

ABRAHAM NEWMAN OF MOUNT BURES: From Farmer's Son to Lord of the Manor

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Research into village history often uncovers one particular character whose actions stand out, compelling one to investigate him further: just such a person was Abraham Newman of Mount Bures. Scattered fragments of this life appeared in "*Mount Bures: Its Land and Its People*", (McMaster and Evans 1996), but it seemed that Abraham warranted a fuller version of his amazing and distinguished position in the village.

His background history

Abraham was born and baptised in Mount Bures in 1735, the younger son of Thomas and Anne Newman. Father Thomas was a tenant farmer of Mount Bures Hall and its farmlands. The Hall was then, according to a later occupier, "*mean, low and damp and not at all suitable for the principal house of the village*". The house was in fact considerably enlarged in 1854. Thomas Newman was church warden here for many years from as early as 1741, dying in 1790 at the age of 88. He had been preceded at the Hall by a Robert Newman (1722) who was described also as a miller of Boxted (1). Search was made in that local church register for any signs of Robert Newman but without success. He could have been from the Suffolk Boxted, in fact. The Mount Bures will of a William Newman (1717) (2) bequeathed two freehold houses and their hereditaments in Mount Bures. The first house was left to his loving brother Robert Newman which had been lately purchased from Mr. Jordan Harris and the second house to his loving sister Susan Golding, widow, which had been lately purchased from Mr. Thomas Newman.

These two properties cannot be identified at present nor has it been possible to establish with certainty whether William and Robert were related to Thomas Newman at the Hall. Neither of William Newman's two houses could have been the Hall, of course, which was at that time firmly owned by the Cressener Lords of the Manor with a clear sequence of deeds as evidence. The Manor court rolls during that period however were apparently not being recorded due to the fact that the then Cressener Lord, Edward (3), lived mainly in Hamburg. One more record of Robert Newman appeared when he baptised a child at Mount Bures in 1735, the same year as the birth of Abraham Newman, our main subject. Perhaps the Robert Newman branch returned to Boxted and their milling. It is interesting to note that a century later there were Newman millers here again in Mount Bures when they built a new windmill (c. 1816), sited just south-west of our present Thatchers Inn. The Inn itself was built by John Newman, the miller's son, originally as a double tenement (two cottages) (4). This family of millers also hailed from Boxted where further research would be most valuable; certainly the christian names of both groups are decidedly repetitive. Some descendants of the later family are still present in Mount Bures today and again occupy the original Bake house cottages (now Catchlands) close to the now demolished mill (5).

Abraham Newman's early years

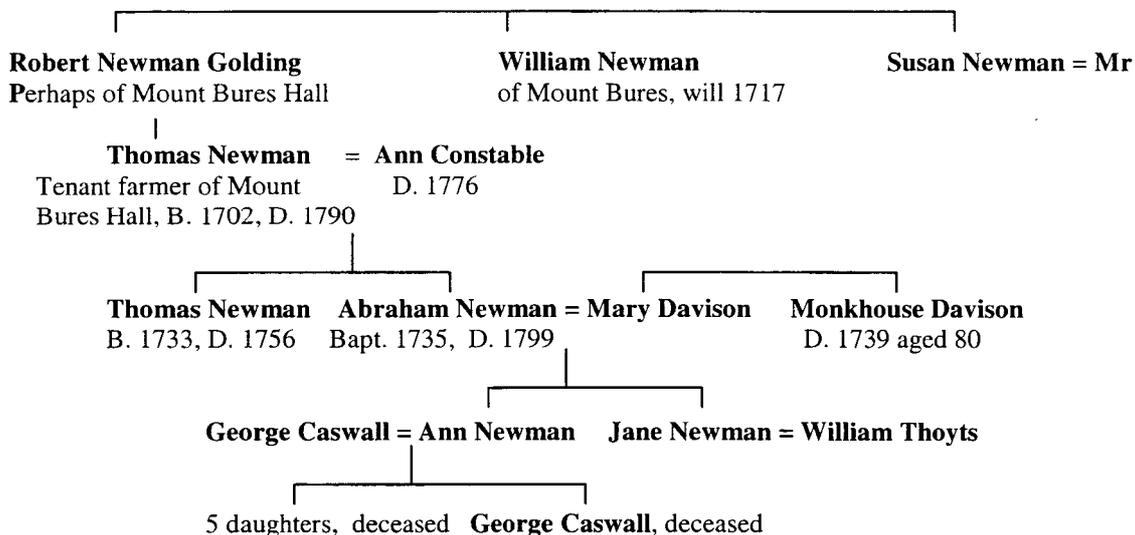
His mother, Anne Newman (nee Constable) was a daughter of that same family which later in the century produced the famous artist John Constable. Anne died in 1776 having lived in Mount Bures Hall for very many years. Her eldest son Thomas junior, born 1733, was destined to die in 1756 at the early age of 23. The vicar left a particularly considerable entry in the register concerning the large vault to be provided for the unfortunate young man (6). Special fees were arranged for it. It was to "*lie in the churchyard at the end of the chancel*" where it is still identifiable today.

Abraham, then aged 21, had probably not expected to farm the Hall lands and therefore had made his way to London where, by the age of 35, he had become an exceedingly wealthy grocer of Fenchurch Street (7). One imagines that he was able to sell much of his father's fresh produce from Mount Bures in this way. Certainly he never forgot his childhood roots, as will be seen.

He married Mary (nee Davison) and two daughters were born to them, Ann and Jane. These two girls while still minors were bequeathed vast fortunes under the 1786 will of their uncle, Monkhouse Davison (8). A sum of £104,000 was placed in Trust for their benefit. Davison was described as Abraham's brother-in-law and was also a grocer of Fenchurch Street in the City of London. Since Abraham

appeared to have no further siblings, apart from Thomas above (deceased), it seems likely that Monkhouse was the brother of Mary, Abraham's wife. Perhaps Abraham learned his trade or was apprenticed to the Davison family originally. He was nominated Trustee for his daughters' huge fortunes in the 1786 Davison will. Nevertheless Abraham was himself equally successful a decade earlier judging by his numerous land purchases in Mount Bures and elsewhere, as follows.

Newman family tree



Abraham's estates

Notions and Smiths farm 1778, 76 acres, Withers Farm 1778, 54 acres; Akermans (Takeleys) 1779; Reedings land, 16 acres, and cottage 1780, now Elms farm on which he erected the present "*capital messuage*" 1782; Pylates (Herds Pasture) with 38 acres 1780; Godfreys Farm (Old House) with 29 acres 1780, all in Mount Bures alone.

There were numerous other properties as well. He was not able to purchase the Lordship of the Manor with the Hall and farm lands until 1790, the year his father died. That year he inherited, also from old Thomas, Peartree Farm, alias old Brookhouse alias Martyns atte the Brooke, a very well documented property dating from before 1494 which Thomas had owned freehold since c. 1769 (9). The house stood at the north end of Peartree Hill and was retained by Abraham as his main country home which later he bequeathed to his elder daughter Ann. His younger daughter Jane received his main London residence in Fenchurch Street according to his 1796 will detailed later. Probably Abraham was able to invest his daughter's legacies to a certain extent towards various transactions. Old Brookhouse was demolished before 1829 when daughter Ann (Caswall) died. Whether or not it was a customary stipulation in the 18th century both Abraham and Ann in their wills ensured particularly that the husbands of their female heirs should not have administrative rights over their wives' inherited incomes. In Ann's case three of her four surviving daughters had well-placed husbands - namely Major General Claud Bouchier, Sir John Round of the famous Birch family and Colonel John Rolt. But the sums bequeathed were considerable and reflected grandfather Abraham's vast acquisitions and business acumen, together with his care for his female heirs.

The Kingsbury connection

During his life one senses that Abraham had a particular friendship with the Kingsbury family headed by Joseph and his second wife Martha. Joseph had in his early years been gamekeeper at the Wormingford Hall, eventually becoming tenant farmer at that establishment. The Kingsburys were very small landowners by comparison with Abraham and it appears that, when Joseph was eighty, he and Martha were settled in Mount Bures as Abraham's tenants at the new Elms Farm which had been commissioned by Abraham in 1781/2. It was a most superior "*messuage*" and included 48 acres, some being the old Brookhouse/Peartree fields. Joseph was over 30 years older than Abraham and he did not survive long after the move, dying in 1786, though his wife Martha lived on until 1808 when her will (10) showed

she was still at Elms farm. Joseph's will bequeathed considerable property in various villages, providing well for his children and daughter-in-law, a widow; his son Robert having predeceased his parents. (10a)

Martha appeared to receive very adequate provision in Joseph's will although at her death only two freehold properties were recorded. She did not figure in Abraham Newman's generous will as did several of his other farming tenants. They must have been well acquainted having lived within a stone's throw of one another for some eighteen years and perhaps old friends for much longer. Wills are most revealing document: Joseph Kingsbury's own father, John, apparently bequeathed his wife adequate property in lieu of that stipulated in her marriage contract. On the face of it he sounded fair but he added a codicil a year later stating that if she opposed his arrangements and insisted on her "dower" and "thirds" then she would forfeit all the gifts in his 1718 will. Most of his so-called gifts were in Trust for his sons in any case. He even listed his household effects for her use down to the bed and linen items attached. Not at all the usual loving type testament and Joseph did not emulate his father's example. Very many of these Kingsbury lands were purchased in turn by Abraham Newman before his death (11). When judging by his will it might seem he was the proverbial soft touch to his friends and his heirs since even Joseph's daughters sold some of their marriage trust lands to Abraham. His deeds form a fascinating jigsaw to interpret.

Abstract of Abraham Newman's Will, proved 1799 (12)

Abraham Newman executed a remarkable forty page (20 sheets) last will and testament which one would have judged a veritable feast financially for his legal advisers in 1796 when it was compiled. His two loyal friends over many years, however, had been Robert Parnter senior of Bedford Square, London and his son Robert Parnter, junior, of the Inner Temple who were always his main Trustees. His cousin, Charles Newman, then of Mount Hall, his tenant and third Trustee, also featured constantly. All names and properties in this lengthy will are mentioned for family history research purposes. Much legal jargon has been omitted of necessity.

Abraham desired to be buried in a leaden coffin as close as possible to his dear and affectionate wife Mary whose death had occurred in 1783. She was buried in a vault at the Church of All Hallows, Mark Lane, Staining, an area close to Fenchurch Street where her husband had his grocery establishment. Abraham expressed the preference to be buried at Mount Bures church if it was at all possible to move his wife's coffin there. Apparently it was not possible in the event, since his burial is registered at Staining in 1799. This was a great pity perhaps since he so obviously loved the village of his birth.

His bequests reflect considerable generosity to all who served him in any capacity. The two churches of All Hallows and Barking parishes each received £50. Sadly the former church was demolished in 1870 but its great 70-foot tower still stands. (13) Although All Hallows fell down in 1671 it was rebuilt. There appears to have been a manor of Staines pre Conquest and a will of 1281 records "*All Hallows de Staining cherch and All Hallows de Barking cherch in Marte (sic) Lane*". Staining All Hallows is thought to have been one of the earliest stone churches in London c. 1140, built perhaps to avoid the unwelcome burning of wooden structures common at that period. It is connected with the present St. Olave Church, Hart Street, London, well known as Samuel Pepys' parish and burial place. The numerically larger proportion of poor people in city areas probably accounted for Abraham's smaller bequest of only £25 to his own village church at Mount Bures. The poor were to be informed of this gift at the earliest service in church on the Sunday after his decease.

To resume, the following hospitals each received £100: St. Bartholomew; the London Hospital, Magdalen Hospital; the City of London Lying In Hospital and the Smallpox Hospital. Significantly the Marine Society of London was allocated £500, perhaps reflecting how much Abraham had depended on foreign imports for his prosperity (see ref. 17). Employees Mr. Colin Bays, Mr. Richard Cresen , Mr. William Jackson and Mr. Robert Whitehead, clerks at his grocery business, each had £100, though Mr. Thomas Huntley, servant there, had £200. Those over one year's service £20 each. Those under 1 year £10 each. Other household or domestic servants £10 apiece. Apparently Abraham had housekeepers in several of his major properties, Mrs. Elizabeth Holt and her three children at Porters in Ballingdon each received £100. The children's sum to be invested at 4% until they came of age for their maintenance. To Mrs. Betty Powell, housekeeper at Brookhouse, £200 or a£20 annuity for life at her choice. Farming tenants Mrs. Deborah Groves, widow of Joseph, Mr. Hugh Pettitt and Mr. Peter Pettitt all benefitted by £100 each. Others, Mrs. Ann Hall, wife of Thomas of Otter (sic) Belchamp (N.B. Belchamp Otten) and her sister

Mrs. French, widow, £100 each as also Mr. Thomas Shirley of Mile End, Colchester. Cousin Charles Newman at Mount Bures Hall and his wife Elizabeth had £500 and £100 respectively with £100 to each of their children. To Mr. Charles Newman at the Valley Farm Mount Bures and to each of his children £100. Mr. John Davison of Hilltop Westmoreland £500, presumably a relative of his wife Mary. To each and every of the children and grandchildren of his late uncle John Newman of Middleton Gate House in Essex, farmer living at his death, £20. To the Parnters father and son £300 and £100 respectively, also to Michael and Isabella, children of Robert Parnter junior £100 each. William Thwaytes of Fenchurch Street, grocer, and his wife Jane £500 and £100 respectively. (NOT his daughter Jane Thoys - author's note)

Probably the most illuminating paragraphs of Abraham's will ran as follows: "*Whereas it is my intention to give to each and every female child of my daughters, Mrs. Ann Caswall and Mrs. Jane Thoys the sum off 15,000 provided such children are not more than eight in the whole, total £120,000. If more than eight the sayd sum to be equally divided*". As happened constantly this was to be a Trust Fund until each child came of age or married earlier. Interest to be paid to their parents meanwhile. Trustees were both Parnters, John Lambert of Cornhill, London gentleman, and Jane Thoys. Several pages of administrative directions by Abraham accompanied this bequest. Husbands were excluded as usual.

Ann Caswall received besides the gift of £3,000 cash sum, both the Manors and lands of Mount Bures Hall with the old Brookhouse farm together with the Manor of West Bergholt Hall and its lands recently purchased of John Hadley Esq. of Colchester. Younger daughter Jane Thoys received a £7,000 bank annuity Trust also the Manor and lands of Goggeshall [*sic*] Hall with the Rectory and Tithes purchased of Richard Benyon and others. More lands and estates in Barking and Daggenham [*sic*] in Essex. Messuages and lands in Fenchurch Street, Lime Street and Billeter Lane in the City of London, together with a messuage in the Strand in the County of Middlesex in the occupation of Joseph Greensill. Jane's Trustees, also for Ann above, were the Parnter duo and Cousin Charles Newman who were directed to permit the tenant of the Barking and Daggenham [*sic*] farms and lands namely Philip Choate, his wife or two sons to carry on the tenancy there as per the conditions already pertaining, as long as they pay the £150 per annum rent. Likewise Ann Caswall's Trustees also gave security to Charles Newman for life in his occupancy of Mount Bures Hall and lands at £175 yearly rent. Charles had to collect Quit Rents as usual but was allowed Land Tax. If either daughter predeceased their husbands the Trusts passed to these spouses only for life and then to the children of said daughters. Abraham did not forget his sons-in-law however. George Caswall received £7000 and William Thoys £3000 as outright gifts.

Abraham specified for Ann all his personal effects at Brookhouse Mount Bures, goods, furniture, plate, linen, china, wine and other liquors, live and dead stock but excepting money or securities for money therein. Likewise for Jane all his Fenchurch Street house contents excepting monies, goods or effects in trade there, with, additionally, his house and farm at Porters in Ballingdon, Essex.

George Caswall junior, grandson, aged 2 years, £5000 in Trust in bank annuities until the age of 21. In the event that he died before attaining that age then it would pass to all his brothers or sisters. Both Parnters, Jane Thoys and John Lambert acted as Trustees in this case. George junior predeceased his parents. He was unmarried with four surviving sisters.

Abraham named eight Trustees who benefited by £200 each, all to receive expenses from his residuary estates, any remainder of which went to daughters Ann and Jane equally divided. Several other important items were included, the first being Abraham's intention not to deduct any debts of legatees to himself, saying "*whereas William Thwaytes may find it inconvenient to pay over £70.000 plus interest thereon, he is at liberty to pay at 4% interest in nine instalments at equal four monthly periods over three years from the date of my decease*". William's securities for this sum to be passed to Abraham's Executors.

The Webb Family Trusts

The second item was a sum of £3000 to be invested in a Bank Trust for William Webb aged ten years, son of Mrs. Mary Webb, until his coming of age at 21, interest meanwhile for his maintenance. His mother Mary also had a £1000 Bank Trust fund together with an annuity of £300 per annum for life, the latter secured from certain lands owned by Abraham in Ardleigh and Dedham. Namely three quarters

share of a freehold farm (unnamed) with the Parsonage and Tithes purchased of Reverend Marshal Lugar (14). Also the Manor and lands of Martells Hall purchased of Thomas Wright Esq. Both Parnters and Mrs. Jane Thwaytes were trustees. In the event that Mary Webb should die before her son William reached 21 then her remaining Bank Trust fund with any interest that accrued was to pass to William. In the event, however, that William should die before 21 then his £3000 Bank Trust Fund went back to Abraham's daughters via his estate.

Nevertheless Abraham went to great pains to secure Mary's annuity of £300 appointing John Round of Colchester and Charles Newman of Mount Bures Hall as new Trustees should the annuity not be paid. These two gentlemen were instructed to continue William's trust and to transfer any issues or proceeds of sale on the Ardleigh and Dedham properties into Bank stocks until William's age of 24 years when the entire above bequest matured for William's sole use subject only to his mother Mary's £300 annuity. Should he die before 24 leaving no heirs then the above Bank trust lands again reverted to Abraham's daughters. If, in fact, William left heirs then they inherited in turn. Mary is mentioned again in codicils to Abraham's will, see following. William Webb survived to marry the Reverend Lugar's eldest daughter Sarah c. 1806 when he was 21. They lived at Ardleigh Court, once the Rectory, naming their first-born, a son, William Newman Webb. Was this a tribute to his benefactor or, as one suspects, was William, son of Mary Webb, perhaps a natural son of Abraham? If so he was probably born around 1785/6 after Abraham's wife Mary died. The Reverend Marshal Lugar lived at Ardleigh Park where, the record states, William Webb kept his hounds (15). Young William had progressed greatly it appeared.

First Codicil of Abraham Newman 22nd February 1799

An Act made 26th year of George III was the basis for another of Abraham's Trusts. It was an Act for Providing a proper Workhouse and better Regulations for the Poor within the parish of Barking in Essex and for regulating the Common Wharf within the Town of Barking. An Annuity of £100 out of the Rates or Assessments to be made for the relief of the poor within the said parish was to be paid to Abraham or his Executors at Barking aforesaid quarterly each year during the natural life of Elizabeth Holt of Barking which said annuity was secured by a Deed Poll under the hands and seals of three Directors of the said Act, Edward Hulse, James Hatch and George Spurrell dated 12th November 1796. Since that date Abraham had lent and advanced to the above Directors the sum of £1000 at 5% per annum to secure the annuity. Abraham was assigned the Rates and Assessment to be collected for the relief of the Poor which he or his Executors were to hold until the said £1000 and interest should be fully paid. Following this curious arrangement Abraham's four main Executors, George Caswall, William Thwaytes, Robert Parnter the Elder and Charles Newman, were charged with forming a Trust from the above Deed Poll and capital investment for the benefit of Elizabeth Holt and Mary Webb during their joint lives equally. Elizabeth had been Abraham's housekeeper at Porters property but Mary Webb had no named abode. She was not included in the Ardleigh list of 1796 either, though she was at Porters when Abraham died. If either lady should die the whole Trust passed to the survivor outright. Abraham certainly cosseted his ladies at every step. Mary Webb headed the field. Among other lands purchased since 1796 Abraham held some at Fordham and Mount Bures purchased of Joseph Lavender, William and Martha Grimwood's lands at Mount Bures and a half of Manor and Lordship of Kelvedon Hall, Essex all added to Ann Caswall's main Trust. The other half of Kelvedon Hall, also purchased from Vincent Eyre, was added to Jane Thoyts' main Trust previously recorded.

Further messuages, farms and lands at Ardleigh purchased of Elizabeth Rogers (16), were added to the main Fund held by Trustees John Round and Charles Newman for the benefit of William Webb already detailed above.

First Codicil witnesses: Charles Druce, Edward Brown junior and Richard Ewens.

2nd Codicil dated 2nd March 1799

This addition to Abraham's will was made only six days before his death, which probably occurred at his Fenchurch Street home, since he appeared in the Staining Burial Register for burial there on 17th March, aged 64. The Codicil, however, was attested on 13th March by the oath of two gentlemen, Charles Druce and Richard Ewens, both of Fenchurch Street in the parish of St Catherine Coleman, London. They confirmed that the writing was indeed Abraham's.