

HISTORY.

HEMPSTEAD HALL,
SAFFRON WALDEN, ESSEX.

STEEPLE BUMPSTEAD 239.

Comments and Extracts from:

The History and Topography of the County of Essex,
by Thomas Wright Esq., Trinity College

CAMBRIDGE.

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Hempstead, though sometimes spelt in that way at the time of writing, was customarily written ~~HEMSEED~~, and occurs in Domesday or Domesday Book as HAMSTED. Also in other old records as Hemsted or Hemstead from the Saxon "hem" or "ham", a habitation or dwelling.

The heavy clay soil is mentioned, also the woods, in which connection there is reference to some remarkable trees of the district. Thus "and on land belonging to Sir W. Eustace, a wych elm of a beautiful form called the High Treet, rising to an astonishing height". (??WYCH TREE FARM???)

"The ancient mansion of Hemsted Hall is about two miles north east of the church. This manor, from Richard Fitz-Gislebert, passed to one of the earls of Clare, who at an early period gave it to the De Veres, earls of Oxford, and it was holden of them, as of their honour of Hedingham Castle, by the service of two knights fees; but the earls of Clare remained lords paramount. Robert de Watevil lived here in the reigns of Richard I and of King John. The estate continued in this family till it was conveyed by the marriage of Joan, daughter of sir John de Watevil, to Sir William Langham in 1341,..... the manor continued in the family till Alice, only daughter of Richard Langham conveyed it to her son Sigismund Cotton, who was succeeded by his son William in 1541, ... The last of the family mentioned in the record as holding this possession was Anthony Cotton in 1631; his immediate successors cannot be traced, owing it is believed to the confusion of the times".

The "confusion of the times" may refer to Cromwell. In any case there appears to be a definite gap in the record, which may cover the movement of the house from its almost certain location inside the moat to its present position.

over.....

"Sometime about the middle of the seventeenth century (circa 1650) the estate became the property of the Harvey Family, either the learned physician Dr. William Harvey, or his brother Eliab Harvey, with Crochmans (Winslow) and other Lands in the parish. After having remained in the hands of this family for many generation, the Hemsted Hall Estate has lately (circa 1835) been sold, and is now in the hands of the Houblon family of Chigwell."

The earliest Deed which we (Percy Taylor) possess is dated 1864, and conveys the property from Messrs. Drummond to a Mr. John Price. Attached thereto is a Covenant by Mrs. G. Drummond to produce Deeds. There is on this Covenant a schedule of the said deeds, and the first deed in the schedule is dated December 1835 and has as one of the parties a member of the Houblon family. Others mentioned include a Cotton and a Drummond.

It appears, therefore, that in general terms the historical extracts herewith noted connect with the deeds we possess sufficiently to give at least an outline history of Hempstead Hall.