

NOTES FROM THORNHAM

Last month I wrote about Swatts Hall which eventually formed part of the Henniker land surrounding Thornham Hall and its park on three sides. This was known as 'The Manor of Swatshall, Woodhouse and Braiseworth'.

Woodhouse is thought to have been the manor house of Thornham Parva and located on the moated site hidden in woods about three quarters of a mile north



west of Red House Farm. The LIDAR aerial laser scan above shows how the not-quite-rectangular moat is very well preserved to this day, despite being buried in woodland and abandoned in the 16th century. Perhaps the house became surplus to requirements as the Hall developed?

Braiseworth Old Hall is the only one of the three manor houses to survive. It seems not to have had a moat, but is built on the banks of the River Dove.

It can be no coincidence that these houses were as remote from village centres and churches as possible, and built on the borders of their parishes. Swatts is in Gislingham but close to Magna, Woodhouse is in Parva next to Magna and Braiseworth Hall abuts both Thorndon and Stoke Ash.

Since feudal times, public manorial courts had been held by lords of the manor to administer obligations of their inhabitants as well as land tenure. Originally held every few weeks, they ended up as an annual event, the last one being held in November 1865 at the Stoke Ash White Horse. It must have been a brief affair as the next court was held only an hour later at the Wickham Skeith Swan. In the 1920s property law was finally simplified, leaving manors with no legal status.

✳ You can read all my Notes from Thornham on www.thornhams.org. Keep well and please let me know about your research. Stephen Schwarz