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Brimpsfield Church History-Part IV

by R. F. Butler
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Brimpsfield Church History

By RUTH F. BUTLER, M.A.

PART IV THE PRIORY

ERE we plunge into the labyrinth of historical sources, it may be well to enquire what we know of the priory building itself. Rudder (*History of Gloucestershire*, 1779) writes: 'The Priory is supposed to have been a fine building. Marble work has been found among the ruins'. Bigland (1791) states even more decisively: 'The site is still shown, and it is reported that certain small members of architecture, with tracery of exquisite Gothic workmanship, have been formerly discovered'.

The site is still indicated on the Ordnance Map, but is now indistinguishable, except, it has been said, in times of unusual drought, or possibly from the air. Such 'small members of architecture' as may be detected in or on buildings in the village are believed to have come from the castle ruins (See *Proceedings of the Cotteswold Field Club*, xxxiii, pp. 116-18). Bigland's 'Gothic' legend will remain unproved without skilled excavation.

If we have to depend on hearsay or conjecture as to the building itself, the institutional history of the priory is more elusive still. Prolonged research has produced mainly negative or contradictory results. The story, so far as it can be reconstructed, resolves itself into five periods, each with its special problem.

- i. The foundation and origin.
- ii. The relation between church and priory. (This has been partially discussed in Part I, and some 'overlapping' is inevitable.)
- iii. The suppression of the priory, and its fate between 1414 and 1476.
- iv. Its relation to Middleton-Brimpsfield, Wilts.
- v. The Priory land in recent times.

Dugdale stated clearly, and later historians of Gloucestershire—Atkins, Rudder, etc.—have all repeated that Brimpsfield had a Priory which was a cell of the Benedictine Abbey of Fontenay, probably by the gift of one of the early Giffards. The V.C.H. has more details, and

a list of Priors, but gives S. Wandrille of Fontanelle as the Mother House. Knowles and Hadcock repeat this attribution, which the Registers of the Bishops of Worcester and other original sources have proved to be an error. Fontenay and Brimpsfield were undoubtedly mother and daughter. But many obscurities surround their history.

i. *Origin*

To begin with the history of the Mother House.

The Benedictine Abbey of Fontenay, two leagues south of Caen, in the Norman diocese of Bayeux, was founded, or refounded, between 1055 and 1070¹ by Raoul Taisson I (Radulfus Taxo) and his two sons, Raoul and Erneiz, 'to the praise of God and of S. Stephen', and this foundation was confirmed by 'Duke William, after he became King of England'.²

The latest historian of the alien monasteries, Mr D. Matthew, gives many and detailed examples of the post-Conquest religious policy of the King and his Anglo-Norman lords. 'Rather than found new monasteries in England, they expressed their piety through gifts to the monasteries which enshrined their family's devotion in Normandy'. 'Nearly thirty Norman Monasteries received gifts of manors or estates in addition to churches and tithes, and so became landlords in England'.³

If we ask, was it piety of this kind that led to the affiliation of Brimpsfield and Fontenay?—there is no absolutely certain reply.

English documents are dumb as to our priory till 1280 at earliest; Norman sources begin somewhat earlier, but give rise to conflicting theories—one ascribing the foundation of the 'cell' to the family of Taisson, benefactors of Fontenay—the other to the family of Giffard, lords of Brimpsfield manor from the time of the Conquest.

For the Taissons, we have the reports of three visits to Fontenay made by the Archbishop of Rouen between 1248 and 1270. In the first (1256), it is stated that there are two dependent priories in Normandy and *one in England*. In 1267 this is named *Beinsteld* and is said to have one resident monk. 'This priory has been given, as well as the churches of Warham and Wellis, by Raoul Taisson'.⁴ To identify *Beinsteld* with Brimpsfield seems a fair conjecture (cf. the variants of its English spelling, given in Part I), but we cannot so readily accept the Taisson tradition.

¹ Dugdale *Mon. Angl.* vi ii, 1084 gives a possible 6th c. foundation.

² *G.C.* xi, pp. 62 and 413, and *Farcy*, p. 2.

³ *Matthew*, p. 29.

⁴ *Farcy*, pp. 48 and 68, and Bonnin, *Journal de Rigaud, Archevêque de Rouen*.

For the Giffards there is a document preserved in the archives of the Caen municipality, a translation of a Bull of Pope Nicolas IV, confirming the possessions of Fontenay (1291). Among these occur: 'En Angleterre l'eglise de Brinnefult avec ses dependances. Dans les manoirs d'Helie Giffard les dixmes des vacheries et porcheries, bergeries et des fromages, et tous les droits que vous possédez dans les dits manoirs (also 'Les dixmes des vacheries &c dont votre monastere peut jouir par donation de Raoul Taisson, dans Doubrie et Hamungebrie').¹ (See Appendix I, *infra*).

However visionary may appear this magnificent grant of tithes, at a moment when the relations between Edward I, the Pope, and the King of France were most uneasy, the Papal reference to 'Elias' is valuable, and may be taken, I think, as destructive of the Taisson legend. How, we may ask, did this arise?

The Abbot who in 1267 attributed the foundation of Brimpsfield Priory to Raoul Taisson may have been generalizing from the large number of endowments bestowed upon Fontenay by that family, who (to quote Farcy) 'for nearly two hundred years made it a point of honour to augment the original foundation by new grants'. Taisson monuments were in the abbey church; masses were said for their souls. By the 13th century, moreover, Taissons had become more Norman than English—the loss of Normandy by King John had affected their political career. The Giffards were less well-known. They had, it is true, founded a convent at Longueville, the 'caput' of their Norman honour—across the Seine from Fontenay.² Osbern Giffard, the first lord of Brimpsfield, had made a small benefaction to the abbey of S. Stephen's Fontenay of 'two hides and a virgate in Mideltone' (Wiltshire) according to Domesday Book. This was still held in 1242 'in frankalmoin by gift of the antecessors of Elias Giffard'.³

The problem still remains: *which* ancestor of Elias gave the Gloucestershire endowment? There were four Elias Giffards, between 1096 and 1247—roughly contemporary with the four Taissons who bore successively the name of Raoul. Elias II and III were generous in a way, for the good of their souls, but were chiefly interested in St Peter's, the large Benedictine Abbey at Gloucester. Elias III endowed it with land in Wiltshire, as did his father, 'saving the tenure of the church of Funtenay' [See *Gloucester Cartulary*, I, 66]. Elias II actually entered St Peter's as a monk.

¹ Municipal Archives of Caen: Collection Mancel. Acte no. 9.

² Pierre Le Cacheux: *Chartes du Prieurie de Longueville*.

³ D.B. and *V.C.H. Wilts*, II, p. 155; also *Book of Fees* (Testa de Nevill), II, p. 743.

The two earlier generations were more Norman in their affinities. Osbern, we have seen, linked Fontenay with his Wiltshire estates. He may have returned to live in Normandy, and look after the affairs of the family after the death (about 1100) of Walter of Longueville, who was his uncle (or, possibly, his father). This was the Giffard—the head of the clan—who had fought at Hastings and been created Earl of Buckingham. It is known that Elias had succeeded his father, Osbern, at Brimpsfield by 1086, but an Osbern Giffard is heard of in Normandy at a later date, taking part in an important ceremony. The daughter of William I, Matilda, who had become Abbess of the Holy Trinity Convent at Caen, died on 6 June 1113. Her 'rouleau mortuaire' contains a verse, composed by the Abbot of Fontenay, and signed not only by the abbot and monks, but also by 'Osbernus Giffard' and his wife, Hadwisa, and 'Radulfus Taxo' and his wife, Albureda.¹ The identity of this Osbern with that of 1086 cannot be proved, but the association with Fontenay and with Taisson is suggestive. The two families had many Norman bonds—neighbourhood, and importance in the councils of King William, to whom they were both of kin.² It may have been Taisson influence that instigated the endowment of Brimpsfield priory; Osbern may even have discussed it with Raoul at the solemn occasion of the abbess's funeral, and then sent word to his son to arrange for the reception of the monks from Fontenay. By this, Elias might feel that he had provided for the safety of his father's soul and for the religious needs of himself and his tenants. Further in conjectural chronology we dare not go.

If Elias I did found the priory, he did little more for it, except, possibly, to restore the church. Indeed, it is worthy of note that no one of the Giffard family took much interest in the little foundation at their doors. All four Elias Giffards were far more concerned with Gloucester Abbey, or even with Llanthony Abbey. John, son of Elias IV, was devoting himself to the foundation of a cell for Benedictines at Oxford, and its promotion to the status of 'Gloucester Hall', 1283-1291. This was almost the moment of the prior's heaviest suffering as an alien (*infra* p. 132), from which Sir John, high in the service of Edward I, might surely have saved him. The prior and monks were, perhaps, mainly accepted as useful adjuncts to the manor. (Their occupation of an acreage so near to the castle may, at times, have been regretted. A north door to the nave was built, and a chancel added to the church

¹ Farcy, p. 31.

² There may even have been a marriage connection. A memorandum (date 1070-79), *re* grants to Fontenay, is confirmed by the widow of Raoul II—Matilda, 'daughter of Walter'. If this were Walter Giffard of Longueville, Raoul and Osbert would be brothers or cousins-in-law. See Davis, I, no. 117.

in the 13th century. But not till the time of John II, 'the Rych', does the prior even appear as patron of the living (1303).

The Giffards in no way rivalled the Taissons as benefactors of Fontenay and its priories, and we can well understand the vagueness of a Fontenay abbot as to the origin of the cell in Brimpsfield—a name which Norman scribes found impossible to spell!

ii. *The Priory in relation to the Church*

It has been shown in Part I of this paper that no positive connection between priory and church can be traced before the 14th century, and we have tried to realize how vague is our knowledge as to the type of foundation existing even in the century before. Accepting the probability of a grant to Fontenay by the Giffards from their Gloucestershire lands, corresponding to that made in Wiltshire, we have still to enquire: did this grant amount merely to a few acres of land, served by a clerical bailiff, charged to collect the proceeds and forward them to the Mother House in Normandy, or did the grant include the Church, and its income? In the latter case, monks would be sent over from Fontenay, who would use the church for their own rule of worship, 'and attend themselves to the spiritual responsibilities of the parish' [Matthew], including, of course, their lord and benefactor, whom they may have served as private chaplains. (A document in the Cirencester Cartulary contains the name of 'Gilbert the chaplain' witnessing a gift of Elyas of Brimpsfield. There can be no certainty that Gilbert was chaplain to Elias, nor is it certain which of the four successive Elias Giffards is concerned, so this valuable date eludes us.) There would be no conventual establishment, but a grange sufficient to house two or three monks, and to contain the tithes and crops when gathered in.

The picture becomes more definite in the reign of Edward I, when Brimpsfield begins to appear in the records both of the King and the Church. The Cartulary of Cirencester Abbey mentions a Prior of Brimpsfield who, in 1280, held half a hide in Bradwell, Oxon., which again was held of him by the Preceptor of the Knights of the Temple. This is probably the earliest reference to our priory and the only indication that it may have had other lands than those in Brimpsfield and in Wiltshire. It can only have been a short-lived tenancy. The Order of Templars was dissolved in 1312, and the church of Bradwell passed to the Hospitallers, but the manor, remaining in the hands of the king, was occupied in 1338 by his doctor, 'Master Pencius'. [Larking, *The Knights Hospitallers in England*, pp. 193 and 213.]

The registers of the Bishops of Worcester record in 1289 that Brother Gilbert, monk of S. Stephen of Fontenay,¹ is to be 'inducted in the name of custody to the Priory of Bremesfeud, on the presentation of the Abbot of Fontenay'. Gilbert was succeeded the following year by Robert, monk of Fontenay, who is given by the Bishop 'the custody of the Manor of Bremesfeud'. (The term 'manor' must here be interpreted as 'landed estate'.)

From 1294 to 1303 the Priory was involved in the troubles that befell all alien priories during Edward's French wars. An enquiry was instituted into the value of the lands of 'religious under the rule of France', in order to check the passing of goods and money into enemy hands. It was reported that 'The prior of Fontenay has the Church of Bremesfeld 'in proprios usus'. 'The yearly value, with land in demesne, is £6 13s 4d' (1293). 'The Lands of the Prior of Fontenay² at Midleton, in the county of Wiltshire, are worth £4 0s 4d.' Here we have the first definite evidence that links the church with the priory, and that links together *Brimpsfield* and *Middleton* (*infra* p. 135). In October 1294 the King granted protection to the Prior of Brimpsfield, probably in return for a money fine. Early in 1297, with increasing fears of a French invasion, Edward seems to have seized the alien priories once more, only restoring them to their Priors 'to hold during his pleasure', in return for an annual payment at the Exchequer.³ Brimpsfield must have been harshly assessed, for in May 1303 the Bishop of Worcester received a royal writ to levy a debt of £22 from the ecclesiastical goods of the Prior of *Brymifeld* and *Middleton*—the Sheriff having certified that the prior had no *lay* fee from which he can levy. The Bishop replies that the prior's goods, consisting of two oxen, price one mark (13s 4d), and hay, price half a mark, have been sequestered towards the debt; and later in the year (presumably after the crops and tithes were gathered) that 8 marks 11s 4d (£5 18s 0d) have been levied on the prior's ecclesiastical goods, and no more can be levied at this time.⁴ Another valuation of about the same date values the goods and chattels on the Manor of the Prior of Fontenay at Bremesfeld, at £1 19s 0d (including six oxen) and the tithes and fruits of the demesne at £5.⁵

If the tithes were so large a proportion of the total income, the so-called 'manerium' must have been a very small affair, for which one ox-team sufficed. It is a sorry tale of petty oppression. But with the

¹ Not S. Stephen of *Wells*, as is given in vol. II of the *W.H.S.* The original text is clearly 'Fontineto'. See Giffard's Reg. (1289), Worcs. R.O. 716.093 B.A. 2648(1).

² Extents of Alien Priories. B.M. Add. MSS. 6164, pp. 60, 72.

³ *Cal. P.R.* (1292-1301), pp. 97 and 271.

⁴ Ginsborough's Reg., p. 44 (*W.H.S.*).

⁵ B.M. Add. 6164, p. 89. See also Matthew, Chap. III for full account of Edward I's dealings with alien priories.

conclusion of peace between England and France in 1303, the pressure on the alien priories was lifted for a time. In 1303, significantly, comes the first mention of a 'Vicar of Bremmesfeld'¹ 'presenting' a deacon for ordination. Does this imply that, with less financial duress, poor 'Brother Robert,' the Prior, had at last been able to appoint a Vicar for the church, instead of performing the services himself?

From this date onwards the patronal connection between church and priory is acknowledged, though not undisturbed. The Table [see Appendix II, which should be read in conjunction with the 'Table of Incumbents' in Part III], shows that of the nine Priors known by name, only two can be definitely said to have 'presented' to the vicarage, i.e. Priors de Brykebec and de Haketo; though the anonymous vicar of 1303, and John of Prestbury were probably also priors' appointments. In 1337 the alien priories were seized by Edward III, 'because of the war with France'. In 1341, when he levied a heavy tax upon the church—'the ninth fleece, lamb and sheaf'—Brimpsfield was assessed at £15 5s *od.*² Three years later, after a presentation to the vicarage by Prior de Haketo, the King insisted that the candidate—Hildesley—should be re-presented by himself and re-instituted by Bishop Wulstan de Bransford.

The alien priories were restored by the Crown just after the Treaty of Bretigny between England and France (1360), and three priors were appointed to Brimpsfield in rapid succession, the last (Simon Halley) having an English name. But they are shadowy personages, of whom nothing is known.

In 1378 Parliament demanded and carried through the expulsion of most of the alien monks. Who remained at Brimpsfield we do not know.

The six vicars who followed Hildesley were presented not by the Prior, but by the King, who in 1412 is definitely quoted as 'the true patron' of the vicarage.

In 1414 all alien priories were dissolved by Parliament (Statute of Leicester).³

A period of some confusion followed, due to the weakness or to the pious scruples of the Lancastrian kings, and the demands of their greedy supporters. In 1440 a Commission was appointed to enquire into the position of the alien priories. They were bestowed by letters Patent upon the Archbishops and bishops, who in February 1441 formally surrendered to the Crown 'all the priories, manors etc., late

¹ Ginsborough's Reg., p. 39 (*W.H.S.*).

² Inquisition of the Nones, 15 Ed. III.

³ See Matthew, Chap. IV.

called alien priories—with the advowsons of all rectories and vicarages, all rents and farms'.¹

So ends a chapter of local as well as national history.

iii. *The History of the Priory Lands after the Suppression*

Henry V bestowed the priory upon his step-mother, the Dowager Queen Joan, for whom it was managed by a 'clerk-farmer' until her death in 1437.² Her treasurer's receipts to Nicholas Dixon, 'clerk-farmer', for the rent of £7 *os od* per annum appear in the 'Extents of Alien Priories' for 1430, 1431, 1432 and 1434.³ Nicholas Dixon, and a non-clerical assistant, Thomas Blithe, were re-appointed in November 1440 'to hold the alien priory of Brymmesfelde for 10 years, rendering for keeping of the same £7—maintaining there the divine services and other works of piety customary from of old, maintaining houses, enclosures and buildings and supporting all other charges incumbent on the priory, provided that they have allowance in payment of their farm in respect of any annuities granted out of the keeping of the said priory'.⁴

How do we interpret the entry as to *divine services*? From 1412 to 1444 the church was being served by vicars appointed by the Crown, (see Part III *supra*) who, we may presume, had subsisted on their glebe, lesser tithes and offerings. An additional stipend to the vicar would hardly be described as an annuity. Did Nicholas Dixon assist the vicar in any clerical capacity? or was he responsible for some chantry service—celebrated, perhaps at a side altar on the north side of the nave, where an aumbry in the wall still survives?

Possibly the proviso was merely a sop thrown to the Church, while the fate of the alien priories as a whole was in suspense. Certain it is that in 1441, when the spoil was his by law, the pious Henry VI at once appropriated much of it to his new foundation, Eton College. Henry Sever, first Provost, received 'the priory of Brymmesfeld in Gloucestershire', with appurtenances and received £11 from the Sheriff, *occupier of the priory*, 1441.⁵ With the priory evidently went the advowson, for the College acted as patron of the living at the two next vacancies, 1444 and 1445. An attempt has already been made (Parts I and III) to trace the subsequent history of the priory by following the track of the patronage. Its fate is deeply involved in the vicissitudes of

¹ *Rolls of Parliament*, IV, 22; *Cal. Cl. R. 1435-1441*, pp. 493-4.

² *Cal. P.R. 1413-1416*, p. 166.

³ E.106/12/35. Extents of Alien Priories. (P.R.O.)

⁴ *Cal. Fine Rolls, 1437-1445*, p. 175 and E. 372/280 (Pipe Roll 1442-3).

⁵ *Rolls of Parliament*, V, pp. 395, 414 and Eton Coll. Accounts, XLIX, no. 294.

the Wars of the Roses. In March 1461, after Henry's defeat at Towton he was succeeded by Edward IV, who promptly declared null and void all grants made by the Lancastrian Kings. His later tergiversations are best shown in tabular form.

- 1462 Lease to William Beaufitz for ten years of the alien priory of Brimpsfield.¹
- 1463 Eton College abolished, and annexed to St George's College, Windsor, by Papal Bull, at request of King Edward. The amalgamation of the two bodies can never have been complete.²
- 1467 Re-grant to Eton College, 'so that they may pray for the good estate of the King and Queen'—of Brimpsfield priory and also of 'all lands and services in Middelton, Co. Wilts., sometime pertaining to it'.³ (This last item will be treated later.)
- 1471 King Edward ordered the bells of Eton College, which had been sent to St George's, to be restored. (This indicates his vacillating policy as to the two foundations.)
- 1474 Brimpsfield Priory granted to St George's,⁴ but as already shown May 17 almost certainly transferred in fact to the King's mother, Cicely Duchess of York, to whom 'the Park' was confirmed on May 18.
- 1476 A Papal decree annulled the Bull of 1463. From this time on we hear no more of the priory as a separate entity. The history of the Church patronage (Parts I, II and III) shows it to have been absorbed into the manor.

iv. *Middleton-Brimpsfield, Wilts.*

There remains a puzzling side-issue to which reference has already been made. Except for the one allusion to 'the Prior of Brymifeld and Midleton' in 1303, (*supra* p. 132) the two estates of Fontenay Abbey in Gloucestershire and Wiltshire seem to have been administered separately. Yet their history is in some respects similar. Both Priories occur in Henry VI's endowment of Eton, and in Edward's re-grant to Eton in 1467. Middleton does *not* re-appear in the grant to St George's, Windsor, though Henry VII actually had the manor (in 1485 or '86) when he granted the office of keeper of the beds in Windsor Castle to Hugh Ansley, with wages for himself and a groom out of the issues of the lordships or manors of Stratton and Middleton-Brymmesfeld.⁵

¹ *Cal. P.R.* Ed. IV, 1461-67, p. 108.

² M-Lyte, p. 65.

³ *Cal. P.R.* 7 Ed. IV, pp. 62-3. See also Wright, who prints all the grants in full, p. 461.

⁴ *Cal. P.R.*, Ed. IV, 1467-1477, p. 461.

⁵ *Cal. P.R.*, Hen. VII, 1, p. 26

Eton College has records proving its possession of lands in 'Middleton-Brimfield' from 1565 to 1867. These records—mainly leases or terriers—refer always to 'the *manor or priory* of Middleton-Brimfield in the Parish of Norton Bavant'. It is described as lying in scattered portions, difficult to identify. When finally parted with in 1867, a portion of the lands—described as 'the farm of Middleton-Brimfield'—had already been sold to James Bayley Esq. about 1798.¹

A counter-story to the evidence plainly existing in Eton College Archives is contained in a grant by Henry VIII of the 'lordship, manor and park of Brymesfelde, Wilts. to Sir John Bridges, Knight', at almost the same date as the grant of Brimsfield, Glos.² It would seem probable that, as in Gloucestershire, the 'Priory' was only a portion of the whole manor of Middleton, and that Eton College retained this portion—(scattered about the manor) while the rest of the estate was at the disposal of the Crown. (Alternatively, the grant to Bridges may not have been effective.)

The present writer paid a visit to the farm of Middleton (near Norton Bavant), and found that the connection with Eton College, as well as the double name 'Middleton-Brimsfield' are now entirely forgotten, and that the only conjectural trace of the 'priory' history is in one field on the farm:—'Pill field', where large building stones had been ploughed up in living memory. This may be the 'Priors-Pill' field mentioned in an Eton MS.

v. *The Priory Land in Recent Times*

In Brimsfield, Glos., the priory name is by no means extinct.

From the 17th century onward we hear of 'the priory' as a farm. 'John Hayward of the Priory' occurs in the Parish Register 1696. In a 'Terrier of Glebe lands and mode of Tithing', 1680, occurs a curious passage: 'In lieu of Tythes:—viz, for Brimsfield Park *which was known to be formerly Abbey or Friarie Land* there is usually paid a noble per annum. . . . There is £10 paid yearly in lieu of Tythes out of ye Demesne Lands'.—Similar words occur in a Terrier of 1704.³

¹ Eton College Muniments.

² *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII*, cxxi (2), no. 770, p. 83 (Jan. 1544). See also *Cal. Cl. R. 1468-1476*, p. 185 (Nov. 1471), where 'the receivers, farmers & other occupiers of the *manors* of S. Margaret, Stratton and Middleton Brymmesfeld, Co. Wilts', are ordered 'to pay Thomas Cressey, keeper of the beds in Windsor Castle, 6*d* a day, and 3*d* a day for his groom,' out of the profits of the manors. (There is no allusion in either case to 'priory lands', which were, we presume, in the hands of Eton College.) A similar order for the wages of the keeper of the beds occurs Oct. 1485. *Cal. P.R. Henry VII*, i, p. 26.

³ The Diocesan Records in Gloucester City Library contain a set of 'Terriers of Glebe Lands belonging to the parsonage of Brimsfield', 56. T.i; T.ii; T.iii; T.vi.

'Friarie' is evidently a corruption of Priory. The passage must be interpreted, I think, as *that part of the Park* (i.e. Manor) *which had been priory land*. This would coincide with the theory that the priory lands were taken into the manor by Edward IV on his mother's behalf (see Part I). They were still reckoned as part of the manor in 1766, when the Trustees of Lord and Lady Mount Edgcombe sold 'the Pound House and pasture ground called the Priory'—twelve acres more or less—to Edward Hayward as a 'release in fee from the manor'. (A 'John Hayward' was tenant at the time—probably descended from the John Hayward of 1696. The Hayward family were well enough off, as yeomen-farmers, to erect tombstones in the churchyard during the 18th century, but seem to have died out early in the 19th.)

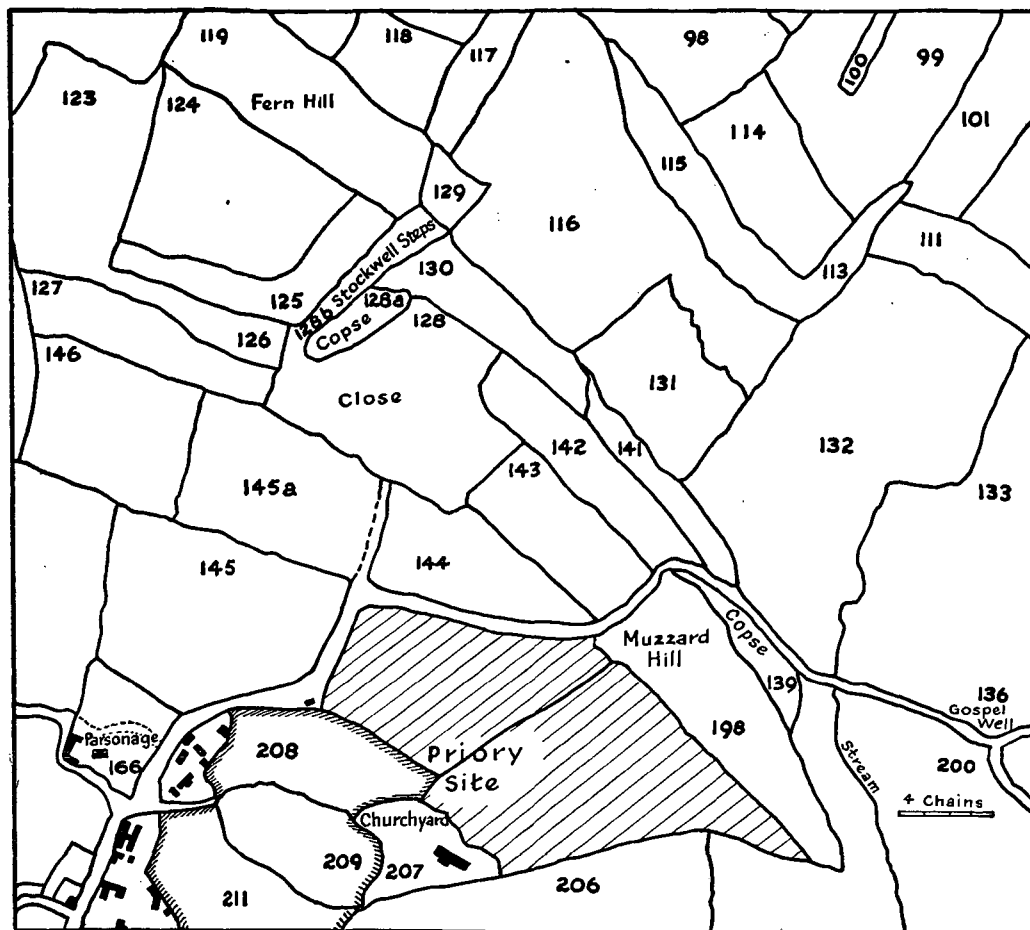
In 1815 another conveyance of these twelve acres again describes them as 'taken out of the lordship and manor'. In 1838, when the Tithe Map was drawn up, the Commissioners described the two priory fields, amounting to twelve acres, as occupied and *owned* by the Rector, The Rev. W. Moore. This is an unexpected, but not very long-lived combination. Mr Moore was a 'family man', and evidently a practical farmer, preferring to have his farm land compact and close to his home; he let the more distant glebe fields, rented Castle Hill and the Bancroft fields and acquired the priory as his own. But he parted with the latter before his death, for a conveyance of 1863 shows the final emergence of the modern Priory Farm, composed of the twelve 'priory' acres, *plus* the castle mound and the Bancrofts.¹

Except for this short interlude, Glebe and Priory lands seem to have remained distinct, from the earliest date for which there is evidence.

To conclude the story, reference must be made to the sketch map appended (which may be supplemented by an air-photograph in the *Cotteswold Field Club Proceedings* referred to on p. 127). Though drawn from the Tithe Map of 1838, it can help us to picture also the triple core of Brimpsfield—castle, church and priory—in the middle ages. The castle on the moated mound (209) then dominated the scene, with 'Bancroft' almost surrounding it (208, 211). Below the mound, the ground slopes south-east to the stream in the valley and to the Park, where the lord or lady of the manor, or their 'Parker', resided after the demolition of the castle. Sloping down, north-east, from Bancroft (208) are the twelve acres of priory land—the church and churchyard lying on one side, a large piece of glebe on the other. In modern times the village and the parsonage lie to the west of this

¹ For the information derived from these deeds I am indebted to John Ticehurst, Esq., proprietor of Priory Farm.

TRANSACTIONS FOR THE YEAR 1963



MAP (explanatory notes)

Outlines, numbers and names of fields are derived from Brimpsfield Tithe Map, dated August 1838

- SHADED PORTIONS** = *Priory land.* (The site of the building is not marked on the Tithe Map and only rather vaguely so on the Ordnance Survey; moreover, the field-boundaries are not quite identical in the two maps.)
- SHADED OUTLINES** — *modern Priory Farm, including the castle ruins (209) and the two Bancrofts (208 and 211), as well as the two shaded fields.*
- NAMED FIELDS** = *Glebe land, 1838, exclusive of the 'parcels' in the South Field, which lie outside the radius of this sketch map.*
 In 1841, under an Enclosure Act, these pieces were exchanged for a strip near Nettleton (100); Biddle Hill ((144); Whorestone (143) and Gibridings (142). This last is the only glebe now owned by the Rector.

now rather lonely centre; but we cannot say where the early vicars abode, whether in a priests' house or in the priory [see Part II, under *W. Roberdes*]. It looks as if the original grant to Fontenay was carved out of the lord's demesne—a small, compact holding, near to the church and the castle; and to the demesne, we suppose, it returned in the time of Duchess Cicely, remaining part thereof till the 'release in fee' of 1766. (The fact that in 1838 it was liable to tithe confirms this supposition.)

As to the exact position of the priory buildings we cannot be sure—nor indeed of their character and extent. They must, one would guess, have comprised a tithe barn for grain, and buildings to shelter the valuable products of the *vacheries, porcheries et bergeries*, not to mention a byre for the prior's oxen, and some rooms for himself and his one or two companions. (Had the monks a little chapel of their own, or did they perform all their devotions in the church, or even in a chapel at the castle, during the Giffards' reign?) In very early times there may have been no division between the church ground and that of the prior. Close to the existing churchyard wall may be seen large 'worked' stones in use, both for paving a gateway and strengthening the field walls; there is also a suspicious hollow in the ground, which suggests a site, well-quarried during many generations. Only excavation can tell us more; *may volunteers and a skilled director be forthcoming!*

The glebe lands are shown on the map, to complete this story of the church. They require some commentary. There is no description of them earlier than a 'terrier' of 1663, which corresponds very closely, in extent and in area, to that of 1838. It gives one or two small bits of history: the parsonage includes 'a little meadow adjoininge' the north side of the house, called 'the Andrewe' (probably the large kitchen garden of the modern rectory); 'Stockwell Style' occurs as an alternative for the rather odd 'Stockwell Steps'. There was also one more copse (Birtlands) attached to the glebe; these copses would have been prized for the rector's beansticks and firewood.

Gospel Well must have history attached to it. Was it deemed to be a holy well? or used for baptisms? It included half an acre of meadow—not clearly defined on the tithe map. (The spring itself now is used for a bathing pool.)

The whole glebe comprised 35 acres, 2 roods, 3 poles—an extent roughly corresponding to the virgate, or normal holding of the medieval villein. It was usual for the priest's glebe to be held, like the villein's, in scattered strips—to be consolidated and enclosed at later dates. The churchyard was included in the glebe—probably from the date when the living became a rectory.

On this glebe—supplemented by small tithes and church offerings—the early vicar had to subsist. He had a heavy task—sometimes trudging from strip to strip of his scattered plough-land, or herding a few beasts on the grass balks in the open fields—sometimes ranging his wide parish, neglecting not ‘to pay a call, on the remotest, whether great or small, upon his feet and in his hand a stave’—like the ‘poor parson’ of the *Canterbury Tales*.

Nor had the priors an easy lot, during their short period of existence (possibly but a hundred years). Their main *raison d’être* was the collection of the greater tithes, and the transfer of their money equivalents (known as ‘apports’) to the distant abbot in Normandy, or to the tax-gatherers of the King, who regarded them, in time of war, as potential enemies. Their own twelve acres were a meagre holding, with a bad aspect, which would cause crops and grazing to be late. The oxen impounded for Edward I seem to have been low in value, and the value of the haycrop (6s 8d) only half the value of an ox (see p. 132 *supra*).

Now, the picture is changed. With modern grass-cultivation the farm (enlarged) gives feed to a small herd of Jersey cows. They grow sleek in the fields once trampled by the prior’s oxen (probably iron-shod), and in the home-croft of the demesne—even in the castle-courtyard. Beneath their hooves may be, perhaps, the answers to some of the problems which darken Brimpsfield history still.

APPENDIX I

The involvement of the Giffard with the Taisson family is such that the latter deserves a short note to itself.

The Taissons of Normandy begin with Raoul and Erneiz, sons of Raoul of Anjou. Raoul Taisson I died about 1056; Raoul II, d. c. 1068; Raoul III, c. 1100; Jordan, c. 1154; Raoul IV, c. 1200. The direct line died out probably, soon after 1204, and was succeeded by the descendants of Erneiz. The first documentary evidence as to their possessions in England occurs in a charter of 1217, of which the original is lost, but a copy (19th-century) survives in the Archives of Calvados (H560 2.fol. xxviii). In this, Robert Fitz Erneiz the Sixth, nephew of Raoul Taisson IV, confirms the grants made by his father to Fontenay Abbey: ‘Item in Anglia . . . ecclesias de Welles et de Warham, cum terris et decimis et omnibus pertinentiis earum et decimam totius dominii mei de Hammgebi’.

Wells and Warham churches can be identified with Wells-next-the-Sea and Warham St Mary, in Greenlow Hundred, Norfolk. In Domesday these manors are held by Walter Giffard, first Earl of Buckingham, relative and companion of the Conqueror. Subsequently they were held by the Taissons under the honour of Gloucester. We do not know how this occurred, but the fact is proved by the charter of 1217, and also by a passage in the *Book of Fees*, 1226–8 (p. 388).

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Hammgebi is Hemingby, Lincs. Even by the date of the *Lindsey Survey* (Lincs. Record Society, vol. 19), the tenure of Hemingby is none too clear. A Gilbert Tisson held six carucates in the small wapentake of Gartree to which Hemingby belonged. This part of Lincolnshire was occupied by men who were neighbours in Normandy, the Bishop of Bayeux, the lord of Fontenay-le-Marmion (Robert de Marmion), Taisson and others. When the latter actually obtained Hemingby, we cannot be sure, but the papal Bull, quoted on p. 129, mentions 'Hamungebrie' as given to Fontenay by Raoul Taisson (probably Raoul IV; cf. Charter).

Most of these facts have appeared in part already in *Gallia Christiana*, and been quoted by other historians, but they have been elucidated by recent reference to the Archives of Caen and Calvados. The excursion from the title of this article is justified, I think, as throwing light on a piece of obscure Anglo-Norman history, and on the several parts played by Giffards and Taissons. By negative evidence it confirms the decision, given in the main text, as to the founder of Brimpsfield priory.

APPENDIX II

PRIORS OF BRIMPSFIELD

1280	'A Prior' unnamed. ¹
1289	Brother Gilbert. ²
1290?	Brother Robert le Masiner. ³
1311	Father Thomas de Briquebec. ⁴
1327	Brother Roger de Argenciis. ⁵
1328	Richard de Hente. ⁶
1329	Roger de Hegneto or Haketo. ⁷
1349	The Priory in the King's hands.
1361	John Fabrun. ⁸
	Peter le Cerboneur (resigned 1363). ⁹
1363	Simon Halley. ¹⁰
1423	'Prior and farmers'. ¹¹

ABBREVIATIONS

B.M.	=	British Museum.
<i>Cal. P.R.</i>	=	<i>Calendar of Patent Rolls.</i>
<i>Cal. Cl. R.</i>	=	<i>Calendar of Close Rolls.</i>
Cottineau	=	Dom. L. H. Cottineau. <i>Répertoire des Abbeyes & Prieuries.</i>
d'Anisy	=	Lechaudé d'Anisy. <i>Extraits des chartes et autres actes normands et Anglo-Normands.</i>
Davis	=	H. W. C. Davis. <i>Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum.</i>
Farcy	=	Paul de Farcy. <i>Abbayes de l'Evêché de Bayeux.</i>
<i>G.C.</i>	=	<i>Gallia Christiana.</i>
Loyd	=	L. C. Loyd. <i>Anglo-Norman Families.</i>
Knowles	=	Knowles and Hadcock. <i>Medieval Religious Houses.</i>
Matthew	=	D. J. A. Matthew. <i>The Anglo-Norman Monasteries</i> (O.U.P. 1962).
M-Lyte	=	Maxwell-Lyte. <i>History of Eton College</i> (1875).
<i>V.C.H.</i>	=	<i>Victoria County History of Gloucestershire.</i>
Wright	=	Heywood and Wright. <i>Ancient Laws of the 15th century for Kings College, Cambridge and for the Public School of Eton College</i> (1850).
(<i>W.H.S.</i>)	=	<i>Registers of the Bishops of Worcester</i> , published by Worcestershire Historical Society.
Parts I, II and III	=	'Brimpsfield Church History', <i>Trans. BGAS</i> , vol. 81.

¹ See p. 131 *supra*. ² Giffard's Reg.—see note p. 132 *supra*. ³ Giffard's Reg. (*W.H.S.*), II, 357.

⁴ Reynold's Reg. (*W.H.S.*), p. 153.

⁵ Cobham's Reg. (*W.H.S.*), p. 249.

⁶ *V.C.H.*, from Bishops' Registers.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Cal. Cl. R. Henry VI*, 1, 21.

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SUPPLEMENTARY NOTE TO PART II, p. 81

A possible equivalent for '*de Cymteus*' has been suggested to me: *Cintheaux* (near Val-es-dunes, Normandy).