

BURTON LAZARS, Leicestershire: The Evidence from the Worked Stone Collection

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Introduction

The small village of Burton Lazars in Leicestershire takes its name from its most significant historic feature, the medieval hospital of the Knights of St Lazarus, but in common with many other monastic sites in Britain, radical clearance since the dissolution of religious houses in the 16th century has removed any material evidence for it. The site is represented by enigmatic, and largely unexcavated, mounds in a field on the edge of the village, its buildings have totally disappeared and it is difficult now to get a sense of what the site looked like in the medieval period.¹ The discovery of a number of worked stones in a garden close to the hospital site in the recent past has provided us with the chance to evaluate its appearance, at least in part.

In the spring of 2000 the archaeological warden for the parish of Burton Lazars was contacted by the tenant of Burton House to discuss the carved stonework in the rockery of her garden. It had been used to edge the driveway, and further pieces had been found in the wood beyond the garden and added to the rockery. Most pieces were loosely packed as edging stones, but some large sections of late-medieval window tracery had been cemented in on either side of the gate into the garden.

¹ The history of the order of the Knights of St Lazarus, and the limited information about Burton Lazars hospital have been extensively studied by David Marcombe. David Marcombe, *Leper Knights, the Order of St Lazarus of Jerusalem in England, 1150-1544*, (Woodbridge, Boydell 2003). The account of the hospital's foundation and history by John Nichols, in his *History and Antiquities of Leicestershire*, vol. 2 pt 1, (London 1795), pp. 272-276 is cited by most historians, although his understanding of the site is limited.

I was brought in to comment on the significance of the stonework, and together with David Marcombe and the late Jenny Allsop of the Burton Lazars Hospital Site Research Group, investigated the garden and its rockery. It was clear that we were looking at an important collection of medieval carved stonework. There was also further worked stone in the low walls and steps to the abandoned garden in the wood, and a few blocks were recovered from this area. Full archaeological investigation of these features was, unfortunately, not possible.

A team of volunteers was brought together and, over a two-day period in early 2001, the assembly of worked and carved stones was taken to the nearby village hall for basic cleaning and to record the stones. In accordance with the tenant's wishes, the stones were returned to the garden and replaced in the rockery as closely as possible to their original sites. Their subsequent history is unclear, the garden of the house, and the wood next to it have been developed for housing and the site has been cleared.²

Provenance of the stone blocks

Most of the blocks had been damaged and were weathered, with very few having a complete set of worked faces, but most have enough distinguishing features to allow their original site and period to be suggested. The consistency of the weathering on the blocks suggests that the stones had been exposed to the elements for some considerable time before they went into the rockery, and that they were therefore most likely to have come from the exterior of a building. Even in their degraded state, it is clear that the fragments, many with foliage ornament spread across a series of stones, are from buildings of some richness and elaboration. Considerable skill is evident in the deep undercutting of the

² An archaeological evaluation was made of the site and wood in 2005 prior to development, but the report makes no reference to any worked stone. Adrian Burrow, *Archaeological Evaluation at Melton Road, Burton Lazars, Leicestershire, June/July 2005*, Northamptonshire Archaeology Report 05/106 (July 2005). It is understood that some of the stones have been secured and their whereabouts is known to members of the Research Group.

foliage and there is a liveliness and variety in the ways in which the leaves have been carved (Fig. 1).



Figure 1. G071, carved stone with foliage linked by a ribbon scoll between roll mouldings. Photo credit: Trevor Clayton

Jenny Allsop's report on the geology of the stone established that it had been quarried outside the area and most probably came from the area of the Lincolnshire Limestone belt which partly lies in the neighbouring county of Rutland and in the region around Barnack, close to the Great North Road.³ Stone transport was costly in the past, especially when it had to be moved by road rather than on boats, and so local stone was used where possible, even if it was of a lower quality. Most of the stone-built cottages in the villages use the local ironstone with its distinctive orange colour, and the parish church is also largely built of it with limestone used sparingly for windows and buttress cappings. For larger, and more wealthy, sites where stone suitable for fine carving was

³ Site Archive 2001.

needed, the transportation costs were not a deterrent, as was clearly the case here.⁴

Taking all the evidence together, the medieval date of the found stone (discussed below), the elaborate nature of the carvings requiring use of high quality limestone, and the proximity of the find site, it all points to same conclusion, that the most probable source of the rockery stone was the hospital site of St Lazarus. An added complication at Burton, however, is that Vaudey Abbey, a Cistercian house in Lincolnshire, had a grange in the village that bordered on the lands of the hospital to the south. These sites varied from modest farmsteads to small-scale monasteries, and in places removed by more than a day's march from the mother house, chapels or oratories were provided to allow the lay brothers to attend services.⁵ Antiquarian references to the hospital site have therefore to be treated with caution since there may have been confusion between the hospital and the grange buildings once the two had been dissolved.⁶

The question of how the stonework reached the rockery and the wood can be addressed by looking at what happened at other sites during the 16th century. Religious houses dissolved at the Reformation and not refounded as cathedrals, or had their churches transferred to parish use, were rendered unusable to religious communities by the removal of the roofs from their churches and were mostly sold as sites for demolition. The records of the sale of materials from these sites for the Crown list timber and lead, together with window glass, including its ironwork, and roof tiles. Paving stones are mentioned as well, but the actual walling

⁴ Jennifer S. Alexander, 'Building Stone from the East Midlands Quarries: Sources, Transportation and Usage', *Medieval Archaeology* 39 (1995), pp. 107-135.

⁵ David H. Williams, 'Cistercian Granges', in Terryl Kinder and Roberto Cassanelli, (eds), *The Cistercian Arts from the 12th to the 21st Century*, (Montreal & Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press 2014), pp. 259-274.

⁶ See further below.

materials are not usually included, and the new owners of the sites were at liberty to sell off what remained.⁷

The stone that had the greatest value was the regularly shaped ashlar blocks that made up the main walling of the buildings since this could be directly re-used in building work. Projects underway in the mid-16th century, such as the building works at the Cambridge colleges, were able to take advantage of the opportunity to buy the newly available materials. The town is in an area devoid of good building stone and Ramsey Abbey, Huntingdonshire, which had bought stone from the quarries at Barnack, was close enough to provide it with a ready source of worked stone that could easily be re-used in their new buildings.⁸ Whole sections of the abbey were bought, dismantled and transported to Cambridge and as a result very little of Ramsey Abbey remains.

In a number of cases the new owners built themselves a house on the site, either by adapting or rebuilding one of the claustral buildings and retaining the cloister as a courtyard, as at Newstead, Nottinghamshire, or by clearing the site and constructing a new house, as at Longleat, Wiltshire. In either case much of the redundant medieval stone would have vanished from sight in the foundations or been re-used directly, and surplus stone would have been sold off. At Newstead, for example, the west front of the priory church was retained together with the cloister and its buildings although these were both remodelled to some extent

⁷ Mackenzie E.C. Walcot, 'Inventories and Valuations of Religious Houses at the Time of the Dissolution, from the Public Record Office,' *Archaeologia* 43 (1871), pp. 201-250. For an overview of the subject see Howard Colvin, 'Recycling the Monasteries: Demolition and Reuse by the Tudor Government', in his *Essays in English Architectural History*, (New Haven and London, Yale 1999), pp. 52-66.

⁸ Donovan Purcell, *Cambridge Stone*, (London, Faber and Faber 1967), pp. 29-30.

(Fig. 2). There are a few fragments of medieval carved stone built into the garden walls, but nothing further remains from the church.⁹



Figure 2. Aerial view of Newstead Abbey from the north west, showing the west front of the priory church and the survival of the cloister walks. Photo credit: the author - all pictures not otherwise credited are by the author

It is clear that any redevelopment of the hospital site was not carried out by its new owner to create a house for himself. Burton Lazars, its hospital and manor, together with its properties were granted to John Dudley, Earl of Northumberland, in May 1544.¹⁰ It was only one of a number of monastic and collegiate properties that he acquired as part of a growing, but changing, list of estates he held during the period between the 1530s and his fall from grace in 1553. From at least 1536 he was

⁹ Rosalys Coope and Pete Smith, *Newstead Abbey. A Nottinghamshire Country House, its Owners and Architectural History 1540-1931*, (Nottingham, The Thoroton Society 2014).

¹⁰ *Letters and Papers Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, 19, pt 1, 1544.*

engaged in buying up land in Staffordshire and on the Welsh border, and this was augmented by further advantageous purchases in the 1540s, culminating in a royal gift of lands and properties when he was made earl of Warwick in 1547, additionally, he continued to trade in land until the last years of his life. His building work, however, was concentrated on his castles of Kenilworth, later to be considerably more developed by his son, and at Dudley where he arranged for a substantial rebuilding of part of the castle in a Renaissance style since this was intended to be his main residence.¹¹

In Burton Lazars some of the cottages in Lime Street, that runs from the main road through the village towards the hospital site, have quoins of high quality limestone included in with the ironstone and two farm houses immediately adjacent to the hospital site have considerable amounts of re-used stone in their outside walls. The east gable wall of Chestnut Farm is constructed from a whole sections of limestone ashlar laid in well-coursed rows in contrast to the ironstone of the rest. The main facade is brick but more blocks of limestone can be seen on the west wall where it is more randomly distributed. Hall Farm nearby is also constructed of a mixture of limestone and ironstone and in these cases their proximity to the site would suggest that the limestone has been re-used from the hospital buildings. It is also evident that the mounds in the fields of the hospital site include further stone of a similar type that emerges after winter rain has washed away the top covering of turf.

Builders in the nearby town of Melton Mowbray would have been likely purchasers of redundant materials, and indeed there is some evidence for this. The first part relates to a section of a tile pavement recorded in the church that is closely similar to tiles discovered at Burton

¹¹ For John Dudley, see, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*; Richard K. Morris, 'I Was Never More in Love with an Olde Howse nor Never Newe Worke Coulede be Better Bestowed': The Earl of Leicester's Remodelling of Kenilworth Castle for Queen Elizabeth I', *Antiquaries Journal* 89 (2009), pp. 241-305; W.Douglas Simpson, 'Dudley Castle: The Renaissance Buildings', *Archaeological Journal* 101 (1944), pp. 119-125.

Lazars in 1913 and now on display in the British Museum.¹² The British Museum tiles were made between c. 1450-1525 and include a distinctive one bearing a merchant's mark with the initials 'I, or J, M'. Merchants' marks existed as an early form of identification stamped on bales of produce, they also appear on brasses and other monuments as a form of quasi-heraldry where they served as a form of commemoration, as is the case with this tile.¹³ The mark must have belonged to a lay benefactor whose identity it would have revealed in the middle ages. John Nichols includes a drawing of the merchant's mark tile amongst a set of very similar, but not identical, tiles which he recorded at Melton Mowbray parish church. They had already been removed by the time Nichols saw them in 1795, but he describes them as having been sited, 'near the chancel door', and these are most probably *spolia* from the site.¹⁴

Nichols repeats a local tradition that stones from the site were used to build the vestry of Melton Mowbray church but this has been

¹² The limited information about the 1913 excavation is discussed in Marcombe 2003, pp. 239-240. The tiles bear evidence of having been kiln wasters since their glazing had not been fired at sufficient heat for the colour to change, Elizabeth S. Eames, *Medieval Tiles, a Handbook*, (London, British Museum 1968), p. 29. There are also several disordered sections of a circular pattern with fleurs de lys which suggests either that they had already been moved before they were excavated, or, bearing in mind their poor finish, that they had been used as the flooring for a building of lesser importance on the site.

¹³ For merchants' marks see F.A. Girling, *English Merchants' Marks*, (Oxford, OUP 1964).

¹⁴ Nichols 1795, pl. 46,(opposite p. 240), fig. 9, and p. 251. Both sets include heraldic tiles that have yet to be identified but one has the device of the pierced cinquefoil and this belongs to the earls of Leicester. The same heraldry is on an earlier tile excavated at Leicester Abbey, and it relates to shared patronage between the two sites. The third earl of Leicester, who built the church of Leicester Abbey, was the father of Robert de Beaumont, or FitzPernel, (d. 1204) who was a patron of Burton Lazars. The abbey tiles, which are from the 14th century, are published by James Thompson, 'On Leicester Abbey and its Ancient Remains', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 6 (1850), pp. 116-122.

queried since it has a datestone of 1532, when the hospital was still flourishing (Fig. 3).¹⁵ There may be grounds for revisiting this question though. The vestry walls are built out of limestone and although the stones are cut to ashlar, the blocks are not coursed regularly, and the window jambs have stones of different lengths, all of which would be surprising in a building constructed from newly quarried stone. The parapet stonework is much more regular, but it has evidence for the removal of a waterspout that would have discharged directly over the doorway beneath. The possibility that this building has been made out of the remains of another structure still has to be considered, the hospital site is an obvious candidate, and it is possible that the datestone is misleading.



Figure 3. Melton Mowbray parish church vestry from the east, note the irregularity of the stone courses

¹⁵ The vestry was apparently built at the expense of Sir John Digby, who died in 1533 and has been described as a benefactor of the house. Philip E. Hunt, *The Story of Melton Mowbray*, (Leicester, Leicestershire County Council 1979), pp. 43-44. The source for this information is not given however.

A further example of re-use is the late-medieval three-light blocked window in the north end of the chantry priests' house next to the church, now known as Anne of Cleves House, and it may well have come from Burton Lazars. It is of a different design and stone type to the rest of the building, and is poorly assembled with brick replacing sections of the mullions. It is clearly not part of the original structure and must be a later insertion, again possibly taken from the hospital site.

While small-scale window tracery would have been a saleable item, carved stone was less valued. Occasionally sculptural work was retained, but this is uncommon and the vast majority of moulded and decorated stone was simply cast aside and either served as rubble, or was sold to be broken up and put in the mortar mixer. In most cases the unsaleable stone was left on site, sometimes remaining where it had collapsed, as happened to the nave aisle vault at Coventry,¹⁶ or simply piled up as a scrap heap of low-value material. This latter is the probable fate of the Burton Lazars stone. All the rockery stone shows considerable signs of damage sustained during demolition. It is clear that the stones were not taken apart carefully as none has any complete joint faces preserved although a few retain their joint beds and some of these still have the masons' lining up marks visible.¹⁷

Description of the blocks

The stonework from the Burton House rockery forms two distinct categories and is from several periods, the first consists of stone from doorways and windows. Three sections are from the head of a single late 15th- or early 16th-century three-light glazed window with mullions extended into the window head, and cinquefoil cusps under a shallow four-centred arch (Fig. 4). The three lights are of equal size, about 700mm in width, making the whole window at least 2.5m wide, including its mullions. As well as the groove for the window glass there is a space cut

¹⁶ Margaret Rylatt and Paul Mason, *The Archaeology of the Medieval Cathedral and Priory of St Mary, Coventry*, (Coventry, Coventry City Council 2003).

¹⁷ The damage was most probably caused when the clamps joining the blocks were roughly torn out to recover the lead used to secure them.

out on the joint face of one mullion for an iron bar that would have supported the panel of glass. The complete window either formed part of a glazed cloister arcade or came from a church. Further stones from the jambs and sills of other windows with simple chamfer mouldings are also present but not in sufficient quantity to allow a reconstruction to be made.



Figure 4. Stones G105, G016, G107 reassembled to form a late-medieval window head, scale in centimeters

The second category consists of sections with foliage decoration that formed part of larger structures and these can be further divided into distinct groups. The first of these, group 1, consists of a number of limestone angled blocks from octagonal features, with sides of either 220-30mm or 260-70mm, both having hollow backs and, where enough survives to be measured, a height of c.250mm. and a thickness of between 140mm and 180mm (Fig. 5). Two further very damaged blocks appear to have come from a similar but smaller feature with sides of less than 210mm. Some of the 220-30mm sized blocks include a blank face.



Figure 5. Section of octagonal feature, G063 with offset roundels containing foliage. Photo credit: Trevor Clayton

None of the pieces is complete but each has one or more faces ornamented with a range of strongly characterised plants set within deeply undercut circles with chamfered edges, all with the same diameter of 150mm. The roundels are either centred on the face of the block or offset and where the lining up marks survive on the joint face these are invariably in line with the centres of the motifs. In one case the foliage has been replaced by a human face, of which only the lower half survives (Fig. 6).



Figure 6. Stone G066 with grotesque head replacing the foliage in the left-hand roundel. Photo credit: Trevor Clayton

The foliage designs are based on natural plant forms with single specimens and sometimes also short sections of stem included, and this provides a date at the end of the 13th century for the carvings (Fig. 7). Following earlier examples from the mid-13th century in France, English masons produced work based on closely observed plants for a short period in the late 13th century, most notably in the chapter house of Southwell Minster - the famous 'Leaves of Southwell', from after 1290 (Fig. 8). Further examples can be seen in work of the 1280s and 1290s at Lincoln cathedral, in the later work on the Angel Choir and cloister, and at York Minster in the chapter house.¹⁸



Figure 7. Stone G092 showing the naturalistic treatment of the foliage and its stems. Photo credit: Trevor Clayton

¹⁸ Paul Williamson, *Gothic Sculpture, 1140-1300*, (New Haven and London, Yale 1995), p. 213.



Figure 8. Detail of the chapter house doorway at Southwell Minster

Although the foliage is depicted naturalistically, precise identification of the plants is limited by the constraints of the material and by the question of scale since all the plants have been carved to fit the space within the roundels. It would also be simplistic to assume that the carvers were intending to produce botanically precise sculpture. Despite this, tentative identification of the less damaged carvings suggests that we have examples derived from field maple, white bryony, and possibly ivy and a form of buttercup. There are also two examples of a plant resembling cuckoo pint, with its cowled spadix and associated heart-shaped leaves (Fig. 7), and a single flower head with a prominent centre and four petals that may represent the mallow.¹⁹ The carvings show different plants on adjacent faces and most have their leaves arranged symmetrically. Some designs are repeated and one type with five lobes appears six or seven times, it may be based on white bryony (Fig. 7). The

¹⁹ I am grateful for the help of Venetia Barrington in determining the probable plant specimens depicted.

lobes end in a group of three triangular sections and this type also appears on a block with a foliage trail (see below).

The blocks can be fitted together to make octagonal courses each of four sections with joints at the midpoint or end of one side and on some there are cut-outs for metal clamps to secure them, as well as traces of mortar on the joint beds (Fig. 9). The difference in size of 50-60mm between the three sets of stones would have been too great for the blocks to have belonged to a single feature but would not have been noticeable in a row of them.



Figure 9. Joint bed of G089 with socket for metal clamp and lining up marks inscribed. Photo credit: Trevor Clayton

The larger blocks can be reassembled to make a single ornamented course, whereas the smaller blocks most probably came from single courses of two features. Closely associated with the carved blocks are dismantled sections of two plain octagonal capitals with simple mouldings of a size suitable for either larger size of block (Fig. 10), and there are further sections of shallower mouldings (Fig. 11).



**Figure 10. G055, section of octagonal capital with hollow back.
Photo credit: Trevor Clayton**



**Figure 11. G053, moulding from lower section of chimney.
Photo credit: Trevor Clayton**

A linking feature of all these fragments, including the capitals and mouldings, is that they have hollow, curved backs which when reassembled form a central void of c. 330mm diameter (Fig. 12). They therefore can be reconstructed as parts of several vertical structures

unsupported by surrounding masonry, most probably a set of medieval chimneys (Fig. 13).²⁰

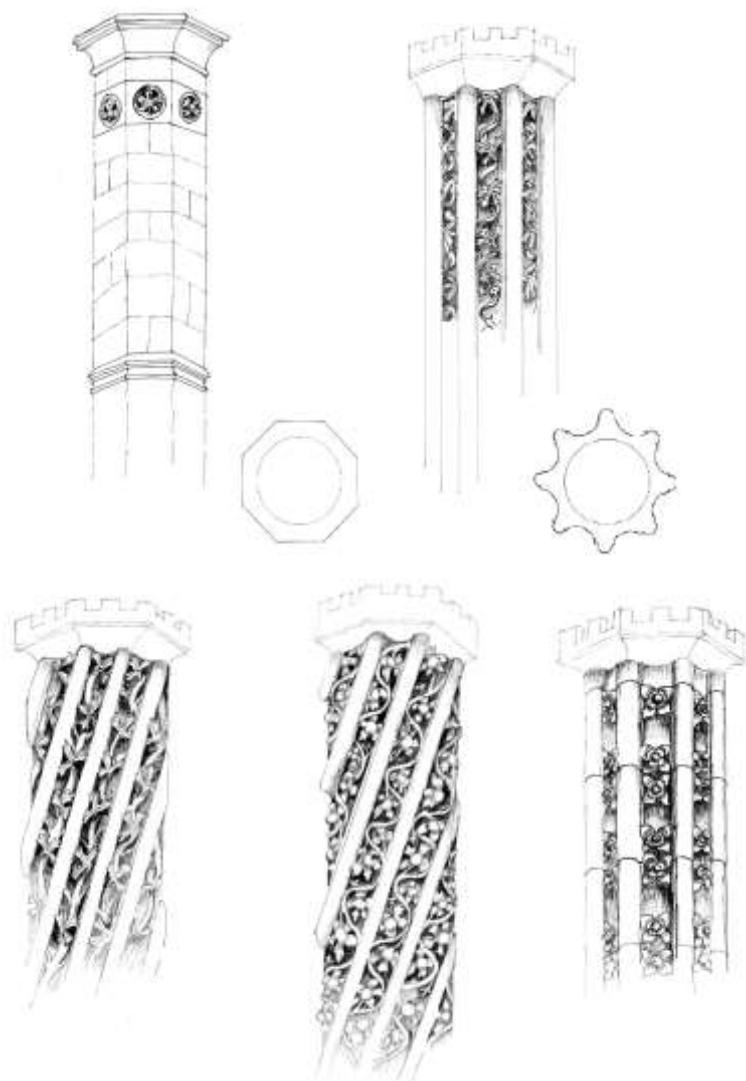


Figure 12. G055, G056, and G057 reassembled to form the chimney capital

It is very unlikely that these pieces have come from columns supporting an arcade in an aisled building such as a church or hall. Medieval builders either constructed piers from sectional but solid blocks of coursed stone, or, for larger columnar examples, created an outer skin of dressed stone and filled the centres with rubble and mortar. In the latter case the backs of the facing stones were left unfinished so that the mortar would adhere better, and it was not the case that a regular curved surface was used.

The courses with the smaller sized faces including a blank face most probably come from a pair of chimneys that would have been joined together at the base and at the top by projecting capstones, and several of the lower mouldings have evidence of having been paired originally. An example of this type is the pair of chimneys on the late medieval Archbishop's Palace at Southwell, Nottinghamshire, restored in the 19th century but shown on earlier topographical drawings (Fig. 14).

²⁰ My thanks to Stuart Harrison for this suggestion.



**Figure 13. Reconstruction sketch of the five chimney types, not to scale.
 Left to right, group 1, plus plan, group 2 with plan shared by groups 2-4, group
 3, group 4, group 5,**



Figure 14. Restored pair of late-medieval chimneys at the Archbishop's Palace, Southwell

Chimneys have featured in buildings since at least the 12th century, although initially reserved for smaller buildings or for use where a central hearth was impractical. Later examples can be seen on the lodgings ranges of large houses where the higher level servants were given individual heated chambers with fireplaces, such as Gainsborough Old Hall, Lincolnshire, or Wingfield Manor, Derbyshire, both from the 15th century.²¹ Chimney shapes vary from square, lozenge-shaped, polygonal

²¹ For chimneys see Valentine Fletcher, *Chimney Pots and Stacks*, (Fontwell, Centaur Press 1968); LeRoy Dresbeck, 'The Chimney and Social Change in

or round but are vulnerable to high winds and lightning strikes and the hot gases passing through the flues weaken the joints of the stonework which means that their survival is patchy and many medieval examples have been lost. A number of examples have been recovered in excavations, particularly at castle sites such as Old Sarum castle, Wiltshire, from the second quarter of the 12th century, Tonbridge castle gatehouse, Kent, from the mid-13th century, or Conisbrough castle, Yorkshire, from the first quarter of the 14th century.²² In each of these cases the chimneys have been ornamented with bands of sculptural enrichment.

The 14th-century clergy houses in the Vicars' Close at Wells, Somerset, have a very fine set of tall octagonal stone chimneys finished with traceried ornamental tops that provide examples of high-status medieval chimneys and are prominently placed on the facades of the houses (Fig. 15).²³ The smoke openings are derived from those of roof-top louvres above central hearths. Naish Priory, Somerset, a 15th-century gatehouse, has an octagonal chimney with an ornamented course at the top of a similar type to that reconstructed at Burton Lazars.²⁴ A close parallel for Burton Lazars, in the extent if not the form of its decoration, is the hexagonal chimney on the gable at Northborough Manor House, near Peterborough, from c. 1320-40 which is decorated with traceried

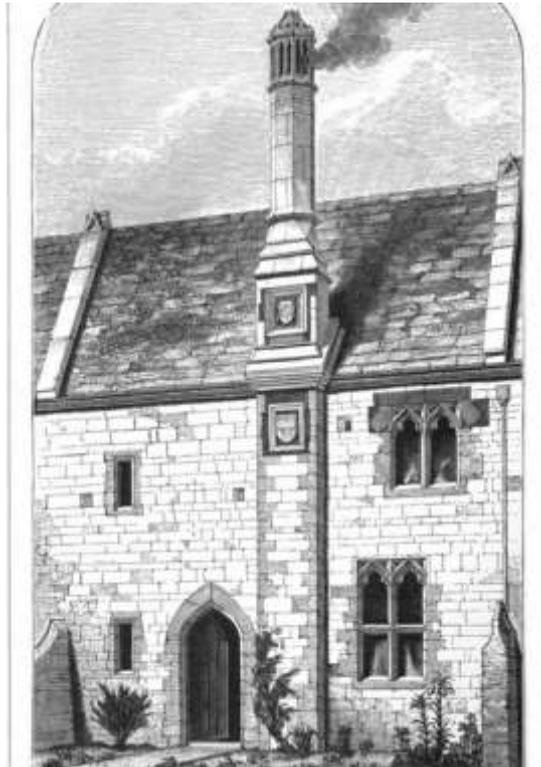
Medieval England', *Albion* 3/1 (1971), pp. 21-32; L.F. Salzman, *Building in England down to 1540*, (Oxford, Clarendon Press 1952) 2nd edn 1967, pp. 99-100, refers to the early 14th-century London ordinance requiring chimneys to be made of stone, tile or brick.

²² For Old Sarum see, Margaret Wood, *The English Medieval House*, (London, Phoenix House 1965), pl. XLIVe; Tonbridge, Derek Renn, 'Tonbridge and some other Gatehouses', in A. Detsicas, (ed.), *Collectanea Historica: Essays in Memory of Stuart Rigold*, (Kent Archaeological Society 1981), pp. 93-104, at pp. 97-98; Conisborough, Stephen Johnson, 'Excavations at Conisborough Castle 1973-77', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* 52 (1980), pp. 59-88.

²³ John Henry Parker, *The Architectural Antiquities of the City of Wells*, (London, James Parker and Co. 1866), pl. xxiv, the caption adds that the engraving shows the facade of one of the vicars' houses from 1360, unaltered.

²⁴ Anthony Emery, *Greater Medieval Houses of England and Wales, 1300-1500*, (Cambridge, CUP 2006), vol. 3, Southern England, pp. 598-600.

gables, crockets and large finials beneath a ball-flower frieze and battlemented top (Fig. 16).²⁵ Melbourne Castle, Derbyshire, is a lost building but a survey drawing made of it in 1561 shows the set of stone chimneys, some of which are medieval and have mouldings and various designs of decorated bands closely comparable to Burton's examples (Fig. 17).²⁶



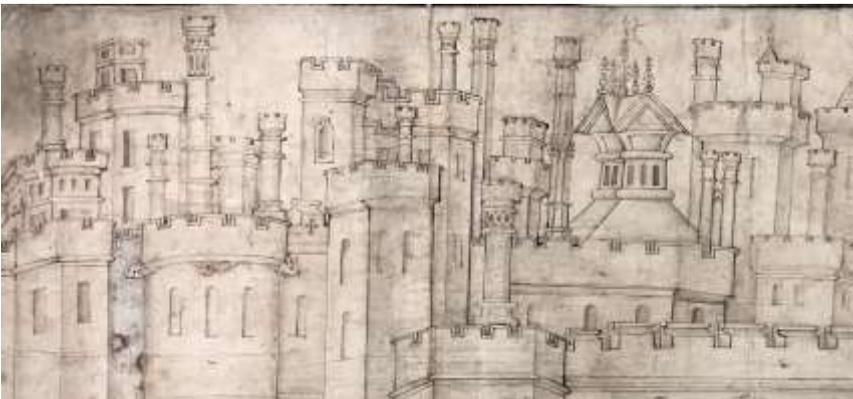
**Figure 15. 14th-century chimney on a house in Vicars' Close, Wells, Somerset.
From Parker 1866**

²⁵ Charles O'Brien and Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England, Bedfordshire, Huntingdonshire and Peterborough*, (New Haven and London, Yale 2014), pp. 573-574.

²⁶ The National Archive, ref MCP 1/95.



Figure 16. Gable chimney on Northborough Manor House



**Figure 17. Detail of the 1561 survey drawing of Melbourne Castle, Derbyshire.
TNA Ref. MCP 1/95. Photo credit: Rosie Wright**

The second group is made up of stones from further vertical features that were smaller than the octagonal ones, but considerably more elaborate, and they can also be reconstructed as chimneys. Four different designs can be identified, with either straight or diagonal rolls set between foliage. The roll mouldings are equally spaced and laid out in an octagonal arrangement although the visual effect is that the final structure will have appeared to be circular (Fig. 13).

Group 2A. The pieces that make up this group form courses of vertical rolls and fillets between foliage trails of naturalistic leaves joined by long ribbons (Figs 1 and 18). The leaves are tall rather than wide and have four or five fronds ending in three unequal points. There are similarities between this leaf type and one of those found on the octagonal sections with the same tri-lobed ends to the leaves and deeply recessed veins (Fig. 7, right roundel).



**Figure 18. G090, foliage trail with ribbons and roll moulding.
Photo credit: Trevor Clayton**

The leaves are widely spaced and the ribbon emerges from the tip of one leaf before twisting to form the stem of the next one. The better preserved stones show some variety in the depictions of the leaves within one course with convex and concave versions on adjacent faces. Two

fragments may have been positioned at the top or bottom of the sequence as the fillet next to the roll moulding continues at right angles behind the foliage. Lining up marks to locate the centres of the spaces between the mouldings are found on three blocks with joint beds surviving.

Group 2B. This group of stones are similar in scale, but with diagonal roll mouldings, and naturalistic leaves that are joined by long fleshy stems having additional short leaf spurs curved around the trilobe leaves (Fig. 19). It is noticeable that the stems and leaves extend further over the fillets beside the roll mouldings in this group. The leaves are depicted as convex rather than concave and have three-lobe fronds. Very few of these pieces are more than fragments, and the less damaged sections retain only two rolls with associated foliage. Two further pieces were left in the rockery as they had been trapped beneath the roots of a tree.



Figure 19. G052, foliage with naturalistic leaves and stems between diagonal rolls. Photo credit: Trevor Clayton

Group 2C. These stones share the same type of diagonal roll mouldings but the foliage design is quite different, resembling an undulating cabbage leaf or bulbous seaweed, and is the sort of formalised foliage which replaced naturalism in the 1320s-30s (Fig. 20). The distances between the rolls are slightly larger in this group and the rolls measure 30

55mm instead of 50mm, but the thickness of the blocks is very similar to the other members of the foliage group and the reconstructed internal diameter remains the same. Survival of larger pieces is better in this set and several have three roll mouldings with parts of their adjacent foliage (Fig. 21). These sections make up more than a quarter of a circle and would therefore have needed to be combined with smaller sections of two roll mouldings to complete each course, of which two sections have survived.



Figure 20. G049, post-naturalistic foliage between diagonal rolls.

Photo credit: Trevor Clayton



Figure 21. G048, section of similar feature to G049, with three roll mouldings surviving. Photo credit: Trevor Clayton

Group 2D. The final group has a foliage design which also moves away from naturalism with fleurons carved in the hollows between the roll mouldings, and these revert to the vertical. The carving is shallower than those of the other foliage types and the blocks are therefore slightly thicker although the spaces between the fleurons are cut back to a similar thickness as the foliage examples. The fleurons are positioned close to the joint bed and most of the blocks have only one row of fleurons present. One has two rows with a gap approximately equal to the size of the fleuron between them (Fig. 22). Only three fragments retain more than one roll moulding. Although the basic design of four stylised petals around a prominent centre is common to all the pieces, there is some variation in the execution and one has smaller petals, whereas the rest have larger and more tightly packed ones.



Figure 22. G051, two rows of fleurons between rolls, note the proximity to the joint beds. Photo credit: Trevor Clayton

Despite their differences the blocks from the four groups are all from features of a similar size and have the same hollow curved backs as the octagonal blocks, but with deep undercutting behind the foliage which reduces the thickness of the original blocks to a minimum of 35-

40mm with a maximum thickness of 130mm at the roll (Figs 13 and 23). The internal diameter is c. 300mm. No capitals have been identified for this group. Since the final structures will have been smaller and narrower than the octagonal chimneys, they were therefore probably not as tall and may have been used on gable ends.



**Figure 23. Plan view of Figure 21 showing the thinness of the block.
Photo credit: Trevor Clayton**

Naturalistic foliage linked by a curving stems is found on the outer portal to the 14th-century porch at Melton Mowbray church where it occurs on three orders of the arch and on the hoodmould as part of a rich scheme that includes ball-flower ornament (Fig. 24). Although badly eroded, the arch seems to have had the same sort of late-naturalistic, and deeply undercut, foliage as the pieces in the second sub-group, although not by the same mason, and was most probably built c. 1330. The bubbly seaweed or cabbage-type leaf is first found in the second quarter of the 14th century, and the stylised fleurons appear at about the same date. Both types of carving can be seen together on the pulpitum screens of Lincoln Cathedral and Southwell Minster from the 1330s (Fig. 25).



**Figure 24. Melton Mowbrary parish church,
detail of the west door from c.1330**



**Figure 25. Lincoln Cathedral pulpitum with fleur-de-lis and post-naturalistic
foliage used together, from the 1330s**

Formalised foliage had a long life which continued throughout the medieval period up to the Reformation. The fireplace in the abbot's lodging at Muchelney Abbey, Somerset, for example, has two runs of foliage, one a vine scroll with curving stems, leaves and fruit, and the other with leaves on naturalistic stems, and in both cases the leaves have the bubbly cabbage-leaf design (Fig. 26). The foliage is combined with a quatrefoil frieze characteristic of the building's construction date in the 1460s-70s.²⁷ It is therefore feasible for the two chimneys with these types of foliage to have been a 15th-century addition to a building at Burton Lazars.



Figure 26. Fireplace in the abbot's lodging at Muchelney Abbey, Somerset, from the 1460s-70s

Chimneys covered in ornament are more familiar from the period in which brick was used and complex patterns were created from special

²⁷ Emery 2006, pp. 596-598.

moulds, such as those found on great houses in the south-east of England after c. 1450, but elaborate stone versions have also been recorded and these represent a continuation of a medieval tradition. Lacock Abbey, Wiltshire, has examples in stone that consist of a succession of chevrons together with other elaborately finished chimneys from the period of the remodelling to create a house in the 1540-50s (Fig. 27).²⁸ A further early-Tudor building, Thornbury Castle, Gloucestershire, from the first quarter of the 16th century, has both stone and brick spiral pattern chimneys (Fig. 28).²⁹ A group of houses in the south-west built of Ham Hill stone display a rich assortment of elaborate stone chimneys. Barrington Court in Somerset from the middle of the 16th century has stone chimneys and tall finials to all gables of the same type of design, based on spirals with octagonal shallow capstones.³⁰ Mapperton House in Dorset is of similar date and stone, and also has spiral stone chimneys over the gable ends of the north range of the building from the mid-16th century.³¹ The Burton Lazars examples therefore represent a rare survival of the medieval predecessors of these later chimneys that developed from the simpler octagonal form with a band of ornament to one with the designs spread across the whole surface that was to dominate in the early-modern period.

²⁸ Harold Brakspear, 'Lacock Abbey, Wilts.', *Archaeologia* 57 (1900), pp. 125-58.

²⁹ Maurice Howard, *The Early Tudor Country House*, (London, George Philip 1987), pp. 57-58.

³⁰ Nicholas Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry 1480-1680*, (New Haven and London, Yale 1999), pp. 75-78.

³¹ Michael Hill, John Newman and Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England, Dorset*, 2nd edn, (New Haven and London, Yale 2018), pp 380-382.



Figure 27. Lacock Abbey, Wiltshire, chevron patterned chimneys on the converted monastic range from 1540s-50s



Figure 28. Stone and brick ornamented chimneys at Thornton Castle, Gloucestershire from the early 16th century

Original building type

We now need to consider the type of buildings that this collection of stonework would have come from. The three pieces of tracery from a single window will have been part of a large church, possibly the collegiate church suggested by David Marcombe to have been built by Master William Sutton in the middle of the 15th century,³² or from a remodelling of the canons' cloister at a similar date. The chimneys, however, would have come from a domestic building, or row of buildings on the site.

As noted above, private chambers or suites of smaller rooms used by members of households or staff are the most likely places to find fireplaces and the chimneys would have reflected the status of the buildings by being more, or less, decorated. There is, however, a marked shortage of evidence for the form and appearance of buildings of the order. William Page, in describing Locko, Derbyshire, noted it to be, 'the only regular preceptory of the Lazarite order in England of which we have found any record', and this does not include any information about its buildings.³³ At Burton, David Marcombe, despite detailed study of the order, found, 'a shortage of documentary and archaeological material for almost all periods before 1500', and his conclusion that the order's combination of roles made it a sort of hybrid, embodying elements from military orders, monastic life and the treatment of lepers, suggests that providing an architectural context for Burton Lazar's buildings and collection of stone will not be straightforward.³⁴

The earthworks on the site at Burton Lazars have been surveyed and a tentative plan for the site suggests that a larger and a smaller courtyard were built here, with at least one or possibly more gatehouses.

³² Marcombe 2003, pp. 92-93.

³³ William Page (ed.), *Victoria County History, Derbyshire*, vol. 2 (London, HMSO 1907), pp. 77-78.

³⁴ Of the twelve houses linked to Burton Lazars none has any standing fabric surviving, no sites retain clear evidence for the type or form of their buildings and little investigation has been undertaken at any of them. Marcombe 2003, pp. 2, 6, 67, 70.

Fish ponds and associated features were identified to the north west of the site and the perimeter was surrounded by banks and ditches.³⁵ None of these features can be dated without excavation, but references in documents, such as the Burton Lazars Cartulary of 1404 which mention a gatehouse, courtyard, chapter house and chapel, give some indication about buildings on the site in the later medieval period.³⁶

The order of St Lazarus had been established in the early 12th century in Jerusalem to provide military service and charitable functions through hospitals for those suffering from leprosy.³⁷ It reached Britain soon after and by the end of the century the Master of Burton Lazars had jurisdiction over the other houses of the order in Britain, and it must therefore have been an important site, while changes in the responsibilities of the Master as the organisation and purpose of the order evolved would doubtless have been reflected in the alteration or reconstruction of its buildings. In particular, the change of purpose of the order from being an administrative centre for the financial support of the order in the east to having a more generalised charitable function within Britain after 1291 may have required a rethinking of its sites and buildings. As Rafaël Hyacinthe argues, a more overtly charitable role would have made the order more acceptable within post-1291 society than one dedicated to supporting an overseas organisation.³⁸

Burton's role as a house for a military order invites comparison with buildings of similar orders, the preceptory of the Templars at South

³⁵ A.E. Brown, 'Burton Lazars, Leicestershire: A Planned Medieval Landscape?', *Landscape History* 18 (1996), pp. 31-45.

³⁶ Marcombe 2003, p. 148.

³⁷ Marcombe 2003, p. 9.

³⁸ Rafaël Hyacinthe, 'Crisis what crisis? The "Waning" of the Order of St Lazarus after the Crusades', in Helen Nicholson, (ed.), *On the Margins of Crusading: The Military Orders, the Papacy and the Christian World* (Farnham, Ashgate 2011), pp. 177-193.

Witham in Lincolnshire providing a possible exemplar.³⁹ South Witham, however, more closely resembles a working manor with a chapel, than the type of site Burton would have been, so parallels might more usefully be sought amongst other complexes.

Burton Lazars is described in the documentary record from the 12th century onwards as a hospital, with the canons following the Augustinian rule, and it is this dual aspect that will have become more prominent in the later period.⁴⁰ In Burton's case although it continued to be described as a hospital for lepers it is clear that its later role was a more general one of providing charitable support for the sick, and elderly, to administer a growing confraternity of lay people and to issue indulgences, much of which would have been compatible with a hospital function.⁴¹

Comparison with other medieval hospitals is likely to be useful here and excavation at key sites has provided the opportunity to understand their layout. One of the most extensive and wealthy was that of St Leonard in York. It consisted of a church with bell tower and cloister for the canons and a chapel for the hospital that was served by secular

³⁹ Its excavation has produced the most complete plan of a house of the military orders in Britain. Philip Mayes *et al.*, *Excavations at a Templar Preceptory, South Witham, Lincolnshire 1965-67*, The Society for Medieval Archaeology Monograph 19 (2002).

⁴⁰ For example, Gaulby church in Leicestershire had been given to the, 'hospital of Burton Lazars' by William Burdet before 1184, W.G. Hoskins and R.A. McKinley (eds), *Victoria County History, Leicestershire*, vol. 2 (London, HMSO 1954), pp. 36-9. The house was described as 'the hospital of Burton Seynt Lazer without the walls of Jerusalem in England' in May 1372, *Calendar Close Rolls Edward III, 1369-1374*, (London, HMSO 1911), p. 431. The papal bull separating Burton from the French mother-house of Boigny in 1479 and placing it directly under the pope's jurisdiction, refers to the 'brethren of the Lazar house or hospital of Burton', J.A. Twemlow, (ed.), Vatican Regesta 547, *Bullarum Secretarum Lib. II Tom. II, Calendar of Papal Registers relating to Great Britain and Ireland*, vol. 13, 1471-84, (London, HMSO 1955), p. 2.

⁴¹ The 1479 papal bull specifies that care of 14 lepers was a requirement, Twemlow 1955, p. 2, and Marcombe 2003, pp. 181-94.

priests, with buildings to house the canons, the regular sisters, choristers, and their servants, and for the secular priests and their household. Its plan of a double courtyard was used to provide separate parts of the site for the hospital buildings and for the canons as two distinct entities, with the canons not directly engaged in the work of the hospital.⁴²

York's plan is one that has been identified at a number of sites, for example it was used at St Mary Spital, London specifically to effect a segregation between the religious and secular elements in two distinct zones. The largest building on the site was the infirmary hall, to which a chapel was directly attached.⁴³ At smaller sites where there might only be a cloister for the canons the service buildings such as the kitchens would be shared between the two zones and positioned between them to create the separation, as at St Mary Ospringe in Kent.⁴⁴

The infirmary halls at sites such as St Mary Spital invite comparison with surviving medieval hospitals in France, such as Tonnerre, where large open halls provided accommodation for the inmates and a small chapel occupied the far end of the building. The Hospital of Notre Dame des Fontenilles, Tonnerre, (Yonne), was founded in 1293 as a *maison dieu* by Marguerite of Burgundy who died in 1308. The Tonnerre infirmary has a timber roof to the hall and stone vault to the chapel (Fig.

⁴² 'St Leonard's Hospital', in *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the City of York, vol. 5 Central* (London, HMSO 1981), pp. 93-95, William Page (ed.) *Victoria County History, A History of the County of York, vol. 3*, (London, HMSO 1974), pp. 336-346. A 1364 visitation makes a specific reference to a chimney that was to be provided in the conversion of a building underneath the infirmary which housed abandoned infants and children, 'lest the smoke should harm the children'. In consideration of the actual hospital buildings, there are numerous examples to cite and their purposes can be determined, see Roberta Gilchrist, *Contemplation and Action: The Other Monasticism*, (London, Leicester University Press, 1995), especially chapter 2.

⁴³ Martin Huggon, 'Medieval Medicine, Public Health and the Medieval Hospital', in C. Gerrard and A. Gutierrez (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Late Medieval Archaeology*, (Oxford, OUP 2018), pp. 836-855.

⁴⁴ Huggon 2018, pp. 847-848.

29). The inmates occupied cubicles along both sides of the hall, which was lit by windows placed high in the wall, while the relative status of the hall and chapel was reflected in the greater elaboration of the windows in the chapel.⁴⁵



Figure 29. Tonnerre, Yonne, the 13th-century infirmary hall now used as an exhibition centre

Burton's plan would fit the model well and the two courtyards identified by Brown would have permitted the master of the order and his staff to maintain their role as canons and administrators in a separate part of the site from that used by the hospital.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Lynn T. Courtenay, 'The Hospital of Notre Dame des Fontenilles at Tonnerre: Medicine as *Misericordia*', in Barbara S. Bowers, (ed.), *The Medieval Hospital and Medical Practice*, (Farnham, Ashgate 2007), pp. 77-106.

⁴⁶ Brown 1996, p. 33.

The excavations mentioned have not revealed the form, or level of accommodation, of the Master's house, but other sites have been more informative. Ledbury St Katherine's had the Master's house in the centre of the site, and it had its own complex of solar, hall and service range with a kitchen.⁴⁷ At Burton Lazar's possession, St Giles Holborn, the Master's house was large enough to provide accommodation for a chaplain, a clerk and a messenger in separate rooms as well as a suite of rooms for the Master.⁴⁸ At St John's, Lichfield, the refounding of the 12th-century hospital as an alms-house in the 15th century led to the reworking of the infirmary hall as a substantial three-storied house for the Master, with new accommodation in the form of single heated chambers, built as lodgings for the inmates.⁴⁹

Wealthier hospital sites such as the Savoy Hospital in London, or St Cross Hospital Winchester, included accommodation for the Master and his household in a separate suite of buildings, both to reflect the status of the office holder and to provide a place to conduct the administration of the site and its estates.⁵⁰ At both places the Master's lodgings were at the outer edge of the precinct, at St Cross in the Gate Tower and adjoining wing, and at the Savoy on the west side immediately behind the Great Gate, with gardens in front. The Masters would therefore have had ready access to the outside world and visitors on business could be admitted without disturbing either the work of the canons, or of the hospital. We know that Burton Lazar's Master had a separate lodging by at least the mid-15th century, and would have

⁴⁷ Martin Huggon, 'The Archaeology of the Medieval Hospitals of England and Wales, 1066-1540', unpublished PhD thesis, Sheffield University, 2018, p. 235.

⁴⁸ Marcombe 2003, p. 169.

⁴⁹ M. Greenslade and R.B. Pugh (eds), *Victoria County History, A History of the County of Stafford* vol. 3 (London, HMSO 1970), pp. 279-289.

⁵⁰ H.M. Colvin, *The History of the King's Works* vol. 3 1485-1660 (Part 1), (London, HMSO, 1975), pp. 196-206. M. Bullen, et al., *The Buildings of England, Hampshire: Winchester and the North*, (New Haven and London, Yale, 2010), pp. 710-725.

certainly needed a similar form of accommodation from the late 13th century onwards, if not before.⁵¹

The Burton Lazars Master's lodge would have been a suitable site for ornate chimneys, and a date in the early 14th century for two designs places them at a time when building work was more likely to have taken place than in the second quarter of the century when the French connections of the order and the growing political unease in the country would have created a particularly unsettled time for Burton and its dependent houses.⁵²

The other two chimney designs, which may have been from a much later period, could have come from an extension of the Master's house, or possibly from a different type of building such as the lodgings for corrodians. St Giles, Holborn is known to have provided accommodation for these people and in one example, John Plompton, who was admitted as a corrodian at St Giles in 1372, was to be given accommodation described as 'a chamber with a chimney and a wardrobe'.⁵³ While not all corrodians were of the status of the retired dean of Lincoln who took up residence at Louth Park Abbey in the mid-13th century in a newly-built hall with its own chapel in the infirmary, retired lay folk would have expected to have had private heated quarters and wealthier ones might well have had more luxurious versions.⁵⁴ Housing for corrodians would have been like that found in alms-houses,

⁵¹ On 17th June 1450 Pope Nicholas V granted an indult to allow Master William Sutton to conduct early services in his lodge as the permit was for a portable altar for use in his house, 'on which they may have mass etc even before daybreak, in presence of themselves and the members of their household'. J.A. Twemlow, (ed.), *Vatican Regesta 396, Calendar of Papal Registers relating to Great Britain and Ireland*, vol. 10, 1447-55, (London, HMSO 1915), pp. 91-97.

⁵² Marcombe 2003, p. 76.

⁵³ Marcombe 2003 p. 163.

⁵⁴ E. Venables, (ed.), *Chronicon abbatie de Parco Lude, The Chronicle of Louth Park Abbey*, Lincoln Record Society vol. 1 (Lincoln, W.K. Morton, 1891).

which in turn resembled the lodgings ranges of great houses, and chambers would have had fireplaces and chimneys. Had provision been made for higher status corrodians at Burton Lazars then it is possible that their chambers would have had ornate chimneys, but this is impossible to verify in the absence of documentary evidence.

As a hospital, rather than a monastic or mendicant site, its closure during the Dissolution was not automatic, its wealth had been assessed in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* of 1535, but there is no record that Burton Lazars surrendered until the order was suppressed in 1544 and its property reassigned. Leland commented that Burton had, 'a veri fair hospital and collegiate chirch' on his visit to Leicestershire in the period after the mid-1530s, he otherwise makes reference to monastic houses in the same journey as 'late, or "lately", suppressid', and clearly Burton was not amongst them.⁵⁵

It is hard to determine the amount of demolition that took place during this period, there is one piece of evidence that seems to suggest that its buildings had been taken down, but the source is problematic. Nichols cites William Wyrley's description of Burton Lazars, '*...ubi ruinae monasterii eorum videntur ad Australem partem parietis*', which Nichols dates to 1569, but without giving evidence for the date.⁵⁶ The information is in an undated notebook recording Wyrley's visits to churches in the county, which probably happened between 1598-1609 in preparation for the heralds' visitation in 1619.⁵⁷ It is also possible that in referring to the ruins of the 'monastery' being on the 'south' part of the site that he was instead describing the grange buildings belonging to Vaudey Abbey, dissolved in 1536, since that lay to the south. Wyrley also worked with William Burton whose *Description of Leicestershire* was compiled after

⁵⁵ L. Toulmin Smith, (ed.), *Leland's Itinerary in England and Wales*,. vol. 4, (London, Centaur Press 1964), p. 19. The *Itinerary* is from the period c.1535-43 and the Leicestershire notes have not been more precisely dated.

⁵⁶ Nichols 1795, p. 272, n. 1.

⁵⁷ Marcombe 2003, p. 148, Wyrley's notes are in the College of Arms, Vincent MS 197.

1595 and published in 1622. Burton makes no reference to the state of the site at Burton Lazars, beyond stating that there had been 'a large and faire Hospitall' there, which resembles Leland's comment.⁵⁸

As noted above, Dudley's acquisition of the site in 1544 was part of an expansion of his landholdings across the country and not connected with any intention to establish residences for himself at his new properties, including Burton Lazars, preferring instead to draw rents from the properties. At Fotheringhay, Northamptonshire, for example, he took over the dissolved college associated with the Yorkist mausoleum, and leased it out to a member of Sir Walter Mildmay's staff in the same year as he rented out Burton.⁵⁹ Dudley's rental for Burton Lazars in 1548 described it as, 'the site of the manor and mansion house... with stables, gardens and a dovecote'.⁶⁰ The use of the word, 'mansion' suggests a large house possibly of some architectural significance, but that is not the meaning that the word had in the 16th century or before.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* cites earlier uses of 'mansion' to have much broader meanings. St John's Hostel, a lodging in Cambridge, was described as 'a mansion or hospicium' in 1444, and in 1509 a property in Oxford was listed as a 'Tenement or Mansion called the Lyon', clearly these were other than high-status buildings. An alternative use of the word was for the dwelling of an ecclesiastic or for a house of any sort and it is clear that the term does not carry any connotation of size or status. The addition of the stables, garden and a dovecote does imply that it offered more than basic accommodation, but this is unlikely to mean that Dudley had arranged for the construction of a new house on the site. It is

⁵⁸ William Burton, *The Description of Leicestershire*, (London 1622), pp. 63-64.

⁵⁹ Dudley may have arranged for the destruction of Fotheringhay's college buildings but not the chancel of the church as has been claimed, see Sofija Matich and Jennifer S. Alexander, 'Creating and Recreating the Yorkist tombs in Fotheringhay Church (Northamptonshire)', *Journal of the Church Monuments Society* 26 (2011), pp. 82-103. Sir Walter Mildmay was a close associate of Northumberland's son, John Dudley.

⁶⁰ Marcombe 2003, p. 235.

much more likely that the 'mansion' was an existing building such as the Master's lodge, which would have been suitable for immediate use as a dwelling by a new user without the need for conversion or rebuilding. Many of the dissolved monasteries had their most obviously domestic buildings, such as abbots' lodgings, turned into houses in the 16th century, such as Muchelney, mentioned above, where modifications were made to the cloister to extend the dwelling, or Forde in Devon for which the last abbot before the house was dissolved had just completed a new porch and hall to his lodging in a Renaissance style, and in both cases these became houses for seculars.⁶¹ There is no trace of the house on the Burton Lazars' site now although the outlines a garden that might have been associated with it have been identified.⁶² The 'mansion house' at Burton Lazars that Nichols laconically reports was, 'blown down' in high winds in 1705, may well have been this building, and the discarded pile of stone from its chimneys joined the scrapheap already occupied by the fragments of the hospital church.⁶³

⁶¹ Emery 2006, p. 597, and pp. 560-565.

⁶² Brown 1996, p. 33.

⁶³ Nichols 1795, p. 268.