NOTES AND NEWS

into France during the reign of Francis I (1494-1547), and it was named after his Queen. The British name Green-gage owes its supposed origin to the Gage family. Sir Thomas Gage of Hengrave Hall, near Bury St. Edmunds, obtained it from his brother, a Catholic priest living in Paris, at the beginning of the 18th century. Hogg refuted this and said that it must have existed in this country for considerably more than a century before this, and it is now thought that it was introduced into France before the time of Francis I. Simmonds gives more detail of the Gage family story.

The close similarity to the Reine-Claude plum poses the interesting speculation that the single Hereford stone may well represent an early accurate dating for that plum in this country. Next to the college of the vicars choral is the bishop’s garden, and the stone boundary-wall well antedates the college. Hereford Cathedral was a secular foundation, and had close associations with the continent all through the middle ages; even some of the stone used in 11th-century building is said to have come from Caen. After 1066 the abbeys of Lyre and Cormeilles in France were given endowments in the diocese of Hereford, and the abbots became ex-officio prebendaries of the cathedral, represented by vicars in the choir. In the hundred years before the building of the cloisters several bishops were connected with the continent, e.g. John Gilbert (1375-89) was often in France on state business, Robert Mascall (1404-16) went on various embassies to foreign courts and Thos. Poltone (1420-21) was consecrated in Florence. From the Norman conquest to the time of these bishops there were close links between the bishops and France, Flanders, Lorraine and Savoy.

J. T. WILLIAMS

PRIOR MORE’S FISHPONDS

Fishponds were a common amenity on large medieval lay and monastic estates, and a great many of them survive to this day. Fish was a much more important item of food in the middle ages and later than it now is; and fresh fish was very dear, in spite of prolific fish-production in the unpolluted waters of those days. The pond cultivation of fish was even financed by the London fishmongers. But little published material is available to tell us how they were managed and thus enable us to make some comparison with modern fish-culture. William More, prior of Worcester from 1518 to 1536, had several fishponds at his granges at Battenhall and Grimley (including Hallow), and he built a moat around his manor at Crowle in 1533 at a total cost of £8 19s. 3d. He kept a journal in which he gives itemized accounts of his expenditure on the ponds, and of the results obtained, which tell us something about their management.

In only one case, that of Crowle Moat, do we know the area of the pond. The identity of many of the other ponds is confused by changes of name, and the Worcestershire County Archivist kindly tells me that the named ponds cannot now be traced; Noakes could still see the outlines of several ponds at Lower Battenhall in 1866, though the newly-built railway crossed the site on an embankment. We can only infer that some of the ponds must have been small because they were emptied by baling out, while others must have been larger because the prior had boats on them.

Since the areas of the ponds are not known (with the exception of Crowle Moat) the

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13. I am grateful to Mr. F. C. Morgan for his interest, to Dr. D. F. Cutler of the Jodrell Laboratory, Kew, who confirmed the identification of hazel, and to Mrs. A. M. Withnall of the National Fruit Trials, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, for her comments on the plum-stone.
16. I am very grateful to Mr. R. Gilyard-Beer for drawing my attention to this fascinating journal.
NOTES AND NEWS

The rate of stocking with fish cannot be compared with that of modern ponds. Further, work on the ponds was done by two separate groups of men, namely, hired labourers (often Welshmen), whose pay was entered in the journal, and the prior's own grooms or servants, whose wages are lumped together in a consolidated monthly sum. The work done by the prior's servants can be inferred only by such items as extra footwear and clothing issued for this wet and muddy work, summaries of wages for jobs 'including the warke of my Nown servents', and occasional tips to them for extra diligent 'warke a Bowte ye poolez'. Clearly, however, the ponds could be fished by the prior's own staff without the need for any entry in the journal.

The stocking of the ponds

Table II (p. 121) shows that the ponds were stocked at two main periods—in summer, with eels, and in winter and early spring, with other fish. Most of the eels were stocked in the earlier years, and the prior did not stock any more after 1524. Perhaps, having stocked no fewer than 6,486 of these slow-growing fish (Table I) in six years, the prior felt that his supply was assured for several years ahead. The eels were mostly bought from John Wells, who was also a professional boatman and maker of wickerwork 'weles' or eel-traps. The eels were very cheap, at 50 for one penny; but in summer, when they are on the move, they are readily caught in traps. As Wells was able to supply 1,400 at a time, he must have had means of storing them against an order. The transport of the eels would be no problem, since they will live for many hours out of water, especially if packed in wet grass or straw. As stocked, they were described as 'store yeles', which probably means yellow eels of about edible size.

Table I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FISH STOCKED</th>
<th>FISH CAUGHT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Store yeles</td>
<td>6,486</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Store Tenches</td>
<td>2,254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Store Pickerels</td>
<td>318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Store Bremes</td>
<td>413</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Store Peerches</td>
<td>324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Store Rotches</td>
<td>1,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Store Grete yeles or good yeles</td>
<td>107+316 stores + many</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grete Tenches</td>
<td>275+324 stores + many yong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pike</td>
<td>119+many stores + gadds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bremes</td>
<td>62+many bremesklets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grete Peerches</td>
<td>123+grete number of small</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grete Rotches</td>
<td>52 rotches &amp; peerches</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table I shows that the next most popular fish was tench, and then pickerel. Last come perch and roach. Perch were cheap at about 18 for one penny, but tench and pickerel were expensive at 14d. to 3d. each. Pickerel are of edible size (the prior gave two to the bishop of Winchester) and become pike when grown to 3 lb. weight. Still larger specimens are called luce (Chaucer’s Franklin had ‘Many a breem and many a Luce in Stewe’). Pickerel gadds I have not been able to define, but the context suggests small pickerel.

All these fish were stocked as 'store yeles', 'store tench', etc. The word is ambiguous. The New English Dictionary defines 'store' as meaning either 'bought for fattening', or 'put by in reserve, laid up for future use'. 'Fleta', a combination of two tracts produced in 1289 for the instruction of bailiffs, advised the stocking of fishponds in autumn, the fish to be kept for use as required. Taverner also advised autumn stockings at Hollantide, or about 1 November. But Table II shows that Prior More stocked in spring, near the beginning of the growing season for fish; these fish would be well-grown by the following autumn and winter, and could also be fished as needed during the summer.

In 1612, the household treasurer of the earl of Rutland at Belvoir Castle patronized Paul Robinson, a fisherman who fished the Lincolnshire rivers, buying from him live 19 J. Taverner, Gentleman, Certaine Experiments concerning Fish and Fruits (Wm. Ponsonby, London, 1600), p. 6.
fish of two sizes, namely, larger fish for 'present service', and a smaller size for maturing in the domestic stewponds. The latter were described as 'for store'. The fish were pike, bream, tench and carp.

Lady Day, when More did most of his stocking, is still in the cold season, when fish can be handled without harm. Taverner wrote: 'The colder the weather is, when you handle your fish, the better; unless it be for such fish as you mean to spend presently. But a store fish being taken and handled in hot weather, will be sick, and not prosper long time after, and perhaps die thereof, though not presently.'

In most cases, More does not give the name of the suppliers of these store fish, but in the years 1528 to 1531 he gave several orders to Richard Stone of Ripple. This pleasant Severn-side village is about 13 miles from Hallow and Grimley, and 8 miles from Battenhall. No doubt the roads of those days were little better than the present vile track which connects the river bank with the nearest made-up road. A loaded cart can hardly have done better than 1 1/2 to 2 miles an hour, so Stone's fish must have had to endure road journeys of 8 to 10 hours. But the fish should come to little harm in cold weather; tench and bream are very tenacious of life, tench hardly less so than eels, and, according to Day, can live for a whole day out of water. Tench and bream should have been safe enough packed, like eels, in wet grass or straw. Pike are more active fish, and must have been more difficult to transport. But clearly it was done, and successfully; for the prior, as judged from his journal, would have been too sharp to pay for dead fish, and very few were 'abated' from these lots. Stone may have caught the fish in the Severn, or, in winter, in the flood-meadows about Ripple. But he may have had his own ponds in which he bred or stored tench and other fish for sale.

In the case of Crowle Moat, the initial rate of stocking was fairly high. It is difficult to make a comparison, because all commercial fishponds in Europe are treated with fertilizer to increase their production of fish-food, and therefore of fish, and on top of that, the fish are given supplementary fodder, and so they are heavily stocked to take full advantage of these good growing conditions. But at the research station at Wielenbach in Bavaria a group of unfertilized ponds made on good agricultural land were stocked with small carp and tench at a rate of about 65 fish per half-acre. Crowle Moat had a total surface area of just over a half-acre, and it was stocked with 51 'store' breams and tenches on Lady Day 1532, and with 64 at Lady Day 1534. These would all be fairly large fish. The fish at Wielenbach were fished out every autumn and re-sorted and re-stocked in spring; there was complete control of population. But at Crowle Moat there was no recorded fishing-out and re-sorting during the years 1532-4; even thorough fishing would not prevent survivors from breeding, and the moat would soon fill with young fish all competing for a very limited amount of food. This is where stocking with cannibal fish such as pickerel, perch, and eels would help; they could thin out the population and grow usefully themselves. The journal records the capture of large numbers of small fish in most of the ponds, which could not have happened unless the fish had bred there.

Common carp, still the mainstay of fish farming, were stocked by More on a small and trial scale only, as late as 1531. Carp are not mentioned at all in 'Fleta', 1289, nor did Chaucer's Franklin have any in his stews about 1390. Prior More seemed to treat carp as a novelty in 1531, but by 1600 Taverner considered carp, bream, tench, and perch as the best fish for culture, giving carp pride of place. Carp bought in 1612 from Robinson to stock the ponds at Belvoir Castle were as expensive for their size as pike and bream, and more expensive than tench. The carp is not native to western Europe, but was introduced from the east, its name Cyprinus deriving from Cyprus,

said to be a staging-post on its pilgrimage. The record of Prior More's journal suggests its introduction to this country about 1450 to 1500.

The fishing-out of the ponds

At long intervals the ponds were fished out by various means. In the 16 years covered by the journal, there are 19 recorded fishings (TABLE II). Almost all were at or near Lady Day, March 25. These fishings are described in different ways. Ponds that could be drained were 'drawed to ye utter must' or 'sewed to ye boottom to be drye', and this is still the only way in which to take the whole fish crop. In at least one case, the pond was fished by baling out the water. In ponds that could not be wholly drained, there was 'sewyng' or 'fysshyng in parte', or just 'ifyshyng'.

TABLE II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quarter</th>
<th>Stocking with</th>
<th>Fishing</th>
<th>Workmen on ponds</th>
<th>Net mending</th>
<th>Laying of weels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>eels</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xmas to Lady Day</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lady Day to St. John</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. John to Michaelmas</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michaelmas to Xmas</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results of these fishings are given in some detail (TABLE I, p. 119). Each pond was fished at intervals of 4 to 10 years and more. Their purpose was a stocktaking of the population of the ponds. Taverner advised such a fishing-out and stocktaking every autumn, and this is still good fishpond practice today. The larger fish can be put aside for 'present spending', and those too small for current use can be sorted and re-stocked among other ponds. This is what Prior More did.

Taverner advised that ponds after draining should lie dry to the sun and air for a year, to sweeten the soil and restore fertility, and this is an approved measure today. But only Ashenshall Pond at Grimley seems to have had this treatment; it was not refilled for 3 years, and during this time some work was done on the pond. But mostly the ponds were refilled immediately, and re-stocked. Thereafter, for several years, the pond will have been stocked more or less annually each year between Christmas and Lady Day.

The results of the 19 recorded fishings are given in TABLE I. The fish harvested are no longer called store fish, but as 'grete' or 'good' yeles, 'grete' tench, peerc, and roch, and pike, not pickerels. The total number of these large fish harvested was 627, an apparently poor rate of survival from a stocking of 11,500 fish.

But, in addition, great numbers of fish too small for 'present spending' were caught, or classed as store fish. Where ponds could not be completely fished, these necessarily had to be left as a contribution to the next stocking. Thus, 'Item ther is left in the pole moche store of pickerells gadds peercs Roches & tenches' when the lower Park Pool at Battenhall was fished. In almost every fishing there are recorded 'moch store of roches & store tenches & peercs' and similar phrases. Especially intriguing is an entry for the fishing of Ludbache Pool at Hallow, which included 'dyvers yeles of every sorte', for eels do not breed in ponds, but they can gain entry into ponds, thanks to their ability to wriggle up and over wet grass. Perhaps there had been some natural re-stocking here,
for this fishing was in 1534, and there is no record of any stocking with eels since 1524. In the fishing of Grimley Mere 7 chub were caught, though none were stocked; but these could have been accidentally included in a batch of tench or roach.

In the fishings-out, the store and smaller fish were distributed among other ponds, and there were a lot of them. For instance from the Nether Pool at Battenhall in 1521 were taken 5 cowles of roach and perch, which were in part re-stocked in the Dey Pool. A cowle was a container slung on a pole between two men, and can hardly have contained less than a hundredweight.

In all, Prior More spent £47 15s. 3d. on his 19 ponds in 16 years, plus food and drink for the labourers, and the time and labour of his own staff. This was no trifling sum at a time when a labourer’s wage was one shilling per week plus food and drink; an ox cost 15 shillings, a bacon hog 2s. 5d., and the weekly expenses of the Prior’s large household were about £1 per week. For this money TABLE I shows the prior got 627 large fish, at an average cost, therefore, of about 15s. 6d., at a time when fresh fish were expensive to buy. One fresh salmon was charged at 12s. 3d., three at 16s. 4d., a fresh fish (kind not stated) 9d., and the two pickerel presented to the bishop of Winchester are entered in the prior’s accounts at 7s. the pair.

But in fact it is unlikely that these 19 recorded fishings represent the whole product of the 19 ponds. It is much more likely that the ponds were fished as required by the prior’s personal and household table. Gasquet tells us that the servants, and especially the larderer and turnbroach, had to go to the ponds to help catch fish for the conventual meal. The journal has much evidence of this. The annually-repeated stockings do not indicate a once-for-all fishing. Thus Whitnel Pool at Grimley was stocked about Lady Day in 1521, 1522, 1523, and 1525, but not fished out until 1529, when the recorded catch was only 23 perch and 10 tench, with many other roach and store tenches and perchs.

Eel traps were ordered and placed in the ponds at all times of the year (TABLE II). These would give a steady supply of table eels, for this type of trap does not damage the fish, which can be returned unharmed if too small for the table. TABLE II also shows that there were many payments to Thomas Nutt for repairs to nets, and these payments are again at all times of year, suggesting regular use. Noakes tells us that there were important fisheries in the Severn, including Grimley and Henwick, both priory demesnes. Most of the nets made by Nutt were small, and only the ‘grete draught net’, with a cod or bag for the collection of the fish, would seem large enough to fish a wide river such as the Severn at Worcester. But the use of the word ‘gurges, gurgitis’ suggests that these river fisheries were fixed engines or fish weirs.

If the prior’s own servants were sent to do the fishing, there need be no entry in the journal, since these men were already on pay; for example, an entry for Lady Day, 1522, gives 13 herons, 13 pikes, 3 great tenches, and 2 great breams taken from the Nether Pool at Hallow, with no entry for wages. Conversely, on two occasions there are entries where hired men did the fishing, once in July, 1522 (iij laborars castyng ye Dey Poole at Batnal 18d., 12d.) and once in October 1527 (to iiij warkemen castyng ye mott of Crowle, 12d.).

Aside from the stockings and the long-period fishings-out, the ponds seem to have had little management. Money was paid to labourers for making channels to bring water to the ponds, to ditchers for making drains to empty the ponds, to tyners for making fencing, and to carriers of clay, thorns, and stakes. Payments and gifts of clothes were made to otter takers, mud was cleared, and reeds kept down. Besides these items, there are many and regular payments to workmen ‘abowte ye pooles’ without stating the nature of the work paid for. TABLE II shows that this work was evenly distributed throughout the year, except that there was less in the winter quarter, probably because

35 F. A. Gasquet, English Monastic Life (Methuen, London, 1910), pp. 204, 211.
of snow and ice. This was pond upkeep; but there is no mention of manuring to increase the fertility of the ponds, a measure known to Taverner 70 years later, and no supplementary feeding of the fish. In a journal which records the value of meat fed to the prior's goshawk, fodder for the fish would not have been overlooked.

Taverner wrote: 'Although one acre of ground overflowed with water will it selfe keep but 300 or four hundredth carpes, or other fishes; yet so much feeding as you may adde thereto, that it may keep three thousand or four thousand in as good a plight as three hundredth or four hundredth without such feeding.' He advised the use of cheap grains for this purpose, as is commercial practice today. There was thus a considerable technical advance in the views of Taverner in 1600, as compared with the practice of Prior More in 1518–34.

Prior More retired to Crowle, where he died about 1558. He seems to have prepared for this, for he gave Crowle, then 'in decay', a thorough refit, and finally completed a moat which he promptly stocked with tench and bream. So in the evening of his life, he could still have enjoyed his fresh fish.

G. F. HICKLING

THE GALWAY CONFERENCE, 1971

The 14th Annual Conference of the Society was held at Galway, Ireland, from 1–6 April, 1971. The theme of the conference was 'The Church in Early Ireland'. The conference opened on Thursday, 1 April, with a lecture by Professor M. Duignan entitled 'Sources for the Early Christian period'. This was followed by a reception given by University College, Galway. On Friday, 2 April, Professor M. J. O'Kelly lectured on 'The secular background to the Early Christian period', Mr. Liam de Paor on 'Architecture and sculpture of Early Christian Ireland', Mr. E. Rynne on 'Metalwork and manuscripts of early Ireland', and Mr. B. Ó Ríordáin on 'Excavations in medieval Dublin'. Following this last lecture there was a reception by the Irish Tourist Board. On Saturday, 3 April, the conference visited Clonmacnoise, Boher and Gallen. On Sunday, 4 April, there was a guided tour round Galway and an excursion to Roscam and Athenry. On Monday, 5 April, visits to Kiltiernan, Ennis, Dysert O'Dea, Killinaboy and Kilfenora were followed by a subscription dinner, and this closed the formal business of the conference. On Tuesday, 6 April, the conference went to Dublin by train and was given a reception by the Director and Trustees of the National Museum of Ireland. The Society must record its gratitude to Mr. E. Rynne who acted as local secretary for the conference.

DAVID M. WILSON