

# THE LONDON AND MIDDLESEX ESTATES OF ETON COLLEGE

By NOEL BLAKISTON, Public Record Office

The original endowment of Eton College consisted largely of the lands of Alien Priors. Only a fragment of the College property in London and Middlesex, however, came from this source. Most of the lands in London and the suburbs belonged to the Hospital of St. James, the reversion of which, upon the death, cession or resignation of Thomas Kempe, the warden, was granted to the College by patent of 30 October, 1448. The grant became operative almost at once with the appointment of Kempe to the bishopric of London on 4 February following. The warden's residence then became the town house of the Provost and there are references to it in the Audit Rolls, which record, for example, the expenses there of Provost Bost at the time of the coronation of Richard III.<sup>1</sup> The same Bost, who died in 1504, bequeathed to his successors his furniture in the Hospital.<sup>2</sup>

The demesne lands of the Hospital, as appears from the lease book and from receivers' accounts, were let as a single farm. There is an original indenture of lease at Eton by Provost Westbury, bearing his seal, dated 1 August 1454, to Sir Thomas Mason, chaplain, of the great garden lying on the east side of the Hospital, for seven years.

In 1531 the Provost was compelled—for he can hardly have been willing—to exchange with the Crown the Hospital and all but its remoter appurtenances, viz., Chalcots and Wyldes in Hendon, Finchley, and Hampstead, a tenement called the White Bear in Bread Street and a messuage in Westminster, for the manor of Baldwins by Dartford, the advowson of the church of Newington, and the Flache in Luddenham marsh, in Kent.<sup>3</sup> Thus the King came into possession of the Hospital, with 185½ acres mostly between Charing Cross and Hay Hill, on either side of what is now Piccadilly. This property became the nucleus of the Bailiwick of St. James.<sup>4</sup>

The property in Westminster was situated at the southern end of King Street<sup>5</sup> and the records of Eton describe in some detail both the situation and the actual or projected, buildings at various periods. In a lease of 20 June, 1459, one of the tenements is described as abutting on

the King's way in the high road of Westminster on the east, and on the west as far as the common ditch of the town. The tenant was to build a new house 39 feet long and 15 feet broad, with a loft of the same measurements, the house to be divided into a parlour and a kitchen, between which there were to be two chimneys under one mantel of sufficient height. The chimney in the hall was to be taken down and rebuilt.

A century later one lease embraced four tenements, situated between tenements lately of the abbot of Westminster both to the north and the south, that to the north called le Swanne. By a lease of 1 October, 1623, the property was demised to one Richard Price, vintner, and was said to be commonly known by the name of the Queen's Arms. In a lease of 1753 the premises are described as four messuages, one of which was formerly known as the Queen's Arms, then as the Crown Tavern and since as Brown's Coffee House, all adjoining one another and abutting on the Swan Tavern on the north and the Green Tree on the south. The measurements are given in the following lease as 41 feet 6 ins. on the east and 45 feet 6 ins. on the west, and 194 feet from east to west on the north side and 188 feet 3 ins. on the south. A survey with a plan, of 1769, made by the architect, Henry Keene, gives a very full description of the property.

A tripartite indenture of 19 June, 1688, which is at Eton, appears to relate not to the College tenements but to contiguous property, belonging to the Dean and Chapter of Westminster. It concerns Moses Pitt, bookseller, the publisher of the "English Atlas." "The English Atlas," says the *D.N.B.*, "was not successful from a pecuniary point of view, and Pitt also had losses in building speculations." Our document bears out the latter statement. Unfortunately it has been mutilated, but there seems no doubt that it is a mortgage of some of Pitt's Westminster property, which was already heavily mortgaged, viz., the Bores Head Inne and a piece of ground in Antelope Yard.

A tenement called le Whyte Bere in the parishes of St. Mary Magdalene and All Saints in Westchepe and Bradstreete was included in those lands of the Hospital of St. James reserved to the College when Provost Lupton on 1 November, 1531, granted the Hospital to the Crown. This property, demised to the Hospital by Stephen Blundus, had been confirmed to the leprous maidens by Royal Charter of 29 April, 1242.<sup>6</sup> An 18th century transcript at Eton of a lease of 1287 (which I have not yet run to earth) of part of the land later occupied by

the White Bear at the corner of Cheapside and Breadstreet, shows that this part of the property was then void and burned out. The area has been devastated by fire at least twice since then, in 1666 and in the last war. The White Bear which was burned down in the Great Fire is of much interest, for the house at the southern end of the block was occupied by Milton's father. Fortunately the records of Eton tell us a good deal about it, for there is a plan with a survey of the property made 16 October, 1617, when the poet was not quite nine years old. These have been printed.<sup>7</sup>

Another outlying appurtenance of the Hospital of St. James was a tenement called the Ball at Holborn Cross, in the parish of St. Sepulchre's without Newgate, between the beerhouse called the Lamb on the south and Cockes lane on the north. It was here, at any rate at certain periods, that the Provost, deprived of his residence at St. James's, chose to make his London domicile. In a lease of 1599, the lessee was obliged to find in the messuage called the sign of the Ball a sufficient chamber or lodging with bedding and other furniture meet for lodging for the Provost, Vice-Provost and Fellows as often as they or any of them should come to London about the College business. The premises eventually passed out of the hands of the College when the Mayor, Commonalty and Citizens of the City of London were empowered to buy the same by the Holborn Valley Improvement Act of 1864.

The main interest of the records at Eton relating to the Chalcots estate comes from the information they provide about the building that took place at Hampstead in the nineteenth century. By an Act of Parliament of 1826 the Provost and College were enabled to grant building leases of lands in the parishes of Hampstead and Marylebone. A prospectus, dated 1 May, 1829, which included a ground plan of the estate, set out the proposals to let the land on 99 year leases, subject to building covenants, for the erection of substantial and respectable private houses and offices, the plans of which had to be submitted to the College surveyor. The surveyor at this time was John Shaw, the architect, who was succeeded, on his death in 1832, by his son, John Shaw, who, in his turn (he died in 1870), was succeeded by George Pownall. Far the largest number of the earlier building leases was given to one Samuel Cuming, to whom (or to the builders he employed), and to John Shaw, the credit must be given for the stylish elevations of the houses built during the forties and fifties in, for example, Provost Road and Eton Villas. These

records have been examined by Sir John Summerson, who has made a study of the estate which he hopes to publish in due course.

The property in the Vintry was not connected with the Hospital of St. James. On 9 April, 1446, the King granted the College the reversion of two parts of the Crane and Wharve in the Vintry, which Derek Pile held for his life, and the third part, which Jaquetta, widow of the Duke of Bedford, held in dower. Pile's patent was annulled by an act of resumption in the Parliament of 1441 and on 30 April, 1455, the College was granted a further patent.<sup>8</sup> Jaquetta married as her second husband Richard Woodville. She survived him, not dying till 1472, having become Edward IV's mother-in-law in 1464. The Woodvilles appear to have ousted the College from its holding in the Vintry. It was not till 1487 that, as appears from L. T. R. Memoranda Roll, Mich. 3 Henry VII rot. 13, of which there is an exemplification at Eton, the College recovered possession. There are accounts of the bailiff and collector of rents as early as Michaelmas 1447. The College leases show the property to have consisted of various tenements, including a capital messuage called Copt Hall and a garden sometime called "the Vinegar garden of the Crane." On 31 July, 1800, the College conveyed the estate to its then lessees, the premises being described as a messuage or tenement and public house adjoining on the south called The Fox and Goose, a warehouse adjoining the same on the south, a warehouse called by the name of or adjoining a wharf called Red Lion Wharf in Brick Hill Lane and three warehouses adjoining the same, all in the parish of St. Martin in the Ward of Vintry.

There are a few other documents at Eton concerning properties in London the College never held or only held for a very short time. These include an early thirteenth century grant by Arnold Fitz-Aluff to the monks of Bec of an earthen wall between his land and theirs in the parish of St. Lawrence Jewry, so that they might make a stone wall there.

The College estate at Rudsworth in Stanwell, co. Middlesex, was acquired by purchase in 1458. An indenture of 28 January, 1457, made at the Hospital of St. James, witnesses that Richard Burton had received from Master William Westbury 50 l. by the hands of Sir Thomas Mason, in part payment of a sum to be paid for lands and tenements, late of Ralph atte Mille in Stanwell. A further receipt, of 24 February, 1458, shows that the full payment of 100 marks had been made.

The mediaeval deeds at Eton relating to this property include nearly forty documents of the thirteenth century. Among the earlier tenants of

the land was Master Richard, King Henry III's harper, to whom there are various references on the Close Rolls. On 20th October, 1242, the King, from Bordeaux, ordered Hugh Giffard, Keeper of Edward, his son, then an infant of three years old, to retain Richard le Harper *ad solacium puerorum*. On 15 March, 1253, he sent Master Richard to console his son, Edmund, then sick. On 29 May following, an order was made for providing robes for Harper's wife, to wit a coat, an overcoat of squirrel fur and a cloak with a hood of doe skin. One of the deeds at Eton gives the name of Harper's wife, Beatrice.

In a deed of 1 April, 1505, Andrew Wyndesore, esq., of Stanwell, undertook to found chantries in the churches of Stanwell and Dorney and provide houses for each of the chantry priests, whose prayers were to be for the welfare of the families of Wyndesore and of John Scotte, of Dorney, esq.

The Manor of Ruislip was not among those lands of the Abbey of Bec that were given to Eton. It went to Henry VI's other foundation, King's College, Cambridge. As, however, the proctor of the Abbey in England carried out his administration from the Middlesex manor, documents addressed from Ruislip are to be found at Eton. Such, for example, are leases of the manors of Bledlow (1326, 1336), Blakenham (1343) and Wedon (1353).

In a document of 1484 the College of Eton was given the right to distrain upon the manor of Ruislip, if the sister foundation failed to carry out the terms of a certain benefaction.

#### NOTES

- 1 Maxwell-Lyte, *History of Eton College*, 4th edn. p. 82.
- 2 *ibid.* p. 92. St. James' Palace is on the site of the Hospital of St. James.
- 3 *Statutes of the Realm*, Vol. III, p. 398. Documents at Eton.
- 4 To be described in a forthcoming volume of the L.C.C. Survey.
- 5 i.e. the King Street which ran roughly along the line of the western side of the lower part of the present Whitehall from the end of Downing Street to Parliament Square. Rocque's map of 1746 shows the area well.
- 6 *Cal. of Charter Rolls*, Vol. 1, p. 269.
- 7 *London Topographical Record*, Vol. XIX, no. 80.
- 8 *Cal. of Patent Rolls 1452-61*, p. 231.