

MANORIAL HERITAGE REGISTRY HISTORICAL RECORD EXTRACT

MHR-M-0003181 • MANOR
ABBOTSBURY MANOR

Evidence status: Unverified
Generated: 14 October 2026 17:18 UTC

Location: Abbotsbury, Dorset
Associated places: Abbotsbury, Dorset

LORDSHIP / TITLE ASSOCIATIONS

ABOUT THE MANOR

Abbotsbury Manor was the principal manor of Abbotsbury, Dorset, administered in the medieval period by the abbot of the Benedictine Abbey of St Peter at Abbotsbury. The settlement developed around the abbey and was governed as a manor rather than as a borough. The abbey's lands and manorial rights were surrendered to the Crown in March 1539 during the Dissolution of the Monasteries. Sir Giles Strangways subsequently acquired the freehold of Abbotsbury and a long lease of the abbey site, with the post-Dissolution estate including the manor, abbey buildings, mills, fishery-related rights and the swannery. A manor house was built or adapted from the former monastic buildings. The property remained associated with the Strangways family and later the Fox-Strangways family, Earls of Ilchester. The medieval abbey cartulary and many estate records were damaged or lost during the Civil War, so the descent cannot presently be reconstructed continuously for every generation.

OWNERSHIP / HOLDER ACCOUNT

The earliest securely evidenced institutional lordship is that of Abbotsbury Abbey, founded by Orc and Tola in the 11th century and endowed with their lands. By Domesday Book the abbey held Abbotsbury among its manors, and later sources describe the abbot as lord of the manor. The abbey surrendered on 12 March 1539. The Crown then disposed of the former abbey estate. Sir Giles Strangways purchased the freehold of Abbotsbury in 1541 according to the Dorset Historic Towns Survey; a Dorset Heritage Explorer record dates the purchase of the abbey site to 1543, so the precise completion date should be treated as uncertain within 1541-1543. Sir John Strangways is

documented as owner during the Civil War by 1643-1644, but the intervening succession from Sir Giles and the exact transmission to Sir John are not established by the sources used. The estate was in the hands of the Ilchester Estate by 1735 through the marriage of Elizabeth Strangways Horner to Stephen Fox. Stephen Fox later took the name Fox-Strangways and was created 1st Earl of Ilchester in 1756. The Earl of Ilchester was lord of Abbotsbury in 1810, and Henry Stephen Fox-Strangways, 3rd Earl of Ilchester, is recorded as having inherited the Abbotsbury estate during the first half of the 19th century. A directory for 1901 likewise names the Earl of Ilchester as lord of the manor and principal landowner. The later descent requires confirmation from the Strangways or Ilchester estate records and is not supplied here as a continuous chain.

CONVEYANCE / DESCENT

- c.1044 - 12 March 1539 | Abbey of St Peter, Abbotsbury, represented by its abbot | Foundation and endowment of the monastery with the Abbotsbury lands by Orc and Tola; the abbot is subsequently identified as lord of the manor. | | Dorset Historic Towns Survey: Abbotsbury, Part 5.1 and 5.2, Medieval Abbotsbury; Dorset Historic Towns Survey: Part 3 and 4, Context and Sources.
- 12 March 1539 - 1541-1543 | The Crown | The abbey surrendered to Henry VIII's commissioners on 12 March 1539; the former abbey estate and manorial freehold were subsequently acquired from the Crown by Sir Giles Strangways. | | Dorset Historic Towns Survey: Abbotsbury, Part 5.3 and 5.4, Post-medieval and Modern Abbotsbury; Dorset Heritage Explorer, The Manor House, Church Street, Abbotsbury, record MDO14035.
- 1541 - 1546 | Sir Giles Strangways | Purchase from the Crown of the freehold of Abbotsbury and a 40-year lease of the abbey site after the Dissolution. | | Dorset Historic Towns Survey: Abbotsbury, Part 5.3 and 5.4, Post-medieval and Modern Abbotsbury; Dorset Heritage Explorer, The Manor House, Church Street, Abbotsbury, record MDO14035.
- by 1643 - 1666 | Sir John Strangways | Succession within the Strangways family; the precise conveyance from Sir Giles Strangways' line to Sir John Strangways has not been established. | | Abbotsbury History, Abbotsbury Tourism and Traders Association; Simon Keynes, The Lost Cartulary of Abbotsbury, Anglo-Saxon England, Cambridge University Press.
- 1735 - 1776 | Stephen Fox, later Stephen Fox-Strangways, 1st Earl of Ilchester | The Abbotsbury estate passed into the Ilchester Estate through the marriage of Elizabeth Strangways Horner to Stephen Fox in 1735; Stephen Fox was created Earl of Ilchester in 1756. | | Dorset Historic Towns Survey: Abbotsbury, Part 5.3 and 5.4, Post-medieval and Modern Abbotsbury; Abbotsbury History, History of Abbotsbury.
- by 1808 - 8 January 1858 | Henry Stephen Fox-Strangways, 3rd Earl of Ilchester | Inheritance of the Abbotsbury estate within the Fox-Strangways line; the exact succession instrument is not identified. | | Historic England, Abbotsbury Gardens, List Entry 1000707; John Martin of Evershot, Abbotsbury, 1810.
- by 1901 | Earl of Ilchester | Later succession within the Fox-Strangways family; the specific earl, date and conveyance are not established in the sources used. | | Kelly's

Directory of Dorsetshire, Abbotsbury entry, early 20th-century edition reproduced by the University of Leicester Digital Collections.

RECORDED RIGHTS

- Manorial governance and jurisdiction: The settlement was governed as a manor, with the abbot of Abbotsbury Abbey identified as lord of the manor during the medieval period.
- Swannery rights or associated swannery interests: The post-Dissolution estate is described as including the Abbotsbury swannery.

DISCLAIMER

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