

THE MANORS OF WEMBURY

By Robert Rowland

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Wembury was a rural Parish with two settlements at Knighton and Down Thomas. These were essentially street villages, with the farms, cottages and tenements side by side along the main street. The main Manors were Wembury, Traine, Langdon and Down Thomas, ancient land holdings passed down over the centuries very rarely sold sometimes changing hands in marriage settlements and mutual exchanges.

If we start in the East with, **Wembury Manor** bordering along the Yealm estuary King Edgar granted it to the Priory of Plympton in 974 and it was a very productive farm. The Prior had several villagers living on the manor, more than were at Knighton, so there could well have been a settlement in the vicinity of Thorn or near the present alms-houses. The Prior would have enjoyed fish and oysters from the river, and the fish trap and pond at Thorn may also date back to monastic times. Wool would have been a very important product and all the cliffs and headlands would have been well grazed. This all changed with the dissolution of the monasteries in 1536.

The Prior had granted leases to the Ryder family who continued to farm the land, but the ownership passed first to The Earl of Southampton and then to Robert Chamberlaine and then in 1591 to Sir John Hele Sergeant at Law to Elizabeth I and then James I, who built his mansion house on the site of an old monastic building. The access was via the quay on the river at Thorn. Thorn House being considered the Gate House with thirteen fire hearths, while the big house had thirty two recorded in the hearth tax of 1662. Sir John may not have wished to look out on humble thatched cottages and preferred to create a large deer park. At the start of the Church Records The Lord Crofts pays the Poor Rate for Wembury Manor. He was William Crofts who was in exile with Charles II and returned at the Restoration and had married the widow Hele. The Manor had devolved in ownership to Sir Edward Hungerford husband of the original Sir John Hele's Great Granddaughter Jane. He had encountered large debts as the family were on the losing side during the Civil War.

Lord Crofts who was guardian of the Duke of Monmouth in his minority was succeeded as lord of the manor in 1671, by The Duke of Albermarle otherwise known as General Sir George Monck, founder of the Coldstream Guards, a former Cromwell supporter, but very influential in the return of King Charles II. George Monck's family home was Great Potheridge near Torrington in North Devon. On his death the Wembury estate passed to his son Christopher, who had been made Governor of Jamaica. He died of alcoholism on the island after celebrating the birth of James II new son. His widow returned to England. During the voyage the ship hit bad weather, and her chest of gold had to be jettisoned overboard to save the ship.

The Wembury estate was then purchased in 1686, by John Pollexfen a London merchant involved in trying to break the monopoly of the East India Company. His brother was Henry Pollexfen Lord Chief Justice under James II. They were Devon men having been born at

Sherford near Kingsbridge, and their Grandfather had resided at Caulston just across the Yealm in Revelstoke. Henry's country seat was at Nutwell Court on the Exe, While John to increase his estate, purchased Traine and leased Spriddlestone. He rebuilt Wembury House leaving only the ramparts of the previous mansion. Again after a couple of generations John Pollexfen's extensive estate was divided between his three Chudleigh Gt Grand- daughters. Straws were drawn to see who would receive each part. Miss Elizabeth Chudleigh gained Wembury Manor, while her sister Mrs Mary Prideaux wife of Humphrey Prideaux inherited Traine Manor.

Elizabeth Chudleigh sold the Manor to William Molesworth, William whose brother Sir John lived at Pencarrow both married sisters the daughters of James Smyth of St Audries in Somerset a very wealthy man. Sadly tragedy was to befall this family at Wembury. William and Elizabeth had two young daughters Barbara bap 1757 and Frances bap 1758. Elizabeth's sister Frances died at Pencarrow after giving birth to a son, Sir John's son and heir, William Molesworth who was baptised here in St Werburghs in 1758. Then Elizabeth died in December the same year. Her Memorial stone lies on the floor of the south aisle to the right of the vestry. She was followed by her husband William in February 1762, and finally little Barbara in June 1762. Frances survived and went to live at Pencarrow with her Uncle. Wembury House was left to fall into a ruin, once again. William was said to have an excellent Library at Wembury. His books were taken and sold in London. Frances grew up to be a beauty and a portrait of her by Sir Joshua Reynolds hangs in California, when she was older she moved to London under the guardianship of her Aunt Lady Lucan. At the age of 28yrs she was married after just a three week courtship to Lord Bayham later to become Lord Camden. He sold the estate to Thomas Lockyer in 1802.

The Lockyers were prominent maritime merchants and lawyers of Plymouth. Members of the family were Mayors of the town on nine separate occasions. Thomas set about building himself a new house from the ruins of the old mansion. The Barton farmed since 1755 by Robert Anthony had developed and grown right in front of the big house. Thomas cleared all this away and built new barns at Old Barton and new houses at both Old and New Bartons. Tragedy was to strike again in 1806, before he could finish his new mansion, he was involved in an accident on his way home from Plymouth. A cow that had been lying under the hedge in the road at Plymstock, suddenly got up and startled his horse. He was thrown from the carriage and broke his leg. His man servant at Wembury went looking for him, when he did not arrive home. He was taken to Radford in the care of Sir Christopher Harris, but sadly died later after gangrene set in. His son Thomas junior married and settled at Thorn known as Lockyers Cottage or South Wembury. Thomas junior had been sent to France as a boy, to learn the language and complete his education. Unfortunately he was caught up in the Napoleonic War, and unable to return home. He became a drummer boy in the French Militia. He eventually reached Bordeaux, and heard English voices on the Quay. The American Captain luckily was aware of his family in Plymouth and agreed to take him aboard, and he was returned at sea to an English vessel. This had a profound effect on

him for the rest of his life. Thomas senior's widow continued to live in Wembury House until her death in 1825. Her third son Edmund Lockyer is renowned for raising the Union flag in Albany and claiming Western Australia for the Crown in 1827. His eldest son William spent time at Wembury with his Grandmother. Edmund had three wives and at least 12 children in Australia, and he died there at Woolloomaloo in 1860

The Lockyers retained the estate but sold Wembury House to Sir Edward Thornton a well decorated diplomat (Count of Cassilhas Privy Councillor KCB and other Portuguese and Swedish decorations). The family arrived at Wembury with at least five sons and a daughter, but lost four of their sons in early deaths, one of them Dudley drowning in the Yealm while swimming off Machine Beach. Sir Edward remained at Wembury until his death in 1852 at the age of 86yrs.

The Thorntons were followed by Mr Nathaniel Barwell an ex -Navy man, who had been retired early after the peace with Napoleon. He objected very strongly about pedestrians and farm traffic passing through his property to avoid the steep hill. He built a wall across the entrance at the end of Passage Lane. There was a court case and he later erected a plaque (still to be seen) inside the wall to the ' iniquities of lawyers'! Someone had witnessed Mr. James Lawes Lockyer demolishing some of this wall by moonlight.

Mr. Barwell was succeeded by Ralph Dawson a shipping merchant from Liverpool. Mr Dawson needed more accommodation for his staff so he purchased a little orchard from the Coleman family who lived at the Smithy and built Dawson's Cottages at the bottom of Traine Road, these were later to be known as Watergate Cottages. The Colemans did not want to sell, but Mr Dawson said he would withdraw his custom. The Lockyers gradually sold off their estate, some of which came into the hands of the Calmady and then the Cory family of Langdon.

Thorn was purchased by the notorious Peter F Bluett in 1865. He had left his wife and family at Holcombe Rogus and set up home at Thorn with his servant girl by whom he had several children. Part of the manor became incorporated into Lord Revelstoke's Membrand Estate when the fish store and baulking house were built at Machine Beach.

In the early 1900s Mrs Cory came to live at Thorn. Her stepson Richard Wallis Cory had inherited Langdon on the death of his father. Mrs Cory who had recently married her companion Col George Gore lived at Thorn with her two daughters. They were presented at Court, and needed to find husbands, so she extended the house to include a ballroom and a snooker room. Mrs Cory also entertained at Elliot Terrace on the Hoe, later to become the Plymouth home of Lady Astor.

The next incumbent of Thorn was Mr William Arkwright who settled here in 1918 for the benefit of his health, bringing with him some very large urns from his home at Sutton Scarsdale in Derbyshire. He was a very keen gardener and collected specimens from around

the world. He was also interested in the breeding of Jersey cows and pointer dogs. He converted what had once been a chapel to a residence for his gamekeeper. It then became known as Thorn Cottage. In 1891 Dr Robert Hogarth Clay and his family were at Wembury House. He was a very well respected Plymouth Doctor while practicing at Devonport Hospital he encountered Mrs Emma Jane Metters who had four daughters. He took them in and trained them up to work in his house. All four married local men. When Mary Edith married William Cooper in 1900 he lent her his pony and carriage to take her to the church and take them home to Gabber. Dr Clay had three daughters who were brought up to be practical. There is the story of the youngest milking a cow one day when along comes a young man, who was employed to help William Arkwright write a book. Although she was well over forty and he, a lot younger, they married and produced a son whose descendants now live in Australia. The other two daughters later settled on their own farms one at Great Fancy Estover and the other Maude at Combe Farm Plymstock. Maude was an accomplished artist, dogs and horses were her favourite subjects, her largest work 'August Gold' hangs in the hall of Torre Abbey at Torquay. It depicts harvesting wheat sheaves in a field behind Wembury Church.

Dr Clay was followed in 1926 by Mrs Cecil Walker who was there during World War II. She built Monckswood beside her stables for a friend. It was later let for the use of the Air Vice Marshall based at RAF Mountbatten. The name Monckswood commemorates the ownership of General Sir George Monck and the house, originally named Southcrosse, is reputed to have been influenced in design and style by Edwin Lutyens.

Mrs Walker was followed in 1948 by Sir Henry and Lady Studholme. Sir Henry a former equerry to Queen Elizabeth II was Member of Parliament for Tavistock for many years. Lady Judith was a descendant of Oliver Cromwell and had his portrait hanging in the dining room. Lady Studholme purchased Old Barton from Tom Steer, and also Knighton Farm from Ben Clifton and the valley in front of the house from Henry Lugar. Judson Partridge owned New Barton.

Following the death of William Arkwright the Thorn estate was purchased by The Hon Mrs Ida Marie Sebag-Montefiore. Her father was Lord Bearsted one time Lord Mayor of London and the founder of the Shell Oil Company. It is said that a scallop shell from the Yealm inspired the emblem of the company. Before leaving Wembury, just before World War II, Mrs Sebag Montefiore gave much of the cliff land towards Wembury Beach to a preservation society, later to be taken over by the National Trust.

With the departure of Mrs Sebag Montefiore, and the sale of the Cory's Langdon estate in 1927 the Manor lands were sold off to individuals and what had once been wheat fields of West Wembury Farm became the new village of Wembury.

The **Manor of Traine** lies to the north east side of the Parish, from the stream behind Knighton to the Lodge for Spriddlestone House and includes Spirewell, Higher Ford and Hollacombe. At the Domesday Survey Ruald held Alphameston (The old Saxon name for the Manor) Ruald was granted 32 Manors in Devon. He died at St Nicholas' Priory in Exeter, and most of his Manors devolved to the Giffard Family of Weare Giffard. A descendant Hugh de Alphameston gave a third of the manor to Plympton Priory on his death. This was most likely land adjoining Wembury Manor, and running down to what became Wembury Woods. A later descendant Henry Trecarrel alias Esse of Trecarrel at Lezant near Launceston died seized of the Manor in 1535. His estate was divided between his four daughters, and Traine was given to daughter Jane Kelly of Redcliffe her descendants the Cloberrys of Bradstone owned Traine in 1500s, and Edward Reade was living at Traine at the start of the Wembury Church Records. He had married Margaret Cloberry and they raised their family in the old Manor House that was situated in the valley below the present farmstead. On their deaths the Manor reverted back to the Cloberrys, and in 1689 Oliver Cloberry sold to John Pollexfen of Wembury Manor, who was expanding his estate. John Pollexfen's Gt Granddaughter Mary Chudleigh inherited Traine, she had married Humphrey Prideaux of Place at Padstow. She passed away leaving a son and heir George, but he predeceased his father, who had remarried. Humphrey Prideaux decreed in his Will that Traine should be sold, and the money divided between his new wife and their children. This provided an opportunity for the present tenant Robert Anthony to purchase Traine, which he did in 1797. The family had scraped together to find the money with a mortgage, and parts were sold off, The Rev Lane of Coffleet purchasing Hollacombe, the Calmadys of Langdon purchasing parts of Spirewell adjacent to Ranleigh, and the Prideaux family retaining Higher Ford.

Robert Anthony built the present Farm House and buildings, moving the farmstead to higher ground. On his death the estate was left to his Grandson Philip Light Anthony, who after raising a family, and losing his wife decided to marry his 17yr old servant girl, when he was 53yrs. This caused a great deal of trouble, as he bequeathed Traine to his new wife and his 12yr old son. This dis-inherited his three emnbvcxzlder sons, there was a court case that lasted about 20 years. During this time his son in law John Wilson of Prince Farm Down Thomas as Trustee, was in charge, but the farm was let out, and very little maintenance was done. The farmhouse roof leaked on the North side and the floors below rotted away. Finally in 1911 the Corys of Langdon purchased Traine, reroofed the house and built a new stable block. Then in 1927 the Langdon estate was sold and Traine became the property of Archibald Sutcliffe Knight an estate agent from Bournemouth, and partner in Frank Knight &

Rutley. He had also acquired West Wembury Farm from the purchaser of the Langdon Estate Albert Edward Betcheley Betcheley Crundall, who retained the woodland of Traine. Mr Knight piped water from Traine to Church Road and sold off building sites down towards the beach. This became the start of the present village of Wembury. With War imminent Traine was sold in September 1939 to Frederick Rowland a young Market Gardener aged 22yrs from Plymstock. He bought Traine for its sunny aspect, but the soil was never as good as Plymstock for growing brassicas. When he arrived at Traine the farm was overrun with rabbits. He was ashamed to say that he had bought land at Wembury as it was thought a poor area, with many shanties, built to escape the bombing of Plymouth.

Meanwhile Spirewell had been acquired by Edward Hensleigh after the Civil War, he had turned out John Portworthy, the last of an old Wembury family, once stewards of Wembury Manor for the Prior of Plympton. The Hensleighs owned about thirty acres around Spirewell and leased a lot more. They prospered for three generations, and John Prideaux Hensleigh took on more and more land, much of what had been farmed by his wife's grandfather James Hooke at Down Thomas and Langdon. Times had changed since the peace with Napoleon, and farming was less profitable, John Prideaux got into debt and had to sell Spirewell. He served 12 months in prison for maliciously wounding William Bunker, the new occupier of Spirewell, in Church in an argument over Spirewell box pew. He died a short while after in 1839 at Higher Ford. Spirewell and Higher Ford were taken over by the Langdon Estate and after the sale they became the property of the Hannaford family, and their daughter Mrs Penny sold Spirewell to Percy Jewell in the 1960s. Harry Booth took on Higher Ford as a market garden. Dairying prospered at this time and large herds of Friesians became the norm at Spirewell, Traine and Knighton Farms.

Hollacombe has remained part of Spriddlestone. It was sold in 1858 by Rev Richard Lane to Thomas Elliott who built the present Spriddlestone House. The Elliotts married into the Kingwell family of Great Aish at South Brent, and when the Elliotts died out the house was let out for many years by the Kingwells. Eventually it was purchased by Alvina Cane, and after passing out of her family for a while has recently returned to Cane ownership. Spirewell has been joined with Leyford at Staddiscombe as a cereal and pheasant shooting estate, owned by Juliet Atkin. In 1500s Leyford was also linked with Traine and farmed by the Reade family.

The **Manor of Langdon** lies to the South of the Parish. There were at the time of Domesday two manors one held in, Saxon times, by Goda and the other by Heche. Perhaps they were situated North and South of the road that runs through Langdon. Langdon Court and Home Farm are situated to the North of this road, and Langdon Barton to the South. Further North is Raneleigh a large farm that became part of Langdon, but was originally a Domesday Manor called Britricheston. In early times Langdon was the home of the Pipard family and known as Langdon Pipard. Then in the 1500s it was owned by the Courtenay family. They

were Royal Cousins and posed a threat to Henry VIII who had them attainted and the estate was bequeathed to Catharine Parr on Henry's death. Queen Elizabeth I allowed Vincent and his brother Richard Calmady to purchase the estate in 1555. Vincent was a lawyer and Agent for the Mayhews of Boringdon. He is said to have purchased the ruins of Plympton Priory and used some of the granite pillars for the foundations of Langdon Hall. His Ward was Catherine Courtenay who he married to his son Josias in 1584. Josias and Catherine's son Sir Shilston Calmady was killed at Forde Abbey during a skirmish during the Civil War. He was succeeded by his son another Josias, and in their time the house and parkland was extended and laid out with statues of Greek Gods, lakes and fishponds, with a carriage way approaching from Wembury Road at Hollacombe and going through the woods and along past the largest fish pond and approaching the house from the North East. Sadly this Josias died without leaving a male heir. His daughter Lady Narborough is commemorated with a large monument in St Werburgh's Church. He was succeeded by his nephew Josias Calmady III who was MP for Okehampton he died in 1714, and the estate passed first to son Shilston, and then to son Waldo. Waldo died at Langdon in 1755 again with no surviving male heir. Then for more than thirty years the House was let out to various families, and James Hooke acquired most of the land to farm, and he made his home in the rear of Langdon Hall. In about 1720 James Hooke's Uncle also James Hooke had come to Langdon from Crediton and settled at Underhill Tenement, which later became Langdon Stables. His nephew followed him and as this was the time of the enclosures, more land was taken for sheep, and the small husbandmen lost their land and common rights, and became agricultural labourers. It was during this period the estate was neglected, and many of the houses and barns fell into disrepair.

The ownership of the estate came to Captain Warwick Calmady a Navy man, and second cousin to Waldo. On Captain Warwick's demise in 1788, there were no surviving male Calmady heirs. The estate passed to Pollexfen Calmady a niece. She had eloped aged 19yrs and married her first cousin Warwick Calmady the illegitimate son of Capt Warwick, and reputedly kept a haberdashery business in London. It was unlikely that she would inherit Langdon as she had a brother John Francis Calmady. Sadly both he and her husband were to pass away in 1779. She had a son little Warwick born in Fulham in 1777 who also was to die in 1784. By this time she had remarried to Admiral Charles Holmes Everett in 1783, and he agreed to change his name to Calmady. A map and survey of the estate was made at this time and work began on repairing and restoring what was economic to save. Many of the farmhouses were rebuilt circa 1800 during their tenure. The estate continued to prosper and expand with their son Charles Biggs Calmady and his wife Emily. They had five daughters and a son Vincent Pollexfen. Vincent did not make Langdon his home, and was more interested in hunting with the Tetcott Hunt. In 1854 there was a bad fire at Langdon, and the east side and entrance had to be rebuilt VPC can be seen over the doorway. In 1876 Vincent needed to sell Langdon to regulate the sale, a deal was done with the two other owners of land in Down Thomas, Bastards of Kitley and Prances of Manor Farm. The ancient

strip fields were amalgamated and the holdings were allotted in ring fences to Manor Farm, Princes Farm, Gabber Farm, Taylors Farm and Paiges Farm.

Langdon was purchased by Richard Cory Esq, and Vincent's three unmarried sisters moved out, and made their home at Knighton Villa, once a farm called Nicholls Tenement. Richard Cory came from Cornish origins as did the Calmadys. He had made his fortune transporting coal in ships from South Wales to London. Richard's first wife was soon to pass away in 1879, and he remarried in 1881 Bessie Frances Coulthard a daughter of the Rev Coulthard Vicar of Plymstock. Bessie was a socialite and entertained at Langdon, Edward Prince of Wales with Lily Langtry, and his brother the Duke of Edinburgh, Admiral of the Fleet, who was a regular visitor. Shooting parties were the order of the day and the Gamekeeper Benjamin Sansom was given a purpose built house at Mount Pleasant with kennels for the dogs, and became a very important man conserving the pheasants. Richard Cory was a great benefactor of St. Werburgh's Church and in 1886 had paid for the restoration, when the box pews were removed. On his death in 1904 Mrs Cory married Col Anthony Ellard Gore a royal bodyguard and moved to Thorn. Langdon Court became home to the son and heir Richard Wallis Cory and wife Kate Rundle. Sadness was to occur when their only son was to die of a fever at Maker barracks, in 1907 aged just 22yrs, shortly after joining the army. He was said to have had the biggest funeral ever known at St Werburghs, with soldiers and bands marching in procession from Plymouth. Richard Wallis Cory died in 1926 and in 1927 the Langdon estate came up for sale. It was purchased by Albert Edward Betcheley Betcheley Crundall. He came from a family involved in timber trading, and much of Wembury Woods were cut down at this time. The estate was sold off in pieces to many of the tenants. Traine and West Wembury Farms were sold to Archibald Sutcliffe Knight an estate agent from Bournemouth. He piped water from Traine to the top of Church Road, and sold off building sites along Church Road. Langdon Court itself became the home of Mrs Kenyon –Slaney until WWII then it became the offices for the Eagle Oil Company, and later a convalescent home for sick children. Finally it became a hotel. The Andrews family purchased Langdon Barton, and Richard Pursely bought Home Farm, Raneleigh came into the Cundy ownership.

The **Manor of Down Thomas** was in the time of Edward the Confessor owned by Aluric or Alebric, after 1066 it was held by the Norman William under Judhel of Totnes. Dona paid taxes on 3 ferlings. There were four villeins and one serf. At that time Dona or Down was one large uncultivated Down. An early record after Domesday shows Thomas, who gave his name to the village, son of Joel de Down as holding two parts of a Knights Fee in the Manor of Down Thomas C1243. John de Down left the Manor to son in law Henry de Britricheston C1352. John de Britricheston and his wife Cecilia had a licence for their chapel at Down Thomas in 1417.

It could have been them who laid the street village out. Eight tenement farms side by side along the east side of the road with houses at right angles to the road running down the slope. Hingstons (Mussel Inn) Leys and Taylors (Staddon Court) still surviving. The village was situated under the hill, so not visible from marauding Vikings, but with good water supply from wells. The open field system, which lasted here until 1876, would have had eight strips in each field, and there probably would have been an ox team of eight oxen to plough the strips. The field system can clearly be seen on the Tithe Map of 1842, gently curving strips with room to turn the plough team at top and bottom. This all changed in 1876 when the three land owning families of Calmady, Prance and Bastard realigned the farm boundaries to produce ring fenced farms.

When the last of the Britricheston line died out, John had no male heir so left the Manor to be divided between his three daughters, who were Elizabeth married to John Wyvell, Margaret married to Walter Carswell and Joane married to Edward Barnhous. Nicholas Wyvell in 1583 sold lands in Down Thomas to Richard and Andrew Calmady. In 1578 Vincent Calmady had purchased the Barnhous share from Sir Thomas Rodgeway, whose Mother in Law was Grace Barnhous. The third share came into the hands of the Cole family of Slade Cornwood, who sold it to Andrew Cholwich of Cholwich Town Cornwood in 1605. This was Manor Farm and site of the old Manor House and Chapel. The Cholwich family sold to Courtenay Connell a Freeman of Plymouth in 1765. Courtenay Connell's daughter and eventual heiress, Anna, had eloped with William Prance from North Devon, and after the sale of some tenements attached to this holding, Manor Farm remained with the Prance family, well known Solicitors and Surgeons of Plymouth, until 1923. It was then purchased by the farmer John A. Kingwell. Although having a family tomb in St Werburgh's churchyard, the first two William Prance' were nonconformists and allowed the first Bible Christian chapel to be built in Manor Farm yard in 1834. This later became a Methodist Chapel. With the opening of the new chapel in 1900, the building became 1 and 2 Manor Cottages.

The three parts of Down Thomas were roughly the Barton lands to the North, the Manor lands including Yolland, to the South and the Tenements in between. Over the years boundaries changed somewhat, but three separate land holdings remained. In 1588 Martyn Ryder sold Raneleigh to Josias Calmady, and in 1593 Josias Calmady sold the Barton Farm to Martyn Ryder and his descendant Francis Ryder Gent was living there when he died and bequeathed Farm Barton and much of Paiges, to his Nephew Phineas Harwood, and the Harwood family lived there until 1769. It was then sold to John Spurrell a butcher from Stoke Damerel. He had done well vitalling ships, and set his Nephew John Spurrell Pode up as a Gentleman and had purchased Slade at Cornwood, the old home of the Cole family to be the family seat. It stayed with them until 1814 when John Pollexfen Bastard became the new owner. The Bastards of Kitley were extensive land owners and already owned Staddiscombe and much of Staddon Heights. Almost 100years later they were to have a big sale, and much of this part of their estate was sold off to the tenant farmers and cottage dwellers.

The central part of the Village had largely remained in Calmady hands, bits being sold off and bought back, with the exception of Taylors Farm. In 1717 Francis Calmady leased House Barn Shippen Pigs Houses, Herb Garden and land to Jacob Ley Yeoman of Down Thomas. Jacob and his sister Welthin Kingcombe settled in what became Leys and later Taylors. They leased several smaller tenements, which later became known as Taylors Leaseholds. Robert Taylor came from Newton Ferrers and married Thomasine Avent. They settled first in Underhill Tenement at Langdon, Which later became the stables for the Corys. They had a daughter Elizabeth, who with several others was 'drowned twixt the Mewstone and the continent' as were several other Parishioners of all ages in 1720. Their son Francis Taylor termed himself Gentleman of Leys and owned 40 acres, so had he inherited land or money from his Mother an Avent or his Grandmother a Worth from Brixton. Francis had first married a widow from Plympton, and then in 1767 at the age of 59yrs he married Elizabeth Adams and also fathered a child with her 16yr old sister Ann. He had one or two other illegitimate children in the area. Francis and Elizabeth had son Robert Taylor bap 1768 and Elizabeth bap 1770, she had life interest in Budges, Yolland and Landboots tenements. She married The Rev Benjamin Love Vicar of Wembury in 1789, and had two surviving children Louisa and James. The family lived in what became Langdon Barton Farmhouse. Sadly Benjamin died in 1797 and is buried in the floor of the South Aisle of the church. He had property in Herefordshire, and was made Rector of Hittesleigh at a young age by the Calmadys. He may well have been a friend and contemporary of young Francis Calmady son and heir to the estate who died while at University. Louisa later married Nicholas Lockyer of Plymouth.

Robert Taylor, who had life interest in Fosters, Kingcombes, Spicers and Hakes tenements as well as owning 40 acres with Leys, married his cousin Elizabeth Davis in 1788 and had several children. In 1813 he moves the family to near Bath, and sells Leys to William Sauday. He was to die at Ditteridge near Bath in 1833. Taylors Farm was then let out, but came back to the Calmadys and then the Corys to be sold in the Langdon Sale of 1927 when L G. Staddon of Goosewell bought it, and the name was changed to Staddon Court.

Farming has ebbed and flowed over the years James Hooke mentioned in Langdon took over much of Down Thomas in 1700s Followed by John Prideaux Hensleigh his Grandson in law. The husbandmen and cottagers of a bygone age became farm labourers as the small tenements were amalgamated. With the building of the Plymouth Breakwater many found employment as masons and quarrymen. Again with the building of Staddon and Staddon Heights Forts in 1870s, there was employment for local men. RE Cocks at Raneleigh was an employer of at least five men to milk his large dairy herd in early 1900s. He had 100 cows at Raneleigh, 100 cows at Ernesettle and 100 cows at Fardel Cornwood. His name appears on the foundation stones of the new Methodist Chapel (now Doune House) that was opened in 1900. It could seat 120 people and the Watts family were stalwart supporters. It was to close about 1970, to become a private residence.

Within living memory Down Thomas was a busy agricultural community. Captain Bob Giles farming Princes, Reg MacBean at Gabber, Arthur Staddon at Staddon Court, Jim Pursley at Farm Barton and Jim Wilson at Paiges Farm.

In 1960s Plymouth had a major expansion, and took in Plympton and Plymstock. There was a great fear at the time that Wembury may also have been annexed by Plymouth. A protest march was organised led by the Vicar to City Civic Centre. Plympton Rural District Council was abolished, and Wembury now came under South Hams at Totnes. Wembury Parish was extended at this time to Leyford Lane, and all on the left of Hooe Lane towards Staddon Heights. So Wembury now included much of Leyford, Manor and Court Gates farms of Staddiscombe, together with Staddon Heights Golf Club and the Great Wall.