



The Ancient Hamlet of

# PEASDOWN

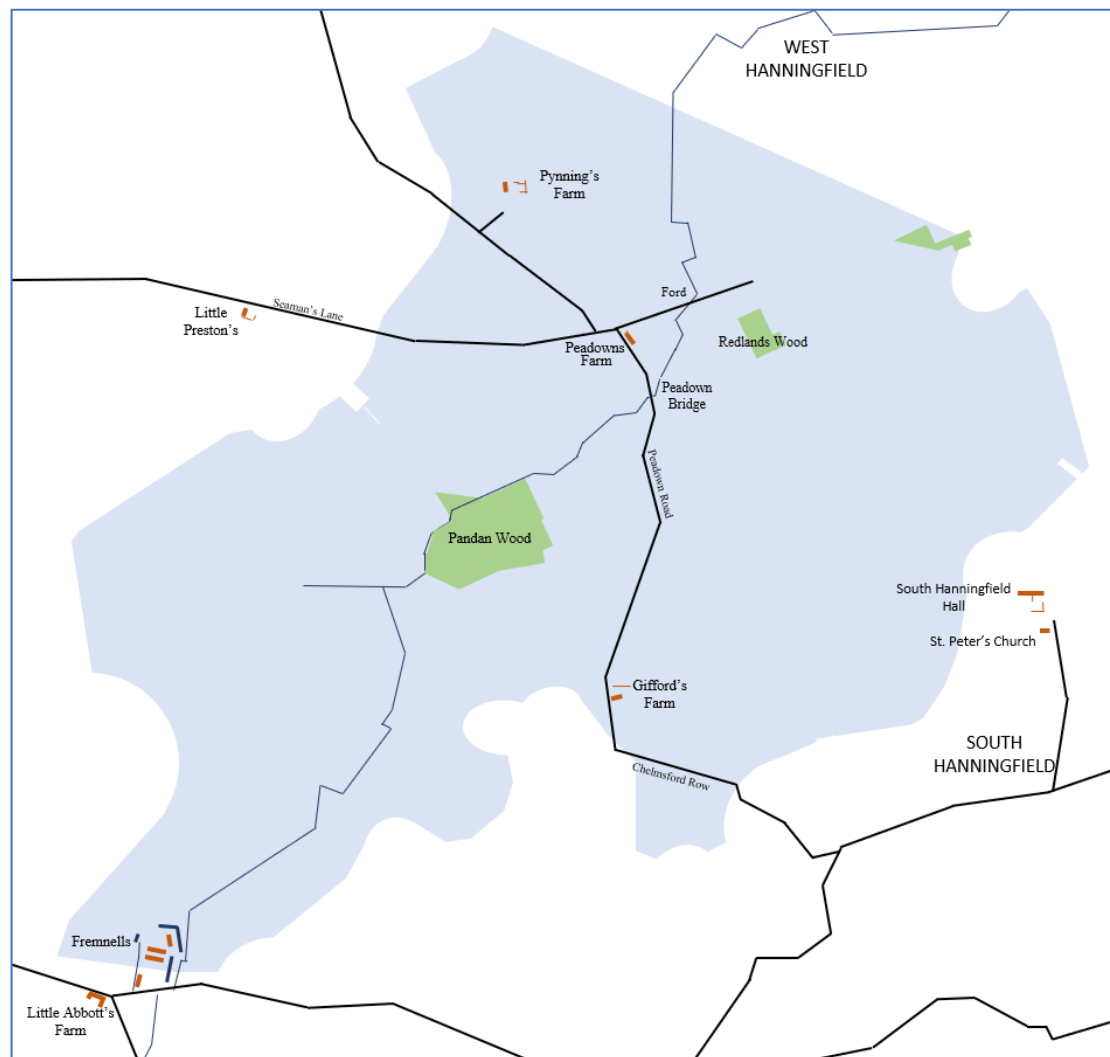
*The farming community that disappeared under Hanningfield Reservoir*



James Nason

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The hamlet of Peasdown, compared to Hanningfield Reservoir.

## HANNINGFIELD RESERVOIR

Hanningfield has the second largest reservoir in Essex (behind Abberton) and the eleventh in the country. It attracts thousands of visitors a year who want to walk around the woodland, do some fishing, go to the Visitors Centre or sit in the cafe and look across the water.

The reservoir lies within the Chelmsford area, but was created, in-part, to provide water for the New Town of Basildon.

The area that was flooded was a hamlet, known as Peasdown, we believe it is named after one of the farms. The name was also recorded as 'Peadown', 'Peadowns' 'Pea Down' and 'Peasedown'.

The reservoir covers around 870 acres and is covered by a Bird Sanctuary Order as it is home to a number of Gadwalls and Teals. A large number of Canada Geese can be seen near the fishing lodge, and often with their chicks.



A consultation regarding the creation of the reservoir was reported on by the *Essex Newsman* on 10<sup>th</sup> March 1950.

Mr Cope Morgan K.C. was acting for the National Farmers' Union in 1950 after it was proposed that 'Hanningfield Valley' would be flooded. He asked Mr Eve, a

witness for the Water Companies, what the farmers were expected to do. He suggested they may want to become bus conductors.

Mr Eve explained that it was entirely up to the farmers to decide, and that it was down to the companies to re-house those that would need to be moved from their cottages.

Mr Morgan then asked if Fremnell's Manor would really be destroyed. He explained that it had been modernised and the original timber farmhouse dated from 1550. Mr Eve replied that he thought that was an engineering matter. Mr Cope retorted: "I should have thought it was a matter of culture and good taste."

Mr Maurice Fitzgerald interjected on behalf of the Water Companies: "of course, nobody wants to flood the land or destroy anything unless it is absolutely necessary."

Work began on the creation of the reservoir in 1951 and took 5 years to complete. All the buildings in the area were demolished, including Fremnell's and eleven cottages. Some of the brick from the manor house were used in the construction of one of the dams.

A camera crew was sent to the area by *Pathé News*. They filmed families leaving the area, as well as cattle being moved. It was also recorded that all the trees in the valley were cut down to stop them from poisoning the water.

Mr Alec Frood and his family were the last to leave the valley. He was filmed

harvesting a wheat crop prior to moving to his new farm in Braxted.

One of the earth-moving machines used in its creation was left in place and covered in concrete.



Construction on the reservoir

The water treatment plant opened in 1956 with the reservoir being officially opened on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> September 1957 by Henry Brooke MP, who was Minister of Housing. The block of flats, that dominate Basildon town centre, are named after him.

*The Sphere*, an illustrated newspaper, published photos on the 19th March 1955 of the valley being flooded. Around 3 million gallons of water flowed in every day eventually leaving the valley submerged under 6 billion gallons.

It was hoped that the reservoir could yield 21.5 million gallons a day during a time of drought.



Water pours in to the valley in 1955 - *The Sphere*

It took 200 days to fill the valley, using water that was pumped in from the Chelmer and Blackwater rivers. The perimeter of the reservoir is 6 miles long and its deepest point is 55 metres below the surface.

The *Pathé News* narrator stated that the water would be needed by the New Town of Basildon as well as Southend and London County Council. This had already been reported in *The Sphere* (illustrated newspaper) on the 18<sup>th</sup> December 1948.

Rumours about a church spire appearing when the water level gets low have been circulating for years. Mick Green, a former resident of Downham, had heard that scuba divers had gone in to the lake to clear the lead from the roof.

When the water levels do drop, part of the foundations of Fremnell's Manor can be seen from Hawkswood Road.

As previously stated, no structures were left in place. There wasn't a church there anyway, as worshippers would have probably attended St. Peter's Church in South Hanningfield.

## DOWNHAM and THE HANNINGFIELDS

The three nearest villages to the reservoir are Downham, West Hanningfield and South Hanningfield, with the area of Sandon Valley that was flooded apparently split between the three parishes.



Downham was not named in the Domesday Book in 1086 but Roman remains were discovered in the village, suggesting that it had been a Saxon settlement. The village is around half a mile away from the reservoir.



Hanningfield was first recorded in the Domesday Book, as Haningefeld and Haneghefelda. Karen Plumridge wrote in *'Study of the Parish Landscape'* in 1997 that the name appeared to date from the Anglo-Saxon era and means 'the open country (feld), of the people (inga), of Hana or Han.'

As well as having two residents hanged for their involvement in the 1381 Peasant's Revolt there were also a number of people accused of witchcraft.

The Witchcraft Act of 1542 made Witchcraft an offence punishable by death. This act was repealed five years later.

A new act was created in 1563 and demanded the death penalty for anyone found guilty for using witchcraft to commit murder.

Thomas Kynge, of South Hanningfield, was accused in 1584 of 'bewitching a person to death' and was hanged for his crime.

During 1590 Alice Bateman of East Hanningfield was accused of being 'a witch, and failing to receive Communion'. Francisca Pashell, of South Hanningfield was also accused. It is not known what the outcome of these accusations were.

Six residents of East Hanningfield were 'accused of Witchcraft' in 1608. All six had their cases dismissed.

The last execution for witchcraft in England was in 1684, when Alice Molland was hanged in Exeter. Scotland executed its last witch 20 years later. Law was passed in 1735 making it illegal for anyone in Great Britain to accuse another of witchcraft.

## FREMNEll'S MANOR

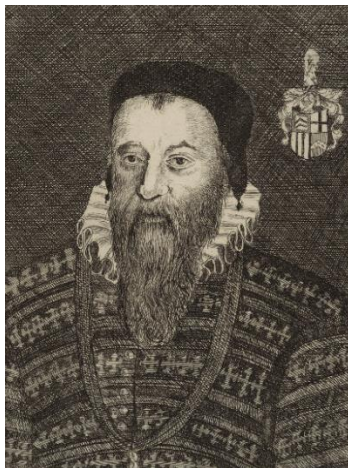


Fremnell's Manor, published in *The Echo*, 15 August 2007

By far the most impressive building to be demolished to make way for the reservoir was the 800-year-old manor of Fremnell's.

The first record of Fremnell's dates from 1376 when it was referred to as 'Hemenales', named after John de Hemenale in 1285.

During the reign of Elizabeth I (1533-1603), the estate, then known as 'Fremingnells', was owned by Sir Henry Tyrrell, also spelt Tirrell.



Sir Henry Tyrrell, 1582

Sir Henry died in 1588. He was buried under a slab in Downham church.

Cartographer John Norden recorded 'Fremnal' on his 1593 map of Essex. Chapman and André's 1777 map of Essex named the manor as 'Frimnells'.



The building dated from around 1550 and is likely to have been built by Sir Henry. It later came in to the possession of Sir Thomas Raymond, who was one of the Justices of the Kings Bench. It is thought that Sir Thomas had the frontage of the manor built and had the walls that enclosed the front courtyard erected.

According to an article published in *The Echo* on the 15<sup>th</sup> August 2007 local folklore suggests that Fremnell's was a meeting place for Guy Fawkes and the other Gunpowder Plot conspirators.

Much of the article was incorrect but they did publish two photos, including one of the interiors of the house.



Thomas Raymond, also recorded as Rayment, was born around 1626, educated at Christ's College, Cambridge and transferred to the Court of King's Bench on 24 April 1680.



Fremnell's Manor, 1948

He was remembered for failing to point out the irrationality of a defendant's confession in a witchcraft trial. The defendant died as a result.

Sir Thomas Raymond died on 14th July 1683.

Fremnell's moved in to the hands of Cornelius Vanden Anker, who paid £3,100 for the estate. Cornelius was married to Sarah Norden, the daughter of

Baptist preacher Robert Norden. Mr Norden was instrumental in the establishment of Baptist churches in Virginia having travelled to the colonies in 1714.

Benjamin Disbrowe took over at the manor, dying there in 1707. After Cornelius, Sarah's second husband, died Sarah married Benjamin Disbrowe.

Benjamin was the seventh son of Major-General John Disbrowe, who had married one of Oliver Cromwell's sisters. Benjamin Disbrowe was appointed as Sheriff of Essex in 1689, a role he held for 8 months.

Sarah died in 1692 and Benjamin married her sister, Mary. His third marriage.

Benjamin had a son, Cromwell Disbrowe, with his first wife, Elizabeth. Cromwell married Cornelia Vanden Anker, the daughter of Cornelius and Sarah.

The manor was inherited by Platt Disbrowe, the son of Cromwell and Cornelia. When he died in 1751 Fremnell's was sold.



Many of the Disbrowe family are buried in the graveyard at St. Margaret's, Downham.

It is rumoured that the notorious Essex highwayman, Dick Turpin (1705-1739), stayed at Fremnell's. Jessie Payne wrote in her *'A Ghost Hunter's Guide to Essex'* that Dick may have ridden his horse up the stairs where he stabled it in one of the attic rooms, which was once a chapel.

The 1851 census recorded Sarah Low as a farmer living at 'Fremnells, Downham'. Sarah was a widow in her 40's, managing 320 acres and employing 9 labourers.

She lived with her three daughters; Susan (17), Alice (6) and Matilda (2).

A report in the *Essex Standard* on 5<sup>th</sup> January 1877 mentioned that Mrs Low died, aged 75 years.

Mr Low had lived in Fremnell's for many years, until his death in 1830. It was then taken over by Edmund Low until his death in 1850.

Living 'near Fremnells' was Joseph Green. Joseph had given his occupation as 'farm labourer'. He was living with his 24-year-old wife, Marianne, as well as their two sons; John (12) and George (1). The census shows they had two labourers lodging with them.

The *White's Directory* of 1863, a 'general survey of the county', listed 'Fremnales' in the Parish of Downham and as 'one of its three manors.' The directory also recorded that it was in the ownership of the Manbey family.

White's also showed Thomas Blyth at Fremnells, listing him as a farmer. He first appears in the manor on the 1861 census.

An advert was placed in the *Chelmsford Chronicle* on 1<sup>st</sup> March 1867 for the auction of 'Frimnell's Farm and Woods',

in the parishes of Downham and South Hanningfield.

The farm comprised 331 acres, an ancient mansion, extensive buildings, a woodland and a registered title, 'all for £300 per annum.'

When the 1871 census was taken Thomas William, Blyth was in charge of 840 acres of Fremnell's farmland, and was employing 30 labourers.

Thomas, who was 42 and from Dunmow, was living with his 46-year-old wife, Rebecca, who was from Braughing in Hertfordshire. They lived with their four children as well as Eliza Neeves, employed as a housemaid, and Sarah Maskell, who was a General Servant.

Also living on the Fremnell's estate was William Smith, a labourer from Panfield, near Braintree.

He and his wife lived with a son and a grandson. They also had three lodgers; James Low (21) and Robert Capon (76) were both farm labourers. Henry Hemp (59) was employed as a groom.

Thomas Blyth placed an advert in the *Chelmsford Chronicle*, which was printed on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1898.

He was looking for a 'head horseman' to carry out drill, road and was a good ploughman. All applicants were required to have good references.

The estate, including Fremnell's Manor, the farm, Little Abbott's and two cottages, was bought by a Mr Matthew Tarbett Fleming around 1907.

Mr Tarbutt Fleming was born in Glasgow during 1851. He worked as an East India



Merchant and was a founding director of the 'Burmah Oil Company.'

He set about repairing and updating the manor house. An electric light plant was installed, powered by a Hornsby's Internal Combustion Engine, 9. H.P. with Dynamo & Accumulators.

A boiler supplied central heating. The pressure for this was supplied from Southend Water Works Company's Main, which passed along Wickford Road.

The 1911 census listed the staff that were employed at Fremnell's:

Charles Douglas Piper (23)	Footman
Edith Emily Hoskins (29)	Cook
Mary Small	Housemaids
Kate Ellen Beer	Housemaids
Beatrice Hoskins	Kitchen Maid

George Reeves was living on the estate with his wife and his mother-in-law. George was employed as a 'Domestic Gardner'.

Frederick Webber was also working as a domestic gardener. He lived with his wife, Emma and their family. Their 15-year-old son, William, was working as a milk carrier.

Sergeant William Thomas Webber served with the 24<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers during the First World War. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission records that he was killed on 19 April 1918 and was buried in Berles New Military Cemetery in Pas de Calais. He was just 22. By this time his parents were living in Corbetts Tay, Upminster.

A gamekeeper is listed on the 1911 census. Ernest Cross was living with his wife and their three children.

Matthew Tarbett Fleming died on 10 December 1913, the year after he had married Elizabeth Wells.

The manor went up for auction on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> September 1919 at 2.30, held at Winchester House. An extensive sale catalogue was printed for the occasion.

The manor house was described as a 'comfortable residence of Elizabethan style' and had electric light and central heating, garage, stables, chauffeur's cottage, kitchen and pleasure garden.

There was also a lodge at the entrance to the estate, two cottages, paddock and plantations, 'in all about 18 acres 1 rood and 19 poles.'

A rood is around one quarter of an acre, whilst a pole is a 5.5-yard x 5.5-yard square.

The house contained:

#### Ground Floor

- Entrance Lobby: Leading in to a spacious oak panelled hall (34ft x 20ft 9ins by 9ft 6ins high.)
- Drawing Room (17ft x 15ft 10ins x 10ft 3ins.)
- Dining Room: Oak panelled (20ft 10ins x 17ft 3ins x 10ft 3ins.)
- Smoking Room: Oak panelled (15ft 4ins x 14ft 10ins x 10ft.)
- Business Room
- Gun Room
- Garden Room
- Wine Store
- Two lavatories and W.C.

#### First Floor

Approached by a broad oak staircase on to a spacious landing, there are:

- Six bedrooms and 1 dressing room,
- Three bathrooms

- Three W.C. and housemaid's cupboard.

### Second Floor

There are 6 good bedrooms. Domestic offices are exceedingly well-arranged and comprise:

- Kitchen
- Servery
- Butler's room
- Scullery
- Servant's hall
- Larder
- Housemaid's pantry
- Coal room
- Boiler house
- Boot room
- Servant's bathroom
- Bathroom and W.C.

A garage, stabling for 3 horses and the engine house were hidden from view by shrubbery.

The manor also had a bowling green, tennis lawn with a duck pond, supplied by a stream. There was also a rose walk, flower garden, extensive kitchen garden with greenhouse, about 80ft long, potting sheds and tool house.

Fremnell's Farm was also listed in the catalogue, comprising several enclosures of arable and pasture land, and plantations, containing altogether about 334 acres 1 rood 6 poles.

Little Abbott's House, 'a small picturesque country residence' was listed.

Little Abbott's sat almost opposite Fremnell's, on the opposite side of what is now called Hawkswood Road.

The house had stucco walls and a tiled roof, two sitting rooms, kitchen, scullery, and four bedrooms.

The servant's W.C. was in the rear yard. The house was let to Mr Wilton for £35 a year, but was occupied by his sub-tenant, a Mr Thomas William Blyth.

Little Abbott's land contained 30 acres 3 roods 34 poles with a pair of cottages.

The tithe rent on all of the property, paid in 1918 was given as:

South Hanningfield	£21	14s	1d
Downham	£69	18s	0d

The rents for the whole estate came to £613 17s 0d, which is roughly £35,700 in 2021.

The estate appears to have been bought by Robert Parrish, from Somerset. The sale catalogue held by the Essex Records Office shows that the estate was bought for £6,000 in 1919 (around £318,000 in 2021).

By the mid-1920's Fremnell's estate had gained a reputation for sport. The Essex Union Hunt often visited the valley fox hunting. Grouse hunting took place and a 'point-to-point horse racing course of around 3.5 miles was created.

*The Illustrated London News* printed a photo on 21<sup>st</sup> April 1923 of Miss Joan Parry jumping a stream on the Fremnell's estate, whilst taking part in the Ladies Adjacent Hunt Race.

An inventory of the *Historical Monuments in Essex, volume 4, South East* by His Majesty's Stationery Office, London was published in 1923.

The report recorded that the garden to the front of the house was enclosed within a brick wall. The garden was entered by two gateways that had brick pillars and ball finials. Each panel had a panel sunk in to it. One had the initials 'TRA &C., with the other displaying the year '1676'.

The report also mentioned that the moat was 'imperfect' but the overall condition of the house was 'good'.

William Parrish died in 1925 and his wife, Laura, moved to Chelmsford. She died in 1938.

The last owner of Fremnell's Manor was Laurence Kirk, a Justice of the Peace, born in 1864, who bought the estate in 1926.

The *Chelmsford Chronicle* twice advertised the opening of the gardens at Fremnell's Manor, both times to raise money for the Essex County Nursing Association.

The public could visit on Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1945 from 2:30pm until 6pm with admission set at one shilling.

Another advertisement stated that the gardens would be open on 4<sup>th</sup> June 1947. Admission was 6d.

'*The Ghost Hunter's Guide to Essex*' by historian Jessie Payne tells the story of a male that stayed at Fremnells in 1951. He woke up during the night to see a glowing spectre in the room. As the figure approached him, he turned on the light, only for the figure to disappear. This happened again within a few weeks.

*The Sphere* published a wonderful photo of Fremnell's Manor on 9<sup>th</sup> October 1954

as it reported on the creation of the reservoir.



Fremnell's Manor, 1954, *The Sphere*

When the house was eventually demolished its bricks were used in the creation of one of the dams.

As a boy Jack Thorington was taken there, from Wickford, by his father to see the manor before it was pulled down.

He "thought it was a superb old place" and remembered talk about it being taken down, brick by brick, to be rebuilt elsewhere.

As the reservoir was created and Basildon New Town was being built the manor was remembered in a road name. The Fremnell's runs from Whitmore Way to Broadmayne.





Fremnell's Manor, 1954, [historicengland.org.uk](http://historicengland.org.uk)

## GIFFORD'S FARM

As people sit in the café near the fishing lodge and look out across the reservoir the majority of them will be unaware that they are looking out over the former site of Gifford's Farm.



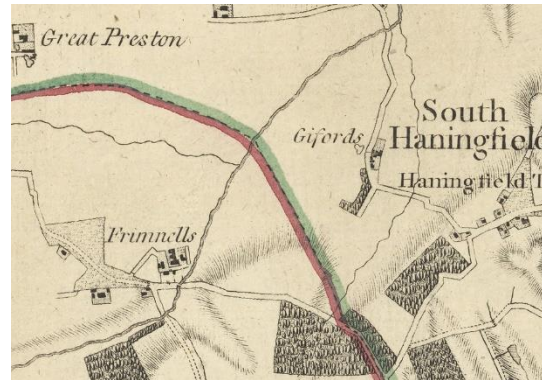
Those visitors to the café would have travelled along Gifford's Lane to get there. The 1898 Ordnance Survey map shows that the original track can still be seen as it goes in to the reservoir and slopes out of view.



Richard Pusey's research for a magazine report on the area discovered that the farm is shown on an estate map, which Richard Honeywood had drawn up in 1736.

Another estate map, dated 1799, tells us that the farm was owned by Filmer Honeywood.

When John Chapman and Peter André surveyed Essex in 1777, they recorded 'Gifords' as well as 'Frimnells'.



*The Sun (London)* ran an advertisement on 19 July 1828, which was reproduced by *The St. James Chronicle* a week later, to share the details of an auction to be held at the Black Boy Inn, Chelmsford at 1pm on Friday 1 August 1828 for the sale of Gifford's Farm.

The farm was reported to cover 210 acres, of which '157 acres are in the occupation of Mr Joseph Watt, tenant at will, at a rental of £200 per annum.'

The farm was described as a 'valuable freehold property' that was 'abounding with game.' It also has an 'uncommonly thriving woodland' making up 57 acres of the farm land. This appears to have been Pandan Wood.

It appears that the farm was bought by Sir Thomas Tyrrell, but Gifford's was one of four farms, all around Runwell, being advertised for let in the 6<sup>th</sup> September 1833 edition of the *Chelmsford Chronicle* due to the death of the owner.

The paper advised that the farm was made up of 89 acres, 39 of which were pasture. The land was described as 'being of very good quality and in a high

standard of cultivation.’ The buildings were in a good state of repair.

The farms were auctioned on 19<sup>th</sup> November 1833.

Samuel Cooper was recorded on the 1851 census as a bailiff, living at Gifford’s Farm. He was 49 at the time and had been born in nearby Rettendon. His 44-year-old wife, Maria, from Downham and their daughter, Mary, lived together. They also had two lodgers that were working as Agricultural Labourers.

*White’s ‘The History, Gazetteer and Directory of the County of Essex’* records that a Mrs M.A. Jourdon was the occupant of Gifford’s, South Hanningfield in 1863.

Two years later and a lot of the live and dead stock on the farm was put up for auction.

The 8 September 1865 edition of the *Chelmsford Chronicle* had details of the auction, which was set to take place on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> September 1865.

The items listed were:

- 11 very useful cart horses,
- 2 bay harness Mares,
- 3 Cart Colts
- 1 Nag Colt
- Chestnut Pony
- 7 shorthorn Heifers and Steers

Also mentioned were 100 half-breed sheep ‘fit for the butcher’, as well as wagons, carts, harrows, ploughs, rolls and ‘the usual assortment implements adapted for the cultivation of 200 acres of land.’

William May was listed as the head of a household on Gifford’s Farm when the

census was taken in 1871. He was a 60-year-old farm labourer born in West Hanningfield. He lived with his wife and their three children.

Another farm labourer listed as the head of his household and living on the Gifford’s Farm land was William Everett. He had been born in Runwell 45 years earlier. His wife Hannah, from Dunton, lived with William, their three daughters and her 75-year-old father, Joseph Woolman. Joseph’s occupation was also recorded as ‘farm labourer’.

Stephen Searles was working as an agricultural labourer and living on land at Gifford’s Farm with his wife, Mary and two children. The family had two lodgers with them in 1871. Thomas Doe was also recorded as an agricultural labourer whilst Isaac Doe was working as a shepherd.

At that time Gifford’s Cottage was occupied by Mary A Chapman, a 62-year-old assistant from Woodham Mortimer.

Only two families were living on the farmland when the census was taken in 1881.

Stephen and Mary Searle were still living and working on the farm. By this time, they had 6 children living with them.

Charles Doe, an agricultural labourer, had moved in with his wife, Sarah, and their four children.

Gifford’s Farm was still in the possession of Thomas Blyth when the *Essex Herald* reported a ‘very bad case of glanders’ on the 16<sup>th</sup> January 1894.

Glanders, a glandular disease which mainly infects horses, mules and donkeys has been known to transfer to humans.

The case was reported by Inspector Amos and veterinary inspector, Mr Norman, said the case was several weeks old.

The last case in the United Kingdom was reported in 1928.

The 1901 census recorded Gifford's Farm as being in the parish of West Hanningfield.

Stephen Searle was still living on the farm, but is now employed as a horseman. Stephen and his wife are living with their son, William, who is working as a farm labourer.

The Searles left the farm before the 1911 census, and Stephen died in 1912, aged 74.

William Harvey, 26, from Buttsbury and his 21-year-old wife, Ellen, from South Hanningfield, are also recorded on the census as living at Gifford's Farm.

Gifford's was recorded in South Hanningfield on the 1911 census. Thomas Blyth, from Downham, was the farmer there at the time. He and his wife Ethel lived with two of their three children, the eldest of which is recorded as Susie Grace Blyth, 19, 'farmers daughter'.

Emma Kate Jordan, 35, from Chelmsford is described as a 'maternity nurse' and appears to have been living in the farmhouse. The Blyth's employed a 17-year-old domestic servant called May Keeling.

There were two census pages completed with the address of Gifford's Cottage. William and Ellen Harvey were still living on the farmland. William is now employed as a 'stockman on farm', and the couple have a 6-year-old daughter called Amelia Ellen. Also in the cottage is James Sewell, Ellen's 74-year-old father. James is working as a farm labourer.

Arthur Martin is also living at the Gifford's Cottage address. Arthur, then 38, was employed as a horseman on the farm, as is his 16-year-old son Harold. Arthur's wife Louisa is also recorded.

*The Essex Newsman* printed the story on the 17<sup>th</sup> June 1939 of Mr W. Jefferies, an employee on Gifford's Farm, explaining that he had one of his thighs broken when he was kicked by a cow.

Dr. Frew was summoned from Wickford prior to Mr Jefferies being taken to hospital.

## PANDAN WOOD

Pandan Wood stood on the land managed from Gifford's Farm. Today it is remembered in the name of Pandan Close, in West Hanningfield.

The wood was named, but only as 'Pandan' in the *Field* on the 21<sup>st</sup> January 1882. A hunt unsuccessfully chased a fox across Billericay, Ramsen and Pandan before losing it in Norsey.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> November 1933 the *Chelmsford Chronicle* reported that the Essex Union Hunt had visited the area, passing through Pandan and west towards Great Preston's. 'The hunt was ultimately unsuccessful.'

The fox-hunting season was opened at Fremnell's on the 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1934. *The Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News* stated that a fox was found at Pandan and was chased along Seaman's Lane, passing Little Preston's where it eventually escaped.

Another fox was also tracked through Fremnell's Farm, but it also escaped.

The Essex Union Hunt were again mentioned in the *Chelmsford Chronicle*, this time published on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> April 1935.

The hunt rode through Crowsheath Farm, Fremnell's and Pandan, but had to admit defeat and go home empty-handed.

Whether 'Pandan' was the name the wood was referred to or the area was not recorded.



## PEADOWN FARM

Peadown Farm was first recorded on the Quarter Session Rolls in 1677. The Courts of Quarter Sessions were local courts that were held at four set times each year. The inhabitants of West Hanningfield went before the court 'for not repairing the highway from "Peadown to the 3 elms", leading to Chelmsford containing 80 roods in length'.

John Chapman and Peter André created a detailed map of Essex in 1777. Peadown Farm is marked on the map, but it was not named.

The 1881 census recorded Peadown Farm as standing on Peadown Road. This is likely to be the road that went south to Gifford's Farm.

Ten years earlier and the census showed that the farm was being run by Mr Joseph Magner, a 60-year-old 'farmer of 20 acres.' He was living with his wife, Elizabeth' and their 13-year-old son, Louis.

By 1881 The Magner's had left and been replaced by John and Catherine Freshwater. John was 45, had been born in Writtle, and gave his occupation as 'Agricultural Labourer'. The Freshwaters had two children, the eldest was also called John, 15, and was employed as an 'Agricultural Labourer'.

The farm was recorded as 'Pea Downs' in West Hanningfield at the time of the 1901 census. Three households were listed as living on the farm.

Joseph Cox's occupation was given as 'Yardman on cattle farm'. He was 51 at the time, and living with his wife, Martha,

and their three sons. All three were listed as 'Agricultural Labourers'.

Charles Doe was a ploughman on Peasdown in 1901 Twenty years earlier he had been working on Gifford's Farm. His 23-year-old son was also a ploughman. They lived with Charles' wife Sarah and their daughter, Elizabeth.

Also working as a labourer, at the age of 72, was George Cox from West Hanningfield. His son, William, was working as a 'Stockman of Cattle'. They lived with George's 18-year-old granddaughter, Maud.

Peadowns, West Hanningfield, had two families living and working on the farm in 1911. Joseph Cole, and his wife Martha, were living in one property. Joseph was a 62-year-old Stockman on the farm.

Leonard Frances Gale was employed as a Coachman and was living with his wife, Emma, and their daughter, also called Emma.



'Peadowns' Farm, 1948, *The Sphere*

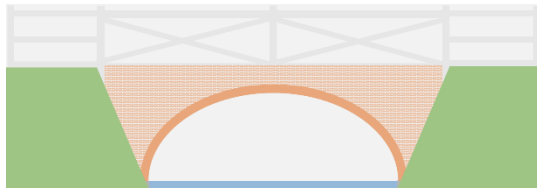
## PEADOWN BRIDGE

Peadown Bridge is marked on the 1895 Ordnance Survey map, just to the south of Peadowns Farm, along Peadown Road.

Sandon Brook used to travel north-east passed Fremnell's, possibly feeding in to the moat, through Pandan Wood and under Peadown Road, where it was crossed by the bridge.

It then went north, between Peadowns Farm and Redlands Wood, over a road (marked on the map as a 'ford' and in to West Hanningfield.

A design for 'Pea-Down Bridge' can be seen by visiting the *Essex Records Office*. It was drawn in 1813, was coloured with water colour paints and is a work of art in its own right.



My poor attempt at reproducing the image of Pea-Down Bridge

## PYNNING'S FARM

A magazine article written by Richard Pusey in the 1980's explained that Pynning's Farm dated back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century and took its name from William Pynning.

The *Essex Records Office* hold details of the deeds for Pynning's Farm, starting from 1638, but a 1628 Survey of the Hanningfields states that the farm was owned by Sir Henry Cloville. His family had been granted the land by William II.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> June 1845 the *Essex Herald* published a notice about a setter being found running stray on Pynning's Farm, West Hanningfield on the 27<sup>th</sup> May. The notice went on to say that the owner could collect the dog there, or it would be sold.

The 1848 edition of *White's Directory* listed Thomas Blyth as the farmer at Pynning's.

The *Chelmsford Chronicle*, published on the 8<sup>th</sup> October 1897 told its readers about the successful harvest on 'Pinning's Farm' the previous Saturday.

Mr Colin Benson held a dinner to the men, their wives and children, and the tenants on the farmland at 'Pinning's Farm.' A barn was decorated and around 40 people enjoyed the roast beef and plum pudding that was made for the celebrations.

A concert party was put on to entertain anyone that attended and the entertainers were treated to supper.

Mr William Benson was employing Arthur Cooper as a horseman on Pynning's Farm in February 1901 when he suffered a

severe kick to the stomach from one of the horses.



Pynning's Farm

Mr Cooper, then 32 years-old, was taken to his home where he was attended to by Dr. Lyster of Great Baddow. Arthur succumbed to his injuries.

*The Essex Newsman* reported on the 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1901 that an inquest held at West Hanningfield returned a verdict of "accidental death".

Hewell and Alice Collis were living on Pynning's Farm when the 1901 census was taken. Hewell, from Terling, was employed as the farm bailiff.

Pynning's Farm was again recorded as being in West Hanningfield when the 1911 census was taken.

The head of the house was Walter Smith a 46-year-old farmer from Carnarvon. He appears to have moved his family down from Lancashire 4 or 5 years earlier, to take over the running of the farm.

Walter's wife, Jessie, and their first three children were all from Lancashire. Their last three, the eldest of which was Wilmot Hodge, 4, are recorded as being born in West Hanningfield.

The *Chelmsford Chronicle* reported on ploughing matches that were held at

'Pynning's Farm' on Saturday 14 October 1911. Mr S. Hodge lent a field for the occasion.

The competition was the idea of Mr Walter Hill, of Peadowns, and he offered the prizes. The event was arranged by Mr C. J. Benson and farm workers from both East and West Hanningfield were invited to enter.

Judges looked on as each competitor worked an area of half an acre each. Those judges commented that it was perhaps some of the best ploughing they'd witness in the county, other than at Ilford.

The men's competition was won by a Mr H. Cooper, who was employed by Mr Benson, with A. Martin winning the Under 21's competition.

The Stationery Office produced 'An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in Essex, volume 4, South East' in 1923 and recorded details about Pynning's Farm.

The walls were partly of brick and the roof was covered with slate. It appeared that most of the house had been rebuilt in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but the central chimney stack was thought to date from the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, which was 'of cross-shaped plan and set diagonally.'

An auction of farming implements from Pynning's Farm took place on Saturday 9 March 1942. The *Chelmsford Chronicle* listed them with the prices they were sold for:

Potato riddler	£16
Hay grip	£13
Potato plough	£12.10s
Horses	up to 54½ Guineas
Tractor	£120
Cultivator	£54

Corn and seed drill	£40
Waggon	£57

Sylvia Kent wrote a report for the *Great British Life* website having spoken with Mr Derek Owen.

Mr Owen was born in 1932 and had lived on Pynning's Farm. His father and uncle grew vegetables and kept pigs there.

Mike Miner's, a reporter with the *Echo* spoke with Ann and Robert Cooper as they visited the Reservoir in 2007, as they had both grown up on Pynning's Farm.

Robert's father was a tenant farmer but was forced to move in 1954. He could remember Peasdown Cottage, which stood nearby.

Ann's father was Alec Frod, who was filmed by *Pathé News* in 1954 as he moved his family out of the area. Alec died in 1984.



Pynning's Farm - *Pathé News*

Pynning's Farm Lane runs from West Hanningfield and along part of the reservoir, where it joins up with Seaman's Lane. It once ran into the valley where the farm stood, and met up with Gifford's Lane.

Sources:

A Ghost Hunter's Guide to Essex'

An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in Essex, volume 4, South East'

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Peadowns Farm



Lost views of Peasdown – *Pathé News*