



To the Manor Born

John Marsden

Gone but not forgotten...

- The English manor, as such, no longer exists.
- It lives on, however in:
 - Manor Houses
 - Place names (Manor Avenue, Intake)
 - Surnames (Heriot, Pindar, Steward, Hayward)
 - Figures of speech “Not on my manor!”
 - “Lordships of the manor”

What was a manor?

- A geographical area
 - Yes, but ill-defined
- A system of land tenancy
 - Yes, but this is only part of the manor's role
- A system of civil administration
 - Perhaps the best way to look at the manor

What was a manor?

A little common wealth, whereof the Tenants are the members, the Land the bulke and the Lord the head.

The Surveyors Dialogue

John Norden (1607)

What was a manor?

- There is no template for the manor
- Each manor could operate differently
- I will describe a typical manor...
- ...but *your* manor may be different
- To understand the manor we need to look at land ownership.

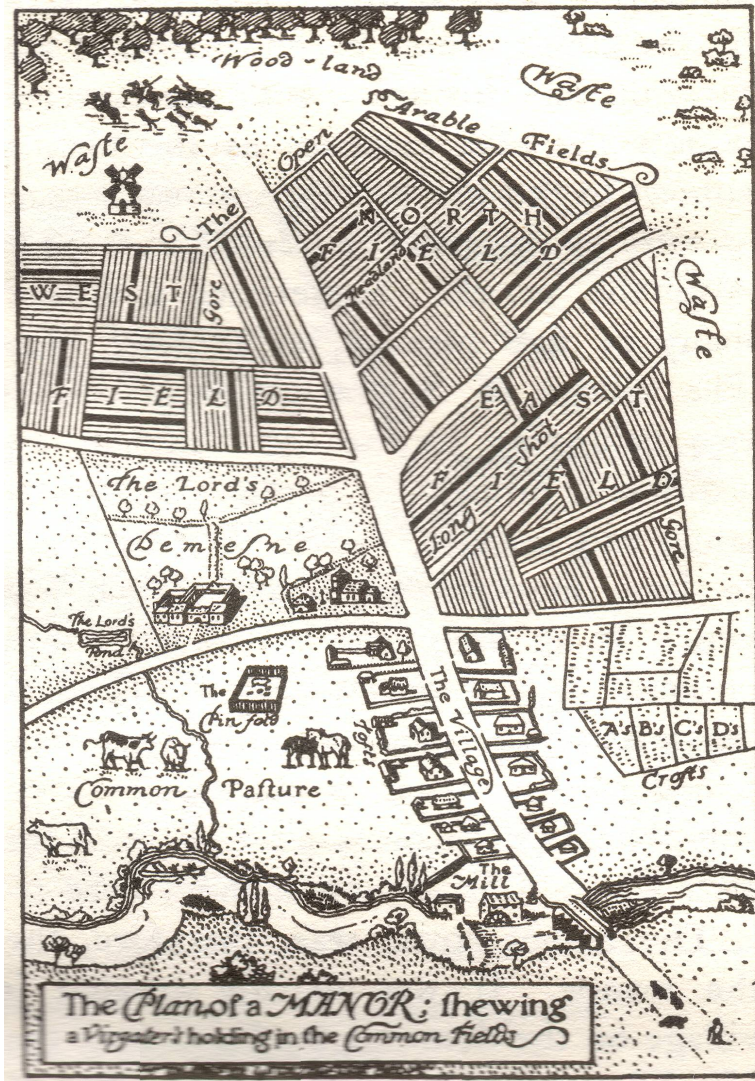
1066 and all that



After the Conquest

- All land was seized by the monarch
- The monarch leased land to his supporters
 - These were known as “tenants in chief”
 - The leases required “Knight Service” (10 knights)
 - Subinfeudation (sub-leasing)
- The holders of leases became manorial lords
- Manorial lords issued leases to farmers
- Some farmers might sub-let portions

What did the manor look like?



- Open Fields
- Demesne
- Manor House
- Common Pasture
- Waste
- Assarts and Intakes
- Village and crofts
- Corn mill and Bakehouse

The Manor House



The Corn Mill



The Open Field System



The Open Field System

- Land was not divided into private fields
- Manors had large “open” fields
- Typically 3 fields (3 year rotation)
- Fields were divided into strips (selions)
- Each farmer had one or more strips in each field
- The same crop was planted by all
- Ploughing, sowing and reaping were on a fixed timetable



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How did the manor work?

- A mixture of rights and obligations
- Pre-date the conquest but continued later
- Embodied in the “custom of the manor”
- The lord leased land to the tenant
- The tenant paid rent and other charges
- The tenant might have to perform services
- Managed through a system of courts

Who were the 'players'??

- Lord of the Manor
- Steward – The Lord's representative
- Bailiff – The Lord's 'foreman'
- Reeve – The tenants' 'foreman'
- Special officers: Pindar, Hayward,
- Constable, Beadle
- Tenants

The Court Baron

- Met at customary times
- Conducted before a jury of tenants
- Was concerned with tenancy matters
- Oversaw tenancy transfers
- Appointed officers
- Proceedings recorded in “court rolls”

Essoins and Mercies

- Tenants were required to attend the courts
- Essoins were accepted excuses
 - Illness
 - Lord's business
- Those with no excuse were “amerced” (or fined “in mercy”)

Manorial Tenancies

- Freehold tenants
- Copyhold tenants
- Leasehold tenants
- Bordars
- Cottars

Copyhold Tenancies

- Tenant received a copy of the court roll entry
- Leases had to be transferred by the court
- Several systems operated
 - Primogeniture (eldest son)
 - Ultimogeniture (youngest son) a.k.a. Borough English
 - Gavelkind (divided between sons)
 - Leases for named lives
- Abolished by Acts from 1841 to 1925

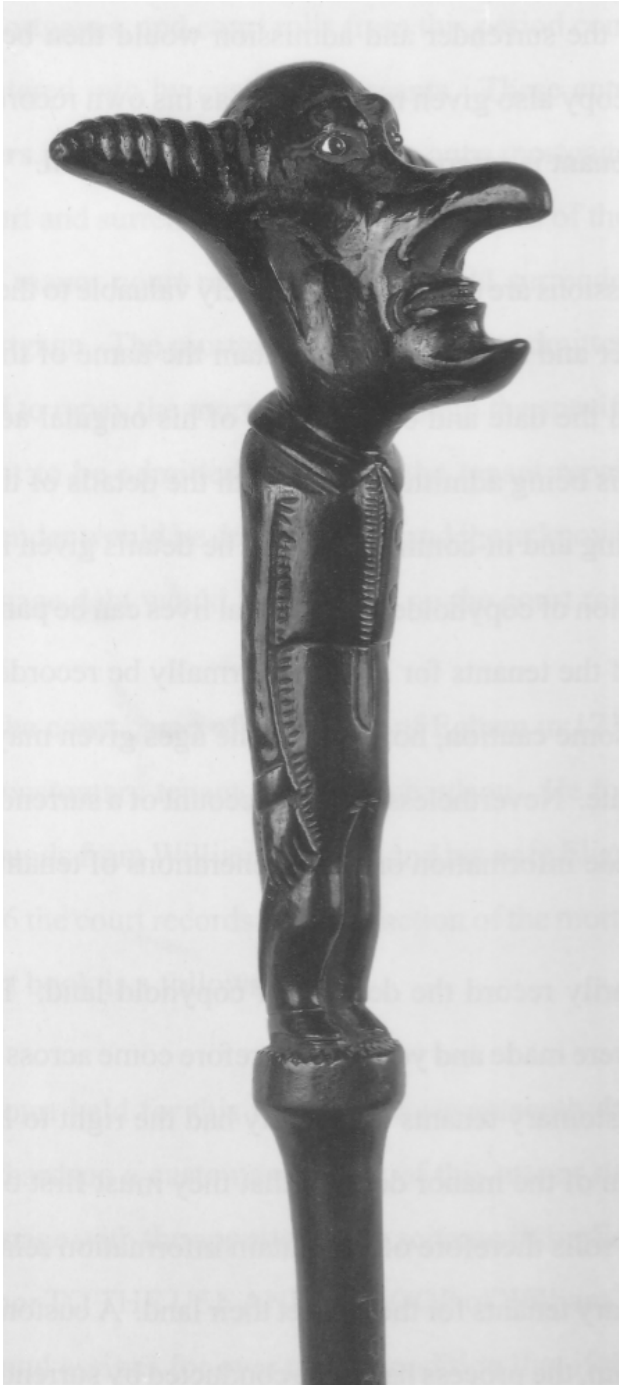
**Manor of Chipping Barnet and East Barnet,
Hertfordshire. 17 April 1770**

...the said Richard HASSELL was admitted tenant in Fee on a Recovery thereof by him suffered at a court held for this manor on the 12 day of March 1733, as appears by the Rolls of the said court, [he] hath since the last General Court departed this life seized of the said premises according to the custom of the said manor and that Richard HASSELL esquire is his eldest son and heir at law and of full age...

**Manor of Chipping Barnet and East Barnet,
Hertfordshire. 17 April 1770**

...NOW at this court comes the said Richard HASSELL esquire in his own proper person and humbly prayed of the Lady of the Manor aforesaid to be admitted tenant to the said premises so descended to him as aforesaid by the death of the said Richard HASSELL his father. And thereupon the Lady of the Manor aforesaid by her steward aforesaid granted to him seizing thereof by the rod according to the custom of the said manor...

... And he gave to the Lady a Fine for such her estate and entry into the said premises



The Steward's Staff

Church Aston, Shropshire

19th century

The Court Leet

- Met at customary times with a jury of tenants
- Concerned with the maintenance of order
- Prosecuted offences against the manor
 - Straying animals, blocked ditches etc.
- Prosecuted offences against the person
 - Assaults, theft, defamation
- Heard civil suits
 - Unpaid debts etc.

The Court Leet

- Limits to its authority
 - Under 40 shillings value
 - No jurisdiction over felonies
 - No jurisdiction over ecclesiastical matters

The View of Frankpledge

- Dates from Saxon times
- Villagers grouped into “tithings” (10 people)
- Mutual responsibility for behaviour
- Represented by a “tithingman” who appeared before the court leet
- Tithingmens’ reports constitute the “View of Frankpledge”
- If offender absconded, the tithing became responsible for any damages suffered

Court Rolls



Manorial court records

Court Leet Preamble



Court Leet Preamble

Essoined Chief
pledges free
tenants &
deceners

At this Court Robert Church, George Potter, Ralph Sydey, John GreneWood,
John Leffingwell, Richard Parker, John Smith, Richard Haywood, Thomas Smith
William Prentice, Christopher Isaake, Christopher Hall, John Ansell, William Marce
Esdrs Wade, heirs of Thomas Culverton, Joan Pierson, Alberly Prior, Peter Gylat,
John Warren, Robert Woodward, John Woodward jun., John Wangeford, Thomas Turnor,
John Coote, Richard Clarke, Benjamin Handeler, Thos Polley jun., Henry Abbott
jun. were essoined

Homage
for Leet

William Loveney
John Prentyce
Edward Wade
John Tracer
Edward Catt
John Cutler

Jury

Simon Turner
John Kendall
John Parker jun. Jury
William Rookes
Henry Bridge
George Pilgrim

Tenants &
deciners in
mercy for
default

Who said on their oath that Edward Earl of Oxford, William Sydey gent, Thomas
Samford gent, John Aylet, John Cockerell, George Sayer gent, Robert Dawes, John
Collyn, William Adams cleric, Francis Wangeford, John Grigges, Elizabeth Smith,
Lawrence Gylat, heirs of John Enews, William Veysey tenants, Simon Kendall, Simon
Ive, Eliochim Ive, Adham Mapas, Henry Smith deceners and residents, owe suit at
this court and on this day made default, therefore each of them is in mercy iiid

Manchester Court Leet

20 Oct 1820

And the Jurors aforesaid upon their oath aforesaid do present that John Evans of Manchester aforesaid Coal Dealer being then and still an Inhabitant and resiant of and in the said manor on the ninth day of October Instant was possessed of and still is possessed of a certain Coal Yard in Hanover Street in this Manor and within the Jurisdiction of this Court at which he sold large quantities of Coals to divers of the liege subjects of our said Lord the King and did then and there knowingly and designedly keep and use a certain false and defective pair of scales for and in the weighing and selling of such coals as aforesaid with intent thereby then and there to cheat and defraud all persons resorting to the said Coal Yard of the said John Evans for the purpose of buying such coals as aforesaid Whereupon it is considered that the said John Evans be in mercy.

The said amerciamment of the said John Evans at the sum of five pounds.

Woodborough, Notts. Final Court Leet (1924)




Finding Manorial Records

- Manorial Documents Register: Part of National Archives Discovery catalogue.
discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/manor-search
- Can search by name of manor if known (See Victoria County History or Lewis's Topographical Directory)
- Can search by place name.
- Provides a list of records and where held.

Manorial Documents Register

Search results for masham

masham 

[Start new search](#) [Browse](#)

Filter results

Your filters

Manor 

[Remove all filters](#)

Held by

 [The National Archives](#) (3)

 [Other archives](#) (97)

Date

☐ 1925 - 1949 (1)

☐ 1900 - 1924 (2)

☐ 1800 - 1899 (4)

☐ 1700 - 1799 (36)

☐ 1600 - 1699 (47)

☐ 1500 - 1599 (22)

☐ 1400 - 1499 (7)

Refine

Records 100

Record creators 0

Descriptions of records and information about how to access them

1 - 15 of 100 results Sorted by:

Relevance



[Simple view](#)

[Print](#)

[Export results](#)

[ELLINGSTRING MANOR, map](#)

map

Location: **Masham**, Yorkshire, North Riding

Held by: North Yorkshire County Record Office

Date: 1769

Reference: ZS

Subjects: Manors

[MASHAM MANOR, estimation of lands](#)

estimation of lands

Location: **Masham**, Yorkshire, North Riding

Held by: North Yorkshire County Record Office

Date: 1634

Reference: ZS

Subjects: Manors

The Records

- Maps and Boundaries
- Extents and Lists of Tenants
- Deeds and Enfranchisement of Copyholds
- Court Rolls/Books and Papers
- Accounts

But ... You will encounter Latin in earlier records

Learning More - Books

- Using Manorial Records, Mary Ellis
- My Ancestors were Manorial Tenants, Peter Park (Good overview)
- How to Locate and Use Manorial Records, Patrick Palgrave Moore (Concise)
- Manorial Records, Denis Stuart (Good Latin exercises)
- Life on the English Manor 1150-1400, H. S. Bennett
- The English Manor c1200 – c1500, Mark Bailey.

Most are out of print. Try abebooks.com or amazon.com

