

The History of Moistown: Part 1 by Dr. Sylvia Warham c. February 2010

When we first moved to Broadwoodkelly in 2002, I wandered around the earthworks at Moistown and wondered why it was called 'Moistown'. Local people told me that it was called Moistown because the land was very wet down there, which was certainly true! However, over time and a great deal of searching, I discovered that Moistown acquired its name for very different reasons.



It was very wet at Moistown.



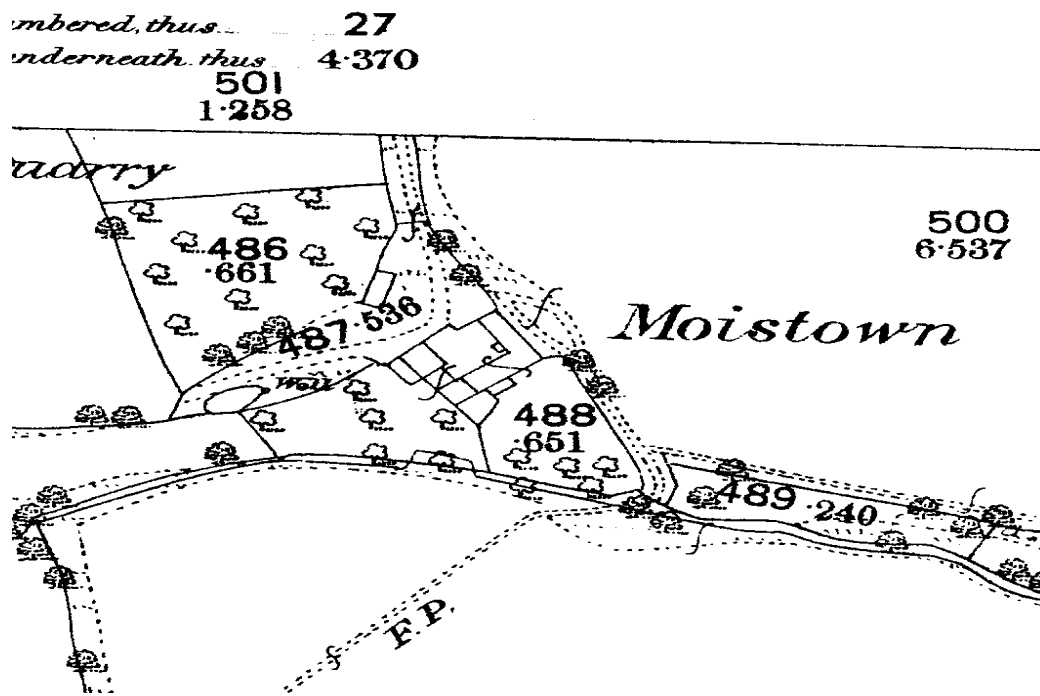
As early as 1301 we have a record of Roger Moys owning land and living in Broadwoodkelly. We have records showing that the Moys family lived in Broadwoodkelly for over two hundred years between 1301 and 1531. It was quite a large family and Michael Moys, who is recorded in Iddesleigh in 1586, was the father of another long line of the Moys or Moyse family. As I shall show later, the property for the first three hundred years of its life was simply called Moys after the Moys family.

However, over time the name changed and in various property deeds it was referred to as Moystown and Moystown Court. I later discovered that 'town' attached to a name in the Broadwoodkelly area was a corruption of 'Stone' and usually indicated a stone quarry. In Broadwoodkelly we have Barntown, Clarkestown and Moyestown all associated with stone quarries. At Moystown there is a quarry in the very next field to Moystown. We know that it was definitely a stone quarry and remained so for many years, because in the account books of William Harris, a wheelwright in Broadwoodkelly in the 1800's, he records collecting cartloads of stone from 'Moyestone'. It is very likely that some of the stone from the quarry was used in the building.



It is very likely that some of the stone was used in the building.

Local people told me that Moystown was a small settlement with just two cottages, but the 1887 Ordnance Survey map showed that this had not always been the case. Certainly as late as 1887 Moystown had been a reasonably sized house built around three sides of a courtyard. If you look closely you can see that there was a tree lined carriage drive which was over 100 metres long. The house was carefully laid out with two orchards and a tree lined pathway to the pond and well. This didn't look like a farm cottage. The footprint of the building was too large for that.



Moistown, Pattiland Farm , Broadwoodkelly on the 1887 Ordnance Survey map

The name in the deeds that really intrigued me was 'Moyestown Court'. In times gone by the name 'Court' was usually reserved for very grand properties. Was it possible tha Moistown had been a grand property, or was it merely a case that its owner at the time had 'grand ideas'?



All the indications seemed to point to the fact that Moistown had been a substantial house. . .

Looking at a later map dated 1944 we can see that only two wings of the house had survived. More importantly, the well worn track between Pattiland farmhouse, a much smaller property, and Moistown is quite significant. It was usual in medieval times for a manor house to be supported by a working farm. These working farms associated with larger properties are very common and many still exist today. They were often called names such as 'Manor Farm', 'Home Farm, and 'Park Farm'. More than likely Pattiland farm was one such farm, supporting the larger property at Moistown. With all the indications of a long sweeping carriage drive, a large footprint on the 1887 Ordnance Survey map, well laid out gardens and a supporting 'manor farm', all of the indications seemed to point to the fact that Moistown had been a substantial house.

Looking around the site of Moistown itself, at the dressed stone and especially the ancient trees lining the carriage drive, I came to the conclusion that not only had Moistown been a substantial house, but also, it was probably quite old.



Ancient trees line the carriage drive.



Moistown was probably quite old



In part two of this series I shall begin to explore just how old the house was.