

LANDOWNERSHIP

Bishops Hull formed part of the bishops of Winchester's manor of Taunton Deane whose capital messuage was Taunton Castle. The charter giving three mansae in the parish to the old minster at Winchester in 1033 is believed to be spurious.¹ There were some freeholds notably the manor of Fideoak but most of the parish was Taunton Deane copyhold or demesne overland. Although some families amassed land from the early 18th century, there were 11 male freeholders recorded in 1697,² in 1842 the largest landholding was only c. 240a. and only nine people held more than 50 a.³ The manor was sold to Robert Mattock and the manorial hundred of Hull, which included Bishops Hull parish, was sold by Robert Mattock's trustees to Edward William Cox in 1866 who like Mattock enfranchised the copyhold estates. The bishops of Winchester retain mineral rights only.⁴

TAUNTON DEANE MANOR

The urban area of Bishops Hull lay in the demesne of the manor of Taunton Deane and was dominated by Taunton Castle, the capital messuage. Land and manors in the Taunton area had been acquired by the bishops of Winchester from the 8th century probably including Bishops Hull and the site of the castle.⁵ The bishops retained the castle except during vacancies and the chaotic period in the 1260s when it was given to Crown grantees.⁶ In the mid 16th century the castle was in Crown hands after the seizure of the bishops' estate and was let with Taunton Deane manor to tenants whose leases remained in being after the estates of the bishopric were restored in 1575.⁷ The Hill family remained lessees in the 1630s but appear to have sublet the castle to the bailiff or keeper and in 1632 keeper William Cliffe appears to have lived in some part of it and retained possession in 1647⁸ when the castle and manor, forfeited by the bishop, were sold to Brampton Gurdon and John Hill in trust for

¹ The electronic Sawyer S 972, esawyer.org.uk: accessed 3 Feb. 2016.

² A.J. Webb, *Two Seventeenth Century Freeholders Lists* (1990), 30.

³ SHC, tithe award.

⁴ VCH office, draft history containing inf. supplied by then Steward of Taunton Deane.

⁵ Taunton, landownership.

⁶ *Cal. Pat.* 1258—66, 7, 180, 193; 1266—72, 77, 143, 204.

⁷ *Cal. Pat.* 1560—3, 16; 1572—3, 537; Webster, *Taunton Castle*, 272.

⁸ SHC, DD/X/WA/1, 28; Webster, *Taunton Castle*, 274.

the wealthy lawyer Roger Hill.⁹ In 1659 the castle was transferred to new trustees but in 1662 it was restored to the bishop of Winchester.¹⁰

In 1822 the castle was sold by the bishop to Thomas Southwood of Pitminster who was followed by Robert Mattock who in 1839 bought out the rights of Edward Jeffries Esdaile, last keeper, to Castle House. Esdaile also sold the right to hold courts to the Clerk of the Peace and assigned the keepership and all its appurtenances to Mattock in 1850. Mattock (d. 1859) left the castle to his nephew and namesake but had contracted to sell it having secured from Esdaile a release of any claim to the assize hall in the castle. In 1866 Robert Mattock the younger split up and sold what was then known as the Castle Green estate, consisting of the Castle, Castle Lodge, the Winchester Arms and associated cottages, the cattle and sheep markets and Clarke's Hotel. He sold the Castle to Robert Parsons of Taunton reserving the right to use the two rooms over the Castle archway known as the Muniment Room or Exchequer with right of way.¹¹ The new owner set about demolishing the older parts of the castle and concern over the building's future led the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society to purchase it with the gardens in 1874. The Society retains ownership.¹²

CASTLE

The Medieval Castle

The castle site may have evolved from the enclosure of a hall in the 11th century and the development of both private accommodation for the bishop or his officials and space for administration and record keeping in the 12th century. The castle buildings were substantially expanded in the mid 13th century to comprise halls, chambers, chapel and kitchen in the three ranges that survive and to the east a great tower and soldiers' accommodation and presumably other rooms that have been demolished together with stables. The castle was encircled by the Millstream on the north and by a moat on the other sides crossed by a bridge to the Water Gate¹³ on the north and a second bridge to what is now the main

⁹ SHC, DD/X/WA/2—4, 6.

¹⁰ Ibid. DD/X/WA/7; *Cal. SP Dom.* 1661—2, 372.

¹¹ SHC, DD/SAS/S1122/1/18, 20, 30—1, 35.

¹² Ibid. DD/SAS/S1122/1/36—7; DD/CH/22/4.

¹³ Also known later as the North Gate.

entrance gate on the south, known as the Great or South Gate in 1685.¹⁴ The outer bailey to the south was also surrounded by a moat and at least two bridges with gates on the west and the east, the latter surviving as Castle Bow. Here were also the site of the porter's house, possibly on the site of the present Castle Hotel, and all the agricultural buildings such as barns, granges, cattlesheds, pound, gardens and dovecot. There was a fishpond in the garden but it is not clear if this or the one on the south side of Taunton was the one provided with a boat and a wall and furnished with reeds, eels, and swans. Fish were also kept in the moat. The castle was also protected by walls, mainly of earth, and palisades.¹⁵

Although the major building work took place in the 13th century, especially in the time of William Raleigh (1242—50), significant work was carried out for William Wykeham (1366—1404) and William Wayneflete (1447—86) who visited in 1449 and spent some months in the castle in 1461. Thomas Langton (1493—1501) made at least two visits in the 1490s either side of that of the king and was probably responsible for altering the south range notably Castle House and the gatehouse, which bears his arms dated 1495 and those of Henry VII. Langton's arms with the date 1498 also appear on Castle Bow although those have been moved.¹⁶ The Constable's hall, chamber and kitchen formed part of the castle until the mid 15th century, probably on the east as his garden adjoined the town mills. He had a new kitchen in 1343 and his bakehouse and stable are also recorded until 1471. These outbuildings, his well and the garden presumably lay in the Constabulary or Constable's Ward. The location of the Constable's tower is uncertain and a grange was known as the Constable's in 1401.¹⁷ The officer probably seldom occupied his accommodation but major building work was carried out in 1477 for a visit by Constable Giles Daubeney.¹⁸

Although the bishops rarely visited the castle its buildings were extremely well maintained every year in addition to periodic alterations and additions.¹⁹ Important guests included King Henry I, King John, his infant daughter Eleanor and the papal legate in the early 13th century and Henry VII in

¹⁴ SHC, DD/SP/22/18.

¹⁵ Webster, *Taunton Castle*, 18—21, 266—73, 282; SHC, T/PH/win 1220—1, 1267—8, 1283—5, 1301—2.

¹⁶ *Bridgwater Borough Archives 1445—68*, p. 52; Webster, *Taunton Castle*, 207, 209, 247, 269—70.

¹⁷ SHC, T/PH/win 1447—8; Webster, *Taunton Castle*, 12, 14, 16—18, 22.

¹⁸ SHC, T/PH/win 1476—7.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* passim.

1497 to accept the surrender of Perkin Warbeck. It is not clear if all royal visitors stayed in the castle, some may have lodged at the priory.²⁰ However, apart from the reference to accommodation for soldiers and to providing munitions in the 13th century, there is little evidence for military use. Men and knights in 1215—16 appear to have been visiting and only the watch, number unspecified and one crossbowman were recorded as employed all year. The 1260s saw the bishop reinforcing the defence and employing an armed watch for 10 weeks. Ironically it was a powerful wind that did the damage, which took several years to repair. However, the watch and a crossbowman were employed again in 1271 but by 1301 although there were arms and equipment for ten men, 12 crossbows and 34 lances only a single watchman was at the castle but food was provided for him, the carter and the gardener who were perhaps required to assist him. Other officers may also have armed themselves if needed.²¹ The castle seems to have functioned mostly as an occasional palace and the administrative and storage facility for a very large manor.²² That probably made it vulnerable for example in 1451 when the earl of Devon besieged it as his enemy the Lancastrian Lord Bonville had taken refuge there.²³

Post medieval history

The building of the school in the southern end of the castle area in 1522 may be an indication that the castle defences were already redundant. Although the fishing of 'le mote' was recorded as let in 1535 and 1555 by the 1540s the moats were at least partly dry and let as gardens.²⁴ The officers no longer lived in the castle although the porter or his deputy resided by the East Gate and at times lessees of offices resided in parts of the castle building. The porter's stable, shared with the clerk, was now in the outer bailey already known as Castle Green and a place of public resort and thoroughfare by the early 17th century.²⁵ For much of the 16th century the tenants neglected to keep the castle in repair. The Crown paid Sir Hugh Paulet for repairs in 1578, probably in connection with the assizes held

²⁰ *SDNQ*, XXVII, 127—130; N. Vincent, *The letters and charters of Cardinal Guala Bicchieri* (Cant. and York Soc. 1996), ix, 157; Webster, *Taunton Castle*, 270; *Cal. Chart.* (1327—41), 422; *Cal. Chart.* (1427—1516), 14; *Cal Pat.* 1225—32, 14; *ODNB* Perkin Warbeck: accessed 12 Apr. 2018.

²¹ SHC, T/PH/win 1215—16; 1264—8, 1270—1, 1301—2.

²² Below, soc. hist, local govt.

²³ *VCH Som.* II, 191.

²⁴ Below, soc. hist, educ.; SHC, T/PH/win 1535—6, 1542—3; T/PH/hps/1.

²⁵ SHC, DD/SP/18/13; 71.

there by the 1530s and accounting for the porch to the Great Hall bearing the arms of the then bishop Robert Thorne and the date 1577.²⁶ However, in 1581 it was said that the chapel chamber, in the south range, was so decayed it could take out the Exchequer where the records were kept.²⁷

The lessees appear to have sublet the castle to the bailiff and in 1632 bailiff William Cliffe may have lived in it. The great barn, then a stable was let in 1633 to Robert Browne, clerk and porter of the castle, with all ponds, moats, ditches, banks and lands on either side of them in return for stabling and provender for the bishop's officers twice a year. As the castle was the capital message of the manor, the courts and administrative business of the manor and its records were held there.²⁸ There was also some provision for defence as arms for 100 men and two barrels of gunpowder were seized in 1642.²⁹

The castle was garrisoned during the Civil War and endured several sieges. It would appear that at least the inner moat was dug out again possibly wider, a retreating force was ordered to dump guns with carriages in the moat in 1643, and with additional ditches and banks including in the area of the school and of the Water Gate near the town mills where the Millstream and river acted as natural defences. It is not clear how much was destroyed by war in the immediate area of the castle, the school survived, the great barn was already a stable and was recorded in 1659 but possibly the others had long been taken down or converted to other uses when demesne farming had ceased about two centuries earlier. The administration carried on and there is no reference to damage in 1647 when Roger Hill acquired the Castle and four gardens under the castle wall were let out.³⁰ The Browne family continued to live at the castle in the 1640s.³¹ Orders for demolishing the castle in 1650 and 1651 were not carried out and some buildings appear to have been repaired but the garrison and ammunition were removed.³²

²⁶ SHC, T/PH/win 1535—6; *Cal. Pat.* 1560—3, 16; *Cal. SP. Dom.* 1547—80, 590; Webster, *Taunton Castle*, 29, 207, 209, 247, 269—70. The porch is lost.

²⁷ SHC, DD/SP/3.

²⁸ SHC, DD/X/WA/1; DD/X/VNL/1; Webster, *Taunton Castle*, 274; below, local govt.

²⁹ D. Underdown, *Somerset in the Civil War and Interregnum*, 40.

³⁰ C. E. H. Chadwyck Healey, *Bellum Civile*, 85; Webster, *Taunton Castle*, 274—5; SHC, DD/X/WA/3, 7; DD/SAS/C795/TN/16, 132; below, soc. hist.

³¹ TNA, PROB 11/204/487.

³² *Cal. SP Dom.* 1650, 60, 584; 1651, 462, 474, 505—6; 1651—2, 17, 97.

Hill tried to exclude public use of the castle for the assizes, quarter sessions and other meeting but in 1656 an agreement was drawn up between him and the mayor of Taunton and others³³ and the castle continued to serve these purposes. The ancillary areas were all let out as copyhold including the moats, probably used as landfill for the wartime debris and then levelled with earth possibly from the banks. Attempts were made to stop encroachment on the castle site in the 1650s but by the end of the 17th century Castle Green was being developed with houses and gardens with the agreement if not the encouragement of the manor.³⁴ Repeated instructions to slight the castle in 1662 do not seem to have been carried out and perhaps the levelling of banks and ditches, the ruinous nature of the outer gates and the largely domestic and administrative usage of the remaining buildings, which would have been very expensive to dismantle and replace with new court buildings, not to mention families like the Brownes and Beresfords whose home was the castle, allowed it to escape destruction.³⁵ There were complaints in the late 17th century that the leads at the west end of the great hall were a danger to the grand jury.³⁶

Although the moat and Water Gate continued to be used as boundary marks for copyhold property in the late 18th century the moat had clearly ceased to exist long before although part of the inner moat remained as a sunken garden.³⁷ The great hall was used as a courtroom although a ballroom was recorded in 1747.³⁸ From 1786 Benjamin Hammet, MP for Taunton and keeper of the castle, oversaw the improvement of the court facilities including converting the great hall into two courtrooms, creating a new grand jury room and providing accommodation for the judges. He introduced historic doors and windows, possibly from Orchard Portman House, which was partly demolished at that period.³⁹ The hall and grand jury room were used briefly in 1809—10 as a boys' charity school.⁴⁰ In 1816 the great hall was reroofed, part of the outside wall was rebuilt,

³³ SHC, DD/X/WA/5;Q/SR/84/4—5, 89/37.

³⁴ SHC, DD/SP/20, 101, 104—5, 302.

³⁵ SHC, DD/SAS/C795/TN/51; Webster, *Taunton Castle*, 275—6; TNA, PROB 11/204/487; PROB 11/454/263; PROB 11/573/153.

³⁶ SHC, DD/SP/21/1.

³⁷ Ibid. DD/SP/168, 319/77.

³⁸ Ibid. Q/RRw/1; below, local govt.

³⁹ Webster, *Taunton Castle*, 277.

⁴⁰ SHC, D/P/tau.m/17/1.

accommodation for Crown and Nisi Prius courts was improved including the provision of privies.⁴¹ The hall was also used for public meetings including that on the Reform Bill where the Revd Sidney Smith uttered his famous tale of Mrs Partington trying to keep the sea from her door.⁴² By 1821 apart from the assize hall the castle was divided into two houses one with eight bedrooms and the other with 11 and run as a school. A new schoolroom had been built over the brewhouse, stables and coach house belonging to the first house.⁴³ In 1838 a company was formed to acquire the west and south ranges for judges lodgings.⁴⁴ Several moves to find an alternative to the castle, including demolishing part of it for a new assize court c. 1840,⁴⁵ came to nothing until the Shire Hall in Taunton opened in 1857, when there was a petition for the castle to remain in public use for large meetings.⁴⁶ It was fitted out as a public hall with waiting and retiring rooms and in 1866 was said to be one of the finest public rooms in the west of England furnished with six gilt gasoliers, a curtained stage, dressing room and ticket room. The rest of the building remained two large houses, one used as a school to which a public baths was attached.⁴⁷

Although the manor courts had not been held in the Castle for many years the archives remained there and when the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society bought the castle in 1874 the lord of the manor retained right of access to the muniment room until 1936.⁴⁸ The society restored but also altered the castle and demolished many of the more recent additions in the courtyard including the grand jury room on its double row of columns.⁴⁹ They used the great hall for meetings and to house their growing museum collections. The residential areas were occupied by the curator, firstly in the west range but when that was re-roofed without attics as museum accommodation in the 1880s he moved to the south range and in the 1900s to Castle House when it had ceased to be a school.⁵⁰ In the early 20th century the museum was opened to the public and in 1934 a new block of

⁴¹ Ibid. Q/AC/1.

⁴² A.W. Vivian-Neal and H. St. G. Gray, 'Materials for the History of Taunton Castle', *PSANHS*, LXXXVI, 53—4.

⁴³ SHC, DD/CN/29/7; below, soc. hist., educ.

⁴⁴ Webster, *Taunton Castle*, 32.

⁴⁵ SHC, T/PH/chn/1.

⁴⁶ Ibid. Q/SR/631/165, 177—8.

⁴⁷ Ibid. DD/CH/22/4, 23/5; Webster, *Taunton Castle*, 215.

⁴⁸ SHC, DD/CH/23/5; DD/SAS/S1122/1/36—7, 61.

⁴⁹ Webster, *Taunton Castle*, 181.

⁵⁰ Ibid. 67, 198.

galleries were built east of the great hall on the site of Tone House, which the society had acquired in 1927 through the generosity of William Wyndham and demolished in 1930 along with the Water Gate.⁵¹

In 1958 the castle was let to Somerset County Council who took over the running of the museum.⁵² Castle House was used for museum storage and workshops and from the 1970s the south range was occupied by the local history library and the society's office and library. In the late 2000s the castle was vacated for restoration and refitting, the 1930s link with the Wyndham galleries was replaced by a new glazed entrance and foyer and in 2011 opened as the Museum of Somerset in the care of the South West Heritage Trust. Castle House is partly exhibition space and partly holiday accommodation.

CASTLE BUILDING

The surviving medieval buildings together with the remains of the great tower in the east gardens presumably date from the 12th century but greatly altered. They comprise the great hall, which faces north-west and was largely rebuilt in the mid 13th century, a short south-west range linked by a round tower to a late 15th-century south range, entrance gateway and further range to the east known as Castle House. The house has a roof of 1482, fragments of wall painting and a 16th-century cross wing, substantially enlarged in the 17th century to allow the building to be used as a house, independent of the rest of the castle. Stairs and panelling survive from the 17th or early 18th century and there is a shell hood over the front door. A length of low wall links Castle House to the 1930s block and the early 21st-century museum entrance. Away from the castle itself the only surviving building is the arched gateway of the East Gate now incorporated into the Castle Hotel.⁵³

FIDEOAK

⁵¹ SHC, DD/SAS/S1122/1/58, 71; Webster, *Taunton Castle*, 155, 164—5. The stonework may have been re-used in the gate to Ine's garden.

⁵² SHC, DD/SAS/S1122/69—70.

⁵³ *Ibid.* DD/V/TAB/28. A very detailed survey of the archaeology and surviving structures will be found in C. Webster, *Taunton Castle* (2016).

The manor of Fideoak, later called Fideoak and Oldbury, was held of the bishops of Winchester although by the 16th century owners were regularly presented for default of suit.⁵⁴ In the mid 18th century the unnamed owner of Fideoak manor was entered under Holway in the bishop's rental as owing £1 3s. lord's rent.⁵⁵ Fideoak was a large estate with lands outside the parish at Bickenhall and Buckland St Mary. It was divided at an early date apparently between those lands at Fideoak in the parish and those outside.⁵⁶ In 1208—9 Christian, widow of Jordan de Chilton, having remarried, released her right to dower in half the manor of Fideoak to Robert de Chilton.⁵⁷ Robert remained in possession in the 1240s and 1250s and like Jordan seems to have also been known as of Fideoak. He was succeeded c.1255 by Jordan son of Roges although the estate seems to have been held by the constable of Taunton until 1265, possibly during a minority.⁵⁸ Jordan was said to have been followed by Simon Roges and his wife Joan and son Henry (fl. 1327).⁵⁹ Henry's son John (fl. 1343—56) left a son John who died childless in 1387 when the estate passed to Richard Averay son of Matilda, sister of John Roges the father.⁶⁰ In 1391 Richard who was then of age sold his estate to trustees including Sir Thomas Brook.⁶¹ A confusing sequence of fines and grants between many parties were made in 1391 and 1396 leading to litigation but Sir Thomas held the manor in 1412, jointly with his wife Joan.⁶²

Sir Thomas Brook (d.1418) was followed by his widow Joan (d. 1437) and son Thomas (d. 1439) whose son Edward Brook, Lord Cobham (d. 1464) appears to have settled Fideoak, like Quantock Durborough in Spaxton, on his daughter Elizabeth for her marriage to Robert Tanfield.⁶³ Elizabeth (d. 1502) was followed in turn by her grandson William Tanfield (d. 1529) who settled part

⁵⁴ Hants. R.O., 11M59/C1/19/4.

⁵⁵ SHC, DD/SAS/C795/41 (Holway tithing).

⁵⁶ The latter became a separate manor: below, this section.

⁵⁷ E. Green, *Feet of Fines 1196—1307* (Som. Rec. Soc. 6), 25—6; *VCH Som.* VI, 210.

⁵⁸ T. Hunt, *Taunton Customs* (Som. Rec. Soc. 66), xviii, xix; *Cal. Inq. p.m.* IV, 32.

⁵⁹ C. Chadwyck Healey, *Hist. of W. Som.* 241; F. Dickinson, *Kirbys Quest etc* (Som. Rec. Soc. 3), 147.

⁶⁰ *Cal. Inq. p.m.* XVI, pp. 190—1.

⁶¹ *Cal. Close*, 1389—92, 266; SHC, A/CTP/2/1/12; E. Green, *Feet of Fines 1347—99* (Som. Rec. Soc. 17), 147.

⁶² BL, Harl. Ch. 53 G 53, 56 A 1; TNA, C1/6/203; *Feud. Aids*, VI, 508; *Cal. Close*, 1413—19, 478.

⁶³ *Cal. Inq. p.m.* IV, 32; BL, Harl. Ch. 46 H 7; Add. Ch. 6144; Hants. R.O., 11M59/C1/19/1; *VCH Som.* VI, 115.

of his estates on his wife Isabel, and his son Francis (d. 1558).⁶⁴ Francis's widow Bridget (d. 1583) probably held the estate during the minority of his son Clement.⁶⁵ Clement (d. 1585) was survived by his wife Anne and his son Sir Francis (d. 1639), governor of Newfoundland,⁶⁶ who probably sold Fideoak almost immediately.⁶⁷ In 1625 it was settled on John Pyne of Curry Mallet.⁶⁸ John and his wife Anne sold it in 1676 to Thomas Gardner (d. 1679) and Richard Brimsmead (d. 1689) who divided and sold it, a process continued by their heirs converting copyholds into freeholds. The lordship was not sold.⁶⁹

Much of the unsold estate including Fideoak and Oldbury houses remained in the Gardner family and passed to John Gardner (d. by 1718) and his son William (d. 1744) who left most of the estate to his wife Betty for life and then to his kinsman Thomas Gunston.⁷⁰ Betty married Samuel Dewberry and remained in possession until her death in 1798.⁷¹ Betty also held Taunton Deane copyhold at Barr and Frethey.⁷² She was succeeded by Frances Freke who sold Fideoak and Oldbury houses and c. 100 a. before 1817 to William Walter, great nephew of Betty and the second largest landowner in 1842. He also owned the tithes, which were merged with the freehold in 1838.⁷³ William and his son claimed fishing in the Tone under their manorial rights until 1871 or later.⁷⁴ William (d. 1863) was succeeded by his son Octavius (d. 1919) whose estate was divided and sold off. Fideoak and the agricultural land were bought by Somerset County Council for smallholdings.⁷⁵

In 1752 Thomas Gunston and his father John had bought Newley farm, formerly in Fideoak manor, from Thomas Darch, heir to his maternal grandfather Samuel Spreckett who had presumably bought it from the manor.⁷⁶ Thomas Gunston died in 1797 and his brother John a few days later so

⁶⁴ *VCH Som*, VI, 115; G. Bradford, *Proceedings in Star Chamber* (Som. Rec. Soc. 27), 90; TNA, C 142/50/126.

⁶⁵ TNA, C 142/121/131; par. regs. Gayton, Northants: accessed 17 Jan. 2017.

⁶⁶ TNA, C 142/212/46; *Dict. Can. Biog.*: accessed 17 Jan. 2017.

⁶⁷ He sold West Bagborough in 1587: TNA, CP 25/2/206/29 Eliz Hil

⁶⁸ TNA, CP 43/170, rot. 40.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* CP 25/2/717/28 Chas II, Trin; SHC, D/P/b.hl/2/1/3; DD/CH/67/4—5; DD/SF/11/1/84.

⁷⁰ SHC, DD/SF/11/1/84; DD/CH/67/4—5; DD/DP/43/2.

⁷¹ *Ibid.* D/P/b.hl/2/1/6; monumental inscription in chyd.

⁷² SHC, DD/AY/66.

⁷³ *Ibid.* DD/SAS/C/909/58; Q/REI/35/3; A/CGS/26; tithe award.

⁷⁴ *Taunton Courier*, 20 Spr. 1859, 24 Aug. 1859, 28 Apr. 1869, 14 June 1871: BNA accessed 1 Nov. 2017.

⁷⁵ SHC C/C/4/1/114; C/SH/46/1/3; A/BNK/1/1/17, 3/7; W. Walter (1863), *Nat. Probate Cal.*: accessed 18 Jan. 2017.

⁷⁶ SHC, DD/BR/hck/7; DD/SAS/C795/PD/66.

the estate passed under the terms of his will to his niece Frances, who also succeeded to Betty Dewberry's estate, and her husband Francis Freke who added the name Gunston.⁷⁷ They settled their unsold estates on their son Thomas in 1822 but he died childless in 1824 and Francis died in 1829. In 1838 Frances (d. 1841) settled the estate on her granddaughter Elizabeth 'Fanny' Charter for her marriage to William Maclean and in 1842 William was in possession of his wife's 240-a. estate, the largest holding in the parish including Upcott and Newley farms and former Taunton Deane copyhold at Barr and Frethey and Ritherdons Farm in Rumwell, created out of several small copyholds.⁷⁸ Elizabeth (d. 1855) was succeeded by her son William (d. 1910) and in 1911 by Alan Maclean who broke up the estate for sale when at least some of the land was bought by the tenants.⁷⁹

The manor land outside the parish came to be regarded as a separate manor, although with the same name despite having no land in Fideoak. It came into the possession of the Wadham family and on the death of Nicholas in 1609 passed to his sisters and their descendants the Strangways and the Wyndhams as shares in the manor of Fideoak and Oldbury.⁸⁰ The Wyndham family still retains lordship of Fideoak and Oldbury.⁸¹

No capital message was recorded. Fideoak farm, probably the four-hearth house of Thomas Gardner in 1664—5,⁸² was a stone and thatch house but was in poor condition in 1910 and has since fallen into ruin.⁸³ Oldbury Lodge is a 19th-century house on the site of an earlier unnamed house.⁸⁴

FORMER TAUNTON DEANE MANOR COPYHOLDS

As the manorial system declined especially by the 18th century several families amassed holdings, which they redeveloped as farms and country houses. Those estates were sometimes referred to as customary freeholds. Even when copyholders omitted to perform the necessary admissions and surrenders resulting in the lands falling into the lord's hands, a situation known as 'lockage', the

⁷⁷ SHC, DD/AY/64, 66.

⁷⁸ SHC, DD/AY/64; DD/CH/106/13; DD/DP/85/1.

⁷⁹ SHC, C/C/4/3/1—19.

⁸⁰ Dors. HC, D/FSI, box 11, compoti; SHC, DD/WY/60/1, 3, 77/7.

⁸¹ *VCH Som.* VI, 187—8, 191; SHC, DD/WY/262/1—2.

⁸² Dwelly, *Som. Hearth Tax*, I, 33.

⁸³ SHC, A/BNK/1/1/7; TNA, IR 58/82128.

⁸⁴ SHC, DD/AY/66; A/BNK/1/1/7; title award. The Dewberrys were described simply as of Barr.

family remained in possession and simply paid a triple fine to rectify the situation when it was pointed out to them.⁸⁵ The holdings were eventually enfranchised during the 19th century. The largest were at Rumwell but also included Upcott, Frethey and Barr held by the owners of the Fideoak estates. Some small copyholds were held by wealthy copyholders who built grand houses that could never have been supported by the land attached to them of which the most important were Great House, Upcott Farmhouse and Rumwell Hall.

Great House

The Farewell or Farwell family acquired a small copyhold estate during the 16th century on which they built Great or Court, now Manor, House in Elizabeth's reign. Although they had few holdings in the parish they had lands elsewhere and amassed great wealth as office-holders, lawyers and merchants, reflected in the size of the house, their monuments in the church and their wills. The first to hold land in the parish was Simon Farewell (d. 1545) in 1504, followed by his son Simon the younger (d. 1568) and Simon's son John who surrendered it his brother George (d. 1609) who built the Great House. His son Sir George (d. 1647) married Mary Seymour (d. 1661) and was followed by his son George (d. 1687) whose eldest son George died childless in Barbados in 1690 and was followed by his brother Richard (d. 1711).⁸⁶ Richard left the 'great dwelling' and customary estate to his youngest son Joseph, who died childless in 1764 and appears to have surrendered the estate in trust in 1720. He left his estates to the daughters of his sister Anne (d. 1757), wife of Nathaniel Wyersdale; Margaret (d. 1765), Anne (d. 1780), Elizabeth (d. 1788) and Sarah (d. 1773), wife of John Jarman who held an estate in Bishops Hull known as Parsonage Farm. In 1773 Anne surrendered her interest in favour of her nephew and niece Nathaniel and Margaret Jarman and her sisters appear to have done similarly.⁸⁷ Margaret Jarman died unmarried and Nathaniel left a son Edward, the highest rent payer in Hull tithing who held c. 25 a. with Great House in 1842, and a daughter Elizabeth wife of William Blake who held the Jarman estate.⁸⁸ In 1870 the house was settled on the marriage of

⁸⁵ e.g. SHC, DD/DP/59/9.

⁸⁶ Crisp, *Abstracts of Som. Wills* (1887—90), IV, 65—7; SHC, A/CJR/1; DD/FJ/9.

⁸⁷ SHC, A/CJR 1; Q/REI/35/3; DD/FJ/7, 10; TNA, PROB 11/904/151.

⁸⁸ SHC, A/CJR/1; DD/SAS/TN/41; Q/REI/35/3; title award.

George Nesbitt Stephens and Elizabeth Tomlin of Rumwell who renamed it Manor House.⁸⁹ It was enfranchised and bought by Henry de Courcy Rawlins who with his wife Rosabelle restored the house in 1901 probably introducing features such as panelling. Having passed through several hands it was bought for use as a nursing home from 1987.⁹⁰ In 2017 it was the Manor Care Home and belonged to Barchester healthcare.

The **H**-shaped house is sometimes said to have been built by Simon Farewell (d. 1568) but if so then it was completely rebuilt by his son George *c.* 1586, the date on the Ham stone porch.⁹¹ Built of rendered rubble it comprises a two-storey central range with attics, cross passage from the porch and ceiled great hall. This range is flanked by large cross wings; that on east has a garderobe in an upper chamber. Both wings but especially that on the west are angled, possibly to fit a plot boundary. In 1591 George Farewell acquired a plot of land north of his house and adjoining two other houses for his 'conyger' indicating that there were neighbouring houses adjoining on the street when it was first built.⁹² There were 11 hearths in 1664—5.⁹³ Many additions have been made to the house and it is now dwarfed by very large ranges of late-20th century buildings to the north housing the elderly residents. There were 18th-century features possibly installed by Richard Farewell (d. 1711), and 19th and 20th-century panelling probably installed by the Rawlins family. One room had a frieze with 45—50 coats of arms that were removed before 1912.⁹⁴ The house was in a very bad state by the 1980s. It was repaired and further alterations were made between 1987 and 1992 for the nursing home including removal of panelling and re-roofing.⁹⁵

Upcott Farm

Copyhold estates at Upcott and Newley were mainly in the hands of the Gardner family by the 18th century and descended with their Fideoak freeholds to Sir Thomas Gunston who may have built

⁸⁹ Ibid. DD/CH/129/10.

⁹⁰ Ibid. DD/V/Tar/3.2; D/DC/tau.d/24/2/63.

⁹¹ Ibid. DD/V/Tar/3.2; Orbach, *S. and W. Som.*, 120.

⁹² SHC, A/CJR/1; DD/FJ/6.

⁹³ Dwelly, *Som. Hearth Tax*, I, 32.

⁹⁴ SHC, DD/V/Tar/3.2; *PSANHS*, LVIII, 78.

⁹⁵ SHC, D/DC/tau. d/24/2/63.

Upcott House, later Hall.⁹⁶ Upcott farm was created out of possibly four copyhold farms and some overland probably by the Buncombe family in the 18th century.⁹⁷ In 1823 the estate was enfranchised for John Buncombe but he and his wife Dorothy both died that year and in 1829 their son Richard sold Upcott to James Pring.⁹⁸ The Bryant family later acquired the farm and after the death of Edwin Bryant c. 1885 his son Walter who had gone to Australia could not be traced so in 1900 the family properties including Upcott were sold.⁹⁹ The house ceased to be a farmhouse in the 1880s when its tenant was John Haviland who called himself John de Sontag de Havilland and named the house Havilland Hall.¹⁰⁰

Rumwell Hall Estate

This estate originated in the accumulation of copyholds including Dodhouse and Homelands also known as Colbornes by the Risdon family.¹⁰¹ Benjamin Cross Risdon and his wife Margaret held four copyhold farms and 27 a. of overland in 1733, mostly in succession to his mother Joanna Risdon, which were mortgaged to Sir Edward Seymour possibly to improve the estate and build a house. He was unable to pay his debt and Edward Seymour, duke of Somerset, took possession of the estate with the Risdons as his tenants. By 1792 the debts had been paid and in 1796 Benjamin Risdon the younger surrendered his copyhold for the duke's assignee Jonathan Cape.¹⁰² In 1805 Jonathan was succeeded by his sister's son William Cadbury (d. 1847) who probably built the present house before c. 1810. William's widow Mary (d. 1856) added to their holdings but left her estate to trustees for sale.¹⁰³ The 81-a. estate included Rumwell House, now Hall, and grounds but the farm land was added to Castlemans Hill farm in Trull parish. The trustees enfranchised the estate for the purchaser in 1857, Thomas Belsey Tomlin, who renamed it Rumwell Hall, enlarged the grounds and mortgaged the

⁹⁶ Ibid. DD/DP/59/9; 60/17; above, intro.

⁹⁷ SHC, Q/REI/35/3.

⁹⁸ Ibid. DD/SAS/C/238/37; tithe award.

⁹⁹ Ibid. DD/CH/77/5.

¹⁰⁰ East Sussex RO, AMS 6344; SHC, DD/SAS/HV/102; TNA, RG 12/1878; above, intro.

¹⁰¹ SHC, DD/SAS/TN/41; DD/CWCw/3.

¹⁰² Ibid. DD/SP/319/334; DD/CWCw/3; Q/REI/35/3.

¹⁰³ Orbach, *S. and W. Som.* 120; SHC, DD/CWCw/3; DD/CH/80/8; DD/HP/11C; above, intro.

estate. In 1902 Caroline Fox, wife of Wellington cloth manufacturer Charles Fox, bought the house and Thomas Yeo bought the land.¹⁰⁴ She presumably bought it for her son Charles Leslie Fox (d. 1933) and his wife Lillian (d. 1949). The younger Charles altered the house and grounds and provided staff cottages in 1912. After Lillian's death the house was sold.¹⁰⁵ It was a hotel in the late 20th century and an office and conference centre in 2017.

TAUNTON PRIORY LAND AND RECTORY

Taunton priory owned small parcels of land in the parish named Denebiri and Donekesham,¹⁰⁶ possibly the gift of members of the de Hulle family, Hamwood and cottages, which were administered under its manor of Fons George in Wilton.¹⁰⁷ After the Dissolution the Crown sold the priory lands to several people and the descent of the Bishops Hull properties has not been traced¹⁰⁸ but a former barn was later known as Prioress house, probably from prior's house, and became the poorhouse.¹⁰⁹ Four acres was sold in 1554 to William Morgan of Pentrebach (Monm.) who a few days later released it to Jerome Halley of London with the church house.¹¹⁰ As Bishops Hull was a chapelry of Taunton St Mary its 'rectory' consisted only of tithes. After the Dissolution they were farmed out by the crown¹¹¹ but in the later 17th century were acquired by the Farewell family.¹¹²

TRULL LAND

In 1542 Trull parish bought part of Rixham Meadow, later known as Trull Acre, on the Wellington road near Stepswater to raise money from renting it out. It was conveyed to Trull Acre Ltd with the right to sell and was sold in 1910.¹¹³

¹⁰⁴ SHC, DD/CH/80/8.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. DD/SAS/C/2273/1/B6.7

¹⁰⁶ C. Brett, *Crown Revenues from Som. and Dorset*, supp., 94.

¹⁰⁷ BL, Add Ch. 16333, 25873; *Cal. Chart.* 1327—41, 318.

¹⁰⁸ *L&P Hen.VIII*, XIX, 1, p. 497; *L&P Hen.VIII*, XX, 1, pp. 210—11; *Cal. Pat.* 1549—51, 53.

¹⁰⁹ Below, soc. hist.

¹¹⁰ SHC, DD/GC/20.

¹¹¹ TNA, C 3/18/77

¹¹² Below, rel. hist.

¹¹³ *Churchwardens Accounts, 1457—1559* (Som. Rec. Soc. 95), 241, 290—8, 301—2; SHC, D/P/tru/5/1/12—13, 16; DD/DP/61/8, 198/7—8.

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