

LANDOWNERSHIP

Dunster castle dominated the pattern of landownership in the parish and beyond and although the castle is no longer the administrative centre and the land belongs to the state, the estate is still of major importance in the area. For centuries its owners asserted right as lords or overlords over many west Somerset manors and as lords of Carhampton hundred over the seashore. During the 18th and 19th centuries in particular the Luttrells bought the property of other landowners and small freeholders to become the major landlords in Dunster and surrounding parishes.

THE BARONY

The large barony or honor of Dunster was held by the Mohuns and Luttrells with Dunster manor. In 1086 William de Mohun held 56 Somerset estates, mostly west of the Quantocks but also Brewham, North Cheriton and Nunney in east Somerset and manors in Normandy. Dunster became the 'caput' or administrative centre of an honor comprising 39 ½ knights' fees in 1166 with 4 new ones and in 1168 William de Mohun was charged on 41 old and 5 ½ new fees although he refused to pay for more than 41. That remained the nominal size of the barony and despite the gift of two knights' fees to Ford Abbey, which was released from service in the 1270s,¹ in 1279 John de Mohun claimed over 55 fees² and in 1461 James Luttrell had 72 estates in Somerset, 13 in Dorset and 4 in Wiltshire totalling 69 and 11 fifteenths fees.³ The Luttrells paid the Crown 33s. 4d. for Dunster barony.⁴

¹ S. Hobbes, (ed.) *Forde Abbey Cartulary* (Som. Rec. Soc. 85), p. 149.

² I J Sanders, *English Baronies* (Oxford 1960) 114 n.; *Red. Bk. Exch.* (Rolls Ser.), I, 168—9; *Cal. Inq. p.m.*, II, p.174. The honor of Dunster and its lords have been comprehensively studied by Sir H. C. Maxwell Lyte in *Dunster and its Lords* (1882), *A History of Dunster* (1909), and the *Honor of Dunster* (Som. Rec. Soc. 33).

³ SHC, DD/L P 4/43.

⁴ *Ibid.* P 6/11, P7/34, 49, P31/8.

Whenever the lord was a minor the king took control of the barony and castle. Between 1195 and 1203 the king paid the janitor and watch of the castle. He also paid an annuity to Richard the clerk by gift of William de Mohun, for 34 mounted men in 1199, and for repairs to the castle in 1195 and 1199—1200.⁵ Two crossbowmen and their horses are mentioned in 1222.⁶ The castle was in the care of Robert of Blackford, the constable c. 1220.⁷ In 1265 the office was held by Sir Adam Gurdun (d. 1305) who engaged in a sea battle off Dunster with a party of Welsh raiders under Sir William Berkeley. However, Sir Alan was a supporter of Simon de Montfort and after the battle of Evesham the keeping of Dunster Castle was given to Alan de Plugenet (d. 1273).⁸ In 1280 Frances D'Accorso, a royal administrator was given £200 to take charge of the manor and castle of Dunster.⁹ In 1385 Patrick Everard, a local man, was constable during the young Hugh Luttrell's absence on the king's service.¹⁰ In the 1430s, during the minority of James Luttrell, the heir's estate was farmed out for £100 with the proviso that if anyone offered more the farmers must pay extra or lose out to the new bidder.¹¹

Despite the erosion of feudal tenure and the disappearance of the court of fees,¹² the Luttrells were keen to preserve their barony and maintain their rights. Larder silver was still paid by tithings within the barony in the 1560s.¹³ That was probably the hock rent or wiggyn money still paid by five tithings in 1719.¹⁴ Right of

⁵ e.g. Pipe R. 1195 (PRS NS 6), 39; Pipe R. 1197 (PRS NS 8), 138; Pipe R. 1199 (PRS NS 10), 243; Pipe R. 1200 (PRS NS 12), 95.

⁶ Pipe R. 1222 (PRS NS 52), 116, 155, 164.

⁷ Foreign Accts. 1219—34 (PRS NS 44), p. 1.

⁸ DNB.

⁹ Cal. Fine R. 1272—1307, 127.

¹⁰ Cal. Pat. 1381—5, 599.

¹¹ Cal. Fine R. 1430—7, pp. 19—20, 85.

¹² Below, local govt.

¹³ SHC, DD/L P 14/8.

¹⁴ SHC, DD/L 1/7/23.

wreck brought prizes like the ship's gun washed up at Minehead in 1714.¹⁵ In the 18th century determined attempts were made to secure feodary rents from the manors that made up the barony. It was said c. 1730 that more 'honours' were still paid to Dunster than to any other castle or manor.¹⁶ As far as possible owners were traced and in the 1760s demands for payment were issued. Some people no longer owned the estates and others had never heard of rents that had not been collected for nearly 40 years.¹⁷ The Luttrells persisted, keeping careful lists of the estates in question and whether or nor rents had been paid. Conversely the Luttrells secured released from chief rents owed to others.

Feodary rents for Bratton in Minehead and Timberscombe were still being paid in 1900.¹⁸ In the 19th century it was right of wreck along the west Somerset coast from Shurton Barrs at Stogursey to the Devon boundary that the family fought hard to preserve. Careful accounts of wrecks dating back to the mid 18th century were submitted in the 1850s as proof of the Luttrell right although many witnesses seemed unsure whether the right attached to the honor or the hundred, although the hundred goes no further west than Blue Anchor bay.¹⁹ The Luttrells continued to exercise the right to wreck into the 20th century and went to law again to defend their claim in 1947 to 1952.²⁰ The Dunster Castle estate preserved the old barony demesnes still in Luttrell hands. In 1873 it covered 12,732 a. and brought in over £20,000 in rent.²¹

DUNSTER CASTLE see under manor

¹⁵ Ibid. 1/4/11.

¹⁶ Ibid. DD/X/WBB 49.

¹⁷ Ibid. DD/L 1/10/35B; 1/20/78.

¹⁸ Ibid. 1/10/35C; 1/24/7.

¹⁹ TNA, BT 212/34

²⁰ Ibid. BT 243/265.

²¹ Return of Owners of Land 1873 (1875), II, Som. 46.

DUNSTER MANOR

In 1066 Dunster was held by Aelfric who also held Avill and was clearly an important local landowner. There were many thegns of this name with land in Somerset but the lord of Dunster may have been the Aelfric who held Bratton and Holnicote, west of Minehead. After the Conquest²² William de Mohun, from Moyon in western Normandy, was granted nearly 60 estates in the county and was made sheriff of Somerset c. 1083. He farmed a dozen manors, which had belonged to Earl Harold and also held lands in other counties but most of his lands were in west Somerset. He established the seat of his barony at Dunster and built a castle there, possibly because it had been an important centre for Aelfric and his predecessors although few inhabitants were recorded in 1086. William granted out most of his estates including Avill but retained Dunster, Alcombe, and Staunton in hand until the 1090s when he used Alcombe to endow a priory and granted Staunton to a tenant. Dunster, however, remained in hand until the 20th century.²³

William was clearly a wealthy man. It may have been the approach of death and guilt at having been involved in the murder of Glastonbury monks at their own altar²⁴ that led him to use some of his land and wealth to endow Bath priory but the date of death is unknown. By 1131 William de Mohun he had been succeeded by a son William II de Mohun (d. by 1155). The latter was created earl of Somerset by the Empress Matilda in 1141, but the title died with him. He was a supporter of Matilda and rebelled against King Stephen fortifying Dunster Castle against the king's forces. He was said to have had a powerful army at Dunster and accompanied Matilda to London and Winchester. About the same time he founded Bruton priory. He is said to

²² It has been suggested as a reward for suppressing rebellion in 1068—9. Despite Wace's *Roman de Rou* it seems unlikely he took part in the Conquest: J Campbell-Kease, 'William de Moyon, Sheriff of Somerset', *Somerset and Dorset Notes and Queries*, XXXVI (2008)181—8.

²³ *VCH Somerset*, I, 501—7; *DNB*.

²⁴ *VCH Somerset*, II, 86.

have gone into exile when his knights were captured during a battle with Stephen's forces c. 1143 and may have died shortly afterwards. His son William III de Mohun (d. 1176) inherited his father's barony and estates but not the earldom and confirmed and enlarged the gifts of his father and grandfather to Bath and Bruton priories. He was succeeded by his son William IV de Mohun (d. 1193) whose surviving son Reynold was a minor and came of age c.1204. He married Alice Briwere who in the 1230s became heir to her family's large estates in Devon and Somerset, which on her death passed to the Mohun family. Reynold also died young in 1213 leaving an infant son Reynold II who did not attain his majority until 1227 and was initially in the care of Henry Fitz-Count, illegitimate son of King John.²⁵

The younger Reynold was responsible for giving the burgesses of Dunster a charter and a market. He probably spent little time at Dunster having many houses including Torre, Devon, where he died. Having started out soldiering like his ancestors he took the unusual step of becoming a judge. He was Chief Justice and later Keeper of the royal forests south of the Trent. Like his Mohun ancestors and his grandfather William Briwere he was great benefactor to the church and founded Newnham Abbey, Devon. His son John died in Gascony 1253—4, leaving an infant son John who succeeded his grandfather in 1258. Reynold's widow Isabel (d. 1360) was ordered to deliver Dunster castle to Queen Eleanor and it passed through the hands of Adam Gurdon, who defeated Welsh pirates under the command of Sir William Berkeley at sea in 1265, and Alan Plugenet before John came of age in 1269.²⁶ John also died young in 1279 leaving a son, John II de Mohun, who came of

²⁵ I J Sanders, *English Baronies*, 114; *DNB*; H C Maxwell Lyte, *A History of Dunster* (1909), 11—18. That history gives detailed biographies of the Mohun and Luttrell families.

²⁶ I J Sanders, *English Baronies*, 114; *Cal. Pat.* 1247—58, 616; 1258—66, 443; Maxwell Lyte, *Hist. Dunster*, 32, 35.

age in 1290. Meanwhile both castle and manor were given to a succession of grantees including John de Vesey who held them from 1282.²⁷

John II de Mohun was a soldier and a supporter of Thomas, earl of Lancaster. he and his wife Ada were credited with formally founding Dunster priory. Their eldest son John was also a soldier. He married Christiana de Seagrave c. 1305. She brought a dowry of £400 and three manors to the Mohuns. The younger John died in Scotland in the 1320s leaving an infant son John who succeeded his grandfather in 1330 at the age of 10.²⁸ The heir's grandmother Sibyl de Mohun was given custody of the castle and manor but not of her grandson who was in the care of the Burgersh family.²⁹ Before he came of age the young John attended the king and spent most of his life fighting, mainly alongside Edward, the Black Prince who presented him with a horse. John was at the battles of Crecy and Poitiers. During a brief visit home he was imprisoned for kidnapping a tenant, John Durborough. In 1346, 1351, and 1370 he made settlements of his chief estates including the manor of Dunster on his wife Joan Burgersh and in 1351 made over his deeds to her, probably because he had no male heir and possibly also because he was in debt. In 1374 John and Joan granted their estates to trustees and Joan, who negotiated with Elizabeth Luttrell for a sale of the reversion of Dunster. John died in 1375 leaving three daughters, Elizabeth, countess of Salisbury, Philippa, Lady FitzWalter and Maud, Lady Strange but in his inquisition post mortem it was stated that he had no lands and no heir.³⁰

In 1376 Elizabeth, daughter of Hugh Courtenay, earl of Devon and his wife Margaret Bohun, and wife of Andrew Luttrell, purchased the reversion, after Joan's

²⁷ SHC, DD/L P1/1; THA, C 47/3/21/5—7; Cal. Pat. 1272—81, 374; 1281—92; Cal. Close, 1279—88, 149.

²⁸ Cal. Pat. 1301—7, 327; W. Hunt, (ed.), Cartularies of Bath Priory (Som. Rec. Soc. 7), 132; DNB.

²⁹ Cal. Close, 1330—3, 96; Cal. Pat. 1335—8, 177, 505.

³⁰ Cal. Close, 1349—54, 223, 464, 489, 492; SHC, DD/L P 1/4/2, 1/5/1—2, 1/6/1—2; Cal. Inq. p.m. IX, p. 304; DNB;

death, of the Mohun's west Somerset estate including Dunster, Minehead and Carhampton for over £3,000.³¹ Elizabeth (d. 1395) never benefited from her purchase and when in October 1404 Lady Joan Mohun died at Canterbury³², she seems to have shut Dunster castle up after her husband's death, Dunster passed to Elizabeth's son Hugh Luttrell. However Joan's surviving daughters Elizabeth and Phillippa, now Duchess of York, and Maud's son Richard le Strange disputed the Luttrell's possession and embarked on unsuccessful litigation. The Luttrells were to keep possession of Dunster, except for brief periods, for over 500 years.³³

Sir Hugh Luttrell, like his Mohun predecessors, found himself caught up in the war with France, and also in the war with Owain Glyndwr in Wales. Wherever he went provisions were dispatched from his estates. From 1418 he was Lieutenant of Harfleur and by 1420 Seneschal of Normandy, leaving his son John and receiver Richard Arnold in charge at home. He lived well at Harfleur with provisions sent from home, including wine, and took some of his plate and household goods to Normandy.³⁴ He died in 1428 to be succeeded by his son John who died two years later when the manor passed to John's widow Margaret (d. 1438), their surviving son James being an infant.³⁵ Most of the Luttrell estate was granted to Robert Coker, Margaret's second husband, during the minority and he granted them to Sir Philip Courtenay. Coker was said to have gone into hiding following that grant and in 1441 was accused of committing waste and destruction.³⁶

³¹ SHC, DD/L P 1/7, 32

³² Her effigy lies in the cathedral crypt.

³³ Weaver, F.W. (ed.), *Somersetshire Wills, 1501—1530* (Som. Rec. Soc. 19), 302—4; *Cal. Pat.* 1401—5; 507; *Cal. Inq. Misc.* VIII, p. 176; *Cal. of Signet Letters of Hen. IV and Hen. V*, p. 86; *Parl. Roll*, III, 577.

³⁴ SHC, DD/L P 1/14, 1/16/13, 24.

³⁵ *Cal. Inq. pm*, XXIII, pp. 21, 286; SHC, DD/L P 1/20.

³⁶ SHC, DD/L P 1/19; *Cal. Pat.* 1436—41, 368, 574.

In 1449, after coming of age, James Luttrell settled Dunster and his other estates in trust for his issue with remainder to Richard Luttrell and when Richard died c. 1450 he gave his estate to trustees made another settlement. James was attainted in 1461 for treason in having with others killed Richard, duke of York, father of King Edward IV, in 1460 at the battle of Wakefield. Ironically Sir James had died at the beginning of that year of wounds received in the same battle, in which he was knighted. His elder son Alexander was a minor and probably died before he came of age. The Dunster estate was seized by the Crown and in 1463 was given to Sir William Herbert, later earl of Pembroke, whose son was given the title Lord Dunster in 1466.³⁷ In 1469 Sir William was executed at Northampton. Later that year Dunster manor, honor and castle were given to Anne, Countess of Pembroke during the minority of her son William. A repeat of the grant in 1472 gave William Herbert not only Dunster but also the estates held by Elizabeth Luttrell, relict of James, who complained in 1475, apparently successfully. When Henry VII came to the throne in 1485 James's surviving son Hugh successfully petitioned parliament for the restoration of the estate claiming his father was loyally supporting the king, Henry VI. Despite that he was fined £200 for involvement in the 1497 rebellion, the only person in Carhampton hundred to be fined.³⁸

Sir Hugh (d. 1521) appears to have lived mainly at East Quantoxhead when not serving the king, as did many of his successors. He was succeeded by his son Andrew (d. 1538) and Andrew's son Sir John (d. 1551) who spent much of his adult

³⁷ SHC, DD/L P 1/23/1—2, 5—6; 1/24/1—2, 1/25/1—2; Cal. Pat. 1446—52, 284, 1461—7, 30, 99, 286; DNB.

³⁸ Cal. Pat. 1467—77, 174, 522—3; SHC, DD/L P 1/26, 40/13; A. J. Howard, Fines Imposed on Persons who assisted the Rebels... 1497 (1986), 15.

life fighting in Scotland.³⁹ He died of ‘sweating sickness’ before an intended expedition to Morocco leaving a widow Mary (d. 1588) and three young daughters. Mary and her second husband James Godolphin remained in possession of the manor until c. 1553 when they moved to Kilton, another of her dower estates. Sir John’s mother Lady Margaret and trustees for his other siblings also held considerable estates. Sir John’s brother Thomas Luttrell sold most of his own property to buy the reversion and other rights to Dunster manor and other property held by his female relatives c. 1561.⁴⁰

Thomas (d. 1571) enlarged the family estate by marrying Margaret Hadley (d. 1607), eventual heir to three large manors in West Somerset and other lands.⁴¹ Their eldest son George was ward and later son-in-law of Hugh Stewkeley of Marsh. In 1584 his mother, then living in Dorset with her second husband, assigned Dunster manor to him. George (d. 1629) became the first Luttrell to make his home at Dunster for over a century, building the Jacobean mansion in the lower ward of the castle, which is the core of the present house. He also largely rebuilt the house at East Quantoxhead for his third wife Silvestra Capps who remained there until her death after 1655.⁴²

The manor had been settled on George’s son and heir Thomas Luttrell in 1621 for his marriage to Jane Popham.⁴³ Thomas was a Parliamentarian in the Civil War and Jane commanded the garrison at Dunster Castle in 1642 but the castle was surrendered in 1643. On Thomas’s death in 1644 he was succeeded in turn by his sons

³⁹ TNA, C 142/37/116; SHC, DD/L P 2/5. The famous allegorical picture in Dunster castle showing Sir John in the sea is presumed to represent his resilience in the face of the wreck of the English cause in Scotland.

⁴⁰ Weaver, F W (ed.), *Somerset Medieval Wills, 1531—8*, (Somerset Record Society 21, 1905), 149; *VCH Somerset*, V, 122—3; SHC, DD/L P 2/12/28; 2/13; 14/5; TNA, C 1/1354/44; *ibid.* C 142/106/5514/2; *Cal. Pat.* 1550—3, 67—8; 1555—7, 468.

⁴¹ *Cal. Pat.* 1560—3, 86; 1563—6, p. 260; SHC, DD/L P 2/17/1; 2/18; 14/11, 13, 16; TNA C 142/159/43.

⁴² *VCH Somerset*, V, 123; SHC, DD/L P 2/21/1; 3/6/1, 4; 14/24/2.

⁴³ SHC, DD/L P 3/4/1, 3; 3/7—9.

George (d. 1655) and Francis (d. 1666).⁴⁴ Francis left a widow Lucy and three sons, Thomas, Francis and Alexander. Lucy administered the estate and recovered the substantial fortune held by her mother-in-law Jane (d. 1668), which had been stolen by Thomas's sister Amy and her husband George Reynel. It was said to amount to £10,000 in gold, silver and jewels taken from a chest during her last illness. Allowing for some exaggeration it indicates the enormous wealth amassed by the family. The court judgement was for £6,200.⁴⁵ The eldest son Thomas died a childless minor in 1670 and the second son Francis (d. 1690) appears to have been an extravagant man who left many debts. His widow Mary (d. 1704) married Jacob Bancks a Swede serving in the English navy who reputedly rescued her when her London house was destroyed by fire. He became MP for Minehead in 1696.⁴⁶

Tregonwell Luttrell, only son of Francis, died under age and childless in 1703, when his heir was his uncle Alexander who died in 1711 leaving a widow Dorothy (d. 1724) and several infant children. The eldest, also Alexander (d. 1737), had had the benefit of a midwife costing almost £28 in 1705.⁴⁷ He married Margaret Trevelyan of Nettlecombe who survived him together with their young daughter, also Margaret. The elder Margaret married Edward Dyke of Pixton and Tetton and appears to have had custody of the person and estates of her daughter, her orphaned niece Anne Luttrell and her second husband's cousin and heir Elizabeth Dyke. On coming of age in 1747 the younger Margaret married her cousin Henry Fownes who added the name Luttrell.⁴⁸ The family may have been short of money as part of the Luttrell family

⁴⁴ Ibid. DD/L P 3/6/5; F A Crisp (ed.), *Abstracts of Somersetshire Wills*, VI, 17; Maxwell Lyte, *Hist. Dunster*, 180—1, 203—4; TNA CP 43/293, rot. 10.

⁴⁵ Cal. SP. Dom. 1667—8, 130—1; Maxwell Lyte, *Hist. Dunster*, 203—4.

⁴⁶ SHC, T/PH/pro 5; Crisp, *Som. Wills*, VI, 19; Maxwell Lyte, *Hist. Dunster*, 217.

⁴⁷ SHC, DD/L 1/4/11.

⁴⁸ SHC, DD/L 1/23/4; Crisp, *Som. Wills*, VI, 19—20; Maxwell Lyte, *Hist. Dunster*, 224—6.

plate was sold for nearly £200 in 1743 possibly to pay the outstanding expenses of Mr Luttrell's funeral.⁴⁹

Margaret died in 1766 leaving a son Henry Fownes Luttrell (d. 1780). Henry's son John Fownes Luttrell succeeded. John (d 1816) was followed in turns by his sons John (d. 1857) and Henry (d. 1867). Neither married and Dunster passed to their brother Francis's son George Fownes Luttrell (d. 1910). George purchased many neighbouring estates including Avill. He also bought lands in the manor of Old Cleeve and was instrumental in preserving Cleeve Abbey. He was a meticulous estate manager with a board to oversee maintenance and tenancy matters, which kept regular minutes from the late 19th century. In 1910 the Castle and its 12 a. of ground alone was valued at £28,540. In 1879 he entertained the Prince of Wales when he came to hunt on Exmoor.⁵⁰ George's son Alexander died in 1944 and was succeeded by his son Geoffrey (d. 1957).⁵¹ In 1949 Geoffrey sold his estates, which had been heavily mortgaged by his father, to Eagle Star Insurance Company in 1950 and they were divided up and sold in 1951. The castle and much land were purchased by the Commissioners of Crown Lands with Geoffrey as tenant but by 1953 Geoffrey was anxious to buy back the castle. In 1954 he repurchased the castle and a small acreage around it. Geoffrey's son Colonel Sir Geoffrey Walter Fownes Luttrell succeeded and in 1974 gave the castle and grounds to the National Trust. The lordship was never sold and remains in the family. Colonel Luttrell died in 2007 and was succeeded by his brother Julian.⁵²

Castle

⁴⁹ SHC, DD/L 1/4/11.

⁵⁰ SHC, DD/L uncat. ledgers and minutes; DD/IR T14/4; D/P/du 4/1/1.

⁵¹ *VCH Som.* V, 44, 91—2; SHC, Q/RDg 5, 12; *ibid.* DD/X/BRY 2; below, this section.

⁵² TNA, CRES 34/4537, 59/1; SHC, A/BQD 1; *ibid.* DD/NA 14—15; info from late Col. Luttrell.

The capital message of Dunster manor was the castle. There may have been a Saxon building on the Tor but after 1066 William de Mohun built a castle there, which was reinforced with solid stone defences by his son William who held it against King Stephen's forces in 1138. The lower ward of the Castle was enlarged and strengthened by Sir Reynold de Mohun (d 1258), possibly in the 1230s.⁵³ In the 1280s the bakehouse and oven were in need of repair. Work, mainly roofing, was required on the oriel beyond the gate, the new tower beyond the great chamber and a chimney, the great hall, a chamber between the kitchen and the gate, the lord's chamber and its oriel, the soldiers' chamber, the bellcot [campanario] and the turrets around the castle. A kitchen and larder were to be erected and a garderobe next to the bakehouse was to be mended. A chapel window needed repair.⁵⁴

Although Lady Joan de Mohun appears to have left Dunster after her husband's death in 1375, maintenance was not neglected.⁵⁵ Sir Hugh Luttrell repaired and improved the buildings, repairing the tower over the gate and the tower over the west corner of the keep, repairing windows and doors in the upper and lower castle and glazing, working on the chapel in the keep and building a garderobe in 1405, and importing four carts of wainscot from Minehead.⁵⁶ In 1416—18 the lower gate was repaired along with other parts of the castle and a mason from Bridgwater came to view the rebuilding of the hall. In 1419—21 the castle was 'rebuilt' for £70 involving the building of a limekiln and carriage of stone from Bristol and Watchet. In 1420 the hall was demolished and a new one built with nearby buildings, which cost over £100 including freestone bought at Bristol, tools, 2,379 lb of iron and 141 qtrs of lime,

⁵³ *Curia Regis R.* 1233—7, p. 88.

⁵⁴ TNA C 47/3/21/6.

⁵⁵ SHC, DD/L P9/3—4.

⁵⁶ SHC, DD/L P 37/7; 1/23/1b.

wages of the masons and the purchase of draught animals to carry the materials.⁵⁷ Additional work in the 1420s included a new gatehouse costing c. £250. William Bowland the mason was in charge of building work and cottages near the castle were taken over for lime burning.⁵⁸ By 1426 timber fitting such as the spere for the lord's hall, windows, and a partition between hall and chapel were made and installed, a chamber in the hall was repaired, two chimneys were built, Dame Hawyse's tower was cleaned and the old kitchen in the keep was demolished. Clearly the castle was taking on a more domestic appearance flanked by outbuildings such as workshops and lime store. Sir Hugh's death did not put an end to the work and in 1428 work was carried out on the chamber over the gate by the stable and the house next the outer gate was tiled. In 1430 two buttresses were completed at the castle gate.⁵⁹

On the death of John Luttrell in 1430 his widow Margaret was assigned a third of the castle including the two gates at the castle entrance with the buildings above them and an old cook-house adjoining, a tower west of the gate and the garden between it and another tower called 'hayneystoure', possibly Hawyse's tower, with access to the rest of the castle as required.⁶⁰ The 'old castle' covering two acres, presumably the Tor, was let in 1457.⁶¹ Parts of the medieval wall and a ruined tower survive on the north side of the garden court in front of the house. In 1513 Eleanor Luttrell was betrothed in the Castle Wardrobe.⁶²

Sir George Luttrell employed William Arnold in 1617 to build a new house in the lower ward for £40, half in marshland that Arnold said was not worth £20. Luttrell claimed that the building was not as planned, was full of defects and would cost

⁵⁷ Ibid. P 1/16/3,6,13; 4/26/4; 11/1.

⁵⁸ Ibid. P 11/3.

⁵⁹ Ibid. P 1/17/1—2; 11/3.

⁶⁰ *Cal. inq. p.m.* XXIII, p. 288.

⁶¹ SHC, DD/L P18/4.

⁶² A. Watkin, *Wells Cathedral Miscellanea* (Som. Rec. Soc. 56), p. 157

£1,200 to put right instead of the £462 originally agreed. Arnold replied that the rooms were too good for Luttrell!⁶³ During the Civil War the Castle was badly damaged and Parliament its demolition apart from the house and lower ward. Francis Luttrell and his wife Mary Tregonwell restored the castle as a mansion house in the 1680s and probably built the surviving stables below the gatehouse. When Francis died the castle was luxuriously furnished and comprised a study on the leads and another furnished as a bedroom, 21 chambers, a long gallery with white lacquered sconces, hangings and paintings, great and little parlours, a withdrawing room, the great hall with six yellow lacquered sconces, large staircase with spaces for tables and a couch, a porch and an inner porch, men's hall, butler's room, candle house, pastry and outer pastry, washhouse with seven tubs, dry larder, scouring house, kitchen, closets and storerooms, two dairies, buttery, cheese room, and stables with 6 chambers.⁶⁴ Roofing work appears to have been unfinished when Francis's son Alexander died in 1711.⁶⁵

Alexander's widow Dorothy levelled the old keep to create a bowling green with an octagonal brick summerhouse of 1727, possibly by Bampfylde, and created a drive to the eastern entrance. She had a chapel built, probably designed by Sir James Thornhill who painted the Brazen Serpent for it, with 4 stone and iron windows, a round window, pediments, an altar on steps, flooring and seating at an estimated cost of nearly £1,300 in 1721—3. Considered remarkable when built, it was demolished by Salvin.⁶⁶ Dorothy's granddaughter Margaret and her husband Henry Fownes Luttrell created a new deer park and 15a. of gardens with Gothick follies many designed buy local artist Richard Phelps, including Lawns Bridge over the Avill and

⁶³ TNA, C 3/299/30.

⁶⁴ SHC, DD/L 1/31/31/2; *ibid.* T/PH/pro 5.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* DD/L 1/10/35.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* DD/L 1/4/11; 1/22/8/23/4; DD/TB 19/2.

the gateway from the mill. The castle gatehouse was converted into workshops, cooperage, and laundry and the farmyard with hay barn was built, possibly by Harris of Blandford.⁶⁷ The Green Court was created in 1764 on the site of the lower ward north of the house retained by the remains of a medieval curtain wall, which and provides views to the east, north and west. The early 19th-century Luttrells spent little time at Dunster and in 1845 the castle was described as a 'sad picture of departed greatness', the furniture as mediocre, and the only tolerable portrait was a van Dyke in the hall.⁶⁸

The present Castle was created by George Smith and Co. of London to designs by Anthony Salvin between 1868 and 1872 for George Luttrell (d. 1910). The plans were modified because of cost but the house was remodelled and extended in irregular baronial style with two towers and a north-east service. A large estate yard was created out of the old farmyard between the stables and the village, now dwellings, and a new drive spiralled up to the Tor. Interior work included oak panelling for the great hall, conversion of the old ground floor to provide gun, billiard, muniment and business rooms, drainage, water and heating. In 1873 the reopening of the castle was marked by a ball to which tenants whose rents were over £50 were invited.⁶⁹ Work in the 20th-century concentrated on the garden including dense planting of fuchsias and other tender shrubs, which benefit from proximity to the sea, creating a polo ground on the Lawns and planting an avenue of oaks.

Dunster Castle, a grade I listed building and scheduled ancient monument is in the care of the National Trust, stands on levelled ground north-east of the Tor overlooking Dunster and the sea. Constructed mainly of red sandstone under lead and slate roofs, behind crenellated parapets, its irregular layout includes three towers and

⁶⁷ Ibid. DD/L 1/22/7 and 7A; 'Somerset archaeology, 2006', *PSAS*. 150 (2007), 227.

⁶⁸ SHC, DD/SWD 10/11; SHC, DD/L 1/10/35C.

⁶⁹ Ibid. DD/L 1/4/14; DD/X/AND 1; *ibid.* T/PH/riba 1.

several turrets. The north-west entrance has a porch approached by a flight of stone steps and surmounted by a monumental relief carving of the Luttrell arms. A formal terraced garden with an orangery designed by Salvin has replaced the former eastern entrance. The old park lies between west of the river and the new park to the east, divided by Henstey wood and including the Lawns, rises south to the prehistoric enclosures at Gallox Hill and Bat's Castle.⁷⁰

THE PRIORY ESTATES

The total original endowment is uncertain but by 1291 the priory held Dunster church worth £8, Alcombe manor, temporalities in Dunster and Doverhay in Luccombe worth £3 10s, a pension of £2 0s 4d from Cutcombe and Luxborough, and a pension of 7s from Stogumber church.⁷¹ The priory received gifts of land called Northcombe, Avilham for the good of the soul of Sir Ralph de Mohun in the 13th century,⁷² before 1346 a hide of land extending into the marshes, burgages in Dunster and land at Frackford, c. 1350 six houses and 18 a. rights to pasture and firewood,⁷³ and a cottage in Marsh and land for anniversaries for Patrick Everard and his wife Joan.⁷⁴ By 1535 Dunster rectory was worth £17 5s 8d gross including tithes from Dunster and its hamlets, half Minehead demesne and some land in Carhampton and Exford. Most of the priory's other property in Dunster and neighbouring parishes including Cutcombe, Porlock and Withycombe was administered as part of Alcombe manor and was let to

⁷⁰ See Somerset CC, HER and NT guidebooks for details of buildings.

⁷¹ Tax. Ecccl. 198, 205.

⁷² SHC, DD/L P16/4, 7.

⁷³ *Ibid.* P16/2, 6; TNA, C 143/299/23; Cal. Pat. 1350—54, 210—11.

⁷⁴ SHC, DD/S/SV 3.

John Luttrell (d. 1558), second son of Sir Hugh.⁷⁵ At the dissolution all the priory's estates passed to the Crown, which gradually sold them off.⁷⁶

Alcombe Manor

In 1066 Algar held Alcombe, also Minehead and possibly Aley and Stockland Bristol east of the Quantocks all of which were given to William de Mohun, who kept Alcombe in demesne until 1090 when he gave it with Dunster church to Bath priory, which according to his wishes, used both to endow the new priory at Dunster.⁷⁷ After the Dissolution Alcombe and the rest of the priory's property remained in the hands of the farmer John Luttrell who also leased the priory site.⁷⁸

In 1561 Alcombe manor was sold to Sir George Speke, a major Somerset landowner, and Edward Gilbert, presumably Speke's trustee, to hold for a fortieth of a knight's fee.⁷⁹ Sir George Speke (d. 1584), whose first wife was a Luttrell, was followed in the direct male line by Sir George (d. 1637) and George (d. 1690), a minor,⁸⁰ who later mortgaged Alcombe. His son and heir John dismembered the manor, selling to those who could afford it and giving the rest to his son George who disposed of it and the chief rents. Most land was bought by the brothers Richard, Hugh and Aldred Escott c. 1719. Aldred's purchases included the lordship and freehold rents but the lands were sold c. 1727 by his son Richard Escott of Bristol. Hugh, of Withycombe, also had Alcombe Cross farm, a freehold of Staunton manor, inherited from his father Hugh (d. 1674) who bought it from Thomas Slocombe in

⁷⁵ Ibid, DD/L 1/28/21/8; TNA, SC 6/3144; Valor Eccl. (Rec. Com.), I, 176, 220.

⁷⁶ e.g. SHC, DD/L P 40/3; below, this section.

⁷⁷ VCH Som. I, 502; SHC, DD/L 16/4, 7; English Episcopal Acta: X Bath and Wells, lxxv.

⁷⁸ TNA, SC 6/3144.

⁷⁹ Cal. Pat. 1560—3, 328

⁸⁰ TNA, C 142/205/199; M J Hawkins (ed.), Sales of Wards in Somerset, 1603—41 (Som. Rec. Soc. 67), p. 58; VCH Som. IV, 143.

1668.⁸¹ Hugh's son, also Hugh (d. s.p. 1753), described his estate as Alcombe manor but his brother John (d. 1756) and John's son Thomas (d. 1789) made no such claim.⁸² Thomas left his Alcombe lands to his youngest son Hugh (d. c. 1834) who, probably because of financial difficulties, sold most for building. The remainder, mainly Alcombe Common (c. 164 a.), passed to Hugh's cousin Bickham Sweet Escott of Stogumber, descendent and heir of Richard Escott, elder brother of Hugh (d. 1673) and Aldred.⁸³ The Sweet Escott family retained c. 80 a. in 1910 and probably until their estate was divided and sold in the 1930s.⁸⁴

Rectory and Priory site

In 1543 the Crown sold the reversion of the priory site and demesne lands to Humphrey Colles, apparently on behalf of Sir Andrew Luttrell's widow Margaret (d. 1583) who settled it in trust in 1546 for herself and Thomas her second son who predeceased her leaving a son George, heir to Dunster manor.⁸⁵ The priory became Priory farm and a barn, now known as the tithe barn, was built over some of the conventual buildings. The farm descended with Dunster manor. In 1787 and 1791 John Fownes Luttrell with other landowners purchased the fee farm owed for the former priory estates and chantry land.⁸⁶

CLEEVE ABBEY ESTATE

⁸¹ SHC, DD/L 1/23/3—4, 1/28/7; 1/28/21/8, 2/1/1, 2/1a/1, 2/31/2, 2/7/97; DD/DP 120; DD/HB 12; Crisp (ed.), Som. Wills, IV, 102—3.

⁸² SHC, DD/L 1/23/3, 2/1/1, 2/33/6; DD/CNY 1/2/1.

⁸³ Maxwell Lyte, Hist. Dunster, II, 457; SHC, DD/L 1/23/3, 1/28/21/11; 2/1/1; *ibid.* tithe award; see Introduction, settlement.

⁸⁴ SHC, DD/IR T/14/4; VCH Som. V, 182.

⁸⁵ SHC, DD/L P14/7, 26; P16/8—11, 17, 21; Crisp, F.A. (ed.), Abstracts of Somersetshire Wills, VI, 15.

⁸⁶ SHC, DD/L 1/32/44; below, *rel. hist.*, chantries.

Hugh Pyrou of Oaktrow in Cutcombe gave three houses and 12d rent in Dunster to Cleeve abbey in 1346 and in 1401 the abbey held a mill in West Street.⁸⁷ By 1535 the abbey's property including eight scattered tenements in Dunster and Marsh was worth £4 13s. gross from which 17s. was distributed in alms for Pyrou and others.⁸⁸ After the Dissolution the Crown leased out the various properties including three tenements with gardens held at will, a tenement in West Street and three others under one roof, four in 1683, now called the Nunnery, before they were dispersed through sales in the 17th century.⁸⁹

AVILL MANOR

Grabbist and Gallox Hills separate Avill from the rest of Dunster parish. Avill, a separate manor and tithing from the end of the 11th century, included freehold farmsteads such as Ellicombe, Frackford, and Kitswall, houses in West Street and Gallox Street, and land in Carhampton and Timberscombe.⁹⁰ By 1746 land in Bicknoller, Crowcombe, Carhampton, Cutcombe, Old Cleeve, Dunster, St Decumans, and Timberscombe had been added to the manorial estate.⁹¹

In 1066 Aelfric held Avill, a ½-hide estate, with Dunster but by 1086 William de Mohun had given it to a tenant called Ralph.⁹² Henry of Avill (fl 1177—1194) may have been followed by Agnes by 1201.⁹³ In 1202 William of Avill held Avill for a half-fee but despite having a daughter Alice, wife of Robert son of Edric, was

⁸⁷ TNA, C 143/281/13; Cal. Pat. 1345—8, 67; below, econ. hist.

⁸⁸ Valor Eccl. I, 217; TNA, SC 12/32/5; SHC, DD/L P15/5/1.

⁸⁹ SHC, DD/L P16/2, 12; 1/29/25a; TNA, C1/1362/10—12; SC 12/32/5; Cal. Pat. 1578—80, p. 182, 1589—90, p. 17; above, intro.

⁹⁰ Devon RO, 1148 M/add 2/61, 6/20; E. Green (ed.), Feet of Fines 1347—99 (Som. Rec. Soc.17), 204; SHC, Q/REI 8/3a; *ibid.* DD/L 1/28/23/23.

⁹¹ Devon RO, 1148 M/add 6/20.

⁹² VCH Som. I, 503.

⁹³ H. C. Maxwell-Lyte, Historical Notes on some Somerset manors formerly connected with the Honor of Dunster (Som. Rec. Soc. extra series), 85—6; The Honor of Dunster, (Som. Rec. Soc.17), 13—14.

succeeded by his brother Hugh who disputed Avill's boundary with Reynold de Mohun in 1233.⁹⁴ Hugh's second wife Julian and daughter-in-law Joan survived him but in 1265 Roger de Wildacre held Avill in ward for Richard of Avill, grandson of Hugh by his first wife Felice of Crowcombe.⁹⁵ Geoffrey (d. 1349) eldest son of Richard (d. 1307) may have his demesne as he was not taxed at Avill in 1327.⁹⁶ Geoffrey's eldest son Thomas of Avill left an only child Ellen who married John Kempe of London. In 1371 Ellen and John sold Avill for £333 to Robert Cheddar of Bristol and others, possibly in trust for William Cheddar. Litigation resulted in confirmation of the sale in 1374.⁹⁷

In 1380 and 1383 the estate was settled on William's brother Robert Cheddar (d. c. 1384) and his wife Joan⁹⁸ who held Avill with her second husband Sir Thomas Brook (d. 1418).⁹⁹ Joan and Robert Cheddar's son Richard (d. 1437) was succeeded by his brother Thomas (d. 1443) whose widow Isabel received Avill in dower¹⁰⁰ although half the manor was also claimed by her elder daughter Joan, widow of Richard Stafford, and later Viscountess Lisle.¹⁰¹ When Isabel died in 1476 the manor passed to Elizabeth (d. 1487) wife of Sir Edward Grey (cr. Viscount Lisle 1483, d. 1492), surviving daughter of Thomas and Isabel's daughter Joan.¹⁰² Elizabeth's son John Grey, Viscount Lisle (d. 1504) settled it on himself and his wife Muriel or

⁹⁴ TNA, E 326/9707; Close R., 1231—4, 295; Honor of Dunster, 26.

⁹⁵ TNA, E 326/9695; VCH. Som., V, 57; Feudal Aids, IV, 296, 302; Cal. Inq. Misc. I, p. 264; Cal. Inq. p.m., II, p. 174; Honor of Dunster, 47.

⁹⁶ TNA, E 326/9677, 9679; SHC, DD/HP 39; Cal. Inq. p.m. VII, 218, 220; Feudal Aids, IV, 334, 341.

⁹⁷ TNA, E 326/9704, 9706, 9685, 9692, 9714; Green (ed.), Feet of Fines 1347—99, 82.

⁹⁸ TNA, E 326/9713; Green, Feet of Fines 1347—99, 118.

⁹⁹ Ibid. 204; Honor of Dunster, 115, 129; Cal. Inq. p.m. XX, p. 262—3..

¹⁰⁰ Cal. Close 1399—1402, 283; 1413—19, 479; 1441—7, 107; Feudal Aids, IV, 390, 430; Honor of Dunster, 178, 196, 200, 209; Cal. Fine R. 1430—7, pp. 361—2; TNA, C 139/84/62. Thomas Cheddar was said to have done homage in 1422, possibly an error for Richard: SHC, DD/L P 4/28.

¹⁰¹ Cal. Fine R. 1437—45, p. 268; TNA, C 139/108/5; C139/154/27; C 140/26/42; SHC, DD/L P4/43.

¹⁰² SHC, DD/L P5/55; TNA, C 139/154/ 27; C 140/41/40; C 140/58/67; Complete Peerage, VIII, 59—61. Joan's sister Isabel Newton presumably released her share of Avill as her family made no claim to it: SHC, DD/L P5/55; TNA, C 139/108/5.

Marcella (d. 1512), daughter of Thomas, earl of Surrey, who married secondly Thomas Knyvett.¹⁰³ Avill descended to John and Muriel's infant daughter Elizabeth Grey, Baroness Lisle (d. 1519) whose heir was her aunt, also Elizabeth, Baroness Lisle (d. c. 1530),¹⁰⁴ wife of Arthur Plantagenet (cr. Viscount Lisle for life 1523, d. 1542), illegitimate son of Edward IV.¹⁰⁵

John Dudley, Elizabeth's son by her first husband, conveyed her estates to trustees before 1532 when Sir George Brooke, Lord Cobham, heir to the Cheddars recovered them but by 1536 Avill manor had passed to Edward Seymour, earl of Hertford.¹⁰⁶ In 1539 the earl and his wife Anne sold it to John Stocker (d. 1539), a merchant of Poole, Dors., and his wife Edith Phelips¹⁰⁷ who let Avill in the 1550s to John Stocker, presumably her son, who predeceased her. His son, also John had succeeded Edith by 1591¹⁰⁸ and mortgaged the manor in 1607.¹⁰⁹ John (d. c. 1610) left a widow Margaret and son Anthony who with Margaret's second husband William Cable were joint owners in 1621.¹¹⁰ Anthony was followed in turn by his sons John (d. c. 1660), a Royalist Colonel who was fined over £1,300 after the Civil War, and William (d. 1669) whose surviving son Anthony sold Avill in 1699 to William Blackford.¹¹¹ William (d. 1732) left an infant daughter Henrietta (d. 1733) whose heir was her cousin Elizabeth Dyke.¹¹² In 1745 Elizabeth married Sir Thomas

¹⁰³ Cal. Close 1500—09, 92, 219—20; Cal. Inq. p.m. Hen. VII, II, pp. 521—2; Complete Peerage, VIII, 61—2.

¹⁰⁴ Elsewhere said to have died in 1526: The Honor of Dunster, 281—3.

¹⁰⁵ L&P Hen. VIII, I, p. 1116, XII (1), p. 257; SHC, DD/L P5/9; TNA, E 326/5686; Complete Peerage, VIII, 62—8.

¹⁰⁶ TNA, E 326/12122; Cat. Ancient Deeds, III, pp. 4801; Maxwell Lyte, Hist. Dunster, II, 439.

¹⁰⁷ SHC, DD/L P5/21/1—2; TNA E 326/12122; *ibid.* C 142/62/89.

¹⁰⁸ TNA, C 3/41/11; *ibid.* REQ 2/ 127/12; The Honor of Dunster, 292, 304; SHC, DD/L P5/43.

¹⁰⁹ S.W. Bates Harbin (ed.), Somerset Enrolled Deeds (Som. Rec. Soc. 51), pp. 178—9.

¹¹⁰ TNA, CP 25/2/345/6 Jas. I Hil.; CP 25/2/346/9 Jas. I Trin.; C 3/327/1.

¹¹¹ Maxwell Lyte, History of Dunster, II, 439; F.A. Crisp (ed.) Abstracts of Somersetshire Wills etc. copied from the manuscript collections of the late Revd Frederick Brown, IV, 78, 88—9; Devon RO 1148 M/add 2/61.

¹¹² Crisp Somerset, IV, 78.

Dyke Acland and Avill descended with the Acland estates¹¹³ until Avill farm was sold to Geoffrey Fownes Luttrell in 1870 although the Aclands retained some land and the lordship.¹¹⁴

Thomas of Avill built a house in the court at Avill in the 14th century but after the manor passed from the Avills to absentee lords it was let as a farmhouse.¹¹⁵ By the mid 18th century the duty of entertaining the steward fell on the tenants of Overburrow farmhouse, possibly indicating that Avill Farm was unfit.¹¹⁶ Avill Farm had been rebuilt by 1910 with 11 bedrooms.¹¹⁷

ESTATES ASSOCIATED WITH AVILL

Bonnton

A small Acland estate called Common Allers, probably part of Avill manor, occupied a small valley south of Avill Farm. In the 1708 a house called Bondington, now Bonnton, was built on the land by the Smith family. In the 19th-century it was rebuilt as an estate cottage.¹¹⁸

Ellicombe

In 1301 Adam son of Henry Damesone gave land in Ellicombe to Richard of Avill whose ancestors had granted it to Adam's ancestors,¹¹⁹ indicating that it may have formed part of Avill manor, although the Lawrence family had a freehold farm in Ellicombe held of Dunster in the late 16th and early 17th century.¹²⁰ In the 1740s the

¹¹³ Devon RO 1148M/add 1/53, 2/61.

¹¹⁴ SHC, DD/L 1/20/78; Maxwell-Lyte, *Somerset manors*, p. 274.

¹¹⁵ TNA C 3/42/82; C 3/45/10.

¹¹⁶ Ravenhill and Rowe, *Maps and Surveys*, 8.

¹¹⁷ TNA, IR 58/82374.

¹¹⁸ Ravenhill and Rowe, *Maps and Surveys*, 52—3.

¹¹⁹ TNA 326/9697—8.

¹²⁰ M.J. Hawkins, (ed.), *Sales of Wards in Somerset, 1603—41* (Som. Rec. Soc. 67), p. 123.

Aclands. Avill manor included four farms at Ellicombe, amalgamated into two known as Lower and Middle Ellicombe by 1840.¹²¹

Middle Ellicombe, later Ellicombe House, now Ellicombe Manor, probably originated as a 16th-century cross-passage farmhouse, which was considerably enlarged in the 19th century with staff accommodation, later turned into holiday cottages.¹²²

Frackford

This estate, between Dunster and Avill, formed part of Dunster priory's estate until the Dissolution. Later the land in Carhampton parish belonged to Foremarsh manor¹²³ but the house and Dunster land was absorbed into Avill manor.¹²⁴ Frackford House, south of Frackford bridge, was demolished after the 1880s.¹²⁵

Kitswall

Lands at 'Kekeswall' and 'Cokerige' appear to have been in Avill manor from an early date although Kitswall, south of the river, was divided between Dunster and Carhampton parishes. Before 1307 Richard of Avill gave Cokerige to his son Robert whose son Simon was surnamed Kitswall. From the late 14th to early 16th centuries it was held by the Hamelyns of Luxborough but possibly as lessees of the manor.¹²⁶ By the 18th century the Escott family held both Lower Kitswall and Overburrows or Overborough under the Aclands. The estate covered over 100 a. in Carhampton and

¹²¹ Ravenhill, M R, and Rowe, M M (eds) The Acland Family: Maps and Surveys 1720-1840 (Devon and Cornwall Record Society, New Series, Vol. 49, 2006), 52; Devon RO 1148 M/add 2/61; SHC, tithe award.

¹²² SHC, D/SP 176/31; DD/X/RID 41.

¹²³ SHC, DD/L 1/23/3; see Carhampton, landownership, Foremarsh.

¹²⁴ Ravenhill and Rowe, Maps and Surveys, 51; SHC, DD/L 1/33/47; *ibid.* tithe award; see this section, Avill.

¹²⁵ SHC, tithe award; DD/L, box 291/4; OS Map 1:10560, Som. XXV. SW (1890 edn).

¹²⁶ SHC, DD/HP 39.

125 a., mostly woodland, in Dunster with the parish boundary passing between the two farmsteads.¹²⁷ In the 1740s the Overborough tenant was required to entertain the steward of Avill manor an obligation transferred by 1830 to Lower Kitswall, now Kitswall Farm in Carhampton, probably because Overborough was already abandoned.¹²⁸ It was a ruin in 1869 but was renovated before 1890 as Higher Kitswall, a two-bedroom cottage with farmbuildings, all dilapidated by 1910, and by the later 20th century the site was again abandoned. The house had probably been a medieval open-hall longhouse, ceiled in the 17th century, and the ruins of a former kitchen or bakehouse stood to the east.¹²⁹

STAUNTON MANOR

Staunton, although in Dunster parish, was in Minehead borough. In the Middle Ages it was often known as Staunton by Dunsterdene.¹³⁰

Stantune was held by Wallo in 1066 but passed to William de Mohun before 1086 with an unnamed thegn's one-virgate estate.¹³¹ Before 1196 William had granted it to Walter of Downhead (d. c. 1224).¹³² A namesake held the fee between 1279 and 1285.¹³³ By 1291 it had been acquired by Sir William Martin who had married Eleanor, widow of John de Mohun, c. 1285. In 1296 John of Downhead sued William and Eleanor for Staunton Downhead manor but failed to appear in court.¹³⁴ Sir William (d. 1324) remained in possession and was succeeded in two thirds of the

¹²⁷ H C Maxwell-Lyte (ed.), Records of the Honor of Dunster (Somerset Record Society, 33), 339, 341, 352; Ravenhill and Rowe, Maps and Surveys, 51—2; SHC, DD/HB 12; DD/L P1/33/47; 1/10/35; *ibid.* Q/Rel 8/3a; *ibid.* tithe award.

¹²⁸ Ravenhill and Rowe, Maps and Surveys, 8; J. Savage, Hist. Hund. Carhampton, 307.

¹²⁹ OS Map 1:10560, Som. XXXV. SW (1890); TNA, IR 58/82375; SHC, DD/L, box 291/4; DD/V/WLr 3.9.

¹³⁰ Cal. Close 1354—60, 110.

¹³¹ VCH Somerset I, 503.

¹³² Maxwell Lyte, History of Dunster, II, 444; Red Bk. of Exchequer, I, 168.

¹³³ Honor of Dunster, 47, 54, 62; Cal. Inq. p.m., II, p. 177.

¹³⁴ SHC, DD/L P40/13; Honor of Dunster, 67; Maxwell Lyte, Hist. Dunster, II, 445.

manor by his second¹³⁵ son William (d. s.p. 1326) who held it as a quarter fee. The remaining third was held in dower by his mother Eleanor or sister in law Jouette.¹³⁶

In 1326 a third of William's estate went to his widow Margaret, who married Sir Robert of Watevill, and the rest was divided between his sister Eleanor, wife of Philip Columbers, and James Audley, son of his other sister Joan. James claimed the fee but apparently let his share to Eleanor (d. c. 1342 s.p.) whose estate he later inherited.¹³⁷ Between 1353 and 1356 James repeatedly settled the reversion on King Edward III¹³⁸ and in 1374 granted the manor to William Gambon for life for an annuity. After James died in 1386¹³⁹ King Richard II gave the reversion of the manor to Robert de Vere, earl of Oxford, but despite Gambon's claim, when de Vere forfeited his estates for treason in 1388 the king gave Staunton to his half-brother John Holand, earl of Huntingdon (cr. duke of Exeter 1397). In 1390 the reversion was granted to St Mary Graces abbey by the Tower of London, Edward III's intended recipient after Audley's death. In 1400 John Holand was executed but the abbey never took possession of Staunton,¹⁴⁰ which remained with William Gambon and his assigns the Fry family. In 1416 John son of William Gambon released his claims to Staunton and the younger John Holand failed to recover Staunton in 1418 as part of his father's estate.¹⁴¹

¹³⁵ The elder, Edmund died childless before his father: Complete Peerage, VIII, 537—8.

¹³⁶ Feudal Aids, IV, 302; Sanders, Eng. Baronies, 15, 105; Cal. Inq. p.m. VI, p. 446; TNA C 134/99/1.

¹³⁷ Cal. Close 1323—7, 482; Sanders, Eng. Baronies, 15, 105; Complete Peerage, VIII, 537—8; Honor of Dunster, 72; Feudal Aids, IV, 302; Cal. Inq. p.m. VII, p. 220; VIII, p. 268; E. Green (ed.), Feet of Fines 1307—1346 (Som. Rec. Soc. 12, 1898), p. 24.

¹³⁸ Cal. Pat. 1350—4, 429; Cal. Close 1349—54, 594; 1354—60, 110—11; E. Green (ed.), Feet of Fines 1347—1390 (Som. Rec. Soc. 17, 1902), 33, 181.

¹³⁹ Cal. Pat. 1374—7, 44; Cal. Inq. p.m. XVI, p. 735.

¹⁴⁰ Cal. Pat. 1385—9, 113, 332, 495; 1389—92, 364; 1399—1401, 279, 397; TNA, SC 8/20/989, SC 8/129/6431.

¹⁴¹ Cal. Close 1354—60, 486; Maxwell Lyte, Hist. Dunster, II, 450—1; Honor of Dunster, 115. The Holands listed Staunton among their estates in 1443: Cal. Pat. 1441—6, 242.

The manor, later known as Staunton Fry,¹⁴² was held by Peter Fry (d. by 1410), William Fry (d. c. 1420), Peter Fry (d. c. 1429), Peter Fry of Kingsbridge, Devon, (fl.1449), John (fl. 1461), William (fl. 1480), Robert (fl. 1499) and Roger (d. c. 1520).¹⁴³ Roger's son Robert (d. 1531) was succeeded by his son William, who in 1541 settled Staunton on his son, also William (d. c. 1544).¹⁴⁴ William's son Bartholomew¹⁴⁵ with his son Ferdinand sold it in 1593 to Richard Godbeare who sold it in 1598 to Nicholas Downe, a merchant from Barnstaple, Devon.¹⁴⁶

In 1637 Nicholas Downe apparently settled Staunton on his son Richard, a clergyman, whose son John succeeded before 1685.¹⁴⁷ Richard (d. 1692), brother and heir of John left two sisters Mary, wife of John Blake, and Anne (d. 1722), wife of Edward Carpenter. In 1698 Mary sold her half to John Lee husband of her daughter Elizabeth whose heirs were her children John Lee and Mary, wife of the Revd Robert Luck, who in 1721 sold their shares to their uncle John Blake (d. 1727). Anne Carpenter had left her half of the manor to John Blake for life. John's son Martin died a minor in 1735 and the manor was shared between his aunt Joan, widow of Lewis Gregory, who already held half Staunton under the terms of Anne Carpenter's will, and John Lee who died childless in 1738 leaving his estate to his sister Mary Luck. Mary died childless and a lunatic in 1748 when her heir was her cousin the Revd George Gregory son of Joan and Lewis. In 1752, after securing a release of claim from his remaining relatives,¹⁴⁸ mortgaged the manor. His son Lewis and the mortgagee released it in 1761 to Jonathan Hall (d. c. 1764) who left it to his great nephew Richard Hall Clarke. In 1774 Richard sold Staunton, whose tenants were

¹⁴² SHC, DD/WO 21/3/4.

¹⁴³ *Feudal Aids*, IV, 390, 430; SHC, DD/L P 4/38, 43, 56; TNA, C 140/75/41; *ibid.* SC 6/198/1.

¹⁴⁴ SHC, DD/L P5/14; TNA, C 142/81/132; *ibid.* TNA CP 25/2/35/240/32 Hen. VIII Hil.

¹⁴⁵ SHC, DD/L P5/29; DD/WO 21/3/4

¹⁴⁶ TNA CP 25/2/207/35 & 36 Eliz I Mich.; 40 & 41 Eliz I Mich.; SHC, DD/L P5/50

¹⁴⁷ TNA CP 25/2/527/13 Chas. I Mich.; *Honor of Dunster*, 338.

¹⁴⁸ TNA CP 25/2/1056/7 Geo. I Mich.; CP 43/696, rot 15; *ibid.* PROB 18/61/52; DD/L 2/16/91, 93a.

entitled to vote for the Minehead MP, to John Fownes Luttrell for £5,500.¹⁴⁹ It descended with the Dunster estate but remained an independent manor.¹⁵⁰

The capital messuage recorded in 1353¹⁵¹ may have been one of the Staunton farms or possibly Lower Hopcott, in Minehead parish, described as the capital messuage in the 18th century.¹⁵²

MARSH

Marsh was mainly divided between the manor of Foremarsh,¹⁵³ including Lower Marsh in Carhampton, and Marsh manor, which included Higher Marsh farm in Dunster but with lands in both parishes. Little is known of the medieval ownership of Marsh but land there was held by people surnamed of Marsh and a branch of the Hamelyn family in the 13th and 14th centuries.¹⁵⁴ At least some of that land had passed to the Stewkeleys by the 15th century.¹⁵⁵

Richard Stewkeley (d. by 1449) and his wife Joan were followed by George (d. 1492) who married Jane Luttrell and left an infant son Peter and 12 burgages of which at least seven were at Marsh and a capital messuage and land held of Cleeve Abbey.¹⁵⁶ In 1508 Jane gave Peter (fl. 1557), still a minor, land in Marsh and Dunster borough.¹⁵⁷ Thomas Staunton of Essex, presumably a trustee, sold a capital messuage and lands in Marsh to Peter's son Sylvester Stewkeley of the Middle Temple in

¹⁴⁹ Honor of Dunster, 229; TNA CP 25/2/1398/14 Geo. III Hil.; SHC, DD/L 2/16/93a, 2/17/94—5, 2/33/6.

¹⁵⁰ Maxwell Lyte, Hist. Dunster, II, 453—4; TNA CP 25/2/1398/14 Geo. III Hil.; SHC, Q/RDg 1; Q/RDd 34.

¹⁵¹ Cal. Inq. Misc. III, p. 41.

¹⁵² SHC, DD/L 2/16/93.

¹⁵³ Carhampton, landownership.

¹⁵⁴ SHC, DD/L P8/2/19, 45, 77, 90, P9/2/1, P17/1/52; VCH Office, Taunton, Pole MS 4115; BL, Add. Ch. 7021.

¹⁵⁵ SHC, DD/L P8/2/90; 1/10/35A.

¹⁵⁶ Cal. Inq. p.m. Hen. VII, I, p. 402; TNA, C142/81/190; DD/L P8/2/190. 220, P15/5/1.

¹⁵⁷ SHC, DD/L P13/7.

1551.¹⁵⁸ Sylvester (d. 1557) was succeeded by his elder brother Hugh (d. 1589).¹⁵⁹ In 1579 Hugh bought the Dodington family's lands in Dunster and Carhampton.¹⁶⁰ Hugh's son Sir Thomas (d. 1639) was followed by his son Sir Hugh (cr. Bt. 1627, d. 1642) whose son Hugh was under age.¹⁶¹ Sir Hugh's widow Sarah married Sir William Ogle, Lord Ogle and in 1658 they settled Marsh and other estates on the marriage of the younger Sir Hugh Stewkeley and Catherine Trott.¹⁶² Sir Hugh (d. 1719), whose only son Charles predeceased him,¹⁶³ left his estates in trust for sale. Marsh and Dunster rectory were bought by Hugh's widowed daughter Sarah St John who later married Francis Townsend. Sarah (d. c. 1760) left her estates to her niece Mary Legge, Baroness Stawell (d. 1780)¹⁶⁴ whose son Henry Stawell Legge, Lord Stawell, sold them c. 1789 for £5,000 to John Fownes Luttrell.¹⁶⁵ Thereafter Marsh descended with the Dunster Castle estate as Higher Marsh farm.¹⁶⁶

The lord's house at Marsh was virtually rebuilt in 1425—6 with 10,000 Cornish slates and over 50 crest tiles for the hall¹⁶⁷ and probably became the Stewkeley mansion called Marsh House in 1719.¹⁶⁸ It was presumably the partly demolished capital messuage called Seven Chimneys which Lady Stawell undertook to demolish in 1758 and replace with a new farmhouse for her tenant. A range of buildings and a garden court were destroyed between 1768 and 1790 probably in 1775 when Higher Marsh Farm was rebuilt.¹⁶⁹

¹⁵⁸ Ibid. DD/X/KL 1.

¹⁵⁹ TNA, C 142/117/51; Crisp, (ed.), *Abstracts of Som. Wills*, I, 79; F. W. Weaver, *Somersetshire Wills, 1531—1558* (Som. Rec. Soc. 21), 194—6.

¹⁶⁰ SHC, DD/X/KL 1.

¹⁶¹ VCH Som. V, 27.

¹⁶² SHC, DD/MY 11.

¹⁶³ *Complete Baronetage*, II, 26.

¹⁶⁴ SHC, DD/MY 11; TNA, E 134/10 Wm 3/Trin. 1; DD/L 2/33/6, 2/42/11.

¹⁶⁵ G. D. Stawell, *A Quantock Family* (Taunton, 1910), 129, 469; SHC, DD/L 1/10/35.

¹⁶⁶ Above, this section; SHC, DD/L 1/10/35.

¹⁶⁷ SHC, DD/L P 11/3.

¹⁶⁸ SHC, DD/L 1/7/23, 1/10/35.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid. 1/10/35A (map), 1/26/18; 1/33/51; *ibid.* tithe award.

