

THE DESCENT OF THE MANOR OF AMPNERS IN THRANDESTON

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HISTORIANS OF SUFFOLK are disadvantaged in that the county's *Victoria History* has not yet progressed beyond its first two general volumes. Though, in partial compensation, W.A. Copinger's *The Manors of Suffolk* was completed by 1911, it has long been understood that this monumental seven-volume work must be approached with extreme caution. Copinger, working before the days of county record offices, relied almost exclusively on printed works and material in the national repositories, ignoring (or having no access to) records then in landowners' estate offices or in the custody of their family solicitors and manorial stewards, but now for the most part deposited in the Suffolk Record Office. As a result, there are numerous *lacunae* in his accounts of the descents of many manors, a shortcoming exacerbated by his distressing tendency to slide silently over these gaps in the record, leaving his readers to infer that the chain of descent he gives is unbroken.¹

Copinger's one-sentence account (1909, III, 321) of the descent of the manor of Ampners in Thrandeston, in the north of Suffolk near the boundary with Norfolk (see location map, Fig. 30), is surely among the thinnest and least satisfactory in the whole work, stating merely that 'in 1609 this manor was vested in Sir William Cornwallis, who died in 1613 [*sic*], from which time it has passed in the same course as the main manor of Thrandeston'. Its pre-17th-century history is passed over in total silence.

In 1987 the Iveagh Manuscripts, without exception the richest source of documentary evidence for Suffolk's medieval history then remaining in private hands, were purchased for the Suffolk Record Office. The documents fall into two distinct groups. The first, Sir Thomas Phillipps's collection of Suffolk topographical manuscripts, acquired from antiquarian libraries dispersed in his lifetime, notably those of Craven Ord and William Stevenson Fitch, was fully catalogued (as HD 1538) shortly after its arrival in Ipswich. The second group (now HA 411) comprises the estate archive of the Cornwallis family, which was seated at Brome Hall and held extensive property (including, from 1697, the Honour of Eye) in north Suffolk and south Norfolk. Many of the Cornwallis documents, including court rolls and other records of the family's numerous Suffolk and Norfolk manors, were in such fragile condition that they could not be safely handled. Cataloguing, undertaken by the present writer, therefore began only in 2000, in conjunction with a major programme of conservation.

Three of Thrandeston's five manors – Woodhall (the principal manor), Mavesons and Ampners – eventually passed into Cornwallis ownership (Copinger 1909, III, 318-21). Identification of their records was at first rendered difficult because the headings to the proceedings of the earlier courts of two of them name both manors simply as 'Thrandeston'. One series of court rolls evidently related to Woodhall, a name which does not appear in the headings until 2 June 1574 (though an undated fragment of a 14th-century lease does refer to 'the manor of Thrandeston called le Woodhalle').²

Other rolls, though their earlier courts are similarly headed *Curia de Thrandestone* or *Curia tenta apud Thrandeston*, were found on examination to form a separate series relating to a different manor, since they are further described as *Curia Eleemosinarii de Norwyc*,³ the court of the *Eleemosinarius* (Almoner) of the Priory of the Holy Trinity or Christchurch in Norwich (the Cathedral Priory). By 1373 the name of the manor as given in the rolls is *Thrandeston Eleemosinarii* (Thrandeston Almoner's),⁴ a manor not referred to by Copinger. There can be no doubt that the name 'Ampners', which appears in the court rolls only

from 1612,⁵ is a corruption of 'Almoner's'. This conclusion is fully borne out by a 15th-century endorsement on a late 14th-century rental, reading 'A Terrer [terrier] of the Amnors of Norwich londys in Franston', and by a 1545 purchase deed of 'the Ampners Manor . . . sometime parcel of the possessions of the late dissolved Priorie of Christ Church in Norwich'.⁶

The Holy Trinity cartularies do not record the grant of the Thrandeston manor to the Priory, though that house seems to have held it, and to have assigned its revenues to the use of the Almoner, by an early date. In a charter attributed to the 13th century (Dodwell 1974, no. 253) the Bishop of Norwich forbade the Archdeacon of Sudbury, the Dean of Hartismere, the Vicar of Yaxley and the chaplains of Yaxley and Thrandeston to participate in the punishment of crimes committed by the tenants of the Prior of Hoxne (a cell of Holy Trinity) and the Almoner of Norwich in the townships of Yaxley and Thrandeston, on the grounds that all the manors of the Prior and convent of Holy Trinity were exempt from their jurisdiction.

The Suffolk revenues settled on the Almoner to help meet the expenses of his office included rents of 5s. 1d. in Weybread, 8d. in Ashby, £3 in Lowestoft, 6s. 8d. in Stoke Ash

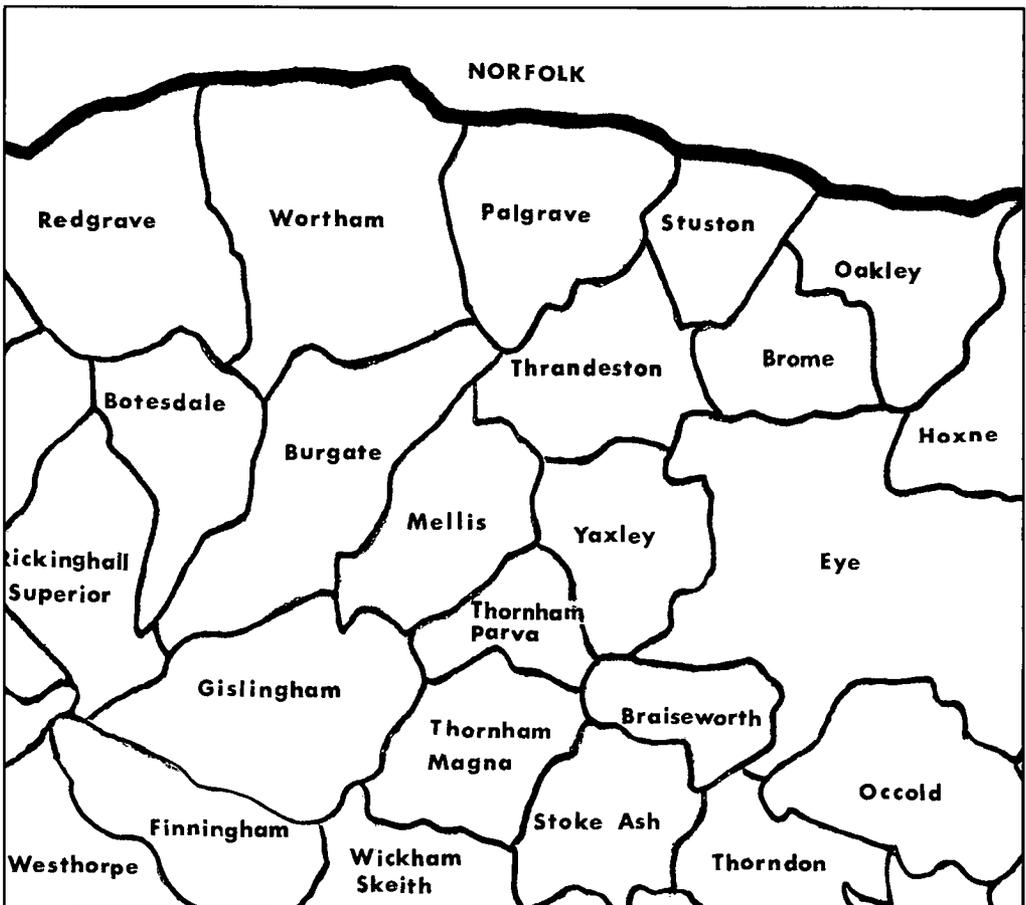


FIG. 30 – Location map for the parishes of Thrandeston, Yaxley, Mellis, Thornham Parva and Stoke Ash, all of which contained lands held of the manor of Ampners.

and 13s. 5½d. in Yaxley (Blomefield 1806, III, 613). Though Blomefield knew of no property held by the Almoner in Thrandeston, the manor of Thrandeston *Elemosinarii* did however extend into Stoke Ash and Yaxley, and also included land in Thornham Parva and Mellis; indeed the manor court was held at Yaxley on five occasions between May 1379 and August 1386.⁷ The *Valor Ecclesiasticus* of 1535 (Dugdale 1823, IV, 24) records revenues of £8 15s. 6d. in Yaxley and £1 10s. in Yaxley and Thrandeston due to the Cathedral Priory. The former payment probably relates to the Prior of Hoxne's manor of Yaxley; the latter almost certainly represents the income from the Almoner's manor, for it did not differ greatly from the total rent of £1 13s. 9½d. received by the secular lord of Ampners in 1561.⁸

The Almoner's responsibilities, financed from these and other revenues, included, in addition to the usual distribution of alms to the poor and maintenance of the convent's almshouses, the perambulation of the liberties on the Rogation days. On the feast of St Nicholas (6 December) he also provided wine and food, and payment for the boys who took part in the procession to St Leonard's, the Priory's cell on Mousehold Heath outside Norwich.⁹

The Almoner seems to have been regarded as ex-officio lord of the manor, for the courts were usually held in his name, and his year of office sometimes appears in the headings to the rolls. On only two occasions (in November 1491 and March 1505) is the court stated to be that of the Prior, and even on the first of these it is specifically said to be held 'to the use of the Almoner' (*ad opus Elemosinarii*). The court rolls supply the names of eleven Almoners unknown to Blomefield when compiling his *History of Norfolk*, and expand significantly the known period of office of several others; they are listed in Appendix 1.

In 1538, with the writing on the wall for even the greater monasteries, the Prior and convent of Holy Trinity surrendered to the Crown, and by royal charter issued on 2 May Prior William Castleton (*alias* Catton) became Dean of a new cathedral chapter, with most of his former monks as prebendaries or canons. These favourable terms were however purchased dearly, for the Crown was determined to take its profit, to secure which it had already on 1 April, a month before the issue of the charter, given licence to the Priory to alienate lands to an annual value of more than £48 (Atherton *et al.* 1996, 507–08). The licence (in the form of Letters Patent under the Seal for Ecclesiastical Causes) entrusted to 'our beloved and faithful servant' Sir Richard Gresham the arrangements for the sale of Holy Trinity's cell of Hoxne with its lands, including its manor of Yaxley, valued at £18 ls. *per annum*, together with certain other, unspecified, manors, lands and tenements (of the Prior's choice) to the annual value of £30. That the latter properties included the Almoner's manor in Thrandeston is shown by a 16th-century copy of the royal licence in the Cornwallis archive endorsed 'for Ampners Box', indicating its status as a title deed to the manor.¹⁰

Gresham (?1485–1549), Lord Mayor of London in 1537 and father of the builder of the Royal Exchange, had been a confidant of both Wolsey and Thomas Cromwell, and in 1534 a commissioner to enquire into the value of benefices in advance of the Dissolution. He profited greatly from the suppression of the monasteries, securing many personal grants of monastic land, including Fountains Abbey (*D.N.B.*). He now seized the opportunity presented by his privileged position as a commissioner for sale of the Holy Trinity lands to acquire for himself, doubtless on the most favourable terms, the Almoner's manor in Thrandeston.¹¹

Gresham apparently bought Ampners as a short-term speculation, for he did not hold it long. Sometime before November 1545 he sold it to Sir Robert Southwell (d. 1559), Master of the Rolls, who, like Gresham, took a very active part in the Dissolution, undertaking much survey work for the Court of Augmentations and enriching himself in the process (*D.N.B.*). On 10 November 1545 Southwell in turn sold the manor for £40 to John Kene of Thrandeston,¹² who also held the manor of Welholmes in the same parish

(Copinger 1909, III, 319). Kene held his first court for the manor of *Thrandeston Kenes et quondam Eleemosinarii* on 1 June 1546, but evidently sold out almost immediately to Thomas Cornwallis, who in turn held his first court for *Thrandeston Cornewaleys nuper Eleemosinarii* on 16 June 1547.¹⁹

The Cornwallis family, descended from Thomas, Sheriff of London in 1378, were prominent landowners in Suffolk from the early 15th century to the early 19th. Thomas (1519–1604), the purchaser of the Almoner's manor, was the son of Sir John (1491–1544), who had been Steward of the Household to the child Edward VI before his accession. Thomas was knighted in 1548, and taken prisoner the following year while assisting in the attempt to put down Ket's rebellion in Norfolk. He was an early supporter of Queen Mary, whom he served as Treasurer of Calais and Comptroller of the Household. On Elizabeth's accession he was removed from office as a recusant but, though he spent some time under arrest, was treated with moderation. He rebuilt Brome Hall and augmented the family estates by purchase (*D.N.B.*; McGrath and Rowe 1960).

Sir Thomas's descendants (see Appendix II) held the manor of Ampners until the death of Charles, second Marquis Cornwallis without male issue in 1823, when it was sold to Matthias Kerrison of Bungay, whose career both in trade and in the accumulation of landed estates is the subject of a recent article in these *Proceedings* (Lawrence 2000). On the failure of the direct Kerrison line with the death of Sir Edward Clarence Kerrison in 1886 the manor passed to his sister Agnes, Lady Bateman.

The court rolls in the Cornwallis archive enable one more name to be added to the known total of Suffolk manors which changed hands in the great territorial upheaval of the mid-16th century brought about by the wholesale plunder of the monasteries. Sir Thomas Cornwallis, though a Roman Catholic and a loyal servant of Queen Mary, apparently experienced no difficulty in reconciling his beliefs and allegiance with the retention of his grasp on his share of the monastic spoils throughout the reign of his Catholic sovereign.

APPENDIX I

ALMONERS OF HOLY TRINITY PRIORY, NORWICH, EX-OFFICIO LORDS OF THE MANOR OF AMPNERS IN THRANDESTON

(The names marked with an asterisk were unknown to Blomefield and have been supplied from the manor court rolls (HA 411/2/1/6/1/2–5, 8, 10). Where possible, the dates of office given by Blomefield have been amplified.)

Thomas de Stanfield, n.d.

H. de Norwold, *t.* Prior William [?William de Claxtone, Prior 1326–44].

John de Hedersete, 1348.

* Roger de Hadesco: courts held 6 May 1353 and 15 Apr. 1354.

* Nicholas de Gys/de Gis: courts held 8 Jan. 1360–18 Jul. 1370.

* Vincent de Blakenee: first court held 25 Mar. 1373.

Peter de Dyerham/de Derham: first court held 20 May 1377.

John de Len/de Lenne: first court held in 1378 or 1379 (2 Ric. II), last recorded court held 17 Oct. 1388.

Nicholas de Geyton: only recorded court held 16 Oct. 1399.

* John Danitr': first court held 27 Jul. 1401.

Nicholas de Elyngton: first court held 13 Feb. 1409.

Thomas Hyndringham: first court held 12 Jan. 1412; last recorded court held 8 Feb. 1417.

- * William Metyngham: first court held 31 May 1418.
- * Thomas Cannbrygge: first court held 26 May 1421; last recorded court held 16 Jul. 1425.

[There are no surviving court rolls for the years 1426–71.]

John Molet, 1458.

Richard Marsham, 1461.

- * Roger Framyngham: first court held 9 Apr. 1472.

Thomas Fulmerston/Fowlmerstone: first court held 17 Feb. 1474; last named in court held 21 Oct. 1477.

Denis Hindolveston, 1490.

- * John Sebely: first court held 18 Nov. 1496.

Robert de Watfield, 1506.

- * John Hempstead: first court held in 1509 or 1510 (1 Hen. VIII).

- * Richard Shaterye: one recorded court, not specifically stated to be his first, held 14 Nov. 1515.

John Shelton/Schelton: first court held 16 Nov. 1520.

Henry Manuell, 1528.

- * Thomas Leman: first court held 11 Dec. 1531; the last Almoner to be named in the rolls.

APPENDIX II

SECULAR LORDS OF THE MANOR OF AMPNERS FROM THE DISSOLUTION TO 1918

Sir Richard Gresham, ?1538–before Nov. 1545.

Sir Robert Southwell, to 10 Nov. 1545.

John Kene of Thrandeston, 10 Nov. 1545–?1547.

Sir Thomas Cornwallis, before 16 Jun. 1547–1604.

Sir William Cornwallis, 1604–1611.

Sir Frederick, first Baron Cornwallis, 1611–1662.

Charles, second Lord Cornwallis, 1662–1673.

Charles, third Lord Cornwallis, 1673–1698.

Charles, fourth Lord Cornwallis, 1698–1722.

Charles, first Earl Cornwallis, 1722–1762.

Charles, second Earl and first Marquis Cornwallis, 1762–1805.

Charles, second Marquis Cornwallis, 1805–1823.

Matthias Kerrison, 1825–1827.

Sir Edward Kerrison, bart, 1827–1853.

Sir Edward Clarence Kerrison, 1853–1886.

Agnes, Lady Bateman, 1886–1918.

NOTES

(All MSS cited are in the Ipswich Branch of the Suffolk Record Office.)

- 1 See, for example, Copinger's account (1908, II, 293–95) of the manor of Crowfield-cum-Bocking, in which he states that the manor was purchased by Henry Harwood in the 18th century, implying that he bought it from the Wingfield family. In reality (see Allen 1997, 28–29, 43), it was purchased by Daniel Browninge, a London merchant, from Harbottle Wingfield in 1673, and inherited by Harwood as nephew of Browninge's second wife in 1714. Copinger makes no reference to the Browninge family's forty-year lordship.

- 2 Court roll, 1559–1602, HA 411/2/1/5/1/25; lease fragment, Edmund de Pastone to John Dersham of Wortham, Craven Ord's 'Collections for a History of Suffolk', Iveagh Phillipps Collection, HD 1538/7, f. 124. 'Thrandeston Woodhall' also appears in the manor rentals for 1559–60 and 1568–69, HA 411/2/1/5/4/3, 4.
- 3 Court roll, 1320–24, HA 411/2/1/6/1/1.
- 4 Court held 25 Mar. 1373, court roll, 1348–93, HA 411/2/1/6/1/2.
- 5 First court of Dame Jane Cornwallis, widow of Sir William and guardian of Frederick Cornwallis, 3 Jun. 1612, court roll, 1551–1616, HA 411/2/1/6/1/12.
- 6 Rental, 12 Ric. II (1388 or 1389), HA 411/2/1/6/4/2; deed, 10 Nov. 1545, HA 411/3/1/10/1/2.
- 7 See the 1579 extent of the manors of Woodhall and Ampners, V11/3/3; the purchase deed of 10 Nov. 1545, HA 411/3/1/10/1/2; and the court roll of Thrandeston *Elemosinarii* 1348–93, HA 411/2/1/6/1/2 mm. 4r.–5d.; courts were held at Yaxley on 31 May 1379, 29 Oct. 1381, 4 Aug. and 2 Dec. 1382, and 6 Aug. 1386.
- 8 Summary of accounts of the bailiffs of the Cornwallis manors for the year ending at Michaelmas 1561, HB 18: 51/10/7.5.
- 9 Blomefield 1806, III, 613: presumably a reference to the rites and customs of the 'Boy Bishop', on which see Rigold 1978, 87.
- 10 Copy Letters Patent, 1 Apr. 1538, HA 411/3/1/10/1/1.
- 11 Sir Robert Southwell's deed of sale of the Almoner's manor to John Kene in 1545 (HA 411/3/1/10/1/2), referred to in the text below, states that he himself had originally purchased it from Gresham.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Court rolls 1495–1546 and 1547–1550, HA 411/2/1/6/1/8, m. 10r., and HA 411/2/1/6/1/11, m. 1r.

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Abbreviations

D.N.B. *Dictionary of National Biography*.