

The Norfolk Properties of the Nunnery of St. Mary Clerkenwell and the Capra Family

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In preparing an edition of the mid-thirteenth-century cartulary of the nunnery of St. Mary Clerkenwell, I find that grants of rent and land were made to the nunnery at Burston and Tittleshall. Like much other outlying property, this property drops out of sight and there are no references to the nuns holding property in Norfolk in the surviving account rolls of the nunnery for 1490-1 and later.¹

In referring to the cartulary, I cite both the number which I am assigning to each deed in the edition, a typescript of which is deposited in the Bodleian Library, and also to the folio of the original MS. in the British Museum, the Cotton MS. Faustina B.ii.

BURSTON

In No. 189, fo. 52, Michael Capra, Rose his wife, and Robert de Munteni notify William bishop of Norwich (1146-75) and others that they have given the nuns 1*l*s. rent in Burston. They are to chose for making this payment one of Michael's socmen in that vill. Any defaults are to be made up from the land of the grantors.

The grant is made in free alms for the safety of them and theirs.

Perhaps this rent was soon sold or exchanged in a transaction of which no record survives. For no later references have been found in the surviving muniments of the nunnery to an interest at Burston, and Burston was not mentioned in the general confirmation made by Henry II, about May 1176, in No. 10, fo. 10v. This might indicate that the compiler of the cartulary in the middle of the thirteenth century was not personally familiar with the details of the nunnery's property, at any rate in Norfolk.

¹ P.R.O., Ministers' Accounts, Henry VII, 396. cf. Ministers' Accounts, Henry VIII, 2116, 2117, 2118, 2119, 2120 and 2396.

TITTLESHALL

In No. 111, fo. 33v, in 1175-6, Geoffrey Capra gives and confirms to the nuns in free alms his rent from the mill of Tittleshall which the prior of Reinham held in fee for 15s. 2d. yearly which they are to pay as before. The nuns give 8 silver marks in the king's court.

The grant of this mill to Reinham, the church "Sancte Marie et Sancti Johnanis de Normanesberht" is in the British Museum, Add. ch. 24,307, where, however, the rent is said to be 13s., though Michael also retained certain rights at the mill which may account for the discrepancy.

There can be no doubt, however, that the writer of the cartulary meant to say 15s. 2d., for he repeats the sum in another grant to the nuns of the same mill by Geoffrey in No. 112, fo. 33v.

This grant is confirmed by Henry II in 1176, and the sum is again stated to be 15s. 2d. But in No. 113, fo. 33v, before 1176, Geoffrey again grants this rent adding that during his life the nuns are to be paid part of the rent—6d.—though thereafter the canons of Reinham are to pay the full sum.

Geoffrey's grant is confirmed by his nephew Michael in No. 114, fo. 34, after 1190. In 1186 the rent given by Geoffrey is confirmed by Urban III¹ and in No. 6, fo. 8v, in 1190, Richard confirms the grant of the mill.

A great wealth of material for the history of Tittleshall, including a number of early deeds and court rolls, is contained in the muniment room of the Earl of Leicester for whose family it had been acquired by Chief Justice Coke.

Sir Edward Coke's Great Book of Conveyances² deals with this property on fo. 41-63. The nuns seem to have lost their interest in this place early, possibly to Castle Acre, to whom Simon, bishop of Norwich, confirmed 2 parts of the demesne of Robert de Verli and William Capri.³

The family of Capra at Tittleshall is discussed by the Rev. Charles Parkin.⁴ The descent of the manor of Tittleshall Peakehall from Hamo de Chevery (tem. Ed. I.) is summarized in Sir Edward Coke's Great Book on fo. 44v. and the descent of the manor of Tittleshall Greenston Calys from tem. Hen. III.

The site of the mill of Tittleshall is still remembered locally. A windmill there was used as a landmark in the time of Elizabeth.⁵

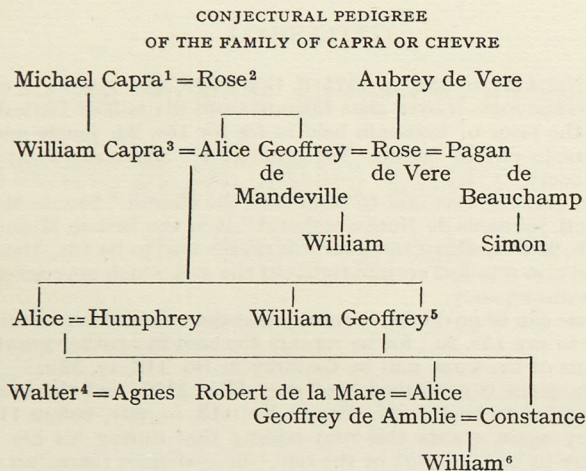
¹ W. O. Hassall: "Two Papal Bulls for St. Mary, Clerkenwell", *E.H.R.*, LVII, 97.

² Holkham MS., 764.

³ Blomefield: *History of Norfolk*, 1808, VIII, 370.

⁴ *An essay towards a Topographical History of the County of Norfolk*, 1809, by Blomefield, continued by Parkin, X, 60.

⁵ Holkham MS., 764, fo. 52v.



^{1, 2} Michael, Rose his wife and William their son, cf. B.M. Add. ch. 24, 307, first half or mid. twelfth century. They made the foundation charter of Thoby (1141-51), *Monasticon*, VI, 554. Jordan de Briesete was a witness.

³ For the probability that William Capra was brother-in-law of Geoffrey de Mandeville, see Round: *Geoffrey de Mandeville*, 169^a. He says William gave his surname to the manor of "Chevere" in Mountnessing.

⁴ Walter's seal is described, Norman Moore: *History of St. Bartholomew's Hospital*, I, 239. The name of his mother is there given as Avice.

⁵ Perhaps father of William, son of Geoffrey, prior of St. Leonard Ginges, Parkin's note on Tittleshall and the Capra family, *Essay Towards a Topographical History of the County of Norfolk*, X, 61.

⁶ Geoffrey de Amblie, Constance his wife, and William their son, see W. Farrer: *Honors and Knight's Fees*, III, 174.7. See his discussion there of Agnes, Alice, and Constance; cf. W. O. Hassall: "The Essex property of St. Mary, Clerkenwell", *Essex Arch. Soc. Trans.*, XXIII, pt. 1, p. 17.

N.B.—For further information about this family see Davis: *Regesta*, 133; *Curia Regis Rolls*, VII, 133, 140, 253, VIII, 342, 384; *Cal. Pap. Reg.*, I, 127; Auvray: *Registers of Gregory IX*, 400-401 and B.M. Add. MSS., 15, 399, fo. 65 v.