

Excerpts from Droxford's History up to the Armada

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EXCERPTS FROM DROXFORD'S HISTORY UP TO THE ARMADA – (page 1)

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If you stand at Merrington's crossroads, looking North towards Meonstoke, there is a hill on your left front called STANBURY, meaning 'STONE FORT' in Saxon. On this hill, at a height of 300 feet, there is what appears to be a Roman fort or camp with a good view over the crossroads and over the RIVER MEON.

Looking next to the Hambledon road to your right you see a small bridge over the MEON and next to it a field which was called FORD ACRE in the year 1552. Below that bridge there are several large flat stones in the bed of the RIVER, suitable for a ford at an important crossing-place for the road before the bridge was built. I suggest that the Saxons called this "DROKENESFORD", meaning 'THE FORD AT THE DROKES'. What then was a DROKE? It seems to have been a word used for a road or pathway running at a lower level than the two pieces of higher land on either side of it.

On the left side of WATTON LANE there is a field which was called 'DROKE WATTON' in 1841 and is still known as 'DROKE' by its farmers today. Another good example of a DROKE is in SHEEP POND LANE, just past Droxford's present cemetery, where the road there is at 200 feet on the map but the fields on either side rise to 250 feet and to 300 feet on the right.

In the year 826 the Saxon King EGBERT gave twenty HIDES of land (about 3,500 acres) at DROCENESFORD to the OLD MONASTERY at Winchester and this land later became the FOUR TITHINGS of DROXFORD, HILL, SWANMORE and SHEDFIELD, all together being the Manor and Parish of DROXFORD. A CHARTER for this gift still survives and many of the boundary marks on it can still be found and visited 1,200 years later.

In the year 1260, in the reign of Henry the Third, the BISHOP of Winchester was taking over this and other Manors from the OLD MONASTERY and wanted to know who were his new tenants in DROXFORD MANOR. From a resulting document we therefore know who were 'FREE' and who were 'BOND' Tenants; what lands they each held in each Tithing; what rents they were due to pay; and what duties each one should carry out for the Lord of the Manor each year.

This document (or CUSTUMAL) shows at least 112 TENANTS in the whole Manor but this total should probably be multiplied by 4 or 5 to include their wives and children, giving a total population for the whole 4 Tithings of perhaps 4 to 5 hundred.

Every year an Account for the Manor was sent to the Lord's Steward at Wolvesey in Winchester – records of deaths and marriages; numbers of beasts born, sold and died; crops sown, reaped and threshed; and fines paid to the Manor for offences committed or permissions sought. For 1289, for example, the Manor's Bailiff was MATTHEW DE WENHAM and its REEVE under him (who made sure that the work was done each day) was HENRY THE CARTER.

In the 1289 Account there is also named a JOHN, son of JOHN DE MOLENDINIS, whose family dated back to the Conquest and were always loyal servants to the Crown. JOHN the son was born about 1265 and his mother was named AGNES, thought to be the lady now lying quietly in the Lady Chapel of Droxford Church.

When John the son entered the service of King EDWARD the First in the King's Wardrobe about 1285 he became known as "JOHN DE DROKENESFORD". He had at least 4 brothers – PHILIP, MICHAEL, RICHARD and ROGER, all surnamed "DE DROKENESFORD" too.

The Wardrobe men were the King's close advisors and it was also a money-finding source when he needed war finance quickly and could not wait for the funds from the normal slow process of the Exchequer.

JOHN joined the Wardrobe ladder at the bottom but in ten years he rocketed through its ranks to the top, becoming KEEPER OF THE WARDROBE on 20th November 1295. He held that office until the King's death in 1307. He then soon fell out with King Edward the Second and his favourites and became BISHOP OF BATH AND WELLS on 9th November 1308, remaining there until his death on 9th May 1329. His tomb in Wells Cathedral has this magnificent effigy of him on it, for which he acted as model before his death. He frequently gave a helping hand to his brothers and nephews and often came back to his native village – DROXFORD.

About 1295 RICHARD OF MIDLINGTON granted John some land to the south of Droxford Church. This was called "PALYCE" in 1552 and has been "PALACE MEADOW" since at least 1841. Here we believe from metal detector finds and some small excavations and with the help of local moles that JOHN had a house built and that he came here with his retinue whenever he could – possibly to escape the politics.

Round about 1315 and at a time of long continued bad weather, poor harvests and many deaths from disease and starvation, Bishop JOHN had considerable work done to repair and enlarge the church at Droxford. He also is said to have built tombs there for his parents.

In 1349, the year of the BLACK DEATH, the Manor Account shows the following deaths of Manor tenants:- 22 in Shedfield; 13 in Swanmore; 11 in Hill; 6 in Midlington; 17 in Droxford Village. This is a total of 69 deaths of TENANTS (excluding their families and others) and can be compared with the previous total quoted of 112 TENANTS in the Manor in the CUSTUMAL of the year 1260. It seems to indicate a PLAGUE death rate of at least one-third of the Manor's population.

I want to tell you here about a MICHAEL DE DROKENESFORD who was Rector of Droxford from about 1322 to November 1361, when he seems to have died in a later outbreak of PLAGUE. He was a nephew of BISHOP JOHN and seems to have stayed at his post all through these anxious years of disease and death – a man steadfast in his care of this parish.

I move on now about 200 years to the mid-fifteen hundreds in Droxford village here. The Lord of the Manor was still the Bishop of Winchester and the Rector of Droxford from at least 1533 was a man named WILLIAM CUFAUD, otherwise CUFFOLD. He remained Rector for at least 25 years and held that position all through the Reformation period under Kings HENRY the Eighth, EDWARD the Sixth and Queen MARY, eventually dying 5 months after Queen ELIZABETH came to the throne in 1558.

WILLIAM CUFAUD, "Clerk, Doctor at the Law and Parson of DROKINSFORD", wrote his own Will on 8th February 1558 and after his death three local men of Droxford went through his house here to make an INVENTORY of what was in each room and to value each item for PROBATE purposes. They found:

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IN HIS CHAMBER: 5 feather beds (worth £7) – his apparel and bows and arrows (worth £4) – two great chests and four coffer – fireplace equipment – cushions and so on;

IN HIS STUDY: were eating vessels – 5 candlesticks – a standing cupboard – a round table – and books worth £3 – 6s. – 8d.;

IN HIS HALL: were a wide table and a form to sit on – a chess-board with men (worth one shilling) – a pair of playing tables – one chair, two stools, two more forms – cushions and other things;

IN HIS PARLOUR AND LITTLE CHAMBER: were an old bedstead, old harness – a sheaf of arrows – two bills and a lead mallet (these sound like fighting equipment).

There were also 11 pairs of sheets, 2 tablecloths, 4 pillows, 3 towels and 5 table napkins.

In the STABLE were 2 geldings with 3 bridles and saddles (worth £3) and somewhere nearby were 8 Kine (worth £5 – 6s. – 8d.).

DOCTOR CUFAUD had also a manservant named WILLIAM HETHER who had charge of the KITCHEN and the BREWERY – all their brass and cooking equipment – and 8 and a half bushels of malt, a beer barrel and a mould for making candles. WILLIAM HETHER had 3 children and DOCTOR CUFAUD left them 20 shillings (or 6s. 8d.) each. His Executors were his 3 nephews – SIMON, WILLIAM and HUGH CUFAUD and to them was left “all my gold unbequeathed” and a direction that if their Uncle dies at DROXFORD he should be buried in the high chancel of the Church there. He may be there still.

The Inventory totals the whole value of the Rector's Estate at £45. 1s. 6d., which I believe would now be about £9,000.

The three men who made it were PHILIP BENSTED THE ELDER, WILLIAM MICHENALL and THOMAS STROWGENELL.

PHILIP BENSTED was born in Droxford in or about 1512. He came from an old Droxford family which had probably lived in the area from Saxon times at least. He married a girl called ELIZABETH and they had several sons and daughters. By 1554 PHILIP was the tenant of what we know now as 'MEON HOUSE' and 'CHERWELL COTTAGE' at the junction of Mill Lane with the A32 road. He was also then tenant of an old Tudor house which stood opposite the 'WHITE HORSE' and was taken down in 1970, revealing a Tudor Rose painted in black and white on the south end wall of the attic.

In July 1554 BENSTED was granted a Lease of the DROXFORD MANOR FARM, presumably moving his family down there, as he let the old Tudor House to a ROBERT ADAMS for 6 years. In his WILL of 30 June 1577, describing himself as a “yeoman of Droxford”, BENSTED left the remaining period of his Lease of the Farm to his youngest son EDWARD BENSTED. He also left to EDWARD “six of the best horses”. To each of his children he left a silver spoon, of which he had 22, and he left each grandchild “one ewe sheep”. The Inventory with his Will states that he had 4 coats, 4 jerkins, 3 doublets, 3 pairs of hose, 3 cloaks, 1 gown, 2 hats and 2 caps. In his HALL he had an arquebus and its flask, a sword, a dagger and leather pouches. At the end of the day there were 2 feather beds, a feather bolster or two and as many of the 8 feather pillows as he and ELIZABETH needed.

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For their serving men and maids there were flock mattresses and bolsters on their bedsteads but they no doubt slept well enough on them after busy days. Outside there were 20 ducks waddling around, worth 3s. 4d. or two pence each.

PHILIP's personal servant was JOHN GODWIN and he was left 2 bushels of barley; two other servants WILLIAM GRANT and JOHN CLEWER were left "the end of the 2 bushels of barley".

PHILIP BENSTED THE ELDER died early in July 1577, now aged about 65, but ELIZABETH lived on to 1610, dying in the same year as EDWARD her youngest son (who in his Will describes himself as "Gentleman"). PHILIP instructed that he should be buried within Droxford Church. The value of his Estate in the Inventory was totalled at £89. 8s. 4d., probably about £15,000 or so today.

WILLIAM MYCHENALL, who also worked on the WILLIAM CUFAUD Inventory, seems to have lived in Droxford from at least March 1559 to his death in 1583, 25 years or more. He seems also to have been connected in some way with the BENSTED family.

THOMAS STROWGENELL or STRUGNELL was the third man who helped to list and value the WILLIAM CUFAUD Estate. This surname appears in the late 1300's (when one of them was the Reeve of Droxford Manor) and again in 1490 (when a WILLIAM STRUGNELL was a carpenter at St. Clairs Farm, about 2 miles down the present A32 towards Wickham). The surname is still known in this area.

The THOMAS STRUGNELL of the CUFAUD Inventory seems to be the one who was a Manor tenant with his wife JOAN until 1570 of the two properties now known as "Willow House" and "Clarks House" (just across the Square from here). They also held the properties opposite the "White Horse" now known as Tudor Cottage, Glebe Cottage, Bakehouse Cottage and Claremont. Their successors in these holdings about 1570 were the HONYMAN family who seem to have come here from East Hoe, near Soberton. There were HONYMANs at "Willow House" for more than 100 years.

I will just mention 3 more properties which were here in 1588 at the time of the Spanish Armada. First, the "WHITE HORSE INN", held since 1552 at least by PHILIP LYDALL, who died in 1576, leaving it to his widow AGNES and his son and heir, also a PHILIP. It was then known as "ONE COTTAGE ... called WOOLHOUSE", perhaps because the Manor's annual wool clip was stored and baled up there before being sent on to a more central store to join other wool clips from the Bishop's other Manors. The LYDALL family continued here until after 1700 – more than 150 years. The Deeds are said to mention a Licensed Premises here since before 1650.

Secondly, the "SMALL HOUSE", opposite the "Bakers Arms". This passed in 1559 from a THOMAS. INE HATCH (possibly the widow of DAVID HATCH) to his youngest son JOHN, who left it to his own youngest son SIMON HATCH in 1599. This family of HATCH then held the house for over 150 years and also later held what is now "MEON HOUSE", where they had a blacksmith's shop.

Finally, there is the row of 4 cottages opposite the old telephone box. In 1556 this was ONE cottage, probably more or less the same size as SARUM HOUSE next door (the home of the KNIGHT Family) and in 1556 this one cottage was held by JOHN STRUGNELL, youngest son of THOMAS and CLARA STRUGNELL and possibly the younger brother of the THOMAS STRUGNELL of "Willow House" and "Clarks House". In 1628 the cottage was held by an EDWARD STRUGNELL and the Hearth Tax of 1664 shows that it then had had 2 hearths but had also by then been burned to the ground. EDWARD

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STRUGNELL continued to hold the property until 1694 and may have been a carpenter and builder, for another cottage was built there and was described in 1976 as “an old, very early seventeenth century timber-framed house of two bays ... the timbers being of good quality”. Later on it was divided into the present four cosy cottages.

I hope I have now said enough to show that the Droxford village which we know today still has many dwellings which were here in the Armada year. On 18th July 1588 the Queen wrote from her Manor of Greenwich to her two Lieutenants of the County of Southampton. She refers to duties so well performed by them already and to the great willingness of her loving and dutiful subjects in preparing for a possible invasion of the Realm. She then goes on to say in some of her own writing:-

“We have therefore thought it meet ... to require you forthwith ... to call together at some convenient places the best sort of gentlemen under your Lieutenancy ... (and) that the most of them should have, upon this instant extraordinary occasion, a larger proportion of furniture, both for horsemen and footmen (but especially horsemen) ... thereby to be in their best strength against any attempt whatsoever and to be employed both about our own person and otherwise ... the number of which larger proportion ... we require you to signify to our privy council ... We assure ourselves that Almighty God will so bless their loyal hearts ... toward us their loving Sovereign and their natural country that all the attempts of any enemies whatsoever shall be made void and frustrate to their confusion, your comforts and to God's high glory.

By the Queen.”

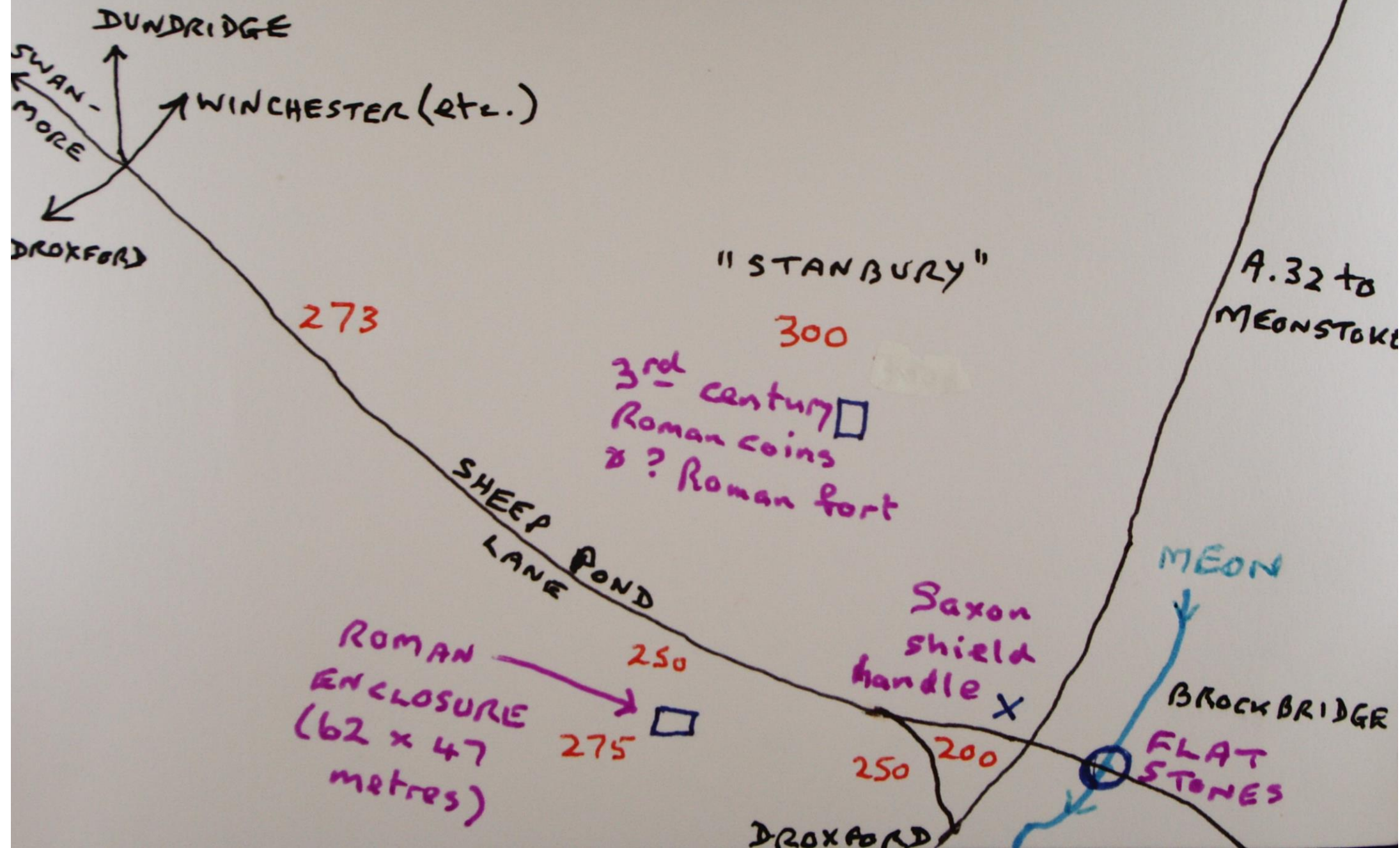
The red flag is up! Thank you for listening!

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SPOT HEIGHTS IN RED (FEET)





DROKE
WATTON

PONDSIDE FARM



DROGFORD

in the County of

SOUTHAMPTON

by C. W. Barrington, Esq., F.R.S.

1844

*In the Hydrographic Survey, conducted for
England and Wales, by the H.M.S. "Porpoise",
the depth of the water in the neighbourhood
of the above place is laid down on the basis of
Sounding in the vicinity of Southampton.
Published by the Hydrographic Office,
Admiralty, London.*











One of the narrow flint and mortar sills, upon which the timber-framed superstructure of the service ranges were erected

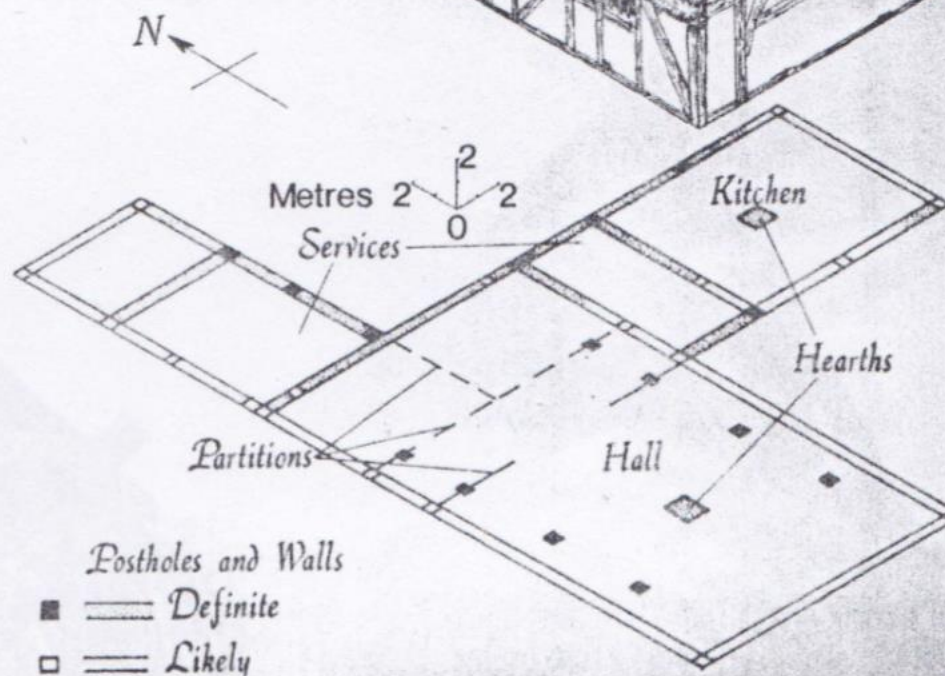
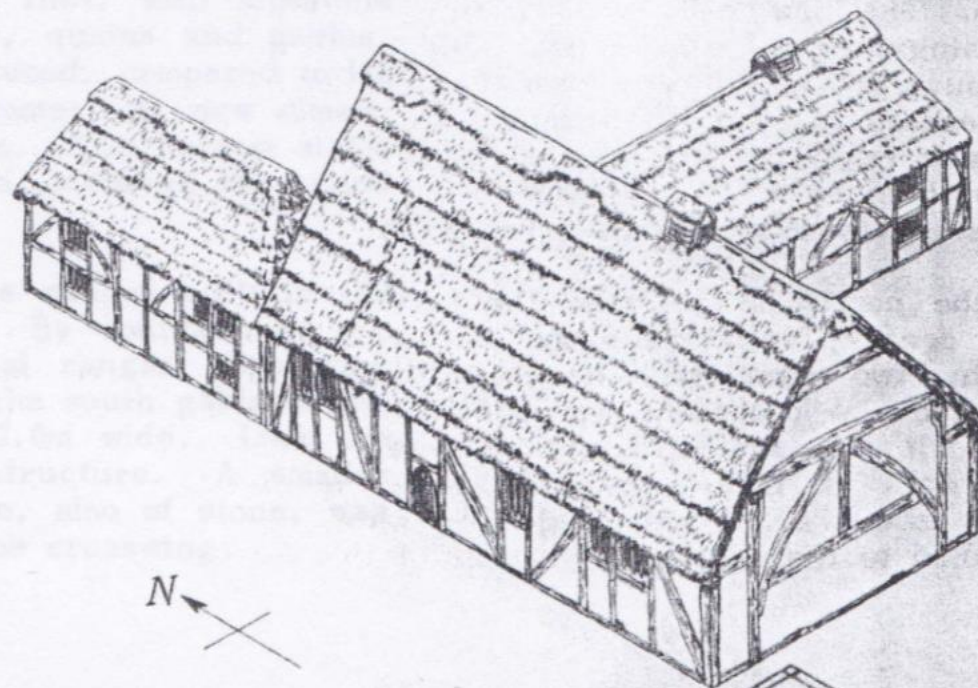
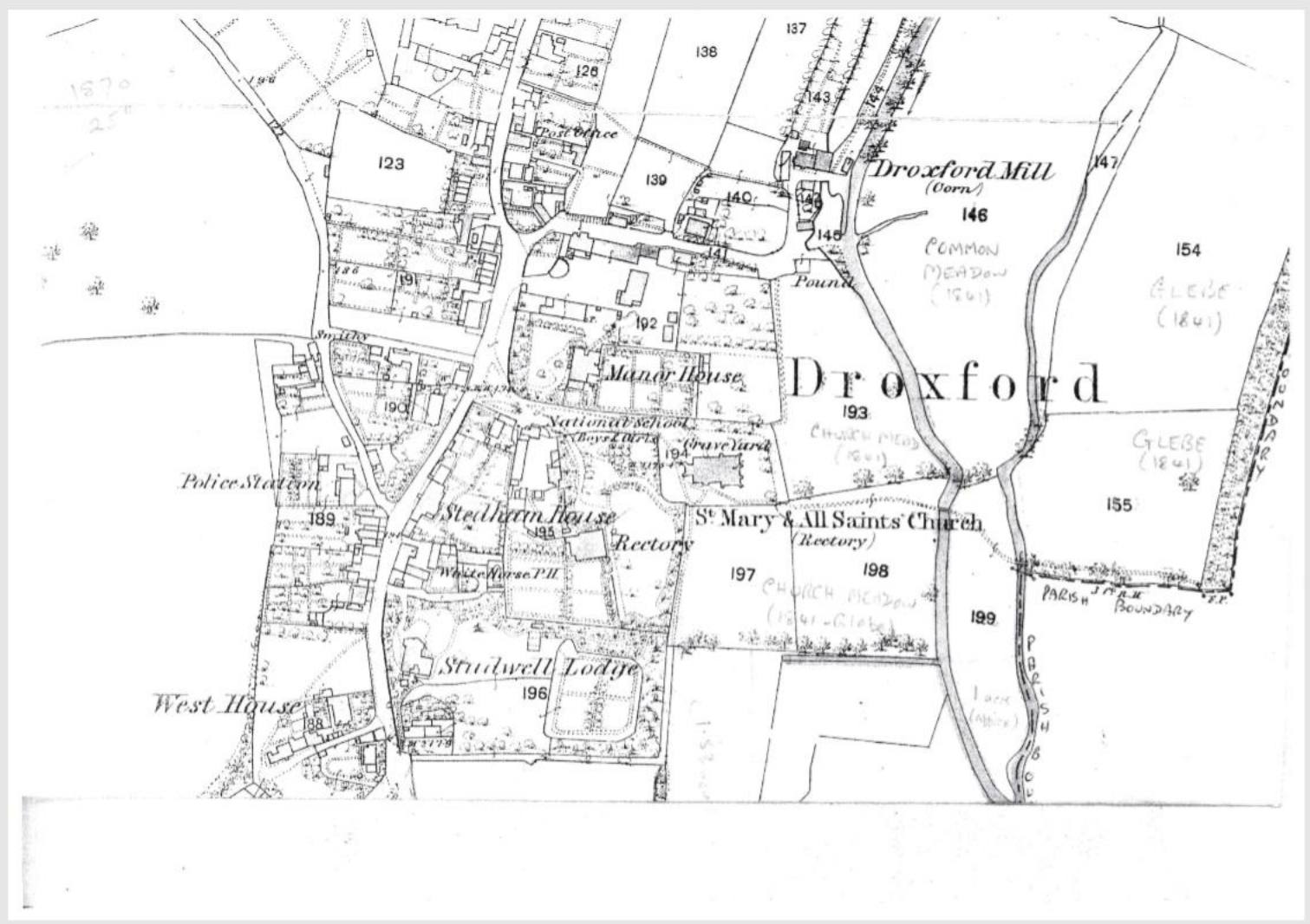


Figure 14 : The first manor house, as it may have looked during the 13th century









MATTHEW SALE CUTS DOWN A TREE TO BUILD A HOUSE.
Carving of the first half of the sixteenth century ; size, 1 foot 6 inches by 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches.



William Jake, carpenter of the rood loft at St Michael's, Hubberholme, North Yorkshire













Village Green, Droxford.