

THE HUNTLEY MANOR ESTATE 1717 - 1883

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In 1717 a survey of the manors of Huntley, Netherleigh and Longhope was produced for the Duke of Kent who owned the larger part of all three parishes. The survey consists of large maps and details of all tenants. It appears to have been a preliminary to the sale of his Gloucestershire estates. In 1725 an Act of Parliament was passed vesting the estates of Henry Duke of Kent in Hereford, Monmouth and Gloucestershire in the Duke and his heirs which allowed these properties to be sold. His other estates in Essex, Suffolk, Bedford, Hertford, Northampton and Leicester were settled in lieu of the freed portions. The Gloucestershire estates were to be sold and the proceeds divided between his daughters.

In 1721 Edmund Probyn purchased a number of the major farm properties in Huntley. In 1726 he raised a mortgage of £1,500 at 4½% interest against 'all that Manor of Huntley in the County of Gloucester'. The mortgage was cleared less than two years later, in December 1727, at a total cost of £1,562.10s.0d.

Edmund Probyn was baptised on 16th July 1678 at Newland and was Sargeant at Law of the Middle Temple in 1725. Two years later he became a Justice of the Kings Bench and was Knighted. He became Chief Baron of the Exchequer in 1741. His property in Longhope and other parishes adjoining Huntley were initially administered from London and later from Newland. During the next 160 years the Probyn family increased their property holding in Huntley until 1883 when the estate was put up for sale.

The period covered by the Probyn family ownership was one of great agricultural development. New ideas on crop rotations, livestock breeding and land inclosure were introduced. In a local situation the owners attitude to these changes would either speed improvements or delay change. The 1717 survey of Huntley showed Wood End as the principal farm with 141 acres of land. It was twice the size of any other farm in the parish. In addition to Wood End there were ten leaseholds of between 20 and 75 acres and nine of under 20 acres. While most of these centred around three or four adjacent plots they all had outlying fields in other parts of the parish. This situation suggests the Church Field, the Hayes, Rye Meadow and Sow Meadows were once open fields and had been split up to provide a number of holdings. Certainly by 1717 four or five plots existed by each name and the larger leaseholds could claim a portion of each. 23 freeholders were listed as paying yearly

rents to the manor of between 2d. and 5s. In addition 8 incroachments are shown on Huntley Hill, the largest being 2 acres 1 rood 17 perches and the smallest 13 perches. Half of these incroachments did not contain buildings. The church tithe accounts indicate that by 1736-8 the number of incroachments and small holdings had increased considerably. Unfortunately it is not until 1800 that a further complete list of land holdings is available.

Sir Edmund Probyn died in 1742 and left his property to his nephew John Hopkins on the proviso that he change his name to Probyn. John Hopkins/Probyn married Ann Howell whose father purchased a number of pieces of land in Huntley in 1751. These land holdings were added to the Probyn estate at a later date. John Probyn died in 1773 and was succeeded by his son Edmund Probyn. The Land Tax returns of 1777 show 53 persons as liable to pay Land Tax. If the sums assessed are taken as a guide Wood End was still the principal farm paying £2.17s.9³/₄d. Northend Farm and Pool Farm were both assessed at over £1 as were the holdings of the Reverend John Morse. After 1787 the Land Tax returns show the proprietors of each property in addition to the occupier. Out of £56.10s.0d. due for the parish £40.9s.9d. related to Probyn-owned property. In 1793 an Act was passed which allowed landowners to redeem their liability to Land Tax in return for a once-off payment against each property. In 1799 Edmund Probyn obtained certificates of redemption for most of his property in Huntley. The principle farms of Wood End - 236 acres, Northend - 100 acres and Little Northend - 96 acres were thus left free of compulsory outgoings. A number of rent lists exist for the period 1722-1799 and although many only show chief tenants others list all rents payable to the manor. There are a number of notes about the late payment of rents and arrears lists seem to have been produced regularly but unfortunately there is no indication of the action taken to recover these amounts. Subsequent rent lists with details of late payments suggest that the arrears were collected after the arrears list was produced before further payments fell due.

In 1794 an exchange of land was undertaken between Edmund Probyn and Thomas Blunt. This gave Edmund Probyn lands in Abinghall and a cash balance of £316.18s.0d. in exchange for the White Hart premises and lands in Huntley with lands of Chesgrove previously leased to Thos. Blunt.

Josiah Coleman of Longhope appears to have acted as agent for Edmund Probyn in the sale of timber from the estate. In 1797 following advertisements, an auction at the Red Lion Inn resulted in the timber of Castle Hill Wood, on the Huntley parish border, being sold for £10.19s.0d. an acre. The purchaser, William

Young, paid a deposit of 10% of the total purchase price i.e., £60.4s.0d. immediately. The notices of auction list the conditions of sale including some to protect the property from excess damage during the felling and hauling of the timber. The purchaser was allowed almost two years to clear the timber but was to exercise due care not to cause damage to other property on the estate. Edmund Probyn died in 1819 and the properties passed to his son John Probyn. John Probyn was vicar of Longhope for some years and was buried there in 1843. There are no records of his influence on the estate.

His successor to the estate ownership was his son, another John Probyn. The Land Tax returns of 1826 give additional information about property in the parish. At this time 19 properties and 6 pieces of land were owned by people other than the Reverend Probyn. The land assessments suggest that they were all small holdings.

The Huntley tithe map and documents which are dated 1841 show that the Rev. John Probyn owned 1081 of the 1409 acres affected by tithes. Of the remaining acreage covered by tithes 153 acres were waste land and 45 acres were under the control of the Rev. Daniel Capper leaving only 130 acres in individual ownership.

The Probyn owned properties fell into the following size groups:-

Over 200 acres	1
100 - 200 acres	2
75 - less than 100 acres	1
50 - less than 75 acres	1
30 - less than 50 acres	5
20 - less than 30 acres	1
10 - less than 20 acres	2
5 - less than 10 acres	5
Less than 5 acres	92

It is interesting to note that some 356 acres was let to the Drinkwater family. John Drinkwater also owned 5 acres and rented a further 3 acres in Huntley from the parish officers of Westbury. The Trustees of the Poor owned some 6 acres which were leased out in 5 portions and included 4 properties.

In 1856 an award was made for the inclosure of Huntley Common. This set aside two areas which were to be under the control of the churchwardens and overseers of the poor - one for exercise and recreation and the other as allotments for the labouring poor. (Both of these areas remain today and are still used for

their intended purposes). Persons with a claim to the common worth less than £5 received a cash benefit while the remainder were allotted plots of land. The main recipient was Edmund Probyn who was allocated 1090 acres while the next largest award was 49 acres to the Rev. Daniel Capper in respect of glebe land. Edmund Probyn was to purchase one plot of land - 9 acres in all - for £470 which was to provide the finance for the inclosure award. The award also provides for an exchange of land between Edmund Probyn and the Rev. Daniel Capper which included part of the glebe lands. The award of land on the common was followed by the formation of Yew Tree Farm which also absorbed other land in the immediate vicinity.

Some of the lands exchanged were used by Edmund Probyn to form the park and garden of the manor house built in 1862. The manor was built in French Chateau Style with S.S. Teulon as architect. Twenty years later in the sale particulars it was described as:-

'Most substantially built in the French Chateau Style planned in every way for the family of distinction'

The outbuildings and yards included stabling for nine horses, a coach house, walled kitchen and fruit gardens, vinery, orchard houses, melon, cucumber and forcing pits. The house had 14 principal bedrooms and 6 secondary or servants rooms and a lift from the ground floor. Attention is drawn to the complete service of hot and cold water and the 'never failing spring' of the purest water which rises on the hill immediately at the rear of the mansion. The premises were 'heated throughout with hot water pipes'.

John Probyn died in 1863 and was buried in Longhope. His successor was his son Edmund Probyn of Huntley Manor an ex-Dragoon Guards officer. Thus for the first time the estate was administered from Huntley Manor.

In 1872 a further inclosure award effected Huntley Hill and Brights Hill Common. Edmund Probyn was awarded 80 acres in addition to a number of small plots relative to land purchased by him during the proceeding few years. The awards included 22 acres to Rev. Henry Miles, the new Rector of Huntley. Only 3 other awards exceeded 5 acres.

A further exchange of land in 1874 is shown as coming under the inclosure award and Improvement Act. This affected the exchange of land adjacent to the common in Huntley against land by the railway station in Longhope between Edmund Probyn and John Constance.

When the estate was put up for sale in 1883 the acreage exceeded 2880 of which 661 acres was outside Huntley parish. The figures suggest that Edmund Probyn

had continued to purchase pieces of land in the parish during his control of the estate; certainly considerable sums of money had been spent on property improvement since a residence was established in the parish.

It is interesting to follow the changes which took place during the period of Probyn ownership as they affected Woodend Farm which was the largest farm in the parish. In 1711 the Duke of Kent leased Woodend Farm to John Cocks for a rent of £4.8s.6d. per annum plus 2 fat capons or 15s. in lieu at Whitsuntide. The lease was for the three lives of John Cox, Charles Cox and Thomas Savage. The acreage, including properties, was listed in the 1717 survey as nearly 142 acres and this included Huntley Mill which was let as part of the farm.

The farm was purchased by Sir Edmund Probyn in December 1726. In 1732, Woodend House, stables, out-houses and land was leased to Sarah Pullen. A new lease was made in 1735 to James Drinkwater which mentions only the stables and orchards. Widow Pullen seems to have continued at the farm and possibly the property was split for this period.

The Land Tax returns of 1777 to 1783 show £2.17s.9½d. due for Woodend. James Drinkwater also held the Red Lion lands and in 1787 his total Land Tax payment was £12.16s.6d. which suggests a large land-holding. James Drinkwater died on 31st May 1793 and by 1795 Edward Drinkwater had taken his place.

In 1780 James Drinkwater paid £140.0s.0d. in rent which had increased to £154.13s.0d. by 1799. Deeds in 1794 show Edward Drinkwater's holding to be 199 acres. Woodend Farm was one of the properties for which Land Tax redemption was purchased in 1799 by Edmund Probyn.

The documentation shows Woodend Farm as 211 acres with 25 acres of wood. During the 18th century the farm had been increased in size by the absorption of two smallholdings. The farm's fields had not been as scattered as those of others in the parish and the greater part of the land lay to the south and south east of the farmhouse with the mill at the southern end on the parish boundary. A stream runs through the farm from Huntley Hill to the mill. The turnpike road ran through the farm and the turnpike house remains at the farm entrance although the modern road runs to the north.

Soon after 1800 Joseph Drinkwater became tenant and Woodend was managed from the Red Lion Inn. There were 110 acres of arable land and 123 acres of grass producing a tithe charge of £35.6s.0d. and £5.6s.3d. poor rate annually.

The 1841 tithe list shows Joseph Drinkwater holding 251 acres including a house, farm buildings, a rick yard, cattle shed and yard. By this time the toll road was no longer used but provided the farm with a private drive.

The Red Lion with some 56 acres of land was being run as a separate concern by James Drinkwater. The land of Woodend Farm had been amalgamated and then consisted of adjacent fields which covered the area from the church to the southern parish boundary and mill site. (The mill had ceased to be mentioned by 1841). The 1841 census returns show Woodend Farm's residents as Joseph and Elizabeth Drinkwater. Joseph had 3 resident agricultural labourers and one female servant.

Ten years later the census records that Woodend Farm acreage was 265 acres and Joseph employed 10 labourers, four of whom seem to have been resident. The 1861 census show the farmer at Woodend to be David Rogers. In addition to his wife and daughter, a house servant, dairy maid, nurse and carter are also listed. David Rogers and his wife were born in Scotland.

The tenant had changed again by 1879 when Kelly's Directory lists James Ware. By 1883 the Farm was let to Francis Thorniloe at a 'reduced rent of £350 per annum'. The Farm extended over 270 acres. The sale particulars call Woodend a 'Model Farm Homestead' and state that it had been recently rebuilt.

The farmhouse had a W.C. and the farm buildings included a fattening shed for 40 beasts and cowshed for 20 beasts in addition to many specialist barns and storehouses. During the period under study the farm had almost doubled in size while the rent had increased from £5.3s.6d. to £350.0s.0d.

Although for the larger part of their ownership the Probyn family were absentee landlords, they seem to have kept sufficient contact with the Huntley estates to keep abreast of changes. They spent considerable sums of money to improve the estate, and even to the extent of selling shares to redeem the Land Tax. The inclosure award, which was funded by a land purchase by Edmund Probyn allowed for a continuation of the process of redistribution of land between farms. A number of small units of land were absorbed into the larger farms and Yew Tree Farm and Home Farm were formed. Attention was paid to the upkeep of the woodlands with a view to the sale of timber and some 128 acres of woodland existed by 1883. This consisted of oak, ash, elm and fir trees and was estimated at an annual value of approximately £100. The period of 160 years during which the Probyn family owned and developed the Huntley Manor estate included many changes and the pattern of the farms and woodland altered considerably. It is

perhaps a tribute to their planning that this pattern remains intact

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