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THE BARTON AND BARTONER OF CHRIST CHURCH, CANTERBURY.

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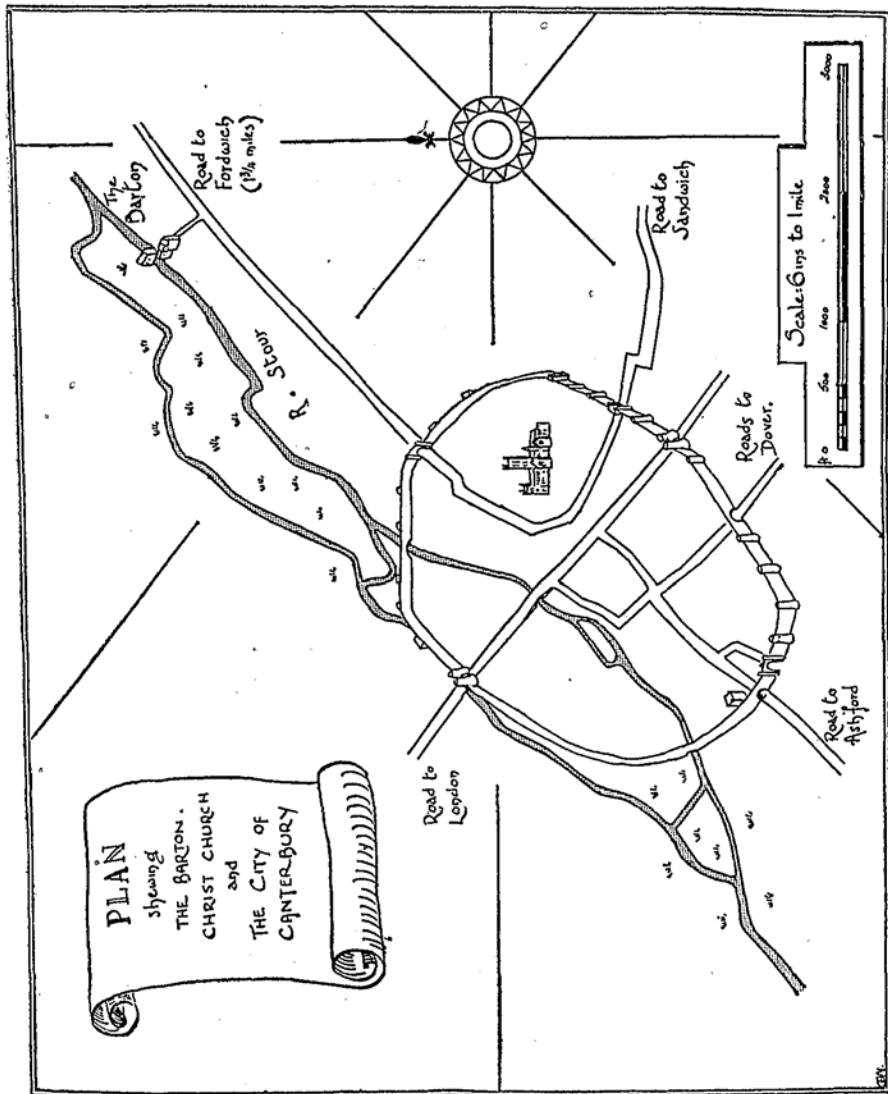
THAT curious, and whimsical antiquary, William Gostling, taking his *Walk In and About the City of Canterbury* nearly two centuries ago, did not fail to wend his way down Northgate Street. First he came upon Jesus Hospital, the charitable foundation of Sir John Boys, and then "farther on and within the city liberty . . . on the river a little way from the road" he espied Barton Mill. There he observed that "some remains of flint walls by the wayside thither, and a chapel near the mill, pretty entire, seem to show there was once a considerable enclosure"; but, he added, "neither the Canterbury antiquarians, nor common tradition give any history of it."¹ Unhappily Gostling had omitted to consult the *Antiquities* of William Somner, for it is that most redoubtable of Canterbury antiquaries who tells us that "Barton Mill was sometimes, and that from old times belonging to Christ Church, where the Monks' Corn was ground for their own spending within the Court."² In the Dean and Chapter Library, Canterbury, there have fortunately survived a large number of documents bearing upon the history of the Barton and its management. It is therefore proposed in this article to amplify the statement of William Somner and to show the peculiar importance of the Barton in the domestic economy of Canterbury Cathedral Priory.

The name barton (O.E. *beretun*) is derived from two Old English words, *bere*=barley, and *tun*=an enclosure. In its primitive form, therefore, the word barton simply designated a granary for barley. Soon, however, in its Latin guise *bertona*, which is common in Christ Church records before the end of the twelfth century, it came to have a more extended meaning and to be used for a home-farm,—an area of land held in demesne for the lord's own profit. With this second and wider connotation the word barton is frequently encountered in this country in the later middle ages. Thus the Manor of Barton was the home-farm of Ramsey Abbey, and manors of the same name served a like purpose for houses as wide apart as the cathedral priories of Ely, Bath, and Winchester. The monastic barton, or home-farm, was, in fact, a common institution in medieval England. Bartons were also to be found, though less frequently, on collegiate and lay estates.

The barton of Christ Church, which must be at once distinguished

¹ 1825 ed., p. 35.

² Ed. N. Battely (1703), p. 25.



from the barton of St. Augustine's on the east side of the city (commemorated to-day in Barton Fields) illustrates both the limited and extended sense of the word. It was the home-farm of the monks but was also, from an early date, the place where their barley was stored, milled, and malted. We learn that in 832 King Atulph, at the behest of Archbishop Ceolnoth, gave the vill near the city of Canterbury called Northwood (*Nordwda*) to the monks, to which were attached five yokes (*jugera*) of land and two meadows, one at Thanington and the other at Schettynge. In the *Domesday Monachorum* this manor of Northwood, which soon for reasons which will now appear obvious received the name of Barton, was said to be appropriated to the table of the monks (*est de cibo eorum*) and to be in the hundred of Canterbury. No less than 97 burgesses dwelt on the manor and paid rents to the value of £8 0s. 6d. With all its assets the manor was said to be worth £17. Pope Alexander III confirmed the possession of the manor of Barton to the monks in 1179, together with the meadows and mills which belonged to it. It was only natural that a large area of land in close proximity to the city should become a bone of contention between the city authorities, assertive of their judicial rights, and the monks of Christ Church, who were equally bent on maintaining their franchises. In the first years of the fourteenth century the city officers actually arrested a man within the Barton manor and confined him in the city gaol. Archbishop Winchelsey wrote a letter of sharp reproof to the bailiffs of the city in 1303, ordering them to hand over the prisoner to the bailiffs of the prior and chapter.

The first indication as to how the Christ Church barton was managed is contained in a Canterbury rental of the late twelfth century (R.31 in Box D. in Room ZA in Dean and Chapter Library). Rents were then owned in the parish of Northgate by "the monk who manages our barton" (*monachus qui custodit bertonam nostram*). It seems certain, therefore, that at least by the end of the twelfth century the Saxon and Domesday manor of Northwood was the site of the barley granaries, mills, and malthouse of the priory, from which it took its new name of *Bertona*, and was specially supervised by one of the monks. This much we can infer from the rental. In the thirteenth century the records become abundant and leave us in no doubt as to the function of the barton and its monk-manager, the bartoner (*berthonarius*), in the economic system of the cathedral priory.

The first extant bartoner's account forms one of that group of obedientiaries' accounts which were compiled at the Michaelmas audit and thus called *Assisae Scaccarii*. Its date is 1225, but we learn from the treasurers' account of 1214 that barley was taken to the barton before the exile of 1207-13. It therefore seems reasonable to suppose that bartoners were presenting accounts at, or before, the turn of the century. A magnificent series of accounts, surpassing those of any

other monastic obedientiary, has survived for the later middle ages. In the first place, Room XYZ in the Dean and Chapter Library contains account-rolls of the bartoner for the years 1279-1428 and, secondly, accounts of the serjeant of the barton plough-land (*caruca de bertona*) for the period 1291-1471. In the same collection there are accounts of the bartoner as keeper of the malt-hall for the years 1377-1460, and a number of loose accounts for individual years. None of the series is, of course, unbroken, but the accounts occur with exceptional frequency in the years under consideration. Finally, rolls of the bartoner's court are extant for the period 1434-1522, rounding off and completing an altogether remarkable body of manuscript survivals.

Apart from his judicial work in the Barton court, the bartoner had four main functions allotted to him by the monastic chapter. First, he supervised the cultivation of the plough-land and the rearing of stock on the manor, which was placed under the immediate direction of a serjeant (*serviens*). Next, he saw to the receipt of barley and oats at the granaries. Thirdly, he was responsible for the milling and malting operations and, lastly, for the delivery of the malt at the brewery in the *curia* of the priory, where it was made into beer.

The plough-land of the barton consisted of a wide belt of land to the north of the city, stretching from the parish of Northgate to the manor of Sturry. Part of it was simply called *Bertona*, but the larger part was known as *Colton*. All the main cereal crops, save rye, were grown on the manor. In 1291, for example, 50½ acres were sown with wheat, 73½ acres with barley, and 4½ acres with oats, making a total of 128½ acres under crops. Wethers and ewes grazed on the pasture lands, and there were also a number of oxen and pigs. But the manor was not nearly as important as Ickham and Monkton and other large arable farms of the Christ Church monks in Kent. It was one of their smaller estates, and is chiefly of interest for the milling and malting operations which took place within its confines.

It is easy to see why the Canterbury monks chose the manor of Northwood as the site of their barton. It was conveniently situated on the river Stour¹ and was within easy reach of Fordwich, the medieval port of Canterbury. After being unladen at the Fordwich quay, the corn was taken on pack-horse or by cart to the granaries of the barton by way of that long causeway which is still discernible on the Sturry Road. The great increase in corn production on the Canterbury estates in the thirteenth century was reflected in the buildings of the barton, for in 1225 the treasurers devoted a sum of £20 towards the construction of a new granary for the storing of the vast corn supplies. All the barley and oats were taken to these granaries, and the bartoner was strictly enjoined in 1305 not to sell any without the express consent

¹ I am indebted to my friend Mr. Graham Webster, late of the Canterbury Surveyor's Department, for the accompanying map.

of the prior. The wheat was never taken to the barton—for it could not be malted—but was carried to the great granaries in the *curia* or the numerous mills of the priory in the city. The bartoner's account for the year 1311-12 (which is printed below and has been very kindly transcribed for me by Mr. W. P. Blore, Hon. Librarian of the Dean and Chapter Library) gives an admirable picture of the receipt of the corn supplies during this peak period of demesne economy. Most of the corn, it will be seen, came from the manors of the priory, but some was purchased by the treasurers. As the middle ages waned the corn bought from outside increased in amount, but there was never a time when the bartoner did not receive "food-farms" from the manorial demesnes. At harvest time he was so constantly occupied with this task that in 1298 Archbishop Winchelsey gave him special leave to go to and fro from the barton without seeking the special licence of the prior on each occasion.

After receiving the corn the bartoner promptly attended to the milling and malting. There has been a mill on the site of the present Barton Mills for at least seven centuries and probably for a considerably longer period. Numerous references to it occur in the accounts, such as the purchase of oil and soap for the wheels and the repair of its simple machinery. The building which to this day faces the Stour and has on its north-west side a buttress with a chamfered edge probably embodies part of the medieval malt-hall, which stood in close juxtaposition to the mill. Gostling was clearly in error in thinking the building to be a chapel. Here the malting took place at frequent intervals throughout the year, usually about four times a month. The barley and oats grain, after soaking, were placed in appropriate conditions of moisture and warmth, with free access of air. Gradually that chemical change took place which consists primarily of the conversion of starch into sugar, and the malt was ready to be carried to the monastic brewery. Three or four servants were employed throughout the year in the malt-hall, headed in the fifteenth century by a master of the malt-hall (*magister de la Malthalle*) who wore special robes and must have exercised functions of general supervision.

A groom (*palefridarius*) and loader (*lodarius*) assisted the bartoner in carrying the malt from the barton to the brewery in the monastic precinct. They were granted special liveries of food and drink and were counted among the regular *familia* of the *curia*. Their conduct was subject to regulation by the monastic chapter.

The fourth and perhaps the most important aspect of the bartoner's work was that of providing for the smooth working of the brewery. The brewery, which lay to the north of the *curia* (Green Court) and now forms part of the King's School offices, was, like the malt-hall, staffed by a master brewer (*magister braciator*) and three or four servants. As the account shows, the brewings were reckoned in quarterly periods

and took place with the same regularity as the maltings. Utensils of all sorts were constantly being purchased for the brewery. In 1414-15, for example, hoops were bought for mending barrels, and candles for lighting the brewery. "Scoops", linen cloth, rings, trivets, taphose (sic), and charcoal were constantly in demand. With his many responsibilities the bartoner must certainly have been one of the most active of the conventual obedientiaries. Another monk took his place in choir during his frequent absences at the barton, for he was only able to lead a quasi-regular life. Many of the most important and senior monks were promoted to the office. To take only one example, John Woodnesburgh, who was co-adjutor to Prior Chillenden in 1410, at the same time held the office of bartoner. He became prior in the following year.

The years 1250-1350 marked the high-water mark of the manorial economy of Christ Church, and it was therefore in this century that the bartoner was most actively employed. It was the golden age of demesne farming and the bartoner, together with the garnerer who received the wheat supplies, was one of the key men in the economic system of the priory. His responsibilities were great, yet the accounts show that he rose to the occasion and punctiliously fulfilled the duties imposed upon him. His method of accounting was clear and exact—a fact which must have greatly facilitated the effective execution of his duty. The long series of accounts are themselves a testimony to the integrity of the Christ Church bartoners, for failure to keep accounts was one of the besetting sins of the middle ages and a most common cause of economic collapse.

After Prior Chillenden had completed his policy of letting out manorial demesnes on lease in the last decade of the fourteenth century, the work of the bartoner declined in importance. Most of the corn was now purchased in the local markets by the prior-treasurers and taken to malt-houses in the city. In 1405-06, for example, 1,084 quarters of barley were malted at the barton, but 513 quarters were taken to various malt-houses in the city. Again in 1410-11 no less than £12 18s. 4d. was paid by the monks to the city maltsters. But activity in the brewery was unabated and the bartoner still supervised the management of the manor, the demesne of which was constantly demised for short-term leases. In 1399 the prior and chapter granted 20 marks of rent from Barton Manor to the two chantry chaplains who sang in the cathedral for the soul of the late John Buckingham, Bishop of Lincoln.

The bartoner held a court for his tenants at the door of the brewery (*ostium bracini*). Court-rolls have only survived for the fifteenth and early sixteenth century. They show that the business was then trivial in amount. The payment of reliefs or the distraint of tenants for failure to do so constituted its main activity. The bartoner presided

in the presence of the steward of the liberty, a trained lawyer who held the High Court of the prior in the North Hall of the priory. In the later fifteenth century the bartoner's court became an assembly where the tenants paid their rents. Judicial work had ceased altogether and the steward of the liberty no longer attended the meetings at the door of the brewery.

Direct references to the barton in the last century before the Dissolution are somewhat scarce. In 1437 the account-roll of the prior-treasurer shows us that considerable quantities of barley and oats were still taken to the barton for milling and malting. A record of the malt supplies at the barton in 1507 (Cant. MS. D.E. 147) makes it quite clear that the buildings were still in use on the eve of the Suppression. In 1535 the lease of the manor was said to yield an annual sum of £31, and separate rents at Colton were worth £1 19s. 4d. Five years later the Dissolution brought an abrupt end to a long epoch in the history of the ancient manor of Northwood.

BARTONER'S ACCOUNT, 1311-12

Computus fratris Alari Oysel Berthonarii dominica proxima ante festum. a festo Sci. Luce evangeliste Anno Regni Regis Edwardi quinto. usque ad dominicam proximam ante festum Sci. Michaelis Anno regni regis Edwardi sexto.

xx

Recept' De tempore post dominum H. Mot de ordeo iiiii. x sum. vi bus. di bus.

summa patet.

Recept' de Custode de Eastekent

xx

De Monketone de ordeo palmali¹ iiiii. vii sum. vii bus.
 De Eastria de ordeo palmali xxiiii sum. iii bus.
 Item de ordeo yemali² x sum. iii bus.
 De Adesham de Gavelkorn³ xxx sum.
 Item de manerio de ordeo palmali xxxvii sum. vi bus.
 De Icham de ordeo palmali cxxxi sum. iii bus.
 Item de ordeo yemali lxxvi sum. iii bus.
 Item de firma de Bourne de ordeo palmali ix sum.
 De Cherteham de ordeo palmali xxvi sum.
 De Godmeresham de ordeo palmali xix sum.
 Item x sum.
 Inde de firma ate Hoke vii sum.
 De Broke de ordeo palmali ix sum.

Summa ordeï recepti de Custode de Eastekent cccc. lxxi sum. i bus.

Recept' de Custode de Waldis.

De Coptone de ordeo palmali	xv sum.
De Welle „ „ „	iii sum.
De Hollingbourne „ „	x sum.

¹ Spring barley.

² Autumn barley.

³ Gavel-corn.

Item de ordeo yemali xx sum. i bus. di. bus.
 De Aghene de ordeo palmali xxviii sum. vi bus.
 De Ebbene " " " xxv sum.
 De Rokynge " " " vii sum. di.
 De Apuldre " " " iii sum. vi bus.
 De Eastfarlege x sum. di.

Summa ordei recepti de Custode de Waldis c. xxiii sum. v bus. di. bus.

De Bertona nichil.

Summa ordei recepti de maneriis cum remanenti et firmis

xx

DC. llll. v sum. v bus.

Empt' per thesaurar' D. xvii sum.

summa patet.

Inde de Ecclesia de Westclive lxxvii sum. di.

Summa tocius ordei recepti cum remanenti M. cc. ii sum. v bus.

Expens'

In xlvii facturis¹ (sic) M.C. lxxv sum.

Item in metekorn² unius servientis facientis braseum a festo Sci. Michaelis usque ad festum Sci.

Iohannis Baptiste vi sum. di., qui capit per sex septimanas i sum.

Item in metekorn trium servientum per totum annum xxv sum. qui capiunt per sex septimanas i sum.

[interlined] et subtraitur di. sum pro uno fimo (? for famulo).

Item pro aqueductu iii sum.

Item capt' per Regem i sum. v bus.

Item in vendicione v sum. di.

Summa tocius expense MCC. xvii sum. v bus.

Et sic de excremento de DCC. et xl sum. xv sum. sicci bladi. Hoc est de centena ii sum.

Recept' de Avena³ de Custode de Estekent.

De Monketone xiii sum. di.
 De Eastria xvi sum. di. v bus.
 De Lidene x sum.
 De Adesham xvii sum. di. ii bus.
 De Icham ii sum. di.
 De Godmersham iiiii sum.
 De Broke xii sum.

Summa avene recepte de Custode de Eastekent.

lxxvi sum. vii bus.

Recept' de Custode de Waldis.

De Magna Chert xx sum. di. vi bus.
 De Parva Chert xv sum.
 De Holingbourne ix sum. di. vi bus.
 De Merseham viii sum. di.
 De Apuldre x sum. di. iii bus.

Summa avene recepte de Custode de Waldis.

lxiv sum. di. vii bus.

Item de empt' per thesauras' xx sum. vii bus.
 summa patet.

¹ maltings.

² mixed corn.

³ Oats.

Inde de Ecclesia de Westolive v sum. di. vii bus.
 Item de empt' per Berthonarium x sum.
 Summa tocuis avene recepte c. lxxi sum. xiii bus.

Expens

In ix fucturis et x sum. cxlv sum.
 [underlined or erased]
 Inde capt' per Regem xxxi sum. vi bus.
 In farina¹ xvi sum.
 In prebenda palifrid' et lodarii² x sum.
 per ministros.
 Item capt' per Regem i sum. v bus.
 Summa tocuis expense avene C.lxxii sum. v bus.
 Et sic de excremento di. sum.
 Et memorandum quod de M.C.lxxv sum. ordeis sicci unde factum Braseur
 misse sunt ad Curiam MCCCC lxviii sum. vi bus.

xx

Et. sic de excremento CC. iii. xiii sum. vi bus.
 hoc est de centena xxv sum.
 Item memorandum quod de C. xlv sum. avene sicce unde factum fui
 Braseum molatum misse sunt ad Curiam C. lxxiii sum. ii bus.
 Et sic de excremento xxix sum. hoc est de centena xx sum.
 [scratched out] Item capt' per ministros domini Regis xxxi sum. vi bus.

Recept' eiusdem de Braseo ordeis

Recept' de Braseo ordeis post dominum H. Mot. CC. xxxi sum.
 Item de recept' Brasei avene xxii sum.
 Summa huius CC. liiii sum.

Recept' de Novo braseo ordeis

Item recept' de novo Braseo ordeis M.CCCC. lxviii sum. vi bus.
 Item de Novo Braseo avene C. lxxiii sum.
 Summa huius M.DC. xlii sum. vi bus.

xx

Summa tocuis Brasei recepti M.DCCC. iii. xvi sum. vi bus.

Expens'

xx

Braciat'³ primo quart' de Novo Braseo ordeis CC. iii. xvii sum.
 Item de veteri Braseo avene xxiii sum.
 Summa Brasei Braciat' primo quart' CCC. xx sum.

Braciat' secundo quart' de Novo Braseo ordeis CCCC. x sum.
 De Novo Braseo Avene xxx sum.
 Summa Brasei Braciat' secundo quart' CCCC. xl sum.

xx

Braciat' Tercio quarter' de Novo Braseo ordeis CCC. iii. xvii sum.
 De Novo Braseo avene xliii. sum.
 Summa Brasei Braciat' Tercio quart' CCCC. xl sum.
 Braciat' quarto quart' de Novo Braseo ordeis CCCC. xiii sum.
 De Novo Braseo avene xlvii sum.
 Summa brasei braciat' quarto quart' CCCC. lx sum.

¹ Oatmeal.

² The allowance of the groom and the carter.

³ Brewed.

Summa tocius Brasei Braciati M.D.C. lx sum.

Item allocantur ei xxxvii sum. di cum excremento.

xx

Et remanent in annum futurum C. iiii. xix sum. ii bus.

xx

Inde de Braseo ordeï C. iiii. ii sum. vi bus.

Item de Braseo avene xvi sum. di.

Compotus eiusdem in denariis

Recept de xxiiii s. ix d. de v sum. di. venditis. summa patet.

Expens'

In Ciliciis¹ emptis x s. vi d. ob.

In emendacione domorum lxi s. ii d. 9^a.

In „ molendi' xii s. iiii d. ob.

In rotis emendandis et nov' ferr' cum harnasio xiiii s. vii d.

In corio equino² pro saccis emendandis iii s. i d.

In utensilibus emptis et emendatis xi s. i d.

In solidatis³ unius servientis facientis Braseum a festo Sci. Michaelis usque ad festum Sci. Iohannis Baptiste ix s.

In solidatis trium servientum per totum annum xxxvi s.

In ferratura⁴ palfridi et lodarii vii s. ii d.

In farina facienda vi d.

In caritatibus⁵ et oblacionibus lx s.

Item pro x sum. avene emptis xxxviii s. iiii d. precium summe iii s. x d.

Summa huius expense xiii li. iii s. x d. 9^a.

et debentur ei xi li. xix s. i d.

Compotus eiusdem de Redditu Coltone

Recept'

Idem respondet de vi li. xviii s. vi d. ob. 9^a de Redditu Coltone.

Item de Releviis et perquisitis Curie⁶ ii s.

Summa vii li. vi d. ob. 9^a.

Expens'

Liberat' in thesauria vi li. xviii s. vi d. ob. 9^a.

In allocacione pro Elemos' xvi s.

Item in domibus locatis emendandis iiii s. viii d.

In districcionibus faciendis⁷ xii d.

Summa expens' viii li. ii d. ob. 9^a.

Et debentur ei xi s. viii d.

¹ Hair-cloth.

² Horse-leather.

³ Wages.

⁴ Shoeing.

⁵ Pittances.

⁶ Reliefs and profits of Court.

⁷ Making distrains.