

# WILLIAM LOWNDES AS A BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LANDOWNER

JENNIFER MOSS

*William Lowndes (1652–1724) rose from modest origins to spend almost 30 years as Secretary to the Treasury. There he amassed a considerable fortune, and he used almost all his surplus income to buy land. This article seeks to set out how he did this. The entry on Lowndes in the new edition of the Dictionary of National Biography deals at some length with his career at the Treasury, but makes only a brief mention of his activities as a landowner. Yet they are of some interest, showing what it was possible for a self-made man to achieve at the turn of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.*

We can look at his purchases in some detail, because, presumably due to his training at the Treasury, he kept detailed records. These are available in his three Survey Rolls, now in the County Record Office<sup>1</sup>. They combine both a listing of purchases (usually giving the vendor, the price, whether freehold or copyhold land, and whether one or more houses were included) and also what he terms ‘Writings’ about each of the more substantial purchases. These last are essentially what would today be termed abstracts of title, and in some cases are very lengthy.

Survey Rolls 1 and 2 consist of a number of lengths of parchment, each something over two feet long, stitched end to end. Lowndes refers to these lengths of parchment as ‘Prefses’ (Presses) but in her excellent catalogue of the Lowndes papers Deborah Jenkins uses the term ‘Membranes’ and that is what is used here. Roll 3 is different, being made up of sheets of paper, stitched together at the top.

The question arises as to whether Lowndes himself actually wrote the rolls. Although as Secretary to the Treasury he must have been extremely busy, yet it is striking that the rolls include several notes in the first person singular, and there are references to ‘my wife’, ‘my brother-in-law’, and ‘my son’. The handwriting of most, but not all, the entries seems similar to that found in Lowndes’ three Notebooks<sup>2</sup> – which he definitely wrote himself. At various points in the first and second rolls, however, there are notes to the effect that Lowndes has examined the section above at a certain date, followed by his signature. The

personal notes he has included make the story come to life.

Roll 1, of 18 membranes, was drawn up in 1703 and covers all the property included in his settlement on his son Robert made at that date.

Roll 2 is made up of 25 membranes and dates from about 1715. It lists further property bought in the Winslow area 1703–1715 together with the two estates – at Broughton and Stoke Manderville (sic) – bought with his daughter-in-law Margaret Atcherley’s marriage portion. It then sets out at great length the history of the purchase of The Bury, Chesham in 1687, and more briefly gives the abstracts of title relating to other property in the Chesham area bought between 1692 and 1707, four shares in an estate in Romney Marsh bought 1689–1708, Carter Lane Grounds, Pitchcott bought in 1709 and two purchases in London made in 1692.

Roll 3 has 53 paper sheets and dates from 1723, nearly at the end of Lowndes’ life. It summarises the two previous rolls, and lists the few remaining purchases in Winslow. It then describes purchases in Barton Hartshorn and Chesham and a number of important purchases in the north of the county.

Lowndes was involved in property transactions at a time when agricultural land had been partially, but not completely, enclosed. Hence some of the purchases were of ‘closes’ or fields, whereas some of the land bought is described as being in the open fields – such as Demoran Field in Winslow, and West Dean and Dungrove Fields in Chesham.

It is difficult to estimate what today’s values of the land purchases would be. There is a table, produced some years ago by the Government

Statistical Service, which estimates how something equivalent to today's Retail Prices Index changed between 1750 and 1914. Combining that with more recent information suggests the RPI has changed by a factor of about 120 since Lowndes' day. But this may not be exactly relevant since the recent significant shift in the relative costs of property and retail prices relates chiefly to residential property, rather than agricultural land.

#### THE WINSLOW AREA

Lowndes started buying land some time before 1679, the year in which he married Elizabeth Harsnett. He notes that, later in 1679, he entailed his first purchases for himself and his male heirs. The Roll (dating from 1703) notes sadly that by then Elizabeth was dead. In 1679 Lowndes had been working at the Treasury for about four years, and had evidently been able to build up some savings. Elizabeth possibly had a portion that – together with Lowndes' savings – could have been used to fund some of the purchases.

From then until 1687 Lowndes confined his purchases of land to the Winslow area, including nearby Shipton. In the course of his life he was to make a total nearly one hundred individual purchases there.

Many of the Winslow purchases were quite small – of a few acres of copyhold land – but two of the first, bought in 1679 from Edward Palmer and Robert Clayton, were sizeable, being of 72 and 90 acres respectively. This supports the suggestion of the use of some of Elizabeth Harsnett's portion. Lowndes records, with evident satisfaction, that the Palmer land had been part of his father's estate,

as had some further purchases<sup>3</sup>.

The first Survey Roll also records how Lowndes put together the site on which Winslow Hall would be built in 1700. In 1690 he bought a house from John Dymort for the large sum of £400; in 1703 he notes that this was 'a brick house, near the street, puld (sic) down to make my new house...its orchard with another that belonged to Halfpenny (an earlier purchase) make the first garden that lies behind my new house'. In 1692 he bought another house from Benjamin Scott 'in Sheep Street now demolished to build my new house' for £280, while he later bought half an acre of copyhold land from Richard Lottman for £45 which 'is laid into the Backside of my new house', and two plots each of 2/3 acre of copyhold land were bought from Nir (sic) Merwin and his wife, and Robert Gibbs and his wife, for £50 and £60 respectively, the first being 'a little orchard now layd into my biggest Garden next the wall of my lesser Garden' and the second 'an orchard next to that which was of Merwyn'. Much later, in 1720, he bought a cottage in Sheep Street from Robert Eden which was then pulled down to improve the view 'from my son's house to Granborough'! That view remains to this day.

In 1697 Lowndes laid out the large sum of £4900 on the purchase of the Manor of 'Winslow cum Membris' (Winslow and also Shipton, Little Horwood and Granborough), the Town of Winslow with its Fairs and Markets, the Rectory impropriate of Winslow and Shipton, 2 acres in the Parsonage Close and 8 acres lying dispersed in Winslow fields. This purchase was made from Richard Goodwin and others, and all was let to Robert Gibbs at an annual rent of £220. The Roll describes

TABLE 1 William Lowndes' purchases of land in the Winslow area

	<i>Number of purchases</i>	<i>Houses</i>	<i>Freehold &amp; copyhold land acres</i>	<i>Price paid £.s.d</i>
1679–1692	33	7	471	6451.6.3
1692–1698	26	8	240	8793.14.2
1698–1703	9	3	63.5	1332.1.6
<i>Total of Roll 1</i>	68	18	774.5	16577.1.11
Roll 2 1703–1715	15	7	201	3246.2.8
Roll 3 1715–1720	13	8	143	1673.0.0
<i>Overall total</i>	96	33	1118.5	21496.4.7

how at a Court Baron on 11 October there was a sequence of surrenders and recoveries and Lowndes was finally admitted to all the copyhold lands in this purchase. Lowndes states that the complicated procedure was needed 'to ruff off all the Entails and Remainders over which had been before made of the Lands'.

Periodically further settlements were made of the land he bought, in favour of himself and his heirs. In the 1684 settlement there was mention of Mrs Jane Hopper, whom he had married as his second wife in 1683, when Lowndes put his half of The Berrylands into his marriage settlement. In 1687 there was another settlement in favour of himself, the eldest son Robert and Robert's heirs, and there were further settlements in 1689 and 1698, entailing the property in the male line.

Then in 1703 Lowndes put all the land he had bought up to that point in the Winslow area, with a single exception, into the very large settlement on Robert, in anticipation of his marriage to Margaret Atcherley. The settlement also included an estate at Nether Shendley (now Shenley Church End) of 53 acres, bought for £850 from Thomas Whorwood. The purchases included in the settlement totalled 18 houses, 115 acres of freehold land and 659½ acres of copyhold land which together had cost Lowndes a total of £16,027 1s 11d.

The settlement also included the newly built Winslow Hall. The building costs of the Hall had been £6585 10s 2¼d. So the final value of the settlement made by Lowndes on Robert, Margaret and their heirs was £23,462 12s 1¼d. And in addition Lowndes was foregoing the income from the tenants of a significant area of land.

At the start of his Will<sup>5</sup>, Lowndes spells out his enthusiasm for primogeniture, which must have been the thought behind the generous treatment of his eldest son. It is sad that Robert was to prove a rather unsatisfactory eldest son and heir. Lowndes evidently had fond memories of Robert's mother, who had died only days after Robert's birth, after only a year of marriage.

In divesting himself of so much property, not to mention the house on which he had lavished so much care and attention, Lowndes must have expected – rightly as it turned out – that his income from the Treasury would permit further substantial purchases to support him and his growing family by his fourth wife. She bore him a total of 14 children, although only six survived into adult life.

After 1703 Lowndes made a further 28 purchases in the Winslow area, involving 344 acres of land, at a cost of £4919 2s 8d. A feature of a number of the Winslow purchases is the mention of 'cows commons', or the right to graze cattle. It is only rarely possible to deduce if the land involved in a purchase is arable or meadow, but 'Tuckey Mead' is an exception, and Lowndes bought it for £50 per acre, while much of the other land – presumably arable – was bought for between £8 and £20 per acre.

#### THE CHESHAM AREA

In 1687 Lowndes bought land in Chesham, his first purchase outside the Winslow area. Perhaps he chose Chesham as approximately halfway between London and Winslow, and thus a good place to break the journey.

1687 was the year after Lowndes had been promoted to be a Chief Clerk at the Treasury. It was also the year of the birth of his second son, William, following his (third) marriage to Elizabeth Martin in 1686. It is possible Elizabeth brought a marriage portion with her, which could have contributed to the purchase price. This price, £1430, was far beyond the cost of previous individual purchase made so far in Winslow.

There is an interesting document<sup>6</sup> which sets how what was presumably the asking price of £1500 was calculated – based on 22 year's purchase of the rent appropriate to each area of land. The most valuable are 5 acres of meadow, in 'ye home mead' and 6 in Holls Platt and Barker Mead, with a rental of £3 per annum per acre, while for the 2 acres of meadow adjoining 'ye Worthys' the figure is £2 per annum per acre. Arable land – 3 acres in 'ye digging close' and 22 acres in 'ye Worthys' – has a much lower rental value of 12 shillings per acre, while for 4 acres 'in a cornfield', in fact West Dean field, the figure is only 8 shillings per acre. Taken together these 42 acres of farm land were valued at £1179 4s, while the house, orchard, garden, fishpond, stabling and barns are valued at £320 16s. The valuation is therefore based on meadow land at between £44 and £66 per acre, and arable at between £9 and £13 per acre – figures broadly in line with those deduced earlier for the Winslow purchases.

The abstract of title of the various parts of The Bury estate is set out at great length in the second

survey roll<sup>7</sup>. The purchase, from a father and son, both named George Norbury, was complicated, due to an outstanding mortgage, and a price of £1430 was agreed. Finally Lowndes ‘exhibited his Bill in the Exchequer Chamber’ saying he was ready to purchase for £1430, but was now informed of incumbrances in the shape of money owed to Ralph Stuckley and George Hawes. The resultant decree specified how the purchase money should be apportioned to clear off these incumbrances. 20 years later Lowndes bought a further 9 acres in a meadow close by, from Joseph Welch, for £200.

Following the purchase of The Bury, Lowndes bought more sizeable farms and other land in the Chesham area, most significantly larger than the parcels he was continuing to buy around Winslow. The first such purchase was of the Manor of Grove, or Grove Park, in 1692. It was bought from Henry Bunn with 104 acres for £1200. The Survey Roll traces the title of The Grove back to a transaction in the reign of Henry VIII. By Henry Bunn’s time the situation was complicated with mortgages and other obligations. One strand of Henry Bunn’s somewhat tangled financial affairs involved a Release of Dower from Faith Bunn, widow (presumably formerly the wife of Henry’s father John), in 1681, a lease of the Manor for a peppercorn rent – that may have arisen from Henry’s failure to carry out the terms of a will of which he was executor – and a subsequent redemise that involved Henry Bunn agreeing to pay £30 a year to Mary Wingfield throughout her life. William Lowndes took on this obligation when he

purchased the Manor and he continued the payments for the remainder of Mary’s life.

In 1692 William Lowndes instructed Thomas Pegsworth to survey the large block of land at The Grove. Lowndes was a stickler for accuracy, and, in Survey Roll 2, he notes that Pegsworth had made an error in his calculations, underestimating the total area of the various parcels of land by 10 perches. Pegsworth’s total was 104 acres 1 rood, 5 perches, whereas the areas given for the individual parcels actually summed to 104 acres, 1 rood and 15 perches.

Later, in 1704, Lowndes bought a further 22 acres in a strip of fields next to the first purchase – from Elizabeth, Henry Bunn’s widow, for £240 – and this was added to the main area of Grove Farm.

Lowndes then bought two woods. In 1693 he bought the 13½ acres of Goddards Wood (or Garretts Coppice) on the boundary between Great Missenden and Wendover parishes, from John Chase, for £416 2s 6d. This must have been the wood now shown as ‘Lowndes Wood’ on today’s Ordnance Survey map, just south of Chartridge Lane, beyond Cherry Tree Farm. In 1698 he purchased eight parcels of arable land or wood called Millfields, in Berkhamsted – comprising 60 acres altogether – from Robert Cordwell, for £1171. It was from here that timber was taken to Winslow for the construction of Winslow Hall.

The next purchase was of Dungle Farm, with 90 acres, bought in 1702 from William Baldwin and his wife Elizabeth for £1330. The property had been mortgaged to Sarah Baldwin, and Sir Robert

TABLE 2 William Lowndes’ Purchases in the Chesham area

<i>Date</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Land in acres</i>	<i>Purchase price – £.s.d</i>
1687	The Bury	46	1430
1707	meadow nearby	9	200
1692	Manor of Grove	104	1200
1704	fields adjacent	22	240
1693	Goddards wood	13.5	416.2.6
1698	Millfields, Berkhamsted	60	1171
1702	Dungle Farm	90	1330
1716	Bush Ground Farm	30	355
1720	Bellingdon - Baldwin	48	705.5.0
1721	Bellingdon – Geary	110	1500
	<i>Total</i>	532.5	8547.7.6



FIGURE 1 William Lowndes, Secretary to the Treasury. Portrait by Godfrey Kneller. Reproduced © Crown copyright: UK Government Art Collection.

Harsnett (the father of William Lowndes' first wife) was involved in the mortgage's assignment. The purchase also involved '£10 pa to be paid by mee to Clare Snootson during her life and £200 to be payd by me within 3 months after her death to Christopher Geary' but Lowndes persuaded Geary to settle for £140 paid immediately. Bush Ground Farm (now Hog Lane Farm) followed in 1716 with 30 acres.

Finally, towards the end of his life, Lowndes bought two blocks of land which were later to form part of today's Bellingdon Farm. In 1720, for £705 5s, he bought 25½ acres of freehold land, and 24 acres copyhold from William Baldwin and Elizabeth his wife (presumably the same vendors as the Baldwyns at Dungle Farm). Finally in 1721 he bought Geary's Farm, 110 acres for £1500. This had been mortgaged to him in 1718.

#### LAND IN KENT AT ROMNEY MARSH

Between 1689 and 1708 Lowndes bought fractions of an area of 200 acres, in the parish of Eastbridge, Romney Marsh. In January 1689 he bought ¼ of 1/6 and 1/3 of ¼ of 1/6 of the whole, from Anne Adams, for £142 14s 2d and next month for the same sum he bought the same proportion from Robert Harsnett, Doctor of Divinity, the brother of his first wife Elizabeth. Three years later he bought a full 1/6 share from Anne Adams for £475. Finally he bought another 1/6 from Eusebius Buswell in 1708 for £450. Presumably this complicated land holding pattern reflects the richness of the Marsh as a grazing area.

Adding his fractions together gives an overall fraction of 4/9 of the whole. The whole was rented by a single occupier, and Lowndes received 4/9 of the total rent payable.

#### LAND IN LONDON

Lowndes made two purchases in London. In October 1692 he bought nearly 4 acres of land in Carnaby Street and King Street, St James, for £400, from the Executors of Poultney. This land lies just east of today's Regent Street.

Then in January of the same year (this was before the change of New Year from March to January) he bought two fields in Knightsbridge known as Great and Little Spittlefields, with a total area of 18½ acres. That to the north was on the

west of the Westbourne stream and that to the south on the east, the two being connected by a narrow neck of land, now at the kink in Lowndes Street. The stream was not finally covered until 1842 when the fields were developed by Thomas Cubitt as the Lowndes estate. Today Harvey Nichols is sited along the northern frontage of the area.

Lowndes considered he had overpaid in spending £500 on these fields, but wrote that he 'gave these large summes chiefly to have the Tenant right for the benefit of my posterity'. He evidently could foresee how London would grow and expand.

In the following March King William III and Queen Mary granted to Richard Powys and John Taylor, who were Clerks at the Treasury and acting as Lowndes' trustees, a lease of all this London land for 99 years, with a ground rent of 13 shillings and four-pence for King Street and Carnaby Street, and the same again for Spittlefields, this rent to be paid to the Exchequer at Michaelmas. This lease permitted the construction of an unlimited number of houses.

#### LAND IN OTHER PARTS OF BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

Reference has already been made to purchases at Broughton and Stoke Mandeville, with Margaret Atcherley's portion, and Lowndes' own purchase at Nether Shendley.

In 1709 Lowndes bought Carter Lane Grounds, Pitchcott, from a widow, Sarah Horton, and her son and grandson for £2450. Today this is a large dairy farm, and presumably it was grazing land 300 years ago. Then in 1716 he bought the farm of 107 acres at Barton Hartshorn from a widow, Mary Fall, and others, for £1300.

In 1713 Lowndes bought land at Walton, Bierton & Stoke Mandeville for £2661 1s 4d from Joseph Newell. This included the 'liberty' to dig for brick clay, which must account for the high price. 134 acres at Stoke Mandeville were bought the same year from John Dunstan, and the next year 24 acres from Richard Reding for £400.

#### NORTH BUCKS

Towards the end of his life Lowndes made a number of large purchases in the north of Buckinghamshire. Some of these purchases are described in great detail in the third of the survey rolls. This

series of purchases was triggered by the marriage in 1711 of Lowndes' second son, William, to Margaret Layton.

In anticipation of the marriage, Lowndes and Thomas Layton, father of Margaret, put £2000 and £1500 respectively in the hands of Charles Hosier and Thomas Jett (Lowndes' son-in-law through his second wife) as trustees, to be spent on land. When, in 1715, the estate of Astwoodbury was identified as suitable, Lowndes and Thomas Layton provided a further £1200 and £1000 respectively, to enable the estate to be bought for the considerable sum of £5700<sup>8</sup>.

Writing some decades later, the antiquarian Browne Willis, described the mansion house of Astwoodbury as one of the finest mansions in the county<sup>9</sup>, but only a tower or dovecote remains today. In addition the purchase included four farmhouses, some 360 acres of arable land or pasture (including 82 acres in an area of pasture called Kowfield, recently enclosed) and some 17 acres of woods. The whole estate was entailed in the male line to Lowndes' son William and his children.

Some years later, in May 1718, Lowndes bought the second manor of North Crawley, known as Broughtons Manor. This was bought from two of the daughters of Bernard Gregory and their sons, for £2756. The estate consisted of the manor house, a cottage, a mill and a total of 154 acres, mainly enclosed but with 15 acres in the common fields. The land was distributed in North Crawley, Filgrave, Tyringham, Emberton, and Hardmead.

1720 saw the purchase of Hollowes Manor and Broadmead Farm, described as 'late Robinsons', with a complicated history. The purchase included some 170 acres in North Crawley and Moulsoe, mainly enclosed but with 66 acres dispersed in the common fields of North Crawley, and Thurseley Wood with a separate title. The whole cost £2055.

The same year saw the purchase of a house and 3 fields, totalling 15 acres, at Ringtail or Broadmead. These were bought from Mistress Susan Smith for £288 5s.

Then in 1723, the year before his death, Lowndes bought the Crawley Grange estate, his largest purchase of all. This included the largest house in the parish of North Crawley, built by a former rector, Dr Roger Hackett<sup>10</sup>. Perhaps because old age was catching up with him, this is the only purchase not recorded by Lowndes in the survey rolls, but the original conveyance exists in the

archive of the Boswell family, who owned Crawley Grange until recently. The agreement was between William Temple of North Crawley and the Hon Alexander Denton of Hillesden, Justice of the Court of Common Pleas; Sir Nicholas Carew of Beddington in Surrey and William Hezzer of Inner Temple; and William Lowndes and Thomas ??? of Somerset House. £3376 5s was paid to Denton by direction of Temple and £8123 15s was paid to Sir Peter King, Knight and Lord Justice of Common Pleas, making a total purchase price of £11,500, an enormous sum for this date. The quadripartite Indenture of Bargain and Sale lists all the lands involved, situated in North Crawley, Astwood, Chicheley and Newport Pagnell. Only 10 days before his death Lowndes entailed the Crawley Grange estate to his grandson Richard, the eldest son Robert's eldest son, perhaps to keep it out of the hands of his spendthrift son Robert.

Unfortunately only the purchase price, and not the acreage was extracted from the Boswell's indenture, but, assuming that the estate was of broadly the same character as Astwoodbury, which cost half as much, we can estimate the acreage at perhaps 750 acres.

Excluding the contributions from Thomas Layton, Lowndes invested a total of £20,099 5s in land in this area around North Crawley, all in the space of less than ten years.

#### TOTAL PURCHASES

Lowndes purchases can be summarised:

TABLE 3 William Lowndes' Total Purchases of Land

	<i>Acre</i> s	£
Winslow	1119	21496
North Bucks	1466	20099
Chesham & nearby	532	8548
Elsewhere in Bucks	363	7661
Kent	90	1211
London	22	900
<i>Total</i>	3592	59915

To this total must be added the money spent on building Winslow Hall, £6585. In addition Lowndes rebuilt The Bury in 1716, and earlier he built the Tithe barn at Winslow, now a private

house. No building accounts survive for these, but The Bury was built as a comparatively small house, so the two together might be assumed to have cost perhaps £1400, giving an overall total of £8000 on newly built houses.

Lowndes' 1709 notebook<sup>11</sup> refers to new building work carried out that year. At Winslow there was work on a new farmyard, costing £11 11s, and at Chesham there was work on the house itself costing £7 5s 6d while £12 19s 3¼d was spent on a new brick garden wall. He also spent £28 16s 3d on the house at Winslow, mainly on painting the house, (despite it being his son Robert who lived there), and £17.4.8½ on 'ordinary repairs' elsewhere. Together these total nearly £78. If we assume this annual level of expenditure on property was typical of the period from 1700 (when Winslow Hall was completed) until Lowndes' death in 1724, this gives another £1870 spent on property.

In short, by summing the purchase prices, the building costs and additional annual costs, we may conclude that Lowndes spent an overall total of around £70,000 on property. With the somewhat speculative assumption of a multiple of 120, we may estimate that, at today's prices, Lowndes spent a total of some £8.4 million on land and buildings. That is surely an impressive amount for a man who had no inherited wealth from which to launch his purchases.

#### RENTAL INCOME

The lands Lowndes purchased produced a significant rental income. We have records of his total rental income in the 1709 Notebook, in a list of his rents in 1713 from the Aylesbury area<sup>12</sup>, and at the end of his life, in 1722, a listing – in an old man's writing – of all his rents, with details of the make-up of the Winslow and Chesham figures<sup>13</sup>.

By putting his Winslow purchases before 1703 into Robert's Settlement, Lowndes gave up the income on some 770 acres. After that he would have only received income from property not in the settlement.

The actual house at The Bury was never let, but it was used by Lowndes throughout his life.

By 1709, with Lowndes' further purchases, the total of rents had risen to £289 15s 6d, with the addition of a rent of nearly £60 from Dungrove Farm, £9 from the additional 22 acres he had bought adjacent to Grove Farm, and numerous

TABLE 4 William Lowndes' Rental income in 1703

	£
Farmland at The Bury	50
Grove Farm, Chesham	45
Knightsbridge	30
King St & Carnaby St	?
Romney Marsh	37 approx
<i>Total, say</i>	£175

small rents from further purchases at Winslow.

In 1713 Lowndes received further additional rents totalling £143 13s 6d from the properties bought in the Aylesbury area that year, which by 1722 had risen to £150.

He summarised the 1722 rents as follows:

TABLE 5 William Lowndes' Rental income in 1722 'My Reall Estate per annum'

	£.s.d
At Winslow	204.1.11
Chesham	326.0.6
Romney Marsh	53.6.8
Pitchcot	110.0.0
Knightsbridge	70.0.0
Walton & Aylesbury	150.0.0
Barton Hartshorn	90.0.0
North Crawley	204.10.0
<i>Total</i>	1,208.8.7

However, he splits the Winslow figure into £172 11s 11d actually received (with the details of the amount paid by each tenant), and the rest, again itemised, relates to properties 'which I permit to be enjoyed', presumably rent-free, with a notional total of £31 10s. It is clear from the names that a number of his Winslow tenants are in fact the people from whom the properties were originally bought.

Again the Chesham rents divide into those actually received, totalling £265 10s, and the balance of notional rents relating to the unlet land. The latter includes Garrards (Goddards) Wood, the woods (but not the arable land) at Millfield and 8 acres of wood at Grove Farm. The rest of the land kept in hand included '5 acres sowed with wheat in Dungrove field'.

So as Lowndes purchases continued, his rental



income became an increasing part of his total income.

#### A HANDS-ON LANDOWNER

Despite being more than fully occupied at the Treasury, Lowndes also found time to take a very practical interest in those of his land-holdings that were not let.

In the 1709 notebook he records on several occasions in some detail how he marked and numbered trees that should be felled the following winter. On 27 September he notes 'I marked at Millfield 30 beeches, 6 asp<sup>s</sup><sup>14</sup> and 1 ash to be feld (sic) in the ensuing winter and they are numbered'. 100 beeches and 3 asp<sup>s</sup> were marked at 'Charteridge' – presumably in Goddards Wood – as were 11 ash and 43 beech in the 5 acre wood at The Grove, and 1 ash in the hedge of Spring Close.

The woodman James was paid a pound for 'a year's looking to Gorrets/Goddards wood' and 6s 8d for felling 10 loads of timber, while £5 was advanced to Nich. Statham (possibly Lowndes' Chesham agent or manager) for a cow. Two scythes and brooms and two baskets together cost 15s 3d. The detail set out in the 1709 record of expenditure is surprising, and this meticulous attention to detail must have resulted from his years of careful accounting at the Treasury.

#### FOR THE FUTURE

Just as Lowndes had been meticulous in recording his property transactions, so he made meticulous plans as to what should happen to his estate when he died. This is set out in his Will.<sup>5</sup>

The Will starts by ordering that he should be buried in the vault he had made in the chancel of Winslow church. Sadly there is now no evidence of this in the church today, nor indeed is there any memorial to him at all. This is presumably because, when Winslow church was 'restored' by James Oldrid Scott in Victorian times, the Lowndes family was no longer living at Winslow Hall, but at Whaddon, and they were not really concerned as to what happened in the church at Winslow.

The Will then confirms the effect of the many settlements Lowndes had made in his lifetime:-

- a. The settlement of 1703 on the marriage of Robert settling on him and his male heirs
- b. Winslow Hall, the Manor & Rectory of Winslow and land in that area;
- b. The settlement of 1711 on the marriage of his son William, used in the purchase of Astwood-bury;
- c. The settlements of 1703 and 1705 on his daughters Anne and Elizabeth, by then deceased, and laid out on land;
- d. The settlement of 1712 on his surviving wife Rebecca of land in the Chesham area, for her widowhood, and then for Charles, her eldest living son;
- e. The settlement of 1712 of the land in London and Kent on Charles;
- f. The settlement of 1715 of land in the Aylesbury area, initially on Edward and Henry, but now, since they had died, for Charles;
- g. The settlements of 1712 and 1716 of Carter Lane Grounds, Pitchcott, and Barton Hartshorn, on Richard and Joseph respectively.

Next, lands recently bought at North Crawley and Moulsoe are bequeathed to William the younger, while land recently purchased in the Chesham area is bequeathed to Rebecca for life, and then to Charles, and land recently bought in the Aylesbury area to Charles.

All the copyhold lands, whether in the Winslow area, or at Chesham are bequeathed to his Trustees Charles Shales (Rebecca's brother) and Samuel Swithin. They held it under the terms of an earlier settlement for Robert and his heirs in the male line. In the event, a century or more later the Selby-Lowndes who was then Robert's descendent passed the Chesham copyholds to the Chesham branch of the family.

Robert receives arrears of rent owing at Lowndes' death at Winslow, Rebecca those at Chesham, William at North Crawley, Charles in Kent, London and Aylesbury, Richard at Pitchcott and Joseph at Barton Hartshorn. Lowndes also releases Robert from all his outstanding debts to his father.

Charles receives all the books 'in my new Closet at Chesham', except for one copy of Rymer's *Foedera* which goes to Richard.

Gifts of personal items in his lifetime are confirmed. Rebecca receives the coach, chariot and horses, and other personal items not bequeathed by the Will, including 'my large Diamond Ring', together with £300 of ready money for immediate expenses.

Charles is to receive £500 immediately and Richard and Joseph the same when they reach 21, and there are to be portions of £3000 for his daughters Clara, Sarah and Mary. Clara actually received hers before her father's death, on her marriage in 1723, in Chesham church. Mary (and Joseph) were ultimately buried in the chancel of Chesham church. Lowndes' 20 grandchildren each received £300, the boys at 21 and the girls at 21 or marriage if earlier.

The details of entailing the remainder in the male line are spelt out at great length. The executors are to be Charles Shales, Lowndes' sons-in-law Thomas Jett and John Duncombe, and Richard Hill, uncle of Robert's wife, and possibly the same Richard Hill as had been Paymaster of the Forces in Flanders.

Pecuniary legacies therefore totalled nearly £14,000, to which must be added perhaps £2,000 for chattels, and Robert's cancelled debts might total £1–2,000. We have already deduced Lowndes spent some £70,000 on land and buildings, so taken together Lowndes' estate at the time of his death must have been in the region of £90,000. This is a large sum, but not excessive, in comparison with the fortunes of some of those implicated in the South Sea Bubble. It was in the very year that Lowndes' Will was signed that he was in large part responsible for resolving the problems arising out of the collapse of the speculative Bubble.<sup>15</sup>

The Will was dated 7 March 1721 and subsequent codicils dealt with land bought between then and Lowndes' death in 1724, and with Clara's marriage.

#### LOWNDES THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LANDOWNER

It is Winslow with which Lowndes is chiefly remembered today. But, because of his settlement of the estate there on Robert, almost as soon as the new house was built, Lowndes actually spent much of the remainder of his life – when not in London –

at Chesham. In view of the small size of The Bury after rebuilding, and presumably before, Chesham was not really a family home. His large family must have been brought up mainly in the various London houses he rented, in Princes Court, Broad Sanctuary and Chapel Street<sup>16</sup>. They also lived for part of the time in Tunbridge Wells, and some of the children had been born in Edmonton.

So William Lowndes should perhaps be seen at least in part as an absentee Buckinghamshire landowner, rather than a true Buckinghamshire resident.

#### NOTES

1. D/LO/4/1–3
2. Formerly in the library of the Bucks Archaeological Society and now in the County Record Office at D/X/1435.
3. Lowndes' father Robert (1619–1683) had originally owned land in the Winslow area, but at the time of the Civil War he sold up, and travelled to America to join relatives there. After the execution of Charles I he returned to Winslow before William was born.
4. See *Records of Bucks*, Vol 12
5. D/LO/6/2/1
6. D/LO/4/6
7. D/LO/4/2
8. D/LO/4/3
9. Browne Willis, *History of the Town, Hundred and Deanery of Buckingham*, London 1755
10. Victoria County History
11. D/X/1435
12. D/LO/4/40
13. D/LO/4/39
14. The OED defines an asp as a poplar tree with especially tremulous leaves.
15. John Carswell, *The South Sea Bubble*, Alan Sutton, 1993
16. These can be identified from the Poor Rate books