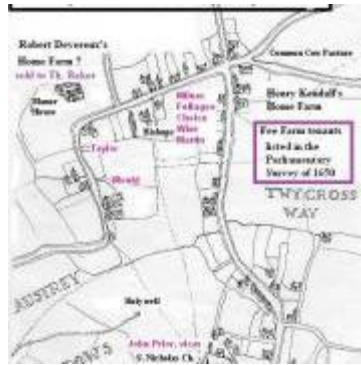


Devereux's Tenants: The 1650 Survey of Austrey Fee Farm Rents

At the end of the Civil War with the start of Cromwell's Commonwealth, a series of Parliamentary Acts were made to survey the possessions of the late King Charles Stuart prior to their sale to raise money for Parliament. An Act for the survey and sale of Fee Farm rents introduced into the Commons on 16th July, 1649 followed a series of earlier Acts and surveys for the disposal of royal estates. These surveys were likened to the Domesday Survey of 1086, in the extent of describing and estimating the value of taxable assets, land and rents. This is particularly relevant at local level to the parish of Austrey in north Warwickshire where an Exchequer survey of "*Lands and Tenements in Alvestry als Austrey in late possession of Charles Stuart, late king of England*", lists all of the Austrey lands, enclosures, houses and cottages belonging to Charles Stuart "late King of England". Drawn up in October 1650 by the appointed Parliamentary Commissioners, this 19 page document provides very detailed and precise details of the houses and lands belonging to the Earl of Essex's estate at the Nether End of the parish, identifying some of the inhabitants of the mid seventeenth century parish and describing their situation and their rental value.



The survey describes the Austrey lands, houses and cottages with appurtenances once in the possession of the late Lord Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex Austrey, recently sold to Thomas Baker of Weston, gentleman, the purchaser rated "*at his desire ... for himself and Edward Allen of London, gent.*" Devereux who had held these lands in fee simple for the past eighteen years was the third earl, a courtier in Charles I's entourage, son of the famous Elizabethan courtier executed for treason by Elizabeth I. His twenty-one year lease was granted by letters patent of Charles I on 16th June, 1638, for an original purchase price of £888-12-0. Its current valuation of £31-7-4 p.a. at the start of the survey represented its "clear improved" value, with £18 accruing in yearly rents. Despite his position as Captain General responsible for the king's safety, Devereux attempted to broker a peace settlement in the struggle between king and parliament and was appointed Commander of Parliamentary forces at the start of the war. He held this post until he resigned his commission in 1645 after a series of setbacks, which led to the formation of Oliver Cromwell's new model army. It is unlikely that Devereux ever visited his Austrey estate although his kinsman, Justice Sir George Devereux, collected poll money from the parish for the county in 1641. These Austrey lands were surveyed and sold off to raise money for Parliament at the end of the Civil War. A list of troopers attached to the survey suggests that the manor house was still under occupation by Parliamentary troops at the time it was drawn up. (E121/5/1)



The Survey starts with a description of the main structure, the manor house “*a Messuage or dwelling house with the appurtenances, one Barne consisting of tenne bayes... which doe conteyne in length 140 foote of assize and in breadth 18 foote ...a Pigeon house, Orchard and Garden, and a Backsyde to the said Messuage, bounded by Austrey Street on the east and common fields on west, area three acres one rood*”, valued at £7. This is almost certainly the manor house at the Nether End of the village that formed the original demesne or home farm of the Ferrers estate. It was a quite substantial house, “*consisting of eleven rooms, six below stayers and five above*”. The tiled and thatched outhouses included a cow house and a stable 36 ft by 18 ft. and a pigeon house, “*reasonable well stocked with pigeons*”. (E320/T12)

The house was attached to two pasture closes. One (‘*the Overclose*’) *abutting on lands of Thomas Taylor on the south and Austrey Street on the north, with an area of six acres*”. The other “*near a messuage, Austrey Street on the south side, a Common in the occupation of Thomas Page on the north, area two acres*”, valued at 80s. The survey also records “*several parcels of meadow in Read Meadow... one west of New Meadow, one east of Long Meadow, with a total area of seven acres and twenty-three acres of arable strips in Orton Way Field intermingled with those of the inhabitants, including ‘Millway Common’ on the west and 14 acres 3 roods in Lesemores and Hollywell Brook Field and including Kings Close, in the occupation of John Prior, the vicar or his assigns.*

Some of these pasture closes might be found on the later Tithe map although most of the scattered field strips would now be impossible to trace. However it might still be possible to identify the approximate location of some of the tenant's holdings, including Richard Read's cottage with an its adjoining barn of two bays, a cowhouse, stable, and orchards, bounded by Austrey Street on the west side, the owner farming seven scattered field strips in *Orton Way Field, Hollywell Brook Field, and Twycross Field*. The survey records other holdings further along on the opposite side of the street, including one occupied by James Prior and another “small cottage” in the occupation of Thomas Mould. The occupiers of the home farm were able to sublet field strips in *Hollywell Field* abutting Mill Post highway and pasture on four pieces of meadow ground, covering some seven acres altogether, containing six “long poles apiece lying in *Read Meadow*, fifteen poles in *New Meadow* and six pieces of meadow ground containing six long poles apiece in *Long Meadow*, these meadow pieces being estimated to be altogether worth £6 annually. Frequent references in the survey to parcels of arable land in the Common fields intermixed with the land of the rest of the inhabitants, variously described as *fellows, followers* or half furlongs, *headlands, through shooters, and baulks*, attest to the survival and extent of Austrey's three great open fields up to 1650.

- **Orton Way Field.** 81 lands covering 27 acres 2 perches, valued at £9-3-4
- **Twycross Way Field.** 61 lands covering 23 acres 3 roods, valued at £7-17-0

- **Hollywell Brook Field** (als *Helemore*). 35 lands in covering 14 acres 3 roods, valued at £3-18-0

The survey provides a very interesting and informative list of seven “undertennes” or tenants of the Devereux estate with the rental value of their holdings. The names of the tenants identify them as familiar long term residents of Austrey (with the possible exception of Ralph Fellagoe who may have been a recent arrival). Most are listed in the parish register or as signatories to the Protestation Oath of 1641, as subscribers to the Proposition Tax, or as claimants for losses from free quartering during the Civil War. Their holdings, all measure one or two roods and are valued at 13s 4d or 16s. They are clustered together and almost identical in size and layout. The first belongs to **Thomas Mould**, who leases and occupies a small three-roomed cottage, two at ground level one above, with a barn and a cowhouse measuring 36 ft x 16 ft, a stable, 20 ft x 16 ft, and an orchard and garden plot beyond. His modest holding which measures a single rood is sited between Austrey street on the west and a parcel of ground occupied by James Prior on the east and is valued at 15s, with an attached seven field strips or parcels of land in the Common Fields covering two acres, worth 13s 4d. A list of claims for losses from provisioning and free quarter submitted to the Parliament in 1646 reveals that Thomas Mould provided quarter for sixteen men and horses for two days and made further claim for a hat, 8s in ready money and six strikes of malt.

James Pryor leases and occupies another cottage with four rooms, two up and two down, with a small barn and a cowhouse, and a garden plot butting onto a parcel of ground in occupation of Thomas Mould on the west and Austrey Street on the east side. This plot also covers a single rood, and valued at 13s 4d, with an additional five parcels of arable in the Common Fields covering two acres, and valued at 13s 4d. This may be the same James Prior who claimed £1-10s for quartering seventeen men and horses for two days, and for other horses taken from him when the parish was visited by a “motley horde” of Scots in July, 1645. He also lost a mare worth £5-10s taken by Captain Smyth’s men under the command of the Earl of Denbigh according to a list of claims for losses made to the Exchequer after the war.

Richard Read occupies a cottage of three rooms (two below stairs, one above) with a barn of two bays measuring 28 ft x 18 ft, and a cowhouse abutting land occupied by Thomas Howe on the west and Austrey Street to the east together with five strips of arable lands in Orton Way, Twycross Way and Hollywell Fields, covering two acres, valued at 13s 4d. In June, 1644 Captain Ashleyhurst’s troops from Derby apparently went off with Richard’s horse which he estimated to be worth £7 and he also claimed 12s for quartering eight men for two days during the Civil War, presumably some of them billeted in the barn or the cow byre.

Thomas Milners has two roods, a cottage house with three rooms (two below stairs, one above), a small barn, an orchard and a garden, between the lands of Ralph Fellagoe on the south and Austrey Street on the north, valued at 16s, together with six arable lands in Orton Way, Twycross Way and Hollywell Brook Fields, covering two acres, and valued at 13s 4d.

Raphael Lagoe, also has two roods although he occupies a small cottage with only two rooms (one below, one above), with a little barn, an orchard, and a garden plot, sandwiched between ground belonging to Thomas Milner on the north and Richard Choise on the south, and worth 16s together, with five arable field strips in Orton Way Twycross Way and Hollywell Brook Fields covering two

acres, and valued at 13s 4d. An claimant of the same name asked £1-4s for quartering nineteen soldiers for two days and 14s for the loss of a flaxen shirt in 1646. (SP28/186)

Richard Wise, occupies a cottage house with 5 rooms (two above stairs, three below), a barn measuring 24 ft x 18 ft, a yard and a garden plot between the lands of Ralph Felagoe and Thomas Martin, altogether estimated to be worth 16s. He also has access to seven arable field strips in Orton Way, Twycross Way and Hollywell Fields covering two acres, and valued at 13s 4d.

Thomas Martin, occupies a cottage house with four rooms (two below stairs, two above), a small barn, a back yard, and an orchard, bounded by lands in occupation of Thomas Taylor and Richard Wise covering 2 roods, and worth 16s. He farms five arable strips in Orton Way, Twycross Way and Hollywell Brook Fields. Covering two acres, valued at 13s 4d.

These messuages and tenements came “*with all Wayes, passages, liberties, priviledges of Commons and Common of Pasture, easements, advantages, emoliments and appurtenances*”. There is a “Memorandum” recording that they were originally granted by Charles Stuart, the late king by “Patents bearing the date 21 June, 14th year of his reign to Robert, late earl of Essex, to hold from 16th July next for 21 years, for £18 at Lady Day and Michaelmas by equal portions”, confirming that they were worth £31-7-4. The lease required the lessee to “*well and sufficiently ... repaire, support and susteyne, escouse [?], purge and maintaine all the howses, buildings, enclosures and water lanes [?] belonging to the premisses and att the end of his said Terme soe to leave the farme. He having and takeing all necessary Books to be thereupon spent and not elsewhere, and Timber towards the repairs of the howses and buildings of the premisses by assignment*”. A Covenant attached further specifies that “*if the said Rent or part thereof be behind and unpaid for the space of four dayshe forfeit double the Rent with liberty of distresse till satisfaction made*”. The nine year gap or lapse in the lease upon the 16th July last past covers the period that John Smith of Kegworth in Leicestershire took over the Fee Farm rents “by means of assignment”.

The survey concludes with reference to unsubstantiated claims by **John Prior**, the vicar of Austrey, relating to claims for certain lands and tenements that belonged to the vicarage. These claims were apparently dismissed by the commissioners as he “hath not made anie thing appear unto us. And therefore wee leave the same to the determinacon of the Honourable Board”. The vicar had already claimed £4-10s for “grass, hay, provender, malt and pease” and a further £1-10s for “meat and drink and services” and a horse worth £4, taken by the Scots around 1645. (SP 28/186).

The reserved Rent for the Fee Farm was set at £18.0.0 with a slightly increased improved value of £49-7-4. Roger Mandeville, Clerk, is recorded as the executor and the document is witnessed by William Hill and Thomas James, who both signed their names. This is a valuable document as it reveals part of the occupation and settlement pattern at one end of the village. The following roll of names abstracted from the survey is a partial list of the Austrey tenants, smallholders and those with common field lands who were resident and farming in the parish at time of the survey.

Smallholders ('undertennes')

- Raphael Lagoe
- Thomas Martin
- Thomas Milner

- Thomas Mould
- John Prior (vicar)
- James Pryor
- Richard Read
- Richard Wise

Holders of Common Fields lands

- John Becke
- William Beck
- Ralph Brown
- Richard Choice
- Richard Clark
- William Crispe
- Robert Cross
- William King
- Mr Leeving
- Thomas Martin
- Thomas Milner
- Mr Moncke
- Humphrey Mousley
- Joseph Orton
- William Orton
- Thomas Page
- John Robinson
- John Smart
- Phillip Smith
- Mr Swale
- Thomas Taylor
- Richard Wise

Sources and References

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Reconstructed Map of the 1650 Survey: [parlemappe.jpeg](#)

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