the wings extending towards the north, that is, away from Church Green. The central hall was originally of one storey and this would have been the most significant room in the house, the room where the family lived and ate and relaxed by the fire. The smoke from the fire would have drifted up to the roof and blackened the timbers, which indeed it did, the discoloration is still visible today.

In the 16th century it became the vogue to carry the first

floor across the whole house, the development of the brick chimney had rendered this possible, thus creating an extra chamber from the upper part of the hall - that it was once open to the roof may have been an important factor in the dating of the building although it could have suggested a pre-16th century origin.

The RCHM, reporting in the early 1920s, had no access to carbon 14 or dendrochronological dating, and Hewett's work on the evolution of joinery was still well in the future. Later research, using these dating aids, has altered many of the RCHM's findings (it was more than 200 years out when dating the great barns at Cressing Temple!) and it is likely that more of their 16th century attributions will be found to be too recent. This is almost certainly the case with the Pulling House, where more recent investigation suggests that the oldest part dates back to the second half of the 15th century.

The Commission's report added that the northeast wing was lengthened in the 17th century. This wing looks more substantial than the rest of the house, with lambs tongue chamfer stops throughout, and it almost certainly was added on to the service end of the original house. The report also noted that modern additions had since been made to the west end and at the back of the main block.

The south front, facing Church Green, is gabled at each end and the upper storey of the west wing, the Bromfields end, had at one time projected, or jettied, on the west and north but at a later date was underbuilt with brick. Jettying was a means of increasing the size of upper floors and was common in the

Tudor period, though why this should have been done to a house where space could never have been a problem isn't clear. But there is no doubt that marks on beams in the west part of the building do indicate where it would have been jettied. This wing retains its crown post roof. Clearly, the main block and the west wing are the oldest parts of the present building and it was probably at least 100 years old when the fence list was drawn up in 1569. The RCHM's final comment was that inside the house, in the original north wall of the main block, is an old window, now blocked, of two lights with a square mullion. This then is the house, but it doesn't explain why it was called the Pulling House.

The house could have been named after an early owner. This is the usual origin of Broomfield's early house names, many of them going back to the 13th and 14th centuries. However, none of the Broomfield records from around that time mention a Pulling, Pullen, or anything like it. The parish register shows that an Agnes Pullen was buried at Broomfield in 1552, so a family of that name was then living in the village, but there is no Pullen or Pulling on either the 1524 or 1544 tax returns for Broomfield. A John Cottes does appear as a taxpayer on the 1544 list and it is known that the Cottes family did own the Pulling House sometime before 1569. And the 1570 fence list states that it was once Brownes. So we now have two pre-1570 owners but neither explains the Pulling.

It is just possible that the house got its name from a very early owner, before Browne or Cottes, perhaps of a building that stood on the site before the present house was built. The 16th century Agnes Pullen, though not living at the Pulling

House, could have been a descendant of that family. But if this is the explanation it might be expected to be called Pullens or Pullings, as in Butlers, Priors, Ayletts, Glovers, Staceys and Brownings. "The" Pulling House sounds more like a use or a characteristic, as in The Well House, The Water House, The Parsonage and The Vicarage.

Another curious feature of the name is that it wasn't given on that first fence list, nor did it appear in the will of the then owner, William Freeman, who died in December 1570. It first appeared on the 1678 fence list when it had been in the Freeman family for more than 100 years. Yet the 1678 list was quite definite, it was not Freeman's but The Pulling House. There has been some speculation that it might come from an old meaning of pulling, i.e. plucking, and thus may have been associated with poultry or game. As it happens there is a good foundation for what might at first seem an unlikely attribution. Since it wasn't given as a former name on the 1570 list it may have originated with the Freeman family and William Freeman's will of 1569 includes unusual bequests of feathers!

What is quite certain is that the Pulling House, doubtless before it acquired that name, belonged at some time to Browne because the 1570 fence list states that the house was "sometime John Brownes". It had changed hands by 1544, when John Cottes was living there, and in 1569, when William Freeman made his will he mentioned in his will that he had bought the house from Goodman (no doubt John) Cottes. The fence list

was based on ancient custom so John Browne would have owned the property at a much earlier date. The name Browne is uncommon in early Broomfield records but there are two significant occurrences of the name.

The earliest deeds of the nearby Kings Arms, in those days it was called Crouch House, date from 1474 and 1503 and among the witnesses on each occasion was John Browne. If this is the "sometime John Browne" of the fence list, and it quite likely is, then this could place the property back into the 1470s. And since neither Browne nor Cottes appear on the 1524 tax list for Broomfield the likely scenario is that John Browne had the Pulling House (though not then known as such) in the late 1400s - early 1500s, someone else lived there in the 1520s, and John Cottes acquired it between 1524 and 1544. In 1567 William Freeman bought "3 messuages, 1 garden, 8 acres of land and 2 acres of pasture in Broomfield" from Cottes. So had the Pulling House already been divided into three or did he buy two other houses in Broomfield in addition to the Pulling House? As to John Browne, it is possible that he also owned the Angel at some time (it too was referred to on the 1570 list as "sometime Brownes"). A John Browne, surely connected, was a witness to the will of Robert Osborne of Broomfield Hall in 1561, and in 1571 the will of John Putto of Broomfield Mill was witnessed by John Browne, "curate of Broomfield".

The Freeman family was to be associated with Broomfield for more than 200 years, much of it with the Pulling House. The first of them to be mentioned in Broomfield, William Freeman, was living there in 1569 when he noted in his will that he had

bought the property from Goodman Cottes. William may have come from a Little Waltham family, perhaps the son or grandson of Thomas Freeman of that parish. Given as the owner on the fence list which was drawn up in 1569 and implemented in May 1570, William died just before Christmas 1570. His will was a long and detailed one, showing his concern to get all the loose ends tied up before he died. It also showed that he was quite a wealthy man.

William Freeman's first concern was for the disposal of his house and land in Broomfield and he willed that it "shall be and remain after my decease to my young children Mary Freeman, John Freeman, William Freeman and Rose Freeman for six years". He instructed "my well beloved wife Edie Freeman to keep my children until they come of full age". And after his younger children had had the benefit for six years it was to go to William's son and heir, Richard Freeman. In order to be quite sure of the succession William added "if he (Richard) has no heirs then to my son John Freeman and if he has no heirs then to my son William Freeman and if he has no heirs then to my daughters and their heirs". William needn't have worried because Richard had eight children.

When his father died, Richard Freeman was 24, still unmarried and living at the Pulling House. His father left him £15 (this was at a time when a labourer might earn between £3 and £4 a year), one of his best horses or geldings, his best gown, his best shirt, his best livery coat, the bed "that Richard now lies on" and all the furniture that belonged to it, a silver spoon, forty pounds of feathers, and William's bible. The last two were

unusual bequests among Broomfield wills at that time; feathers seem highly unusual and probably few of the laity had bibles since few outside the church could read. William surely could read. His will doesn't give his profession but he might just have been an attorney since his descendants certainly were, and this would have required some literacy. On the other hand the curious bequest of feathers does sit oddly with the law. The feathers might have been associated with the copyhold farm, Podinges or Puddings, which he also possessed.

Richard's sister also got £15, her bed and its trappings, and a silver spoon. The two younger daughters were similarly treated. Of the two younger sons John got £15, his bed and its trappings, and a silver spoon, whilst William Jnr. got £15, his parents bed and two silver spoons. Old William must have had seven silver spoons to dispose of.

There was much more to William's will - he comes across as a wealthy, literate, painstaking and successful man, in other words a typical product of the Tudor age. Among his other bequests he left his "oldest fur gown" to his wife, and to his young daughter Rose he gave a gold ring the weight of an Angel and also a pair of silver hooks. An Angel was a gold coin that had been first struck in 1465 and which continued to be minted until the reign of Charles I. And then there were the feathers; in addition to Richard's forty pounds of feathers William left three score pounds of feathers each to his daughters Mary and Martha. That's well over a hundredweight of feathers, an enormous amount. Were they the soft down feathers for pillows, or the wing and tail feathers for quill pens and arrow flights, or some of each?

William's will was witnessed by John Poole and Lawrence Salmon, two well-known Broomfield figures, and by Richard Long, the farmer at Bishop's Hall in Chelmsford, and William Sheather, who had bought Maynetrees in Chelmsford in 1566.

Six months after William Freeman's death his son Richard married Alice Ardell at Broomfield church and between 1572 and 1583 they had eight children. One died within two days of being baptised but the others, three boys and four girls, seem to have survived. The future of the Freeman family, and the Pulling House, was assured.

In January 1572 William's widow Edie married John Argent. Her husband may have come to live at the Pulling House because Edie was still charged with bringing up the youngest Freeman children. His name appears in the churchwardens' record for the period so he was certainly living in Broomfield. He died in 1579 and Edie died in the following year.

The Pulling House was the residence of a man of substance and the family married into the same social class. One of Richard Freeman's sisters married Thomas Osborne (the Osbornes were at Broomfield Hall), and Richard's daughter Joan married Lawrence Glasscock whose family was associated with Choppings and Priors. In 1597 a Mr John Morris of Little Leez Hall died at the Pulling House while on a visit to Richard

Freeman. Maybe they had sat in the hall discussing the latest news, the unrest in Ireland where Queen Elizabeth's planting of English Protestants had alarmed the native Catholic population. Perhaps they had spoken of the Earl of Essex's return from his expedition to Cadiz with Sir Walter Raleigh. Or perhaps the topics would have been the weather, the crops and the state of the roads. Looking out across the Green they would have seen the cottages that belonged to Broomfield Hall, which later became known as Woollards. Glancing to the left of those cottages they would have seen Crouch House, where John Goodeve lived with his family, and the traffic passing along the road between Chelmsford and Braintree. To the right of the cottages and opposite the church stood Swan House, and further to the right they could have seen the old manor house of Broomfield Hall. Not so very different 400 years later.

Alice Freeman died at the Pulling House in 1587 and Richard married again. He died in 1604 at the age of 58. Like so many people he delayed making his will until the last moment; it is dated the 28th June 1604 and just over a week later, on the 6th July, he took his last short journey from the Pulling House to the church next door to be laid to rest. Richard's eldest son, another Richard, was his heir and the sole executor of his will. His second wife, Mary, was to have an income of £6 a year from his estate. He remembered his grandchildren Glasscock and his sister Osborne, and he left ten shillings to each of his godchildren, John Webb and Andrew Brett (the Bretts farmed at Patching Hall). He gave the unusual sum of twenty marks to his second son, Robert Freeman, and he left the residue of his household stuff, goods and chattels to be equally divided into four parts.

Two parts were to go to his youngest son Thomas, one part to his wife Mary, and the fourth part to one of his daughters who had married a Mr Sewell. His brother John was in the house when he made his will and acted as one of the witnesses.

There is a curious anomaly in the Freeman family tree. Whilst there is no doubt that William left the Pulling House to his eldest son Richard, that Richard married Alice Ardell and they had a son Richard who was the next to inherit, the pedigree of the Freeman family in the 1634 Visitation of Essex shows an apparent descent from John Freeman of Broomfield. This would have been William's younger son as evidenced by his will. The Visitation pedigree shows that John had a son Richard who married an Alice Offyn of Great Baddow and their offspring carried on the Freeman line. No parish records have been found to substantiate this.

The Freeman family continued to own the Pulling House for perhaps 130 years after Richard's death in 1604. In 1615 Francis Freeman of Broomfield, yeoman, was ordered by the Quarter Sessions to keep the peace towards Grace, the wife of Robert Branwood. This suggests that perhaps another part of the family was then living there. However, the Richard Freeman who inherited it in 1604 became a successful attorney in Chelmsford and it was with Chelmsford that the family became closely associated.

As early as 1597 a Richard Freeman was practising as an attorney in Chelmsford; this may have been Richard Senr.

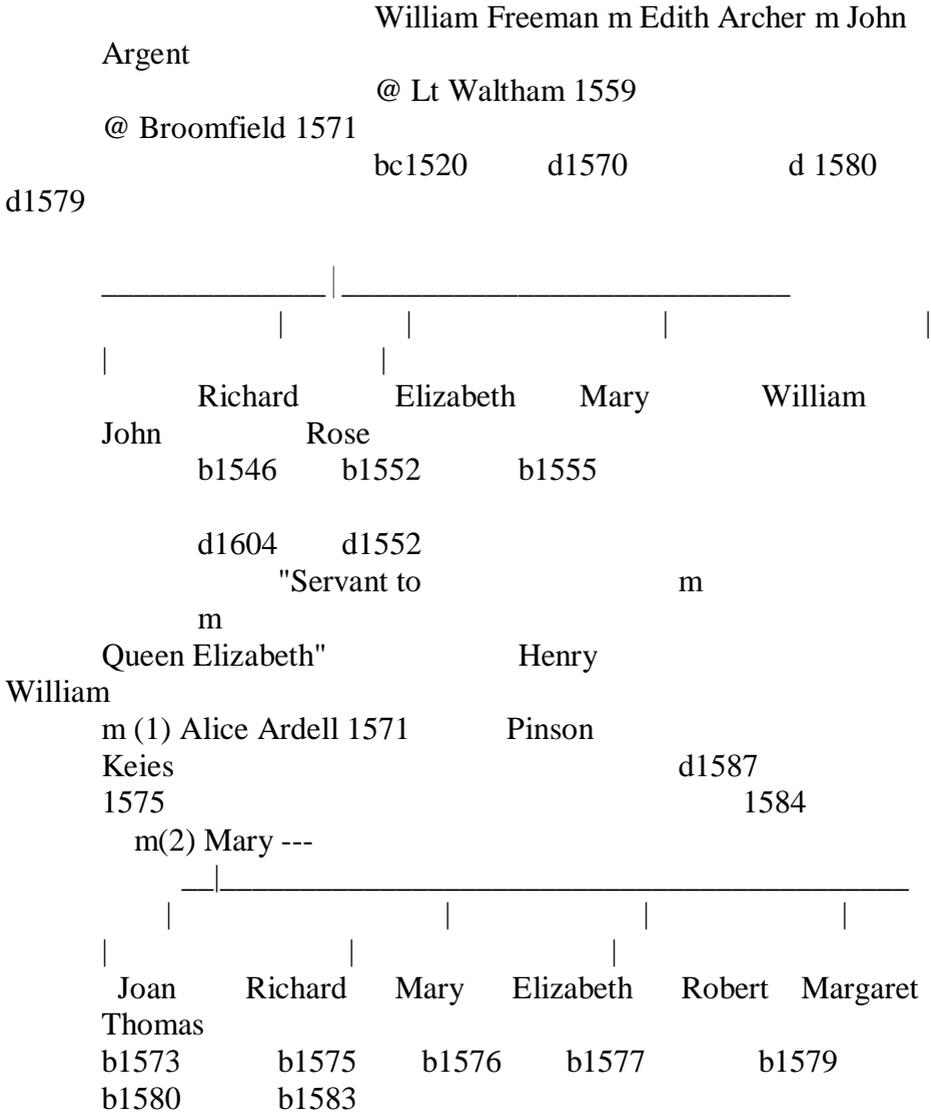
(1546-1604) who would then have been 51, or it could have been his son Richard who was baptised in 1575 and would then have been a young man. Certainly the latter Richard prospered in Chelmsford for in 1613 he bought a house called Daysies in the High Street and three years later he bought the prestigious property of Guy Harlings in New Street. He was one of the three highest rated townsmen in Chelmsford and took a leading part in the town's affairs until his death in 1639. His younger brother Thomas was also a prominent figure in Chelmsford at the same time; from 1628 he was Clerk of the Peace. The Freeman family gets many mentions in Hilda Grieves's definitive history of Chelmsford, "The Sleepers and the Shadows".

The next mentions of the Pulling House are in the fence lists of 1678 and 1687 when it was still shown as the house of Richard Freeman. This was most likely the fourth generation of Richard Freemans and the great-great-grandson of William. Other members of the family were still well established in Chelmsford. In 1683 Thomas Freeman, gent., was one of the leading townsmen but still with Broomfield connections for he had married Anne Webb, the daughter of William Webb of New House (now Broomfield Place). In the 1720s Thomas Freeman, Gent., possibly the same one, was living at Maynetrees in New Street, next to Guy Harlings. And in 1744 Thomas Freeman Snr and Thomas Freeman Jnr were witnesses to a lease involving Catherine, the widow of Daniel Scratton of Butlers. However, it is certain that long before this the Pulling House was being leased out. Although the Freeman family was undoubtedly the owners there were no Freeman taxpayers on the Ship Money tax list of 1637 or on the Hearth Tax lists of 1662 and 1671. They never

appeared as local ratepayers after the death of Richard Freeman in 1604 and shortly afterwards they would no doubt have been living at Guy Harlings and Maynetrees in Chelmsford and whoever leased the Pulling House from them must have paid those taxes.

The Chelmsford Freemans principal connection with Broomfield in their latter years seems to have been to be buried there with their ancestors. Thus Elizabeth, the daughter of Thomas Freeman of Chelmsford, gent., was buried here in 1710 and Marbury Freeman, attorney of Chelmsford, was buried at Broomfield in 1728. Marbury was the great-great-great-grandson of the William Freeman who was at the Pulling House at the time of the 1570 churchyard fence list. Marbury's son John was buried here in 1731. Philip Morant, in his version of the fence list of c1735, referred to the house as still being Freeman's and as late as 1763 a Richard Freeman was buried in Broomfield. He may well have been the last of the male Broomfield Freemans.

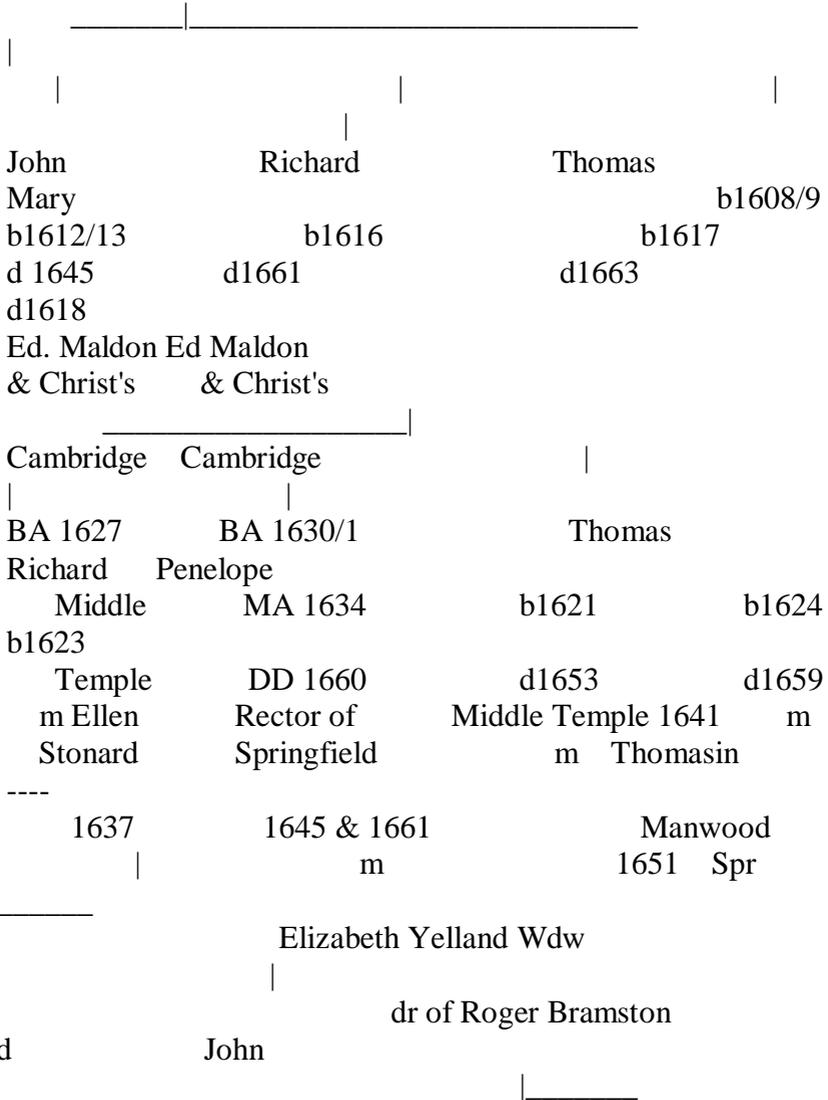
The FREEMAN family tree.



	m	d1639	
of		d1641	
	Lawrence	m	Hornchurch
	Escheator		
	Glasscock	(1) Judith Browne wdw*	m
	Penelope		
	1591	at Aldham 1604	
Browne			
		d1618	
dr of			
		(2) Bridget	
Judith*			
		Staines, wdw	
1620 @		d1630	
	Walthamstow		
d1631			
		(a)	
(b)			

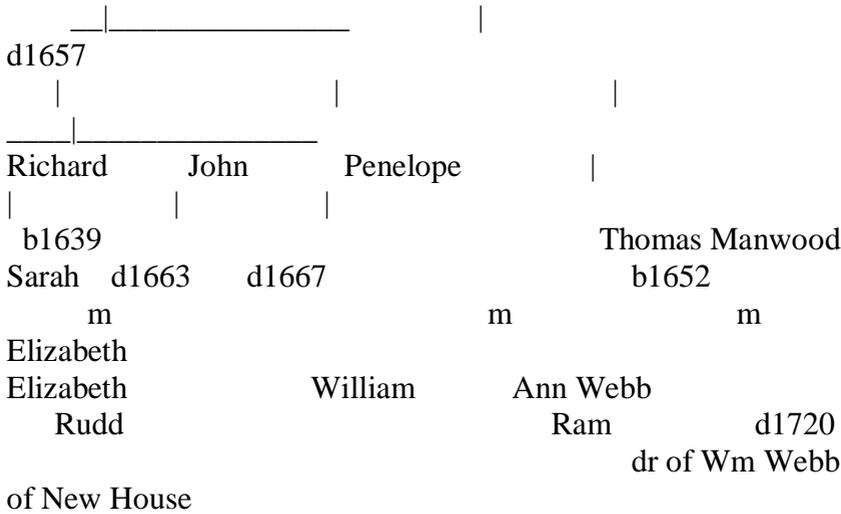
(a)

(b)



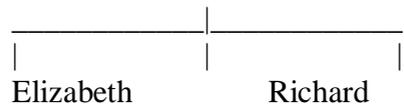
b1657

b1659



(c) (d)

(c) (d)



John

m

d1714

Christopher

m

Harris 1659

Dorothy Goddard



Ann		Thomas	Ann		Cecilia Thomasin
Marbury	Diana				
b1683		b1687	b1687		b1691 b1693
b1695	b1697				
<1687		d1750			d1731
d1726		d1728			
			Attorney		
			Attorney		
	Richard	m	Penelope		m
	b1684	-----		b1689	
Dorothy Brown					
d1763					at
Good Easter					

1724

	Thomas	Dicina	Richard	Letitia	Diana	
	Richard	John				
	b1726	b1727	b1728	b1729	b1731	
	b1725	b1728				
	m					
d1763?	d1731					
Jane Read						
1752?						
		John		Catherine		
Elizabeth						
		b1732		b1733		
b1735						



The history of the house from the Freeman period up to 1840 is somewhat clouded. Some time after the Freemans left it was divided up into cottages, probably three in number. The oldest of the present title deeds, dating from 1861, lists indentures going back to 1848 and the first mention of Martha Gopsill. It also recites three previous groups of occupants and may take the story back to 1800 or earlier. It says that the property was divided into three tenements and formerly occupied by James Pulley, William Perry and Mary Parsons, afterwards by James Pulley, William Perry and Hugh Pitts and now (1861) by Samuel Pulley and Charles Dowsett.

Pulley and Dowsett were living at the Pulling House at the time of the 1841 census and Pulley was there when it seems that it changed hands in 1833. Three generations of James Pulley appear in the registers from 1771 and a James Pulley was mentioned on the Land Tax assessment in 1799 so the Pulleys may well have been at the Pulling House before 1800. As to Mary Parsons, this might just have referred to Martha Parsons, the granddaughter of John Parsons, who in 1809 had married Thomas Beardwell and who in the following year inherited the Kings Arms from her grandfather. The 1841 census suggests that by that date there were only two tenants.

The Land Tax assessments, the existing sheets cover the years 1783 to 1832, should help to confirm the owners and inhabitants of the Pulling House during that period. Although the assessments rarely identify a property by name the known owners and inhabitants of other properties in Broomfield help to

narrow down the possibilities. Comparing the last assessment list, 1832, with the tithe award of 1846, when properties were identified, helps still further since many of the names on the former list were present on the latter. Unfortunately, none of the Land Tax assessments show the occupants exactly as given in the deeds of the Pulling House. Even more unfortunately, it was in or around 1833 that Henry Mickleburgh, a farmer from Great Baddow, came into possession of the property with Samuel Pulley, and probably Charles Dowsett, as his tenants. So his name didn't appear on the 1832 assessment list but he was there at the time of the 1846 tithe award.

By a process of elimination there appear to be only two properties unaccounted for on the Land Tax assessments. Samuel Pitt owned one of these properties in 1783 and John Parsons, who also owned the Kings Arms, owned the other.

Taking the Samuel Pitt possibility first, he was shown as the proprietor of the property from 1783 until 1811. In 1783 it was occupied by Scawen, in 1785 John Taylor, in 1799 Strutt, Wright and James Pulley. Significantly there were then three tenants and one of them was James Pulley. By 1805 it was Martha Strutt and others (who may still have been Wright and Pulley), in 1810 it was given as Pulley and Dowsett and in 1811 as Dowsett and others. In 1813 Samuel Pitt had disappeared from the scene and it looks as if his property was now owned by John Cunnington and occupied by Robert Cunnington. From 1822 to 1832 the proprietor and occupant was shown as widow Sarah Willis.

The Parsons property was owned by John Parsons in 1783 and occupied by Thomas Suckling. By 1805 John Parsons was shown as both proprietor and occupant. In 1815 the owner-occupier was Thomas Beardwell. The significance of this is that Martha Gopsill, who was definitely the owner of the Pulling House in 1848, was John Parsons's granddaughter and Thomas Beardwell's wife! However, there is no suggestion of there ever being three concurrent tenants during this period. It is likely, therefore, that the first scenario, that the owners after the Freemans were successively Samuel Pitt, John Cunnington, and Sarah Willis, is the correct one.

Samuel Pitt was a prosperous linen draper with a shop in Chelmsford High Street which he leased from Robert Greenwood, a prominent citizen, Quaker, and successful ironmonger and builders' merchant whose business adjoined Pitt's drapery. Greenwood's shop later became Grippers ironmongers, then Halfords and then Go. Pitt was a Chelmsford man and like Greenwood was much involved in the town's affairs. In 1794/5 he served on a committee to supervise the distribution of coal and bread to the poor of the town during the severe winter of that year. In 1800, when the roof of Chelmsford parish church collapsed, he became one of the trustees overseeing its restoration. In 1806 he was on a vestry committee for assessing the Poor Rate for the town.

Pitt may well have lived over the shop in Chelmsford High Street. The land tax returns from 1783 to 1811 show him as owner of the property in Broomfield but never the occupant. By 1812, the last year of his ownership, the tenants were shown

as “Dowsett & others”. This ties in well with the tenancies of the Pulling House but from 1813 “Dowsett and others” disappear from the names of tenants on the Land Tax returns.

Robert Cunnington had married Susan Johnson in 1777 and their son John became articled to a Mr Scott, an attorney in Witham. In due course John set up his own practice in Great Square, Braintree, and by 1839 he had taken his nephew Augustus Veley into partnership. John and Ann Cunnington had four children, two boys and two girls, and the eldest boy, also John, joined the practice but later went to Australia. The second son, Augustus, also became a solicitor in the family firm. John Cunnington Snr. had bought the Broomfield property probably around 1813, and in his will, made in 1819 when he was 40, John bequeathed to his father Robert his “freehold messuage or tenement in Broomfield now in the occupation of my said father”.

Tantalisingly, the house in Broomfield carried no further identification in John’s will. His house in Braintree was to go to his wife. In the event John lived on until for another 28 years, dying in 1847 at the age of 68. His father had died in 1821 at the age of 69, and it is likely that the house was then sold or leased to Sarah Willis, a widow whose husband Thomas had also died in 1821. And yet, during this period there was only a single occupant shown for this property in the Land Tax returns in any year; Robert Cunnington from 1813 to 1821 and Sarah Willis from 1822 to 1832. There was no mention of a multiple tenancy.

John Cunnington was deeply interested in local history,

in his case it was Braintree and he compiled a detailed history of the town. He may have intended to get it published but in the event it remained in manuscript form, passing down through the family until it found its final home in the Essex record Office. The Cunnington family continued to be prominent figures in the life of Braintree, John's son Augustus (1824-1902) was succeeded by his son Herbert John, and the family name still lives on in the solicitors firm, still in the Great Square at Braintree.

By 1833 the position becomes clearer when Henry Mickleburgh was identified as owner. Born in 1760, Henry Mickleburgh had married Susannah Holland at Chelmsford in 1796 and by 1833 he was well into his seventies. Susannah died in 1844 at the age of 77 and Henry died two years later at the age of 86. Henry was a farmer at Great Baddow and had no need to live at the Pulling House. Through the 1840s Samuel Pulley and Charles Dowsett continued to live there. In 1851 Charles Dowsett was described in the census as a grocer and he also held the office of Parish Constable. He was then 37 years of age, married to Elizabeth, and with three children, Charles (aged 11), Elizabeth (9) and Ann (7). As before he shared the property with Samuel Pulley, then aged 73. James Pulley, Samuel's son, may also have been living there then with his wife Mary.

In or around 1848 the Pulling House became the property of Martha Gopsill. The granddaughter of John Parsons of the Kings Arms, she was twice widowed. Her first husband was

Thomas Beardwell who died in 1826. She next married John Gopsill, a member of the malting family of Swan House, who died in 1841. When Martha died in 1858 it passed to her son George Beardwell, also a maltster, of Galleywood common. Charles Dowsett was a tenant throughout this period, as was Samuel Pulley until his death in 1855 at the age of 77. Samuel's brother James died only a week or so later - he was 80. James Pulley junior took on the Pulley share of the tenancy. In 1861 Dowsett was shown as a grocer and market gardener and James Pulley was a shoemaker. Dowsett was still there in 1871, when he was described simply as a market gardener, and James Pulley was still in the other half. Pulley had been a widower for some years and his daughter Rachel lived with him. In 1873 Charles Dowsett bought the property from George Beardwell for £800.

At no time do the census returns suggest that the Pulling House was three cottages although the deeds clearly indicate that this was once so. Material evidence of a third cottage came to light only recently when another door and window was discovered hidden behind the plasterwork of the front wall of Bromfields.

Charles Dowsett was a market gardener and much of the land, which in those days included what is now the garden of Broomfield Wyck, was given over to greenhouses for the cultivation of cucumbers and tomatoes. Charles Dowsett Senr. died in 1891, it passed to his wife Elizabeth and Charles Dowsett Junr then succeeded her.

It was probably in the 1890s that Walter Smith, a draper from Wethersfield, came to the Pulling House. Charles

Dowsett had married Mahala Smith of Wethersfield so it was no doubt a family affair. The Dowsett inheritance had divided the property into nine parts for Charles Dowsett's nine children, Charles Frederick, Henry, Walter, Arthur, Elizabeth, Annie Lavinia, Herbert and Ernest (twins), and Alfred Sydney, and between November 1897 and November 1906 Walter Smith bought out the nine parts, thus uniting the property once again.

Walter Smith was a keen photographer but alas only a handful of his vast collection has survived. He was once a familiar figure cycling round the district with his trusty Thornton-Pickard camera and when he died his camera and collection of photographs were auctioned off. The photographs were on glass plates and many were used, and broken, by the purchaser to scrape wallpaper off the wall! One of the nine shareholders, Arthur Dowsett, was also described as a photographer "of Broomfield" but none of his photographs have been traced.

Walter Smith lived in the part of the house that is now Bromfields. It is very likely that either he or Arthur Dowsett would have taken the photograph of the men who worked the market garden.



The workforce at the market garden c1909.
Fred Tunbridge, Fred Dowsett, Tom Crozier, 'Mouser' Clark
Alfred Dowsett
Whisk the dog

The market garden continued to thrive and amongst the deeds is a tenancy agreement of 1919 between Walter Smith and Thomas Crozier who had been working there for some years. At this time there were 19 large greenhouses for tomatoes, cucumbers, and vines, and Thomas Crozier was still working it when Walter sold the property to another photographer, Fred Spalding Jnr. of Chelmsford for £1,700. This was in 1926 but Fred's ownership was short for on the 8th October 1927 he died at the Westcliff Hotel, Westcliff-on-Sea. It then passed to Fred Burrell, solicitors managing clerk for Leonard Gray & Co, who held it until 1953.

It was in 1953 that the Vineries, named appropriately after the vines that grew in the market garden there, and the newly christened Bromfields went their separate ways. Fred Willett, builder, decorator and plasterer, purchased the Vineries for £2,100 and his handiwork can be seen, both externally and internally, today. The internal, covering up some nice timber framework, was less appealing than his external pargetting. In 1969 Major Bob Blackie and his wife Jean arrived at the Vineries.

Born near Edinburgh in 1921, Bob Blackie joined the Territorial Army and then in World War II moved on to the Indian Army, serving with them through the Italian campaign. After the War, when it looked as though a future in the Indian Army was likely to be short lived, he transferred to his father's old regiment, the Sherwood Foresters with whom he was involved in the Berlin airlift of the 1950s. He also served for a time in Malaya but then, with an eye to life after the army, though somewhat to the displeasure of his father, he moved to the Pay Corps. His final assignment was as Paymaster at the army's corrective establishment at Colchester.

When he left the army his accounting work in the latter part of his service led to a civilian job with M&G in Chelmsford and his and Jean's arrival at the Vineries. In Broomfield Bob soon became involved in local affairs, becoming a Parish Councillor and a Trustee of Woollard's charity. The Vineries was ideally placed for him to keep an eye on Woollard's cottages opposite! Bob had a dicky heart, a condition that may have been exacerbated by the Dengue fever he contracted in Malaya, and on the 14th December 1982 he died of a heart attack.

In 1971 Derek and Eileen Bower came to Bromfields, succeeding the Kirk and Garood families in that house. The Kirks had been there for some 14 years and became well known in the village. Their successors were there for around four years and although Mr Garood was manager of the local branch of Lloyds Bank the family made little impact on the memories of villagers.

Derek Bower was born in London in 1928 and educated at Kings School, Macclesfield. A management consultant, he travelled widely, both in his work and as a lifelong interest. He liked nothing better than to holiday off the beaten track in far away lands. Like Bob Blackie, Derek took an interest in local matters. One of his great interests was wine and he was a committee member of the Chelmsford Wine Circle. He was also on the committee of Broomfield Cottage Gardeners Association and the Essex Timber Framed Buildings Group, and a vice president of Broomfield Cricket Club.

Local history was another of Derek's many interests. In addition to obtaining a Certificate in the subject from Essex University he became deeply involved in studying the history of the Pulling House. Like others he was puzzled by the gap in the house's history in the late 18th early 19th century, between the Freemans and the Dowsetts. He had guessed that the answer might lie in the Land Tax returns and had made a start in identifying the properties on the returns when time ran out. Derek had been ill for some time and he died in 1998, before he could complete the task.



Major Robert "Bob" Blackie
1921-1982



Derek Bower
1928-1998

