

THE MANOR OF BENSTED ST CLAIR

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ABSTRACT

This article traces the history of the manor and small community of Bensted St Clair, near Droxford, from the tenth century to the present day, and gives some account of its connexion with the St Clairs, an active minor gentry family in Hampshire and the other counties of southern England. The manorial accounts are used to throw light on agrarian practices in the period after the Black Death, and a previously unknown medieval fulling mill is identified. The line of the north-south road, now the A32, is shown to have been very significantly changed during the early nineteenth century.

INTRODUCTION

St Clair's Farmhouse stands on the site of the hall of the now almost forgotten manor of Bensted St Clair. It lies on the west bank of the river Meon about two miles south of Droxford at the point where the A32 road and the river are crossed by a minor road between Swanmore and Soberton Heath (SU 604 154). The present building has been described as a 'seventeenth-century brick farmhouse with an older timber-framed wing' (Pevsner & Lloyd 1967, 194). The lands of the former manor stretched some 2¼ miles along the Meon which formed their eastern boundary with the manor hall about midway. Over the centuries the lands extended westwards on both sides of the road leading to Swanmore and Bishops Waltham. The older Bensted fields were bisected by the construction of a road (now the A 32) at some time between 1810 and 1841. The southern part of an earlier road, once known as Huntwyche, or Huntage, Lane, took a route several hundred yards further west, some 30 feet higher up the valley slope; but its course is now difficult to discern. The northern part of this older road survives as a farm track.

From the time of the Domesday survey until the sixteenth century, when it became a leased

farm, the manor was worked mainly, latterly entirely, for the demesne, and its tenants were too few to form a tithing. The hamlet of Cott Street, just off the road to Swanmore, half a mile west of the farmhouse, possibly had its origin in a little group of cottages anciently attached to the manor (Fig 1).

The original name of the manor, Bensted, is lost. The farm which succeeded the manor took its name from the family of St Clair (var. Seyntcler, Sencler, Sinklar etc.) who held the manor from about 1160 until c 1390.

Note: In the text below the Latin form *de Sancto Claro* is translated 'de St Clair', and this rendering is used throughout except when quoting, when the form used is that of the original document or printed source.

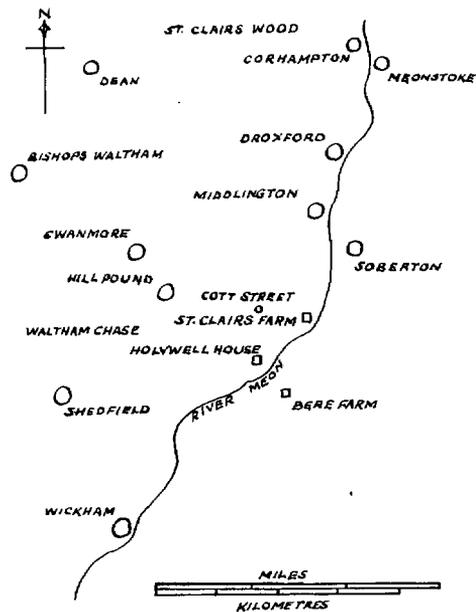


Fig 1. The environs of St Clair's Farm, anciently the manor of Bensted St Clair.

PRE-CONQUEST TO DOMESDAY

The earliest known reference to Bensted is in a charter of King Eadwig, *als.* Edwy, granting land at Droxford to the 'noble Lady' Æthelhild in the year 956 (*ASC* 600; *K1181*; *BCS* 953; *SLC* 105). Bensted is mentioned twice in the bounds which are given in OE at the end of the Latin text: 'Ærest of Drocenesforde to bienestede: of bienesteda to scida felda . . .' ('First from Droxford to Bensted, from Bensted to Shedfield . . .'). From this fleeting reference it is not evident whether bienestede was a settlement or merely a topographical feature (*bien* - 'bean'; *stede* - 'place, site, locality'; *EPNS* 1970, II, 146).

Domesday Book shows that Bensted had been a distinct tenure in the time of Edward the Confessor (1042–Jan 1066). It is entered under the lands of the Bishop of Winchester among those designated 'for the victuals of the monks of Winchester' (*de victu monacho* 'Wint'), that is to say, for the monks of the Cathedral Priory of St Swithun, and as part of the manor of Droxford in Droxford Hundred. Although it appears to have been the equivalent of a manor before the Conquest, the tenure was not entirely free, for its holder, Agemund, 'could not go whither he would'. It can be estimated that the arable at Bensted in 1086 was about 360 acres, of which some 240 acres were demesne, and 120 acres were held by 3 villeins and 3 bordars. The manor was among the minority in Domesday Book where the lands of the demense greatly exceeded those of the customary tenants.

THE FAMILY OF ST CLAIR

The earliest evidence of the presence of the St Clair family in Hampshire emerges from a grant of land at Woodgarston by Mathew de Scures who held the manor of Wickham, 3 miles southwest of Bensted. Robert de St Clair was among Mathew's neighbours who witnessed the document (*HRO* 21M58/T86). The deed is undated but it has been attributed to 'between 1160 and 1170' (*Bigg-Wither* 1905, 245). This dating is consistent with the appearance of Mathew de Scures as a tenant of John de Port for 4 knights' fees in Hampshire in 1166 (*Red Bk Exch* 207).

The earliest post-Domesday direct reference to Bensted found in the present study is in a final concord dated 1201 in which Humphrey de St Clair quitclaimed one virgate at Bensted to Robert de St Clair (*PRO CP25/I/203/2*, CP601). Robert de St Clair was among the 16 knights named for election to a Hampshire grand assize in 1201 in which the bishop of Winchester was plaintiff (*Cur Reg R* 3–5 John, 76). The knights were headed by Roger de Scures who had been described as the heir of Mathew de Scures in the document relating to Woodgarston (*supra*).

In 1203 Roger de Scures, Robert de St Clair and Hamo de Midlington, with others, were attached (*atachientur*) in Hampshire for failing to attend an assize of *novel disseisin* in respect of land at Markestok' (*Cur Reg R* 3–5 John, 212). Although it is indexed as 'Meonstoke' in the *Calendar of Curia Regis Rolls*, Markestok' is otherwise unknown as an early form of the place-name Meonstoke; but Markestok' was a thirteenth-century form of Martock, Somerset (*Ekwall* 1934/66, 317). It was in the hundred of Martock that the Somerset St Clairs held their manor of Stapleton, and in 1233 Geoffrey de St Clair was succeeded there by his son Sir Robert. At the same time, Robert inherited land at Staunden' in Hampshire which Geoffrey had held of the king in chief (*ERF* I, 97). Whether Robert of Hampshire and Robert of Somerset were the same person is uncertain. The association with Roger de Scures, and Hamo de Midlington (Middlington is 1½ miles north of St Clair's Farm) leaves no doubt that the Hampshire Robert was of Bensted.

The status of Bensted, both hundredal and manorial, was complicated. Bensted does not appear as a tithing, the smallest unit of local government, in any of the records examined, but was treated as part of the tithing of Droxford, in the bailiwick of Droxford, the other constituents of which were Hill, Swanmore, Shedfield and, sometimes, Middlington, within the hundred of Droxford which, in or before the thirteenth century, was absorbed into Waltham hundred. Jurisdiction of the hundred was vested in the bishop of Winchester (*Cam* 1930/63, 268). The bishop's manorial bailiwick consisted of Walth-

am, Droxford, Bensted, Bitterne and, sometimes, Droxford Philip. The St Clairs did not hold the manor of Bensted directly of the bishop, but as a sub-infeudation of the de Scures family of Wickham (PRO C135/44, CP1342). When, and under what circumstances, the de Scures acquired the mesne lordship of Bensted has not been discovered, but references to the association between the de Scures and the St Clairs, quoted above, indicate that it was probably earlier than 1170. It may be relevant that Hugh de Port held both Bensted and Wickham in 1086 (*DB Hants*). Ecclesiastically, Bensted was in the parish of Droxford.

Beaulieu Abbey held land adjoining Bensted and the dating of several of its charters leaves the succession of the St Clairs at Bensted confusing during the early thirteenth century. The grant of the manors of Soberton and Flexland to the abbey by Ralph de Clere is dated *c* 1235. Ralph de Clere (the name is *not* a variant of St Clair) held these lands of Jordan de Walkerville, and with them went a meadow lying in Bensted, held of William de St Clair 'by exchange' (*per escambium*) (*Beaulieu Cart* 48). The gift was confirmed by Jordan de Walkerville in a charter dated 1234/5 where the meadow is described as '*prato in Benestude*' (*Beaulieu Cart* 46). Confirmation of the grant by the king is firmly dated 15 October, 1235 (*Beaulieu Cart* 7). A grant of lands in Soberton to Beaulieu Abbey by Walter Mandé, dated *c* 1235, appears to indicate that the manor of Bensted was then held by H' de St Clair. These lands bounded southwards on the land of H' de St Clair (*Beaulieu Cart* 59). It is conceivable that H' de St Clair was Humphrey who quit claimed the virgate in Bensted to Robert de St Clair in 1201 (*supra*). It is also possible that the abutment referred to by Walter Mandé was this virgate and not the manor of Bensted itself. However, if H' de St Clair held the manor of Bensted he must have preceded William. A dispute arose between the abbey and William de St Clair about the use of a path which led from 'Soberton bridge over [a/the] field of Bensted' (*super campum de Benestude*). Possibly this path gave access to the meadow of Ralph de Clere's grant. Soberton bridge adjoined the 'North Field' of Bensted (Fig 2). The

dispute was settled *c* 1236 when William de St Clair agreed that the monks might freely use the path. At the same time he renounced his right to a plot of land held by William Fullo (*Beaulieu Cart* 77). Fullo was a latinisation of 'fuller' (Latham 1965, *sub voc fullatio*). Later evidence (*infra*) indicates that there had been a fulling-mill on the manor of Bensted. William Fullo may therefore have been the fuller in the early thirteenth century.

William de St Clair was party to a final concord in 1236 concerning half a virgate at Henton' in Hampshire (Hinton, but whether the place of that name in Christchurch, Fawley or Finchdean hundred is not evident) (PRO CP25(I)203/6).

It is not clear how many St Clairs with the baptismal name William were active in Hampshire in the later thirteenth century. William de St Clair, jointly with William de Hamelton, was keeper of the temporalities of the bishopric of Winchester during the vacancy from June 1280 (*CFR* I, 128) until August 1282 (*CCR* 1279–1288, 171). As a justice, William de St Clair presided with William de Braiboef over gaol deliveries at 'Wolvesheye' (Wolvesey Castle, Winchester) in 1281 (*CPR* 1272–1281, 456). In a dispute over tithes between the prior of Christchurch, Twynham, and the prior of Breamore in 1315, it was mentioned that William de Seyncler had been steward of the New Forest in the time of Edward I (*Inq Misc* II, 241).

By the end of the thirteenth century Bensted had descended to John de Sencler who had married Joan, daughter of Thomas de Aldham (Yaldham, Kent) (*IPM* VII, 5). His son, also John, was born in 1301 (*ibid*). In that year he appeared as witness to a grant of land at Meonstoke by Ralph Beupel to Sir John de Droxford, clerk (*CCR* 1302–1307, 86), the future bishop of Bath and Wells ('Sir' was a courtesy title for clerics). Because Bensted was not a tithing it does not appear by name in the lay subsidy of 1327, but under the vill of Droxford, now in Waltham hundred, John de Sentcler was assessed 8 shillings, the highest assessment in that vill. He was also assessed 2 shillings in Titchfield (PRO E 179/173/4).

In 1328 John de Chykehull granted to John de

Seyntcler the elder, for life, the manor of Wolveston (Woolston, Waltham hundred), with remainder to John de Seyntcler the younger and Henry le Wayte, clerk, for their lives, and ultimate remainder to Henry's sister Isabella de Inkepenne (*CPR* 1327–1330, 307–8). According to *VCH Hants* (III, 264) the Wayte family held land at Bere as part of the manor of Hambleton 'from early times' until 1561. The modern Bere Farm across the River Meon from St Clair's Farm and south of Soberton is said to mark the site (SU 601 142).

In view of impending events that were to change the circumstances of the St Clairs of Bensted (*infra*), it may be significant that in 1327 John de Seyntcler 'the elder' gave his lands in Hampshire as security for a debt to Sir William Trussel, the knight who was to be proctor of the earls and barons at the deposition of Edward II (*CCR* 1323–1327, 92).

Joan de St Clair's nephew, Francis de Aldham, was among the rebels sentenced to be drawn and hanged when the rising against Edward II failed in 1322 (*PDCW*, 350). Another was Thomas de St Clair who may well have been a member of the Hampshire branch of the family for he had been pardoned of a charge of 'divers disseisins' in Hampshire and Dorset in 1320 (*CPR* 1321–1324, 503). Whether the sentence was carried out on Francis and Thomas is not known, but Francis had certainly died by 1327. In the inquisition *post mortem* his next heir was named as 'John de Sencler, son of Joan, late the wife of John de Sencler, aunt of the said Francis, aged 26 years' (*IPM* VII, 5). In the same year the escheator was ordered to deliver to 'John, son of John de Seyntcler, kinsman and heir of Francis de Aldham, tenant in chief of Edward II, the lands late of the said Francis, he having done homage' (*CFR* III, 30). This inheritance greatly enhanced the fortunes of the Hampshire St Clairs, for it brought to them not only the manor of (West) Aldham in Kent, which survives today as the house and park bearing the name 'St Clere' (TQ 578 592), but also the manors of Brambletye, Laverketye, Exceat, Lambehem, Jevington and Tarring in Sussex, Chiselbergh with other lands in Somerset, Romeshede (Riverhead?) in Kent and

Wodepreston (Little Preston) in Northamptonshire (*IPM* VII, 5). The acquisition of the Sussex estates raised John de St Clair to the status of tenant in chief under the Crown.

During his lifetime Sir John de Seyntcler, as he is now described, appears to have increased the family estates still further, for when he died in 1336, in addition to the lands inherited from his cousin, he held in Sussex the manors of Heighton (later Heighton St Clere) and Nutbourne. The holdings in Sussex now totalled approximately 17 knights' fees. He left a widow Alice and a son John, aged 3 (*IPM* VII, 686). In an extent attached to the IPM it is stated that John Sencler, deceased, held no land of the king in Hampshire, but that he held jointly with his wife Alice the manor of Bensted in that county of John de Scures, *chivaler*, for one knight's fee for all services (PRO C135/44 CP1342).

The extent shows that in the fourteenth century Bensted had its own manorial court. It also had a water-mill, presumably on the site of the Domesday mill. With only 5 cottars and apparently no villeins or other customary tenants the manor had become even more heavily biased towards the demesne than it had been in 1086. As the acreage held by the 5 cottars is not stated a reliable estimate of the total arable cannot be made. However, it is unlikely that 5 cottars would have held more than, say, 40 acres between them; it may well have been considerably less. All that can be inferred, then, is that the total arable in 1335 was not more than 160 acres. If the estimate for Domesday was a reasonable approximation, then at first sight the amount of land under the plough at Bensted had contracted very considerably by 1335. Meadow had increased by just one acre. The 2 acres of woodland in 1335 would seem to represent little change from the amount of woodland that had provided pannage for only 5 pigs according to Domesday. There were 16 acres of pasture 'in severalty', and pasture for 60 sheep. If 3 to 4 sheep are allowed to the acre, giving roughly between 15 and 20 acres, then the total pasture would have been between 30 and 35 acres.

The manor of Bensted was still held in ward in 1346 when it was described as 'Bensted and Haliwell' of half a (knight's) fee, of which a

twentieth part was held by Nicholas de la Bere (FA II, 335). It will be noted that the assessment was now half that of 1335. As will be seen below, the assessment of half a knight's fee was repeated in 1428. The small estate of Holywell lay about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile south-west of the manor house of Bensted and today is marked by Holywell House (SU 595 151). Evidently the name derives from a pool 500 yards SE of Holywell House, which is marked as 'Holy Well' and classified as an 'antiquity' on the OS 1:50,000 map (SU 597 147). In the late nineteenth century it was recorded as 'St Clare's Well' (Hope 1893, 76), a common mis-spelling of St Clair at that time. Little is known of its religious associations. The National Monuments Record have it as 'an ancient well situate S of Crooked Copse, known locally as a Holy Well'.

Bensted had now become a relatively minor holding among the estates of the Hampshire St Clairs, and at some time in the last quarter of the fourteenth century Sir John Seyntcler and his wife Katherine appear to have made their Kentish manor of Aldham St Clere their principal residence. Sir John was succeeded by his son Philip who acquired by marriage the great manor of Penshurst in Kent.

Thus the association of the St Clairs with Bensted came to an end, though they appear to have retained some land in Hampshire, for John Seyntclere, son and heir of Philip, appears in the Feudal Aid of 1412 as holding land and rents at Penyton (Pennington near Lymington) valued £20 (FA VI, 458). There is also evidence that younger sons had established branches of the family that remained in Hampshire. The church and estate management were among the more usual occupations for younger sons of gentry and instances of each in the St Clair family have been found. Sir Adam Seyncler was vicar of Selborne *c* 1350–70 (*Selborne Chart* 92–4). Brother John Sencler was 'master' at the Titchfield Abbey manor of Inkpen *c* 1320, and in 1316 a John Sencler (probably not the same as Brother John) paid six marks at Titchfield to have messors replace him as reeve (Watts 1958, 157–8). William de Seyncler atte Dene, presumably so surnamed to distinguish him from his kinsmen at Bensted, was outlawed for failing to

appear before the justices to render account for his time when he was bailiff to Walter de Mareys at Corhampton. He was pardoned of outlawry when he surrendered to the Fleet Prison in 1342 (CPR 1340–1343, 66). The hamlet of Dean lies about 3 miles north-west of St Clair's Farm and 3 miles south-west of Corhampton. In the lay subsidy of 1327 Henry de Seintcler was assessed 8*d* at Lys in Meonstoke (PRO E/179/173/4). Liss is approximately 13 miles north-east of St Clair's Farm. Another was William Seyntcler who had slipped off to London in an attempt to escape citation by the dean of arches *c* 1368 to appear at Winchester Cathedral to answer a charge of refusing to marry Lucy Romeseye, having contracted matrimony *per verba de presenti, subsequente copula* (an instance of the law relating to contracted marriage invoked by Richard III for his claim to the throne) (*Wykeham's Reg* II, 62–3). The Droxford court roll of 1409 mentioned John Shainclere, or Shamclere, probably a garble of Seintclere (HRO Eccl I, 75/4). No doubt it was a branch of the Bensted St Clairs that accounts for the naming of another St Clair's Farm (SU 579 211) and of St Clares Wood (OS Map. 1810), both near Corhampton, and about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles north-east of Dean (*supra*). In his will dated 1580/1 and proved in 1587, Thomas Worsham, lessee of Corhampton Farm, bequeathed '3 closes of St Cleres grounds' to his son-in-law John Wyatt and 'grounds of St Cleres' to his wife Alice (HRO B Wills). Both Thomas Worsham and John Wyatt were assessed at Corhampton in the lay subsidy of 1586, but no St Clair appears (*Subs* 1586).

In the south aisle of Droxford church there is a medieval sepulchral effigy of a lady which was found, about 1820, buried in a nearby meadow. It has been dated late thirteenth century (Pevsner & Lloyd 1967, 194). Presumably because no other medieval family of rank in the parish was known, it has been conjectured that the lady may have been the mother of John of Droxford, bishop of Bath and Wells, 1309–29. In the light of the knowledge that some six generations of St Clairs must have been interred in Droxford church in the Middle Ages, it is at least as likely that the lady was a St Clair. The English St

Clair coat of arms was azure, a sun in splendour or. It was carried into Kent by the Hampshire line and it appears on bench-ends in East Budleigh Church, Devon.

DEMESNE OF THE BISHOP OF WINCHESTER

In 1381, close to the time of the departure of the St Clairs from Bensted, Sir John de Scures had died without issue. His sister, Sybil, was his heiress and by her marriage the manor of Wickham passed to a branch of the Uvedale family (*VCH Hants* III, 234), but evidently the inheritance did not include the mesne lordship of Bensted. By 1390 the bishop of Winchester had recovered Bensted as a demesne manor. According to *VCH* (where Bensted St Clair is confused with Bensted Popham, now Binstead, 3½ miles north-west of Alton) Sir Philip Seintcler conveyed his manor of Bensted to the bishop of Winchester in 1391 (*VCH Hants* II, 485); but, of course, the bishop already was tenant in chief of Bensted, and had been since the Conquest. No conveyance by Philip Seintcler has been traced in the present study, but a royal charter dated 6 December, 1390, granted to William of Wykeham, bishop of Winchester, and his successors, free chase and warren 'in all the demesne lands and woods of the manor of Benestede Seintclere, co. Hampshire, which adjoin the king's forest of Bere' (*CChR* V, 320). Now that it had ceased to be a sub-infeudation, for accounting purposes Bensted answered directly to the bishop's auditor and treasurer at Wolvesey Castle, Winchester.

The manorial accounts for 'Bienestedsencl'r' first appear in the bishop's Account Rolls (often referred to as 'Pipe Rolls') for the year to Michaelmas 1391 (*HRO Eccl* II, 159398), roughly coinciding with the year 1390/91 when the bishop of Winchester was granted free chase and warren. These were enrolled from the Ministers' Accounts, the earliest of which to survive for Bensted is for the year to Michaelmas 1394 (*HRO Eccl* II, 159465). In one important respect Bensted differs from the other manors of the bailiwick (Waltham, Droxford, Droxford Philip and Bitterne). The enrolled accounts

show that the other manors were managed locally by reeves, whereas, except for apparently three years within the period 1390 to 1454, and probably until 1524, Bensted was run by a 'farmer' (*firmarius*). The known exceptions were the years to Michaelmas 1391, 1394 and 1406 when the account was rendered by a *serviens*. It would appear that at Bensted the description *firmarius* and *serviens* were used in a sense rather different from that usually understood by these terms.

The term *serviens* was elastic, and could be applied to a wide range of servants from high-ranking officials to menials. Although at Bensted it was used for what today would probably be called a 'farm manager', in view of the changed sense of the term 'farm', and because the usual translation 'serjeant' is not applicable, here it will be left untranslated. Unlike a reeve, who was normally drawn from the villein class and elected by his fellows, a manorial *serviens* was appointed by the lord of the manor. A reeve normally received no salary, but he was granted an acquittance of rent and, usually, of work services, while the *serviens* usually received a payment in cash and an allowance of grain (Drew 1947, 20 fn 2). The *serviens* at Bensted was paid 45s 7½d for the year 1393/4.

The *firmarius* at Bensted was a farmer in the sense that he paid an annual sum of money as 'farm' and appears to have retained at least some part of the profit of the manor, but he was not a farmer in the sense of a holder of a long lease, often defined in terms of 'lives'; his tenure was usually no more than 5 or 6 years.

The accounts rendered by a *serviens* were minutely detailed. They conformed to the stereotyped pattern in general use in the fourteenth century (*cf* Harvey 1984, 32). The *firmarius* also rendered detailed accounts, but certain sections were omitted, such as costs of maintenance of plough and cartage equipment, and sheep-fold charges, but both *serviens* and *firmarius* accounted for work carried out on the house and buildings. The *serviens* accounted for crops, which were mainly corn and its by-products, in terms of cash, yields and quantities set aside for seed. The accounts of the *firmarius* had no section for crops, but both *serviens* and *firmarius* rendered

detailed account of livestock. Thus the distinction appears to be that the *serviens* had to account for every asset, every product and every transaction, while the *firmarius* was required to account only for the longer term assets and his dues to the bishop.

Possibly, Bensted was treated differently from the other manors within the bailiwick of Waltham because, since Domesday, it had been a manor where production was mainly for the demesne or for sale, and that a suitable reeve could not have been found among the few customary tenants. There were no villeins and only 5 cottars in 1335. The solution could have been to appoint a short-term manager who paid 'farm' in return for a share in the profits or products of the manor. It may be that a *serviens* was put in charge when no one was forthcoming suitable or willing to accept the terms of the farm. From the Ministers' Accounts up to at least the mid-fifteenth century it appears that, with one exception, all the *firmarii* and *servientes* were already tenants within the bailiwick of Waltham. Although some held parcels of villein land (*terra nativa*), it is thought that they must all have been freemen (HRO Eccl I, 74/37 *et seq.*). One, Philip Alleyn, was an *affeerer* (assessor of fines) in 1451/2 (HRO Eccl I, 75/23).

The *firmarius* appointed, exceptionally, from outside the bailiwick was Richard Newport (in 1450) whose family held of Beaulieu Abbey the neighbouring manor of Soberton since 1409 (*Beaulieu Cart* xxi). In 1445 Richard Newport was named for the appointment as bailiff of Waltham and Twyford for life, and was to receive 10 marks sterling in wages and fees from the revenues of the two bailiwicks. He was described by Cardinal Beaufort, then bishop of Winchester, as his 'armiger', well-known for his faithfulness, industry and diligence (*RCS* 283).

The accounts show that the manor was now run largely on commercial lines. Only a small proportion of its produce was retained for the bishops' household; the greater part was sold. there is no indication of anything reserved for the *serviens*. In 1394 his wage of 45s 7½d, or 1½d per day was his only remuneration.

The entries for corn reserved for seed show that only 93 acres of land were to be sown for

1395. The sowing rate leaves no room for doubt that the references are now to statute acres. This inference is consistent with Dr Titow's conclusion that the 'standard' acre had been used on all the manors of the bishop of Winchester since 1321, although 'customary' acres were commonly used in southern Hampshire from 1302 to 1320 (19/2, 151). The extent of 1335 should therefore be treated with caution. With allowance for fallow, it would appear that there were no more than 140 acres of demesne arable in 1394/5. To this figure must be added an unknown acreage of land represented by rents of assize. Although the acreage of arable at Bensted remained considerably less than in 1086, it appears to have changed little since 1335, so that the decrease of land under the plough cannot be attributed to the Black Death. The contraction might appear to be consistent with the belief that the agricultural recession had begun in some places before the plague (*Postan* 1973, 43); but at Bensted the reduction of the arable had been offset by a large increase of sheep. The 60 sheep for which there was pasture in 1335 had increased to 256 in 1394, after the sale of 157 lambs. At 3 to 4 sheep to the acre, and without taking into consideration the grazing of the fallow and the meadows after haymaking, 256 sheep would have required, in round figures, between 60 and 90 acres of pasture. There were 12 acres of meadow, an increase of 4 since 1335. Customals often stipulated that tenants should fold their sheep on demesne lands for certain periods. At Bensted, after the hay was gathered the meadows were let for grazing, thereby obtaining a cash return in addition to the benefit of manuring. From the account the acreages of woodland cannot be deduced.

From the entry for 'perquisites of the court' it is evident that, despite the small number of its tenants, Bensted continued to hold a court baron.

Assize rents had increased three-fold since 1335. This would seem to be contrary to the economic trends since the Black Death. Perhaps more land had been rented out, or possibly – and there is some indication that this was the case – more land had been let to residents of

neighbouring manors who might have been charged at a higher rate than customary tenants (e.g. the 5 cottars of 1335). There is now no evidence of land held by predial services; the two ploughmen, the shepherd, and the 12 men who were employed for two days to clear the garden of thorns and weeds, were all paid wages.

We have remarked that crops were accounted for at Bensted only when a *serviens* was in charge. Accounts for two consecutive years under a *serviens* appear not to have survived. Consequently yields cannot be accurately calculated. However, allowing for rotation, if it is assumed that the smallest sowing for which seed was reserved for 1395 (barley on 22 acres) was also the smallest acreage for any of the three corn crops harvested in 1394, and that the largest sowing for 1395 (oats on 34 acres) was also the largest acreage for any corn crop harvested in 1394, a rough estimate of yields per acre can be attempted. As the sowing rate per acre can be calculated, the same data can be used to estimate the yield per bushel of seed. Ignoring the 5 acres for peas and the 5 acres for vetch, the known data are:

Crop	Yield 1394 bushels	Seed for 1395 bushels on acres	Sowing rate bushels per acre
Wheat	356	70 27	2.6 (say 2½)
Barley	375	90 22	4.1 (say 4)
Oats	316	136 34	4.0

From these known data, and with the foregoing assumptions, it is possible to make the following rough estimates of yields in 1394. All figures represent bushels.

Crop	Harvest 1394	Yield per acre		Yield per bushel of seed	
		If 22 acres (highest)	If 34 acres (lowest)	Highest	Lowest
Wheat	356	16.2	10.5	6.5	4.2
Barley	375	17.0	11.0	4.2	2.7
Oats	316	14.1	9.3	3.5	2.3

These estimates may be compared with the averages on all the manors of the bishop of Winchester over the period 1209 to 1349 as calculated by Dr Titov (1972, 14). The first

figure represents the highest, the second the lowest, thus: yields per acre for wheat 13.8/7.0, for barley 27.6/11.0, for oats 16.0/8.3; and yields per bushel of seed, for wheat 5.34/2.61, for barley 5.55/2.79, and for oats 3.4/1.79. Bensted was a productive manor.

Horses were used, it seems, only for cartage. Ploughing was by oxen. There were 8 oxen, but this should not be taken to mean that Bensted had one traditional plough-team. In this period two teams of 4 oxen, with lighter ploughs, were more likely and there were two ploughmen. With a sowing of only 93 acres, and arable, with fallow, totalling probably no more than 140 acres, the work load was light.

No income from the mill appears in the account, suggesting that it was leased out separately from the manor, or operated directly under the bishop. The mill recorded in Domesday Book would have been a water-mill, and it was described as a water-mill (*molend' aquatit'*) in the extent of 1335. That there was a fulling-mill on the manor is implied by the reference to William Fullo ('the fuller') c 1236 (*supra*), to Fulling Mill Mead in 1647, and to Upper Fulling Mill Mead and Lower Fulling Mill Mead in 1741 (Fig 4). The two latter are thought to equate to Upper Holywell Mead and Lower Holywell Mead as shown on the Tithe map of 1841 (Fig 5). There were also references to Napperesmill and Napperesmylle in the accounts of 1394 and 1406 (HRO Eccl II, 159465/1 and 5). A map by Isaac Taylor, dated 1759, shows 'Sinkles Mill' on the west bank of the River Meon, 5 furlongs downstream from the homestead, here shown simply as 'Sinkles'. This places the mill between Upper Holywell (or Fulling Mill) Mead and Lower Holywell (or Fulling Mill) Mead. Signs of disturbed land in this position may mark the site (SU 597 146). It may be relevant that Thomas le Wayte had a fulling-mill at Funtley c 1350, and that the Wayte family appear to have been in the cloth industry until at least the sixteenth century (Watts 1982, 62). There had been associations between the St Clair and Wayte families in 1328, and it will be seen below that the Waytes had an interest in Bensted in 1428. Possibly the Waytes were tenants of the Bensted fulling-mill. Whether at one time there had been

two mills, one for corn and the other for fulling, or whether the fulling-mill was a conversion with the growth of wool production in Hampshire, is not evident.

An entry for the Feudal Aid of 1412 tells us little: 'Henry [of Beaufort] bishop of Winchester has lands and rents in Bensted, Draxford [*sic*], Cold Henle and Eston value (etc) £20.' (*FA* V, 449). The entry for the Feudal Aid of 1428 is more informative: 'The bishop of Winchester and John Estney hold in Bensted and Halywell half a fee that John Seintcler formerly held, of which moiety, however, Elysabet Wayte holds a twentieth part' (*FA* II, 357). John Estney's interest in Bensted is not understood. Possibly Elizabeth Wayte's twentieth part was the land at Hoywell formerly held by Nicholas de la Bere, mentioned in the account of 1394, or possibly the fulling-mill.

From 1478 to 1482 the court rolls show that John Newport was distrained on 'lands appurtenant to the manor of Bienstede called Synkeleriscourt' which is held at farm, namely one croft called 'le Shete' (Fig 2) containing by estimation 4 acres and one croft of arable called 'Nappery-shill'. Apparently he had defaulted on the annual rent of 18*d*. Moreover, his father, Richard Newport, who was *firmarius* in 1450, had enclosed one rood in the Lord's meadow called 'Laurens Garden' (Fig 2). Consequently these lands had been withdrawn (HRO Eccl I, 77/2-4). The relationship of Richard Newport and his son John to the Richard Newport who held the neighbouring manor of Soberton until his death in 1477 (*VCH Hants* III, 258) is uncertain. The latter's heir, also John, was born in 1454 and was presumably identical with 'John Newport, knight, the pope's commissary to Bosnia, Slavonia and Albania, chamberlain and chancellor of Alfonso, King of Aragon, of the diocese of Winchester' who travelled on the pope's business with 15 companions in 1456/7 (*Papal Reg* XI, 164).

In 1492, Thomas Haydoke, *servitor*, was appointed clerk of the bailiwick of Waltham, Droxford, Bensted and Bitterne, for life, on account of his good services to bishop Courtney (*RCS* 497). He was still in office in 1502 when the Bensted account includes an entry under

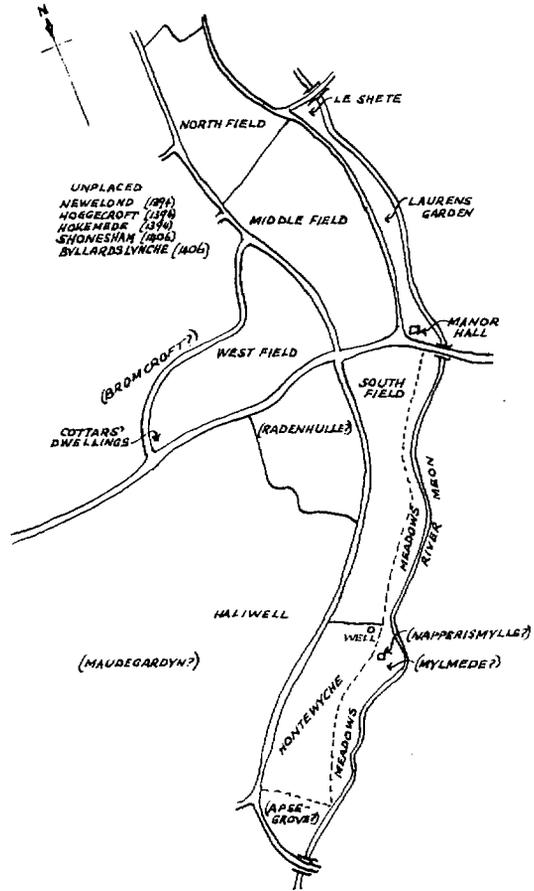


Fig 2. The medieval manor of Bensted St Clair (reconstruction).

Stipend for a payment to Thomas Haydocke, clerk, of 6*s* 8*d* (HRO Eccl II, 159465/61).

The account for 1502, when Thomas Crowcher was *firmarius*, shows 'null' under the heading 'perquisites of the court'. Profits from land were 23*s* 3*d* for a toft, with lands containing by estimation 2 virgates of villein (*nat*) land within the demense of Bensted called Westlond and Mawdelond 'formerly in the hand of Henry Newport and now in the hand of Thomas Crowcher'. For the Treasurer at the Lord's Hospice 80*s* (or 40*s* – the entry is ambiguous) in respect of 10 quarters of wheat delivered to Waltham, with 13*s* 5*d* allowance for the reeve of Droxford Phi[lip]. To Roger Layborne, Treasurer of Wol-

vesey, £4 10s was paid in June, and 40s in November, total £6 10s. The livestock remaining 'in the custody of the *firmarius*' were 4 horses, 6 oxen, 2 rams and 214 ewes.

By an indenture made in 1519, Thomas Channell 'of Bensted' held a mill in Droxford for an annual rent of £4 (HRO Eccl II, 158819/8/10). In 1524 Thomas Channell was shown as *firmarius* thus explaining the description 'of Bensted' in 1519. The accounts had now become very brief. There is however, an exceptional reference to 7 quarters of wheat for sowing on 20 acres of land, and 6 quarters and 4 bushels of oats, but the rest of the passage is deleted, presumably by the auditor. This brief reference to seed reserves hints at a further reduction of the arable, for they compare with 8 qrs 6 bu of wheat for sowing on 27 acres, and 17 qrs of oats on 34 acres in 1394/5. The figures for livestock remaining were exactly those of 1502 and are therefore suspect, but since 1394 oxen appear to have been reduced by 2, and sheep by 40, but there was an additional horse. The heading 'Perquisites of the Court' had now been dropped.

REFORMATION TO INTERREGNUM

In June 1551 John Poynt, bishop of Winchester, surrendered to the king the Hampshire 'manors of Mardon, Twyford, Marwell, Waltham, Droxford, Benstede, Byterne, Sutton, Ropley, Hedley, Alresford, Hygh Clere, Burgh Clere and Bentley', together with manors in Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Wiltshire, Surrey and Somerset. In return he was granted numerous rectories, a capital messuage in Lambeth, Surrey, and exonerated from annuities out of the surrendered possessions, including an annuity of 60s 10d to Thomas Uvedale (see below) for the keeping of Waltham Chase (CPR 1550-53, 178-9). This grant shows that Bensted was still regarded as a manor in its own right.

In the following October a grant was made to 'the king's councillor William, earl of Wiltshire, great treasurer of England, of the hundred, lordship and manor, and the chace and parks of Waltham, and also the lordship of Droxford, Droxford Philippe, Benstede, Bitterne and

the chace and game of Bysshoppesdyche' with other manors and privileges in Hampshire (*ibid* 139). The grant concludes with the statement that the earl was to hold these manors and liberties 'of the king in chief by the service of the fortieth part of one knight's fee', rendering yearly £229 13s 1¼d, thus illustrating the need for caution in attempting to draw inferences from assessments of knights' fees. Two days after this grant, by a charter dated 11 October, 'William earl of Wiltshire, lord St John, KG' was created marquess of Winchester (*ibid* 138).

From a survey made in 1552 it is evident that Bensted had remained in the occupation of the Channell family. The survey states that 'John Channell holds by indenture the site of the manor of Seyntcleres Court with all its buildings, orchards, gardens and marshes' (HRO Eccl II, 158819/8/10). Despite the relatively large acreages of some of its fields, the estate appears to have been already enclosed. Although Leland does not mention the Droxford district specifically, he describes the lands between Southwick and Wickham, and between Wickham and (Bishops) Waltham as enclosed (Leland 1535-43/1964, 285). The survey is rich in field-names, most of which can be identified (Fig 3). The arable appears to have increased to 220 acres from the estimated 140 acres of 1395 (which did not include land rented out). There was little, if any, change in meadow land, and pasture had disappeared, unless any was included in the considerably increased acreage of woodland (16 acres) or, perhaps, in what were described as fields and closes (field-name elements were beginning to lose their significance). The evidence is insufficient to warrant a conclusion that wool was no longer a major product.

In 1558, Mary I restored to John Whyte, bishop of Winchester, all the former temporalities of the bishopric which, of course, included the bailiwick of Waltham, now described as 'Waltham, Droukensford *alias* Droukensfield, Droxford Philipp *alias* Droxford Philippe, Bensted and Byterne (CPR 1557-58, 146). The records of the changes of capital tenure during this unsettled period show that, although it was leased out as a farm, Bensted was still regarded as a manor; but the grant of 1558 is notable as

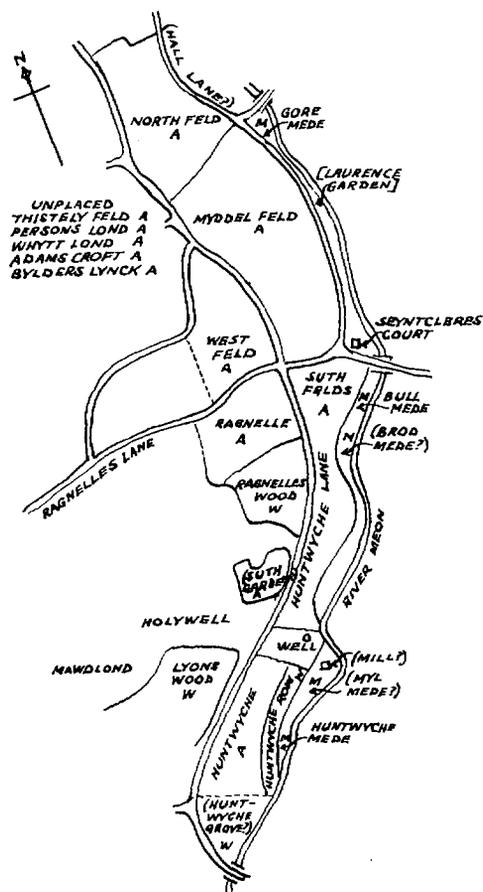


Fig 3. The site of the manor of Sycntcleres Court, 1552. (Derived from HRO Eccl II 158819/8/10) A = arable; M = meadow, W = woodland.

the last occasion when it was referred to by its Old-English name. Henceforth it was to be known by some form of the Norman name of its medieval holders, which we have seen gradually coming into use since 1391.

In the last quarter of the sixteenth century St Clairs was tenanted by Thomas Uvedale, younger son of Sir Arthur Uvedale of Wickham (Gower 1865, 117). A Consistory Court Book entry dated 1579, relating to the will of Elizabeth Bensted, names the principal deponent as 'Thomas Uvedale de Seintclers corte, Armi-ger' (HRO Diocesan Collection C47 & C48). In his own will, dated 1596 and proved in May 1597, he is described as 'Thomas Uvedale of St

Cleircourt within the parish of Drokenford'. (In the printed summary of this will 'St Cleircourt' is misread as 'Elenes Court' – Gower, *op cit.*) His will makes no mention of the lease of St Clairs Court (HRO B Wills, 1597).

According to Dugdale, under the date 1646, the manor of Droxford was sold to Francis Allen, esquire, for £7,675 13s 7d (Dugdale 1846, I, 203). This was the year of the act of Parliament to abolish archbishops and bishops and to sequestrate episcopal lands. Yet a survey presented by a Court of Survey of the manor of Droxford that 'heretofore' belonged to the 'late Bishop of Wintown' is dated 2 March, 1647 (HRO 45M69/27). The survey states that a lease had been granted by Thomas, bishop of Winchester, to the 'late Queen Elizabeth dated the Eighth day of July in the thirtieth year of her Raigne of the Mannour of Droxford . . . to hold from Mickelmas 1617 [*sic*] for fifty years', and that the lease was now held by Sir Richard Uvedale. It then proceeds: 'Their is also one other farm called Sinklars farm heretofore leased and now in the possession of Edward Arthur', and further on: 'the said farm Called SinkClares farm with the Appurtenances theirunto belonging Containeth by Esteemation two hundred acres whereof three score acres is Copice and woodground upon which farme their are divers timber trees but the true value of them we Know not . . .' It was let at £70 per annum. The bounds are given as Waltham Chase on the south, the tithing of Hill on the west, and the north part against Soberton, and a 'tenement Called holiwell part of the mannor of Soberton laying within this mannor on the east. . .'. Several tenants of the manor of Soberton claimed 'time out of mind to have had out of the mead Called Bull mead parcell of the sd. farme Called Sinkclares grass and in mannour and form following, vydell Doctor Curl one acre John Hasler two acres John Cossons one acre'. Dr Walter Curl, bishop of Winchester, had retired to Soberton, where he lived in obscurity, after the surrender of Winchester to Cromwell in 1645 (*VCH Hants* III, 269). Tenants of the tithing of Hill had similar claims on grass out of 'the meadow Called fullingmill meadow . . . Simon Prowting and Henery Prouting [*sic*] one

acre, Edward Brewer one acre Edward Russell half an acre' from the feast of the Annunciation (25 March) until Lammas Day (1 August).

Thus it appears that much of the cultivated land at what had now become St Clairs Farm had reverted to woodland since 1552. Even then, the product of 6½ acres of meadow was gathered by people other than the farmer. The expression 'time out of mind' may well have been used (if unconsciously) in its correct legal sense 'since before the coronation of Richard I', for we have seen that the monks of Beaulieu, as tenants of Soberton, held a meadow in Bensted confirmed by an *inspeximus* dated 1235, only 45 years later than that limit of legal memory.

RESTORATION TO THE GEORGIANS

With the Restoration in 1660 the bishop of Winchester was reinstated and his temporalities were recovered, among them St Clairs which had become a leased farm on the manor of Droxford.

In 1668, Dr William Hawkins, rector of Droxford, wrote to Thomas Garrard, the bishop's secretary at Farnham Castle, saying that 'St Clares is not let above £100 per annum, and it be sekourd at 120 that is the outside, my tithes from thenes are valued at £20'. He added a personal postscript: 'Mrs Anne is very well & remembers her love to you. And at a little more lessure after Monday when the Church going is over will answer my Father Waltons & Uncle Ken(s) letters, in the meane time - desire you to make an excuse for us' (HRO Eccl II, 415809 E/B6a). 'Father Walton' was, of course, the 'compleat angler' Issak Walton, and the rector's wife Anne was his daughter. He spent the latter part of his life in Winchester, where he died aged 90 in 1683. His kinsman, Thomas Ken, fellow of Winchester College was chaplain to Charles II and then bishop of Bath and Wells.

The manor of Soberton came into the possession of Thomas Lewis through his marriage to Anne Maria, grand-daughter of Dr Walter Curl, the retired bishop. Thomas Lewis also acquired St Clair's farm under a lease from the bishop of Winchester. In 1724, John Cleverly wrote from Waltham (where he may have been bailiff) to

the bishop at his Chelsea palace to say that he could find only one leasehold estate in the manor of Droxford, and that this was the 'leasehold farm which is called by the name of St Cleare and is one hundred and ten pound per annum' (HRO Eccl II, 415809 E/B6c). Thomas Lewis died in 1736. A document addressed to the Lord Chancellor, dated 29 March, 1739, and concerned with the descent of the lease, reveals that Thomas died 'considerably indebted', and states that the lease of St Clair's farm was for 3 lives. A postscript dated 16 May, 1739, disclosed that 'the above lease cannot at present be found' (HRO Eccl II, 415809 E/B6d). A survey of the estate 'late in the possession of Thomas Lewis, deceased', was taken in September, 1741. The survey included St Clair's farm and, as a separate holding, Holywell farm. St Clair's farm was now divided into two parts, the larger occupied by John Knight with 306 acres, and the smaller by John Lacy with 107 acres (HRO 5m54/42). It had expanded to an acreage greater than at any time in its previously recorded history. Although the farm had common of pasture in Waltham Chase, there was again, as in 1552, no pasture, and there was now no woodland, though there were rights of 'feedings' and cutting of underwood (Fig 4).

THE TITHE SURVEY

When the parish of Droxford was surveyed in 1841 for the commutation of the tithes, St Clair's Farm was owned by Henry Bunbury Minchin, but was occupied by Jeremiah Knight, presumably a descendant of the tenant of 1741. The lands which had been under a separate tenancy in 1741 were re-united with the main farm, which had again expanded and now covered 484½ acres. The lands extended from the homestead in three directions, northwards and southwards, following the slightly curving course of the River Meon which still formed the eastern boundary, and westwards on both sides of the road leading to Swanmore which had been called Ragnelles Lane in the survey of 1552 (Fig 5). It was in this westward direction that most of the additional land had been acquired. The cultivation was again predominantly arable, as

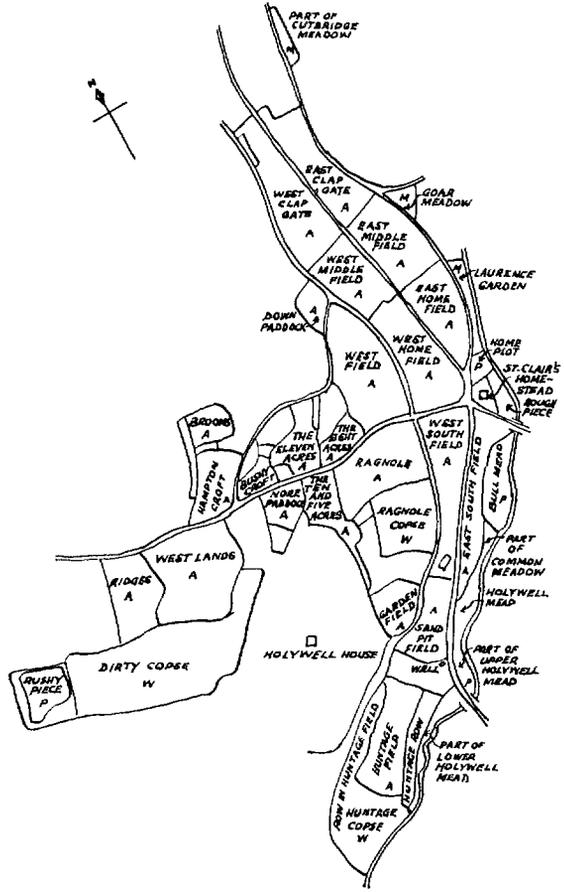
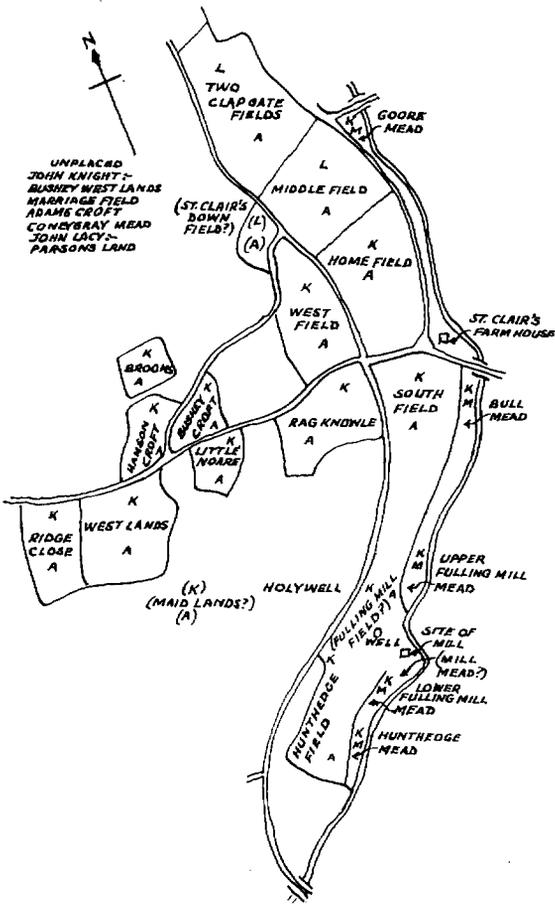


Fig 4. St Clair's Farm, 1741. (Derived from HRO 5M54/42) K = John Knight, tenant; L = John Lacy, tenant; A = arable; M = meadow.

Fig 5. St Clair's Farm, 1841. (Derived from the Tithe Survey map and schedule 1841, HRO) A = arable; M = water-meadow; P = Pasture; W = woodland).

will be seen from a summary of the Tithe Award of 1842:-

Arable	331 acres
Water meadow	8½ acres
Pasture	28 acres
Woodland	114 acres
Homestead, cottage, road	3 acres
	<u>484½ acres</u>

It will be noted that the arable of 1841 approximated closely to the estimated acreage of plough-lands of Domesday Book. Apart from

the homestead itself, there was only one dwelling on the farm, a 'cottage and garden' which stood at the junction of the road to Swanmore and 'Cot Street', now Cott Street Farm. The occupant is not named.

The re-routed road between Droxford and Wickham (the modern A32) which the Tithe Survey map of 1841 shows as dividing the lands of St Clair's Farm into two, cutting through some of the larger and more ancient fields, had not been constructed when the first Ordnance Survey map was drawn in 1810. This division is reflected in some of the field-names; for instance, Middle Field of 1741 had become East Middle

Field and West Middle Field in 1841, and Home Field had become East Home Field and West Home Field. No Turnpike Act for this road has been found in the period 1663 to 1836 (Albert 1972, App B).

CONCLUSION

Mainly because it was a possession of the bishopric of Winchester, the place known in AD 956 as Bienestede, which became the manor of Bensted St Clair, then Seyntcleres Court, and eventually St Clair's Farm, is well-documented. Its records illuminate some of the complexities of medieval land tenure, agriculture and estate management, and, it is thought, they merit deeper study in the context of agrarian history than has been attempted in this essay. The preservation of the Norman name of the medieval holders of the manor is a reminder of the antiquity of many of our rural house-names; some of the field-names may be even older. Just as the first surveys reflect the landscape as it was in earlier centuries, many of the fields and

copses of the medieval manor are recognisable today; and in the summer of 1984 corn was growing in fields that had been arable in the Middle Ages.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For providing information or copies of documents I am indebted to the Rev John Beaumont, Rector of Droxford, Mr Graham Colbourne, Dorset Agricultural College, Mrs Alice James, editor *Fareham Past and Present*, Mr Laurence Keen, Archaeologist for Dorset County Council, Mr Grahame Soffe, Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, Mr K J Taylor, National Monuments Record (Southampton), Dr Penry Williams, New College, Oxford, and Mr and Mrs Hugo Wood-Homer, Bardolf Manor, Dorset. This study could not have been attempted without the helpful services of the Search Department, PRO, the County Archivist and Staff, HRO, and the Requests Service of Dorset County Library.

I am especially grateful to Mr D G Watts, MA BLitt (Oxon) for reading the draft of this paper and for his valued suggestions. If any errors have slipped through they are mine.

ABBREVIATIONS AND REFERENCES

Abbreviations precede the source references to which they apply below. Where entries in printed sources are numbered, the reference is to number not to page. See also *Proc* 39 1983 4.

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CP25(I)/203/2 Final Concord 1201.
CP25(I)/203/6 Final Concord 1236.
C135/44 CP1342 Extent of the Manor of Benstede 1335.
E179/173/4 Hampshire Lay Subsidy 1327.

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Eccl II 158819/8/10 Survey of Droxford 1552.
Eccl II 159398 159399 159400 Account Rolls for Bailiwick of Waltham.

Eccl II 159465 Ministers' Accounts for Manor of Bensted.
Eccl II 415809 E/B6a-d Correspondence Bishopric of Winchester.
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21M58/T86 Grant by Mathew de Sures.
45 M69/27 Survey of Droxford 1647.

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BCS Cartularium Saxonicum (ed) W de Gray Birch 1885 London.
Beaulieu Cart The Beaulieu Cartulary (ed) S F Hockey 1974 Southampton.
CCR Calendar of Close Rolls PRO.
CChR Calendar of Charter Rolls PRO.
CFR Calendar of Fine Rolls PRO.
CPR Calendar of Patent Rolls PRO.

- Cur Reg R Curia Regis Rolls* PRO.
- DB Hants Domesday Book Hampshire* (ed) J Munby 1982
Chichester.
- ERF Excerpta e Rotulis Finium in Turri Londinensi Asservati* PRO.
- FA Inquisitions and Assessments Relating to Feudal Aids*
PRO.
- Inq Misc Calendar of Inquisitions Miscellaneous (Chancery)*
PRO.
- IPM Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem* PRO.
- K Codex Diplomaticus Aevi Saxonici* (ed) J M Kemble
1847 London.
- Papal Reg Calendar of Entries in the Papal Registers* 1921
HMSO.
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