

MANORIAL ROLLS

The copies of the Manorial Rolls for Pitton & Farley, Wiltshire that Sue Clives has been sending in gives a good picture of the type of information these records contain. In addition it gives us a small window to look in at what life on a Manor must have been like in the 1700's.

The Manor Court was held at least once each year and was presided over by the Steward of the Manor. The jury or 'Homage' was selected from the tenants of the Manor.

The record of the court of June 1, 1753 begins this way:

The Court Baron of the Rt Hon'ble Stephen Lord Ilchester and Stavordale Baron Strangways of Woodford Strangway in the County of Dorset and Baron of Redlynch in the County of Somerset and Lord of the said Manor [Pitton & Farley] there held on Friday the first day of June in the Twenty Sixth year of the Reign of our Sovereign Lord George the Second by the Grace of God of Great Britain France and Ireland King Defender of the Faith and soforth and in the year of our Lord One Thousand seven Hundred and Fifty three before Matthew Merefield Gentleman Steward.

At the manor court the day to day operations of the Manor would be decided and any changes since the last court ratified. Examples of these that came forward June 1, 1753 were:

We present William Collins ... William Whitlock dead since last Court. We present Mary Bell dead since last Court.

We present Ambrose Whitlock to be Tythingman for Pitton & Farley

We present that it is our custom that no Woman shall be admitted Tenant to her Widowhood but enjoy it according to the Custom of this Manor

We present that no Man shall put Straw or Dung in the Highways of this Manor under the Penalty of Ten Shillings

We present that no Tenant shall let his Piggs go into the Field at Farley till the Field is rid and from that Time and no longer than Michaelmas

While not a lot of genealogical information is to be found in the Court Rolls, upon the transfer of a Manor a census of the tenants would be done and such was the case in 1766 at Pitton & Farley. The census gave the name of all the tenants including wives and children and their ages. A very valuable tool for the family researcher. You could also find disputes being settled in the Manor Courts with reference to old documents and giving fathers and grandfathers rights that a disputant now claimed. Such a case is mentioned in the Court of August 16, 1757 where John Whitlock of Plaitford claimed to hold land for the lives of his sons John and Stephen Whitlock by a document dated Nov.19,1719.

Other relationships are mentioned such as in the Court of June 21, 1764:

We present Martha Whitlock to find a Tythingman for the Year ensuing and Thomas Whitlock her Son is sworn accordingly

Ducks were obviously a problem as there was a one shilling fine for each duck allowed to go in the Haymere

Pond at Pitton. This item appears in many of the Court records of this time.

Our thanks to Sue Clives for these items as the Manorial Rolls are a valuable and underutilized tool for family historians.

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