

The Coster Farm called Lower Field Farm Bourton

Some of the lands to the west and north of Shrivenham were owned by the Pleydell family of Coleshill. (To become the Radnor Estate) These lands all formed part of the holdings of the Shrivenham Rectory Manor. At the Dissolution when Henry VIII seized the Monasteries, the Victoria County History recorded that William Pleydell of Coleshill had leased the lands of the Rectory Manor by grant of the Abbot of Cirencester Abbey. This was renewed by the Crown at the latter part of the 16th century. Recent information discovered at the Berkshire County Archives, confirmed that the principal location or site of the Rectory Manor was at Sandhill Farm, less than a mile to the northeast of Lower Bourton. (See SHS Listing N995). It would explain therefore, how in 1827, the Earl of Radnor agreed to sell a farm with lands attached, the farmhouse and yard located at Lower Bourton.

We know from documents in the Bourton House papers that John Coster was farming at Parsonage Farm, and we know further that his two sons John and William, also took on a lease for the same farm in 1811. (SHS/BH.1/21). The location of the Farmhouse (Parsonage) and therefore the nucleus of the farm is shown in the map extract below.



But in 1828 circumstances changed that caused the Earl of Radnor to sell the farm that was located a considerable distance from of his estate at Coleshill. Consequently, a

deal was made with William Coster to buy the farm. It can only be assumed that William was one of the brothers who had been farming Parsonage Farm as mentioned above.

Articles of Agreement made and enforced into this
 sixteenth day of October One thousand eight hundred and twenty
 seven Between The Right Honorable Jacob Earl of Radnor for himself his Heirs Executors and Administrators
 of the one part and William Coster of Bowton in the
 Parish of Shrivensham in the County of Berks Yeoman of
 the other part.

The said Jacob Earl of Radnor doth agree to sell to said William
 Coster and the said William Coster doth agree to purchase of the
 said Earl upon the Terms and Conditions hereinafter mentioned
 The Freehold and Inheritance in fee simple of All that Estate
 belonging to the said Earl situate at Bowton in the Parish of
 Shrivensham in the said County of Berks with the Appurtenances
 thereunto belonging. And also all and singular the several Messuages
 Farms Lands Tenements and Hereditaments whatsoever situate at
 Bowton aforesaid which are more particularly described and set
 forth in the Schedule to these Presents annexed or subjoined and all
 Timber Tallow and other Trees now standing and being on the said
 Estate and Hereditaments at or for the Price or Sum of Nine thousand
 Pounds subject to any Leases affecting the same Estate or any part thereof
 And it is agreed that the said Earl or his Heirs shall

The sale price agreed was £9000 for the whole farm and the sale document listed the land and premises that came with the purchase. (Below. RBA. D/EPB/E50).

set their Hands and seals the day and Year first above written.

The Schedule above referred to

The Lower Field Farm		Acorn Farm	
18 Homestead	0 2 24	29 Barn Stable and Yard	0 2 14
17 Cottage	1 0 20	30 The two paddocks	2 0 28
12 Long Ground	3 2 2	34 House Ground	6 0 0
10 Home Ground	13 1 2	33 Meadow	9 2 4
11 Shed in Gr ^o	1 1 4	32 Stake Ground	7 3 10
0 New Broke Ground	9 3 10	30 Backyard Ground	9 0 10
3 1/2 Lower Field	52 3 27	31 Ram Close	2 0 13
2 Common Plat	7 2 2	27 Acorn Field	53 2 21
1 Hill Mead and Brook Mead	29 2 16	28 Lot Mead	6 3 24
1 Road by New Broke Mead	1 13	26 Adjoining Acorn Ground	2 2 5
	<u>119 0 9</u>	Brought down	<u>100 1 18</u>
		In the occupation of W. Coster	<u>219 1 27</u>

Documentation surviving from the Pleydell papers described, '*All that Estate belonging to the Earl situate at Bourton.*' (See extract above & map below BCA D/EPB/E50). In the Article of Agreement shown above, it mentions only William Coster. However, in the Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre Archives, there is a copy of an Indenture that is a Conveyance dated 30th October 1828 between five parties, the fourth being William Coster of Bourton and the fifth, Joseph Coster of Shellingford. (WSHC 1461/2368)

The Costers seem to have been farming at Bourton for some time as in St Andrew's Churchyard at Shrivenham, there are a large amount of them interred. There is John Coster who died on 23rd April 1771, aged 73, and another John who died in 1816, aged 80, both described as from Bourton. The latter was the father of the two sons mentioned above.

The purchase sum agreed for the estate was £9000, a deposit of £4500 to be paid by 25th March 1828 (Lady Day), and the remainder to be paid with interest as soon as possible. The lands extended to the north and west of the farmhouse centre with a gap in between belonging to others. The plot numbered 18 on the map extract below is the site of where the Grange was built in 1849 by John Tucker (See SHS N354). Even though the farm was called The Lower Field Farm, the farm of that name that exists today down by the main A420 Swindon road, was not built until 1911, (although there is a barn there today that could be the one shown on the map.) The conveyance of 1828 described at the Lower Bourton location '*A Dwellinghouse, Homestead, two barns, stable and coach house, Cowhouse, site of Cottage Gardens and Orchard etc.*'



William Coster died in 1833 and he too was buried in St Andrew's, Shrivenham, aged 54. Joseph, his younger brother by two years, took over the farm and upon his death on the 8th July 1840, a subsequent advertisement in 1842 was placed in a local newspaper offering the farm for sale. (Below. Berks Chronicle 28th May 1842). His gravestone in St Andrew's churchyard described him as aged 60 from Bourton. We have yet to discover who purchased the farm but it was most likely to have been Henry Tucker.

BERKSHIRE,
*Within half a mile of Shrivenham Station on the Great
 Western Railway.*

MR. W. W. SIMPSON has received instructions, pursuant to the will of the late Joseph Coster, Esq., to **SELL BY AUCTION**, at the Auction Mart, on Tuesday, 28th June, at 12 o'clock, in three Lots, the following desirable **PROPERTY** :—

Lot 1.—A valuable **FREEHOLD** and **TITHE-FREE ESTATE**, called Lower Field Farm, eligibly situate in the parish of Bourton, four miles from Highworth, six from Swindon, and seven from Faringdon, all excellent market towns. It comprises a brick-built farm-house, with garden and orchard, granary, stabling, bullock-shed, and other buildings, together with 116 acres of land, whereof 72 acres are pasture (a large proportion of which is very powerful bullock-feeding land, including 17 acres of water meadow, which may be irrigated at pleasure, and the remainder deep stapled arable land.—Lot 2. A desirable **ESTATE**, called Acorn Farm, situated near Lot 1, comprising a cottage, with garden, barn, stabling, and other buildings, together with 100 acres of land, of which 70 acres are meadow and pasture (including seven acres of most productive water meadow), and the remainder very fertile arable land.—Lot 3. A **COTTAGE** and **GARDEN**, with about an acre of pasture land, situate near Lot 2, and held under leases for two lives, aged sixty five and sixty-six years, at a quit rent of one shilling per annum. About an acre of freehold pasture land adjoining, and two cottages and gardens contiguous, held under a lease for three lives aged 55, 56, and 68 years, at a quit rent of 10s. per annum.

The Estates may be viewed. Particulars, with plans annexed, may be obtained of Messrs. Tilson, Squance, and Tilson, solicitors, 29, Coleman-street; at the Auction Mart; and of Mr. W. W. Simpson, 18, Bucklersbury.

The Bourton House papers have provided a large amount of information about events in Bourton from as far back as the middle of the 16th century. They have provided the evidence that John Tucker purchased what was Parsonage Farm. We know that by 1888 much of the surrounding land was owned by Mrs Elizabeth Tucker, wife of the late Henry Tucker who died in 1875. It's logical to assume that Henry must have purchased Lower Field Farm, as above, but unfortunately the documentation is not with the BH papers. John must have made some kind of deal with his brother Henry to take ownership of the buildings and land that was part of the sale purchased from the Radnor Estate by the Costers (No 18 in the plan extract above) to build The Grange. (Below). The Tuckers were extremely wealthy having made their fortunes in the silk business. (See SHS Listing N147 and the book Tuckers of Bourton).



Although we don't have that last piece of evidence, it can be summarised that by 1850 the Tuckers owned the greater part of Lower Bourton and its surrounding farmland. The Grange had been completed by John Tucker, and there is no evidence to suggest that he ever resided there but instead was occupied by John Allaway and would be for over 50 years. (For a separate explanation on The Grange see SHS. N354).