

# King's Walden Place Names

## WITH A NOTE ON INCLOSURES

*By Audrey Grant*

King's Walden is a parish of entirely rural character. It has many fine trees, mainly oak and ash, varied by hollies in the hedgerows with their distinctive shapes and silvery boles. There are no classified roads: the lanes and footpaths are bordered by hedges which contain a great variety of woodland shrubs, indicating their great age. The woods nearly all show signs of former coppicing. Extra plantations which were widely established in the 19th century to satisfy the demand for hurdle-making can be recognised on today's maps, distinguished by the suffix 'spring' – Follyfield Spring, Netherfield Spring, Diamond Spring.

Of the placenames mentioned in Domesday Book in relation to 'Walden Regis' all but one have survived to the present day, and these – with the statistics of population and cultivation – help one to envisage the Saxon rural community which was so precisely delineated by the Commissioners in 1086. The following condensed version provides the framework on which the parish and manor developed. (Note that it is now generally accepted that Domesday population figures may need to be multiplied by as much as five to give actual population totals, including women and children.)

**WALDEN REGIS** answers for two hides. (200 acres, approximately.) Land for 20 ploughs. A priest with 13 villagers, 4 smallholders, 2 cottagers. Woodland for 300 pigs.

**THE HAMLET OF LEY GREEN:** 3 freemen cultivating one virgate (about 30 acres) of ploughland, 4 smallholders. Woodland for 40 pigs.

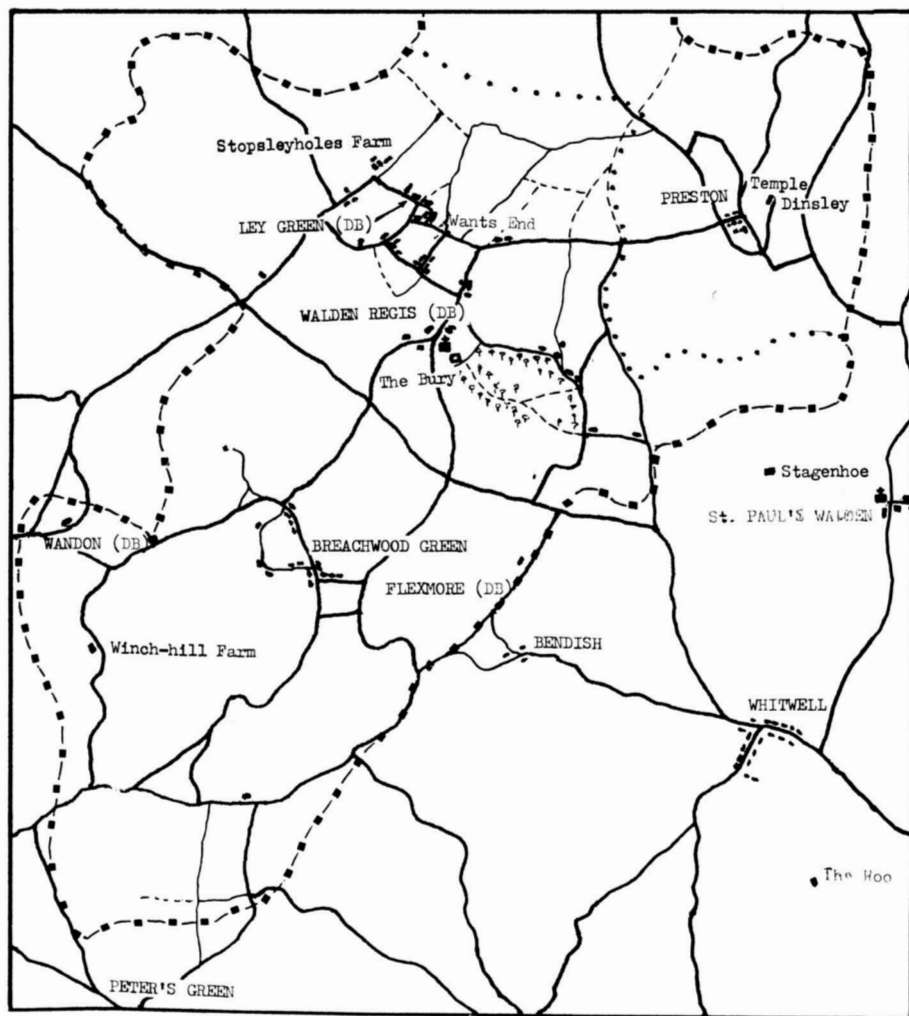
**WANDON:** 3 virgates of ploughland. Land for 2 ploughs, 6 oxen. 6 villagers. Woodland for 40 pigs. (At the time of the Domesday survey Wandon lay in Hitchin, but soon afterwards appeared in the Walden Regis records.)

**FLEXMORE:** Two holdings, each of half a virgate (15 acres), and each having land for half a plough. One freeman, one smallholder, 4 villagers. Woodland for 5 pigs. (There are signs in the valley below this site of ponds which could have been used for the soaking of flax. The name Flexmore ('Flaxmere?') is not on present-day maps, but it appeared in documents until the 19th century).

Another hamlet, not mentioned in Domesday Book, would have been established shortly afterwards when the woodland known as 'Brach wood' in Saxon times was cleared. This settlement became Breachwood Green, and as time went on grew larger than King's Walden. In later years it had a tower mill, a blacksmith's shop, and several brickworks.

I have found no records showing how the parish fared during the disastrous years of the Black Death, 1348-50, when one third of the inhabitants of nearby Hitchin are said to have died.

Documents of the 16th and 17th centuries introduce some of the inhabitants of the parish, and mention their holdings in the open fields. Owing to the wooded and



SKETCH MAP OF THE PARISH OF KING'S WALDEN, WITH PART OF  
 St PAUL'S WALDEN.

Boundary of King's Walden — ■-■-■ Former boundary . . . .

undulating character of the terrain, these fields were scattered pretty evenly over the area, and were quite numerous, as the Inclosure Award shows.

1545. Grant by William Walche of Walden Sancta Pauls, Co. Herts, tailor, to Thomas Walshe, of a tenement and croft, with 8 acres and 3 roods of land in Walden Regis.<sup>1</sup>

1564. Licence by Nicholas Brystone of Ayott, Co. Herts, to Thomas Welles, late of

Walden Regis, Co. Herts, to sell to Richard Tuffnall, blacksmith, a messuage, close, lands, etc., in Walden Regis.<sup>2</sup>

1572. Grant by Thomas Aunsell of Hitchin, weaver, to Thomas Ivory of Walden Regis, of 2 acres and 3 roods of land in Walden Regis.<sup>3</sup>
1581. Sale by Edmund Tuffnal, blacksmith, of Walden Regis, to John Sibley of Stopplesley, Beds, of 2½ acres in Walden Regis. (This brought the name 'Stopsley' into the parish.)<sup>4</sup>
1581. Sale by John Prudden to John Sibley of Stopplesley, of a close called Nining le Wick (5 acres). (Wicks is a field name on Stopsley Farm to this day.)<sup>5</sup>
1599. Sale by John Welles, of Walden Regis, Herts, yeoman, of an acre of land in Leggattes Field (open field) in Walden Regis, lately purchased of Edmund Tuffnall, blacksmith, also lands, tofts, tithes, in land called Wandon.<sup>6</sup>
1605. Sale by Edward Prudden Senior and Edward Prudden Junior of Walden Regis, Co. Herts, yeomen, to Thomas Welshe Junior of Walden Regis, yeoman, of an acre of land in Flaxmere Field in Walden Regis.<sup>7</sup>
1624. Exchange by John Foster of Winch Hill, Walden Regis, Co. Herts, yeoman, with Edward Sibley of Breechwood Green in Walden Regis, of two parcels of land in Wandon Field, in exchange for others in the same field.
1640. Sale by Edward Prudden of King's Walden, Co. Herts, yeoman, to Edward Sibley of the same, yeoman, of three roods of land in a field called Darley, in King's Walden.

With regard to the lands of the Lordship, I have not attempted to interpret any documents earlier than 1575, when it came into the possession of the Hale family. The following tell the story.

1576. Mortmain Licence to William Burgh, Baron Burgh, and Katherine his wife, to alienate to Richard Hale the Manor of King's Walden at Walden Regis, Herts.
1576. Sale by William Burgh, Baron Burgh, to Richard Hale, citizen and grocer of London, of the Manor of King's Walden at Walden Regis, Herts, with appurtenances in King's Walden, Powles Walden, and Polletts (i.e., St Ippollitts) for £1,000.

The manorial records show that the Hales continued to purchase land in Hertfordshire and other counties over the following centuries. In 1635 William, the son of Richard Hale, regained possession of the valuable Rectory Manor and its tithes, which had been granted away from King's Walden by Henry VIII to the Lord of the Manor of Temple Dinsley. William Hale also obtained the reversion of the Manor of Stagenhoe, and purchased the Manor of Lannock in the parish of Weston.

In 1687 William Hale was granted a faculty by the Commissary for the Archdeaconry of Huntingdon, "to erect a calvary adjoining the chancel of the Parish Church of Walden Regis, because the chancel where his predecessors were buried is full."<sup>12</sup> A *calvary* was commonly "a life-size representation of the Crucifixion on a raised ground in the open air, [or] a series of representations, in a church or chapel, of the scenes of the Passion." (O.E.D.) But other dictionaries<sup>13</sup> record the use of the term 'in Catholic countries' to describe the chapel itself, and it is apparently in this unfamiliar sense that it is used here. William Hale died in 1688, the year after this faculty was granted. The inscription on his tomb, situated "on the south side of



*KING'S WALDEN. St Mary's church, showing the chapel erected by William Hale in 1687.*

a Chapel built by Colonel Hale on the north side of the chancel", was quoted by Chauncy in his *Historical Antiquities of Hertfordshire* published only twelve years later.

During the 18th century there was increasing pressure on the part of the wealthy landlords for powers to speed up the process of inclosure of the areas of open field in their parishes, to enable them to put into practice the many new methods for better production, both of crops and of livestock. Hundreds of Inclosure Acts were passed through Parliament, among them in 1797 two initiated by William Hale of King's Walden.

The texts of the Inclosure Acts for the parishes of King's Walden and of Weston – which includes the Hale Manor of Lannock – are preserved in the County Record Office.<sup>14</sup> The following names of open fields to be subject to inclosure have been extracted from the 'Act for Dividing and Inclosing the Open and Common Fields, Common Meadows, Common Pastures, and other Commonable Lands and Waste Grounds in the Parish of King's Walden in the County of Hertford':

Downs Common Field, Frogmore Common Field, Wooden Common Field, Royden Common Field, White Common Field, High Field, Mill Field, and also those previously mentioned in the charters.

Those who owned strips in these fields were allotted other land in exchange, and there were areas of open common, and also the wayside verges, which were available



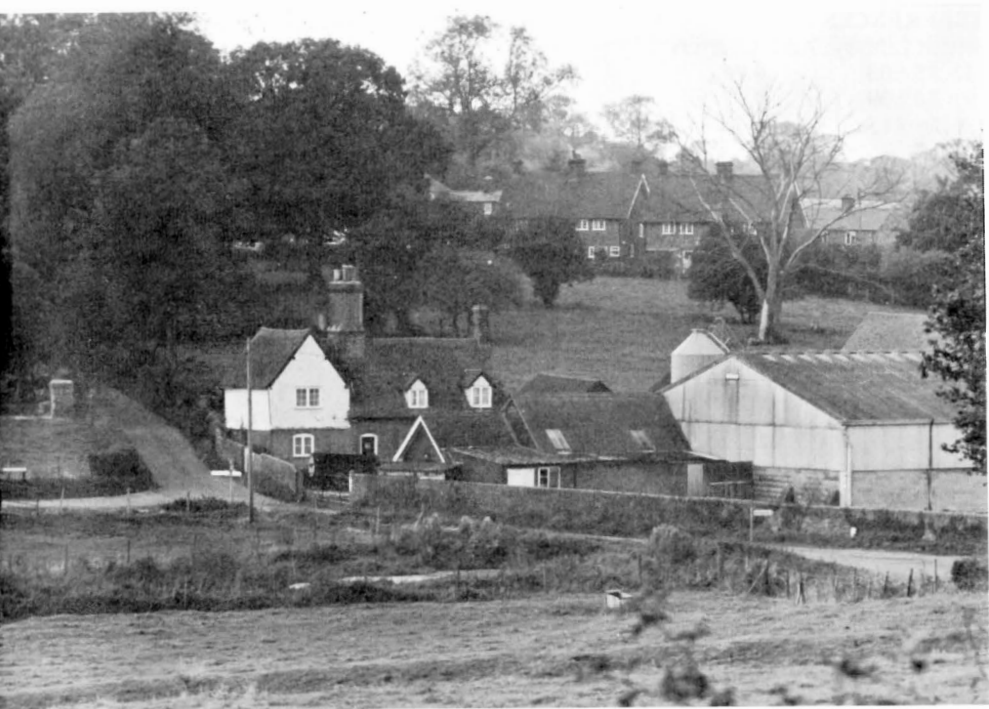
*KING'S WALDEN. Wants End (right) and Upper Wants End Farm (left), with Ley Green in the background.*

to the cottagers for grazing. In the Land Tax records of 1830, Frogmore Common, Windmill Common, and King's Walden Common are mentioned, but soon after this would be inclosed.

Detailed study of the massive King's Walden document would be a formidable task, but the County Record Office has published<sup>15</sup> a most helpful selection of facsimiles of much of the text of the Weston Award, with explanatory notes on the procedures involved. The fact that one of the manors involved in the Weston Inclosure Act was the property of William Hale makes the study of the documents additionally interesting, and throws light on the Act and Award for King's Walden.

I conclude by quoting from Arthur Young's survey of agriculture in Hertfordshire in 1804,<sup>16</sup> to illustrate farming practices in King's Walden during the years immediately following inclosure. Young had a high opinion of the husbandry practiced in Hertfordshire, and of the enterprise shown by farmers and landowners throughout the county. He recognised the beneficial results which had followed upon inclosure, and commented upon the agricultural improvements which had contributed to increased national prosperity. The following are his comments on our parish.

"Mr Roberts (the farm bailiff) of King's Walden, has had great success by sowing wheat in the spring after turnips . . . In the harvest of 1800 he had ten acre which



produced 5 loads per acre. As for oats, . . . Mr Hale had this year eight loads (4½ quarters) after Swedish turnips . . . I have never seen finer stubbles than those which I found on his farm. Mr Roberts . . . laid down some land to grass five years ago . . . Dutch clover, rye grass and hay seed, which did very well for three or four years.”

“Mr Hale of King’s Walden has cultivated Swedish turnips for four years and uses all for sheep and lambs; . . . the beginning of March, common turnips being over, 200 sheep and 200 lambs, and 140 other sheep were kept on them near seven weeks. Mr Hale has for many years cultivated the large cow cabbages . . . and they are given to the cows night and morning, when they are eaten in the yard.”

Arthur Young’s report went on to describe the extraction and use of chalk and the method employed to raise this to the surface from pits, which were lined with a basketwork of hazel rods and brushwood, the loosened chalk being raised in baskets which were levered up by a form of jack. The pits were dug to a depth of 20 or 30 feet, and chambered at the bottom. This chalk, extracted from deep levels, could be laid on the fields without being burnt in a kiln. “Mr Hale of King’s Walden lays 50 loads an acre on clay and binding flinty land, and its only use is to make these soils work well, which it effects perfectly . . .”

Regarding livestock, Young recorded that Mr Hale had only Devonshire cattle “and approves of them much”, and was also well pleased with the South Down sheep which he had had five or six years: “I viewed Mr Hale’s flock with pleasure, they form a capital one, and the wool is very fine. They are the best flock of South Downs which I have seen in Hertfordshire.”

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