

The History of Chidham & Hambrook

Introduction by Steve Tanner

The Oxford book of place names gives the name Chidham as being derived from the Old English word CEOD, meaning a bag or pouch and HAM meaning a settlement. Chidham being therefore, the pouch-like bag settlement. It is thought the shape of the Chidham peninsula gives rise to the 'pouch-like bag' description. Unlike Chidham, HAM at the beginning of the name means a rock and therefore Hambrook refers to a place where the spring gushes from the rock.

Chidham is not mentioned in the Domesday survey of 1086, being then included in the Bishop of Exeter's estate of the Chapelry of Bosham. In 1121 Bishop Warlewaste of Exeter founded the College of Bosham with six prebends, which were Bosham parochial, Appledram, Chidham, Funtington, Walton and Westbrook. It is doubtful whether the prebend of Chidham worked in the parish, as there was a separate vicarage of Chidham, Andrew Prous being the first recorded vicar in 1261.

The first mention of the Lord of the Manor of Chidham is in a document entitled "The Confirmatory Grant of the Chapelry", dated 1243, naming the Bishop of Exeter as Lord of the Manor of Chidham and having small tenants, who were his servants, in the Hamlet of Westerton. By this time there were already three tithings, the other two being Middleton and Easton.

After the dissolution of the College of Bosham, the Bishop conveyed the Manor of Chidham to Thomas Fisher in 1548. Thomas then transferred it to Henry Bickley, in whose family it remained passing to his son Thomas and grandson Thomas, who died in 1640. It was subsequently bequeathed to Brewen Bickley, grandson of Henry and Cicely Ryman, and to their son Richard. Richard died before his father, whose estates passed to a younger son Henry, who died in 1707, leaving the Manor of Chidham to his son, another Henry, who sold it in 1714. It was apparently bought by Richard Lumley, Earl of Scarborough and descended with Westbourne until the death of Richard Barwell in 1805, after which it was sold to Edmund Woods. William Padwick owned the Manor in 1822 but sold it to Charles Cheesman some time before 1835, after which it passed to Alfred Cheesman, Andrew Hutton, John Henry Hortin and Viscount Gifford. Sophie, Lady Gifford, (widow of the 3rd Baron), was named as Lady of the Manor between 1915 and 1922, but it was in the hands of Albert Eadie in 1919. It was subsequently acquired by Lord Iveagh.

There is very little known about the parish in the 14th and 15th centuries, though encroachment of the sea is recorded in the Nonce Rolls of 1340, where it was noted that since 1291, the parishes of Chidham and Thorney had each lost twenty acres of arable and 20 acres of meadowland to the sea.

The surviving records of the Sussex Subsidy of 1327 gives the names of the following contributors, living in Chidham:-

Ralph Hambrook
Richard Grigg
Richard Herbelot
Robert Muleward
William Neuman
John Godefray
John Alyng
Simon Godefray
Henry at Putte
John Pruet
The widow at Stone
The widow Mafford
Thomas de Watergate
The widow Cepsston
Godfrey de Ledes
Thomas Roberd
William Russel
John Maudut
Richard Falzes

At the beginning of the sixteenth century there was increasing criticism of the Church in England and of the usefulness of the monasteries. The Priory of Pynham was suppressed by Cardinal Wolsey, who seized the property, which included Priors Lease. When Wolsey fell from power it was confiscated by Henry VIII, who gave it to Lucy Neville, daughter of John, Marquis Montague. It changed hands several times, passing to William Barnard and became known as Barnard's Manor. It now only survives as a farm and the name has reverted back to Priors Lease.

Chidham Church suffered badly following Henry VIII's break with Rome, when he stopped pilgrims from visiting St. Cuthman's shrine. This resulted in a loss of revenue from offerings made to the image of St. Cuthman. The parish records indicate that the Church continued to be neglected in the first half of the seventeenth century as mention is made of the Chancel paving being broken up and the stone wall gable end of the Chancel needing to be taken up and replaced. In 1626 it was recorded that the vicarage house and barn had fallen into decay and in 1636 a worrying note states, "the steeple is like to fall down". The first half of the eighteenth century saw no improvement and for a long time there was no vicar, services being taken by Curates. 1770 seems to have been a turning point, with the appointment of a new vicar, Anthony Fosbrooke as by 1776, Sir William Burrell noted "the Church is in good repair and has a small wooden turret".

A map dated 1812 shows all the landowners, both freeholders and copyholders, south of the Turnpike Road, (A259), with a small area to the north. John Newland owned Chidmere Farm and what is now Cobnor Farm, but was then wasteland. In 1836, by Act of Parliament, the Tithes, (payment in kind by landowners to the Church), were commuted for a rent charge on the land. The Tithe map for Chidham is dated 1846 and gives the name of each field, with its acreage and the name of the owner and the occupier of all the properties and land. From this it can be established that the area of the parish was just over 1534 acres, of which 1236 were arable, 159 meadow and pasture, a little over 8 acres of woodland and houses, buildings, water, rough ground, roads, glebe lands and waste making up the remainder. The map also shows the new public highway linking the Turnpike Road with Steels Lane. Called New Road on the Tithe Map it was subsequently called Malthouse Lane and later the whole road was re-named Chidham Lane, the southern section from Steels Lane to the Cobnor Track having previously been called Gosmer Lane. The tithe award to the Dean and Chapter of the Cathedral Church of Chichester was 478 pounds 6 shillings annually and to the Vicar, (Henry Smith), 130 pounds annually.

The 1882 copy of Kellys Directory for Sussex gives the population of Chidham as 266 and records the following list of commercial residents:-

John Carroll – Market Gardener
John Collis – Beer Retailer
Thomas Cox – Farmer at Hambrook
John Habin – Farmer at Church & Manor Farms
George Hackett – Market Gardener
James Hackett – Miller
James Hackett – Market Gardener
John Hackett – Market Gardener
Stephen Hackett – Market Gardener
Abraham Pennicott – Shoemaker
Sutton Brothers – Maltsters
William Terry – Farmer & Market Gardener
Henry Wakeford – Market Gardener
John Wakeford – Market Gardener
William West – Farmer

The population rose to 503 in 1911. This was principally due to the development of Hambrook and building along Main Road, probably stimulated by the opening of the Nutbourne Halt station in 1906. Development since the Second World War has been concentrated near the A259. Hamstead Meadow, in Chidham Lane, was a Chichester Rural District Council estate, which was completed in 1949. Later, Maybush Drive private estate and the Flatt Road Council estate were built. In 1971, the population was given as 980, comprising 494 males and 486 females.

Chidham in 1867

From Kelly's Post Office Directory of Essex, Herts, Middlesex, Kent, Surrey and Sussex, 1867:-

CHIDHAM is a parish, 5½ miles west from Chichester, in the Western division of the county, Bosham hundred, Westbourne union, Chichester rape, county court district, diocese and archdeaconry, and Boxgrove rural deanery, bounded on the south by Bosham Creek and Thorney Channel, and on the north by Westbourne. The living is a vicarage, formerly appropriated to the College of Bosham, annual value £210, with residence, in the gift of Miss Walker, and held by the Rev. George Alfred Walker, M.A., of Wadham College, Oxford. The village is small, situate near the centre of the peninsula made by the two creeks before mentioned, and about a mile south of the turnpike road from Chichester to Emsworth. The area is 2,185 acres, and the population in 1861 was 310.

EASTON and WESTON are tithings;

Cobnor is a farm

Parish Clerk, George Bleache

Letters through Emsworth, which is the nearest money order office.

Roxford Col. Cobnor house

Hasler Mr. William

Walker Rev. George Alfred, M.A.[Vicar]

COMMERCIAL

Ayling Thomas, Carpenter & beer retailer

Boorn Thomas Morgan, farmer, Manor farm

Carroll John, cowkeeper

Cox William, farmer, Hambrook

Habin John, farmer

Hackett Henry, market gardener

Hackett James, miller

Hackett John, market gardener

Hackett Stephen, market gardener

Jordan George, blacksmith

Kennett William, farmer

Kerry William, farmer

Pennicott Abraham, shoemaker

Sainsbury Thomas, farmer

Sandell William, farmer

Wackford Henry, market gardener

Salt

Salt working was also an important industry in the area, dating from at least the Iron Age. The harbour was an ideal area for salt production, being relatively sheltered with low-level marsh that could easily be enclosed. In the Iron Age and Roman periods, salt water was collected in pits at high tide and transferred to crude ceramic vessels where the water dried and the salt could be collected. Later, south coast salt production was by the boiling of seawater, concentrated by sun and wind, in lead or iron pans over coal fires. South coast salt making seems to have declined in the 19th century due to increased competition from Cheshire and salt imported from the Continent.

Shipbuilding

Shipyards concentrated around the harbour at Itchenor, Bosham and Emsworth for the purpose of building and maintaining little ships for coastal trade and the fishing industry all around the coast. The earliest references to ship building date to the late 17th century, when an inventory of the belongings of John Chatfield from Itchenor in 1694 included a reference to 'shipwright work.' Although the harbour had been rejected as not suitable for a naval establishment by the Navy Board in 1698, a number of small to medium-sized warships were built at Itchenor in the 18th and early 19th centuries.

Fishing

The exploitation of fish is likely to be one of the oldest industries in the area, and may date to the Palaeolithic and certainly to the Mesolithic. A specialised flint assemblage from the Neolithic period was found at Chidham in 1980. The flints may have been used to prepare wooden arrow shafts, spear shafts and possibly osiers for plaited fish traps. Fishing is also likely to have been an important part of the local Iron Age, Roman and medieval economy.

The normal pattern of fishing in the harbour in the post-medieval period seems to have been to fish wet fish in the summer, and shellfish in the winter. Plaice, flounder, sole, whiting and whiting-pout, mackerel and herring were all fished in the harbour in the 19th century. The Terror, currently being restored by Chichester Harbour Conservancy as part of the 'Rhythms of the Tide' project, carried oysters between lays at Hayling Island. By the early 19th century, the local oyster beds had been fished out.

Chidham Wheat

Chidham's makes its claim to fame on the discovery of a new variety of wheat, which became known as 'Chidham Wheat'. The Rev. Arthur Young in his General View of the Agriculture of the County of Sussex, written in 1813, described it 'As Mr Woods was occasionally walking over his fields, he met with a single plant of wheat growing in a hedge. This plant contained thirty fair ears in which were found fourteen hundred corns. These, Mr. Woods planted the ensuing year, with the greatest attention, in a wheat field: the crop from these fourteen hundred corns produced eight pounds and a half of seed, which he planted the same year; and the produce amounted to forty-eight gallons: this he drilled, and it yielded fifteen quarters and a half, nine gallon measure. Having now raised a large quantity of seed, he partly drilled, and in part sowed, the last produce broad-cast, over rather more than fifty acres of land, and he gained 38½ loads. Twenty loads of this quantity were sold for seed, at £15.15s per load. The wheat, upon trial, was discovered to be so fine, that Mr. Woods had an immediate demand for a far greater quantity than he could spare for sale. It was said of the sample of Chidham wheat, 'it is white, of a very fine berry and remarkably long in the straw so as to stand full six feet in height'.

Some Recollections from Ann Griffiths of Havant:-

Francis RAPER, my four greats grandfather, joined the army as a Brevet Lieutenant on 25th September 1757, shortly after the outbreak of the Seven Years War. He was promoted to Captain on 23rd March 1761, six days before his Regiment, the 67th Foot, South Hampshires, sailed to the capture of Belle Isle.

In June 1762, Portugal was threatened with invasion from Spain and the Belle Isle garrison was sent to Lisbon. Captain Francis's letters from Lisbon and Portalegre to his C-in-C, Lord Loudon, are in the British Manuscript Library. They show Francis as a capable manager. In January 1763 he wrote from Portalegre:-

"I have sent your Lordship a return of the number of sick left at this place. We have procured fresh provisions for all the sick hitherto and nothing shall be omitted that can be of use to them ... Mr. Hayes the surgeon thinks that about Friday next 40 men will be able to go to Abrantes(?) ... Col. Sherman has at my request asked the Magistrate to procure carts by that time, tho' I fear we shall not get them as there is none in the neighbourhood."

On 8th October 1765, at Chidham, Sussex, Francis married MARY SONE, daughter of the late RICHARD SONE, yeoman, of Chidham Mere, now Chidmere House, and his wife, MARY, née MIDLANE. The Sones had originated from Stoughton in Sussex but had spread to neighbouring parishes, including Havant and Warblington. On 4th March, 1766, Captain Francis's Uncle Robert wrote from Charleston:-

"Dear Nephew, I read your extraordinarily agreeable letter of 19th June last, acquainting me of your being married to my favourite Miss Sone which gives me perfect pleasure. I assure you I shall always have great regard for you both. You may depend on it. Inclosed I send you a bill on John Heron for

£12. 10s and when Curling sails I will send you another for £87. 10s more, together making £100 which I desire you both to accept on this happy occasion.”

On 12th April, he wrote again: ”

I have been perusing the latter part of your letter of 14th October, which I have not answered before and I do now assure you that I am at a loss to advise you about the matter you mention. Whilst the regiment stays at Portsmouth no doubt but you will continue in it, this I suppose will be so but as you seem much inclined to quit and exchange I may be mistaken. Upon the whole I advise you to consult your father who is a better judge of these affairs than I am and whatever is agreeable to him and also Mrs. Raper will be agreeable to me.”

Francis eventually retired from the army in 1769. His father, William, died in 1771 and was buried at Chidham. Francis, in his will of 1772, mentions his freehold properties in “The West Street” Chichester and the house and offices he is building in West Street to the design of Thomas Andrews. Francis died on 26th October 1773, aged 39, and is buried at Chidham. He left two sons and a daughter, Mary, aged three months.

The 1780 Land Tax shows Francis’s widow, Mary, living at what is now Langley House in West Street. This may be the house built by Captain Francis, as it remained in the family’s ownership until Sir Robert Raper’s death in 1901 and was extended by him. The family Coat of Arms can be seen set in the wall at the rear. Joseph Freeland, who occupied the house for some years, was the father of Frederic Freeland, who married Robert George Raper’s sister, Ann Thornton Raper. Joseph and Robert Raper senior were two of my great-great grandparents. Sir Robert George Raper was mayor of Chichester ten times.