

The King's Weston estate farms

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This is a guide to the long-obliterated agricultural landscape of the King's Weston estate, explaining where the farm buildings were, what can still be seen of them today, and how they got their names.

The beginnings of modern King's Weston

The former King's Weston estate occupied a large swathe of what is now north-west Bristol, including a good deal of land which would be unrecognizable to visitors of today. Much of it was once not really dry land, but marsh along the Severn and the Avon, overflowed regularly by the sea, stretching a considerable distance from the present riverbank, and much of what came to be called Henbury hundred was also known as Henbury in the Saltmarsh (Latin: *in Salso Marisco*) well into the second millennium. Archaeologists are gradually finding evidence that the marsh was not always a wasteland, even in prehistoric times. The evidence from the Neolithic era onwards suggests periods of regular inundation by the sea, separated by periods allowing the formation of stable soils that could be farmed, in response to falls and rises in sea level driven by climatic variation. At Katherine Farm, in the middle of the marsh, archaeologists have discovered surfaces with evidence of human occupation dating to the Mesolithic and Bronze Ages. Before the marsh was tamed, in periods when it was relatively dry, it would provide grazing for cattle and maybe sheep, and might sometimes even support food crops. When it was relatively wet, it would no doubt provide food in the shape of fish and waterfowl. There would always be moist patches and poolsides suitable for growing reeds for thatching and floor-covering, as the name of the village of Redwick (from the Old English for 'reed farm', *hrēod + wīc*) implies.

There is evidence of attempts to interrupt the effects of these climatic changes by building seabanks with sluices which would allow the marsh to be drained and turned over to agriculture. These banks, of unknown age but at least medieval, were probably heightened and strengthened in the early and late seventeenth century following ruinous floods in 1607 and 1687.¹ They used to be visible in the low ground of Shirehampton and

¹ The vicar of Almondsbury, John Paul, noted of the event on 30 January 1607: "... in Saltmarsh many howses overthrowne." This flood, due to an exceptionally high spring

Avonmouth, but they have all disappeared under house-building and industrial development. They were made unnecessary by the even later banks and works that form part of the Avonmouth dock complex, made out of clay dug out to create the first dock in the 1870s, though some of these Victorian works may incorporate sections of the older structures along the Severn shore. The age of some of the early banks may be obscure, but as we shall see, drainage works from the seventeenth century onwards had a profound effect on the landscape and on the fortunes of King's Weston.

Situated mainly within Henbury parish and totally within Henbury hundred, the King's Weston estate at the height of its wealth, power and influence around 1850–1900 consisted of the limestone ridge which stretches from the boundaries of the Blaise Castle estate to the end of Penpole, a good deal of what is now Sea Mills, Shirehampton and Avonmouth, the marshes from the mouth of the Avon northwards to the sluices called New Gout and Hoar Gout at the seaward end of the Mere Bank, which separates King's Weston and Lawrence Weston, and even further north into Lawrence Weston. A great estate was necessarily a farming estate, so even today, when we associate the name of King's Weston mainly with the eighteenth-century mansion and its beautified park, we should remember that the history of the estate until the nineteenth century is the history of its farms, because the prosperity of the mansion's owners derived largely from the success of its tenant farmers in dragging enough of a living from the soil to pay their rent. Only in the nineteenth century did it come into the hands of men whose wealth derived from elsewhere: the banking family Miles, with interests in slave-worked plantations in the West Indies.

The King's Weston estate itself originally formed a tithing (a civil subdivision) of Henbury parish. It has a history traceable back to the time of Domesday Book, when it was royal demesne, i.e. revenue derived from its activities went into the king's own coffers, rather than being granted to a feudal tenant: hence the place-name. It was eventually granted away to the Berkeley family, and Maurice Berkeley de Gaunt of that family gifted it back, on his death in 1230, to the then king, Henry III. That situation

tide and storm surge (or according to one recent theory to a tsunami), remains Britain's worst single sudden natural disaster.

continued until at least 1285, sometime after which it passed into the hands of other proprietors. Its possessors expanded it over the centuries to include land in the Lawrence Weston tithing of Henbury, and in Shirehampton, which was then a tithing of Westbury on Trym parish.

The point at which we pick up the farming history of King's Weston is the point at which a number of tenant farms seem to have been newly created on the estate, perhaps as early as the seventeenth century. These farms were self-contained; that is, they did not participate in any earlier open-field system, and they must have been newly enclosed from former marshland, which would have been manorial waste (i.e. not previously ploughed for growing crops, but used as common pasture).² The coastal plain is not depicted as farmed on Greenville [Grenville] Collins's chart of 1693, and it still appears as "Pasture Ground" on Anselm Holliday's chart which was made some time between 1690 and 1712, most probably close to 1712. Sir Robert Southwell had bought the estate from the Bristolian Hooke family in 1679, and soon set about improving his new acquisition. We have an early record of "all the seawall from Shirehampton to Aust as alsoe of the publick bridges, gouts, reenes and pills [sluices, drainage ditches and saltwater creeks] in the Lower Levell and who ought to scoure cleanse maintain and repair the same", drafted by Thomas Cann for the Thornbury Sessions of Sewers in 1684. This can be seen as a preliminary to Sir Robert's assessment of what needed to be done to improve his estate. Taking advantage of his connections, in his role as president of the Royal Society, he enlisted one of the leading scientists of the day, Robert Hooke,³ to advise him on reconstructing and strengthening the old seabank, the need for which was emphasized when the wall was overtopped by a "tidal wave" in 1687. Hooke noted on 10 January 1693 that he had "diswaded [Sir Robert] from rake and captston [capstan], advised ditching and wall with buried trunks [culverts made of hollowed tree-trunks? RC] to carry off the water; explained to Mr Southwell all the papers of pressure, resistance of

² As late as 1958, the Royal Commission on Common Land defined manorial waste as 'part of the demesne of a manor left uncultivated and unenclosed, over which the freehold and customary tenant might have rights of common' (*Hansard*, 12 July 1966).

³ I have not discovered how the famous Robert Hooke was related to the Bristol Hooke family from whom Southwell bought King's Weston, if at all. Both Hooke families came originally from east Hampshire and a connection must be suspected, however distant.

wall, centre of gravity.” Evidently, then, the new farms did not exist in 1693. The need for the new banks was demonstrated very soon after by the great storm of 26 November 1703, which caused disastrous damage in Somerset and to ships in Kingroad and on the Severn. The new landlord also corresponded seriously with agricultural specialists about how the land could be made more fertile using pioneering experimental techniques. Southwell’s letters and notes of the 1690s contain references to the use of crushed and burnt lime, marl, Severn mud, seaweed and sainfoin (*Onobrychis*) crops to improve the soil. Robert Neale, on 9 August 1690, advised the use of lime, “mudd” and “gribbs” or “gripps” [drainage ditches].

We do not know for sure, then, when the first farms of the modern era appeared in the Marsh, but the 1690s seems a reasonable guess. Artefacts found near the site of Katherine Farm suggest that a predecessor of this farm was medieval, and was therefore the oldest farmstead site of the King’s Weston estate. There may have been another medieval farm near the later Rockingham Farm. Some of the surviving farm buildings of the estate (see more fully below) appear to date from the period of Southwell’s improvements. Aust farmhouse (Image 26) and Home Farm (Image 13) are of the seventeenth and early eighteenth century respectively, the now demolished house of Katherine Farm (Image 15) appears to have been of the eighteenth, and Sea Mill(s) farmhouse (Image 21) carries a datestone of 1700. Two of the farms were by the river Trym in what is now Sea Mills suburb. Most of the others were on the marshland flanking the Severn and protected from all but the worst saltwater flooding by the new seabanks. That might appear surprising, since the agriculturalist Thomas Rudge wrote as late as 1807 that, even when relatively dry, the “blue-clay” marshes further north along the Severn were “cold, sour and unproductive of any but the coarsest herbage”. The land here must have had some compensating features thanks to Southwell’s modern methods, because despite Rudge’s bleak assessment of the marsh, the new farms were not all devoted to grazing cattle on poor turf; some of their fields were used for growing crops. Surviving fields within Shirehampton, Avonmouth and King’s Weston are rare, but one is shown in Image 1, off Third Way, Avonmouth, opposite the former Barracks Cottages (whose site is under the modern buildings shown). Its striped appearance is due to the survival of the ridge-and-furrow pattern produced by farming methods in use

before the enclosure movement, showing that crops were being grown here on the marshes before modern enclosure, which took place here around 1822, as we shall see. Image 2 is a recent ground-level view in Avonmouth Way showing how little of this pattern can now be discerned.



Image 1: Screenshot taken from aerial imagery © Blom Pictometry via Bristol Know Your Place web-site



Image 2: The scanty remains of ridge-and-furrow off Avonmouth Way

The farms of the marsh and Sea Mills were not necessarily all created at the same time, but they form an interlocking set which occupies almost the whole farming landscape of the area. That is consistent with the idea that the marshes were drained, enclosed and systematically reorganized in the very late 17th century, even if some of the land was already being farmed in small individual units (as suggested by the medieval archaeological evidence at Katherine Farm). Some earlier farms may have been abandoned, and some kept in use but renamed. Paintings and engravings of the King's Weston area from the earlier eighteenth century appear to show the marshland covered with hedged fields, but no evidence of buildings can easily be detected; artistic licence may have been exercised to ignore any that were there. William Halett's surveys of the "Mannor" and the "Levell" for Sir Robert's son Edward Southwell I (1720; Images 5 and 6) show several farms or at least sets of farm buildings (perhaps only outlying barns or shelters in some cases), unfortunately none of them named. These can therefore be confidently dated to the first phase of marshland improvement, if some of them are not older still: Home Farm, Campbell Farm, Clack Mill Farm, Sea Mill Farm, Ardglass (Cowley) Farm, Madam (Mere Bank) Farm, Cromwell (Kingroad) Farm, lost cottages of an

unidentified farm in Ballast Lane, and an otherwise unknown one in Shirehampton, south of the rhine which formed the parish boundary. The sites of the last two are, or were in the last hundred years, marked by ponds. A level landscape of pastures divided by hedges (“Plaine de paturage coupée de hayes”) is shown on an inaccurate but informative map made from memory by a French spy, le sieur de Bévillie, in 1768.

The existence of a survey carried out by Isaac Taylor in 1771, and mapped in 1772, might suggest that another reorganization happened not long before 1771. It is possible that Taylor was simply recording a situation that had existed since about 1720, or so, but there are definite hints that a new order had been created during the later 18th century, with farm buildings clearly of that era and farm names which relate to the Southwell family’s circumstances in that century. Each unit covered by Taylor’s survey consisted of a block of land divided into closes (hedged fields). This was in tune with improvements typical of the agricultural revolution which continued apace after Robert Southwell’s early efforts. The grazing land on the marshes had once been common land, as we know, but enclosure to form these small farms had clearly taken place well before the Inclosure Act of 1822 which allowed major local landowners to enclose remaining common in Westbury on Trym, Henbury and Compton Greenfield. This Act permitted the enclosure of riverside common land in Shirehampton, for example, and on Penpole Ridge and King’s Weston Hill, but exactly how the main King’s Weston enclosure which created the new farms was formally and legally allowed to take place is not yet known. Nothing much is known either about how the new creations were farmed, but there is no reason to suspect anything abnormal, except what was noted earlier about Robert Southwell’s scientific interest in the fertility of their soil. So here we concentrate on where their buildings were and what their names were.



Image 3: Samuel Ireland: View of Kings Weston from the mouth of the Avon (1792; British Museum; downloaded from King's Weston Action Group Newsletter 11; edited)

To do that, we need to focus on the history of the Southwells, an Anglo-Irish family on the up and up who had figured strongly in the English conquest and settlement of Ireland. Sir Robert was a prominent diplomat and politician. He became Secretary of State for Ireland in the reign of William III and Mary II. He had inherited and acquired interests in and around Kinsale, County Cork. His son Edward Southwell I was MP for Kinsale for much of the period from 1692–1730. Several fields on the King's Weston estate, on what became Kingroad and Cromwell Farms, carried the name *Great* or *Little Kingsale*. They are near what is marked on the earliest OS 1" map of 1830 as "The old house", which is also marked but not named on Taylor's 1772 map in plot 243; was this an older "Kinsale Farm", reorganized out of existence in the eighteenth century, perhaps? And if so, could this be the building with a tower visible between the two foreground ships, directly below Penpole Lodge, on Samuel Ireland's sketch of the Avon and King's Weston, done in 1792 (Image 3)? *Kingsale* is an older English spelling of the name of the Irish town and of the barony associated with it (see Image 4), though the Southwell family never held the barony themselves, and from 1682 onwards Sir Robert and the later Southwells were absentee (though reasonably benevolent) landlords in Kinsale; Sir Robert founded the Southwell Gift almshouses there in 1682. But several of the names of the new farms reflect either the family's Irish background, or the brilliance of their family connections, or both. Sir Robert's descendants

made some socially and financially very advantageous marriages, and that fact had an impact in the local namescape.

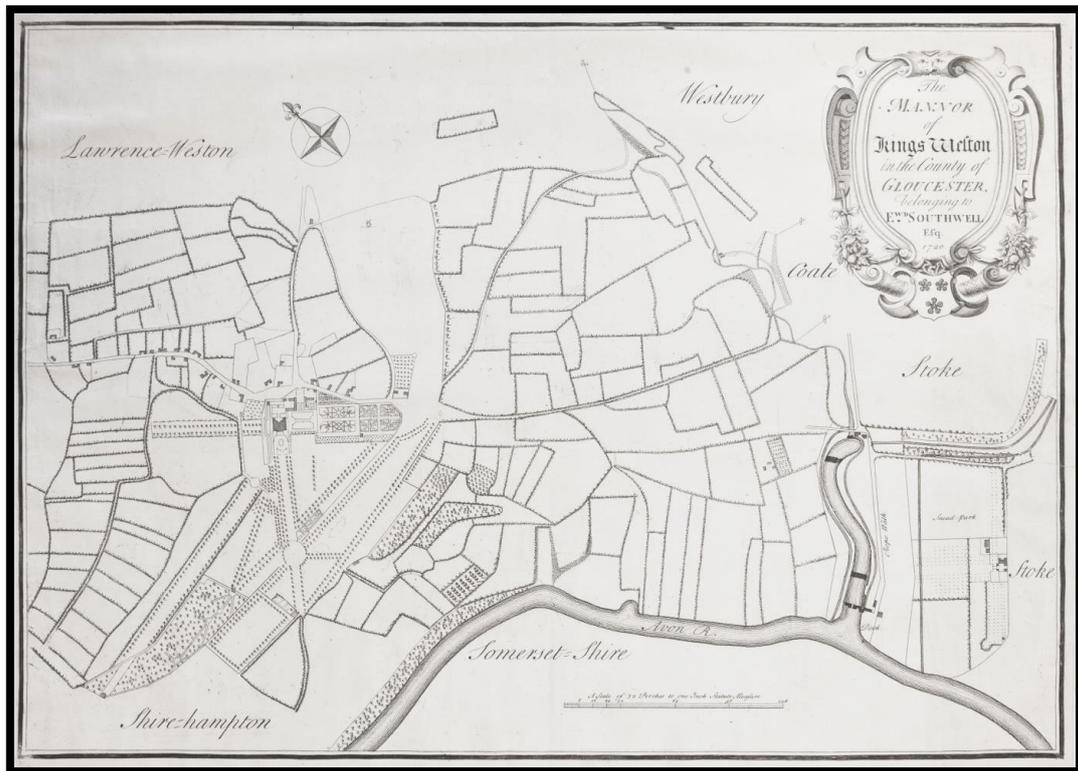


*Image 4: Pub frontage in Kinsale, County Cork
Downloaded from www.lordkingsale.com/*

Sir Robert's son Edward (Edward Southwell I), the man who commissioned the existing King's Weston mansion in 1712–19, married Lady Elizabeth Cromwell, the eighth Baroness Cromwell, in 1703. She was the daughter and heiress of Vere Essex, an Irish peer, the fourth Earl of Ardglass. Edward Southwell I inherited the Secretaryship of State for Ireland from Sir Robert, and was connected by background with Queen Anne's new Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, the second Duke of Ormond. In 1729, Edward Southwell I and Elizabeth's son Edward (Edward Southwell II) married Catherine Watson, daughter of Edward Watson, Viscount Sondes, and Lady Catherine Tufton. Catherine was the sister of the second and third Earls of Rockingham. The Rockinghams were a powerful family. The first earl (created 1714) was a prominent politician, and the second marquess was prime minister twice, in 1765–6 and 1782. Edward Southwell II and Catherine had a son, also Edward (Edward Southwell III), who married in 1765 Sophia, third daughter of Samuel Campbell, another Irish landowner (descended from a Scottish planter), of Mount Campbell, County Leitrim. Edward Southwell III, MP for Kinsale 1761–8, was elevated in 1776 to the de Clifford barony, which had been in abeyance for some decades, becoming the twentieth baron of that title. After his death, Sophia became governess to the Princess Charlotte of Wales, the daughter of the future George IV.

The Irish connections of the King's Weston estate could be multiplied. William III, returning victorious on 6 September 1690 from the battle of the

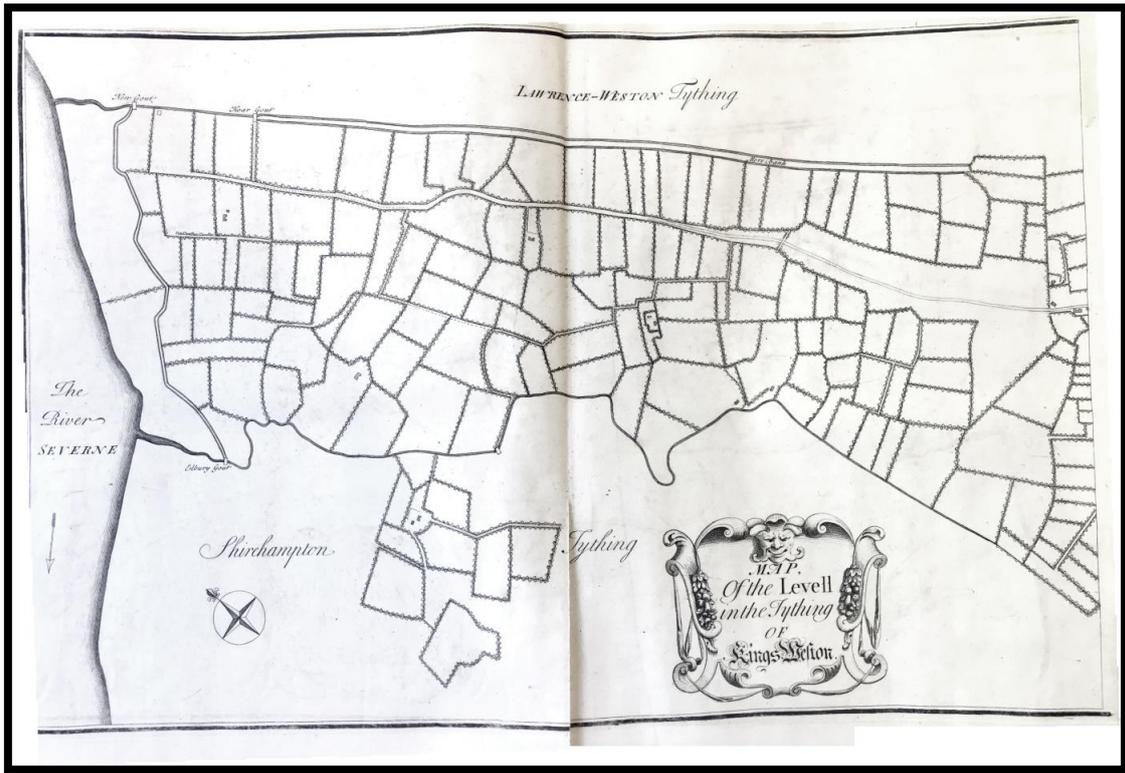
Boyne, landed at Shirehampton (as shown in a tableau inset into the chart by Greenville Collins made in about that year) and “lay that night at Kings Weston at the house of Sr Robert Southwell”. The now demolished Banqueting House (1707) beside the later mansion was modelled on a similar building on the estate of the Duke of Ormond, Edward Southwell I’s patron, at Richmond in Surrey.



*Image 5: Halett's plan of the manor of King's Weston (1720);
Bristol Archives 24387*

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onedrive.live.com/?authkey=%21AMuSDv5mY3zrm48&cid=A3713A6E4D68F225&id=A3713A6E4D68F225%213102&parId=A3713A6E4D68F225%213063&o=OneUp



*Image 6: Halett's plan of the Level at King's Weston (about 1720);
Bristol Archives 41965/1
(King's Weston Action Group)*

The individual farms in Isaac Taylor's estate survey (1771-2)

Ardglass Farm NGR ST 529792

This name honours the Irish earldom of Edward Southwell I's wife's father, and therefore commemorates a family event of 1703, during the earliest phase of agricultural improvement, but after the death of Sir Robert in 1702. The title is taken from the fishing village of Ardglass in County Down (Irish *Aird Ghlais* 'green point or promontory'). The farm-name is not known from any other source. Already by 1830 it was known as *Cowleys-Farm*, and later most often as *Cowley Farm*, for uncertain reasons, but probably from a surname known locally and likely to be that of a tenant farmer, just as ***Rockingham Farm*** (see below) was sometimes known as *Mitchell's Farm*. By 1939, the farm had been acquired by a subsidiary of the National Smelting Company, Avonmouth Farms, who planned to convert the farm buildings into cottages. They were no longer there on maps of 1971–2. The site is under Access 18, the recent commercial development off King's Weston Lane.



Image 7: The site of Ardglass/Cowley Farm today



***Campbell Farm
NGR ST 538782***

Image 8: Campbell Farm. A close-up estate agent's photo of the house can be seen at images.zoopla.co.uk/f4cd4bef8deebc28ac232ec9b2b7d78f00ca7b2d645430.jpg

This name commemorates the family of Edward Southwell III's wife. It was later often known as *Campbell's Farm* as if someone called *Campbell* had been the actual tenant farmer, and sometimes as *Cambell Farm*. The farmhouse is still there, north-west of the junction of King's Weston Lane and Long Cross, and it has given its name in its original form to Campbell Farm Drive whose houses were built in its yards and home ground. Along with the name evidence, the handsome late-Georgian façade suggests the farm in its present form dates from after 1765. But there is an unnamed farm at this position already on the 1720 Halett estate plan (Image 6).



*Image 9: Sophia Campbell, Mrs Southwell, later Baroness de Clifford,
by Joshua Reynolds (1768)*

*Downloaded from
www.clanmacfarlanegenealogy.info/*

Clack Mill Farm NGR ST 553769

This farm, later called simply *Clack Farm*, was close to a water-mill of this name on the river Trym. Its farmhouse was at the present junction of Coombe Dale and Sunny Hill, Sea Mills. A clack-mill was a windmill-like device producing a loud clicking noise for scaring birds. The word must have also meant a mill which made a sound like this, maybe in reference to the damsel-rod or clapper banging on the hopper to help feed grain onto the millstones. It may have been a variant of **clap-mill* in a similar sense, found in some place-names. The buildings were demolished in 1937 to make way for the expanding suburban estate of Sea Mills.



Image 10: Clack Farm in the 1920s; image from Bristol Archives as used in www.bristol.gov.uk/sites/default/files/assets/documents/sea-mills-character-appraisal.pdf (link now broken)



Image 11: Clack Farm in its derelict state shortly before demolition, as seen at farm3.staticflickr.com/2285/2046093813_9644a09d67.jpg

Cromwell Farm (see also Kingroad Farm)

NGR ST approx. 525792

This takes its name from the surname of Edward Southwell I's wife, and therefore may date from the early 1700s. Its buildings were situated north of the riverward end of Shirehampton Rhine, one of the main natural marshland drainage channels, and its site was absorbed into the factory estate of the National Smelting Company, east of St Andrew's Road, after the First World War. The site is more or less due east of St Andrew's station, and bisected by the drainage channel replacing the old rhine in the Smelters' estate which was redeveloped in 2012–13. No close-up picture of the old farm is known. In its later days it was known as *Kingroad Farm*, after the anchorage in the Severn at the mouth of the Avon, which was originally close to this point before the course of the Avon moved southward to its present position in the 1870s. It was also known as ***Hort's***, from a surname found in Henbury parish as early as the sixteenth century. But Cromwell/Kingroad Farm was not the same as the ***Kingroad Farm*** which existed at the time of Taylor's 1771–2 survey; that was by the bank of the Severn further to the south. The separate ***Mere Bank*** or ***Merebank Farm*** was established on land of Cromwell Farm before around 1900, close to field 226 on Taylor's survey, south-west of the sluice called Hoar Gout at the end of Mere Bank Rhine, which takes its name from a conspicuous old bank (often interpreted as a Roman road) marking the boundary between the ancient tithings of King's Weston (in Lower Berkeley hundred) and Lawrence Weston (in Lower Henbury hundred). The buildings of Mere Bank farm, confusingly, were next to fields called *Madam Closes*, and included a building called in 1772 *Madam House*, presumably an old farmhouse which later resumed its old function: for why that is confusing, see ***Watson Farm***. Mere Bank Farm has disappeared in its turn.



*Image 12: Lady Elizabeth
Cromwell, Lady Southwell, by
Godfrey Kneller (?1703-9)*

*Downloaded from
www.kwag.org.uk/*

Home Farm ***NGR ST 541778***

Home Farm was a name regularly given to the farm closest to the manor house or main residence of a multiple estate, and it was unsurprisingly therefore also referred to as ***King's Weston Farm*** in some 19th-century documents. It was farmed directly by and for the estate owners rather than being let to tenants. The farmhouse, possibly an early-18th century building, but with some later Gothic(k) features round the back, still exists in King's Weston Lane as Home Farm Family Centre.⁴ The now demolished Penpole Inn was built on a part of its home ground which in the late-18th century glory days of King's Weston had been the site of a menagerie; what animals this contained is not known. The inn has now been replaced by housing. The other farm buildings were opposite, on the north side of the lane. They survived till after World War 2, and their site was redeveloped as Tufton Avenue and Rockingham Gardens. These new street-names follow local tradition by picking up Edward Southwell II's family connections – see above.



Image 13: Home Farm farmhouse in 2013

⁴ Put up for sale in 2018.

Katherine Farm NGR ST 536797



Image 14: Katherine Watson, Mrs Southwell, by Allan Ramsey (1740)

Downloaded from www.kwag.org.uk

This must have been named after one of the several *Catherines* or *Katherines* in the Southwell family, most likely Edward Southwell II's wife (or her mother, or conveniently both). The farm is occasionally referred to in records, in a misleading but not uncommon trend, as *St Katherine's*. The house (though apparently replaced in the 1950s by the most recent owners, Wessex Water) and some buildings are still there, surrounded by the structures, ponds and tanks of the Avonmouth sewage treatment works whose operators had bought the site from Avonmouth Farms, who themselves had acquired it in 1939. These can be seen from what is left of Lawrence Weston Road (the cycle path). Archaeological finds near the site suggest that a farm may have existed here in medieval times, but under what name is not known. The older house may possibly have had some pre-

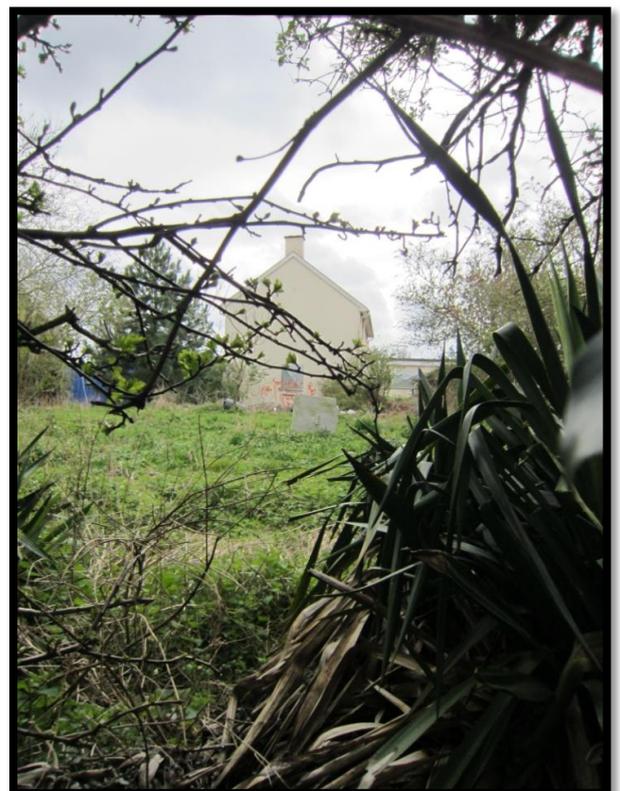
18th-century internal features. Another small farmstead, whose buildings were still in existence in 1946, could once be found to the south-west of its site, nearer to King's Weston Lane, and the access road to the recycling centre ploughs straight across its site. It is not named on any map so far discovered. (Perhaps these were just distant outbuildings of Katherine's Farm.) See also *Poplar Farm*.



Image 15: believed to be the historic Katherine Farm farmhouse in the 1940s or 1950s (published Wessex Water 2006; copyright unknown)



Image 16: Shed at Katherine Farm in 2011 (above); Image 17: The post-World War II former farmhouse in 2013 (right)



Kingroad Farm (see also Cromwell Farm)

NGR ST 513798

This farm took its name from Kingroad, the roadstead or anchorage in the Severn at the old mouth of the Avon, close to which the farm buildings stood. It was later sometimes known as *Battery Farm*, from a gun emplacement set up nearby during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars (1792–1815), and the older name was transferred to **Cromwell Farm**. The original farmland was absorbed into the lands needed for the Royal Edward Dock and its extensions, but its buildings existed until sometime around the Second World War. After about 1950 most of the site was under a large coalyard served by the railway. The buildings were near Elbury Gout, the sluice at the mouth of Shirehampton Rhine. That opens the possibility that the farm site is ancient and was originally called *Elbury*. This name was recorded as *Elleberge* as early as 1299, and right by the farm site was a field called *Home Barrow*, which would tie in with an original name from Old English **ellen-beorg* ‘elder-tree mound or barrow’.



Image 18: Battery (previously Kingroad) Farm and (site of) Mere Bank Farm from the air in 1921; copyright Historic England, downloaded from www.britainfromabove.org.uk/download/EPW005481, used under the terms and conditions for private, free-access, no-charge, no-advertising web-sites

Lawrence Weston Farm NGR ST 547787

This was in medieval times the chief or only farm of Lawrence Weston. Its site can be traced to the plot directly north-east of the junction of Long Cross and Lawrence Weston Road, where the youth centre was till recently. Lawrence Weston was a tithing or division of Henbury parish which owed its name to its association with St Lawrence's leper hospital near Lawford's Gate in Bristol. Nothing of the farm is visible now – it was demolished about 1953 – and no close-up images of the farm are known.



Image 19: the position of Lawrence Weston farm, Ordnance Survey 1:63600 map of 1830, derived from *A Vision of Britain*, [www.visionofbritain.org.uk/maps/sheet/first edition/sheet35](http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/maps/sheet/first%20edition/sheet35)

Rockingham Farm NGR ST 527808

This was named from the noble title of the family of Edward Southwell II's wife Catherine. It was sometimes mapped as *Mitchell's Farm* (e.g. on OS, 1888–9), after one of its 18th-century tenant farmer families. It was centred on a stone house which has been judged to be of late-17th or 18th century date, which was marked on an 18th-century estate plan BRO 93/3c and which was therefore older than its 1772 name. Its buildings were still there in 1975–92 and identifiable still in about 1999, just east of the railway bridge in Smoke Lane. Its site is now under the car park of Honda between the drainage ditch Salt Rhine and the road Poplar Way West. The name survived in general use long enough to be kept for a nearby works and even for the new trading estate which was being developed from 2013 onwards. A conspicuous sign outside Honda is just south of its site.

It was suggested in 2000 by Martin Locock and Martin Lawler that this farm-site replaced an earlier medieval one a little way further inland, the site marked as *Cold Arbour* (with the adjacent *Old House Ground*) on Taylor's 1772 map, which may have been its name. This site has revealed a large spread of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century pottery. Another inhabited site south-west of Rockingham farm buildings is shown as *Burnt House* on a deed of 1744 in Bristol Record Office, BRO 93/3c, but nothing more is known about this.



Image 20: Rockingham Farm was north-west of (behind) the Honda building

***Sea Mill Farm (in 1772 part of it was sublet as Sea Mill Dock Farm)
NGR ST 551764***

This was later known as *Sea Mills* Farm, like the estate which took over its name when the farm was sold off for housing in 1921. The older singular form commemorates a mill known as *Semmille* in 1411. This seems to have contained a Middle English word *sem* or *seme*, meaning 'a single packhorse load', for obscure reasons. The farmhouse, with its datestone of 1700, mapped on the estate plan of 1720, survives surrounded by 1920s housing in Bowerleaze, Sea Mills.



Image 21: Sea Mills farmhouse in 2013

Watson Farm **NGR ST approx. 534799**

The name comes from the surname of Edward Southwell II's wife. It had a late 18th-century farmhouse, with some possible earlier features, out in the marsh beyond the far end of Lawrence Weston Road. The name is not known from any other source. In its later existence (but at least as early as 1830) it was known as **Madam Farm**, which preserves an earlier name for lands in the vicinity (Great and Little *Madam*) on record as early as 1492. Some land on the other side of Shirehampton Rhine in **Cromwell Farm** bore the same name, suggesting that an older farm had been reorganized into two. The older (and newer) name probably comes from Old English *mæd-hamm* 'mead ham', i.e. 'riverside land used as meadow'. Madam Farm also seems to have been known in its latter days as **Champ(e)ney**, from a surname *Champneys* recorded in Henbury parish as early as the 17th century, and perhaps that of a tenant farmer. The site is now covered by a car park of commercial premises in the Cabot Park development, south of Poplar Way West, by the Merebank Road roundabout. The disused reservoirs in Merebank Road are just south-west of it. The buildings were demolished in May 1998. No image of the farm is known.

Other King's Weston farms first recorded after 1772

In Avonmouth:

King's Weston also owned the land on which **Poplar Farm NGR ST 538795**, south-east of **Katherine Farm** and on part of its former lands, was established at some time after 1772. The house was on plot 275 of Taylor's map (335 of the tithe award map; 1625 of the 1900 OS map). It appears on OS maps by 1881, but not named. It was sold off with other farms in 1936 and finally disappeared quite recently after commercial development on its former fields. Its site is immediately north-west of the subway carrying the former Lawrence Weston Road under the M49, built in 1996.



Image 22: The site of Poplar Farm in 2013, with a footbridge over the M49 in the background

Merebank Farm NGR ST 522801 was created around 1900 on the lands of ***Cromwell Farm*** (which was later called *Kingroad Farm*). Its site was by the eastern bank of the lake marking the western edge of the grounds of the former Constellation (now Accolade) wine warehouse, just east of the Severnside Trading Estate. It took its name from the ancient straight bank across the marshland marking the boundary of Lower Berkeley hundred and Henbury hundred. The farm was demolished between 1946 and 1955 for commercial development and its lands have been transformed out of all recognition.



Image 23: the approximate site of Merebank Farm from King's Weston Lane, with Accolade Wines on right

In Shirehampton:

King's Weston also owned a considerable amount of land in Shirehampton village, though it has not been possible for sure to identify particular farms from the 1772 Taylor estate map.

The presence of the field-name *Home Ground* (152 on Taylor's map; 31 on the tithe award map) suggests that the adjacent property later known as ***The Wylands NGR ST 529771*** (151 on Taylor's map; 34 on the tithe award map) was the farmhouse of one such farm before its rebuilding by the estate architect Frederick Bligh Bond in 1907. Both plots 151 and 152 were occupied by a Mr Hunt in 1772. The site is labelled "mansion house" on the copy of the 1841 map of Shirehampton tithing done by Mr H. A. Lane in 1979. It appears that this, and not the Elizabethan House in the High Street, must have been the main farmhouse of Shirehampton at that period.

Down the hill from this position, and called *Bushes* (from a surname) in 1797, was ***T Farm NGR ST 521785*** (later in Avonmouth parish, at the end of First Way). It was possibly named from a surveyor's perspective after a T-shaped wood or orchard by the farmhouse, and not mapped before about 1877. This was certainly a King's Weston farm, as were:

Shirehampton Farm NGR ST 526778 (house east of Atlantic Road close to the M5 Avon Bridge)

Avonmouth Farm NGR approx. ST 518783 (house between Evelyn Lane and Nova Way, north of the original Avonmouth village; created about 1865)

The buildings of Avonmouth Farm survived till at least 1954, those of T Farm till 1962, and those of Shirehampton Farm till the late 1960s.

All these farms were sold off in 1936 after the death of "Squire" Philip Napier Miles of King's Weston the previous year.

Barrow Hill Farm NGR ST 769525

The farmhouse of this farm still stands in Groveleaze, Shirehampton. It has been dated on stylistic grounds to about 1840, and was probably designed by the King's Weston estate architect of the time, Thomas Rumley. It must take its name from the "barrow" or rounded hill on the edge of the former

marshland which has been quarried away and hollowed out, and on the remains of which sits Barrow Hill Crescent. Or there may once have been a barrow (burial mound) on this hill.



Image 24: Barrow Hill Farmhouse in its present state (2012)

Woodwell Farm NGR ST 536766 was a short-lived farm of the late 1930s–40s established on former King’s Weston estate land close to the Woodwell Road railway bridge in Shirehampton. Its farmhouse was on the site now partly occupied by the Cotswold Community Centre. This building was a hut bought from the former World War I Shirehampton Remount Depot after it had been used for temporary housing in the 1920s, and it formed the original Community Centre when the farm went out of business, and its land was taken over for housing, this time permanent. This small enterprise may also have been the one called *Shire Farm* in 1943, but that is uncertain.



*Image 25: The former Woodwell Farm farmhouse
in its Community Centre days
(copyright unknown; downloaded from Shire on the Web web-site,
www.shire.org.uk/shire.php?edition=422)*

In Lawrence Weston:

By the time the remaining farms of the King's Weston estate were sold off in 1936, it also included two more farms in Lawrence Weston. One was the 79-acre ***Aust Farm NGR ST 547787***. The farmhouse, of seventeenth-century appearance (Image 26), is stranded incongruously among modern houses in Knovill Close, along with cottages nearby in Lawrence Weston Road which belonged to one or other of the farms in Lawrence Weston (Image 27). Aust Farm may originally have been part of Lawrence Weston Farm. It seems to take its name from the old village close to the original Severn Bridge, which like Lawrence Weston was formerly in the enormous parish of Henbury, but it is assigned to a "Mrs Aust" on the Taylor map of 1772, and on this map it stands next to *Aust Paddock*, so the name is after all from a local surname deriving from the village-name.

The other was the smaller, 20-acre, ***Spring Farm NGR ST 544788***, which was on the edge of the marsh north-west of the present St Bede's Roman Catholic School, marked but not named on large-scale OS maps from 1881, named on maps in 1955 and demolished between then and 1974. Its site is under the school tennis courts and playing fields – as is the site of its predecessor, a Romano-British farmstead.



Image 26: Aust Farm in 2013



Image 27: Cottages in Lawrence Weston Road formerly belonging to Aust or Lawrence Weston Farm, photographed in 2013

The end of farming

Philip Napier Miles died without children in 1935. The bulk of his vast farming complex was sold off on 19 March 1936 and dispersed, and the contents of the house were auctioned off by John E. Pritchard and Co. in September 1937. The National – later Imperial – Smelting Company, with

its great chemical works on land bought from the King's Weston estate after the Great War, had taken an unlikely interest in farming, buying up four of the farms – Rockingham, Katherine, Cowley (Ardglass) and Merebank (Madam) Farms – but this was a strategic move with a view to forestalling compensation claims which might be lodged by nearby farmers worried about chemical pollution of their pastures. In the short term the Smelter continued an operation called Avonmouth Farms Ltd. The company was incorporated in 1933 (whether Miles himself was involved is uncertain), and has since been dissolved, at an unknown date. This takes us beyond the time of the interest of the King's Weston Estate, though, and our exploration stops here.



Image 28: King's Weston House in 2016

Sources

The generous help of David Martyn in locating and supplying original material and illustrations, in improving and correcting the text, and in generally encouraging the work is gratefully acknowledged. Since this is not an academic article, the text is not equipped with footnote references, but all statements can be verified in the material cited below. Images are the author's except where stated.

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Image 29: Sir Robert Southwell, who purchased King's Weston in 1679 and began its modern development (artist reputedly Sir Godfrey Kneller)

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