

MANORIAL HERITAGE REGISTRY HISTORICAL RECORD EXTRACT

MHR-M-0002815 • MANOR

Grittenham

Evidence status: Unverified

Generated: 14 October 2026 03:05 UTC

Location: Wiltshire

Associated places: Wiltshire

LORDSHIP / TITLE ASSOCIATIONS

- Lordship of the Manor of Grittenham | Associated | | Provisional

ABOUT THE MANOR

ALTHOUGH THIS Lordship is situated in the parish of Brinkworth, it was listed in the Domesday survey, not by name, but as a dependency of Brokenborough, a Manor that was some distance away. In Brinkworth proper, there were two Lordships of five hides each, one held by Malmesbury Abbey and the other by Miles Crispin, the former descending to the Howards, Earls of Berkshire and Suffolk, while the latter passed to the Hastings family, Earls of Huntingdon. Grittenham has been identified with the one hide of land in Brokenborough that was held by an unnamed Englishwoman in 1086; she holding the same from Malmesbury Abbey. The Lordship of Brokenborough covered an area of 50 hides (ie 6,000 acres) but for all its size it was only valued at £26 in 1066 and £30 in 1086. The Abbey held the Lordship until the dissolution of the monasteries in the reign of Henry VIII. Although little is known of the subtenants of Grittenham over the centuries, we can glean some information about it from the few documents that have survived. In 1540, the Manor consisted of demesne land leased in five portions and some copyholds. The open field in the tithing may have been enclosed in the later 16th century when the demesne was in hand and the Lords of the Manor apparently ejected the copyholders, added copyhold land to the demesne, and converted arable to meadow and pasture. About 1600, the demesne of 414 acres of grassland remained in hand: 230 acres were meadow, 182 acres pasture and 44 cows, 36 other cattle and 200 ewes were kept on it. In 1541, it was granted to Sir John Ayliffe (d 1556) and his wife Elizabeth. Thereafter, it passed in direct male line descent to John (d 1579), John (d 1631), Sir George (d 1643), John (d 1645) and

George (d 1713). On the latter's death it passed with Foxley manor to his widow Judith (d 1716) and then to their son John (d 1722) who died without issue. It then descended to John's sister Judith (d 1737) then Susanna Horner and finally to Henry Fox, Baron Holland. This gentleman was the son of the celebrated Sir Stephen Fox, Paymaster General of the Army in the reign of Charles II, who grew so rich from his financial dealings that he was knighted by the King. The 1st Baron Holland was born during his father's dotage and like him was Paymaster General to the Army, a post which he soon afterwards resigned. Sir Stephen Fox came from a relatively humble background but his son caused a considerable stir in aristocratic circles by eloping, in 1744, with Lady Georgiana Lennox, the eldest daughter of the 2nd Duke of Richmond and great-granddaughter of King Charles II. The marriage was a very happy one and produced several sons of whom Charles James Fox, the Whig leader during the Napoleonic Wars, is the most well known. This gentleman was one of the most eminent statesmen of his time and possessed many of the qualities, good and bad, of his illustrious ancestor King Charles, including his predilection for ladies of notoriety and low birth; he married Elizabeth Armistead a celebrated cyprian, who was his mistress for many years. The Lordship continued to descend in the male line to the eldest son in each generation. On the death of the 1st Baron in 1774 he was succeeded by his son Stephen, the 2nd baron who died in the same year leaving an only son Henry Richard. 3rd Baron. The latter died in 1840 leaving an only son Henry Edward who died in 1857. The Lordship then passed to Lady Mary Powys, the last Baron's sister, and then to her sons Leopold Fox-Powys (d 1893) and Thomas Powys, Baron Lilford. The latter gentleman then sold it to George Llewellyn Palmer in 1895 and it has remained in the possession of his descendants ever since. Brinkworth parish, which is shaped like Africa, is one of the largest in north Wiltshire and presently covers an area of 6,075 acres. (Among 2-3% of manors which are registered with HM's Land Registry - Title #: unknown) Until the creation of the Ordnance Survey in the mid 19th century many place names remained uncertain and varied. They often depended on local use and how they might have been written in various documents over time. Take the Lordship of the Manor of Grittenham for instance. It can

alternatively be known as Grettenham, Gruttenham or even Grottenham, although the former is the least likely to be used. The settlement of Grittenham had its name fixed on the map with this spelling but a new Lord of the Manor might choose their own. Grittenham is found a few miles west of Royal Wootton Bassett in the parish of Brinkworth. It was, and remains a rural area, once formed by large open fields, divided into a myriad of smaller areas known as strips. It seems likely that at an earlier time Grittenham was a much larger village than now and this was likely a result of the inclosure of the open land in the 16th century. This will be explained in due course.

The Manor is thought to predate the Norman Conquest and was claimed as a possession of Malmesbury Abbey as part of a larger estate known as Brokenborough. The Abbey was already an old institution in 1066, having been founded in the late 7th century. The date at which it was endowed with the land at Grittenham is not known for certain but it is likely that it was made during the reign of King Eadwig (955-959) as part of a large gift of fifty hides of land he granted to the Abbey. A charter made in 1065 notes that Gruttenham counts for one hide and by the time of Domesday this land had been granted to an unnamed knight. It was soon returned to the Abbey, which retained Grittenham for the next 450 years.

At the time of the Dissolution in 1538, the Manor was seized by the Crown and held by Henry until 1541 when it was granted to John Ayliffe. It is described at the time to consist of demesne land divided into five portions and a number of copyholds and measured around 1500 acres. Ayliffe was a resident of London who had served as sheriff of the city and knighted in 1549. He was one of the emerging middle classes who prospered under the Tudors. His profession was that of barber surgeon to Henry VIII and is featured in a painting of Henry by Holbein known as King Henry VIII and the Barber Surgeons. This was a profession midway between a barber who cut hair and shaved mens chins, and doctor who would be allowed to undertake various medical procedures such as amputating limbs and blood-letting. Ayliffe was known to have successfully treated the king for a fistula and for which the grant of Grittenham was the direct reward as was 100 marks, left in Henry's

will,
specifically for Ayliffe. On his death in 1556 the Manor passed to his son John and then to his son,
also John.
It was under the stewardship of the latter members of the family that a drastic change was made to
the physical shape of the Manor. Whereas until the end of the 16th century, Grittenham had remained
largely unchanged for centuries, the new lords of the manor decided to follow an economic trend of
the day and enclosed the open field, ploughed up the intricate strips of land and created large
fields of grass and pasture land for sheep. The manorial copyholders, and many of the villagers were
ejected from the village and their homes pulled down. Many of them moved to nearby Brinkworth. The
Ayliffe family built a manor house, known as Grittenham House and it became something like a small
landed estate. This was a common pattern amongst landowners but caused much distress amongst the
labouring poor who lost their land and their livelihoods at the same time. By 1680 there were over
400 acres of grassland, 250 of meadow and 180 of pasture, whereas before 1550 almost all of the land
would have been arable or fallow on rotation.
The Manor remained in the hands of the Ayliffe family until 1737 when it passed from the last
surviving member, Judith, daughter of George Ayliffe to her cousin Susanna Strangeways. Although she
was married she alone was lady of the Manor, until her death in 1758 when it was passed to her
daughter's brother-in-law, Henry Fox. Fox was one of the leading politicians of the 18th century
and served various Whig administrations as Secretary at War, Southern Secretary and Paymaster of the
Forces. He achieved notoriety in 1744 when he eloped with the daughter of the Duke of Richmond,
Caroline Lennox, which was one of the major social scandals of the 1740s. This didn't appear to
harm his political prospects and two years later he was appointed Secretary at War under the Duke of
Newcastle. During the decade he became a close friend and confidant of George II and although he was
tipped to be Prime Minister the position always remained just out of reach. He was an ally of
Newcastle but was considered too ambitious and grasping by his colleague and when William Pitt
became Prime Minister in 1757, Fox was left out of the cabinet. He was appointed as

Paymaster and remained in this post until his resignation in 1765. He was created the first Baron Holland in 1763.

On his death in 1774, Grittenham passed to his son Stephen, the 2nd Baron but he died a few months later in the same year and so the Manor passed to his son, Henry, 3rd Baron. Henry, was another prominent politician of the early 19th century who, served as the Lord Privy Seal in the Ministry of the Talents led by Lord Grenville in 1807. From him it passed to his son Henry, 4th Baron in 1840 and on his death in 1859 it passed to his wife Mary, Lady Holland. From her it came to Leopold Fox-Powys and in 1895 it was sold by Thomas Powys, Baron Lilford to George Llewellyn Palmer who served as Lieutenant-Colonel of the Royal Wiltshire Yeomanry during the First World War. Grittenham remained in the Palmer family until the end of the 20th century.

Catalogue source Lot #21 Manorial Auctioneers Partnership June 1992 Lot #5 of Manorial Services Auction - Winter 2021 - Stephen Johnson

Associated manorial documents / archive references Court Rolls & Books 1544-1732 Wilts RO Rent Rolls 1704-47, 1830-60 Customal c 1550 Court Papers 1587-1777 Court Rolls & Books with Cole Park & Burton Hill 1563-1778 Deeds, Survey & Court Rolls 17th-18th c PRO Rental c 1600-3 Essex RO 1541 Grant of the Manor Wiltshire History Centre 1722 Map of the Manor 1760 Map of the Manor Source notes ((1992 Catalogue Begins)) | ((2021 Catalogue Begins))

OWNERSHIP / HOLDER ACCOUNT

Historical holder / succession information Abbey [source claim requiring identity review] held_manor

- historical_holder_or_transferee Source wording: The Abbey held the Lordship until the dissolution of the monasteries in the reign of Henry VIII. Lady Mary Powys, the last Baron's sister [source claim requiring identity review] 1893 • passed_to • historical_holder_or_transferee Source wording: The Lordship then passed to Lady Mary Powys, the last Baron's sister, and then to her sons Leopold Fox-Powys (d 1893) and Thomas Powys, Baron Lilford. John Ayliffe 1538 | 1541 • granted_to • historical_holder_or_transferee Source wording: At the time of the Dissolution in 1538, the Manor was seized by the Crown and held by Henry until 1541 when it was granted to John Ayliffe. his son John [source claim requiring identity review] 1556 • passed_to •

historical_holder_or_transfereeSource

wording: On his death in 1556 the Manor passed to his son John and then to his son, also John.her

daughter s brother-in-law, Henry Fox [source claim requiring identity review]1758 • passed_to •

historical_holder_or_transfereeSource wording: Although she was married she alone was lady of the

Manor, until her death in 1758 when it was passed to her daughter s brother-in-law, Henry Fox.Although she was married she alone [source claim requiring identity review]1758 •

lord_of_manor

• historical_holder_or_transfereeSource wording: Although she was married she alone was lady of the

Manor, until her death in 1758 when it was passed to her daughter s brother-in-law, Henry Fox.his

son, Henry, 3rd Baron [source claim requiring identity review]1774 • passed_to •

historical_holder_or_transfereeSource wording: On his death in 1774, Grittenham passed to his son

Stephen, the 2nd Baron but he died a few months later in the same year and so the Manor passed to

his son, Henry, 3rd Baron.

CONVEYANCE / DESCENT

- 1538|1541 | John Ayliffe | granted_to | | Lot #21 Manorial Auctioneers Partnership
June 1992 | Lot #5 of Manorial Services Auction - Winter 2021 - Stephen Johnson

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