

From the *Transactions* of the
Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society

Quenington, Gloucestershire

by E. M. Clifford
1961, Vol. 80, 93-98

© The Society and the Author(s)

Quenington, Gloucestershire

By E. M. CLIFFORD, F.S.A.

QUENINGTON is situated $8\frac{1}{2}$ miles north-east of Cirencester in Gloucestershire. It lies on the Roman Akeman Street, and the river Coln runs through the village, which is surely one of the loveliest in this Cotswold country. Among its glories are the wonderful ornate Norman doorways and tympana, the dove-cot, gate house and a range of buildings adjoining. The three last formed part of the Commandery of the Knights Hospitallers; they are situated in the moated grounds of Quenington Court, the residence of Miss I. Pelly.

The Knights Hospitallers

'The Knights Hospitallers¹ began A.D. 1092 with the building of a hospital for the pilgrims at Jerusalem. They followed a rule of life based upon that of St Augustine and their dress was black with a white cross upon it. They came to England very shortly after their foundation; their first house in London dates *c.* 1140. They rose in wealth and importance in the country; and their head, or grand prior as he was called, became the first lay baron in England and had a seat in the House of Peers.'

The Christians were driven from Jerusalem in 1187 and the Order of St John, after establishing themselves successively at Acre and Cyprus, settled at Rhodes for about 200 years. In 1522 the Knights had to abandon Rhodes and later settled in Malta, which became the headquarters of the order.²

Quenington

At the Norman Conquest William gave Quenington and other manors to Walter de Laci and in Domesday it is recorded³ that his son Roger was lord of this and nineteen other manors in Gloucestershire. 'Agnes Laci, William de Poictou and the Countess Cecilia founded a preceptory for the knights hospitallers in this place and endowed it with their lands here. And Mabilia, the wife of William de Mara, and Robert de Mara^y gave them their demesns in Camsden, belonging to Quenington. And William de Lega^y also gave many

¹ Gasquet, *English Monastic Life*, p. 230.

² Rudder, *History of Gloucestershire*, p. 618.

³ H. J. Harris, *St John in Herefordshire*, p. 5.

lands and tenements belonging to Quenington, to the knights of the same preceptory.’

Papal Bulls, Lechlade

There is among the muniments of New College, Oxford,¹ one bull of Pope Gregory IX, date 1233, and two of Pope Innocent IV (1249-50 and 1243) addressed to the Prior and Brethren of the Hospice of St John, by the bridge of Lechlade, Gloucestershire; these are earlier dates than were available at the time of writing *VCH* Glos: vol. II.

Dissolution and later

After the dissolution of such establishments by Henry VIII in 1540 Quenington passed into the hands of Anthony Kingston and in 1608 William Kingston was lord of the manor. It may be at this time that the elaborate garden feature which gave rise to the excavation next to be described was undertaken. It was now (at the time of James I) that ‘the land² around the house began to be treated in a formal way . . . and on another [side] a formal garden set with flowers and herbs’.

The Excavation

During the hot summer of 1955 Miss Pelly noticed that shadows had appeared on the lawns which adjoin her house on the north-east and south-west sides (FIG. 1). Those on the north-east suggested that they might be the foundations of a tower which often formed a part of the establishments of Knights Hospitallers in France, as at Saint Gilles at Toulouse.³ On the south-west, shadows indicated long straight walls, some running east and west with others abutting on to them.

A trial excavation on this side showed that indeed walls were there, that one was 3 feet wide, and built of good Cotswold stone, and that another, running in the same direction, was 2 feet wide. No dating evidence was discovered. These walls are substantial enough to consider it probable that they may have been the walls of the Hospitalers’ church. In April 1958 one-quarter, 16 feet square, of the supposed tower foundation was excavated and it was found by pottery and a copper token that the shadows formed a 17th-century construction, probably an ornamental garden feature of that date, the sort of thing described by John Summerson².

The stone pitching (the shadows) being the foundations for paths and the dark intervening patches beds for flowers or roses (PLATE XIII).

¹ *Trans. BGAS*, xli, p. 223.

² John Summerson, *Architecture in Britain, 1530-1830*, p. 54.

³ Joan Evans, *Art in Mediaeval France*, p. 134.

QUENINGTON, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Further excavation showed that beneath the 17th-century level there was more stonework, this was shown, by the pottery found there, to be of the 13th century (FIG. 3). Beneath this again there was a 12th-century construction and the pottery found with it is illustrated in FIG. 3.¹

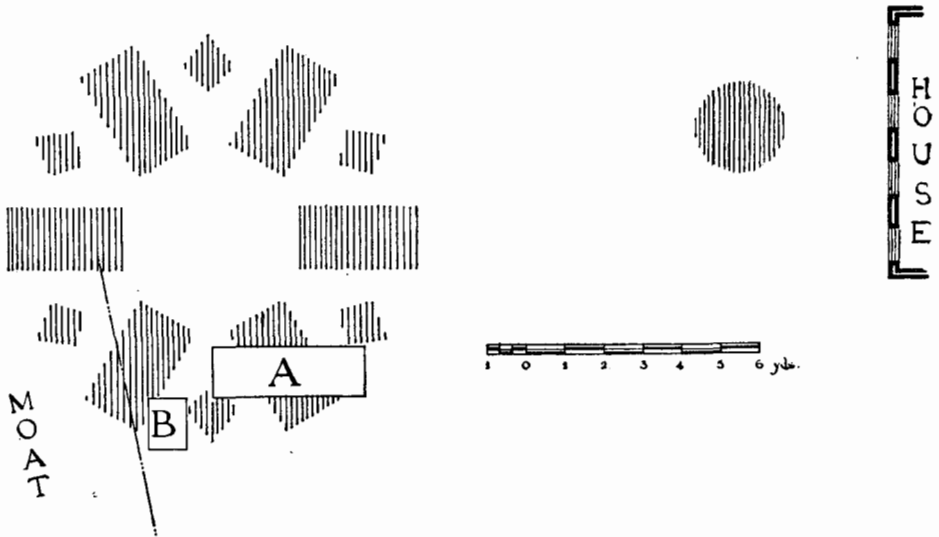


Fig. 1. Shadows as seen on the lawn

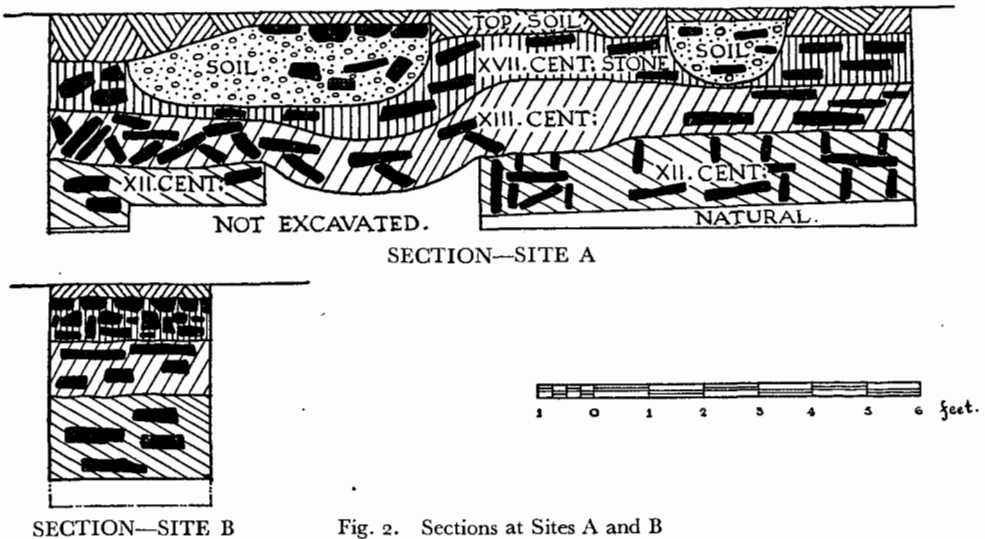


Fig. 2. Sections at Sites A and B

¹ Pottery kindly drawn by Miss Clare I. Fell.

Discussion

None of the stonework of the 12th and 13th centuries in this site is substantial. This and its close proximity to the moat and the really enormous quantities of bones and teeth of ox, sheep and pig, together with the pieces of cooking pots, make it possible that this area was included in the kitchen quarters in the 12th and 13th centuries. Later the roof fell into decay and these particular buildings were disused. The tiles which formed the roof were some of glazed earthenware and some of Cotswold stone.

This excavation shows that this area of the Knights Hospitallers' vast possessions was occupied in the 12th and 13th centuries, which was not certain before, although it is in accord with what is known of the movements of the Order here.

On this small site there is nothing to show for the 14th, 15th and 16th centuries, but after the Reformation, when the estate passed into the hands of the Kingston family; we now know that the gardens were laid out in the fashion of the early 17th century.

FINDS

Copper Token

By OWEN F. PARSONS

Copper token, probably a farthing, issued at Burford in 1669. The types are as follows, *obverse*, Lion rampant to left, in field B B, no legend. *Reverse*, A/BVRFORD/TOKEN/1669 in four lines, a floret at each side of the A, three florets below. No legend round. Small part of edge broken away. Milne, Oxfordshire tokens No. 43.

I do not know if this was issued by the Public Authorities at Burford, or whether there was a Lion or Red Lion Inn there, in which case B B might have been the innkeeper's initials.



PLATE XIII. Site A, showing 17th-century garden lay-out



PLATE XIV. Antefix. Legio XX

facing p. 96

QUENINGTON, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

POTTERY

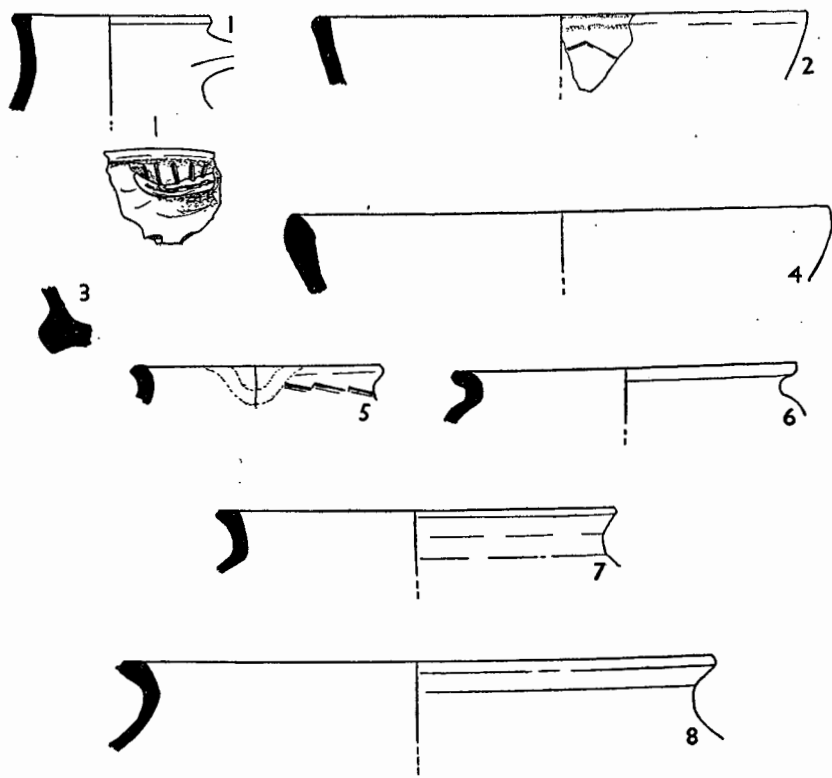


Fig. 3

From level 2. Jugs, Cooking-pots, roof tiles. 13th century.¹

No. 1. Neck of jug, grey core. Pinkish buff surface, neck and top of handle slashed. There is also fragment of similar ware from same level.

No. 2. Rim sherd from wide mouthed cooking-pot, similar ware, c. 10 inch diam. Lightly engraved zig-zag before firing below rim.

No. 3. Separate foot of tripod-base. Similar ware.

No. 4. Rim of large cooking-pot, c. 11 inch dia. Grey core, reddish buff surface.

No. 5. Sherd from rim, probably of jug as there appears to be the inner curve of spout on inside. Deep diagonal stamps below rim, done before firing. Grey core, pinkish buff surface.

Roof-tiles. Light green glaze, as on pottery.

From level 3. Cooking-pots. 12th century.²

No. 6. Rim of cooking-pot, grey shell-filled ware, dark grey. Black finish outside, reddish surface. 7 inch dia.

No. 7. Rim of cooking-pot, 8 inch dia., ware as No. 6 with reddish surface.

No. 8. Rim of cooking-pot, 12 inch dia., ware as No. 7.

¹ *Trans. BGAS*, vol. 68, p. 30 ff, Selsley Common; vol. 71, p. 88 ff, Whittington Court; vol. 75, p. 28 ff, Prestbury.

² *Ibid.*, vol. 75, p. 28 ff. Prestbury.

Acknowledgments

Many thanks are due to Miss Pelly who so generously allowed her lawn to be dug up and gave the excavators much kind hospitality. Captain H. S. Gracie, Mr L. J. Jones, Mr Richard Reece and Mr Peter Broxton gave unstinted help throughout. Sections re-drawn by Mr G. T. Harding and plan from a survey by Mr L. J. Jones. Mr G. J. Hurst and Mr G. C. Dunning kindly examined the pottery.

A Roman Tile

In the Gate House at Quenington Court there is an accumulation of pottery fragments which has been found on the estate from time to time. Among them there is a Roman antefix, which masked one end of a row of ridge-tiles. The antefix has the badge of Legio XX (PLATE XIV). Although the legend LEG XX does not in this instance accompany the boar, it is identical with antefixes made for Legion XX at Holt, the legionary tiler in North Wales which worked for Chester.

Either the antefix was made for a temporary station of a detachment of Legio XX in Gloucestershire before the legion moved to Chester—Gloucestershire had many tileries in Roman times—or this antefix is a relatively modern import into Gloucestershire from the Chester area. Against the first hypothesis is the very close resemblance of the antefix to those made at Holt; against the second is the fact that there is in the area in which the antefix was found no house of the type to be owned by a person likely to have collected antiquities of this kind. It may be noted that in the Corinium Museum there is a quantity of Samian ware of *c.* the 1st and *c.* the 2nd century from near Quenington. Mr Graham Webster has kindly looked at the photograph of the Roman antefix and he is of the opinion that it is more likely to be a modern import and that it is probably Grimes' type No. 2¹.

Miss Pelly has given permission for the finds to go to Corinium Museum.

¹ *Y Cymmrodor*, xli, fig. 58.