



Wyre Forest Study Group

Orchards in the Manor of Bewdley in 1749

BRIAN STEPHENS

Several documents from the 18th and 19th centuries make it possible to gain some idea of when and where orchards were planted around Bewdley and Wyre Forest, and when and where the area of plantation increased to develop the fruit trade which flourished up to the mid-20th century. The Bewdley Historical Research Group publication 'Bewdley in its Golden Age' volume 2, 1999, 'Trades and Industries 1660 – 1760' includes two relevant articles. 'Husbandry in Bewdley and the Surrounding Area' (D. Lloyd et al. Pp17-32) discusses agriculture of the period and 'Woodcrafts and Hornworking' (Rhoda Murray, pp135 – 146) considers the usage of forest products. However, neither includes any mention of fruit or orchards, and only brief reference to hops. This study is based on the Manor of Bewdley, but a similar study conducted on documents relating to the adjacent Manors of Dowles, Ribbesford, Alton, Rock, Cleobury or Stodesden would provide a more complete picture.

From Feudal times all land belonged to the Crown. Vassals held lands from lords-superior on condition of military service, down through a hierarchy, to Manors with a Lord of the Manor. The people lived as Tenants on the Lord's land with various types of holdings, agreements and conditions. The Manor was supervised by Stewards and Bailiffs, and the whole regulated by the Manor Court. The Steward kept the Roll, an updated list of tenants and rents. Much of this legal framework persists and terms such as landlord and roll-call are in common use.

THE MANOR OF BEWDLEY 1749

With the title; "A survey of the Manor of Bewdley in Worcestershire made in the year 1749 for Edwd Winnington Esq by John Ingram", the Roll for that time forms one source which reveals a great deal of detail giving an insight into some aspects of local life in the mid-eighteenth century. The photocopy used here runs to 131 pages (A4), and an index, (with a few pages of the original, missing), all hand written, without corrections, in beautiful 'copper plate' which must be a fair copy from an original draft compilation. Parts in another hand have been added later up to about 1770. Thanks are due to Mr Charles Purcell for the opportunity to inspect the documents.

The first twenty or so pages outline the history of the Manor (and hence Bewdley); Charters, claims to Title, legal relations with the Crown and Borough of Bewdley. There then follows an inventory of the numerous properties and tenants of the Manor lands starting with a number of holdings, some with relatively substantial rents, round the Town and the Park. Then many entries listed by district e.g. The Park, Upper Street, Load Street, Wyre Hill, Bark Hill, Coppices, Forrest, Lyehead, etc. In

each case there is a description of the property, names of tenants, occupants, type of holding, dates and duration of leases often determined by the lives of family occupants, and rents quoted in pounds £, shillings s, and pence p. (20 shillings and 240 pence to £1; 12 pence to 1s).

Unfortunately there is no map to match the Survey and few clues regarding land use or acreage, other than terms like 'Barn', 'Outbuildings', 'Close', 'Inclosure', 'Incroachment', 'Wood', 'Coppice', 'waste'. The point of my enquiry is to seek information on Orchards, but the term 'Orchard' is hardly used. Since there is no mention of other crops either, or land use other than 'Close', and 'Inclosure', not even 'Grass' or 'Arable', one cannot make assumptions that in 1749 the only 'Orchards' are those mentioned. However, that orchards are mentioned to a limited extent does suggest that they were noteworthy or uncharacteristic.

Pages 102-123 list a summary of the 'Chief Rents', following the various sections. At the end are some additional notes, with some also added later by a different hand, giving interesting records of Coppices; dates of felling and yields and prices obtained; Bark, Cordwood, Shidewood, Poles, Beesom Straws, Stakes, Thinnings; from Hitterhill 1758, Park End Bind 1768, Brandlodge Coppice 1762, Simon's Stool 1768, Hawks Bind 1769, Doghanging 1770 and others. The survey concludes with an index of the persons at each property.

The Document of course reveals in addition, a great deal of social history as well as the gradual enclosure of land from 'Waste'. Selected, brief examples, transcribed verbatim, will illustrate the sort of information. Note the absence of punctuation, use of capitals and some spellings.

P26 "John Ingram (*Author of the survey*) holds part of Ticknell House wherein he Dwells and that part of the Gatehouse now rented by Thomas Meysey with the Outbuildings Gardens and Close lying between the House and Park Lane By lease to him thereof Granted by Salwey Winnington Esq from Ladyday (25th March, Annunciation Day) 1734 for 60 Years The Tenant to keep Repairs And the Landlord to pay all Taxes Except the Window Tax Rent £16-10s-0p Yearly value £20-0s-0p"

WYRE HILL (pp 57 - 62)

- "John Blount the Elder Cottage **Orchard** and Close 99 year lease Granted 1729 £0-13s-0p"
- "John Blount Junr Tenement Garden and **Orchard** £0-10s-0p"
- Page 41. John Wharton Lease 1733 a messuage garden and **Orchard** on Wyre Hill purchased by Mr Winnington and no part of the Crown Lands and also several closes



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part of Bewdley Park for 99 years determinable on the lives of...£10 – 0s – 0p... So much of the farm above as lies without the Park yields Tyth to the Rector of Ribbesford. (And what seems a later entry); Wharton hath assigned his lease to William Taylor who pays for an incroachment on the Cleobury Road...£ 0-5-0

There are 19 entries for Wyre Hill extending up to Long Bank yet **only three references to Orchard.**

BARK HILL (pp 65 – 79)

- “Samuel Aldersee holds a Tenement divided into two Dwellings and a Garden and **two Orchards** by Lease granted in 1704 for 99 Years £0-10s-0p”
- “Richard Danby...Lease near Wynne Brook for 99 years from 1731. He also pays for an Incroachment about 1/4 acre £0-0-9p. There is a **good Orchard** on these takings of Danby”
- “Thomas Bodenham.....two barns and eight closes.... from 25th March 1746 for 21 years.....also holds..... a close on the other side of the lane now a **Hopyard** £1-10s-0p”
- “Stephen Knowles late Samuel Smith for an **Orchard** £0-2s-0p”

There are 40 entries for Bark Hill, but **only three mentions of Orchard** and the only citing of Hopyard. Without seeing the Lease of 1704 there is no indication when any orchard existed. Was it already there or did it appear subsequently, but before the Survey? 1704 would seem to be an early reference to orchards.

FORREST (pp 82 – 94)

- P84 “The Widow Dalloway assignee of George Davis holds Rudds Cottage at Hopes Brook by lease Granted in 1729 for 50 years absolute from Michaelmas 1728 £0-5s-0p
- **An Orchard** over agst Bows part of Rudds Tenmt is laid open to Copyhold Land
- John Dallow a New Built Tenement and New Inclosure very poor and not worth Inclosing Lett at Will.... £0-1-6p (After listing his children he had obviously prospered,taking another Lease) Lease Ladyday 1767 for 70 years £1-0s-0p”
- P88 “In the middle of the Common above Dallows new Inclosure Tenement and **Orchard** where Dovey Dwelt before he took the Furnace Mill £0-2s-6p”
- P89 “Richd Bark a little new house **Orchard** and a New Inclosure by a lease Granted in 1730 for 99 years”
- P90 “John Jones a tenement and **Orchard** at Lem Brook Lease 1731 for 99 years £0-5s-0p”

- P90 “Edward Hodgkis a House Garden and **Orchards** (plural) Lease 1731 £0-1s-6p”

Of the 41 Tenancies listed under the Forrest there are **only five mentions of Orchard.**

INCLOSURES AT LYE HEAD near BLISS GATE (pp 95 – 99)

- P96 “A Tenement much out of repair and an **Orchard** late Shepherds now let to Thomas Jones (at Will) a Lease Granted 1748 Lives Thomas Jones Sarah his Wife and Eliza their Daur £0-12s-0p”
- P97 “Thomas Price for a Tenement Garden and **Orchard** at Lyehead granted in 1724 to Thomas Bevan Lives lesee Sarah and Ann his two Daur £0-5s-0p”
- “William Edwards for a Tenement and **Orchard** late Seve\r\ns £0-1s-0p (This worth £20)”
- “Thomas Fellows for a House and **Orchard** below Prices £0-5s-0p”

There are 17 tenancies listed under Lyehead. **Only four refer to an Orchard.**

To summarise the references to **Orchards on the Manor Land**

Wyre Hill	3	Forrest	5 at least
Bark Hill	3+1	Lyehead	4
TOTAL 16 at least			

One can suspect that cider apples might be the main crop, but there is no indication of the areas of orchards or types of fruit. At this time transport of fruit by wagon would be slow and bruising on unmade roads. Commercial fruit growing was largely in Kent with swift and ready access to the huge London market via the Rivers Medway and Thames. Elsewhere fruit culture was the interest of Gentlemen with large households, walled gardens, and professional gardeners. There was little popular interest in fruit growing for markets other than for local use. An orchard would provide more fruit than a family would need thus it would seem the produce was intended for marketing and the production of cider would have been the most likely outlet for any quantity of fruit. Thus, apart from household use of other top fruit, orchards would be of cider apples and perry pears.

There are numerous points of interest among these data apart from fruit. Many of the names are familiar today. Samuel Uncles held land on Bark Hill. On page 95, under Lyehead, “Thomas Milman weaver holds by Lease Granted in 1729 two Tenements and 4 Closes there for 50 years from Michaelmas 1728 Rent clear of taxes £1-1s-0p” The carpet trade in Kidderminster is reckoned to have started around 1735, heralding the

end of the cottage industries. Any community would have had a full range of its own local tradesmen, but by the mid-eighteenth century the Enlightenment, the Scientific, Technological and Industrial Revolutions were about to develop causing huge and rapid changes to everyday life and work. From this survey it would seem reasonable to conclude that in the mid-eighteenth

century the **sixteen modest orchards** and the **fruit** produced played a small part in the economy of the Manor of Bewdley. In 1749 Thomas William Coke (1754-1842) pioneer of the Agricultural Revolution, living in Norfolk, would not be born for six years, so we might consider this survey as a glimpse into rural life 'at the end of an era' about to disappear for ever.

Unusual Numbers in Wyre Forest of the Horse Fly *Tabanus bromius* (Linnaeus, 1758) (Diptera: Tabanidae)

KEVIN MCGEE

On 4th July 2008 I visited Wyre to undertake some general recording and photography. I concentrated in the area alongside Dowles Brook in the centre of the forest. I was pleased to come across 3 specimens of the horse-fly *Tabanus bromius*, 2 of which were males. Although not a particularly rare insect I have never found it to be as common as general text books would have you believe. The best indication of current population levels are given in *British Soldierflies and their Allies* (Stubbs & Drakes, 2001) who write that is rare in the midlands but frequent in southern England. They go on to say 'it is a local species and would seem to have declined substantially'

The following day, 5th July 2008, I attended an organised recording day at Pound Green Common. During the afternoon some of us visited a part of Hurst Coppice, Wyre Forest. I was amazed to find 10 specimens of *T. bromius* with ease. They were all at rest on log-piles

along a length of the track covering about half a mile. Eight of them were females. Close approach for photography was simple, this is not usually the case! I have found *T. bromius* previously at rest on fence-posts and tree stumps, but only as singletons, except for one occasion when I counted about 6 at Grafton Wood, Worcestershire, on 2nd August 2004.

I've always found very hot and humid conditions to be best for horse-fly species but neither day fell into that category. The weather though had been relatively settled for a short while prior to this period so I believe they were taking advantage as part of a synchronised emergence; there was precious little opportunity during the cool and wet conditions in the summer of 2008!

REFERENCE

Stubbs, A.E. and Drake, M. (2001). *British Soldierflies and their Allies*. British Entomological and Natural History Society.



Tabanus bromius (female)

Kevin McGee