

Chapter 2.

Fristling Hall Farm

The manor farm of Fristling is situated to the west of Stock village, one of its boundaries being the River Wid. The present 19th century house stands up on a ridge and is surrounded by a moat about fourteen feet wide, and it is reasonable to presume that the earlier houses were on the same site as the present one.



Moat surrounding the house.

The Manor of Fristling was identified with Festingas by Morant, who stated that in Domesday book it was placed among the lands held by the Abbey of Barking. This has not been confirmed, and a former Rector of Stock wrote that from the end of the twelfth century, the manor was held by a family known as de Fristling and other variants. A deed of about 1247 granted land to Godfrey de Firstlinge, including some bordering the River Wid. He already held land in Ginges Regina (Margaretting). Other land was later added in Stock. From sometime in the fifteenth century the manor had passed from this family, until it was finally sold in 1589 to the youngest brother of Sir William Petre. After The death of Robert, Fristlinghall Manor and Farm came to Sir John Petre.

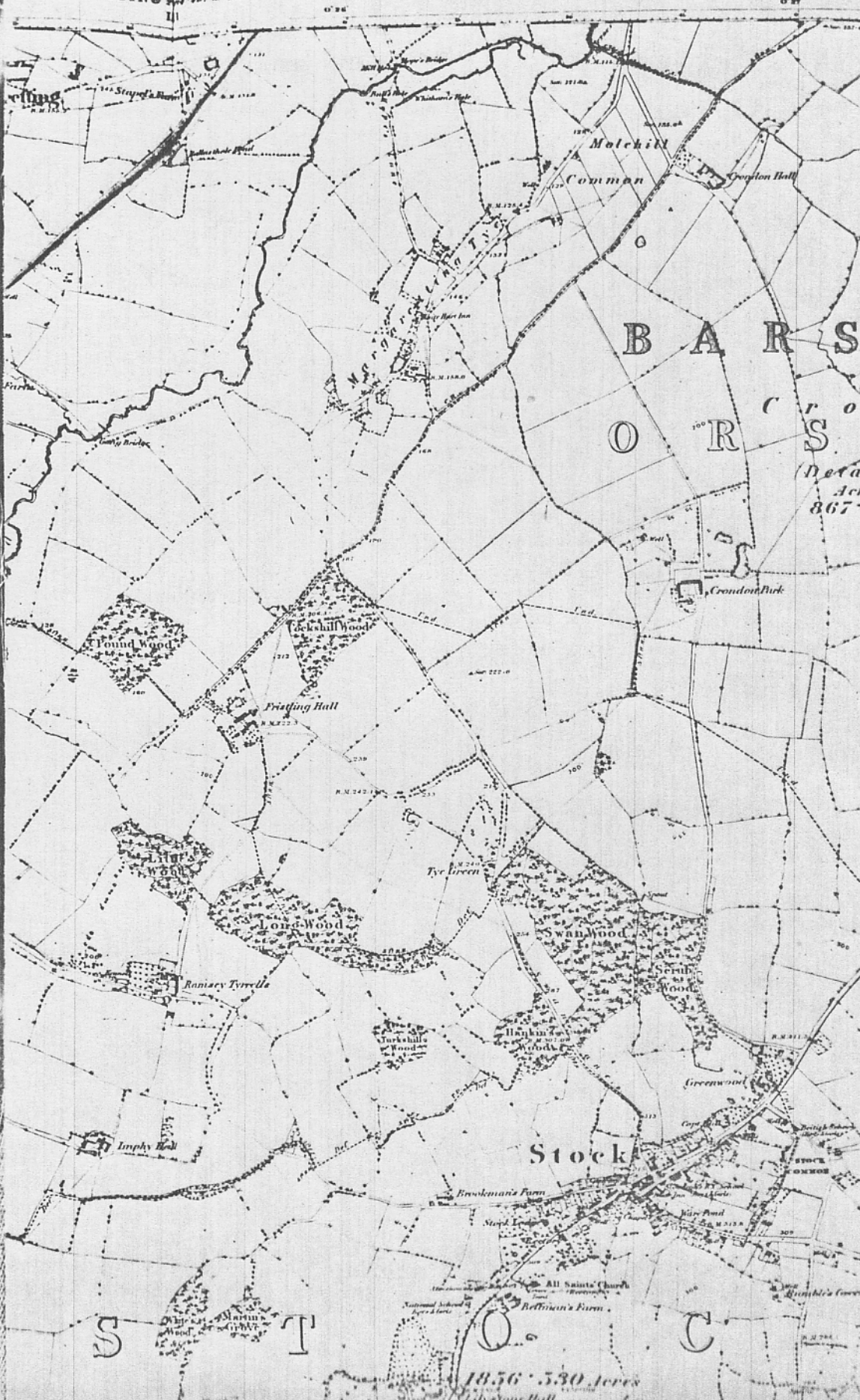
The Manor still spreads over Stock, Buttsbury and a small part of Margaretting. In leases, account books, and Directories, the manor farm has been listed variously under these parishes.



View of Fristling accross the fields
from Margaretting.

MARGARETTING 10000 10000 in Square 52 601

CHESHAMSTON
10000 10000
20.58 084
(and 10000 10000)
in Square 45 52 601



B A R S
C r o
O R S
(Net
Acr
867

S T C

18.56 530 Acres
Cheshamston

Fristling Hall Farm - Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century.

The accounts for the Thorndon Estate for 1675 show that Henry Shuttleworth was the tenant paying £90 per annum in rent. Later accounts show that by 1695, he was receiving an allowance of £56.10.8d. The difficulties faced by farmers in this time were reflected in this set of accounts where rate abatements are in evidence through to the early 1700's. There are accounts of arrears by copyholders as well, and many of Lord Petre's tenants farmers were paying no rent at all. Shuttleworth appears to have been managing better than most. Despite the low agricultural prices of 1702, the next account shows that he was able to pay his rent in full by 1703. The rent was £100, but as shown in 1707, this included the land at Turkshill (£10).

There appear to be no further rent accounts or relevant statements until 1724. This leaves a gap during the famine years of 1709-1710 when there were disastrous winters, and the following years when dairy farming would have been more profitable.

In 1724 there is a lease to William Oddin for the farm, noted as 245 acres at a rent of £90. Leases at this time seem to be on a yearly basis, although Oddin seemed to be an interim tenant, perhaps until Henry Shuttleworth's son took over.

By 1730 there is evidence that Henry Shuttleworth (Jnr.) was the tenant, still with rent of £90 + £10 for Turkshill.

However, in 1734, the Enrolment Book of Essex Leases in the Petre archives shows John Perry taking up the tenancy at the same rent. His family was to farm Fristling Hall for nearly a hundred years. There seems to be no relevant information about the farm from 1734 until 1759. The intervening years show good harvests until 1755, although there were

outbreaks of rinderpest and cattle plague."¹¹

The lean years of 1755-1758 may have been the reason for the lower rental in 1759 of £79.¹²

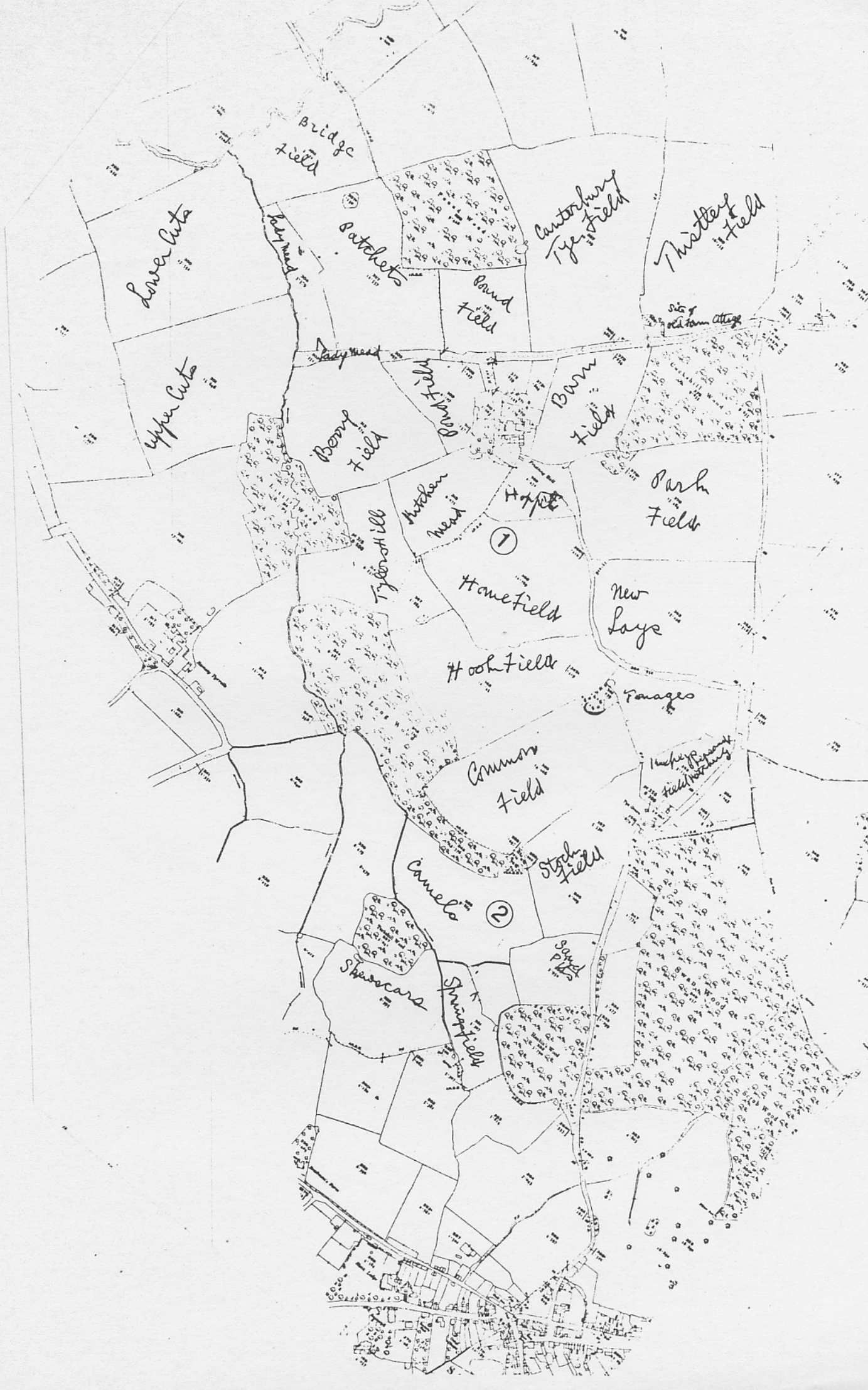
The cold winter - summer drought, and autumn floods of 1762 may not have affected this farm so much as others in the area whose tenants were unable to pay their rent in full: the tenant of Fristling Hall did not get into arrears. As the harvest was good, it is possible that he did not carry so much stock.

1768 was the beginning of a series of bad years and poor harvests.¹³ Wet years were more disastrous for farms in this area than on lighter land. Perry was now unable to pay his debts, and was £12 in arrears, which rose to £33 in 1773 reducing to £20 in 1775.¹⁴ He obviously had neither capital nor collateral behind him, as a Mr. Archer stood surety for him during these years of depression.

Again there appears to be a gap in tenants' accounts except for repairs, until 1791 when John Perry took out a lease for 21 years at a rent of £146.¹⁵ He died in 1800¹⁶ and the lease was transferred at a rent of £152.6s. Rents on the estate generally doubled by 1812,¹⁷ as leases ran out, and returns on farming improved.

The records continued with full rent being paid until 1813.¹⁸ During the war years, with high agricultural prices and more land coming under the plough, this was to be expected.

In 1813 the farm changed hands, and the new tenant was Thomas Bridge, who owned his farm at Ramsey Tyrells as well as renting Imphey Hall. It was apparent that not only was he a substantial farmer, but also a progressive one.



Bridge had been approached as a leading farmer in the district by Arthur Young, to contribute information for his report on Essex farms for the Board of Agriculture. This gives a more specific idea of the way in which Thomas Bridge worked his land.

These points emerge from the report :

1. Bridge was commended on having perfectly ploughed land.

' .. the form of the lands perfectly correct and so gently rounded and with such regularity that no drop of water could anywhere lodge. I have rarely seen a farm so thoroughly well ploughed on so stiff a soil.'

2. The soil would not take clean lime, but it was used mixed with chalk, dung and any composted material. Bridge thought that lime and chalk 'hardly paid'. He used a waggon load of mixture per acre, which cost £3.3s. a load, plus carriage.

3. Rotations used :

fallow	fallow
wheat	oats
clover	clover
beans	wheat
wheat	

Beans were treated as a fallow. Of the second course 'fallow had some tares or rye sown on it for the spring'. 'The former is an excellent course.'

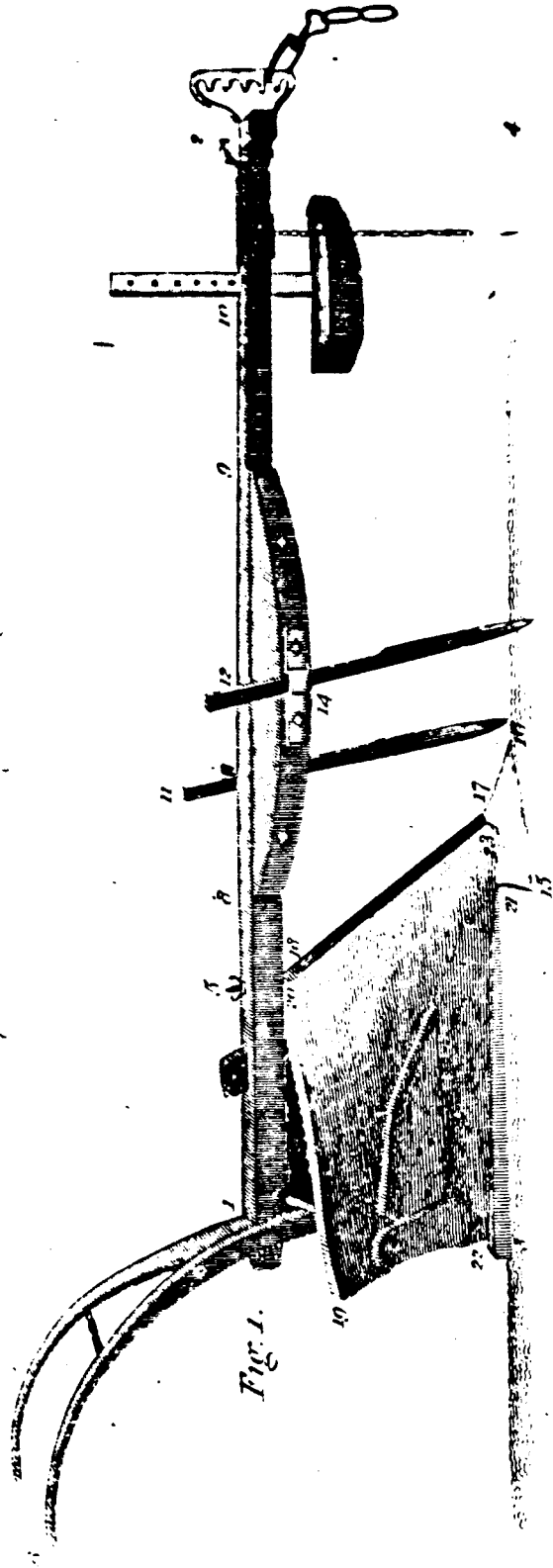
4. Bridge had a piece under cabbages, being useful when turnips could not be pulled in frost.
5. Slugs were a continuing menace, having 'eaten him up a piece of rye kept for sheep food.' Young continues, 'Not a rook following the plough - they have none, probably from destroying them.'

Arthur Young

Illustration of a drain plough as use by Thomas Bridge from 'Agriculture of Essex'

Plate 46. P. 188.

Great Drain Plough?



'Mr. Bridge has a very large and strong plough for cutting the first spit for hollow drains, drawn by 6-8 horses according to the depth of soil. Furrows 12 inches deep have been made with it.'

Arthur Young - 'Agriculture of Essex' page 188. (1813)

These points emerge from the report.

1. Bridge was commended upon having perfectly ploughed land, in a manner to aid drainage. His method of putting in drains is described, and the strong plough used is illustrated.
2. The soil would not take clean lime, but was used mixed with chalk, dung and any composted material. This was common husbandry in the area. Thomas Bridge thought that lime and chalk hardly paid. He used a waggon load of mixture per acre costing £3.3s. This was at a time when the material was expensive and cattiege cost the same amount. It did seem to be over-rated to the extent used and the expense involved.

3. Rotations used,

1. fallow	1. fallow
2. wheat	2. oats
3. clover	3. clover
4. beans	4. wheat
5. wheat	

With the second rotation fallow had some "tares or rye sown on it for spring. The former is an excellent course.

Mr. Bridge has a very high opinion of tares, he thinks that a full crop ameliorates the land more than anything."

4. Bean stubble ploughed up 'beautifully for wheat'. Apparently much troubled by slugs which had eaten a 'piece of rye kept for sheep feed.
5. He kept Yorkshire shorthorn cattle mainly cows with sucking calves.

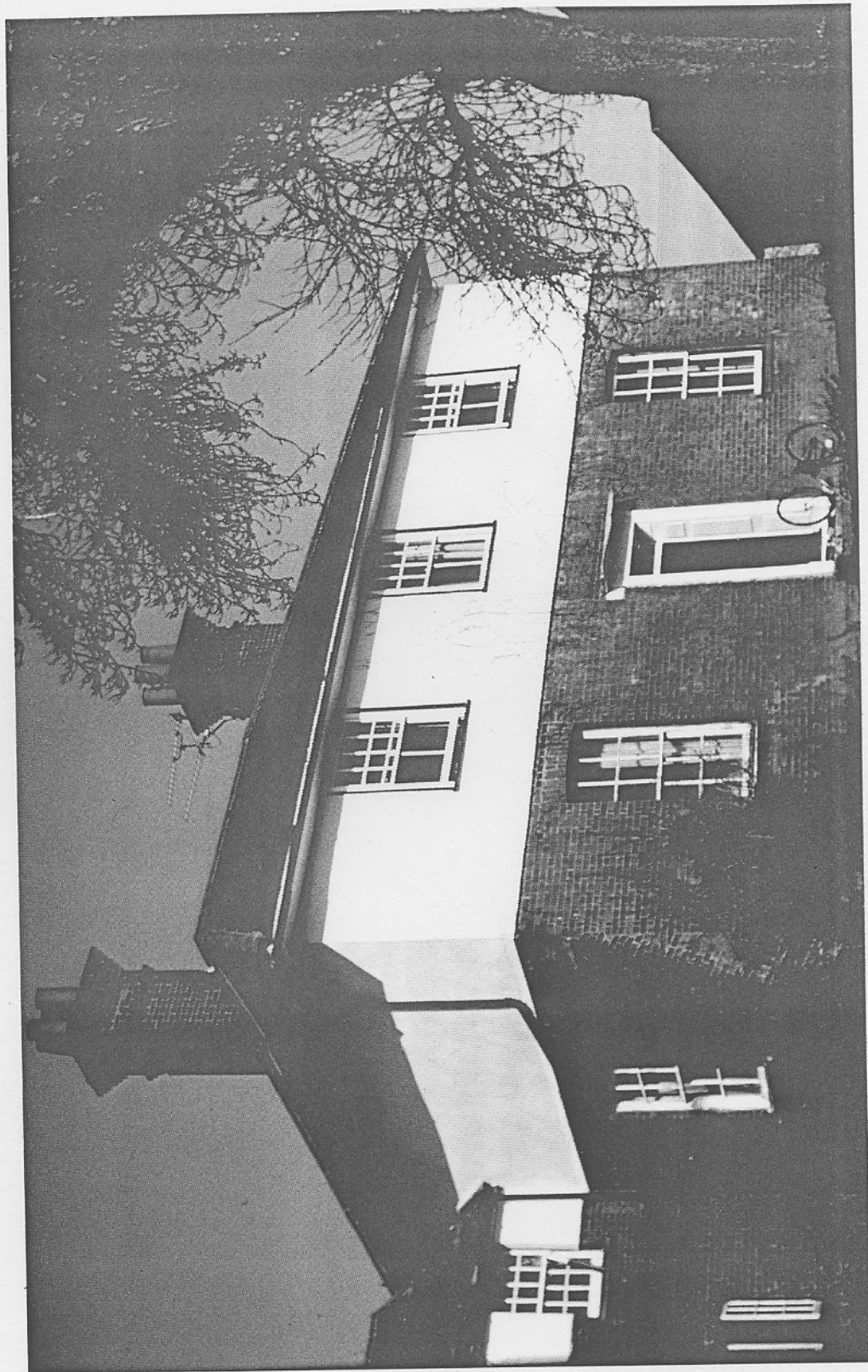
Bridge had been approached as a leading farmer by Arthur Young to contribute the district information to his report on Essex farms for the Board of Agriculture. This gives more specific information of the way in which Thomas Bridge worked his land.

FRISTLING HALL FARMHOUSE

Ground floor - house as built in 1851

First floor - addition built for the

Wilson family in 1886.



Although the information refers to Ramsey Tyrrells and Imphey Hall, the adjoining Fristling Hall would have been farmed in the same manner. Thomas Bridge received much praise for his husbandry. This report gives a clearer idea of crops being grown, livestock and farming methods.

It would have been interesting to find out how he coped during the post war years of depression, but there are no tenancy accounts to give any indication as to whether the falling prices caused him to seek rent rebates, as was general at the time. He died in 1835,²⁴ and his son took over the farm when agriculture was again becoming profitable, leading up to the era of high farming. His father had paved the way for him to take full advantage of the upsurge in agriculture. A new house was built in 1851.²⁵

As soon as the neighbouring farms of Glasscocks and Greenwoods fell vacant in 1859 and 1860 respectively, he rented them from Lord Petre under leases which ran out in 1875. He did not renew these leases and it may have been that Bridge, in common with other farmers at this time of prosperity, had over-stretched himself, finding that he was having to retrench his position at the onset of the agricultural depression.

By 1879, after several years of bad harvests, 10% was allowed off the rent, and the rates were being paid by the landlord. When Bridge died in 1881, the farm was taken in hand. This lasted until 1886, and during that period a neighbouring farmer, A.C. Marriage, became manager or overseer at a salary of £100 a year. From 1884-1886, an Abstract from the Thorndon Estate Accounts combines the accounts of both Fristling Hall, and the nearby farm of Crondon Hall which were both in hand.

They were of similar acreage and soil conditions and would have been farmed in like manner. One may assume that stock and crops were fairly equal in proportion.

The corn sold, would imply mostly wheat as oats or rye would have been used for feed. Clover was also sold, the cake bought would have added to the existing feedstuffs grown.

Sheep, lambs, bullocks, calves, poultry and eggs helped make up the income. As wool to the value of £21.2s.6d. was another item, it does not appear as if there were large flocks of sheep kept. According to the accounts more than double the amount of livestock was bought in than was purchased. Cutting down on the livestock probably meant a more immediate flow of cash, as stock was fetching a better price than corn.

The advertisement placed in the Scottish newspapers by Lord Petre's agent, F. Coverdale, brought immigrant tenants to both these farms. Every effort was made to accomodate the dairy farmers whotook up the tenancies, and when William Wilson from Ayrshire took over Fristling Hall, arrangements were made to cater for a different style of farming. This is an illustration of the satisfaction expressed by Scotch tenants to R. Hunter Pringle in 1893.

William Wilson leaded the farm for 14 years at a rent of £252 per annum plus £8 for two cottages. Rates were paid by Lord Petre, and the land was tithe free. The extra accomodation was evidently being paid for in the higher rent.

The 10% allowed on the rent was shown in a memorandum in the accounts as £20 for half years allowance for cake, lime and manure.

A daughter of W. Wilson recalled how her father came to England with his family and a Scotch family, as well as cows, furniture and implements in a train hired for the purpose.

Fristling Hall

View of the farmhouse and outbuildings.



The Great Barn (16th - 17th century)



The train was unloaded at Ingatestone Station, and the procession made its way to the farm.

The first years could not have been easy, for apart from the general depression in agriculture, the new tenant was faced with adapting a mixed farm to his own uses. No sheep were kept from this date, and he was relying on his dairy herd of Ayrshires. While the farm had been in hand a large acreage had been put down to corn, but there was still a fair amount of rough pasture.

Corn was still grown, but the heavy soil and the years of disastrous weather conditions made it difficult to plough and clean the land. A threshing contractor reported his grandfather as saying that at this time Essex farmers only grew weeds. This was especially true of Fristling Hall where the corn was of poor quality, even when there were as many as ten stacks to be threshed. Dealers would arrive at the end of the last day and offer a price well below average. ..

According to report there was friendly revalry among farmworkers taking milk to Ingatestone station. Each farm of similar acreage running dairy herds , including Fristling averaged about eight churns. The waggons used to return with coal collected at the station.

During the worst period during the 1890's, Wilson had additional rent abatements. From 1896 he had an extra cash allowance of £14, but by the time he left in 1900, he was paying his rent in full. As he was able to take over a larger farm outside the district, he must have been reasonably successful. However, farmers in the area are reported as saying that he did not put back as much as he took out of the land, and left it derelict. Successive farmers with limited capital could not make it pay for many years.

REFERENCES

Chapter 1.

1. This remark echoes that made by another farmer to R.Hunter Pringle - ;If we get the crops away and have a good seed time, our soil grows a lot of corn.'
Royal Commission of Agriculture 1894 p. 37
2. Mr. A.J.Smith (snr.) Fristling Hall, Stock.
3. A History of Essex - P. Morant Vol. 2 p.50
4. Rev. F.W.Austen former Rector of Stock MSS.
5. Essex Record Office D/DP A63/1
6. " " " D/DP A64/1
7. " " " D/DP A66
8. " " " D/DP E182
9. " " " D/DP E61
10. " " " D/DP E26
11. Agricultural Records A.D. 220-1968 - J.M.Stratton pages76-78
12. E.R.O. D/DP A88
13. " D/DP A68
14. D/DP A90
15. TR165/1
16. The Landed Society and Farming Community of Essex - Colin Shrimpton - p. 19
17. E.R.O. D/DP A149
18. Agriculture of Essex - Arthur Young - p.200
19. " " " p.223
20. " " " p.254
21. " " " p.377
22. " " " p. 68
23. E.R.O. TR 165
24. E.R.O. D/DP A312
- Details from accounts
- For ironwork and repairs to Fristling Hall £2. 15s.
- Jarvis Bricklayers-work at new house £70.17s
- Carpenters work £64. 8s.10d
- Laying asphalte floors £28. 10s 6d
25. E.R.O. D/DP A364
26. D/DP A360
27. TR 165
28. D/DP A388
- 29 Appendix
30. Report to R. Hunter Pringle (for R.C. of A. 1894) from F.Coverdale dated 1893.
- 31 Royal Commission of Agriculture Report 1894 p. 43

32. E.R.O. D/DP A388
33. E.R.O. D/DP A386
34. Random Jottings of my early home ' Mrs. M. Glasscock MSS1943
Other comments include:
1. Meet of the staghounds
 2. Violent (probably 1891) cut a swathe through the county.
gale Wilson was compensated.
 3. A new self-binder was purchased. 'It was not received
with unmixed joy'(presumably by the farm workers.)
35. Mr. D.E.White, Durrants Farm, Margaretting.
36. E.R.O. D/DP a392