

## THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

### The Manorial History of Chalgrove by J. Blair

In 1086 Miles Crispin, a member of the great honour of Wallingford, held ten hides in Chalgrove.<sup>54</sup> This estate, which probably corresponded to the modern parish excluding the hamlets of Rofford and Warpsgrove, was held by the Boterel family for three knights' fees from c. 1100 until the death of Peter Boterel in 1165.<sup>55</sup> Tenure of the manor over the next 70 years was very unstable: assigned for the maintenance of a succession of royal servants, it reverted to the crown at frequent intervals.<sup>56</sup>

The division into two shares which was so marked a feature of Chalgrove's later history begins to appear at this date. In 1199 the king granted Chalgrove to Hugh Malaunay with the advowson and some additional properties, to be held, however,, for only two fees.<sup>57</sup> By 1212 this Chalgrove property had reverted to the crown: 25 librates were held by Thomas Keret, while the rest remained in the king's hand and yielded  $\text{œ}20$  p.a.<sup>58</sup> Later that year the king's part was restored to Hugh de Malaunay.<sup>59</sup> Passing briefly on his death to his son Peter, it was granted in 1224 to Hugh de Plessis, Drew de Barentin and Nicholas de Boterel for their support in the king's service.<sup>60</sup> Meanwhile Keret's part had returned to the crown, and was granted to Hugh le Despenser, again in 1224, as a moiety of the manor with the capital messuage.<sup>61</sup> It is clear from the Letters Close of 1224 that the divided manor still possessed only one manor house. Both parts were soon resumed by the crown, and in 1229 the whole manor was re-granted to Hugh de Plessis, John de Plessis and Drew de Barentin.<sup>62</sup> Hugh de Plessis' portion, described as a third of the manor with the capital messuage, was granted to William de Huntercombe in 1231 but shared out in 1233 between the other two parceners.<sup>63</sup>

Henceforth Chalgrove descended as two separate fees in the Plessis and Barentin lines.<sup>64</sup> By 1279 the former had passed to Margaret de Plessis, while Drew had been succeeded by one William Barentin.<sup>65</sup> In that year the Hundred Rolls<sup>66</sup> itemise the demesne, customary land and freeholds of both halves. A remarkable feature of the demesne and customary holdings is the almost exact parity between the two manors.<sup>67</sup> The Barentin demesne consisted of  $311 \frac{3}{4}$  acres arable, 30 acres meadow, 30 acres pasture and 2 mills; the Plessis demesne was  $312 \frac{1}{2}$  acres arable, 30 acres meadow, 30 acres pasture and 1 mill. Unfree land comprised 5 virgates, 16 half-virgates (total 13 virgates) and 5 cottages on the Barentin fee, and 7 virgates, 11 half-virgates (total  $12 \frac{1}{2}$  virgates) and 3 cottages on the Plessis fee.<sup>68</sup> Customary rents and services were almost identical, and a fourth mill was held of the two lords jointly.

The only possible explanation for this is a systematic partition of Chalgrove into identical half-shares, still sufficiently recent in 1279 for the similarities to remain conspicuous. It recalls the established 13th-century practice in cases of division between co-heirs, when it was normal to make a detailed survey for allocating the portions.<sup>69</sup> Under the 1229 grant the three parceners had evidently held Chalgrove in common, but in 1231 the sheriff was ordered to make an extent of the demesne, rents and villein holdings and put Huntercombe in seizin of one-third.<sup>70</sup> It may be conjectured that the manor was now parcelled out in three equal shares; two years

later, the halving of Huntercombe's portion between Plessis and Barentin would produce the situation revealed in the Hundred Rolls.

This twofold division persisted through the 14th and 15th centuries. As described below (pp. ), the Barentin moiety descended to the late 15th-century John Barentin II. Beset by financial troubles, John sold the manor in 1485 to Thomas Danvers, Bishop Waynflete's agent, for endowing his newly-founded college. A survey of that year (below, p. ) shows that 'Barentin's Manor' had retained its identity over the previous two centuries. But if the Barentin descent was straightforward, that of the Plessis moiety was complex. In the words of a manorial clerk writing in 1503,<sup>71</sup> the Chalgrove demesnes were: divided into 2 equall parts, whereof one part belongeth to the heyres of Barantine and so now to Mag[dalen] Coll[ege]. The other part is divided between 3 lords, whereof one is called Senclerise, the which Master Hampden of Woodstock hath. The 2nd was called sometyme the lands of Master Hoore, the which now Mr Darell hath. The 3rd part was called Argentines lands, the which now Mag[dalen] Coll[ege] hath.

The Plessis manor remained unitary until the late 14th century. Margaret de Plessis was still holding it in 1284-5,<sup>72</sup> but by 1293 she had married the royal judge William de Bereford.<sup>73</sup> Between 1316 and 1335, their son Sir Edmund de Bereford succeeded to the moiety.<sup>74</sup> A magnificent survey of Edmund's Chalgrove property was compiled in 1336, giving a full rental and customal as well as a parcel-by-parcel description of the demesne in both measured and customary acres.<sup>75</sup> The list begins with the 'situs curie infra fossatum.... in quo edificatur aula, boveria et stabula', an unusually clear contemporary description of a moated manorhouse.

Sir Edmund de Bereford died in 1354, to be followed only two years later by his son and heir.<sup>76</sup> The moiety was now fragmented between Edmund's three sisters, Margaret, Joan and Agnes, and his grandson Baldwin de Bereford.<sup>77</sup> Baldwin's fraction<sup>78</sup> seems to have become amalgamated with the share of Joan, one of Edmund's three heiresses and wife of Gilbert de Ellesfield.<sup>79</sup> The property descended to William de Ellesfield, who died in 1398 leaving it to relatives named Hore.<sup>80</sup> Clearly these were the 'lands of Master Hoore' of the 1503 memorandum. Margaret de Bereford married James Audley; her fraction passed to her daughter Joan, wife of Philip St. Clare<sup>81</sup> and was later known as 'St. Clare's'.<sup>82</sup> The third sister, Margaret, married Sir John Mautravers and later Sir John de Argentein, by whose name her share came to be known.<sup>83</sup> Passing through various hands,<sup>84</sup> 'Argentines lands' were bought for Magdalen by Thomas Danvers in 1487.<sup>85</sup> Thus Magdalen College held from its foundation the Barentin moiety of the entire manor, and the Argentein third of the Plessis/Bereford moiety.

Notwithstanding these separate lines of descent, some of the manors were held and administered jointly. A rental compiled in 1377<sup>86</sup> includes the inheritances of all three sisters, and in 1399 the Ellesfield manor was demised for a life to Thomas Barentin's widow.<sup>87</sup> In 1428 Reynold Barentin owed the feudal obligations for the former Bereford fee as well as his own, while a court roll of the same year deals with tenements held both 'de feodo Barentyn' and 'de feodo Bereford'.<sup>88</sup> During the 1430s courts seem to have been held jointly for the Barentin, St. Clare and Hore tenants.<sup>89</sup> Purchases by John Barentin of Argentein's manor in 1457 and St. Clare's in 1474 are recorded.<sup>90</sup> It is hard to establish the real effect of these involved

transactions, which evidently placed most of Chalgrove under the immediate control of the Barentins for much of the 15th century. It is quite clear, however, that for administrative and accounting purposes the subdivisions were respected, the manors being consistently regarded as distinct entities. There is every reason to think that the symmetrical partition carried out before 1279 was still a tenurial reality two centuries later.

#### The Identity of the Site in Hardings Field by J. Blair

From this descent it will be clear that between c. 1240 and c. 1370 Chalgrove contained two capital messuages, serving respectively the Barentin and the Plessis/Bereford manors, and that the breakup of the Bereford half may have resulted in the appearance of subsidiary manorhouses in the late 14th or early 15th century. Excavation has shown that the moated site in Hardings Field was occupied from the late 12th/early 13th century and extensively rebuilt in the 13th and early 14th centuries. Therefore it must be identified either with the chief messuage of the Barentins or with Sir Edmund de Bereford's moated house of 1336. To establish which, it is necessary to work backwards from late sources in which the site can be firmly identified.

A map and terrier drawn up in 182291 show the field as an old enclosure called Court Hays, copyhold of John King and late of Thomas King. In 1675 Ralph Quartermain surrendered Court Heyes, a customary close of pasture, to the use of Thomas King.<sup>92</sup> A terrier of c. 1600 includes 'the syte of the manour of Magdalen College in the tenure of Elisabeth Quartermayn, wherapon is a barne, a pigion house and an orcharde, Called Court Hayse'.<sup>93</sup> In 1520 John Quartermain owed 10s rent for a former demesne close 'where the manour stood' and a further 10s. for 'a barn and a culver house', while in c. 1500 John Quartermain the elder was paying 10s 'pro claus "voc" Court Close'.<sup>94</sup> It can hardly be doubted, especially in view of the highly suggestive name 'Court Hays', that all these entries refer to the same piece of land.

Luckily its history can be traced a little further back, to just before the Barentin and Argentein manors were permanently reunited under Magdalen College. The transfer of the Barentin manor to Danvers in 1485 occasioned the compilation of a new and very detailed survey.<sup>95</sup> Here the 'manerium vocatum Barantynes maner' is firmly identified with the lands and tenements 'pro parte Thome Danvers'. The names of the demesne closes (including Grassheys, Southparrok, Shrevemannysheys, Newclose, Luxe and Stratfords) correspond exactly with earlier rentals of the Barentin manor (such as that for 1405-6)<sup>96</sup> which include the farmed-out demesne. The Barentin demesne, then, still remained distinct. Only a few months later than this survey, a list of rents owing to Danvers from the lands and tenements late of John Barentin for the financial year 1485-6 gives the same list of demesne closes, with one crucial addition: 'Et de v s [half-yearly, i.e. 10s. p.a.] de firma Johannis Quatermayn' pro scita manerii ibidem cum pastura, fructibus, stagnis et aliis proficuis ibidem, hoc anno sic dimissa'.<sup>97</sup> Clearly this was identical with 'Court Close' which Quartermain held for the same rent only a few years later, and hence with the modern Hardings Field.

If the site was in Danvers's hands by 1485-6 it clearly cannot represent the capital messuage of the Argentein portion, which he did not acquire until 1488. At this date

the other two shares of the original Plessis/Bereford moiety (St. Clare and Hore/Pudsey) were still self-contained and independent manors. The only reasonable conclusion is that this was the Barentin manor house, demolished on the completion of the transfer from Barentin to Danvers in October 1485; hence the statement of 1485-6 that its vacant site had been 'thus demised this year'.

The Bereford 'Court within a moat' of 1336 must therefore have been elsewhere. Unless there is another moated site within the village of which no trace remains, it seems reasonable to suggest that the moat at Manor Farm is that described in the survey.

The survey also gives the area of 'Summa Placia Curria' as 1 acre, 1 rood, 32 perches. If this is interpreted as the area 'infra fossatum' it would correspond quite well to that of the moat as shown on the 1846 tithe award map. To date limited excavation at Manor Farm has been within the 15th-century standing building and has confirmed the date of its construction while suggesting that this building stood on virgin ground. However, the trenches were located outside the line of the moat. It would seem possible that the south-eastern arm of that moat was partially back-filled by the time of the construction of the house or with the addition of its wings. But it is interesting to note the line of a boundary shown on the 1822 estate map which corresponds to the position of that moat arm.

The most likely location of the remains of the Bereford Manor buildings would be in the area to the west of the present building, which may well represent a direct replacement for the medieval hall. It is hoped that further investigations at Manor Farm will confirm this.

#### The Barentins and Chalgrove (Fig. 4) by J. Blair

If it is disappointing to find that the Hardings Field site is not the moated house described in 1336, its firm association with the Barentins is ample compensation. For several generations this was the principal home of a leading county family, and the development of the site can be closely related to its owners' circumstances and social pretensions.<sup>98</sup>

The mid 13th-century co-tenants had both grown prosperous in the royal service. Like their predecessors over some decades, Plessis and Barentin were originally assigned Chalgrove for their maintenance on a short-term basis; it was only because their tenures became, in the event, permanent that the manorial division remained stable from 1233. John de Plessis first appears in the early 1220s and rose rapidly in the court circle after c. 1230. Marrying the Warwick heiress, he was styled Earl of Warwick from 1247 until his death in 1263.<sup>99</sup> Drew de Barentin's career was not dissimilar.<sup>100</sup> From 1222 he received a yearly allowance of 10 marks,<sup>101</sup> and in 1232-3 he and John de Plessis were joint tenants of land in Jersey.<sup>102</sup> At this period the king began to employ Drew on administrative and diplomatic assignments. In 1235 he appears as Warden of the Channel Isles, a post which he held for nearly twenty years.<sup>103</sup> He was Seneschal of Gascony from 1247,<sup>104</sup> and throughout his career he made frequent journeys abroad on the king's business.<sup>105</sup> He steadily enlarged his holdings in the Channel Isles,<sup>106</sup> which may have been worth considerably more than his single Oxfordshire manor by his death in 1264-5.<sup>107</sup>

Did these two men take any active interest in Chalgrove? The excavated evidence for occupation from the early 13th century (below, p. ) supports the suggestion, already made on topographical grounds, that the Barentin house was the earlier of the two and a primary element in the village plan. Since the capital messuage had been assigned to Huntercombe's fraction in 1231, it must have passed to Drew de Barentin when this share was split between John de Plessis and himself two years later. Why? Plessis would have needed a house also, so it can be inferred on prima facie grounds that a new curial complex is likely to have been created soon after 1233. On the Barentin site, the earliest fully excavated set of buildings must date from Drew's time or not long after.

Thanks to Henry III's habit of bestowing goods in kind, some written evidence remains for this work. Between the 1230s and the 1260s the Close Rolls record a long series of royal gifts to John de Plessis and Drew de Barentin, mostly in the form of deer, wine, firewood and timber. In 1232 they were joint recipients of four oaks from Shotover Forest to make posts and wallplates,<sup>108</sup> presumably for some building needed as a result of the current tenurial rearrangements. In a series of later gifts, all the timber trees came from Bernwood Forest (including Brill and Panshill) on the Oxfordshire-Buckinghamshire border.<sup>109</sup> From here Plessis received 30 trunks (fusta) in 1240 'in the places nearest to the land which he has in Chalgrove', followed by four timber oaks in 1248, five in 1255 and eight in 1259.<sup>110</sup> The more modest gifts to Barentin comprised of seven timber-oaks in 1255 and a further ten in 1256.<sup>111</sup> Since Drew had no other recorded manors which were anywhere near Bernwood, it must be presumed that all this material was destined for Chalgrove.

The royal gifts need not, of course, have provided all the necessary timber, but they presumably met a specific need and reflect to some extent the scale of operations. The evidence suggests a major building campaign on the Plessis manor in c. 1240 followed by lesser works over the next 20 years, and a campaign on the Barentin manor during 1255-6. It seems very likely that the 1240 works mark the creation of Sir Edmund de Berford's 'situs curie infra fossatum' of a century later. On the Barentin site, a date of 1255-6 agrees well with the excavated Phase 2 (below, pp. ), where the stone-rubble walling may help to explain why less timber was received from the king. Thus the aisled hall, chamber and dovecote, with their encircling moat, can be attributed with some confidence to the later years of Sir Drew Barentin I, a house worthy of his status as a senior crown servant.

Drew I's heir (and perhaps nephew) Sir William Barentin first appears as a newly made knight in 1260.<sup>112</sup> He was less notable politically and seems to have been often in debt,<sup>113</sup> though his second marriage, with a Blancminster heiress, added extensive Essex properties to the family estate.<sup>114</sup> His son Drew II had succeeded by 1291, when William's widow Joan pursued a claim in the Essex manors against Drew and his wife Petronilla.<sup>115</sup>

Sir Drew Barentin II retained both the family estates in the Channel Isles and his stepmother's inheritance.<sup>116</sup> In addition to this, he had substantial Kentish property and further manors in Suffolk, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire.<sup>117</sup> Like the first Drew he did occasional business for the king in Jersey and Guernsey, and acted there as Justice Itinerant in 1309-10.<sup>118</sup> He was recorded as non-resident on his Essex

manors in 1296, and during 1322-5 he served as sheriff of Oxfordshire and Berkshire.<sup>119</sup> Oxfordshire was clearly his main focus of interests, and until his death in 1328-9 he performed the normal range of duties appropriate to a leading county gentleman.<sup>120</sup>

Sir Drew II's principal house was undoubtedly Chalgrove manor, where a neighbouring lord is said to have written to him in 1295 to announce the birth of a son.<sup>121</sup> Probably attributable to him are the excavated Phases 3/1 and 3/2 (below p ), of c. 1300-30, which involved extending and modernising the buildings to meet rising standards of domestic comfort. An integrated service, solar and undercroft range was added to the hall, and a base-cruck probably replaced the central aisle truss. Architecturally the result must have been much more impressive than the hall of the 1250s, comparable to the surviving base-cruck hall at Sutton Courteney 'Abbey' in scale and internal effect.<sup>122</sup>

Significantly, Chalgrove now became the Barentins' established place of burial. During c. 1310-30 the chancel of St. Mary's church was lavishly rebuilt and decorated, perhaps by Sir Drew though more probably by Thame Abbey, which held the advowson from 1317.<sup>123</sup> A list compiled in c. 1480 tells us that Sir Drew II and his successors for the next five generations were buried in this chancel, all but the last (John I, d. 1474) under 'marble stones'.<sup>124</sup> In the cases of Thomas II, Reynold and Drew III, these slabs survive and prove to be monumental brasses;<sup>125</sup> it seems highly likely that Sir Drew II and his son were also commemorated by this newly fashionable type of memorial.<sup>126</sup> Like the rebuilding of the manor house on more imposing lines, this creation of a 'family mausoleum' suggests a heightened sense of identity with the main residence and church, now a miniature caput honoris. In thus imitating 12th- and 13th-century noble dynasties, Sir Drew Barentin and his immediate successors were wholly typical of their age and class.

On Sir Drew's death his son Thomas Barentin I inherited Chalgrove and its nearby dependencies; the property in Essex and the Channel Isles passed to a nephew named William Barentin and never returned to the senior line.<sup>127</sup> It is clear that both Thomas and his son, a second Thomas, resided consistently at Chalgrove, where they executed several deeds between the 1340s and the 1390s.<sup>128</sup> Thomas married Joan Malyns, a daughter of a neighbouring knightly family at Chinnor.<sup>129</sup> In 1370 Thomas and Joan received episcopal licence for an oratory at Chalgrove,<sup>130</sup> and this could refer to either the timber or the later stone chapel (below, p). Thomas was sheriff of Oxfordshire and Berkshire in 1378 and MP for Oxfordshire in 1387, thereafter serving frequently in both capacities.<sup>131</sup>

On his death in 1400 Thomas II held the single manor of Chalgrove, worth just under  $\text{œ}27$  p.a. net; the heir was his son Reynold, aged  $20 \frac{3}{4}$  in December 1402.<sup>132</sup> Reynold Barentin may have begun his occupation with the last major refurbishment of the manorial buildings (Phase 4). This included a new kitchen linked to the service passage, the partial flooring-in of the hall and the division of the farmyard into two courts (below, ). But in 1415 Reynold suddenly found himself master of a much finer house on the death of his wealthy uncle, the London goldsmith Drew Barentin.<sup>133</sup> In 1391, with his brother Thomas Barentin II, Drew had bought the Oxfordshire manor of Little Haseley.<sup>134</sup> The sumptuous manor house at Haseley Court, much of which still remains, must have been built soon afterwards,<sup>135</sup> and

Leland's statement that 'Barentyne the gold-smythe buylded the Manor Place at Little Haseley'<sup>136</sup> is easily accepted. Drew died childless, and the heir to his numerous manors, including Little Haseley, was his nephew Reynold.<sup>137</sup>

This was a crucial event in the history of Chalgrove manor house, for within a few decades Little Haseley had displaced it as the main Barentin residence. In 1441 <sup>138</sup> Reynold was succeeded by his son Drew Barentin III, MP for Oxfordshire in 1445-6 and a prominent figure in local administration.<sup>139</sup> By 1451 he was dating deeds from Little Haseley,<sup>140</sup> and in 1453 (the year of his death) he is described as 'of Little Haseley and Chalgrove'.<sup>141</sup> His will requests burial at Chalgrove beside his first wife Joan,<sup>142</sup> but it is significant that the ornaments of his chapel are left to a chapel in Chalgrove parish church, subject to his third wife's life-interest. There seems a clear implication here that services in the manorial chapel were expected to cease with the widow's death.

Drew was succeeded in his numerous Oxfordshire and Berkshire manors by his son John Barentin I,<sup>143</sup> sheriff in 1464-5 and MP in 1467-8.<sup>144</sup> Until his father's death he may have maintained a household at Chalgrove: he is called 'late of Chalgrove' in 1458,<sup>145</sup> and he enlarged his estate there by purchase (above, ), but in later life his home was Haseley Court. On his death in 1474 he was buried with his ancestors at Chalgrove, but the customary bequest for forgotten tithes was made to Great Haseley church, 'where as I am paryshener'.<sup>146</sup> His wife Elizabeth, who was jointly enfeoffed with him in the main family holdings, was to have custody until the majority of their heir, another John.<sup>147</sup>

Both before and after coming of age, John Barentin II and his wife Mary Stoner seem to have lived at Little Haseley.<sup>148</sup> Here their son William was born in December 1481,<sup>149</sup> and when part of the Chalgrove property was demised in 1478 the old Barentin demesne was stated to be in the hands of various farmers.<sup>150</sup> By now the manor house had probably been abandoned for residential use, and in this context it is interesting to note a petition by the Abbot of Abingdon which seems to date from the early 1480s.<sup>151</sup> The Abbot claims to have bought from John Barentin for  $\text{œ}18$  'the tymber of certeyn houses than sette in the towne of Chalgrave . . . and the tyles wych than covered the same houses', subsequently withheld by John on the pretext that the land had been in feoffees' hands at the time of the bargain. The sum is considerable, and it seems at least possible that this refers to the decaying manorial buildings, reprieved for a few more years by this calculated trickery.

This incident is one sign of growing financial problems. The Barentins sold off Argentein's and St. Clare's in 1482,<sup>152</sup> and a series of protracted mortgage transactions culminated in 1485 in the final sale of the old family demesne to Thomas Danvers.<sup>153</sup> The infant heir, later Sir William Barentin MP, succeeded in that year to the remaining estates;<sup>154</sup> he lived his whole life at Haseley Court, where John Leland admired his 'right fair mansion place, and marvelous fair walkes topiarii operis, and orchardes and pooles'.<sup>155</sup> The Barentins' connection with Chalgrove ended on the death of John II in December 1485, within a few months of the destruction of his ancestral home.