

Account of Purley on Thames

Westbury Farm Lease 1741

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An article by Jean Debney in the series From my History Notebook article 59 published in PPN March 1986

59. Lease of Westbury Farm - 1741

The history of any property has to be pieced together from such documents and other evidence that have survived and can be discovered.

The manor of Purley Parva or Little Purley is known to have existed at the time of the Domesday Survey in 1086 and during the next 600 years continues to be referred to as such. By 1629 it is referred to as the manor of "Westbrook Farm alias Little Purley", and a century later as "Westbury Farm" or occasionally as "Purley Farm".

If a family is associated with a property for some years their name may be linked. Thus there are several references to this manor being called "Purley Malines" in the late 17th and early 19th centuries after several generations of a family who held it in the 14th century.

The name "Viners Farm" relates to 174 acres of this manor which members of the Viner family leased in the 18th century. This name stuck until the present century when it reverted to the current Westbury Farm.

The first record of the Viner family in Purley is the baptism of three children of John and Ann between 1704

and 1709, when although referred to as "of Mapledurham" they paid taxes in the parish; within two years Ann was a widow.

Nothing more is known until 21st February 1741 when Ann Viner, still a widow but now described as "of Newnham, Oxford", leased for 9 years "all that messuage or tenement, farm lands and premises lying in Purley called Westbury Farm late in the occupation of Giles Blagrove and now in the occupation of Elizabeth Flower, widow" plus some other unspecified land in Purley and all the "timber trees". The annual rent was £90 for the farm and £11 for the rest plus "one couple of fat and well fed pulletts yearly" to be paid on the 1st January to the widow Isabel Lybbe and Philip Powys her son-in-law, both of Hardwick, Oxford.

The terms of the lease stated that the "dung and compost" from the farm should be spread on the fields as manure except in the last two years when it was to be stored in the "backside" (i.e. the farmyard). "Mixt grass seed" with barley was to be sown in the final year in 25 acres of enclosed arable field. Also free accommodation for the landlords' men and horses was to be allowed any time after the 1st May that year so that the common field, lying in a summer fallow, could be ploughed and sown with seed ready for the next tenant. The lease also stated that Ann Viner could store her crops free of charge for a month after the expiry date. The landlords promised to find "rough timber" to repair the buildings and Ann was to allow them to "hold courts in the demised messuage as often as they please".

From other fragmentary evidence, it seems that Ann Viner, her son William and then his daughter, remained in possession until about 1796 when Edward Sherwood was the farmer. A manor court appears to have been held in Westbury Farm house on 22nd October 1754 when among the expenses is the payment of 2s6d (12½p) to Mrs Viner's daughter, presumably for serving the mutton and beer which were eaten on that occasion; and a further court was held there in March 1773 just 5 months before William's death.

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