

“THE MALLETS AT ASH”

This history forms chapter five of my book “ASH: an ancient estate in north Devon”.

It will be followed on this website by chapter 6: “House and buildings”, and chapter 7: “Upstairs, downstairs”, in the fairly near future.

The remainder of my book deals with Anglo-Saxon and Medieval Ash, and post-Mallet times to the present day.

The complete book is available from me at dartmoor@gotadsl.co.uk

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There is news of pictures of the Mallets at Ash which should be available later in 2007

CHAPTER FIVE: THE MALLETS AT ASH.

5.1 BACKGROUND: THE END OF THE MIDDLE AGES

In the 16th C England gradually emerged from the rigid archaism of feudalism, and from a countryside of warring barons & wandering outlaws; and despite the occasional bloody bitterness of the Reformation – particularly in the Devon countryside, which clung to its old Catholic ways well into Elizabethan times – the land progressively became a more ordered and safer place.

Husbandry in Devon in the 16th & 17th centuries apparently developed into some of the best in the country [2]; its entirely enclosed non-communal agriculture was more efficient, and locally more flexible than the long-abandoned open-field system, as each lord strove to utilise his land to its best potential. The infield/outfield system of earlier times remained popular (known as “ley” farming in the 17th C), since pasture was always plentiful in N Devon on slopes & wetlands, ensuring that pastoralism retained its dominance.

Devon became one of the leading textile counties in the 16th C, and Exeter, Totnes, and then Barnstaple became trade centres [10]. This new industry had helped to support the county’s rural economy in the arable agricultural depression of the late Middle Ages, and it also pointed the way towards a significantly pastoral-based post-medieval economy in N Devon. Wool prices rose rapidly in the first half of the 16th C: sheep became the most profitable activity for many farmers [13].

In 1536 Henry VIII swept away all the smaller monasteries – including Frithelstock¹ (*plate 1*), which had only 5 occupants at the time – and the bigger ones followed 3 years later. Most were sold off to moneyed gentry: large numbers of new country estates sprang up in this period.

The prosperity of the Elizabethan & early Stuart periods also provided the necessary growth & profits to fund what has been called the Great Rebuilding, a country-wide trend of rebuilt & restored country houses, farmhouses & cottages, in the period 1570-1650.

During this post-medieval period of social and economic expansion, younger, non-inheriting aristocratic sons sought out heiresses in order to establish seats and lineages for themselves²...which brings us to the Mallets³ of Ash.

5.2 THE COMING OF THE MALLETS.

The aristocratic Mallets of Somerset were descended from the head of this Norman-French family⁴ in the 1060s. He had fought with the Conqueror at Hastings, and was his close friend. This royally favoured family acquired lands in Somerset (e.g. Curry Mallet, Shepton Mallet & others), and in the late 12th C their main seat became Enmore, near Bridgwater. [1].

Richard, the second son of William Mallet of Enmore, married Joan, nee Vyell, the heiress of Ash, in 1530⁵ [1] [12]. He came endowed of 1/3 of a manor in Gordano⁶, via his mother, its heiress: he sold it in 1547.

Knowledge of the prosperity & social standing of Ash in 1530 is meagre. It seems that the Vyell family, and the Bishops who acquired Ash when Joan married, firstly, Nicholas Bishop, do not seem to have been especially elevated socially, though doubtless they were important in a local context. John Vyell had been a joint owner (with 4 others) of a knight’s fee in Iddesleigh in 1428, and there are occasional references to both families in the Devon Lay Subsidy of 1332, though they were not taxed highly (and didn’t live in the vicinity anyway). We will see later (5.5.4) that Ash was held in the late 16th C of another small manor (in Dolton) – i.e. was rented from a superior lord – and this situation most likely pertained too in the early years of that century. In 1525 Denis Vyell (who may have been Joan’s father) was the only Vyell assessed in the Lay Subsidy of Iddesleigh, at £3, a middling worth in the parish; a high taxpayer locally, like one Walter Morell, was rated at £10. {Later, in the 17th C, the Veale family, of possibly the same lineage (*see 5.10.2*), were rectors of Iddesleigh for 3 successive generations [8].}

¹ See 4.2.

² A situation that still actively prevailed some 3 centuries later, as any reader of Jane Austen will know.

³ The variation in the spelling of the family name by different branches, and through time, has been well described [1]. I will use only the “Mallet” form in my text, though retaining alternative forms in any reproduced archival documents.

⁴ Surprisingly, he was maternally related to the vanquished Harold.

⁵ At about this time a son of a family branch at St. Audries, near Watchet, made his seat in Devon at Woolleigh Barton, 5 miles from Ash off the Beaford-Torrington road.

⁶ Near Bristol.

5.3 DESCENT OF THE MALLETS OF ASH.

Head Mallet	Life span	MARRIAGE		
		date	Bride	Bride's status
Richard	1500 - 1548	1530	Joan Bishop, née Vyell, died c.1580.	Heiress of Ash, widow of Nicholas Bishop.
William	1542 - 1586	c.1572	Susan Stafford	Of the Staffords of Stafford Barton in Dolton
Oliver	1572 - 1647	1592	Margery Osbourne of Iddesleigh Died 1644	Father was patron of the living at Iddesleigh, and a notary public.
William	1601 - 1662	1. 1630	Eulalia Copplestone Died 1643.	Da. of Richard Copplestone of Woodlands, Little Torrington, patron of Iddesleigh living.
		2.c1645?	Jane (?) d.1685	Name unknown
Hugh the elder	1634 - 1693	1.1661	Elizabeth Lethbridge. Died 1662	Daughter of Thomas Lethbridge Esq of Jacobstowe, lord of the manor of Winkleigh Keynes.
		2. 1672	Joan Holcombe 1643 – 1722.	Heiress of Richard Holcombe of Uton Arundell.
William, of Ash & Grapton	1678 - 1724	1703	Mary Bourne Died 1723	Heiress of William Bourne, lord of the manor of Meavy.
William, of Grapton & Ash	1705 - 1776	1736	Jane Veale, 1718 – (?) (<i>alive in 1781</i>)	Co-heiress of Walter Veale of Passaford, Hatherleigh. This family had supplied 4 rectors of Iddesleigh; it was probably the same family as Vyell (<i>see Richard above</i>).
William	1746 - 1781		<i>did not marry</i>	
Hugh the younger	1747 - 1823	1784	Jane Henchman 1747 - 1823	Daughter of Rev. Francis Henchman, g/son of the bishop of London.
Hugh	1788 - 1865	1824	Caroline Coventry Died 1875	Daughter of Hon. John Coventry, 2 nd son of 6 th Earl of Coventry.
Hugh Coventry	1828 - 1881	1853	Georgina Bathurst Died 1881.	Daughter of Henry Bathurst, Archdeacon of Norwich, and son of the Bishop of Norwich.

All known brides' families entitled to display arms (William's wife of c.1645 unknown).
Most data from [12], with back-up from [1].

5.4 RICHARD MALLET 1500-1548

5.4.1 The bride and her background

Richard acquired the Ash estate by marrying Joan (or Jane) Bishop, widow of the owner in 1530. We know that Nicholas Bishop held Ash from an early Chancery proceedings record [32] from around 1529. Bishop died in 1529/30 [32], apparently childless, with his wife his heir.

It can be assumed that Joan brought one or more other tenements to the marriage: a William Mayne complains in about 1530 [21] that he hadn't been leased a tenement in Iddesleigh already agreed by Nicholas & Joan Bishop. Later, after Richard's death, Edmund Weekes, Joan's 3rd husband, claimed East Yagland in Hartland [22] – the source of a long-running dispute between Joan & Richard's son (*see below*) – very likely because it came to Joan via her 1st marriage and thus passed to her later husbands.

Clayton Veale has told me [email of 11/4/07] that his family was established in Monkleigh, near Gt. Torrington, so it's interesting to see that Edmund Weekes was disputing the ownership of a farm at Monkleigh with William Mallet, Richard's son [30], so it's possible that this property too had come to Joan Vyell.

We know in some detail the properties held by Richard's son William [23] and it is quite possible that some of these had been brought to the Mallets by Joan's marriage to Richard (*see 5.5.1 below*).

5.4.2 Other documentary records

No will, inventory or Inquisition Post Mortem of Richard has been recovered.

As mentioned above (5.2) Richard inherited one-third of the manor of Easton in Gordano (his 2 other brothers holding the other 2 portions). In 1547 he sold his entire share: it comprised 900 acres of mixed farming land, yielding £4 12s 6½d rent [24]. The selling price is unknown, but could have been in the region of £100 by comparison with other sales of this period. This capital could have been used to acquire other lands near Iddesleigh that his son eventually inherited.

There is a Chancery record [11, re DRO C1/508/29] that suggests that Bishop and his wife had an interest in the farmsteads of Stapleford and Upcott in Hatherleigh, and Waterhouse in Monkokehampton. We shall see these tenements included in William Mallet's IPM (*see 5.5.4 below*), so it's quite probable that Bishop's widow Joan brought them to her new husband Richard Mallet in 1530, particularly as the Vyells were joint owners in 1428 of a knight's fee in Iddesleigh that included Upcott in Hatherleigh.

Richard appears in surviving Iddesleigh records for the short period 1537 – 1541 as one of the custodians of the shrines of Iddesleigh church [37]. Such men were prominent local gentry chosen to act as bankers to manage the gifts & legacies which supported the daily upkeep of the church fabric, vestments & equipment.

In the Lay Subsidy of 1544, 14 years after his establishment at Ash, Richard was rated at £10, a more than 3-fold increase over the previous Ash occupant (Vyell: *see 5.2 above*), and higher than Walter Morell's £7 (*see 5.2*). Since the subsidy was based not on land owned, but on the *produce* of that land, it could be interpreted that Richard had either brought in extra stock, or significantly raised the estate's output. Richard's peers in Iddesleigh were Morell, William Moyse, Henry Bremelcombe & Thomas Arnold, all church custodians, and all rated roughly similarly for taxation.

However, neither the 1525 nor 1544 subsidies contain persons assessed on lands (rather than goods), indicating that Iddesleigh manor was held by absentee lords. The fact that Iddesleigh had been split up before Richard's time, and had no dominant manor house or family, must have increased his, and his descendants' social standing as lord of Ash.

Richard died in 1548. He fathered three sons and a daughter[1], though a youngest son & daughter (Barnabie & Thomasine) are also recorded [25]. The inheritance is a little difficult to pin down: his elder sons John and Anthony certainly inherited Ash in turn [25, 22], though John seems to have died soon after 1550, and Anthony by 1558 [1, 26]. It was upon this latter date that the 3rd son, William, inherited Ash at the age of 18, and subsequently spent most of his adult life in litigation with his step-father for the control of Ash and its holdings (*see 5.5.1 below*).

5.5 WILLIAM MALLET 1542 – 1586.

5.5.1 The inheritance.

The third son (*see above*), William was only six at his father's death. On the deaths of his 2 elder brothers the estate seems to have passed to him in his late teens, though it is apparent from surviving records that his step-father, Edmund Weekes (his mother's third husband) took advantage of the rather unusual inheritance situation of the three

different male heirs, and the heirs' mother's potential inheritance rights, to attempt to gain control of Ash and its estate through the latter channel. There are a large number of surviving lawsuits in Chancery between 1558 and 1584 where William was usually the plaintiff and Weekes the defendant.

A quite normal inheritance procedure then was for a deceased husband to have made his wife his heir if any son was under age; if his wife re-married she would forfeit one half of the estate (sharing it with her son & heir), the whole reverting to the son upon her death⁷. Weekes and his wife certainly appear to have lived at Ash [27], but William is described as "Gent. of London" in Chancery Proceedings of the 1560s [26], possibly residing there in order to manage his actions better, and possibly because life at Ash under the circumstances wasn't viable. Weekes seems to have enjoyed, possibly illegally, the rentals of some of William's late father's tenements for most of his married life (1550 – 1580). He comes across as a forceful and manipulative man, not above forging property deeds [28, 29], corrupting witnesses[28], or even threatening death [30].

Of the various disputed territories, the Weekes family seem to have successfully retained the East Yagland tenement in Hartland (*see appendix 1*) after William's death, since there is no mention of them in William's IPM (5.5.4 *below*). In a Chancery complaint of William [33] we see that Seldon tenement in Monkokehampton had passed to Weekes via his wife Joan, the likelihood being that it was in her right, having come from Bishop, her 1st husband. Nevertheless, after Weekes' death, Seldon reverted to William – it's in his IPM (5.5.4). And we can also suspect that the other Hatherleigh & Monkokehampton farmsteads (*see 5.5.4*) also came to the Mallet family via Joan.

Thus it would appear that most of William's holdings – Ash, Seldon, Stapleford, Upcott & Waterhouse – had already been his father's holdings, and had been brought to him by his marriage to Joan.

There was a Court-enforced arbitration award in 1572 [27] though Weekes defaulted on this. Joan eventually separated from her husband, presumably as a result of all this family squabbling, and went to live with her son in around 1572/3 [25]. William was then described as "of Iddesleigh", and the implication is that his step-father left the marital home to live elsewhere – quite likely at Barntown in Monkokehampton [27]. Certainly by Weekes' death in 1584 William was definitely in possession of Ash: Weekes' IPM exists [31] and makes no mention of it.

5.5.2 The bride and her background

William married Susan Stafford in around 1572 (since his first child was born in that year). This was the time (*see above*) that his mother separated from his step-father, so it is likely that William had now taken up occupancy at Ash Barton. His wife came from the Staffords of Stafford Barton, the Mallets' neighbours in Dolton, 3 miles to the north. This family had originated in the 14th C when, as Kellaways, and the holders of Stafford Barton, they changed their family name to that of their seat.

It is not apparent that Susan brought many properties to the marriage (*though see 5.5.4 below*). Nevertheless, a match with a daughter of long-established gentry must have been satisfactory for the first of the Mallet line to be born at Ash. There were 6 children from the marriage, the eldest son Oliver surviving as heir.

5.5.3 William's will, 1586. [34]

He was the first Mallet born at Ash. He died in 1586 aged 46 and was buried in the family vault in Iddesleigh church. Ash Barton was left to his widow and then to Oliver, his eldest son, with mainly lump sum arrangements for his other children. As was usual at that time valuable timber pieces and window glass in the barton was also left to his heir, including the "selinge" or wainscoting. His estate was valued at £121 (*see 5.5.7 below*).

One of the four executors was Hugh Osbourne of Iddesleigh, a notary public, who was the father of Oliver's bride-to-be of six years later [35]. Another trustee was Mr Justice Periam: he had sold lands to William's kinsmen at Woolleigh Barton in Beaford; he had been one of the judges of Mary Queen of Scots at Fotheringay, and was eventually Lord Chief Baron of the Exchequer [12].

William actually died before he signed his will, and before it was witnessed, and his wife took out letters of administration a few weeks later, witnessed by John Stowford (or Stafford) of her family.



⁷ This was, in fact, the way William set up his own will.

5.5.4 Inquisition post mortem. *Reproduced in tabular form below.*

The IPM – which was a legal requirement until the mid-17th C, devised originally so that medieval monarchs could assess how their lands were held – was undertaken at Exeter Castle 5 months after the will was proved. It is quite detailed. It was taken under the oaths of 13 men, 10 of whom were classed as gentlemen, and one (John Cruse⁸) as esquire, the next class up and normally denoting an important landowner. William was entered as “yeoman” in the writ, but was found by the inquisition to be “gentleman”. The IPM is effectively an “inventory” of the deceased’s land holdings, and is consequently of great interest, particularly William’s “*messuage*⁹ & 200 acres in Coldashe¹⁰ ... held of Edward Amendeth Esq of his manor of Cherubere¹¹, in free socage, by fealty and 26s. 8d. rent”. This passage harks back to medieval times and tells us that the Mallets didn’t own Ash, but held by rental under ancient feudal tenure (though the fealty due was perhaps pretty nominal by this time). The little manor belonged to another manor, Cherubeer, itself a small manor in Dolton parish. This type of feudal sub-letting from one lord to another (often lesser, though not necessarily so) was very common.

INQUISITION POST MORTEM of William Mallett of Ash. 1586.

HOLDING	LOCATION	PARISH	HELD OF:	MANOR	TENURE	WORTH p.a.
Moiety of 2 messuages & 200 acres.	Seldon	Hatherleigh	The heirs of Weekes	Dickeford	Lease ?	6s. 8d.
(same holding as above)	Stapleford & Upcott	Hatherleigh	Heirs of Leonard Lovis esq	High Heanton	Lease ?	5s.
A moiety of 60 acres.	Waterhouse	Monkokehampton	Philip Pyne & Ralphe Berrye	Monkokehampton	Knight’s service	5s.
A moiety of 1 messuage & 40 acres.	Yeolden	Abbott’s Bickington	John Stowell, knight	Sutcombe (held by J Stowell)	Lease ?	6s.
1 messuage & 200 acres.	Coldashe, (aka Ash).	Iddesleigh	Edward Amendeth, esquire	Cherubeer (held by E. Amendeth)	Free socage, fealty & 26s.8d. rent.	26s. 8d.
1 messuage & 30 acres.	Upcott	Dowland	Roger Molford, esq.	Dowland (held by R Molford)	Knight’s service & 2s. rent.	3s. 4d.
David’s Marsh. Ψ	2 acres (appears to be Tithe plot 813)	Monko.				12d.
Certain lands & tenements.	East Yagland ¶	Hartland				

Ψ = an additional holding mentioned in the will.

¶ = did not belong to Mallet family after William’s death.

Knight Service would have involved payment of a fine rather than a military duty.

Some minor points from the table: Lovis was possibly from nearby Lovistone in Huish; High Heanton was probably Heanton Sachville in Huish; Monkokehampton manor passed to Berry & Pyne via co-heiresses in the early 15th C; the Stowells got Sutcombe in Abbots Bickington (near Shebbeer) from the heiress of Merton in the 14th C; Yeolden was a tenement in A. Bickington – there was a William de Yolden there in 1332; the Molfords held half of Roborough (near Dolton) manor in the mid-16th C; the Upcott tenement was what had been called Mallet’s Upcott in the early 18th C, and was probably the West Upcott of the 1840 tithe survey [20], still a 30-

⁸ Quite possibly of the Crewse family that held neighbouring Dowland manor in the early 16th C.

⁹ A dwelling plus associated barns/outhouses.

¹⁰ Sic! (see appendix 3).

¹¹ Cherubeer and Dolton manors were held by the Ameridiths before the 17th C. [Amendith & Ameridith are obviously the same]

acre holding; Dickeford was most likely Deckport in Hatherleigh (known as Dyckerport¹² in the 14th C), a holding which became part of Ash again in the late 19th C.

Many of the holdings have already been discussed. Yeolden in Abbots Bickington, however, appears for the first time, as does the small holding at Upcott¹³ in Dowlan, the adjacent parish to the north, which quite likely was brought by William's wife (her father being lord of the manor of Dowland).

5.5.5 The inventory.

The inventory¹⁴ attached to the will is a most important document for historians since it lists the personal possessions of the deceased: in William's case both his domestic and his agricultural wealth. It thus dovetails with the IPM which records only William's real estate. Inventories were done by neighbours.

5.5.5.1 William Mallet's Inventory, 15th April 1586. (made by Michael Moyse, Thomas Bremelcombe & Daniel Ware)

Taken from Olive Moger's typescript, with modern spellings adopted.

Eight oxen	£17
Ten cows & heifers	£15
Four steers	£5
Eight yearlings (7 of 2 winters old)	£4 6s 8d
Four of 3 winters old	£4
Two geldings & two mares	£6 13s 4d
Sheep	£6 13s 4d
Hogs	£1 3s 4d
Geese, and poultry	6s 8d
Corn in the barn	£9
Corn sown	13s
Wool	£1
	[sub-total £70 16s 4d]
His apparel, with 2 gowns	£10
Three feather beds, made up	£6
Three dust beds, made up	£1 10s
All the bedsteads, table-boards, cupboards, stools + pair of tables	£4
Silver salt cellar, 9 silver spoons & a gold signet ring	£3
A pot, 2 pans, a cauldron and a frying pan	4s 4d
3 candlesticks, 2 snuffers; 2 mortars; and all pewter vessels	£1 8s
A small truck; 4 chests; all wooden vessels	13s 4d
Three clothes boards	13s 4d
Bacon	6s 8d
One long wagon (<i>wain</i>) with pair of iron-clad wheels, plus all other implements belonging to it	£2
Three spits, 1 iron bar, 2 mattocks; shovels; and all other ware	10s
	[sub-total £30 2s 8d]
	<u>TOTAL £121</u>

Note: the two sub-totals are mine; they actually sum to £101 2s 0d, nearly £20 less than that stated in the inventory. Presumably other items were added later; most likely "money in purse", a regular item in these documents, though existence of debtors might also be implied.

5.5.5.2 Interpretation of the data.

William had 8 oxen (i.e. a ploughteam), thus he had arable, confirmed by the £9 worth of corn already harvested the previous year, and the lesser value already sown, though this all doesn't sound too extensive: a large-scale *sheep* farmer in 1625 near Axminster (with £166 worth of sheep – 493 beasts) had £102 worth of corn in barn and £23 worth newly sown on 24 acres [13]. So we're only looking at perhaps around 10 acres of arable at Ash (possibly the 11-acre Higher Gratton field?). (see 5.13.3 below).

¹² Gover, Mawer & Stenton: *The Place-names of Devon*.

¹³ Not to be confused, of course, with the Upcott in Hatherleigh.

¹⁴ Inventories accompanied wills from the early 16th to the mid-18th centuries.

He had £28 worth of cattle (a total of 31 beasts), including some dairy cows, and £7 worth of sheep (probably representing some 2 dozen, no more), some pigs, poultry and four horses. Thus Ash supported a mixed farming economy of modest extent relative to its relatively large (200) acreage. I would have expected more sheep, considering they were the most profitable section of the south west's agricultural economy at that time [13].

Indoors there were the usual pots & pans & furniture, the latter including 6 "performed"¹⁵ beds plus some bedsteads. William's household at his death included his wife, four sons between the ages of 1 and 14, and two daughters aged 2 and 7. It seems likely that three feather beds could have accommodated the family, with the two dustbeds¹⁶ being for indoor servants. The number of beds and pieces of furniture, plus the valuables worth £3, suggest a reasonable-sized farmhouse very typical of the locality, and a yeoman of modest income.

5.5.6 Other records.

The Subsidy of 1581 was based, as previous taxation, on the values of either goods or lands. Of the local families familiar from earlier subsidies, Michael Moyse was taxed for £10, Hugh Osbourne for £7 and Thomas Bremelcombe for £5, all for goods, whereas William Mallet was taxed for £2 *on land*. The rate in the £ paid varied, of course, so I think what we are seeing here is the most advantageous assessment for the Exchequer, and not that William was less wealthy than his father (*see 5.4.2 above*).

5.5.7 SUMMARY

The will & inventory suggest a reasonably successful yeoman rather than a country gentleman, and the escheator of the Exeter IPM some 6 months later (*5.5.4 above*) obviously thought so too, initially – though he finally recorded William as "gentleman" following the oaths presented by the 10 gentlemen and one esquire. Nevertheless, a sum of £121 was a low estate value for a gentleman when "*the average yeoman (in 1625) left between £100 and £200 in personal estate*" [13]. It mustn't be overlooked, however, that William was drawing 27s. per annum in rentals from his holdings, and these, as well as the fruits of his home farm at Ash, must have been enough to sustain a comfortable life style.

William's farming activities seem to have been of less importance during most of his adult life than his preoccupation with challenging the activities of his step-father, and much of his energies must have been directed to that end. At this remove it isn't possible to judge the rights & wrongs of the 22 years of litigation between the two men (from 1558 till 1580): both were determined protagonists, with Weekes having the considerable advantage of probably legally occupying Ash whilst his wife lived, as well as potentially laying claim after her death¹⁷ to the lands she had brought as her own to Richard Mallet.

In his marriage William adopted the natural tendency of the rural gentry in seeking a partner amongst his own kind locally. By this time England's gentry comprised a vast network of inter-married families; what has been called one great cousinage. This was a natural preoccupation among this class, employed in order to promote (or at the very least sustain) their social position and wealth.

William's real achievement was to establish a package of lands around Ash (in Hatherleigh & Monkokehampton) that he could pass on to his heir. It's quite probable that he only took over Ash after his marriage, just 14 years before his death, which could explain its under-utilisation of its full potential.

5.6 OLIVER MALLET 1572 – 1647.

5.6.1 The inheritance

Oliver was 14 years old at his father's death. His mother inherited the Ash tenement, with Oliver succeeding to it on her death¹⁸. Oliver also inherited, in his own right, all the barton's "bedsteads, tableboards, benches, seelings and glass"¹⁹ [34].

5.6.2 Bride and her background.

Oliver married Margery Osbourne in 1592. Her father, Hugh Osbourne, was a notary public of Iddesleigh, and patron of the church living from 1587 – 1591 [8], and had been one of the four executors of William's will; another of his daughters married John Stafford (another executor of William's will) of William's wife's family. In his will²⁰

¹⁵ Meaning *complete or made up*.

¹⁶ Strawbeds?

¹⁷ Both Weekes & his wife seem to have died in 1580, though exact dates aren't known.

¹⁸ A normal bequest.

¹⁹ Eldest son's normal inheritance of "movables". *Seeling* means wainscot; *glass* is window glass.

²⁰ Hugh Osbourne died in 1603.

Hugh left Oliver one feather bed, one gilt goblet, 6 silver spoons, one stone cup covered with silver & gilt, and one horse and one mare, and all corn growing in Condledge²¹; Oliver's son Hugh was also left some tithes in Lynton parish – it being stated that Oliver himself already enjoyed certain tithes of that rectory (very likely as part of the marriage settlement) [35]. In the same will debts worth £100 were left to Oliver's daughter Margery²². Hugh also left a tenement in Winkleigh to various other relatives. The value of his estate isn't stated in the transcription that has survived [35].

Thus the bride's father was a well-to-do country gentleman, and the marriage would have been a good one for William.

5.6.3 Taxation and visitation.

The Subsidy of 1642 recorded the top 4 taxpayers in Iddesleigh parish as: Walter Veale, clerk²³, 40s.; Richard Moyse 18s.; Oliver Mallet, gent. 16s.; William Arnold 13s. Although these values cannot be directly related to the earlier subsidies mentioned in 5.4.2 & 5.5.6 above, they must nevertheless roughly reflect the status of the individuals at the time; thus Oliver occupied much the same position socially as his father, on a par with other senior men locally.

The College of Arms heralds' visitations to Devon in 1531 and 1564 did not include Ash or any Mallets: perhaps the former date was too early for the new Mallet branch, and the latter too close to the time of the unseemly dispute between William and Edmund Weekes. But that of 1620 does list "Mallett of Idsley" and it conferred the right of the Ash Mallet line to display arms. [Systematic heraldic visitations by the controlling authority began in the 16th c. in order to ensure that those displaying arms had a legitimate mandate: a coat of arms was a much sought-after means of social climbing.]

The heralds recorded those resident at Ash in 1620, and constructed a line of descent. Those resident were: Oliver, and Margery, his wife; Hugh, the heir, aged 23 (who was to die before his father); William (the ultimate heir); Richard; John; Emanuel; Margerie, and Susan.

The family tree contains some inaccuracies, suggesting that the heralds did not have direct contact with the owner at the time: Richard Mallet's wife was incorrectly entered as the daughter of Bishop; and the family of Susan (Oliver's mother) was left blank!



5.6.4 Oliver's will. [38]

Oliver made his will in Nov. 1644, and it was witnessed by Hugh Stafford (using the Kellaway/Stoford arms as seal). A codicil was added one month later. He died in 1647²⁴, but as the ecclesiastical courts in which wills were examined were closed (because of the Civil War) it wasn't proved until 1661 (when the inventory was also done).

The will confirms that Oliver held the rectory of Lynton & its tithes²⁵, though he left these to three of his other children rather than his heir – doubtless the reason why this holding doesn't feature in the extended Ash estate of subsequent generations.

His heir William was left the Barton of Ash, including the glass, wainscoting and furniture in the same manner as his father's will (*see* 5.5.3).

No IPM survives for Oliver, but since the holdings of his father, William, are accurately mirrored by his grandson's (Hugh) it would appear that he acquired no new holdings apart from the Lynton rectory.

A stone tablet in Iddesleigh church gives Oliver's death as 1633, an obvious error since I find no other Mallet of that name at that time [1].

²¹ I've not traced this tenement.

²² A large sum; it was due from a cousin. In those days gentlemen often performed the role of moneylender.

²³ i.e. clergyman (clerk in holy orders).

²⁴ Three years after his wife.

²⁵ Thus he was an impropiator (lay-holder) of Lynton's tithes.

5.6.5 Oliver's inventory.

For some reason only the inventory of his *domestic goods* has survived. Their value amounted to just over £43, an increase of nearly 50% on his father's of 76 years previously. Noticeable is the complete absence of any silver and gold articles, most of which he gifted to his children in his will.

The inventory is a regular one, recorded room by room, though it wasn't done in a perambulatory manner, as his grandson's was 33 years later (*see 5.8.6 below*). Nevertheless it is most instructive to compare the two, and this table is given in 5.8.6. The number of rooms and their functions & contents confirm that Oliver lived in a typical Devon farmhouse, though doubtless furnished and equipped rather better than the average yeoman's (i.e. the wainscot and the window glass).

5.6.6 SUMMARY

In Oliver's time the Mallet branch at Ash was confirmed as a gentle line. He married well locally, and it is obvious from their social contacts that the Ash Mallets were established members of the local rural gentry. However, he left only a modest sum at death, and his household goods were similar to his father's. He lived in what was obviously a typical farmhouse architecturally. Of his husbandry we know nothing. The Lynton impropriation appears not to have been valuable enough to retain for the future Ash Mallet line.

5.7 WILLIAM MALLET 1601 - 1662

5.7.1 Inheritance.

William was the second son of Oliver, four years younger than his brother Hugh, the heir, who was alive in 1620 (*see 5.6.3*). Oliver died in 1647, Hugh apparently predeceasing him. William was thus 46 when he nominally inherited, though we don't have precise details of the situation at Ash in the Cromwellian period – his father's will wasn't proved until one year before William's own death (*see 5.6.4*). William's mother died 3 years before her husband so we can assume that William dwelt at Ash (with his bride – see below).

Little is known of the Mallets' relationship with the revolutionary state during and after the Civil War – they were probably Royalists (*see 5.7.4 below and 6.2.i*) – though this relationship could have proved influential to their fortunes.

William married in 1630, and possibly the couple lived at Ash for the next 13 years alongside William's parents.

5.7.2 Bride and her background.

At the age of 29 William married Eulalia Coplestone, in 1630, at Little Torrington church. She was the daughter of Richard Coplestone of Little Torrington, and granddaughter of Richard Bellew of Ash Barton in Braunton²⁶. A branch of the Coplestones of Colebrook existed at Wyke in Little Torrington [Lysons]. One Anthony Coplestone was patron of the Iddesleigh living from 1591 to 1643.

Richard Coplestone left his daughter 6 silver spoons in his will of 1671. His inventory listed plate & jewels worth £31, and his total estate was worth £370, so he appears to have been rather wealthier than Oliver Mallet, William's father [39]. However, Eulalia seems to have brought no land holdings to her husband.

There were 4 children of the marriage, all sons, the last surviving for only a few weeks in 1643, the mother dying at its birth [1].

5.7.3 The second marriage.

William married Jane (surname unknown) at some time, and she died in 1685 [1]. There is no record of any offspring, and the event is a bit of a mystery, since no will of William's survives.

5.7.4 Supporter of Charles II ?

A story is quoted [in 18] that William accompanied Charles II into exile in France following the Royalist defeat at Worcester in 1651 (presumably returning in or around 1660 at the Restoration). However, I can find absolutely no evidence to support this within the current world-wide Mallet family, or elsewhere, despite spending some time on it.²⁷ In 1649 Parliament set up a system for the sequestration of Royalists' estates.²⁸ The aim was not permanent confiscation but the collection of a large fine, amounting to at least twice the value of the total estate. A search of the

²⁶ A fine stone-built 17th c barton. It may have been leased to the Woolleigh Mallet branch in the mid- to late-16th c if the ID of Ashbere in John Mallet's will of 1570 is correct.

²⁷ Sadly, the author of [18] died in 2006 before I could query the item.

²⁸ The Committee for Compounding of Delinquents.

web yields no evidence of any Mallet compounding for Ash, and although the extensive records of the Committee survive at the PRO at Kew, they are not easily accessible and would involve many hours of on-site searching. Additionally, it is known that at the Restoration there were moves to recompense Royalists badly treated by Cromwell. Equally, it's known that some country estates survived the Commonwealth untroubled by these matters, possibly due to astute politicking by their owners. There's a whole section of Mallet history here that needs special research.²⁹

William died in 1662, and he is remembered on the same monumental tablet as his father (5.6.4 above).

5.8 HUGH MALLET – “The Elder” – 1634 – 1693.

5.8.1 Inheritance

Hugh was his father's eldest son. He was baptised at Iddesleigh, probably in Feb.1634 [1]. It is likely that he inherited all the Hatherleigh and Monkokehampton tenements (*see appendix 1*).

5.8.2 Bride's background.

Hugh married Elizabeth Lethbridge at Iddesleigh on 4th Oct. 1661, six months before his father died [1]. She was the daughter of Thomas Lethbridge of Jacobstowe, of a well-known local family. In 1638 Lethbridge had purchased the manor of Winkleigh Keynes³⁰ [40]. Elizabeth died in Dec. 1662 [1] – probably at, or soon after, childbirth; the child, a daughter, also called Elizabeth, died unmarried at the age of 34 in 1696, leaving an estate worth £250 that she distributed mainly as cash gifts in her will [41], and thus possibly giving us some idea of what a non-heiress of her class could be worth at that time. She (Elizabeth the daughter) recorded [41] that she was a kinswoman of the families of Speccott, Furse of Dolton, and Bellew. The Furse family married into the Bellews of Stockleigh English, and removed from Furse to Halsdon in Dolton [Lysons], where they remained until the 19th c. The Speccotts of Merton were originally the Fitz-Bernards who settled at Speccott Barton in the late-12th c [Lysons] and changed their family name³¹. Sir John Speccott was lord of the manor of Holsworthy in 1621, and of Stoke in Teignhead in 1659 [Lysons].

Hugh's wife's lineage was therefore good (though her family arms don't feature in the Iddesleigh church window {*plate 7*} as she produced no male heir).

5.8.3 The second marriage.

In 1671, 10 years after his first marriage, Hugh remarried, to Joan Holcombe. She was the heir of Richard Holcombe of Uton³² Arundell near Crediton [12]. These Holcombes may well have been connected to the Holcomb family of Hole in Branscomb, though they sold this seat in c.1600 and removed [Lysons]: this family's coat of arms features in the Iddesleigh church window. There were Holcombes in Crediton in 1544 [42].

5.8.4 Lands acquired.

There survives a marriage settlement [43] that appears to involve a messuage in Uton Arundell, and also premises in Ashreigny, and a fine indenture [44] that actually lists the properties, with their acreages and rental values: **6 messuages; 9 cottages; 9 gardens, 70 acres (of arable); 14 acres of meadow; 20 acres pasture; 40 acres furze & heath** (i.e. rough pasture) **and 30s. rent in Crediton, Rings Ash** (Ashreigny) **and Uton Arundell**. Later, in 1712 [45] we find that the 40 acres were probably called Blackdown, of rental value 15s.

So Joan Holcombe brought 14 acres, 6 tenements and 9 cottages to the marriage: a later record of 1728 [46] places three of the tenements in Uton, three “houses” at Ashreigny, and the nine cottages at Uton. The acquisition of these new lands effectively doubled Hugh's income from his tenants (*see lands table in app. 1*).

Hugh's will shows that as well as retaining all the lands inherited from his ancestors, and accumulating the Uton/Ashreigny conjugal supplements, he'd also acquired a *messuage in Iddesleigh called Middlewood* which [46] confirms as *part of Middleweek*, a smallholding just to the west of Ash, and near Iddesleigh Mill.

5.8.5 Hugh the Elder's will. [47]

Hugh bequeathed all his lands to four trustees: Philip Furze of Spreyton; George Lethbridge of Jacobstowe; Samuel Johns of Bideford; and Henry Ball of Yarnescombe, for a period of 30 years; after which time all the holdings of the

²⁹ Preferably by someone within easy reach of Kew!

³⁰ This manor subsequently remained in the family for nearly 200 years. The other manor in the village, Winkleigh Tracey, also eventually came under Lethbridge control many years later.

³¹ In the same way that the Kellaways of Stafford Barton did (see 5.5.2).

³² aka Yewton.

estate were to go to William, his eldest son (who was 15 at the time of his father's death in 1693). This all seems a bit strange to modern eyes. It's been suggested [18], very plausibly, that as Hugh had been a Royalist (*see* 5.7.4) the succession through trustees was a device designed to avoid possible sequestration of his property by Parliamentarians³³.

So the will put the four trustees in charge of the estate for 30 years from 1693; they were to lease or rent the tenements in order to raise the necessary funds for covering the will's bequests, which were summarised here.

Elizabeth, his eldest daughter, was to get £500: £200 two years after Hugh's death (in 1693), and £300 by 1699 (she actually died in 1696 – *see* 5.8.1).

Hugh, the younger son, was to get £300 when 21 (in 1702), though the trustees could use this as required for his education or training.

There was to be a heavy fine if William, the elder son, or any of the children "molested" the trustees, and a forfeit of the tenement of Stapleford.

The will allowed Hugh's widow reasonable use of the barton (she actually lived until 1722, aged 79).

The will also allows William, the elder son, to devise the barton at the age of 21 to a wife (he actually married aged 25 in 1703).

So the will seems constructed to allow William, the real heir, to acquire and inhabit Ash and its estates without actually being the legal owner until 1723; how the relationship between occupier and trustees actually worked would be nice to know! But we do know that William only enjoyed legal ownership for one year (he died in 1724), though as we shall see (*in* 5.9 *below*) he had other irons in the fire.

5.8.6 The value of the estate.

We don't know whether the monies bequeathed were realised – they look to have been fairly substantial amounts (£500 would have amounted to perhaps around £75-100k today) – though we can only assume that property leases & rents at Hugh's command would have adequately covered them. There is a record [45] of the 40-acre Blackdown tenement being leased by William in 1712 for £101 plus 15s. per annum rent (*refer* 5.8.4), which could imply that the 500 or so acres that the Mallets held at the time (apart from Ash) might potentially have raised c.£1500.

However, leases were normally for 3 lives (or 99 years) and so didn't become frequently available unless by common consent, and thus by no means all of these 500 acres would have been available for leasing in the short-term. Nevertheless we must assume that Hugh and his advisers had done their calculations diligently and that the monies bequeathed (a total of £540 over up to nine years) would have become available at the appointed times according to the will. The annual income of a man of Hugh's position can be assumed to have been at least £100 p.a. [48]

5.8.7 The inventory.

This document, drawn up the 9th June 1694 [47], is the most important extant record we have of the Ash Mallets prior to the tithe survey of the mid-19th C. It is important not just for its detailed listings of domestic and agricultural possessions, vital as these are for an understanding of Hugh's Ash economy, but because the domestic inventory was obviously done during a precise perambulation from room to room sequentially; which means that the disposition of the various rooms of the barton are identified, enabling a "reconstruction" of the barton's plan to be attempted with a good degree of confidence. This is great news, since the barton doesn't survive in any positively identifiable form on the ground, and it will be used for much of the discussions in chapter 6.

Below is a summary table of the inventory of agricultural goods, with a comparison to that of Hugh's great-grandfather (*see* 5.5.5).

³³ The late-Stuart period from 1685 till 1702 was a time of revolution and monarchical & religious disputes. The Catholic/Royalist cause was effectively extinguished with exile of James II in 1688, leading to the Glorious Revolution of 1688/9.

TABULATED AGRICULTURAL INVENTORIES of 1586 and 1694.

Taken from Olive Moger's typescript of the original documents, with some modern spellings inserted.

1586 (15 th April)		1694 (9 th June)	
ITEM	£ s. d.	ITEM	£ s. d.
8 oxen	£17	8 oxen	£40
10 cows & heifers	£15	11 cows & a bull	£36
8 yearlings, 7 2-year-olds, 4 3-year-olds	£4 6s 8d	8 2-year-olds + 9 yearlings	£37
4 steers	£5	8 calves	£6
2 geldings and 2 mares	£6 13s 4d	5 labour horse & 2 colts	£20
Sheep	£6 13s 4d	74 sheep & 48 lambs	£26 18s 0d
Hogs	£1 3s 4d	18 pigs	£10 10s 0d
Geese and poultry	6s 8d	Geese, turkeys and poultry	13s 4d
Corn harvested ("in the barn")	£9	Corn in the barn, and the wool	£5
Corn in the earth	13s 0d	11 acres of wheat	£27 10s 0d
Wool	£1	12 acres barley and 6 acres oats	£29
1 large wain with pair of iron-clad wheels, and all accessories	£2	1 wain body and wheels, 2 other pairs of wheels & butts	£7 10s 0d
3 spits, 1 iron bar, 2 brandises mattocks, shovels and all other ware	10s 0d	1 iron bar & 2 old saws, 1 ladder, planks and other timber, husbandry tools	£2 8s 4d
		Horse & ox harrows; ploughshare & horseshare; winnowing sheets, hoops & sieves	£3 3s 4d
		Cider pound & wring	£1
Total £70 16s 4d		£252 13s	
0d			

5.8.7.1 Agricultural possessions.

Hugh's husbandry was worth £252 13s., around 3½ times that of his great-grandfather 108 years earlier. Hugh had 37 cattle worth £79, much the same number as in 1586 (33, worth £28 then), and 122 sheep & lambs worth £47 against around £7 worth of sheep 108 years earlier. He had 5 draft horses & 2 colts worth £20, compared to the 2 geldings & 2 mares worth nearly £7 of his great-grandfather.

Hugh had a total of 29 acres planted with wheat, barley, oats and peas, worth £56, with around £2-3 worth of corn already harvested, compared to his great-grandfather's c.£10 worth from an unknown acreage.

The values of cattle and horses I take to indicate a roughly twofold increase in the inflation rate over the 100 years to 1694, so that the increase in value of Hugh's economy, after adjustment for inflation, would appear to be around 80%: I take this to be the extent that the productivity at Ash had increased during the course of the 17th century. Hugh had significantly more arable (a total of 29 acres) than his great-grandfather William (who probably only had about 10 acres under the plough: *see 5.5.5.2*)³⁴. Although cattle seem to have been roughly equivalent in numbers, Hugh had around 10 dozen sheep, about five times as many as William.

The figures suggest a mixed farming economy, with sheep being the dominant pastoral section – we know that sheep farming was especially profitable at this time [10]. Summing the values on an arable:pastoral basis we get a 53:47 ratio, and thus an equally mixed farming economy.

³⁴ Inspection of the tithe map (*see 5.13.3*) shows names suggesting earlier arable to be the three Grattons (18½ acres), Cana Park (4½ acres) and Wheat Park (3 acres), and this 26-acre total must surely have been among the key arable fields.

5.8.7.2 Domestic possessions.

TABULATED DOMESTIC INVENTORIES of 1661 and 1694. [Some modern phraseology has been employed.]

ROOM (in the order of listing of 1694)	1661	1694
Parlour	2 bedsteads + appurtenances. 1 table-board, 1 carpet, 6 cushions, 8 joint-stools or benches, 1 chair	1 table-board, quilt & bench. 1 side table, couch, carpet & 6 chairs
Hall	2 table-boards, 1 carpet, 1 settle & 1 bench	1 table-board, bench & 2 chairs. 1 clock. 1 pair andirons. 2 seeling pieces. A halberd.
Dairy ("buttery" in 1661)	1 table-board, 1 bench	10 cream pans. 1 little table. Butter & cheese.
Kitchen	<i>see bottom of table</i>	1 little table, bench & settle. 5 brass cups, 4 kettles, 1 warming pan, 2 brass candlesticks. Pot hooks, hangers & other chimney stuff. One cupboard and cheese wring. Three spits, one dripping pan.
Chamber over Parlour	One table & carpet, with a bedstead.	1 hanging press and sideboard. 2 old chairs + pair iron dogs. Silver plate & spoons. 1 looking glass.
Chamber over Hall	2 bedsteads + appurtenances. 1 cupboard. 1 great chest, 1 coffer, 1 table & 2 chairs.	1 bed, made up. 1 press, 2 chests, 2 chairs, 1 table, 2 coffers, 21 pewter dishes and custard pans, and a flagon. The table linen.
Chamber over Porch	2 bedsteads + apps.	2 beds made up, 7 cushions. Four little boxes and coffers.
Bed chamber ("over buttery" in 1661)	2 bedsteads + apps. 1 round table	2 beds made up, 1 bedstead. 3 boxes & a coffer. One looking glass.
Chamber over Kitchen	1 bedstead with coverlet	1 bed made up, 1 bedstead. 1 chest & little coffer. 2 limbecks. 1 little chest.
Chamber over Drink House	<i>see below</i>	1 bed made up & a bedstead, 2 old bedsteads. 1 brass kettle, 4 keeves, 20 hogsheads.
Brewhouse	<i>see below</i>	12 barrels, 1 trendle, 6 buckets, 2 barrels.
<i>Itemised separately in 1661, though most appear ex. kitchen/ brewhouse.</i>	The linen. The pewter. The brass. Three spits and rest of iron stuff. The barrels, keeves and other small vessels.	
WORTH	£43 4. 4d.	£59 2s. 6d.

Andiron: metal support for holding wood in grate. **Seeling piece:** wainscot. **Limbeck:** a still. **Keeve:** obviously a wooden vessel of some kind. **Hogshead:** a large cask, usually of around 50 glns. **Trendle:** probably a small truck.

Compared to the domestic inventory of his grandfather 33 years earlier, Hugh's was worth about one-third more at £59. This sum compares reasonably well with what a *prosperous* Devon yeoman left in 1625 – c.£50 – and rather more than an *average* yeoman [13]. The only really valuable items are the silver plate & spoons (£8), in comparison with the absence of precious metals in 1661 (and the £3 worth of silver & gold in 1586).

5.8.8 Other records

In 1673 the decision was taken to pull down Old St.Paul's in London (then in an unsafe condition, following the Fire), Christopher Wren designing the new one. Monies were raised by subscription from parishes. Iddesleigh raised £1 1s.7d., Hugh Mallet donating 6d.³⁵, his wife and son giving the same [50]. The rector, Walter Veale & family gave 8s., but the other gentry & well-to-do yeomen gave no more than Hugh Mallet.

³⁵ Pretty much like giving a fiver today.

5.8.9 SUMMARY

The 16th and 17th C Ash Mallets come across as members of the lesser Devonian gentry, as wealthy as prosperous yeomen on their 200-acre farm, but *additionally* enjoying the profits of another 500 acres of land in six other parishes. They also benefited from the social status which accrued from membership of a noble family of national repute, a cachet which was reinforced in 1656 when they became the senior Mallet branch following the extinction of the Enmore line [1]. They married into an extended, loose kinship of their Devonian peers, gradually increasing their lands, fortunes and status to a modest degree.

Hugh waited a decade after the death of his first wife before he remarried; then he made a marriage that, fortuitously or otherwise, was as profitable as any Ash Mallet's hitherto. It will be seen in chapter six that the first mansion to be built at Ash (replacing the barton) may have been planned by Hugh, even though its construction was left to his son.

We know next to nothing of the family's activities and fortunes during the civil war and its aftermath, though they do not on the surface appear to have been disadvantageous. Hugh may have had strong Royalist sympathies – like most other gentry (and also peasantry) in the S.W. – and an inspection of the records of the Committee for Compounding of Delinquents at the NRO might uncover something; *in particular*, the annual income of the Ash estate [48].

5.9 WILLIAM MALLET, of ASH (also GRAPTON) 1678 – 1724.

5.9.1 Inheritance.

The elder son of Hugh, William was baptised at Iddesleigh in Nov. 1678[1]. He matriculated at Oxford (Exeter College) in 1696, apparently the first Ash Mallet to attend university. He inherited Ash, though under constraining conditions of trusteeship set up by his father (*as explained in 5.8.5*). His half-sister's will left him £100 and "jewels" in 1696 (*see 5.8.2*); she was 16 years his senior when she died [41].

5.9.2 Bride and her background.

In 1703 William married Mary Bourne, the heiress of William Bourne of Stowford³⁶, and Grapton in Meavy (on the western edge of Dartmoor), at Bickleigh³⁷ [12]. I can find nothing about the Bourne family at Meavy or Stowford; it must have been one of the 400 or so lesser gentry of Devon [48]: their arms are depicted in the Iddesleigh window.

Meavy manor had belonged to the Meavy family, but by 1630 Sir William Strode was lord of the manor, according to Lysons (who also adds that it was sold in 1808 by Hugh Mallet "*in whose family it had been for many years*"). Thus it is likely that Bourne did not hold the property for long.

5.9.3 Lands acquired.

The DRO has a copy of a marriage settlement [49] conveying in trust the Crediton and Ashreigny holdings acquired by William's father 30 years earlier (*see 5.8.4*), though no Meavy land is mentioned. For the latter we must go to documents of 1728 (during the time of William's son & heir) where the entire Mallet estates, including those at Meavy, are set out in detail [46]. A lease of 1712 [45] describes William as *gent. of Grapton in Meavie*, implying that Grapton was his main seat at that time. Whether he was living at Grapton with his wife because his mother was occupying Ash (she didn't die until 1722), or whether his wife preferred to stay at her old home, isn't known. There is too a family tradition of a great destructive fire at Ash³⁸ around 1700, so it's possible that building work was underway, forcing the family to use other accommodation (*see also chapter 6*). Then again, William's marriage in 1703 may have supplied the impetus for a new mansion, as such events often did. Whatever, William was married at the neighbouring parish of Bickleigh, and seems to have lived at Grapton for a time – his son William was certainly baptised there in 1705 [1].

To return to the archives [46], the lands acquired in Meavy parish via William's wife were: the manor of Meavy (William was lord of the manor and so would have taken chief rents³⁹ from all of the properties); the tenement of Grapton (aka West Grapton, Higher Grapton, Gratton); Brightworthy (Brisworthy, a farm 900 feet up on the Moor at the limit of colonisation); and Yeanadon Downe (Yennadon Down, a large area of Moorland touching 1000 feet, now rising above Burrator reservoir on the west). No land values are given, but Brisworthy and Yennadon are on the moorland fringe, at the edge of the parish, and it is unlikely that they commanded a high price (they were doubtless used as a sheep ranch): presumably Bourne, or some other landowner, retained the better land in the parish.

³⁶ Possibly Stowford near Halwill.

³⁷ 4 miles south of Meavy.

³⁸ Got verbally from Mrs Primrose Mallet-Harris in 2006.

³⁹ Ground rents.

In terms of new acreage for the Mallets, the Meavy holdings may have amounted to at least 600 acres, perhaps more, allowing, say, 200 acres for Grapton, 100 for Brisworthy⁴⁰, and 300 or more for Yennadon. Two-thirds of this, however, would have been rough grazing, suitable only for sheep or the hardier cattle. Nevertheless, the profits to be got from sheep rearing meant that the extensive hill grazing available on Dartmoor was generally thoroughly exploited.

5.9.4 Other documents.

No will exists. William died two years after his mother, in 1724, aged 46. He was buried in Iddesleigh [1], so may well have been living at Ash during his later years.

5.9.5 SUMMARY

William's lifetime covered a period of political and religious instability. However, we know nothing of the family's activities or fortunes during the Monmouth or Jacobite uprisings; or indeed, whether these events touched them much at all. We can see that his marriage was quite advantageous, probably doubling the family acreage, and providing two family seats; Ash and Grapton.

His involvement in mansion-building activities will be discussed in chapter six.

5.10 WILLIAM MALLET, of GRAPTON and ASH 1705 – 1776.

5.10.1 Inheritance.

Unlike his Ash ancestors, William was born and baptised at Meavy, and apparently an only child [1]. He probably inherited around 1,500 acres from his father, which included the local Hatherleigh & Monkokehampton tenements, those at Crediton, and the newly acquired properties at Meavy.

5.10.2 Bride & background.

He married, in 1736 at Iddesleigh⁴¹ church [1], Jane Veale, daughter of Walter Veale of Passaford in Hatherleigh. The Veales were a family from the Buckland Brewer-Monkleigh area to the NW of Torrington, known in medieval times as Viel, Vyel or Vele [Lysons]. It has been surmised [1] that Jane was therefore of the same family as Joan Vyel, the heiress who had brought Ash to the Mallets 200 years previously, and this I find believable (though the Iddesleigh window has two quite different arms for the two roots). A John Vyell was a joint owner of a knight's fee in Iddesleigh in 1428, and nearly 100 years later a Denis Vyell appears in the 1525 lay subsidy in Iddesleigh. Furthermore, we saw (*in 5.4.1*) that Joan may have held some property in Monkleigh in her own right. The source of the family was probably the Vitalis⁴² (Norman) family that held manors in this part of Devon after 1066. In a record of 1238 a farmstead in Buckland Brewer a farm called Vielstone is mentioned – "Viel's farm".

We saw (5.8.8) that a Walter Veale was rector of Idesleigh in 1678 – indeed, four generations of the family had the living from 1616 till 1738⁴³, and a James Veale was patron of the living from 1689 till 1724 [8].

So the union was a good match socially; and the Mallets and Veales got even closer in c.1806⁴⁴ when the 4th son (and 12th child) of the marriage assumed the name of Veale after inheriting under the terms of the will of his uncle (his mother's brother) who was childless [1].

5.10.3 Lands acquired.

The archival material referred to in 5.9.3 [46] confirms the total land holdings of William: note that one⁴⁵ of the documents refers to him as "of Exeter". [These holdings are listed in appendix 1.] Additionally, a tenement called Eggbear in Werrington parish in west Devon⁴⁶ is referred to. It's not possible to determine whether this new holding was brought by William's wife, or by William's mother.

⁴⁰ Calculated pro rata from [45].

⁴¹ [12] has "at Torrington".

⁴² The vernacular form of the name was "Viel", Vitalis being the learned, Latinised form (of a saint's name popular in Normandy).

⁴³ There is a fine monument to Walter Veale, died 1681, in the chancel.

⁴⁴ James's 1st child, surname Veale, was born in 1806 [1] so he must have assumed the name in that year or a year or two before.

⁴⁵ Aug. 1728.

⁴⁶ North of Launceston, and now in Cornwall.

In 1745 [51] we see Brisworthy Farm in Meavy being leased by William (“of Ash”) to one Thomasine Willcox, widow, at an annual rent of £2. In 1759 he leases Higher Tenement in Meavy Town to Richard Bowden⁴⁷. So William was obviously drawing income from his Meavy lands throughout his life.

5.10.4 The children of William & Jane.

The marriage produced 12 children, 8 girls and 4 boys, born between 1738 & 1755, and all baptised at Iddesleigh [1]. As already mentioned, the last child inherited Passaford⁴⁸ in Hatherleigh.

5.10.5 Other comments.

In chapter six I discuss William’s role in the building of Ash House, though sadly, despite his long life, there is little real information about his activities.

No will exists, nor ever did: he died at Ash intestate in April 2nd 1776 [12] [1].

5.11 WILLIAM MALLET 1746 – 1781.

5.11.1 Background.

The eldest son, he succeeded to Ash presumably on his father’s death in 1776, apparently having been granted administration of his father’s affairs [12]. However, [12] doesn’t refer specifically to William by name, and implies that Hugh, the second son, inherited as the heir. This is almost certainly because William died unmarried, and thus without an heir, his brother Hugh then inheriting. Nevertheless, William’s will [52] makes it quite clear that he owned Ash, and that he left it to his brother.

5.11.2 Will of William [52].

This was proved in July 1781 by Hugh, his brother and sole executor. It entrusted John Woolcombe, of Ashbury, and John Bellew⁴⁹ of Barnstaple to keep his lands for the use of his brother Hugh (aged 34 in 1781). He left £10 each to his 9 surviving siblings and to his mother, and also annuities for three of his sisters.

He directly left Stapleford to Hugh, and also Pitts and Poundhouse tenements in Hatherleigh, two properties which appear for the first time in the Ash “portfolio”.

The will mentions that his mother was living in a house at Great Torrington.

It also stipulates that his brother James should *not* benefit from his will unless he retained the Mallet surname, so James’s uncle’s plans for him must already have been common knowledge (*see 5.10.2 above*).

5.11.3 Lands owned.

Apart from the Pitts & Poundhouse properties the will mentions that one Joseph Northmore was occupying Grapton Barton, and a Richard Bowden (*see 5.10.3 above*) held “my lands in Meavy Town”. This latter turn of phrase suggests that other lands in Meavy were owned, and indeed the 1780 Meavy Land Tax returns show that he owned The Shop.

A lease of 1777 [53] confirms that he still held the Youlden moiety in Abbots Bickington (part of the Ash lands early Mallet days), whilst a surviving lease of his brother [54] indicates that the Ashreigny houses were still held.

Assuming that most of the Hatherleigh and Monkokehampton farmsteads were still owned – as they certainly still were 100 years later – one of the small group of properties I am unsure about are those at Crediton, since we here no more about them after 1728 [46], in William’s father’s time: it’s like they were sold. Neither does Eggbear in Werrington (*see 5.10.3*) feature, nor Mallet’s Upcott in Dowland (last recorded under this name in a court baron of Dowland manor in 1751 [20]).

5.12 HUGH MALLET – “The Younger” - 1747 – 1823.

5.12.1 Background.

Acquired Ash on the death of his unmarried elder brother in 1781; he was the 2nd son and 7th child of his parents, and the 7th Mallet generation to hold Ash after Richard, founder of the dynasty. He was baptised at Iddesleigh in 1747 [1].

⁴⁷ Dartmoor Press info, ex Richard Mallett.

⁴⁸ A country estate & seat of the Veale family just to the NW of the village.

⁴⁹ Presumably of the same family mentioned in 5.8.2.

5.12.2 Bride and her background.

Hugh was married in 1784 at Clungunford, Salop. His bride was Jane Henschman, of Furney Hall, Salop., daughter of the Rev. Francis Henschman, the grandson of the bishop of London of that name [12]. This was the first Ash Mallet choice of spouse not of rural Devon, and perhaps marks the beginning of their ascendancy in the wider social order.

5.12.3 Property owned.

We can reasonably assume that Hugh's total estate included those held by his late brother (*see 5.11.3*). Additionally, there survives a lease [55] of 1806 concerning property in the manor of Ludbrook, in Ermington, on the edge of the southern Moor. Perhaps his wife brought this. What is noticeable about the lease is that Hugh is recorded as *Hugh Mallet of Ash, Esq.*, the first time we see this hierarchical form used – hitherto all Mallets in the archives were recorded as *Gent.* And, eleven years later, a lease survives [56] of some property in Hatherleigh (presumably one of the long-held tenements) where Hugh is again so addressed.

In 1808 Hugh sold all his Meavy properties to Masseh Lopes, Bart. [Lysons]. Significant also is that we see no more of the Youlden moiety again in the archives.

Towards the end of Hugh's life he was involved in a long-running dispute concerning a mortgage on the manor of Black Torrington (5 miles W of Hatherleigh). There exists a draft assignment of this mortgage [57] which tends to indicate that Hugh had held the manor, possibly got from a member of the old Woolleigh branch of the Mallets, who certainly still held lands in this parish⁵⁰. This property was eventually conveyed to William Harris Arundel of Lifton Park [58] seven years after Hugh's death. Was Hugh trying to raise funds?

5.12.4 Exeter Flying Post records.

In October 1793 Hugh is mentioned as Deputy Lt. Devon Militia. There are also two other extracts from this paper, one in 1792 mentioning him as an Agent for tithes and one from 1818 as an agent for Royal Exchange Assurance.

5.12.5 Land Tax returns 1780 – 1832.

These show that Hugh Mallet, Esq., a magistrate, was not occupying Ash between 1780 and 1790 – one Simon Sloman was. Hugh is shown as living there from 1791 till 1813, then a Thomas Goss occupied until 1815; then a William Ward until 1818. From 1819 till his death in 1823 Hugh was the occupant (though he actually died in his magistrate's lodgings at Exeter [12] – he had been a magistrate for 30 years). Sloman, Goss & Ward are names that feature in the Iddesleigh and Dolton tithe surveys as tenant farmers⁵¹: so they weren't occupying Ash as gentry but rather farming its lands.

5.12.6 SUMMARY.

Hugh's tenure at Ash marks two changes of direction for the Ash line. Firstly, his marriage was almost certainly the factor directly responsible for raising his family's social profile. Secondly, he deliberately seems to have contracted the Ash holdings to no more than the old tenements in the neighbouring parishes of Hatherleigh & Monkokehampton. Moreover, the land tax data is the first indication of Mallet disengagement at Ash – the start, perhaps, of a trend that culminated in the long-term letting of Ash House some 50 years later, followed by its sale soon afterwards. Nerveless, there was to be one more to reside and farm at Ash: Hugh's son and heir Hugh.

5.13 HUGH MALLET 1788 – 1865.

5.13.1 Early years.

The only son, he inherited Ash, aged 35, in 1823 on the death of his father, after being required to take out Letters of Administration because his father had died intestate [12]. His widowed mother was presumably still living at Ash at this time (she died in 1833 [12]).

Prior to his inheritance, and his marriage, he became a captain in the Royal Horse Artillery, but upon the death of his father he lived and farmed there.

5.13.2 Bride and her background.

He married Caroline, daughter of the Hon. John Coventry, second son of the 6th Earl of Coventry by his wife Lady Barbara St. John, at St. James's Church, London, in 1824 [12]. This marriage doubtless enhanced the Ash Mallets' standing, as his father's had.

⁵⁰ Info ex Richard Mallett.

⁵¹ John Sloman farmed 185 acres at Chapple & Tockley in Dolton; Thomas Goss had 102 acres at Eastwood & Bearland; and William Ward 120 acres at Lane End & Pixton in Iddesleigh.

5.13.3 The Great Tithe Survey.

5.13.3.1 Introduction.

Early in the 19th century (in 1808) Charles Vancouver's "General View of the Agriculture of the County of Devon" was published; it contained some notes of the situation at Iddesleigh of around 1806. The Parish population was 441, of which only 2 had no occupation – presumably Mallets at Ash. At this time the "*soil is worn, crops poor, pasture thin, though the area is picturesque*". Vancouver wasn't the only observer to remark upon the transition of Devon from an area of farming excellence (in the 16th & 17th C) to backwardness by the 19th C. He also found that seven-eighths of the farming land of north Devon was of the "convertible" variety, that is, not permanent pasture or meadow, but capable of being taken under the plough on occasion: only one-eighth was regularly under corn. At around this time the important issue of tithe reform nationwide was high on the political agenda, grown out of the vast number of tithe disputes that had clogged up the courts for years. In 1836 an Act required every parish to be accurately surveyed, and every plot of land to be assigned a tithe rent-charge, by an agreement between tithe holders & tithe payers, in order that a fully commuted tithe could be established. The need for this had grown out of the vast number of tithe disputes that had clogged up the courts for years. In 1836 an Act was passed that required every parish to be accurately surveyed, and every plot of land to be assigned a tithe rent-charge, by an agreement between tithe holders & tithe payers, in order that a fully commuted tithe could be established.

Each surveyed plot was numbered, and its accurate extent, usage and owner & occupier noted. It is the single most authoritative proprietorial, economic & demographic account of Iddesleigh ever assembled. Moreover it was undertaken before Devon was much affected by the Industrial Revolution, and before the railways had made an impact, so it gives us the chance to see rural Iddesleigh unaffected by these great changes. Furthermore, it coincided with the first detailed census, at a time before the population flow from country to town had really begun.

So the tithe survey, together with the census of 1841, allows a "snapshot" of Ash in the mid-19th C of great clarity and detail.

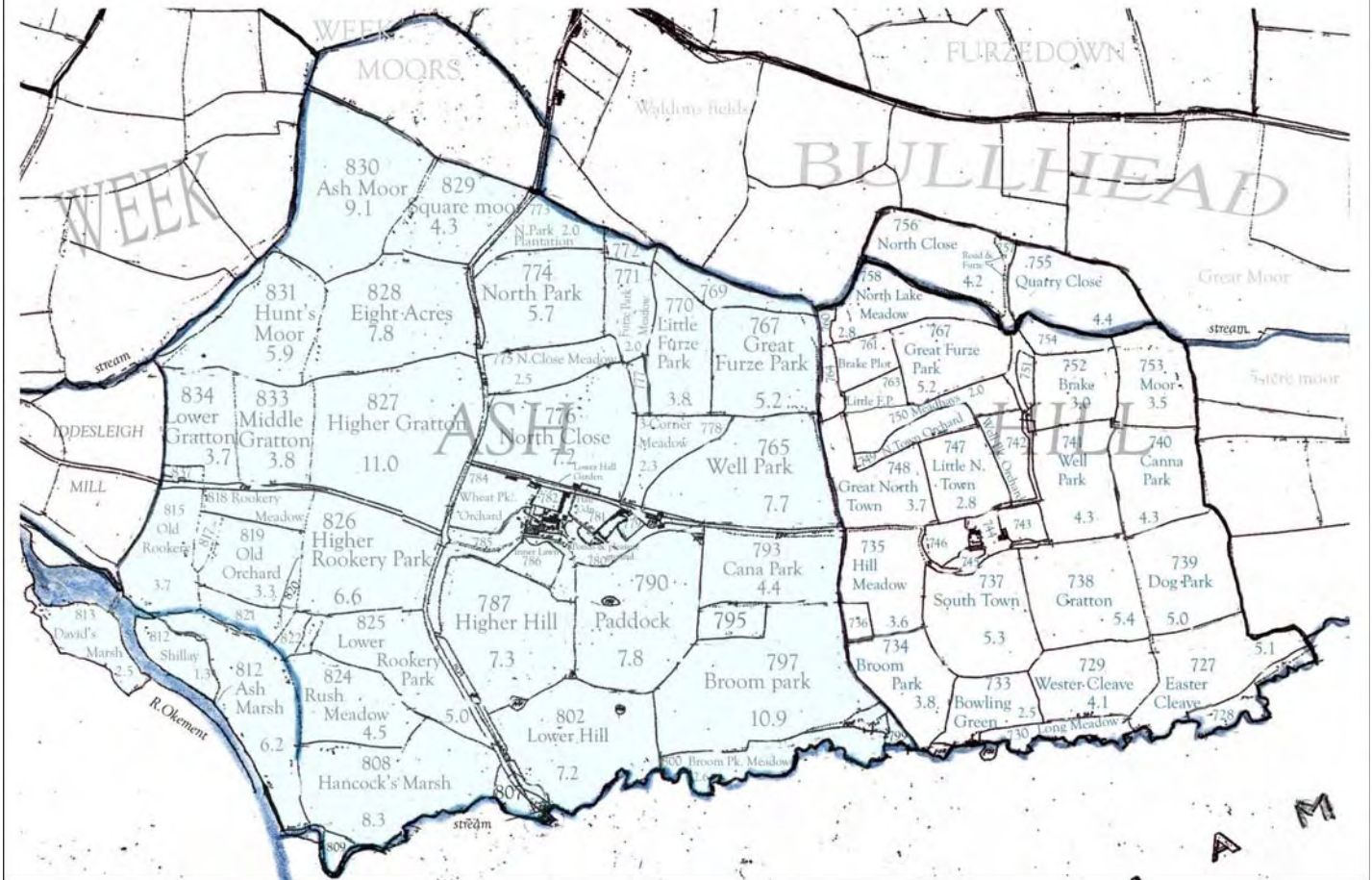
5.13.3.2 The tithe map.

That part covering Ash and Hill is shown above. The map is important to historians for field names & shapes, both of which could be centuries old (*see 4.3 for more discussion on this*).

The map clearly shows the extent of the Ash estate in 1843: the Mallets owned no other land in the parish, though other lands were held outside (*see 5.11.4 below*).

1843 ASH+HILL tithe map. Field number, name and acreage.

This scale c. 10 in. to 1 mile. (1mm = 7yds).

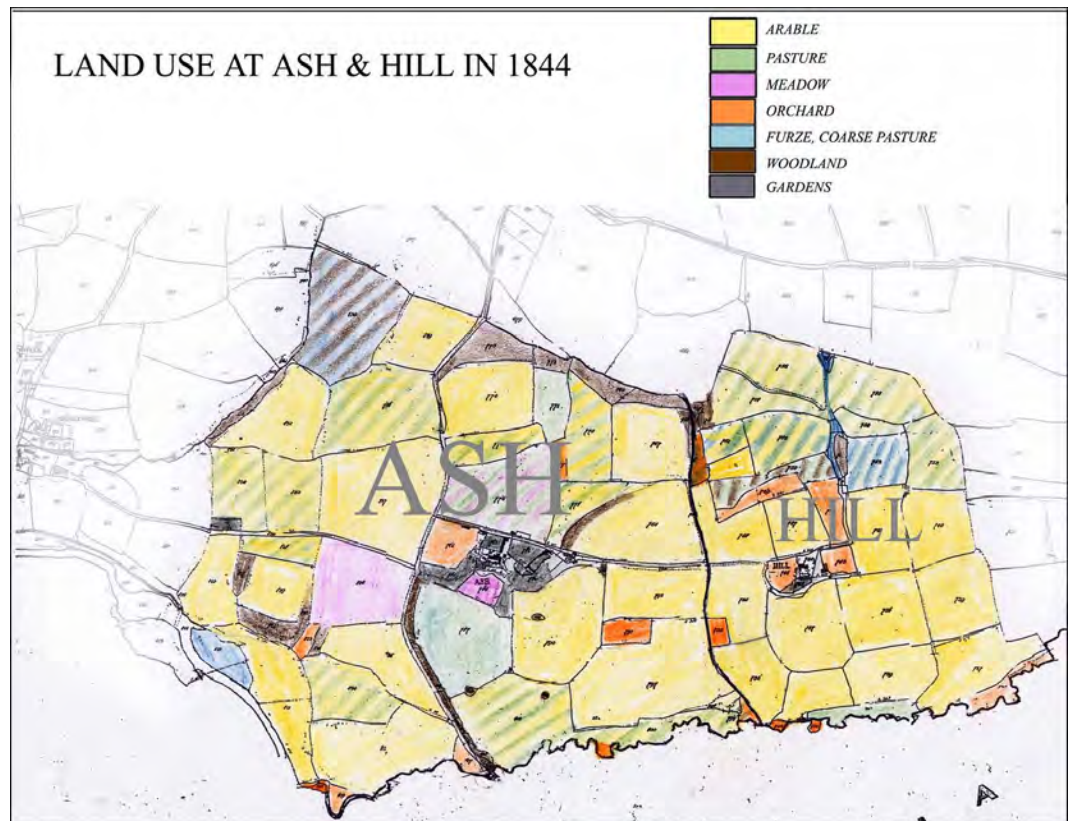


5.13.3.3 The tithe apportionment list.

This is the section of the survey detailing plot ownership & usage. State of cultivation data has been employed to make the diagram (right, based on the tithe map), and gives an overview of how the estate was farmed in 1844.

5.13.3.4 Agriculture at Ash in the 1840s.

The period from around 1830 till 1860 was a quite prosperous one for landlords. Cereal prices rose dramatically during the Napoleonic wars, but at their end in 1815 there was something of a collapse, only to recover a decade or so later, since the protective duty on corn gave an artificial boost to arable farming that lasted until cheap imports from N America caused a big fall in prices from the late 1860s.



Thus it was that many north Devon parishes with grasslands normally best suited to dairying saw well over 50% of their lands in use for arable farming; indeed, some parishes were almost totally arable in the 1840s, such were the profits to be got from wheat. All of which comes as a great surprise to the present inhabitants of these parishes, who have perhaps imagined dairying and stock rearing as existing since time immemorial here.

However, though farmers prospered, and rents rose with prices, in Devon wages didn't keep pace, and from c.1850 farm labourers started leaving the land in large numbers for the better-paid employment in the towns. The countryside started to empty, many parishes losing more than half their inhabitants by the end of the century, which trend has of course never been reversed.

At Ash, in 1843, 102 of the total 190 acres were classed as arable, some 54% of the whole. Although this sounds high for north Devon grassland, it was, in fact, a relatively low figure for the neighbourhood. At Hill, next door, around 70% was down as arable, as it was too at Brimblecombe, Bridgetown & Fursdon. The average arable content for all holdings in the parish was 63%, though many of the smaller tenements (like Week and North Hole) had well over 80%, as too did much of Dowland parish to the north.

Alas, the tithe records for Iddesleigh are incomplete⁵², so we don't know what the course of crops was; that is, we don't know how much that was classed as arable was actually under the plough in any one season, for it is most unlikely to have been 100%. In neighbouring Dowland we know that one-half the arable was under the plough at any one time [20], and we must assume that some similar arrangement applied at Ash. This would mean that at least ¼ of all the land at Ash would have been ploughed each season; a remarkably high figure on an estate where for most⁵³ of the 20th C that figure has been zero!

The lack of detailed arable data in 1844 is mirrored for the pastoral, and for the same reason: we don't know what numbers of cattle & sheep the pasture supported. But we know that Dowland's 1700 acres sustained 350 sheep, 35 horses, 50 bullocks & 20 cattle, in a parish that was rather more "arable" than Iddesleigh. Scaling these figures down for Ash *pro rata*, but allowing for somewhat more pastoralism there, yields, for example, just 40-45 sheep at Ash, which emphasises the subsidiary nature of stock keeping in the 1840s.

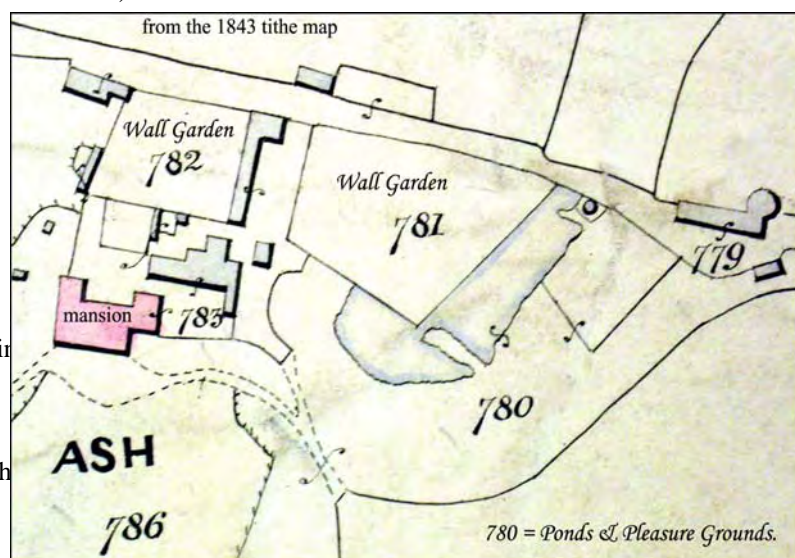
The table gives the breakdown of farming activities at Ash in 1843.

ARABLE	54%	
PASTURE	23%	(c. ½ of this was Rough Pasture)
TIMBER	10%	
MEADOW	6%	
ORCHARD	3%	
GARDENS	2%	
Roads, Bldgs., Yards	2%	

The total tithe rent-charge at Ash was nearly £30, and was paid to the rector⁵⁴ of Iddesleigh, the owner of all the tithes.

In 1843 Hugh Mallet was farming all his 190 acres at Ash; there were no separate tenements. He would have employed the services of a steward or farmer – though it is uncertain where this person was located: whether he lived off the estate, or in a cottage near the mansion. Some farm labourers would have lived on the estate (*see 7.3.1 below*) and some in neighbouring cottages (such as Waldens).

5.13.3.4.1 Despite Ash's function as the seat of the Mallets, the figures in the above table are those of a working farm, where the agricultural activities came right up close to the mansion⁵⁵: only 4 acres of gardens are recorded around the house (and only 2½ of these classed as "pleasure gardens"). These few acres are of interest,



⁵² The Iddesleigh Tithe Files were officially "weeded" in 1960, and as a result, historians have lost much useful data.

⁵³ Excepting the years around the two world wars.

⁵⁴ At that time the famous Jack Russell.

⁵⁵ Which might, however, have been protected by a ha-h

however, since they form the nucleus of what was a deliberate leisure landscape constructed possibly in the 18th century, when such amenities were popular. The fields just beyond the ha-ha too look to have been planted with clumps of trees in order to improve the view from the house.

This leisure area also contains 2 features that need interpretation. On the map of 1843 can be seen plot #780: ponds & pleasure grounds. The ponds, though garden features at that time, may just conceivably be the remains of medieval fish-ponds⁵⁶; the causeway almost dividing the waters could have had a utilitarian function (a bottle-neck for netting), though more likely it was a feature for viewing ornamental fish.

The circular structure at the north end of the pond is more reliably identified as a dovecote⁵⁷. It was some 10 feet in diameter. It's a pity it's not survived. Cedars of Lebanon flourished in the grounds; it was the custom to plant one tree when the heir of Ash married – the largest is over three centuries old [60].

5.3.13.5 The tithe survey elsewhere in Devon.

The survey quite categorically tells us which lands Hugh Mallet held: they were confined to the parishes of Hatherleigh and Monkokehampton. Waterhouse (57 acres) in Monkokehampton was a Mallet possession still; and Easterbrook too was owned, the first time we see this 46-acre farm feature in the Mallet records. In Hatherleigh parish, 6 tenements were in Mallet hands, 4 of them having featured in William's inventory of 1694: the first four in the list below.

<u>Tenement</u>	<u>Occupier</u>	<u>acreage</u>
Seldon	Robert Powlesland	138
North Stapleford	Robert Ash	98
South Stapleford	Richard Keener	58
Hockaday's Plats ⁵⁸	William Tucker ⁵⁹	2
Grudgeworthy	William Tucker	67
White's (or Pits) ⁶⁰	Robert Stone	9

As can be seen, the small farm of Grudgeworthy, near Seldon, had been added to the estate.

5.13.4 SUMMARY.

Hugh's occupancy appears to have brought a period of stability – indeed, the last of such of the Mallets' tenure at Ash. Two daughters and a son were all born on site between 1825 and 1828; and he actively farmed Ash (as shown by the tithe survey). He was also, like his ancestors, a county magistrate. As remembered by his grandson Sir Claude Coventry Mallet [60] he was a rather austere man, a committed Christian, and doubtless typical of a Victorian country gentlemen of the time.

During his term at Ash the lands held reverted to an extent and location quite similar to that which pertained during the first of the Mallets in the 16th century. Thus the total estate became more compact and localised, and so presumably more manageable.

5.14 HUGH COVENTRY MALLET 1828 – 1881 : The End of the Mallets at Ash.

5.14.1 Inheritance.

Hugh's son, Hugh Coventry succeeded in 1865; Hugh's widow, Caroline (the artist of the oil painting of Ash south front, reproduced as plate 12b) lived on until 1875, dying at Budleigh Salterton (to where she may have moved after her husband's death).

5.14.2 Military and public careers. [59]

As a young man he pursued an army career, as his father had, and became a captain of 4th Royal Light Dragoons in 1846, 9th Lancers in 1851, and N. Devon Yeomanry Cavalry; and was sometime ADC to Lord Carlisle, the Lord Lt. of Ireland.

Following a spell as superintendent of passports at the Foreign Office in 1858, he was appointed secretary & registrar to the Slave Trade Abolition Commission in South Africa in 1865 (the year of his father's death). After this

⁵⁶ Used as a source of winter meat.

⁵⁷ Pigeons were also a source of winter meat, plus eggs.

⁵⁸ Very likely the same as the 2-acre David's Marsh in 5.5.4

⁵⁹ We will meet this family name again as an Ash tenant in 5.14.5.2 below.

⁶⁰ See 5.11.2.

service he was appointed British Consul in Columbia in 1871; in Panama in 1874; and in Buenos Aires in 1879. After a period of much bad health he was invalided home in 1880, and died at Tunbridge Wells the next year.

5.14.3 Marriage.

Hugh married, in 1853 at Bath, Georgina, daughter of Henry Bathurst, Archdeacon of Norwich, and son of the Bishop of Norwich. She had been born in 1832 at the rectory at Holkham, Norfolk. It is known that she returned to England in 1880 with her sick husband, and three daughters [59], so it may be presumed that the family accompanied Hugh on his diplomatic service abroad.

5.14.4 The Ash estate: the end of Mallet tenure.

Hugh's father had farmed at Ash until his death in 1865, living there as an aristocratic country squire. However, his death coincided exactly with the commencement of his son's diplomatic career abroad. So it comes as no surprise to see in various trade directories of the time that, from 1866, Ash was let as a gentleman's country estate, the short leases (see the list below) suggesting an emphasis on country sports activities.

1866	Fred Taylor, resident.
1870	Col. Henry le Poer Trench
1873	St. George Esq.
1876	Capt. Richards
1878	Hon. Rupert Arundell
1881	Benjamin Thorne Turner Esq.

One wonders whether the house was being adequately maintained during this time.

After his marriage in 1853 Hugh probably lived at Ash for a while; but his wife was said never to have been happy there [1], and they certainly dwelt at London, renting a house from Lord Curzon, and making their home there [59]. On the return to England in 1880 after 15 years abroad the decision to sell Ash must have been made: precisely why isn't known, though the fact that their son and heir already had a senior diplomatic post in Argentina, and that the other six children had also stayed there, could have meant that Ash had simply become surplus to the family's requirements (especially as Hugh's mother also died in 1881).

The various Ash tenancies ended in 1883, but the house and estate had already passed to its new owner in 1881.

5.14.5 The estate at the time of the sale.

We are fortunate that a detailed survey, similar in content to the one of 1844, was taken in 1879 for the purpose of the estate agents' sale catalogue, in 1879. This document still exists [15 (*under -/58/1*)], and contains lithos, maps and details of house, outbuildings & lands, together with rental values & tenants' names – all of which tells us exactly what was going on at Ash at the end of the Mallets' tenure there.

A more detailed description of the mansion is given in the next chapter, but the other factors are dealt with below.

5.14.5.1 The gentleman's residence.

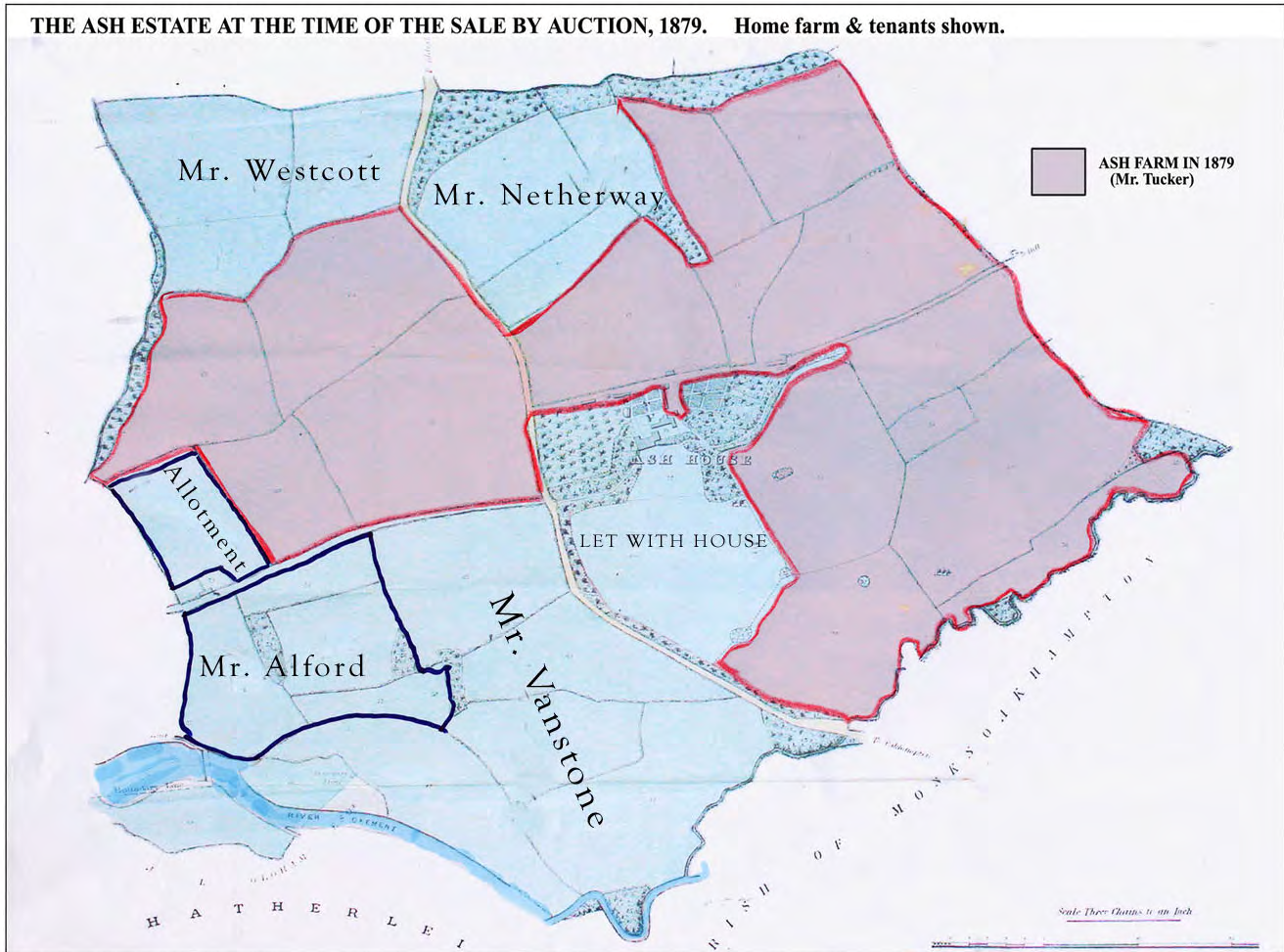
The Ash estate comprised 190 acres, exactly what it had been in 1843. Some 6 acres of this included gardens, lawn, orchards & pleasure grounds around the house to the west, south & east, plus 7 acres of pasture beyond the ha-ha to the south. In addition, the house retained access to a few acres of woodland, variously dispersed around the estate's perimeter, for shooting purposes. The whole residential property amounted to 24 acres, a considerable increase over the 1843 figure, and formed the gentleman's country house-in-parkland. The shooting was managed by a Mr. Yealand, the head gamekeeper [60].

Adjacent to the mansion on the east was an extensive stable block of two coach-houses and five stalls, plus a loft over which included two grooms' bedrooms.

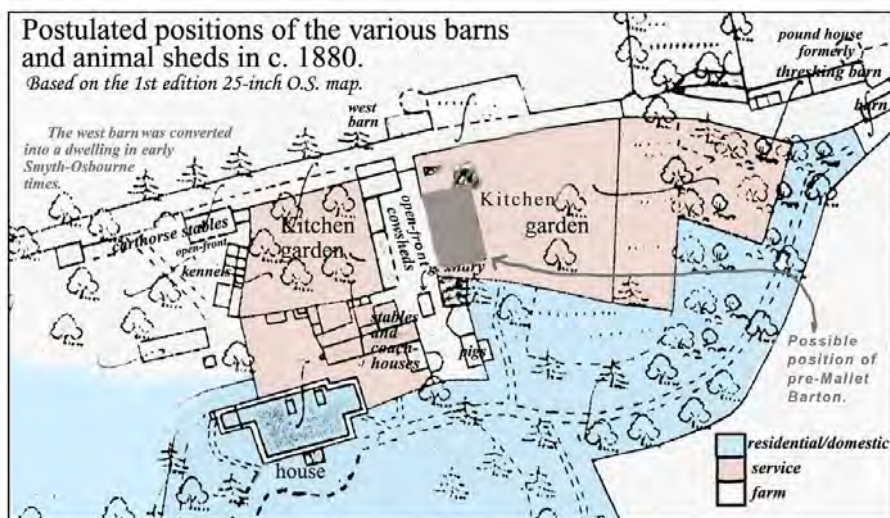
5.14.5.2 The Farm.

The "home farm" comprised 96 acres (*see map below, based on the NDRO archive 2239B add 7/59/1*). In 1879 the tenant was a Mr. Tucker. The sale document makes it clear that there was no farmhouse/cottage, so Tucker didn't live on-site: what was to become an employee's cottage in Smyth-Osbourne times had not then been converted from its function as a barn. Perhaps unsurprisingly, a valuation of the time [15] bemoans the absence of a farmhouse as reducing the letting potential of the house (as well as implying that the 2 farm tenements in the sale (*see 5.14.5.4*) didn't come up to scratch in terms of condition).

Somewhat surprisingly, nearly 10 years after the first cheap imports of N. American corn, exactly the same proportion of Ash land was under the plough in 1879 as in 1843: some 55%. Thus the farm was still a mixed one, though with the emphasis on arable.



The catalogue mentions cow-houses, calf-pens & piggeries. The 1886 O.S. map shows two barns with horse-engine annexes, one to the north-east, and one to the west of this, the former possibly being the “pound-house with presses & horse-shaft” of the sale catalogue. An attempt to identify these buildings has been made (*see the map below, also plate 23c for a view of this area over 100 years later*).



It is doubtful that Mr. Tucker was a new tenant in 1879⁶¹: more likely that he had been renting Ash farm, plus the two cottages in Ash Lane to the west, for some years during the Mallets’ letting of the mansion. We can expect that he put his own labourers in the cottages. His activities would have been entirely unconnected with the tenant at the mansion (a Mr. Turner, at that time) and with the owners, too. At the end of the Mallets’ time at Ash, both the estate and the mansion had been divorced from each other, and from the founding family.

⁶¹ As seen in 5.3.15.5 above: a Tucker had been a tenant of the Mallets 35 years previously.

5.14.5.3 Other lands at Ash.

Tucker's farm didn't occupy the whole estate; there were another 70 acres, let in 5 parcels to other tenants, involving both arable & pastoral activities (*see map above*).

5.14.5.4 Other properties owned.

The Mallet family possessed manorial rights over Monkokehampton manor, though it's not known when they acquired these. Effectively, this meant they collected chief rents⁶² from one dozen farm tenements, though the value was small.

Two farms were also owned, the 57-acre Waterhouse Farm and the 46-acre Easterbrook Farm, the former having belonged to Mallets for at least 300 years. Three cottages in Monkokehampton were also owned, including "Crossways" at Hughball (*plate 8*).

Of the properties formerly held in Hathlerleigh, Dowland, Abbots Bickington & Crediton there is no mention, so they must have been sold at some time after 1844 and before 1879.

5.14.5.5 Totting up.

acreage

House & Gardens	15 acres
Woods	9
Ash Farm	96
Other Ash fields	70 in 5 parcels
2 Monko Farms	<u>103</u>
	<u>293</u> acres total

income

House & Gardens	£200 ⁶³
Woods	15
Ash Farm	136
Other fields	121
2 Monko Farms	85
Monko cottages	5
Monko manor rights	<u>4</u>
	£566 total

⁶² Ground rent.

⁶³ This of course refers to a tenanted mansion.

5.15 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER FIVE.

The Mallets did not achieve any national prominence during their first 2½ centuries at Ash¹, being content to live in their traditional barton in Iddesleigh, and be among the 300-400 Devonian “...gentry, very numerous and very influential politically and socially”². By the early 18th century, however, a fine country mansion had been built. Latterly, the last three owners of Ash took wives from outside Devon, and from significantly higher strata of society; and the last Ash Mallet forged a career as a senior diplomat abroad, and Ash seemed to have become of little importance to a family that had lived there for 3½ centuries.

At the start, the first two generations at Ash don't seem to have been especially dominant locally, but the Heralds' Visitation of 1620 confirmed their gentle status, and this was significantly reinforced in 1656 when they became the senior English branch.

The Ash Mallets never seem to have owned much more than about 800-1300 acres (in excess of their 200 acres at Ash), and indeed, as far as we can tell, never left large fortunes at death. Nevertheless by the mid-17th century they had successfully established themselves amongst their fellow Devonian gentry and were actively marrying into it, and as a result acquiring more and more lands.

So, by the end-17th /early-18th century the family at Ash had acquired sufficient wealth to build a mansion (in the then fashionable classical style), got in part from the heiresses who had married into the family. A study of the Mallet window in the church (*plate 7*) shows that all the Mallet wives came from families with the right to bear arms, indicating that the Mallets consistently married daughters of families who were at least their peers, and although this may not necessarily always have guaranteed great wealth, it did ensure that a certain social standing was maintained. Thus by marrying astutely the Mallets at Ash were able to sustain themselves locally as rural gentry without possessing large estates, and were, in fact, probably self-supporting from the operations of their home farm. They would have dominated the social³, legal⁴, economic and cultural life of Iddesleigh and Monkokehampton.

By the end of the 18th C we see signs of change, which become more marked in the following century. Hugh (“The Younger”) seems to have been the first Ash Mallet to significantly enhance his social standing through marriage. He was also the first to reduce the total size of the estate, and although his son subsequently provided 40 years of family stability there (during the “high farming” period of the 19th century), the later Mallets do generally seem to have been less resigned to the lives of rural gentlemen, perhaps particularly since Devon was gradually becoming affected by the industrialisation of Victorian England, and opened up by the railways. Both upper and lower classes graduated from countryside to city in the second half of the 19th C, with the former frequently becoming involved in service to the Empire (seen both as an attractive career and a duty in many aristocratic families). Whatever, it does appear that the horizons of the last two Mallet generations at Ash were situated well beyond the boundaries of Ash, and of Devon, and, ultimately, of the country.

We know that in the late 18th C the Ash estate was let to a succession of local farmers, this arrangement lasting until 1819 when the Mallets took possession again. It's not clear, however, exactly when the home farm ceased to be run on behalf of the family, and when tenants took over, though this situation seems to have become the norm by the 1860s. After 1865, Ash seems to have become something of an unwanted estate and seat – quite possibly not in tip-top condition – both mansion & farmland being let (as leisure estate & tenant farm respectively), and thus divorced from each other as well as from their founding family. The last Ash Mallet, Hugh Coventry, spent very little of his life there, and took to living in London when not serving in ambassadorial positions abroad; his son, Sir Claude Coventry Mallet, was born in London in 1860, and too became a diplomat, but by this time Ash had been sold.

¹ Their 16th – 19th C kinsmen at Enmore, St. Audries & Poyntington in comparison furnished 3 High Sheriffs, 2 Chief Justices and 2 Solicitor-Generals; they also enjoyed vastly greater estates and wealth (particularly the 2nd St. Audries Mallets.

² Hoskins “The estates of the Caroline gentry”, in “Devonshire Studies” Ed. by Hoskins & Finberg.

³ It would have been beneficial for the Mallets that they came to Ash soon after the manor of Iddesleigh had ceased to control life locally, it having split up in the 15th or 16th C following the failure of the de Sully line.

⁴ As magistrates from the 18th C.

APPENDIX 1. ASH ESTATE LANDS (acreage) AS HELD BY THE MALLETTS.

Acreage often unknown. Ash owned a moiety of some of the tenements in the 16th & 17th centuries; I have assumed the Malletts had a half share, a common arrangement.

Head Holdings	Rich 1530 1548	Wil. d.158 6	Oli. d.164 7	Wil. d.166 2	Hugh d.169 3 Elder	Wil. d.172 4	Wil. d.177 6	Wil. d.178 1 Young	Hugh d.182 3	Hugh d.186 5	Hugh d.188 1	Sm-Osb.	sale wwII	Ros. 1970 s, 1980 s.	sale 1993
Ash house+lands	200#	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	191	130	130	130	148	127
<u>In Iddesleigh</u> Adams Barton Middle Week Week Moors Iddes. Mill Hill farm Bullhead farm Bearland farm Fursdon farm	?		yes		Yes Part	?	yes	Yes ?	yes			c.15 10 c.45 89 192 44		110	
<u>In Hatherleigh</u> Seldon* Stapleford* Upcott* Deckport Grudgeworthy Stapleford moor Pitts+Poundho.	*tot. of c. 100	* as previous	Yes yes	Yes yes	Yes Yes yes	Yes Yes yes	Yes Yes yes	? ? Yes yes		138 156 67		138 156 225 67			
<u>In Monko. LoM</u> Waterhouse Easterbrook Monko. Mills Beer farm Holme Down	?	30 kf	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	Yes?	Yes?	57 46	57 46	57 46 c.100	Yes yes		
<u>In Dowland</u> Mallets Upcott		30 kf			30	30?	30?								
<u>In Hartland</u> East Yagland	yes	yes													
<u>In A. Bickinton</u> Youlden		20	20	20	20	20	20	20							
<u>Lynton Tithes</u>			yes												
<u>In Crediton</u> In Ut. Arundel* Black Down 9 cots in U.A.*					Yes 40 yes	Yes 40 yes	Yes 40 yes								
<u>In Ashreigny</u> 3 houses* * total = 104a.					yes	Yes	yes	yes	yes						
<u>In Meavy LoM</u> Graption Barton Meavy tmnts incl. Brisworthy, Shop, H. Town, Yennadon						Yes yes	Yes yes	Yes yes	Sold in 1808						
<u>In Werrington</u> Eggbear farm							yes								
<u>In Ermington</u> Ludbrook									yes						
TOTALS	c400	c400			700?	1500 ?		1000 -		655	293	about 1314		258	127

[kf = knight's fee; # = held in socage; LoM = lord of the manor (later Malletts only for Monko)]

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- [28] Star Chamber Proc. Eliz. M.1/33
- [29] Star Chamber Proc. Eliz. M.48/20
- [30] Star Chamber Proc. Eliz. M.42/26
- [31] Inq.Pst.Mort. Edmond Weeks, gent. Section 2, 278, No.126 (1584)
- [32] Early Chanc.Proc. Bundle 609. No.38
- [33] Chanc.Proc. Ser.II. 1558-1579. 123/65
- [34] WCSL Exeter. (Moger) will of William Mallet. 1586
- [35]* Hugh Osbourne's will. Archdeaconry of Barum. (1602)
- [36] Chanc. Inq.Pt.Mort. Series II. Vo..210 (108). (1586)
- [37] File on Iddesleigh parish in WCSL
- [38]* Full will and inventory of Oliver Mallet. ArchD. of Barum. (1661)
- [39]* Will of Richard Copplestone. ArchD. of Barum (1617)
- [40] "Winkleigh". Ed. L.McLean. 1997
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- [43] Marriage settlement, 13th Oct 1671. DRO Z1/48/32/1
- [44] Indenture of fine. 1671. DRO Z1/48/32/2
- [45] Lease. Blackadownes fields. DRO Z1/10/588 (1712)
- [46] Lease/release lands in 9 parishes. 1728. DRO Z1/48/24/2a,b&c
- [47]* Will & inventory of Hugh Mallet, 1686. Registry of Bishop of Exeter
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- [54] Lease. Rings Ash. 1804. NDRO 2309-3/36/41
- [55] Lease. 1806. Property in manor of Ludbrook, Ermington. PWDRO 944/16-17
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- [57] Draft mortgage, B.Torrington. 1829. SARS DD/S/BT/27/8/16
- [58] Chanc. Petition. B.Torrington. 1830. DRO 210M/T/84
- [59] Material from Mrs. P.Mallet-Harris, great granddaughter of Capt. Hugh Mallet.
- [60] Some early recorded memories of Sir Claud Mallet, ex Mrs. P.Mallet-Harris.

* = Pre-war transcriptions of archival material obtained by kind permission of Mrs. P. Mallet-Harris.

** = Provided Richard Mallett.

TDA = Transactions of the Devonshire Association

WCSL = West Country Studies Library, Exeter.

NDRO = North Devon Record Office, Barnstaple.

Barum = Barnstaple

DRO = Devon record office, Exeter

PWDRO = Plymouth & West Devon R.O.

CRO = Cornwall R.O.

SARS = Somerset archive & record service.

Additionally, I have referred to Lysons' "Devon" (1815) for identification of aristocratic families and manors, especially useful for chapters 4 & 5; and also to volume XX of *Somerset & Dorset Notes & Queries*, "The Mallets of Ash", in order to add a few minor bits of detail to [1] and [12] cited above.