

## 5. BUTLERS

Butlers Hall was described by Wright as “the capitol mannor, holden of the honour of Clare”. The Domesday survey gives its value as twenty-two shillings, smaller than the other identified Domesday manors in Bulmer. The (de) Butlers (Botelers) gave it their name in the 14th Century. The Milksoppe family who lived on the estate sold it to the Daniels (who also owned Grandon Hall) and from them it passed to William Jenners of Acton whose land holding in the region was enormous. We have not tried to deal with its manorial history, leaving our glimpses of mediaeval life for other Bulmer manors. What is striking about this southern area of the village is its total de-population. Several old roads and tracks disappeared altogether and no road across this land was made up. Butlers itself, once a thriving manor, has no-one living there now. There were other farm houses but they too have gone.

### **Vanished Farms**

Bonnets, a farm north east of Butlers is referred to in 1446 as Bonetts Lande. John Hale left it to his wife in 1500. It features in the map of 1600 as belonging to George Hicks. It was advertised in the 18th Century as being near the turnpike road. Punts and Bonetts was a manor with land in other villages as well as Bulmer. Punts gave its name to a wood near the brickfields and the hill leading from it. In 1600 Punts Wood, Punts Lane and Punts Tie (a little green) were on the Hedingham Road nearer to Tye Corner. In 1840 Bonnets Farm was still occupied. By 1871 it was empty and the house was pulled down soon after. The footpath to the site from the Hedingham Road was well known as Bunnets Lane in living memory but otherwise all trace of it is gone. The Leys farm has also gone. All that remains of the house is a scatter of broken bricks and tiles on the field near the footpath that goes north from the Wickham Road. The Brewster family were associated with this farm and Butlers. Brewster tombs are in the churchyard and the earliest is of 1717. George Brewster of the Leys was Overseer of the Poor for the parish in the 1830s.

### **Of Cocks, Shocks and Treaves**

John Brewster of Butlers owned 40 acres in Wickham St. Paul and he and a farmer called Ruffle were engaged in 1768 in a great tithe dispute with the Rector of Wickham who “had been of the law and knew very well how to introduce prolixity and expence” into a law suit. Both sides issued pamphlets to gain public support. The chief cause of complaint was in the procedure for cutting corn crops. The Rector insisted that they must cut the whole of a field and set it out in treaves or shocks (sheaves in stocks) so that he could take every tenth shock before they carted any away themselves. The barley too was to be cocked or shocked. Local custom had been otherwise. Legal costs were very high and the only beneficiaries seem to have been the lawyers.

Smaller farms disappeared in great numbers during the improved, larger scale farming

of the 18th Century and during the amalgamations and depressions of the 19th. There was still one farmer to every ten workers in Bulmer in 1800; but farms continued to disappear so that by 1871 all that was left of the Leys was the house. In it lived, all on his own, 76 year old Abraham Whiting. He was unmarried and a mole catcher.

One hundred years ago Butlers itself, however, had 232 acres and unlike the Leys and Bonnetts was still a going concern. In 1871 William Nott, born in Pebmarsh, lived in the house and employed thirty three labourers and three boys. His wife came from Wickham St. Paul. There were two sons and two daughters and an unmarried domestic from Halstead living in. One of his descendants, Frank, later farmed nearby and was one hundred and one years old when he died. The first Ordnance Survey Map shows the farm layout with its walled kitchen garden, orchard and extensive farm buildings. Those thirty six workers lived at the Tye, Wickham St. Paul or Wisbry Hill. One said "I went along o' the threshin' tackle. I harvest for old Billy Nott six years right orf - start six o'clock, leave orf ten at night".

For some years the land was used for apple growing but today most of the land has been sold off. The Cansell brothers still use some of the buildings for pigs and farm some of the land near the house which is empty.

The Royal Commission in 1916 described the house as being in reasonable condition and of a 16th Century H plan with crossed wings on the east and west with 17th Century additions on the east side. The West chimney stack was original. It has been much altered over the years and was once three dwellings. The interior is in a very dilapidated state today. It has had new chimneys, roof and windows put in but the exterior still shows that this was formerly a fine house.

It is a long step from Butlers to the Church where we go next but several of its farmers lie buried in the churchyard. John Brewster was put to rest there in 1800 and, after the tithing troubles, must lie there more easily than he would have done in Wickham Churchyard which is just across the fields.



*Butlers*