

HUNTLEY MILL

by J.M. Eastwood

The study of property in Huntley, a country parish some ten miles west of Gloucester, which has been under way for two years, has raised a number of questions and problems. The uneven distribution of houses leads to the question of why properties are concentrated in certain areas while others contain little or no property. A closer study may help to answer these questions.

The 1717 estate survey contains a map and terrier which is the earliest detailed record of properties available. The survey forms a convenient starting document from which to study property and land changes in Huntley over the last 260 years. It is apparent that some properties ceased to be used while others were split to give dwelling accommodation for more families. Over the 260 year period there have also been notable changes to the road network, water resources and field sizes and it is of interest to discover why the changes took place.

In one area of the parish there are now no houses at all and only one farm building. The building at present in this area is a brick barn of no great age and the site has no recorded buildings on the 19th century maps. This land south of the present village extending to the southern parish boundary is traversed by one lane where the earlier maps show three lanes or roads. It was in an attempt to find out why this area did not attract housing and why the road and field patterns have changes so much that this study was started.

The area has an added interest in that it includes the site of Huntley Mill and it seemed relevant to try to discover something of the history of the mill. Some of the changes to the road system may have been connected with the cessation of operations at the mill.

Earlier information relating to this area can be obtained from studies of the Roam roads in the Forest of Dean. Research has suggested that the Roan road from Gloucester to Monmouth ran along the southern boundary of Huntley parish. This boundary line would appear to have still been the route of a lane or road in the early 18th century and a small section is followed by the modern road from Huntley to Westbury.

The Domesday Book, which normally lists all mills, does not mention a mill in Huntley. This would suggest that the mill was not then established. The first mention of a

mill is in the records of the perambulations of the Forest of Dean. These records quote the forest boundary running 'from the vill of Blechedon (Blaisdon) by highway as far as the mill at Hunteley (Huntley) which is called Stinderforthemilne and from thence by the way as far as the ditch of the wood of Bridwoode (Birdwood)'. Thus it appears that the parish boundary was then the boundary of the Forest of Dean and that by this time (1300) there was an established mill.

There is a long period for which no documents relating to the mill and this area of Huntley have been found. The next reference to the mill is contained in the survey prepared for the Duke of Kent in 1717. This survey map shows the mill and the roads leading to it. One lane leads directly from the village to the mill and meets another lane which follows the southern parish boundary. The mill is sited where two streams meet, one coming from Woodend farm and the other from Longhope parish - the latter is known as Ley Brook. The terrier which goes with the survey shows that the mill was let with Woodend farm to John Cox Esq:-

'Huntley mill and the little meadow adjoining.'

The fields listed include -

'Mill meadow, millpond meadow and little millmead meadow'

The survey also mentions Charles Jones as the tenant of the mill but gives no further details of his holding. On the map two buildings are drawn in the mill area. One of the buildings has a wheel drawn at one end and also a small square alongside. The square plot may represent the mill pond. Charles Jones died in 1733 and although some of his descendants continued to live in the parish they would not appear to have retained this holding.

John Cox, who had held Woodend Farm, died in 1745, and no further members of his family can be traced as living in Huntley. The mill is next mentioned with other land when it was sold to Mr. Probyn by the Duke of Kent. Unfortunately the documents do not show which land went with individual properties and give no indication of tenants at the time of the transaction. Later in the 18th century (c.1770) a set of notes on properties and leases include a record of one to Richard Drinkwater which included 'An old farm house, a mill and mill house, a barn of three bays, oak threshing floor and a cart house at one end.' The fields listed by name help to identify the properties and the farm house would appear to be Woodend Farm but the mill house probably represents the property previously let to Charles Jones.

Although later deeds mention the mill meadows there are no further documents for the actual mill. In the later 18th century the 'lane leading from Huntley village to Huntley Mill' was used as a landmark on a number of deeds. This cannot be held to prove that the mill was still in existence but does show that the lane was still in use.

In 1841 the tithe map for Huntley was produced and there were no buildings in the southern part of the parish where the mill had been. The lane leading from the village to the mill still existed but the lane along the southern parish boundary was not shown - presumably it had ceased to be used. The fields in the mill area had been enlarged by some amalgamation and were still attached to Woodend Farm. The map of 1883 which was produced for the estate sale shows that some further field amalgamation had taken place. The lane to the mill no longer existed. The original line of this lane was marked by field boundaries and in fact still is for most of its length. The mill site is still the meeting point for fields on the southern parish boundary but recent work on the stream bed and banks have removed any signs of the mill which may have previously survived.

Although an outline of the history of the mill has been obtained there are many gaps in the story. Some other pieces of information came to hand during the study which may have relevance to the mill's history.

One idea which was considered is that another mill may have taken over some of the work available to Huntley mill. There is no documentary evidence of another mill within the parish but Upper Ley Mill in Westbury parish is within a half mile of the Huntley parish boundary. The Ley Brook turns into Westbury parish at the point where Huntley mill stood and makes its way to join the river Severn. A short distance to the south of the Huntley boundary is Ley Fold Farm and Ley Mill Farm. In the Industrial History of Dean Cyril Hart mentions that the iron framework of the wheel at Upper Ley Mill was still in position in 1940. It would thus appear that this mill survived long after the Huntley mill ceased to operate and it may well have taken over some of the business from Huntley Mill.

The 1841 census of Huntley lists John Elliot as a miller. He was aged 75 and it may well be that he had to retire to Huntley from elsewhere but it is also possible that he had been the last tenant of the mill earlier in his life. No further papers for John Elliot have been found but this does raise the question of when the mill ceased to operate. If it was during John Elliot's lifetime it may well have continued after 1800, some thirty years after the documentary evidence.

A further factor to be considered is the field distribution in this part of Huntley. One large portion of the land north of the mill was called Rye meadow and this may once have been part of the common field system. If this were the case it would have precluded building in this area until the field system was modified and the fields enclosed. This portion of the parish was fully enclosed before the 1717 map was produced and thus it may have been difficult for people to encroach on this area in the way that they did on Huntley Hill. The fact that the

land was later part of the largest farm in the parish would also have had an effect in that the farm had its buildings and accommodation in one unit to the west of the area under study.

It would appear that the mill was water operated (from its siting and the millpond references) and it is therefore relevant to look at the water sources. The early ordnance survey maps show a reservoir to the north of Woodend which is not shown on earlier estate maps. It is perhaps worth asking if this would have affected the flow of water in the stream which ran from here through Woodend to the mill.

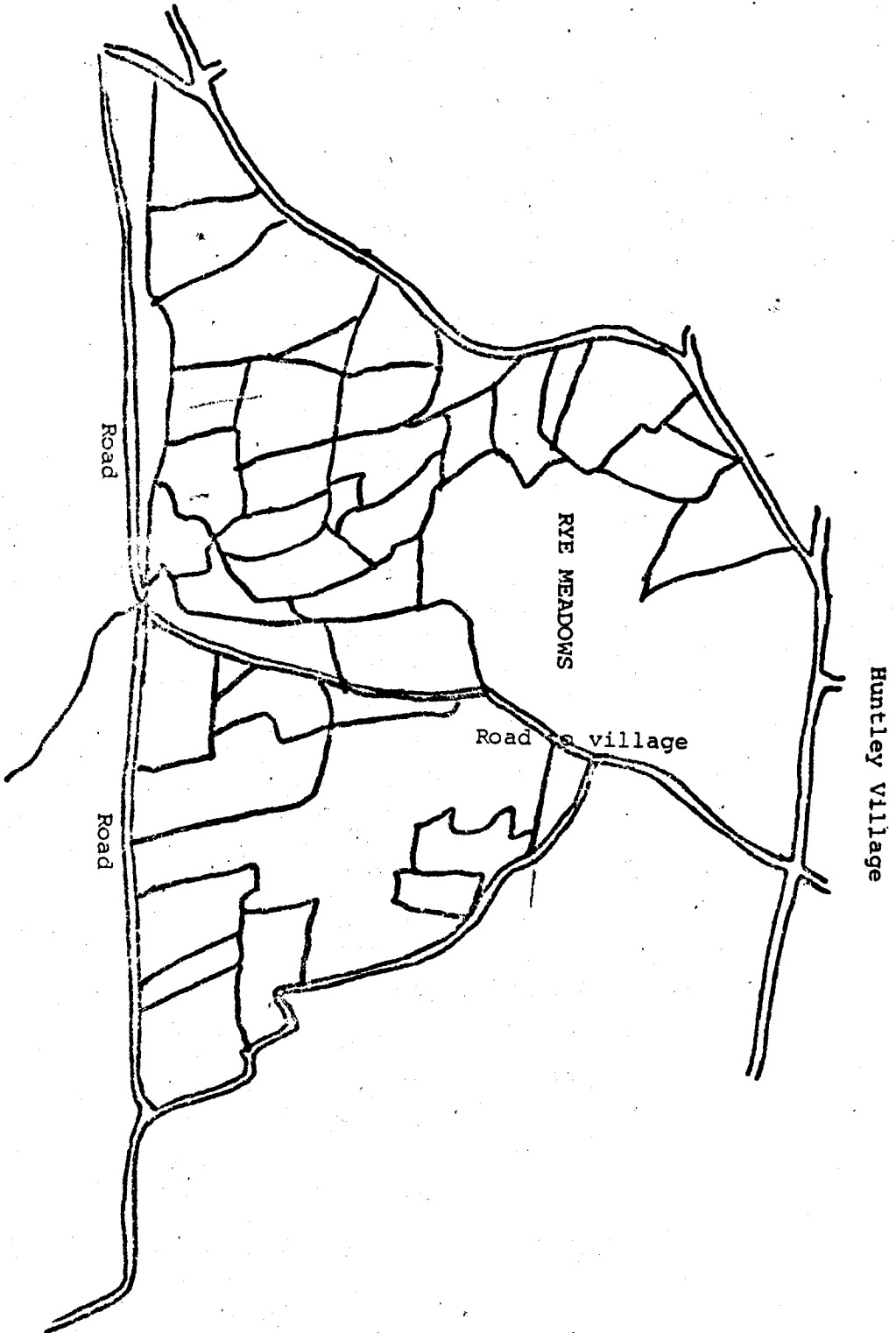
The lane which led to Huntley Mill is no longer needed and therefore it is logical that it has been lost but the lane which followed the southern parish boundary would have provided a shorter route from Birdwood to Longhope than the present road which goes through Huntley village. This route may have been very wet in winter as it followed the Ley Brook but there is no logical reason why it should have ceased to be used. The early ordnance survey maps show five footpaths meeting at the site of the mill and state that a footbridge existed across the Ley Brook. This would suggest that the footpaths had existed when the mill was operating but were still in use. The lanes that had existed in 1717 were included as footpaths.

It is hoped that as the study of the whole parish continues more information will fit into place and give a better insight into the reasons for the mill's disappearance. It appears to have operated for about five hundred years and to have had a marked effect on the field and road system of this part of Huntley parish.

References

- Glos. R.O., D1297 Survey of Huntley, Longhope and
Netherleigh, 1717
Glos. R.O., D23/E23 Deeds and leases of the Probyn family
Glos. R.O., Huntley tithe map, 1841
Glos. R.O., SL10 Sale Particulars, Huntley estate, 1883
Cyril Hart, The Industrial History of Dean (Newton Abbot
1971)
1878/81 Ordnance Survey maps.
Cyril Hart, Archaeology in Dean (1967)

1717 Field and Road Plan



1880 Field and Road Plan

