

and replaced by a new hall (D) on more massive foundations immediately to the east, the east wall of the old hall being adapted to serve as the west wall of the new one. The east wall of the new hall was on a line with the east wall of the old northern chamber block, and the southern chamber block was extended eastwards (E) to the same line, giving the house a symmetrical east front of four bays. Additional structures, probably garderobes serving the southern chambers (F), were built on the south side.

In both its phases, therefore, the house had a hall with chamber blocks at each end, a common type of secular plan that suits the information given in the document of 1499 and the inventory of 1528, from which it can be seen that both chamber blocks were of two storeys, one containing the parlour with a chamber above it, and the other having service rooms with another chamber above. No chapel was needed, for the 1499 document shows that the monks were using the adjacent parish church. The lesser foundations to the south and west probably represent the stables, barns and 'long house' of the documents, bordering a court or farmyard, the whole arrangement being typical of a small medieval manor house or a monastic grange.

The use of simple houses as non-conventual cells goes back a long way. A 12th-century example has survived at Beckford (Worcs.) where there was an alien cell of the Augustinian priory of Sainte Barbe-en-Auge with a resident prior and one or two monks during most of the Middle Ages. Here, at some little distance from the church that the monks leased in 1247, there are incorporated in the basement of the refectory of the present Salesian Training College substantial remains of the lower storey of a typical 12th-century 'upper hall' house that no doubt formed the domestic buildings of the cell. Later examples could be multiplied from documents, and an occasional one has survived, as at Wilmington Priory (Sussex).⁶ A useful glimpse of another 14th-century cell like Walton is given by a reference to Allerton Mauleverer (Yorks.),⁷ an alien priory dependent on Marmoutier, where in 1378 the resident monks held the church for their own use and lived nearby in a dilapidated hall with chambers and offices.

HISTORY OF WALTON PRIORY

by Katharine Davison, B.A.

The name Walton is now retained for the westerly suburb of Felixstowe but in medieval times it covered a far greater area which included present-day Old Felixstowe and stretched beyond this to

⁶ *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, LXIX (1928), pp. 1-52.

⁷ *Victoria County History, Yorkshire*, III (1913), p. 387.

the coast, which would have been approximately a quarter of a mile further out to sea than it is today.⁸ Medieval Walton enjoyed a certain amount of political and economic importance; this was partly due to her favourable position at the head of the Colneis Peninsula, and most particularly due to her close association with the powerful family of Bigod. Shortly after the Conquest, the Norman baron, Roger Bigod, was rewarded with Framlingham Castle and extensive estates in Suffolk and Norfolk; amongst these was Walton. Here Roger Bigod or his son, Hugh, 1st Earl of Norfolk, built a castle in the ruins of the old Roman Saxon Shore fort; this castle was destroyed in 1174 after the Bigods had played a leading role in the ill-fated rebellion against Henry II.

It was Roger Bigod who granted the church of St. Felix, Walton, together with its tithes and appurtenances to the Benedictine cathedral priory of St. Andrew's, Rochester.⁹ The date of this grant is not known but it was confirmed by William II, who died in 1100.¹⁰ The monks of Rochester duly established as a cell there the priory of St. Felix.

St. Felix Priory was never very important and little of her history is documented. It is recorded that Silvester, prior of Rochester from 1178, built (*fecit*) a refectory, dormitory and guest house at Walton.¹¹ One can deduce that at some date the priory was moved (see below). The most stirring event in her history appears to have been during the peasants' revolt in 1381 when Walton was a target of the mob and at the priory the books were burned and so was the warden's house.¹² In September 1528 the priory was suppressed and given to Wolsey for the endowment of his college Ipswich.¹³

It seems reasonable to suppose that Walton was founded with the customary 12 monks and a prior. Certainly an extent of Walton Manor and St. Felix Priory made in 1307 mentions a prior and 13

⁸ With the growth of Felixstowe a certain amount of confusion arose over names and the terms Walton and Filchestowe (Felixstowe) appear to have been used indiscriminately hence Walton Priory is often called Felixstowe Priory.

⁹ John Weever, *Funeral Monuments* (1631), p. 766, refers to an undated charter in *Carta Antiqua Lit. R.R.* then reputedly in the Tower of London. These charters are now in the P.R.O. but that of Roger Bigod is not among them. See also John Thorpe, ed., *Registrum Eoffense* (1769), p. 117 and B. M. Cotton MSS Dom. X., fol. 109.

¹⁰ *Calendar of Charter Rolls*, II (1906), p. 195, 3 Ed. I, no. 6.

¹¹ Thorpe, *op. cit.*, p. 121. For the date of Silvester, Prior of Rochester see Henry Wharton, *Anglia Sacra* (1691), I, p. 345.

¹² S.R.O., Felixstowe Priory Rolls. Roll 1, *Prima cur' post combustione Librororum* ('First court after the burning of the books') is written in the top left hand corner. There is also a letter from Rochester dated 17 May 1382 requesting a report on the state of the cell in Cotton MSS. Faustina, C.V, fol. 10b.

¹³ Letters & Papers, Hen. VIII, iv, 5075.

black monks;¹⁴ the monastic population was at its peak at the turn of the 14th century and so probably this number represents Walton at her largest. The 1381 poll tax figures give only three monks – this drop in numbers may have been due to the Black Death, but more likely was due to a deliberate act of policy on the part of Rochester at the time of moving the priory to a new site, the new priory merely consisting of a small ‘holding garrison’ of three or four monks outstationed to look after Rochester’s territorial interests.¹⁵ There does not appear to have been any attempt to alter this situation and at the dissolution with only three monks and a prior the priory was easy prey for Wolsey.¹⁶ Indeed the poverty of the priory at that time is further emphasised in an unsigned memorandum sent to Wolsey in 1528, which speaks scathingly of ‘hangings of little worth’ and the bare state of the house.¹⁷

The land which St. Felix Priory owned in Walton and Felixstowe constituted the small manor of Felixstowe Priory. Most of their land was given to them by the Bigods and the extent of these donations can be seen in the following extract from an *inspeximus* of a writing of Hugh Bigod, confirming the grants of his father and brother and making further grants (Calendar of Patent Rolls, 13 Edward III, 2,11):

‘Confirming the grants of the church of St. Felix, with the churches of St. Mary, Waleton, and St. Mary, Tremle, with all their lands, possessions and appurtenances, the whole tithes of the lordship and mills of the said town of Waleton, a mill in Burgh, a fishery and the land late of Columbanus the priest, the land late of Blackeman, the land late of Goderick and Leorick his brother, and the men, rents, and possessions held by the said church of St. Felix by the bounty of his (Hugh Bigod) ancestors, and granting to the same in free-almes forty-eight acres out of the cultivated land of his lordship in exchange for land of their church where (*ubi*) he built (*firmiter*) his castle, and the land which remained from the exchange of his plough land (*culture*) which is called ‘Bredinge’; with the Chapel of Burgh (*Capella Burgi*) . . .’¹⁸

In addition to these there are records of three grants in free-almes and two feofments of lands in Walton in the 13th century and two

¹⁴ *Inquisitiones Post Mortem*, Vol. IV (1913), 35 Ed. I, 534.

¹⁵ J. Russel, ‘Clerical population in Medieval England’, *Traditio* (1944), p. 177. I am indebted to Mr. Gilyard-Beer for this latter suggestion. For the moving of the priory see below.

¹⁶ Letters & Papers Hen. VIII, *iv*, 4755 (Part II, 1965, p. 2062).

¹⁷ Letters & Papers Hen. VIII, *iv*, 5075, 5077. (Part II, 1965, pp. 2211, 2212).

¹⁸ The date of this grant of Hugh Bigod is 1154; see the Register of the church of St. Andrew’s, Rochester, Cotton MS, Vesp., A, XXII. It is interesting to note what appears to be a reference to the building of the Castle.

later quit claims of rent and services from donors other than the Bigods.¹⁹ Outside Walton, the priory held land in the parishes of Sternfield, Westerfield, Bucklesham, Kirton, Martlesham, Helmingham, Ipswich, Sutton and Orford.²⁰ In the 1291 Taxation of Pope Nicholas IV the revenue derived from the possessions of St. Felix Priory was valued at a modest £32 2s. 9d.²¹

Throughout its existence St. Felix Priory maintained a close connection with the mother house at Rochester. There are references to a commission coming from Rochester to Walton in 1291 about the election of a bishop, and various letters are recorded summoning the monks of Walton to Rochester to take part in the elections of bishops and priors.²² There was one occasion when all the monks of Rochester were to be summoned to an assembly to elect a prior, 'excepting those of Filchestow who are not to be called to it . . .'; no reason is given for this apparent disgrace.²³ In 1330 there was an episcopal visit to the cell.²⁴ Whenever a new warden was to be appointed to the cell letters of recommendation were sent from Rochester to the lords of Walton.²⁵ On many occasions the prior and chapter of Rochester had to intervene in disputes of the Felixstowe Priory Courts; the limitations on the tenorial rights of the cell appear from the following letter, dated 1412:

'Whereas the Warden of the cell of Filchestowe or Walton (*Filchstowe sive Walton*) with the brothers dwelling here by no means enjoyed the power to alienate the rents or lands of our cell or to let them to farm for longer than seven years without special consent of the prior and chapter of Rochester, yet we are informed that certain lands have been alienated to divers persons without our knowledge and let to farm for so long as twenty to one hundred years, disinheriting others and to the detriment of the cell . . .'²⁶

There is a tradition that, at some time, the priory moved from a site on the coast by the castle to its present position behind Walton Church. The charter of Hugh Bigod quoted above refers to the fact that the land of the monks' church was where he built his castle and also grants them a piece of land called 'Bredinge' with the Chapel of Burgh. Now, amongst the business of manor court held on

¹⁹ Bodlian Charters, 241-243. Kent Archive Office also has 5 title deeds relating to lands in Walton.

²⁰ Thorpe, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

²¹ *Idem.*

²² E.g. Bodlian Charter 1384; Cotton MS, Faustina C.V., fol. 51.

²³ Wharton, *op. cit.*, p. 371.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 426.

²⁵ E.g. Cotton MS, Faustina, C.V., fol. 15, 36, 56 and 129.

²⁶ *Idem.*, fol. 118b.

the Tuesday after 25 March 1409 there is recorded the question of the lease of a piece of land called Bredynge alongside Fylchestowe Church.²⁷ Similarly in a survey made of Felixstowe in 1613 by one Aaron Rathbone, a close of arable ground called Breadinge is described as abutting on the church;²⁸ from which one might conclude that Old Felixstowe Church was originally the Chapel of Burgh but in this instance the important point is that the priory held land in the vicinity of the castle and Old Felixstowe Church.²⁹ This, however, does not necessarily imply that the priory was there too. But turning to the 1613 survey once again there is this reference:

'A close of arable or pasture grounds called the Oulde Abbey lienge between the Cliffe East and South and the close last mentioned west containing seven acres and one roud'.³⁰

The close last mentioned is Great Long Dole which is described

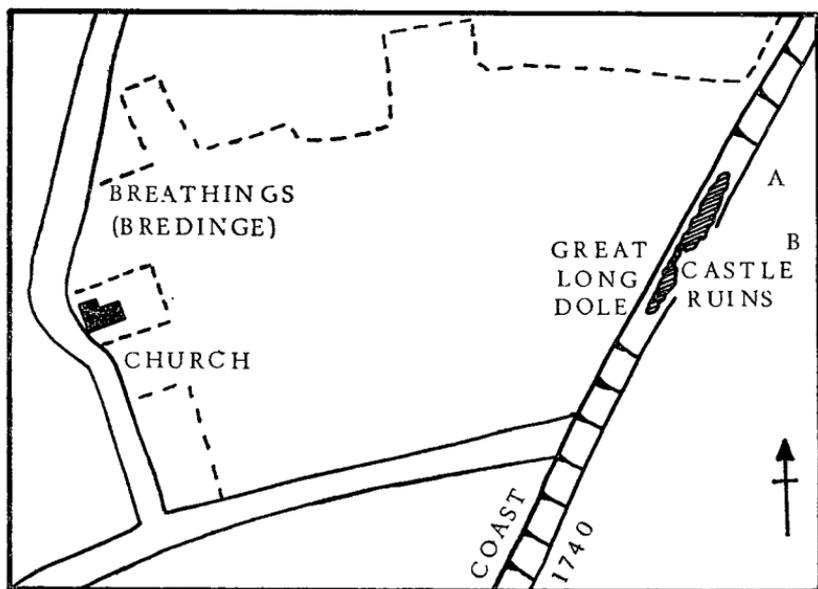


FIG. 42.—Map of part of Felixstowe based on Kirby's map of 1740 and the Rathbone survey of 1613. A, approximate position of Old Abbey Ponds; B, approximate position of Old Abbey Close.

²⁷ S.R.O., Felixstowe Priory Rolls, 2.15.

²⁸ Aaron Rathbone, 'A Survey of the Manors of Walton cum Trimley and St. Felix Priory' (1613), p. 533 in S.R.O.

²⁹ It is interesting to note that the Domesday reference has one church for Walton, presumably St. Felix, and one for Burgh, presumably Old Felixstowe Church.

³⁰ Rathbone, *op. cit.*

as having the Old Abbey and the cliff on its east. Another close of meadow called Old Abbey Pond is said to have the cliff on its east.

On a map of Felixstowe made in 1740 by Joshua Kirby, and based upon the Rathbone Survey, neither Old Abbey nor Abbey Pond are shown, having been lost to the sea, but the castle is shown as a ruin on the cliff edge and shore, and the area on its landward side is called 'Great Long Dole' thus giving us the approximate position of the Old Abbey (Fig. 42).³¹ Incidentally this map shows the area north of Felixstowe Church as Breathing which can be identified with Bredinge. Although 1613 is the earliest one can locate the Old Abbey, there are earlier references to it in the priory rolls. In the court, held on the Friday after 14 January 1500, the question of rent for Abbey Close came up;³² while in the court held on the Friday after 29 June 1473 notice is given of the fact that 'John Pope tenant of the Lord of the Old priory (*veterem prioratum*) ploughed up a way there.'³³

This attests that the priory had been moved before 1500; the question remains, how long before. That Silvester built a refectory, dormitory and guest-house at Walton after 1178 would fit a hypothesis that the removal followed the dismantling of the castle in 1174, but this is not supported by the archaeological evidence of the building uncovered in the 1971 excavation which with its diagonal buttress is unlikely to be earlier than *c.* 1300. There is, however, a reference to a licence for Thomas, Earl of Norfolk, to grant in mortmain to Rochester Priory, sixteen acres of land in exchange for ten acres of land in Walton in 1317.³⁴ Perhaps significantly, the 'abbey meadow' behind the church of St. Mary's Walton is approximately sixteen acres.³⁵ This agrees with the archaeological evidence; it therefore seems likely that the move took place early in the 14th century.

Finally, let us consider the documentary evidence for the physical layout of the second priory. There are no descriptions of St. Felix Priory as such, but a certain amount of incidental information can be gathered. Two sources are of particular interest in this respect and will be quoted here; an extract from the annual accounts of William Waterford the warden of the cell in 1499;³⁶ and a memorandum on state of the cell sent to Wolsey at the time of its suppression.³⁷

³¹ S.R.O., J. Kirby, 'Plan of Felixstowe and Walton' (1740). A Blois MS (1594-1670) has the following reference: 'I saw ye ruins of Felixstowe Hall, as also ye Priory too near ye sea' (*Proc. Suff. Inst. Arch.*, xiv (1912), p. 157).

³² *Felixstowe Priory Rolls*, 8.15.

³³ *Idem*, 4.7.

³⁴ Calendar of Patent Rolls 11 Ed. II, ii, 11 (Vol. III, 1903, p. 151).

³⁵ I am indebted to Mr. Wall of Felixstowe for pointing this out.

³⁶ P.R.O., Ministers Accounts, Hen. VII, 691.

³⁷ Letters & Papers Hen. VIII, iv, 5075, 5077.

Upkeep of the House

1. 'Item, given to Thomas Whight for tiling ornately (*teglateri in ornando*) half of the hall (*aulae*) with the parlour and upper room 6s. 8d. . . . item, paid to carpenters for work repairing the long house (*longe domus*) and the stable for fourteen weeks 56s. . . . item, for a roof over the barn 2s. 6d. . . . item for Henry Oldhawe for tiling the other barn for enclosing the pigs and other necessities for three weeks 4s. 6d. Item, for much red colouring for the hall (*in colors rubeo pre aula plura*) and the upper room 14d. in mending the glass windows around the convent and parish church (*ecclesian conventualem et parochialem*) 12d. . . .'
2. 'In the hall: 3 standing boards (*i.e.* tables) set fast in the ground; old hangings of little value, stained with the life of Job. In the parlour, a cupboard with 2 aumbries valued at 5s; an old long table next the widows small square side tables and two old short forms an ell long of little value. In the buttery: a bin for bread to be chopped. In the cellar nothing. In the chamber over the parlour: a small bedstead, and a noughty lock. All the locks about the house were nought. Two old square chests, a pair of rude and-irons. In the next chamber: a small bedstead an evil lock, a new clothes press.'

These accounts agree with each other and it would seem that our essentially domestic plan should include a hall, a parlour with a room above and a buttery; the long house, stable and barn could be away from the main complex. There is nothing in these descriptions to suggest a claustral layout. The tiling *in ornando* of the hall in 1499 is interesting, giving a possible fixed date for the ridge tiles which came from the excavation. If this is correct, they are, incidentally, the earliest so far found north of London.

There is a ~~print~~ ^{sketch} of the west prospect of Walton Priory on the Kirby map, showing a two storeyed house with a ruin beside it (Plate X; see above, p. 135).

List of known Wardens of St. Felix Priory

- Robert de Suthlete, 1352—1361, Prior of Rochester.³⁹
 John de Hertlepe, 1361—1380, Prior of Rochester.³⁹
 Robert le Reve.⁴⁰
 John Moral, 1381.⁴¹

³⁸ All except nn. 42, 43, 44, 46, 48 and possibly 45, 49 sound like Kent names.

³⁹ Dugdale, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

⁴⁰ Cotton MS, C.V, fol. 38.

⁴¹ *Idem*, fol. 10b.

List of known Wardens of St. Felix Priory—contd.

- Henry Raundes, 1384.⁴²
 Thomas de Herietesham, 1384—1391.⁴²
 Nicholas de Frenesberg.⁴³
 John Galdyng, 1412.⁴⁴
 John Sutton, 1412.⁴⁴
 Richard Peckham, 1496.⁴⁵
 William Waterford, 1499.⁴⁶
 John Peckham, 1503.⁴⁷
 Robert Helgate, last warden.

List of Documents relating to St. Felix Priory

Public Record Office

Calendar of Charter Rolls. 3 Ed. I, 6. Confirmation of the grant of Roger Bigod of St. Felix Church.

Calendar of Patent Rolls, Ed. II, ii, 11. Grant of land in mortmain of 16 acres of land in Walton in exchange for 10 acres. 13, Ed. II, ii, 11. Inspeximus and confirmation to prior of Rochester in mortmain of a writing of Hugh Bigod confirming grants of his father and granting in free-almshouses 48 acres in exchange of land of their church where he built his castle.

Inquisitiones Post Mortem, 35 Ed. I, 534. Extent of Walton Manor and St. Felix Priory. 36 Ed. III, 397. Advowson of priory.

Ministers Accounts, Hen. VII, 691. The account roll of William Waterford, Warden from 1499. Printed in William Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum* (1846), vi, p. 563.

Letters and Papers, Hen. VIII, *iv.* part 2, (republished 1965), 4259 and 4755. The Suppression of the priory, *iv.* 5075, 5079. An unsigned memorandum on the state of the cell sent to Wolsey. Mention of Felixstowe Priory in *iii.* 5136, 5144, 5280, 5353, 5458, 5985, 6061.

British Museum

Cotton MSS., Faustina, C, V, Registrum Cartarum Ecclesia Roffensis, fol. 10b. Letter from prior of Rochester dated 17 May 1382 wanting a report on the state of the cell.

Fols. 15, 36, 38, 56, 129. Letters concerning the appointments of wardens of the cell at Walton, 1381-1412.

Fol. 51. Letter 6 May 1389, summoning monks of cell of Felixstowe to Canterbury to elect new prior of Rochester.

⁴² *Idem*, fol. 36.

⁴³ *Idem*, fol. 56.

⁴⁴ *Idem*, fol. 129.

⁴⁵ Cole MS, xvii, 691b.

⁴⁶ *Min. Accs. op. cit.*

⁴⁷ Felixstowe Priory Rolls, X.13.

Fol. 118. Letter undated but probably 1412 sent from Rochester concerning the question of lease of land and disinheritance in Walton. Domitian X, fol. 109. Record of grant of Roger Bigod and confirmation of Hugh Bigod. Vespasian, A, XXII, Register of Church of St. Andrew Rochester, fol. 5. Confirmation of Hugh Bigod's confirmations and grant of chapel, 1154, by Pope Adrian.

Bodleian Library

Charters 239—243. Small grants of land and services from various people to St. Felix Church Walton. *c.* 1180—1270. See W. Turner, *Calendar of Charters and Rolls preserved in the Bodlian* (1878), p. 536.

Charter 1384. June 1291, Commission from Rochester to Walton concerning the election of a bishop.

Kent Archive Office

Six title deeds relating to Walton Priory, one of them a grant of a messuage in Orford. A fragment of a manor court held by prior of Walton 1266—7.⁴⁸

Edited Original Sources of St. Andrew's Rochester

John Thorpe, ed., *Registrum Roffense*, (1769). Contains several incidental references to Walton.

Henry Wharton, ed., *Anglia Sacra* (1691), I, pp. 341—55, 'Annales ecclesia Roffensis, ex Historia ecclesiastica Edmundi de Hadenham menachi Roffensis'. Contains a few references and charters relating to Walton. William Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum* (1846), I, p. 159. Contains a few references to Walton.

Suffolk Record Office (Ipswich)

The Felixstowe Priory Manor Court Rolls. These exist in toto from 1382. A partial handwritten transcription of these can be found in the Redstone Collection in Ipswich Borough Library.

Aaron Rathbone, 'A Survey of the Manors of Walton cum Trimley and St. Felix Priory' (1613). Important source of topographical information.

Joshua Kirby, Plan of Felixstowe and Walton (1740). Useful topographical information; also includes a sketch of Walton Priory (Plate X).

⁴⁸ I am indebted to Kent Archive Office for this information.