

# MANOR OF PITTON & FARLEY, WILTSHIRE

The joint parishes of Pitton & Farley are a few miles east of Salisbury (formerly New Sarum). The parishes were formally joined in 1874 but the two villages were barely a mile apart and interaction between the two had gone on for centuries.

The most important feature of the area is the royal residence of Clarendon Park which may date back to William the Conqueror. Ralph Whitlock wrote that the hedges that formed the edge of the park likely dated from the 1100's due to the number of different hedging varieties this part of the hedge contained. Clarendon Palace fell into ruin before Elizabeth I time and despite the fact it was the largest building second only to Westminster, there is nothing left but an archeological site. In 1976 Ralph Whitlock commented you could be walking in the woods along the side of where the walls of the Palace were and not even know they once stood there for five hundred years.

The name Pitton comes from the Anglo-Saxon word "Putta" or hawk and Ralph Whitlock speculates that likely Pitton was where the royal hawks were kept.

The Archer family had large holdings in Farley in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries and as surnames evolved at this time the major families in the area were known as de Pitton. Born in Farley in 1627, Sir Stephen Fox was likely the most famous person from the area. A politician and founder the Royal Hospital at Chelsea (For Chelsea Pensioners) he build the Farley Hospital for the poor elderly people of Pitton and Farley. The twelve almshouses of the Farley Hospital were build by Sir Christopher Wren's master craftsman, Alexander Fort and are still there and are now Grade 1 listed buildings.

Sir Stephen Fox owned both the Villages of Pitton and Farley in the later 1600's and was a Member of Parliament for Salisbury. In 1678 he took over the lease of the Manor of Pitton. The Manor later came into the hands of the Earl of Ilchester, Stephen Fox-Strangway who was Sir Stephen Fox's son. As the Fox-Strangway seat was in Dorset the records for the Manor of Pitton for this time period are held in Dorchester.

Manors evolved from the list of landed estates contained the Domesday Book of 1086. By about 1200 manorial records start to be maintained. The manor system was the method of local government that existed until the formation of parishes in the 1600's. Manorial records kept track of tenancies and the transfer of tenancies from generation to generation. The deaths of many tenants are recorded as that usually resulted in a transfer of tenancies. Manor courts settled disputes between tenants and between owners and tenants. General maintenance of the Manor was recorded such as work on roads, and hedging and ditching throughout the Manor. Manor Courts were abolished in 1922 but Manor records many tracing back to the 1200's are a major unused resource of genealogical and historical details about ordinary people who lived at a time for which not many personal records exist. In many cases you can put together mini biographies of major tenants lives over long periods of time. Our records on the Whitloks of the Manor of Chicklade, Wiltshire in the 1300's and 1400's are a great example.

Using <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/N16165207> we know there are extant records for the Manor of Pitton and Farley 1600-1699 held at the Dorset History Centre Ref: D/FSI Box 19. In addition the Steward's Papers with Compton Bassett 1610-1783 are held by the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre NRA Ref: NRA17343 Pleydell-Bouverie. In 2002 Quintin White visited the Dorchester Record Office and was given access to the Fox-Strangway Collection. Most of his notes cover the years 1700 to 1840. The details from the Farley Hospital records are full of interesting genealogical details

about the White, Read and Whitlock families. Again many dates of death are recorded in these records and in many cases the age of children who received help from the hospital. (X6075)

Ralph Whitlock was born in Pitton and was the local expert on this part of the county for many years. He wrote more than one hundred books and his book *Wiltshire* is the source for much of the information in this article. We have fifty-one of his books in our collection.

It is possible the manorial records may contain clues regarding the Whitlocks who left Wiltshire for America in the 1640's. They are certainly the best untapped source we have and definitely worth some research time and effort by the Whitlock Family Association.

We know the Whitlock connection to Pitton traces well back into the 1500's. There are tax records from 1545 and 1576 (R2092). See also the Will of Thomas Whitlock 1575 (WFA Newsletter March 2008). The Pitton File is 95 pages long and contains a list of every document in our files relating to Wiltshire, Dorset and Hampshire.

SOURCES: R2092; R2751; X6075; X8027; Ralph Whitlock's books; Pitton File