

'The Great Barn', Lewknor: The Documentary Evidence

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During an All Souls College Progress in 1969, Dr. Peter Salway recognized Medieval timber-framing masked by modern cladding in a barn at Church Farm, Lewknor. Further examination suggested that an important late Medieval aisled hall-house had been adapted for agricultural use. Three bays survive intact, with fine cusped bracing at the presumed dais end. The southern end has been rebuilt. The building has been surveyed and photographed by the R.C.H.M., and it is hoped to publish a full architectural description in a future issue. Meanwhile we print a review of the documentary sources, the result of work generously financed by All Souls after the existence of the structure had been brought to the college's attention by the O.A. and H.S.

THE discovery of a medieval timber-framed building, now in use as a barn, on Church Farm, Lewknor, led to a search in the archives of All Souls College, the present owner, for information about its builder, its original purpose, and its first owner. The most obvious clue to the answer to these questions lies in the establishment of the ownership of the land, both at the postulated period of the construction of the barn, and subsequently.

There were in the middle ages three separate estates in Lewknor: Nethercote, Lewknor and Moor Court. In addition, there was also the land belonging to the glebe.¹

Moor Court came into the possession of All Souls in 1742-44, when it consisted of the manor house of the same name, Tippings or Lewknor Farm and a yeoman's holding of thirty-six acres with its capital messuage near the Common Pound, i.e. on the road to South Weston.² Thus neither the estate nor the building had any connection with the college in the 15th century.

Nethercote and Lewknor manors were separate estates in the 15th century, and were merged into joint possession only in 1780 when Richard Paul Jodrell, already the owner of Lewknor, purchased the Nethercote lands.³ Again, the deeds show that Church farm did not belong to either estate, purchased by the college in 1954. In addition, rents were being collected by the college from its tenant from at least as early as 1900.⁴

This leaves only one possibility, namely that when All Souls acquired the advowson, the glebe land and the rectorial tithes in 1440, it also acquired Church Farm. If indeed the building passed into college ownership at this date, it is

¹ *V.C.H. Oxon.*, VIII, Lewknor, by the late Sir Edmund Craster, pp. 98-115.

² Bodleian Library, MS. d.d. All Souls, c. 112/28; b 12/70, 72, 75.

³ Salle Park Deeds, B.II, 9, 10, 11, 12.

⁴ Information from the College estate Agent, Mr. G. N. Beckett.

logical to expect that there would be some reference to its existence in the accounts of the farmer of the lands. Such is indeed the case. Four particulars of accounts survive, for the years 1458-59, 1460-61, 1463 and 1483-84.⁵ The dates of these are sufficiently close to the date of the acquisition of the rectory and therefore of the glebe to make it inherently probable that they would provide some indication of whether there were existing buildings, or whether the college had to build afresh.

The evidence of the accounts suggests that All Souls inherited an existing set of farm buildings: a barn, a great barn, a malthouse, a carthouse, a swinehouse, a dovehouse, a churnhouse and a 'kyll'⁶ are all mentioned. The cart-house and swinehouse were specifically stated to be 'in the parsonage', itself under construction. Noticeable, perhaps significant, stress is laid on mangers and on the provision of timber for their construction. But neither the quantities of materials bought, nor the numbers of labourers employed, nor the length of time for which they were paid suggests that new work was being undertaken. Entries such as the two shillings paid for the scraping of moss from the roof of the barn and the fourteen shillings paid for thatching the barn suggest repair of an older structure. In other words, the college came to own existing buildings, some of them farm buildings, to which they added a new parsonage house.

On the assumption that the college did inherit these buildings, they can only have been acquired as part of the rectorial estate, and the fact that there is no specific mention of the buildings in the bulls concerning the transfer, nor any title deeds amongst the college archives⁷ is of little importance. Having established that the college acquired the buildings that went with the rectorial glebe, it is probable that the previous owner of the advowson can be credited with the construction of the building. From 1146 until 1440 the living was in the gift of Abingdon Abbey. Until the Dissolution, they were also the holder of the Lewkenor manor, so that in either capacity it is scarcely surprising that they should find a need for a large building, which could have been put to a variety of uses, both residential (the abbey was after all an absentee landlord), for storage, and perhaps even curial. Both the manor and the hundred courts were still being held in the village as late as the early 15th century.⁸ Moreover, the abbey, alone amongst the landowners in the parish of the 14th century, would have been able to command not only the necessary money, but also the craftsmen skilled enough to erect such a building. It is also the only one of the three manors for which a manor house is not known; the site of Moor Court must have been that of the present day house of the same name, and that of Nethercote the site of the house burned in 1871.

Although the identification of the building as part of the rectorial estate can be taken as established, the identification of the building in question with the great barn of the accounts is less sure. Documentary evidence shows that

⁵ MS. d.d. All Souls c. 323, c. 324, c. 325.

⁶ This usage is still current in the potteries, see John Wain, *The Contenders* (1958), p. 38.

⁷ MS. d.d. All Souls, c. 112/3, 6.

⁸ R. E. G. Kirk, *Accounts of the Obedientiars of Abingdon Abbey*, Camden Society, N.S., LI, 1892, pp. 148-9; P.R.O., S.C. 2/197/40. No accounts of construction by the abbey at Lewkenor have survived.

there were many buildings in the vicinity of the church, which, although they have since disappeared, were there in the 15th century.

Some things we know for certain. The existing building was not at any date after 1440 the parsonage. The accounts show that this was clearly a new building, and also that it was the H-shaped building described in the 1685 glebe terrier,⁹ and shown on the enclosure award map of 1814. It is also unlikely that our building was 'the long house by the street'. Street should be taken to mean road, and it is scarcely near-by. The comment is more likely to refer to the churchhouse, quitclaimed by the Fellows to the church wardens in 1518.¹⁰ Our building cannot have been the barn on the west side of the vicarage, acquired by All Souls in 1751 from the Codrington Bequest: before that date the college would have had no responsibility for its maintenance.¹¹ For the same reason, neither can this barn be either of the two listed in the glebe terrier of 1736.¹² It is unfortunate that a document of such a late date should contain the first mention of the two barns owned by the rector, but, if a historical connection can be stretched from c. 1450 to 1736, the two barns of 1736 correspond with the barn and the great barn of the late 15th century. The building was so patently in existence by the end of the 16th century that its absence from Longden's map of the glebe lands commissioned by Warden Hovenden in 1598 cannot be taken as an argument that it was not college property. The period was not one when the placing of buildings in accurate relationship to each other was deemed important, and in several other respects Longden's map is not correct.

The site of the building, only a few yards outside the churchyard wall, is an entirely probable one for the rectorial barn. Equally the fact that in 1445-46 there was an already existing building in use as a barn is clear from an entry on the account for that year recording the expenditure of £6. 16. 4 on repairs to the chancel and the barn. If the architectural evidence suggests that the barn was in fact originally a late 14th century dwelling, it would seem that a new parsonage was built in about 1440 complete with hall and chambers and a separate kitchen, and the old building, now too old-fashioned and uncomfortable for habitation, but by no means dilapidated, was turned into a barn.

APPENDIX

MS. d.d. All Souls, c. 323/1458-59

Parchment roll headed of John Pine. The draft also exists. The documents are much creased and badly written.

Compotus Nicholai Andrew firmar' ibidem hoc anno

In primis pro ij cereis ardentibus in cancellae ecclesie ibidem vjs viij d

Et de xiv s resolut' pro stuplacione orrei ibidem

Et de xvijjd pro unguis ad eundem stuplacionem et pro (. . . bacione)

cujusdam muri vjd

⁹ Bodleian Library, O.A.P. Oxon., b. 41, fo. 23; Oxon. Record Office, Oxfordshire Inclosure Acts, vol. II, p. 1390.

¹⁰ All Souls College Register, i, fo. 85.

¹¹ MS. d.d. All Souls, c. 115/82, 83, 84.

¹² MS. d.d. All Souls, c. 244/48.

Et pro gronne pynninge et j panell ejusdem muri iiijd
 Et pro ij praecepibus equorum in stabulo ijs
 Et de ijs pro ij cratibus ligneis ad le Kyll ibidem
 Et de vjd pro j citula
 Et de xijd pro j cirtene et j caterell
 Et de iiijd solut' uni operario circa idem
 Et de xvijjd pro j bigat' spinorum et ruborum pro sepibus
 Et de xvijjd pro le tenett de le Hemphaye
 Et de iid solut' uni operario circa (idem suppl.)
 Et de iiijd pro clavic' ad reparacionem de le Pale
 Et de ijs solut' pro depecione le mosse a tecto orrei
 Et de xvijjd solut' pro () () custodis
 tempore autumpnali
 Et de xvijjd pro trina progressu ad Watlynton pro capitulo
 Et de ijs solut' esculencione et poculacione pro archero

c. 324/1460-61

Expense fact' per Nicholai Andrewe firm' Rect' de Lewkenor' anno r.r.
 Edwardi primo iste sunt (tear) quorum petit alloc' de firma predict' in primis
 De xxijd sol' uni colligenti reddys ad le watelyng' orrii ibm per $4\frac{1}{2}$ dies cap' per diem
 4d ut paret per precio ()
 Et de viij d sol' uni laboranti circa watelyng dict' orrii per ii dies
 Et de ijs vjd sol' diversibus labori circa preparationem le thayche per ix diebus cum
 prandio et potu pro eodem orrio
 Et de ijs vjd sol' tectori pro labor' suo laboranti ibidem circa dict' orrei et magnum
 orreum per v dies et pro prandio suo per (idem) tempus
 Et de xxd sol' labo (scored out) servienti dicti tectoris per idem tempus capienti per
 diem iiijd.
 Et de viij d sol' uni laboranti circa dawbacione dicti orrii p. . le stodys
 Et de xvd sol' diversibus laborantibus circa reparacionem de le thayche ad malthouse
 ibm per v dies cum prandio et potu
 Et de iiijd sol' pro le sparys ad idem opus ad supradictum orreum
 Et de xvd sol' tectori pro labore suo et prandio per iij dies laborand' ibm circa eadem
 domum
 Et de xij d sol' servienti suo per idem tempus cap' per diem iiijd
 Et de iijs sol' pro iij bigat' de tynett ad sepe rectori vulgariter nuncupatur Personyes
 Crofte ibm hoc anno
 Et de iijjs sol' pro divers' labor' circa idem opus per xij dies cum prandio et potu
 Et de ix d sol' uno labor' circa reparacionem diversorum hostiorum et le hoystye pro
 le manger ibidem et pro clavo per ij dies lab'
 Other entries are scored through.

c. 324/1463

Expense et reparaciones facte per Nicholaeum Andrew firmar' de rectorii de Lewkenor hae sunt.
In primis se allocari petit
 De vjs viij d solut' pro cereis ardentibus in choro ibidem
 Et de ijs vjd solut' pro expensis officii Archidiaconi in visitacione generali
 Et de ijs vjd in expensis vicarie ibidem pro expensibus Mag' Johannem Ludford in festo
 Pasche (line scored through)
 Et de vs iij d pro le stodys ad novum domum ibidem et labor' de le stodyng
 Et de xjs pro le rodde et dawbacione murorum ejusdem domii
 Et de iijjs sol' pro caria' lapidum ad le basyne (scored through) pro bassesse ejusdem
 domui a Hedynton

Et de xd sol' pro le rodds wyndyng et dawbyng unius chere annexo magno orreo
 Et de xvd sol' unum thaycher circa magnum orreum et domum fen' per iij dies cum
 prandio et provenda ibidem
 Et de xiiij sol' pro servienti famuli sui per idem tempus
 Et de vjd sol' pro le drawyng de le thache
 Et de ijs iiij sol' ij carpentariis labor' circa reparacionem stabuli per vij dies ad ()
 Section scored through, including
 De vjs viij sol' de quibus vic' ibidem petit pro terra jacent infra Rect' ibidem et liberac

c. 325/1483-84

Paper roll. *Comptus domini R. Knody firm' ibidem hoc anno.*

Item for ye reparacion apon the parsonage for dygginge of and carrying of viij lodeys
 of stones xxd.

Item for quarrying of iij lodes of flynt () and for carrying () v d.

For ij quarters of lyme and the cariage iijs iiij d

Item for digkyng and carrying iij lodes of sand viij d

Item for growynd pynninge and mending of the long house by the stret one man six
 days at iiij d per day ijs.

For making of a floor with stoddys wyndyng dawbyng ()

pargetting up the hall and chambers and stoddys one man at iiij per day ijs ijd.

Item for ground pynning of the great barn for two man for three days every man vd.
 per day summa ijs. vjd.

Item for tapys in the quire vjs. viij d.

?? Item for wine vjs. viij d.

Item payd for ij lodes of tymber for to make the cartyshowse and the swynehowse in the
 parsonage () () ijs iiij d.

?Item payd for ij carpenters v days and the master taking iiij d and his man iij d. daly
 summum ijs. xjd.

Item for hyr bed and bord xxd.

Paid for bord for to make ij dorys for the sayd howse xijd.

Item payd for () for the hooks vjd.

Item payd for nayles and stapels iiij d.

Item payd for a thousand of lathnayles xiiij d.

Item payd for cc littlenayles xd.

Item pro reparac' xxijs. vjd.

I am grateful to Dr. W. G. Urry, and to Messrs. R. Franklin, J. S. G. Simmons, and G. Webb, for their help in preparing this paper.