

VICTORIAN HISTORY OF MOSTON



Title	Brook Farm, Clay Lane, Elton
Type	Farm & Land
Date Produced	22 nd February 2025
Internal Reference	E04P
1840 Owner	Lord Crewe
1840 Occupier	Matthew Hassall
Tithe Map Apportionments	Many – See Appendix
1840 Area	118.1 Acres



Brook Farm 2025 from Clay Lane Flashes

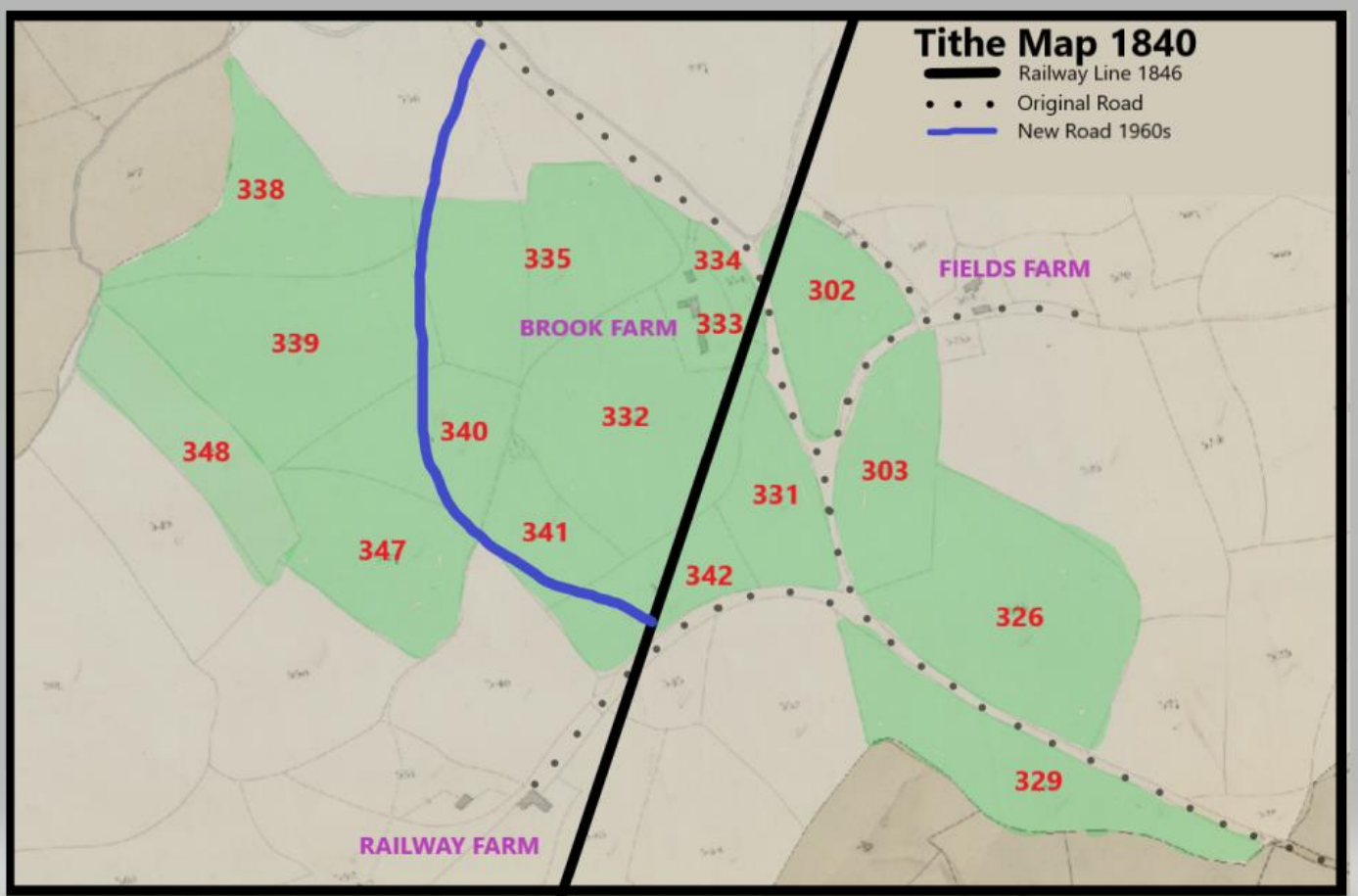


When the 1840 tithe map was taken, Brook Farm was under some uncertainty where for a five year period, there were a string of tenants effectively keeping it going while Lord Crewe found a long term tenant.

By 1841 this issue was resolved when the 38 year old and recently married Joseph Billington (1801-1883) took over and he was to stay there for the rest of his life with his wife Margaret

Tenant	Year	Value
and Sander	1836-1837	111.1
Sam. Oliver for the above	1837-1838	111.1
	1838-1839	111.1
Matthew Hasfall for the above	1839-1840	111.1
John Martin for part of the above Farm	1840-1841	111.1
Joseph Billington for the above	1841-1842	111.1

Crewe Estate Account Book Cheshire Archives DCR-59-2-23



At this time, Brook Farm comprised 88 acres occupying a central space in the southern part of Elton. I think it would be fair to say that history has been pretty cruel to the farm. Firstly in the 1840's the railway was built going through the middle of the farm then perhaps more significantly some 70 years later it was subject to the impact of subsidence caused by salt mining with many of the smaller flashes forming on its land.s

At around this time, the original "Brook House" also had to be demolished, again due to the effects of subsidence due to mining. In the 1960's to rub salt into the wounds 😊, the new Clay Lane road to replace the old submerged old road again went right through the middle of the property. Despite all these set backs, Brook Farm still today remains as a large working farm.

The Crewe Estate records confirm Matthew Hassall was “tenant at will” in 1840-41. There is a side note that the farm rent was in arrears at the end of the financial year (but repaid shortly afterwards) and that some of the lands were let to four other local farmers.

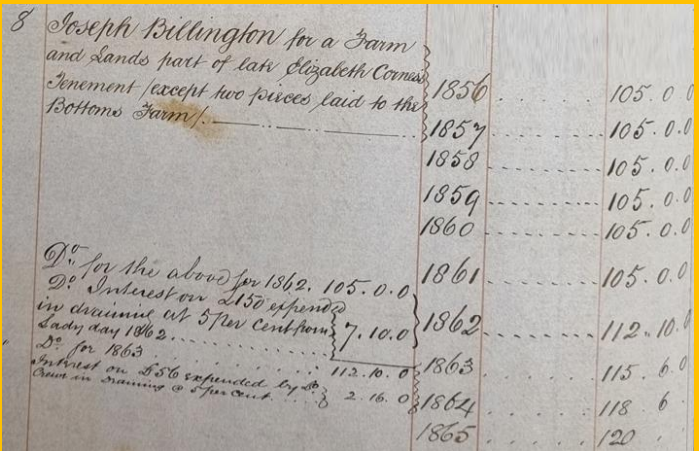
6	A Farm and Lands part of late Elizabeth Cornes' Tenement	82.2.21	Matthew Hassall	183.2.6	01.11.3	15 Mar 1841
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Crewe Estate Annual Account Cheshire Archives DCR-59-5-074 1840-41

6	A Farm and Lands part of late Elizabeth Cornes' Tenement (except two pieces let to John Williamson)	73.1.0	Joseph Billington late Matthew Hassall	112.0.0		
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Crewe Estate Annual Account Cheshire Archives DCR-59-5-075 1841-42

A year later it can be seen that Joseph Billington’s lease was now in place with the size of the farm being reduced somewhat with 9 acres being passed to John Williamson of Bottom’s Farm in Warmingham. Given the location, this probably related to plots 347 and 348 . The farm size stayed at 73 acres 1 rood for the rest of Joseph Billington’s time at the farm. Rent started at £112 per annum but was reduced on Lady Day 1851 to £105 with no reason given beyond a note to recognise the fact.

<p>In the late 1850, 2 acres of Elm Tree Farm in Elton were given up to the Cheshire & North Wales Drainage Company and Lord Crewe began a programme of increasing the quality of the land.</p> <p>Work was completed on Brook Farm during the period 1862 to 1866 with overall costs of £300. These costs were recouped by Lord Crewe in the long run by increasing the Rent by 5% of the costs incurred bringing the total up to £120 pa</p>		 <p>Crewe Estate Account Book Cheshire Archives DCR-59-2-25</p>				
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At about the same time, the country was stricken by a bout of the Cattle Plague, (Similar to Foot and Mouth disease). Cheshire was hit particularly badly by the disease and as a consequence (although he wasn’t obliged to do so), Lord Crewe allowed a 25% reduction in rent from his tenant farmers for the years 1865 and 1866. As such, the rent increase to £120 only effectively took place from 1867-68

Twenty years later, Lord Crewe gave his tenants a 10% allowance (£12 for Mrs Billington) as a result of the agricultural depression that was beginning to affect British farming as a result of the repealing of the Corn Law Act in 1846. It took 40 years to have this effect on Lord Crewe but ultimately led to the sale of the estate when cheaper imports from America made it very difficult for the British farming industry.

No.	Description of Property.	Quantity.			Tenants' Names.	Arrears.	Yearly Rent.	Total.	Net Cash received.	Allowances in consequence of agricultural depression &c.
		A.	R.	P.						
8	Farm and Lands	73	1		Joseph Billington's Repd.		120	120	108	12

Crewe Estate Annual Account Cheshire Archives DCR-59-5-122 1886-87

1841 England Census for Joseph Billington

Cheshire > Warmingham > Sandbach > District 21

Brook House Farm	1	Joseph Billington	Head	Mar	33	Farmer	2
		Margaret do	Wife	Mar	31		2

1851 England Census for Joseph Billington

Cheshire > Elton > Sandbach > 13

2 Brook House Farm	1	Joseph Billington	Head	Mar	43	Farmer	Cheshire Acton
		Margaret Billington	Wife	Mar	40		do Wyburning

1861 England Census for Joseph Billington

Cheshire > Elton > Sandbach > District 17

Brook House Farm	1	Joseph Billington	Head	Mar	53	Farmer of 67 acres	Cheshire Acton
		Margaret Billington	Wife	Mar	51	Farmer's Wife	do Wyburning
		Mary Moorcroft	Daughter in Law	Widow	74	Proprietor of House	do do

1871 England Census for Joseph Billington

Cheshire > Elton > ALL > 18

Brook Farm	1	Joseph Billington	Head	Mar	63	Owner of 67 acres (including 20 acres of land)	Cheshire Acton
		Margaret do	Wife	Mar	60	Farmer's Wife	do Wyburning

1881 England Census for Joseph Billington

Cheshire > Elton > ALL > District 18

Brook Farm	1	Joseph Billington	Head	Mar	73	Owner of 67 acres & 100 acres of land	Cheshire Acton
		Margaret do	Wife	Mar	70	Farmer's Wife	do Wyburning

National Archives : 1841-1881 Census Brook Farm

During this period, Joseph always seemed to have 2 servants and with a farm of roughly 70 acres (One of the 9 large farms in Elton at the time), he would certainly be utilising the agricultural labour available from the many cottages found nearby at Longfold.

BURGLARY.

George Davenport alias Isaac Bennett, labourer, Manchester, aged 28, was charged with breaking into the dwelling-house of Joseph Billington, at Elton, and stealing therefrom 4lbs. of bacon and other articles, on the 3rd of June last.

Mr. Henry Latham appeared for the prosecution; the prisoner was undefended.

The prosecutor deposed that he went to bed on the night in question leaving the house fast, but in the morning it was found a window had been opened, and 4lbs. of bacon were gone.

James Charlesworth said, I am a labourer in the service of Mr. Billington. On Tuesday morning, the 14th June, about a quarter before five, I met the prisoner about a quarter of a mile from my master's house. He was going from the house towards Northwich. He spoke to me and said he was very thirsty as he had been drunk overnight. I took him into a public-house to have a glass of ale. When there I saw a piece of bacon in his pocket.

Henry Moors, watchman at Vickers' bone works, deposed that, on Tuesday, the 14th June, the prisoner gave him a piece of bacon which was found to fit into the flitch belonging to the prosecutor.

Chester Courant 10th Aug 1859 – Prisoner found guilty and imprisoned for four years due to previous convictions

THE REV. PETER MACKENZIE AT SANDBACH.

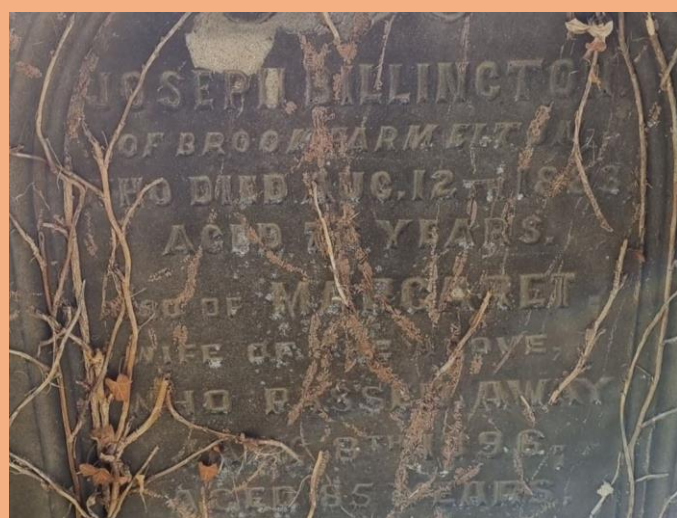
On Tuesday the Rev. Peter Mackenzie, the well-known preacher and lecturer, paid a visit to Sandbach. In the afternoon, at three o'clock, he preached an impressive sermon in the Wesleyan Chapel, Middlewich Road, to a large congregation.

Alderley Advertiser 20th Nov 1880

The proceeds of the collection in the afternoon amounted to £5 16s 2d; proceeds of the tea and lecture, £25 12s 10d; and the Chairman received a cheque from Mr Joseph Billington, of Brook Farm, Elton, for £5, making a total of £36 9s.

From reviewing the census returns and parish records it is also clear that Joseph and Margaret never had any children. Joseph Billington died in 1883 and was buried at Warmingham St Leonard with his wife. In his will, he left legacies of £50 to the executors and the estate was left to be split equally between 2 nephews John & William, neice Elizabeth and a member of his wife's family. This was all subject to the usual life tenancy to his wife Margaret who outlived him by a further 13 years.

This is the last Will and Testament
of me Joseph Billington of the Brook Farm Elton near Sandbach in
the County of Chester Farmer I direct all my just debts funeral and testamentary
expenses to be paid and discharged by my executors hereinafter named as soon
as conveniently may be after my decease and subject thereto I give devise and be
queath all my real leasehold and personal estate whatsoever and wheresoever
unto my wife Margaret Billington, John Scragg of Elton aforesaid Farmer and
John Charles Billington of Elton aforesaid Farmer their heirs executors administra
tors and assigns (hereinafter referred to as my said trustees) Upon trust to permit
my said Wife to have the absolute use and unlimited control of the same so long
as she shall live And I declare that my said Trustees shall permit my said wife
to receive the rents dividends and interest arising therefrom and shall at the request
of my said Wife sell and convert into money the whole or any part of my said
real leasehold and personal estate and pay the proceeds arising from such sale



Warmingham Church MI

10 October. The Will of Joseph Billington late of the Brook Farm Elton near Sandbach in the County of **Chester** Farmer who died 12 August 1883 at the Brook Farm was proved at the **Principal Registry** by Margaret Billington of the Brook Farm Widow the Relict and John Scragg and John Charles Billington both of Elton Farmers the Executors.

After his death, despite her age, it does appear that Margaret carried on to manage the farm with the added luxury of an additional servant! Her executor John Charles Billington farmed over the road at Elton Hall and though there is no obvious link, they must surely have been somehow related. John Scragg of Fields Farm was a cousin to Joseph

1891 England Census for Margt Billington

Cheshire > Elton > ALL > District 18

Margt Billington	Head	Wid.	81	Elton
John Thomas	Serv.	Ma	34	Elton
Mary do	do	M	28	Elton
Charles Charles	do		14	Elton

National Archives 1891 Census

BILLINGTON Margaret of Elton Cheshire widow died 8 January 1896 Probate **London** 11 September to John Charles Billington farmer Effects £27 2s. 8d.

By the time of her death in 1896, there was very little left in the kitty so to speak...."you come into the world with nothing and you leave with nothing"

Richard had married Ann Scragg in 1896 whose father Henry lived at Elton Villa, effectively a next door neighbour. Brook Farm hence became available to him at just the right time to start his married life and I am sure the Crewe Estate Manager Mr McCracken would have been more than happy to recommend him to Lord Crewe to take on the tenancy.

1901 England Census for Richd W Oulton											
Cheshire > Elton > Sandbach > District 18											
Brook Farm	1.			Richd W. Oulton.	Head	M.	30	10	Permanent Workman	-do-	
				Annie J.	Wife	M.	32.	11	Domestic	Employer.	
				Richard	Son		3.	12	✓		
				Minifred	Daughter		2	13	✓		
				George Scragg.	Serv.	S	17.	14	Agri. Cultivator	Labourer.	Worker
				Frances Spilbury	- do.	S	12	15	Servant (Domestic)	- do.	

National Archives 1901 Census

1911 England Census for Richard Whittaker Oulton									
Cheshire > Elton > ALL > 18									
Richard Whittaker Oulton	Head	41		Married	14	2	2	2	Fanner
Annie Jane Oulton	Wife		42	Married	14	3	2	1	Fanner's Wife
Richard Oulton	Son	13							
Winifred Oulton	Daughter		12						

National Archives 1911 Census

Summary of Land in the Township of Elton recently purchased by Messrs Markham & Co Ltd - Good and Forward - Chesterfield				
Farm	Buyer	Reut	Area Stat. Acres	Total Area
<u>Purchased from H. Weinstein - 9th Feb. 1917</u>				
Flash Farm	R. J. Oulton	Same as before	103.627	
Elton Hall	G. Willis	Same as before	85.309	189.936
<u>Purchased from Lord Ormsby - 8 Feb. 1917</u>				
Elton Hall Farm	John R. Whittaker	£100-0-0 Formerly occupied by F. Willis on East Side of Railway. Fields 372, 363, 362 and 357 now added to Railway Farm	61.261	
Elton Hall Farm	R. W. Oulton	Same as before Formerly occupied by F. Willis, on East Side of R. near Archers Field No 284. now added to Fields Farm	3.984	
Fields Farm	John Soragg (now R. W. Oulton)	Same as before	119.346	
Small Holdings	Arthur Nicholson Mrs. Gordon	Same as before	6.388	
Railway Farm	John R. Whittaker	Same as before	96.355	
Brooke Farm	R. W. Oulton (now Peter Jones)	Same as before	68.536	
Bottoms Farm	Mrs. Johnson	Same as before	36.726	
Yeowoods Farm	W. Hassell (now R. W. Oulton)	- " -	8.272	400.868
Total Land in the Township of Elton - Stat. Acres			590.804	

4 W. North. Dept.
John Arch. Markham
Midd. & Co.

7. July 1917

It was Richard who was in situ at the farm when Lord Crewe decided to sell off the estate. Unlike many of the properties in Elton, it was never put up for auction, presumably due to the issues with subsidence and it was sold privately to Markham and Co who later sold to the British Soda Company who then retained the salt mining rights in the area.

The Salt company then leased the farms in general back to the tenants who were there at the time though it appears that at this stage Richard moved to Fields Farm on the other side of the railway and a Peter Jones took over at Brook Farm.

Some time later, the Hancock family took over the lease and they have been there ever since, eventually purchasing it in the 1987 when British Soda finished their interests in the area. Gilbert Hancock retired in 1954 and the farm passed to his brother's family

Schedule of Farms sold to Marckham and Co 1917

Chronological List of Owners and Occupiers

Year	Source	First Name	Surname	Lived	Age	Years in Situ	Years at Property	Acres	Rent	Occupation	Status	Other
1660	Poll Tax	Alice	Furnival							Farmer	Lifehold	Widow
1676	Crewe Rentals	Widow	Furnival						£0.5.0	Farmer	Lifehold	
1696	Crewe Rentals	Ralph	Furnival						£1.7.0	Farmer	Lifehold	
1708	Crewe Rentals	William	Furnival	-1727						Farmer	Lifehold	
1721	Crewe Rentals	William	Furnival	-1727					£1.7.8	Farmer	Lifehold	
1735	Crewe Rentals	Mrs	Furnival							Farmer	Lifehold	
1746	Crewe Lease	William	Hewitt	1713-1782	33	1713-1782	23		£2.3.8	Farmer	Lifehold	Leasehold 3 lives
1764	Crewe Estate	William	Hewitt	1713-1782	51					Farmer	Lifehold	
1766	Wyatt Survey	John	Crewe	1742-1839	21	n/a	n/a			Gentleman	Owner	
1766	Wyatt Survey	William	Hewitt	1713-1782	53					Farmer	Lifehold	
1781	Land Tax	Richard	Lea	1716-1794	65	1770-1783	13			Farmer	Undertenant	
1782	Crewe Lease	Elizabeth	Hewitt	1725-1788	57	n/a	n/a			Spinster	Lifehold	of Nantwich, brother of William
1783	Land Tax	James	Lea	1725-1795	58	1783-1795	12			Farmer	Undertenant	Brother of Richard
1789	Crewe Estate	James	Lea	1725-1795	64				100	Farmer	Tenant	11 yr Rack Lease
1797	Land Tax	Joseph	Cornes	1764-1826	33	1795-1827	32		115	Farmer	Tenant	14 yr rack lease £130 after 7 yrs
1800	Crewe Estate	Joseph	Cornes	1764-1826	33					Farmer	Tenant	
1827	Land Tax	Elizabeth	Cornes	1770-1845	57	1827-1840	13		200	Farmer	Tenant	Widow of Joseph
1837	Crewe Estate	Samuel	Olliver				2			Farmer	Undertenant	or Farm Bailiff
1840	Crewe Estate	John	Machin				1			Farmer	Undertenant	or Farm Bailiff
1840	Tithe Map	Hungerford	Crewe	1812-1894	38	n/a	n/a			Gentleman	Owner	Grandson of John Crewe
1840	Tithe Map	Matthew	Hassall	1788-1847	52		1			Farmer	Undertenant	of Flash Farm, Elton. Bailiff?
1841	Census	Joseph	Billington	1808-1883	33	1840-1883	43		112	Farmer	Tenant	
1851	Census	Joseph	Billington	1808-1883	43				105	Farmer	Tenant	
1861	Census	Joseph	Billington	1808-1883	53			67	105	Farmer	Tenant	
1871	Census	Joseph	Billington	1808-1883	63			67	112	Farmer	Tenant	
1881	Census	Joseph	Billington	1808-1883	73			67	120	Farmer	Tenant	
1891	Census	Margaret	Billington	1810-1896	81	1883-1896	13	73	120	Farmer	Tenant	Widow of Joseph
1894	Crewe Estate	Robert Ashburton	Crewe-Milnes	1858-1945	36	n/a	n/a			Gentleman	Owner	Nephew of Hungerford Crewe
1901	Census	Richard Whittaker	Oulton	1869-1955	32	1896-1917	21	71		Farmer	Tenant	
1911	Census	Richard Whittaker	Oulton	1869-1955	42			71		Farmer	Tenant	
1917	Sale	Markham and	Company Ltd	n/a	n/a			68		Salt Mining	Owner	
1921	Census	Peter	Jones	1892-1959	29	1917-1926	9			Farmer	Tenant	
1925	Sale	British Soda	Company Ltd	n/a	n/a					Salt Mining	Owner	Connected to Markham & Co
1929	Electors Roll	Jesse	Jones	1882-1947	47	1926-1937	11			Farmer	Tenant	Brother of Peter
1939	Nat Register	Gilbert	Hancock	1901-1982	38	1937-1953	16			Farmer	Tenant	

Tithe Map Apportionments 1840

Township	Parish	Ref	Owner	Occupier	Name	A	R	P	Total Acres
Elton	Warmingham	302	Lord Crewe	Matthew Hassall	Sandy Croft	5	0	26	5.2
Elton	Warmingham	303	Lord Crewe	Matthew Hassall	Coppenhall Croft	5	0	23	5.1
Elton	Warmingham	326	Lord Crewe	Matthew Hassall	Big Coppenhall	10	2	5	10.5
Elton	Warmingham	329	Lord Crewe	Matthew Hassall	Stony Ridding	6	2	22	6.6
Elton	Warmingham	331	Lord Crewe	Matthew Hassall	Kendal Croft	4	1	0	4.3
Elton	Warmingham	332	Lord Crewe	Matthew Hassall	Barn Field	9	0	34	9.2
Elton	Warmingham	333	Lord Crewe	Matthew Hassall	House Garden and Yard	1	0	0	1.0
Elton	Warmingham	334	Lord Crewe	Matthew Hassall	Orchard	0	3	0	0.8
Elton	Warmingham	335	Lord Crewe	Matthew Hassall	Kiln Croft	9	1	37	9.5
Elton	Warmingham	338	Lord Crewe	Matthew Hassall	Great Meadow, Part of	6	1	4	6.3
Elton	Warmingham	339	Lord Crewe	Matthew Hassall	Head Berry	9	3	38	10.0
Elton	Warmingham	340	Lord Crewe	Matthew Hassall	John Field	4	0	23	4.1
Elton	Warmingham	341	Lord Crewe	Matthew Hassall	Woodhouse Croft	1	3	9	1.8
Elton	Warmingham	342	Lord Crewe	Matthew Hassall	Little Daylight	3	1	0	3.3
Elton	Warmingham	347	Lord Crewe	Matthew Hassall	Little Croft	5	3	18	5.9
Elton	Warmingham	348	Lord Crewe	Matthew Hassall	Brook Field	4	2	18	4.6