

Early modern East Meon

By Michael Blakstad, East Meon History Group, November 2016

Introduction

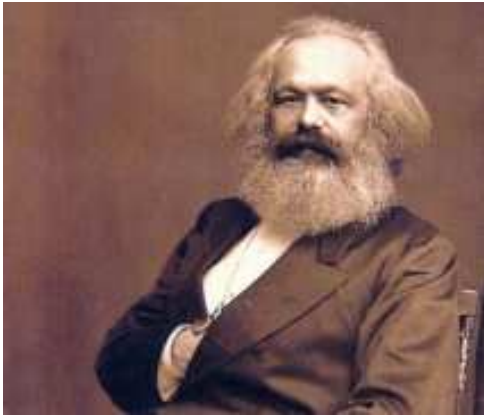


Fig 1 Karl Marx

According to Karl Marx, 'men make their own history'. He was the first to view history from below, from the perspective of the working man and woman; before him, historians had mainly relied on official records and the autobiographical, often self-justificatory, accounts of monarchs, politicians, generals and churchmen¹. The floodgates then opened, and 'national' history was joined by social history, economic history, agricultural, cultural, gender and racial history.

In the 1950s, the Leicester school of historians led by W.G. Hoskins and Keith Wrightson demonstrated that this sprawling range of approaches to history can most practically be viewed through the spectrum of local communities; today, most universities offer local history as a subject². This study attempts to offer a fragment of the history of Britain in the early modern period by examining the 'microhistory' of East Meon.³ This is part of a larger research project by East Meon History Group to research the history of farming in this parish; we are here concentrating on the context rather than the practice of agriculture, which will be researched by David Hopkins.

Summary

Since Saxon times, East Meon Hundred was the largest of the Hampshire estates of the bishops of Winchester; as a result, meticulous diocesan records were kept and are available at the HRO; it was a wholly agricultural community in which a few gentry, more yeoman farmers and many husbandmen rented land from the diocese, paying their dues in rent, produce, or labour on the diocesan demesne. In the early modern period, new methods of building led to substantial houses matching the needs of households which were both domestic and economic units; in them, servants of both sexes lived and worked under one roof. Local government was devolved to the parish vestry, of which the leading farmers were the most prominent members. Growing efficiencies in agriculture, including the enclosure of land by more prosperous farmers, dispossessed small farmers and made life outside the farm household precarious: whilst the parish provided welfare for its resident poor, vagrant paupers were strenuously

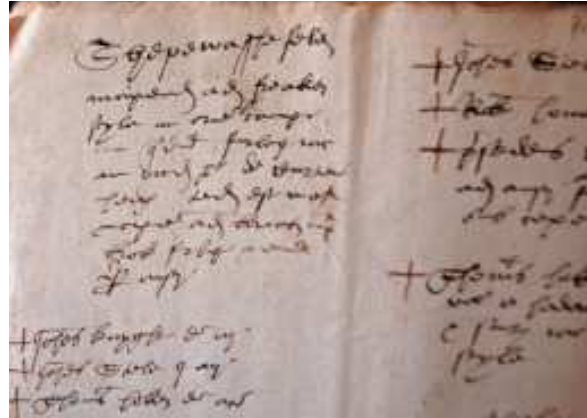
¹ Tosh, John *The Pursuit of History* Routledge 1984 p235.

² Tosh *ibid* p82

³ Variouslly defined, but roughly, in England, from the Reformation to the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution.

evicted. Plague was a frequent visitor, often encouraged by hunger in times of food shortage; the Civil War brought its own curse of poverty and epidemic to the poorest and under-nourished elements of the local population. During the Commonwealth, the diocesan estates were confiscated: after the Restoration, tenancy was granted to royal favourites. When Karl Marx urged the examination of history from the perspective of the lower classes, he set researchers a challenge, since there are no diaries or personal accounts on which to draw, but there are official records.

Sources



Figs 2 & 3. 1567 rental book, extract from entry on Oxenbourne

Documents at the HRO, which holds the records of the Diocese of Winchester, and at the National Archive, provide details of landholdings in early modern East Meon. The earliest, Figs 2 & 3, is a Rental Book compiled in 1567, soon after Elizabeth came to the throne and probably an attempt to re-assess the income of the Diocese following the Dissolution of the Monasteries⁴. It is written in secretary hand; fortunately, a copy was made in the 18th century, Figs 4 - 6⁵.



Figs 4 & 5 Lands in East Meon tithing, from 18th Century transcript of 1567 rental book

Some of the place names have survived to the present day including the George

⁴ HRO 11M59/A1/3/6 Rental and custumal for East Meon manor 1567

⁵ HRO 11M59/A1/2/12. 18th century copy with index

Inn, 'with one cottage and curtilage'. Others are Duncombe, South Mill and Washers.

Tenants in East Meon	
Edward Aburrow	86-85-86
Nich. Aburrow	87-88
Jean. Aburrow	89
Robt. Aburrow	90
John. Bulbeck	91-92-93
John. Bulbeck	94-95-96
John. Bulbeck	97-98-99
John. Bulbeck	100-101-102
John. Bulbeck	103-104
John. Bulbeck	105-106
John. Bulbeck	107
John. Bulbeck	108
John. Bulbeck	109-110
John. Bulbeck	111-112
John. Bulbeck	113-114
John. Bulbeck	115-116
John. Bulbeck	117-118
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John. Bulbeck	133-134
John. Bulbeck	135-136
John. Bulbeck	137-138
John. Bulbeck	139-140
John. Bulbeck	141-142
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John. Bulbeck	173-174
John. Bulbeck	175-176
John. Bulbeck	177-178
John. Bulbeck	179-180
John. Bulbeck	181-182
John. Bulbeck	183-184
John. Bulbeck	185-186
John. Bulbeck	187-188
John. Bulbeck	189-190
John. Bulbeck	191-192
John. Bulbeck	193-194
John. Bulbeck	195-196
John. Bulbeck	197-198
John. Bulbeck	199-200

Fig 6 Tenants in East Meon, 18th century transcript of 1567 rental book

Several of the names of the 16th century tenants will become familiar to us, including Aburrow, a family which survived in East Meon until Janet Aburrow married in the 1940s, Bulbeck, Langrish, Pink, Steele, Tyrrill and Write (Wright). The next 16th century survey is the Lay Subsidy List of 1586, a record of taxation, which records the names of those who paid rent throughout the Hundred.

The image shows a page of handwritten text in a cursive script, typical of 17th-century documents. The text is arranged in several paragraphs, with some lines starting with 'The said...' and 'The said...'. The handwriting is dense and somewhat difficult to read due to the cursive style.

Fig 7. Extract from Parliamentary Survey of 1647⁶

80 years later came the Parliamentary Survey of 1647, Fig 7, conducted with a view to confiscating the diocesan estates and selling them to supporters of the Commonwealth. The East Meon entry reads ... 'late in the possession of Dr Walter Curle [previously Bishop of Winchester], and now by ordinance of Parliament settled upon trustees for the use of the Common Wealth'.

⁶ HRO 11M59/A1/2/12 'Parliamentary survey' and valuation of the manor of East Meon 1647

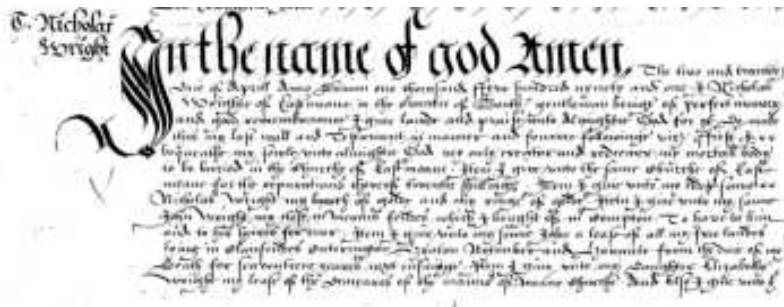


Fig 8. Will of Nicholas Wrighte, gentleman, of East Meon Hampshire⁷

Probate documents tell us a lot about those who were wealthy enough to have property worth leaving, and to hire a clerk to write their wills and inventories. There are other Diocesan records, notably the Diocesan Account Rolls, and Court Records (usually concerning land disputes or transfers). Once again, the more prosperous the citizen, the more likely the name is to appear.

Parish Registers of Baptisms, Marriages and Deaths cover the early modern period, and are a means of establishing the rites of passage of East Meon residents, providing they chose to be baptised, married and buried in the parish church



Fig 9. Entry from East Meon Overseer of Poor's account book, 1728

Finally, there are Parish records. The parish vestry, was in effect the local civil service and among its duties were the raising of Poor Rates and the care of the poor. The detailed accounts kept by the Overseers of the Poor, Fig 9, and by the Vestry of its proceedings provide an insight into life in the early modern period⁸.

Apart from official records. there are no written accounts by anybody living in East Meon in this period, no diaries or letters, still less any articles or memoirs. Most people were illiterate. To provide a wider picture of social conditions in this period, we have turned to the work of modern historians and there is a bibliography is at the back of this paper.

⁷ The National Archive PROB 11/87/221 *The Will of Nicholas Wrighte, gentleman of East Meon Hampshire* 1596

⁸ HRO PO1 1727 *Overseer of the Poor's accounts book*

The local scene

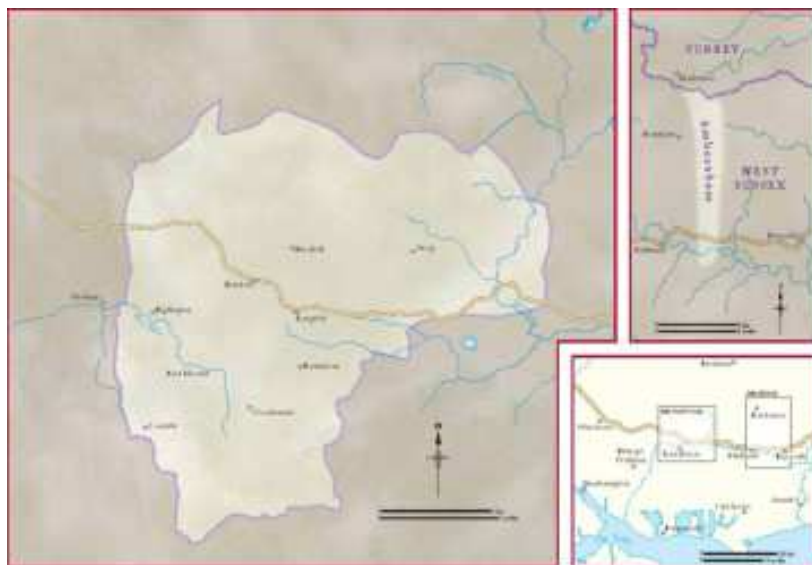


Fig 10 The Hundred of East Meon, 10th to 19th centuries

From Saxon times, East Meon had been a minster, a hundred, a parish and two manors⁹. Meon Manor, *Fig 10*, comprised not only the tithings of Oxenbourne, Riplington and Combe, which are in today's parish, but Langrish, Ramsdean, Bordean, Froxfield, and Steep, as well as a slice of what today is West Sussex, Ambersham. It all belonged to the Diocese of Winchester, and the bishop was lord of the manor, landlord and rector. The bishop was also lord of Meon Ecclesia, a smaller manor entirely surrounded by Meon Manor; it comprised Court and Church Farms and land to the west and south of the village, including South Farm. The diocese received rent from the tenants who farmed most of the land, produce from the land farmed 'in demesne' (i.e. by tenants and villeins working directly for the diocese), and rectorial, or 'greater', tithes, which comprised one tenth of the produce of all tenants including the labours of tradesmen and craftsmen. There were two barns at the Court House, a large tithe barn to which farmers delivered one tenth of their produce, and the smaller manorial barn which stored the crops harvested in demesne.



Fig 11 The smaller, manorial, barn at The Court House which was rebuilt in the 17th century

⁹ Yorke, Barbara, *Wessex in the Early Middle Ages* p 183, a map of three minsters: Titchfield, Bishop's Waltham and East Meon taken from *Minsters and Parish Churches*, ed J.Blair

The vicar received ‘lesser’ tithes, defined as a ‘miscellaneous assemblage of garden crops, animal products, poultry, timber, turf and hay’¹⁰; he also received the produce of glebe land, which he probably farmed himself, and fees he received for baptising, marrying and burying parishioners (which included all the tithings including Froxfield, Steep and Ambersham). He would have employed curates or clerks to serve chapels in Froxfield, Steep and Ambersham, but would have pocketed the fees¹¹. The Diocese provided his vicarage and probably a fixed emolument.

*Table 1 Hearth Tax Assessments 1665*¹²

Village	Hearth tax	Exemptions	Totals	x 4.3
East Meon	102	31	133	572
Oxenbourne	52	2	54	233
Langrish	33	14	47	202
Ramsdean	64	12	76	327
Combe	25	1	26	112
Riplington	21	10	31	133
Bordean	50	1	51	219
Froxfield	115	34	149	641
Steep	148	30	178	765
Ambersham	105	8	113	486
East Meon Hundred	751	137	888	3818

We can get a good idea of the population of all the tithings in the two manors from the hearth tax returns of 1665, *Table 1*: the tithing of East Meon was smaller than those of Steep and Froxfield; Ambersham, Oxenbourne, Ramsdean and Bordean were significant settlements in their own right. (The population figures are calculated using the formula proposed by Andrew Hinde, multiplying the number of hearths and exclusions by 4.3.¹³).

¹⁰ N.J.G.Pounds *A History of the English Parish* Cambridge University Press 2000 p53.

¹¹ N.J.G. Pounds *Ibid* p57.

¹² Figures from Elizabeth Hughes and Philippa White (ed) *The Hampshire Hearth Tax Assessment 1665* pp246 & 72

¹³ Andrew Hinde *Calculating Crude Birth and Death Rates for Local Populations During the Parish Register Era*. p90 Local Population Studies. Paupers who lived in their own houses were exempt from Hearth Tax



Fig 12, Speculative map of the settlement of East Meon in in the 17th century

In the 17th century, the 'vill', or settlement, of East Meon would have been no more than a cluster of 'home' farm houses with some land around them, some cottages, and a few shops, workshops and ale houses. This map, *Fig 12*, is based on the 17th century buildings which remain to this day, allowing for some later replacements for buildings destroyed by fire or simply re-built. To help locate them, *Fig 12b* shows the modern names of some of the buildings



Fig 12b Names of today's houses, plus the likely location of the Vicarage before 1840

Placing the vicarage opposite the lych gate is based on supposition, as is the branch of the River Meon which flows through the grounds of Court Farm, feeding its fish pond, then on to join the present course at The Cross. This based on the fact that today's river takes an abrupt turn at each end of 'The Cross', unlikely to have been its natural course. So what sorts of people lived in these houses, and in the surrounding farms?

Who was who

Table 2 William Harrison's four degrees of people, 1577

Four degrees of People, William Harrison, 1577	
Gentlemen	Nobility, Knights, Esquires, Gentlemen
Citizens and Burgesses	
Yeomen	Farmers and master craftsmen
Labourers & Servants	Husbandmen, cottars, apprentices

Social divisions in the early modern period were clearly defined. *Table 2* shows the 'Four Degrees of People', described by William Harrison in 1577¹⁴. He was one of several observers who attempted to delineate class divisions at that time. 'Gentlemen' included Nobility, Knights, Esquires and Gentlemen, their status defined by lineage or, increasingly, by income. Baronets and knights had an annual income of £10,000 (over £2 million in today's money), a lesser or parish gentleman 'only' needed £200 (or £40,000) to qualify. Because the bishop of Winchester was lord of the Meon manors, there were no great landed families living in mansions; the 'upper crust' of the tithings around East Meon in the sixteenth century were mere 'parish gentlemen'.

It was common at the time to describe the different classes as 'better' or 'upper' sort, 'middling' sort or 'lesser' sort¹⁵. East Meon had mainly middling and lesser sorts, and of course, paupers..

Gentlemen

Table 3 Gentlemen in selected Tithings, Lay Subsidy list 1586¹⁶

Gentlemen in Eastmeane manor, Lay Subsidy 1586	
Eastmeane Goods	Robert Wright, gent, £16 John Wright, gent, £10
Riplington Goods	Nicholas Wright, gent, £5
Borden Lands	Edward Langrishe, gent, £12
Borden Goods	Nicholas Pescod, gent, £8
Langrish Goods	William Langrishe, gent, £8
Ramsdene Goods	Roger Langrishe, gent, £3

Table 3 is taken from the Lay Subsidy of 1586 for the central tithings of the Hundred of East Meon; the more distant tithings of Froxfield, Steep and Ambersham are omitted. It shows the names of those designated as 'gentlemen': three Wrights (Nicholas and his two sons Robert and John), two Langrishes (Edward and William) and Nicholas Pescod. Being a wholly agricultural community, East Meon had few citizens - the vicar would have been one, perhaps the bailiff another - and no burgesses

¹⁴ Wrightson, Keith *English Society, 1680 - 1780* p27

¹⁵ Wrightson *ibid* p148 onwards

¹⁶ Hampshire Record Series *The Lay Subsidy of 1586*

Yeomen

Table 4 Yeomen in Eastmeane Lay Subsidy list 1586

Lay Subsidy, Eastmeane tithing, 1586	
Eastmeane Lands	Nicholas Tire 20s, John Godwine 20s, Agnes Ringe 20s John Longe 20s
Eastmeane Goods	Peter Tirrell, £9 Margaret Langrishe £4, Richard Lange £7, Anthony Cowse £8, Anthony Kerbye <i>alien</i> £10 Anthony Pincke £3, Nicholas Langrish £5, Thomas Bulbeck £6, Anthony Langrishe £4, Anthony Bulbeck £6, John Tirrell, £7, William Stert £3.

Table 4 lists other well-off farmers in the central tithing of Eastmeane tithing. 18 are listed, who, with the exception of two women, would have been counted as 'yeomen', men of substance whose farms grew more than their families needed for subsistence.

Table 5 Yeomen in selected tithings of East Meon Manor

Lay Subsidy, selected tithings of Eastmeane manor, 1586	
Combe Goods	Richard Upsdale £6, Thomas Knowler, £6, John Godwyne £4, Thomas Hether £3
Riplington Goods	Richard Smithe £8, John Tirrell £10, John Aborrough £3
Borden Lands	Anthony Heather £13
Borden Goods	Thomas Goddard £15, Ralph Hedger £8,
Langrish Lands	Robert Joye £3, Hugh Crowcher £6
Ramsdene Lands	John Tribe £6, gent, £8
Ramsdene Goods	Richard Page £7
Oxenbourne Goods	Edward Haycroft £9, John Pincke £9, Thomas Hooker £7

Table 5 lists farmers looking beyond Eastmeane to the tithings which border it, some: these include several - Upsdale, Hether, Tirrell, Aborrough and Pincke - owned land in more than one tithing in the Hundred.

Labourers and servants

The next category were 'labourers' and 'servants'. In an agricultural community, these were separated mainly by age: 'servants' were young people who had left their parents' house in their early teens and lived under their employer's roof until marriage. In the country, males were husbandmen and females house and dairy maids; in towns, the boys were apprentices and the girls domestic servants or shop assistants. When couples decided to get married, usually in their late 20s, they were required to leave the household. The more successful farm servants became 'husbandmen' or 'cottars', owning their own cottages and a small amount of land – subsistence farmers who also farmed a furlong or two of open field land, kept pigs and chickens, and probably a cow or two on the common. The less fortunates became 'agricultural labourers', to whom we shall return. The early 17th century witnessed a housing boom, as prosperity grew and farming techniques improve.

The early modern household

In 1589, an Act had been passed 'against erecting and maintaining cottages'¹⁷; it sought to regulate cottage building and multiple occupation of cottages. It was now illegal to build a cottage without four acres of land, to convert a building into a cottage without four acres of land or to 'willingly uphold, maintain and continue' a cottage without four acres of land or for cottages to be occupied by more than one family or lodgers¹⁸. The Act was intended to protect the status of husbandmen who had the means to build or buy a cottage and who owned enough land to support themselves, and to stop migrant labourers from building shanties, usually on waste land, hoping to put down roots in the parish.



Fig 13 Old Bell Cottage, original building



Fig 14 White Cottage

Several such cottages were built in and around East Meon in the early seventeenth century, in what amounted to a housing boom. They include Old Bell Cottage, *Fig 13*, Sebastopol and White Cottage, *Fig 14*, though none has as much as four acres of land today.

¹⁷ 31 Eliz. c. 7 (1589), cl. 1–5 (*Statutes of the Realm* (10 vols, 1810–28) [hereafter SR] IV (i), pp. 804–5).

¹⁸ Tankard, Danae *The regulation of cottage building in seventeenth-century Sussex*.
www.wealldown.co.uk/buildings/pendean-farmhouse/



Fig 15. Kews and Paupers Cottages

Kews and Paupers' cottages were also built at this time but must have been exempted from the four-acre rule' this was sometimes granted when a landholder needed more housing for his labourers and appealed to the lord of the manor or JP, or when the vestry needed housing for the poor. All these are built from brick, which was now the main material for building; in the early 17th century a brickworks was opened in what is now the nearby village of Stroud.

Forge Cottage



Fig 15 Forge Cottage, with central chimney



Fig 16 Forge Cottage, hearth with oven



Fig 17 Forge Cottage, living room fireplace

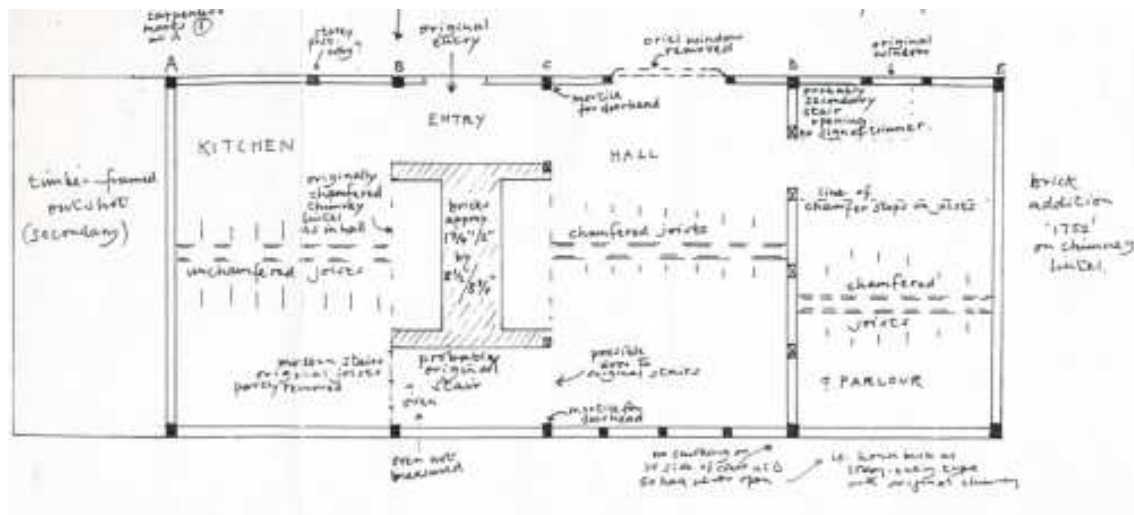


Fig 18, Floor plan of Forge Cottage

The most crucial innovation were central fireplaces and chimney. Forge Cottage, a more substantial yeoman's dwelling, has two substantial hearths, *Figs 16 & 17*, one on each side of the chimney breast: one was the cooking range, the other the fireplace of the owner's immediate family. This was a significant advance on the hall houses, where an open fire in the centre had emitted smoke which lingered until it found vents in the roof; the smoke was now ducted through a chimney to the outside air. The chimney was usually directly opposite the entrance, see *Fig 18*, with the owner's private chambers to one side, and the service areas to the other. Rooms could now be built in varying sizes and layouts, and the same roof now covered not only the private spaces of the owner's family but workshops or farm offices, while the servants slept in chambers above them, often in a single space. (Families slept together; the oldest girl facing the wall, with the next oldest next to her, until the youngest who slept next to the mother, then the father and the boys in ascending order.)

The Tudor House



Fig 19 The Tudor House photographed in 2007

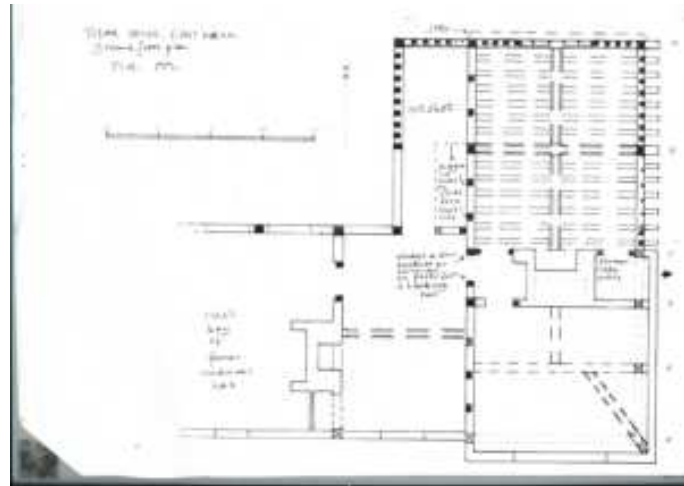


Fig 20, floor plan of The Tudor House, by Edward Roberts

Another example is the Tudor House, *Fig 19*, which was converted in the 1580s by Nicholas Wright, gent, one of the wealthiest men in East Meon, from a 14th century hall house. To the three medieval bays, which lay east to west along what is now Workhouse Lane, he added a north-south wing, *Fig 20*, with a new entrance off what is now the Cross. Immediately opposite the entrance was a substantial central chimney with service areas to the left/south and west and family rooms to the right/north.

The Tudor house appears to have been Wright's 'home farm' and the working areas would probably have included the kitchen with a communal dining table at which family and servants ate together, a dairy where women would have made butter and cheese, a pantry (or bakery), a buttery (or bottlery), and might have included stalls for animals. Sleeping quarters for the servants would have been above the working areas. The number of workrooms and chambers supports the belief of today's historians that the early modern 'family' unit was not confined to the immediate kin of the owner but the entire household.¹⁹

¹⁹ The Oxford English Dictionary derives 'family' from the Latin *familia*: 'household' or 'female servant'; defined in 1545 as: '1. The servants of a house; the household ... 2. The body of persons who live in one house or one head, including parents, children, servants &c'.

The Court House



Fig 21 Court Hall and 17th century farm house



Fig 22 Robert Bryden print of Court Farm yard in 1905



Fig 23. Parliamentary Survey of 1647

The Court House itself, is today the best preserved of the Bishop's Hampshire palaces. In the 17th century, a substantial farm house was added, *Fig 21*, to the medieval Court Hall and chambers and Court Farm is described in the 1647 Parliamentary Survey, *Fig 23*: 'The Manor House called ye Court House, being strongly built with a Buttery, a larder, a day-house, a kill, three lodging-chambers, a corn-chamber, a cheese-chamber, with some other little rooms. Before the entrance of the house with three rooms thereunto belonging²⁰.' The Victoria County History records that the Hall itself was used as just another farm building, and this 1905 print by Robert Bryden, *Fig 22*, shows part of the farmyard at this time, before the architect Morley Horder bought The Court House and restored it so sympathetically to its medieval glory.

²⁰ HRO 11M59/A1/2/12, *A Survey of East Meon* also *Victoria County History, Hampshire* p65

South Farm



Figs 24 – 27. Parliamentary Survey of South Farm, 1647. 'The Mansion House being strongly built with timber consisting of a hall, a parlour wainscotted about, a kitchen, a pantry, a Brewhouse, a Milkhouse, ... with four convenient rooms below stairs; above the hall is a fair Chamber wainscotted over, over the Hall is a fair Chamber wainscotted; over the parlour is a Chamber wainscotted, five Convenient Lodging Chambers, a ? Loft, four Convenient Rooms above stairs; belonging to the said house two barns, a stable, an oxhouse with convenient housing for cattle, also the ? Consisting of a Litter Crascott or Court before the house two gardens, two outyards lying altogether to the north by the highway leading from East Meon to ... the Mill and Mill Pond of Mr Searle on the East'.

The 1647 survey also contains a detailed survey of South Farm, *Figs 24 – 27*. With its wainscoting and 'convenient rooms' this must have been one of the finest farm houses in the tithing.

William Harrison, writing in 1577, commented on the signs of increasing wealth in England : "Three things have changed: the multitude of chimnies recently erected ... great amendment of lodging (i.e. bedding) ... exchange of vessel (from wooden to pewter)"²¹ Such signs of prosperity appear in East Meon probate documents, such as the 1701 Inventory of John Luff, *Table 6*. Luff was theyeoman farmer of Bereleigh, a sub-manor, and this building also accommodated the early modern household of family, servants, living and farm rooms, in addition to outhouses for the cattle and grain.

²¹ Quoted by Keith Wrightson *Ibid*

Inventory of John Luffe of Bralye, East Meon, Hampshire, yeoman ²²	
Wearing apparel and money in purse	06.00.00
<i>In the hall</i> one table and forme six joynd stools one sidebord three old chairs and other small items praised at	01.00.00
<i>In the low chambre</i> One bed and bedstead bolster and blankets thereunto belonging	01.00.00
<i>In the hall chambre</i> one feather bed &c	01.10.00
<i>In the chamber over the butrey</i> one feather bed &c	01.18.00
<i>In the old chamber</i> one truckle bed one malt mill &c	01.15.00
<i>In the chamber over the kitchen</i> two old beds &c	01.05.00
<i>In the butreys</i> four hogsheads, six small barrells &c	02.15.00
<i>In the milkhous</i> one and a half dozen of hogsheads	00.12.00
<i>In the kitchen</i> , one table and forms and iron firepan and tongs and other old lumber sixteen small dishes of pewter one flaggon three canldesticks four kettles two brewpots four skillets and other small things	02.10.00
Barron and cheese	01.06.00
<i>In the barn</i> wheat and oats	07.10.00
<i>In the gate</i> seven young hogs, nine pigs	04.00.00
Five cows three bullocks three weaning sheep	18.00.00
Six horses and the harness	30.00.00
Two wagons two dungarts one rowler nine harrowes and other small implmnts of husbandry	13.00.00
One hundred and forty sheeps and thirty lambs	98.00.00

Table 6 Inventory of John Luff, owner of Bereleigh, 1701



Fig 25. Sketch plan of unidentified mill, from back of 1567 Rental Book

(In passing, the architectural historian and author of several books on Hampshire's medieval houses, Edward Roberts, reacted to a sketch plan, Fig 25 found in the 1567 survey²³; he wrote: 'This is a rare and fascinating Elizabethan sketch of an elaborate system of ponds and millstreams, with the usual sloppy handwriting. It shows the mill house and what appear to be two grids of some sort. I can make out myle [mill] pond, ryver, the lug wall'. It is not clear which mill it might have been; possibly South Mill, but it could have been Frogmore, one of two corn mills at Drayton, then called Shutt Mills, a mill held by William Heycroft in the tithing of Meonchurch, a water mill at Ramsdean, or another at Sheet, or

²² HRO 21M65/D3/427 Inventory of John Luff (Luffe) of Bereleigh ('Bralye'), East Meon, Hampshire, yeoman 1701

²³ Roberts, Edward Hampshire Houses 1250 – 1700, Their Dating and Development, Hampshire County Council 2003, and Medieval Hall Houses of the Winchester Area, Winchester City Museum,

one of two fulling mills in the tithing of Oakshott, in Froxfield ... all within the Hundred of East Meon²⁴.)

The wealthiest family

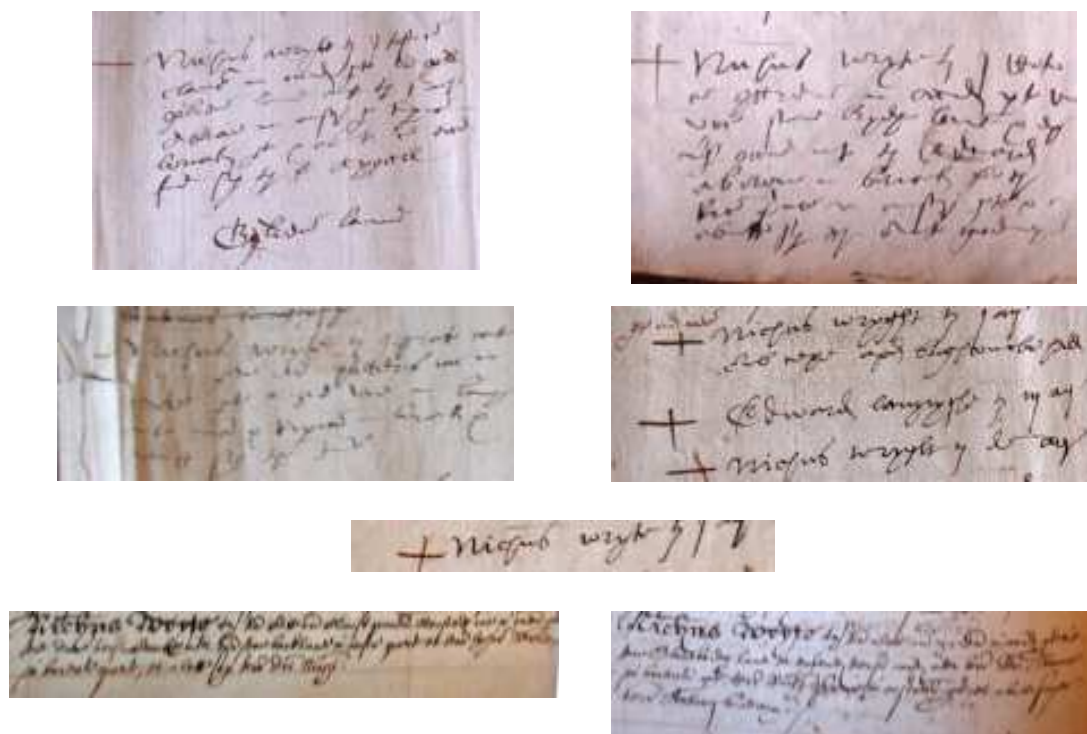


Fig 26 Jettying of first floor of Tudor House



Fig 27 Close studding of Tudor House

At the time, South Mill was owned by Nicholas Wright who has been mentioned three times already: the records reveal that this was evidently the leading family in East Meon in the second half of the sixteenth century and the first quarter of the seventeenth. The name then disappears completely from the records. It was probably Nicholas who converted the Tudor House in a very lavish manner ... jettying the first floor, *Fig 26*, in a manner designed used to extend town houses over narrow streets and a conspicuous luxury in a country village; while the close studding of first floor beams, *Fig 27*, was structurally unnecessary and also designed to impress. 'Wright', variously spelt, appears throughout our 16th century records, *Figs 28 - 34*.



Figs 28 – 34. Entries recording land rented by Nicholas Wright, in tithings including Oxenbourne and Tygwell, in the 1567 Rental book

²⁴ VCH *ibid* p68

The Rent Book of 1567, *Figs 35 – 39*) records Nicholas Wright’s properties throughout East Meon tithings in Borden, Tygwell, Oxenbourne, Riplington and Ramsdean²⁵.



Figs 35 – 39. 18th century transcript of 1567 Rental book, showing Nicks Write lands in Meane Manner and Borden



As we have seen, the Lay Subsidy of 1586 designated Nicholas, his brother Robert and Nicholas’s son John as ‘gentlemen’. East Meon’s Parish Registers started in 1560; *Table 7* lists the early appearances of the Wright family²⁶. Interestingly, the surname disappears entirely from the registers and other parish records after the burial of Barbara (‘gent’) in 1628.

Baptisms

D/MTH	Year	Forename	Parents forenames	Surname
10-Aug	1589	Mary	Robt	Wright?

²⁵ Edward Roberts wrote a private note in 1990: ‘The earliest known owner of The Tudor House was Nicholas Wright, in 1567... In 1588, William Wright was seized of the reversion of the manor of Peak in E.Meon (VCH iii 67)

²⁶ Available as Excel files at http://www.eastmeonhistory.org.uk/content/catalogue_item/architecture-2/records-registers/registers-baptisms-marriages-deaths

3-Feb	1562	Thomas	Nicholas	Wrighte
9-Aug	1563	Henry	Nicholas	Wrighte
6-Oct	1565	Jane	Nicholas	Wrighte
25-Aug	1594	Elzebeth	Robert	Wrighte
10-Oct	1602	Katherine	John	Wrighte

Marriages

4-Nov	1604	Richard	Wright	Jone	Tablege
-------	------	---------	--------	------	---------

Burials

25-Sep	1568	Joane	Wright	Possibly Jane
15-Mar	1596	Nicholas	Wright	"g"
1-Nov	1605	Richard	Wright	Son of John Wright gent.
3-Jun	1624	Robt.	Wright	Gent
15-Nov	1628	Barbarah	Wright	Gent

Table 7 – East Meon Parish Registers. They are not complete, and the transcriber has had some difficulties



Figs 40 & 41 Clauses from the 1591 will of Nicholas Wright

When Nicholas Wright wrote his will in 1591, *Figs 40 & 41*, he bequeathed *twentie shillings* so that his body could be buried *in the churche of Eastmeane*. At that time, the floor of the church was beaten earth, intersected by the gravestones of wealthy parishioners of sufficient wealth and standing to be buried within the walls of the church. Nicholas bequeathed *to my eldest son Nicholas Wright my brooche of gold and my ringe of golde. ... to my son John Wright my ho[u]se in Mean fiels with it bought. Item unto my sonne John a lease of all my free landes lying in Clanfield Catherington, Lynton (?) Nytimber and Havant for seventeen years ... to my daughter Elizabeth Wright my lease of the demesne of the manor of Meane Churche ...* so his estate reached well beyond his multiple holdings in the manors of Meane and Meane Ecclesia²⁷. It is interesting that the eldest son, Nicholas, was only let a few items of jewellery whilst his brother John inherits the remainder of the estates. The burial of a Nicholas in 1596 might be that of the son, who was perhaps sickly when the father died; the burial of

²⁷ 11M59/C9 *Fine books 1508 – 1832*

Nicholas senior does not appear to have been recorded in the register. According to the 1589 fine book, John had acquired from Nicholas Wright at least 11 houses and cottages, a mill, and well over 100 acres of land in East Meon. When, on his father's death in 1591, he inherited the rest of the estate, he in turn was the leading figure in East Meon; appears in the account rolls every year from 1592 – 1625, designated as 'farmer', alongside the reeve and bailiff²⁸. The fine book for 1600 records that Johannes Wright sold The Tudor House to John Long, who paid a fine of 2/- for 'one cottage with a garden of bondland in the tithing of East Meon'²⁹.

Why did the Wright family disappear from the records? There is no trace of a will by John Wright but when his brother Robert died before him, in 1624, *Figs 43 – 45*, he left only female heirs, his widow Elizabeth and daughters, who between them had married an Aylwine, a Waterfield, a Godrell and a Farrell³⁰.



Fig 43 Will of Robert Wright, 1624. . And whereas I have a lease of a faarm in Eastmeane called Southefarme, and of all the landed meadows, pasture feedings, woodes, ... commons, profitts and commodities thereonto belonging for the terme of fiftie hears and thereabouts ... my mill

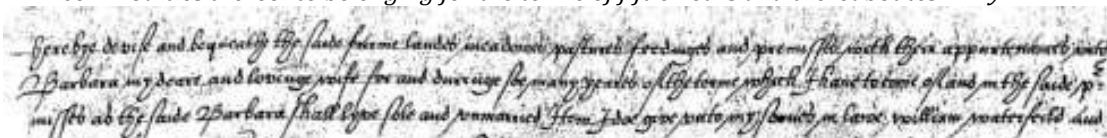


Fig 44. Hereby devise and bequeathe the saide farm lands meadows pasture feedings and premisses with their appurtenances unto Barbara my deare and lovinge wife for and duringe soe many years of the terme ... as the saide Barbara shall be sole and unmarried

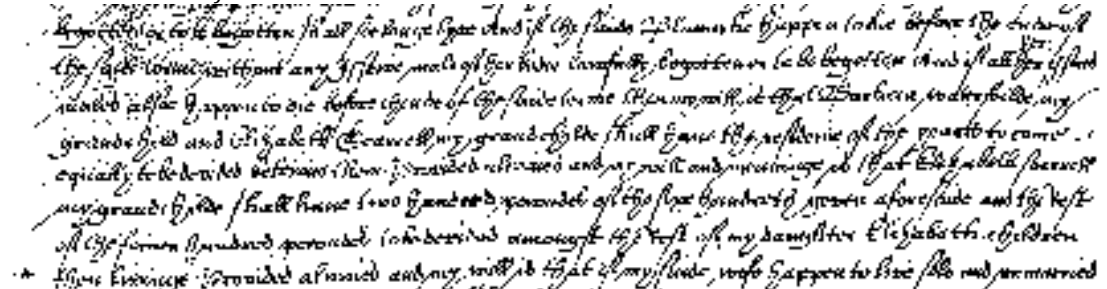


Fig 46 ...to Barbara my deare and loving wife, My daughter Blanche, married to Robert Aylwine, grandchildren Barbara Waterfield, Elizabeth Godrell, Elizabeth Farrell.

²⁸ HRO 11M59/B2/17/127-145 Account rolls for East Meon 1594 - 1625

²⁹ HRO *ibid* The fine and description of the property remained constant whenever the house changed hands, until Arthur Warren sold it in December 1935).

³⁰ TNA prob/11/144 Will of Robert Wright 1624

None of the in-laws appear in the 1665 Hearth Tax assessments for East Meon tithings, so it must be assumed that the females of the Wright family married 'out of the parish', possibly to more elevated families than could be found locally. This is confirmed by a 1649 '*deed of discharge ... under the will of Robert Wright of East Meon, gent to pay an annuity and legacies from £600 chargeable on South Farm, East Meon*'; the beneficiaries are '*Robert Allwyn of Midhurst, Sussex, gent; Peter Allwyn of Treford, Sussex, yeoman, and Barbara his now wife, and, second, Thomas Hanbury of Buriton, esq*³¹. The Wright family, and its wealth, had by now left the parish, and appear to have played no part in the enclosures which characterised the latter part of the seventeenth century.

Enclosures



Fig 47 West Field and Westood Common, Laxton, Nottinghamshire, 1635 (The common lies to the west of the arable field)³².

Most of East Meon still used the Open Field system, whereby farmers would rent from the diocese a number of 'lands', or strips in large meadows, around which they would rotate their arable crops, as well as sharing grazing on the common. This system allowed the poorest husbandman to plough his land alongside the richest gentleman farmer, but modern methods of agriculture were making the wealthier tenants keen to enlarge their plots.

³¹ HRO 79M74/E/T12 *Deed of discharge of an obligation under the will of Robert Wright...*

³² W.G.Hoskins, *The Making of the English Landscape* Little Toller Books 2013 p52



Fig 48 1567 Rental book, tithing of Oxenbourne, listing the open field tenants

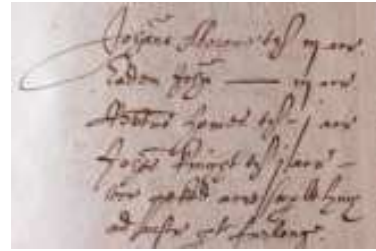


Fig 49 Joanna Aburrow, Edward Fox

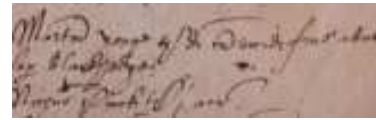


Fig 50 Martin Yonge, Richard Pinck



fig 52 Second sheet of Oxenbourne listing

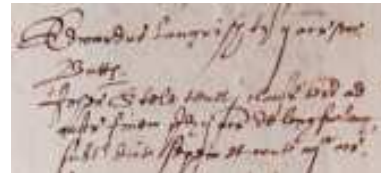


Fig 53 Edward Langrish, John Stele

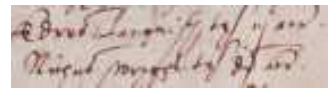


Fig 54 Edward Langrish and Nicholas Wright

These two pages from the 1567 Rental book show the occupancy of open fields in the Decenna (Tithing) of Oxenbourne & Ecclesia³³. Under the name of each field, *Figs 48, 52*, is a description of its division into broad bands, running from top to bottom, under which are listed the tenants who rented individuals strips, *Figs 49, 50, 53, 54*, including both subsistence farmers and substantial landholders such as Edward Langrish, Richard Pink and Nicholas Wright, who rented strips in several tithings. As the population of England grew in the early modern period, and as towns and cities demanded more food, improved equipment and methods, irrigation and fertilisers made farming more efficient: large fields were more productive than the strip of land under open field system and wealthy farmers were keen to enlarge their holdings by ‘persuading’ their landlord to move their less successful neighbours to other locations.

³³ 11M59/A1/2/10

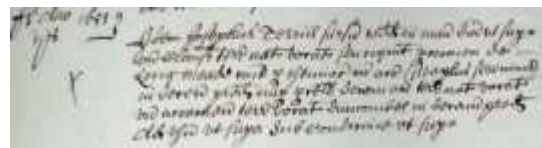
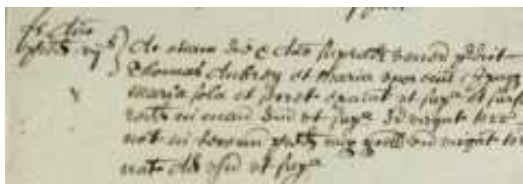


Fig 59. Enclosure contract, 1661, for land in the tithing of Oxenbourne. Nine copyholders promise to pay the lord of the manor for permission to enclose common lands and convert them into separate ownerships without any loss in rents or dues to the lord. The signatures are familiar to us as better-off yeoman farmers, Charles Cranley, Anthony Bulbeck, Anthony Longe, Nicholas Pyncke, Richard Aylward, Johon Hobbs, Richard Downs, Thomas and John Adcoke



Fig 60. This section is signed by Arthur Bold Esq., the bishop's steward at the manor court and surrenders the messuage into the lord bishop's hands for the use of Alice Pinke during her lifetime and afterwards to remain with the said Roger Smith and his heirs.

The process of enclosure had started in the Middle Ages, and most had been by agreement, or arm-twisting, between tenants. Most enclosures took place in the 19th century, enacted by Acts of Parliament; before then, the only surviving written contract for enclosure in East Meon was made in 1661, of land 'within the tything of Oxenbourne'³⁴. In the first extract, Fig 59, nine copyholders promise to pay the lord of the manor for permission to enclose common lands and convert them into separate ownerships without any loss in rents or dues to the lord. These are the signatures of the beneficiaries, already familiar to us as better-off yeoman farmers, including Bulbeck, Long, Pyncke, Aylward, Hobbe, Downs and Adcock. Another section, Fig 60, is signed by Arthur Bold Esq, the bishop's steward at the manor court, and surrenders 'the messuage into the lord bishop's hands for the use of Alice Pinke during her lifetime and afterwards to remain with the said Roger Smith and his heirs'.



Figs 61 & 62. Xs marking the agreement to surrender of Thomas Aubrey & Joseph Terrill

³⁴ David Hey, ed. *Oxford Companion to Family and Local History* Oxford 2008 p188 - 189 HRO 1M59/C611/108/138 1661 Enclosure in the tithing of Oxenbourne, East Meon Agreement

Those who agreed to have their land enclosed were, for the most part, illiterate, and signed with a mark ... *Figs 61 and 62* show the crosses of Joseph Terrill and of Thomas Aubrey and his wife. The dispossessed were usually assigned lesser lands and perhaps a cottage. At the same time, improved methods of farming required fewer people to do the work; those who were moved to less productive land often failed to support themselves and their families and became agricultural labourers. Similarly, when living-in servants got married and were obliged to move out of the farm household, most became zero-hours labourers. Farm work in the parish was seasonal, and it was virtually impossible to earn enough across the year to support a family; many agricultural labourers fell into poverty, depending on the parish. Some took to the road in the hope of finding work in other villages, and in doing so exposed themselves to serious insecurity.

Poverty

Poor Laws, 1598 - 1601	
1597	Act for the Relief of the Poor
1601	Elizabethan Poor Law
1662	Law of Settlement and Removal



Table 8 - Early Modern Poor Laws

A succession of Poor Laws, *Table 8*, starting in the reign of Queen Elizabeth in 1597 and 1601, had established the principle that parishes were responsible for looking after their own paupers, and for levying the money to meet the costs. The Law of Settlement and Removal of 1662 defined the distinction between settled and vagrant poor³⁵. "Settlement" defines the care the parish should provide to those who could prove residence in the parish. "Removal" was the fate awaiting vagrants who dared look for work outside theirs. Thus, the poor were divided into two categories. Those who could demonstrate that they had been born in the parish or had been employed there for a year were deemed to be 'settled poor' and the early modern period saw the creation of a prototype welfare state, in which parishes were required to raise Poor Rates from its better-off residents and to administer the monies in support of its resident paupers. 'Vagrant poor', on the other hand, who could not prove that they 'belonged', were remorselessly hunted and driven outside the parish boundaries.

³⁵ Porter, Roy *English Society in the Eighteenth Century* Penguin Social History of Britain 1991 p127 Each native was deemed to possess a 'settlement' in one parish, and in one parish only ... could be established most commonly by a) birth in a parish if a bastard, b) having a father there, c) marrying a husband there, d) being hired as a covenant servant for a year there, e) being apprenticed there, f) renting a house there.

The settled poor

Tithing	Hearth tax	Exemptions	Totals
East Meon	102	31	133
Oxenbourne	52	2	54
Langrish	33	14	47
Ramsdean	64	12	76
Combe	25	1	26
Riplington	21	10	31
Bordean	50	1	51
Totals	347	71	418

Table 9 Hearth Tax 1665 exemptions

We get some idea of the number of ‘settled’ poor in East Meon from the 1665 Hearth Tax, because paupers living in their own homes were exempted from paying the tax, *Table 9*. Almost a third of the households in East Meon and Langrish tithings fell into this category, and almost half in Riplington, but many fewer in Oxenbourne, Combe or Bordean. Some ‘settled poor’ were supported and housed by their own kin, so the number of paupers in each tithing would be higher than shown in the list of exemptions.

Vagrant poor

The “Removal” clauses in the 1661 Act required the Overseers to evict migrant paupers who roamed the country, most of them looking for work. Some built shacks on waste land and tried to establish residency. The better-off parishioners who were obliged to pay Poor Rates were keen to see that their money was well spent, and the Vestry required Overseers to root out the vagrants before they could do so.³⁶

³⁶ For a vivid description of the efforts to which an overseer in a Sussex parish went, see D.G.Vaisey (ed) *The Diary of Thomas Turner, 1754 – 1765* CTR Publishing, 1994 p 135.

Removal Orders ³⁷	
1751	<i>Removal order and pass for Elizabeth Tatford alias Redding, singlewoman from Warnford to East Meon</i>
1774	<i>Order for the removal of John Harding, wife Mary and children Mary (9), Elizabeth (8), Ann (4) to East Meon</i>
1774	<i>Order for the removal of William Sims and wife Ann to East Meon</i>
1789	<i>Removal order to Mayfield of Edward Parkes and wife Sarah; from East Meon</i>
1791	<i>Removal order with examination of Margaret Shawyer with her children, Charles aged 6 and James aged 2 to East Meon</i>
1792	<i>Order for the removal of Nathaniel Taylor, wife Mary and children Diana (8) and John (8 months) to East Meon</i>

Table 10 Removal Orders to and from East Meon

Table 10 lists a number of removal orders, to and from East Meon, which were issued at the very end of our period and show that it wasn't just men who roamed the country looking for work. Whole families, often single mothers with children, were removed. Another responsibility of the Overseer was to track down the fathers of babies born to young women who could not afford to keep them, and oblige the parish to support them.

The first welfare state

We can see from the meticulous accounts kept by the Overseers that parish support for the settled poor was not ungenerous; extracts from East Meon's Overseer's account books of the early 18th century show that the poor were supported according to their needs, with food and other necessities, with rent and medical expenses, *Fig 64*. In return, they were expected to do do work where they could. *Fig 65* records what William Pink paid for paupers to spin the wool (which he presumably sold on to manufacturers in Petersfield, noted at the time for the manufacture of white kerseys.

³⁷ East Sussex Record Office PAR422/32/3/57 *Removal order to Mayfield of Edward Parkes and wife Sarah; from East Meon, 1789*, HRO 6M69/PO19/5 *Order for the removal of William Sims and wife Ann to East Meon* HRO 46M69/PO19/14 *Order for the removal of John Harding, wife Mary and children Mary (9), Elizabeth (8), Ann (4)* 1774 HRO 46M69/PO19/14 *Order for the removal of Nathaniel Taylor, wife Mary and children Diana (8) and John (8 months) to East Meon* HRO 46M69/PO19/14 1792 *Removal order with examination of Margaret Shawye with her children, Charles aged 6 and James aged 2 to East Meon*

90	One Pie of Mutton 23.	J. Terrill	0 5 9
90	four Loaves of Bread	L. Garvin	0 1 7
90	two Gallons of Meal	do	0 1 9
40	two Hamper Beds	A. Whitcomb	0 2 2
40	One Yard of flossh	Wm Pinke	1 5 8
90	half a yard of Red flossh	do	0 1 0
90	three pounds of flossh	J. Whitcomb	0 1 0

Fig 67. 1727 accounts, detail. Note names of suppliers – Terrill, Whitcombe, Pinke

Paupers, both men and women, also worked in the fields. Gilbert White described the situation in Selborne, not ten miles away, in a letter written in 1781: “We abound with poor; many of whom are sober and industrious, and live comfortably in good stone or brick cottages, which are glazed and have chambers above stairs; mud buildings we have none. Besides the employment from husbandry, the men work in hop gardens, of which we have many, and fell and bark timber. In the spring and summer the women weed the corn; and enjoy a second harvest in September by hop-picking. Formerly, in the dead months, they availed themselves greatly by spinning wool for making of *barragons*, a gentle corded stuff, much in vogue at that time for summer wear; and chiefly manufactured at Alton, a neighbouring town, by some of the people called Quakers but from circumstances this trade is at an end³⁸.” Selborne appears not to have had a village workhouse, while East Meon had built one sixty years before White’s letter was written.

The workhouse

In 1722 an Act was passed authorising churchwardens and overseers to buy or rent buildings for the lodging, maintenance and employment of the poor. East Meon had its own workhouse by 1727, situated in what is now Workhouse Lane³⁹. By now, paupers were issued with gowns embroidered with ‘P’ for ‘pauper’ embroidered and were known as ‘goodmen’ or, the women, ‘goodies’. East Meon’s was well known to be a decent workhouse, with the inevitable result that migrant paupers from elsewhere tried all the harder to establish residency in the parish.

³⁸ White, Gilbert *The Natural History of Selborne* Little Toller Books, 2014 P32

³⁹ The name was not ascribed to the street until the twentieth century, by which time the old workhouse had burned down.



Fig 68 East Meon's workhouse, burned down in 1910, was next to these cottages and probably similar in appearance⁴⁰

Mortality spikes

The living conditions endured by the 'lesser sort' and by paupers were basic, and made worse by the famines and epidemics which ravaged the country in this period; when plague hit people already weakened by hunger the effects were devastating. (Rosemary Hopewell is researching Epidemics as part of the Farming the Valley research project.) The main killer was bubonic plague which was caused by *Yersinia pestis*, a strain of a bacterium passed on either through the bite of an infected flea (invading the lymph nodes and producing painful swelling or buboes) or by an infected person's cough or breath, a mode of transmission that rapidly led to lung failure. The fleas were carried by rodents, especially rats, who found thatched timbered houses far more hospitable than those made of brick or stone. Fleas thrived in humid weather of about twenty to twenty-five degrees celsius, so if summer temperatures persisted into a rainy autumn, they could survive for quite a while⁴¹.

Study of Parish Registers of burials for the first 60 years of the 17th century demonstrates that the parish of East Meon suffered no fewer than seven 'mortality crises' in that time, almost certainly caused by epidemics⁴².

⁴⁰ Standfield G *A History of East Meon* Phillimore 1984 p52

⁴¹ Shapiro, James 1606 *The year of Lear*, Faber & Faber 2015 pp 321/2

⁴² HRO, and www/eastmeonhistory.org.uk, *East Meon Parish Registers, Burials*

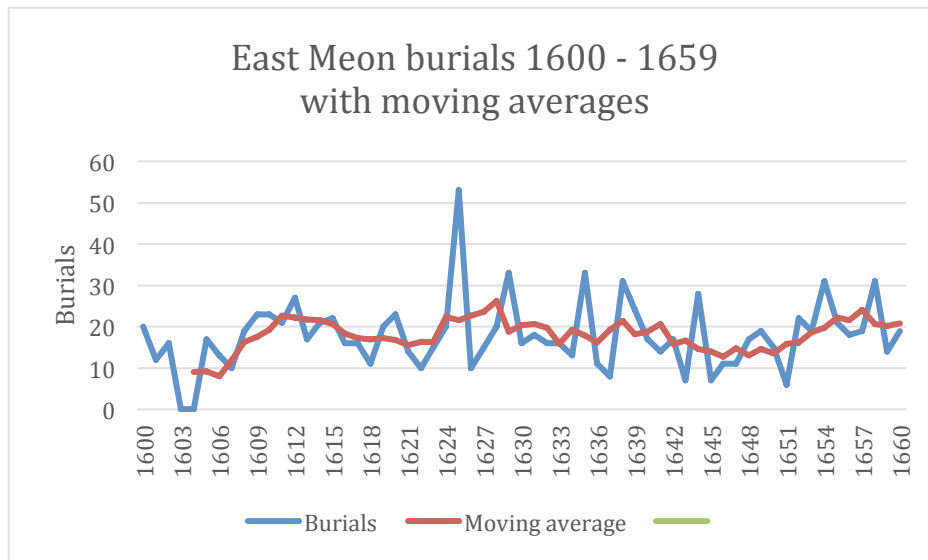


Table 11 Mortality crises in East Meon 1600 - 1659

The blue line in *Table 11* shows the number of burials each year, and the red line shows the average burials for five years up to that point. Where the burials are one-and-a-half times larger than the moving average, this is defined as a 'mortality crisis'⁴³. The worst single year for East Meon burials was in 1625 which was more than twice the moving average; this is almost certainly the result of bubonic plague. Remarkably, the manorial records make no mention of this crisis, probably because most of the dead were poor people.

Date of burial	Year of burial	Christian name	Surname
9-Aug	1625	Katherine	Marshame
13-Aug	1625	Agnes	Watlington
13-Aug	1625	Dorothie	Heath
23-Aug	1625	John	Pinsarce
23-Aug	1625	Judeth	Pinsarce
23-Aug	1625	John	Ruminger
29-Aug	1625	Joan	Kerby
29-Aug	1625	Margaret	Hencocke
29-Aug	1625	Francis	Cager
29-Aug	1625	Francis	Cager
30-Aug	1625	Richard	Cager
30-Aug	1625	Olliffe	Cager
11-Sep	1625	William	Fillpott
11-Sep	1625	William	Hencocke
11-Sep	1625	Joan	Cager

⁴³ Hinde, Andrew. *A review of methods for identifying 'mortality crises' using parish record data* P84. *Local Population Studies Sources and Methods* No 79, pp 90 - 96. 2007. To define a 'mortality year' we have followed Hinde's guidance: 'there are arguments for using either R.S. Schofield's multiplier of x 2 or Derek Turner's of x 1.5 to define a mortality crisis year'; our parameters are therefore between the two. The figure for 1625 is more than double the moving average, above the Schofield figure and the other five years are above Turner's 1.5 .)

12-Sep	1625	Richard	Sucket
12-Sep	1625	Sarai	Hencocke
13-Sep	1625	Joan	Hencocke
14-Sep	1625	John	Hencocke
16-Sep	1625	Rosse	Aburrow
17-Sep	1625	William	Hencocke
18-Sep	1625	Joan	Godden
23-Sep	1625	Joan	Hedges
26-Sep	1625	Edward	Aburrow
26-Sep	1625	Margery	Hedges
29-Sep	1625	Anthony	Aburrow
29-Sep	1625	John	Aburrow
31-Sep (sic)	1625	Marie	Harbard
2-Oct	1625	Ursela	Harbard
9-Oct	1625	John	Cranhame
9-Oct	1625	Margaret	Godden
13-Oct	1625	Edward	Suckett
18-Oct	1625	Thomas	Suckett
19-Oct	1625	Francis (male)	Loving
24-Oct	1625	Joan	Willis
25-Oct	1625	Joan	Suckett
29-Oct	1625	Marie	Suckett
5-Nov	1625	Margarett	Suckett
6-Nov	1625	Thomas	Holmes
29-Dec	1625	John	Godden

Table 12, East Meon burials between August and December 1625

The names which appear in the burials register, *Table 12*, between August and early November that year show clusterings of surnames: five Cagers, five Hencoakes, four Aburrows and Sucketts, two each of Godden, Hedge and Harbard; this suggest that the plague wrought havoc in vulnerable households. Twelve burials took place in August, sixteen in September and nine in October⁴⁴.

The second worst of these crises was in 1644; in March that year the parliamentary army under Sir William Waller camped in the parish of East Meon, which might indicate that this year's mortality was caused by another form of epidemic, 'war typhus', which accompanied both Civil War armies. Although analysis of the burials register, show that most burials that year took place in February and March, before the army arrived, David Hopkins has pointed out that the Roundheads had occupied Petersfield in the preceding month, and plague travelled along busy routes like the one between Petersfield and East Meon, so probably preceded the arrival of the army⁴⁵. During the chaos of the subsequent interregnum, the whole Meon Valley suffered a decade of high mortality, as did much of the rest of the country.

⁴⁴ HRO, *Winchester Diocese Pipe rolls* (11M59/B1/329, 11M59/B2/17/154 and 155) I am indebted to David Rymill of the HRO for his research into the pipe rolls.)

⁴⁵ Slack, Paul *The Impact of Plague in Tudor and Stuart England* Clarendon Press Oxford 1990 p73

Ale houses and inns



Figs 69 & 70 Extracts from 18th century transcription of 1567 rental book of East Meon manor, showing George Inn, 1 cottage and curtilage

The 'lesser sorts' were roundly criticised by Puritan clergymen, for the amount of time they spent in ale houses. Considering the dark, dank conditions of Early Modern cottages and hovels, it is not surprising that many sought the warmth and light of the ale house. Basically, an ale house was just a cottage where the wife brewed the beer, and customers sat at the kitchen table to drink it; East Meon would have had several during our period. Hops were grown locally, and hop fields continued into the 19th century; most farms would have had a malting floor and have brewed their own beer. There were also two inns – strictly speaking, a coaching inn providing a change of horses, overnight accommodation and sustenance to travellers, but East Meon was never on a coaching route. Perhaps the bishop's palace brought a regular stream of diocesan officials who needed accommodation. Figs 69 & 70 are snippets from the 1567 Rental Book of East Meon village, and provide evidence that the George Inn was in business at that time. The rent, for a 'cottage and curtilage' was a mere 2 shillings.



Fig 71 Assignment of lease of George Inn to Gregory Mallory.

Nearly a hundred years later, we have this record, Fig 71, of the Assignment by the diocese of the lease of the George to Gregory Mallory. A clerk has signed, in rather wobbly handwriting, in the name of the Bishop of Winchester; the Diocese owned the property, which may have been confiscated and even closed down during the Commonwealth, and subsequently restored.



Fig 72. The George Inn, predominantly built in the 17th century



Fig 73, The Angel Inn, now Cross Cottages, also built in the 17th century

Edward Roberts suggests that the George we see today was built in the 17th century and Gregory Mallory may have been responsible for replacing an earlier hostelry, following a lean time for inns during the Commonwealth. The other inn was the Angel, in the Cross – today, named Cross Cottages. Because no coinage was issued during the Commonwealth, some businesses issued their own coinage, and Freddie Standfield refers to a farthing ‘having on its obverse ‘JOHN WHITCOMBE AT YE .. *the blank space is filled with a representation of an angel* ... and on the reverse IN EAST MEANE.66 MW.’ ’66 refers to the year 1666⁴⁶.

Paupers were not irresponsible to drink beer; it was much safer than the polluted water of the time. Even children drank ‘small beer’ – weak ale – and the parish brewed ‘church ale’, which it provided to the poor and gave to parishioners on feast days. However, ale houses were looked down on by the righteous as places where the undeserving poor spent money which should have been used to support and feed their families. The Puritans terminated the practice of making and selling church ales;⁴⁷. Which brings us to the place of the church and the influence of the Puritans.

⁴⁶ Standfield, F.G *Ibid* p50

⁴⁷ N.J.G.Pounds *A History of the English Parish* Cambridge University Press 2000 p241 ‘It is in keeping with the general tenor of the Puritan revolution that fees and rentals from church pews went some way towards replacing the income from church ales. Long sermons and seats on which to endure them took the place of ritual feasting and drinking’

The parish

The vestry



Fig 75. 1753 Parish Rates, note Robert Sharrock of Court Farm



Fig 76. 1753 Signatures to Vestry minutes, note Steele, Tirrell, Pincke, Sharrock



Fig 77. 1665 Hearth Tax, including Randoll, Terrill, Pink



Fig 78. 1755 Signatures to Vestry minutes, note Richard Eyles I, Robert Pink



Fig 79 Churchwardens 1754, Steele, Pink, (& 1814, Richard Eyles III and Merrill)

Figs 75 – 79 are a sample of the paperwork produced by the parish officials of East Meon across our period. Stuart monarchs and their Privy Councils knew that parishes had the capacity to raise taxes and govern locally⁴⁸. Appointing Overseers of the Poor was only one of the responsibilities delegated (under the supervision of local JPs) to the parish vestry. This comprised between four and six parish gentry and yeoman farmers who, unpaid, handled affairs matters thought to have been beyond the grasp of ordinary parishioners⁴⁹. It met in the church vestry, while larger parish meetings were held in the nave.

⁴⁸ HRO 46M68 *East Meon parish papers*

⁴⁹ Pounds *ibid*, p192

The vestry was a combination of today's Parochial Parish Council, Parish Council and District Council; its most important members were the two church wardens, who were responsible for the management of both the church and the secular parish. The vestry appointed village constables, overseers of roads and bridges, as well as dog-catchers, ale-tasters and of course the church servants, clerk, vergers and sexton. The vestry was required to collect not only parish rates, but also national levies such as the 1665 hearth tax. The names of our village worthies reappear constantly on both church and civil records.

Puritans



Fig 80. The transept arches of All Saints Church today



Fig 81. Faint traces of figures of angels on north-west transept column

The Reformation, of course, had changed the look of the church interior. During the catholic middle ages, the nave had been separated from the chancel by a heavy rood screen carved with saints and a floral pattern, and it probably had a wooden Calvary, or 'rood', on top of the screen and a 'doom', or Last Judgment, painted on the archway (traces of two carved angels can just be seen on the north west pillar of the transept, Fig 81). Parishioners peering through into the chancel would have seen the light of wax candles glinting on the pewter or silver chalices and candlesticks and the bright colours of the priest's vestments. Under Edward and Elizabeth, the authorities removed all idols and whitewashed the murals, producing the bare white walls we see today.

Partly in recognition of the monarch as head of the English church and partly to provide some relief for the bare post-Reformation walls, many churches erected royal arms: in 1613, All Saints placed James I's arms, probably in the transept (Fig 82, now above the south door)⁵⁰. It would have been hidden when William Waller's parliamentary army encamped outside the village in 1644; the troops destroyed any remaining traces of monarchy or 'idolatry'. The vicar, John Shrigley, was fortunate to survive the Civil War; the Rump Parliament appointed commissioners to eject 'ignorant and scandalous' (i.e. traditional anglican) clergymen; in all 2,425 benefices were sequestered and their vicars replaced with more puritan clergymen⁵¹. Shrigley had been appointed by Walter Curle, the Laudian and monarchist Bishop of Winchester, and must have kept his head down during the visit of the Parliamentary Army. The diocese itself did not escape the puritan purge.

⁵⁰ Pounds *ibid* p497

⁵¹ McCall, Fiona *Baal's Priests* Ashgate 2013, p5, Watts, Michael R. *The Dissenters from the Reformation to the French Revolution*. Clarendon Press. Oxford 1978 p77



Fig 82 Stewart coat of arms above south door, 1613



Fig 83. Walter Curle, Bishop of Winchester 1632 - 1646

Landowners

Bishop Curle fled to Soberton when Winchester fell to the Parliamentarians in 1645; he died in 1647. In 1645, Parliament had passed a Bill for the Sale of Episcopal Lands and the diocese of Winchester was stripped of all its estates⁵². Court and South Farms were sold to Parliamentary supporters Nathan Hallowes (a Derby MP) and Richard Dannald respectively⁵³. In 1649, the two Meon manors were bought by Francis Allen MP, a contentious and wealthy London goldsmith-financier, who had arranged the funding for the execution of Charles I⁵⁴.



Fig 84. Sir Stephen Fox by John James Baker; Fox was financier to Charles II and leaseholder after the Restoration of East Meon manorial lands



Fig 85. Start of 19 page letter from Charles II allocating Court Farm to Stephen Fox⁵⁵

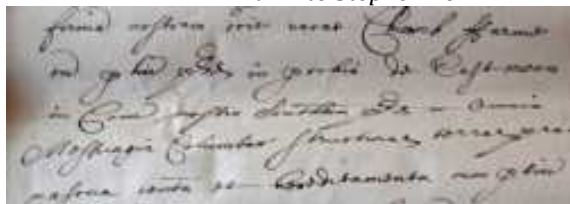


Fig 86. Page 7 specifying Church Ffarm

⁵² McCall *ibid* p6

⁵³ Victoria County History *Hampshire* p65 footnote

⁵⁴ David Hopkins www.eastmeonhistory.net/wars/the-civil-war-in-east-meon. British History Online, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-treasury-books> vol 1 pp 270 – 281 *Forfeit of lease from Francis Allen to Stephen Fox*

⁵⁵ HRO M49/T50 *Copy of letter patent granted to Stephen Fox to Charles II, Court Farm, part of the manor of East Meon 1660*

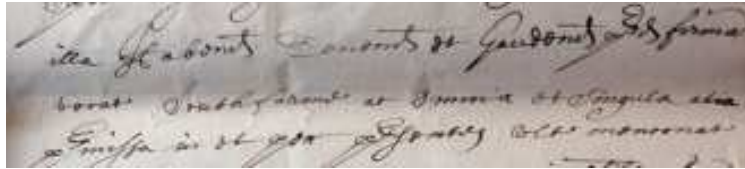


Fig 87 p15 Firma vocet Southffarme



Figs 88 & 89. Sale of South Farm by Stephen Fox, 1662, to William Hearst, London Doctor⁵⁶

Upon the Restoration of Charles II in 1660, the manors were restored to the diocese. Tenancy of the principal estates, however, was granted to followers of the king: Court, Church and South Farms went to Stephen Fox, the man who had financed Charles's exile and negotiated his return to England. A letter patent, *Figs 86- 87*, ran to 22 pages in handwritten Latin, making the gift and specifying the rents to be paid. It states: '*lett unto the aforesaid Stephen ffox All that the Site (?) of the Mannor and Capitall Messuage and Mansion house of east Meon with the Appurtenances with the County of Southton commonly called or known by the name of Court Farms*⁵⁷. *And all houses, Edifices Buildings Barns Stables Dowhouses Orcharde Gardens arrable Lande, Meadows, Pastures, ffoodings, Woods, Underwoode, Profittes, Comodities and Appurtenaces whatosever thereunto belonging, appertaining or therewith.* In 1662, Fox sold South Farm to William Hearst, a London Doctor (*Figs 88 & 89*).

⁵⁶ HRO 8M49/T51 *Bargain and sale of South Farm, part of the manor of East Meon, i) Stephen Fox Middx esq. ii) William Hearst of London, doctor*

⁵⁷ Court Farms ... more than one? Other pages refer to Fox receiving the lands previously let to Francis Allen, who had also leased South Farm.



Fig 90. Indenture of Heydon Woods to Sir William Lewis 1660⁵⁸

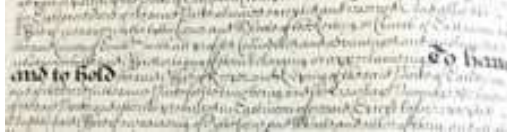


Fig 91. Lease of the office of the keeper of the park to Sir William Lewis, 1661⁵⁹



Fig 92 Sir William Lewis, Bordean.

Sir William Lewis, owner of Bordean and a Parliamentarian, had rented land at Hyden Wood and Park. Lewis had been appointed governor when Portsmouth capitulated to the Parliamentary Army in 1642, but was a victim (along with 270 MPs) of 'Pride's Purge' in 1648 and was imprisoned for three years. He was subsequently a leader of the moderate Presbyterian group which aimed for conditional Restoration and, when Charles II came to the throne, his property was given back⁶⁰. With all these lands went the rights to the rectorial, or greater, tithes, but that is another story

Conclusion

The social structure of East Meon was changed by the Civil War and Restoration. New sub-manors were established and to the handful of previous minor gentry were added knights and esquires, including some absentee landlords. Early modern East Meon was unnoticed by the rest of the world, a middling sort of agricultural community governed by middling sorts of parish worthies. During the first part of the period, the Diocese commanded large revenues from the fruit of its demesne land, from the rent and services of its tenants, and from the greater or rectorial tithes; no resident was rich enough to rise above the level of minor gentry. Until the 19th century, the hard-working vestry looked after both the church and the parish, caring for the resident poor, ensuring law and order, maintaining the roads and bridges and catching stray dogs. There was a housing boom in the early 17th century, both of substantial households and of cottages with their four acres. Even within this community, the gap between rich and poor was cavernous, and the ill-fed poor suffered most in the frequent epidemics which swept sixteenth and seventeenth century England.

⁵⁸ HRO 11M59/D1/2 page 13 *Lease of Heydon Woods at East Meon part of the Winchester Bishopric Estate, to Sir William Lewis* 20th Nov 1660

⁵⁹ HRO 11M59/D1/2 page 53 *Lease of the Office of the keeper of the park at East Meon, part of the Winchester Bishopric Estate, to Sir William Lewis, 11 Feb 1661*

⁶⁰ Keeler, *Long Parliament*. pp250-1; Eg. 1048, f. 74; Underdown, *D Pride's Purge*, pp195, 346; Clarendon, *Rebellion*, p191.)

This study has merely scratched the surface of information contained in the records of early modern East Meon; it has not attempted to investigate the nature of the crops grown in the parish, the markets they served and the prices they reached in years of plenty and of famine, or any other aspects of agriculture which will be researched. The records contain names and details of many more families, some of which survived in the parish for four centuries and more; they hold information about the land leased to each individual, including house and field names some of which survive to this day and these will be tabulated, to work out how large and where their holdings were. East Meon History Group has won a Heritage Lottery Fund grant which to pay for a cartographer to draw up maps of these holdings, showing the effects of the enclosures and the growth of large estates. The same approach is being applied to other periods, from the late Iron Age to the 20th century. The research will be presented in talks to the Group, in papers and on the website www.eastmeonhistory.org.uk.



East Meon farmland photographed by Chris Warren

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