

## Notes on the history of Wykes Manor

There was a Roman settlement at Wykes between the 2nd and 4th century, and the name Wyke probably derives from the Scandinavian 'wic' meaning a bay or creek.

Up until the end of the 16th century boats could reach within 1km of Donington Wykes by entering Bicker Haven. The estuary then dried up.

Richard I (1189-1199) founded a free manorial chapel here, suggesting that the manor was already well established. The chapel and house were probably made of stone. By 1280 the Earl of Richmond owned the manor, and the chapel was still standing in 1526 when the Duke of Suffolk is recorded as its patron.

Most fenland villages contained a number of manors originating in the middle ages, but continuing to function well into the 19th century. Each held its own manorial court appointing local officials, dealing with changes of tenancy, rules governing use of fen and common land as well as related problems such as the misdemeanours of tenants. The surviving manorial records for Donington Wykes date from the mid 16th century (at Lincolnshire County Archives).

Sir John May and Dame Mary May held the Lordship of the Manor after their marriage in 1671. The Manor of Wykes was then used as collateral for money borrowed up until 1675.

In 1679 Thomas Cowley moved from London and together with John Farrington bought the Manor of Wykes for £8000 and Thomas Cowley built the present house in 1680. It was probably built alongside its predecessor rather than replacing it on precisely the same spot.

John Farrington died in 1684 and his widow Anne Farrington continued to live with Thomas Cowley until she died in 1686.

Part of the house, presumably the kitchen and servant area, was rebuilt sometime later, and then in 1831 the last extension was completed (the date was found on leadwork discovered while reroofing).

Thomas Cowley died in 1721 having never married, leaving all his estate to the village of Donington via the Cowley Trust (we have a copy of the wills, 'Copy of Donington Settlement 1701', 'Copy of Mr Cowley's Will



and Codicil dated 1711 and 1718', as well as the decree 'respecting Mr Cowley's Charity Estate in Donington' made in 1726).

The purpose of the trust was to establish a local school and to erect some almshouses in the village, and although the school was established the decline in income from the wool and linen industries meant that the income from the estate could not cover the cost of the almshouses and they were never built.

A Cowley estate map of 1781 shows two thirds of the present pasture as woodland, although within a few years this was reduced to one third.

In 1826 Thomas Holland, a grazier, was living in the house. He lived there with his daughter Mary and son John George, together with 5 servants until at least 1861.

In 1842 it was noted that 'On Wikes Farm is the only heronry in this part of the kingdom.'

In 1863 John George Holland, Thomas' son, was living in the house with his wife Elizabeth, daughter and 5 servants.

In 1876 William Wass, a farmer of 325 acres, lived in the house with his wife Harriett, four children and 2 servants. He moved out to the Red Cow Public House in Donington.

In 1891 Joseph Drewery, his wife Elizabeth Ellen, three children and 2 servants were living in the house. Joseph Drewery was a breeder of shire horses, Lincs red shorthorn cattle and curly coated pigs.

In 1933 John Caswell, a farmer, was living in the house. He emigrated to New Zealand before we bought it in 1997.

The Cowley Trust still exists and recently sold the Lordship of the Manor of Wykes to Petronella Keeling, a resident of Spalding.

Siobhan Leahy, 2003