

## The History of Mistley (New) Hall (3rd)

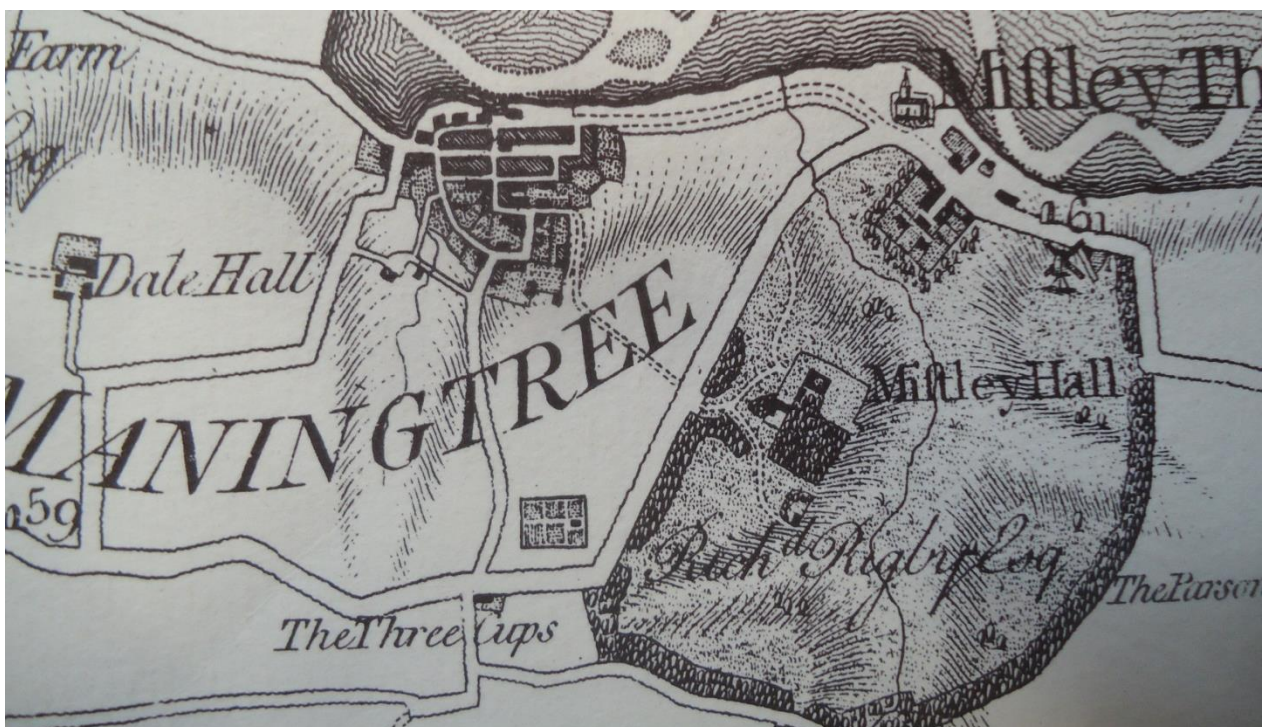


### **The Rigby Family.**

The site of the 1st Mistley Hall of the manor is thought to be the 'Old Mount', which was a moated mansion just off to the left of the Clacton road before the radio mast, now covered in trees. The 2nd was then built by Richard Rigby in about 1725 overlooking the Stour estuary from the top of the hill (now called Old Hall). As part of this, to the southwest, he built a large walled kitchen garden. This was part of a wide set of pleasure gardens, walks and a deer park to entertain many important visitors. This was linked by roadway, known now as the 'Rigby Road'. The estate was enhanced later by his son when he came into money in the late 1770's. This may have included the tunnel/bridge built either as a folly, or to allow visitors to under pass the Rigby road.

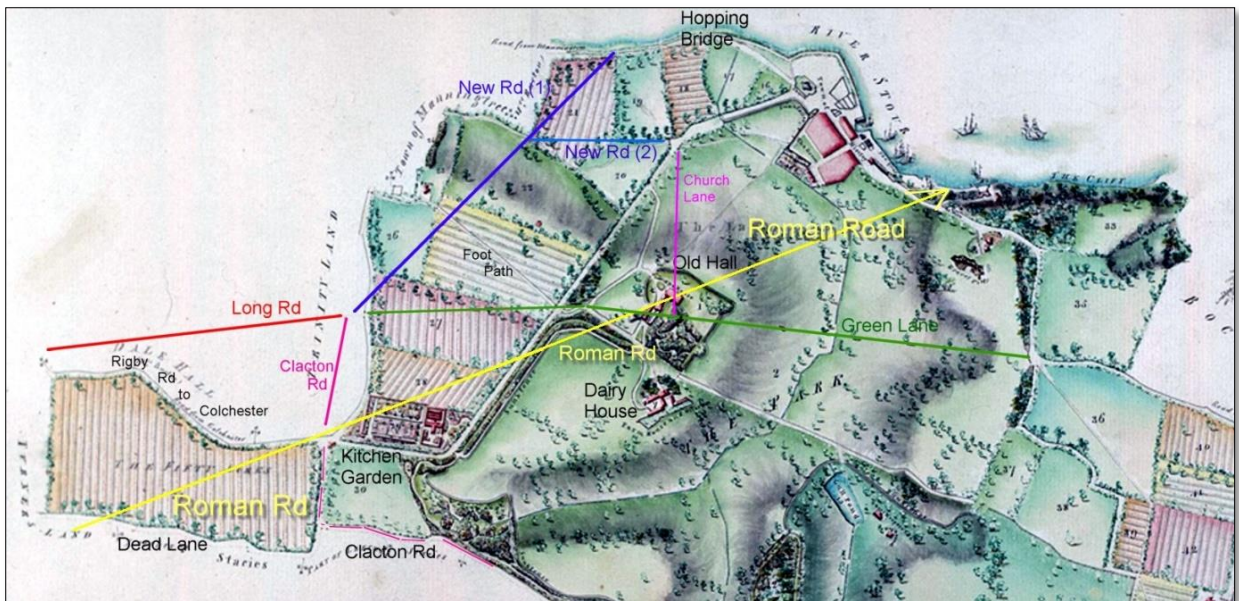


Before 'Long Road' was built, the Rigby road joined the London to Manningtree road at the top of Colchester Road, from there it went more East, before it crossed the Clacton Road by the old Three Cups Inn. It then skirted round the Kitchen Garden. From there it had a straight run passed the Rigby Hall (2<sup>nd</sup>), down towards the river and the church now known as the Towers which the Rigby's had built.





Alongside the roadway were a series of paths for perambulation and special sunken fences to manage animals without spoiling the open parkland views. Later to divert traffic away from the Hall the Rigby's put in New Road (1). Long road was also added and the Clacton road straightened. The lower entrance to the New Mistley Hall (3<sup>rd</sup>) though still follows the route of the old Rigby Road.



### The Page Family.

At the great sale of the Rigby estates in 1845, Mr Robert Everitt Page brought the old walled Kitchen Garden and then built a new hall on the site, using some of the materials from the old (2<sup>nd</sup>) hall (bricks in particular), carting them down the Rigby road which went straight across the field in a direct line to what is now called the Round Clump.

There were some other items that came from the old (2<sup>nd</sup>) hall – part of the staircase and a fireplace, both designed by Adams and the top of one of the rotunda. The Adams brothers had done a lot of work designing new interiors for the old Rigby Mistley Hall (2<sup>nd</sup>) but did not design the new one and the Architect is otherwise not known to us.



Whilst his father was a simple 'Robert Page', Robert Everitt Page's son had the same name as his father including the distinctive middle name 'Everitt', as did other members of the large Page family. One might have assumed the Page family took

'Everitt' as a second name either due to some inheritance requirement or record of part of the maternal line, but that does not seem the case as Robert Everitt Page (Senior) married Elizabeth Everitt in Manningtree chapel in 1811. The two families may well have had a long association, but unlikely this was an arranged marriage.

Robert Everitt Page (Sn) was already a property owner in Manningtree town and seems to have started off as a merchant trading in grain and coal. This was the trade to be in at the time as was Malting, which he also expanded into as a tenant of the Rigby family on Mistley Quay. This enabled him to buy his own boats to ship goods around the coast, sometimes outright, sometimes as shares. The first bowsprit barge recorded in his name was the 'Resolution' of Ipswich which he brought in 1818. Two years later he brought a three quarter share for £300 in the 'Friends Increase' another barge of 122 tons. By 1829 the family were renting their own shipyard in Manningtree which gave them access to the quay and their own coal yard. Ten years later and they had vessels coming down from London on which any business could send cargo every week.

Whilst son Robert Everitt Page (Junior) had married and moved out, by 1841 the couple still had seven other children at home with them in their Manningtree home, aged 8 to 25 years, along with a couple of servants.

At the sale of the Rigby estates in 1845, he also purchased nearby *Cups Field* (Listed 30 in the survey map above and the location of the long gone, *Three Cups Inn* on the corner of the Rigby Road) plus *Barnfield* and also one of the Adams designed gate houses to the north of *Park Road* as it was called before it became *Green Lane*.

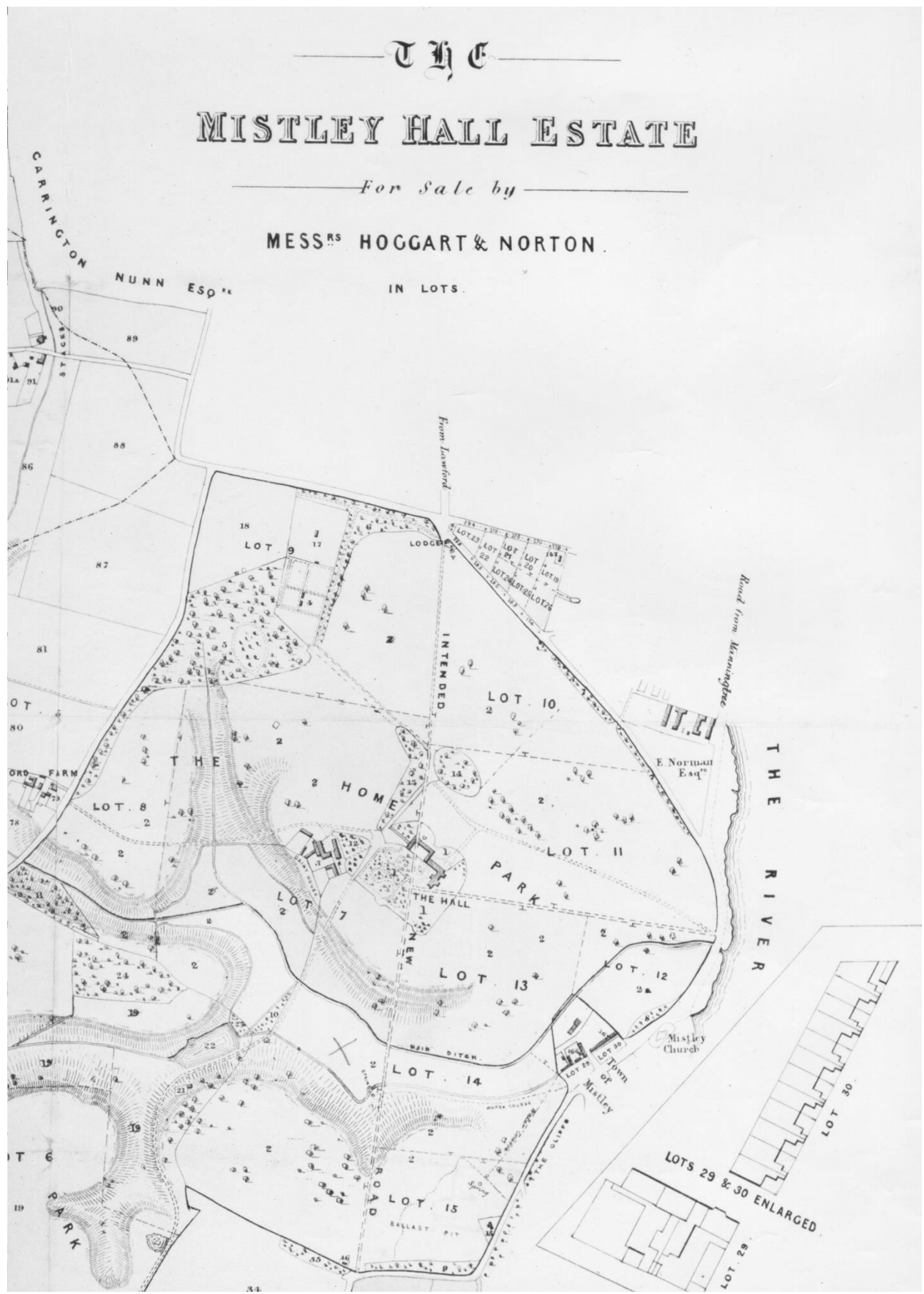
One of his relatives Joseph Page had already purchased Trinity farm off the Rigby's in 1803 when they were first trying to clear debts from the estate. This had come to Robert Everitt Page (Sn) as well.

He also owned ships called the '*Manningtree Pacquet*' (the name of the Inn in the High Street now known as Townsends) and the '*Mary*'.

Having purchased the Kitchen Garden and fields at auction (Lot 9 below) in 1845, construction started straight away and the new mansion would not have taken long to complete. Come the 1851 census, the family had settled in with Robert by then 62 years of age and his wife Elizabeth 61, both had been born and raised in Manningtree. Their two adult Daughters and a 19 year old son Charles were still living at home with them. The Mansion was a much more modest affair than the Rigby Hall that had gone before, but made good use of the high brick walls that had surrounded the Rigby Kitchen Garden, against which the hall and a cottage were built. One aspect that seems odd now is that the house and main entrance were built facing east, but this was due to the Rigby roadway to the Old Hall still running behind the Kitchen garden when it was being built, the Rigby Hall being taken down at the same time. The sale map of 1845 shows that the Clacton road had been straightened and a new road is intended running from the two Adams designed

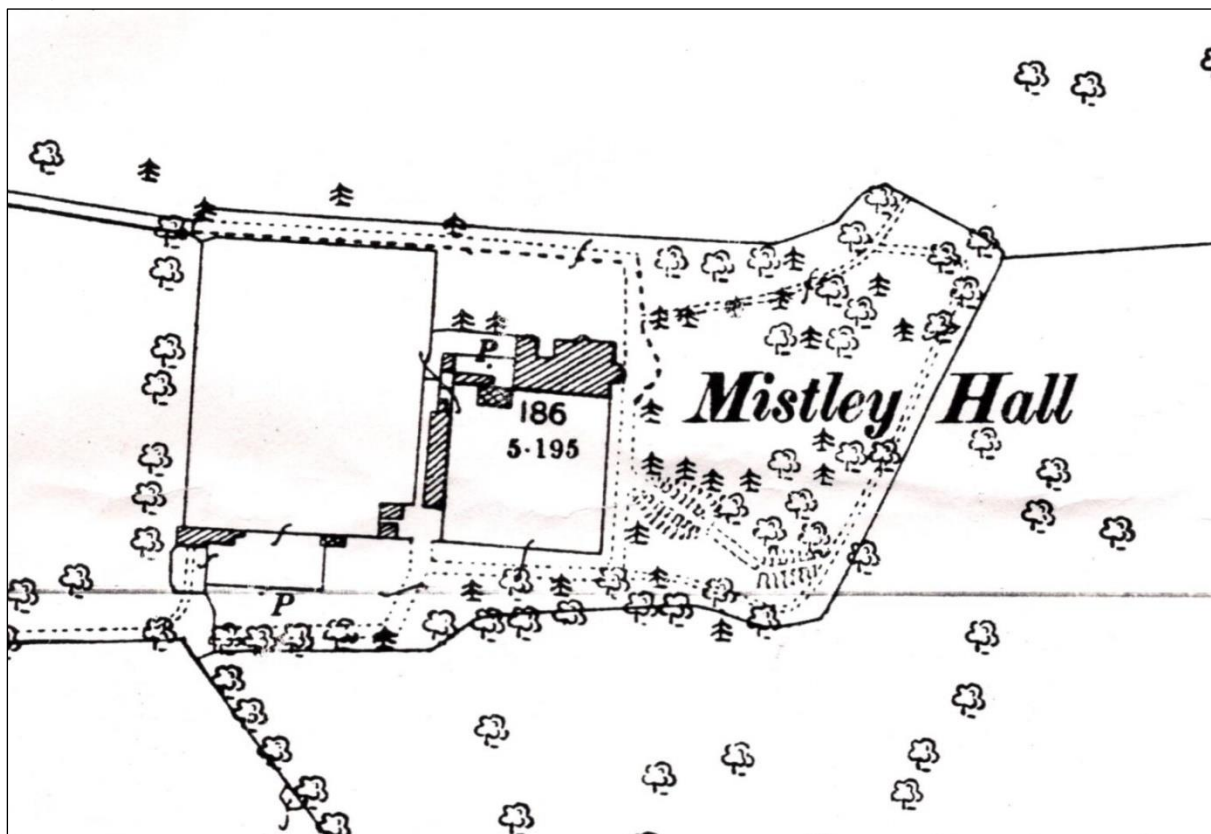


lodges on Park Road, through the Old Hall, to the Pound at the other end of Mistley, now known as Green Lane.



After his wife died in 1858 Robert continued at the hall and is by then recorded as a 'Corn Merchant'. His son (Jn) of the same name and occupation was also living at the hall, having lost his wife as well. He was 47 years of age. The other children had moved on. The New Hall needed a number of staff to keep it going and a cook, housemaid and groom were all employed. The family traded as Page and Sons, maltsters, coal & corn merchants and ship owners at Manningtree Quay & Mistley Wharf.

Robert (Jn) Everitt Page married again in 1868 this time to Susannah Folkard, originally from East Bergholt but living in the Town. As was the fashion the ceremony took place in London and the couple spent time there and later at a property in Harwich Road in Mistley. The same year the family business ran into problems and had to be dissolved through being declared bankrupt and reformed. The new company being run by just Robert Everitt Page (Jn) and his brother John Everitt Page.



By 1871 Robert (Sn) is on his own in the main hall with just three domestic servants, whilst the gardener has his own separate cottage which had been built against the old large Kitchen garden wall as well (outside the south western corner). This was large enough for him and his wife, daughter (a teacher) and four younger children.



Robert Everitt Page (Senior) died still resident at Mistley Hall aged 84 in the first week of December 1872. His Will showed that he still had a number of properties (one shop) and two Maltings in the Town and two ships. He wrote off his three sons debts to him and provided annuities, including one for his daughter Emma. His son (Jn) inherited the business (Quayside and Maltings in Manningtree) and Mistley Hall, which he moved back into for a while. This did not solve the financial troubles that overtook him and he was for a short while declared bankrupt. He moved back to London, Islington and died in 1882.

The history becomes a bit vague at this point and it is not clear if the Hall was then sold on, or was retained and rented out by creditors, or by the Page family. Either way we then see a series of families moving in for relatively short periods.

### **Short stayers.**

The first was Edward Morrell, a retired Lieutenant Colonel (infantry) from Berkshire who had moved in by 1891 with a very young family of four children (youngest just 9 months) along with a Nurse, Cook, Parlour maid and house mistress. A coachman and his family lived in the Cottage. Colonel Morrell stayed just a few years before a doctor from Abberton (Essex), Edward William Bawtree moved in. He had started as an army surgeon and later worked as a deputy inspector general of hospitals. He did



not stay long either, dying in 1898, with his will not suggesting he had actually owned *Mistley Hall* either.

The next resident was William Walton, he was 69 years old by then and came from Yorkshire where he had worked in manufacturing. His wife was from Ireland and they lived there for a few years with their daughter Florence, with the five servants needed to keep the place going and a young Gardener and family resident in the Cottage.

After a gap in 1906 the next to occupy the hall was Charles Sturton Master (esquire). He was a 80 year old gentleman of private means, originally from Saffron Walden. His wife Eliza was from Ireland and their family home had been in Shropham in Norfolk. They had two of their older children with them and one of the three servants they relied on had also come with them from Norfolk. This included a coachman who lived at the Cottage. The Masters lived at the Hall for some ten years or so until he died in 1921.

### **The Norman, Atkinson and Strover Families.**



There is a possibility that the Norman family of *Mistley Place* (The Walls) had purchased *Mistley Hall* (3<sup>rd</sup>) in 1882 from the Page estate at a time when the Norman property holdings were still expanding. They already owned *Mistley Lodge* in New Road where **Laetitia Janet Emily Norman** was brought up.

She was a keen rider and took part in hunting events where she met **Captain Ben Atkinson** (born 9<sup>th</sup> Jan 1872 in Ireland) who she married in 1903 in London after he returned from serving in the Boer war. They had a daughter **Rosalind Mary Atkinson** who was born in November 1904 and a son John Edward Acheson Atkinson in March 1909, later baptised at Mistley. A further son Ben (Junior) was born in 1915. Whilst Laetitia

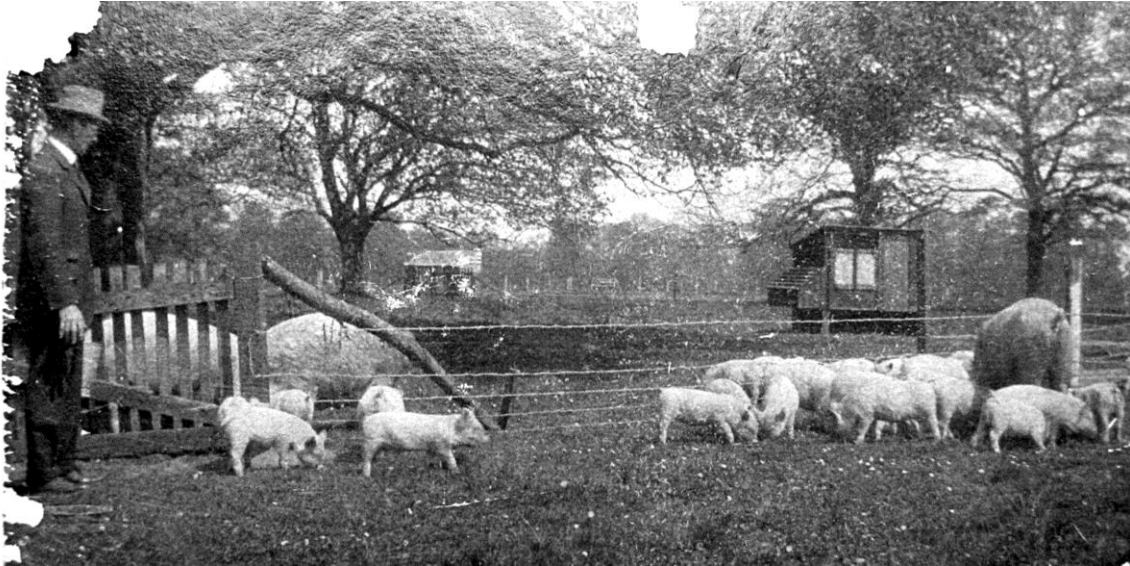
had come from the, at one time very wealthy Norman family, they had by then fallen on harder times with some of them being declared bankrupt. Estate promised to the couple as part of their marriage settlement by his (Atkinson) family also never materialised. They therefore spent a fair bit of time renting properties and visiting the rest of the Norman family living in *Mistley Place* and later *Mistley Lodge*, New Road, particularly before and during the First World War when his career took them around the country to various military postings and then to serve in France.



After being stationed around the country, by June 1921 Ben Atkinson (Senior) had been promoted to a Brigadier-General (later Major) and the couple had moved their small family into *Mistley Hall* (3<sup>rd</sup>) in time for the census. This may already belonged to Laetitia's Uncle Edward Norman or the Norman family trust and had already been bequeathed to her, or Ben had done well enough by then to purchase the hall.

One of Ben Atkinson's interests after he retired was keeping pigs at the Hall and he obtained special planning permission for this. His pig breeding abilities saw him winning prizes at several shows.





The house and family needed servants and in 1921 the family employed a children's Nurse, Kathleen; a cook, Alice; a parlour maid, Florrie and a general maid Edith Wyatt from Suffolk, seen in this photograph.



The family also employed a full time gardener who in 1921 was George Faint, who was living with his family in part of what was left of the Rigby hall on Green Lane (now known as 'Old Hall').



In 1933 Major Atkinson also obtained permission for some alterations to be made to Mistley Hall cottage.

Their daughter **Rosalind Mary Atkinson** became a fine musician playing Viola and in 1925 met Major Ernest James **Strover** whilst skiing in Switzerland. He started with the army in India but switched to flying, being shot down over enemy lines in France during WW1. Given the difference in age (20 years), it was not a match her family were keen on, but they were married at St Mary's church in New Road, Mistley in 1927. She then went with him to India and their first son Paul was born there in 1928. During a posting to Malaysia in 1931 their second son John was born. During periods of leave they would stay back at *Mistley Hall* with her parents.

After a successful army career, on the way back from India in 1937 Ernest Strover decided to study for the priesthood and after his ordination for a short while took on a parish in Sutton Coldfield, Warwickshire before taking a commission as a Chaplain in the RAF at the rank of Squadron Leader.

At the outbreak of WW2 Ben and Laetitia Atkinson are still at *Mistley Hall* joined for a short while by their daughter **Rosalind** and her husband, by then the Reverend Ernest **Strover**.

The family had four servants to manage the Hall and also present in 1939 were two school aged children, Norman S. Davidson of 9 years (born 28<sup>th</sup> September 1930 in New Zealand ), and Joan M Davidson (born 7<sup>th</sup> October 1932) along with their mother Clara Winifred Davidson (born 18<sup>th</sup> March 1904) from Hackney. They may have been evacuated to Mistley or in need of support. Within the Hall grounds at *Mistley Hall Cottage* was the gardener Herbert along with his wife Emily and another elderly lady.

Son John Edward Acheson Atkinson had married by that time and followed in his father's footsteps to join the army, becoming a captain in the Rifle Brigade. He died whilst serving with the Sudan Defence force in December 1940 aged 31 years and was buried in the Khartoum War Cemetery.

The family continued at the Hall with father Ben Atkinson dying shortly after in 1942. At the end of the war there was better news in 1946 with the marriage of son Ben Atkinson (Jn) to Patricia Anne Morse in Westminster. He had been taken prisoner in Tobruk and spent most of the war as a POW before returning home. The couple do not appear to have had children and she remarried some nine years later.

Having had a third son, Dick in 1941, **Rosalind Strover** moved with her husband to the Lawford Rectory where he had been appointed vicar in 1945.

Looking ahead to his retirement the Stover's applied for planning permission and after an appeal in 1956 were granted approval to build a new bungalow just inside the grounds, as they felt unable to afford to take on the whole Mistley Hall. This became known as *Mistley Wood* and was on what was the old Clacton road. Here they created a new garden with rhododendrons and in front, a fair sized Croquet lawn

bordered by daffodils. They could still afford to travel and in 1957 had a cruise to Madeira, Portugal.

Laetitia Atkinson remained at Mistley Hall and is recorded as having a visit from a large class of children from Harwich Primary School in 1960, organised by Doug Barret the head teacher.

The top floor of *Mistley Hall* was at some point converted into flats and rented out. One of the residents in 1962 was Lady Elizabeth Goodeth Crawley-Boevey. Her husband had been forced to sell the family home of Flaxley Abbey in Gloucestershire in 1960 so they may have been living there as a temporary measure, but likely had some relationship beforehand with the Atkinsons.

As well as his writing, the Rev. Ernest Strover continued part time with his church work and was on the board of governors for the Manningtree secondary modern school. He passed away on Christmas Eve 1962 and due to his service there, his ashes were buried in Lawford Church. Their son John Strover has since written a biography of his father (nicknamed 'Puck'), their time in India and the RAF.

As a major landowner and beneficiary of the Norman estate, administered by a trust, Laetitia Atkinson was also asked to contribute to the cost of re-roofing Mistley Church in 1963 by the Reverent Morley who was trying to raise the several thousand pounds needed.

Rosalind's brother Ben(Jn) Atkinson seems to have had a separate life, living in Westminster and rising to Lieutenant Colonel in the army. This left her to care for her mother Laetitia until her death in late 1972, age 93 whilst still living at the hall. With her brother Ben she then became one of the main beneficiaries of what was left of the Norman estate which was still substantial even though small parts had been given away to well liked locals, such as Mr Askew who ran the radio shop.

Whilst living in the bungalow Rosalind was approached to sell the main hall to a new charity (ACORN) which opened a residential home there in 1975. The bungalow and garden at *Mistley Wood* which she retained, was sold in 2001 once the charity had acquired sufficient capital to make the purchase from her. The history of the charity can be found on their website and the Walled Garden and views of the Hall can be enjoyed from the café where everyone is welcome.

[Acorn History - Acorn Villages](#)

Due to her own care needs **Rosalind Strover** moved into a nursing home, first in Colchester, then *Nayland House*, Care Home in Suffolk. Given the good care she received she lived to the grand age of 106 years. In 2011 she was buried next to her husband at Lawford Church.



Rosiline Strover

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