The background of the cover is a detailed historical painting. In the foreground, a man with a long white beard, wearing a dark hat and a voluminous red cloak with a white fur trim and a gold chain, stands on a wooden bridge or balcony, looking out over a river. The river is filled with several boats. To the left, a large boat carries a group of people, including a figure with a red and white flag. Further down the river, several smaller boats with rowers are visible. The river is flanked by lush green trees and fields under a soft, hazy sky.

Elmbridge Hundred: Rural Retreat to Forest Law 1492-1548

By C.L. Dawson

CasaColori Local History Pamphlets

In the aftermath of the War of the Roses, a London goldsmith becomes Lord Mayor of London, and searching for a country residence fitting for his status, invests in vast swathes of land in Elmbridge Hundred where he constructs a spectacular moated mansion adjacent to the river Thames at Oatlands. After Sir Bartholomew Rede's death, his nephew William is forced to fight for his inheritance, firstly in court against a rival family who claim the manor as theirs, and then against Thomas Cromwell, King Henry VIII's chief minister, who has a plan to create a vast hunting ground close to Hampton Court for the increasingly corpulent monarch.

This playground for the privileged will have a dramatic impact on those scraping a living within its boundaries. Once Hampton Court Chase is fenced off, the inhabitants of a large part of Elmbridge Hundred find themselves subject to Forest Law, which puts their livelihoods under threat; but it is not an easy matter to appeal to the determined Cromwell and his irascible master.

This is a true story of how a quiet corner of Surrey first attracted the interest of rich Londoners and the royal court, and how the locals attempted to stand their ground.

Elmbridge Hundred: Rural Retreat to Forest Law 1492-1548

A True Account of Wealthy Goldsmiths, Lost Manors Disputed Back to the Domesday Book, a Feisty Widow Standing Up to Thomas Cromwell, and the Devastation of Forest Law.

C. L. Dawson



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Sir Bartholomew Rede, Lord of the Manor of Oatlands

Part 1: Sir Bartholomew Rede, Lord of the Manor of Oatlands 1492-1505

Goldsmith



In 1492 — the year that Christopher Columbus set out on his first transatlantic voyage — Bartholomew Rede¹, the newly appointed Prime Warden of the Goldsmiths' Company in the City of London, travelled upriver by barge and disembarked at the wharf at Weybridge Hawe. He was looking for a country residence within easy reach of the capital where he could find respite from the hustle and bustle of his day-to-day responsibilities, and was immediately taken by this particularly attractive section of the Thames, where

¹ Also referred to in ancient documents as Reed, Read, Reade etc.

Sir Bartholomew Rede, Lord of the Manor of Oatlands

it meandered through meadows and around two small islands, and was joined by the river Wey. It might have been a stretch of the imagination to call the nearby crumbling farmhouse a ‘manor house’, but he could picture in his mind’s eye a moated mansion, set in acres of fields and forests. As he was shown around the surrounding villages by John Hall, a local landowner but also tailor to wealthy Londoners including himself, Bartholomew Rede saw an opportunity to develop an estate worthy of his status where his family might put down roots.

In the following decade, along with his younger brother John (who was, conveniently, a notary) and a small group of colleagues and friends as investors, he bought up tract after tract of land in Walton-on-Thames, Weybridge, Byfleet, Shepperton and Chertsey as they became available, offering prices that no widow or heir could refuse, amassing almost 2,000 acres, including 124 acres of ‘a messuage called Otlands²’ and another larger one, almost 500 acres, called ‘Wodehammes’.³ Of the 42 extant land deeds that recorded property transactions in Walton-on-Thames and Weybridge between 1492 and 1504, 31 (nearly three-quarters) involved Bartholomew Rede⁴.

He was one of the new breed of men who had made their fortunes through their own abilities, not inherited wealth, in his case as a craftsman with

2 A messuage being a ‘dwelling place.’ Otlands is the spelling in the original document.

3 He also bought: WEYBRIDGE: ‘Le litle pyngle’, lying together in ‘Persing Meadow’ at ‘Coclyndale’ towards Shepperton ‘Chirch’ plus one acre in ‘le Persyng’ in the place called ‘le Hamon’; and another in a field called ‘Illond’, which croft or ‘litle pyngle’ and land and meadow are called ‘Eyes Londres’; cottage and land called ‘Crokfordes’. WALTON: Lands in East and West Ashley, where the latter was commonly called ‘the Byttum’; lands in Kenysworth and Apps Field; messuage and divers lands called ‘Sayes’. CHERTSEY: Diverse lands called ‘Russelles’. SHEPPERTON: the Manor of Shepperton and 20 messuages, 20 gardens and lands in Uppershepperton, Nethershepperton, Netherhalford and Litlyngton.

4 In addition to the Hall family, other vendors were named: Bynding; Hawke; Ruggeley; Warner; Waterman; and Wydder.

Elmbridge Hundred: Rural Retreat to Forest Law 1492-1548

a head for business. His origins in the middle of the fifteenth century were in the coastal town of Cromer in Norfolk, the middle son of five boys and one daughter of Roger and Catherine Rede. By 1480, having completed a seven year apprenticeship and presented his ‘masterpiece’, Bartholomew was accepted as a liveryman of The Mystery of Goldsmiths of the City of London (more commonly known as the Goldsmiths’ Company⁵) and opened his own premises in ‘Goldsmith’s Row’, one of the side streets off Cheapside not far from the Goldsmiths’ Hall, where he himself would take on apprentices (eighteen over time plus two ‘aliens’ or foreign workers). A trade in precious metals and stones was always at risk of attracting less legitimate citizens and practices, and the Goldsmiths’ Company’s royal charter sought to counter this by ensuring that all products of gold and silver received a mark of authentication from the Assay Office in the Goldsmiths’ Hall — the ‘hallmark’ — as well as the maker’s mark, and that the sale of silver plate and jewellery was limited to members of the company, and could only take place in regulated premises. This required a body to enforce the rules, and the role of wardens evolved who were permitted to enter any place selling gold and jewellery, in any part of the country, to search for and even destroy items without the hallmark, or with a faked hallmark or of a sub-standard quality, and to issue fines and threaten imprisonment for which they could ask for support from the Mayor or Sheriffs if needed. These wardens were appointed annually by the livery members at a General Assembly in April, with the most senior member of the Goldsmiths’ Company being the Prime

⁵ The Goldsmiths’ Company was one of the twelve ‘great livery companies of the City of London, together with (in order of precedence): Mercers; Grocers; Drapers; Fishmongers; Skinners; Merchant Taylors; Haberdashers; Salters; Ironmongers; Vintners; and Cloth Workers.

Sir Bartholomew Rede, Lord of the Manor of Oatlands

Warden, who took office on the 19th of May, which was the feast day of St. Dunstan, the company's patron saint.

Bartholomew Rede's skills as a jeweller were sufficient to attract royal interest. In June 1488, he attended King Henry VII at his Manor in Sheen⁶ who purchased '*diverse jewels*' to the value of £106, 13 shillings and four pence⁷, a receipt for which found its way into the state papers, to be paid by the Treasurer of the Exchequer. These six objects were a mixture of religious and household items, including, in order of value: A tabernacle with an image of our Lady, garnished with a great red gemstone and a large sapphire; a holy water font of gold, garnished with rubies, pearls and a sapphire; a tablet of gold garnished with a red gemstone and pearls; a salt cellar garnished with rubies and pearls; another salt cellar of gold shaped like a columbine flower; and a flower of gold with a lion, garnished with diamonds and two rubies.

⁶ The Manor of Sheen would be redeveloped a few years later into Richmond Palace.

⁷ Approximately £100,000 today, according to the Bank of England Inflation Calculator.

Elmbridge Hundred: Rural Retreat to Forest Law 1492-1548

Mandate to the treasurer and chamberlains of the 2 June.
Exchequer to deliver "vpon the sight hereof in redy
" money, . . . without preste or othr charge," to Bar-
tilmew Rede, the sum of cvi. li. xiii. s. iiiii. d., in full pay-
ment of his bill for "diuerse juelles." Given at the
manor of Shene. Signet B.

Account of the diuers jewels attached to this Signet
Bill :—

In primis an holywater stoppe of golde, garnysshed w^t
rubyes, peirlis, and a grete saphir weying xi. vnces
quart., price xx. li.

Item, a salte of golde like a columbyne, weying iiiii. vnces
iii. quart., price ix. li.

Item, a tabernacle of oure lady, weying xvii. vnces di.,
garnyshe w^t a grete baleys and a grete saphir, price
xl. li.

Item, a salte with a beralle garnysshed with rubyes and
peirlis, weying x. vnces di., price xv. li.

Item, a tabelet of golde garnysshed w^t baleyce and peirlis,
weying viii. vnces di. quart., price xvi. li.

Item, a floure of golde w^t a lyon garnysshed w^t dyamondes
and ii. rubies, price vi. li. xiii. s. iiiii. d.

Summa - cvi. li. xiii. s. iiiii. d.

Fig 1: Record of receipt for Jewels Sold to King Henry VII in 1488

After he became Prime Warden of the Goldsmiths' Company, with his increased prestige, his known royal payments for jewellery totalled more than £2,200⁸.

⁸ Equivalent to £2.2m in today's currency.

Master of the Mint

For the majority of his career, Bartholomew Rede was, literally, surrounded by money. The skills necessary to maintain the standards of precious metals led inevitably from the earliest times to a close involvement of senior goldsmiths in the manufacture and quality control of the currency of the realm and Bartholomew first appears in written records in 1482, when he was appointed Warden of the Exchange by Edward IV. The Exchange managed the purchasing of gold and silver bullion to be melted down and used to make coins, issued newly minted coins, and allowed foreign merchants to exchange their money for English currency and provided foreign coins for those travelling overseas. These transactions were according to rates on a table displayed in the Warden's office. Then, in February 1483, he was promoted to Master of the Mint, which must have come as a surprise because the incumbent, Sir William Hastings, had held the title, as well as that of Lord Chamberlain, for many years, and would in fact be re-instated three months later. Those three months, however, were to be highly eventful.

The factory, workshops and offices that made up the Royal Mint were located, for reasons of security, inside the walls of the Tower of London, in a tightly controlled area of the Outer Ward known as Mint Street. Making coins — the silver penny, silver groat, gold angel and gold ryal — was a noisy and dangerous process, using furnaces to melt down the bullion, which released noxious fumes, then cutting pieces of metal that were placed between engraved

Elmbridge Hundred: Rural Retreat to Forest Law 1492-1548

dies, hammered by hand, and hardened again by fire. At Easter, just as Bartholomew was becoming used to this chaotic environment, King Edward IV fell fatally ill and died a few days later on the 9th April 1483. His eldest son became Edward V, and since he was a minor, just twelve years old, the role of Protector was given to Richard, Duke of Gloucester, who decided bring his nephews — the new king and his younger brother, the nine-year-old Prince Richard — to the Tower of London to await the coronation. From his office, Bartholomew Rede would have looked out over Tower Green to the White Tower where the two Princes were lodged. Over the course of the summer, as parliament announced under pressure that they were illegitimate and Richard III was crowned instead, they were seen less and less until eventually they disappeared.

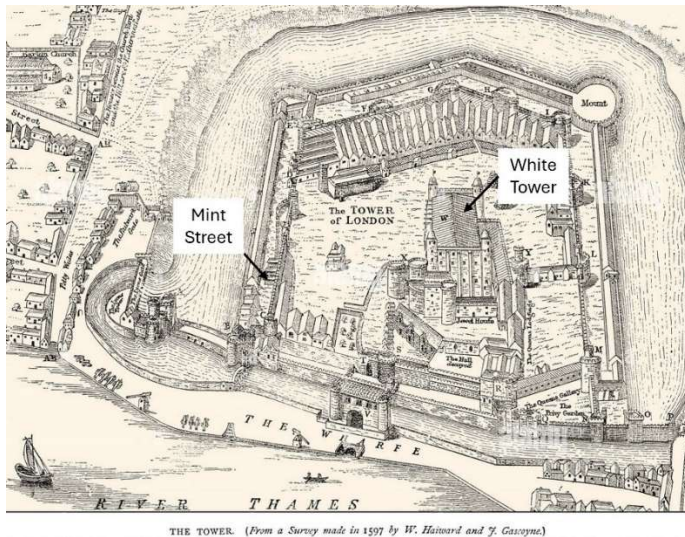


Fig 2: The Tower of London – Mint Street and the White Tower

Sir Bartholomew Rede, Lord of the Manor of Oatlands

These were turbulent times. In June, Richard III executed Sir William Hastings, who had been re-appointed Master of the Mint, for treason and installed his own choice, Sir Robert Brackenbury, who was also Constable of the Tower and therefore notionally in charge of the well-being of the two Princes. Brackenbury was an unfortunate man, as two years later in 1485 he was obliged to join his sovereign on the battlefield at Bosworth where he was killed by the army of Henry Tudor.

Bartholomew Rede had escaped harm and by the end of 1485 was again made Master of the Mint, a position he was to retain for the rest of his life, albeit jointly as the role was considered too open to corruption for one person. In 1489, Henry VII decided to introduce a new coin — a gold sovereign that was worth 20 shillings (in other words, the first pound coin) but was of such a high value that it was mostly used as a show of wealth — and Bartholomew Rede was assigned to head the commission for its introduction.



Fig 3: Henry VII Gold Sovereign 1489

Lord Mayor of London

Bartholomew Rede was a rich man who had access to money and was comfortable with financial matters. Like other goldsmiths in an era before banks, he was much sought after for a variety of services that included storage of gold, for which he issued a receipt that was in effect a type of paper money, and money-lending for which he made a charge. His clients were not only other rich merchants and nobles, but also the king himself. As a result, his network of illustrious connections across London and beyond grew, and he was sought out by others looking for introductions to court, so he began to consider how to make the most of his position.

The path from Master of the Mint to Prime Warden of the Goldsmiths' Company to Lord Mayor of London was not an uncommon trajectory for a talented individual, and Bartholomew Rede had been fortunate to have been apprenticed to Sir Hugh Bryce who had done just that, and thus provided a blueprint. The first step was to be elected as one of the two Sheriffs of London by representatives of the Livery companies, which was a requirement for any future mayor in order to prove his judgement and character, and this Bartholomew achieved in 1497. The City of London was governed by the Court of Aldermen, who each represented a ward, and the next year he was appointed Alderman for Aldersgate, in which Goldsmith's Hall was located. In preparation for the promotion to Mayor that would surely follow, he acquired the lease of Crosby Place on Bishopsgate in January 1501, which through the accumulation of adjacent properties had become one of the largest private houses in the City

Sir Bartholomew Rede, Lord of the Manor of Oatlands

of London. It is likely that he knew the place well, since it had previously been occupied by Richard III during his ‘protection’ of his nephews barely a mile away in the Tower of London, and where he was residing when offered the crown. It was certainly prestigious enough that the fifteen-year-old Catherine of Aragon was lodged there, presumably under Bartholomew’s supervision, in November 1501 when she arrived from Spain in advance of her marriage to Prince Arthur.

At Michaelmas 1502, Bartholomew Rede was triumphantly elected Lord Mayor of London by his fellow Aldermen and as was the convention, he took office in the Guildhall in the second week of November. On that morning, accompanied by the Aldermen, he boarded the ceremonial barge that took him on a symbolic journey from the City of London to the Palace of Westminster where, in front of the Barons of the Exchequer, he swore allegiance to the king. On the return, the river was filled with hundreds of boats of all sizes, from the official barges of the Livery Companies to the wherries rowed by the watermen, all decked out with banners and streamers and accompanied by the sound of drums, trumpets and flutes. The new Mayor alighted at Baynard’s Castle, then rode side-by-side with his predecessor Sir John Shaa, followed by the Aldermen, also on horseback, through St Paul’s Churchyard and along Cheapside, back to the Guildhall, with ushers clearing the way. The procession was cheered on by the crowds; London had a population of 50,000, five times the size of the next largest city of Norwich, and it felt as if most of them were out enjoying the spectacle.



Fig 4: The Tudor Lord Mayor's Show

The banquet in the Great Hall was magnificent. The thousand guests — prominent citizens, senior court representatives, members of the aristocracy and visiting foreign dignitaries — were seated at sixty long tables, and served food prepared in the newly-built kitchens: roasted in its eight hearths or boiled in vats or baked in the ovens. In the afternoon, Bartholomew attended mass at St Paul's Cathedral, and then there was a torchlit parade back once again to the Guildhall. Despite the cost to the Goldsmiths' Company which had organised and paid for the event, there was an economic benefit to the City as a whole with the influx of visitors requiring transport, accommodation, transport and meals, and hopefully buying jewellery.

Sir Bartholomew Rede, Lord of the Manor of Oatlands

Henry VII's life had been beset by adversity, and during the early part of Bartholomew Rede's mayorship, in February 1503, there was yet another tragedy when his wife Elizabeth of York, older sister of the Princes in the Tower, died of an infection after giving birth to a daughter who only survived a few days; and this less than a year after their eldest son Arthur had succumbed to sweating sickness. In the wake of such grief, Maximillian I, the Holy Roman Emperor, sent a delegation to London to offer his condolences, which was lodged at Crosby Place, where they were treated to a feast that became legendary. An account was written down by a monk, Friar Jones, from the Greyfriars which was discovered almost a century later in the monastery library by John Stowe, who included it in his famous 'Survey of London' of 1598. The story went as follows⁹:

"More than a hundred guests were entertained in the grand dining hall at Crosby Place. Three courses of the best meat money could buy were served on silver plates stamped with Bartholomew Rede's coat of arms, and after each was finished, rather than being taken back to the kitchens, the leftovers were placed in what appeared to be a miniature area of parkland, complete with fencing and trees and sweet-smelling flowers, that had been arranged in the centre of the hall. Only at the end of the dinner were these remnants transferred to trenchers and carried out through the main gate into the street where tables had been set up for the poor."

⁹ I have summarised the original account, and modernised the spellings.

Elmbridge Hundred: Rural Retreat to Forest Law 1492-1548

Amongst the attendees was an Italian jeweller who, after the meal was finished and the guests were talking amongst themselves, was showing those around him a precious stone which he claimed was of great value, and which he boasted that he had offered to the Emperor Maximilian, and to the King of France and also to King Henry VII, but none of them could afford to pay him what it was worth. The conversation was overheard by the mayor, Bartholomew Rede, who asked him 'So, you have offered it to our Sovereign Lord, the King's Grace?' to which the foreigner answered in the affirmative. 'Do you think the King refused it for want of treasure? Let me see it!' said Bartholomew, and examining it from all aspects as befits a man who was himself a notable jeweller, he asked the Italian what he valued it at. 'A thousand marks!'¹⁰ came the reply. 'And will that buy it?' said the mayor, to which the stranger nodded 'Yes.'

Bartholomew gestured to one of his men, and asked him to fetch a spice mortar and pestle, and placing the stone inside ordered him to crush it into a powder, which he did. Then Bartholomew requested a cup of wine, which he poured into the bowl and, to the astonishment of all of the observers, drank it down in one go. Turning to his guest once more, he said 'Speak honourably of the King of England, for you have now seen one of his poor subjects drink a thousand marks at a draught.' And then he commanded that the full cost of the jewel be paid to him."

§

¹⁰ Approximately £667,000 in today's money.

Sir Bartholomew Rede, Lord of the Manor of Oatlands

The extravagance of Bartholomew Rede's gesture makes a good anecdote, but what exactly does it signify? He seems to be making the point that in England even 'poor subjects' (though he was anything but poor) can afford to buy expensive jewellery that the king cannot, and what is more, that they can even wastefully dispose of it. However, if the tale is to be taken at face value — when evidently a genuine precious stone could not possibly be ground down by hand — an alternative interpretation could be that, as an ex-Prime Warden of the Goldsmiths' Company, he was in a position to recognise a fake. But rather than humiliate the merchant, he chose to pay him what he asked. What an honourable citizen the mayor was!



Fig 5: Bartholomew Rede's Coats of Arms as Mayor of London 1502

Lord of the Manor of Oatlands

At the end of his mayorship in late in 1503 he was knighted. Sir Bartholomew Rede was an extremely wealthy man; he had status, he had friends and acquaintances in high places and was looked upon favourably by the king, and he had acquired property and vast landholdings in the City of London and Surrey, as well as in Middlesex, Berkshire, Oxfordshire, Wiltshire and Hampshire. Yet, it was only at his Manor of Oatlands that he could truly leave behind the fetid streets of the city and breath in the country air. There, he had removed the existing timber-framed buildings and constructed a spectacular moated mansion in brick, with a gatehouse and inner courtyard, towers at each corner, a great hall and a family chapel.

In 1505, he became unwell and made his will. He and his wife, Elizabeth, had not been blessed with children, but he had a nephew William, son of his brother John, whom he had taken under his wing in the goldsmith's trade, and who would be his heir. He died in October, aged around 48, and in accordance with his wishes was buried in a tomb in the cloister at the Charterhouse, the Carthusian monastery a few streets north of Goldsmiths' Hall¹¹. For a man so prominent in his own lifetime, he left few physical traces — there are no portraits of him, or an effigy, no surviving personal papers or letters, and his spoken words are recorded only in the brief, and probably apocryphal, recounting of his exploits at his great feast. His main legacy was

¹¹ His will also left property in London to the Carthusians, the revenue from which was to be spent on a Free Grammar School in his parental home town of Cromer.

Sir Bartholomew Rede, Lord of the Manor of Oatlands

meant to be the Manor of Oatlands, but whether there was one manor on his estate, or two, and who owned them, later became a matter of some debate and led to a court case. In time, his beloved country house would be unscrupulously removed from his descendants' ownership, then later raised to the ground, until all that remained was his coat of arms carved on a wooden shield that had once adorned the end of a pew in his family chapel.



Fig 6: Sir Bartholomew Rede's Arms from a Pew (Elmbridge Museum collection)

Part 2: The Lost Manors of Oatlands and Hundulsham 1511-1537

Trouble at Goldsmiths' Hall



Fig 7: Site of Goldsmiths' Hall, near Cheapside, on Agas Map of 1560

In 1511, Elizabeth Rede took a last look at the frontage of Crosby Hall in the line of buildings on Bishopsgate, and put her city life behind her. The provisions of her late husband Sir Bartholomew Rede's will six years earlier had left her his numerous properties for the term of her natural life, but now a few years later she wanted to make Oatlands, in the Surrey countryside, her main residence. She would live there alone for the next twenty years, receiving visits from her sister Philippa who was married to a notable jeweller, and from

her late husband's brother John and sister-in-law Anne, and from her nephew William with his wife and children who lived close by.

William Rede had followed his esteemed uncle into the goldsmith's trade, benefitting from his patronage. On Bartholomew's death, he even took on his duties of Master of the Mint alongside Robert Fenrother who had held the title some years previously, but despite this position and his jewellery business, the following decade was not a favourable one. Although he was Bartholomew's heir, he was not able to reside at Oatlands until the death of his aunt, who remained in good health, so he and his family lived across the river at the impressive, but less splendid, manor house of Shepperton. Then, on the accession of Henry VIII to the throne of England in 1509, he and Fenrother were unceremoniously replaced at the Mint by Sir William Blount, 4th Baron Mountjoy, who had been Henry's boyhood tutor — although a silver lining was that among his relatives, the Blounts of Kinlet, was William's future second wife, Isabel.

Next, in the same year that Elizabeth Rede was moving permanently to Oatlands, there was trouble at the Goldsmiths' Company when he found himself standing, unrepentant, before its leadership at Goldsmiths' Hall as charges were read out. It had begun when, for some unspecified reason, he had refused a request to be one of the bearers of the coffin of William Marshall, a recently deceased Warden, to St. Dunstan's Church for burial. Initially, he was fined 40 shillings but refused to pay, and was then brought before the Assembly at which his 'contumacious conduct' — wilfully disobeying their authority — put him in danger of imprisonment. Instead, in full view of all of the Wardens, he was

The Lost Manors of Oatlands and Hundulsham

dismissed from the Goldsmiths' Company. The following year, his reputation suffered further when a commission of twelve senior courtiers and lawyers was established to enquire into 'extortions and deceptions' during his time as Master of the Mint under Henry VII.

Then came the court cases.

The Lost Manor of Hundulsham

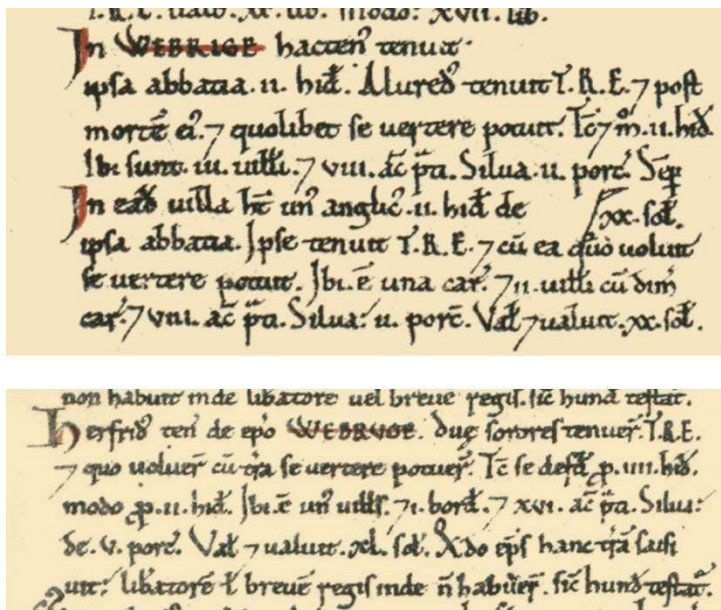


Fig 8: Weybridge (as Webrige and Webruge) in the Domesday Book 1086

Elmbridge Hundred: Rural Retreat to Forest Law 1492-1548

The roots of the legal issues that the Rede family would face stretched back almost five hundred years to the Domesday book where Weybridge, then home to just seven households, was mentioned in two separate entries, and where three manors were identified. The first entry, written as ‘Weybrige’, listed the Abbey of Chertsey as both ‘Tenant-in-chief’ and ‘Lord’ (according to the feudal structure) of eight acres of meadows and woodland occupied by three households. A further eight acres, where the Abbey was still Tennant-in-chief, were being ploughed by ‘an Englishman’ who was the Lord of the Manor, with two households. Over the centuries, these tiny communities would become the manors of Weybridge and Oatlands (or Ottelands, Otlands or Otland), and at some point the Tenant-in-chief would become the crown, possibly at the same time as Byfleet (which was also originally held by the Abbey of Chertsey) in the early fourteenth century.

The second entry, ‘Weybruge’ in the Elmbridge Hundred, was the same size as the other two combined, encompassing 16 acres where two households lived — a villager and a smallholder. This manor had belonged to two sisters before the Norman conquest, but was now under the Lordship of Herfid of Throwley in Kent, although the ultimate Tenant-in-chief was Odo, Bishop of Bayeux. Odo was William the Conqueror’s half-brother, sharing the same mother, and appeared in the Bayeux tapestry (which he may have commissioned) in full chain armour at the Battle of Hastings. In later medieval documents, this manor was called Hundulsham, or occasionally Hundeswaldesham.

The Lost Manors of Oatlands and Hundulsham

A few weeks after the death of Sir Bartholomew Rede in 1505, an Inquisition Post-Mortem was put in place to establish the extent of his landholdings and identify his heirs and their status — whether there was in fact an heir, and whether he or she was a widow, or a minor — and thereby ensure that any fees or services due to the king were continued without a break. The Inquisition was organised by the local Sheriff who selected a jury of freeholders who could be relied upon, with their local knowledge, to spot any discrepancies or forgeries in the documents that the Rede family would present to prove ownership of property and land; or in the case where no deeds were to be found, to confirm possession on the basis of their collective community memory. The resulting document listed Bartholomew's acquisitions in Surrey, amongst them 124 acres called 'Otlands' (previously owned by John Coke, a lawyer) and another of almost 500 acres, called 'Hundeswalde' alias 'Wodehammes.' (previously owned by Robert Turberville and Thomas Elynbrigge). These two sets of prior owners were known to each other as there appeared to have been some confusion over title at the end of the fifteenth century, when a court case had been brought by Turberville and Elynbrigge against John Coke, regarding "Brooklands, Hundeswaldesham and Byfleet." Nevertheless, with the official duties completed, Elizabeth Rede and her nephew William took legal possession of their estates.

There was, however, an objection. The Wodeham family had owned a house and land referred to as Hundulsham on their land deeds since at least the 1250s. In 1484, John Wodeham of Weybridge died and his estate was granted to his daughter and heiress, Margery and her husband Edmund Waker, who

Elmbridge Hundred: Rural Retreat to Forest Law 1492-1548

lived in Berkshire. Learning that the Redes had taken possession of what they considered their manor house and lands, they contested the findings of the Inquisition Post-Mortem, and arguments continued back and forth for several years until around 1515 when Margery Waker brought a case against Elizabeth Rede and William Rede in the Court of Chancery, where civil disputes over property were handled. The court ordered the discovery of documents to support the case and subsequently, maybe providing an insight into the resolve of Elizabeth Rede, her nephew William was forced to bring a separate case against his aunt for “Detention of Deeds of the Manor of Hundulsham, required for the defence of title against the bill in this court of Margery Waker.”

The Redes disputed the very existence of a separate manor of Hundulsham, arguing that there had always been two houses on their estate in Oatlands, both of which they owned. In the absence of evidence to the contrary, the Rede family won. After Margery Waker’s death, her son Thomas tried to appeal the ruling in 1522, but lacking funds he was forced to file a complaint in the Court of Requests, which was known as ‘the court of poor men’s causes’. He protested at the injustice of trying to fight against a family ‘of great substance, with many friends in the county’ but the original decision was upheld.

As a consequence, the name of Hundulsham — the manor which had been home to generations of people working its land for hundreds of years — was never heard of again, and became lost to history.

Thomas Cromwell's Ward

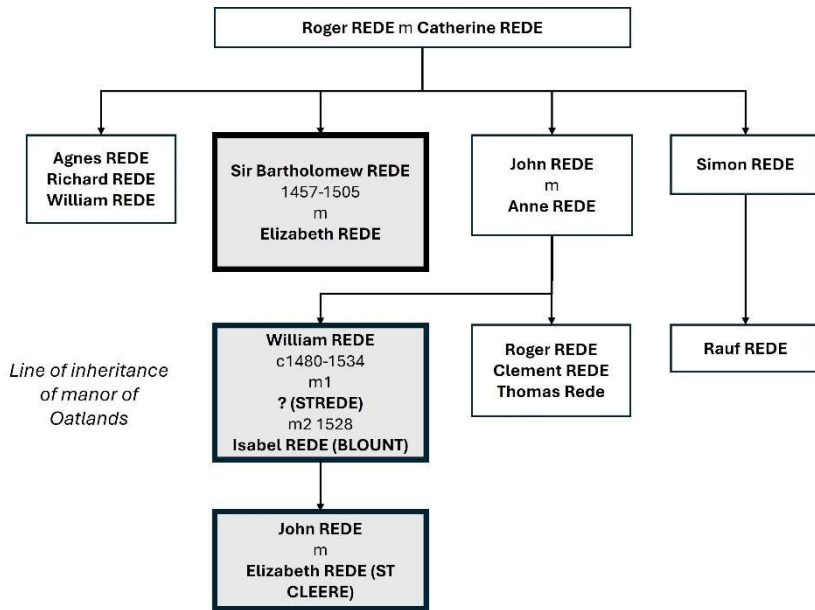


Fig 9: Rede family tree, showing line of inheritance of the manor of Oatlands

No longer a goldsmith but referring to himself as a ‘gentleman’, William Rede married Isabel Blount as his second wife in 1528, and she became stepmother to his children. With Elizabeth Rede still living in Oatlands, William and his new wife continued to live in Shepperton.

The claim to fame, or infamy, of Isabel’s family was centred around her eldest sister, Bessie Blount, who had followed what would become a well-worn path from maid-of-honour to the Queen to mistress of King Henry VIII. Her

distinction was that in 1519, she gave birth to a boy, who was named Henry Fitzroy in recognition of his royal father, and whom Henry openly acknowledged as his son. As the lack of a legitimate prince continued, Fitzroy was raised to the peerage in 1525 aged six, as the Duke of Richmond and Somerset. The attraction of Isabel Blount for William Rede might therefore have been partly this proximity to royalty and intrigue, as she was in effect an aunt of the king's only son. How she benefitted from an older husband, who was a former goldsmith with a question mark over his integrity, is less clear although the prospect of becoming Lady of the Manor of Oatlands might have had an appeal.

In 1532, Elizabeth Rede died, and her nephew was finally able to move his family into the manor house of Oatlands. It was to be his misfortune that he was only able to enjoy his new surroundings for a short period because he died in 1534, leaving Isabel as potentially the second widow in succession in long-term residence. A new Inquisition Post-Mortem was established, but the situation was very different this time since ownership was passed to William's eldest son John, who was still a minor. The rules stipulated that in this case, the child was to be placed into royal wardship, whereby the person to whom the wardship was granted had full control over the property and lands, and the marriage prospects of the ward. This created a market for wardships, which could be bought and sold, being particularly sought after by wealthy fathers looking to improve the fortunes of their daughters.

Unusually, John Rede was made a ward of Thomas Cromwell, recently appointed Henry VIII's principal secretary and chief minister, and left for

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London immediately, even though there was no formal paperwork filed until 1536 — possibly an oversight that given future circumstances needed to be quickly rectified at a later date. This left Isabel in a precarious position, reliant on Cromwell, who had his hands full dealing with the king's 'Great Matter', for the decision as to whether she could remain at Oatlands.

Isabel's actions reveal her as a feisty woman, who had no fear of dealing with powerful men. A month after William Rede's death, a request was made on her behalf to Cromwell for John to return to Oatlands for the '*month's mind*' requiem service, and masses, because she felt it would be beneficial as there would be '*a great assembly of his kin*'. The next year, she wrote directly to him "*to know whether I shall continue your tenant in Brokeland and Otland during the nonage of my son-in-law. If you put me out it will be a great undoing*". Not receiving an answer, she travelled up to London with her counsel to tackle him face to face. Thomas Stydolf, Cromwell's local agent in Surrey who kept him informed of goings on, wrote that "*she takes me for a great enemy, and has complained about me to honourable men*". At the same time, he was fielding enquiries as to whether Oatlands, or other properties owned by the Redes in Weybridge¹², might become available, and attempts were made to surreptitiously find out what Isabel knew about the terms of the various land grants; but she was too clever to be taken in, and told him to take up matters with Cromwell as he had custody of the child.

¹² Including Sir Anthony Browne, a Surrey noble and courtier, and who would later become the first Lieutenant of Hampton Court Chase; he was interested in Weybridge Hawe.

Elmbridge Hundred: Rural Retreat to Forest Law 1492-1548

Events reached a turning point in late 1537 when a scheme came to light to create a vast hunting ground adjacent to Hampton Court, to be called Hampton Court Chase, which would necessitate the crown buying up, and fencing off, all of the land between the rivers Mole and Wey. The manor house of Oatlands happened to be positioned at its western edge, and was already of a sufficient calibre to be transformed into a royal hunting lodge, or even a standing palace, as it would require little additional expenditure to convert to the king's tastes. In December 1537, Henry VIII spent a fortnight at Oatlands making plans, and at the start of the New Year a deed was drawn up whereby, in exchange for the Manor of Oatlands and the lands in Weybridge and Walton-on-Thames, John Rede — whose great uncle Bartholomew had established the great estate — was granted the former lands of the Augustinian Priory of Tandridge, 25 miles to the south east, which had just been disbanded.

Sir Bartholomew Rede had built the prestigious manor house, and his family had lived there contentedly for almost fifty years but with its loss were left with only memories. If they had in fact used any underhand means to unjustly increase their landholdings after his death at the expense of Margery Waker, then being purposefully deprived of Oatlands by Thomas Cromwell, acting for Henry VIII, could be seen as a sort of comeuppance.

Part 3: The Enclosure of Elmbridge Hundred 1539-1548

Sickness, Age and Corpulence of Body



Fig 10: Approximate Boundary of Hampton Court Chase 1539-48

The more observant landowners and commoners living in Elmbridge Hundred in the summer of 1537 would have seen the first signs of impending change. Official-looking men were turning up unannounced in most of the towns and villages, taking measurements, checking boundaries, writing down lists of owners and asking questions about the value of landholdings. Later, back

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in London, the results of these surveys were turned into a set of proposed land purchases.

In the autumn, there was increased activity on the Thames as boatloads of timber were transported from crown property in Surrey and Berkshire. Peasants working the land, particularly around Byfleet, Cobham and Esher, watched as wood was unloaded from wagons then chopped into posts and rails by men wearing green liveries, whilst others erected a fence, shored up by earth on either side for strength, and dug out a deep ditch in front. At intervals, gates were placed to allow horses and carts to pass through, and there were stiles for those on foot. Occasionally, a ‘deer leap’ was created — lowering the height of the fence and installing soft sand on the inner side — that allowed deer to enter, but not exit.

In a matter of a few months, the locals would find themselves enclosed within a royal hunting ground, Hampton Court Chase, that came with a physical barrier, but also a legal one, that combined together would impact their lives for over a decade.

§

The origin of the royal chase was the unseating of Henry VIII during a jousting competition in January 1536, when he was crushed beneath his horse and lay unconscious for so long that onlookers thought he had died. In the aftermath, the existing sores on his legs became infected and would not heal. In constant discomfort, and requiring assistance to walk, his mood darkened, possibly exacerbated by a head injury, and he became bad tempered and

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irritable. Unable to participate in the sports he enjoyed, he compensated by eating and drinking more, which combined with his newly sedentary circumstances, led to a rapid increase in weight.

The conundrum of how to deal with Henry's lack of outdoor pleasurable pursuits paused during the terrible events of the summer of 1536 and the downfall of Anne Boleyn, then were taken up again the following year when a solution was proposed by the Privy Council. Hampton Court was the king's favourite palace, which he had transformed to showcase his own tastes in entertainment — feasting, music, dancing and gambling — so it would make sense to situate it at the heart of a great hunting ground so that Henry, who could now just about be lifted on to a suitable horse, would not have to travel far to hunt. This could be achieved by purchasing all of the land to the west of the palace, below the Thames and adjacent to the rivers Mole and Wey, thereby creating a royal chase that would continue all the way to the edge of Windsor Forest. The advantage of creating a chase partly bounded by three rivers was the reduced cost of fencing, known as 'paling'.

The Act itself, which was the outcome of all of the preparatory work, was titled 'Whereby Hampton Court is Made an Honor', and came into force on the first of October 1539. This formalised a legal agreement, or indenture, in two parts. The first concerned the acquisition (by purchase, exchange or via dissolution) of all of the manors over a wide area of Surrey¹³ and Middlesex,

¹³ In Surrey, the manors were: Walton-on-Thames, Walton Leigh, Oatlands (with lands in Weybridge, Walton-on-Thames, and Chertsey); Byfleet and Weybridge; East Molesey; West Molesey; Sandown; Weston; Imber Court; and Esher. The Manor of Oatlands had been acquired from John Rede in 1538.

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which represented the greater landholding of the ‘Honour’ of Hampton Court. The second part was the more specific agreement creating Hampton Court ‘Chase’, between King Henry VIII and a long list of named freeholders¹⁴ and copyholders in the Lordships, manors, towns and villages of East and West Molesey, Walton-on-Thames, Esher, Weybridge, parts of Cobham and other parishes and hamlets falling within the boundary of the chase, and applied to all of their lands, meadows, woods and pastures. All of these *“shall from henceforth be free chase and warren for all manner of beasts of venery and warren, and shall have all such and like liberties, jurisdictions and privileges as any ancient chase or forest within this realm has or of right ought to have, and every person and persons that shall fortune hereafter to trespass or offend within the said new chase, shall incur and run into danger penalties and forfeitures as if the same offence had been done or committed in any other chase or within this Realm of England”*.

The Act also laid out the rules and benefits that applied. The farmers were allowed to cut down and use or sell trees within their own property, and were allowed to fence off their own fields, but only whilst the crops were growing. Once the harvest was over, the officers of the chase would check that

¹⁴ At the top of the list was Sir Richard Page, a gentleman of the Privy Chamber, Vice-Chamberlain in the household of Henry VIII's illegitimate son, Henry FitzRoy, and High Sheriff of Surrey. Page had been imprisoned in the Tower of London in 1536 during the downfall of Anne Boleyn, on charges of treason and adultery, but later released on the advice of Thomas Cromwell. The name of John Machyn of Weybridge was also included whose servant, Alice Hamond, was subject to a violent attack on May Day 1536, which was reported in state papers.

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the deer were allowed free rein again. In recompense for their inconveniences, rents were reduced by one third, and fines on inheritance by a half¹⁵.

The king had been somewhat surprised that he had not been able to just clear his chase of people by the power of royal prerogative, and had been obliged to send out his commissioners to undertake negotiations, but he could henceforth look out from his palace directly onto his new hunting ground. It is highly unlikely that any courtiers would have dared to comment publicly upon the physical and mental changes that taken place to bring it into existence, but the writer of a later Act of the Privy Council, after Henry's death, described the situation at hand succinctly: *"The Chase was but newly and very lately erected in the latter days of the king of famous memory, when his highness waxed heavy with sickness, age and corpulence of body, and might not travel so readily abroad, but was constrained to seek to have his game and pleasure ready and at hand, the which his loving subjects were content for the comfort and ease of his majesty to suffer, trusting of a sufficient amends or relief to be had after"*.

¹⁵ In his Institutes of the Laws of England, Sir Edward Coke, Lord Chief Justice of the King's Bench under James I, was highly critical of the Forest Laws. He was a fierce defender of the common law against the royal prerogative, and argued that the king could only create new forests with the consent of those who lived there. To illustrate this, he cited the Act of Hampton Court Chase and its civilian benefits, clearly oblivious of the reality on the ground. Coke would be the subject of his own scandal in Oatlands in 1617.

The Enclosure of Elmbridge Hundred

Fenced In by Forest Law



Fig 11: Royal Hunting Grounds were Controlled by Forest Law

The ‘loving subjects’ of Walton-on-Thames, Weybridge, Oatlands, Brooklands, Byfleet, Esher, Cobham, and East and West Molesey were less than pleased to find themselves fenced-in, and soon became familiar with the antics of the royal hunting parties. By the early 1540s, Henry VIII had tempered his expectations and, no longer capable of a wild pursuit with a pack of dogs, had to content himself with what he considered less manly methods. Sometimes, he chased the deer gingerly on horseback down defined avenues cut through the

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forest, until they were caught in nets. At other times, the deer were flushed out of their hiding places by bloodhounds and pursued by greyhounds past a platform, known as a 'standing', where the royal hunting party shot at them with longbows or crossbows. This was a preferred method when the ladies wanted to participate, as they could use lightweight bows. At Oatlands Palace, the deer were rounded up in advance and held in a pen before being released to run through the rain of arrows.

For the common people who had rarely, if ever, given a thought to the definition of the land on which they were scraping a living, being told that they were no longer subject to the common law of the land, but were to obey 'Forest Law', was somewhat of a revelation. Legally, a forest was a large, typically wooded, expanse of land where the hunting rights belonged to the crown, and where the deer roamed freely. A chase was a private forest that only a select group of high-ranking nobles was permitted to create within their own estates, where they could hunt deer and wild boars and also, if they were granted the right to a 'free warren', to hunt smaller game such as foxes, hares, rabbits, pheasants and partridges. A park, on the other hand, was distinguishable by being fenced on all sides, so that the deer could not escape and were more easily managed. There must have been some confusion, therefore, when the indenture was read out, because Hampton Court Chase was clearly a royal forest, but at the same time it was enclosed, so was really a park, but it was called a chase. However, no-one was going to question the king's wording.

Forest laws developed from the twelfth century to protect the wellbeing of the hunted wildlife at the expense of anything else. As crown possessions,

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these animals were clearly not to be poached or taken from the forest, but the regulations extended to their habitat and food sources, so that they must be able to wander at will within the boundary defined by the fence and eat whatever they wanted. Moreover, there were many other rules that now had to be observed, and anyone found in contravention faced punishment by fine or imprisonment. Residents were informed about a series of restrictions: that they were banned from supplementing their meagre diets by hunting rabbits, or any game birds, or from taking fish from the ponds; that if they ventured out after dark, they ran the risk of being accused of night poaching; that their cattle would not be allowed to graze on common land, if the deer were present; that they could no longer remove the undergrowth from the woods which they used for fuel in the winter, as this was a food source for the deer; and that they could only leave Elmbridge Hundred, for example to go to the market towns, through specified gates. Movement was even more critically controlled during certain periods of the year, such as the weeks around Midsummer's Day when the red and fallow deer gave birth. Even finding a deer that had apparently died of natural causes was fraught with danger — being found in possession of venison, and especially selling it, was a crime as it was only permitted to be gifted, as a favour evoking status, by the king or forest owner.

There was soon much distress over the impact of Forest Law, especially amongst the poorest. In theory, the agreement allowed fences to be put up to protect crops, but in practice this was only during certain times of the year when the wheat and barley were growing, and their own flimsy barriers gave little protection. In the summers, constant crop damage by the herds of deer resulted

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over time in arable land being left uncultivated, and pastures became overgrazed producing treeless commons and heaths on which no animals could survive. In advance of the winters, the forest rangers took supplies of fodder and stored it away for the deer in locked buildings. Unable to subsist, families went hungry until many smallholders were forced out of the area, abandoning cottages that fell into ruin.

There was little scope, or resolve, to fight back. Elsewhere, other communities had resorted to tearing down fences at night and making off with the wood for firewood, but as the king's fearsome reputation grew, no-one in such close proximity to the court dared to turn to violence, although in some areas the situation became so dreadful by 1545 that a few desperate people made an official complaint to the Lieutenant of the Chase.

The Enclosure of Elmbridge Hundred

The Fearless Lieutenant of the Chase



Fig 12: Sir Anthony Browne, Lieutenant of Hampton Court Chase 1539-1548

On New Year's Day 1540, only three months after he had been appointed the first Lieutenant of Hampton Court Chase, Sir Anthony Browne faced one of the two incidents in his life that could have resulted in his swift execution. As a close friend of Henry VIII, he had accompanied the king to Rochester Castle where the plan — a misconceived attempt at chivalry — was to surprise Anne of Cleves (who was on her way to London to become the next Queen) in disguise. According to Browne's own words, written down in his

belatedly candid deposition at the subsequent Convocation to examine the matter, Henry asked him to enter her chamber in advance and tell her that he had brought a New Year's gift and ask her if she would like to see it. Expecting to be confronted with the epitome of beauty that he had conceived in his mind, Browne was met instead with a group of ladies-in-waiting, none of whom stood out in particular. Having been directed to the princess, he was "*never more dismayed in all my life, lamenting in my heart to see the lady that was so far and so unlike that which was reported*". Unwilling, potentially fatally, to warn the king, Sir Anthony noted "*in his majesty's countenance such a discontentment and misliking in her person... that he tarried not to speak to her twenty words*". Rather than offer the richly garnished sable scarf and cap himself, Henry sent Sir Anthony with the presents the next morning.

#

Sir Anthony Browne's primary title was Master of the Horse, one of the three great Officers of the Royal Household, in which he was responsible for the king's horses, whether used for war, pageantry or hunting. The role of Lieutenant of Hampton Court Chase was therefore a natural, and profitable, addition to his portfolio of offices which had allowed him to build up major landholdings in Sussex and Surrey, where he was a Justice of the Peace and a representative for the county in parliament on four occasions. Given his busy schedule, he employed a number of men to enforce Forest Law in the chase, including Forest Keepers and Underkeepers who maintained the fencing, managed the trees and timber, fed the deer, checked the wildlife numbers,

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organised the hunts and looked after the lodges, and kept an eye out for poachers.

The second life-threatening incident occurred in January 1547, when Sir Anthony Browne “*undertook the dangerous task of telling the King of his approaching end*”, an assignment for which he was probably the only volunteer. Henry VIII appears to have accepted his fate, however, since he appointed Browne as guardian to Prince Edward and Princess Elizabeth, and he personally informed them of their father’s death. As Master of the Horse, he had a major role in the funeral arrangements and then, in February, in the coronation. A painting that hung for many years in his descendants’ seat at Cowdray House¹⁶ showed him in the procession, accompanying the nine-year-old King Edward VI along the streets of London that had been gravelled so that the horses would not slip on the ice, past the crowds lining Goldsmith’s Row, on the south side of Cheapside, with the goldsmith’s shops “*set out with cups and beakers of gold, and the master of each shop standing at his door ready to salute the young king as he went by*”.

¹⁶ The painting “The Procession of King Edward VI from the Tower of London to Westminster Previous to his Coronation” was destroyed in a fire in 1793, but an engraving taken from it survives.

Dechased



On the third of September 1545 at Oatlands Palace, a group of ‘poor men’ representing almost the whole of Elmbridge and some adjacent areas — Walton-on-Thames; Weybridge; East and West Molesey; Cobham; Esher; Byfleet; Thames Ditton; Wisley; Hersham and Shepperton — stood nervously

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before the eight members of the Privy Council.¹⁷ They had been summoned to be examined about complaints that they had made to the Lieutenant of the Chase regarding their impoverished circumstances which, they maintained, were the direct result of their commons, meadows and pastures being enclosed within the fences and “*Overlaid with the deer now increasing daily upon them, very many households of the same parishes be let fall down, the families decayed ... the country thereabout in manner made desperate*”. The council was sympathetic and proposed that a commission be set up to record their grievances in writing. Unfortunately, no-one — not even Sir Anthony Browne who was usually the most fearless — felt up to the job of confronting the king with an account of the impact of his wayward deer.

There would be three more years of hardship for the commoners to endure until the commission they had been promised was established, and then only because Henry VIII had died and his decrees could be challenged without fear. On this occasion all was done properly, with the Council of Augmentations formulating fifteen articles designed to establish which of the complaints could be upheld, or was unsubstantiated, and what parts of the management and maintenance of the chase should be kept or changed. These formed the basis of a survey whose overseers selected twenty-four ‘*substantial and discreet men*’ of Elmbridge to answer under oath. The findings were then corroborated by visits to the hunting grounds, and by further interrogatories undertaken by Sir

¹⁷ Consisting of: The Duke of Norfolk; The Earl of Essex; The Bishop of Winchester; Sir John Cage; Sir Anthony Browne; Sir Anthony Wingfeld; Sir William Paget and Sir William Petre. Source: Acts of the Privy Council 1545 and 1548.

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Anthony Browne prior to his death later the same year of 1548 at the manor house he had built for himself in Byfleet¹⁸.

There was broad agreement on the conclusions, since the complaints of physical damage now aligned with the economic interests of the crown, where a notable decrease in revenue and rents, combined with the potential costs involved in making repairs to the fences, had become evident. So it was that in early May 1548, “*upon mature deliberation weighed and considered*”, it was agreed in the council chamber at Westminster that Hampton Court Chase would be ‘dechased’, with the proviso that the king would be permitted to use the land as a chase again at any future time should he wish to. The deer were to be rehomed in Windsor Park, and the fencing was to remain in place until Michaelmas when it would be removed, and the unenclosed land returned to its former tenants.

Finally, after a decade of suffering, the inhabitants of Elmbridge Hundred could return to a sense of normality.

¹⁸ He was succeeded as Lieutenant of Hampton Court Chase by Sir Michael Stanhope, whose tenure was literally cut short when he was beheaded for treason in 1552. Stanhope’s daughter Jane later built Ashley House in Oatlands, scene of an infamous ‘riot’ in 1617.

Timeline

Sir Bartholomew Rede. Lord of the Manor of Oatlands

Date (Age)	Event
1457*	Born in Cromer, Norfolk. <i>*His birth year is based on the assumption that he was 14 when he began his apprenticeship in 1471 according to the Goldsmiths' Company records.</i>
1471-1478 (14-21)	Apprenticeship to Sir Hugh Bryce, Goldsmith of London
1480 (23)	First recorded as a liveryman of the Goldsmiths' Company
1482 (25)	Warden of the Exchange (Edward IV)
1483 (26)	Master of the Mint (Edward IV) for 3 months
1485-1505 (28-48)	Joint Master of the Mint (Henry VII)
1492-1493 (35-36)	Prime Warden of the Goldsmiths' Company, for the first time
1492-1504 (35-47)	Active in buying property and land in Walton, Weybridge, Byfleet, Chertsey and Shepperton and the creation of the Manor of Oatlands
1497 (40)	Sheriff of London
1498-1502 (41-45)	Alderman of Aldersgate Ward
1501, 1502 (44,45)	Prime Warden of the Goldsmiths' Company for the second and third times.
1501-1505 (44-48)	Purchased lease to Crosby Place, one of the largest private houses in the City of London
1502-1503 (45-46)	Elected and served as Lord Mayor of London

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1502-1505 (45-48)	Alderman of Cheapside Ward
1503 (46)	Knighted by Henry VII
1505 (48)	Died and buried in the Charterhouse

The Lost Manors of Oatlands and Hundulsham (William Rede)

Date (Age)	Event
c1480*	William Rede born. <i>* based on being deputy at the Royal Mint in early twenties</i>
1503 (23)	Deputy to Bartholomew Rede at the Royal Mint
1505-1509 (25-29)	Joint Master of the Mint
1511 (31)	Dismissed from the Goldsmiths' Company
1512 (32)	Accused of Extortion and Deception when Joint Master of the Mint
c1515 (35)	Court case with Margery Waker; files case against his aunt Elizabeth Rede
After 1518 (38)	Son and heir John Rede was born to his first wife, whose surname was Stede. John was still a minor (under 21) in 1538, so must have been born after 1518.
c1514-22	Bessie Blount, older sister of Isabel Blount, was mistress of Henry VIII and gave birth to his only recognised illegitimate son, Henry Fitzroy (1519-1536)
1522 (42)	Court case with Thomas Waker re: Hundulsham
1528 (48)	Married Isabel Blount, as his second wife
1532 (52)	Moved from Manor of Shepperton to Oatlands on death of Elizabeth Rede in December 1532
1534 (54)	Died at Oatlands

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Date	Event
1536	King Henry VIII was badly injured in a jousting tournament, marking the start of health problems and weight gain (January)
1537	Survey of Elmbridge Hundred carried out by King's Commissioners; first sections of fencing erected
1539	Act of Privy Council creating the Honour and Chase of Hampton Court (October); Sir Anthony Browne appointed as first Lieutenant of Hampton Court Chase.
1545	'Poor men' of Elmbridge brought before Privy Council at Oatlands Palace to be questioned about their complaints (September)
1547	Sir Anthony Browne told King Henry VIII of his impending death; Henry died (January)
1548	Hampton Court Chase was 'dechased' (May); Sir Anthony Browne died at Byfleet Manor (May)

Authors Note

The Julian calendar is used for days and dates, as this is how they were recorded in the contemporary sources.

I have adjusted some of the quotes into modern English for easier reading, whilst keeping the words as close to the original as possible.

Images with no description are AI-generated.

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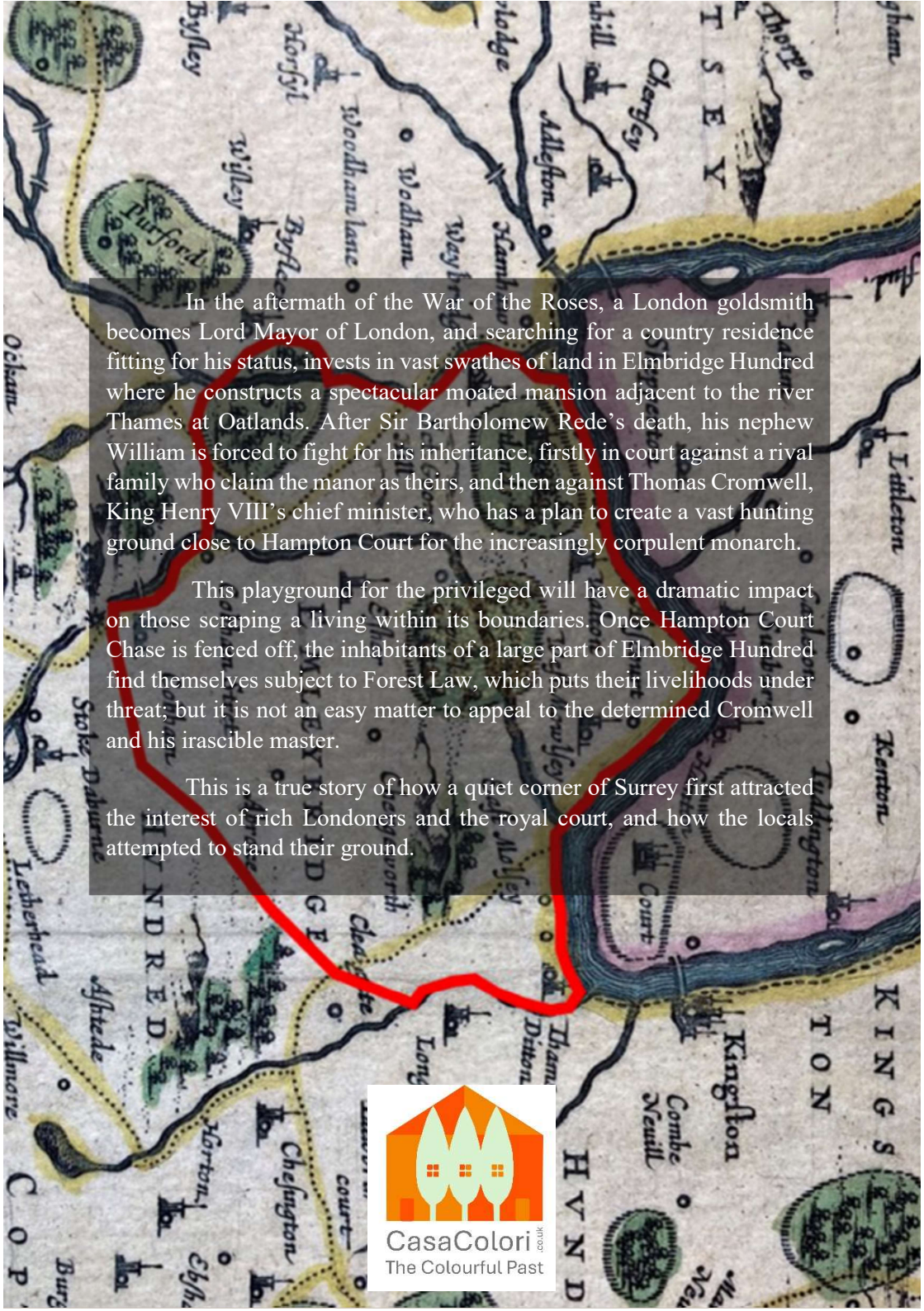
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Elmbridge Hundred: Rural Retreat to Forest Law 1492-1548

About the Author

C.L. Dawson is a local historian from Elmbridge in Surrey. Unsurprisingly, given the proximity of Hampton Court, his preferred periods are the Tudors and Stuarts. He focuses on researching and writing engaging stories involving local people, ideally finding connections where they came into contact with famous faces or key events, and whenever possible using eyewitness accounts from antique books, letters, diaries, pamphlets, and other primary sources.

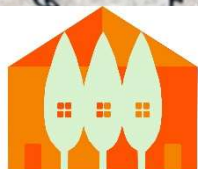
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In the aftermath of the War of the Roses, a London goldsmith becomes Lord Mayor of London, and searching for a country residence fitting for his status, invests in vast swathes of land in Elmbridge Hundred where he constructs a spectacular moated mansion adjacent to the river Thames at Oatlands. After Sir Bartholomew Rede's death, his nephew William is forced to fight for his inheritance, firstly in court against a rival family who claim the manor as theirs, and then against Thomas Cromwell, King Henry VIII's chief minister, who has a plan to create a vast hunting ground close to Hampton Court for the increasingly corpulent monarch.

This playground for the privileged will have a dramatic impact on those scraping a living within its boundaries. Once Hampton Court Chase is fenced off, the inhabitants of a large part of Elmbridge Hundred find themselves subject to Forest Law, which puts their livelihoods under threat; but it is not an easy matter to appeal to the determined Cromwell and his irascible master.

This is a true story of how a quiet corner of Surrey first attracted the interest of rich Londoners and the royal court, and how the locals attempted to stand their ground.



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