

People were cheated out of their inheritance, for example when John Shyming married the daughter and heir of Johan Clerk, after the mother died John had to buy the land from Spicer which he should have inherited. An executor was unable to sell a tenement in accordance with the deceased's will without Spicer's approval, and presumably a bribe of some sort.

It appears that the complainants against Spicer were dredging up all they could against him, and it was common in Tudor times to overstate charges in court. So we must regard some of the above with suspicion.

The inhabitants 'worse troubled' by Willoughby

The Chantry dedicated to St. Mary was closed along with all such institutions in 1547, so complaints against Willoughby concerning the Chantry lands post-dated the other ones. Clearly an order made in the court of Star Chamber had not been observed by Willoughby and the inhabitants were 'worse troubled' by him. He had held a manorial court and unjustly seized the copyholds of Thomas Manning and others. He had also leased the Chantry lands to John Sawyer and ploughed up the lands of the church.

Spicer had allowed Sawyer to run 1,000 sheep, and Thomas Harman 200 sheep, on the town fields. Spicer and Sawyer had ploughed up various ways leading to Gedgrave Chapel. A new charge was added. James Coo, with the help of various inhabitants, had carried his boat to the Haven, but Spicer had arranged for two men to cut the cable so that the anchor was lost.¹¹

Clearly things got no better between the townspeople and Lord Willoughby of Parham, created baron in 1547. John Spilwater, Robert Pawling, John Mansall, Alexander Dame and others made an appeal in Star Chamber to the Lord Chancellor, who was Bishop of Winchester. Stephen Gardiner was reinstated by Queen Mary upon her accession to the throne in 1553, having been deprived and held in the Tower during Edward VI's reign.

Willoughby had ignored an earlier ruling, and the inhabitants were unable to enjoy the liberties and privileges that had appertained before the present Lord Willoughby became manorial lord 15 years before. There were three main charges, that Willoughby had interfered with the election of burgesses, he had let the Chantry lands to John Sawyer who had ploughed

them, and Spicer had granted privileges to Sawyer in the shack time.¹²

On the last day of September 1554 Sir William Drury and Clement Higham esquire took depositions from 16 men, all except two from Orford, regarding an event that had taken place the previous 7th January. They were commanded by the Court of Chancery to look into a dispute between Thomas Spicer and Robert Pawling, the former charging the latter with false imprisonment.

All the deponents, mostly mariners but also a butcher, a fishmonger, a smith, two husbandmen and a labourer, were sworn, examined and asked seven questions and all agreed what had happened in Orford Church nine months before. They were present when, after the service was finished, Spicer arrested Pawling in the Queen's name by virtue of a writ. However Pawling told Spicer he would not obey him, nor his writ, nor 'no such false knave as he was'.

Two other inhabitants, Thomas Manning and John Spylwater, said it was 'well done' to set Spicer 'by the feet for breaking of their liberties'. Thereupon Pawling took Spicer by the arm and led him towards the stocks, saying that he was the Queen's officer and Spicer but a lord's bailiff. There were questions about what else was said and by whom, where the stocks were situated and finally what they knew about Spicer being placed in the stocks during the 'rebellion' of 1549.

The story takes on an element of farce when, having reached the stocks, they were found to be broken. One deponent elaborated, saying that John Markant lifted the broken stocks and said, 'Bayly, if thou wilt, thou shalt set in them' and Pawling added, 'if they may hold, thou should sit in them indeed'. Then Pawling let Spicer go, but the latter said, 'so thou art my prisoner and I will have thee unless thou wilt find me surety'. Whereupon Pawling cast off his gown, laid hand on his dagger, and went his way.

Most of the deponents were aware that Spicer had been placed in the stocks for three days and nights in 1549 during the 'campyng time', but only some of the eldest knew that Thomas Manning and John Spylwater were the instigators. A few regarded those taking part in the rebellion were indulging in 'naughty acts', adding that Spicer did not consent