

Stallpits Farm, Shrivenham - a general history

By Neil B. Maw



The Manor of Stallpits became one of the principal manors of Shrivenham about 150 years after the Norman invasion of 1066. It's a curious name and possibly originates from the Saxon period to mean, *'a location for animals at a place of water.'* However, other interpretations have been suggested. The Victoria County History (VCH) notes that in 1229 the lands received by Reynold de Whitchurch became the Manor of Stallpits, and in 1257 there is mention of a *'plot of land where the manor of stauelpeth was built.'* (VCH Vol 4 p.531-543). It's likely that, in general, the actual *'Lord of the Manor,'* did not inhabit any building that stood on the site where Stallpits Farm stands today. In the early period there would have been a dwelling house among other farm buildings, such as barns, pig styes, ricks and enclosures, but it would have likely been occupied by a tenant. There is much evidence to suggest that from the Norman period, most of the land, although being part of a Manor, was widely dispersed among the tenants, and for two reasons. Firstly, it prevented any one person holding large clusters of land that could become a militia stronghold, and secondly, the land was agriculturally more evenly distributed in quality. The enclosure document held by Shrivenham Heritage Society dated 1658, describes such a landscape as mentioned above (See SHS N825). It also provides a useful piece of information whereby it includes part of the

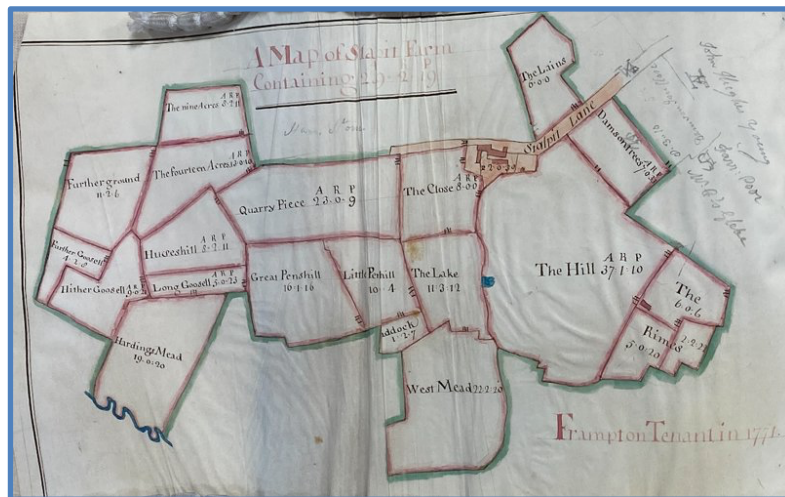
sentence, *'one other plot in the Sands above Stallpits house.'* This suggests that there was a substantial domestic dwelling located on the spot where the farm stands today.

The manor and farm became part of the Beckett Estate during the tenure of Sir William Essex. The VCH gave the information that Alexander Unton sold it to Essex in 1546. It was to remain with that estate for nearly 400 years.

In 1657 we have the documentary evidence that John Wildman purchased the Manor of Beckett, which included Stallpits, from Henry Marten (junior). (See SHS Listing No N1481). Whilst his father was busy with business in London, John Wildman junior was taking care of local business in Shrivenham. Documents in the county archives record that on 28th January 1686 he rented out Stallpits Farm for £100 per year to John Ayres of Aldbourne. The description is unusual and describes the deal as the inclosed ground called Rymes Hill and another ground adjoining called Damson Trees. Other grounds also, called Pinnols Close, Westmead and a pasture ground called Stallpits Lake. At the end of the description it adds, together with the Dwelling House called Stallpits House. (RBA. D/EX1567/1-21).

A few years later, Sir John Wildman decided to sell the farm and an Indenture dated 28th January 1692 records that the purchaser was Edward Barton of Hackney, Middlesex, for £700. It's described as, all that Capital Messuage or Tenement and farm commonly called Stallpits Farm being part and parcel of the Manor of Shrivenham Stallpits. We have no indication whether Barton occupied the farm or purchased it to rent it out. But the documentation recorded that he borrowed £1000 to make the purchase. (RBA. D/ER/T68).

We have no further documentary information until 1771, when William Wildman, Lord Viscount Barrington (2nd) provided the information that Stallpits Farm was in the occupation of John Frampton (BCA D/EX 1424/1). There is a drawing of the layout of the farm, including fields and their sizes. (See below).



Stallpit Farm		17
	A, R, P	
The Homelead	2 0 30	
The Close	8 0 0	
The Lake	11 3 12	
West Mead	22 2 20	
The Badock	1 2 7	
Little Penhill	10 0 4	
Quarry Piece	23 0 9	
Great Penhill	10 1 10	
Long Goswell	5 0 23	
Haver Hill	8 2 11	
The Fourteen Acres	13 0 10	
The Nine Acres	8 2 11	
Further Ground	11 2 6	
Further Goswell	4 2 8	
Hither Goswell	9 0 21	
Hardings Mead	19 0 20	
The Hill	37 1 10	
The Rimes	6 0 6	
The Drove	5 0 20	
The Lane	2 2 22	
The Lanes	6 0 0	
Sum Tot.	239 2 19	

From an estate accounts book, also held in the Berkshire County Archives, we get a description of the farmhouse and buildings as they were circa 1796 (BRO D/EX 447/2/1).

'The premises consists of a House with five rooms on a floor, brick built and thatched. The house is old but if thatched it would stand for many years. A Barn with 5 Bays, Stable for 7 horses, an open Shed or Wainhouse, another open shed for cattle, all stone built and thatched in pretty good repair. Another Shed for Cattle and a Wainhouse for 2 Waggons, timber built and thatched in pretty good repair. Another open Shed for Cattle with a straw roof, old and of little value. A small distance there is a cow house or feeding house for tying up 20 Cattle with Calves, Stalls behind, timber built and thatched in good repair.'

From George Merryweather, the Beckett Estate Steward from 1815-1821, comes more information contained within his letters to his employer, George Lord Viscount Barrington (5th) (See SHS Listing N1549). In letter 49, dated 21st January 1818 he wrote of Stallpits Farm, 'I

have purposely reserved this farm to the last. This being esteemed the great beauty. I hope it will almost let itself. He was very impressed with the farm and on 20th March 1818, in letter 52 he stated, *'I can now announce to your Lordship the letting of Stall Pitts Farm. There have been upwards of ninety applications for this farm. I have got an excellent tenant. The rent is £750 a year and this is the utmost I have been able to accomplish.'* He also added that he had let the farm to a Mr Thomas Plummer of Purton near Wootton Bassett. We also learn from Merryweather that the outgoing tenants were still the Frampton family. Whereas old John Frampton had died years earlier, the family still held the occupancy of the farm. Shrivenham parish records show that John was 89 years old and was buried on 25th December 1786 on the north-west side of St Andrew's graveyard. The family were clearly not happy at leaving the farm and George Merryweather reported to Lord Barrington that they *'sold all the Hay, Straw and Manure and even the very hedgerows as they grew. Moreover, they tore up all the trees in the gardens and took them away.'*

A newspaper article confirmed that the new tenants of 1818 were still there nearly 20 years later. *'Married at Shrivenham by the Rev Archdeacon Berens, (Vicar of Shrivenham) Mr T. Whitfield of Uffington, to Elizabeth, eldest daughter of Mr T. Plummer, Stallpits Farm, Shrivenham.'* (Oxford University & City Herald 19th March 1836). It was another marriage that confirmed the Plummers had been there for nearly 40 years when Joseph Plummer's daughter of Stallpits married Henry Tuckey (Devizes & Wilts Gazette 3rd April 1856). Thomas Plummer probably died in 1838, and his son Joseph married Jane Hewer on 5th August 1848 and was listed on the census of 1851 as head of the household at Stallpits Farm. His first son Joseph was born in 1849 and he went on to have another five sons and two daughters. He died on 7th March 1867 at the age of 48 and was buried in St Andrew's churchyard, Shrivenham on 12th March (Wilts & Glos Standard 16th March 1867). The death of Joseph seems to have caused much turmoil. His son, also Joseph, would have been aged 18 at this time, but he seems not to have taken over the running of the farm, neither is there any mention of the late Joseph's wife, Jane (nee Hewer). The census for 1871 showed Elizabeth and Henry Plummer at Stallpits, brother and sister aged 18 and 9 years respectively, and Elizabeth Hewer aged 41, aunt of the two Plummer children. The census for 1881 showed that George Hewer was head of Stallpits Farm with wife Elizabeth. Wherever Joseph Plummer was living at this time is an enigma, but newspaper advertisements showed that he died early in the year of 1884. Two sales took place during the month of March on the instructions of the executors of Joseph Plummer, to sell off all the equipment, livestock and furniture of the house. The occupation of the Plummers at

Stallpits Farm had ended after 66 years. Three years later the newspaper reported the sad death by suicide of Henry Plummer, son of Joseph senior, who worked on a farm at Radcot, near Faringdon.

A list of names from an agricultural show reported in the newspaper, showed that James Lawrence had taken possession of Stallpits Farm directly after the Plummers. (Reading Mercury 20 December 1884). The census of 1891 showed that James Lawrence, his wife and children were still at the farm, but sadly his daughter Isabel Clara had died at the age of 12. (Faringdon Adver 14th Feb 1891). But happier times lay ahead when Beatrice Annie Lawrence married William Hedges of Watchfield Farm (Swindon Ad 19th September 1896).

SHRIVENHAM.
WEDDING.—The marriage took place at the Parish Church on Monday in last week of Miss Beatrice Annie Lawrence, eldest daughter of Mr J. Lawrence, of Stallpits Farm, and Mr William Hedges, only son of Mr Robert Hedges, of Watchfield Farm. The bride, who was given away by her father, was attired in white cashmere, and attended by her four sisters—the Misses Ethel, Agnes, Mabel, and Ida Lawrence—and the Misses Blanche and Madeline Hedges, sisters of the bridegroom, dressed in cream alpaca with blue trimmings. Mr J. Porey acted as "best man." The ceremony was performed by the Rev E. F. Hill (vicar), assisted by the Rev J. Footman (curate). Many handsome and useful presents were received, including a silver butter dish and knife presented by about 40 of the inhabitants of Watchfield to Mr W. Hedges as a token of their respect and esteem.

James Lawrence was an enthusiastic and successful pig breeder and he exported his pigs abroad. A newspaper article reported on a sale that had taken place in North Carolina, USA, and 'Stall Pitts' pigs were fetching high prices (Faringdon Adver 14th March 1903). He was also sending his pig stock to Hungary (Reading Mercury 24th October 1903).

SHRIVENHAM
SALE OF BERKSHIRE PEDIGREE PIGS.—At Mr Vanderbilt's sale of Berkshire pigs held at Biltmore Farm, North Carolina, U.S.A., the following prices were made for six Berkshire sows, bought of Mr James Lawrence, Stall Pitts Farm, Shrivenham:—Stall Pitts Addie, £61; Stall Pitts Hazeldine, £58; Stall Pitts Hazeldine 2nd, £56; Stall Pitts Hazeldine 3rd, £55; Stall Pitts Hazeldine 4th, £57; Star of Stall Pitts, £41. Sixty-one pigs realised £2,800.

Various mentions in the local newspapers provided the information that James Lawrence was still at the farm through the years of the first world war. He was aged 74, way past the age of call-up for military service, and announced his retirement by way of the sale of all his animal stock and farming equipment (Faringdon Adver 9th March 1918).

Swindon. Telephone: 51, Swindon.

NEXT FRIDAY.

"STALL PITTS" FARM, SHRIVENHAM, BERKS.

Close to Shrivenham Station. Seven miles from Swindon and 20 from Oxford.

Important Sale of the whole of the LIVE AND DEAD FARMING STOCK,

comprising:

85 Head of well-bred Shorthorn Cattle, being 29 Cows and Heifers in and with calf, 23 in-calf Heifers, 13 Stirks, and 21 Yearlings, 2-year-old Bull. 17 grand Cart Mares and Geldings, as under: 3 worked Horses (all under 8 years except one Mare), two 3 year-olds (bro-an to trace harness), three 2-year-old Colts, two yearling Colts, milk-cart Horse, 66 Hampshire Down Toga, 11 Sows and 6 Boars, the last of the "Stall Pitts" Pedigree Berkshire Herd. Poultry, etc.

The Implements and Machinery include: 2 Boat Wagons, 4 new Wagons, Scotch Cart, 7 Tip-Carts, Elevator, Martin Cultivator, Side Rake, Drills, Swathe Turner, Self Binder, 2 Mowing Machines, Ploughs, Rollers, Drags, Harrows, etc. A large quantity of Harness and Barn Tackle Shepherd's House, Hurdles, Dairy Utensils, etc.

Mr. James Lawrence, who is retiring from business, has instructed

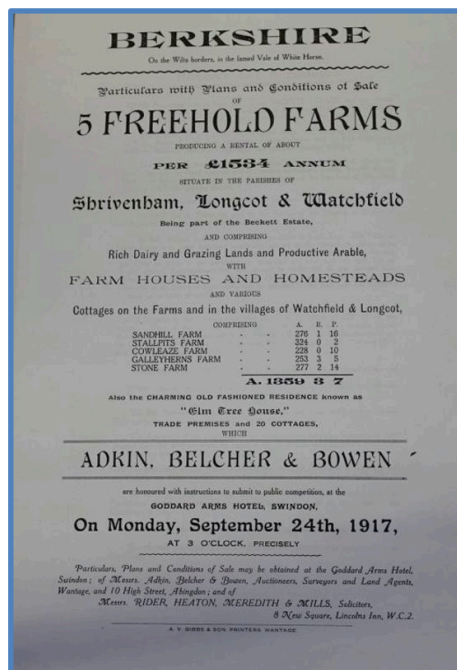
Messrs. FERRIS & PUCKRIDGE

TO dispose of the above valuable Agricultural Stock, by Auction, on the Premises, on Friday, March 15th, 1918, commencing at 11 a.m. precisely.

Catalogues may be obtained of Messrs Ferris and Puckridge, Auctioneers and Surveyors Milton, Pewsey, Wilts; and 71, Queen Street, E.C. 4.

Miscellaneous

His intention to retire may well have influenced his decision not to purchase Stallpits Farm when it came up for sale in 1917. Like many other large estates, Beckett and the Barringtons were struggling to survive and selling off the estate's assets was inevitable. However, at the sale held at the Goddard Arms, Swindon in September 1917, although interest in the farm was high, it failed to meet the reserve price.



Captain John Theodore Colledge must have made an agreement with the agents if he purchased the farm by private treaty after the auction. But whether he purchased or negotiated a rental with the new owner, he was firmly in occupation by 1920. He and his family ran a successful farm and took a very active part in village life. John Colledge was also a Magistrate. The family featured quite regularly in newspaper advertisements and stories. An exciting but tragic event took place in 1934 when an aircraft crashed at the farm killing the passenger and injuring the pilot. (For full details see North Wilts Herald 2nd November 1934 and SHS N1455) Newspapers of the period were also including more photographs and from two weddings of the Colledge family we get to see them. (Photos below both from the Bystander 3rd June 1936 and 8th Nov 1939). There is also a lovely picture available of June Colledge's dog called Puffin (See SHS Listing N1451).



Kay Vaughan

Pamela Margaret Colledge

Is the elder daughter of Capt. and Mrs. John Colledge, of Stallpits, Shrivvenham, Berks. She is engaged to Fred Hoyland Mayor, son of the late Fred Mayor and Mrs. Mayor, of Brockham, Betchworth



Miss Diana Preston and Mr. John Colledge

John Francis Colledge, only son of Captain and Mrs. J. T. Colledge, of Stallpits, Shrivvenham, Wilts., and Diana Mary Bruce Preston, second daughter of Lieut.-Col. the Hon. Richard Preston, of Woburn Hill, Addlestone, Surrey, and the late Mrs. Preston, and a cousin of Viscount Gormanston, were married at St. Anne's, Chertsey, Surrey

Captain John Colledge died and was buried on 8th April 1947. It's not certain if he owned Stallpits Farm but a sale of all the farm implements, machinery and effects took place in March 1952 (Shepton Mallet Journal 29th Feb 1952).

The Electoral Register for 1958-9 listed at the farm Jack Butler with his wife Eileen Katie Butler. An entry in the Illustrated Sporting News for 1st April 1965, showed that he was still there. But then we come to the end of this general history of the farm so far. Today the farm is owned by Mr Robert Gay, who also owns Sandhill Farm (see SHS Listing N995).

If any reader would like to comment on this history or would like to add further information then please contact us at: info@shrivenhamheritagesociety.co.uk