

NOTES

THE TICKFORD PRIORY SEAL MATRIX



Bronze seal matrix of Tickford Priory (x2).

Tickford Priory, founded by Fulk Paganell in the reign of William Rufus, was one of the earliest, if not the first, of the monasteries to be founded in Buckinghamshire. It belonged to the Cluniac Order and was originally a cell of the Abbey of Marmoutier at Tours in France. The Cluniacs were one of the less common orders in Britain and were especially orientated towards learning.

Tickford had a troubled history. As an alien priory it would have experienced difficulties during the wars with France. It was seized by the Crown by 1324 and subjected to the official keeper of the lands of aliens, its revenues thus passing into secular hands. Moreover, there are frequent reports that the rule was badly kept, that the number of monks fell below the proper total, that the Bishops of Lincoln (in whose diocese it fell) were in conflict with the Abbots of Marmoutier and that some of the priors led scandalous lives. From the reign of Henry IV onwards Tickford ceased to be immediately subject to Tours and its priors were nominated by the Prior of Holy Trinity, York, as proctor-general of the Abbot of Marmoutier. The last prior surrendered the house to Wolsey on 5th February 1524 that its revenues might be applied to the support of the new college at Oxford. The Priory site passed to Anthony Cave who turned it into a 'good manor house'. Ruined buildings survived until the 18th century and fragments are re-used in the present house and outhouses.

In 1994 Buckinghamshire County Museum purchased a fifteenth-century bronze seal matrix of Tickford Priory. It takes the almond shape normally used by the medieval church and has the favoured subject of the Coronation of the Virgin. The design, cut in intaglio, depicts the Virgin seated on a canopied throne, (echoing the monumental sculpture of the time), holding a sceptre in her left hand and with the Infant standing on her right knee. Beneath, in an alcove, stands the figure of St Martin of Tours* dividing his cloak with his sword while two beggars kneel before him.

The purchase of this seal matrix was made possible by a grant from the M.G.C. Purchase Grant Fund, administered by the Victoria & Albert Museum, to whom the Society is grateful.

The inscription on either side is in Latin between cabled borders (expansions are indicated by square brackets):

'Sigillu[m]: Con/[ve]ntuali (*rectus* 'conventuale'); (cross)Orat[orii]: B[ea]te: Ma[rie]/de:Tykford'

'The conventual seal of the Oratory of the Blessed Mary of Tickford'.

The reverse has an integral hog-backed spine with perforation. The dimensions are 70mm × 44mm (maximum width) × 18mm (depth, including spine). The matrix is in good condition and microscopic examination showed that it was unlikely to have been buried.

The seal would have been used to authorize priory business, being appended to documents upon a strip of parchment or cord. Tickford owned several churches and lands in North Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire and Warwickshire and this matrix may have been used at several sites. Unfortunately, its history since the Reformation is not yet known, but it remains a rare and beautiful piece of Buckinghamshire's medieval history.

One other matrix is known from Tickford of a slightly different design and inscription. It is in the British Museum: see VCH IV, 365, Pl.I.

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St. Martin was born in the 4th century in what is now Hungary and brought up in Pavia, Italy. As a young officer at Amiens he gave half his cloak to a naked beggar, in whom he was led to recognize Christ and soon afterwards he was baptized and left the army to follow a religious life. In 370/1 he became Bishop of Tours and led an extremely active missionary life, becoming an evangelizer of rural Gaul and the father of monasticism in France. He was one of the first holy men who was not a martyr to be publicly venerated as a saint. Many churches were dedicated in his honour in England and on the Continent.

NORTH END FARMHOUSE REVISITED

In *Records* 18, Pt 2 (1967), we published an account by Guy Beresford of North End Farmhouse, Long Crendon. Beresford described the house as 'evidently of considerable importance', and thought it 'likely that it was built in the early 15th century', but was unable to shed any light on its history.* However a very thorough trawl through the records relating to Long Crendon, undertaken in the course of work on Dr N.W. Alcock's survey of Midland Cruck buildings,¹ has brought to light a number of points of interest. These have been made the subject of the present note.

The house was demolished in 1965, and we are therefore reliant on Beresford's admirable drawings and description for our knowledge of its structure. He considered that it originated as a three-bay building with a two-bay hall and a two-storey service bay to the north; a possible cavil is that it is perhaps more likely that the latter replaced a parlour-and-solar bay than that there was never a fourth bay. (c.f. Willow Vale Farm, Steeple Claydon)² This involves supposing that the house had been turned round, the service bay having been originally at the S (downhill) end, a likely enough development: c.f. No 1 Bates Lane, Weston Turville.³

It was the quality of the carpentry that led Beresford to suspect high status: the symmetry of the cruck blades, the precision of the joints, the neatness of the chamfers. In 1827 (a convenient date at which to start as it was then that the parish was enclosed) it was the capital messuage of a large freehold tenement with 132 customary acres. The owner was John Henry Taunton of Oxford;⁴ his tenant was Edward Kirby, who had obtained his lease from Taunton's predecessor, Spencer Smith, between 1821 and 1823.⁵ Before Kirby the tenant was Thomas Briaris, and before him a Mrs Osborne. Little or nothing is known of any of these people, who seem to have been incomers, but an Edward Kirby was farming at nearby Westcott in 1799;⁶ Briaris makes an appearance in the court rolls in 1822, when he was tenant of a messuage and

yardland recently inherited from an uncle by his sister Elizabeth Thompson, née Briaris;⁷ and Mrs Osborne had earlier been a tenant of land owned by Richard Brangwin,⁸ one of a long-established Haddenham family. Smith had been in possession since 1809.⁹ In 1827 he was in possession of the much smaller property next door, to the SW. Smith's predecessor was John Stevens, whose tenant was a Thomas Webster, and before him successively Richard Gibson and Thomas Gibson, members of an old Crendon family of harness makers.¹⁰ Stevens had replaced a Mrs Loader, but beyond her the trail runs out.

The size and quality of the house suggest one of Long Crendon's larger freeholds. It was not Sperlings, since that was the present 'manor house',¹¹ and this leaves three possible candidates: Loveden's, and the freeholds for which in 1522 Thomas Gadbery was assessed at £3 6s. 8d, and Margery East at £4 6s. 8.¹² We know the East land to have contained 6 virgates,¹³ and Gadbery's to have held 100 acres (c.42 ha).¹⁴ The extent of the Lovedens demense is discussed below.

Robert Gadbery, probably Thomas's grandson, sold 4 virgates and other land in 1554, but not the house,¹⁵ and this makes it unlikely that Northend Farm was his capital messuage: a house bereft of its land is liable to conversion into labourers' cottages. In 1549 the Easts' land is likewise found without a messuage: none is mentioned in a rental replete with holdings for which a messuage is specified.¹⁶ The Easts lived in Warwickshire,¹⁷ so it is possible that there had been no house on their land for a long time.

Loveden's (which took its name from William Loveden, a free tenant of the manor in 1391/2,¹⁸) had, on the other hand, a house on it in 1658. The property had been acquired by Michael Dormer in 1517,¹⁹ by Nicholas Bethune in 1554,^{19a} and by James Braybrooke in 1566.²⁰ In all these transactions it is described as a 'manor'; 'reputed manor' would probably be more accurate. Its location in the village is apparent from the court roll of that year: Braybrooke was told to scour his ditch at North

* It is now known that one of the cruck blades was dated by dendrochronology to 1405.

End.²¹ The Braybrookes were a recusant family, living at Hampstead Norris, Berks,²² and had tenants at Lovedens whose identity has not been discovered. As recusants they must have had a hard time in the early seventeenth century, and they sold Lovedens in 1632:²³ (This may have been a conveyance to trustees; the 'purchasers', Anthony Langstone and William Adams, do not appear again)) Later the land came into the hands of the Allnutts of Ibstone. In 1658 Henry Allnutt and his brother Christopher sold Lovedens 'farmhouse' to William Cannon and Thomas Greening, both of Long Crendon.²⁴ The accompanying land included Conygre Close.²⁵ At the same time they sold two yardlands to William West of Long Crendon, who at once sold the land on to an Oxford alderman, William Wright.²⁶ Wright in turn sold it to William Cannon.²⁷ Some at least of the Loveden's land may thus have been re-united with the house. The wording of William Cannon's will of 1679 suggests that he was then living in the house.²⁸ If so, it then had five hearths.²⁹

This does not exhaust the tale of the Allnutts' Long Crendon disposals: they also sold two yardlands to Robert Cozens,³⁰ also of Long Crendon. This was described as being 'part of Fitzwater's land',³¹ which identifies it as part of a large fifteenth-century freehold, not then part of Lovedens.³² They further sold a substantial property to John Randolph of Long Crendon, and a group of trustees.³³ The property is detailed as 'two cottages, five gardens, a hundred and forty acres of land, ten acres of meadow and forty acres of pasture', but since these figures are taken from the Foot of a Fine, no reliance can be placed on them. Randolph died in 1670, leaving to his son William 'all the yardlands that I bought of Henry Allnutt'.³⁴

The virgated land listed in these disposals (almost certainly common-field land, and certainly in demesne, as there is no mention of sitting tenants) amounts to 4½ yardlands, and there is independent confirmation that this was in fact the extent of Lovedens demesne.

This extent is nowhere explicitly stated; it has to be inferred. A convenient starting point is, not the earliest mention, but a manor court of 1561 at which enquiry was made concerning a small plot

called Power's Close (probably *rectius* 'Poor's Close', charity land). One of those who gave evidence was William Dormer, who said that Power's Close was part of Loveden's land, which was nine yardlands (virgates) held of All Souls.³⁵

Twelve years earlier, in 1549, a court, properly a *curia supervisii*, (a court of survey) held for William Dormer, had surveyed all his lands and tenants and their rents.³⁶ It included Lovedens, which he had bought in 1517, but was shortly to sell to Nicholas Bethune. It apparently lists only copyhold land, as all the rents shown are at the customary levels of 14s for a yardland, and 7s for a half yardland. The Lovedens land is distinguished by marginal annotations: 'Betham' (for 'Bethune') is written against two yardlands and one half yardland, while 'Digby' is written against one yardland and two half yardlands. The rents are all multiples of 7 shillings, indicating that these are copyholds. It is not known who Digby was, but this land is clearly subsidiary to the main Dormer lordship, so it should be part of Lovedens. This indication that there was 4½ virgates of copyhold in Lovedens - and therefore 4½ virgates of demesne - is confirmed by a document of 1563.

This is a rental apparently prepared for John Piers on his temporarily taking over the Dormer lordship in 1563.³⁷ It is arranged under various headings, and shows tenants and their rents. Under 'The Copyholders' appear five holders of virgates. Five further virgates are listed under the heading 'Such as were copyholders and were made free by Mr Dormer'. Heading this part of the list is 'Mr Betham and his tenants - 59 s', 59 shillings is of course 4½ times 14 shillings, the standard rent for a copyhold yardland. The reference to 'Mr Betham' tells us that this is Loveden's virgated (common-field) copyhold land (now evidently enfranchised). When we come, therefore, to a part of the list headed 'Mr Betham and his tenants doe paye' we can be reasonably sure that we are dealing with leased demesne. Here there are eight entries of half yearly rents: one of 7s. 4d, three of 7 s., one of 2s. 2d, two of 9d. and one of 8d. There is no way in which we can relate these sums to acreages, since we are not now dealing with customary rents, but the computations above are reasonably conclusive for copyhold (tenant) land of 4½ virgates and demesne land of equivalent extent.

The Braybrookes made efforts to expand their demesne by dubious means: their unilateral enclosure of 8½ acres was presented at a manor court in 1596.³⁸ Part of the land they enclosed was called Conygar Hill; and some of it remained with the Cannon family for nearly 100 years. Conygre was still in that family in 1756.³⁹ In 1759, however, the whole property was sold to Thomas Cox and Thomas Reynolds, of Notley Abbey.⁴⁰

No link has yet been found between any of these families and Mrs Loader, but the Braybrookes' connection with North End puts its identity with Lovedens beyond reasonable doubt.

In 1876 the holding was still in the hands of the Taunton family; the tenant was Francis Dodwell,⁴¹ a member of what was then the village's most successful family.⁴² Men had forgotten that it had ever been a manor.

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