

THE Priory of Seaton or Lekeley¹ was founded by Henry, son of Arthur, son of Godard, lord of Millom,² towards the end of the twelfth century as a house of Benedictine nuns, and was dedicated to St Mary.³ No seal is previously recorded and no register is known: “nor, from the paucity of the revenues, is it likely that one was ever made”.⁴

Seaton clearly was very poor and, despite a number of minor appropriations, it remained poor. On 13 November 1227, “in consideration of their poverty”, it was granted the church of Irton.⁵ On 1 April 1357, in an attempt to alleviate their plight, Henry, Duke of Lancaster, granted to the prioress and nuns the hospital of St Leonard, Lancaster, with power to appoint a chantry priest to officiate there.⁶ The abbey of Holm Cultram also appeared to offer them some support, in 1450, with the lease of lands in Lekeley.⁷ But life must have been very difficult given the relative isolation and the poverty. The gross income of Seaton was found to be £13 17s. 4d. for the tax assessment in the year before the dissolution of the house.⁸ After dissolution, when there were only two nuns and a novice, the gross income was found by the royal custodian to be £24 17s.⁹ Even so this is a very low figure. Whilst any such figures should be viewed with a degree of circumspection, Knowles and Hadcock provide the 1535 net income for 72 Benedictine nunneries and show that only 17 of these had incomes of less than £25.¹⁰

Details of the prioresses and the nuns are very scarce but the records of Agecroft Hall throw light on the story of one inmate, identify a hitherto unrecorded prioress and provide an insight into the complexities of ecclesiastical law at that time.¹¹

Adam de Prestwich (c.1260-1316) owned three Lancashire manors – Prestwich, Alkington and Pendlebury.¹² On his death, Prestwich and Alkington descended via his wife Alice Wolveley, to their eldest son, Thomas and his heirs, while the younger son, Robert, received Pendlebury, with remainder to his sister Alice, who married Jordan Tetlow.

In 1331 Thomas Prestwich granted to Richard, son of William Radcliffe, his lands in Prestwich, Alkington and Pendlebury for life in fee.¹³ The grant of Pendlebury was successfully disputed by his brother Robert Prestwich but in 1333 the grant of Prestwich and Alkington was confirmed.

In about 1345/6 Thomas de Prestwich died leaving two infant daughters, Margaret and Agnes, as joint heiresses of his manors.¹⁴ As the girls were underage they became wards of Henry, Duke of Lancaster. He appointed as guardian for them, Richard Radcliffe, who, as we have seen had lifetime usage of Prestwich and Alkington from Thomas. Before 1350, Margaret, the elder daughter, was sent to the nuns at Seaton and Agnes married John Radcliffe, brother of her guardian Richard.¹⁵ This arrangement was not unusual, despite the youth of the girls. Guardians, who usually paid for the privilege, had the right to benefit from the marriage of their wards and clearly the intent was to gain all the Prestwich land for the Radcliffes. With the profession of Margaret as a nun there would be no obstacle



PLATE 1. Seaton Priory chancel east end, showing the triple lancet windows.

to the inheritance. "A nun, dead in the eyes of the law which governed the world, could claim no share in her father's estate" and the practice of removing young heiresses to a convent for that very purpose was not uncommon.¹⁶ A professed religious by virtue of the vow of poverty could not inherit and exceptions alleging religious profession could be used to thwart a claim to an inheritance.¹⁷ To be a true profession it was essential that the profession was made freely by an unmarried person who was *compos mentis*. In the case of girls the earliest age at which they could enter a religious house as a novice was twelve. A year of probation was required and therefore the earliest age for profession was thirteen.¹⁸

In 1348/9 Robert Prestwich died without issue and, in accordance with the original agreement, Pendlebury passed to his sister Alice Tetlow. When Alice died shortly afterwards, followed by her two sons Robert and Jordan,¹⁹ her daughter Joanna became heiress of both Pendlebury and Tetlow, and third in line for Prestwich after Agnes and Margaret. Now well endowed, Joanna married Richard Langley, whose origins are unclear, but who was probably connected to the Langley family of Middleton, Lancashire.²⁰

Agnes died in about 1361,²¹ perhaps in the second great outbreak of plague. Since she had never borne a child the Radcliffes did not pursue a claim based on her marriage to John Radcliffe, but their life tenancy continued to run. In view of the fact that Margaret was a nun at Seaton, Prestwich now passed to her cousin Joanna Langley. Perhaps realising that she could entertain a claim on the estate, Margaret,

“on the first opportunity . . . went forth from the priory, without leave, and returned to the world, which in her heart she had never left, and married Robert Holland, publicly, after banns, and had issue”.²² For a professed person to abandon the religious life was a very serious matter and was a crime by the general rule of the church and by the constitutions of the various orders. Margaret would have been liable to arrest and forcible return to Seaton and would have been automatically excommunicated.²³ It is difficult to imagine that she could have achieved her escape and return to her home region without serious planning and assistance.

Together they claimed Prestwich as Margaret’s inheritance, and they appear to have initially succeeded, although they could not actually gain possession until the Radcliffes died. The crux of the claim and all subsequent legal actions was the question of the legality of Margaret’s profession.

During the remainder of the tenancy there were many exchanges between the Radcliffes and the Langleys, supporting each other’s claims. In 1362 the Radcliffes confirmed their annual rent of 50 marks silver for Prestwich to be paid to Richard Langley, and his heirs for ever.²⁴ But Margaret and Robert must have presented their case, perhaps with confirmation from the Duke, for in late October 1371 the Radcliffes quit claimed their rights in Prestwich to them:

Be it known &c that we Richard de Radcliffe, senior, and Isabel my wife, have remised and released, and for us and our heirs for ever quit claimed to Robert de Holland and Margaret his wife, all our right and claim which we have or may have in the manor of Prestwyche and in all the lands and tenements &c in Prestwyche with all the appurtenances.

With clause of warranty.

In testimony of which to these presents our seals are affixed.

Given at Radclif on Monday next before the feast of All Saints [1 November] 45 Edward III [1371]²⁵

But, in less than a month the Radcliffes or the Langleys received acknowledgement from Seaton that Margaret had in fact been professed:

Know all men &c that the Lady Margaret de Prestwyche, one of the nuns of Seton, of the age of 15 years and more was professed in the Morrow of St. Katherine the Virgin and Martyr [26 November] Anno Domini 1360 in the presence of Sir John Cragge, Prior of the Abbey of Furnes, and Sir John de Hudelleston, Knight, and lord of Millum, Richard de Cowplond of Furnes, Richard de Hudelleston and others. And the said Lady Margaret on the said day in the presence of the said persons made obeisance to the Prioress of Seton, viz. the lady Ada de Walton, and the said Margaret on the said day confessed before the said persons that she was not coerced nor compelled but voluntarily entered the order of St Benedict in the said house and was professed.

In testimony of which the common seal of the House of the Nuns of Seton to these presents is placed.

Given at Seton in the feast of St. Andrew the Apostle [30 November] 1371.

(To this deed a large oval-shaped seal of white wax is still attached, but it is so much rubbed as to be quite illegible.)²⁶

In July 1372, possibly as a result of this new evidence there appears to have been a reversal of the previous decision in respect of the Prestwich lands, for John of Gaunt’s Registers record that he instructed Thomas Molyneux “guardian of our fees and franchises” that “notwithstanding the previous grant to Robert de Holland, the land is to be taken back by Gaunt and granted to persons other than him and his wife” and in November of the same year he instructed John Botiller, the sheriff of Lancaster to take the manor into his, the Duke’s, hands because of the non age (8)

of the heir, Roger de Langley whose father, Richard, had died before October 1369.²⁷

The Radcliffes continued to occupy Prestwich, and presumably paid their rent to the Duke, until their deaths c. May 1374 when the unfortunate sheriff, John de Botiller of Werynton, came to take formal possession of Prestwich for the Duke:

Whereupon came Robert de Holland on the said Monday with many others assembled together with him, armed in breastplates, and with swords, bows and arrows, and intruded himself and by force took possession of the said lordship of the Duke in presence of the said Sheriff to the great contempt of the said Lord the Duke, *vi et armis* and against the peace. And they say that the said Robert occupied the said manor and took the issue and profits thence arising, the which manor is worth per annum beyond reprises 10 pounds.²⁸

Surprisingly, the Hollands and their growing family remained at Prestwich until the case finally came to court in 1389. In that time they had not been idle. In about 1381 Margaret appealed to Pope Urban VI (1378-89) asking for a dispensation on the grounds that her profession had not been freely given. The Pope instructed the Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield to investigate the issues raised in the petition and to determine the matter.

The enquiry was duly carried out, although as Seaton was not only in a different Diocese but also in a different Province, it may not have been very thorough. However, he duly delivered his decision:

The Bishop has received letters from Augustine Bishop Pennen' and Adrien, late Penitentiary of Pope Urban VI, dated S. Peter's Rome, vj Kal. Feb., the third year of his Papacy, [1381] stating that a petition had been received on behalf of Margaret de Prestewyche, woman of Coventry and Lichfield Diocese praying for a dispensation on the following grounds:

In her eighth year or thereabouts certain of her friends compelled her against her will to enter the Priory of Nuns of Seton, Order of S. Augustine (*sic*) and to take on her the habit of a novice. She remained there as in a prison for several years, always protesting that she never had made, nor ever would willingly make, any profession. And then, seeing she must by profession be excluded from her inheritance, she feigned herself sick and took to her bed. But this did not prevent her being carried to the church, at the instance of her rivals, and blessed by a monk, in spite of her cries and protests that she would not remain in that priory, or in any other Order. On the first opportunity she went forth from the priory, without leave, and returned to the world, which in her heart she had never left, and married Robert de Holland, publicly, after banns and had issue.

The Bishop on enquiry found that these things were so, and by virtue of the authority committed to him, released her from the observance of the said Order or any other. Dated Heywood, 28 February 1384 seventh Indiction, sixth year of Urban VI. Present:- ds. John de Uttoxhatre, chaplain, William de Hampton and John de Castre, clerks and Nicholas de Rugeley, literate, of Coventry and Lichfield and Lincoln dioceses.²⁹

It was no small thing to appeal to a Pope. The petition had to be presented to the Pope himself in Rome, either in person or by a proctor. It is unlikely that Margaret went to Rome and it may be that her father-in-law, Thurstan Holland used his family influence to get her petition presented by one of the resident proctors in Rome who handled the English business there. There were also strict rules about the form of the petition. The Papal Chancery excluded all mention of persons not the object of the petition and explains the somewhat awkward reference to "certain of her friends".

Power commented: ". . . it is satisfactory to know that one energetic girl at least, succeeded in making good her protests and in escaping from her prison".³⁰ Power

had naturally assumed that the Dispensation would ensure that Margaret recovered her lands, but it was not to be.

In 1388 the Langleys acquired a second copy of the verification of Margaret's profession from Seaton and also similar testimony from Richard de Canpeland [*sic*] as follows:

To all &c. Richard de Canpeland of Forneys sends greetings. Because it is meritorious to bear witness of the truth, I have testified that a certain Margaret de Prestwyche one of the nuns of Seton was professed and made obeisance to the Prioress of Seton, viz. Ada (Ede) de Walton in the presence of John Cragge, Prior of the Abbey of Forneys, John de Hodeleston, Knight, lord of Millum, and others. In testimony of which to these presents my seal is affixed. Given at Bolton on Thursday next after the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Mary the Virgin [15 August]. 12 Richard II [1388]

(Seal – heraldic – rather worn & might possibly be made out).

Endorsed – “To prooffe that Margrate prystwyche was a none”.³¹

The case by the Duke, against Robert Holland came to the Court of Lancaster in 1389, before Justice Thomas Pynchebek.³² The charge was that the Duke had issued orders to take Prestwich into his hands because of the minority of Roger Langley, son of Richard and Joan his wife, who held the manor from the Duke. Holland had entered Prestwich by force, occupied the same and taken the issues and profits thence arising, worth 10 pounds per year, which should have gone to the Duke.³³

Robert, of course, pleaded that he was “in no wise guilty” and recited Margaret's inheritance in great detail. The lawyer for the Duke, John Woderof, countered with almost the same inheritance except that Margaret was excluded for having taken the veil at Seaton. Robert responded by saying that “Margaret is a secular woman and not a nun nor ever was professed . . .” and “this he is prepared to prove in any way soever the Court shall consider”.

The case dragged on until August 1391 before the sheriff was able to assemble a jury “of 24 as well Knights etc of the neighbourhood of Prestwyche”, and the same evidence was repeated on both sides. It was then decided that the crucial question of the legality of Margaret's profession should be passed to an Ecclesiastical Court and the Archbishop of York, Thomas Arundel, was asked to investigate. He did not reply and finally in March of 1393 Holland pointed out that Seaton was outside the jurisdiction of Lancaster, which is why the Archbishop refused to answer. So the case was sent before the Duke himself who requested the King – Richard II – to require the Archbishop to reply. Finally, in August 1394 the court recorded the receipt of the following three deeds, details of which are taken from Agecroft Deed 66:

Writ from John of Gaunt:

John the son of the King of England, Duke of Aquitaine and Lancaster, Earl of Leycester, Lincoln and Derby, Steward of England to his Justices at Lancaster, greeting.

We send you a certain certificate, under the foot of our Seal to us in our Chancery sent by our Lord the King under the foot of his Seal, that further the more carefully and skilfully according to the law and custom of the Kingdom of England you may be able to proceed in an imparlance which is in our Court before you between us and Robert de Holland, because the same Robert entered . . . the Manor of Prestwyche, with the appurtenances, with force and arms, having lately been seized into our hands by reason of the minority of Roger, son and heir of Richard de Langley and Joan his wife, who held that manor of us in chief by Knight service. Witness me myself at Lancaster the 6th day of August in the 18th year of the Regality of our County Palatine of Lancaster [1395]



PLATE 2. Agecroft Deed 35.

The royal writ to the Archbishop:

Richard by the grace of God, King of England and France and Lord of Ireland, to the Venerable Father in Christ, Thomas by the same grace Archbishop of York, Primate of England, greeting.

Whereas a plea pends in the Court of our most dear uncle, John, Duke of Aquitaine and Lancaster, between the Duke himself and Robert de Holland because the same Robert entered with force and arms the Manor of Prestwych with the appurtenances having lately been seized into the hand of the aforesaid Duke by reason of the minority of Roger son and heir of Richard de Langley and Joan his wife who held the manor of the same Duke in chief by Knight service, and in the plea aforesaid on behalf of the aforesaid Duke it is alleged that Margaret daughter of Thomas, son of Alice de Wolueley, the which Margaret the same Robert asserts to be his wife and in her right to have entered the Manor aforesaid, was a professed nun in the House of the nuns of Seton, in the County of Cumberland, within your diocese, without the Regality of the aforesaid Duke, as by the tenor of the record and process of the plea aforesaid, which we cause to come before us in our Chancery, fully appears. And because the enquiry of such kind of clause belongs to the Ecclesiastical Court within the said Duchy aforesaid, because the said House of Seton is without the same Duchy, as is set forth, it cannot be demanded without our command to due execution. We command you, as heretofore we have commanded, that having called before you those in this behalf to be called, you shall make diligent inquisition concerning the premises, and what you have enquired you shall make known to us in our Chancery in the Octaves of St. John the Baptist next to come, and wheresoever then it shall be, by your Letters sealed, remitting to us this Writ. Witness me myself at Westminster the 13th day of February in the 17th year of our reign.

The reply from Archbishop Arundel of York:

To his most Excellent Prince and Lord in Christ, the lord Richard by the grace of God the illustrious King of England and France and Lord of Ireland, Thomas by divine permission Archbishop of York, Primate of England and Legate of the Apostolic See, greeting in Him by whom King's rule and princes govern.

Your royal writ to these presents annexed know you that we have received, by pretext of which, having called those in this behalf to be called according to the requirement of the law, we have made diligent inquisition upon the matters contained in the same, and by the same inquisition we have found and ascertained that Margaret, daughter of Thomas, son of Alice Wolueley, of whom mention is made in the said Writ, was a nun and professed in the House of the nuns of Seton in the Writ expressed. Which things to your Royal Highness we make known by these our Letters Patent confirmed by the enclosure of our Seal. Dated in our house near Westminster on the 27th day of June in the year of Our Lord 1394, and in the 7th of our translation.

And upon this the aforesaid Robert de Holland having been solemnly required came not. And because the Court is not yet advised to render judgement in the premises a day is given etc. At which Monday before the aforesaid Justices here came the aforesaid John Conyers who follows, and asks that the aforesaid Robert may be burdened of the issues of the Manors of Prestwych aforesaid for seven years towards the Lord Duke and the aforesaid Robert shall be taken for the intrusion etc."

In August, 1395 a partial judgement was recorded against Robert de Holland:

And the record aforesaid having been seen and diligently examined, it is considered that the aforesaid Robert shall be burdened of the issues of the manor aforesaid for the last five years of the said seven years towards the Lord Duke, and as regards the issues of the aforesaid first two years and the taking of the said Robert, the Court is not yet advised to render Judgement, therefore a day is given before the aforesaid Justices etc.

Deed 66 ends at this point and it is interesting that in all the details outlined in the deed there is no mention of the bishop's dispensation given on behalf of the Pope.

Roger de Langley lived just long enough to see his claim to Prestwich validated. He died in 1393, seized of the manors of Pendlebury, Prestwich and Alkington. His heir was his son Robert de Langley, aged 15 years, and in the wardship of the Duke.³⁴

The simmering hostility between Hollands and Langley was not quite over. In 1401 Robert de Holland relinquished all his claims on Prestwich in return for an annuity of five marks paid to Edmund his youngest son, with the condition that the Hollands make no disturbance, or the annuity would cease. And also that if Peres, John, Nicholas and Edmund, sons of Robert Holland each agree to the same condition as they come of age, then they shall receive the same annuity. "And they are sworn upon the Sacrament of the Altar to hold and perform these covenants".³⁵ But this clearly did not resolve the matter as subsequent activity by Robert Holland resulted in a Royal Pardon from Henry IV to Robert de Langley, as follows in part:

Henry, by the Grace of God &c . . . whereas we have heard that Robert de Holland and certain other persons outlawed for felony, have lately come to the Manor of our beloved tenant Robert de Langley of Prestwyche . . . the said Robert being in our service after our coming into England and there animals goods and chattels of the said Langley took and drove them as far as the vill of Glossop, co. Derby. And the said Robert de Langley sought the recovery of the said goods and chattels, but Robert de Holland entered the house of a certain Master Wagstave and refused the giving up to the said Robert de Langley and defied him and fought with him, so that one of the servants of the said Langley was wounded with a certain arrow in his body and the brother of him that was wounded, seeing that his brother was badly wounded and in danger of death, threw fire into the said house so that it burnt and the said Robert de Langley took the said Robert de Holland and conveyed him to the County of Lancaster and kept him there in custody amongst his friends . . .

And because the aforesaid Robert de Langley or his tenants aforesaid can have no recovery at the common law upon losses and expenses of this kind because the same Robert de Holland is outlawed for treason . . . have pardoned Robert de Langley the suit of our peace which to us belongs against him for the burning of the house and the receiving and detention of the said Robert de Holland, indicted and outlawed in form aforesaid . . . cited and accused, and also the outlawry if such things against him were promulgated, and our firm peace to him therefore we do grant . . .

23 May in the 3rd year of our reign [1402]

By Writ of Privy Seal.

(To this the great seal of Henry IV in white wax is still attached, but is much worn.)³⁶

Nothing more is known of Margaret and Robert de Holland, or their six children, with the exception of Peter [Peres] the oldest who exchanged land with Robert de Langley in 1416, in apparent amity.³⁷

The Langleys held Pendlebury (renamed as Agecroft) Prestwich, Tetlowe and Alkrington until 1561 when once again the male line failed and the property was divided between Sir Robert Langley's four daughters. Agecroft then descended through his daughter Anne to the Dautesey family.³⁸

The story of Margaret Prestwich provides a good illustration of (a) the slow pace of litigation and (b) the difficulty of getting justice in the face of determined self-help, both of which were rife in the fourteenth century, when the royal government, preoccupied as it was with war in Scotland and France, was somewhat weakened, especially in the North of England.

APPENDIX

List of known prioresses and nuns of Seaton.

BUTLER, MARJORIE – Prioress of Seaton; a commission to elect a new prioress was issued on 16 July 1441 after her death.³⁹

COPELAND, JOAN – Prioress of Seaton; occurs 1538;⁴⁰ in the Comperta of Drs Layton and Legh dated February 1536, was accused of incontinence with a priest.⁴¹

CROFT (CREFTO) (CROFTEN), ELIZABETH – Prioress of Seaton; on 18 October 1450, Thomas York, abbot of Holm Cultram granted to Elizabeth Crefto, prioress of Seaton, all the land between the Esk and Duddon, called Lekely, for 12 years; rent 20s.⁴²

CROFTE (CROSTE), MARGARET – Nun of Seaton; granted dispensation on 5 June 1470, being the illegitimate daughter of a married man and an unmarried woman to be elected etc. to the said priory, and to administrations and any offices thereof, or of any other priory of the said order, and to govern the same in spirituals and temporals.⁴³

DENTON, . . . – Prioress of Seaton; a slab at High Hyton farm [SD 091875] . . . is thought to have been brought from the Benedictine nunnery of Seaton . . . and to commemorate a prioress . . . The incised design is of a crozier, set centrally, that curls to a trefoil leaf at its centre, between two lines of inscription HIC IACET DENTONEAD.⁴⁴

PRESTWICH, MARGARET

RIBTON, SUSANNA – Nun of Seaton; in the Comperta of Drs Layton and Legh dated February 1536, was accused of incontinence.⁴⁵

SANDES, ELIZABETH – Prioress of Seaton; Chancery proceedings were commenced 1504-1515 by Robert Hutton, clerk, against Elizabeth Sandes, prioress of Seaton *re. detention of deeds relating to a message in Seaton.*⁴⁶

SETON, JOAN – Prioress of Seaton; occurs 1535;⁴⁷ may be the same as Joan Copeland

WALTON, ADA (EDE) – Prioress of Seaton: Margaret Prestwich, nun of Seton made her profession before Prioress Walton on 26 November 1360.⁴⁸

Acknowledgements

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Notes and References

¹ Referred to variously as Seton, Seaton, Leakley or Lekeley – see A. M. Armstrong, A. Mawer, F. M. Stenton and Bruce Dickins, *The Place-Names of Cumberland* (English Place-Name Society Vol. XXI) (Cambridge, 1950) ii, 347.

- ² For this family, the Boyvills, see Mary C. Fair, "Notes on Early Copeland", *CW2*, xxxvii, 80-1, 84.
- ³ *VCH Cumberland*, ii, 192-194.
- ⁴ John Caley, Henry Ellis and Rev Bulkeley Bandinel, *Dugdale's Monasticon Anglicanum* (London, 1822), iv, 226.
- ⁵ J. Raine (ed.), *The register, or rolls, of Walter Gray, lord archbishop of York: with appendices of illustrative documents* (Surtees Society 56, 1872), 18.
- ⁶ *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1354-1358*, 134: *Dugdale's Monasticon Anglicanum*, iv, 227.
- ⁷ F. Grainger and W. G. Collingwood (eds.), *The Register and Records of Holm Cultram CWAAS Record Series VII* (1929), 32 citing Hesleyside MS., 9.
- ⁸ *VCH Cumberland*, ii, 193.
- ⁹ PRO SC6/Henry VIII/7454.
- ¹⁰ D. Knowles and R. N. Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses England and Wales* (Longman, 1971), 253-255.
- ¹¹ The 500+ deeds relating to Agecroft were calendared and translated in the 1880s by the notable antiquarian, John Parsons Earwaker (1847-1895). Texts can be seen at the Manchester Central Library, Chetham's Library, Manchester, and at Agecroft Hall Museum. Agecroft Hall, which once stood in Pendlebury, in the Wapentake of Salford, Lancashire, was home to the Prestwich, Langley and Dauntesey families from 1199-1925. Overtaken by the Industrial Revolution and damaged by coal mining, auction or demolition seemed the only solution but in 1925 Mr Thomas C. Williams of Richmond, Virginia, bought the usable portions of the Hall and rebuilt it on the banks of the James River in Richmond, Virginia. Sadly, he lived only a year after completion, but left a generous endowment to support the Hall for the use of the people of Richmond. Today it is a Historic House Museum with authentic period furniture, open to the public. See www.agecrofthall.com for more details.
- ¹² The matter of his tenure of the three manors is complex as is their descent after his death and although it is integral to the story which follows, the full detail cannot be given here. For a more complete picture see *VCH Lancs*, v, 76-78; iv, 398-9 and John Booker, *Memorials of the Church in Prestwich* (1852), 3-5, 185-7, 192-194.
- ¹³ *VCH Lancs*, v, 77 n21.
- ¹⁴ The suggestion in *VCH Lancs*, v, 77 n.26 that he was alive in 1348 appears to be in error – there is no reference to Thomas Prestwich in De Banco R. 356, m 384d. On 7 July 1346 "John Radcliffe and Alice Prestwich hold Alkryngton in socage, rendering yearly at the 4 terms . . . 12d and giving relief etc. . .", W. Farrer (ed.), *Lancashire Inquests, Extents, and Feudal Aids Lancashire and Cheshire Record Society 70*, 105. This clearly implies that Alice was a widow at this date.
- ¹⁵ Agecroft Deed 66 original in Latin and held by Chetham's Library, Manchester; *VCH Lancs*, v, 77.
- ¹⁶ E. Power, *Medieval English Nunneries c. 1275-1535* (1922), 33-34.
- ¹⁷ F. Donald Logan, *Runaway Religious in Medieval England c. 1240-1540* (Cambridge, 1996), 22.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 10, 12.
- ¹⁹ Although there is no direct evidence it is probable that they died in the plague which swept through Lancashire at this time – the first major visitation occurred in 1349, "when mortality was almost unbelievably high", R. S. France, "A History of Plague in Lancashire", *Trans. History Society of Lancashire and Cheshire* (1938) 90, 20.
- ²⁰ From this line sprang Thomas Langley (died 1437), executor of the will of John of Gaunt, Lord Chancellor of the Privy Seal during the reigns of Henry IV and V, and Bishop of Durham, who may have influenced the proceedings to follow. See J. Booker, *Memorials of the Church in Prestwich*, 190-193.
- ²¹ Agecroft Deed 66 and *VCH Lancs*, v, 77.
- ²² R. A. Wilson (ed.), *The Registers or act books of the bishops of Coventry and Lichfield. Book 5, being the second register of Bishop Robert de Stretton, A.D. 1360-1385: an abstract of the contents* (William Salt Archaeological Society, New Series 8, 1905), 179-80. Robert was a younger son of Thurston Holland of Denton.
- ²³ F. Donald Logan, *Runaway Religious*, 9-10, 97.
- ²⁴ Agecroft Deed 31 original in Latin and the property of Mrs Angela Hogg.
- ²⁵ Agecroft Deed 34 original in Latin and the property of Mrs Angela Hogg.
- ²⁶ Agecroft Deed 35 original in Latin and is retained at Agecroft Hall.
- ²⁷ S. Armitage-Smith, *John of Gaunt's Register* (Camden Society Third Series, 1921), 66, 94, 260.

- ²⁸ Taken from Agecroft Deed 66.
- ²⁹ R. A. Wilson (ed.), *The Registers or act books of the bishops of Coventry and Lichfield*, 179-80.
- ³⁰ E. Power, *Medieval English Numerics c. 1275-1535* (1922), 35-36.
- ³¹ Agecroft Deed 40 original in Latin and the property of Mrs Angela Hogg.
- ³² Chief Baron of the Exchequer, 24 April 1388-12 May 1389 *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1385-9*, 428. It is possible that the reason for his replacement was his death, as part of the Lincolnshire property of Sir John de Bello Monte (Beaumont), who died in 20 Richard II (1396/7) is stated to have "come from the heirs of Thomas Pynchebek", E. Foss, *A biographical register of the Judges of England 1066-1870* (London, 1870), 543 and *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem* (HMSO) xvii, 289. This may therefore be one of the reasons that the case was not finalised under his direction. It has been suggested that Pynchebek was Chaucer's serjeant-at-law [Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, General Prologue; May McKisack, *The Fourteenth Century 1307-1399 The Oxford History of England* (Oxford, 1959), 196 n2].
- ³³ The information about this trial comes from Agecroft Deed 66, which is an exemplification made for the benefit of the Langley family in 1414, to prove their right to Prestwich for further generations.
- ³⁴ *Townley's Abstracts of Lancashire Inquisitions* (Chetham Society Old Series 95), 50-53. Appendix to the 39th Report of the Deputy Keeper of the Public Records.
- ³⁵ Agecroft Deed 57 original in Norman French and the property of Mrs Angela Hogg. It is not clear whether each son will receive 5 marks or all of them must share.
- ³⁶ Agecroft Deed 58. The Royal Pardon was sold at Sotheby's in 1958 by a descendant of the Dautesseys of Agecroft.
- ³⁷ Agecroft Deed 70 original in Norman French and at Chetham's Library, Manchester.
- ³⁸ *VCH Lancs*, iv, 399-400.
- ³⁹ A. Hamilton Thompson, *The Registers of the Archdeaconry of Richmond* (Reprinted from the *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*), xxv, 229.
- ⁴⁰ *CW2*, xlv, 135.
- ⁴¹ *Calendar of Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic* x, 140.
- ⁴² F. Grainger and W. G. Collingwood (eds.), *The Register and Records of Holm Cultram CWAAS Record Series VII* (1929), 32 citing Hesleyside MS., 9.
- ⁴³ *Calendar of Papal Letters*, xii, 739.
- ⁴⁴ Peter Ryder, *The Medieval Cross Slab Grave Covers in Cumbria* (CWAAS Extra Series XXXII, 2005), 86.
- ⁴⁵ *Calendar of Letters and Papers* (HMSO), x, 140.
- ⁴⁶ PRO C1/325/69: *Early Chancery Proceedings*, iv, 275 citing bundle 325 no. 69.
- ⁴⁷ *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, v, 265.
- ⁴⁸ Agecroft Deed 35.