

The Abbey Manor

In 1225 the Lord of the Manor demised (transferred by lease) four virgates of farmland and a wood called Le Thorn (in all about 210 acres or 85 hectares) to the Abbot of Reading. The annual rent was twenty shillings. The farmland included a freehold of thirty acres south of Hale Green held by Geoffrey Wykinge. Four copyholds of fifteen acres each and one of thirty acres lay between Nightingale Lane and Wokefield, as did the woodland, traceable on the 1840 tithe map as Burnt Hill and Great Coppice Ground.

After the dissolution of Reading Abbey in 1539, its Mortimer lands were granted to John, Earl of Warwick. They passed to Edward VI's uncle, Edward, Duke of Somerset ('The Protector'). After his execution in 1553 they were bought by John Lucas for $\text{œ}1,095\ 14\text{s}\ 8\text{d}$. His son became a baronet and his great-grandson was created Baron Lucas. As he was a Royalist, the advent of the Civil War meant that his estates were forfeit; however, he managed to retain them by paying $\text{œ}3,634$. He died in 1671 leaving only a daughter Mary, who married Anthony, tenth Earl of Kent. The Manor House in Mortimer Lane was sold to its tenant, Thomas Bever. It became known as Bever House, and later as Mortimer House. The Bever family is remembered by the name of a housing estate.

In 1724 Henry, eleventh Earl of Kent, sold the rest of the estate. Geoffrey Wykinge's freehold had in 1704 been leased to Thomas Mills and in 1724 his son bought it. He sold it to William Spratley three years later. In 1752 William's son John sold it to Henry Lannoy Hunter and it became part of Trunkwell Estate, which had also once been Abbey property. The other purchasers of farms in 1724 included Samuel Bever, adding to his acreage, Richard Man of Burghfield and John Stockwell. The Bever family bought out most of the other farmers between 1740 and 1771 and in 1808 the one-time Abbey Manor became part of the Englefield Estate and remains so today. Stockwells Farm was pulled down in the 1920s but Mann's Farm was rebuilt about 1850. Mortimer House was until recently a home for the blind.