

Footnote

It seems that at the end of the 19th century the 'geometrical wood' was acquired by the owners of the Sudbourne estate and incorporated into Sudbourne Great Wood, Captain's Wood and Black Walks as part of their prime sporting territory. One of the big oil paintings hanging in Orford Town Hall shows a lavish picnic lunch in Sudbourne Great Wood during the time of Sir Richard Wallace who owned the estate from 1872 to 1884.

In 1917 the then owner, Kenneth Mackenzie Clark, sold the estate to Walter Boynton, whose main business was timber. He came from Lincolnshire but later lived at Melton Grange. It is not entirely certain whether the sale from Clark to Boynton was actually completed, but in 1918 Boynton put the entire estate up for sale, except that he retained the right to all the timber for a period of three years from the date of the sale. The sale was a flop, with very few lots (mostly cottages and houses in the villages and a few farms) finding a buyer. Orford Museum is fortunate to have a photocopy of the Auctioneer's copy of the sale catalogue of the 1918 sale and a later sale in 1922, generously supplied by the archive department of Messrs Knight, Frank (and from which the map on p2 comes). Lot 90 in the 1918 sale was 'A compact area of Woods, Plantations and Arable and Pasture Land including the well-known Sudbourne Great Wood, Captain's Wood and Black Walks, containing a variety of well grown timber trees and two cottages and gardens situated north of the village of Sudbourne ... It covers the area of about 327.184 acres'. Because Lot 1, Sudbourne Hall, failed to find a purchaser, Lot 90 was withdrawn from the sale. The estate was eventually sold in September 1921 to Joseph Watson (Lord Manton), but the annotation of the Knight, Frank catalogue shows that Lot 90 was not included. It seems that Walter Boynton had decided to retain the woods and to fell the trees. The modern Ordnance Survey map shows just how thorough a job he made. Almost nothing remains of Sudbourne Great Wood. Captain's Wood fared a little better, though there are not many ancient trees still standing.

Whilst the ancient deciduous woods were being felled and farming was going through a bad patch in the 1920s, the whole of the area of the old Sudbourne Common to the west of the Snape road and the farmland from Sudbourne church road north to School Road was purchased by the Forestry Commission. Their plantations of serried ranks of conifers have changed the appearance of the Sudbourne landscape dramatically and irrevocably.

A further shock administered in the 20th century was the requisition of the parishes of Sudbourne and Iken by the Ministry of Defence during the Second World War. The inhabitants were evacuated and the whole area became a battle-training ground, an activity which has left some scars on the landscape and a great deal of buried military debris.

Research into the history of the ownership of the Sudbourne estate in the early part of the 20th century is an on-going project. It will be the subject of an article in a future issue of the Bulletin.