

THE MANOR OF TOOTING BEC AND ITS REPUTED PRIORY

BY

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RELATIVELY insignificant as the results may be, the task of uncovering the north-eastern villages of Surrey which have been swallowed up by suburban development has a fascination all its own. The problem that confronts us here is not that of farmers ploughing the sites of barrows, but of speculative builders laying out estates in the nineteenth century. They must be pardoned for ignoring field-boundaries, for filling in ditches and diverting small streams into the sewers; such acts were unavoidable. But they seldom had any care for old place-names, and covered the countryside with streets and roads which bear meaningless designations.

Another difficulty lies in the fact that the suburban population tends to be migrant. The inhabitants work hard, for they are working towards the day when they can leave the suburbs and retire to the South Coast or elsewhere. With some honourable exceptions, few of them take any interest in the past history of their locality, often merely because it has never been brought to their notice.¹

This particular area has been chosen for examination because of its connection with mediæval history. It is a matter of common knowledge that the manor of Tooting Bec, together with a small adjoining manor in Streatham, was owned by the Abbey of Bec-Hellouin in Normandy from 1086 or earlier until the final suppression of the Alien Priors in 1441: but there has been considerable uncertainty as to whether there existed at any time a Priory or even a cell of Bec upon the manor. The second part of this paper recapitulates such few facts as have been collected bearing on this point, which may help towards settling the question.

Tooting Bec is unsurpassed in the long continuity of its manorial records. Next after Stoke-by-Clare in Suffolk it was the oldest Bec manor in England, having been given to the Abbey by Richard of Clare before 1086. The land was administered direct from Bec until 1322, when it was leased out: from 1394 to 1422 it was held by Merton Abbey, and in 1441 it went the way of all other alien Priors, passing first to Eton College and then in 1465 to the Fraternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in "Berkyngchirche" (All Hallows, Barking), which held it until the suppression of the Chantries

¹ An enquiry sent to a local newspaper suggesting a few notes on the mediæval and later history of Tooting Bec Manor brought no reply.

in 1548. In 1873 the Metropolitan Board of Works purchased the manorial rights in order to preserve the Common land; and it was succeeded in 1888 by the newly-formed London County Council, who now hold at the County Hall at Westminster Bridge and make freely available to enquirers the Court Rolls from 1246 to 1316 and from 1394 onwards. In 1909 a first volume of *Court Rolls of Tooting Beck Manor* was published by the L.C.C., but it has not been followed by a second. The editor, G. L. (later Sir Laurence) Gomme, says in his preface: "As taken over with the manor, the rolls formed an almost complete set from December 1394, . . . every reign (with the exception of that of Edward III) from Henry III to Victoria being represented by at least some years in these records." The rolls from 1422 to 1888 still await full transcription.

THE PERAMBULATION OF 1793

As a first contribution towards filling in this gap, it may be of interest to reproduce with commentary the Beating of the Bounds in 1793, as it is recorded with full detail by the Clerk to the Steward of the Manor in the Court Book for 1731-1888.

. . . The Homage aforesaid at this Court perambulate the Bounds of the said Manor and deliver unto the Steward aforesaid in Open Court a Paper under their hands in the following words, vizt

STREATHAM JUNE 3rd 1793 PERAMBULATION OF THE MANOR OF TOOTING BECK IN THE PARISH OF STREATHAM IN THE COUNTY OF SURRY BY THE COPYHOLDERS OF THE MANOR THIS DAY

10 o'clock set out from the Corner of Streatham Church yard at the end of the fence bounding Dr. Bullock's¹ (the Rector's) garden cross the road² and go over fence of Mr Macnamara's³ garden and follow the sewer to the right to the bottom of Mr Macnamara's field called Fairfield then turn to the left with fence of said Field till we come to the Pleasure ground walk and turn up said walk on a turned arch in a straight line to the bottom of Dukes hill then turn to the left to gate entering little Lime Common⁴ & go with fence to the top of the hill then turn to the right with fence to premises on lease to Mr Stallard Penoyre and continue with fence to Streatham Common & then turn to the right with fence of Mr Penoyre's premises outside of d^o to Mr Newman's premises then inside of fence and out again on the Common at the bottom of the Plantation & go outside of fence bounding his Grace's lands to Turnpike road⁵ cross road & enter garden in Mr Pickersgill's tenure over fence at a Willow tree & then go with the fence bounding his Grace's lands in the tenure of Mr Pickersgill to the sewer⁶ and follow same to the right till we come to the lands in tenure of Thomas Mason & follow sewer being the bounds of d^o to Merchant Taylors bridge⁷ at the end of Wood lane then turn to the right up lane outside of fence in lands in Thos Mason's tenure to the lane in D^o's house & cross lane to pales inclosing Mr Piozzi's grounds⁸ then turn to the left & continue outside of D^o to the end of D^o opposite the post by the road on the Common then cross road and go 18 feet to left of row of trees⁹ in a straight line to fence of fields in W^m Charrington's tenure¹⁰ then turning to left on Common continue with fence to Common gate¹¹ then turn down the lane¹² to right & follow sewer on the left side till we come to a field his Grace's land called Longfield then turn to left along

1. etc. These numbers refer to the commentary below, pp. 5-9 and to Fig. 1 above.

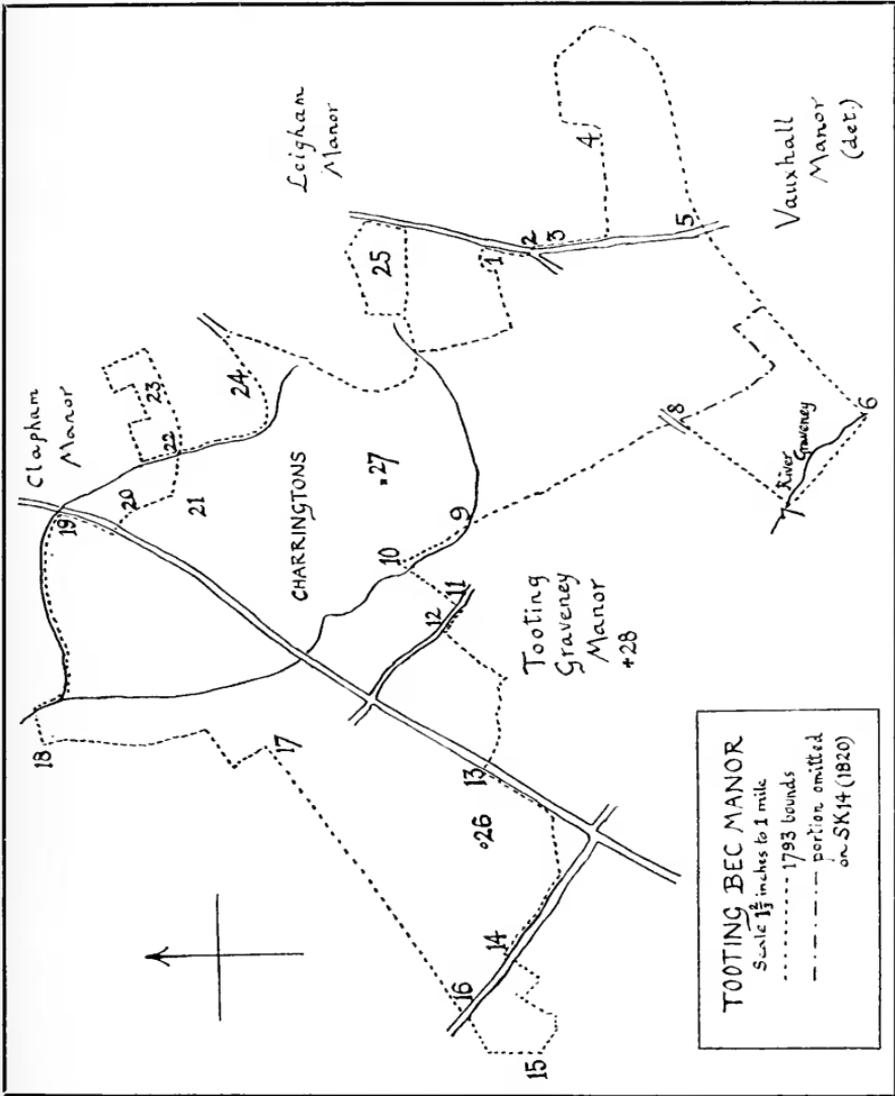


FIG. 1.

side of fence bounding his Grace's land to the end of the land in Mr Smith's tenure then to the right with fence bounding D^o land till we come within 40 yards of Nursery in lease to Alex^r Hay then turn short to the left down the field on ground formerly a hedge row & turning to the right enter the road at the Pond at the bottom of A. Hay's Nursery & cross the Turnpike road¹³ to the mark in the Wall late Mr Rush's then turn to left with Wall to Mr Davis's Yard & turn to the right thro' d^o with the sewer & follow d^o into garret Lane to post at the corner of a field then turn to left¹⁴ by fence & side of Cottage garden to the end of that field then a little to the right & then to left with fence of another field at end of d^o incline to the right and cross a footpath into Biggery Mead¹⁵ go to the left with fence of D^o to a Willow tree by which there was formerly a style then turning to the right cross the Mead to the Sewer then to the right with the Sewer to Drunken bridge¹⁶ from d^o go up footpath by fence & enter garret lane 12 yards to right in d^o cross to Boundary fence of Mr Harrison's farm & go with d^o in a strait line to the corner of the lane which enters Wandsworth Common¹⁷ cross lane & then turn to left with fence of Mr Gray's farm which bounds the same from Wandsworth Common till we come to Clapham lane¹⁸ then turn to the right with fence down lane to the Bridge then turn to the right with Sewer along one field and then keep to the left with d^o to Balham hill¹⁹ where the sewer crosses the London Road then turn to the right along road and cross road when we come to the Boundary of his Grace's lands on lease to R. Milson and then²⁰ with ditch bounding d^o into land on lease to J. Charrington²¹ & follow fence bounding said land to Sadlers new erected cottage in Dragmire lane²² to the left down lane and cross d^o to a field called Friday Grove²³ (formerly three fields) enter s^l field & go round the same & then again enter Dragmire lane & go with the ditch to Tooting Common & up with fence of d^o to Hide farm²⁴ pass d^o & go with fence of Common till we come to the fence of the lands in J^{no} Heath's tenure near the corner of the Common & then turn to the left with the fence which leads in a strait line to Cottages on premises on lease to Dr Thomas called Mount Ephraim²⁵ & with the fence of Cottage gardens enter the lane & then turn short to the left along the north fence of the field in Mr Fairfield's tenure & leave that field turning again to the left with the fence of lands in J. Heath's tenure to the north end of a field called Long Field then turning to the right go on the road to the pumphouse then turning to the right go down south fence of the field before mentioned in Mr Fairfield's tenure & enter Tooting Common then turn to the left with the Common fence to fence of Mr Fairfield's pleasure ground & follow that fence to Boundary Wall of his Yard & follow d^o to Wall bounding Dr Bullock's Yard & with d^o through his garden to Streatham Street then turn to the right with garden hedge to East Corner of Church Yard where we began.

COMMENTARY ON THE PERAMBULATION OF 1793

For the sake of brevity, and perhaps of elegance, the varying names—occasionally confused in some of the older maps—of Balham High Road, Upper Tooting High Road, etc., are all replaced in this Commentary by *Stane Street*. This is the oldest historical name, and applies equally well to any section. The fourteenth-century Court Rolls use various terms, such as The Londonweye: also Upstrete and similar names which may in some cases possibly apply to Streatham High Street. The Perambulation speaks of *The Turnpike*

13. etc. These numbers refer to the commentary below, pp. 5-9 and to Fig. 1 above.

and *The London Road*. *Stane Street* has the advantage of standing apart from these variations, and is moreover the subject of the latest close geographical examination, that by S. E. Winbolt in *With a Spade on Stane Street* (1936).

1. "Richard Bullock, D.D. Instituted in 1784; died in 1809." (E. W. Brayley and J. Britton, *History of Surrey* III (1850), p. 432.)
2. Streatham High Road, which, as its name suggests, is one of the old Roman roads. It ran to a point in Sussex which may be given either as Portslade by Shoreham harbour, or as Hassocks: the probable fact is that it served that neighbourhood in general and the Sussex ironworks in particular. Before reaching London it joined Stane Street on its journey from Chichester, almost certainly at Kennington. S. E. Winbolt, however (*op. cit.*, p. 205), speaks of the Godstone-Streatham road as joining Stane Street between Balham and Clapham Park. A fair alignment of this could be devised by use of Rocque's map of 1768,² the earliest large-scale map of the area known, by following his not very reliable field-boundaries. Such a route would run up Dragmire Lane (the present Cavendish Road) but would leave Streatham parish church on its *right*, not following the present road even as far as Bleak Hall. Alternatively, the road³ on Rocque's map from Bleak Hall to "Babylon" is suggestive. Dragmire Lane is itself a very old track, marked on all early maps; but it continued rather as a route from Clapham to Tooting Graveney church (point 28 on the map), skirting the western edge of the Common fields. Margary (*Roman Ways in the Weald*, 1948, p. 116) does not subscribe to Winbolt's theory, saying "It is reasonable to assume that this route" (*i.e.* the Brixton Road) "represents the final course of our road." And though suburban building has obliterated all the type of evidence upon which alone the absolutely final verdict can be given, from the general and almost universal witness of the early maps as well as from common sense and from the name of "Brixton Causeway," the present route from Streatham to Kennington must be correct.
3. According to J. Harvey Bloom in *Bygone Streatham* (1926), p. 32, David Macnamara was agent to Francis, Duke of Bedford, and lived in the house which is now the Convent of St. Mary, dying in 1800. But Bloom's pamphlet is a farrago of inaccuracies and even glaring errors, though it will be quoted here and there below (with all due reserve) when no other information has come to light by means of which it can be tested or corrected.
4. Bloom (p. 14) says "Streatham Common was formerly known as Lime or Leigham Common." This is certainly not true, for Streatham common lay within the manor of Vauxhall, not that

² Date as proposed by Dr. Wilfrid Hooper in *Sy.A.C.* XL (1932), p. 68.

³ The present King's Avenue, which continues as Bedford Road and reaches Clapham Road at the railway station.

of Leigham. But the spelling of Lyam is found in old documents, and the identification of Lime with Leigham is correct. The "Little Lime Common" is marked on early maps as quite distinct from Streatham Common. Its precise location is shown on plate II (dated 1790) of J. Edwards, *A Companion from London to Brighthelmston* (1801), as a square roughly 200 yards on each side, abutting upon the present Streatham railway station.

5. The Streatham-Croydon road; at the point now marked by the north-west corner of Streatham Common.
6. The "River Graveney," a brook named by back-formation from the manor of Tooting Graveney, running into the Wandle (also a back-formation from Wandsworth). It is inelegantly described here—in accordance with the custom of that period—as "the sewer." Geographically, the point is of some importance, for it shows that the 1820 Surrey and Kent Sewers Commission map of the manor in the County Hall is inaccurate in regard to the manor boundary. The designation of that map in the London County Council archives is "SK 14," under which siglum it is quoted hereafter: and, mainly because of its generous scale of six chains to the inch, or $13\frac{1}{2}$ inches to the mile, it has otherwise been taken as the standard. But it omits the southernmost portion of the manor, as will be seen from the marking --- on our map.
7. As to this bridge (pl. I a) and its name, the following information has been kindly provided by Mr. Evan James, Clerk to the Worshipful Company of Merchant Taylors, answering an enquiry in March 1961:

The bridge over the River Graveney was marked on local maps as recently as 1904 as the Roe Bridge. It is said that it was because a Mr. Thomas Roe was thrown from his horse while crossing the river and was nearly drowned that the Merchant Taylors' Company decided to build this bridge. There is nothing in our records, however, to confirm this story nor was there a member of the Court of Livery of that name in 1652.

In 1550/1 John Wylford, a Past Master of the Company, left rent charges of £13 a year to the Company in Trust to apply the income in repairing the highways through Streatham, Mitcham, Carshalton and Sutton made by his late father, James Wylford. Our records contain no reference to a specific payment for the building of the bridge in 1652, but it may well be that part of Wylford's bequest was, in fact, used for this purpose, which could well account for the Company's Arms and the inscription appearing on the bridge.

There is a record of three years' income being paid over in 1772 for the rebuilding of the bridge. The latter bridge had on one side the Arms of the Company with the date 1652 and the words "This bridge was built at the cost of the Worshipful Company of Merchant Taylors" (pl. Ia). On the other side it bore the following inscription:

"The bridge built by the Company named on the opposite stone was taken down, rebuilt and enlarged in 1772 by the munificence of the Gentry in the neighbouring parishes in concurrence of the said Company."

8. Mr. Piozzi married Henry Thrale's widow, who is well known to history as the friend and hostess of Dr. Johnson. Thrale

Fallowes' map was printed in 1767 for the sale of the Lewis lands,⁵ so that its landmarks can be taken as reasonably secure for our 1793 Perambulation.

The "Pond at the bottom of A. Hay's Nursery" causes slight confusion. Alexander Hay had a market garden with certain streams and ponds—probably watercress beds—on the further, north-western, side of the Turnpike Road (Stane Street). Either he had similar gardens where the Perambulation sites them, or—which I think less probable—the Clerk to the Steward of the Manor made a slip here. Fishponds Road is presumably named from these ponds. But it is too much to hope that Broadwater Road, which runs into Fishponds Road, preserves the memory not of these watercourses but of the Brodwater clan which lived hereabouts from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century, and very likely before and afterwards. They were an interesting and a rowdy lot, Richard Brodwater having been haled before the Manorial Court in 1408 for having bitten the finger of his neighbour John atte Wode.⁶

14. At the point where Selkirk Road joins Garratt Lane, which is called How Lane in Rocque's map of 1768. There is a "Howmede" mentioned in the Court Roll of 1401, which may very well be adjacent. The adjoining Graveney Road probably takes its name from the boundary between that manor and Bec.
15. Given as "Baggery Mead" in Rocque's map of 1768. It was common land of the adjoining manor in Wandsworth, and stretched north and south along the banks of the river Wandle, which is some 600 yards distant at this point. Unless—which is most unlikely—our copyholders were trespassing at this point, the bounds of the Mead, as distinct from those of the Manor, were probably somewhat vague at this period.
16. I have not succeeded in tracing any explanation of this intriguing title in documents of the period, though the Fallowes map (1720) names Great and Little Drunken Bridge Fields at this point, the latter being still called Drunken Bridge Field in the 1840 Tithe Award map for the parish of Streatham.
17. This lane, formerly "Wandsworth Lane," is now known as Trinity Road. The point mentioned is at the junction with Crockerton Road, from which the boundary runs along the line of St. James' Road; and it is perpetuated in the division between the postal districts of S.W.12 and S.W.18.
18. Now Nightingale Lane. Just north of this point the Falcon brook was joined by the Hidaburn, here called "the sewer."
19. At the junction with Oldridge Road. The writer's father remembered the time in the 1860's when the Hidaburn ran across Stane Street here, forming a splash or shallow ford.
20. The line of Old Devonshire Road on the present map.

⁵ In the Minet Library, Camberwell. A manuscript copy of 1755 is in the Sy.A.S. Library at Guildford.

⁶ Gomme, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

21. See No. 10 above.
22. Cavendish Road: but the older name survived within living memory. Foden's and some other early maps following him have misprinted the name as Dragmore. Zennor Road marks the site of Sadler's, Clark's, and Parsons', three cottage copyholds (Court Book, 1807).
23. The odd-shaped Grove is still part of Streatham parish, surrounded on three sides by Clapham.⁷ A road built across these three fields, and following the curve necessitated by their shape, was named Grove Road until recent times, when it was changed to Weir Road out of compliment to the benefactor of the Weir Hospital.
24. Not demolished until about 1900: in Clapham parish and never part of Bec manor. The reference in *The Place Names of Surrey*, p. 21, to the field called "Le Hyde" in the 1415 Court Rolls is probably incorrect, and this entry applied to some other field on the manor, probably in the Streatham portion. Nor was it the Falcon Brook which skirted the property, but the Hidaburn, for which see p. 4 of *The Place Names of Surrey*. Hydethorpe Road preserves a relic of the name, which I do not think is very ancient. The older maps, e.g. Rocque, call it by variants of The Tile Kiln.
25. The name survives in Mount Ephraim Lane and Mount Ephraim Road.

THE REPUTED PRIORY ON BEDFORD HILL

In January 1961 my friend the Prior of Bec, Dom Philibert Zobel, wrote to me: "I think you are right in doubting whether there has been any religious community from Bec at 'The Priory'" (Dom Philibert is referring to the pseudo-Gothic house at the top of Bedford Hill which bears that name; marked 27 on Fig. 1). "Tooting was only a manor and not a priory." This line has also been taken by some previous writers, though not by all: and though at the outset of this enquiry I was in agreement with Dom Philibert, an attempt at settling the question seemed worth while.

The earliest claim for this site seems to have been made in 1886 by F. Arnold in his *History of Streatham*, where he prints a tale of the old priory buildings having been burnt through the carelessness of one of the monks who upset an oil lamp; of old walls having been incorporated in the present buildings; and of ancient tiles discovered in the cellar, two of which he claimed to have seen. As to this story, which Arnold must have heard from some romancer of the period, no reputable historian—such as H. E. Malden in the *Victoria County History of Surrey* (1905) or Marjorie Morgan in *The English Lands of the Abbey of Bec* (1946)—has taken the trouble to repeat or refute

⁷ Patent Rolls, 1 Eliz. Pt. i. M 8, describe Friday Grove as part of Leigham Manor, which may or may not have been true for that date.

it. Some minor local historians have, however, used parts of it, without going to the trouble of further investigation: e.g., H. W. Bromhead, who says on p. 10 of *The Heritage of St. Leonard's Church, Streatham* (1932), that from Bec "a band of monks came and built their Priory upon their newly acquired estate of Tooting, on what is now Bedford Hill." J. Harvey Bloom is another embroiderer. On p. 38 of *Bygone Streatham* (1926), dealing with "The Shrubbery," a fine house on Leigham manor but not far from St. Leonard's Church, we actually read "The house has three remarkable passages, one of which is said to lead to a vault in the churchyard, another supposed to connect itself with the Priory on Bedford Hill, and a third leading towards Wood Lodge." Of these ancient drains I can only say that my three sisters were all at school in that house, "The Shrubbery," while I was also at a preparatory school in "The Priory"; and that if any underground tunnels had existed one or other of us would certainly have got wind of them and done some private unlawful exploration, even though our respective schools were nearly a mile apart. All that has happened since is that one of my sisters saw (as an adult) the brickwork arch of a large drain, leading incidentally not in the direction of "The Priory" but in that of the parish church of St. Leonard, Streatham, at the time when "The Shrubbery" was being pulled down to make way for modern shops in Streatham High Road.

But interest in the possibility of an actual priory or a small religious house somewhere on the manor was aroused six weeks after my receipt of Dom Philibert's letter, when Mr. Geoffrey Gibbens called my attention to a passage on p. 149 of Marjorie Morgan's book mentioned in the previous paragraph, based upon a document preserved at St. George's Chapel, Windsor,⁸ where it is stated that in 1322, the year in which the Tooting and Streatham estates were finally leased out and no longer administered from Bec, "the abbey claimed the following spiritualities in Tooting, where they had a chapel, and Streatham: All tithes . . . 20s. pension from the church of Streatham and the right to compel all their tenants to come to their chapel at Tooting at the feast of the Purification and offer candles."

This Windsor deed, however, could also be read in such a way as to imply no more than "our chapel upon our manor of Tooting," which is the way in which the whole manorial area, of which only about one-fifth lay in Streatham proper, is normally described in the fourteenth-century documents. The actual words are:

. . . Capellamque seu oratorium libere habendi in manerio suo de thoting
Ad quam seu quod ipsi familiares sui et tenentes sui infra dictam parochiam
commorantes qui pro tempore erant suis temporibus . . .

However, Marjorie Morgan (now Mrs. Chibnall) writes to me that on the whole "there seems no reason to use two different terms"

⁸ Dean and Chapter Muniments, Box XI G, No. 78.

(for the parish church and the chapel) "if the monks meant Streatham church by 'capella in manerio de thotingg.'"

The erection of this chapel by some later writers into a full-blown priory appears to derive from Stow's *Survey of London* (1603):

John Earle of Worcester . . . gave to the Custos of that fraternity⁹. . . the Priorie of Totingbecke, and auotion of the parrish church of Stretham in the county of Surrey, with all the members and appurtenances, and a Parte of the Priory of Okeborn in Wiltshire, both priors Alien . . .¹⁰

Tanner (*Notitia Monastica*) amplified this in 1695 as under, and is copied by Dugdale:

Some part of this town being given to the abbey of Bec in Normandy, probably by Richard fil. Gisleberty or Richard de Clare, a Great Norman nobleman, *temp. R. Will. I vel Will. Rufi*, some Black Monks of that house were fixed here: and this estate was sometimes accounted a distinct alien house, and at other times only a manor belonging to Okeburn, the chief cell in England to that foreign monastery. The farm of this place, granted to John Ardern esquire for ten years at 191 *per ann.* with the reversion, was granted, 19 *Hen. 6* to Eaton college. It was granted, 1 *Ed. 4* to the bishop of Durham; and 5 *Ed. 4* the priory of Totingbecke with the advowson of Stretham were procured by John earl of Worcester, and with the king's leave settled by him on a fraternity, which he had instituted in the church of Allhallows Barking, near the Tower of London.

Tanner's footnote (apparently from the Patent Rolls, although not so stated) runs:

1 *Ed. 4*, p. 4, m. 17 de concessione prioratus sive manerii de Totyngbeke episc. Dunelm ad terminum vitae.

In the *Victoria County History of Surrey* H. E. Malden writes¹¹ that a Prior of "Theuteng" is named in the Calendar of Papal Letters, i 271; and on p. 54 he speaks of "the small priory at Tooting dependent upon Bec." By the courtesy of the Minet Library at Camberwell, where the papers used by Malden in the preparation of the Surrey V.C.H. are preserved, I have had an opportunity of going through these, and there is nothing further to suggest that he had extra information about this "small priory." I am disposed to think that he accepted the term as justified by this use of the title of "prior," together with the "prioratus sive manerium" of which Tanner speaks and vague local legends which may possibly have induced the rash statements of writers such as Bloom and Bromhead.

As to the curious form "Theuteng," this is spelt by Gomme in *Court Rolls of Tooting Beck Manor* (1909), p. iv, as "Thentung," perhaps by a printer's error. But any suspicion that it might refer to some quite different place is dispelled by the reading "thotingg" in the Windsor deed XI G 78 already quoted: and there is mention elsewhere of a "Godefridus de Thoting" who held lands on the Bec manor of Weedon.¹²

⁹ St. Mary's Guild at All Hallows, Barking.

¹⁰ Reprint of Stow, ed. C. L. Kingsford (1908), Vol. I, p. 131.

¹¹ *V.C.H.* 11 (1905), p. 129

¹² British Museum Addit. MS. 24316, f. 45: quoted in Mrs. Chibnall's *Select Documents of the English Lands of the Abbey of Bec*, in Camden Society, Third Series, lxiii (1951), p. 101.

In an article at p. 33 of the *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* for 1940, six years earlier than her book already quoted, Marjorie Morgan summed up the position of the smaller Bec manors in England thus:

During the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries organization must have varied almost from year to year as new donations came in. When a couple of monks were sent to take charge of some property they needed no special conventual buildings: the manor house with a chapel in the parish church or a small oratory were sufficient for them. Two monks spending a few years, or even decades, settling some of the estates in order, may easily have left the memory of a priory in places where, by the thirteenth century, no trace of religious life was to be found. Blakenham may for a time have been a cell of Bec: Dom Thibault, who compiled a chronicle in the late seventeenth century—before the records of the original mother abbey had been destroyed—noted that a cell was founded there. On equal or more slender evidence the title of priory has been given to Tooting, Povington, Weedon, Lessingham, and Hooe. At least these short-lived or even legendary priories serve as an indication of the early administration of the English property when all other sources are silent. The first gifts of manors at Ogbourne were made only about 1133, and the completion of the donation *ad vestiendum monachos* came in 1147 or 1149: before, and for some time after, that date monks of Bec may have been sent to any of the manors listed above. And it is certain that they were sent to Ruislip. Ruislip was an administrative centre at an early date, and remained one until the late fourteenth century, but in the twelfth century it was also a priory.

The English Lands of the Abbey of Bec deals with this point, in a more condensed form, on p. 20: but the final sentence of that passage relates to our enquiry:

Gradually the number of Bec's English cells was reduced to a minimum.

From this rather unsatisfying body of evidence we turn to the more positive witness of the early maps. Comparison of these reveals that not one of them—not even the Ordnance Map of 1860—is to be entirely trusted, for all of them fall down in some detail or another. But if a sufficient number agree on some point, without revealing the fact that they have certainly copied from one original; and if such points can be confirmed as fitting into the truth as known from the modern surveys and from sixty years' personal knowledge of the terrain, we have something definite upon which to base conclusions.

In the later part of the eighteenth century, beginning with Rocque's Survey of 1768, and during the first quarter of the nineteenth century, a number of large-scale maps of Surrey, or of the Environs of London, begin to appear. These show the principal "Gentlemen's Residences"—often described as being genteel or respectable—and in many cases field-boundaries. Analysis shows that the field-boundaries are far less reliable than the gentlemen's seats; for the object of the map-makers was partly social and connected with real-estate speculation and development, agriculture being perhaps a secondary consideration. There is hardly any disagreement over the naming and position of the country houses which began to dot this corner of Surrey at the turn of the century.

One of the largest of such residences upon our manor was Bedford Hill House, standing approximately where Nos. 8, 10 and 12 of the present Veronica Road are built. This dates from somewhere about 1807 or perhaps a few years later; but on the other (SE) side of Bedford Hill no house is shown until we get to the date of Bryant's map (1822) together with Greenwood and Pringle of the same date. Here a house is shown on the site of the present "Priory House": but it is not called by any such name, being labelled as "Bedford Grove" and as the seat of — Bucker, Esq. In the Streatham Tithe Award Map, of which the final certificate is dated 1840, it is styled "Bedford House," rented by William Ellis from the Borradaile family. The Tithe map was almost certainly laid out a year or more before the final date: and the Surrey (1839) Directory of Pigott in the Archive Room at County Hall, Kingston, states that Abraham Goldschmidt and William Flower Ellis were residing at "Bedford Priory." This fixes the date at which the name was given at approximately 1839. The name of "Priory" or "Priory House" has been continued up to the present time except for a couple of decades or so at the end of the nineteenth century, when a preparatory school was established there and the name changed—perhaps a diplomatic move in view of the publicity then attaching to the Bravo poisoning mystery which had occurred on the premises in 1876—to "Harlington." There can be little doubt that the name was a period-piece of early Victorian romanticism and has no value for historical purposes.

If any tradition has been enshrined by the choice of this name in 1839, it is almost inconceivable that no trace of it can be found in the many documents of the manor which have been preserved. Furthermore, maps earlier than 1807 show nothing but farmland in this Bedford Hill area, which was known in the eighteenth century as Charrington's Farm.¹³ The Bedford Grove, Bedford House, or Priory grounds, which ran down the hill as far as the present Dornton Road, were separated from the Bedford Hill Farm or Charrington's at some time between 1822, when Richardson Borradaile bought the estate from the Duke of Bedford as Lord of the Manor, and 1822, when the maps first show a house distinct from Bedford Hill House on the south-east side of Bedford Hill and adjoining Tooting Bec Common. But this house remained on lease from the Bedford Hill House or Borradaile estate until 1840 at least, and perhaps until 1877, when the present series of Title Deeds begins. For this last detail of information I am indebted to the kindness of the present owner, Mrs. Hammond.

To sum up: it would seem best to conclude that monks of Bec were resident upon the manor, perhaps continuously, from the

¹³ The names of fifteen fields are recited in the 1802 Deed of Sale from the Duke of Bedford as lord of the manor to Thomas and John Graham (Public Record Office; Com. Pleas Recov. R. Hil. 42 Geo. III M. 52): but none of these names, with the very doubtful exception of a "Moat Field," conveys any indication of historical nature.

eleventh century up to some date not later than 1322; and that the title of Prior was applied at times to the head of that group. It is significant that no mention of any conventual establishment or buildings appears in the Court Rolls, apart from the "capella" at Tooting. The geographical outline of the manor makes it reasonable to suppose that this chapel would have been near the tofts and cottages of the villeins at point 13 on Fig. 1 and for half a mile north-east along Stane Street; for this village is a mile and a half from the parish church of Streatham. "Beke Spring"¹⁴ and "Beke Field" on the Percival Lewis map of 1720 may possibly point to its actual site, and Rocque retains the spelling *Tooting Beke* for the village of Upper Tooting. If the monks had any settled residence, we should rather expect it to be in the neighbourhood of the parish church of St. Leonard at Streatham.

¹⁴ Marked 26 on Fig. 1.



(a) MERCHANT TAYLORS BRIDGE, TOOTING BEC.
 (p. 6; No. 7 on map and commentary.)



(b) NORTH SIDE OF LIME-KILN 4, SHOWING ENTRANCE ARCH (p. 23).