

## LANDOWNERSHIP: THORPE-LE-SOKEN

### INTRODUCTION

In 1066 Thorpe, along with Walton and Kirby, formed part of St. Paul's Cathedral's great estate of the Naze assessed at 27 hides.<sup>1</sup> Leases reveal that the three sub-divisions or manors existed by *c.* 1150, although Thorpe was first recorded in detail as a separate unit in 1222.<sup>2</sup> A second, smaller, manor at Landermere Hall, first recorded in the early 13th century, developed out of a freehold estate of 1 hide in the north of the parish held from the dean and chapter.

The lands of the principal manor, including a park later a separate estate, were alienated in the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>3</sup> The landed estate remained important although its size was roughly halved when Thorpe Hall and Thorpe Park passed into different hands after another sale in 1801. The Landermere Hall estate had expanded by the later 18th century, probably as the result of investment by new owners developing Landermere quay.<sup>4</sup> It remained a significant landholding throughout the 20th century when it was owned by Strutt and Parker Farms Ltd. The amalgamation of copyhold estates also produced some medium-sized farms, many with substantial farmhouses, from the 17th to the 20th centuries; the most notable of these was at Comarques.<sup>5</sup>

The principal manor and estate had no resident owner until the 1820s when Thorpe Hall was extravagantly rebuilt and occupied by the wealthy lawyer J.M. Leake (d. 1862). After Leake's death it was leased again, for a time to Frederic Foaker, new owner of Sneating Hall manor, Kirby-le-Soken.<sup>6</sup> For much of the earlier 20th century the house was the English home of J.H.G. Byng, Viscount Byng of Vimy (Governor General of Canada 1921–6), and his wife Lady Byng, a respected gardener. It is possible that the minor lords of Landermere were resident in the Middle Ages, but otherwise owners of that estate were also non-resident, its two houses, called Landermere Hall and New Hall, being occupied by tenant farmers. The large, high-status, house built at Comarques in the 18th century was occupied in the earlier 20th century by the author Arnold Bennett and then by A.K. Fairfax, Lord Cameron of Fairfax.

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<sup>1</sup> *VCH Essex*, i. 443.

<sup>2</sup> *The Domesday of St. Paul's of the year M.CC.XXII*, ed. W.H. Hale (Camden Soc., 1858), 43, 131; R. Faith, 'The topography and structure of a small soke in the Middle Ages: the Sokens, Essex', *EAT*, 3rd ser., xxvii (1996), 211.

<sup>3</sup> For detailed descents: below, this section.

<sup>4</sup> Below, this parish, Economic History.

<sup>5</sup> *White's Dir. Essex* (1848), 473; *Kelly's Dir. Essex* (1866–98).

<sup>6</sup> Above, Kirby-le-Soken, Landownership; *Kelly's Dir. Essex* (1866), 196; (1870), 217.

Thorpe-le-Soken manor, later Thorpe Hall, part of St. Paul's estate of the Naze, was first recorded as a separate unit in 1222.<sup>7</sup> The manorial demesne then comprised *c.* 180 a. of arable land and a park, while the tenants held 10 hides, perhaps *c.* 1200 a., as well as 251½ a. leased from the demesne and 121¼ a. of assarts.<sup>8</sup> By 1297 the demesne contained 472½ a., of which 200 a. was woodland.<sup>9</sup> Later evidence from 1797 and 1840 suggests that the demesne probably comprised the whole south-east part of the parish sub-divided between the home farm proper (*c.* 266 a.), near the church and village, and the park (*c.* 373 a.) in the south-east corner of the parish bordering Little Clacton park.<sup>10</sup> Tenanted land was concentrated in the centre of the parish, around the village, and in the west around Thorpe Green and Far Thorpe Green. The manor thus covered the greater part of Thorpe parish, except for the lands of Landermere Hall.<sup>11</sup>

The demesne was divided from the manorial rights sometime in the mid 17th century, and thereafter the manorial lords held no land in the parish. However, *c.* 1900 they still retained rights over 645 a. of land divided between 120 tenements and 109 copyhold tenants, so retained some significance for the local community.<sup>12</sup>

Neither the lords of the manor nor the new owners of the landed estate after it had been alienated were resident. From the 12th century the dean and chapter of St. Paul's leased their estates in the Sokens, either as a whole or in parts, a policy probably continued by the barons Darcy of Chiche.<sup>13</sup> Thorpe Hall was leased by the later owners, the Leake family, to George Witherington of Thorpe, gent., in 1734, to Robert Shearcroft, owner of Landermere Hall, in the later 18th century, and to G. Robertson in 1809.<sup>14</sup> The rebuilding of Thorpe Hall in the 1820s seems to have heralded a reversal of policy, as J.M. Leake lived at the Hall afterwards, although lands beyond the extensive house grounds were let to a local farmer in 1840. Leake, who was also lay impropriator, was actively involved in the religious and political life of the community.<sup>15</sup> After Leake's death in 1862 the house and farm were again leased, at first to Frederic Foaker of Sneating Hall, Kirby-le-Soken. The

<sup>7</sup> *Domesday of St. Paul's*, ed. Hale, 43.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* 38–43. The total includes 1 hide held by Ralph son of Richard, the tenant of Landermere Hall: below, this section, Landermere Hall.

<sup>9</sup> Guildhall MS. 25516.

<sup>10</sup> ERO, D/DU 286/1; *ibid.* D/CT 352, 352A.

<sup>11</sup> Below, this section, Landermere Hall.

<sup>12</sup> ERO, B5109, sale cat.

<sup>13</sup> *Domesday of St. Paul's*, ed. Hale, 125–6, 129–32; above, Walton-on-the-Naze, Landownership.

<sup>14</sup> ERO, D/DEI T365; BL, Add. MS. 47998A, f. 55.

<sup>15</sup> ERO, D/CT 352, 352A; below, this section; below, this parish, Political History; Religious History.

next owners to occupy the house, albeit after the estate had been alienated, were Viscount and Lady Byng from 1913 to 1949.<sup>16</sup>

There was a manor house at Thorpe c. 1150 with a hall, chamber, ante-chamber (*tresantia*), and ‘two private houses’ (*duas privatas domos*) that may have represented further separate domestic chambers, as well as a kitchen, brewhouse, malthouse, dairy, and range of agricultural buildings. These seem to have survived into the mid 15th century, when there was also a gatehouse to the curia.<sup>17</sup> Traces of these medieval buildings may have survived into the later 18th century when the architect John Johnson designed a new front to what seems to have been a complex house of multiple phases. His design was not executed, the Hall being later rebuilt by J.M. Leake in 1822-5 to designs by M.G. Thompson, and subject to further extension and refitting by Viscount Byng in the earlier 20th century that apparently removed most internal historic features.<sup>18</sup> The gardens at Thorpe Hall were laid out by Lady Byng, with many flowers, shrubs and trees brought from overseas.<sup>19</sup> Following the failure of planning applications in the 1990s, including one for a ‘retirement village’ on the estate, the house deteriorated and the roof collapsed in 2002. In 2003 it was pending demolition and replacement with a 100-bed health spa complex.<sup>20</sup>

### *Descent*

The manor descended with Walton Hall and Kirby Hall as part of the lordship of the Sokens, passing from the dean and chapter of St. Paul’s to the barons Darcy of Chiche, the earls of Rochford, and their later successors including Richard Rigby, Charles Pearson, and Benjamin and Edward Chapman.<sup>21</sup> The last owners exercising manorial rights were Emma Elizabeth Freeman of Chertsey (Surr.) and Clara Freeman of Canterbury (Kent), ladies of the manor in the 1920s. As at Walton Hall and Kirby Hall, J.L. Beaumont of Coggeshall served as the last steward of the manor,

<sup>16</sup> L.P. Lonsdale, *Changes in a Rural English Village. A Pictorial View of Thorpe-le-Soken & Landermere 1880–1990* (Lavenham, 1994), 92; *Kelly’s Dir. Essex* (1866–37); above, Kirby-le-Soken, Landownership.

<sup>17</sup> *Domesday of St. Paul’s*, ed. Hale, 132; Guildhall MS. 25122/1022, 1025–27. For further details: below, this parish, Buildings.

<sup>18</sup> E.A. Wood, ‘Three Georgian Houses. The Rebuilding of Thorpe Hall, Thorpe Vicarage and Kirby Vicarage 1822–1828’, *EAT*, 3rd ser., ii (1966), 123–4; Lonsdale, *English Rural Village*, 90, 102–03; H. Colvin, *Biographical Dictionary of British Architects, 1600–1840* (2nd edn., 1978), 823–4; *Thorpe Hall. The Lady Nelson Convalescent Home* (Colchester, n.d., copy in ECL Colch.); ERO D/DHf T92/72–86; BL, Add. MS. 4799B, ff. 18–31; below, this parish, Buildings.

<sup>19</sup> M.E. Byng, *Up the Stream of Time* (1946); Lonsdale, *English Rural Village*, 102–3; *Thorpe Hall. The Lady Nelson Convalescent Home*.

<sup>20</sup> *East Essex Gazette*, 3 Aug. (1990); *The Times*, 27 Jan. (1996); *East Anglian Daily Times*, 1 Feb., 14 Feb. (1996); *Frinton and Walton Gazette*, 27 Sept. (1996); *Clacton and Harwich Evening Gazette*, 20 Sept. (2002). I am grateful to Mrs. P. Lonsdale for these references.

<sup>21</sup> Above, Walton-on-the-Naze, Landownership; *Kelly’s Dir. Essex* (1890), 21; ERO, D/DU 271/28.

and the firm of Beaumont and Sansom sold it by private treaty to Leslie Maddock of Mettingham Castle (Suff.) in 1963, presumably on behalf of the heirs.<sup>22</sup>

As at Kirby Hall, the house and demesne lands of Thorpe Hall were alienated from the manor in the mid 17th century, probably by Elizabeth Countess Rivers (d. 1651) to pay her debts. She apparently sold them to Thomas Wharton, secretary to Queen Henrietta Maria. Afterwards they descended to Humphrey Wharton (d. 1669) whose son Andrew Wharton sold the estate to Henry Nurse of Mile-End (Mdx.). After Nurse's death the estate was sold to Stephen Martin of Mile-End in 1723. On receiving a bequest from Admiral Sir John Leake he changed his name to Stephen Martin Leake. He was succeeded by his son another Stephen Martin Leake, appointed Garter King of Arms in 1754.<sup>23</sup> He died in 1773 and was apparently succeeded by his son J.M. Leake (d. 1797) who was succeeded by his son another J.M. Leake, a wealthy lawyer and Essex J.P.<sup>24</sup> The younger J.M. Leake died in 1862 and was succeeded by S.R.M. Leake of Ware (Herts.).<sup>25</sup> He died between 1890 and 1894 and was succeeded by his widow who seems to have sold off the land c. 1907.<sup>26</sup>

About 1913 the house and grounds at Thorpe Hall were purchased by J.H.G. Byng, created baron Byng of Vimy in 1919 and viscount Byng of Vimy in 1928. He died in 1935 but his widow, Lady M.E. Byng, continued to live at Thorpe Hall until her death in 1949. The house was sold in 1951 to Sir George Nelson of the English Electric Company as a convalescent home for male employees and was later named The Lady Nelson Convalescent Home. The home was closed in 1988 and the house sold for development to E.A. Ryan Developments Ltd.<sup>27</sup> Part of the land was still owned by E.A. Ryan in 2002, but the deteriorating house and its immediate grounds had by then been sold to Tangram Leisure.<sup>28</sup>

Landermere Hall was first recorded in 1211–12 when Henry of Furnellis quitclaimed to Ralph son of Richard one carucate of land in 'Landimer'.<sup>29</sup> Ralph still held a hide of land in Thorpe in

<sup>22</sup> HMC, MDR (Thorpe-le-Soken, Thorpe Hall).

<sup>23</sup> Morant, *Essex*, i. 481–2; ERO, T/P 195/8, no. 23, pp. 7–9; Wood, *History of Thorpe-le-Soken*, 150–1; above, Kirby-le-Soken, Landownership.

<sup>24</sup> Wood, 'Three Georgian Houses', 123; Wright, *Hist. Essex*, ii. 797.

<sup>25</sup> *White's Dir. Essex* (1863), 513.

<sup>26</sup> *Kelly's Dir. Essex* (1890–1908).

<sup>27</sup> 'Notes of the Quarter: Julian Hedworth George Byng', *ER*, xlv (1935), 194; Complete Peerage, xiii. 317–18, 438; 'Notes of the Quarter: Thorpe Hall', *ER*, lx (1951), 108; *Thorpe Hall. The Lady Nelson Convalescent Home*; Lonsdale, *English Rural Village*, 99, 109.

<sup>28</sup> *Clacton and Harwich Evening Gazette*, 20 Sept. (2002): reference supplied by Mrs. P. Lonsdale.

<sup>29</sup> *Feet of F. Essex*, i. 46.

1222.<sup>30</sup> The overlordship of the dean and chapter was recorded in 1485, and that of the canons' successor Lord Darcy in 1575.<sup>31</sup>

The place-name, and later documentary evidence, both reveal that the manor lay in a block in the north of the parish on either side of Landermere Road leading from Thorpe village to Landermere quay and Hamford Water. It had few tenants: only five were recorded c. 1600.<sup>32</sup> The lands were chiefly in demesne and by 1704 had grown to c. 368 a. with 30 a. of salt marsh, although only 198 a. and 14 a. of salt marsh were recorded in 1801.<sup>33</sup> The minor families holding the manor in the Middle Ages may well have been resident, but there is no direct evidence. The effigy of a knight in Thorpe church was popularly identified in the 18th century as the 'king' of Landermere Hall, but the identity of the man commemorated by the monument remains unclear.<sup>34</sup> Later manorial lords and estate owners from the 17th century until c. 1909 were not resident and the estate was let, from c. 1800 apparently divided between two tenanted farms, described as Landermere Hall farm (250 a.) and New Hall Park farm (272 a.) in 1845.<sup>35</sup>

It seems improbable that any major part of the early manor house at Landermere, reputed to be the oldest building in the parish in 1768, has survived. The existing house, built in the later 18th or earlier 19th century, may have been erected when either Robert Shearcroft or Richard Rigby was redeveloping Landermere quay. In the same period a second house, New Hall, was built on the estate, perhaps in order to divide the enlarged landholding between two tenants.<sup>36</sup>

### *Descent*

The descendants of Ralph of Landermere cannot be traced, but the manor should probably be identified with the single hide at Thorpe held by Giles Fillol, archdeacon of Colchester, in 1297. Giles was perhaps an ancestor of Richard Fillol, the major taxpayer in Kirby and Thorpe in 1327,<sup>37</sup> and of John Fillol of Landermere, a collector of the 1377 lay subsidy. All three men were

<sup>30</sup> *Domesday of St. Paul's*, ed. Hale, 41; E.A. Wood, 'The identity of the effigy in Thorpe-le-Soken church', *ER*, lxiv (1955), 132–3; below, this parish, Buildings.

<sup>31</sup> *Cal. Inq. p.m. Hen. VII*, i. 41.

<sup>32</sup> ERO, D/DRc M46; *ibid.* D/CT 198, 198A.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* D/DLl E3; *ibid.* B5511, sale cat.

<sup>34</sup> F. Chancellor, *The Ancient Sepulchral Monuments of Essex* (1890), 102–4; Morant, *Essex*, i. 482; Wood, 'Effigy', 130–7.

<sup>35</sup> ERO, D/DRg 2/44; D/DLl E3; D/DSf T59 (catalogue); *ibid.* D/CT 198, 198A; *Pigot's Directory* (1839), 79; *Kelly's Dir. Essex* (1894–1910).

<sup>36</sup> Dept. of Env., Buildings List; Morant, *Essex*, i. 482; Wood, *History of Thorpe-le-Soken*, 156; below, this parish, Economic History; Buildings.

<sup>37</sup> Wood, 'Effigy', 132–3; Guildhall MS. 25516; ERO, D/DHw M1; Ward, *Medieval Essex Community*, 12, 14.

presumably related to the Fillol family who gave their name to Felix Hall in Kelvedon and who held other lands in Tendring Hundred.<sup>38</sup> By 1412 the manor had passed to Thomas House, apparently by marriage to Joan a daughter of John Fillol, and following Thomas's death in 1442 the estate, then called 'La Hide', passed to his son Walter.<sup>39</sup>

Title to the manor cannot be traced in the mid 15th century, but Isabella Doreward apparently brought it in marriage to David Mortimer. The manor then passed to David's son Robert (d. 1485) who was succeeded by his daughter Elizabeth, a minor.<sup>40</sup> Elizabeth married George Guildford, controller of the household of Henry VII, and in 1502 and 1527 they quitclaimed estates including Landmere Hall and the Island of Horsey to feoffees.<sup>41</sup> Guildford presumably later remarried, for with his wife Barbara he sold the manor to John Neve in 1536.<sup>42</sup> It then passed to the Abell family, perhaps by marriage, for in 1560 Margaret Neve, an Abell by birth and possibly the wife of John, received an annuity from the manor.<sup>43</sup> On the death of John Abell of West Bergholt in 1575 the manor passed to his son Waldegrave Abell who apparently sold it to Paul Bayning (d. 1616). He was succeeded by his son Paul Bayning, Baron Bayning of Horkesley and Viscount Sudbury (d. 1629), whose son another Paul Viscount Bayning (d. 1638) left two daughters as co-heirs. Landmere apparently fell to the portion of the elder daughter Anne who married Aubrey de Vere, earl of Oxford.<sup>44</sup>

About 1680 the earl of Oxford apparently sold the reversion to Edward Peck of Little Sampford and Edward Rigby of Covent Garden (Mdx.), and after the earl's death in 1703 the estate passed to Edward Peck's grandson William Peck.<sup>45</sup> Either that William, or his son of the same name, disposed of the estate c. 1728 to John Deuch, who soon afterwards conveyed half of it to a Mr. Westley. John's son or other relative Peter Deuch apparently sold the rest of the estate to William Shearcroft in 1759.<sup>46</sup> However, Holman and Morant record that Richard Westley sold the manor to Robert Shearcroft. He was certainly in possession of it by 1768 and was responsible for rebuilding

<sup>38</sup> *Cal. Fine R.* 1377–83, 57; *Essex Sessions of the Peace, 1351, 1377–1379*, ed. E. Chapin Furber (Colchester, 1953), 34; *Feet of F. Essex*, iii. 6.

<sup>39</sup> *Feud. Aids*, vi. 440; Wood, 'Effigy', 136; ERO, T/P 195/8, no. 23, p. 15.

<sup>40</sup> *Cal. Inq. p.m. Hen. VII*, i. 41; ERO, T/P 195/8, no. 23, p. 11.

<sup>41</sup> Morant, *Essex*, i. 441, 482; *Cal. Close, 1500–09*, 31; *Feet of F. Essex*, iv. 106, 166.

<sup>42</sup> *Feet of F. Essex*, iv. 210.

<sup>43</sup> *Essex Wills*, ii. 120.

<sup>44</sup> Morant, *Essex*, i. 482; ERO, D/DHt T267/1 (abstract of title); *VCH Essex*, x. 224.

<sup>45</sup> ERO, D/DHw T5; Morant, *Essex*, i. 447.

<sup>46</sup> ERO, D/DHt T267/1 (abstract of title).

Landermere quay.<sup>47</sup> The manor later passed, presumably by sale, to Richard Rigby of Mistley Hall (d. 1788), and thirteen years after his death it was sold by his heirs and executors to pay his debts.<sup>48</sup> The purchaser in 1801 is unknown, but at a later sale, perhaps in 1825, it passed to the Hope Life Insurance Co. who held the manor in 1831. The company was presumably motivated by commercial considerations, for by 1840 they appear to have sold off the bulk of the land except the quay. The manorial rights may have been retained as the company was still recorded as lord in 1848, but they presumably lapsed shortly afterwards as no more is heard of the manor.<sup>49</sup>

Landermere and New Hall farms, alienated from the manor, were owned by William Brackenridge and John Barnley by 1840. They may have been held by either H. Burnley or Col. Onslow, or both, in 1848, and had passed to J.H. Burnley, Earl of Onslow by 1878. He was dead by 1906 and shortly afterwards his trustees sold the estate to Strutt and Parker Farms Ltd. Under their ownership it remained an important farm throughout the 20th century, although being managed from nearby Damont's farm in 2003.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Morant, *Essex*, i. 482; *Essex Life. Wills of Essex Gentry and Merchants*, ed. F.G. Emmison (Chelmsford, 1978), 50; *Hist. Essex by Gent.* vi. 69; ERO, T/P 195/8, no. 23, pp. 12–13; below, this parish, Economic History.

<sup>48</sup> ERO, D/DHw E9.

<sup>49</sup> Wood, *History of Thorpe-le-Soken*, 156; Wright, *Hist. Essex*, ii. 797; *White's Dir. Essex* (1848), 473. This reconstruction is tentative as deeds of Landermere Hall c. 1845, formerly in the ERO but reclaimed by the depositor in 1974, would probably throw further light on the fate of the manor: ERO D/DSf T59 (catalogue).

<sup>50</sup> Lonsdale, *Rural English Village*, 29–31; *White's Dir. Essex* (1848), 473; *Kelly's Dir. Essex* (1878–1937); *Yellow Pages*, Colchester 1994/5; inf. from Mrs. P Lonsdale.

## Other Estates

*Thorpe Park* originated as the park of the dean and chapter of St. Paul's principal manor of Thorpe Hall. The park was first recorded for certain in 1222,<sup>51</sup> but it may have been the wood in Edulvesness that the bishop of London returned to the canons c. 1127 after enclosing it in his park of Little Clacton.<sup>52</sup> The park was separately itemised when the three Soken manors were exchanged with the crown in 1544, and also when they were granted to Lord Darcy of Chiche in 1551, perhaps implying that it already had its own lodge or farm.<sup>53</sup>

The park appears to have been of moderate size, although perhaps representing over half of the demesne of Thorpe Hall: much of the 200 a. of woodland recorded in 1297 presumably lay within its bounds.<sup>54</sup> By 1778 the Thorpe Park estate comprised c. 435 a., rising to 488½ a. in 1801, although evidence from 1840 suggests that probably only c. 373 a. lay within the former pale.<sup>55</sup> The surviving 17th-century house, with its own access road connecting to the Kirby Road, may lie on the site of an earlier lodge.<sup>56</sup> There is no evidence that the owners were ever resident, and the estate was presumably always occupied by tenant farmers; that in 1839 was James Pertwee who may have been responsible for the early 19th-century remodelling of the house.<sup>57</sup>

The estate descended with Thorpe Hall until it was sold in 1801 by the heirs and executors of Richard Rigby of Mistley Hall to clear his debts.<sup>58</sup> The purchaser is unknown, but by 1840 it was held by Sir William Grant. It later descended to a Capt. Grant who held it between 1870 and 1912; he appears to have leased the land to tenant farmers.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>51</sup> *Domesday of St. Paul's*, ed. Hale, 38.

<sup>52</sup> Boyden has favoured Kirby for the park's location on the basis on an endorsement to the charter of 1127. Yet the existence of a park at Thorpe by 1222, and its proximity to Clacton, probably indicates the true location: *Early Charters of the Cathedral Church of St. Paul's, London*, ed., M. Gibb (Camden, 3rd ser., lviii, 1939), 43–4; Guildhall MS. 25122/1488; P.B. Boyden, 'Nemus de Edulvesnasa in 1127', *EAT*, 3rd ser., iv (1972), 146–7.

<sup>53</sup> *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xix (1), p. 495; *Cal. Pat.* 1550–53, 136–7; above, this parish, Introduction.

<sup>54</sup> Guildhall MS. 25516.

<sup>55</sup> ERO, D/DFI E1, no. 24; *ibid.* B5511, sale cat.

<sup>56</sup> *Essex Map* (1777); Dept. of Env., Buildings List.

<sup>57</sup> *Pigot's Dir.* (1839), 79; ERO, D/CT 352A.

<sup>58</sup> Above, Kirby, Landownership; *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xix (1), p. 495; Morant, *Essex*, i. 481; *Cal. Pat.* 1550–53, 136–7; *Hist. Essex by Gent.* vi. 69; ERO, B5511, sale cat.

<sup>59</sup> ERO, D/CT 352A; *Kelly's Dir. Essex* (1870–1912).



*Comarques* can probably be traced back to copyhold lands of Thorpe Hall granted to Revd Joshua Lisle, vicar of Thorpe, in 1676.<sup>60</sup> In 1840 its lands, by then greatly expanded to 352 a., were mainly located at the south-west end of Thorpe village and around Thorpe Green.<sup>61</sup> The estate's chief significance, however, lies in the quality of its large red brick mid 18th-century house and the status of its residents. Morant, writing in 1768, reported that it had been built by Joshua Lisle and Captain Comarque, but if Lisle built a house then the surviving one must be its replacement for he died in 1700.<sup>62</sup> In 1718 Lisle's son George sold the estate to John Comarque, presumably the Captain who gave his name to the house and who is thought to have been a Huguenot refugee.<sup>63</sup> By 1768 the estate had passed to Revd. Shaw King of Mereland, Kirby-le-Soken, and afterwards to his widow Elizabeth.<sup>64</sup> In 1840 the resident owner was Samuel Dennis, although in the period 1848–63 the house was occupied by Captain Anthony Runnacles.<sup>65</sup> Mrs. Dennis, perhaps Samuel's widow, briefly occupied the property 1866–70, but it was then leased to a succession of tenants. It was sold to Henry Atlee by 1898, father of Clement Atlee the later Prime Minister, and then to Mrs Jupp who lived there 1906–12.<sup>66</sup> The author Arnold Bennett purchased it about 1913 and lived there until 1921, during which time the house was remodelled internally.<sup>67</sup> By 1929 Comarques was the home of A.K. Fairfax, Lord Fairfax of Cameron, one of the principal landowners in the parish in the 1930s.<sup>68</sup>

*Beldams* was a small freehold estate, perhaps little more than 50 a. in extent, north of Thorpe village on either side of the Landermere Road.<sup>69</sup> It was first recorded in 1544 when, together with the Soken manors, it was exchanged by the dean and chapter of St. Paul's with the crown for other

<sup>60</sup> Wood, *History of Thorpe-le-Soken*, 154.

<sup>61</sup> ERO, D/CT 352, 352A.

<sup>62</sup> A brick inscribed 'W. Whatley 1755' probably gives the correct date. Morant, *Essex*, i. 482; Wood, *History of Thorpe-le-Soken*, 154; Dept. of Env., Buildings List; below, this parish, Buildings.

<sup>63</sup> ERO D/DBm M206, pp. 88–9; D/DBm M220, pp. 251–2; Wood, *History of Thorpe-le-Soken*, 154.

<sup>64</sup> Morant, *Essex*, i. 482; *Hist. Essex by Gent.* vi. 69; Wood, *History of Thorpe-le-Soken*, 154; above, Kirby-le-Soken, Landownership.

<sup>65</sup> ERO, D/CT 352, 352A; *White's Dir. Essex* (1848), 474.

<sup>66</sup> *Kelly's Dir. Essex* (1866–1912).

<sup>67</sup> Lonsdale, *Rural English Village*, 275–6; ERO, D/DBm M438; L. Weaver, 'A lesser country house of the XVIIIth century: Comarques, Thorpe-le-Soken, remodelled by Mr. E.A. Rickards', *Country Life*, xxxix (1916), 222–5.

<sup>68</sup> *Kelly's Dir. Essex* (1929–37); *Who's Who in Essex* (Worcester, 1935), 98.

<sup>69</sup> E.A. Wood, 'Beldams in Thorpe-le-Soken', *EAT*, 3rd ser., viii (1976), 289–91; ERO, D/CT, 352, 352A.

estates.<sup>70</sup> In 1551 Edward VI granted it with the Soken manors to Lord Darcy of Chiche.<sup>71</sup> It was presumably always leased, being occupied in the mid 16th century by the Kyldergrave family.<sup>72</sup>

The descent is largely untraceable and its later owners were probably of no particular consequence in the parish. Between 1743 and 1764 the estate was held by Henry Burton; by 1772 he had been succeeded by Mary Burton, his widow.<sup>73</sup> The land had been incorporated into New Hall farm by 1840 and the 'site of the manor' was sold as part of the Landermere Hall and New Hall estates in 1845.<sup>74</sup> The house probably lay on the east side of Landermere Road, about halfway between Thorpe village and Thorpe Lodge; of the buildings existing on that site in 1777 nothing substantial appears to have survived.<sup>75</sup>

*The Improprate Rectory* of Thorpe descended with the Soken manors until the mid 17th century, and then with the Thorpe Hall estate after it had been alienated from the manor and sold to Humphrey Wharton.<sup>76</sup> The lay improprator J.M. Leake collected tithes on 2874 a. of land in 1796, virtually the whole of the parish and in 1840 his son, J.M. Leake, held great tithes on all but 103 a.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Wood, 'Beldams', 289–91; *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xix (1), p. 495; above, Walton-on-the-Naze, Landownership (Introduction).

<sup>71</sup> *Cal. Pat.* 1550–53, 136.

<sup>72</sup> ERO, D/DLc T25; *Cal. Pat.* 1550–53, 136.

<sup>73</sup> PRO, C 103/12/1; Wood, 'Beldams', 290; Morant, *Essex*, i. 482; *Hist. Essex by Gent.* vi. 69.

<sup>74</sup> ERO, D/CT 352, 352A; *ibid.* D/Sf T59 [catalogue].

<sup>75</sup> Wood, 'Beldams', 290–1; Dept. of Env., Buildings List.

<sup>76</sup> Above, this section, Thorpe Hall; *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xix (1), p. 495; *Cal. Pat.* 1550–53, 136–7; Morant, *Essex*, i. 481–2; ERO, D/DU 286/1; *White's Dir. Essex* (1863), 513.

<sup>77</sup> BL, Add. MS. 47998A, f. 5; ERO, D/CT 352A.