



The Manor of Milton  
& The Scottish  
Baronies of  
Prestoungrange  
& Dolphinstoun





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Prestoungrange University Press for  
The Baron Courts of Prestoungrange  
and Dolphinstoun  
The Manor House  
Milton Malsor  
Northamptonshire England NN7 3AQ

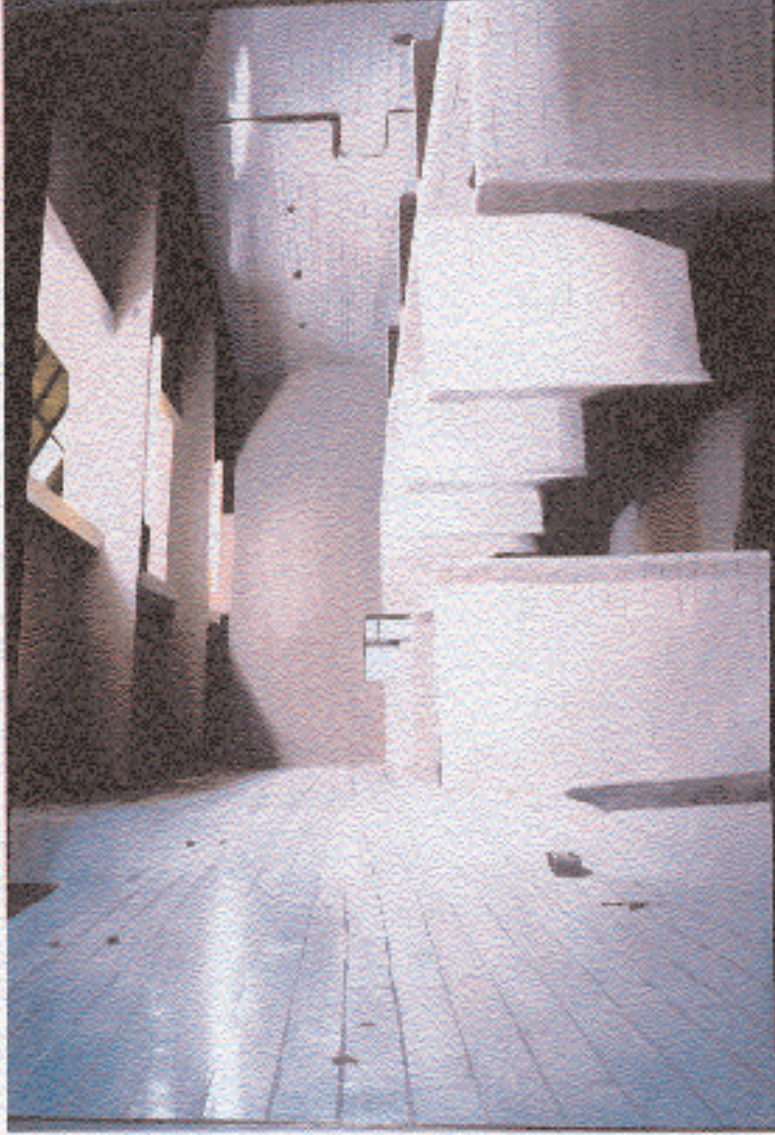




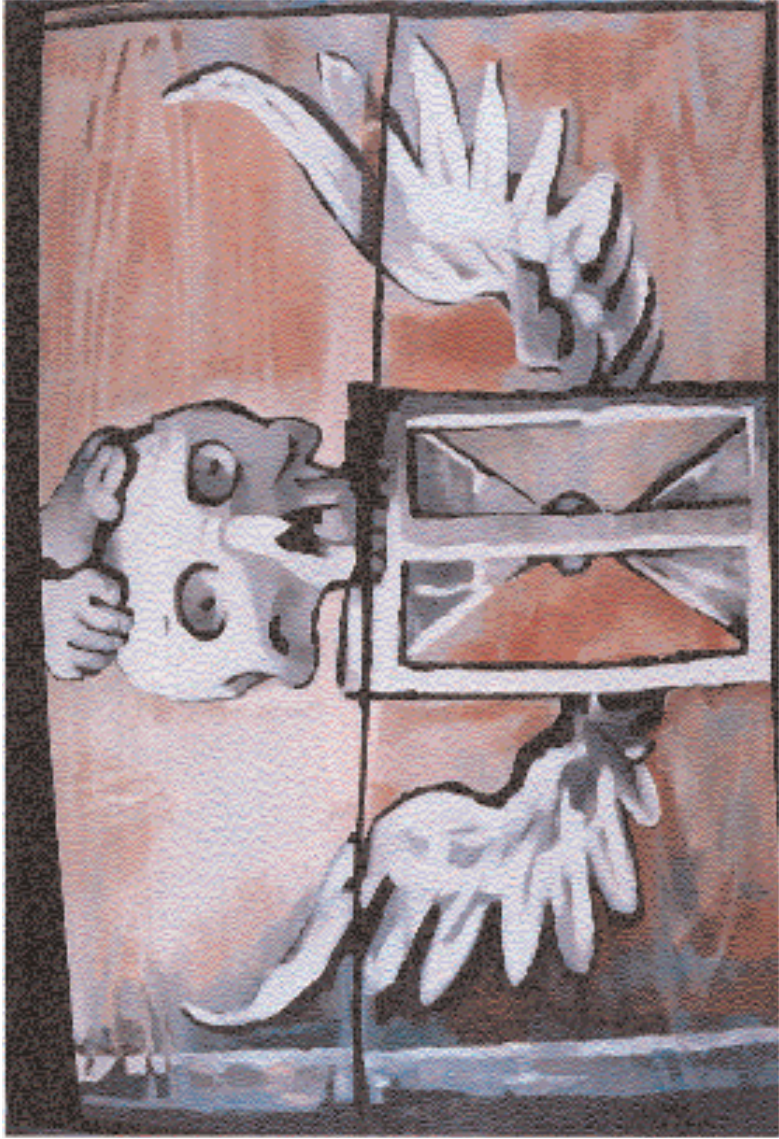
*The Prestoungrange Paintings by Janice McNab*



*Foreshore*



*Mining Museum*



*Painted Ceiling*



*The Manor House has contrasting West and East elevations. The West front is shaded by the American tulip tree*







*The Conservatory on the South side is a delight and the weather vane on the Barn spells out the family name 'Wills'*





*Each year the family holds a snooker contest on December 16th, the Baron's birthday; and in the summer the East Lawns have hosted weddings and al fresco luncheons (The Baron and Lady Avril with Mathew Yr, his wife Kathryn and first granddaughter Lorna)*





*The Manor Dovecote (above) was restored to become an e-office in 1995, and the Barn (centre) converted for garage space and a Snooker Room in 1990. Below the magnificent rose wall on the Barn's south side*





*View from the Manor House across to the Norman Village Church; and below the cherry trees in blossom*





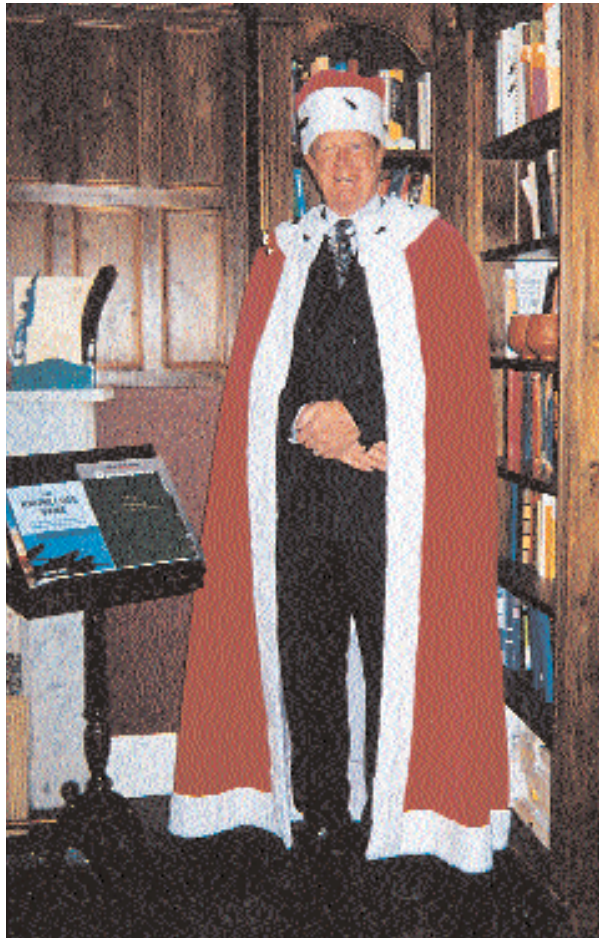
*The West face of the Manor is magnificent at Christmas as too is the Dining Hall*





*Eccentricity is assumed, and The Baron presides (above) at a Hong Kong flag lowering ceremony in 1998.  
Below, with Lady Avril of Prestoungrange in 1999*





*The Much Honoured Baron of Prestoungrange & of Dolphinstoun in the library of The Manor House; and below Prestoungrange house at Prestonpans, East Lothian, now the home of The Royal Musselburgh Golf Club*





*The Baronial foreshore looking east (above) and west (below)*



*The Cornish Beam engine that pumped the water from the colliery and the Prestoungrange Brickworks – as they are in 2000 within the Industrial Heritage Museum*



The Manor of  
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*Inside front cover: Badge and Standard of The Much Honoured Baron of Prestoungrange (1999)*

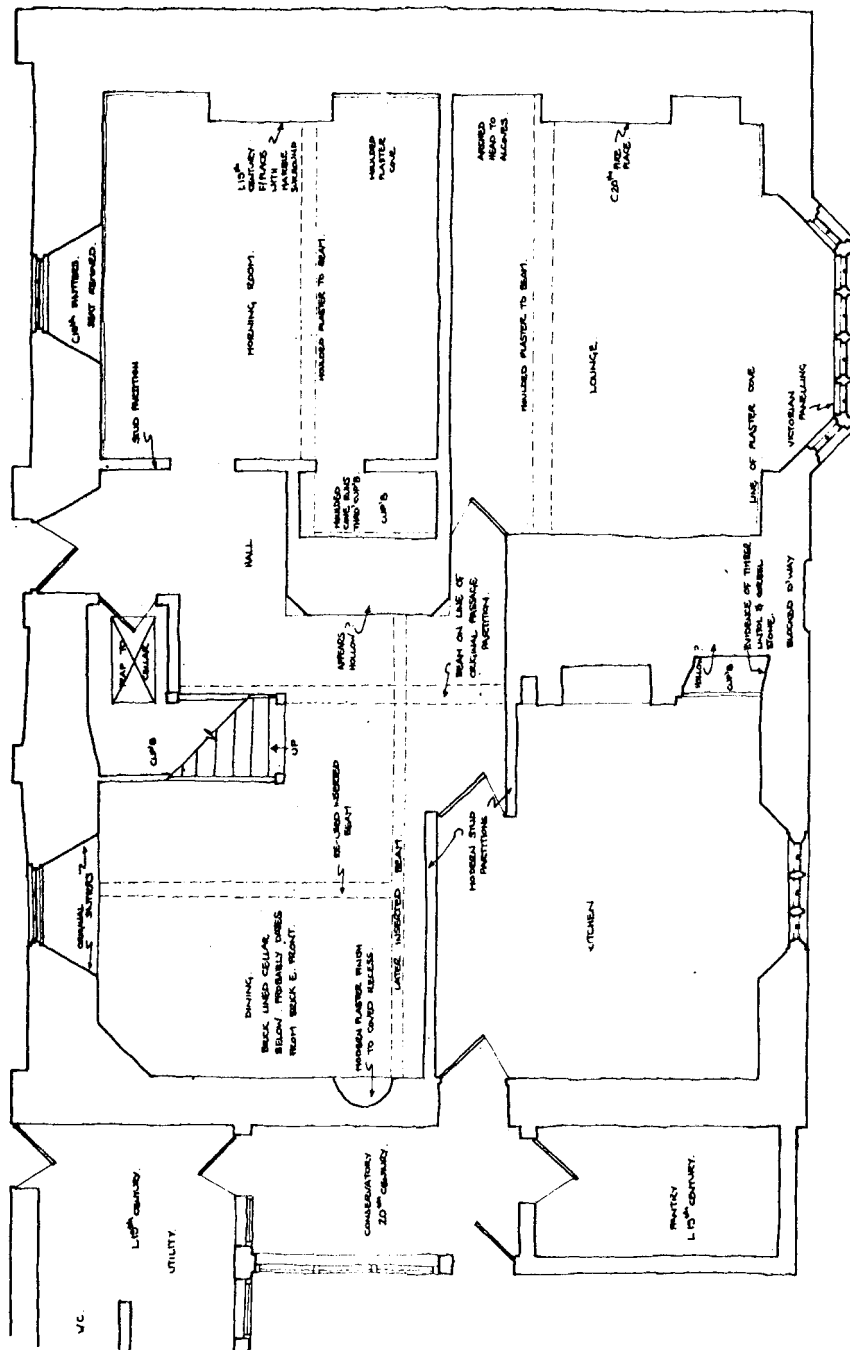
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### Bibliography

*Centrespread: The Prestoungrange Paintings by Janice McNab and a selection of photographs*

*Inside rear cover: Ensigns Armorial of the Wills Family (1985)*

*Outside rear cover: Tartan of the Household of The Much Honoured Baron of Prestoungrange (1999) with Buckle and Strap Crest*



Wills' Manor of Milton ground floor plan 1979 before restoration

## Chapter 1

### THE HISTORY OF THE MANOR

THE FIRST recorded mention of Milton is from the days of William the Conqueror in his *Domesday Book*, in which was set down the various baronies held by his nobles, with the several Manors of which each consisted.

After victory in the Battle of Hastings and his subsequent coronation, William the Conqueror seized the lands of all who had opposed him. He then made grants of them to his followers but, in doing so, was shrewd enough to realise that if he granted several contiguous estates thereby forming one large, undivided portion of land, it might well eventually prove a source of danger. Hence we find that, large as was the territory granted to any Norman, it was in several scattered portions, so that he could not become too powerful in one neighbourhood. These vast possessions were termed baronies. The Barons, in turn, divided their vast possessions amongst knights, each such division being called a Manor. The knight who held it was known as the *Lord of that Manor*. Each barony was also known as an *honor*, because it consisted of several knights' fees and so conferred a position of honour upon its owner.

It is probable that the Manor was in reality the same as the old Anglo-Saxon *mark*, which was an area occupied by the village community. It consisted of the township or group of houses; the arable land, divided into several plots for growing crops, but used in common when fallow or between reaping and sowing; the meadowland, common to all after the hay had been carried; and the waste lands, over which the members of the township had rights of pasturage, taking wood, etc. Each mark was ruled by an excellent system of self-government in an assembly of freemen. It was, as a rule, of the same extent as the parish, and several marks made up what was called the *Hundred*, which again was governed by the votes of the freeman.

With the Conquest, such Anglo-Saxon independence came to an end. The manorial system gave the whole of the land in a manor to one man who became its lord and all the people on that manor had to swear to do him service.

William naturally thought it advisable to find out exactly

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*Manor House, Milton Malsor – West ‘Stone Front’ in 1979*

how much land each man had and what dues should be paid to the Crown. So in 1080 he appointed Commissioners who visited each county and every Hundred and township. In each Hundred a jury was empanelled who declared on oath the extent and nature of each estate, the amount of arable and pasture lands, the woods and mills, and the name of the owner of each, with the number of slaves that each man had. They also ascertained the value of the land both before and after the Conquest, with the amount due from it to the Crown. They found there were some 700 baronies and 60,215 knights' Manors. These facts are all carefully recorded in the *Domesday Book*, which is today at Somerset House in London.

When it was rebound nine hundred years later, facsimile copies were made, of which the folio copy is at Wills' Manor of Milton.

\*

Early eighteenth century researchers suggested that two barons held lands at Milton as part of their baronies, with knights and lords of their Manors in **Ambrose** and William respectively. Those who earlier wrote the village history told it thus:

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“Wills’ Manor is from the Knights’ fee originally held by Ambrose in the Honor of William Peverel in the Foxlea Hundred”.

The exact *Domesday* extracts as translated from their original Latin reads:

### “WILLIAM PEVEREL’S LAND

#### *In Foxlea Hundred*

*Ambrose holds of William four hides in Molitone (Milton). There is land for four ploughs. In demesne there are two ploughs, and three serfs; and four villeins and five bordars with two ploughs. There are sixteen acres of meadow. It was and is worth four pounds. Gitda held these lands freely in King Edward’s time”.*

William Peverel was a powerful baron and was the founder of the Abbey of St James, at Northampton. The land at Milton that formed part of his barony was formerly held by Gitda, who in all probability was the mother of King Harold, who had been defeated in the Battle of Hastings twenty years before the *Domesday Book* was completed.

The second Manor, (that on Malzor Lane), was held by William in the Honor of Goisfrid Alselin in the Colestery Hundred. The exact *Domesday Book* entry reads:

### GOISFRID ELSELIN’S LAND

#### *In Colestrey Hundred*

*Goisfrid Alselin holds of the king three hides and a half in Mideltone (Milton), and William holds of him. There is land for nine ploughs. In demesne there is one plough; and sixteen villeins, with the priest and five bordars, have seven ploughs. There is a mill rendering thirty pence, and two acres of meadow. Wood three furlongs in length and two furlongs and a half in breadth.*

*To this manor pertain two hides, less one virgate, in Colestrey (Collingtree). There is land for four ploughs. Two socmen and five villeins have these there. There are three acres of meadow.*

*In Torp (Rothersthorpe) there is half a hide belonging to Mildetone (Milton). There is land for one plough, which is there, with one villein. The whole was worth four pounds; now it is worth six pounds.*

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An explanation of some of the terms in the *Domesday Book* extracts will surely be helpful at this stage.

The *hide* was the unit of assessment, and was a measure of land equal to as much as a plough could plough in a year. Hence it varied. The *virgate* was a quarter of a hide.

Ambrose's Manor we are told had land for four ploughs, or 480 acres. Two of these were in *demesne*, with three serfs – i.e. land kept by the Lord of the Manor for his own use.

The *serfs* were little better than slaves. In Anglo-Saxon times they were probably the descendants of those Ancient Britons who, when the country was seized by the Saxons, had remained in the neighbourhood, unable to tear themselves away from the land of their fathers. In Norman times their number was probably increased by the poorer of the conquered Saxons.

The *villeins* seem to have been of a degree superior to that of the serfs, and were so called because they were attached to the *vill* or estate. They held a cottage and land, purely at their lord's will, and for this they had to render certain menial services. These services were mostly of an agricultural nature, but so uncertain that they never knew from one day to the other what might be required of them. The only claim that the villeins had to their land was the entry of their name on the *Court Roll of the Manor*.

The *bordars* were apparently a degree higher than the villeins. They held a cottage and land on the condition of supplying the Lord of the Manor with small provisions such as poultry and eggs.

The *socmen* were tenants who held of their Lord by soccage. By this, a man was enfeoffed freely, or in *fee simple*, and his land could not be taken away at the will of the Lord of the Manor, as that of the lower degrees of tenants could. He was exempt from military service and paid a rent either in money or provisions. In the socman's tenure of land, as well as that of the lords of the manor, we see the origin of freehold tenure.

There were two courts held by the Lord of the Manor, the chief being the *Court Baron*, in which the socmen sat as judges with their lord. At this court, duties and customs were received and surrenders of land considered and passed, as well as other business.

The *Court Leet* was another ancient court at which people guilty of encroachments on land, using fraudulent weights and measures, committing nuisances, and so on, were punished. Of



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this court, the Lord of the Manor or his steward was the judge.

The earliest historical notes on Milton were written between 1718 and 1721 by William Taylor, the schoolmaster of Heyford. He was one of those employed by Dr Bridges to collect information and transcribe inscriptions and records for his great *History of Northamptonshire*. These manuscripts are now preserved in the Bodleian Library at Oxford. In them is a reference to the Milton Manorial courts:

*“The Lord Leimpster (since Mr Dry’s decease) keeps two Courts for this Town, at Ye Cock in Cotton End, Northampton, but in the parish of Hardingstone: First, called Easter Court for swearing of parish officers; the other called Cotton Leet, appointed for such as plow from One Another, and to Endict or present any one for ye Commission of trespasses”.*

\*

For the list of the lords of the two Manors the best source is the *History of Northamptonshire* by Dr Bridges, who compiled the names of those who held them up to about the year 1720. In his list of the Lords of Milton, he begins with William’s Manor held of Goisfrid Alselin, but assigns it to Collingtree from the reign of King John. From the reign of King Henry III he deals solely with the knight’s fee of the Honor of Peverel for Milton – **Wills’** Manor today. He recounts thus:

*“By inquisition taken in the reign of Henry III, John Malesoures was found to hold of William Bardolf one Knight’s fee in Middleton and Colentre of the Honor of Peverel. This William was grandson of Thomas Bardolf by Down, his eldest son. In the 24th year of Edward I this knight’s fee was in the hands of William Bardolf, who held it of the king in capite. In the ninth year of Edward II John Malesoures was Lord of Middleton; and in the 20th year of Edward III, upon collecting the aid to make the king’s son a knight, he accounted for one knight’s fee in Middleton and Colyntree, as held of the fee of Bardolf. The successor of William Bardolf was Thomas his son, by whom this knight’s fee, then in the possession of John de Malesoures, was settled on Agnes his*

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*wife in way of dower; and this Agnes surviving her husband, left it at her death, in the 31st year of this reign, to John Bardolf, her son and heir.*

*From John de Malesores the Manor of Milton descended to Sir Thomas Malesores, Knight, who by deed bearing date in the 35th year of Edward III assigned it to Hugh Malesores his brother for the term of his life; with the remainder to Amicia, the daughter of the said Thomas and her heirs, and in case of failure of issue, to the heirs of Hugh Malesores aforesaid. Accordingly by inquisition taken in the 39th year of the same reign it was found that Hugh Malesores was at that time in possession of this Manor; and that the advowson of the church, with 4 acres of land, which were the glebe belonging to it, were in the hands of Thomas **Wake** and held of the same Manor by homage, fealty, and a certain annual payment. In the 12th year of Richard II died Sir John Bardolf, seized of three parts of one Knight's fee in Midelton and Colintre, then in the tenure of Robert le Veer, the husband of Amicia, or as she is called in this record, Anne, the daughter of Sir Thomas Malesores, and by virtue of his marriage with this lady possessed of the Lordship of Middleton.*

*In the 7th year of Henry VI, Thomas **Parwich** was certified to hold one Knight's fee in Midleton and Collingtre; and in the 10th year of Henry VIII died Goditha **Wigston** possessed of this Manor which she had held of the King, as of his Manor of Shelford in Nottinghamshire, by the service of one Knight's fee. This lady was formally the wife of William Perwich, son of William Perwich of Lubenham in Leicestershire, by who she had issue Rose her only daughter and heir, first married to Kebull, and afterwards to William Digby of Kettleby in the same county. Her successor was John **Digby**, her grandson, a minor 11 years old, who inherited his Lordship as heir to Rose his mother. He married Mary, the third daughter and co-heir of William, Lord Par of Horton, who after his decease was remarried to Henry Brooker Esq of Lubenham, and transferred to Lordship into that family. In the 7th year of Edward VI a fine was levied between Henry **Brooke** and William **Digby** of the Manor of Middleton-Malsor and Collingtre, with the advowson of the Church of Middleton. From*

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*this Henry they descended to Roger, the son of Roger Brooke his younger brother, who dying in the first year of Queen Elizabeth left them to Mary his daughter, and minor five years of age. She died seized of them in the 16th year of his reign without issue, nor did it appear who was her heir. But in another inquisition it is said that Andrew, John and Richard, the nephews of Henry Brooke, and her father's younger brothers, were heirs in remainder.*

*The next possessor that we meet with the Manor of Milton is Sir William Samwell, Knight, who by indenture bearing date of 1st of April in the 11th of James I conveyed the said Manor with its members and appurtenances, and advowson of the living, together with the Manor House, four yard lands and certain closes in Milton to Sir Sapcotes Harrington who had married Jane his daughter, and his heirs for ever. Sir Sapcotes Harrington by deed of feoffment dated 11th of August in the 18th year of the same reign, conveyed the premises to Sir Francis Hervey and his heirs. From this gentleman they descended to his son Sir Stephen Hervey, Knight of the Bath, who left them in the 6th year of Charles I to Francis his son; upon whose decease without issue they devolved with a certain Manor or seignory in gross in Milton and Gayton, to Richard Hervey Esq, his younger brother. In the 24th year of Charles I this Richard Hervey in consideration of the sum of £1,500 sold and confirmed the Manor with its members and appurtenances to Richard Gleed and Edmund Gleed his son, and to their heirs for ever. This Edmund, surviving his father, became possessed of this estate; and by his last will bearing date 25th April 1679, bequeathed it to Richard his son. He left issue Elizabeth an only daughter, wife to the late Richard Dodwell Esq. his successor in this inheritance and the present Lady of the Manor of Milton”.*

Thus far Dr Bridges brings us in the list of Lords of the Manor of Milton of the Honor of Peverel. It remains to add that after the death of Mrs Elizabeth *Dodwell*, in 1750, the Manor passed to Mrs Elizabeth *Nash*, who had a daughter named Mary. Mrs Elizabeth Nash married John *Darker* who, in his wife's right, was Lord of the Manor of Milton and Collingtrough and is so described in the Bill for enclosing the Open Fields and Commons in 1779. At her death in 1788, her

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daughter, Mary Nash, became Lady of the Manor. She married William Blake the younger of Danesbury, Welwyn, Herts. Their son, William John *Blake*, inherited it in 1852, and on his death in 1875, the Manor passed to his nephew, Colonel Arthur Maurice Blake. In 1877 Colonel Blake sold the property to Mr James *Asplin*, of Milton, who remained Lord of the Manor of Milton, of the Honor of Peverel, until his death in 1923.

The Manor of Milton remained with James Asplin's family until 1953 when it was sold to the *Yorke* family of Kettering. In 1969 the Manor passed briefly to George *Hall* and three other transient owners followed, terminating with the *Leon's* from the United States.

In 1979 it was acquired by Professor Gordon and Avril *Wills*, who are today's Lord and Lady of the Manor of Milton formerly in the Honor of William Peverel. In 1998 Gordon Wills acceded to the feudal Scottish Barony of *Prestoungrange* at Musselburgh from whence his mother came, and in 1999 to the adjacent Barony of *Dolphinstoun*. He continued also to hold the Manor of Milton. *Further details of the Baronies of Prestoungrange and of Dolphinstoun are given in the Chapter 6.*

The most thoroughgoing restoration of the Manor House since Victorian times was undertaken by the Baron of Prestoungrange and Dolphinstoun during the twenty years 1979–1999, as described in Chapter 2.

\*

There are still two Manor houses in Milton at the dawn of the 21st Century. Wills' Manor is the gabled Tudor residence at the top of what was called Pluck's Lane (changed to Rectory Lane in the 1960's). It is called *The Manor House*, with a very fine dovecote standing a few yards to the west. The other Manor house is known as Milton Manor, and is the residence with the Georgian front near the old main road leading from Oxford via Towcester to Northampton on Malzor Lane.

There being two manor houses, there should be, and there were, until 1995, two dovecotes. One has been already mentioned. The other stood at the end of the line of buildings to the east of The Grange. Because of this, it has been suggested that The Grange may have been the site of the old Milton Manor centuries ago. However, this need not necessarily follow, as a dovecote could well be situated at some distance from the manor house.

With the exception of the Rector, none could keep doves but the Lords of the Manors, as they would not dream of allowing

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*Drawn by Miss H. M. Asplin.*

*The Manor House, drawn by Miss Asplin circa 1920*

their corn to be eaten by their tenants' birds. Also, the doves in winter provided a welcome change of diet from the universal salt meat, for it was an expensive matter to keep beasts for killing as root crops were then not generally grown in England.

### **The Story of James Harrington**

The history of Wills' Manor today must not be left without a few words about the remarkable man, James Harrington, who as a boy lived in the old gabled Manor House at the top of Pluck's Lane. He was the son of Sir Sapcotes Harrington and his wife Jane, who was the daughter of Sir William Samwell of Upton Hall. Dame Jane's father bought the Manor and gave it to his son-in-law Sir Sapcotes Harrington on his marriage.

James proceeded to Trinity College, Oxford, but left without taking a degree. During his continental travels he visited Rome and while there he refused the privilege of kissing the Pope's toe, which was the usual mode of expressing honour and reverence to the Pontiff. When King Charles heard of this he reproved him for his rudeness, but Harrington

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declared he would not kiss the foot of any prince after kissing his King's hand.

After his return to England, James Harrington joined the Presbyterian Party, but took no part in the great Civil War. When King Charles, who had been captured by the Scots, was handed over to the English, Harrington was one of the Commissioners who received him at Newcastle and brought him to Holdenby House in Northamptonshire, afterwards accompanying him to the Isle of Wight. Though a strong Republican, Harrington treated the Royal prisoner with such consideration and sympathy that a warm attachment sprang up between them. On one occasion in some dispute he took the King's part so stoutly as to cause great offence and he was told to leave his post, but he continued to serve Charles until at last he was forcibly dismissed. James Harrington was allowed to attend the King on the scaffold at Whitehall.

In 1656 he published his at once celebrated book, *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, the manuscript of which was initially seized by Cromwell when at the press, but he later relented. It describes his own imaginary *Oceana*, and provides the subject matter for a very delightful though excessively odd book, wherein the project for a doctrinaire republic is worked out with all the learning, all the quaintness and almost all the splendour of a mid-seventeenth century writer.

At the Restoration he was thrown into the Tower on November 26th, 1661, because of his strong Republican views. He was eventually released and died of paralysis in London on September 11th, 1677. He lies buried side by side with Sir Walter Raleigh on the south side of the altar in St Margaret's Church, Westminster.

## Chapter 2

### WILLS' MANOR HOUSE

THE PRESENT day structure of The Manor House includes window frames on the west elevation that date back at least to the last quarter of the seventeenth century and for this reason the restoration date stone placed above the front doorway in 1979 refers back three hundred years.

Prior to the commencement of the restoration of The Manor House by the Wills' family in 1979 with Northampton builders Barber & Dawkins and architect Phillip Keevil, Paul Simons of the Society of Ancient Buildings conducted a detailed historical survey and ventured most of the opinions given below.

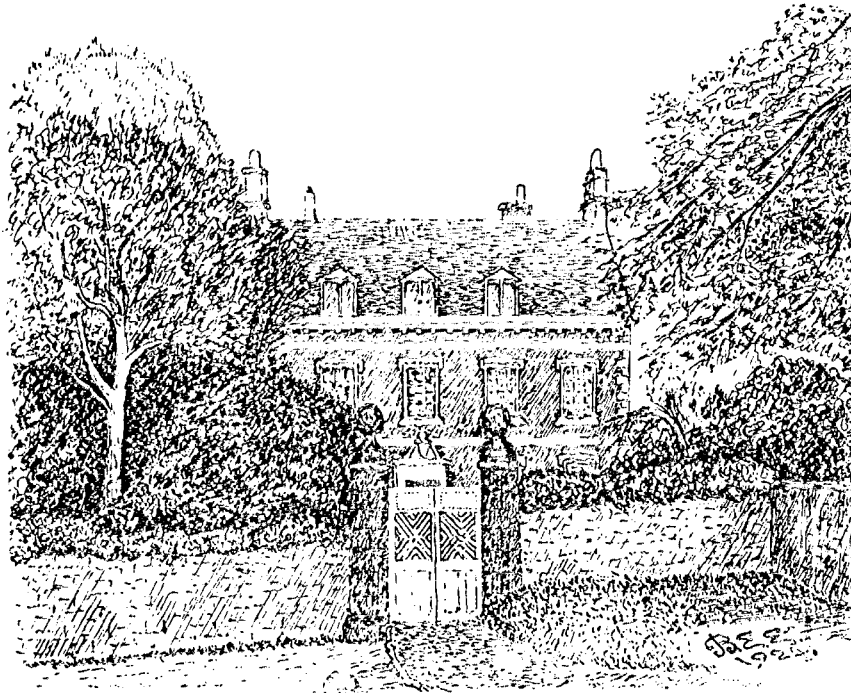
The Manor was probably built in the late 17th century, probably around 1675, and is constructed predominantly in random rubble. The Lords of the manor at that time were Richard Gleed and Elizabeth Dodwell.

The original stone built house with its mullioned windows appears to be an unusual example of a *double pile house* with a central lobby entrance (this was presumably blocked up after the reign of Queen Anne until its re-opening in 1979). On entering through the west facing main doorway one would have been faced with a side of a large axial chimney stack serving both principal rooms. Only two similar examples are known – one in Derbyshire and another in Gloucestershire.

Due to the rare occurrence of such a two pile plan it is impossible to guess at the layout before the house was turned around in fashion with the Georgian style in the middle/late 18th century by the Nash family. The basic plans were always a four unit type on the ground and first floors, with the staircase almost certainly where the predominantly Victorian equivalent is to be found today.

The very thick south wall of the house suggests one of two alternatives. There may well have been a medieval Manor House or Hall on the site – there would certainly have been one in the vicinity. But it would have been uncomfortable and out of fashion in the mid-17th century and the existing building would therefore be a product of the first great rebuilding phase from 1640–1726 that affected most prosperous areas of rural England. The very thick south wall could have been part of the earlier medieval structure. During

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*Sketch of the other Manor house, Milton Manor, 1924*

the 1979 restoration when the new doorway was made for the conservatory that now stands there, traces of old doorways, wood reinforcements and windows were found. The wall itself is, of course, in-filled with soil.

The second alternative is that the Manor House was a totally new structure constructed from locally available random rubble. The south wall may have shown signs of movement in the early 18th century as the inner core of earth can wash out and thereby create failure. This could have been done at the same time as the addition of the two lateral fireplaces in the two reception rooms, subsequently removed in 1979 during restoration. Such an alternative would explain the disconcerting asymmetry of the elevation as emphasised in the different lines of the gable coping stones when viewed from the west.

The stone bay windows on the west side are not earlier than 1680 as revealed by their concave, hollow section mullions. The plain chamfer mullions of the Victorian kitchen, now the entrance hallway, date from up to 50 years earlier and were quite common. The bay was thus an improvement carried out shortly after the house was built or is a good later copy. One would have expected to find drip mouldings about the



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chamfer mullions (lead was added in 1979 to address if not solve the problem). The two chamfer mullioned windows above the original Victorian kitchen have been replaced, although they are very good copies from the originals. The mouldings of the (then) redundant stone doorway are consistent with a late 17th century date but appear to have been re-set. In the mid-nineteen eighties considerable replacement of damaged mullions took place across the west face.

The central chimney stack is of stone and originally heated the two principal rooms on the ground floor, at least one of the first floor rooms and one of the attic rooms, the fireplace of which is now blocked up. Its presence is shown by the stone corbel blocks which supported the hearth in the ceiling to be observed on the first floor landing and in the main bedroom there. During restoration in the attics the original fireplace was revealed, still in perfect condition, but it was concealed once again amongst ceiling rafters. It is a solid stone fireplace with simple mouldings like the west front doorway.

The location of the original kitchen is a mystery. It would not usually have been in the front of the house where the Victorians had it. Cooking could have been carried out elsewhere in a now disappeared building. During restoration the floor of the Victorian kitchen as it was pre-1979 was found to be covered with flagstones, as was the cupboard in the south east morning room. The flagstones were taken up and re-used as the step just inside the new west front doors, to form the small patio on the north side of the post-1979 kitchen, the step outside the east facing stable door to the kitchen and the paved area in the east garden for the sundial.

Perhaps most significantly, excavations to construct the post-1979 kitchen discovered beneath the north east corner of the late 19th century Victorian pantry a brick lined well. It was covered over rather than filled in as work proceeded – and should not be confused with the soft water holding tank some five yards further east which remains accessible. The original stone cover for the soft water holding tank was sawn in half to provide the outside step for the post-1979 main west entrance when it was heightened, widened and re-opened as it appears today.

The major earlier transformation of the late 17th century Manor House occurred in the middle/ late 18th century. This was the era of the Georgian country squire and the new vogue for brickwork, even in established stone areas. This was to

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totally change the appearance of the east front and to make a drastic transformation to the interior. The house we see today was largely created at that time.

The east front took on a Queen Anne or Georgian facade, with sash windows, a panelled door with fanlight and casings, decorative lintels and pilasters. The pilasters are of an excellent quality which is not apparent in the rest of the elevation, even though they are somewhat irregularly spaced. Added on to the stone walls to south and north, the east elevation's brickwork was poorly built and ill proportioned, thereby reflecting the possibility of a local builder. Better versed in the use of stone, he would have been attempting to come to terms with new materials and copying some decorative features. The general quality is reflected in the juxtaposition of windows and pilasters, the clumsy roofing to the south-east corner with its bizarre pilaster there, the mid string courses and the rebuilt and buttressed section of the wall. The internal plaster cove in the morning room does suggest that the door may well have been added after the initial brickwork was introduced, since the morning room window has changed from its earlier position as though to make way for the east door, and was left without a sill until one was subsequently cast in 1993.

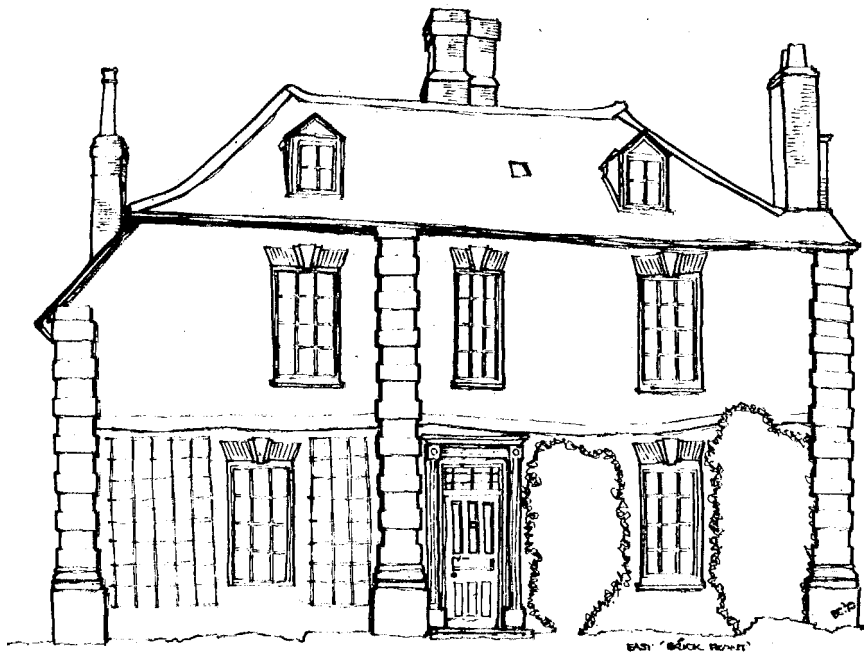
As already indicated, the internal rebuilding of the Manor House at this time was drastic. The two rooms on the ground floor to the south of the house were put into one long room, and the decorative plaster work was added to the beams and coving placed around the edges. The fireplace must have remained in the centre of the house since, during the 1979 restoration, it was quite clear that the two fireplaces had been added subsequently to the coving.

The coving in the sitting room post-1979 has been re-made to conform with the room's present dimensions and is only original at the east and west end, on the beams and in the recesses to north and south.

The Georgian work in the south ground floor room was undone in the late 19th century, when it was inelegantly divided and the two fireplaces and the south side chimney were added. These were both removed and the south room opened up again in 1980.

Whether immediately or subsequently, the old west entrance was closed off in the Georgian transformation with the advent of the doorway on the eastern front of the house. It could have continued in use until the kitchen stove was placed at the

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*Manor House, Milton Malsor – East 'Brick front'*

south end of the pre-1979 kitchen area and the passageway leading into the house was blocked off.

The cellar was also probably added or converted at this time, as evidenced by its brickwork. The original staircase was also probably removed as part of the enterprise to make way for the eastern entrance. The replacement staircase and the panelled first floor landing date from this Georgian transformation as well, as do the fine window shutters and seats, several of which were replaced in 1979.

The roofline to the east front was now at right angles to the double ridgeline of the original roof. This will undoubtedly have been slightly modified as demonstrated by the positioning of the hidden fireplace in the north side attic which would have been unusable with the present roofline. The north east chimney stack also derives from this time and can be dated between 1760–1800, thereby giving a clue to the time of the east front conversion in general.

Minor changes took place in the 19th century, the most important being the re-roofing in slate of the house to east and north. The arrival of slate in the district would probably have been via the Grand Union Canal which reached the area. Two additional small wings were constructed to the north of the

## WILLS' MANOR OF MILTON

Manor House at this time, but although on two levels, were apparently little used upstairs with no proper access from the house. The one to the north west was inaccessible until the mid-20th century when it was converted to a bathroom by making an opening into it from the main bedroom on the first floor. The second, to the north east, was accessible only from a ceiling hatch and is the location of a further rain water holding tank. The two Victorian wings to the north were connected by a modest conservatory in the early 20th century demolished in 1979 as the new kitchen was added.

Outside the Manor House proper in 1979 were two buildings, the more modest being a row of farm sheds and a keeping room and workroom. The more significant is the well preserved dovecote. Simons felt it had never been such a building, but local people can recall when it was and the openings being filled in during the 1920's. The nesting box atop the roof of the dovecote was still present on old photographs from the early 20th century. In 1990 this was accurately restored using those photographs.

The dovecote was always floored over, as was evidenced by the external stone steps access to the upper floor. The dog kennel beneath these was an interesting curiosity. The roof had been substantially re-built in the mid-20th century and the ground floor undoubtedly used earlier as a coach house. The brick partitioning suggested that a horse box and perhaps an upstairs hay loft were present in the late 18th century. The cobbles in the horse box extend beneath the gravel driveway along the north of the house, which was the direction of access to the Manor Farm yet further northwards and to the east.

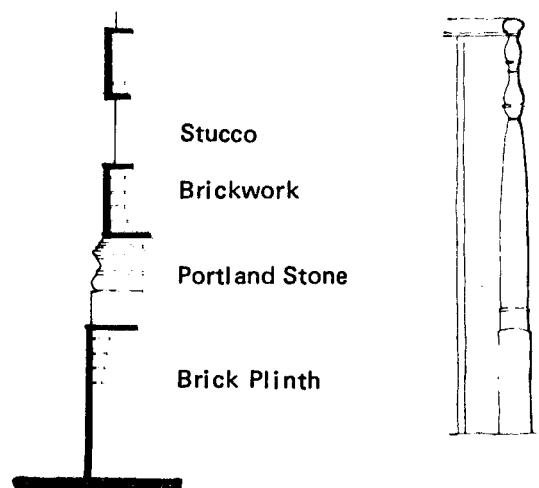
Peverel Lodge, which lies at the west end of the gardens, was built within the then grounds of the Manor House by Mr and Mrs Yorke when they were Lord and Lady of the Manor, and they moved into it in 1969, when Mrs Yorke's health deteriorated.

The Manor Farm including the Old Barn, now converted to a fine home, was finally disposed of separately from the Manor House by the Aspinall family in 1953. This was also the time from which the walled gardens as we see them today were laid out by Mr and Mrs Yorke. As the line drawing by Miss Asplin from the early 20th century shows, the west gardens were then used for sheep grazing. The gardens to the east were used for vegetables. Mr and Mrs Yorke set about laying out lawns and stocking the borders with shrubs and a multitude of spring flowers from snowdrops, violets and

## WILLS' MANOR HOUSE

primroses, through to hyacinths, daffodils, narcissi, tulips and bluebells. The fine American tulip tree on the west lawn had been planted by the Asplins to celebrate a 25th wedding anniversary before the gardens were laid out but the cypress hedges were all introduced by the Yorkes. They also planted a myriad of roses, including a fine rose hedge between the east lawns and the kitchen gardens, replaced in 1981 by today's beech hedge. The wrought iron gates on the driveway to the south were installed by Mr and Mrs Yorke on their ruby wedding anniversary in the 1960's, and subsequently electrified in 1990.

In the kitchen gardens the Yorkes ensured an ample supply of soft fruit with the planting of a strawberry bed, raspberries, red, white and blackcurrants and gooseberries. A fine row of cherry trees ends the gardens to the east, whilst apples, pears and plum trees also give fruit. Finally, a generous asparagus bed was set down which provide supplies for the household throughout the early summer. In 1980 the peach and apricot trees were added, together with the espalia and greengage trees. In 1991 the fig tree joined them.



*Profile of plinth and pilaster on east elevation and stair newel post*

### *Chapter 3*

## RESTORATION OF THE MANOR HOUSE BETWEEN 1979 & 1999

WHEN the Wills' family acquired the Manor House in 1979 it had been standing empty for nearly twelve months and was in need of most extensive repairs. The west wall of the dovecote in particular was in a state of imminent collapse. Accordingly, it was decided to restore the whole property to the standard of a large family house, with all the comforts and amenities of the late 20th century. The local Northampton architect, Phillip Keevil, was commissioned to prepare drawings and, with the consent of the Department of the Environment since The Manor House and the Dovecote are both Grade II Listed Buildings, restoration was initiated. The work was expertly carried out by local Northampton builders Barber & Dawkins, under the direction of Phillip Barber.

The major strategic decision was to turn The Manor House ground floor back to its original 17th century orientation. The blocked front entrance on the west was opened up and widened, supplementing the original stonework. Within the re-opened doorway, a new entrance hall was introduced in the old Victorian kitchen area. The floor tiles were imported from Italy and the flagstones of the inside step retrieved from the old kitchen floor. The window seat was added to match that already in the dining room. The guest washroom and wardrobe were also introduced.

A Japanese oak screen was erected between the new entrance hall and an enlarged dining hall, in both of which additional roof beams were placed. A new modern kitchen was added to the north sweeping away the former conservatory and outhouses there. This was further redesigned in 1998 when the present Victorian style fittings were introduced.

On the first floor the only major work required was the introduction of ample en suite bathroom facilities for the master bedroom to the north west and the main facility to the north east.

The library to the south west received, solely for decorative purposes, the marble fire surround removed from the downstairs morning room and all the best of the early oak floorboarding was gathered together in this room, cleaned and

## RESTORATION OF THE MANOR HOUSE

repolished. The library retains some of the best examples of early glass window panes in the house. Until 1979 it had been a bedroom. Its final conversion with pine shelving and panelling was completed in 1989 under the direction of Avril Wills.

The need to rebuild the west entrance on the ground floor exposed dangerous deterioration throughout the roof valley area, and this led to the rebuilding of the airing cupboard in the master bedroom and the incorporation of an additional cupboard into the north study wall.

The top floor as attics of The Manor House were totally dilapidated when restoration commenced. They were converted to a suite of rooms with bathroom facilities for the two Wills' sons, Mathew and Julian. All the original timbers were treated and exposed. The old door with its myriad of key holes and ancient interior wooden bolt in the north bedroom was retained. The restoration was preceded by the lifting of all the tiled sections of the roof to the south and within the valley. After relining, insulation and timber replacement as necessary, the useable old tiles were repositioned to the south slope and slates positioned in the valley. At the same time the central chimney stack was lowered by the removal of the brick section that had been added in Victorian times. This subsequently created major smoke problems in the sitting room that were only overcome by the construction of a new chimney and an extractor fan.

The east lawns have already been used for marquees at two wedding feasts – for Avril Wills' niece Amanda Hartwell and Nicholas Healey in 1987 and for Mathew Wills in 1994 on his marriage in Milton Parish Church to Kathryn Sharp. Annual Garden Parties have been held in June.

To the north of the new kitchen a utility room for laundry and full gas central heating was added with a sauna bath beyond. Its north and east exterior walls were rebuilt to replace the unsafe Victorian brickwork of the outhouses

The old 18th century sitting room to the south was re-opened to its full glory from east to west as the two room Victorian configuration was abandoned. The fireplace therein was re-opened into the central stack, its surround being built in the Adam style personally by the Wills' family itself in situ. The fireback with the Wills' family badge was cast in 1993.

The brass electrical fittings were imported from France, and china door finger panels and knobs carefully selected. The window seats to east and west windows were put in place. The

## WILLS' MANOR OF MILTON

pre-cast wall panels and ceiling rose made in Sheffield were a completely new element introduced to unify the two former rooms.

The stained glass Wills' coat of arms was placed in the sitting room window facing north west in 1988 and the arms of Prestoungrange will be added in 2000.

Beyond the re-opened sitting room to the south a new cedar wood conservatory was added of modular construction from Richardson's of Darlington. The Mexican floor tiles were added in 1994.

The staircase leading to the first floor was modified from its severe Victorian styling. Newel posts and handrails were replaced with the flourish at the dining room level.

The outbuildings to the north were removed and replaced with a stone faced but brick built double garage and workshop, and the antique handbasin from The Manor House placed in the garden washroom.

The dovecote south wall was totally rebuilt, eliminating the staircase to the upper level and the dog kennel beneath, but transferring the doorway, suitably heightened and facing south, to the ground level. Internally, a completely new floor was placed at the upper level with ladder access. The horse box area below, and the Victorian coach house area were left in their former condition.

\*

The restoration of the dovecote and the creation of a single story garage to the west in 1979 were only partial solutions for the outbuildings. The garage was especially inelegant and in 1990 it was converted and extended to its present character as The Barn. Separate access by stairway to a second level provided ample space for a snooker room, and the building was extended in length. An annual snooker tournament for the family was instituted to celebrate its opening on December 16th – Gordon Wills' birthday. The horsebox timbers were transferred from the dovecote as it too was converted.

The Wills' family badge, granted in 1985 with the Coat of Arms by The Earl Marshal of England in HM The Queen's College of Arms was carved into the datestone on what was now called The Barn. A weathervane was placed on the roof including the family name with styling from a Victorian example in Buckingham.

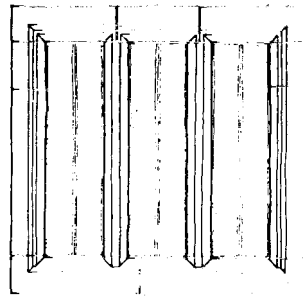
The dovecote regained convenient interior access to its upper level, with leaded windows added to north and south. It



## RESTORATION OF THE MANOR HOUSE

became a study with fine roof and timbers. The glover on the roof was restored from earlier photographs to the way it had been in the 1920's. Downstairs, the horse box and store were incorporated as a home office providing all the contemporary electronic equipment needed of PCs, fax and modem for 21st century communications on the Internet.

Wood storage was transferred to the area connecting the sauna bath and The Barn, with new roofing introduced to keep it dry. In the garden to east and south concrete pavers were introduced to replace the Yorkes' now decaying concrete paths. The flagpole was erected on the north west Victorian extension wall to fly the Wills' flag as authorised by the Grant of Arms and The Baronial Standard of Prestoungrange. Finally, the main gates were electrified and a wicket gate added for ease of access.



*Kitchen window c. 1675–1700*

## Chapter 4

### MILTON'S LOCAL INDUSTRIES

BY FAR the most ancient of the vanished industries of Milton is that of the miller's craft. We have already noted from the *Domesday Book* that Williams' Manor had a "mill rendering thirty pence" probably a windmill.

A mill was once connected with the Church Cottages, the "toft" granted by Thomas Rage to the church of Milton. In 1517 the foefees granted to Richard Hut of Blisworth a lease of tenement,

*"with a horsemylle and a close to the same perteynyng, togedir as they byn sett in the Town of the forseid Middylton."*

Richard Hut was promised what seems like preferential treatment. He was to grind for three days in every week,

*"yt is to sey Monday, Wednysday and Friday to serve the seide Town of Middilton. And all the seide Town of Middelton promysith and granntith to grynde at the seide mille before any other as long as they may be as well served there as thei can be in any other place by thise presentes."*

Close to Stockwell, where the Church Cottages stand, is a field known as Mill Banks. Its name tells us there was a mill standing here until the Enclosure of the Commons in Milton and Collingtree in 1779, when it was pulled down. A windmill stood in Mill Close on the Collingtree Road, where there is now an orchard to the east of the railway. This in its turn was demolished in the middle of the 19th century. It had been offered for sale on June 9th 1798 following an advertisement in *Northampton Mercury* on Saturday May 26th 1798:

In the parish registers are references to Wm. Bray, Miller, in 1817 and 1821. Then in 1825 we find that Widow Bray "failed in her business with ye windmill and disposed of the lease for £20 and her horse and cart for £15." So in 1837 we find "Wm. Marks, Miller" and his son "George Marks, Miller"; but the Bray family seem to have resumed the

## MILTON'S LOCAL INDUSTRIES

### **A WINDMILL**

For Sale by Auction

by Benjamin Mason

At the Dolphin Inn, in Northampton on Sat. the 9th of June 1798, at Four o'clock in the afternoon, subject to such conditions as will be produced.

A substantial well-built Windmill, standing and being at Milton, otherwise Middleton Malsor, in the County of Northampton, in the occupation of Mr William Bray, at the yearly rent of Ten Pounds, clear of all Deductions.

For further particulars or to treat by private contract, apply to William Bellamy, or Joseph Bennett, both of Hasely, Near Warwick, and for a view of the premises apply to the Tenant.

\*

NB – Milton is three miles from Northampton.

business, as in 1849 and 1851 John Bray is described in the registers as "Miller".

There seems to have been some dispute subsequently as to the ownership of the mill in Mill Close, and for several years it stood idle and tenantless, being used only by tramps as a shelter at night. Bits of it were taken away by stealthy hands for firewood, and at last, about 1864, some half-dozen Milton boys daringly removed one of the four brick piers on which it stood, leaving one brick on end as a temporary support. At this, from a safe distance, they hurled stones until the brick was shattered and the huge structure toppled over with a resounding crash. Some of those boys, old men by this time, are still in Milton. The two millstones are now in the garden at Mortimers, the very fine house standing opposite Wills' Manor to the west of the Rectory.

\*

**WEAVING** seems to be one of the earliest recorded of the other industries that once flourished in Milton. We know that

## WILLS' MANOR OF MILTON

in the fifteenth century the weaver's craft flourished in Northampton and, being so near the town, Milton must have possessed its share of woollen weavers. This idea is supported by the existence of St Catherine's Chapel in Milton Church, because the weavers had their annual festival on St Catherine's Day. In all probability this was the Guild Chapel for the Weavers' Guild in Milton.

In the time of Henry VIII there was perhaps more sheep farming than agriculture in the country districts, and the cottagers would possess their spinning wheels both for woollen and linen yarn. It was the woman's work to spin, and the wheels would be handed down from mother to daughter. Thus Alice Gaddesden, widow, of Milton bequeathed by Will dated October 26th, 1599:

“I give and bequeath to Katherine Gadsden my daughter ...  
one woollen wheele, one linnen wheele.”

The Will of William Dry, Lord of the other Manor, October 10th, 1677, records:

“Item. I do geve and bequeath unto my sd. loving wife all the linnen and other goods she brought to me with her and also all the linnen yarne, which is in my house, which she lately span with her own hands.”

In this Will dated July 1st, 1676, Richard Dix describes himself as “of Milton, Weaver,” which is the first reference we have to the weaving industry in Milton.

The church registers give very meagre details of the persons entered therein until we come to the 18th century, and then we find men described by their occupations. Amongst them are the following connected with the weaving industry:

1729	Jonathan Rowlatt, <i>fell-monger</i>
1734	Edmund Rogers, <i>weaver</i>
1737	James Bibswell, <i>weaver</i>
1739	Henry Garriot, <i>jersey-comber</i>

The latest entry of a weaver is that of James Bibswell, which occurs again in 1744.

So it is evident that there were some cottages in Milton where the hand-loom was worked, and very many where the whirr of the spinning-wheel was heard. The linen that was

## MILTON'S LOCAL INDUSTRIES

spun on the wheels of the cottagers was of home production. Flax was cultivated in the neighbourhood until the end of the 19th century and provided employment for many, as an entry in the School Log Book for July 31st, 1865, explains that several children were absent "gleaning peas and pulling flax". It has recently reappeared in the local fields in the 1990s.

\*

**LACE MAKING** is an art and craft that has long since vanished. This art was introduced into the neighbouring county of Buckinghamshire by Henry VIII's first wife, Queen Katherine of Arragon. Immigrants from Flanders were those principally engaged; and by the 17th century had spread to Northamptonshire. During the 19th century pillow lace was made in almost every cottage in Milton, and there were schools in the village where little girls were taught how to ply the bobbins. One near the green was kept by Mary Caswell about fifty years' ago, and in the School Log Book we find occasionally a note to the effect that some girl had left school to learn lace-making.

Buyers of lace made periodical visits to the village and the lace-makers took their wares to them, when there would be much chaffering.

Until the 1860's the Milton lace-makers used to bake an ornamented cake, called a Tander's Cake, for St Andrew's Day. This day was observed in Milton as the lace-makers' festival, and the bellringer would ring out the church bells. Lace-making declined when machine-made Nottingham lace flooded the market.

\*

**BREWING AND MALTING** was always vital to communities. In olden days the aleman brewed his own liquor. The names of some who kept an alehouse here in years gone by are found in the register: 1719, "Sarah Dunckley, widow, who sold ale"; 1720, "Will Burman who sold ale", and "John Bull, aleman". In 1739 a representative of an allied trade is mentioned, "James Harris, Cooper", and in 1824 we find "Williams Marks, Brewer".

The first maltster referred to as being of Milton is James Palmer, who in his Will dated January 3rd, 1683, describes himself as "of Milton alliis Middleton Malzor, Maulster".

## WILLS' MANOR OF MILTON

At the beginning of the 19th century a malting business was carried on in Milton by Thos. Cockerill, who kept the Greyhound Inn, where was sold his own home-brewed ale. In 1806 he began operations on a larger scale and built a brewery close to his inn, called the Hope Brewery. He carried on the business of brewer and maltster for many years, being succeeded about 1825 by William Minards. In 1835 Minards sold the business to James Lilly, who kept the business going until 1866, when it was purchased by Wm. East. His son, Herbert East, became a partner in the business in 1880 and was a man of some considerable enterprise. The old brewery was considerably enlarged and new plant added, and in 1888 a new brewery was built adjoining the old one. There is a well on the premises, 35ft deep, from which water is pumped to an iron tank in the roof, which holds, 3,000 gallons. When the well was made, the workmen who were digging at the bottom suddenly came upon the spring. The water poured in so rapidly that they had to be drawn up at once, leaving their working tools behind.

In 1905 the Hope Brewery was sold to Phipps' Northampton Brewery Company, who promptly dismantled the premises and possessed The Greyhound as a tied house. Since 1996 The Greyhound has seen a spirited and sustained revival. It was refurbished and extended in Tudor style to serve not only the village but the rapidly growing population on Northampton's Hunsbury Hill and well fulfills the social function of a country Inn.

The maltings connected with the business were considerably older than the brewery, and once belonged to Mr John Marriott, a Baptist minister. The Stackyard Malting, as it was called, has since been converted into a row of eight cottages, bearing the name of Maltings Terrace, situated at the back of the Little Green. A description of it published before the alteration is of interest:

“This ancient malthouse is 153 feet long, and is, in part, two storeys high. It is built of brick and stone, and, with its old-fashioned outside stairs, has a quaint appearance. It comprises, besides the ground floor, barley stores, malt-bins and a kiln. The basement of the building contains the pale ale cellar, and a large portion of the upper storey has been converted into a hop store”.

This malthouse evidently existed long before the time of Mr Marriott, and from it the farmers and villagers obtained their malt to brew their own ale.

## MILTON'S LOCAL INDUSTRIES

Hops for brewing were successfully grown in Milton although not necessarily for the Hope Brewery. The evidence comes from the following extract of an Excise statement signed by Thomas Phipps, ultimately owners of the Northampton Brewery, on July 27th, 1852:

*“I, Thomas Phipps, of Bridge Street, Northampton ... do hereby make an entry of One Kiln or Oast, marked 2K, for the purpose of drying Hops, the produce of my hop ground in Milton Field, in the parish of Milton etc.”*

\*

**PIN MAKING** curiously though it may seem, once flourished at Milton, the factory being situated at the end of a garden next to the Baptist Chapel. Here the Lever family made brass pins, employing a good many workmen in the time of business prosperity. A writer in the *Victorian County History* states that the Lever family also had a factory at Hardingstone and Stony Stratford as well. At Hardingstone the manufacturers were Edward Lever and his nephew William, and the latter continued making pins there after his uncle Edward's death. Another uncle, John Lever, manufactured the pins at Milton.

Pins used to be imported into England, but in 1626 the industry was introduced into Stroud, from where it soon spread to London, Bristol and Birmingham. The pins then made were not all of one piece, the heads being formed of coiled fine wire, each head consisting of two complete twists. Thousands of these heads were softened by heat, and the “heading boy” pushed the “shanks” (the lengths of wire forming the pins) into a mass of heads. When the shanks had each a head stuck on, he passed them on to another person who put the finishing touches to the heads. As may well be supposed, these heads were very liable to come off. It was a tedious business, for each pin had to pass through no less than 18 processes, a man or a boy being responsible for each process. This was famously instanced by Adam Smith in his *Wealth of Nations* as his classic example of the division of labour in 1679. In 1817 Seth Hunt patented a machine for making head, shaft and point in one entire piece, and various improvements in the machinery brought it about that by 1840 the machine-made pins has almost entirely driven those made by hand out of the market. So by degrees the smaller pin

## WILLS' MANOR OF MILTON

factories were extinguished and manufacturing concentrated in urban areas

At Milton the pins were, of course, manufactured by the old process of sticking on the heads, and there are some records of the factory in existence. In the parish registers, there are entries concerning "Thomas Lever, Pin Manufacture," on various dates from 1820 ending in 1843.



## Chapter 5

### MILTON MISCELLANY COLLATED BY EVANS IN 1920

MOST of the old Milton customs have ceased to be, but it is still possible to glean from various sources some account of what used to take place in our village. Elderly people retain vivid memories of what they did as children, and scattered about the pages of the old School Log Book we can find references to various happenings.

*Plough Monday*, for instance, is not now observed by the remaining farm labourers of Milton, but 60 years' ago it was recognised to the full. From the Log Book we find that January 9th, 1865, the first Monday after the Epiphany, is entered as Plough Monday, presumably a holiday, while against January 13th, 1868, is the note: Plough Monday; usual visitation of coloured faces.

*St Valentine's Day* was well kept by the youths and maidens of the village up to 50 years' ago, and the school children usually had a half-day holiday, when they went about singing and collecting money. From the School Log Book we find in 1868: Feb. 14th, Valentine's Day. Usual half-holiday, and on February 26th: Distributed the money collected on St Valentine's Day. 39 children received 3d each. Many of them bought slates. In 1871, however, there was no holiday and the observance of the feast of St Valentine seems to have fallen gradually away. Some elderly people remember going in their young days to the bigger houses for pippins and gingerbread, which were given away every year to the children on that morning.

A custom popular in Milton from ancient times and still observed in the 1920's was the eating of figs on *Fig Sunday*, the name by which Palm Sunday is sometimes called. This custom is based on the incident of the Fig Tree, when Our Lord wished to eat of the fruit.

*Garland Day*, as it used to be called at Milton, according to the old Log Book, was kept on Old May Day, the 12th of the month, until 1906, but from that year this link with the past was severed and the day was changed to May 1st. The school children chose a Queen of the May and went in procession around Milton, singing appropriate songs, afterwards visiting other villages. This festival was reintroduced in the 1980s.

## WILLS' MANOR OF MILTON

*Tanders Day*, St Andrew's Day, was the lace-makers' festival. The lace-makers made an ornamented cake and the bellringers rang peals in the early morning. Besides this, the children used to go tandering, as it was called – they would visit a lace-maker's house and be regaled with games and sweets.

The *Ringers' and Singers' Supper* is a very old institution, and takes place on New Year's Eve, when the choir and bellringers meet. After the supper, games and songs are indulged in, and as midnight approaches the assembled party proceed to the belfry, where the Old Year is rung out and the New Year ushered in with a peal on the bells.

Cricket and football have long been popular at Milton, as may be seen from the Log Book:

*1865, May 23rd. Cricket match kept some away in afternoon, and again on the 30th a note to the same effect.*

*1867, Monday March 18th. Boys gone to see a football match between Milton men and Patchell (11 a side). Patchell won.*

Many quaint sayings are based upon observations of the weather. One, often quoted, runs:

- *If there's ice in November that will bear a duck,  
The rest of the winter will be slush and muck*

Another rhyming forecast tells us:

- *If it rains on Easter Day,  
Much good grass, but little good hay.*

Another saying is:

- *When Milton Feast comes, you can shut your door.*

This alludes to the practice of allowing the cottage doors to stand open during the summer. When *Milton Feast comes, on September 14th*, the weather is appreciably colder and the days are shorter, which accounts for the saying:

- *On Milton Feast, shut your door at six.*
- *A Sunday moon brings a flood before the month is out.*

## MILTON MISCELLANY

Another expressive local phrase is: As *cold as a clat*, a clat being one of the bits of manure that are spread over the field.

Another descriptive saying is: *When mice fight rats, the rats get the best of it*. A poor person will have little chance of success if he goes to law against a rich and influential person.

A *hundred-to-one pudding* consists of a hundred pieces of potato to one of meat, covered with pastry and cooked in a basin. It was an excellent stand-by during the Great War.

Some peculiarities of Northamptonshire dialect still survive in Milton, but instances of this nature can, of course, only be obtained by patience. The almost obsolete word *unkid* is occasionally met with, usually in such a combination as *unkid and dreadful*. The word *unkid* means horrid.

*Don't be look herrikin?* *Herrikin* means wild, unkempt, rough.

*I was fair mommered* means I was quite worried, or flurried. This is a Midland expression frequently heard in Milton, but sometimes the word *moithered* is used, bearing the same meaning.

A *mawkin* is a scarecrow or effigy, a word still in frequent use.

*Mullock* is in general dialect throughout the country, and means any kind of rubbish or weeds.

*To be shut of* someone means to be rid of that person.

*To hold* means to borrow.

*Out* is often used for away. Children from other villages who attended Milton School were described in the Log Book as *out-towners*.

*To call* is to tattle, gossip, spread reports. To call another person is to speak slanderously of that individual. As one woman philosophically said, *When they call me, they're giving someone else a rest*.

*Middling* is to be unwell, practically the same as indifferent as applied to health. If a person is very *middling* he is very ill. Found in most counties.

*To thack* is to thatch; so a thacker is a thatcher.

*Jetty* is a term used for a narrow passage between two walls or hedges. The narrow lane between Wills' Manor and Milton House leading to the Compass Inn is so named.

A hen *burks* her chickens when she gathers them under her wings for warmth.

*Whittish* means poor, bad, very third-rate. A *whitterish thing* is of little account.

*Muckle* also means something poor or bad. "I'll keep the good apples and sell the muckles."

## WILLS' MANOR OF MILTON

*To run* is to chase. The dog ran the cat.

The use of *while* instead of until is found throughout the Midlands and the northern counties. "*I will stay here while Thursday.*"

There are also some quaint beliefs and superstitions at Milton.

- When the pink pink note of the chaffinch is at its best and can be thought to say *pincher*, then rain is near.
- When a hare runs through the village, a fire or some other disaster will occur within a month.

## Chapter 6

### ACCESSION TO THE BARONIES OF PRESTOUNGRANGE & DOLPHINSTOUN

PRESTOUNGRANGE is a feudal Scottish Barony dating back to the Reformation. Mark *Ker*, Commendator of the Abbey of Newbattle, had the lands and Barony of Prestoungrange granted to him under the Charter of The Great Seal of Scotland in 1587 and that grant ratified in 1591 by King James VI:

*De terris de Prestoungrange cum manerie and valle ...  
and other lands ... omnes dictas terras &c erigendo in  
leberam baroniam de Prestoungrange*

The name, Prestoungrange, is recorded as early as 1189 when the lands were granted by Robert de Quincy to the Monks of Newbattle. The boundaries set forth in their Charter were from Whytrig Burn on the east to the Marches of the Abbot of Dunfermline of Inveresk and Pinkie to the west. On the south ditches were dug at the edge of De Quincy's territory of Tranent. Robert's son Seyer de Quincy later increased the grant to include half the March on the Whytrig Burn side and the rights to the coal and quarry workings within their lands down to the low water mark on the sea boundary to the north. They worked the coal extensively and in 1526 added the harbour later known as Acheson's or Morrison's Haven where they had authority to charge all the customary dues as in the port of Leith. Coal mining continued until the early 1960s and today Prestoungrange Mining Museum tells the story. The thirst of the miners' was slaked by John Fowler's ales from Prestonpans, and thriving brickworks and potteries existed.

The mansion house of Prestoungrange includes many features, most notably its famous painted ceiling dated 1571 which is now removed to Merchiston Tower at Napier University in Edinburgh; but the monks would undoubtedly have had buildings on the site since 1189.

## PRESTOUNGRANGE & DOLPHINSTOUN

All these lands were included in the Lordship of Newbattle and Mark Ker became a *Lord of Parliament*. In 1606 he was also created Earl of Lothian. In 1621 the second Earl, Robert, granted the Barony under reversion to John *Morrison*, an Advocate and onetime Treasurer of the City of Edinburgh. Robert renounced the reversion on August 1st 1623 and Alexander, Morrison's son, obtained a Decree of Declarator on November 29th 1628. John had previously obtained a Charter of novodamus pass the Great Seal on August 29th 1622.

The most notable of the Morrisons of Prestoungrange were Alexander and William, respectively son and great-grandson of John. Alexander was appointed *Lord of Session* in 1626 and in 1627 was elected *Rector of the University of Edinburgh*, having a reputation for great learning. William, the great-grandson served in the last Scottish Parliaments prior to the Treaty of Union, for which he was a *Commissioner*, representing Haddingtonshire and Peebleshire for over 25 years. He sat for East Lothian in the first and subsequent Parliaments of Great Britain until 1715. But he squandered his riches through gambling and when he died in 1739 Prestoungrange passed to his son Alexander until its sale in 1746.

The Barony had come into common ownership with the Barony of Dolphinstoun in 1684. Both these Baronies were contained in a Charter of Vendition from Alexander in favour of William *Grant* in 1746, the year after the Jacobite victory by Bonnie Prince Charlie at the Battle of Prestonpans on the Barony's lands on September 21st. The purchase price from the creditors was £S 124,100. William Grant was appointed *Lord Advocate* on February 26th 1746 and returned to the Parliament of Great Britain as Member for the Elgin Boroughs where, on April 1st 1747, he was '*added to the gentlemen who are appointed to prepare and bring in a bill for taking away and abolishing the heretable jurisdictions in ... Scotland*' winning the praise of Sir Horace Walpole when he took part in the debate on the Second Reading. He continued as an MP until 1754 when he was appointed *Lord of Session* and a *Lord of Justiciary* sitting as Lord Prestoungrange. He died in 1764 in Bath but lies buried at Prestonpans where there is a monument to him in the churchyard. His contemporary, Tyler, spoke how his '*winning gentleness in the conduct of the adjustment of claims on the forfeit estates ... merited universal approbation*'.

William Grant had a Charter of the Barony of Prestoungrange and others pass the Great Seal on July 26th 1746 and the abstract reads:

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‘Giving granting and disposing ... in favour of William Grant Esquire, His Majesty’s Advocate ... Heretably and irredeemably ALL AND WHOLE the lands and Baront of Prestoungrange containing and comprehending the lands, teins and others underwritten viz ALL AND HAILL the Lands and Dominical Lands of Prestoungrange with the Manour place and Town thereof with housings biggings yards orchyards coal coalercis parts pendicles and pertinents of the same with the salt pans Teinds and other pertinents thereof Together with the Cunnigary adjacent to the said Lands of Prestoungrange the lands of Saltpreston with houses biggings and pertinents thereof with the arable lands lying in the said town the miln and Miln lands att Prestoungrange with the harbour called Acheson’s Haven with the two corn milns adjacent ... sixty four acres of arable Land lying towards the sea The Lasnds of Couthrople (now Dolphinstoun) with the Mannour place thereof and siety four acres of arable land lying on the west part of the lands of Prestoungrange of old ... and that in in Special Warrantice & Security of all and whole the said lands and barony of Prestoungrange containing and comprehending the lands and others above mentioned within the pertinents principally disponed ... WHICH LANDS Baronys Right of patronage & athers above written pertained heretably of before to the now deceast Willliam Morison of Prestoungrange Elder Holden by him of his majesty and his Royal Predecessors as Immediate lawfull Superiors therefor in chief AND WERE in virtue of Decreet of sale pronounced by the Lords of Council and Session upon the Thirtieth day of July One thousand seven hundred and forty five years In a process of ranking and Sale at the Instance of John Viscount of Arbuthnot Against the said William Morison Elder of Prestoungrange & his whole Creditors therein mentioned ... Duely and lawfully ADJUDGED DECERNED AND DECLARED to pertain and belong to the said William Grant esquire ( in the said Decreet designed Mr William Grant Advocate ) and his heirs and assignys heretably and irredeemably as the highest offeror and lawfull purchaser of the same upon his paying or consigning the Sum of One Hundred and twenty four thousand one hundred pounds Scots money..’

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William Grant left three daughters of whom the eldest, Janet, married the 4th Earl of Hyndford who died in 1787 but she continued living at the mansion house of Prestoungrange until 1818. She was responsible at the time of the Enclosures for the creation of excellent maps of both baronies. She was succeeded by her nephew Sir James Suttie of Balgone, the 4th Baronet and son of her sister Dame Agnes Grant or Suttie, who assumed the name Grant Suttie by Charter of Resignation in 1822. Dame Agnes' Charter in Sir James' favour read:

*'... in favour of Sir James Grant Suttie of Prestoungrange and Balgone, Bart, eldest lawful son of Dame Agnes Grant or Suttie, second lawful daughter of the deceased William Grant of Prestoungrange Esquire, one of the Senators of the College of Justice, and spouse of the late Sir George Suttie Baronet of Balgone, and the heirs male of the body of the said Sir James Grant Suttie ... in ALL AND WHOLE the lands and dominical lands of Prestoungrange ... AS ALSO ALL AND WHOLE the South Aisle of the Church of Salt Preston ...*

Sir James set about a major transformation of the mansion house which bears above the north door the date 1830. He died in 1836 and was succeeded by his eldest son Sir George Grant Suttie. His heirs continued to live in the mansion house at Prestoungrange until 1922 when it was leased to the Royal Musselburgh Golf Club giving them one of the most impressive Clubhouses in Scotland. The feudal Barony of Prestoungrange together with Dolphinstoun remained in the Grant Suttie family until September 1998 when by charter of Vendition from Sir James Grant Suttie, Bart., in favour of Gordon *Wills, Lord of the Manor of Milton* in Northamptonshire and the youngest son of the late Stanley Wills and Audrey *Park* of Musselburgh (whose father James Park had worked as a Prestoungrange miner at the beginning of the 20th century), he acceded to the Barony of Prestoungrange and the then remaining lands on the north foreshore. In September 1999 Sir James Grant Suttie, Bart., further transferred the Barony of Dolphinstoun.

Gordon Wills, who has three sons Duncan, Mathew and Julian, by Charter of Resignation assumed the name Park Wills *Prestoungrange*. His life has echoed the earlier traditions of learning of Alexander Morrison who in 1627 had been elected *Rector of the University of Edinburgh*. Author of more



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than thirty books, he has had a career devoted to academic scholarship around the Commonwealth holding professorial chairs from 1965 at the Universities of Bradford, Cranfield, Alberta, Tulsa, Western Australia and Queensland in customer policy and knowledge management.

He was *Principal of International Management Centres* from 1982 until 1997, when he was elected International President. In 1994 it became the world's first Internet based school of management. In 1997 he was further elected *President of the Canadian School of Management*. His Ensigns Armorial, originally authorised under Warrant from the Earl Marshal of England dated July 13th 1985 and issued by Garter King and Clarenceaux on November 20th 1985, remained in the name of Wills. New Ensigns Armorial as Baron of Prestoungrange were subsequently granted under Letters Patent in his own name and rank as Baron under Warrant from the Lord Lyon in Edinburgh in December 1999.

The Prestoungrange Arms additionally display the helmet and Scottish baronial robe and cap as authorised by King Charles I for his coronation and in use ever since. They are well shewn on the front cover of this booklet. The Wills family Arms appear on the inside rear cover together with the Badge granted by the Earl Marshal in 1985.

In 1998 the Baron Court of Prestoungrange was re-established to ensure the preservation of both baronies' history and also to project their role into the next millennium. Working with the Prestoungrange Industrial Heritage Museum a website was established and Prestoungrange University Press published its first title, *Cleaning Up* by Dr Julian Wills. In 2000 a socio-economic history series of the major issues arising from the Prestoungrange industrial heritage will be published on the Internet for use by schools. And limited editions of Prestoungrange pottery will be produced.

The 'Park Wills Prestoungrange Sept' registered its tartan as illustrated on the outside rear cover of this booklet with the Scottish Tartans Society in 1999. The tartan is one of the clearest statements of Scottish nationhood, having been outlawed by Parliament in 1747 following the unsuccessful attempt of Bonnie Prince Charlie to regain the throne of Great Britain for the Stuarts from the House of Hanover. The new tartan incorporates elements of those of all the preceding baronial clans that held Prestoungrange – the Kerrs, the Morrisons and the Grants together with most lately the Park Sept of the MacDonalDs – into a design now used exclusively

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for Prestoungrange. The regalia of the Prestoungrange barony, the Bailie's medal and Sergeand's ellwand were also crafted at this time, and the baronial horns acquired from Hua Hin in Thailand.

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The third millennium sees the return of its own Parliament in Scotland, the first such gathering since 1707 when the Act of Union passed; and the Scottish Crown will once again rest on the head of the monarch where it has not been since Charles II acceded as King of Scotland during the Cromwellian interregnum in his 17th century English Commonwealth. It may be recalled from Chapter 2 that it was ironically from the Manor of Milton that James Harrington had gone on to serve that Commonwealth as a Commissioner to the captive Charles I, to attend him at his execution, and later to be imprisoned on the Restoration of Charles II to the throne of Great Britain in 1660. Like the Scottish tartan, his book *The Commonwealth of Oceania* was banned for what it had asserted.

Despite the new parliament's determination to abolish feudal superiority, fate is much kinder for the Manor and Baronies in the third millennium. Our family's adopted purpose is *Cyberfeudalism*. We commissioned three paintings from Janice McNab to celebrate this new direction and the opening of the Baron Court's Rooms at Beaumont Street, Oxford, which appear in the centre pages of this booklet – along with a selection of photographs from the Manor of Milton and the Baronies.

## MANOR AND BARONIES

### **In this Day and Age ...?**

We do hope all who read this pamphlet will enjoy its stories. It was originally created in 1981 as, and it of course remains, an essentially egocentric endeavour by the Wills' family – Avril, Gordon, Mathew and Julian. This second edition in 2000 brings the story further up to date.

Once we all became the owners of The Manor of Milton we were naturally curious to know who and what had gone on before us. And because our Manor dates back to the *Domesday Book*, ownership records were readily available. Furthermore, with help from the Secretary of the Society for Ancient Buildings, the architecture and structure of The Manor House had a story to tell as well. Thus, it was relatively easy to uncover many facts about our home, to edit them, and to add to them the part we have played in its late 20th century restoration.

To be the feudal Lord and Lady of the Manor against such a longitudinal perspective is as deeply satisfying as it is fun. The delusions of grandeur it gives one, and of course it does, are historically vicarious. Yet we feel no need for a bonfire of our vanities, rather an enthusiasm for studying and telling out a piece of our history here. This was further well exemplified when we lately added Chapter 6 telling the equally fascinating story of the Scottish feudal Barony of Prestoungrange to which we acceded in 1998 and of Dolphinstoun from 1999.

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Gordon Baron of Prestoungrange & Dolphinstoun  
Lady Avril of Prestoungrange & Dolphinstoun  
Mathew Wills, Yr of Prestoungrange  
Julian Wills, Yr of Dolphinstoun

*Major sources for this history were:*

- Evans, B.E. "The Story of Milton Malzor"*  
*Wells, Gardiner, Darton & Co, London, 1926*  
*Reprinted MCB University Press, Bradford,*  
*1997*
- Simons, P "Private Survey for the Lord and Lady of the*  
*Manor of Milton of its Structure and Fabric"*  
*1979*

Simons' survey is now deposited with the Northampton Record Society at Delapre Abbey and attached to the deeds of the Manor House.

Evans, who was Rector of Milton Malsor when he wrote his book, relied heavily on the Northamptonshire Record Society's Office at Delapre Abbey, and in particular on:

- Dr Bridges' History of Northamptonshire*  
*Dr Baker's History of Northamptonshire*  
*The Victorian County History series: Northamptonshire*  
*The Domesday Book entries on Milton*

When the Domesday Book was rebound to commemorate its 900th Anniversary, two facsimile copies were obtained and are kept at Wills' Manor.