

8.

Priors.



Priors is a house with an unbroken history, still a single residence, an impressive provenance, and remarkably few owners in its long life. Owned by Blackmore Priory for almost 300 years, by the Manwood family for around 200 years and then by the Christy family for more than 100 years, no other building in Broomfield can match its record.

Morant, in his history of Essex, relates that the Priors estate once belonged to the Priory of Blackmore. The Priory had been founded around 1155-1165 either by Adam and Jordan de Samford or by Sir John de Samford for an order of Augustinian canons. The de Samfords were lords of the manor

of Blackmore and of Fingrith Hall, another manor in that parish, and Adam and Jordan were Chamberlains to Queen Matilda. The lands in Broomfield were no doubt granted to the Priory; certainly before 1322-3 when an agreement was made between Ranulf Chopyn of Writtle and Emma his wife, and Sewell de Broomfield, regarding a field called seven acres between the Prior of Blackmore's land and the Roman land of Writtle.

The starting point for the story of Priors must be a Fine dated 1241-1242. In it Ralph Grasvassal quitclaimed $\frac{1}{2}$ a carucate of land in Broomfield to the Prior of Blackmore. There has been much debate over the actual size of a carucate. In the parts of the country under Danish influence, and this would include much of Essex, it is considered to be the equivalent of a hide. The hide itself could vary from 60 to 120 acres but there is good evidence to show that in Essex it was the latter. This ties in well with other Fines around this period which refer to land in Broomfield. For example, in 1239 Gilbert FitzHenry quitclaimed 120 acres of land in Broomfield to John de Cramavill. In 1261 Francis de Burnham quitclaimed 120 acres to William de Middleton which was previously of John de Cramavill. So this piece of land, wherever it was, seems to have been a nice convenient size, one hide or one carucate. In 1247 William Middleton held one carucate of land of Ralph le Champneys and John le Long. Why some fines should refer to a carucate and some to acres isn't clear, but if indeed a carucate was 120 acres then what it comes to is that the Prior of Blackmore would have had 60 acres of land in Broomfield in 1241-1242.

In 1327 William atte Priors was assessed at 12 pence for

the lay subsidy tax of that year. So by then there would have been a house on the land and William was living there. The estate remained in the hands of the Priory of Blackmore until 1527, when the Priory was dissolved. Throughout this period the Priors estate would doubtless have been let out to tenant farmers, providing a steady income to the Priory. The tenants names may well appear on the early tax records but since these are just lists of names there is no way of knowing where in Broomfield they lived. In 1527 the priory passed to the abbey of Waltham Holy Cross which was shown as the owner at the time of Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries. The final inventory of the priory of Blackmore confirms that it then still held the lands of Priors, one of 80 dwellings and more than 2,000 acres of land in its possession.

The present house has been dated to around 1550 by the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments which, if correct, would suggest that it was rebuilt soon after it was taken from the Abbey. The dates given by the Royal Commission need to be taken with a large pinch of salt; there was no carbon dating and no dendrochronology in 1921 and subsequent dating of other buildings has shown the Commission's dates to be sometimes wide of the mark. However, the date seems reasonable for the style of the building.

The house was built largely of brick with a central hall and cross wings. It was originally moated, which could indicate that it occupied the site of the earlier house. Part of the moat still exists. In about 1600 a new staircase wing was added to the main block and a splendid oak staircase was installed at that time. The staircase has a moulded handrail, turned balusters and square newels with moulded and panelled

heads. The house also has some 16th century oak panelling, possibly dating from the 1550 rebuild if the RCHM dating is correct. Pevsner (*The Buildings of England*) noted that it was an interesting 16th century house, though whether he personally examined it, or sent an assistant, or merely cribbed from the RCHM report I cannot say.

Outside, the north-west exterior wall is probably unchanged since the house was built except for the blocking up of the windows and some weathering of the moulded string-course. The house still has its Tudor chimney stack of four octagonal shafts standing high above the roof. The central front of the house has timber-framed gables; originally these would have been plastered, in more recent times the plaster was removed, exposing the timber framework. Even more recently, they have been plastered again. The north wing has its original three-sided bay with plastered, moulded, brick mullions.

On the dissolution of the monasteries, between 1536 and 1538, the house passed to the Taverner family. The Taverners lived at Rainham and also leased property in nearby Wennington, and they probably never lived at Priors because at that time the property was let to a tenant, Richard Cleydon. Nor did they hold it for long for in 1544 Richard, Roger and Robert Taverner disposed of Priors and a wood called Broomfield Grove to William and Margaret Garrard. The Garrard ownership was even more short lived because in the following year Priors passed to William and Margaret Eyre. There then followed some to-ing and fro-ing between William Eyre the elder and his son William Eyre the younger until the father finally alienated it to his son in 1562. There was an area

of farm land amounting to some 23 acres adjacent to the Priors estate which belonged to the church and the Eyres rented this at 12 shillings a year to add to their farm

The Eyres were most likely the family who were senior Chelmsford householders at the time and one of the Williams would have been the gentleman who in 1557 was occupying the White Horse Inn in the High Street, where Barclay's Bank now stands. The spelling of names was somewhat arbitrary at the time, as it had long been and was to remain so for many years to come, and Eyre was also spelled as Ayer and Ayre. In 1560 Thomas Cook, a labourer of Broomfield, was accused of stealing 2 doublets and other items from William Eyre valued at 3 shillings. Cook pleaded not guilty, was found not guilty and acquitted. So who took the doublets?

In 1563 William Eyre the younger disposed of Priors to Thomas Wallenger of Cliffords Inn. Wallenger was also a Chelmsford man and a lawyer, and Cliffords Inn was the oldest of London's Inns of Chancery. He seems to have had a successful practice in the town, appearing frequently at court on behalf of his clients. By 1569 Priors was described as "sometime William Ayres and now Thomas Wallengers" on the draft of the first fence list so Thomas was still the owner in that year. Like the Eyres Thomas Wallenger continued to rent the church lands, from 1564 to 1581.

Thomas Wallenger belonged to the most prominent Chelmsford family of his time, after the Mildmays. Their chief property was in the very centre of the town (where later the Corn Exchange and now a shopping precinct stands) and at one time they also owned Maynetrees in New Street. Thomas

married first Avice Reynolds in 1568 and then after Avice's death he married Bennett Gunson. The marriages were well connected for Avice's father, William Reynolds, was a wealthy draper in the town and the senior chief pledge at the manor court. Bennett Gunson was the daughter of Benjamin Gunson, treasurer of the Navy, who was Sir Thomas Mildmay's uncle.

It may have been soon after Thomas's Wallenger's first marriage that he bought Priors. The Wallengers had several children baptised at Chelmsford, which was still the family's parish. His elder brother John would have inherited the family mansion in Chelmsford town centre but in 1579 John Wallenger died unmarried and Thomas inherited the Chelmsford property. In the following year he was churchwarden of Chelmsford church. He would surely have moved into the Wallenger mansion in town and it may be that as he was then the head of the family he decided to sell his Broomfield property. Thomas Wallenger died in 1614 but by then the story of Priors had moved on.

In 1582 Thomas Wallenger sold Priors to Edward Elliot and his wife Jane. Edward Elliot, esquire, lived at Newland Hall, Roxwell, he was one of Her Majesty's justices and his name frequently appeared at the Assizes in the 1590s. He died on the 26th December 1595. His son, Sir Thomas Elliot, took on Newland Hall after his father's death and it is very probable that Priors was again let out to a tenant farmer during this period. Edward's widow Jane featured in several property transactions in the early 1600s but there was no mention of Priors.

The Broomfield parish registers show another family

living at Priors between the Elliots purchase and the arrival of the Manwoods for in 1593 Margery, the daughter of Lawrence Glasscock of Priors, was married to Henry Poole. It is very likely that the Glasscocks were lessees of the Elliots for Morant recorded that Priors passed from Elliot to Manwood. The Elliots left little trace of their presence in Broomfield, presumably Edward Elliot was still living at Newland Hall, but the Glasscocks were more prominent. A Lawrence Glasscock married Joan, the daughter of Richard Freeman of the Pulling House, in 1593; this Lawrence was most likely the son of the Lawrence whose daughter married in that same year.

The Glasscocks were still at Priors in 1612 for in that year the parish register recorded the burial of Mary Serle, daughter of John Serle, who “died at Priors at her grandfathers Lawrence Glasscock“. She was aged 7 or 8 years. Two years later, in 1614, Lawrence Glasscock died. It would seem to have been during the Glasscock period that the house was enlarged and the present staircase installed though this does seem strange if they were merely the lessees of the Elliots of Newland Hall and then the Manwoods.

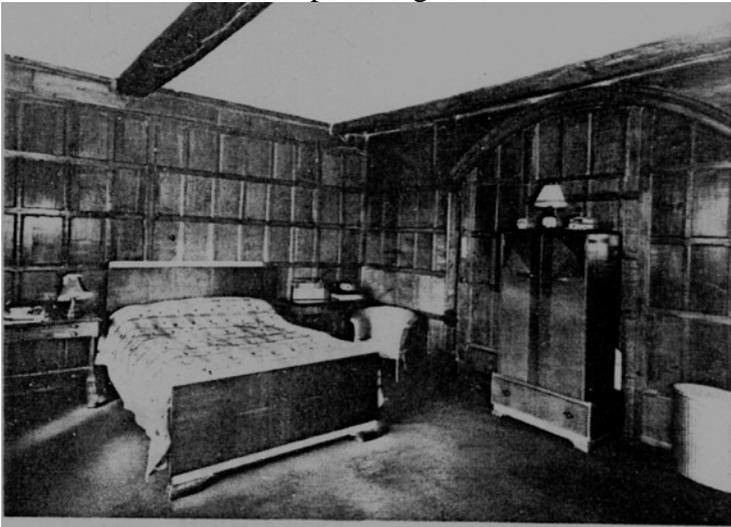
In fact Lawrence Glasscock owned another Broomfield farm. This was Chobbings, situated in a corner of Broomfield at the junction with the parishes of Writtle and Chignal St James, and very close to the Priors farmlands. Chobbings was another property on the 1570 churchyard fence list and there will be more about Lawrence Glasscock in another chapter. Suffice to say Priors was no doubt the superior residence and so in addition to leasing the farm land to add to his Chobbings land Lawrence would have lived with his family at Priors.

By the early 1600s Priors had passed into the possession of the Manwood family. The first Manwood to be associated with Priors according to Morant was John Manwood. This gentleman was a lawyer, a barrister of Lincoln's Inn, and the author of a treatise on the Forest Laws, printed in 1600. A kinsman, Sir Roger Manwood, was Lord Chief Baron of the Exchequer to Queen Elizabeth I. John was clearly an authority on matters relating to forests; he was gamekeeper of Waltham Forest and a justice of the New Forest. He married Mary Crayford, a Kentish lady, and they had three children, Thomas, Jasper, and Anne. John died in 1610, four years before his tenant Lawrence Glasscock, so he probably never lived at Priors. John was succeeded at Priors by his eldest son Thomas.

The first Manwood to figure prominently in Broomfield was Thomas Manwood, son of the aforesaid John, and also a lawyer of Lincoln's Inn. Thomas was born in 1587 so he would have been 23 when his father died. In the 1630s he was living at Priors with his wife Ann, the daughter of Vice-Admiral Sir Thomas Love. Thomas and Anne had nine children: Ann, Mary, Thomasina, Thomas, Elizabeth, John, Sarah, Roger, and Love. In 1651 Thomasina married Thomas Freeman of Springfield, another legal family who for many years lived at the Pulling House on Broomfield's Church Green. In 1661 Sarah married Joseph Luckin of Dyers Hall, Chignal Smealey. Love was Thomas's youngest daughter and in 1681 she married Thomas Cox, for nearly 50 years the vicar of Broomfield.



Above - the staircase of c1600
Below - fine panelling in a bedroom



Thomas Manwood died in 1650 at the age of 63. His

wife died thirteen years later. There is a splendid marble wall monument in Broomfield church to the memory of Thomas. It reads:

In te
DOMINE
*f*peramus, Infra hanc Sacrarij partem in pace qui =
escit, Adventum Supremi ludicis expectans
THOMAS MANWOOD Generofus, et Manfi de
Prioris in
hac Parochia Pofsefsor & Incola, Filius
Ioannis
MANWOOD Armigeri, et Libri de Legibus
Forestanum
docti Congeftoris, Confanguineus ROGER
MANWOOD
militis et Capitalis BARONIS Scaccarij
REGNANTE
ELIZABETHA
Qui oppetijt XX°. die Septembris ANNO DOMINI
MDCL Ætatis LXIII. Duxit uxorem ANNAM
filiam
THOMÆ LOVE Militis & in Clafse Regis
IACOBI I
Vice' Admirallij ex quâ sobelem procreavit
tres
filios et *f*ex filias.
Iuxta hunc inhumatus jacet IONNES
MANWOOD
Generofus. et Supradicti THOMÆ filius qui
vitam hanc depofuit XI° Aprilis Anno
DOMINI
MDCCV Ætat. LXIII
Merca -
Hic nupfit DIANAM filiam RICHARDI GOLD
toris Londinienfis, de qua reliquit Superftites
DIANAM
filium unicum THOMAM et duas filias

et KATHERINAM, Quorum,
 KATHARINA, quæ nupta Reverendo OLIVERO
 POCKLINGTON A.M. & Ecclesiæ de Chelmsford RECTORI
 fuit dum vixit fida Uxor, pia Mater, & iuxta Noverca
 Obijt XXVIII Martij Anno DOMINI MDCCXVI Relictis Li -
 beris, Katherina, Thoma Diana & Anna & prope Patrem
 vltima sepulta est, et
 THOMAS folus nominis, & Rei Hæres adhuc in vivis hoc
 Monumentum in memoriam Majorum proprijs sumptibus
 posuit, Ianuarij XXVI^o. An^o DOMINI MDCCXVIII

Translation:

In Thee, Lord, we trust. Below this part of the church awaiting the coming of the Supreme Judge rests in peace Thomas Manwood, Gentleman, owner and occupier of Priors Hall in this parish, son of John Manwood, Esquire, learned compiler of the book of laws of foresters, kinsman of Sir Roger Manwood and Chief Lord of the Exchequer in the reign of Elizabeth. He died on the 20th day of September in the year of our Lord 1650 aged 63. He married Anne, daughter of Sir Thomas Love, Vice Admiral in the fleet of James I, by whom he had issue three sons and six daughters. Next to him lies buried John Manwood, Gentleman, son of the aforesaid Thomas who laid down this life 11th April in the year of our Lord 1705 aged 63. He married Diana, daughter of Richard Gold, London Merchant, by whom he left to survive him an only son Thomas and two daughters Diana and Katherine, of whom Katherine, who was married to Rev. Oliver Pocklington M.A. Rector of Chelmsford and while she lived a faithful wife, devoted mother and fair stepmother, died 28th March in the year of our Lord 1716, leaving three children, Katherine, Thomas and Diana, and finally Anna who was buried beside her father. Thomas the last of the name and heir to the estate being still among the living set up this memorial to his forbears at his own expense January 24th in the year of our Lord 1718.

Thomas Manwood left his estate to his wife Ann for life and then to his son John. The 1671 hearth tax return shows that John was assessed for 10 hearths, indicating that Priors was either a very large house or he owned more than one property in

Broomfield. It was almost certainly the latter since it is very probable that by then the Manwoods also owned the Angel along Main Road. In 1690 the vestry minutes recorded that John Manwood was to make alterations to the parish poor house along Main Road and to recover his costs out of the rent he would have paid for the use of the poor land - this was the land supposedly given by John Gynes which was administered by the church for the benefit of the parish and which abutted Priors land, the land which had been rented by the owners and lessees of Priors at least as far back as the Eyres in the 1560s.

Although John Manwood was the owner of Priors, and he was present at the Broomfield vestry meeting in 1674, the 1678 churchyard fence list gives Mr Luckin as the occupant of Priors and he was still there on the 1687 list. Now Mr Luckin must have been either William or Joseph of the Dyers Hall, Chignal Smealey, family. Both Luckins could have been around at the time; William had married Mary Brett in 1657 and Joseph was John Manwood's brother-in-law. Joseph died in 1687 so he could just have made the fence list of that year. Indeed, a sentence was added to the Priors entry on the 1687 fence list, which read "Now Mr Manwood" clearly indicating that Mr Luckin was no longer there. So I suspect Joseph Lucking was the tenant of Priors.

John Manwood was present at the vestry meeting of 1690; the year in which he agreed to have alterations made to the parish poor house. A deed dated 1697 appointing additional trustees of Pooles Charity for property in Little Waltham (Channels) refers to John Manwood of Broomfield, gentleman. Another deed dated 1704 also refers to John as 'of Broomfield. All of which suggests that after the death of Joseph Lucking

John had returned to take up residence at Priors.

As the memorial in Broomfield church relates, John Manwood married Diana Gould or Gold and they had four children, the three named on the memorial, Thomas, Diana and Katherine, and a fourth, John, who died when a child. John Manwood died on the 11th April 1705 at the age of 63, the same age as his father. In his will he left Priors to his son Thomas “Upon this condition that he pay yearly and every year to my two daughters Diana and Katherine Manwood the sum of twenty pounds apiece of lawful money of England by half yearly payments as long as they and either of them shall keep themselves single and unmarried”. If they were to marry with appropriate family approval the annual £20 was to be replaced by a gift of £500. Clearly the condition was adhered to and his son Thomas succeeded him. It was this Thomas Manwood who appeared on Morant's fence list in 1735 as the owner of Priors.

Among the other bequests in John's will, £500 went to his wife and £5 was to be distributed amongst the poor of Broomfield. His son Thomas inherited John's “great silver tankard”; one wonders what eventually became of it. He obviously wanted a modest funeral, declaring in his will that he wanted it to be “in as private manner as may be without any attendance except my children, relations and servants this is my desire”

Thomas Manwood was deeply interested in the education of the poor and was a leading light in the formation of a charity school in Chelmsford, and for the first fifteen years of its existence he was the treasurer of the charity which ran the school. Thomas also owned the Crane Inn in Chelmsford High

Street and he leased the Wallenger mansion near the Shire Hall as his town house. He was very active in Chelmsford affairs and no doubt lived in the Wallenger mansion, leasing out Priors. When Thomas Manwood died in 1744 (in his will he described himself as “of Chelmsford”) he was succeeded as treasurer of the charity school, by his nephew, Thomas Pocklington, whom he had adopted as his heir.

Thomas Manwood’s will was long and detailed. His loving sister Diana Luckin was to receive £40 a year out of the income from his houses and land in Broomfield with considerable and detailed powers of redress should it not be forthcoming. To his nephew Thomas Pocklington he gave “All that my capital messuage or tenement called Priors with the lands, woods, woodgrounds, tenements and hereditaments thereunto belonging as the same are situate lying and being in Bromefield aforesaid and Springfieldand now in the several occupations of Nathaniel Lucking (sister Diana’s husband), Henry Wallis and John Rolfe“, subject to the payment of the annuity to Diana. Pocklington was also charged with the care to repair and decently maintain the family monument in Broomfield church whenever wanting. To Manwood’s niece, and Pocklington’s sister, Katherine went Fridays Farm in Good Easter, while his other niece Diana received the messuage tenement or farm called The Lodge in Moulsham and Widford. Diana and Katherine Pocklington also received bequests of £1,000 each under Thomas’s will.

Katherine Manwood was Thomas Manwood’s sister and she had married the rector of Chelmsford, Oliver Pocklington, a man of considerable energy and authority. Pocklington was rector of Chelmsford for thirty-three years and a man who

clearly saw his duty as extending far beyond his ecclesiastical duties of baptisms, marriages and burials and the writing of Sunday sermons. He was a trustee of Chelmsford's charity school, along with Thomas Manwood, a trustee of the first parish workhouse, he donated books to the church library and was a regular name at the head of petitions to improve the town centre. Katherine was Pocklington's second wife and she died in 1716 soon after giving birth to a daughter Anne, who sadly also died. Their son, and therefore Thomas's nephew, was Thomas Pocklington.

Like his father the rector and his Uncle Thomas Manwood, Thomas Pocklington became a leading figure in Chelmsford's affairs. He was on a committee formed to consider the replacement of the decayed pipes that brought water to the town centre, he regularly attended the vestry meetings, he succeeded his uncle Manwood as treasurer of the charity school, and he was a backer of a scheme to make the river Chelmer navigable. Thomas also took on the lease of the Wallengers mansion in Chelmsford town centre and of course he owned Priors from 1744 until his death in 1772. Although married he had no children and so his Priors property passed to his widow.

Thomas Manwood and his nephew Thomas Pocklington probably never lived at Priors, the Manwoods having acquired the lease of the central and prestigious mansion of Wallengers in Chelmsford. In 1746, two years after Pocklington inherited Priors, his mother's sister, his aunt Diana, died. The burial record described her as the wife of Nathaniel Luckin of Priors. So it is clear that the Luckin family were still leasing Priors from the Manwood family. They were of course very much a part of that dynasty and were certainly at Priors in the later 1600s and

the mid-1700s. However, the Land Tax returns show that by 1783 Daniel Blyth was the occupant and farmer.



The Manwood memorial in Broomfield church.

The Manwood dynasty of Priors, Broomfield.

*John Manwood m Mary Crayford
d1610*

*Thomas Jasper Ann
b1587 d1650
m Anne Love
daughter of Vice-Admiral Sir Thomas Love*

*Anne Roger b1629 b1649 m
Mary Love b1631 b1650
Thomasina b1634 m
Thomas b1637
Elizabeth b1640 m
John b1642 d1705
Sarah b1646 m
Thomas Freeman 1651
Thomas Cox 1681
Diana Gould Luckin 1661*

*Katherine d1716 d1676 m
Oliver Pocklington
Diana b1666
Thomas b1668 d1746 m
Nathaniel Luckin
John b1670 d1744*

*Diana m
Katherine
Thomas m
Ann b1716 d1769*

d1716

*George
Tindal*

*Rev John
Woodroofe
b1705 d1786*

*m
but no issue*

Thomas

When Thomas Pocklington died his Priors estate passed to his widow. At first Daniel Blyth of Writtle leased Priors from her. Daniel was a Writtle farmer who also owned several other properties in Broomfield but he was only the tenant of Priors. He died in 1813 but by 1804 the lease had passed to Thomas Gandy of Howletts Farm in Chignal St James. Gandy made his will in 1810 and in it he left the lease of the “farms and lands of Priors in Broomfield where I dwell” to his wife Ann and his brother-in-law William Pinchon, his wife to receive the benefit of the produce of the farm for life. The will was proved in 1828 but by then events had overtaken it, for Priors had a new owner.

Widow Pocklington lived on for many years after the death of her husband; he had died in 1772 but she was still given as the owner of Priors until 1820, from 1804 with Thomas Gandy as her tenant. In addition to Howletts Farm at Chignal St James, Gandy also owned the Bell public house in Little Waltham and he had two sons, Isaac and William, but the Gandy connection was not to last long beyond the death of Mrs Pocklington. And with her death ended the Manwood connection with Priors.

In the early 1800s Thomas Christy came to Broomfield. His part in the Broomfield story more properly belongs to Brooklands but in the period 1815-20 he bought up many

properties in Broomfield, including Priors and its neighbouring farms, Scravels, Philips, and Glovers. At first Thomas Gandy continued with the remainder of his lease but in 1825 Christy decided to take it in hand and in the following year he paid Thomas Gandy a final settlement on the farm stock. The exact size of the Priors estate at this time is difficult to determine because Thomas Christy seems to have brought at least a part of what had been Phillips Farm into it.

If the original Priors estate had amounted to 60 acres then it had long since expanded. When Thomas Wallenger bought the estate from William Eyre in 1567 it consisted of the house, garden, orchard, 80 acres of arable land, 3 acres of meadow, 30 acres of pasture and 12 acres of wood, i.e. a little over 125 acres. In 1822 Christy gave Priors as just over 113 acres and this roughly tallies with the Tithe map, so presumably between 1567 and 1820 around 12 acres had been lost, possibly to Scravels or Phillips farms

The oldest part of the estate may have consisted of what Christy listed in 1822 as:

Christy name	Tithe name	Christy
Tithe		
Wheat Barn Pasture	Home Pasture	2.1.22 2.2.36
Barley Barn Pasture	2 Acres	2.1.19 2.0.23
4 Acres	5 Acres	5.0. 7 4.3.24
Wood Field	Wood field	7.2.10 6.3.37
14 Acres	14 Acres	15.1. 4
14.2.12		
Walk Field	Walk Field	10.1.11
7.2.20		
	Pightle	

2.2.36			
Lay Field	Whitegate		7.0. 3
7.2.22			
Long Croft	Long Croft	11.3. 6	
11.2.28			

By both Christy's and the Tithe figures this would have come to just over 60 acres but there was 2 acres of yard, garden and chase to be added, plus Daffy Wood, then of around 3 acres.



The lands of Priors Farm, Broomfield.

	a r p				
1. Wood Field	1	2 37	†	Once	part of
Scravels farm					
2. Taylors Field	4	1.37	†	Once	part of
Scravels Farm					
3. Long Croft	11.2.28		*†		
4. Pightle	2.2.36		*†		
5. Wilderness	4.1.22		†	Once	part of
Scravels farm					
6. Walk Field	7.2.20		*†		
7. Whitegate	Pasture	7.2.22	*†		

8.	Dunstalls Pasture Farm?	4.1	3	†	Once	Phillips
9.	Lt Dunstalls	3.1.	9	†	“	“
10.	Homestead	2.0.27		*†		
11.	Home Pasture	2.2.36		*†		
12.	2 Acres	2.0.29		*†		
13.	Wood Field	6.3.37		*†		
14.	5 Acres	4.3.24		*†		
15.	14 Acres		14.2.12	*†		
16.	Gt Dunstalls Farm?	8.3.	3	†	Once	Phillips
17.	Dukes Garden	7.1.23		†	“	“
18.	Daffy Piece Wood	1.0.	3	*†	Once part of Daffy	
19.	Daffy Wood	2.0.	0	*†		
20.	Gt Church Lands	12.3.25			Purchased 1880	
21.	Pingley	9.1.16		*		
22.	Hither Bucklands	12.1.38		*		
23.	Lt Newlands	7.1.	1		Once Phillips Farm?	
24.	Wains Field	4.2.	2		Once part of Scravels farm	
25.	Lt Church Lands	9.2.24			Purchased 1880	
26.	Newland Spring	2.0.21			Once Phillips Farm?	
27.	Gt Newlands	9.1.34			“	“
28.	Middle Bucklands	14.1.10		*		
29.	Further Bucklands	10.3.	1	*		
30.	Fir Tree Field	4.0.17		†	Once	part of Scravels farm
31.	Barn Field	8.2.	3	†	Once	Webb's Farm?
32.	The Garden	1.3.32		†	“	“

“						
33.	Webb’s Pightle	1.2.27	†	“		“
“						
34.	Orchard	0.0.22	†	“		“
“						
35.	Green Field	4.3.	9	†	Once	part of
	Scravels farm					
36.	Sweetings	5.2.25	†			
37.	Cats Brains	13.2.32	†			

* = The lands purchased by Thomas Christy c1820.

† = The lands of Priors Farm 1976

The red border shows the farm as at 1976.

The above sketch shows how the Priors land had changed over the years, particularly during the Christy period. Parts of other farms had been added and land use had changed. Daffy Wood (19) was undoubtedly once larger, the northern part (18) had been grubbed out and turned over to arable land as Daffy Piece. Wood Field (13) had met the same fate. Interestingly, by using Christy’s measurements, adding the acreages of Daffy Wood, Daffy Piece, Newland Spring and Wood Field it comes to around 12 acres, the amount of woodland that was there in 1567.

By 1976 there had been two other significant changes; the farm had extended considerably towards the north-east (fields 30-37) and retreated from the south (20-27).

In 1841 Thomas Christy leased Priors to William Bott, a fellow Quaker. The initial lease was for seven years and Christy carefully set out the conditions of the lease. By then he had changed the farm somewhat so that it now contained

about 125½ acres. Great and Little Dunstalls and Dukes Garden, probably once part of Philips Farm, had been incorporated. William Bott was of course shown as the occupant on the 1843 fence list and Bott continued the leases of Priors until William's death in 1885.

Thomas Christy died in 1846 and he left Priors to his second son, Samuel Christy. In 1861 Samuel Christy changed his name to Christie-Miller when he inherited the Miller family property in Edinburgh and Buckinghamshire. Amongst the Christy papers in the Essex Record Office is a series of letters which passed between William Bott and Samuel Christy /Christie-Miller. It covers a period of nearly thirty years, from 1857 until shortly before Bott's death in 1885 and is a fascinating account of the state of farming at that time. Samuel would enquire as to the state of the crops and the farm in general. William Bott would give details of the crop situation, the need for repairs to the buildings, and he also seems to have kept an eye on Samuel's behalf on neighbouring Scravels farm, which had been let to Robert Warner. From time to time repairs were needed at Priors. In 1879 William Bott had written that he had had to strip off part of the roof of the house and put some new rafters in. He had also had the tops of the chimneys repaired as some of the bricks were blown off and not safe.

In 1879 Bott had written to Samuel Christie-Miller noting that it had been a disastrous year for crops and a series of poor years led to him having difficulties paying the rent for Priors. He wrote in 1884 that "last year (i.e. 1883) had been the worst year" only to write later in that year "1884 the worst year in my experience". More correspondence followed, with

Bott asking for more time to pay. The rent, £422 p.a., fell into arrears and Bott wrote that he had no money without threshing a good deal of corn, which he was reluctant to do at the present because of the prices being fetched. He wrote asking for a permanent reduction in the rent. Bott's son recorded that his father had apparently spoken to Samuel Christie-Miller's son on the subject and he was favourable to some arrangement.

Some of Bott's difficulties may have arisen due to the size of his business. He had taken on more and more farmland over the years, Priors was but one of his farms. In 1851 Bott was farming 280 acres, by 1861 this had grown to 450 acres and by 1881 it was up to 637 acres. In 1851 he had employed 14 men but by 1881 there were 41 men and 6 boys working on his farms. If 1883 and 1884 were bad years for all his crops then his financial problems were understandable. His household at Priors was modest with just two servants, a cook and a housemaid. His family consisted of himself, his wife Eliza and their four children. By 1871 his two sons, William and Lindley, were no longer at home but the two daughters, Julia and Margaret, were still there in 1881, in their 30s and unmarried. Whatever William Bott's money problems and his negotiations to reduce the rent, events overtook it when Bott died on the 10th April 1885.

In September of that year William Bott Jnr. wrote to Samuel Christie-Miller relinquishing the tenancy. The farm buildings were evidently in need of attention and between 1887 and 1889 much work was put in hand, supervised by the family's agent and surveyor Archibald Christy and Samuel's nephew Wakefield Christy. New farm buildings were erected

and work was done on the house. In 1887 Archibald reported to Wakefield:

27 April. Inspected samples of bricks. Ordered that the sand be washed before being used for mortar and that better bricks are to be used.

10 May Rejected unsound bricks. Bricklayers to pay more careful attention to several details in laying bricks.

7 June Directed that some alterations should be made (at builder's cost) so that my drawings should be properly carried out.

22 July. Met the builders. Gave orders as to him altering the position of loopholes in one cowhouse which had not been placed as shown in my drawings and were in their present position useless.

In 1889 Archibald wrote to Wakefield "You will I think like the elevation of the front as altered, for the new gable gives a very good effect to the whole and even rumour says that we "haven't spoiled the house after all". In that same year Samuel Christy-Miller died and the property passed to his nephew Wakefield Christy. In 1880 Samuel had extended the estate by buying the Church Lands of John Gynes charity, nearly 23 acres and abutting the Priors land, from the parish for £1,900. This was the land for which the Priors owners and occupiers had been paying rent for more than 300 years. Samuel had been approached by the Vestry as long ago as 1863 on the matter; presumably the time was not then ripe.

When Wakefield Christy inherited his uncle's property in 1889 he too changed his name to Christie-Miller, and on Wakefield's death in 1898 it passed to his second son, Charles Wakefield Christie-Miller. Meanwhile the tenancy had

changed hands. When William Bott died in 1885 Lawrence Marriage, of the other local Quaker family, who was then farming at Fingrith Hall, Blackmore, had applied for the tenancy of Priors and Scravels farms. Nothing came of this and the lease went to James Christy, the son of James Christy of Boyton Hall and brother of the family agent Archibald Christy. These were from the Patching Hall branch of the family. In between the Botts leaving and James Christy taking up residence Priors became the home for a time of the farm bailiff, first John Elmes and his family and then by John Cowell.

James Christy was born in 1845 and he married Isabella Marriage of Ayletts, Broomfield. When he died in 1911 he was succeeded at Priors by his son James and his daughter Dora Christy. James died first and Dora lived on alone at Priors until in 1936 the farm left the Christy family. During the 1930s a number of Scottish farmers moved south and among them was Tom Gemmill, whose father-in-law bought Priors and gifted it to him and Sadie as a wedding present.! The Gemmills farmed it for many years. Tom kept to his Scottish associations and was renowned for his herd of pedigree Ayrshire cattle. He also held Scottish reunions at Priors for many years and the skirl of the pipes would ring out of a summer evening as reels were danced on the lawn. Tom avowed that he lost many pints of valuable milk as his Ayrshires danced to the pipe music!

When Tom Gemmill retired in 1976 Priors and its land was put up for sale. Tom and Sadie had their retirement house built within sight of Priors but the family connection had ended since their son Stuart had set himself up on a farm in Suffolk. The sale catalogue noted that the farm then extended to 141 acres and the accompanying plan showed how the land that

made up the farm had changed since the tithe map 130 years earlier. The catalogue also mentioned that the fine panelled bedroom (p204) was formerly a chapel. Certainly the panelling is very unusual for a domestic room, and yet there seems no record of its ever being used as a chapel. Nor is it clear why it should ever have been used as such. The ecclesiastical connection with the Priory of Blackmore might suggest itself but the house was far removed from the Priory and in any case it seems that the present house was built after the Priory had surrendered it. Did the Manwoods use it as a chapel? We may never know.

The estate was broken up when it was sold and after a short interlude Priors was purchased by Michael Williams in 1978/79. He was married to Glenys, who sadly died in 2001, and they had two daughters, Laura and Marina, both born at the house. Having for many years lived outside the United Kingdom, Michael Williams arrived at Priors via another Tudor house, Parsonage Farm at Theydon Bois in Essex. He immediately started on a substantial period of renovation of the house and granary. From his home at Priors he commutes to his office near the Old Bailey where his company, Brewin Dolphin plc, has its Head Office. And what a splendid home to return to.



Priors.



The front of Priors had probably been plastered for several hundred years. The plaster was damaged in World War II and Tom Gemmill had it removed to reveal the timber frame.



The rear of the house. Until 1987 an ancient mulberry tree grew here, turning the lawn red with its fruit each year until the hurricane of that year brought about its demise.

* * * * *

1570. The tenement of Priors sometime William Ayres and now Thomas Wallengers maketh from Lewgers towards the west one rodd.

1678. The tenement of Priors now in the occupation of Mr Lucking maketh from Stoaks towards the west by estimation half a rodd.

1687. The mansion of Priors now in the occupation of Mr Luckin maketh from Knights towards the west half a rod. Now Mr Manwood* *This sentence added later.

1735. Priors - Mr Manwood - A Rod.

1843. 8. Priors, occupied by Mr W Bott, maketh from No. 7 one rod. Owner Thomas Christy.

1844 Tithe Award. 196. Owner Thomas Christy. Occt Wm Bott.

9.

Crouch House

now The King's Arms.



An entry in the court rolls of the manor of Broomfield Hall dated the 7th December 1807 reads: "At this Court it was found and presented to the Homage that John Parsons is the owner of a certain messuage or tenement sometimes called Crouch House, late the Kings Arms, and now the Coach and Horses held freely by deed of the said Manor....." Another entry in the court rolls, dated the 4th September 1816, tells that "a messuage called Crouch House, or Kings Arms, and now the Coach and Horses, is now in the occupation of Thomas

Beardwell". The building referred to is of course what is known today as the Kings Arms. It was once called Crouch House, then the Kings Arms, then for a short while the Coach and Horses, then it reverted to the Kings Arms and has remained so ever since. However, the story of this building starts much further back in time. It begins at least as far back as 1474, for a deed of conveyance in that year states:

"Let all men present and to come know that I, William Skynner of Chelmsford have given, conceded and in this present document confirmed to James Lamburne of Broomfield, Robert Rolff of Little Waltham, Andrew Gynes and John Webbe of the aforementioned Broomfield one tenement with one plot of pasture with all its appurtenances called Crowchhous according as they are situated and lie in the aforementioned Broomfield between the King's highway leading from Chelmsford towards Braintree on one part and the land of Clement Spice, Esquire, on the other part, with one headland abutting on Broomfield Green, but the other onto the paddock lately belonging to Salomon Nevylle. James Lamburne, Robert Rolff, Andrew Gynes and John Webbe, their heirs and assigns are to have and to hold the aforementioned tenement in perpetuity. Witnessed by John Bisshop, Salamon Elyot, John Scot, elder son of John Scot, John Brown, and others. Given at the aforementioned Broomfield on the 15th day of the month of February in the 13th year of the reign of King Edward, the fourth after the conquest of England."

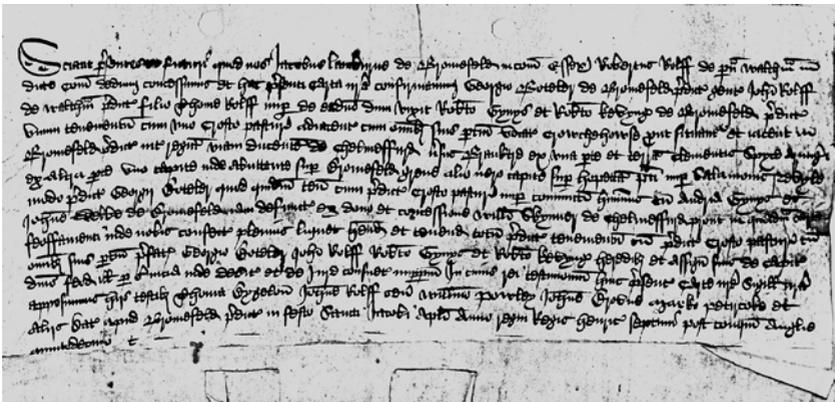


The 1474 deed of conveyance

In 1500 there was another conveyance. James Lamburne and Robert Rolff, two of the four-man consortium of 1474, (the other two had since died) confirmed to George Boteler of Broomfield, Gent., John Rolff of Little Waltham, Robert Gynes and Robert Devenish of Broomfield the property as described in the 1474 deed. This deed reads as follows:

“Let all men present and to come know that we James Lamburne of Broomfield in the County of Essex, Robert Rolff of Little Waltham in the aforesaid county have given, conceded and in this our present document confirmed to George Boteler of the aforementioned Broomfield, gentleman, John Rolff of the aforementioned Waltham, son of Thomas Rolff lately of the same during his lifetime, Robert Gynys and Robert Devenys of the aforesaid Broomfield, one tenement with one adjoining plot of pasture with all its appurtenances called Crowchawse according as they are situated and lie in the aforesaid Broomfield between the King’s Highway leading from Chelmsford towards Branktre on the one side and the land of Clement Spyce Esquire, on the other with one headland abutting onto Broomfield Green but the other abutting onto the paddock lately belonging to Salamon Nevyle, now to the aforementioned George Boteler. This tenement with the aforementioned plot of pasture lately

belonged to a consortium of men with Andrew Gynys and the late John Webbe by the gift and grant of William Skinner of Chelmsford, according as is perfectly clear in a certain document of feoffment then completed by us. George Boteler, John Rolff, Robert Gynys, Robert Devenys, their heirs and assigns, are to have and to hold the whole aforementioned tenement and aforementioned plot of pasture with all the aforesaid appurtenances according to the service due therefrom in respect of the feudal lord and by common law in perpetuity. In witness of this matter we have set our seals to this present document. Witnessed by Thomas Bygelon, John Rolff senior, William Powley, John Browne, Mark Petircoke and others. Given at the aforementioned Broomfield on the feast of St James the apostle (i.e. 22 July) in the 15th year of the reign of King Henry, the seventh since the conquest of England.”



The 1500 deed.

The description was the same as the 1474 deed except that the paddock to the south of the property, once owned by Salamon Nevylle, was now owned by George Boteler. The spelling of the various names was somewhat capricious, Boteler would now be Butler, Gynys - Gynes, Bygelon - Bigland, Powley might well be the Polley of the early parish registers, and Petircoke might have become Peacock.

Crouch House was therefore built some time before 1474, perhaps long before 1474, and William Skinner is its first known owner though there could have been others before him who are unrecorded. It can also lay claim to having the oldest deeds of any of the lay buildings of Broomfield. As for William Skinner, he was a wealthy Chelmsford man, probably descended from the William Skinner who owned valuable properties in Chelmsford High Street and who was a senior officer at the manor court between 1384 and 1405. The William Skinner of Crouch House had married Agnes Sparew, a co-heir to the Maynetrees property in New Street. Agnes died in 1475 and William died in 1478, leaving a cottage in New Street (at the back of the churchyard by the entrance to Church Street) as an almshouse for the poor. Clearly his interests lay in Chelmsford and his purchase of Crouch House may have been a business venture.

Of the four men who bought Crouch House, Andrew Gynes died in 1482 and John Webbe had also died before the 1500 conveyance. James Lamburne died childless in 1503 and in his will he left his house to his wife Alice. His best gown, his best doublet and two silver spoons went to his brother William, and 12 pence was left to the High Altar in the church at Broomfield. The house isn't named in his will but the next

deeds show that in 1504 the consortium of Boteler, Rolff, Gynes and Devenish granted Crouch House to Alice Lamburne, widow of John Lamburne. So it may be that the 1500 deed was in the nature of a mortgage, which Lamburne redeemed. What is certain is that after Alice Lamburne the house passed to the Putto family.

John Putto was a Broomfield taxpayer in 1524 and it may have been he or his son who sold the property to Lawrence Rochell of Springfield in 1563. John Putto was a miller, living at the Mill House, or the Water House as it was then called. The Puttos were also millers in neighbouring Springfield and a later John Putto, miller of Springfield, was up before the Quarter Sessions in 1620 accused of being a common drunkard. The Puttos were a prolific family, John Putto had ten children, and more will be said of them in the chapter dealing with Broomfield Mill. Suffice to say that John Putto died in 1571 by which time the ownership of Crouch House had passed on. Lawrence Rochell appears in the Assize records for this period as a juror and as constable for Springfield and doubtless it was from him or his family that Rochelles Farm in Lawn Lane, Springfield, got its name. The Rochell ownership was short-lived and in 1567 Crouch House was sold to John Goodeve of Great Waltham. This wasn't quite the end of Lawrence's association with the parish for on the 23rd May 1574 he was married to Joan Lord in Broomfield church.

The Goodeves were a family of yeoman farmers in the Walthams and it was John Goodeve who appeared as owner of Crouch House on the 1570 fence list. It was also he who got in a spot of bother with the archdeacon's court in that same year because his part of the fence was in disrepair. It seems as

though the drawing up of the list had focussed attention on who was responsible for the various bits of fence and the state that it was in. And John Goodeve was caught out. Perhaps the state of the fence had caused the churchwardens to set down in writing the responsibility for its repair. Two of those given responsibility for the fence had disputed their liability but not John Goodeve so presumably he set to and repaired his bit. John died in 1606 and Crouch House passed to his son, Thomas.

At this point something should be said about the house and how it got its curious name. The Kings Arms is a listed building though the details accompanying its Grade II listing are sparse. Basically it is described as 18th century with exposed timber framework which, if true, would imply that it has been rebuilt since its earlier manifestation as Crouch House. The exposed framework has only been visible since 1958, before that the exterior walls had been rendered with plaster. The 1958 renovation was presumably to give it a more attractive “olde worlde” appearance. The building’s original name is unlikely to have come from an early owner for none of the existing early records mention anybody by the name of Crouch, or anything like it. Most likely it came about because of its mode of construction, a crutched or cruck house, so called from its peculiar framework. A cruck was a large curved beam supporting both walls and roof of a building and this may have been sufficiently unusual in Broomfield to have attracted the name.

There was also a small pasture associated with the house. It couldn’t have been on the east side (Main Road) or the north side (Church Green), and the space between the house and the land of Broomfield Hall, which then included Woollards, was

hardly sufficient because of other buildings so it must have been to the south and this is confirmed in later deeds.

On the 9th May 1625 Thomas Goodeve of Crouch House, weaver, entered into a bond with Thomas Goodeve of Little Waltham, linen draper, to indemnify against his wife's dower. This is the first association of a trade with Crouch House. Would travellers along the Main Road have heard the clicking of a loom as they passed by? A fortnight or so later Margery, or Mary, Goodeve released all title to Crouch House. Thomas Goodeve of Crouch House died in 1627, he was buried on the 13th March of that year and his wife Mary followed him; she was buried just three days later.

Thomas Goodeve appointed his son Edward, yeoman, of Little Waltham, and Thomas Luckyn of South House, Great Waltham, as executors of his will. In it he instructed that Crouch House be sold by his executors to best advantage, the money to be used towards the paying off of his mortgage, the bringing up of his children and the relief of his wife.

In 1627 Crouch House passed into the ownership of the vicar of Broomfield, Thomas Burr. An interesting sideline to this acquisition is a pair of documents, one of 1626 and the other dated the 6th June 1627. The 1626 paper is a Bond in the sum of £40. It was from Thomas Goodeve to Robert Sawen of Moulsham in Chelmsford, tailor, for "the performance of covenants in a pair of indentures of even date". It was witnessed by Thomas Burr the vicar, William Howe of the Well House, and Thomas Bale. In it Thomas Goodeve is described as "of Broomfield, weaver" so the loom was still clicking and it looks as though his association with Robert Sawen could have

arisen through Thomas's supplying woven material to the tailor of Moulsham.

The second document, written in the following year, is an acquittance, or release from debt, in the sum of £24.16s.4d and it reads:

“Robert Sawen of Moulsham in Chelmsford, tailor, by the appointment of Edward Goodeve and Thomas Luckyn of South House, to Thomas Burr of Broomfield (due from Thomas Goodeve of Broomfield, deceased).

Upon a mortgage of a messuage called Crouch House, and a bond dated Sept 1626.

Witness Wm Pynenon”

So it seems that the late Thomas Goodeve had borrowed this sum on the strength of a mortgage on his house and the executors were carrying out their duty in repaying it.

Thomas Burr would have had the vicarage as his main residence and it may be that when he came into possession of Crouch House he at first let or leased it. In 1633 he conveyed it to Thomas and Hannah Welby, occupation unknown, together with the (presumably attached) kitchen house, and a little tenement adjoining the kitchen house then in the occupation of Mary Hayward and Mary Crow, widows. Both the widows died in the same year, Mary Crow died in May 1637 and Mary Hayward in the October.

Thomas Welby died in 1643 and when his widow

Hannah died in 1654 she specifically left the little tenement to Thomas Burr in her will with no mention of Crouch House which must have reverted to the Revd. Burr. Two years later, in 1656, Burr sold it to Edward Stoakes of Great Baddow. In the deed of conveyance Crouch House is described as "a capital messuage abutting upon the Highway leading from Braintree to Chelmsford, on the West upon a messuage late of Alice Goodwife (Goodeve?), widow, on the North upon Broomfield Green, and South upon the land of Thomas Burr aforesaid sometime belonging to the said messuage..... ". This land would have been the paddock or pasture mentioned in the deeds of 1474 and 1500, it lay to the south of the house, and clearly Rev. Burr had decided to keep it.

The deed of conveyance also made it clear that the sale excluded "the kitchen house sometime belonging to Crouch House and a little tenement adjoining in the occupation of Susan Parker widow with a purpasture of four foot of assize all along the east side of kitchen and tenement with the backside and garden now of the little tenement given to Thomas Burr in the will of Hannah Welby widow dated 20 May 1654". So Revd Burr had decided the keep this bit too.

As a postscript to the sale the following was written on the 28th May 1659:

"I Robert Smith of Much Baddowe in the County of Essex, Carpenter, do certify those whom it may concern, that about three years since I (was) working upon reparation of palings for Edward Stoakes in Broomfield, and intending to put one pair of Rayles ends into the corner post next to Crouch House yard by the street, Mr Burr then Minister of Broomfield

did forbid me so doing and told me it was his post, craved me to put up another post by his post. And this I certify under my hand Robert Smith".

The reference to Crouch House abutting a dwelling on its west side is interesting. Earlier deeds refer only to the land of Clement Spice on that side, and Spice was then the occupant of Broomfield Hall. The Alice Goodwife, or Goodeve, mentioned in the 1654 deed must have been the widow of a next generation of Goodeve owning a cottage immediately behind Crouch House. It is likely that she was the widow Goodeve who died in 1654 and who, as Alice Wallenger, had married Anthony Goodeve in 1606. This little tenement seems to have been inhabited by widows of the parish, not dissimilar to the cottages a little further along Church Green which later became known as Woollards.

There was indeed a cottage standing immediately behind the Kings Arms into the 20th century, known in its later days as the Prop House because of the large timber prop holding it up. No longer there, the Prop House may well have been the little cottage mentioned in the deeds of Crouch House.



This photograph shows the buildings that once stood between the Kings Arms and Woollards cottages, before the Prop House got its prop.



The little cottage, known as the Prop House, in its last years, now with the prop to hold it up.

It is possible that the property had been used for trade as well as living premises since the time of Thomas Goodeve the weaver, and when it was sold in 1656 it may have become a shop because Edward Stoakes was a tallow chandler. Had the sound of the loom been replaced by the smell of mutton and beef fat being rendered into tallow for making into candles? Stoakes's ownership didn't last long because in 1664 he sold Crouch House to Abraham Boosey, a wealthy yeoman of a Chignal St James family with Broomfield connections at Scravels and Staceys Farm, and who was also the owner of the Well House (his main residence) and Ayletts. Stoakes had been present at a vestry meeting in 1659 and was present again in 1676, long after he had sold Crouch House so he still had an interest in Broomfield. The sale was presumably a business acquisition by Boosey and Crouch House continued to be leased or rented out. In 1678 it was shown as being in the occupation of John Dice. This was a particularly short-lived residence for John Dice died in 1680.

Thomas Burr's son John had married Mary Bullen and after John Burr died his widow had married first Abraham Boosey and when Abraham died Mary married for the third time, to John Allen. Crouch House was then sold to John Turner, a carpenter. John Turner's son, another John Turner, was a wheelwright and he inherited Crouch House on his father's death in 1700. It was in that year, on the 30th September, that a parish meeting decided that securities must be provided for "those persons lately come to inhabit in our parish". This was to guard against them becoming a charge on the parish in the event of their needing assistance. One of those named was Nathaniel Cooke who was then residing in "Turner's house".

Within the space of 80 years the building seems to have seen a variety of trades carried out under its roof - weaver, tallow chandler, carpenter, wheelwright. In 1704 the property changed hands yet again, being sold to Thomas Lee for £48.

Thomas Lee had married Elizabeth Jeffries of Chelmsford in 1690 and by 1704 they had eight daughters, Elizabeth (b1691), Ann (b1693), Mary (b1694), Katharine (b1695), Sarah (b1697), Abigail (b1699), Frances (b1701) and Ruth (b1703). A ninth daughter, Diana, and a son, Thomas, had died in infancy. There then followed a clutch of boys: William (b1706), Thomas (b1707), John (b1708), and George (b1712), so in all Elizabeth had given birth to 14 children in 21 years. Thomas Lee was a grocer and Crouch House would then have been both a residence and a shop. His occupation would have kept him in regular contact with the other villagers and in 1720 this may have been his undoing.

In November 1719 one of the villagers, William Stileman, returned to Broomfield from wherever he had been and brought with him the smallpox. He died on the 1st December of that year and between then and March 21st 1720 fourteen villagers had died of the disease, including the landlord of The Angel, the village blacksmith, his wife and his apprentice, William Stileman's mother and, from the grocer's shop, Thomas Lee and his son Thomas. Stileman's aged father survived the outbreak and dropped dead suddenly in Chelmsford market two years later. Thomas Lee Senr. made his will on the 21st February, writing that he was "indisposed in body", an understatement for he died a few days later. He left a silver spoon to each of his daughters.

Elizabeth Lee also survived the disease and continued to live at Crouch House, the eldest son William running the business until his death in 1733, and in 1740 she gave the property to her son George "in consideration of a room in the house being provided for her for the remainder of her life together with access to the pump". Elizabeth died in 1747. The reports of weights and measures inspectors show that George was still a grocer in 1763 but then in 1765 he had become a victualler and the first recorded licensee of the Kings Arms.

George Lee had married Mary Finch in 1743. They had five daughters; Mary, Sarah, Jenny, another Mary and Susannah who all died in infancy. In 1752 their mother died and in the following year George married again, to Elizabeth Earee. George and Elizabeth had better luck, they had three more children and all survived, Elizabeth, Mary and Jenny. So George had eight children in all, and all of them daughters. Back in 1749 George had bought another Broomfield property from Adam Dines (this became the Plough alehouse and is now The Gables) but he sold it in 1754 to Philip Wakelin, the blacksmith, for £20 and resumed business at Crouch House. He died in 1773 and left his property jointly to his three surviving daughters.

There were now tenants behind the bar at the Kings Arms, John and Anne Jasper. John featured in the parish overseer's accounts, sending in his bill for supplying beer to the poor of the parish. Mrs Jasper had featured on several occasions in the same accounts; she was paid for mending Cornell's stockings and shoes, for bringing Livermore home, and for looking after John Hills. For the latter she was paid

one shilling a week. These were all cases where the parish had a responsibility to look after its poor, and willing parishioners were paid to help with the tasks of mending shoes and clothes, supplying food and providing accommodation if the almshouses and the poorhouse couldn't cope. An earlier occupant of the Kings Arms, when it was still known as Crouch House, was Richard Dice's widow and in 1703 she and widow Kemp had been put into the lower rooms of the almshouse.

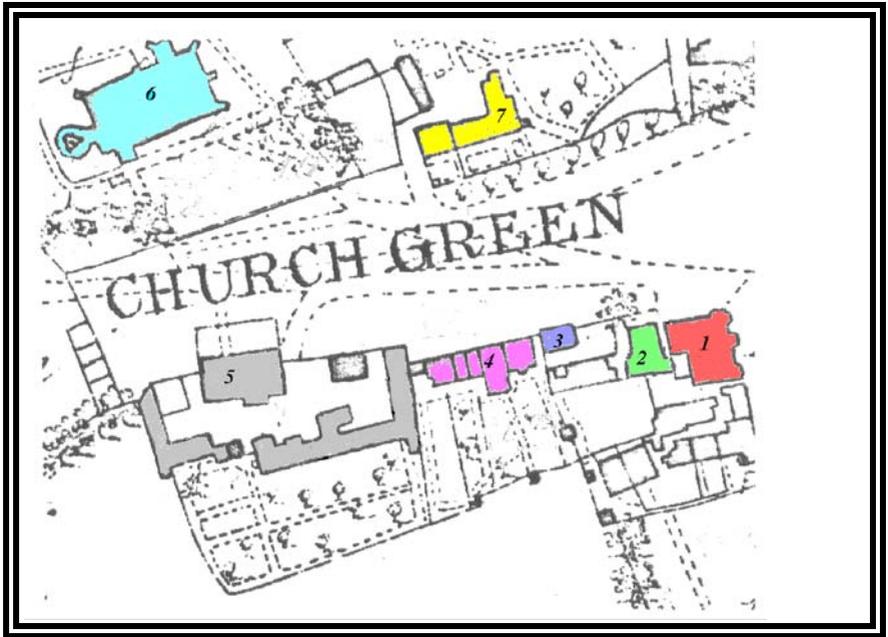
In 1782 Mary Lee died, she was 25, and her two sisters sold the Kings Arms to Ann Wakelin, the widow of Philip the blacksmith. Widow Wakelin died in the following year and the Kings Arms was sold in 1783 to John Parsons, a farmer from Chignal St James. The beneficiary was probably the widow's daughter Ann, who had married John Moss of Springfield. More tenants had come and gone; John Jasper had died in 1781 at the age of 49; his widow lived on until 1803 but by 1785 the tenant was Samuel Wilkinson. Samuel died in 1794 and his widow Elizabeth held the licence from that year until her death in 1806, when Hannah Wilkinson took it on for a short time.

The next tenant, John Day, celebrated his arrival by changing the pub's name from the Kings Arms to the Coach and Horses. His tenancy too was short lived but he and his wife Margaret managed to produce two children while they were there. Charles, who only lived for a short while, was baptised on the 17th August 1808 and buried on the 31st August. Their second son, John, was born in 1809 and seems to have survived the perils of infancy.

Crouch House had historically been manorial property, held copyhold of the manor of Broomfield Hall, so whenever it

changed hands it was necessary to surrender it at the next manor court which would then admit the new copyholder. Most of the records of Broomfield Hall were destroyed in World War II but surviving fragments reveal that at a manor court held on the 7th December 1807 "it was found and presented by the Homage that John Parsons is the Owner of a certain Messuage or Tenement sometimes called Crouch House, or Kings Arms, and now the Coach and Horses held freely by deed of the said Manor....."

John Parsons had been in Broomfield as early as 1768 when he was appointed overseer of the poor. He died in 1810 and left the property to his granddaughter Martha, who in 1809 had married Thomas Beardwell. Thomas took over the licence and several years later, in 1821, renamed the pub, returning it to its previous name, the Kings Arms. One wonders why it was changed in the first place and then, having been the Coach and Horses for some 15 years, why was it changed back? Perhaps the new name never caught on, maybe the locals still referred to it as the Kings Arms and so Beardwell submitted to popular usage. Whatever the reason, in 1826 Thomas Beardwell died and the pub was again tenanted, the new licensee was Daniel Batt. Although only a tenant of the Kings Arms the Broomfield Tithing Map shows that in the 1840s Mr Batt was the owner of the little cottage behind the pub which later became known as the Prop House, with William Turnedge as his tenant.



The Church Green area as it was when surveyed by Capt. Pilleau for the Ordnance Survey in 1875.

1. The Kings Arms
2. The little cottage, alias the Prop House
3. At one time the butcher's slaughterhouse
4. Woollards Cottages
5. Swan House, maltings and outbuildings (since demolished)
6. St Mary's church
7. The Pulling House (Bromfields and The Vineries)

In 1835 Martha Beardwell married again, her second husband was John Gopsill of the family of maltsters who lived at Swan House on Church Green, but John lived only a few more years, he died in 1841 and Martha was once again a widow. Thomas Sarel took over the tenancy from Daniel Batt, and then in 1854 Martha let the pub to William Taylor. The old lady died in 1859, 50 years after her marriage to Thomas Beardwell, and she left the Kings Arms to her son George Beardwell.

In 1877 the breweries came on the scene. In that year George Beardwell died and the trustees of his will sold the Kings Arms to Messrs Wells and Perry, brewers, of Chelmsford. The price was £1,300, a large sum for those days although in the light of the rise in the value of property over the years perhaps it wasn't such a large sum. £1,300 in 1877 would have a purchasing power of just over £60,000 in 2002. William Taylor continued to hold the licence for a few more years, to be succeeded in the 1880s by Arthur Campen. Then came James Wenn, followed by Robert Horne.

The second half of the nineteenth century saw the introduction of photography and by the turn of the century picture postcards were in vogue. The Kings Arms was one of the focal points of the village, a place where carts and wagons would pause while their men took some liquid refreshment. It was at a strategic corner of Church Green, another popular photographic scene. The Chelmsford photographer Fred Spalding and local photographer Walter Smith took several images featuring the Kings Arms, enabling future generations to see the pub as it was before it and its surroundings were changed forever.



A focal point of village life, the Kings Arms provided the backdrop as the local children watched itinerant musicians with barrel organ and bones in the early 1900s. Below, more locals pose outside the pub 50 years later. The licensee, Mrs Parish, is on the left.



The photograph at the opening of this chapter reveals, if you know what you are looking for, the little butchers shop that

was once at the rear of the pub. A patch of white, barely discernible in this photograph, is actually a carcass of meat hanging in the butcher's shop window!

In 1910 Jim Parish took on the licence. He soon became a prominent figure in many village activities. He also managed to combine the duties of licensee of a thriving public house with the office of Clerk to the Parish Council.



In this photograph, taken shortly after World War I a charabanc outing was about to depart from the Kings Arms. Jim Parish is the dapper figure in the straw boater on the left of the picture.

When Jim Parish died in 1940 his widow, Emily took over. In 1935 the property had passed to new owners, Taylor Walker, who eventually merged with Ind Coope. With the

property went the butcher's shop adjoining it and the slaughterhouse at the rear. The slaughterhouse, which also appeared on those early photographs, later stored the bicycles for Gladwyn's cycle shop, before reverting to the Kings Arms.

Robert Scott succeeded Emily Parish as licensee in 1956 and in 1958 the brewers decided to carry out substantial alterations to the building. The plaster rendering which had covered it for so long was removed to reveal the timber framework. Somewhat smartened up, this is how it can be seen today. The old butcher's shop has been incorporated into the building and the slaughterhouse is now a garage. In 1965 Mr Starkey became the licensee and in 1967 Denis Bryan took over.

Denis and Jacqueline Bryan managed the pub for many years, they were still there in 1985, but their's wasn't the end of the story. By 1990 the Longdens were there and they were followed by John and Liz Beard. After these several short tenancies Fredeick (Rick) Johnson took over and brings the story up into the 21st century.

There have been other changes. The Kings Arms is now (in 2002) a part of the Pubmaster chain which itself was a creation of the early 1990s and was subject to a management buyout in 1997. No longer just a place for a pint and a chat, part of it is now a restaurant and food is served seven days a week. The story continues, and the old building lives on. If only walls could speak, how much more would we know of its history.



The Kings Arms in 2000.



And as it was long ago.

1570. The tenement of Crouch House and now John Godeves maketh from Priors towards the west half a rodd. (Stokes in the margin).

1678. The tenement of Crouch House now in ye occupation of John Dice maketh from Priors towards the west by estimation half a rodd.

1687. The tenement of Crouch House now John Turners maketh from Priors towards the west half a rod

1735. Crouch House - Mrs Lee - half a rod.

1843. 9. Crouch House, or Kings Arms (Mr D Batt) maketh from no. 8 four and a half feet. Owner Widow Jn Gopsill