

# The Manor, Hamlet and Tithing of Broadwell in Leckhampton

*Terry Moore-Scott*

## Introduction

A history of Leckhampton's three medieval manors, covering their Domesday origins and subsequent descents to more recent times, is provided in an earlier Research Bulletin.<sup>1</sup> It is however a basic principle in producing any history that new evidence will come to light calling for a re-assessment of previously reported evidence. Fortunately, current work being undertaken to produce the Leckhampton part of the Victoria County History for Cheltenham is uncovering valuable archival material held in the National Archives relating to Leckhampton previously not accessed. In the course of this, one particular document<sup>2</sup> has provided new information about one of Leckhampton's manors, the least well identified one, called Broadwell. It is sufficiently significant to warrant this addendum to the original paper.

This article examines the new evidence and discusses its meaning and significance for our understanding of the historic settlement in Leckhampton known as Broadwell. Also looked at is newly available evidence from recent archaeological investigations of the area. It starts though with a brief résumé on Leckhampton's manorial estates.

## A brief résumé on Leckhampton's manorial estates

The principal estate, that associated with Leckhampton Court and known as Leckhampton manor, has a history that extends back to Saxon times and for many subsequent centuries its descent is traceable through the great house of Despencer and later a series of prominent Gloucestershire families, the Giffards, Norwoods and Tryes. The early extent of this estate is indicated in the Domesday Book as being 4 hides of land (possibly around 500 acres).<sup>3</sup> For much of its existence this manor came under the overlordship of Cheltenham and one 16<sup>th</sup> century lord of Leckhampton (William Norwood – through his marriage to Elizabeth Lygon) was for a period leasee of Cheltenham manor itself; he also rented from the manor of Cheltenham a pasture called 'Blandlands' - a matter of particular relevance discussed later in this paper. In 1841, the estate was actually put up for sale, the sale particulars indicating that the estate was made up of around 460 acres centred on Leckhampton Court and around 190 acres on Leckhampton Hill within Coberley parish.

A second, small, manorial estate in Leckhampton, referred to in the earlier article as the Berkeley/Partridge manor, is first recorded in Domesday as consisting of just 1 hide of land (possibly around 120 acres). Its identification and subsequent descent is somewhat complicated but can be traced down through a series of different owners including lords of Monmouth and then Berkeley. Early in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the manor's assets also included 20 acres in a field called

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<sup>1</sup> Moore-Scott T, *The Manorial Estates of Leckhampton*, Leckhampton Local History Society Research Bulletin no. 4 (Summer 2010), 29-41.

<sup>2</sup> Ref. TNA SP 46/64/fo43.

<sup>3</sup> The actual size of a 'hide' varied considerably throughout the country depending on location and condition of the land, but in Gloucestershire it is thought that a 'hide' measured roughly between 120 and 180 acres.

'Banlond' rented from the manor of Cheltenham (c.f. 'Blandlands' field mentioned above.). In 1460, Berkeley's holdings in Leckhampton were described as 8 messuages (dwelling houses), 80 acres of arable land, 10 acres of meadow and 4 acres of wood. Ownership of this manor eventually passed down to an Edward Nurse (or Nourse) who is recorded as holding a court of survey for his manor in 1691. A survey by James Crow done in 1746 (see Fig. 1) clearly shows 'Mr Nurse's Farm House' just north-east of the moated site and various parcels of Nurse land scattered around to the north and west. Landownership in Leckhampton must have undergone changes following the enclosure awards in 1778 and, by 1835, this estate (now under the ownership of a Mr. W. S. Evans) totalled over 207 acres.<sup>4</sup>

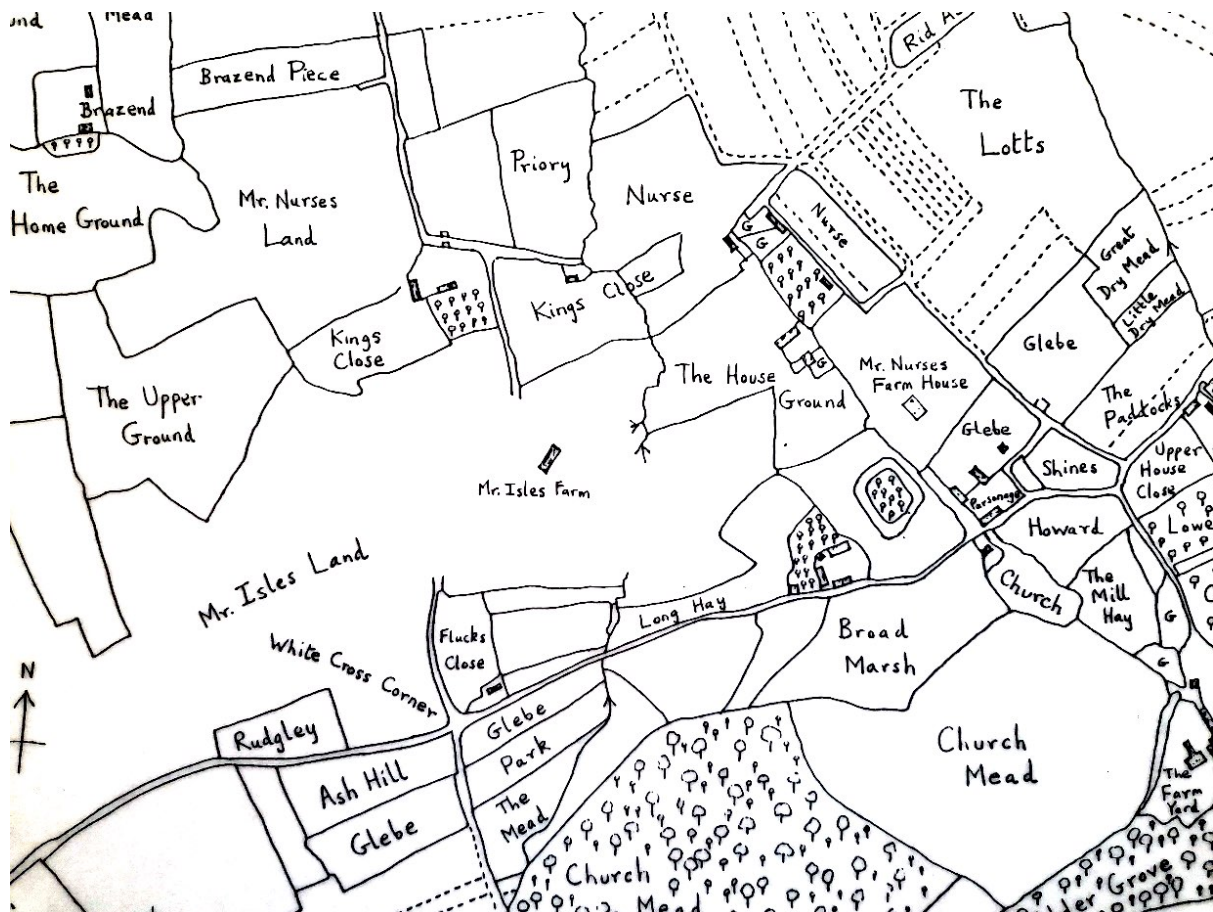


Fig. 1. Detail from James Crow's Estate Plan of Leckhampton, 1746.

**The Broadwell estate.** The earliest record of the name 'Broadwell' in association with Leckhampton occurs in 1294 when a Walter of Broadwell was named as an executor of the will of Giles of Berkeley, lord of neighbouring Coberley. In 1309 Broadwell was quoted as a witness in an inquisition into the Leckhampton estate of Amauri Despenser. In 1316, Walter of Broadwell was one of four lords in Leckhampton and a little later he was assessed for tax there. His estate is very likely represented by the third of a knight's fee in Leckhampton<sup>5</sup> said to have been held by the Mortimers of Wigmore. The existence of this estate, as held by the heirs of Walter of Broadwell, is recorded until at least the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century. Research has produced good

<sup>4</sup> After Henry Norwood Trye, Evans was recorded as the most prominent landowner in Leckhampton.

<sup>5</sup> The amount of land represented by a knight's fee varied across England but it is generally held to be a measurement of land deemed to be sufficient to support a knight and his family.

evidence of a likely connection between this estate and the 11<sup>th</sup> century estate recorded in Domesday as belonging to William Leuric, consisting of a substantial 3 hides of land.

The actual existence in Leckhampton of a place known as Broadwell is indicated in court records of Cheltenham manor and hundred between 1597 and 1601 which allude to separate tithings<sup>6</sup> of Leckhampton and Broadwell. Otherwise, little else was known of Broadwell until 1617 when William Norwood is recorded as holding the ‘manor of Leckhampton and Broadwell’. Following William’s death in 1632, an inquisition into his possessions attributed to him ‘the manor Leckhampton’, seemingly suggesting that Broadwell had by then become fully subsumed into his manor. As to the size of the estate, if the equation with Leuric’s three hides at the time of Domesday (possibly about 350-400 acres) is correct, the extent of Broadwell could at one time not have been far short of that of the main manor of Leckhampton. To date, however, the location of Broadwell has always been an enigma: the newly-available documentary evidence goes some way towards providing answers.

### The New Documentary Evidence

Dating from around 1615 or just after, the document contains details of two complaints by the manor of Cheltenham, one of them being against William Norwood of Leckhampton<sup>7</sup> alleging that, while lord of Cheltenham manor, Norwood had wrongly exercised manorial rights in respect to ‘the hamlet’ of Broadwell. The document is entitled ‘Remembrances touching on the Mannor of Cheltenham’<sup>8</sup> and that part of the text relating to Norwood and Broadwell is of sufficient interest to warrant setting out in full here:

#### *Remembrances touching the Mannor of Cheltenham*

*The Mannor and Hundred of Cheltenham have ben in lease ever (since) 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> of Phi(lip) and Mar(y)<sup>9</sup> until the feast of St John the Baptist anno 1615. In which tyme Mr W<sup>m</sup> Norwood, being Owner of the Mannor of Leckhampton lying within and held of the Mannor of Cheltenham under the rent of xv s. p.a., and suite of Court<sup>10</sup> and of diverse Freehold land(s) in the Hamlett of Bradwell (devided from Leckhampton by a small streame but parcel of the Mannor of Cheltenham) and being also farmor<sup>11</sup> of the Mannor Etc of Cheltenham hath much wronged and lessened the Mannor of Cheltenham in lands privileg(es) and other rights thereunto belonging by adding them to his owne land(s) and Mannor of Leckhampton viz. the Royaltie, view of Frankpledge<sup>12</sup> With waifes, strays, felons, good(s) Etc thereunto belonging ([and] being incident to the Mannor of Cheltenham) Mr Norwood do keepe and receave to himself, as due to his Mannor of Leckhampton, during his lease and endevoreth the Continuance thereof, and the better to collour the enjoying of divers parcels of*

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<sup>6</sup> ‘Tithing’ = administrative sub-division of a manor; originally a company of ten householders whose representatives were called upon to attend manorial court meetings.

<sup>7</sup> The other complaint, not related to Leckhampton, is against a William Packer of Ham (in Charlton Kings),

<sup>8</sup> The term ‘Remembrances’ is unusual but, in this context, it seems to mean nothing more than an account of evidence taken from witnesses.

<sup>9</sup> Queen Mary I of England (1512-1558) came to the throne in 1553. She married Philip II of Spain in 1554.

<sup>10</sup> ‘Suit of Court’ = an obligation to attend manorial and hundred court either in person or by a deputy.

<sup>11</sup> ‘Farmer’ = tenant.

<sup>12</sup> ‘View of Frankpledge’ = the right through manorial courts to exercise jurisdiction over minor offences and to impose fines on offenders.

*wastes<sup>13</sup> & land(s), hath encroached upon and added to other his owne free land(s) in the tithing of Bradwell one other parcel of ground xi li. p.a. called band land for which he Compounded with Sir John Wooley and gave him 100 li. Mr Norwood hath and doth pretend this tithing of Bradwell to be parcel of his Mannor of Leckhampton, Royaltie wast(e) Etc to be his, and the inhabitants there to appeare att the Court leet at Leckhampton, Electing and swearing[in] Cunstable, tythinge men and other officers there, which of right ought to bee done at the Leete held for the Mannor of Cheltenham.....*

## Discussion

The text tells us that between 1554/5 and 1615 William Norwood had possession of Cheltenham manor in addition to his own manor of Leckhampton. By being part of, and under the manorial jurisdiction of, Cheltenham manor, the lands and hamlet of Broadwell during this period were also rightfully Norwood's. His alleged offence was that he had wrongly treated Broadwell and the manorial rights attached thereto as though they were part of his Leckhampton manor. Norwood had similarly taken into his manor a parcel of land he had rented from Cheltenham called Bandland (a.k.a. Blandlands/Banlonds). This field, which is located at the western edge of Leckhampton parish in the vicinity of Brizen (see Figure 4 on page 9)<sup>14</sup> is not specifically described as being in Broadwell but a connection would appear to be implied. In spite of Cheltenham's objections, Norwood appears to have held on to Broadwell: we know that in 1617 he is recorded as holding the 'manor of Leckhampton and Broadwell', and on his death in 1632 his holding is described as 'the manor Leckhampton', implying that Broadwell had by then become fully subsumed into his manor.

Of particular note however is the description of Broadwell as being 'divided from Leckhampton by a small stream'. The watercourse being referred to is almost certainly Hatherley Brook and its inclusion in the text (in parentheses) suggests that the Cheltenham complainants wished to emphasise the existence of a well-defined physical boundary separating the two settlements.<sup>15</sup> A reasonable conclusion to be drawn from this information is that the hamlet/tithing, and the earlier manor, of Broadwell covered that part of Leckhampton parish lying west of Hatherley Brook right up to the western edge of the parish, an area incorporating the sites of Brizen Farm (see Fig. 2), Berry/Leckhampton Farm and the small settlement at Cummins Row (see Fig. 3).

We can't be sure what the northern and southern extents of the settlement were. It is quite plausible though that it would have extended right to Leckhampton's northern boundary with Cheltenham parish; apart from anything else, this would have provided it with the resource of two common fields (Merestones and Stanley), an important component of the manor. To the south, the uncertainty must be how far up the hillside (i.e. south of Leckhampton Lane) it went. The reference in the text to 'waste' lands may point to the less workable fields on the hillside being included in the estate. The inclusion of the hillside area would also have provided access to hill-top grazing land for animals via what today we know as Crippetts Lane (actually just an extension of Farm Lane).<sup>16</sup> (footnote on facing page)

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<sup>13</sup> 'Waste' = poor land used commonly by tenants, usually on manor boundaries e.g. for grazing.

<sup>14</sup> It is not clear why, but the Blandlands field appears to have had a special significance for the land-owners of Leckhampton, not just Norwood. As noted above, at one point in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, acreage in the same field is singled out as being rented from Cheltenham by the lord of Leckhampton's second (Berkeley/Partridge) manor.

<sup>15</sup> It is not uncommon for streams to be used as boundaries in this way; indeed the Hatherley Brook further downstream formed the boundary between the ancient manor of Redgrove and Cheltenham hundred and manor.



Figure 2. Brizen Farm today.  
(© Mr Michael Purnell. Source: Historic England Archive).



Figure 3. Cummins Row as it looked in the early 1900s. The gated trackway in the foreground is Farm Lane.

(original held in the Leckhampton LHS Archive)

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<sup>16</sup> Also covered in Research Bulletin no. 4 (pp.39-40) is the Isles (or Berry) estate which, from early in the 17<sup>th</sup> century until the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, appears to have been held independently from Leckhampton manor. Crow's Estate plan of 1746 (Fig. 1) shows it as being centred on what we know as Leckhampton Farm in Farm Lane and extending from the centre of the village, across the Hatherley Brook and as far as the western edge of the village. Norwood, having secured Broadwell for himself, therefore appears to have lost little time selling or leasing off manorial land from both sides of the of the Hatherley Brook, suggesting that the brook no longer retained quite the same status of a land boundary as it did.



## Archaeological evidence

Thanks to the extensive housing developments that have occurred in recent years affecting the western part of the village and the planning regime requiring archaeological investigations to be carried out prior to development, much hitherto unknown evidence about early human activity and settlement in Leckhampton has become available. Much of this importantly has related to prehistoric and Roman periods, but the archaeology has also produced tangible evidence from the medieval and early post-medieval periods which has a bearing on Leckhampton's medieval manorial history, especially that of Broadwell.

The first archaeological excavations, which were carried out in 2008 by Oxford Archaeology over a large area of land to the west of Farm Lane<sup>17</sup> produced a considerable amount of evidence of prehistoric and Roman activity covering much of the area. Significantly however, in the north-east corner of the area around Brizen Farm they found material dating to the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, including ditches and a limestone wall. An earlier desk-based assessment by Oxford Archaeology<sup>18</sup> had already drawn attention to aerial photography which showed a pond and a rectangular earthwork just to the north of the present farm buildings, suggestive of a moated manor site. The archaeologists concluded that all this evidence supported the theory that Brizen Farm (itself of 16<sup>th</sup> century origin) was built near the site of a much earlier 13<sup>th</sup> century farm. If the identification of a moated site is correct, Brizen begins to look very much like the principal location in medieval Broadwell, akin perhaps to the moated site at Church Farm (thought possibly to be associated with Leckhampton's main manor).

The other excavations, again by Oxford Archaeology, took place in 2019 in three fields between Farm Lane and the Hatherley Brook designated as the site for a new secondary school<sup>19</sup>. In addition to uncovering late Iron Age and Roman material in all three fields, the excavators also found in the southernmost field pottery dating from the 13/14<sup>th</sup> and 16/18<sup>th</sup> centuries. The location of these finds coincides with the small group of buildings in the King's Close field shown on Crow's 1746 plan (see Fig. 1). This site is what we now think of as Cummins Row, which from available evidence was for a number of centuries a small settlement and working component of the Broadwell estate.

This degree of archaeological investigation has so far not touched the third key location in the area, namely Leckhampton Farm, but were that to happen, it seems highly probable that it would come up with similar evidence relating to its medieval existence and place in the manor, hamlet and tithing of Broadwell in Leckhampton.

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<sup>17</sup> See *Brizen Farm Shurdington Gloucestershire. Archaeological Report*. Oxford Archaeology (2008).

<sup>18</sup> See *Brizen Farm Shurdington Gloucestershire. Desk Based Assessment (unpublished)*. Oxford Archaeology (2008). Also *Archaeological Review 2008*, TBGAS vol. 127 (2009), 318-319.

<sup>19</sup> See *Proposed Cheltenham Secondary School. Farm Lane, Leckhampton, Gloucestershire; Archaeological Examination Report*; Oxford Archaeology Ref. no. 7429 (July 2019).

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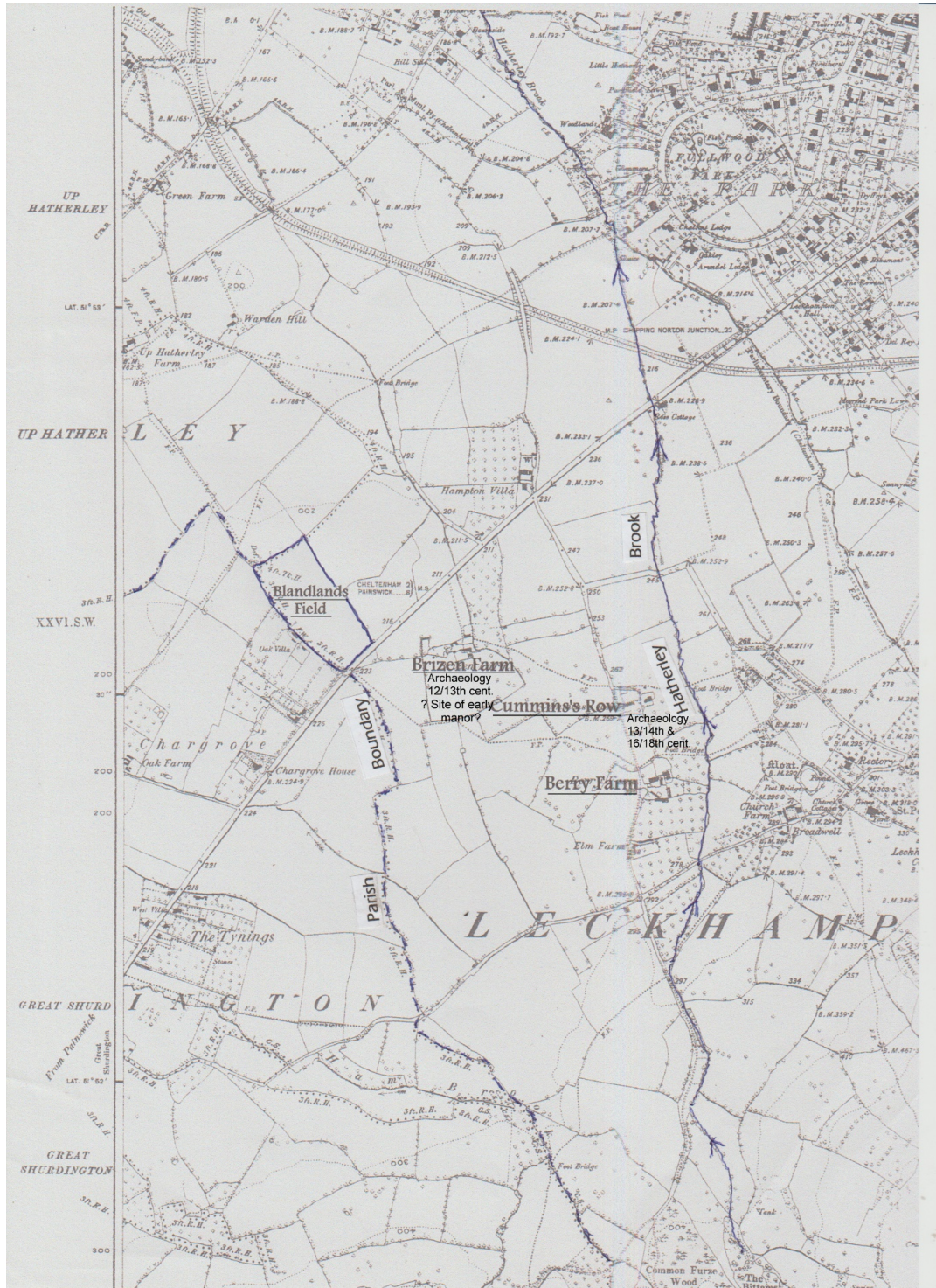


Figure 4 1930's O.S. map of a part of Leckhampton, annotated to show the east and west boundaries of Broadwell and the location of Blandlands field and other key locations.