

SHORTER NOTICES

A MID-FIFTEENTH-CENTURY BOOK-LIST AND INVENTORY FROM EAST DEREHAM, NORFOLK

by Jeremy Griffiths

A paper bifolium copied in a mid-15th-century hand, now in The Schøyen Collection, contains a list of books and other artefacts, comprising an inventory of an unnamed, but clearly substantial church.¹

A note on the outside of the bifolium in ink in a late 18th-century hand, which has been identified as that of the antiquary Sir John Fenn (1739-1794), states that this is 'An Account of Plate, Vestments, Mass Books & Popish Relicks, etc. belonging to the Church, no date'.²

A pencil note states that the inventory was formerly part of MS 25750 in Sir Thomas Phillipp's collection, a miscellaneous group of papers, including materials relating to the Cinque Ports and Court Rolls of Thurnham, Kent.³

The inventory itself helpfully contains some clues to the identification of the church, whose property it lists. Amongst the items of church plate listed are: 'thre pyxtes' (a pyx was a vessel, usually a small box, used to carry the Sacrament to the sick), one of which is described as '*with sen nycolas rybbe*', that is a box incorporating a relic of St Nicholas's rib.

Two other items amongst the list of church plate were also decorated with images associated with a saint or comprised relics of a saint. The first, a pax (a tablet of gold, silver or glass, often decorated with images, used as an object of devotion in the celebration of the Mass), is described as '*with a boke of sen Wyborow*', that is, apparently, decorated with the buck or deer of St Wyborow. A second item of plate is described as '*a schoe of sen Wytborow of syluer*' that is, presumably the relic in silver of a shoe of St Wy(t)borow. St Wyborow or Wytborow is undoubtedly to be identified as St Withburga ('borow', *town*, is apparently an attempt to render in Middle English the sense of the Anglo-Saxon 'burg').

The identification with St Withburga is confirmed by one further detail. One of the legends connected with St Withburga is that at a time of privation amongst the members of her small community, two white does appeared, as if by miracle, and provided her and her companions with milk. The saint is represented with these animals on several Norfolk rood screens.⁴ The 'boke' of 'Sen Wyborow' that decorated the pax, was presumably another representation of the same animal with which the saint is elsewhere associated.

Withburga is traditionally named as one of three sisters, daughters of the East Anglian king Anna (c. 635-54), all prominent in the religious life of Anglo-Saxon England.⁵ Aethelthryth, or Etheldreda, was founder and first abbess of Ely, succeeded by her sister Sexburga, wife of Eorcenbert, king of Kent, founder of a religious community on the Isle of Sheppey. Sexburga was, in turn, succeeded as abbess of Sheppey and of Ely by her daughter, Eormenilda.

Withburga is said to have founded a religious house at East Dereham, Norfolk, following her father's death in battle in 654.⁶ The monastic house at Dereham is said to have been destroyed c.870. Withburga's body was subsequently translated to Ely in 974, to be buried next to her two sisters and her niece. It seems most probable that the inventory is a list of goods of the church at East Dereham, constituting evidence that Withburga continued to be venerated

there after her translation, rather than an inventory of the large monastic church at Ely or even of a chapel within it. Further confirmation of this association is the presence in the list of the relic of St Nicholas's rib. The church at East Dereham is dedicated to this saint.⁷

St Withburga

The earliest sources for the *Life* of St Withburga are in Cambridge, Trinity College, MS O.2.1. (fols 236v-240v) and Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 393 (fols 59r-69r), also incorporated in the *Liber Eliensis*.⁸ The *Life* recounts her withdrawal to East Dereham to found a religious community there and the translation of her body from the churchyard into the church at Dereham c. AD 798, approximately 55 years after her death, in c. AD 743.⁹ The Corpus copy of the *Life* goes to on recount subsequent translations of her body to Ely in the 10th century and at Ely in 1106.

The establishment at Ely of the cult of the three royal sisters and Abbess Eormenilda may be association with Bishop Aethelwold's re-foundation of the abbey church in 970.¹⁰ Aethelthryth's body was found beside the high altar during the reconstruction of the abbey and the bodies of her successors, Sexburga and Eormenilda, were translated to the same location.

The first abbot, Brihtnoth, arranged for the translation of the body of Withburga from Dereham to join those of her three sisters. In 974 Withburga's body was seized by Abbot Brihtnoth by force of arms, exercising proprietorial rights claimed through the acquisition of lands at Dereham and with the support of King Edgar.¹¹ As part of the development and publicization of the cult of these royal saints, their feast days were promulgated in Ely calendars of the late 10th and 11th centuries and decorative images of all four were placed beside the high altar.¹²

Having been thus forcibly translated to Ely, Withburga was again moved in 1106, following the completion of the reconstruction of the abbey church by Abbot Richard, formerly a monk of Bek, who is said to have had a vision of the saint on his deathbed.¹³ Subsequently relics of all four of the Royal saints were moved again on 17 September 1252, in the presence of King Henry II, to the presbytery constructed by Bishop Hugh Northwold, now the choir.¹⁴

Various miracles were reported at Withburga's shrine at Ely.¹⁵ London, British Library, MS Cotton Caligula A. viii (fols 102r-107v) contains a list of miracles associated with the saint, beginning with an account of the miraculous punishment of Bishop Everard of Norwich (1131-45), apparently written in or after the second quarter of the 12th century.

The inventory provides evidence of the persistence of the veneration of a local saint from the Anglo-Saxon period, even after the removal of her remains in the 10th century. The inventory also provides an unusually detailed insight to the wealth of a Norfolk church in the late Middle Ages.

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1 The form of reference is Oslo & London, The Schøyen Collection, MS 1632. The item was purchased in November 1992 from Sam Fogg Rare Books & Manuscripts, London. The overall size of the bifolium is 210 x 290mm. The bifolium appears at first sight to have been bound inside out, with the contents out of order, but see the notes to the transcription and translation, below. The inventory is transcribed in full in Appendix 1 and illustrated in the plates accompanying this article, which are reproduced by permission. Similar lists of books and objects in Norfolk churches may be found in *Archdeaconry of Norfolk Inventory of Church Goods temp. Edward III*, ed. Aelred Watkin, Norfolk Record Society 19, 2 parts (Norwich, 1947-48). I am grateful to Dr A.I. Doyle and Dr M.B. Parkes, who read this article in draft and checked my transcriptions, saving me from numerous errors and providing better explanations of certain of the terms in the list than I had been able to suggest. Mr Paul Rutledge and Mr Alan Davison have also kindly read the article in draft and have suggested a number of improvements.

2 I am indebted to Mr Rutledge, who has identified the hand as that of the antiquary Sir John Fenn (1739-1794) and

informs me that the early 15th-century Churchwardens' Accounts from East Dereham also passed from Fenn to Sir Thomas Phillipps, and were purchased by the Norfolk Record Office from the Robinson Trust in the 1980s, providing circumstantial evidence in confirmation of the suggested origin of the inventory.

The note in Fenn's hand includes some comments upon the possible dating of the watermark. The watermark, in the form of a bull, is not particularly close to any of the examples given by C.M. Briquet, *Les Filigranes*, ed. Allan Stevenson, 4 vols (Amsterdam, 1968), but may be compared to no. 2816.

- 3 The contents of MS 25750 are summarily described in the *Catalogue of MSS in Thirlstaine Library*, now Oxford, Bodleian Library, Phillipps-Robinson Papers e.466. A note on the title-page of the manuscript, signed by Edward A. Bond, states that the catalogue covers those items 'that had never been catalogued by Sir Thomas Phillipps or had lost their catalogue number. Made for probate of will.', with the additional comment that 'This is the Catalogue B referred to in my valuation of the 26th of June 1872.'

The inventory appeared in a sale of material from Phillipps's library, sold by the Robinson Trust, at Sotheby's, 15 June 1971, lot 1599, amongst a group of miscellaneous items derived from a number of different Phillipps manuscripts. The Sotheby's lot, including the inventory, subsequently appeared in A.G. Thomas, *Catalogue 33* (1975), item 61 (other items originally from Phillipps MS 25750 had also appeared in A.G. Thomas, *Catalogue 29* (1972), item 14 and *Catalogue 31* (1973), item 21).

I am grateful to Mr Richard Linenthal of Bernard Quaritch Limited for supplying me with a copy of the entry in Thomas's *Catalogue 33*.

- 4 M.R. James, *Suffolk and Norfolk* (London, 1930) notes the occurrence of representations of St Withburga accompanied by a deer on four Norfolk rood screens (p.14), but names only three, at Barnham Broom (p.141), North Burlingham (p.142), and Oxborough (p.191). James also notes that St Withburga was formerly represented in a window at Walpole St Peter (p. 211), now lost.

I am grateful to Mr D.P. Mortlock, who has informed me that the screen from Oxborough was moved to the church at East Dereham when the tower at Oxborough collapsed into the nave in 1948. Mr Mortlock has kindly provided several further references to representation of Withburga: on a 15th-century rood screen at Woolpit, Suffolk, repainted in the 19th century, in all but one case repeating the original subjects; amongst modern figures added to a 15th-century font cover at Ufford, Suffolk; and in modern stained glass by Stammers of York installed in the transept window at East Dereham in 1975.

Frances Arnold-Forster, *Studies in Church Dedications*, 3 vols (London, 1899), ii.369-371, notes only one church (but for a mission ship in the Fens, dedicated in 1897) dedicated to St Withburga, at Holkham, where Withburga is said to have spent her childhood; see the account of the saint's life in James Bentham, *The History and Antiquities of the Conventual and Cathedral Church of Ely* (Cambridge, 1771), pp. 76ff, derived from the *Liber Eliensis*. On the Holkham dedication, see also David Rollason, 'The Shrines of Saints in Later Anglo-Saxon England: Distribution and Significance', *The Anglo-Saxon Church: Papers on history, architecture, and archaeology in honour of Dr H.M. Taylor*, ed. L.A.S. Butler and R.K. Morris, The Council for British Archaeology, Research Report 60 (London, 1986), pp. 32-43, p.46.

- 5 For the development of the cult of these Royal saints, see Susan Ridyard, *The Royal Saints of Anglo-Saxon England: A Study of West Saxon and East Anglian Cults* (Cambridge, 1988), pp.50, 59. On Withburga, see also D.W. Rollason, *Saints and Relics in Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 1989), pp.179, 180, 209-11, 223, 233.
- 6 David Knowles & R. Neville Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses: England & Wales*, revised edition (London, 1971), p. 472; Sir William Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, ed. J. Caley, Sir H. Ellis, Rev. B. Bandinel, 8 vols (London, 1846), II. 176-177. The early 14th-century *Cartulary* of the house at West Dereham was, incidentally, also formerly in the collection of Sir Thomas Phillipps, MS 8134, subsequently sold at Sotheby's, 11 November 1946, lot 131 and now London, British Library, Additional MS 46353.
- 7 See Arnold-Forster, ii. 369-371; Nikolaus Pevsner, *North-West and South Norfolk*, *The Buildings of England* (Harmondsworth, 1962), pp. 141-143.
- 8 The *Liber Eliensis* was edited by E.O. Blake, Camden Society, 3rd series, 92 (London, 1962). Ridyard, p.59, fn. 199, also lists other texts that mention Withburga, including abridgements of the Trinity and Corpus manuscripts' accounts in London, British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius E.i and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Tanner 15. The Life is no. 8979 in *Bibliotheca hagiographica latina antiquae et mediae aetatis*, 2 vols and supplement (Brussels, 1891-1901, 1911).
- 9 Ridyard, p. 57, fn. 192. Bentham, p.76, recounts that the saint's body had been found in the original grave uncorrupted and was then moved into the church. A spring, which may still be found to the west of the nave and reputed to have healing powers, is said to have appeared from the site of the saint's grave in the churchyard at East Dereham.
- 10 Ridyard, pp. 181ff.
- 11 Ridyard, pp. 191-92, 194; Rollason, 'The Shrines of Saints', p. 38; Rollason, *Saints and Relics*, p.180.
- 12 Ridyard, pp. 185-86, fn. 46.

APPENDIX I

Transcription of the text.

Abbreviations are expanded in italics.

- Item a mesboke curyd *with* [ve] rede velwete
- Item a mesboke curyd *with* hertes leder
- Item a mesboke curyd *with* buckys leder
- . Item tweyne iemewse
- Item a cohere curyd *with* hertes leder
- Item þe gospeller & þe pysteler
- Item a precynary clospys of syluer
- Item a grayyl *with* syluer clospys
- Item a bokee callyd þe mayster storyse þat þe veker hathe
- Item a glosyd sawter
- Item a prynspale corpras *with* a casse
- Item a noder corpras *with* a casse
- Item tweyne howselyng clothys
- de novo . Item an awter clothe of owr lady of qwyte damaske
with frechely frenchyd
- . Item a boxe of yuery
- Memorandum* tweyne candell stykkes of syluyr
- Item tweyne Senses
- Item tweyne Schyppys
- Item [tweyne] a cros *with* thre pesys
- Item a pax *with* a boke of sen wyborow
- Item tweyne basynnys
- Item tweyne crewettes
- Item Sex peyrr chalys and tweyne brokyn [v] viii
- Item [tw] thre pyxtes on of berel a noder [*with* a] of golde & syluyr
and a noder *with* sen nycolas rybbe
- Item a crysmatory
- . Item a pese *with* a cuer of golde & syluer
- . Item a schoe of sen wytborow of syluer
- . Item [twe] tweyne bolsters
- Item a vestement *with* a cope of clothe at of tyssew
- Item alpys cope
- . Item tweyne copys of blewe *with* egyptys
- Item a blewe vestment *with* a cope
- Item a vestement *with* a cope of ser Ion roche
- Item a knytes vestment *with* a cope
- Item a vestement of qwyte *with* tweyne copys
- Item a vestement *with* byrdes *with* a cope
- Item a vestement *with* besawntes *with* tweyne copys
- . Item a blakk cope *with* clothe of golde
- Item a vestment of lebbardes
- Item a lytyl cope of besawntes
- Item a vestment of crownys
- Item a vestment *with* crownyd emmys
- . Item tweyne vestmentes of rosette damaske
- . Item a blewe vestment *with* garteres
- . Item a vestment of the rode awter of clothe of velwett

Translation of the text:

*Words supplied to clarify the sense of the original are included within parentheses.
Superscript numbers refer to brief notes at end.*

- Item a massbook covered¹ with red velvet
- Item a massbook covered with doeskin
- Item a massbook covered with deerskin
- Item two iemewse²
- Item a cowcher³ covered with doeskin
- Item the Gospels and the Epistles
- Item a processional⁴ with silver clasps
- Item a grail⁵ with silver clasps
- Item a book called the Master Stories⁶ that the vicar has
- Item a glossed Psalter
- Item a main altar cloth⁷ with a case
- Item another altar cloth with a case
- Item two howselyng⁸ cloths
- New . Item an altar cloth of Our Lady in white damask newly 'frenchyd'⁹
- . Item a box of ivory
- Memorandum two candlesticks of silver¹⁰
- Item two censers
- Item two ships¹¹
- Item a cross¹² in three pieces
- Item a pax (decorated) with a buck of St Withburga
- Item two basins
- Item two cruets¹³
- Item six pairs of chalices and two broken ones 8 (in all)
- Item three pyxes, one of beryl, another of gold and silver and another (containing a relic of) St Nicholas's rib
- Item a chrismatory¹⁴
- . Item a piece (of plate) with a cover of gold and silver
- . Item a shoe (relic) of St Withburga in silver
- . Item two bolsters
- Item vestments with a cope¹⁵ of cloth and tissue¹⁶
- Item alpys¹⁷ cope
- . Item two blue copes (decorated) with eagles
- Item blue vestments with a cope
- Item vestments with a cope (belonging to/given by) Sir John Roche¹⁸
- Item a knight's vestments with a cope
- Item white vestments with two copes
- Item vestments (decorated) with birds with a cope
- Item vestments (decorated) with bezants¹⁹ with two copes
- . Item a black cope with cloth of gold
- Item vestments (decorated with) leopards
- Item a little cope (decorated with) bezants
- Item vestments (decorated with) crowns
- Item vestments (decorated with) crowned 'M's'²⁰
- . Item two (sets of) vestments of pink damask
- . Item blue vestments (decorated) with garter (badges)²¹
- . Item vestments for the rood altar of velvet cloth

Notes on transcription and translation

1. No abbreviation is signalled in the word 'curyd' in this or the following lines, though the word must have been intended as 'c[o]u[e]ryd'.
2. The meaning of *iemewse* is unclear. This form is amongst those given in the *Middle English Dictionary* for *jemeuse*, or 'jewels', though what this might be in context is uncertain, especially since the item occurs amongst the list of service books and other manuscripts. Dr A. I. Doyle has suggested that in context the term might refer to 'chemise' bindings.
3. *Cochere* or *cowcher* refers to a large service book, probably a Breviary (*MED*), but could also, apparently, refer to any very large book; see P. R. Robinson, 'The Vernon Manuscript as a "Coucher Book"', *Studies in the Vernon Manuscript*, ed. Derek Pearsall (Cambridge, 1990), pp.15-28.
4. The *precynary* is a processional.
5. The *grail* is a gradual.
6. Dr Doyle tells me that the term *Mayster Storyse* refers to Peter Comestor, whose *Historia Scholastica* is referred to in this form in several Middle English texts.
7. *Corpras* or *corporas* are given by *MED* as variants, meaning 'altar cloth'.
8. The *howselyng clothys* are linen cloths used in the communion service.
9. The altar cloth referred to here may have been decorated with an image of Our Lady, or, perhaps more probably, have been intended for use at the altar of Our Lady in the church. The precise meaning of the phrase *frechely frenchyd* is unclear, though Dr Doyle points out that *frechely* is probably to be connected with the annotation *de novo* in the margin, apparently in the hand of the scribe of the rest of the list. Dr Doyle also suggests that *frenchyd* may, perhaps, indicate that the altar cloth was trimmed with lace.
Qwyte, which appears also later in the list, is a characteristically Norfolk spelling and is confirmation, if such were needed, of the suggested localization of the list; see Richard Beadle, 'Prolegomena to a Literary Geography of Later Medieval Norfolk', *Regionalism in Late Medieval Manuscripts and Texts*, ed. Felicity Riddy (Cambridge, 1991), pp.89-108
10. The opening word of this entry at the head of the page would at first suggest that this originally began the inventory list. However, if this was originally the first item and if the bifolium was originally folded the other way to make this the beginning of page 1, the list of books and other items beginning 'Item a mesboke...' would have been on the last page of the bifolium, with two blank pages in between. In these circumstances it seems probable that the bifolium was folded as it is now, with the list beginning on the third page with the entry 'Memorandum two candlesticks...', and that the writer ran out of room and completed the list on the facing page.
11. I am indebted to Mr Alan Davison for pointing out to me that the ship was an emblem of St Nicholas, patron saint of the church of East Dereham and of sailors. Mr Davison also points out, however, that benefactions to the church at Swaffham, dedicated to SS Peter & Paul, during the 15th century included two ships of silver by one John Chapman and two other ships given by another individual, as recorded in the Black Book of Swaffham (see J. F. Williams, 'The Black Book of Swaffham', *Norfolk Archaeology*, 33 (1965), 247). There nevertheless appears to have been a side-altar dedicated to St Nicholas at Swaffham and the gifts to the church there may still, therefore, represent a particular devotion to that saint (see Francis Blomefield, *An Essay Towards a Topographical History of the County of Norfolk*, continued by C. Parkin (London, 1769), vol III pp.510-13). The items referred to in the inventory list were possibly incense holders in the shape of ships for use at the altar or other types of ship model given as votive offerings (one may compare the ship votive ship models given by seamen in thanks for safe passage in the church at Rocamadour, in the Guyenne). The reference in the inventory list might be judged to provide at least circumstantial support for the proposed origin of the list in a church dedicated to St Nicholas.
12. The *cross* is here said to be in three pieces. It may be relevant in this context that the surviving examples in an apparently widespread group of 15th-century processional crosses in gilt bronze are constructed of three pieces, one branch with the figure of Christ and two branches with the figures of John and Mary fitting into a boss at the top of the staff; see Pamela Tudor Craig, *Richard III*, Catalogue of an exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery June-October 1973 (London, 1973), item 209 and plate 67; Charles Oman, 'English Medieval Base Metal Church Plate', *The Archaeological Journal*, 119 (1964), 195-207. To Oman's list of surviving crosses in the appendix may be added at least one further example, with cast evangelist symbols and some contemporary colour, in a private collection in Oxfordshire.
13. The *crewettes* or *cruets* would have been glass decanter-like flagons, containing communion wine.
14. The *chrismatory* would have been a vessel containing the chrism or consecrated oil, or possibly a case containing three small flagons of oil used for baptism, confirmation and anointing the sick.
15. The *cope* is the semi-circular cape, often richly decorated or embroidered, worn by the priest over his vestments.

Throughout the inventory the form of words *a vestment* is used to mean what we would now call a set of vestments, in the plural.

16. *Tissue* indicates a rich form of cloth, often shot through with gold or silver thread.
17. The meaning of *alpys* is unclear in context, though Mr Rutledge kindly tells me that Alpe is a local surname and so might refer to the owner or donor of the vestment.
18. The vestments and cope of *ser Ion roche* may refer to an incumbent of East Dereham. Mr Rutledge kindly informs me that priests without degrees were often given the title 'sir'. Alternatively the list may be recording a gift to the church by a local knight.
19. *Besawntes* are the round heraldic charges called bezants.
20. The *crownyd emmys* of the inventory must be 'crowned Ms', the letter standing for the word *Maria* or Mary, in honour of the Virgin.
21. The vestments decorated with *garteres*, or garters, may refer to the badge of the Order of the Garter. The vestments were, possibly, a royal gift or the gift of a Garter knight in the neighbouring area.

THE MANORS OF WEST WALTON

by Alan Davison

Introduction

West Walton is a large village in the northern part of the Norfolk portion of Fenland. It lies about 5km to the north of Wisbech and about 19km south-west of King's Lynn. In 1985 an account of the development of West Walton as a Siltland parish was published¹. In that the presence of two moated sites was noted. One, now only partially visible, was just north of the church, the second lies near Priory Farm, one kilometre to the east. It was suggested that these could be equated with the manors held by the Abbey of Ely and the Priory of Lewes. The proximity of the second moat to Priory Farm and the presence of the Lewes Rectory in that quarter of the village led to the suggestion that it was the site of the Lewes manor. This was repeated in a later account, part of the publication of the Fenland Project's fieldwalking programme². Subsequently, Mark Leah and Margaret Mathews of the then Norfolk Archaeological Unit undertook, as part of the Fenland Evaluation Project, further study of a number of the surface features identified during the Fenland Project, including the Priory Farm site, and the present writer, who had provided some documentation in 1985, was engaged to investigate the documentary background of each. This led to the positive identification of the sites of the Ely and Lewes manors in West Walton but left the identity of the second moat in question.

Manorial History

In 1086 there were two major tenants-in-chief who held in West Walton. They were the Abbey of Ely and William de Warenne. Each had four carucates of land and one hundred acres of meadow. Two smaller portions were held by Ralph de Beaufour who had one carucate, and by Hermer de Ferrieres, who had 91 acres and one half of a church at 15 acres. According to the *Inquisitio Eliensis* Ely also had one half of a church³.

Ely held its manor until the Dissolution when it became Crown property. In the reign of James I it was held by the Prince of Wales and, later, by Catherine of Braganza, widow of Charles II⁴. Warenne gave his land in West Walton to Cluny, of which St. Pancras, Lewes, was regarded as a cell. After the Dissolution it came to the Duke of Norfolk and, subsequently, to the Hare family, one of whom became Earl of Coleraine⁵.