

The rules again:

3. The Triennial General Meeting is and shall be held in the month of June in each third year.....Special meetings may be convened by the Chairman and Secretary upon a request by the Committee or by four freeholders of the said Parish....

The remainder of the rules define the powers of committees and indicate how decisions will be taken.

The Manor Court in the Future

The judgement of people I have consulted is that the trend in this area will be towards larger and larger farms and, therefore, fewer farming freeholders. The number of resident freeholders in the settlements in the Parish is relatively small. The actual land holdings of the Manor Court, I have discovered, are extremely difficult to define in terms of boundaries. In some cases, it seems, the only clue is a certain marker stone and once that has gone from living memory, the boundary is lost. There are no definitive maps and no registered title. I have included on a separate sheet the results of the painstaking researches made from County Field Records by Les Smith. This was made in the 1970s and shows the acreages, rods, perches etc. of the holdings and includes land in Greenholme which does not appear on the 1972 schedule. I was informed by one resident, a retired parish councillor, that a large local estate had managed to successfully register title to the land and it had been lost to the Manor Court.

There is, in relation to a current planning application, a challenge from the highways authority regarding the ownership of the wide verges to which reference has already been made.

John Dunning, current chair of the Manor Court, said at the last Triennial General Meeting that there was only one other Manor Court still functioning in England. Many have been subsumed in the past by Parish Councils. Who can say therefore whether the Manor Court of Orton will survive well into the foreseeable future. The little parcels of land will be vulnerable to absorption into neighbouring properties, buildings require expensive maintenance.

Only the future will tell but it would seem to be a shame if this last surviving, and currently very effective, relic of an ancient system should disappear.

P. R. Dunford, Berwyn House, 1998