

**PETER HOPKINS reports on  
LOCK, STOCK & DORRELL – A TREASURE MAP OF MERTON  
ABBEY?**

In March I received a letter from David Saxby, the Museum of London Archaeology Service archaeologist responsible for excavations at the Merton Priory site. In it he enclosed a photocopy of the map reproduced opposite, asking if the Society could shed any light on it. Apparently it was dropped to the site c. 1987-1988 by someone from Sutton, but no-one knew who the donor was.

Although I have had to reduce it from an A3 sheet to fit the page, I have made no attempt to clean it up. The smudges in the corners show where tape was fixed when it was traced from the original.

Hidden in the discoloured area at the left-hand side is the heading, "COPY OF DOCTOR SHOCKWELL'S MAP 1653-1727", but MoLAS call it 'the treasure map', as it purports to locate a 'VAULTED ARCH' in which a box of plate had been hidden at the time of the dissolution of the Priory. The note on the right-hand side reads:

*"Jeff, this vault is supposed to have been here in 1697 and was called the Arms Vault and a work by a Mr Betty existed then wherein he supposed that inside it lay a box of plate not deposited with Henry VIII and his commissioners. Mr Betty said that a king's coat of arms was kept within but didn't say which king or when."*

MR BETTY'S HOUSE is depicted to the left of this note, with a HEDGEROW (marked by a hatched line) separating it from land held by MR BETTY. Above the house an arrow points to a structure labelled MR BETTY AND HIS VAULTED ARCH. To the left of this structure is a buttressed section of an apse, probably part of the Chapter House. STONE WALLS representing part of the Priory Church are also depicted, with one house built against the inside of the right-hand wall, labelled MR STOCKS HOUSE, and another in the centre of the Chancel area, labelled DORRELLS HOUSE. Land occupied by MR DORRELL is shown at the top. STABLES are shown to the left of the Church walls, and an OLD HOUSE in the corner of the west end. Trees grow within the former Chancel and east of the Chapter House. A FALLEN WALL is at the north east corner of the Chancel, and a [REBUILT] LOOSE PACKED WALL at the west end of the Church. A PIT is shown to the east of MR BETTY'S HOUSE, and several STONE PILES are depicted around the site – a reminder that the Priory ruins were still being used as a source of building stone in the locality. Just below the compass rose is a CARTER'S STONE HUT, and another HUT is shown among trees on the east bank of the river. A CHAPEL WITH STABLES is shown next to a water mill labelled MERRY MILL WATER MILL with a BRICK TIMBER BARN adjoining. A POND is shown to the right of the mill, and a DRY POND above it. On the west bank is another HUT, a length of FLINT AND LIMESTONE WALL with a GATE AND DOOR, CALLED NEWGATE. Another GATE AND DOOR abuts another length of FLINT AND LIMESTONE WALL running parallel to the river. A house is depicted in this area, labelled MR LOCKES. In the bottom right corner is a FALLEN BARN, STONE WALLS, MADE UP WALL, TIMBER AND RED BRICK. Above this is marked the SITE OF FORMER DWELLING, among the trees.

According to the key, the solid black lines represent WALLS OF ABBEY OR OTHER STONE BUILDINGS, a pecked line - - - depicts WALLS BURIED BUT STILL TO BE SEEN, curving fine lines delineate PATHS. Straight lines give measurements, though the map is not to scale. The crosses scattered between the church and the river show WHERE CORPSES WERE FOUND BY MR BETTY.

The names Lock[e] and Dorrell are well-known in the history of Merton, though not concurrently. There was one known reference to 'Mr Lock of Merton Abbey', but this map is the first piece of evidence to locate him at the property in which the Norman arch was later discovered. Merton Abbey was not one of the many properties owned by the Lock family. When Aubrey visited c. 1673 the house was occupied by 'Mr Pepys', who had bought the estate in 1668. One branch of the Lock family lived in Wimbledon until 1679 but the family's long connection with Merton itself had been thought to have ended in 1646 with the sale of Church House and Merton Holts, together with the tithes and other rectorial rights. In 1697 these properties and rights were bought by Robert Dorrell, whose son, John Dorrell, bought the lordship of the manor of Merton two years later. There was no manor house in Merton, although a farm and some leasehold cottages were sold along with the manorial rights, so perhaps the new lord of the manor lived in the house at Merton Abbey, small though it appears. However, a John Dorrell of Morden, husbandman, had died in 1624, and a Robert and Catherine Dorrell had leased the meadows now covered by Morden Hall Garden Centre, at some time before 1716, so the family may already have had local connections. Mr Betty's name has not so far appeared in local records, nor that of Mr Stock[s].

The name MERRY MILL attached to a mill on the site of the present Merton Abbey (Liberty) Wheelhouse is also a surprise. The Priory was known to possess a pair of mills known as the Amery Mills, but they were always believed to have been on the site later used as a copper mill and then for the Board Mills.

If this map is genuine then it casts doubts on some of our established ideas regarding Merton's history. If any reader has anything to offer on Dr Shockwell or his map, or Mr Betty and his work, please let us know!

