

Time and Tithes Wait for No Woman: A Dispute between the Monks of Longueville and the Nuns of Goring

Alien priories—satellite communities of French abbeys—were established throughout England following the Norman Conquest.¹ One such alien priory was Newton Longville in Buckinghamshire. Purchased by New College in 1441, its archive passed into the college's possession where it remains to this day, offering a fascinating, albeit incomplete, record of how one Norman community managed its English estates. This Note spotlights one intriguing episode from the Newton Longville archive concerning a dispute with the female religious community in Goring, a village on the Thames in south Oxfordshire. It begins, however, with a brief contextual history of Newton Longville and its mother house—Sainte-Foy in Longueville-sur-Scie, France.

‘ALIENS’ IN BUCKINGHAMSHIRE?

Walter Giffard II, the second earl of Buckinghamshire, in the late 11th century founded the Cluniac priory of Sainte-Foy (Saint Faith) in Longueville-sur-Scie, located in the Seine-Maritime region of Normandy.² He had inherited his peerage and vast tranches of land in England and France from his Norman father and namesake, Walter Giffard I, who had been handsomely rewarded thereby for fighting alongside William the Conqueror at the Battle of Hastings in 1066.³ Walter II endowed his foundation at Longueville with many of these properties from whence the community derived goods and income. Their ownership of these lands was confirmed by Walter II's son and heir, Walter Giffard III, in the mid-12th century.⁴

Among the English lands listed as owned by Longueville was *Neutone* (Newton) in Buckinghamshire.⁵ Agents or proctors of Longueville—French monks sent from Normandy to the English countryside to act as the priory's representatives and manage its landed holdings—were stationed at Newton.⁶ Consequently, by 1241, it had been renamed Newton Longville, the name by which it is still known today.⁷ With no monastic buildings and a maximum of only two monks resident at a time, the alien priory at Newton Longville was not a priory in the conventional sense.⁸ It was, however, central to the administration of the French community's interests in England and operated as such until confiscated by the Crown in 1414 as part of the suppression of alien priories during the reign of King Henry V.⁹ Following this, the king granted a lease of Newton Longville for life to Sir Ralph Rochefort in partial repayment of the debt he owed him. Consequently, Newton Longville did not pass into direct royal ownership until Rochefort's death

¹ For the history of alien priories in England and their suppression, see Donald Matthew, *The Norman Monasteries and their English Possessions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962); Marjorie M. Morgan, 'The Suppression of the Alien Priories', *History* 26 (1941), 202–12; Marjorie Morgan, *The English Lands of the Abbey of Bec* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1946); Benjamin Thompson, 'The Laity, the Alien Priories and the Redistribution of Ecclesiastical Property', in *England in the Fifteenth Century: Proceedings of the 1992 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. Nicholas Rogers (Stamford: Paul Watkins, 1994), pp. 19–41; and Benjamin Thompson, 'Prelates and the Alien Priories', in *The Prelate in England and Europe, 1300–1560*, ed. Martin Heale (Suffolk: York Medieval Press, 2014), pp. 50–75.

² Paul Le Cacheux, *Chartes du prieuré de Longueville de l'ordre de Cluny au diocèse de Rouen antérieures à 1204* (Rouen: A. Lestringant, 1934), pp. xiii–xiv; Sara Fry, 'The Lands and Patronage of Walter Giffard I, II and III Lord of Longueville-sur-Scie and Earl of Buckingham, 1010–1164', 2 vols (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Winchester, 2020), I, 117–18.

³ Le Cacheux, *Chartes du Longueville*, pp. xii–xiii.

⁴ H. E. Salter, *Newington Longeville Charters* (Oxford: Oxfordshire Record Society, 1921), pp. xii–xiii, 1–2; New College Archives, Oxford, NCA 11921.

⁵ Newton (Longville) was first mentioned in Domesday Book (1086); 'The Cluniac Priory of Newton Longville', in *A History of the County of Buckingham: Volume 1*, ed. William Page (London: Constable, 1905), pp. 395–6.

⁶ Salter, *Newington Longeville*, pp. xv–xvi, xlv–xlvii.

⁷ 'Newton Longville', *Digital Survey of English Place-Names*: <<https://sepn.nottingham.ac.uk/view-only/data/placenames/53282ee4b47fc407e300039d/>> (Accessed: 24 July 2025).

⁸ Salter, *Newington Longeville*, pp. xv–xvi.

⁹ *ibid.*, p. ix.

in 1441.¹⁰ Soon after, Thomas Bekynton, secretary to Henry VI and former fellow of New College (June 1408–November 1420), persuaded the king to sell the land to the College, pleading their dire financial situation owing to poor harvests and food scarcity.¹¹ Using a secret restricted fund left by its founder, William of Wykeham, the college purchased land at Newton Longville and elsewhere with the aim of recovering solvency by increasing revenue.¹² Documents housed at Newton Longville were transferred with the land into the ownership of New College where they remain to this day. They constitute a rich, but tantalisingly incomplete, documentary archive spanning from the late 11th century until the estate passed into the college's possession in 1441. This archive offers insights into the management of the English properties owned by Longueville Priory in Normandy, revealing how the community administered its estates, the identities and responsibilities of its proctors, and the community's extensive networks which connected it to lay and religious elites on both sides of the Channel. Through an analysis of the surviving documents, this Note explores one of the more contentious episodes within Newton Longville's history—a dispute with the Priory of Goring over land at Moulsoe in Buckinghamshire.

A MONASTIC MIX-UP?

The origins of this dispute lie in the concurrent gifting by different patrons of rights pertaining to Moulsoe to two religious communities. The earliest surviving charter which records Longueville Priory's claim to Moulsoe was issued by Henry I, king of England and duke of Normandy (*H[enricus] rex angl[orum] et dux norm[annorum]*).¹³ Witnessed at Rouen (*Rothmagus*), where it is still preserved today, the document dates to sometime between 1106, when Henry took control of Normandy following the Battle of Tinchebray, and his death in 1135.¹⁴ The charter lists the lands in Normandy and England which had been given by various donors to the monks of Sainte-Foy, Longueville. It seems probable that this document was prepared shortly after Henry's seizure of Normandy in 1106, when the community would have been most anxious to see their rights and possessions confirmed. The charter's truncated witness list, which includes only five individuals and a reference to 'many others' (*multis aliis*), could indicate that it is an abridged copy of the original. However, there is nothing to indicate that its content is inauthentic. Later charters, including those issued in the mid-12th century by King Henry II (September 1155) and by Walter Giffard III (1152x58) confirm many of the same land grants to Longueville.¹⁵

Henry I began his charter with his own gifts to Longueville, before confirming the gifts previously presented to the community by other patrons, including by his predecessor King William II (*d.* 1100). The vast majority of the landed holdings listed had been gifted to the community by its founder, Walter Giffard II (*d.* 1102). This included the manor and church of Newton Longville (*Niventon[us]*) with all its appurtenances, where Longueville's proctors were stationed when in England. It also included the tithes of the demesne of several manors owned by

¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. x.

¹¹ *ibid.*; for Thomas Bekynton, see A. B. Emden, *A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to A.D. 1500*, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957–59), I, 157–9.

¹² R. L. Storey, 'The Foundation and the Medieval College, 1379–1530', *New College Oxford 1379–1979*, ed. John Buxton and Penry Williams (Oxford: The Warden and Fellows of New College, Oxford, 1979), pp. 3–43, at pp. 13–14.

¹³ Rouen, Archives Départementales de Seine Maritime, 24 H 3/5; Le Cacheux, *Chartes du Longueville*, pp. 1–3; J. Horace Round, *Calendar of Documents Preserved in France, Illustrative of the History of Great Britain and Ireland: Vol. I. A.D. 918–1206* (London: Printed for Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1899), p. 74.

¹⁴ Round (*Calendar of Documents*, p. 74) provides a date of 1106–1109, but it is unclear on what grounds; the heavily truncated witness list does not appear to offer any clues.

¹⁵ King Henry II's confirmation charter for Longueville of 1155 survives in two copies: Rouen, Archives Départementales de Seine-Maritime, 24 H 3/8 and New College Archives, Oxford, NCA 12038. Moulsoe is misspelt in these documents as *Bulebou* and *Buleshou* respectively. Walter Giffard III's confirmation charter for Longueville is Oxford, New College Archives, NCA 11921. The charter in Rouen has been digitised and is available here: <www.archivesdepartementales76.net/ark:/50278/61cd689c51759485743315a90e43ba7d>. The charters housed at New College will soon be available to view on the online Archives Catalogue: <<https://archives.new.ox.ac.uk/>>.

Walter II, including Moulsoe (*Molossoe*). Neither Henry I's charter, nor any other extant document, records when Walter II founded the community at Longueville and transferred to it ownership of his English properties—including Newton Longville—though a date in the 1080s or 1090s seems likely. Salter believed that Walter II founded and endowed the Priory at Longueville with lands in Buckinghamshire and beyond in *c.* 1080. He argued that the foundation must have occurred before the completion of Domesday Book in 1086 because many of Walter II's English estates, including Moulsoe, were already held by knights in his service at the time of the Great Survey.¹⁶ Fry, however, favours a later date for the foundation of Longueville. She suggests that Walter II built his priory after Easter 1089 with money he received upon reconciling with King William II following a short-lived rebellion.

The earliest extant evidence for the Priory at Goring's claim to Moulsoe is a confirmation charter issued by Henry II datable to 1179.¹⁷ Now the oldest surviving charter in favour of Goring, it establishes that the community was founded sometime prior to the death of Henry I (*d.* 1135).¹⁸ Henry II confirmed, as he and his grandfather had for Longueville, Goring's ownership of all the properties listed in the charter which had been gifted to the nuns by various patrons. Among these was the church at Moulsoe, which was presented to Goring by Geoffrey Fitz William (*d.* 1179/80) and Emma de Langetot (*d. aft.* 1185).¹⁹ Geoffrey was the foremost tenant of Walter Giffard III.²⁰ Emma, his wife—presumably a descendant of Ralph de Lanquetot who held several estates, most in Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire, from Walter Giffard II at the time of the Domesday Survey—continued to own land in Moulsoe following Geoffrey's death.²¹ The couple's gift to Goring presumably encompassed the patronage of the church and the advowson—the right to present a member of clergy to the benefice. It was probably made in the 1160s or 1170s, given, as Blair demonstrated, that Henry II's charter seems to only record those donations made to the priory during his reign.²²

By the early 13th century, however, the nuns of Goring were claiming not only the church of Moulsoe, but also the tithes of the demesne. This brought them into direct conflict with the

¹⁶ Salter, *Newington Longueville*, p. xiii.

¹⁷ Oxford, Bodleian Library Chart. Oxon. D 1 (1). The text of the charter is printed in T. R. Gambier-Parry, *A Collection of Charters Relating to Goring, Streathly and the Neighbourhood, 1181–1546*, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxfordshire Record Society, 1931), I, 1–3. For its date, see Nicholas Vincent (ed.), *The Letters and Charters of Henry II, King of England 1154–1189*, vol. 2: nos. 741–1341, Beneficiaries D–H (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), pp. 410–12. The witness list includes William du Hommet, who was made constable of Normandy in *c.* 1179, and Richard d'Auffay, who died in *c.* 1180/1. The witness described as 'Geoffrey, my son' (*Gaufrido filio meo*) should be identified as Geoffrey II, Duke of Brittany. That he is untitled in the charter indicates that it probably pre-dates his departure for Brittany to marry Duchess Constance in April 1179 (their marriage did not take place until July 1181).

¹⁸ Henry II confirmed a grant made by Henry I, his grandfather, which freed Goring from taxes and other burdens imposed on landholders by the Crown: *Preterea concedo quid tota terra predictae ecclesie de Garing[us] sit ita libera et quieta ab omnibus placitis et querelis et geldis et scotis et operibus castelli et aliis consuetudinibus sicut Rex H[enricus] avus meus eis concessit, et sicut carta eius testatur* ('Furthermore, I order that all the land of the aforementioned church of Goring be so free and quiet from all pleas, and complaints, and gelds, and scots, and castle-workers, and other customs as King Henry, my grandfather, granted to them and as his charter attests').

¹⁹ *Ex dono Gaufridi filii Willelmi et Emme de Langetot, Ecclesiam de Mulesbo in liberam et perpetuam elemosinam.*

²⁰ John Horace, *Rotuli de dominabus et pueris et puellis de XII comitatibus (1185)* (London: Pipe Roll Society, 1913), p. 41.

²¹ The *Rotuli de Dominabus et Pueris et Puellis*—a survey of the status and assets of widows and wards on estates owned by Crown in 1185—reported that Emma held land in Moulsoe worth £14 per annum (valued at £15 if 50 sheep were grazed). Her heirs were listed as the wives of Alan of Dunstanville and Alard Fitz William; these women should be identified as Cecily and Muriel, Emma's daughters. This was recorded in the. See Round, *Rotuli de dominabus*, pp. 40–1 and John Walmsley, *Widows, Heirs, and Heiresses in the Late Twelfth Century: The Rotuli de Dominabus et Pueris et Puellis* (Tempe, Arizona: Arizona Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2006), pp. 60–1.

²² John Blair, 'The Foundation of Goring Priory', *Oxoniensia* 51 (1986), 194–7, at pp. 194–5. Contrary to Salter ('House of Austin Nuns: The Priory of Goring', in *A History of the County of Oxford: Volume 2*, ed. William Page (London: Archibald Constable, 1907), p. 103) and Gambier-Parry (*A Collection of Charters*, I, xvii, xl), Blair argued that Thomas de Druval, who was listed as the grantor of several small estates to Goring in Henry II's charter, could not have founded the community. This is further supported by a charter of Thomas de Druval which is datable to 1173x1195 on internal evidence.

monks of Longueville who had received these tithes from their founder, Walter Giffard II, in the late 11th century. It is unclear when and why Goring's claim changed, though it is perhaps not entirely unexpected that they would attempt claim the tithes of a demesne for which they held the advowson. It is tempting to think that this occurred in the aftermath of Longueville's dispute regarding the tithes of Moulsoe with an entirely different party—Roger, a canon of Lincoln Cathedral.²³ The documents relating to this dispute are only preserved in the *Liber Niger*, a cartulary housed at New College which was copied c. 1530 probably from an earlier cartulary made at Newton Longville. The documents are datable based on internal evidence to the 1180s.²⁴ They record that William, the proctor of Longueville, had appealed to the Archbishop of Canterbury regarding Roger's attempt to claim the tithes of Moulsoe. The archbishop ordered that Roger could retain the land at Moulsoe and the tithes therefrom until his death if he paid the monks a pension of five shillings a year at Pentecost. This arrangement held for only a few years before Roger chose to relinquish his rights to Moulsoe which reverted back to Longueville. The circumstances surrounding Roger's attempt to claim and his subsequent surrendering of the tithes of Moulsoe is unclear. However, it may suggest that they had a questionable title which Roger was happy to yield and which the nuns of Goring perhaps later discovered.

PRIORESS MARGARETA OF GORING AND THE AGREEMENT OF 1203

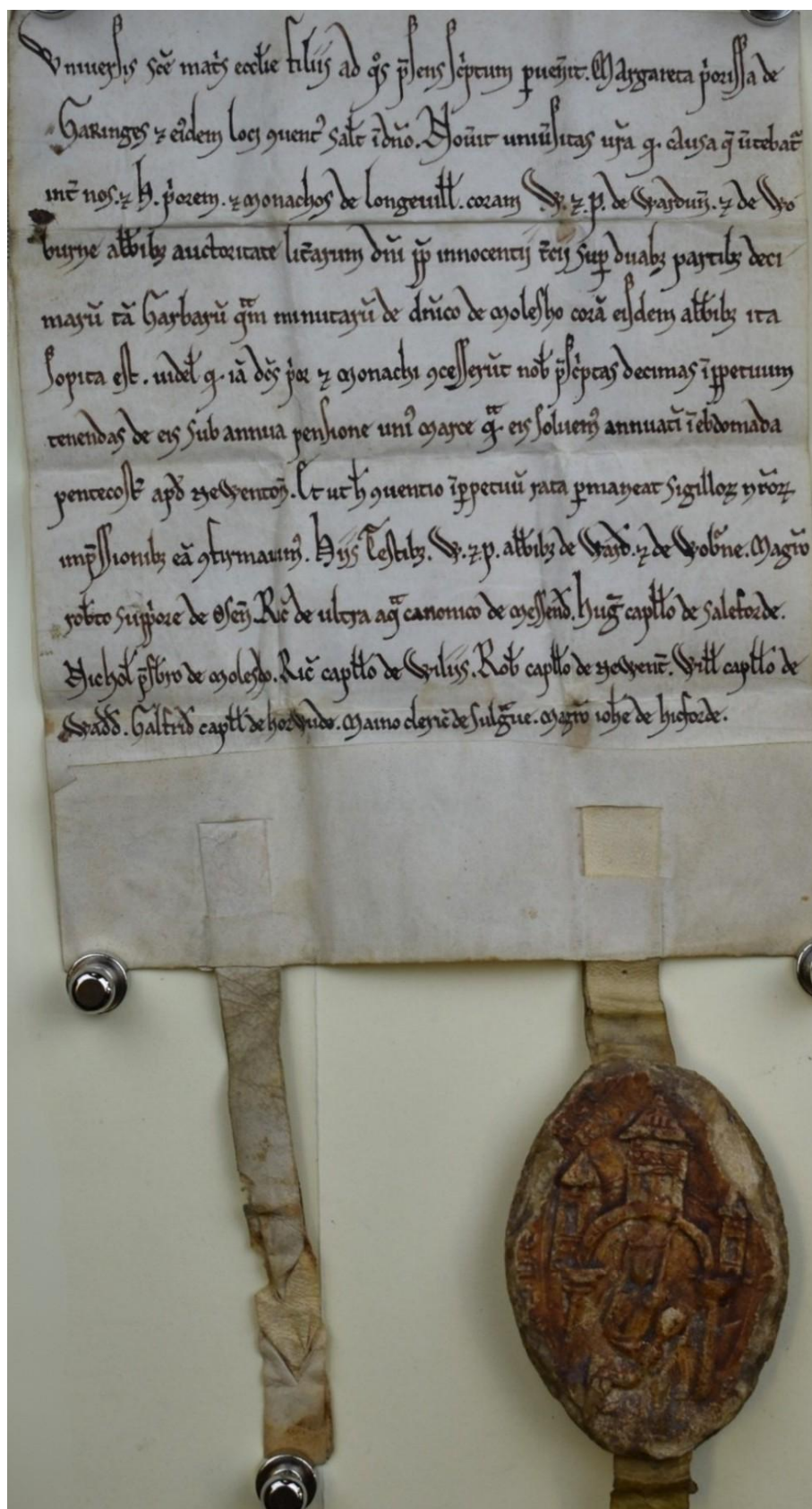
The communities of Goring and Longville reached an agreement regarding the tithes of Moulsoe in 1203. The terms of their settlement are detailed in two surviving documents—a letter preserved in the *Liber Niger*, and an original single-sheet charter issued by Margareta, Prioress of Goring. Prioress Margareta's charter is both very small (measuring only 185 x 150 mm) and very neat. It was copied by a single, experienced scribe who was probably a local cleric connected to the Goring community. Their hand is consistent and clearly legible, with occasional calligraphic flourishes which enhance the document's appearance without distracting from its content. The charter succinctly summarises Prioress Margareta's agreement with Prior H. and the monks of Longueville regarding the tithes of Moulsoe.²⁵ It records that Abbot W. of Warden (Warden Abbey, located south-east of Bedford) and Abbot P. of Woborne (Woburn Abbey, just south-east of Milton Keynes) arbitrated the settlement under the authority of Pope Innocent III (1198–1216). The prior and monks of Longueville agreed that the nuns of Goring could hold the tithes of Moulsoe in perpetuity in return for a pension of one mark which was to be paid annually at Newton Longville during Pentecost week. It concludes with an extensive witness list, featuring the leaders of some of the most important religious communities in the area, such as the Abbot of Missenden.

The language of the charter serves to establish Prioress Margareta's primacy and agency from the outset. The scribe wrote her name in full, but abbreviated the other names within the body of the document to their initial. Gendered imagery was used to demonstrate the prioress's authority within the defined parameters for women religious.

²³ New College Archives, Oxford, NCA 9744, *Liber Niger*, f. 66r; Salter, *Newington Longueville*, nos. 55–8.

²⁴ Salter, *Newington Longueville*, no. 57 is the testimony of Robert de Burneham, archdeacon of Buckingham, regarding Roger's relinquishing of the tithes of Moulsoe. Robert de Burneham first appears as the archdeacon in a document dated to 14 January 1181/2 (New College Archives, Oxford, NCA 11991) and last appears in a charter preserved in the St Alban's Cartulary which is dated to the 25 August 1189 (London, British Library, Cotton MS Julius D III, ff. 1r–124v at f. 121r). His predecessor, David, is last titled archdeacon in a Pipe Roll dated September 1177 and his successor, Stephen de Swafeld, is first attested in c. 1194. For these dates, see 'Archdeacons: Buckingham', in *Fasti Ecclesiae Anglicanae 1066–1300: Volume 3, Lincoln*, ed. Diana E. Greenway (London: Institute of Historical Research, 1977): <www.british-history.ac.uk/fasti-ecclesiae/1066-1300/vol3/pp39-41> (Accessed: 24 July 2025).

²⁵ New College Archives, Oxford, NCA 11925. For the text of the charter, see Salter, *Newington Longueville*, no 60. Prior H. should be identified as Prior Henry of Longueville who is first attested in a charter dated to 1196 and last attested in a charter dated 19 September 1203; both documents are only preserved in the Newton Longville cartulary. See Salter, *Newington Longueville*, p. xlv and nos. 61 and 67.



New College Archives, Oxford, NCA 11925
 Prioress Margareta of Goring's charter, datable to 1203,
 which records the settlement with Longueville Priory regarding the tithes of Moulsoe
 This and following images © Courtesy of the Warden and Scholars of New College, Oxford

The charter opens with the salutation *Uniuersis sancte matris ecclesie filiis ad quos presens scriptum peruenerit . Margareta priorissa de Garinges et eiusdem loci conuentus salutem in domino* in which Prioress Margareta directly addressed ‘all the sons of the holy mother Church’, both as an individual and on behalf of the community she led. The Church as a mother remains a popular concept, and was frequently found in the proems of documents from the 13th century, but the explicitly gendered language perhaps served here to parallel, and thereby underline, Prioress Margareta’s authority as a woman of God. In the same way that the Mother Church protects and cares for her believers, Prioress Margareta protected and cared for the members of the community at Goring, including through the defence of their rights and income. The seal of Goring priory, which depicts the Throne of Wisdom (*sedes sapientiae*)—a popular motif among medieval female religious communities—seems to further reinforce this message.²⁶ The Virgin Mary is depicted enthroned with the baby Jesus sat on her lap; she is simultaneously a loving mother, bouncing her child on her knee, a queen-like figure exercising her power and authority, and the sacred throne of Divine Wisdom, the seat of the Logos Incarnate.²⁷

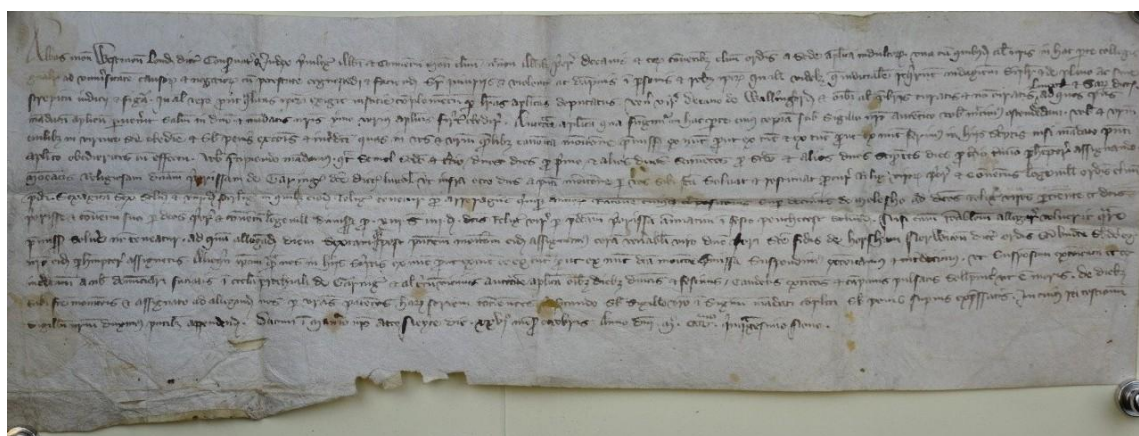
A second, longer document, provides further information regarding the settlement between Prioress Margareta of Goring and the Priory of Longueville regarding Moulsoe. It is a letter, preserved only in the *Liber Niger*, written jointly by the abbots of Warden and Woburn—the arbiters of the settlement.²⁸ The abbots’ letter reveals that this was the second such judgement on the matter of the disputed tithes of Moulsoe. The abbots began their missive with a transcription of a letter they received from Pope Innocent III dated to the 2nd Ides of June in the fifth year of his pontificate (1203). This recorded that the prior of Newton Longville had appealed to the Apostolic See because the nuns of Goring, with support from the priest of Moulsoe, had claimed tithes which belonged to the community of Longueville. The pope reported that he had delegated witnesses to enquire into the matter, but they were refused admittance by the judges of the case, led by the Abbot of Missenden, who subsequently ruled in favour of Goring. The prior of Newton Longville, as representative of his community in Normandy, appealed this decision. Pope Innocent III consequently commanded the abbots of Warden and Woburn to hear and evaluate the legitimacy of this appeal before confirming or overturning the previous ruling at their discretion. By prefacing their account of the settlement with a transcription of the pope’s letter, the abbots provided evidence of, and thereby reinforced, the authority and legitimacy of their actions. The abbots then detailed the steps they had taken to rectify the situation. They explained that, as Pope Innocent III had instructed, they summoned all the parties to appear before them. They heard arguments from both sides, from Prior H. and the monks of Longueville, and from the nuns of Goring, supported by F., a priest of Moulsoe. Both parties presented their views on their rights to the great and small tithes of the demesne of Moulsoe (*super duabus partibus decimarum tam garbarum quam minutarum de dominico de Moleshou*) and on the previous ruling made by the Abbot of Missenden and his co-judges. This discussion culminated in the agreement described in Prioress Margareta’s charter. The abbots confirmed that both parties took an oath to abide by the terms of the agreement.

²⁶ Roberta Gilchrist, *Gender and Material Culture: The Archaeology of Religious Women* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 144–5. The seal of Longueville is no longer attached to the document, but may survive separately in the College’s archives.

²⁷ A second Goring seal is preserved attached to Oxford, Bodleian Library, Chart. Oxon. D. 4 (21)—an agreement between John Loveday II and Prioress Margareta de Rale concerning a disputed payment for lands in Goring, dated 28 July 1354 (for the text, see Gambier-Parry, *A Collection of Charters*, II, 175–6). For the many symbolic meanings of the Throne of Wisdom, see Ilene H. Forsyth, *The Throne of Wisdom: Wood Sculptures of the Madonna in Romanesque France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), pp. 1–2.

²⁸ *Liber Niger*, f. 66; Salter, *Newington Longueville*, no. 59.

DEBT AND EXCOMMUNICATION



New College Archives, Oxford, NCA 11923

Letter from John, vicar of Nuffield, to the Prior of Horsham regarding Goring's failure to pay the agreed pension to Longueville for the tithes of Moulsoe; dated 5 November 1359

Despite these assurances, however, the peace between Goring and Longueville which was reached in 1203 did not last. On 5 November 1359, John Goney, the vicar of Nuffield, wrote to the Prior of St Faith of Horsham, in the diocese of Norwich, about a dispute between Goring and Longueville over Moulsoe.²⁹ This letter powerfully demonstrates ecclesiastical networks in action and shows the sheer number of individuals involved in the administration of the Church's bureaucracy. Goring Priory had appropriated the benefice and advowson of Nuffield in 1215 and appointed John as vicar in 1350.³⁰ The prior of St Faith of Horsham was the Cluniac's sub-conserver and sub-delegate, and reported to the Abbot of Westminster—the order's conserver and judge delegate. John informed the Prior of Horsham that the Abbot of Westminster had written to him and to other curates in the Salisbury and Lincoln dioceses on 26 October 1359. The abbot ordered that the Prioress of Goring must pay 66s 8d to the prior and monks of Longueville for five years of rent in arrears for the tithes of Moulsoe. The prioress, who was not named in any of the surviving documents, was given six days to settle her debt. If she refused, she was ordered to appear before the Prior of Horsham to give her reasons. John Goney reported that he had duly delivered a copy of the monition to the prioress which she, in turn, had sent to her steward for his advice.

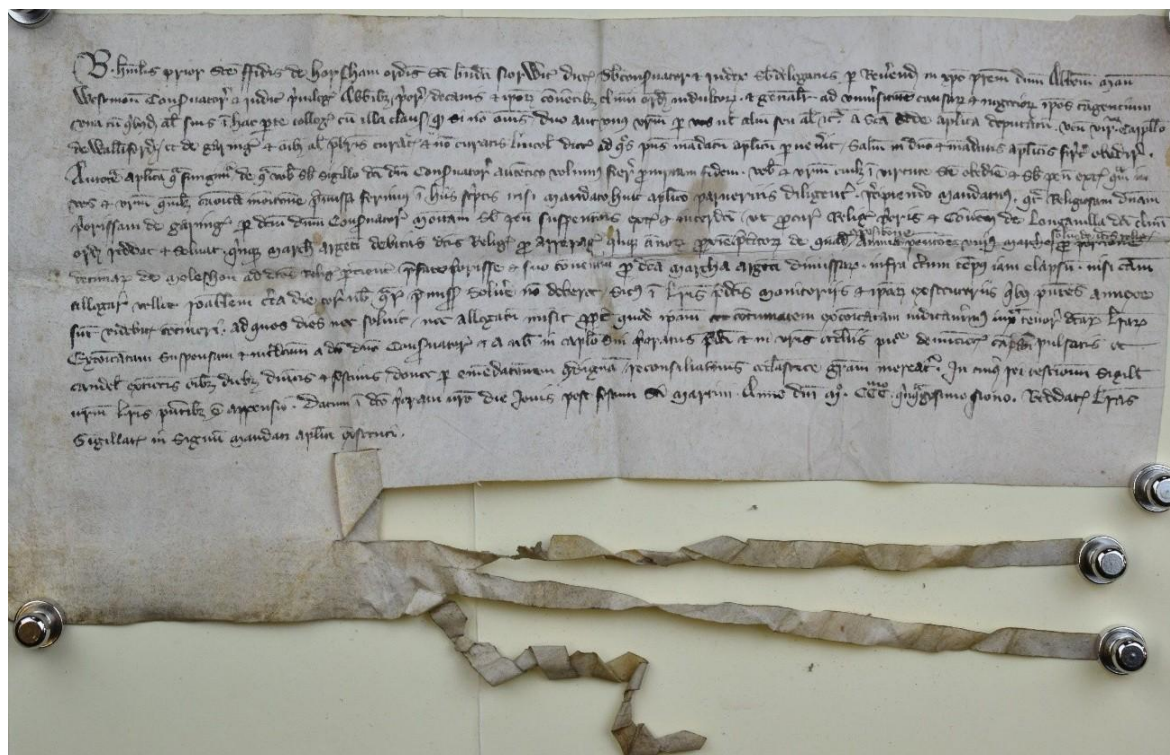
On 17 November 1359, the Prior of Horsham wrote to the chaplains and curates of Wallingford and Goring to advise that the Prioress of Goring had failed to pay or to appear before him.³¹ Consequently, she was declared contumacious and excommunicated. She was banned from entry into neighbouring churches and from the chapter house of her own priory. We do not know why the prioress failed to pay the pension for the tithes of Moulsoe. Excommunication was the Church's most severe sanction. This indicates that the prioress's failure to pay rent to Longueville was perceived as a serious transgression worthy of the harshest punishment. This may have been because the continued financial stability of a religious community such as Longueville rested, in no small part, on agreements like that reached with Goring. Indeed, Longueville priory engaged in similar disputes over land with other English religious houses in the 14th century. Surviving documents show that the proctor of Newton Longville, as Longueville's representative in England, proactively and determinedly asserted the community's rights and defended their possessions, appealing to the Church hierarchy and effectively employing the ecclesiastical network to resolve

²⁹ New College Archives, Oxford, NCA 11923; Salter, *Newington Longueville*, pp. xxv–xxvi.

³⁰ 'Nuffield', in *A History of the County of Oxford: Volume 18*, ed. Simon Townley (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2016): <www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/oxon/vol18/pp342-367> (Accessed 3 April 2025).

³¹ New College Archives, Oxford, NCA 11924; Salter, *Newington Longueville*, p. xxvi.

disputes quickly in favour of Longueville.³² The severity of the Prioress of Goring's punishment, therefore, may have been intended to deter other leaders of religious houses from withholding payment.



New College Archives, Oxford, NCA 11924

Letter from the Prior of Horsham to the chaplains of Wallingford and Goring excommunicating the prioress of Goring for failing to pay the agreed pension to Longueville for the tithes of Moulsoe; dated 17 November 1359

Unfortunately, due to the incomplete nature of the Newton Longville and Goring archives, we have no information about what happened next. Ultimately, Longueville successfully retained its rights to the tithes of Moulsoe.³³ We do not know, however if, faced with excommunication, the prioress reconsidered her stance and repaid the debt or if she was unable or unwilling to do so. Extant documents relating to Goring from the first half of the 14th century certainly do not paint the happiest picture of its finances and governance. By 1291, Goring's annual income from its estates only totalled £44, a woefully inadequate sum on which to sustain a community of between 30 and 40 members. In 1301, Prioress Agnes resigned and a fiercely contested election took place. Supporters of the two main candidates—Margery Neal and Agnes of Ludershall—each conducted their own procession from the chapter house to the high altar, with both parties singing *Te Deum* and attempting to outperform the other. The bishop intervened, declared the election invalid, and made Margery the prioress. In December 1309, the bishop appointed Nicholas, rector of nearby Checkendon, as master of the priory, which was apparently failing under the leadership's mismanagement of its finances and affairs. The bishop also issued orders for the arrest of an apostate nun, who had fled the priory earlier that year. In 1358, the year before the prioress was excommunicated, another nun ran away with someone else under a vow of celibacy; the nun was returned to the community and absolved following penance.³⁴ It is unclear how much the few surviving documents, which provide only limited insights into life at Goring Priory, accurately

³² See, for example, the dispute between Longueville and Notley (*Nutle*)—also founded by Walter Giffard II—regarding the tithes of Morton; New College Archives, Oxford, NCA 12014; Salter, *Newington Longueville*, no. 37.

³³ *Liber Niger*, f. 14; Salter, *Newington Longueville*, no. 151.

³⁴ Salter, 'House of Austin Nuns', pp. 103, 104.

reflect the condition of the community at this time. These documents, which only record instances where external intervention was required, by their nature skew in favour of the negative. Times of community cohesion, of success, and good management do not feature in the extant record. It is also important to remember that Goring Priory was certainly far from unusual in experiencing internal conflict and financial difficulties. Nevertheless, it is possible that the conditions at Goring in and preceding 1359 led to the prioress's failure to pay rent to Longueville and, ultimately, to her excommunication.

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