

The Villages on the Manors of Titchfield Abbey

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THE Premonstratensian Abbey of Titchfield was founded in 1231-2 by Peter des Roches, Bishop of Winchester.¹ In the late 14th century it had fifteen manors, which contained more than 60 villages and hamlets and 500 tenants. The village of Titchfield is about half-way between Portsmouth and Southampton, on the River Meon three miles from its mouth on Southampton Water. The demesne there was organized into three farms, Posbrook, Lee and the Rectory barton, and nine other manors in the parish included lands at the villages of Crofton, Stubbington, Fontley and Swanwick. Outside the parish there were manors at Corhampton, further inland, Cadland across Southampton Water, Portchester and Portsea on Portsmouth Harbour, Wallsworth to the north of Portsdown Hill, and Inkpen in south-west Berkshire.

The principal sources for the history of the Abbey are the four registers of Titchfield Abbey in the British Museum, and the register for Portchester in the Hampshire Record Office. The most important of these registers is the Court Book, probably written about 1400, which contains an edited transcript of the court rolls of the more important manors from 1245, and for other manors from shortly after their acquisition, to 1377. This body of material gives a detailed picture of the activities of the Abbey's unfree tenants, and in particular of their non-agricultural pursuits and their contacts with the outside world.²

Titchfield was a substantial market town by medieval standards. In the village lived the lesser administrative staff of the estates, the bailiff, reeve, town reeve, messors, clerks, porters and Abbey servants. In small cottages near the demesne farmsteads and along the road to the Abbey lived the ploughmen, carters, dairymen, shepherds and huntsmen of the demesne; and the hired experts, the ditchers, threshers, sowers and mowers. There were the most usual of the craftsmen, the smiths and the iron workers, and the inevitable miller. In and around the market square cooks, butchers, bakers, brewers and salters, did an active business supplying the Abbey and its visitors as well as the countryside. In the yards and alleys between the square and the church were the workshops of carpenters and coopers, roofers and thatchers, bowl makers and rope makers, tailors and barbers. Besides these ancillary and distributive classes there were two groups which may reasonably be regarded as forming local industries, those using leather—skinners, tanners, leather dressers, harness makers, saddlers and shoemakers, who may have had their workshops along the river between the church and the mill where the tannery now stands, and those preparing wool—fullers, treaders, combers, spinners and dyers. The settlement of merchants, sailors and substantial freemen in the village² was the natural consequence of this activity.

1. For the general history of the Abbey see H. M. Colvin, *The White Canons in England*, 184-91 and *passim*, and *V.C.H., Hants*, II, 181-6.

2. The source of facts given in the article is unless otherwise stated the Court Book (B.M. Loan 29/59); the Rental (B.M. Loan 29/58) and the Register (B.M. Loan 29/53) are referred to as such.

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The same kinds of people, though in smaller numbers, are found at Portchester, Cadland and Wallsworth. Apart from the small administrative group working around the hall, and the demesne workers around the farm, the craftsmen and shopkeepers should perhaps be spoken of in the singular. There were taverns at Cadland and Wallsworth. At Cadland there was a basket maker and a potter, and a wheelwright as well as a carpenter. Leather work was done as at Titchfield; there was a tanner at Portchester and shoemaker at Cadland, and both a saddler and a skinner at Wallsworth, and there were cottagers engaged in the wool processes, a weaver at Cadland and a napper at Wallsworth. Fishing was a regular occupation. Although on these manors there was not the urban development of Titchfield they must each have had a group of shops, stalls and workshops at the focal point of the village.

On the smaller manors even the administrative and demesne staff was reduced to a minimum; there may have been a permanent staff of only two or three, especially on the manors close to Titchfield where the specialist work could be done by men sent over from the home farms. There was on each manor only a handful of craftsmen and tradesmen and some of these may have done more of their trade in Titchfield market than in the village itself, the Crofton potter for instance carrying his stock into Titchfield once a month, or the Stubbington butcher taking animals down to slaughter in some seasons and bringing meat back in others. The Titchfield market may have put out of business many of the small craftsmen who would normally have found a living in the nearby villages, just as during the last century Fareham has taken the trade of Titchfield. Wool was worked even in these small villages by men who may have been served by itinerant middlemen, weavers at Inkpen, Fontley and Stubbington, a comber at Swanwick and a dyer at Inkpen. The woodland seems to have been economically important at Inkpen where there was a charcoal burner, sawyers and a wheelwright. Fontley, a detached part of which lay at Hook on the coast, included among its tenants a skipper and a fisherman. The manors at Inkpen and Corhampton formed only part of the community and at Stubbington and Fontley there were territorial peculiarities which make it difficult to guess at the appearance of the villages. Swanwick and Crofton may have consisted of houses strung out along a single road and many detached cottages, Inkpen and Stubbington of houses along the roads leading to a road junction, and Corhampton and Fontley of tiny hamlets.

There had been a market at Titchfield since at least 1086, but the five-day fair was not granted until the 15th century. The three-day fair and the Saturday market at Portchester were begun in 1294.³ Titchfield village was referred to as a *villa mercatoria* in a court of 1335 and there was a *praepositus burgi*, as well as a manorial reeve by at least 1329. The tenants of Portchester were frequently referred to as burgesses, and aldermen took the place of tithingmen in making presentments. In 1312 Richard Sigar's heir was declared not to be liable for relief because he held by burgage tenure. The Portchester survey of 1408, which describes the 190 houses held of the three landlords lying close together along the West Street and South Street, refers only to high and low tenure, that of sokemen and that of villeins.

Butchers and bakers were the most common of the tradesmen, eight butchers and a baker for instance being amerced for overcharging in the Titchfield court of 1398.⁴ Live animals, hides and leather, wool and wool fells were probably connected with the traffic in meat. There was a plea of debt for great fleeces (2/-) at Titchfield in 1398, and 15 lb. of white

3. q.v. *V.C.H., Hants*, III, 158.

4. Hampshire Record Office, 5M 51/49.

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wool were reported as *wayf* in a Portchester court in 1336. Bread, flour and grain were probably connected with the business of the bakers; in 1398 there was a plea of debt for 12/6 for bread and another of 1/2 for victuals. Fish, caught around the coasts and in the rivers were sold in Titchfield market.⁵ Beer was brewed by many tenants, both it and wine were presumably sold in the taverns, and tolls were paid on sales of cider.⁶ Hemp and flax were mentioned in the tithe arrangements of 1264-75.⁷ The manufacture of the former is probably associated with the 'ropers' who appear among the villagers; that of the latter appears at Wallsworth where in 1339 Eva *le Nappere* said in court that Agnes Suarel had changed the piece of linen thread which Eva had given her to be bleached. The shops and workshops of all these people were probably only cottages; the largest commercial buildings were the mills, which dealt in grain and flour, and the fulling mill which Thomas le Wayte had on the manor he held of the Abbot at Fontley Furstbury.⁸ Other commodities which may be mentioned are the gravel, peat and turf which were dug by the tenants.⁹

Two major products of the area were timber and salt, and again the tenants took part in the production and sale of both. There were continual fines in the courts for cutting and selling timber without licence. Between 1328 and 1331 at Titchfield, for instance, a total of 77 trees, and unspecified numbers in other cases, were felled by tenants.¹⁰ At Swanwick in 1308 William Reve of Curbridge took up his father's land and shortly after was fined for felling oaks without licence. In 1310 he was forbidden to make a passage across his land for timber or other merchandise, lest the King's customs should be impaired or a highway to the sea claimed. In 1313, however, he was given permission to have a 'port' on his land at Curbridge for two years and could renew the arrangements if he wished; if he did not wish to do so he could enclose his land. Salt pans were held by tenants at Cosham, Portchester, Titchfield, Swanwick and Cadland.¹¹ The rent was often in salt, commonly of about 2 bushels as at Cadland in 1320, sometimes as much as 2q. 4b. for a whole *salina* and 1q. 2b. for half a *salina*, as at Wallsworth in 1339. The plots lay along the coast side by side, and because they were sometimes leased as 'the land of a *salina*' and not as a *salina* it is possible that they were also used for grazing. The *salinae* are not listed in the Rental and the total receipts of salt in rents are given only for Titchfield and Wallsworth, 6q. 4b. at Titchfield in the Rental and 2q. 4b. at Posbrook in the Extent, worth 10/-, 9q. 4b. at Wallsworth in both worth 25/4, 6d. and 4d. a bushel respectively. At Portchester there is virtually a rental of *salinae* in a court of 1259. Ten tenants had held such land by permission of Abbot Isaac and this was confirmed by Abbot Henry. They came and made fine with him to hold the land as in the time of his predecessors, doing the rents and services due, nine of them who each held an acre paying 2/-, and Richard Alwin who held four acres 8/-. At Cadland in 1270 the leasing of *salinae* was supervised by four jurors *de salinae assendendi* who 'ordained and provided' that two tenants should take up lapsed holdings and that another should

5. e.g., fishing at Portsea in 1366; fish in the Meon, Register, f. 18; three fishmongers in Titchfield, 1398.

6. Wine was frequently given as an entry fine instead of money, e.g. Titchfield 1334. For cider see Titchfield, 1307-8.

7. H.R.O. WD/39.

8. Register, f. 18.

9. H.R.O. WD/36, cf. 1260; gravel, e.g. Swanwick 1350, Cadland 1348.

10. See also Wallsworth 1340 (10 small oaks), Inkpen 1368 (oaks, ashes), Swanwick 1323 (10 oaks) and 1330 (12 oaks).

11. See the map of Domesday salt pans in H. C. Darby, *Historical Geography of England*, 226. For the importance of timber in Fareham and Titchfield see *V.C.H., Hants*, III, 211, and for salt *V.C.H., Hants*, V, 469-72.

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continue in possession. There is no evidence of how many *salinae* there were or of what profit might be made from one, but it was not only the virgators who held them, and a few shillings gained from sales of salt would have been a welcome addition to the income of a smaller tenant. The only reference to transactions in salt is at Cadland in 1250 when John Sithe, a man who had been living outside and later left the demesne, admitted that he owed Robert Pymper, who was not a tenant, six bushels of salt. Salt was sent from Titchfield to Inkpen on a number of occasions, and it is interesting to note that the Winchester manor of Bursledon, which is across the Hamble from Swanwick, sent salt to three other episcopal manors.¹²

Southampton was only about half an hour's journey by boat from Cadland and some ten miles by road or an hour by sea from Titchfield and Swanwick. Portsea lay immediately outside the walls of Portsmouth, and the Cosham lands of Wallsworth were on Portsea harbour. The 'fleet' of Hook and the Hamble estuary on which Swanwick and Warsash in Titchfield lay were important roadsteads for shipping.¹³ The tenants of Swanwick and Warsash carried the Abbot to Hook, Cadland and Southampton as one of their services. Fareham, on a creek between Portchester and Titchfield, though still smaller than either, was growing in importance in this period.¹⁴ Then as now the sea was the obvious outlet for the landless men of the villages. At Cadland, for instance, in 1320 Robert Pynnock was reported to have been detained in 'transmarine parts' by contrary winds since before the last court. When in 1329 Cecilia Schurwynd died leaving a house and garden at Hythe and no beast as heriot, her son and heir Edward was at sea. In 1349 it was reported that John Broun had been captured at sea in time of war by the enemies of the King and taken outside the realm of England and had not returned.¹⁵ At Crofton in 1351 the death was reported of Simon Havek who had held a messuage and virgate and whose heriot was a mare; he had been killed at sea by enemies from Normandy. His father Robert now took the tenement until Michaelmas having the right to the corn of every kind which was sown there, and Roger Foxore paid a mark to have it thereafter. In 1359 it was said that William Hoggyn, who had been pledged by his brother, his brother-in-law, a kinsman and two others to stay in his house and pay chevage, carrying on his *officium nauti* (*sic*), had after all left the demesne. At Swanwick in 1355 William Sexi had to undertake that he would not take himself off to overseas parts without licence, and that when he returned from the voyage for which he was now licensed, if he was still alive, he would engage in agriculture with his neighbours.¹⁶ In the Rental Nicholas son of John Saltere of Crofton appears as paying 6d. annual capitage to stay at Dartmouth or Plymouth during the will of the lord.

The distances which the peasants travelled by land appear most clearly in the Portchester custumal.¹⁷ The tenants had to go for the lord's food to Southampton, Winchester or Chichester; if they were abroad through the night their expenses were paid by the Abbot, and they were quit of two days' work for the service. If the lord bought seed at Titchfield, Fareham, Southwick or elsewhere the tenants had to carry it to Portchester and were quit of a day's work. They had to take the corn to be ground at the mill of Wickham or of Fontley,

12. See *Pipe Roll of the Bishopric of Winchester*, 1208-9, ed. H. Hall, 32.

13. *cf.* the return of 1345 quoted in *V.C.H., Hants*, V, 364 and 370.

14. *cf.* P.R.O. E 179 173/95 (abatements) and *V.C.H., Hants*, V, 423.

15. See also 1358, 1361, 1366, 1369.

16. See also 1368.

17. In B.M. Loan 29/53.

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or if the lord wished to sell, to the markets of Fareham, Titchfield or Southwick. It is interesting that the Abbot bought seed and sold corn in several different markets, and sent corn to be ground to the mills of other lords when he had a mill of his own at Wicor. The tenants of Inkpen had to go to Andover and other towns within some 12 miles of the village, and those of Wallsworth carried corn a similar distance to Titchfield. The Titchfield tenants had to carry food to Winchester. The market attracted men to Titchfield from all the neighbouring villages; selling meat there in 1398 were John Boucher of Wickham, Thomas Boucher of Chilling, Thomas Neel of Rowner and William Martin of Portchester. There were at least two smiths from other villages working there, Henry *Faber* of Fareham had a holding in 1275, and John de Northbrook of Wallworth, smith, took up a piece of demesne for customs like those of the other cottars in 1335; two years later it was reported in the Wallsworth court that he had obtained land in Titchfield and he was acquitted of his tithing there.

The Inkpen accounts¹⁸ give detailed evidence of the distances which were travelled on manorial business. Wool, wheat, pigs, capons and cheeses were regularly sent from Inkpen to Titchfield and occasionally to other manors, and iron, tar, cider, wine, flour, salt, malt, fish and eels might be sent to Inkpen. During the restocking after the Black Death, hundreds of sheep and lambs and oxen, cows and heifers were moved between the manors. In 1320 two mares were bought at Abingdon, and 52 sheep from the Rectory of Wodehay. In 1321 an ox was bought at Ramesbury, a cow at Hungerford, and cider at Wherwell. In 1325 there were expenses for four carts going to Winchester, to sell grain, and the swineherd drove pigs to Andover. In 1330 a small cart-horse was bought at 'Boxgrave', possibly Boxford, and expenses were incurred in selling wheat at Winchester, where some of the wool on its way to Titchfield may also have been sold. In 1347 the reeve went to Newbury to buy corn, and two carters took their carts to Collingbourne to buy corn for seed. In the view of c. 1365 it was noted that 80 oaks worth £4 had been sold to John Carpenter of Shalbourne, and grease was bought at Wodehay; in that year two servants were sent to London. In 1386 the bailiff went to Andover to sell wheat, to Wokingham to get a villein, and to Titchfield, where one of the shepherds also spent four weeks. Taxes were paid at Abingdon and at Malmesbury, and judicial enquiries held at Hungerford, Andover and Winchester. In 1325 cheeses, oats and a ewe were sold to the Earl of Winchester, Hugh le Despenser; he had recently disseised the Lady Emmelina, who held land in Inkpen, of her manor of Avington, three miles north and he held two other manors nearby. In 1330 nearly 200 sheep were received from Titchfield and sent on to John Maltravers, whose manor of Maltravers near Wantage, fifteen miles north, had been restored to him in 1327.¹⁹

The places of origin of men appearing in the courts show clearly the areas from which new tenants and regular visitors were drawn into the estates lying around the Solent and Southampton Water. The first area was the coastal region from Chichester and the Sussex border twenty miles to the east, to Christchurch and the Wiltshire border twenty-five miles to the west. Also in direct seaborne contact was the Isle of Wight, within ten miles by sea and river of all the manors except Corhampton and Inkpen. The second area was the natural hinterland of the first, the Hampshire and Wiltshire downland and the valleys running from it to the sea. The connections of Titchfield stretched only just over the watershed of the Hampshire basin into the headwaters of the rivers beyond. Beyond that the villages looked in

18. Berkshire Record Office, M66-M90.

19. cf. M. Morgan, *English Lands of Abbey of Bec*, 49, for marketing. The Bec manors of Combe and Ogbourne were near Inkpen.

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different directions, the north and east of the area to the Thames and London, the west to the Severn and Bristol. From Southampton Water the lines of contact followed the rivers and downland routes used by the West Saxons from the lower Test at Romsey to Salisbury and the middle and upper Avon, from the upper Test up on to the Berkshire downs to overlook the Thames and the Kennet, and from the Itchen to Alton and the Surrey border. Modern Hampshire is cut from north-east to south-west by the routes radiating from London, to Salisbury and Exeter, to Winchester, Bournemouth and Poole, to Southampton and to Portsmouth. This evidence reminds us that in the Middle Ages some of these routes did not exist, that to get to London you were as likely to go north to the Thames and then east as to take the more direct route through Farnham and Guildford which brought the South Hampshire man close to the Forest of Bere and the Weald.²⁰ The county was a social unit in a much more real sense than it is today, and Winchester and Southampton were its natural centres. To the east and west of the county where the towns and ports were smaller than to the north the contacts with other counties were closer, from the headwaters of the Meon down the Rother valley to the Arun in Sussex, and from the lower Avon into Dorset. The seaborne traffic went further afield, to Sussex and Kent and into the Thames estuary on one side, and to Devon and Cornwall and into the Severn on the other, and into Southampton came Scots, Irish, Spaniards, Frenchmen, Rhinelanders and Flemings.²¹ Men from beyond the normal limits, from Kenilworth and Whitby for instance, had probably come with the armies embarking at Southampton and Portsmouth for France, and had preferred to settle in the busy little ports where they disembarked than to make the long journey to the north.

Why did small farmers, peasants and labourers make the two- or three-day journey from downland villages like Kingsclere and Sombourne to look for land and work in the coastal villages? In some cases we can see what happened. In the year of the Black Death Thomas Scad of Tuderle (Tytherley in Hants) a carter, married Johanna, daughter of Robert Peeke of Crofton, without licence; no more is heard of either of them and he presumably took her back to Tytherley with his load. If she had stayed a little longer and paid the marriage fine he could have settled down there, for two of her relations had died in the plague and one of the tenements had fallen in hand. In the next year at Corhampton Thomas de Tottford, another carter, did give up his profession and settle down; he took up for 6d. and 2/- a year at will the messuage and four of the ten acres which Henry Coleman had had when the plague caught him. At Titchfield in 1335 Johanna Stopeham (Stopham is thirty miles away in Sussex) died, a cottar whose heriot was a ewe worth 9d.; her cottage fell in hand and was taken up by John *le Kembere* of Husseborn (Hurstbourne is nearly thirty miles to the north). John may have been an itinerant worker in wool who took the chance afforded by the death of Johanna, perhaps herself a spinster, to get a cottage and workshop. It was perhaps, as it may have been in the 15th century and was in the 18th and 19th centuries, the lure of the towns which induced people to move. Southampton, Portsmouth, Portchester, Titchfield and Wickham were among the most heavily assessed of the Hampshire towns in 1333, and the Hampshire towns compare favourably in wealth with those of other counties.²² There was a thriving coastal and overseas trade, important fairs and markets were held in towns, and, as has been seen, there were small industries based on local raw materials. It is easy to see why small traders, craftsmen and pedlars would tend to drift south or use a

20. See the 'Gough' map, 1325-50, facsimile by Ordnance Survey, 1870 (1935 ed.), and the itineraries from Titchfield in Library Register, published in the *Proceedings of the Leeds Philosophical Society (Literary and Historical Section)*, IV, 1938.

21. cf. Darby, *op. cit.* 272-82.

22. See P.R.O. E 179 173/4 and 242/15a. For other counties see W. G. Hoskins in *Devonshire Studies*, 212.

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workshop in a coastal town as a base when collecting and distributing in the downland villages. A further point is that the gravels and clays of the coastal region, settled and cleared later than many of the downland villages, were richer than the chalk lands to the north. It was one of the five rich areas of Hampshire in the lay assessment of 1333-34, and Titchfield was one of the most heavily assessed parishes in the ecclesiastical grant of 1340.²³ Large areas of the centre and north of the county were assessed at much lower rates. On the Titchfield estates, already rich in comparison, there was still land being brought into cultivation, while in the upland villages the remaining waste may have been too poor even for temporary cultivation. There is some evidence that the population of these manors was increasing in the first half of the 14th century when that of other parts of the country may have been declining. If there was work to be found for skilled and seasonal labour there, the poor cottager with all his wealth on his back may have thought of the coastal towns as Irishmen thought of 19th century England. Finally, as free and soke tenure were as common on these estates as holdings in strict villeinage, and services were often light and frequently commuted, there was an added inducement for the wealthy up-country peasant to saddle his horse and make the over-night journey to Titchfield, to enquire at the Abbey and in the market and taverns about vacant holdings, or the possibility of a sale. There is, unfortunately, no evidence as to how the market in land, implied in the figures of land transactions, was organized; it could not have been a purely casual affair.

Much remains obscure about the development and the functions of small market towns in the later Middle Ages. The Titchfield evidence suggests that at least in some parts of the country the facade of the manor may have hidden quite a different economic and social structure; a manor might be a market, a villein a sailor, a cottager an artisan, and a freeman an entrepreneur. It is suggested that the study of such small towns, their minor industries and their regional connections, may have an important bearing on some of the remaining problems in the economic and social history of the period.

23. P.R.O. E 179 173/13.