

THE HAMPSHIRE LANDS OF CORPUS CHRISTI COLLEGE, OXFORD, AND THEIR MANAGEMENT 1500–1650

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ABSTRACT

In 1517, Richard Fox, bishop of Winchester, founded Corpus Christi College in Oxford and funded it by endowments, mainly of land, much of which was in Hampshire. Proper title was essential and legal disputes were common but, since prospective tenants would not readily lease run-down estates, it was also in the interest of an absentee landlord that the quality of his land and buildings should be preserved. After many years of stability, the agricultural economy was about to undergo dramatic change, as rising prices disadvantaged those dependent upon static rents. These national factors forced the College to change its management practices and created a new pattern of administration that lasted for the following 200 years.

INTRODUCTION

Corpus Christi College, Oxford, was founded in 1517 by Richard Fox, bishop of Winchester, as a secular college. The College lands were dispersed through eleven counties which, apart from Lincolnshire, were all in the south of England; birth in one of those counties was a primary qualification for admission to the College (Milne, 1946, 3). The largest holding, however, was in Hampshire, around the seat of the Founder's diocese. Although this paper is based upon the Hampshire lands, it is not possible to research the serial records without noting that the procedures were common to other counties, and that Hampshire was typical of them. The archive provides a remarkably full picture of the College tenancies; furthermore, the archives of other Oxford colleges, which contain parallel documents, indicate that they practised similar estate management and shared Corpus Christi's problems.

Richard Fox was the son of a Lincolnshire yeoman and had many landed friends in Hampshire (Milne, 1946, 4). His feeling for the

land and his influence as a bishop are apparent in his Statutes and endowments. His concern for security and the maintenance of quality made him conservative about land management; thus chapter xlvi of his Statutes forbade the alienation of land (Ward, 1843, ch xlvi). As a result of its immersion in inappropriate land management and static rents, Corpus Christi was unprepared for the stresses of the later sixteenth century and was obliged to change its practices in the years that followed.

THE ESTATES: THEIR ACQUISITION AND COMPOSITION

Although not the largest of the Oxford colleges, Corpus Christi was the holder of a major estate. In the ecclesiastical survey of 1534 its net annual value stood at £342, against £847 and £1066 for New College and Magdalen respectively, both foundations by earlier bishops of Winchester. Fowler (1893, 21) noted that it was founded 'out of the private revenues of Foxe and a few friends, and not, as was the case with some other foundations, out of ecclesiastical spoils.' Whatever the truth of this statement may have been, it is fact that Hugh Oldham, bishop of Exeter, made a large cash donation (Fowler, 1893, 30), that Fox's Steward, William Frost, donated the manor of Mapledurwell (TT 11, 13, 23) and that John Claymond, the College's first President, bequeathed estates in Kingsclere and Longstock (TT 5, 3, 38).

The variety of factors that influenced Bishop Fox in his choice of land was rather wider than those that can be established from the College archive alone. Some of the latter are of particular relevance, however. Since the estate would not be exploited directly, Fox's primary objective was

land that could be leased, the most profitable form of letting. Security was also important and the majority of his individual purchases were of land enclosed by fence or ditch; such land was also of greater value than that held in common (Thirsk 1967, 207). In general the quality of the land was high; three of the estates, Eling, Nursling and South Stoneham, lay on the heavy soils of the Hampshire Basin, where stock farming was a specialism by the beginning of the seventeenth century (Thirsk 1967, 67), but the majority lay in two bands running east-west across the chalk downland of the county. It has been said of such land that:

... the scale of farming enterprise was grander and more ambitious on the Hampshire downlands than any encountered elsewhere, although an explanation may be difficult to find. Not only were the larger farmers breeding hundreds of sheep for the manuring of their fields, but they were fattening cattle, breeding horses and keeping pigs as well. ... As early as Henry VIII's reign, therefore, the downland farmers of Hampshire were engaged in large-scale capitalist farming (Thirsk 1967, 65).

Fox's preference for rural estates is clear from the Hampshire endowments. Indeed, in observing that this was almost entirely so, College Librarian Dr Milne (1946, 4) said:

That his choice of this class of property in preference to urban was deliberate is shown by the provision in his Statutes that none of the land he had given to the College should be alienated unless it was occupied by buildings, in which case it might be sold and the proceeds invested in agricultural land. It seems fair to infer that Fox, the son of a Lincolnshire yeoman, believed in the country-man as the mainstay of England.

Although the College had a number of urban buildings in Newtown, Odiham and Overton, including some of high quality, they were incidental to substantial areas of land.

The Founder's purchases took place over the ten-year period from 1517 to 1527 and were made from widely differing vendors. This implies that the open market was used, but the Twyne Transcripts suggest that pressure was brought to bear on some occasions; in the case of the second

half of the manor of Marwell Woodlock in Owslebury, for instance, it was bought in secrecy, and 'with great labore', by an agent in 1518 (TT 12, 15, 4). All the Hampshire lands were in the hands of Corpus Christi before the Founder's death in 1528, except for Walters in Odiham, Edmundstrop Benham in Kingsclere, and some small pieces in Overton; these exceptions were all purchased by serving Presidents by 1551, presumably out of profits on the earlier endowments (TT 11, 12, 44; 12, 16, 15; 6, 1, 157/160).

The disposition of the estates by parish is shown in Fig 1, and their topography is illustrated in accurate detail by the seventeenth century Langdon Maps (LM - examples at Figs 2-4). Corpus Christi's holding in Hampshire was about 4,000 acres. Of this, by far the greater proportion, around 2,700 acres, was demised by lease, including a fair proportion of the open-field land of the manors of Overton, Polhampton and Quidhampton, all within the parish of Overton. In addition, the College was lord of the manors of Mapledurwell, Rombridge in Eling and Marwell Woodlock in Owslebury, where copyholds took up about 1,100 acres. Although there is no single source from which an aggregate of the leasehold and copyhold acreages may be drawn, most are to be found in a 'Description of Estates belonging to Corpus Christi College, Oxford' (Mc 13/1), the contents of which appear to have been transcribed at an early date from the cartouches on the Langdon Maps. The extent of the unmapped estates of Longstock and Hurstbourne Tarrant have been extracted from a later terrier and estate maps of 1823 and 1828 (Cg 1/4; Maps 118 & 129). The freehold lands, also situated in the manors mentioned above, were not mapped by Langdon and cannot be quantified with confidence; having regard to the quit-rents noted below in the sub-section on freeholds, however, they probably amounted to no more than a few hundred acres. A number of advowsons, also held by Corpus Christi, were included in the value quoted above, but are not considered here.

In addition to the two complete manors of Marwell Woodlock and Mapledurwell, the College held the demesne lands of a third, Rombridge in Eling. The remaining estates varied

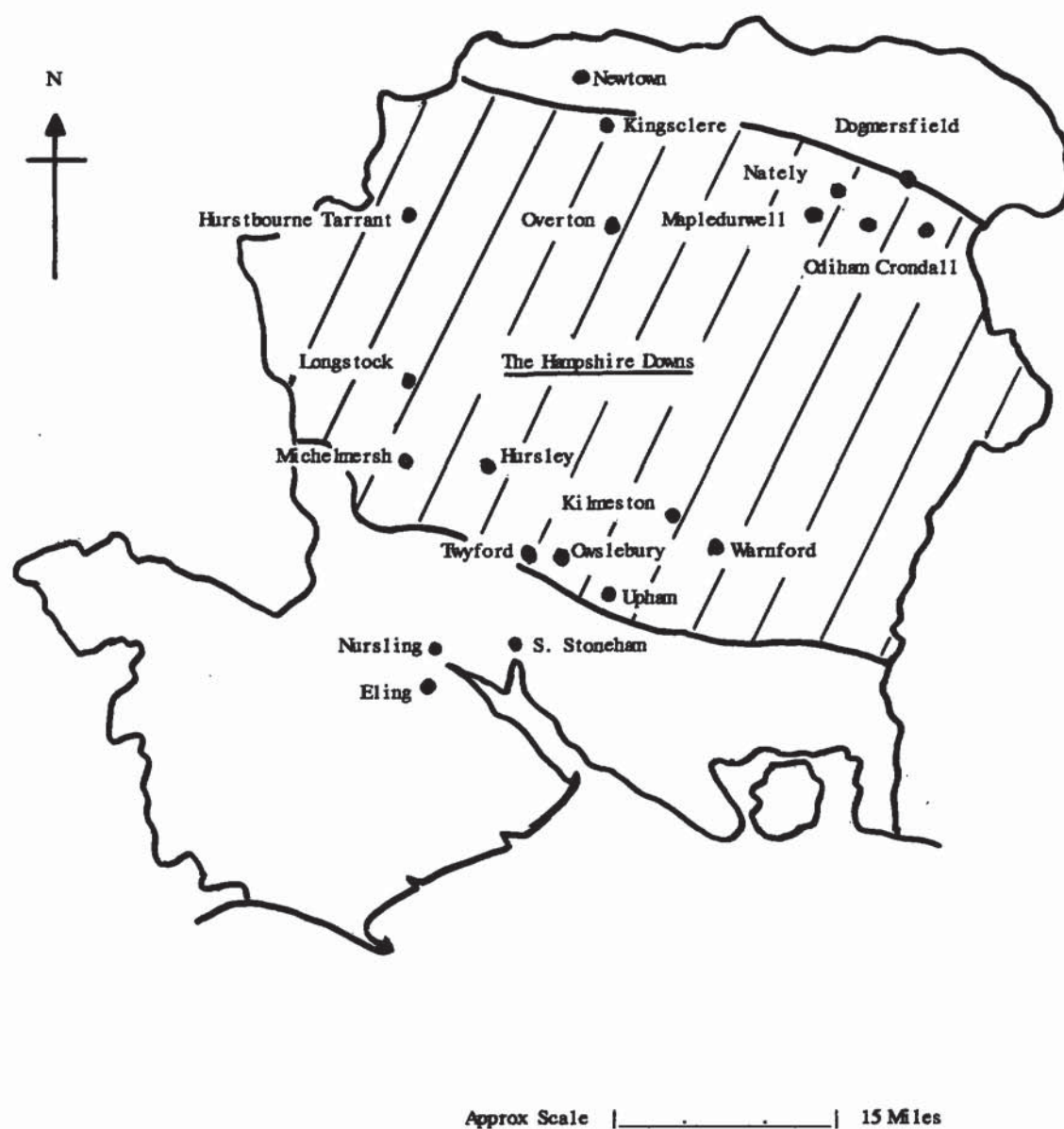


Fig. 1 Distribution of the Hampshire lands, by parish.



Fig. 2 The Langdon map of Mapledurwell, 1616 (II, 11).

considerably in size and topography, and ranged from fully enclosed to wholly open-field. Concern for the protection of title, in particular that expressed in the College Statutes forbidding the permanent alienation of land, ensured that there should be no change, and there can be little doubt that the landscapes depicted in the Langdon Maps were just as they had been at acquisition about 100 years earlier; they therefore present a complete cross-section of the enclosure patterns of lowland England in the early sixteenth century (see Figs 2–4). Although many of the estates were quite compact, others comprised enclosures that were dispersed over wide areas, demonstrating one of the practical problems that beset medieval agriculture. An extreme example is provided by the Langdon Map of Edmundstrop Benham, which has eleven individual insets; when

these are identified on the Ordnance Survey map of 1871, two and a half miles are seen to have separated the northern- and southern-most plots (LM II 6 and OS, sheets 3 and 9).

A combination of the College records often reveals the disposition of the lands of the tenants of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries in the greater context of the parishes in which they were situated. They reveal, for instance, that the copyholders of the open-field manor of Mapledurwell were accommodated in two distinct parts of the parish (Mc 13/1, 37–39; LM II, 11). The holders of around nine acres lived in the northern part and shared a three-field system; with such small holdings, and restricted to a three-year rotation of crops, they were clearly subsistence farmers. Those living in the southern part shared a five-field system, and most held

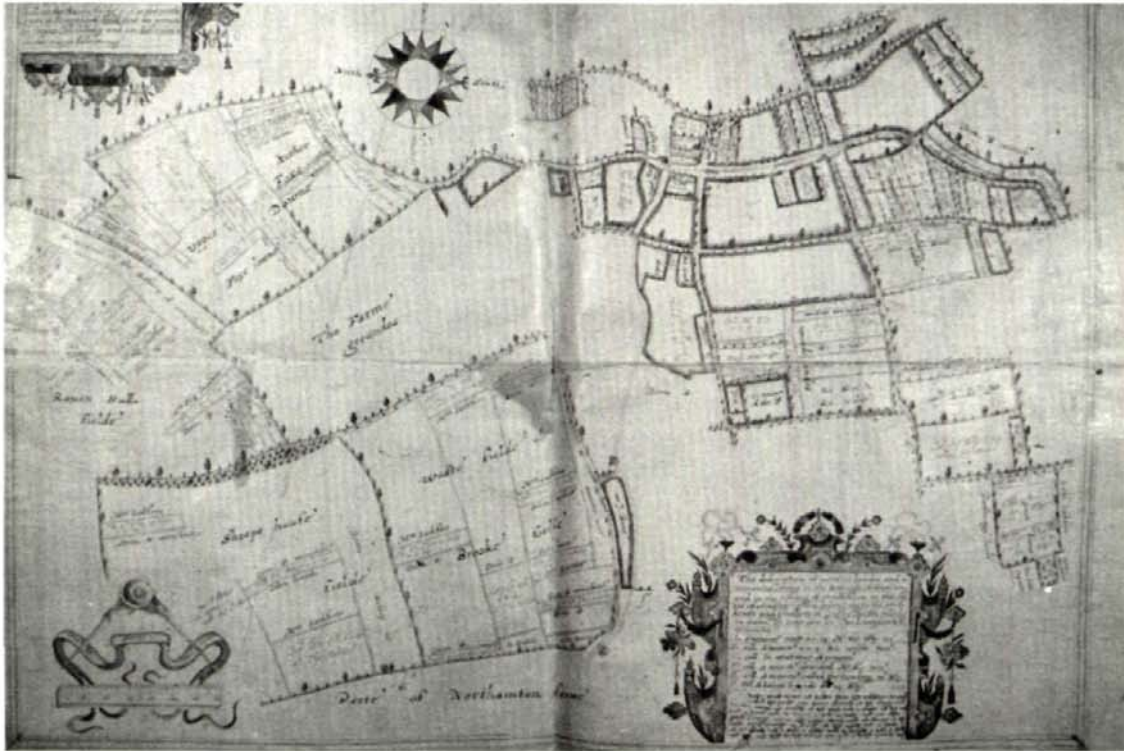


Fig. 3 The Langdon map of Overton, 1615 (II, 28).

between 30 and 40 acres. These more affluent men were either sub-letting or farming for profit, and one of them, the occupier of the manor house, actually held 174 acres. Considerable aggregation had clearly taken place, leaving a number of landless cottages, some of which were occupied by widows, but others by males (Mc 13/1, 37–43). A further example is the comparison of Overton with Newtown, both 'new' boroughs established by the bishop of Winchester at the beginning of the thirteenth century (Beresford, 1959, 195–200); here the Langdon Maps (II, 5 & 28) show main streets, of comparable length and width, which are compatible with the holding of markets. The related documents reveal that the Overton tenants were thriving economically throughout our period, but in Newtown the first signs of

decline were appearing (LB; Cc 2/19–42); Newtown is little more than a hamlet today. Beresford shows that at least one villein paid to have a plot in Overton, and it is possible that the association of land with the burgages dates back to the establishment of the new town, which was created out of the demesne land of the old manor (Beresford, 1959, 196).

THE PROTECTION OF TITLE AND QUALITY

Secure titles were difficult to buy in the early sixteenth century and the Founder's concern for the security of his endowments is expressed in his Statutes, which included the provision that surplus monies should be set aside for 'the

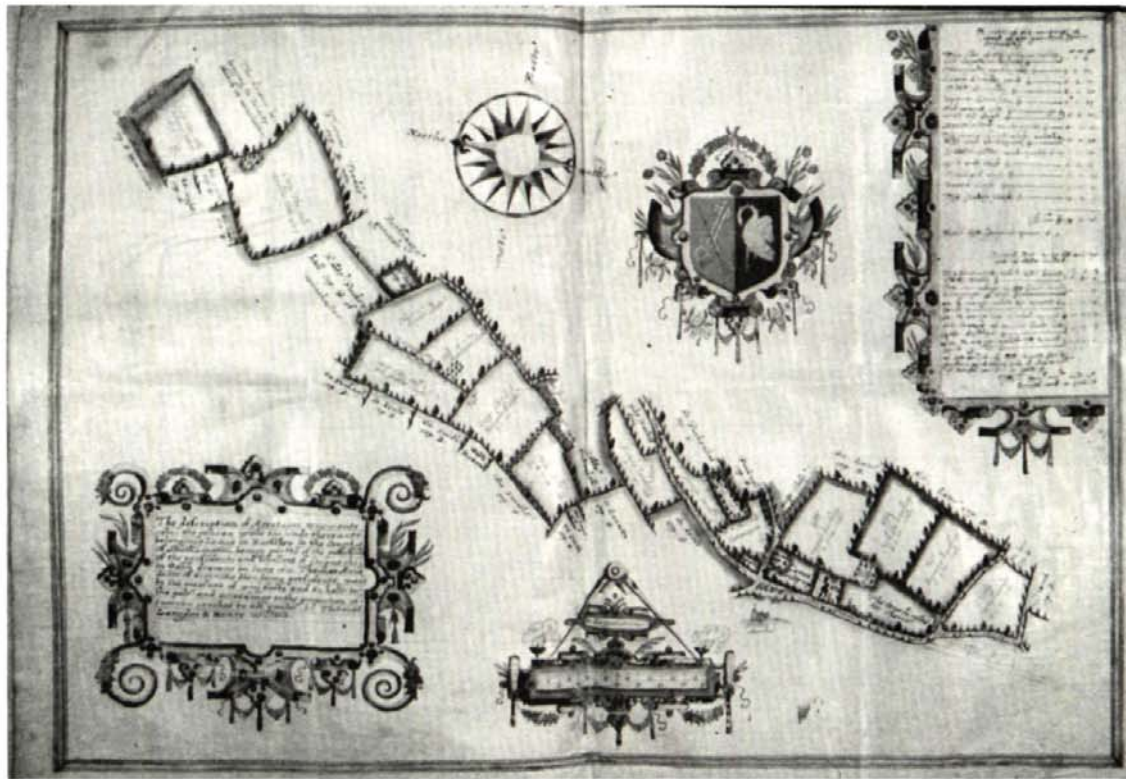


Fig. 4 The Langdon map of Hursley, 1615 (II, 16)

defence of suits and pleas' (Ward 1843, XLIV). Bonds given by vendors at the time Corpus Christi's lands were purchased included covenants for the production of 'evidences' as to former title, and copies of these evidences are included in thirty volumes of Twyne Transcripts, which were transcribed by members of the College in 1627.

The Langdon Maps confirmed the boundaries with neighbouring estates, their production following a dispute over College land in Kent; Thomas Langdon was employed by Corpus Christi as early as 1605, but most of the Hampshire maps were drawn between 1615 and 1616 (Woolgar 1985, 136). Their accuracy compares well with the First Series of the 6" Ordnance Survey maps, to the extent that individual closes can readily be identified; such identification in the dispersed estates provides a

graphic illustration of the distance separating closes, which is not apparent from the Langdon Maps themselves. An example of Langdon's accuracy appears at Fig 5, where the closes of the Hursley estate are located on the 1870 Ordnance Survey map (OS, sheet 49), and should be compared with Fig 4.

Together, the Maps and Transcripts would have provided a formidable armoury with which to fight law-suits. Nevertheless they were supported by the additional safeguards of fairly frequent terriers and an express prohibition in all leases against sub-letting without licence from the College.

It was also very necessary for an absentee landlord to ensure that his estate was maintained to a good standard. Twenty-year leases gave incentive to the lessee to maintain and even

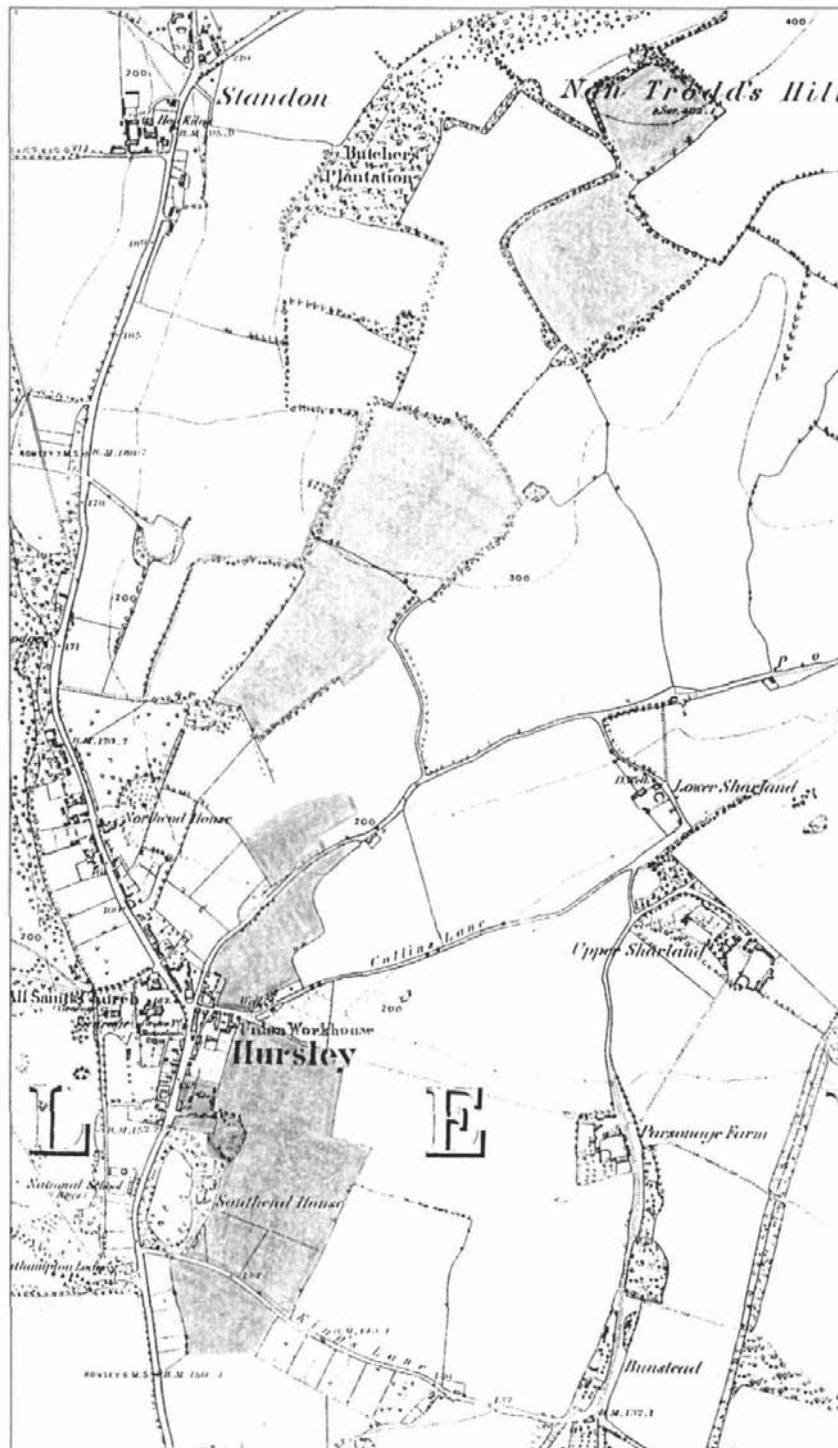


Fig. 5 Hursley in 1870: OS Map 6", 1st Series, Sheet 49.

improve it, but dangers lay in the final years of the term, and examples of neglect are often to be seen in the records at the time of a change in tenant. Standard covenants were built into indentures, rendering them void in case of non-compliance and, given the beneficial nature of Corpus Christi's leases, a point to be discussed later in this paper, the possibility of refusal to renew them would have been enough to keep most tenants in line. The College was nevertheless heavily dependent upon the reports of its bailiffs, and its only direct involvement was in the President's annual or biannual progresses.

TENANCIES AND TENANTS

The College estates in Hampshire included the three principal forms of tenancy: copyhold, leasehold and freehold. Copyhold rents were fixed by custom and, by the beginning of the seventeenth century, the crown was constantly advised to convert its copyholds into leaseholds and thus increase its income (Batho 1967, 270). That Bishop Fox, a century before, had shown a predilection for leaseable lands is further testimony to his shrewd approach to land dealings. The College received rent from freeholders and copyholders on its manors and held courts baron there at infrequent intervals, when a member of the College attended to act as steward.

Leases

Apart from short-term variations, many secular landlords had let land on long lease during the fifteenth century, and rents had assumed static prices as a result (Aylmer 1986, 521). Corpus Christi had to set the initial rents of its leasehold lands at an economic level, therefore, so as to permit husbandmen to make a living or sub-landlords to make a profit; subsequent events show that it had erred on the side of generosity, and, many years later, the College itself referred to its leases as 'beneficial' (F/1/1/2, 9/10). The affluent downland farmers of Hampshire referred to above were yeomen, men with large holdings who were directly involved in agriculture, rather

than the greater landholders who sub-let to others; they may be contrasted with the farmers of the villein class, who cultivated rather less than ten acres, frequently as little as two. Many Corpus Christi tenants fell into the yeoman category, and the inventories accompanying their wills demonstrate not only this, but also the benefits deriving from their leases: John Atwood died at Michelmersh in 1557 leaving an estate worth £61 12s 8d, while Anthony Bair, of Bere in Warnford left £187 13s 0d when he died in 1575 (HRO U.1557 and 1575 B6/1). Only fifty years later values had soared even further, and Nicholas Mathew, formerly of Mapledurwell but later also a tenant in Bere, left an estate valued at a little over £400 in 1606 (HRO 1606 B36/1-2). It is clear from the inventories that these valuations related only to chattels and stock held on the estates names, but some tenants held College leases in more than one parish and others may well have held from other landlords.

Fox's Statutes decreed that, except for urban land, no College lease should be for more than twenty years (Ward 1843, 46). In this he had again anticipated a national movement, for an Act of 1571 declared all university leases of more than twenty-one years to be void, and a further Act of 1572 exempted burgages from the terms of this legislation. The reason for this legislation was that, because serious decay could occur in the latter years of the term, long leases were thought to be 'the cheefest Causes of the Dilapidations and the Decaye of all Spyrituall Lyvynges and Hospitallitie' (Enactments, 176, 188). A few exceptions had been made prior to the Act, however, when favoured men were granted leases for terms that had been more usual in the fifteenth century. William Hornclyffe who, as an 'oratur' (TT 30, 221), was possibly one of the College Readers, entered a 99-year term in Newtown in 1518, for example, while William Fletcher, one of the bishop's stewards and the first tenant of *The Hart* in Overton, was appointed rent-collector in the north-west of Hampshire and granted a ninety-year lease in 1525 (TT 7, 5, 54 and LB 1, 15), a move that may well have been intended to reward him and command his continued loyalty at the same time.

From the outset leases were intended to provide

and maintain a clear income. The College required its tenants to keep the property in good repair, and to pay any quit-rents in addition to the lease-rents; furthermore, tenants were liable to provide board, lodging and stabling for the President and his retinue during progresses, if required. On the other hand, there were often valuable privileges attached to the land, of which the 'unstinted' commons in Holt and Headley enjoyed by the tenant of Edmundstrop Benham in Kingsclere was a typical example (Mc 13/1, 31).

Lessees considered the land to be their own during the term of their leases, which were heritable, and extensions depended solely upon their ability to pay renewal fines and the rent. The latter point is evidenced by the will of Thomas Collett of Newtown, in 1612; in bequeathing his lease in trust for his godchildren, Collett exhorted his executors to pay the rent at the times appointed, and to 'take heed of forfaytinge' (PRO PROB11/121, 161). Given a degree of initial affluence, therefore, a tenancy could, and often did, remain in one family for a long period of time; the at-Noke and Spencer families, for example, held the Kilmeston estate continuously from 1589 to 1805 (LB 4-29).

The conditions created in the College's leaseholds were therefore of potentially great stability, and this had a considerable effect upon the properties themselves. Although the College merely required tenants to maintain such buildings as existed at the time of the granting of their leases, affluent lessees began to build new houses for their own use almost immediately after their grants had been made. No early evidence has been found, but later documents suggest that such investment was recouped by private agreement; in 1703, for instance, Hazard Withers surrendered his lease of Hall Place in Hurstbourne Tarrant on consideration of £200 paid to him by Stephen Barton, the next tenant (C1 6/4). Since such tenants appear to have been local men who had already made their mark, it was natural for them to build in as grand a manner as possible, and it is to be noted that some of the houses were built upon sites that would be described as 'prestigious' today. William Searle is recorded as carrying out the 'great charge of building' at Walters in Odiham

just before 1546 (LB 1, 87); this building still stands in the High Street there and its high quality is marked, not only by its great size, but also by the fact that it is brick-built and has substantial lateral stacks, a very up-to-date feature at that date (Fig 6 – E Roberts, *pers. comm.*). The earliest features of the high-status farmhouse at Bere in Warnford are said to date from around 1550 (E R Lewis, *corresp.* Feb 1989), and, of other surviving buildings, the eye-catching, close-studded building now known as the *Swan Inn* in Newtown probably dates from the first half of the seventeenth century (E Roberts, *pers. comm.*); either of two prosperous tenants, Thomas Collett, a surgeon, or Thomas Walden, a yeoman, could have been responsible for the building of the latter. The *White Hart* (Fig 7) in Overton is another fine building, elements of which Edward Roberts dates to within 25 years of 1650 (*pers. comm.*); it was tenanted by Richard Ely, gentleman, from 1603, followed by Thomas Coteel Esq from 1634 (LB 5, 159; 6, 40 and 7, 213), and it is possible that one of these men carried out the building, even though it is unlikely that he occupied it himself (its outward appearance today is probably due to the considerable refurbishment which took place just before 1770 – Cc 11/22). While the status that derived from erecting a new, and possibly grand, building would have been great, it was not achieved without danger, and William Hornclyffe, the first tenant in Newtown, appears to have overstretched his resources. In a petition to the President, he appealed for help in resisting a claim being made against the land on which he had built a new house in Newtown, and at the same time referred to his 'great povertie' (Cc 8/1 – undated). He disappeared from the rent-collector's rolls in 1538/9 (Cc 2/19), but the land remained in Corpus Christi's possession.

A surge of rebuilding took place in Overton, where five College tenements were described as having been newly built in the years between 1542 and 1555 (Cc 2/22-35), but there is evidence that this was funded by Corpus Christi itself (Cc 7/1-3). The College's finances were in a healthy state at this time – purchases of land were still taking place – and the fact that rents were



Fig. 6 "Walters", in Odiham.

raised (Cc 2/22-35) implies that the improvements were made as an investment rather than out of any consideration for the tenant.

Leasehold rents in the early sixteenth century were, as has already been noted, commonly regarded as static. It followed, therefore, that when a sharp increase in population in the latter part of that century caused an equally sharp increase in prices, Corpus Christi, along with other university colleges, fell into financial difficulty. This is not evident from income, which had continued to rise until about 1550, as the last acquisitions were made (Duncan 1986, Table 1), but was due to increases in the cost of commons, liveries and stipends for members of the College (Fowler 1893, 331). A comparatively recent and increasingly common feature of leasehold tenure in many non-collegiate estates had been the

obligation laid on tenants to pay all or part of their rents in corn or other produce (Bowden 1967, 682), and, in 1576, Parliament used this system to relieve the universities' plight. Under 'An Acte for the Maintenance of the Colledges in the Universityes etc.' (Enactments, 190), a part of every lease-rent was to be 'reserved' in corn or its market value, which was initially set at 6s 8d per quarter for wheat and 5s per quarter for malt. The intention was that the new rent formula should reflect the value of the land more accurately than before; more importantly, by mirroring the rise and fall in the cost of corn, it would continue to do so in the future. Although the Act specified that one third 'at least' should be so reserved, it may be that there were good reasons why Corpus Christi was inhibited from setting its corn-rent at more than that proportion;



Fig. 7 "The White Hart", in Overton.

in the event, precisely one third was chosen and, in retrospect, this may be seen as a long-term error. The remaining two-thirds were thereafter referred to as 'Old Rent' in the College documents. The new system became uniform throughout the estates, but was a gradual process, since each new corn-rent could only be introduced as the existing lease fell in; the first one in Hampshire appeared in 1578, with John Wylde's lease of a burgage on the west side of South Street in Overton and three acres in the open-fields (LB 3, 92).

One-third of the original rent for Wylde's tenement was duly converted to corn-rent, but the interpretation of the Act in respect of burgages appears to have been incorrect since, at the next renewal, the rent was divided into

separate elements for burgage and land, corn-rent only being computed for the latter (LB 4, 87). Other burgages were treated in the same way, the effect being to freeze the rents apportioned to the buildings (LB 4, 63/73/74/87/100/105). The uncultivated Polhampton warren, or 'game of conyes', in Overton parish was treated as a burgage, and rent in kind of 'twelve couple of conyes' was merely commuted to a cash payment of eight shillings to enhance the original rent (LB 4, 63).

The Hart, also in Overton, was part of a leasehold that included two other buildings in the town, but it also included two yardlands in the open-fields. This preponderance of land over buildings appears to have been the sole reason why the tenement was treated as if it were wholly

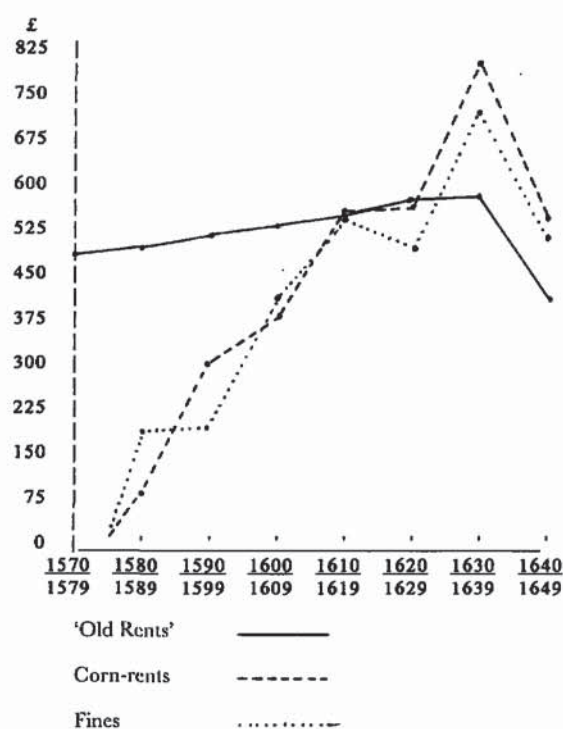


Fig. 8 A decennial comparison of rents and fines, 1570–1649.

agricultural in character. The whole of the original rent was converted under the corn-rent formula, strictly in accordance with the Act. The rural estates were all treated in this way, the farmhouses clearly being regarded as appendages to the land.

Payment in kind would have been inconvenient to tenant and landlord alike, of course, and corn-rents were invariably settled by translation into cash, as provided in the Act. The effect of this early form of index-linking is apparent from the College accounts, which show dramatic increases in rental income from 1585 until the disruption caused by the Civil War in the 1640s (Duncan 1986, Table 1 – see Fig 8).

A further Act of Parliament of 1576 outlawed the practice, of which the Society of Corpus Christi had been guilty, of granting postdated leases to prospective tenants more than three

years before the current indentures were due to expire (Enactments, 192). An extreme example of this had occurred following John Lacy's twenty-year lease of Bere Farm in Warnford in 1544, Roger Weldon being granted a lease for the same land in 1554, 'for 20 years after John Lacy's lease expires' (LB 2, 19). The underlying motive for this policy, which, in view of the scope of the legislation, was clearly not restricted to Corpus Christi, must have been the Society's practice of dividing a large proportion of renewal fines between the President and Fellows; although something of a gamble for the prospective tenant, who might not live to benefit from it, the early receipt of fines would have been welcomed by individual Society members, who might otherwise not be in office to benefit from them. Fines are dealt with in greater detail overleaf.

Copyholds

Less substantial than the leaseholds, both in area and income, were the copyholds, a name taken from the practice of issuing the tenant with a copy of the manorial court roll which confirmed the grant. These tenancies were all for the term of three 'lives', that is to say, three persons were nominated and tenure lasted until the death of the longest lived. Being customary tenancies, rents were fixed for all time, but fines and heriots were payable on certain occasions during the tenancy in addition. As a 'life' was voided, by death or surrender, another might be granted against payment of a fine, and this usually resulted in continuity of tenure within a particular family. Heriots, payable upon the death of a tenant, were usually the 'best beast' of the deceased, and thus reflected a degree of inflationary pressure; since there was no provision for increases in rents, however, the system was already becoming inadequate and anachronistic. It is significant that most of Corpus Christi's copyholds lay in its manors in Mapledurwell and Owslebury, which were not typical of the Founder's purchases; the former, as has already been noted, was the donation of his steward, while the latter did have considerable demesne lands which could be leased at a greater profit. Survival of the College's Manorial Court Rolls is

sporadic, but the subsequent Court Books go on to provide remarkable continuity in the recording of the copyholds. Many of them were small and in Mapledurwell in 1614 several were of eight or nine acres, with rents as low as 2s *per annum*, but Hugh Mathew, who lived in the manor-house there, paid £3 11s 11³/₄d for the 174 acres that he held (Mc 13/1, 36/37 and 40/1). A printed 'Account of the Estates' shows that the latter copyhold still existed, and that the rent was still precisely the same, in 1881 (F/1/1/2, 11). Again, payments in kind would have been inconvenient to landlord and tenant alike, and heriots were usually commuted to money payments.

Freeholds

While the copyholds did not provide such a good yield as the leases, they did make a substantial contribution to the College's income. The hereditary freehold tenancies, on the other hand, were of little value from the outset and became even less so. They were to be found only in the manors where Corpus Christi was the lord and, although many were very small, a few, by sixteenth-century standards, must have been quite large.

Little is known about their location, since they were not included in the Langdon Maps, but the 'Description of the Estates' shows that there were six in the manor of Rombridge in Eling, with quit-rent totalling £1 1s 11d in 1615 (Mc 13/1, 55). These included a single acre called Hookers, held by the widow Goase at a quit-rent of 1d *per annum*, and unquantified land at 15s held by John Mills Esq (Mc 13/1, 55). The information for the other two manors is much more limited, and can only be confirmed by entries in later Court Books. There were probably no more than two in Marwell Woodlock with a combined quit-rent of 24 shillings (F/3/3/4, 97-1701), and possibly only two in Mapledurwell, each with a quit-rent of twopence (F/3/3/4, 42-1687 and 59-1694). There are a few references to freeholds in surviving Court Rolls, but there is no continuity and none of them can be identified with certainty in the later Court Books.

A freeholder merely paid suit of court and a fixed quit-rent. In addition, a relief of precisely

one year's rent was payable by the heir upon a tenant's death, as a condition of entry. Freeholds, with their unindexed rents, were relics of more stable times:

Even at the beginning of the Tudor period such rents had often added little to the landlord's income and, with the fall in the value of money, they became less and less significant. Thus, by the middle of the seventeenth century many freeholders had ceased to make any payments whatever and freehold had almost achieved its modern meaning (Bowden 1967, 684).

Fines

Rents did not constitute the only form of income from land. 'By the middle of the sixteenth century the price paid for the use of land had come to assume the form, not so much of an adequate annual rent, as of a small rent supplemented by large payments (fines) on the renewal of leases or copies' (Fowler 1893, 331). In the case of copyholds the tenants paid in order to add further lives and the fines varied according to the number and age of lives added, with an upward trend as the value of land increased; they were recorded in such manorial court records as survive from the period.

Fines were also used to register changes in the value of leasehold land, and were levied at the sealing of indentures. They did not regularly appear in the College accounts until 1587/8, however, because it was the College Society's practice to appropriate a large proportion of this income to private use. This caused a scandal with which, according to Fowler, 'the "cession" of no less than four Presidents of Corpus . . . was more or less connected', and in 1599 President Reynolds asked Bishop Bilson, the College Visitor, to adjudicate in the matter. Although such appropriation was common among ecclesiastical landlords at the time, Bishop Bilson considered that it was the Founder's will that all fines should be applied 'to the publick good of the College', and he ruled accordingly; he did not forbid the receipt of private 'gratifications', but warned against wringing the tenants for private gain (Fowler 1893, 331 and 344-51). Having regard to the colleges' access to fines, it

is not clear why there was a need for the corn-rent legislation of 1575, and it may be that their appropriation to private use was accepted as customary; that the 1575 Act expressly decreed that corn-rents were to be 'expended to the Use of the Relief of the Commons and Diet of the said Colledges' would tend to confirm this view (Enactments 1, 190).

Entry or renewal fines fell to be paid whenever a new lease was granted, but this was not just dependent upon the expiry of the previous lease. It was an invariable condition of leases that an estate could only be sub-let with the express permission of the College, given by means of the specific Licences to Assign with which the early Lease Books abound. The issue of a licence was contingent upon the renewal of the lease, necessitating the payment of a further fine; thus a change of sub-tenant required application for another licence. Where lessees sub-let, therefore, renewal fines became due rather more frequently than at the end of the standard twenty-year term. There was an early modification to this procedure, when the issue of 'open' licences to assign was introduced; these entitled College tenants to sub-let, to 'any fit and convenient person', for a period of seven years. This modification becomes apparent, in tenancies that were consistently sub-let, by the appearance of regular seven-yearly renewals, despite the fact that the indentures still carried a nominal twenty-year term.

According to Dunbabin (1986, 277) leasehold fines levied in the universities were usually set in multiples of the clear value of the land in question, that is to say, of its true gross value less the reserved rent actually payable to the college. Bowden has suggested (1967, 686) that elsewhere in the country in the sixteenth century they broadly equated to one or two years' rent. In Corpus Christi, at least, the picture became rather more complex than that. No record of individual fines on leases is available until the introduction of the Grant Books in 1609, but from that date most can be extracted provided the date of the grant is known. From these records it appears that a combination of annual value and the years already expired in the previous lease were used

to compute the fine; a tenant exploiting the land himself, and holding it for most of the twenty-year term, would expect to pay considerably more than a tenant who was sub-letting and renewing at seven-yearly intervals. The major advantage to the College of the seven-yearly renewals appears to have been the opportunity to revise fines upwards more frequently to take account of recent inflation, no increase in rents being possible.

Generally speaking, the lessees of Corpus Christi property did rather well for themselves at the expense of an absentee landlord, whose difficulty would have been in assessing the true annual value of its estates and the level of entry and renewal fines that should be set. This is well illustrated in the inventory of a tenant of Shelley in Eling, who died in 1640, which showed that the annual value of the years yet to run in his lease far exceeded the net annual outgoings, including allowance for the last fine, at the time of his death (HRO 1640 A88/2). Much the same sort of benefit was provided by the fixed rents of the tenancies of the copyholders and freeholders, and this was increasingly the case towards the end of our period and beyond it.

THE INCOME FROM THE ESTATES

The earliest books of account, the *Libri Magni*, are not wholly reliable, although Duncan's work (1986) does provide a fair picture of gross income from all sources from 1521 until the introduction of the corn-rents, and of analysed gross income thereafter.

Valor Ecclesiasticus, on the other hand, compiled by the Crown for tax purposes in 1534, gives reliable and detailed, gross and net rental income for each parish (VE II, 244/6). The net total of £342 from the eleven counties given in the first paragraph of the text included income from some sources other than rent, such as advowsons, and made allowance for certain College expenses, such as stipends; it provides the best available information for its time. Comparative net figures from the counties for rents alone are given in Table 1.

Table 1. The Net Value of Corpus Christi's Estates, 1534.

The following table shows the net value (i.e. rents less quit-rents) by county, and is taken from *Valor Ecclesiasticus* Vol 2, pp. 244/6.

	£.	s.	d.
Oxfordshire	37.	14.	10.
Berkshire	1.	1.	10.
Gloucestershire	45.	11.	3.
Southampton	79.	7.	0 ¹ / ₂ .
Wiltshire	18.	15.	0.
Somerset	30.	10.	2.
Devonshire	21.	0.	0.
Bedfordshire	42.	12.	8.
Surrey	54.	0.	8 ¹ / ₂ .
Kent	47.	8.	1 ¹ / ₂ .
Lincolnshire	9.	3.	8.
Total	387.	4.	5 ¹ / ₂ .

The sixteenth-century rent collectors' rolls are incomplete but are extant for much of the period 1528–1563 (Cc 2/9–41). Taken in conjunction with the earliest Lease Books (Vols 1–3), they show that, once set, the initial leasehold rents remained unchanged until the introduction of corn-rents after 1575. It is not clear why the College was inhibited from raising its rents before 1575 (or why the 'Old Rent' element was never changed thereafter). It may be that the answer lies in the Acts of 1571 and 1572, which limited the terms of college leases; they decreed that the 'accustomed' yearly rent should be 'reserved' during the same terms.

In addition to static rents, it has been shown that, for at least part of the period, most of the fines had been appropriated to the use of the Society. These factors are reflected in the total receipts from all counties in the *Libri Magni*, which rose from £326 in 1521/2 to £520 in 1550/1 as more revenue-producing lands were acquired, and then remained fairly constant until 1584/5, when corn-rent appeared for the first time. In 1587/8 the contents of the Fines Chest, £178, were also set out separately. From 1600 dramatic increases were recorded in corn-rents and fines, and total receipts peaked at an average of around



Fig. 9 Increases in corn prices, decennial averages, 1561–1652.

£2,100 in the decade before the commencement of the Civil War. During the 1640s income dropped to an average of £1,300, falling to a low of £652 in 1644/5. By the end of our period, rent collection appears to have returned to normality and arrears were being made up (Duncan 1986, Table 1). Fig 8, which is based upon decennial averages of figures that are not wholly reliable, demonstrates the rise of the corn-rents from their first recording in 1584/5, the dramatic increase in recorded fines following Bishop Bilson's ruling in 1599 and the fairly constant line of the 'Old Rents'; the decline in all receipts in the 1640s is also striking. Fig 9 demonstrates the increase in corn prices over the same period, although its figures, averaged from those of numerous locations, are rather crude. In specific terms, the effect on combined cash- and corn-rents alone is equally striking. The price of wheat at Oxford in 1649 was £3 12s 0d, and malt £1 16s 0d; applying the corn-rent formula to the 'Old Rent' of £1 10s 0d for Kilmeston, for instance, a value of precisely £5 10s 0d is obtained, an increase of 266% over 1589, the first 'corn-rent' renewal (F/10/2, Unpag.; LB 2, 65).

Such was the overall picture, but *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, supported by the Lease Books, provides the basis for a comparison of rental income from the individual parishes. The gross incomes recorded in those two sources agree precisely in all those parishes where the College land was let by a single indenture, and general

agreement is achieved in others. Table 2 shows the net value by parish in Hampshire in 1534. Marwell Woodlock in Owslebury and Overton were therefore joint jewels in the Hampshire crown at that time; the leases in the two parishes produced roughly the same amounts, the static burgage rents in Overton roughly equating with the static copyholds in Marwell, and this situation lasted at least until 1650. (LB 3, 94/41/172; and 4, 16/28/42/64/74/88/92/93/100/142). The income from copyholds and freeholds in each of the manors remained static throughout the period.

Table 2. The Net Value of Corpus Christi's Estates, 1534.

The following table shows the net value by parish within Hampshire, and is taken from *Valor Ecclesiasticus* Vol 2, pp. 245/6.

	£.	s.	d.
Overton			
(incl. Quidhampton and Polhampton):	17.	8.	2½.
Kingsclere	2.	17.	4.
Newtown	2.	0.	0.
Hurstbourne Tarrant	6.	0.	2.
Kilmeston	1.	6.	4.
The Manor of Marwell Woodlock			
(incl. land in Owslebury, Twyford & Upham, held by lease and copyhold)	16.	8.	11½.
Hursley	7.	4.	2.
Braichfield in Michelmersh	1.	10.	4.
South Stoneham (prob. incl. Nursling, which is not specifically mentioned in the survey)	1.	6.	8.
Eling (including land in Shelley and Rombridge, held by lease, copyhold and freehold)	5.	16.	0.
Bere in Warnford	5.	2.	1.
Mapledurwell (including land in Upnately, held by lease, copyhold and freehold)	8.	6.	9½.
Odiham (incl. land in Dogmersfield and Crondall)	4.	0.	0.
Total for Hampshire	79.	7.	0½.

The combined total of fines from all counties was considerable and, like the corn-rents, reflected increasing prices. The graph at Fig 8 includes decennial averages from 1570 to 1649; it is significant that the curves for fines and corn-rents follow the same pattern once the latter had settled down. The sharp rise from 1600 is evident, and there were further increases in the following three decades. As with other income, a slump occurred in the 1640s, but recovery is recorded towards 1649/50, as arrears were collected (Duncan 1986, Table 1).

The 266% increase in the revenue from Kilmeston, demonstrated above, would have been uniform throughout the leaseholds, and, in the absence of other rent modifications, was effectively the increase between 1517 and 1649. Since wheat prices increased by almost 600% in the same period (Rogers 1882, 292; 1887, 276), it is apparent that the index-linking of the corn-rents was in itself insufficient to make good the shortfall in income. It is also significant, therefore, that Duncan's analyses show that the total of fines in the decade leading up to the Civil War had risen to almost precisely one half of the total from rents.

During the following century the price of wheat fluctuated, but there was a downward trend, and an overall fall of about 20% by 1749 (Bowden 1985, App. III); there is evidence that the tenantry suffered hardship during this period and the Lease Books show that transfers to new lessees were much less frequent.

CONCLUSION

Bishop Fox laid down that the President of Corpus Christi had to be expert in all matters regarding rents, buildings and the leasing of property (Duncan 1986, 574). In addition, the College employed bailiffs and must have had access to the experience of highly-placed landowners. Furthermore, the external pressures to which it was subject were the same as those felt by non-institutional landlords.

Nevertheless, like other colleges, it was bound by its own Statutes and the corn-rent legislation, and its leaseholds remained 'beneficial' for the

tenants and were never to give the returns that they might have done. The real value of the income from the copyholds, despite their security and the ease of collection, was steadily declining, as were the fixed quit-rents and reliefs of the freeholds. By the early eighteenth century freeholders had begun to default on a regular basis and references to them disappear from the Court Books after 1772; it may be assumed that the quit-rents paid by College tenants to other lords also ceased at about this time, but no evidence on this point has been found.

The Civil War had already created difficulties in collecting rents and assessing values before the end of our period, and the College's landlordship was yet to be affected by other external developments. In the eighteenth century Enclosure by Agreement was hindered by the Founder's ban on alienation, and the College required Acts of Parliament to override its own Statutes; later still, the coming of the Basingstoke Canal and the evolution of the railways required the involuntary surrender of land. The building of substantial houses continued, of which the mansion house that still stands at Marwell in Owslebury is an outstanding example. When William Long renewed his lease in 1813, the formula for the calculation of his rent was just as it had been when Sir John Seymour had renewed in 1594, although the value of the corn-rent had risen considerably in the meantime, of course. Long felt secure enough in his tenancy to refashion the building extensively in that year, and the house and estate remained in the leasehold of the family or their trustees for a

further fifty years (Crook 1993, 37 and LB 4, 35; 30, 450–37, 301).

Nevertheless, the pattern of estate management that had evolved as described above, was firmly established by 1650, and a combination of the Founder's Statutes and the index-linking corn-rent legislation ensured that it should continue for a further 200 years thereafter. The estates that had been fully enclosed from the outset remained precisely as they had been in the sixteenth century and, when university colleges again came under financial pressure in the second half of the nineteenth century, Parliament acted once more, this time to permit the permanent alienation of land. Following an Act of 1858 (Enactments III, 217), a massive rationalisation took place and the most widely dispersed properties were sold off. Only then was the College released from the ties of medieval farming.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Manuscript sources in Corpus Christi College

LB	Lease Books
LM	Langdon Maps
TT	Twynce Transcripts

Enactments	<i>Enactments in Parliament</i>
HRO	Hampshire Record Office
OS	Ordnance Survey
PRO	Public Record Office
VE	<i>Valor Ecclesiasticus</i>

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Cc 8/1 William Hornclyffe's petition to the President of the College (c 1539).

Cc 7/1-3 Accounts of money laid out and received by John Langcaster for three houses and a barn in Overton, 1542-1550.

Cc 11/22 William Woodward to the President of the College, 13 Jun 1770.

Cg 1/4 Terrier for Hurstbourne Tarrant (undated).

Cl 6/4 Hazard Wither's surrender of his lease of Hall Place, 18 Sep 1703.

F/1/1/2 An Account of the Estates of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, 1881.

F/4/1/1-4 Grant Books (1609-1687. Contain rough details of leases, including fines paid).

F/10/2 Corn Books, bundle 2, book for 1649. (Un-numbered and unpaginated.)

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Map 118 Estate Map Ibthorpe in Hurstbourne Tarrant, 1823.

Map 129 Estate Map of Upton in Hurstbourne Tarrant, 1828.

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