

The Rector's Gift.

Integrating Church Development and Village Landscape at Car Colston (Nottinghamshire) and Elsewhere

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This paper explores the value of combining studies of church fabric with those of their surrounding settlements, which was the theme of the conference jointly-held between SCA and MSRG at Leicester in 2015. Analysis of the unusual village plan of Car Colston in Nottinghamshire identifies an original, very large green at its heart. St Mary's church formerly sat on it; and the principal block of settlement encroachment, creating the latter-day pattern of two separate greens, lies adjacent to it. The church, on the other hand, is notable for its elaborate chancel and fittings of mid 14th-century date. We identify this elaboration as the action of a last secular rector, as he transferred the advowson to Worksop Priory and became the living's first vicar: it was 'the rector's gift'. We further propose that this change of status opened the way for the monastery to exploit its new asset at Car Colston by creating a block of properties adjacent to their former rectory, now vicarage, which became the core of the encroachment of settlement onto the green, observed in today's landscape. Further examples of similar 'rector's gifts' are proposed at Heckington and Great Hale (Lincolnshire) and at Wharram Percy (Yorkshire, East Riding), and the extent to which these examples of rebuilt 14th-century chancels are accompanied by the expansion of settlement across former greens is considered. It is concluded that the change of economic status embodied in a 'rector's gift' – significant in its own right for its impact on church fabric and fittings – was sometimes a mechanism that initiated change in the physical form of the adjacent settlement, such as in-filling of greens.

The south Nottinghamshire village of Car Colston is an extraordinary place. With the huge western green of some 18 acres / 7.25 ha ('Large Green') separated from a smaller eastern green of nearly 6 acres / 2.25 ha ('Little Green') by the church and its surrounding properties, it feels more like a village in Surrey, Sussex or Essex than one in the intensively farmed, former open-field, landscape of the north-east Midlands. But its distinctive character today was perhaps less distinctive in the past; and, consequently, the way in which the village plan here developed can cast light on a number of other villages that found themselves in similar circumstances. In particular, the

physical and institutional development of the church, with its striking elaborate chancel and tall thin bell-tower, can (we suggest) illuminate one mechanism for a specific change in village morphology – encroachment on and sometimes complete infilling of large greens.¹

Car Colston, church and settlement

St Mary's church at Car Colston is a fine building. It has a distinctive tower of two clear phases, with a short pyramidal stone spire, a pair of nave aisles and a south porch. But the church is particularly celebrated

for its fine chancel, built of Sherwood sandstone and evidently a single-phase construction (Fig 1). The east window of five lights is the glory of the church. It has a distinctively enlarged central light and the tracery pattern is also that used in a group of windows in Lincolnshire that can be dated to the 1340s and 1350s. Their common inspiration was perhaps the prominent window in the gable of the south transept of Lincoln Cathedral, thought to have been inserted in the late 1330s (Everson and Stocker 2011, 226). The east window design places construction of the chancel firmly in the 1340s or 1350s. Like many expensive new chancels of this date in the region, St Mary's also has a fine three-seat sedilia in the south wall, decorated with distinctive and high-quality leaf- and figure-sculpture, which is accompanied by a contemporary piscina set within an ogee-headed niche containing a lovely micro-vault (Fig 2a).

The church sits at the focal point of the settlement, in between the two greens and within a knot of properties that have none of the regularity of form of those that line the greens proper (Fig 3). The latter are a mixture of well-to-do farmhouses and smaller village properties or tofts. A number of the farmhouses are associated with traditional village families, like the Blaggs at Brunsell Hall on Little Green, but all have frontages lining the green's edge and open onto it. Local histories report that Large Green has been in existence from the later sixteenth century, when the first documentation spells out the regulations that governed – and still govern – it (eg Haynes 2000, 72–3, acknowledging (at 140) the use of unpublished papers of TM Blagg on the greens of Car Colston²).



Fig 1
Car Colston, church of St Mary from the south-east
(Photo: authors)

But the green's archaeology suggests a greater age. It appears to have had long approach funnels typical of medieval commons, mostly now enclosed. There is no sign of ridge-and-furrow on these greens at Car Colston, as would surely have been evident had they been a late creation out of the medieval landscape. There is a general bumpiness, well-preserved throughout Large Green; but these earthworks do not represent former house sites or settlement remains. They have no overall pattern and little or no local form. Probably they represent, instead, the remains of many generations of communal activity and facilities, in the form of stock ponds, communal dung heaps, pinfolds and the like, renewed many times over. There is clear, and typical, encroachment of properties on the common space: by cottages peripherally on the north edge of Large Green (in 1843 the property of the Overseers of the Poor of Car Colston (Nottinghamshire Archives Office, AT 26/ 5A, 5B)) and by a former non-Conformist chapel on the green-side corner of Church Street. The best visible evidence for the age of the layout we see at Car Colston today is probably the earliest fabric in Manor Farm at the south-west corner of Large Green, which contains late-medieval timber-framing. Earthworks lying south and east of Manor Farm, in Hall Close were the target of limited investigations in the 1970s, and a cursory published report at least confirmed a medieval date of origin and use, though in practice they probably include both appurtenances of the manorial holding and also tofts fronting the green (O'Brien 1977). Certainly, when William Senior produced a survey plan of the Earl of Newcastle's land in Car Colston in 1630, two greens existed, with the Earl's interest in each reckoned at something over 6 acres / 2.5 ha; and – perhaps significantly – the naming of each green was the same, 'Carcoulston Green' (Nottinghamshire Archives Office, CC 1 S).³

Several of the Earl's properties in 1630 occupied much of an island of plots north of the church, between Bedeham Lane and Little Green, which has all the appearance of infill of former communal space. This infill is not a recent development, then; though a further row of plots northwards onto Little Green marks a subsequent stage of encroachment, which took place between the early seventeenth and the mid nineteenth century, consolidating a landless cottage that Senior's map shows standing on the then-larger green. Indeed, the so-called Old Hall, standing north-east from the church and within this island – which was the residence of the notable Nottinghamshire antiquary, Robert Thoroton



Fig 2
Car Colston, church of St Mary: (a) chancel fittings – sedilia and piscina, (b) west tower from the north-west, (c) heightened west tower from Large Green (Photo: authors)

(1623–1678), and was rebuilt by him in 1666 (Hildyard 1957; 1991; 2004; Barley and Train 1972; Henstock and Train 1977) – is reported to have occupied the site of an original Morin Hall, dating from the thirteenth century (Haynes 2000, 13–14). It is not known how this encroachment on the green originated, or whether it was originally related to the rectorial holding to the south. Several stages of encroachment and its consolidation are evident, therefore, in the village morphology between the church and Little Green.

The knot of properties around and south of the church, too, looks like the development of an early and undocumented encroachment. In addition to its formal difference from the pattern of properties lining the greens, it sits within a pair of continuous boundaries that lie at an angle to the field boundaries round about, and which we might think once marked the original north-western and south-eastern boundaries of a united single green. The continuous eastern boundary appears to define a single space, enclosing both the Large Green and Little Green, and suggests that this even larger single open space might once have terminated to the east in two broadly triangular funnel-shaped plots of land tapering eastwards along both of the lanes that enter the village at this end; Car Lane and Spring Lane (Fig 3). This proposed larger green, with an extent of approximately 58.25 acres / 23.5 ha, both re-connects the modern Little Green with today's Large Green and includes the knot of properties around the church. Furthermore it identifies St Mary's church as a communal foundation, of the type we have defined as an 'on-the-green' foundation, and which accounts for more than 30% of church sites in our recent Lincolnshire study (Stocker and Everson 2006, 58–76). Interestingly, the place-name affix that distinguishes Car Colston from (say) Colston Bassett nearby in the same county developed from Old Norse *kirkja* 'church' in its Middle English form *kirk(e)*, and only later became assimilated to the common word for 'marshland', *carr* – Middle English *ker* (Gover, Mawer and Stenton 1940, 223). This understanding of the place-name might also suggest the distinctive prominence, or emblematic new foundation, of the church here, within the green-based settlement.

Although this proposed original green at Car Colston is very large, similar greens at the centre of settlements have been recognised in other East Midlands villages. In Lincolnshire we identified similarly large examples in studies at Springthorpe, Roxby, Branston and elsewhere (Stocker and Everson

2006, Part 4); a number of them, significantly, were funnel-shaped and apparently opened out onto upland or low-lying grazing areas. Other scholars who have looked penetratingly at medieval settlement plan-forms in the region have reported similar findings, including notably elongated funnel-shaped greens or droves of considerable extent in Northamptonshire (Partida, Hall and Foard 2013, especially 104–20). Closer to home, large greens at the centres of Wellow and Linby in Nottinghamshire are still open, or partly open, today. In Nottinghamshire, as in Lincolnshire and Northamptonshire, however, the great majority of such large greens have presumably long since been infilled, without documentation, and thus it is a rarity to be able suggest a date, and a set of circumstances, for these considerable changes to the village-scape, as we will now seek to do at Car Colston.

At Car Colston, it is possible to deduce approximately when the process of infilling the common space got underway, and here too we can guess at the social and administrative changes of which it was the product. Fortunately, Car Colston's infilling occupied only one specific part of the green – the area around the church – leaving the remarkable village-scape encountered today. We suggest that the key to understanding the process by which this infilling of part of the green at Car Colston occurred can be read in the development of the fabric of the church. Our exploration of Car Colston therefore provides an excellent example of the way in which the setting of a church can cast light on the history of the church itself, and, conversely, an understanding of the development of the church can cast valuable light on the history of the settlement.

The Rector's gift

The key to our understanding the infilling of the Green at Car Colston lies in the process of church impropriation: the process whereby the 'ownership' of the rectorial tithe – often quite a substantial allocation of property – passed from the hands of a secular family (nominally the family, or the heirs of the family, who had originally established the church) into those of a monastic house. On impropriation the monastic house then instituted a 'vicarage', which usually involved the allocation of a small proportion of the tithe, or the payment of a relatively small stipend, to a resident priest to perform the cure of souls at the church, whilst they retained the much higher-value rectory

Fig 3

Car Colston, reconstruction of original green, with funnels eastwards onto access roads and widening westwards onto the heath along the Fosse Way: 'the Ring of the Town' and common rights as recorded in the 1843 Tithe award and apportionment (Nottinghamshire Archives Office, AT 26/ 5A, 5B)

in their own hands. We will show that this process of impropriation sometimes had considerable impact on that part of the church fabric for which the rector had responsibility: in most parishes, the owner of the rectory had responsibility for the chancel, whilst the parish had responsibility for the nave.

Consequently, we can presume that the remarkable chancel at Car Colston was very probably built by the rector in the two decades or so between 1340 and 1360. This chancel is clearly an addition to the existing church fabric, and must have replaced an earlier, almost

certainly less elaborate, building. Its creation was a very splendid 'gift' to the larger community by the rector; but the important question is, therefore, who held the rectory of the church when the chancel was built?

The church at Car Colston is not mentioned in Domesday Book, but it was given to the Augustinian canons of Worksop Priory by William de Lovetot, who probably founded the priory in 1103, although its tenure is not confirmed until 1130 (Page 1910, 125–6; *contra* Godfrey 1907, 49). However, this gift of the church to the priory in 1103 evidently did not

include enjoyment of the rectorial property. As is not uncommon, these properties were retained by the donor family, who paid Worksop an annual pension of 6/8d in recognition of the canons' nominal 'ownership' of the church. In 1291 the rectory was worth a total of £17 6/8d; so it was a valuable property to those who claimed ownership. The priory would have been consulted about the appointment of priests (the advowson); but, as the church had not been properly impropriated, the Lovetots – as *de facto* holders of the rectory – would have been able to ensure that their candidate for rector would benefit from the income. This nominee would provide whatever priestly services were thought necessary at Car Colston – either by undertaking the cure of souls themselves, presuming that they were in holy orders, or more likely by appointing a junior clerk to undertake the work.

At Car Colston these matters were the subject of legal dispute. Worksop Priory had obtained a licence for impropriation of the rectory from Edward II (Page 1910, 128), but it seems clear from what follows that this was not enacted. Indeed, the priory had to wait until 1349 to obtain the rectory, through proper impropriation. In that action, the rectory – including the great tithe – passed into the hands of the priory and became part of its own endowment. In return, the priory was obliged to provide a properly qualified vicar, who would be paid through the establishment of a new vicarage based on the lesser tithe, and would live henceforth on site. The new vicar would be responsible for the cure of souls. Even then the matter was not resolved, and the canons appealed to the Pope in 1363 to obtain a confirmation of their impropriation of the rectory (Godfrey 1907, 50). This major change in the management and governance of the church came about however, not through pressure from the priory, or from the Archbishop of York, but because at this time the Lovetot estate ended up in the hands of an heir – another William – who was himself an unmarried priest. No doubt because he was both the senior member of the family and an unmarried priest, William finally decided that his best course of action was to provide properly for his own commemoration at Car Colston, and for that of his ancestors, by handing the rectory over to the priory, in return for his own appointment as the first properly instituted vicar. He was indeed appointed to the vicarage for the remainder of his life in 1350, though thereafter Worksop Priory would appoint his successors.

William's project was evidently not just the orderly transfer of the governance of the church to the priory on

his own death, but it also included the reconstruction of the chancel on a notably lavish scale. Furthermore, the building work was merely the external aspect of his preparations for the transfer of the family's ancient possession to the priory. Based on the comparable cases we will explore below, we can also propose that William additionally wanted to ensure perpetual commemoration of himself and his family as part of the new arrangements, both in Car Colston and perhaps also in the priory church at Worksop – though direct evidence for this does not survive in the published chantry certificates for Nottinghamshire (Thompson 1911; 1912; 1913; 1914). William Lovetot did not die until 1369, which is later than the date likely for the tracery in the east window, so it seems all but certain that the lavish reconstruction of the chancel was his work. It might well have been begun before 1349–50 when the legal aspects of the impropriation were concluded; but, as he was not replaced as vicar until 1369, it is highly likely that he saw his project through to completion. The construction of the new chancel, then, has to be seen in the context of a carefully negotiated impropriation between the final non-institutional rector of the church and the impropriating monastic house. It was a magnificent 'gift' to the priory, no doubt paid for out of rectorial income and intended, we strongly suspect, to house the formal obsequies of the defunct aristocratic family that had looked after the church for generations. In a very real manner, then, the family would continue to benefit from the rectory, only now, instead of receiving the income in this world, the deceased members of the family would benefit from the prayers of priory appointees in the next.

When William de Lovetot died in 1369, therefore, fundamental changes took place at Car Colston. Not only was the new vicar appointed in his place a canon of Worksop, perhaps with no knowledge of the village, and subject to change at regular intervals, but, since the rector was no longer the resident lord in the vill, the rectorial property would inevitably have become viewed as a mere financial asset by the priory.

In our study of the Lincolnshire parochial churches founded 'on-the-green', we found that many were accompanied 'on-the-green' by the rectory buildings themselves (Stocker and Everson 2006, 66–7; Everson and Stocker 2011, 176–9), and we suggest this was also the case at Car Colston. The former rectory property and the new vicarial property would probably have been co-located during the life of William de Lovetot, between 1349 and 1369, but we have no unequivocal information where those properties were in the village.⁴

Latterly, the modern vicarage had stood on the north side of Church Street, but an earlier, wealthy, vicar built Car Colston Hall at the north-west corner of Large Green, apparently extending the grounds of the existing vicarage, which he had demolished (Haynes 2000, 39, 52–3; Nottinghamshire Archives Office, AT 26/ 5A, 5B). This demolition seems to have been underway when the Glebe Terrier of 1840 was being drawn-up (Nottinghamshire Archives Office, DR/1/3/2/30, 14). Even so, the earlier demolished vicarage was of nine rooms and itself evidently of some quality.⁵ Three sets of documentation show, however, that the medieval parsonage was very probably located on the green south and south-west of the church. First, around the year 1600, the Whalley family, having acquired the rectory and advowson of Car Colston after the Dissolution, built a house on 'Wilmot's' (an almost adjacent plot on the opposite/north-side of Church Street) 'out of the Parsonage-House', intending the new structure to serve as a house of correction. The old parsonage house had clearly been timber-framed, since the putative house of correction was itself pulled down in the 1610s and 'the frame of Wood' was sold to a man in Hickling, 'to set up there after the burning of his old one' (Barley and Train 1972, I, 241, 242). Secondly, an undated but evidently thirteenth-century deed gifted 'a messuage lying between the parsonage and the Common Moor, or Green' (*ibid.*, I, 237). Thirdly, the Glebe Terriers for Car Colston, which run from 1714 to 1840, consistently report that, in addition to the vicarage, the vicar holds 'one little close, taken from the common green, of two acres, fenced with thorn trees and containing ash trees' (Nottinghamshire Archives Office, DD/1/3/2/30, 1–14). This plot is very likely to represent the original rectory, on the original green, and thus the site of the timber-framed vicarage that was removed in the early seventeenth century. Taken together, we suggest that these references support our expectation, based on better documented cases, that the rectory buildings, and subsequently those of the vicarage, occupied the space now taken up by the houses on the green south and south-west of the church. It is, we suggest, no coincidence that the first edition OS map of 1884 shows a ring of small properties facing outwards towards Church Street and Large Green, and that the large central space within the ring – by then subdivided into several paddocks – is of approximately two acres.

When the rectory was impropriated into the priory in 1349, and the vicarage was formally established, this site inevitably fell a rung down the social scale.

The ordination of the vicarage by Archbishop William de la Zouche on 28 September 1349 requires that the vicarage shall be provided with a 'competent mansion with a curtilage and other houses' (Godfrey 1907, 49–50, quoting the Torre Ms. at York Minster). No doubt such extensive provision was necessary on the rectory site whilst the last of the Lovetots continued to occupy it. Indeed, this might have been little more than a description of the existing ancient rectory. But following the death of the former rector, now vicar, William Lovetot, in 1369, future vicars would not need such an extensive *curia*. Any agricultural complex attached to the former rectory could, at this moment, be amalgamated with whatever agricultural centre the priory already owned in the vill, or nearby, and the commercially more valuable parts of the former rectorial *curia* – the plots around the edges, facing the Green and the roadways – could be shorn away from the rectorial holding, which now only had to provide for the new vicarage. We suggest, then, that it was Worksop Priory that developed the group of small village plots, around the edge of the former rectorial enclosure south-west of the churchyard. Seven of these peripheral properties were recorded as having rights on the common in the Tithe Award, and it is their successors, and associated infilling, that still stand here today (Fig 3).

We might further propose that the tall tower, the upper stages of which can be dated to the later fourteenth century by the tracery patterns of its belfry openings, was also part of the plan for redevelopment of the village by Worksop Priory (Fig 2b). Once a scheme for building properties for rent on the former rectorial *curia* was implemented, they would tend to obscure the church tower from the remainder of the village, and especially from the focus at Large Green. To judge by the surviving lancet in its lower storey, there had been a tower west of the nave since the early thirteenth century, but the tall proportions of the later upper additions ensure that the tower projects above the cottages in front of it when viewed from the distant western end of the village (Fig 2c).

Thus, we suggest, the infilling of the green at Car Colston by creating a series of small peasant plots around the edge of the former rectorial establishment was the consequence of Worksop Priory's 'sweating the assets' of their new rectory following its acquisition in 1349, even though it is perhaps unlikely that they will have been able to undertake any such redevelopment until after William Lovetot's death twenty years later. Although the sources are silent on the point, we suggest

that this was the first step in introducing dwellings other than the rectory onto the Car Colston green south-west of the church. Subsequently, further infilling seems to have occurred to the south-east of the rectory site, and we have already seen that the *curia* of Morin Hall had apparently been present on the green to the north-east of the church since the thirteenth century, although its original relationship with the rectory plot remains unknown.

Having made some sense of the material evidence surrounding the impropriation – the reconstruction of the choir and the infilling of part of the village green at Car Colston – by viewing them together as intimately related developments, we can compare this case with others, where similar material evidence might also be an indicator of similar processes at work in the development of this particular village morphology. We believe that the combination seen at Car Colston of a ‘final rector’ of an un-impropriated rectory, the construction of a magnificent chancel in which the last rector and his family could be commemorated, and the reorganisation of a village green (usually by infilling, or partial infilling) to make rental income for the monastic impropiator can be glimpsed in a number of other villages in the East Midlands. Indeed, there may have been many more examples of similar behaviour by secular rectors dealing with impropriation. Our difficulty is finding parallels where good evidence survives, not just for the reconstruction of the chancels, but also for the infilling of the former greens. Nevertheless, during the course of our researches, we have encountered at least three other candidate cases of the same concatenation of history, architectural history, and settlement archaeology: at Heckington and Great

Hale in Lincolnshire and at Wharram Percy in North Yorkshire (Fig 4).

Comparable examples?

Heckington

Perhaps the most notable example of the final non-institutional rector's ‘gift’, where we can also suggest an association with the infilling of the village green shortly afterwards, is at Heckington in Lincolnshire. Here Hamilton Thompson drew attention to the interesting correlation between the construction of the magnificent and justly famous chancel, with its elaborate sculpture on sedilia, piscina and Easter Sepulchre (Fig 5), and the tenure of the rectory by its last ‘secular’ holder before it was impropriated by Bardney Abbey, to which the church was confirmed as a possession in the late twelfth century (Page 1906, 98; Thompson 1913–4, 63–7). As at Car Colston, the abbey received a pension from secular rectors throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in recognition of their interest in the church, but the great tithe and other rectorial property was retained by the de Gant family, who had originally given the church to Bardney. Again as at Car Colston, the abbey made various attempts to impropriate the rectory, at moments when the situation looked favourable during these centuries, and thus to consolidate their asset. They tried in 1228 and 1306 (*ibid.*, 64), but on both occasions the attempted impropriation failed. The church was eventually impropriated, and a vicarage established, in 1344.

It was also during this period – between 1306 and 1344 – that the magnificent chancel was constructed. A

Church	County	Date of chancel & (evidence)	Last owner of rectory prior to impropriation	Rectory given to	Date of impropriation	Death of final rector	Chantry for last rector's family
Car Colston	Notts	1340s–1350s (window tracery)	William Lovetot	Worksop Priory	1349–50	1369	Not documented but likely
Heckington	Lincs	completing in 1333 (inscription)	Robert de Potesgrave	Bardney Abbey	1344	1349	yes
Great Hale	Lincs	chancel gone	Elias & Hugh de Wheteley	Bardney Abbey	1346	1331 (Elias)	yes
Wharram Percy	Yorks East Riding	second quarter 14th century (excavation results)	Henry de Percy	Haltemprice Priory	1327	1349 (resigned 1323)	yes

Fig 4
Summary tabulation of ‘rector's gifts’



Fig 5
 Heckington, church of St Andrew: chancel fittings: (a) tomb niche and effigy of Richard de Potesgrave on north side, (b) piscina, (c) Easter sepulchre, (d) sedilia (Photo: authors)

style-critical assessment of its date based on the superb sculpture suggests construction in the late 1320s or early 1330s (Sekules 1986; Scheingorn 1987), as does the window tracery (Wilson 1980, 23). We are entitled

to presume, then, that the chancel at Heckington was built by the last non-institutional holder of the rectory: the well-known figure of Richard de Potesgrave, a royal clerk and chaplain to Edward II, who held it

between 1308–9 and his death in 1349. Indeed, the responsibility of Richard de Potesgrave is strongly indicated by the fact that the fine effigy in the ‘founder’s location’ at Heckington is that of a priest, and it was apparently confirmed by an inscription in one of the chancel windows (Fig 5a; Cole 1911, 191). Trollope explained that de Potesgrave’s appointment to the rectory was made by Edward II in 1308–9, as the last of the de Gants (Lady Lora) had died childless in that year and her estate had thus passed to the Crown (Trollope 1872, 384–5; Kightly nd.). In 1346, de Potesgrave was instituted as the first vicar of Heckington following the ordination of the vicarage by Bishop Bek (Thompson 1913–4, 65–6). On his death in 1349, he was laid to rest in his beautiful new monument in the ‘founder’s position’ north-west of the new high altar, conveniently adjacent to the door to the new ‘vestry’, which is equipped as domestic accommodation, as well as for a vestry, and was probably intended for the priest who served the chantry which de Potesgrave had equipped so expensively. The chantry was licensed in 1328, confirmed in 1335–6 (Foster and Thompson 1923–5, 65–9, No.100).

Even when de Potesgrave took up Heckington rectory in 1308–9, there can have been little doubt in his mind that, on his death, the rectory would pass to the abbey, and that the church would thereafter be served by a vicar. However, it seems that, like William de Lovetot, de Potesgrave’s response was to commission the most lavish and liturgically advanced building he could afford.⁶ Within this rebuilt chancel he founded a well-endowed chantry for the benefit of his own soul and those of his parents. Assessing motivation in such circumstances is not straightforward, but we suggest that he undertook this notable expenditure in order to offer the abbey the most splendid of ‘gifts’ on his own demise. It seems likely that the new chancel was always intended as the setting for his personal chantry, dedicated to St Mary, and later it was certainly celebrated at the high altar. Although the magnificent new chancel was, then, primarily for the use of subsequent vicars, appointed by Bardney, de Potesgrave’s ‘gift’ also incidentally provided a fine setting for the performance of his family’s obsequies. As with the other final rectors considered here, it did not really matter to him if the capital of the rectory itself was diminished in the process: he was not leaving it to earthly heirs.

The records surrounding the institution of de Potesgrave as the new vicar of Heckington in 1346 are also similar to those we have seen at Car Colston

(Thompson 1913–14, 66). The new vicar was permitted to occupy the former rectory house until his new dwelling was completed. This new complex had a hall, a kitchen, a chamber and a stable.⁷ This was good-quality accommodation, but perhaps not as extensive as the former rectory property, part of which was apparently intended by the abbey for other uses.

Like Car Colston, plan-form morphology shows that St Andrew at Heckington is also a church established in the north-west corner of what was also probably originally a large open communal space (Fig 6). Like Car Colston and other churches ‘on-the-green’ which we identified in our 2006 study, we can suggest that the rectorial *curia* at Heckington was also located on this putative green as the vicarage was first located in the large plot to the east of the graveyard by Terriers in the early seventeenth century.⁸ The vicarage was likely there in 1346 and the rectory had probably been there since the church was first founded. Virtually the entire remaining green at Heckington is now settled with the small irregular-shaped plots that are typical of village green infill, except a relatively small area in the south-western corner, which remains open and is still known as The Green. However, much of the area we identify as the original green here had become a small village estate consisting of a house, a barn, four tenements, and about seventeen acres of land still said to be ‘on the green’ by the late seventeenth century.⁹ This estate, which must have occupied much of the remaining original open space, became a charitable trust after the death of its final owner, William Taylor in 1720.¹⁰ If our argument in this paper is correct, then we would suggest that William Taylor’s predecessors had acquired this property infilling the green from Bardney Abbey, probably after the Dissolution. This would imply that, as at Car Colston, following the impropriation Bardney sought to develop the green by creating new infill properties for rent.

Great Hale

Hamilton Thompson recorded a very similar sequence of events to those at Car Colston and Heckington surrounding the impropriation of the rectory at Great Hale. This village has been the subject of at least two detailed studies (Thompson 1913–4, 63–7; Stocker and Everson 2006, 158–65). Like Heckington, the church at Great Hale had been originally granted to Bardney Abbey by Gilbert de Gant; but, as with the other cases we are dealing with here, the rectory property remained with the incumbent family. The latter paid a substantial fine, of £5, to the abbey in recognition of their rights

Fig 6
Heckington, reconstruction of conjectured original green

in the church, though the annual pension was a mere 6/8d in 1306. In this case, the incumbent appears not to have been from a great family, but held land only in this vill. The incumbents were in effect 'squarsons' and we are not given the family name, if indeed they had one. Perhaps the relatively lowly social status of the incumbent family was part of the reason why, in 1245, Gilbert de Gant IV made an unsuccessful bid to expel Nicholas the priest from the rectory.

As at Heckington, then, it was not until 1344 that royal licence for the impropriation of the rectory of Great Hale by Bardney Abbey was issued, and the vicarage was instituted in 1346. As at Car Colston and Heckington in this case too, it may be that the impropriation also came about through a failure in the rector's family line, although this cannot be demonstrated here. Our attention is drawn to the cleric Elias de Wheteley, who was a notable figure in the county, moving from preferment to preferment, and who had the ear of successive bishops, Dalderby and

Berghersh (Bennett 1999, xvii). It seems that Elias had intended to found a major chantry at the altar of St Katherine in Great Hale church in the 1320s; but he died in 1331, without establishing his chantry, and the foundation was actually made by his brother Hugh in 1336 (*ibid.*, 38, No.300, 67–8, No.532). There has been considerable confusion surrounding the establishment of the chantry, not least because the Chantry Certificate itself names one Richard de Wheteley as the founder, which appears to be a scribal error (Foster and Thompson 1923-5, 57–64, No.98). Even so, it seems that Elias was the instigator of the chantry at Great Hale, where he was rector. Consequently, if he was playing the role of the 'final rector' at Great Hale before impropriation, as Richard de Potesgrave was doing at nearby Heckington, then it might have been Elias who spent the money at Great Hale church to make it into a similarly fitting 'gift' for the abbey.

As at Heckington, the new vicar's holding at Great Hale, following impropriation in 1346, was defined

in relation to the former rectory, whose former house and *curia* the vicar was to occupy while the abbey provided a new vicarage elsewhere on the same site. At Heckington the new house that the abbey was required to build for the vicar consisted of a hall and kitchen; at Great Hale there were to be additionally two chambers, a bakehouse, a brewhouse, a grange, a stable and a cattle-shed. These additional agricultural buildings probably reflect the size and agricultural character of the former squarson's rectory. For a period, then, the resulting *curia* eventually contained two substantial houses: the former rectory and the new vicarage, plus a suite of agricultural buildings (Fig 7).¹¹

Our published study of the village morphology of Great Hale demonstrated that the village was originally based around a large square green, perhaps like Heckington (Stocker and Everson 2006, 162–4) (Fig 8). Again as at Heckington, the rectorial *curia* is readily identifiable co-located 'on-the-green' with the churchyard, in its south-eastern corner. In similar fashion, too, the green itself has now been submerged beneath small irregular-shaped properties of characteristic infill type. In the light of the comparable cases outlined in this study, we should now like to suggest that this infilling of the green at Great Hale took place as one part of, and subsequent to, the economic and social developments following the impropriation of the rectory and the construction of the vicarage here by Bardney Abbey in 1346.

Although the church retains plenty of physical evidence for a major reconstruction in the first half of the fourteenth century, the chancel is now entirely

missing, so we can make no judgements about its relative splendour. It had gone before 1634, when it was said that the chancel had been demolished at least sixty years previously (Stokes 2009, 77–8). As the de Wheteley chantry had become united with the other two chantries in the church by the fifteenth century at the altar of St Mary (Foster and Thompson 1923–5, 57–64), and as the altar of St Mary appears to have been the chancel altar, it may be that the demolition of the chancel in around 1570 actually reflects a contemporary perception that the chancel of the church had become a private chantry chapel, and was therefore a candidate for demolition after the abolition of chantries in 1549.

At Great Hale, then, we appear to see another impropriation brought about by a final non-institutional rector, who founded a major chantry in the church for the benefit of his defunct family. Here too, it seems possible that the infilling of the former green was also related to the impropriating monastery's replacement of the former rectory buildings with a smaller vicarage and their renting out of other elements of the former rectorial *curia*.

Wharram Percy

No doubt examples of churches of this type could be multiplied.¹² Churches which were substantially rebuilt by the last rector as a 'gift' before the rectory was impropriated by a monastic house and a vicarage instituted, and where there was a contemporaneous foundation of a chantry offering prayers for the souls of the deceased rector and for their family, were probably quite frequently met with. Although it is geographically remote from the group we have been considering so far, it is worth introducing just one more example, since it has been the subject of exhaustive study, both historical and archaeological.

The fabric of St Martin's church at Wharram Percy and its documentary background have been more intensively researched than almost any other in England (Bell *et al.* 1987; Stocker and Everson 2012 and references cited there); and we have suggested that the new chancel of phase 6 here too was potentially another example of the same phenomenon of the 'final rector's gift' (Everson and Stocker 2012a). The rectory and advowson had been in the hands of the Percy family since the twelfth century, but this Percy line ended in two female heiresses, the daughters of Peter Percy II, who died in 1312 (Wrathmell with Whittick 2012, 229–30). Peter's brother Henry was an ordained

Fig 7
Great Hale, church of St John Baptist: Nattes' view from the south-west in 1804, with the Old Vicarage in the background, then (as now) an eighteenth-century building on an older plot (Lincoln City and County Library, Local Studies Collection, II/205)

Fig 8
Great Hale, reconstruction of conjectured original green

priest and in possession of the rectory from 1308 (Brown and Thompson 1936, 128). He did not die until after 1323, so he must have seen himself as the 'final rector' of the Percy line.

The excavations of the entire church chancel revealed that the choir in Phase 6 was reconstructed on a notably lavish scale (Fig 9); on grounds of its likely date, it was probably Henry Percy who sponsored the reconstruction. Indeed, the priest's grave containing a chalice and patten that was discovered buried in the 'founder's position' north-west of the high altar could easily have contained his very remains (Everson and Stocker 2012b, 273). His tomb, whether it was that excavated on the north side of the choir or not, would thereafter have been the focus of prayers for the Percy family. In this case Henry's donation of the rectory to nearby Haltemprice Priory was somewhat

drawn out between 1322 and 1326 (Wrathmell with Whittick 2012, 238). Nevertheless, Haltemprice was in possession of the rectory by the time that their foundation charter was issued in January 1326. In return for licensing the transfer of the rectory to Haltemprice, the new priory was to provide two chaplains to celebrate commemorative masses at Wharram. One of them was specifically associated with the Scrope family (*ibid.*); whilst the other was deputed to say masses for Henry Percy and his family. Standing back from the detail, then, it seems clear that the process, and the underlying motivation of the final Percy rector at Wharram Percy was very similar to his equivalents at Car Colston, Heckington and Great Hale. That was to create a fine new chancel to house his family's chantry as a 'gift' for the appropriating monastic house.

If Wharram offers a parallel in terms of biography, institutional and structural history, it may also be a parallel in terms of the topographical development of the village. St Martin's church is thought to have begun life as a church 'on-the-green', with its rectory on the green immediately to the north, as we have suggested was the case at Car Colston, Heckington and Great Hale (Everson and Stocker 2012a; 2012b, 263). Furthermore, the green at Wharram acquired an infilling row of properties, the 'East Row' of cottager plots extending north from the church, late-on in the development of the village plan (Fig 10). There have been no excavations to date this infilling of the green at Wharram directly, and it has previously been linked with the re-location of the Percy manorial *curia* and associated developments in the plan-form of the village a century earlier. The parallels with Car Colston, Heckington and Great Hale suggest, however, that there is scope to explore alternatives. Might the Wharram green have been developed as a site for rented properties by Haltemprice Priory, once they had acquired the rectory, possibly quite slowly, as the result of a spurt of economic activity in the village that proceeded from the change in agricultural leadership on the rectory holding?

Summary and Conclusion

This paper began with the impressive green at Car Colston, rather than with a church fabric. It has not enquired – in a way that has rather preoccupied settlement studies – into the origins of the various greens encountered. The tendency for medieval settlement to shift to green- or common-edge configurations has been shown by plentiful fieldwork in East Anglia, for example, generally to have a twelfth-century starting point, perhaps sometimes even to occur by the time of Domesday Book (for a summary with references, see Martin 2012, 235–7). There is no comparable body of fieldwork for the East Midlands, since greens have not been seen as such an important component in settlement morphology. Colston's name itself – as a so-called Grimston-hybrid, combining an old English generic element with an Old Norse personal name for its first, specific element – is understood by place-name scholars to signal a major tenurial change: of an English estate taken over by Scandinavian lords. But whether that triggered a radical change of settlement form or economy, and at what date – perhaps sometimes in the early eleventh century, in the

Fig 9

Wharram Percy, church of St Martin: (a) excavated priest burial, (b) plan of excavated chancel area in phases VI-IX (Bell et al. 1987, Fig. 18)

age of Cnut, rather than necessarily in the late ninth century land-taking by the Great Army (Cameron 1971; Fellows-Jensen 2012) – is uncertain.

Instead, this paper addresses later developments, asking why the part of the green around the church had been infilled during the medieval period and prior to enclosure. The fabric history of the church points to important tenurial changes here in the second quarter of the fourteenth century, which might suggest a *terminus post quem* for the change in village morphology. Circumstantial support for the argument that the process of infilling followed the impropriation of the rectory at Car Colston is offered by three other eastern English cases, at Heckington, Great Hale and Wharram Percy, where the same tenurial changes, the reconstruction of the chancel and the infilling of part or all of the green can perhaps also be seen at approximately the same moment in time.

In all four cases, changes were instigated by the final wealthy individuals to hold the rectories, before they were to be impropriated by religious institutions. These rectors embraced the transfer of their rectories into institutional hands, and took full advantage of the moment to create

Fig 10

Wharram Percy, reconstruction of development phases of the later medieval village. Left: late twelfth century; Right: later medieval (Everson and Stocker 2012, fig.97, drawn by E Marlow-Mann)

lavish gifts for their successor institutions, which also served as magnificent settings for their own and their family's obsequies. But once the donors had departed, having provided their successor institutions with financial assets including parts of the village greens, it seems likely that the institutions decided – in these cases – to exploit the situation by building new properties on the formerly common land. Though the sequence of events we have highlighted here no doubt represents only a small subset of cases of encroachment on medieval public space, and perhaps quite a rare mechanism, the phenomenon we have identified demonstrates the value of continuing integration of documentary and fabric history of churches with the study of their settlements, in ways that are too rarely explored by scholars concentrating in one or other specialist study.

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Notes

- 1 It was to explore the relationship between church and village that the joint conference of the Society for Church

- Archaeology and the Medieval Settlement Research Group visited Car Colston in September 2015, guided by the authors. This paper rounds up and expands our discussions on that occasion.
- 2 We have not pursued this reference to potential further information, as we have been unable to trace, in any of the usual sources, the published reference given to these papers (sc 'Blagg, H., 1948').
 - 3 A forthcoming publication in the Thoroton Society Record Series is of the 130 estate maps drawn by Senior in the period 1600 to 1640 for the Cavendish cousins, the Earl of Newcastle and the Earl of Devonshire, the originals of which are held at Welbeck Abbey and Chatsworth respectively.
 - 4 Unfortunately, the Tithe award and apportionment affords no simple or direct indication, in the form of a tithe-free plot (Nottinghamshire Archives Office, AT 26/ 5A, 5B). Instead, this source indicates that provision for the vicarial income had been made from tithes on all the land within an envelope – 'the Ring of the Town' – encompassing the whole settlement plus many adjacent closes (Fig 3).
 - 5 'A House built of bricks and covered with flat tiles containing nine rooms, seven floored with plaster and bricks and two with Deal, ceiled with lime and hair, with Brewhouse, Barn and Stable built with brick and covered with (pan-) tiles, with a small courtyard, Backside garden and Orchard upon one acre and a half ... fenced with thorn hedges (Nottinghamshire Archives Office, DR/1/3/2/30/1-13).
 - 6 Exceptional chancel furniture at Heckington played a role in de Potesgrave's enhancement of the chancel to make his magnificent 'gift', and arguably the chancel furnishings at Car Colston are sculpturally of similar type. However, not all of the famous group of East Midlands churches that feature sculpture of this notable type, Sibthorpe, Navenby and Hawton for example (Sekules 1986; Sheingorn 1987), were impropriated at this time. At Sibthorpe, it does appear that the chancel was rebuilt in preparation for the rectory's impropriation by a monastic institution; though it was purchased by the donor for the purpose, and there was no question of the settlement's being reorganised subsequently. At Navenby, by contrast, the rectory had been impropriated long before the fine chancel, with its carved Easter Sepulchre, was added to the church. Whilst at Hawton, the rectory was never impropriated; it remained in secular hands, with the chancel being rebuilt and equipped with magnificent furnishings by a secular rector.
 - 7 The vicarage house that survived to be recorded in the run of Heckington Glebe Terriers from 1605 to 1828 (Lincolnshire Archives Office, DIOC/TER/LINCS/HECKINGTON) was of two stories and four bays, and the complex included a barn, a stable and two small courtyards. In 1671 these included a parlour, a hall, two further 'low rooms' with chambers over and a kitchen (possibly detached). By 1828 this house was of brick with a 'slate' roof (presumably limestone slate). This structure is located in the 1671 Terrier within the plot to the east of the churchyard though, already by this date, John Christopher's house stood along Eastgate to its east. To the south of the vicarage was a meadow of one acre, called 'Parson's Plot' and also belonging to the vicar.
 - 8 See n.7 above.
 - 9 Lincolnshire Archives Office, DIOC/TER/LINCS/HECKINGTON/1828. Not all of the land can have been located on the former green, as it is not that large.
 - 10 The Taylors were major landowners in the village by this time and rented the Manor House (Heckington Village Trust 2001, 35).
 - 11 The Terrier run for Great Hale, which begins in 1605, records what may be the vicarage of 1346, and that for 1707 describes the house and plot in some detail. It was a three-bay house with two rooms above and three below. The two above, and two of the three below, were boarded (ie panelled). The building's walls were of 'mudd' beneath a straw thatch. The stable was also straw-thatched. (Lincolnshire Archive Office, DIOC/TER/LINCS/GREAT & LITTLE HALE). The vicarage and its outbuildings stood in a plot of half an acre, with a railed fence facing Church Street.
 - 12 It is quite possible that something very similar occurred at Stainton-by-Langworth (Lincolnshire), for example, where Elias de Wheteley's brother Hugh was rector and may have re-furnished the chancel before the rectory was impropriated by Barlings Abbey. Here too the green in the centre of the village has been infilled, perhaps at about the same time (Everson and Stocker 2011, 253–61, 337–40). Here too there is a surviving, elaborate triple sedilia. It is an interesting line of thought that such facilities were necessary in these cases to provide seats not just for the new vicar, but also for the chantry priests who would now be present at high masses. Sekules's explanation (1986) that the *soit-disant* 'Easter sepulchres' were used as 'chalice safes' arguably plays into the same point. If there were high masses and subsidiary chantry masses going on sequentially, then a place to reserve the sacrament in its chalice, after high mass and before the chantry mass, would be practical and appropriate.

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