

This is the sixteenth of an occasional series of articles by David Stone about incidents in the history of Swanton Morley and its church

LAND IN SWANTON MORLEY OWNED BY THE BOYS' HOSPITAL IN NORWICH

As some of you may know, next year the Friends of All Saints' are organising a 'Lincoln Festival' which will celebrate the bicentenary of the birth of Abraham Lincoln, and the fact that some of his ancestors lived in Swanton Morley. I hope to be able to talk more about this and to present the full programme in next month's edition. However, it was when I was studying the results of a survey of the village which was undertaken in 1692, and which shows the lands held by the Lincoln family at that time, that I came across several pieces of land that were owned by the Boys' Hospital, Norwich. So, although it does not have too much to do with the village, I thought that it might be interesting to find out a little more about this hospital. Note that the old meaning of the term 'hospital' was simply a place of care.

Thomas Anguish, was a wealthy merchant who lived in Tombland at what is now part of the Maid's Head Hotel. He was elected Mayor of Norwich in 1611. As usual there was a pageant and firework display outside his house, and apparently some of the fireworks exploded accidentally; and thirty-three people were crushed to death as they tried to escape. (From then on, fireworks were banned on feast and guild days.) Thomas died in 1617 and there is a splendid memorial to him and his wife in St George's Tombland – although it is almost hidden by the Victorian organ. His memorial is located above his usual seat in the church.

Anyway, in his will he bequeathed to the city certain property in Fishergate, to be used to found a hospital "for keeping, bringinge up and teachinge of young and very poor children, borne and brought up in the city of Norwich. and especially such as for want lye in the streets whereby many of them fall into great and grievous diseases, as that they are fittinge for no profession ever after."

After his death, his sons released the property to the city and it was fitted up for this use by the corporation. The rules said that the east part of the house should admit 10 boys and two girls, with two sets of apparel (linen and woollen) being provided by their respective parishes. A master and dame were appointed to keep the children at work. Apparently gifts and legacies to support the hospital came pouring in, and in 1628 Charles I gave a charter establishing "The Children's hospital in the City of Norwich." Until 1650, boys and girls were educated together at Fishergate, but in 1649 Robert Baron, the mayor who died that year, endowed a separate Girls' Hospital. It is interesting to note that this was the first year of the Commonwealth, so perhaps the Puritan element did not think it proper for boys and girls to be educated together. In 1664 this Girls' Hospital was duly established in a house in Golden Dog Lane, in what had been the Great Garden of the Black Friars Over the Water. From then on, the site at Fishergate housed only the Boys' Hospital. Anguish's charity later set up other schools, and the boys' school was eventually sold off in 1885.

But, going back to 1692, we can see that the income from some of the land in Swanton Morley was being used to provide funds for the Boys' Hospital. It would be interesting to find out who gave the land to the hospital. Does anyone have any information on this?