

# LATCHMOOR AND THE EARLY HISTORY OF GERRARDS CROSS

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*By the early fourteenth-century, the formerly unitary manor of Chalfont St Peter had broken up into a large number of semi-independent agricultural units, each of which included large open fields. The descent of one of these, Latchmoor (earlier Hatch Riding) is described and also the process of its enclosure in 1846–7. An account is also given of four houses whose names used to include 'Latchmoor', and their occupants. All are near Latchmoor Pond at the north-west end of Gerrards Cross Common.*

## INTRODUCTION

Until the open birch-covered area which forms the most attractive part of Gerrards Cross was unimaginatively dubbed East Common and West Common, the whole of this open space was known as Gerrards Cross Common or, less frequently, Latchmoor Common. The pond in the extreme west corner is always called Latchmoor pond, and the four old houses which face the track leading down to the pond used to include Latchmoor or Latchmore in their names (Fig. 1).

The name Latchmoor hovers round the west end of Gerrards Cross, for there are roads leading out of Orchehill Avenue called Latchmoor Avenue, Latchmoor Grove and Latchmoor Way. The first two were laid out after the coming of the railway in 1907, and the third was developed only after the Second World War. All three roads lead to Austenwood Common. The naming of these roads reflects the previous existence of a great open field called Latchmore Field, which was cultivated in strips in the mediaeval way (Fig. 3) until it was enclosed in 1846.<sup>1</sup> Roughly, the field



FIGURE 1 Latchmoor Pond and the old houses near it: from a postcard. Latchmoor House (Walpole House) 3<sup>rd</sup> from left).

stretched from behind Latchmoor pond to Austenwood Common (Fig. 5).

The first occurrence of the name Latchmoor seems to be in a rental of lands belonging to Henry Bulstrode, dated 1627.<sup>2</sup> Henry was a very important figure in the area, and the remains of his elaborate tomb are in Upton Church. He was a Puritan and is supposed to have ruined himself by raising troops for Cromwell. He lived in the great house called Hedgerley Bulstrode which he may have rebuilt; he died in 1643.<sup>3</sup>

As is well known, Gerrards Cross was artificially created to meet the demands of a rapidly growing population. In order to create a new parish, adjoining parts of five ancient parishes were amalgamated. These parishes were: Chalfont St Peter, Iver, Upton, Fulmer and Langley Marish. In 1859, after the building of St James's church, the area became an ecclesiastical parish, but it was not until thirty years later, in 1895, that the civil parish was established, under the administration of a parish council.<sup>4</sup>

#### PART I THE HISTORY OF THE AREA DURING THE MIDDLE AGES

It is not clear why the name Gerrards Cross was chosen.<sup>5</sup> The earliest mention of the name is found in a fifteenth-century rental of Missenden Abbey where it is spelt Gerarddes Cross.<sup>6</sup> Mr Edmonds<sup>7</sup> thought that it might be derived from the name of Robert Gerard who was recorded as a tenant of Missenden Abbey in the survey of Abbey property dated 1333,<sup>8</sup> and that he may have had a holding near Mumfords which controlled a crossing of the London-Oxford road. Robert does not appear again in the Missenden documents. In old maps, such as that of John Rocque,<sup>9</sup> it is called Jarrets Cross and marks a crossing of the London-Oxford road and the track (Packhorse) leading to Chalfont St Peter. There seems to be a group of houses near it.

Since the largest part of the new parish of Gerrards Cross, including the Latchmoor area, was taken from the ancient manor of Chalfont St Peter,<sup>10</sup> it is through the history of Chalfont St Peter that the evolution of Latchmoor must be traced. The most important source for this history is provided by the Domesday Book.

#### Domesday

The Chalfont St Peter entry runs thus:

In Celfunte Roger held of the Bishop [i.e. Odo of Bayeux] four hides and three virgates. There is arable land for fifteen ploughs, in demesne there is one and fourteen villeins with four bordars having fourteen ploughs. There are two serfs and one mill of six shillings value. Meadow two caracutes. There is woodland for 600 pigs and one hawking ground. The total value is 110 shillings.<sup>11</sup>

Several questions arise on this entry. If the hide is correctly estimated at 120 acres,<sup>12</sup> the area of the manor would have been about 500 acres. Part of the land would have been ploughed and part used for grazing and communal haymaking. Did the community need fifteen ploughs? A plough team usually comprised four oxen. Were any of these used to plough the land which was later called Latchmore Field? These animals belonged to the tenants, villeins, who brought them to the areas to be ploughed. No doubt these oxen could be pastured on the waste, i.e. uncultivated, land between manors in the summer, but they would have needed an enormous amount of hay in winter. This was grown and harvested in a meadow near the Misbourne called Old Mead. Some horses and sheep were also kept (Fig. 3).

Like many Buckinghamshire manors, Chalfont was more valuable under its Anglo-Saxon lord, called Leofwine, than it became after the Conquest. As the manor, together with other large estates, was now vacant, William granted it to his half-brother, the redoubtable Bishop Odo of Bayeux (for whom the famous tapestry was made). As shown in the Domesday entry, Odo installed a Norman called Roger d'Anketil as lord of the manor of Chalfont. Roger's daughter married Geoffrey de Turville, a member of an important Buckinghamshire family. This Geoffrey [Geoffrey I] had a son, another Geoffrey [Geoffrey II] who was living in the late twelfth century and was a generous benefactor to the church. He built or rebuilt the church of Chalfont St Peter and gave it to his son, Geoffrey [III], who was a clerk; he gave the manor to his other son, Richard who was a knight. Meanwhile, an Augustinian Abbey<sup>13</sup> had been founded further up the Misbourne valley and attracted gifts from many landowners, some local, others from further afield.<sup>14</sup> Richard de Turville now bought the church

of Chalfont St Peter from his brother Geoffrey III and gave it, with its tithes and other assets, to the Abbot. The manor remained separate. Richard died in 1228, having endowed the Abbey with more property, perhaps because he decided to live with the community and end his life at the Abbey. (This is called a 'carrody'.)

Henceforward the history of Chalfont St Peter is linked with that of Missenden Abbey and can be traced through Abbey documents.<sup>15</sup> The most valuable of these is a survey of the Abbot's property, compiled in 1333.<sup>16</sup> This survey shows that, whereas in 1086 Chalfont was a unitary manor, by the early fourteenth century it had broken up into a large number of semi-independent agricultural units, each of which included large open fields. The units may perhaps be called hamlets.

There were a good many of these hamlets on both sides of the river stretching from near Chorley Wood in the north to the London-Oxford road in the south. In order to illustrate her publication of the Missenden survey, Mrs Elvey compiled a map to show their relative positions.<sup>17</sup> [Fig. 2] Those on the south side of the river form an arc, surrounding

the east side of Gold Hill Common; one end of the arc rests on the river and the other on the road to London-Beaconsfield road. The names of the settlements which form this arc are: Common Down, Scolebury, Layters, Old Field and Mumfords. At a tangent to this arc is a large area called Hatch Ryding<sup>18</sup> which merges into Smithsfield. Smithsfield can easily be located from Mrs Elvey's map (Fig. 2) because one corner abuts on another unit called Marsham, Mersam or, occasionally, Dorsetts, which was a farm almost in the middle of the present Gerrards Cross, i.e. where Marsham Way crosses Marsham Lane. Smithsfield must therefore be identified as Gerrards Cross Common, and Hatch Ryding as Latchmore Field, the arable field of about 60 acres which was cultivated in strips. Hatch Ryding must have been one of the most important hamlets in Chalfont St Peter. It is difficult to picture its appearance as there has since been so much development in the area.

A better idea of one of these semi-independent hamlets is gained by a study of Layters (now Layters Green) which is reached by a small road leading south from the south-western boundary of



FIGURE 2 Chalfont St Peter showing places mentioned in medieval records (from Elvey, *Rees Bucks* 17(1961)).

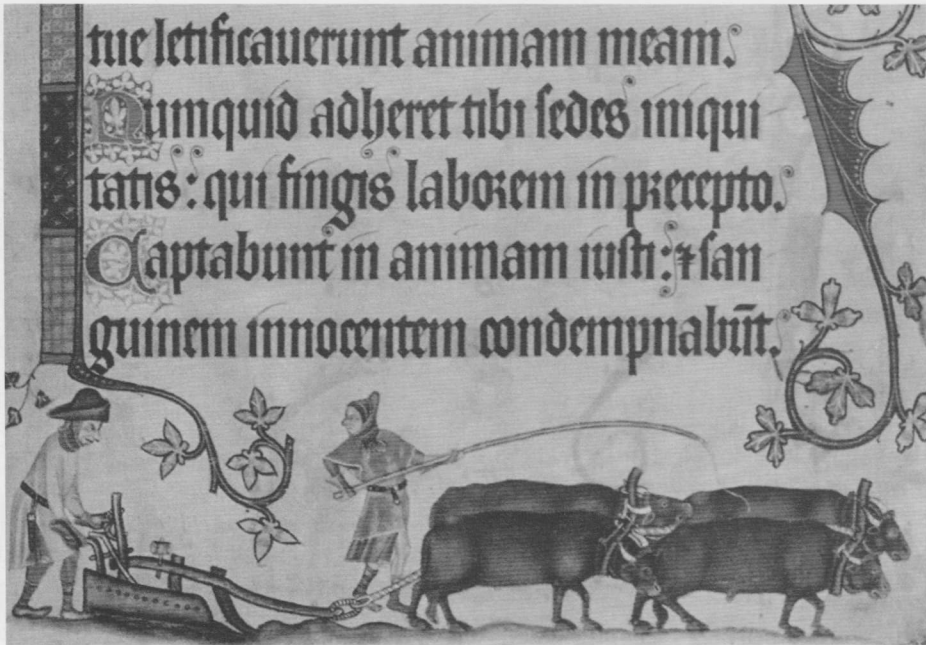


FIGURE 3 Upper: ploughing with oxen (F.170).

Lower: bringing home the harvest (F.173v).

From the Luttrell Psalter Add MS 42130; reproduced by permission of The British Library



FIGURE 4 Ordnance Survey 1812, 2" to 1 mile survey (tracing). Latchmoor Field indicated by \*.

John Kemp	resident of Chalfont St Peter Village	4 strips
Maltmans Green [probably the Peake family]	"	6 "
Orchehill [The Blounts]		16 "
James Coles	Chalfont St Peter Village	3 "
Asting [ <i>sic</i> ] Wood Farm [owner unknown]	Chalfont St Peter	2 "
Fern Hill ?	"	14 "
Layters Green [owner not named]	"	4 "
Marsham Farm [later Gerrards Cross] [owner not named]	"	1 "

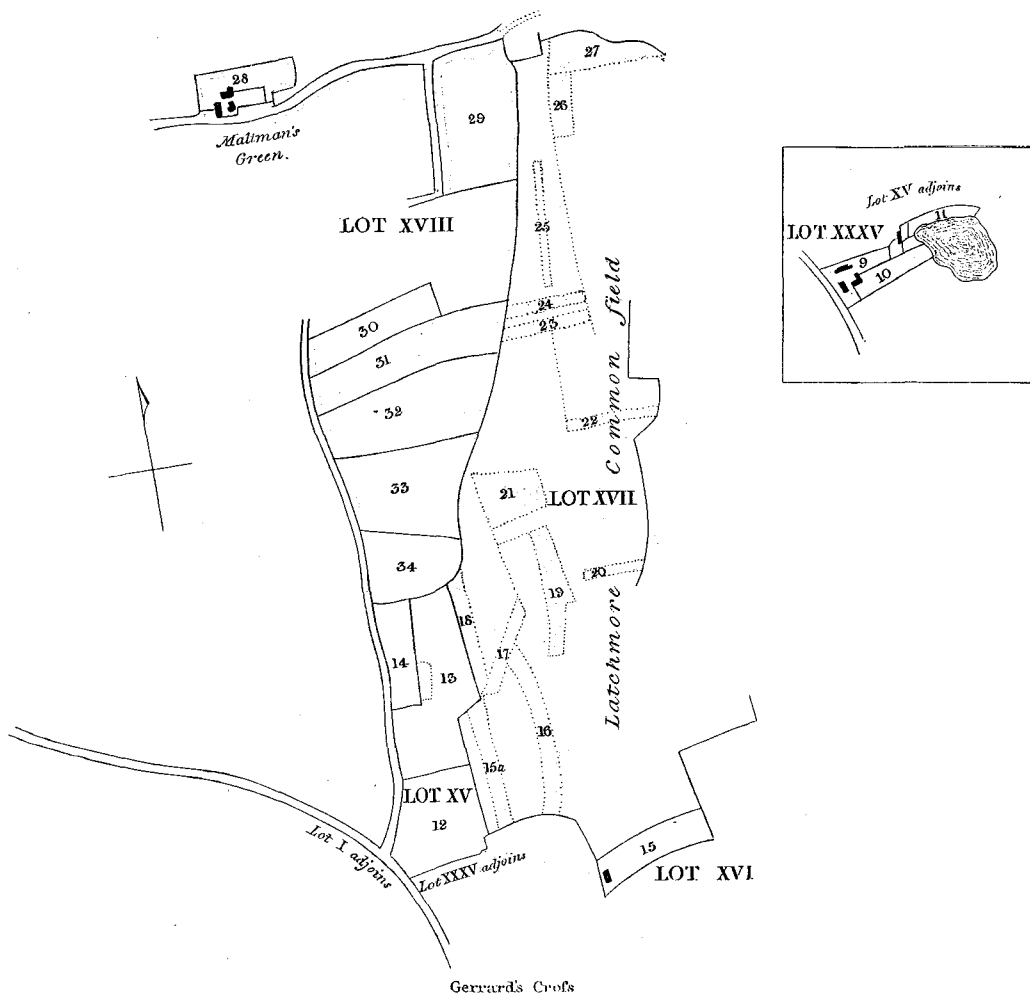


FIGURE 5 Latchmoor Field and surrounding fields. From a catalogue of sale of Bulstrode Estate 1814 (kindly provided by Mathew Tomkins).

Gold Hill Common. On the left of this bye-road there is a large farmhouse with a fine barn, probably dating from the seventeenth century but perhaps standing on a mediaeval site. Opposite the farm there is a small area of grass, possibly once used for grazing. This is crossed and recrossed by tracks which lead to cottages grouped round it. These cottages date from the sixteenth or seventeenth century to the twentieth centuries. Beside the green there is a large, willow-fringed pond, which may be compared to the pond at Latchmoor. According to Dr E. Clive Rouse, both ponds were

made artificially by choosing an area where there was clay, fencing it, driving a flock of sheep into it and leaving them to trample it until a solid impenetrable bottom was created.<sup>19</sup>

Latchmoor or Hatch Riding was fortunate because the survival of the open field system, and the availability of plentiful grazing, made it a self-contained agricultural unit. Layters was not so lucky as it lost its arable land in the sixteenth century, owing to the activities of the Brudenell family who occupied the independent manor of Brudenell (now Chalfont Park).<sup>20</sup>

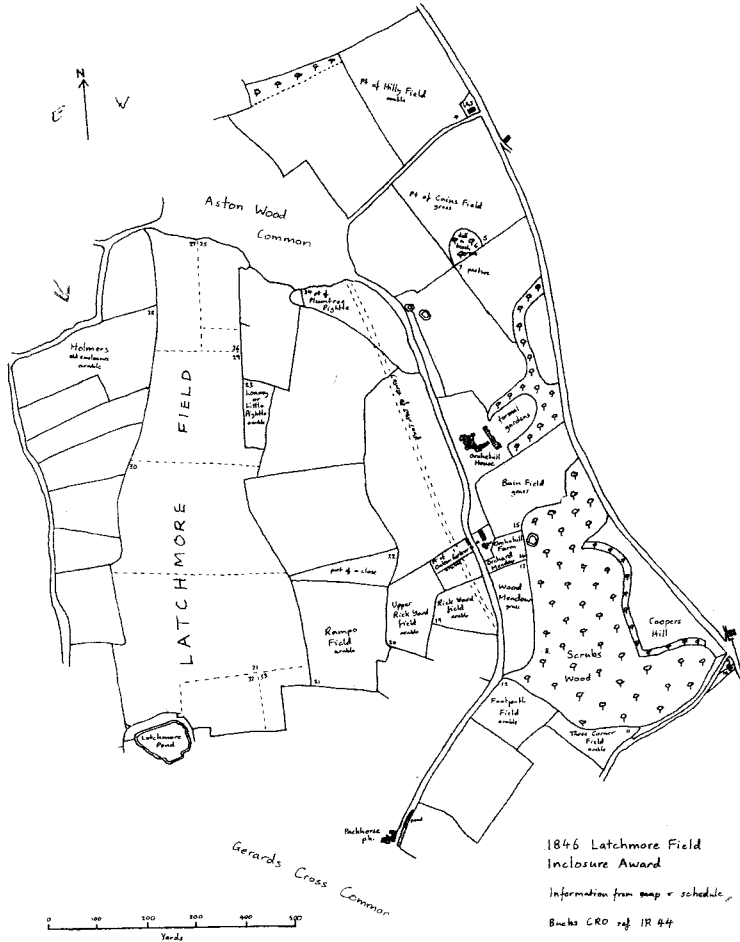


FIGURE 6 Latchmoor Field, based on the enclosure map of 1846 with added information from the schedule (BRO IR 44). Map by Mathew Tomkins.

There are many entries about the hamlets of Layters and Hatches in the Missenden documents, but it is particularly interesting to try to trace the history of a family called atte Hatch who probably took their name from the area where they lived. John Hatch is mentioned three times in the survey of 1333 and already appears to be prosperous. He was succeeded by William who was wealthy and tried to assert his complete independence from the Abbey. He was a progressive farmer and realized that great wealth could be earned from sheep. He may have grazed his sheep on Smiths Field (Ger-

rards Cross Common). He was presented to the manor court for enclosing common land and transferring goods from his customary land to his freeholding in order to avoid paying dues to his landlord (the Abbot). The court exacted sixty-two sheep as surety for future good behaviour.<sup>21</sup>

Some fourteen years after the survey of the Abbot's lands in 1333, the great pestilence, later known as the Black Death, devastated England. Owing to the shortage of labour, the traditional organization of the manors collapsed as villeins and other agricultural workers left the land to seek

high wages elsewhere. Missenden Abbey was without an abbot for six months, and the difficulties of farming affected the Abbey itself and its individual tenants, including John Hatch who sold out to John Botterfield, a rival progressive farmer who seems to have had more resources. Many of the Abbey's tenants asserted their independence and sold their holdings. One purchaser was John Bryan, vicar of Chalfont St Peter, who already held the separate vicarage manor consisting of land and houses near the church. He now bought several of the old Abbey holdings including "three parcels of an acre in Hatches with common on Smith's heath".

The Abbey struggled on until 1538 when it was dissolved by Henry VIII. The Abbey's land and other assets were bought in 1540 by Robert Drury,<sup>22</sup> whose grandfather – another Robert – had been Speaker of the House of Commons in 1495. Robert himself came to Buckinghamshire when he married Elizabeth Brudenell, heiress to the Brudenell Manor (Chalfont Park). Robert was a capable and just man, and he was admired by his neighbours. He re-established the manorial court and enforced its judgments. He died in 1577. The parish register refers to him as "that venerable man".<sup>23</sup> His sons filled important positions in public life, but his grandson, William, who described himself as "blind, lame and destitute of estate", went bankrupt and sold to Henry Bulstrode the manor of Chalfont St Peter, the church with its tithes and advowson, together with a number of farms. Hatches was expressly excluded from the sale and was bought separately by Richard Baker, probably a newcomer who also bought Dorsetts (Marsham Farm).<sup>24</sup> It is not known how long the Bakers owned Hatches, but in 1816 it belonged to William Beckwith, whose will is preserved.

## PART II ENCLOSURE

The old manorial system, closely associated with open-field agriculture and a degree of a sense of common ownership was certainly gravely weakened by the demographic crisis of the fourteenth century. Despite the advance of Enclosure, however, large areas of open fields remained, in some places, until quite recently. Thus, it is estimated that in 1874 some 4,800 acres in Buckinghamshire remained unenclosed; isolated examples still existed in 1946.<sup>25</sup>

Over the years, landowners living in or near the old manors often attempted to get possession of open fields, as illustrated locally by the activities of the Brudenells at Layters Green and the Hatches probably on Hatch Ryding. In the 1510s and 1520s, Henry VIII's chief minister, Thomas Wolsey, issued proclamations against enclosure and the consequent depopulation of the countryside. These measures were only partially effective – for instance, whereas the Hatch family were forced to give up land which they had illegally enclosed and were punished for the attempt,<sup>26</sup> the Brudenells successfully absorbed the open arable fields at Layters Green.<sup>27</sup> The illegal activities of landowners had only a minimal effect on the progress of enclosure, but others were beginning to realise the inefficiency and wastefulness of arable cultivation in open fields, and progressive farmers often came to voluntary agreements to enclose and divide land. These voluntary agreements were often unsatisfactory and therefore the practice of seeking clear definition by private Acts of Parliament grew up. The private Acts were very expensive to promote, and pressure was exerted on the government to introduce a cheaper and less cumbersome system. Governments now wished to encourage enclosure, as it was thought that the disappearance of the open fields would lead to great efficiency in farming and a higher production of food. This was a pressing need as the population was growing and food was scarce and expensive, partly owing to the Corn Laws which prohibited imports of food. A succession of Acts was thus introduced, the first in 1801, the second in 1835 and the third in 1846. The requirement of parliamentary endorsement for enclosure was abolished, and groups of local people wishing to enclose specific fields were encouraged to appoint commissions under whose authority the work of division could be carried out.

### The enclosure of Latchmore Field

The enclosure of Latchmore Field took place in 1846–7 under the Act of 1835 which had been passed during the reign of William IV (1830–37). Under the heading "Landowning in the Common Fields", the tithe map of 1842 lists the people entitled to cultivate strips in the common fields and also the names of properties to which these rights were attached. Under Latchmore Field, it gives names, places of residence and number of strips (See below.)



There are thus two people, John Kemp and James Coles, who were probably descended from the original tenants of the Manor of Chalfont St Peter. John Kemp also had the right to cultivate one strip in the arable field of Chalfont Common. In this field there were four other residents of Chalfont St Peter village, one an innkeeper, and otherwise the right was vested in various large farms. The provenance of the map which shows the original allocation is unknown, but a splendid coloured map, preserved at Aylesbury, shows how those who had received allocations at Enclosure exchanged them so that their land should be as near as possible to property they already possessed. (Fig. 6) The map shows that, with two exceptions, the people who received allocations were not, as might have been expected, small farmers but well-known local landowners who must have gained control of the strips. It is strange that the Duke of Somerset, who lived in the great house at Bulstrode, is not mentioned. Henry Bulstrode, who owned the manor in the sixteenth century, certainly had rights to cultivate strips in the field, and such strips also appear on the map of the estate dated 1814. (Fig. 5)

As already shown, Latchmore Field consisted of 61 acres which stretched roughly from the pond in the west corner of what is now known as West Common to Austen Wood Common. There are no maps or plans until the eighteenth century. Mr Matthew Tompkins, who is writing a thesis on the Manor of Chalfont St Peter, found a number of maps and plans in which the "Field" is shown. The earliest is the plan of Brudenell Manor by Samuel Warner in 1733<sup>28</sup> showing Chalfont Park. The next is the Ordnance map of 1812 (Fig. 4),<sup>29</sup> but the most interesting is the five-page catalogue of the sale of the Bulstrode estate in 1814 (Fig. 5).<sup>30</sup> The field is shown but not clearly defined on page 1 (top right corner), but a more complete plan is found on page 4.

If these earlier maps and plans are compared with the map of 1846,<sup>31</sup> certain differences are found. For instance, in the 1846 map the Field touches only one side of Latchmoor pond, whereas the other maps show it practically encircling it; therefore the Field extended into what is now West Common, covering the sites of the nineteenth-century houses and cottages which flank the track leading from the London-Oxford road to the pond. This map is the prime source for the study of Latchmore Field; it is not, however, the enclosure

map itself. Accompanying documents explain that the existing map "is based on" one made by John Rolfe. This implies that the map does not show the original allocation, and that its purpose is to show final ownership after the exchanges had been effected. The names of the recipients of the newly allocated land are inserted on the map. Beginning at Latchmoor pond, they are as follows:

- John Kemp\*
- William Blount (owner of Orchehill House\*; now St Mary's School)
- Messrs Ed. W. Weller
- Mrs Eleanor Peake (her husband was a solicitor; they lived at Maltman's Green\*; she had also acquired the old holding of Holmers, a separate unit bordering the field on the south, and the long narrow fields next to it)
- Job Green (who received at least three allotments)
- Joseph Coles\*
- William Jones Esq.
- J. J. Dolan Esq. (two allotments)
- William Blount (again a large allotment)
- Mr J. N. Hibbert (owner of Chalfont Park)

\* indicates that the individual or property was mentioned on the Tithe map of 1842; see above.

Besides the Blounts, Hibberts and Eleanor Peake, William Jones and J. J. Dolan must have belonged to the gentry as they are given the rank of esquire. Mr Spencer Smith (also sometimes called Esq.) held land just outside the Field on which the houses with Latchmore or Latchmoor in their names were probably built.

The schedule with the existing map is arranged under various headings. The first two list the land exchanged by William Blount and John Nembard Hibbert, and the land exchanged from J. N. Hibbert to Mrs Eleanor Peake. These schedules concern not only the land allotted to these and other landowners as a result of the enclosure of Latchmore Field, but also include a number of other properties outside the Field, including many cottages ("yards" and gardens). Some of the field names such as Rampos Field and Oaken Grove are easily recognizable; others are of great interest to historians.<sup>32</sup>

These documents concerning land are accompanied by an interesting account of the procedure adopted for the enclosure of the field. John Rolfe, a

Beaconsfield solicitor, was appointed as Commissioner and had to swear on oath before "His Majesty's Justices of the Peace" that he "would carry out the work according to the best of his skill and judgement ... according to equity and good conscience". The oath was witnessed under seal in the presence of George Glead, the vicar. Two years later in 1847 the work was signed in the presence of Robert Peake, solicitor of New Palace Yard, and Thomas Peake<sup>33</sup> (Gent.) of the same place. The final award was duly proclaimed in the parish church of Chalfont St Peter on 18 April 1847.

The second important source of information about the Latchmoor area are the census returns of 1851, 1881 and 1891. The first was about four years after the publication of the enclosure award. The enumerators visited each house and recorded who was there on that particular occasion, often ignoring the actual ownership of the house. Dr Thorpe<sup>34</sup> warns against placing too much reliance on the returns; he says that the enumerator made only a few notes of the names of the houses he was recording. This was certainly true of Latchmoor houses; often the same people are listed in more than one house. They may simply have been visiting, but this is unlikely when a whole family was involved!

### PART III THE HOUSES OF LATCHMOOR

As already mentioned, there are four old houses which face a track leading from the west end of Gerrards Cross common to Latchmoor pond. All the houses used to include the name Latchmore or Latchmoor. The track, which has never been tarred, divides and runs round irregularly shaped patches of grass which lie in front of the houses, and which were probably taken from the common. The largest had originally been a seventeenth-century farmhouse, while the others had probably been cottages for people working on the farm. All of these include older structures behind their eighteenth- or nineteenth-century façades. (Fig. 1)

#### **A. Walpole House (previously Latchmoor House, Belleview)**

The largest house is now called Walpole House (Fig. 8). In 1912 it was called Latchmoor House, but for most of the nineteenth century its name was Belleview or Belleview Farm. It was a considerable farm and remained as a farm until the end of the nineteenth century. The early title deeds are lost,

but I think my father saw them and said that about 1670 the property was called Latchmoor Close.

Latchmoor House was built as a farmhouse in the seventeenth century. It then consisted of one three-storied gable which is unusually wide and high. One end of this gable and its original chimney can be seen from the narrow drive between the house and its neighbour, and the other from the back garden of the house itself. (In the illustrations, this end of the gable is emphasized (Fig. 9).

Some time in the mid eighteenth century, the owner decided to enlarge the farmhouse to make it suitable for a gentleman's residence. He therefore built a typical eighteenth-century façade in front of the farmhouse, demolishing its front wall so that the two buildings could be amalgamated. The highly symmetrical character of the eighteenth-century building can be appreciated better from the garden than from the front (which has been fundamentally altered). This is higher than the farmhouse and can be seen above the original gable. The front is built of pinkish-red bricks which are far brighter in colour than those of the farmhouse.

From the front, the roof is characteristic of the eighteenth century because there is a flat walkway between the front of the house and the gable; this makes the roof invisible to those walking past the house.<sup>35</sup> One often heard people say, "I don't like that house. It has no roof." The reason for building roofs in this way is not obvious, but was almost universal at this period; similar houses can be seen facing the main streets in both Beaconsfield and Amersham.

The façade is interesting. On the ground floor the centre is marked by the elegant pillared porch which no doubt had a single window on each side. The original shape of these windows is not known because they were enlarged in the nineteenth century and fitted with plate glass, with only a horizontal division. It is pleasing that these windows have now been replaced by others with window-bars.

The windows of the bedrooms on the first floor are rather tall and narrow, and their panes are well proportioned, while those on the top floor are smaller and more square in shape. The difference in the sizes of the windows gives character and variety to the façade. The first floor used to have slatted shutters which softened the whole appearance.

The eighteenth-century building was enlarged in the nineteenth century by the addition of a large bay with a bedroom above; its roof is flat. The

extension, the object of which was to enlarge the sitting room, entailed the demolition of the lower part of the end wall of the eighteenth-century façade house and fireplace. On the first floor the original wall and its fireplace remained. The bay is almost like an independent building and has its own chimney and fireplace. The bay has the large windows already described, and it was probably at this time that the windows flanking the porch were replaced.

The next alteration to the house was equally radical, for it was decided to enlarge it still further by joining it to a simple two-storied cottage which stood further back from the road and whose front wall was probably in line with that of the seventeenth-century farmhouse. The junction of the house and cottage consisted of sloping skylights which were supposed to drain into a central rain-water tank, but they always leaked into the kitchen below and caused problems.

This cottage is built of brick and has a tiled roof. It appears as a long building because it joins the saddle room and coach house. The design of the end gable is unusual as the end of the gable is cut off to form what may be called a hipped roof. The large brick barn which used to stand between Latchmoor House and its neighbour has a similar roof.

The entrance door of the cottage became the back door of the main building. This led into a space which became the scullery of the house. It was fitted with a copper (for washing clothes and bed linen) and a bread oven. On the other side of the door was a square room which was used as a maids sitting room. This may have been the oldest part of the whole building as timber framing could be seen in the walls. This room no longer exists as it was here that Mr Smit installed a huge safe (see below).

It is interesting to trace the owners of the house. Unfortunately nothing is known about the original owner or the occupant who built the eighteenth-century extension, but, as already mentioned, the will of William Beckwith, dated 1816, is extant.<sup>36</sup> He lived in the house, was wealthy and also owned property in London; he left the house to his married daughter. The house was a farm and the owner cultivated strips in Latchmore Field. The dwelling was probably called Latchmore House in Beckwith's time, but for most of the nineteenth century it was known as Belleview or Belleview Farm. This name

was still used on the Ordnance map of 1912, but when my father rented the house in that year it was known as Latchmoor House.

In the nineteenth century, information about the ownership becomes more abundant. The tithe map of 1842 gives the name of the owner as Susan Wassall who lived in the house and had the use of the lawn and yard, garden, stackyard, paddock and out-house, orchard and meadow. She was independent, aged 50 and employed two servants. The Directory for 1847 gives the name of Mr George Healey, and the 1851 census records the occupants as Catherine Mikel and Clara Hodges, both annuitants; the former is given as "house proprietor". Clara employed a cook, a housemaid and a coachman. This entry is probably unreliable<sup>37</sup> as these two ladies are also mentioned under Latchmoor Cottage. The census shows that the main occupant of Belleview was George Healey, a farmer who was then 44 years old and farmed three acres<sup>38</sup> employing 18 labourers. His wife employed two indoor servants and one male aged 16 and the other female. Healey is mentioned in the 1861 Directory.

During the middle years of the nineteenth century he grew increasingly prosperous; the census of 1861 shows that he had become a land agent responsible for farming 560 acres and employing 22 men, while in 1871, when he was 64 years old, he occupied 750 acres with 28 men and two boys. He is still named in 1877. He lived in the house and probably added the bay to the front, installed the plate-glass windows and the main staircase with its very elaborate cast-iron banister. He also built the very elaborate villa called Bella Vista which used to face the common. He may have died during the late 1870s for the 1881 census shows the owner as John Bromwich, a retired builder, who shared the house with Andrew Stacpoole, formerly vicar of Writtle in Essex (see under Latchmoor, below).

The Bromwich family consisted of John and his wife, Hannah, and three daughters, called Alice, Mary A. and Florence M. who were being educated by a governess, Flora M. Rhind, who came from North Shields. They employed a housemaid called Mary Hume and a cook called Hester Boutell, and a gardener, Charles Johnson. It was probably while the Bromwiches were in occupation that the farm was given up.

The next owner was William Carter, of independent means, who is mentioned in 1891, 1895 and 1901. His wife was called Margaret, and they

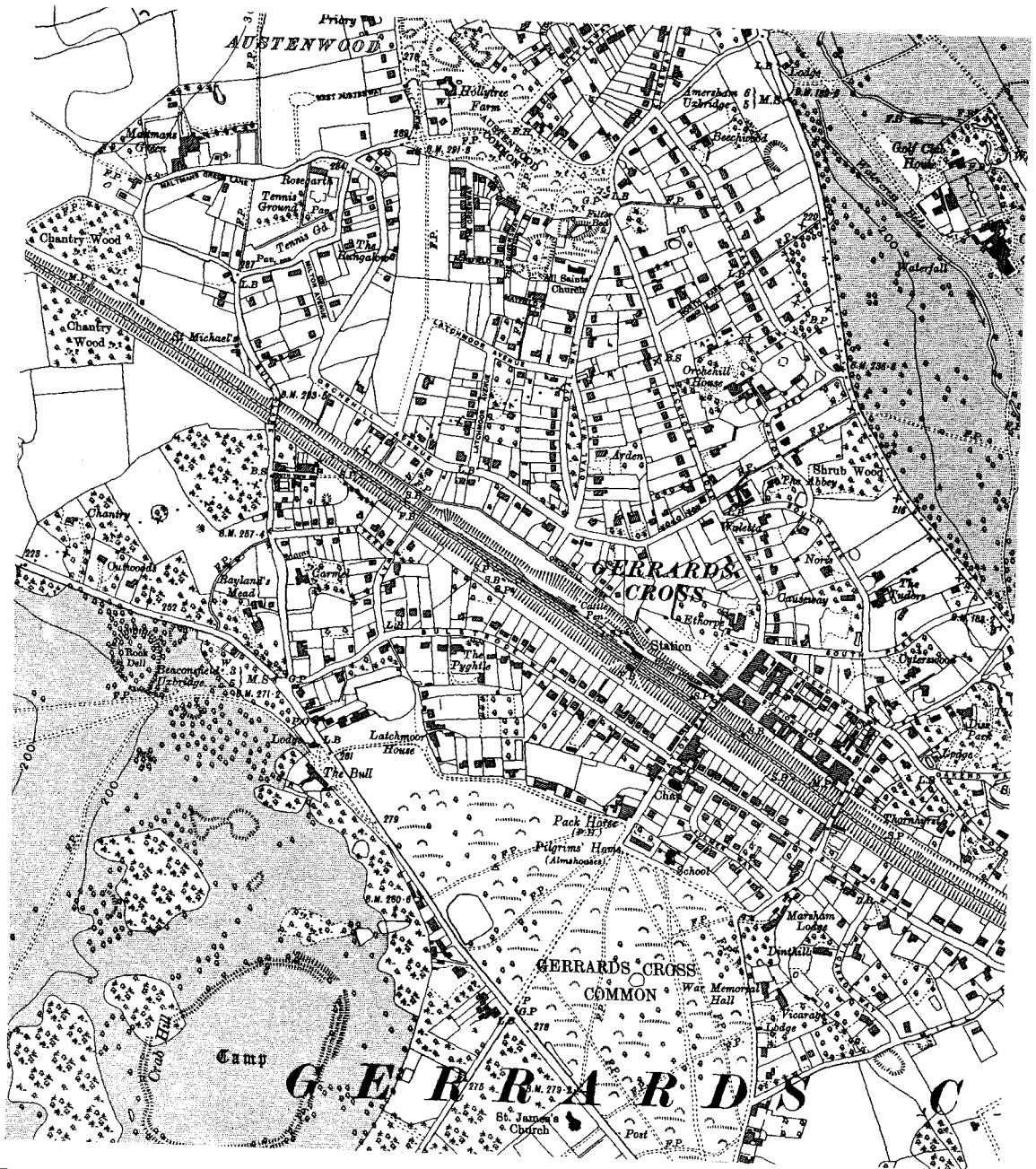


FIGURE 7 Gerrards Cross 1926, Ordnance Survey 6" map. Latchmoor House and pond is shown at the north end of 'Gerrards Cross Common'.

had one son, Edwin, and I think a daughter called Helen. Although she is not recorded, I remember her as an old lady in 1907. The house was then acquired by the Gurney family. As shown in the

rate book of 1910, Mrs Gurney had bought a considerable number of sites in the central part of Gerrards Cross, and would now be called a "developer".



FIGURE 8 Latchmoor House (now known as Walpole House).



FIGURE 9 Latchmoor House (now Walpole House) with gable of the original house circled.

A Mrs Gurney was our landlady when my parents and I came to the house in 1912. My parents, Professor and Mrs Baker who were both chemists, lived there until 1935. They worked for the government during the First World War; their most important work was the invention of gas masks, and on the purification of water and the production of a hygienic khaki dye for bandages so that wounded soldiers on the battlefield would be less conspicuous.

The name of the house was changed again in the twentieth century to Walpole House. This change was due to events in the Second World War when the house was owned by Mr J. Smit who had been an important figure in Amsterdam and headed the group of merchants dealing in industrial diamonds which was centred in that city. The diamonds were very important in the manufacture of machinery. When the German invasion of Holland seemed imminent, Mr Smit persuaded all the merchants to collect the diamonds and ship them to England. The British government sent H.M.S. Walpole to escort the Dutch ship carrying them across the Channel. Mr Smit lived in the house (and married an Englishwoman as his second wife), and a great safe was built there in which the diamonds were safely stored. The story is admirably told in a film called *Operation Amsterdam*.

### **B. Latchmoor**

The second of the houses near the pond was always known as Latchmoor (Fig. 1). It is a rather a pretty house, probably dating from the early nineteenth century. It consists of two blocks, one standing further forward than the other, which are linked by a large porch supported by pillars. The two blocks have separate slate-covered roofs. The front may always have been whitewashed. Like Walpole House, the back is older than the front, and the building may once have been a single cottage. The back part may have been rebuilt earlier than Walpole House as there is a pretty circular window facing the garden.

The first mention of the house may have been in the title map of 1840 when it was occupied by Tobias Gainsford who also had the outbuildings, garden and orchard. He is mentioned in the census of 1841, but the 1861 census shows W. J. B. Moore, curate of Fulmer, as the occupant. He was one of the Bramley Moore family. The Misses Reid generously built St James church, which was finished in

1859, and at the same time bought Latchmoor and conveyed it the Ecclesiastical Commissions to serve as a vicarage. The first vicar of Gerrards Cross was William Addington Bathurst MA, aged 32. He was living here in 1871 and employed three servants. The house is marked as the Vicarage on the 1880 Ordnance Survey map. (The Vicarage was later moved to Waterscroft on the east side of the common – now Gerrards Cross Memorial Centre – which is nearer the church.)

The 1881 census records the name of the main occupant of Latchmoor as Andrew D. Stacpoole, vicar of Writtle and a J.P. for Essex. He is also mentioned as occupying Walpole House (Bellevue). The Directory for 1883 shows him still at Latchmoor, now called Rev. Stacpoole, M.A.

The Directory for 1887 gives the name of Peter Grayham, probably the most colourful of the owners. He was an artist and had, perhaps, been influenced by Landseer, as he was said to have been fond of painting highland cattle. He owned a small herd which grazed on the common in the charge of a herdsman. When he wanted to paint the cattle, he went into his newly built studio which was divided into two by an artificial stream behind glass doors. The herdsman would drive the cattle into the further part of the studio and, behind the glass, Grayham could paint in safety. His paintings are scarce; there are some in Royal Holloway College. He also painted good seascapes and country scenes but when cattle are included, they look like ordinary domestic breeds. Grayham is mentioned only in the 1887 and 1891 Directories. When he left in 1895, the house was bought by Frederick George Cullen. Both he and his wife were artists and were, no doubt, attracted by the studio. They lived there until Mrs Cullen died in 1939.

In 1952 the house was divided into flats, and the Directories list them, unimaginatively, as Nos 1, 2, 3. However, their new names reflect something of the history of the house: The Old Vicarage; Bailiff's Cottage; Cullens Cottage; The Studio.

### **C. Latchmoor House (previously Latchmoor Cottage)**

Confusingly, the third of the old houses is now called Latchmoor House, but it used to be Latchmoor Cottage. Like the other houses, the back is older than the front. The house stands further back than the two already described and there is a single-storey building standing at right angles to the main

building which reaches the track; this is now used as a garage.

The façade of the house is long and low and is built of yellowish stock-brick; the roof is slate. The porch, which has white pillars, is not in the middle of the building, as at Walpole House. Only two storeys are visible from the road, but there are attic rooms above, lit by windows overlooking the front. Again, as at Walpole House, there is a flat walkway between the top of the front wall and the gable of the roof; here the purpose is obvious, for the attic windows are not obscured.

The house is mentioned under 'Latchmoor House' in the tithe map of 1840, when Mary Shackle and Robert Saunders were occupying it, outbuildings, garden, lawn and pleasure ground, and also what was called the House Meadow, which was probably at the back. Mr Saunders is mentioned in the 1847 Directory, but the census report of 1851 records Mrs Catherine Mikel, annuitant. The 1861 census report says she was 85 years old and was the house proprietor. It will be remembered that she is also given as the proprietor of Walpole House, when she and another old lady seemed to be sharing the house with George Healey, the farmer.

By 1869 the Directory states that Charles James Brown (master R.N.) was in the house, but the 1871 census names James Crighton Nelson, aged 50, with two servants.

Ten years later, in 1881, the census gives Henry Hipwell, aged 40 ("farmer out of business") with Ann Hipwell and seven children, including two daughters, Ellen and Emily, and sons, Sidney and Charles, who were all described as scholars. There seems to have been plenty of room in the house. Perhaps the building which is now the garage was used as part of the dwelling, for the 1881 census also lists for this house: Richard Smith, groom and domestic, Elizabeth Smith, Harry Walker, groom, John Bell, blacksmith, Rose A. Bell and Charles Bell.

In the 1891 census and Directory, Matthew Roe, paper-maker, was living here, and he and his family were also recorded in 1895 and 1899.

This house remained essentially a cottage until after the First World War when it was owned by another Mr Saunders. The only staircase was narrow and twisting and was housed in a tongued-and-grooved cupboard opening out into the kitchen. (There was a similar staircase leading from the farm kitchen to upstairs rooms in Walpole House.)

Mr Saunders, a London house agent, transformed the house by buying a beautiful carved and polished seventeenth-century staircase and gallery, making the hall into a large room with a polished floor for dancing.

#### **D. Waterside (previously Latchmoor Villa)**

The fourth of the old houses used to be called Latchmoor Villa, but is now Waterside. Like the others, it was refronted, and it is a nicely proportioned rectangular house. From the front it appears as a simple square building with walls rendered in grey cement; the front door was in the middle (but is now altered), with a single window on each side. The long tiled roof of the original dwelling can be seen behind.

The 1840 tithe map shows two cottages and gardens, one occupied by John Kemp and John Williams, and the other by James Tripp. The 1851 census gives Clara F. Haynes, annuitant, and two servants, and she was still there in 1854. From 1887 the ownership is quite straightforward. Thomas Samworth, given in the Directory of that year as "formerly at Bull Hotel", also appears in the 1891 census (given as a farmer) with his wife Sarah Emma; they had three children, Edith, Alfred and Henry, all of whom were scholars.<sup>39</sup> In the 1899 Directory, Mrs Samworth is listed and in the 1901 census she was living on her own means and with one servant. According to the Directories up to 1931 she, and later Edith and then Henry, were living here. The house remained unaltered for many years, and it was rumoured in the 1920s that it did not even have electric light!

#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Mrs P. Walker who helped me to prepare the text; Mrs B. Lyddiat who prepared the illustrations; Matthew Tomkins who most generously gave me a series of maps and also valuable information.

1. The exact location of the field and the process of its enclosure are discussed in Part 2, below.
2. County Record Office BAS M/15183. In the entry in the rental, it is written as Latchmere with a question mark. When the open field is mentioned in later documents, it is nearly always spelt Latchmore. Three of the old houses near the pond used the spelling Latchmoor or Latchmore.

3. G.C. Edmonds and A.M. Baker, *A History of Chalfont St Peter & Gerrards Cross and The History of Bulstrode*, Gerrards Cross, Colin Smythe, 2003, p. 113. Also A.M. Baker, 'Upton church and the Bulstrode brasses', *Records of Bucks*, **42**, (2002), p. 103–117.
4. Edmonds & Baker, *op. cit.*, p. 5.
5. This might be ascertained if the early minutes of the parish council were examined.
6. Aylesbury BAS M 15/80, p.1
7. Edmonds and Baker, *op. cit.*, p. 11.
8. E.M. Elvey, The Abbot of Missenden's estates in Chalfont St Peter. *Records of Bucks*, **17**(1), (1965), p. 21.
9. Topographical map of the County of Bucks, 1761. British Library Maps 1420 14 (reproduction kindly given to me by Matthew Tompkins).
10. E. Briden, *The Parish Church of Chalfont St Peter*, 1979, p. 1.
11. *Victoria County History*, Vol. 1, 1969, pp. 222–3.
12. The hide used to be thought of as 120 acres, the carucate half a hide and the virgate a quarter of a hide, but this is now disputed. The interpretation of Domesday is very complex.
13. E. Elvey, The abbot of Missenden estates in Chalfont St Peter. *Records of Bucks*, XVII, (1965), p. 21
14. R. H. Bevis, *A Short History of Missenden Abbey*, Colchester, Benham & Co. (on behalf of Missenden Abbey College of Adult Education), 1951, p. 2.
15. These documents survived by chance and were given by the late Dr P. C. Moore to the Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society.
16. Elvey, *op. cit.*, p. 21. Marsham Farm is still shown on the Ordnance map of 1909, and is mentioned as a working farm in the rate book of 1910.
17. This map is reproduced in Edmonds and Baker, *op. cit.*, p. 2.
18. According to M. Tomkins, who is writing a thesis about the Manor of Chalfont, Riding or Ryding means an area recently cleared of scrub.
19. In a programme about the eighteenth-century landscape designer known as Capability Brown, it was shown that this method was still employed in the grounds of Blenheim Palace (28 May 2004, on BBC 2, text by D. Gavin).
20. Edmund Brudenell, who died in 1469, acquired interest in Layters and may have conceived the long-term plan of completely absorbing it. The plan was carried further by this Edmund's son, another Edmund, who decided to turn the whole area into a sheep-run. The conversion of arable land into sheep-runs was deplored by the government. In 1489 an Act was passed "against pulling down of towns". In 1515 further Acts ordered that land converted to pasture should be restored to tillage, and houses which had been pulled down should be rebuilt. Jurors from Chalfont St Peter affirmed that both at Butterfields and Layters, land which "time out of mind had been plough and sown, but had now been laid waiste and the houses destroyed. Two ploughs had been displaced and twenty persons who previously made a living from them were forced to leave home and seek sustenance elsewhere and were driven away in misery." (Elvey, *op. cit.*, p. XX).
21. Elvey, *op. cit.*, p. 29
22. Edmonds & Baker, *op. cit.*, p. 29
23. *ibid.*, p. 29
24. *ibid.*, p. 30.
25. E. W. Tate, *A Hand List of Buckinghamshire Enclosure Acts and Awards*. Bucks County Council, 1946, p. 27. I am indebted to Mrs D. Guland for sending me photocopies of this important article. See also Buckinghamshire Record Office, Catalogue of Maps (1961); the Office possesses about 100 enclosure maps.
26. Tate, *op. cit.* The land may have been Hatch Ryding or Smithesfield.
27. Tate, *op. cit.*
28. BL Add MS 745.
29. Copy in Bucks County Record Office, ref. 154.
30. Maps from the printed sale particulars of the Manor of Fulmer and Temple Bulstrode in 1814; Bucks County Record Office, Moire family deeds AR/94, Box 4, Bundle 45. There is also a master plan showing the whole estate; Box 4, Bundle 54. This date may not be exact: the Dukes of Portland sold Portland to the Duke of Somerset in 1812 (Edmonds & Baker, *op. cit.*, p. 155).
31. Bucks County Record Office, IR/89; see Catalogue of Maps (1961), p. 11.
32. Three Corner Fields; Footpath Field; Wood Meadow; Barn Field; Rickyard Field; Upper



- Rickyard Field; Loamy of Little Pygties Field (which is listed as an old enclosure). In another schedule, other names are Hilly Field; Cairns Field; a dell in Beach, part of Scrubbs Wood.
33. One of them was probably the husband of Eleanor Peake who received considerable portions of Latchmore Field.
  34. Dr D. Thorpe, Convenor, Bucks Local History Network.
  35. It seems possible that attic rooms may have been planned above the ceilings of rooms on the second floor, and that these rooms were to be lit by windows in the gable. This can be illustrated in Latchmoor Cottage (now Latchmoor House); see below.
  36. Photocopy kindly sent to me by Mr Julian Hunt.
  37. See Dr Thorpe's warning near end of Part II.
  38. That he farmed only three acres seems most unlikely.
  39. It would be interesting to know whether they went to the local school which was under construction in 1861.