

THE MANOR OF SPRIDDLESTONE

By Robert Rowland

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The Domesday Manor of Spriddlestone recorded that Ralph Spridel holds Sprideleston from Reginald de Ferariis (Honour of Trematon) and the latter holds from the Earl of Cornwall the Count of Mortain. Reginald holds Spriddlestone from the Count. Four Thanes held it freely and jointly before 1066. It paid tax for one virgate of land. Land for 2 ploughs, one plough there, 4 villagers and 3 smallholders, meadow 1 acre, pasture 10 acres. Formerly worth 20s value now 10s.

1216 William Spridel

1332 (Devon Lay Subsidies) Roger Spridel paid 18d also William de Spriddlestone was Juror for Plympton

1335 Walter Spridel

1442 John Fortescue Esq. G160 1524/7 3rd son of John Fortescue of Wimpston Esq. John Fortescue died 1538

1539 Richard Fortescue Esq. L 6.

1544 Nicholas Fortescue Esq. L 40.

1570 John Fortescue Esq. b 1516 married Florence Vivian of Trelowarren.

1594 Edward Fortescue Esq. Tenant of the Barton at this time was Tristram Bartlett Yeoman.

1596 John Fortescue Esq, Tenant of the Barton was Tristram Bartlett senior in 1616 & Tristram Bartlett junior son of John Bartlett.

1616 Sub let to Henry Pollexfen Esq.

1660 Edward Fortescue Esq. Tenant was Tristram Avent.

1679 Edward Fortescue Esq. Paid tax for 12 Fire hearths (John Avent had 10 Fire hearths at Venn)

1691-99 Edward Fortescue Esq.

1711 Leased to John Pollexfen of Wembury Esq. Pollexfen pronounced Polsen. At this time John Pollexfen's Estate extended from the River Yealm to Polsen or Polston Park, it included the Manors of Wembury, Traine and Spriddlestone.

1739-1751 John Fortescue Esq. Tenant was Philip Avent.

1779 Edward Fortescue Esq.

1780 Richard Inglett Fortescue of Dawlish Esq. Nephew of John Fortescue.

1785 Sold Manor to Thomas Lane of Coffleet Esq.

From the above list we have the descent from the Spridels who may well have been the pre Norman land holders into the hands of the Fortescue family who, being the overlords decided to build a large Manor House here where they settled for over 300 years, with easy access to the sea via the Yealm

estuary. The Fortescues were a large and extensive family with land and estates all over Devon, and at various times their principal residence may have been elsewhere. Their house is shown on Benjamin Donn's map of 1765, but with no name given, which may indicate that the house was already being neglected by the Fortescue family.

Rev Richard Lane was the Vicar of Brixton for over 50 years, as well as the owner of the Coffleet Estate, which adjoins Spriddlestone on the eastern side across the Creek. His Father Thomas Lane had inherited Coffleet from his Uncle Thomas Veale a wealthy Plymouth Lawyer who also owned Bradley Manor at Newton Abbot. There is a bust of Thomas Veale in Yealmpton Church. Richard Lane was well liked as a Vicar and spent a great deal of time in later years writing the history of Brixton Parish. He obviously knew his parishioners well, as his registers give extra details of maiden names, grandparents names and places of residence. He was a generous man with a large family and mansion house to maintain, and his fortune became dissipated, and on his death in 1858, much of the estate was sold off. Coffleet was bought by the Bastards of Kitley, who annexed the parkland and pulled down Coffleet House. Today all that remains is a ruined stable block and cottage. Richard Lane junior became the Vicar of Wembury and lived at Brixton Lodge.

Sometime between 1841 & 1850 Thomas Elliott Esq. purchased the Manor of Spriddlestone and built Hollacombe (later Spriddlestone) House, his eldest daughter Susanna died there in 1850 aged 36yrs. Thomas was born at Bigbury in 1781 the only child of Thomas Elliott and his wife Mary Garland. He moved to Kinterbury St Budeaux above the Tamar sometime before 1811. His first wife Susanna Kingwill died aged 30yrs in 1817 and their eldest son Thomas Kingwill Elliott died the following year aged just 7yrs 6mths. They are buried together at Bigbury. Thomas then in 1818 married a widow Elizabeth Jarvis at Stoke Damerel, who was his wife's sister and they had two more children Thomas Elliott Elliott and Eliza Ann Elliott Elliott. Elizabeth died aged 51yrs at St Budeaux in 1832. Thomas may well have married again, as in the 1851 census he states that he is married, but in the 1861 census he is a widower. When he moved to Spriddlestone he came with his three children Susanna, Thomas and Eliza, and perhaps a third wife. He built his new house on rising ground above the combe of Hollacombe, at the end of a long drive from Spriddlestone. The house had a similar design and said to have had the same builder as Bovisand Lodge built in 1811 for Joseph Whidby who was responsible for building the Plymouth Breakwater. To facilitate a clear run from the Torr Hill road for his carriage Thomas had to demolish three cottages and barns. He replaced these with the building of Little Spriddlestone. After the demolition of the old Manor House in 1870s Hollacombe House became Spriddlestone House and as the access to Wembury Road was shorter than the lane to Spriddlestone, this became the principal entrance. Thomas Elliott died in 1864 and his two surviving children Eliza and Thomas both in their forties promptly married. Eliza married a widower Thomas Butland from Diptford Court Diptford, and Thomas married his first cousin Emily Jane Kingwell from Great Aish South Brent. Thomas and Emily had a daughter Emily Elizabeth. Thomas died in 1878 aged 53yrs, followed by his daughter and wife in 1884 Emily Elizabeth aged just 17yrs died of tuberculosis and Emily Jane of cancer. They are all buried in Brixton Churchyard in a large chest tomb just above the church porch near the path.

The Manor now came into the hands of the Kingwell family of Great Aish, and Spriddlestone House was let for many years to the following:- John Philips Corn Merchant 1884, Major General William C. Hamilton retired Indian Army 1890, Erasmus Coryton Roberts JP from Antony Cornwall 1891, Edward Trood manure manufacturer 1901, James Gibbs Director of Chemical Works 1910, Alfred

Gillard 1919, William George Serjeant 1930 and Richard Barratt 1935. The estate was then sold and Spriddlestone House became the home of Elizabeth Alvina Cane and her husband Thomas J. Coleman. Alvina later bequeathed the house to her nephew Benjamin Cane of Venn.

A description of the Manor of Spriddlestone written by Rev Richard Lane in 1838 and extracted from his History of Brixton, must have been much as Thomas Elliott found it when he arrived.

'The manor of Spriddlestone extends from Coffleet Lake on the East to the extremity of the Parish in the West and consists of the following lands viz.

<i>The Barton of Spriddlestone</i>	<i>177 acres</i>	<i>Adam's Tenement</i>	<i>11 acres</i>
<i>Gold's Tenement</i>	<i>34 acres</i>	<i>Lawson's Tenement</i>	<i>6 acres</i>
<i>Barrett's Tenement</i>	<i>27 acres</i>	<i>Ball's Tenement</i>	<i>22</i>
<i>acres</i>			
<i>Treby's Tenement</i>	<i>19 acres</i>	<i>Page's Tenement</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>acres</i>			
<i>Croft's Tenement</i>	<i>5 acres</i>	<i>Cottages & Gardens</i>	<i>3r</i>
<i>29p</i>			
<i>Boger's Tenement</i>	<i>20 acres</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>345</i>
<i>acres</i>			

The several Leasehold Tenements with the exception of some Cottages & Gardens are at present (1838) are in the hands of the Lord of the Manor, the terms having expired. There is only one Free Tenant who does suit of court to the Lord of the Manor and Pays a chief rent of ten pence.

The Old Manor House and buildings attached form an oblong/square of a 100ft by 88ft and is of an early date as Henry VI 1422-1461. The Chapel which has long since been pulled down, occupied part of the North side-some corbels cut in freestone with angels holding escutcheons, and parts of Gothic moorstone windows belonging to it are still to be seen. The banqueting room measuring 25ft 6ins by 15ft 6ins with an arched roof and deep handsome cornice, was situated at the southern end of the east side--- The entrance to the house was by an arch into the court on this side. About the close of the sixteenth century a new house was erected in the quadrangle in front of the western side of the old buildings with an interval of only.....ft. It contains an entrance hall, a large parlour, and drawing room, and an uncommonly spacious kitchen. The windows in the front of the house were ornamented with a variety of armorial bearings in painted glass, which were taken

down a few years since and given to John Inglett Fortescue late of Buckland Filleigh who placed them in his Parish Church.

On 24 March 28yr of Elizabeth I John Fortescue described as of St Clear Cornwall & John Fortescue of Spriddleston his son & heir sell to Christopher Wotton of Revelstoke Gent for £201 6s 8d--628 Okes to be chosen out of Spriddleston Wood/now a field, (but retaining the name) on the North side of the pathway leading along the cliff.'

With Richard Lane's description above in 1838, the Brixton Tithe Map and apportionment of 1840 together with the Brixton Census return of 1841 we have a good insight into what Spriddlestone was like before Thomas Elliott's arrival. In 1841 there were 14 families living in cottages at Spriddlestone, the head of the houses being William Hill, Philip Treble, William Titball, Nicholas Parsons, Jane Beer, Thomas Medland, James Pursley, William Page, John Husk, William Cawse, Richard Parsons, Nathaniel Yabsley, Richard Parsons senior and William Cane. Four of which were small farmers, three were quarrymen and one was a shoemaker. There was also John Avent with his family and four servants, he farmed most of what became Higher Spriddlestone, and Thomas Cook who farmed the Barton with his family and five servants living indoors. So the old story that Spriddlestone once had enough young men for their own football team is true. By 1861 there were 8 inhabited houses and 3 uninhabited, and by 1911 there were just five occupied by the families of Skelly, Yabsley, Budge, Mashford and Radmore.

In 1841 the ruin of the Manor House was still standing and the Cook family were living in part of it, by 1851 Thomas Button was the farmer, he had 246 acres and came from Roche in Cornwall. In 1861 it was John Sanders. He was farming 167 acres and came from Plympton St Mary. In 1871 James Cook was back, but farming the Barton from South Barton, so this must have been when the old house became uninhabited. In 1881 Benjamin Bastin was here in the new farmhouse and the remains of the old Mansion had completely gone. Pieces of the old house can be seen today, in the converted barns, particularly granite window sills and lintels. The dilapidated barn beside the road opposite the farm entrance is particularly rich in ancient lintels and carved stone. As this barn appears on the tithe map, I think much of the stone came from the ruined chapel, which Richard Lane stated had been pulled down before 1838. This may explain the rumours that this was once a chapel, and the reason why the field behind is called Chantry Meadow. In 1890 William Richard Smerdon was farming the Barton. In 1901 John Northmore Atwill took over and purchased Spriddlestone Barton. He came from Lower Venn at Pennycross Plymouth. His brother James Henry Atwill farmed Leyford at Staddiscombe. In 1935 it was offered at auction and purchased by John Procter, 166 acres + 5 acres of Wood and 15 acres of River and Mud-bank. John Procter had been farming Moor Farm Kings Tamerton, but the Procters were an old Brixton family., once living at Combe and Fordbrook. Charlie and Reg Procter continued farming the Barton until they died Reg in 1995 & Charlie in 1998.

A new farmstead was built at Higher Spriddlestone replacing John Avent's farm that was virtually adjoining the Barton on the East side in front of 'Instead' Mr. Anning's present house. The tenancy was offered in 1873 with the chance to build your own farmhouse. This was taken up by James Newman a farmer's son from Curtisknowle Diptford. He settled here with his wife and about 90

acres. They raised 10 children. The last to farm at Higher Spriddlestone were three siblings Beatrice, Stanley and Harry Newman who did not marry and lived well into their 80's until the last died in 1963. The farm was bought by Tom Staddon of Halwell Farm next door. The farm house and barns were then sold off separately.

Little Spriddlestone was farmed at one time by William Toms and later by Ernest Radmore until it was amalgamated with Torr Hill. 'Instead' is situated on the Tenement that Richard Parsons held in 1841. The house and barns are long gone, but the field outline remains the same. This could be where the free tenant lived who is mentioned by Richard Lane, as this property was owned in 1841 by the Rev John Froude of Modbury. It amounted to about 18 acres in all and included Bullaford Slate Quarry down on the Creek. Richard Parsons junior and William Cawse were quarrymen and Nicholas Parsons was described as a stone cutter. William Beer continued farming his families holding of 14 acres, but as their cottage and barn was in the way of Mr. Elliott's new drive entrance, he had to move, and he became the Miller at Wembury Beach, where he stayed until he died aged 88yrs in 1902. A little further northwards along the road and opposite stood two cottages that were demolished and formed the site of Little Barton. One cottage was the home of James Pursley and the other Thomas Medland. Thomas Medland's family went on to become Cow Keepers and Dairymen in Plymouth, while James Pursley's family moved to Spirewell and then to West Wembury Farm. James' father in law William Page lived next door in 1841 in what is now Orchard Cottage. Page became a family middle name with the Pursley family.

Benjamin Cane was born at Whifferton in 1834 the son of Joseph Cane and Priscilla Hook. The family moved c1840 to Venn Farm Brixton. Benjamin married in 1860, and sometime between then and 1871 he moved with his young family to newly built Torr Hill. The original Torr Farm was down in the valley at Brixton Torr. The new farm incorporated many of the small fields on the left of the lane that runs down through Spriddlestone to the Creek. These had once been Tenement lands of the villagers of Spriddlestone. On the right hand side of the lane were the large arable fields of the Barton. Benjamin's great grandson Basil Cane now lives at Spriddlestone House and farms with his son Steven much of the Manor.