

Virginia Bainbridge notes
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The key references in the sections on the 16th-century history of both manors is to the calendar of 'Letters and Papers Henry VIII, IV (1), pp. 848-9' (VCH fn 99). This reference confirms that in 1526 the Crown took both manors from Abingdon Abbey and granted them to Wolsey's new foundation of Cardinal College, Oxford, although in 1537 the Abbot of Abingdon was apparently still in possession of Cuddesdon. Cuddesdon was in the hands of the Crown by or before 1546.

The VCH states that on Wolsey's fall in 1530, the manor of Wheatley reverted to the possession of the Crown. A list of tenants, or lessees of the manor follows, and the VCH relies here on a series of deeds enrolled in the records of the court of Common Pleas, in the National Archives (C.P.). The paper trail for the later 16th and 17th century is deliberately confusing. Footnote 298 mentions that some lessees were Roman Catholic and it is typical of Oxfordshire Recusant families that the true ownership of a manor or other landed property was obscured at this time. Heavy recusancy fines levied on estates from the later decades of Elizabeth's reign could easily turn a minor gentry family into landless labourers (See Mrs. Stapleton's fascinating book on Oxfordshire).

This is the mystery at the heart of the descent of Wheatley manor. I don't think you will get greater clarity through paying for further research.

MH reply

Thank you so much for this which, after reading it very carefully and several times, has clarified the whole situation other than the obscure descent of the manor and when the Crown fell out of this. So, the grant by the King to Wolsey was well ahead of the Dissolution of the Monasteries.

But I am still intrigued by VCH footnote 168. You may tell me that this has nothing to do with the Manor, more with land?

VB further response

The grant of Cuddesdon manor in 1558 is made to Sir Frances Englefield, a prominent Roman Catholic and senior Counsellor to the Catholic Queen Mary. He is linked to one Christopher Smith, so they seem to be trustees for the manor at this point. Footnote 168 refers to a grant which is summarised in the 'Calendar of Patent Rolls' series of volumes.