

## Loxley and its Landowners

In Roman times the road from Stratford upon Avon to the Fosse Way followed the line of the modern road to Ettington (Banbury Road). In the middle ages the same road was used as a saltway. Loxley was linked to this road by an ancient track that ran close to the site of the modern Grove Hill Farm and Goldicote House, leaving the modern Wellesbourne to Stratford Road where it abruptly turns northwest at the west of the village. Evidence for this is to be found in a lease granted in 985 AD by Oswald, archbishop of Worcester, for five houses in the neighbouring parish of Tiddington. The description of the boundary of the property includes “salt mere on clæg broc” {salt mere to clay brook} and “on loc setena gemære” {by the boundary of the inhabitants of Loxley}. The Anglo-Saxon word “gemære” became “meer” and is retained today as in Meer Hill Farm near this point.

Just to the east of the Church another track ran southeast past Oakham Farm towards Walton and Ettington and this was the main route from Wellesbourne to Ettington before Red Hill was turnpiked in 1754. Loxley Farm, which lies between these two tracks, is the oldest surviving building in the village that has not been substantially modified and it probably lay in a hollow before the road near the church was lowered (the old level of the land can be seen near the church gate and the track to the Old School House). However, archaeological evidence suggests that the medieval village of Loxley lay to the south of the Church and documents relating to the ownership of Loxley Manor after the Dissolution of the Monasteries (1538) indicate that the farm now known as Home Farm is probably on the site of the ancient manor.

The written history of Loxley starts in 795 AD when the register of Worcester Cathedral records having received Loxley Church as a gift from King Offa around 760 AD. In the reign of King Canute (1016-1035 AD) they were deprived of it because they were late paying their Danegeld. In 1086 AD the Domesday Book shows that the landowners in the parish were the Count of Meulan (elder brother of Henry Newburgh the future Earl of Warwick), the Bishop of Worcester, and Hugh de Grandmesnil. Before he died in 1196 AD, Robert FitzOdo sold much of his holding in Loxley to the Monks of Kenilworth Priory and his great-grandson, Peter de Mora, gave them the manor and all of its possessions. The FitzOdo family were ancestrally related to Bishop Odo of Bayeux who was a half brother to William the Conqueror.

Land ownership in the parish remained in the hands of the Church and two other landlords for about six hundred years. The village prospered and in 1291 AD reference was made to a mill here belonging to Kenilworth Abbey. The Victoria County History suggests that the mill may have been along the track to Goldicote where there is a field called Miller’s Way but it seems more likely that this was a reference to Franklyn Miller who owned Loxley Manor (see the Ecclesiastical Terrier for 1714 for references to Mr. Millers land). The mill was more credibly near to the Church and the adjacent granary, which occupied the site of Loxley Hall, because the two fields belonging to the church, lying east of it, and south of the road to Wellesbourne, were known as Mill Hill in 1585. They appear as Lower Mill Hill and Upper Mill Hill on the 1837 map and still belonged to the Church.

In 1569 William Underhill of Idlicote and his son William Underhill, purchased the Manor of Loxley from Lewis Grevyll esquire of Milcote and Thomasine his wife, who had purchased it from the Crown (see Loxley Manor from the Dissolution). The elder William died in 1570 and on 18th November 1588 the younger William sold it to his second cousin, Thomas Underhill; the property consisted of ‘20 messuages, 3 cottages, 10 tofts, 1 dovecote, 20 gardens, 1000 acres of land, 300 of meadow, 1600 of pasture, 40 of wood, 200 of furze and heath 4s rent in Loxley and Barford, paying £220 in sterling’ [1]. The Ecclesiastical Terrier dated 12th February 1616 describes parcels held by Widow Locke and Richard Greenway that were on the ground of Mr. John Eedes and Mr. Thomas Underhill and some arable land in Coxhill (which can be identified near the Church in 1837) occupied by William Smith on the ground of Mr. Thomas Underhill. The Victoria County History says that the manor house was on the site of Oakham Farm and the demesne lands lay to the west of

the house where the modern Ordnance Survey map shows Demands Coppice – the name being derived from demesne – but there is good evidence in the deed by which Edward Nash of East Greenwich purchased what he described as Loxley Manor that this was not so. Many of the old field names have disappeared but the Inclosure Award in 1758 refers to the Upper Demesnes, Middle Demesnes and Further Demesnes in the ‘old inclosed’ lands of the village. The field later known as The Ten Acres was one of the Demesne fields.

Thomas Underhill made reference to his own purchase in some Chancery Proceedings dated 26 January 1620/1 [2] but died intestate on 22 April 1622 [3]. In 1642 Thomas Underhill of Loxley, son of the previous Thomas, was the only Underhill, and one of a modest number of the Warwickshire gentry, who attended the muster of troops in support of King Charles I. He and his family had left Loxley and moved by 1653 to a house in Oxhill that had been willed to him by his uncle George in 1650, together with some money to help pay off a debt to Thomas Nash of Stratford upon Avon who was the cousin of Edward Nash of East Greenwich. Perhaps the cost of being a prominent Royalist was too high during the Commonwealth.

The 1630s were a period of religious intolerance when Archbishop Laud was enforcing uniformity of worship in every parish – which was seen by many as a retreat from the Reformation. Loxley, keen to conform, commissioned a new bell in 1632 and new pews were installed at the expense of the Vicar in 1638. A note made in the register at that time said that Thomas Underhill and his family were to have the front pews on both sides of the church and Robert & John Hopper and their families were to have the pews behind them. The vicar and his family were to have the third pew on the north side forever. The significance of this information to this discussion is that, at this time, the Hoppers who were ‘of Walton’ on the east side of Loxley [4], were the ‘second family’ of Loxley after the Underhills. The family continued to own land in and around the village for many years. The Hearth Tax Returns for the 1670s show that the principal families living in the parish were the Hoppers and the Southams.

The land held by the Church was recorded by John Dadley, Church Warden, in the Ecclesiastical Terrier of 1714. There are references to Mill Hill bounded on the east by Wellesbourne Pasture, Coxhill to the south, Barnetts (11 acres) of Mr Millers to the west, Sidelands (7 acres) under it northwards bounded on the east by Wellesbourne Pasture north by Mr Hopper’s meadow and west by the road to Mr Miller’s grounds and Woodfield (50 acres) bounded on the east by Sir John Mordaunts ground of Walton south and west by Mr Miller’s Pratts grounds and Wood Butts and north by Mr Boyse’s Wood and Wellesbourne field. The locations of these fields can be seen on the map of the ‘Old (Pre 1758) Inclosures’ that was drawn in 1837.

The open fields of the parish, which mostly lay to the west and south west sides, were inclosed by Act of Parliament in 1758. The east and north east portions of the parish, including Loxley farm, Oakham Farm and the demesne lands of the former manor, were not covered by the Award – this is the area covered by the 1837 map of the ‘Old Inclosures’. The land that had been held intact for so many years began to be sub-divided early in the 18th century: there were still only seven farms in the parish by 1730 and seven proprietors with holdings from ¼ to 6½ yard-lands in the 1758 Award, Grove Hill Farm was created between 1760 and 1765, and twelve farms are recorded in the Land Tax Assessment of 1775. As a result of a Chancery Decree in 1831 between Dewes and Beresford concerning property in Loxley and Wellesbourne, John Dewes of Wellesbourne sold a farm (310 acres), another farm (237 acres), a cottage, and the schoolhouse to John Milward who is shown holding most of the ‘Old Inclosures’ land in 1837 [5]. He died in December 1842 and Loxley House was inherited by his nephew, John, eldest son of his brother William. The site of Loxley House now Loxley Hall was where the granary belonging to the monks at Kenilworth had stood, according to Rev. J. Harvey Bloom. The younger John returned to Ireland, where he had been born, married Martha Sheppard in 1847 and returned to live in Loxley [6] until he sold his property in the late 1850s to James Cove Jones. From his family it passed to the Kendall’s in 1912 and then to Gregory-Hoods in 1928.

Following the death of Benjamin Dadley in 1833, Home Farm (108 acres), Stratford Way Farm (90 acres) and Pasture Farm (24 acres) on the west side of the parish were sold. In 1855, the trustees to

the will of Richard Rose who had died in 1831, sold Oldborough Farm where the tenant was Isaac Plumb - presumably to the Plumb family because in 1911 they sold it for £890 to Thomas Henry Meadows, grocer, of Stratford upon Avon. The land adjacent to the farm is now a residential development following a long period of commercial use by Blake's Dairies.

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[1] Birmingham City Archives: MS 3008/Acc 1883-006/63195 Writ. Wm. Underhill and Thomas Underhill: Manor of Loxley, and twenty messuages, etc. - date: 1588. This was clearly more than the parish of Loxley which contained less than 1600 acres in 1887.

[2]

PRO C 2 Jas. I U/3/32

[3] Inquisition Post Mortem - PRO C 142/400/14

[4] 1. Grant of a tenement and garden by Robert Hopper, husbandman, of Walton dated 6th September 1541 – SBTRO ER 2/10. 2. Assignment of a messuage in Church Tysoe to Robert Hopper of Walton, gent., 9th April 1649 – WCRO L5/359 a&b

[5] His stone tablet near the chancel step bears the arms of Milward of Lechlade, Gloucestershire but this was the estate that his younger brother George had purchased in 1819. Their father, George, lived at Wincot in Gloucestershire and other family members lived at Welford also in Gloucestershire. The connection with Loxley goes back to 1675 when John Milward of Welford demised a half share of two yard land in Welford to Anne Marshall of Loxley.

[6] In 1851 John Milward, the nephew, and wife Sarah both born in Waterford, Ireland were living at Loxley House, and Louisa Hemmings, his niece, born in London was visiting Birmingham with her mother.