

SHORTER PAPERS

A CARTHUSIAN GRANGE AT GREEN ORE ON MENDIP

The Valor Ecclesiasticus of 1535 (VCH Somerset 2,123) lists Greneworth as a landholding belonging to the Carthusian monastic house of Hinton [Charterhouse], Somerset. Entry no. 23276 on the Somerset Monument Record (www.somerset.gov.uk/her) refers to a former grange at Green Ore on Mendip. The sites suggested include the farm at the crossroads of the B3135 and A39, now called Manor Farm (ST578502), and Rookery Farm (ST 576510). (Manor Farm was called Green Ore Farm in part of the 20th century and this has led to confusion with the one mentioned below.)

Using map regression beginning with the Chewton Tithe of 1839 (M5092/1 T/PH/TI), the Chewton Enclosure map of 1800 (Q/rde 23), the Roque map of 1740 (DD/WG 1) and the Chewton Minery map of c. 1700 (DD/WG C924), all of which are at the SRO, one can see a similarly shaped area blanked out on all four. The Tithe map describes this area as 'extra-parochial', whilst the other maps refer to it as belonging to Green Ore Farm, Green Oar Farm and Grenewore House respectively. It is also rather simplistically depicted as a square on the Greenwood map of 1822 (Fig. 1)

Examination of a document of 1609 (DD/WG – at the SRO) gives details of a dispute between John Portman, who owned Greenwoare Farm and Charles Waldegrave (Lord of the Manor of Chewton) over whether Greenwoare Farm was a demesne and outside the jurisdiction of the Manor of Chewton. A witness called to give evidence describes the farm as Greneworth alias Greenwoare and said he had never known it to be part of Chewton Manor. A further document of 1576 in the Exchequer Depositions (E 134/19 Eliz Hil No. 3 – at the PRO) concerns the 'farm or grange of Greneworth'. On



Fig. 1 Greenwood's map, 1822

Queen Elizabeth's behalf her representatives question witnesses as to whether they know of the manor of 'Greneworth als Grenowre'. One Robert Sudge said he knew the grange to sometime have belonged to Charterhouse Henton. Given this evidence, the area on the Tithe map marked as 'extra-parochial' would make sense. It was not included in the parish of Chewton because it was a demesne in its own right and being of monastic origin appears to have retained its non-tithable status into the 19th century.

Although the present-day Rookery Farm has a date plaque of 1655, an earlier building appears to adjoin it at its northern end. The north gable has a 14th-century double lancet solar window and a curious early 16th-century doorway at first floor level (Fig. 2). In addition, various blocks of medieval moulded masonry feature in later garden walls and gateposts



Fig. 2 Rookery Farm, north-facing gable

surrounding the farm, suggesting that the older building has been renovated and updated in the past. The Revd John Skinner sketched the rear aspect of

the farm in the early 1800s and he clearly shows the 14th-century solar window, a medieval double lancet window to the upper storey on the east wall and the addition of steps to the first floor doorway (DD/SAS/G1818/4/2/3).

Recent restoration of the farm included the removal of all the wall render revealing further medieval architectural features in the shape of the voussoirs of a drain in the north-west corner, which could have led from a garderobe, and a single lancet window in the west elevation. It also appeared that the ground floor level had at one time been considerably higher and that the first floor level had been lowered at some stage. The wall seam of the medieval with the 1655 build was very visible on the east side.

All the evidence points strongly to Rookery Farm being the site of the Carthusian Grange, with the suggested demesne still marked by a continuous stone wall on all but the south-west curved boundary. An unpublished report entitled 'The Documentary, Cartographical and Archaeological Evidence for the Existence of a Carthusian Grange at Green Ore on Mendip' by P. Osborne (2004) is deposited at Wells Museum Library.

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