

TORRE ABBEY: LOCALITY, COMMUNITY, AND SOCIETY  
IN MEDIEVAL DEVON

Thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

by

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2010

## ABSTRACT

Torre Abbey was a rural Premonstratensian monastery in south-east Devon. Although in many ways atypical of its order, not least in the quality and quantity of its surviving source material, Torre provides an excellent case study of how a medium-sized medieval monastery interacted with the world around it, and how the abbey itself was affected by that interaction. Divided into three broad sections, this thesis first examines the role of local landowners and others as patrons of the house in the most obvious sense, that of the bestowal of lands or other assets upon the house. Torre was relatively successful in this regard, and an examination of the architectural and archaeological record indicates a continuation of that relationship after the thirteenth century. The second section notes areas of conflict with the laity. Disputes could and did arise over both temporal and spiritual affairs, as well as through the involvement of a number of lay figures in the administration and patronage of the house. In both respects, notable incidents in the mid-fourteenth century highlight the complexities of the canons' relationships with the secular world. These are further explored in an analysis of the abbey's role during the Hundred Years' War and the Wars of the Roses, two conflicts which greatly affected the locality, but required vastly differing approaches by the canons. Finally, the effect of society on the canons themselves is considered. It is possible to recover some picture of their origins, both social and geographic, as well as some idea of the size of the community in the fifteenth century, and discuss the repercussions for an understanding of monastic recruitment. Finally, the dynamic of the community over the entire history of the abbey is considered in terms of the scattered source material, utilising both architectural and documentary evidence.

## ABSTRACT

The subject of this thesis is the Premonstratensian abbey of Torre between 1196 and the early-sixteenth century, and its relationship with the secular world. The abbey was sited on the south-east coast of Devon, close to the sea shore, in a region both fertile and populous, and within a well-established tenurial situation. Unlike the reclaimed wasteland and fen common to the settings and lands of the other houses of its order, Torre held urban properties and tenants as well as large and lucrative manors and parishes in its vicinity and beyond. In obtaining, holding, and profiting from these estates, the canons of Torre found themselves drawn into constant contact with the laity of its locality. No one abbey, and, indeed, no one thesis, could reveal all the multifarious points of contact between the monastic and the secular worlds and their repercussions, but there is enough evidence from Torre to highlight a number of such interactions which have not previously been studied in any great detail.

In terms of source material, Torre is particularly fortunate both amongst the Premonstratensians and the Devon abbeys. Two cartularies survive, as well as a number of supplementary collections of charters, and reveal much about the relationship of the monastery to its patrons in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The high survival rate of the episcopal registers of Exeter, and the visitation records of the Premonstratensians from the late-fifteenth century, provide snapshots of the lives of the abbots and canons. Furthermore, architectural and archaeological surveys of the site have provided a great deal of 'physical' source material. This may be used both to study the continued relationship of the canons to their patrons, as well as to study the changing dynamics of space within the cloister as the nature of community life developed over the centuries.

Such a study is unique amongst the Devon abbeys, and serves as a broader analytical counterpart to a forthcoming archaeological monograph on the house.

The thesis is broadly divided into three parts, dealing with different aspects of monastic-lay interaction. The first of these, consisting of four chapters, analyses the development of the relationship between the abbey and its patrons – mainly as revealed through the grants of land in the cartularies – in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The house was founded by the great justice and administrator William Brewer. His familial, tenorial, and social connections provided the abbey with a powerful ‘network of patronage’ in the first decade of its existence, and the resulting foundation endowment of the abbey was particularly generous. The lands and churches in its possession by 1207 were not only spread throughout South, East, and North Devon, but also included properties in Somerset, Berkshire, and Lincolnshire. The disparate locations of its lands were in stark contrast to Brewer’s nearly contemporaneous Cistercian foundation at Dunkeswell, and may represent a difference in the requirements of the orders.

Brewer’s son added to his father’s endowment, but died in 1232, only eight years after inheriting. The Mohun lords of Dunster inherited the tutelary patronage of Torre, and showed little interest in the abbey. Nonetheless, the canons attracted a large number of patrons from the locality of the abbey and its lands. While the canons were granted no new lands outside of its vicinity, they were able to substantially expand their holdings in the region. Grantors tended to be of lesser status and more local influence than those who were of Brewer’s circle, although still mainly knightly. The terms of their grants indicate that both spiritual and financial rewards were motives in their decision to patronise Torre. Throughout this period there was, however, no identifiable ‘network of patronage’ as such, but a connection to the locality of the abbey on the part of its patrons.

The abbey's tutelary patrons, the Mohuns, reappear in the history of the house in the fourteenth century. Between 1346 and 1370 John (V) de Mohun, the last of the main line of the family, was involved in a series of transactions and enfeoffments resulting in the capital manor of the abbey, Tormohun, being transferred to the canons. The process itself is highly interesting as an example of the complex and often confused reality of land ownership and administration hidden behind seemingly simple legal formulae. In the involvement of a number of lay figures it is possible to note the social relations of the abbey in this period, as well as their relationship to Hugh (II) de Courtenay, Earl of Devon, who was the abbey's tutelary patron after the death of John de Mohun.

Grants of land were by no means the only, or even the most common, method of patronage of an abbey by the laity. At most abbeys, however, the sources through which alternative methods can be discerned have not survived. In this respect Torre is particularly fortunate to have been the subject of an archaeological excavation in the nave and north transept of the abbey church in 1986-9, while the cloister was excavated in 2005. Utilising the archaeological reports, it is possible to discern that the abbey church was the final resting-place of a number of the laity throughout the history of the abbey. While numbers declined in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, lay burial did not cease altogether, and, in conjunction with other evidence of lay patronage of building schemes, it is certain that the house continued to be an object of the spiritual attentions of the laity.

Yet not all monastic-lay interactions were so benevolent. The second section of the thesis deals in turn with areas of conflict between the two. Disputes between the religious and the laity were inevitable in the administration of the abbey's estates, and in their relationships with other landholders, and have been the focus of a number of studies. An analysis of conflict with the laity at Torre is hindered in this regard by a lack of sources relating to the abbey's position as landlord. The abbey also held eight appropriated

churches, representing a sizeable portion of its income, and whose revenues were thus jealously guarded. The parishes of North Devon, especially, tended to be very large. As such, there were a number of disputes, both small and large, between the abbey and its parishioners over the provision of spiritual services and chapels. The most notable and long-running of these occurred in the parish of Townstal, which included the busy port of Dartmouth. The inaccessibility of the church and the intractability of the abbot when faced with the prospect of losing revenue to a chapel in the town resulted in a conflict lasting most of the fourteenth century, and was complicated by the involvement of a group of Austin friars.

Particularly relevant for a study of monastic-lay interaction are the social networks revealed by an incident of the mid-fourteenth century regarding an internal dispute over the abbacy. All the canons involved had notable local connections with lay society, and their friends and relatives were so intimately involved in the affairs of the house that the identity of the abbot was a cause for concern for more than just the canons. The violent intervention of lay patrons on a house to ensure compliance was not unique to Torre, but a thorough analysis of the figures involved reveals a great deal about the nature of society and lordship in Devon at the time.

Not all conflicts with society were of the canons' making, or even in their control. Very little, if any, work has been undertaken on the response of monasteries to wider political developments, although these could have a major effect at a local level. In this respect, the Hundred Years' War and the Wars of the Roses can both be shown to have presented Torre with the threat of conflict, although they required very different precautions. The nature of the threat and reaction in both instances is such that no one monastery has enough material for a full local study, although by placing Torre in the

context of other houses a number of preliminary points may be made about the general situation.

For those monasteries sited on the south coast the threat of raids from the French, or, indeed, from pirates, was very real, and proximity to a major port heightened the danger. In this respect, Torre's relation to Dartmouth placed it in a perilous position. A number of monasteries sought grants to crenellate in this period, although these have been dismissed, as have monastic defences more generally, as more status symbols than responses to a threat. An analysis of the relevant sites, however, and specifically Torre, reveals that monastic defences were not without purpose. They were not designed to hold a site against an armed invasion, but to deter potential raiders and provide a measure of shelter in the event of an attack.

The Wars of the Roses, however, presented a very different threat. A great number of monasteries had clear links to the political affairs of the time through their patrons or staff, yet no study has ever considered the repercussions of these connections. Torre's patrons were the Courtenay Earls, who were attainted in 1461, but the abbey also had connections to the Dinhams and had prominent Yorkist supporters as their neighbours. Devon was one of the counties most affected by the events of the period, and the abbeys of the county clearly took some part in the affairs, even if their decisions were largely pragmatic. On the accession of Henry VII, the abbey found it expedient to draw a line under the previous years and, as was the case with a great many parish churches in the region, express an adherence to the new regime through simple visual displays.

The final section discusses the canons themselves, and how their lives were shaped by the society around them. The canons were not drawn from a social vacuum, but recruited from the society in which the abbey was set. As such, they had a pre-formed relationship with that world. The names of 121 members of the community can be

recovered, allowing some analysis of their geographic and social origins. A number of the canons were drawn from the locality of the abbey, including the towns of Newton Abbot and Dartmouth, although a significant number came from further afield and even from outside the county. This is a picture replicated across the Devon abbeys, although in the available space it is only possible to conduct a brief analysis of this last point. Class origins are more difficult to identify, given the homogeneity of surnames in all social groups, although there were a number of the sons of the gentry, both local and distant, amongst the canons. In terms of the size of the community, for most of the late-fourteenth and early-fifteenth century it was stable at around 13, although this figure was higher both before and after.

An analysis of communal life based on the minimal surviving sources is a difficult proposition. There is almost no direct evidence for the discipline or makeup of the community in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, as the abbey was exempt from episcopal visitation and no records of the order survive for the period. Architectural changes, however, not only reveal the likelihood of lay brothers in claustral accommodation, but also suggest that the community relaxed prohibitions on seculars entering the cloister and associated buildings in the late-thirteenth or early-fourteenth centuries, when the lay brothers disappeared from the monastic scene.

The individual canons appear with a greater frequency operating outside the abbey from the late-fourteenth century, when the abbey began to appoint them to its appropriated churches. In common with many other houses, there are also a number of individual examples of canons seeking some release from the cloister through ‘official’ means, although examples are limited both in number and chronologically. By the time of the first thorough picture of communal life – in the late-fifteenth century visitation records of Richard Redman – the canons can be shown to have adopted a number of ‘secular’ traits.



The breakup of the communal dormitory and refectory, association with women and the laity, and gambling for money all appear as pervasive if common relaxations of the original monastic life and secularisation of the cloister. Yet on the whole, the canons appear as largely blameless, moderately disciplined in their daily lives, and, while worthy of no particularly special praise, not culpable of any major spiritual errors.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost my thanks must go to my supervisors, Benjamin Thompson and John Blair, who were unfailingly generous with their time, patience, and assistance. I would also like to thank all those, too numerous to name, in the History Faculties at Oxford, KCL, and UCL, both staff and students, and all those at Wadham College, who provided aid and encouragement.

I am thoroughly grateful to all the staff at Torre Abbey, and especially Michael Rhodes, for lending me their time, and allowing me free access to such a fantastic building. Michael also contributed the photographs of Abbot Cade's tomb in Chapter 6. Les Retallick's enthusiasm was an inspiration throughout. Chris Thomas and Dave Saxby of Museum of London Archaeology gave their time to discuss the archaeology and architecture of the house, provide photographs and plans, and allowed me access to the archaeological records and sculpture. Also to Barry Chandler and the staff of Torquay Museum, and all the staff at the Local Studies Centre in Torquay Central Library, my thanks are due.

I visited a great number of archives in the course of my research, and would like to thank the staff of the Bodleian Library; Trinity College Library, Dublin; The National Archives; and the Record Offices of Devon, Cornwall, Somerset, Lincolnshire, and Plymouth and West Devon. I am grateful to Sir Richard Carew-Pole for his permission to study documents in the Antony House Muniments.

I owe a debt I can never repay to my parents, who provided the funding and support necessary, although I shall never know how, and who never lost faith. But over all I thank Sarah, who maintained, jostled, and diverted me in equal measure, and helped with the maths. I am truly grateful.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

|                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| <i>BoF</i>          | <i>Book of Fees</i> , 3 vols (London, 1920-31)  |
| <i>BRUC to 1500</i> | A. B. Emden, <i>A Biographical Register of the University of Cambridge to 1500</i> (Cambridge, 1963)  |
| <i>BRUO</i>         | A. B. Emden, <i>A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to 1500</i> , 3 vols (Oxford, 1957-9)   |
| <i>CAP</i>          | <i>Collectanea Anglo-Premonstratensia</i> , ed. F. A. Gasquet, 3 vols, Camden Society, 3 <sup>rd</sup> ser. 6, 10, 12 (1904-6)                              |
| <i>CChR</i>         | <i>Calendar of Charter Rolls</i> , 6 vols (London, 1903-27)   |
| <i>CCR</i>          | <i>Calendar of Close Rolls</i> (London, 1892-1963)  |
| <i>CIM</i>          | <i>Calendar of Inquisitions Miscellaneous (Chancery)</i> , 7 vols (London 1916-69)  |
| <i>CPL</i>          | <i>Calendar of Entries in the Papal Registers relating to Great Britain and Ireland: Papal Letters</i> , ed. W. H. Bliss <i>et al</i> , 20 vols (1893-2008) |
| <i>CPR</i>          | <i>Calendar of Patent Rolls</i> (London, 1891-1916)   |
| <i>CRR</i>          | <i>Curia Regis Rolls</i> , 20 vols (1922-2006)  |
| <i>DART</i>         | <i>Report and Transactions of the Devonshire Association</i>  |
| <i>DC</i>           | Trinity College, Dublin, MS 524   |
| <i>DCNQ</i>         | <i>Devon and Cornwall Notes and Queries</i>   |
| <i>DCRS</i>         | Devon and Cornwall Record Society   |
| <i>DFOF</i>         | <i>Devon Feet of Fines</i> , ed. O. J. Reichel, 2 vols, DCRS Publications (1912-39)   |
| <i>DRO</i>          | Devon Record Office   |

|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| <i>EC</i>               | <i>The Exchequer Cartulary of Torre Abbey (P. R .O. 164/19)</i> , ed. D. Seymour (Torquay, 2000). Numbers refer to charter entries, which are also calendared in D. Seymour, <i>Torre Abbey</i> (Exeter, 1977) |
| <i>FA</i>               | <i>Feudal Aids</i> , 6 vols (London, 1899-1920)  |
| <i>IPM</i>              | <i>Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem and other Analagous Documents preserved in the Public Record Office</i> , 26 vols (1904-)  |
| <i>L&amp;P</i>          | <i>Calendar of Letters and Papers Domestic and Foreign of Henry VIII</i> , 22 vols (1862-1910)   |
| <i>MDE</i>              | G. Oliver, <i>Monasticon Dioecesis Exoniensis</i> (London, 1846)   |
| <i>PROME</i>            | <i>The Parliament Rolls of Medieval England 1275-1504</i> , ed. C. Given-Wilson, 16 vols (Woodbridge, 2005)  |
| <i>Reg. Brantyngham</i> | <i>The Register of Thomas de Brantyngham, Bishop of Exeter (1370-1394)</i> , ed. F. C. Hingeston-Randolph, 2 vols. (London, 1901-6)  |
| <i>Reg. Bronescombe</i> | <i>The Register of Bishop Walter Bronescombe</i> , ed. O. F. Robinson, 3 vols, Canterbury and York Society, 82, 87, 94 (1995-2003)   |
| <i>Reg. Grandisson</i>  | <i>The Register of John de Grandisson, Bishop of Exeter (1327-65)</i> , ed. F. C. Hingeston-Randolph, 3 vols. (London, 1894-9)   |
| <i>Reg. Lacy</i>        | (i-ii) <i>The Register of Edmund Lacy, Bishop of Exeter (1420-1455)</i> , ed. F. C. Hingeston-Randolph, 2 vols (London, 1909-15)   |

|                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
|                          | (I-V) <i>The Register of Edmund Lacy, Bishop of Exeter (1420-55)</i> , ed. G. R. Dunstan, 5 vols., DCRS, n.s. 7, 10, 13, 16, 18 (1963-72) |
| <i>Reg. Stafford</i>     | <i>The Register of Edmund Stafford (1395-1419)</i> , ed. F. C. Hingeston-Randolph (London, 1886)  |
| <i>Reg. Stapledon</i>    | <i>The Register of Walter de Stapledon, Bishop of Exeter (1307-1326)</i> , ed. F. C. Hingeston-Randolph (London, 1892)                    |
| <i>RO</i>                | D. Knowles, <i>The Religious Orders in England</i> , 3 vols (Cambridge, 1961-2)   |
| <i>Rot. Chart.</i>       | <i>Rotuli Chartarum in Turri Londinensi Asservati</i> , ed. T. D. Hardy (London, 1837)  |
| <i>Rot. Litt. Claus.</i> | <i>Rotuli Litterarum Clausarum in Turri Londinensi Asservati</i> , ed. T. D. Hardy, 2 vols (London, 1833-44)                              |
| <i>Rot. Litt. Pat.</i>   | <i>Rotuli Litterarum Patentium in Turri Londinensi Asservati</i> , ed. T. D. Hardy, 2 vols (London, 1833-44)                              |
| <i>TA</i>                | D. Seymour, <i>Torre Abbey</i> (Exeter, 1977)   |
| <i>TNA</i>               | The National Archives   |
| <i>TNHS</i>              | <i>Transactions of the Torquay Natural History Society</i>  |
| <i>WC</i>                | H. M. Colvin, <i>The White Canons in England</i> (Oxford, 1951)   |



## INTRODUCTION

In the late 1530's, John Holbeme esq. presented a petition to the Court of Star Chamber in which he accused Simon Rede, abbot of Torre, 'beyng a man of great possessions and substance in the ryght of the said howsse...to the accomplishment of his evyll disposition, will, and yntent as well in executing his vycyousse and abhomynoble lyvyng towards God' of 'vexyng and troblyng... his pore neybors'. In order to maintain his position, the abbot 'reteyned dyvers and sondry knyghts, esquyers, and gentilmen beyng the great rulers and comon jurors within the said shyre with the most part of all men lerned in the lawes of your Realme within the same shyre' so that he 'oppressithe your said pore and faithfull subietts menassyng and thretenyng them in such a wise that they dare not compleyne unto your highnes', and 'made his open avaunt and bosted hymselff saying that any who attemptithe the law with him shall have no remedy in seven yeres whether hys mater be just or wronge'. As an example, Holbeme gave the case of John Longe the elder and his son who had taken a bill to the sessions at Exeter 'ayenst one Elizabeth Shaplegg whom they hadd in suspicion for burnyng ther barne plemysched with corne. The said abbott for specyall favor and love that he have unto the said Elizabeth caused hys parte to speke suche wordes unto the seid John Longe and his son that then for fere of the said abbotts displeysure durest not procye any ferder upon the said bill ayenst the said Elizabeth so that by the meanes of the said abbott and hys adherents no man can preveyle or opteyne ayenst the said abbott or his said adherents within the said shire'. Furthermore, when the king's visitors had come to the abbey, the abbot had connived with others in 'ymbesilyng and conveying a great part of the plate of his monestory aforseid to hys lovers and fryndes'.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> TNA STAC 2/21/96.

It may seem odd to begin, effectively, at the end, but this episode does neatly illustrate the theme of this thesis, namely, the involvement of the abbey of Torre in the society around it, and the effect of this involvement on the life of the community within. The abbot was able to involve himself so deeply in the lives of the villagers of Tormohun because he was their lord, both lay and spiritual, inasmuch as he held the manor and parish. His involvement was perceived to be personal, as he lent his weight to a female friend who was involved in a court case. He was seen to be powerful, with high social connections, the ability to dispense patronage, and a strong sense of his own political superiority in the region. He was also venal, secreting plate, presumably, for his own ends. Regardless, for now, of how accurate this picture might be, the fact that these allegations were brought at all indicates a great deal about the social standing of the abbot. Not only did he have enemies, certainly amongst his local tenants, but the suit notes his powerful friends. To put this thesis in its simplest possible terms, it is a study of those friends and enemies throughout the period of Torre's existence – 1196 to 1539.

Our understanding of the relationship between the canons and lay society is limited by the available source material for a history of Torre Abbey. In terms of chronology this necessitates a span of the whole of the abbey's existence. While this is a particularly lengthy span for a study of society, the nature of the sources dictates it. While for the thirteenth century there is ample charter evidence to study the relationship of the abbey with those who granted or sold it land, to limit ourselves to these would be to ignore the continuation of that relationship in a different form in the later centuries, as revealed through other, often non-documentary, sources. Furthermore, much of the evidence for contact between the canons and the laity from the fourteenth century and beyond comes from the nature of their conflicts. Finally, in the late-fifteenth century we have the fullest

evidence for the lives of the canons themselves, and we are able to witness the effects of lay interaction on the community. To limit ourselves to any one period would, therefore, ignore important aspects of the canons' relationship with the laity of Devon.

Having said this, it has not been possible, even over an extended timescale, to reconstruct much of the social interaction of the abbey. Partly this is a source-based problem. Many aspects of monastic-lay contact, especially of the mundane and daily sort, were not recorded or have not survived. Thus we know almost nothing about the servants of the house, or the abbey's administrative staff, labourers, or corrodians. In terms of the monastic economy, while there are occasional glimpses into the organisation of the estates through rough entries in the cartularies, we have nowhere near enough material to construct a coherent account of the economic operations of the canons, nor of the lives of their tenants. This is unfortunate, as the abbey was a major landowner in its area, and beyond, yet the potential for such a study is severely limited. As such, this thesis focuses on the relationship of the abbey with its lay patrons, mostly gentry, while considerations of the exercise of the abbey's lordship must be largely put aside.

This thesis will make extensive use of the term 'patron' in discussing the interaction of the laity with the abbey, although not in the traditional sense in which the term is used in monastic historiography to mean the descendants of the founder of a house. Having defined the term so specifically, historians are forced to utilise a number of vague descriptions of those who granted land and property to the house, of which 'donor' and 'benefactor' are the most used. Yet such terms do not come near the association with the house that they seek to describe, as they infer one-off transactions or, in the case of benefactor, a more passive 'well-wisher'. Patronage, as implied in the art-historical sense, connotes a long-standing relationship between the house and the layperson, of which the grant of land or property as enshrined in a charter represents one small aspect. It also has

more active connotations than ‘benefactor’. The heirs of the founder do need to be distinguished, and this thesis follows Julian Luxford in adopting the term ‘tutelary patron’ to emphasise the frequent role of the descendants of the founder in protecting the interests of ‘their’ monastery.<sup>2</sup>

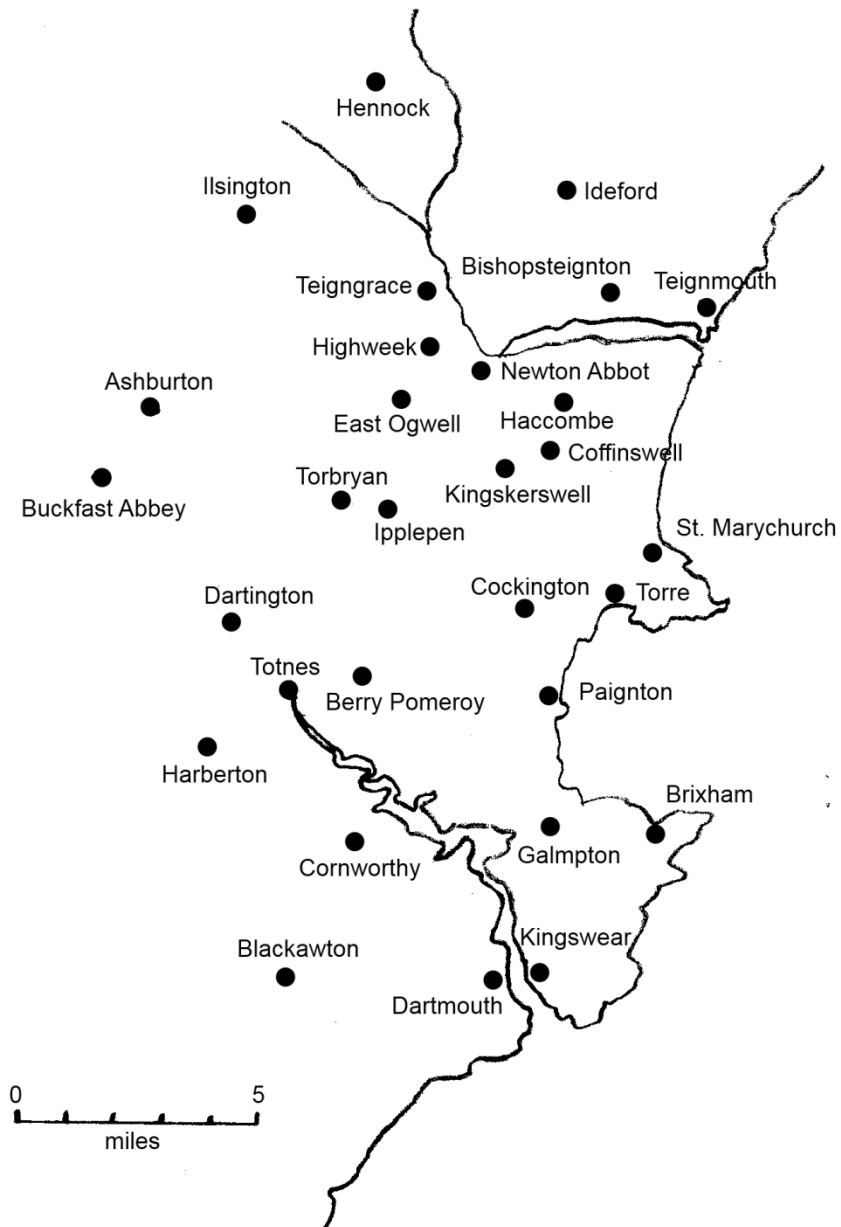
Intimately connected with an analysis of the patrons of Torre is one of the social situation of the abbey. Any study of the interaction of a rural monastery with the society in which it operated will of necessity be one of locality. The most likely potential sub-noble patrons of an abbey were those who lived or held lands in the immediate vicinity of the precinct, so that the abbey was in their *patria*.<sup>3</sup> The ‘sphere of influence’ of any particular institution was largely dependent on its wealth, status, and fame. There would also be pressure from other nearby monasteries, as well as non-monastic ecclesiastical institutions. Although many individual cases will be examined in the text, it is worth, therefore, giving a brief overview of the social and tenurial situation in the vicinity of the abbey. In terms of the abbey’s social interactions, this comprised a rough semicircle of around ten miles radius running from Stoke Fleming and Blackawton to Totnes, then practically due north through Bovey Tracy to Hennock, and down through Ideford to the mouth of the Teign [Fig. 1]. On the whole, this was an area of ancient cultivation and fertile soils, although to the north-west it shaded towards more highland pastoral agriculture. It was, however, one of the most densely populated areas in the south-west both at Domesday and throughout the

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<sup>2</sup> J. M. Luxford, *The Art and Architecture of English Benedictine Monasteries, 1300-1540* (Woodbridge, 2005), pp. xvii-xviii.

<sup>3</sup> P. Coss, *Lordship, Knighthood and Locality: A Study in English Society c.1180-c.1280* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 10; E. Jamroziak, *Rievaulx Abbey and its Social Context, 1132-1300: Memory, Locality, and Networks* (Turnhout, 2005), pp. 55-110

Middle Ages, it was the area in which the abbey's influence would be most keenly felt, and it was the area in which the canons held a number, if by no means all, of their lands.<sup>4</sup>



**Figure 1: The locality of Torre Abbey**

<sup>4</sup> F. W. Morgan, 'The Domesday Geography of Devon', *DART* 72 (1940), pp. 312-28; H. C. Darby & R. Weldon-Finn (eds.), *The Domesday Geography of South-West England* (Cambridge, 1967), pp. 238, 248; R. Kain & W. Ravenhill (eds.), *Historical Atlas of South-West England* (Exeter, 2000), pp. 107-9, 269-80.

The tenurial shape of the county as a whole, or in conjunction with Cornwall, from Domesday Book to the sixteenth century has been the subject of a number of excellent full-length studies focusing on specific periods, a number of which are unpublished theses, although there is a lacuna in this respect for the thirteenth century.<sup>5</sup> The county was dominated throughout the period by the honours of Okehampton, held by the Courtenays in the thirteenth century and with its lands mainly in the north, and Plympton, held by the Redvers Earls of Devon and based in the south. From 1297 these were united in the hands of the Courtenay family, who were also made Earls of Devon from 1335. Their position as resident magnates in the county led to an indisputable social and economic dominance in the fourteenth century, although it was severely challenged in the fifteenth, and effectively ended in the mid-sixteenth.<sup>6</sup>

The tenurial and social background of Devon changed a great deal between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries, and it would be impossible even to summarise these developments here. Throughout the text the key developments will be noted when they arise. However, in the vicinity of Torre, the honours of Plympton and Okehampton were major landholders, and the land on which the abbey itself was built was ultimately a Plympton fee. As such, the Courtenay family figure highly in the abbey's history, although usually through the intervention of their retainers, rather than directly. Ecclesiastical lords, mainly the bishop of Exeter, and later the dean and chapter, also held extensive property, and the bishop had palaces at Paignton and Bishopsteignton [Fig. 2].<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, the area included the *caputs* of three baronies, at Dartington, Totnes, and Berry. From the late-

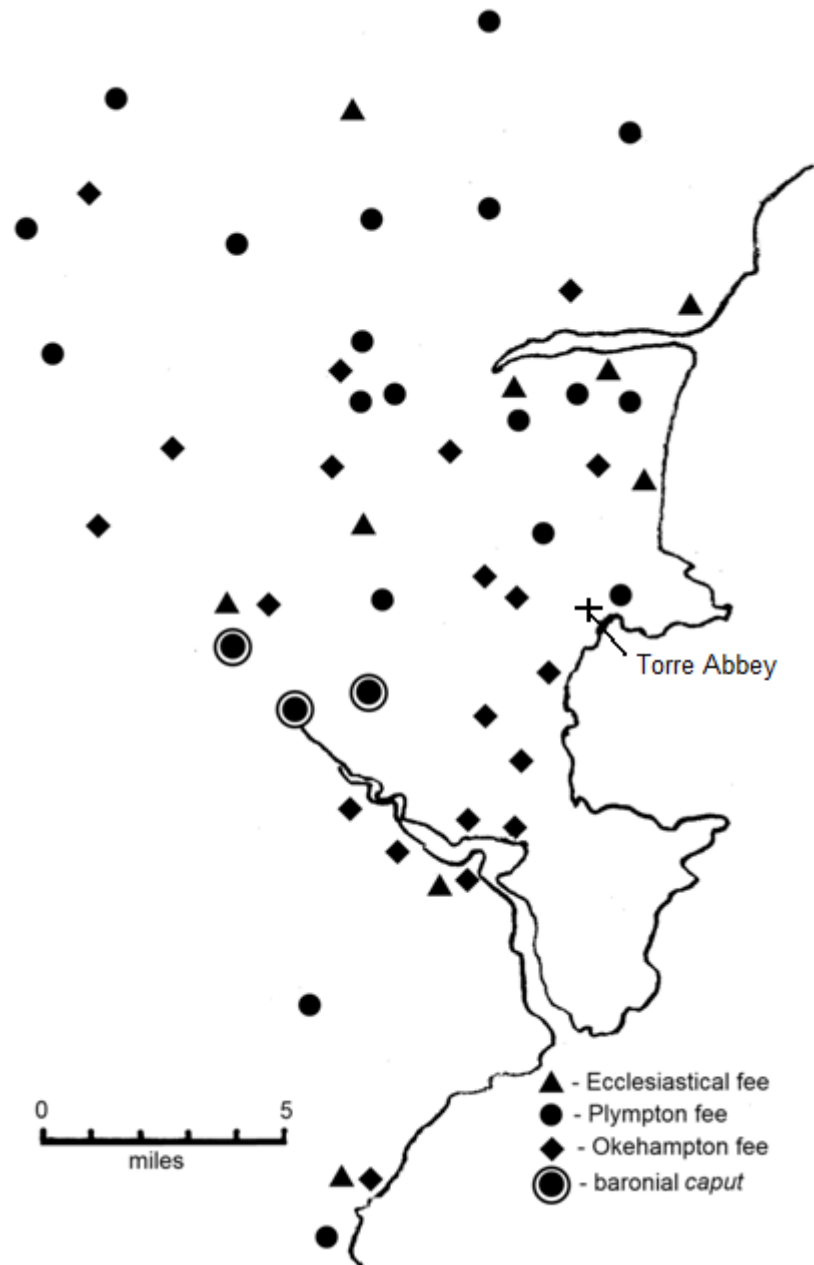
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<sup>5</sup> *Charters of the Redvers Family and the Earldom of Devon, 1090-1217*, ed. R. Bearman, DCRS, n.s. 37 (1994); R. J. Burls, 'Society, Economy and Lordship in Devon in the Age of the First Courtenay Earls, c. 1297-1377', (DPhil Thesis, University of Oxford, 2002); C. J. Tyldesley, 'The Crown and the Local Communities in Devon and Cornwall from 1377 to 1422 (PhD Thesis, University of Exeter, 1978); R. E. Stansfield, *Political Elites in South-West England, 1450-1500* (NY, 2009); H. M. Speight, 'Local Government and Politics in Devon and Cornwall 1509-49, with special reference to the South-Western Rebellion' (DPhil Thesis, University of Sussex, 1991).

<sup>6</sup> M. Cherry, 'The Courtenay Earls of Devon: The Formation and Disintegration of a Late Medieval Aristocratic Affinity', *Southern History*, 1 (1979), pp. 71-97.

<sup>7</sup> W. G. Hoskins, *Devon*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Chichester, 2003), p. 81.

thirteenth century, however, the Zouche lords of Totnes were absentees, and as such they do not play a prominent role in the history of the region.<sup>8</sup>



**Figure 2: Major tenants-in-chief in the region of Torre Abbey**  
Based on the feudal survey of 1242-3

In terms of urban areas, there were four sizeable towns. In order of size Totnes was the most ancient and important in the earlier centuries, although its predominance was

<sup>8</sup> H. R. Watkin, *The History of Totnes Priory and Medieval Town* (Torquay, 1914-17), ii, pp. 722-3.

severely checked by the rise of Dartmouth from the thirteenth century. To the north of Torre, Newton Abbot, situated in the canons' manor of Wolborough, was the most important town. Ashburton to the east was important for its status as a stannary town, but its proximity to Buckfast Abbey means it figures less in the history of Torre.<sup>9</sup> Dartmouth, as a major port only ten miles to the south, by road and ferry, or around twenty miles by boat, was to play the most important role in the history of the abbey, as not only was Torbay considered a part of the waters of the Dart, but the canons held properties in the town, as well as the advowson, soon appropriated, of the parish church.<sup>10</sup>

Relationships with the monastic houses of the region do not figure highly in the sources for Torre. The nearest house of any note was Buckfast Abbey, only twelve miles to the west. The abbey was a pre-Conquest foundation, but had been re-founded in the mid-twelfth century as a Savignac, and later Cistercian, house.<sup>11</sup> The abbot of Buckfast attended the signing of the foundation charter of Torre, but beyond this there is no noticeable contact between the two houses, nor any identifiable overlap in their patrons.<sup>12</sup> We may attribute this mainly to a difference in spheres of influence, inasmuch as by the time Torre was founded, Buckfast had established itself mainly in the area immediately surrounding its precinct and in South Devon, but not to the west in the hinterlands of Torbay.<sup>13</sup> Besides Buckfast, the only other foundations were the alien priory at Totnes, the tiny alien priory at Ipplepen, and the nunnery of Cornworthy, none of which were large enough to have any discernable effect on Torre's relationship with the laity.

At this stage to attempt a brief overview of the sub-tenants in the vicinity of the abbey for the period in question is impractical, given the chronological span and proliferation of individuals. Furthermore, throughout this thesis local figures of tenurial or

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<sup>9</sup> M. Kowaleski, *Local Markets and Regional Trade in Medieval Exeter* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 70-4.

<sup>10</sup> H. R. Watkin, *Dartmouth* (Exeter, 1935), p. 373.

<sup>11</sup> J. Stéphan, *Buckfast Abbey* (Bristol, 1970), pp. 11-18, 24-49.

<sup>12</sup> EC 1.

<sup>13</sup> *MDE*, pp. 371-80



social importance to the abbey will be highlighted. It is worth noting, however, that on the whole, beneath the handful of large honours, the county was ‘a patchwork of petty and fragmented fiefdoms... in which title was frequently obscure and multiple ownership common.’<sup>14</sup> From before Torre’s foundation we find the vast bulk of the county, at parish and manor level, held by a multitude of lesser knights and gentry. The sheer profusion of lesser gentry throughout the period of this thesis, and the high turnover of landholding families, makes a firm grip on the particulars of the Devon lay scene at any one point particularly difficult. This is especially the case at a local level, amongst the lesser gentry and wealthier townsmen, and there is little generational continuity amongst the families which we find associating with the abbey on a personal or professional level.

We have said nothing so far of the particulars of Torre’s monastic situation. The origins and spread of the Premonstratensian Order have been discussed enough that we need only cover the briefest outline here.<sup>15</sup> The order was founded in Northern France in 1121 by Norbert of Xanten, and spread rapidly. The first house to be founded in England was Newhouse, on the east coast near Immingham in Lincolnshire, in 1143, and the last was Wendling in Norfolk in around 1267. Overall, the Premonstratensians occupied around five hundred active sites throughout Europe at any one point from the thirteenth century. After the foundation of Wendling, there were thirty abbeys of the order in England until the early sixteenth century, of which Torre was the most westerly, the only one in the Westcountry, and around 120 miles from the next nearest house at Titchfield. The statutes were technically based on the Augustinian rule, and the Premonstratensians were an order of canons, yet they borrowed heavily from the Cistercians in many respects. Their major

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<sup>14</sup> Burls, ‘Society, Economy and Lordship’, pp. 26-8.

<sup>15</sup> For what follows; J. Gribbin, *The Premonstratensian Order in Late Medieval England* (Woodbridge, 2001), pp. 1-19; WC, pp. 1-26; J. Bond, ‘The Premonstratensian Order: A Preliminary Survey of its Growth and Distribution in Medieval Europe’, in M. Carver (ed.), *In Search of Cult: Archaeological Investigations in Honour of Philip Rahtz* (Woodbridge, 1993), pp. 153-85.

innovation, a circarial rather than filial system of visitation, may also have contributed to a tendency towards regionalism, and there is no sense of the strong community throughout the order that the Cistercians displayed. This may be in part due to the poor survival of the records of general chapter at Prémontré, but intra-order relations soon deteriorated to the extent that the English abbeys were excommunicated by general chapter for non-payment of dues in 1310. The schism was partially resolved, but led to the effective breakaway of the English abbots from the continental authority, for administrative purposes, in 1316.

It has not been necessary to dwell too long on the history of the order as in the course of this thesis the Premonstratensians do not figure particularly highly. Torre was effectively isolated by distance from its sister-houses, and, while there is occasional mention of visitation and co-operation between Torre and the other Premonstratensian abbeys, the materials do not survive to present the abbey in the light of its order. The canons were undoubtedly fully aware of their profession, and of the individuality of their statutes in the county, yet beyond this we have no means to recover the level of participation of the community at Torre in the wider community of the Premonstratensians in England.

## Sources

Compared to the other abbeys of the county, the survival of sources for Torre is almost remarkable. Of all the monastic houses in Devon, only Torre, Forde, Newenham, and the nunnery of Canonsleigh have full surviving cartularies.<sup>16</sup> Torre is particularly fortunate to retain two such cartularies, the later (The 'Exchequer' Cartulary, TNA E 164/19) being the

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<sup>16</sup> The dependent or alien priories of St. Nicholas' Exeter, Otterton, and Modbury also have surviving cartularies. Tavistock and Buckfast's are partial survivals; G. R. C. Davis, *Medieval Cartularies of Great Britain* (London, 1958), pp. 12, 19-20, 45, 47, 76, 78, 84, 108-9; *The Cartulary of Canonsleigh Abbey*, ed. V. C. M. London, DCRS n.s. 8 (1965); *The Cartulary of Forde Abbey*, ed. S. Hobbess, Somerset Record Society 85 (1998).

easier to read, and, perhaps, the better known, having been transcribed and (less successfully) translated by Deryck Seymour in an edition published by the Friends of Torre Abbey in 2000.<sup>17</sup> The manuscript is mainly in a single hand of the early-fifteenth century, neat and measured, with a number of initials in red and blue, although it is possible that some folios are missing, as there is no index, and no charters concerning the manor of Torre, acquired by the canons in 1370, are included.<sup>18</sup> The earlier ‘Dublin’ Cartulary (Trinity College Dublin, ms. 524) appears to have been initially compiled in the late-thirteenth century, again in a neat and measured hand, then throughout the fourteenth and early-fifteenth centuries was added-to many times by numerous writers.<sup>19</sup> Completing a transcription of this cartulary, which includes over 250 entries not found in the

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<sup>17</sup> *The Exchequer Cartulary of Torre Abbey*, ed. D. Seymour (Torquay, 2000) [EC]. The manuscript history following the Dissolution is easy to trace. According to the frontispiece the cartulary was the property ‘of the heirs of John Gaverock, gent., deceased.’ Gaverock had been steward of the abbey in Wolborough, and lived at Ford in the manor. In 1545 he purchased Wolborough with his wife, and died sometime after 1565. His son, Richard, inherited, but died without issue before 1571 and the property was divided between John’s three daughters. The cartulary was shortly after delivered to the Exchequer, on 5<sup>th</sup> February 1579, by Richard or William Melford of the Inner Temple by the order of the Court (he is called Richard on the opening flyleaf, and William in a similar notification on the final folio); DRO D1508M/Moger/71, 101, 333. Besides the two cartularies now in evidence, the nineteenth century editors of Dugdale mention a third ‘register’ among the title deeds of the Rev. Richard Lane of Coffleet, Brixton; W. Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum* (London, 1817-30), vi, p. 924. Lane was a keen early nineteenth-century local historian and bibliophile who also owned Highweek and Bradley, near Newton Abbot. He was also stated to have had a copy of the Newton Abbot borough charter, since lost; D. M. Stirling, *A History of Newton Abbot and Newton Bushel* (Newton Abbot, 1830). The latter may be true, but since Oliver, written after Dugdale’s edition, makes no mention of this register it seems highly unlikely that it existed. It was probably a copy of Pole’s transcript of the Torre cartulary, a number of which were in private hands; J. Brooking Rowe, ‘Presidential Address’, *DART* 14 (1882), p. 75; D. Lysons & S. Lysons, *Magna Britannia* (1806-22), vi, pp. 73, 271, 329.

<sup>18</sup> The last four charters are later insertions, all dating to 1468/9, and are in a different and more florid hand, as is that on fo. 73v (EC 222), dating to 1344, and fo. 94v (EC 281) dating to 1471.

<sup>19</sup> The manuscript history of the cartulary is a little more vexed. According to the bookplate on the inside cover, it was delivered to the library of Trinity College by William Barry, AM. The impression of the seal of Richard Connell, public notary, dated 1668, is also evident. From the contents of the copy, this cartulary was certainly the one in the possession of Thomas Ridgeway, later Earl of Londonderry, who purchased Torre Abbey in 1598. It was lent to the antiquarian William Pole in 1599 in order that he could make notes (Antony House Muniments, Cornwall Record Office, PG/B2/9). Ridgeway had extensive properties in Ireland, living there almost permanently after 1606, and therefore must have borne the cartulary to that country. The Ridgeways sold Torre Abbey in 1661, and their line became extinct in 1714. It must have been around this time that the manuscript found its way into the hands of William Barry (d. 1744/5), the rector of St. Brides and an alumnus of TCD, who delivered it to the library of his *alma mater*; R. Dunlop & S. Kelsey, ‘Thomas Ridgeway, first earl of Londonderry (c.1565-1632), *ODNB*; E. B. Fryde, D. E. Greenway, I. Roy, *Handbook of British Chronology*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Cambridge, 1996), p. 495. As evidenced by the contemporary index, a number of original entries have been lost, particularly the end items 200-220 and some mentioned elsewhere in the text to have occurred after these. An excellent, if brief, description of the state and layout of the manuscript is provided in M. L. Colker, *Trinity College Dublin Library, Medieval and Renaissance Latin Manuscripts* (Dublin, 1991), ii, pp. 1016-23, and p. 885 for notes on William Barry.

Exchequer, has formed the basis for much of the material to be found in this thesis.<sup>20</sup> It is hoped that it will be possible to arrange this material into a form suitable for publication as a companion to the Exchequer volume. The cartularies are also supplemented by the Courtenay collections formerly held at Powderham castle.<sup>21</sup> Much of the abbey land was held from the Courtenay earls, and the charters they preserved often include vital witness and dating evidence omitted in the cartularies, as well as other charters omitted altogether.

Besides the charter evidence for Torre, Devon is fortunate in having an almost complete set of episcopal registers from the mid-thirteenth centuries, most in published editions of greater or lesser quality. As the Premonstratensians were an exempt order, these tell us little about the internal history of the abbey, but they do provide valuable evidence of the abbey's interactions with the parishioners of its appropriated churches, amongst other things. The work, both published and unpublished, of the antiquarian George Oliver on the monastic and ecclesiastical records of the diocese is similarly indispensable to the religious or social historian of medieval Devon.<sup>22</sup> The records of the corporation of Dartmouth and the town and priory of Totnes have also survived, and were rigorously calendared in the early-twentieth century by Hugh Watkin, also a historian of Torre.<sup>23</sup> There are also a number of excellent works by seventeenth century antiquarians, none of which were fully published until centuries after their authors' deaths. William Pole is perhaps the best of these, but John Prince, Tristram Risdon, and Thomas Westcote all produced invaluable works for the historian of medieval Devon.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> The extra entries include, but are not limited to, royal and papal charters (fos. 7r-23r; 147r-152v), material on the acquisition of Tormohun (fos. 92v-98v), and houses in Exeter and Totnes (fos. 77r-80r, 120v-124r), as well as scattered form letters, letters to General Chapter, memoranda, and sporadic tithe assessments, tenurial agreements, and valuations.

<sup>21</sup> DRO D1508M/Moger.

<sup>22</sup> MDE; G. Oliver & J. P. Jones, *Ecclesiastical Antiquities of Devon* (Exeter, 1828); DRO Z 19/8/3.

<sup>23</sup> Watkin, *Dartmouth*; idem, *Totnes*.

<sup>24</sup> W. Pole, *Collections towards a Description of the County of Devon* (London, 1791); J. Prince, *Worthies of Devon* (London, 1810); T. Risdon, *The Chorographical Description or Survey of Devon* (London, 1811); T. Westcote, *A View of Devonshire in 1630* (Exeter, 1845). Westcote's work was substantially corrected and

Furthermore, Torre is unusual, both amongst the abbeys of Devon and those of its order, in that large parts of the monastic fabric are still standing. The house was converted to a private home by successive owners after the Dissolution, notably the Cary family in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Of the claustral buildings, the west range is almost completely intact, although there have been marked internal modifications. The undercrofts, however, survive almost unchanged, as does the ceiling of the great hall. The south, refectory, range was less well treated, the outward appearance having been modified to that of a Georgian mansion and with even more severe internal modifications. The east range survives only as a bare façade, while the church was almost completely demolished at the Dissolution, although the tower, having become unsafe, was apparently destroyed by gunpowder by one of the Cary owners.<sup>25</sup> Of the extra-claustral buildings, an internal gatehouse, the ‘Mohun’ gatehouse, and the abbey’s great barn, known as the ‘Spanish Barn’ after the internment of Armada prisoners there, are both excellent survivals of their kind.

More important, perhaps, has been the long-term recent archaeological and architectural work on the site. The initial phase was a three-year (1986-9) archaeological excavation of the nave, aisle, and north transept of the abbey church by a team from Exeter Museums Archaeological Field Unit, under the direction of Andy Pye.<sup>26</sup> Then between 2002 and 2008 Museum of London Archaeology excavated the cloister and carried out a through survey of the west and kitchen ranges as part of a Heritage Lottery Fund sponsored project to restore and repair the abbey. The results of both these phases, in addition to a number of smaller interim projects, have been collated and analysed by MOLA in preparation for an archaeological monograph on the abbey. This author has been

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extended by George Oliver; J. Youings, ‘Some Early Topographers of Devon and Cornwall’, in M. Brayshay (ed.), *Topographical Writers in South-West England* (Exeter, 1996), pp. 50-61.

<sup>25</sup> TA, p.16.

<sup>26</sup> A. R. Pye, ‘Torre Abbey Excavations 1986-89: Assessment Report and Post-Excavation Research Design’, Exeter Museums Archaeological Field Unit (1994).

fortunate enough to be involved in both the project and the monograph, and, as a historical advisor to the latter, has been able to view the work in a draft stage and analyse some of the findings in this thesis.<sup>27</sup>

In terms of evidence for the daily religious activities of the canons in their capacity as regular religious, we are less fortunate. While, it is true, the visitation records of Bishop Redman, covering the years 1478-1500, are an invaluable resource for the life of the community in the late middle ages, they can only tell us so much.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, the sporadic records of Premonstratensian life prior to the late fifteenth century contained in the '*Registrum Premonstratense*', transcribed by Peck and edited with the visitation records by Gasquet, tell us little about Torre.<sup>29</sup> Besides the two cartularies, no texts produced at or owned by Torre have survived, and we have no idea, for the vast majority of the history of the house, how they went about their daily round. We should always bear in mind, however, that service at the abbey, regardless of the relative laxity of the community at the time, almost certainly never ceased, and that, although we may only see the canons through their interactions with the outside world, a large part of their time would have been spent in the execution of the hours and the performance of their spiritual duties.

It is an extremely small and rural monastery in England that has not by now received some attention from modern historians, albeit with great variations in the quality of scholarship. Thus the historian of Torre is indebted to two local historians of the twentieth century: Hugh Watkin and Deryck Seymour. Both were noted above for their editions of primary sources relevant to the history of the abbey, but both also produced

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<sup>27</sup> D. Saxby & A. Westman, *The Premonstratensian Abbey of Torre*, MOLA Monograph (forthcoming). It has not been possible to provide pagination for references to this work in the text, as it is still in an early draft form.

<sup>28</sup> CAP. This source is discussed in Chapter 8.

<sup>29</sup> The original is Belvoir Add. MS 2. Gribbin, *Premonstratensian Order*, pp. 21-4; H. M. Colvin, 'The *Registrum Premonstratense*: a Lost MS. Rediscovered', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 8 (1957), pp. 96-7.

works of secondary literature on the abbey which, despite their limitations, have been utilised by historians of medieval Devon and of monasticism more generally. Watkin, who died in 1937, was the more rigorous historian, and served as the president of the Devonshire Association for 1918. Yet while he published numerous articles on the history of the locality, his work on the medieval abbey was largely restricted to two short books: a guide and a consideration of the abbots, both of which are an unfortunate mix of scholarly research and wild speculation.<sup>30</sup> In recent times, however, his efforts have been largely overlooked in favour of the 1977 book on the abbey by Deryck Seymour (d. 2006), a local schoolteacher with a passion for the history of South Devon.<sup>31</sup> Although he was generally an assiduous researcher and an entertaining author, he too was wont to let wishful thinking override the available evidence on occasion.<sup>32</sup> This has led to his *Torre Abbey*, as well as his edition of the Exchequer Cartulary, containing numerous errors of dating and narrative. Perhaps the greatest failing of Seymour's work, from a historiographical point of view, is his inability to grasp the basic tenurial structures of the locality, rendering much of his analysis of the cartulary, and thus a great part of his book, largely redundant. Yet this failing is not to deprive him of some notable achievements, not least the correct identification and description of most of Torre's lands; the accurate transcription, if not translation, of the abbey's cartulary; and the creation of a work which, if not wholly correct, was written in such an enjoyable and enthusiastic fashion as to inspire many, including the author of this thesis, to look further into the history of the abbey.

Two studies of the Premonstratensian Order in England are also of use to the historian of Torre, although one much more than the other. Howard Colvin's 1951 work on

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<sup>30</sup> H. R. Watkin, *A Short History of Torre Abbey* (Torquay, 1911); idem, *The Abbats of Thorre*, TNHS Publications (Torquay, 1937). A partial bibliography and details of Watkin's life may be found in his obituary; *DART*, 80 (1938), pp. 34-5.

<sup>31</sup> *TA*.

<sup>32</sup> Perhaps notably, besides his local histories, Seymour also wrote a number of books on the ghosts of the region.

the white canons stands as a landmark study in the historiography of English monasticism.<sup>33</sup> His focus was mainly on the period up to the mid-fourteenth century, although much later material was included in his analysis, and consists almost of a collection of essays on the Premonstratensians bound into one volume. Thus the origins of the order, their settlement in England, their struggles with the general chapter, internal administration, pastoral care, and other smaller topics are all discussed with a great deal of learning and subtlety, but there is no grand overarching theme. Despite the breadth of his analysis and his comparative youth at the time of writing, the result is truly a magisterial piece of historical writing. The more recent work by Joseph Gribbin has a smaller focus, both chronologically and thematically, of the period of the visitations of Richard Redman in the last quarter of the fifteenth century.<sup>34</sup> The work consists of three main parts: a thematic arrangement of the visitation records; a description of the liturgy of the English Premonstratensians; and a discussion of the rather meagre intellectual culture of the order. The author did not see the economic and social activities of the canons as within his remit, and, as such, while the first part of the work has been consulted for the last chapter of this thesis, the text as a whole is of much less use to this study.

Even a study of a monastery of the size and position of Torre, with such fragmentary records, must be forced to make choices in the direction of its investigations. It was originally intended to undertake a comprehensive study of the history of the house, with a strong architectural/archaeological element. As such, in the course of the research for this thesis, as many relevant records as it has been possible to check have been utilised, and the resulting source material could inform a study twice this length. As such, a great deal has been omitted, but it is hoped that much will reappear in some form in the future.

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<sup>33</sup> WC.

<sup>34</sup> Gribbin, *Premonstratensian Order*.



The lack of account rolls, court rolls, manorial surveys, or any other evidence for the administration of the abbey estates precludes a thorough study of the economy of the house, or, indeed, any meaningful understanding of the relationship of the abbey with its tenants. Some work on the administration of the abbey estates has been undertaken as part of the research on this thesis, as well as some overview of the methods of farming and the patterns of enclosure on the abbey estates, but for reasons of space and the clarity of the discussion it was not possible to include much of this. Furthermore, a great deal of contextualised analysis of the architectural and archaeological evidence of the house has been included in the forthcoming monograph, and, as such, only the elements relevant to the line of this thesis have been retained. This has resulted in these sections being less architecturally detailed, but more analytical, and vice versa for the MOLA publication. Thus in the case of the burial record, for example, detailed context numbers have not been given, again for reasons of space, as they can be found in the monograph.

This thesis is a study of the relationship between the canons and the laity over three and a half centuries. For the first two centuries, the survival of two cartularies and a number of charter collections allows a particularly in-depth study of the patrons of the house, in terms of their status, their motives, and the nature of their relationship with the house. This study forms the backbone of the first half of the thesis, and has been divided into four separate parts, three detailing separate periods of patronage, and the fourth analysing less traditional methods of discerning patronage.

The first [Chapter 1] deals with the initial endowment of the abbey, and the importance of the abbey's founder in ensuring that those in his circles of influence, whether familial, tenorial, or professional, assisted in the augmentation of his new abbey's resources. The second [Chapter 2] notes the failure of the Brewer line with the death of the founder's son in 1232, and the abbey's response in terms of seeking patrons. Although

they no longer had a central figure to organise their ‘network of patronage’, the canons were successful in attracting a wide range of local figures to grant land to the abbey. This chapter also undertakes an analysis of some of the more noticeable trends in that patronage, and the potential motives of those who granted land to the abbey. The third part [Chapter 3] mainly looks at a single instance of patronage in the fourteenth century. By this point, any substantial grant of land does not fit into a pattern as such, but was an event with individual and often unique circumstances. In this case, the abbey’s tutelary patron, John de Mohun, was heirless, and the abbey was able to negotiate the acquisition of their capital manor of Tormohun. Yet the process reveals as much, if not more, about the connections between the abbey and the gentry of Devon, who organised, administered, and executed the transaction, as it does about their relationship with their tutelary patron. A further chapter [Chapter 4] takes the patronage history beyond the written sources, and utilises physical evidence from the abbey to discuss continued patronal relationships between the canons and the laity. Foremost in this analysis will be the burial record uncovered in the thorough excavation of 1986-9. Such a study is unique amongst both the houses of the English Premonstratensians and those of Devon, and hopefully should provide valuable insight into an often-overlooked ‘alternative’ method of monastic patronage.

However, relations with the laity were not always so favourable for the canons. The second section comprises two chapters analysing different points of conflict with the secular world. The first [Chapter 5] notes the common causes of monastic-lay conflict: tithe and rent disputes, or disputes over spiritual provisions. The latter is examined in some detail in the light of an episode at Dartmouth in the mid-fourteenth century, and reveals the difficulties that even such an important port town could face when up against an intractable monastic foe. The second half of the chapter, however, looks at a less common

point of conflict, albeit by no means less important. This takes the form of a thorough analysis of a dispute over the abbacy, again in the mid-fourteenth century, which resulted in the storming of the abbey by a lay mob. Yet the episode is taken as the starting-point for an analysis of a number of features of lay society, as well as placing in context the reasons for such a violent exertion of lay power over a monastery. The second chapter [Chapter 6] looks less at the conflict engendered by the abbey's role in secular society, and more at the abbey's rather more passive role in times of secular conflict. The position of abbeys in war, especially in coastal regions, has not been studied in any great detail, yet there was a constant threat of violence and raiding from the sea, coupled with the more universal threat of violence from the locality. The defensive response of Torre, and other abbeys, to the threat of wartime, and peacetime, seaborne pillaging is discussed here. The second half of this chapter moves the picture forward to the mid-fifteenth century, a time of great strife for Devon, and the abbey's role in the 'Wars of the Roses'. While there is little direct evidence for the abbey's part, this is an opportunity to examine the role of monasteries generally, and especially those in Devon, in the factional politics of the period. In the light of such an overview, it is possible to suggest some interpretations of iconography in the late-medieval abbey, and to underline, once again, the immersion of the abbey in the secular world.

The final section turns to the canons themselves. Chapter 7 attempts an overview of the geographical and social origins of the canons of Torre, of which the full names of 120 can be ascertained. Studies of the origins of the inmates of smaller rural monasteries are rare, and this chapter starts by attempting to provide a practical methodology of monastic prosopography. Although space prohibits a thorough comparison with the other Devonian abbeys, some initial thoughts are given on what would be a fascinating project: a complete picture of the recruitment practices of the major Devon abbeys. We may also extract from

the concerted name-lists of the period some indication of the standard complement of the house, the life-expectancy of the canons, and the popularity of the monastic lifestyle in the few centuries before the Dissolution. Finally, a chapter analysing the effect of secular influence on the monastic precinct [Chapter 8] utilises a wide range of sources to show otherwise hidden trends in the community, most notably the disappearance of the lay brothers in the late-thirteenth century. The changing space within the abbey also reveals what appears to be a general opening-up of the monastic cloister to the laity at around the same time, and possibly the fragmentation of the community. When Richard Redman visited the abbey in the late-fifteenth century, he found the standard of living to be satisfactory on the whole, albeit with a number of pervasive secular influences and a generally more relaxed standard of discipline than the statutes required. Nonetheless, despite their constant interaction with the world around them, the canons of Torre appear to have been largely aware of their vocation, and mostly true to it.

## CHAPTER 1

### William Brewer and the foundation of Torre

Torre Abbey was founded in 1196 by the great justice and administrator William Brewer (Briwere/Briwerre/Bruere) (occ. 1175 – d. 1226).<sup>1</sup> Watkin asserts that he was born at Torre, yet there is no evidence for this, nor for Torre having been part of his ‘patrimony’.<sup>2</sup> There is only very scant evidence for Brewer’s ancestry, and it is similarly difficult to piece together which of his lands came to him by inheritance and which (the vast majority) were purchased by him or bestowed upon him. The only evidence for his father, supposedly Henry, comes from a memorandum copied from the collections of Robert Glover.<sup>3</sup> However, the source is not dated, and contains a number of dubious statements, not least that Brewer was ‘a noble captain with King Richard in the Holy Land’, when he was actually one of the king’s justices at home while Richard was on crusade.<sup>4</sup> We have firmer evidence for Brewer’s earlier ancestors:

King John grants to William Brewer and his heirs all lands and holdings of whatsoever fief etc., just as William Brewer his grandfather held in the time of King Henry [I] and the bailiwick of the King’s forest of Bere...as the aforesaid ancestors of William Brewer held the aforesaid bailiwick in the time of King William and King Henry our grandfather.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The two fullest discussions of his life are in H. R. Watkin, ‘A Great Devonian: William Briwer’, *DART*, 50 (1918), pp. 69-169; and R. V. Turner, *Men Raised From the Dust* (Philadelphia, 1988), pp. 71-90.

<sup>2</sup> *TA*, p. 47; Watkin, ‘A Great Devonian’, p. 71. Watkin’s assumption that Torre was Brewer’s ‘patrimony’ was based in part on his assertion that Brewer held the manor in chief. Yet in 1247 the manor was stated to be held by Brewer’s heirs of the honour of Plympton; *BoF*, ii, p. 769; *FA*, i, p. 318.

<sup>3</sup> Bodl. MS Dugdale 18, fo. 15r, ‘Memorandum, quod dominus Willielmus de Brewer, filius henrici Brewer, vixit temporibus Henrici secundi, regis Ricardi primi, et Regis Johannis, et fuit nobilis capitaneus cum rege Ricardo in terra Sancta; et fuit dominus de Axmyster in com. Devoniae, et de villa de Weere in com. Somerset, et aliorum dominorum; qui obiit anno 1226 et sepelitur in Abbathia de Donqueswell coram principali Altare in com. Devoniae.’

<sup>4</sup> Turner, *Men Raised*, p. 73. He had taken the oath to the cross, but along with Geoffrey fitz Peter and Hugh Bardolf this was removed from him in order that they could govern in Richard’s absence; *The Chronicle of Richard of Devizes*, trans. & ed. J. A. Giles (London, 1841), p. 8. The memorandum also mentions his life as spanning the reigns of Henry II to John, omitting that he lived well into Henry III’s reign.

<sup>5</sup> *Rot. Chart.*, p. 39.

‘Grandfather’ (*avus*) in this sense may not indicate that the William Brewer of Henry’s reign was the father of Henry Brewer, as the charter also uses ‘grandfather’ to refer to King John’s great-grandfather, but instead in the sense of him being the effective founder of the dynasty. He may have been the first to be given the title of forester of Bere – a hereditary position.<sup>6</sup> This would point to Brewer having originated from Hampshire, possibly near Mottisfont where he founded an Augustinian Priory in 1201, and where his brother John, later a patron of the priory, appears to have resided.<sup>7</sup>

There is further evidence for a Hampshire connection. In 1148, a William Brewer appears holding land in Winchester, later found in the possession of the founder of Torre and given by him to Mottisfont.<sup>8</sup> We also find a Wakelin Brewer as the recipient of a grant of a hide of land in Michelmersh and Aubridge, near Mottisfont in Hampshire, in 1129x1171, witnessed by William Briwere and his sons Richard and Thomas.<sup>9</sup> This hide was also later granted to Mottisfont priory by the founder of Torre.<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately the dating of Wakelin’s charter cannot be narrowed down, so we cannot tell if the witnessing William Brewer was the founder of Torre’s father, grandfather, great-grandfather, or even the founder himself, although there is no evidence that the latter had a son called Thomas. In 1166 we find a Richard ‘filius Willelmi Bruerre’ holding a barony in Somerset in 1166 in which Walter Brito held fees, thus probably identifying it as Odcombe, while William Bruerre held half a fee in Chesterfield, where the founder of Torre and his son later held

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<sup>6</sup> Turner, *Men Raised*, p. 71. Brewer had held the position under Richard in 1190, so John’s charter was a confirmation; *Pipe Roll 2 Richard I*, p. 132.

<sup>7</sup> John Brewer held land of William in 1201-2, and appeared with him as a witness to various charters in the early thirteenth century, including the foundation charter of Torre; *The Red Book of the Exchequer*, ed. H. Hall, Rolls Series, 99 (1896), i, p. 162; EC 3. Brewer may have had two other brothers: Richard who died in 1205, and Peter de Rivallis who became a canon of Mottisfont and was known as ‘the holy man in the wall’. The latter is more spurious, however, and lacking evidence; Watkin, ‘A Great Devonian’, pp. 80, 137; Dugdale, *Monasticon*, vi, p. 481; *Rot. Litt. Claus.*, i, p. 32.

<sup>8</sup> Turner, *Men Raised*, pp. 71-2; F. Barlow, M. Biddle (eds.), *Winchester in the Early Middle Ages*, Winchester Studies 1 (Oxford, 1976), pp. 85-6; *Survey of Medieval Winchester*, ed. D. Keene, Winchester Studies 2 (Oxford, 1985), ii, pp. 921, 1029.

<sup>9</sup> *English Episcopal Acta VII: Winchester 1070-1204*, ed. M. J. Franklin (Oxford, 1993), p. 21. The dates are provided by Bishop Henry of Blois as witness.

<sup>10</sup> Dugdale, *Monasticon*, vi, p. 481.

the borough.<sup>11</sup> If we dismiss the lone reference to Henry, therefore, we may tentatively recreate the twelfth-century Brewer genealogy thus: a William Brewer, possibly son of William, originally from Hampshire, had as sons the founder of Torre and his brothers Richard (d. 1205), John, and an unidentified Thomas.

We cannot, however, completely dismiss Brewer's familial connections to Devon. One obvious link depends on the relationship between Brewer's family and the nunnery at Polsloe, near Exeter. This has 'traditionally' been ascribed to Brewer's foundation, but as there is firm evidence for the existence of the nunnery not long before 1160, and similar evidence pointing towards its foundation also occurring around that date, we must, if ascribing the foundation to a William Brewer, point to an ancestor of the founder of Torre.<sup>12</sup> Brewer did provide for two of his sisters-in-law to become nuns at the priory, although this is hardly evidence of his tutelary patronage.<sup>13</sup> More compelling evidence of a long-standing association with Devon must surely come in the form of his familial ties throughout the county. He himself wed the mistress of the Earl of Cornwall, while his brothers-in-law included John de Torrington, holder of the barony of Great Torrington, and William de Bruera, holder of a number of fees in Devon, including Wolborough near Torre. Reginald de Albamara, lord of Woodbury, was his uncle, and relations appear as the rector of Torre church and a canon in Exeter cathedral, while his nephew became bishop of Exeter.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> *Red Book*, i, pp. 229, 344; Turner, *Men Raised*, p. 82; I. J. Sanders, *English Baronies: A Study of their Origin and Descent 1086-1327* (Oxford, 1963), p. 132.

<sup>12</sup> The earliest reference to the 'sanctimoniales' of Polsloe is in a charter of the chapter of Exeter granting the rights to a cemetery in 1159-60; Exeter Dean and Chapter Archives, MS 1374, calendared in *HMCR Var. Coll.* iv, no. 49. In 1161-2 the 'nuns of Exeter' appear in the Pipe Rolls, which 'can only refer to the Polsloe Nunnery'; *Pipe Roll 8 Henry II*, p. 5; E. Lega-Weekes, *The Pre-Reformation History of St. Katherine's Priory, Polsloe*, *DART*, 66 (1934) pp. 181-189; 67 (1935) pp. 349-359; 69 (1937) pp. 447-470; 70 (1938) pp. 423-432. The statement that it was of Brewer's family's foundation is mainly based on the tradition, repeated by Oliver and apparently without evidence, that Brewer was the patron of the nunnery before it passed to the Bishops of Exeter. When and why this latter occurred is also unclear; *MDE*, pp. 162-3.

<sup>13</sup> Turner, *Men Raised*, p. 89.

<sup>14</sup> *Rot. Litt. Pat.*, pp. 86, 120; EC 90; Turner, *Men Raised*, p. 87; *Gervase of Canterbury: Historical Works*, ed. W. Stubbs, *Rolls Series*, 73 (1879-80), ii, p. 113; Watkin, 'A Great Devonian', pp. 144-6.

The founder of Torre himself probably first appears in our sources in 1175, witnessing a charter at Marlborough with King Henry II.<sup>15</sup> Turner wonders if this presence with the king suggests he might have been a knight in the royal retinue, although if this were the case then we might expect his appearance in more than this solitary charter. Either way, his career and his connections in Devon would not have been hindered by his marriage to Beatrice de Vaux. Beatrice was almost certainly the mistress of Reginald de Dunstanville, Earl of Cornwall (d. 1175), by whom she bore at least one son, Henry Fitz Count. While Watkin was sure that this was not the case, two entries in Dugdale's manuscript collections provide firm evidence. A memorandum of the manor of [Kings]kerswell states that she 'avoit una filia par Reynold q. fuit comit de Cornwall. Et le nom de fil. fuit Henry fitz le Count qui fuit Bastard.' Furthermore, in a charter recording the grant of the manor of Kerswell and land of Hakford to William Brewer the Younger, Henry calls him 'fratri meo'.<sup>16</sup> Beatrice was a relative of Hubert de Vaux, a prominent tenant of the Redvers Earls of Devon in their honour of Plympton.<sup>17</sup> Her dowry conveyed Collaton, Kingskerswell, Ugborough, Torre, and perhaps a number of other manors, to her husband.<sup>18</sup> They had at least two sons and five daughters, of which William Brewer the Younger was probably the eldest.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> *Documents Preserved in France, Illustrative of the History of Great Britain and Ireland, 918-1206*, ed. J. H. Round (London, 1899), p. 336.

<sup>16</sup> Watkin, 'A Great Devonian', pp. 75-6; Bodl. MS Dugdale 39, fos. 54r-v.

<sup>17</sup> Bearman, *Charters of the Redvers Family*, pp. 38, 66-8, 71, 75-8, 83, 89, 117. He should not be conflated with the northern Hubert de Vaux/Vallibus who held the honour of Gilsland in 1157; R. H. C. Vaux, 'Who was Hubert de Vallibus?', *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society*, ser. 3 vol. 7 (2007), pp. 49-55.

<sup>18</sup> EC 6, 9. A charter between Brewer and Henry de Nonant notes that [Shiphay] Collaton (Not Colton in Somerset, as Turner mistakenly asserts) was part of her dowry, while Beatrice's confirmation of Brewer's endowment of Torre mentions only the land and church of Torre and the ferling at Ugborough, so it seems likely that these had been her lands. In a memorandum of the manor of [Kings]kerswell, preserved in the collections of Robert Glover, Beatrice is called 'Dame de Torre et Karswell'; Bodl. MS Dugdale 39, fo. 54v; Turner, *Men Raised*, p. 72.

<sup>19</sup> Turner claims the eldest son was Richard (d. 1205), yet as has been noted, this was Brewer's brother. Brewer and Beatrice had a younger son Richard, who died in 1215, when his lands were to be handed to his father. In previous charters where both Richard and William the Younger are mentioned, William's name always appears first, and Richard was not a witness to the foundation of Torre; Turner, *Men Raised*, p. 85; *Rot. Litt. Claus.*, i, pp. 32, 238; *Rot. Litt. Pat.*, p. 146; Watkin, 'A Great Devonian', p. 82, EC 1-2.



As a founder, the canons of Torre could not have wished for a more powerful and energetic man in the Westcountry in the late-twelfth and early-thirteenth century than William Brewer. One of those ‘self-made men’ that characterised the royal administration in the era, his power base was in Devon and along the south coast. As we have noted, his association with Devon may have been longer than Turner, or Reichel in his analysis of the feudal baronage of Devon, supposed. Both claim, following the charter précised by Dugdale that the first purchase of land in Devon by William Brewer was of Ilsham in 1179.<sup>20</sup> The full version of the charter, dated 23<sup>rd</sup> October 1180, makes it clear that Brewer already held the land, and was resuming the fee from the tenant:

Sciant presentes et futuri, quod ego Hawisa de Ilesham, et Rad. sponsus meus, et Rogerus filius noster et haeres, et Angerus frater ejus, communi consilio et assensu, vendidimus in finali vendicione, Willelmo Briwere domino nostro, et quietam clamavimus, de nobis et de omnibus successoribus nostris, totam terram nostram de Ilesham; et totum jus nostrum ejusdem terrae, quam tenebamus de eo per servitium feudi dimidii militis, pro xxxi marcis argenti ita scilicet quod decem marca nobis clamavit quietas, quas ei debebamus pro servicio ejusdem terrae: et xxi marcas nobis pacavit in denariis. Haec autem venditio facta fuit in pleno comitatu de Devenescire; et postea retracta et recordata apud Westm. ad scaccarium, die Jovis proxima post festum S. Luca Evangelistae, anno xxvi<sup>o</sup> regni Regis H. secundi, coram Ric. Winton. et Gaufr. Elien. et Johe. Norwic. Episcopis; et Rann. de Glanville, et Ric. Thesaurario, et Will<sup>o</sup>. Basset, et Alano de Furnellis, et Robert Mantell, et aliis Baronibus, qui tunc ibi aderant.<sup>21</sup>

Just under a year earlier, in Michaelmas 1179, Brewer had been appointed sheriff of Devon, a position he was to hold until 1189.<sup>22</sup> This was apparently his first major office, besides his hereditary position as forester of Bere, so it would be reasonable to assume that he already had some territorial base in Devon, especially given his unusually long occupation of the shrievalty. The status of his immediate predecessor, Hugh de Gundeville, gives us some indication of the type of figure appointed to the shrievalty in this period. He was a Westcountry man, who served in the household of William earl of Gloucester, held

<sup>20</sup> Turner, *Men Raised*, p. 80; *VCH Devon*, i, p. 567; W. Dugdale, *The Baronage of England* (London, 1675-6), i, p. 700.

<sup>21</sup> Bodl. MS Dugdale 18, fo. 43v. The charter was in the hands of the Earl of Elgin, but is now apparently lost. It does not appear to have been seen by either Turner or Watkin, and has not been printed elsewhere.

<sup>22</sup> *List of Sheriffs for England and Wales*, List and Index Society, 9 (1898), p. 34.

lands all over the south-west, including in Devon, and was 'a figure of importance at the royal court'. He may even have had a pre-existing relationship with Brewer, as he was sheriff of Hampshire from 1170. We should also assume some closeness to the king on the part of Brewer, as Henry II generally followed a policy of appointing court favourites to the shires.<sup>23</sup>

If Brewer was already an important figure in local and perhaps national circles on his appointment to the shrievalty, by the time he came to found Torre he was one of the most important figures in royal administration. In terms of status and land, he was undoubtedly among the higher powers in England. There is not room here to number all the positions he held, or the various abilities for which he was famed, but suffice to say that, in 1219, he was assessed for scutage on more than sixty knight's fees, over several shires. By this time he had founded and endowed three monasteries of reasonable standing, at Torre, Dunkeswell, and Mottisfont, as well as a number of castles and hospitals. He stood alongside the justiciars towards the end of John's reign, was 'high among the councillors' of Henry's minority, and had 'accumulated so many lands that he clearly ranked alongside the barons in resources'.<sup>24</sup>

Brewer has rightly been noted for his numerous foundations and patronage of ecclesiastical institutions, and was unusually generous for the time. Torre was the first of the three monasteries he was to found, and, perhaps accordingly, the most generously endowed. It has been speculated that his motivation for the foundation of Torre was as a thank-offering for the safe return of his son, William Brewer the Younger, who had supposedly been sent as a hostage as part of King Richard's ransom.<sup>25</sup> The elder Brewer was certainly involved with the negotiations to free the king; he was in Worms in 1193 to

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<sup>23</sup> E. Amt, *The Accession of Henry II in England: Royal Government Restored 1149-59* (Woodbridge, 1993), p. 41; J. Boorman, 'Gundeville, Hugh de (d. 1181?)', *ODNB*; W. A. Morris, *The Medieval English Sheriff to 1300* (Manchester, 1968), pp. 111-13.

<sup>24</sup> Turner, *Men Raised*, pp. 71, 74-82.

<sup>25</sup> *TA*, pp. 7, 48, 51.

secure his release, and returned with him in 1194.<sup>26</sup> Besides his father's close involvement with the negotiations, other evidence suggestive of the truth behind this story is the presence of the younger William on the continent with King Richard in 1197, his subsequent grants to this abbey over his father's other foundations, and his burial before the high altar at Torre.<sup>27</sup> Yet, as Seymour suggests, the story may have come about through a conflation of the elder Brewer's involvement at Worms, and his son's subsequent capture and ransom at the hands of the French in 1204.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, if it were true, it seems odd that no mention of the tale is made in the foundation charter, to which the younger William was a witness, nor in the record of the younger William's memorandum, entered into the abbey cartulary.<sup>29</sup> In more prosaic terms, as a prominent figure and landholder in Devon, but largely a 'self-made man', the foundation of a monastery was one of those status symbols which would cement his family's reputation amongst the higher social echelons. If his upbringing was in Hampshire but his adopted county and main power-base was Devon, here was an affirmation of his standing and intent.

### The Foundation of Torre

Turning to the foundation itself, there are a number of versions of Torre's 'foundation charter', reflecting the growth of the endowment of the house over the first few years.<sup>30</sup> While interim foundation charters are not uncommon, Galbraith felt that the final 'great' monastic foundation charter was the culmination of the process of foundation: 'At last, perhaps at the dedication of the church, the intention of the founder was felt to have been

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<sup>26</sup> Turner, *Men Raised*, p. 73; *Chronica Magistri Rogeri de Houedene*, ed. W. Stubbs, Rolls Series, 51 (1868-71), iii, pp. 214-5, 217.

<sup>27</sup> Turner, *Men Raised*, p. 85; DC fo. 159r.

<sup>28</sup> TA, p. 48; Turner, *Men Raised*, p. 85; *Rot. Litt. Pat.*, p. 55.

<sup>29</sup> DC fo. 159r.

<sup>30</sup> EC 1-3, DC fos. 31v-34r.

realised, and by a natural instinct the whole complicated process of foundation would be recorded in writing'.<sup>31</sup> It would be wrong, however, to suggest that, of the Torre charters, even the 'great' foundation charter of the abbey represented the fulfilment of Brewer's intentions. It appears instead to have been drawn up at a time only around three years from the arrival of the canons in 1196, perhaps in response to the translation of the first abbot, Adam, to Newhouse, and in order that the canons had a single unified document outlining their rights to the earliest endowment.<sup>32</sup> Even by the royal confirmation of their foundation in 1200 the endowment had increased, as it had further by the time of the papal confirmation, before 1207.<sup>33</sup> To categorise the grants received between 1199 and 1207 separately from those received before 1199 would be to create an artificial distinction, as they were certainly the result of Brewer's influence and patronage.

Furthermore, as Galbraith noted, 'the foundation of the monastery was not, in fact, a single act'.<sup>34</sup> Neither the arrival of the canons in 1196, nor the drafting and witnessing of the foundation charter in around 1199, nor the dedication of the church at a time unknown, represented the end of the foundation process, but steps within it. In terms of endowment, it would be more accurate to view the end of the foundation period as being in 1207, after which the abbey's acquisitions largely ceased until Brewer's grant of the advowson of Buckland Brewer church shortly before retiring to Dunkeswell in 1224. We could, perhaps, include the years between 1224 and 1232, when Brewer's son William did much to complete the endowment, yet a generation had passed by that point, and his circle, while obviously bearing some similarities, would exhibit clear differences from those of his father. As such his patronage of the abbey will be explored in a later chapter. This chapter

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<sup>31</sup> V. H. Galbraith, 'Monastic Foundation Charters of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries', *Cambridge Historical Journal*, 4 (1934), pp. 214-21.

<sup>32</sup> Adam was made abbot of Newhouse around three and a half years after the foundation – so in late 1199; *CAP*, iii, p. 141.

<sup>33</sup> Shebbear church, granted to the canons in 1207, is not listed in the papal confirmation; EC 4; DC fos. 17r-18v; *Rot. Chart.*, p. 168.

<sup>34</sup> Galbraith, 'Monastic Foundation', p. 214.

shall be limited, therefore, to the period up to and including the grant of Shebbear church in 1207, and the extent to which the fortunes of Torre were shaped by the generosity and influence of their founder, William Brewer.



**Figure 1: Lands and Churches of Torre Abbey**  
**X – Churches named as grants but never received**

Following his decision to found a monastery, and having chosen the abbey of Welbeck as the father-house, Brewer would have had to present evidence to the abbot that he was willing to give enough land for the sustenance of a new foundation. Three versions of the foundation charter of Torre survive in the cartularies, and one appears to consist of the

lands promised at this early stage.<sup>35</sup> In the charter, Brewer gives the land on which the abbey is to be sited, called Rowedone, with freedom to fish and trawl in the bay, the church of Torre, with pasture in the vill for their cows and horses and one hundred sheep, all the vill of Wolborough with the church and a nine shilling rent from land in Aller, all his land of Greendale in the manor of Woodbury, a ferling (c. 25 acres) in Ugborough with pasture and common on Dartmoor, and a ferling of land in Bradworthy.<sup>36</sup>

For the entirety of the period between Domesday Book and the foundation of Torre Abbey, we know almost nothing of the history of the manor of Torre. In 1086 'Torra' was held by William Hostiarius along with Ilsham and ten other manors in Devon, as well as lands in Nottinghamshire.<sup>37</sup> In terms of the Devon manors, it is impossible to trace any clear descent between William and the holders of the manors in the late-twelfth or early-thirteenth centuries.<sup>38</sup> It has been supposed that William and his son Robert attached themselves to Robert Curthose in his bid for the English throne.<sup>39</sup> There may be some truth in this, as certainly by 1124-9 Robert Hostiarius had been supplanted in his Leicester estates by Henry Tuchet, and the manner in which William's Devon estates were split between the honours of Plympton and William Brewer seems to indicate that they had been granted out by the king.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> EC 3; DC fo. 31v-32v. The charter itself was clearly written after the foundation of the abbey had occurred, as it refers to the place 'where the church of St. Saviour is founded', although the occurrence of the phrase in other foundation charters, including Welbeck, suggests that this indicates only the commencement of work on the site, not the completion of the buildings; WC, p. 65. Exact dating is impossible, however, as no witness list or other indication has been preserved. Seymour thought it odd that no date had been appended to any of the foundation charters, although as they were in 'letter' form we should expect the date to be omitted; EC, p. 54; Galbraith, 'Monastic Foundation', p. 205.

<sup>36</sup> EC 3, 17, 34. The ferling was an administrative area of land peculiar to Devon, comprising anywhere between 16 and 36 acres in the holdings of Torre, depending on the quality of the land; H. P. R. Finberg, *Tavistock Abbey* (Cambridge, 1951), pp. 39-40.

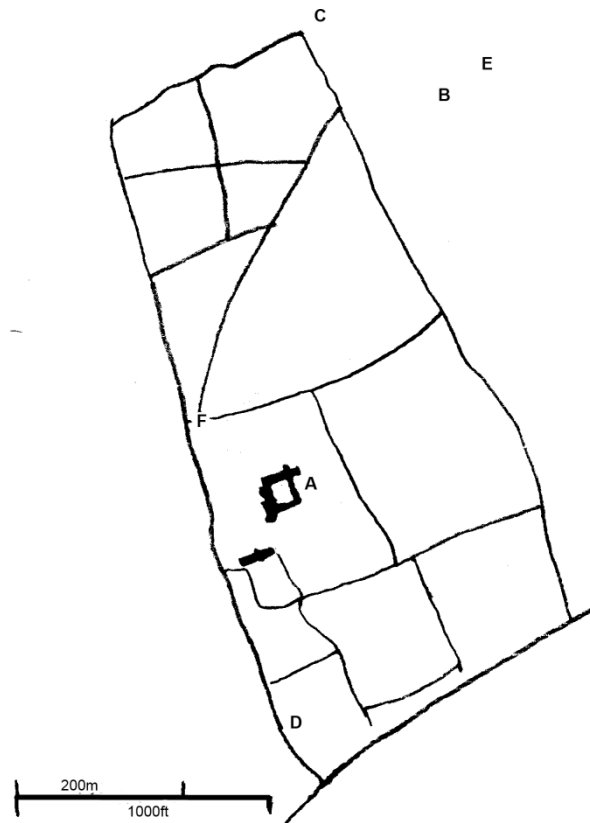
<sup>37</sup> *DB Devon*, 51,2-12; *Notts*, ch. 29. Robert, called son of William the Usher, held land in Leicestershire; *DB Leics*, ch. 20; K. Keats-Rohan, *Domesday People* (Woodbridge, 1999), pp. 389, 492.

<sup>38</sup> Croke Burnell, Raddon, Sutton, Mariansleigh, and Torre were held of the honour of Plympton in the thirteenth century, while Cadeleigh and Bolham were held of the Mohun honour, indicating they had been held in chief by William Brewer; *FA*, i, pp. 319, 321, 425; *BoF*, ii, pp. 761, 769, 787-8.

<sup>39</sup> Watkin, 'A Great Devonian', p. 70.

<sup>40</sup> J. H. Round, *Feudal England* (London, 1895), p. 210.

The site of the abbey was bounded ‘by the road which comes from Cockington as far as the vill of Torre and so before the door of Richard then the parson of Torre, then by the road which runs down to the sea, and so from the sea as far as the *calcetum*, and from the *calcetum* up to the aforesaid road which comes up from Cockington, by way of a certain piece of land where there is a spring called Efrideswelle’.<sup>41</sup> These boundaries are easily identified [Fig. 2], and roughly correspond to the present-day Mill Lane (the road from Cockington), Belgrave Road (the road to the sea), along the sea front to King’s Drive (the *calcetum*), and the length of King’s Drive and Avenue Road as far as Mill Lane, (following the line of the *calcetum* and Efrideswelle), an area of around 75 acres.<sup>42</sup>



**Figure 2: Boundaries of Rowedone and Torre Abbey**  
**A - Abbey Buildings; B - Torre Church; C - Probable site of parsonage; D - Calcetum;**  
**E - Probable site of Torre Courthouse; F – Main Gatehouse**  
 Based on Ordnance Survey first series 1:2500

<sup>41</sup> EC 3.

<sup>42</sup> H. H. Walker, ‘Some Medieval Demesne Boundaries in Torquay’, *DART*, 97 (1965), pp. 196-7; *TA*, pp. 81-2. Walker mistakenly states that the original boundary cut through the western half of Torre Abbey Meadow, when it followed the current line of the King’s Drive. The later grant of land by William Brewer the Younger was to the west of the *calcetum*.

Wolborough, at the head of the Teign estuary, was purchased by Brewer from his brother-in-law William de Bruera, son of Antony de Bruera, for forty marks shortly before he granted it to the abbey.<sup>43</sup> Indeed, the abbey is explicitly mentioned in the charter between the two men.<sup>44</sup> Bruera was also involved in the grant of Greendale, part of Woodbury parish. Brewer had been enfeoffed in two virgates of land in Woodbury by his uncle, Reginald de Albamara, lord of Woodbury, in order to grant them to William de Bruera as part of the dowry for his sister.<sup>45</sup> Brewer then negotiated the return of the land, part of Greendale, in exchange for the manor of ‘Houbotone’, and granted the whole to the canons.<sup>46</sup> It was confirmed to the canons by Reginald de Albamara, who is mentioned in the foundation charter as having granted the land to Brewer.<sup>47</sup> It is not clear when the negotiations surrounding either Wolborough or Greendale were made, although the mention of the abbey in Bruera’s Wolborough charter suggests that the sale to Brewer occurred in 1196 or shortly before.

Of the two smaller grants, Brewer had held the manor of Ugborough since before 1190, and it had probably been part of his wife’s dowry.<sup>48</sup> The picture at Bradworthy, on the other hand, is less clear. At around the same time as the foundation of Torre, Brewer was negotiating the purchase of the manor and church of Bradworthy from Henry de Pomeroy, holder of the honour of Berry. The sale, for seventy marks, was not completed

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<sup>43</sup> EC 90. William de Bruera was married to Brewer’s sister Iggelesia. Despite the similarity in names, there is no evidence for any older association of the two families. It is Bruera, and not Brewer, who is the descendant of the Ralf de Brueria who held land in Devon at Domesday; Watkin, ‘A Great Devonian’, pp. 69-71.

<sup>44</sup> EC 16.

<sup>45</sup> EC 89, 90. The land transferred to William de Bruera was described as being four librates.

<sup>46</sup> EC 1, 91. ‘Houbotone’ is unidentified; there is no evidence of Bruera holding an interest in any manor of similar name in Devon.

<sup>47</sup> EC 1-3. Reginald acquired Woodbury by marriage with Adelia or Eliza, daughter of William Carbunel, who held the manor solely from 1174, and jointly with Reginald in 1182. Thus Brewer’s mother may have been an Albamara or a daughter of Carbunel. However, Reginald’s wife is consistently called Avelina in the Torre cartulary, and, if this is not a scribal error, then it allows the possibility that Reginald was Brewer’s uncle by his remarriage; EC 89; *Pipe Roll 21 Henry II*, p. 65; *Pipe Roll 23 Henry II*, p. 4; *Pipe Roll 28 Henry II*, pp. 28, 32.

<sup>48</sup> O. J. Reichel, *The Hundreds of Devon (Supplementary)* (Plymouth, 1928-38), p. 324; above, p. 40.



until April 1198.<sup>49</sup> Henry may have had familial links to Brewer, inasmuch as Beatrice de Vaux may have been his cousin.<sup>50</sup> Bradworthy was thus in Henry's possession at the foundation of the house, and, while Brewer is stated to have granted the land in the foundation charter, Pomeroy's granting-charter of the ferling, named as Hidesburga, along with the mill and church of Bradworthy and the chapel of Pancrasweek, was entered into the cartularies.<sup>51</sup> The canons had some problems in asserting their rights to the advowson of Bradworthy, inasmuch as it had been granted to the Augustinian canons of le Val in Normandy by Geoffrey de la Pomerai in 1125. Brewer was aware of this problem, or was soon made aware, as he brokered a deal whereby the canons of Torre would pay an annual rent of four marks to those of le Val in exchange for the advowson. The canons later arranged to make this payment to a messenger sent to Exeter, although it is likely that the deal was broken at the time of the first prohibitions on removing money from the country in the early-fourteenth century.<sup>52</sup> While in this case the prior grant was overcome relatively easily, it is the first instance of a recurrent theme in the endowment of Torre; that of the difficulty in asserting rights to presentation in churches.<sup>53</sup>

The initial endowment is striking inasmuch as it is inconsistent with those of the other English Premonstratensian houses, whose typical foundation grants were of lands in

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<sup>49</sup> *DFOF*, i, p. 12.

<sup>50</sup> Reichel identifies the Domesday manor of Coleton (17,27) held by Ralf de Pomeroy of Judhael of Totnes as Shiphay Collaton, which was part of Beatrice de Vaux's dowry; O. J. Reichel, 'The Hundred of Haytor in the Time of "Testa de Nevil," A.D. 1244', *DART*, 40 (1908), p. 126. This is further substantiated by Alric having held it TRE, as he also held nearby Torre and Cockington, although all were held separately at Domesday. Reichel concludes that a Pomeroy must have married a Vaux, being the parents of Beatrice, and transmitted the manor to her. The identification appears to be correct, as William Brewer held it from the barony of Totnes in the 1190s; EC 9; B. Powley, *The House of De La Pomerai* (London, 1944), pp. 14-15.

<sup>51</sup> EC 152. The same charter makes it clear that Brewer held the rights to multure in the manor before 1198. This grant should not be confused with the one immediately preceding it, whereby William Brewer grants a ferling with named boundaries; EC 151. It was this ferling that Seymour traced, and conflated with Hidesburga; *TA*, pp. 177-9. The original charter makes clear that this must be William Brewer the Younger, as the first witness is William de Ralegh, sheriff of Devon (1225-8); DRO D1508M/Moger/417; *List of Sheriffs*, p. 34.

<sup>52</sup> *WC*, p. 157; A. Lefournier, *Essai Historique sur l'Abbaye de Notre-Dame-de-Valle* (Caen, 1865), p. 337; EC 153-6; *RO*, ii, p. 159.

<sup>53</sup> See below pp. 57-9, Chapter 2, pp. 69, 72-4.

the immediate vicinity which would be farmed by the canons themselves.<sup>54</sup> Yet the abbey was founded in an area of relatively high population density and ancient cultivation, not amidst the waste, fen, and moor more commonly associated with the reformed orders.<sup>55</sup> Besides the home farm, the canons were given two sizeable manors in Wolborough and Greendale. Both may have included burgeoning urban centres, as Newton Abbot in the former and Woodbury Salterton in the latter may already have existed in some form.<sup>56</sup> Wolborough was only six miles from the abbey, but Greendale was over twenty miles along the coast, on the other side of the Exe. Ugborough and Bradworthy are initially almost inexplicable as gifts, being single holdings of land seventeen and fifty-five miles from the abbey, respectively. The former, however, appears to have been given in order to ensure that the canons had ‘venville’ rights of free pasture on Dartmoor, as belonged to those with land in the vicinity of the moors.<sup>57</sup> The ferling in Bradworthy was adjacent to the sanctuary land of the church, and as such it seems the subsequent gift of the church was already planned.<sup>58</sup> In total, the revenue from this initial grant of land accounted for more than a third of the abbey’s income at the Dissolution, and represented a greater source of revenue than the entire endowments of thirteen Premonstratensian houses.<sup>59</sup> The scale and nature of the lands in the earliest charter were to set the tone for Torre’s subsequent land acquisitions, and marked the abbey out from the normal patterns of

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<sup>54</sup> WC, p. 162.

<sup>55</sup> See Introduction pp. 20-2

<sup>56</sup> The charter granting the market at Newton Abbot was given in 1221, although it states that the day of the market was to be moved from Monday to Wednesday, implying an earlier settlement. Its name then was Shireburne Newton, so its foundation by the abbey may be a later invention; *Rot. Litt. Claus.*, i, p. 454. The origins of Woodbury Salterton are unclear, but it was most probably the ‘vill’ mentioned in the granting-charter.

<sup>57</sup> H. E. Hallam (ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales II: 1042-1350* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 388-9.

<sup>58</sup> This is also suggested by Henry de Pomeroy’s granting-charter, which names both the church and the ferling as parts of the same grant. ‘Sanctuary land’ was the common term for the church glebe in Devon.

<sup>59</sup> This was mainly from Wolborough (Newton Abbot £10 17s 7d; Wolborough manor £47 18s 3d; church £20 10s 10d) and Torre church (£43 6s 10d); *MDE*, pp. 176-8; D. Knowles & R. N. Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses: England and Wales* (London, 1953), pp. 162-70.

endowment for the new monasteries of the last major wave of traditional monastic foundation.

Another theme that can be identified even in this early charter is the prominence of Brewer's family and tenants in the endowment of his abbey. It has been frequently noted that the role of the great magnates in the foundation and endowment of abbeys was as much in setting an example to their tenants and dependants, and confirming their grants, as it was in personally donating land and churches.<sup>60</sup> There were, therefore, two methods by which Brewer's patronage was exerted. Firstly, through direct endowment, either from lands in his possession or those bought specifically for the purpose. Many of the lands promised to the abbey by Brewer were not in his hands at the time, and a number of the charters specifically indicate that the land was being sold to him in order that he might endow the monastery. Secondly, the endowment of the monastery by his tenants, relatives, and associates. There is some degree of overlap between the two, as we have already seen, where the purchase of lands from family to endow the abbey resulted in the vendor being named as a co-grantor of the property. However, whether the sale was given on favourable terms in order to secure spiritual returns for the vendor is unclear in most cases.

By the time of the signing of the 'great' foundation charter the endowment of the abbey had grown.<sup>61</sup> This charter appears to have been a composite record of at least two separate ceremonies. One of these, presumably at the father-house of Welbeck, was witnessed by the abbots of Welbeck, Roche, and Rufford, and the prior of Worksop, while the other, at Torre, would have hosted most of the other names, including the bishop of Exeter and abbot of Buckfast.<sup>62</sup> The longer charter repeats all the grants contained in the

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<sup>60</sup> J. Wardrop, *Fountains Abbey and its Benefactors 1132-1300* (Kalamazoo, 1987), pp. 168-9; A. Fizzard, 'Lay Benefactors of Plympton Priory in the Twelfth Century', *DART*, 134 (2002), pp. 36-42.

<sup>61</sup> In both the Exchequer and Dublin cartularies, the long version of the foundation charter is marked as 'melior'; EC 1; DC fos. 32r-34v.

<sup>62</sup> WC, pp. 154-5. The date of the Welbeck leg of the witnessing ceremony must be after Richard abbot of Welbeck's election in 1197, but before 1200, when Prior Stephen of Worksop's successor is first mentioned;

initial version, but now adds the church of Bradworthy together with the chapel of Pancrasweek, the mill of Bradworthy and multure throughout the manor, all of which had probably been earmarked for the abbey, but not included in the initial grant as the sale was still pending. Furthermore, Brewer added all the land of North Shillingford, which he had purchased from William de Tracy for eighty marks, and a certain part of his land at Shiphay Collaton.<sup>63</sup>

The church and mill of Bradworthy have already been touched upon, as they were included in the separate granting-charter of Henry de Pomeroy. Following Brewer's purchase of the manor he issued his own charter granting the advowson of the church, with its attendant chapel of Pancrasweek, which was confirmed by Bishop Marshall on 27<sup>th</sup> October 1198, noting that the gift was Brewer's.<sup>64</sup> The Collaton grant was land that had come to Brewer as part of his wife's dowry, and he parted with a compact area of around 130 acres, forming the southern part of the manor, probably his demesne.<sup>65</sup> The grant of North Shillingford to the canons was noted in the confirmation charter of King John to have been that of Brewer together with William de Tracy and Drogo de Montgiron, although in the foundation charter Brewer states only that he purchased the vill from William de Tracy for eighty marks.<sup>66</sup> Neither William nor Drogo appear to have close

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D. Knowles, C. N. L. Brooke, V. C. M. London (eds.) *The Heads of Religious Houses in England and Wales: I, 940-1216* (Cambridge, 1972), pp. 191, 198.

<sup>63</sup> EC 1.

<sup>64</sup> EC 150, 153.

<sup>65</sup> Colvin states that a portion of the manor had been purchased by Brewer from Gervase son of Brettell Juas for 80 marks *ante* 1194; *WC*, p. 158, citing PRO Ancient Deed L 197 (now TNA DL 25/197). This sale cannot refer to Shiphay Collaton, however, as it includes the church, and Shiphay Collaton was in St. Marychurch parish. It is, instead, referring to Brewer's purchase of the church and some land of Colaton Raleigh, which was granted to Dunkeswell Abbey by Brewer in King John's reign. In 1242 the abbot of Dunkeswell was holding Colaton Abbot, in Colaton Raleigh, of Patrick de Chaworth, one of Brewer's heirs; *BoF*, ii, p. 762; *MDE*, p. 397; *VCH Devon*, pp. 567-8; *FA*, ii, p. 762. The boundaries of the land in Shiphay Collaton were correctly identified by Hilda Walker, although many of the topographical features she describes have been obscured or removed by modern development; Walker, 'Some Medieval Demesne Boundaries', pp. 202-9 and Fig. 2.

<sup>66</sup> EC 1-2, 4, 242-3. This William de Tracy was stated to be the son of Gervase de Courtenay, possibly by a daughter of William (II) de Tracy (d. 1176) the holder of Bradninch in 1166, and thus had taken his mother's name. The William de Tracy holding at North Shillingford and that who held the honour of Bradninch to

connections to Brewer, nor to have been tenants of his.<sup>67</sup> This may in part account for the very clear sale terms under which the land was obtained by Brewer for the abbey, although we must also admit that this may be one example where the relationship between the co-grantors and the founder must remain unclear, if perhaps implicit.

The next notice of additions to the abbey endowment comes in 1200, less than a year after the 'great' foundation charter must have been witnessed, when the royal confirmation of the abbey's possessions included three further grants to the canons.<sup>68</sup> All the items in the great foundation charter were included, along with the vill of 'Haggelegh' in Somerset from John de Torrington, one and a half virgates in Newenham in Berkshire from Walter son of Ivo, and all the land of Walter de Vaschi in Kingswear excepting that part which belonged to the Priory of Totnes and sixpence owed to the Hospital of Jerusalem.<sup>69</sup>

We may once again trace Brewer's hand in these grants. Walter de Vaschi was one of his tenants, the magnate having accounted for the whole of the vill of Kingswear in 1219.<sup>70</sup> John de Torrington was holder of the barony of Great Torrington, and a grant to Dunkeswell Abbey refers to William de Torrington, son of John, as William Brewer's

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1194 were different people; O. J. Reichel, 'The Early History of the Principal Manors in Exminster hundred', *DART*, 47 (1915), pp. 229-30; and see p. 58 below.

<sup>67</sup> A series of charters attest to a complex tenurial system, which apparently indicates that, while Drogo held the whole manor of Shillingford, William held a third of the fee from him as North Shillingford. Yet the fee was divided not only in this fashion, but between honours, as Drogo held the two-thirds at Shillingford St. George from the holders of the honour of Plympton, while the third in the north was held of Bradninch, the subject of a dispute between the heirs of William (III) de Tracy (d.1194) and Hugh de Courtenay from 1195 to 1199; see below p. 58. Thus, confusingly, Drogo states that he held of the heirs of William de Tracy for a third of a fee, whilst a different William de Tracy held the same third of Drogo; EC 242-3. Later, the successors of Drogo held two-thirds of the manor of Shillingford from the honour of Plympton while the canons held their third from Bradninch, which makes sense of the charters from the later holders of Bradninch, Henry FitzCount and Raymond of Cornwall, confirming Brewer, Drogo, and Tracy's gift to the canons; EC 242-3, 246-8, 251-2; *VCH Devon*, i, pp. 562-3; *BoF*, ii, p. 790; *FA*, i, p. 346.

<sup>68</sup> There are two versions of King John's confirmation in the cartularies, one of which is longer and apparently more concerned with the liberties and rights of the canons, yet omits some of the grants of land. They appear to have been written up at roughly the same time, and are largely concomitant with the confirmation dated 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1200 in the Charter Rolls; *Rot. Chart.* p. 70; EC 4-5; DC fos. 29r-31v.

<sup>69</sup> EC 211. As Totnes Priory had the advowson of the church it seems most likely that Torre's portion was the southern half of the vill; P. Russell & G. Yorke, 'Kingswear and Neighbourhood', *DART*, 85 (1953), pp. 56-65.

<sup>70</sup> *Pipe Roll 3 Henry III*, p. 23. Any connection between Walter and the Vesci family of Northumberland is obscure. His parents were William de Vaschi and Juliana, who were benefactors to Totnes Priory; EC 212.

nephew, indicating that John was Brewer's brother-in-law.<sup>71</sup> Seymour wrongly identified his grant of Haggelegh as a lost farm called 'Hacleys' around a mile south-west of Milverton, with a total area of only 52½ acres. However, given the land was providing a revenue of £4 4s 9d in 1535, it is certain that this manor was instead the much larger farm of Hagley Bridge, at around 400 acres. It was in Somerset, directly across the county border from the manor of Dunningstone, which the canons were later to acquire from a tenant of William Brewer the Younger.<sup>72</sup>

Walter son of Ivo's grant is almost inexplicable, given the distance of around 170 miles between the abbey and the land in Berkshire, although it may be ascribed to the close ties between Brewer and Godfrey de Lucy, Bishop of Winchester. Newenham itself is identifiable as part of the manor of Warfield, which was held by the bishop.<sup>73</sup> Godfrey and Brewer had taken part in the eyre of the south west from the autumn of 1198 to the summer of 1199.<sup>74</sup> It was during this period that the bishop witnessed the sale of North Shillingford, which was then granted to the canons.<sup>75</sup> He also witnessed the grant of Townstal church to the abbey at some point between 1200 and his death in 1204.<sup>76</sup> The timing of Walter's grant, in either 1199 or 1200, would thus suggest Godfrey de Lucy as a factor, especially as in October 1199 the bishop was arranging the transfer of some of his

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<sup>71</sup> Turner, *Men Raised*, p. 86; TNA DL 36/3 fo. 92 no. 221.

<sup>72</sup> *TA*, p. 151; *MDE*, p. 177; and Chapter 2, pp. 68-9. Hagley Bridge, called Hagley on the tithe map, was an outlier of Milverton parish, and the vicar of Milverton quitclaimed the right to tithe on the demesne of Haggelegh; EC 123. After the Dissolution, Haggelegh and Dunningstone were sold together to Roger Bluett, and the family records make it clear that the manor is Hagley Bridge; *L&P*, xv, p. 170; Somerset Record Office, DD\CCH/39; DD\BR\lm/1.

<sup>73</sup> *BoF*, i, p. 107. The Prioress of Kington, who acquired Newenham in 1228, sold it in turn to the Bishop of Bath and Wells in 1291, where it is identified as lying in Warfield; *VCH Wiltshire*, iii, p. 60; and Chapter 2, p. 69. Godfrey de Lucy and Brewer also had a familial tie, albeit a loose one, in Fulbert II of Dover (d. 1202), who was the bishop's great-nephew, and whose son, also named Fulbert, had married Brewer's daughter Isabel; Turner, *Men Raised*, p. 83; S. Painter, *The Reign of King John*, (Baltimore, 1950), pp. 74-6 details how the Lucy inheritance was shared between Brewer and Bishop Godfrey.

<sup>74</sup> D. Crook, *Records of the General Eyre*, Public Record Office Handbooks, 20 (1982), pp. 56, 61; Turner, *Men Raised*, p. 74.

<sup>75</sup> EC 243, 251.

<sup>76</sup> EC 191.

Cornish manors to Brewer.<sup>77</sup> The holding must have been difficult to administer, although it was not in the canons' possession for long.<sup>78</sup>

The last of the 'foundation charters' was composed at some time before 1207, in the form of a papal confirmation of their endowment. Innocent III's charter included all previous grants, along with one ferling of land in Ingsdon from Geoffrey del Estre, the church of Townstal from William FitzStephen, the church of Skidbrook in Lincolnshire from Richard de Parco, and the church of Hennock from Philip de Salmonville. Also included were four grants of churches which, for one reason or another, failed to materialise, that is, of Diptford, Moretonhampstead, Trentishoe, and Braunton.<sup>79</sup>

Two of these grants are clearly due to Brewer's influence. Geoffrey del Estre was a tenant of Brewer's at Langford Lestre, and the ferling he granted was called 'la Hethe', in Ingsdon manor, in Ilsington parish.<sup>80</sup> His grant must have been made before 1202, as Brewer took custody of his lands and heirs in that year, and Robert del Estre, Geoffrey's son, inherited in 1203.<sup>81</sup> The exact boundaries of this land are unclear, although it may well have been a part of the western portion of Ilsington parish known in the nineteenth century as 'Great Plantation'.<sup>82</sup> The church of Hennock had been received by Philip de Salmonville as part of the dowry of his wife Beatrice from her father William de Hennock, both of whom are named in the granting-charter. Beatrice gave her own confirmation, and in later years it was her child from her previous marriage to Girard de Clist who confirmed

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<sup>77</sup> EC 5; *Rot. Chart.* p. 28.

<sup>78</sup> Chapter 2, p. 69.

<sup>79</sup> DC fo. 17r.

<sup>80</sup> *BoF*, i, p. 97.

<sup>81</sup> *Pipe Roll 4 John*, p. 248; *Pipe Roll 5 John*, pp. 71, 74, 83.

<sup>82</sup> Seymour suggests that the 'heathfields' of Bovey Tracey, Ilsington, and Ingston were in this area; *TA*, pp. 236-7.

the grant.<sup>83</sup> Girard had been a tenant of William Brewer's in Hennock, which presumably was also held of Brewer by Philip and Beatrice.<sup>84</sup>

The other two grants are not so easily connected to Brewer. A William FitzStephen and his family had been lords of Townstal, Norton, and Hardness, comprising the northern part of Dartmouth, since at least 1166, holding of the Dorset honour of Marshwood.<sup>85</sup> The honour was the subject of a dispute at the time of the grant of Townstal to the canons, between Henry de Tilly and Geoffrey de Mandeville and his son William.<sup>86</sup> However, the advowson of the church may have been in the hands of the Berkeley family, as in the grant to the canons, from FitzStephen and his wife Isabella, the canons were specifically asked to pray for the grantors and also for Isabella's father William de Berchele. While his identity is not clear, the name was not common in Devon at the time and, as such, he may have been related to the holders of the Gloucester honour of Dursley, as William FitzStephen also had some landed interests in Gloucester in the late-twelfth century.<sup>87</sup> The advowson may thus have formed part of Isabella's dowry, although the family of FitzStephen had held the manor for at least one generation. FitzStephen does not appear to have had tenurial or professional connections with Brewer, and it may be that this was a grant by a local landholder acting on his own initiative. However, given the fluctuating nature of Brewer's holdings and influence at this point, it may be that the evidence of their association has simply not survived.

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<sup>83</sup> EC 44-7; Pole, *Collections*, pp. 264-5.

<sup>84</sup> In 1198 Girard de Clist held four-and-a-half fees, including Hennock, from William Brewer and Henry de Pomeroy; *DFOF*, i, p. 9; *BoF*, i, p. 396. Philip de Salmonville, or Surmaville, was of the family that held Newton Surmaville in Somerset; E. H. Bates Harbin, 'History of the Manor of Newton Surmaville', *Proceedings of the Somerset Archaeological Society* 56 (1910), ii, pp. 1-4.

<sup>85</sup> FitzStephen also held fees at Galmpton, Huish, and Radmore of the honour of Totnes; *Liber Niger Scaccarii; Nec non Wilhelmi Worcestrii Annales Rerum Anglicarum*, ed. T. Hearn (London, 1774), i, p. 84; Watkin, *Dartmouth*, p. 2; *BoF*, ii, p. 793. Watkin states that William FitzStephen was the son of Stephen de Mandeville, the 'great knight' of Devon mentioned by Henry of Huntingdon. Yet William himself states his father to be Stephen de Tunstall, and Stephen de Mandeville's son and heir was Roger; A. Fizzard, *Plympton Priory: A House of Augustinian Canons in South-Western England in the Late Middle Ages* (Leiden, 2007), pp. 91-2.

<sup>86</sup> Sanders, *Baronies*, p. 64.

<sup>87</sup> EC 191; Sanders, *Baronies*, p. 114; *Pipe Roll 8 Richard I*, p. 145; *Pipe Roll 10 Richard I*, pp. 2, 181.



Even more difficult to comprehend is the grant of the church in Skidbrook, Lincolnshire, by Richard de Parco. Richard also appears to have received the advowson of his church through the dowry of his wife, Beatrice, daughter of Roland Haket, as the grant was made for the souls of all three.<sup>88</sup> It is unclear as to why this church was granted to the canons of Torre, when it lies over 300 miles from the abbey. Skidbrook lay in the honour of the counts of Brittany, of which Conan had granted the manor to Roland Haket sometime before the former's death in 1171.<sup>89</sup> The English lands of the counts of Brittany had escheated to the king in 1203, following the death of Arthur.<sup>90</sup> As such, Brewer may have been in a position to influence the king in ensuring that his tenants granted the church advowson to his abbey. There may also be a link through Brewer's son-in-law Baldwin de Wake, lord of Bourne in Lincolnshire, with considerable holdings around Louth. Through his proximity he may have been able to influence the gift of Richard de Parco and thus ensure his place as a patron of his father-in-law's foundation.<sup>91</sup> Yet there must have been churches in a similar position closer to Torre, so this does not explain why one in Lincolnshire should be granted to an abbey in Devon. More likely is that Brewer was made aware of the wishes of one of the king's tenants to grant a church to a religious institution, and he was able to ensure that it was his foundation that benefited, regardless of the great distances involved.<sup>92</sup>

The churches of Diptford, Trentishoe, Moretonhampstead, and Braunton are all mentioned as in the possession of Torre in the papal confirmation, yet none ended up in the hands of the canons. This is the only time they are stated to be possessions of Torre and by the time of the first episcopal registers the advowsons, with the exception of Braunton,

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<sup>88</sup> EC 138-9.

<sup>89</sup> EC 138; *BoF*, i, pp. 173-4; J. Everard, *Brittany and the Angevins: Province and Empire, 1158-1203* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 48.

<sup>90</sup> Everard, *Brittany and the Angevins*, p. 175.

<sup>91</sup> *BoF*, i, pp. 177-87; Turner, *Men Raised*, p. 86.

<sup>92</sup> In the late-thirteenth century the canons administered the church and its lands through a procurator, the subprior of the Premonstratensian abbey of Barlings (Lincs), and this may have been common throughout the period; DC fo. 161v.

were in lay hands.<sup>93</sup> Earlier than this it is not possible to identify most of the holders of the advowsons for sure, although in the late-thirteenth century the manor and advowson were held together in three cases. In the 1200's, Diptford was held by Henry Fitz Count, the stepson of William Brewer, and had been held by Reginald de Dunstanville, his father, before him.<sup>94</sup> Trentishoe was a member of the barony of Barnstaple, which in the early thirteenth century was subject to a dispute between two rival claimants, Oliver de Tracy and William de Braose each holding a moiety.<sup>95</sup>

Geoffrey fitz Peter, the magnate, had held the valuable manor of Moretonhampstead from the honour of Bradninch since he had been granted it for the service of only half a knight's fee by Hugh de Courtenay in 1195. As with Barnstaple, the honour was the subject of a dispute. William (III) de Tracy, apparently one of the murderers of Becket, had held it until his death in c.1194, and it was granted to Hugh de Courtenay in 1195 by King Richard. In 1199, following the accession of John, Oliver de Tracy, the holder of half the honour of Barnstaple, and Henry de Tracy, son of William (III), both offered 1000 marks for Bradninch, while Hugh de Courtenay offered 2000 marks to keep it. Geoffrey fitz Peter must have been instrumental in ensuring the barony went to Henry, as in 1199 he was confirmed in his holding of Moretonhampstead, but now merely for the service of one sparrowhawk. In 1202 the honour was awarded to Henry Fitz Count, although fitz Peter and his heirs continued to hold the manor and the advowson of the church, both being held by Richard fitz John, his great-grandson, in 1278.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> *Reg. Bronescombe*, i, p. 255; ii, p. 699; iii, p. 1195. Braunton was held by the Dean and Chapter of Exeter.

<sup>94</sup> *BoF*, i, p. 97. Lysons and Reichel confuse Diptford in Stanborough hundred, which was held of the king at Domesday, with Dipford in Bampton hundred, which was held of the queen and was later a part of the barony of Torrington; *VCH Devon*, i, p. 566; Lysons & Lysons, *Magna Britannia*, vi, p. 163.

<sup>95</sup> The barony had been divided since c.1154, and in 1166 Tracy held 28 fees while Braose held 23½. It was reunited in 1213 on Braose's forfeiture; *VCH Devon*, i, pp. 557-8; Watkin, *Totnes*, ii, pp. 685-6; Sanders, *Baronies*, p. 104.

<sup>96</sup> *VCH Devon*, i, pp. 562-3; *Rot. Chart.*, pp. 61, 79; *Pipe Roll 6 Richard I*, p. 171; *Pipe Roll 1 John*, p. 198; *Pipe Roll 2 John*, p. 234; *Pipe Roll 4 John*, p. 250; Painter, *King John*, pp. 38-9; *Reg. Bronescombe*, i, p. 157. Sanders, *Baronies*, pp. 20-1 does not set out the full nature of the dispute.

It is possible, therefore, to understand how most of these churches ended up at least within the grasp of the canons. Henry Fitz Count was Brewer's step-son and Geoffrey fitz Peter was a close colleague. In the disputed Barnstaple honour, the canons may well have attempted to persuade one of the claimants to grant a church that was not firmly in their possession. Braunton church was in the hands of the King around the time the document was drawn up, although by 1208 it had been granted to William Brewer, nephew of Torre's founder and the future Bishop of Exeter.<sup>97</sup> Diptford was vacant and in the King's hands in 1226, when Bartholomew de Puy, or Podio, twice applied for presentation with letters from the Bishop of Exeter. His appeal appears to have been stalled, however, by the abbot of Torre's insistence on his rights in the church, as he appeared before the justices at Exeter later in the year with his plea.<sup>98</sup> The abbot was ultimately unsuccessful, and herein may lie the clue to inclusion of these charters in the papal confirmation. It may well be that they were mooted as potential gifts, or seen by the canons as achievable goals. The church of Braunton, in the hands of the king, must have effectively been in the gift of Brewer, especially as his nephew was favoured with the prize. The others may have been promised or suggested, and, even if the only further connection with the canons was the appearance in their papal confirmation, this was enough to encourage future abbots to assert their (non-existent) rights. As we shall note in the next chapter, however, even when advowsons had been granted by charter, there was no method of ensuring possession in law. The crucial factor in the ownership of ecclesiastical advowsons was the ability to present at vacancies, and it is clear from the number of disputes and *darrein presentments* at this time that this was by no means simple.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> J. Stéphan, 'St. Brannoc's Chapel and Well', *Buckfast Abbey Chronicle*, 28 (1958), pp. 104-5.

<sup>98</sup> *CPR 1225-32*, pp. 38, 65, 79.

<sup>99</sup> K. L. Shirley, *The Secular Jurisdiction of Monasteries in Anglo-Norman and Angevin England* (Woodbridge, 2004), pp. 135-40; Chapter 2, pp. 69, 73-4.

The final grant that might be assigned to this initial ‘foundation’ period is that of Shebbear church. According to the granting-charter, the church was given to the canons by King John. Yet Brewer’s name is high on the list of witnesses, and it is clearly due to the magnate’s influence in court that this gift was bestowed upon his foundation.<sup>100</sup> Indeed, according to the feudal inquisitions of 1251, the canons held the church of Shebbear from King John thanks to the efforts of William Brewer.<sup>101</sup> Here, in high relief, we may see the value of having such a high-profile magnate as founder. Even though he could not be compared to Geoffrey fitz Peter or Ranulf of Chester in terms of land-holdings, his longevity in terms of influence enabled him to endow Torre with far more than his own holdings.<sup>102</sup>

Using the Dissolution land valuations, imperfect as they may be, by 1208, Torre’s endowment was enough to ensure the abbey was considered amongst the wealthiest of the order in England. The lands and churches of the canons to that date were providing an income of around £250 in 1535. Although, of course, we may only draw the vaguest conclusions from these figures, had the endowment of Torre remained static after the foundation the abbey would nonetheless have had a potential income comparable to that of its father-house of Welbeck at the Dissolution. While a poor foundation endowment could be overcome, and the fortunes of some notable Augustinian houses have been shown to be in stark contrast to their modest initial endowments, this was not the case at Torre, and the financial pre-eminence of the abbey amongst the English Premonstratensians was clearly guaranteed from the very beginning.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> EC 170; *Rot. Chart.* p. 168.

<sup>101</sup> *BoF*, ii, p. 1264.

<sup>102</sup> Turner, *Men Raised*, p. 80.

<sup>103</sup> D. M. Robinson, *The Geography of Augustinian Settlement in Medieval England and Wales*, BAR British Series 80 (Oxford, 1980), i, pp. 279-80.

**Table 1: Summary of lands granted to Torre by William Brewer, and how obtained by him**

| Date | Land               | How obtained   | Extent                    |
|------|--------------------|--|---------------------------|
| 1196 | Torre              | Dowry(?)   | Church and abbey site     |
| 1196 | Wolborough         | Purchased from brother-in-law                          | Church and manor          |
| 1196 | Greendale          | Purchased from uncle/brother in-law                    | Two virgates              |
| 1196 | Ugborough          | Dowry(?)   | Ferling                   |
| 1196 | Bradworthy         | Purchased from Henry de Pomeroy                        | Church, mill, and ferling |
| 1199 | North Shillingford | Purchased from William de Tracy and Drogo de Montgiron | Manor                     |
| 1199 | Collaton           | Dowry  | c. 130 acres              |

**Table 2: Summary of lands granted by associates of Brewer, and relationships**

| Date | Land      | Grantor               | Relationship to Brewer | Extent       |
|------|-----------|-----------------------|------------------------|--------------|
| 1200 | Haggelegh | John de Torrington    | Brother-in-law         | Manor        |
| 1200 | Newenham  | Walter son of Ivo     | Godfrey de Lucy?       | Two virgates |
| 1200 | Kingswear | Walter de Vasci       | Tenant                 | Half manor   |
| 1207 | Ingsdon   | Geoffrey del Estre    | Tenant                 | Ferling      |
| 1207 | Townstal  | William FitzStephen   | Unknown                | Church       |
| 1207 | Hennock   | Philip de Salmonville | Tenant                 | Church       |
| 1207 | Skidbrook | Richard de Parco      | Unknown                | Church       |
| 1207 | Shebbear  | King                  | Court                  | Church       |

### Torre and Dunkeswell

To conclude this study of the foundation endowment of Torre, we may attempt a comparison with Brewer's other monastic foundation in Devon: the Cistercian abbey at Dunkeswell. This is especially interesting given the short period of time separating the foundation of the two abbeys. Dunkeswell was founded in 1202, and it would be surprising if the prospect of a Cistercian monastery had not been in Brewer's mind whilst he was completing the endowment of the Premonstratensian. Certainly by the time he was arranging the final transaction of the manors of Shillingford or Greendale in 1199 he must have been giving some thought to the abbey he was to found nearby in just three years time. Indeed, the manor of Dunkeswell itself was purchased by Brewer from Henry de Pomeroy in 1199, although as part of a general acquisition of the northern half of the

honour of Berry.<sup>104</sup> In the map below [Fig. 3], all the grants included in the ‘foundation’ periods of each house are included. This is easier for Torre than Dunkeswell, which does not have a surviving cartulary, although foundation charters for the latter do survive.<sup>105</sup> Given the close chronological and geographical setting of the two foundations, and their shared founder, we might use the results of such an analysis to discern the differences between the foundation endowment of a Cistercian and a Premonstratensian house in the early thirteenth century.

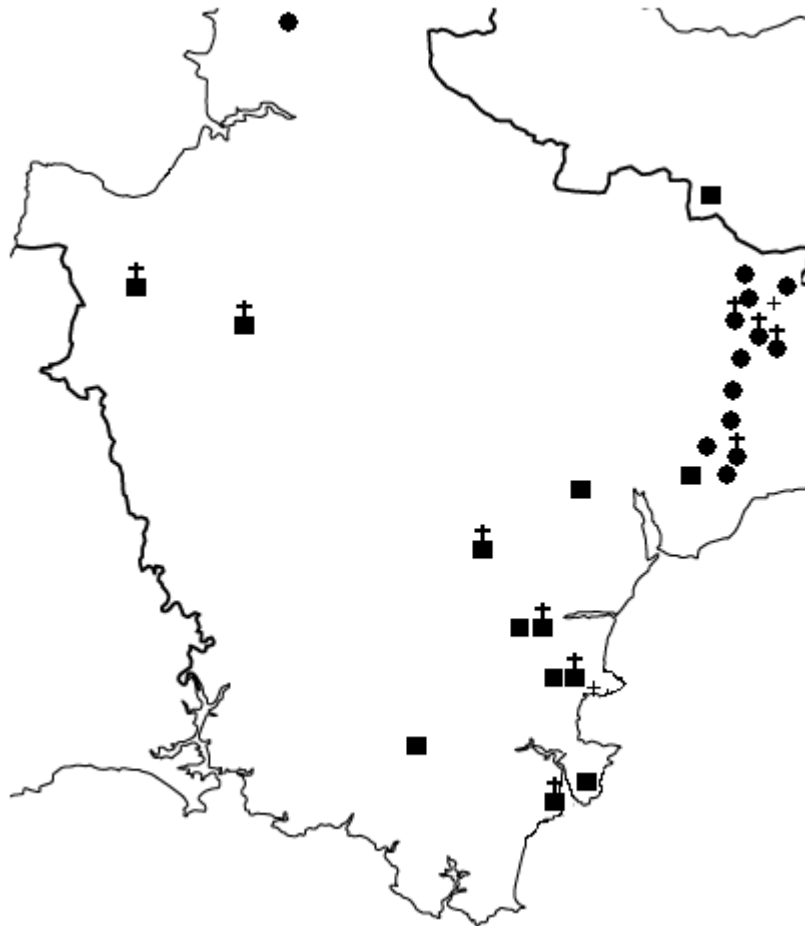
On the whole, the early patrons of Dunkeswell, as at Torre, were tenants of Brewer, although any further associations are generally hindered by the lack of original charters. A comparison of the spread of abbey lands, however, reveals a striking difference. The majority of the Cistercian house’s holdings were within a fifteen-mile band running longitudinally down East Devon, including all four of the abbey’s appropriated churches. The only major property outside this band is the North Devon manor of Lincombe, granted by Brewer. Lands granted to the monks by other patrons were also focused heavily in the immediate neighbourhood of the abbey, even attracting the gift of Bolham manor from their mother abbey of Forde. Thus the traditional Cistercian picture of a compact group of holdings around the abbey holds good at Dunkeswell, although the 1535 valuation suggests that the lands themselves were reasonably lucrative.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> *DFOF*, i, p. 20.

<sup>105</sup> *MDE*, pp. 394-6; J. A. Sparks, *In the Shadow of the Blackdowns: Life at the Cistercian Abbey of Dunkeswell and on its Manors and Estates, 1201-1539* (Bradford-on-Avon, 1978), pp. 22-9; TNA DL 36/3/fo. 92 no. 221.

<sup>106</sup> *MDE*, pp. 397-400. Dunkeswell was stated to have an income of £294 18s 6d, a sizeable part of which came from its foundation endowment.



**Figure 3: Early endowment of William Brewer's foundations of Torre and Dunkeswell**  
**Key: Square – Torre possession (Skidbrook, Lincs, and Newenham, Berks, not pictured);**  
**Circle – Dunkeswell possession**

The spread of lands contrasts starkly with the picture at Torre, where, of Brewer's personal foundation grants, only Torre itself, Collaton, and Wolborough are within fifteen miles of the abbey. The rest are spread over East and North Devon, with Ugborough to the south. Most interesting, perhaps, are the two manors of Torre that could be considered to lie in Dunkeswell's sphere of interest, namely Greendale and Haggelegh. In the case of the former, it was an early grant, and thus may have been made while the foundation of Dunkeswell was still getting off the ground. As regards Haggelegh, however, which was made later, we can only surmise that either it was deemed unsuitable for the monks, that they did not want it, or that John de Torrington specified a preference for the canons. Either way, his son, William, granted the manor of Broadhembury to Brewer in order that he could endow his abbey at Dunkeswell.

A further clear difference between the two foundations is the size of their spiritual endowments. Brewer granted two churches to Dunkeswell, both within a mile of the abbey, and both together with their manors, which were largely coterminous with the parishes. Torre was similarly granted the nearby churches of Torre and Wolborough, the latter attached to the manor, but also the distant churches of Bradworthy and Shebbear, and possibly influenced that of Skidbrook. It may be that the Premonstratensians, as canons, were considered more appropriate recipients of spiritual grants than the more cloistered monks, although such simple distinctions are clearly problematic.<sup>107</sup> Furthermore, concerning the geographical diversity of the two abbeys' lands, case studies at other Premonstratensian houses show that this is a case of Torre's abnormality rather than a difference between the orders. The lands of Coverham, a Yorkshire house founded only a few years after Torre, have been shown to lie in a 20 mile square 'polygon', or sphere of influence, separate and distinct from those of nearby monasteries.<sup>108</sup> The lands of Durford Abbey were also arranged around the site of the house in a fashion similar to that at Dunkeswell.<sup>109</sup>

These studies, together with Colvin's outlines of the foundation complements of the Premonstratensian houses, indicate that Torre's initial endowment differed from the majority of the other houses of the order in England in two key respects. Firstly, the compact grange lands sited close to the abbey, so characteristic of the reformed orders, were almost entirely absent at Torre, although Collaton may have performed this function. In their place, however, were whole manors with villas and tenants, and even a burgeoning town, spread over a much wider area. Certainly Colvin, in his thorough comparison of the

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<sup>107</sup> The spiritual income of Torre in 1535 formed around 35% of the total income of the abbey, although this figure is considerably lessened by the low valuations given to the North Devon churches and Townstal. Dunkeswell's spiritual income was only £19 from a total of £294; *MDE*, pp. 176-8, 398-400.

<sup>108</sup> G. Halsall, 'Coverham Abbey: Its Context in the Landscape of Late Medieval North Yorkshire', in R. Gilchrist & H. Mytum (eds.), *The Archaeology of Rural Monasteries*, BAR British Series 203 (Oxford, 1989), pp. 113-39.

<sup>109</sup> *The Durford Cartulary*, ed. J. Stevenson, Sussex Record Society, 90 (2006).



early endowments of English Premonstratensian houses, felt that Torre's lands marked it out from the other abbeys:

The abbot of Torre was...a feudal lord of some importance in south-east Devon, and with his numerous manors and his urban tenants he had more in common with the head of an ancient Benedictine house than with the penurious abbots of his own order, whose original endowments had in most cases been consistent with the Cistercian ideal of a self-supporting community farming large areas of marsh and meadow by means of granges and lay-brethren.<sup>110</sup>

The question must be asked, however, as to why Torre's foundation endowment was of this nature, unlike most of the other houses of its order. In this regard, the extent to which the endowment of Torre Abbey was centred around the patronage of Brewer cannot be understated. He was a man famously adept in the practice of land acquisition, at currying favour in court of the King, and of using his considerable influence to further his own ends. For a period of three years much of his energy appears to have been devoted to the foundation of his abbey on the south-east coast of Devon, although he continued to influence grants even after the foundation of his Cistercian house. The donors to the abbey in this 'foundation' period came from varied social and geographical backgrounds, yet they almost all, where it can be shown, shared one thing in common: their personal, familial, or tenurial connection to the founder. Brewer's influence on the endowment was comparable to that which the Redvers Earls of Devon were able to exert on the endowment of Plympton Priory in the twelfth century.<sup>111</sup> Yet, unlike the Earls, Brewer did not have a settled barony on which to exert his patronage. His lands spread far and wide throughout Devon, but most were not held in-chief, and he was a prodigious purchaser and, occasionally, vendor of lands. His ability to exploit the patronage of the king, and his relationships with powerful figures both at a national and local level, made his 'barony' a

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<sup>110</sup> WC, p. 162.

<sup>111</sup> Fizzard, 'Lay Benefactors', pp. 36-42; Fizzard, *Plympton Priory*, pp. 57-97.

fluid element in the tenurial framework of Devon. The novelty of his honour is underlined by the lack of a *caput* until after 1200.<sup>112</sup>

As Turner has so rightly argued, he was one of that class of self-made men of the late-twelfth century. Yet he is marked out from them by the generosity which he displayed in his endowment of new monastic foundations, in a period traditionally seen as one in which large-scale endowment of monasteries was a thing of the past.<sup>113</sup> It is perhaps even more notable that, given the relatively late date of the foundation, the lands were mostly of some ancient cultivation, including whole manors and more populous areas. The Premonstratensians, following the Cistercians, were often favoured because they were supposedly ‘cheap’ to found, and, accordingly, received a large amount of wasteland or land of poor quality which had to be transformed by their own labours. For the canons of Torre, the lands they found themselves endowed with were of generally good quality, lucrative, and ready-stocked with tenants and labourers.

These factors alone may not account entirely for Torre’s unusual endowment. Ranulf de Glanville was of a comparable stature to Brewer, in terms of influence and wealth. His desire to make his Premonstratensian foundation at Leiston, Norfolk, ‘the greatest of all the houses of [the] order in England’, as noted by the first abbot, manifested itself in a foundation complement of the abbey’s lucrative home manor, with all its appurtenances, and three churches, two of which were also in Leiston manor.<sup>114</sup> Thus, while the possession of feudal lordship over a large manor marked out the canons of Leiston from their brethren elsewhere, their holdings nonetheless conformed to the traditional localised Premonstratensian pattern. At Torre the home manor, also lucrative, was not granted to the canons by Brewer, and nor was the whole manor of Collaton, only

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<sup>112</sup> *VCH Devon*, i, pp. 567-8; Turner, *Men Raised*, pp. 80-5.

<sup>113</sup> J. C. Ward, ‘Patterns in Monastic Endowment: The Foundations of the Clare Family, 1066-1314’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 32 (1981), p. 442.

<sup>114</sup> *WC*, pp. 118-25, 346.

the demesne. Both of these had been part of his wife's dowry, and may have been in his hands for a number of years. Whether through a personal or financial decision, Brewer preferred to grant the abbey lands that he had bought specially for the purpose, or, where possible, arrange for his relatives and tenants to add their share. Through this policy, as well as his generosity, the founder of Torre ensured that his abbey was unlike most of the others in the order in England, and the valuations of 1535 reveal the result of this initial fortune as the abbey's pre-eminence, in terms of income, amongst those houses.

Thus right from the foundation Torre's wealth and status, relative to the houses of its own order at least, were assured. In terms of its integration with society, as opposed to the intended seclusion of the monastic cloister, this had the potential for serious repercussions. We will note throughout this thesis the various ways in which the canons interacted with the laity in the secular world, and how lay society permeated the cloister. It is worth bearing in mind that their lands, being widely spread and generally lucrative, but also including whole manors with burgeoning towns in the locality of the abbey, made social interaction unavoidable, as compared with the more secluded self-contained granges around the houses of many other abbeys of the order.

## CHAPTER 2

### Patronage and locality in the mid-thirteenth century

In the previous chapter the foundation endowment of Torre was examined in the light of the professional and familial relationships of the founder, William Brewer. Following the grant of Shebbear church to the canons in 1207, he effectively ceased to add to the abbey's possessions either directly or through his patronage of others. Between 1207 and his retirement to Dunkeswell Abbey in 1224, therefore, we find very few new grants to the abbey.<sup>1</sup> This may be allied to a natural curtailment of the initial flurry of grants made to most new monastic foundations. Furthermore, following the death of his son in 1232/3, the canons were left without an interested or active tutelary patron for nearly a century.<sup>2</sup> In the mid-thirteenth century, however, they were able to add considerably to their already generous endowment. This chapter focuses on those who patronised the abbey through grants of land and appurtenances after the failure of the founder's line, and their motives and possible connections to the abbey. While the foundation endowment was primarily granted by those with a personal or tenorial connection to the founder, in this later period we must look for other focal points around which to construct a 'network of patronage'.

Firstly, however, we should note the grants attributable to the influence of the founder's son, William Brewer the Younger, between his inheritance in 1224 and his death in 1232/3. Almost immediately prior to his retirement, the elder Brewer made one last grant to the abbey, of the church of Buckland Brewer. Given the timing, this was probably more due to the influence of Brewer's son, as he appears first in the witness list and

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<sup>1</sup> Watkin, 'A Great Devonian', pp. 167-8; *Rot. Litt. Claus.*, p. 633.

<sup>2</sup> *BoF*, i, p. 395.

subsequently granted the manor of Buckland Brewer to the monks of Dunkeswell.<sup>3</sup> It may, however, have been a consolation to the canons for their founder choosing the Cistercian house as his resting place. In a situation similar to that which the canons had found on being granted the church of Bradworthy, Buckland Brewer had previously been granted to the Benedictine Nunnery of Kington by the Brito holders of the honour of Odcombe (Somerset), former lords of the manor, during the episcopacy of John the Chanter (1186-91).<sup>4</sup> In 1227, as a solution advantageous to both parties, Maria, the prioress, conceded the church to Torre in exchange for the one and a half virgates at Newenham in Berkshire that the abbey had been granted by Walter son of Ives.<sup>5</sup>

Unusually for a Premonstratensian foundation, the elder Brewer had given the canons little in the way of lands close to the precinct, beyond the strip of fields to the north of the abbey and half of his nearby manor of Collaton. His son went some way to rectifying this by granting the remainder of Collaton, although as it was called the 'vill' this was apparently mainly tenanted, along with a meadow by the abbey's home farm and the small demesne manor of Ilsham around two miles to the east of the abbey.<sup>6</sup> He also took steps to ensure that most vital of monastic concerns: water supply. The canons were permitted to conduct water from St. Petrock's spring, by his courthouse, down to the abbey for 'the celebration of divine service in the abbey church, and the washing of the canons, and any other necessities in the canons' court'.<sup>7</sup>

Brewer, like his father, was able to induce a number of grants from tenants and associates. Henry de Ferendone was a tenant of Brewer's in the manor of Dunningstone, in Clayhanger parish, across the Devon border from the canons' manor of Haggelegh

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<sup>3</sup> EC 181; TNA DL 36/3/fo. 92 no. 221.

<sup>4</sup> EC 185; Sanders, *Baronies*, pp. 132-3. Brewer had acquired most of the honour of Odcombe in 1200, although may have had prior rights in it; Chapter 1, p. 38.

<sup>5</sup> EC 5, 187; WC, p. 158; Chapter 1, pp. 53-5.

<sup>6</sup> EC 8.

<sup>7</sup> EC 11.

(Somerset). Sometime after 1224, Brewer had purchased the manor for forty marks from his uncle William de Bruera. He enfeoffed Henry, who cannot have held it for any great length of time, as before 1232 he granted the manor to the canons in order that a canon would be assigned to say Mass for him, and included Brewer amongst the beneficiaries of salvation arising from the grant.<sup>8</sup> Brewer gave his confirmation and added the service of the small adjacent manor of Petton.<sup>9</sup> There may have been some problems arising from the conditions of sale from Bruera to Brewer, as a number of final concords were copied into the cartulary whereby, in 1227, Bruera renounced his claim to the manor, and in 1238 Henry's heir Nicholas issued a similar quitclaim.<sup>10</sup>

A number of other grants can be attributed to Brewer's influence during this time, although they were not on the same scale as those his father was able to induce. The grant of a ferling in Edginswell by Seward and his daughters, confirmed by Richard Foliot, may be datable to this period.<sup>11</sup> The manor was adjacent to Collaton on the north, so would have been an extension of those lands. On a similar scale, it may have been in this period that William de Buckland gave the canons the first of their lands in Buckland-in-the-Moor, with the grant of a ferling at Scobitorr; in 1242 this was held of the honour of Plympton through numerous mesne lords, but it may well have been a Brewer fee.<sup>12</sup>

We might also note in this period the role of the bishops of Exeter in facilitating the appropriation of the canons' churches as being a sort of patronage. Unlike the majority of their order, and unusually amongst most monasteries of similar stature, Torre had appropriated 'in proprios usos' all their churches by 1227. Only Buckland Brewer, the last

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<sup>8</sup> EC 114; DRO D1508M/Moger/186. Henry was named from Farrington, immediately adjacent, on the north, to the abbey's manor of Greendale, where he was a tenant of William de Bruera. The Farrington family was later a prominent one in the county; Westcote, *A View of Devonshire*, p. 464.

<sup>9</sup> EC 115-16; DRO 1508M/Moger/416.

<sup>10</sup> EC 117-18; *DFOF*, i, p. 146.

<sup>11</sup> EC 271-3, 275. Seymour assumed this 'Welle' was Coffinswell, yet Richard Foliot's confirmation makes clear that it was Edginswell, as the manor was held of the honour of Plympton; *TA*, pp. 257-60; *BoF*, ii, p. 768.

<sup>12</sup> EC 76, 78; *BoF*, ii, p. 768.

church to be appropriated, had any kind of stipulation on how the canons were to use the income, with a clause that the benefice was to be put to special use sustaining the poor and healing the sick who came to the abbey.<sup>13</sup> A familial connection to the founder may have played a role here, inasmuch as Bishop Brewer (1223-44) was his nephew, and Dunkeswell, the other Brewer foundation in Devon, was also able to appropriate its four churches at this time.<sup>14</sup>

Following the death of the younger Brewer in 1232/3, and his burial before the high altar at Torre, the patronage of the abbey passed, along with the manor of Torre, to the Mohun family, through the first marriage of the younger William's sister Alicia.<sup>15</sup> The Mohun family already held the tutelary patronage of the Benedictine houses at Dunster and Bruton from their own foundation, and Reginald founded a house of Cistercian monks at Newenham in Devon in 1246, so it is perhaps unsurprising that he paid little attention to Torre. For the period up to 1320, members of the family appear in only four of the Torre Abbey charters, twice to confirm the grants of the Brewers, once as witnesses, and once in an agreement over the provision of services at their chapel in Torre manor house.<sup>16</sup> While it is possible to note the confirmation of the Brewers' patronage made by Reginald de Mohun in 1252 as perhaps representing 'a reaffirmation of the current relationship between patron and monastery', especially given the statement that the confirmation was given for '[his] soul and those of [his] ancestors and successors', it nonetheless appears that there was minimal contact between the abbey and the Mohun family, and certainly no visible acts of patronage.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> DC fo. 130v; EC 14, 22, 48, 141, 153, 171, 183, 197.

<sup>14</sup> Sparks, *Shadow of the Blackdowns*, p. 89.

<sup>15</sup> DC fo. 159r; TNA DL 25/213. For the descent of the tutelary patronage of Torre, see Chapter 3, pp. 107-9.

<sup>16</sup> EC 12, 13, 119, 278

<sup>17</sup> B. J. Thompson, 'The Church and the Aristocracy: Lay and Ecclesiastical Landowning Society in Fourteenth Century Norfolk' (PhD Thesis, University of Cambridge, 1989), p. 117.

### Individual Benefactors

Following the failure of the direct Brewer line, and the apparent lack of interest of the subsequent Mohun lords of Torre, the canons were left facing a void of major patrons. While they were apparently unable to find a family to offer sustained patronage, they were able to receive substantial grants of land from a number of individual donors. It may be that, in the relative patronal vacuum caused by the death of their founder's son, potential patrons were more prepared to come forward, as their grant was more likely to be noticed by the canons. As a result, they might also expect that their grants would engender greater spiritual returns. Between 1232 and around 1270 the canons of Torre were able to attract grants of land and rights from a number of patrons of varying means, status, and circumstances, before such methods of patronage largely ceased in the latter half of the century.

The most important of these mid-century benefactors, in terms of status, was surely Robert de Courtenay, holder of the barony of Okehampton and, after the Redvers Earls of Devon, the second magnate in the county. In 1234 he granted the canons his prebend of Ashclyst, attached to the chapel of St. Mary in Exeter Castle.<sup>18</sup> The castle of Exeter had become attached to the honour of Okehampton shortly after the Conquest, and had thus fallen into the hands of the Courtenays when they came into the barony in 1173.<sup>19</sup> At some point in the early-twelfth century, however, the lord of Okehampton, either Baldwin the Sheriff or his daughter Adeliz, had founded and endowed a chapel in the castle, providing it with four prebends; livings drawing their income from churches and other estates at Ashclyst, Carswell, Cutton, and Hayes.<sup>20</sup> Sometime before 1142, the chapel and prebends were granted to Plympton Priory by Adeliz, along with the churches of Alphington and

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<sup>18</sup> EC 124.

<sup>19</sup> Sanders, *Baronies*, pp. 69-70; *VCH Devon*, pp. 554-6.

<sup>20</sup> H. G. Godsall, *The Castle of Exeter* (Exeter, 1956), pp. 8-11



Kenn.<sup>21</sup> Yet by 1186x1188, at least, Plympton was no longer in possession of the chapel or churches, which had apparently reverted to Okehampton, now in the hands of the Courtenays. In 1219x1227 the canons of Plympton asserted their rights against Robert de Courtenay, and in exchange for their quitclaim he gave them fifty-six acres and a water-conduit at Alphington.<sup>22</sup>

Robert subsequently arranged for the detachment of the prebend of Ashclyst to Torre. While the grant was complicated by the ecclesiastical nature of the prebend, the actual land involved was a smallish manor to the east of Exeter. The grant did not arise, as Colvin states, from a dispute over the advowson of Chawleigh church.<sup>23</sup> Instead Robert de Courtenay wished to grant Ashclyst to the canons but retain the advowson of the church, which was apparently also a part of the prebend, for himself.<sup>24</sup> According to the granting-charter, the canons were supposed to hold the prebend after the death of the incumbent Thomas de Wimundesham. Yet on his resignation in 1260 William de Stanfere was appointed on the presentation of John de Courtenay, son of Robert.<sup>25</sup> Shortly after, John compensated for the canons' inability to gain control of their prebend by granting the whole of his land of Duelton (probably Dolton, in north Devon) until such time that the prebend became free.<sup>26</sup> In 1276, Hugh de Courtenay, John's heir, confirmed the grant of the prebend to the canons.<sup>27</sup>

However, in 1284 Ashclyst was held by William de Werplisdone, a canon of Exeter Cathedral. It seems likely that he had been in possession of the prebend since before the death of John de Courtenay, and the canons of Torre agreed to rent it from him

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<sup>21</sup> Fizzard, *Plympton Priory*, p. 62; Bearman, *Charters of the Redvers Family*, pp. 182-3.

<sup>22</sup> Fizzard, *Plympton Priory*, pp. 63, 252-4.

<sup>23</sup> *WC*, pp. 160-1.

<sup>24</sup> The grant is of an earlier date than the dispute: Grant EC 124, before 31<sup>st</sup> March 1237; Dispute EC 126, 19<sup>th</sup> April 1238. Chawleigh church is said to be a 'porcio' of the prebend.

<sup>25</sup> *Reg. Brouncombe*, i, p. 98.

<sup>26</sup> *IPM*, ii, p. 53.

<sup>27</sup> EC 128.

for three years at 20 marks.<sup>28</sup> Yet William died within a few months of the agreement, and this time the canons were able to enter into their possession of the prebend, and obtained confirmations of their rights in the prebend from bishop, pope, king, and the dean and chapter of Exeter.<sup>29</sup>

The problems the canons faced in asserting their rights to the prebend mirror those noted with the churches of Bradworthy and Buckland Brewer, which were granted to the canons despite already being held by another monastery.<sup>30</sup> The prebends of the castle had already been granted to and recouped from Plympton Priory in the twelfth century. Ashclyst was then granted to the canons, but for reasons unknown John de Courtenay was able to present a candidate at the next vacancy. Although the prebend was, essentially, a parcel of land, as it was technically a spiritual holding there were few options available to the canons once the Courtenay candidate had been presented. They were, perhaps, relatively fortunate, inasmuch as they were compensated with a manor, and they were able to rent the land from the holder, thus, presumably, easing their passage to acquisition. As the castle chapel involved no cure of souls, the canons would not have been presenting a candidate, but instead alienating the land. This may have worked in favour of John de Courtenay's attempts to present to the prebend, especially given the sixteen years which had passed since his father's grant, as in practical terms it was much simpler for a layman to continue presenting as his forebears had done than it was for a monastery to appropriate.

Despite the grant of Ashclyst being almost a decade after the death of the elder Brewer, it can probably still be assigned to his influence. Brewer had held the castle together with Robert de Courtenay in the last years of King John.<sup>31</sup> After 1232, however, the castle was granted by Henry III to Peter des Rievaulx, after which it was held by the

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<sup>28</sup> EC 129.

<sup>29</sup> EC 130-134. The chronology of events is confused in Seymour's edition of the EC, where his translation of charter 130 is inaccurately dated 29th February 1284. This should be 28th February 1285.

<sup>30</sup> See p. 69 above and Chapter 1, p. 49.

<sup>31</sup> Godsall, *Castle of Exeter*, p. 10.

sheriff of Devon.<sup>32</sup> Having lost control of the castle itself, Robert may have thus been minded to donate one of the prebends to the abbey founded by his colleague. Robert had previously confirmed the canons in their possession of Wolborough, and quitclaimed the knight's service they owed him for the land.<sup>33</sup> Following his death, however, the Courtenay family appear to have had very little interest in the abbey before the mid-fourteenth century.

Other major Devonian families took lesser roles in donations to the abbey, although most involved rights in markets and fairs. While the elder Brewer was still alive, but following the foundation period, Henry (III) de Pomeroy, son of the Henry who sold Bradworthy to Brewer at the foundation of Torre, granted the canons four pounds of wax annually from his rent at Berry Pomeroy.<sup>34</sup> In the late-1240's, Johanna, the widow of Reginald de Valletorta (d. 1245), holder of the Cornish honour of Trematon but with extensive holdings in Devon, quitclaimed to the canons all tolls on the merchandise they bought and sold at St. Kalixtus' Fair in Colyton.<sup>35</sup> Also around that time, William de Cantelupe, lord of the honour of Totnes, granted the canons market rights and freedom from toll in Totnes and Kingswear. We might possibly link this to some lingering attachment to Brewer and his circle, as the lords of Totnes had a familial connection to the founder of Torre, albeit a weak one. Reginald de Braose, who enforced his claim to half the honour of Totnes in the early-thirteenth century, married Brewer's daughter Graecia. Their son William inherited in 1228 and, after his execution in 1230, the barony passed to

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<sup>32</sup> Godsall, *Castle of Exeter*, pp. 13-19

<sup>33</sup> EC 19.

<sup>34</sup> EC 152; DC fos. 122r. In the charter Henry states that he was the son of Alice Vernon, who was wife of Henry (II) de Pomeroy. This identifies him as Henry (III), who inherited in 1207 and died in 1222; Sanders, *Baronies*, pp. 106-7; Powley, *House of de la Pomerai*, pp. 28-32.

<sup>35</sup> EC 103; Sanders, *Baronies*, pp. 90-1. The fair had been granted to her father, Thomas Basset, in 1207, and was one of the most important fairs in East Devon, lasting up to 15 days; Kowaleski, *Local Markets*, p. 362; *Rot. Chart.*, p. 169; *Gazetteer of Markets and Fairs in England and Wales to 1516*, ed. S. Letters, List and Index Society, SS 32-33 (2003), i, p. 100.

Eva, William's daughter, who married William de Cantelupe in around 1243.<sup>36</sup> Given the numerous progeny of Brewer's daughters, however, we should probably not regard this connection as anything particularly remarkable.

However, the most important baronial figure in terms of his patronage of the abbey was Peter FitzMatthew. He held the honour of Erlestoke, in Wiltshire, through his mother, a descendant of Roger de Mandeville, which he inherited in 1245 on the death of his brother Herbert. He also held several fees in Devon of the honour of Plympton, and the family styled themselves lords of Stokenham after their manor in the county.<sup>37</sup> Peter's most important grant to the canons was his manor of Blackawton, a large manor to the south and west of Dartmouth, with all its appurtenances and multure at the fulling mill from the men of Stokenham.<sup>38</sup> In return the canons were to pay ten marks annually to his brother Roger and his heirs, although this cannot have amounted to much as Roger was dead, and the sum was quitclaimed, by 1259.<sup>39</sup> In 1535 this manor was providing an income for the canons of £54 14s 8d, around one-seventh of the total landed income of the house and one-fifth of all the temporal income.<sup>40</sup> Peter probably also released them from making suit at his hundred court of Coleridge.<sup>41</sup> There may also be a connection between Peter and the grant of a ferling to the canons in Aylesbeare, near Woodbury, by Alexander, son of Angerus de Huntoba. While the land itself is not specified, although Seymour

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<sup>36</sup> Sanders, *Baronies*, p. 90; Watkin, *Tomes*, ii, pp. 688-95, 713-21. Sanders gives the date of Eva and William's marriage as 1235x1248, yet Watkin correctly notes that the earliest reference to William as lord of Totnes is in a charter of 1244, and it seems the marriage had occurred not long before. William de Braose had supposedly committed adultery with Joan, wife of Llywelyn the Great and daughter of King John, and was hanged at Gwynedd by Llywelyn; L. J. Wilkinson, 'Joan, Wife of Llywelyn the Great', in M. Prestwich *et. al.* (eds.), *Thirteenth Century England X* (Woodbridge, 2005), pp. 89-94.

<sup>37</sup> Sanders, *Baronies*, p. 42. The death of Peter's brother Herbert FitzMatthew at the hands of the Welsh was noted by Matthew Paris; *Matthaei Parisiensis, Monachi Sancti Albani, Historia Anglorum*, ed. F. Madden, Rolls Series 44 (1866-9), ii, p. 500.

<sup>38</sup> EC 223.

<sup>39</sup> EC 230.

<sup>40</sup> *MDE*, p. 176. The income from this manor alone was also notably more than the entire income at the same time of the Premonstratensian houses at Blanchland and Egglestone.

<sup>41</sup> His brother's confirmation states that Peter gave the canons two charters; EC 224. DC fo. 163v contains a charter from Peter to the Abbot of Buckfast freeing him and his men of Englebourne from suit at Peter's hundred court of Coleridge. It seems likely that a similar concession would be made to the canons, of which the charter has not survived.

suggested it was a farm by the name of Huntisbeare, Matthew FitzHerbert, Peter's father, held land called Hunteberg near Woodbury in 1226.<sup>42</sup> If Hunteba and Hunteberg are the same then we may probably attribute the grant to Peter's influence.

Peter's role as a patron of the house evidently extended further than the grant of Blackawton. In a charter of the canons confirming the spiritual services that would be conferred on him, it was noted that, besides his grant of the manor, made 'in his pure charity', he had also performed many good works in the defence of the abbey, and shown great devotion to the house. The canons promised to do as much for him in death 'as may be done for lord William Brewer, our founder'.<sup>43</sup> He was not the abbey's tutelary patron, as this position was held by the Mohuns, yet in the absence of their patronage, for the ten years between his inheritance and his death in 1255, Peter FitzMatthew may have acted as such for the canons of Torre. Peter's heirs apparently made no attempt, or were unable, to capitalise on the abbey's goodwill. His lands passed to his brother John, who died in 1260, and his heir Matthew Fitz John only came to age in 1279. He died without issue in 1309, although by then he had surrendered his lands to the crown in return for a life interest.<sup>44</sup>

The relationship between the canons and their patron was by no means one-way. Peter and his family had constant problems with debt in this period. In 1255, the year of his death, Peter was in debt to Aaron of London to the sum of £150, which he was ordered to repay at the rate of 50 marks each year.<sup>45</sup> He had been charged a relief of £100 on entering his lands in 1245, as was his brother John in 1255, sums which were still unpaid in Edward I's time.<sup>46</sup> He was not unusual amongst his class in contracting such debts; long minorities, sudden deaths, or general mismanagement of estates could result in the accretion of sizeable debts by any landowning family in any time period. Many English

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<sup>42</sup> EC 101-2; *DFOF*, i, p. 74; *TA*, pp. 141-2.

<sup>43</sup> DC fo. 157r.

<sup>44</sup> Sanders, *Baronies*, p. 42.

<sup>45</sup> *CPR 1247-58*, p. 400.

<sup>46</sup> Sanders, *Baronies*, p. 42.

landowners, of varying status, found themselves indebted to the Jewry in similar sums and more.<sup>47</sup> One reason, amongst many, for the financial difficulties of a number of knightly and baronial figures in the mid-thirteenth century might be found in Henry III's repeated levying of impositions on the wealth of the Jews. Between 1241 and 1258 the crown collected around 100,000 marks from the Jewry, as a result of which the moneylenders were forced to call in their loans. As such, there was 'a spiral of collapse' and many debtors such as Peter FitzMatthew were forced to sell lands or budget accordingly.<sup>48</sup> In 1270 Nicholas FitzMartin, the guardian of Peter's nephew and heir, was attempting to force the abbot and another tenant to pay their portion of a debt of 600 marks which had been owed in fee-rent to Aaron from the lands of Peter FitzMatthew.<sup>49</sup> While the documentary agreement on which this debt transfer was based is now lost, there is a definite indication that the canons were granted the manor in exchange for some of the burden of Peter's debt.

Besides the patronage of local baronial figures, the abbey was successful in attracting patronage of all forms and sizes from the knightly and potentially knightly classes. The first such individual benefactor, chronologically speaking, following the death of William Brewer the Younger in 1232, was Jordan de Dacombe. His ancestry is obscure, although he appears to have been the son of a Michael de Dacombe who had held the manors of Dacombe and Welles since the late-twelfth century.<sup>50</sup> The extent of

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<sup>47</sup> M. Prestwich, *Plantagenet England* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 393-4, and n.119 below.

<sup>48</sup> R. C. Stacey, 'The English Jews under Henry III', in P. Skinner (ed.), *The Jews in Medieval Britain* (Woodbridge, 2003), pp. 41-54; idem, '1240-1260: A Watershed in Anglo-Jewish Relations?', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 61 (1988), pp. 135-50. We should be wary, however, of assigning too many mid-thirteenth century financial problems to this 'perfect storm' of indebtedness and government taxation. The sheer breadth of work on the 'crisis' or otherwise of the knightly classes in the thirteenth century reveals this as an incredibly complex picture, with many individual and local variants.

<sup>49</sup> *Calendar of the Plea Rolls of the Exchequer of the Jews*, i, p. 228.

<sup>50</sup> Michael de Dacombe held the manors of Dacombe and Welles before Jordan, having been confirmed in his holding along with his brother 'Ibert Ybro' by Richard le Speke, to hold as their brother William (d. 1189) and their father had held it. In a subsequent charter, Nicholas de Pola confirms to Michael 'de Daccumba' his holding of a third of a fee in Holrigge, and the grant is confirmed just as Robert de Daccumba held it. There is no evidence for Nicholas de Pola being Jordan's grandfather, as Seymour suggests. While the exact relationships are nowhere explicitly stated we might suggest that there were three brothers,

Jordan's holdings is similarly unclear, although he granted two fees at Dacombe and Welles [Coffinswell] to the canons in 1239, with one-third of a fee at Holrigge in Ideford.<sup>51</sup> Of these, Coffinswell was held for one knight's fee by Hugh Coffyn, while Warin, son of Johel, held one-sixth of a fee in Dacombe, and the one-third at Holrigge was held by David de Holrigge. The remaining five-sixths in Dacombe appear to have been in demesne at the time of the grant, although by the start of the fourteenth century the canons had managed to resume all but one-third in Coffinswell.<sup>52</sup>

Jordan's grant differed from those previously received by the abbey, in that the land was initially leased to the abbey for twenty marks *per annum*, but the canons would receive it in free and perpetual alms on his death in 1246.<sup>53</sup> While the land was that from which he took his name, Jordan must have inherited or married into lands in Hampshire, as his charter states that the rent was to be rendered at Titchfield, the site of a Premonstratensian house in that county. The Dacombe and Holrigge lands thus seem to have been his only holdings in Devon, although his family were later to flourish as minor gentry in their adopted county. The size and scope of his holdings in Hampshire is similarly unclear, although they appear to have been in keeping with his status at the lowest end of the knightly class. His son, Thomas de Dacombe, gave lands within the

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William, Robert (called 'Ybro' [Probus?] in one charter), and Michael de Dacombe, the latter of which had Jordan de Dacombe as his heir; *TA*, p. 262; EC 282, 288. A Nicholas de Dacombe held the manor before 1164; *English Episcopal Acta XI: Exeter 1042-1184*, ed. F. Barlow (Oxford, 1996), pp. 70-1.

<sup>51</sup> EC 283-5. Some confusion over the exact nature of this grant, and its chronology, has stemmed from the position in the cartularies of charters regarding a grant of land and rents in Edginswell, also called 'Welles', immediately before that concerning Coffinswell and Dacombe; EC 271-9; DC fos. 40v-44r. This led previous historians to assume that the canons had held land in Coffinswell and Dacombe before Jordan granted them the manors, and posit that there were either three manors in the two fees, Wille, Welle, and Dacombe, or two, Welle and Wille, the latter of which became Dacombe; W. Keble Martin, 'A Short History of Coffinswell', *DART*, 87 (1955), pp. 165-90; *TA*, p. 257; n. 11 above.

<sup>52</sup> EC 284, 299-313. The two fees at Dacombe and Welles were held, via a number of mesne tenants, of the Speke family, who held in turn from the Abbot of Tavistock; EC 295-7; *BoF*, ii, p. 768.

<sup>53</sup> EC 284.

county to the nunnery at Wilton and Carisbrooke Priory in the early 1250's.<sup>54</sup> Another Thomas held half a fee in Park, Hampshire, at the turn of the fourteenth century.<sup>55</sup>

Besides Jordan, whose grant was the largest from a knightly figure, the canons received the patronage of a number of landholders of similar status. Robert le Denys granted the canons a house and garden as well as six acres and another piece of land to the north of the house in Pancrasweek in exchange for five acres of the canons' demesne there.<sup>56</sup> This may not seem much in the way of patronage, but it was clearly important enough that the canons were prepared to maintain a chantry for him in the chapel in the manor.<sup>57</sup> This branch of the Denys family was notable in Devon in the thirteenth century, holding several manors from various honours including Pancrasweek, Southweek (in Germansweek parish), Caulstone (near Newton Ferrers), and Collaton St. Mary (then Collaton Clavill), the last of which was in the hinterlands behind Torbay.<sup>58</sup>

It is to be expected that figures with holdings around the abbey would be those most likely to appear as patrons of the house. Perhaps the closest of these knightly landholders were the Cockington family, based at the manor of the same name to the west of the abbey, and holding from the honour of Dartington.<sup>59</sup> The manor was in the parish of Torre at this date, although it was served by a relatively ancient chapel in the grounds of

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<sup>54</sup> *VCH Hampshire*, v, pp. 229-30.

<sup>55</sup> *FA*, ii, p. 337.

<sup>56</sup> EC 168. The date of this charter is unclear, as Robert was a common name in the family, although it must have been before 1292 when the family's holdings were divided amongst female heirs; Pole, *Collections*, pp. 279, 336, 350.

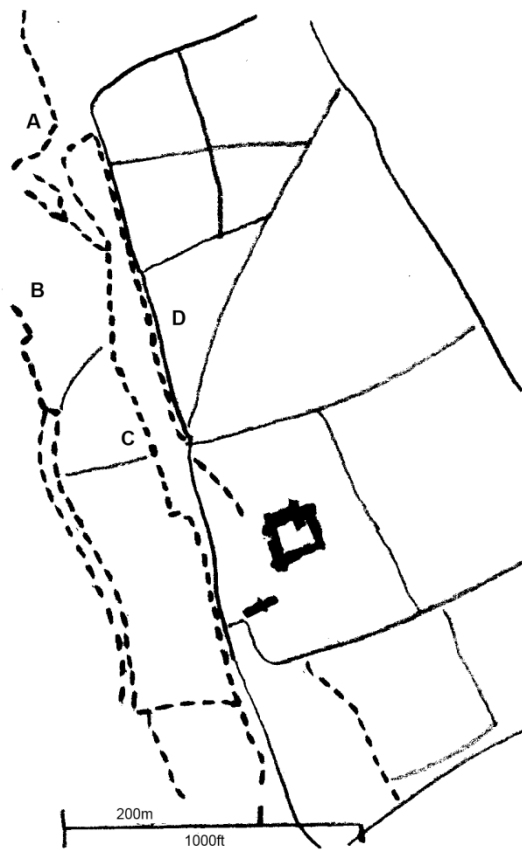
<sup>57</sup> See below p. 96.

<sup>58</sup> *BoF*, ii, pp. 756, 767, 770, 791. Other principal branches of the Denys family were based at Orleigh and Holcombe, although there were numerous others 'too tedious to enumerate', as Prince puts it, making it difficult to precisely identify which lands were held by which branch. A branch of the family, although which is unclear, held lands in Somerset and founded the hospital, later the nunnery, of Whitehall in Ilchester; Prince, *Worthies*, p. 289.

<sup>59</sup> *BoF*, ii, p. 768. The early genealogy of this family has yet to be satisfactorily laid out. In a charter of 1161x1184 Roger de Cockington describes himself as the grandson of Robert FitzMartin, lord of Cockington and holder of Dartington honour in the early-twelfth century, and not the nephew, as Seymour and others have erroneously stated. Risdon claims that Robert bestowed Cockington on a younger son, Roger, excepting the chapel and two 'farthings' of land, by which should probably be understood the sanctuary land of the chapel. His source for this information is unknown; Risdon, *Chorographical Description*, p. 147; EC 262; *TA*, pp. 247-8.



the manor-house which, as it was in the hands of the monks of St. Dogmaels in Pembrokeshire at the foundation of Torre, had been the subject of negotiations in the early-thirteenth century.<sup>60</sup> Roger was a common name in the family in the thirteenth century, so the chronology of their patronage is difficult to unravel. However, the first instance of the involvement of the family with the abbey appears to be a charter of the early thirteenth-century Roger de Cockington granting 21 and one-sixth acres of land in Collaton and a meadow in his adjacent manor of Chelston in exchange for which he was granted the tenancy of the sanctuary land of the chapel of Cockington, to be held of the canons.<sup>61</sup>



**Figure 1: Monastic Water Supply – dashed lines indicate watercourse**

Key: A – Fulford Mill and Bridge; B – Sherwell Brook; C – Fulford Brook; D – Canalised Water Supply

Based on OS first series 1:2500

<sup>60</sup> Cockington was an instance of a chapel which had its own rector and paid only a pension to the mother church, although possibly deferred marriage and burial rights. The chapel had been granted to St. Dogmaels sometime after 1115 by their founder, Robert FitzMartin (see previous note), who was also lord of Cemais. Early in the thirteenth century the canons leased the chapel and its sanctuary land from the monks for five marks *per annum*, a payment which persisted until the Dissolution. The chapel was formally re-attached to the parish in 1236; EC 259-62, 270, 317-9; A. H. Thompson, *The English Clergy and their Organization in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1947), pp. 124-5.

<sup>61</sup> EC 263; DC fo. 156v.

Perhaps more importantly for the canons was the century-long process whereby the family enlarged and secured the abbey's water supplies [Fig. 1]. The abbey precinct bordered the manor of Cockington on its west side, and much of this boundary was comprised of the Sherwell and Fulford brooks. In 1258x1264, William de Cockington, son of the Roger de Cockington who held the manor in 1242, granted the canons the water from the spring of Sherwell, after it had passed under Fulford Bridge in his land, for the celebration of divine service in the abbey church and all other necessities of the church and canons.<sup>62</sup> His brother and heir Henry granted the canons 24 feet of land through the length of the abbey walls on the west side, presumably in order to bring the brook there within the abbey lands.<sup>63</sup> Henry's son Roger effectively completed the process in 1293 by granting the canons all of Fulford and Sherwell brooks below the millrace, which was at the north-western corner of the abbey's home farm of Rowedone. He also gave the canons the right to quarry at Corbyn's Head, a cliff on the shore near the abbey, and pannage there.<sup>64</sup> The last of the family was also the last to grant rights to the abbey, as in 1327 James de Cockington allowed the canons to spread and dry their fishing nets on his land, and confirmed their rights to fish from Livermead in Torbay.<sup>65</sup> The importance of these charters to the canons is underlined by the copying into the cartulary of a confirmation of their water rights as late as 1472.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> EC 266-8; DC fo. 44v; and see below Chapter 4, p. 142. This transaction has formerly been dated to 1330x1345, on the basis that abbot Simon named within the charters was Simon de Plympton. The witness lists indicate that it must have been the earlier abbot Simon (occ. 1252-1264). Roger de Cockington was living but gravely ill in 1258, while Abbot Simon died in 1264, giving a time frame for the granting-charter. William must have died shortly after inheriting, as Henry de Cockington, his brother, is first mentioned as lord of Cockington during Simon's rule, when he confirmed his brother's grant; *CPR 1247-58*, p. 648; *BoF*, ii, p. 768.

<sup>63</sup> EC 281. Henry was a knight of Thomas de Clare in 1272. It must have been a younger son of the same name who, according to the household accounts of Bogo de Clare, was a clerk of the exchequer in 1284, as Roger de Cockington, his eldest son and heir, was stated to hold Cockington in 1284; *CPR 1266-72*, p. 643; *FA*, i, p. 317; C. H. Hartshorne, 'Illustrations of Domestic Manners During the Reign of Edward I', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, 18 (1862), p. 70.

<sup>64</sup> EC 264-5. The Fulford mill stood at the junction of the present day Avenue Road and Old Mill Road; B. Read, *Cockington Bygones* (Huish Episcopi, 1999-2003), iii, p. 51.

<sup>65</sup> EC 269. James was sheriff of Devon 1325-7 and 1344; *List of Sheriffs*, pp. 34-5.

<sup>66</sup> EC 281.

The family of Alice de St. Marychurch were also local if nonetheless relatively eminent patrons of the abbey in the mid-thirteenth century.<sup>67</sup> She held St. Marychurch – a large and lucrative manor to the north of Torre – of the honour of Cardinan, and was married twice, first to Maurice de Rouen (de Rotomago), and secondly to Thomas de Cirencester.<sup>68</sup> Thomas previously had a career as a royal servant, and was appointed as custodian of the lands late of William de Vernon Earl of Devon in 1225; Branton, Karswell, and Diptford in 1226; and most of the lands of Hugh de Lusignan in 1227. He also appears as sheriff of Somerset and Dorset from 1227 to 1237, and sheriff of Devon 1231/2.<sup>69</sup> The extent of his personal holdings are unclear, but in 1242 he held Woodhuish in Brixham along with St. Marychurch, both of the honour of Cardinan and probably both through his marriage to Alice. Alice granted the canons a ferling of land in St. Marychurch, along with Walter de Fonte and his family, and 2lbs of wax annually in exchange for her burial at the abbey. Her brother, most likely a half-brother, William Finamore, granted the canons three ferlings at Lydewyngitone, now Boohay in the hinterlands of Kingswear, which he held of her and Thomas.<sup>70</sup>

Isabella de Waddeton was another landed widow who patronised the abbey around the same time as Alice. She had been married to Martin de Fishacre, and both were buried at the abbey.<sup>71</sup> The Fishacre family were mainly based around the hinterlands of Brixham and Kingswear, and Collaton Fishacre, where they held of Peter FitzMatthew and his

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<sup>67</sup> The name of this family is usually given as ‘de St. Marychurch’, although it is stated in the cartularies that Alice’s father was Martin Buzun, son of Thomas Buzun, perhaps son of the William Buzun who held 8½ fees of the honor of Totnes in 1166. The name indicates the status of the family as *buzones*, that is, men of some standing on the county scene. It may have been applied as a byname to a number of unconnected families in this period; EC 216, Watkin, *Totnes*, ii, pp. 757-770, 1044; *Liber Niger*, i, p. 126; *DFOF*, i, pp. 179, 270-1, 273-4; P. R. Coss, ‘Knighthood and Early Thirteenth-Century County Court’ in P. R. Coss & S. D. Lloyd (eds.), *Thirteenth Century England II: Proceedings of the Newcastle upon Tyne Conference 1987* (Woodbridge, 1988), pp. 46-53. Westcote mistakenly asserts that Alice was *temp.* Ed. II; *View of Devonshire*, p. 605.

<sup>68</sup> EC 216, 219, 280; DC 43r. Maurice de Rouen had held Radworthy of William Brewer the Younger; *BoF*, i, pp. 396-7.

<sup>69</sup> *BoF*, ii, p. 767-8; *CPR 1216-25*, p. 541; 1225-32, pp. 40, 98, 134, 226; 1232-47, pp. 50, 207; *List of Sheriffs*, pp. 34, 122.

<sup>70</sup> EC 216-9; *TA*, p. 215.

<sup>71</sup> See Chapter 4, pp. 146-7 below.

family, Combe Fishacre, and Fishacre Barton in Littlehempston bear their name to this day.<sup>72</sup> Martin de Fishacre had a long-term association with the abbey, appearing in witness lists to abbey charters in areas where he had no tenurial interest, perhaps indicating that he had a role in the abbey administration.<sup>73</sup> Following Martin's death, Isabella granted the canons a ferling in Waddeton, together with John le Connere and his family, in exchange for the burial of her and her husband, and for a lamp to be kept burning in the abbey church.<sup>74</sup>

We should be wary, however, of an over-reliance on grants of land to show the full extent of patronage in this period. Hugh Peverel, lord of Ermington, granted the canons a house in Smithen Street, Exeter.<sup>75</sup> Yet a letter of 1231 indicates that this may have been only one aspect of his patronage. The canons, following permission from general chapter, in recognition of the devotion shown towards the house by Hugh, granted him and his successors the right to institute a canon in the house.<sup>76</sup> This was not an unknown occurrence, although the exact means by which Hugh proposed to support his canon are unknown.<sup>77</sup> The practice may not have lasted long, however, as this branch of the family had died out by the early-fourteenth century.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> *BoF*, ii, pp. 767, 769, 776. They held a number of other lands and churches in the area and beyond, although the frequency of the name Martin in the family makes it difficult to unravel their exact status at this time. The scholastic theologian Richard Fishacre was probably a later descendant of this family; M. O'Carroll, "The Fishacre Tribe": The Family Origins of Richard Fishacre OP, *New Blackfriars*, 80 (1999), pp. 325-45.

<sup>73</sup> EC 12; DRO D1508M/Moger/197; D1508M/Moger/205-7.

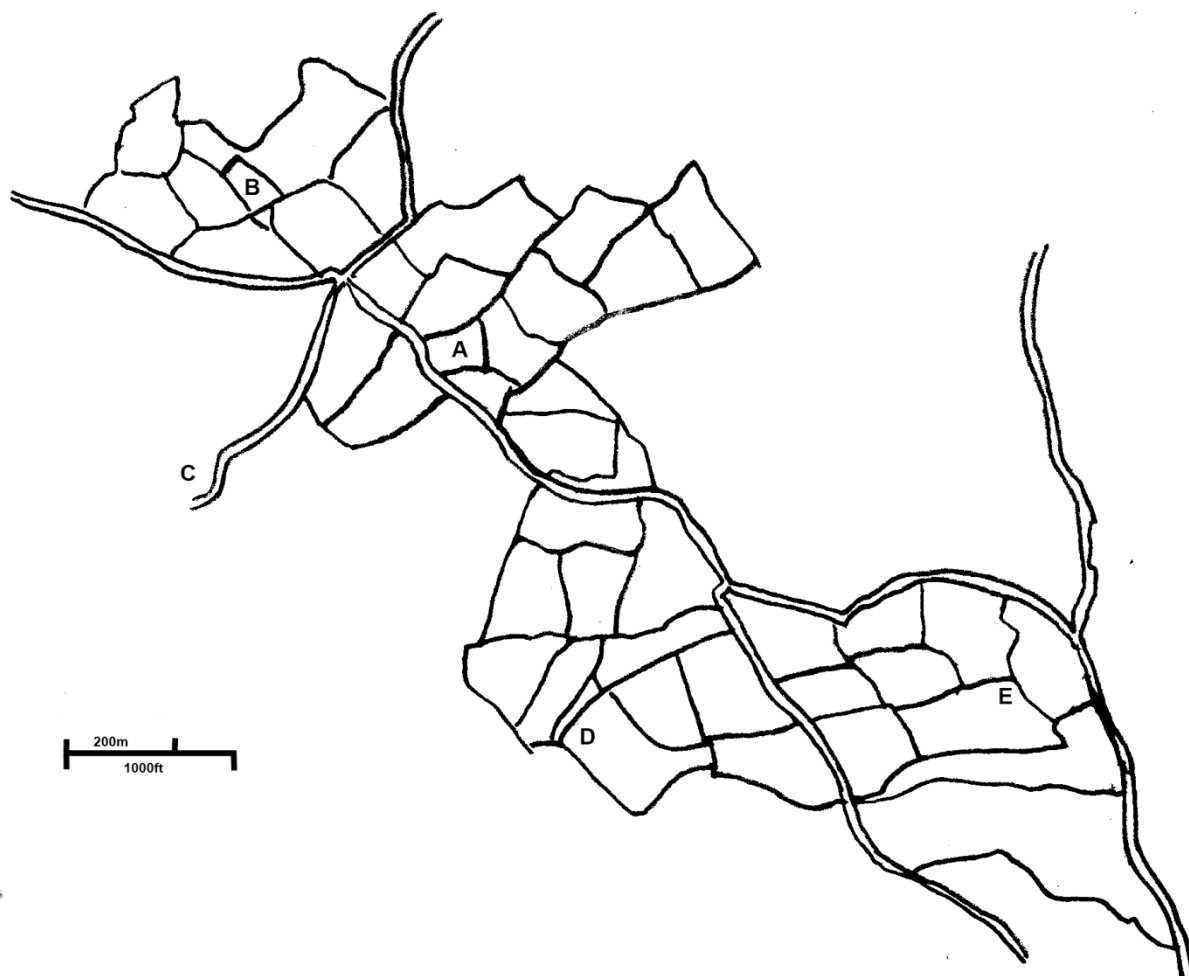
<sup>74</sup> DC fo. 27v.

<sup>75</sup> DC fo. 78v. He held Ermington of the honour of Plympton, but was also a fairly substantial landholder throughout the county, of various honours; *BoF*, ii, pp. 770-1, 776, 786.

<sup>76</sup> DC fo. 155r.

<sup>77</sup> *WC*, pp. 304-6.

<sup>78</sup> *FA*, i, p. 352.



**Figure 2: The grange of Flode in Hennock**  
**Key: A – Flode; B – Huish; C – Frost; D – La Cleye; E – Lyneham**  
 Based on OS first series 1:2500

By no means all the benefactors of Torre were notable or wealthy. Even disregarding the mass of small transactions where the canons were resuming their own fee, the abbey had dealings with a number of free tenants, who held anything from a few acres to a few ferlings, and these will be noted more generally in the discussion below. Here it will suffice to study the sequence of grants that went into the creation and consolidation of the canons' grange at Flode, in Hennock. The acquisition and expansion of this estate is a classic example of the gradual consolidation of a demesne land holding.<sup>79</sup> Through grants and purchases, the abbey acquired a large demesne farm around twelve miles north of their house. The first territory the canons owned in the area was the sanctuary lands of the

<sup>79</sup> C. Platt, *The Monastic Grange in Medieval England* (London, 1969), pp. 57-65.

church of Hennock, which they had been granted in the early thirteenth century along with the advowson of the church.<sup>80</sup> The extent of the land was not specified, but it lay to the south-east and at some distance from the church. The exact chronology of the expansion of the canons' land in this area is difficult to recreate, as the relevant charters are mostly undated. It is, however, possible to get some idea, from witness and other internal evidence, of the probable sequence of land transactions.

The initial expansion of the canons' holding in the manor appears to have occurred at some point between 1234 and 1241, when they were granted half a ferling lying next to their sanctuary land and to the north of the *camera* of Richard de la Flode by Adelardus, the chaplain of Beadon.<sup>81</sup> The subsequent acquisition of lands around this initial half ferling, and the connections between all the grantors involved in the creation of the grange, strongly suggest that the canons had laid the groundwork for most of the expansion of their holdings before the formal transfer of the first piece of land. As it was, after the initial transaction, there was a swift succession of grants in the early 1240's, probably beginning in 1241 with the grant of a ferling at 'la Fluda', a hilltop farm to the west of the Teign valley, and to the immediate south of their half-ferling, by Richard de la Flode, in exchange for a corrody for himself and his wife at the abbey.<sup>82</sup> This was followed by an adjacent ferling to the east from Richard's daughter Mariota, and nine acres from Walter Parminter, Richard's nephew.<sup>83</sup> Also around this time, the canons gained possession of a

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<sup>80</sup> EC 44. See Chapter 1, pp 55-6.

<sup>81</sup> EC 60-64, DRO D1508M/Moger/198. The history of this half ferling is particularly complex, although it seems that the land had initially been granted to Nicholas, vicar of Chudleigh, by Girard de Clist, lord of Hennock, who in turn had purchased it from Richard de la Flode, in order to provide Nicholas' daughter Johanna with a dowry. Nicholas also purchased the wardship of Richard's son and heir, Robert, and betrothed him to Johanna, such that when Robert inherited Flode the half ferling dowry would adjoin their lands. Nicholas then sold Johanna and Robert's wardship along with the dowry to Adelardus. Robert then died, and Johanna married Martin de Babbacombe. They quitclaimed the half ferling to Adelardus, who apparently still had some rights over it, and who granted it in turn to the canons. Seymour's translation of the relevant charters consistently mistakes 'heres' for heiress, although the context makes it clear that Richard de la Flode's heir was male.

<sup>82</sup> DC fo. 67r-v; EC 68, dated 4<sup>th</sup> September 1242; and see below p. 105.

<sup>83</sup> EC 54-7. Mariota's grant refers to the land of Flode being already in the possession of the canons, so must postdate Richard's charter. Richard had confirmed the nine acres to William Parminter, stating that it was the

further ferling at the farm of Huish, directly north of Flode, from William Lancelin.<sup>84</sup> In total, this would have given a block of around 100 acres at the head of the Teign valley. At the same time, the canons were granted freedom from suit of court in the hundred of Teignbridge by Nicholas Burdun, facilitating the creation of a grange, presumably around Richard de la Flode's farmhouse at Flode, after which it was named.<sup>85</sup>

The grange remained as a hundred-acre block for around thirty years, until the canons were able to complete their expansion down the rolling hills towards the Teign in around 1270. The second series of transactions appear to have occurred in two batches, and concern the two farms now known as Clayparks and Lyneham. These had been held by Roger de Beadon, who also held the tenement of Beadon around a mile to the north-west of Hennock, and had shared the portion of his estate in the south of the manor equally amongst his three children, Edward, Amelota, and Edith. While the exact dating is difficult to ascertain, it is probable that Amelota, whose charter is undated and lacking witnesses, may have made the first grant, consisting of all her land of La Cleye and a third part of a ferling at Lynicombe.<sup>86</sup> At around the same time, the canons were granted all the land

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land which Walter de la Flode, his father, had given to William as dowry for Alice, Richard's sister. Alice and William were the parents of Walter Parminter. The nine acres were not together, but six acres lay 'juxta sepe Edwardi de la Hockbeare' and three acres 'juxta Coldeswilles more'. Huxbear farm still stands to the east of Flode, while Coldeswilles moor may be represented in the current farm of Frost, to the east, perhaps serving in apposition to the nearby south-facing farm of Warmhill.

<sup>84</sup> EC 67. The transaction was performed through a nominee for the abbey in the shape of Walter, vicar of Shebbear, who purchased the land from William and then granted it on to the abbey; DRO D1508M/Moger/202. Richard de Totton was instituted as vicar of Shebbear on the death of Walter in 1256 (not 1251, as Seymour thought; *TA* p. 191), while B. de Totton was instituted in 1241, giving a date for the charter of c.1250, although more precise dating is not possible; DC fos. 169v, 170r. This rough dating is confirmed by the witness list on William Lancelin's confirmation charter; DRO D1508M/Moger/197; D1508M/Moger/207. The use of a nominee was presumably to keep the monetary transaction separate from the granting of spiritual services, perhaps in order to avoid accusations of simony. The rent was a pair of spurs which by 1294 had been commuted (if it had not always been the case) to 3d, and was quitclaimed by William de Uphom, son of Robert de Uphom and heir of William Lancelin; EC 51. It is difficult to say for certain whether the Flode or Huish grant came first, or if they were roughly concomitant, as neither mentions the other.

<sup>85</sup> EC 70.

<sup>86</sup> EC 71-4; DRO D1508M/Moger/204. Amelota states that she was the daughter of Roger, and she held a third part of La Cleye and Lynicombe. Edward is called 'de Beadon', and held land in La Cleye, so his relationship is reasonably assumed. Edith is nowhere stated to be a daughter of Roger, but held, with her husband Ralph de Nova Villa, the remaining parts of La Cleye and Lynicombe. As her quitclaim is included in the cartularies alongside his grant, (whereas, for example, Edward de Beadon's wife Cecilia makes no

which Ralph de Nova Villa, husband of Edith, held in La Cleye, together with a promise of any future lands which might accrue to him. This appears to have been in effect a promissory note of sale, as in 1270 Ralph and Edith confirmed all their lands in La Cleye and Lyncombe in return for a payment of 100s.<sup>87</sup> The canons were able to complete their acquisition of La Cleye and Lyncombe with the grant, later that year, of Edward de Beadon's portion. This was made on the condition that the canons paid 20d rent for it until the death of Edward's wife.<sup>88</sup> The final addition was the farm of Lymhouse, at the very south of the canons' holdings, given soon after by Engelys and Mariota, daughters of William de Lymhouse, for another fee of 100 shillings.<sup>89</sup> Together, Lymhouse, Lyncombe and La Cleye comprised land totalling something over 130 acres.

By the early 1270's, therefore, the canons had amassed a holding of around 230 acres in the south-east portion of the manor of Hennock, owing no suit to the hundred court, and also, as they held the church, with no threat of the payment of tithe.<sup>90</sup> The holding had been built up piecemeal, practically a ferling at a time, and from three familial groups of limited resources. As the Flode family exchanged their land for what was effectively a corrody at the abbey, we might infer that the ferling given to the canons was the only land they held. This would, of course, create problems in regard to the provision of services to the lords of the manor, as the Flode family would no longer be able to

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quitclaim) it is likely that the grant was of her inheritance, or her dowry. Edward's grant and Edith/Ralph's charter of sale are both dated to 1270, while the witness lists of Edith and Ralph's undated confirmations are similar enough to that appended to Edward's charter as to suggest a correlation of date. Commending Amelota's charter to a similar 1270 date is the very similar wording of Ralph's charter, although it cannot be conclusively stated that hers was given before or after any of the others.

<sup>87</sup> DRO D1508M/Moger/204; EC 73-4.

<sup>88</sup> EC 72.

<sup>89</sup> DRO D1508M/Moger/418. Mariota's husband Osbert de Holcombe confirms this transaction in EC 75.

<sup>90</sup> Seymour's note to EC 75 (p. 152) suggests that the canons may have acquired Huxbear, to the east of Flode, based on a charter of Totnes Priory remitting the tithes from that farm, and all other rights of tithe in the parish, to the canons of Torre in 1276. Although the relevant granting-charter has not survived, Totnes priory held a handful of tithe rights in Hennock, and the charter should be read as the quitclaiming of these rights in a parish appropriated to the canons. It certainly does not imply ownership of Huxbear by the canons of Torre, and in the late-fourteenth century it was held by Thomas Pomeroy; TNA SC 8/22/1078. Despite their quitclaim, in 1291 Totnes Priory was stated to have a pension worth 2s from Hennock; Watkin, *Totnes*, i, pp. 179, 190.



perform the service they owed. However, as the lord gave his consent and quitclaimed the service due to his court, and the canons still owed forinsec service, it might be claimed that the lord suffered *damnum*, but there had been no *iniuria*.<sup>91</sup> From the evidence of their names, the other grantors may have held other lands by marriage or inheritance in Beadon, Holcombe, or Newton Abbot.

The impetus for these grants may have come from the canons themselves, as patrons of the church of Hennock. The lord of the manor, Richard Tremenet, or Tribus Minetis, gave the canons his confirmation of the grants, yet appears to have had no other dealings with the house. His confirmation was, of course, necessary, and, as it was in free, pure, and perpetual alms, and free and quit from all secular services to his court, he was most likely forgoing the feudal services and incidents on the land.<sup>92</sup> Wardrop, in her analysis of the charters of Fountains, deduced that in most cases where the service due from land was quitclaimed by the lord, the donor had made private arrangements about how he would continue to provide those services. Yet in cases such as this where the donor was from the peasantry, and thus presumably unable to continue providing services having surrendered his land, the lord usually inserted a clause specifying the nature of the monastery's feudal obligations, even when given free and quit and in free, pure, and perpetual alms. Here it appears that Richard Tremenet was absolving the canons of all intrinsec services to his court, although subsequent surveys of the abbey's feudal

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<sup>91</sup> S. Raban, *Mortmain Legislation and the English Church 1279-1500* (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 13-14, 40; T. F. T. Plucknett, *Legislation of Edward I* (Oxford, 1970), pp. 94-101; P. A. Brand, 'The Control of Mortmain Legislation 1200-1300', in J. H. Baker (ed.), *Legal Records and the Historian* (London, 1978), pp. 29-40.

<sup>92</sup> EC 66, 69. He held the manor of the barony of Okehampton, and also held half a fee in Huish [Great Huish, in Tedburn St. Mary?] of the honour of Plympton, *BoF*, ii, pp. 786, 788. He had inherited through marriage to Isabel, daughter of William de Clist the son of Girard de Clist and Beatrix who had granted Hennock church to the canons at the foundation; Pole, *Collections*, p. 264; see Chapter 1, pp. 55-6.

obligations indicate that the canons still owed forinsec service to the Honour of Plympton.<sup>93</sup>

Finally, we might note the link between the status of the benefactors and the nature of the grant. As opposed to the largely self-contained manors, often with sizeable vills, numerous tenants, and various lucrative appurtenances occasionally granted by the abbey's more high-status patrons, the grange at Flode was a small collection of farms held in demesne by the canons, and probably, given its aspect on the eastern slopes of Dartmoor, used for livestock and a little hardy arable. That Torre only amassed one such holding, of the type commonly associated with the reformed orders, may, therefore, be explained by the canons' relative success in attracting donations from the knightly classes and above.

While the canons of Torre were able to attract sizeable grants of property in the 1240's and 1250's, practically all their land transactions after this point were concerned with lands already in their fee, or, in the case of Flode, the consolidation of their granges. Thus in the 1270's, presumably as a reaction to the profitability of high farming, they engaged in a series of purchases and transactions in their third of a fee at Holrigge, which had been part of the grant of Dacombe and Welles, and similarly in Wolborough, most notably with the sizeable farm of Keyberry, also in their fee, in 1286.<sup>94</sup> Yet after the mid-1250s the canons' endowment ceased to grow, suggesting that the Statute of Mortmain had little effect, and that the era of acquisition was over at Torre. The notable exception to this was the grant of the manor of Tormohun in the fourteenth century, although the significance of this process is studied in the next chapter.

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<sup>93</sup> Wardrop, *Fountains Abbey*, pp. 31-8; E. Kimball, 'Tenure in Frank Almoign and Secular Services', *English Historical Review*, 43 (1928), pp. 341-53; DC fo. 140r. Nicholas Burdun also freed the canons from service due from the land at the hundred court of Teignbridge; EC 70.

<sup>94</sup> EC 33, 42, 302-15; DC fo. 136r, 155v, 157v; Prestwich, *Plantagenet England*, pp. 427-34; E. Miller & J. Hatcher, *Medieval England: Rural Society and Economic Change 1086-1348* (London, 1978), pp. 213-24.

### Patterns of Benefaction

It is now a 'commonplace that landowners granted property to monasteries in the middle ages in order to secure a greater hope of salvation'.<sup>95</sup> This is evident in the general tenor of the vast majority of the charters of Torre, and, indeed, of any monastery. The canons of Torre were engaged in the business of their, and their community's, salvation, and through the granting of land or property, or through other forms of patronage, a lay person might hope to enter into, in some way, that community. Beyond this fundamental point there was, of course, a wide range of differing expectations, in terms of spiritual returns, on the part of patrons. These we shall turn to, but first it is worth addressing the question of why the laity chose Torre as the object of their patronage.

For the foundation period the familial, social, and tenorial circle of William Brewer played a major role in the endowment of Torre. Following the death of his son, however, the abbey's tutelary patrons, the Mohun family, appear to play no prominent role, and there is no similar lay figure to the founder around which we may construct a network of mid-thirteenth century patronage. Even Peter FitzMatthew, who was said to have done so much for the abbey that he was rewarded with the same spiritual returns as those given to Brewer himself, cannot be shown to have had any significant connections with more than a small handful of the other patrons of his time, and certainly not enough to discern a 'network' around him. It may be that the central figure around which a particular network arose did not personally grant property or land to the canons, and as such would not necessarily appear in the cartularies. Where we would expect to find such patrons, however, is in the witness lists to those charters, and enough survive in the cartularies and

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<sup>95</sup> B. J. Thompson, 'From 'Alms' to 'Spiritual Services': The Function and Status of Monastic Property in Medieval England', in J. Loades (ed.), *Monastic Studies II: The Continuity of Tradition* (Bangor, 1991), p. 227.

original documents to indicate that there is, again, no central figure or figures of mid-thirteenth century patronage at Torre.

The role of patrons in utilising their influence or connections to introduce others to a religious foundation and in inducing them to patronise the house has been the focus of a number of recent studies.<sup>96</sup> Yet, on the whole, the patrons of Torre following the death of William Brewer the Younger are distinguished almost by the lack of obvious familial, marital, or tenurial connectivity. Lineal heirs may have continued their family's involvement with the abbey following the death of the original patron, as with the Cockington, Albamara, FitzStephen, and Buckland families. Yet there are no provable wider familial or marital connections between such patronal families and seemingly isolated individuals. Tenurial connections are similarly elusive, as no particular magnate or honour stands out as linking together a significant portion of the knightly or lesser patrons of Torre. We cannot rule out the possibility of these factors being important in the reasons for the patronage of Torre in individual cases, yet they are not evidential enough to be considered as particularly significant to the majority.

Before identifying alternative possible motives for patronage of Torre over other monastic houses we might return to a point briefly noted above regarding the role of heirs in continuing the patronage of their ancestors. Wardrop's analysis of the patrons of Fountains revealed the changing nature of patronage from the first generation who granted the land, property, or rights, to the second generation, who were content to confirm those grants without necessarily adding to them.<sup>97</sup> This may be found in a number of cases at Torre, but, perhaps more notably, there were several instances of third and fourth generation patrons making additional grants to the house. At Greendale, Geoffrey de

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<sup>96</sup> Fizzard, *Plympton Priory*, pp. 57-97; idem, 'Lay Benefactors', pp. 33-56; Jamroziak, *Rievaulx Abbey*, pp. 52-110.

<sup>97</sup> Wardrop, *Fountains Abbey*, p. 146.

Albamara, son of the original donor, confirmed the original grant.<sup>98</sup> It was his son, Reginald, who expanded and consolidated the canons' land in the area in the mid-thirteenth century.<sup>99</sup> Similarly, following William de Buckland's early-thirteenth century grants of land around Buckland-in-the-Moor, it was his grandson Roger de Buckland who was the next to add to the canons' holdings.<sup>100</sup> William de Lestre exchanged the ferling in Ingsdon that his grandfather had granted to the canons for one called Glascombe in Ugborough.<sup>101</sup> Following William FitzStephen's grant of Townstal church at the foundation, it was not until 1285 that William's great-grandson Richard FitzStephen arranged the exchanges of land in the town that would consolidate the abbey's sanctuary land and estates in the parish.<sup>102</sup> We also find a number of descendants of patronal families appearing as witnesses to Torre charters, especially the Cirencester, Fishacre, Cockington, and Albamara families, although with the first three of these it is difficult to say whether this was due to their involvement with the abbey or their status as local landholders in the areas with which the charters were concerned.<sup>103</sup>

Alison Fizzard, in her work on Plympton, noted the propensity of later generations to attempt to have their ancestors' grants and confirmations overturned, especially in regard to rights to churches.<sup>104</sup> Disputes over monastic property and advowsons were particularly common in the later thirteenth century, although Torre was only involved in one such dispute. In 1294, Gilbert FitzStephen, great-great-grandson of William

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<sup>98</sup> EC 94.

<sup>99</sup> EC 93, 95-8, 100.

<sup>100</sup> EC 76-82.

<sup>101</sup> EC 240, see Chapter 1, p. 54. This transaction would certainly have benefited the canons. The ferling in Ingsdon was called 'La Hethe', and thus may have been of low quality, as well as lying distant from the canons' other holdings. They already held another ferling in Ugborough, however, and Glascombe appears to have had tin deposits, as there is some evidence of open-cast mining there. The canons also preserved Devon's stannery charter in their cartulary, although there is no further evidence as to the value of this income; DC fo. 147; TA, 235-7; J. Butler, *Dartmoor Atlas of Antiquities* (Exeter, 1991-7), iv, pp. 82-100.

<sup>102</sup> EC 191, 200, 208. William's grandson Gilbert gave the canons land in 1251, but this was to institute a chapel; EC 199.

<sup>103</sup> EC 72, 265, 267, 298; DRO D1508M/Moger/198; D1508M/Moger/205; D1508M/Moger/235

<sup>104</sup> Fizzard, *Plympton Priory*, pp. 99-127.

FitzStephen, donor of Townstal church, appears to have taken advantage of the vague wording of the original charters. He took the canons to court in a dispute over the advowson and, while he eventually quitclaimed all right to the church, it was only in exchange for 20 marks.<sup>105</sup> Various reasons have been given for the initiation of these suits. It seems likely that they arose either from a dispute over the rights of ancestors to grant away an inheritance, especially if their descendants felt they had granted away too much, or, less generously, from a calculated attempt to extort money from the monastery. In the cases concerning disputed advowsons, they almost all ended in the monastery retaining the church but handing a good sum of cash to the litigant.<sup>106</sup>

In some instances the motives behind an act of patronage can be seen in the light of a patron's lack of male heirs. This was especially the case where large amounts of land were involved. Regarding the monasteries in Norfolk in the fourteenth century, 'of all the manors given by [tutelary] patrons, none was both inherited from a father and would have been passed on to a son'.<sup>107</sup> This would most obviously apply to William Brewer the Younger in Torre's case, although Ilsham was the only whole manor that he directly granted to the canons. We might also extend this to a number, although not all, of the patrons of Torre. Peter FitzMatthew, who gave the canons their largest and most lucrative property, had inherited from one brother and was succeeded by another. The clear exceptions are Jordan de Dacombe, whose lands of Dacombe, granted to the abbey, were inherited from his father and would have been passed on to his son Thomas, who confirmed his father's grant; and Richard de la Flode, who had a son and a daughter.

If tenurial and, beyond lineal descendants, familial ties were not particularly significant factors in the decision to patronise Torre, the most obvious factor must be that

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<sup>105</sup> EC 206.

<sup>106</sup> R. A. R. Hartridge, *A History of Vicarages in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1930), p. 6; Wardrop, *Fountains Abbey*, pp. 122-8.

<sup>107</sup> Thompson, 'Church and the Aristocracy', pp. 130-1.

of locality. Most of the patrons of Torre held a portion or all of their lands within a ten mile radius of the abbey. The two closest landholders – the lords of Cockington and St. Marychurch – were both patrons of the abbey, as were the holders of the two closest honours – Totnes and Berry Pomeroy. In fact, only one of the patrons of Torre in the period after the foundation could be said to have held no interest in the vicinity of the abbey – Nicholas de Ferendone, whose patronage can be attributed to the influence of William Brewer the Younger. Allied to this is the fact that, although the canons were initially successful in attracting grants from outside Devon, at Newenham in Berkshire, Skidbrook in Lincolnshire, and Haggelegh in Somerset, they were unsuccessful in adding to these after the death of their founder.

The canons were also successful in attracting patronage from individuals and families within their parishes. The negotiations behind the creation of the canons' grange at Flode cannot have been harmed by the families' position as parishioners of the abbey's church of Hennock. The church was implicitly involved in the earliest transactions, as the first piece of land received by the canons was adjacent to their sanctuary land in the parish. We might also note the possible role of the abbey's appointed vicars as advocates for the canons. The land granted by William Lancelin, forming part of the grange, was transferred through an intermediary in the shape of Walter, vicar of Shebbear.<sup>108</sup> The charter from this stage of the transaction was not copied into the cartularies, presumably as it represented a brief stage in the negotiations and had no lasting significance for the canons, but is only a chance survival in the Courtenay archives. As such, the role of the abbey's clerks and vicars in securing patronage for the abbey may have been much wider.

It was probably also during Walter's time as vicar of Shebbear that the canons received a number of lands and rights in that parish. A grant by Robert de Markeros of

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<sup>108</sup> DRO D1508M/Moger/202, see n. 84 above.

lands in Sheepwash, in that parish, in order to maintain a chaplain at the chapel there cannot be dated with certainty, although it is most likely mid-thirteenth century.<sup>109</sup> The connection with the parish was made particularly explicit, however, as the land, consisting of half a ferling in Hocrigge and half a ferling to the east of Chimbrigge, which Ralph de Monte Sorel had granted to him, as well as another ferling and a half in Hocrigge and Brendon, which Leticia de Pirro had granted to him, was granted not only to the canons, but to the church of St. Michael at Shebbear and the chapel of St. Laurence at Sheepwash.<sup>110</sup> Another undated charter contains the grant by Sibella 'de Alta Villa' of her mill at Upcott in Shebbear parish, together with the suit of mill of her men at Upcott.<sup>111</sup>

Similarly, while Robert le Denys held lands in Collaton St. Mary near the abbey, it was in his role as a parishioner of the abbey church of Bradworthy, wherein lay his chief manor of Pancrasweek, that he became a patron of Torre. This is highlighted in the terms of his grant, in which he exchanged lands with the canons on the undertaking that the priest who served Pancrasweek chapel would celebrate a daily mass there for his soul. The exceptions to this were on the days when he performed the customary duties at the chapel, in which case he should be remembered 'in a private mass and in the priest's second prayer.'<sup>112</sup> While we cannot uncover the negotiations which led to these arrangements, it is surely implied that the canons, as rectors, were only willing to grant a chantry if the abbey, rather than the church or chapel, was the object of patronage.

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<sup>109</sup> This is the only reference to Robert de Markeros, although he purchased the land from Ralph de Monte Sorel, who was alive in 1249; EC 175-8; *DFOF*, i, p. 257.

<sup>110</sup> EC 178. While the farm names have long died out, the boundaries given in the charters make clear that the lands were all in the vicinity of Laket (now Lake Farm) and Michelbrok (now the Mussel Brook), to the north of Sheepwash village.

<sup>111</sup> EC 179. 'Alta Villa' may have been the Latin form of Highampton, to the south of Sheepwash. The grant was given in her widowhood, although it is not clear to whom she was married. It is also unclear if 'Upcott' at that date referred to Upcott Barton or Upcott Avenel in the parish, or both.

<sup>112</sup> EC 168. This arrangement is highly intriguing, as the priest would only be allowed to perform one mass each day, making the concept of a second 'private' mass problematic. The text reads 'Pro hac autem donacione concessione et presentis carte mee confirmacione concesserunt mihi dicti Abbas et Conventus pro se et successoribus suis quod quicumque presbyter Capelle sancti Pancracii de Wike deservat quod idem omnibus diebus pro anima mea et animabus predictorum divina celebret salvis diebus debitis et consuetis memorate Capelle et salva Capellaria sua. Ita quod tunc nos habeat specialiter in memento secreti Misse et in sua secunda oratione.'



‘Networks of patronage’, or, apparently in Torre’s case, the patrons of the house, have been claimed to be exclusive. The patrons of Wombridge Priory tended to be benefactors of that house alone, which supposedly indicated a sense of ‘community’ amongst them and between each other.<sup>113</sup> Yet there may be a number of alternate reasons for this, not least that they could only afford to patronise a single house, at least in terms of land. Furthermore, due to the non-survival of evidence regarding most gifts of cash, we may only be truly sure of the exclusivity of patronage so far as land is concerned. We might expect to find magnates patronising a number of houses, given the resources at their disposal. Yet even the lesser figures, who we might not expect to have enough lands to be able to patronise more than one house, occasionally do so. Regarding those of Torre, even allowing for the paucity of thirteenth century monastic records for Devon, the Albamara family granted the land of Hayne in Plymtree parish to the monks of Forde, Alice and Thomas de Cirencester granted 105 acres in Weringeston in Buckerell to Dunkeswell Abbey in 1253, while Thomas de Dacombe, son of Jordan, who entered into the abbey’s prayers through his confirmation of his father’s grant, granted land to monasteries in Hampshire.<sup>114</sup> We should not, therefore, overstate the exclusivity of patrons of monasteries, especially as the majority of cartularies from Devon abbeys do not survive, and, as such, we cannot get a full picture of the overlapping of patronage.

In discussing patronage and ‘grants’ of land, it is often too easy to overlook the role of cash and the normal operation of the land market in expanding a monastery’s endowment. Money is very rarely mentioned in the granting-charters, and as such it is usually impossible to discern when the canons bought land and for how much. In all the grants discussed above, only a handful mention sums of money changing hands. There

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<sup>113</sup> A. Abram, ‘The Augustinian Priory of Wombridge and its Benefactors in the Later Middle Ages’, in J. Burton & K. Stöber, *Monasteries and Society in the British Isles in the Later Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 2008), p. 91.

<sup>114</sup> Hobbs, *Cartulary of Forde Abbey*, pp. 103-4; *VCH Hampshire*, vol. 5, pp. 229-30; *DFOF*, i, pp. 273-4.

may have been a common use of intermediaries to keep monetary transactions out of the granting-charters, as exemplified in the case of Walter, vicar of Shebbear.<sup>115</sup> The acquisition by the canons of the land of la Cley and Lynicombe from Ralph de Nova Villa and his wife Edith in 1270 is one of the very few charters in the cartularies phrased in terms which explicitly state the transaction to be a sale and purchase of land. Ralph and Edith, by mutual consent, agreed ‘to sell and concede in perpetuity all their land...for one hundred shillings sterling which they received by hand [from the canons].’<sup>116</sup> Notably, there were no spiritual returns included in the transaction, and the land was not given in alms.

In other charters the understanding that the transaction is a sale and purchase of land, rather than the grant in alms from the charity of the donor, is often unavoidable. The circumstances surrounding Jordan de Dacombe’s grant of Dacombe and Welles with the service of various tenants, for example, look like the actions of a man in need of ready money. The land was initially leased to the canons for twenty marks per year, and only on Jordan’s death was it to become the canons’ in free and perpetual alms. However, the canons again appear to have taken steps to ensure that the transaction was not presented as a sale. The confirmation of the initial lease period appears only in a final concord confirming to the canons the grants of land and services made by Jordan, and in the granting-charters themselves no mention is made of any monetary payment. The agreement was made in 1239 and Jordan died c. 1246, so the canons may have paid around 120 marks for the land.<sup>117</sup> Similarly, we have noted above how Peter FitzMatthew, as with so many others, was in debt to Aaron of London, apparently having inherited financial

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<sup>115</sup> B. Hill, *English Cistercian Monasteries and their Patrons in the Twelfth Century* (Urbana, 1969), pp. 57-79; C. Harper-Bill, ‘The Piety of the Anglo-Norman Knightly Class’, in R. A. Brown (ed.), *Proceedings of the Battle Conference on Anglo-Norman Studies II 1979* (Woodbridge, 1980), p. 67.

<sup>116</sup> EC 73.

<sup>117</sup> EC 283-4, 286, Jordan was dead by 29<sup>th</sup> June 1246 (EC 295) and the lease agreement was made on 25<sup>th</sup> June 1239, with the rent to be paid on the Feast of St. Giles (16<sup>th</sup> Sept.). The income from the land at the Dissolution was £27 16s 4d, so even allowing for inflation this was an excellent deal for the canons; *MDE*, p. 176.

difficulties. The canons were able to acquire his manor of Blackawton in exchange for the canons maintaining a pension of ten marks for his brother and his brother's heirs, and apparently agreeing to take on some of his debt.<sup>118</sup>

In the case of Jordan de Dacombe, we might be able to tie his financial problems to the so-called 'crisis' of the knightly class in the thirteenth century.<sup>119</sup> That is, in the early to mid-thirteenth century it is possible to observe the failure, for various reasons, of the lower ranks of the knights and the resultant emergence of a more exclusive and perhaps more socially aware 'chivalric' knightly class. Jordan held a little over two fees in Devon and a small amount of land in Hampshire. He, therefore, would fit neatly into this narrative. Peter FitzMatthew, on the other hand, held a barony and numerous fees, although he was certainly at the lower end of the baronial spectrum in terms of wealth. The family may have suffered particularly from a rapid series of deaths – Matthew FitzHerbert in 1235, Herbert FitzMatthew in 1245, then Peter himself in 1255 – and their subsequent decline must in large part be attributed to the death of John FitzMatthew in 1260 and the nineteen-year minority of his son Matthew FitzJohn. Financial ruin through sudden death and long minorities was not a problem that was by any means exclusive to the mid-thirteenth century, although the peculiar 'spiral of collapse' between the Jews and their debtors caused by Henry III's excessive taxation of moneylenders exacerbated the situation.<sup>120</sup>

Perhaps more importantly, as far as the canons of Torre were concerned, they were in a position to purchase land from those in financial difficulties. They were not alone in

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<sup>118</sup> pp. 76-8 above.

<sup>119</sup> For which see R. H. Hilton, *A Medieval Society: The West Midlands at the End of the Thirteenth Century*, (London, 1966), pp. 49-55; P. Coss, 'Sir Geoffrey de Langley and the Crisis of the Knightly Class in Thirteenth-Century England', *Past and Present*, 68 (1975), pp. 3-37, and partial refutation in D. Carpenter, 'Was there a Crisis of the Knightly Class in the Thirteenth Century? The Oxfordshire Evidence', *English Historical Review*, 377 (1980), pp. 721-52. Coss' more recent work stresses that 'crisis' should perhaps be eschewed in favour of 'transformation'; P. Coss, *The Origins of the English Gentry*, (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 69-108.

<sup>120</sup> pp. 77-8 above.

doing so. Indeed, Anne Polden goes so far as to suggest that, whether money was mentioned in the granting-charter or not, most major grants of the thirteenth century, as opposed to small plots, mills, or church advowsons, ‘were almost certainly sales...by financially embarrassed knights’.<sup>121</sup> Peterborough Abbey was noted for taking full advantage of the indebtedness of their tenants, while Meaux Abbey took on the staggering debt of 1,300 marks owed by one of their patrons, William Fossard, to Aaron of Lincoln in exchange for land in Wharram le Street.<sup>122</sup> The Gilbertine priory of Malton, in North Yorkshire, paid out almost £500 in purchasing land from indebted knights.<sup>123</sup>

When applied to the cases at Torre, however, Polden’s argument does not quite fit. While it is fair to say that money was indeed changing hands between the canons and impoverished knights, to claim that a sale is only that, and cannot be regarded as a grant, is to dismiss the complexity of such transactions. Both Jordan de Dacombe and Peter FitzMatthew received spiritual returns, as well as cash or a pension, and made their grants in ‘free, pure and perpetual alms’.<sup>124</sup> Furthermore, the spiritual returns were not general prayers for the donor and his family, but a chantry and burial respectively, while the canons also lauded Peter FitzMatthew’s charity and service to the abbey.<sup>125</sup> Thus to call such transactions sales is to ignore a prominent spiritual element. Perhaps we might propose a more general use of ‘grants’ as being the term for such complex multi-faceted transactions, with ‘sales’ and ‘gifts’ at the commercial and spiritual end of transactions, respectively. Either way, it seems likely that a great deal of monastic land acquisition involved a far greater admixture of spiritual and temporal returns than the surviving charter record would suggest. As far as Torre was concerned, however, the abbey was copiously

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<sup>121</sup> A. Polden, ‘A Crisis of the Knightly Class? Inheritance and Office among the Gentry of Thirteenth-Century Buckinghamshire’, in P. Fleming, A. Gross, J. R. Lander, (eds.) *Regionalism and Revision: The Crown and its Provinces in England, 1200-1650* (London, 1998), p. 38.

<sup>122</sup> J. Burton, *Monastic and Religious Orders in Britain, 1000-1300* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 261-2.

<sup>123</sup> Prestwich, *Plantagenet England*, p. 394; R. Graham, *English Ecclesiastical Studies* (London, 1929), p. 256.

<sup>124</sup> EC 223, 283.

<sup>125</sup> See below p. 103.

well-off in terms of its order, and able to be competitive with others in the county, and this translated into a strong presence in the land market.

### Motives for Patronage

Some of the motives for donation to the abbey have already been touched upon. The influence of William Brewer, for instance, surely stands as a motive in itself. Conversely, the lack of an active tutelary patron after the death of his son may also have provided a motive, as grants to an abbey without an active patron were, perhaps, more thankfully received by the canons. Most of the charters of donation to the abbey contain a formula stating that the grant is for the soul of the benefactor, together with, variously, those of his wife, parents, lord, and king, and all his ancestors and successors. This is perhaps the most obvious and pervasive evidence of the spiritual return expected of a grant in alms to an ecclesiastical institution. Indeed, before the thirteenth century it is frequently the only spiritual service attached to a grant.<sup>126</sup> As the thirteenth century progressed, however, property and rights were increasingly given in exchange for more specific returns. The most common of these was the promise of burial in the abbey precinct, although this would not always be seen as an exchange. In some cases the canons would be as concerned to obtain the body of a benefactor as they would the grant itself. This topic is, however, a complex one, and will be dealt with in a later chapter.<sup>127</sup>

The canons might be expected to provide specific spiritual services in exchange for a grant. Indeed, the grant itself might be intended to pay for their provision. Henry de Ferendone's grant of Dunningstone was provided in order to maintain a canon to say mass

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<sup>126</sup> Thompson, 'From 'Alms' to 'Spiritual Services'', p. 236.

<sup>127</sup> See Chapter 4.

for himself, his ancestors, and all the faithful departed.<sup>128</sup> Jordan de Dacombe gave his land in return for the abbey assigning one of the canons to celebrate divine service for himself, his wife, and all his ancestors and successors.<sup>129</sup> Sampson Foliot granted the canons three shillings rent in Edginswell to buy altar wax in order for the canons to sing mass. In return, the canons were to give him full service on his death as if he were one of the house.<sup>130</sup> The provision of wax was a common and cheap method of ensuring participation in the canons' divine service, as the lights they formed would be lit through the mass.<sup>131</sup> The canons were also apparently appreciative of the grant, as of the two charters of Alice de St. Marychurch, the one granting two pounds of wax annually was marked 'the better', as opposed to the one granting a ferling of land.<sup>132</sup>

Lights appear as important in themselves in the case of Isabella de Waddeton's grant of a ferling of land. This was given, together with her body, in return for the canons' promise to keep a light burning before the altar of the Holy Cross, and say a weekly mass for her, her husband Martin de Fishacre, and all their ancestors and successors. Should the light ever be extinguished, the grant was to revert to her heirs.<sup>133</sup> This last example is a particularly detailed one, compared to most in the thirteenth century. It has been noted that female tutelary patrons were more likely to specify spiritual services, perhaps because, as females, they were uncertain that any general spiritual returns would be dutifully remembered.<sup>134</sup> It may be possible that similar motives were at work in Isabella's case, or it may be that this was more a determination to fulfil a personal spirituality that can no longer be recovered. We will return to this particular request when considering the

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<sup>128</sup> EC 115

<sup>129</sup> EC 283.

<sup>130</sup> EC 274.

<sup>131</sup> Thompson, 'Church and the Aristocracy', p. 82.

<sup>132</sup> DC fo. 43r.

<sup>133</sup> DC fo. 27v.

<sup>134</sup> Thompson, 'Church and the Aristocracy', p. 107.

archaeological evidence for patronage, as it appears that Isabella's instructions were not carried out, or were at least substantially modified, after the mid-fourteenth century.<sup>135</sup>



**Figure 3: Line of Sight from West Door to High Altar**  
**Key: A – Probable grave of Peter FitzMatthew; B – Western Door;**  
**C – Grave of William Brewer the Younger and High Altar**  
 Plan provided by Museum of London Archaeology

The largest spiritual return given by the canons in the thirteenth century was to Peter FitzMatthew. In return for his grant of the manor of Blackawton, and as thanks for his great and immutable grants, Peter was to share in all the good works of the canons, his name was entered into the martyrilogium of the house, and his obit was pronounced each year in chapter, so that in all 'it makes for him the same amount as that for lord William Briwere our founder in masses, prayers and more...'<sup>136</sup> It is also possible to identify the most likely site for his burial position in the church: positioned in the nave, in apposition to the founder's son who was buried in the chancel [Fig. 3]. Line of sight to particular altars and images was important in medieval lay piety.<sup>137</sup> This grave showed clear signs of a raised monument, destroyed at the Dissolution, and as such would have dominated the

<sup>135</sup> See below Chapter 4, pp. 146-7.

<sup>136</sup> '...fiet pro eo quantum sit pro domino W Briwere fundatore nostrio in missis orationibus pluribus...'; DC fo. 157r.

<sup>137</sup> N. Saul, *English Church Monuments in the Middle Ages: History and Representation* (Oxford, 2009), pp. 118-19; C. P. Graves, *The Form and Fabric of Belief: The Archaeology of Lay Experience in Medieval Norfolk and Devon*, BAR British Series 311 (Oxford, 2000), pp. 113-50.

eyeline to the great rood, and, depending on the transparency of the rood screen, the high altar when entering through the west door. Thus, not only in the spiritual provisions for him but also in the position of his burial we may see the institution of Peter FitzMatthew as a sort of secondary founder.

On the whole, however, the grants to Torre were made with hopes of unspecific spiritual returns. It has been noted that before the fourteenth century the laity may have ‘lacked the knowledge with which to instruct their houses’ on the specific provision of spiritual services.<sup>138</sup> At Torre, only a very small number of grants stipulated how the proceeds of the land or rent should be used, while at Fountains over four hundred of the abbey’s grants contained clauses specifying that whatever was contained therein was to provide for lights or spiritual services or alms for the poor.<sup>139</sup> This may be indicative of a spiritual naivety on the part of a great number of the patrons of Torre, inasmuch as they were willing to let the canons arrange the details of their provision of spiritual services. It may be, however, that there were a number of charters and agreements similar to that granted to Peter FitzMatthew outlining the nature of the services to be provided to him, separate to the more general provisions included in his grant of land.

Returns did not, of course, have to be spiritual. The sale of land has already been touched upon, but patrons could also exchange their land for some form of maintenance at the abbey in the form of a corrody. Thus the canons were able to resume a part of their fee in Wolborough in exchange for an undertaking to care for the tenant’s mother.<sup>140</sup> Another resumption in the manor, from Richard Carre, was given in exchange for an exceptionally generous corrody for the grantor’s son.<sup>141</sup> He received a daily ration of three loaves called ‘free’, a gallon of beer or a pottle of good cider or beer, and a dish of meat from the

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<sup>138</sup> Thompson, ‘Church and the Aristocracy’, p. 100.

<sup>139</sup> Wardrop, *Fountains Abbey*, pp. 118-21.

<sup>140</sup> EC 33.

<sup>141</sup> DRO D1508M/Moger/51; D1508M/Moger/89; D1508M/Moger/117.



kitchen, 'as the free servants have'. He was also given four shillings annually for his clothing. He was clearly lodging in the abbey precinct, and had given an oath to remain chaste, as the abbot forbade him to marry without express permission, and stated that if at any time he crossed the abbey boundaries to consort with women then he was to do penance in the form of a penny to the light of Mary the Virgin in the abbey church, and one of his loaves was to be given to the subcellarer.<sup>142</sup>

Richard de la Flode similarly granted his land in exchange for a corrody for himself and his family. Richard received food, clothing, and lodging at the abbey, as the free servants had, although further details are not given. His wife, Odelina, was provided with a house outside the abbey walls, and granted the right to two quarters of wax and one quarter of barley per year. She also received 2s at Easter, a quarter of oats at Michaelmas, one basket of fruit and one of beans at Christmas, and annually a cartload of wood or turf for her fire. Their son, also Richard, was entitled to a daily meal at the abbey, although there is no mention of lodgings in his case.<sup>143</sup> While all this may seem an exceptionally generous return for a single ferling (c. 25 acres) of land, we should bear in mind that Richard and Odelina were probably elderly, and their son was less well provided for. Furthermore, even in the case of Richard Carre above where very little land was involved, the canons could afford to utilise large corrodies, as even if it meant cutting costs in the short term while the corrodians were still alive, after their death the land would belong to the canons.<sup>144</sup>

While William the Younger offered the canons some new patronage in the 1220's, the failure of the direct Brewer line, and the apparent disinterest of the Mohun lords of Torre,

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<sup>142</sup> DC fo. 165v.

<sup>143</sup> DC fos. 67r-68r.

<sup>144</sup> B. F. Harvey, *Living and Dying in England, 1100-1540: The Monastic Experience* (Oxford, 1993), p. 198; A. Bell & C. Sutcliffe, 'Valuing Medieval Annuities: Were Corrodies Underpriced?', *Explorations in Economic History*, 47 (2010), pp. 142-57 makes the case that on an assumed lifespan of a corrodian of around 12 years from taking up their corrody, most such deals, however, generous they seemed, worked out in favour of the granting abbey.

meant the canons had to attract patronage from outside the circle of influence of their tutelary patron. This was not particularly unusual, and occurred at a great number of monastic houses in the middle ages, for various reasons.<sup>145</sup> What is clear, however, is that the canons of Torre were never given a major second wave of donations by an heir of the founder, as happened, for example, with Henry Hussey at Durford Abbey.<sup>146</sup> Instead, they were able, with some varying degrees of success, to court benefactions from the baronial and knightly classes, although almost exclusively from those located in south-east Devon. Thanks to the extensive foundation endowment of William Brewer, the abbey was rich. Yet its influence, strong enough to have induced grants from Linconshire and Berkshire while the founder was still alive, appears to have been reduced to an area of its immediate vicinity following his death.

Thus while the first chapter noted a community of patronage around William Brewer, in the mid-thirteenth century the most important factor appears to be locality. The majority of patrons held lands in the vicinity of the abbey precinct or the abbey's lands and parishes. As such, it is difficult to identify a particularly strong 'network of patronage' at this time, although most of the patrons either have a local or parochial connection with the abbey. Furthermore, patronage was not exclusive, although a number of the lesser patrons could presumably only afford to give their support to a single monastery. The patrons were also increasingly stipulating more specific spiritual returns, although apparently not to such an extent that this was widespread. This was the last major era of expansion for Torre, and certainly after 1270 they were mainly restricted to small resumptions of fee. The next chapter, however, notes not only the last major acquisition of the abbey, but also the lay preference for greater and more specific spiritual returns.

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<sup>145</sup> Thompson, 'Church and the Aristocracy', pp. 67-72.

<sup>146</sup> Stevenson, *Durford Cartulary*, pp. xxiv-xxvii, 4-5.

### CHAPTER 3

#### John de Mohun and the acquisition of Tormohun

As noted in the previous chapter, by the time of the Statute of Mortmain grants of land to Torre had effectively ceased. Furthermore, the canons had also largely lost contact with their tutelary patrons, the Mohun lords of Dunster. However, in the mid-fourteenth century both these situations changed. The grant of the manor of Torre, or Tormohun, by John de Mohun, the abbey's tutelary patron, is the best documented of all the land transactions of the abbey.<sup>1</sup> It is worth studying in some detail, as it reveals not only the methods by which monasteries were able to acquire land against the provisions of the Statute of Mortmain, but also the changing nature and terms of grants to the church. The numerous lay figures involved also reveal something of the patronal connections between the abbey and the secular world.

At the foundation of Torre, William Brewer had granted the canons the parish church of Tormohun, but kept the manor for himself. William the Younger did not part with it either, and on his death without issue it passed to his sister, his father's fourth daughter, Alicia and her second son, William de Mohun.<sup>2</sup> Alicia had married Reginald (I) de Mohun (d. 1213), by whom she bore four sons, then William Paganell (d. 1228), who died without issue. Alicia's eldest son, Reginald (II) de Mohun, had inherited the honour of Dunster from his father, while William was endowed with his mother's share of the Brewer inheritance. As part of a deal towards the foundation of Newenham Abbey in 1246, however, most of William's share passed to Reginald. The foundation had been William's idea, but, in exchange for a cluster of manors including Tormohun, he asked that

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<sup>1</sup> Hereafter, the manor of Torre will be referred to as Tormohun, to avoid confusion with the abbey. It was known as such from the mid-fourteenth century.

<sup>2</sup> Dugdale, *Baronage*, ii, p. 702; H. C. Maxwell-Lyte, *History of Dunster and of the Families of Mohun and Luttrell* (London, 1909), i, p. 17; H. R. Watkin, 'The Manor of Tormohun', *TNHS* 4 (1922-6), p. 136.

Reginald give the majority of land for the foundation endowment.<sup>3</sup> In the 1250's, Reginald apparently used the manor house at Tormohun as one of his residences, for in a charter of 1252 the abbot gave him permission to erect a chapel there, and, in the notice of his death preserved in the Newenham Abbey cartulary, he is stated to have died there in 1257 or 1258. Notably, perhaps, he sent for a Franciscan friar from Oxford to perform the last rites, despite the proximity of the canons.<sup>4</sup> After his death the manor passed to his grandson, John (II) de Mohun (d. 1279), thence in turn to his son, John (III) de Mohun (d. 1330), and finally to John (III)'s grandson John (V) (d. 1376).<sup>5</sup> Throughout the period, the manor was held of the honour of Plympton, which by the fourteenth century was in the hands of the Courtenay family.<sup>6</sup>

The tutelary patronage of Torre Abbey passed, as far as can be ascertained, along with the lordship of the manor in which it was situated.<sup>7</sup> The Mohun lords, however, showed little interest in their Premonstratensian foundation. This is understandable on several counts, not least the distance of the abbey from their ancestral seat, and the focal point of their holdings, at Dunster. Furthermore, the family already held the patronage of two monasteries of Mohun foundation, Dunster and Bruton Priors, both in Somerset. Reginald (II) de Mohun and his brother added Newenham to these in 1246. In terms of a family mausoleum, the honour was shared between Newenham, Bruton, and Dunster.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Bodl. MS Top. Devon d. 5, fos. 18v-24v; *MDE* p. 357; Maxwell-Lyte, *History of Dunster*, i, p. 21.

<sup>4</sup> EC 13; DC fos. 36v-37r; Bodl. MS Top. Devon d. 5, fos. 27v-28r; Maxwell-Lyte, *History of Dunster*, i, pp. 27-9. The idea that Tormohun was Reginald's only or even main home, as suggested by Watkin and Seymour, is nonsense, as, besides Dunster Castle, he frequented his manors of Whichford, in Warwickshire, and Ottery in Devon; Watkin, 'Manor of Tormohun', p. 138; *TA*, p. 32; Maxwell-Lyte, *History of Dunster*, i, pp. 19-20.

<sup>5</sup> Maxwell-Lyte, *History of Dunster*, i, pp. 35-43.

<sup>6</sup> *BoF*, ii, p. 796; *FA*, i, p. 318.

<sup>7</sup> DC fo. 159v. The tutelary patronage of Dunkeswell following the death of William Brewer the Younger is unclear, although by 1362 it was in the hands of the Duke of Lancaster. Brewer's Augustinian foundation of Mottisfont passed into the hands of the King; K. Stöber, *Late Medieval Monasteries and their Patrons: England and Wales c. 1300-1540* (Woodbridge, 2007), p. 119; *IPM*, xi, p. 111.

<sup>8</sup> Of the six known sites of burial for members of the main branch of the Mohun family, three were at Newenham, two at Bruton, and one at Dunster. This is contrary to Stöber's assertion that Dunster was the favoured site, as only John (III) de Mohun is stated to have been buried there; Maxwell-Lyte, *History of Dunster*, i, pp. 17, 28, 30, 33, 42, 46; Stöber, *Late Medieval Monasteries*, p. 119.

Finally, the opportunities for a tutelary patron to immerse themselves in the life of an abbey in their custody were more limited in the Premonstratensian Order than in most.<sup>9</sup> Thus, with their patronage so widely spread, and the relationship of patrons to Premonstratensian abbeys being somewhat weaker than in other orders, it comes as no real surprise to learn that the Mohuns made no new grants of land or churches to Torre Abbey, and apparently had little contact with the canons.<sup>10</sup>

The first documentary evidence of an interest in the canons of Torre on the part of their tutelary patrons is from John (III) de Mohun. In the early-fourteenth century he granted them a small piece of land in Bradworthy, apparently to connect the canons' land in the manor to the church.<sup>11</sup> More intriguingly, there is a deteriorated charter preserved in the Dublin Cartulary indicating the terms of a loan made by John to Hugh (I) de Courtenay in 1326. John states that he has loaned £200 to Hugh, which was placed in the keeping of the abbot of Torre.<sup>12</sup> Neither the purpose nor the outcome of the loan are stated, although it may have been placed with the abbot to aid with building projects at the abbey.<sup>13</sup> While this clearly represents the active involvement of John (III) as the abbey's tutelary patron, the scanty nature of the evidence precludes any further understanding.

More substantial was the relationship between the canons and John (V) de Mohun, the last of the male line. John was ten when his grandfather John (III) died in 1330, his father, John (IV), having died sometime after 1322. His wardship passed through the grasping hands of Henry Burghersh and William Ayremin, and finally to Bartholomew Burghersh, half-brother of Henry. On being liveried in 1341, by the special request of Bartholomew, John de Mohun promptly married Joan Burghersh, the daughter of his

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<sup>9</sup> WC, pp. 291-9 notes that there before the sixteenth century there are no instances of tutelary patrons overtly influencing elections, nor of taking reliefs or other exactions during vacancies. At West Dereham in 1325, the tutelary patron found that he had no profit from the advowson, no custody in a vacancy, no licence to elect, and no right of presentation; Thompson, 'Church and the Aristocracy', p. 66.

<sup>10</sup> See Chapter 2, p. 71.

<sup>11</sup> DRO D1508M/Moger/415.

<sup>12</sup> DC fo. 92v.

<sup>13</sup> See Chapter 4, p. 155.

guardian.<sup>14</sup> Whilst a committed and able soldier – he was one of the original twenty-five Knights of the Order of the Garter – he proved either unable or unwilling to manage his inheritance. The fortunes of the Mohun family cannot have been helped by John’s long minority, nor by the fact that no lord of Dunster had left an heir of full age since William (III) de Mohun took the title in c. 1155.<sup>15</sup> This latter point had not, however, prevented John (III)’s loan to Courtenay noted above. Yet the circumstances of his minority suggest that Maxwell-Lyte and subsequent accounts may be unfair in stating that John ‘lived beyond his means’ and created his own financial worries.<sup>16</sup> Only a year after his livery, in 1342, he composed a will in which he was concerned with the repayment of his many creditors in London and elsewhere.<sup>17</sup> This may indicate that, regardless of any later financial naivety, John’s problems were not all of his own making.

Nonetheless, John de Mohun was to be remembered by the canons of Torre as having made a special contribution to the fortunes of their house. It is possible to discern the first concrete interest in the acquisition of Tormohun by the canons in January 1348, when John granted the manor to Robert le Pyl, parson of Crewkerne, and Edmund Gras, parson of Teignbruer, for life.<sup>18</sup> Edmund had strong connections to the canons, as not only was a relative of his, John Gras, abbot of Torre in 1348, but the family had close links to the abbey in this period.<sup>19</sup> Robert le Pyl was one of the most active lawyers in the household of Hugh (I) de Courtenay (1275-1340), having been given licence to serve in his household in 1331 and 1334, and was also a member of the household of his son Hugh (II)(1303-77). The Courtenays also presented him to a number of livings, including a

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<sup>14</sup> Maxwell-Lyte, *History of Dunster*, i, pp. 43-4.

<sup>15</sup> Maxwell-Lyte, *History of Dunster*, i, pp. 9-45.

<sup>16</sup> Maxwell-Lyte, *History of Dunster*, i, p. 46; TA, p. 63; Watkin, ‘Manor of Tormohun’, p. 146.

<sup>17</sup> Maxwell-Lyte, *History of Dunster*, i, p. 46; Somerset Record Office, DD\L/P37/4.

<sup>18</sup> DC fo. 97v.

<sup>19</sup> See Chapter 5, p. 176. Teignbruer was the early name for Teigngrace. It was named not for the family of William Brewer, founder of Torre Abbey, but his brother-in-law William de Bruera, who granted Wolborough to the canons.

prebend in Exeter Castle, where the canons held Ashclyst, and the rectory of Crewkerne, of which they were patrons.<sup>20</sup>

Given their intimate connections with the abbey and the earl, the two clergymen thus appear to be acting as nominees for the canons and Hugh (II) de Courtenay, who was lord of the fee. However, Hugh's association with the abbey, or with Mohun, may have gone further than this. While his overlordship would mean his interests had to be protected, it would not necessarily entail his involvement to the extent of providing one of his agents as a nominee. Robert le Pyl does not appear to have been acting independently, as in each subsequent stage of the transaction there was at least one identifiably 'Courtenay' agent. There was some prior relationship between the abbey and the immediate predecessors of Mohun and Courtenay in the shape of the £200 loan in 1326, although it is not clear that this was still outstanding, or how it would induce Hugh to involve himself in the manor. While it may not be possible to reconstruct the reasons for Hugh's active role here it is worth at least noting, inasmuch as the Earl of Devon was taking an active interest in the affairs of the house.<sup>21</sup>

The issue was soon complicated, however, by John de Mohun's attempts to secure his inheritance by a series of enfeoffments to use. Between 1346 and 1348 he and his wife arranged a series of short-term enfeoffments of their officials in Dunster Castle, followed by the re-conveyance of the lands to John and Joan.<sup>22</sup> The apparent purpose of these transactions was to ensure that the sonless career soldier could secure his lands for his three daughters. It also gave Joan a life interest in all the manors of her husband. One such transaction granted a number of tenancies to William de Hothorp and Richard Coke,

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<sup>20</sup> Burls, 'Society, Economy and Lordship', p. 187; *Register of Ralph of Shrewsbury*, ed. T. S. Holmes, Somerset Record Society 9-10 (1896), i, pp. 72, 178; ii, p. 467; *Reg. Grandisson*. ii, pp. 940-6.

<sup>21</sup> See Chapter 5, pp. 185-6.

<sup>22</sup> Maxwell-Lyte, *History of Dunster*, i, pp. 46-51.

chaplain, including the manor of Tormohun, with the intention that William and Richard would regrant the tenancies to John and Joan, with reversion to their heirs.<sup>23</sup>

In the fine regarding this transaction, it was also stated that Edmund Gras and Robert le Pyl were to hold Tormohun for a period of ten years, with reversion to John de Mohun.<sup>24</sup> This was in obvious conflict with the earlier grant for life, and John de Mohun explained the situation in a letter of 1351. He stated that the manor had originally been granted to John Osborn, his constable, who, acting for him, had granted it to Robert and Edmund for life. Osborn had then, with the consent of Robert and Edmund, granted the manor to William de Hothorp and Richard Coke, who leased it to Robert and Edmund, with reversion to John de Mohun.<sup>25</sup> Under the terms of the new agreement, Robert and Edmund were to hold the manor for ten years only, before it would revert to John. As Edmund died in 1349, this series of transactions must have happened in quick succession.<sup>26</sup> Robert, now the sole nominee, replied stating that the manor had indeed been granted to John Osborn, who had in turn granted it to Edmund and Robert for the term of their lives. Osborn had then granted the reversion of the manor to John de Mohun and his heirs in fee simple. John de Mohun had then further ensured the reversion of the manor, along with his other lands, to himself and his heirs, through a grant to William and Richard. These two had then sought to harass Robert and, while he was alive, Edmund, and prove, insincerely and falsely, that they held the manor for a period of only ten years.<sup>27</sup>

The formal and precise legal framework of the charters of enfeoffment thus concealed a much more complex and, perhaps, uncoordinated reality. The matter was soon effectively settled, however, as in June 1351, John de Mohun confirmed the grant of a

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<sup>23</sup> *CPR 1348-50*, p. 58; DC fo. 128v. Neither appears to have been a figure of any note; they were most likely servants of John de Mohun. Richard Coke is called 'chaplain' in 1351; DC fo. 95v.

<sup>24</sup> DC fo. 128v.

<sup>25</sup> DC fo. 95r.

<sup>26</sup> *Reg. Grandisson*, iii, p. 1405.

<sup>27</sup> DC fo. 95v.



large portion of land in the manor of Tormohun to a group of clerics and laymen. The extent of the land was stated to consist of 18 messuages and 18 ferlings of land in Upton, with rents and services of all tenants in the vill, ‘all land and tenements on the south side of the way which leads from Walflute towards Ilsham as far as it extends within the limits of the said manor; and in one messuage and one ferling of land which Richard Bunne sometime held; and in one and a half acres of land extending over Waddone in the said manor within the bounds of the lands of the manor of Collaton; and in one corn water-mill with the service of all the tenants...and in one acre and one virgate of meadow lying in a certain close between the aforesaid mill and the sea...’. The recipients were named to be ‘Robert le Pyl, parson of Crewkerne, Thomas Bernhous, parson of Dartington, Richard de Wodelond, parson of Stokeinteignhead, William de Rasseleghe, vicar of Bradworthy, William Davis, chaplain, William Busschyl, John de Berkadone, John de Pyn, and John de Northcote’.<sup>28</sup>

This transaction and others mentioned in the charter did not add to the canons’ holdings, as the canons had had the manor to their use since 1348. Its purpose, besides increasing the number of nominees, was to separate the named lands and appurtenances from the manor itself, with the intent of alienating the former to the canons. The charter notes that the manor itself had been granted by John Osborn, acting on behalf of John de Mohun, to Robert le Pyl and Edmund Gras, who in turn granted it to William Sleigh of Kenton and Richard Forst of Niewton. This is the only mention of these two intermediaries, and while their purpose is unclear they may again have been acting on behalf of Courtenay and the abbey respectively, as Kenton was a Courtenay manor held in demesne, and Newton Abbot was held by the canons.<sup>29</sup> They then granted the manor to the

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<sup>28</sup> DC fo. 94r.

<sup>29</sup> *FA*, i, p. 377; William Sleigh, along with William Smale, mayor of Dartmouth, and John Dabernon of Bradford, leased the stannaries of Dartmouth from Bartholomew Burghersh, and thus may also have had a

nine nominees. Thus the named lands in the manor and the manor itself were, initially, held by the same nominees, the only difference being that the manor had reversion to John de Mohun. The result of this, as will be discussed below, was to allow the lands to be alienated, while the manor was still in John de Mohun's power to grant or not.

The transfer of land to a group of nominees who would hold the land in name whilst the actual lordship was exercised by another party, an 'enfeoffment to use', was used by both lay and ecclesiastical lords in this period. The former often employed it to secure the smooth passage of lands to heirs, and the latter utilised it to avoid the limitations of the Statute of Mortmain. Through nominees, an ecclesiastical institution could enjoy the fruits of any grants of land without having to pay for their alienation in mortmain. The process has been thoroughly analysed, and there is very little that can be added in terms of new information from the events at Torre.<sup>30</sup> What is notable, however, is that the process of the transfer of the manor to the canons fits so closely with many of the patterns observed elsewhere. It was considered good practice to use several nominees, with a preponderance of secular clergy, in order to prevent disputes arising should one of the nominees die and his heirs, or the wards of his heirs, claim the land. It was of the utmost importance that the monastery could trust their nominees, and, as such, family members, local notables or patrons, lay officials of the abbey, and those with expertise in the field were often employed.<sup>31</sup>

Of the nine nominees in the 1351 grant, five were indeed clergy, but only one, William de Rasseleghe, was the vicar of a church in the possession of the abbey. Stokeinteignhead church, of which Richard de Wodelond was the parson, was of the patronage of Plympton Priory. However, nominees often worked for more than one house,

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connection to John de Mohun, as Bartholomew was his father-in-law; *The Register of Edward the Black Prince*, ed. M. C. B. Dawes (London 1930-33), ii, p. 84.

<sup>30</sup> J. M. W. Bean, *The Decline of English Feudalism* (Manchester, 1968), pp. 104-79; S. Raban, *Mortmain Legislation*, pp. 114-29.

<sup>31</sup> Raban, *Mortmain Legislation*, pp. 115-21.

and Richard was also a university graduate, so thus may have been employed for his legal knowledge.<sup>32</sup> Dartington church, of which Thomas Bernhous had been the rector since 1348, was in the patronage of Margaret Martyn (d. 1359), who, since the death of her husband William Martyn, had held the advowson with the manor of Dartington from James de Audley, lord of St. Marychurch.<sup>33</sup> Robert le Pyl may have been retained as a nominee for his expertise and interest in the matter, or perhaps as a representative of Hugh de Courtenay's continued interest.

The lay nominees were mostly local gentry, but almost all were prominent on the county scene. John de Northcote was most likely a tenant of the abbey, styling himself John de Northcote of Newton Abbot, and was a figure of some repute in the county, holding the shrievalty of Devon in 1353/4.<sup>34</sup> John de Pyn was the holder of Upton Pyne, near Exeter, and was the steward of Bartholomew Burghersh, father-in-law of John de Mohun, in the coinage of the stannaries of Devon.<sup>35</sup> William Busschyl held the manor of Teignwick [Highweek] and rights in Teignbridge hundred, together with Newton Bushel, the town forming the adjacent northern counterpart to the canons' town of Newton Abbot.<sup>36</sup>

One of the original nominees, Edmund Gras, like his relation at the abbey, was apparently a victim of the Black Death, and had effectively been replaced by a kinsman and namesake of the new abbot, John de Berkadone (1349-82). Seymour assumed that the nominee and the abbot were one and the same, and that it was 'absurd' to think they were two men with the same name.<sup>37</sup> Despite his reservations, this was indeed the case, and in Grandisson's register, where he is noted to have presented to the church of Lew Trenchard

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<sup>32</sup> *Reg. Grandisson*, iii, p. 1266; Fizzard, *Plympton Priory*, pp. 185-6; Thompson, 'Church and the Aristocracy', p. 299.

<sup>33</sup> *Reg. Grandisson*, iii, p. 1377; *FA*, i, p. 395; *IPM*, viii, pp. 271, 394; x, p. 390

<sup>34</sup> *CPR 1361-4*, p. 340; *CFR 1347-56*, p. 388.

<sup>35</sup> Hoskins, *Devon*, p. 510; *Black Prince's Register*, ii, p. 80.

<sup>36</sup> DC fo. 137(bis)r; *FA*, i, p. 378; *IPM*, x, pp. 386-7.

<sup>37</sup> *TA*, p. 64.

in 1349, his wife is named as Alice, the widow of Nicholas de Milleford.<sup>38</sup> He was lord of Barkington, in Staverton, and in 1346 he held a third of a fee in Rushford and half a fee in Sparkwell, both of the honour of Okehampton, half a fee in Church Marwood of the honour of Plympton, and half a fee with Richard Corbyn in Milton, Hok, Newton and Foldhay in North Tawton hundred, also of the honour of Plympton.<sup>39</sup> Thus he was connected not only to the abbey by familial ties, but through tenurial links to the Courtenays.

The types of nominee employed by the canons were thus representative of the common makeup of such groups. Yet two of them appear in a more active patronal role in regard to the transfer of the lands in the manor that were dealt with in the separate charter of 1351. Nine years passed before the lands were alienated to the canons, but in 1360 John de Berkadone and John de Pyn acquired a licence for the alienation of ‘twenty messuages, one water-mill, 400 acres of land, four acres of meadow, fifty acres of pasture, six acres of wood, and fifty acres of heath in Tormohun, producing £7 7s 4d annually.’<sup>40</sup> The charter states that they granted the land to the canons ‘in order to find two canons as chaplains to celebrate divine service each day in the abbey for the souls of the said John and John and for all the faithful departed’.<sup>41</sup> The naming of nominees in chantry grants is not unknown. Their inclusion could be intended as part of the method of payment for their services, either specifically for the work involved in the transfer of the lands, or generally for

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<sup>38</sup> *Reg. Grandisson*, iii, p. 1391.

<sup>39</sup> These lands were scattered all over the county. Rushford is near Tavistock, Sparkwell near Plympton, Church Marwood north of Barnstaple, while Milton, Hok, Newton and Foldhay are near Zeal Monachorum and Coleridge; *FA*, i, pp. 387, 392, 414, 422; *DFOF*, ii, pp. 318, 350, 362-3, 375-6, . John de Berkadone also appears on a Dartmouth charter with Robert le Pyl in 1350; Watkin, *Dartmouth*, p. 37.

<sup>40</sup> TNA C 143/332/21; *CPR 1358-61*, p. 334; DC fo. 94v. Watkin’s translation of the acreage is incorrect, reading the admittedly indistinct figure in the cartulary as forty, rather than 400, acres. The enrolled licence and the inquisition clearly states 400 acres, ‘Manor of Tormohun’, pp. 143-4.

<sup>41</sup> *CPR 1358-61*, p. 334; DC fo. 94v. Watkin mistranslates ‘ipsorum Johannis et Johannis’ as John and Johanna, referring to John de Mohun and his wife, and thus he, and Seymour following him, state that this was a Mohun chantry; ‘Manor of Tormohun’, p. 144; *TA*, p. 64.

services rendered to the institution.<sup>42</sup> Yet in the case of Torre, as John and Johanna de Mohun were not mentioned, it is far more likely that John de Pyn and John de Berkadone, both relatively wealthy landowners in their own right, had purchased the land from Mohun and the other nominees in order to grant it to the canons. This would explain why the number of nominees was reduced from nine to just these two, especially as the manor itself continued to be held by multiple nominees, including John de Northcote. The separation of the lands from the manor in 1351 was clearly the preparation for this alienation. Finding comparisons for such incidences of nominees becoming patrons themselves in the land they were holding is a difficult task, however, as it requires an in-depth study of individual transactions and, here as in many places, the relevant fines may not have survived.

This land alienated to the canons comprised a large portion of the manor, over 500 acres in a manor of around 2000. The exact boundaries of the land are not entirely clear, but they appear to have included Upton, by this point the main settlement in the manor around a mile inland following the course of the Fleet Brook, along with all the rents and services of the villagers both there and at Torre.<sup>43</sup> They also held all the land to the south of the road between Walflete, by which is presumably meant the mouth of the Fleet Brook below Waldon Hill, and Ilsham. The road is the modern Torwood and Babbacombe Roads as far as Ilsham Road, leading to Ilsham Grange. From the description of the 'grange' in Tormohun at the Dissolution of the abbey, the future demesne lands of Torwood, Braddons, Dunstone, Warber Park, and Bowsbrake to the north of Torwood Road, as well, perhaps, as those between the Fleet on the east and the abbey on the west, named as Croft

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<sup>42</sup> Thompson, 'Church and the Aristocracy', pp. 182, 245-6.

<sup>43</sup> The 1332 Lay Subsidy gives the number of households in the tithing as fourteen. Given there were probably a number of exemptions, and this figure includes the vill of Torre and Upton, as well as, perhaps, a few other scattered farmsteads, eighteen households in 1360 would appear to be most of the properties in the manor; *The Devonshire Lay Subsidy of 1332*, ed. A. M. Erskine, DCRS, n.s. 14 (1969), p. 3.

and Waldon Hill in the Dissolution sale, were not included in this transaction.<sup>44</sup> Some of these lands were presumably those conveyed to the canons by Durling Abbot, chaplain, in 1413, when he purchased a licence to transfer four messuages, two ferlings, and 26 acres in the manor 'to support certain charges in their church'.<sup>45</sup>

The manor itself, with all the relevant appurtenances and incidents, was alienated to the canons in a separate transaction in 1370. The canons had probably had the use of the manor since their nominees are first mentioned in 1348, and certainly since 1351.<sup>46</sup> Yet the manor itself was still technically John de Mohun's, and was included amongst forty-three title deeds granted by him to his wife in 1355. Johanna de Mohun was, by this stage, not only interested in acquiring a life-interest in her husband's estates, but had 'obtained complete ascendancy over him'.<sup>47</sup> This might explain, at least, why the land in the manor was separated from the manor itself, as the couple may have held hopes of producing a male heir (John would have been around thirty-five in 1355), or Johanna may not have wanted to alienate property in which she had only recently acquired a life interest.

The permanent acquisition of the manor by the canons effectively occurred in 1369, when the nominees purchased the quitclaim of John de Mohun for 200 marks.<sup>48</sup> The manor was rated in the inquisition *ad quod damnum* as being worth £7 5s 4d a year, although this figure clearly did not include the lands transferred to the canons in 1360.<sup>49</sup> Thus 200 marks was a reasonable sum for the purchase of the manor, at around eighteen

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<sup>44</sup> *Devon Monastic Lands: Calendar of Particulars for Grants 1536-58*, ed. J. Youings, DCRS, n.s. 1 (1955), pp. 14, 25; Walker, 'Medieval demesne boundaries', pp. 194-211.

<sup>45</sup> *CPR 1408-13*, p. 466; TNA 143/444/8. Durling Abbot was ordained as priest in the title of Buckfast Abbey in 1377, and was named as creditor of William Langston in the same year. He was a chaplain in the deanery of Moreton in the archdeaconry of Totnes in 1379; *Reg. Brantyngham*, ii, p. 781; TNA C 241/162/79; E 179/24/9 m.1. Very little else can be ascertained of his life or status. He was clearly acting as a nominee for the abbey, having purchased the land from its various holders in 1407. They were named as Alexander Werthe and his wife Julia (with one ferling), Alexander Trotyng and his wife Joan (with 22 acres), Roger Bosse (with 4 acres), and William Porrecombe and his wife Alice (with one ferling); TNA CP 25/1/45/73 no. 79

<sup>46</sup> DC fo. 94r-v. The rights to the waste of the manor were quitclaimed to the canons by John de Mohun in 1363; DC fo. 95v.

<sup>47</sup> Maxwell-Lyte, *History of Dunster*, i, pp. 48-9; Somerset Record Office DD/L/P1/5/1-2, DD/L/P1/6/1-2.

<sup>48</sup> DC fo. 95v.

<sup>49</sup> TNA C 143/371/5.

times the stated annual value.<sup>50</sup> By this time, the nominees were Walter de Columpton, clerk, Roger Boghemore, clerk, and John de Northcote, the last of which had been a nominee in the manor since 1351. Of the other two, Walter had been a canon of Exeter Cathedral since c. 1366, while Roger had been collated to a prebend in Ottery collegiate church in 1361.<sup>51</sup> The actual transfer of the land to the abbey occurred on May 6<sup>th</sup> 1370, when the three nominees received licence to grant the manor to the canons in order that divine service be celebrated each day in the abbey for the souls of the lords of Mohun and all the faithful departed.<sup>52</sup>

Again the timing of the grant is significant in regard to the fortunes of the Mohun family. In 1369 John de Mohun was around forty-nine, and had presumably forsaken all hopes of producing a male heir. It was not untypical of the last of the male line of a family of tutelary patrons to arrange the transfer of the capital manor of the abbey to the religious, while a lack of heirs was a common precursor to granting land to any monastery. The Norfolk abbeys of Mendham and Hempton both received their capital manors under similar circumstances in the fourteenth century.<sup>53</sup> John may also have been growing infirm, as it was in July of that year that a group of trustees was assembled to separate the core of the honour of Dunster – the castle along with the hundred of Carhampton and a number of the surrounding manors – in order to sell it ‘according to the pleasure and honour of the lady’, Joan de Mohun.<sup>54</sup> The purchase of the quitclaim of Tormohun from John de Mohun was licensed in May 1369, so it appears that there was a definite attempt to consolidate the honour at this point. Tormohun was one of a number of more distant manors not included

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<sup>50</sup> The general rate in this period was between fifteen and twenty times the annual value, K. B. McFarlane, *The Nobility of Later Medieval England* (Oxford, 1973), pp. 56-7; Raban, *Mortmain Legislation*, p. 177-80; Thompson, ‘Church and the Aristocracy’, p. 87.

<sup>51</sup> *Fasti Ecclesiae Anglicanae 1300-1541: Exeter Diocese*, ed. J. M. Horn (London, 1964), p. 39; *Reg. Grandisson*, iii, p. 1463.

<sup>52</sup> DC fo. 80v.

<sup>53</sup> Thompson, ‘Church and the Aristocracy’ pp. 48, 109, 130-1.

<sup>54</sup> Maxwell-Lyte, *History of Dunster*, i, pp. 49-53; *CPR 1367-70*, p. 256; Somerset Record Office DD\L/P1/7; DD\L/P17/1/41.

in this package, and was sold to the canons, presumably in return for some badly-needed ready money. In 1374 the reversion of the remaining central lands of the honour was sold to Elizabeth Luttrell, with Joan de Mohun to hold them until her death. John de Mohun died the following September, in 1375, while Joan lived until 1404.<sup>55</sup>

The interest of the honour of Dunster in the manor of Tormohun and the abbey of Torre appears to have ended with the death of John, if not perhaps previously with the sale of the manor to the canons. In John de Mohun's quitclaim of 1369 the reversion of the manor was stated to be to William de Columpton's heirs, although, as a canon, he cannot have had legitimate heirs. As such, on his death, the mesne lordship would presumably have reverted to the tenant-in-chief, and from this date onwards the canons held the manor directly from the Courtenay honour of Plympton.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, as a direct consequence of the transfer of the manor to the canons, and the death of the last in the line of the Mohun patrons of Torre, the tutelary patronage of the abbey was either transferred to the overlords of the manor, the Courtenay Earls of Devon, or lapsed and was taken up by them. Either way, the earls are named as tutelary patrons in a visitation of 1478. The transfer of the capital manors of abbeys by their founders when the end of the familial line was imminent is replicated at a number of abbeys of this time, and in each case, where the tutelary patronage appears to have been attached to the manor, this fell on the overlord.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Maxwell-Lyte, *History of Dunster*, i, pp. 53-8; Somerset Record Office DD\L/P1/7; DD\L/P1/32.

<sup>56</sup> DC fo. 95v. While the manor does not appear in the feudal survey of 1428, it was also not included in the deeds of sale to the Luttrells, nor in Joan de Mohun's inquisition *post mortem*. The inquisition *ad quod damnum* relating to tenements in the manor in 1413 states only that the manor was held of the Earl of Devon; TNA C 143/444/8. All evidence thus seems to point to the manor now being held directly of the Courtenays by the abbey.

<sup>57</sup> CAP, iii, p. 142; Thompson, 'Church and the Aristocracy', pp. 48, 73. While the advowson of Torre does not appear with the other Courtenay houses in the inquisitions *post mortem*, this is not necessarily an indicator that it was not in their patronage. There were a variety of reasons why an abbey might not appear in inquisitions, and in the case of the Courtenays only Forde, Cowick, St. James' Exeter and Buckland were named. Their inclusion appears to have more to do with their ties to the baronies by which they had been founded. Forde and Cowick were both attached to the honour of Okehampton, having been founded by Richard FitzBaldwin, while St. James' and Buckland were attached to the earldom of Devon and the honour of Plympton, having been founded by Baldwin de Redvers and Amicia, countess of Devon, respectively; MDE, pp. 153, 191, 338, 380.



While the manor of Tormohun was the only addition of any great substance to the abbey's endowment in the fourteenth century, another was proposed yet never materialised.<sup>58</sup> This is revealed by a petition of William de Aumale of Woodbury and Henry Percehay, or Percy, asking to grant the church of Marhamchurch, on the north-east Cornish coast around ten miles from the canons' church of Bradworthy, to the abbey in May 1355.<sup>59</sup> Henry was a prominent Devonian lawyer, first appearing as such in 1352, later rising to be a King's Sergeant in 1365, and a Justice of the Common Pleas in 1377. He married Isabella, the widow of William de Fillegh, held land in Tallaton, Burlescombe, and Kitton in Holcombe Rogus, and appears in parliament both for Devon and Torrington in 1352 and a number of times thereafter. He does not appear to have any connection to the Percy earls of Northumberland, although the name was not particularly common in Devon; his father William is the only Percy or Percehay in the 1332 lay subsidy. William de Aumale's ancestors had formerly been patrons of the abbey, having been involved in the granting of the manor of Greendale at the foundation. His father, who died in 1336, had been sheriff of Devon in 1333 and an MP for the county in 1335, and William had strong links to Hugh (II) de Courtenay. Indeed, Burls describes him as a 'protégée' of the Earl.<sup>60</sup>

However, neither William nor Henry appear to have had any rights themselves in the church. The evidence for the middle of the century, around the time of the grant, is sadly lacking, but the patron in 1328 was Joan de Engleys, or Lengleys, and by 1370 the

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<sup>58</sup> There were a number of small resumptions of fee throughout the century. That in Tormohun in 1413 has already been mentioned; n. 45 above. A grant of messuages and land in Dacombe by John de Northcote and Walter Smyth was the subject of an inquisition *ad quod damnum* in 1377, but no licence was granted. This may have been the same land subsequently granted by John Dalkyn, TNA C 143/388/22; CPR 1396-9, p. 153.

<sup>59</sup> TNA SC 8/246/12300.

<sup>60</sup> Burls, 'Society, Economy and Lordship', pp. 119, 149; K. L. Wood-Legh, 'Sheriffs, Lawyers and Belted Knights in the Parliaments of Edward III', *English Historical Review*, 46 (1931), p. 377; CPR 1367-70, p. 299; Reg. Grandisson, iii, p. 1487; Erskine, *Lay Subsidy*, pp. 33, 87; Westcote, *View of Devonshire*, p. 491; Pole, *Collections*, pp. 87, 109, 207-9; J. J. Alexander, 'Devon County Members of Parliament Part II: The Middle Plantagenet Period (1327-1399)' *DART*, 45 (1913), pp. 257, 260.

patronage had passed to Richard Polglos, son and heir of William Polglos.<sup>61</sup> According to the 1355 petition, the advowson had been held by Lengleys of Nicholas de Motton, who held it of the Duchy of Cornwall. Nicholas was probably the de Morton who held the large nearby manor of Mitchell Morton (later Great Morton) along with Mortain fees in Trevelward and Trekinward (Trewellard near Saltash).<sup>62</sup> From an indenture made in September 1355, it is clear that Joan had died without heirs, probably in the late-1340s, and her lands had escheated to William de Chambernoun. On his death in 1353, his two coheirs, Elizabeth, wife of William Polglos, and Katherine, wife of Walter de Wodeland, agreed on the division of the inheritance.<sup>63</sup> The advowson of Marhamchurch does not appear in the indenture, although given that only four months earlier it had been the subject of a petition for alienation this may be unsurprising. For whatever reason, though, the gift never materialised, or was prevented from occurring, and the canons received no new advowsons of churches after that of Buckland Brewer in 1223. At the Dissolution, a pension of 5s 8d from the rectors of the church was received by Hartland Abbey, although no record of such a grant survives.<sup>64</sup>

There is a clear connection between the abbey and the interested parties, inasmuch as Walter de Wodelond, who had married one of the coheirs of Chambernoun, was lord of Cockington, the manor adjacent to the abbey to the west. It is not clear when or how he came into the manor after the death without male issue of the previous holder, James de Cockington, probably in 1351, but he was certainly holder in 1353, when he was granted the rights to a market and fair in the manor.<sup>65</sup> He held numerous lands in Devon and Cornwall, having been a prominent knight in the retinue of the Black Prince since 1345,

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<sup>61</sup> *Reg. Grandisson*, iii, p. 1254; *Reg. Brantyngham*, i, p. 11. Richard Polglos was described by Risdon as 'an idiot, who died of the plague, in an abbey in Yorkshire', whose inheritance was conveyed to John Herylle by marriage to Richard's sister Margaret; Risdon, *Chorographical Description*, pp. 345-6.

<sup>62</sup> *FA*, i, pp. 201, 207, 212; Alexander, 'Members of Parliament II', p. 259.

<sup>63</sup> The land inherited by the heirs of William Chambernoun included Joan de English's capital manor of Stockleigh English; *Reg. Grandisson*, iii, p. 1472; TNA E 40/6956.

<sup>64</sup> *MDE*, p. 215.

<sup>65</sup> *CChR 1341-1417*, p. 126; TNA CP 40/365 m. 162.

and acted as the prince's standard-bearer at Poitiers in 1356.<sup>66</sup> He later appears more directly as a patron of the abbey granting the canons a message in Exeter in 1370, the year of his death, in order that his anniversary be celebrated in the abbey church.<sup>67</sup>

How fortunate, then, was Torre Abbey, in comparison to the other abbeys in Devon, in attracting a grant of the size of the manor of Tormohun in the fourteenth century? It has been claimed that 'even in the fourteenth century, when secular donations to the monasteries had all but dried up, Torre remained the most favoured monastic recipient of lay patronage in Devon'.<sup>68</sup> While it is broadly true that, in terms of land at least, many Devon abbeys do not appear to have continued to attract the patronage of the laity, there are a number of notable exceptions. As we shall see in the next chapter, however, even in the case of those abbeys where lay patronage, as revealed through grants of land, appears to have completely halted, a host of other methods which are less well-represented in the documentary sources reveal a continuation of monastic patronage.

Not including hospitals and the smaller collegiate foundations, it has been calculated that there were twenty-eight monastic institutions in Devon by 1300.<sup>69</sup> For ease of study dependent priories and nunneries will be omitted, and of the remainder only those with an annual income of over £100 at the Dissolution will be analysed, which results in a core sample, including Torre, of the ten wealthiest Devonian monasteries [Table 1]. While this may seem arbitrary, the resulting set comprises nine monasteries of similar size, wealth and status to Torre, and from across the three major orders – Benedictine, Augustinian and Cistercian. As the survival of cartularies from the monasteries in question

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<sup>66</sup> *Chonicon Galfridi le Bakere Swynebroke*, ed. E. M. Thompson (Oxford, 1889), pp. 150, 312; J. Hatcher, *Rural Economy and Society in the Duchy of Cornwall* (Cambridge, 1970), p. 111.

<sup>67</sup> *CPR 1367-70*, p. 388.

<sup>68</sup> Burls, 'Society, Economy and Lordship', p. 54.

<sup>69</sup> C. J. Holdsworth, 'From 1050 to 1307' in N. Orme (ed.), *Unity and Variety: A History of the Church in Devon and Cornwall* (Exeter, 1991), pp. 23-52, p. 35 and table on pp. 40-1.

is patchy at best, the main source of evidence for the acquisition of property in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries will have to come from licences to amortise preserved in the Patent Rolls, as well as the collected sources contained in Oliver's *Monasticon Dioecesis Exoniensis* and Dugdale's *Monasticon*.

The two wealthiest monastic houses, Plympton and Tavistock, made very few additions to their endowments after 1279. With the exception of a handful of grants of messuages and rent, Tavistock's transactions mainly concerned resumptions of fee, while Plympton did not make any applications for licences to amortise land.<sup>70</sup> The major exception to this, although not a particularly valuable comparison with the situation at Torre, was the grant of the alien priory of Cowick to Tavistock by Edward IV in 1462, the assets of which were valued at £78 at the Dissolution.<sup>71</sup> In terms of spiritual assets, both Plympton and Tavistock appropriated a number of the churches of which they already held the advowson, but only Tavistock actually added to that number, being granted the advowson of Whitchurch and Westleigh churches in 1301, of which at least Whitchurch was subsequently appropriated.<sup>72</sup> Ralph de Albamara, who granted the church of Westleigh, was not a member of the East Devon family who were patrons of Torre but a direct descendent of the Robert of Aumale who was a notable tenant of the honour of Plympton at Domesday. His family were patrons of Tavistock, having previously granted Ottery in Lamerton to the monks, while Walter le Abbe, who granted Whitchurch, held a number of fees around the abbey.<sup>73</sup> The monks were unable to secure the grant of

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<sup>70</sup> Finberg, *Tavistock Abbey*, pp. 17-8; Fizzard, *Plympton Priory*, pp. 99-127; *MDE*, pp. 91-4, 130-4. In 1348 Plympton priory was granted a licence to amortise £10 of land yearly 'at the request of Joan, the king's daughter', but there is no record of this licence having been used; *CPR 1348-50*, p.57.

<sup>71</sup> Finberg, *Tavistock Abbey*, p. 28; *CPR 1461-7*, pp. 222, 273; Holdsworth, '1050 to 1307', pp. 40-1; Chapter 6, p. 215.

<sup>72</sup> Fizzard, *Plympton Priory*, pp. 129-51; Finberg notes the appropriation of Whitchurch, but was apparently unaware of how the monks had come to possess it; *Tavistock Abbey*, pp. 25-8; *CPR 1292-1301*, p. 616.

<sup>73</sup> Finberg, *Tavistock Abbey*, p. 16; *DB Devon*, ch. 28; *BoF*, ii, p. 757; *FA*, i, pp. 353-5, 358.

Westleigh, however, and by the late-fourteenth century the patrons were the Dean and Chapter of Exeter.<sup>74</sup>

| House               | Order | Income in 1535 (£) |
|---------------------|-------|--------------------|
| Plympton Priory     | Aug   | 912                |
| Tavistock Abbey     | Ben   | 902                |
| Buckfast Abbey      | Cist  | 466                |
| Torre Abbey         | Prem  | 396                |
| Forde Abbey         | Cist  | 374                |
| Hartland Abbey      | Aug   | 306                |
| Dunkeswell Abbey    | Cist  | 295                |
| Buckland Abbey      | Cist  | 241                |
| Newenham Abbey      | Cist  | 227                |
| Frithelstock Priory | Aug   | 127                |

**Table 1: Monasteries in Devon with an annual income >£100 at the Dissolution**

Buckfast, the wealthiest Cistercian house in the diocese, failed to attract any major additions to its landed endowment in the last few centuries of its existence. The monks did, however, win the riparian rights to weirs and fisheries in the upper concourse of the Dart in 1383, following what may have been a protracted legal battle with James and Thomas Audley, successive lords of Dartington. Furthermore, in 1385, the monks were granted a licence to receive the fisheries and mills of the manor of Staverton, held by the dean and canons of Exeter, at a yearly rent of 10 marks.<sup>75</sup> By 1535, however, the fishing rights were only valued at £1, while the mill provided an income of 10 marks and the rent had been reduced to five marks.<sup>76</sup>

Of the remaining Cistercian houses, despite Buckland's late foundation, by Amicia de Redvers, dowager Countess of Devon, between 1273 and 1278, the only addition to the initial endowment of the house appears to have been single properties in Saltash and Exeter, the latter of which was left to the monks by William de Stanes, chaplain, in 1313,

<sup>74</sup> *Reg. Brantyngham*, i, pp. 26, 34.

<sup>75</sup> *CPR 1381-5*, p. 344; *1385-9*, p. 2; Stéphan, *Buckfast Abbey*, pp. 83-6.

<sup>76</sup> *MDE*, pp. 375-7.

and which was large enough to be valued at £1 6s 8d *per annum* at the Dissolution.<sup>77</sup> In 1325, Forde Abbey made its only acquisition of the later period, being granted property in Charmouth, Littlewindsor, and Sandpit amounting to 3 messuages, 110 acres of land, 30 of pasture, 11 of meadow, and two each of wood and moor, worth £2 yearly, to support a chantry for the souls of King Edward and Robert FitzPayn.<sup>78</sup> Although the abbey received a number of further licences to amortise in the fourteenth century, the vast majority were concerned with resumptions of fee.<sup>79</sup> The remaining two, Newenham and Dunkeswell, appear to have added nothing of any real note to their possessions after 1279.<sup>80</sup>

Of the remaining two Augustinian houses, Frithelstock Priory made the only major acquisition in the fourteenth century. In 1332, Thomas de Stapledon, Richard de Coleton, and Richard de Brayleghe, clerks, granted the manor of Broadwoodwidge, in West Devon, along with the advowson of the church, later appropriated, to the canons of Frithelstock in order to maintain chantries for Walter de Stapledon, late Bishop of Exeter, and his brother Richard.<sup>81</sup> The grant was lucrative, valued at £36 19s 7d at the Dissolution, but must be understood in terms of the history of the priory. Founded in 1220 by four canons and a prior from nearby Hartland, Frithelstock was effectively dependent on its mother-house for the first century of its existence. The grant from the estate of the Stapledons was intended to give the bishop's family status as second founders, and the large and lucrative manor of Broadwoodwidge was to support the increase of the complement of canons from five to fourteen, as well as adding two secular brethren, at least one of whom was to be in holy orders. The community was to celebrate masses for

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<sup>77</sup> *MDE* p. 391; C. Gill, *Buckland Abbey*, 3<sup>rd</sup> rev. ed. (Plymouth, 1968), pp. 10, 20, 28.

<sup>78</sup> *CPR 1324-7*, p. 152. A general licence to alienate £10 of land per year was granted in order that such a chantry could be founded, *CPR 1313-7*, p. 619.

<sup>79</sup> *CPR 1317-21*, pp. 38-9. A grant of 50 acres of land and 20 of moor in Watelegh by William de Pillaunde and Nicholas Portebrief in 1319 may not have been a resumption, but was subsequently held as an outlier of the manors of Strete and Leigh, *CPR 1317-21*, p. 408; *MDE* p. 355.

<sup>80</sup> Dunkeswell may have received land between Giddesham and Honiton known as Repalyngheys at some point in the fourteenth century, Sparks, *Shadow of the Blackdowns*, p. 29.

<sup>81</sup> *CPR 1330-4*, p. 372.

Walter and Richard each day, and on their anniversaries were to feed one hundred of the poor.<sup>82</sup> The purpose of the grant of Broadwoodwidger was, therefore, to transform a small dependent priory into a large chantry foundation for the souls of the Bishop of Exeter and his brother. One of Stapledon's executors also arranged for the bishop's church of Ashwater to be transferred to the canons, although Bishop Grandisson refused to allow them to appropriate it. In the 1420's the prior granted the church and some land to Thomas Carminow, who presented in 1433.<sup>83</sup>

It is clear, therefore, that, besides a few exceptional cases at Frithelstock and Tavistock, the monastic houses of Devon were no longer attracting benefactors willing to offer substantial grants of land, although grants of messuages, or deals amounting to resumptions of fee, are common enough. Quite why this should be is not entirely clear, and certain circumstances would suggest that the opposite would be true. Devon was, after all, a large and sparsely populated county even before the Black Death. The monasteries within the county were mostly of small-to-middling sizes and wealth, and spread reasonably widely. They were not all competing in the same spheres of influence, and were not so large that a grant of land would go unnoticed. However, in terms of feudal tenure, the county was fragmented, divided into a 'patchwork of petty and fragmented fiefdoms', and had been that way since Domesday at least. There were a handful of large estates; in the fourteenth century the baronies of Okehampton/Plympton, held by the Courtenays, and Barnstaple/Dartington, held by the Martins and then the Audleys, were the major concentrations of lordship. Yet three-quarters of the county was occupied by

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<sup>82</sup> *MDE*, p. 219; M. Buck, *Politics, Finance and the Church in the Reign of Edward II: Walter Stapledon, Treasurer of England* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 34-5; R. Pearse Chope, 'Frithelstock Priory', *DART*, 61 (1929), pp. 173-5.

<sup>83</sup> *CPR 1334-8*, p. 545; Pearse Chope 'Frithelstock Priory', p. 175; *Reg. Grandisson*, ii, p. 1088; *Reg. Stafford*, p. 143; *Reg. Lacy*, i, p. 157; I, p. 257. The grant of Ashwater to Carminow is in the Cary family papers, calendared by Moger in the catalogues of the DRO.

knights and gentry, who were rarely attached by their tenure to only one magnate affinity.<sup>84</sup>

This fragmented tenurial situation was a check on the seemingly free availability of land, as most of the county was in the hands of those who had little to spare for monastic alms. The greater lords in the county, whether the barons themselves or their more notable tenants, may have had some land to spare but, on the whole, chose not to grant it to established monastic foundations. The secular, rather than regular, ecclesiastical arm tended to be the more favoured destination of lay territorial grants. Parish churches were patronised by lords of lesser means, while the greater county gentry and nobility founded collegiate chantries of their own. To name but a few, in the fourteenth century, John Dabernon founded a chantry in Tavistock parish church, Stephen de Haccombe founded an archpresbytery for himself and Hugh (I) de Courtenay at Haccombe, Hugh (II) de Courtenay endowed a private chapel at Colyton, and Guy de Brian founded the collegiate college at Slapton.<sup>85</sup> Yet even the focus of secular religion in the county, Exeter Cathedral, which was undergoing a period of rebuilding, was failing to attract bequests of land and money as it had done. The bequests of the laity to this endeavour were, on the whole, small in scale, the majority of the building work being funded by the bishop and the dean and chapter. The only major grant of land from the laity was £10 of rent from Hackworthy from the executors of W. de Molland in 1321/2, although Hugh (I) de Courtenay also bequeathed 100 marks towards the fabric in 1340.<sup>86</sup>

The monasteries of Devon in the fourteenth century were, therefore, not receiving grants of land in any great quantity, and Torre's ability to acquire the manor of Tormohun

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<sup>84</sup> Burls, 'Society, Economy and Lordship', pp. 28-38.

<sup>85</sup> *Reg. Grandisson*, ii, pp. 852-5; DRO 158M/T3; Bodl. MS Wood empt. 3; Burls, 'Society, Economy and Lordship', p. 57.

<sup>86</sup> *The Accounts of the Fabric of Exeter Cathedral, 1279-1353*, ed. A. M. Erskine, DCRS, n.s. 24, 26 (1981-3), i, p. 136; ii, pp. ix-xiii, 259; D. N. Lepine, 'The Courtenays and Exeter Cathedral in the Later Middle Ages', *DART*, 124 (1992), p. 54.



is, in that light, notable. It is also clear that smaller grants of land had practically ceased across the board, and that any land received by the abbeys of Devon tended to be for a particular purpose, or have a very individual motive. We cannot, as such, fit the grants of the fourteenth century into a pattern as we have with those of the thirteenth, but instead they appear as separate events. The complex process by which land was transferred in this period, also, allows us to note the interaction of the canons with the gentry of the county, who acted as nominees and attorneys for the abbey. The importance of locality noted in the last chapter is still evident here. Furthermore, two of the nominees involved in the Tormohun transaction were relatives of successive abbots of Torre. The relationships engendered by the recruitment of canons, and the potential repercussions for a study of patronage, will be discussed in a later chapter. However, we will first attempt to reconstruct the level, if not necessarily the specifics, of continued patronage of Torre in the later centuries through an analysis of the physical record.

## CHAPTER 4

### The burial record and 'alternative' methods of patronage

In three previous chapters, we have noted how Torre was able to attract substantial grants of land from the laity at the foundation of the house and throughout the thirteenth century, and then was fortunate enough to be able to take advantage of the circumstances facing its tutelary patron in the mid-fourteenth century. Although land grants are the most abundant source through which we can trace the patronage of monasteries by the laity, they were by no means the only manifestation of patronage. Despite this, many major studies of the relationships between individual monasteries and their patrons restrict themselves to these sources, and as such have a strong focus on the period of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, with perhaps some analysis of the period immediately after the Statute of Mortmain and the repercussions of that legislation.<sup>1</sup> Even where studies do analyze lay patronage in the later centuries, they have a tendency to focus mainly on land.<sup>2</sup> The problem is mainly one of evidence. The cartularies only rarely preserve the other methods by which a potential benefactor could patronise an abbey, such as by monetary gift, the installation of a chantry in the abbey church, payment for the construction or reconstruction of abbey buildings, or by choosing to be buried in the abbey grounds, with the attendant mortuary.

The reliance on grants of land in determining the success of a monastery in attracting patrons has led to some studies viewing the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries as something of a void for monastic patronage, one such recent work stating that 'evidently, investment in piety by lay folk continued...but not, however, in monastic foundations'.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For example, Wardrop, *Fountains Abbey*; Finberg, *Tavistock Abbey*; E. King, *Peterborough Abbey 1086-1310* (Cambridge, 1973); Jamroziak, *Rievaulx Abbey*.

<sup>2</sup> A. Fizzard, *Plympton Priory*; S. Hockey, *Quarr Abbey and its Lands 1132-1631*; B. F. Harvey, *Westminster Abbey and its Estates in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1977).

<sup>3</sup> Stöber, *Late Medieval Monasteries*, p. 17.

Potential donors to monastic houses ‘were turning to the type of personally oriented religion exemplified by chantries, and they consciously turned their backs upon the older establishments’.<sup>4</sup> While the general fall in recorded grants of land to monastic houses cannot be disputed, other work has recognised the continued benefaction of monastic houses through direct cash grants, ‘physical patronage’, and mortuaries. McFarlane suggested that the Statute of Mortmain deflected alms from landed endowment to building and altar funds. Gifts of cash and precious objects had always been valued highly by the church, and there is reason to believe they became even more prized by the religious.<sup>5</sup> Finding evidence for such assertions had previously proved difficult. Yet recent attempts to synthesise archaeological and other ‘physical’ evidence with more traditional documentary evidence have resulted in subtle new approaches to this problem. Julian Luxford’s recent work on the analysis of patronage in Westcountry Benedictine monasteries after 1300 is an excellent blueprint for the recognition of sponsored building works in medieval monasteries.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, thorough excavations of the churches and cemeteries of a number of monastic sites, and the historical analysis of the findings, have provided a methodology of recognising patronage through the burial record.<sup>7</sup>

Even where historians have focused on alternative methods of patronage, there is often still an almost exclusively documentary basis for their analysis. David Postles’ study of lay burial in monastic churches and cemeteries was entirely document-based, utilising *cum corpore meo* charters for the most part. Indeed, he asserts that, in the thirteenth

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<sup>4</sup> J. T. Rosenthal, *The Purchase of Paradise* (London, 1972), p. 36.

<sup>5</sup> McFarlane, *Nobility of Later Medieval England*, p. 95; Raban, *Mortmain Legislation*, p. 140.

<sup>6</sup> Luxford, *Art and Architecture*.

<sup>7</sup> R. Gilchrist & B. Sloane, *Requiem: The Medieval Monastic Cemetery in Britain* (London, 2005); G. Astill & S. Wright, ‘Perceiving patronage in the archaeological record: Bordesley Abbey’ in M. Carver (ed.), *In Search of Cult: Archaeological Investigations in Honour of Philip Rahtz* (Woodbridge, 1993), pp. 125-37; G. Astill, S. Wright, & S. Hirst, ‘Patronage, memorial and burial at Bordesley Abbey’, *Cîteaux: Commentarii Cistercienses*, 56 (2005), pp. 353-62; G. Astill, S. Wright, & S. Hirst, ‘The Bordesley Abbey Project reviewed’, *Archaeological Journal*, 161 (2004), pp. 106-58; B. Golding, ‘Burials and benefactions: an aspect of monastic patronage in thirteenth-century England’, in W. Ormrod (ed.), *England in the Thirteenth Century*, Proceedings of the 1984 Harlaxton Symposium (Woodbridge, 1985), pp. 64-75; D. Postles, ‘Monastic burial of non-patronal lay benefactors’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 47 (1996), pp. 620-37.

century at least, ‘burials were usually elicited in the form of a gift *cum corpore meo*’.<sup>8</sup> This has a number of repercussions for his analysis. Firstly, given that the majority of the houses included in his study were mid-twelfth to early-thirteenth century foundations, and thus, as with Torre, might be expected to attract most of their land-based patronage between the late-twelfth and mid-thirteenth centuries, a study of burial based on *cum corpore meo* grants of land and rent would be expected to find, as he does, that lay burial in monastic churches reached its height in the early-thirteenth century. Secondly, as the cartularies largely recorded only grants of land, and were mostly compiled in the fourteenth century, we would not expect to find much documentary evidence of payments for burial, nor records of burial after the fourteenth century.<sup>9</sup> Julian Luxford, however, notes that payments to a monastery for burial, or mortuaries, were usually in cash, and could be anywhere between 10s and £20.<sup>10</sup>

Postles does concede that there were occasions of payment for burial in monastic sites from the fourteenth century, but that these were, on the whole, confined to the higher nobility.<sup>11</sup> Again, the source availability somewhat distorts his findings, as he is mainly arguing from the evidence of wills, the survival of which is much greater for the wealthier and more notable families. While it cannot be disputed that the monasteries were no longer as favoured by the laity, with parish churches, private chantries, and the friaries all competing for their affections, it is overstating the case to say that lay burial had all but ceased at the houses of the regular religious. Gilchrist and Sloane’s recent work confirms that, in general, interment in monastic cemeteries declined from the mid-fourteenth century. At St. Mary Merton and Stratford Langthorne the rates of burial in the fifteenth

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<sup>8</sup> Postles, ‘Monastic burial’, pp. 624-33.

<sup>9</sup> Holdsworth notes the proportion of grants *cum corpore meo* as less than 2% at a number of houses. Only 14 of 1300 charters associated with Reading Abbey indicated the wish of the patron for burial there; C. J. Holdsworth, *The Piper and the Tune: Medieval Patrons and Monks*, (Reading, 1991), pp. 13-14.

<sup>10</sup> Luxford, *Art and Architecture*, p. 189.

<sup>11</sup> Postles, ‘Monastic burial’, pp. 634-5.

and sixteenth centuries were around one in every five and four years respectively. At St. Saviour Bermondsey, St. James' Priory, Bristol, and St. James' Priory, Northampton there is evidence of cemeteries being abandoned in the fifteenth century.<sup>12</sup> The cemetery was generally only used for small-scale benefactors in the thirteenth century, those who, as Postles perhaps rightly notes, would be more likely to find their salvation in the community of the parish.<sup>13</sup> The higher-status patrons would be more likely to be interred in the monastic church. Archaeological evidence tends to show that there was still a demand, albeit much reduced, for burial in the abbey church in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and this must reflect a continued willingness on the part of the local gentry to lend their patronage, in whatever form, to the abbey.<sup>14</sup>

Much of the problem with this later evidence is in the identification of the laity buried at Torre. While the wills surviving from medieval Exeter have recently been collated, having survived on the rolls of mayoral court proceedings, most of those from the rest of the county were destroyed in 1942.<sup>15</sup> However, some indication of the tastes of the Devonshire laity can be ascertained from the Exeter wills. Being a survey of urban burial in a cathedral city, it is perhaps unsurprising that by far the most popular location was the cathedral and its cemetery which had strong rights in this area. Yet the Hospital of St. John, on the outskirts of the city, was nonetheless a popular burial site, with the third most popular being the Dominican friary. In terms of the monks, both Cowick Priory and St. Nicholas' Priory, among others, were still in use as burial sites. In the former case, however, this was mainly due to its function as the Courtenays' mausoleum before 1377.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Gilchrist & Sloane, *Requiem*, pp. 54-5; P. Miller & D. Saxby, *The Augustinian Priory of St. Mary Merton, Surrey: Excavations 1976-90*, MOLAS Monograph 34, (London, 2007), pp. 146-50.

<sup>13</sup> Postles, 'Monastic burial', pp. 621, 634.

<sup>14</sup> Gilchrist & Sloane, *Requiem*, p. 57.

<sup>15</sup> D. Lepine & N. Orme, *Death and Memory in Medieval Exeter*, DCRS, n.s. 46 (2003), pp. 126-7.

<sup>16</sup> Lepine & Orme, *Death and Memory*, pp. 7-13, 43-119; N. Orme, 'Access and Exclusion: Exeter Cathedral 1300-1540' in P. Horden (ed.) *Freedom of Movement in the Middle Ages*, Proceedings of the 2003 Harlaxton Symposium (Donington, 2007), p. 271.

Turning, then, to Torre church, around 140 graves were excavated in the nave, aisle, north transept and western half of the choir, dating from the early-thirteenth century to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, although more precise dating for the later periods is difficult in most cases [Figs. 1-3]. In confronting this material for our analysis, the first real problem must be one of how the graves of the laity can be distinguished from those of the religious. This is compounded in the analysis of a burial site such as that at Torre, where there is little documentary or monumental evidence to suggest who the occupants were. Firstly, it must be noted that the statutes of the Premonstratensians in this respect, for all their other apparent similarities, were not the same as those of the Cistercians. We should not assume the same pattern of initial prohibition of lay burial in the monastic precinct, followed by a general lessening of the restrictions up until around the mid-thirteenth century, as has been traced in the records of the Cistercian General Chapters.<sup>17</sup> No such records survive for the Premonstratensians but they were apparently burying lay patrons of both sexes in their churches and chapter houses from an early date.<sup>18</sup> There is evidence in a charter confirmed to Durford abbey that the order had a papal privilege to accept any lay person for burial in their abbey churches as early as the 1160's.<sup>19</sup> The willingness of the Premonstratensians to accept the laity for burial may reflect their status as canons with some vestigial claim to being a preaching order, compared to the more resolutely cloistered Cistericans.<sup>20</sup>

Through the evidence of other Premonstratensian abbeys, it is possible to suggest that the graves in the church are unlikely to be those solely or even largely those of the religious. At Titchfield, the east cloister walk was the favoured place for the burial of abbots, with twelve of the twenty being buried there. This practice started with Richard,

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<sup>17</sup> J. Hall, 'The legislative background to the burial of laity and other patrons in Cistercian abbeys', *Cîteaux: Commentarii Cistercienses*, 56:1-4 (2005), pp. 363-71

<sup>18</sup> *WC*, p. 265, n. 4.

<sup>19</sup> *English Episcopal Acta: Canterbury II, 1162-90*, eds. C. Cheney & B. E. A. Jones (Oxford, 1986), p. 129.

<sup>20</sup> Postles, 'Monastic burial', pp. 630-1.

the first abbot, who, according to a medieval list of abbots of the house, was buried to the west of the door of the chapter house in 1238. The last abbot to be mentioned as buried there is William Austen, in 1485.<sup>21</sup> Whether this reflects a particular local practice, following the decision of the first abbot, is debatable, but the east cloister walk at Torre revealed a similar sequence of eleven graves [Fig. 3], with a total of forty around the whole cloister, and it is tempting to think of these as the graves of abbots and senior canons.<sup>22</sup> A particularly fine thirteenth-century coverstone was found on one of the graves, although it bears no inscription.<sup>23</sup> At Dale Abbey, another Premonstratensian house, a number of graves of priors were found in the chapter house.<sup>24</sup> Burial of a handful of religious in the abbey church was fairly common, and the excavation of what appears to be two abbatial effigies in the abbey church at Torre indicates that this was most likely the case.<sup>25</sup> It was particularly common for abbots who had overseen a rebuilding programme in the church to be buried in relation to their work. We would expect, however, following standard monastic practice, that the vast majority of the canons would have been buried to the east of the church, in the canons' cemetery.<sup>26</sup>

Furthermore, at least some evidence of a lay element in the burial community is borne out by the thirteen graves in the church which were fully excavated. At Bordesley, a

<sup>21</sup> F. Madden, *Collectanea Topographica et Genealogica* (London, 1834-43), i, pp. 14-16.

<sup>22</sup> At Westminster Abbey the cloister walk functioned as a burial place for abbots before the thirteenth century; N. Rogers, 'Monuments to Monks and Monastic Superiors' in B. J. Thompson (ed.), *Monasteries and Society in Medieval Britain*, Proceedings of the 1994 Harlaxton Symposium (Stamford, 1999), p. 264.

<sup>23</sup> Curiously, the coverstone was buried below the level of the pavement in the cloister, so would not have been seen. As the stone had a raised pattern and inwardly-bevelled edges it must have been designed to be displayed above ground level, possibly in the cemetery. Those in the cloister walk would have had to have been flush with the pavement, and, as such, this stone had to be buried and a flagstone placed on top, ensuring that the pavement remained level. This would seem to indicate that the stone was made during the owner's lifetime, yet after its completion a change in his status also resulted in a change in his burial site. If the east cloister walk was the normal site for abbatial burials in Premonstratensian churches, then the burial of the coverstone may indicate an abbot who was only elevated to the office in later life.

<sup>24</sup> W. St J. Hope, 'On the Excavations on the Site of Dale Abbey', *Derbyshire Archaeological Journal*, 2 (1880), pp. 128-34.

<sup>25</sup> Saxby & Westman, *Abbey of Torre*.

<sup>26</sup> Gilchrist & Sloane, *Requiem*, pp. 57-61; Rogers, 'Monuments to Monks', pp. 262-76. At Barnwell the fifth prior, who had been instrumental in rebuilding the church 'was buried in the church which he had built in front of the great rood'; *The Observances in Use at the Augustinian Priory of St. Giles and St. Andrew at Barnwell, Cambridgeshire*, ed. J. W. Clark (Cambridge, 1897), p. xiv.

lay burial population was suggested by the mixed age and sex group in the church.<sup>27</sup> At Torre, at least one was female, and one was a child under sixteen. It could also be suggested that, when later graves cut through earlier burials, this reveals the canons had no filial loyalty to those buried within their church. At St. Augustine's, Canterbury, the sacristan was mandated to ensure that no previously buried remains were disrupted in the monks' cemetery.<sup>28</sup> While the graves in the cloister at Torre were largely undisturbed, furthering the idea that they were those of the canons, those in the church frequently intercut. Finally, there is documentary evidence of lay burial in the church in the mid-thirteenth century, of both sexes, and it would be highly surprising if the canons had not taken full advantage of the opportunities for attracting wealth and grants that burial in their monastic church could invite. At Premonstratensian Langley Abbey in Norfolk, for example, extracts from a now-lost register of burials record some forty-nine lay burials in the abbey church, although there may have been many more as this only included the higher-ranking knights and gentry. Notably, as well, twelve of these were women.<sup>29</sup> We might expect a similar picture at Torre.

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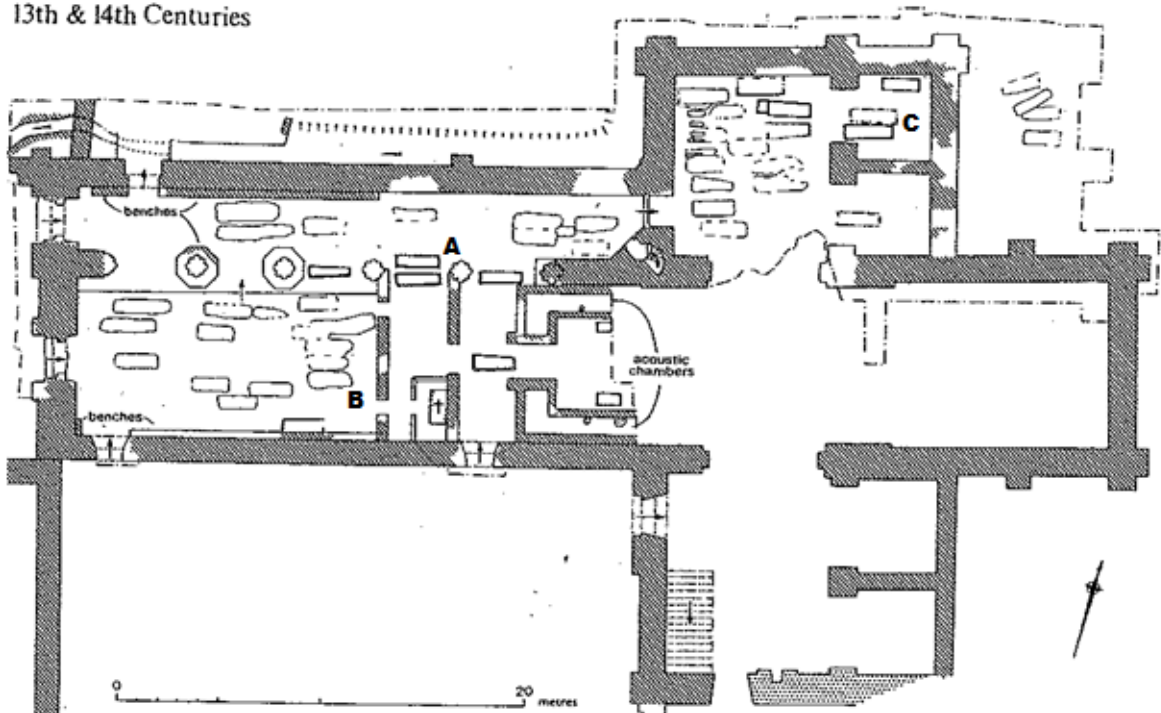
<sup>27</sup> Astill, Hirst, & Wright, 'Bordesley Abbey Project Reviewed', p. 122.

<sup>28</sup> Gilchrist & Sloane, *Requiem*, p. 51.

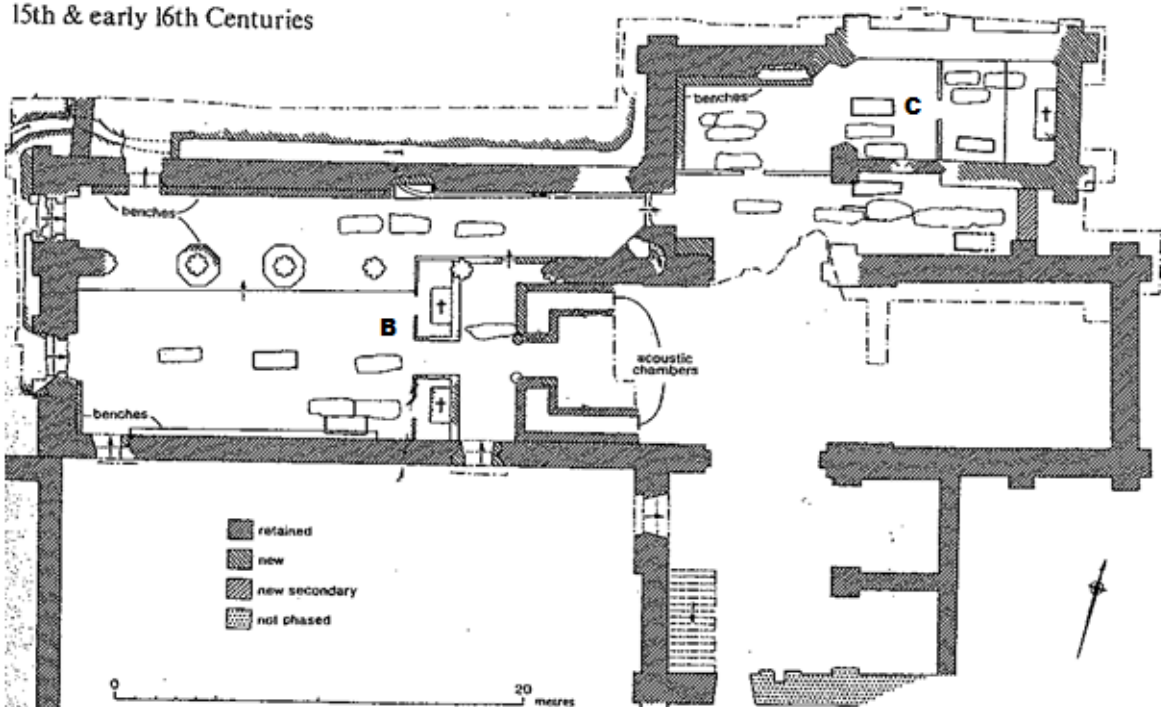
<sup>29</sup> J. Weever, *Antient Funeral Monuments of Great Britain, Ireland, and the Islands Adjacent* (London, 1767), p. 548. The original, 'a book of annals belonging to this priory, in bibl Cotton' is lost; WC, p. 386.



13th & 14th Centuries



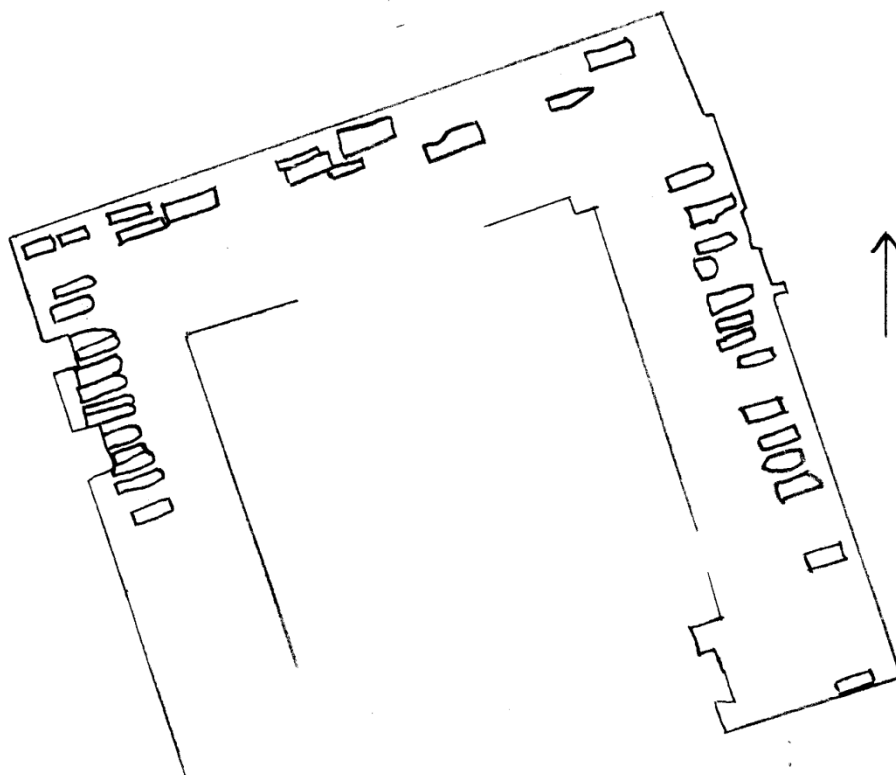
15th & early 16th Centuries



**Figures 1 and 2: Burials in Torre Abbey church**

**Key: A – Cockington grave; B – Altar of the Holy Cross; C – Intercutting graves in North Transept**

From A. R. Pye, 'Torre Abbey Excavations 1986-89: Assessment Report and Post-Excavation Research Design', Exeter Museums Archaeological Field Unit (1994)



**Figure 3: Burials in the cloister at Torre Abbey**

In terms of documentary evidence for the burial of the laity at Torre, only nine names can be ascertained [Table 1]. Most of these have already been mentioned in the course of the chapters on patronage, appearing as they do in *cum corpore meo* grants. All date from the thirteenth century, and, with the exception of William Brewer the Younger and Peter FitzMatthew, were knightly or gentry figures. We might take them as representative of the class of person to be buried in the church, preserved for us solely because their mortuary was in land or rent rather than cash or other services. The two couples, Isabella de Waddeton and Martin de Fishacre and William and Johanna de Cockington, are the only donors to give their preferred location of burial within the church, although the burial locations of William Brewer the Younger and Peter FitzMatthew can also be ascertained with some certainty.<sup>30</sup> Of the remaining three, we cannot positively state that they were buried in the abbey church, rather than the cemetery, although

<sup>30</sup> For Peter FitzMatthew and William Brewer see Chapter 2, p. 103.

Amicia's grant of wax suggests a desire to have some kind of personal presence at the performance of Mass, which we might expect to be coupled with a suitable burial location.<sup>31</sup> Were it not for the archaeological evidence, therefore, we would assume that very few of the laity were buried in the church at Torre, and none after the thirteenth century.

**Table 1: Named burials at Torre Abbey, with date of charter**

| Name  | Date of charter | Grant <i>cum corpore meo</i>                      |
|---|-----------------|---|
| William de Buckland                         | early 13th c    | One ferling in Buckland-on-the-Moor <sup>32</sup> |
| Osbert the Poitevan                         | early 13th c    | 2s rent <sup>33</sup>                             |
| William Brewer the Younger                  | 1224x1232       | Water from his spring <sup>34</sup>               |
| Peter FitzMatthew                           | 1245x1255       | Manor of Blackawton <sup>35</sup>                 |
| Amicia de St. Marychurch                    | mid. 13th C     | 2lb wax annually <sup>36</sup>                    |
| Isabella de Waddeton and Martin de Fishacre | mid. 13th C     | One ferling in Waddeton <sup>37</sup>             |
| William and Johanna de Cockington           | 1258x1264       | Water from his spring <sup>38</sup>               |

Turning now to the archaeological evidence, a number of patterns emerge in both the dating and the positioning of the graves. As noted above, the traditional picture has it that the laity were switching their attentions to parish churches and smaller chantry grants, and bequeathing their bodies to the same. At Torre, only 31 of the 140 graves in the church can be dated to the period of the late-fourteenth to early-sixteenth centuries, almost certainly indicating a dropping-off of patronage. Yet the numbers in this case can be deceptive. Firstly, the nave and aisle of the church were floored only once, at the foundation, and, as such, the seven graves in the nave and the three in the aisle are only datable as belonging to a later period because they intercut or supplant previous burials or, in two cases, cut through the line of the screen which was removed in the fourteenth century. Fifteen or so

<sup>31</sup> Thompson, 'Church and the Aristocracy', p. 82.

<sup>32</sup> EC 76.

<sup>33</sup> EC 29.

<sup>34</sup> EC 11.

<sup>35</sup> EC 223.

<sup>36</sup> DC fo. 43r.

<sup>37</sup> DC fo. 27v.

<sup>38</sup> EC 267.

graves in the nave and aisle that do not overlap other interments are, as a result, undatable. Even if they were all found to be of a later period, however, this would still only give 46 of the 140, meaning that between a fifth and a third of the total population was interred in the last 175 years, as compared to the previous 175 years. While this would support the traditional picture of a decline in patronage, it certainly does not suggest that the flow had entirely dried up. Although between 31 and 46 burials in 175 years, an average of just over two per decade, may not seem a great number, these would have been the higher-status burials, and the chancel, choir, and south transept, which were also popular sites, were not excavated. Furthermore, the monastic cemetery outside would probably have taken more from benefactors of lesser status and other laity associated with the abbey, although there has been no excavation of this area and, as was noted above, burial in external monastic cemeteries was also in decline.<sup>39</sup> Burial was also one of the more conspicuous acts of patronage, and by no means the only or the most popular one available. While the numbers involved were not, therefore, huge, they nonetheless represent a continued desire on the part of some lay individuals, who by comparison with other sites would be mostly gentry of the type who were donating land in the thirteenth century, to patronise the abbey through a choice of the monastic church as their resting-place.

Inside the church it is unsurprising to find that certain areas were favoured as burial sites, notably the north transept chapels, the west wall of the north transept, and, in the nave, along the line of sight to the rood and high altar. There is also a cluster of graves against the south wall of the nave which almost certainly respects the site of an altar. Although the abbey was a private conventual church, the laity would nonetheless have had some measure of access to certain areas. At Exeter Cathedral, it has been noted that, although certain areas were reserved for burial, such as the choir for bishops, depending on

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<sup>39</sup> Gilchrist & Sloane, *Requiem*, pp. 56-7, 63-4; Postles, 'Monastic Burial', p. 634.

the social status of the individual, wealth and influence ‘opened doors’ and ensured access to more sacred parts of the church.<sup>40</sup> Given the lack of physical impediment suggested by the archaeological record at Torre, and the popularity of the north transept as a burial space, we may surmise that there may have been a similar situation, with greater access to the east of the church being confined to those of higher wealth and standing.<sup>41</sup>

Altars and images were obvious foci of lay piety in any church, monastic or parochial, and had the power to draw in potential patrons. A shrine, image, or devotional item which was considered to be particularly efficacious in procuring divine intervention was therefore a tremendous asset. Perhaps the best-known such attraction, in a monastic context, was the image of Our Lady at Walsingham, which was still garnering over £250 in offerings at the Dissolution, long after most other monastic shrines had faded to relative obscurity. While there is no surviving evidence of any particular shrines or images at Torre, most of the multitude of shrines around the country are now only known to us by chance, as there was a proliferation of local centres of sanctity which ‘[rose and fell] without interference or note’.<sup>42</sup> It is, for example, only a fleeting reference in the episcopal registers of Worcester that alerts us to the presence of the once-revered shrine of ‘St. Barbar’s hede’ at the Premonstratensian abbey of Halesowen. Its importance to the economy of the abbey is also indicated, although doubtless greatly exaggerated, as in 1343 the abbot complained that the house was impoverished on account of the shrine being less popular with the faithful than previously.<sup>43</sup>

Only two charters from Torre specify a place of burial. One of these was Isabella de Waddeton’s association with the altar of the Holy Cross, which is discussed below. The other was William de Cockington’s grant of water from his streams, along with his body,

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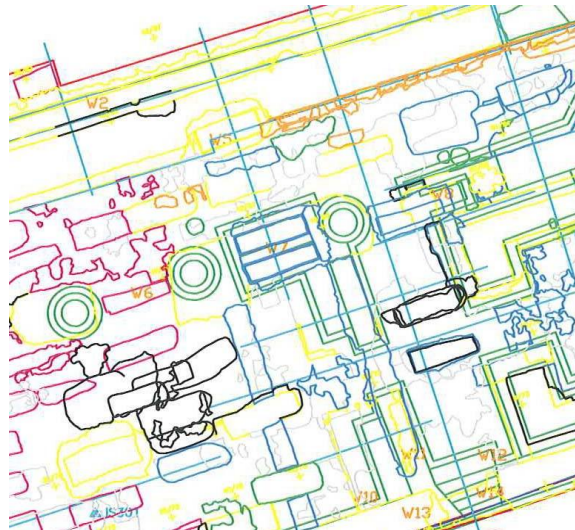
<sup>40</sup> Orme, ‘Access and Exclusion’, pp. 280-6; Lepine & Orme, *Death and Memory*, pp. 25-32.

<sup>41</sup> Saul, *English Church Monuments*, pp. 116-17.

<sup>42</sup> K. Kamberick, *Popular Piety and Art in the Late Middle Ages: Image Worship and Idolatry in England 1350-1500* (NY, 2002), pp. 118-25.

<sup>43</sup> WC, p. 181.

in return for which a mass was to be celebrated in Cockington church on Wednesdays, and on every other day at the altar of St. John the Baptist in the abbey church. His body was to be buried there, with his wife Johanna, and his granting-charter was to be displayed by their tomb 'so that all who pass by can see, read, and understand'.<sup>44</sup> The double grave in the nave arcade [Figs. 1 & 4] is almost certainly that of William and Johanna, and when excavated was found to contain a man and woman of 25-35 years old, which would fit with this identification. Yet the excavated sculptural fragments associated with this grave, including the family's cockerel motif, have been dated to the mid-fourteenth century [Fig. 5].<sup>45</sup> The Cockington family was still extant at that point, although the last of the line, James de Cockington, must by then have been elderly and known that he would not produce an heir.<sup>46</sup> This new statuary may, therefore, represent a refurbishment of his ancestor's tomb. On the other hand, it may have belonged to James' tomb, presumably positioned close to William and Johanna's, and when they were broken at the Dissolution the rubble intermingled.<sup>47</sup>



**Figure 4: Location of William and Johanna de Cockington's grave in the nave arcade**  
Plan provided by Museum of London Archaeology

<sup>44</sup> EC 267-8, and see Chapter 2, p. 82.

<sup>45</sup> Saxby & Westman, *Abbey of Torre*.

<sup>46</sup> Chapter 3, p. 122.

<sup>47</sup> Saxby & Westman, *Abbey of Torre*.



Figure 5: Cockerel statuery associated with Cockington grave

Whether or not Torre had particularly notorious relics or other devotional stimuli, the grouping of burials in the church indicates that patrons were aware of the particular localities of sanctity and could choose between them. Such a desire must indicate to us a prior relationship between the patron and the site. That is, the choice of a particular site for burial in an abbey church indicates that the patron not only was aware of the site, but felt a connection with it enough that they had chosen it as their permanent resting place. Postles, in discussing *cum corpore meo* charters, notes that many were the only grant made to a house by the individual.<sup>48</sup> Yet surely the decision to favour a particular house as a burial site in most cases indicates a long-standing association on the part of the patron. Indeed, increasingly in the later centuries, candidates for burial at a house would often have some history of service or employment there, either as a nominee in land management or as a steward or bailiff, and thus a familiarity with the space.<sup>49</sup> In that instance, a visible burial in the abbey church could stand as a reminder to the canons of the works performed for them, and the debt correspondingly owed.

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<sup>48</sup> Postles, 'Monastic Burial', pp. 632-3.

<sup>49</sup> Luxford, *Art and Architecture*, pp. 193-4.

More intriguingly, perhaps, a substantial number of later graves in the abbey church either partially cut or wholly supplant previous interments. This is especially notable in sites of particular devotional focus. Mortar ridges found on many of the graves indicated that they had been overlain with flagstones that were non-coterminous with the grave, and thus overlapped in a manner unrelated to the situation below. As such the graves may have been marked on the wall or, if on the floor, not directly above. Thus the partial cuttings may represent the difficulty in precisely identifying the extent of previous burial sites when pulling up flagstones. In areas of marked competition for space this is particularly noticeable. The graves in the north transept frequently cut through and, in a few cases, completely supplant earlier interments. The most notable of these sequences are those that occur in the entrance to the south chapel of the north transept; the double walled grave in the entrance to the north chapel; and the grave dug through the probable site of the altar of the Holy Cross. Of the walled graves in the north chapel [Figs. 1 & 2], that against the south wall was the first to be dug, followed by the northern, more central, cut. When the chapel was enlarged and refloored, however, the northern of the pair was completely supplanted, to the extent that it could only be identified by the scar of its eastern end, and a new central grave reused the south wall of the earlier grave while removing the northern wall, perhaps to fit a coffin. In the southern chapel [Fig. 6], the central grave position, in the entrance to the chapel, was supplanted no less than three times, the third time being intercut by two graves at a similar time.





**Figure 6: View of northern transept chapels looking east, showing intercutting of graves in the southern chapel (middle)**

The grave at the east end of the nave, supplanting the former line of the rood screen, and the probable site of the altar of the Holy Cross, is a slightly different matter [Figs 1 & 2]. The altar of the Holy Cross was normally located below the rood screen, and was a popular place for burial and lay piety in medieval churches, although in Exeter Cathedral it was located in the north transept, and there was no altar directly under the rood.<sup>50</sup> In the thirteenth century a line of six graves had been placed in front of and to the north of an altar directly in front of the rood screen at Torre. A very similar situation occurs at Premonstratensian Langley Abbey in Norfolk, where Margaret, the wife of Roger de Kerdeston, was buried before the altar of the Holy Cross in the abbey church in 1328. She was to the south of Thomas de Kerdeston, archdeacon of Norfolk, who had died in

<sup>50</sup> K. Imesch, 'The Altar of the Holy Cross and the Ideal of Adam's Progeny: "ut paradysiace loca possideat regionis"', in E. E. DuBruck & B. I. Gusick (eds.), *Death and Dying in the Middle Ages* (NY, 1999), pp. 73-106; Orme, 'Access and Exclusion', pp. 274-5. The altars of St. Mary-in-the-nave and St. Nicholas were either side of the rood in Exeter.

1270. Her husband died in 1337 and was buried to her south. Thus the altar appears as the site of familial devotion over a number of years.<sup>51</sup> At Torre in the mid-fourteenth century, however, the screen was removed, and a grave was inserted directly over the site of the altar. The exactly central position of the burial might suggest that it was associated with the rebuilding scheme which involved the removal of the rood screen and altar, perhaps in terms of funding. Similar associations of graves with the funding of construction schemes have been found elsewhere, most notably at Bordesley, where a grave to the east of the presbytery step was linked to the rebuilding of the presbytery and crossing in c.1330.<sup>52</sup>

Despite this later grave at Torre respecting the sites of the previous line of burials, the position would still have had repercussions for the wishes of a previous patron. Isabella de Waddeton had stated that her gift of a ferling in Waddeton was to be held only as long as a light was kept burning by the altar of the Holy Cross, where she was buried with her husband. If the lamp was extinguished, the grant was to revert to her heirs.<sup>53</sup> Seymour assumed that the grant had reverted at some point, as it does not appear in the Dissolution inventories, yet a court roll of 1520 shows that the abbot still held the land.<sup>54</sup> Given the popularity of the altar of the Holy Cross throughout the medieval period, it seems likely that it was removed to another site within the abbey church. Even if this were the case, the spirit of Isabella's request would have been breached, as the juxtaposition of grave and altar would have been broken. That the canons were apparently able to retain this land despite violating the terms of the grant may reveal another facet of the monastic-patron relationship. Isabella had requested to be buried next to her husband, Martin de Fishacre, and the Fishacre family held Waddeton after her death. Yet the line of their direct descendants had failed by the mid-to-late-fourteenth century, and, as the manor

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<sup>51</sup> Weever, *Funeral Monuments*, p. 548.

<sup>52</sup> Astill & Wright, 'Perceiving Patronage', p. 132.

<sup>53</sup> DC fo. 27v.

<sup>54</sup> TA, p. 218; DRO CR 42.

subsequently reverted to the bishop of Exeter, the canons may have felt able to ignore that clause.<sup>55</sup> It is notable that the charter of the grant was not copied into the fifteenth century cartulary compiled by the canons, and they may have been trying to conveniently forget Isabella's wishes in that respect.

A similar lack of heirs to ensure the continued respect of their ancestors' burial sites may have led to the supplanting of graves elsewhere in the abbey church, and especially those in the transept areas. The transept chapels were commonly used as family mortuaries, as the evidence from Bordesley would suggest.<sup>56</sup> In many other cases at Torre it would appear that the families either ceased caring about their ancestors' burial sites, or died out. As such, they were no longer useful as patrons to the abbey, and the graves, after a suitably respectful period, could be supplanted. The turnover of lower-gentry families in Devon in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was certainly high, with only a few lasting more than a handful of generations before relocation, lengthy minorities, or the failure of the male line caused the family to cease to be a power in the area. Simon Payling has noted the high rate of failure in the male line in the century after the Black Death, calculating that in Nottinghamshire between 1346 and 1428 only 35% of lay fees stayed in the tenure of the same family.<sup>57</sup> In the hundred of Haytor, in which Torre Abbey was situated, of the twenty-eight lay fees for which returns are available in 1346, twenty were held by descendants of those who were holding in 1303, a survival rate of over 71%. For the twenty-four which can be traced down to the fifteenth century, eighteen changed hands, a survival rate of only 25%.<sup>58</sup> If this picture of a frequent turnover of gentry families is

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<sup>55</sup> Guy de Fishacre held the manor in 1303, Cecilia de Doddiscombe in 1348, and the bishop of Exeter (the tenant-in-chief) in 1428. Cecilia may have held the fee of the Fishacre family as mesne tenants; *FA*, ii, pp. 348, 391, 445.

<sup>56</sup> Astill & Wright, 'Perceiving Patronage', pp. 133-4.

<sup>57</sup> S. J. Payling, 'Social mobility, demographic change, and landed society in Late Medieval England', *Economic History Review*, 45 (1992), pp. 51-73; S. J. Payling, *Political Society in Lancastrian England* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 67-8.

<sup>58</sup> *FA*, ii, pp. 347-8, 391-2, 444-5; Reichel, 'The hundred of Haytor', pp. 110-37. Of the remaining six, one had been sublet by a descendant of the holder in 1346, one had reverted to the tenant-in-chief, two had been

correct, and Payling's work suggests that it was a more widespread occurrence than south-east Devon, it may go some way to explaining why the transept chapels were, apparently, only used by a particular family for a relatively short period of time. It would also provide a constantly renewing source of patrons for the abbey, who could hopefully be persuaded to usurp the burial spot of the gentry whose manor and social place they had taken.

Gilchrist and Sloane point out that, even in lightly populated cemeteries, there was intercutting of graves, suggesting competition for space, and that direct supplanting must suggest specific selection of a grave site.<sup>59</sup> This has clear repercussions for an analysis of the monastic-patronal relationship at Torre. On the one hand it seems that any space, within the abbey church at least, was for sale, even if it had already been taken. As such, this might suggest that the canons were being forced to bend to patronal desires, or were so desperate for money that they were prepared to fulfil any wish. On the other hand, a patron purchasing such a space must have been aware that it was already filled, and as such could only expect to occupy it themselves for so long. Indeed, the canons may have been actively promoting the purchase of specific sites, and making the most of the available space in what was a declining market of patrons who wished to seek burial in a monastic church.

Burial in the abbey church was by no means the only method of ensuring a presence during the divine service of the canons. Payments for window glass, especially bearing armorials, or for images, vestments, plate, or fabric funds, could all be considered as acts of patronage which were frequently performed by the laity, especially the sub-noble laity of the type noted to be likely patrons of Torre.<sup>60</sup> At nearby Buckfast Abbey, for example, as part of a settlement of fishing rights, James and Thomas de Audley, holders of the

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divided so that the descendants of the 1346 tenant only held a part of the fee, and two were held as before. This picture is replicated across the whole county in this period; D. Postles, *Surnames of Devon*, English Surnames Series 6, (Oxford, 1995), pp. 236-40.

<sup>59</sup> Gilchrist & Sloane, *Requiem*, p. 52.

<sup>60</sup> Luxford, *Art and Architecture*, pp. 196-200.

honour of Dartington, were to have two depictions of their arms maintained in the windows of the west gable of the conventual church, and another two in the windows of the lady chapel.<sup>61</sup> Although no sacramental garments or objects, nor window glass, survive from Torre, they were common items bequeathed or funded by the laity, and relatively cheap. Indeed, memorial glass was ‘almost inestimably numerous’, and it is almost certain that it would feature in the windows of the church, as well as perhaps the cloister, guest hall, and refectory.<sup>62</sup>

Despite the disappearance of the vast majority of the potential objects of patronage in the abbey church, there remains one particularly interested focus of lay attention, in the physical manifestation of the chantries associated with the acquisition of the manor of Tormohun. The previous chapter examined in detail the process whereby the canons were able to take possession of their capital manor, and the numerous local gentry and chaplains involved. At around the time of the acquisition, the north chapel of the north transept was extended eastwards and enlarged, and it is almost certain that the two events are linked. Foremost amongst the evidence is a fine stone effigy, with canopy, in the rebuilt north chapel, from which two fragments of lower left leg with garter, associated with several other fragments of armour, surely represent the memorial of John de Mohun, a founder Knight of the Garter.<sup>63</sup>

The severe alterations to the transept would certainly have been a costly enterprise, and disruptive to the daily round of the canons, yet it is not entirely clear who paid for it. John de Mohun would be the most likely candidate, yet he was notoriously poor, while John de Berkadone and John de Pyn, the local gentry who apparently purchased land in the manor for the canons in exchange for a chantry, would have already made some

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<sup>61</sup> *CPR 1381-5*, p. 341; Stéphan, *Buckfast Abbey*, p. 86.

<sup>62</sup> Luxford, *Art and Architecture*, pp. 197-8. At Premonstratensian Easby the arms of the Scropes of Bolton were displayed on windows, altar panels and vestments in the church, and in the windows of the refectory; *WC*, p. 297.

<sup>63</sup> Saxby & Westman, *Torre Abbey*; and see Chapter 3 above.

considerable outlay on the land itself. The canons themselves would therefore be likely to front a great deal of the expense, but there may also have been substantial contributions from other patrons. As Luxford notes, in a monastic as well as parochial context, a 'desire to contribute to a major new programme of work seems to have elicited many benefactions. The evidence is clear: when a new church, major building or significant part thereof went up, so did sub-noble interest in contributing towards art and architecture'.<sup>64</sup>

Further indication of the multifarious nature of payment for the building works comes from the burial record. The body of John de Mohun could not have been buried at Torre, as there is surviving documentary evidence of his burial at Bruton Priory.<sup>65</sup> His gartered effigy at Torre did not sit on a tomb recess, but merely a shelf in the wall. The basis of his chantry may not have been purely effigial, however, as the Mohuns were known to practice heart burial. One of his ancestors, John (I) de Mohun (d. 1252x1254), also had his body buried in the family mortuary at Bruton, while his heart was interred at Newenham, the house to which he was greatest benefactor.<sup>66</sup> A heart casket could have formed part of the altar fittings at Torre, although these have been completely obliterated. The practice of division of the body for burial had been denounced by the papal bull *Detestande feritatis* in 1299, which diminished its popularity for a time. The bull, however, could not eradicate the 'deep-seated belief in the multiple prayers which division seemed to ensure', and there were a number of noble heart burials in England in the fourteenth century, including the Earl of Huntingdon; Peter, 3<sup>rd</sup> Baron Montfort; and Elizabeth de Clare.<sup>67</sup> Unfortunately, following the despoliation of the church at the Dissolution, it is almost impossible to prove in this case.

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<sup>64</sup> Luxford, *Art and Architecture*, p. 194.

<sup>65</sup> Maxwell-Lyte, *History of Dunster*, i, p. 46.

<sup>66</sup> Maxwell-Lyte, *History of Dunster*, i, pp. 30-1

<sup>67</sup> E. Brown, 'Death and the human body in the later Middle Ages: the legislation of Boniface VIII on the division of the corpse', *Viator*, 12 (1981), pp. 221-70; C. A. Bradford, *Heart Burial* (London, 1933), pp. 100-24.

Although John de Mohun was not buried in the chapel, or, at least, his body was not present, there are a number of graves clearly associated with the site. John de Berkadone and John de Pyn, as both patrons and nominees of the abbey, and given their association with the land, would almost certainly be candidates for burial in the chapel. Furthermore, there are a great number of other gentry figures with links to the abbey and the Mohun family that could have contributed to the building fund or donated some specific item, in exchange for commemoration or burial in or near the chapel. Besides those mentioned in the previous chapter, John de Mohun's uncle Paganus de Mohun confirmed the grant and was an important figure in his own right, while Abbot John de Berkadone, who had overseen the process from 1349 to its completion in 1370, and was abbot until 1382, may have been buried in relation to the new building works.<sup>68</sup>

The only other evidence for Torre's attraction as a burial site in this period, although perhaps more representative of the common patrons of the abbey, is from William Doune (d. 1361), archdeacon of Leicester but a native of Devon, who left two hundred pounds for the foundation of two chantries in secular churches. If this proved too difficult they were to be founded in Launceston Priory and Osney Abbey, or, failing that in Torre and Nutley Abbeys. He apparently had a connection to Torre through a nephew in Dartmouth, Robert Bozoun, who was in the 'livery' of the abbot, and may later have become chancellor of Exeter.<sup>69</sup> However, William had borrowed a copy of the *Summa Codicis* of Azo of Bologna from the abbot, and thus may also have been in the abbey's employment. He also left the abbey five pounds, but there is no evidence that his executors had to fall back on his third choice of chantry site.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> DC fo. 98r; Maxwell-Lyte, *History of Dunster*, i, p. 41.

<sup>69</sup> A. H. Thompson, 'The Will of Master William Doune, Archdeacon of Leicester', *Archaeological Journal*, 72 (1915), p. 273; *Fasti Exeter 1300-1541*, pp. 9, 33, 40.

<sup>70</sup> Thompson, 'The Will of Master William Doune', pp. 270, 273, 280.

The importance of enshrining their noble patron, John de Mohun, in the fabric of the abbey church, even if his body was not physically present, would probably have overridden the issues of cost for the canons. Attracting major patronage, in both landed and architectural terms, from a figure of such local and even national importance would bolster the reputation of the abbey as a suitable target of patronage for other high and lesser-status figures. As such, while, sadly, none of the stained glass and very little of the statuary survives from the north transept, we can expect that this area would have been a strong focus of lay patronage in the abbey. The northern transept was a popular site for burial, and presumably other forms of patronage, throughout the centuries, and thus would have been a not inconsiderable source of income for the canons.

Besides the abbey church, the laity could patronise an abbey through more general contributions to the building funds, and expect commemoration there. The most obvious example of this type at Torre is the ‘Mohun’ gatehouse, so-called because of the display of the arms of John (III) (a cross engrailed) on one of the gate-hall brackets. Yet other brackets do not appear to continue the Mohun theme. Those of the abbey (a chevron between three crosiers) and William Brewer (two bends *undy*) are represented both on brackets and in the ceiling keystones. Watkin identified another bracket as bearing the arms of Reginald (I) de Mohun (a dexter arm with a maunch *ermine*, the hand holding a fleur-de-lys) impaled, possibly by the Brewer arms of Alice, his wife.<sup>71</sup> While this may be so, they are eroded beyond all recognition today. One certainly bears the arms of Speke – a double-headed eagle displayed.<sup>72</sup> This notable knightly family had a connection to the abbey through their mesne lordship of Dacombe, although they were mainly associated

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<sup>71</sup> Watkin, *Torre Abbey*, p. 40.

<sup>72</sup> *MDE*, p. 169. Watkin and Maxwell-Lyte suggest it was the emblem of John (I) de Mohun (d. 1252x1254), although this was a single-headed eagle; Maxwell-Lyte, *History of Dunster*, ii, pp. 498-501; Watkin, ‘Manor of Tormohun’, p. 147.



with Brampford Speke and Woolfardisworthy, north of Exeter.<sup>73</sup> Other brackets clearly bore arms, although the soft sandstone has not preserved the designs well enough for recognition to be possible.

However, all the brackets are small, roughly carved, and facing inwards to the gate halls, where they are not easily seen. The largest devices are those of the abbey and of Brewer, carved onto the keystones in the roofs of each bay. If they were intended to commemorate or display the abbey's patrons they do not do so in any effective fashion. Furthermore, the gatehouse was almost certainly built after 1370, around the time that the Mohun line was becoming extinct, yet the arms of John (V) – a cross 'lozengy' – were not displayed.<sup>74</sup> The Speke arms also suggest a connection between the abbey and this family, and perhaps a multiplicity of donors to the building fund, although there is no evidence of contact between the two after the thirteenth century. As such, the 'Mohun' gatehouse, while the most obvious remaining display of lay arms at the medieval abbey, is less obviously 'Mohun' than has been thought. Without any documentary connection, it is almost impossible to say how these designs should best be interpreted. It may even be that they were purely decorative, intended only to fill the blank spaces on the fronts of the capitals with something more meaningful than foliage, not testifying to patronage but 'to enthusiasm for the most popular decorative idiom of the age'.<sup>75</sup>

The gatehouse was only one, albeit now the most visible, in a series of building and rebuilding programmes at the abbey. Also in the fourteenth century, the western range was internally modified and the south range, including the refectory, was heightened, and given a new, steep-pitched, roof, the scar of the old roof being clearly visible on the western

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<sup>73</sup> *FA*, i, p. 419; Pole, *Collections*, pp. 235-6.

<sup>74</sup> Watkin, *Torre Abbey*, p. 41. The identification of the arms of John V as a cross 'lozengy' follows Maxwell-Lyte, *History of Dunster*, ii, p. 501; See Chapter 6.

<sup>75</sup> Luxford, *Art and Architecture*, p. 14.

end.<sup>76</sup> The cloister was also narrowed and heightened, similarly with a steep-pitched roof, and the two scars of the roof levels and corbels can be clearly seen on the outer walls of the east and west ranges. At Premonstratensian Easby, a rebuilding dated to the thirteenth century involved the heightening and shortening of the refectory.<sup>77</sup> By comparison, it may also be that the refectory at Torre was given more floors, subdivided internally into a refectory and what St. John Hope called a ‘buttery’ – an everyday dining room – and perhaps had initial lancet lights replaced by larger glass windows. Recent renovations have uncovered evidence of large windows with fourteenth-century tracery in the west and south walls of the refectory at Torre, suggesting that one purpose of the rebuilding was to make the refectory a lighter space. Similar motives were probably behind the rebuilding of the cloister. The corollary of this would be that there was also more window-space for armorials, sponsored devotional scenes, and other acts of artistic patronage.

What is certain is that these rebuilding schemes, together with the construction of the gatehouse, would have been costly, disruptive, and, in the case of the cloister and refectory, apparently largely cosmetic. The apparent introduction of glass to both the refectory and cloister would have certainly transformed the spaces within, from previously quite poorly-lit areas to light, open, and more impressive areas. It would also, as a result, have provided the opportunity for acts of patronage to be commemorated in stained glass, and perhaps in tracery and sculpture. Given the extent and narrow time-frame of all these reconstructions, it seems unlikely that the canons would have funded these projects purely on their own income, and we could expect that local patrons would have been involved. William Doune, mentioned above, left five pounds to the abbey ‘ad fabricam claustrī’ in 1360, and there would almost certainly have been many similar bequests.<sup>78</sup> There appears

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<sup>76</sup> For the western range see Chapter 8.

<sup>77</sup> P. Fergusson, ‘The Refectory at Easby Abbey: Form and Iconography’, *Art Bulletin* 71 (1989), pp. 337-8.

<sup>78</sup> Thompson, ‘Will of Master William Doune’, p. 270. Other bequests in the will were made generally, or for the fabric of the precinct.

to have been some relationship between Hugh (I) de Courtenay and the canons at this time. The loan in 1326 of £200 from John (III) de Mohun to Hugh Courtenay, which had been placed with the canons, was noted in the previous chapter.<sup>79</sup> While the purpose of the loan is not stated, it may well be that some of this money was earmarked for improvements to the fabric of the abbey. Hugh was a noted sponsor of ecclesiastical architecture in the region, and, the abbot of Torre was one of only four monastic prelates who attended his funeral at Cowick in 1340.<sup>80</sup> Again, however, without any direct documentary evidence in this respect it is difficult to say more.

The historiography of lay patronage of monasteries has a tendency to focus too much on the documentary evidence. This leads to a picture of patronage based only on grants of land and rights, and excludes a multiplicity of other ways in which the laity could enter into the spiritual works of the regular religious. It also results in an analysis which terminates in the late-thirteenth or early-fourteenth centuries, by which time land-based patronage had become an exceptional rather than a regular occurrence. However, the analysis of physical evidence, such as that at Torre, allows us to extend our analysis of lay patronage into the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. While this evidence suggests the same general tendencies of a falling-off of material support by the laity for the monasteries, it does show that, as cannot be seen through a study of land grants alone, there were still areas in which the laity were prepared to grant money and goods. Given the excavations conducted at Torre, the most notable of these areas is in the burial record, where we can be reasonably sure that the vast majority of the graves in the abbey belonged to the laity, and there was some competition for favoured grave sites throughout the history of the abbey. This may well reflect the canons adapting their principles in order to attract

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<sup>79</sup> DC fo. 92v; Chapter 3, p. 109.

<sup>80</sup> R. A. Higham, 'A Knight to Remember: The Building Enterprises of Hugh Courtenay (1272-1340)', *DART* 121 (1989), pp. 151-8; *Reg. Grandisson*, ii, pp. 939-40.

patronage in the later centuries, rather than let one of their few chapels or more sacred sites fall into abeyance. It also reveals that the commemoration of patrons by the canons may not have been as rigid as the documentary evidence would suggest. The burials themselves also represent only one aspect of patronage in the church, and from other sites it is clear that stained glass, vestments, plate, and other church effects would be objects of lay patronage. Similarly, the cloister and refectory rebuilding schemes were sponsored, or at least aided, by lay donations, which would be commemorated. As such, we can expect that the domestic buildings of the abbey, the church, the cloister, and the refectory, where the canons prayed, walked, and ate daily, would be cluttered with the symbols of the laity.

## CHAPTER 5

### Monastic-lay conflict in the fourteenth century

It is clear from the preceding chapters that the canons had established numerous links with the laity, which were manifested through grants of land, rights, cash, or even their bodies to the abbey. Yet these grants paint a picture of monastic-lay interaction that is almost entirely pacific, and hardly representative of the overall picture. The following two chapters form a counter to the preceding section, and present instead a number of incidences of conflict. This could arise wherever there were points of contact between the canons and the laity: over the abbey's duties to provide spiritual care in their parishes, their rights to land or manorial appurtenances, or through the everyday involvement of the abbey in the social politics of their region. In receiving grants of land, mills, churches, and other appurtenances, the canons had to accept that there would be times when their rights to these had to be defended. This is a commonplace of medieval history.<sup>1</sup> Occasionally, however, the disputes grew into a more protracted struggle between the religious and the laity. A study of one such incident, at the prosperous port of Dartmouth in the canons' parish of Townstal, illustrates much about the relationship between the canons and their wealthy parishioners and neighbours. Yet not all conflicts arose from disputes over property or spiritual provision. The second half of this chapter will examine in detail one that arose from the more complex issue of lay desire for control over the considerable wealth and patronage now wielded by the canons, and analyse the implications for our understanding of the relationship between the canons and the local laity.

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<sup>1</sup> Jamroziak, *Rievaulx Abbey*, pp. 111-30.

The vast majority of conflicts between the laity and the regular religious in the Middle Ages arose from the monasteries' position as landholders.<sup>2</sup> In most cases these conflicts are not distinct from those arising between lay landholders and their peers or tenants, inasmuch as they were inevitable in the course of tenurial, professional, and social interaction. There is no real qualitative difference in the nature of a tenant's dispute depending on whether his lord is abbatial or lay. Nor would we expect to find anything distinguishing a quarrel over rights to land between an abbot and a lay lord from one between two lay figures, excepting, of course, that the abbot might have the added inducement of spiritual returns for the case to be settled in his favour. The evidence for the vast majority of day-to-day disputes does not survive for Torre, as all of the medieval court rolls from their manors have been lost. There are a number of disputes that were taken to a higher court, however, and thus in the 1240's, for example, we find the canons complaining about the non-payment of 9s rent by Roger de Parco in Bradworthy, and the refusal of Richard de Langford and his men to make suit at the abbot's mill in the same manor.<sup>3</sup> These and others like it, however, do not represent any more than the obstacles encountered in the normal running of a medieval estate. The canons, as a corporate body, acted no differently from the other landholding members of their society.

The temporal affairs of the canons were not the only source of conflict with the laity. Their rights to parish churches, and the provision of services to those in their use, could be just as, if not more, contentious. Problems with parishioners make up a large number of the monastic-lay conflicts at any religious house with appropriated churches.<sup>4</sup> Most commonly these were disputes over the payment of tithe or the provision of spiritual

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.; Z. Razi, 'The Struggles between the Abbots of Halesowen and their Tenants in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries', in T. H. Aston *et. al.* (eds.), *Social Relations and their Ideas: Essays in Honour of R. H. Hilton* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 151-68; B. A. Hanawalt, 'Peasant Resistance to Royal and Seigneurial Impositions' in F. X. Newman (ed.), *Social Unrest in the Late Middle Ages* (New York, 1986), pp. 23-47.

<sup>3</sup> EC 166-7; CRR 1237-42, pp. 169-70; 1242-3, pp. 137, 216.

<sup>4</sup> Fizzard, *Plympton Priory*, pp. 153-78.

services. Tithe disputes were as common as might be expected when a society living on or under the poverty line was forced to give a tenth of its agricultural produce to an institution that was very obviously wealthy. In 1261 the abbot of Torre had to ask the abbot of Glastonbury to assist him in the collection of tithe in Torre's Somerset lands, where he was facing some resistance, while in 1289 the parishioners of Tormohun, the abbey's home parish, were refusing to pay tithe after being roused against the abbot by two of their number, who were promptly excommunicated by the Archdeacon of Totnes.<sup>5</sup> The close relations between the villagers of Tormohun and the canons, who by 1370 held both the parish and the manor, led to inevitable strains. One of the most unusual instances occurred in 1390, when the villagers were spreading a rumour that the abbot had beheaded one of the younger canons, one Simon Hastings. Bishop Brantyngham, hearing this, came to Torre, where the abbot presented Simon as alive and well. The bishop threatened excommunication for the originators of the rumour and any of the parishioners who might subsequently repeat it. Evidently Simon Hastings was alive, as he appears in the episcopal registers after his supposed beheading, so quite how the story originated, or what its purpose was, is unclear, besides a manifestation of the occasional ill-feeling between the abbot and the locals.<sup>6</sup>

We occasionally find the canons apparently taking matters into their own hands and becoming personally involved in the collection of rents or tithes. In 1241 Abbot Laurence, Thomas de Torre, and Hugh de Torre, canons of the house, together with William and Gilbert de Gappah, two of the abbey's bailiffs, were summoned on a charge of breaking and entering houses by force of arms in Teignweek. The land in question must have been Maynbogh, the canons' only holding in the manor, which had been granted to

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<sup>5</sup> DC fos. 11v, 162v.

<sup>6</sup> *Reg. Brantyngham*, ii, pp. 705, 868-70, 872.

them not long before by Geoffrey Giffard.<sup>7</sup> In 1316, Robert de Pentelowe, the parson of Stoke Fleming, accused Abbot John le Rous, Thomas de Plympton his fellow canon, William Pomeroy and William Wyker, of carrying away his goods at Wike and Little Dartmouth. The canons claimed that they were owed tithe from the lands, although, while they were part of Townstal manor, the parson correctly argued that for ecclesiastical purposes they formed an outlier of the parish of Stoke Fleming.<sup>8</sup>

The frequency at which similar incidents involving personal intervention on the part of the religious appear in the commissions of oyer and terminer must cast some doubt on the veracity of the accounts. In the same decade as the trespass at Wike and Little Dartmouth, for example, we find similar incidents of trespass committed by the abbot and monks of Hyde, Bermondsey, Tewkesbury, Bindon, Bury St. Edmunds and many others.<sup>9</sup> It must, surely, be questioned as to whether the abbot and monks of such great houses as are included amongst these would personally involve themselves in the breaking and entering of property, and the removal of goods owed, or whether they were included in the indictments as high-ranking officials of the abbey, and were thus considered responsible for the actions of the corporation. Kaeuper notes the difficulty of ascertaining whether a commission was brought because a genuine crime had been committed, or was merely being used as gambit in a local feud.<sup>10</sup> In most of the monastic cases, however, the carrying away of goods seems to indicate forcible attempts to settle debt in relation to tithe or rents, as on the whole the properties were in parishes or manors owned by the religious.

The large parishes of Devon were a frequent source of contention between the monastic appropriators and their parishioners, as settlements could grow up at the other end of a parish, and thus far from the church that was meant to serve them. Most of the

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<sup>7</sup> *CRR 1237-42*, pp. 264, 298; EC 25-8.

<sup>8</sup> *CPR 1313-17*, p. 503.

<sup>9</sup> *CPR 1307-13*, p. 309; *1313-17*, pp. 406, 700; *1317-21*, pp. 91, 362-3.

<sup>10</sup> R. W. Kaeuper, 'Law and Order in Fourteenth Century England: The Evidence of Special Commissions of Oyer and Terminer', *Speculum*, 54 (1979), pp. 775-81.



larger parishes had some sort of chapel within them, to serve outlying villages, and in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries there was a noticeable movement to provide new chapels in areas that lacked them, and for long-standing chapels in large parishes to have their status raised to that of a semi-parochial church.<sup>11</sup> In Exeter diocese, the petitions made to the bishop on this account usually followed the same line of argument, based on the 1287 ruling of the Synod of Exeter. The parish churches were stated to be distant, along difficult and dangerous roads liable to flooding and worse, so that the bodies of the dead could not be borne to the cemetery.<sup>12</sup> We should not necessarily dismiss these claims purely because they are formulaic: they almost certainly reflect the general state of the climate and roads of medieval Devon.<sup>13</sup> The vast majority of petitions requesting the bestowal of semi-parochial status on chapels-of-ease in the diocese were granted. Where the church in question was held *in proprios usos* by an abbey, however, the religious would often resist for fear of losing part of the parish revenue to a church that was not under their control. Plympton Priory only relented to the demands to give semi-parochial rights to the chapel of the parishioners of Plympton St. Mary in 1441, sixty years after the demand had first been made, while the canons fought the petition of the parishioners of Wembury right to the Dissolution.<sup>14</sup> Of the eight appropriated churches of Torre Abbey, four had chapels which were granted semi-parochial status in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Two of these parishes, Shebbear and Bradworthy, were huge, at around 7,500 and 14,000 acres respectively with sizeable villages at either end, and the canons of Torre do not appear to have put many obstacles in the way of the conferral of burial and christening rights on

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<sup>11</sup> N. Orme, 'The Medieval Chapels of Heavitree', *Devon Archaeological Society*, 49 (1991), p. 124; idem, 'Church and Chapel in Medieval England', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6<sup>th</sup> ser., 6 (1996), pp. 75-102.

<sup>12</sup> *Councils and Synods, with other documents relating to the English Church: 1205-1313*, ed. F. M. Powicke & C. R. Cheney (Oxford, 1964), ii, p. 1005, no. 11.

<sup>13</sup> Hoskins, *Devon*, pp. 21-3, 148-50.

<sup>14</sup> Fizzard, *Plympton Priory*, pp. 169-76.

their dependent chapels, although they naturally insisted on appropriate safeguards for their finances and the rights of the mother church.<sup>15</sup>

Not all such cases were easily or amicably solved. The busy and prosperous port of Dartmouth was within the canons' parish of St. Clement at Townstal, yet when the parish church had been built, at some point in the eleventh century, the town had not yet developed, and the focus of the parish was the rural farming community high on the hills overlooking the River Dart. By the fourteenth century, however, Dartmouth was a large and prosperous mercantile port, containing the vast majority of the parishioners of the church.<sup>16</sup> For all of these, including the wealthy burgesses, it was thus a mile walk to their church, 350ft above the town [Fig. 1]. This situation was exacerbated in September 1329 by the suicide of the vicar of Townstal, Richard de Widecombe. Bishop Grandisson ordered an inquiry and placed the church and cemetery under interdict.<sup>17</sup> Despite the institution of a new vicar in October 1329, the interdict was still in effect in January 1330.<sup>18</sup>

The interdict left the parishioners in a spiritually perilous position. At least one took matters into his own hands. William Bacon, one of the wealthiest burgesses and later mayor, obtained permission from the bishop to establish an oratory in his house in the town where he could have services performed by a suitable chaplain, albeit secretly and with closed doors and no ringing of bells, and only for himself, his wife, and a select few of his family.<sup>19</sup> For the majority of the other townsmen, however, such options were not available. The parishioners had to obtain special licence from Bishop Grandisson to hold a service with open doors and ringing of bells in the parish church on Christmas Eve 1329.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> *Reg. Grandisson*, ii, pp. 1195-6; *Reg. Stafford*, p. 287.

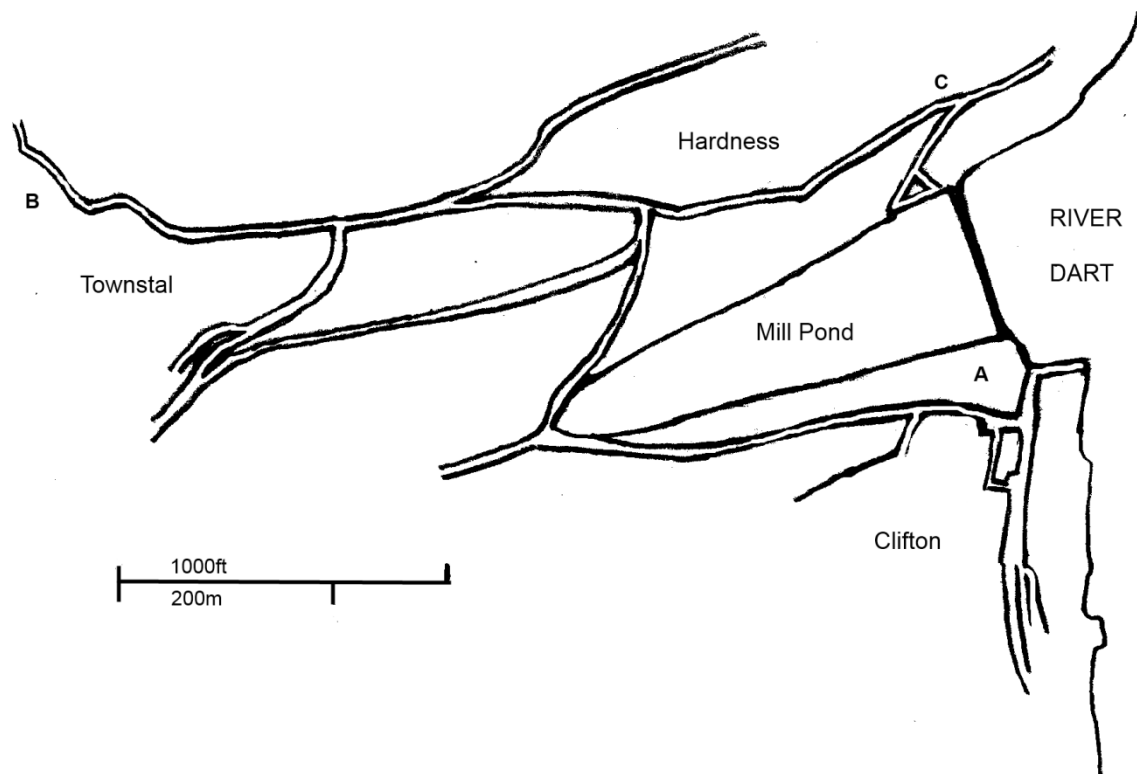
<sup>16</sup> Hoskins, *Devon*, pp. 382-4.

<sup>17</sup> *Reg. Grandisson*, i, p. 529.

<sup>18</sup> *Reg. Grandisson*, i, p. 554; ii, p. 1273.

<sup>19</sup> *Reg. Grandisson*, i, p. 539; Watkin, *Dartmouth*, p. 183.

<sup>20</sup> *Reg. Grandisson*, i, p. 550.



**Figure 1: Medieval Dartmouth**

**Key: A – Site of St. Saviour's chapel/Augustinian friary; B – Townstal church; C – St. Clarus' chapel**

It is not clear when the interdict was lifted, but it highlighted the problem of the provision of services to the busy port. William Bacon appears in a more philanthropic light in his attempts to resolve the issue. On February 16th 1330, in a deed originally witnessed at Dartmouth by the king himself, he obtained licence to grant an acre of land to the abbot and convent of Torre in order to build a church in the town for the use of the parishioners there. It was noted that the parish church was distant from the town, and as such many parishioners 'on account of the great fatigue of their bodies' were not able to attend the services. It is notable that the grant was in order for a new parish church to be built, not just a chapel for Dartmouth, although this might be a scribal ambiguity.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> DC fo. 57v; *CPR 1327-30*, p. 516. Much confusion in dating this event has been caused by Watkin's incorrect transcription and translation of the licence to amortise this land copied into the Dublin Cartulary. He reads the dating clause as '16<sup>th</sup> February in the 14<sup>th</sup> year of our [Edward I] reign', and states that the charter can therefore be dated to 1286. His presumption that the king in question was Edward I comes from a recorded visit by the king and queen to Exeter during Christmas 1285, thus giving the opportunity for a subsequent visit to Dartmouth. Yet the charter correctly reads 'anno regni nostri [Edward III] quarto.'

From subsequent events, it appears that the canons refused William Bacon's gift along with his request for a parish church for Dartmouth. The increased prosperity of Dartmouth in the fourteenth century must have vastly increased the revenues of Townstal, as well as putting the abbot in a position of effective spiritual lordship over the town. They also held sanctuary land and tenements in Townstal assessed at a third of a fee in 1346, so had some physical presence in the area.<sup>22</sup> Given the revenue involved, the canons were thus understandably loathe to risk losing any rights, and, instead, in 1331 received permission from Bishop Grandisson to perform services in the ancient chapel of St. Clarus 'pro parochianis senio confractis et alias debilitatis'.<sup>23</sup>

The earliest reference to this chapel is in around 1235, and it presumably shares the same (masculine) patron as St. Cleer in Cornwall, and the chapel of St. Clair built c. 1429 in Heavitree parish, although which Clarus/Clair is unknown. The Dartmouth chapel was ruinous in the sixteenth century and disappeared in the seventeenth.<sup>24</sup> However, it was never going to provide an adequate solution to the problem of providing accessible services to the parishioners of Dartmouth. Not only was it probably too small, but also its position, close to the town centre on Clarence Street and easily accessible today, was until the late-sixteenth century separated from the southern portion of the town by a tidal mill pool and quay. The only way to cross between Hardnesse on the north and Clifton Dartmouth on the south was via a narrow pass along the top of the mill dam. Thus while the opening of St. Clarus' for services might have helped some of the infirm parishioners in the northern part of the town, those to the south were still effectively cut off.<sup>25</sup>

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Neither Seymour nor Watkin appear to have been aware of the patent rolls entry, and thus both are unable to explain the immediate circumstances surrounding Bacon's actions; *TA*, p. 207; Watkin, *Dartmouth*, p. 280.

<sup>22</sup> *FA*, i, p. 393; *EC* 199-204, 208.

<sup>23</sup> *Reg. Grandisson*, ii, p. 614.

<sup>24</sup> Watkin, *Dartmouth*, p. 7; idem, 'The Lost Chapel of St. Clare at Hardness, Dartmouth', *DART*, 61 (1929), pp. 219-36; N. Orme, *English Church Dedications: with a survey of Devon and Cornwall* (Exeter, 1996), p. 73; idem, 'Medieval Chapels of Heavitree', pp. 121-5.

<sup>25</sup> P. Russell, 'The new quay at Dartmouth, 1584-1640', *DART*, 82 (1950) pp. 281-90; I. H. Smart, 'The Development of Dartmouth Millpond to 1846', *DART*, 125 (1993), p. 192.

William Bacon, presumably representing the will of the majority of the Dartmouth parishioners, was not to be easily dissuaded from his ambitions for a church to serve the southern portion of the town. He turned instead to the order of Austin friars, who had been looking to establish a foothold in Devon since at least 1328, and for whom Bishop Grandisson was a protector.<sup>26</sup> Early in 1331 Bacon received another licence in mortmain, this time to appropriate the acre to the friars in order that they might build ‘an oratory and dwelling-houses’ in Dartmouth.<sup>27</sup> Despite Grandisson’s ties to the order, the friars had clearly not sought his permission to settle in Dartmouth, as shortly after the licence was granted the bishop sent Master Henry Bloyau, a canon of Exeter, to investigate Thomas de Komptone and Nicholas de Stauntone, who were both actually Austin friars but were suspected of posing as priests in the town. They were found to have built an oratory or chapel without the requisite permission from the diocesan, or at least occupied a building for that purpose, and Bloyau forbade the friars from using it, a prohibition which lasted until July 1335.<sup>28</sup>

Meanwhile, the abbot of Torre, Simon de Plympton, evidently concerned both by the snub to his spiritual and temporal authority in Dartmouth and the threat posed by the friars for the potential patronage of his house, attempted to have the friars removed from the parish through an appeal to the higher ecclesiastical courts. No record survives of the filing of the suit or of its proceedings, although it was notable enough to be preserved in a ‘Processus litis inter abbatem de Torr’ et Aug’’, MS 321 in the library of the Augustinian friars at York.<sup>29</sup> The appeal appears to have lasted from 1331 until 1343, processing through the Court of Canterbury to the Papal Curia, and certainly by 1344 the suit had been concluded against the friars in the latter, which imposed perpetual silence on the

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<sup>26</sup> *Reg. Grandisson*, i, pp. 177-8, 490.

<sup>27</sup> *CPR 1330-4*, p. 46.

<sup>28</sup> *Reg. Grandisson*, ii, pp. 620, 788.

<sup>29</sup> M. R. James, ‘The Catalogue of the Library of the Augustinian Friars at York’, *Fasciculus Ioanni Willis Clark dicatus* (Cambridge, 1909), p. 50.

brethren in Dartmouth.<sup>30</sup> Realising now that the ecclesiastical hierarchy was firmly against them in this matter, although apparently still with some considerable support on the ground in Dartmouth, the friars made one last attempt to hold their position.

According to Grandisson's register, it was alleged that, on March 14<sup>th</sup> 1344, a certain Brother Hugh, styled Bishop of Damascus, arrived at the town dressed in lay attire of a short tight-buttoned coat with long sword and buckler. In order to gain entry to the town, he initially claimed that he was the envoy and minister of the King, sent to arrest the ships there. However, on going to the friary he was received by the friars and swapped his lay clothes for the habit of the order, a pastoral staff, and an episcopal mitre. He then summoned the parishioners of Townstal and declared that the friars had been successful in the Papal Curia against the abbot of Torre, and that he had been sent to the town by the Pope and cardinals in order to consecrate the oratory. Having done so, he granted indulgences to the townspeople, confirmed and christened girls and boys, heard confessions, and absolved those who had been excommunicated on account of violence committed in the town. He then went to many taverns in the town and drank in them, and freely displayed a ring which he claimed the Pope had given to him with his own hands.<sup>31</sup>

In his defence, also recorded, Hugh denied the most serious charges, and attempted to give mitigating circumstances for the others. He had been travelling from Cambridge to Exeter on his way to Dartmouth to consecrate the cemetery of the friars when he received information that the purpose of his journey had become known to the abbot of Torre. As such he would have been in danger from the abbot's men had he not disguised himself. He acknowledged that he consecrated the cemetery, granted indulgences, but only of forty

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<sup>30</sup> *Reg. Grandisson*, ii, p. 1028.

<sup>31</sup> *Reg. Grandisson*, ii, pp. 1028-30.

days and not one hundred as alleged, and confirmed girls and boys.<sup>32</sup> He had not drunk in the taverns but had been invited to the hall of William Smale, mayor of Dartmouth, and William Bacon, burgess of the town, and had drunk there. All other charges he denied.

Furthermore, Hugh stated that he was well within his right as Bishop of Damascus in consecrating the cemetery of the friars, as if the diocesan refused to consecrate their cemeteries or oratories the order had privileges from the Apostolic See that the ceremony could be performed by any bishop. Roth's statement that Hugh was acting 'with the permission of Grandisson and the pope himself' is completely incorrect. Grandisson subsequently investigated the actions of Brother Hugh, and the Papal Curia had only recently decided in favour of the abbot of Torre and against the friars, so was unlikely to have acquiesced in the consecration of their buildings.<sup>33</sup>

Hugh, Archbishop of Damascus, O.S.A, is later found acting in a more official capacity as suffragan to the Archbishop of York between 1344 and 1351, dedicating chapels, churches, and churchyards; to the Bishop of Lincoln in 1347; and in the same year as an auxiliary of Hamo Hethe, Bishop of Rochester, given licence to ordain in Greenwich and bless and dedicate churches and altars and the like for two years in Rochester diocese.<sup>34</sup> His position as Archbishop of Damascus was one *in partibus infidelium*, the titular bishopric of an area overseas and inaccessible, commonly bestowed on the friars by papal provision in order that they might assist bishops in their episcopal duties, and whose numbers multiplied in the fourteenth century.<sup>35</sup> Yet the privileges granted to the friars meant that these bishops *in partibus* could operate outside of, and indeed against, the

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<sup>32</sup> 40 days was the normal maximum from the late-thirteenth century, although 100 days was canonically allowed on occasions where a bishop was dedicating a new church; N. Orme, 'Indulgences in the Diocese of Exeter, 1100-1536', *DART*, 120 (1988), p. 20.

<sup>33</sup> F. Roth, *English Austin Friars 1249-1538* (NY, 1961), ii, pp. 150-5.

<sup>34</sup> *Rochester Register of Hamo de Hethe, 1319-52*, ed. C. Johnson, C&Y Society 48-9 (1948), ii, pp. 831-4; *The Fabric Rolls of York Minster*, ed. J. Raine, Surtees Society 35 (1859), p. 237; Fryde *et al*, *Handbook of British Chronology*, p. 285.

<sup>35</sup> Thompson, *The English Clergy*, pp. 48-9, 70, 200-6; *RO*, ii, pp. 369-75; M. Robson, 'Franciscan Bishops *In Partibus Infidelium* Ministering in Medieval England', *Antonianum*, 78 (2003), pp. 547-73.

existing episcopal framework if the diocesan refused to consecrate their buildings.

Clashes between the friars and regulars were not uncommon, especially in towns. The canons of Plympton Priory found themselves facing down new monastic communities in their borough of Plymouth on two occasions. At some point in the early fourteenth century the Carmelites had settled a convent near the town against the wishes of the canons of Plympton and the vicar of Plymouth. The latter two complained to Bishop Stapledon, who interceded on their behalf. In this case, however, the king himself, a friend to the order, intervened on the friars' behalf. In 1314, he instructed Stapledon to allow the friars to consecrate their buildings, and the resulting licence appears in the same year. Stapledon was either unwilling or unable to perform the task himself, as the licence states that the friars were to secure any bishop that they liked to consecrate the church. The rights of the parish church were also protected to some degree, in that they were not to bury strangers dying in the parish without the vicar's consent.<sup>36</sup>

The second instance occurred at the close of the fourteenth century, and bears a close resemblance to the events at Dartmouth. Between 1381 and 1385, a group of Franciscan friars settled in Sutton, near Plymouth, and acquired property in the area, once more against the wishes of the canons and vicar. In the latter year, Bishop Brantyngham wrote to the dean of Plympton instructing him to stop the friars, as they were proceeding without episcopal licence or licence from the Papal Curia. Archbishop Courtenay intervened on the side of the canons and vicar, adding that the locals should make no more donations to the friars. However, the Franciscans produced a document showing that in 1381 they had received permission from Urban VI to appropriate property and build a church, cemetery, and other buildings in Plymouth. Brantyngham nonetheless refused to allow the building to proceed until the 'canonical requirements' had been met, and

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<sup>36</sup> *Reg. Stapledon*, p. 315; *MDE*, p. 152.



instituted a hearing under the archdeacon of Totnes.<sup>37</sup>

The result of the hearing is not known, but evidently the king intervened on the part of the friars, and eventually their buildings were completed.<sup>38</sup> Unsurprisingly, however, they found Brantyngham unwilling to assent to the consecration of their site. Thus, in 1391, the friars secured the services of the Dominican John Berham, Bishop of Neapolis, to consecrate the place.<sup>39</sup> Bishop Brantyngham excommunicated both Berham and the Franciscans, and laid their church under interdict.<sup>40</sup> The case had also been brought before the Papal Curia by Michael Cergeaux, the vicar of Sutton, in whose parish the Franciscans had built their convent. The Curia mandated the Archbishop of Canterbury, the abbot of Buckland, and the dean of Exeter to ensure the demolition of the buildings. Yet the friars were confident of their position, especially with the king on their side, boasting that they would defend themselves by lay power and continue at their chosen site.<sup>41</sup> Despite the numerous injunctions against them, their confidence was well founded, as the Franciscan house at Sutton was still in operation at the Dissolution.<sup>42</sup>

Although the friars at Plymouth succeeded where those at Dartmouth failed, a number of common themes arise from the events. From the actions of the Franciscans at Plymouth and the Austin friars at Dartmouth, it is possible to see bishops *in partibus* acting in a manner which has previously not been identified. While their main duties were to act as suffragans or assistant bishops, or aid at the Curia, here we see them intervening

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<sup>37</sup> *Reg. Brantyngham*, ii, pp. 575-6, 588-9; *The Metropolitan Visitations of William Courtenay*, ed. J. H. Dahmus (Urbana, 1950), pp. 14, 138.

<sup>38</sup> *CPR 1381-5*, p. 399.

<sup>39</sup> Berham was also licensed to christen and administer first tonsures in Canterbury diocese under Archbishop Courtenay. In 1373 he appears as executor of a will in Kent under that title. His see was presumably either Neapolis in Cyprus or Flavia Neapolis, modern Nablus, in Palestine, not, as Williams suggests, Naples in Italy; I. J. Churchill, *Canterbury Administration: The Administrative Machinery of the Archbishopric of Canterbury, Illustrated from Original Records* (London, 1933), i, p. 129; A. Williams, 'Relations between the Mendicant Friars and the Regular Clergy in England in the Later Fourteenth Century', *Annuaire Mediaevale*, 1 (1960), p. 80.

<sup>40</sup> *Reg. Brantyngham*, ii, pp. 723-4.

<sup>41</sup> *CPL 1362-1404*, p. 404.

<sup>42</sup> Williams, 'Relations between the Mendicant Friars', pp. 79-81; *MDE*, p. 152.

on behalf of struggling convents of friars in order to lend their foundations some legitimacy. That they were not always successful in doing so is clear from the failure of the convent at Dartmouth, yet despite the numerous papal injunctions, excommunications and interdicts laid on the convent at Plymouth, the Franciscans managed to hold on. They were clearly popular in the town, as suggested by Archbishop Courtenay's demand that the locals cease their gifts to the community, and it may have been this popularity, and the support of the king, that justified their boast of being able to defend themselves with lay power.

From remarks made by Hugh at his hearing, it is clear that the townspeople of Dartmouth were, on the whole, supporting the friars against the abbot of Torre. Indeed, the friars' presence in the town was symptomatic of a wider conflict over spiritual provision to the town. The willingness of the locals to receive the bishop is apparent even in the accusations against him, although given that he was granting indulgences of some considerable size this is perhaps not surprising. He was also invited to dine with the mayor and senior burgesses. However, Hugh mentions that the welcome he received was not entirely friendly. A certain sailor from St. Albans, thinking he was the abbot of Torre and had come to expel the brethren, struck him on the arm with a bow and threatened to come with his accomplices and leave no-one alive in the town if the Archbishop did not grant him absolution. The second part of this statement appears to be Hugh's explanation to the charge that he granted absolution to those excommunicated on grounds of violence. The first half, however, is further indication that the abbot was not seen in the friendliest light in the town at the time.<sup>43</sup>

Nonetheless, by the onset of the Black Death the overall picture at Dartmouth had changed very little from that of the early thirteenth century. The parishioners still had to

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<sup>43</sup> *Reg. Grandisson*, ii, p. 1030.

make the long climb to their parish church, although the more infirm of their number in Hardnesse might have been able to use the chapel of St. Clarus. Having seen off the challenges of the friars and deflected the will of the burgesses, the abbot of Torre was perhaps even more solidly ensconced as spiritual lord of the borough than he had been previously. Although the temporal lordship of Dartmouth was in the hands of Guy de Brian, the abbot of Torre was able to frustrate the ambitions of the burgesses by refusing to concede any of the rights of his church of Townstal.<sup>44</sup> The lengths to which the abbot was prepared to go, not just in terms of ecclesiastical jurisprudence but, as Hugh's need to adopt a disguise showed, the intention to physically harass those who would operate counter to his wishes, appear to have made him a powerful if unpopular figure in Dartmouth.<sup>45</sup>

This episode is, of course, just one more in a long history of conflict between the friars in their various guises and the existing parochial and episcopal network upon which they were imposed. In this case, as in that of the Franciscans at Plymouth and so many others, the root of the problem was that the authorization came from the papacy, regardless of the wishes of the diocesan. According to a letter of 1351, John XXII had given the friars leave to found houses at Wiche in Worcester diocese and Dartmouth in Exeter diocese.<sup>46</sup> The friars could thus rely on papal privileges allowing them to bypass the local ecclesiastical hierarchy, take revenue from the parish church, and preach to the people almost with impunity. This is not to say that the existing parish system was adequately serving the spiritual needs of the populace, but it is clear to see why the friars were so

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<sup>44</sup> Watkin, *Dartmouth*, p. 274; for Guy de Brian see below p. 185.

<sup>45</sup> In 1350 Thomas de Temedebiny[?], an Augustinian friar, was assaulted at Newton Abbot by Richard Forst, identifiably one of the abbot's men who was acting as a nominee for the abbey around this time; TNA CP 40/363 m. 104; Chapter 3, p. 113.

<sup>46</sup> *CPL* 1342-62, p. 386.

unpopular with many church rectors.<sup>47</sup>

The abbot of Torre may have won the battle against the friars, but the situation at Dartmouth remained untenable. As a coda to this incident, it is not entirely clear whether it was the friars themselves or the disgruntled townsfolk who were occupying the old friary in November 1351. Either way, Bishop Grandisson issued instructions to the dean of Totnes and the rectors of Dittisham and Stoke Fleming that certain ‘disciples of Antichrist’, posing as brethren of the Order of Hermits in Townstal, had committed many abuses. The ‘friars’ were not to hear confession or minister.<sup>48</sup> Grandisson’s overall response to the situation at Dartmouth is in keeping with his noted antipathy to both the creation of new chapels and the settling of friars in his diocese, as well as the expression of ‘popular’ religion, although despite his voluminous letters on the subject it is not clear in this case that his proscriptions against the friars had much effect.<sup>49</sup> At a parochial level, the power of the abbey and the victorious suit in the Papal Curia would seem to have been the most important factors in the success of the canons in repelling the friars and resisting the chapel.

It was to be another twenty years before the question of Townstal’s inaccessibility as a parish church was to come to the fore once more, although the parishioners had clearly not lost hope in the meantime. The will of John Clerk, dated 1363, bequeathed his body to Townstal church, but also put one mark to the fabric of the new church of Dartmouth. This may indicate the initiation of a new building programme at the site of the old friary, but it was not until 1370 that the mayor and community of Dartmouth received licence from Bishop Brantyngham to celebrate in their chapel ‘newly built to the honour of the Holy

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<sup>47</sup> Burton, *Monastic and Religious Orders*, pp. 127-8 discusses some thirteenth-century examples of conflict between the friars and the more established religious houses.

<sup>48</sup> *Reg. Grandisson*, ii, p. 1108. If these were local laymen posing as friars, then there is a certain similarity to the group who set themselves up as the ‘Order of Brothelyngham’ in Exeter in 1348; *Reg. Grandisson*, ii, pp. 1055-6.

<sup>49</sup> M. Haren, *Sin and Society in Fourteenth-Century England: A Study of the Memoriale Presbiterorum* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 56-7; N. Orme, ‘Bishop Grandisson and Popular Religion’, *DART*, 124 (1992), pp. 107-18.

Trinity', on the condition that they were to respect the rights of the mother church at Townstal, and that on Sundays and festivals they personally attended the parish church.<sup>50</sup>

The canons only gave their consent two years later, noting that 'the parishioners of Dartmouth have constructed a chapel in the parish of Townstal without obtaining licence from the abbot of Torre or the vicar of Townstal', appearing to suggest that the parishioners had built and received episcopal licence for the chapel, and then presented it as a *fait accompli* to the abbot. It seems unlikely that the abbot would have been unaware of what was happening in the town, especially as John Clerk appears as an associate of the canons.<sup>51</sup> The abbot may have been content to let the situation develop under guidance and then agree to terms at the end.

The abbot was cautious to ensure that his rights as the rector of Townstal were not eroded. He gave his assent to the new chapel with its baptistery and cemetery on the provision that it was entirely dependent on the mother church. The chapel and cemetery would have to be consecrated by the bishop, at the expense of the parishioners, and all services were to be provided at the expense of the parishioners. The vicar was to appoint a chaplain to serve the chapel on a yearly basis, although the vicar could choose to administer the sacraments if he so wished. A tenth of all oblations, and all the offerings and revenue, were to go to the mother church except on the feast of St. Mary Magdalene when the parishioners were to give a penny or half-penny, as was customary, to the chapel. The fabric of the chapel, together with all ornaments, vestments, and books, was entirely the responsibility of the parishioners.<sup>52</sup> The chapel and cemetery were duly consecrated a

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<sup>50</sup> *Reg. Brantyngham*, i, pp. 231, 247; Watkin, *Dartmouth*, p. 291. The more commonly stated dedication is to St. Saviour, the same dedication as Torre Abbey, e.g. Watkin, *Dartmouth*, pp. 101, 110, 140. The post-Dissolution dedication was settled as St. Saviour, and remains so to this day. Orme suggests the two dedications were not mutually exclusive, and that St. Saviour's was so called as being the most visible of the Trinity; Orme, *Church Dedications*, pp. 152-3.

<sup>51</sup> See below pp. 189-90.

<sup>52</sup> EC 194; *Reg. Brantyngham*, i, p. 284; Watkin, *Dartmouth*, pp. 285-6.

week later on 13<sup>th</sup> October, and the abbot undertook to find a chaplain.<sup>53</sup> Yet the canons were still cautious about their rights in the town, as evidenced by the fact that, from the 1370's, and apparently not before, the abbey began to institute senior canons as vicars of Townstal, presumably to ensure a tighter grip on the situation in the parish and prevent any loss of rights to the chapel.<sup>54</sup>

This episode marks a departure from the picture of monastic-lay interaction as examined in the previous chapters. That mainly saw the abbey as a beneficiary of patronage by the laity in a largely harmonious interaction between the religious and secular worlds. Here, however, we see the abbey tenaciously defending its power and influence in a town which, by extension, we may suggest was of considerable importance to it. As the holder of the parish church the abbey's power was mainly spiritual, and this translated into a rich source of tithe income. Yet the importance of the town was more than just financial. As a wealthy mercantile centre, the abbey would hope to recruit patrons and staff from amongst the burgesses, and generally to bring the town into its social orbit. This importance is clearly shown when the abbey's influence was threatened by the arrival of a group of friars, who themselves appear to have been invited by a group of burgesses in an effort to undermine the abbot's spiritual power. For financial reasons, the abbey could not risk losing the tithes of Dartmouth, but for both economic and social reasons it could not abide a religious rival in the town. Had the friars succeeded, the abbey would have found its influence in the town seriously curtailed. That the abbey went to some lengths to expel the friars and was able to maintain its control in the town is testament both to its importance to the abbey and of the abbey's power in the town and the region. In this and subsequent chapters, the continuing close relationship between the town and the abbey is explored in more detail.

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<sup>53</sup> *Reg. Brantyngham*, i, p. 30.

<sup>54</sup> See Chapter 8, pp. 270-71.

### 'The Cotelford Affair'

The vast majority of disputes between the laity and the regular religious arose in the course of the administration of estates and spiritual services, and these normally, and rightly, receive the most attention in the historiography of monastic-lay conflict. Yet there are a number of incidents at abbeys that do not fit into this category. As well as receiving the patronage of the laity, an abbey such as Torre was a powerful source of patronage for clergy and laity alike. The canons could dispense benefices and posts in their employment, as well as grant leases on lands and tithes. Yet such patronage was not dispensed in a social vacuum, and the direction of the abbey's largesse could be channelled by the influence of the tutelary patron or other local notables. For various reasons the abbey might resist this influence, or, perhaps due to familial ties or personal enmity on the part of the abbot, attempt to alter the network of its distributed patronage. Such developments in the patronal history of a house can be obscured, however, by the often violent methods to which the lay patrons resorted.<sup>55</sup>

In 1345, on the death of Abbot Simon de Plympton, the canons had to elect a new head. The process was attended by Robert, abbot of Welbeck, their father-abbot, and conducted by way of compromission.<sup>56</sup> The panel comprised seven of the canons: Richard de Cotelford, prior and presumably favourite for the post; John Dyer, subprior; John Bodeam; John Gras; George de Grimstone; John de Berkadone; and John de Stoucombe. John Dyer, George de Grimstone, and John de Berkadone chose Richard, which, as he presumably would not vote against himself, constituted a simple majority. The father-abbot, however, refused to confirm the election, and instead appointed John Gras.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Stöber, *Late Medieval Monasteries*, p. 103.

<sup>56</sup> This was 'by far the most common' method of election, and the favoured candidate was usually included on the panel; *RO*, ii, p. 250.

<sup>57</sup> *CPL 1342-62*, p. 340.

Robert's motives for quashing the election are unstated, but he was well within his rights to do so.<sup>58</sup> It may have been that the four-three majority was not adequate for his election, and, as suggested by a similar disputed election at Fountains, a two-thirds majority was required. However, the most common reason given for the overturning of Cistercian abbatial elections in the later Middle Ages was the influence of outsiders.<sup>59</sup> In terms of influence, Richard's family appear as landholders in South Brent, probably aspiring free tenants with connections to Buckfast Abbey, as well as burgesses of Dartmouth.<sup>60</sup> Yet John Gras, the canon chosen instead, was the more well-connected figure. His family held the manor of Teigngrace, north of Newton Abbot, and had strong links to the abbey. Geoffrey Gras, who inherited Teigngrace around this time, was a soldier who served in France with John de Mohn and was granted the manor of Glenogra, co. Limerick, in 1347. Members of the family appear as witness to charters of the abbey both before and after 1345, and a Thomas Gras had been a canon in 1318.<sup>61</sup> It would thus be more likely that Gras' connections would have influenced the election. Aside from bribery, the Abbot Robert may have decided that it would be better for the abbey to have a head with prominent local connections than risk alienating patrons. On the other hand, he may simply have been unimpressed by something he had heard or seen in the compromission council, or suitably impressed by John Gras' performance there.

Either way, John Gras was elected abbot, and he was confirmed by the bishop on 21<sup>st</sup> December 1345. In a letter of 1351, Grandisson noted that he had been aware of the potential for this situation to get out of hand, and, as such, had summoned Richard de Cotelford, John Dyer, and Richard de Hamptisford, the cellarer, who brought with them a

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<sup>58</sup> *CAP*, i, pp. 123-4.

<sup>59</sup> E. F. Jacob, 'The disputed election at Fountains Abbey, 1410-16', in V. Ruffer & A. J. Taylor (eds.), *Medieval Studies presented to Rose Graham* (Oxford, 1950), pp. 80-2.

<sup>60</sup> J. Brooking-Rowe, *Contributions to a History of the Cistercian Houses of Devon* (Plymouth, 1878), p. 106; Erskine, *Lay Subsidy*, p. 10; Watkin, *Dartmouth*, pp. 37, 283; *CPR* 1330-3, p. 504.

<sup>61</sup> *CPR* 1345-8, p. 512; 1350-4, p. 292; DC fos. 94v 137(bis)r; *CFR* 1347-56, p. 53; see Appendix 2.



letter written by Cotelford and sealed with the common seal of the convent in which the preferment of John Gras was noted. The three canons swore that John had been chosen by their father-abbot, and Richard de Cotelford publicly and expressly removed his claim to the abbacy.<sup>62</sup> From subsequent events, however, it is clear that Richard did not keep to his word, and must have started litigation against John Gras in Avignon almost immediately.

Gras ruled for three and a half years, dying in early 1349.<sup>63</sup> It seems likely that he was a victim of the Black Death sweeping the Westcountry from the very end of 1348, as it reached its height in Devon and Cornwall in March, April and May of 1349, and the communities at St. Nicholas' Exeter, Buckfast, Hartland and Tavistock lost their heads.<sup>64</sup> We have no record of whether the plague hit Torre itself, or how hard if it did, although the timing of John Gras' death suggests a connection. His successor, John de Berkadone, was confirmed by Grandisson in May 1349.<sup>65</sup>

In the meantime, Richard de Cotelford continued to press his claim and in November 1349 won his case, presumably automatically as a result of Gras' death. Grandisson, having previously received Cotelford's sworn promise to renounce his claim to the abbey, was unwilling to perform his consecration as abbot so Richard received confirmation instead from the exiled bishop of Porto. Richard then disappears from the

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<sup>62</sup> *Reg. Grandisson*, ii, pp. 1002, 1109-10. The letter of 1351 has led to some confusion, mainly through a failure to realise that Grandisson was talking about the events of 1345. The incorrect transcription of Gras as 'Cras' in the printed registers led Watkin to assume that this 'John Cras' was a different abbot, although he had previously dismissed this notion. Seymour thought that the letter indicated the reinstatement of John Gras in 1351, and this was followed by the editors of the second volume of *Heads of Religious Houses*; Watkin, *Abbats of Torre*, p. 6; idem, 'Teign, Teign Bruer, Teign le Gras, Teign Graas, Teign Grace', *TNHS* 6 (1930-4), pp. 140-2; D. M. Smith & V. C. M. London (eds.), *Heads of Religious Houses in England and Wales, II: 1216-1377* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 513; *TA*, p. 55.

<sup>63</sup> *Reg. Grandisson*, ii, p. 1082; *CPR 1351-4*, p. 190.

<sup>64</sup> *Reg. Grandisson*, ii, pp. 1079, 1082; iii, pp. 1380, 1390; F. A. Gasquet, *The Black Death* (London, 1893), pp. 87-90.

<sup>65</sup> *Reg. Grandisson*, ii, p. 1082. He is only called John in the confirmation. Colvin was unsure of who this referred to, given how common the name was amongst the canons of the abbey. Seymour assumed this was a different abbot from John de Berkadone, 'sent to Torre by command of the Order to restore peace there.' *Heads of Religious Houses* states that this was a second confirmation for John Gras. The papal letters and patent rolls make it clear that Gras was dead, and as John de Berkadone appears as abbot in 1352, and no other confirmation is contained in the episcopal registers, there is no reason to think that this abbot John is not John de Berkadone; *WC*, p. 417; *TA*, p. 55; Smith & London, *Heads of Religious Houses, II*, p. 513.

sources for nearly two years before returning to England from Avignon to press home his claim in August 1351. Going first to Westminster, he received royal support, along with one year's protection in prosecuting his rights to the abbey. This was followed by a similar grant of protection from Prince Edward, who held the rights to the waters of Torbay as part of the duchy of Cornwall. Richard then journeyed down to Torre, accompanied by Roger de Queryngdon, the bearer of the king's protection.<sup>66</sup>

Within two months, however, there was trouble brewing. On 6<sup>th</sup> November 1351 the king granted two years' protection to the (unnamed) abbot, 'on his petition showing that a large confederacy of disturbers of the peace, men at arms, and others purpose to come to the abbey and the granges, manors, and other places annexed to the abbey and consume and waste the goods and things therein.'<sup>67</sup> While the language itself may be formulaic, these were more than just paranoid fears. Two weeks later, on 20<sup>th</sup> November, a commission of oyer and terminer was appointed, and headed by Hugh de Courtenay:

...on complaint of John, abbot of Torre Moun, that Adam de Fenton, Henry de Brixton, Richard Geffard, John de Falewille, Robert de Falewille, chaplain, John Hereberd, Richard Attewille, Stephen Derneford, Richard Ballond, John Vayreson, Philip Simon, Walter Verlecombe, Richard Brigge, and others broke by night his close, church and treasury at Torre Moun, co. Devon, carried away his goods and assaulted his men and servants, whereby he lost their service for a great time.<sup>68</sup>

The formulaic language of such commissions is all too evident, but, regardless of the gravity of the actual offence, that these figures were named at all must tell us something of the social networks of the abbey at this time. Previously, it has been argued that this raid was part of Richard's attempt to assert his claim to the abbacy.<sup>69</sup> While this still may have

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<sup>66</sup> *CPR 1350-4*, pp. 130-1, 292; *Black Prince's Register*, ii, p. 16; E. Windeatt, 'Charter of Creation of the Duchy of Cornwall', *DCNQ*, 10 (1918-19), p. 138. It generally took around five days to travel from London to Devon; C. A. J. Armstrong, 'Some Examples of the Distribution and Speed of News in England at the Time of the Wars of the Roses', in R. W. Hunt, W. A. Pantin, & R. W. Southern (eds.), *Studies in Medieval History presented to F. M. Powicke* (Oxford, 1948), pp. 446, 452-4.

<sup>67</sup> *CPR 1350-4*, p. 186. The abbot's original petition has apparently not survived.

<sup>68</sup> *CPR 1350-4*, pp. 164, 204.

<sup>69</sup> *WC*, p. 242; *TA*, p. 54.

been the case, there is enough evidence to propose a reassessment of this episode to the effect that Richard had successfully instated himself as abbot, and thus the attack was not to support him but to remove him.

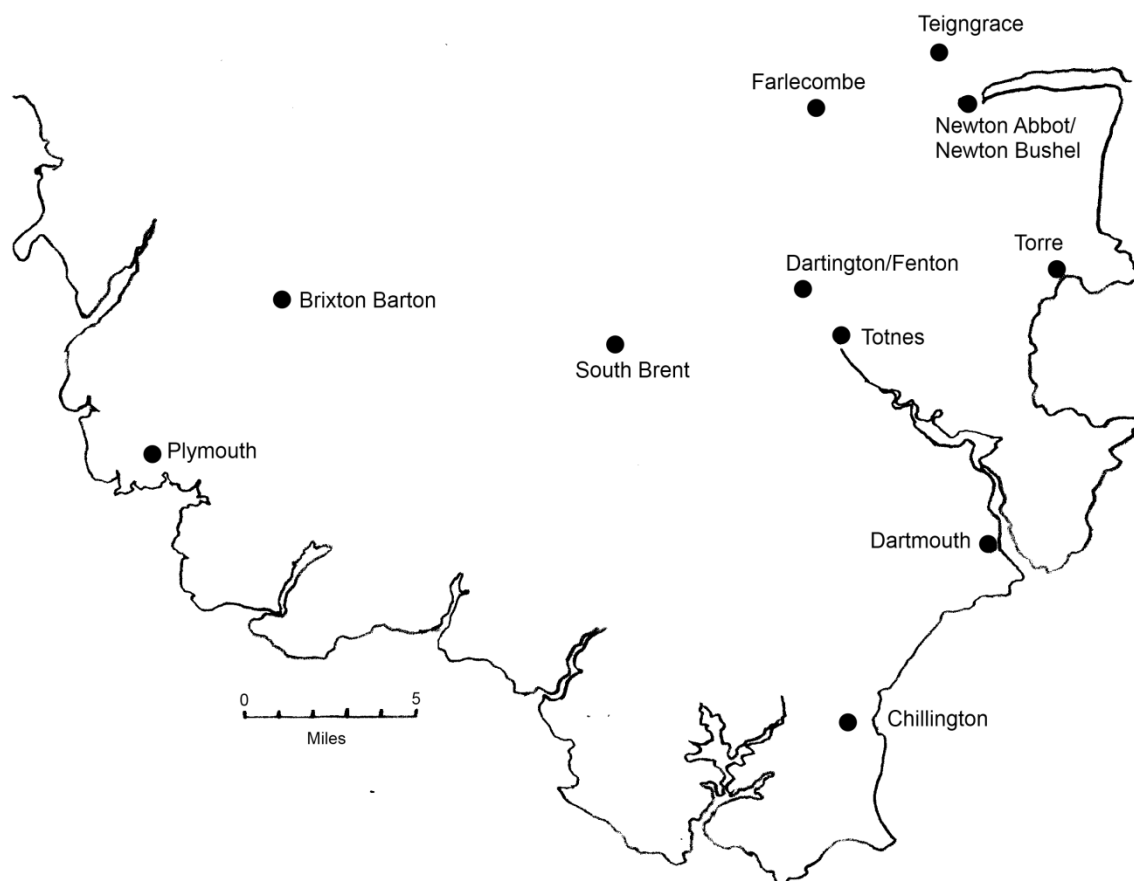
To understand the motives of the group named in the commission, it is necessary to construct a brief prosopographical overview of their background. They were no local band of angry peasants, but were drawn from across the lower gentry and townsmen of South Devon. None appear to have any previous direct connection to the abbey, although there is evidence of contact between the individual members. They are listed in a rough social order. Adam de Fenton was lord of Fenton, in Dartington, and had married Mabilla, daughter of Hugh (II) de Courtenay, shortly before the raid. Through this marriage he also came into the manors of Powderham and Whitstone, with the advowson of the church of the latter, and possibly briefly held the honour of Dartington.<sup>70</sup> In 1349 he had been removed as one of the coroners of Devon for being ‘insufficiently qualified’, and frequently appears as a debtor, often for quite large sums.<sup>71</sup> Henry de Brixton held one and two-thirds of a fee in Brixton Barton and Doune, both in the hundred of Plympton but held of the honours of Halberton and Stodbury respectively.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> *DFOF*, ii, pp. 382-3, 408, 420, 443; F. B. Prideaux, ‘Powderham’, *DCNQ*, 18 (1934-5), pp. 322-3; F. Rose-Troup, ‘Powderham’, *DCNQ*, 18 (1934-5), p. 375; *Reg. Grandisson*, iii, p. 1420; H. C. Gibbs, *History of Gibbs of Fenton* (London, 1925), p. 4.

<sup>71</sup> *CCR 1349-54*, p. 131; TNA CP 40/405 m. 109d.

<sup>72</sup> *Feudal Aids*, i, pp. 401-2.



**Figure 2: Origins of gang members and other places mentioned in the text**

Richard Geffard, or Giffard, held some land in Brixton of Henry de Brixton, and appears with him, along with several others, in a case of trespass in William Pipard's park of Langdon in Devon in 1346.<sup>73</sup> Stephen Derneford was a resident of Plymouth, and is mentioned as part of a gang who robbed Hugh de Courtenay of 140 marks worth of florins there in 1350.<sup>74</sup> Walter Verlecombe [Farlecombe] can be traced to a farm of that name around two miles north-east of Ashburton.<sup>75</sup> John de Falewille may have had connections to the abbey through his residence in Dartmouth. In 1340 he was a member of a jury of the borough, and in 1354 was operating, along with John Vayreson [Fayreson], as a merchant from the port, given license to export 100 quarters each of wheat and oats.<sup>76</sup> Robert de

<sup>73</sup> *CPR 1345-8*, p. 115; Plymouth and West Devon Record Office, Calmady MSS, 1221/1.

<sup>74</sup> *CPR 1348-50*, p. 586; *Reg. Brantyngham*, i, p. 332.

<sup>75</sup> Erskine, *Lay Subsidy*, p. 113.

<sup>76</sup> *CPR 1354-8*, p. 150; Watkin, *Dartmouth*, p. 37.

Falewille, clerk, was most probably a relative, and appears in 1356 as parson of Virginstowe church, although no record survives of his institution.<sup>77</sup>

A number of the gang had a Totnes connection. John Fayreson and Walter Farlecombe were both members of the Totnes Guild of Merchants, having been enrolled in 1341-2 and 1343-4 respectively, while Fayreson was also MP for Totnes in 1350.<sup>78</sup> Walter Farlecombe, and Richard Ballond both appear as witnesses to a grant of 1349, while Richard had previously appeared as witness to a grant dated at Totnes in 1342, and in 1378 is mentioned as having at least two tenements in the borough.<sup>79</sup> Adam de Fenton and John de Falewille were witnesses to a grant at Totnes in 1348, while John de Falewille, Walter Farlecombe, John Fayreson, and Philip Simon all appear as witnesses to an enfeoffment to use in Totnes in 1351.<sup>80</sup>

What, then, can be said of the gang? They were, on the whole, men of moderate status and wealth. Adam de Fenton and Richard de Brixton were landholders of some substance, and Adam had close links to the Courtenays, while most of the others were merchants and townsmen. None of the named attackers appears to have come from the immediate vicinity of the abbey. While Totnes, around eight miles from the house by road, provided a focal point for many members of the gang, their individual bases were relatively dispersed. Henry de Brixton, Richard Giffard, and possibly Richard de Falewille were based in West Devon, Adam de Fenton in Dartington, Walter de Ferlecombe near Ashburton, and John de Falewille in Dartmouth. They were also well-connected with local burghal society, and would have been capable of gathering a force of accomplices – the ‘many others’ of the commission. As such, they were presumably only the ringleaders of a

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<sup>77</sup> *CIM* 1348-77, p. 77. The patrons were the abbot and convent of Tavistock. With much less certainty Robert de Falewille may be identified as being presented to Diptford church on the presentation of the king in 1371; *CPR* 1370-4, p. 49.

<sup>78</sup> Watkin, *Totnes*, i, p. 261; E. Windeatt, ‘The M.P.’s for the Borough of Totnes’, *DART*, 32 (1900), p. 434.

<sup>79</sup> Watkin, *Totnes*, i, p. 288; DRO 347 A/PF; 3799M-0/ET/3/14.

<sup>80</sup> Watkin, *Totnes*, i, pp. 271-2.

much larger mob.

It is striking that none of the members can be found to have had any previous direct contact with the abbey itself. The vast majority of attacks on monastic houses and property were committed by tenants, parishioners, or associates. The troubles experienced by Plympton priory in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were all connected with either their lordship of the borough of Plymouth or their attempts to exert spiritual control over dependent chapels.<sup>81</sup> During the dispute over the abbacy at Tavistock in 1327 the abbey was raided by seventeen men, led by John Fromund, who attacked the king's men and carried away goods.<sup>82</sup> Yet in this case the men were all prominent burgesses of Tavistock, and, like so many boroughs in that year, were probably taking advantage of the disruption at the abbey to press their own claims. As such, Finberg's suggestion that the burgesses were acting on behalf of deposed abbatial candidate John de Courtenay lacks evidence.<sup>83</sup> In Torre's case, however, there is no obvious connection between the attackers and the abbey. There are many incidental connections – the abbot was a member of the Totnes Guild and rector of Townstal, for example – but nothing to suggest the attack was motivated by the personal concerns of the perpetrators.

Connections between the gang members are more tangible. There were business connections between Walter Farlecombe and John Fayreson, as members of the Totnes Guild, and after the attack John de Falewille and John Fayreson were reunited as merchants shipping out of Dartmouth. Henry de Brixton may have been a tenant of Adam de Fenton, and Richard Giffard was a tenant of Henry's in turn. Henry and Richard had been indicted as members of a gang before, while Adam and Henry were later connected over a debt to Prince Edward.<sup>84</sup> Robert de Falewille may have become involved through

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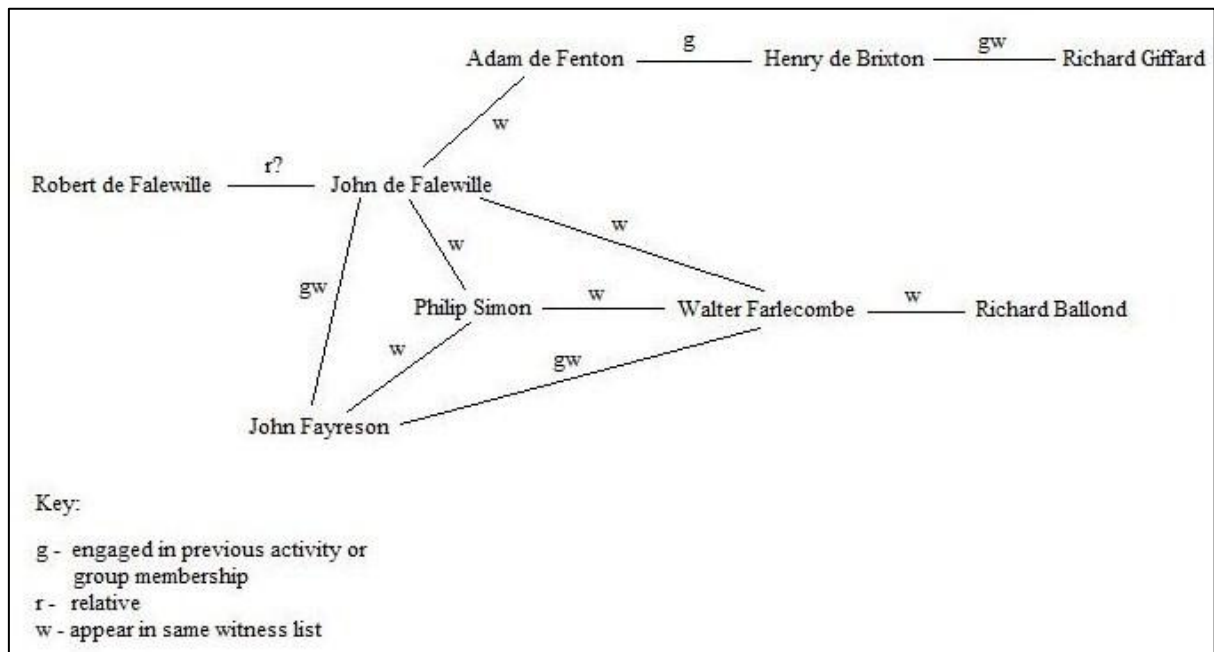
<sup>81</sup> Fizzard, *Plympton Priory*, pp. 161-77.

<sup>82</sup> *CPR 1327-30*, p. 211.

<sup>83</sup> *RO*, ii, pp. 266-8; H. P. R. Finberg, *West-Country Historical Studies* (Newton Abbot, 1969), p. 173.

<sup>84</sup> Gibbs, *History of Gibbs*, pp. 15, 21, 106, 146-7; *Black Prince's Register*, ii, p. 173.

his relation to John. Beyond this, however, the only connections between the gang members are their appearances together on witness lists. This certainly suggests that many of the gang members were moving in the same localities and circles of influence.



**Figure 3: Connections between the gang members**

Thus, while the members of the gang had some previous contact, came from South Devon, and many had an association with Totnes, it is also clear that they were not a band formed from a particular locality and they had no apparent motive, beyond plunder, for attacking the abbey. The obvious conclusion, therefore, is that they were engaged by a third party for this singular purpose. The key piece of evidence to support such an analysis is in a letter patent dated June 18<sup>th</sup> 1352, and is the last we hear of Richard de Cotelford:

Pardon, at the request of Guy de Bryan, to Geoffrey Gras of Teynghebruer of the king's suit for the imprisonment of brother Richard de Coteleford, canon of the abbey of Torre Mohun, for the death of the same Richard and for the death of Roger de Queryngdon, also for the robbery of two horses, worth £20 and other goods late of the said Roger and in his keeping at Torre Mohun and the robbery of a protection of the king sealed under the great seal, also in his keeping, and the tearing asunder and breaking of the protection in contempt of the king, whereof he is indicted or appealed, and of any consequent outlawries.<sup>85</sup>

<sup>85</sup> CPR 1350-4, p. 292.

While there is no conclusive proof to link the kidnapping of Richard and Roger to the November attack, as that is the only record of a violent trespass on abbey property, and no reference to the kidnapping could be found in the relevant plea rolls, it certainly seems likely. The pardon clearly indicates that Roger, and thus presumably Richard, was staying at the abbey. It would also account for the naming of the abbot in the complaint of the attack as John, Richard having been abducted and killed.

If it is likely that the November attack was the occasion of the capture of Richard de Cotelford and Roger de Queryngdon, it is almost certain that the gang was organised and directed by Geoffrey Gras, the kinsman of the deceased abbot John Gras whose election Richard had effectively posthumously overturned. However, a number of questions remain. Firstly, why was the kidnapping not mentioned in the commission of oyer and terminer, and secondly, if Gras was responsible, why was he not cited along with the others in the gang? The answers can only be tentative, but John de Berkadone can hardly have been happy about the reappearance of the claim of Richard de Cotelford, and there may well have been a sizeable element in the abbey that were happy to see Richard go, regardless of the means. Indeed, in December 1351 they requested a letter of testimony from Bishop Grandisson confirming that Richard had renounced his claim to the abbey in 1345, and thus his short abbacy was invalid.<sup>86</sup>

The collusion of John de Berkadone and, perhaps, Hugh de Courtenay may be evident in the abbey's network of patronage at this time. As noted in a previous chapter, Berkadone's kinsman, a Courtenay tenant, was acting as a prominent nominee for the abbey in 1351, shortly before the raid, as had John Gras' kinsman before both their deaths in 1349. Courtenay was also involved through his agents in the transfer of the manor of Tormohun to the canons, while Geoffrey Gras later appears witnessing John de

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<sup>86</sup> *Reg. Grandisson*, ii, pp. 1109-10.



Berkadone's transfer of land.<sup>87</sup> Guy de Brian's role in acquiring a pardon for Geoffrey Gras is also significant. He was the Courtenay honour of Okehampton's most important tenant, and held land all over south east Devon as well as in Wales. In 1341, while his father was still alive, he had been granted the lordship of Dartmouth by Edward III, who was a close acquaintance, and inherited the rest of his estates in 1349. Like Geoffrey Gras he was a career soldier, who had borne the royal standard at the siege of Calais in 1347, was made Lord Brian in 1350, and was later to become Admiral of the Fleet and a Knight of the Garter. He was also tied to the Courtenays through his sister, who had married Hugh (III) de Courtenay (d. 1349), son of the second Earl. Furthermore, the tutelary patron of Torre, John (V) de Mohun, had fought with Guy de Brian, and Geoffrey Gras, in France.<sup>88</sup>

Given the prominence of Courtenay tenants and the Berkadone/Gras family in the transfer of the manor of Tormohun, and in the locality of the abbey, the presence of Courtenay's son-in-law Adam de Fenton at the head of the gang may acquire a greater significance. Having held the abbacy for over two years, and enlisted his family as patrons of the abbey, John de Berkadone can hardly have been pleased at Richard's reappearance. Similarly, Richard had posthumously overturned John Gras' election, and he cannot have had much affection for the Gras family, nor Geoffrey Gras for him. Courtenay and John de Mohun may also have seen him as a disruptive influence in an abbey in which they had recently taken a strong influence. Yet once Richard had established himself as abbot, it would have been difficult to dispose of him by legal means, and as such more drastic measures were required.

This then begs the question as to why the incident was reported at all, given that the result was a favourable one for John de Berkadone, the reinstated abbot. An attack on an

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<sup>87</sup> DC fo. 94v; Chapter 3, pp. 110-16.

<sup>88</sup> R. G. F. Stanes, 'Sir Guy de Brian, KG', *DART* 92 (1960), pp. 248-78; J. L. Gillespie, 'Guy Brian (c. 1310-1390)', *ODNB*; R. J. Burls, 'The Courtenays and the Re-establishment of the Earldom of Devon in the Fourteenth Century', *DART*, 137 (2005), pp. 157-9; *CPR 1345-8*, p. 512.

abbey was an obvious and serious breach of the peace, and even in Devon, where much of the exercise of the king's authority was in the hands of Hugh de Courtenay and his circle, the blatant disregard for the king's protection and the kidnapping of his messenger, especially, could not go unreported. The commission was headed by Hugh (II) de Courtenay, and thus, given his close connections to Guy de Brian and Adam de Fenton, doubtless the outcome and pardon had been assured from the start, or at least after some behind-the-scenes negotiations. Furthermore, the commission was reissued five days after the original, with William de Shareshull removed. As he was the only 'central' government figure not attached to the local Courtenay affinity in the list, this may reflect Courtenay's attempts to control the situation.<sup>89</sup> Almost every single member of the gang named in the commission also appears after the attack, apparently having suffered no punishment or recriminations, it seems likely that the commission itself was something of a paper tiger from the start.<sup>90</sup> If Berkadone had ordered or encouraged the raid, by reporting it he was thus attempting to clear himself of suspicion, safe in the knowledge that the commission would not press any charges against those involved.

In summary, it is likely that a raid on the abbey was organised by Geoffrey Gras, with the backing of Abbot John de Berkadone, and perhaps with the prior collusion of Guy de Brian and even Hugh (II) de Courtenay, in order to swiftly remove the usurper Richard de Cotelford. The motives for this, on Berkadone's part, are clear enough, while Gras would have had both personal and financial concerns. Firstly, Cotelford had overturned the election of Geoffrey's deceased kinsman, which must have been taken as a slight to the family's honour, and secondly, as a local landholder of some reputation, Geoffrey could stand to profit from a friendly abbot who might favour him in the distribution of patronage. Having kidnapped Cotelford and reinstated Berkadone, the subsequent reporting of events,

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<sup>89</sup> *CPR 1350-4*, p. 164.

<sup>90</sup> Burls, 'The Courtenays and the Re-establishment', p. 161.

and the inevitably friendly makeup of the commission, would ensure that the gang got away freely, while Gras could obtain a pardon through Guy de Brian.

We must still admit the possibility of the raid having been carried out on Cotelford's behalf, and his kidnapping occurring at a separate time. Yet this would make little difference to the structures of power and patronage revealed by the events. While it is rather too much to place this single event, and the possible subsequent control of the legal proceedings, in a wider framework of the ability or otherwise of the Courtenay Earls to control the workings of justice in their county, it is at least worth remarking on the appearance in the narrative of two figures with very close links to the Earl: his son-in-law Adam de Fenton, and his associate and tenant Guy de Brian.<sup>91</sup> It is also clear that the gang was effectively contracted by an interested party to attack an abbey in which they had no obvious interest, and that their connections ensured some immunity from prosecution. All the abbatial candidates in this period had lay connections, although John de Berkadone and John Gras' families were perhaps more influential than Richard de Cotelford's. Furthermore, regardless of whether it was done through the raid, Geoffrey Gras kidnapped and killed Richard de Cotelford and the king's messenger in order to ensure his continued influence at the abbey.

We may, however, place this incident in the wider context of Torre's social relations in this period. This incident should not be considered in isolation from the theories of patronage built up in the preceding chapters. The close cohesion between the monastic and secular spheres is shown not least through the identities of the abbatial candidates as sons of the local gentry. The importance of this link to the abbey is shown in the involvement of kinsmen of abbots Gras and Berkadone as nominees and patrons in the transfer of the manor of Tormohun to the canons. The abbey also acted as an important

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<sup>91</sup> The power of the Courtenay Earls in this respect has been thoroughly explored, and is asserted, in Burls, 'Society, Economy and Lordship'.

dispenser of patronage to the locality, in terms of employment and the farming of land, amongst other things. Thus the relationship was symbiotic, with both the laity and the abbey benefiting from the involvement of the other. Thus when the status quo was disrupted, as Richard de Cotelford attempted, there would be disaffected parties both inside and outside the abbey walls. This, then, is the other side of the patronal relationship to that presented by the granting-charters of the thirteenth century. Here we may see the importance of that continuing relationship both to the abbey and the laity, as opposed to single acts of patronage on the part of the latter.

For a patron to resort to violence in order to ensure his continued association with an abbey is unusual, but not unparalleled. At Newenham Abbey in 1402 Abbot Leonard Houndalre was abducted along with £40 worth of goods by sixty armed men, mainly from Collumpton, Brandninch, Clyst, and Honiton, sent by Philip Courtenay, who then held the abbot at Bickleigh until he paid £10 in ransom. Abbot John Legge had resigned in 1401, on account of his ‘many great offences concerning the goods of the abbey,’ which probably related to his close relationship with Courtenay.<sup>92</sup> Having elected a new abbot, however, Courtenay ensured the abbey’s continued deference by emphasising the power that the local magnate could wield over the abbey, and to ensure the direction of patronage.<sup>93</sup>

John Dinham attempted similar tactics at Hartland Abbey, of which he was tutelary patron. In 1444, he was accused of breaking the close of the monastery, stealing the possessions of the abbot, and threatening the life of the community. This appears to have been in response to an erosion of the rights of patronage over the abbey throughout the previous century, especially with regard to the election of a new abbot in 1442, a process

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<sup>92</sup> The supposed incident of 1392 where John Legge was captured by Courtenay, noted by Davidson, did not occur, but his source is confused with the later capture of Houndalre; J. Davidson, *The History of Newenham Abbey, in the County of Devon* (London, 1843), pp. 88-9.

<sup>93</sup> TNA SC 8/216/10798A; SC/8/216/10798B; SC 8/126/6261; *CPR 1401-5*, p. 133.

in which Dinham's wishes were ignored.<sup>94</sup> Furthermore, perhaps the clearest example of the power of local patrons over an abbey occurred at Hartland in 1534, when the Arundells, then tutelary patrons, were able to resist Thomas Cromwell's attempts to deprive the abbot of office by occupying the abbey with force of arms and fending off all comers. The JPs sent to the scene were powerless, and, fearing for their lives, risked the wrath of Cromwell rather than enact his wishes.<sup>95</sup>

Returning to Torre, a final incident serves to reaffirm the known social network of the abbey. In 1363 a commission of oyer and terminer was mandated to inquire as to a complaint by Guy de Brian that the abbot of Torre, together with George de Grymeston, William Norton, and Geoffrey Baroun, his fellow canons, Walter Smith and Robert Hirlond, chaplains, John Busshel, William Gras, William Henry of Dartmouth, Walter Cordon, John Wherton of Dartmouth, Thomas Knolle, John Knolle, William Orchet, and John Clerk of Chedelyngton [Chillington in Stokenham] took a ship of his worth £500 from Dartmouth.<sup>96</sup> Most of the figures in the gang confirm what has been said above and in previous chapters about the local figures acting as patrons and associates of the canons. Thus John Busshel was the brother and heir of William Busschyl, holder of Teignwick and Newton Bushel, who had been a nominee of Torre in 1351.<sup>97</sup> William Gras may have been the heir of Geoffrey, and the name is uncommon enough that he was certainly a relation.

Yet, in contrast to the antagonism towards the abbot that was detectable in the actions of the townsmen in 1344, there may be evidence of more cordial relations with Dartmouth, as there were at least six prominent burgesses acting with the abbot and canons in this instance. William Henry had been the MP for Dartmouth in 1360, and was mayor in 1365, John Wharton had been bailiff of the town in 1350 and was mayor in 1367, while

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<sup>94</sup> *CPR 1444-6*, p. 292; *Reg. Lacy*, III, pp. 348-77; H. Kleineke, 'The Dinham Family in the Later Middle Ages' (PhD Thesis, University of London, 1998), pp. 180-5.

<sup>95</sup> *L&P*, viii, p. 387; Speight, 'Local Government and Politics', pp. 144-5.

<sup>96</sup> *CPR 1361-4*, p. 369.

<sup>97</sup> *IPM*, x, p. 387; see above Chapter 3, p. 113.

Thomas and John Knolle and Walter Cordon appear frequently in charters of the town.<sup>98</sup> It is not entirely clear who held what at which time, but one of a father and son, both called John Clerk, held the position of mayor in 1362, and one or both were MP's for the borough in 1363 and 1373.<sup>99</sup> It is probably the son who appears in this instance. Furthermore, only just over a decade after Guy de Brian had obtained a pardon for Geoffrey Gras, one of Geoffrey's kinsmen is found acting maliciously against him. The presence of the large Dartmouth contingent when there is no evidence of enmity between the burgesses and the lord of the manor, and all of whom reappear in positions of authority and on royal commissions where Guy de Brian would have influence in appointment, suggests that there must be more to this than a simple case of robbery of Guy de Brian by those indicted.

Yet, although we are unable to get to the root of what occurred in this instance, there is evidence to suggest that the canons had by some means indebted themselves to Guy de Brian. An entry in Pole's late-sixteenth century notes on the Dublin Cartulary states that four years later, in 1367, the canons paid Guy 500 marks as full solution of their debt of 1000 marks, which may have been related to this incident.<sup>100</sup> The wealth of the canons at the time may have been particularly remarkable, as another entry two years later notes that the canons had a debt of £1000 to Matthew de Cleveden, a Somerset knight with some connection to the Mohuns, which they paid in full.<sup>101</sup> It is not clear how they were incurred, but if these separate entries represent different debts they would stand as

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<sup>98</sup> Watkin, *Dartmouth*, pp. 49, 52, 54-8, 183, 271, 362.

<sup>99</sup> Watkin, *Dartmouth*, pp. 183, 271-2, 362, 364.

<sup>100</sup> Antony House Muniments, Cornwall Record Office, PG/B2/9 fo. 10v. The index of the Dublin cartulary indicates that a number of charters originally placed at the end of the volume are now missing, and there are further internal references to charters no longer extant. Pole's calendar suggests these receipts were copied into the final leaves of the cartulary, and must therefore have been lost along with indexed charters 200-220 and the other material. The manuscript was rebound in around 1830, and it is not clear at what point the final sections were lost.

<sup>101</sup> Antony House Muniments, Cornwall Record Office, PG/B2/9 fo. 10v; *CCR 1369-74*, p. 89. Clevedon had been one of four nominees involved in an enfeoffment to use of the core of the honour of Dunster between 1340 and 1355; Somerset Record Office, DD\L/P1/6/2.

testament to Torre's considerable wealth at this time, itself a factor in the desire for control over the abbey.

It is undeniable that by this stage the abbey was fully active in local society. The abbacy itself was a position of enough importance that it could be worth years of intrigue and appeals to the papal curia, presumably at considerable personal expense. Yet even the decisions reached in the ecclesiastical courts could be overturned by the involvement of the local structure of power in the abbey's internal affairs. Conversely, the abbey invited lay involvement by its wealth, which made it a powerful and attractive dispenser of patronage. Furthermore, even when the abbey was in dispute with rival ecclesiastical groups, as with the friars at Dartmouth, it was not necessarily an ability to win the case in the ecclesiastical courts that was paramount, but the expression of power in the locality. This point is reinforced by the failure of Plympton Priory, despite winning the legal battle, to remove the popular Franciscans from Plymouth.

Both the events at Dartmouth and the attack on the abbey tie in with the considerations of patronage previously discussed. In the case of Dartmouth, the merchants and burgesses of the town would have been a potentially fertile source of patronage for the abbey, as well as an excellent locality for recruitment, both of staff and canons. The abbey could not risk losing their influence in the town to a rival religious institution in the shape of the friars. While this involved perhaps alienating the townsmen in the short term, it enabled the abbot to eventually come to a more beneficial settlement and retain a strong presence in the town. In the case of the 'Cotelford affair', on the other hand, it becomes clear that we should not necessarily regard coercion and patronage of a monastery by the laity as being mutually exclusive. In this case and the others mentioned, action apparently hostile to the abbey was rather an attempt to ensure a more central position in the 'network

of patronage'. The canons themselves, or parts of the community, could be privy to such manoeuvres, perhaps in an attempt to raise or protect their own standing in the community, as may have been John de Berkadone's motive. Nonetheless, such coercion, even if violent, should certainly not be seen as exclusively hostile, as we see, for example, that Geoffrey Gras and his family remained in the patronal and social circles of the abbey after he had kidnapped and murdered a canon. That such an action did not result in his expulsion from the abbey's social interactions suggests very much that the canons were willing and able to adapt their response to the behaviour of their patrons depending on circumstance. That such behaviour could be tolerated, and perhaps even acquiesced in, may also indicate the high value of active patronage to the abbey. Furthermore, it suggests a complexity and depth to the monastic-lay relationship not previously explored in the historiography.

Yet, as other parts of this thesis illustrate, despite the complaints of parishioners and the violent exercise of power over the abbey, the canons were by no means perceived as a redundant religious force. As an institution with extensive resources and potential patronage opportunities, the canons could not help but be viewed with envious eyes, both by those who felt they did not deserve their wealth, and by those who would share in it. Yet they were still a target for some types of lay patronage. Furthermore, while we know very little about the state of the spiritual life of the canons, when, as we shall see, this information does become available, there is nothing to suggest a widespread malaise. Although our interpretation of the monastic-lay relationship in the fourteenth century, as compared to the thirteenth, may be based in part on the different records available for each period, it is nonetheless possible to identify the role the canons were playing in the outside, secular, world, and perhaps that this diminished their sacred status to that world, regardless of the actual rigour of their daily life.



## CHAPTER 6

### Monasteries and the threat of war

The last chapter analysed some of the social relations of the abbey, and its conflicts with the laity, in terms of the micro-political setting of the locality. This chapter turns instead to events of national political importance which could nonetheless affect the abbey in its local setting. One aspect of encroachment on the monastic precinct which is rarely mentioned, in terms of English history at least, is the difficulties faced by monasteries in border regions from the threat of opposing armies and opportunistic raiders.<sup>1</sup> This was a threat which, admittedly, was faced by only a small percentage of the monasteries in England, but at Torre and other abbeys along the south coast, and in other border areas, the threat from pillaging, plundering, or even invasion was very real. Furthermore, in times of civil strife, such as the 'Wars of the Roses', a number of monasteries whose patrons were intimately involved in the political machinations of the day would stand the risk of being drawn in, or at least experiencing some form of collateral damage.

As an abbey both based on the sea shore, in an area which saw much violence at the outbreak of the Wars of the Roses, and with a family of tutelary patrons who were attainted as a result of their support for Henry VI, Torre was faced with a near-continual threat of violence throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, although the responses to these two threats will have been very different. While a number of abbeys were in a

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<sup>1</sup> The exceptions to this are Emilia Jamroziak's recent short article and Christopher Brooke's longer discussion of ecclesiastical institutions on the Anglo-Scottish borders, and parts of the chapter dealing with England in Peter Harrison's work on fortified churches; E. Jamroziak, 'Cistercians and Border Conflicts: Some Comparisons between the Experiences of Scotland and Pomerania', in J. Burton & K. Stöber (eds.), *Monasteries and Society in the British Isles* (Woodbridge, 2008), pp. 40-50; C. J. Brooke, *Safe Sanctuaries: Security and Defence in Anglo-Scottish Border Churches 1296-1603* (Edinburgh, 2000); P. Harrison, *Castles of God: Fortified Religious Buildings of the World* (Woodbridge, 2004), pp. 66-87. In continental terms, see M. Jones, 'War and Fourteenth-Century France', in A. Curry & M. Hughes (eds.), *Arms, Armies and Fortifications in the Hundred Years War* (Woodbridge, 1999), pp. 103-20; M. de Smet, 'Heavenly Quiet and the Din of War: Use and Abuse of Religious Buildings for Purposes of Safety, Defence and Strategy' in P. Trio & M. de Smet (eds.), *The Use and Abuse of Sacred Places in Late Medieval Towns* (Louvain, 2006), pp. 1-26.

similar position, no one house has enough evidence for a through individual study. As such, this chapter will first study the nature of and reaction to the overseas threat in terms of the construction of defences at monasteries in border regions, and secondly analyse the involvement of monasteries in the Wars of the Roses, mainly in terms of the adaptation of monasteries' social networks in response to changing political circumstances. As very little general work has been done on either topic, a localised study such as this cannot hope to give anything more than initial thoughts, although there is scope for an interesting wider study. In both instances, the focus will clearly be on Torre and its locality, but a number of comparative examples will be drawn upon to illuminate what are often scanty or oblique records.

It will be useful at this stage to identify and define the two types of defensive role played by monasteries and their communities in times of war. The first of these is a simple protection of the precinct and lands of the house from external force. This force might be exerted by a foreign power – along the south coast this was usually the French – or opportunistic domestic raiders – either pirates or local gangs. Any monastic community in a border region might feel the need to defend itself physically, usually through fortification of the monastic buildings. The surviving fortifications, or documentation of their construction, can often be taken as evidence that there was a real threat against that particular location, and, as such, the abbey had taken necessary precautions against that threat. In doing so, of course, the abbey would have to engage the secular arm, usually for a licence to crenellate their buildings, and the fortification would have the added effect of an increase in the security of the area. At Torre it is possible to see that the canons fortified themselves against the threat posed by their proximity to the sea, and that this threat was both real and potent.

The other role played by monastic communities in times of war was in the active defence of their area. That is, the abbot would be in charge of the local array, or have some active responsibility for the defence of the realm. The abbot of Battle fortified his abbey in 1338, and arrayed his servants for the defence of the realm, while the heads of Faversham, Dover, Christ Church Canterbury, and Rochester were all instructed to arm themselves and their servants.<sup>2</sup> Probably the most extreme example of this is provided by the actions of the prior of Lewes in 1377, who led a force against the French raid at Rottingdean.<sup>3</sup> From 1346 the abbot of Quarr presided over the defence of the Isle of Wight, and was the subject of numerous commissions of array.<sup>4</sup> In Devon, Torre's position within the 'maritime lands', within six leagues of the coast, would have carried some responsibility for the organisation of local levies, certainly after 1369 when the exemption of the church from such duties was removed.<sup>5</sup> In 1377, the bishop of Exeter and the abbot of Buckfast were ordered to defend their lands near Dartmouth against the threat of French invasion, while the heads of Plympton, Buckland, Tavistock, and Modbury were to do the same at Plymouth.<sup>6</sup> It is not entirely clear why Torre was not included in this array, although given the proximity of the abbey to the sea shore it may be that its role in the defence was taken for granted.<sup>7</sup> The first part of this chapter will, however, mainly focus on the arrangements made for the defence of the abbey and the monastic community, rather than on the active participation of monasteries in the defence of the realm.

Torre's position on the coast, with its walls only around 200 yards from the sea shore, effectively placed it in a border zone with France, especially after the loss of

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<sup>2</sup> *CCR 1337-9*, pp. 414, 542; *CPR 1338-40*, p. 92.

<sup>3</sup> *The St. Albans Chronicle*, eds. J. Taylor, W. R. Childs, L. Watkiss (Oxford, 2003), p. 165.

<sup>4</sup> Hockey, *Quarr Abbey*, pp. 135-9.

<sup>5</sup> J. Sumption, *The Hundred Years' War: Trial by Battle* (Pennsylvania, 1999), pp. 226-7; W. M. Ormrod, *The Reign of Edward III* (London, 1990), p. 132.

<sup>6</sup> *CCR 1374-7*, pp. 497-8. Buckfast does not appear to have held any lands in the immediate vicinity of Dartmouth, although they held some tenements in the town in the sixteenth century. It may be their coastal lands around Kingsbridge, in South Devon, that are meant; Watkin, *Dartmouth*, p. 174; *MDE*, pp. 385-7.

<sup>7</sup> The abbot was named, along with the prior of Plympton, in the commission to restore peace after the Peasants' Revolt; *CPR 1381-5*, p. 246.

Normandy in 1204. Although it was unusual for abbeys to be sited close enough to the south coast to be at risk from French raids, those that were often found themselves under threat or otherwise inconvenienced by their position. In 1386, for example, the monks of Benedictine Abbotsbury, in Dorset, complained to Urban VI that, as their house was situated on the coast, they were frequently invaded by Spaniards, Normans, and Bretons, and garrisoned by the king's forces, and the expense was threatening the continuation of religious services at the house. This may be seen as so much hyperbole, as the monks were attempting to acquire the advowson of Tolpuddle church, but Richard II's repetition of the 'great cost which they daily incur for defence against hostile attack' in his confirmation suggests that the monks' position was perilous to some degree.<sup>8</sup>

The sacred space of a monastery provided little or no protection against the ravages of war. Urban monasteries in the Low Countries were occasionally razed by their own townsmen, especially if they were extra-mural, to ensure they were not used as a weak point by the enemy in a siege.<sup>9</sup> Although there is no evidence of this occurring in English history, proximity to a major port heightened the danger of being razed along with the town during a raid. This is most marked in the area around the Cinque Ports and the Solent. In 1295 Dover Priory was burnt by a French landing party, and nearby Lewes Priory was almost taken in 1377.<sup>10</sup> In 1337, Hamble Priory, in Southampton, was burnt by the French, its 'alien' status as a dependent cell of Tiron offering it no protection.<sup>11</sup> The priory of St. Denis, to the north of Southampton, claimed to have been damaged by French raids on the town around the same time.<sup>12</sup>

These houses appear to have been effectively collateral damage in large scale attacks on the town in which they were situated. Yet any house in the general vicinity of a

<sup>8</sup> *CPR 1385-9*, p. 47; *CPL 1396-1404*, p. 77.

<sup>9</sup> Smet, 'Heavenly Quiet', pp. 10-23.

<sup>10</sup> M. Prestwich, *Edward I* (London, 1988), p. 383; J. Taylor *et. al.*, *St. Albans Chronicle*, p. 165.

<sup>11</sup> *VCH Hampshire*, ii, pp. 221-3.

<sup>12</sup> *The Cartulary of the Priory of St Denys near Southampton*, ed. E. O. Blake (Southampton, 1981), i, p. xl.

port could be vulnerable to opportunistic raids from foreign enemies, either as part of a general harrying of the locality, or as an alternative to attacking a well-defended town. Explicit accounts of attacks on abbeys are, however, rare, and instances must usually be gleaned from passing references. That attacks occurred is undeniable, but individual raids on rural monasteries were presumably not thought to be of enough interest to warrant a note in the contemporary chronicles. In 1338 the priory of St. Anthony-in-Roseland, a cell for two canons of Plympton Priory in the Falmouth estuary, was raided by the French. The only record of this event, however, is the notice in Bishop Grandisson's register that the prior of Plympton had requested that the priory appropriate their church of Newton St. Cyres to pay for the repairs, amongst other things.<sup>13</sup> According to another letter of 1338 in Grandisson's register, the proximity of Tywardreath Priory to the sea exposed the convent to raids by pirates, and, as such, they were given permission to temporarily remove to another site, distant from the sea, when this threat arose.<sup>14</sup> It must also have suffered, however, from its proximity to the major port of Fowey. Their situations were similar to that faced by Torre in that they were all near enough to a major port, in Torre's case Dartmouth, to be in real danger of opportunistic French raids.

The threat of attack along the Westcountry coast was both real and omnipresent.<sup>15</sup> As such, in the fourteenth century the fortifications at Dartmouth, Kingswear, Powderham, and Berry Pomeroy were constructed, and new work was undertaken on the castles at Totnes, Plymouth and Trematon.<sup>16</sup> Besides general references to the harrying of the coast in the chronicles, a few more specific and violent episodes appear as testament to the threat. After being rebuffed from an attempted invasion of the Isle of Wight, French fleets burnt Teignmouth in 1340 and attacked Budleigh in 1348, while Dartmouth and Plymouth

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<sup>13</sup> *Reg. Grandisson*, ii, p. 872.

<sup>14</sup> *Reg. Grandisson*, ii, pp. 870-1.

<sup>15</sup> Tyllesley, 'The Crown and the Local Communities', pp. 132-3.

<sup>16</sup> R. A. Higham, 'Public and Private Defence in the Medieval South West: Town, Castle and Fort' in *idem*. (ed.), *Security and Defence in South-West England before 1800* (Exeter 1987), pp. 41-3.

were raided in 1377. Most spectacular, however, was the incident of the French landing party which was defeated just south of Dartmouth in 1404. Two French nobles, Du Chatel and Du Jaille, fitted out a fleet to ravage the Devon coastline. Their main target was Dartmouth, apparently in revenge for attacks on the Brittany coast made by sailors of the town. They landed with a force near the town, at Blackpool according to Higden's continuator, around two miles south, but their attack was unsuccessful. Du Chatel was killed in the fighting and many of his knights taken captive.<sup>17</sup>

The French and English chroniclers disagree over the nature of the defence of Dartmouth. The *Chronicle of Saint-Denis* claims that the English were aware of the planned attack and had assembled a force of 6,000 trained men behind specially constructed coastal defences. The chronicler goes on to state that Du Chatel's brother returned around a month after the first attempt, this time in great secrecy, and easily captured Dartmouth. His force pillaged and plundered the area before torching the town and returning to Brittany.<sup>18</sup> Thomas Walsingham, on the other hand, claims that the initial fleet had anchored outside Dartmouth for six days, allowing the locals to gather a makeshift force to defend the coast. The force was said to be made up of the local peasantry, including women and children, rather than trained men. This may be so much rhetoric, in the ironic touch that the supposedly arrogant Du Chatel was 'beaten by the rustics, and killed by those who he most despised'.<sup>19</sup> No English chronicler mentions the second, supposedly successful, attempt. However, the fame of this incident was such that in 1405, the Spanish chronicler Gutierre Diaz de Gamez mentions the defeat of Du Chatel

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<sup>17</sup> Sumption, *Trial by Battle*, pp. 226-8, 262-3; M. M. Oppenheim, *The Maritime History of Devon* (Exeter, 1968), pp. 13-23; C. Gill, *Plymouth: A New History*, rev. ed. (Tiverton, 1994), pp. 39-52; P. Russell, *Dartmouth: A History of the Port and Town* (London, 1950), pp. 42-7; A. L. Rowse, *Tudor Cornwall* (London, 1941), p. 108; P. Q. Karkeek, 'Notes on the Early History of Dartmouth', *DART* 12 (1880), pp. 576-7; J. Froissart, *Chronicles of England, France, Spain, and the Adjoining Countries*, trans. T. Johnes (London, 1849), i, p. 512.

<sup>18</sup> *Chronique du Religieux de St. Denys*, ed. L. Bellaguet (Paris, 1839-52), iii, pp. 170-81.

<sup>19</sup> *Johannis de Trokelowe et Henrici de Blaneforde, monachorum S. Albani*, ed. H. T. Riley, Rolls Series 28 (1866), p. 383.

when writing of the disagreement between Pero Niño and Charles de Savoisy over whether to attack Dartmouth. The county appears to have been well-defended by that point, as he reports ‘fair troops of soldiers and archers coming up on all sides to defend the shore’. It was also known amongst the captains as ‘the place where the English had killed Messire Guillaume de Chastel’.<sup>20</sup>

Turning now to Torre, the first mention of its perilous position on the south coast, and the dangers this position entailed, comes during the early stages of the Hundred Years’ War. In April 1348 the canons were granted a licence to reinforce and crenellate their perimeter wall.<sup>21</sup> In November of the same year a suit against the deceased abbot Simon de Plympton was halted by the king as ‘the abbey being situated on the sea coast has sustained expenses and intolerable charges for the defence of those parts’.<sup>22</sup> Expense is always prone to exaggeration, although this instance of an abbey claiming the charges of a defensive role is highly unusual.

Crenellation licences are a source of some controversy. The fourteenth century saw an explosion in royal grants of licences to crenellate, mainly to the gentry and lower nobility, to the extent that they have been dismissed as more of a status symbol than a means of defence.<sup>23</sup> They also do not reflect the totality of defensive construction in this period, as there are many examples of the fortification of private houses without a licence, including Powderham Castle in the 1390’s.<sup>24</sup> In the case of licences granted to ecclesiastical institutions, Coulton largely dismissed them as being desired more for ‘the extra *cachet* of royal recognition’ than for any truly defensive purpose, and, unlike those on the continent, no monastery in England, with the exception of Tynemouth Priory, was

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<sup>20</sup> *The Unconquered Knight: A Chronicle of the Deeds of Don Pero Niño, Count of Buelna*, ed. J. Evans (London, 1928), p. 117.

<sup>21</sup> DC fo. 93r.

<sup>22</sup> *CPR 1348-50*, p. 206; DC fo. 93r-v.

<sup>23</sup> C. Coulson, ‘Structural Symbolism in Medieval Castle Architecture’, *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, 132 (1979), pp. 73-90.

<sup>24</sup> Higham, ‘Public and Private Defence’, pp. 41-2.

fortified to the extent that it could withstand a full-scale attack.<sup>25</sup> This latter statement is broadly true, although Lindisfarne Priory was also very heavily fortified, yet perhaps misses the crucial point.<sup>26</sup> The main threat to monasteries in England was sporadic raiding, as opposed to the large standing armies that ravaged the continent. Indeed, maintaining impenetrable defences was not worth the inconvenience and expense, given the nature of the threat, and in 1385 Lindisfarne asked the king's permission to take down their perimeter walls as they could no longer take the strain of garrisoning them.<sup>27</sup>

More recent work has emphasised the defensive purpose of crenellation licences, whether as a deterrent against particular local tensions or, especially in the south and south-west, the threat from France.<sup>28</sup> We may illustrate this through a brief survey of those granted to monasteries. The patent rolls record thirty-one grants of licences to crenellate areas of the precinct at twenty-seven monasteries between 1293 and 1389.<sup>29</sup> Fifteen of the houses were Benedictine, six Augustinian, three Premonstratensian, two Cistercian, and one Cluniac. As to the extent of the licences, eleven were general, or stated that the whole site was covered by the licence, seven were for the church or belfry, six for chambers or houses in the precinct, four for walls, and two were for gatehouses. An analysis of the geographical spread of the houses [Fig. 1] reveals concentrations of fortified monasteries in the north, the Welsh Marches, and the south-east, with a small cluster in East Anglia. The fortification of these houses was clearly in response to a threat from external forces, either Scottish, Welsh, or French. Of the houses away from these areas, in the centre of the country, most of the licences can be explained by local factors. Abingdon was granted a licence in 1330, presumably in response to the increased factional violence in Oxford and

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<sup>25</sup> C. Coulson, 'Hierarchism in Conventual Crenellation: An Essay in the Sociology and Metaphysics of Medieval Fortification', *Medieval Archaeology*, 26 (1984), pp. 83, 91-2.

<sup>26</sup> Brooke, *Safe Sanctuaries*, pp. 73-5.

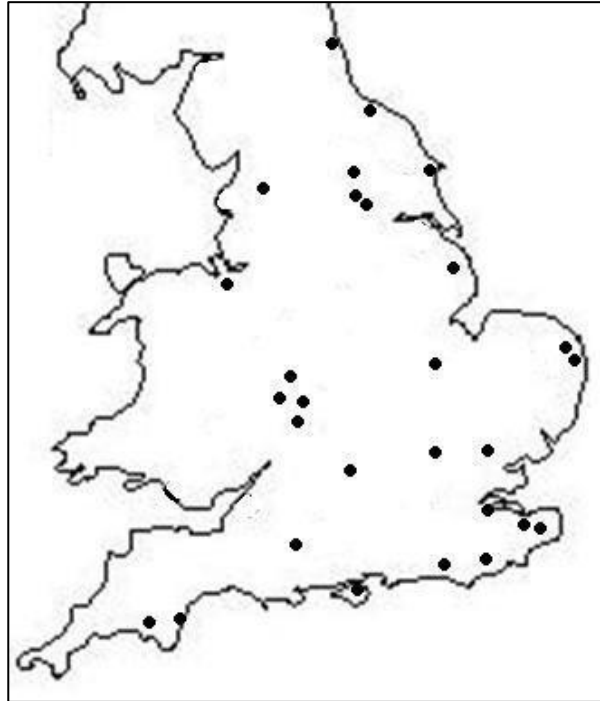
<sup>27</sup> Not only was the plea of the monks rejected, but they were sent another two cannon and an artillery expert; Brooke, *Safe Sanctuaries*, p. 75.

<sup>28</sup> Higham, 'Public and Private Defence', pp. 27-50.

<sup>29</sup> M. Thompson, *Cloister, Abbot and Precinct* (Stroud, 2001), pp. 147-8.



the riots that had been affecting the abbey. Similar urban conflict, or at least the rising threat of it, might explain the grants to Peterborough and St. Albans.<sup>30</sup> The only other south-western house to be granted a licence was Buckland in 1337, where it was for the church and dwelling. In that instance, while the church survives, only a length of the perimeter wall indicates any attempt at fortification.<sup>31</sup>



**Figure 1: Locations of Monastic Houses with Licences to Crenellate**

In terms of the translation of these licences into physical fortifications, perhaps the best gauge of a monastery's defensive functions, if any, can be provided by the surviving gatehouses. On the whole, monastic gatehouses were not intended to serve a militaristic function, and as such were often covered with ornamentation and features unsuitable for a defensive structure, such as large windows. Thus, while the imposing gatehouse at Thornton, with its barbican and provision for a portcullis, appears at first to have been a military structure, the large bow window on the first floor effectively precludes the efficient exercise of this function. The great gatehouses of the abbeys at Ramsey and Cerne

<sup>30</sup> Coulson, 'Hierarchism in Conventual Crenellation', pp. 84-90; D. M. Palliser, *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain: 600-1540* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 297-8.

<sup>31</sup> G. W. Copeland, 'Some Problems of Buckland Abbey', *DART*, 85 (1953), p. 51.

contain large and elaborate oriel windows, which would certainly have interfered with any defensive function. The purpose of the ornamentation, usually in the form of figures of saints and kings and the arms of the abbey and its patrons, was to 'engender awe, wonder and respect but not fear.' The monastic gatehouse also performed a dual function not found in military gatehouses; the regulation of both incoming and outgoing traffic. Thus the monastic gatehouse was as likely to be as ornamented on the rear as the front, to deter potential apostates.<sup>32</sup>

Gatehouses survive from a number of the abbeys granted licences to crenellate, and present an inconclusive picture as regards their function. The large gatehouses of Peterborough, St. Augustine's Canterbury, Battle, Abingdon, Evesham, St. Albans, and Thornton are all certainly visually impressive, both in terms of size and ornamentation. As such, they deterred potential attackers both spiritually, with an array of saints, and physically, as a defensive structure. There is evidence that portcullises were fitted at Peterborough and Thornton, but they may have been mainly for show. Of the other surviving gatehouses, that of Rochester cathedral priory is a plain, unadorned, and apparently functional structure, but has no battlements or other defensive apparatus. Bridlington Priory's gatehouse appears to be roughly contemporaneous with the abbey's licence of 1388, was similarly unadorned, and may have contained a prison. Given the difference in wealth and size between these latter two and the former group, it is tempting to assume that the size, type, and ornamentation of a gatehouse was primarily determined by economic factors.<sup>33</sup>

At Torre, Leland stated that there were '3 fair gate houses'.<sup>34</sup> One of these was certainly the inner, 'Mohun', gatehouse, which stands today. Foundations of the main north gatehouse were uncovered during road-works in 1969. It occupied a position just

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<sup>32</sup> R. Morant, *The Monastic Gatehouse* (Lewes, 1995), pp. 24-5.

<sup>33</sup> Morant, *Monastic Gatehouse*, pp. 137-201; Thompson, *Cloister and Precinct*, pp. 106-25.

<sup>34</sup> *The Itinerary of John Leland*, ed. L. Toulmin Smith (London, 1964), i, p. 223.

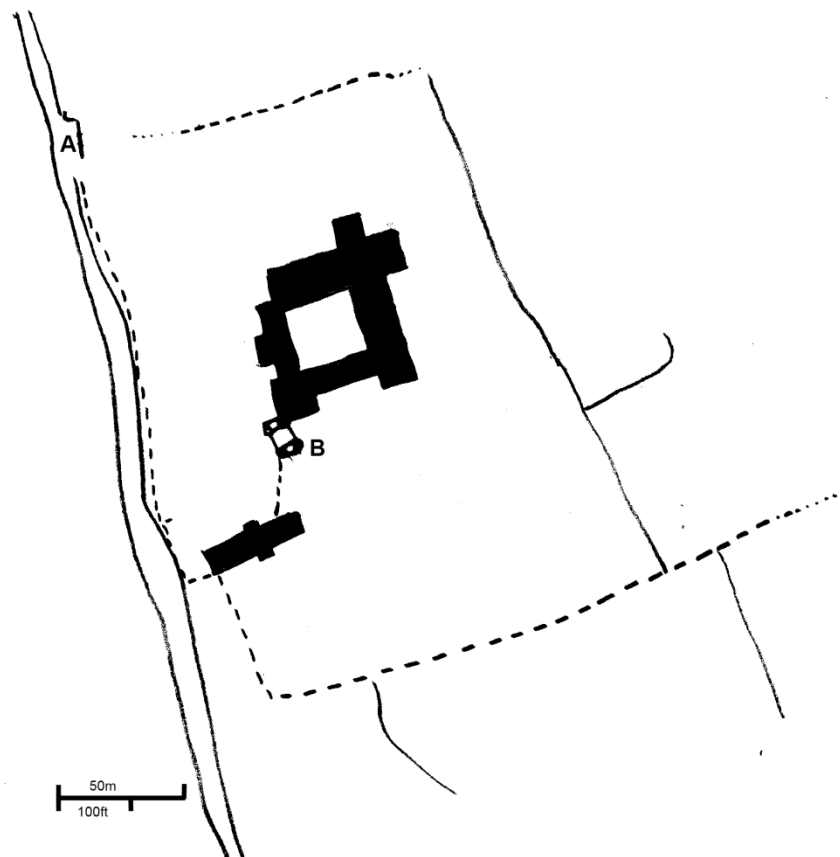
outside the present-day gates at the end of the King's Drive, around 100 metres from the west end of the nave of the abbey church. It was apparently a substantial structure, although little more can be known as the archaeologist's notes have disappeared.<sup>35</sup> The position of the third gatehouse is somewhat of a mystery. Leland may have been referring to the tower on the western range, or, as Seymour supposed, to a small entrance assumed to be to the west of the Spanish Barn. However, it seems doubtful that such a small structure would have existed, as it would have certainly compromised the effectiveness of the main gatehouse, less than fifty metres away. The third gatehouse, if there was such a structure, is more likely to have been positioned somewhere on the eastern boundary of the precinct, allowing access from the present-day Belgrave Road. All traces would presumably have been lost when the Italian Gardens were laid out in the nineteenth century.

However, the licence to crenellate at Torre specifically stated that it was the wall, indicating the perimeter wall, which was to be fortified. No trace of this survives, although part of its route may be seen in aerial photographs to the south of the house. That there was some form of stone wall surrounding the abbey is in little doubt. In a charter of 1473 the canons were confirmed in land that they held along the length of their wall on the western side of the abbey.<sup>36</sup> It is not clear if the abbey grounds were surrounded in their entirety but the shadow of the wall across the south front of the abbey might indicate that the precinct area was enclosed separately from the surrounding grounds [Fig. 2].

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<sup>35</sup> Pers. comm. P. Lemar, formerly principal architect for Torbay Borough Council.

<sup>36</sup> EC 281



**Figure 2: Walls of Torre Abbey - as indicated by dashed lines**  
**Key: A – Main abbey gatehouse; B – Mohun gatehouse**

The Mohun gatehouse is, therefore, the only defensive structure surviving at Torre. Its position is unusual, at the south-west extremity of the claustral buildings and angled slightly north-west/south-east. The angle was such as to allow the main abbey drain to flow under its north-eastern turret. Only three other surviving gatehouses can be found in such a position in England: at Abbotsbury, Hulne, and Tavistock ('Betsy Grimble's Tower'), although none appear to have been attached to the claustral buildings in the manner of the Mohun gatehouse.<sup>37</sup> It was an inner portal, within the precinct, and therefore would not be designed to withstand the same pressures as the main gate. However, it is clearly a functional structure, almost entirely devoid of ornamentation, with no sign of ever having borne sculpture or decoration on any façade [Figs. 3 & 4]. The three surviving round turrets (the north-eastern turret contained a garderobe and was removed to make way for an access staircase) contain narrow window slits on the lower floors and hand-

<sup>37</sup> Morant, *Monastic Gatehouse*, insert between pp. 30-1.

cannon loops on the upper. A number of the turret windows on the second floor may also be identifiable as loops for hand-cannon. The crenellations around the roof appear to be contemporaneous with the gatehouse itself. Access was provided by one of two double-chambered gatehalls, one vehicular, the other pedestrian. Both were controlled by substantial wicket-gates, as evidenced by the hinges and bolt-holes remaining on the inside jambs.



**Figures 3 & 4: The ‘Mohun gatehouse from the east (left) and west (right)**

The exact function of a fortified inner portal is difficult to fully understand. At a fundamental level it provided some accommodation, as both the first and second floors were divided into at least two chambers with fireplaces, and the porter’s lodge on the ground floor had a fireplace and space for a bed. As it was not controlling access to or from the precinct, there were only small patronal and no devotional images to deter potential aggressors or apostates. Instead it appears to have operated as a portal between the western precinct, which included the monastic barn, the main entrance to the cloister and probably the guest hall, and the southern, where most of the abbey’s industrial

complex and its fishponds and mills were situated.<sup>38</sup> As such, it effectively separated the abbey's hospitality and industrial sectors. Yet this would not account for the unusually defensive nature of the structure. The gun-loops are mainly positioned to provide a field of view southward and westward across the face of the south range. Given that there was probably no portal in the south precinct wall – access to the shore and quay being provided by the causeway from the main gate – this inner gatehouse was therefore the defensive structure for the seaward side of the abbey. Due to its proximity to the house, it may have been intended as a potentially defensible shelter during raids, in effect a monastic peel tower.

The dating of the gatehouse has also caused some difficulty. The heraldic designs were noted in a previous chapter, and the omission of John (V) de Mohun's 'cross lozengy' has led a number of writers to assign a date of c.1320.<sup>39</sup> As the hand-cannon loops are contemporary, however, the date must be after around 1370, when such weapons became common.<sup>40</sup> Emery suggests an even later date of c. 1380-90, and claims a similarity to the gatehouse of Dunster Castle (built 1419-21), although the latter is a far more imposing structure, and the similarities are perhaps overstated.<sup>41</sup> In all, however, a later date seems almost certain, in the last quarter of the fourteenth century, although the rough nature of most of the architectural detail precludes any further precision. Such a date would also fit with developments in the war. While the defeat at La Rochelle in 1372 did not, as was once thought, hand control of the Channel to the French, it did provoke an number of defensive measures on the south coast, and there is an identifiable increase in

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<sup>38</sup> Saxby & Westman, *Abbey of Torre*.

<sup>39</sup> Watkin, *Torre Abbey*, pp. 40-2; *TA*, p. 22; See Chapter 4 pp. 152-3.

<sup>40</sup> M. H. Keen, 'The Changing Scene: Guns, Gunpowder, and Permanent Armies', in idem., *Medieval Warfare: A History* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 278-80.

<sup>41</sup> A. Emery, *Greater Medieval Houses of England and Wales 1300-1500 III: Southern England* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 655-6.

raids on the south-west.<sup>42</sup>

While we have no direct record of the abbey itself being attacked in this period, although, as has been noted above, we would not necessarily expect to find one, it is clear that the canons at least felt a threat of being raided. The abbey's close relationship with Dartmouth was noted in a previous chapter, but here the proximity of the port placed the canons in danger of opportunistic raiding by foreign fleets attracted to the area. It is less clear as to the extent to which the abbey's fortifications served as part of the local system of coastal defence, although as their expense and utility were mentioned a number of times in letters patent they may well have had some greater defensive role. While it is also true that Torre, as with most of the abbeys in a similar border position in England, could only be described as 'sub-fortified', and would have easily succumbed to a fully armed invasion force, we should also note that the expense and disruption of erecting and manning strong defences, as at Lindisfarne, was a serious obstacle for most monastic communities.<sup>43</sup> It was also simply unnecessary for most, given that its primary purpose was to deter any would-be raiders from pillaging the abbey precinct. While a great number of monastic gatehouses tended to be more for decoration, and utilised heraldry and images as a deterrent to would-be attackers, those in more exposed positions preferred functional structures which would also have some form of actual defensive capability. Torre was in an unusual but by no means unique position as a fortified coastal monastery, and while more research on this topic is certainly required, it takes no great leap of imagination to suggest there was a certain level of interaction between such monasteries and the local populace to ensure the safety of both.

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<sup>42</sup> J. W. Sherbourne & A. Tuck, *War, Politics, and Culture in Fourteenth-Century England* (London, 1994), pp. 41-53; Tyldesley, 'Crown and the Local Communities', p. 132.

<sup>43</sup> The term 'sub-fortified' is Coulson's, who states that this encompassed most noble households and below, in fact, anything not capable of withstanding a full-scale siege; Coulson, 'Hierarchism in Conventual Crenellation', p. 75.

## The Wars of the Roses

If the threat to monasteries during foreign wars has been largely overlooked, their position during the domestic turbulence of the latter half of the fifteenth century has been almost completely ignored. Few modern accounts of the period commonly known as the Wars of the Roses make any mention of the role of the church and ecclesiastical institutions in the factional politics of the time. A view of the fifteenth century gleaned from Knowles' *Religious Orders*, for instance, would hardly include the Wars at all, as there are only a handful of references made to them in any of the three volumes. Christine Carpenter stated that the church was 'the part of society most untouched by the crisis,' and that, even as landowners, the ecclesiastical institutions of England suffered very little compared to their lay counterparts.<sup>44</sup> Some work has been undertaken on the role of the bishops during the conflict, but with a few notable exceptions their part has been seen as overwhelmingly passive.<sup>45</sup> The most visible part played by the monasteries in the period was as a place of sanctuary, especially at Westminster and Beaulieu, which had strong traditional rights. Nunneries were also frequently used to hold the female relatives of traitors in custody.<sup>46</sup> Yet through their ownership of land, the recruitment of canons, and the daily interaction of the religious with the secular world, monasteries could not help but be drawn into secular affairs. Furthermore, some of the community, or their administrative staff, would have had families who were intimately involved in the politics of the time, and many of the leading figures of the Wars are found as stewards of the greater monastic houses.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> C. Carpenter, *The Wars of the Roses: Politics and the constitution in England c. 1437-1509* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 260.

<sup>45</sup> R. J. Knecht, 'The Episcopate and the Wars of the Roses', *University of Birmingham Historical Journal*, 6 (1957-8), pp. 108-31.

<sup>46</sup> R. G. Davies, 'The Church and the Wars of the Roses', in A. J. Pollard (ed.), *The Wars of the Roses* (Basingstoke, 1995), pp. 134-61; Stöber, *Late Medieval Monasteries*, p. 54, n. 247.

<sup>47</sup> *RO*, ii, p. 285.



Conversely, it is occasionally possible to note occasions of abbots influencing their patrons, as the abbot of Talley, the only Premonstratensian house in Wales, together with the Bishop of St. David's, was instrumental in ensuring that his tutelary patron Rhys ap Thomas, of whom the abbot was a close confidant, would come out in support of the Earl of Richmond's claim to the throne from 1483.<sup>48</sup> While there is little such direct evidence for the involvement of most monasteries in factional politics during the Wars of the Roses, we may, though a study of Torre and the other Devonian abbeys, discern some elements of how the events of the time affected, and were affected by, the monasteries of the area.

Devon as a county was linked to some of the most important, and the most violent, episodes of the national conflicts of the second half of the fifteenth century. The most notorious of these, the Courtenay-Bonville feud of the 1450's, has been documented in many major studies of the Wars.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, it was to the shelter of John Dinham's house at Nutwell Court that the Earl of March, together with Warwick, Salisbury and others, were spirited after Ludford Bridge in 1459, and where they stayed for a week before sailing to Calais from Exmouth in a boat bought with Dinham's money.<sup>50</sup> Clarence was a major landholder in the county after 1467, and Warwick, Clarence, Pembroke and Oxford landed in Devon, possibly at Clarence's port of Dartmouth, in 1470 at the start of their successful campaign to unseat Edward IV.<sup>51</sup> When Queen Margaret landed in England in 1471 to reclaim the throne for Henry there was support for her cause in the Westcountry and she was able, with the aid of Sir Hugh Courtenay, to raise the 'hoole

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<sup>48</sup> R. A. Griffiths, *Rhys ap Thomas and his Family: A Study in the Wars of the Roses and Early Tudor Politics* (Cardiff, 1993), pp. 185-7, 198-204, 209, 251, 276.

<sup>49</sup> R. A. Griffiths, *The Reign of King Henry IV* (London, 1981), pp. 574-7, 753-6; R. L. Storey, *The End of the House of Lancaster* (Gloucester, 1986), pp. 84-92, 165-75; M. Cherry, 'The Struggle for Power in Mid-Fifteenth Century Devonshire', in R. A. Griffiths (ed.), *Patronage, The Crown, and The Provinces* (Gloucester, 1981), pp. 123-44; Stansfield, *Political Elites*, pp. 165-73.

<sup>50</sup> C. Ross, *Edward IV* (London, 1974), p. 21. Nutwell is not, as Ross suggests (and Gillingham repeats), near Newton Abbot, but at Lympstone, around two miles up the River Exe from Exmouth. This would seem to make certain his assertion that it was to this house that the nobles fled, given its proximity to their point of departure; J. Gillingham, *The Wars of the Roses* (London, 1981), p. 105.

<sup>51</sup> Ross, *Edward IV*, p. 147; *CPR 1461-7*, pp. 197-9, 212-3. Contemporary sources say Devon, or, more widely, the Westcountry, while later sources claim Dartmouth.

myghte' of Devon and Cornwall.<sup>52</sup> Similarly, in the revolts against Richard III in 1483, Devon was one of the centres of resistance against the new king, largely led by the Marquess of Dorset and Thomas St. Leger, but including the Bishop of Exeter, Peter Courtenay, and other members of that family.<sup>53</sup>

These events could not have passed the abbey by. Indeed, William Cary, lord of the manor of Cockington, adjacent to the abbey and in the canons' parish of Tormohun, was one of those executed at Tewkesbury Abbey for supporting Margaret's forces.<sup>54</sup> His lands had been declared forfeit in 1467 for his support for her cause, having joined the exiled court in 1465.<sup>55</sup> From 1467, therefore, the canons' nearest neighbour on the west was Sir Thomas Bouchier, younger son of Henry, Earl of Essex, and a loyal servant of Edward IV.<sup>56</sup> He appears as a patron of Torre, confirming the canons in the grants made to them by the de Cockington lords of the manor 'for the health of [his] soul and the souls of all the previous lords of the manor, for their injuries and transgressions'.<sup>57</sup>

Furthermore, to the immediate east of their manor of Tormohun, the manor of St. Marychurch was held throughout this period by the Lords FitzWarin, William Bouchier and Fulk Bouchier his son, brother and nephew respectively of Henry, Earl of Essex. The lands and title had been inherited by William's wife Thomasin, daughter of Richard Hankford (d. 1431), who himself had come into the lands and title through his wife Elizabeth, daughter of Fulk FitzWarin (d. 1407).<sup>58</sup> They played a prominent part in the conflicts and subsequent political history of the county, as William was one of Bonville's

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<sup>52</sup> *Historie of the Arrivall of King Edward IV*, ed. J. Bruce (Camden Society, 1838), p. 23.

<sup>53</sup> C. Ross, *Richard III* (London, 1981), pp. 109-10.

<sup>54</sup> *A Chronicle of the First Thirteen Years of the Reign of Edward the Fourth*, ed. J. O. Halliwell (Camden Society, 1839), pp. 18-19.

<sup>55</sup> M. Mercer, 'The Strength of Lancastrian Loyatism during the Readeption: Gentry Participation at the Battle of Tewkesbury', *Journal of Medieval Military History*, 5 (2007), pp. 89, 94. *PROME*, xiii, pp. 123-4. William's son, Robert, was reinstated to the Cary lands on the accession of Henry VII; *PROME*, xv, pp. 181-3.

<sup>56</sup> He was also the husband of Joan Barre, the widow of Humphrey Stafford, Earl of Devon; *CPR 1467-77*, pp. 24, 46, 425; Ross, *Edward IV*, p. 327.

<sup>57</sup> EC 281.

<sup>58</sup> *IPM*, xxiii, p. 306.

chief allies, while Fulk, together with his brother-in-law Lord Dinham, was 'the main force in shire affairs' after the Readeption.<sup>59</sup> With such politically polarised neighbours it is hard to see how the canons would not have been affected by the strife and political disturbances of the period.

Devon was, therefore, a frequently disturbed county in this period, and we might expect to see this reflected in the fortunes of the abbeys in the area. Certainly, in December 1455, John Harrys, a canon of Torre, received papal dispensation to receive a benefice for life, with or without cure, because the abbey 'is situate on the sea shore in a place dangerous on account of invasions, so that the canons have sometimes to have recourse to arms for the defence of themselves and the monastery, wherefore he fears to reside within'.<sup>60</sup> While we might dismiss this as so much hyperbole, there are a number of points of interest. The wording does not appear to be mere formula; it is apparently the only instance, in the second half of the fifteenth century at least, of an English religious being granted dispensation from their monastery on the grounds that it was dangerously sited, and, furthermore, the only instance of the statement that a religious was having to take up arms to defend himself.

The letter was sent from the Curia on 21<sup>st</sup> December, only six days after the skirmish between Bonville and Courtenay near Clyst, and, as such, while the petition itself must have been placed some time before that event, it was evidently set against a background of the greatest period of strife in Devon of the fifteenth century. Martin Cherry notes that the summer of 1455 in Devon was one of 'violence and murder', which was not only quantitatively but qualitatively different from the endemic violence of the county in the 1440's and 1450's.<sup>61</sup> We may include a note of caution with regard to the

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<sup>59</sup> Stansfield, *Political Elites*, pp. 151, 177, 184, 207-8, 245-51.

<sup>60</sup> *CPL 1455-64*, p. 93. Harrys (or Harry) had joined the abbey sometime before 1449, as he was ordained acolyte in that year; *Reg. Lacy*, IV, p. 226.

<sup>61</sup> Cherry, 'Struggle for Power', pp. 123-4.

contemporary reporting of the events of 1455, inasmuch as the violence of the period was used as part of York's petition to become protector, and, as such, the nature and extent of the troubles may have been overstated.<sup>62</sup> However, Hannes Kleineke's recent work supports Cherry's view of the endemic nature of violence in Devon, and indicates that the level was high throughout the fifteenth century. Particularly relevant for John Harrys' petition is his suggestion that the escalation of violence may be dated to 1454, in which year the earl's sons twice occupied Exeter. Furthermore, this increased violence in the region persisted until at least 1458.<sup>63</sup>

Thus the coincidence of timing would thus appear to link the petition to the strife of 1454/5. The abbey's patron at this time was the Courtenay Earl of Devon, so it is possible that, in one way or another, this connection had embroiled them in the troubles. This does, however, beg the question of why there is no mention of more obvious Courtenay abbeys such as Forde, where a number of the family were buried, being involved in the troubles.<sup>64</sup> It is perhaps more likely that the local politics of the time were not directly to blame, but that opportunists took advantage of the chaotic state of the county to raid the house. Torre was, however, not the only ecclesiastical institution to be attacked in 1455. The dean of Exeter was imprisoned and robbed by the Earl's men, who also dragged Master John Morton out of the choir of the cathedral during the celebration of Mass and held him captive until he paid a ransom.<sup>65</sup>

External attacks were not the only problems faced by the canons in this period. On 23rd November 1455 the abbot, John Lacy, died, and the prior wrote to the abbot of Welbeck asking him to supervise the election of a successor as quickly as possible. The

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<sup>62</sup> Storey, *House of Lancaster*, p. 172.

<sup>63</sup> H. Kleineke, 'Why the West Was Wild: Law and Disorder in Fifteenth-Century Cornwall and Devon', in L. Clark (ed.) *The Fifteenth Century 3: Authority and Subversion* (Woodbridge, 2003), pp. 75-94; idem, 'Pe Kynges Cite': Exeter in the Wars of the Roses', in L. Clark (ed.), *The Fifteenth Century 7: Conflicts, Consequences and the Crown in the Late Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 2007), pp. 142-3.

<sup>64</sup> *MDE* pp. 338-9.

<sup>65</sup> Storey, *House of Lancaster*, p. 170.

prior bemoans that the brethren are ‘as lambs among wolves’ as they were subject to many molestations, and perturbed by ‘storms’.<sup>66</sup> He could not come personally with the abbot’s seal, as the abbey was in the middle of many difficult negotiations concerning things both spiritual and temporal, but instead sent Brother William Gambon with the seals.<sup>67</sup> The timing of the election was clearly poor, being in the middle of one of the most violent episodes in Devon’s history, and, by all accounts, John Lacy’s successor, Richard Cade, did not have the most favourable of starts to his rule. In September 1456 the abbot of St. Radegund’s, John Chilton, the visitor of the order in England, wrote to Cade noting that he had been informed that William Nowell, the prior, was a troublemaker and disturber of the peace. Having summoned Nowell to appear before him, Chilton was satisfied that he was not the root of the trouble, but that Abbot Richard was to blame – his rule lacked firmness, strife and discord abounded, and the abbey was dilapidated and its light extinguished. Richard was to set his house in order or render up his seal and retire on a pension of twenty marks.<sup>68</sup> A few days later, Chilton wrote to the abbot of Welbeck, the father-house of Torre, asking for permission to visit the abbey and settle the discord there himself.<sup>69</sup> According to the Registers of the University of Oxford, Richard Cade, canon of Torre, had rooms at Exeter College in 1457, so he may well have been taking some leave of absence from the abbacy to attend university. This was not unique, and Walter Hawes, the prior of Frithelstock, had similarly taken two years leave from his monastery to study at university shortly after his election in 1434.<sup>70</sup>

There is an indication that Cade’s social networks may have involved the abbey more deeply in local politics, and especially so after 1461. At the time he was at Oxford,

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<sup>66</sup> ‘quia diversimode inquietamur, ac fluctus tempestatis nos perturbant.’ It is not clear whether the storm was literal, perhaps a flood risk, or refers metaphorically to the turbulence of the social scene.

<sup>67</sup> *CAP*, iii, pp. 137-8.

<sup>68</sup> *CAP*, iii, pp. 139-40.

<sup>69</sup> *CAP*, iii, pp. 140-1.

<sup>70</sup> *BRUO*, i, p. 337; *Reg. Lacy*, I, pp. 306-7.

George Neville, a noted Yorkist, was both the Chancellor of the University and the Bishop of Exeter, although this is perhaps more coincidental than indicative of any wider political stance on Cade's part.<sup>71</sup> His family were burgesses of Dartmouth, who can be found associating with John Meryfeld and John More, members of John Dinham's household, and Thomas Gylle, the controller of customs for Dartmouth and Exeter.<sup>72</sup> More also appears acting with William Bonville in 1438.<sup>73</sup> Meryfeld, the coroner of Devon to 1467, also appears as a feoffee of the abbey in Tormohun, Dartmouth, and in Newton Abbot along with John Trumpingdon, whose name is later found among the canons themselves.<sup>74</sup> Yet there is no evidence for Dinham's involvement in the Courtenay-Bonville feud, despite Dinham's association with both Bonville and Sir Philip Courtenay of Powderham, and he appears to have been Lancastrian until as late as 1459.<sup>75</sup> As such the problems of 1455 may not be traceable to the association with Dinham retainers. Whether it affected the abbey's allegiances throughout the period, however, is difficult to say, although John Meryfeld continued his connections both to the abbey and Lady Joan Dinham after the accession of Edward IV.<sup>76</sup>

One noted example of Yorkist support amongst the Devon abbeys is perhaps the abbot of Tavistock, John Dynyngton (1451-90).<sup>77</sup> Quite what his support entailed is unclear, but his abbey was rewarded for it with the grant of Cowick Priory with its possessions by Edward IV in 1462. The priory had been suppressed in 1451 and given by Henry VI to his college at Eton.<sup>78</sup> The transfer of property is notable inasmuch as it represents the penalising of an institution identified as supporters of the old regime and the

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<sup>71</sup> R. L. Storey, 'The Universities during the Wars of the Roses', in D. Williams (ed.), *England in the Fifteenth Century: Proceedings of the 1986 Harlaxton Symposium* (Woodbridge, 1987), pp. 320-1.

<sup>72</sup> Kleineke, 'The Dinham Family', pp. 147-8, 196, 246, 249; Watkin, *Dartmouth*, pp. 136, 143; C. L. Kingsford, *Prejudice and Promise in Fifteenth Century England* (London, 1962), pp. 89-90.

<sup>73</sup> TNA CP 25/1/46/85/151.

<sup>74</sup> DRO D1508M/Moger/139; *CCR 1461-8*, p. 356; Watkin, *Dartmouth*, p. 136; Chapter 7, p. 237.

<sup>75</sup> Kleineke, 'The Dinham Family', pp. 192-3, 242-3.

<sup>76</sup> Kleineke, 'The Dinham Family', p. 148; DRO 1508M/Moger/139.

<sup>77</sup> Finberg, *Tavistock Abbey*, pp. 28, 263-4.

<sup>78</sup> *Reg. Lacy*, III, pp. 142-3; *CPR 1461-7*, pp. 222, 273.

rewarding of one faithful to Edward.<sup>79</sup> Cowick also had a long association with the attainted Courtenay Earls: it was of their patronage and several of the family were buried there.<sup>80</sup>

In July 1461, four months after Edward had taken the throne, Dynyngton was appointed to a commission to raise supplies from Devon for the war against France. Also included on the commission, alongside such notable Devon Yorkists as Philip Courtenay, Nicholas Kirkham, and a younger Dinham, were the abbots of Buckfast and Torre, the prior of Plympton, and the mayors of Totnes and Dartmouth.<sup>81</sup> The abbots of Buckfast and Torre and the prior of Plympton do not appear on any further commissions under Edward, so this single appearance can hardly be evidence for firm Yorkist sympathies. It is more likely that the abbeys were merely the largest in the county, or the largest of their respective orders in Devon, along with two of the most important boroughs. Dynyngton, however, appears on a much more politically charged commission in the same month, alongside many of the same Yorkist gentry and the two mayors, charged with apprehending William the Bastard of Exeter and Baldwin Fulford, who had been stirring up the county in the cause of Henry VI.<sup>82</sup> Furthermore, Dynyngton is the only abbot to reappear on commissions throughout the period.<sup>83</sup> It is reasonable to assume his credentials as a Yorkist, although the evidence is less strong for the other abbeys on the first commission. It at least suggests they, like many of the gentry families in the area, were not averse to working under a Yorkist regime.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> This picture is complicated, however, by the subsequent regranting of the priory to Eton by Edward in 1467. The abbot of Tavistock took the case to the papal curia and evidently won, as the priory was in the abbey's possession at the Dissolution, *CPR 1467-77*, pp. 62-3; *1476-85*, p. 90.

<sup>80</sup> *MDE*, pp. 154-5.

<sup>81</sup> *CPR 1461-7*, p. 37; J. A. F. Thomson, 'The Courtenay Family in the Yorkist Period', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 45 (1972), p. 236.

<sup>82</sup> *CPR 1461-7*, p. 33.

<sup>83</sup> *CPR 1461-7*, pp. 233; *CPR 1467-77*, p. 612.

<sup>84</sup> M. Mercer, 'Lancastrian Loyalism in the South-West: The Case of the Beauforts', *Southern History*, 19 (1997), pp. 42-60.

Thomas Oliver, abbot of Buckland, on the other hand, was notably implicated in the last phases of the Wars, taking a position against the government of Richard III. He had been abbot since 1464, although from a date probably not long after his election until 1473 he was involved in a dispute over the abbacy with the prior, William Breton.<sup>85</sup> This case may have had some roots in factional politics, although not, as Gill suggests, through the supposed intervention on Oliver's behalf of Richard Edgecombe, 'the leading Lancastrian in the west'.<sup>86</sup> In fact, Edgecombe was part of the commission to remove Oliver, and is never named as an abettor.<sup>87</sup> However, William Breton was apparently being assisted by Humphrey Courtenay, son of Philip Courtenay of Powderham.<sup>88</sup> The Powderham Courtenays were a rival faction to the Courtenay Earls, being 'Yorkist' or, more specifically, allied to Clarence at this time, and were amongst his retinue.<sup>89</sup> Clarence was one of the largest landholders in Devon after the attainder of the Earls in 1461, and had been ensuring his rise to pre-eminence in place of the Courtenays, both in landed terms and through his retaining of a number of the former Courtenay affinity.<sup>90</sup> Humphrey Courtenay may thus have been attempting to extend Clarence's influence in an abbey that was previously in the patronage of the Earls of Devon, as well as assert Powderham Courtenay rights over the traditional dominion of the main Courtenay branch.

In the event, Thomas Oliver was not deposed, and ruled until the 1490's. His troubles had not ended, however, as, according to John Hooker's additions to Holinshed's

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<sup>85</sup> D. M. Smith (ed.), *The Heads of Religious Houses in England and Wales III: 1377-1540* (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 275-6.

<sup>86</sup> Gill, *Buckland Abbey*, pp. 36-7.

<sup>87</sup> *CPR 1467-77*, pp. 171-2, 403-4. Edgecombe's Lancastrianism in this period has perhaps been overstated. Although his lands were forfeited in 1471, he was pardoned in 1472 and served on a number of commissions in the Westcountry, including against the Earl of Oxford's occupation of St. Michael's Mount, and another to arrest Henry Bodrugan in 1474. He probably held latent feelings, but like many individuals at the time, his abilities to work under a Yorkist regime suggest he could hardly be called a 'leading' Lancastrian; Rowse, *Tudor Cornwall*, pp. 85-7, 102-5, 110-11; *CPR 1467-77*, pp. 399-400, 403-4, 491; Stansfield, *Political Elites*, pp. 141-6;

<sup>88</sup> *CAP 1467-77*, p. 404.

<sup>89</sup> M. A. Hicks, *False, Fleeting, Perjur'd Clarence: George, Duke of Clarence, 1449-78* (Gloucester, 1980), pp. 71-3, 188, 217; Thomson, 'Courtenay Family', pp. 244-5.

<sup>90</sup> Kleineke, 'De Kynges Cite', pp. 141-2.



*Chronicles*, ‘Oliver’ abbot of Buckland was amongst those indicted for treason by John, Lord Scrope in session at Torrington in late 1483. The dean and archdeacon of Exeter are also named in Hooker’s list, and he notes there were ‘five hundred others’ indicted as accessories, all of whom fled to Brittany or elsewhere, saving Thomas St. Leger and one Sir John Rame, who were beheaded at Exeter.<sup>91</sup> Although Abbot Thomas is referred to by his second name only, Hooker correctly names the dean at the time as John Arundell, and the archdeacon as David Hopton, which suggests he was working from documentary sources which have not survived.<sup>92</sup> Thus it appears that Abbot Thomas was involved in the south-western element of Buckingham’s revolt, although given the number of Edward IV’s supporters who also did so, it would be rash to impute any certain longer-term Lancastrian sympathies.<sup>93</sup> Horrox has noted that the assumption, from the attainders, that Exeter was a focus for the south west is misleading, as it was more likely a blanket usage for a number of risings in the region.<sup>94</sup> In this instance, Richard Edgecombe’s influence may indeed have been key, as his residence at Cotehele lay only four miles due west of Buckland and could have been a focus for revolt. Edgecombe was certainly caught up in the rising, although the stories about his daring escape from the clutches of Henry Bodrugan, as retold by Rowse, are greatly exaggerated traditions with no real evidence.<sup>95</sup>

For the vast majority of similar sized monasteries, such as Torre, the evidence for allegiance in the second half of the fifteenth century is similarly difficult to interpret, and usually far more lacking. Of course we should be very wary of assigning a ‘side’ to any particular institution for the entirety of the period. To say that an abbey was ‘Lancastrian’ or ‘Yorkist’ is to give substance to what were often opportunistic decisions based on local

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<sup>91</sup> R. Holinshed, J. Hooker, *Chronicles* (London, 1588), iii, p. 746.

<sup>92</sup> *Fasti Exeter 1300-1541*, pp. 5, 14. This would also be the earliest reference to David Hopton as archdeacon of Exeter; his predecessor had died in October 1482.

<sup>93</sup> Ross, *Richard III*, pp. 105, 109-13.

<sup>94</sup> R. Horrox, *Richard III: A Study in Service* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 156-8.

<sup>95</sup> Rowse, *Tudor Cornwall*, pp. 102-5, 110-11; P. Maddern, ‘Sir Henry Bodrugan’, *ODNB*.

political realities. The City of Exeter, as an example of another corporate body, was 'pragmatic' in its dealings with the kings and the aristocracy during this period, generally sending aid when called upon regardless of which king was on the throne.<sup>96</sup>

Torre was also, along with a number of the Devonian abbeys, without a tutelary patron at this point. As has been noted, the abbey had been of Courtenay patronage since the death of John (V) de Mohun in 1376, yet the line of the Courtenay Earls had been broken by the attainder and execution of Thomas, the 6<sup>th</sup> Earl, in 1461. The title was briefly taken by his brother John during the Readeption, but following his death and attainder at Tewkesbury in 1471 the Courtenay claim passed to a more junior line through Sir Hugh Courtenay of Boconnoc, who had also been executed after Tewkesbury, to his son Edward, who was pardoned and generally acquiesced in Yorkist rule. The Earldom was not returned to Edward, however, and his sympathies were clearly Lancastrian, and later Tudor. He disappeared from public life after 1477, then resurfaced in the 1483 rebellion against Richard III, before fleeing to Richmond's court.<sup>97</sup>

In this light, there may be some interest in the statement of the canons in 1478 that their tutelary patrons were the Earls of Devon, at that time technically impossible.<sup>98</sup> We might dismiss this as convenient shorthand on the part of the canons; a recognition that attainder was generally only temporary and that the Courtenays were the natural heirs of the title.<sup>99</sup> A great number of monastic houses must have been in a similar position in this period with attainted patrons. From the single reference at Torre we can only say that the identification of Earls of Devon in 1478 was strangely politically naive on the part of the canons, but perhaps indicative of an allegiance, albeit indirectly through ties to the family.

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<sup>96</sup> Kleineke, 'De Kynges Cite', pp. 151-6.

<sup>97</sup> Thomson, 'Courtenay Family', pp. 230-5.

<sup>98</sup> CAP, iii, p. 142.

<sup>99</sup> J. R. Lander, 'Attainder and Forfeiture 1453-1509', in E. B. Fryde & E. Miller (eds.), *Historical Studies of the English Parliament* (Cambridge, 1970), ii, pp. 94-5, notes that 84% of attainders of the nobility between 1453 and 1509 were ultimately reversed.

Thus the return of Edward Courtenay in 1485, and his restoration to the Earldom on 26<sup>th</sup> October of that year may have been a cause for celebration at the abbey at the return of their tutelary patron. In this respect, there are at least two surviving examples of what appear to be ‘Tudor’ roses at the abbey. The rose design, while a common enough heraldic and decorative design in the Middle Ages, in this instance appears to have a function greater than that of mere embellishment. John Cooper’s work on political propaganda in Tudor Devon and Cornwall is particularly relevant for an understanding of the placement and meaning of such symbols, as well as that of Sidney Anglo on the form of late-medieval iconography.<sup>100</sup>

One of these roses appears on the grave of Abbot Cade, which survives in the north transept of East Ogwell church, along with those of Abbots William Norton (1382-1412) and Thomas Dyer (1483-1523) [Fig. 5]. How, when, and why they were transported there is unknown. That of Abbot Norton was twice reused, giving at least a *terminus ante quem*, and perhaps even a date, for their removal to East Ogwell of 1566.<sup>101</sup> It is likely that all three would have originally lain in the east cloister walk of the abbey, which would also account for their intactness, as most of those in the church would have been smashed when the roof was pulled in at the Dissolution.<sup>102</sup> Those of William Norton and Richard Cade are similar in form: a plain rectangular centre bordered by the inscription and some foliated decoration. Richard Cade’s has a hollow for a small brass figure of an abbot with crozier, although the brass itself is missing. The inscription on Richard Cade’s tomb reads ‘Hic jacet dominus Ricardus Cade istius loci abbas XVIII qui obiit ultimo die mensis Maii anno domini Millio CCCC LXXX II[?] cuius anime propicietur Deus Amen.’ Seymour claimed that the date was almost completely illegible, but it clearly shows his death to

<sup>100</sup> J. P. D. Cooper, *Propaganda and the Tudor State* (Oxford, 2003); S. Anglo, *Spectacle, Pageantry and Early Tudor Policy* (Oxford, 1969); idem, *Images of Tudor Kingship* (London, 1992).

<sup>101</sup> The inscription reads ‘Here lyeth the body of John Holbeme Esquier who dyed the xvii of November anno domini MCCCCCLXVI cujus anime propicietur Deus’.

<sup>102</sup> Saxby & Westman, *Abbey of Torre*.

have occurred in either 1482 or 1483, depending on whether a third 'I' is obscured by a crack in the stone [Fig. 6].<sup>103</sup>



**Figure 5: Grave of Abbot Richard Cade in East Ogwell parish church**

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<sup>103</sup> *TA*, p. 78.



**Figure 6: Date on Abbot Cade's Tomb – LXXXº II [?] cui<sup>us</sup>**

While any trace of a third ‘I’ has been obliterated, the date of 31<sup>st</sup> May 1482 for the death of Abbot Cade is problematic when related to the documentary sources. Unfortunately, Bishop Courtenay’s registers are missing from 1480 until the run of his successor’s begins in 1487, so there is no surviving entry for the confirmation of Abbot Cade’s successor, Thomas Dyer. However, Richard Redman conducted a visitation of Torre on 21<sup>st</sup> September, 1482 when Richard Cade was listed as abbot. On that occasion, the brethren were enjoined to look after the abbot when he was ill, so his end may not have been far away.<sup>104</sup> As there is no room for two further ‘I’s in the space provided, and the legible numerals are clearly II and not V or IV, a date of 31<sup>st</sup> May 1483, with the final Iº obscured, must be taken as the date of Richard Cade’s death.

The engraving of the slab may not have been completed until at least three years after his death, however, as it bears a decoration in the form of a rose [Fig. 7]. The carving of the inscription was, evidently, a multi-stage affair. From comparison with other religious monuments, Abbot Cade probably commissioned the grave slab during his lifetime, and, with the exception of the relevant dates, it would have been carved, and the

<sup>104</sup> CAP, iii, pp. 147-8.

brass made and fixed, before his death.<sup>105</sup> There is some evidence for this, in the difficulty with which ‘ultimo die’ has been squeezed in between ‘obiit’ and ‘mensis’, ‘ultimo’ having been heavily contracted, while the large gap left for the name of the month has only ‘Maii’ to fill it, and thus leaves spaces either side [Figs. 8 & 9]. The rest of the inscription is neat and evenly spaced, leading us to the conclusion that these letters were added later, after Cade’s death.

The rose, however, was almost certainly added after 1486. Had it been carved before Cade’s death, we would have to place it in the reign of Edward IV, and, while displays of roses on the grave slabs of Yorkist supporters were not unknown, they are not usually of this type. The tomb of William Harcourt (d.1482), who died around the same time as Richard Cade, has a prominent rose decoration, and it was a common feature of the collars of Edward IV’s supporters.<sup>106</sup> It was frequently used as a device on coins and seals by Edward IV and his Yorkist successors, while, correspondingly, the rose was completely absent as a heraldic design amongst Lancastrian supporters, and was not used even by Richmond until his invention of the united rose on his accession as Henry VII.<sup>107</sup> The caveat to this, as regards the grave of Richard Cade, is that Edward IV’s favoured rose motif was the *rose-en-soleil*, a single rose against the background of a radiating sun. Furthermore, the rose on Richard’s tomb is clearly a double rose, whereas the Yorkist rose

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<sup>105</sup> D. Maher, *Medieval Grave Slabs of County Tipperary, 1200-1600 A.D.*, BAR British Series 262 (Oxford, 1997), p. 20. Also P. G. Lindley, ‘The Great Screen and its Context’ in M. Henig & P. Lindley (eds.), *Alban and St. Albans: Roman and Medieval Architecture, Art and Archaeology* (Leeds, 2001), pp. 259-60 for Abbot Wethamstede of St. Albans, who bore the *rose-en-soleil* badge of Edward IV on his chantry chapel, having organised the construction during his lifetime.

<sup>106</sup> C. Ross, *Wars of the Roses* (London, 1986), pp. 138-40.

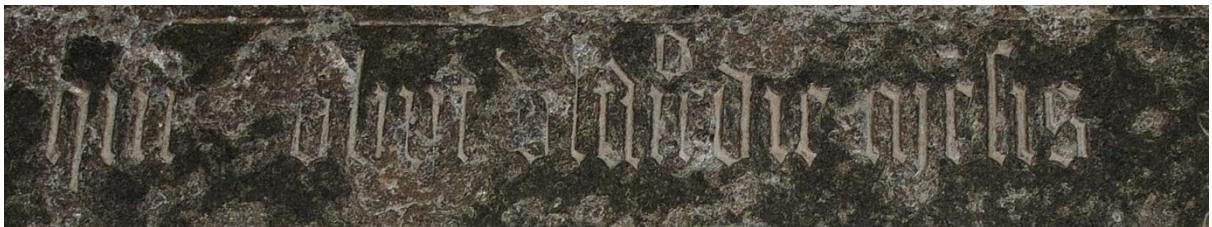
<sup>107</sup> J. Ashdown-Hill, ‘The Red Rose of Lancaster?’, *The Ricardian*, 10:133 (June 1996), pp. 406-20; Anglo, *Images of Tudor Kingship*, pp. 74-97. Anglo’s one instance of the red rose being invoked before 1485 is the Welsh bard Robin Ddu, who wrote of a time when ‘red roses will rule in splendour’. Given that this is the only such reference, with none emanating from either the exiled Lancastrian or Tudor courts, it would be unwise to place too much weight on this as evidence for the existence of a ‘Red Rose of Lancaster’.



was most commonly a single rose.<sup>108</sup> Double and even triple roses were not unknown, but were certainly uncommon as Yorkist symbols.<sup>109</sup>



**Figure 7: Rose design on grave of Abbot Cade**



**Figure 8: qui obiit ult'mo die mensis - note the spacing between the first two words, as compared to the last four**



**Figure 9: 'Maii' - note the size of the gap left for the name of the month**

<sup>108</sup> Anglo, *Images of Tudor Kingship*, pp. 78-9.

<sup>109</sup> H. J. Van Miegroet, 'The Sign of the Rose: A Fifteenth-Century Flemish Passion Scene', *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 27 (1992), pp. 77-84, claims that double and triple roses do appear as heraldic Yorkist devices, mainly with reference to a triple white rose, supposedly as a Yorkist design, on the belt of Mary Magdalene in an anonymous Flemish passion scene. Further evidence, however, is scanty.

A number of different conclusions may be drawn from this, of which two are the most likely. The first is that the rose design has no real significance, and is merely an example of decoration. This is unconvincing at best, not least because Richard Cade died at a time when the imagery of the rose was so highly politicised. Furthermore, the quality of the carving, as compared to the other purely decorative designs on the stone, and the heraldic style of the rose also suggest that it serves some symbolic function.<sup>110</sup> The second, and most likely, is that it is a ‘Tudor’ rose, which would give us a date for its carving, at the very earliest, of November 1485, the first instance of the idea of the double rose as a royal symbol.<sup>111</sup> The first public display of the symbol was probably at York in April 1486, after which it quickly gained popularity.<sup>112</sup> The grave would almost certainly have been in place by this point, and, although there is no trace of an earlier motif there, it may well have replaced a small design. In any case, the carving of the rose would certainly have had to be commissioned by the canons, rather than as a wish of the abbot.

The second rose in the abbey is in the form of a roof boss in the guest hall. As with most wagon roofs in Somerset, Devon, and Cornwall – the area in which they are most profuse – the majority of the roof bosses in the hall at Torre Abbey are non-symbolic foliage, with the exception of two.<sup>113</sup> One is a head, from the cheeks upwards and with flowing hair and an open mouth, the meaning of which is obscure. The other is a double rose, which is currently coloured in the red and white of the ‘Tudor’ rose, although the repainting was done in 1982-4, when traces of white and red paint were found.<sup>114</sup> Again, the rose is far more symbolic in style than other identifiably non-heraldic decorative rose bosses of an earlier period, such as that from the roof of Llanbadarn Fawr church near

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<sup>110</sup> C. J. P. Cave, *Roof Bosses in Medieval Churches: An Aspect of Gothic Sculpture* (Cambridge, 1941), p. 81 notes that, in the case of roof bosses, ‘naturalistic’ roses, with leaves and stem, are increasingly uncommon in the later Middle Ages, while those without leaves and stem tend to be exclusively heraldic.

<sup>111</sup> Anglo, *Images of Tudor Kingship*, pp. 81-2.

<sup>112</sup> Anglo, *Spectacle, Pageantry*, pp. 21-5, 36-7.

<sup>113</sup> Cave, *Medieval Roof Bosses*, pp. 15-16. The height of the ceiling and poor lighting in the hall make it difficult to see the detail on this figure. It may be singing, perhaps an angel?

<sup>114</sup> Pers. comm. L. Retallick, former senior curator, Torre Abbey Museum.



Aberystwyth.<sup>115</sup> The wagon roof of the hall places the reconstruction of the ceiling as late-fifteenth or early-sixteenth century.<sup>116</sup> It may be possible to place the work in the building campaign of the 1480's, which Redman praised in his visitation of 1482.<sup>117</sup> However, the buildings in question were not specified, and, as has been noted above, roses of that date tended not to take this form. As such, this carving presumably dates to a similar period as that of Richard Cade's grave. Indeed, if the building programme was initiated, as it seems to have been, under his abbacy, there may be a connection between the two.

Having identified these roses as significant, at least in terms of the time and situation in which they were made, we must now consider the nature of that significance. In such an analysis, John Cooper's work on 'propaganda' in the Tudor Westcountry is invaluable. He sees the use of simple visual imagery, including roses and other royal symbols, as indicative of communal displays of allegiance to central government and the crown. The first chapter of his study, where this issue is discussed, focuses almost exclusively on parish churches and concludes that displays of royal symbols, amongst other things, are evidence for 'local allegiance to the political centre', in an area traditionally seen as fairly rebellious. He may, however, go too far in stressing the communal nature of these displays, most notably in the case of 'tumultuous' St. Keverne, where the display of royal imagery, in his analysis, acts as a counter to the traditional view of this parish as disruptive and anti-governmental.<sup>118</sup> We should not necessarily assume that these images reflected the feelings of the whole community of the parish. The mere display of royal imagery is not in itself an indicator of allegiance, although to have such images and other trappings of obedience might be propitious. It may merely indicate the

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<sup>115</sup> Now in the V&A Museum.

<sup>116</sup> A similar rose roof boss in a late-fifteenth/early sixteenth century wagon roof survives at St. Minver parish church, Cooper, *Propaganda and the Tudor State*, p. 40.

<sup>117</sup> CAP, iii, p. 147.

<sup>118</sup> Cooper, *Propaganda and the Tudor State*, pp. 12-51.

desire of the churchwarden or rector to give an outward display of allegiance, without representing the will of the parishioners.

In institutions such as monasteries, however, where the community was closed, corporate, and more involved in decision making than were parishioners in their parish churches, we may more easily infer communal feeling from visual sources, although divisions could obviously occur. Such displays at Torre Abbey should, therefore, be seen in the light of the reinstatement of their patronal family to the Earldom of Devon in 1485, as well as the apparent conclusion of the dynastic struggles of the previous four decades with the marriage of Henry VII to Elizabeth of York. The position of the rose in the abbot's hall is particularly significant, as it was there that lay visitors would have been entertained, perhaps especially the abbey's tutelary patron and his circle, and thus it served as a simple visual display of the abbey's allegiance. That on the grave of Abbot Cade is more complex, but given the possible Dinham allegiances and contact with Yorkist politics by Cade in the 1450's and 1460's, they may have thought it wise to overtly display their allegiance to the new regime, both in a place where their patrons would easily see it, and directly associated with the abbot. Furthermore, the mere fact that the abbey felt it necessary to make such displays surely indicates a level of involvement with lay politics that is usually overlooked in modern historiography.<sup>119</sup>

However, as this chapter has shown, the response of monasteries to the political turmoil of the Wars of the Roses cannot be generalised, but must be based on an understanding of the local and individual circumstances of each house. Some abbots found it expedient to act pragmatically, courting patronage depending on the prevailing political winds. Given the strongly 'Yorkist' makeup of Torre's locality until 1485, their

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<sup>119</sup> There is no record of the abbey's participation in the rebellions of 1497, when large numbers in Devon and Cornwall rose up, the second time in support of the pretender Perkin Warbeck, as the rolls of fines for Devon have not survived. In Somerset, the abbots of Athelney, Cleeve, Forde, and Muchelney were all fined for their participation, or for aid given to the rebels, N. Orme, *The Cap and the Sword: Exeter and the Rebellions of 1497* (Exeter, 1997), pp. 9-20.

involvement with Dinham retainers and Thomas Bouchier look to have been part of such a policy. Others, such as Thomas Oliver at Buckland or John Dynyngton at Tavistock, took stronger political lines, in the former case possibly due to the local influence of Richard Edgecombe. On the accession of Henry VII, and the return of the Courtenay Earls of Devon, many Westcountry parishes felt it necessary to display their allegiance to the new regime, and perhaps implicitly to the returning earl. It is unsurprising to see that abbeyes, who, as this thesis seeks to show, were fully immersed in local networks of power and influence, followed suit in their submission, at least outwardly, to the change in circumstances. The reactions of monasteries to wider political changes should, therefore, be considered in the light of their more local needs, and the responses of their patrons.

More generally, the role of abbeyes during periods of turbulence or war has not previously been studied in any particular depth. This in itself is surprising, not least because abbeyes in border positions frequently found themselves embroiled in conflicts, either actively or passively. Furthermore, as wealthy landowners, on a par in status with the gentry, we should perhaps be surprised if the abbots of some houses had *not* been drawn into national politics, either through their familial connections or through the influence of their patron. An abbey could be an influential institution, especially in its immediate area and through the control of parish churches in its possession, yet this could also spread notice of their wealth and somewhat precarious defences. The disparate and often indirect evidence upon which a study must of necessity be based, combined with the intimate knowledge of circumstance required to fully understand each local case, is an obvious deterrent to a concerted national analysis of this role. Yet a local study can only go so far, and wider analysis would reveal much of interest.

## CHAPTER 7

### The Canons of Torre

Until now, this thesis has dealt with the issue of monastic-lay contact from a largely ‘external’ point of view. That is, we have analysed the patronal relationship of the canons and the laity in terms of grants and spiritual returns, what we might think of as the professional side of their interaction, and the nature of conflict between the two, both from a local or parochial perspective and against a wider social background. Throughout the course of this discussion, we have constructed a picture of the type of lay individual with whom the canons were interacting. We may now turn to the issue of how this interaction affected the canons themselves; their daily lives, the shape of their community, and their personal relationship with the secular world. One fundamental aspect of that relationship was the process of recruitment of the canons. While the monastic ideal was intended to represent a rejection of the secular world, and the process of acceptance into the community implied a severing of ties with any previous social circles, in practice this was often untenable. The canons were most likely to be drawn from the vicinity of, or from individuals associated with, the abbey, and thus would enter the religious life with pre-established links to the laity with which the abbey dealt.

There are a number of preconceptions about the type of individual who joined a monastic community in the Middle Ages. There are also many difficulties in ascertaining the background of the religious of any particular house. This chapter focuses on some of the identifiable demographic characteristics of the community at Torre, and uses the findings to balance some of the received wisdom in this field. It is possible, from various sources, to produce the full names of some 121 canons, and in many cases to track their

careers over a number of years [Appendix 2].<sup>1</sup> This number is quite remarkable in comparison with what is known, and what has been analysed, from other similar-sized houses. In her study of Plympton Priory, for example, Alison Fizzard limited her analysis to the fourteenth century, giving a total of 48 canons mainly retrieved from ordination lists.<sup>2</sup> While those retrieved from Torre are far more chronologically spread – from the mid-thirteenth century to the mid-sixteenth – this also allows us to gain some understanding of how, or if, the recruitment patterns of the abbey changed. Most major studies of the origins of regular religious have focused on the larger Benedictine abbeys or on cathedral priories, and much of what is repeated about the recruitment habits of all monasteries is founded on this basis.<sup>3</sup> Thus a similar study at a small, albeit moderately wealthy, rural monastery such as Torre will hopefully go some way to countering that bias.

The purpose of this chapter is threefold. Firstly to gain some idea of the geographic origins of the canons of Torre, in order to establish the size of the abbey's 'catchment area'. Most work on this subject repeats Knowles' assertion that 'for every house the conclusion is the same: the vast majority of recruits came from the manors and estates owned by the monastery...only a small minority bore family names or were strangers from afar'.<sup>4</sup> This may well be the case at larger houses with vast estates and numerous tenants of higher social standing, but would surely result in serious recruitment problems at smaller houses. Secondly, and proceeding from this issue, it will be possible to posit some idea of the social standing of the families of the canons of Torre and, in this way, gain an insight into the nature of the community and its relations with the laity. Finally, the almost

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<sup>1</sup> References for the ordination of individual canons can be found in Appendix 2, and are not given in footnotes.

<sup>2</sup> Fizzard, *Plympton Priory*, pp. 212-18.

<sup>3</sup> *RO*, ii, pp. 229-33; J. Greatrex, 'The Local Origins of the Monks of Worcester Cathedral Priory', *Transactions of the Worcester Archaeological Society*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ser. 16 (1999), pp. 143-53; D. Lepine, 'The Origins and Careers of the Canons of Exeter Cathedral', in C. Harper-Bill (ed.), *Religious Belief and Ecclesiastical Careers in Late Medieval England* (Woodbridge, 1991), pp. 87-120.

<sup>4</sup> *RO*, ii, p. 229; G. Harriss, *Shaping the Nation* (Oxford, 2005), p. 333. Greatrex opens her study on the monks of Worcester Cathedral Priory with an acceptance of this statement, albeit with slightly wider parameters; 'Monks of Worcester', p. 143.

unbroken run of episcopal records of ordinations and the detailed records of the late-fifteenth century visitations allow us to gain some idea of the size of the community from the late-fourteenth century, as well as some understanding of its makeup in the period of visitation.

### Social and Geographic Origins

In terms of ascertaining geographic origins, the utilisation of name evidence has many difficulties. As most in-depth studies in this field since Knowles have focused on cathedral priories, or been largely based on those studies, the identification of these problems has become slightly skewed. Thus Fizzard devotes only one paragraph to methodology, most of which is concerned with the difficulties in identifying the origins of cathedral canons, before concluding that ‘perhaps...after the Black Death the priory began to draw recruits from a wider area’.<sup>5</sup> However, the problems encountered when attempting to chart a map of the geographical origins of the canons of Torre, or, for that matter, any house of regular religious, should be differentiated from those involved in performing a similar task for the secular canons of cathedrals. While there may be some broad similarities, the cathedrals and monastic houses of England are two fundamentally different prospects in terms of recruitment. Cathedrals were the focus of a diocese, and, in the secular cathedrals at least, their prebends and canonries were often valuable prizes for an aspiring careerist. As such, their catchment areas are likely to be much larger, often extending to other dioceses, and the recruits are likely to be older, with some sort of pre-existing ecclesiastical career. Lepine notes that locative surnames of canons of Exeter Cathedral were often indicators of the place where a cleric began his career – their first vicarage or rectory.<sup>6</sup> This is hardly

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<sup>5</sup> Fizzard, *Plympton Priory*, pp. 212-13.

<sup>6</sup> Lepine, ‘Canons of Exeter Cathedral’, pp. 88-9.

going to be a problem with monastic recruits, as it is unlikely that any other than the smallest handful would have converted from secular to regular religion.<sup>7</sup> While monastic cathedrals would have been less enticingly lucrative, and the recruits would mostly not have had clerical careers beforehand, the cathedral was still a focus for the diocese, and thus would have greater resources and a wider catchment area than could possibly apply to most regular monastic houses.

With locative surnames, or, indeed, any type of surname, we must be wary of the increasing incidence of hereditary surnames across the class spectrum; a process which was largely completed by the mid-fourteenth century in Devon.<sup>8</sup> In general, from the late-fourteenth century increased mobility and the growth of hereditary surnames ‘interfere seriously’ with any attempts to create a geography of origins.<sup>9</sup> However, this may be less of a problem at some monastic houses, where many of the community took a new name, usually from their place of birth, on entry.<sup>10</sup> In the Dissolution pension list of Forde abbey a number of the monks were listed by a locative name as well as by what may be presumed to be their family name. Thus Abbot Thomas Chard was *alias* Tybbes, William Sherbourne *alias* Rede, Richard Exminster *alias* Were, and so on.<sup>11</sup> We may be certain, in the case of Abbot Chard, that he was a native of Chard, born to the family of Tybbes, and had taken his locative name on entering the house, and there is no reason to think that the other locative aliases represent anything other than places of birth.<sup>12</sup> At Durham Priory

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<sup>7</sup> One canon of Torre, William de Warland, was specifically stated to have previously been a lay cleric, while in 1278 the abbot of Prémontré gave his permission for the abbey to receive two defecting clerics as canons; DC fos. 161v, 166v.

<sup>8</sup> Postles, *Surnames of Devon*, pp. 81-107.

<sup>9</sup> P. McClure, ‘Patterns of Migration in the Late Middle Ages: The Evidence of English Place-name Surnames’, *Economic History Review*, 32 (1979), pp. 167-82.

<sup>10</sup> RO, ii, p. 229; B. J. Thompson, ‘Monasteries and Medieval Society’ in idem. (ed.), *Monasteries and Society in Medieval Britain*, Proceedings of the 1994 Harlaxton Symposium (Stamford, 1999), p. 5.

<sup>11</sup> L&P, xv, p. 545; xiv (1), p. 184.

<sup>12</sup> Most antiquarian accounts, following Wood, have given his place of birth as Awliscombe, and to the Chard family who resided there. Yet in the late-nineteenth century it was conclusively proven by Frederic Weaver that this was not the case. Chard should not be confused with the contemporary prior of Montacute and Bishop of Solymbria with the same name, MDE, p. 341; F. W. Weaver, ‘Thomas Chard D. D., the last abbot of Ford’, *Proceedings of the Somerset Archaeology and Natural History Society*, 37 (1891), ii, pp. 1-

around 80% of the monks bore locative surnames, a statistic which is roughly replicated amongst the Somerset religious, although in general the practice appears to have varied greatly from house to house and over time. On the whole, locative surnames occur more amongst monastic inmates than the general population, indicating that this was probably a common practice.<sup>13</sup>

At Torre in the thirteenth century, of the ten canons whose names we have, nine were locative, perhaps indicating a widespread adoption of the practice of taking a new name on entering the community. The only exception was Richard de Punchardon, who had the name of a notable Devonian family. The fourteenth century saw a much reduced 55% of canons with locative names, although the figure is higher before 1350 than after. Among those canons who did not have locative surnames are a number of obvious gentry names: particularly Gras (twice), Beaumont, and Drake in the first half of the century. In subsequent centuries the figure falls even more, at 39% over the fifteenth century and 34% in the sixteenth. This was still higher than the 34% of the population of Devon in 1332 and 26% in 1524 who bore locative names.<sup>14</sup> The difference between the canons and the laity cannot be accounted for by differences in social groupings, either, as, especially from the late-fourteenth century, there was little difference in the types of names borne by any group in Devon.<sup>15</sup>

It is probable, therefore, that before 1350 a large number of canons, with the exception of some sons of the gentry, took new locative names on entering the community. We might suggest that the poorer recruits would want to change their names, while those with more well-to-do families, especially with patronage links to the abbey, would keep

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14; idem, 'Two Thomas Chards – a correction', *ibid.*, 42 (1896), pp. 67-71; H. C. Maxwell Lyte, 'Thomas Chard, abbot of Ford', *ibid.* 74 (1928), pp. 57-61.

<sup>13</sup> R. B. Dobson, *Church and Society in the Medieval North of England* (London, 1996), p. 56; Weaver, 'Thomas Chard', p. 4.

<sup>14</sup> Postles, *Surnames of Devon*, pp. 109-32.

<sup>15</sup> Postles, *Surnames of Devon*, pp. 231-8. This phenomenon is not common to all counties.



them. This would hardly give the best picture of a unified and devoted community, but indicates perhaps two tiers still firmly rooted in secular society.<sup>16</sup> It is perhaps more likely, however, that it was a personal devotional decision, and some gentry would have changed their names. It is still difficult to comprehend why some would not have taken this choice, however, especially in the face of peer pressure. The numbers who adopted locative names fell substantially after 1350, although the difference in figures between the lay and monastic population suggests it was being practiced to a small degree. Given the homogeneity of names across social groups in Devon by this point, it is less clear that there would be a gentry/non-gentry split in adopting a new name. This may have been a purely personal choice, connected to a renunciation of the secular world on entering the community, and in this regard the particularly unusual name of Peter Osanna (1387-91) may indicate a single instance of the adoption of a devotional name.

Our ability to discern adopted names is severely hampered from the mid-fourteenth century by the disappearance of syndetic ('de', 'de la', 'atte', etc.) names, both amongst the canons and in society generally.<sup>17</sup> This intensifies the problem of separating assumed locative aliases, indicating a geographic origin, from inherited locative surnames which may have migrated. On the whole, however, in the lay population, where locative surnames are found elsewhere than the place to which they refer, the distance of migration is not very far. Even by the 1524 lay subsidy, the pattern of locative surnames in Devon indicated 'short-distance, localized migration...often only into adjacent parishes.'<sup>18</sup> As such, a geography of origins should not be too adversely affected by this problem.

The further main issue with the identification of the origins of the canons, if we accept that a large number were utilising locative aliases, is that there is no method to

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<sup>16</sup> Greatrex noted that, despite the majority of the Worcester monks taking locative aliases, a small number did not, many of whom retained gentry names; 'Monks of Worcester', p. 146.

<sup>17</sup> Postles, *Surnames of Devon*, pp. 118-19.

<sup>18</sup> Postles, *Surnames of Devon*, pp. 127-32.

discern if two canons with the same first name are actually one using different surnames. The small pool of first names in monastic communities, and lay, has long been recognised, and it is brought into sharp relief at Torre.<sup>19</sup> Of the canons with known first names, 41 were called John, 20 Richard, 18 Thomas, and 14 William. Thus 75% of the canons shared four common names. There is no evidence of the ‘sudden change’ observed by Knowles of the religious taking ‘clearly assumed’ Christian names after 1500. Indeed, of the 17 canons entering the abbey after 1500, 7 were called John, 5 Thomas, 2 Richard, and one each Henry, Geoffrey, and Simon, continuing the pattern of previous centuries.<sup>20</sup> Given that in Torre’s case the vast majority of canons are known through the ordination lists it is unlikely that one canon would be counted twice, as most paths of ordination can be traced. There are a small handful of possibilities, most notably the William Teyngmouth who was ordained as an acolyte and subdeacon in 1426 being almost certainly the same person as William Hamond, who first appears in the next year being ordained as a deacon.<sup>21</sup> Yet on the whole there are very few instances where a canon can be identified as having both a surname and a locative alias.

In terms of the identification of geographic and social origins of non-locative surnames, we are hampered by the lack of lay subsidies with full entries of names for the fifteenth and much of the fourteenth centuries, that is, between 1332 and 1524, leaving us with little idea of the exact spread of surnames through that period.<sup>22</sup> Fortunately, the records of the boroughs of Totnes and Dartmouth survive, including the poll tax return for 1377 from the latter. We also have the names of the local collectors for most of the county from the poll tax of 1377, as well as the regular feudal assessments, although none between 1348 and 1428, which give us some idea of the distribution of names amongst the

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<sup>19</sup> *RO*, ii, p. 231.

<sup>20</sup> *RO*, ii, pp. 231-2.

<sup>21</sup> Peter Milward (1494-1500) is almost certainly called Peter Smith at his priesting, although neither name is locative or patronymic.

<sup>22</sup> Erskine, *Lay Subsidy; Devon Lay Subsidy Rolls, 1524-7*, ed. T. L. Stoate (Bristol, 1979).

gentry and burgesses in the immediate region of the abbey.<sup>23</sup> While this aids us in identifying the geographic origin and social standing of the more unusual names, there are nonetheless a great number of common occupational, patronymic, or topographic names for which it is possible to identify no particular geographic or social origin. As such, our observations must include the caveat that in any study of the recruitment of the regular religious, there is much that is unknowable, and we must be prepared to accept that our findings can only be tentative at best.

There are, however, a number of points that can still be made about the origins of the canons of Torre. Firstly, with the obvious exception of the foundation complement sent from Welbeck, very few came from outside the county. John Bilney (1379-1400) was probably not a native of the East Anglian town of that name, but connected to a family who appear as witnesses to charters of Launceston Priory and as holding land in Launceston town between 1384 and 1402.<sup>24</sup> Given his unusual career as a canon, however, and his subsequent presence at Cambridge University, he may yet have been from further afield.<sup>25</sup> Edward Trevergy's (1491-1500) name is distinctively Cornish, although it may refer to a number of places in the county, notably in Cury, St. Cleer, and St. Gennys, the last of which was held by Launceston Priory.<sup>26</sup> John Bromford (1414-16) may have been related to the Nicholas Bromford who was escheator for Devon and Cornwall in 1412-13 and held land in North Cornwall and Barnstaple.<sup>27</sup>

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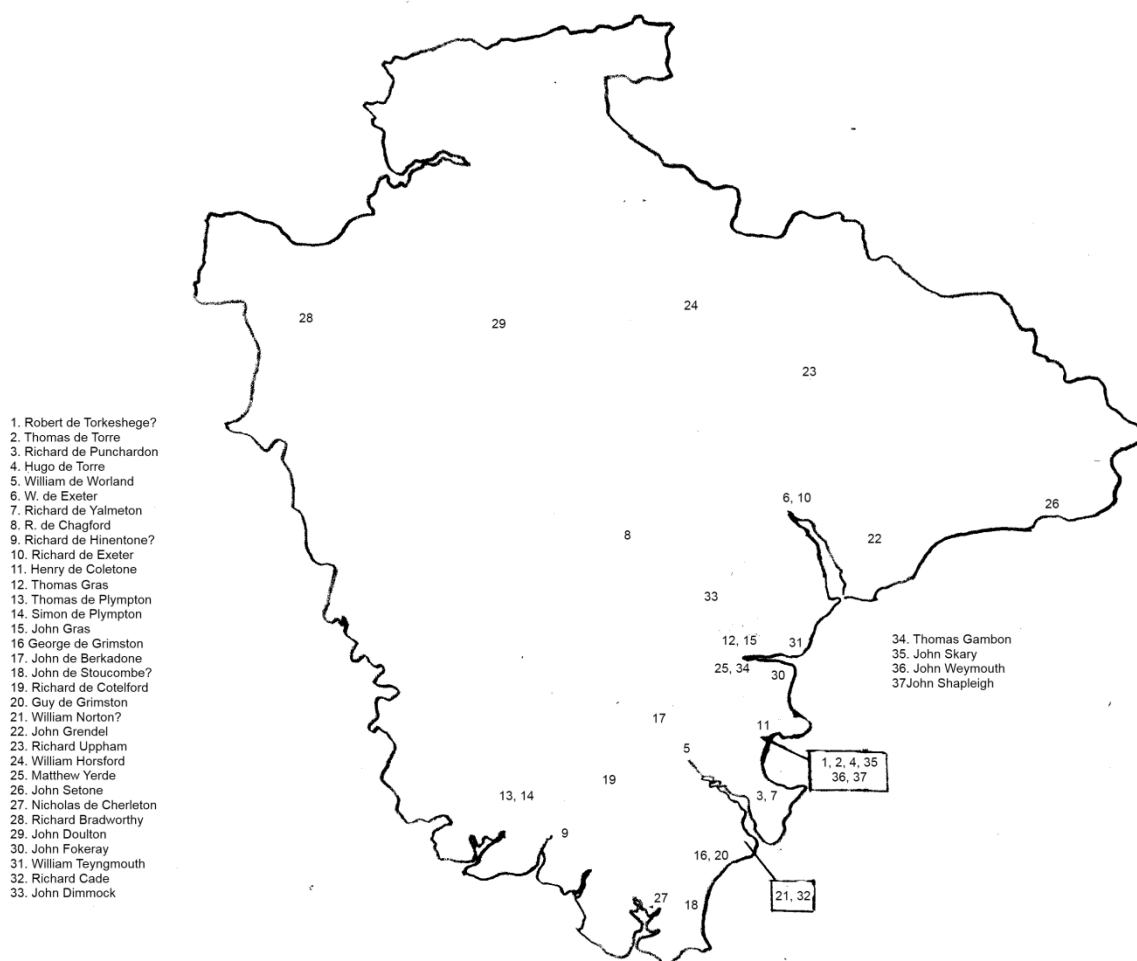
<sup>23</sup> Watkin, *Dartmouth*; idem, *Totnes*; *The Poll Taxes of 1377, 1379 and 1381*, ed. C. C. Fenwick, *Records of Social and Economic History*, n.s. 27 (Oxford, 1998), i, pp. 114-44; *FA*, i, pp. 311-498.

<sup>24</sup> *Feet of Fines for Cornwall*, ed. J. Hambley-Rowe, *DCRS* (1914-50), ii, p. 74; *The Cartulary of Launceston Priory*, ed. P. L. Hull, *DCRS*, n.s. 30 (1987), pp. 53, 55-7, 73, 134-5, 176.

<sup>25</sup> See Chapter 8, pp. 272-4.

<sup>26</sup> *MDE* pp. 23-7; Hull, *Launceston Priory*, p. x.

<sup>27</sup> Tyldesley, 'Crown and the Local Communities', p. 59.



**Figure 1: Identifiable Devonian origins of canons of Torre**

There may have been a handful of other recruits from elsewhere. One certainty in this regard is John de Elmore (occ. 1330-3), who was accepted by the canons on Bishop Grandisson's request. He had been a canon of Llanthony Secunda in Gloucester, but, wishing to 'grasp the fruits of the good life', felt that the 'close observance of the Rule' at Torre would 'compensate for the zeal which [he] has', as well as being 'remote from his friends' and other distractions.<sup>28</sup> The transfer to Torre is explicable inasmuch as Elmore was Grandisson's chaplain, thus had a connection with the diocese.<sup>29</sup> John Lacy, who became abbot in 1442, probably has no connection to the contemporaneous Edmund Lacy, bishop of Exeter, who was from Gloucester. The bishop did introduce some of his

<sup>28</sup> *Reg. Grandisson*, i, p. 249

<sup>29</sup> *Reg. Grandisson*, i, pp. 166-7, 201, 232-3.

immediate family into the diocese, but was appointed in 1420, while John Lacy first appears as a canon of Torre in 1412, being ordained by Edmund Stafford.<sup>30</sup> Edmund also appears to have had no connection with Devon before his appointment to Exeter, so there appears to have been no prior relationship between the abbot and the bishop.

Amongst the canons who may reasonably be assigned a specific place of origin in Devon, there are a number of notable concentrations [Fig. 1]. There are, clearly, a number from the immediate vicinity of the abbey. Besides the two early canons 'de Torre', and possibly the one 'de Torkeshege', there are none with locative surnames indicating a local origin. There are no similarities between names of canons in the early-fourteenth century and those noted from the vicinity in the lay subsidy of 1332, yet the 1524 subsidy notes the presence in Tormohun and Cockington of a William Shaplegh, a Robert Wyll, a John, Robert, and William Waymouth, and a Walter Jamys, all of whom shared surnames with canons at the abbey in the sixteenth century, while Elizabeth Shapleigh was noted as one of those locals for whom Abbot Simon Rede had 'specyall favor and love'.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, the 1524 subsidy notes a number of others in those parishes who had namesakes at the abbey in preceding centuries, such as Cade, Coke, Dyer, Milward, and Scary. However, most of these latter are very common names in late-medieval Devon, and only Scary appears in Tormohun alone.<sup>32</sup> Nonetheless, it is clear that, in the later centuries certainly, the canons were recruiting from the families of the immediately surrounding area.

There are a small number of canons fulfilling the traditional picture of recruitment from the lands and parishes of the abbey. Some of these can be identifiable from locative names, such as Richard Bradworthy, George and Guy de Grimston from holdings in Blackawton, and William Norton, who may have come from the area of that name in

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<sup>30</sup> DRO Chanter MS 8, fo. 285r. Edmund's brother Philip was an esquire in the episcopal household; N. Orme, 'Edmund Lacy (c.1370-1455)', *ODNB*.

<sup>31</sup> TNA STAC 2/21/96, and see Introduction, p. 17.

<sup>32</sup> Stoate, *Lay Subsidy*, pp. 206-7 and *passim*. Even Waymouth and Shaplegh appear in six and seven different parishes, respectively.

Dartmouth. The family of John Dimmock held the manor of Hennock, where the canons held the church, from the mid-fourteenth century.<sup>33</sup> Some others can be discerned as originating from families based at the boroughs near the abbey, although, again, there are few locative indicators. Thus a Thomas Gambon was described as the tanner of Newton Abbot, holding land in the town and in Newton Bushel in the early-fifteenth century, around the same time as a canon of the same name occurs at Torre (1428-42), while Richard Cade was a member of a prominent Dartmouth family.<sup>34</sup> John Trompindon's (1482) name is not identifiably Devonian, and is probably derived from the Cambridgeshire village of Trumpington. However, a John Trumpyngdon appears in charters of Newton Abbot and Dartmouth in 1465 and 1468 and as a tax collector for Devon in 1468, so presumably was a figure of some status.<sup>35</sup> There is no other instance of the name in Devon, and as such this may have been a recent and ephemeral migration. There is, however, a connection between Trumpington and south-east Devon in that the Reynell family held both the Cambridgeshire manor and land all over the south-west, including East Ogwell, adjacent to the abbey's manor of Wolborough.<sup>36</sup>

Also common was the recruitment of canons from the areas immediately surrounding their own lands and in the hinterlands of the abbey. Besides the more obvious locative names, there are a number who may be identified from their association with families of the area. Thus Thomas (1316-18) and John Gras (1345-9), Geoffrey Baroun (1363-79), Matthew Yerde (1383-1414), and John Fokeray (1419) bear the names of gentry families based along the Teign estuary.<sup>37</sup> Also in the vicinity of the abbey, Richard de Punchardon (1241) is more likely to be connected to the Robert de Punchardon who

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<sup>33</sup> C. Worthy, *Devonshire Parishes* (London, 1887-9), ii, pp. 150-1; *FA*, i, p. 394.

<sup>34</sup> DRO D1508M/Moger/209-13, 222-4, 233; Chapter 6, pp. 214.

<sup>35</sup> Watkin, *Dartmouth*, p. 143; DRO D1508M/Moger/139; *CFR 1461-71*, p. 231; Chapter 6, p. 213.

<sup>36</sup> Prince, *Worthies of Devon*, pp. 692-3; Westcote, *View of Devonshire*, pp. 576-8; Pole, *Collections*, pp. 251-2,

<sup>37</sup> Worthy, *Devonshire Parishes*, ii, pp. 69, 288-9; *FA*, ii, p. 482; DRO D1508M/Moger/85.

was a juror in Haytor hundred in 1242, and held land in Ipplepen and Galmpton, than the main branch of the family who held Heanton Punchardon, amongst other lands.<sup>38</sup>

Yet there were also a number of canons drawn from regions that might be considered to be outside the catchment area of the abbey. This is not uncommon, and has been noted by Dobson in his study of the monks of Durham, and by Kershaw at Bolton Priory, amongst others.<sup>39</sup> Again, there are a number of obvious locative names in this respect, although some are difficult to pinpoint. Richard Sele (1371-82), for example, bears a name that is only found in Witheridge and East Budleigh hundreds in 1332, and is probably locative from either South Zeal, near Okehampton, or Zeal Monachorum, which was held by Buckfast Abbey.<sup>40</sup> He must have come from some distance from Torre, therefore, although exactly where is debateable. Thomas Akkelane (1392-6) is clearly from the Acland family, who held land all over North Devon in the late-fourteenth century.<sup>41</sup> John Beaumont (1314-15) has a similar probable origin, connected to the Beaumonts of Shirwell who also held much land in North Devon in the early-fourteenth century and after.<sup>42</sup>

Thomas (1316-18) and Simon de Plympton (1318-45) may have adopted locative aliases, or may be connected with the Simon de Plympton who in 1303 held land in Shilston in Drewsteignton and Baccamoore in Plympton St. Mary.<sup>43</sup> Thus these canons either came from a family whose holdings were over twenty miles from the abbey, and sent two sons in quick succession to the same house, or they came from even further, from

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<sup>38</sup> *BoF*, ii, pp. 767-8, 783-4

<sup>39</sup> Dobson, *Church and Society*, p. 57; I. Kershaw, *Bolton Priory: The Economy of a Northern Monastery, 1286-1325* (Oxford, 1969), pp. 12-13.

<sup>40</sup> Erskine, *Lay Subsidy*, pp. 29, 107, 125; *MDE*, p. 376.

<sup>41</sup> *FA*, i, pp. 465-8, 484.

<sup>42</sup> *FA*, i, pp. 375-6.

<sup>43</sup> *FA*, i, pp. 345, 353, 388, 402. The family had either changed their name or died out by 1346, when the lands were held by Simon de Nywenham and the prior of Plympton. Tavistock had an abbot Robert de Plympton in 1131-46, Finberg, *Tavistock Abbey*, p. 277. Amongst the vicars in the benefices of Plympton Priory were Nicholas, Gilbert and 'Splot' de Plympton, although this might represent the parish at which they had begun their ecclesiastical careers; Fizzard, *Plympton Priory*, p. 203 n. 121.

an area with a large and influential priory. If the latter is the case, it may be that the priory was not looking for recruits at the time, and suggested the canons of Torre, or, conversely, it may be that Simon and Thomas had specifically wanted a more rigorous life than was offered at Plympton, and thus chose the Premonstratensians.

The small number of canons who can be positively associated with the urban areas of Dartmouth, Totnes, Newton Abbot, and Exeter is probably misleading, as at other abbeys towns and cities provided a number of recruits.<sup>44</sup> The disappearance of urban locative names at Torre from the fourteenth century onwards is more likely to represent a problem with the adoption of locative surnames from areas of large recruitment when so few personal names were in use than any change in the pattern of recruitment. This may also account for the lack of locative names from Tormohun, Cockington, and other areas where recruitment may have been high. There are a handful of bynames and surnames that might indicate urban origins, but it is clear that any attempts to construct a complete map of the geographical origins of the canons will be hindered by the difficulty of identifying urban and immediately local origins.

In the course of the discussion of the geographical origins of the canons, we have inevitably touched on the issue of social background, and we may attempt some summary of the two. It is highly likely that, as Fizzard noted with the canons of Plympton, there were no representatives of the most distinguished Devonian families, such as Courtenay, Pomeroy, or Dinham, who held baronies or large tracts of land in the county.<sup>45</sup> Nor are there any of the truly great knightly families of the county, with the possible exception of the Beaumonts of Shirwell, of which John Beaumont was an MP for the county in 1326.<sup>46</sup> Far more common amongst the known canons of Torre are the sons of the lesser gentry,

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<sup>44</sup> Dobson, *Church and Society*, p. 59.

<sup>45</sup> Fizzard, *Plympton Priory*, p. 213.

<sup>46</sup> J. J. Alexander, 'Devon County Members of Parliament I: The Early Plantagenet Period (1213-1327)', *DART* 44 (1912), p. 380; idem, 'Devon Magnates in 1294 and 1324', *DART*, 71 (1939), pp. 289-99; idem, 'Devon Magnates in 1434', *DART*, 72 (1940), pp. 283-303; Pole, *Collections*, pp. 43-70.



both local and from further afield, notably the families of Acland, Baron, Bromford, Dimmock, Gambon, Punchardon, Drake, Berkadone, Fokeray, Grimston, Gras, and Yarde, amongst others. Townsmen of the local urban areas figure in our analysis, but probably not in sufficiently large numbers to reflect the actuality of recruitment. Similarly, we are only able to identify the canons drawn from the free tenants around the abbey at the time of the lay subsidy of 1524, when they can be seen to have made up a reasonable contingent.

It is perhaps most notable that very few of the canons possessed names identifying them as relatives of the lay patrons of Torre, with the clear exceptions of John Berkadone and the Gras canons. Yet there are no Fishacres, Cockingtons, Albamaras, or the like, nor any of the abbey's immediately neighbouring lords, such as the Carys, Coffins, Bushels, Audleys or Haccombess. The reasons for this are not particularly clear, as we might expect the families with canons at Torre to take a keen interest in the abbey's affairs, or at least to have some pre-existing relationship. A number of associates of the abbey, including Gras, Berkadone, and Cade, had canons at the house, although their involvement normally postdates their kinsmen becoming abbot. We are, of course, hindered in our analysis of this relationship between the abbey and the families of the canons by the lack of sources enabling a reconstruction of the network of patronage around the house from the late-fourteenth century, and by the difficulty in reconstructing social origins from names in the county.

The majority of identifiable canons came from the vicinity and lands of the abbey, yet there are enough from other areas, and even from outside the county, to suggest a more complex picture of monastic recruitment than has perhaps been previously suggested. However, we should be wary that the canons who have been identifiable in terms of geographic or social origins are usually those of higher status or more disparate origin. While a great number must have come from the lower and urban ranks of society, aspiring

free tenants, burgesses, yeomen and the like, they are usually not possible to identify.<sup>47</sup> We might even see them as the normal recruits, although the sons of the gentry or knightly classes, who came along with greater or lesser frequency, would presumably be preferred by the canons for the potential benefits of such links to the more wealthy and influential laity. Many of the names of the canons are also too common, across classes, to state whether they are those of the gentry or the lower social groups, a problem which increases over time. It is impossible to tell, for example, whether the two Cook/Coke canons of Torre (1395-1404 and 1488-1500) were from urban families of that name, related to the Cook lords of Thorne, near Ottery St. Mary, or, indeed, from any of the myriad such named families in Devon.<sup>48</sup>

A comparison with the other Devon abbeys sheds some light on general recruitment practices in the area. There is not enough space to undertake a particularly thorough study here, but the snapshot of monastic communities in the area provided by the clerical subsidy roll compiled for the archdeaconry of Totnes in 1379 provides a useful point of departure for a comparison of the communities of the various monastic houses in south Devon.<sup>49</sup> However, the roll is not without complications. The canons of Plympton Priory were in the process of electing a new superior, and, as such, their names were not taken, although it is stated that there were eighteen at the house.<sup>50</sup> The names of the religious of Torre, Tavistock, Buckland, and Buckfast are apparently all included. Yet those who were absent from their house, whether as vicar of a church, at university, or for some other reason, do not appear to have been included in the name-lists. Thus Richard Sele, canon of Torre, is not entered as one of the community but in his position as vicar of Bradworthy, while

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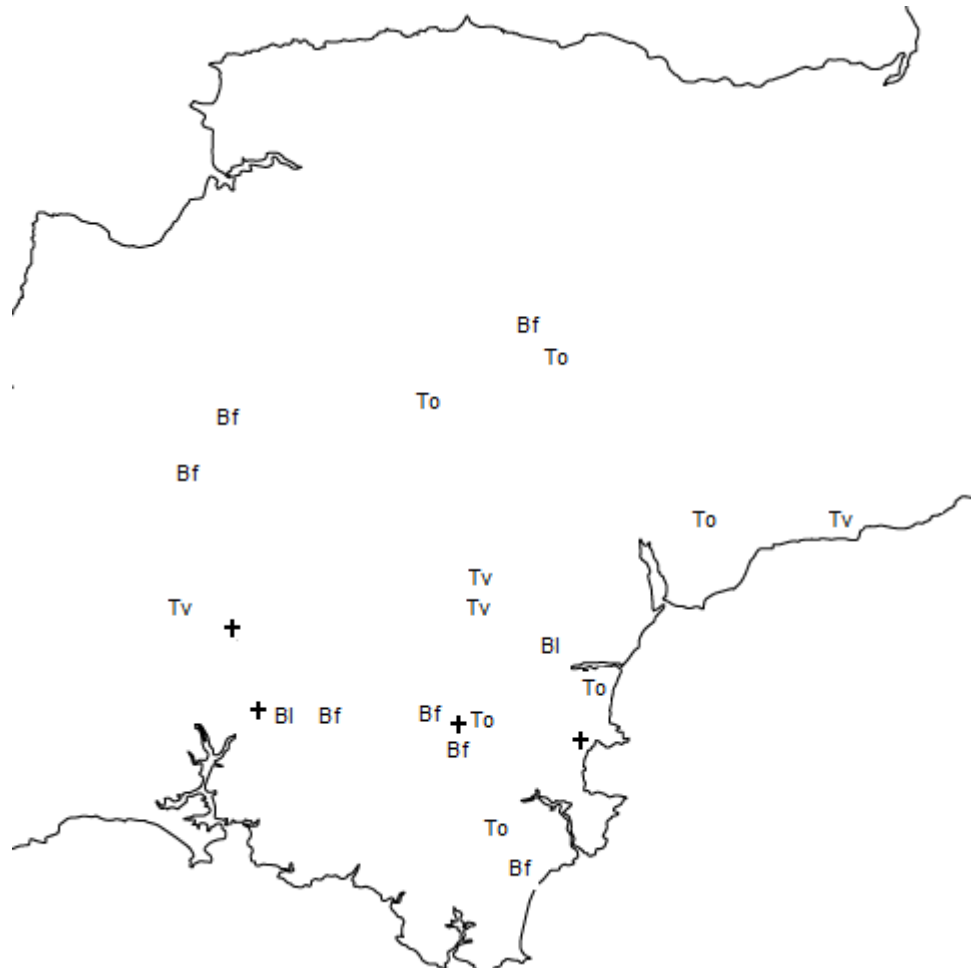
<sup>47</sup> *RO*, ii, p. 230; Dobson, *Church and Society*, p. 59.

<sup>48</sup> Risdon, *Chorographical Description*, p. 47.

<sup>49</sup> TNA E179/24/9.

<sup>50</sup> 'priorati Plymton electione pendent'; Prior Ralph Person had died in 1379, and his successor, John Shaldon, was confirmed in February 1380; *MDE* p. 132; TNA E 179/24/9 m. 2.

Nicholas de Cherleton may have been absent for other reasons.<sup>51</sup> Nonetheless, where it has been possible to check known religious at a house against the subsidy roll, it would appear that the vast majority are accounted for.



**Figure 2: Comparison of Origins of Regulars named in the Clerical Subsidy of 1379**  
**Key: + – Religious House, To – Torre, Tv – Tavistock, Bf – Buckfast, Bl – Buckland**

Even from this small sample, it is clear that the houses were recruiting both from their immediate localities and from much further afield. Local origins are represented by Richard Buckland at the abbey of that name, Stephen Luscombe and John Skyredon [Scorriton] at Buckfast, and Richard Bradestone at Tavistock. Further afield, Buckfast and Torre had both recruited from the north of the county, with William Morchard, John Thoriton [Torrington], and Luke Hollewill [Halwill] monks of the former and Richard Sele

<sup>51</sup> Nicholas de Cherleton first occurs as vicar of Townstall in 1391, yet does not appear in the ordination lists, which are complete between 1370 and 1392. He may thus have been ordained outside the diocese, or before 1370 yet was absent from the abbey in 1379; *Reg. Brantyngham*, p. 113.

and Richard Uppham canons of the latter. It might be expected that Tavistock would have the largest catchment area of any of the four houses, given the historic size and wealth of the abbey, yet of the eleven monks, only Richard Bronnyscombe [Branscombe] came from any great distance. This picture should, however, be mitigated by two factors. Firstly, only three of the Tavistock monks have recognisable locative surnames, the others having mainly common patronymic or occupational surnames (Edward, Bond, Culling, Sander etc.). Secondly, the period was one of straitened circumstances for the abbey, and this may be reflected in the small community size and, apparently, catchment area.<sup>52</sup>

This general picture of a mix of local and distant recruits is replicated, where it can be observed, at most of the Devon houses across the period.<sup>53</sup> Even at the very end of the period, at Forde, where many of the canons had a locative *alias* and thus an ascertainable place of origin, the diversity of origins is notable.<sup>54</sup> Of the eight monks with Devon or Somerset aliases, Chard, Dinington, Ilminster, and Kingsbury are all within ten miles of the abbey. Four others, however, from Awliscombe (17 miles), Bridgwater (25 miles) and Exminster (35 miles) represent far more substantial distances travelled, past a number of other monastic houses. One, William Sherborne *alias* Rede, may even have originated from the immediate area of another major foundation, as Thomas and Simon de Plympton appear to have at Torre along with a number of religious at all houses throughout the period.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, in the 1379 subsidy, we find a handful of similar occurrences in the shape of John Blachewille, monk of Buckfast, who may have come from Blackwell in Blackawton parish, and a monk of Buckland by the name of John Gras, who was almost

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<sup>52</sup> Finberg, *Tavistock Abbey*, p. 27.

<sup>53</sup> As compared with monastic recruits appearing in the ordination lists for Exeter. For names of fourteenth-century Plympton canons; Fizzard, *Plympton Priory*, p. 218.

<sup>54</sup> *L&P*, xiv (1), p. 184.

<sup>55</sup> Greatrex notes a similar occurrence amongst the regular religious of Worcester diocese; 'Monks of Worcester', p. 144.

certainly associated with the family who were notable patrons and canons of Torre in the mid-fourteenth century.<sup>56</sup>

We cannot with any certainty suggest why any particular layman wishing to enter a monastic house would choose one over another. Such a choice would be liable to great variation in personal circumstance and devotion, in much the same way that we cannot recover many of the personal motives for patronage of any particular house. It is clear that, in some and perhaps most instances, locality was important. Thus the gentry, townsmen, and free tenants of the hinterlands of Torbay can be found in some abundance at Torre. Yet they were mainly not of the families who also appear as patrons in landed terms. It may be that families felt that the provision of a canon, perhaps with a monetary grant as has been noted at Gilbertine houses, was an act of patronage in itself sufficient to ensure spiritual returns, and thus no further grants of land were required.<sup>57</sup> Vice versa, families who had already ensured spiritual returns from the abbey through grants of land would perhaps not think it necessary to subsequently have one of their number become a canon. It is nonetheless curious that having a pre-existing relationship with the house did not seem to encourage recruitment to Torre from patronal families.

Those who came from further afield may similarly have had multifarious reasons for choosing a particular house. The order, status, or wealth of a particular monastery may have played a large part in that choice. John de Elmore specifically requested a transfer to Torre because of the closer observance of the Rule in Premonstratensian houses as compared to Augustinian houses. Where the families are identifiably gentry or wealthier burgesses they may have been in a better position to make this choice, being more likely to travel and form opinions on the various options. The acceptance of the religious life cannot, after all, have been a decision taken lightly, even at the laxest of convents, and the

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<sup>56</sup> See Chapter 5, p. 175. The only two appearances of a Gras in the 1332 subsidy were associated with the Gras family of Teigngrace; Erskine, *Lay Subsidy*, pp. 42, 59.

<sup>57</sup> B. Golding, *Gilbert of Sempringham and the Gilbertine Order* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 151-3.

desire for a Cistercian over a Premonstratensian life, or one remote from friends and family and thus freer from secular diversions, may have motivated the Gras found at Buckland in 1379 to choose that house. In the case of the poorer recruits, the nature of monastic recruitment itself may have resulted in the disparate patterns we see at Torre and amongst the Devonian abbeys. Monasteries had to live within their means, in terms of convent size, or risk impoverishment. As such, if a potential recruit found an abbey unwilling to accept him due to a full capacity, and was without the financial means to purchase a place, he may have been referred to another institution which was looking to fill gaps in its complement. This may explain why a number of religious bearing locative surnames of the vicinity of other abbeys appear, as amongst the lower social groups those close to a monastery were probably more likely to be drawn to the regular religious life. With this in mind, we may turn finally to a consideration of the patterns of recruitment and the size of the community at Torre, and some more specific understanding of the demographics of the canons.

### Community Numbers and Mortality Rates

The visitation records, combined with the bishops' registers, provide an excellent basis for a study of the numbers, ages, and life expectancy of the canons of Torre. A full understanding of these issues requires a great deal of source material which has normally not survived. The two most complete studies of this kind, Hatcher's at Christ Church and Harvey's at Westminster, both focused on very large houses with the kind of records which simply do not exist for smaller houses.<sup>58</sup> The complete lack of useful internal records in this respect does not, however, totally preclude an analysis of the community in

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<sup>58</sup> J. Hatcher, 'Mortality in the fifteenth century: some new evidence', *Economic History Review*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ser. 39 (1986), pp. 19-38; Harvey, *Living and Dying*, pp. 112-45.

terms of age and numbers, but it does force us to rely almost exclusively on ordination registers and other miscellaneous external accounts. Fortunately, for Exeter diocese the ordination registers are largely complete, especially from the episcopates of Stafford and Lacy. These allow us to gain some understanding of patterns of recruitment to the abbey. Furthermore, we can tentatively apply the mortality findings from previous studies in this area to approximate the strength of the community over an eighty-year period. Finally, the regular lists of canons provided in the late-fifteenth century visitations give us some clue as to the demographics of the community in terms of age.

From the more complete ordination records of this period some clear patterns emerge as regards the regularity of recruitment by the community at Torre. The records are almost complete between 1370 and 1450, and, as the canons were all ordained priests by their vocation, feature nearly every canon that can be shown to have joined the abbey in this period.<sup>59</sup> Of course, the ordination lists only date the canons' first appearance before the bishop to receive orders and so cannot precisely date their arrival at the abbey. Furthermore, it might be argued that a group of two or three canons receiving their first orders does not necessarily mean that they were recruited at the same time. Yet there are enough instances of single presentations to suggest that the canons were not always in the habit of group ordination. Even if this was the case for a period, or on occasion, it is unlikely to distort any particular recruitment date by more than a couple of years at most. They should, therefore, allow us to chart, at least in general terms, the recruitment practices of Torre Abbey.

The pattern [Fig. 3] appears to be one of bursts of recruitment, with canons often arriving in pairs or threes, followed by long gaps of up to ten years (1372-82 and 1398-1408). This

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<sup>59</sup> Nicholas de Cherleton does not appear in the ordination lists, first coming to our attention as vicar of Townstall in 1391. He may have been ordained before 1370, yet does not appear in the 1379 Subsidy. He may, however, have been absent from the abbey at the time, or ordained in a different diocese.

may suggest a relatively settled community, recruiting to fill spaces left by death or other absence from the cloister.<sup>60</sup> This point may be more clearly illustrated by the use of mortality data to suggest an average community size, as displayed on the graph. Any ‘mortality rate’ in this section must be taken to include all permanent absence from the cloister, whether through death or apostasy.<sup>61</sup> Only in the case of abbots and canon-vicars is it possible to arrive at a date of death, where it is mentioned in the bishops’ registers, and there are too few of these to give any meaningful data. However, the data from Westminster and Christ Church leads us to suggest an average mortality rate of a little over thirty per thousand across the whole period, which, in a community of fifteen, would work out at an average of around one death every two years.<sup>62</sup> Given that the complement of canons at Torre was thirteen in 1379, we can thus plot, based on this average mortality and the number of canons ordained to the abbey, the rough size of the community over a period of almost a century.<sup>63</sup> This figure provides a realistic picture of the community retaining a complement of between twelve and fourteen. This does not, of course, account for sudden bursts of mortality or, indeed, of unusual longevity on the part of large sections of the community. The limited evidence provided by the dates of occurrence of individual canons suggests a similar picture, and it would appear that the number of canons at Torre between 1373 and 1454 only rarely dipped much below, or climbed much above, the canonically stipulated thirteen.<sup>64</sup>

This is, however, a drastic reduction from the only previous reference to the size of the community, when in 1310 the number of massing priests in the abbey church was said

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<sup>60</sup> Dobson noted a similar pattern at Durham Cathedral Priory; Dobson, *Church and Society*, p. 55.

<sup>61</sup> There is evidence for the apostasy of only two canons of Torre in this period: John Somaister in 1416 and Walter Speyer in 1478.

<sup>62</sup> Harvey, *Living and Dying*, pp. 122-7; Hatcher, ‘Fifteenth-century mortality’, pp. 27-31. Hatcher suggested a death rate of over 40 per thousand as indicating a ‘mortality crisis’.

<sup>63</sup> TNA E179/24/9 m. 1.

<sup>64</sup> The average community size across the period 1373-1454 taken as a whole is 12.95.



to number 26, along with two subdeacons.<sup>65</sup> While a number of these may have been secular chantry chaplains, it is still probable that the community was notably larger than the period of the late-fourteenth to mid-fifteenth centuries. Recruitment to the religious life, both secular and regular, did fall after the Black Death.<sup>66</sup> Ordination lists only survive between 1308 and 1321, during which time seven canons were ordained from Torre. This is a figure slightly higher than 1370s rates, and around the same as the 1420s, although given the restricted date range this comparison is only of dubious value.

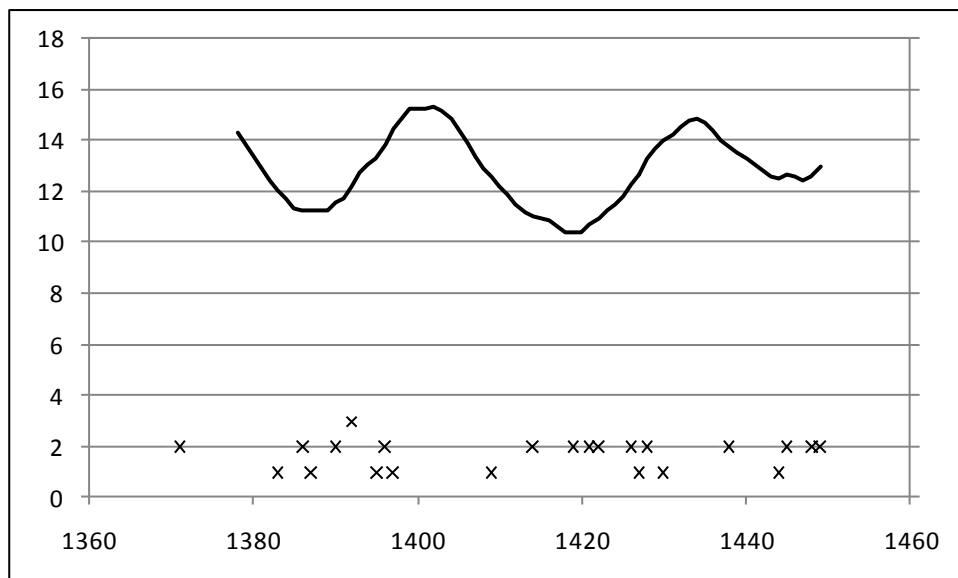


Figure 3: Canons Joining the Abbey and Suggested Community Size (8 year moving average)

The figures alone do not indicate the difficulty with which recruits were attracted, or if the abbey was turning some away to maintain a lower complement. As has been noted, the abbey was not obviously poor, being able to pay large debts and acquire the manor of Tormohun in the late-fourteenth century, and thus may have held an attraction in terms of its comfortable means.<sup>67</sup> It may be that the canons felt no need to increase the numbers of canons, perhaps allowing a diminution in the numbers in choir in exchange for

<sup>65</sup> G. Oliver, *Additional Supplement to the Monasticon Dioecesis Exoniensis* (Exeter, 1854), p. 17.

<sup>66</sup> R. N. Swanson, *Church and Society in Late Medieval England* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 30-6, 83-4.

<sup>67</sup> See Chapter 3 and Chapter 5, pp. 189-90.

a general increase in the quality of living. In the last quarter of the fifteenth century, however, we see the numbers gradually rise again. At the first visitation of Richard Redman, in 1478, there were sixteen canons at the abbey, and he enjoined the abbot to increase the complement. By the time of the next visitation, in 1482, five canons had been recruited, although through mortality the community had not increased in size. By 1494 the abbey had twenty canons, a situation which largely persisted until 1500, the last year of visitation reports, when there were nineteen.<sup>68</sup> Again, this picture tallies with the rise in the numbers of monastic recruits more generally.<sup>69</sup>

Furthermore, for the period of visitation, we are able to produce some statistics for the potential age breakdown of the community in each of the years of visitation. The data relies on the minimum canonical age for ordination to the priesthood being 25, which, as Barbara Harvey notes, should be taken to mean that ‘the candidate was in his twenty-fifth year: he was actually to be 24’. Harvey considered the small intervals between profession (usually occurring at age 18) and ordination as indications that many monks were only 19 or 20 when they were priested.<sup>70</sup> At Christ Church, however, the average age of profession was much lower, at 16.8 years at the end of the fifteenth century, although this was during a period of exceptionally high mortality, and Hatcher sides with Knowles in ascribing a general date of profession for all novices at 18.<sup>71</sup> The Premonstratensian statutes proscribed the reception of novices before their eighteenth birthday, although canon law allowed for the recognition of monastic vows at age fifteen, and the presence of boys in the cloister at age fourteen.<sup>72</sup> At Torre, we can trace the ordination paths of 22 of the canons between 1371 and 1454 with the average time for a canon to progress from acolyte to

<sup>68</sup> CAP, iii, pp. 143, 145, 148-9, 153-5

<sup>69</sup> Swanson, *Church and Society*, p. 84.

<sup>70</sup> Harvey, *Living and Dying*, p. 119.

<sup>71</sup> Hatcher, ‘Fifteenth-century mortality’, pp. 26-7; RO, ii, pp. 230-1;

<sup>72</sup> *Les Statuts de Prémontré réformés sur les ordres de Grégoire et d’Innocent IV au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, ed. P. Lefèvre (Louvain, 1946), p. 24; F. D. Logan, *Runaway Religious in Medieval England* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 10-12; Gribbin, *Premonstratensian Order*, p. 56.

priest being a little under four years. This figure includes, however, such rapid progression as Simon Hastings, who progressed through the four orders in one year, and, at the other end of the scale, John Cook, who took nine years.<sup>73</sup> If we accept Harvey's suggestion that the canons were mostly 18 when ordained as acolytes, then only four of the twenty-two would have been of canonical age when priested. On the other hand, if we follow Swanson's assertion that the age restriction for priests was inflexible on most occasions, the average age for the ordination of canons of Torre as acolytes in this period would be a little over twenty.<sup>74</sup> In 1372, high mortality had seriously reduced the number of canon-priests at Plympton Priory, and the community's subsequent request for special dispensation to ordain some of their number to the priesthood at twenty suggests the canonical age was being upheld in Exeter diocese, in the late-fourteenth century at least.<sup>75</sup>

In the later period for which we have evidence, between 1478 and the early-sixteenth century, it would seem that the canons were only ordained as acolytes after at least one or two years at the abbey, that is, presumably, after they had completed their novitiate. However, the gap between joining the abbey and progressing to the subdiaconate or higher could be much longer. John Skary first appears in the 1494 visitation, but it was not until 1502 that he was made subdeacon, and 1503 until he progressed to the diaconate. James Cumpline appears in the 1482 visitation, but was not priested until 1492. William Sherwell had to wait the longest. He arrived at the abbey sometime before 1497, was made subdeacon and deacon in 1509, then priest in 1511. If he was priested at the canonical age it would suggest he was only ten when he joined the abbey, while if he was eighteen when he joined then he would have been 32 when priested.

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<sup>73</sup> John Hylle may have taken as much as eighteen years to progress from acolyte (1397) to priest (1415). This may be two canons with the same name, but this would suppose that the former never progressed beyond the first order, and the latter did not have his first progression recorded.

<sup>74</sup> Swanson, *Church and Society*, p. 42.

<sup>75</sup> *Reg. Brantyngham*, ii, p. 263.

Harvey could excuse the early priesting of the monks of Westminster on the grounds that they would not be given cure of souls, and this would hold good for most of the canons.<sup>76</sup> We should also be wary of assuming that the canons would only recruit from the minimum age bracket yet, from the longevity of some of the individual canons and the time taken to process through the orders, it would appear that a large number of the community of Torre may have been younger than eighteen, and sometimes considerably so, when they joined. Indeed, Bishop Redman commanded the abbot of Sulby to recruit two or three young boys, *pueri*, to increase the complement of his abbey in 1491.<sup>77</sup> On the other hand, when the path from acolyte to priest can be seen to have been completed in an unusually (for the canons, at least) short period, we must not rule out the possibility that these were more mature applicants, over the canonical priesting age, and perhaps even having joined the abbey in later life.<sup>78</sup> Unfortunately, as with so much of the fine detail, there is no method for accurately and finally ascertaining the dates of birth of any of the canons and, as such, we must leave this problem unsolved.

Following on from this, although we cannot be sure about precise ages, it is at least possible to combine the ordination lists with the visitation lists and produce a rough picture of the age demographics of the canons of Torre between 1478 and 1500 [Fig. 4].<sup>79</sup> As can be seen, over half of the canons in 1478 were forty or over, and less than one-fifth were under thirty. The average age was around 44. By the next visitation, however, there had been an influx of young recruits, presumably following Bishop Redman's injunction to increase the number of canons, and a number of the more elderly canons had died.<sup>80</sup> The lowest age sector alone then made up almost half the community, a figure which remained

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<sup>76</sup> Harvey, *Living and Dying*, p. 119.

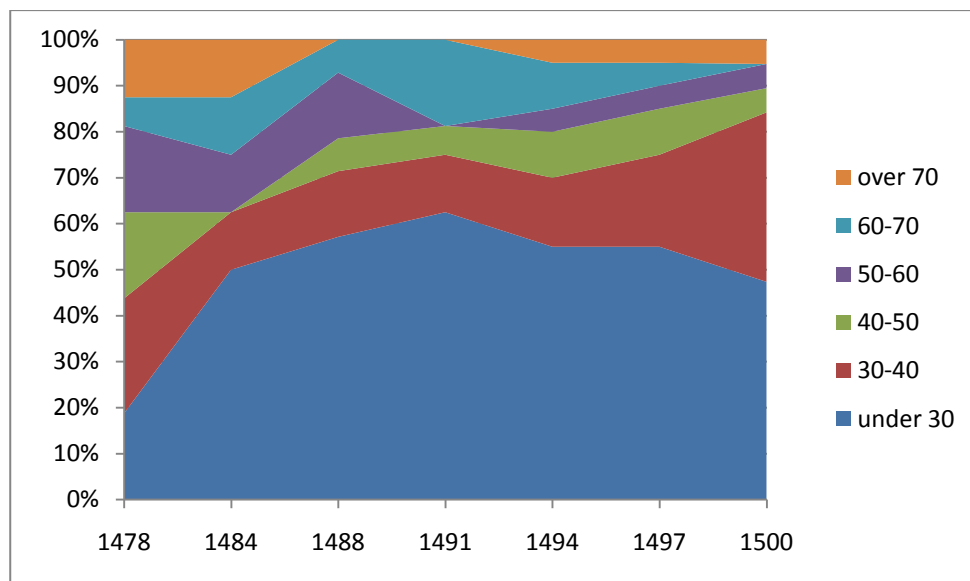
<sup>77</sup> Gribbin, *Premonstratensian Order*, p. 56. The 'pueris per dominum abbatem assignatis' mentioned at Torre in 1478 were almost certainly seculars being educated in the abbot's household, rather than unprofessed novices; *CAP*, iii, p. 143.

<sup>78</sup> Swanson notes that progression from acolyte to priest in a year and even less, six months or even one month in extreme cases, was not unknown, and possibly not uncommon; *Church and Society*, p. 42.

<sup>79</sup> Assuming a priesting age of at least 24.

<sup>80</sup> *CAP*, iii, p. 143.

relatively constant throughout the period. For the remainder of the period, the most notable figure is probably the number of canons who lived to sixty or seventy, or even more, as a proportion of the population. Most notably, Richard Cade and Thomas Dyer, successive abbots, lived to 78 and 80 respectively, based on their priesting at age 24. Perhaps one of the attractions of life at Torre in this period, therefore, could be the comfortable lifestyle suggested by the longevity of the community.



**Figure 4: Age Structure of the Community at Torre Abbey 1478-1500**

In the late-fourteenth and early-fifteenth centuries, it would appear that the population of Torre remained relatively stable, at around the canonical minimum of thirteen, recruiting only to fill gaps left by death. There was a marked practice of recruitment from the area around the house itself, including Dartmouth and Newton Abbot, but a number of more widely-travelled canons attest to a greater complexity as regards the the monastic catchment area than has previously been suggested. The canons were not socially homogenous, but there was a marked preponderance of the sons of the lesser gentry and local townsmen, indeed, from the same social circles as can be seen as patrons and

employees of the abbey. Some may have been younger than the statutory age on entry, although there may have been a great deal of flexibility in this matter.

Between the mid-fifteenth century and the first visitation in 1478, there were a large number of exceptionally long-lived canons, with the effect that the population numbered sixteen in 1478, eight of which had been at the abbey for thirty years or more. Through recruitment and longevity, the abbey steadily increased its complement to twenty by 1494 and maintained it to the end of the century. These figures were above average for a Premonstratensian house.<sup>81</sup> At the Dissolution, there were sixteen canons at the abbey, although for those figures we have to remember that there had been very little recruitment for a number of years, and that a number of the younger religious had been statutorily evicted.<sup>82</sup> Furthermore, a letter of 1538 remarks that the abbot had been turning away some of the canons of Torre in the years immediately prior to the Dissolution.<sup>83</sup> Thus an average figure of around twenty canons for the sixteenth century would not seem to be too unrealistic, and in itself indicates that monasticism, at Torre at least, was still as attractive an option for the laity as it had been in the past.

Although the evidence provided by the small sample group at Torre can only go so far in extending our understanding of monastic recruitment and demographics in the later middle ages, which itself has seen little in the way of thorough historiographical analysis, nonetheless there are some findings that seem to run counter to the accepted wisdom in these areas. The catchment area for recruitment is certainly much wider than has previously been suggested, and is certainly not restricted to the abbey's lands. A wider analysis of the Devon houses suggests that, while most monastic recruits came from Devon, their origins ranged between local to and extremely distant from the monastery. There may even have been a system of referral operating amongst the houses, to place

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<sup>81</sup> Gribbin, *Premonstratensian Order*, p. 54.

<sup>82</sup> TNA E 322/246; *RO*, ii, p. 257, iii, p. 282.

<sup>83</sup> *L&P*, xiii (3), p. 17.

potential inmates at a house that was in need of recruits, although more research in this area is required. Certainly at Torre there appears to be a policy of recruitment to fill places left by death, maintaining a complement for much of the period 1379-1454 of around 13. This fits with Barbara Harvey's suggestion that the abbot of Westminster recruited monks with an optimum community size in mind.<sup>84</sup> In Torre's case, we may this applied to a smaller rural monastery that apparently had no problem in maintaining numbers, and, indeed, could increase the community to around 20 by the end of the fifteenth century. Furthermore, the large variation in intervals between ordinations for individual canons may point to a more complex recruitment practice than simply accepting young boys, as the minimum priesting age appears to have been mostly inflexible. Perhaps most importantly, even this small-scale analysis reveals the potential that a wider study of recruitment and monastic demographics, mainly through episcopal ordination lists, could have for our understanding of monastic life in the later middle ages.

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<sup>84</sup> Harvey, *Living and Dying*, pp. 73-4.

## CHAPTER 8

### The abbot and the community

Having considered who the canons were, and their numbers in the later years, at least, we turn finally to the nature of communal life at the abbey. The records for a thorough study of this topic are almost entirely lacking for the early centuries, while the visitation records of the Premonstratensians provide a wealth of detail for just over twenty years at the end of the fifteenth century.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, so much do they dominate in an otherwise barren field that Gribbin's recent work can claim to be a history of the Premonstratensians in England in the late Middle Ages whilst focusing mainly on the period 1478-1500.<sup>2</sup> Given their importance, they will inevitably feature heavily in a chapter on the nature of communal life at the abbey. However, a great deal of recent work has been undertaken on the early development of monastic communities utilising non-documentary sources, notably the architectural development of claustral buildings, and theories of space to analyse the changing dynamics of community life.<sup>3</sup> Some of the buildings at Torre survive in a state conducive to such analysis, and as such it will be possible to consider what may be gleaned from them about communal developments before the period of visitation.

The documentary evidence reveals almost nothing of life within the abbey walls before 1478. That the canons were not entirely cloistered is clear from the occasional references to their operation outside the abbey, usually on abbey business. Thus a canon Brian served as a procurator for the house under Abbot Simon (occ. 1254-64), before becoming abbot himself in 1264, Thomas and Hugo de Torre were charged with trespass

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<sup>1</sup> CAP.

<sup>2</sup> Gribbin, *Premonstratensian Order*.

<sup>3</sup> More recent studies include M. Cassidy-Welch, *Monastic Spaces and their Meanings: Thirteenth Century English Cistercian Monasteries* (Turnhout, 2001); P. Fergusson & S. Harrison, *Rievaulx Abbey: Community, Architecture, Memory* (London, 1999); L. V. Hicks, *Religious Life in Normandy 1050-1300: Space, Gender and Social Pressure* (Woodbridge, 2007).



when attempting to forcibly distraint land due to unpaid rent, with brother Richard de Punchardon standing as their procurator, and Robert de Torkeshege died falling from a horse between Kingskerswell and Torre.<sup>4</sup> We might expect these canons to be cellarers or other high-ranking obedientiaries, yet with such small glimpses into their lives it is impossible to state anything further about the lives of the early canons.

Even the abbots are somewhat elusive, at least until the rule of Abbot Simon. Until then, they tend to only appear in a handful of charters, almost solely connected with grants to the abbey. We must beware of drawing conclusions from negative evidence, and this disparity in the number of references may in part be due to the increase in material from the mid-thirteenth century. In terms of integration with lay society, however, it was only around that time that the abbey gained possession of its houses in Exeter, Totnes, and Bampton, and the right to buy and sell at the markets of Totnes and Kingswear. They did not even gain the right to hold a market and fair in their own town of Newton Abbot until 1221.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, Dartmouth, which was to have such an impact on the abbey from the fourteenth century, was only in the mid-thirteenth establishing its status as a large independent town. As such, the abbot may not have had as much recourse to leave the abbey in the earliest years, except perhaps to visit its lands.

From the earliest period there were times at which the abbots would have been statutorily obliged to be absent from their house on the business of the order. Attendance at general chapter at Prémontré was compulsory for every abbot unless he was incapacitated by ill health, or specially excused on account of the remoteness of his abbey.<sup>6</sup> While from around 1280 the abbots of Torre did utilise such excuses, there is no evidence that the

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<sup>4</sup> Watkin, *Totnes*, i, p. 162; *CRR* 1237-42, p. 246; *Crown Pleas of the Devon Eyre of 1238*, ed. H. Summerson, *DCRS*, n.s. 27 (1984), p. 115.

<sup>5</sup> EC 30, 137; *Rot.Litt.Claus*, i, p. 454; DC fos. 77r-80r, 120v-124r; Watkin, *Totnes*, i, pp. 80, 150-1, 163. The abbot was a member of the Totnes Guild of Merchants in 1260, but it is not possible to tell how early he had joined; Watkin, *Totnes*, i, p. 80.

<sup>6</sup> Lefèvre, *Statuts*, pp. 84-91, 144-5.

earlier abbots extricated themselves from their duty to attend the general chapter.<sup>7</sup> The abbot would also have to be away from the house on occasion to enact the system of visitation pioneered by the Premonstratensians from the third quarter of the twelfth century.<sup>8</sup> The Cistercians, from whose Rule so much of the Premonstratensian regulation was borrowed, utilised the hierarchy of filiation as their visitation system. However, the geographical indifference of this system made it expedient for the Premonstratensians, with their often widely spread and remote houses, to institute regional circaries which could be visited annually by a rotating delegation of two abbots.<sup>9</sup>

England was divided into three circaries, in place by at least the 1220's, of which Torre was in the southern region. There were eleven houses in the southern circary, suggesting that, if two abbots completed the circuit every year in rotation, each abbot could expect to be called away on average every five or six years.<sup>10</sup> This picture is complicated by the statutory insistence that abbots of one circary should visit those of another, but it is not clear whether this was ever applied in practice. The abbots would then be expected to appear at the general chapter to present their reports.<sup>11</sup> Although there is precious little information on the activities of the English visitors in the thirteenth century, Abbot Richard (1270-c.1301) appears as visitor to the southern circary three times. In 1280 and 1293 he completed the visitation, but was unable to make the journey to general chapter, and in both instances, a proxy was sent on his behalf.<sup>12</sup>

Although regular visitation and attendance at Prémontré may have largely ceased by the early-fourteenth centuries, by this time there were other calls upon the abbot's time.

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<sup>7</sup> DC fos. 161v, 164v, 165r. Colvin suggests that ubiquitous attendance at general chapter was likely amongst the English abbots before the late-thirteenth century; *WC*, pp. 195-7

<sup>8</sup> *Les Statuts de Prémontré au Milieu de XII<sup>e</sup> Siècle*, eds. P. F. Lefèvre & W. M. Grauwen (Averbode, 1978), pp. xxiii-xxvii, 47-8; *WC*, pp. 19-20

<sup>9</sup> Lefèvre & Grauwen, *Statuts*, pp. 47-8; Lefèvre, *Statuts*, pp. 102-5.

<sup>10</sup> *WC*, p. 198. The statutes stated that the abbots should be changed every year, where possible; Lefèvre, *Statuts*, pp. 102-3.

<sup>11</sup> Lefèvre, *Statuts*, pp. 102-3, 144-5; *WC*, p. 200.

<sup>12</sup> DC fos. 161v, 164v, 165r.

In the late-thirteenth and early-fourteenth centuries the abbot was regularly called to parliament and convocation, which would have involved an absence from the house of around 21-25 weeks each year and presumably lodgings in the capital.<sup>13</sup> In the context of developments at other houses it is to be expected that by the mid-fourteenth century, if not before, the abbot would have been living separately from the community, with his own household, and spending a great deal of time outside the precinct.<sup>14</sup> Occasional appearances on secular business, as a tax collector or creditor, suggest this was the case, as does the importance of the position implied by the abbatial dispute of 1345-51.<sup>15</sup>

### Lay brothers

One section of the early community that has not previously been recognised at Torre is the lay brothers, although due to their lowly position and generally early disappearance we know very little of their presence at Premonstratensian abbeys. The three-page appendix which Colvin devoted to the subject remains the fullest account of the *conversi* of the order in England, and, even in more general terms, most work has concentrated on their status in the legislation of the order.<sup>16</sup> The root of this problem – a lack of sources – has resulted in the Premonstratensian lay brethren being written off as an unimportant and not particularly numerous class.<sup>17</sup> In terms of numbers, at Torre, we cannot suggest any exact figures, but their presence, not previously detected, can be revealed through both documentary and physical evidence.

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<sup>13</sup> Based on estimates of 5-6 weeks attendance three times per year, plus one week each way measured travelling time from Torre; *RO*, ii, pp. 301-7; A. M. Reich, *The Parliamentary Abbots to 1470: A Study in English Constitutional History* (Berkeley, 1941), p. 365; *TA*, pp. 35-7.

<sup>14</sup> Gribbin, *Premonstratensian Order*, p. 69.

<sup>15</sup> DC fos. 92-3; TNA E 179/24/9 m. 1; Chapter 5, pp. 174-87.

<sup>16</sup> *WC*, pp. 360-2; G. Van den Broeck, 'Les Frères Convers dans la Législation des Prémontrés', *Analecta Praemonstratensia* 44 (1968), pp. 215-46.

<sup>17</sup> Bond, 'The Premonstratensian Order', pp. 156-7.

Statutorily, the Premonstratensian legislation of the twelfth century concerning lay brothers was heavily influenced by the Cistercian Rule. The *conversi* appear as illiterate, being allowed no books and restricted to learning the simplest chants and prayers, living separately from the rest of the community, restricted in their access to the cloister, mainly employed in manual labour, and were, on the whole, second-class citizens in the abbey.<sup>18</sup> They were generally recruited from the peasantry, and were expected to perform a variety of manual tasks, including the supervision of the granges.<sup>19</sup>

The thirteenth century redaction of the Premonstratensian Statutes, however, goes some way to reconciling the *conversi* with the rest of the monastic community, and many of the provisions for the religious were now specifically directed at both canons and lay brothers. While the prohibition on books and the simple liturgy remained, as well as some new legislation on the grey copes and beards that had to be worn by the lay brothers, the overall impression appears to be one of increasing integration. Perhaps most notably in the new redaction, the *conversi* are stated to live inside their monasteries, probably indicating the practice of housing the lay brothers in the cloister range itself.<sup>20</sup>

Torre has not been previously been considered to have had lay brothers as part of the community.<sup>21</sup> Yet their presence is confirmed by the appearance of a brother Thomas, *conversus* of Torre, as second witness, after Brother Richard, canon, to a charter in the late-1230's between the abbot of Torre and the prior of Totnes.<sup>22</sup> Besides this solitary piece of written evidence, however, any further notice of the presence or numbers of the lay brothers at Torre is elusive. There are no references to their numbers at any Premonstratensian house, although at Cistercian abbeys, especially in the twelfth century,

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<sup>18</sup> R. Van Waefelghem (ed.), 'Les Premiers Statuts de Prémontré', *Analectes de l'Ordre de Prémontré*, 9 (1913), pp. 48, 60-2; Van den Broeck, 'Les Frères Convers', pp. 216-19.

<sup>19</sup> J. S. Donnelly, *The Decline of the Cistercian Laybrotherhood* (Fordham, 1949), pp. 19-21.

<sup>20</sup> Lefèvre, *Statuts*, pp. 14, 30, 110-11; Van den Broeck, 'Les Frères convers', pp. 220-9.

<sup>21</sup> *WC*, pp. 360-2.

<sup>22</sup> DRO 312M/TY1-129. The term *conversus* would have been known in Devon, as there is evidence of lay brothers at Dunkeswell, Buckland, and Newenham. There is no reason to assume that it meant 'convert' in any other sense; *MDE*, pp. 384-5; *CPR 1292-1301*, pp. 459-60; Bodl. MS Top. Devon d. 5, fo. 3v.

the numbers of lay brothers often far outstripped those of the regular monks.<sup>23</sup> The Brother Ranulf who was ‘custos’ of Wolborough and enclosed the meadow of Honeywell in the early-thirteenth century may well have been a lay brother, in keeping with their expected role as supervisors of labour on the closer of the abbey’s estates.<sup>24</sup> There are, however, similarities to the manner in which Shap Abbey served its nearby churches of Shap and Bampton with regular canons, one as vicar, and responsible to the abbot for the accompanying temporalities.<sup>25</sup> Against this interpretation, however, is the likelihood that, from the earliest times, Torre appears to have served both Wolborough and Tormohun with secular chaplains.<sup>26</sup>

As the documentary evidence is so meagre, most of what we can ascertain about the lay brothers of Torre comes from the abbey. Such evidence is obviously open to a great deal of interpretation, and only the broadest conclusions can be drawn from analogy with other sites. While most of the rooms around the cloister shared a set function at almost every house, those of the western range, and especially the southern half of the range, do not appear to have had a ‘typical’ use. At a number of Cistercian houses, however, it was the site of the lay brothers’ accommodation for those that were not residing on the granges of the house.<sup>27</sup>

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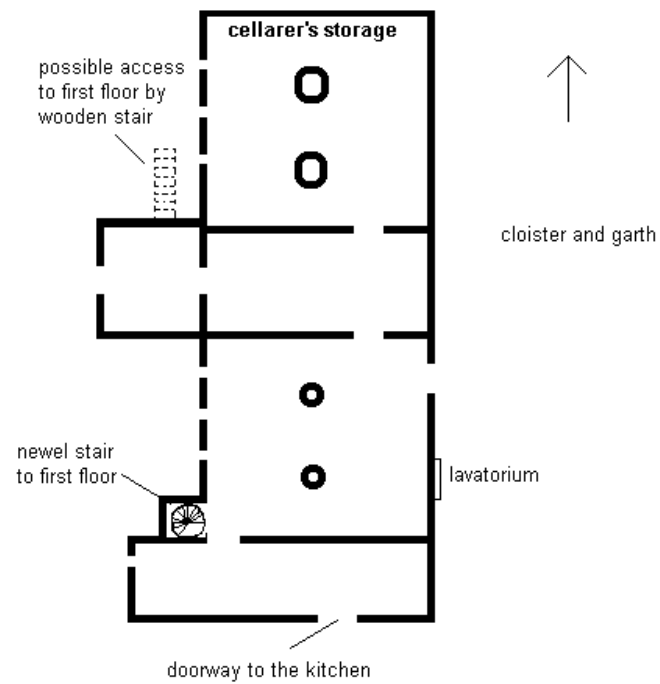
<sup>23</sup> *RO*, ii, pp. 258-9; *WC*, pp. 361-2.

<sup>24</sup> *DC* fo. 136r.

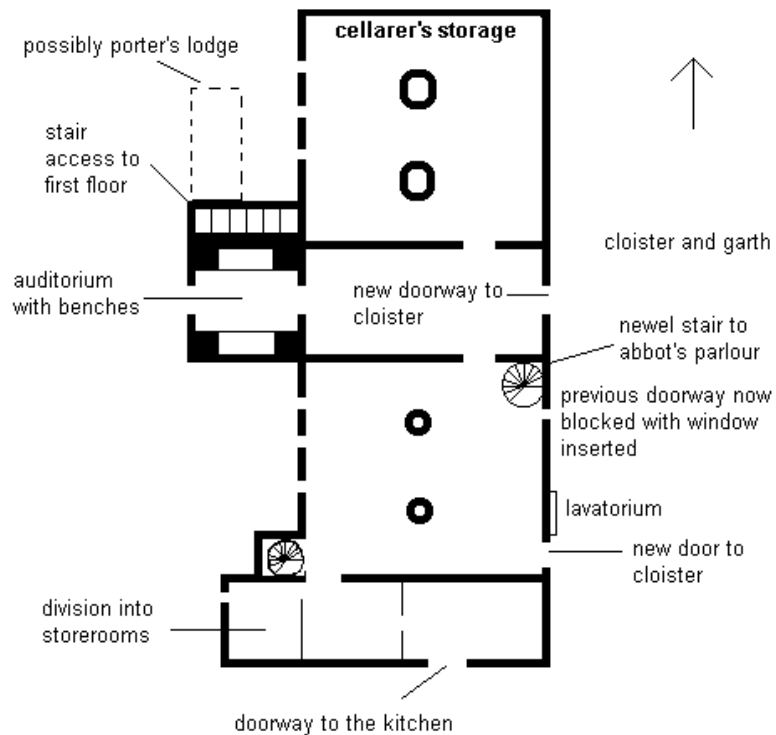
<sup>25</sup> *WC*, pp. 278-9.

<sup>26</sup> *EC* 22; *Reg. Grandisson*, ii, p. 1058; *Reg. Lacy*, III, p. 63. The two churches effectively formed a peculiar, as there are no records of presentation to either in the bishops’ registers, nor of any visitation of either; Swanson, *Church and Society*, pp. 22-4.

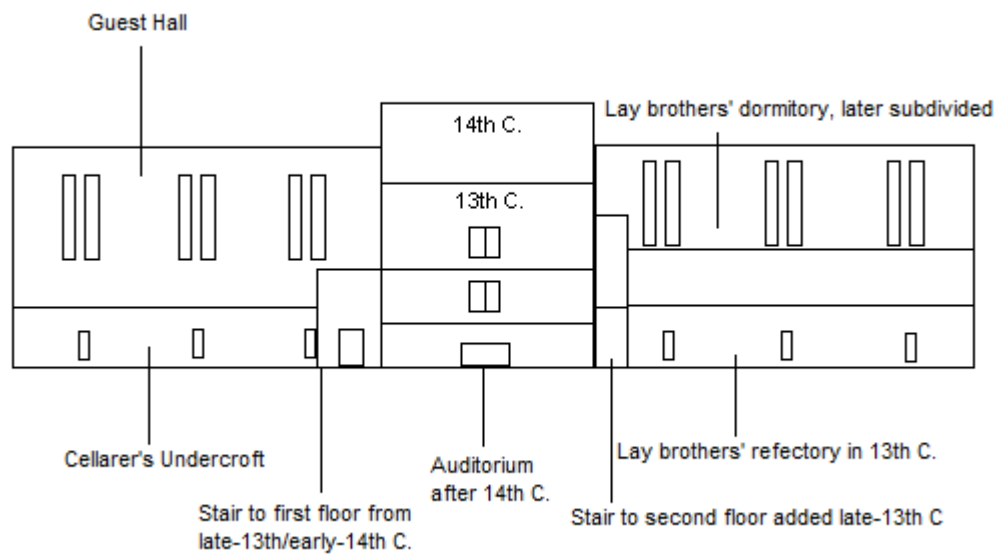
<sup>27</sup> Cassidy-Welch, *Monastic Spaces*, pp. 171-5.



**Figure 1: The Western Undercroft in the 13th century**



**Figure 2: The Western Undercroft in the 14th-15th centuries**



**Figure 3: The Western Range, looking east, with building stages**



**Figure 4: The Western Range, looking east**

At Torre, building programmes in the southern half of the western range indicate a change in its use in the late-thirteenth century [Figs. 1-4]. Initially, there were few points of access between the individual rooms of the western range and the other areas of the monastery, perhaps indicating a particular form of enclosure separate to the rest of the community. Thus the only access to the cloister was by a small, plain door in the southern of the two undercrofts. The cellarer's storage area could only be accessed from the

undercroft passage. Of the two first floor areas, the southern half was accessed by a newel stair in the south-west corner. There is no evidence that the range had a second floor, and there is no identifiable method of access to one. The kitchen block was to the south. The tower was initially only two storeys high, providing access to the guest hall to the north. Access to the first floor of the tower from the outside was, presumably, provided by a wooden stair.<sup>28</sup>

The original building seems to mirror the arrangements seen at some Cistercian houses for the lay brothers' *dorter* and *frater*.<sup>29</sup> It has been suggested that this area was used for housing the poor travellers, or the retinues of the important guests, but this is highly unlikely.<sup>30</sup> Firstly, there is no evidence of this in any other Premonstratensian house, and it is more likely that they would have been housed in separate outbuildings or above the stables than in the claustral buildings. Secondly, the presence of a doorway to the cloister suggests that, whatever this room was used for, access to the sacred areas of the abbey was not totally forbidden to those who used it. On Sundays and feast days the lay brothers would celebrate in the claustral church, processing from their *frater*, along the west cloister walk, and into the nave of the church by the door at its south-west corner.<sup>31</sup> The cloister doorway in the southern undercroft may have served this purpose. The lack of windows or any other entry points on the cloister side suggests that, while there may be reasons for the lay brothers to enter it, for most of the time they had no reason to look upon the cloister at all.<sup>32</sup>

By the mid-fourteenth century, however, the lay brothers had practically disappeared from the monastic scene in general. At Torre, they may have disappeared

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<sup>28</sup> Saxby & Westman, *Abbey of Torre*.

<sup>29</sup> Cassidy-Welch, *Monastic Spaces*, pp. 171-5; J. P. Greene, *Medieval Monasteries* (Leicester, 1992), pp. 87-8.

<sup>30</sup> Watkin, *Torre Abbey*, p. 33.

<sup>31</sup> *WC*, p. 360

<sup>32</sup> Cassidy-Welch, *Monastic Spaces*, p. 173.



earlier, at least from the cloister, as the tower was heightened in the late-thirteenth century, with access added to the first and second floors, suggesting that the first floor of the southern half of the range was also subdivided at this point. In the fourteenth century, the tower was heightened again, with access provided to the top floor by an internal stair. A lavabo and an arch to the screens passage of the guest hall were also inserted, although these may have been replacements rather than new features.

The southern undercroft also underwent a number of developments. The single small door to the cloister was blocked, and replaced with a stair to the first floor and a window. Yet two new portals were inserted, a main doorway from the cloister to the undercroft passage and one in the south-west corner of the cloister, possibly to provide ease of access to the kitchen for the *refectorius* – the canon responsible for mealtime arrangements. The room to the south of the undercrofts was partitioned in the fourteenth century for storage. The ground floor of the tower had benches inserted on either side, for use as an *auditorium*, or outer parlour, where the canons could converse with the laity.

It has been assumed that the abbot had his living quarters in the western range from the fourteenth century, although where he had resided previously is unknown.<sup>33</sup> It may be that, following the statutes, he would have had a chamber in the communal dorter for the first century.<sup>34</sup> Unfortunately, the dorter has almost completely disappeared at Torre, so there is no way of knowing if the abbot had a presence there. In the Cistercian monastic plan, the abbot lived in separate accommodation on the east of the claustral buildings from the thirteenth century at least.<sup>35</sup> If this style of accommodation was followed by the Premonstratensians, the only building on any of the surviving sites which could fulfil the role would be the infirmary hall, serving a dual purpose. Such an arrangement is not implausible, and, indeed, has been suggested for the surviving infirmary building at

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<sup>33</sup> TA, p. 20.

<sup>34</sup> Lefèvre, *Statuts*, p. 41.

<sup>35</sup> Burton, *Monastic and Religious Orders*, p. 144.

Premonstratensian Halesowen, which functioned as a multi-purpose area throughout the history of the abbey.<sup>36</sup> At Torre, the infirmary building is in a completely ruinous state, and offers little material for an architectural examination. As such, we cannot know whether the abbot resided in the dorter or the infirmary, or, indeed, elsewhere in the abbey.

However, when it became free, it would seem natural for the abbot to choose the western range as his residence. The lay brothers were situated here because they were a bridge between the two worlds, performing both spiritual and temporal tasks.<sup>37</sup> The *auditorium* was also here, where the canons and seculars could converse. The hall where the abbot received his important guests was in this position at almost every Premonstratensian house.<sup>38</sup> The abbot, especially by the fourteenth century, would be likely to assume part of this transitive space as his own, so he could personally adopt the role of mediator between the two worlds.

To this effect, the southern first floor of the western range was partitioned into two. The new second floor probably formed the abbot's chambers, while the first floor served as his parlour, where he could speak to guests and other seculars in private. It is possible that, as at Dale Abbey, the tower contained a chapel for the use of the abbot and some of his more important guests, as the second floor of the tower would have been easily accessible from the abbot's chamber.<sup>39</sup> The stairway in the south-west corner that had linked the kitchen to the lay brothers' frater now serviced the abbot's chambers. The abbot was, therefore, quite separate from the canons, and was able to take his meals, say masses, and play host to his guests without having to enter the cloister.

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<sup>36</sup> G. Brown, *Halesowen Abbey and its Environs*, English Heritage Archaeological Investigation Report Series A1/19/2005 (2005), pp. 7-9; N. A. D. Molyneux, 'A Late Medieval Building at Halesowen Abbey', *Transactions of the Worcestershire Archaeological Society*, 9 (1984), pp. 45-53.

<sup>37</sup> Cassidy-Welch, *Monastic Spaces*, pp. 167-93.

<sup>38</sup> A. W. Clapham, 'The Architecture of the Premonstratensians: With Special Reference to their Buildings in England', *Archaeologia*, 73 (1923), pp. 128-9.

<sup>39</sup> H. M. Colvin, 'The Internal History of Dale Abbey', *Journal of the Derbyshire Archaeological Society*, n. s. 15 (1941), p. 41

The role of the southern undercroft from the fourteenth century is not entirely clear. It does not appear to ever have been subdivided, and given its proximity to the kitchens it may have been used as a dining room for the abbot's household or the servants of guests. At Titchfield in 1400x1405 the 'vault' provided a dining space for 47 people, presumably servants or guests.<sup>40</sup> Even if this room was not used for dining, although this is the most probable suggestion, its place in the western range would suggest that it occupied some secular or semi-secular role. That the cloister was no longer inaccessible suggests an increasing familiarity with the secular world on the part of the canons. Furthermore, the building of the outer parlour, which was apparently not replicated at any other English house of the order, suggests an institutionalised relaxation on the prohibition on mixing with seculars.<sup>41</sup>

Given the nature of the sources, we cannot be certain about the hypotheses just posited. Nonetheless, the nature of the changes indicates a relaxation of the enclosure of the cloister in the early-fourteenth century. The abbot and his household may have lived in buildings elsewhere in the precinct which have not survived, although by comparison with other sites it is almost certain that he would have been separate from the community by this date. If that was the case, then the western range would either have provided chambers for the individual canons or rooms for the lay staff. Allied to this is the development of the refectory in the south range at a similar time, whereby it was heightened and, possibly as with the contemporaneous developments at Premonstratensian Easby, subdivided into a formal hall and a 'buttery' for everyday use.<sup>42</sup> Thus the initial communal and cloistered lifestyle effectively enshrined in the earliest buildings was certainly changing, not least in that one section of the community disappeared from the scene. The exact nature of the

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<sup>40</sup> Gribbin, *Premonstratensian Order*, p. 64.

<sup>41</sup> Clapham, 'Architecture of the Premonstratensians', pp. 128-9.

<sup>42</sup> Fergusson, 'Refectory at Easby', pp. 334-51.

community after the remodelling is not clear, but the increased permeability of the western range suggests an institutionally more relaxed attitude to contact with the laity.

### Leaving the Cloister

Despite the relaxation towards the secular world suggested by the architectural development, the canons themselves appear only very occasionally acting outside the monastery even in the later period. From the 1370's there were a variety of methods by which a regular religious could leave the cloister, either on a temporary or permanent basis, yet very few of these were utilised by the canons of Torre.<sup>43</sup> Logan, in his work on 'runaway religious', recognises three 'legal' routes by which a regular in the late-fourteenth century could gain independence from his house: institution to a benefice, a papal chaplaincy, and transfer to another monastery.<sup>44</sup> The first of these was particularly common at Torre, the second rare, and the third unknown.

Both the Premonstratensians generally and Torre more specifically had the right to institute canons in their churches, yet there is little evidence of the canons taking up this privilege until the period after the Black Death.<sup>45</sup> All of Torre's eight churches had been appropriated in the thirteenth century, and many of the names of their vicars survive, yet the only canon found in such a position in the earlier years is John de Elmore, a convert from Augustinian Llanthony Secunda, who was appointed vicar of Buckland Brewer in 1333.<sup>46</sup>

In total, twenty canons served as vicars of the abbey's churches between 1372 and the Dissolution, a little over one-fifth of all the canons known to us from this period. The

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<sup>43</sup> Logan, *Runaway Religious*, pp. 42-62.

<sup>44</sup> Logan, *Runaway Religious*, pp. 42-62.

<sup>45</sup> *CPL 1455-1464*, p. 343; *Reg. Brantyngham*, i, p. 28; Lefèvre, *Statuts*, pp. 123-5.

<sup>46</sup> *Reg. Grandisson*, iii, p. 1297; Chapter 7, pp. 236-7.

appointment of canons as vicars was clearly encouraged, as in the visitation of 1478 Bishop Redman enjoined the abbot of Torre to do so in all their churches, as was 'the custom and privilege of the order'.<sup>47</sup> Yet despite the papal permission, and Redman's injunction, the abbey almost solely did so in Bradworthy and Townstal.<sup>48</sup> The Premonstratensians as a whole in England did not appoint canons wholesale to their churches. In the last quarter of the fifteenth century Hartridge only counted 40 Premonstratensian canon-vicars, while the order in England held a total of around 140 appropriated churches.<sup>49</sup> One problem may have been the need to have another canon as *socius*, a prescription which was oft-repeated in the bishops' registers of institutions, although while Knowles felt this injunction was followed until very late, Colvin notes that there was no evidence of it after the fourteenth century amongst the Premonstratensians.<sup>50</sup>

Bradworthy was served by William Norton and then, briefly, Richard Sele in the late-fourteenth century, followed by just under ninety years of secular vicars until Thomas Dyer took the position in 1470. He was then followed by a succession of canons until sometime shortly before the Dissolution.<sup>51</sup> Townstal was even more regularly served. Of the 167 years between the institution of Thomas Burgess in 1372 and the Dissolution, secular priests served as sole vicars of Townstal for little over 25 of them. The position appears to have been a coveted one, as all seven of the abbots of Torre from William Norton to Simon Rede, the last abbot, served as vicars of Townstal at some point, and

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<sup>47</sup> CAP, iii, p. 143.

<sup>48</sup> The exception, besides John de Elmore, was the appointment of the retiring abbot Matthew Yerde to their Lincolnshire church of Skidbrook in 1414; Lincolnshire Archives DIOC/REG/14 fo. 68v.

<sup>49</sup> Hartridge, *History of Vicarages*, p. 176; E. Beck, 'The Appropriated Churches of the English White Canons', *Analecta Praemonstratensia*, 5 (1929) pp. 96-108, 177-97, 288-305.

<sup>50</sup> RO, ii, p. 292; WC, pp. 279-80. The vicar of Townstal could possibly have been supported by a canon holding the chaplaincy of St. Saviour's in Dartmouth. John Chester was 'vicar' of Dartmouth in 1478, although this may be a mistake for Townstal, and John Derke was chaplain of Townstal in 1497, while William Colling was vicar. The majority of chaplains of Dartmouth, however, were secular; Watkin, *Dartmouth*, p. 277.

<sup>51</sup> *Reg. Brantyngham*, i, pp. 28, 78-9, 82; DRO Chanter MS 12, part 2, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, fo. 11v; DRO Chanter MS 14, fo. 16v.

usually as the last post before being elected to the abbacy.<sup>52</sup> As noted in a previous chapter, the appointment of the first canon-vicar to Townstal coincided with the building of a chapel in Dartmouth, and thus the canon may have been appointed partly to ensure the rights of the mother church.<sup>53</sup> Thus those canons of particular talent, who seem to have been marked out for the abbacy, may have been sent there to integrate with the townsmen and gain useful contacts for their future role. Indeed, this may even suggest that an appointment to Townstal effectively constituted an anointment of a successor by the incumbent abbot. Even if this were not always the case, it is curious to note that the abbacy was so often given to a canon who had operated outside the community for a number of years, and this must surely reflect the canons' understanding of the much more secular and socially integrated nature of the role. The canon-vicar at Bradworthy, on the other hand, may have operated as a steward of the abbey's spiritual assets in the region, given the grouping of churches in North Devon at Bradworthy, Buckland Brewer, and Shebbear,.

Institution to a benefice would result in some considerable term of absence from the cloister, especially as neither vicarage appears to have been appropriated, and thus the canons were appointed for life or until resignation. The situation would be especially marked at Bradworthy, around 55 miles from the house. Roger Legge, vicar in the late-fifteenth century, does not appear in one of the visitation records while still a canon of the house, and presumably he was given dispensation due to the distance involved.<sup>54</sup> In most cases, where a reason was given for the vacancy of the benefice, the position was stated to be vacant due to the previous incumbent's election to the abbacy or death, with only a few cases of resignation. Rotation was not common, therefore, and only two canons served at two different churches: Roger Legge was vicar of Bradworthy between 1486 and 1499,

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<sup>52</sup> *Reg. Brantyngham*, i, pp. 33, 133, 137; *Reg. Stafford*, p. 215; *Reg. Lacy*, i, pp. 157, 268, 272; DRO Chanter MS 12, part 2, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, fo. 10v; DRO Chanter MS 13, fo. 57v.

<sup>53</sup> See Chapter 5, p. 174.

<sup>54</sup> *CAP*, iii, p. 153.

when he was moved to Townstal until his death in 1514, while Matthew Yerde was vicar of Townstal between 1394 and 1396, and, on his resignation as abbot in 1414, became vicar of Skidbrook.<sup>55</sup> Disregarding the two canons who died or resigned within a few months of being appointed to a benefice, the average time served at a church by one of the canons was a little short of ten years. William Brydon spent the longest time at one church, being vicar of Townstal for twenty years, only slightly longer than John Brygges' nineteen year stint at the same church earlier in the century.<sup>56</sup> However, Roger Legge's two consecutive periods at different churches, mentioned above, would have kept him away from the cloister for a full twenty-eight years, from a total of thirty-six as a canon of Torre.

Given the large amount of time spent by the canons at these benefices, we may infer that they were relatively comfortable livings. In the thirteenth century, the stipend of the vicar of Townstal was a flat sum of seven marks per year from the abbey.<sup>57</sup> Yet in 1400 the vicar, at that time the canon Richard Bradworthy, was stated to receive twenty marks as his salary from the abbey, as well as one penny from each burial or anniversary in the parish and the small tithes of pigs, butter, cheese, and geese.<sup>58</sup> Given the generous remuneration, we might suggest that one of the attractions of Torre as a choice for the potential monastic recruit was the chance, after a period in the cloister, of being appointed to a comfortable benefice with no real threat of removal, without fear of having to court lay patronage, and on substantially better terms than most secular vicars could hope for.<sup>59</sup>

There are a handful of other, more unusual, instances of canons acquiring a measure of independence, the most striking instance of which comes in July 1380 when John Bilney, king's chaplain and canon of Torre, was granted ten marks yearly from the

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<sup>55</sup> DRO Chanter MS 12, part 2, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, fo. 10v; *Reg. Brantyngham*, i, p. 137; *Reg. Stafford*, p. 215; Lincolnshire Archives DIOC/REG/14 fo. 68v.

<sup>56</sup> *Reg. Thom. Bouchier*, fo. 32r; *Reg. Booth*, fo. 35v; *Reg. Stafford*, fo. 251r.

<sup>57</sup> DRO D1508M/Moger/187; EC 157, 198.

<sup>58</sup> DRO Z 19/8/3/127-8.

<sup>59</sup> Swanson, *Church and Society*, pp. 57-8.

priory of Cammeringham, Lincolnshire, followed by his appointment to the custody of the priory in January 1381.<sup>60</sup> Cammeringham was a cell of the Premonstratensian abbey of Blanchlande, in Normandy, to which Richard de Haia had granted the manor of Cammeringham early in the reign of Henry II.<sup>61</sup> It had come into difficulties by 1371, when the prior's companion was sent back to France by royal order, and was farmed to a number of clerks, one of whom was Bilney. He appears to have had some difficulty administering the estate, as in 1383 a band of locals ejected Bilney and his tenant and removed a number of their goods and trees, and in 1387 he surrendered it in return for ten marks per year from the revenues of Devon, although by that time he was no longer referred to as a king's chaplain.<sup>62</sup>

It is not clear how Bilney had become a royal chaplain whilst serving as a canon of Torre. There were, generally, between five and ten king's chaplains at any one time, who would officiate in the king's private chapel, were usually numbered among the inner circle of the court, and several became close friends of the king.<sup>63</sup> Like Bilney, the chaplains often held other positions and were frequent absentees, as the king could by ancient custom give dispensation to his clerks to be non-resident pluralists. They would also, as with Bilney, be found suitable livings from benefices in royal patronage to negate the need for payment direct from the household. Furthermore, Bilney was not the only monastic king's clerk, as, besides a number of friars, the Cistercian monk Robert Tideman of Winchcombe was the king's surgeon from 1390, and a trusted confidant throughout the

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<sup>60</sup> *CPR 1377-81*, pp. 537, 589; *CCR 1377-81*, p. 396.

<sup>61</sup> *Calendar of Documents Preserved in France*, i, pp. 310-11.

<sup>62</sup> *CPR 1381-5*, p. 357; *CPR 1385-9*, p. 314; *CCR 1385-9*, pp. 241-2.

<sup>63</sup> C. Given-Wilson, *The Royal Household and the King's Affinity: Service, Politics, and Finance in England, 1360-1413* (Yale, 1986), p. 67.



1390's, while Thomas Merks was a monk of Westminster abbey and a clerk of the chapel by 1395.<sup>64</sup>

There was a connection between the royal chapel and King's Hall, Cambridge, and a John Bilney 'petit clerk' of the chapel royal was admitted to King's Hall as a scholar in 1382, becoming a fellow in 1383, and vacating the post in 1400.<sup>65</sup> The only John Bilney appearing as a king's chaplain is the canon of Torre, and therefore he is most likely to be the scholar of King's Hall in 1382.<sup>66</sup> This would also explain why Richard II continued to provide the canon of Torre with a stipend of ten marks, even after he had apparently ceased to be his chaplain, as it would have paid for his maintenance at university. While it does not seem possible at this point to explain the particulars of how a canon of Torre Abbey rose to a position within the royal household, the fact that he was able to come to the king's attention suggests a measure of prior independence from the cloister. The distances involved, between Cambridge, Westminster, Cammeringham, and Torre, should not in themselves be surprising. David Lepine's study of secular canons has shown that such travelling was common amongst the late-medieval higher clergy, and so, having left the cloister, albeit perhaps not permanently, we should not necessarily expect Bilney to have confined himself to Devon.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Given-Wilson, *The Royal Household*, pp. 67, 175-80; R. E. Rodes, *Ecclesiastical Administration in Medieval England: The Anglo-Saxons to the Reformation* (London, 1977), p. 161.

<sup>65</sup> *BRUC to 1500*, p. 62; A. B. Cobban, *The King's Hall within the University of Cambridge in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1969), pp. 56-64.

<sup>66</sup> Emden, following Gray, claims this John Bilney to have been the burgess who was mayor of Cambridge at regular intervals between 1406 and 1434. The picture is further complicated by the patent rolls granting such diverse benefices as Barnack in Lincoln diocese, Titchwell in Norwich diocese, and the chaplaincy of St. Leonard in the Forest, Chichester, to a John Bilney in the 1390's. A John Bilney, clerk, of London diocese also occurs between 1377 and 1387. It is most likely that there are three or more individuals here, of which the canon of Torre has been confused with the later mayor of Cambridge; J. M. Gray, *Biographical Notes on the Mayors of Cambridge* (Cambridge, 1922), pp. 16-17; *CPR 1385-9*, p. 333; *1389-92*, p. 500; *1396-9*, p. 58; *1399-1401*, p. 257; A. K. McHardy, *The Church in London 1375-92*, London Record Society (1977), p. 81.

<sup>67</sup> D. Lepine, '“Loose Canons”: The Mobility of the Higher Clergy in the Later Middle Ages', in P. Horden (ed.), *Freedom of Movement in the Middle Ages*, Proceedings of the 2003 Harlaxton Symposium (Donington, 2007), pp. 104-22.

A handful of canons received papal dispensation to find a benefice, perhaps suggesting a permanent abandonment of the cloister. John Harrys' petition on account of the danger of the monastery in 1455 has been noted elsewhere, and he appears to have left the monastery, but we also find William Hamond in 1457 and William Colling in 1476 receiving similar dispensations.<sup>68</sup> There is no record of either receiving benefices based on these letters, and both are found as canons long after these dates. Colling was appointed vicar of Townstal, but only twelve years later, in 1488.<sup>69</sup>

John Brygge had the title of papal chaplain bestowed on him in 1402, although it is not clear if he used it to leave the cloister or is the John Burghe who was presented to Townstal in 1414.<sup>70</sup> If the latter, the acquisition of the title may have been part of an attempt to raise his profile within the abbey, perhaps with an end to securing the lucrative vicarage. More intriguingly, a papal letter of 1402 states that William Nichol, canon of Torre and papal chaplain, had held the vicarage of Bradworthy by papal provision, although he had resigned it on being elected abbot. Bradworthy now being void, he was to be collated to the vicarage again, and resign that of Holne which he held.<sup>71</sup> The abbot at the time was William Norton, although Colvin assumed the letter must refer to William Mychel, who was abbot from 1414.<sup>72</sup> There is little doubt, however, that the letter is addressed to Norton, as he was vicar of Bradworthy from 1373 to 1382, and resigned the position immediately on his election as abbot, while William Mychel was only ever vicar of Townstal.<sup>73</sup>

The confusion may have arisen from a mix-up at the Curia, as a Sir William Nicholl appears as vicar of Holne until 1423, presumably having been collated to the

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<sup>68</sup> *CPL 1455-64*, pp. 93, 342; *1471-84*, p. 490.

<sup>69</sup> *CAP*, iii, p. 149.

<sup>70</sup> *CPL 1362-1404*, p. 313; *Reg. Stafford*, p. 215; *Reg. Lacy*, i, p. 157.

<sup>71</sup> *CPL 1396-1404*, p. 463.

<sup>72</sup> *WC*, p. 417, n. 11.

<sup>73</sup> *Reg. Brantyngham*, i, p. 78; *Reg. Stafford*, p. 215.

benefice on William Norton's vacation and the two being confused by the scribe.<sup>74</sup> The statement that Norton was provided to Bradworthy in 1373 is not entirely correct, as the episcopal registers state that he was presented by the abbot and convent. He was, however, the first canon to serve Bradworthy, and, as such, the papal privilege of the canons to serve their churches themselves was repeated by Brantyngham.<sup>75</sup> The vicarage of Holne near Buckfast Abbey, said to be worth less than ten marks per year, had been held by the Hospital of St. John in Exeter since 1329, who presented John Madeley in 1381, although in 1386 James de Audley, who was also lord of St. Marychurch near Torre, was stated to hold both the manor and advowson.<sup>76</sup>

The provision to Holne may have been linked to the bestowal of the papal chaplaincy, neither of which are recorded. The purpose of the latter is not entirely clear, unless Norton either received it before he became abbot in 1382, or it was an actual administrative position in England rather than merely honorary. If the latter, the benefice may have gone to supporting his additional role. If, however, it was honorary, the provision to a vicarage, which he would certainly have served with a curate, could serve as a means of ensuring that the abbatial household had some financial independence from the abbey. The subsequent provision to Bradworthy, noted to be a more lucrative vicarage of up to twenty marks per year, was thus an attempt to increase his income, with the added bonus that the church was in the hands of the canons and held by a secular priest. Although the provision notes that the benefice was void, this was not so, as it was held by John Dalkyn, a secular priest presented by the abbey, continuously from 1382 until his death in 1405, and following him John Yerde, another secular, held it until after Norton's death in 1412.<sup>77</sup> 'Void' must then refer to the resignation of the vicarage by Norton on becoming

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<sup>74</sup> *Reg. Lacy*, i, p. 64.

<sup>75</sup> *Reg. Brantyngham*, i, p. 28.

<sup>76</sup> *MDE*, pp. 304-6, 310; *IPM*, xvi, pp. 76-7; *Reg. Grandisson*, i, pp. 496-9; *Reg. Brantyngham*, i, p. 73.

<sup>77</sup> *Reg. Brantyngham*, i, p. 82; *Reg. Stafford*, p. 149.

abbot. Dalkyn's continued presence as vicar, however, suggests either that the provision was unsuccessful, perhaps being annulled by the reissuing of the Statute of Appropriations in 1402, or that the abbot took the vicar's portion, but continued to employ Dalkyn as a curate.

Similar incidents occur later in the abbey's history. In 1502, Thomas Dyer received dispensation to receive a benefice together with the abbey, while the last abbot of Torre, Simon Rede, was himself instituted as vicar of Townstal in 1531, and remained in that position until his death in 1555.<sup>78</sup> The record of his institution notes that the advowson of the church had been granted to Nicholas Kirkham by the abbot and convent. Rede's curate was to be Thomas Peyre, following the free resignation of the previous incumbent, Nicholas Cartwright.<sup>79</sup> How 'free' his resignation was is debateable, but the alienation of advowsons by heads of monastic houses in order that they themselves could be instituted as vicar was not uncommon during this period.<sup>80</sup> The purpose, presumably, of the abbot himself holding the vicarage, although he would almost certainly have used a secular chaplain to perform the cure of souls, would again be to ensure that the revenue of the parish went into his household, rather than through the revenues of the community.

Most similar instances, amongst Premonstratensian abbots at least, occurred around the same time as Rede's appointment to Townstal, that is, in the 1520s and 1530s. Of the earlier examples, John Woodthorpe, abbot of Hagnaby, was granted dispensation to hold a benefice in plurality with his abbacy in 1443.<sup>81</sup> Other abbots, such as those of Welbeck and Egglestone in 1400 and 1401 respectively, were to resign their abbacy before taking up a benefice.<sup>82</sup> This appears to have been a method of resignation on the part of an abbot, in

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<sup>78</sup> *CPL 1495-1503*, p. 455; *MDE*, p. 171.

<sup>79</sup> *DRO Chanter MS 14*, fo. 55r.

<sup>80</sup> Swanson, *Church and Society*, p. 86.

<sup>81</sup> *CPL 1431-47*, p. 354.

<sup>82</sup> *CPL 1391-1404*, pp. 334, 414.

much the same manner as an MP would take the Stewardship of the Chiltern Hundreds.<sup>83</sup> At Torre, Matthew Yerde's short rule as abbot was brought to an end in 1414 when he was presented to the church of Skidbrook by the prior and convent.<sup>84</sup> From the late-fifteenth century, however, the practice became more common, with the right of next presentation usually having been granted to a layman beforehand. Of the Premonstratensian abbots of Lincolnshire, for example, two successive abbots of Newbo in the early sixteenth century, John Colby and William Brull, were instituted to churches in the appropriation of their abbey without resigning their position.<sup>85</sup> Robert Goodall, abbot of Sulby between 1506 and 1524, was instituted to Sibbertoft church in 1513, then East Haddon in 1517.<sup>86</sup> Robert Esington, abbot of Newhouse was instituted to a sixth part of the church of Brocklesby in 1513, and his successor John Maxe was given papal dispensation to hold benefices besides that of the abbey of Newhouse.<sup>87</sup> While the abbot had long lived a largely separate life to the community, therefore, it may be that across the order he was only in the early-sixteenth century fully breaking away and establishing separate sources of income.

### Communal life

Having noted that the architecture of the abbey indicates a relaxation of the prohibitions on interacting with seculars, and, especially, that the provision of vicars to churches would have resulted in the commingling of canons and laity, albeit outside the community, it is possible to examine any deleterious effects on communal discipline over a number of years in the late-fifteenth century. The English Premonstratensians as a whole are perhaps most

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<sup>83</sup> WC, pp. 250-1.

<sup>84</sup> Lincolnshire Archives DIOC/REG/14 fo. 68v.

<sup>85</sup> The churches were respectively Barrowby in 1509 and Allington in 1511, no dispensation survives in the papal letters. Notably, Barrowby was in the presentation of the abbot and convent of Eye, Lincolnshire Archives DIOC/REG/23 fos. 137r, 143v.

<sup>86</sup> Lincolnshire Archives, DIOC/REG/23 fo. 225r; DIOC/REG/25 fo. 30r.

<sup>87</sup> Lincolnshire Archives, DIOC/REG/23 fo. 146r; *CPL 1513-21*, pp. 381-2.

famous for the remarkable survival of a series of visitation records from this period, conducted by Richard Redman. Much has been written about the difficulties in using these documents, not least about the editorial failings of Gasquet's edition.<sup>88</sup> In terms of the general picture of the Premonstratensians presented by the visitation records, both Knowles and Gribbin argued that Redman's methods and judgement on the whole gave an accurate picture.<sup>89</sup> It is difficult to disagree with the argument that Redman was an experienced and careful visitor, who relied not only on the information he gleaned from his interviews with the canons and other figures connected with the abbeys, but from his personal appreciation of the general situation at each abbey. The comparison of the records over the course of the period suggests that both minor and major faults were identified, and usually corrected by the next visitation. We cannot, however, rule out the possibility that some faults were hidden from his eyes by the collusion of the community or some other form of effective coercion on the part of the monastic authority.

Torre was visited seven times by Redman: in 1478, 1482, 1488, 1491, 1494, 1497, and 1500. We have no evidence for the frequency of visitation at Torre in the earlier centuries. Gribbin suggests that the practice of visitation had generally ceased by the late-medieval period, and Torre may have been visited infrequently even during the period of active visitation.<sup>90</sup> In the thirteenth century, a number of documents survive suggesting that, in place of actual visitation, the convent at Torre would agree to meet the appointed visitors of the southern circary at an intermediate, and more convenient, place.<sup>91</sup> One of the visitations of the late-fifteenth century was conducted in this fashion. In 1488, the abbot and a representative of the convent at Torre met Bishop Redman at Durford Abbey,

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<sup>88</sup> Gribbin, *Premonstratensian Order*, p. xvii n. 14 gives a full bibliography of corrections to the *CAP*. The records for Torre are mostly unaffected.

<sup>89</sup> Gribbin, *Premonstratensian Order*, pp. 40-100; *RO*, iii, pp. 39-51.

<sup>90</sup> Gribbin, *Premonstratensian Order*, pp. 31-2.

<sup>91</sup> DC fos. 161r, 165r; *WC*, pp. 199-200.

because of some ‘great uneasiness’ on Redman’s part.<sup>92</sup> It is perhaps notable that the visitation of the house after this, in 1491, was the first in nine years and had the most to correct after that of 1478, which may have been the first visitation for even longer.<sup>93</sup> It is most probable that the frequency of personal visitation of Torre by the appointed circator was dependent on the personal and professional qualities of the individual. A zealous visitor, like Redman, would perhaps be more likely to visit than most.<sup>94</sup>

In general terms, over the whole period, the only grounds on which to disagree with Knowles concerning his assertion that Torre was one of those abbeys, along with Barlings, Beauchief, Beeleigh, Coverham, Croxton, Hagnaby, Leiston and West Dereham, which were ‘entirely and continuously satisfactory’, are in his phrasing.<sup>95</sup> As Gribbin notes, this statement is ‘unintentionally misleading’, although it is much punchier than his alternative, if more accurate, description of this group as those which had a ‘consistently good, if not high, standard of observance throughout most of their visitations, though not without fault entirely, and even showed signs of excellence and a degree of fervour’.<sup>96</sup> Even during the worst years of 1478 and, to a lessening degree, 1491 and 1482, Redman still found much to praise in the administration and devotion of the abbot and canons of Torre. Whilst considering the faults of the canons, it is worth bearing in mind the repeated statements to the effect that the abbey was well provisioned, with an abundance of grain and wine, free of debt, and with no major liturgical faults.<sup>97</sup>

We have already noted that 1478 was the worst year in terms of the number of faults brought to light by the visitation report. There were severe personal faults on the part

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<sup>92</sup> *CAP*, iii, p. 149.

<sup>93</sup> *CAP*, iii, pp. 142-4, 149-51.

<sup>94</sup> Thomas Shorham, abbot of Bayham, the visitor immediately preceding Redman, and who was effectively usurped by the Bishop, had an inquiry ordered into his conduct after being relieved of his duties. It is not clear what he had done wrong, or if this was part of a personal feud between him and his successor; *WC*, pp. 224-5; Gribbin, *Premonstratensian Order*, pp. 176-81.

<sup>95</sup> *RO*, iii, p. 41, although, following Gribbin, Cockersand has been omitted here, while Knowles included it, Gribbin, *Premonstratensian Order*, p. 92.

<sup>96</sup> Gribbin, *Premonstratensian Order*, pp. 92-4.

<sup>97</sup> *CAP*, iii, pp. 144, 147, 149-52, 154-6.

of two canons. Walter Speyer was charged with apostasy, theft, open rebellion, incontinence, and other crimes, while Richard Bigod was charged with apostasy. Neither canon denied the charges, and they were sentenced to exile at Newhouse and Welbeck respectively, with forty days' penance on bread and water, and three years imprisonment, with Speyer having to stay for a further ten years unless dispensed. However, the abbot, together with the abbot of Durford, who was acting as Redman's assistant, the prior, subprior, cellarer, and all the convent intervened on Bigod's behalf, and his sentence was held over until the next convocation. Evidently, Bigod never went into exile, as he appears as a canon of Torre every visitation up to, and including, 1500, becoming circator and later subprior.<sup>98</sup> Speyer had no such intercession, however, and three days after the visitation Redman wrote to the abbot of Newhouse instructing him to take the canon for three years' imprisonment and ten years' exile.<sup>99</sup> He may have caused problems there, as well, as in 1479 Redman charged that he should be imprisoned at Durford, where he died of an epidemic before 1482.<sup>100</sup>

While the crimes with which they were charged seem particularly serious, Gribbin and Logan have effectively argued the case that Redman's definition of apostasy was very broad, encompassing all those who left the abbey without permission for whatever purpose or duration. Thus the canonical apostates, those who had left the cloister with no intention of returning, were caught up with those who merely left the cloister for a short time or specific purpose, yet without express permission.<sup>101</sup> In the case of Richard Bigod, given the willingness of the abbot, convent, and assistant visitor to intervene, and his subsequent long service at the abbey, he may have been one of the lesser offenders, albeit one handed a particularly heavy sentence, itself perhaps influenced by the much more serious case at

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<sup>98</sup> CAP, iii, pp. 143, 145-6, 148-9, 151, 153, 155.

<sup>99</sup> CAP, iii, p. 147.

<sup>100</sup> CAP, i, p. 150; ii, p. 194.

<sup>101</sup> Gribbin, *Premonstratensian Order*, pp. 57-61; Logan, *Runaway Religious*, pp. 32-3.



the abbey. The harsh sentence, and Redman's subsequent strict prohibitions, may also be indicative of the visitor's desire to eradicate practices such as casual disobedience and leaving the cloister which, as 'lesser evils', had become endemic and accepted. Thus in 1482, the canons were ordered to obey the prior and subprior under threat of open rebellion, while in 1491 he forbade any canons from leaving the abbey without special prior permission from the abbot, under threat of apostasy.<sup>102</sup> Walter Speyer, however, may well have been a full-blown apostate, given the nature of the other crimes to which he confessed. He had been a canon at the abbey since at least 1445, when he was ordained as an acolyte, and, beyond boredom, we cannot even guess at his motives for apostatising. While the charge of 'open rebellion' may have been less serious than the name suggests, when combined with charges of theft and *incontinentia* – fornication – his actions truly appear to have been, as Redman wrote, 'in scandalum nostre alme religionis'.<sup>103</sup>

Redman noted a wide range of faults at Torre, ranging from a handful of the most grave to a range of smaller technicalities. It is true that the problems with such evidence are not easily brushed aside. Redman was mainly reliant on what he could glean from the interviews with the canons, and the exculpation of two canons on serious charges suggest either the ease with which compurgation could be obtained or some underlying tension and, perhaps, a culture of blame within the abbey at certain points. Thus in 1482 Richard Coringdon was absolved of making keys to the abbot's chest and helping himself to the gold and silver therein, while in 1491 Thomas Humfray was cleared of a charge of incontinence with a local woman.<sup>104</sup> As the minimal injunctions from the visitation conducted by proxy at Durford show, it was easy to sweep such problems under the carpet for the sake of the visitor. However, even if the spiritual discipline can be dismissed as a show for the visitor, the continual economic solvency and smooth operation of the abbey's

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<sup>102</sup> CAP, iii, pp. 146-7, 150.

<sup>103</sup> Gribbin, *Premonstratensian Order*, pp. 70-1.

<sup>104</sup> CAP, iii, pp. 148, 150.

accounts, even if they may not have been completely regular in 1478, paint a picture of Torre as a well-run monastery. Again, there is evidence of Redman tightening current practice at the abbey, as at the first visitation the officials of the abbey were enjoined, under pain of the greater excommunication, to present their accounts of receipt and expenditure annually before the abbot, with the exception of the more remote churches which were to do so every three years.<sup>105</sup> In the last instance, it is not clear whether Redman was only referring to Skidbrook or included the North Devon parishes. If both, this would be further testament to the separation from the cloister involved in the canons serving Bradworthy.

It is also possible to note the division of the house into separate chambers and households. When Redman enjoined the canons to be in bed by eight, he specifically exempted the obedientiaries.<sup>106</sup> Including the abbot, six of the sixteen canons named as residing in the abbey held official positions, and others may have held positions which were not noted in the report.<sup>107</sup> They would not all have slept in the dormitory at this point, and the wording of Redman's instruction for all those sleeping in the communal dormitory to rise for Matins strongly suggests some fragmented sleeping arrangements.<sup>108</sup>

The evidence from other houses indicates that this trend was widespread. The Dissolution inventory of Beeleigh stated that the claustral ranges contained the great chamber, a white and a green chamber, two servants' chambers, a childrens' chamber, and a 'chamber under the white chamber'.<sup>109</sup> Halesowen's surviving infirmary building, of similar dimensions to that at Torre, was a multi-functional space which included both an infirmary and apartments for monastic officials.<sup>110</sup> At Torre, the rooms of the Mohun

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<sup>105</sup> CAP, iii, p. 144.

<sup>106</sup> CAP, iii, p. 144.

<sup>107</sup> CAP, iii, p. 145.

<sup>108</sup> CAP, iii, p. 147.

<sup>109</sup> R. C. Fowler, *Beeleigh Abbey* (London, 1922), pp. 31-6.

<sup>110</sup> Brown, *Halesowen Abbey*, pp. 7-8.

gatehouse, which were clearly partitioned, with fireplaces, and those of the western range and infirmary would thus doubtless have been used as private chambers. In 1491, the canons of Torre were reminded not to eat with seculars in the infirmary or dormitory or other 'suspect places', further intimating the decline of communal life in the refectory.<sup>111</sup> Yet this was by no means so pronounced as could be identified elsewhere much earlier. In the Westcountry, the monks of Tavistock were taking meals in their private chambers by 1373, while the canons of Launceston and Bodmin had private rooms in 1346/7. Grandisson railed against these developments, and was especially condemnatory of the house, dog, boy, herb-garden and dovecot that were the individual perquisites of the Launceston canons.<sup>112</sup>

The prevalence of individual chambers at Torre is also inferred by the Redman's statement of the restrictions placed upon consorting with women. In 1491, Thomas Humfray was accused of consorting many times with a local woman by the name of Johanna Guby, who was presumably related to the Richard Goby found at Tormohun in 1524.<sup>113</sup> Although Humfray was acquitted, Redman took the opportunity to remind the canons that they were 'not to consort with suspect women, and not to eat or drink with others in the infirmary or dormitory or other suspect places'.<sup>114</sup> The problem did not occur in the visitation records thereafter, but interaction with the locals, including local women, must have been difficult to prevent. The abbey was not far from Torre village and the canons would, of course, have a regular connection with the abbey servants. We have seen that some of the canons were drawn from the immediate area of the abbey, and thus would have had pre-existing relationships with friends and relatives, making it even more likely

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<sup>111</sup> *CAP*, iii, p. 150.

<sup>112</sup> *RO*, ii, p. 245; *Reg Brantyngham*, i, pp. 312-5; *Reg. Grandisson*, ii, pp. 1007, 1011.

<sup>113</sup> *CAP*, iii, p. 150; Stoate, *Lay Subsidy*, p. 206.

<sup>114</sup> *CAP*, iii, p. 150. Consorting with women was one of the reasons for which a canon of Taunton or Bruton priories could be stripped of their rooms, the other being excessive private drinking, *RO*, ii, p. 245.

that monastic-lay social interaction would occur.<sup>115</sup> However, that there was any form of interaction with women at all suggests that the position on this had changed since the earliest years. The initial Cistercian statutes had been extraordinarily strict on the prohibition of women in the cloister, and in a Premonstratensian context we may see this at Torre in the corrody granted to the son of Richard Carre in the mid-thirteenth century, where the abbot insisted that, although not a canon, in staying at the abbey he had to remain celibate and was not to consort with women.<sup>116</sup>

We can also note another common late-medieval trend at Torre in the inclusion of young boys as part of the abbot's household. In 1478, the 'boys assigned to the abbot's household' were specifically exempted from the prohibition on seculars associating with the brethren in collacion, potacion and recreation.<sup>117</sup> It is not clear how many of these boys there were, and if they were being schooled towards becoming canons, or, more likely, were of the type found at Durham Cathedral around the same time acting as servants for the canons and 'receiving neither wages nor livery'.<sup>118</sup> Gribbin, however, notes the almost complete lack of evidence for monastic schooling with a view to recruitment in English Premonstratensian houses.<sup>119</sup> A letter of 1538 gives some clue to their status. Leonard Yeo, priest, wrote to Lady Lisle on behalf of his brother, Edmund, requesting that she find space in her household to take Edmund's son into service. Although the boy had been in the abbey for six years, the abbot had clearly started to prepare for the coming storm and had, the letter notes, put three or four of his serving boys away, together with some of the canons. This was happening at monasteries all over Devon, and the letter finishes by noting that 'masters fall very scant in our parts, and servants very plenty'.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Chapter 7, pp. 236-41.

<sup>116</sup> Hicks, *Religious Life*, pp. 55-6; Chapter 2, p. 104.

<sup>117</sup> *CAP*, iii, p. 143.

<sup>118</sup> R. B. Dobson, *Durham Priory 1400-1450* (Cambridge, 1973), p. 121.

<sup>119</sup> Gribbin, *Premonstratensian Order*, p. 56.

<sup>120</sup> *L&P*, xiii (3), p. 17

One particularly notable indication of secular influence within the cloister has caused some previous comment, and is worth dealing with here. In 1491, the canons were instructed not to play games for money, especially that game ‘vulgarly called *tenys*’.<sup>121</sup> ‘Teneas’ was also played for money at Lavendon.<sup>122</sup> Knowles concluded that the game in question was most likely not tennis but an unknown card game called ‘tens’.<sup>123</sup> Yet not only was tennis reasonably widespread in monastic cloisters by the late-fifteenth century, but there is record of it being played in the cloisters and alleys of Exeter Cathedral in the 1450’s. Indeed, in 1451, Bishop Lacy accused the canons of Ottery St. Mary of creating a tennis league with some of their parishioners, and specifically referred to the game ‘vulgariter nuncupatum *tenys*’.<sup>124</sup> We may, therefore, be reasonably sure that the game was widespread amongst Devon’s religious, and that, in Torre’s case, this was not a reference to an apocryphal card game. The reference to playing for money, which led Knowles to his conclusion, was a very common feature of medieval tennis: ‘In the Middle Ages tennis was always played for money...in medieval racket games obsessive betting was the rule’.<sup>125</sup>

In all, however, the canons of Torre generally maintained a good level of devotion and observance throughout the period in question. The visitation of 1478 may have been the first for some years, prompting a number of faults to be punished and corrected. Yet once the regular visitations had begun, the behaviour of the canons was met with approval by Redman. Rather than be lost in the sea of minutiae revealed about the canons’ daily lives and liturgical rounds, a number of general trends in the domestic situation of the community have been analysed. Firstly, we may note, as at many other monastic houses in this period, the breakup of communal life to a certain degree. The canons were not all

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<sup>121</sup> *CAP*, iii, p. 150.

<sup>122</sup> *CAP*, iii, p. 35.

<sup>123</sup> *RO*, iii, p. 51.

<sup>124</sup> *Reg. Lacy*, III, p. 119.

<sup>125</sup> H. Gillmeister, *Tennis: A Cultural History* (London, 1997), p. 123.

sleeping and eating together, although it is clear that the communal dormitory and refectory were still in use to some extent. A small handful of the canons had achieved greater independence of means and action in the later-fourteenth century, but this was a short-lived phenomenon. More importantly for the last two centuries was the habit of canons serving parish churches for long periods, which was encouraged by the central administration of the order. While the evidence of previous centuries is slim, and any institution will naturally endure good and bad periods in terms of discipline, by the time of the visitation the abbey was, if not worthy of excessive praise, guilty of no more than accepting a general and pervasive relaxation of communal life. In this regard they were no different to, and in many cases better than, a great number of medieval monastic houses.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> B. J. Thompson, 'Monasteries, Society and Reform in Late Medieval England', in J. G. Clark (ed.), *The Religious Orders in Pre-Reformation England* (Woodbridge, 2002), pp. 187-9; N. Orme, 'Monasteries in Medieval Cornwall: Mediocrity or Merit?' in J. Burton and K. Stöber (eds.), *Monasteries and Society in the British Isles* (Woodbridge, 2008), pp. 220-8.

## CONCLUSION

### The Dissolution

Returning, finally, to the suit between John Holbeme and Abbot Simon Rede which was extensively quoted in the introduction to this thesis, how fair was the picture it painted of life at the abbey? In terms of the ‘vycyousse and abhomynoble’ life of the abbot, we can say little of certainty, although a generous amount of exaggeration is perhaps to be expected. The lives of the canons only half a century previous were relatively blameless, although much may have changed in the intervening years. The inventory of the abbey has not survived, so how much of the plate was secreted away we also cannot tell. As a retainer of knights, esquires, gentlemen and lawyers, we may be more tangible. In common with most monasteries, and certainly with those in Devon, the abbey had granted sizeable annuities to powerful men in the county shortly before the Dissolution.<sup>1</sup> Yet not only was the practice unremarkable, but almost all the names of annuitants at Torre may be found acting in some capacity at other houses. Some had been in receipt of the abbey’s pay for a number of years, but most grants were given in the year and a half before the surrender of the abbey, as the storm clouds gathered. The ubiquitous Sir Thomas Dennis, ‘privy councillor, chancellor of Anne of Cleves, frequently sheriff of Devon, and an eminent time-server,’ had been granted an annuity of 40s in 1533, the earliest surviving such grant at Torre.<sup>2</sup> Thomas Carew esq. and his son John were granted the same in 1535.<sup>3</sup> From September 1537, however, there is a sudden rush of such grants, including 53s 4d to John Stephyns esq ‘for his good and free service’, 20s to Humphrey Colles esq. ‘for his good counsel in law’, 20s each to Thomas Wolcote gent. and Sir John Fulford, and 40s to John

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<sup>1</sup> Fizzard, *Plympton Priory*, pp. 235-44.

<sup>2</sup> Hoskins, *Devon*, p. 84; DRO Z 19/8/3/129.

<sup>3</sup> DRO Z 19/8/3/132.

Whyddon, gent.<sup>4</sup> Many of these were lawyers, including Humphrey Colles, who was also a member of the house household of Katharine, Countess of Devon, and John Whyddon.<sup>5</sup> Most were in receipt of annuities from several monastic houses in the county, especially Dennis, Colles, and Ridgeway.<sup>6</sup>

There is nothing to suggest there was anything more to their appointment than it being sensible to make powerful friends in dark times. Whether the canons were attempting to save their house or to court patronage for the times to come is perhaps irrelevant, and the two were hardly mutually exclusive. Either way, it failed to help the canons' cause. Very little survives regarding the very end of the abbey, or much about the fate of the canons. The deed of surrender was signed by sixteen canons on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1539, in the presence of William Petre.<sup>7</sup> Abbot Rede was one of the better remunerated of the Devon heads of houses, with a pension of £66 13s 4d, although less than the heads of the wealthier houses of Plympton, Tavistock, and Buckfast received. It was also less than Thomas Chard, abbot of Forde, despite his house having an annual income of slightly less than Torre.<sup>8</sup> This may indicate that Abbot Rede was not as well-connected as John Holbeme had suggested.

Following the surrender of their house, a number of the canons found employment as secular chaplains, either in chapels or as personal chantry chaplains. In what is perhaps a testament to their connection to the locality, none moved far. Henry Bagwell, a university graduate, was employed as a chaplain by the parishioners of Kenton, John Payne by those of East Teignmouth, and Thomas Clement by those of Kingskerswell. Two found livings as personal chaplains, Thomas James for Agnes Thorn at Broadhempston,

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<sup>4</sup> DRO Z 19/8/3/131-2.

<sup>5</sup> M. Westcott, 'Katherine Courtenay, Countess of Devon, 1479-1527', in T. Gray *et al.* (eds.), *Tudor and Stuart Devon: The Common Estate and Government* (Exeter, 1992), p. 31; W. Pole, *Collections towards a History of the County of Devon* (London, 1791), p. 89.

<sup>6</sup> DRO Z 19/8/3/16, 19, 67, 97-8, 122-3.

<sup>7</sup> TNA E 322/246; *L&P*, xiv (1), p. 135; xv, p. 543.

<sup>8</sup> L. S. Snell, *The Suppression of the Religious Foundations of Devon and Cornwall* (Marazion, 1967), pp. 139-52.



and John Wyll, who travelled the least distance from the house, being employed by Thomas Cary at Cockington.<sup>9</sup> Abbot Rede had the best situation, for as well as his substantial pension, he continued to hold the vicarage of Townstal to which he had been appointed in 1531.<sup>10</sup> Yet on his death in 1555/6 not only did he bequeath more to the church of Stoke Fleming than to the parish he had served for 24 years, but was also buried in the former.<sup>11</sup> There is no evidence of his family living in the parish in the 1524 lay subsidy, although there must have been some personal local connection. His antagonist, John Holbeme, in what was either a deliberate act or a twist of fate, died in 1566 and was buried in East Ogwell church, under the re-used gravestone of Abbot William Norton.

## Conclusion

For ease of analysis, the various aspects of the abbey's interaction with lay society have been considered largely in isolation. Yet it is clear that this is a highly artificial distinction, and the individual facets of the monastic-lay relationship must be considered as merely parts of an intrinsically linked whole. At certain points throughout this thesis the interplay of themes has been noted, but it is now possible to show, albeit only roughly, how the monastic-lay relationship and its effects at Torre operated on a broader scale. While Torre was only one medium-sized rural abbey in a distant corner of England, and the exact details of its history are unique to its situation, the generalities of its social experiences may be applied more widely as a speculative 'ideal type' of monastic involvement with local society. Such a general picture can only be created from an understanding of the inter-connectedness of the various strands from which the history of the abbey has been constructed in this thesis – lay and monastic patronage, recruitment, disputes, local

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<sup>9</sup> F. Rose-Troup, 'Lists Relating to Persons Ejected from Religious Houses', *DCNQ*, 17 (1932-3), pp. 85-93.

<sup>10</sup> See Chapter 8, p. 276.

<sup>11</sup> *MDE*, pp. 171-2.

politics, pastoral care, internal discipline, and so on. We must be wary, however, of creating a picture that is *too* coherent. The often chronologically restricted range of sources for various aspects of the monastic-lay relationship invites the suggestion that there were various ‘eras’ in the history of Torre – that the thirteenth century was one of patronage and the fourteenth century one of dispute, for example. Yet by stating that source bias hides a continuity of themes across centuries is to argue from an often complete absence of positive evidence. An interdisciplinary approach aids in reconstructing some elements of social action, although the problems involved in interpreting ‘physical’ evidence have been noted. The truly broad themes, such as patronage, are perhaps less problematic, but difficulties arise when judgements must be made about the extent to which seemingly stand-alone dramatic events fit into a wider picture of social interaction. This problem is exacerbated by a lack of historiography for a number of the approaches taken in this thesis.

It would be fair to state that the seed of Torre’s interaction with local society was planted by its founder, and, to continue the analogy, he was able to determine the nature of the plant that sprung from it. A small, impecunious house, surrounded by its granges and with few or no tenants, as may be found at a number of Premonstratensian, Cistercian, and other abbeys, would clearly have a small social footprint in its locality. Torre, on the other hand, with its urban tenants, whole manors, and urban parishes, was intimately involved in local society from its foundation. This made it unusual for its order, but, in terms of the totality of English monasticism, a normal medium-sized house. That a close involvement with local society was not just an option but a necessity is clear. The canons were landlords; they had to exercise cure of souls in their many parishes; their numerous, widespread, and neatly parcelled lands would be farmed out to the local gentry when economic circumstances dictated. Furthermore, the wealth of the house placed the abbot, as its most prominent representative, on a par with the leading gentry of the region. This

combination of wealth and social status gave the canons a prominent presence in the locality, which led in turn to the abbey both attracting a higher status of patron after the death of their founder and having the financial resources to compete effectively in the land market. As we previously noted on this point, also, the ability to attract grants from patrons and to effect sales should not be considered as mutually exclusive: the reality of the monastic acquisition of land was more complex than a simple gift/sale dichotomy.

Within this last complexity we may identify the germ of a theme that recurs throughout our analysis of Torre's social interactions: the symbiotic relationship between monastery and society. Many studies reduce the relationship between monasteries and lay society to single instances of contact – the granting of land, cash, or memorial goods, or of a body for burial – and ignore the pre-existing relationship between the patron and the object of his patronage. The evidence by which a knowledge of such events has come down to us may tend to that impression, but this most visible act of patronage would more often than not have represented only one facet of a relationship which was by no means so one-sided. A monastery such as Torre was able to dispense a great deal of patronage itself, through its employment, favourable leases, loans, the reception of family members as inmates, and much more, to say nothing of the spiritual services offered through the daily round of the canons. Both parties therefore provided a service for the other, only one small part of which has normally survived, and the returns provided by the monastery were certainly not confined to the spiritual realm. When this relationship was unbalanced or disrupted by one party or the other, there could be serious and sometimes violent repercussions. Thus when Geoffrey Gras felt his position as a prominent patron of the abbey might be threatened by the usurpation of an abbot who was not favourable to him, he conspired to have him removed by force. The difficulty, danger, and expense of such an

undertaking surely indicates the importance of the patronal relationship to the laity, as well as the canons.

Of course, this symbiotic interaction could hardly fail to affect life at the abbey itself. Even if, as it would appear was the case, the canons attempted to maintain internal discipline and the performance of the daily round, at a basic level at least, they could not escape the pervasive influence of the society in which they lived, and from which they were drawn. As much as the monastic code may emphasise the rejection of the world on entry to the house, in reality the close bonds of family and society were not so easily broken. That some canons, increasingly so in the later centuries, chose to retain their familial surnames rather than adopt a new one on profession suggests a continued attachment, and, in the case of gentry names, even a pride in social origins. The effects on the nature of communal life may be read in the architectural changes of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. These, along with the partial documentary evidence, reveal the increasing separation of the abbot from the cloister and the establishment of his household, and the dissolution of communal sleeping and eating arrangements with the creation of separate chambers for the obedientaries. This development was facilitated by the disappearance from the cloister of the quasi-monastic lay brothers, and the resulting changes in function of the western range also reveal an opening-up of the cloister to ingress from the western, secular, side.

Having said this much, a word of caution is necessary. The integration of the abbey with the secular world was pervasive, as can be seen throughout this thesis, yet it was not excessive. There are no reports of the complete degeneration of the monastic life, and where the canons of Torre appear in the records of the order they at least maintain the semblance of a communal and regular life. We should not dismiss their piety, but it must be tempered with the understanding that almost all their actions were influenced by their

social networks. Even in the exercise of pastoral care at their parish churches, the canons jealously guarded their rights and income against the wishes of their parishioners. Perhaps most notably, the imposition of canons to personally provide cure of souls was less a pastoral decision than an economic and social one – to provide a measure of supervision and control over the potentially unruly or more distant parishioners and the revenues they provided. Thus, also, when the locality of the abbey was seriously affected by the tides of national politics, the canons could not help but be drawn in. Their connections with local society were too strong for them to stay passive and, even if they had wished to do so, a pragmatic approach to local diplomacy would take the form of their involvement with the dominant power of the time. During the Wars of the Roses this manifested itself in a policy of connection to the Dinhams and Bouchiers during the Yorkist ascendancy, and displays of allegiance to the Courtenays and the new regime after 1485. Yet ensuring that useful and powerful figures in the region were within the social orbit of the abbey would have been a routine part of the abbot's networking role, and would by no means have been confined to periods of national strife.

The relationship between monasteries such as Torre and the local society in which they were situated is thus close and complex, but worthy of detailed study. A wide range of economic, social, and spiritual factors affected the actions of both sides in their dealings with the other. To dismiss any one factor, as much previous historiography was wont to do, is to omit an important motive in the totality of the monastic-lay relationship. Furthermore, there is a great deal of information which it has not been possible to include in this thesis. This in itself should hopefully encourage wider study of smaller, rural monasteries utilising a wide variety of evidence – both documentary and physical – and approaches. Very little of what has been found at Torre is unique to the abbey, yet much does not appear in more general works because it has not been identified at the larger

abbeys. We should not assume that the monastic experience was homogenous, and in focusing on single case studies it is possible to draw out numerous revealing incidents and themes of monastic-lay interaction and community life that have previously escaped notice. The possibilities for further study in this area are immense and exciting, not just in Devon, but throughout the country.

## APPENDIX 1

### The Abbots of Torre

Only first and last occurrences of abbots are given, for the purposes of establishing chronology. Further references may be found in D. M. Smith *et al.* (eds.) *Heads of Religious Houses: England and Wales* (Cambridge, 2001-08), i, pp. 198, 289; ii, pp. 512-3; iii, pp. 587-8. Other lists may be found in *WC*, pp. 416-7 and *TA*, pp. 26-45, although all of the above contain some errors and omissions.

**Adam 1196**— First abbot, arrived 25<sup>th</sup> March 1196, transferred to Newhouse c. 3½ years later, i.e. in mid. 1199 (*CAP*, iii, p. 141)

**John** occ. 1200 (*Rot. Chart.*, p. 99)

**W.** occ. 1207x1208 (EC 174)

**Roger** occ. early 13<sup>th</sup> C. (EC 35, 160)

**Robert** occ. 1223-1228 (EC 146, 187)

**Laurence** occ. 1231-1246 (DC fo. 155r; EC 295)

**Simon –1264** occ. 1252 (DC fo. 37r; Watkin, *Totnes*, i, pp. 162)

**Brian 1264-1270** (*Reg. Bronescombe*, ii, p. 10)

**Richard 1270**— occ. 1301 (*Reg. Bronescombe*, ii, p. 40; EC 17)

**John le Rous –1330** occ. 1306 (EC 189)

**Simon de Plympton 1330-1345** (*Reg. Grandisson*, i, pp. 568-9; ii, pp. 1109-10)

**John de Gras 1345-1349** (*Reg. Grandisson*, ii, pp. 1002, 1109-10)

**John de Berkadone 1349-1382** (*Reg. Grandisson*, ii, p. 1082)

Richard de Cotelford claimant 1345-1351, see pp. 174-86 above.

**William Norton 1382-1412** (*Reg. Brantyngham*, i, p. 476)

**Matthew Yerde 1412-1414** Resigned, appointed vicar of Skidbrook church, Lincs (*Reg. Stafford*, pp. 214, 350; LA DIOC/REG/14 fo. 68v)

**William Mychel 1414-1441** (*Reg. Stafford*, pp. 214, 350)

**John Lacy 1442-55** (*Reg. Lacy*, i, pp. 267-8; *CAP*, iii, pp. 137-8)

**Richard Cade 1456-1483** Eighteenth abbot. (*Reg. Thom. Bourghier*, p. 153; Watkin, *Dartmouth*, p. 136; *CAP*, iii, pp. 142-8; see pp. 219-20 above)

**Thomas Dyer –1523** occ. 1488 (*CAP*, iii, p. 149; DRO Chanter MS 15, fo. 7v)

**Simon Rede 1523-1539** (DRO Chanter MS 15, fo. 20v; TNA E 322/246)

## APPENDIX 2

### Canons of Torre with known surnames or bynames

Only those canons whose full names can be recovered are included in this list. Dates given for each canons are their first and last appearances in the sources.

Abbreviations:

Presb – ordained priest

Deac – ordained deacon

Subd – ordained subdeacon

Acc – ordained acolyte



| Date occurs   | Name                  | Position   | Sources  |
|---------------|-----------------------|--|--|
| 1238          | Robert de Torkeshege  |  | <i>Crown Pleas of the Devon Eyre of 1238</i> , p. 115  |
| 1241          | Thomas de Thorre      |  | <i>CRR</i> , xvi, pp. 264, 298   |
| 1241          | Richard de Punchardon |  | <i>CRR</i> , xvi, p. 264   |
| 1241          | Hugo de Thorre        |  | <i>CRR</i> , xvi, p. 298   |
| 1265          | William de Worlond    |  | DC fo. 166v  |
| 1270x1302     | W de Exeter           | Subprior?  | DC fo. 161v, 162r?   |
| c.1280-c.1309 | Richard de Yalmeton   | Cellarer   | DC fos. 4v, 165r   |
| 1280x1291     | R de Chagford         |  | DC fo. 166r  |
| 1280x1291     | Richard de Hinentone  |  | DC fo. 160r  |
| 1296-1307     | Richard de Exeter     |  | DC fos. 15r, 166r  |
| 1305-1330     | John le Rous          | Abbot occ. 1305-1330   | EC 189   |
| 1309          | Henry de Coletone     | Presb 1309   | <i>Reg. Stapledon</i> , p. 463   |
| 1314-15       | John Beaumont/Beamund | Deac 1314, Presb 1315  | <i>Reg. Stapledon</i> , p. 502   |
| 1315-17       | William Drake         | Deac 1315, Presb, 1318   | <i>Reg. Stapledon</i> , pp. 506, 511, 521  |
| 1316-18       | Thomas Gras           | Subd 1316, Deac 1318, Presb 1318                               | <i>Reg. Stapledon</i> , pp. 511, 516, 521  |
| 1316-18       | Thomas de Plympton    | Cellarer   | DC fos. 14v, 15v, 161r   |
| 1316-51       | John Degh/Gogh        | Subd 1316, Deac 1318, Presb 1318; Subprior 1345                | <i>Reg. Stapledon</i> , pp. 511, 516, 521; <i>CPL</i> , iii, p. 340                          |
| 1318          | Roger de la Lake      |  | DC fo. 161r  |
| 1318-45       | Simon de Plympton     | Abbot 1330-45  | <i>Reg. Stapledon</i> , pp. 516, 521; <i>Reg. Grandisson</i> , i, pp. 568-9; ii, pp. 1109-10 |
| 1321          | William de Bois       |  | <i>Reg. Stapledon</i> , p. 533   |
| 1330-3        | John de Elmore        | Moved from Llanthony Secunda; Vicar of Buckland<br>Brewer 1333 | <i>Reg. Grandisson</i> , i, p. 249; iii, p. 1297   |
| 1345          | John Bodeam           |  | <i>CPL</i> , iii, p. 340   |
| 1345-9        | John Gras             | Abbot 1345-9   | <i>CPL</i> , iii, p. 340; <i>Reg. Grandisson</i> , ii, p. 1002                               |
| 1345-58       | George de Grimston    |  | <i>Ibid.</i> ; <i>Reg. Grandisson</i> , ii, p. 1195  |

|           |                                |   |  |
|-----------|--------------------------------|---|--|
| 1345-82   | John de Berkadone              | Abbot 1349-82   | <i>CPL</i> , iii, p. 340; TNA E 179/24/9 m. 1  |
| 1345      | John de Stoucombe              |   | <i>Ibid.</i>   |
| 1345-52   | Richard de Cotelford           | Prior   | <i>Ibid.</i>   |
| 1345      | Richard de Hamptisforde        | Cellarer  | <i>Reg. Grandisson</i> , ii, p. 1109   |
| 1363-79   | Guy de Grimston                |   | <i>CPR</i> , 1361-4, p. 369; TNA E 179 24/9  |
| 1363-1412 | William Norton                 | Vicar of Bradworthy 1373-82; Abbot 1382-1412  | <i>CPR</i> , 1361-4, p. 369; <i>Reg. Brantyngham</i> , i, pp. 78, 82, 476  |
| 1363-79   | Geoffrey Baroun                | Vicar of Townstal 1374  | <i>CPR</i> , 1361-4, p. 369; TNA E 179 24/9; <i>Reg. Brantyngham</i> , i, p. 33                                    |
| 1371-9    | John Tilly                     | Acc 1371, Subd 1371, Deac 1372, Presb 1373  | <i>Reg. Brantyngham</i> , ii, pp. 757, 765, 767, 777   |
| 1371-9    | Giles Puling                   | Acc 1371, Subd 1371, Deac 1372, Presb 1373  | <i>Reg. Brantyngham</i> , ii, pp. 757, 765, 767, 777   |
| 1371-82   | Richard Sele                   | Subd 1371, Deac 1372, Presb 1373; Vicar of Bradworthy 1382                              | <i>Reg. Brantyngham</i> , i, p. 82, ii, pp. 757, 771, 777  |
| 1371-9    | John Grendel                   | Subd 1371, Deac 1372, Presb 1373  | <i>Reg. Brantyngham</i> , ii, pp. 757, 771, 777  |
| 1372-9    | Richard Uppham 'le Epistolier' | Subd 1372, Deac 1372, Presb 1373  | <i>Reg. Brantyngham</i> , ii, pp. 767, 771, 777  |
| 1372-9    | William Horsford               | Presb 1372  | <i>Reg. Brantyngham</i> , ii, p. 767   |
| 1372-79   | Thomas Burgess                 | Vicar of Townstal ?-1374; Precentor 1376  | TNA E 179 24/9; <i>Reg. Brantyngham</i> , i, p. 33; Watkin, <i>Dartmouth</i> , p. 286                              |
| 1379-1400 | John Bilney                    | King's chaplain   | TNA E 179 24/9; <i>CPR</i> , 1377-81, p. 537; 1385-9, p. 314   |
| 1383-1414 | Matthew Yerde                  | Deac 1383, Presb 1383, Vicar of Townstal 1394-6; Abbot 1412-14; Vicar of Skidbrook 1414 | <i>Reg. Brantyngham</i> , i, p. 137; ii, pp. 838, 841; <i>Reg. Stafford</i> , pp. 215, 350; LA DIOC/REG/14 fo. 68v |
| 1386-7    | John Setone                    | Acc 1386, Subd 1387   | <i>Reg. Brantyngham</i> , ii, pp. 852, 855   |
| 1386-1419 | John Somaister                 | Acc 1386, Subd 1387, Deac 1389, Presb 1391; Inst rector of Thurstlestone 1419           | <i>Reg. Brantyngham</i> , ii, pp. 852, 857, 861, 870; <i>Reg. Stafford</i> , p. 213                                |
| 1387-91   | Peter Osanna                   | Acc 1387, Subd 1387, Deac 1388, Presb 1391  | <i>Reg. Brantyngham</i> , ii, pp. 854, 857, 858, 869   |
| 1390-1    | Simon Hastings                 | Acc 1390, Subd 1391, Deac 1391, Presb 1391  | <i>Reg. Brantyngham</i> , ii, pp. 868, 869, 870, 872   |
| 1390-1    | Richard Middlecote             | Acc 1390, Subd 1391   | <i>Reg. Brantyngham</i> , ii, pp. 868, 870   |
| 1391-1400 | Nicholas de Cherleton          | Vicar of Townstal 1391-4; 1396-1400   | <i>Reg. Brantyngham</i> , i, pp. 113, 137; <i>Reg. Stafford</i> , p. 215   |

|           |                           |  |   |
|-----------|---------------------------|--|---|
| 1392-6    | Thomas Akkelane           | Acc 1392, Subd 1392, Presb 1396  | <i>Reg. Brantyngham</i> , ii, pp. 874, 876, DRO Chanter MS 8, fo. 250v  |
| 1392-1406 | Richard Bradworthy        | Subd 1392, Deac 1392, Vicar of Townstal 1400-6                                       | <i>Reg. Brantyngham</i> , ii, pp. 874, 876  |
| 1392-1433 | John Brygges/Burghe?      | Subd 1392, Presb 1397, [Burghe, Vicar of Townstal 1414-33, d. 1433]                  | <i>Reg. Brantyngham</i> , ii, p. 876; DRO Chanter MS 8, fo. 251r; <i>Reg. Stafford</i> , p. 215; <i>Reg. Lacy</i> , i, p. 157 |
| 1395-1404 | John Cook                 | Acc 1395, Subd 1400, Deac 1400, Presb 1404   | DRO Chanter MS 8, fos. 249r, 254v, 256r, 259v   |
| 1396-1413 | John Doulton              | Subd 1396, Deac 1397, Presb 1400, Assaulted 1413                                     | DRO Chanter MS 8, fos. 250v, 251r, 254v; <i>Reg. Stafford</i> , p. 68   |
| 1396-1441 | William Mychel            | Deac 1396, Presb 1397, Vicar of Townstal 1406-14; Abbot 1414-41                      | DRO Chanter MS 8, fos. 250v, 251r; <i>Reg. Stafford</i> , pp. 215, 350; <i>Reg. Lacy</i> , I, pp. 267-8                       |
| 1397-1415 | John Hylle                | Acc 1397, Subd 1414, Presb 1415  | DRO Chanter MS 8, fos. 251r, 286r, 286v   |
| 1409-10   | Thomas Skoch              | Acc 1409, Deac 1410, Presb 1410  | DRO Chanter MS 8, fos. 273r, 273v, 274v   |
| 1414-16   | John Bromford             | Deac 1414, Presb 1416  | DRO Chanter MS 8, fos. 285r, 291v   |
| 1414-55   | John Lacy                 | Deac 1414, Presb 1416, Vicar of Townstal 1433-42; Abbot 1442-55                      | DRO Chanter MS 8, fos. 285r, 291v; <i>Reg. Lacy</i> , i, pp. 157, 268   |
| 1419      | John Fokeray              | Acc 1419   | DRO Chanter MS 8, fo. 298r  |
| 1419      | Nicholas Willelmi         | Acc 1419   | DRO Chanter MS 8, fo. 298r  |
| 1421-6    | Henry Benet               | Acc 1421, Deac 1422, Presb 1426  | <i>Reg. Lacy</i> IV, pp. 72, 74, 76, 100  |
| 1421      | John Bourton              | Acc 1421   | <i>Reg. Lacy</i> IV, p. 72  |
| 1422-4    | Thomas Sadeler            | Acc 1422, Subd 1422, Deac 1423, Presb 1424   | <i>Reg. Lacy</i> IV, pp. 78, 80, 90   |
| 1422-3    | Thomas Maior              | Acc 1422, Subd 1422, Deac 1423, Presb 1423   | <i>Reg. Lacy</i> IV, pp. 78, 80, 84   |
| 1426-78   | William Teyngmouth/Hamond | (Acc 1426, Subd 1426, as Teyngmouth), Deac 1427, Presb 1429                          | <i>Reg. Lacy</i> IV, pp. 104, 115, 130; <i>CAP</i> , iii, p. 145  |
| 1426-83   | Richard Cade              | Acc 1426, Subd 1426, Deac 1427, Presb 1428, Vicar of Townstal 1442-56; Abbot 1456-83 | <i>Reg. Lacy</i> , i, p. 272; IV, pp. 104, 115, 122; <i>CAP</i> , iii, pp. 137-41, 145, 148                                   |
| 1428-82   | John Dimmock              | Acc 1428, Subd 1429, Deac 1433   | <i>Reg. Lacy</i> IV, pp. 122, 123, 144; <i>CAP</i> , iii, pp. 145, 148  |
| 1428-42   | Thomas Gambon             | Acc 1428, Subd 1429, Deac 1433, Presb 1435, Vicar of Townstal 1442 (d.)              | <i>Reg. Lacy</i> , i, pp. 268, 272; IV, pp. 122, 123, 144, 159  |
| 1430-5    | William Blower            | Acc 1430, Deac 1434, Presb 1435  | <i>Reg. Lacy</i> IV, pp. 135, 152, 160  |
|           |                           |  |   |

|           |                    |  |  |
|-----------|--------------------|--|--|
| 1438-56   | William Nowell     | Acc 1438, Subd 1438, Deac 1440, Presb 1442, Prior 1456   | <i>Reg. Lacy</i> IV, pp. 168, 169, 179, 187; <i>CAP</i> , iii, p. 139  |
| 1438-82   | Richard Bittecombe | Acc 1438, Subd 1438, Deac 1440, Presb 1444, Cellarer 1478-82   | <i>Reg. Lacy</i> IV, pp. 168, 169, 179, 200; <i>CAP</i> , iii, pp. 145, 148  |
| 1444-1500 | Richard Byggode    | Acc 1444, Subd 1444, Deac 1445, Presb 1446, Circator 1491-7; Subprior 1500   | <i>Reg. Lacy</i> IV, pp. 199, 204, 208; <i>CAP</i> , iii, pp. 143, 145, 148-9, 151, 153, 155   |
| 1445-76   | William Brydon     | Acc 1445, Subd 1445, Deac 1446, Presb 1447, Vicar of Townstal 1456-76(d.)  | <i>Reg. Lacy</i> IV, pp. 204, 208, 213; <i>Reg. Thom. Bourghier</i> , p. 153; DRO Chanter MS 12, part 2, fo. 35v                                 |
| 1445-79   | Walter Speyer      | Acc 1445, Subd 1447, Presb 1449; exiled to Newhouse 1478, Durford 1479, d. there before 1482                         | <i>Reg. Lacy</i> IV, pp. 204, 212, 227; <i>CAP</i> , i, p. 150; ii, p. 194; iii, p. 143  |
| 1448-97   | William Colling    | Acc 1448, Subd 1450, Deac 1452, Presb 1454; Subprior 1478-82; Sacristan 1482; Vicar of Townstal 1488-99(d)           | <i>Reg. Lacy</i> IV, pp. 220, 232, 243, 251; <i>CAP</i> , iii, pp. 145, 148-9, 151, 153; DRO Chanter MS 12, part 2, 2 <sup>nd</sup> ser, fo. 10v |
| 1448-78   | Thomas Burnell     | Acc 1448, Subd 1450, Deac 1452   | <i>Reg. Lacy</i> IV, pp. 220, 232, 243; <i>CAP</i> , iii, p. 145   |
| 1449-94   | Robert Bentley     | Acc 1449, Subd 1453, Deac 1454, Presb 1456   | <i>Reg. Lacy</i> IV, pp. 226, 246, 250; DRO Chanter MS 12, part 1, fo. 142v; <i>CAP</i> , iii, pp. 148-9, 151, 153                               |
| 1449-56   | John Harry         | Acc 1449, Subd 1453, Deac 1454   | <i>Reg. Lacy</i> IV, pp. 226, 246, 250   |
| 1460      | Richard Weste[?]   | Acc 1460   | DRO Chanter MS 12, part 1, fo. 149v  |
| 1461-1523 | Thomas Dyer        | Subd 1461, Deac 1462; Prior 1478-82; Abbot 1483-1523   | DRO Chanter MS 12, part 1, fos. 151v, 152v; <i>CAP</i> , iii, pp. 145, 148; DRO Chanter MS 15, fo. 7v  |
| 1476-8    | John Chester       | Vicar of Dartmouth 1478  | DRO Chanter MS 12, part 2, fo. 35v; <i>CAP</i> , iii, p. 145   |
| 1478-82   | Henry Babidon      |  | <i>CAP</i> , iii, p. 145, 148  |
| 1478-82   | Richard Coringdon  | Circator and Cantor 1478-82  | <i>CAP</i> , iii, pp. 145, 148   |
| 1478      | John Stephen       | Infirmarer and Refector 1478   | <i>CAP</i> , iii, p. 145   |
| 1478-99   | John Derke         | Novice 1478; Subd 1479, Deac 1479, Presb 1479; Subprior 1488-94; Chaplain of Townstal 1497; Vicar of Bradworthy 1499 | <i>CAP</i> , iii, pp. 143, 145, 148-9, 151, 153, 155; DRO Chanter MS 12, part 2, fos. 91v, 93r, 94r; 2 <sup>nd</sup> ser., fo. 11r               |
| 1478-1514 | Roger Legge        | Novice 1478; Vicar of Bradworthy 1486-99; Vicar of Townstal 1499-1514(d)   | <i>CAP</i> , iii, pp. 145, 148-9, 151, 153, 155; DRO Chanter MS 12, part 2, 2 <sup>nd</sup> ser, fo. 10v; Chanter MS 13, fo. 57v                 |

|           |                        |   |   |
|-----------|------------------------|---|---|
| 1482      | John Churchford        |   | <i>CAP</i> , iii, p. 148  |
| 1482      | John Trompingdon       |   | <i>Ibid.</i>  |
| 1482-1539 | John Ostryge/Asteredge | Subd 1487, Deac 1487, Presb 1488; Cellarer 1497-1500                              | DRO Chanter MS 12, part 2, fos. 151v, 152v, 153v; <i>CAP</i> , iii, pp. 148-9, 151, 153, 155; TNA E 322/246   |
| 1482-1514 | Thomas Humphrey        | Cantor 1491; Subprior 1497; Prior 1500; Vicar of Townstal 1514                    | <i>CAP</i> , iii, pp. 145, 148-9, 151, 153, 155; DRO Chanter MS 13, fo. 57v                                   |
| 1482-1500 | James Cumpline         | Subd 1487, Deac 1488, Presb 1492; Succentor 1500                                  | <i>CAP</i> , iii, pp. 145, 148-9, 151, 153, 155; DRO Chanter MS 12, part 2, fos. 151v, 153v, 160r             |
| 1487-1500 | John Michell           | Subd 1487, Deac 1487, Presb 1488; Cantor 1497; Circator 1500                      | <i>CAP</i> , iii, pp. 149, 151, 153, 155; DRO Chanter MS 12, part 2, fos. 151v, 152v, 153v                    |
| 1488-1500 | John Hayman            | Succentor 1491  | <i>CAP</i> , iii, pp. 149, 151, 153, 155  |
| 1488-1500 | Adam Cook              | Acc 1490, Subd 1490, Deac 1490, Presb 1492; Infirmer 1497                         | DRO Chanter MS 12, part 2, fos. 156v, 157v, 160r; <i>CAP</i> , iii, pp. 149, 151, 153, 155                    |
| 1488-1539 | Richard Milton         | Acc 1490, Subd 1490, Deac 1490; Succentor 1497; Precentor 1500; Prior 1539        | DRO Chanter MS 12, part 2, fos. 156v, 157v; <i>CAP</i> , iii, pp. 149, 151, 153, 155; TNA E 322/246           |
| 1488      | William Schere         |   | <i>CAP</i> , iii, p. 149  |
| 1491-1500 | Edward Trevergy        | Novice 1491-4; Sacristan 1500   | <i>CAP</i> , iii, pp. 151, 153, 155   |
| 1491-1500 | John Hoper             | Novice 1491-4   | <i>CAP</i> , iii, pp. 151, 153, 155   |
| 1491-1500 | Philip Mogge           | Novice 1491-4; Subd 1497; Deac 1497, Presb 1498 called William Mug, Infirmer 1500 | <i>CAP</i> , iii, pp. 151, 153, 155; DRO Chanter MS 12, part 2, 2 <sup>nd</sup> ser., fos. 38r, 39r           |
| 1494      | Richard Dyrler         | Deac 1494   | <i>CAP</i> , iii, p. 153  |
| 1494-1500 | Peter Milward          | Novice 1494-7; Subd 1498, Deac 13th Jun 1500, Presb Dec 1500? (Called Smith?)     | <i>CAP</i> , iii, pp. 153, 155; DRO Chanter MS 12, part 2, 2 <sup>nd</sup> ser., fos. 39r, 41v, 42r           |
| 1494-1503 | John Skary             | Novice 1494; Subd 1502, Deac 1503   | <i>CAP</i> , iii, pp. 153, 155; DRO Chanter MS 12, part 2, 3 <sup>rd</sup> ser., fos. 13r, 14r                |
| 1494-1500 | James Sutton           | Novice 1494, Acc 1497, Subd 1498, Deac 1500, Presb 1500                           | <i>CAP</i> , iii, pp. 153, 155; DRO Chanter MS 12, part 2, 2 <sup>nd</sup> ser., fos. 38r, 39r, 41v, 42r      |
| 1497-1539 | Thomas Lorimer         | Novice 1497-1500, Sub 1502, Deac 1503   | <i>CAP</i> , iii, pp. 153, 155; DRO Chanter MS 12, part 2, 3 <sup>rd</sup> ser., fos. 13r, 14r; TNA E 322/246 |
| 1497-1523 | William Sherwell       | Novice 1500; Subd 1509, Deac 1511, Presb 1511; Vicar of Bradworthy 1523           | <i>CAP</i> , iii, pp. 153, 155; DRO Chanter MS 13, fos. 102r, 105v, 107v; Chanter MS 14, fo. 16v              |

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|---------|------------------|---|--|
| 1500-6  | Richard Prest    | Novice 1500, Subd 1506, Deac 1506, Presb 1506       | <i>CAP</i> , iii, p. 155; DRO Chanter MS 13, fos. 86v, 87v, 88v                              |
| 1509-39 | Thomas Clement   | Subd 1509, Deac 1511, Presb 1511                    | DRO Chanter MS 13, fos. 102r, 105v, 107v; TNA E 322/246                                      |
| 1512-39 | Simon Rede       | Subd 1512, Deac 1512, Presb 1512; Abbot 1523-39     | DRO Chanter MS 13, fos. 110r, 111r, 112r; Chanter MS 14, fo. 55r; DRO Chanter MS 15, fo. 20v |
| 1514    | John Derte       | Subd 1514, Deac 1514, Presb 1514                    | DRO Chanter MS 13, fos. 117r, 117v, 118v   |
| 1514    | Geoffrey Letyke  | Subd 1514   | DRO Chanter MS 13, fo. 117r  |
| 1525-6  | John Weymouth    | Subd 1525, Deac 1526                                | DRO Chanter MS 14, fos. 158v, 161v   |
| 1527-39 | Henry Bagwell    | At Oxford 1527-32, BA & DD                          | BRUO 1501-40, p. 20; TNA E 322/246   |
| 1530-9  | John Shapleigh   | Subd 1530   | TNA E 322/246; DRO Chanter MS 14, fo. 173v   |
| 1533-9  | John Lane        | Deac 1533; Presb 1535                               | TNA E 322/246; DRO Chanter MS 14, fos. 184r, 186v  |
| 1539    | John Wyll        | Presb 1508?, not called a canon, just ad tit. Torre | DRO Chanter MS 13, fo. 99r?; TNA E 322/246   |
| 1539    | Thomas James     |   | TNA E 322/246  |
| 1539    | John Payne       |   | TNA E 322/246  |
| 1539    | John Farmer      |   | TNA E 322/246  |
| 1539    | Thomas Bridgeman |   | TNA E 322/246  |
| 1539    | Thomas Emett     |   | TNA E 322/246  |
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| 1539    | Richard Yonge    |   | TNA E 322/246  |

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|   |   |
|---|---|
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| 347 A/PF 5                                  | Grant of land in Totnes, 1349                 |
| 3799M-0/ET                                  | Early deeds of Seymour of Berry Pomeroy       |
| Chanter MS 8                                | Episcopal register of Edmund Stafford         |
| Chanter MS 12, part 2                       | Episcopal registers 1465-95                   |
| Chanter MS 12, part 2, 2 <sup>nd</sup> ser. | Episcopal register of Richard Redman          |
| Chanter MS 12, part 2, 3 <sup>rd</sup> ser. | Episcopal register of John Arundel            |
| Chanter MS 13                               | Episcopal register of Hugh Oldham             |
| Chanter MS 14 & 15                          | Episcopal register of John Veysey             |
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| D1508M/Moger                                | Early Courtenay deeds from Powderham Castle   |
| Z 19/8/3                                    | Notebook of George Oliver, nineteenth century |

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| CP 40       | Plea Rolls   |
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|              |  |
|--------------|--|
| DL 25/213    | Grant of spiritual services to William Brewer the Younger on the anniversary of his death, 1224x1232 |
| E 40/6956    | Indenture concerning lands of William de Chambernoun, 1355   |
| E 164/19     | Cartulary of Torre Abbey, fifteenth century  |
| E 179/24/9   | Clerical subsidy for the archdeaconry of Totnes, 1379  |
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| MS Dugdale 39      | MS Collections of William Dugdale, seventeenth century           |
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