

The Manor of Lackham

A Short History



By

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The estate of Lackham, situated on the western bank of the Bristol Avon just outside the Wiltshire market town of Chippenham, has a long recorded history. In the immediate vicinity there is evidence of Stone Age, Bronze Age and Roman occupation. Parts of 3rd and 4th century Roman querns (used for grinding corn) and roofing tiles have been found, and Romano-British field boundaries were found underneath the medieval House. In the early mediaeval (Saxon) period it was part of the estates of one of the richest of the Wiltshire *thegns*, Aelfstan of Boscombe. He was a counsellor and favourite of Edward the Confessor (c1003 - 1066) throughout his reign.

The d'Eu family

After the Norman Conquest, at the time of Domesday, the Manor was held by William d'Eu, the son of the Count of Eu who later held the title himself, for a time.

William d'Eu & Edward of Salisbury are believed to have replaced the Saxon church at Lacock with a Norman one, the remains of which came to light when the present church was restored in 1861

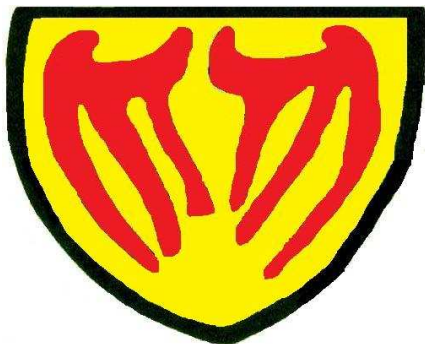
William was involved in a rebellion in 1087 but was dealt with leniently by the King, so much so that in 1088, he entertained William I, "*and a large gathering of the leading magnates at his Manor of Lackham*".

He rebelled again in 1095 and William (Rufus) II, not being as forgiving as his father, or maybe thinking twice was one rebellion too many, dealt harshly with the rebels; The Anglo Saxon Chronicle tells that

"Geoffery Bainard accused William d'Eu, the Kings kinsman, of treason and maintained his charge in single combat: and William being vanquished, the King ordered him to be blinded and emasculated"

Nothing further is heard of William d'Eu and it is likely he died of his wounds very soon afterwards.

William held land in many places throughout the country and Lackham itself, along with several other Wiltshire and Gloucestershire manors, were held from him by the Bluet Family, and they continued to hold their estates after William's demise, now from the de Clare family who had been given the land by the King.



The Bluet family

The Bluet family seat was at Silchester in Hampshire ¹ and they held many manors in the south west and Marches, being some of the more important Marcher barons. Bluet's who held Lackham fought for the King in France, Ireland, Wales and Scotland in various conflicts. The Lackham line also held Daglingworth and Duntisborne, just outside Cirencester as well as Yeovilton and Hinton Blewett. The Bluets held Lackham for two hundred years, until the middle of the fourteenth century. The only surviving Bluet, Eleanor had married Edmund Baynard for Dunmow in Essex about 1349 and Lackham passed to the Baynards.

¹ For a more detailed look at the Bluets see Pratt, T & Repko, K (2008) *The Bluets – a baronial family and their historical connections 1066 – 1340* LMA&RLT



The Baynard family, the Lackham branch used a slightly different version

The Baynards were another Norman family; Ralph Baynard "*was a valiant Norman who came over with the Conqueror*". He built one of the three Norman castles located in London, Baynards Castle near St Pauls Wharf.

Hunting was a major pastime for the nobility at this time. Edmund bought a grant from Edward III to hunt in the Royal Forest of Pewsham

"with power to kill and carry away either stag or fallow deer, and also to command the King's keepers to assist in the chase after the deer was wounded by crossbow etc notice being given to the lodge by the winding of a horn. Aubrey has it slightly differently, that the grant ran so that "if the King [my emphasis] should happen to kill a deer in the Forest, so near the River Avon that one might throw a Horne [ie within a horns' sounding of the River], the Lord of Lackham, by custome, could challenge for his own, which Sir Robert Baynard did in King James' time, and alleged his graunt for it from a King. "On my soule", said King James, "he was a wise King that made such a graunt".

The Baynards owned Lackham for almost exactly 400 years after Edmund and Eleanor. One of the aisles of St Cyriac's church in Lacock was the family aisle, where many of them are buried. [The Bluets had burial rights in the abbey Church but this right did not extend to the

Baynards when they took over. The Abbey church was demolished after the Dissolution and so there are no memorials to the Lackham Bluets in Wiltshire]

One of the limited number of memorial brasses to be found in Wiltshire is to be seen in the Lackham aisle and commemorates Robert and Elizabeth Baynard and their 18 children. Robert died in 1501. The second son, *George*, was a cleric and the costume shown on the brass

The costume worn by *George*



detail from the Baynard brass

with university cape and hood, whereas *George* has a short scarf thrown over the shoulders and fastened by a button. One of Robert and Elizabeth's grandchildren, *Beatrice*, was the last Abbess of Lacock Abbey.

Lackham has always been a relatively small estate but that does not mean it was unimportant. There are, for example, several connections to the great events of the sixteenth century for example. In 1535 royalty apparently stayed at Lackham. The Manor was visited by Henry VIII for several days. At this time Henry was "*paying his addresses*" to Lady Jane Seymour of Wolfhall near Marlborough. It is recorded that Henry stayed at Wolfhall. When Henry visited Lackham the banqueting hall was "*newly floored with the massive oaks of the*

estate". In the late nineteenth century there was still in existence a print showing the preparations for the king's visit

*with the rats and mice running away from the cleaning-
maids, who with mop and broom are making all things clean
and trim for the royal guest*

Three years after this visit, in 1538, there was a serious threat of invasion by the "*Catholic Princes of Europe*". Henry VIII called for the raising of the military tithes which each Manor still owed to the Crown. Lackham's part was to provide "*7 archers and 8 billmen, and also have ready a horse and harness and other small arms*"

Edward Baynard was Warden of Chippenham and Melksham Forests and High Sheriff of Wiltshire (in 1553); his letter patent being signed "*Jane the Queen*", the only known signature of Lady Jane Grey as Queen.

By the middle of the 17th century the Baynard line was failing and the only surviving Baynard, Mary, was married to Captain the Hon. James Montagu in 1635. Mary was only 14 at the time of the marriage but as her father only survived a further six months there was presumably some urgency.



Arms of the Montagu family

This marriage was something of a good catch for the Baynards; James was the third son of the Duke of Manchester and nephew of the Bishop of Bath and Wells at the time, another James Montagu. This uncle

renovated much of Bath Abbey and the Montagu arms are to be seen on the great West Door of the Abbey.

The Montagus were not obviously involved in the last Civil War, although it would appear that James was a Captain in the Parliamentary Army. His father was Speaker for Parliament throughout the war and was in command of one of the Parliamentary armies. There is no record of any of James' service, however, and Lackham does not appear in the records during this period. In the accounts of Chippenham's Bayliff there is a record of payment made towards "*the garrison at Lackham*" but no other indications have been found that the Manor was garrisoned, unlike its neighbours Lowden and Lacock.

The Montagus were connected with one of the most infamous episodes of the early 18th century. Elizabeth Eyles, wife of the third James Montagu to own Lackham, was sister to one of the directors of the South Sea Company, who lost his estates when the Bubble burst.

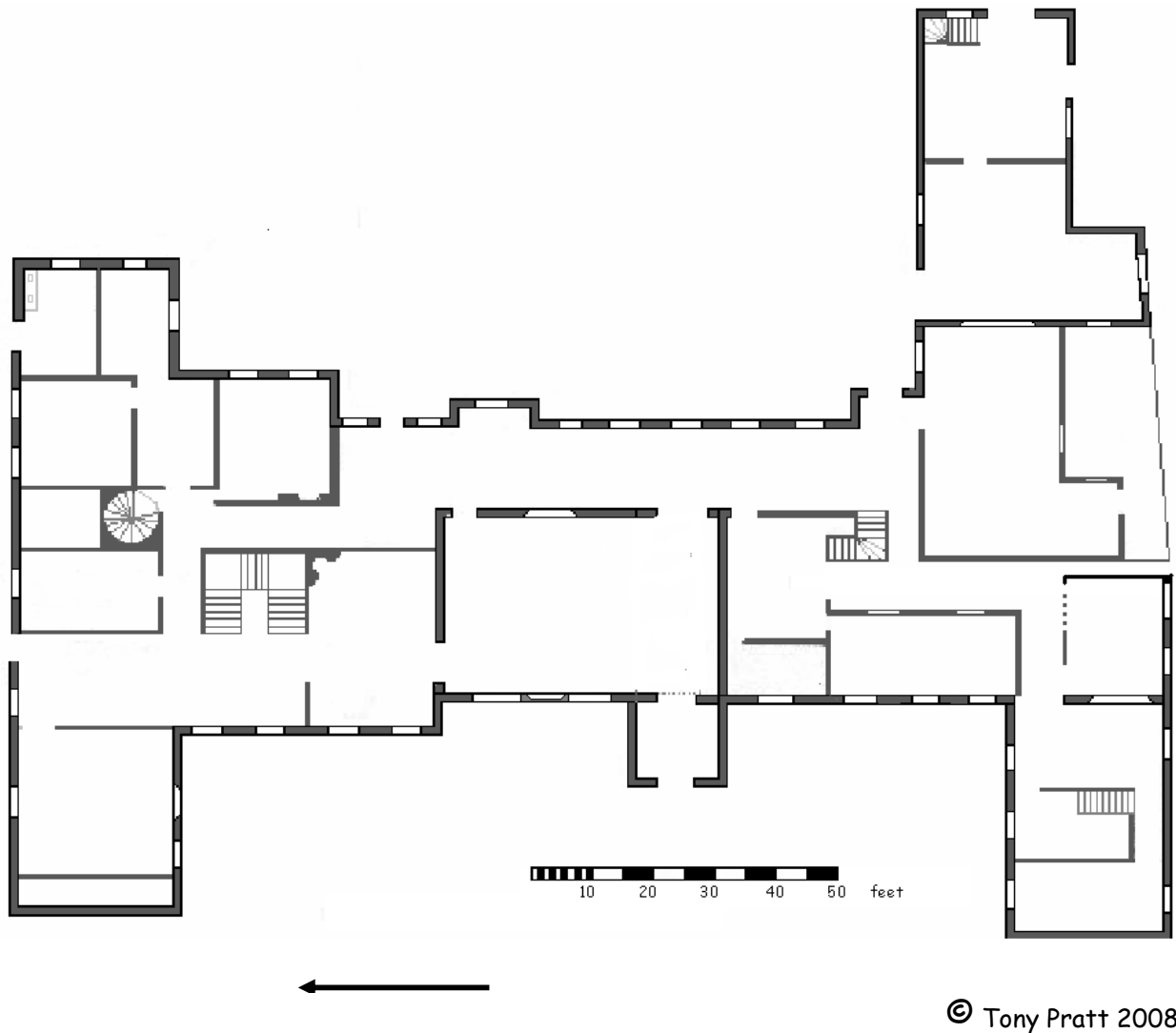
The present Lackham House is not the original, but was built by the Montagu family. The earlier house was in a different location entirely. The earliest sketch of Lackham House is dated 1684, and the house was described as

The old manor house has been described as

Deserv[ing] a passing mention. It exhibited specimens of various periods from the Norman downwards, and presented an appearance of rude grandeur rather than the beauty of regular architectural proportion. It stood completely embosomed in woods. The great hall was hung with armour

It lay at right angles to the present house facing west. It was south of the Terraces on a flat platform in the field west of the Playing Fields. A plan of the house was located in the Library of the Wiltshire

Archaeological and Natural History Society in Devizes and it has been redrawn by the author for this work².



Various maps of the 1773 - 1793 period all show a multi-fronted mansion but one dated 1795 clearly shows the current House and so the old house was demolished and the present one built between 1793 and 1795. When building work was carried out in Lackham House in 2003 carved medieval masonry was found filling the walls. Evidently much of the original house found its way into the new construction and some of it appears to form the foundations of the Walled Garden. It is certain that very little was left in the ground as the foundations were robbed out.

² I am happy to acknowledge the debt I owe to WANHS for allowing me access to their records

The original Georgian building was smaller than the House we see now, basically just a two storey square block with a service corridor along the northern side extending beyond the house to the east and west and with service wings at either end of this.

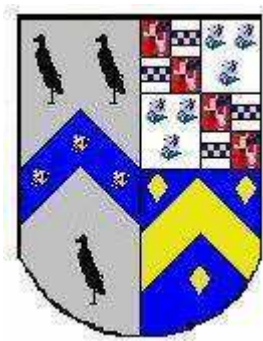
The last Montagu to control Lackham although he didn't actually own it was the colourful George Montagu. He fought in the American War of Independence and was subsequently appointed Colonel of the Wiltshire Militia for many years until he was cashiered for "*conduct unbecoming and officer*" and "*abusing his position*" in making improper advances to the wives of fellow Officers, what one commentator has called "*provocative marital skirmishing*". He was not allowed to inherit Lackham when his brother James died without issue. This was because George had left his wife to live with Elizabeth Dorville, who also happened to be inconveniently married at the time (given that James' will clearly shows he had two illegitimate children of his own by a married woman this seems rather unfair). George was a famous naturalist and a very early member of the Linnaean Society. Montagu's Harrier (*Falco cineraceus*) is named in his honour. He died in 1815 of lockjaw after treading on a rusty nail. He was partly responsible for the Montagus losing Lackham. He and his spendthrift son George Courtney Conway Montagu (who carried on the family tradition of having illegitimate children and mistresses) were engaged in lengthy (and therefore *costly*) litigation over the inheritance of the estate, which eventually came to be run by Trustees appointed by the Court of Chancery. The estate was eventually sold to pay the debts³.

This marked the end of Lackham being owned by one family for more than one generation at a time. The next occupier was Lt. Col. Tufnell of the Middlesex Militia.

³ For an in-depth look at George and his son see "*Two Georgian Montagus*" [Pratt, T (2003)] which is available to read on this site as well, copies can be purchased from the Museum Trust

Lt. Col. Tufnell did not, in fact, own Lackham but was a tenant of the Trustees between about 1817 and 1823, the exact date are unknown. The only records from his time at Lackham are birth and death records in the Parish Registers at St Cyriac's in Lacock. From a survey carried out in 1812 it is known that when he was renting it the estate encompassed 10 farms, Lackham House and 2 mills, with a total of 2180 acres (982 ha) of land.

The next owner of the estate was



Arms of Capt. Rooke RN

(after the memorial in St Cyriac's, Lacock)

Captain Rooke rented Lackham from the Trustees for some years, and during this time they were trying to sell it, not always as a going concern. They intended to sell off the land and even demolish and sell the remains of the house (as they had already done at nearby Alderton. Although offered on this basis in 1831 the estate did not sell. The extended period of Trustee management of the estate and their failure to fund a purchaser may be related to the general down-turn in estate revenues in the wake of the Napoleonic Wars and the eventual repeal of the Corn Laws. Estates were no longer the financial assets they had been.

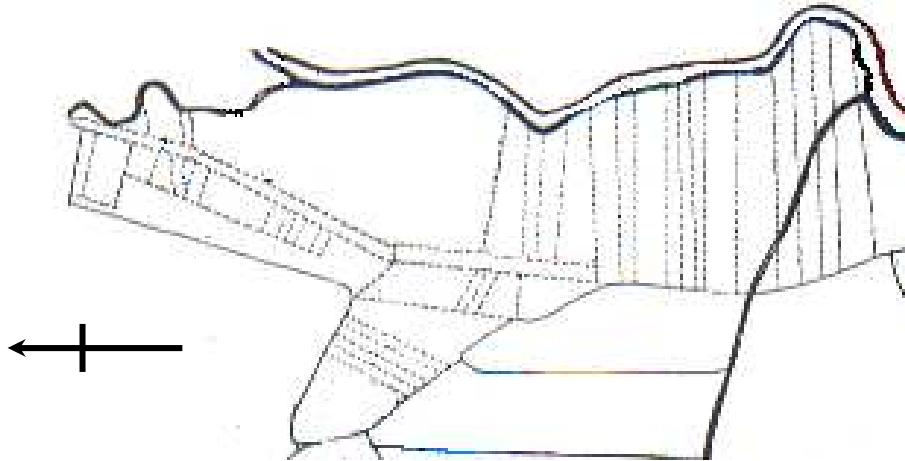
Eventually, in 1835, Capt. Rooke bought the estate. When he purchased it the estate was much smaller than it had been 20 years earlier, the Trustees had managed to sell some land. It was now only 590 acres (240 ha) in extent. It cost him £30,000 and the survey carried out for the sale shows he only bought two farms and the House and Grounds.

He was Sheriff of Wiltshire in 1842 and it was he who added the third floor to the House as well as the colonnaded area on the south side. The extension upwards was said to be to accommodate his large family (the Rookes had 13 children) but when he was at Lackham only a few of them were still living at home.

Capt. Rooke died in 1855 and the following year the estate was put up for sale. It didn't sell then and was re-advertised in 1858 and the sale particulars give a very good description of what the estate was like at this time

The handsome stone mansion with colonnade and wings, and on which the late proprietor expended several thousand pounds in substantial improvements, is delightfully placed upon a gentle elevation, with all its principal rooms opening to the South, and is suited in every respect for a family of rank and fortunes, amidst unusually rich park like grounds, bounded by the windings of the river Avon, which for about three miles exclusively appertains to the estate, with its fishery &c. It is particularly adapted for the preservation of game. A fine terrace walk, screened from the north,, leads to the walled gardens and to a beautiful wood of nearly fifty acres (and famous fox cover) full of thriving oak timber and intersected by gravelled walks and turfed rides, part sloping to the river. There are excellent stabling, superb farm-houses and homesteads, and cottages for gardeners and labourers. The approach to the mansion is by a neat lodge and iron gates from the Chippenham Road, with a carriage drive of about three quarters of a mile, chiefly through plantations; and a pleasant walk through the grounds leads to the church, in which an aisle is attached to the estate

The map for this sale shows some interesting historical features - the fields north of the Front Drive show an ancient arrangement of land tenantry, revealing the presence of medieval field strips - not directly as in Ridge and furrow but in the Tithe areas shown on the map



Henry Berney Caldwell

Lackham was bought by Henry Berney Caldwell for £40,000, before coming to Lackham he had owned Hellborowe Hall in Norfolk.

The records relating to Berney Caldwell's ownership of Lackham are limited, the family were not even there on the night of the 1861 Census, the house was totally empty, the enumerator recorded "*No one present gone away visiting friends*". However in a statement of the accounts of the restoration of the St Cyriac's Church in Lacock, dated march 1862, there is a note that "*the above is exclusive of the Sum expended upon the Lackham Aisle: the entire cost of which was defrayed by B Caldwell esq of Lackham House*". This was just a month before Louisa Caldwell married William Powell there, in April 1862.

The family was still at Lackham in 1864 - the local paper noted that A>W Caldwell of Lackham chaired a meeting of the Lacock Farmers Club on Thursday March 24th when the speaker was the Mayor of Calne who spoke on potato culture.

The Hon. Mary Stapleton Bretherton

In 1866 the estate was sold again, for £46,000, by the Hon. Mary Stapleton- Bretherton

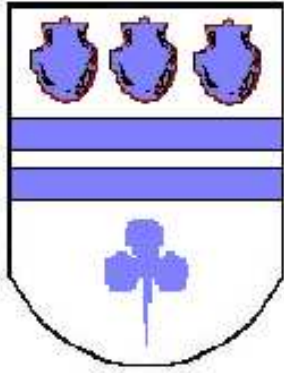
She was a rich woman from two judicious marriages; Mary married William Gerard of Newhall Lancaster (who was a brother of Sir Robert Gerard, Bart.) in 1829. William Gerard died in 1844 and four years later she married the Hon Gilbert Stapleton (brother of Miles Thomas, 8th Lord Beaumont) who died without issue. She added her family name of Bretherton in 1869 and was thereafter Mary Stapleton Bretherton.

She was very involved with the charitable work of the Roman Catholic church, initially having the money for this from an inheritance from her father, "*a well known mail coach proprietor in his day who made a large fortune in business and bought considerable estates in Lancashire*".

She

made over the Mansion house and grounds at Ditton to the Jesuit refugees and built them a church where they now carry on their educational and missionary work, after Religious orders were forced out of Germany, following the passing of the May Laws .

Mary Stapleton-Bretherton died in December 1883. Her Obituary notice (not attributed, but probably The Times) was dated Dec 26 "*The death is announced of the Hon Mrs Stapleton-Bretherton which took place at Rainhill 22nd inst*". Among bequests in her will, dated 7th February 1882, she left £3000 to fund a Roman Catholic priest in Chippenham. She owned other property than Lackham and it is unknown how often she was resident here.



Sir George Errington, Bart.

One of the Trustees for Mary Stapleton-Bretheton's will was her cousin Sir George Errington, 1st Bart (created 18th July 1885) was born at Rockfield in Co. Dublin, Ireland, in 1839. he married a widow, Frances Helena on 11th August 1859, she was the daughter of Herman Robert de Ricci, MD, of Moseley House in Surrey.

George Errington was MP for Co Longford 1874-1885 and JP for Co's Wexford, Tipperary and Longford. He was High Sheriff of Longford in 1888 and of Wexford in 1901. From these dates it can be seen that he certainly wasn't resident at Lackham permanently. Indeed, even though he was described as a life tenant he wasn't living at Lackham all his life (he died in 1920). He was not, for example, at Lackham on the day of the 1871 census, and only 5 staff were present, which argues against a permanent establishment.

The next owner of the estate was



Brig. Gen. George Llewellyn Palmer

Brig. Gen. George Llewellyn Palmer CB DL, bought Lackham in 1893 for £17,652.

George Palmer's father, Michael Palmer was co-owner of the Trowbridge woollen firm of Palmer and Mackay . His mother was Mary Ann " the daughter of Joshua Bates of Halifax, born in 1820.

By the time George was born the family were living at Berryfield House, Bradford on Avon, a fine mansion on the top of the hill north of the town. George was the only son and he was educated at Harrow.



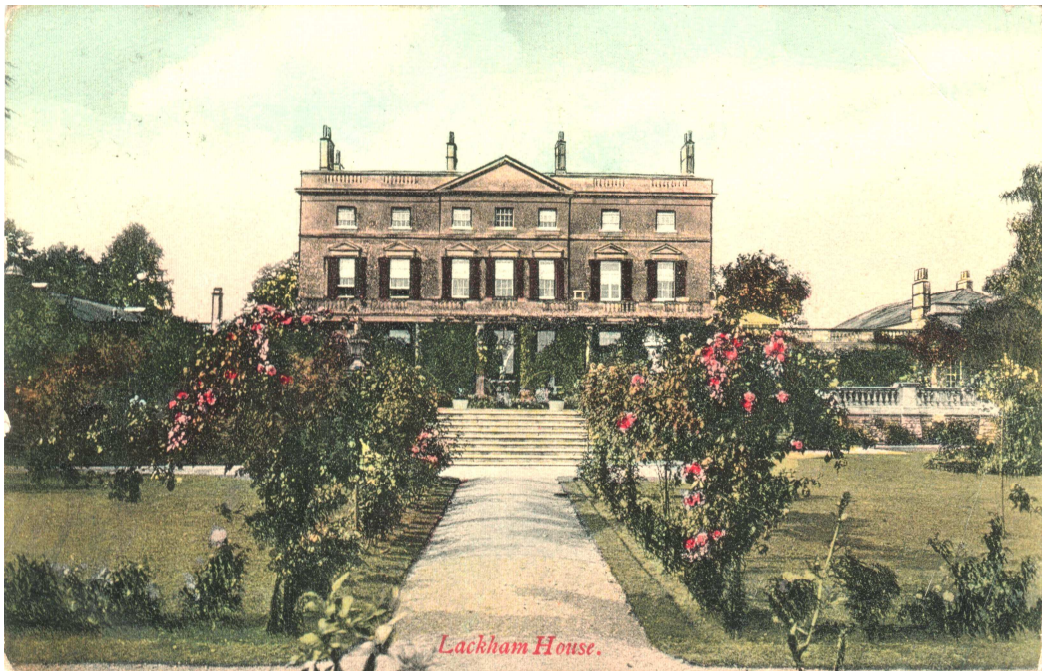
Brig. Gen. G LI Palmer DL JP

George bought Lackham in 1893 but he didn't live there straight away, he rented the estate to Mrs Taylor, probably between 1893 and 1899. Littleis recorded of her tenancy. She lived there with her two grown up sons, John and Leonard.

Before he moved in to Lackham, in 1900, George Palmer had a number of alterations carried out

Mr G L Palmer intends to remove from Springfields, Trowbridge, to Lackham between Chippenham and Lacock..... In January of this year the house was handed over to builders and so extensive are the alterations that the interior of the building has been almost completely remodelled. The house is lighted throughout by electricity, even in the cellars and outbuildings, and altogether about 330 lamps are provided while hot water pipes are laid throughout.

The alterations were mainly to the east wing of the house, including service rooms (coatroom, larder, and dairy) on the ground floor and servant bedrooms on the first floor, and a new Servant's Hall. The current Front Porch replaced an earlier oval shaped structure. The fine terraces south of the house were also constructed at this time and postcard views of them only a few years later give a good idea of how they looked at the turn of the twentieth century



Postcard dated 1907, held in the Lackham archive collection

Lackham took part in the local celebrations after the relief of Mafeking in 1900

At an early hour on Saturday morning the 19th ultimo⁴ the joyful news of the relief of Mafeking was brought to Lacock. Within a very short time the ringers were assembled and the bells rang a merry peal, and everyone knew the glad tidings. At intervals throughout the day the bells were rung and from almost every house a flag of some description was hung. The employees of Lackham House soon formed a bicycle procession; their machines were decorated, and they paraded the village, and with commendable forethought made a collection in aid of the Mafeking Seaside Fund.

Other evidence shows that bicycles were made available to the staff, where necessary, for the performances of their duties. For example the Potboy, William Fell,

was given the use of a bicycle so that he could take and collect post in Chippenham

George Palmer was a great sporting man; he built the new Stable Block at Lackham in 1902 (which is where the arms above are to be found) and was one of the founders, and a Master, of the Avon Vale Hounds.

The Palmer's sold Lackham in 1919 to William Tatem. It would appear that they had not been resident at Lackham for some time previously; in April of the same year an objection to the inclusion of George's name on the county electors list was lodged on the grounds of "non residence"

⁴ ie May, 1900



The Lord Glanely,
Sir William James Tatem

The Lord Glanley, DL Sir William James Tatem , 1st Baron (created 1918) was born in 1868, the son of Thomas Tatem of Appledore in Devon and his wife Louisa, daughter of William Cook.

He purchased Lackham for £62,000 . The estate was treble the size it was in 1893.

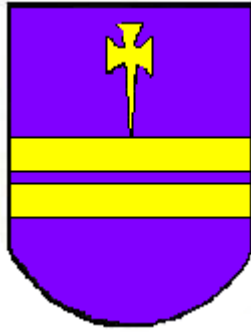
He was a shipping magnate and famous racehorse owner. He did live at Lackham, indeed it is said that in January 1920 he moved here and booked a special train to move his household "*lock, stock and barrel, including animals, from Cardiff*"

He sold Lackham to Major Holt in 1927 for £78,000

Lord Glanely

Having moved temporarily to Weston -super-Mare, Lord Glanely was killed when the town was bombed by enemy aircraft on June 26th 1942

(It is said that he had moved to Weston for the weekend as he was worried about the heavy bombing raids Cardiff was experiencing at the time.....)



Major Herbert Paton Holt

(after the memorial in St Cyriac's Lacock)

Major Holt moved into Lackham sometime between late January 1927 and March of the same year, when he sold off the outlying portions of the estate.

Major Herbert Paton Holt, was born in 1890 in Canada. Lackham folklore has it that he rose to be President of the Royal Bank of Canada but this isn't correct. The Holt who was President of the RBC was his father, Sir Herbert S Holt who had moved to Canada when he was employed as civil engineer on the Canadian Pacific Railway.

Major Holt married Elizabeth Cairns from Montreal and they had two daughters and a son, Lt. George Herbert Holt, who was a member of the Royal Artillery Corps and, while on secondment to the 9th Lancers, he was killed in action on 25th November, 1944 in Italy. Major Holt was High Sheriff of Wiltshire 1935-46 and MP for the Upton district of West Ham 1924-1929.

His niece, Mrs B Clark, from Canada, visited Lackham in 1991 and erected the monument situated to the west of the house, between the House and the Back Drive. The elements inscribed on the monument - plants, a camera and horses - represent some of Major Holt's wide interests and was purposely sited on a minor ley line said to run from St Cyriac's Church to Chippenham



The Holt Memorial in the ground at Lackham

Second World War

During the period 1943 to 1944 Lackham was the headquarters for the 10th Armoured Infantry Battalion of the 4th Armoured Division of the 3rd United States Army, commanded by Gen. George S Patton



The Division HQ units arrived at Lackham on January 10th 1943. It was

late when they arrived at Lackham; a veteran of the 10th who visited Lackham in 2001, recalled that they arrived at Lackham in the dark of night and were surprised at how small the house was - the soldiers were apparently taken directly to the Stable Yard, and it was the Bothy and Stable Yard buildings they first saw, having been driven past Lackham House and not seen it in the blackout.

Very little information seems to have survived from this period, although it is said that damage was inflicted on the garden wall by a Sherman tank. It is also claimed that the original entrance pillars by the Front Lodge were damaged at this time and were later replaced. The wooden hut, used in the 1980's as a store for the Rural Museum housed at Lackham, was reportedly built by American servicemen.

Some structures still remain - to defend the estate seven "pill boxes" were established. One, at the junction of the Front and Back Drives, was removed "*with great difficulty*" in the mid nineteen sixties but the other six remain (see appendix for details of these).

The room that used to house the College library, on the south side of the first floor, was the location of Gen. Patton's rooms, the Librarians office was the bathroom and recently (2000) removal of plaster in this room revealed even earlier wallpaper still in place. It is understood that when D-Day was being planned Gen. Eisenhower visited Lackham, but no evidence for this has been located so far.

Over fifty years later local residents still recalled soldiers being at Lackham, Nancie Howie remembered that

Soldiers stationed at Lackham House who came to the village for a glass or two (or more) of beer, often missed the brook path and blundered through the brook and up the old Nethercote Hill and on to Lackham. Grandfather found many a soldiers' hat floating in the brook, past the garden and heading for the river. Especially when the Americans arrived

and in the archives at Lackham there is a roll of honour of the US Service men who were stationed at Lackham in 1944, made by Joan and Eileen Brunt (Joan later married Mr. Alford) who lived in Lacock, and she is still resident in the village.

In the centre of the middle column is the name of the commanding officer, General George Patton. The name at the top of the list, however, is Private Joseph E Walsh who was engaged to Eileen Brunt, although they never married. It is reported that

the night before D Day, Private Walsh disobeyed orders and left Lackham to tell Eileen he was to leave for France. Joseph found he couldn't get back into Lackham without facing arrest. After dark Eileen's father Percy Brunt, a Lackham farm-worker, guided Joseph back across the fields, carefully avoiding the American sentries

Percy Brunt appears in other records of this period; Oliver Menhinick, Head of Horticulture at Lackham for 35 years, described the condition of the grounds after 1945 :

The garden survived the war years, when the old mansion house was occupied by General Patton's servicemen and tanks were parked on the grass. The paths had grown over but Percy Brunt and Bert Bird found them by probing with an iron bar. Only a few of the fine shrubs survived although the larger specimen trees were in good condition

The house was de-requisitioned by the War Ministry on August 1st 1945 and the Minister for Agriculture formally gave the County Council the go ahead to purchase Lackham on November 12th 1945. The sale was

agreed in June 1945 and the estate was conveyed from Maj. Holt to WCC on November 15th 1945 for the sum of £42,000.

The County Council purchased Lackham with a view to turning it into the Wiltshire Farm institute, with a 60% grant from the War Agricultural Committee, but this was on the understanding that the Committee would use Lackham to run its own training courses for de-mobilised servicemen for the next three to five years



Wiltshire County Council

(Note that a new County flag was introduced in 2007)

Lackham was run by WCC until tertiary education was removed from County Council control in 1993, when the College became independent and was renamed Lackham College. In 2000 Lackham, Trowbridge and Chippenham colleges merged to form the new Wiltshire College, which has recently (2008) been enlarged by the welcome addition of Salisbury College. Necessarily additional buildings have been necessary since 1945 and the focus of the estate has shifted but it is still basically an agricultural rural establishment with a community who live and work there as there has been for over a thousand years.

