

## Chapter 2

### The Principal Land Owners of the Parish

There were Lords of the Manor of Barnstaple and Tawstock soon after the Normandy conquest in 1066. In the 12th century, William de Braose who held the lordship of the Manor of Tawstock gave this together with the sub-manor of Hele to his daughter, Loretta, as a dowry on the occasion of her marriage to Robert, Earl of Leicester, who died about 1209. Loretta the Countess of Leicester, being childless bequeathed one third of Tawstock together with the land of Hele Manor, to Buckland Priory, a house of nuns in Somerset. The remainder of the estate she bequeathed to her niece Matilda who married Henry De Tracy. Thus the greater part of the estate passed through various marriages down through the years to the Wrey family.

This was through Lady Anne daughter of the 4th Earl of Bath marrying Sir Chichester Wrey of Trebigh, Cornwall. Their son Sir Bouchier Wrey K.B and Lady Florence Wrey became the first of the Wrey family to move into Tawstock Court the Manor House.

Now the boundary of the old Wrey estate manor was a little different from the old parish boundary as you can imagine with 2 principal Land Lords in the parish. If we start at Sticklepath Farm at the top of Lake Hill travel across to West Lodge which is near the crematorium, up over the Roundswell Hill leaving out Upcott Farm Roundswell, across to Hollamore Farm. Leaving out Corffe House and Corffe Bungalow we travel down to Tawstock School taking in Tawstock Village and Park Gate Farm, across to Collabear Farm over the ridge to Linscott Farm and cottage. From here across the valley to Pristacott Farms down the road to Combe and Rodge Farm, down to the Burbrook Farms and Fishleigh Barton. At this point straight down to the river Taw and down stream to New Bridge then across the river down stream to Court Barton the whole of the farm, then across the river again to the south bank and up to Sticklepath Farm where we started. When I was a young lad I have seen some old oak field gates with the initials Sir RBSW burnt into the gate head with a hot iron in earlier years.

The other part of the original estate which was inherited by Buckland Priory in Somerset, remained in their possession until the Dissolution of the monasteries in 1536-38. When the monastic lands were redistributed, Hele Manor became the property of the see of Canterbury in 1542 and later in the same year it passed to John Wyndham. Sometime thereafter, it passed into the ownership of the Sturts, a Dorset family, a descendent of which was elevated to the peerage as Lord Alington.