



The Library Hall

The Tithings of Worton & Marston

The parish names of Worton & Marston may be derived from Old English or, in the case of Worton, from Old High German or even Middle Dutch. In Old English the word "wyr" and Old High German "wurz" both form the stem of "wort" meaning plant, root or herb. "Wyr-tun" means herb enclosure. The High German word "wurze" and Middle Dutch "worde" are both connected to "wort", a plant used in brewing. In times past there have been several spelling variations of today's Worton. In 1173 Wrtona, in 1195 Wurton and in 1419 Wourto. Marston may have derived from the Old English "mersc" or Middle English "mersh" both meaning marsh - low-lying or water-logged land. There is a reference in 1289 to 'Mershtone'. The locals affectionately call the village "Marston-In-The Mud".

This name seems appropriate as an extract from the diary of John Saunders in 1727 tells the following tale. - *"that in the lane towards Worton we came to a great myre across ye lane. We had no way to ride bye, so was forced to pass through it with great difficulties to the horse and danger to one's self. Ye horse floundered, ye tackle broke, and I had a very dangerous fall. Then we rid through Worton where I put my tackle to rites, and so on to Imber."* *Source: Memories of Marston & Worton, The Bridge Parish Magazine July 2010*

The land in the parishes of Worton and Marston is uniformly about 200 ft. above sea-level. Bulkington Brook rises in West Lavington, flows north-west through Worton and Marston and is the boundary between them for part of its length. The village of Worton lies on the road from Melksham to West Lavington. That of Marston is a few hundred yards to the south. Roads connect the two villages with Bulkington to the west and Erlestoke and East Coulston to the south.

The tithing of Worton never seems to have been a separate manor, but was part of the Bishop of Salisbury's manor of Potterne. Reference has been made to the settlement of 1173, relating to a capital messuage in Worton.

The family with the longest connection with Worton was that of Flower. A Ralph de Flore was a juror of Rowborough Hundred in 1255. In 1537 John Flower of Worton, clothier, alleged that he had been robbed between Bagshot (Berks.) and Windsor Park. In 1619 another John Flower conveyed to Thomas Long of Great Cheverell, father of his wife Joan, a capital messuage in Worton called Flower's Farm, to make a jointure for the said Joan. John Flower died in 1624, being survived by his wife and his son John, aged nearly 3 years. His father had died ten years before and had also been called John.

The tithing of Marston, like that of Worton, did not form a separate manor. In 1258 Robert de Ringesburne conveyed property in Marston to Walter le Rus. This comprised two thirds of 2 virgates of land and 12d. rent. At the same time Walter surrendered in Robert's favour one third of 2 virgates and 12d. rent in Marston.

In 1905 there were in Marston 163 and a half acres of arable and 679 and three quarter acres of permanent grass. Worton had 131 acres of arable, 712 acres of grass, and 1 and a quarter acres of woods. These comparative figures show the increasing importance of dairy farming in the villages.