

## AN 18th CENTURY SQUIRE by Jane Sale

The phrase 'an 18th century squire' conjures up an image of those two characters in Henry Fielding's *The History of Tom Jones*, Squire Alworthy and Squire Western. The former was an educated man, with sober habits, familiar with London life but happiest on his country estate, where he was known for being a good neighbour and fair employer - his name says it all. Squire Western on the other hand was a rough, mud-on-the-boots, hard riding sort who enjoyed his drink and who objected strongly when his daughter would not marry the man he had chosen for her. Perhaps his name is an indication of how London's 'polite society' pictured West Country landowners. These two were, of course, caricatures, but the best caricatures are based on the truth, so how near to the truth were they?

This article is an attempt to answer that question by looking in some detail at the lives of two Gloucestershire squires of the period, William Baghott of Prestbury and John Prinn of Charlton Kings. The material for it is to be found among archives in the Gloucestershire Record Office, in particular from two very detailed account books kept by William Baghott<sup>1</sup> and an account and memorandum book written by John Prinn of Charlton Park<sup>2</sup>, which though less detailed, provides some interesting comparisons between the two men.

William Baghott came from a long line of landowning Baghotts in Prestbury. An early will is that of William Baghott alias Badger dated 1578, and there is a William Bagger listed among Prestbury's leading landowners in *The Gloucestershire Military Survey of 1522* published in the Gloucestershire Record Series of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society. The two alternative surnames persisted for some time - a deed in 1637 mentions Edmund and Edward Badger alias Badghott. This deed described the family estate as the "Manor of Overton alias Hall Place", which is that part of Prestbury now called Noverton; but from at least 1653 they had also owned "All that, scite of the Mannor of Prestbury commonly called the Farme of Prestbury and also of the farmhouse adjacent to the churchyard at Prestbury". Another deed of 1676 confirms that this farmhouse had become the main family home. The family had also held the advowson of the parish church since 1621, which gave them entitlement to appoint the incumbents.

William was born in 1690, the third of fourteen children. His elder brother died as a child so William would have been brought up expecting to inherit the family estate. It was common practice among the gentry to send their eldest son to one of the Inns of Court in London to gain some knowledge of the law to help them run the estate and take up the public duties expected of them. Unfortunately I have not been able to find any evidence for this in William's case, but I do know that he spent some time in London when he was about nineteen through an entry in John Prinn's account book which refers to a sum of money lent to William Baghott junior "while in London in 1709". The 'Alumni Oxoniensis' shows that his two younger brothers, Thomas and Kinard, went up to Oriel College, Oxford in 1711 and 1728 respectively, prior to their going into the church, but there is no record of William having done so.

William inherited the estate on the death of his father in 1725 and in the same year he married Hester Stephens of Upper Lypiatt. The marriage settlement confirms that William was then living at 'The Farm' in Prestbury and gives us an idea of the layout of the house by listing the rooms set aside for his widowed mother: "the Hall, the Little Closet at the end of the Hall Chimney, the Pantry next the Cellar, the Chamber over the Hall, the Little Chamber and Garret over the Kitchen Passage, the Chamber over the Entry, the back Stairs by the Kitchen, the use of the brewhouse to wash and brew in, and free ingress and egress through the entry". This is the house now known as the Priory and described by David Verey as "a long rectangular structure of timber-framing and stone, incorporating a C14 Hall of four bays, with additional two-storeyed bays at either end probably dating from C16 or early C17. The insertion of a floor in the hall and a chimney in its E bay presumably took place at the same time. The house was largely cased in stone during the C18." The estate land consisted of some closes around Overton and on the Prestbury/Cheltenham boundary, but the rest was scattered among the open fields of Prestbury, together with grazing rights on Prestbury Hill which was Common Land at that time.

The account books start in 1730. They reveal that William had inherited a great deal of family responsibility as well as the estate. His four unmarried sisters and younger brother Kinard had been left legacies by their father

which had to be paid out of the estate funds. There are frequent entries such as "paid my sisters Ann and Grace Baghott - 10 guineas", 'paid my brother Kinard Baghott - 2 guineas". He also seemed to be responsible for paying his mother's bills - "paid for 2 loads of slate for my mother" and "paid Jacob Holder Butcher on mother's account". All payments, even to his wife, are meticulously noted - "paid my wife 2s 6d". Among the receipts are those from his mother-in-law for boarding - she paid £18 per half year, which gives us an indication of the current cost of living for this level of society. The house must have been very full - apart from William, his wife and their growing family, there were his mother, four unmarried sisters, his young brother when home from Oxford, and his mother-in-law, not to mention their servants.

William's main interest was clearly farming - he was not a landowner with a steward to run the estate, but a hands-on farmer. Both books are full of details of his stock: names of cattle and where they were - "I sent Truelove and Starr to ye hill"; what they looked like - "Bought at Tewkesbury 1 red haffer fat and 1 pied cow"; what they weighed - "killed one store pig weighed 141lbs". He was particularly careful to record details of his horses: "Paid for a black two-year old colt with blaze and snip and 3 white feet, 14 hands high", and "Paid for a brown bay colt stoned, 2 year old at harvest, tanned muzzle and flank, and star in the forehead."

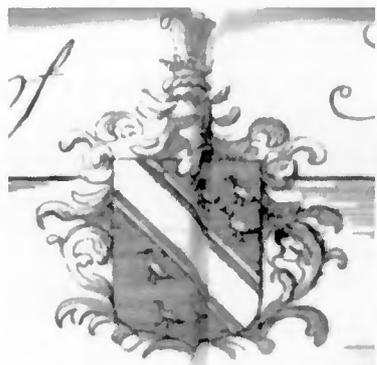
In 1730 he had a mixed farm with a flock of sheep, working bullocks and fattening beasts, breeding sows and young pigs, together with a dairy herd - there are mentions of dairy maids: "Paid Elizabeth Etherton for 14 weeks milking 11/6" and "Daisie Etherton began to milk at 6d per week". The milk was turned into butter and cheese - there were purchases of "cheese cowls, churns etc." and receipts for cheese sold at "Norleich". The pigs were included under the heading of "Dairy Stock" so they were presumably fed on the whey left over after cheese making. The only crops grown for sale appear to have been wheat and barley.

This was a very vital time for the people of Prestbury, as in January 1730/1, fifty four of them signed the Articles of Agreement for a Parliamentary Inclosure Act. William and his mother, and his brother Thomas who owned the Hewlett Estate, were among the signatories. Among the Commissioners responsible for the allotments were William's Uncle, Kinard De La Bere of Southam and John Prinn and William Cooper of Charlton Kings. As a result of the Act William Baghott was able to enclose 103 acres on Prestbury Hill and 136 acres out of the open fields. It seems that he had put up the money needed to get the scheme under way, as during the next few years he received payments from other landowners: "Nov. 1732 received from Mr. Akerman for his part of the charges of Prestbury Inclosure - £17.17.0" and October 1733 "received from Mr. Caple in part of Inclosure charge £21". The Act laid down that landowners were responsible for fencing their new enclosures, and the work had to be completed within twelve years, at the latest. These were referred to as "mounds" either of stone - the accounts show William paying men for "digging stone out for mounds on the hill" and "walling my enclosure on the hill", or "quick mounds" - that is hedges, 7 thousand "Quick" were paid for in 1733.

William's type of farming changed after the Inclosure Act had been passed. He sold off his dairy cows and concentrated more on crop husbandry. Firstly he had to prepare the ground - he paid a team of men to "breast plough and burn" 40 acres of land on the hill. He also bought a new plough which must have been something special as it was transported from Reading rather than being bought locally. Work on William's land was still being done with oxen as shown by his purchase of "a yoke of 2 year old steers" and reference to "my six bullstubs", which are male beasts castrated when fully grown rather than as calves - in this way the animal would develop the strong forequarters associated with a bull, which would make it ideal for drawing ploughs. He also set about improving the fertility and texture of the land - soap ashes - a by-product of the soap industry, soot and chopped rags were all used as fertilisers - in addition to 'muck on the hoof', that is sheep folded on crops such as turnips. As well as his own sheep, there is mention of other farmers' sheep being 'tacked' on his turnips and on clover. Several hundredweight of clover seed was bought together with ryegrass and trefoil - all to improve the pasture. Apart from wheat and barley other crops grown for sale included beans and rape seed which was sold to a miller in exchange for rape seed cake for livestock feed.

William was improving Overton Farmhouse at this time - there is mention of "the new room or parlour" together with a new chimney. Perhaps it was being made more comfortable for his sisters to live in. He was also paying for work on the King's Arms - a rather surprising purchase in 1731, probably because of the land and common rights that went with the property. There is an intriguing entry among the building accounts: "Paid bricklayer for making new Coffee House at the Inn". Coffee houses were of course well known in London,

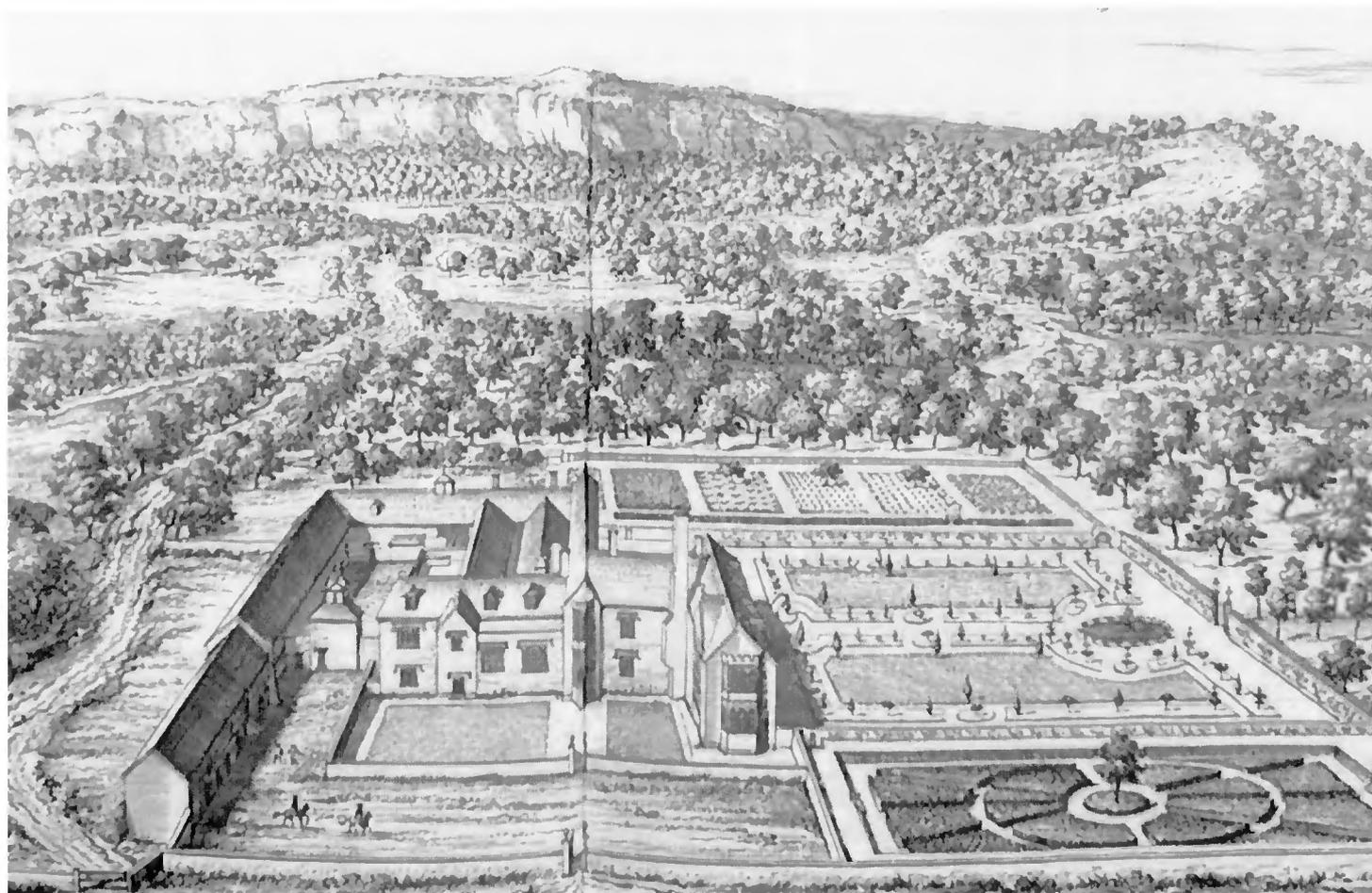
having become popular centres for business and pleasure, but unexpected in Prestbury.



De La Bere Coat of Arms

Personal expenses at this time were minimal - he paid Dame Wilks for "delivering my wife of her son William" and Nurse Marshall for "Attending my wife in her lying in with Will". He bought newspapers - The Gloucestershire Journal is mentioned, writing paper, hemp for sheets, a periwig, shoes and a 'Great Eastrich Cloth coat'. Items of food included sugar - both Lisbon sugar and a sugar cone, Bohea tea - only 1lb, and one touch of luxury - Christmas Fruits, which could have been candied fruits or marzipan shaped into fruits. William certainly enjoyed his wine - 2 gallons of red, 8 dozen bottles of white and brandy were all bought, and the family made cherry wine themselves as shown by an entry for 1733: "C sugar for cherry wine and hogshead to put it in." The family also did their own brewing as malt and hops were bought, and there is mention of "work to cyder mill and press".

An important change took place in 1734, when William's maternal uncle, Kinard De La Bere of Southam died. As he and his wife had no children the estate came to William, on the condition that he added the name De La Bere to his own. William and his family did not move to Southam at this stage, as Kinard's widow continued to live there, but he started to receive rent for tenanted land and paid Land Tax on the estate. He also drew up a contract with Mr. Keck to build Wingmore House - at 4s. 6d. per square, with doorways, lintels and window



An engraving of Southam by Johannes Kip, taken from the Ancient and Present State of Gloucestershire published in 1712

frames to be paid for on a daily rate. The house was built of bricks made on site. Wingmore lies to the south of the road from Bishop's Cleeve to Stoke Orchard, and was part of the Southam estate.

Kinard De La Bere had been the Tory M.P. for Worcestershire in the 1720s, but William does not appear to have been involved in politics, but he did begin to take a greater part in public life. He had been made a Justice

of the Peace back in 1728 when the requisite landholding for a magistrate had been only £20 per year. This was changed in 1731/2 to the sum of £100 per year. An Oath of Office had to be made to prove that the magistrate was still eligible - William made this in 1735, together with a writ of 'Dedimus Potestatem' which gave him the authority to take oaths from new Justices. But it was not until 1736 that he started to enter up 'Expenses at Sessions - servant and horses' - so presumably he was having to travel to Gloucester to attend the Assizes, rather than just the local Magistrates' Court.

William was still a very keen horseman, hardly a month went by without him acquiring a new horse, or swopping one with a neighbour. It was surprising to see the use of the word 'swop', but William used it regularly together with the word 'boot' for the extra amount of money needed for the exchange e.g. "Paid Nick Jenkins Boot money in swop of my Brown Trevanian Mare for a Black Gelding 14\_ hands high, three white feet and star, 5 years old" and a month later "I swopt the Black Gelding above mentioned for a yearling filly got by Hopgoblin". Some of his horses were for use in 'chariots' and 'chaises' as he called them, he paid for the horses to be 'paced' - presumably a high trotting action. Among the harness bought was a 'snaffle', 'ring martingale' and 'sirsingle' - all familiar terms today. The first mention of horse racing comes in 1740, when he sold his 'Cotswold Lady' on the proviso that he should receive ten guineas from "the first prize or plate which she shall win". A 'hunting' whip appeared among his purchases, but there is no mention of any specific hunt, perhaps it was organised more informally among neighbouring landowners at that time. Another of his favourite occupations was shooting - there are occasional entries for repairing or buying a gun, and for training his pointer dogs.

Personal expenditure increased considerably in the years following William's inheritance from his uncle. Oysters, kippers, oranges and potatoes appear among the items of food purchased, and Port wine, Sack, Canary wine, Mountain (a Spanish wine), Rum, Brandy and 3 gallons of Sherry were all added to his cellar. Items of clothing include green Rugin (a coarse woollen material) and blue Damask for waistcoats; hats for himself and his little boys; stays, a muslin apron and flowered cotton for his wife; pairs of boots and pumps; linen cloth for shirt sleeves; and buckskin breeches. The first jewelry mentioned was a pair of sleeve buttons, made of "moca stones set in gold", followed by "silver shoe and knee buckles". An interesting purchase was a set of table glass bought from Bristol. It consisted of a dozen wine glasses, 4 large table beer glasses, 4 large strong beer glasses, a dozen water glasses, and a dozen syllabub glasses. The 'water glasses' are a bit of a mystery - at this time most water was considered unfit to drink, unless it was spa water. The most likely answer is that the glasses would have been used for rinsing the fingers. Another possibility is that they were glasses which held iced water to cool the wine glasses.

There was a further increase in spending after his mother's death in 1738. Nine 'funeral rings' were bought from "Mr. Price goldsmith" - a successful Gloucester man who combined banking with his goldsmith trade, a not unusual combination at that time. Several improvements were made to the house and new furniture bought. John Brown was paid for "Lathing and Plastering new gallery and staircase and several ceilings and partitions", and a stone grate was put in the Passage Chamber. Six chairs were bought for the hall, together with a floor mat, tapestry, repeating clock and case, and a pair of sconce glasses. £3 10s.6d. was paid for 'armed china', presumably a set of table china with the family coat of arms painted on them. Another interesting purchase was a dozen small china plates, a red china tea pot, an Indian waiter and a tea table. The Baghotts were now buying their tea directly from Mr. Twining, who had set up the first tea shop in London in the early 18th century. They were also buying chocolate.

Meanwhile William's family was growing, the midwife was paid at fairly regular intervals as twelve children were born between 1726 and 1747, of which nine survived. The boys went away to boarding school aged seven or eight, while the daughters and little boys had a governess at home. Dancing classes were paid for, for the girls and later for the eldest boy too. The family began to take part in the social life of Cheltenham as shown by entries such as "expense at Cheltenham ball for wife and Nany" (the eldest daughter Anne) and "expences at Assembly at Cheltenham". Hester is bought a striped satin gown, a hoop and a garnet necklace before these occasions. William and his eldest son, Thomas, started to 'take the waters' at Cheltenham Well in 1743 - a 'Well book' was bought by them. There is mention of a butler, cookmaid, 2 chamber maids and a nursemaid among the living-in servants.

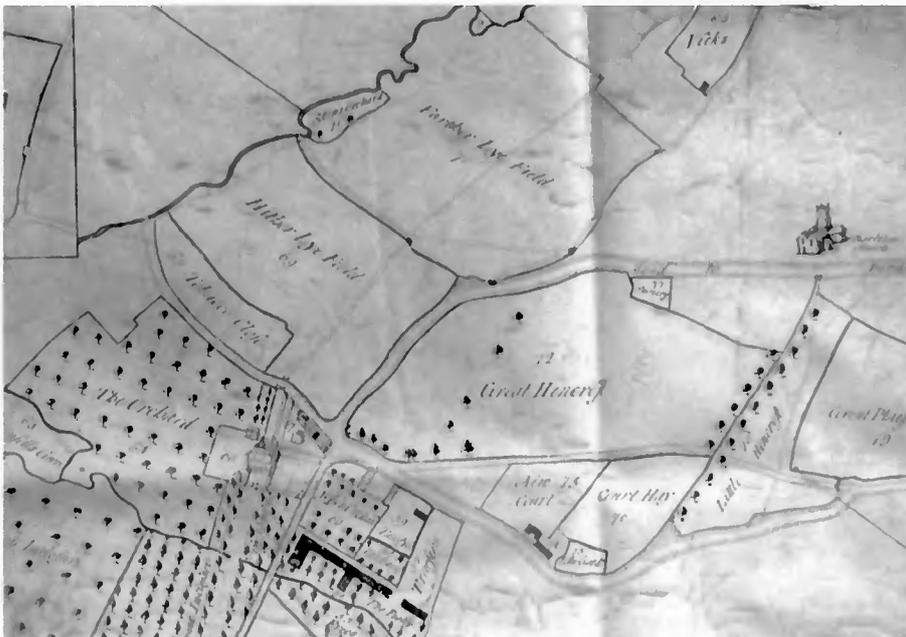
The move to Southam must have occurred about this time - deeds dated 1741 and 1742 give Prestbury as William's address, whereas one dated 1743 refers to William Baghott de la Bere of Southam. There is no direct mention of the move in the Accounts Book, only that the 'Great Clock' at Southam was moved and altered and the stone clock frame from Overton moved to Southam. The house at Southam was illustrated by Kipp in Sir Robert Atkyns book published in 1712.

William's account books finish in 1745. By then it is clear that he has become mainly a landowner, with most of his estate let out to tenants and only a 'home farm' under his direct control. As ever there are the regular purchases, sales and exchanges of horses; and also a pack of beagles. But more important things are needing his attention now - his involvement with public life, particularly with regard to the courts in Gloucester, had been increasing and culminated in his creation as High Sheriff of Gloucestershire for the year 1746.

Turning now to John Prinn of Charlton Park - we find a very different kind of squire. Having read Law and been called to the Bar in 1689, he became Steward of Cheltenham manor and had a wide legal practice, including the Duttons of Sherborne and Sir Berkeley Guise at Rendcomb. Gwen Hart, in her *History of Cheltenham* describes John as "probably the dominant character in this little community of farmers, maltsters, and shopkeepers". John married Elizabeth Rogers, daughter of Richard Rogers of Dowdeswell and they had a son John born in 1686 and a daughter Anne born in 1688. By the mid-1690s he owned New Court in Charlton Kings, where the Cheltenham manor court proceedings were occasionally held. Unlike William Baghott, he did not inherit an estate, but bought one - Charlton Park, or Forden House as it was then called, in 1701.



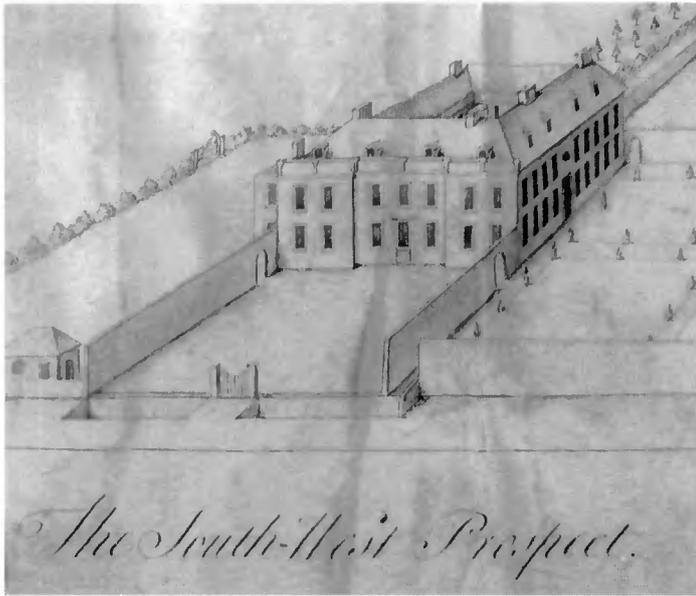
Prinn's Coat of Arms



Details from map of Prinn's Estate 1746 Gloucestershire Record Office D7661 Box 8/1

John's account book shows that although the two men had acquired their properties by different routes they shared similar interests such as making improvements to their buildings and working towards the enclosure of their estate. Between 1710 and 1712 John added a new study to the house, put a new hearth and mantelpiece in his son's room and improved the kitchen, as well as taking down the old stable and barns and rebuilding them farther from the house. Later in 1717 a new brick front and north end were put on the house and his hall was wainscotted with stone. During these years he was planting chestnuts and firs in his grounds as well as pears and apples.

Unlike Prestbury, Charlton Kings had no 18th century Inclosure Act. Landowners like John Prinn, who wanted to enclose land, had to do it gradually by buying up strips of land or exchanging them. John often rented a piece of land first and then bought it - there is evidence for this in entries such as "October 1710 - paid Thomas Smith of Winchcombe for 2 years rent of 1 land in 9 Lands Length" followed in 1713 by "made the hedge round 9 Lands Length at which time that piece was enclosed". In 1724 Thomas Clifly (or Clevely) "received of Mr. Prinn 9s in full of all rent due to me at Ladyday at which time I sold him ye land he before rented of me". Exchange of land also occurred - in 1722 Henry Clevely acknowledged receipt of £1 2s.6d. for



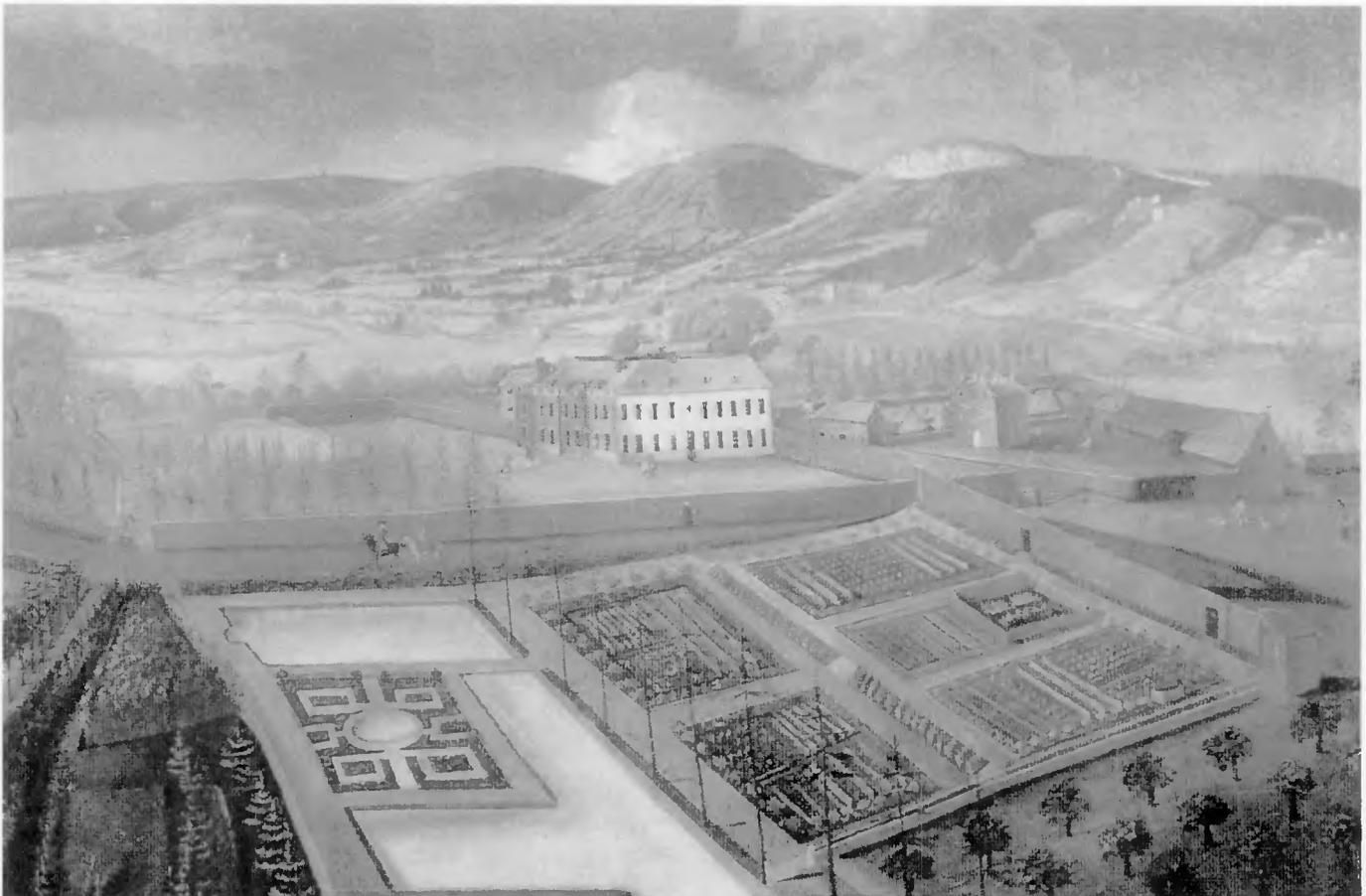
Detail of map of Prinn's Estate showing Charlton Park.  
Gloucestershire Record Office D7661 Box 8/1

"ye Odds of measure of a land of mine lying in Walters Acre Length exchanged with Mr. Prinn for a stick of his, late Samuel Whithorne's lying next east to a land and stick of mine in Gongfurlong."

The running of the estate farm was entrusted to Thomas Hall, who had been engaged in 1703 and was there until at least 1721. He had money deducted from his wages if he failed to get a crop off any piece of land - "May 1713 - Thomas Hall left Charleton acre and ye land next east and a headland in Waterfurrows and a headland in Naunton field and ye land on Forden Bank next to ye way unsown, for which I charge him £1". A mixed farming system was carried out on the estate - sheep and cattle were bought for fattening, while beans, wheat and barley were harvested. Women played a large part in the work - hoeing, weeding and haymaking, and when their children worked it was the mothers who received the money: "Paid Goodwife Styles for her son ye shepherd" and "paid Dame Lawrence for her son for 6 weeks work".

Planting and tending hedges round the newly enclosed land was important - typical entries are "Poplar Acre hedge cut and trees lopped", "Barleymead hedge laid from Whitebreach corner to ye corner next ye winds arse up Barly stream" and "inclosed with crab quick 11 Lands under Harris Picks". It is interesting to note this use of 'crab quicks' as a hedging plant. Celia Fiennes, writing about her journeys through England in the 1690s, comments on these being a particular feature of the Gloucestershire countryside.

John's personal expenses show that he travelled much more than William did. An interesting example occurs in



Mr Prinn's House (Charlton Park) by Thomas Robins the Elder reproduced by kind permission of Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum

1710 when he lists expenses involved in a journey to London: he stopped at Dorchester, Maidenhead and Hounslow for meals and finally arrived at Westminster. When there he seems to have lived very modestly - Dinner 6d, Tea 4d, Supper 3\_d, and even entered up "spent nothing Monday". His payments for 'Waterway' and 'Waterage' are a reminder that boats along the Thames would have been a major means of travel then. He bought snuff while in London, something never mentioned in William's accounts, but was very abstemious as far as alcohol was concerned - a "gill of ale" being the only entry. He did not seem to buy wine when at home either.

The account books show that, in both cases, these two men worked hard to improve their estates and brought about changes to the countryside which we are still aware of today. Whatever our feelings about the enclosure movement, and its political correctness or otherwise, we can all appreciate the stone walls and hedgerows which were the result.

Although they shared some common aims, William and John were very different types of men. William - the born farmer, keen horseman, and hearty drinker seems quite close to Fielding's Squire Western, but there is also evidence that he could be generous to neighbours in difficulties, and that he took his public duties to the church and wider community seriously, so he had some of the characteristics of Squire Alworthy too. John, on the other hand, - a practising lawyer of some consequence in the locality, familiar with London life but taking pride in his country estate, and with apparently very abstemious habits, seems to fit the character of Squire Alworthy perfectly - until that is we read his will. He starts it forthrightly and unconventionally: "The last will and testament of John Prinn, father of John Prinn a son most dutiful and Ann Prinn a daughter most undutiful of children ...." and further on he writes "and my worthless daughter, having chosen to rely upon the charity of well-disposed persons (tis her own expression) rather than to accept of eleven hundred pounds of mine and marry the best deserving man in Europe ... I leave her upon such 'well disposed persons' and give her not more than a corne of pepper to be paid her by my executor when she demand it". So he spurned his daughter when she refused to marry the man of his choice - a real Squire Western characteristic.

Perhaps the truth, rather than the fiction, is that every Squire Alworthy has a Squire Western side to him and vice versa.

## References:

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<sup>1</sup> Gloucestershire Record Office (GRO) D163/E 1 & 2

<sup>2</sup> GRO D7661 Box 3/1