

MANORIAL HERITAGE REGISTRY HISTORICAL RECORD EXTRACT

MHR-M-0002631 • MANOR
Bishop's Stortford

Evidence status: Unverified
Generated: 13 October 2026 21:49 UTC

Location: Hertfordshire
Associated places: Hertfordshire

LORDSHIP / TITLE ASSOCIATIONS
- Lordship of Bishop's Stortford | Associated | | Provisional

ABOUT THE MANOR

Including the Freehold of the Market Square
THIS IS a most important offer and includes the Lordship of the town of Bishop's Stortford which
anciently carried with it the high honorific dignity of Precentor of St Paul's Cathedral, London.
The Precentorship has customarily been appendant to the Manor, and while licence was granted by
Edward III in 1352 to appropriate Stortford to the Bishop's Table, it was not severed.
Bishop's Stortford was the head of the Bishops of London's Barony, stretching from Essex to
Hertfordshire and containing more than 36 Knights' Fees. In the reign of Edward the Confessor, it
was held by Eddeva the Fair and after the Norman Conquest (1066) it was sold by William I to
William, Bishop of London (1051-75).
It is unusual that, with one or two exceptions when the Bishops of London fell into Royal disfavour,
the Lordship of Bishop's Stortford remained in the same hands until the end of this century when
it was acquired by Sir Walter Gilbey. It seems that throughout the Middle Ages four Manorial Courts
were held a year: Michaelmas, Epiphany, Easter, Trinity and one held the view of frankpledge,
usually the day after the feast of Holy Trinity.
Two constables were chosen at this court and the common fine payable by the chief pledges was 16d.
Headboroughs alesters, flesh and fishsters, and cattle drivers were appointed by the Court Leet
until 1872. Indeed, the Manorial Courts also appointed the surveyor of the highway until his duty
was superseded by the highway board in 1856.
During the intrigues of King Stephen's reign (1135-54), Bishop's Stortford played a part of
great importance. From its position on the main road London to Saffron Walden, it cut the

communication between those places for Geoffrey de Mandeville, Earl of Essex. In 1141 or 1142, the Empress Maud, daughter to Henry I and claimant of the English Crown, promised to acquire the Lordship from the Bishop of London and give it to Mandeville. This she seems to have failed to do.

William St Mere Eligis, Bishop of London in the reign of King John (1199-1216), was one of the Bishops who published the Interdict in 1208 because of the King's misrule. John forced him out of the country and Bishop's Stortford together with his other property was seized by the Crown. John was excommunicated in 1211, but submitted in 1213 and restored Bishop's Stortford to the Bishop of London.

The Bishops had a prison in Stortford Castle, now the property of the local authority, and it seems to have been a grim place for in 1344, there were 50 prisoners in the gaol of whom 29 died. It was reckoned at the time that each of them cost a farthing a day to keep. The accounts of the gaolers include such items as lights for the prisoners at night, shackles, fetters, iron for staples, stocks, and so forth.

At the Dissolution, Bishop's Stortford Lordship was regranted to the Anglican Bishops of London and it remained in their hands until the end of the 19th century. It was sold by the Ecclesiastical

Commissioners to Sir Walter Gilbey, whose family's informal motto is blood is thicker than gin.

The Lordship will include the conveyance of the freehold soil of the market square. Rights, customs and incidentsThe Lordship will include the conveyance of the freehold soil of the market square.

Catalogue sourceLot #22 of Manorial Holdings Auction - December 1989

Associated manorial documents / archive referencesFines 1640 Herts RODraft Court Rolls 1948, 1849Court Book 1859, 1906Steward's Accounts 1848Quit Rents 1834, 1842, 1866Survey of Copyhold

1824-1890Court Books 1713-1734, 1738-1740, 1489-1509 Guildhall LibraryCourt Rolls 1576-85Court Rolls

1661-83Surveys 1811-53Estreat Books 1566Court Leet and Baron Rolls 1681-1951Court Rolls 1278-1679Account Rolls 1407-1856Survey and Valuation 1646-47Court Rolls 17th and 18th century

British Museum

OWNERSHIP / HOLDER ACCOUNT

Historical holder / succession informationAnglican Bishops of London and it remained in their hands

until the end of the 19th century [source claim requiring identity review]granted_to • historical_holder_or_transfereeSource wording: At the Dissolution, Bishop s Stortford Lordship was regrantd to the Anglican Bishops of London and it remained in their hands until the end of the 19th century.

CONVEYANCE / DESCENT

- 1208 - 1213 | The Crown | royal seizure and restoration | Manor And Title |
- at the Dissolution - late 19th century | The Anglican Bishops of London | regrant | Manor And Title |
- late 19th century | Sir Walter Gilbey | sale | Manor And Title |
- after 1066 - 1075 | William, Bishop of London (William the Norman) | royal sale or grant | Manor And Title |

RECORDED RIGHTS

- Freehold soil of the Market Square: The sale description expressly includes conveyance of the freehold soil of the market square.
- Manorial courts: Four manorial courts were held annually, including courts at Michaelmas, Epiphany, Easter, and Trinity.
- Court leet and view of frankpledge: One court held the view of frankpledge, and the court leet appointed local officers and regulated customary matters.
- Appointment of local officers: The courts appointed constables, headboroughs, aleasters, flesh and fish tasters, cattle drivers, and, until 1856, the highway surveyor.

RESEARCH GAPS / WANTED EVIDENCE

- [OPEN] The precise Domesday holding entry and tenant terminology require source verification. | Wanted: Source-backed evidence resolving this point
- [OPEN] The dates and legal instruments of the post-Dissolution regrant and the sale to Sir Walter Gilbey are not specified. | Wanted: Source-backed evidence resolving this point
- [OPEN] The surviving status and any current holder of the Lordship of Bishop's Stortford remain unknown. | Wanted: Source-backed evidence resolving this point

DISCLAIMER

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