

Wheathampstead (Watamestede) Manor - key facts and sources

Herts archaeology shows activity for both Mesolithic and Iron Age.

Wheathampstead Manor dates back to the 11th century.

Domesday Book 1086 Hertfordshire p.135b

9 LAND OF WESTMINSTER ABBEY

In DACORUM Hundred

1. The Abbot of St. Peter's of Westminster holds WHEATHAMPSTEAD (Watamestede)

It answers for 10 hides. Land for 10 ploughs. In lordship 5 hides; 3 ploughs there; a further 2 possible.

A priest with 15 villagers have 5 ploughs.

12 smallholders; 9 cottagers.

4 mills at 40s; meadow for 4 ploughs; pasture for the livestock; woodland, 400 pigs.

The total value is and was £16; before 1066 £30.

This manor lay and lies in the lordship of St. Peter's Church.

The Rectory

By 13th century Wheathampstead Rectory Manor was established. Court rolls and draft minutes etc.

1513 - 1933. Miscellaneous stewards papers 1859 - 1933 Hertfordshire Records Office (hereafter HRO) court books 1555 - 1556, 1558, 1560 - 1561 GLC.

Wheathampstead with Harpenden Court rolls 1271 - 1805. Rentals 1650 - 1659. Account roll 1335 - 1336. Surrenders and admissions 16th - 18th century HRO. Court rolls 1539 - 1541, 1636 - 1645 not consecutive. Account 1626-7, account of quit rents 1799 HRO BM Court roll 1699 - 1700. Additional manuscript 46362. Rent rolls of Westminster Abbey Manors 1705. Additional manuscript 15878.

Court Rolls 1663 - 1937. Two files papers relating to farm from 1869 - 1945. Some surveys and valuations 1772 - 1815. General survey of Chapter estates in 1873. Plans of estates at Wheathampstead surveyed 1799. Working papers relating to Bury Farm and the conveyance of the farm 1st November 1945.

Mumford 1800 shows rectory with tythe barn, stable yard, garden and moat. Also 10 further plots giving a total of 40 acres (abandoned for their property in the upper field 1815). Independence gained during 13th century from Wheathampstead Manor.

It is assumed that this independence continued until 1970. (Wheathampstead Rectory had been subject to the separate laws Westminster Abbey enjoyed as a 'Royal Peculiar'). Further research required. (All matters relating to the church are in the archives at Hertford).

Wheathampstead Manor

The wider Westminster estate was 10,000 acres of which Wheathampstead Manor was the capital messuage. In 1086 (Domesday) it included 1,000 acres in total: the manor of 500 acres of demesne land and 500 acres of land for tenants etc.

Sub manor of Harpendenbury is separate (but included in the 10,000).

Wheathampstead was only one of 60 principal estates in 1086 and 110 in 1535 run from Westminster with bailiff in charge.

Wheathampstead Manor sold in 1945.

The Abbey relied on the Domesday Book for information until the 1315 Extent listing Estates which included land owned and dues paid. All the Estates had to register their land - what a task. (see 1315 Extent)

The Extent was a general charge levied such as Domesday only it was much wider and more effective under the direction of 2 rectors and 5 jurors. All had to stand before the committee stating whether they represented the free tenants, Titeburst, Customary or Kenesbue. The number of works between Michaelmas and Lammas amounted to 70s 4¼ d. This included hens and chickens, harrowing, ploughing cropping and marling etc and whether relief was called for. A copy of the 9 pages of foolscap is available at Bury Farm Cottage. The names of all are clearly shown.

Abbot Walter de Wenlock

In 1225 the decision was made to divide Abbeys into two separate departments; that of the Abbot, responsible for all major decisions relating to the Abbey and that of the Prior who had responsibility for the lay brothers and all Conventual matters.

Hitherto the Prior could make few decisions himself without referring to higher authority. As the Abbeys became ever more wealthy and powerful and the manors owned by the Abbeys more numerous, the Abbots duties and responsibilities increased, often taking him away from the Abbey for days at a time. For example, when Walter de Wenlock was Abbot of Westminster from 1283 - 1307 he made about 500 visits to manors for which he was responsible. Meanwhile the Abbeys themselves suffered from lack of leadership.

Also, following the death of an Abbot, it could take up to 6 months or longer before his replacement took office due to the many mandatory procedures and including the visit to Rome for the Pope's confirmation and blessing.

Walter de Wenlock, Abbot of Westminster, edited by Barbara Harvey

Some of these writings and all those concerning Watamestede were in Latin and have been translated. As mentioned, during the course of his Abbacy, Wenlock made in all some 500 visits to manors belonging to Westminster Abbey, some of them a long distance from Westminster, for example Deerhurst in Gloucester. His retinue was considerable on each occasion.

The Prior had responsibility for some 30 Conventual Manors and the Abbot some 15 manors including some Conventual ones: Watamestede, Aldenham, Stevenage, Ashwell, Great Amwell which he continued to visit. He visited Watamestede on the following two occasions: September 30th 1286 and June 1st/ 2nd 1290.

There is a note regarding these visits to Conventual Manors that he, the Abbot, will not take more money from the said manors than the initial rent which was ongoing (for bread and beer) i.e. he was not responsible any longer for these manors and therefore he was not charging them.

No more is known about the buildings.

Leasing

Leasing began in about 1410. First recorded tenant of the Manor was Lawdy 1498 (see copy of part of 1498 lease). The tenancy continued until 1945 (all tenants listed in Westminster Abbey records).

The mill was tenanted, remaining predominantly under Abbey control, apart from a brief period, until the mid 19th century when it was sold into private hands. In 13th century it was moved to slightly higher land, to accommodate larger wheel, Wheathampstead Manor and its buildings were finally sold in 1953.

Plan 1758

A perched moat required. Monastic moats normally extended to an acre. Dug out 25ft wide all round except northwest corner. Relied on ground water from hillside.

1. The Old Manor House (moated all round with gatehouse overlooking entrance)
2. The Gatehouse (connection by bridge over moat).
3. Chamber and Hall
4. Kitchen
5. Bakehouse, brewery and dairy
6. Granary
7. Other farm buildings
8. Dovecote (remains still present in mid 19th century)
9. Pound (could have served both manors for lost animals)
10. Fishpond

David and Ann Godfrey-Evans, February 2014
(assisted by Nicky Godfrey-Evans)

Appendices and Sources

Map of *Kennesbarne or Harpendenbury*

Architectural drawing of the first floor extending to the roof of the original Hall building

Indenture of Richard Lawdy, gentleman 1498/9

Yeoman Plan 1758 – by courtesy of the Dean and Chapter

1800 Wheathampstead Abbey Surveys

1841 Tithe Map

1861 Lease

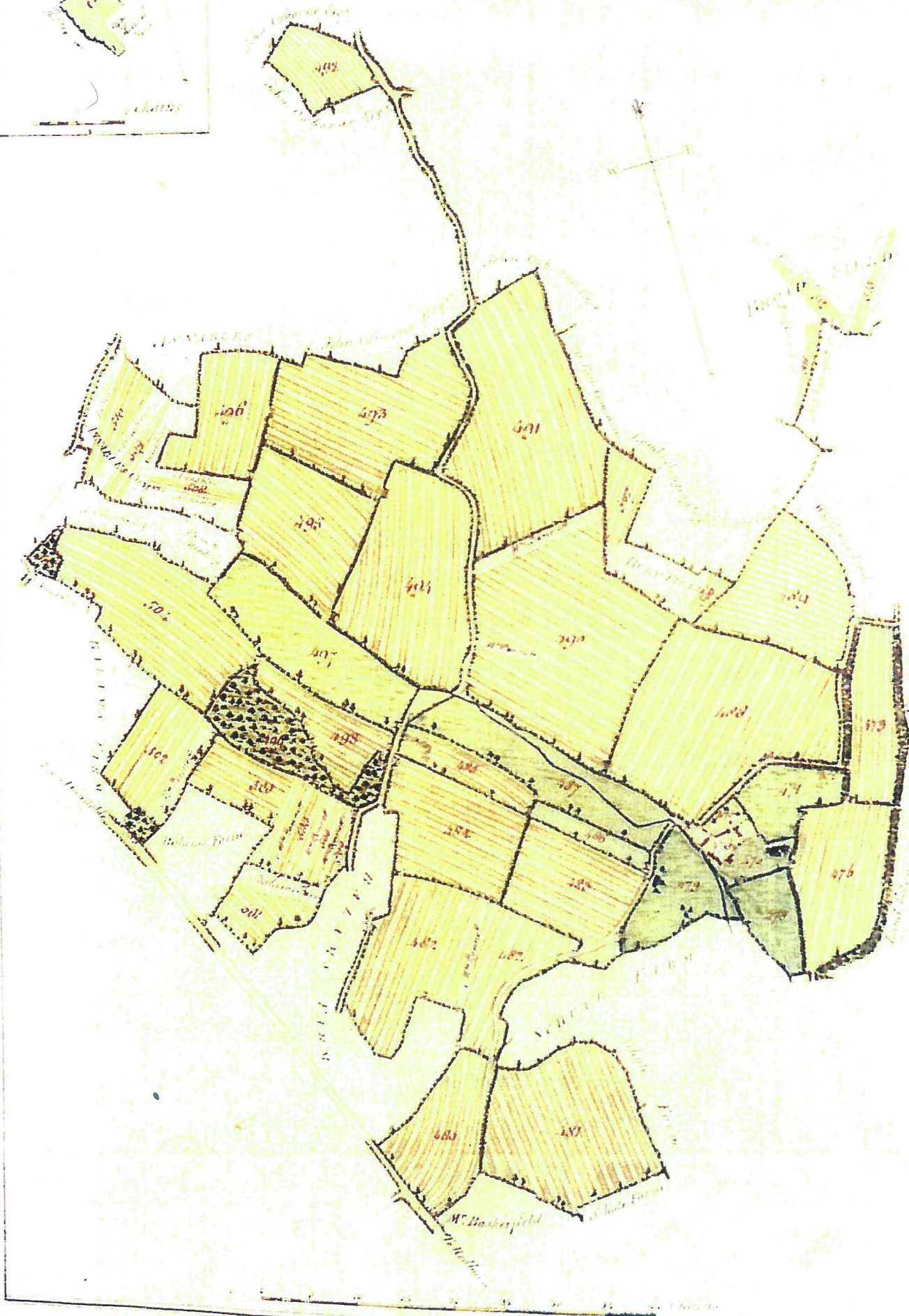
Royal Historical Society – Documents Illustrating The Rule of Walter de Wenlock Abbot of Westminster 1283-1307 Volume 2, edited by Barbara F. Harvey 1965

Westminster Abbey and its Estates in the Middle Ages. Barbara F. Harvey

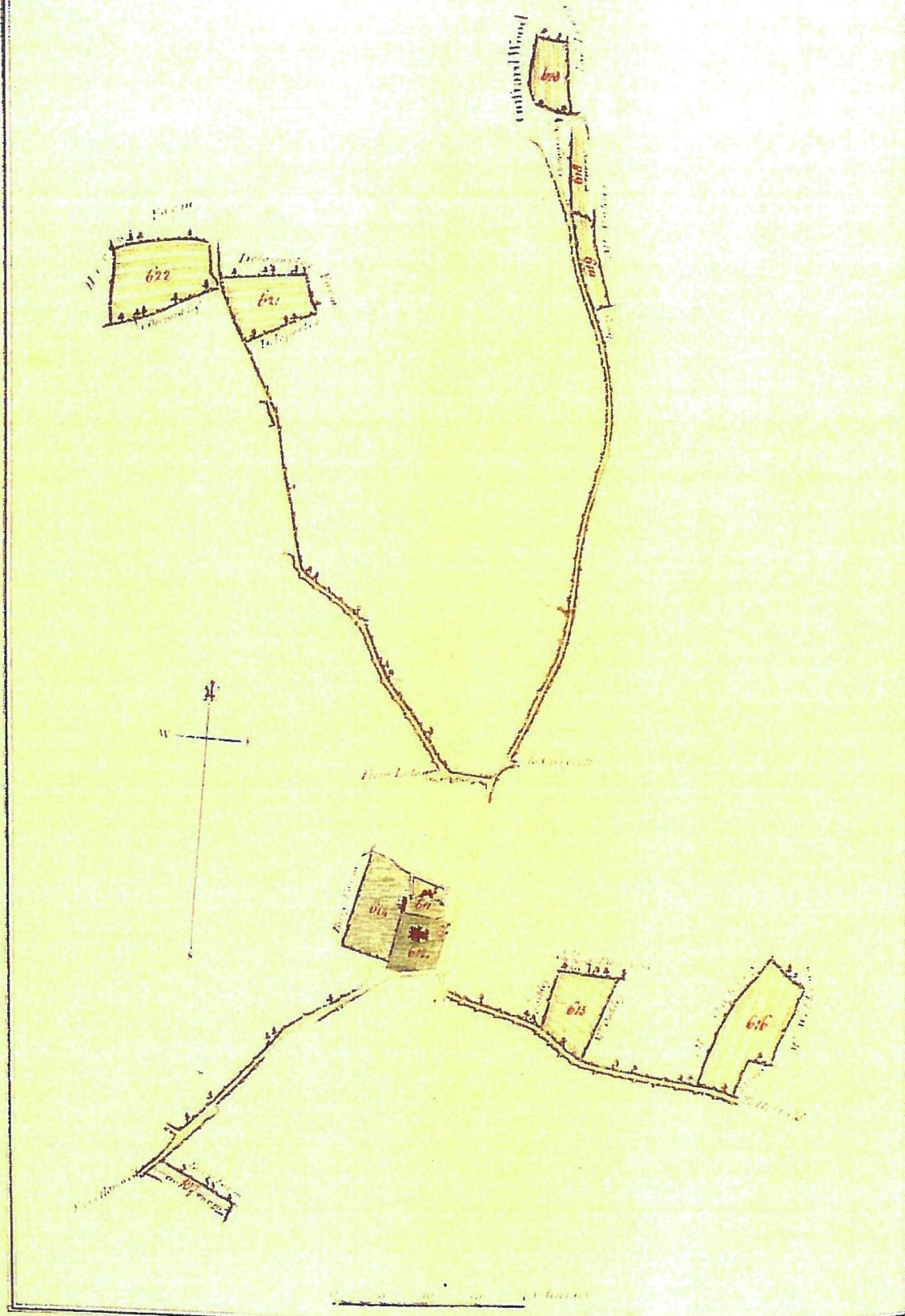
Further Reading

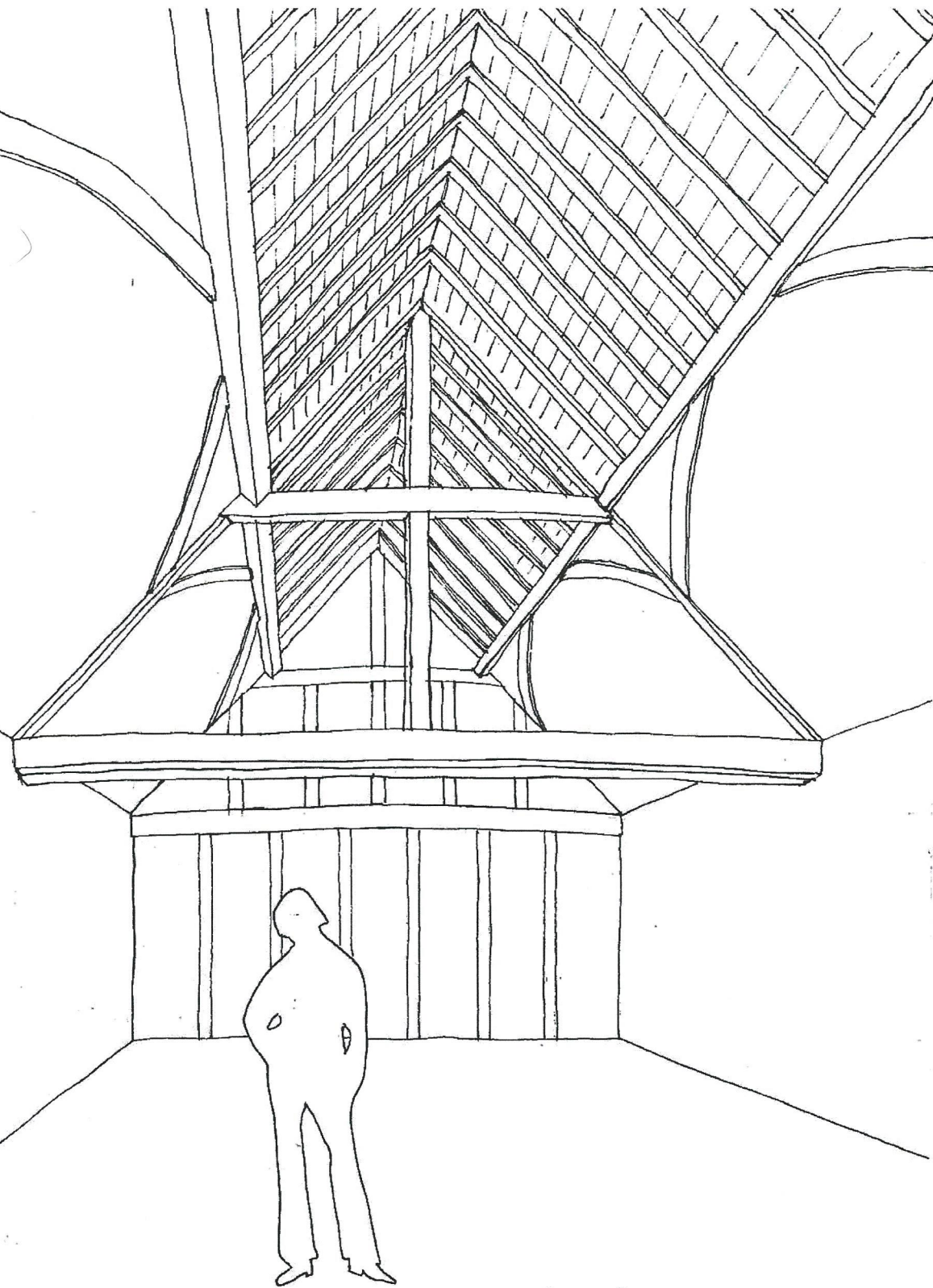
Walter de Wenlock Abbot of Westminster by Ernest Harold Pearce, Litt.D., F.S.A. Bishop of Worcester 1920

KENNESBARN & HARPENDEN BURY



WHETHAMPSTED GLEBE





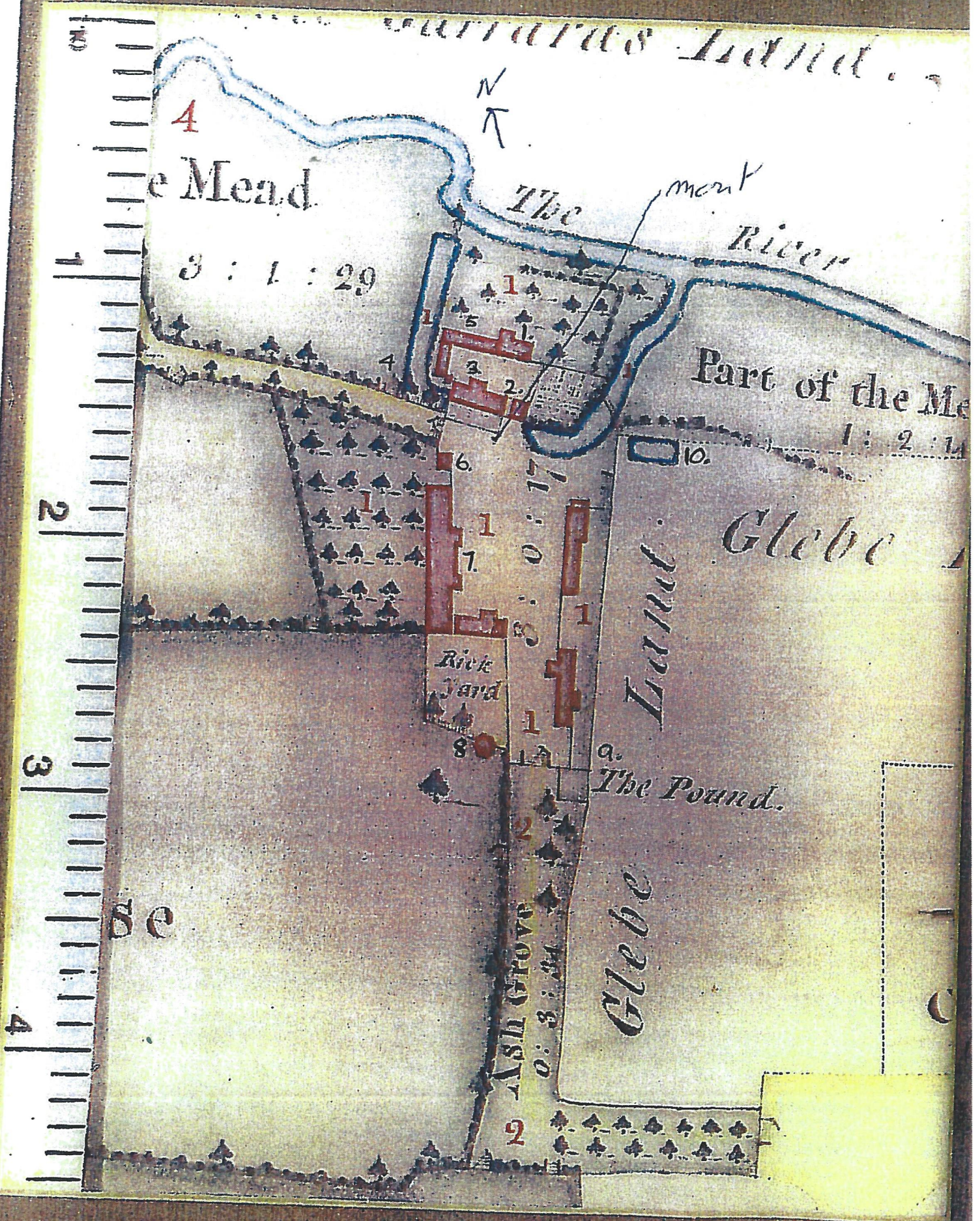
(1) Indenture of Richard Lawdy, gentleman.

Lease from George (Fascet) Abbat and the prior and Convent of Westminster to Richard Lawdy of Wheathampstead, gentleman, of the manor of Wheathampstead with all demesne lands and tithes and with all the warren together with all stock live and dead according to the annexed indenture, as also one close of pasture with one barn thereon called Chapell Hallelwike with the portion of the tithes of the whole parish of Wheathampstead besides that portion late let to John Hunt, farmer of Kenesbernebery, but excepting rents, reliefs, etc., and all that pertains to regality. Lease for 45 years at 27 for the manor and lands and 26 for the tithes and 40 quarters of good and seasonable corn by the accustomed measure which he shall annually deliver. And if it shall happen that any quarter of the said corn be unseasonable and not good and clean the said Richard shall have it back to his own use and pay instead the price according to the London market at that time. And the aforesaid Richard, his executors and assigns shall find for the convent treasurer, the Seneschal and others riding with him 4 times a year to hold courts, food, drink and hospitality, hay, oats and litter for the horses. Provided always that the Abbat, Prior and Convent or their Treasurer or servants at their order shall, if they come, have their hunting, sports and other their lawful amusements without hindrance. And the aforesaid Richard shall have proper heybote, firebote, ploughbote, cartbote and foldbote. And the aforesaid Richard shall have yearly one cloak of the cut of the servants of the Abbat and Convent or 10s., and his wife one cloak of plain cloth or 10s. The Abbat, Prior and Convent shall repair all houses within the manor except thatched houses, which the said Richard shall keep in proper repair. Richard Lawdy and John Lawdy of Wheathampstead, gentlemen, have entered into an obligation touching the covenants of the lease.

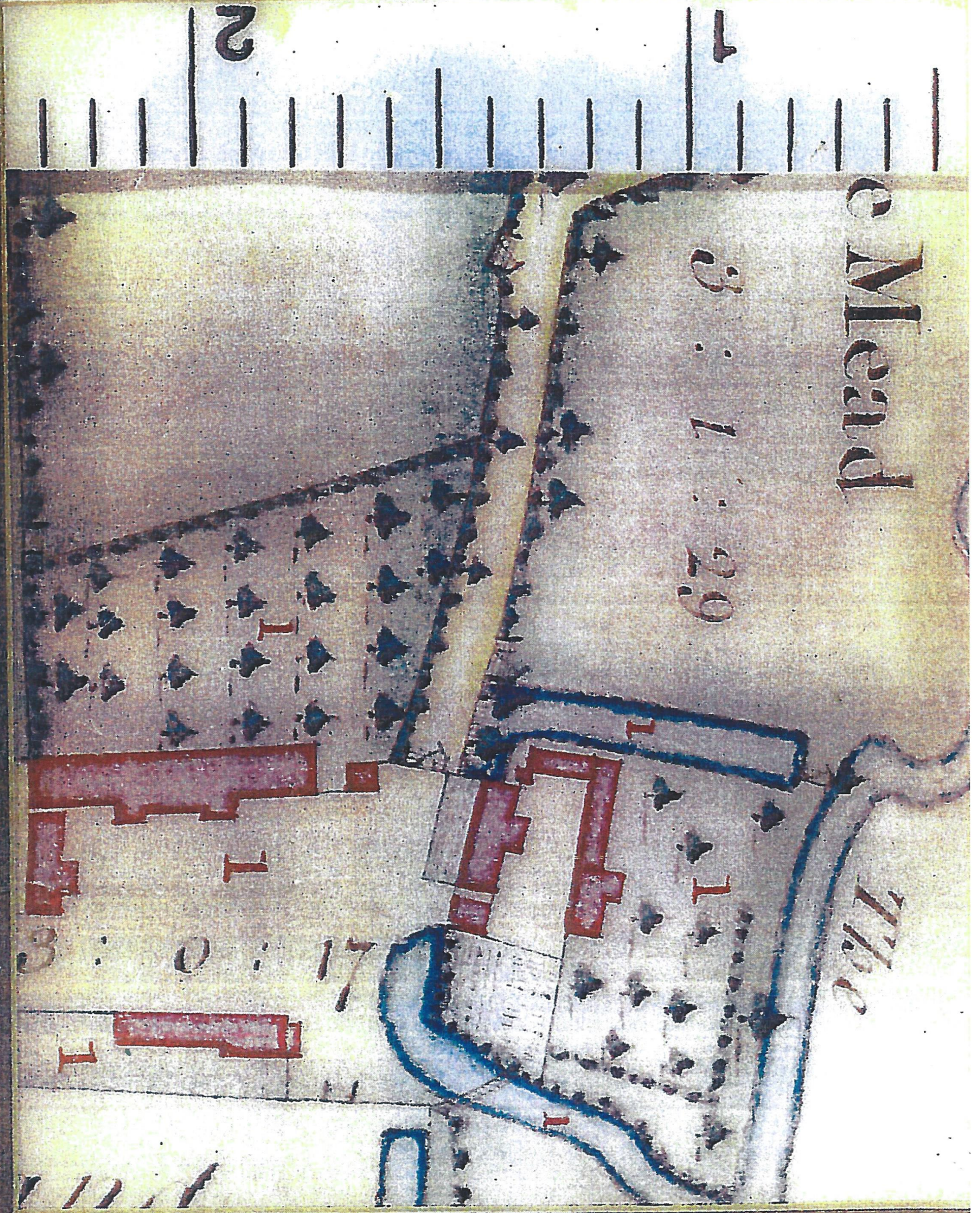
Dat. in Chapter, Feb. 26, 1498/9.

(There follows an inventory of corn, livestock, hay and straw, as well as the furniture, implements, etc. "in aula", "in stabulo", and "in alio stabulo").

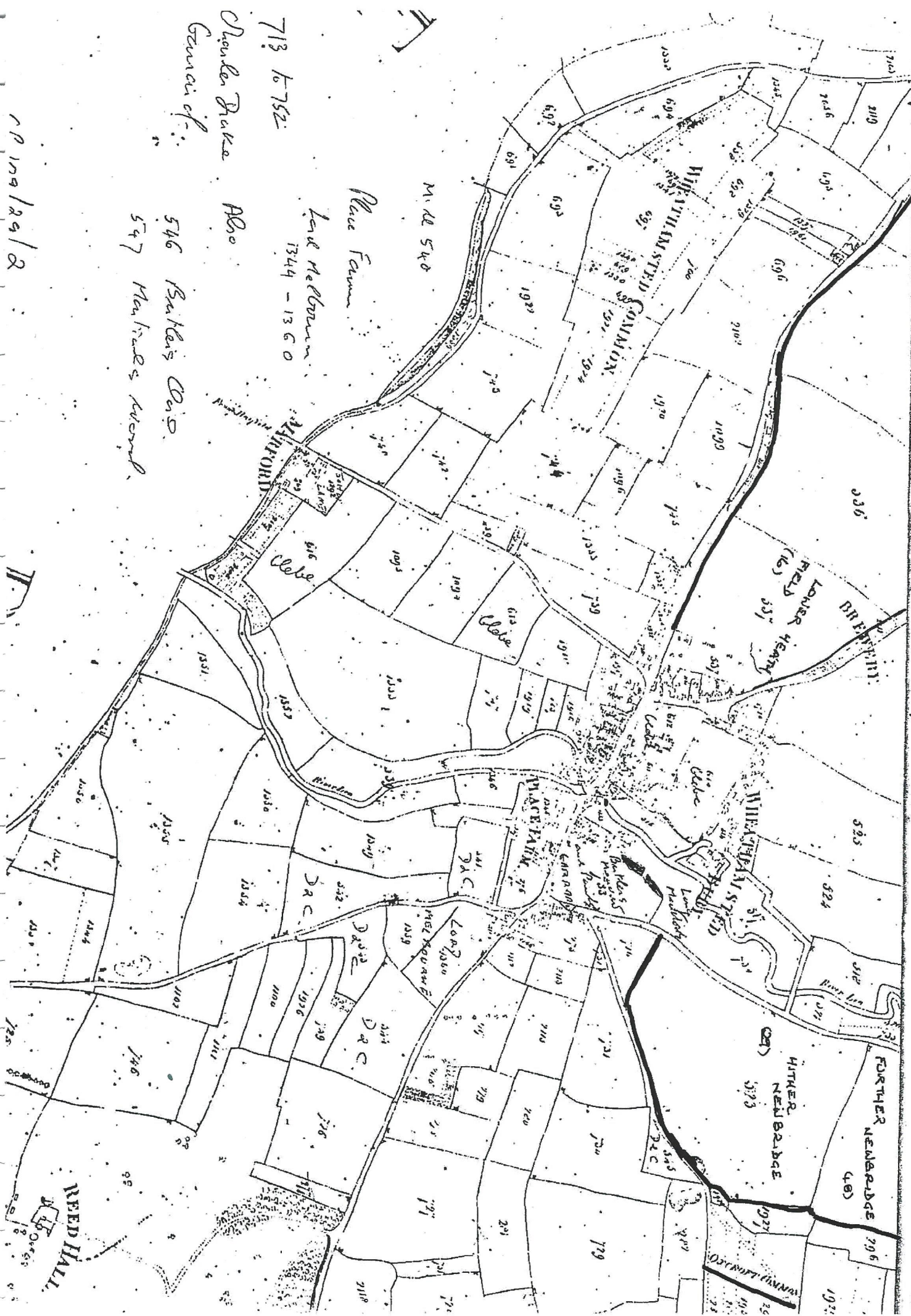
(2) "This indenture made betwene George by the Grace of God Abbot of the monastery of Seint Petir of Westminster, Priour, and Covent of the same place on the one partie, and Richard Lawdy of Whethampsted in the countie of Hertford, Gentilman, on the other partie Witnessith that the said Richard hath couenanted, agreed and undertakyn for to make arere and set up a new Rennyng house of Oke and tymber at the maner of Whethampsted forsaid of the length of 90 fete of assise and in brede 16 fete of assise and every stodde from the Groundsille up to the entertaise shalbe 7 fete of length and every stodde from the entertaise to the side Raison shalbe 7½ fete and the same house shalbe lusted with borde according to the length. Moreover the said Richard hath couenanted to make and sett up a Kille house of Oke and tymber in the said manere of 32 fete in length and 16 fete in brede. And every stodde from the groundsills to the side Raison shalbe 9 fete of length. The same Richard at his owne propre cost and chargis shall make or do to be made all the for-said Rennyng house and Kille house before the fest of Seint Mighell tharchanngeall which shalbe in the yere of our lord god 1500. Except the Abbot, priour and Covent granntith to fynde all the tymber to thacc'oplissement of the said houses at their propre cost. Also the said Richard shall make a sufficient and lafull Rentall and Custumary of all the Rent Fermes and Custumes of the tenants their aperpteynyng to the said manere and delivere the same to the said Abbot or to the Th(esaurer)er of the said monastery before the fest abouewriton. In witnesse of the which thing aswell the Comon Seale of the said Abbot, priour and covent as the seale of the said Richard to thise present indenturis entrechanngeably ben set Yoven the 4th day of the moneth of October the yere of our lord 1498 and the 14th yere of the Reigne of King Henry the 7th."



Yeoman Plan 1758



W. Dunn

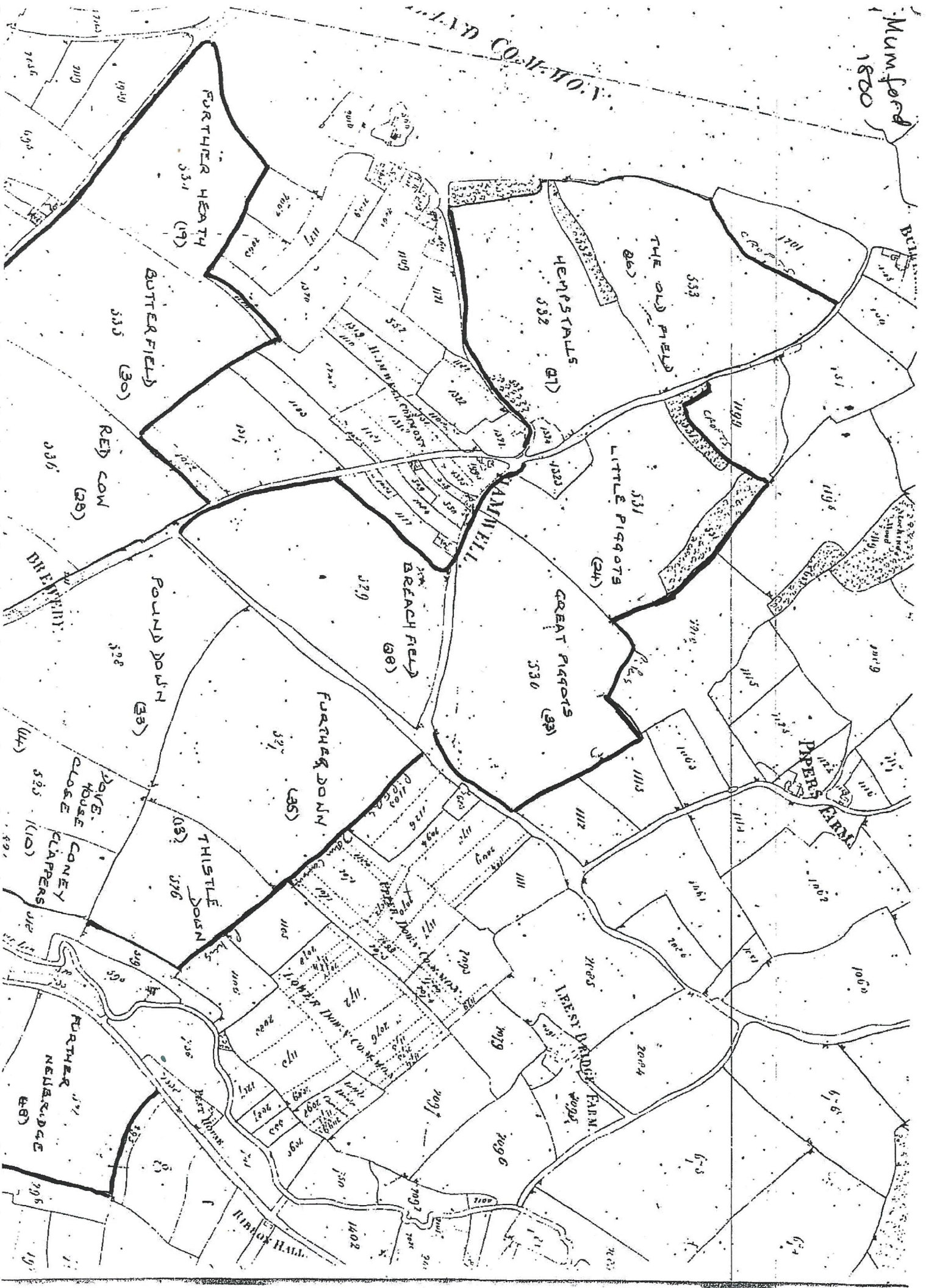


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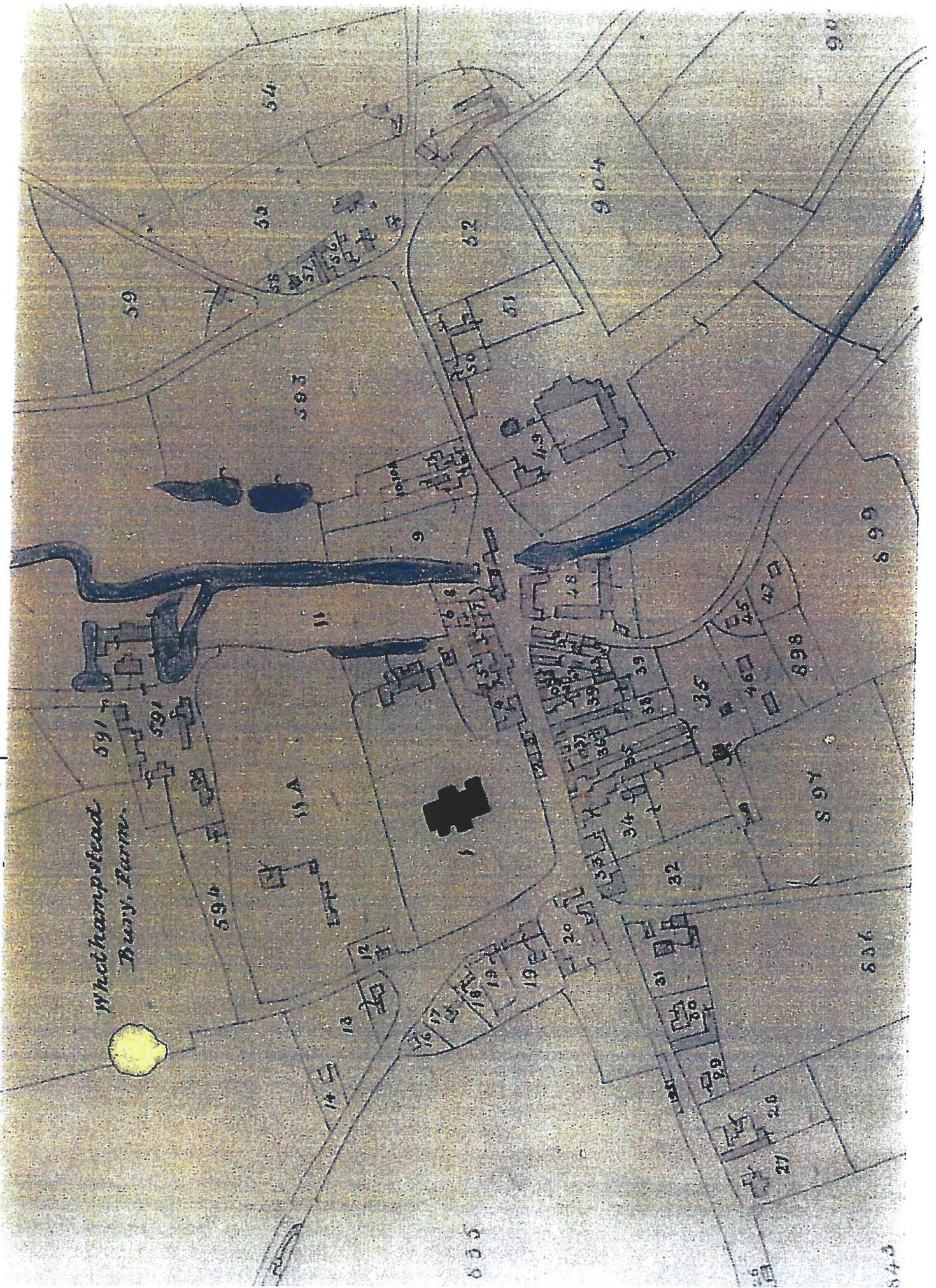
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713 to 752.
Charles Duke
Grandchild of
Also
546 Baileys Co. D.
547 Mainlands Island.

Mumford
1820



0.41 in the map



WESTMINSTER ABBEY'S MANOR OF WHEATHAMPSTEAD

Details to lease 1861 Dean and Chapter to John Miller.

House, timbered framed lath, plaster, weatherboard and tile, partly brick walls in rear containing dining room, drawing room, kitchen, back kitchen, store room, dairy, pantry and cellar on the ground floor and five bedrooms and dressing room over.

Brewhouse, coalhouse and woodhouse to rear.

The buildings comprise open cart shed timber and thatch chaffhouse with loft over timber and tile barn. Timber and tile open shed, cow house, stable, harness room, fowl house and house box of timber and thatch. Stable granary, two loose boxes, piggeries and barn. Stone foundations timber and tile.

Two open sheds, cowhouse and gig house bricktimber and thatch said to have late erected by tenant.

Site of manor usual buildings and dovehouse.

Tithes of Harpenden and Kinnesbarne and watermill. All farm rents, woods, underwoods, waifs, marriages?, strays, reliefs, heriots, escheats, treasures, chattels of felons, fugitives, outlaws, condemned persons and felons of themselves and half of the fishing and half of dovehouse, and other things belonging to the royalty of the said manor.

Always except the D and C all timber trees and timberlike trees growing in or upon the premises or any part there with free liberty of egress or regress to or for the D and C and their officers to fell cut down square and carry away at seasonable time.

Lease for 21 years from Lady Day 1861.

Rent – four score quarters of good sweet seasonable corn and marketable wheat that is to say 40 quarters for the rent of the manor demesne and other premises and 40 quarters for the tithes of Wheathampstead and payable on the usual quarter days.

Bad quality sold on London market.

Keep manor courts four times a year, hospitality, meat, drink, lodging, hay, oats and litter for the horses conveniently and sufficiently. Repairs to bridges, footpaths, premises. Submit map in 3 years. Lawful for lessors to enter to examine premises.