

TWO MEDIEVAL GARDENS

1. A THIRTEENTH CENTURY GARDEN AT RIMPTON

BY T. J. HUNT

The survival among the thirteenth century Account Rolls of the Bishopric of Winchester of some detailed references to the enclosing and planting of a new garden at Rimpton, one of the bishop's smaller manors about five miles North-east of Yeovil, raises some points of interest in economic history; not the least among these is the part played in the manorial economy by such enclosures. At a time when the demesne production was highly organised and minutely accounted for, the produce of the garden seems to have been only casually recorded at irregular intervals. It is possible that vegetables may have been entered in household rolls which were not of sufficient importance to merit preservation. At Taunton the produce of the parks and vivarium is rarely entered in the Account Rolls, yet it must have been of considerable importance to the bishop's household as is apparent from the numerous entries in the Liberate Rolls during a vacancy when the bishopric was in the king's hands. What is clear is that the main function of the garden at Rimpton was for the cultivation and protection of the apple and pear trees and the vines, and that the enclosure offered an opportunity for the more careful cultivation of crops such as flax, beans and peas, which were also grown in the open fields, and the total produce was then recorded in the reeve's account. Here we have the earliest recorded details of the cultivation and preparation of flax in an area where the growing of flax and the making of linen was to become an important industry. What adds interest also to the bare details of the accounts is the record of the making of the ditch and hedge, such a common feature of the Somerset landscape, which may even have survived until the present day. The accounts, given below in translation, are extracted from several sections of the rolls but are for clarity presented in two parts: first, the making of the new garden and second, the produce of the garden.

1. *The making of the new garden*

Extracts from the Pipe Rolls of the Bishopric of Winchester for the years 1264/5 and 1265/6 — Rimpton Expenses account.

Cost of the garden. 1264/5.	£	s.	d.
Digging the new garden for sowing flax and cultivating vegetables		6	
119 young plants purchased for planting in the new garden begun this year	6	6½	
1 quarter 1¾ bushels (of linseed) purchased at 7s. 4d. per quarter	8	11¼	
Stipend of a gardener for three weeks, for everything	3	0	
Planting vines in various places	1	2	
Hoeing, pulling and dressing the flax	2	10	
Making a ditch and bank of 113 perches, five feet in depth and seven feet in width, around the new garden, planting on the top and enclosing it by piecework at 2¾d. a perch	1	5	10¾
The garden. 1265/6.			
129 young pear and apple trees purchased for planting the new garden more completely	11	6	
Stipend of a gardener for grafting the new trees in the same garden for 8 days	1	0	
Part of the cost of hoeing, pulling, retting and dressing flax	7	4½	
A basket purchased for keeping the flax (? linseed)	7		

The perimeter of 113 perches, assuming the perch to be the ancient one of 5 yards, a measure which survived in East Somerset into the 19th century (see *S. & D.*, *N. & Q.* XXVII, 185, p. 241), is equivalent to 565 yards and the maximum area enclosed, a square with sides of approximately 141 yards would be nearly four acres. It is more likely, however, that some strips from the open arable

fields of the demesne, perhaps a furlong in length, would have been enclosed and the area then would have been about a third of an acre less. That the new garden was considerably larger than the old one is apparent from an entry in the expenses account of the year 1256/7 when a good deal of work was done in repairing the hedges and ditches around the *curia*, the home farm of the manor, and the garden perimeter was then only twenty perches. The possibility of the use of the longer perch of six yards must be considered, when the area of the new garden would have approached six acres. Such a change in land utilization, whether from arable or from pasture, could only have been carried out in this way by the lord of the manor or his officials. There is evidence of careful checks on all changes from the ancient and accepted agricultural pattern, and any enclosure by tenants was strictly forbidden, even the digging of clay for making pots or of marl for improving the land required a licence from the lord.

The gardener employed at Rimpton appears to have been a specialist capable of planning and supervising the whole undertaking. His stipend is far greater than that of the gardener at Taunton Castle, who received only 2s. 6d. *per annum*, but as one of the resident servants may have received food and accommodation as well. For much of the ordinary work of digging he would have used the obligatory services of the villein tenants. In subsequent accounts among the lists of customary services for which acquittance of rent was granted to 17 tenants at Rimpton there is included with threshing, mowing, harrowing and reaping, the task of digging in the garden. This work could only have dealt with a comparatively small part of the total area, and the sale of pasture of the garden on other occasions indicates that the section used as an orchard was let for grazing when not required by the lord's cattle.

The need for such a large garden in a small manor where there was no resident lord and no free tenants calls for some explanation. Rimpton provided the first night's resting place on the journey from Taunton to Winchester and the last on the return journey. Here would stay the Steward on his two visits to hold the Hundred Courts at Taunton every year; the Constable of Taunton when attending the Assizes at Ilchester, only a few miles from Rimpton, or on his way to and from Winchester; here, too, on rare occasions, and 1264 happened to be one of them, the Lord Bishop himself would stay

the night when visiting Taunton. Each of these brought with him his own retinue of officials or chaplains and servants. Of less importance, but still requiring food and shelter, were numerous drovers and messengers on their way to and from other Winchester manors; and once every year came the Bishop's huntsman with servants and hounds on his way to Taunton and Poundisford to hunt deer for the Christmas feast at Wolvesey. No doubt the produce of the garden helped to supply the wants of all these visitors beyond the ordinary provision of bread, meat and ale.

2. *The produce*

It is unfortunate that the series of account rolls of the thirteenth century is not complete and also that there are only a few entries relating to the produce of the garden. From the fruit trees the apples were occasionally sold but more frequently made into cider which was often consumed on the manor. Of the vines there is no further record, at least in the thirteenth century. The few surviving details of the cultivation of flax are given in full below and though it is not possible to comment on seeding rates or yield of the linseed, it is of interest to note what appears to be the practice of allowing the flax to be used for linen to go to seed.

1264/5. Stock account. *Linseed*.

Issue of the previous year	1 bushel of linseed
Purchased	1 quarter, $1\frac{3}{4}$ bushels
Issue of the summer	1 " 3 "
Total	2 " $5\frac{3}{4}$ "
Sown in the new garden	1 " $2\frac{3}{4}$ "
and there remains	1 " 3 "

Flax.

200 beats of flax this year after deduction of tithe. All sold: 3s. 4d.

1265/6.

Linseed.

Remaining from the previous year	1 quarter, 3 bushels
this year	1 " 2 "
Total	2 " 5 "
Sown	1 " 3 "
and there remains	1 " 2 "

Flax.

163 beats of flax remain.

No details have survived of the types or quantities of the vegetables grown in the garden nor is there any indication of the area of this part of the enclosure. Indeed, the only references in the Taunton accounts are to leeks and garlic, both of which would have served as relishes in an otherwise very monotonous diet. At Rimpton in 1262, twelve women were hired to plant beans in the open fields and also in the garden; five quarters and one bushel were used to sow $12\frac{1}{2}$ acres in all, but whether the garden beans were for household use is not apparent.

These few notes may serve to remind us of a contact with a rather remote period and a simpler way of life. It may be possible by careful fieldwork some day to identify the site of the garden and perhaps of the hedge itself, and so establish a survival older than the great majority of the buildings in the area.

APPENDIX

A few of the words given in the translation of the accounts may be interpreted in slightly different senses. Those parts of the original which offer any possibility of other interpretations are given in full below.

1264/5. Custus gardini.

In novo gardino fodiend' ad linum seminand' et oler' colend' vj d.

In Cxix inseribus emptis ad plant' in novo gardino hoc anno incepto vj s. vj d. ob.

In stipend' unius gardinar' per tres septimanas pro omnibus iij s.

In vineis per loca plant' xiiij d.

In lineis sarcland' tractand' et attornand' ij s. x d.

In Cxiiij pertic' circa novum gardin' fossand' plantand' et claudend' desuper ad tasch' de profunditate v pedum et latitud' vij pedum xxv s. x d. ob. qa. precium pertic' ij d. ob. qa.

1265/6. Gardinum.

In ^{xx} vj ix insitis pirorum et pomorum empt' ad novum gardinum plenius plantand' xj s. vj d.

In stipend' unius gardinar' circa easdem plant' et insitand' nova insita hoc anno in eodem gardino per viij dies xij d.

In lino in parte sarclando tractando limando et attorn(ando) vij s. iij d. ob.

In uno corbilone empt' ad lino custod' vij d.

2. THE GARDEN AT GLASTONBURY ABBEY : 1333-4¹

BY IAN KEIL

Although a considerable body of literature exists concerned with the study of medieval gardens, little is known about the size of crops from particular examples. The sole surviving account from the fourteenth century of the gardener at Glastonbury abbey has special interest for the light it sheds on this aspect of horticultural history.² Accounts of the gardeners of Abingdon abbey, Norwich cathedral priory, and a few other places, which have been published, usually record the cash transactions only.³

The gardener at Glastonbury abbey in 1333-4 was Thomas of Keynesham, whose account was compiled on the principle of charge and discharge. Money matters were entered on the face of the roll and all stocks were noted on the dorse. The accounting year ran

¹ I wish to acknowledge the generosity of the Marquess of Bath for loaning Glastonbury abbey records to me for use in the library of Liverpool University, and to the staff of that library. Dr. J. R. Harris kindly read the draft of the article but errors are entirely mine.

² *Longleat Manuscript* No. 11239A. The only other known gardener's account of Glastonbury abbey is for the last year of its existence, 1538-9, which is in the Public Record Office (S.C.6.3118). No issues of produce were recorded. By this period the gardener derived most of his income from rents and spent very little on the garden: 2d. for a pair of gloves and 3s. 7d. for repairs. The other moneys were either paid in liveries or on a miscellaneous number of duties religious and otherwise. Total charge was £9 3s. 0½d. Discharge amounted to £5 15s. 1d. and the remainder of £3 7s. 11½d. was accounted for by Roger Amyce on behalf of his royal master's commissioners for dissolved monastic property.

³ *Accounts of the Obedientiars of Abingdon Abbey*, edited by R. E. G. Kirk, Camden Society, 1892, pp. 16-21, 51-7, 73-5, 127-130. The Hon. Mrs. Evelyn Cecil (Alicia Amherst) *A History of Gardening in England*, London, 1910, third and enlarged edition, see especially pp. 10-13 for translations of some Norwich accounts, pp. 34-5 for one of the Earl of Lincoln's garden at Holbourne (then in Middlesex), and pp. 25-6 for that of the Bishop of Ely's gardener at Holbourne, who accounted for issue of verjuice, seeds of parsley, hyssop, savory and leeks, and the dead stock, in addition to cash transactions. See also H. W. Saunders *An Introduction to the Obedientiary and Manor Rolls of Norwich Cathedral Priory*, Norwich, 1930, pp. 130-1.

from Michaelmas to Michaelmas. There were four famuli working in the garden at Glastonbury, under the supervision of the gardener. He also seems to have been responsible for receiving some of the issues of produce from gardens or orchards attached to manors owned by the abbey. The size of the garden at Glastonbury at this period is not stated, but it included an orchard, a vineyard, a herb garden, vegetable plots, possibly some flower beds and some pasture. The types of crops recorded seem rather limited. No mention was made of flowers; so perhaps they were grown by obedientiaries responsible for decorating chapels and shrines, or else they were purchased or, if only labour costs were involved, they were deemed unworthy of mention.⁴ The same may be true of vegetables such as cabbage.

The cash receipts, amounting to £4 6s. 5½d., came under two headings — issues (£3 12s. 6½d.) and sales on account (13s. 11d.). The latter item had no particulars given on the face of the roll, but the details appeared in the transactions of stocks.

Pastures were of considerable extent. The herbage and nettles of the great garden were sold for 4s. 3d. and no more, because three horses belonging to the cellarer of the hall and another monk were grazed there. This entailed no income from hay this year. Some other pasture was sold for 1s. 6d. but the little garden was depastured by demesne horses involved in stone carrying for "the new building" at Glastonbury. A further 10s. came from winter pasture for sheep between Christmas and Easter. The total income from grazing was 15s. 9d.

Revenue from garden produce was 58s. 2d. The largest item was 21s. for 3 tuns of cider. 54 beats⁵ of linen were sold for 9s. and 16 stones of hemp, containing 25 pounds each, raised 10s. 8d. 2 quarters 1 bushel of onions were sold for 8s. 6d.; madder plants for 5s., leek plants for 7d. 5 quarters 2 bushels of apples, sold on account for 3s. 5d., complete the list of produce marketed.

⁴ Cecil *op. cit.* p. 17. There were flower gardens cultivated by the Sacrist to provide for the abovesaid purposes at Winchester, Ramsey, Abingdon and Norwich. In the Glastonbury Sacrist's account for 1538-9 there is reference to such a flower garden.

⁵ This measurement may be "Bolts".

Other income came from miscellaneous sources: brushwood sold at 4s.; 4 bushels of mixed grain fetched 1s. 4d.;⁶ 5 old spade irons were disposed of for 2½d.; and the only item under the livestock heading, a horse which was received from the reeve of Glastonbury, was sold on account before foaling for 2s. The smallness of this sum suggests that the animal was either of poor quality or else fodder was very scarce.

The discharge had a grand total of £4 11s. 0d.; hence the gardener on the year owed 4s. 6½d. This part of the account was divided into four items, surplusage of the previous year of £1 10s. 9d., necessary expenses, purchases of seed and cash liveries. This last, the final item of the account, was composed of (i) the proceeds from the sale of linen for 2s. 4d., and linen and hemp for 13s. 4d., which were rendered to the cellarer of the hall, and (ii) £1 1s. 0d. paid to the abbot which resulted from selling cider. The seeds purchased were 4 bushels of beans at 1s. 8d. and 2 bushels of hemp at 1s. 8d., but a bushel of linseed at 12d. was crossed out. The other expenditure amounted to £1 0s. 3d. of which 17s. was paid as wages to the four famuli for the year.⁷ A smith received 1d. to mend 2 hoes with iron bought for the purpose and a further 2d. to repair a bolt on the large door into the garden. It cost 4d. to have 4 bushels of beans planted in a day. This tedious task was often women's work, although who did this job is not indicated in the account. Processing flax cost 5d. Ten moles were captured in the garden for 3d., the only reference to pests. Four pairs of gloves were bought for the famuli working in the vineyard and garden for 6d. New tools purchased were a sickle for clearing the garden at 8d. and new irons for the spades at 10d.

The gardener was silent about manuring, but this does not imply that no attempts were made to improve, or to maintain, the condition of the soil. Similarly the dead stocks listed may not be a complete recital of tools, but only those on which money had been spent — for example no rake was mentioned; yet this tool was in wide use, as manorial demesne dead stock accounts sometimes

⁶ See the discussion of the stocks below.

⁷ *Longleat Manuscripts* Nos. 10632, 10633, 11239, all for 1334-5, shew wages of famuli at Glastonbury and on many Somerset manors to be 5s. per annum with a grain allowance. The same size of grain dole, but with a wage of 4s. per annum, was paid on Wiltshire manors. Also see below.

shew. Recorded at Glastonbury were a sickle, an axe, 5 new spades with new irons and 4 iron hoes. These were not a lavish capital provision for the four men who tended a large garden. Two of them went to Sowey,⁸ the great marshland manor near Bridgwater, for three weeks at harvest time. The sale of grain abovesaid might be evidence that these famuli had a payment of grain at the rate of 1 quarter for 12 weeks, a rate which was universal on the abbey's manors. If this occurred, then the omission of grain obtained to pay them is strange, because the only grain mentioned among the stocks, apart from the seed bought and planted, was an estimated issue of $2\frac{1}{2}$ quarters of beans. Of these, 1 quarter went to the cellarer and $1\frac{1}{2}$ quarters, "green in summer", were rendered to the cook. However, there are some signs of hasty compilation which may be the fault of the scribe or the accountant. The gardener, for example, was not given the title "Frater" although this was the usual style for an obediary; and the absence of the two famuli was said to be 2 weeks in one place and 3 weeks in another. These famuli seem to have been relatively under paid if they received only what was explicitly stated.

Obviously the weather was of cardinal importance and in the manorial account of Glastonbury for this year, it was said to be very dry, so much so that the yield of hay was affected.⁹ Hence in discussing the yields from the garden it should be remembered that the year was not average. Since no other garden accounts have survived for comparison of produce, it is impossible to judge whether this was a good or bad year for apples.

The gardener seems to have answered for the processing of produce from the vineyard or orchards under his charge. Although the size of the crop from the vineyard is unknown, it was of sufficient importance to allow 1 pipe 105 gallons of wine and 70 gallons of verjuice to be made, tithe having been paid on both. These were rendered to the cellarer of the hall. The issue of apples was $156\frac{1}{2}$ quarters and remaining from the previous year were $1\frac{1}{2}$ quarters. The gardener received apples from manorial orchards:¹⁰ 8 quarters

⁸ Weston Zoyland, Middlezoy and Othery.

⁹ *Longleat Manuscript* No. 11239.

¹⁰ *Longleat Manuscript* No. 10633. Sowey orchard apples were made into cider on the spot.

from Marksbury, 43 quarters 2 bushels from Pilton, 11 quarters 2 bushels from Batcombe, 10½ quarters from Ditchet, 10 quarters 6 bushels from Meare, 8 quarters from Godney, and 8 quarters 7 bushels from Shapwick. The total was 100 quarters 5 bushels from outside Glastonbury. 248 quarters of apples were allocated for cider making, 2 quarters were sent to the cook for "ampeliuis";¹¹ 1½ quarters were consumed by the abbot, cellarer and others during the winter and in Lent; 5 quarters 2 bushels were sold and 2 quarters remained for use in hall at the end of the accounting year. Cider was obtained at the rate of a tun for 8 quarters of apples pressed, yielding in all 31 tuns 80 gallons. 12½ tuns were made from apples from the manorial orchards and were not subject to tithe, so that on the remainder a tithe of 1½ tuns 60 gallons was paid. The cider was distributed thus: 1 tun to the pittance by order of the cellarer of the hall, 2 tuns for the abbot whilst staying at Mells, 1 tun to Doultong and 1 tun to Pilton for harvesting expenses there, 1½ tuns 20 gallons for men hayricking for the cellarer of the hall, and 20 tuns to the same cellarer for his official expenses. The 3 tun surplus was sold. From the foregoing information it would seem that cider apples were grown over a wide area of Somerset. None were sent from Wiltshire or Dorset estates, perhaps owing to the difficulty of transporting them. The orchard at Glastonbury also produced 3 bushels of pears, tithe paid. 1 bushel was sent for the abbot's use at Mells and the rest were given to the hall cellarer. Mells, to which provisions were sent, was a manor on the main route from Glastonbury to Oxford and London, and it was a regular stopping place for travellers on abbey business to and from Wiltshire and beyond.

The other produce was various: onions, leeks, garlic, madder, flax, hemp and linseed. Herbs were not specified except that the total issue of seed for the year was 2 pounds. From the previous year 5 pounds remained and this seed sown; and so 2 pounds were kept for the next season. Quantities of garlic were enormous; 6,000 cloves were the residue of the previous year and 5,000 were the issue after tithing. These 11,000 cloves of garlic were used in the year: 3,000 for seed, 2,000 for the abbot's kitchen and 6,000 to the larderer for the expense of the inn (*hospici*). Probably some of this prodigious quantity would have been used to prepare medicines.

¹¹ This may be a form of applejuice.

The same need might have prompted the cultivation of *gallium* (bedstraw or madder), although its property as a dye could have been of equal importance.¹² There were sown some 5 *lect'*,¹³ two years previously, 10 *lect'* in the past year and 16 *lect'* in the year of account. Of these 31 *lect'* 15 were to be sold after Michaelmas, 1335. From 2½ bushels of linseed came an issue of 60 beat of flax, 6 of which were paid in tithe and the others sold. After paying tithe, there was an onion harvest of 3 quarters from 4 pounds of seed. To obtain seeds, 2 bushels of onions remaining from the previous year were planted. 2 quarters 1 bushel of onions were sold and 4 bushels 3 pecks were sent to the cook, whilst the rest were kept for seed raising. Leeks were also a popular item of diet; 13 *lect'* of them remained from the previous year and 12 *lect'* were the issue from the abbey garden. In addition 7 *lect'* from Meare and 4 *lect'* from Pilton were received by the gardener for the use of the abbot when he visited his houses in those manors. The other leeks were for the abbot's inn or for seed production; the proportion of the 23 *lect'* for each purpose was not recorded.

The gardener accounted for seeds thus: 14 pounds of leek issue sown; 2 pounds of onion were outstanding and 4 pounds were produced from 2 bushels onions planted, whence 4 pounds were sown and 2 pounds were kept; 2 bushels of hemp remained, 2 bushels were issue and 2 bushels were purchased, making in all 6 bushels, of which 4 were sown and 2 preserved; 1½ bushels of linseed were residue, 2 bushels were issue, which were used so that 1½ bushels were sown and the others were stored for the following year. What the rate of seeding per acre was, the accountant never indicated. It makes valid comparison of yields impossible.

The value of the garden produce is difficult to compute owing to lack of knowledge about qualities and quantities.

¹² Certain plants of the madder and bedstraw family were also used for "cheese rennet." (Clapham, Tutin and Warburg, *Flora of the British Isles*, p. 992; Gerarde's *Herbal* (ed. 1636) pp. 1126-8).

¹³ This is a unit of cultivation and might refer to a plot or bed (*lectus*) whose size was customary. cf. Cecil *op. cit.* p. 6. I am grateful to the librarians of the Board of Trade, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Chief Inspector of Weights and Measures, Somerset, and the County Archivist of Somerset, and the librarian of the Royal Agricultural Society for attempting to discover the meaning of the term for me.