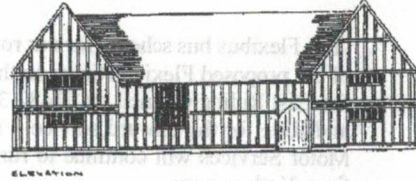


THE MANOR HOUSE AND COURT HOUSE SEATON ROSS



The Manor House at Seaton Ross was built in 1683 and is believed to have been of a timber-framed construction. It stood on the site, which is now Manor House Farm close to St. Edmunds Church. One of the early occupiers of the Manor House was the Varvill family. Matthew Varvill lived as a tenant farmer at the Manor House in the mid to late 18th century. He was a prominent and well-respected Seatonian being a tenant farmer of 52 acres, 1 rood and 34 perches on Lady Day 1798 at a yearly rent of £37.0s.0d, Churchwarden in 1795 and also served on the local jury. Matthew Varvill's son Robert, lived and farmed at the Manor House well into the 19th century. The 1641 census shows Robert his wife Ann, their 4 children and 4 labourers and servants lived at the Manor House. The Manor House also served as a Court House.

Every lord of a manor had the right to hold a court for his tenants. The courts were presided over by the lord's steward. Manorial juries, consisting of 12 homagers (jurors), were sworn in. Their first duty was to deal with the lord's financial interests in his manor, They then appointed officers, e.g. the constable, judged pleas by individuals, and laid pains or fixed penalties on categories of petty offences. Pains were the regulations issued by the jury of a manorial court leet, the breeches of which incurred a fixed penalty. These regulations involved the organisation of communal agriculture, the scouring of ditches, the use of public wells and the muzzling of mastiffs. Decisions were not imposed by the lord or his steward, but were made by the jury, who were selected from the chief tenants of the manor, The manorial court dealt therefore with petty law and order and the administration of communal agriculture. The East Riding of the County of York Holme Beacon in September 1824 showed the return of the Churchwardens and overseers of the township, of Seaton Ross of men qualified to serve as jurors. There were 17 men to choose from; 13 farmers, 2 yeomen, 1 joiner and a miller. In fact, Robed Vaivill who was Matthew Vaivill's son served as a juror. Some of the convictions of that time were:

- November 1815 Conviction of James Addison of Allerthorpe, clerk.
'Using a gun for the destruction of game at Seaton Ross on the 28th October 1815'- Fined £5.
- 8th June 1827. Conviction of Matthew Cook of Seaton Ross, *miller*.
'Breaking a fence enclosing a field in Seaton Ross, the property of Robert Cook, farmer Fined 1 shilling.

- 28th January 1835. Conviction of John Braithwaite of Bielby, labourer.
'Trespass in pursuit of game at Lands in Seaton Ross belonging to William Constable Maxwell esquire',
Fined £2 plus 7s lid costs or 2 months in the house of correction.
- 8th February 1836. Conviction of Frank Maysen assistant to Robert Rook.
Damaging the floor of the house of William Tomlinson of Seaton Ross, farmer'.
Damages —5 shillings, Fined 10 shillings plus 9 shillings costs or one month in the house of correction.
- 23rd February 1836 Conviction of William Waring of Melbourne, shoemaker. Trespass in pursuit of game at lands situated at Seaton Ross in occupation of Robert Varvill belonging to William Constable Maxwell- Fined £2 plus £2.9s.10d costs or 2 months in the house of correction.

The above provide an insight into the petty offences dealt with by the Seaton Ross Manorial Court. The Manor House served as the Court House well into the middle of the 19th century but around this period, many manorial courts had declined and some had disappeared. Seaton Ross was no exception and ceased to be a Manorial court around 1840.

Williams Watson's June 1811 map of the "township of Seaton Ross" clearly shows the Court House with Matthew Varvill as the occupier. This was the case in his June 1828 plan but then Matthew's son Robert Varvill is the occupier of the Manor House. Williams Watson's notebook of 1848 showed the Manor House was demolished and re-built as the Manor House Farm in that year (1846). The occupier was Robert Varvill's wife Ann, her occupation listed as grocer. Robert Vaivill had died in 1845 aged 65. The Manor House stood 60 yards from the roadside.

So came to an end another important function of the village, holding a manorial court for trying and convicting petty offenders. The illustration shows a typical example of an open hall Manor House in Eastern England during the period C15th to C17th. The Manor House at Seaton Ross may well have looked very similar.

Malcolm Young - Seaton Ross - 2003

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