

MANORIAL HERITAGE REGISTRY HISTORICAL RECORD EXTRACT

MHR-M-0003144 • MANOR
Worstead Hemptons

Evidence status: Unverified
Generated: 16 October 2026 12:57 UTC

Location: Norfolk
Associated places: Norfolk

LORDSHIP / TITLE ASSOCIATIONS

ABOUT THE MANOR

THE LORDSHIP of Worstead Hemptons lies in the parish of Worstead in North East Norfolk. The name of Worstead is known throughout the world for the eponymous woollen cloth which originated in the village. From the time of the Norman Conquest, Flemish weavers were attracted to the area by the prosperous wool trade and set themselves up in Worstead. The cloth is made from straight, carded woollen fibres forming continuous lengths known as slivers . The slivers are blended and then combed to make the fibres lie parallel. Then the slivers are tightly twisted or worsted and spun into yarn. The resulting cloth, also known as stuff , is lightweight but has a hard, smooth texture. Worsted yarns are used to make cloth such as whipcord, gabardine and serge. Worsted cloth is slightly different from other cloths in that the natural crimp of the wool fibre is removed in the process of spinning and this makes it resilient and hard wearing, suitable for carpets, garments, hosiery, gloves, and even billiard table cloth. The term worstead , or worsted , is first noticed during the reign of Edward II (1307 1327). Edward III (1327 77), who was married to a Flemish princess, Philippa of Hainault, encouraged an increase in the immigration of Flemish weavers so that they might exercise their mysteries in the kingdom and the oldest Act of Parliament which is retained in the House of Lords Record Office is the Taking of Apprentices for Worsteads in the County of Norfolk Act of 1497 . Indeed, much of England s trading wealth was based on the success of the woollen industry in East Anglia, of which the manufacture of worsted cloth was fundamental. Even today, the Lord Chancellor s seat in the House of Lords is known as the Woolsack.

A famous citizen of Norfolk and ancestor later Lord of Worstead Hemptons, William Paston, (1378 1444), wrote to his cousin Robert:

I pray that you will send me hither two ells of Worsted for doublets, to happen (wrap me up warm) this cold winter, and that ye enquire where William Paston bought his tippet of fine worsted cloth, which is almost like silk, and if that be much finer than that ye should buy me, after seven or eight shillings, then buy me a quarter and a nail thereof for collars, though it be dearer than the others, for I shall make my doublet all Worsted, for the glory of Norfolk.

The production of worsted in the village continued until 1882, when the last weaver, John Cubitt,

died at the age of 91. By this time the business had become largely mechanized and moved its centre

of production to the area in and around Norwich. Many of the weavers cottages survive in the

village and are notable for being spacious enough to house the 12ft high weaving looms. At the time

of Domesday Book of 1086, the Lordship of Worstead Hemptons formed part of the capital Manor of

Worstead, which was held by the Abbey of St Bennets by the reign of Henry I (1100 1135) when it

had become a separate estate and is first mentioned soon afterwards as coming into the possession of

the Priory of Hemptons, from which the Lordship derived its name. The Priory was founded during

Henry's reign by Roger de Martin and lay at the end of a causeway between Hempton and Fakenham.

Worstead Hemptons was an unusually large estate held by the priory for, although the prior had land

in over forty Norfolk parishes, these were usually small parcels and as a result the Priory's

income was rather small, only £29 in 1291. During this period the monks often had considerable

trouble in securing their manorial rights.

In February, 1299, William de Bedingham, the King's minister for the execution of the sheriff's

writs, was attacked by a mob of over sixty men and women in Worstead after travelling there in an

attempt to recover manorial dues.

Hempton was among a number of small priories included in the list of lesser monasteries of Norfolk

drawn up in 1536 for suppression. On 11 August, 1536, it was visited by Sir Roger Townsend, Sir

William Paston, Richard Southwell, and Thomas Mildmay, as commissioners. They drew up an inventory

of articles valued at £128 3s. 9d. Within the year the monastery was closed and its lands

and goods

sold. After the Dissolution, the Lordship of Worstead Hemptons was granted to John Spencer.

He was

succeeded by his son Leonard Spencer. Spencer also held another Manor in the parish and is last

recorded in 1572. In 1565 however he sold Worstead Hemptons to Robert Paston and Thomas Thimblethorp. Thimblethorpe farmed an estate which had formerly belonged to the abbey of St Bennet

and Paston was descended from a family of notable Norfolk gentry who are remembered in a series of

personal letters surviving from the 15th century and which forms one of the most valuable records in

English history the Paston Letters.

Later in that century the Lordship was sold again to the Utber family, from them it passed to the

Mitsons. At the beginning of the 18th century the Lordship was in the possession of Charles Harman

alias Le Gros. His father, Richard Harman, had married Catherine Le Gros and Charles was born in

1686.

Rights, customs and incidents During this period the monks often had considerable trouble in securing their manorial rights.

Catalogue source Lot #21 of Manorial Auctioneers November 2007

Associated manorial documents / archive references Deeds 1797 Norfolk RO Deeds 1810-1811 Courts with

other Manors 164-1779 (non consecutive)

Source notes Catalogue transcribed by the Lord of Finchingfield - a friend to learning

OWNERSHIP / HOLDER ACCOUNT

Historical holder / succession information John Spencer granted_to •

historical_holder_or_transferee Source wording: After the Dissolution, the Lordship of Worstead

Hemptons was granted to John Spencer. Mitson passed_to •

historical_holder_or_transferee Source

wording: Later in that century the Lordship was sold again to the Utber family, from them it passed

to the Mitsons.

CONVEYANCE / DESCENT

- | John Spencer | granted_to | | Lot #21 of Manorial Auctioneers November 2007

- | Mitsons | passed_to | | Lot #21 of Manorial Auctioneers November 2007

- - 1572 | Leonard Spencer | | Manor And Title |

- 1565 | Robert Paston and Thomas Thimblethorp | sale | Manor And Title |

- | Utber family | sale | Manor And Title |

- 1700 | Charles Harman alias Le Gros | | Manor And Title |

RECORDED RIGHTS

- Manorial rights and dues: The priory is described as having difficulty securing its manorial rights; in February 1299, an attempt to recover manorial dues at Worstead led to an attack on the king's minister and a large mob.

DISCLAIMER

This is a historical registry extract generated from the Manorial Heritage Registry. It records the registry's documented research and assertions; it is not a Land Registry title document, legal certificate, or guarantee of ownership, lordship, rights, boundaries, or enforceability.