

Langtoft Hall & The Hydes

Peter Coles

16 July in the forty ninth year of the reign of
Queen Elizabeth II

Langtoft Hall

The site of Langtoft Hall lies at the east end of the village in the area covered by the pond and Barn Owl Close and has been the subject of several archaeological excavations.

The whole village and parish of langtoft belonged to Crowland Abbey from before the Norman Conquest. 'Ingulf' writing down the traditions of the Abbey notes that '...the king Wichtlaf confirmed the gift of Fregist, the Knight, that is to say, the whole of the vill of langtoft, and in the fields of the said vill six carucates of arable land, the same being in length fifteen quarentenes (40 perches) and nine in breadth - as also one hundred acres of meadow land and a wood and marsh two leagues in length, and two leagues in breadth: besides the church of the said vill and forty acres in the fields of 'Depyng'.

The exact identity of this historical benefactor is open to debate. He may have been Frythegyst who apparently disgraced himself by flight in the face of the Danes in 993. Alternatively a Fredgist appeared in Domesday Book as a pre-conquest landowner in East Deeping. Either man could have been Ingulfs 'Fregist' although more than a century separates them.

The site of langtoft hall was originally owned and occupied by the monks of Crowland Abbey. Up until 1988, the L shaped remains of a moated enclosure on the line of car dyke were clearly visible abutting the eastern side of the site but ploughing has since levelled this area. The line is still visible however as variations in crop growth dependant on the crop and growing season. Early Ordnance Survey maps show this enclosure together with another moat to the north of the hall site.

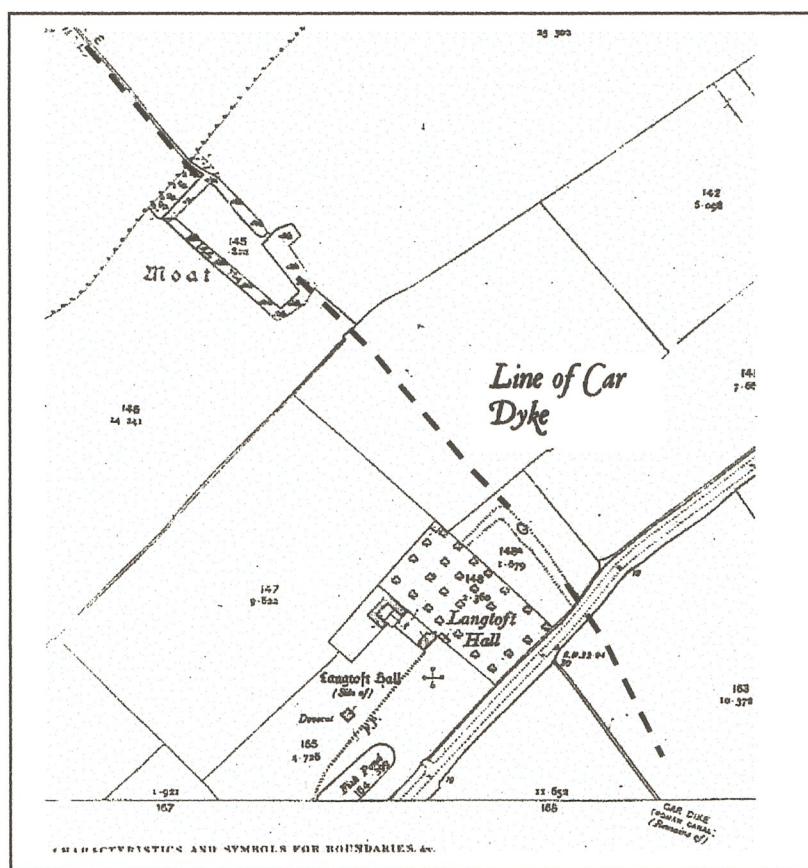


Fig 1.

The enclosure to the east of the site is most probably the remains of the boundary ditch of the curia dating from around the 11th or 12th century. It is possible that Car Dyke was originally incorporated into it (this phenomenon has also been observed at Sempringham Priory, another monastic site on the Car Dyke). The moat 250 metres to the north of this site may well have been an artificial rabbit warren. The use of a ditch either wet or dry and the size of this moated area is not inconsistent with recorded sizes of some rabbit warrens. An estate map of 1890 appears to confirm this for the field immediately to the south west is called Conygree Piece (Coney being the old english word for rabbit).

The original hall was probably located closer to the centre of the village and this present Manorial Site may reflect the growing importance of the fen-edge as a resource from the eleventh century.

Although pottery dating from the 9th century has been found on the site no evidence of any manorial complex from this date has been found. The earliest datable feature found on the site was a feature thought to have been an 11th or 12th century well or other form of drinking water supply.

During these Middle Ages, conflict and invasion made Langtoft and the manor dangerous places to live. Records show that '...in the year 1008 Baston and Langtoft were burned by fire by Swayne the King a Dane who with a fierce army wasted all before him:- he burned towns, plucked out the countrymens guts and murdered the religions with extreme torture'. Following his death in 1014, Swayne was succeeded by his son Canute!

At the time of the Domesday survey in 1086 the manor (i.e. the estate) was recorded as comprising 'meadow, marshland, woodland and arable':

Estate	Holding at geld	Woodland	Church	Value T.R.E	Value in 1086
Langtoft	6 carucates	Worth 2s	-	£4	60s

Throughout the High Middle Ages the manor was a major source of income and produce for the community. Up until the mid 14th century the land was managed directly from Crowland Abbey and was farmed primarily for the market. In 1344 the monastery was in serious financial difficulties "...owing to raids on the manors and granges by men who carried off goods and drove away animals and cattle to places unknown". Accordingly Edward III took the abbey and its possessions (including this manorial complex) into his special protection and from 1368 the demesne was leased to the villeins. However the complex did not remain safe for long for, in 1390, the Chronicler tells us that 'the men of Deeping made untruthful accusations against the Abbott at the court in Stamford. ...they drove away the beast and animals of various kinds more than fifty in number, from the manors of the said abbot at Langtoft to the manor of Thomas Holland Earl of Kent (Edwards III's half brother) at West Deeping where they detained them for a considerable time'.

The last abbot of Crowland, John Wells, or Bridges ruled from 1512 to 1538 and on 7 October 1539 less than two months before their surrender the monks of Crowland made Robert Littlebury bailiff of their manor in langtoft with a pension of 15 marks. He was also an annuitant of the house with an annual payment of £1 13s 4d which was paid until his death on 8th January 1558.

The first descriptions of this Manorial Complex were made as part of the dissolution in 1536 during a survey of all church lands for Henry VIII when the property was described as being '...with houses and buildings within the (moated) site, (and) land, ways, waters, woods, commons, fisheries pertaining ...a rectory...with tithes, barns and granaries pertaining'. This appears to constitute a property of some considerable value. During archaeological excavations in 1996, remains of an aisled long house, fireplace, oven bases and cellars were found to the south of the existing farmhouse and considered to be the remains of the domestic buildings from the 1536 survey.

On 4th December 1539 Thomas Cromwells commissioners arrived at Crowland and the Abbot and 28 monks signed the surrender. (One year later Thomas was executed for heresy and treason!) The rectory of langtoft was in the hands of the crown bailiffs and was sold four years later.

Evidence suggests that following the dissolution the stone buildings were demolished and the moat filled in. The rubble from the buildings being spread around the central third of the site. This possibly followed a slow decay of the property for an entry in the Langtoft Manor Court Rolls of 1586-89 states '...and that the capital messuage or mansion house of this manor is greatly ruinous, and it is ordered that Robert Bever of the same shall repair the aforesaid messuage before the Feast of Saint Michael the Archangel next, under a penalty of [not specified].

At some point the site passed into the hands of the Hyde family and a grand hall was built in the area to the north of the farmhouse under the existing crewyard. Unfortunately there appears to be no recorded historical descriptions of the hall or information on who built it or how. This hall which existed during the 16th/17th and 18th centuries must have been a grand affair attested by its carriage entrance which consisted of an avenue of trees two miles long extending from King Street. See fig 2.

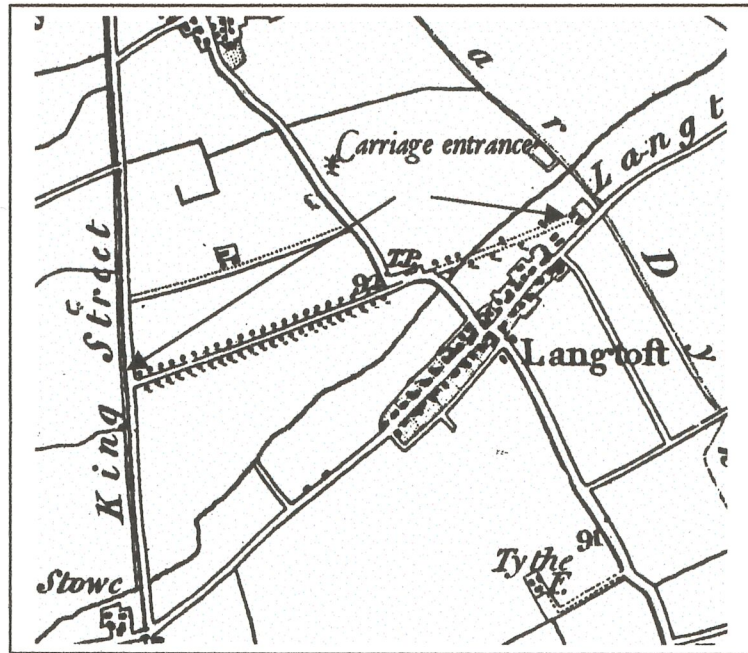


Fig 2.

The Hyde family remained on the site until the 18th century and were the principal landowners during that period. William Hyde lived here in 1682.

To the south of the hall, aerial photographs from 1947 seem to reveal remains of formal gardens with curvilinear raised flower beds typical of the 18th century and almost certainly associated with the hall (fig 3). This style of garden was a result of english aristocrats making the 'Grand Tour' of Europe and thus wanting their estate to resemble the classical landscapes depicted by continental painters. William Hyde had accompanied the Earl of Exeter on such a tour in 1683.

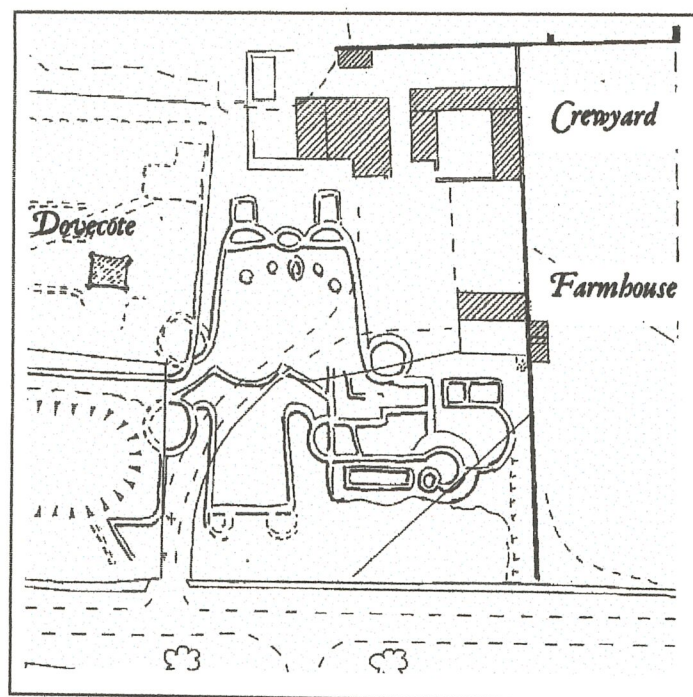


Fig. 3.

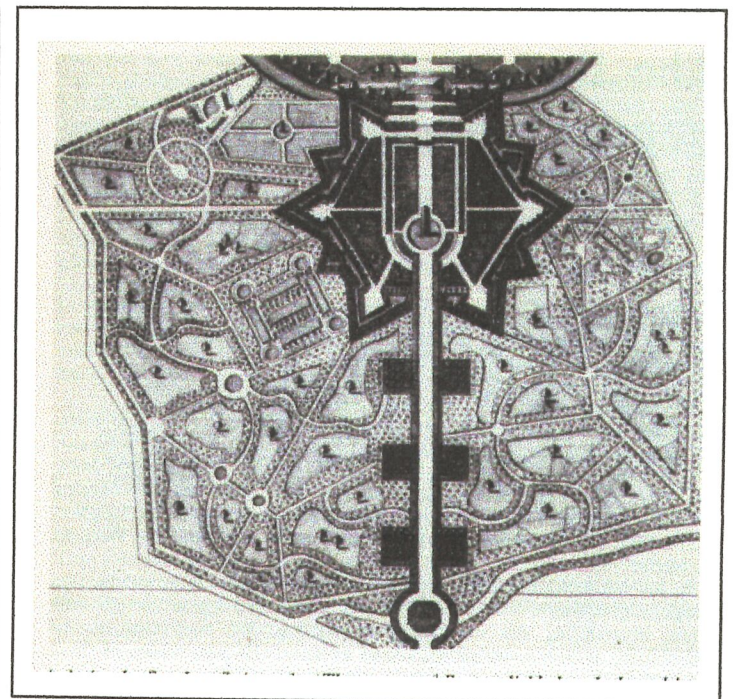


Fig 4 Design by Stephen Switzer (1682-1745)

Sometime around 1792 the materials of the hall were sold off in rooms and the hall demolished. The Torrington Diaries written by the Honourable John Byng (Later fifth viscount Torrington) during his tours of England and Wales 1781-1794 record the remains of a once grand house '...Lovetoft, where had been a grand mansion; of which now only the garden walls and orchard remain, with the pillars of an entrance'.

Remains from this period still exist today - walls behind nos. 14 and 16, Barn Owl Close; stone entrance pillars on the Bourne rd and part of the carriageway route itself now called the Long Walk running from Kings St to the main A15.

Following the demolition of the hall and before 1816, a farmhouse was built on the site and the ownership passed to Sir John Heathcote bart. who became lord of the manor. It subsequently passed into the hands of Sir George Heathcote bart, Lord Aveland and thence Lord Willoughby de Eresby. In 1890 a crewyard was built on the site. These were built on several farms belonging to the estate of Lord Willoughby de Eresby in 1890-1891 and were part of a countrywide movement to modernise and improve facilities on farms.

In 1995 the site was redeveloped with the farmhouse being modernised and the crewyard retained and converted into living accommodation.

Historical summary of the site:

1. *Medieval moated site overlaying Car Dyke and enclosing monastic dwelling.*
2. *Following the dissolution, the monastic dwellings are demolished and the rubble spread across the central third of the site.*
3. *16th century: Langtoft Hall and formal tree-lined avenue and garden walls.*
4. *Early 18th century: addition of landscaped garden layout and further garden walls.*
5. *Late 18th century: hall demolished replaced by farmhouse and adjacent building.*
6. *Late 19th century: adjacent building demolished and replaced by crewyard.*
7. *Late 20th century: development by Parker & sons.*

Site Ownership:

Last abbot:

John Welles (alias Bridges) 1512-1539

Lords of the Manor

1556 - Juliana Bothe (widow)

1583 - Cuthbert Blaketon (son of Juliana)

1594 - Edward Heron

1615 - Bevell Molesworth

1621 - Bernard Hyde (Farmer of the Manor)

1631 - Humphery Hyde (Gent)

1640 - Sarah Hyde

1641 - Bernard Walcot & Sarah his wife

1653 - Bernard Walcot (Guardian of William Hyde)

1660 - William Hyde

1701 - William Hyde

1744 - 1754 - Thomas Vroian, Phillipa (Hyde) & Anna Hyde

1769 - Sir Gilbert Heathcote Bart.

1873 - Lord Aveland

1890 - Lord Willoughby de Eresby

1991 - Lincolnshire County Council

Glossary:

<i>Annuitant</i>	<i>A priest employed in saying annuals, or anniversary Masses.</i>
<i>Carucates</i>	<i>a unit of land in the DaneLaw corresponding to the Anglo-Saxon hide (c. 100 acres)</i>
<i>Crewyard</i>	<i>A fold yard or enclosure, bedded with straw, where cattle are kept in winter.</i>
<i>Curia</i>	<i>the court of a sovereign or of a feudal lord; also; his residence or his household</i>
<i>DaneLaw</i>	<i>the north-eastern region of England, subject to Scandinavian settlement and retaining distinctive customs.</i>
<i>Demense</i>	<i>a lord's chief manor place, with that part of the lands belonging thereto which has not been granted out in tenancy; a house, and the land adjoining, kept for the proprietor's own use)</i>
<i>Geld</i>	<i>the Anglo-Saxon tax levied on a territorial basis.</i>
<i>Mark</i>	<i>a unit of account; 16s 8d or two thirds of a pound sterling.</i>
<i>Messuage</i>	<i>a building or part of a building usually with its grounds</i>
<i>Vill</i>	<i>Village</i>
<i>Villeins</i>	<i>So called because they lived chiefly in villages and were employed in the lowest kind of agricultural work. They held small portions of land in lieu of wages for the sustenance of themselves and their families.</i>

The Hydes of Langtoft

William Hyde was the grandson of a London merchant and customs farmer. His father a younger son, acquired property and connections in Lincolnshire and Rutland by marriage. Educated at Queens college Cambridge he married Mary daughter of Sir John Trollope 1st Bt. of Caswick in 1658.

As Sheriff of Rutland, Hyde was responsible for conducting the general election of 1660, and signed the congratulatory address to King Charles II at his restoration. It was at this time he became captain of the Lincolnshire militia (horse). The militia was the result of actions taken by parliament to ensure that no new rebellion could take place. The army and navy were disbanded and Parliament instead intended to rely for public order on the militia, the citizen force which in 1663 stood at 90000 men including 6000 horse. He was also an active justice from 1660 until his death with responsibilities in Kesteven & Holland.

In 1678 parliament and the nation were alarmed by a fictitious report of a popish plot to assassinate the king and massacre Protestants in order to bring about the succession of the Duke of York (James II). Parliament became completely unmanageable and in 1679 Charles disbanded it after it had sat for 17 years. From about this time the old names of court and country fell out of use and people were distinguished as Tories (Kings supporters) and Whigs (opponents).

During the subsequent election, Sir Robert Carr, rival of Lord Lindsey (Robert Bertie 15th Baron Willoughby de Eresby) and friend of Hyde toured the boroughs appealing for the return of patriots. Hyde was returned for Stamford along with Sir Richard Cust and when Shaftsbury, leader of the Whigs surveyed the results he classed Hyde as 'honest'. This election result was a blow to Lindsey as it saw the rejection of his brothers Charles and Peregrine. The election of Hyde and Cust has been attributed to the decision of the Earl of Exeter (John Cecil 5th Lord Burghley) 'virtual proprietor of Stamford to use his influence' against the Berties.

Three parliaments (known as the exclusion parliaments) met in 1679-1681 and William Hyde was member of Stamford for all three. Throughout this period exscesion to the throne, Roman Catholic 'aspirations' and fear of another civil war dominated parliamentary business. Hydes associations both with Sir Richard Cust bart. and Sir Robert Carr (Hyde was named as trustee of his will) both suggest Whig tendencies.

In 1682, Lindsey employed his authority as lord lieutenant to dismiss William Hyde from his militia captaincy. Although presumably a Whig it is possible that Hyde may have gone over to the court for, following Hydes dismissal, Lindsey was ordered to explain his actions to the King. Sir Leoline Jenkings Secretary of State wrote 'by express command of his majesty, to inquire the cause'

In 1683, an alleged conspiracy to murder the King, known as the Rye House Plot, and the death of Sir Robert Carr allowed a Tory reaction to slowly set in. Upon the report of the plot, Lindsey mustered the militia and raided the houses of exclusionist members including Cust. The Whig movement and its leaders fled abroad with Shaftsbury who later died in Holland. It was at this time that Hyde also went abroad accompanying Lord Exeter as 'a gentleman soldier' on one of his many 'Grand Tours' through France and Italy. During these tours the Earl was accompanied by much of his household with coaches, wagons and spare horses. He purchased jewellery, statues and paintings.

Hyde did not stand for parliament in 1685 and in 1687 was listed among the Northamptonshire opposition to James II. It is thought that when Lord Lindsey wrote: 'This is one of the worst of them, fit to be turned out' he was referring to Hyde. Hyde was re-elected for Stamford in 1689 and again in 1690. He died on 21st Nov. 1694 and was buried in Langtoft. His memorial erected by his daughter-in-law reads:

'Sacred to the memory of William Hyde senior who died 21 Nov. 1694 aged 59 years and mary his wife (elder daughter of Sir Thomas Trollope of Casewick in the county of Lincoln Bar) who died 21 March 1677 aged 35 years by whom he had 3 sons and one daughter. He was the delight of his countrymen honoured with the title of honest chosen frequently to serve in parliament as burgefs of Stamford. A Senator most faithful to his God, King and Country.'

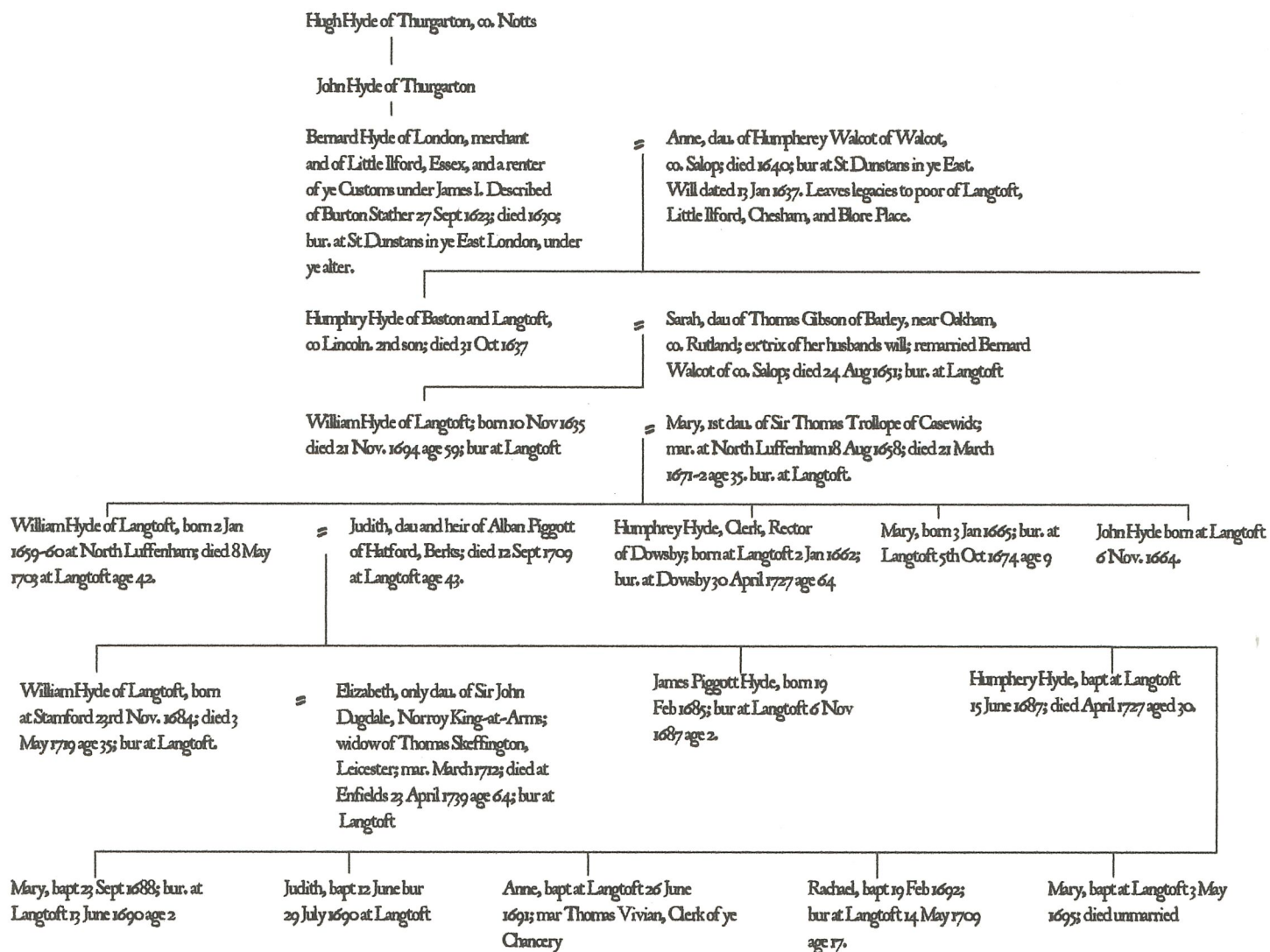
The Hyde family continued to reside in Langtoft and in 1707 Rachael Hyde bequeathed a legacy of £50 for the poor parishioners. This sum was used to purchase a small copyhold estate, which was subsequently sold for £450 in 1835, and the proceeds used to by two houses in Long Sutton producing a rental of about £14. It is recorded that 'one third of the income was used to pay the education of eight children with the remainder distributed in bred and clothing'.

At some point during the 18th century the Hydes link with Langtoft ended although six generations continued in Dowsby.



Hyde of Langtoft

Arms. - gules, a saltire or, between four bezants a chief emine
 Crest. - A unicorn's head couped argent, armed and maned or, collared vair, or and gules.
 (Granted by Sir William Segar, Garter, Sept. 1609.)



References

Ancaster collection

Andrews, C.B
 Drakard, J
 Fraser, A
 Hadfield, M
 Healy and Roffe
 Henning, B.D
 Hodget, G.A
 Holmes, C

Lindsey

Archaeological
 Services
 Maddison
 Marrat, W
 Platts, G

Raban, S
 Samuels, J
 Trust for Wessex
 Archaeology
 Varley, J
 White, W

Various entries

The Torrington Diaries Volume Two
 History of Stamford
 The Lives of the Kings & Queens of England
 The English Landscape Garden
 Earthworks survey (unpublished)
 History of Parliament. The Commons 1660-1690
 Tudor Lincolnshire, History of Lincolnshire Vol VI
 Seventeenth Century Lincolnshire, History of Lincolnshire Vol VII

Langtoft Hall Farm: Archaeological Evaluation

Lincolnshire Pedigrees

The History of Lincolnshire
 Land and People in Medieval Lincolnshire, History of
 Lincolnshire Vol IV
 The Estates of Thorney and Crowland
 Archaeological Excavation at Langtoft Hall
 Langtoft Hall

The Parts of Kesteven
 Directory of Lincolnshire