

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.

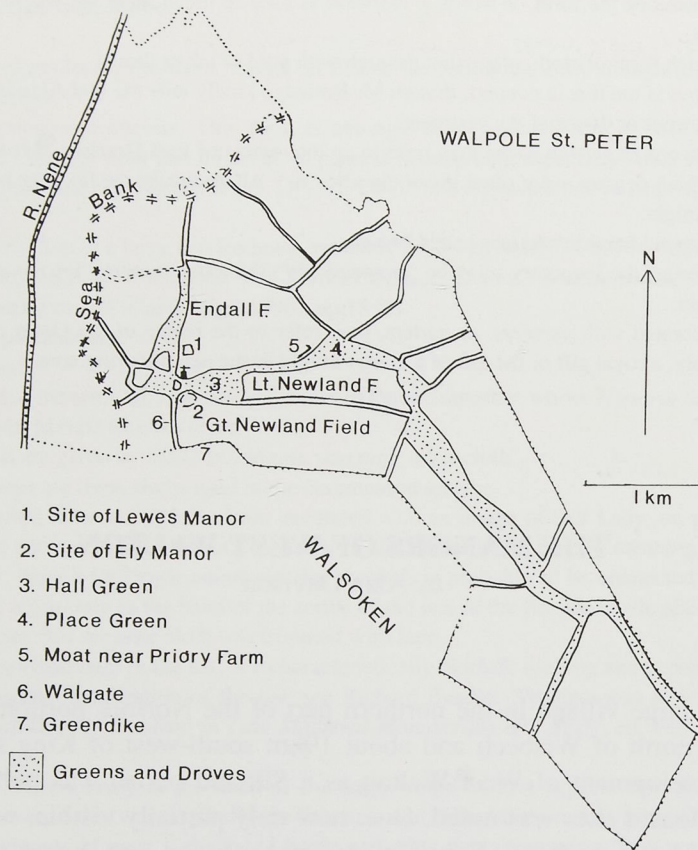


Fig. 1

West Walton: locations of sites and features mentioned in the text (after Silvester)

The Documentary Evidence

For the Lewes manor only a few documents giving topographical details have come to hand. The most significant description of its site comes from a terrier of 1342-3 which reads '*unum manerium cum le calfmedewe qui continet infra clausum fossatum et qua circumdatum VII acras*' (a manor with the calfmeadow which contains, within the enclosing ditch and water surrounding it, seven acres)⁶. A terrier of 1353 provides a similar description but places the manor, apparently, in the calfmeadow⁷. All accounts record the area as seven acres.

A much later terrier dating from 1685⁸ gives information about Lord Coleraine's manor. Under a heading 'Endall Field' it describes his tenant (Lady Winter) as holding a manor house and a meadow called 'Battle Meadow' with another meadow 'Calves Medow' which contained seven acres next the common way to the west, her own lands to the east and with Butt Green to the south. She also held land within Hall Tofts, 23 acres of free land and, in Stibtoft, a further 22 acres of free land next Hall Green to the south, with land of Nicholas Repps DD and another man to the north, Calves Meadow to the west and with land of yet another person to the east. Lady Winter also held 1¼ acres enclosed with a moat 'commonly called Fold Acre'; this last statement was said to be supported by records from the time of Henry VII.

From this it appears, despite some obscurities, that the complex of holdings, including the manor house, lay to the north of Hall Green⁹. The proximity of Calves Meadow, still seven

acres in extent, suggests that the manorial site had not moved significantly since the 14th century, with 'Fold Acre' a possible abandoned site nearby. Hence it appears that the earthworks north of Hall Green, since partially obscured, were, beyond doubt, those of the Lewes Priory manor.

The site of the Ely manor, that of 'The Queen's Majestie' in 1685, was described as consisting of a manor house, barns and stables, with 61 acres of land in Great Newland Field in diverse pieces next to the common drove called Hall Green to the north, the fence between Walton and Walsoken called Green Dike to the south, a common way called Walgate to the west, and land held by Lady Winter to the east. It is clear that this other manorial site lay on the opposite side of Hall Green to the Lewes manor⁹.

This appears a logical arrangement within the early settlement: the two chief lordships, having seats placed on opposite sides of a green, near the church of which they shared the Rectory and agreeing to share a weekly market and an annual fair just as the vill was shared between them¹⁰. There were still Rectors of West Walton Elien and of West Walton Lewes in the 19th century¹¹.

There remains the question of the identity of the Priory Farm site. Such a place might have been the home of some medieval family wealthy enough or important enough to seek to protect or embellish their dwelling with a moat. Members of a family called de Sculham were of some standing in West Walton. In 1250/51 Agnes, widow of William de Sculham, claimed from John de Sculham, a moiety of 720 acres of land and marsh, three mills, four salt pans, 3s rent and a third of 1/12th part of a Knight's fee in West Walton, Walsoken, Walpole, Terrington, Tilney, Setchey, Clenchwarton and Lynn, John obtaining the right to the rest. Blomefield states that a William de Sculham was a free tenant of the Ely manor in 1277¹². In the 13th century William de Sculham built a chapel in his manor house ('curia') in Walton. He had to put it under the mother church of Walton and to declare for himself and his heirs the intention of taking nothing from the mother church. No confession or spiritual ministrations were to be heard or given in the chapel without permission; all offerings were to go to the mother church and no bell might be rung. From this it could be argued that de Sculham's house must have been at some distance from the parish church. Had these restrictions not been imposed it might, in its distant position, have usurped the role of that church¹³.

Blomefield also mentions Lovell's manor of the fee of the Honour of Clare; William Lovell held here and in Walpole in 1459/60. Blomefield associated this holding with a family called Repps, prominent in Norfolk, whose involvement in the Fenland appears to date from 1328/29 when Thomas de Repps was Commissioner of Sewers. In previous accounts¹⁴ significance was attached to two facts. In 1532/3 the Prior and Convent of Lewes leased to John Repps 'late of West Walton, Gent.' their manor of West Walton, the site of the manor house, demesne, and other lands (save for the Hall and two chambers at both ends of the Hall), the garden, a meadow called Bromstoven and the New Hall for an annual rent of £26-13-4d. The early 17th-century copy of a map by William Hayward shows that Repp's house was close to the old West Walton Lewes Rectory. These facts were taken to show that the Lewes holding was in the area of the village where the unattributed moat lies, strengthening the case for its identification as the site of the Lewes manor. However, Faden (1797) appears to show the vicinity of the moat as Place Farm, after Place Green nearby. West Walton Lewes Rectory and, therefore, the Repps house, was some 600m to the west, placing it closer to the moat north of the church. The Repps connection with that site appears to have begun in 1532/3 but it is possible that, previously, they may have been associated with the Priory Farm site. Blomefield states that, in 1629, an

Inquisition recorded that Henry Repps died seised of a capital messuage and 324 acres of land; the messuage and 58 of those acres were held of the King's manor in West Walton, suggesting that Repps had, perhaps, been originally a tenant of the Ely manor. No particular significance need be attached to the name of Priory Farm near the unnamed moat; lands of the Priory and the Abbey were scattered throughout the fields of West Walton and it is quite likely that it merely means that it was established on land held, or formerly held, as part of the Priory manor.

As late as 1685 there are frequent references to 'the manor of Nicholas Repps, Doctor of Divinity'. The 1685 Terrier also mentions the manor of William Colville Esq.; according to Blomefield the Colvilles held the manor of Marshes ('de Marisco') in Walsoken which was an Ely manor and which, in part, extended into West Walton. This can be safely dismissed from consideration.

The Archaeological Evidence

The discoveries made during the fieldwalking programme of the Fenland Project seem to agree with the documentary evidence quite closely.

The site to the north of the church¹⁵ consists of a rectangular moat still visible as a depression. Silvester describes it as set on a roddon with a causeway across the ditch and inlet and outlet channels, all on its southern side. A dense concentration of Late Saxon and medieval pottery mingled with a smaller quantity of Middle Saxon sherds lay on top of the roddon and spread down its western side. There were abundant shells and animal bones. Some post-medieval finds were made within the moated enclosure.

To the south, on the opposite side of the green is another group of sites¹⁶, all on the roddon and probably, as Silvester suggests, parts of one large spread. All have Middle Saxon pottery; on Context 3 Late Saxon and medieval sherds are dominant, they are present on Context 2, but, on Context 4, medieval pottery alone was found with the Middle Saxon sherds. All three contexts have bone and shell, Contexts 2 and 3 have post-medieval material and areas of discoloured soil were noticed on Contexts 3 and 4.

The earthworks near Priory Farm¹⁷ include the remains of a moat, several platforms, possibly the sites of buildings, and two phases of cultivation strips. Within the remains of the moat a sparse scatter of 13th- and 14th-century sherds with, possibly, some 15th-century material was found, while, close by, another sparse scatter consisted of 14th- and 15th-century sherds. No finds of earlier date were made. However, it must be stressed that only limited cultivated areas were available for examination and that, as a result, undue emphasis must not be placed on the quantity and dating of finds which are, nevertheless, suggestive.

Conclusions

By 1316 the township of West Walton was firmly divided between two major lordships¹⁸ as was the Rectory, the half church of the annexation of Hermer having, apparently, passed to Lewes. It would be natural for the two manors already established in 1086 to be located on the roddon described by Silvester as the most prominent in the area, as it would have offered relatively secure sites in a low-lying landscape prone to flooding. The presence of Middle and, in particular, Late Saxon pottery on the sites identified above supports this. The finding of post-medieval pottery, domestic refuse and, on the southern site, building materials, suggests long occupation and some degree of status. The verbal description of the Ely site given in 1605 agrees closely with the position occupied by Silvester's Sites 34, 35 and 36 while, on the copy

of Hayward's map of 1591¹⁹, Green Dike lay to the south of it, Hall Green to the north and the road to the west of it was named Walgate.

Virtually all the Late Saxon sites discovered by Silvester in the Marshland were in relatively limited concentrations on or near roddons, circumstances similar to those noted here in West Walton. There were few, if any, obvious roddons near Priory Farm and this strengthens the evidence for a medieval origin for that site²⁰. The Priory Farm site would fit the implied description of the de Sculham house, but beyond that tentative suggestion the evidence will not extend.

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19. Silvester, 1988, 10-11.
20. I am grateful to R.J. Silvester for drawing my attention to these facts.