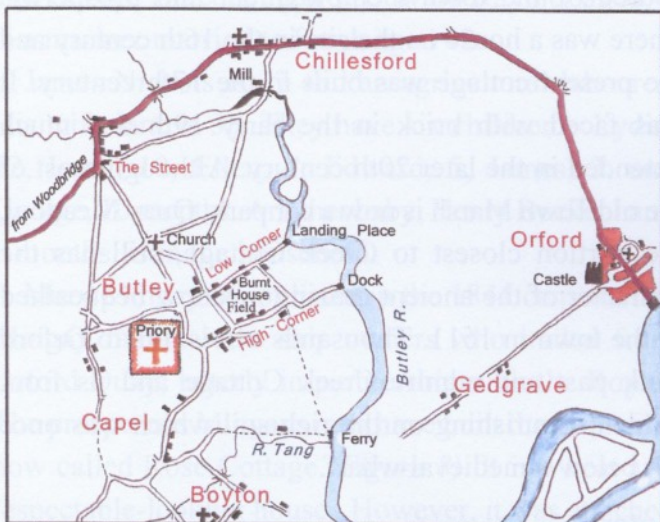


HISTORY HIDDEN IN BURNT HOUSE FIELD, BUTLEY

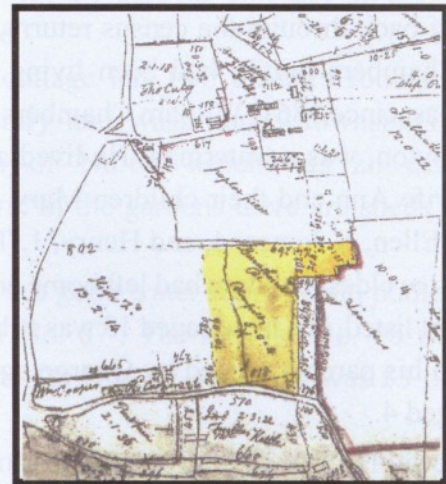
by Valerie Fenwick

Modern field names sometimes contain clues to the past. 'Burnt House Field', 'Burnthams' on an estate map, and 'Burntus' as local inhabitants call it, is a case in point. It is flanked by two hamlets known today as Butley High and Butley Low Corner (Fig. 1). They used to form the core of the village close to its hub- a Medieval priory which morphed into a Tudor mansion after the monastery was dissolved. Today Burnt House field's 25¼ acres envelop a marked rise above low-lying alluvium. This better drained land must have always have been valued as winter grazing. Local people know neither the precise location, nor the original name of, the 'burnt house', and to anyone who enquires a variety of invented explanations may be given. It was a puzzle asking to be solved.



1. Burnt House field lay in the centre of the Medieval village of Butley. It was conveniently situated between the Priory and the river and near the church.

Old maps were a starting-point. Isaac Johnson's survey shows that in 1819 the 25 acres were divided between four fields, only one of which was named 'Burnt House Piece' and comprised 5-0-4 acres. This was a problem because, whilst manorial records contemporary with the fire in 1792/3 provide its identity, they state that Woodhouse lay in some 4 acres. The explanation was provided by a rare surviving draft map made when the fields were being reorganised following the fire; an acre strip was added along its west side enlarging it to five acres. On subsequent maps the name of the field has disappeared, and a mystery beloved of local people was born.



Following the fire Burnt House Piece (yellow) was enlarged. Isaac Johnson recorded the changes and its incorporation into Low Farm.

Robert Blomfield

Under the manorial system of landholding, long parchment rolls recorded formal tenancies (copyholds) and itemised the components. However not all rolls survive and there are gaps in the records. At the time of the fire Robert Blomfield held, copy of Kettleburgh Manor, 'Woodhouse Close' and the one-acre former common, enclosed by the landowner to local protest 220 years earlier. In addition Robert rented two small fields, a cottage and gardens at High Corner and three marshes at the foot of Burrow Hill, making a total of 44¾ (Fig. 1). He lived in Essex and we may surmise that an employee in the cottage farmed it on his behalf, whilst Robert visited the old Woodhouse for sport and recreation. Vic Harrup has traced the Blomfield background and possible connection to an initialled teaspoon found in the field (*Orford Bulletin* Autumn 2018).

Woodhouse

For an earlier period, information about Woodhouse was gleaned from incidental information in a description of the Forthe estate undertaken by Radulph Agas in 1594. His accompanying maps of Butley unfortunately do not survive but from his abbreviated Latin descriptions of the abutments of each field, it was possible to identify 'High Corner' as 'Reilie Green', 'Low Corner' as 'Lowsing Green' and name the man who then rented most of what is now called Burnt House Field – but not the field in which the house lay – as William Hatche.