

Bidney Mill.

Bidney, modern Bidney Farm, the site of an ancient manor, is in the parish of Dilwyn. However, documentary evidence exists to show that with Bidney Mill “*anciently*” came certain rights over lands in the adjacent manor of Burton, which is in the parish of Eardisland. These rights came with a “*certain rent of four shillings per annum*” being payable to a “*freeholder to the Lord of the Manor of Burton*”. The way in which these rights were exercised led to an unsatisfactory situation which eventually saw the matter being dealt with in the manorial court held at Burton on 30th September 1626. The Court Rolls of Burton¹ record for that date:

“*...Item the jury aforesaid upon evidence given in open Court do find that anciently a certain rent of four shillings per annum hath been paid to one John Trumper a freeholder to the Lord of the Manor of Burton by the then owner of Bidneys mill for making a stanke or weare upon the freehold land whereby to divert and turn the ancient watercourse out of the ancient course for the service of the same Bidneys mill which watercourse we find so to have been diverted and turned by the space of many years as that the ancient watercourse is utterly decayed to the damage to both of the land and other inhabitants of the said manor.*”

In modern parlance this can be summarised by saying that water management work for the benefit of Bidney Mill, albeit across land rented for that purpose,² led to problems further downstream and where the water had previously flowed, and those people in the Manor of Burton who were affected by this made complaint to their lord of the Manor.

That Bidney Mill was not what is nowadays called Burton Mill is evidenced by a slightly later document of 22nd May 1655³ which clearly mentions both a mill at Burton Court and, and in a different section of the document, a mill at Bidney. Both are described as “water corn mill”.

A slightly earlier reference (1619) is even more clear:

“*Garway, Sir William, Kt.: A capital messuage called Bidney alias Bydenoe in Dylwyne and Erdislande, lands belonging to the same and a water mill and a messuage called Le Byrton*^{4,5}”

I have attempted to identify the freehold land held by John Trumper in 1626, the whereabouts (on Tippet's Brook) of Bidney Mill, the 'stanke or weare' referred to, and the alterations to the watercourse which are mentioned.

Towards these aims a check of my index to this section has revealed no land held by the Trumper family anywhere near to the area in question. So far, for other items such as this, my main source has been the schedule to the Tithe Map. This does at present show one Trumper family entry "Trumper's Plock", field 449a, but this is quite close to Legions Cross⁶ and therefore not relevant to this '1626' reference.

¹ HRO CF58/-.

² Whether that purpose was declared at the time is, I think, doubtful.

³ PRO Crown Leases 2159.

⁴ Modern 'Bereton Farm'.

⁵ PRO Exchequer Records E367/1386.

⁶ See 1790 in this section.

The identity of the 'then owner of Bidney' is unknown to me; and the same is the case at the time of the Tithe Map.⁷ But the ownership of the fields abutting Tippet's Brook can be ascertained from the schedule to the Tithe Map although Tippet's Brook being the Parish (and Manor) boundary complicates matters. However, land in Eardisland (Burton) immediately across the brook from Dilwyn (Bidney) in the same ownership, if so evidenced by the Tithe Map schedule, albeit 218 years after 1626, might be an indication of the position of the 'stanke or weare upon the freehold land'.

There are members of three families owning land in/near appropriate positions both in Dilwyn (Bidney) and Eardisland (Burton) evidenced by the Tithe Map schedules. They are Thomas Bowen, John Greenly Snr (Eardisland) and John Greenly Jnr (Dilwyn) - and William Lambe Esq.⁸ The Bowen family fields in the two parishes are a long way from each other; so are the fields owned by John Greenly snr. and John Greenly jnr.....which leaves William Lambe.

Among many others he owned in Dilwyn No.970, "Mill Meadow" and in Eardisland No.367, "Island".

There are several other fields in Dilwyn with 'Mill' connotations;⁹ in Eardisland (Burton) only one: No.336, "Mill Meadow" which abutts Burton Mill to the north. The field name "Island" could be taken to suggest that this field once had water bounding it on all sides. It is immediately west of Burton Mill and on the Tithe Map has the brook bounding the south side of it.¹⁰ In fact it still does have water to all sides. The southern boundary of the two fields and a small part of an orchard to the north of "Island" is where the present mill leet of Burton Mill runs, which takes this immediate area out of our quest to identify the cause of the (Burton) Court proceedings in 1626.¹¹

Dilwyn No. 970 "Mill Meadow" is about 1/4 mile west of Burton Mill, south of Tippet's Brook where the mill leet to Burton Mill leaves the main stream. Immediately opposite it north of the brook are Eardisland Nos.369 and 371 - these are "Waste" and Southall's Meadow"¹² respectively. The "waste" we nowadays call 'Pigmore Common': on the Tithe Map itself it is simply labelled 'Common'.

Having now dealt with Field Names in the context of their ownership there remains to carry out a close visual inspection of the Tithe Map, both north and south of Tippet's Brook.

There are two candidate areas for consideration, but it is not out of the question that they both may have been the cause of all the fuss. The first of these is Dilwyn '760', immediately west of Dilwyn '970' which has already been mentioned. Dilwyn '760' is a long field which terminates at its west end where it meets the lane down

⁷ Field name ownership suggests William (Lacon) Lamb.

⁸ On the Eardisland schedule he is referred to as William Lamb Lacon. It is usual to find him called "Lacon Lamb(e)".

⁹ Nine in fact, but all either very close to Burton Mill or further east, with the exception of No.969, another "Mill Meadow" which abutts 970 to the south of it.

¹⁰ The land south of the brook there rises quite steeply: the brook could never have been moved further in that direction.

¹¹ Sketches from Eardisland and Dilwyn Tithe Maps are at the end of this Paper.

¹² This is interesting in a completely different context.

from Bidney Farm, across the brook, and north towards Dowsage in Burton. Its northern boundary is the brook which looks remarkably straight here, as indeed it does for a similar distance west of the lane. The brook then wriggles a little (when seen still heading west, upstream) before the second candidate for our attention is reached, an apparently completely straight length of brook north of Dilwyn '730' and '732' and south of Dilwyn '731', south of Burton '1026'. Burton '1028' is actually south of the brook.

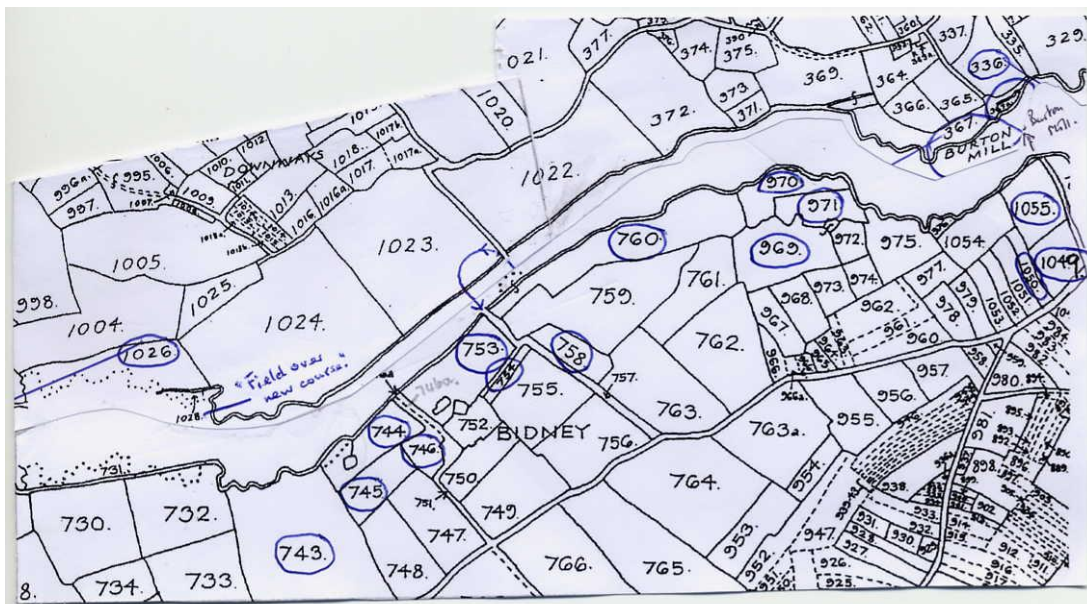
Thus we find both Dilwyn and Eardisland/Burton lands both south and north of the Tithe Map course of the brook. Bearing in mind that the brook is, and very likely always has been, the parish boundary between Dilwyn and Eardisland along this stretch, and that the manor of Burton is always referred to as being in Eardisland, it is evident that some non-natural movement of the brook must have taken place at some date.

By name Dilwyn '760','730', '732',and '731' are all "Long Meadow", but separate fields; Burton '1026' is "Hops", Burton '1028' is "Field over new Course".

Of these possibilities, the 'Prime Suspect' , for me, is Burton '1028' and environs, in spite of the 218 year gap between the two descriptions.¹³

That much water management work has been carried out along the stretch of Tippet's brook which has been described, is undeniable. But to establish who did which work - and when, and the location of Bidney Mill itself, is beyond the data currently available. It is possible that further Indentures or other documents naming land and the ownership of it may come to light in the course of my various research activities, but until then the situation will remain undecided.

I will attempt to illustrate the stretch of Tippet's Brook in question:¹⁴



¹³ Tithe Map Schedule 1844 and basic text, 1626.

¹⁴ Sketches of parts of the maps for the two parishes being involved, there is a gap in the middle, the brook appearing on both maps.