

have related to.⁶ However, in the basement of the present house there are still two surviving medieval doorways, and at least one stretch of wall. Elsewhere, early occupants of former monastic buildings often lived in the prior's or abbot's lodging – the only buildings whose form resembled a normal house or which provided conventional domestic accommodation – and it may be that at Wroxton the prior's lodging continued to be occupied as a dwelling until the building of the existing house.

Thomas Pope, who was born around 1508 in Deddington, trained as a lawyer, entered royal service and rose very rapidly. In 1536 he was appointed Treasurer of the newly-created Court of Augmentations, the body set up to administer the dissolution of monasteries. Wroxton was one of many properties he had acquired and with which he endowed Trinity College in Oxford in 1555. However, before Thomas Pope's gift of the freehold to Trinity College he had given a 99-year lease to his brother John, and the gift to the College was on the understanding that John Pope's descendants should always live there and that the College should always renew the lease to them.⁷ It was an odd thing to do, particularly since he had already made out a deed whereby his very extensive Oxfordshire estates should pass directly to John if he should die childless,⁸ and it created what was described by the *Victoria County History* as 'the remarkable situation had arisen of a great English land-owner whose main residence was held on lease.'⁹ For the moment the arrangement presumably satisfied both brothers, but it bore the seed of future difficulties.

Margaret Pope, mother of the two brothers, was living at Wroxton by 1550¹⁰ and was buried there in 1555; John Pope was presumably living at Wroxton by that time, and in 1573 William, his son and heir, was baptised in the parish church. There is no evidence of a mid-Tudor house, and it is likely that not all of the Priory buildings had been demolished and that John Pope had adapted some of them to live in. John Pope died in 1583, when William was a child of ten. A variety of dates between 1580 and 1618 have been advanced for the new house, and although the latter is almost certainly too late, there is no firm evidence on which to attribute the house either to John Pope or to his

⁶ *Oxford Times*, 17 August 1956. No other record of these excavations seems to exist.

⁷ For £80 and 6 capons and 6 good hens at Christmas. TC, B/1.32.

⁸ National Archives WARD7/85/184.

⁹ *VCH Oxon* IX 176.

¹⁰ *ib.*