

16TH CENTURY WOODHURST



SWAN WEIR BUILT AT THE END OF THE 16TH CENTURY

The 16c was a century of great change in England. A century of innovation, adventure, exploration, and great literature. But the one change that had a great affect at the time and even more in the centuries since, the breakaway from the Church of Rome and the establishment of the Church of England. The church was the centre of village life and as such the changes in the country would have been felt in the small communities such as Woodhurst

In this booklet I am attempting to give a picture of Woodhurst in the 16th Century. To help I am using records that are held in the Cambridgeshire Record office in Huntingdon, and I thank them for permission to use the records. Also information from books and the internet. Unfortunately the church registers for Births Marriages and Burials for Woodhurst which began in 1538 are lost. These would have been a great help in discovering many aspects of the life of the population.

The records that I have used are

Lay Subsidy Rolls These were a tax to subsidise foreign wars. Begun in 1290 they fell out of use, but were revived by Henry VIII. They consist of a list of names of the members of the parish that qualified to pay this tax, the value of their goods or land, and if labourers their annual wage. The amount of tax they had to pay was also included.

Wills There are 34 wills of Woodhurst people made during this century still in existence. They provide an interesting insight into people's relatives and possessions including farm stock, clothes and furniture.

Manor Records Woodhurst Manor belonged to Ramsey Abbey until 1539, then it belonged to the crown. There are minutes of the Manor Court Records for five years, from 1561-1565. These are in Latin but have been translated. They illustrate how the court worked, transfer of land, and the bye-laws that were set by the court, The most prominent members of the community were jury (homage) members,.

Google I found this to be an extremely useful tool in finding information about life in the sixteenth century

KINGS & QUEENS 1500-1558



HENRY VII



HENRY VIII AND HIS 6 WIVES

- Catherine of Aragon
- Anne Boleyn
- Jane Seymour
- Anne of Cleves
- Catherine Howard
- Catherine Parr



EDWARD VI



MARY 1ST

POINTS TO NOTE

At this time the church was called All Hallows or All Saints. This was the same as St Ives church as Woodhurst was a chapelry belonging to St Ives. Although the keeping of a church register for Births Burials and Marriages was made law in 1538 the ones for Woodhurst were lost and the first register begins at 1680.

In the 16c they used the Julian calendar so the first day of the year was March 25th. This was not changed to the present Gregorian calendar until 1752.

The Elizabethan alphabet had 24 letters. The letters 'i' and 'j' were interchangeable

And the letters 'u' and 'v'

Capital J was often used instead of capital I

A letter which looked like 'y' made the sound 'th'.

Therefore the word 'the' was written 'ye'

The spoken language had a base of about 500 words, today the number is 2,500. This was the age of Shakespeare and he and other writers invented many words at this time.

The penny (d) was the unit of currency. Other coins were

a farthing	a quarter of a penny	Halfpenny	half a penny
Half groat	two pence	Sixpence	six pence
Shilling	twelve pence	Crown/ half angel	five shillings
Angel	ten shillings	Pound	20 shillings or 240 pence

Numbers were written using Roman lower case letters

liij = 4 viii = 8 xl = 40 xxxij = 33 c = 100 ccxxxv = 235

Inflation was extremely high in the 16c.

Comparisons were made in 2005 with the 16c

£1 in 1500 is equivalent to £480.10 in 2005

£1 in 1550 is equivalent to £200.51 in 2005

£1 in 1600 is equivalent to £100.64 in 2005

Prices of food and clothes

Bread 2d **chicken** 1d **oysters** 4d a bushel **tankard of ale** ½ d **beef** 3d a pound

Honey 2 groats for ½ a gallon **eggs** 2d a dozen

Pair of shoes with buckles 8d **coloured felt hat** 2s **coloured felt hat eaten by moths** 1s

½ yard fustian 16d **3 dozen buttons** 9d

Important dates in the 16c

- 1500 Henry VII is king
- 1501 Henry's elder son Arthur marries Catherine of Aragon
- 1502 Prince Arthur dies
- 1509 Henry's second son, Henry, marries Catherine of Aragon.
(with special dispensation from the Pope)
- 1509 Henry VII dies and Henry VIII becomes king
- 1516 Henry and Catherine have a daughter called Mary.
- 1530 A law passed stating that the old and disabled poor people should have a licence to beg.
- 1533 Henry declared that his marriage to Catherine was annulled and married Anne Boleyn. This resulted in rejecting the Pope's authority.
- 1533 Henry and Anne Boleyn had a daughter, Elizabeth
- 1534 An Act of Supremacy was passed which made Henry VIII head of the Church of England.
- 1536 Anne Boleyn accused of committing adultery and was beheaded. Henry then married Jane Seymour.
Dissolution of small religious houses
Catherine of Aragon dies. Her funeral is at Peterborough.
- 1537 Jane Seymour gave birth to a son, Edward, and died a few days later.
- 1538 Ordered that every church must have an English translation of the Bible and another that idolatrous images to be removed from churches.
Thomas Cromwell ordered that the parson must enter in a book all Marriages, Baptisms and Burials that took place in his church
- 1539 Act of Six Articles which laid down beliefs of Church of England
- 1539 November, the Abbey at Ramsey, which was Lord of the Manor of Woodhurst was dissolved and monks were found other employment. John Payke Junior was the treasurer and he was sent to Woodhurst to become their curate,
- 1540 Henry married Anne of Cleves and divorced her 6 months later.
He then married Catherine Howard

- 1542 Catherine Howard beheaded.
- 1543 Henry married Catherine Parr.
- 1545 Latin was replaced by English as the language of church services.
- 1547 Henry VIII died. He was succeeded by his son Edward VI. As he was only 9 years old the Earl of Somerset was his Protector. He was anxious to make England a true Protestant country.
- 1549/1552 A Book of Common Prayer issued. Priests were now allowed to marry.
- 1553 Edward VI died. As his half sister Mary, daughter of Henry's first wife Catherine of Aragon, was Catholic, Lady Jane Grey was named as the next in line to the throne. But Mary came to London with her supporters and Jane was taken to the Tower of London, and Mary became Queen. Mary restored the Catholic Masses
- 1554 Mary married Phillip of Spain, this was very unpopular in the country. Aged 17, Lady Jane Grey was executed. Clergy who had married were ordered to leave their wives or lose their living. The Act of Supremacy was repealed.
- 1555 Mary increased her efforts to restore Catholicism to England, this included burning Protestant leaders, the result being that many Protestants fled to the continent.
- 1558 Mary died and her half sister became Queen Elizabeth.
- 1559 In January Elizabeth was crowned and proceeded to restore a moderate Protestantism to England. The Act of Supremacy was restored in April. Bishops and clergy who would not recognise Elizabeth as head of the Church of England were removed from their posts. All but one bishop and about one third of parish priests did not recognise Elizabeth.
- 1570 The Pope excommunicated Queen Elizabeth
- 1572 A law was passed stating that all men except noblemen had to wear a woollen cap on Sundays.
- 1581 People were fined for non-attendance at a Church of England church. This was aimed at the Roman Catholics.
- 1588 The English fleet defeated the Spanish Armada

16C ENGLAND

Population During this century the population of England rose from just over 2 million, to about 4 million. Tudor life was ruled by your status in society and the Government made laws to perpetuate these divisions. At the top were nobility, then gentry and rich merchants, followed by yeomen and craftsmen, then tenant farmers and finally wage labourers. It is thought that 50% of the population were living at subsistence level, just about managing to survive. The Sumptuary Laws stated what clothes you could wear according to your status. The ability to take part in some sports and pastimes were also ruled by your place in society.

The rich people were very rich and enjoyed displaying their wealth, building magnificent houses, eating rich food and wearing ornate clothes. The poor on the other hand lived in simple huts and wore plain simple clothes. The government became concerned about the numbers of poor people and appointed a JP in each parish. One of their tasks was to collect money from the better off members of the parish to help with looking after the poor. They appointed an Overseer of the Poor to help in their work with these people .

The Government divided the poor into three groups.

The Helpless Poor. These included the old, the sick, the disabled and children. The children were given apprenticeships and the others a small weekly allowance.

The Able Bodied Poor These were people who were able and wanted to work. Each parish was ordered to build a workhouse for them to stay in until they obtained work. In the workhouse they would make things to benefit the parish.

Rogues and Vagabonds These were people who could work but preferred to beg or steal. Begging was made illegal and punishable by flogging and perpetual offenders could be hanged.

Education Children of nobility, gentry and yeoman farmers were educated. The boys went to a type of nursery school and on to grammar school when they were seven. The brightest then going to one of England's two universities, Oxford or Cambridge. Girls were educated at home. Children of the lower classes did not learn to read and write. As soon as they were able the boys worked in the fields and the girls helped in the house.

Medicine In the 16c many people died from epidemics such as smallpox, the plague, sweating sickness (probably influenza) and dysentery. Many women died in childbirth. Doctors were expensive and did not really understand how the body worked they believed that signs of the zodiac ruled different parts of the body. People would look to a wise woman if they were ill as they had an extensive knowledge of herbs. One third to one half of babies born died before they were 16. Average life expectancy was 35, although some people lived to their 70s or 80s. People were very superstitious, there were certain things women had to avoid eating or touching while they were pregnant or it would harm the baby, and belief in the power of witchcraft was widespread.

Transport Roads were poor especially those in the country, where they were often no better than muddy tracks. People walked or travelled on horseback , wealthier families had coaches or litters to travel in. Parliament Acts in 1555 and 1573 stated that every householder was expected to work on the roads for 6 days every year. Great use was made of the rivers , ships from overseas were quite small so they could travel a fair distance inland. This was an age of exploration by sea and in 1577-1580 Francis Drake circumnavigated the world.

Food and Drink There was a great deal of difference between the rich people in society and the poorest. Grand banquets were held by the nobles using many products from abroad. Those at the other end of the social scale ate rough brown bread made with barley or rye, cheese and onions and potage. Potage was made with water, grain and any vegetables they could grow. And if they were lucky some meat as well. Only the very poor drank water as it was unsafe to drink, others would drink low alcohol ale, often brewed by the housewife. Young children drank milk. The richer families drank imported wine, cider, brandy, sherry (sack) and mead. The wealthy ate off silver or pewter plates. Evidence of wills show that some people in Woodhurst used pewter plates. Poorer people used wooden trenchers, and the very poorest used a thick slice of bread as a plate.

Clothes Fashion was extremely important for the rich people, the more elaborate your clothes were the higher your status in society. The sumptuary laws stated what you could and could not wear according to your class. Silk and velvet were two materials only available to the very rich. The poorer middle class wore jerkins and doublets, over a shirt. The sleeves called fustian sleeves were separate from any other item. The poor had little money to spend on clothes. They wore aprons, fitted sleeves and neckcloths. Colours too stood for your position in society and the poor wore brown, yellow or blue dyed from walnut, madder or woad. Clothes were often held together with laces and pins. Clothes were made with muslin and wool which were cheap and easily obtainable. Everyone wore hats.

Leisure and Entertainment There was a variety of leisure and entertainment for the rich including hunting, hawking they played chess and backgammon. They played a form of tennis. Bowls and skittles. Music and dancing were popular and as the century advanced with the advent of Shakespeare and other playwright going to watch the plays in the newly built theatres became the fashion. There were games too for the poorer classes. Games such as Hopscotch, Marbles, Blind Man's Bluff, Skittles, Rounders, Shove Halfpenny, Shuffleboard, Knucklebones and Battledore and Shuttlecock. All classes of society gambled with dice and cards, and cruel sports like cock fighting and bear baiting were also popular.



The Lay Subsidy Taxes were began in the 13c to pay for foreign wars. Over the years it fell out of use but was revived by Henry VIII, This list consisted of male members of the parish over 16 years of age who were liable to pay the tax. The wealthier members paid according to the value of their moveable goods. Farm labourers who received a yearly wage of 20 shillings were also included. The very poor were not included in the list. Researchers say that in a rural community there would have been at least 40% of population receiving less than 20 shillings and not on the list, and therefore not liable for tax

It is difficult from this list to calculate the size of the population. In 1300 papers from Ramsey Abbey state that there were 55 families living in Woodhurst. There is every reason to suppose a similar number or a few more were living in Woodhurst in the 16c.



FARMER OVERSEEING THE LABOURERS AT HARVEST TIME

LAY SUBSIDY ROLL 1524

NAME	GOODS or LABOURER	VALUE	TAX PAID
John EDWARD sen	goods	£10	5s
William JUSTICE	goods	£6	3s
William HARROW	goods	£8	4s
John BARRENGER	goods	60s	18d
John NONE sen.	goods	£8	4s
Robert LYLLY	goods	40s	12d
John NUNE jun	goods	40s	12d
Robert ABBOT	goods	£5	2s 6d
John JOHNSTON	labourer	20s per annum	4d
William WARDE	goods	40s	12d
Thomas GOVY	goods	40s	12d
Thomas HARDINGS	labourer	20s per annum	4d
John SMYTH	goods	40s	12d
John FLESHER	labourer	20s per annum	4d
William ...LSON	labourer	20s	4d
Robert C...PONS	labourer	20s	4d
William GOBY	goods	40s	12d
John WARDE	goods	£6	3s
Thomas OKYE	labourer	20s per annum	4d
Richard WOODE	labourer	20s per annum	4d
John BIFIELD	labourer	20s per annum	4d
Robert FLESSHER	goods	40s	12d
Roger FARRINGTON	labourer	20s per annum	4d
William PAPE	labourer	20s per annum	4d
John ABBEY	labourer	20s per annum	4d
John CHRISTEMESSE	labourer	20s per annum	4d
John CARROW	goods	60s	18d
John EDWARD jun	goods	£4	2s
Reginald GOBY	goods	£4	2s
John LYLLY	labourer	20s per annum	4d
Thomas BRAINTON	labourer	20s per annum	4d

OUR CHURCH IN 16c

If you had come into this church in the 16c a very different sight would have met your eyes. The nave would have been a similar size to today except that it would have been painted in bright colours, the walls would have been covered with designs and religious pictures. Pictures depicting scene from the Bible showing good and evil. . The windows probably had stained glass. Most people could not read and the pictures told the Christian story. They had a great belief in life after death and hell and damnation. There is evidence on the pillars that they were painted at one time. There would have been a chancel but not the one you see now which was built in 1848. The present bell tower dates from early 17c, but there were bells in the church in the 16c either in a smaller tower or maybe hanging outside the church as at Old Hurst.

There would have been lights lit in the church in Woodhurst; an altar light, a sepulchre light and St John's light. People formed themselves into a guild to look after the St John's light. Money was left in wills for the upkeep of these lights. The sepulchre light , the Easter candle, was in the chancel which was where the priests conducted the service. The priest was the only one who could bring salvation to you, he would invoke saints, use relics, sprinkle the holy water and exorcise the devil. He would have been chanting in Latin while the congregation stood in the nave, not understanding a word he said although mesmerised by the magic of it. Seats were only for the very wealthy. The curates during this period were Sir William Watson and Sir John Whyte. Non-graduate vicars were given the title Sir, although they were not knights.

The priest would have been assisted by the parish clerk who played a vital role in the services, a knowledge of Latin was essential as he said the responses and read the epistle. He prepared vestments, books and the lights and altar for services. He was paid by the parish and may have worn a uniform.

After 1539 when Ramsey Abbey was dissolved by Henry VIII and the church in England split from the Pope and the church of Rome, parish churches gradually began to change. The pace of change depended on the local gentry. In some churches altars and the stained glass windows were removed. In 1545 every parish church was given a copy of the Bible in English and it was ordered that services must be in English. In 1553 Mary became queen and churches were ordered to revert to Roman Catholicism. The Latin Bible to be used and only Latin to be spoken in services. This lasted for five years until Elizabeth came to the throne. The English Bible was re-introduced and services again conducted in English. This break from Rome was permanent and the Church of England was firmly established. The vicar at this time was John Pake who had been the treasurer at Ramsey Abbey

During the next fifty years some seats were gradually introduced into church and attendance was made compulsory. . It is evident from later wills that the priests continued to play a vital role in the village as they were one of the few people that could read and write. They usually witnessed wills and sometimes acted as Scriptor or scribe. No villager could leave the parish for good without the signature of the parson and the constable. After John Pake there were three further curates in post until the end of the century.

1566 Reynold Middleton, 1573 Thomas Stacey and John Brett from 1583.

THE MANOR OF WOODHURST

The Manor of Woodhurst covered most of the parish of Woodhurst, it was an economic unit containing the Lord of the Manor's land, land that was tenanted, and common land. In Woodhurst there was also some free land that did not come under the jurisdiction of the Lord of the Manor.

Ramsey Abbey owned the Manor of Woodhurst until 1539 when Henry VIII dissolved the monasteries,. After 1539 the Manor reverted to the crown. The Manor was governed by a Manor Court, which in Woodhurst met every year. It was presided over by the Lord of the Manor or his/her Steward and all tenants were supposed to attend. Up to twelve of the more prominent members of the village were the Jury. The proceedings were in English but recorded in Latin until 1752

Land was held copyhold of the Manor, similar to leasehold today. All conveyances of copyhold land had to pass through the court and entry fines imposed. The minutes show disputes and changes in occupancy of holdings, details of rents due and paid, and any problems with tenants of the court. The court also appointed parish officials, such as constable, hayward, and ale taster, and set the byelaws for the coming year.

There are Manor Records for Woodhurst for 1561-1565 The byelaws set by the Manor Court for these years are as follows.

Medieval Latin plus 16c writing at times makes some words impossible to decipher

It is ordered by the aforesaid Jurors, with the assent of our Lady the Queen, that no-one shall keep or put his sheep in the field called Stubble Field before the feast of St Michael the Archangel ¹under a penalty of 40s.

Item that each person shall scour his ditches and water courses before the feast of St Andrew, ²under a penalty of 3s 4d.

Item that no-one shall allow his foals to go at large in the fields, that is to say the corn fields, under a penalty of 3s 4d.

Item that no cottagers shall keep more than two cows, and one weakling under a penalty of 6s 8d.

Item that no-one shall keep more than one plough ox before the common keeper of cows, called the herdman, before the end of harvest, under a penalty of 3s 4d.

Item it is ordered that all cattle called geste cattle, over the age of two years be avoided by.....until harvest be done, under a penalty of 3s 4d.

Item that no- one shall break hedges, under a penalty of 3s 4d.

Item that no-one shall keep bhyerdes under a penalty of 6s 8d.

Item that no beast shall lie in a field until Michaelmas Day but draught oxen, upon pain of 6s 8d.

¹ September 29th

² November 30th

Item that M Massye shall sufficiently make his fences around his pastures before the Feast of Saint Martin³, under a penalty of 40s.

Item that no-one shall cut down trees called bushes growing upon the common under a penalty of 10s

Item that no- one shall glean before the end of harvest under a penalty of 3s4d.

It is ordered by the homage, by the assent of our Lady the Queen , lady of this manor, that no-one shall make his hedges before the Feast of Saint Andrew under a penalty of 3s 4d.

Item that all stiles shall be repaired and made good before the aforesaid feast under a penalty of 3s 4d.

Item that a hedge or fence called a bratche⁴ hedge shall be fenced and repaired before the Feast of Saint Andrew under a similar penalty.

Item it is further ordered that all old orders should stand and be observed under the penalties fixed beforehand.

Item that no-one etc..shall keep geese after the beginning of lent under a similar penalty.

Item that no man shall keep any foals loose in the Fyebees after they are one month old, upon pain of 3s 4d.

Item that each person shall ring his pigs before the Feast of Saint Martin, under a similar penalty.

Item each person who collects peas collects them on their own lands, in the time called peascod time, under a penalty of 3s4d.

Item that no-one shall keep foals called foles loose in the fields after they have attained the age of one month, under a similar penalty.

Item that no-one shall agiste⁵ cows in the common pasture under a penalty of 49s.

On the following two pages are part of a copy of the original minutes of the Manor Court of Woodhurst for 2 October 1561 and the English translation.

³ November 11th

⁴ Think this means dividing

⁵ Remain and feed for stated time

PARISH OFFICIALS APPOINTED BY MANOR COURT

1561

Reginald Govey was chosen and sworn as constable⁶

John Byfielde and **Thomas Plomes** were chosen and sworn as ale-tasters⁷

Thomas Bushell and **Robert Endsbye** were chosen and sworn as overseers of all bye-laws made in the court

John Francke was chosen and sworn as hayward⁸

1563

William Colvyle was chosen and sworn as constable

William Clement and **William Webbe** were chosen and sworn as ale-tasters

William Christmas was chosen and sworn as hayward

1564

John Christmas was chosen and sworn as constable

John Frank was chosen and sworn as hayward

Roger Harrow and **Reginald Govey** were chosen and sworn as overseers



A VILLAGE CONSTABLE

⁶ Manorial officer link between lord of the manor and tenants, the keeper of law and order

⁷ Manorial officer responsible for the taste and correct measurement of ale

⁸ Manorial officer responsible for hedges and fences and preventing animals from straying

Manor Court Roll, Woodhurst, 2 October 1561

Woodhurst **Court Baron** with View of Frankpledge etc held in the same place on the day and year aforesaid, that is to say, on the second day of October in the third year of the reign of Queen Elizabeth.

Essoins None (*apologies for absence*)

Chief Pledges with the homage	Henry Lord	Robert Endsbye...
	William Colvyle	Roger Sedgwicke
	Roger Harrow	William Nunns
	John Plomere	Reginald Colvyle
	Thomas Bursall	John Crystemas
	John Byfielde	William Clement
	Thomas Plomere	

Whereas at the court held in the same place on 22nd September in the first year of the reign of Elizabeth, now Queen, it was presented by John Plomere that William Caroys, lying in extremity¹, surrendered into the hands of our Lady the Queen, through the hand of the same John Plomere, a customary tenant of the aforesaid manor, one messuage², with two virgates of land and two and a half acres of meadow, and one pightle, to the use and behoof of Jane Robson, wife of Robert Robson, lately the wife of the said William Caroys, for the term of her life, and after the decease of the same Jane, to the use and behoof of him or them [not clear whom this refers to] for ever, to whom the aforesaid John Plomere and a certain John Crystemas and Roger Harowe bargained and sold the aforesaid messuage and all and singular the premises, with their appurtenances, according to the force, form, effect and tenor of the last will and testament in writing, shown then in full court, of the aforesaid William Caroys, just as by the rolls of the aforesaid court, amongst other things is fully contained and may appear.

Now to this court came both the aforesaid John Plomere and the aforesaid John Crystemas and Roger Harowe, and in full court they witnessed that a certain bargain and sale of the aforesaid messuage, with two virgates of land and the rest of the premises, was made by them to William Laurence esquire and his heirs for ever, to have to the same William and his heirs for ever immediately after the death and decease of the aforesaid Jane. And afterwards to this same court, in completion of the aforesaid bargain and sale, came both the aforesaid John Plomere, John Crystemas and Roger Harowe, and Robert Robson and Jane, his wife and the late wife of the said William Caroys, and (she, Jane, having been examined, alone and secretly, by the Steward) in full court they surrendered into the hands of our Lady the Queen the aforesaid messuage, with two virgates of land and two and a half acres of meadow, and one pightle³, to the use and behoof of the aforesaid William Laurence esquire and his heirs for ever, under this condition following, that is to say, That the aforesaid William Laurence, his heirs, executors or assigns should pay or cause to be paid ten pounds of good and lawful money of England, according to the force, form, effect and tenor of the aforesaid last will and testament,

¹ When he was dying

² Dwelling house & surrounding property

³ Small irregular shaped piece of land usually at end of cultivation

WILLS

Wills were written on paper or parchment. They were then copied into large ledgers. There are no original wills for this century for Woodhurst. but there are 34 that have been copied into these large ledgers..

Thirty one written by men and three by women. The women were widows.

Two of the men were widowers and one a bachelor.

The remaining 28 men died before their wives, clearly indicating that men did not live as long as women. Often the man writing the will left property to his wife to be taken away if she remarried. In two cases the wife is pregnant and property is left to the unborn child if it is a boy, and a little money if it is a girl.

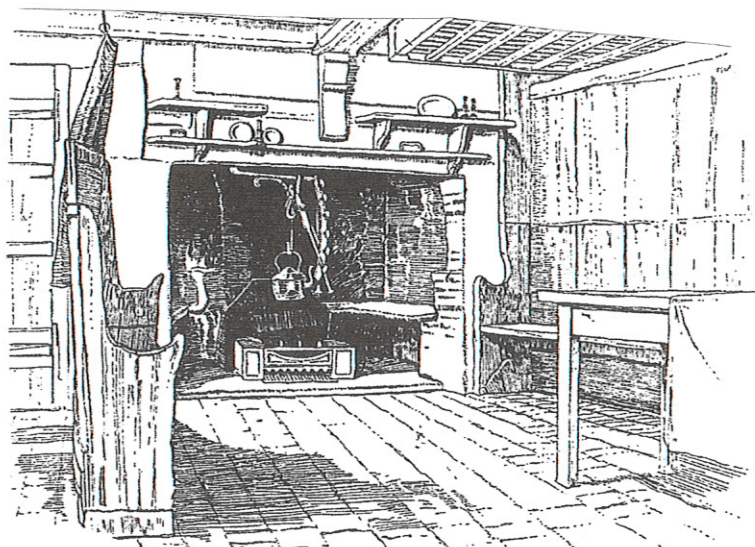
Money is left to the mother church of Lincoln (the church was in Lincoln diocese), to Woodhurst church, to the lights in Woodhurst church, to repair of the bells, to repairing the roads in the parish, for the priest to say prayers for their departed soul, and to the poor. The wills were generally written shortly before the death of the writer, and the government encouraged probate to be proved very quickly after death. The priest as one of the only people in the village who could read and write would often have written the original will and he was usually one of the witnesses. As one of his tasks was to look after the poor he encouraged people to leave money to them.

Wills also reflected the changes occurring in the country as a whole with regards to the church and the break with Rome. In the early part of the century the wills refer to our blessed lady St Mary and to all the saints on heaven. All reference to Mary and the saints is absent later on in the century after Elizabeth becomes queen and the split from Roman Catholicism becomes permanent.

Some wills give an idea of the clothes, household goods, animals and land that the writer has to leave his family and friends. A list of their furniture gives an indication as to what kind of house they lived in. For example 'a hanging for a standing bed'. (*This is a bed standing away from the wall and it has curtains around it*) suggests that this was a two storey house, one of the largest in the village. Wills were however not only written by the wealthier members of the village, in the list for the 16c there are also a labourer and a shepherd. Rich or poor the one constant is the fact they wanted their soul to be right with God so that they could enter heaven

On the following pages is a list of all the wills that still exist for Woodhurst in the 16c, including their status, name of their wife. Numbers of children what animals they mention in their wills and a brief not of anything of interest in their will.

FIREPLACE IN A YEOMAN'S
FARMHOUSE



H = Horses C = Cattle SH = Sheep s = son d = daughter

LIST OF WILLS

Name	Status	Date	Wife's name	No of children	H	C	SH	Arable crop	Land and Property
William Harrow		Feb 1520	Johana	1s 1d	*	*	*		Message west end of town Place called Pinchbeck + 12 acres
Richard Carter		Sept 1528	Joan	1s		*	*	*	
John Sanders	blacksmith	Oct 1533	Johan	1s 1d	*	*	*		Wife to have house & land unless she marries when he will go to son
Alice Metcalf	widow	Aug 1539		1s 4d		*	*		
John Edward		Feb 1539	Margaret	1s 1d	*	*	*	*	Copyhold house and land
Robert Plume		Oct 1545	Agnes	2s					
Bawedwayn Leadbeater		Aug 1545	Elizabeth	1s 2d	*	*	*		Copyhold house & land to wife. If she re-marries immediately his son Giles is to have the house
Edward Allwarde	husbandman	Oct 1545	Isabell	1s	*	*	*		Copy hold to wife as long as she remains a widow. 2 men servants a bullock each; a maid servant 10 shillings
John Barregere		July 1545	Alice	1d		*	*	*	Wife to have copyhold land as long as she remains a widow. Gave to 24 named people a bushel of malt Value £28
Thomas Okye		Feb 1546	Elizabeth	2s					Wife can stay in copyhold up to ten years and then it is for son John. If both sons die. House to be sold and money received to build a house for to lodge strange poor people, and money left over to go to poor.
Jeffrey Maddew	husbandman	July 1548	Alice	1s			*	*	Gave 10s for the highway between the church and Swan Hill Everyone without a plow to have a peck of wheat and a peck of malt
Richard Wood	Sheppard	Jan. 1552	Dorothy	1s				*	Wife to have house as long as she stays a widow, if she marries it goes to son William. Both to give to the poor as they think best to pray for Richard's soul
John Nune the elder	husbandman	April 1553	Katherine	4s 2d	*	*	*	*	House to eldest son, William Wife is pregnant child will inherit what he has given to two youngest sons if they die before they marry Value £43-13-4
John Skelton	husbandman	April 1553	Elizabeth	2s 2d	*			*	Value £12-12-4
Roger Farrington	Husbandman	October 1557	Margaret	2s 4d	*	*	*	*	Property in Old Hurst to wife. If she remarries son to enter it day before Value £60-8-0
Robert Flesher	Labourer	Sept 1558	Agnes	1d		*	*	*	Grandson to have house and wife Agnes can stay there unless she re-marries

Name	Status	Date	Wifes name	No of children	H	C	SH	Arable crop	Land and Property
John Christenmasse		Jan 1558		4s	*	*	*	*	
Anys Plume		Jan 1559		2s			*	*	A coomb of barley to be shared among the poor at christmas
William Carows		Jan 1560	Jane	9chdn		*			Copyhold to wife after she dies to be sold, 3 oldest sons to have 10s each remainder shared between other 6 children
William Adams		Mar 1566	Elizabeth	3s 1d		*	*	*	When all bequeaths met wife to dispose for children and soul of William as she shall think most expedient to the pleasure of God Value £8
Robert Allwarde		May 1571	Katherine	2s			*	*	Property sold for stock for son Robert until 18 & copyhold in Woodhurst if wife be having a man child by me then he to have it after she dies VALUE £9-7-8
Margaret Farrington	widow	Oct 1571		2s		*	*		
Roger Harrow		April 1572	Ellin	1s 1d		*	*		Wife 6 acres and 1 acre of meadow VALUE £17-8-0
Robert Aresdeacon		May 1573	Alice	3s 2d					House to son when 21, wife can live in it must repair VALUE £25-7=0
Thomas Harison	husbandman	June 1573	Elizabeth	1s				*	VALUE £31-6-1
William Stoughton	husbandman	May 1577		2d	*	*	*	*	estate equally divided between two daughters VALUE £26-11-4
Henry Lord	Yeoman	Sep 1575	Fellis	1s 3d	*	*	*	*	Wife to have land until son gets to age 21
John Christmas	yeoman	Feb 1583	Agnes	2s 2d	*	*	*	*	Owens much land main farm to eldest son, Swannells to younger son
Hugh Bateman	husbandman	Feb 1583	Alice	2s	*	*	*	*	Farms a large area wife to have farm until sons 21
William Colvill	husbandman	Mar 1583	Ellen	1s	*	*	*	*	Land to son, must look after mother, if she does not like it pay her £4 a year.
Richard Uptomas	husbandman	July 1592					*		All house and land to brother
John Christnas	husbandman	Mar 1592	Mary	1s	*	*	*	*	Wife have calvens farm, rest to son. If wife pregnant and it is a boy it will have this farm if a girl £30 when she is 28 VALUE £143-17-0
Thomas Harvey	husbandman	Sep 1595	Alice	1s			*	*	Wife to have farm where living after death to son. Buy a 10s.stock to give to poor yearly for ever more. Gave 3 servants a ewe lamb each. VALUE 10s 6d
Raynoldi Govie	husbandman	April 1599	Margaret	2s 2d	*	*	*	*	Land to wife and then sons. Sons to look after mother

Will of Bawedwayn Leadbeater

Bawedwayn Leadbeater made a very interesting will in 1545. This will illustrates the fear he had and that many people at this time had, that their soul would not go to heaven when they died.

He commends his soul to almighty God and our blessed lady Saint Mary. He gives 6d to the high altar of Woodhurst in recompense of his negligence

He leaves his copyhold property to his son Giles, his wife can live in it until she re-marries.

If all his three children die without issue he wants the house to be sold for the best price and of the money received one half to his sister and the other half will be done for his soul, and his good friends soul in the chapel of Woodhurst by the parish clerke for a masse and dirge and specially for poor people to pray for him.

He gives to his son Giles his hovind cow and to Agnes his daughter a red cow which Margaret Abbott has. He gives his best cow to be sold at the best price and with part of the money he wants the priest Sir John Pake to say half a trentall¹ of masses for his soul. He gives Sir John Pake his silk doublet, his second coat to his son Giles and to Thomas Ockey his blue coat, a dublette, my best cap, a pair of hose and a scythe. He gives his mother a kerchief², and a pair of fustian sleeves. He gives Elizabeth Ockye a pair of fustian sleeves,

He gives his wife Elizabeth all his grain growing in the fields of Woodhurst a red cow and all his household stuff.

He wills that the grain owed him by Robert Allwarde and Thomas Govie be sold at the best price and used to repair his house.. The residue of all his goods and chattels he wants Mr Giles Taylard to dispose of them and distribute in charity as he shall think best for the health of his (Bawedwayn's) soul and there with to please God.

¹ A trentall of masses is 30 masses said on 30 consecutive days for the soul of the departed

² A cloth used to cover the head

WILL OF RICHARD CARTER AS WRITTEN IN THE OLD LEDGER

Richard Carter
Carter mper de
Wode hunte

In dei nomine Amen The year of our lord
1550 upon the 11th day of September I
Richard Carter of Woodhurst Wylt Wylt and
of good mynd make my will in this maner of
wise I bequeythe my soule unto almyghty god
our blisful lady Seynt Mary and to all the
Seynts in heven and my body to be buried in
the churche yerde of Woodhurst And I geve for
my principall my best good yet 6 shillings
And I geve to the lady hight altar for
gottin of my godd and I geve unto for
my ghostly father & benefactour of Woodhurst And I
geve unto the lady godd And I geve unto our
ladye light godd And I geve unto the sponser
light and to Seynt Johns light godd des I geve
by 2^o unto o^r mother churche of Lincolne des I
will that John my sonne have vj combe of barley
vj bullockes and vj sheepe and if he die wth in
y^e year of age I will paye this good wherof remayne
to his grandfater and that he shal paye it to the sponser
for the helpe of his soule and for the soules
of all the soules of the
Wolfe John Carter his brother Symon byson
John Norone and I make my next John Carter
and John Walling my executor and William
Wuff executor and overseer

RICHARD CARTER

*In dei noie Amen*¹ The yere of oure Lord one thousand five hundred 28, the 3 day of September I Richard Carter of Woodhurst wyll witts² and of good myndes make my will in this manner of wise.

I bequeath my soul unto almighty God, our blessed lady saynt Mary and to all the saints in hevyn and my body to be buryede in the churche yarde of Woodhurst. *And* I give for my principall my best good that is sh..ke³ *And* I geve to the high aulter for forgotten tithes 20d. *And* I give unto Sir Robett my ghostly father⁴ a bushel⁵ of whete *And* I geve unto the bells 20d *And* I geve unto oure Ladys light 20d *And* I geve unto the sepulcr light⁶ and to seynt Johns light 20d *Also* I give 6d unto our mother churche of Lincoln⁷ *Also* I will that John my sone have 6 combe⁸ of barley 2 bullocks and 6 shepe *And* If he die with in 15 yere of age I will that this good aforseide remain to his grandsire and he see that it be disposed for the helth of his soul and for there souls that it came of and for all Christian souls

The witness

John Cartere his brother **Symon Hy.....** **John Nonne** and i make my wiff **Joan Carter** and **John Ballyinger** my executors and **William Ruff** executor and onpere.⁹

Proved 23 September 1528

¹ In the name of God Amen

² Only will that says this others say whole mind

³ The main things that he is bequeathing

⁴ A priest

⁵ Equal to 8 gallons

⁶ Light that was burning constantly on north side of the church

⁷ Woodhurst was in Lincoln Diocese

⁸ Equal to 4 bushels

⁹ Umpire of the will to see bequests carries out

WILL OF JOHN CHRISTMAS WHO DIES IN 1592

This is a summary of the will of John Christmas written in 1592.

John Christmas was a husbandman the eldest son of John Christmas who died in 1583 He was married to Mary and had one son John. He was one of the wealthier members of the parish, his will worth £143 - 17shillings.

He left all his free land to John to be given when he reaches the age of 21 years. His wife Mary to look after the copy hold farm previously Calvens until John comes of age, but she must allow her mother-in-law to have half the fruit from the orchard.

Also he gave to his son 6 horses worth £6 a horse, 6 milk cows worth 16 shillings and 8 pence a piece; 24 wether sheep worth £7 a score: 23 ewe sheep worth £6 a score, one sow hog and store hog. All the cart and plough lumber that he had two long carts with two pairs of shod wheels, one muck cart with a pair of shod wheels cart and plow harness for 6 horses. Four pairs of harrows. Two dozen hurdles.

A standing bed with all that belongs

A great brass pot

Two kettles one less one bigger

Great goose pan

Pot hanging with the iron bar in the chimney

Standing table with a form

All the great chests that belonged to his father

4 pairs of sheets two flaxen and two harder.

All these moveable goods to be given when he is 21

John further states that if his wife Mary is pregnant and it is a boy he is to have the .Calvens farm when he is 21

If it is a girl she is to be given £30 when she is 28 years old.

He left his uncle William some sheep and all his uncle's children a cow bullock each.

He gave 10 shillings in stocks to Woodhurst for ever to be let out and the rent is for the use of the poor yearly for ever.

He gave to any poor body in Woodhurst who does not own a plough 12d and 6d to all his godchildren



PLOUGHING IN TUDOR TIMES

WOODHURST IN THE 16th CENTURY

What was Woodhurst like in the 16th century? It is probable that the road around the village was similar in shape to today, but the road itself would have been a track made of mud and stones. Thomas Okye in 1547 left 12 pence to repair the road between his house and the church with stone. Each parish was supposed to repair its own roads and a law introduced in 1555 stated that a man must be chosen to be 'Surveyor' of the highway. The rich would provide the materials and the poor work unpaid for 6 days every year to repair the road...

A rough estimate of the population of Woodhurst at this time is between 200 and 300. It has been said that over 40% of the rural population would have been very poor. In Woodhurst as well as these poor labourers there would have been people connected with country life such as blacksmiths, carpenters, thatchers and shepherds. There were husbandmen who were tenant farmers, and yeomen who were more prosperous farmers and often owned free land. Everyone would have known their place in society and how to behave accordingly. The wealthier members of society gave generously to the poor. Farm labourers, who would have had a little patch of ground behind their cottage – enough to grow a few vegetables, and maybe keep a pig – would only have earned about 20 shillings a year.

Their cottages were small; only one or maybe two rooms, the walls made of clay, mud and cow dung on a wooden frame. There would have been a hole in the thatched roof to let the smoke out. Later in the century chimneys began to be built at one end of the cottage. The floor was made of earth. Glass was not affordable for poorer people, so they had wooden shutters over their small windows. Light inside the house was provided by rush light. These were made by dipping a dried rush in animal fat to make a torch. Furniture was made of wood; they would sit on a bench or stool with a plank of wood for a table. They would use wooden trenchers to eat off; the very poorest would use a thick slice of bread as a plate. They only had one cooked meal a day, and that would have been potage, which was made with water, grain and any vegetables they had and if they were lucky a bit of meat. Children drank milk and adults ale if they could afford it, as water was unfit to drink.

Everyone wore several layers of clothes to keep warm. The men wore breeches and hose (stockings), an undershirt, jacket and a loose tunic. Everyone wore a hat. The poor women's clothes were made of wool. Clothes would have been dyed with natural dyes and would have felt coarse against their skin. Most poor people probably only had one set of clothes, and washing clothes or indeed themselves was quite rare. It is difficult to imagine what their houses must have smelled like!

In Tudor times clothes indicated your position in society. In 1510 a law was passed saying what you could and could not wear according to your social class. For breaking these rules servants and labourers could be put in the stocks for three days.

The wealthier members of Woodhurst community would have lived in larger houses, with glass in their windows and walls made of wattle and daub or even of brick. Unfortunately we have no evidence of a brick house in the village at that time. Swan Weir, next to the pond, is the only house remaining in Woodhurst that was built at the end of the 16th century. This type of house would have been occupied by the husbandmen and yeomen farmers. The houses were large enough to have standing beds with curtains around them. They had large fireplaces and a selection of brass and iron cooking pots, wooden, chests, tables and chairs. The wealthier farmers used pewter platters and some had candlesticks, indicating their houses were lit by candlelight not rush lights. They wore more elaborate clothes made of better materials; precious enough to be mentioned in Wills as bequests to family and friends. Their sons would have been taught to read and write, and the girls to do fine needlework. Some houses were large enough to require servants to look after them. Thomas Harvey had three servants and in his 1595 Will he left them each a lamb.

The farmers and their labourers would have worked in the three great fields of Woodhurst: Stockin, Goslin Bush and East. These fields were divided into strips and people had a number of strips each in any of the three fields. Some labourers may have had just one strip. In addition there were several small closes and furlongs. Work began at sunrise and ended at sunset. To cultivate your land you needed a plough; those without a plough were very poor and often the recipients of money or grain in the Wills of better off members of the community. Crops grown were wheat, barley, malt and peas, and hives of bees were kept. Oxen were used to pull the plough, not horses; horses were used as a mode of transport. Cows were kept for their milk although sheep milk was also used. There were a lot of sheep in the village, a favourite gift in Wills too.

At the heart of the community were two organisations, the Manor and the Church. The Manor, which until 1539 was owned by Ramsey Abbey, looked after the day to day running of the village. The Manor Court met at least once a year in the village to note changes in tenancy, to set the bye-laws and to appoint officers. After the dissolution the Manor passed to the Crown and the business of the court was overseen by a steward, usually a lawyer, acting for the Crown. The Priest and the Church looked after most of the other needs of the community. Attendance at church was made compulsory by law. This century was one of change; at the beginning the Church was Roman Catholic, with the Bible and all services in Latin. By the end of the century the Church had separated from Rome and the Pope, becoming the Church of England with all services and the Bible in English. The priest was the spiritual head of the village, and could guarantee your soul a place in heaven. People were obsessed with getting everything in order, including paying tithes due and gifts to the Church so that their soul would go to heaven.

When people were dying the church bells tolled to mark their passing. Only the wealthy had a coffin; most bodies were simply wrapped in wool. When someone was buried the whole community would follow the body to the church for the funeral, the bell tolling as they walked. Sometimes the poor were given money for attending the funeral, as the more people who prayed for your soul the better it was. Some paid the priest to say a *Trentall* of masses for them – that is thirty masses said on thirty consecutive days for your soul.

With no schooling for most of the children of the village, as soon as they were able the boys would have been helping in the fields and the girls taught by their mothers how to look after the house and younger siblings. Average life expectancy at this time was 35, although some lived to 70 and more. However, 1 in 4 died before their fifth birthday. From the Wills we have, we can see that it was common in families for husbands to die before their wives, so there would have been many families in Woodhurst where a woman was the head of the family. If a widow was lucky she may have found another husband, but in doing that she might – according to the contents of her husband's Will – lose the house and any property he had left her.

As a small rural community, affairs of State would have passed the village by, but 6 people were enrolled as reservists in 1588 when there was a threat of Spanish invasion. They had to declare the weapons they had available. Records show that these included a musket, a pike and a sword!

Woodhurst was a small tight knit rural community – a place that people did not pass through; the main roads were a mile to the east and the west. The village would have grown all the food it needed, and although life was hard it was a community where people looked after each other. Conditions were not hygienic and diseases spread rapidly, so the villagers would have lived in fear of becoming ill. The sweating sickness, which was a disease of the Tudor era, killed nearly everyone who caught it. There was also the Plague, Smallpox, TB, a skin disease called Scrofula and *childbed fever* which many women died of after giving birth. It is unlikely that a doctor lived here but there would have been a wise woman or man who was knowledgeable about herbal remedies. This was frowned on by the Church but these were often the only person that people could turn to if they were ill. People in the 16th century were very superstitious and had a strong belief in magic and fate; often the wise woman (or man) would have been thought of as a witch who had magic powers to sort out their problems. And were their problems greater, or easier than those we face in 2015? I do wish we could travel backwards through time to find out!

16c GLOSSARY

agist	to pasture/to pay for pasture
bushel	equal to 8 gallons
coffer	wooden box or chest for storing clothes and other valuables
combe	equal to four bushels
coverlet	bedspread
crowe of iron	a rotating trippet, iron grid for pans adjacent to a fire
dirige	a funeral dirge
dressing bord	table for dressing meat and other food
dripping pan	pan put below meat on revolving spit to catch the drips of fat
doublet	close fitting body garment with or without sleeves
Feast of St Andrew	November 30th
Feast of St Martin	November 11th
Feast of St Michael the Archangel	September 29th
fustian	thick coarse woollen cloth
fould hurdle	hurdle. Used for enclosing
gears	harness for horses
gentleman	superior to a yeoman, didn't work with his hands
gyld	guild;a medieval association providing masses for the dead and mutual support
hayward	manorial officer responsible for hedges and fences and preventing cattle from straying
heckford	young cow not yet had a calf
holland apparel	clothes made of fine linen
hose	thigh length wool stockings
hovel	open shed /poor dwelling
husbandman	a tenant farmer
hutch	large wooden box with lid for storage
iron rack	holds pipes in a fire to burn out impurities of tar, nicotine & carbon
joyned bedsted	bed made by a joiner

kerchief	cloth to cover the head
kettle	open cooking pot with semi-circular handles at each side
leas/leyes	open meadow, pasture or arable land
livery cubbord	cupboard for clothes/with perforated doors for keeping food
mark counties	not an English coin, but used as a unit of accountancy in Danelaw worth 13s 4d. Half a mark 6s8d Quarter of a mark 3s 4d.
messuage	dwelling house, outbuildings, garden & land
nuncupative	a spoken will
peasecod	pea-pod
peck	equal to two gallons
pillowbeare	pillowcase
platter	flat dish or plate or pewter, wood or earthenware
pott	metal cooking vessel usually with three feet to stand over a fire
prizes/prizinsore	someone who appraised the contents of the will
sawcers	small shallow dish or deep plate in which salt or sauces were put on the table. NOT a saucer to go under a cup
sepulchre light	the light which was burning continually before the sepulchre on North side of church
shod wheels	wheels with iron rims
standing bed	Bed with hangings and high enough to have a trunkle bed sliding beneath it.
standing table	table standing out in the room
tangs	large girth used to fasten the load or panniers on a pack saddle.
tester	rigid wooden frame supporting a draped canopy
thackinge	thatching
trentall of masses	30 masses said on 30 consecutive days for the soul of the departed
truckle bed	low moveable bed hidden away during the day.
unpare/onpare	someone to see that the will was carried out as the person making it wanted
wether	male sheep
yeoman	a farmer, more prosperous than average husbandman, may have owned land

