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**Clifton in 1746**

by J. Latimer  
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## CLIFTON IN 1746.

By JOHN LATIMER.

OUR fellow-member, Mr. Pritchard, has recently come into possession of an interesting Plan of the parish of Clifton, showing the state of all the land within the parochial boundaries in the year 1746, and, with the consent of the Committee of the Clifton Antiquarian Club, has kindly permitted the Editor to reproduce it in our *Transactions* in a reduced form. From the title of the Plan, appended by its author—namely, “A Survey of the Manor of Clifton in the County of Gloucester; part of the estates belonging to the Merchants’ Hall, Bristol,”—it may be surmised that the surveyor was employed by the Merchant Venturers’ Society; whilst the signature of “G. Goldney” inscribed in one corner seems to show that the copy before us had been made at the instance of a member of the family that built and then inhabited the fine mansion still known as Goldney House. It is to be regretted that the book which must have accompanied the Plan, giving the area and possibly the names of the various fields, as well as the names of their owners, is no longer forthcoming. The property of the Merchants’ Society is, however, indicated by a different colouring.

As regards a large portion of the parish of Clifton, there are few districts in England that have undergone a more remarkable transformation during the last hundred and fifty years. When Sir Robert Atkyns compiled his account of the parish in 1710 he was informed by the local authorities that the population was estimated at 450, and this survey, made thirty-six years later, proves that but little change had taken place in the interval. The total area being set down at 984 acres, the inhabitants—men, women and children—represented little more than one human being to every two

acres. In 1702, at a sitting of a now forgotten tribunal, the Court Leet of the Hundred of Barton Regis, four persons styled "gentlemen"—Arthur Hart, John Hodges, John Sandford and Thomas Goldney,—residing in Clifton, and apparently comprising the whole of the upper-class inhabitants of the parish, were fined half-a-crown each for non-attendance. This confirms a statement made by the Rev. William Goldwin, Head-master of Bristol Grammar School, and the poetical delineator of the city in 1712, to the effect that in his time there was just sufficient society to establish a whist table.

By 1746 the Plan shows that in the neighbourhood of the church, and scattered along the road as far as near the site of what is now Manilla Hall, about a dozen houses were then in existence;<sup>1</sup> but local builders, then as now, sometimes offered a supply in excess of the demand, for amongst Mr. Seyer's MSS. in the Reference Library is a note stating that in 1750, out of about twenty houses on Clifton Hill, eleven were offered to be let or sold at one time. As to the rest of the parish, the plan shows that a few cottages stood in the locality now known as Black Boy Hill; a small nursery garden is marked upon or near the site of King's Parade; and a solitary dwelling, known by the name of the "White Ladies public house," famous as the scene of a shocking murder in 1749, stood at the east end of what is now Oakfield Road, and appears to complete the list. All the rest of upper Clifton is divided into fields, and from the letter placed on each plot, it would seem that the land was divided into about a dozen farms, some of only a few acres, whilst two or three extended over several fields, those marked with the letter U numbering nearly forty and being widely separated. Some of the fragmentary patches marked Z were probably limekilns, then very numerous. Some of the enclosed fields

<sup>1</sup> It will be observed that the road in this locality is shown on the plan to be of great width. In a tracing in the possession of Mr. Alderman Fox, made about 1775, this wide space is marked "Clifton Green," and a small enclosure on the west side is inscribed "The Pound."

are known to have been in as unimproved a condition as was the open down to the west of them; furze was abundant, and wild animals were so plentiful, that the parish vestry, doubtless instigated by the farmers, was accustomed to lay out money for their extermination. Between 1730 and 1735, both years included, rewards were paid for the summary destruction of ten foxes, a polecat, a kite, and no less than 109 hedgehogs, which were universally believed to drain the cows of their milk.

A district so completely rural was not in need of many roads. Describing upper Clifton in modern terms, the main thoroughfare was that which, starting from the west end of Park Row, ran down Berkeley Place to Jacobs Wells, ascended the hill to Clifton Church, and went on by Rodney Place and the Promenade to Alderman Proctor's fountain. It then divided, one branch skirting the down and proceeding to Redland, much as at present, whilst the other crossed the down in the direction of Stoke Bishop, its course being shown on the Plan by two rows of trees, a few of which still remain. Another main road, known for generations as Gallow's Acre Lane, is now represented by Pembroke Road. As not a single private house then existed there—indeed there was only one within the memory of some of us—the lane must have been used mainly for occupation purposes, and for conveying large quantities of lime from the kilns to the shipping, for exportation to the West Indies. The two turnpike roads from Stoke Bishop and Westbury had been laid out about twenty years before this plan was executed, and are each marked upon it by two rows of trees across Durdham Down. But throughout the twenty years the turnpike gates were repeatedly burned down by the rural population—instigated not merely by the farmers but by some landowners—and the trustees, destitute of funds, were unable to keep them in repair. Uniting at the top of Black Boy Hill, the turnpike formed the boundary of the parish as far as the present Clifton Down railway station, where the road turned off eastward in the direction of Cotham, St. Michael's Hill, and

Steep Street. The extension to Park Street was not laid out until many years later.

Turning from Clifton on the hill to the more populous district in the valley of the Avon, the fashionable patronage then enjoyed by the Hot Well is denoted by the extent of the pleasure grounds and gardens in the neighbourhood of Dowry Square. That square had been begun about 1727, but was still incomplete. Dowry Chapel was being built, and the Vauxhall Gardens adjoining—an imitation of the famous lounge in London—were being laid out when the survey before us was made. Another interesting feature is the spot marked as “The Playhouse,” which was opened in 1729. In 1746, the very date of the Plan, the premises were granted on lease by the Merchants’ Company to their builder, John Hippisley. The theatre is delineated as a long but very narrow edifice, which explains a fact noted by a contemporary, namely, that an actor who left the stage on one side and re-entered on the other had to leave the house and walk round the building. At the Hot Well itself, the Plan shows the pump room, a lodging house, and what was probably a room for billiards and other amusements, all of which are known to have existed. The road from Bristol ended at the Well, and there is no vestige of a path along the bank of the Avon lower down. The New Hot Well, near the mouth of Oakham Shoal, or Slade, as the Ravine was then called, will also be observed. A pump room was built there about 1730. This place was hardly approachable at all by the river side, but was reached by a horse track from Durdham Down, carried along the southern brow of the Ravine to the bottom of the rocks. The upper portion of this rapidly descending path is still to be seen. It was perfect until the construction of the Avonmouth railway. The popularity of mineral waters early in the eighteenth century can have no more striking illustration than the fact that this almost inaccessible spring, a mile from any habitation, was let for several years at upwards of £100 per annum. The lessees became insolvent, however, in the year

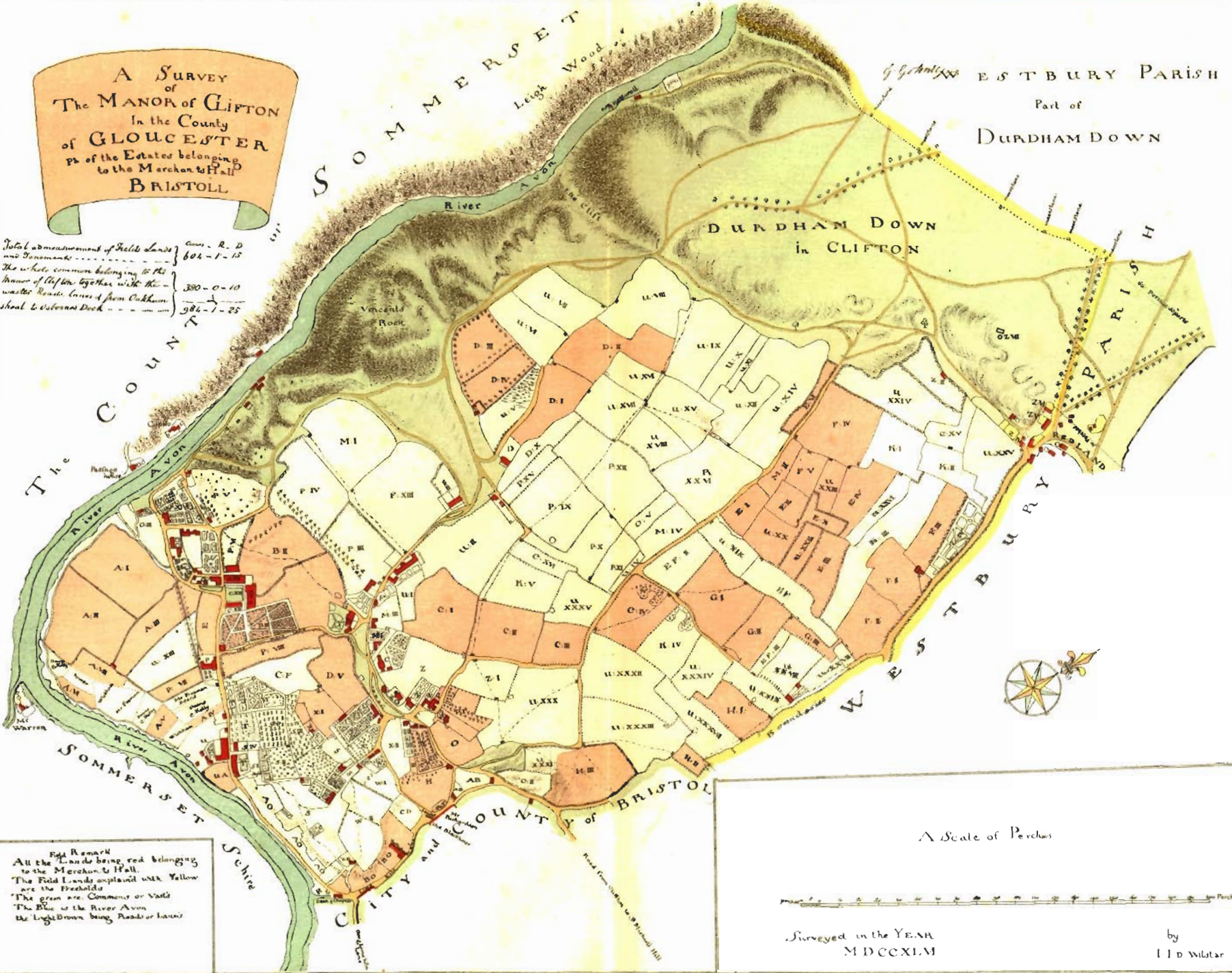
this Plan was made; and though their successors, paying one-fifth of the former rent, set up a lodging house, and gained a temporary success from John Wesley's recovery from illness there in 1754, the spa could not maintain a competition against its ancient and more popular rival, and the place was abandoned to quarrymen before the end of the century.

It will be observed that nearly opposite to the old Hot Well is a building marked "The Cold Bath," doubtless supplied from the spring which falls into the Avon at that place. This is the only record of such an establishment. About forty years later a small cotton factory was erected there, much to the annoyance of the nobility and gentry visiting the pump room: the workpeople being accustomed to cross the river in boats and raise occasional uproars. A little nearer to Rownham Ferry is a larger site, marked "Cupilo." This is believed to have been the remains of a lead smelting works, erected by Viscount Grandison in the reign of Charles II., or of another factory of the same kind started soon after by one John Hodges. Lord Grandison, in an appeal to the Privy Council, alleged that he had laid out £10,000 under a royal patent, and Hodges was suppressed; but the earlier adventure proved also unsuccessful.

A brief final reference may be made to the area of the parish. The surveyor computes it at 984 acres; but in the census returns for 1831, the last prior to the inclusion of Clifton in the borough of Bristol, the area is given at 910 acres. The discrepancy may be partially due to the fact that by an Act passed in 1776 that portion of the parish lying between Hotwell Road and the Avon, from "a little brook anciently called Woodwell Lake" down to Rownham Ferry, was separated from Gloucestershire and incorporated with the City of Bristol, except as regarded local taxes and the Parliamentary franchise of freeholders. But the plan-maker estimates "the whole common belonging to the manor," with the wastes, roads and lanes, to be 370 acres in extent; whereas the area of Clifton Down conveyed under

A SURVEY  
of  
The MANOR of CLIFTON  
In the County  
of GLOUCESTER  
Part of the Estates belonging  
to the Merchant Hall  
BRISTOLL

Total admeasurement of Meads Lands } ans. R. D  
and Tenements } 804-1-15  
The whole common belonging to the  
Manor of Clifton together with the  
waste Roads, Lanes & from Colham  
shoal & external Dock } 380-0-10  
} 1184-1-25



Right Remark  
All the Lands being red belonging  
to the Merchant Hall  
The Field Lands enclosed with Yellow  
are the Freehold  
The green are Commons or Waste  
The Blue is the River Avon  
The Light Down being Roads or Lanes

A Scale of Perches

Surveyed in the YEAR  
M DCCXLVI

by  
I D Wilton

REDUCED FACSIMILE OF PLAN OF CLIFTON, 1746.

SEARNS & CLIFTON BRIDGE ST BRISTOL

the Act for vesting the downs in the Corporation was only 230 acres; and after allowing for the great devastation committed by quarrymen, and perhaps some filching from the common on the part of private landowners, it is difficult to account for so great a disparity, except by an exaggeration in the earlier measurement.

Since these notes were written, I have obtained some information respecting Goldney House, which, if not interesting, is at least curious. It is well known that Mr. Thomas Goldney, a relative of the owner of this Plan, and a leading member of the Society of Friends, expended very large sums for over twenty years in collecting shells, Bristol diamonds, and other crystallised stones for the ornamentation of a grotto in the grounds of his mansion.<sup>1</sup> It now appears that his shrubberies were also decorated with paintings similar to the scenes of a theatre, apparently intended rather for the beguilement of visitors than to add enchantment to the view. In the day-book of Michael Edkins, painter, grandfather of the late Mr. William Edkins, are the following items charged to Gabriel Goldney, Esq., for work done in 1777, at Goldney House:—

To cleaning, repairing, and varnishing a large scene in the garden	£	s.	d.
... ..	3	3	0
To colouring, stopping, varnishing and entirely new painting a large scene which terminates a walk in your garden	...	...	5 15 6

The following additional items are dated 1779:—

To cleaning, repairing and varnishing all the

<sup>1</sup> The Right Hon. Lewis Fry, the present owner of Goldney House, has been kind enough to inform me, from notes in his possession, that the grotto and its approaches were commenced in 1737, but not completed until twenty-seven years later. The "great terrace" was constructed in 1753-4, and the tower (still standing) "for my steam engine" in 1764. The engine, which must have been a remarkable novelty at that date, was doubtless used to raise water for the fountains in the grotto and grounds, described by Mrs. Delaney. In explanation of the lengthened period of construction, Mr. Fry writes: "Probably the Spanish war, and perhaps the attractions of privateering, engaged friend Goldney's attention and delayed the work."



architect ( <i>sic</i> ) in a large picture in your garden, and repainting the view under the arch ... ..	£	s.	d.
	3	13	6
To cleaning the painting at the end of the greenhouse . . . and painting the grand walk in the picture in the garden, varnishing the marble step, &c. ... ..	1	1	0

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After the above paper had been sent to the printers, I discovered at Merchants' Hall, through the courtesy of Mr. Pope, the Treasurer of the Merchant Venturers' Society, the original plan from which Mr. Goldney obtained a tracing, together with the book containing the names of the various owners and of their respective properties. I have also been kindly permitted to make use of this information, which, it need hardly be stated, is of a very interesting character. The details, however, are too elaborate to be given at length, owing to the minuteness of nearly all the fields, few of which exceeded four or five acres in area; but the following summary will enable the reader to identify the properties as marked on the Plan.

The area belonging to the Merchants' Society, including "the whole common belonging to the manor, together with the wastes, roads and lanes from Oakham Shoal to Osburn's Lock," was nearly 565 acres. The following were the occupiers of the land under cultivation:—

	A.	R.	P.
A 1 to A VII.—William Jeffreys, Esq. (part of this holding was in "Rownham common mead")	31	0	16
B 1 to B III.—Late James Hollidge, Esq. (two houses, two fields and "a great garden now held by Henry Combe, Esq.")	18	3	33
C 1 to C IV.—Mr. Willoughby (four fields)	23	1	3
D to D V.—Mr. Deverell (a house, garden, orchard and five closes)	27	1	15

E to E v.—Samuel Gardner (a withy bed, four closes and “Gallows Acre”) ... ..	A.	R.	P.
	16	0	24
F to F v.—Mrs. Floyd (a house and five closes)... ..	23	2	37
O.—Mrs. Phippen (two houses, garden, orchard and close) ... ..	3	0	1
P and P i.—Mr. Freeman (a house, garden, orchard and close) ... ..	3	0	31
G to G III.—Mrs. Pidding, late Hort (three fields)	13	1	30
H to H III.—Mr. Paul Fisher, late Gainer (a house, garden and three closes) ... ..	17	0	30
AB.—Capt. Smith (a public house, &c.) ... ..	0	3	30
BO.—Several holdings along Limekiln lane (including the Playhouse) ... ..	4	1	20
K.—The Church House, with a court adjoining the Church ... ..	0	0	10
R.—Capt. Osburn, a tenement, garden and dock-yard ... ..	0	1	30
RS.—Stephen Richardson, tenement and garden	0	1	2
A.—The Hotwell House, garden, court, and Waleks ( <i>sic</i> ) ... ..	0	2	8
B IV.—The New Hotwell House with a splot of ground ... ..	0	2	10

We now come to the other freeholders, two of whom were owners of nearly half the cultivated land in the parish.

	A.	R.	P.
U to U xxxvii., also V IIII. and AO.—Mr. F. Freeman's freehold (8½ acres were in Rownham common mead) ... ..	189	1	17
P III to P xv.—The Rev. Mr. Power (the first plot contained a mansion house, garden, orchards, &c.) ... ..	78	0	1
S to S vi.—Robert Smith, Esq.'s freehold (including the “Great Messuage” with gardens, orchards, &c. Nearly all this estate was garden or orchard ground) ... ..	20	0	30
T.—Mr. Frey's freehold (tenements and gardens)	3	3	12

	A.	R.	P.
CF.—Mrs. Bishop's freehold (two houses, garden and close) ... ..	4	2	16
X to X II.—Mr. Goldney's freehold (mansion house, gardens, orchard, two paddocks, with a house in the tenure of Parson Taylor) ... ..	8	3	24
W to W II.—Mrs. Hamilton & Co., the Black Horse Inn, orchards, &c. ... ..	8	0	32
CD.—The City of Bristol, a public house, malt-house, &c., by Jacob's Well ... ..	1	0	30
Y.—Mr. Paul Fisher's freehold (a large messuage, gardens, &c.) ... ..	1	0	30
Z to Z VIII., also ZO and ZB.—Mr. Hodges' freehold (marked in margin "bought by Mr. Worrall"; but one plot has a note "bought by Mr. Freeman"). This estate appears to consist of the manor of Clifton formerly belonging to the Dean and Canons of Westbury. Z is "the mansion house"; ZO "the church and churchyard of Clifton"; ZB "one lodging house and garden." There are two public houses and two limekilns ... ..	17	2	12
C.—Mr. Champion's freehold (a mansion house and gardens) ... ..	1	2	20
M to M IV.—Mrs. Parson's freehold (a mansion house, closes, &c.) ... ..	15	3	17
F.—Mr. Peal's freehold (house and garden) ... ..	0	0	36
O I.—Wm. Cann, Esq.'s freehold (a mansion house and gardens) .. ..	0	2	16
DX.—Mr. Deverell's freehold (the Long Paddock) ... ..	3	1	24
K II to K IV.—Mr. Thornhill's freehold (the Long Ground, &c.) ... ..	17	0	38
EF.—Mr. Constant's freehold (the Long Ground, &c.) ... ..	9	3	18
EX.—Mr. S. Gardner's freehold (a paddock) ... ..	1	3	20
O II.—Eliz. Jones of Harfield (a paddock) .. ..	1	3	6
O III and O V.—The Dean and Chapter (Rownham passage and paddocks) ... ..	4	2	32

	A.	R.	P.
R xxvi.—Mr. Ross, apothecary (a pasture) ...	8	3	35
N.—Late Mr. Gouch, the Long Room, gardens and two tenements ... ..	1	0	20
GH [no name].—The middle quarter of Dowry	2	1	15
Q [ditto].—The middle or east quarter, that side where the chapel is built ... ..	0	3	0
C xii [ditto].—Dowry square, with all the build- ings round it ... ..	2	0	22
C xv and xvi.—John Godman's freehold (two pad- docks) ... ..	4	0	30
K i and K v.—Mr. Keen's freehold (two fields) ...	10	0	32
Total fields, lands and tenements ...	60	1	15

The field names have not proved so interesting as was anticipated. With but very few exceptions, the closes were named after their approximate size, as "the two acres," "the four acres," or had no other name than "the home ground," "the upper ground," "the east paddock," &c. Amongst Mr. Smith's garden property S v. is marked "The Vineyard"; E i. and ii., and U xix., xx. and xxii. are called "Lippiatts" with distinctive affixes; D iii. and iv. are styled "Littfields," from which Litfield Place obtained its name; and D i. and ii. are called "Cecill's Littfields," and gave their name to Cecil Road; C i., "Ferne Close," is now Victoria Square; while Hanbury Road South stands on "Road Close" (C iv), and the present Artillery ground on "Dean's Close" (H i.). "Honeyden Hill" (H iii.) was an extensive quarry, now covered by Park Place and Richmond Hill. The present Mansion House and adjoining dwellings stand on "Littlefields" (U vii.); while the villas extending to Proctor's Fountain occupy "Batton's ground" (U viii.), and "the Whiteladies" is marked U xxvii. "Brimley Close" (P xiii.) is now covered with Rodney Place and the buildings behind it; and "Flower Hill" (U xxx.) stood at what is now the junction of Pembroke Road and Queen's Road. These are

nearly all the distinctive names, excepting "Ell," "the Long Leg," and "Parson's Breach." It ought to be added that the road known in modern times as Gallows' Acre Lane is repeatedly called "Gallows' Hill Road" in the Surveyor's book.

There is a valuable paper in volume III. of the *Transactions* of the Society, by Mr. Alfred S. Ellis, on the "Manorial History of Clifton," to which the present writer contributed some supplementary notes in volume XVI. These papers are most helpfully illustrated by the map obtained by Mr. Pritchard.

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