

University of York - Certificate in Local History
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Acomb Grange - An Augustinian Grange in the County of York

Introduction - the problems - the questions

In the winning essay of the 1991 Sheldon Memorial Trust Essay Competition, Jennifer Kaner traced the history and ownership of Acomb Grange from the 12th Century to the present day.(1)

In that essay she raised many questions that would require further research. There were also areas of her work where she could not progress because her physical access to the estate was limited. These are restrictions that do not apply to the present writer,who is the proprietor of Acomb Grange.

She cited evidence which seemed to suggest that St Leonard's Hospital did not enjoy any income from the Grange (24) and suggested,with some uncertainty, that perhaps all the produce went direct to the Hospital.This problem relates directly to a problem identified by Cullum at St Leonard's (25)

She also was uncertain as to why substantial sums were paid in the 14th century accounts to Hugh de Helmsley and Richard de Foxholes.In 1375 to 1379 she identifies' a problem of accounting'in respect of payments to and from John Day,and refers to the substantial expenditure on wages in relation to woodland throughout the 14th and 15th century. A consideration of customs and practices on Granges in the demesne of Augustinian canons might shed light on these issues.

The physical history of the present building was a puzzle (3) .It was known that the celebrated architect John Etty had drawn up plans for a new building on the site,but it was not known whether the present building was built to Etty's design. (3). It was said that an internal examination of the building might help to solve the puzzle.

There was evidence of large scale rebuilding and some considerable expense in the period 1809-1813,and the question was raised whether an extension had been built at this time.(4).

Kaner's consideration of the ownership of Acomb Grange covers the period from its foundation by Charter between 1123 and 1133 (2) and ends in 1922,but is silent about subsequent ownership.Indeed,there is a reference to rents for Acomb not being mentioned after 1923.(5)

This essay, as one of its two prime objectives, attempts to explore some of these questions and to postulate possible answers

SO,for example, a physical examination has now been carried out and evidence obtained which enables a tentative chronology to be determined,and which helps to resolve the question of John Etty's design.

The evidence for building works in the period 1809-1813 is considered and the possible works identified,together with other building projects at other periods not identified in the Sheldon essay.

The record of ownership will be brought up to 1995,a period of over 860 years. The reason that rents ceased to show in the accounts of the Marwoods will be established, but a further question will be raised - why did rents cease in 1923 and not 1919 ?

As a further prime objective, this essay attempts to put the recent history of Acomb Grange in its local context which in local oral tradition is known as the oldest occupied dwelling in the parish of Rufforth. There is no direct evidence for this oral tradition but given the known history of Acomb Grange it is certainly not improbable.

An attempt will also be made to explore the' occupation and use of Acomb Grange in recent times,as compared with its ownership, and to see how this might contrast with similar properties in the same locality, by the use of census and other evidence.An attempt will also be made to trace the changes in the social and economic characters of Acomb Grange and similar properties over time.

Sources in the context of the problems and questions to be explored. The different nature of the problems to be investigated illuminated by differing classes of source data can be

These are

- * The building itself

- * A local oral tradition

- * Local historical publications and newspaper articles

- * Census Data

Less specific sources include documents relating to St Leonard's Hospital and to the nature of Ecclesiastical Granges in Yorkshire

In this context it should be noted that Acomb Grange as an identifiable separate holding, amounting in 1293 to some 323 acres plus two areas of woodland, (24), is only a part of a much larger holding of St Leonard's in the area covering parts of Rufforth and Askham, described as 'in the Liberty of St Leonard's' (26). These holdings would also be 'Granges' in the strict technical sense as defined by Bishop (18). The differing uses of the word 'Grange' as a geographical description in the parish of Rufforth is one that confuses the user of historical sources, as is described more fully below. Even to this day, the postman regularly misdelivers the Royal Mail. In May 1995, a driver delivering materials to 'The Grange' was perplexed to discover he was five miles from his destination.

This confusion should always be remembered when interpreting the historical sources, and is very evident in the census data, even when the enumerator was a resident of the parish as appeared to be the case in all but the 1841 census.

The basic source for the structure and chronology of the building is the building itself. This consists of the physical structure, its interrelationships and its dimensions. It also consists of documentary evidence found within the building structure.

During the course of recent refurbishment it has been necessary to extensively survey and explore the structure. Detailed plans have been drawn up, and the building has been examined by a number of architectural specialists. The conclusions based on these examinations are of the nature of opinions, but the conclusions arrived at tend to clarify some of the issues raised by Kaner, and have enabled a building chronology to be suggested, with tentative explanations for the purpose of new building works at the particular time. It is however of the nature of architectural dissection of a building that alternative explanations can often be postulated.

At each stage of this examination a detailed photographic record has been taken, and this process is still continuing at the time of writing.

In the course of refurbishment work specific evidence has come to light as a result of building techniques used that has enabled very specific conclusions to be arrived at with some certainty.

For example, certain parts of the building are built with an early cavity wall system in that they are not physically bonded to the parts of the building to which they appear to be attached. They are to all intents and purposes free standing buildings.

Brickwork techniques and materials used enable chronology to be estimated, and the technique of saving on mortar by plugging gaps with newspaper as a bonding agent has enabled relatively large quantities of newspapers to be recovered from internal parts of the building which has enabled dates to be determined 'terminus ante quem'

One of these items of evidence is supported by local oral tradition but is viewed with very healthy scepticism by University specialists.

It is apparently accepted by present day local builders that in the rural areas around York in the 18th century that builders would enclose rats within mortar in a building as it was being erected, presumably for good luck. It is certainly a fact that the mummified remains of rats have been extracted from the building, much to the delight of the local cats. It is apparently known to certain historians that there have been traditions of entombing animals within buildings. However, as said before, this is viewed with scepticism by local University historians.

The sources for the building within its local context consist partly of a very strong local oral tradition, of which the above is part, but that has many of the inherent difficulties of such traditions, and indeed to some extent some of the evidence so gleaned can be demonstrated to be incorrect.

For example, one lady in her eighties has asserted that as a little girl the present Acomb Grange was the house in which her grandfather lived, and she has described with some precision the nature of events and the type of farming undertaken. However, the census data up to 1891 and electoral roll data in the twentieth century show that her grandfather actually lived in what is now known as Rufforth Grange. That is not, of course, to say that she did not regularly visit Acomb Grange, and that her childhood memories are confused. Her memories might be evidence for a very interactive and social community. (14)

The sources also consist of local historical publications and newspaper articles over a period. However, some of the newspaper articles may need to be treated with a little

scepticism as they seem to evoke a very romantic view that may not accord with reality.

For example the Yorkshire Gazette of 26th October 1907 carries a full report on the idyllic rural scene in Rufforth in terms that seem to modern eyes to be almost unbelievably romantic. (15) .It should be remembered that this report is contemporaneous with the quite contrasting view of life in nearby York as seen through the eyes of Seebom Rowntree.

However, it may be that the sophisticated modern reader is too ready to read such reports with cynicism, for there are sources which convey a similar picture written by a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society, and such commentaries deserve respect unless specific evidence to rebut them can be forthcoming. (16), (17).

A further source which not only assists with this aspect but also sheds light on the tenure of the property is the census data from 1841 to 1891. However, this data itself raises a number of problems. Paradoxically the nature of these problems is such that it might help an understanding of Acomb Grange within its local context and how that context might have appeared to local people in the 19th century.

At first sight the census data is confusing, and the question is raised 'did the enumerator really understand what he was recording'. However, on closer examination it is apparent that in most cases the enumerator was actually a resident recorded by the census. This presumably reflects a degree of local knowledge, so some other explanation for the apparent confusing data should be sought.

A good example of the confusion can be found in the 1841 census. In that census virtually every resident is recorded as living at 'The Grange'

If 'The Grange' is taken to mean the present Acomb Grange, then there must have been a substantial village which has disappeared since 1841. It is clear that 'The Grange' means something quite different. What that difference was, and what it means in the context of what we describe as Acomb Grange helps us to arrive at an understanding of the problems under investigation and also sheds light on a number of disparate other factors ranging from the confusion of the lady in her eighties referred to

above, to the present day difficulties of the GPO in correctly delivering mail with the word 'Grange' in the address.

An insight into the sources of this apparent confusion can be obtained from a reading of more general sources, such as 'Monastic Granges in Yorkshire' (18), and the early specific history of Acomb Grange (1) and St Leonard's Hospital (19)

Findings

The Augustinian Grange

Granges were a prevalent form of ecclesiastical holding relatively common in the North of England. (20). It has been estimated that there were perhaps rather less than 200 such granges in Yorkshire (37).

A grange was originally a granary, but in time came to be the term for the landholding, usually an arable farm, from which produce was derived. (18), and was extended to include any large outlying monastic farm. If St Leonard's Hospital is to be identified with the pre-conquest foundation of St Peter's as Cullum suggests, (21)' and (22), then Acomb Grange falls outside the normal pattern for granges identified by Bishop (18). He states that granges were predominantly confined to the estates of monasteries founded after the conquest and belonging to newly founded religious orders. He also quotes authorities showing a similar pattern in France (23).

Bishop emphasises that Granges are to be quite clearly distinguished from the home farms of the monasteries themselves, and he also sets out the very clear distinction between manorial holdings and granges. (27)

In the case of Augustinian canons, as with St Leonard's, the acquisition of the land was usually preceded by the acquisition of the patronage of the vicarage, and the right to tithes and the consequent need to establish a tithe barn, and in early usage a 'grangia' was in fact a form of tithe barn.

It is interesting to note that Acomb Grange, at first sight, appears not to follow this pattern, as it was in 1218, almost a hundred years after the foundation of the grange, that the canons of St Leonard's obtained rights over the church of Rufforth. (33).

Acomb Grange does, however, appear to conform to the norm of the 13th Century in that it appears to have been directly held with the produce going to the hospital (24), with no direct evidence of income. This fits the pattern quoted by Bishop in which he says 'they appear in every case to have been created and, for a time, held in demesne by the monasteries which owned them'. Only later just prior to the reformation did they appear to be let out - again a pattern repeated at Acomb Grange (18)(28).

This would seem to support Kaner's hesitant conclusion that perhaps all the produce went direct to the Hospital. It perhaps also explains Cullum's surprise at the low per capita cost of food for the residents of St Leonard's, which she tentatively explained as being due 'to economies of scale' (25)

Bishop surveys in some depth and beyond the remit of this essay a number of subjects relating to Granges - their financing, administration, and the logistics of distribution of produce.

Both Bishop's description, and the position apparently obtaining at Acomb Grange is very broadly in line with the system of estate management described in some detail by Kershaw in relation to another Augustinian House, Bolton Priory. (45)

Bishop also considers the role of Granges in the distribution of land holdings, and the effect on tenemental organisation and agrarian routine on the lay population. Both Kershaw and Bishop emphasise the different practices of the Augustinians when compared to the Cistercians - in that the Cistercians 'cleansed' their holdings of the local people, whereas the Augustinians and Gilbertines tended to act in a way that created a community not unlike lay villis.

This latter point is of relevance to this essay because it is believed that not only did this directly affect the history of Acomb Grange and the village of Rufforth immediately after the Reformation, but that ghosts and echoes are to be found in the local traditions and customs, taking concrete form in some of the responses to the Census enquiries in the 19th Century, and living on to this day in the 'sense of place' of the local community.

The fact that the granges of the Rufforth parish were in the ownership of Augustinian canons has had an impact on the subsequent development of the area, because it was common for Augustinian or Gilbertine granges to encompass substantially the whole of a vill. Thus as Bishop cites, in Marton only eleven scattered acres out of a large estate were not embodied in the grange of Guisborough (31), and of the eleven granges of Malton, six encompassed no local tenanted land. (32)

One of the most significant effects of grange lands falling in to private hands after the reformation was that unlike neighbouring lay agricultural holdings, they were not held in widely distributed strips in the open fields. On the contrary, they would be consolidated long before the formal enclosures, and to a much greater extent than even manorial demesne lands. (29). Kaner quotes several references to 'closes' implying enclosed land. This again corresponds to the practice at Bolton Priory (45)

It is interesting to note that on the enclosure map for Rufforth in 1806, the Grange is actually marked as adjacent to the land to be enclosed, and no enclosure award is made in relation to it. This is despite the very clear definition of the boundary in the Enclosure Act. This seems to suggest the land was already clearly enclosed.

The predominance of Augustinian granges in the Rufforth area would also have meant a significantly different form of landholdings and feudal duties immediately prior to the dissolution than would have obtained in neighbouring parts of the County and Ainsty of York.

The orders of canons regular tended not to have direct agricultural experience or tradition (34). Their practice was to employ 'mercenarii' or 'servientes' from among the toft-holding tenants for monetary hire - a practice quite distinct from the usual system of service.

This monetary expense is often the most significant item of expense in grange accounts of the Augustinians and Gilbertines (35). This is quite distinct from the practice of the Cistercians where granges were occupied and worked by lay brethren, although Kershaw (45) does say that 'on occasion Lay brothers supervised the administration of a group of demesnes' in the Augustinian priory of Bolton.

That this system of paid labour seemed to be the practice at Acomb Grange might be confirmed by the problems of accounting, and expenditures of sums of money identified by Kaner and referred to in the opening part of this essay.

The study of the way these practices differed from non grangelands would itself merit detailed research. For the purposes of this essay, it is sufficient to say that both prior to and subsequent to the dissolution of the monasteries, both the system of landholding and the agricultural practices deriving therefrom had a cultural and social effect that differentiated grange lands from surrounding areas.

The sense of community, the legal status of the individual, his identification with his village or town and his relationship with others in society are likely to have been substantially different in the two neighbouring parishes of Acomb and Rufforth.

Subsequent evidence will suggest that this differentiation was still a powerful cultural force as late as the 19th century, and persists to this day.

It is interesting to note that the community with which Acomb Grange was most closely identified was very much Rufforth. For example, despite being adjacent to Acomb, there is in the whole of the Acomb Parish registers apparently only one reference to an inhabitant of Acomb Grange. (40). In his will, Francis Gale 'desired to be buried in All Saints Church Rufforth' (died 9th December 1561) (16)

That this cultural force still subsisted can be seen from the Census returns of 1841, 1851, 1861, 1871, 1881 and 1891. However, the 1841 census return is an object lesson in not accepting totally the accuracy of any document, as it asserts Rufforth to be in the East Riding of Yorkshire.

The stability of the community is shown in the 1841 Census. Even as late as this, there was in the whole Parish only one person, a child of 11, not born in Yorkshire.

The 1841 Census shows five separate holdings describing themselves as the Grange, each of them consisting of several households. Indeed, the whole population of Rufforth appear to live on a grange property, with the exception of the mysterious Hind House, identified by Kaner and which appears on the Census. One of these

Granges, occupied by John Jolley, is known to be Acomb Grange from subsequent census data, but the identification of the others on the parish map is difficult.

Almost 300 years after the dissolution, the concept of the Grange as a unit is still very strong.

There seems to be a pattern at each Grange property of a main property, clearly the household of the upper social tier, employing both male and female servants, with other adjacent properties where the residents are agricultural labourers. This is a pattern which continues into subsequent censuses.

It is very interesting to note that in subsequent censuses, the main properties show a stability in that there is very little turnover in population from census to census, and what there is appears substantially to be by transmission down the generations. By contrast, there is little consistency in the surnames in the subsidiary properties from one census to another, although it is possible to trace individuals moving from a property in one grange to another between the censuses.

John Jolley's Grange, Acomb Grange, was the largest grange at 420 acres employing 8 agricultural labourers in 1851, compared to the second largest Grange that of William Midgley with 200 acres, employing 3.

By the time of the 1861 census, the confused nomenclature appears to be becoming a little clearer. There were now a number of households that were not describing themselves as being on a Grange. Acomb Grange, now at 480 acres employing 8 labourers, 2 boys and 2 women, and occupied by John Ord Jolley, is now specifically named as such, yet the other four Granges are still all described as Rufforth Grange. All of the Granges have increased in size, with the exception of Joseph Ward's which has lost 7 acres.

The social differentiation is also now accelerating. In addition to his 8 labourers, John Ord Jolley now has a dairy maid and a house maid.

Then in 1871, confusion reigns again in the nomenclature. John Smith now occupies what is clearly Acomb Grange, and is described as such under his entry in 1881 and 1891, but is described here as Rufforth Grange. What was previously and subsequently

described as Rufforth Grange occupied by Joseph Ward is, in 1871, described as Acomb Grange. There are two other Rufforth Granges. Yet the enumerator was the same individual as in 1861, and he is the village grocer. The enumerator in 1881 and 1891 was a different individual, and appears to have been the schoolmaster.

The census, incidentally, corroborates Kaner's finding that the Jolley's were in occupation up to at least 1865.

So we have local men describing the same properties with different names on different occasions. Further, in 1891, Samuel Bean appears at Rufforth Grange, together with his son Lawrence, at a property which is quite clearly not Acomb Grange. Yet this is the Mr Bean whose granddaughter asserts that when she was a child visited what we know to be Acomb Grange.

It is interesting to note how stable and insular this community still was in 1891. Only 7 individuals in the entire village were born outside Yorkshire.

So, from the census data emerges a picture of stability, of limited economic growth, if the size of farms is a measure, of progression up the social scale of the main grange properties, and of a distinct but perhaps lessening of a sense of 'Grangeness'. As we will see later, this process culminated in 1923 with the acquisition of the freehold by the tenant of Acomb Grange, who by then was a Mr Holmes.

Is this corroborated by other sources?

Partly and partly not. Camidge at page 22 appears to contradict the picture of economic growth (46) and stability. However, he is writing some 13 years after the last census reviewed and Kaner does comment that by 1922 the properties were running at a loss. Kaner states that in 1903, Acomb Grange was one of the Marwood's more productive properties in terms of rent, so if there were pressures on tenant farmers at that time, they were not reflected in the rents payable. Perhaps it was a buoyant rent level that created the pressures.

His reference to Mr Marwood's property not being tenanted is puzzling.

The Yorkshire Gazette in 1907 (47) portrays a picture of economic difficulty, combined with a benign paternalism of local worthies

The Building

After the dissolution, the building at Acomb Grange passed through several hands as fully described by Kaner. There have perhaps been several buildings on the site, and only a full archaeological survey would elicit the full story.

However, following the physical survey of the building in 1995 (41) a number of facts have been established and these have a direct bearing on some of the questions raised by Kaner.

With the exception of a single storey extension to the house dated to about the 1850s, and a single storey extension to the cottage of a similar date every wall of the house and the cottage is built upon very substantial stone footings. These are either the lower remaining courses of a substantial stone building, or more likely the stone courses upon which a timber framed building had been built in earlier times. To the rear of this building (and under the present utility room) are the remains of a stone pavement or courtyard, and in the garden to the north are traces of a cobbled roadway. The stonework is of an extremely high standard and not what would normally be expected in a rural vernacular building.

Excluding the later extensions, the rooms of the cottage and the house are a mirror image of each other. They are effectively built to the same plan, with precisely the same dimensions. Those dimensions correspond very closely to the dimensions of the design of a house at Acomb Grange by John Etty in 1694 (42), except that the back kitchen as shown on his plan no longer exists.

However to the rear of the cottage, in the extension built in the 1850s there are traces of earlier building works, and perhaps the back kitchen was built but later absorbed into the extension. In the corresponding location on the house (in mirror image terms) there is a much larger room than the back kitchen and a new kitchen was built. On a number of grounds, both stylistic, and internal evidence this much larger rear extension appears to have been built in the period 1810 to 1815. Given Kaner's reference to a sale plan in 1810 showing the house to have substantially its present plan, then perhaps this extension was built in 1810, possibly in anticipation of the sale. This building work would correspond very closely to the expense on building works identified by Kaner in 1809 to 1813, which she describes as being too much for simple repairs, 'almost amounting to a rebuild' (44)

There is some evidence of there having been a basement to the front of the cottage. It would appear that the internal roof structure of the cottage is much older than the building itself. These perhaps are 'the timbers that were worth saving' referred to in Etty's letter quoted by Kaner. (43). It would also appear that the roof structure of the house is of about the same age as the house ie late 17th Century.

The external appearance of the house and cottage are deceptive. Kaner refers to the detailing on the cottage and suggests that this was perhaps Etty's house. At first glance, it would appear that the house is much later than the cottage, but this, is perhaps due to 'modernisation' in the Georgian period, and 'Georgianisation' in the modern period. Kaner suggests as an alternative that the house was built to Etty's plan and the smaller built to match with farmer and gentry tenant living side by side.

Based on the evidence a tentative chronological plan has been drawn (41) and certain conclusions can be drawn from this.

Ownership and tenure

In Kaner's Sheldon Essay (1), many of the owners of the Acomb Grange Estate have been identified up to 1923. In addition many of the tenants and farmers have been identified, although there is a difficulty in distinguishing tenants from mortgagors. There is also a difficulty with the census information as discussed in the section on sources which creates some degree of uncertainty as to specifically which property is being described in the sources.

It is remarkable to note that the freehold ownership of the property has been in the hands of only four families in the period 1663 to 1995 and only five families since the reign of James 1st, when the Gale family acquired the freehold. The Gale family previously held the lease created shortly after the dissolution of the monasteries, when the property passed out of the hands of St Leonard's Hospital. Prior to that the property had been in the ownership of the hospital since a grant of two carucates of land in Acomb to the Hospital of St Peter (as it was then known) (12) by Henry 1st in a charter dated between 1123 and 1133. There will be few properties in private residential ownership which can trace the freehold back to such an early date and which have passed through so few hands in the intervening period.

It is stated that rents for Acomb Grange ceased in 1923, (13) but this appears to contradict documents registered at the West Riding Deeds Registry. (6) By a conveyance dated 30th October 1919, Sir William Francis Marwood of Busby Hall, as vendor, and Charles Moore Kennedy and John Arundel Hildeyard as trustees of the estate of George Marwood sold the property to Albert Holmes. If rents ceased in 1923, perhaps Sir William retained some other parcels of land in the area until 1923

Sir William Marwood is described in the conveyance as the second son of George Marwood who died on 7th April 1882, and tenant for life of the estates. The trustees in the conveyance agree to the extinguishment of the life interest, and the property is sold to Albert Holmes, who is described as a farmer of Acomb Grange for the sum of g000. Clearly, the financial pressures identified in the Sheldon essay have led to the Marwoods being forced to sell to their sitting tenant Mr Holmes.

The property is described as being 453 acres, one rood and thirty six perches, and a detailed plan is attached, together with a schedule breaking down the estate over arable, grass, road, orchards, ponds, buildings and so on. Approximately 13 acres are shown as grass having been 'ploughed out 1918 by order' - perhaps an early form of set aside? .25 acres are shown as 'rough - formerly Grange Wood'. Perhaps this corresponds to the ancient woodland described in the Sheldon Essay.

The size of the estate corresponds very closely to the estate tenanted by John Jolly in the 1851 census (10), comprising 420 acres, and described in the census as 'Rufforth Grange' but who can be identified as the tenant of Acomb Grange. (9), and corresponds to subsequent census data. It is also apparent how little the overall size of the Acomb Grange farm estate, (as distinct from the entire estate of St Leonard's) has changed since the survey carried out in 1287 (24). St Leonard's was a house of Augustinian canons, and Bishop in his survey of Monastic Chartularies and Inquests asserts that the average size of an Augustinian grange was about 200 acres (30)

Mr Alfred Holmes, the son of the former tenant become freeholder, is, it is understood, at the time of writing still alive, in his 90s and living in Poppleton.

Mr Alfred Holmes is last shown on the electoral roll for Acomb Grange in October 1981 (7) and his interest was sold to Andrew Sykes who first appears on the roll in October 1982 (8)

In January 1995, Andrew Sykes sold the farmhouse, cottage, stables and six acres to Peter and Carol Ann Brown, and retained the remaining farm land for his own agricultural use. The barn was sold in May 1995 for conversion to a dwelling. The effect of these transactions is that Acomb Grange is now within the smallest boundaries it has enjoyed since the 12th century.

The six acres presently owned by Peter and Carol Brown are given over largely to sheep pasture, but may soon be developed for environmentally friendly willow production for a proposed wood burning power station to be built, in the locality.

Conclusions and suggested further enquiries

It has been noted that in some respects, Acomb Grange appears not to fit the pattern identified by Bishop and others.

Perhaps the explanation is that Acomb Grange was not attached to Rufforth proper until a later date. It is described as being in the liberty of St Leonard's in Acomb in 1307. (37). Kaner states that it became a part of Rufforth parish 'at some date before 1520' but does not give a source. It also seems that the area adjacent to Acomb Grange known as Chapel Fields (originally Chapel Flatts) and now the site of a housing estate appears to be of very ancient origin.

It might be a useful source of further enquiry to discover what gave rise to the name Chapel Fields. Does it derive from the fact that the land was simply in the ownership of the Church in the guise of the Minster Treasurer, as it appears to have been in the reign of Henry II (38)? Or was it rather that there had been' at some time a physical

chapel on the site? If so was this an Augustinian one that had tithes connected to it - so giving rise to Acomb Grange.

There is a tantalising snippet in an undated terrier in the Acomb Parish Register which refers to Grange Flats in a context which seems to suggest it was within the curtilage of Chapel Fields. (39) there is clearly scope for some further research.

It has been asserted, but not yet verified, to the writer that many of the Granges attached to St Leonard's fit this atypical pattern. One suggested explanation for this is that perhaps the right granted by King Athelstan 'to a thrave of corn from every plough in Yorkshire' (22), which predated the usual tithe rights, perhaps created the need for a tithe barn.

Aside from the apparent atypical nature of its foundation, Acomb Grange seems in many respects to have been managed and accounted for in a similar manner to other Granges of canons regular, as described by Kershaw and Bishop. It seems to have been held in demesne in its early period with increasing periods of being let. It was enclosed at an early stage. It would seem that some of these practices might help to explain some of the questions raised by Cullum and Kaner.

The practices of estate management are thought, in common with similar holdings by Augustinians and Gilbertines to have helped to create a sense of place within the local community that has, in part, persisted to this day. It has certainly left within the local consciousness a sense of the concept of a Grange as a working economic and social entity. This manifested itself in the census returns of the 19th Century, and is still a part of present day life in the area. It has also led to some of the confusion about what is, and where is The Grange

So far as the House itself is concerned, the tentative chronology would suggest that both of Kaner's alternative suggestions concerning the Etty house are in fact true to a certain extent.

The tentative chronology suggests the following sequence of events.

It would appear that in about 1694, two identical buildings, each substantially to Etty's plan were built, as mirror images of each other. One of them, the present cottage, reused roof timbers from an earlier building.

In about 1810, the right hand of the pair when viewed from the front had a two floor extension built to the rear, effectively obliterating the back kitchen of the original building and creating a new kitchen. At the same time the exterior of the house was remodelled in a Georgian style.

In about 1850, a single storey rather poorly built extension was added to the cottage eliminating the original back kitchen of Eddy's design. At about the same time a single storey rear extension was added to the house.

In the 1970s or 1980s the house was to some extent 'Georgianised'

Within the 20th century the estate has been broken up piecemeal and the central farm buildings are now going out of full time agricultural use, to be used for residential purposes by professional people, with only limited agricultural activities.

This is a process that is mirrored in other similar 'grange' properties. The property presently known as Rufforth Grange, originally a part of Acomb. Grange itself, is a residential property occupied by a Chartered Surveyor and a doctor. The Grange in Hessay is, in mid 1995, being marketed as a professional residence. A number of other granges identified in the census data are also becoming commuter residences for professional people who are maintaining the agricultural character of their particular grange to a greater or lesser extent. In Estate Agent parlance this is the process known as 'gentrification'

However this process is not new. From the time John Jolley took up his tenancy some time before 1810, and was possibly responsible for the extension works, there is a picture of upwards social mobility.

From working tenant farmer, to an employer of men, to employing house maids and the resources to expand and develop the farm, the progress is slow but sure until the freehold becomes merged with the leasehold in 1922.

The history of Acomb Grange, its relationship to the broader history of medieval England, its significance in terms of the development of the local community and the

physical history of the building are all subjects worthy of much lengthier investigation. This essay has, it is hoped, helped to answer some questions raised by others, and to suggest new lines of enquiry, in what is a very complex story.

Any building that has links with Walter de Langton, Alderman Snawsell, the Gales, the Methams and the Thwings, the Pilgrimage of Grace, and the largest English Hospital of the Middle Ages must have many more secrets to yield.

Footnotes

Abbreviation:

AG = J Kaner 'Acomb Grange', York Historian, Vol 10 1992

Cullum = P.H Cullum, 'Cremetts and Corrodies : Care of the poor and sick at St Leonard's Hospital, York in the Middle Ages', University of York Borthwick Paper no 79, (1991)

Bishop = T A M Bishop 'Monastic Granges in Yorkshire', The English Historical Review, No CCII April 1936.

1.AG, p2

'Acomb Grange, as a distinct and separate estate since the 12th Century, deserves to have its history recorded. It lies on the immediate outskirts of modern York, in the green belt, only 2.5 miles from York Minster, and yet it has remained an entity for 800 years'

2. W Farrar, 'Early Yorkshire Charters Vol I' [EYC 1],143

3. AG p14,15 -There is a full description of Etty's structure and his drawings are reproduced on page 13, dated 1694 and reproduced from NYCRO(ZDU) mic 1294 fr 2255

4. AG p15 -There is a full description of the type and costs of building materials used

5. AG p16

'The estates were entailed but by 1922 were running at a loss and more and more land was being sold.Rents for Acomb are not mentioned after 1923'

6. West Riding Registry of Deeds Volume 79 Page 697 No 265,1st November 1919 - Conveyance of property at Acomb Grange

7. Electoral Roll for Harrogate Borough Council qualifying date 10th October 1981

8. Electoral Roll for Harrogate Borough Council qualifying date 10th October 1982

9. AG page 15

10. Public Records Office 1851 Census - Parish of Rufforth

11. W Farrar Early Yorkshire Charters Vol 1 [EYC 1.],143 as quote(in AG page 2

12 For a discussion on the the Minster and the change see Cullum, page 5

break of the link of the hospital from of name from St Peter's to St Leonards

13 AG page 16

14 Interview with the granddaughter of Samuel Bean April 1995

15 .Yorkshire Gazette 26th October 1907

16.Wm 1904

Camidge FRHistS 'Yorkshire Notes and

Queries' Vol 1 No4 July

17 Wm Camidge FRHistS 'Rufforth in the Ainsty of the City of York Its Ancient and Modern History' C L Burdekin York 1903

18. Bishop 19. Cullum

20 Prof J Savine 'English Monasteries on the eve of the Dissolution' p 163

21.Cullum P 5 recites the traditions and evidence for a pre conquest foundation

22. P H Cullum , 'Hospitals in Medieval Yorkshire' DPhil, thesis , University of York,1989
23. M Bloch , 'Les Caracteres originaux de l'histoire rurale française',p12, as quoted by Bishop to say that granges in France were established by the new religious orders
24. The full details of the survey in 1287 are shown in AG at page 5
25. Cullum p17 'St Leonard's budgeted to spend about 4d per person per week on food in the infirmary ,which does not seem to have been a great deal ,although economies of scale may have meant that the hospital could provide food more cheaply than if it were bought individually or by a smaller institution'
- 26 See AG pages 2 and 3 for a full description of the extent of the holdings of St Leonard's Hospital in the area.
27. Bishop .On page 4 he discusses in detail the so called manorial holdings of Rievaulx and Fountains Abbey, and cite the evidence to show that often the term 'manor' was loosely used in accounts of the dissolved monasteries,when in reality the term 'Grange' , should have been used
- 28 For example on page 7 of AG ,in 1461 to 1462 the closes were more and more being let out (quoting York Minster Library ,M2/6d) and just before the dissolution ,the Grange was let out on a 30 year lease to Robert Metham and his wife,Anne (quoting PRO,E303 26 1206,1207)
- 29 Bishop quotes ' Assarting and the Growth of Open Fields', Economic History Bulletin,vi,13 as a full account of the growth of open fields in Yorkshire
- 30.Bishop page 11

31. Chartulary of Guisborough ii 42 et seq as quoted by Bishop
32. Cott MS Claud D xi, fos 277, 271 et seq as quoted by Bishop
33. As quoted in AG, J Parker (ed), 'Yorkshire Fines', Yorkshire Arch Rec Ser Vol 62, (1921), 28, 132
34. Bishop quotes the 'Chapters of the Augustinian Canons' p114 and R H Snape 'Monastic Finance' p10 in support of this contention
35. Bishop quotes the Malton Account rolls as a specific example
36. Bishop - see final page of article for estimates of number of granges and their overall importance in the mediaval economy of Yorkshire
37. A Beardwood, 'Records of the Trial of Walter Langton' Camden Society 4th Ser Vol 6 (1969), 307
38. W Farrar 'Early Yorkshire Charters', Vol 1, 356-357 as quoted by J Kaner in AG
39. Transcription of Acomb parish Registers p187 vol 4 - an undated terrier which states :- 'In the same field (ie Chapel Field) are 2 acres called Grange Flat bounded by the land of Mr Masterman on the west and a Lordship balk on the East'
40. Acomb Parish Registers - Burials June 1798 "Thomas Walker, glover of Acomb Grange - Consumption"
41. Private manuscript by P Brown - 'Survey of the fabric of Acomb Grange in 1995' - at the time of writing still not complete

42 John Etty ,plan for a house at Acomb Grange 1694,North Yorkshire County Record Office (ZDU mic 1294 fr 2255)

43 . Quoted by AG,G Beard 'Craftsmen and interior decoration in England ,1660-1820', (1981),259

44. AG p15

45 I Kershaw. 'Bolton Priory - The Economy of a Northern Monastery

1286-1325',1973,OUP,pp 30 to 38

46 Wm Camidge FRHistS 'Rufforth in the Ainsty of the City of York Its Ancient and Modern History' C L Burdekin York 1903 at page 22 says 'A few farms at this date are held by individual owners - such as Mr Parker,Mr Fawcett,Mr Thomlinson ,Mr Marwood and Rev Appleyard but such ownership does not apply to any great extent.The farms are respectably tenanted and the only regret is that the farmers fail frequently - too frequently to get the profits worthy of their labour and care'

47 .Yorkshire Gazette 26th October 1907 ' A general summing up of the present day life and prospects of this little village must recognise that its life depends almost, entirely on the state of agriculture in the vicinity and upon the disposition of the owner of the land for the time being, and that of the vicar and schoolmaster.

Times would improve in Rufforth and the population show a steady increase if smallholdings, each carrying a house, were available and were well worked. That accomplished, the character of the provision for its mental and physical recreation, indeed, the whole (ompleJ:ion of its outlook would largely depend on the leadership of the three local worthies I have named'