

LANDOWNERSHIP

Trull formed part of the bishops of Winchester's manor of Taunton Deane, whose capital messuage was Taunton Castle, until the 19th century.¹ There were some freeholds, notably Cerney, but most of the parish was Taunton Deane copyhold or demesne, enfranchised during the 19th century. Although the Blakes amassed land from the early 18th century only four people had more than 100 a. in 1842 when the largest landholding was 278 a.²

CERNEY

Cerney,³ known by the 19th century as Zaney and now mostly under a motorway service area, was held of the bishop of Winchester in free socage by the Meriet family and variously described as one or two carucates. In the mid 13th-century Nicholas de Meriet held two knights fees of the bishop. In 1303 Lucy, widow of Simon de Meriet son of Nicholas, settled Cerney on her son Walter de Meriet (d.1345) whose heir was his brother John.⁴ John's son Simon apparently settled the estate on his daughter Alice for her marriage to Thomas Trivet. In 1363, Alice having died, Simon and his wife Margery granted a life interest to John Osborne and his wife.⁵ Simon's kinsman and heir Sir John de Meriet granted the reversion to Henry Moleyns in 1373 and the life interests of Thomas Trivet and his second wife to

¹ Above, Bishops Hull, landownership.

² SHC, tithe award.

³ It has been identified with Cearn whose salt pans were given to the bishop of Winchester in 737 but it seems unlikely that salt was made in Trull: VCH office, draft history of Trull; H.P.R.Finberg, *Early Charters of Wessex*, 115.

⁴ T.J. Hunt, *The Medieval Customs of Taunton Manor*, 31; E. Green, *Feet of Fines 1196—1307*, 328; *Cal. Inq. p.m.* VIII, p. 429.

⁵ *VCH Som.* XII, 193; TNA, 326/5001.

Thomas de Willinton in 1374.⁶ In 1374 Henry released Cerney to John Osborne who presumably secured a release of the remaining interests.⁷

By 1408 John had been succeeded by Thomas Osborne who in 1435 granted Cerney to the vicar of Taunton St Mary and others for a settlement on himself and his wife Margaret for life, their executors for two years and then on trustees with the Osborne almshouses in Taunton.⁸ John Bishop and his wife Alice, presumably heir to the Osbornes, secured estates in Cerney and Dipford in 1438 and a release from the trustees in 1441.⁹ In 1474 the estate was settled in trust for John Bishop's will in which he gave it with the almshouses to his chantry in Taunton St Mary. The gift took effect in 1499 after his death and in 1500 his trustees released the estate to the trustees of Bishop's chantry.¹⁰

Before 1548 the chantry trustees treated the c.200 a. including land outside the parish as a manorial estate, letting lands piecemeal and holding courts for Bishop's Cerney. It was last recorded as a manor in 1602.¹¹ The bishop of Winchester received 20s. rent for Cerney and other chantry estates.¹² In 1549 Cerney was sold to London agents but in 1566 it was held by Robert Smythe, probably the 1549 tenant and son of Robert Smythe of Woodland (d. 1542). Robert paid the 20s. quit rent and before 1566 surrendered his Hamwood copyhold to a relative, possibly on inheriting the Cerney freehold, which he shared with John Smythe, possibly his brother.¹³ Robert (d. 1582) may have been succeeded by Robert (fl. 1614) and John Smythe (d. 1642) who left his 80 a. freehold in trust to pay debts. It was presumably

⁶ E. Green, *Feet of Fines 1347—99*, 84--5; VCH Som. Office, Pole MSS, 4106.

⁷ TNA, E 326/941.

⁸ Ibid. E 326/940, 5027, 5030-1, 11773-5; E 329/424(g).

⁹ E. Green, *Feet of Fines 1399—1485*, 91-3; TNA, E 326/4961, 12805.

¹⁰ TNA, E 326/943, 5020, 5058, 5070, 5082-3, 5858; E 328/180; E 329/476; PROB 11/14/794.

¹¹ Ibid. E 326/943-4, 6328, 7079, 8402; SC 2/169/8; C 142/279/478.

¹² Woodward, *Chantry Grants*, 18.

¹³ TNA, LR 15/186; SHC, D/P/tru/2/1/1 (1542); DD/SP/71 (Woodland tithing); below, this section.

sold to John Baker.¹⁴ John (fl. 1648) was followed by his son John Baker of Hamwood (d. 1677).¹⁵ John Baker's 13 hearths in the 1660s would have included Zaney but its house was poor cottages by 1841.¹⁶ The freehold continued to be held with the Hamwood copyhold by John's son John (d. 1709) and grandson John Baker (d. 1721) who mortgaged it in 1709 and later left all his property in trust for sale.¹⁷ In 1726 his widow Margaret released Hamwood to George Davey of Tiverton for repayment of the mortgage and an annuity. George presumably repaid the mortgage and bought Cerney.¹⁸

George Davey (d. 1747) left Hamwood to his son Roger (d. unm. 1783) and Cerney to his wife Bridget (d. by 1784) who was succeeded by her son George (d. 1784).¹⁹ Bridget (d. 1824), George's daughter and widow of John Hamilton (d. 1778), left her estates to her daughter Barbara and to Mary Anne (d. 1826) and Isabella daughters of her daughter Mary Anne, wife of Andrew Crosse, or if they died childless to their brothers John and Robert.²⁰ Isabella appears to have granted her rights to her brothers who with Barbara apparently partitioned their inheritance in 1858-9. John Hamilton [ne Crosse] took the Trull estate including Cerney (136 a.), which he sold in 1860 to William Blake of Cutsey farm (d. 1864). William mortgaged the land, which was reconveyed to his daughters Elizabeth Blake and Mary Corner in 1881 and formed part of Cutsey farm.²¹

John Smythe's share of Cerney was sold to Robert Thomas in 1614 and 1629. Robert (d. c. 1639) divided the house and land, known as Harpers, between several sons who in 1649 and 1667 released their shares to their brother Botolph.²² Botolph's son predeceased him and

¹⁴ SHC, DD/CT/1; D/P/crf/2/1/1; DD/PH/216/98; D/P/tru/23/6, 14, 15; TNA, PROB 11/188/302.

¹⁵ SHC, D/P/tru/23/23; DD/SAS/C795/TN/16, p. 25; memorial in Trull ch.

¹⁶ Dwelly, *Hearth Tax Returns*, I, 30; TNA, HO 107/959/25.

¹⁷ SHC, DD/AH/57/1/6; TNA, PROB 11/377/383, 11512/305, 11/580/313.

¹⁸ SHC, DD/SP/319/20.

¹⁹ TNA, PROB 11/753/282, 11/889/324.

²⁰ Ibid. PROB 11/1046/195, 11/1694/71.

²¹ SHC, tithe award; DD/CH/118/4; 125/2.

²² SHC, DD/SP/331, f. 101; DD/CT/1; DD/SAS/C795/TN/16.

when he died in 1695 he was succeeded by his daughter Mary wife of Robert Blake and thereafter the land formed part of the Blakes's Cutsey estate.²³

In the 1620s Richard Lanes sold 40 a. at Cerney piecemeal to a kinsman Valentine Gardner in the 1620s.²⁴ Valentine (d. 1654) left the 40 a., called Low Cerney, to his son Henry to provide for his other children. Presumably Henry sold to the Bakers as John Baker held Lower Cerney by 1709.²⁵

By 1766 George Locke or his son John held a 25-a freehold called Zaney with Shobley.²⁶ John (d. 1801) left the income from his estate to his daughter Mary Blake and the land to his granddaughter Elizabeth Welman who in 1809 married Charles Noel, later earl of Gainsborough (d. 1868). Her father Thomas may have held the land on her behalf.²⁷ Elizabeth died childless in 1811 when her heirs were her aunts Jane (d. 1828) and Rebecca Welman (d. 1831). Rebecca left her estate to Mary Blake with remainder to her nephew, Elizabeth's half-brother Charles Noel Welman. In 1838 Charles obtained a life tenancy from the earl, converted by an Act of 1843 into an absolute estate in exchange for other land but appears to have sold it to several people before 1851.²⁸

RECTORY

Trull was one of Taunton priory's churches. After the Dissolution the Crown granted leases of the rectory, excluding tithes of Cerney and Hamwood already farmed out.²⁹ The prior's barn near Hamwood, last recorded in 1539, may have been the barn rented by the parish in the

²³ SHC, DD/CT/1, 50, 54, 78; D/P/ang/2/1/1 (1693, 1695).

²⁴ TNA, C 3/365/34; SHC, D/P/tru/23/14.

²⁵ TNA, PROB 11/242/297; SHC, DD/AH/57/1/6.

²⁶ SHC, Q/REI/35/28; DD/VN/1/7/4.

²⁷ TNA, PROB 11/1364/109; SHC, DD/VN/1/8; D/P/tru/24/35.

²⁸ SHC, DD/VN/1/7/4, 1/8; Q/RDe/165.

²⁹ *Valor Eccl.* I, 170; *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, XV, p. 561; SHC, DD/SPY/1.

1520s for produce from parish land. Unspecified priory property in Trull was sold with the priory site.³⁰ In 1543 the reversion of the rectory was sold in fee simple to Humphrey Colles of Corfe but the Hamwood area tithes continued to be farmed separately under Elizabeth I.³¹ Humphrey (d. 1575) was succeeded by his son John (d. 1608) and the latter's son John.³² Before 1611 the Cerney and Hamwood tithes were bought by Francis Morrice and Francis Phelps who sold them to Thomas Warre to hold of the king's manor of East Greenwich for a £7 quit rent; the rectory apparently only paid £3 10s. Later that year Thomas sold them to John Colles, the lessee, and they were reunited with the rectory.³³

In 1619 the rectory was settled on John Colles (d. 1628), his wife Elizabeth and their son John who predeceased his father leaving four sisters. In 1628 the eldest, Elizabeth wife of Herbert Dodington, sold the rectory to her mother Elizabeth (d. 1634). In 1633 the elder Elizabeth settled it on her daughter, then a widow, and her male heirs. By 1635 Elizabeth Dodington had married John Coventry (d. 1652). Their son Sir John died childless in 1685 and was succeeded by his uncle Francis Coventry.³⁴ In 1692 Francis with his son-in-law Sir Lacon Childs sold the rectory to Smart Goodenough (d. 1720). Smart apparently left it to his grandson Joseph Milner who in 1766 sold it to his cousin Goodenough Earle for £2,150.³⁵ In 1786 Goodenough left his estate to his kinsman Francis Milner Newton (d. 1794) who was succeeded by his daughter Josepha (d. s.p. 1848) wife successively of Clifton Wheat and Sir Frederick Cooper. Lady Cooper tried to enforce payment of tithe in kind in the late 1790s but received a £520 rent charge when tithes were commuted in 1842. She left her property to her

³⁰ R.W. Dunning and M.B. McDermott, *Church Accounts 1457-1559*, 249, 251; SHC, T/PH/win 1538-9, 1544-5; DD/AY/69A.

³¹ *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, XVIII (1), pp. 196-7; *Cal. Pat.* 1575-8, p. 409; SHC, DD/SPY/2.

³² VCH office, abstract of Humphrey's IPM, original not traced; TNA, C 142/302/97.

³³ SHC, DD/SPY/1; C. Brett, *Crown Revenues*, pp. 17, 58, 136.

³⁴ SHC, DD/SPY/1; TNA, C 142/440/90, C 142/520/104; historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1660-1690/member/coventry-sir-john-1636-85; accessed 20 March 2026.

³⁵ SHC, DD/SPY/1-2.

cousin Francis Wheat Newton.³⁶ Francis (d. 1895) was succeeded by his son Francis Murray Newton (d. 1903) and grandson John Goodenough Newton under whom the tithes were redeemed.³⁷

CHURCH LAND

By the 1520s a lay fraternity of Our Lady in Trull church owned land in Trull, Pitminster and Taunton, which the church managed to retain after 1548 as the parish lands charity. The Trull copyhold was Lady Land, later Parish Meadow, north of the church and partly used to enlarge the churchyard in the 16th century, and Lady Liscombe, later Parish Field, across the Sherford stream. The land was cultivated by the fraternity or let to tenants. In 1842 the two fields totalled 8 ½ a. Land was used to enlarge the churchyard again in 1904, some was sold in 1950 and the rest gradually for housing development in the later 20th century.³⁸

The churchyard and its cottages were confirmed as parish rather than rectory property in 1635. By 1628 the parish had a new cottage at Cockhays, later Trull Green, rebuilt in 1732, and later another south of Sweethay called Cob Castle, demolished c.1771 and now occupied by Stone House. Both properties were sold in 1803.³⁹ The clerk's house in the churchyard, now Chantry Cottage, was sold c.1974.⁴⁰

BATTS

³⁶ SHC, DD/WBF/19; D/P/crf/2/1/1 (1794), 2/1/6 (1848); D/P/tru/24/19-21, 26; tithe award; TNA, PROB 11/1249/100, 11/2086/132.

³⁷ VCH office, Taunton, letter from Arthur Newton, 1906; SHC, D/P/crf/2/1/6 (1895, 1903); DD/SPY/67; D/P/tru/3/2/1.

³⁸ R.W. Dunning and M.B. McDermott, *Church Accounts 1457-1559*, 241, 246-303; SHC, D/P/tru/5/1/8; DD/CT/22; tithe award.

³⁹ SHC, D/P/tru/4/1/4, 5/1/1, 9/1/1; DD/CT/22-3; tithe award.

⁴⁰ SHC, D/P/tru/6/3/1.

Most large copyholds remained farms but Batts was an exception. It was a whole virgate holding, held by the Bat family from the mid 13th century until 1327 or later.⁴¹ It was named by the 1520s and in 1536 was held by John Bowringe.⁴² His son having predeceased him, John (d. c.1545) was succeeded by his daughter Joan although his widow Joan (d. c.1587) presumably remained in possession as she was the joint highest taxpayer in the parish in 1581.⁴³ In 1568 the younger Joan married Valentine Gardner and was followed by Valentine, probably her son (fl. 1633).⁴⁴ By 1647 Christopher Gardner held the estate.⁴⁵ His widow Mary surrendered it in 1661-2 to Edward Ash (d. 1671) a plantation owner from Barbados whose son John (d. unm. 1675) left it to his sister Elizabeth to pay legacies and it was sold.⁴⁶

Robert Lucas (d. 1722) held Batts but his son Robert probably after his mother's death in 1741 obtained a private Act to sell, presumably to John Whitmash (d. 1769).⁴⁷ John left Batts to his son Henry (d. 1799) whose son Henry let the house.⁴⁸ Henry Whitmash died in France in 1824 having sold Batts to James Snook c.1818.⁴⁹ In 1825 the estate in Pitminster and Trull was divided up and sold. Captain Duncan (d. 1824) contracted for and occupied the house and grounds. The purchase was only completed in 1842 after his son William attempted to sell it owing to protracted litigation.⁵⁰

Batts Park, formerly Place, had nine hearths in the 1660s, possibly not all in the house, which in 1672 had four chambers including the 'lighthouse', two parlours, a

⁴¹ Hunt, *Medieval Customs*, 58; F. Dickinson, *Kirby's Quest*, 149.

⁴² SHC, T/PH/win 1524-5; D/P/tru/4/1/1 (1536-7).

⁴³ S.W. Rawlins and I.F. Jones, *Som. Wills from Exeter*, 4, 51; SHC, D/P/tru/2/1/1; DD/SP/71 (N. Trendle tithing); A. Webb, *Tudor Subsidies*, 119.

⁴⁴ SHC, D/P/tru/2/1/1 (1567/8); 23/14-16.

⁴⁵ SHC, DD/SAS/C795/TN/16 (N. Trendle tithing).

⁴⁶ SHC, DD/SP/325/205; DD/CT/45; TNA, PROB 11/339/249, 11/352/47.

⁴⁷ TNA, PROB 11/589/439, 11/946/160; YHL/PO/PB/1/1741/15G2n61; SHC, DD/CT/78; D/P/tru/2/1/3 (1741); 13/2/3-4.

⁴⁸ TNA, PROB 11/1325/97; SHC, Q/REL/35/28; A/ANF/1/6/2; BL, MSS EUR F114/14.

⁴⁹ TNA, PROB 11/1694/302; SHC, Q/REL/35/28; A/ANF/1/4-5.

⁵⁰ SHC, Q/REL/35/28; D/T/M/7/5; tithe award; *Taunton Courier* 13 Oct. 1824, 17 Apr 1836, 16 June 1841, 30 March 1842; BNA accessed 25 March 2026.

traditional hall, apple loft and cheese store.⁵¹ It was possibly rebuilt by Henry Whitmash (d. 1798) and in 1813 had 13 bedrooms and four large reception rooms. From 1844 to 1881 it was a girls school.⁵² In 1901 the estate of the Revd Beachamp Kerr-Pearse (d. 1900), who owned Batts by 1875, was sold. The house then had a crenellated, eight-bay front and porch, tessellated floors, a two-storey hall with Adam-style ceiling, a carved oak staircase, a billiard room, a lodge and a coachman's cottage. The garden contained many rare trees.⁵³ By 1910 the house, having been let and sublet, was in poor condition although bathrooms and central heating were installed and there were two staff cottages.⁵⁴ After the last residents, the Las Casas family, moved out in 1935 it was left empty, suffered a fire and was demolished in 1936. New houses were built in the grounds but further development was interrupted by the establishment of a large military camp.⁵⁵

⁵¹ E. Dwelly, *Som. Hearth Tax*, 30; TNA, PROB 4/21032.

⁵² SHC, A/ANF/1/6/1-2; DD/CPHS/43; below, soc. hist. educ.

⁵³ SHC, D/T/tm/12, 660; DD/KIT/7/11.

⁵⁴ TNA, IR 58/82662.

⁵⁵ TNA, RG 14/14216; RG 15/11221; *Taunton Courier* 28 Aug. 1935; 25 March 1936; 13 Aug. 1938; BNA accessed 25 March 2026; below, soc. hist.; Som. HER 47644.