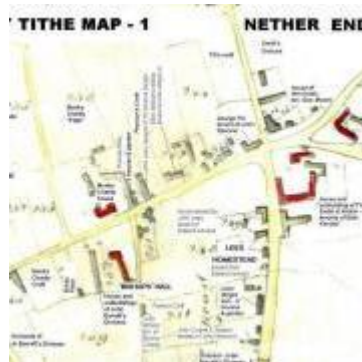


Austrey in 1840 from the Tithe Award

The Warwickshire Record Office contains an original copy of the Austrey *Tithe Apportionment and Plan* from 1840. The Award (drawn up in 1845) lists all of the landholders and their tenants, while the 1840 map attached defines the layout of the village and its surrounding fields, meadows and closes. The detailed list of owners and occupiers reveals a complex pattern of tenancies and sub-tenancies that provide a fascinating view of both the topography and social order of mid nineteenth-century parish. The Award was drawn up in response to an Act of Parliament in 1836 to commute the vicar's tithes to an annual rent payment, to "tidy up" a very complex system of payments in stock and produce and personal obligations. The "Praedial" (or produce) Tithes, and "Personal" Tithes, a tenth of all produce and labour, were the traditional dues paid to the incumbent by his parishioners. The Awards and the Tithe maps drawn up to commute these obligations into money payments from around 1840 onwards throughout the midlands, provide a very thorough and usually accurate survey of the fields, landowners and tenants in individual farming parishes - a complex mosaic of detail invaluable to the social historian.



The 1845 "Apportionment of the Rent Charge in lieu of Tithes in the parish of Austrey" describes a parish of some 2,097 acres 3 roods and 38 perches of which some 647 acres (or about a third of the parish) was arable farmland. The initial summary reveals that the vicar's glebe lands covered about 110 acres and that he had already commuted into his freehold, lands in the meadows at the Nether End of the parish— at *Little Moor, the Hade and Broad Meadow, the Greens and the Little Greens* - for annual cash payments of one halfpenny for each rood. A further 73 acres "enclosed by agreement" in 1746 provided him with six acres of *Tithe Meadows* in lieu of tithe hay and 56 acres of *Common Greens* in the *Overend* exempt from "tithe hay" - all bundled together and commuted into a total annual payment of £100. The Award goes on to list all of the lands of all of the landholders and their tenants, including some 112 houses (including Edward Kendall's "homestead"), sheds, barns, outbuildings and cottages.

The names of some of the freeholders and subtenants with their individual furlongs, enclosures, crofts, houses and homesteads from the Award are shown in the attached extracts (**Nether End - 1** and **Over End -2**). Identification of individual houses, including cottages, barns and outbuildings, such as Sam Rowley's "Tithe Barn yards", Thomas Richards' Windmill and Joseph Brook's Public Houses, matching sites with the names of owners and occupants, is of particular interest as it provides a useful guide to the site of various occupational activities and the distribution of landed wealth in the parish.



The two extracts from the Tithe Map display the two main parts of the village, at the Nether End and Over End, with the names of the principal landholders and their tenants transposed onto each map. The Nether End of the parish contained the principal landholders or gentry and yeomen farmers, two of the old manor houses and *Bishops Hall*, and part of Mr Flavell's farmstead (an occupant of this name being identified as a blacksmith in the 1841 census).

The Overend was the heart of the parish, with the Church, the tithe barn, the Baptist Chapel and the Wheatsheaf Public House. The church, the chapel and the alehouse may have been a refuge for the poorer cottagers clustered around the churchyard including Sarah Barnett, William Orton, Joseph Grimley, Thomas Bircher, and others who occupied various cottages and gardens close to the church and a row of eight adjoining cottages along one side of the churchyard belonging to Joseph Corbett (allotments 538-543).

A marked feature of the Award shown on the map at the Nether End, is the disintegration of the old manorial structure, through subletting or leasing to tenant farmers. The pattern of subdivision reveals that most of the parish was no longer farmed directly by the traditional lords of the manors. Although Edward Kendall, a descendant of the traditional lords of the manor, still had substantial landholdings he appears to have vacated the Kendall homestead subletting it to John Lees, a local farmer. (Curiously, the only Edward Kendall listed in the 1841 census is described as a "ribbon weaver and journeyman" !). Apart from a reference to a straggle of gardens and wastelands retained by "The lords of the Manor and Austrey Freeholders" the bulk of the parish was in the hands of Trustees, Charities and Divisees, such as the Divisees of John Barratt who owned parts of *Bishops*, including the main homestead, two attached houses and outbuildings, pasture closes, meadows and marlpits. John Elton's Divisees also owned and controlled meadows and cow pastures. The Monks Charity and Austrey Charity Trustees pastured livestock on substantial tracts of meadow and pasture lands, including "water flats" and abandoned crofts, places like *Red Meadow* and the *Hall Field* and *wet furlongs*.

The absentee landlords listed among the landholders include clerics from neighbouring parishes. The Rector of Shuttington sublet lands and a house in the Main Street at the Overend to Joseph Corbett. The vicar of Repton in Derbyshire rented lands on Appleby Way to John Barratt. The vicar of Ticknall leased moorland and meadow pieces to John Barratt. Sam Perkins and Shirley Steele Esq. sublet meadows and closes to the Rev. Perkins (presumably Sam's kinsman from Orton on the Hill later recorded in the censuses).

Much more can be gleaned from further scrutiny of the Tithe Map when it is collated with a growing archive of contemporary records, newspapers, almanacks and census records. Thomas Richards is recorded as owner of the Windmill yards and Pinners Close on the Norton Road (allotments 563-564) - the "tower mill" that was demolished in 1915. Joseph Corbett is recorded renting or leasing enclosures at *Far Mill* and *New Mill Close* on the sites of the ancient post mill on Mill Lane, which is clearly marked on the map. The 1841 and 1851 national census records provide further evidence of individual owners and occupiers with their ages and occupations, opening up an even wider field of inquiry. The Tithe Map was drawn up on the eve of increasing industrialization, the beginnings of the modern and the start of national census surveys. However it is a unique and valuable document, an indispensable source for further inquiries into Austrey's inhabitants at the start of the Victorian Age.

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