

# Freeks Farm to Fairplace Hill Housing development, 2020

## Historical Information as a basis for road naming

1. **Annotated copy documents supplied** (various masters culled from my researches 1979-present, re history of B. Hill; recycled for my Adult education tutoring (Sussex Uni. CCE (extra mural tutor in Local History), *et al.*, over the years.

**Map 1.** Relevant section of **Clayton parish Tithe Map**. The tithe maps and schedules were drawn up nationwide, to identify land owners, occupiers and land values, for a new system for paying the clergy. The schedules generally contain field names, but Keymer's unfortunately has none. Clayton's does have them. Most of the Freeks Farm housing development occupies the western half of the farm labelled Freeks (purple).

**Map 2.** Images of the original **Keymer Enclosure award, 1829** and its **plan of Keymer manor's part of St. John's, Common**. (both held by W. Sussex Record Office). A 'Commons Enclosure' was the legal means by which the ordinary farmers of the manor, who held rights to outpasture animals and gather certain plant material from the common agreed (or were often heavily leant upon to agree) to give up those rights, in exchange for owning, outright, as a freehold, a small allocation of the common. The Keymer side of St. John's common was enclosed after months of negotiations, heard at the Kings Head Inn on Fairplace Hill. The Clayton manor's side of the same common was similarly enclosed from 1857-1859.

**Map 3.** **Modern street map of Burgess Hill** showing the **full** extent (Clayton & Keymer) of St. John's Common in relation to the modern street lay-out. Before I had a precise plan of the new development I had thought that it would include the fields (coloured orange) numbered **322 -328 on map 1**. As I now realise it doesn't I will not supply historical info for this or for any other part of the Northern Arc at this time but I could do in future.

**Map 4.** **Scheme for the enclosure of the Keymer part of St. John's Common, 1828**  
The area coloured blue was to be sold in lots in order to recoup the costs of the enclosure (mainly the fees of Messrs. Clutton *et al.*). The remainder, edged yellow on the map, would be allotted to the commoners *pro rata proportione* to the size of their existing holdings. They got the land free, in exchange for their former rights of common, but they would have to pay for the fencing themselves. It is this land which contains the southern half of the new development lies. [Blue and yellow top right hand is the same distribution on the S. end of Valebridge Common.] The late King's Head Inn and the present Watermill Pub are marked in pink as points of reference.

**Map 5.** Full details of the **allotments of common** made to the farmers of Keymer manor (east of Mill Road and North of Leylands Road or Lye Lane). [Note, { nothing to do with present project}, the miller, John Gainsford was well-heeled enough to buy a large allotment west of his windmill.] The main relevance of this map is that it gives **the names of the various copyhold farms** in 1829 which qualified them for a slice of the common west of Freeks Lane. They **are all in Balcombe Parish**. They qualified because half of Balcombe was in Keymer manor (the other half being in Ditchling manor). Balcombe had no original manor of its own but the Stone Hall Estate of Lord and Lady Denman (who commissioned the famous reflective World War I murals in the Village Hall) was created out of these same Balcombe farms. [Keymer manor also stretched north of Worth Forest to Crabbett and Copthorne on the county boundary with Surrey. Copthorne Common was half Keymer, half Ditchling! The pub at Tinsley Green where the

famous marbles matches are played between Sussex and Surrey was part of Keymer manor! And another point of interest: the little row of cottages in Leylands Road just east of Mill road (green on map) represents the miniscule allotment awarded to three little cottages in Balcombe village. They or their successors must have clubbed together and sold out to a builder.] The name of the lord of Keymer manor, Rev. Henry Bayntun, is written all across that tranche of allotments because he had bought them. See further re Map 5, below.

## 2. Names historically associated with the development land

1. **Freeks Farm.** field names See map 1. Owner in 1841: Charles Bayntun, occupier (actual farmer) **Nathaniel Holford**

See the numbers shown on the map

- 276 Banky Mead
- 277 Cart House field
- 278 West piece
- 279 The wood
- 280 Bramble field
- 281 Scruffy grubby field (!!! – Love it. Would do as a name for my house at the moment). Might do for the kiddies’ play area if there is one! [Joke]
- 283 Pit field. This, and the next and ?previous, prob. indicate old clay diggings.
- 284 Brook lag [The lags were and are the elongated meadows along streams which are liable to flood; summer pastures.]
- 285 Denchy mead. This sounds like a meadow they’ve tried to improve by ‘denshiring’, mixing ashes and light material with heavy clay. The process started in Devon, so, a word condensed from Devonshire-ing.

**The little plots coloured yellow, by the river:**

Owner Charles Bayntun; occupier **Thomas Marris**

- 292 Fulling Mill and Drying Ground.
  - 287 garden
- The plot was granted out in the late medieval period to one of the Holcombe family at **Bridge Hall Farm**, (a beautiful medieval Hall house of great importance in the history of BH, now under a demolition order). Fulling, the thickening of woollen cloth, died out after the medieval period and in 1841 it is only the name and memory that lingers.

2. **Freeks Farm: owners.** There is the atte Ferghthe family in the 14thc. then a gap in the records until:

- 1588 Richard Wymarke. daughter Agnes married John Attree (of the Attrees of Theobalds farm in Wiv, and Brooklands in Keymer; and more Attrees....
- 1659 Joan Michell
- 1750 Richard Turner (of Oldlaand in Hassocks)
- 1788 John Wille, whose daughter married Nathan Holford then son Nathaniel Holford who mortgaged in
- 1819 to William Borrer of Hurstpierpoint
- 1841 Charles Bayntun, followed by several further Bayntuns

**3. Manor of Keymer:** boundary perambulation 1828 (as part of the enclosure process).

**On map 1** you will see that I have marked two crosses on the south side of Freeks Farm. I was able to place those accurately from the perambulation – the surveyor comes into St. John’s Common and goes along that boundary passing the **Fleet pond**, which, along with another cross, must be along there somewhere. Then he gets to the third cross: ... *at the corner of Furze Field, and still along the outside of the common southwardly.....* The crosses were markers for the next lot of perambulators, and they were in Christian shape of cross, at which anciently, prayers would sometime s be said as an *aide memoire*. But this perambulation was just done by the surveyor whose name is on the front of the enclosure (plan 2).

#### **4. Map 5, the Keymer Award**

The new development is accessed from The Hawthorns (**see Map 3**) in an allotment awarded to Middle Castye (NB. the Castyes in Balcombe are usually spelt with an e at the end).

It then tracks north up through allotments to Tibbalds, Batchelors, Northlands, Bowders, Hooklands and Rylandes. Most, if not all, of these farms still exist in Balcombe today. Middle Castye lies west of the rest of the Stone hall estate and was gentrified in the 18th century becoming ‘**The White House**’ . **Caroline Chatfield** was the owner of them all in 1821 and this is the last record of them in the Keymer court books, meaning that no further land transfers had taken place between 1821 and 1828 when the common was enclosed. The Chatfields were an ‘old county’ family whereas I believe the Bayntuns were not, It means she would have privately negotiated a good deal for the transfer of her allotments to Bayntun, in advance of the enclosure.

I hope this info will at least lead to some of the new street names. I personally think it would be a nice idea thus to record the odd occurrence of some old Balcombe farm names turning up in Burgess Hill in 1828 and perhaps again in 2020.

*Heather Warne, May 2020  
Archivist (R.M.A.R.A.), and Local Historian,  
13 Gladstone Road, Burgess Hill,  
RH15 0QQ; 01444 236247*