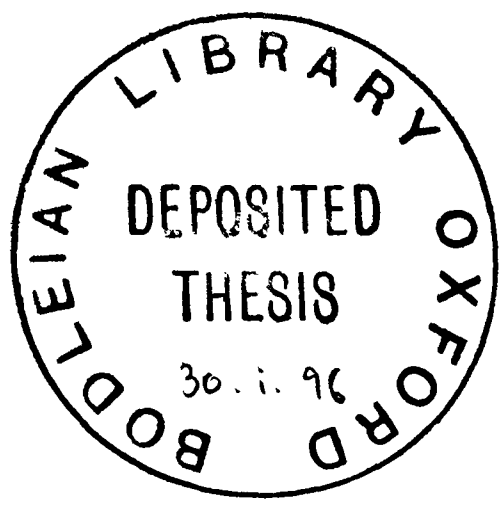
Religious life for women from the twelfth century to the middle of the fourteenth century with special reference to the English foundations of the Order of Fontevraud.

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Berenice M. Kerr,
St Anne's College, Oxford.
Trinity Term, 1995.



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The Order of Fontevraud, founded in 1100 by the hermit/preacher Robert of Arbrisssel was the only twelfth-century women's order incorporating into its structure a group of chaplains and lay brothers whose specific role was to serve the nuns. This thesis examines the origins of the order and demonstrates that the English foundations were a stage in its development, closely linked to its Angevin connections. Each of the two houses established in England c.1150 was founded and patronised by supporters of Henry Plantagenet. Westwood, founded by the de Say family, lesser barons from Herefordshire, received a modest endowment. Nuneaton, founded by the magnate Robert, earl of Leicester, was richly endowed. Twenty years later Henry II expelled the Benedictine community from Amesbury replacing it with a group from Fontevraud, thus founding the third house. A fourth, Grovebury, is not treated; it was never a foundation for women.

I have studied the process of endowment and shown that the wealth and status of the founder in no small measure determined the future prosperity of the foundation. The internal organisation of the Fontevraud houses has been explored, in particular the balance between local autonomy and dependence on the mother house. As well, I have examined recruitment and shown that this, too, reflected on the circumstances of foundation.

My main focus has been on the economy of these three houses, their income and expenditure and the exploitation of their assets. The nuns are seen as a group of women who were dynamic and creative in managing their affairs. This has not precluded an investigation into the spiritual, and in particular, the liturgical dimension of life in the English foundations. Fundamentally the Order of Fontevraud is presented as an opportunity for noble women of England in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries to live religious life in a new order, one renowned for its strict interpretation of the Rule of St Benedict and for the prayerfulness of its members, and one in which women were manifestly in control of their own destinies.

At the beginning of the twelfth century there were about fifteen religious houses for women in England, all of them Benedictine. During the next fifty years this number increased by more than 300% and continued to increase. In this thesis I have tried to add to the understanding of religious life for women in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, in particular the life lived by women in the English foundations of the Fontevraud Order, often termed 'double' houses. Founded specifically for women and independent of any male control, Fontevraud was unique among the new orders in that it integrated into its structure a group of chaplains whose role was to serve the needs of the nuns. One of my important conclusions is that within this order, from the time of its institution, the women were dominant and remained so until the end. This is discussed in the Introduction and in Chapter I, but it is a theme which recurs throughout the entire thesis.

A necessary preliminary to understanding the order is an understanding of the life of the founder. I show the importance of seeing Robert of Arbrissel essentially as a hermit/preacher who, almost despite himself, became a founder when he was constrained by authority to stabilise the group which followed him by giving them permanent shelter and a rule of life. I thus present the foundation of the order in its social and historical context and examine its development as an evolutionary process rather than as an isolated phenomenon. I have made use of a recently-published complete version of one the principal sources of the founder's life, which was thought to have survived in truncated form only until the discovery in 1981 of an early sixteenth-century French translation.[1] The source is dealt with in the Introduction and it is fundamental to Chapter I, where the life of the founder, the circumstances surrounding the foundation and the development of the order are discussed.

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[1] BN. MS fr. 2468. *La vie de M. Robert de Arbrissel, instituteur de l'ordre de Fontevrault par Baldrich, arcevesque de Doles, augmentée par Frère André, mise en français par un religieux de Fontaines, F. G. Boudet.* (printed in Dalarun, *Sainteté,* pp. 264-299).

A common and mistaken view of medieval religious women is that they were all members of the aristocracy. In the case of the Fontevraud Order, however, this was generally the case. While acknowledging that at the beginning, Robert's following was a heterogeneous group of reformed prostitutes, beggars and probably had a substantial middle-class element as well as noble women, I show that within a short time of the order's foundation he returned to his life of preaching and confided its direction to two noblewomen. Whenever new houses were established it was Robert's practice to place noblewomen in charge of them. The aristocratic direction of the order was thus present from the early days, and, far from being a corruption of the ideal, was, as I demonstrate in Chapter I, necessary for its survival.

The first fifty years of the history of Fontevraud was a period of rapid growth and expansion, during which the order, which had become closely identified with the comital house of Anjou, attracted powerful patrons and rich benefactions and came to be regarded as one of the most prestigious and influential orders in the church. By the middle of the twelfth century, foundations in England were possible. I demonstrate in Chapter 2 that it was no accident that these foundations coincided with the accession to the English throne of Henry Plantagenet, Duke of Anjou.

To date there has not been any specialised study of the three houses of the order which were established in England. Individual houses have been treated in the relevant volumes of the *Victoria County History* and the order as a whole has been treated as part of larger works, for example, those of Sally Thompson and Janet Burton.[2] Shorter articles have concerned themselves with one or other of the aspects of the history of the houses but there has

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2 *VCH War*, ii, pp. 66-70; *VCH Wilts.*, iii, pp. 242-258; *VCH Worc.*, ii, pp. 148-151; S. Thompson, *Women Religious: The Founding of English Nunneries after the Norman Conquest* (Oxford, 1991); J. Burton, *Monastic and Religious Orders in Britain, 1000-1300* (Cambridge, 1994).

been no comprehensive investigation of the order *per se* in England nor of its contribution to religious life for women.[3] This thesis is, in a sense, a response to that lack. More specifically, Chapter 2 treats the background to each of the English foundations and in doing so attempts to correct some imbalances of judgement which have resulted from the fragmented nature of the history of the order in England.

The founders of the English houses differed widely in social status. The baronial seat of de Say family, founders of Westwood, was in Herefordshire. Their foundation was patronised mainly by lesser barons like themselves, men obviously pro-Angevin but without the means to finance anything other than a modest house for a few nuns and chaplains. Nuneaton, by contrast, was founded by the magnate Robert Beaumont, *le Bossu,* earl of Leicester, in an outward demonstration of his allegiance to Henry. From its beginning Nuneaton was richly endowed with land and rents spread over a wide area, some of them extremely lucrative. Amesbury, founded some twenty years after the other two, was a royal foundation. It was probably in part fulfilment of his vow to found three monasteries as penance for his complicity in Becket's murder, that Henry II brought a group of nuns from Fontevraud and settled them at Amesbury. The new priory inherited the wealth of the pre-Conquest abbey to which Henry added other benefactions.

I have examined the consequences of the different circumstances surrounding the foundation of each house and have concluded that in each case the status of the founder and the wealth of the initial endowment determined the nature and extent of its subsequent acquisitions and hence its ultimate prosperity. Thus Amesbury profited from its royal connections and achieved a position of influence; Nuneaton continued to attract benefactions from the rich and

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3 Shorter articles include J. Smith, 'Robert of Arbrissel: *procurator mulierum*', in *Medieval Women*, ed. D. Baker (Oxford, 1978), pp. 175-184; J.T. Appelby, 'The Ecclesiastical Foundations of Henry ll', *Catholic Historical Review*, xlviii (1962-30), pp. 205-15; M. Chibnall, 'L'Ordre de Fontevrault en Angleterre au Xlle Siècle', *CCM* xxix (1986), pp. 41-47; H.F. Chettle, 'The English Houses of the Order of Fontevrault', *The Downside Review,* NS, lxi (1942), pp. 33-55.

powerful and, from a position of financial strength, was able to invest in properties with a potential for high returns; Westwood's lack of a substantial disposable income meant that it remained small and relatively poor. A fourth house, Grovebury, is not treated in this thesis as it was a house of brothers only, an alien priory, from which representatives of the abbess looked after her English properties. Foundation, endowment and acquisition of property are examined in Chapter 2.

My study of the foundation and endowment of the houses has been enhanced by my use of a body of documents, generally unnoticed by researchers, relating specifically to Westwood priory and housed in the Birmingham Central Library. The Hampton family papers have not been used in any known study of Westwood and my use of them has meant that the written history of this priory, its benefactors, its involvement in industry and its management of its resources, has been considerably extended. These and my other main sources are discussed in the Introduction.

My focus has, to a large extent, been economic, simply because the bulk of surviving evidence has lent itself to an exploration of the priories' income and expenditure and the exploitation of their resources. This could have been a disadvantage. However, I believe it to be advantageous for two reasons. Firstly, the study of the economies of women's houses has been, by and large, neglected. Secondly, some misleading conclusions about the involvement of women religious in economic matters, based on inadequate and sometimes fragile evidence, have achieved a certain currency. I have tried, in Chapters 5 and 6 to correct these views by presenting the nuns in these houses as women who displayed enterprise and initiative in the exploitation of their assets. I show, for example, that Westwood was involved in the salt industry at Droitwich, that Amesbury had a profitable wool economy and that Nuneaton was responsible for a scheme of urban development which ultimately changed the character of that town and brought considerable prosperity to the region. I demonstrate also that each priory derived income from spiritualities corresponding to the level of its initial endowment. By

examining their acquisitions and by studying the value of their assets in 1535, I show that Amesbury received a significant proportion of its income from spiritual sources while Westwood and Nuneaton were proportionally about equal in this respect.

Study of the religious dimension of the lives of medieval women is fundamental to the thesis but the nature of surviving source material makes it difficult to draw anything other than general conclusions on this topic. Nevertheless I have shown how the statutes of the order reveal the particular Fontevraud interpretation of the Rule of St Benedict and, by using calendars, breviaries and books of hours have been able to indicate that the liturgical cycle at Amesbury incorporated feasts with a 'Fontevraud' orientation and that the cult of the founder survived in at least one of the English houses. The monastic day, liturgical practice and devotions are discussed in Chapter 3 while the statutes are treated earlier, in conjunction with the life of the founder, in Chapter I.

One of the most teasing problems concerning medieval religious is the identity of recruits. Although I have discovered fewer names than I had hoped, I have managed to throw some light on this particular problem showing that, generally speaking, the clientele of each priory was a reflection of its status. This, in turn, was determined at the time of its foundation and endowment. Members of Westwood seem to have been, by and large, daughters of local families, wealthy landowners or lesser nobility. Nuneaton's early recruits came from the families of the Leicester household and their associates, a trend which probably continued. Amesbury's association with the Angevin dynasty meant that members of the royal family became nuns there. The widow and three grand-daughters of Henry III were among them. One of the grand-daughters, Eleanor of Brittany, moved to Fontevraud, where, in 1304, she was elected sixteenth abbess of the order. Recruitment in general is looked at in Chapter 2 and the Appendix contains a list of all known members of the English houses, male and female.

I have been able use the material remains at Nuneaton and documentary evidence from Amesbury to conclude that the inhabitants of both these monasteries were materially well-provided for, thus rectifying some current misconceptions on the subject of living conditions in women's houses. Given the standards of the time, Nuneaton's must have been a well-equipped, functional set of buildings. Both Amesbury and Nuneaton extended the buildings initially provided for them, while at Amesbury private chambers were built to accommodate some of the noblewomen and possibly to alleviate overcrowding.

The internal organisation of religious houses has long attracted attention. In the case of the Order of Fontevraud it is of particular interest as it is necessary to establish the extent of local autonomy vis-à-vis the control of the mother house. I show in Chapter 4 that Fontevraud controlled the appointment of superiors and regularly sent canonical visitors to the dependent houses to scrutinise accounts and to investigate discipline and religious spirit. Houses sent representatives to general chapters held at Fontevraud at which policy on matters affecting the order as a whole was determined. On the local level the prioress was in charge of all matters except spiritual which were the domain of the prior, the superior of the brothers. In practice the latter assumed some of the responsibility for temporal administration of the priory estates, but always at the discretion of and in obedience to the prioress. Relationships between the mother house and the priories were sometimes strained. Amesbury, towards the end of the thirteenth century, and Nuneaton in the early fourteenth, both disputed the right of Fontevraud to appoint the prioress.

The extent of local autonomy is illustrated in the sophisticated system of centralised accounting which was demonstrably in place at Amesbury and possibly at the other two houses at the beginning of the fourteenth century. Obedientiaries in control of funds accounted to a receiver who was in charge of the central treasury and all dispersals. It is difficult to determine whether any of the three monasteries ever 'balanced the budget' in the modern sense of the phrase. Surviving accounts do not provide as complete a picture as one might wish but on the

basis of these I have been able to conclude that during the years of the agricultural crisis Amesbury managed fairly well. During the 1320's Nuneaton was heavily in debt, a state which could have been linked to the rift which had occurred with Fontevraud. Later, a recovery is evident but the second half of the fourteenth century saw renewed problems both financial and disciplinary. Westwood, from what we can gather, had to struggle to make ends meet and needed to rely on credit to finance its day-to-day existence. The questions of priory finances, of income and expenditure, are discussed in Chapter 4.

Like that of every scholar labouring in this field, my work is partially dependent on the insights of others. The particular value of this thesis lies, I believe, in its consideration of the history of the houses in the context of the history of the order and its demonstration that the English foundations were a stage in the evolutionary process of the order, closely linked with its Angevin connections. My investigation of the problems of recruitment and of the internal organisation of the priories has also been valuable. A significant conclusion concerns the level to which these nuns were involved in economic matters: that, far from being passive, they behaved similarly to secular lords and wielded far more power than would have been possible had they been outside the cloister. Of value too, is my conclusion that the endowment of each monastery determined its recruitment and future prosperity. Fundamentally, however, I have presented the Order of Fontevraud as a real alternative for noble women who chose to live a religious life in the twelfth and thirteenth century. This was an order prestigious, autonomous, and independent, renowned for its strict interpretation of the Rule of St Benedict and for the prayerfulness of its members. It was, furthermore, a group of women who actively managed their own affairs and were in control of their own destinies.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.

Iucundi acti labores. (Cicero, *De finibus*, ii, 105).

When I began researching religious life for medieval women I was happily unaware of the extent of the task I had undertaken. Had I known that as well as reading history, I would be studying theology, canon and civil law, urban geography, social anthropology and archaeology, I may have hesitated, reasoning that all this was beyond my capabilities. But as I explored these avenues I found my curiosity whetted, my horizons broadened and my preconceptions challenged. I experienced the stimulation of discovering new associations, the excitement of proposing different interpretations and the satisfaction born of developing an empathy with women from another age and a different social milieu with whom I nevertheless share a fundamental reality. That I would attend Mass in a chapel at Nuneaton where seven centuries ago, 'my' nuns had prayed; that I would hold a breviary which had belonged to a nun of Amesbury, that I would 'discover' a prioress of Westwood who hitherto had been unacknowledged . . . these were experiences which, at the outset, I did not know awaited me, and they are experiences which left a deep impression.

Medieval women notwithstanding, it is to a woman who is very much the product of the twentieth century that I first must pay tribute. Barbara Harvey, who supervised my work and gave direction to my research has been an inspiration, a guide and above all, a good friend. For three years she has offered encouragement, advice and constructive criticism unstintingly and without qualification. Frequently, my prayer has been one of thanks to God that my research was carried out under the guidance of a woman whose wisdom and erudition are so respected in academic circles and who always found time to guide the steps of a beginner. I admire her scholarship, respect her integrity - both personal and professional - treasure her friendship, and I offer her my deepest gratitude.

There are others to whom I owe thanks and I hope these acknowledgements will go some way towards paying my debt. My college tutor, Mrs Jean Dunbabin, has shown an interest in me and my work beginning from the day I arrived in Oxford. She it was who first directed my interest towards the order of Fontevraud. St Anne's College and the Arnold, Bryce and Read Fund gave me monetary assistance which enabled me to consult original material in France. Others who have been generous with their assistance include Dr. Richard Sharpe who helped with difficult charters, Mr John Kay who advised on the intricacies of conveyancing, Mrs Mary Keen who struggled to hone my Latin skills to an acceptable level and the staff of Duke Humfrey who went beyond the call of duty in interpreting obscure references, searching for mislaid books and, when all hope seemed lost, finding them. I thank you all.

Beyond the University there were many people who assisted my research: the staff in the Departmental Archives at Angers, in the archives division of Birmingham City Library, and in the Museum and the Municipal Library at Nuneaton deserve special mention. In Nuneaton, Mr Ted Veasey, local historian, guided me around the material remains of the priory, freely sharing his expertise; in Amesbury, Rev. Wilson allowed me the use of archival material; Lord Hampton generously permitted me access to the originals of his family archives; Dr Christopher de Hamel of Sotheby's sent a copy of a manuscript. The list could continue. May I simply offer each of you my grateful thanks.

On a personal level I must express my gratitude to my family, my friends and my Religious Congregation. You who have supported this project from the beginning, encouraged its progress and now rejoice with me in its completion, are probably unaware of how vital your contribution has been. To each of you I would like to say a personal word of thanks and assure you that your interest, love and support sustained me throughout this time and was never in the least diminished by a journey of thousands of kilometres - or in the case of those of you who live in England, of several miles.

Aware of the degree to which my achievement has depended on others, I am quite humbled. To say thank you is in so many ways inadequate; to say that without you I could not have done it is simply to restate the obvious.

Berenice M. Kerr
St Anne's College, Oxford.
4 September, 1995.

In memory of Anne . . . who would have been so proud.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AASS	Acta sanctorum Bollandiana, ed. J. Bollandus *et al.* (61 vols, Antwerp, Brussels, 1643 -)
Account, Isabel of Lancaster.	'Fragment of an account of Isabel of Lancaster, nun of Amesbury, 1333-34', ed. R.B. Pugh, in *Festschrift zur Feier des zweihudertjährigen Bestandes des Haus-, Hof-, und Staatsarchivs*, ed. L. Santifaller, (Vienna, 1949) pp. 487-498.
AML	Departmental Archives of Maine and Loire, Angers
Annales Monastici	*Annales Monastici*, ed. H.R. Luard, 5 vols, (RS xxxvi, 1864-69)
BAR 182	M. Aston, ed., *Medieval Fish, Fisheries and Fishponds in England* (*BAR* British Series, 182, 2 vols, 1988)
BAR 203	R. Gilchrist & H. Mytum, edd., *The Archaeology of Rural Monasteries (BAR* British Series, 203, 1989)
BAR 227	R. Gilchrist & H. Mytum, edd., *The Archaeology of Urban Monasteries (BAR* British Series, 227, 1993)
BAR	*British Archaeology Report*
BCL	Birmingham Central Library
Beauchamp Cartulary	*The Beauchamp Cartulary*, ed. E. Mason, (PRS, NS xliii, 1980)
BEC	*Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des Chartes*
Black Monks	*Documents illustrating the Activities of the General and Provincial Chapters of the Black Monks, 1215-1540*, ed. W. A. Pantin (3 vols, Camden, 3rd Ser., xlv, xlvii, liv, 1931-37)
Bienvenu, *Fondateur*,	J.-M. Bienvenu, *L'Etonnant fondateur de Fontevraud, Robert d'Arbrissel* (Paris, 1981)
Bienvenu, *Origines*	J.-M. Bienvenu, 'Aux origines d'un ordre religieux: Robert d'Arbrissel et la fondation de Fontevraud', *Cahiers d'histoire*, xx (1975), pp. 227-51
Bienvenu, *Pauvreté*	J.-M. Bienvenu, 'Pauvreté misères et charité en Anjou aux XI[e] et XII[e] siècles', *LMA* lxxii (1966), pp. 389-424; lxxiii (1967), pp. 5-53, 189-216.
BIHR	Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research
BL	British Library
BN	Bibliothèque Nationale
Book of Fees	*Liber Feodorum, the Book of Fees Commonly Called Testa de Neville* (2 vols in 3, PRO Texts and Calendars, 1920-31)
Breviary, Hyde Abbey	*Monastic Breviary of Hyde Abbey, Winchester, The*, ed. J.B.L. Tolhurst (6 vols, HBS lxix, lxx, lxxi, lxxvi, lxxviii, lxxx, 1930-42).
Cal. Chanc.War.	*Calendar of Chancery Warrants* (HMSO, London, 1927-)
Cal.Chart. Rolls	*Calendar of Charter Rolls*, (HMSO, 1903 -)
Cal. Cl. Rolls	*Calendar of Close Rolls*, (HMSO, 1896 -)
Cal. Doc. Fr.	*Calendar of Documents Preserved in France illustrative of the History of Great Britain and Ireland*, ed. J.H. Round (London, 1899)
Cal. Inq. Misc.	*Calendar of Inquisitions Miscellaneous (Chancery)* (HMSO, London, 1916)
Cal. Pap. Let.	*Calendar of Entries in the Papal Registers relating to Great Britain and Ireland. Papal Letters* (HMSO London, 1893-)
Cal. Pap. Pet.	*Calendar of Entries in the Papal Registers relating to Great Britain and Ireland. Petitions to the Pope, i, 1342-1419*, (HMSO, London, 1896)
Cal. Pat. Rolls	*Calendar of Patent Rolls* (HMSO, 1891-)

Cal. Roy. Let.	*Calendar of Royal and other Letters and Writs . . . in the Wakefield Tower*, Appendices to *Report of the Deputy Keeper of the Public Records*, vi, vii, (HMSO, London, 1845, 1846), pp. 88-115, 239-276.
CBA	Council for British Archaeology
CCM	*Cahiers de civilisation médiévale*
Constable, *Eremitical Forms*	G. Constable, 'Eremitical Forms of Monastic Life', in *Instituzione monastiche e instituzioni canonicali in occidente, MCSM* ix, (Milan, 1977), pp. 238-264
Constable, *Renewal*	G. Constable, 'Renewal and Reform in Religious Life Concepts and Realities' in R.L. Benson and G. Constable, edd., *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century* (Oxford, 1982)
Councils and Synods I	*Councils and Synods with other documents relating to the English Church, I, AD 871-1204*, ed. D. Whitelock, M. Brett and C.N.L. Brooke (2 vols, Oxford, 1981)
Councils and Synods II	*Councils and Synods with other documents relating to the English Church, II, 1205-1313*, ed. F.M. Powicke and C.R. Cheney (2 vols, Oxford, 1964)
CUL	Cambridge University Library
Customary Barking Abbey	*The Ordinale and Customary of the Benedictine Nuns of Barking Abbey*, ed. J.B.L. Tolhurst, i, Calendars and Temporal; ii, Sanctorale (HBS lxv, lxvi, 1927, 28)
Dalarun, *Femmes*	J. Dalarun, 'Robert d'Arbrissel et les Femmes', *Annales: economies, societés et civilisations*, xxxix (1984), pp. 1140-60
Dalarun, *Sainteté*	J. Dalarun, *L'impossible Sainteté: La vie retrouvée de Robert d'Arbrissel, fondateur de Fontevraud* (Paris 1985)
Danelaw Docs	*Documents Illustrating the Social and Economic History of the Danelaw*, ed. F.M. Stenton (London, 1920)
DB	*Domesday Book, seu Liber Censualis Willelmi Primi Regis Angliae*, ed. A Farley et al. (4 vols, Record Commission, 1783 - 1816)
DNB	*The Dictionary of National Biography* (22 vols with supplements, Oxford, 1917 -)
Dyer, *English Diet*	C. Dyer, 'English Diet in the later Middle Ages' in T.H. Aston, P.R. Coss, C. Dyer and J. Thirsk (edd.) *Social Relations and Ideas: Essays in Honour of R. H. Hilton* (Cambridge, 1983)
Dyer, *Freshwater Fish*	C. Dyer, 'The Consumption of Freshwater Fish in Medieval England', in M. Aston, (ed.), *Medieval Fish, Fisheries and Fishponds in England* (*BAR, 182*, 1988), pp. 27-38
Dyer, *Standards of Living*	C. Dyer, *Standards of Living in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1989)
Earl.Glouc.Chart.	*Earldom of Gloucester Charters*, ed. R. B. Patterson (Oxford, 1973)
EcHR	*The Economic History Review*
EEA I	*English Episcopal Acta I, Lincoln 1067-1185*, ed. David. M. Smith (London 1980)
EEA II	*English Episcopal Acta II, Canterbury 1162-1190*, ed. C.R. Cheney & Bridget E. A. Jones (London 1986)
EEA III	*English Episcopal Acta III, Canterbury 1193-1205* ed. C.R. Cheney & E. John (London 1986)
EEA IV	*English Episcopal Acta IV, Lincoln 1186-1206*, ed. David. M. Smith (London 1986)
EEA VI	*English Episcopal Acta VI, Norwich 1070-1214* ed. Christopher Harper-Bill (London 1990)
EEA VIII	*English Episcopal Acta VIII, Winchester 1070-1204* ed. M.J. Franklin (London 1993)

EHR	*The English Historical Review*
EPNS	The English Place Name Society
Feet of Fines, Warwick	*Feet of Fines for the County of Warwick 7 Ric. I, 1195 -12 Ed. I, 1284*, ed. F. Wellswood (Dugdale Society, xi, London, 1932)
Feet of Fines, Wiltshire,	*Abstracts of the Feet of Fines relating to Wiltshire for the reigns of Edward I and Edward II, Wiltshire (1272-1327)*, ed. R.B. Pugh (Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society, 1939)
Feudal Aids	*Inquisitions and Assessments Relating to Feudal Aids* (6 vols, HMSO, 1899-1920)
GEC	*The Complete Peerage by GEC* ed. V. Gibbs *et al.* (revised edn., 12 vols, London, 1910-59)
Gerald of Wales	*Giraldi Cambrensis Opera*, ed. J.S. Brewer *et al.* (8 vols, RS, xxi, 1861-91)
Gesta Henrici	*Gesta Regis Henrici Secundi Benedicti Abbatis, The Chronicle of the Reigns of Henry II and Richard I (AD1169-1192) known commonly under the name of Benedict of Peterborough*, ed. W. Stubbs (RS xlix, 1867)
Gesta Stephani	*Gesta Stephani*, ed. and trans. K.R. Potter & R.H.C. Davis (Oxford, 1976)
Harvey, *Living and Dying*	B.F. Harvey, *Living and Dying in England 1100-1540 The Monastic Experience* (Oxford, 1993)
Harvey, *Westminster Abbey*	B.F. Harvey, *Westminster Abbey and its Estates in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1976)
HMSO	Her Majesty's Stationery Office
HRH	*The Heads of Religious Houses England and Wales 949-1216*, ed. D. Knowles, C.N.L. Brooke & V.C.M. London (Cambridge, 1972)
HWRO	Hereford and Worcester Record Office
IPMW	*Inquisitions Post Mortem for the County of Worcester*, ed. J. W. Bund, (2 vols, Worcestershire Historical Society, 1894-1909)
JEH	*Journal of Ecclesiastical History*
Kershaw, 'Agrarian Crisis'	I. Kershaw, 'The Great Famine and Agrarian Crisis in England 1315-1322', *P&P* lix (1973) pp. 1-50
Kershaw, *Bolton Priory*	I. Kershaw, *Bolton Priory, the Economy of a Northern Monastery 1286-1325* (Oxford, 1973)
Knowles, *Monastic Order*	D. Knowles, *The Monastic Order in England* (Cambridge, 1950)
Knowles, *Religious Orders*	D. Knowles, *The Religious Orders in England* (3 vols, Cambridge, 1948-59)
LMA	*Le Moyen Age*
MCSM	*Miscellanea del centro de studi mediovali*
Mon Ang	W. Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, ed. J Caley *et al.* (8 vols, London, 1817-30)
Moore, *Dissent*	R.I. Moore, *The Origins of European Dissent* (London, 1977)
MRH	D. Knowles and R.N. Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses in England and Wales* (London, 1953)
P&P	*Past and Present*
PL	*Patrologiae Cursus Completus: series Latina*, ed. J. Migne (217 vols, Paris 1844-55; index, 4 vols, 1864). Quoted by volume and column.
PRO	Public Record Office
PRS	Pipe Roll Society

Red Book	*The Red Book of Worcester containing Surveys of the Bishops' Manors and other Records*, ed. M. Hollings, (Worcester Historical Society, 1934)
RB	*Rule of St Benedict*, ed. J. McCann (London, 1952)
Rév Bén	*Révue Bénédictine*
Rév d'hist spir	*Révue de l'histoire de la spiritualité*
RHE	*Révue d'histoire ecclesiastique*
RM	*Révue Mabillon*
Rot. Litt. Claus.	*Rotuli Litterarum Clausarum* (HMSO, 1833-4)
RS	Rolls Series
Sermo	*Sermo Domni Roberti de Arbrussello ad Comitissam Britanniae* in J. de Petigny, 'Lettre inédite de Robert d'Arbrissel à la Comtesse Ermengarde', *BEC* v, 3e ser. (1854), pp. 209-235, at p. 225
Slater, *Burgages*	T.R. Slater, *The Analysis of Burgages in Medieval Towns* (Department of Geography, University of Birmingham, Working Paper iv, 1980)
Subsidy Roll, War. 1327	*Subsidy Roll of Warwickshire, 1327*, ed.Wright Wilson, vi, (Transactions of the Midland Record Society, 1902)
Subsidy Roll, War. 1332	*The Lay Subsidy Roll for Warwickshire of 6 Edward III (1332)*, ed. W.F. Carter (Dugdale Society, 1926)
Subsidy Roll, Worc. 1280	*Lay Subsidy Roll for the County of Worcester, c. 1280*, ed. J. W. Bund, and J Amphlett, (Worcestershire Historical Society, 1893)
Subsidy Roll, Worc. 1 Ed. III	*Lay Subsidy Roll for the County of Worcester, 1 Ed. I (recte* 1 Ed. III) ed. F.J. Eld (Worcestershire Record Society, 1895)
TPN	*Taxatio Ecclesiastica Angliae et Walliae auctoritate P. Nicholai IV, c. A.D.1291, ed.* S. Ayscough and J. Caley, (Record Commission, 1802)
TRHS	Transactions of the Royal Historical Society
VA	*Vita Altera B. Roberti de Arbrissello auctore monacho Fontis Ebraudi,* (*PL* clxii, 1058-1078)
VAB	BN MS fr 2468, 'La vie de vénérable Robert de Arbrinsel trad. F. G. Boudet' in J. Dalarun, *L'impossible Sainteté: La vie retrouvée de Robert d'Arbrissel, fondateur de Fontevraud* (Paris, 1985), pp. 264-299
VCH	Victoria History of the Counties of England
VE	*Valor Ecclesiasticus temp. Henrici Vlll, auctoritate Regia Institutus*, ed. J. Caley and J. Hunter (6 vols, Record Commission, 1810-34)
Vita Bernardi	*Vita B. Bernardi Tironiensis Gaufridus Grossus*, (*PL* clxxii, 1362-1446)
VP	*Vita B Roberti de Arbrissello auctore Baldrico episcopo Dolensi (PL* clxii, 1043-1058)
Walter de Wenlok	*Walter de Wenlok, Abbot of Westminster*, ed. B. F. Harvey (Camden Society, 4th ser., ii, 1965)
WAM	*Wiltshire Natural History and Archaeological Magazine*
WNQ	*Wiltshire Notes and Queries*
Worcester Cartulary	*The Cartulary of Worcester Cathedral Priory, (Register I)*, ed. R.R. Darlington (PRS, NS, xxxviii, 1968)
WRS	Wiltshire Record Society

Introduction

Religious Life for Women

Women wishing to follow a monastic vocation at the beginning of the twelfth century faced an uphill struggle. While women participated in the groundswell of religious sentiment which was one of the manifestations of the reform movement, opportunities for them to express that sentiment in religious life were extremely limited.[1] Men had departed from traditional Benedictinism, profoundly influenced by the Cluniac Reform, and had founded orders which presented radical alternatives;[2] women in general were restricted either to joining conventional Benedictine monasteries or attaching themselves more or less permanently to an already-existing male order. Thus, while women flocked to join religious life, as an institution it was ill-prepared to receive them. In the west of France where this study originates, Benedictine houses were not plentiful. In the whole of Anjou, for instance, at the beginning of the twelfth century, Ronceray was the only monastery for women.[3] Initially the male orders welcomed and supported female vocations, but the position of women was never secure in situations where their juridical status remained undefined and they depended on the good will of the order. Two examples illustrate this insecurity. The order of Premontré, founded in 1121, originally welcomed women. Norbert, the founder, consciously made provision for them and several monasteries of the order housed sisters as well as brothers.[4] Soon after the founder's death, however, the women were forced to establish separate communities at some distance from the male houses. By the end of the century the order had decided not to admit any more women, a decision formalised by a bull of Innocent III in 1198.[5] The Cistercian position was slightly different. While not officially welcoming women, the order did not actively hinder

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1 For a survey of the problems faced by women wishing to follow a monastic vocation see P.S. Gold, *The Lady and the Virgin, Image Attitude and Experience in Twelfth century France* (Chicago, 1985), pp. 81-93; M. Fontette, *Les Religieuses à l'âge classique du droit canon. Recherches sur les structures juridiques des branches féminines des ordres* (Paris 1967), pp. 9, 10, 13-18, 27-42; B. Bolton, 'Mulieres Sanctae', in *Sanctity and Secularity, the Church and the World*, ed. D. Baker (Studies in Church History, x, Oxford, 1973), pp. 77-80.

2 D. Baker, 'Crossroads and Crisis in the Religious life of the Later Eleventh Century', in *The Church in Town and Country*, ed. D. Baker (Studies in Church History, xvi, Oxford, 1979), p. 138.

3 Bienvenu, *Fondateur*, p. 56.

4 A. Erens, 'Les soeurs dans l'ordre de Prémontré', *Analecta Premonstratensia*, v (1929), pp. 5-26; Bolton, *op.cit.*, p. 78.

5 Innocent III, *Epistola cxcviii* (*PL* ccxiv, 173-74).

them from joining.[1] Local communities, in fact, encouraged and supported groups of women wishing to follow the Cistercian rule and during the first half of the twelfth century there appeared a vast number of Cistercian houses for women. Those officially incorporated into the order were, however, few.[2] Furthermore, from 1150 onward, the official position hardened and gradually changed to outright hostility.[3] By the second decade of the thirteenth century the incorporation of women's monasteries into the order was forbidden.

The situation in England mirrored that in France.[4] In 1066 there were only about twelve religious houses for women in England and only two or three more by 1100.[5] The General Chapter at Citeaux in 1147 refused to incorporate the Gilbertine order, founded expressly for women, and while many Cistercian houses of women existed in England during the twelfth century, few of them appear to have enjoyed official status.[6] The three Premonstratensian monasteries founded between 1148 and 1154 originally were linked to male houses and may in fact, originally have been mixed, but these links gradually weakened.[7]

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1 On the Cistercians see: C.H. Berman, 'Men's Houses, Women's Houses: The Relations between the Sexes in Twelfth-Century Monasticism', in *Medieval Studies at Minnesota, 2, The Medieval Monastery*, ed. A. MacLeish (St Cloud, Minnesota, 1988), pp. 43-51; L. Lekai, *The Cistercians, Ideals and Reality* (Kent, Ohio 1977), pp. 347-352; S. Roisin, 'L'Efflorescence cistercienne et le courant féminin de piété au XIIIe siècle' *RHE* xxxix (1943), pp. 342-378; S. Thompson, 'The Problem of the Cistercian Nuns in the Twelfth and early Thirteenth Centuries', in *Medieval Women*, ed. D. Baker (Studies in Church History, *Subsidia*, i, Oxford, 1978), pp. 227-252.

2 In 1147 the General Chapter at Citeaux incorporated the community of Obazine which included a substantial number of women. See B. Golding, 'Hermits, Monks and Women in Twelfth-century France and England: the Experience of Obazine and Sempringham', *Monastic Studies, The Continuity of Tradition, I*, ed. J. Loades, (Headstart History, Bangor, 1990), pp. 127, 131-133.

3 Gold, *op.cit.*, p. 85

4 For a survey of the situation in England see J. Burton, *Monastic and Religious Orders in Britain, 1000-1300* (Cambridge, 1994), chs 4, 5.

5 It is difficult to give precise figures for the number of pre-Conquest women's houses. See *MRH* pp. 253-5, 494; Knowles, *Monastic Order*, pp. 702-3 and S. Thompson, *Women Religious. The Founding of English Nunneries after the Norman Conquest* (Oxford, 1991), Appendix A, p. 221.

6 The situation of the Cistercians in England is treated in Thompson, 'The Problem of the Cistercian nuns . . .', *op.cit.*, *passim* and Burton, *op.cit.*, pp. 101-106. While the presence of women was not the only factor influencing the decision of the Cistercian chapter to reject the Gilbertines, it did play a major role. See Golding, *op.cit.*, pp. 140, 141.

7 Burton, *op.cit*, p. 100.

THE ORDER OF FONTEVRAUD[1]

In contrast to this pattern of lack of opportunity, acceptance and rejection stands the order of Fontevraud, founded specifically for women and incorporating into its structure religious brothers whose duty it was to serve the spiritual and material needs of the nuns.[2] This order, founded in France in 1100, within half a century had made the first of three foundations in England. Its founder, Robert of Arbrissel was gifted in ministering to women and his initial band of followers comprised women of every social class and of every type.[3]

The notion of an itinerant preacher of bizarre appearance subsequently becoming the founder of a religious order which attracted the patronage of popes, the beneficence of kings and the membership of women of royal and noble blood is, to say the least, incongruous. However, in the case of the founder of Fontevraud, events actually took this turn. Robert, unkempt and dressed in rags, preached in the towns and villages of western France his message of evangelical poverty and a return to living by Gospel values.[4] In 1100 his following, comprising a substantial number of beggars, thieves and harlots became the nucleus of one of the largest and most prestigious abbeys in medieval France, and he, albeit reluctantly, its founder.[5]

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1 Re spelling: 'Fontevr*ault*' was official during the nineteenth century but since 1968 'Fontevr*aud*' has been favoured as being closer to the etymology of the place name. Bienvenu, *Fondateur*, p. 7. In general I have used the modernised form but where an original document has used a variation I have not made any change.

2 Gold, *op.cit.*, pp. 93-115..

3 Arbrissel is situated south-south-east of Rennes. See Figure I, p. 33

4 For Robert's outward appearance, which accords with the conventional appearance of hermits, see Marbod of Rennes, *Epistola vi*, (*PL* 171, 1483). See also Ivo of Chartres, *Epistola cxcii*, (*PL* clxii, 201) and, L. Gougaud, 'La Vie érémitique au Moyen Age', *Revue d'Ascétique et de Mystique*, i, (1920), pp. 227-229; For Robert's teaching see *Sermo, passim.*

5 Within 50 years of its foundation, according to Suger of St Denis, the order numbered between four and five thousand nuns. Suger, *Epistola lxxxviii* (*PL* clxxxvi, 1392-93).

The preponderance of women among Robert's followers, their obvious attraction to him and the fact that his association with them was an element of his ascetic practice have given rise to speculation on the role of women in his spirituality.[1] Such an analysis is not within the scope of this thesis. What concerns us is Robert's encouragement and support of women in their efforts to live a spiritual life whether in the cloister or in the world. His foundation of an independent order for women illustrates his awareness of one of the manifest needs of his time and he responded to the need with what he termed 'charity', 'love' and 'divine pity'.[1]

As we shall see, the foundation of Fontevraud was not premeditated and the particular characteristics of this Order were probably the result of consultation between Robert and the women he put in charge of the enterprise more than of any specific preconceived policy. He began with the premise that at Fontevraud women and men should live together.[2] By the time of his death fifteen years later, he had developed this premise into statutes which embodied a unique solution to the problem of the *cura monialium* by integrating into the structure of the women's order a group of men whose role was not to supervise but to serve.[3] Thus Fontevraud became the only autonomous order for women to be founded during the twelfth century, an order constituted so that women were juridically in control of their own lives and secure from being termed burdensome or peripheral to any male order.[4]

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1 See in particular Dalarun, *Femmes, passim.*
2 *VP* § 16 , 1051.
3 Gold *op.cit.*, pp. 111, 112.
4 *ibid.*

Sources

The perennial challenge confronting one who would research religious life for women in medieval England is the paucity of source material. Explanations, offering an understanding of the problem, highlight the fact but concede that ultimately there is no solution.[1] It is a sign perhaps of the determination and optimism of researchers that, undaunted by this dearth, they continue to sift through documents hoping to find a clue or a reference which might fill out in a little more detail the broad lines on the canvas. And the fact that resources are less abundant than one would wish increases the value of those at hand.

In the last analysis it is surprising how much material has survived and how many of the missing pieces can be put in place. For some sections of this work there was quite a substantial reservoir. The chapter on the founder and the foundation of the order falls into this category. Topics such as the internal organisation and the economy of the houses are tantalisingly under-resourced, but from the existing documents much valuable information can be extracted and several cameo views of the economic activity of the three houses can be projected. Exploitation of priory resources, both spiritual and temporal, is another area in which the resource material, though scarce, reveals interesting detail and permits fresh interpretations. There are, of course, areas of potential interest which cannot be investigated at any great depth. The study of recruitment in the English foundations, for instance, is hampered by lack of names in any great quantity; the study of the daily lives of the nuns is restricted as there exists only meagre information on this subject. Confronted with seemingly inadequate resources, there is always the temptation to focus on the deficiencies and neglect the value of the information we have. Lest that be the case with this study let us commence by examining the principal sources and assessing their potential value as instruments of research. The sources for the religious life of the nuns are not discussed at this point; they will be considered later in the appropriate section.[2]

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1 S. Thompson, 'Why English Nunneries had no History: A Study of the Problems of the English Nunneries founded after the Conquest', in *Distant Echoes, Medieval English Women*, ed. John A. Nichols & Lillian T. Shank (Kalamazoo,1984), pp. 131-149.

2 See below pp. 125-26.

i) The Life of Robert of Arbrissel

The chief sources for the life of Robert of Arbrissel, founder of the order of Fontevraud, are two *vitae* both written between 1116 and 1120.[1] The first, *Vita B Roberti de Arbrissello auctore Baldrico episcopo Dolensi,* was commissioned by Petronilla de Chemillé, first abbess, immediately after Robert's death.[2] Baldric, a friend of Robert, stated openly that he had not been provided with any worthwhile documentation and had relied on his memory, a memory which, by his own admission, was beginning to fail.[3] Furthermore Baldric had a reputation to live up to. He had already written a life of Samson, a former archbishop of Dol, a life of Hugh, bishop of Rouen and other historical and poetical works.[4] Parts of his *Vita B. Roberti* were evidently written less to impart information than to display his polished literary style.[5] The *Vita Altera B. Roberti de Arbrissello auctore monacho Fontis Ebraudi*, commonly attributed to Robert's confessor, Brother Andrew, was written before 1120 and concentrates on the events immediately prior to and following the founder's death.[6] Until recently it was believed to have survived in a truncated form only, the account of Robert's death ending abruptly with his confession and request for absolution. Within the last decade, however, an early sixteenth century French translation of the entire *Vita Altera* has been discovered and published.[7] Based on personal remembrances and the testimony of eye witnesses, the *Vita Altera* in its entirety provides us with a new perspective on the founder.[8]

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1 The original manuscripts of the *vitae* are no longer extant. References throughout this work are to the versions printed in *PL* clxii, 1043-1078; I have borrowed the *Vita Prima* and *Vita Altera* terminology from *AASS*, Feb. iii, pp. 603, 608.

2 *PL* clxii, 1043-1058 (referred to as *Vita Prima).*

3 *VP* § 2, 5, 1045-46. One wonders what kind of document Baldric expected Petronilla to have provided.

4 R. Niderst, *Robert d'Arbrissel et les Origines de l'Ordre de Fontevrault* (Rodez, 1952), p. 176.

5 e.g. *VP* § 2, 1045.

6 *PL* clxii, 1058-1078, (referred to as *Vita Altera*). The authorship of Brother Andrew has been strongly disputed, though modern scholars generally hold that the tradition attributing the authorship to him is probably authentic. Dalarun, *Sainteté*, pp. 25, 53-54.

7 BN. MS fr. 2468. *La vie de M. Robert de Arbrissel, instituteur de l'ordre de Fontevrault par Baldrich, arcevesque de Doles, augmentée par Frère André, mise en français par un religieux de Fontaines, F. G. Boudet.* This French version of the *Vita Altera* is printed in Dalarun, *Sainteté*, pp. 264-299. For an analysis of this text for authenticity and reliability see *ibid.*, pp. 38-61.

8 These sources are discussed pp. 19-22 below. A critical analysis of the sources for the life of Robert is found in J. von. Walter, *Die ersten Wanderprediger Frankreichs, Studien zur Geschichte der Mönchtums*, i, Robert von Arbrissel, (Leipzig, 1903), pp. 9-94. For a summary of this information see *id.*, 'La vie de Robert Arbrissel', trans. J. Cahour, *Bulletin de la Commission historique et archéologique de la Mayenne*, xxiii (1907), pp. 257-61. The summary is the work of the translator.

There are references to Robert and the order he founded in various contemporary or near-contemporary chronicles. The *Gesta Regum Anglorum* of William of Malmesbury, for example, refers to his eloquence and to the manner in which silence was observed at the abbey.[1] William of Newburgh refers to his preaching, the number of conversions for which he was responsible and includes a curious account of the foundation of Fontevraud as the result of an agreement between Robert, Bernard of Tiron and Vitalis of Mortain by which the last two agreed to minister to men, leaving Robert the care of women.[2] Three French chronicles of the churches of Anjou treat his preaching and his foundation of a religious order: that of St Sergius of Angers, written in the twelfth century, speaks of the numbers converted by Robert's word and example; that of St Maxentius of Poiters, also from the mid-twelfth century, notes the foundation at Fontevraud but speaks only of priests and monks and the fourteenth-century chronicle of St Albinus of Angers simply notes Robert's death.[3] As well, there are references to Robert's activities in the correspondence of his contemporaries. Two letters from Ivo of Chartres to a hermit named Robert are commonly thought to have been written to him; Peter the Venerable tells of his mother being converted by him; Suger of St Denis tells of the remarkable success of the order; Abelard writes of his eloquence.[4] He is mentioned with his fellow hermit-preachers in the Life of Bernard of Tiron and in the *Rouleau de Mort* of Vitalis of Savigny.[5]

Praise for Robert was, however, not universal, a factor which has affected the transmission of some of the sources. There exist two letters, both dating from the early twelfth century, which are critical of Robert's flouting of social and religious conventions.[6] They admonish him for certain improprieties and counsel a greater degree of prudence especially in his dealings with

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1 William of Malmesbury, *De Gestis Regum Anglorum*, ed. W. Stubbs (RS xc, 1889), ii, p. 512.

2 William of Newburgh, *Historia Rerum Anglicarum*, ed. R. Howlett, (RS lxxxii, 1884), i, pp. 51-52.

3 *Chroniques des églises d'Anjou*, ed. P. Marchegay et E. Mabille (Paris, 1869), pp. 143, 420, 32.

4 Ivo of Chartres, *Epistolae xxxiv*, *xxxvii*, (*PL* clxii, 46, 49); Peter the Venerable, *Epistola liii* in *The Letters of Peter the Venerable*, ed. G. Constable (2 vols, Cambridge, Mass. 1967), pp. 158-9; Suger of St Denis, *Epistola lxxxviii*, (*PL* clxxxvi, 1392-1393); Abelard, *Epistola xxi*, (*PL* clxxviii, 355-358).

5 *Vita Bernardi* 1362-1446; 'Rouleau du bienheureux Vital, abbé de Savigny' in *Rouleaux des Morts du IXe au XVe siècle*, ed. L. Delisle (Paris, 1886), p. 284.

6 Geoffrey of Vendôme, *Epistola xlvii*, (*PL* clvii, 181-184); Marbod of Rennes, *Epistola vi*, (*PL* clxxi, 1480-1492).

women. The first, by Geoffrey, abbot of La Trinité de Vendôme 1092-1130, is less caustic than that written by Marbod, archbishop of Rennes 1095-1123, but both carry warnings and appeals to amend his behaviour. Modern scholars appreciate their value: they indicate the reaction of some of the higher clergy to Robert's apostolic activities; they reveal the degree of his popularity and the extent of his following and they provide detail on Robert's penitential practices which would otherwise be denied us. Formerly, however, their negative comments caused problems. In the middle of the seventeenth century, when Robert's cause for canonisation was being considered, Jeanne-Baptiste de Bourbon, abbess of Fontevraud, went to great lengths to suppress what she regarded as damning evidence.[1] She sent two brothers of the order to La Trinité, ostensibly to study Geoffrey's correspondence, but in reality to remove from the manuscript the item referring to Robert.[2] Some years later she managed to obtain a certificate from the monastery, stating that the letter was never part of the original, but subsequent examination of the manuscript and comparison with other copies of the letter have revealed the truth. Copies of Marbod's letter also 'disappeared' around this time, probably at the command of the same abbess.[3] When it became obvious that the existence of Geoffrey's letter could not be denied, an attempt was made to destroy its credibility by attributing it to the heretic Roscelin.[4] Fortunately authenticated copies of both letters have survived to inform our research.[5]

It is one of the ironies of history that a man whose verbal output must have been prolific is survived by so few words which are indisputably his own. There is only one document extant which was written by Robert himself, a letter of spiritual direction to a noble woman,

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1 Jeanne-Baptiste Bourbon was the natural daughter of Henri IV and was abbess c.1637-1670.

2 See J. de Petigny, 'Robert d'Arbrissel et Geoffroi de Vendôme', *BEC*, v, sér. 3 (1854), pp. 22-23.

3 *ibid.*, pp. 27-28.

4 *ibid.*, pp. 28-29. Evidence of the partial success of the enterprise can be found in the Bollandists' edition of the life of Robert where it is stated: *non est ea a Goffrido scripta epistola. AASS*, Feb. iii, § 56, p. 602. Several paragraphs later, the letter is attributed to Roscelin, *ibid.*, § 61, p. 602.

5 For the current location of these and other sources, see Dalarun, *Sainteté*, pp. 353-357 and Niderst, *op.cit.*, pp. 176-179.

Ermengarde, sister of Fulk V, count of Anjou.[1] Despite its being directed to a specific person in a specific situation, this letter can be regarded as an illustration of Robert's message, and to a certain extent, of his preaching style.[2]

ii) The Statutes of the Order

The manuscripts of the original and early versions of the statutes of Fontevraud are no longer extant: all that remains are copies or extracts from compilations, the earliest of which is the work of a brother of the order, G. Boudet.[3] Into his French translation of the *Vita Prima* written sometime between 1491 and 1534, and now in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, Boudet inserted a translation of the statutes. His source was a collection entitled *La Gauffre*, the version of the statutes approved by Pope Callistus II in 1119 which was, according to tradition, compiled by Geoffrey, abbot of Vendôme with whom Fontevraud had close associations.[4] One modern scholar has questioned this tradition, preferring to see *La Gauffre* as a poetic description of the compilation, the metaphor of bees and hives having frequently been used in the two *vitae* to describe the spread of the order.[5] But while the identity of the compiler may be a moot point, we know that the material in the document dates from the early years of the foundation.

Changes to the statutes could and would have been made. The normal vehicle for such legislation was the whole order meeting in general chapter and it is possible that a general chapter occurred as early as 1129.[6] However, we cannot trace the history of the alterations

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1 *Sermo*, pp. 225-235. Ermengarde was hoping to have her marriage dissolved and to become a religious at Fontevraud.

2 See below pp. 38-40.

3 BN MS fr. 2468.

4 VAB § 10, 6. For papal approval of the statutes see Callistus II, *Epistola xxxii*, (*PL* clxiii, 1121); for the influence of Geoffrey of Vendôme on the history of the order, see below p. 47.

5 Dalarun, *Sainteté*, p. 43. See also *Histoire Littéraire de la France, op.cit.*, p. 162 and Bienvenu, *Fondateur*, pp. 124, 168;

6 A charter of 1129 refers to the order *convenientes in generali capitulo*, but whether or not we are to interpret this as a general chapter in the current sense of the word is uncertain. See J. de la Martinière, 'Une falsification de document au commencement du XIIe siècle', *LMA*, 2e sér., xv (1911), charter v, p. 41.

and modifications to the statutes since no acts of this or any other chapter have survived. All that we know is that some changes were made and the amended material was recorded in the compilations to which later redactors had access.

Printed versions of the original statutes began to appear in the mid-seventeenth century at the same time as lives of the founder were being published. In the time of abbess Jeanne-Baptiste de Bourbon two versions appeared almost simultaneously, that in the history of the order written by the Jesuit Honoré Nicquet and the collection of ancient manuscripts relative to the history of the order which was edited by M. Cosnier, curé of Fontevraud.[1] Nicquet tells us that he made use of *La Gauffre* as a source but that he also had recourse to a compilation of statutes in a book entitled *K*, a reference, no doubt, to its position in the library.[2] The version of the statutes which I have used, that published in Migne's *Patrologia Latina,* is taken from Cosnier and in fact incorporates three separate redactions, two of which are taken from a manuscript supplied to Cosnier by a monk of the order whom he describes as being both old and learned.[3]

For the sake of clarity the three versions in Migne will be referred to as 1, 2 and 3 according to the order of their appearance. Version 1 contains forty-four precepts for women entitled *Regulae Sanctimonialium Fontis Ebraldi* and twenty-seven for men, *Praecepta Recte Vivendi*..[4] This version and the versions of Boudet and Nicquet are so similar that we can assume a common source - *La Gauffre* - and thus all three represent a reworking of the original statutes and illustrate the manner in which the order expressed the founder's vision

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1 H. Nicquet, *Histoire de l'Ordre de Font Evraud* (Paris, 1642), pp. 281-298; M. Cosnier, *Fontis Ebraldi Exordium . . .* (La Flèche, 1641). For Cosnier's edition of the Fontevraud manuscripts see below p. 22.

2 For the library at Fontevraud see Dalarun, *Sainteté*, p. 43, n. 134. Nicquet cites several additional precepts taken from *La Gauffre* and other collections but it is impossible to tell from what period of the order's history they originate. Nicquet, *op.cit.*, pp. 299-304.

3 *PL* clxii, 1079-1086.

4 *ibid.*, 1079-1084.

during the period immediately following his death.[1] Migne's Version 2 contains seven precepts each for men and women.[2] It is generally held that these are from a fragment of Robert's original rule, the expression of his ideal for monastic living.[3] Version 3 contains eight precepts, all for women, and is chiefly concerned with the ritual for the consecration of virgins.[4] It dates probably from the middle of the twelfth century.

Examination of the statutory material needs to take place within the context of the Rule of St. Benedict, the fundamental Rule by which a Fontevraud nun lived.[5] Together the Rule and Statutes allow us to review the structures which embodied religious life for this order and to make comparisons with the structures of other contemporary orders.

iii) The English Priories

a) Foundation and Endowment

Sources for the study of the English foundations are not numerous but exist in sufficient quantity to allow some general principles to be extrapolated and an overall view to be delineated. Charters of foundation are the first important source and for two of the three priories these exist. The original foundation charter for Nuneaton, granted in the mid-twelfth century by Robert, earl of Leicester, is in the departmental Archives of Maine-and-Loire at Angers.[6] Parts of this original are rehearsed and supplementary detail is added in charters of confirmation of the foundation issued by Henry II and Theobald, Archbishop of Canterbury. These are in the British Library.[7] Henry II's foundation charter of Amesbury is recited in a

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1 The variations between Cosnier and Nicquet are discussed by J. von Walter in *Die ersten Wanderprediger Franckreichs*, *op. cit.*, i, pp. 75-77. I am indebted to R. Hiley for having translated this chapter of von Walter's book for me.

2 *PL* clxii, 1083-1085.

3 For the dating of the versions see von Walter, *Die ersten Wanderprediger*, *op.cit.*, pp. 65-82; Dalarun, *Sainteté*, pp. 247-250; Bienvenu, *Fondateur*, p. 168.

4 *PL* clxii, 1085, 1086. On the approval of the rite of consecration see Fontette, *op.cit.*, p. 75, n. 69. and Nicquet, *op.cit.*, pp. 414-15.

5 The standard commentary on the Rule of St Benedict is A. de Vogüé & J. Neufvill, *La Règle de St Benoît* (7 vols, Paris, 1972-7). I have consulted this work for clarification of specific issues. Citations throughout this thesis are from *The Rule of St Benedict*, ed. and trans. J. McCann (London, 1952).

6 AML 246 H 1 1.

7 BL Add. Chart. 47390, 47394.

confirmation by John, dated 1199, a little over twenty years after the actual event.[1] This confirmation is, therefore, to be preferred to the *inspeximus* of 1290 where the two differ although the latter has hitherto been generally accepted as the authoritative document for this foundation. The charter of the de Say family, whose foundation of Westwood was contemporaneous with that of Nuneaton, has not survived. However, Henry II's confirmation of the foundation survives as an *inspeximus* and is complemented by a confirmation of the priory's possessions by Richard of Dover, archbishop of Canterbury, dating from 1174x5, and by a bull of Clement III of 1188.[2]

Information on the subsequent history of each priory especially that relating to acquisition of property, is found in a variety of sources, printed and in manuscript form, located on both sides of the Channel. That which concerns Amesbury is found chiefly in chancery rolls and documents mainly of the thirteenth century. The Aston family have deposited in the British Library the archives which provide the main evidence for the endowment of Nuneaton. A number of the Aston charters have been printed in Sir Frank Stenton's volume of Danelaw Charters, but the majority are still in manuscript form.[3] The Cottonian and Lansdowne Manuscripts in the British Library, contain part of the Westwood cartulary.[4] However, a treasure of information on Westwood, hitherto untapped, is in the Pakington family papers housed in the archives section of the Birmingham Central Library.[5] This deposit contains deeds of acquisition and conveyance as well as manorial documents, priory accounts and a visitation report. The history of Westwood, previously relatively obscure, can now be written more fully. Other important and relevant material on the English foundations is in Angers in the Departmental Archives of Maine-and-Loire.[6] Here can be found originals of grants and

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1 *Rotuli Chartarum*, i, pt. i, pp. 13-14; *Cal. Chart. Rolls, 1257-1300*, pp. 157-9.

2 For the inspeximus of the charter of 1155x62 see *Cal. Chart. Rolls, 1257-1300*, p. 320. Richard of Dover's charter (BCL MS Hampton 48) is printed in *EEA II*, pp. 196-7. For the papal bull see AML 244 H 1 1.

3 BL Add. Chart. 47380-49769, 53092-53115. For the printed charters see *Documents Illustrating the Social and Economic History of the Danelaw*, ed. F. M. Stenton (London, 1920), pp. 237-260.

4 BL Cotton. MS Vespas. E. ix; BL Lansdowne MS 227 (printed in *Mon. Ang.* vi, pt ii, pp. 1004-1010).

5 The Hampton Deposit. I am grateful to Lord Hampton for allowing me to consult the original manuscripts.

6 AML 242 H; 243 H; 244 H; 245 H; 246 H.

confirmations for each of the priories as well as documents relating to their internal affairs.[1] Some of these are printed or calendared in other publications.[2]

This main body of evidence, augmented by material scattered in other collections,[3] enables us to build up a fairly comprehensive picture of the affairs of each priory from its foundation through to the end of the thirteenth century and beyond, and allows us to propose that the history of each is largely dependent on the circumstances of its initial foundation which in no small measure reflects the status of the founder.

b) The Monastic Economy

This thesis is concerned with the central economy of the English houses of Fontevraud, and with the exploitation of their estates to the extent that this affected arrangements at the centre. Thus it focuses on the relative importance of cash and liveries in kind from the manors but not on the actual exploitation of the manorial demesnes which supplied the corn and livestock and to some extent the cash. Sources for a study of the monastic economy are not plentiful, but include some unusual items, not commonly found elsewhere.

The earliest documents are three visitation reports dating from the mid-thirteenth century when representatives from Fontevraud looked into the internal affairs of each of the priories.[4] The 1256 report on Amesbury and that on Westwood in the following year are both in Angers, the first in its original form, the second as a *vidimus* of 1470.[5] A summary of the report on Nuneaton of 1256 is contained in an annals of the order compiled during the seventeenth

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1 The material, for instance, concerning the dispute over the appointment of the prioress of Nuneaton in 1318 (discussed below pp. 142-3) is both extensive and unexploited.

2 Many are listed in *The Calendar of Documents Preserved in France illustrative of the History of Great Britain and Ireland, i, AD. 918-1206,* ed. J.H. Round (London, 1899).

3 Some Westwood manuscripts, for example, are at HWRO in the Pakington Deposit; other material on land acquisition is at the PRO.

4 AML 243 H 1 13; 244 H1 2; J. Lardier, *La Sainte Famille de Fontevrault*, AML 1 Mi 74. fo. 476.

5 Parts of the second are illegible.

century.[1] Neither these nor later reports on Westwood in 1306 and Nuneaton in 1328, found respectively in Birmingham Central Library and the British Library contain the type of information one would expect.[2] Visitors of the order received an extensive mandate: as well as looking into spiritualities and temporalities they were to correct, reform and above all to report to the abbess on the state of the priories.[3] No report of this nature has survived. The surviving reports are summary documents treating mostly economic matters and including in some cases numbers of nuns and chaplains and details of stock.

The receivers' accounts are more detailed. Those for Amesbury span the years 1314 to 1319.[4] Since accounts were presented twice a year we can assume that ten were presented during this period. However, only four actually survive: those of respectively, John de Tresfontes presented at Michaelmas 1315, William de Preston, presented at Easter 1316 and Richard de Greneburgh, one presented at Michaelmas 1316 and one at Easter 1319. In each case the account relates to the previous six months. The receivers' accounts itemise cash income and income from the manors for such items as corn, livestock and vegetables. They also include expenses of every kind including those of harvesting crops on the manors, the clothing allowance for the nuns, chaplains and lay brothers, forinsec expenses such as papal and royal taxation and the payment of fees.

Only one receiver's account survives for Nuneaton in the actual period covered by this thesis.[5] However, an account survives for part of the year 1359-60, and this has also been used.[6] The two accounts which survive for Westwood resemble receivers' accounts in their form and content. The first, from March to August 1338 is of a monastic official whose role is not

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1 Lardier, *La Sainte Famille . . . op. cit.*, fo. 476.
2 Westwood: BCL MS Hampton 307; Nuneaton: BL Add. Chart. 47398.
3 Visitation is discussed p. 145 below.
4 AML 244 H 1 3. The rolls are not numbered individually and though obviously from Amesbury have been catalogued with the Westwood material.
5 BL Add. Chart. 49727.
6 *ibid.*, 49728.

explicitly stated; the second, from May to September 1350 was presented by the prior and it may be that he was acting as receiver.[1] This was not uncommon: Brother Richard of Greneburgh held both offices in Amesbury in 1318.[2] Both accounts list cash income and expenditure at the centre and detail expenses associated with the agrarian enterprise on the home farm, and some household expenses are included. Each contains as well a detailed grain and stock account. However, both accounts lack explicit detail of income and expenditure such as we find in the Amesbury receiver's accounts.

The purpose of the medieval account was to establish a state of reckoning between the accountant in question and his superior: it was not to establish the profitability of the enterprise in hand.[3] The receivers' and priors' accounts described above follow this pattern. Moreover, the receivers and priors were only two of the officials who rendered account at specific periods.[4] The sacristan, the infirmarian and other monastic officials accounted to the receiver but all that remains of these accounts is the summary contained in the receiver's accounts. It is particularly to be regretted that no cellarer's accounts survive. Since the cellarer in each house was the official mainly responsible for feeding the nuns and chaplains, we could use these accounts to estimate the extent to which a priory depended on produce from its home farm or manors.[5] Despite these gaps and despite the fact that the purpose for which the surviving accounts were made is not ideally suited to our purposes in using them, these sources do enable us to reconstruct many aspects of the economy of the priories.

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1 BCL MS Hampton 308, 309.

2 This is discussed in the section on obedientiaries, pp. 152-3.

3 The nature of medieval accounts is discussed in P.D.A. Harvey, *Manorial Records* (British Records Association 1984), p. 34. See also R.R. Davies, 'Baronial Accounts, Incomes, and Arrears in the Later Middle Ages', *EcHR* xxi (1968), p. 211 and R.H. Snape, *English Monastic Finances in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1926), p. 63-66.

4 For a fairly comprehensive, though still incomplete, set of accounts see: *Extracts from the Account Rolls of the Abbey of Durham*, ed. J.T. Fowler (3 vols, Surtees Society, xcix, c, ciii, 1898-1900).

5 For an account which contains abundant valuable evidence of this type see: *Fragment of an Account of the Cellaress of Wilton Abbey, 1299*, ed. E. Crittal, (WRS, xii, 1956), pp. 142-156.

The account of the household of Isabel of Lancaster, nun of Amesbury in 1333-4, though not a monastic account, is also of interest in the present context.[1] It reveals what may be termed a 'second economy' operating within a priory, sometimes impinging on monastic affairs, sometimes not. It shows the extent to which community members could live lives almost completely independent of the monastery itself and yet remain part of it, and illustrates the tensions produced in monastic life by the presence of high-born women of independent means.

Although very few ministers' accounts survive for the priories' manors, the inventory prepared by the prior of Nuneaton for his successor, John Rodene in 1344 summarises the value of stock and grain on eight Nuneaton manors and the uses made of the stock and grain as seed corn, fodder and liveries to the priory.[2] It is all the more valuable since it shows us what the priory considered to be the normal state of affairs - an essential consideration in its formulation of policy towards its estates.

The Nuneaton material also contains four rentals, spanning the period from 1325-1335.[3] One of these treats Nuneaton vill only; the others include some of the priory manors. Using these as our source we can obtain information on the terms of tenure exacted by the priory on burgage and demesne holdings and also evaluate the success of the urban development scheme in which this priory engaged. Complementing the rentals are two rolls recording rents received by the prior for the years beginning 23 April, 1332 and 1333.[4] The first of these is almost complete and while the second has some information missing, it illustrates to a certain degree how these assets were managed over two consecutive years.

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1 BCL MS Hampton 310; see Account, Isabel of Lancaster, *passim*. Isabel was prioress of Amesbury 1343-49. See Appendix, p. 258.

2 BL Add. Chart. 49467.

3 *ibid.*, 49464-68.

4 *ibid.*, 49709.

Within the parameters dictated by the sources which have now been described, it is possible to draw some conclusions about the economy of the three priories and to assess in some cases the contribution made by priory's manors. It is also possible to compare the economies of the three priories and to make an informed guess at the extent to which each participated in the market economy of the period by the sale of produce or the purchase of grain and livestock.

The study of the English foundations does not begin in England but in the west of France. Only against the background of the life of the founder and the circumstances surrounding the foundation of the order is it possible to appreciate its expansion to England and the history of the English houses.

CHAPTER I: ROBERT OF ARBRISSEL, THE RELUCTANT FOUNDER

In February 1116, as Robert of Arbrissel lay dying in the priory of Orsan surrounded by religious brothers and sisters, he encouraged them to persevere in virtue and to pray for his soul after his death. In a reflection on his life, he reminded them that, having left behind all the riches and honours of the world, he had chosen to live as a solitary in the desert and to suffer hunger, thirst and exposure in order to triumph over the confusion of this world. Barefoot and wearing a hair shirt, by day wherever he had found a convenient place, he had preached the Gospel, taking in return whatever was given him; by night he had retired to lonely places to pray. Thus he had spent his life eradicating vice and fostering virtue and would have continued to do so had not charity constrained him to do otherwise. The *otherwise* was his foundation of a religious order for women. Often, he told them, he had set aside his own intentions to reach out in pity to their need.[1] This death-bed scene nicely encapsulates the three chief characteristics of the life of Robert - he had been a hermit and a preacher and finally he had founded the order of Fontevraud.

Since his death, critics and converts alike have looked at the events of Robert's life and have used them as a basis for constructing an image based to some degree on reality but nonetheless at the mercy of whatever interpretation the particular exponent has chosen. Some have seen him as a social revolutionary, others as a chivalric figure promoting the cause of women; he has been seen as an eccentric, or as someone driven to use the most extreme measures to expiate the guilt of a past sin. The order Robert founded has similarly suffered a gamut of interpretations ranging from a refuge for world-weary noblewomen to a feminist enclave. Somewhere behind this maze of contradictory assertions is Robert of Arbrissel, a man who was born c.1050 and died in 1116. In one sense it is true to say that it is impossible to reconstruct a true image of Robert the man: it will always elude our grasp, and we risk becoming ourselves enmeshed in the legends. However, by evaluating the evidence we have and by examining the events of his life in their specific historical and social context, it is

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1 *VAB* § 50, p. 289. (Page numbers refer to the printed version of the *Vita Altera* as translated by Brother G. Boudet, in Dalarun, *Sainteté*, pp. 264-269).

possible to form a judgement about a man who was central to the development of religious life for women in the twelfth century.

The day after Robert's burial at Fontevraud, Leger, archbishop of Bourges and a personal friend, preached his panegyric in the chapter house of the brothers' monastery. We know very little of Leger's funeral oration. The original text has been lost and the surviving sixteenth century version is an admixture of fact and fantasy which is of little value.[1] It is safe to assume that under the circumstances the archbishop would have stressed those details of Robert's life which revealed his sanctity - his fidelity to the Gospel, his love of poverty, his missionary zeal and personal holiness - namely those things which the assembly of clerics and nobles gathered at Fontevraud on 8 March 1116 wanted to hear.[2] In all probability he would have glossed over anything which could have introduced a discordant note into the solemnity of the occasion. He is unlikely, for example, to have noted that some prelates found it necessary to counsel Robert to act more prudently or to impose order on the undisciplined lives of his followers. All this is, however, conjectural. The epitaph composed by another friend, Hildebert of Lavardin, has survived intact but its very form militates against its telling us other than what was expected. Written in verse, it stressed Robert's penitential practices, his fasting, his vigils and penitential garb, and left no doubt that its author considered Robert to have been a saint.[3]

INTERPRETATIONS

The bulk of our information on Robert of Arbrissel is to be had from two official lives, both written within four years of his death. Abbess Petronilla commissioned Baldric, archbishop of Dol, well-known for his literary prowess, to write the first of these, commonly referred

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1 Y. Magistri, *Baston de Deffence . . .etc.* (Angers, 1586), pp. 148-178. Magistri's work is discussed by Dalarun in *Sainteté*, pp. 65-73.
2 The dating is that proposed in Dalarun, *Sainteté*, p. 71, n. 49.
3 Hildebert de Lavardin, *Epitaphium Roberti de Arbrissel* (*PL* clxxi, 1391, 1392).

to as the *Vita Prima.*[1] Baldric's main purpose was to edify his readers, to make them aware that Robert was a saint and to lead them to venerate him as a man of God. From the outset it is evident that he was following certain hagiographic conventions.[2] It is unlikely, for instance, that Baldric knew Robert during his youth, yet he insisted that he possessed a moral maturity in advance of his years that he did not succumb to the usual excesses of adolescence, but embraced chastity and delighted inwardly in purity.[3] The rest of the work, though based certainly on some personal knowledge (the abbey of Bourgueil where Baldric had been abbot was near Fontevraud) nevertheless presents a stereotyped view. The details of Robert's life which Baldric chose to stress are those most in accord with what we would expect to find in the life of a saint. Robert's studies, his work in Rennes as a herald of the Gregorian reforms, his penitential practices, his zeal in preaching, his ministry, his foundation of Fontevraud and his death were all put in the context of the life of a holy man, an imitator of Christ, a worker of miracles. It is difficult at times to detect the dividing line between truth and fiction. Baldric's text is amply supported by scriptural references.[4] He did not hesitate to use words such as *venerabilis* or *beatus* to describe Robert and, in the finale, pictured him in heaven in the company of the apostles.[5] On one point, however, Baldric required censorship by a future generation. His reporting that Robert's father was a priest, from a line of priests, was judged by someone (probably abbess Jeanne-Baptiste de Bourbon who showed herself remarkably adept in this field) to be inappropriate and the offending phrase was removed from the edition of the *Vita Prima* which appeared in 1641, and hence from all modern editions.[6]

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1 Baldric's literary works are discussed by R. Niderst, *Robert d'Arbrissel et les origines de l'ordre de Fontevrault* (Rodez, 1952), pp. 175-176.

2 For example, *VP* § 4, 1045-46. On the literary form of hagiography see T. Head, *Hagiography and the Cult of the Saints* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 102-134 and L. Milis, 'Ermites et chanoines réguliers au XIIe siècle', *CCM* xii (1979), p. 41. For an analysis of the *Vita Prima* see J.-M. Bienvenu, 'Les deux *vitae* de Robert d'Arbrissel' in *La Littérature angevine médiévale* (Maulevrier,1981), pp. 65-68.

3 *VP* § 7, 1047. Parallels with the life of Bernard of Tiron are evident here; cf. *Vita Bernardi*, § 6, 1373.

4 *VP* § 10-14, 1049-1051; § 18, 1052; § 23, 1055; § 25, 1056.

5 *VP* § 26, 1058.

6 *Fontis Ebraldi Exordium* . . . ed. M. Cosnier (La Flèche, 1641). His edition was used by J. Bolland, 'Vita B. Roberti', *AASS*, *Feb. iii*, 603-608, and J. Migne, 'Vita B. Roberti de Arbrissello' (*PL* clxii., 1043-1058). On Cosnier's censorship of the original: *AASS*, *op.cit.*, p. 605, n. 2b; Bienvenu, *Fondateur*, p. 17; Dalarun, *Sainteté*, p. 42. See also above pp. 8-9.

It is generally held that the second life, the *Vita Altera* by Brother Andrew, Robert's chaplain and grand prior of the order, was also commissioned by Petronilla to compensate for the deficiencies in Baldric's work.[1] Emphasising as it did the eremitic aspects of Robert's life and scarcely referring to his installation of Petronilla as abbess, to his putting everything under the control of the nuns, or to the brothers' promise of service, it is quite possible that the work of the archbishop of Dol was not wholly pleasing to Petronilla. However, another interpretation is possible. Firstly, it is important to note that Andrew's work was not dedicated to Petronilla. It is reasonable to expect the grand prior of the order to have made a dedication to the abbess somewhere in the text had she commissioned it. His statement at the beginning of his work that he wished to commit to writing the events of the final six months of Robert's life so that those who came after him would have a record of them, may be a factual account of the circumstances of its composition.[2] A chance remark (. . . *licet mihi, fratres, dicere* . . .) made further on in the work lends itself to the construction that Brother Andrew wrote for the community of brothers.[3] On the basis of this, it is plausible to argue that Andrew was writing on his own behalf and not at the instigation of another.[4] The fact that his work records Petronilla's election and its ratification by the Holy See, as well as the brothers' promise of obedience and service, is perfectly consistent with this viewpoint, as is his reluctance to praise Petronilla for fear of being thought a flatterer.[5] Andrew appears as a participant in the events he described, one who has tried within the limits of medieval hagiography, to give an impartial record for posterity.

Interest in the two *vitae* was revived towards the end of the fifteenth century and continued well into the seventeenth, activated by abbesses dedicated to reforming the order by restoring the ancient observance and returning to the original spirit.[6] Abbess Renée de Bourbon was

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1 Bienvenu, 'Les deux *vitae*', *op.cit.*, pp. 68-71, particularly p. 70.
2 *VA* § 1, 1057.
3 *VA* § 21, 1068.
4 This view is proposed in Gold, *op.cit.*, p. 95.
5 *VA* § 8, 1061.
6 For reform of the order, begun by Abbess Marie de Bretagne in 1459, see F. Uzureau, 'La Réforme de l'ordre de Fontevrault, 1459-1641', *RM* xiii, 50, (1923), pp. 141-146.

one of the first to encourage the study of the early sources and it was during her term of office (1491-1534) that Brother G. Boudet, a brother from the reformed house of Fontaines, made a French translation of both lives, incorporating into his manuscript the statutes of the brothers and nuns and other relevant material such as an account of proceedings at the Council of Poitiers and the miracle of Ménélay.[1] Boudet's translation is the only known extant complete version of the *Vita Altera*.[2] Also published during this period of reform, promoted by abbesses belonging to the royal house of Bourbon, were a number of apologetic works all written to extol Robert's sanctity and at the same time to emphasise the authority of the abbess and foster the centralisation of the order under her jurisdiction.[3] The first of these appeared in 1586, dedicated to Abbess Eleanor de Bourbon by the Franciscan Yves Magistri. It is evident that Magistri had used Boudet's translation - in fact it can be argued that he *mis*used it by producing a work which is both confused and confusing, where fact is indistinguishable from the author's opinion, where interpolations and anachronisms abound.[4] The majority of the apologetic works appeared during the reign of Abbess Jeanne-Baptiste de Bourbon (1637-70). She it was who introduced to Rome Robert's cause for canonisation and she commissioned the curé of Fontevraud, M. Cosnier, to re-edit and publish the ancient manuscripts which were pertinent to the early history of the order. Cosnier's work with any inappropriate material excised, became the basis for future editions of the two *vitae*.[5] Other works published during Jeanne-Baptiste's term of office were written either by prominent members of the order or by those under her command and all are written to illustrate the same premise: Robert of Arbrissel was a saint; he is worthy of canonisation.[6]

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1 J. Dalarun, 'La veritable fin de Robert d'Arbrissel', *CCM* xxvii, 1984, pp. 306-311. The priory of Fontaines-en-France in the diocese of Meaux was one of the earliest (1478) to accept the reformed rule. Uzureau, *op.cit*, p. 142.

2 This is the basis of Dalarun's study. Dalarun, *Sainteté*, *passim*.

3 After Renée other Bourbon abbesses were Louise (1534-1575), Eleanor (1575-1611), Louise (1612-1637), Jeanne-Baptiste (1637-1670).

4 This work is discussed in Dalarun *Sainteté*, pp. 65-73. Particularly pertinent is Magistri's distortion of the funeral oration of Leger de Bourges, *ibid.*, pp. 66-69.

5 Cosnier, *loc.cit.* See above p. 20 n. 6

6 One work produced at this time, for example, devoted nineteen chapters to Robert's sanctity. See H. Nicquet *Histoire de l'Ordre de Fontevrault*. . . (Paris, 1642), pp. 131-216. Other contemporary works include: S. Ganot/J. Chevalier *La vie du bienheureux Robert d'Arbrissel* . . . (La Flèche, 1648). (This work is dedicated by Ganot but written by the Jesuit, Chevalier); J. Lardier, *La Saincte Famille de Font-Evraud*, iii, 1650 (AML, 1 mi 74); B. Pavillon, *La Vie du bienheureux Robert d'Arbrissel*,. . . (Paris/Saumur, 1666); Dalarun discusses these works in *Sainteté*, pp. 73-77.

The shift in emphasis from Robert the saint to Robert the man did not occur until the beginning of the twentieth century. Prompted, no doubt, by the current interest in human psychology, scholars began searching the sources to find evidence of character traits, factors which may have influenced his behaviour and indications of his personality. The first to publish such details was a German, Johannes von Walter, whose study of the preachers, Vitalis of Mortain, Bernard of Tiron and Robert, is still considered a seminal work.[1] Von Walter commenced with a rigorous examination of all available source material, thus laying the foundation for later critical assessment.[2] The sources revealed, in his opinion, a man of the people permeated with the spirit of the Gospel, a powerful personality inspired by an interior piety, but withal, someone with no talent for organisation, pessimistic and indecisive, whose fatal flaws meant that the Fontevraud dream did not endure.[3] Several years later, Marthe Peton, in a paper to the *Société des Lettres, Sciences et Arts* at Saumur, in the heart of Fontevraud territory, presented an analysis of Robert's personality, isolating traits such as mysticism and sensitivity said to be typically Breton, and revealing a man given to extremes of behaviour, a passionate and impulsive person who did not always look to the logical consequences of his actions.[4] Peton found a man of admirable zeal, but one whose tendency to obsessive behaviour and lack of balance left him wide open to the criticisms levelled by both friends and enemies.

Interpretations which stripped away the myths to reveal a person of flesh and blood with human characteristics and even inconsistencies, contrast forcefully with a body of pious literature and works of amateur historians which appeared around the same time.[5] These works, written with a particular model of holiness in mind, aimed not at increasing knowledge of Robert but at popularising the myth of Robert of Arbrissel, a devout person, worthy of

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1 J. von Walter, *Die ersten Wanderprediger Frankreichs* (2 vols, Leipzig 1903).

2 This work is discussed by Dalarun in *Sainteté*, pp. 134-139.

3 J. von Walter, 'La vie de Robert Arbrissel', trans. J. Cahour, *Bulletin de la Commission historique et archéologique de la Mayenne*, xxiii (1907), pp. 268, 276-77, 390, 394, 401.

4 M. Peton, 'Robert d'Arbrissel et la fondation de Font-Evraud' *Bulletin de la Societé des lettres, sciences et arts du Saumurois*, iv (1913), pp. 62-76.

5 A. Biron (Abbé Edouard), *Fontevrault et ses monuments ou l'Histoire de cette royale Abbaye* . . . . (2 vols, Paris 1873-74); Les Réligieuses de Sainte Marie de Fontevrault de Boulaur, *Histoire de l'ordre de Fontevrault 1100-1908*, (Auch, 1911-1915); L. Picard, *Le Fondateur de l'Ordre de Fontevrault: Robert d'Arbrissel* (Saumur, 1932); *id.*, *l'Ordre de Fontevrault de 1115 à 1207* (Saumur, 1933).

imitation and veneration. They are inaccurate, often misleading and as works of serious scholarship they cannot merit consideration.

Some interpreters of Robert have sought to gain an understanding of the man and his work by tailoring them to fit certain political or philosophical constructs. The Polish historian Manteuffel, for example, adopted the somewhat doctrinaire position of Robert as defender of the poor against the rich, the weak against the strong - in short, the champion of the masses in their ideological struggle.[1] Manteuffel, emphasising Robert's itinerant lifestyle and the crowds who attached themselves to him, concluded that he was heading with deterministic inevitability towards social conflict. This was only avoided by his choosing to stabilise the group and abandon the experiment.[2] A similar manipulation of facts can be observed in the work of Baronne Brincard who, writing in *Le Correspondent* in 1930, saw Fontevraud solely as an institution in which Robert instituted feminist rule. Brincard proposed Fontevraud as an inspiration to the women of France who, at the time, were struggling to obtain the franchise.[3] Quite recently Loraine Simmons argued that Robert's *extraordinary concept of gender roles in religious life* led him to found an order which consisted of two groups incapable of interaction and, on the basis of this, postulated permanent tension over the balance of authority.[4] She insisted that the maleness of the monks and their lower class was a challenge to the nuns who reacted to it by developing a *proximity anxiety* which is reflected in the architecture of the abbatial church. While these constructions of the life and work of Robert represent significant departures from the mainstream of conventional scholarship they nevertheless serve to illustrate that the man and the order he founded have inspired interpretations of varying degrees of seriousness and erudition.

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1 T. Manteuffel. *Naissance d'une héresie*, trans. A. Posner, (Paris 1970). Manteuffel took his lead from E. Werner, *Pauperes Christi. Studien zu zozial-religiösen. Bewegungen im Zeitalter des Reforpapsttums* (Leipzig, 1956). These two works are discussed in Dalarun, *Sainteté*, p. 140-143.

2 *Il renonçait donc à son apostolat errant dont la poursuite, sous sa forme originelle, devait obligatoirement dégénerer tôt ou tard en un conflit social.* (emphasis mine) T. Manteuffel, *op.cit.*, p. 35.

3 B. Brincard, 'Sept siècles de féminisme à Fontevrault', *Le Corréspondant*, cccxxvi (1932), pp. 353-369.

4 L. Simmons, 'The Abbey Church at Fontevraud in the late twelfth century: Anxiety, Authority and Architecture in the Female Spiritual Life', *Gesta*, xxxi, 2 (1992), pp. 99-107.

A balanced approach can be found in the work of Jacqueline Smith and Penny Schine Gold.[1] The former has questioned Robert's reputation as a protector of women, won initially at the hands of the French historian Jules Michelet and perpetuated in the work of Reto Bezzola and Régine Pernoud.[2] Michelet's *Histoire de France* in 1835 presented Robert as a romantic, chivalric figure who rescued women from harsh treatment by the medieval clergy and lifted them to a position of honour by establishing them in Fontevraud.[3] His view was heavily influenced by a legend in which Robert rescued a group of prostitutes from a brothel in Rouen by preaching to them so convincingly about the mercy of God, that they were inspired to follow him, to do penance and enter religious life.[4] Bezzola, studying William IX of Aquitaine and the troubadours, also subscribed to the legend of Robert the chivalric hero, exalting womanhood by bringing some of the most famous and beautiful women of the age to join his foundation.[5] Régine Pernoud, in a similar vein, portrayed an image of Robert promoting women who devoted their charm and beauty to the work of God with an enthusiasm matched only by the zeal with which they had hitherto pursued the gratification of their passions.[6] Against this romantic ideal Jacqueline Smith countered that Robert was, in fact, neglectful of his fledgling foundation, the responsibilities of which he shed at the earliest opportunity.[7] Though he continued to maintain tenuous links with Fontevraud, he remained at heart a preacher whose call to evangelise took precedence over everything else, even the future direction of the order.

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1 J. Smith, 'Robert of Arbrissel: *procurator mulierum*', in *Medieval Women*, ed. D. Baker, (Oxford, 1978), pp. 175-184.; Gold, *op.cit.*, pp. 76-115.

2 J. Michelet, *Histoire de France*, ii (Paris, 1835), pp. 297-301. H. Martin, *Histoire de France*, iii, (Paris 1855), p. 214, n.1; R. Bezzola, *Les Origines et la formation de la littérature courtoise en Occident* pt.2, ii, (Paris,1960), pp. 275-292; R. Pernoud, *La Femme au temps des cathédrales* (Paris, 1984), pp. 129-169.

3 Michelet, *loc.cit.*

4 This story, of uncertain authenticity, was obtained from an ancient manuscript at the abbey of Vaux de Cernay is reported in B. Pavillon, *op.cit.*, p. 547. (Dalarun, *Sainteté*, p. 125, n. 38). It was possibly written to illustrate Robert's concern for fallen women without having had any foundation in fact. See J.-M. Bienvenu, 'L'Ordre de Fontevraud et la Normandie au XIIe siècle', *op.cit*, pp. 4-5. Michelet's interpretation of the consequences of Robert's actions is nothing short of extraordinary: *La grâce prévalent sur la loi, il se fit sensiblement une grande révolution religiuese. Dieu changea de sexe, pour ainsi dire. La Vierge devint le dieu du monde; elle envahit presque tous les temples et tous les autels. La piété se tourna en enthousiasme de galanterie chevaleresque.* Michelet, *loc.cit.*

5 Bezzola, *op.cit.*, pp. 286-292

6 Pernoud, *op.cit.*, p. 139. See Dalarun *Sainteté*, pp. 143-146 for an analysis of these works.

7 Smith, *loc.cit.*

Penny Gold's approach to Robert is through the institution. He was a man who founded an order, the structure of which reveals the man - or at the very least his concepts of religious life. Fontevraud was, according to Gold, intentionally constituted as an order for women, a factor which explains its endurance when so many others, founded contemporaneously, failed to withstand the test of time. Robert was a founder with an original design: the male element, necessary in every female establishment to take care of the nuns' spiritual and material needs, was integrated into the structure of the order. Robert's concept of gender roles in religious life was based on complementarity. Fontevraud, as designed by Robert, became an example of male-female co-operation. Each group could function within parameters juridically established, aware of what was expected of it and of the other.[1] Here we see an image of a founder extremely conscious of his position and giving the utmost attention to establishing a carefully-balanced arrangement in which good order depended on reciprocity.

Scholarship over the last twenty years has been dominated by two Frenchmen. The first, J.-M. Bienvenu, concentrated on the eremitic side of Robert's character. Having studied the social and economic conditions in the west of France, he demonstrated that the foundation of Fontevraud was a response to the prevailing poverty, both spiritual and material.[2] Bienvenu situated Robert and his fellow hermits and itinerant preachers on a continuum beginning with Peter Damian and extending to the founders of the mendicant orders.[3] Yet the Robert of Bienvenu is a victim - willing perhaps, but a victim nonetheless. The order outgrew him, the aristocratic women he put in charge changed its essential character; he alone remained faithful to the ideals of the eremitic life while Fontevraud transmogrified into a conventional order where the rich women ruled and the men were their servants. Robert's aim was never realised except for a few fleeting years at the beginning of the twelfth century when all was spontaneous and original.[4] Perhaps it is in this context of the women having taken over the

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1 Gold, *op.cit.*, p. 101.
2 Bienvenu, *Pauvreté, passim.*
3 J.-M Bienvenu, 'Préhistoire du Franciscanisme. Aspects pré-Franciscains de l'érémitisime et de la prédication itinérante dans la France de l'Ouest, fin XIe et début XIIe siècle', *Poverty in the Middle Ages*, ed. D. Flood, (Werl/Wesf., 1975), pp. 27-36. See also M.-D Chenu, *Nature, Man and Society in the Twelfth Century*, trans. J. Taylor & L.K. Little (Chicago, 1968), pp. 242-246.
4 Bienvenu, *Origines*, p. 243; *id.*, *Fondateur*, p. 97.

direction of the order, perhaps it is in reaction to the romantic legend of Robert the promoter of women, for some reason Bienvenu has allowed the pendulum to swing to the opposite extreme and has propounded the idea of Robert as the founder of an order where men are humiliated.[1] The humiliation was, he reasoned, an essential part of Robert's personal asceticism which he in turn imposed on his male followers: it was spiritually beneficial for them to be permanently confronted by women to whom they were subjected.

Jacques Dalarun worked from the advantageous position of having discovered a complete edition of the *Vita Altera.* His interpretations are thus based on some entirely new material, which has thrown new light on much of the old. Insistent that there is no one truth about Robert, Dalarun has opted for two interpretations, the first realistic - a reconstruction of events, the second, hagiographic - an examination of Robert's 'sainthood'.[2] He has laboriously reconstructed events - the chronology of the last week of Robert's life, the topography of the priory of Orsan, the seigneurial rivalries at play in the dispute over Robert's body - and the picture he has presented is certainly realistic. However, having turned to analysing the man and his motives, he too has imposed *a priori* a psychological construction which seems to limit our view of Robert to a man driven by guilt. Robert's discovery that he was born of a nicolaistic union and, as Dalarun believes, his marriage (in ignorance of the law) produced an over-riding guilt complex which coloured his entire life and his future relationships, becoming the chief motivation for all his behaviour.[3] Guilt impelled him to eradicate clerical vice in the diocese of Rennes with such unprecedented zeal, guilt urged him to embark on a regime of personal asceticism, guilt inspired him to prove he had gained mastery over his sexual urges by sleeping with young women, and guilt motivated his other relations with women. The texts Dalarun has quoted in support of his theory are not explicit,

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1 Bienvenu, 'Les deux *vitae*' *op.cit.*, p. 76; *id.*, *Fondateur*, p. 96.
2 Dalarun, *Sainteté*, pp. 146-7.
3 Dalarun, *Femmes*, pp. 1147-1148.

however, and are open to interpretations other than those he has proposed.[1] Furthermore, his exploration of Robert's attitude to women has resulted in a confused picture where women are classed as Marthas, Marys or Magdalenes with Robert reacting in a variety of ways to each.[2] Robert needed women, he asserts; they were essential to his asceticism, but his promotion of them to a position of prominence in his order was an inverse effect of this asceticism.[3] We must, Dalarun has claimed, confront the contradictions in Robert's personality. This is true. Ultimately, however, he has confronted us with a figure whose psychological complexity borders on the pathological.

Both Bienvenu and Dalarun have adopted a negative attitude towards and a seeming distrust of Petronilla de Chemillé. Each, but more particularly Dalarun, has attributed to her villainous designs, especially an inordinate desire for power, and the betrayal of the wishes of the founder.[4] Robert was, according to the interpretation of these two men, an embarrassment to the aristocratic women of Fontevraud who tried, therefore, to suppress his memory, prevent his cult and forbid the men of the order to have any access to his tomb.[5] So convinced is Dalarun that Petronilla betrayed Robert's original design that he has put a negative interpretation on actions which are in themselves quite neutral. For instance, he reads harsh intent into her remarks of dismay on seeing Robert so close to death when she arrived at Orsan, yet they could betray a perfectly natural response, a fact which he himself concedes later in the text.[6] Finally he has accused her of having deliberately censored the manuscript of the *Vita Altera* so that it circulated for several hundred years in a truncated form - after a brief period of publicity in the fifteenth century, the complete version remained lost until his

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1 *ibid.* The texts on which he bases his conclusions are: . . *sed nitidam prout poterat amplexebatur castimoniam et intrinsecus diligebat munditiem.* (*VP* § 7, 1047), and . . . *quidam intrinsecus in eo erat conflictus, quidam mentis rugitus, quidam penetralium singulutus* . . . (*VP* § 11, 1049, 50). The first need not necessarily mean that Robert was married. The second could quite justifiably be interpreted as meaning that he was consumed with the desire to conquer his earthly desires, a compulsion shared by all of the hermits. The latter seems all the more feasible when it is seen in context, i.e. immediately following a discussion of his penitential practices.

2 Corresponding to the biblical characters of Martha and Mary of Bethany. This saint and her influence on the eremitical movement are discussed below. See below pp. 45-6.

3 Dalarun, *Femmes*, pp. 1151-1155.

4 Bienvenu, *Fondateur*, pp. 158-9; 166-7; Dalarun, *Sainteté*, pp.198-200; *id.*, *Robert d'Arbrissel, fondateur de Fontevraud* (Paris 1986), pp. 195-200.

5 Bienvenu, *Fondateur*, pp. 157-8; Dalarun, *Sainteté*, pp. 199-200.

6 *VA* § 30, 1072. cf. Dalarun, *Sainteté*, pp. 107, 157.

discovery.[1] It has been left to women scholars such as Penny Gold and Suzanne Tunc to restore the balance by offering Petronilla some rehabilitation.[2]

At the end of the *Vita Altera* Robert is compared to various biblical figures - Joseph, Moses, Daniel and Samuel. Next he is likened to John the Baptist who lived in the desert and proclaimed the Gospel, to Martha who exercised the ministry of hospitality, to Paul who was an itinerant preacher and to Arsenius (a fifth century hermit) who prayed with the gift of tears.[3] The writer obviously saw Robert's as a complex personality with many facets and probably many contradictions, but in these comparisons the images of preaching predominate. Any analysis of Robert of Arbrissel must begin and end at this point. His eremiticism was a preparation for and a function of his call to be a preacher. He would have been subscribed to the axiom of Peter Damian that the only men fit for the office of preaching were those without the support of earthly riches and who, because they possess nothing of their own, have everything in common;[4] he would also have been in total accord with the maxim that only by the authority of his sharing in the mortifications of Christ could a preacher speak out against vice.[5] It is evident that the Fontevraud brothers saw him first and foremost as a hermit/preacher: after his death they clothed him in his hermit's robe and hair shirt.[6] That the hermit and preacher became the founder of a religious order seems almost an accident of fate - a result of his preaching which he neither anticipated nor desired.

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1 Dalarun, *Sainteté*, pp. 104-108.

2 P. Gold, 'Reviews', *Speculum*, lxii (1987), pp. 923-925; S. Tunc, 'Après la mort de Robert d'Arbrissel, Le conflit entre l'abbesse et l'évêque', *LMA* xcviii, (1992), pp. 379-390.

3 *VAB* § 69, p. 296.

4 *Illi duntaxat idonei sunt ad praedicationis officium qui nullum terrenae facultatis possident lucrum: et dum aliquid singulare non habeat communiter omnia possident.* Peter Damian, *Contra clericos regulares proprietarios*, vi, (*PL* cxlv, 490).

5 *. . . sicut verus ille praedicator mundo de seipso dicebat, Christo confixus cruci, ut per auctoritatem mortificationis suae viventes adhuc in peccatis et vitiis possit castigare, et castigatos sibi mortuo conformes efficere. Vita Bernardi*, § 54, 1399.

6 *VAB* § 56, p. 291. The significance of the hair shirt is discussed by Milis, *op.cit.*, p. 74.

To the nuns who were members of the order, however, he was a founder and a spiritual father, his life of eremiticism and preaching notwithstanding. Back at Fontevraud for burial, his body was dressed in priestly vestments and he was buried, not in the mud as he had requested, but in the abbatial church next to the high altar.[1]

ROBERT OF ARBRISSEL

So much for the interpretations of others. In the beginning was Robert. He was born in Arbrissel, south-south east of Rennes, sometime about the middle of the eleventh century.[2] His father Damalioch was a country priest, of a line of priests, clerical celibacy not being imposed in parts of rural France until well into the twelfth century and, in the diocese of Rennes, largely through the efforts of Robert himself.[3] His mother Orguende and brother Fulk are mentioned in the necrology of Fontevraud as are two female relatives, probably nieces.[4] In the normal course of events, he would have inherited his father's benefice and he may indeed have taken possession of it. The details of his life and the order of events before his studies took him to Paris at the age of about thirty are largely conjectural: when exactly he was ordained and whether or not he married are matters on which there is no conclusive evidence. He may have married, although the financial burden of a wife would have made it difficult for him to pursue studies in Paris. There is, in a personal letter from Marbod of Rennes, an allusion to a previous sin against chastity which may or may not mean that he had married after his ordination.[5] We simply do not have sufficient information to form a judgement on this matter. Another matter about which details are not clear is his having been involved in the simoniacal election of a bishop of Rennes.[6] One school of thought dates the event in 1076 with the election of Sylvester de la Guerche.[7] If this were so, the subsequent deposition of this bishop may have precipitated Robert's departure for Paris. While in Paris he may have

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1 *VAB* § 67, p. 295. For his being clothed in priestly vestments see Bienvenu, *Fondateur*, p. 156.
2 Robert's birth date is discussed in von Walter, *op.cit.*, p. 263.
3 Clerical celibacy is discussed in C.N.L. Brooke, 'Gregorian Reform in Action: Clerical Marriage in England, 1050-1200', *The Cambridge Historical Journal*, xii, 1956, pp. 1-21. Much of what is written here is also applicable to the west of France.
4 Bienvenu, *Fondateur*, p. 17.
5 . . . *mulierum cohabitationem, in quo genere quondam peccasti* . . Marbod, *Epistola vi* (*PL* clxxi, 1481).
6 *VA* § 41, 1078
7 Bienvenu, *Fondateur*, p. 21. Silvester de la Guerche was bishop of Rennes 1076-1078 and 1088-1093.

studied under Anselm of Laon who was teaching there at that time.[1] He certainly encountered and became involved in the movement for religious renewal which was currently manifesting itself in the church. This was to change his life. It was on fire with zeal to implement the Gregorian reforms that he returned to his native diocese in 1088 or 1089 as archpriest and assistant to the re-established bishop Sylvester. Thereafter he was the herald of religious renewal, not only in Rennes but throughout the west of France.

During the final decades of the eleventh century, the western regions of France, and indeed most of western Europe, experienced a considerable degree of political, social and economic instability and were in need of reform and renewal.[2] Anjou was torn by rival claimants for comital power to the extent that by the close of the century the authority of count Fulk IV, Le Réchin (1068-1109) was little more than nominal. His standing was further diminished by the blatantly scandalous liaison of his young wife, Bertrade, with Philip I of France. Population increase had put pressure on the land; new inheritance practices reduced wealth and forced many younger members of families into inappropriate marriage alliances or into religious life. Ironically, the implementation of the church laws concerning concubinage and incest meant that women, repudiated by their husbands, were often faced with homelessness or returning to their parental homes where they were not always welcome. The picture of an uprooted population, abandoned children, increased brigandage and lawlessness is intensified by the chronicle of floods, fires, epidemics and locust infestations with which Anjou was beset in the eleventh and twelfth centuries - between 1042 and 1101 there were five famines in the region.[3] Furthermore, religion had fallen into disrepute; of Brittany Robert himself wrote that it was a land where no good could be accomplished, where all ranks of the clergy were guilty of simony, princes were wicked and rapacious and the common people ignorant of God's law.[4]

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1 *ibid.*, p. 22.
2 The situation in Anjou is discussed in J. Dunbabin, *France in the Making*, 843-1180, (Oxford, 1985), pp. 184-90. See also Bienvenu, *Pauvreté*, *passim* and *id.*, *Fondateur*, pp. 52-57.
3 Bienvenu, *Pauvreté*, pp. 391-395.
4 *Sermo.*, p. 228.

Into this scene came, in 1098, Robert the reformer. For four years he worked tirelessly to restore peace in the diocese of Rennes and to eradicate the sins of lay investiture, simony, incest and nicolaism.[1] Not surprisingly he made enemies and the unexpected death of his patron in 1092 forced him to take refuge in Angers where he resumed his studies.[2] Already his propensity for personal austerity was evident. He began to wear a *lorica* next to his skin, to fast and to keep vigil, practices he was to continue more or less in secret for two years before finally leaving Angers and retiring to the forest of Craon where, in the company of others of similar fervour, he lived the life of a hermit.[3] He subjected his body to more extreme rigours, including the wearing of a hair shirt, shaving without water, sleeping on the bare ground, fasting, abstaining from meat and wine, keeping vigils throughout the night in an effort to win the interior battle against the demands of the flesh. This programme, he believed, would enable him to forsake everything and devote himself completely to God.[4]

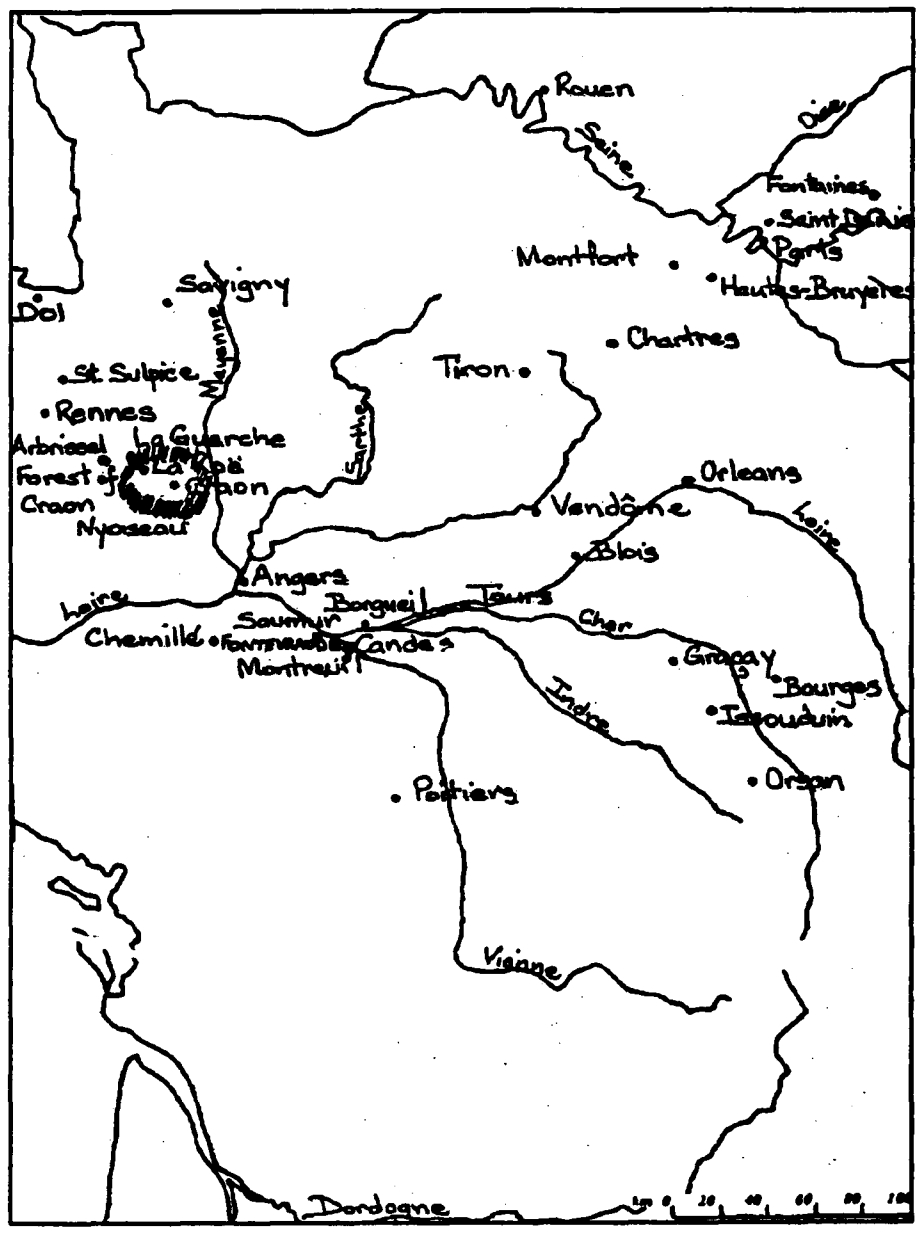
THE HERMIT

Robert's embracing the eremitic life was not an isolated phenomenon. His programme, singular though it may sound, placed him at the heart of a movement which had for some time been manifesting itself in the social and religious fabric of the eleventh century. The call of Gregory VII for the renewal of christian society had given an official voice to the movement but by the time Robert had made his decision to live in the forest of Craon, Benedictine monasticism had been challenged by the foundation of the Cistercian and Carthusian orders in 1098 and 1084 respectively and throughout the whole of western Europe people were experimenting with less formal types of evangelical living.[5] Responding to the challenge to

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1 *VP* § 9, 1048, 1049.
2 *VP* § 10, 1049.
3 The forest of Craon was on the border of Anjou and Brittany. See Figure I. p. 33.
4 *VP* § 11, 1049, 1050.
5 The reform of the church is treated in Constable, *Renewal*, pp. 42-65. Among the more relevant publications on the eremitical moverment are: H. Leyser, *Hermits and the New Monasticism* (London, 1984), *passim*; Bienvenu, *Pauvreté*, pp. 16-34; L. Raison et R. Niderst, 'Le Mouvement érémétique dans l'Ouest de la France à la fin du XIe siècle et au début du XIIe siècle', *Annales de Bretagne*, lv (1948), pp. 1-34; J. von Walter, 'La vie de Robert Arbrissel' trans. J. Cahour, *op.cit.*; Constable, *Eremitical Forms*, *passim*; J. Becquet, 'L'érémiticisme clérical et laïque dans l'Ouest de la France', in *L'eremitismo in Occidente nei secoli XI e XII*, *MCSM* iv (Milan, 1962), pp. 182-202; E. Delaruelle, 'Les ermites et la spiritualité populaire', *ibid.*, pp. 212-241; L. Gougaud, 'La Vie érémitique au Moyen Age', *Révue d'Ascétique et de Mystique*, i (1920), pp. 209-240, 316-328; D. Iogna-Prat, 'La femme dans la perspective pénitentielle des ermites du Bas-Maine', *Révue d'histoire de la Spiritualité*, liii (1977), pp. 47-64; L. Milis, *op.cit.*, pp. 46-80.

FIGURE I. PRINCIPAL SITES MENTIONED IN THIS CHAPTER [1]



return to the sources of Christianity and the idealism of the primitive church, men, both clerical and lay, began to retire to the margins of civilisation, the forests, taking as their models Christ, John the Baptist and St Anthony of Egypt.[2] One area where eremiticism took firm hold was the forests of the west of France which were compared to the Egyptian desert of the patristic period.[3] There, living among the outcasts of society, these 'new' hermits sought in silence, solitude and austerity to live a pure form of evangelical life, working with their hands, taking for food and shelter what the forest provided.[4]

The hermit was rarely alone in his 'solitary' life. Solitude and solitary living were two separate issues, and the solitude of the hermit was more an interior state than an external quality. Robert joined with other leaders of the movement, Bernard of Tiron, Vitalis of Mortain and Raoul de la Futaie who, as well as following their individual missions and

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1 After Dalarun, *Sainteté*, p. 16.

2 Constable, *Renewal*, pp. 46-49. The movement was largely clerical. On the involvement of the laity see Becquet, *op.cit.* pp. 188-89. While women figured prominently among the followers of the hermits, among the leaders of the movement they were extremely rare. One exception was an English nun, Eve, who lived close to Angers in the company of the hermit Hervé. Gougaud, *op.cit.*, p. 211; Bienvenu, *Fondateur*, pp. 65,66.

3 *Vita Bernardi*, §20, 1380-81. Figure I (this page) shows the eremitical foundations in this area.

4 Bernard of Tiron, for example, ate nothing but roots and herbs. *Vita Bernardi*, § 23, 1383. For a discussion of the symbolic aspects of the choice of location see Iogna-Prat, *op.cit.*, p. 50 and Milis, *op.cit.*, p. 50. The expression *new* hermits is from Leyser, *loc.cit.*

instructing their own disciples, supported each other in work and prayer. Bernard, Robert and Vitalis travelled together on a preaching mission throughout the west of France in the early twelfth century and they used to meet regularly at Dompierre to discuss the state of the church and other concerns of a spiritual nature.[1] Neither was the sojourn in solitude a flight from the world: it was a period of intense spiritual activity to prepare the hermits for a new mission. The 'desert' signified a complete rupture with their former way of life in the world or in the cloister; the penance they practised was a means of spiritual 'martyrdom' freeing them to live completely for God and the message of the Gospel; their distinguishing garb was a sign of their having forsaken worldly comfort and espoused poverty.[2] Disciples were welcomed, in fact they were expected in the desert: eremiticism had a strong apostolic element. These hermits wanted to be seen and heard. Their fundamental mission was to announce the gospel to the poor, in both precept and practice.[3]

Some of the hermits were hailed as miracle workers. While the author of the life of Bernard of Tiron stopped short of attributing to him the power to raise the dead, Baldric had no hesitation about claiming that Robert was capable of such actions.[4] The reputation which thus accrued to them, the strangeness of their appearance, the radical nature of their lifestyle, their reputation for holiness, their personal magnetism and the directness of their message all combined to attract the crowds.[5] Some were curious; some were motivated by a genuine desire for conversion. Among the latter there were those who wanted to live the eremitic life themselves and these soon posed a problem. At first they were housed in rude structures in the forest but as numbers increased more substantial dwellings were erected and it became evident that these followers would need some form of a rule of life.

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1 The activities of these and other associates of Robert are discussed by Raison and Niderst, *op.cit.*, pp. 7-17. See also *Rouleaux des Morts du IXe au XVe siècle*, ed. L. Delisle (Paris 1886), p. 281.

2 The 'desert' was often idealised and the regions inhabited by the hermits were probably more civilised than we imagine. Milis, *op.cit.*, p. 50. Martyrdom as an ascetic ideal is discussed in L. Gougaud, 'Les conceptions du martyre chez les Irlandais', *Rév. Bén.* xxiv (1907), pp. 360-373 and Iogna-Prat, *op.cit.*, pp. 53-54. On the eremitical dress see Delaruelle, *op.cit.*, p. 223. The centrality of poverty to the eremitical life is discussed in L.K. Little, *Religious Poverty and the Profit Economy in Medieval Europe* (London, 1978), pp. 70-83.

3 *VP* § 23, 1055.

4 *ibid.*, cf. *Vita Bernardi*, § 50, 1397.

5 Raison and Niderst, *op.cit.*, p. 23.

It was under circumstances such as these that Robert founded a community of canons regular at La Roë in the Forest of Craon.[1] Since the apostolate of preaching was so salient a feature of his programme, it is possible that this community was a base from which priests, celibate, educated, and dedicated to the values of the Gospel, evangelised the surrounding parishes.[2] If so, the community at La Roë was atypical. Generally speaking, the hermit leaders chose to train their followers in the practice of prayer, penance and manual work but preferred to have them live in stable communities rather than engage in outright evangelisation.[3] La Roë was a conventional community of Canons Regular even though Robert welcomed indiscriminately anyone who wished to join it. The women of his entourage were put in the charge of one of his disciples, Solomon, who it seems, founded several more or less temporary establishments for women, until, early in the twelfth century, having been given suitable land by the Seigneur of Nyoiseau, he established there a foundation for women.[4]

Urban II's visit to Angers in 1096 saw the La Roë community formally constituted and Robert's mission as a preacher officially approved.[5] Baldric would have us believe that the Pope summoned Robert, bade him preach and, recognising that the Holy Spirit was using him as an instrument, appointed him apostolic preacher.[6] The reality was probably quite different and hinges on the fact that since the time of Gregory VII the papacy had been exercising

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1 *VP* § 12, 1050. This was the first organised community of canons regular to be instituted in the ecclesiastical region of Tours since the Carolingian period. Bienvenu, *Fondateur*, p. 35.

2 Niderst, *op.cit.*, p. 20. A criticism levelled at Robert's followers was that they deprived the resident clergy of their proper dues. Marbod, *Epistola vi* (*PL* clxxi, 1484).

3 Leyser *op.cit.*, pp. 73-74. There seems to have been a contradiction between the unstructured life which the hermits lead and the stable way of life which, for practical reasons they were obliged to impose on their followers. This matter is discussed in detail below.

4 For Solomon's role see Joseph Avril, 'Les fondations, l'organisation et l'évolution des établissements de moniales dans le diocèse d'Angers du XIe au XIIIe siècle', *Les Réligieuses en France au XIIIe siècle*, ed. M. Parisse, (Nancy,1983), p. 34. See also Bienvenu, *Origines* p. 235. The community at La Nyoiseau was mixed in that it had a group of resident chaplains but its internal organisation was different from that of Fontevraud.

5 The charter recording the donation of land by Renaud de Craon was promulgated and signed on this occasion. Bienvenu, *Fondateur*, pp. 45-47.

6 . . . *se eum statuit seminiverbum. VP* § 13, 1050; § 14, 1051. There is no foundation for the opinion held by some, that Robert was commissioned to preach the crusade. cf. R. I Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society* (Oxford, 1987), p. 20.

increasing control over the activities of 'freelance' preachers.[1] Bishops could permit or forbid preachers to enter their dioceses and while papal permission was not canonically necessary, it provided preachers with an official status and thus some protection, and at the same time enabled the papacy to limit their activities.[2] Word of Robert had undoubtedly reached Urban's ears and it suited his purposes to have him preach in his presence. Satisfied as to his orthodoxy, the pope commissioned him to spread the gospel on his behalf. Thereafter Robert was effectively under papal jurisdiction. He was an official agent of reform and thus morally bound to keep his preaching within orthodox limits.[3] The formalising of the community was also a restraint. Robert was henceforth tied to this group, under the authority of the bishop of Angers. But the continued direction of La Roë was, it appears, a source of tension. His vocation to itinerant preaching, a vocation that was incompatible with the demands of managing an established community, was making itself felt with increasing urgency. When Baldric commented on Robert's refusal to be called 'Lord' or 'Abbot' he was undoubtedly implying a rejection not only of those titles and the power they represented, but also of the responsibility intrinsic to them.[4] A propos of this we might note that Robert's staff was not a crosier but a pilgrim's staff, shaped like a capital 'T', like that of St Anthony of the desert.[5]

It was not until 1098, that, having put the community under the direction of another, Robert embarked on his career as an itinerant preacher, an action for which he was later reproached.[6]

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1 Bienvenu, *Fondateur*, pp. 41-47. Bernard of Tiron and Vitalis of Mortain also received papal permission to preach. Leyser, *op.cit.*, p. 74.

2 Those who preached without authority might end up being branded as heretics. The author of the life of Gilbert of Sempringham, for example, seems to have been at pains to show that this saint worked under the authority of his bishop and was not 'unlicensed'. *The Book of St Gilbert*, *op.cit.*, p. 20. See also B. Golding, 'Hermits, Monks and Women in Twelfth-century France and England: the Experience of Obazine and Sempringham', *Monastic Studies, The Continuity of Tradition*, i, ed. J. Loades, (Headstart History, Bangor, 1990), pp. 134, 143, n.56.

3 See J. Longère, *La Prédication Médiévale* (Paris, 1983), p. 78.

4 *VP* §17, 1052. Most of the itinerant preachers preferred the title *magister*. Chenu, *op.cit.*, p. 252.

5 The staff is preserved at the priory of St Marie de Fontevraud at Chemillé, Maine-et-Loire. Bienvenu *Pauvreté* p. 191; it is illustrated in *id.*, *Fondateur*, facing p. 96.

6 *De professione vitae canonicae et stabilitate loci prioris, susceptaque cura regiminis super fratres ibidem professos: quae omnia propter sorores diceris contempisse.* Marbod, *Epistola vi*, (*PL* clxxi, 1486). cf. *VP* §16, 1051.

The evolution of the La Roë community typifies the transition from an eremitical group to a stable cenobitical community living according to a recognised rule.[1] Generally it was the bishop who, to control the exaggerations of the hermits and to utilise their preaching in the process of reform, encouraged them to settle in a fixed location, to adopt a rule and appoint a leader. Often he influenced local magnates to grant them land on which they could settle their followers. In the case of La Roë, it was the pope who played a decisive role, but the principle remains. The attitude of the church authorities can be understood. In the main the eremitical groups were characterised neither by a rule nor any structured observance - the guidance of the master was their norm.[2] Their non-conformity was sufficient ground for fear and distrust especially among the local clergy who saw in their activities a threat to their revenues.[3] And the fears of the authorities were justified. Untrammelled religious enthusiasm could upset the status quo, as Hildebert, bishop of Le Mans, discovered.[4]

We can be fairly certain that in many of the foundations made at the end of the eleventh and the beginning of the twelfth centuries, church authorities brought pressure to bear on individual hermits and preachers to impose some regularity on the lives of their followers. Marbod of Rennes certainly played a decisive role in the foundation of Fontevraud, begging Robert in the name of both ecclesiastical and lay authority to order the activities of the crowds which followed him.[5] Peter of Poitiers was probably instrumental in securing the initial land grant for Robert and his followers.[6] Barthélemy of Laon was influential in the early years of the foundation of Premontré.[7]

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1 This is treated in Milis, *op.cit.*, *passim* and especially pp. 55-57 and in J. Leclercq, 'Problèmes de l'Erémiticisme' *Studia Monastica*, v (1963), p. 202.

2 *ibid.*, p. 61.

3 See J. Becquet, 'L'Erémiticisme et Hérésie au Moyen Age', *Hérésies et sociétés dans l'Europe pré-industrielle XIe-XVIIIe siècles*, ed. J. Le Goff (Paris, 1968), pp. 139-145, where it is pointed out that all too often orthodoxy was identified with social order.

4 The false hermit Henry of Lausanne led the people of Le Mans in an insurrection against the bishop. False hermits are discussed in J. Leclercq, 'Le Poème de Payen Bolotin contre les faux ermites', *Rév Bén* lxviii (1958), pp. 52-86, and in Moore, *Dissent*, pp. 84-86.

5 Marbod, *Epistola vi*, (*PL* clxxi, 1481). See below p. 41-42.

6 Peter of Poitiers, *Privilegia pro Ordine . . . Fontis Ebraldi* (*PL* clxii, 1089-1092, i-iii). Robert of Arbrissel, *Diplomata*, (*PL* clxii, 1086, i). This will be discussed in greater detail below.

7 C. Dereine, 'Les Origines de Prémontré', *RHE* xlii (1947), pp. 363-370.

This is not to deny that there were other factors which inclined the founders towards providing a rule for their followers. Sometimes it was the followers themselves who, fearing disintegration on the death or departure of their leader, pressed him to give them a formal rule; at other times it seems to have been the hermits themselves who sought a rule which would give permanence to their foundations.[1] However, some of them, Robert included, displayed an ambivalent attitude towards cenobitical life (which adoption of a rule implies) and withdrew from their foundations or tried to prolong the eremitical phase - a course of action which became increasingly difficult as numbers of followers increased.[2] Whatever may have been the motivation, the fact remains: the closing years of the eleventh century and the early years of the twelfth witnessed the birth of several religious houses, among them Tiron, Savigny, St Sulpice at Rennes and Fontevraud, where collective eremiticism evolved into conventional monasticism.[3]

Within a space of three to four years, then, Robert was successively hermit, preacher and founder but we cannot ignore the interdependence of these three facets of his life: to dissociate one from the others is to take it out of its rightful context. Intrinsic to his preaching mission was his ascetic programme practised in the desert, and the direct result of it was the gathering of disciples and their organisation in a stable religious community.

THE PREACHER

What was the message which drew so many to listen to this man and to want to stay and share his way of life? We know that he did not preach the crusade although there was undoubtedly a link between the eremitical and the crusading movements.[4] Like the crusading preachers, Robert preached a message of penance. Peter of Poitiers recorded that in preaching the word

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1 Golding, *op.cit.*, p. 143 n. 39; Leyser, *op.cit.*, p. 22.
2 Milis, *op.cit.*, p. 61-62. Gilbert of Sempringham also withdrew from active involvement in the cenobitical community. *The Book of St Gilbert*, *op.cit.*, pp. 66-68.
3 Constable, *Eremitical Forms*, pp. 250-252.
4 Bienvenu, *Fondateur*, pp. 44, 45.

of God, Robert turned many men and women away from the evils of the world.[1] We know too, that he denounced the lives of the clergy to the extent that Marbod of Rennes accused him of subversion.[2] But to find the positive aspects of Robert's teaching we must turn to his letter to the Countess Ermengarde which embodies his teaching.[3] The main thrust of this letter was that Ermengarde, anxious but unable to leave the world and join Fontevraud, was to develop an interior piety. She was to live in the land of her own heart and nourish herself on the riches contained therein. She was to hold God in her heart, whether she was at home, abroad, in her bed or enjoying herself in fine clothes and in company.[4] Robert advised her how she might achieve this: through prayer, both the canonical hours and shorter prayers, through penance and through ascetic practices, though it was necessary to maintain proper balance in the last.[5] In addition she was to love voluntary poverty and practise almsgiving.[6] Such a programme for a lay woman was practical, achievable and attractive. We have no reason to suppose that the substance of what he preached to others differed markedly from this.

Since we know that this letter was composed by Robert himself, it is worthwhile to examine it, not simply for its content but also for its style, as an indication of what attracted the crowds.[7] Immediately striking is the heavy reliance on Scripture, both Old and New Testament. An analysis of the letter has shown that it contains 68 Old Testament references, 34 of them direct quotations.[8] The most frequently cited book is the Book of Psalms and the predominant

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1 Peter of Poitiers, *Privilegia* (*PL* clxii, 1089, i).

2 *Hoc enim non est praedicare, sed detrahere.* Marbod, *Epistola vi* (*PL* clxxi, 1484).

3 *Sermo*, pp. 225-235.

4 *Inhabita terram cordis tui et pasceris in divitiis eius. . . . . In corde Deum habe sive in civitate, sive in aula, sive in lecto eburneo, sive in veste preciosa, vel in exercitu, vel in judicio sive in convivio fueris. Sermo*, pp. 231,228.

5 *. . . oratio brevis utilis est; . . . oratio cordis, non labiorum est accepta Deo; . . . nuda nudum Christum in cruce sequeris, . . . Discretionem tene in omnibus, in abstinentia, in jejuniis, in vigiliis, in orationibus. Sermo*, pp 227-235. In view of Robert's severe personal ascetic programme, this last advice is interesting.

6 *. . . paupertatem voluntarium dilige. . . . misericors esto pauperibus omnibus sed tamen magis pauperioribus et maxime domesticis fidei his qui propter Deum mundum reliquerunt. ibid.*, pp. 233, 234.

7 It has been suggested that Robert's sermon at Ménélay (printed in Dalarun, *Sainteté*, pp. 297-99), is illustrative of Robert's preaching style, but as we do not know how much of this is directly attributable to Robert and how much is the interpretation of Brother Andrew, its value is less positive than that of the letter to Ermengarde. cf. *ibid.*, p. 182.

8 Bienvenu, *Fondateur*, pp. 58-59.

theme is one of hope in God. Though Robert referred to the tribulations of this life - for which he was termed a pessimist - his gaze went beyond the present to the salvation promised to those who were faithful.[1] There is a similar abundance of New Testament references.[2] Not surprisingly for a preacher, he relied heavily on the Sermon on the Mount.[3] Robert shows himself a reformer, not a revolutionary, and the overall impression supports Brother Andrew's assertion that his preaching showed the presence of the Holy Spirit, was never ineffectual, and always touched the hearts of his hearers.[4] There was never any compromise on the message of the gospel. In fact, his thundering sermons threatening sinners with eternal punishment won him the title of 'Depths of Hell'.[5] This could refer to his early career when his zeal was at its zenith; Peter of Poitiers also referred to his vehement exhortations.[6] By the end of his life he seems to have mellowed: as he lay dying at Orsan, all who came to visit him left consoled by whatever he had said to them.[7]

Robert's message, his eloquence, his personality drew the crowds. Before long they attached themselves to him and followed him through the length and breadth of the countryside. They must have been a motley lot, drawn, at least to some extent, from the lower ranks of society. Baldric describes them as comprising men, women, poor, nobles, widows and virgins, old and young, prostitutes and haters of men. Later he adds that Robert received the poor, the sick, and did not turn away incurables or lepers, those in incestuous relationships or concubines.[8] The extent to which this is an accurate description of the crowds which followed Robert, or indeed any of the wandering preachers is open to question. Baldric does refer to the presence of nobles among the crowd, but there could also have been a substantial middle

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1 On Robert's pessimism: von Walter, *op.cit.*, p. 276.
2 There are 68 references, 48 of them direct quotations. Bienvenu, *loc.cit.*
3 Most medieval preachers used similar themes. J. Longère, *op.cit.*, pp. 209, 210.
4 *VA* § 23, 1069.
5 J.-B. Souchet, *Histoire du diocèse et de la ville de Chartres*, (4 vols, Paris, 1868), ii, p. 362. See also Dalarun, *Sainteté*, p. 180 n. 286.
6 . . . *tonitruo sanctae exhortationis* . . . Peter of Poitiers, *Privilegia* (*PL* clxxii, 1089, i).
7 *VA* § 29, 1072. This is discussed in Dalarun, *Sainteté*, pp. 181-182.
8 *VP* § 19, 1053, § 22, 1055.

class element.[1] Many of his followers were women who had left their husbands.[2] Irrespective of their social mix, the aspect of this large group following Robert through the countryside must indeed have been strange. What is more strange is that they were the raw material for the Fontevraud foundation.

THE FOUNDER

At this stage of Robert's life the foundation of a religious community must have been the furthermost consideration from his mind. He had just divested himself of the responsibility of directing one and surely was not anxious to take on another. Two forces, however, converged to precipitate his decision to provide both stable accommodation and a rule of life for his followers. The first was a letter from a member of the higher clergy voicing his, and no doubt others', criticism of Robert's behaviour; the second was his action at the Council of Poitiers. The letter of Marbod, archbishop of Rennes and Robert's former master at the school of Angers, in addition to the criticism, contained a plea on behalf of clergy and laity alike for him to regularise the lives of his followers, to put an end to their licentious behaviour, and to show some common sense and prudence in his own.[3] The degree of truth behind the criticisms is debatable. It is evident that Marbod relied on hearsay of which rumour and exaggeration would doubtless have been elements, and his reaction is typical of the reaction of authority to seeming disorder.[4] Still, there must have been some basis for the allegations and, given that the crowd following Robert was quite large, it is logical to conclude that he would have found it impossible to maintain discipline and orderly conduct among them no matter how fervent his prayers or prolonged his vigils.[5] One can, in retrospect, appreciate Marbod's consternation. Robert apparently had never been over-prudent.[6] His current behaviour was causing more than a few ecclesiastical eyebrows to be raised. His disciples were dirty

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1 Moore, *Dissent*, p. 77.
2 Roscelin, 'Der Brief an Abelard', in *Der Nominalismus in der Frühskolastik*, ed. J. Reiners, (Münster, 1910), p. 67.
3 Marbod, *Epistola vi*, (*PL* clxxi, 1481).
4 Moore, *Dissent*, p. 84.
5 The behaviour of Robert's followers is described in Marbod, *loc.cit.*; If, as Baldric claims, there were 300 living in the main cloister at the time of foundation, the crowd could easily have numbered in excess of 500. *VP* §20, 1054.
6 Marbod, *Epistola vi*, (*PL* clxxi, 1486).

and unruly, his own attire was unconventional and offensive; his denunciation of the vices of the clergy in front of the common people was manifestly subversive of authority, both spiritual and temporal, and his practice of a most extreme type of penance - *mulierum consortia* - (sleeping in the company of young women to prove he had mastered his sexual desires) was nothing short of scandalous.[1] On receipt of Marbod's criticism and his appeal to sanity and sanctity Robert may have realised that at stake was not only his reputation but also the future of all his followers. Despite his criticism of the established order, he was not a social revolutionary. For his work to continue he relied on the patronage of the baronial class and the approval of the ecclesiastical authorities. He may thus have felt his hand forced to comply with their wishes. Later, when he referred to his foundation of Fontevraud, he remarked that he would happily have continued in his life as a hermit and preacher had not divine pity constrained him to reach out to the needs of his women followers.[2] It is likely that, in actual fact, divine pity assumed a much more prosaic complexion.

The Council of Poitiers provided Robert with an opportunity to prove in a dramatic way where he stood on the issues of adultery and licentiousness. When William IX of Aquitaine brought in his troops to force the assembled fathers to rescind the ban of excommunication imposed on Philip I because of the latter's refusal to end his adulterous affair with Bertrade of Montfort, the only two to take a stand against them were Robert and his friend, Bernard of Tiron.[3] After this episode Robert was morally obliged to ensure that the future behaviour of his own followers was above reproach. Thus, immediately after the Council, (probably between November 1100 and Easter 1101) and no doubt with the assistance of Peter, bishop of

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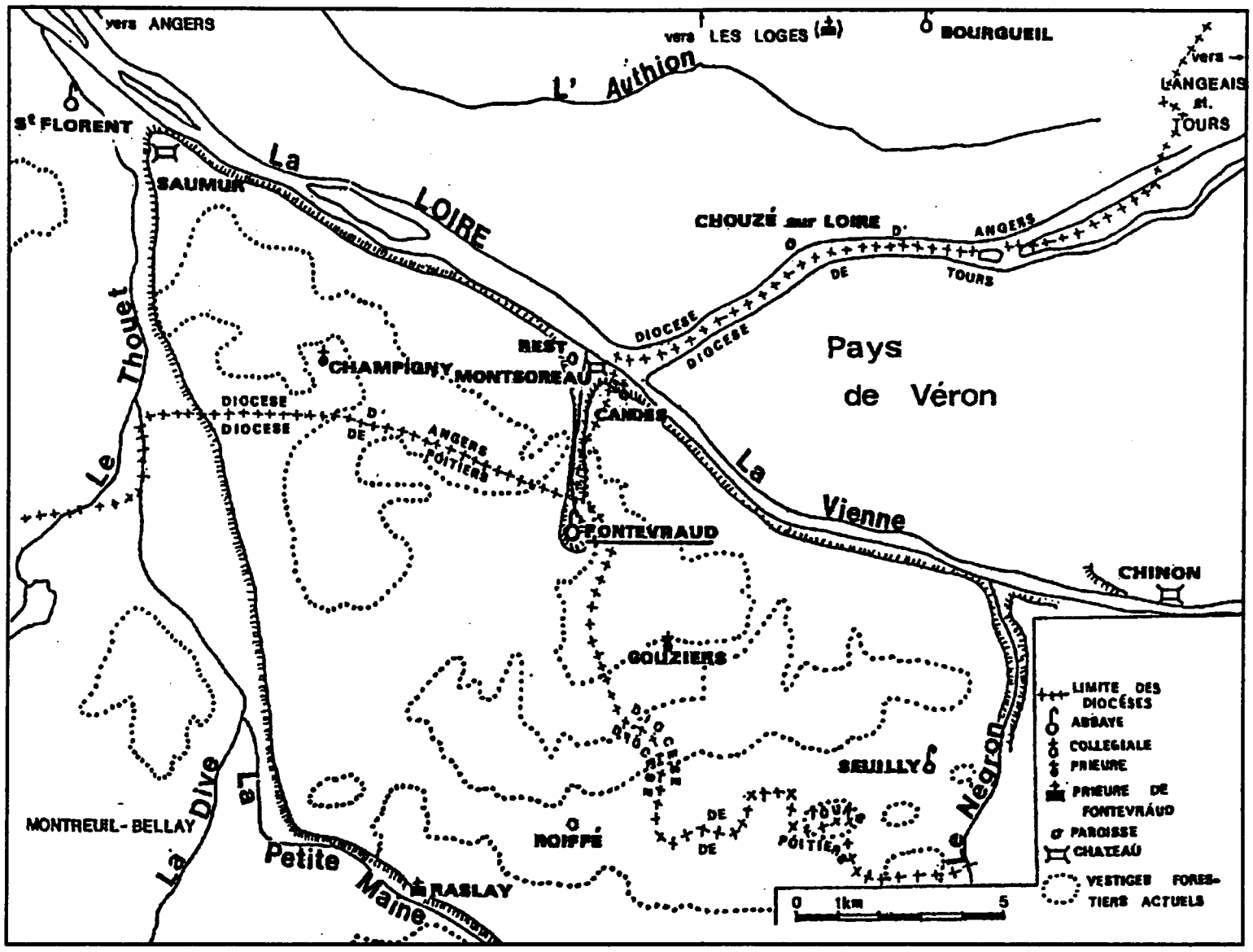
1 This practice of proving one's mastery over the flesh by cohabiting with women is discussed in L. Gougaud, '*Mulierum Consortia*: étude sur le synéisaktisme chez les ascètes celtiques' *Eriu, The Journal of the School of Irish Learning*, ix, pt. ii (1923), pp. 147-156 and Iogna-Prat, *op.cit.*, pp. 57-64. The Celtic influence postulated by Gougaud is feasible given Robert's Breton origins. However, Iogna-Prat shows that most educated clergy of the time were familiar with the conferences of John Cassian where the practice is also discussed. Jean Cassian, *Conférences*, ed. and trans. E. Pichery (Paris, 1958), ii, pp. 219-220. According to Gerald of Wales, St Aldelm of Malmesbury slept between two young girls. Gerald of Wales, ii, p. 236.

2 *VAB* § 50, p. 289.

3 *Vita Bernardi* § 48, 1396.

Poitiers, a long-time friend and supporter, Robert took definite steps towards establishing a permanent foundation.[1]

FIGURE 2. SITE OF THE FOUNDATION AT FONTEVRAUD.[2]



Land was provided in the Loire and Vienne valleys, close to a public thoroughfare.[3] Though described by Baldric as wild and rough, infested with thorns and thistles, the land known as Fontis Ebraudi was no desert.[4] It was actually fertile, suitable for agricultural, pastoral and viticultural exploitation. Early donations included a mill, pasture for cattle and various customs and dues.[5] Moreover its position vis-à-vis civil and ecclesiastical jurisdiction was carefully

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1 On the probable date: Bienvenu, *Origines*, p. 238.

2 Bienvenu, *Fondateur*, pp. 80,81.

3 Peter of Poitiers, *Privilegia* (*PL* clxii, 1089-90, i); *Diversorum Donationes Piae* (*ibid.*, 1104, xix, xx). The topography of the area is shown in Figure 2 (this page).

4 *VP* §16, 1051. The locations of both Molesme and Muret were described in similar terms even though both were close to main roads. D. Baker, 'Crossroads and Crisis in the Religious life of the Later Eleventh Century', in *The Church in Town and Country*, ed. D. Baker (Studies in Church History, xvi, Oxford, 1979, pp. 141-142).

5 The 'desert' was a stock phrase, with biblical connotations and evocative of the hermits of the Patristic period. Milis *op.cit.*, pp. 50, 51. Early charters of donation attest to the fertility of the land at Fontevraud. *Diversorum Donationes Piae*, (*PL* clxii, 1104, charters xix-xx).

considered. In the county of Anjou, it was outside the civil authority of William IX of Aquitaine with whom Robert had clashed, yet it was within the diocese of Poitiers thus ensuring the continued support and patronage of Peter, the bishop.[1] It is quite possible that the latter had used his influence to secure the initial grant of land from Aremburg and her daughter Adelaide; Robert made no secret of the fact that the bishop had played a significant role in his foundation.[2]

While Robert may have been forced by circumstances to make this foundation, when it came to preserving the character of the original group he was definite: where it could be achieved without scandal, women should live with men: Fontevraud was to be a mixed community.[3] And although ecclesiastical authorities were generally not in favour of such, in this case they seemed to have raised no objection. Robert's stand at Poitiers was well known and the evident support of Peter the bishop would have helped establish his credibility.

Organisation of the new foundation was simple. The plan was that the group would live an eremitical life. All were to observe silence at specified times. The sexes were separated. Tasks appropriate to each were assigned: men were to work, women to pray. This was, according to Robert (or Baldric) in keeping with the rules of nature.[4] There was nothing original in the organisation. Women religious of the period were conventionally enjoined to contemplation, silence, mortification and penance.[5] From the outset roles were clearly defined: clerics were to sing Mass and the Offices; lay brothers were to perform manual work. Social conventions were thus preserved. Shelter was at first basic but became more substantial as donations increased.

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1 Figure 2, p. 43. The political and economic advantages of the location are discussed in Bienvenu, *Origines*, p. 239; *id.*, *Fondateur*, pp. 78-85.

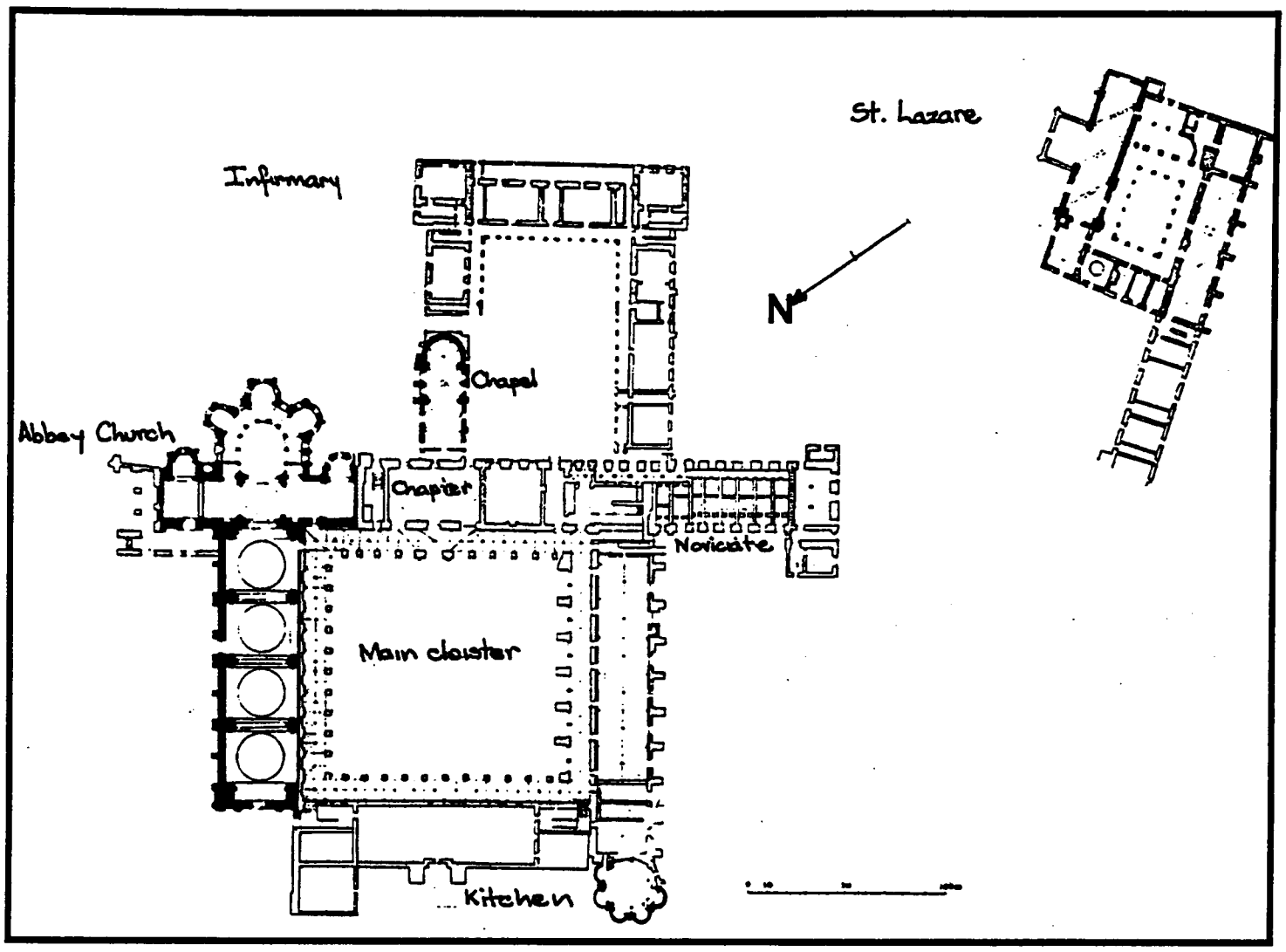
2 Peter of Poitiers, *Privilegia* (*PL* clxii, 1089-1091, i-iii). On the co-operation of Peter of Poitiers see Robert of Arbrissel, *Diplomata* (*PL* clxii, 1086, i).

3 *quoniam mulieres cum hominibus oportebat habitare, ubi possent sine scandalorum scrupulositate conversari et vivere , deliberavit perquirere et si quod desertum contigisset reperire. VP* § 16, 1051.

4 *VP* § 17, 1052.

5 Fontette, *op.cit.*, p. 154.

FIGURE 3. PLAN OF THE MAIN ABBEY BUILDINGS AT FONTEVRAUD.[1]



The men lived together in one dwelling under the patronage of St John the evangelist, known as *The Habit*.[2] Women, who clearly outnumbered the men, were grouped around several cloisters. The main cloister was for contemplatives - at least three hundred of them. Other cloisters, under the patronage of St Lazarus and St Mary Magdalene, housed other groups.[3] The patronage of Mary Magdalene has given rise to a commonly-held belief that this last was a house for reformed prostitutes.[4] Robert was certainly dedicated to the rehabilitation of these women as were others of the preacher-hermits, but among the hermits devotion to Mary Magdalene was very popular, not only because of her reformed life but also stemming from a legend that she was the first hermit.[5] The cult of this saint, centred at Vézélay, was

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1 From M. Melot, *Fontevrault* (Paris, 1971).

2 This title may have been borrowed from dwellings of this name occupied by early Breton hermits. Its derivation is from Old French *habiter*, to dwell. Raison and Niderst, *op.cit.*, p. 5, n. 18.

3 *VP* §20, 1054. The separate cloisters are named in *VAB* § 66, p. 295.

4 Dalarun, *Sainteté*, p. 185; *id.*, *Femmes*, pp. 1146, 47.

5 V. Saxer, *Le Culte de Marie-Madeleine en Occident des Origines à la fin du Moyen Age*, (2 vols, Auxerre, Paris, 1959), pp. 125, 126. See also Iogna-Prat, *op.cit.*, pp. 52-64.

widespread during the Middle Ages. Equally widespread was confusion as to her actual identity, a confusion shared and, in fact, promoted by Gregory the Great: Mary Magdalene, the sister of Martha and Lazarus and the woman who anointed Jesus' feet were all identified as the same biblical figure.[1] It is more than likely that the main cloister of Fontevraud was reserved for virgins and *La Madeleine* for *conversae*, that is, for all other women, reformed prostitutes included.[2]

Of the foundation community Baldric paints an idyllic picture. All lived together in the bonds of fraternal love: there was no bitterness, envy or discord among them.[3] Generally the men belonged to the lower ranks of society, though the priests must have been educated.[4] Noblewomen, however, were among early members of the order and their numbers increased.[5] This was, of course, predictable. Recruitment to religious life was mainly from the upper classes. In the west of France at this time a significant proportion of the members of female religious houses were either noble widows or married women.[6] It was not long before the prevailing social order was apparent at Fontevraud with the noblewomen in charge.[7] It is doubtful that Robert planned this but it seems that he did little to prevent it - in fact, his actions rendered it inevitable.

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1 Saxer, *op.cit.*, i, pp. 2-6; Dalarun, *Sainteté*, pp. 184, n. 320; 185, n. 324.

2 See Dalarun, *Femmes*, p. 1146. The term *conversa* is ambiguous. Originally denoting a late entrant into religious life, it gradually came to mean an illiterate (i.e. unschooled in Latin) monk. By the end of the thirteenth century even among the Black Monks it denoted a lay brother and not a monk. In the present context *conversae* clearly refers to late entrants - the opposite of *virgines* or *nutritae*. Dalarun, *Sainteté*, p. 185. On *conversi/ae* see U. Berlière, 'Les monastères doubles au XIIe et XIIIe siècles', *Mémoires, Académie Royale de Belgique, Classe des lettres et des sciences morales et politiques*, 2e sér., xviii (1923), pp. 27-31 and G. Constable, '*Famuli* and *Conversi* at Cluny. A note on Statute 24 of Peter the Venerable', *Rév Bén* lxxxiii (1973), pp. 326-350.

3 *VP* § 17 , 1052; cf. Acts iv:32.

4 The social status of the brothers was investigated by Bienvenu in his thesis: 'Les premiers temps de Fontevraud (1101-1189): Naissance et évolution d'un ordre religieux.' (Thèse de doctorat d'Etat, Paris, Sorbonne, 1980) Unfortunately I was unable to consult this work.

5 J. de Petigny, 'Robert d'Arbrissel et Geoffroi de Vendôme' *BEC* v, 3e sér (1854), pp. 19, 20, n. 1 lists the most notable among them. They included Agnes, countess of Chateaumeillant; Agnes of Montreuil, cousin of the count of Anjou; Angarde of Roannez, Queen Bertrade; Elisabeth of Montfort, Matilda, countess of Poitiers; Ermengarde, duchess of Brittany; Hersende, the first prioress was sister of Hubert of Champagne and widow of the lord of Montsoreau, Petronilla, the first abbess was widow of the lord of Chemillé.

6 J. Verdon, 'Les Moniales de la France de L'Ouest aux XIe et XIIe siècles', *CCM* xix (1976), pp. 249-253.

7 Dalarun, *Sainteté*, p. 95; Bienvenu, *Fondateur*, p. 87.

The contents of another letter must be considered for their bearing on the turn of events. This letter came from the abbot of La Trinité of Vendôme, written probably c.1101, just as the order was in its initial stages of foundation.[1] As well as reiterating the criticisms of Marbod of Rennes, the letter of abbot Geoffrey indicated that there was some division among the sisters. One group, it appears, felt that Robert was treating them harshly while at the same time favouring another group. Who lodged the initial complaint and who belonged to which group is not known but a few certainties can be established. The complaint must have come from a member of the community who had access to the abbot, that is from one of the noble women. Petronilla of Chemillé was Geoffrey's cousin and it could well have been she who voiced the discontent of her noble sisters who were disaffected and felt that they were not being treated as befitted people of their rank.[2] Robert's attempt at equality on religious grounds where all were simply *pauperes Christi* was obviously distasteful to them.

Geoffrey's letter may have been the impetus Robert needed to goad him into action.[3] In 1101 he would have been no more inclined to settle to monastic life than he had been in 1096 in the forest of Craon. Stability ill-befitted an itinerant preacher. At La Roë Robert, having found someone to whom he could entrust the direction of the community, returned to his preaching. At Fontevraud the same need was presenting itself but the choice of director presented problems. For the continued success of his work Robert relied on the support, both monetary and moral, of the wealthy classes. For the building programme at Fontevraud to continue, he needed to hand over its supervision to someone interested in and capable of seeing it through to a satisfactory completion. The director needed to be a person with sufficient experience, self assurance and social standing to carry on the work. Given the heterogeneous group at Fontevraud, the person best suited to the task had to have been one of the noblewomen and in fact it was Hersende of Montsoreau, sister of Hubert, count of Champagne, mother-in-law of the lord of Montsoreau, on whose land the monastery had been built, whom Robert chose and

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1 Geoffrey de Vendôme, *Epistola xlvii*, (*PL* clvii, 181-184); See J. de Petigny, 'Robert d'Arbrissel et Geoffroi de Vendôme', *op.cit.*, pp. 1-30.
2 See Dalarun, *Sainteté*, p. 186; *id.*, *Femmes*, p. 1157, n. 50.
3 Bienvenu, *Origines*, p. 242.

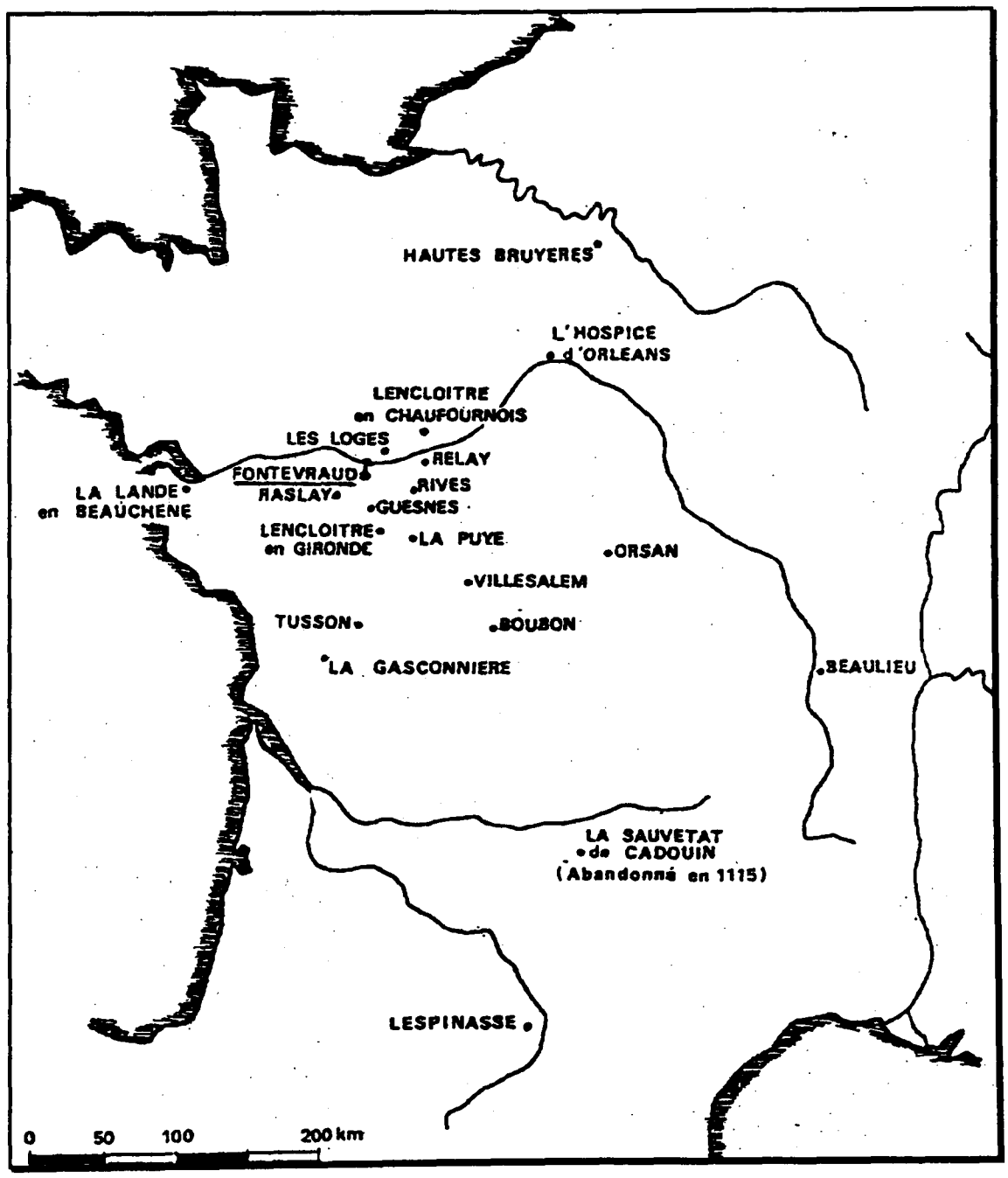
appointed prioress. Petronilla of Chemillé, whom he appointed as her assistant, was also a noblewoman, widow of the lord of Chemillé. There was an inherent danger in this choice, a danger which is evident in the letter of Geoffrey of Vendôme. Robert, in conforming to the wishes of the nobility, ran the risk of establishing a conventional order of women in which the rich ruled over the poor.[1] But did he have any other choice? Certainly, he could not have left administration of such a large concern to anyone other than a noble woman. The poor, the lepers, the reformed prostitutes would not have been suitable candidates for directing the order.[2] Robert himself could perhaps have maintained for a time the momentum of the original dream but it is evident that he had no desire to do so - Baldric stated that he was neither willing nor able to help with the building programme: his was a call to preaching, not administration.[3] What on the surface appears to be a sell-out to the nobility was actually a recognition of reality. Short of abandoning his preaching and directing the community himself - a course he was disinclined to take - the only solution was to appoint to the position of authority someone used to ruling, used to commanding obedience. It was the only logical and practical course of action available to him. Significantly, when it came to founding other priories, Robert followed this same pattern. Agnes, prioress of Orsan was former wife of Alard, lord of that region; Bertrade of Montfort, former wife of the count of Anjou, was made prioress of Hautes Bruyères.[4] Neither Hersende nor Petronilla gave Robert cause to regret his decision; in fact each proved herself a capable administrator.[5] With the direction of the community safely in their hands, Robert was free to continue his work of preaching unimpeded by what he doubtless saw as the minutiae of monastic life.

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1 Dalarun, *Sainteté*, p. 186.
2 Unless, of course, they were of the rank of Bertrade de Montfort.
3 *VP* § 21, 1054.
4 *VA* § 36, 1075; Dalarun, *Sainteté*, p. 186. Pernoud, *op.cit.*, p. 138.
5 For the work of Hersende and Petronilla in preserving the patrimony of the order see Peton, *op cit.*, pp. 74, 75, and R.I. Moore, 'Reconstruction of the Cartulary of Fontevrault', *BIHR* xli (1968), pp. 86-95.

Robert's return to preaching should, however, not be construed as total desertion of his followers.[1] Hersende was never constituted abbess of the order, simply prioress, suggesting that Robert still retained ultimate control. For the next fifteen years Robert was instrumental in bringing donations to the order and fostering many new recruits. Converts were settled in priories dependent on Fontevraud and he periodically returned to the mother house to direct the group. By the time of his death in 1116 he had founded about eighteen priories and had secured a rich patrimony for Fontevraud.[2]

FIGURE 4. PRIORIES FOUNDED DURING THE LIFETIME OF ROBERT OF ARBRISSEL.[3]



1 cf. Smith, *op.cit.*, pp. 175-184. This author interprets Robert's return to preaching as a lack of interest in the order.

2 See Figure 4, (this page).

3 Bienvenu, *Fondateur*, p. 109.

ABBESS PETRONILLA

There is a degree of uncertainty over the precise chronology of the final six months of Robert's life. Assuming that he died on 25 February 1116 and working back from that date we can place the events which we are about to discuss as beginning in September 1115.[1] At this stage Robert, realising that he did not have much longer to live, put in train a series of events which would ensure the permanence and stability of his order.

His first action was to call the brothers together to determine if they wished to continue in their service of the nuns.[2] Almost to a man they agreed to do so, despite having been given the option of leaving Fontevraud and joining another order. Satisfied that he had thus established concord between the two sexes, he then consulted the bishops and abbots of the region concerning the appointment of an abbess.[3] The *Vita Altera* described in detail the nature of the deliberations and tells how Robert finally gained approval for his plan of appointing a *conversa* (someone who had experience of the world as opposed to one who had been raised from childhood in the cloister) as abbess - someone with sufficient business acumen and knowledge of the ways of the world not to lose all that he had built up.[4] He reasoned that the cloistered virgins who knew of no other life than praying and singing psalms, were not suitable administrators: a more practical person was needed.[5] His anxiety was well-founded. The abbey of Ronceray in Angers had been involved in thirty eight cases of litigation between its foundation and 1100.[6] In the litigious society of the twelfth century *naiveté* had no place.[7] Thus it was that on 28 October, 1115, Petronilla of Chemillé, noblewoman and former prioress, was officially designated first abbess of Fontevraud and Robert enjoined on the order that henceforth the abbess was to be elected from among the *conversae* rather than from among those who had been choir sisters from their youth.[8]

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1 The chronology follows that of Dalarun in *Sainteté*, p. 25.
2 *VA* § 3, 1059.
3 *VA* § 4, 1059.
4 *VA* § 4-6, 1059-1060. On *conversae* see above p. 46, n. 3.
5 *VA* § 5, 1060.
6 Verdon, *op.cit.*, p. 263.
7 Subsequent events would vindicate his decision. Moore, 'Reconstruction of the Cartulary of Fontevrault', *op.cit.*, pp. 94-95.
8 Not necessarily, however, a widow. cf. Nicquet, *op.cit.*, pp. 98-99.

This appointment officially constituted Fontevraud as a religious order for women with an integrated male element. Although brothers and nuns lived under the authority of the abbess, it is preferable to avoid the use of the term 'double order' since arrangements under which men and women lived in close association in religious life are so diverse that each case merits individual description.[1] Petronilla's rule was absolute, no different from that of any contemporary abbess.[2] She controlled the entire order, all its members male and female, all its priories and all its temporal domain. A clause from an early collection of rules, judged as bearing the hallmark of Robert's design, states unequivocally that Petronilla, having been chosen by Master Robert and constituted abbess by common consent and the devoted request of the nuns as well as of the brothers, was to have and maintain the power of ruling the order and all the places belonging to the order. All were to obey her and revere her as their spiritual mother, and all the affairs of the order, spiritual as well as temporal were in her hands to be assigned to whomsoever she designated.[3]

Soon after formalising Petronilla's position, Robert departed from Fontevraud on a preaching mission, visiting Hautes-Bruyères, Bonneval and Chartres. For part of his journey he was accompanied by Bernard of Tiron and Petronilla.[4] On 18 February 1116 he fell ill and with help made his way to the nearby priory of Orsan.[5] It is perhaps appropriate that someone who spent a significant part of his life travelling the roads should end his days far from 'home', but Robert's dearest wish was to die and be buried at Fontevraud. Realising that the former was impossible, he repeatedly begged his friends, during the last week of his life, to take his body to Fontevraud after his death and bury him in the cemetery among his fellow workers and the

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1 Gold, *The Lady and the Virgin, op.cit.*, pp. 101, 102.

2 The authority of a twelfth century abbess is discussed in S. Tunc, 'L'autorité d'une abbesse de Fontevraud au XVIIe siècle: Gabrielle de Rochechouart de Mortemart 1760-1704', *RHE* lxxxvii (1992), p. 75.

3 *Ut Petronilla electa a magistro Roberto et constituta abbatissa communi voluntate, et devota petitione tam sanctimonialium quam religiosorum fratrum habeat, obtineatque potestatem regendi ecclesiam Fontis Ebraldi, et omnium locorum eidem ecclesiae pertinentium, et obediant ei; venerentur eam ut suam matrem spiritualem, in eiusque prudentia omnia ecclesiae negotia tam spiritualia quam saecularia permaneant, aut quibuscunque attribuerit, et prout constituerit.* (*PL* clxii, 1083-1084, [5]). This section of the statutes is considered to be a fragment of Robert's Rule. J. von. Walter, *Die ersten Wanderprediger . . . op.cit.*, p. 77. I am indebted to R. Hiley for having translated this section of von Walter's work.

4 *VA* § 11-13, 1062-1064.

5 The chronology follows Dalarun, *Sainteté* p. 71.

lepers.[1] Brother Andrew recounted in detail the events of this last week, Robert's agony, his advice to the nuns and the brothers, his confession, his final blessing and his death on the evening of 25 February at the time of vespers.[2] Immediately after his death conflict broke out. Amidst the sorrow at losing their founder, leader and friend, there was a bitter dispute over possession of his body. Alard, lord of Orsan and Leger, archbishop of Bourges both reneged on their promise to allow Robert to be buried at Fontevraud and did their utmost to arrange the interment at Orsan. At stake was not simply the spiritual privilege of having the relics of a holy man, there were potential financial rewards as well.[3] Petronilla, however, was determined that Robert should be taken back to Fontevraud as he had requested. She and the nuns were prepared to go to extreme measures to force the hands of the clergy and noblemen who thought otherwise. They won the day by praying, fasting, walking in procession in the February cold without veils or cloaks.[4] The body was transported to the mother house by river. The abbey reached, the obsequies were performed and, on 7 March 1116, Robert was buried in the part of the abbatial church normally reserved for the nuns.[5]

The following day Leger of Bourges preached the panegyric in the brothers' chapter.[6] The legends had, without doubt, already begun to develop. But, contrary to what often occurred with monastic founders, the popular legend of Robert the saint was not advanced by Petronilla nor, it seems, by anyone at Fontevraud. No miracles were recorded at his tomb, no cult was promoted.[7] While on the surface this may sound strange, it could illustrate the desire of the order to spare itself the nuisance of throngs of pilgrims to his shrine, guaranteed to disturb the enclosure and disrupt the contemplation of the nuns. This is not without precedent. The monks at Chaise Dieu pleaded with their Saint Robert to refrain from performing miracles so that they would be left in peace by the pilgrims and the abbot of Clairvaux bade St Bernard, by

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1 *VA* § 33, 1073.
2 *VAB* § 43-54, pp. 285-291.
3 *ibid.* § 59-63, pp. 292-294. See also Tunc, 'Après la mort de Robert d'Arbrissel . . .' *op.cit.*, p. 382.
4 *VAB* § 63, p. 294.
5 *VAB* § 66-68, pp. 295-6.
6 *ibid.*, § 68, p. 296.
7 On the process of canonisation: E.W. Kemp, *Canonisation and Authority in the Western Church* (Oxford, 1948), pp. 36-81.

virtue of obedience, to cease performing miracles for the same reason.[1] Furthermore, among the Fontevraud statutes, there was a prohibition against seculars keeping vigil in churches belonging to the order.[2] This would certainly have commanded observance in the abbatial church. Enclosure was not to be compromised, even, it seems, at the expense of the canonisation of the founder. Another possibility is that Petronilla and the nuns wanted to demonstrate that they were not interested in the material rewards of possession of the body. Moreover, it is not incontestable that Robert's cult was neglected. There is evidence that devotion to him did continue. The formula for profession mentioned his relics and a breviary belonging to one of the English foundations includes a prayer to him and an invocation in the litany of saints.[3] Contrary to current opinion, the nuns may not have made a concerted effort to consign their founder to oblivion.[4]

One question, however, must be asked: Why did Petronilla, so determined to return Robert's body to Fontevraud for burial, keep only half of her promise to him? Why, on this occasion did she give in so easily to the wishes of the nobility and clergy, when a week previously she withstood them so vigorously? One interpretation of events attributes to Petronilla a sinister purpose. It sees her as deliberately flouting Robert's wishes, deliberately denying the brothers access to his tomb, deliberately organising that Robert should be forgotten.[5] It is unfortunate that we do not have any evidence in Petronilla's favour and this judgement of her does seem unduly harsh. It must be countered that in having Robert buried in the church Petronilla was probably acting more from wisdom than perfidy - the difficulty she had in obtaining Robert's body in the first place and the attempt by the people of Candes to seize it on the way to Fontevraud would have made her justifiably afraid that the tomb might be robbed were it to be

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1 P-A Sigal, *L'homme et le miracle dans la France médiévale* (Paris 1985), pp. 223-225.

2 *Ut in ecclesiis earum nunquam vigiliae fiant a saecularibus.* § XXXI (*PL* clxii, 1081).

3 With reference to profession the Rule of St Benedict states: *De qua promissione sua faciat petitionem ad nomen Sanctorum quorum reliquiae ibi sunt. . . .* RB § lviii, p. 132. See CUL MS Ee. vi. 16, fo. 9v, 65v. See below p.129.

4 Bienvenu, *Fondateur*, pp. 164-169. This author claims that there was no *rouleau de mort* circulated, a claim which must be based solely on circumstantial evidence.

5 J. Dalarun, *Robert d'Arbrissel, fondateur de Fontevraud* (Paris 1986), pp. 196,197; Bienvenu, *Fondateur*, pp. 164-167.

left unguarded in the cemetery.[1] On the other hand, the fact that the brothers, with the exception of those engaged in celebration of Mass for the nuns, were ultimately denied access to Robert's tomb is difficult, if not impossible, to explain. At Sempringham, by contrast, St Gilbert had been buried in the dividing wall in the priory church so that both nuns and brothers could pray at his tomb.[2]

Another question which must be considered is whether the death of the founder marked the end of the Fontevraud ideal. Most of the institutions founded by twelfth century hermits changed their orientation after the death of their founders or the retirement of the latter from active involvement in the affairs of the institution.[3] But a change in orientation is not tantamount to a betrayal of the ideal. The order of Fontevraud certainly changed direction from its humble beginnings, but its aristocratic propensities had been there from the outset and were endorsed by Robert when he accepted land from magnates and appointed noblewomen as its early administrators. He clearly relied on the generosity and patronage of the aristocracy to sustain his enterprise and hence was in some ways beholden to their wishes. He himself rejoiced in the prosperity of the order, grateful that those who had shared the initial poverty and privation with him should reap the fruits of their labours.[4] The consequence of the tension in Robert's life between preaching and founding a religious order was that the ideal he envisaged for his followers was neither practical nor practicable; the very success of his preaching demanded a modification of the standards he set for them. His dream of his followers living a life of collective eremiticism as *pauperes Christi* contained within itself the seeds of its own destruction.[5] The practicalities of feeding, housing, and caring for a large

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1 The incident at Candes is reported in *VAB* § 65 p. 294. Bienvenu concedes the point about grave robbers. *Fondateur*, p. 157. On theft of relics and translation of bodies of saints see P. Geary, *Furta Sacra* (Cambridge, Mass. rev. edn., 1990), pp. 5-7, 16. For an interpretation of events different from that of Dalarun and Bienvenu, see Tunc, 'Après la Mort de Robert d'Arbrissel', *op.cit.*, pp. 388-390, and Gold, 'Reviews', *op.cit.*

2 *The Book of St Gilbert*, ed. R. Foreville and G. Kier, (Oxford, 1987), pp. 128-31. R. Graham, 'Excavations on the Site of Sempringham Priory', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, v (1940), p. 91.

3 Milis, *op.cit.*, p. 61.

4 *VA* § 7, 1061. For a discussion of material prosperity in monastic life see J. Van Engen, 'The *Crisis of Cenobitism* Reconsidered: Benedictine Monasticism in the Years 1050-1150', *Speculum*, lxi (1986), pp. 285-292.

5 The paradox of the hermit-founder is discussed in Golding, *op.cit.*, p. 129 and Milis, *op.cit.*, 57-62.

group of people, not to mention those of administering an ever-increasing temporal domain, demanded the imposition of structures which immediately spelt the alteration of the original plan.[1] The idealistic and idyllic primitive community of Fontevraud could not have survived; the ideal had to be translated into practical terms. When Robert handed over the task of translation to the two noblewomen Hersende and Petronilla, he set the foundation on the inevitable course of becoming a conventional twelfth-century religious order no matter how much he would have wished it otherwise. The character of the order was destined to change: Robert's ceding of authority to the nobility guaranteed the direction of that change. However, the assessment that under Petronilla and her successors the order became a retreat where the daughters of the nobility and world-weary dowagers could end their days with priests to say masses for them and servants to wait on them is not only undeserved; it is belied by the reputation for strict observance of the Rule which the order continued to maintain and the esteem in which both the church and the laity continued to hold its members.[2]

STATUTES

The principles which governed the life of the Fontevraud order are expressed in its Rule and statutes. Any analysis of the Rule of Fontevraud must begin from the understanding that the fundamental rule of life for a nun of this order was the Rule of Saint Benedict: at her profession she promised stability and conversion of life and obedience to the Rule of Saint Benedict, in the presence of God and all his saints and before the tomb of Robert of Arbrissel, the founder.[3] Chaplains and brothers, as far as we know, followed the Augustinian Rule. What is commonly referred to as the Rule of Fontevraud is the body of statutes which Robert decreed should enshrine the particular manner in which the two Rules were lived in the two

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1 The parallels with the modification of the Franciscan ideal are apparent. Bienvenu, 'Préhistoire du Franciscanisme. . .', *op.cit.*, p. 35.

2 The view that Fontevraud became a 'retirement home' is held by Dalarun; See *id.*, *Robert d'Arbrissel, fondateur de Fontevraud*, *op.cit.*, p. 191. On the esteem of the papacy and prelates: Gelasius II, *Epistola xxii* (*PL* clxiii, 504); Innocent II, *Epistola lxxiv* (*PL* clxxix, 116); Eugenius III, *Epistola xxi* (*PL* clxxx, 1036); Suger of St Denis, *Epistola lxxxviii* (*PL* clxxxvi, 1392-93).

3 *Ego soror . . . promitto stabilitatem et conversionem morum meorum, obedientiam secundum regulam Sancti Benedicti abbatis, coram Deo et omnibus Sanctis ejus, in hoc loco . . . ante Sepulchrum domini Roberti patris nostri in praesentia dominae . . . abbatissae.* Nicquet, *op.cit.*, p. 349. This formula is from 1244 and while it may have undergone some modification since the inception of the order, it would nevertheless be close to the original. The similarity of this formula to that of the Benedictine order is evident. cf. RB § lviii, p. 130.

respective Fontevraud communities.[1] Over the years the statutes were modified by abbesses and chapters general to reflect actual experience. Their matter covers such topics as dress, diet, silence and religious comportment as well as contact between male and female members of the order, maintenance of enclosure and the election of an abbess. A text of the statutes was probably committed to writing during 1115, about the same time as Robert was making provision for the future of the order.[2] It is clear that before this there were some regulations although their exact form is uncertain. Initially, we know, organisation was haphazard and spontaneous and only after external pressure did Robert impose some regularity.[3] Baldric tells us that the sexes were separated, that the women were enclosed and devoted themselves to prayer and that the lay brothers and clerics lived together, the latter performing religious duties, the former manual work. All kept silence at prescribed times and they were able to live by the fruit of their own labours.[4] There must have been a body of statutes in rudimentary form at least, to have been approved by pope Paschal II in 1106: Peter of Poitiers in his charter of confirmation of the order referred to those of the nuns indicating that they were not to be interfered with, but we are ignorant as to their actual provisions.[5]

When the *Vita Altera* was being composed, written statutes were held at the mother house. Brother Andrew noted that the regulation concerning the election of the abbess from among the *conversae* was added to the other commandments which were prescribed by Robert and which were kept at Fontevraud.[6] These, according to Andrew, included regulations on work, food, speech and clothing and were written to ensure that both the brothers and the nuns lived religious life worthily.[7] There was also among Robert's original precepts a prohibition against using violence to defend the property of the order.[8]

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1 References to the Rule throughout this work will be to the Rule of Saint Benedict. The body of customs observed at Fontevraud will be termed *statutes* and individual decrees either *statutes* or *precepts.*

2 It was common practice for founders, prior to their deaths, to put into writing the precepts by which their orders lived. Milis, *op.cit.*, p. 61; Golding *op.cit.*, p. 143 n. 39.

3 See above pp. 41-42.

4 *VP* § 17, 1052.

5 . . . *ut nulli personae liceat regulam sanctimonialium destruere vel mutare.* Peter of Poitiers, *Privilegia* (*PL* clxii, 1091, i).

6 *VA* § 10, 1062.

7 *VA* § 10, 1062.

8 Innocent II, *Epistola lxxviii* (PL clxxix 118,119).

What remains of Robert's statutes, (Migne, version 2), is clearly a representative sample.[1] The nuns' precepts enjoin strict silence in the enclosure except for those who must concern themselves with external affairs.[2] This is stricter than that reported by Baldric where initially silence was observed only at certain times. When speaking was necessary it was to be done in a manner becoming to a religious and while signs were permitted, their use was strictly limited.[3] The prohibition against eating meat even by those who are ill is found only in this version:[4] its disappearance from subsequent versions suggests that it soon lapsed. It is uncertain whether this means that the order as a whole ignored the prohibition or that they simply followed the more humane prescriptions of the Rule of St Benedict and allowed meat to the infirm.[5] The latter seems more probable, especially in view of the fact that the order was still so close to its eremitical origins, even though Peter the Venerable affirmed the consumption of various types of meat at Cluny at about the same time.[6] The only stipulation concerning contact between the male and female members of the order is contained in the ruling that the sick are to be brought to the church for the sacrament of anointing - obviously a means of preventing the priest from coming into the nuns' living quarters.[7] Also in this version is a strong statement on authority structures within the order, outlining Petronilla's position of absolute power, and the status of the Grand Prioress, indicating the role which she is to play between the death of an abbess and the election of her successor.[8]

The 1119 version contains five of these seven precepts - the only two which do not appear are that concerning meat (which has already been discussed) and that defining Petronilla's position.[9] The latter, specifically referring to Petronilla's personal authority, would no doubt

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1 *Inter vetusta statuta data Petronillae . . magistro Roberto.* (*PL* clxxii, 1083).
2 § 4 (*PL* clxxii, 1083).
3 *ibid.* Monastic sign language had been standardised and tabulated by the Cluniac monks during the tenth century. D. Sherlock, 'Anglo-Saxon Monastic Sign Language', *Archaeologia Cantiana* , cvii, 1989, pp. 1-27. cf. RB § xxxviii, p. 92. See also *Monasteriales Indicia* ed. D. Banham (Pinner, 1991).
4 § 4 (*PL* clxxii, 1083).
5 RB § xxxvi, xxxix, pp. 90,96.
6 Peter the Venerable, *Epistola clxi*, in *The Letters of Peter the Venerable*, ed. G. Constable (2 vols, Cambridge, Mass., 1967), i, 388-9. Later history shows that meat was definitely consumed in the English houses, but our evidence is from the early fourteenth century when a greater degree of latitude was exercised in this respect. See below p.175.
7 § 5, (*PL* clxxii, 1083).
8 *ibid.*, § 5, 6.
9 *Regulae Sanctimonialium Fontis Ebraldi*, § I, II, XL, XLIII, XLIV (*PL* clxxii, 1079-1082).

have been invoked during the process of her assuming control of the order. In the body of statutes approved for the future government of the order there would have been need of explicit precepts defining the areas of the authority of the abbess *per se*. These can be found in the 1119 version.[1] The other precepts in this version are mainly regulations on dress and enclosure. The habit was to be made from roughly-woven, inexpensive material, unbleached and of natural colours, without any of the trappings of elegance such as trains, fringes, pleats or embroidery.[2] This, no doubt, was reminiscent of the *melota* worn by penitents and was symbolic of the nuns' having turned their backs on the attractions of the world.[3] Three times a year they were to shave their heads - another penitential gesture.[4] Anyone going beyond the enclosure was to be accompanied ideally by two male religious but at the very least by one religious and one secular, and the context of the precepts concerning excursions from the cloister suggests that only the abbess and those with positions of authority were to engage in external business.[5] The maintenance of enclosure within the monastery was strictly regulated: no one was to go beyond it without the abbess' permission; no one was to enter it without the abbess' permission; nuns did not go to the cemetery to bury their dead; if a patron or pilgrim wished to see the monastery the nuns were to withdraw from view and the grand prioress or cellarist was permitted to show him certain specified areas.[6] The nuns' enclosure was similarly inaccessible to priests whose liturgical function was carefully defined.

Any contact with seculars or with priests was scrupulously supervised.[7] Given the sensitivity of the church to mixed communities and the necessity of avoiding scandal, the regulations concerning contact between the sexes are to be expected, and parallels can be found in the

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1 *ibid.*, § XIX, XXI, XXII, XXIV, XXIX, XXXIII.
2 *ibid.*, § V, VIII, IX, X, XI, XII, XIV, XV.
3 On the *melota*: E. Delaruelle, *op.cit.*, p. 223.
4 *Regulae Sanctimonialium* . . . § XVI.
5 *ibid.*, § XVII, XVIII, XIX.
6 *ibid.*, § XXIII-XXX.
7 *ibid.*, § XXXI- XLI.

statutes of other communities with a similar structure to Fontevraud.[1] One interesting statute decrees that the nuns were to cook for themselves.[2] This probably means that lay sisters would do this work rather than the order have paid servants, but it could also mean that the nuns were rostered for kitchen duty as were Benedictine monks.[3] The general picture is one of penance, poverty and simplicity managed by carefully-defined authority.

The earliest version of the brothers' statutes begins with a preamble indicating that the priests, clerks and lay brothers of Fontevraud had freely chosen to serve the nuns until death under the yoke of holy obedience.[4] Their reverent subjection was not confined to Fontevraud but was to be observed in all houses of the order. The precepts which follow enjoined them to recite the canonical office, to live an enclosed life in community having nothing of their own but being content with what was given to them by the nuns, to be bled three times yearly and to return leftovers from meals to the nuns for distribution to the poor.[5] They were forbidden to accept parish churches or the tithes attached to them, to lend anything to seculars and to receive anyone into their convent without the abbess' permission.[6] Most of these precepts are repeated in the 1119 version of the statutes with the exception of those pertaining to lending to seculars and accepting parishes.[7] Parishes were probably rapidly recognised as a worthwhile source of income. The prohibition against accepting may have been imposed originally by Robert to protect himself and the order from an early criticism concerning the brothers who were said to be depriving the parish clergy of their legitimate income.[8] We do not know the circumstances surrounding the abandoning of this precept but it is evident that 'spiritual'

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1 In 1139 nuns and brothers were forbidden by Canon Law to sing office in the same choir: Lateran II, Canon xxvii in *Sacrorum Conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, ed. J.D. Mansi, (reprinted in 53 vol., Paris 1901-1927), xxi, p. 526 (xxvii). The Gilbertine Rule contained strict instructions concerning the avoidance of contact between the sexes. *The Book of St Gilbert, op.cit.*, pp. 46, 47; Abelard's rule for nuns also limited contact. Abelard, *Epistola viii* (*PL* clxxviii, 276).

2 *ibid.*, § XX.

3 . . . *ut nullus excusetur a coquinae officio*, RB § xxxv, p. 86. See also G. Constable, '*Famuli* and *Conversi* at Cluny. . .' *op.cit.*, pp. 326-34.

4 *PL* clxxii, 1085.

5 *PL* clxxii, 1085, § 8, 9, 10, 11. With regard to bloodletting, three times a year seems infrequent by contemporary standards. At Westminster in the early fourteenth century monks were rostered so that their turn would have come around seven or eight times a year. Harvey, *Living and Dying*, pp. 96-99.

6 *PL* clxxii, 1085, § 12, 13, 14. The Cistercians had a similar ban on accepting churches which was soon abandoned. See Burton, *op.cit.*, p. 247.

7 *Praecepta Recte Vivendi*, § I, II, VII, VIII, XXV (*PL* clxxii, 1081-1084).

8 Marbod, *Epistola vi* (*PL* clxxi, 1484).

income ultimately was extremely important to the order.[1] The regulation concerning dealings with seculars was probably subsumed in the statutes covering separation from the affairs of the world. Other statutes in this version emphasise simplicity in dress: habits were of rough material and simple design; accoutrements such as knives were to be neither costly nor valuable.[2] Here too the outward commitment to poverty was symbolic of inner detachment. Liturgy was to be simple - processions were to be kept to a minimum and confined to the cloister with only the officiating priest wearing a surplice.[3] Women were forbidden to enter the brothers' enclosure, even to work.[4] Several regulations concern the abbess' authority: material goods were to be distributed through her representative, the cellarist; she alone was to receive aspirants; she permitted visitors to enter the brothers' enclosure.[5] Rebellious brothers were to be punished or imprisoned; deserters were to be re-admitted only with the abbess' permission and after having performed appropriate penance.[6]

Some writers have expressed surprise at finding in these statutes regulations concerning rebellious brothers and the punishment to be meted out to them while there is no evidence of corresponding regulations for the nuns. They have interpreted this as an indication of indiscipline among the Fontevraud brothers stemming from the difficulty they would have experienced in submitting to the authority of the nuns.[7] It is clear, however, that the Rule of St Benedict, under which the nuns lived, had ample provisions for dealing with insubordination and there was no need for further elaboration in their statutes.[8] The Rule of St Augustine was less explicit and needed to be supplemented by statutory material such as is presented here. There certainly were cases of desertion from the order. The years following the death of the founder with the necessary centralisation of authority under Petronilla were

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1 On the importance of spiritualities in the income of the English foundations, see Figure I, p. 251.
2 *Praecepta Recte Vivendi*, § IV-VII; XXVI, XXVII.
3 *ibid.*, § XV, XVI. As he was dying Robert referred, somewhat ironically one might suspect, to the wonderful processions held at Cluny. In choosing Fontevraud as his place for burial he rejected others - Bethlehem, Rome, and Cluny, *ubi fiunt pulchrae processiones*. *VA* § 32 1073.
4 *Praecepta Recte Vivendi*, § XIV.
5 *ibid.*, § XVII, XXIV, XXV,
6 *ibid.*, § XIX, XXI
7 For example, Fontette, *op.cit.*, p. 78.
8 RB § ii, xxiii, xxiv, lxxi, pp. 20, 72, 158.

bound to have been problematic to some extent.[1] It was necessary to bring about twenty priories and their inhabitants into the new authority structure and the transition was likely to have been more difficult for the men who had been so closely identified with Robert.[2] In 1118 pope Gelasius II sent a directive to the abbots and priors of monasteries instructing them that they were not to receive brothers from Fontevraud but to charge them to return to their own monasteries.[3] Honorius II had to repeat these injunctions several years later and in 1149, possibly on the death of Petronilla, Eugenius III reprimanded brothers who had violated the nuns' enclosure and set up rival superiors.[4] Robert had anticipated some difficulty and before his death gave those unwilling to stay an opportunity to join other orders.[5] Among those to whom the papal injunctions applied were, no doubt, some who, albeit belatedly, chose to take advantage of the founder's provision. It goes without saying that in every order there would have been malcontents and misfits and others who, finding their living situation intolerable, would have sought greener pastures. Saint Bernard received into Clairvaux monks who had not received proper dismissorial letters from their abbots and Peter the Venerable argued that if a monk's salvation were at stake no letter of recommendation was required for transfer.[6] Obviously, at the time, desertion or movement from one order to another was sufficiently commonplace to provoke such argument. Furthermore, rebellions of brothers were not confined to the order of Fontevraud: that, for example, of the lay brothers at Sempringham c.1165 is well documented.[7] And while some brothers were discontented and chose to leave the order, other groups of men opted to join it. In 1122, for example, Aimeric, prior of the church in Bragerac, brought his whole group under the control of Fontevraud.[8]

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1 Even though Robert had centralised the order to some extent, (*VAB*, § 48, p. 288) it would have been necessary for Petronilla to make adjustments to impose her authority.

2 Robert referred to the men of the order as *filii mei charissimi quos in Evangelio genui. VA* § 3 1058,59: the men referred to themselves as *homines magister.* Marbod, *Epistola vi*, (*PL* clxxi, 1485).

3 Gelasius II, *Epistola xxii* (*PL* clxiii, 504).

4 Honorius II, *Epistola xlix* (*PL* clxvi, 1268); Eugenius III, *Epistola ccclxiv* (*PL* clxxx, 1400).

5 Almost all (*pene omnes*) agreed that there was no better way of life. *VA* § 3 1059. This allows us to speculate that some may have left on this occasion.

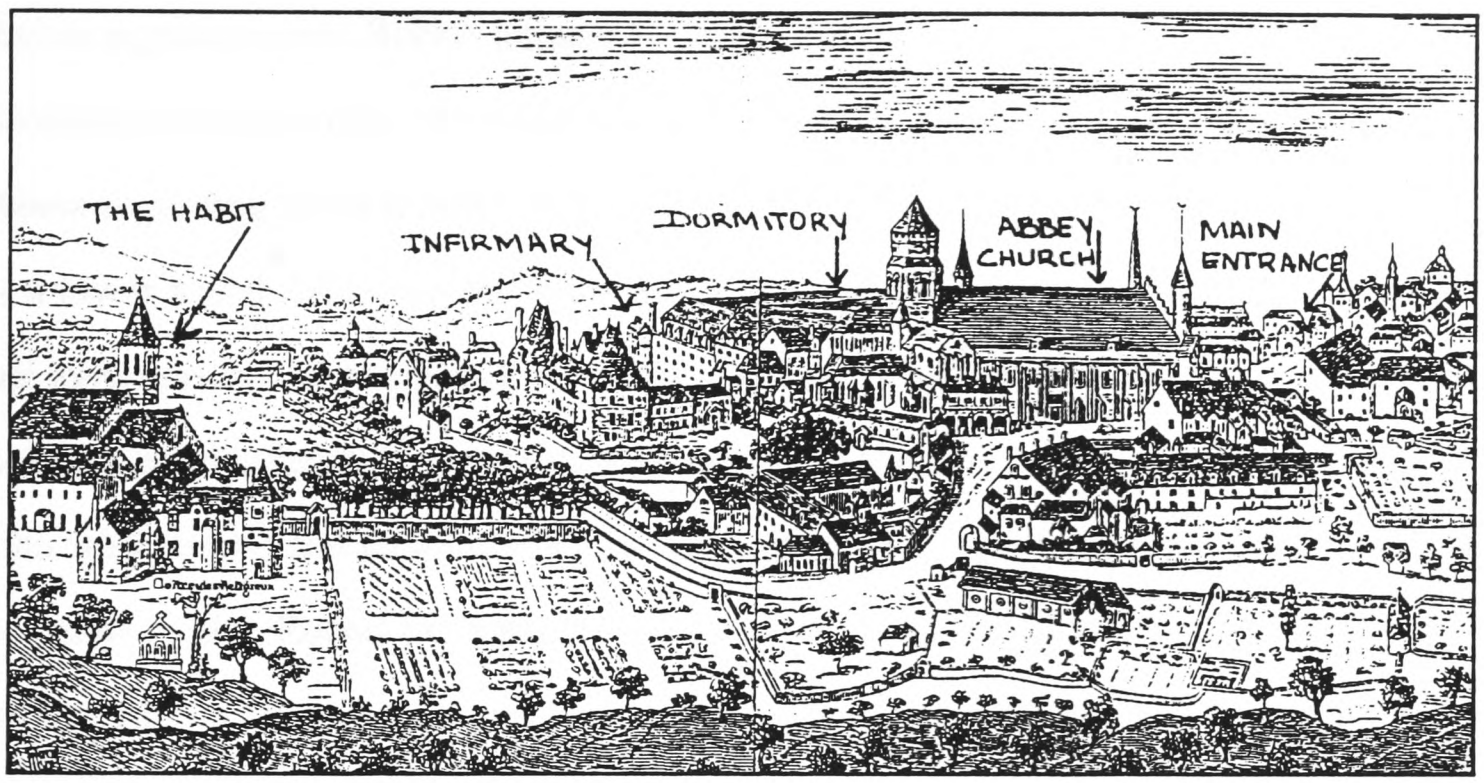
6 A. Dimier, 'Saint Bernard et le droit en matière de transitu', *RM* xliii (1953), pp. 48-82; Peter the Venerable, *Epistola xvi* in *The Letters of Peter the Venerable*, *op.cit.*, i, pp. 78-79.

7 *The Book of St Gilbert*, pp. 76-85, 116-119, 343-9. See also D. Knowles, 'The Revolt of the Lay Brothers at Sempringham', *EHR*, l (1935), pp. 465-487.

8 The charter is quoted in Nicquet, *op.cit.*, pp. 262-64.

Nevertheless this is an appropriate point to examine the position of the Fontevraud brothers vis-à-vis the authority of the abbess. It is best done from the perspective of the juridical position of the nuns. Fontevraud was essentially a women's order.[1] Robert was specific on this score.[2] Papal pronouncements and charters of donation reinforce it.[3]

FIGURE 5: GENERAL VIEW OF FONTEVRAUD.[4]



Robert clearly made a deliberate choice not to perpetuate his own role as master or supervisor, in contrast, for example, to Gilbert of Sempringham.[5] Constitutionally, Fontevraud was an autonomous, independent order for women, ruled by a woman. All authority was vested in the abbess or in those to whom she chose to delegate it, just as in contemporary male orders, or in mixed orders with male control, all authority was vested in the abbot.[6]

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1 See above, pp. 1-4.

2 . . . *quidquid in mundo aedificavi ad opus sanctimonialium nostrarum feci eisque potestatem omnem factultatum mearum praebui. VA* § 5, 1059.

3 Paschal II, Epistolae *clv*, *cdxcii* (*PL* clxiii, 164, 419): Callistus II, *Epistola xxxii* (*PL* clxiii, 1121); Innocent II, *Epistola xxv* (*PL* clxxix, 72); Peter of Poitiers, *Privilegia*, (*PL* clxii, 1090, i); *Diversorum Donationes Piae*, (*PL* clxii, 1097, iv, v, v; 1103, xviii). For a discussion of the evidence from charters of donation see Gold, *op.cit.*, pp. 104-107.

4 A. Jubien, *L'Abbesse Marie de Bretagne et la Réforme de l'Ordre de Fontevrault* (Paris, 1872) frontispiece. This engraving represents the abbey as it was in 1699. While the form of the buildings would have changed since foundation times, the general lay-out of the abbey would be more or less similar to what it was in the early twelfth century.

5 *The Book of St Gilbert*, *op.cit.*, pp. 68-71, 86-89.

6 See above pp. 50-51, and Tunc 'L'autorité d'une abbesse . .' *op.cit.*, pp. 75,76.

We know that all women's communities had to make some provision for the material and spiritual assistance for which they relied on priests and brothers.[1] Traditional Benedictine monasteries for women maintained a staff of resident chaplains and lay brothers for this purpose.[2] Peter Abelard in his rule for *The Paraclete* provided for a community of monks and lay brothers and insisted that they were to be subject to the female superior.[3] The men of Fontevraud were in a similar category. They were not monks as such but were probably canons regular as was Robert himself.[4] Their specific vocation was to provide for the nuns materially and spiritually. At profession they promised poverty, chastity and obedience to the abbess according to the statutes of the order.[5] It is fairly certain that the men were generally of a lower social class than the women, but the important feature regarding their situation is that they were an integral part of the order. Within the authority structure, however, the men had no executive function: their role was simply to obey and serve, taking as their model St John who obeyed and served the Virgin Mary after the ascension of Jesus.[6] And, according to this same model, Robert expected the nuns to work in co-operation with the brothers. On his deathbed he instructed them not to undertake anything new without first consulting them.[7] However, for the juridical integrity of the order, as well as for its practical functioning, it was necessary to have only one authority figure - hence the insistence on total submission to the abbess and obedience to her by all. The obedience and submission outlined in the statutes are,

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1 The problems associated with the *cura monialium* are discussed in Gold, *op.cit.*, pp. 76-93.

2 In the twelfth century, association of men and women in religious life was probably more common than has hitherto been acknowledged. S. Thompson, *Women Religious, the Founding of English Nunneries after the Norman Conquest* (Oxford 1991), p. 113.

3 . . *omnes pariter tam viros quam feminas ei professionem facere et obedientiam promittere.* Abelard, *Epistola viii*, (*PL* clxxviii, 276, 277).

4 Bienvenu, *Fondateur*, pp. 46-47. This explains why, in certain matters, the provisions in the men's rule are more explicit than those in the women's. The canons regular are discussed in C. Dereine 'Vie commune, règle de saint Augustine et chanoines réguliers au XIe siècle', *RHE* xli, pp. 365-406.

5 *Ego, frater . . . promitto quod ero bonus et legalis in hac religione Fontis Ebraldi et erga ipsam religionem, et voveo ac promitto Dei et Beatae Mariae Virgine, tenere et observare pure et nude castitatem, paupertatem et obedientiam Dominae Abbatissae, secundum statuta et observationes religionis, quemodmodum a patribus et praedecessoribus nostris extitit ordinatum et modificatum easdem observare et tenere. Sic me Deus adjuvet.* Nicquet, *op.cit.*, p. 348. This formula dates from 1477 but is said to be faithful to the original act of profession. Fontette, *op.cit.*, pp. 77-78, n. 93. The explicit mention of poverty, chastity and obedience suggests some later influences.

6 *VA* § 11, 1063. See Jn. xix: 22-27.

7 *Aussy sy vouléz faire quelque chose de nouveau, ne faictes jammais rien sans le conseil de voz freres et religieux. VAB* § 52, p. 290. One critic casts doubt on the significance of this action, arguing that new ventures would be rare. Tunc, 'Après la mort de Robert d'Arbrissel', *op.cit.*, p. 383, n. 6. It would seem, rather, that Robert is counselling a spirit of continual co-operation which he hoped would characterise the relationship between the sexes.

nevertheless, unlikely to have had the servile character which some writers have ascribed to them.[1] Rules which they have seen as demeaning to the brothers, are perfectly reasonable seen in the context of a women's community. The efficient management of a large monastery would demand, for example, that material goods be distributed to all, male and female alike, by the cellarist or whomever the abbess appointed to this task; alms would likewise be distributed by the almoner; one person alone should authorise admission to and departure from the monastery. All this is simply sound administrative practice. The fact that the nuns managed the brothers' leftovers is more likely an illustration of the geography of the monasteries than anything else. The brothers' quarters would have been physically distant from the main section of the monastery which housed the nuns. The main gate of the monastery, where the poor waited for their food, would usually have been in the nuns' territory rather than in the brothers'.[2]

CONCLUSIONS

What began as an assorted crowd following a bizarre hermit-preacher developed into an order patronised by the rich and powerful. But this was not the sole reason for the pre-eminence of Fontevraud. This order was renowned for its strict interpretation of the Rule of Saint Benedict and in its structure it presented a unique solution to the question of how best to serve the spiritual and material needs of women striving to follow a monastic vocation. The originality of Fontevraud did not lie in the fact that it comprised both men and women: there were mixed communities before Robert's time and others were founded more or less contemporaneously with Fontevraud.[3] Nor did Fontevraud's originality lie in the subordination of men to an abbess: the early Anglo-Saxon monasteries were well-known for this feature, and contemporary chroniclers did not deem this fact worthy of mention. William of Malmesbury, for example, was more impressed by the fact that strict silence was observed at Fontevraud than that an abbess ruled over men.[4] Robert of Arbrissel broke new ground by integrating the

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1 Bienvenu, *Fondateur* p. 96; Dalarun, *Sainteté* pp. 192-196.
2 This was certainly the case at Fontevraud; see Figure 5, p. 62.
3 M. Bateson, 'The Origin and Early History of Double Monasteries', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, N.S. xiii, 1899, pp. 137-98; E. de Moreau, 'Les monastères doubles - leur histoire surtout en Belgique', *Nouvelle Révue Théologique*, lvi (1939), pp. 787-829 and Gold, *op.cit.*, p. 89.
4 William of Malmesbury, *De Gestis Regum Anglorum*, ed. W. Stubbs (RS 90, ii, 1889), p. 512.

male element, necessary for the *cura monialium,* into the very structure of the order he founded. The position of both the men and the women was carefully defined so that each group knew exactly what was expected of itself and of the other.[1] This contrasts sharply with other contemporary situations where the nuns were simply attached with more or less permanence to a male structure, giving rise at best to ambiguities, at worst to resentment by the men at the necessary investment of resources, both human and economic.[2] The Fontevraud community, focused on women but including men in its structure, was an exception - a factor which perhaps accounts for its rapid expansion.

That there were difficulties and necessary re-adjustments during the reign of the first abbess, Petronilla, cannot be denied. Assuming control of the order, especially after Robert's unconventional style of leadership, would not have been simple and the formative years of any religious order are seldom problem-free. One major problem facing Petronilla was the consolidation of Fontevraud's temporal assets. In the years following Robert's death the order was involved in several cases of litigation, attributable in part to his failure to ensure that grants had been recorded in charters.[3] One case lasted over thirty years.[4] On the political level the position of the abbey vis-à-vis its donors and patrons took a critical turn after the events of 1135 in England. Henry I had made donations to the abbey which were confirmed in 1137 by Stephen.[5] Yet, with the abbey set in the heart of Anjou, loyalties were obviously confused: in 1141 these same donations were confirmed by Matilda. It was the abbess above all who was responsible for decisions about affiliations to one or other party and at times she was required to walk a political tightrope.[6] The upheavals of the 1140s did not leave the order unscathed: one priory in Normandy was probably destroyed in clashes between Geoffrey of

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1 Gold, *op.cit.*, p. 111.
2 See above, pp. 1-2. See also Gold, *op.cit.*, pp. 76-93, 111-112, and Fontette, *op.cit.*, pp. 13-18, 27-42.
3 See M.T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066-1307* (London, 1979), pp. 21-28.
4 R. I. Moore, 'Reconstruction of the Cartulary of Fontevrault', *op.cit.*, p. 94 and de la Martinière, *op.cit.*, pp. 1-45.
5 *Cal. Doc. Fr.* 1052, 1055, 1459, 1460.
6 *ibid.*, 1056.

Anjou and Waleran Beaumont.[1] Such was her burden that at one point Petronilla sought to resign, permission for which Innocent II refused.[2]

Petronilla's rule was a period of both centralisation and expansion. One of her first tasks was to have approved by Rome the statutes which Robert had given the order. Approval was granted in 1119 when pope Callistus II dedicated the abbatial church.[3] Since medieval law tended to be normative rather than prescriptive we would expect that there were changes to Robert's statutes, modifications which reflected the experience of three years' living. This is in accordance with the normal evolutionary process of institutions and, far from constituting a betrayal of the wishes of the founder, could just as easily illustrate fidelity to his spirit. On the other hand it is possible that Robert, never the most practical of men, had prescribed statutes which proved unsuitable for a large, expanding, heterogeneous group. There is not sufficient evidence for us to judge, from the surviving versions of the statutes, the extent to which Robert's original statutes were adhered to or modified. Indications are that, on the whole, the order maintained its high ideals. Very early in its history Robert obtained the special protection of the papacy for his foundation.[4] By 1113 Fontevraud was paying Rome an annual census of two shillings, thus denoting its subjection to papal rather than episcopal jurisdiction.[5] Throughout the twelfth century, the papacy, traditionally averse to allowing orders of women too great a degree of control over their own lives, extended the privileges granted by popes Paschal and Callistus, culminating in 1244 with the decree of Innocent IV

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1 J.-M Bienvenu, 'L'ordre de Fontevraud et La Normandie au XIIe siècle', *op.cit.*, p. 10.

2 . . . *dilectionem tuam monemus, et per obedientiam imperamus ut gregem tibi commissum nulla ratione relinquas, sed potius more solito sorores tuas temporaliter et spiritualiter studeas procurare.* . . Innocent II, *Epistola ccliv* (*PL* clxxix, 304).

3 Callistus II *Epistola xxxii* (*PL* clxiii, 1121).

4 . . . *sanctimonialium congregationem et locum ipsum apostolicae auctoritatis privilegio muniremus.* Paschal II, *Epistola clv*, (*PL* clxiii, 164).

5 Paschal II, *Epistola cccxxxix* (*PL* clxiii, 296); see also *Le Liber Censuum de l'Eglise Romaine*, ed. P. Fabre & L. Duchesne (2 vols, Paris, 1889-1910) i, p. 205.

that the order was directly reliant on the Holy See - *ad Romanam Ecclesiam . . . nullo mediante.*[1] It would be unwise to assume that the bestowal of these privileges was in itself a sign of strict observance, yet it is difficult to believe that the papacy would have accepted lax houses, especially lax houses of women, under its jurisdiction. Privileges such as those bestowed on Fontevraud were not bestowed lightly and perhaps they can be read as signs that, in the eyes of the church, the order was faithful to its spirit.[2] We lack more subtle indications of fidelity to or departure from the particular spirit engendered by Robert that would enable us to judge standards of observance.

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1 Bibliothèque de la ville d'Angers, MS Molinier 880, fo. 52; *Les Régisters d'Innocent IV*, ed. E. Berger (4 vols, Paris 1884) i, 498. The steps by which papal privilege was extended can be traced in a plea made to the Holy See on the eve of the French Revolution by the last abbess of Fontevraud, Julie-Sophie Gilette de Pardaillan d'Antin, abbess 1765-1792. (Bibliothèque de la ville d'Angers, MS Molinier 880, fo. 48-57). Some of these bulls are printed: Callistus II *Epistola xxxii* (*PL* clxiii, 1121); Honorius II, *Epistola xlix* (*PL* clxvi, 1268); Innocent II, *Epistola xxv* (*PL* clxxix, 72); id., *Epistola lxxiv* (*PL* clxxix, 116). For further information on exemption: D. Knowles, 'The Growth of Exemption', *The Downside Review*, 1 (1932), pp. 201-231; 396-436; J.-F. Lemarignier, *Etude sur les privilèges d'exemption et de juridiction écclesiastique des abbayes normandes depuis les origines jusqu'en 1140* (Paris, 1937), pp. 180, 205, 218, 219 and H.E.J. Cowdrey, *The Cluniacs and the Gregorian Reform* (Oxford, 1970), pp. 22-32.

2 See J. Dubois, 'Les Ordres Réligieux au XIIe siècle', *Rév Bén* lxxviii (1968) p. 308.

CHAPTER 2: THE ENGLISH FOUNDATIONS

At the beginning of the twelfth century when Robert of Arbrissel settled his band of followers at Fontevraud, he would have had no notion that within eighty years houses of his order would be established in England, one under the patronage of the king and another under that of his chief justiciar. Yet history attests to the rapid expansion of the order, both in France and beyond. To the number of priories founded during Robert's lifetime, Petronilla had, by her death in 1149, added approximately seventy.[1] There were also foundations in Spain. According to one report there were, by this time, between four and five thousand nuns in the order, which, even taking into account the unreliability of medieval figures, is remarkable.[2] The next phase of expansion, to England, was, according to tradition, planned by the second abbess, Matilda, daughter of Fulk of Anjou and aunt of Duke Henry of Anjou, who, in 1154, was crowned king of England.

FOUNDATION

The expansion of the order of Fontevraud to England was set against the background of Angevin politics. Fulk V, count of Anjou, had been a friend and patron of the abbey during the lifetime of the founder and his patronage continued.[3] He was present at Robert's funeral and it was he who undertook to fund the building of the abbatial church.[4] By the time Matilda took the veil at Fontevraud, the abbey was closely identified with the Angevin dynasty. Early in her term of office as abbess, Matilda apparently began planning for an English foundation.[5] Reasons for this may be sought in Matilda's personal history. Her ties with England went back thirty years to when she had been married to William, son of Henry I, who had drowned

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1 Figure I p. 69. There is some doubt as to whether each of these was a foundation in the strictest sense. For Robert's foundations see Figure 4, p. 49. For expansion into Normandy see J.-M. Bienvenu, 'L'Ordre de Fontevraud et la Normandie au XIIe siècle', *Annales de Normandie*, xxxv (1985), pp. 3-15.

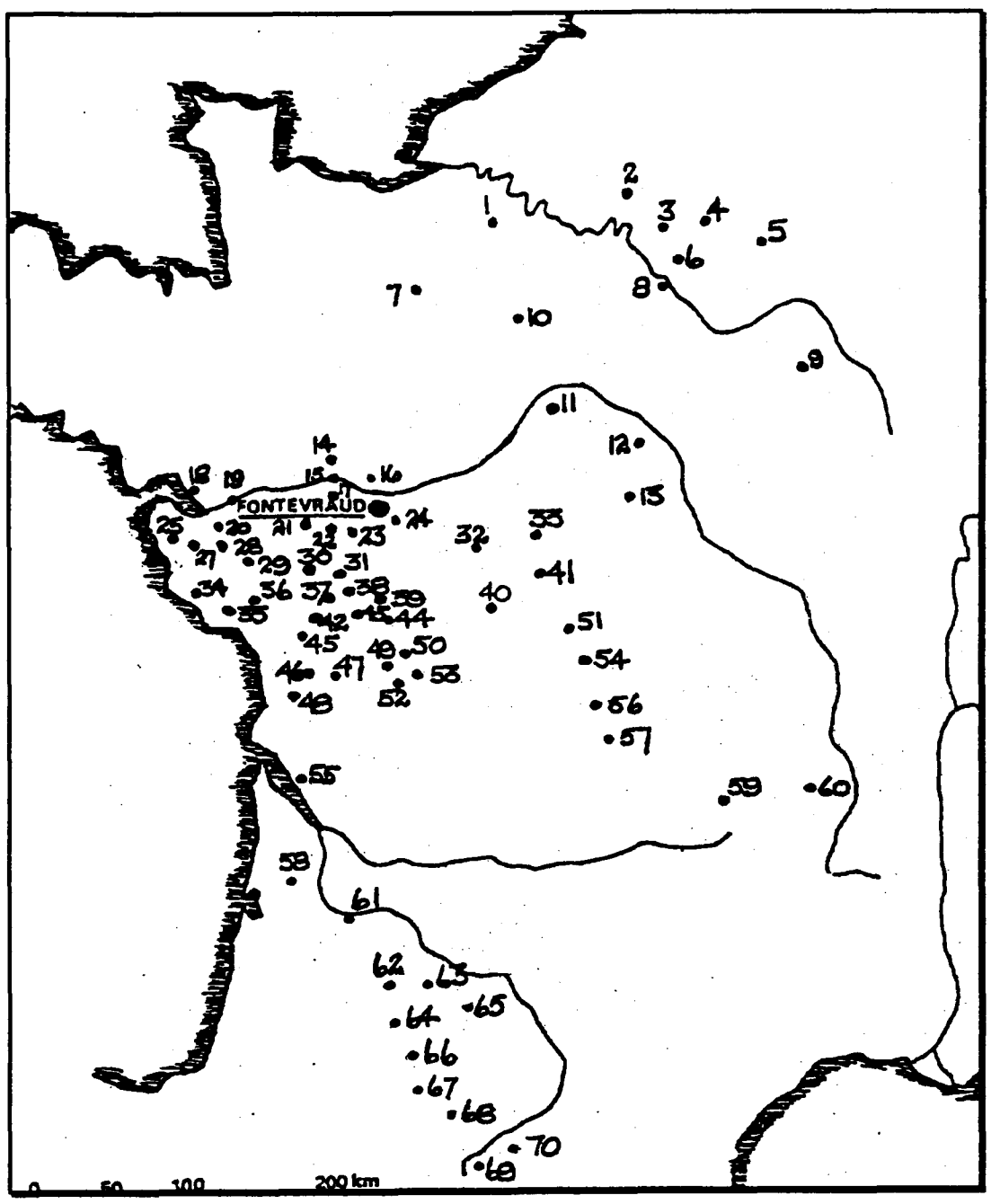
2 Suger of St Denis, *Epistola lxxxviii*, (*PL* clxxxvi, 1392-93).

3 *Diversorum Donationes Piae*, (*PL* clxii, 1097-1102, charters vi-xiv).

4 *Fulco. . . qui magistrum nostrum Robertum atque Petronillam Abbatissam familiores consiliatos a fundamento structuram Basilicae Fontis Ebraldi incoepit votis omnibus et instruxit atque de his de quibus ipse videbatur abundator grato animo in eodum loco immensa beneficia praebuit loarissimosque ac perspicuos redditus Ecclesiae nostrae.* 'Necrology of Fontevraud', *Textes et Documents relatifs à l'histoire des arts en Poitou*, ed. R. Crozet, (Archives historiques de Poitou, liii, Poitiers, 1942), pp. 38, 39. See also Bienvenu, *Fondateur*, p. 156.

5 See Thompson, *Women Religious*, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

FIGURE 1: FONTEVRAUD PRIORIES FOUNDED IN FRANCE, 1116-1150.[1]



Key to priories:

1 Acquigny	2 Warrivilles	3 Collinances	4 Le Charme	5 Longueau
6 Fontaines-les-Nonnes	7 La Vieille Chaise-Dieu	8 Notre-Dame-desMarias	9 Foicy	10 Belhomert
11 L'Epine aux Autels	12 Chaumontios	13 Villecoq	14 La Pignonniere	15 Les Ponts de Cé
16 Borane	17 St Calais-en-Chavagnes	18 L'Ile-de-Vair	19 La Regrippière	20 Blanchecourbe
21 La Rimonnière	22 Montreuil-Bellay	23 Asnière-en-épieds	24 Le Petit-Chouze	25 Touvois
27 Le Val-de-Morière	28 Pontalier	29 Bois-Gohier	30 La Poraire	31 Monbertin
32 Barbeneuve	33 Glatigny	34 Les Cerisers	35 Libaud	36 La Leue
37 La Taconnière	38 Lorgeboisseau	39 Renque	40 Longefont	41 Jarzay
42 Montiboeuf	43 Valette	44 Mongaugier	45 La Dent	46 Les Soussis
47 Coulonges	48 Saint Bibien	49 Forges	50 La Fontaine-St-Martin	51 Herat
52 Montazay	53 La Place	54 Bornet	55 Cormeille	56 Bosroger
57 Arfeuille	58 Notre Dame de Talence	59 Esteil	60 Jourcey	61 La Rame
62 Le Paravis	63 Goulens	64 Vaupillon	65 Bragérac	66 Le Brouilh-Monbert
67 Boulaur	68 St Laurent -sur-Save	69 Brie	70 Sainte-Croix deVolvestre	

in the wreck of the *White Ship*.[2] Her motive in c.1150, however, was probably to assist her nephew, Henry, who was laying claim to the English throne. It is not improbable that Henry Plantagenet had himself approached Matilda about a foundation in England. He had been in

1 After Bienvenu, *Fondateur*, p. 109 and 'Fontevraud', *Histoire-Archéologie* , (1993), pp. 107-109.

2 *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis*, ed. M Chibnall (6 vols, Oxford, 1969-80), vi, pp. 328-31.

England in 1148-49 and assessed the situation there. Perhaps he saw advantages in colonising England with foundations from Fontevraud. Both of his grandfathers had been benefactors of the abbey, and it stands to reason that once England had an Angevin king, foundations should be established in his territory. However, it is impossible to trace the germination of an idea; we can only speculate.

We have evidence that abbess Matilda asked her nephew, Matthew of Flanders and his daughter Ida to lend their assistance to the project.[1] Matthew was the younger son of Matilda's sister Sibyl and Thierry of Alsace, a known supporter of Henry Plantagenet and a generous benefactor of Fontevraud.[2] Matilda was not disappointed: Matthew carried on the family tradition. A second approach may have been made to Amice, countess of Leicester.[3] Betrothed to another of Henry I's sons, the illegitimate Richard, who had drowned at the same time as William, she was now married to Robert *le Bossu*, earl of Leicester, one of the wealthiest and most powerful of the English barons.[4] It is inconceivable that the two women had not moved in the same social circles and known each other. They may even have been friends. This explains to some extent Fontevraud's interest in an English foundation but let us examine the scene in England and establish if the interest was reciprocated.

Without entering into a detailed investigation into what motivated people to make religious foundations, we can state a few general principles. Firstly, motives were generally both religious and secular. The former were usually well-documented in foundation charters. A founder can usually be said to be making an investment in the afterlife, guaranteeing prayers for the forgiveness of his sins, for the salvation of his soul and the souls of his family and forebears. Secular motives were rarely expressed so overtly but were no less pertinent. The process of founding a monastery was intimately connected with family and feudal

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1 MS Cotton Vespas. E. ix, fo. 5v, 6.
2 A.E. Verhulst, 'Note sur une charte de Thierry d'Alsace . . .', *Etudes de Civilisation médiévale, Mélanges offerts à E.R. Labande* (Poitiers, n.d.), pp. 718-719.
3 *GEC* vii, pp. 529-30. This connection is observed by Thompson. *op.cit.*, p. 123.
4 *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis*, *op.cit.*, vi, pp. 294-97.

relationships. On one level it was an act of royal service.[1] Subjects wishing to demonstrate their loyalty by founding a monastery would thus be likely to choose an order which either had the king's approval or was identified with him in some way.[2] On another level the foundation of a monastery was an expression of the donor's status and influence vis-à-vis his rivals.[3] The more prestigious the foundation, the more credit accrued to the founder; the holier his intercessors, the more assured was he of eternal salvation. The status of the foundation redounded to his earthly glory.[4]

These factors were relevant to England in the mid-twelfth century. After the violence, insecurity and uncertainty of the anarchy, there was hope of an era of peace and prosperity under a strong king. But the violence, insecurity and uncertainty had accentuated the transience of this life and reinforced the necessity of making some provision for the hereafter. The greater and lesser baronage had been taking an interest in monastic foundations since the end of Henry I's reign, and, during the years of anarchy, this had reached a peak.[5] On a more immediate level, barons in the Angevin party would have been anxious to demonstrate their loyalty to Duke Henry. For those who chose to found a religious house the obvious choice was the order closely identified with the Plantagenets. Geographical factors also may well have been significant. The older, well-established houses for women were mainly in the south of England. It was an opportune time for making foundations in the Midlands. What existed, then, was a situation in which all parties stood to gain - the order, the king, the founders. The ground was fertile. All that was wanting was someone to begin the sowing. In the event two foundations were made, in close proximity both chronologically and geographically.

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1 R. Mortimer, 'Motives for Monastic Foundations', in *Religious Motivation, Biographical and Sociological Problems*, ed. D. Baker (Studies in Church History, xv, 1978), p. 84.
2 E. Mason, 'Timeo Barones et Donas Ferentes', in *ibid.*, p. 68.
3 *ibid.*, p. 61.
4 Mortimer, *op.cit.*, p. 84.
5 E. Hallam, 'Aspects of Monastic Patronage of the English and French Royal Houses, c.1130-1270', (Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1976), p. 61.

i) Westwood

By 1153 at the latest, a number of benefactions had been secured for a Fontevraud foundation at Westwood in Worcestershire. Richard of Dover's confirmation of Westwood's possessions c.1175 enables us to date, with a degree of precision, this foundation. Since Ralph, earl of Chester, named as one of the benefactors, died in 1153, the process of foundation must have been, if not complete, at least under way by this date.[1] The founders were the de Say family: Eustacia and her two sons Osbert and Hugh, with Matthew of Flanders and Gundred of Warwick among other aristocratic patrons.[2] The de Says were a baronial family, descendants of Richard Scrope, a Norman who had settled in England in the time of Edward the Confessor and established himself at Richard's Castle in Hereford.[3] Osbern fitz Richard was, by 1086, tenant-in-chief of considerable importance with a fief scattered over Staffordshire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Gloucestershire, Bedfordshire and Nottinghamshire.[4] Osbert and Hugh, grandsons of this Osbern, took the name of de Say from the estate of their mother Eustacia.[5] Little is known of Eustacia. The possibility that she may have been married to Geoffrey de Mandeville, second earl of Essex, has been advanced, but as the foundation of Westwood antedates the charters on which this suggestion is based, it is irrelevant to our present purposes.[6] There are no known connections between the family and Fontevraud.

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1 BCL MS Hampton 48, (*EEA II*, p. 196). See also the bull of Clement III (1178), confirming Westwood's possessions (AML 244 H1 1). cf. *The Charters of the Anglo-Norman Earls of Chester c. 1071-1237*, ed. G. Barraclough (Record Society of Lancaster and Cheshire, cxxvi, 1988), No. 202, pp. 205-206. Barraclough attributes the donation to Ralph III, born c.1172, and dates the charter of Richard of Dover 1181x83. This is negated by Cheney who presents irrefutable evidence for dating it June 1174 x September 1175, when Ralph III (earl from 1181-1232), would have been a minor. For a discussion of the process of founding a monastery: V. H. Galbraith, 'Monastic Foundation Charters of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries', *The Cambridge Historical Journal* , iv (1934), pp. 205-222.

2 Founders and donors are discussed more fully below.

3 I. J. Sanders, *English Baronies* (Oxford, 1960), p. 75; *Worcester Cartulary*, p. xxxiii.

4 DB i, 247, 244, 186v, 176, 163, 216v, 292.

5 Sanders, *op.cit.*, p. 75. See R. W. Eyton, *Antiquities of Shropshire* (London, 1857), iv, pp. 302-16.

6 Thompson *op.cit.*, pp. 172-173.

ii) Nuneaton

At the same time as Westwood was being founded there was in train a much more overt demonstration of allegiance to Duke Henry by patronage of a Fontevraud foundation. By May 1153, Robert II, earl of Leicester, had pledged fealty to Henry and had been amply rewarded.[1] Within six months he had promised twenty five librates of land in Kintbury (Co. Berkshire) for a Fontevraud foundation.[2] The political overtones are unmistakable. Robert Beaumont was the younger of twin sons of Robert, count of Meulan, who, having distinguished himself at Hastings, was granted extensive lands in Warwickshire, Leicestershire, Northampton and Wiltshire.[3] For his service as councillor to Henry I, he was granted the entire town of Leicester. Minors when their father died, both twins were brought up at the court of Henry I. Waleran, the elder twin, inherited his father's French lands, Robert, those in England.[4] His marriage to Amice, daughter of Ralph, seigneur of Montfort and of Gael in Brittany, and grand-daughter of Ralph, earl of Norfolk, brought him Breteuil, Lire and Glos. During the anarchy Robert's support of Stephen was rewarded with the town and castle of Hereford and a sizeable part of that county.[5] But, by the middle of the century, when the Angevin party had gained ascendancy, Robert finally changed his allegiance. Duke Henry restored to him and his son all the Beaumont lands previously-confiscated by the Angevins and appointed them his stewards.[6] Later the elder Robert was made chief justiciar, and when King Henry returned to Normandy, he and Richard de Luci were left in charge of the kingdom.[7] It is obvious that the promise to found a house of Fontevraud was an outward sign of the Beaumont-Angevin *rapprochement*.[8]

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1 *Gesta Stephani*, p. 234; *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum, 1066-1154*, ed. H.A. Cronne & R.H.C. Davis (4 vols, Oxford, 1968), iii, 438, 439.

2 . . . *ad faciendum conventum de monialibus eiusdem ecclesie*. BL Add. Chart 47384. For the dating of this charter: D. Crouch, *The Beaumont Twins*, (Cambridge, 1986), p. 203, n. 53.

3 Robert's father, the first earl, received the earldom early in the twelfth century but was normally styled 'count of Meulan'.*GEC* vii, pp. 523-526.

4 The early careers of Robert and Waleran and their father are explored in Crouch, *op.cit.*, pp. 3-28.

5 For Robert's activity during Stephen's reign: Crouch, *op.cit.*, pp. 29-57.

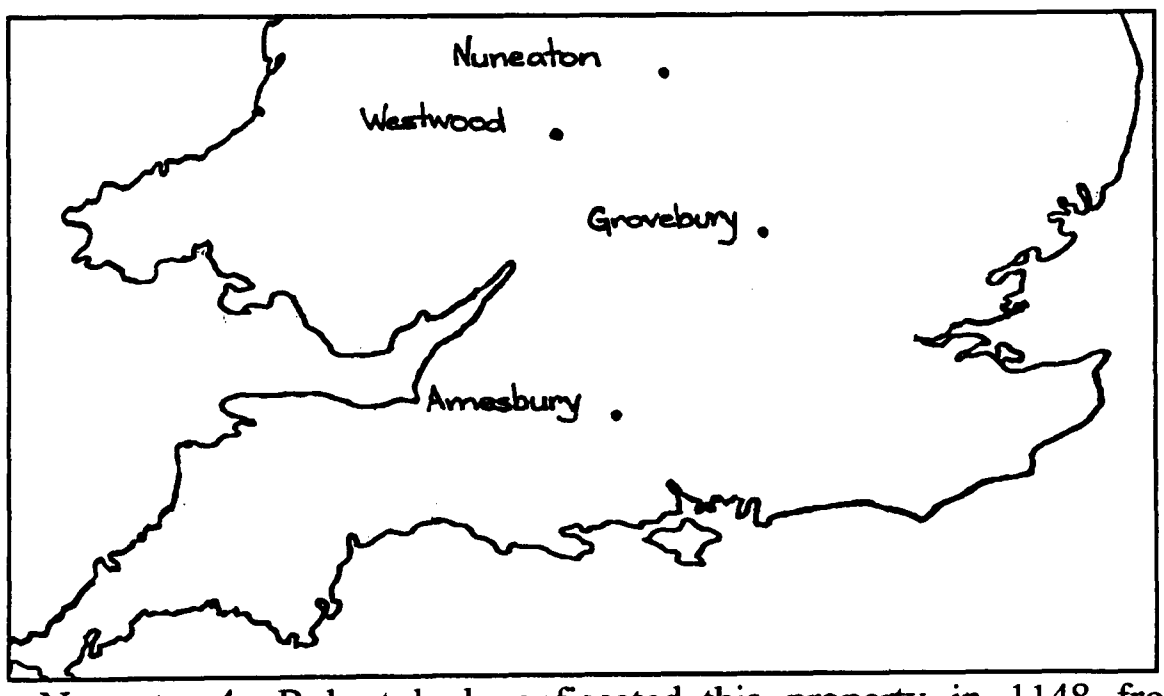
6 *ibid.*, pp. 79-89; See L.W. V. Harcourt, *His Grace the Steward and the Trial of Peers* (London, 1907), pp. 39-43, where the political advantages of the office are discusssed.

7 Crouch, *op.cit.*, pp. 89-98; Harcourt, *op.cit.*, pp. 35,36. Waleran had been chief justiciar in Normandy under count Geoffrey.

8 M. Chibnall, 'L'Ordre de Fontevrault en Angleterre au XIIe Siècle', *CCM* xxix (1986), p. 43.

This is not to minimise the role that Amice, Robert's wife probably played. She had endowed, with her husband's approval, the priory of La Chaise Dieu in Breteuil which was a dependency of Fontevraud.[1] As the Beaumonts had not previously patronised Fontevraud, this may have been the initial contact between earl Robert and the mother house.[2] Amice was possibly making provision for her eventual retirement in a monastery and was anxious to establish a prestigious foundation closer to home. The likelihood of her association with Matilda of Anjou, second abbess of Fontevraud, has already been noted.[3] She may well have contributed to the planning of the new foundation. However, it is certain that nothing would have gone ahead had not it been advantageous to her husband.

FIGURE 2. ENGLISH FOUNDATIONS OF FONTEVRAUD.



There is no evidence that the nuns ever settled on the Berkshire land. By c.1155 the site of the foundation had been moved to Eton in Warwickshire, subsequently to be called Nuneaton.[4] Robert had confiscated this property in 1148 from William de Launay, a rebellious vassal.[5] It seems to have been his policy to ensure that confiscated land was made safe from reclamation by donating it to the church: the Cistercians had gained Garendon and the manor of Biddlesdon in this way.[6] We can detect a similar purpose behind the grant of land at Nuneaton. We have no further details of the building of the monastery, the arrival of the community from France or their formal installation.

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1 BL Add. Chart. 47381; *Cartulaire Normand de Philippe-Auguste, Louis VIII, St Louis et Philippe-le Hardi*, ed. L. Delisle, (Geneva, reprint 1978), p. 2, no. 6.
2 Crouch, *op.cit.*, p. 203.
3 On Amice's role see Chibnall, *loc.cit.*, and Crouch, *loc.cit.*
4 AML 246 H1 1, dated 1155 x 59. BL Add. Chart. 47423, 47424.
5 BL Add. Chart. 48487.
6 Crouch, *op.cit.*, p. 199.

By the end of the decade in which Duke Henry of Anjou had become king of England, supporters of the Angevin cause had provided for two Fontevraud foundations on English soil. The fact that the order was one of the most prestigious in western France, with a reputation for strict observance, made it all the more attractive to prospective founders.

iii) Amesbury

The antecedents of the foundation of Amesbury in 1177 are exceedingly complex, with the 'official' version of events open to question on several counts. Let us first consider the account as reported in the foundation charter of the priory.[1] We are told that Henry II, having learned that the nuns at Amesbury abbey were leading dissolute lives, at the command of Pope Alexander III, and on the advice of the archbishop of Canterbury and several other bishops, had expelled them and introduced in their place the order of Fontevraud. The charter does not indicate that this foundation was part of Henry's penance undertaken at Avranches for his complicity in Becket's murder but it is commonly believed that Amesbury was one of the three monasteries which, the penance having been commuted, he undertook to establish.[2]

A comparison between this version and that recorded in the papal bull addressed to the abbess of Fontevraud informing her of the proposed foundation, lays bare a number of discrepancies.[3] We learn that Henry had written to the pope announcing his desire to introduce the Fontevraud nuns to Amesbury and promising to increase substantially their endowment. The initiative, we may infer, had come from Henry. Furthermore, the bull contains no allusion to any irregularities at Amesbury. The abbess of Fontevraud was informed that the archbishop of Canterbury, together with the bishops of London, Exeter and Worcester, was to go to Amesbury abbey to inform the nuns of the projected change, making sure that those who could not be induced to stay were found accommodation in other monasteries. The letter contains no evidence for the assertion that the nuns were dispersed

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1 *Rotuli chartarum*, i, pt i, pp. 13-14.
2 Gerald of Wales, viii, pp. 170, 171; See also W.L. Warren, *Henry II* (London, 1973), pp. 531, 538.
3 AML 243 H1 7; *Cal. Doc. Fr.* 1069.

because of their immoral lives. The role of the bishops appears not to have been investigatory but rather to arrange a peaceful transition of authority.[1]

One would be less inclined to question the version published in the foundation charter were it not almost identical to the account of the installation of the Augustinian canons at Waltham. The secular canons who had been at Waltham since 1060 were removed in 1177, because they were leading irreligious and carnal lives and in their place Henry II introduced sixteen Augustinians of his own choosing, increasing their income and possessions.[2] Can it be sheer coincidence that the king took disciplinary action against a religious house on these two occasions alone, on such similar charges and both at a time which was so convenient to him? It is more probable that in both instances the charges of moral delinquency were trumped up in order to justify Henry's actions and later reported as fact by the chroniclers. The granting of a yearly pension to the abbess of Amesbury is difficult to explain otherwise: her dissolute life should have disqualified her from any royal bounty.[3] Furthermore we have a slight hint as to why Amesbury may have been chosen as the site of the new foundation. Henry may have been paying off an old grudge.[4] In 1160 Beatrice, the abbess of Amesbury, had incurred the wrath of Henry and Theobald, archbishop of Canterbury, by refusing to accept their nominee in her church at Froyle.[5] Her obduracy persisted despite dire threats, even of military intervention, and she was accused of unseemly, unwomanly behaviour. A definite cause-and-effect relationship between these events and those of 1177 cannot be established, of course, but let us not discount the possibility that in searching for a suitable site on which to settle his favoured order, the king would have remembered an insubordinate abbess of sixteen years ago

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1 The role of the bishop of Worcester is discussed in M.G. Cheney, *Roger, Bishop of Worcester 1164-1179* (Oxford, 1980), pp. 216-7.

2 *Gesta Henrici*, i, p. 174; Ralph of Diceto, 'Ymagines Historiarum', *The Historical Works of Ralph of Diceto*, ed. W. Stubbs (2 vols, R.S. lxviii), i, pp. 420-21. See also J.T. Appelby, 'The Ecclesiastical Foundations of Henry II', *Catholic Historical Review*, xlviii (1962-3), pp. 206-210; and *The Waltham Chronicle*, ed. L. Watkiss & M. Chibnall (Oxford, 1994), p. xxviii, where it is pointed out that some of the canons may have been married, sufficient cause at this date to charge them with immorality.

3 *Gesta Henrici*, i, pp. 135-6. Payments of the pension are recorded in the Pipe Rolls from 23 Hen. II (p. 98), through to 29 Hen. II (p. 141).

4 See S. Elkins, *Holy Women of Twelfth Century England* (London, 1988), pp. 146-7.

5 *The Letters of John of Salisbury*, ed. W.J. Millor, H.E. Butler & C.N.L. Brooke, (London 1955), i, 114/115, pp. 187-189.

and determined to teach her a lesson. Whatever the reason, Beatrice was deposed, her nuns dispersed - apparently none chose to remain under the new regime - and the Fontevraud nuns installed. In May 1177, in the presence of various dignitaries including the abbess of Fontevraud, the new community was formally established.[1] Henry, in a demonstration of generosity, paid the expenses of the nuns' journey and presented them with twenty casks of wine.[2]

iv) Grovebury

There was one other Fontevraud house established in England, though it was not a foundation in the same sense as the other three. The manor of Leighton and its appurtenances had been granted to the abbess of Fontevraud in 1164 in lieu of an annual cash payment from the exchequer which Henry I had donated in 1129 shortly after the marriage of his daughter Matilda to Geoffrey of Anjou.[3] Before 1164 Leighton had been a royal manor, one which had suffered damage and deterioration during the years of the anarchy.[4] At some point a community of Fontevraud brothers was settled here. The first mention of a prior is in 1194.[5] His role, apparently, was to represent the abbess, particularly in her business affairs.[6] There was definitely interaction between the Grovebury brothers and the members of the other English houses. In 1287, for example, the abbess of Fontevraud instructed the prior of Grovebury to make the following provisions for the disposal of his property after his death: whatever possessions he had in the form of movables, fixtures or stock located at Grovebury or Amesbury were to be ceded to Amesbury; those at Westwood and Nuneaton were to be ceded to those houses respectively.[7] There were occasions, too, when the prior of Grovebury acted on behalf of all the English houses. In 1271, for instance, he delivered to the receiver at New Temple, London, on their behalf, the twentieth which had been charged on all houses

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1 *Gesta Henrici*, i, p. 165. The new buildings were not completed until 1186. *ibid.*, p. 354.
2 *Pipe Roll, 23 Hen II*, pp. 97, 179.
3 *Cal. Doc. Fr.*, 1052, 1064.
4 R. Richmond, 'Three Records of the Alien Priory and the Manor of Leighton Buzzard', *Bedfordshire Historical Record Society* , viii (1924), pp. 18, 23.
5 *Rolls of the King's Court in the Reign of King Richard I, 1194-95*, ed. F.W. Maitland (PRS, xiv, 1891), p. 41.
6 For the rental value of the properties of Fontevraud in England see AML 245 H1 7.
7 BL Add. Chart. 47418.

and villeins.[1] However, because this thesis concerns religious life for women, the affairs of the priory at Leighton - or Grovebury as it came to be called in the time of Henry III - will be considered only in so far as they impinge on those of the other three monasteries. Grovebury was always regarded as an alien priory. In 1305 it was confiscated by Edward II but later returned to Fontevraud.[2] During the fifteenth century it was again taken into the king's hands and ultimately it became the property of the dean and canons of Windsor.[3]

ENDOWMENT

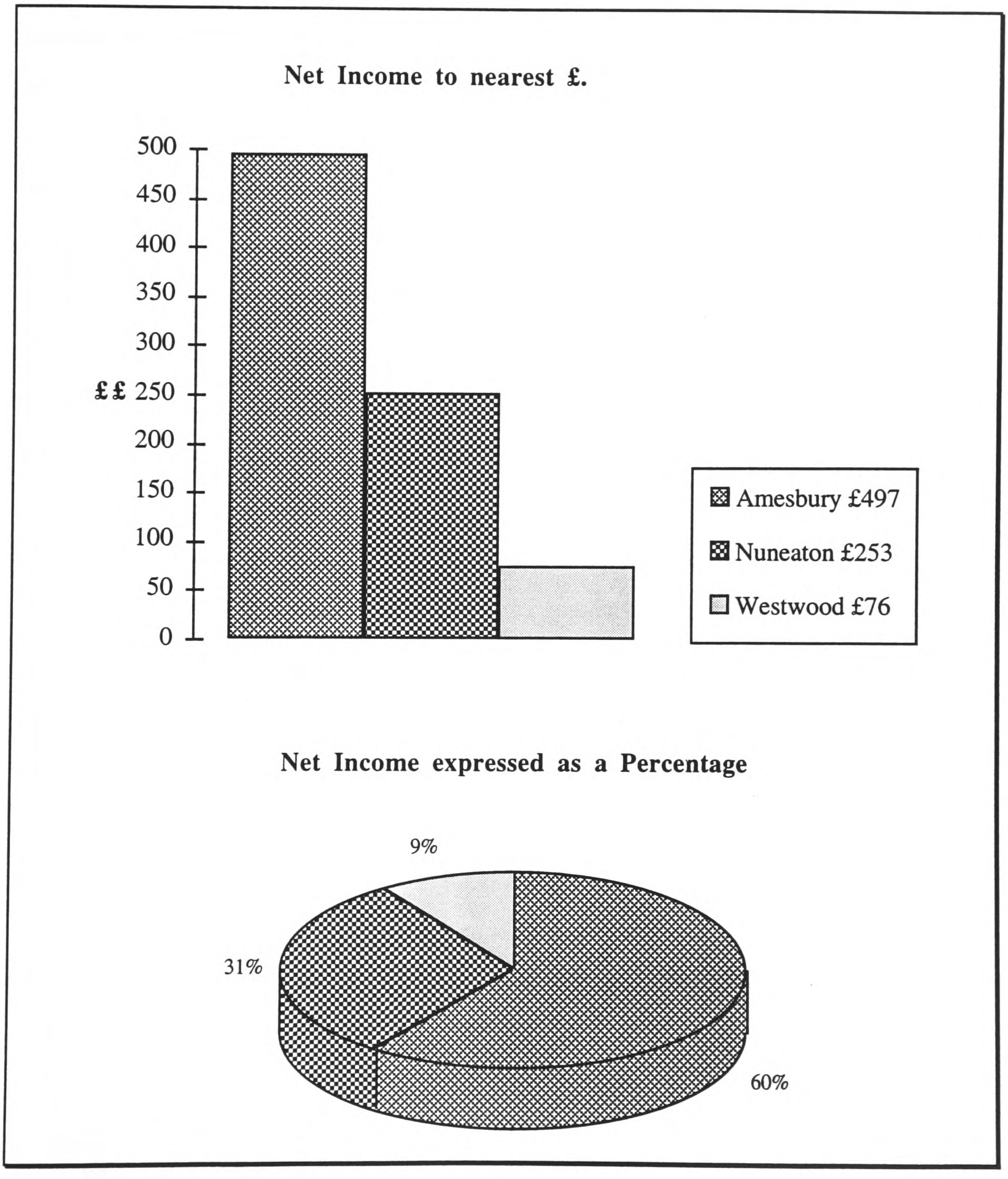
When Amesbury, Westwood and Nuneaton were surrendered to the Crown in the sixteenth century, their total annual income was assessed at more than £900 gross and £826 net.[4] Of the three, Westwood was the poorest; its manor at Westwood, rectories and various small rents yielded a net total of £76 per annum. Nuneaton, with seven appropriated churches, pensions from others and rents from land and various holdings, netted £253 annually and Amesbury, possessing thirteen manors, eleven appropriated churches and eight other properties had an annual net value of £497.[5] The accompanying figure illustrates the fact that Amesbury claimed more than 60% of the sum, while Westwood did not even reach 10%. In 1536 the Act of Suppression differentiated between lesser and greater religious houses - lesser being those with an income below £200 per annum. These were to be dissolved.[6] Nuneaton priory qualified as a greater house with something to spare and Amesbury enjoyed more than twice the prescribed income. Westwood, by contrast, fell far below the required minimum. To understand the differing circumstances in 1535 it is necessary to study the foundation of each

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1 *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1266-73, p.517.
2 See Letter xxii, 'Letter of Mary, daughter of Edward I, a nun at Amesbury, to her brother Edward II', *Letters of Royal and Illustrious Ladies*, ed. M. A. Green (3 vols, London, 1846), i, pp. 61-63.
3 *VCH Beds.* i, pp. 403, 404; iii, pp. 402, 403.
4 *VE* ii, pp. 93-94; iii, pp. 76-77; 276-277. Figures are taken from: A. Savine, *English Monasteries on the Eve of the Dissolution* (Oxford Studies in Social and Legal History, i, Oxford, 1909), pp. 284, 285.
5 'Manor' in this context is a unit of estate administration. See P.D.A. Harvey, *Manorial Records* (British Records Association, 1984), p. 2.
6 Knowles, *Religious Orders*, iii, p. 304.

monastery where it becomes obvious that the initial endowment of each determined its acquisition of property and hence its ultimate prosperity.[1]

FIGURE 3: NET INCOME OF FONTEVRAUD FOUNDATIONS, 1535.



[1] I have employed the terms *monastery* and *priory* interchangeably.

The initial grant for Westwood was Westwood Park.[1] As well, the nuns were granted Crutch, a salt works at Droitwich and the church at Cotheridge with all its appurtenances. Other early donations consisted of two mills, land in Bromfield and in *Auresletam,* the vill of Little Aston, the chapel of St Nicholas at Droitwich, the chapel at Pirton, the tithes from Westwood, Clerhall and Crutch and a third of the tithes of Guiting.[2] These properties, constituting Westwood's initial endowment, would most probably have been in the possession of the nuns by c.1175, either from the original donation or from early grants. The endowment must have been sufficient to support the foundation - otherwise it could not have gone ahead - but viewed objectively it is not, by any standards, large. True, Westwood was not a large house - it seems there were only six nuns in the foundation group and possibly two or three brothers - but the endowment was insufficient to put the house in a strong financial position.[3] This could have been a factor inducing several nuns from Westwood to join the Amesbury foundation in 1177.[4] It could be that by this time numbers had increased to the point where the income of the house was insufficient to support them.

Prominent among benefactors of Westwood, by reason of their status rather than for the magnitude of their donations, were Ralph, earl of Chester and Gundred, countess of Warwick. The former, who at one time held in his power about a third of the realm, must have had a motive for supporting a small foundation removed from the centre of his power, with a correspondingly small donation.[5] His grant of 40s. per annum in alms was certainly a gesture, but of what? We could, perhaps, see it as a sign of goodwill to the Angevin party

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1 *Cal. Chart. Rolls, 1257-1300,* p. 320.

2 The initial grants are listed in AML 244 H1 1 and BCL MS Hampton 48 (*EEA II,* p. 196). Astwood is termed *West*wood in BCL MS Hampton 48; Bromfield is near Ellesmere in Shropshire; M. Gelling & H. D. G. Foxall, edd., *The Place Names of Shropshire, Part 1* (EPNS, lxii, lxiii, 1990), pp. 60-61. Auresletam is unidentifiable. It could be Orleton or Orlestone, both of which were in the Hereford/Worcester area, or perhaps it may have been castle Auretone in Cutsthorn Hundred which was held by Richard Scrope. *DB* i,185; *The Oxford Dictionary of English Place Names,* ed. E. Ekwall, (4th edn, Oxford, 1960), p. 351. Clerhall (Clethale) is a lost village. A. Mawer, & F.M. Stenton, (edd.) *The Place Names of Worcestershire* (EPNS, vi, 1927), p. 313.

3 On the size of the original group: *Mon Ang,* iv, pt 2, p. 1004.

4 *Pipe Roll 23 Hen. II,* p. 64.

5 AML 244 H1 1; BCL MS Hampton 48. This grant and those which follow are recorded in these two charters. For information on Ralph of Chester see *GEC* iii, p. 166; J. H. Round, 'King Stephen and the Earl of Chester', *EHR,* x (1895), pp. 87-91; *The Charters of the Anglo-Norman Earls of Chester c. 1071-1237, op.cit.,* and H.A. Cronne, 'Ranulf de Gernons, earl of Chester 1129-1153', *TRHS,* 4th ser, xx (1937), pp. 103-134.

prior to Ralph's joining Henry in 1153.[1] On the other hand the alliance may have preceded this grant. We do not know. Gundred of Warwick was daughter of William of Warenne and wife of earl Roger.[2] Her grant of a silver mark to be had annually from the fair at Warwick also appears to have been rather perfunctory. Clearly Westwood was not sufficiently prestigious a foundation to attract large benefactions from influential magnates. It seems to have been favoured more by lesser barons of the local area who, in general, had less at their disposal to give.

Walter de Clifford, donor of the vill of Little Aston, was one of these. Walter, the father-in-law of Osbert and Hugh de Say, held several manors and possessed lands in Hertfordshire and Berkshire by inheritance from his uncles Walter and Drogo.[3] The barony of Clifford, by all accounts, came via his wife, said to be the daughter of Ralph de Tony.[4] Walter may have been in the service of the Earl of Hereford; he figures prominently as a witness to several of Roger's charters and he maintained his connections with the earldom after the latter's death.[5] This association identifies him as a member of the Angevin group. Ingelard of Stretton, lord of Ryton in Shropshire, was probably another member. Within a few months of Henry II's accession he was made castellan of Stretton, a royal fortress and manor, either as a reward for past loyalty or in deference to a powerful ally.[6] Since Ingelard does not figure in contemporary affairs the explanation is more likely to have been the former. His donation to the priory was a virgate and a half of land at Bromfield in Shropshire. William de Poer who donated the chapel at Pirton and a third of the tithes of Guiting, was under-sheriff of Worcester and belonged to one of the richest knightly families in the county.[7] Richard de

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1 *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum. . . op.cit.*, iii, 180; Crouch, *op.cit.*, pp. 86, 87.
2 *GEC* xii, pp. 361,362.
3 *DB* i, 61,186.
4 On Walter de Clifford see *DNB* iv, pp. 531, 537-8 and Eyton, *op.cit.*, iv, p. 308. A third daughter of Walter de Clifford was Rosamund, later to play a significant role in the life of Henry II. She may have been born before 1140 but there is no suggestion that her liaison with the king had begun in the early years of the Westwood foundation. Benedicta de Clifford, probably a descendant of Walter, was prioress of Westwood in 1268. See Appendix, p. 260.
5 D. Walker 'Charters of the Earldom of Hereford 1095-1207', *Camden Miscellany*, xxii, (Camden, 4th ser, i), 11, 40, 48, 53, 69, 73, 85, 86.
6 Eyton, *op.cit.*, ii, pp. 81, 83.
7 *Beauchamp Cartulary*, p. xxv. He held the manors of Wichenford and Brendons Norton, land in Stoke Curcy, and together with Hugh Pincerna (Butler), farmed the honor of William de Curcy for £50 8s. yearly. Farrer, *op.cit.*, i, pp. 107, 131, 132.

Portes who held the manor of Elmley, granted a mill and land at Droitwich. Hugh of Arden who granted rent from the mill at Astwood and certain pasture rights, held half of the manor of Astwood.[1] These men were not magnates; what influence they exerted was probably confined to their local area. Furthermore, it is reasonable to suppose that their association as benefactors of Westwood was not haphazard. They were most likely united by a common thread of support of the Angevin cause, support which expressed itself in patronage of a foundation from the Angevin abbey.

In contrast to these knights and lesser barons stands Robert, earl of Leicester, the founder of Nuneaton, considered to be one of the wealthiest and most influential men in England. The monastery's foundation charter of c.1160 x 1163 lists his endowment as the vill of Eton with its appurtenances, land in Kintbury worth £25 per annum and all his holdings and rents in Upwell and Outwell - both land and fisheries.[2] In addition, earl Robert confirmed gifts made by his daughter Isabel - two carucates of land in Waltham with pasture for three hundred sheep; by Richard Mallory - all the land he held in Eton, 2s. annual rent in Leicester and two and a half virgates of land in Swinford, and by Robert son of Joscelin - all his land in Eton between the water and the wood and two virgates on the far side of the water. By 1163, when Henry II confirmed the foundation, adding his personal donation of the church in Chalton, the holdings of the priory had increased by a mill, all of one vill and half of another, two churches, various parcels of land and rents worth £2 6s. per annum.[3] As in the case of Westwood, some of this property may have been part of the foundation grant, some may have been granted later. By whatever means it was acquired, the fact remains: in 1163 Nuneaton priory possessed a sizeable patrimony - substantially larger than that possessed by Westwood.

Those associated with Robert of Leicester in his foundation of Nuneaton were chiefly members of his family or his household. First was his daughter Isabel, who until 1153 had

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1 *VCH, Wor.*, iii, p. 64.
2 AML 246 H1 1.
3 BL Add. Chart. 47394.

been the wife of Simon of Senlis, an ardent supporter of Stephen, from whom he gained the titles and lands of earl of Northampton and Huntingdon.[1] A widow when she made the initial donation, Isabel married Gervase Paynell, baron and lord of Dudley, who very early in the history of the new foundation, granted a mill at Inkpen.[2] Richard Mallory and Robert son of Joscelin were both Robert of Leicester's men. The former was a knight and a tenant of the honor of Leicester at Swinford, Leicester and Welton, Northamptonshire; he is possibly 'Richard the chamberlain', witness to several charters.[3] Joscelin had been marshal under the count of Meulan. Robert, his son, did not inherit the marshalcy but did inherit his father's lands and obviously remained in the Leicester 'circle' where dependants expressed their allegiance to the man of power by the giving and receiving of favours.[4]

When Henry II refounded Amesbury in 1177 he announced in his foundation charter the re-grant of all the possessions of the former Benedictine Abbey of Amesbury which the Fontevraud monastery replaced.[5] The Domesday Survey lists these possessions as eighteen-and-a-half hides in Berkshire - eleven in Kintbury, three-and-a-half in Challow, and five in Fawley.[6] In Wiltshire there were thirty three hides - twelve in Bultford, four in Boscombe, four in Allington, two-and-a-half in Choulston, six in Winterbourne Bassett and four-and-a-half in Maddington.[7] The Abbey had also possessed the church at Letcombe and certain privileges in Bentley Wood.[8]

With such an inheritance the new monastery was certainly financially secure, but there was more to come. Henry, who had promised to increase substantially its endowment, granted it

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1 *GEC* vi, p. 641.
2 BL Add. Chart., 47423, 47424, 47629 (*Danelaw Docs*, p. 251); Farrer, *op.cit.*, p. 110; Sanders, *op.cit.*, p. 113. The earlier of the two charters recording this grant refers to the nuns as being at Kintbury
3 BL Add. Chart., 47394, 47629, 47630 (*Danelaw Docs*, p. 251) His career is discussed in Crouch, *op.cit.*, p. 157, n. 144.
4 AML 246 H1 1. The idea that many of the magnates possessed a *curia* modelled on that of the royal *curia* is discussed in Crouch, *op.cit.*, p. 155-162.
5 *Rotuli Chartarum i*, pt. i, pp. 13-14.
6 *DB* i, 60; see also *VCH Berks.* i, pp. 323-369.
7 *DB* i, 68. See also *VCH Wilts.* ii, pp. 113-167.
8 *DB* i, 52.

thirteen acres of land in and around Amesbury, a manor and various rents, tithes and privileges.[1] The land, all within five miles of the priory - five acres at Ratfyn, one in Milston, three in Cholderton, two in Brigmerston and two in Wilsford - consisted probably in shares in meadow or grazing land and while undoubtedly useful, was unlikely to have been a source of great wealth. Not so the manor of Wallop. This continued to be a valuable source of income for the monastery until the Dissolution. Together with the parish and appurtenant rents, Wallop was worth £37 per annum in 1179.[2] Receivers' accounts of the early fourteenth century show that for the fiscal year of 1315-16, it realised almost £66.[3] By 1535 its net annual value was £47.[4] Henry's grant also included four churches - at Newton Tony, Woodhill, Durrington and Denford. In 1291 Woodhill and Durrington were yielding respectively £2 and £4 5s. per annum and by 1535 Durrington had increased its annual value to £20.[5] In addition, there were tithes in eight other churches.[6] A rent of 20s. per annum was granted in Barroc Wood, five cheeses annually and grazing rights for five lambs in Maiden Bradley, and a tithe of the pannage, in land and pigs, in Chute and Bentley Wood.[7]

Henry definitely kept his promise of providing Amesbury with a substantial endowment. Many of the privileges which he granted would have cost him little but were of great benefit to the priory. Whether or not he was personally responsible for all these donations is, however, a matter of conjecture. There is reason to believe that the pre-Conquest Abbey had already possessed the church at Rockley - it having probably been granted by John Fitzgilbert, brother-in-law of the earl of Salisbury - and there may have been other similar cases.[8]

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1 AML 243H1 7. *Acre* as a measure of land was of varying sizes and, until the end of the twelfth century, was also used as a unit for taxation purposes, in which case it is no indication of the area of the land. P.D.A. Harvey, *op.cit.*, p. 16.
2 *TPN* pp. 185, 189.
3 AML 244 H1 3.
4 *Pipe Roll, 24 Hen. II*, p. 106; *VE* ii, p. 94.
5 *VE* ii, p. 94; *TPN* pp. 185, 189.
6 viz. Milston, Inglewood and Godingflood - appurtenances of Kintbury - Hotherington, Rockley, Fosbury, Bremilham and Tidworth.
7 W.H. Stevenson suggests that Barroc Wood may have been near Letcombe. *Asser's Life of King Alfred* (Oxford, 1904), p. 157. The charter reads: *decimam pasnagii tam* ***denariorum*** *quam porcorum.* For justification of the alternative translation see Stevenson, *ibid.*, p. 156, n.3. He argues that *denarius* is a mistake in transcription and should be den(n), an Old English word meaning a woody valley where cattle and pigs could feed.
8 *VCH Wilts.* xii, p. 174.

Amesbury's foundation charter refers to the fact that some of Henry's men - Humphrey de Bohun, John Marshall, Hugh de Lacy and John de Neville made small donations to the monastery. The first two gave the land in Newton Tony - twelve acres - and the others granted holdings in Tidworth. Why grants which, given the size of the donors' estates, must have been no more than nominal, were acknowledged in such a formal manner is bewildering. The explanation may be the donors' association with the king.[1] Perhaps their small donations were acknowledged in the hope of future, more substantial, patronage. The donors themselves may have wanted to demonstrate their support of the king's foundation but with a minimum investment - their main patronage may have gone to other foundations. Whatever the reason, Amesbury's total endowment, it is clear, established it with a richer patrimony than either Westwood or Nuneaton and gave it the prestige associated with a royal foundation.

ACQUISITION OF PROPERTY

The pattern of relative poverty and affluence which characterised the initial endowment and patronage of the three priories persists through their subsequent history and is manifest in the type and the extent of the property they acquired. What is more, this pattern endures until the time of the dissolution. The prosperity of each priory was in a large measure determined by the assets each received at its foundation. Ultimately Westwood remained small and poor while the other two were larger and more financially secure. My focus in examining the process of land acquisition will be Westwood. Having looked at the property obtained by this priory, how and from whom it was obtained, and where it was situated, I shall analyse the reasons why donors and other benefactors alienated their property. I shall then draw comparisons between Westwood and the other two priories.

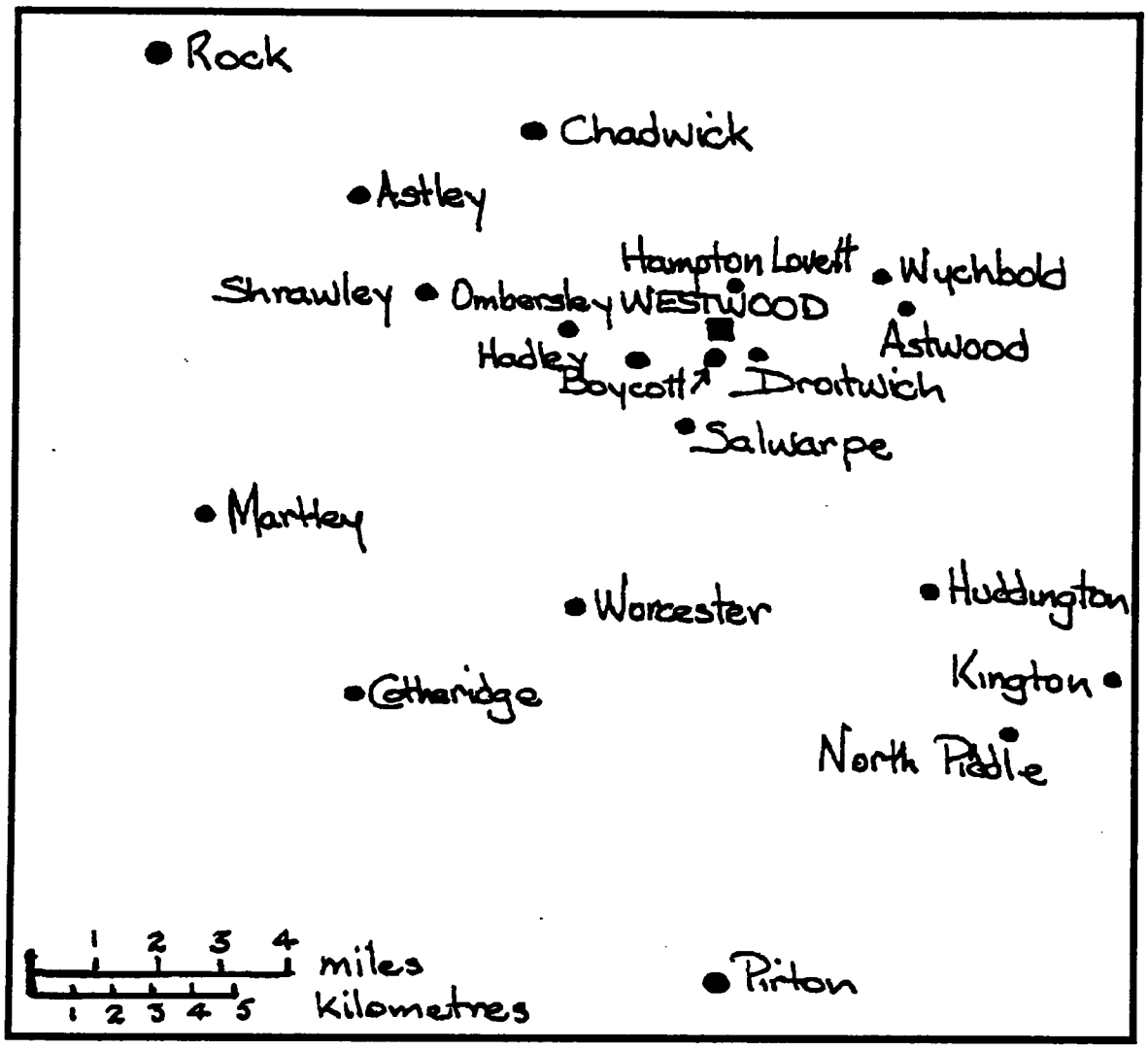
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1 Humphrey de Bohun, a baron, was one of Henry II's chief stewards. He was present at Clarendon in 1164 and supported Henry in the younger Henry's rebellion. He married the daughter of the earl of Hereford through whom the title of earl of Hereford passed to him and he was one of the chief holders of land in Cheshire. His ancestors were Norman from the time of the Conqueror. *DNB* ii, 769-70; Harcourt, *op.cit.*, p. 41. The Nevilles held the honour of Stoke Curcy. Their ancestor, Gilbert de Neville commanded William the Conqueror's fleet. Several Johns appear in the records of the family but none can be positively identified as this man. *DNB* xiv, p. 260. John Marshall who died in 1164 had estates in Wiltshire and held the castle of Ludgershall. He supported the Empress and was rewarded by her son with land in Wiltshire worth £82 per annum. His son John succeeded him and inherited his estates. The latter is undoubtedly the John Marshall of the charter. *DNB* xii, p. 1106. Hugh de Lacy was a baron by tenure and lord of Meath. He fought in Ireland and France with Henry II and though they later quarrelled, in 1177 he was in the king's favour. *DNB* xi, pp. 375, 376.

i) Westwood

The *Valor Ecclesiasticus* indicates that in 1535 Westwood possessed land, appropriated churches, mills, salt pans and other tenements which were at farm.[1] Some of these possessions can be accounted for in the grants made at or soon after the foundation. Subsequent deeds of conveyance and related documents enable us to trace the acquisition of some of the other holdings.

FIGURE 4: PRINCIPAL SITES OF LAND ACQUIRED BY WESTWOOD PRIORY



When these holdings are plotted on a map, it is evident that the properties were all in close proximity to the home farm with a high concentration around Droitwich, the nearest urban centre. Here the chief industry was salt production. There were at least one hundred and fifty nine salt-pans in the town itself and more in the surrounding villages.[2] Naturally, some of the initial endowment of the priory consisted of income from the salt industry.[3] What is more, the prioress and convent took steps to enlarge their income from this source. In the years following the foundation they acquired one of the boiling houses used in salt manufacture, a share of the dues paid for salt making and various rents connected with the salt works.[4]

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1 *VE* iii, p. 276.
2 H.C. Darby and I. B. Terrett (edd.) *The Domesday Geography of Midland England* (Cambridge, 1954), pp. 48, 251-56.
3 *Cal. Chart. Rolls, 1257-1300*, p. 320.
4 BL Cotton. MS Vespas. E. ix, fo. 7v, 8, 8v, 9, 9v; BCL MS Hampton 340. Westwood's involvement in the salt industry at Droitwich is discussed below, pp. 232-35.

The main thrust of the priory's acquisition was in land and rents, the basic form of income in the Middle Ages. Land - meadows, woods, pasture, arable - was acquired close to Westwood at Droitwich, Ombersley and Boycott.[1] Further afield, the prioress and convent obtained property in Cotheridge, Worcester, North Piddle and Kington.[2] Even further was the manor of Rock, and the land at Martley.[3] These distances, however, are relative. The furthermost properties were still within a radius of twelve miles from the priory. Land acquisition was confined to the local area. Rents which were granted or purchased were likewise within this radius. Holdings were obtained in Gosford, Huddington, Droitwich, Stychampton, Astley, Pendock and Astwood with the potential to yield a total of £3 5s. 9d per annum.[4]

Other than land and rents the most common acquisition was mills.[5] Necessary to grind the grain from their own properties, mills were worthwhile assets in that tenants and villagers could be charged to have their corn ground. In the 1535 evaluation three mills were listed as belonging to Westwood: Wychbold, Briarmill and Martley.[6] Among the Westwood charters there are records of grants of four: Wychbold, obtained by mutual agreement with the monks of Worcester; Astwood, granted by Hugh of Arden; Droitwich, granted by Richard de Portes; Middlemill, purchased from John Engleys.[7] It is safe to assume that the Wychbold mill listed in the *Valor* is the same as that obtained from the Worcester monks but establishing any further correlation is difficult. It is tempting to identify the mill granted by Richard de Portes with the 'Richard's mill' which is mentioned in another document, but the latter was at Wychbold, not Droitwich, and seems to have been that ceded by the Worcester monks.[8] It is further tempting

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1 BL Cotton. MS Vespas. E. ix, fo. 2v, 6, BCL MS Hampton 50, 52.

2 HWRO 705 : 380 BA 2309/60 (xxii); BCL MS Hampton 320, 516, 522, 569; BL Cotton. MS Vespas. E. ix, fo. 3v, 4.

3 BCL MS Hampton 520; *Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1281-92*, p. 352. Martley and Pudford are in the same locality. A. Mawer & F.M. Stenton, (edd.) *The Place Names of Worcestershire*, *op.cit.*, p. 65.

4 BL Cotton. MS Vespas. E. ix, fo. 3v, 4v, 7v; BCL MS Hampton 51, 331, 342, 452, 559, 560, 565. Gosford is another of the 'lost' villages. Mawer & Stenton, (edd.), *op.cit.*, p. 288.

5 The economic exploitation of mills is discussed below, pp. 225-29.

6 *VE* iii, p. 276.

7 The grants are recorded in AML 244 H1 1; BCL MS Hampton 48 and BL Cotton. MS Vespas. E. ix, fo. 3v. For the charters documenting the agreement with the Worcester monks, see *Worcester Cartulary* 162-170, pp. 88-92. There is, however, no explicit mention of a mill. See also M. Cheney, *Roger, Bishop of Worcester*, *op.cit.*, pp. 95-96.

8 BCL MS Hampton 447.

to try to identify Richard de Portes' donation with the mill at Briarhill which was the object of an arrangement between the nuns and Henry Lovet, a descendant of Richard de Portes.[1] This is undoubtedly the 'Briarmill' of the *Valor* but we cannot be certain that it was the same mill which Richard de Portes granted. It was to this mill that the priory was granted rights of access during harvest time across the bridge of Briarhill owned by Joscelin son of Richard.[2] (The mill may, in fact, have been named after this Richard.) Nor is Middlemill easily identifiable. We know that it was just outside Droitwich on land bounded by Henry Lovet's meadow and the path to Boycott.[3] We know that in 1270 and 1272 both it and Briarmill were leased as a unit to William of Winetone and Guy of Blackmore respectively.[4] It could be that the two were quite close geographically but this need not necessarily be so. We must resign ourselves to not knowing, particularly in view of the fact that all these mills under discussion were within an area of four square miles. The local inhabitants would have had their means of identifying them; for us it is not so simple. The mill at Astwood was a separate entity and disappeared from surviving priory records.[5] This is not surprising. Mills were wont to deteriorate more than other assets, and possibly over time the priory could no longer afford the upkeep on some of them, despite their value as a source of income.[6] Concerning that at Martley: we have records of acquisition of property in this region but of no mill.[7] It appears for the first time in the *Valor.*

Let us now examine the sources to determine who granted land or made benefactions to the monastery. Westwood was in the fortunate position of being a foundation of one of the newer orders with a reputation for strict observance. Patrons were perhaps more favourably inclined towards this priory than they would have been towards older establishments. Nevertheless,

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1 BL Cotton. MS Vespas. E. ix, fo. 3v.
2 *ibid.*, fo. 9v
3 *ibid.*, fo. 2v.
4 BCL MS Hampton 350, 351.
5 BCL MS Hampton 48; AML 244 H1 1.
6 R. Holt, *The Mills of Medieval England* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 159-161.
7 *Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1281-92*, p. 352.

during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries alienation of property was not undertaken lightly - maintaining the integrity of the fief was a high priority.[1] Thus anyone allowing the priory to purchase land or rents was regarded as a benefactor equally with those who made gratuitous donations. We are hampered, too, by the problem of frequently not being able to distinguish between deeds of sale and deeds of gift. In many instances we cannot be entirely certain what is going on.

The initial patronage of the founders and early benefactors of the monastery was maintained through successive generations of their families. For instance, the heiress of the de Says, Margaret, grand-daughter of Hugh, following the death of her second husband, Robert Mortimer, married William de Stuteville, lord of Cotheringham.[2] William, sometime after 1219, confirmed all previous grants to Westwood by the de Says and Mortimers and inherently pledged the continued patronage of himself and his wife.[3] The Clifford family continued the initial patronage of Walter de Clifford. Walter's great-grandson Roger, probably father or brother of Benedicta de Clifford, prioress of Westwood in 1268, had been justice of the forest south of Trent prior to his going on crusade in 1270. His will of 1284 provided for £10 to be distributed by his executors among all the religious houses of Hereford and Worcester. Westwood priory, however, was singled out for special treatment: it received a separate grant of £10.[4] Hugh, nephew of Ingelard de Stretton, one of the early benefactors, confirmed his uncle's grant and, since part of the original grant had been recovered in a court action, Hugh honoured the grantor's warranty and gave the priory a half virgate of land in exchange.[5]

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1 Mason, *op.cit.*, p. 66.
2 On William de Stuteville see Sanders, *op.cit.*, p. 75, Nash, *op.cit*, i, p. 239 and*IPMW*, i, p. 4.
3 BL Cotton. MS Vespas. E. ix, fo. 5.
4 See *Register of Bishop Godfrey Giffard, 1268-1301*, ed. J. W. Bund (Worcestershire Historical Society, 1902), ii, p. 283. For Benedicta de Clifford, see Appendix p. 260.
5 HWRO 899:365 BA 396/2; 396/3.

There were some who patronised the monastery seemingly without having had previous associations either with Fontevraud in general or Westwood in particular. The Beauchamp family, gentry with extensive lands and considerable local influence, were in this group. Descendants of Urse d'Abitot, sheriff in 1086, this family inherited his lands and those of his brother Robert Dispenser who died without any surviving issue.[1] Urse's only daughter married Walter Beauchamp whose inheritance was enlarged by the grant of the lands of his exiled brother-in-law. A member of the Beauchamp family held the office of sheriff of Worcester almost continually from the time of Walter through till the fifteenth century. Wealth and influence had never prompted the Beauchamps to be generous to religious houses. The grant to Westwood of a half-virgate in Boycott, was, in fact, made by William Beauchamp's widow, Avice, lady Salwarpe.[2] The association with Urse d'Abitot continued, however, through Osbert, probably his brother, who was sheriff of Worcester c.1110 x 1116. His son or grandson, also Osbert, held the manor of Redmarley and granted Westwood land in Worcester. In 1178 he was witness, together with Osbert de Say, to a compromise between the monks of Worcester and the nuns of Westwood concerning the church at Dodderhill.[3]

The patrons listed so far were prominent people in their region. What of the others? To categorise less-eminent benefactors we can use different yardsticks, none of which is applicable in every case. Some can be associated with a particular overlord, himself or herself a patron; some gave grants to other institutions and others, the majority, are destined to remain unidentified and obscure, their only means of classification being what we already know: that they were benefactors of the monastery.

To alienate land in the first half of the twelfth century tenants needed their lord's permission, a factor to which many of the Westwood charters bear witness. Consequently we know the

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1 *Beauchamp Cartulary*, pp. xviii-xxv.
2 BL Cotton. MS Vespas. E. ix, fo. 2v. William Beauchamp died in 1197.
3 BCL MS Hampton 569, 281; *Beauchamp Cartulary*, p. xxviii; See also *Worcester Cartulary*, 164, p. 89.

overlords of some of the people who made grants to the priory. Cecilia de Turberville, for example, granted land at Kington which Hugh of Arden had given her and her husband in frank marriage.[1] What prompted Hugh's gift, what relationship existed between him and Cecilia are unknowns. What we know is that her grant was subsequently ratified by Thomas of Arden, Hugh's heir.[2] Similarly our knowledge of Robert of Keybridge is confined to the fact that his grant was confirmed by his overlord, Ida, countess of Boulogne, daughter of Matthew of Flanders.[3] In both of these cases, tenants in a position to make a donation to a religious house, have chosen the house favoured by their lord, a state of affairs which would have been perfectly normal.

We know that John of Briarhill was a free tenant of Salwarpe manor, that Inard of Elmbridge held land of William de Stuteville on which he paid 5s.11d. scutage in 1235-6 and that John Young (Juvenis) held land in Gloucestershire and Shropshire.[4] We can conclude nothing from this other than that they were probably minor landowners, willing, for one reason or another, to alienate some of their land or possessions to Westwood priory.

There is evidence of some benefactors having patronised other religious institutions as well as Westwood. Roger of Lench from his capital messuage and lands in Chadwick, endowed the hospital of St Wulfstan at Worcester.[5] Roger of Huddington also granted land to this hospital.[6] In one of these cases generosity did not bring a reward: in 1232 Roger of Lench was encumbered to the Jews to such an extent that he was forced to sell off portions of his land to William Beauchamp in order to pay his debts.[7]

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1 BL Cotton. MS Vespas. E. ix, fo. 4.
2 *ibid.*, fo. 4.
3 *ibid.*, fo. 5.
4 For their grants: BCL MS Hampton 50, 52, 529; *IPMW*, ii, p. 79. BL Cotton. MS Vespas. E. ix, fo. 8v; See also *Book of Fees*, pp. 292, 439, 526 and *Red Book* pp. 298, 449.
5 *Cal. Chart. Rolls, 1226-57*, p. 172.
6 *ibid.*, p. 173.
7 *Beauchamp Cartulary*, Nos. 24, 25, 28, 29.

In general, a lack of supplementary information on lesser known benefactors of Westwood priory and the consequent lack of a common standard by which to classify them mean that we can draw no firm conclusions about either their economic or social status. To say that the benefactors of Westwood covered a wide economic spectrum is true, but ultimately not very informative. This problem is all the more apparent when we look at those donors and patrons whose names rarely, if ever, appear in any other context. Occasionally a charter will yield some incidental particulars about a grantor. Simon the chaplain of Droitwich, was son of Nicholas, one-time vicar of Tardbrigge.[1] Isabella, the daughter of Hugh Juvenis may be identified as the Isabella de Groete of Worcester who quitclaimed in favour of the priory, a property previously held by John Juvenis.[2] These small details do not tell us much, but at least they give the donor some identity. Of Elias of Acton, John of the Mill, Walter Falk, Alured Louveron and many others we know nothing more than that they make an occasional appearance as a witness to a charter or on a list of jurors.[3] Of Emma, widow of Alured Fikemon, John of Saltford, Alicia atte Hawe or Richard son of Osbert we know even less.[4] That they have left no records does not mean, of course, that they were nonentities. We can conclude that they were free, that they were willing to alienate property and rents in favour of the monastery of Westwood, but that is all we can conclude.

Having uncovered a little of the 'who' of the grants, we can now turn our attention to the 'why'. We have already referred to the standard practice of a donor making grants to secure eternal salvation for himself, his ancestors and descendants. With some grants there is a departure from standard practice in that specific people are mentioned, people who seem to be outside the immediate family of the donor. John the dean, for example, named Hathulf Dawe and his wife Christiane among those for whose souls he made his donation.[5] We are ignorant of the relationship which might have existed between these parties. In another instance,

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1 BCL MS Hampton 340.
2 HWRO 705:380 BA 2309/60 (xxiii), ; BCL MS Hampton 529; cf. *ibid.*, 520.
3 BL Cotton. MS Vespas. E. ix, fo. 7v; BCL MS Hampton 342, 528, 565.
4 BL Cotton. MS Vespas. E. ix, fo. 7v; BCL MS Hampton 339, 448, 531,
5 BL Cotton. MS Vespas. E. ix, fo. 6v.

however, that of Roger of Huddington, supplementary evidence points to the fact that Matilda of Huddington, for whose eternal salvation Roger donated 2d. per annum in rent, was his overlord.[1] She may well have imposed this as a precondition of her permission. There are several examples of a donor expressing a wish to be buried in the priory church. From these we can infer that the donation included provision for his/her burial and also for masses to be said. Into this category fall the donations of Osbert, son of Osbert Bende, of Richard, priest of St Augustine's at Dodderhill and one of the donations of Ralph Safard.[2]

Donations also benefited the living. Ida, countess of Boulogne, niece of the abbess of Fontevraud, specified that her donation, made at the request of the abbess, was for the sustenance of the nuns.[3] Others were made to provide lighting, in the infirmary and in the priory in general.[4] It would have been accepted procedure for a prospective donor to discuss with the prioress the use to which a donation might be put. With larger gifts the decision may have been submitted to chapter.

Despite the increasing sensitivity of the church authorities during the twelfth century to the practice of simony, there is evidence in the Westwood charters of donations having been made as dowries for persons wishing to join the order.[5] It is impossible to judge whether or not any of these donations were exacted as a condition of entry and they may have been granted before the laws against simony were enforced in all their stringency. Robert of Keybridge's grant made in the early years of the foundation - c.1180 - could imply that he and his children had entered into the confraternity of the order.[6] Its wording -*cum meipso et liberis meis* - however, suggests that the entire family joined the order, a practice not uncommon. Marcigny, for example, was founded for wives and daughters of men who had joined Cluny

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1 BCL MS Hampton 560; BL Cotton. MS Vespas. E. ix, fo. 4v.
2 BL Cotton. MS Vespas. E. ix, fo. 6v, 7; HWRO 705 : 380 BA 2309/60 (xx); BCL MS Hampton 521.
3 BL Cotton. MS Vespas. E. ix, fo. 6.
4 BCL MS Hampton 330, 331, 560.
5 Simony is discussed below p. 108.
6 BL Cotton. MS Vespas. E. ix. fo. 5v.

and Fontevraud itself had probably welcomed entire families. A later confirmation of Robert of Keybridge's grant by his heirs, Reginald and William Benhall, carried the proviso that Reginald's daughter should be received into the order.[1] William Bray gave the land at North Piddle as a dowry for his daughter Amabilia, and Simon Gerverd donated an annual rent of 12s. in Baker Street, Droitwich as dowry for his sister Juliana.[2]

Donations of lands or rents as dowry were clearly donations in the modern sense of the word. It is equally clear that many of what appear to be charters of donation actually are deeds of sale. Sometimes the purchase price is recorded in the charter; sometimes the premium or consideration - the *gersuma* - is recorded and the subsequent payments are not; more often than not there is no mention of payment. We see this illustrated in the dealings between the priory and Ralph and William Hacket. William sold the priory an area called Broadmeadow and five butts of additional land for 8s. premium and an annual rent of 12d.[3] At a later date this transaction was confirmed by William's son, Ralph. The confirmation cost 13s.4d.[4] When this same Ralph Hacket sold holdings at the Droitwich salt works, the priory made a down-payment of 13s.4d. and agreed to an annual payment of 3s. and a *mitta* of salt.[5] Ralph sold the priory a further six selions of land at Droitwich by means of a quitclaim. No price was recorded in this transaction.[6] Confirmations of possession obviously cost money, but the cost is rarely specified. It is difficult to believe that Walter Beauchamp did not exact a payment for his confirmation of his mother's grant of land in Boycott or that Mabel Engleys did not charge for the waiving of her dowry rights in confirming her husband's grant of Middlemill.[7] One example where the cost is recorded is that of John Juvenis of Cotheridge who received two silver marks (£1 6s. 8d.) for confirming a grant of Walter Page.[8]

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1 *ibid.*, fo. 6.
2 *ibid.*, fo. 3; BCL MS Hampton 570. Baker Street is now the Shambles. A. Mawer, & F.M. Stenton, (edd.) *The Place Names of Worcestershire, op.cit.*, p. 21.
3 BL Cotton. MS Vespas. E. ix, fo. 9.
4 BCL MS Hampton 337; BL Cotton. MS Vespas. E. ix, fo. 9.
5 *ibid.*, fo. 9. Figures for 1210-1220 indicate that the average purchase price of a *mitta* (quarter) of salt was 1s. 9d. D.L. Farmer, 'Prices and Wages', in *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, ii, 1042-1350* ed. H. E. Hallam (Cambridge, 1988), p. 807.
6 BCL MS Hampton 337; BL Cotton. MS Vespas. E. ix, fo. 9.
7 BCL MS Hampton 79; BL Cotton. MS Vespas. E. ix, fo. 3.
8 BCL MS Hampton 516.

There are among the charters examples of clear-cut sales. Stephen, son of Inard of Elmbridge sold land in Ruinstreet Droitwich for two coins of unspecified value;[1] John Engleys received three silver marks (£2) as a premium on the sale of a mill and land outside Droitwich - obviously there were additional costs to be met.[2] Richard son of Osbert was paid 20s. for land in Droitwich and Mary of Acton and William of Gouvinscon would have been paid for the land and rent which each respectively obtained licence to alienate.[3]

On occasion the priory secured land by purchasing a quitclaim from those who had rights, actual or potential, in a property. Robert of Holloway, for example received 10s. for renouncing his rights in land at Droitwich which had previously been granted to the priory by John the Dean.[4] Philip son of Osbert also quitclaimed this land but we have no record of what, if anything, he received.[5] When Thomas Cracket renounced his claim to an acre of land in the field of Droitwich he received 10s.[6] Nicholas Starye received 13s. 4d. for surrendering rights to land in Ruinstreet Droitwich which he had obtained through an assize of *mort d'ancestor*, either genuine or contrived.[7] Rents too, were secured through quitclaim. Walter Falk quitclaimed a tenement in Ruinstreet which yielded 12d. annually.[8] Roger of Huddinton received four silver marks on two separate occasions and a premium of 4s. for quitclaiming rents in Huddington.[9]

What appears to be a quitclaim may, in some instances, record an actual sale by the person in possession. Thus, Margaret wife of Richard Falk may have sold the prioress and nuns the

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1 *ibid.*, 341.
2 BL Cotton. MS Vespas. E. ix, fo. 2v.
3 BCL MS Hampton 339; *Cal. Pat. Rolls. 1281-92*, p. 352.
4 *ibid.*, 347.
5 BL Cotton. MS Vespas. E. ix, fo. 6.
6 BCL MS Hampton 348.
7 *ibid.*, 454. By the end of the thirteenth century almost all fines levied in the king's court related to actual sales and purchases: the implied litigation is fictitious. For early fines see *Feet of Fines, Lincolnshire for the Reign of King John, 1199-1216*, ed. M.S. Walker, (PRS, N.S. xxix, 1953), pp. xv- xvii.
8 BCL MS Hampton 342. c.f. BL Cotton. MS Vespas. E. ix, fo. 6v. This charter is identical to the first except that Walter is called William.
9 BCL MS Hampton 559, 560; BL Cotton. MS Vespas. E. ix, fo. 4v.

five selions of land near Middlemill which she recovered as her dowry.[1] Alternatively she may have made an explicit renunciation of land formerly alienated by her husband. The transaction involving a messuage and appurtenances in Ruinstreet Droitwich, quitclaimed by Robert Bucher for 5s., was probably a sale.[2] William Esh probably sold his tenement in High Street, Droitwich; and John Juvenis probably sold his marlpit.[3] Worthy of note is the transaction involving a messuage and curtilage in Wychbold, sold to the priory by Walter de Fonte. Alicia atte Hawe's quitclaim of this property, no doubt secured at a price, is recorded in an identical hand to the deed of conveyance and the witness lists are identical.[4] The two obviously were made conjointly. Two curious examples of quitclaims are the collective renunciations made by tenants of the monastery around the beginning of the fourteenth century. In the first instance eleven men quitclaimed their rights to common pasture in the manor of Cotheridge.[5] In the second, dated 1305, seven selions of land and a marlpit were involved.[6] The background to these transactions remains a mystery; there may have been a dispute. Clearly some *quid pro quo* was rendered but we do not know what. All we can be sure of is that such an action would not have been performed gratis.

Sometimes the payment for a transaction was not entirely in cash. Walter Page, bailiff of Cotheridge, arranged for his tenements, rents and possessions to be taken over by the prioress and convent in return for a long house and curtilage. The value of the items exchanged was apparently not equal. To make up the deficiency the convent granted Walter a pig, two quarters of beef and 40s.[7] Simon son of Richard sold the priory land in Brockfield and while there is no record of the purchase price, he received as a premium a croft, a measure of wheat and half a measure of pease.[8] The terms of the agreement suggest either that the priory was anxious to obtain this land or was short of cash at the time and so paid partly in kind.

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1 BCL MS Hampton 346.
2 BL Cotton. MS Vespas. E. ix, fo. 8.
3 BCL MS Hampton 349, 529.
4 *ibid.*, 448, 450.
5 *ibid.*, 528.
6 *ibid.*, 531.
7 *ibid.*, 530.
8 *ibid.*, 527.

By c.1300 Westwood had, by grant or purchase in various forms, secured the bulk of its patrimony. Its possessions were neither widespread nor particularly lucrative. This was a small foundation, patronised as far as we can judge, by the lesser aristocracy and the wealthy landowners of the region. Despite its being a foundation of the powerful abbey of Fontevraud, Westwood seemed destined to play a minor role in monastic history, overshadowed by its more influential and opulent sister foundations. The pattern of property acquisition observed here, however, was repeated *mutatis mutandis* with the other two.

ii) Nuneaton

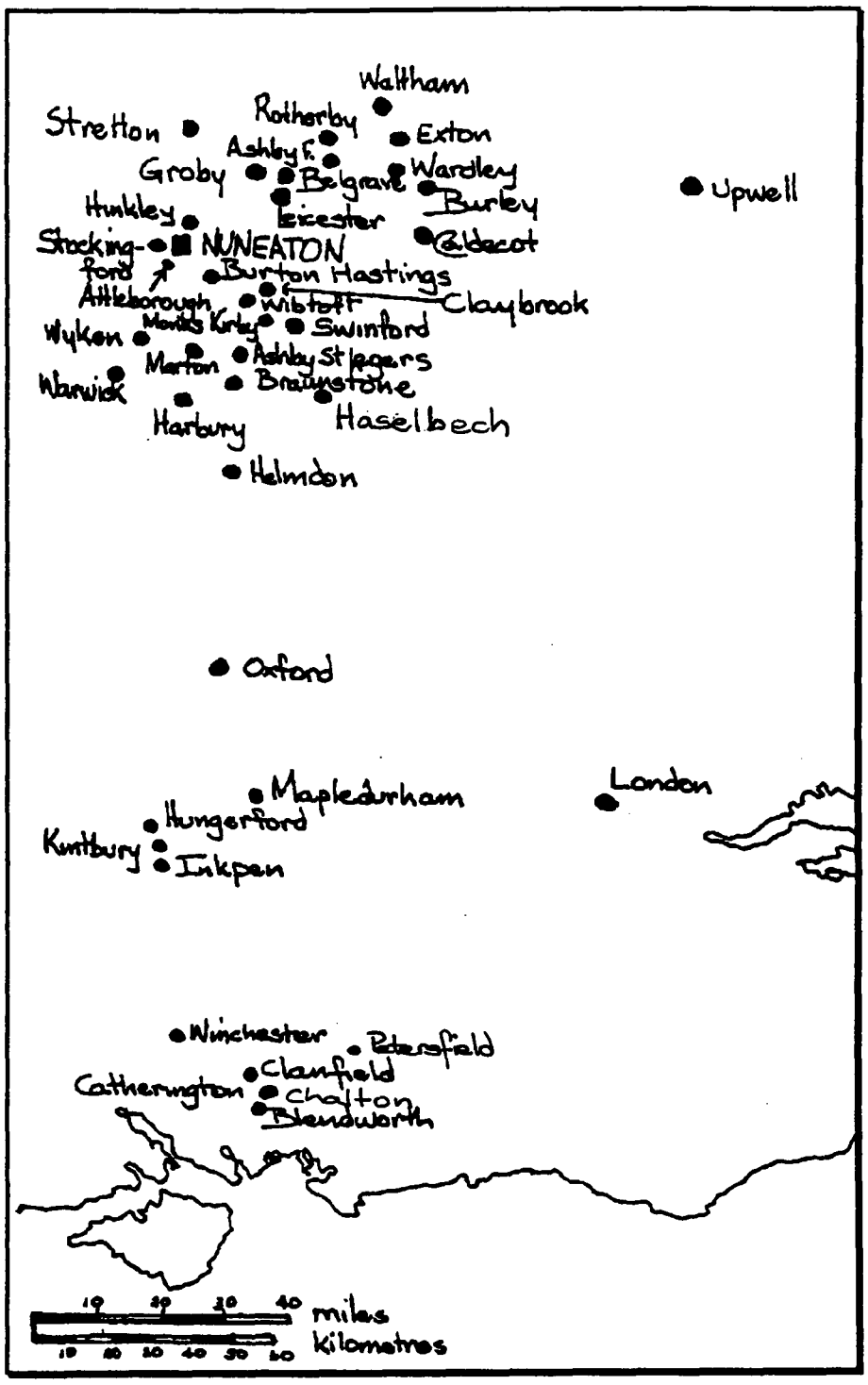
Nuneaton in 1535 possessed seven churches, drew pensions from an additional five and drew income from land and holdings of much the same type as Westwood.[1] Generally speaking, Nuneaton's possessions were similar in character to those of Westwood though more numerous and generally of greater individual value. One of the most striking aspects is the extent of the Nuneaton holdings - they spread from Warwickshire to Leicestershire, Northampton, Berkshire and Lincolnshire to London, Oxford and Winchester. Reference to the accompanying map makes this even more obvious; Blentworth, for example, is more than one hundred and twenty miles from Nuneaton. Despite this evident spread, there is a significant and predictable concentration of properties around Nuneaton itself.

Study of the gradual accumulation of Nuneaton's possessions shows that this monastery received a number of large grants, for example, half the vill of Burton and the vill of Hodnell.[2] Rents which were acquired also tended to be substantially larger than those possessed by Westwood: 5s. annually in Ashby Foleville, 20s. per annum in Harringworth, 100s. per annum in Pimperne.[3] Admittedly not all of Nuneaton's grants were of this magnitude - there was a sprinkling of smaller rents of 20d. or 14d. per annum but the general picture is of a much sounder financial enterprise than that which we encountered at Westwood.

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1 *VE* iii pp. 76, 77.
2 BL Add. Chart. 48039; 48137.
3 *ibid.*, 47398, 47548, (*Earl. Glouc. Chart.*, 67).

FIGURE 5: PRINCIPAL SITES OF LAND ACQUIRED BY NUNEATON PRIORY



Spiritualities too were more numerous and of greater potential value. For instance, the priory obtained the advowson of the churches of Burley, Burton and Claybrooke and portions of others.[1] This house patently outstripped Westwood in both its spiritual and temporal assets. Nuneaton's larger initial endowment and its high status meant that, as well as attracting larger donations, it was able to lay out more in advantageous investments. The prioress and convent paid £8 per annum to Chaise Dieu for the lease of the property at Attleborough.[2] Two virgates at Ullesthorp cost 34 marks (£22 13s. 4d.).[3] For the vill of Hodnell the prioress and convent paid 15 marks (£10) premium and 10s. per annum. A later confirmation cost a further 8 marks (£5 6s. 8d.).[4] In 1314, Nuneaton could pay 40s. to obtain pavage rights for five years on all goods brought into the vill for sale.[5] These investments had the potential to bring high returns. Westwood, with less disposable wealth, was not in a position to make similar

1 BL Add. Chart. 47560, 47789, 48038.
2 *ibid.*, 47998-48003
3 *ibid.*, 47620.
4 *ibid.*, 48137-48142.
5 *Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1313-17*, p.110.

investments. A more secure financial footing meant that Nuneaton could embark on schemes such as the burgage development in the vill.[1]

In donors and patrons the two priories were similar. The continued patronage of the Beaumont family is evident. On her husband's death Amice, wife of Robert II, retired to Nuneaton, taking the veil there.[2] During her lifetime she exercised her influence in the priory's interest.[3] Her presence may have ensured patronage of her family for a time but this continued through several generations. Robert Blanchemains, the third earl, confirmed his father's grants and added his own donation of the tithe from his fishponds at Groby. [4] His son, Robert fitz Parnel, rectified a situation in which the priory was deprived of land in Dadlington by granting land in Belgrave in exchange.[5] Support, moreover, was not confined to the male line. Isabel, daughter of Robert II, granted the priory a bovate of land in Groby; she and her second husband Gervase Paynell granted land in Waltham and they supported the priory's claim to the church in Waltham when this was contested.[6] Hawise, another daughter, may have been destined to be a nun at Fontevraud. [7] These plans were set aside, however, in favour of cementing an alliance between her father and William, earl of Gloucester. Hawise granted the priory land from the manor of Pimperne and 100s. rent from a mill in Nutford and expressed a wish to be buried in the priory church.[8] Her husband too was a benefactor, granting the prioress and convent the churches of St Gregory's Sudbury, Mapledurham and the chapel at Petersfield. [9]

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1 BL Add. Chart. 48490. See below pp. 237-42.
2 G. W. Watson, 'The Ancient Earls of Leicester', *The Genealogist*, x (1893), p. 6.
3 BL Add. Chart. 53102.
4 *ibid.*, 47582, 47643 (*Danelaw Docs*, pp. 244, 259). On Robert III, see *GEC* vii, 530-33.
5 BL Add. Chart. 47551, 47552, 47580 (*Danelaw Docs*, pp. 241-43). On Robert IV, see *GEC* vii, 533-36.
6 BL Add. Chart. 47584, 47631, 47640 (*Danelaw Docs*, pp. 245, 252, 256).
7 BL Add. Chart. 47551 (*Danelaw Docs*, p. 243). She was married to William of Gloucester in 1147x49. Crouch, *op.cit.*, p. 85 and sources cited there.
8 BL Add. Chart. 47517; AML 246 H1 3.
9 *Earl. Glouc. Chart.*, 66.

Figuring prominently among the donors and patrons are members of the Leicester household. Geoffrey l'Abbé, who granted half the vill of Burton, was Robert II's steward.[1] Son of Ralph the Butler, sheriff of Leicester, Geoffrey had pledged his allegiance to Duke Henry with earl Robert.[2] His wife Emma had been married to Geoffrey de Turville, one of the earl's barons, and later took the veil at Nuneaton. Her son Ralph, at the request of his mother, granted the church at Burton.[3] Isabel de Vattville, who, with her husband Hugh Abbatdun, granted the church at Claybrooke, was the daughter of Roger de Vattville, a 'Leicester' baron.[4] Her son, Ernald de Bosco, who confirmed the grant, was another of Robert II's stewards.[5] Ernald's son, Robert, was Robert II's chaplain, and one time rector of Claybrooke. Richard Barre who granted his land at Harbury, was archdeacon of Lisieux. He inherited land in Buckinghamshire from his brother Hugh who had been archdeacon of Leicester and chaplain to Robert III.[6] Hugh became a canon at Leicester some time before 1163 and Richard may have intended doing the same. His charter of donation provided for the contingency that if he joined a religious order, the land at Harbury would remain the property of the priory.[7] William Burdet, donor of the land at Haselbech, was a steward of Huntingdon.[8] He, too, was in the entourage of Earl Robert. Ada, the mother of King Malcolm of Scotland, was another aristocratic patron with Beaumont connections. Her father, William of Warenne, earl of Surrey, was Robert II's step-father. Ada had married Henry, son of David I of Scotland. Henry had died in 1152 while his father was still king and the following year his son Malcolm ascended the throne.[9] The difference in the level of patronage which Nuneaton and Westwood attracted is illustrated in the donations made by Ada and her sister, Gundred of Warwick whose support of Westwood amounted to a silver mark per annum from the fair at Warwick. Ada, by contrast, gave Nuneaton a rent of 100s. per annum.[10]

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1 BL Add. Chart. 47398.; Crouch, *op.cit.*, pp. 86, 92.
2 Crouch, *op.cit.*, p. 86.
3 BL Add. Chart. 48038, 47398. For a genealogical table of this family: Crouch, *op.cit.*, p. 218-219.
4 BL Add. Chart. 47556-47559 (*Danelaw Docs*, pp. 238-40); Crouch, *op.cit.*, p. 110. Roger de Vattville and Ernald de Bosco joined the Angevins at the same time as Robert of Leicester, ibid., p. 86.
5 BL Add. Chart. 47382; Crouch, *op.cit.*, p. 147. Robert of Leicester addresses this particular charter first to Ernald de Bosco and then to all his barons.
6 Crouch, *op.cit.*, pp. 82, 150, 151.
7 BL Add. Chart. 48086; Hugh is a witness to this charter; see also Crouch, *loc.cit.*
8 BL Add. Chart. 47743; Crouch, *op.cit.*, pp. 128, 156.
9 DNB v, p.570.
10 BL Add. Chart. 47398. cf. AML 244 H1 1.

Other benefactors of Nuneaton range from Richard of Ilchester, bishop of Winchester, to a number of people who, like their counterparts in Westwood, are virtually unknown.[1] Of some we know a little. Robert le Megre who sold land in Harbury held that manor for one knight's fee;[2] John of Cranford was lord of Esseby; [3] Robert of Croft and Roger Walensis were probably members of the Beaumont household.[4] The remainder, however, are unknown except for the fact that they were benefactors.

Motives for making donations appear to be similar to those expressed or implied in the Westwood benefactions: Avizia, wife of Roger Walensis, for example, granted land for her dowry on entering the priory .[5] Marcus, son of Edwin gave a house and property in Bristol as dowry for his mother.[6] Richard the burgher gave land near Bisley with his daughter, Eva.[7] Amicia of Grafton gave half of the mill at Sapecote with her body for burial.[8] The donation of Hawise, countess of Gloucester appears to have been to provide for prayers and masses after her burial in the priory church. [9] There is a suggestion, however, that both she and the land had been promised to Fontevraud by her father, the earl of Leicester. If this is correct, her grant was fulfilling a bargain he had made previously. The case of Alieva, wife of Robert the cook, is interesting and rather bizarre.[10] Her donation - of two houses, a mantle, a cap, a gold ring, eight pigs, eleven beasts (*animalia*) and nineteen sheep - was made prior to her taking the veil when she thought she was *in extremis*. In a *caveat* clause she insisted that if she should recover from her illness she should be permitted to return to the world and regain the income from the houses until such time as approaching death would make it necessary for her to return to the cloister.

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1 Richard of Winchester's interest in Nuneaton is recorded in BL Add. Chart. 47789, 47802.
2 *Feet of Fines, Warwick*, i, p.42; *Book of Fees*, p. 959.
3 *ibid.*, pp. 939, 1289; BL Add. Chart. 47643 (*Danelaw Docs*, p. 259).
4 *ibid.*
5 BL Add. Chart. 47599 (*Danelaw Docs*, p. 245). Avizia is styled *mater filie Rogeri Walensis* not *uxor* in this charter.
6 *ibid.*, 47519.
7 *ibid.*, 47524.
8 *ibid.*, 47615-17.
9 *ibid.*, 47517; See *Earl. Glouc. Chart.*, 67 and p. 73.
10 BL Add. Chart. 47601 (*Danelaw Docs*, p. 247).

A certain amount of similarity is, therefore, evident in the types of property acquired by Westwood and Nuneaton and in the way in which it was acquired. Donors and benefactors, as well as their benefactions, reflect the difference in social and economic status of the founders of the two priories, but in the main grants were made for similar motives. The main difference is one of degree. Nuneaton, being larger, more affluent and more influential, attracted the patronage of wealthy and influential patrons while Westwood remained relatively small, poor and insignificant, patronised by less wealthy barons and landowners. Established on a firmer foundation, Nuneaton had more potential to increase its prosperity.

iii) Amesbury

Study of Amesbury's acquisitions shows that this priory was similar to the others in some ways. Between 1178 and 1350 Amesbury appropriated churches, bought parcels of land, secured rents. Its property was within a thirty-mile radius of the priory - more extensive than that of Westwood, less so than Nuneaton's. The major difference between Amesbury and the other two priories stems from the circumstances of its foundation: it benefited from its royal origins by receiving, at a later stage in the process of endowment, two and a half manors.[1]

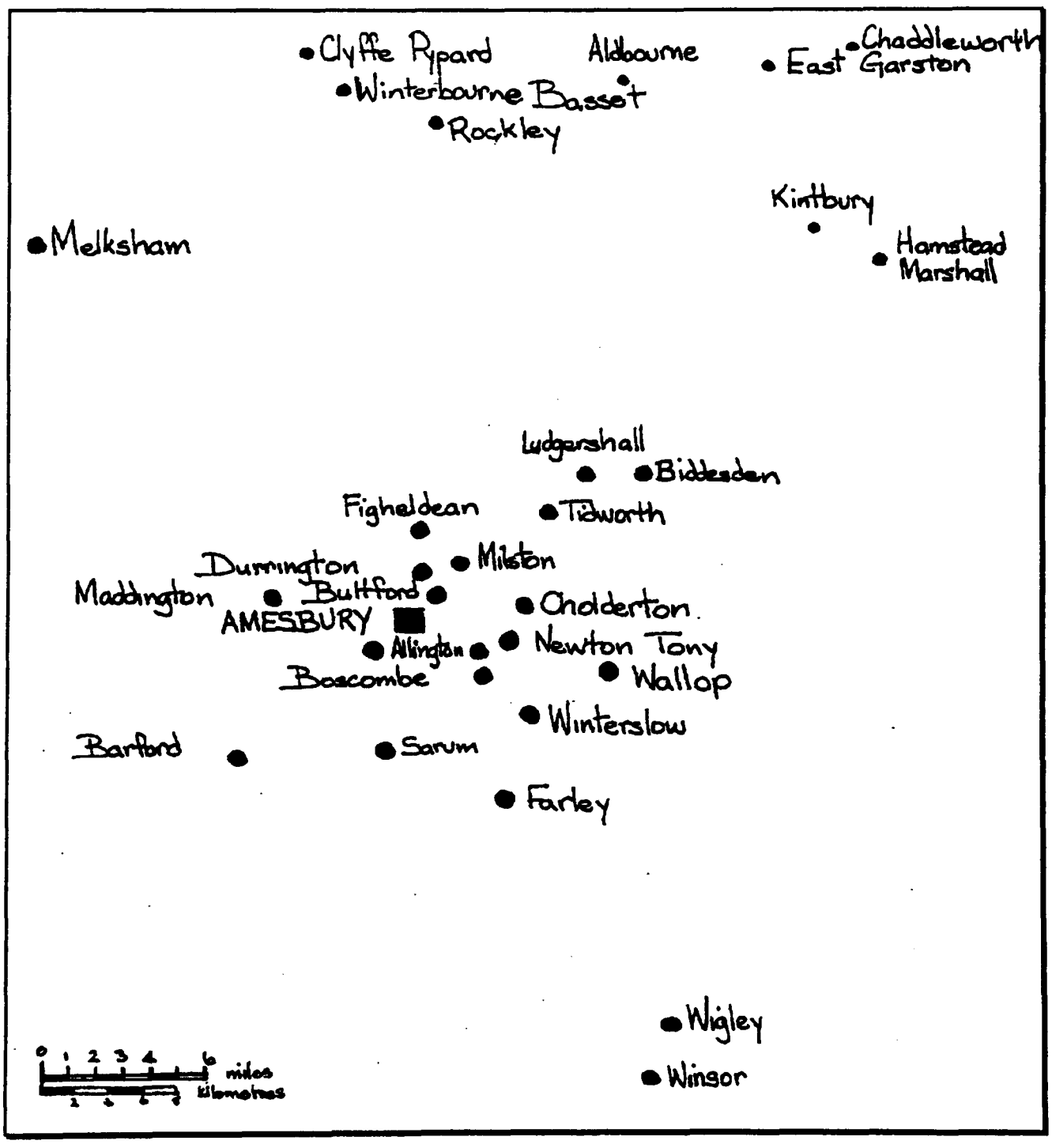
We have seen that Nuneaton, in the years following its foundation, obtained, by purchase or donation, the advowson of several churches. Amesbury likewise acquired churches and it is worthwhile at this point to pose some suggestions as to how. By the end of the twelfth century, as a means of lessening lay control over spiritual affairs, bishops were encouraging laity who still held churches to grant them to monasteries. Thus we see Richard, bishop of Winchester c.1182-4 advising David d'Armenters to grant the church of Burley to Nuneaton priory.[2] Because advowsons were exempt from the provisions of the Statute of Mortmain, those wishing to grant churches at the end of the thirteenth century could gain spiritual

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1 For a list of demesne lands in 1286 see *Cal. Chart. Rolls 1257-1300*, p. 336.
2 BL Add. Chart. 47789. Others of Nuneaton's churches were probably acquired under similar circumstances.

advantages without going through the technicalities of obtaining a licence to alienate their property.[1] Margaret Longespée and her husband, Henry, earl of Lincoln, granted Amesbury the churches of Aldbourne and Wanborough in 1296 and Shipton was acquired later.[2] In 1344 Henry of Lancaster, brother of Isabel of Lancaster, then prioress of Amesbury, granted that priory the advowson of the church of East Garston.[3] We do not know the circumstances of an earlier appropriation of Ludgershall church. Permission was granted by Henry III in 1228 in response to a request by prioress Felicia.[4]

FIGURE 6. PRINCIPAL SITES OF LAND ACQUIRED BY AMESBURY PRIORY



1 See G. Constable, *Monastic Tithes from their Origins to the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, 1964), p. 109.
2 *Feet of Fines, Wiltshire, Ed. I and Ed. II*, p. 42. *VCH Wilts.*, ix, p. 182.*VCH Hants.*, iv, p. 514.
3 *Cal Pat. Rolls, 1343-44*, p. 354; *Cal. Pap. Pet.*, 1342-1419, p. 98.
4 *Cal. Chart. Rolls, 1226-57*, p. 80.

Absence of records means that we cannot trace Amesbury's enlargement of its initial endowment in the same way that we can that of Westwood or Nuneaton. We do have documents, however, detailing purchases of land by the prioress and convent. By the end of Henry II's reign a convenient way of recording the sale of land was by the execution in duplicate of a final concord recording the terms of agreement. Some agreements of this type originated in litigation, a reality not always apparent in the text.[1] We have evidence of a final concord between the prioress and Henry the Carpenter and his wife registering that 20s. was paid for seventeen and a half acres of land, three messuages and two acres with pasture in West Amesbury.[2] The priory may have deliberately secured substantial holdings in this area: other land in West Amesbury was bought from Roger the Convers.[3] In 1309 a process was begun which culminated in the purchase, probably between Michaelmas 1315 and Easter 1316, of further land at West Amesbury from Walter Lovel.[4] Other property included thirty nine acres in Barford and lands and a messuage in Berryfield and Biddesden for which Alice of Heyham received 100s.[5]

Amesbury's most profitable endowments in the post-foundation period were acquired because of its royal foundation. At the end of the twelfth century Amice Pantulf, lady-in-waiting to Eleanor of Aquitaine, granted half of the manor of Winterslow.[6] A member of a prominent Norman family who had founded the monastery of Noron and who were patrons of the monastery of Langley in Leicestershire, Amice had not married.[7] She bestowed her wealth on the order favoured by the queen and announced her intention of taking the veil at Amesbury.[8]

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1 W.L. Warren, *Henry II* (London, 1973), p. 348 and references cited there. See also *Feet of Fines Lincolnshire for the reign of King John*, pp. xii - xxv.

2 PRO CP 25 1 250/11/2.

3 PRO CP 25 1 251/21/38.

4 AML 244 H1 3. See below, p. 218.

5 *Feet of Fines of the Seventh and Eighth years of the Reign of Richard I, AD 1196 to AD 1197* (PRS xx, 1896), 82, p. 60; PRO CP 25 1 252/22/30. Biddesden is either Biddestone or Biddesden Ho. Both are in Co. Wiltshire. J.E.B. Gover, A. Mawer & F.M. Stenton, (edd.) *The Place Names of Wiltshire* (EPNS, xvi, 1939), pp. 82, 341.

6 AML 243 H 1 1.

7 *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis*, *op.cit.*, iii, pp. 154-159; M. Chibnall, 'L'Ordre de Fontevrault en Angleterre au XIIe Siècle', *op.cit.*, p. 45.

8 She calls herself *domicella* in her charter. For an exploration of the meanings, original and extended, of this term see D. Crouch, *The Image of the Aristocracy in Britain, 1000-1300* (London, N.Y. 1992), pp. 150-52.

Melksham manor was granted to Amesbury by Henry III in 1268 to finance an obit for Arthur of Brittany and his sister Eleanor, and for Henry III and Queen Eleanor after their deaths.[1] The two former, offspring of Geoffrey Plantagenet, had, during their lifetime, constituted a threat to the throne and the first had been murdered by King John, the second held in prison. Once they were safely removed from the scene, however, a family piety could be expressed, hence the obit. At first Melksham was leased from Amice, countess of Devon, but in 1274 Edward I requested her to deliver it to the nuns in return for security during her lifetime.[2] This manor became a lucrative source of income for Amesbury. The receivers' accounts of the early fourteenth century show its cash returns as much higher than those of other priory manors. For the financial year 1315-16, for example, Melksham returned in excess of £54.[3]

Chaddleworth was granted originally as a dowry for a grand-daughter of Henry III, Eleanor of Brittany, who joined Amesbury in 1286.[4] The manor, granted by her grandmother Eleanor, was to provide for her sustenance during her lifetime after which it was to be held in frankalmoin by Amesbury.[5] In 1294 it was farmed to William of Claybrooke for three years to defray the priory's debts.[6] This possibly coincided with Eleanor's departure for Fontevraud. Professed in 1291, Eleanor later moved to the mother house where, in 1304, she was elected sixteenth abbess of the order.[7] Chaddleworth was valued at £7 15s. per annum in 1291, and by 1535 was worth almost twice that amount.[8] Income from the manor is listed in the Amesbury receivers' accounts from 1315-19 but there is no indication of its being ear-marked for the abbess of Fontevraud.[9] It is possible that at some point it was formally ceded to Amesbury; it was definitely in Amesbury's possession by 1344.[10]

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1 *Cal. Chart. Rolls,1257-1300*, p. 100.
2 *ibid.*, p. 200; *Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1272-1281*, pp. 60-61; *Cal. Cl. Rolls, 1272-79*, p. 128.
3 AML 244 H1 3.
4 *Mon. Ang.*, ii p. 338. Eleanor was daughter of Henry lll's daughter, Beatrice and of John II duke of Brittany. See Appendix p. 256.
5 *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1281-92* p. 128.
6 *Mon. Ang.*, ii, p. 338.
7 Lardier *op.cit.*, fo. 510.
8 *TPN* p. 192;*VE* ii, p. 95.
9 AML 244 H 1 3.
10 *Cal. Cl. Rolls, 1343-46*, p. 321.

Our survey of the acquisition of property by the three Fontevraud foundations enables us to re-evaluate from an informed position their situation at the time of the Dissolution. Amesbury was demonstrably in a class above the other two priories. We do not know that it had many patrons outside the royal household but in the first century and a half of its existence this can scarcely be deemed disadvantageous. Amesbury had six times the wealth of Westwood because it was richly endowed by Henry II and continued to enjoy royal favour and patronage for at least two centuries. Nuneaton had three times the wealth of Westwood because it was endowed by one of the wealthiest men in England in the twelfth century and this endowment gave it security and influence. Westwood was not so fortunate. There were other convents in England equally as poor as if not poorer than Westwood. This priory's poverty is brought into higher relief by the fact that the other two foundations were so much wealthier. It must be acknowledged, however, that there were other forces, intrinsic and extrinsic, which affected the well-being of the three houses. Over-extension of resources, misrepresentations by unscrupulous operators, moves to become independent of Fontevraud, or at least to limit the control of the mother house, ambiguities associated with Fontevraud's support of the Avignon Papacy, calamities such as fire, famine, war and the Black Death, all had an impact on the livelihood of the nuns and played a part in determining their economic and social situation at the time of the Dissolution. However, it is fair to say that the endowment of each monastery was a crucial factor in determining its subsequent wealth or lack of it. None of the three foundations departed significantly from what its initial endowment prescribed.

Chapter 3: Behind the Walls: Religious Life

It is a truism that in the Middle Ages, religious life was, for women of the wealthier classes, a viable alternative to marriage. It was much cheaper for a father to provide for a daughter entering religion than it was to find a dowry for one seeking marriage and while religious motivation is a difficult quality to assess, many founders of houses for women were, at least in part, motivated by the desire to cater for surplus daughters.[1] This is not to imply that women did not play a significant role in the twelfth-century religious renewal. They certainly did and many women, for a wide variety of reasons, made a deliberate choice to join one or other of the religious orders.[2] Nevertheless, the choice of religious life as a vocation was often a family affair, as was the particular priory or monastery the daughter joined. It was not as if those who joined religious orders were without career prospects; women in religious life, especially those who held positions of responsibility, made decisions involving money and property, often wielding more power than their married sisters and, at the same time, they enjoyed the cachet associated with living a life dedicated to God and the service of the poor. As we observe this phenomenon, however, we are led to wonder what exactly a woman joining a religious order could expect it to provide for her and, conversely, what the religious order would have expected of the aspirant. We will examine the second part of this question first.

The practice of families assigning portion of their wealth to the monastery which their son or daughter joined was common enough. Benedict stated in his Rule that parents who wished to give alms to the monastery on the occasion of their son's entry should draw up a deed of

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1 On motives for founding monasteries see Mortimer, *op.cit.*, pp. 77-85.

2 On reasons for joining religious life see E. Power, *Medieval English Nunneries c. 1275-1535* (Cambridge, 1922), pp. 25-38.

gift.[1] By the eleventh century any optional or voluntary aspect of this gift had disappeared and families who did not offer an entry gift risked having their candidate rejected.[2] Abuse of this practice, seemingly more rife among women religious than men, culminated in a strict prohibition in Canon Law of the exaction of dowries.[3] The Legatine Council of Westminster condemned simoniacal practices in 1127.[4] A century later the Council of Oxford was more explicit, echoing the fourth Lateran Council by making it clear that no pretext was to be used for the exaction of entry gifts. [5] The fact that everyone, canonists included, was aware that there was a certain amount of expense involved in the vesting and the maintenance of religious, led to the development of a fine line between what would technically be termed a dowry and what was otherwise a just contribution to the resources of the monastery. Thus almost all those who entered religion bought with them a gift of some kind. Cartularies of priories attest to lands or rents, in some cases entire manors, being donated on the occasion of an entry.[6]

Aspirants to religious life had to provide the wherewithal for their own habit. In the mid-fourteenth century, a Benedictine monk was required to pay £5 for his initial set of clothes.[7] Benedict had prescribed that the outfit consist of a tunic, two cowls - one each of winter and summer weight - a belt, shoes and stockings; bedding was to consist of a mattress, blanket, coverlet and pillow and other equipment comprised a knife, pen, needle, handkerchief and writing tablets.[8] By 1350 there were doubtless other items which were deemed necessary. When Joan Samborne joined the Augustinian canonesses at Lacock in 1395 she was required to bring a veil, a mantle of worsted, linen cloth, cloth and fur for mantles, cloth for a tunic, fur

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1 *RB* § lix, p. 134.
2 J.H. Lynch, *Simoniacal Entry into Religious Life from 1000 to 1260* (Columbus, 1976), pp. 112, 222.
3 On the incidence of simony in women's houses see *ibid.*, p. 221.
4 *Councils and Synods I*, ii, p. 747 (Canon 3).
5 *Councils and Synods II*, i, p. 119. (Canon 42).
6 See above pp. 93-4, 101, 105.
7 *Black Monks*, ii. p. 50, cited in Knowles, *Religious Orders*, i, p. 285.
8 *RB* § lv, pp. 124-6.

for undergarments as well as a bed and bedding, a bowl and a spoon.[1] Things had changed little by the sixteenth century when Dame Agnes Browne joined a religious order. Her friends provided her with everything from a feather bed to a pewter drinking cup.[2] At quoted prices Joan Samborne's clothing would have cost more than £8 and the additional items another £4 at least. Prices such as these put life in the cloister beyond all but the wealthy, or those who could find a wealthy patron, though it must be admitted that Lacock was a prestigious house and perhaps the cost of items for this abbey was higher than for, say, one of the smaller Yorkshire houses. It is realistic, however, to suggest that entry into the Fontevraud houses was obtained at an equivalent cost. They too were high-status houses, catering for the daughters of the aristocracy. The requisite clothing and equipment for them would have been similar to that required by Joan Sambourne. The early Statutes of Fontevraud stipulated that the monks' cutlery was to be worth no more than two pence and their scabbards no more than one penny.[3] Unfortunately there have survived no explicit instructions as to what a female recruit should have brought, nor the limits of its value. In return for providing basic clothing and equipment and making some contribution towards maintenance, the new member of any religious order could expect to be fed and kept in what appears to have been a reasonably comfortable manner.

Standards of living in medieval monasteries varied, but for the most part they approximated to those of knights and esquires.[4] Costs of living are difficult to estimate. In 1320, when the Augustinian canons of Bolton Priory were dispersed, the houses which received them were paid 5 marks (66s. 8d.) per head per annum or a little over 2d. per day for their upkeep.[5] In 1322 during a vacancy at Abingdon Abbey the exchequer allowed 12d. per day for the prior and 6d. per day for each monk; the following year monks at Thorney Abbey were allotted 3d.

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1 W.G. Clark Maxwell, 'The Outfit for the Profession of an Austin Canoness at Lacock, Wilts. in the Year 1395, and other Memoranda', *Archaeological Journal*, lxix (1912), pp. 117-118. There is no mention in this list of boots, stockings, belt etc. which doubtless would also have been required.

2 Power, *op.cit.*, p. 20

3 For the monks' accoutrements see *Praecepta Recte Vivendi*, § VI, (PL. clxii, 1083).

4 Dyer, *Standards of Living*, p. 32.

5 Kershaw, *Bolton Priory*, p. 159.

per day under similar circumstances.[1] In the second half of the fourteenth century it was assumed that it would cost 10 marks a year to keep a monk at Westminster Abbey - a provision for basic food and clothing.[2] Paucity of evidence prevents us from calculating what it cost to maintain a nun at the Fontevraud foundations but we can safely say that in these priories as elsewhere, the maintenance of the normal standards of living demanded a judicious husbandry of resources which, as we shall see, did not always occur.

Investigation of endowments leads us to consider the physical plant provided by the founders and donors. Monastic precincts and their buildings must have dominated the medieval landscape and, though lacking the grandeur of some of the larger monastic enterprises, those of Nuneaton, Amesbury and Westwood would have been no exception. Unfortunately today little remains to support our assumptions. With two of the three, however, surviving material and documentary evidence enables us to establish some facts about the size and shape of the monasteries and to draw some inferences about the way the nuns lived. Of Westwood we have no information other than that the priory was situated in woodland. The sites of Amesbury and Nuneaton are more clearly identifiable and especially with the latter there are material remains from which a fairly comprehensive picture of the medieval priory can be established.[3] At the time of the dissolution some of the buildings at Amesbury were retained but many of them were demolished. The demolition records allow us to reconstruct, to a degree, the dimensions of that monastery.[4]

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1 PRO C260/35/14.

2 *Flete's History of Westminster Abbey*, ed. J. Armitage Robinson (Cambridge, 1909), p. 133. Economic conditions in the second half of this century were, however, very different from those at its beginning.

3 See Figure 2, p. 114.

4 J.E. Jackson, 'Amesbury Monastery', *WAM*, x (1867), pp. 70-82. The author has translated documents, the originals of which are at Longleat.

BUILDINGS

Questions which we might ask of this evidence - questions concerning space, hygiene, sanitation and general living conditions in the monastic buildings - are important in any study of monastic life. They are all the more important for being too often neglected. Lack of detailed information has lead to stereotyped ideas of both the monasteries and the women who inhabited them. There is, perhaps, an element of stereotype in the views of Roberta Gilchrist, who claims that most houses for women were built in unsuitable locations, were under-resourced and poorly-equipped.[1] This may be true of the houses on which Gilchrist based her study. Evidence from Amesbury and Nuneaton, however, indicates that the nuns in these two houses were, given the standards of the age, well provided for.

One of the first considerations in monastic planning was the availability of water. This was necessary for washing, for bathing and for other domestic uses as well as for the disposal of waste. Effective use of this resource meant that water of sufficient purity and in sufficient volume had to be brought to the monastic site, channelled to where it was needed in lavatoria, kitchens, drains and reredorters and then removed. Beyond the inner precinct of the monastery water was needed for mills and fishponds.[2] Where the chosen site had a stream flowing in the desired configuration, the solution was simple: Fountains Abbey is one example of how a monastery could make maximum use of the stream which flowed through the site; Waverley and Roche are others.[3] More often than not, however, the site was not ideal and the construction of an artificial watercourse was necessary.

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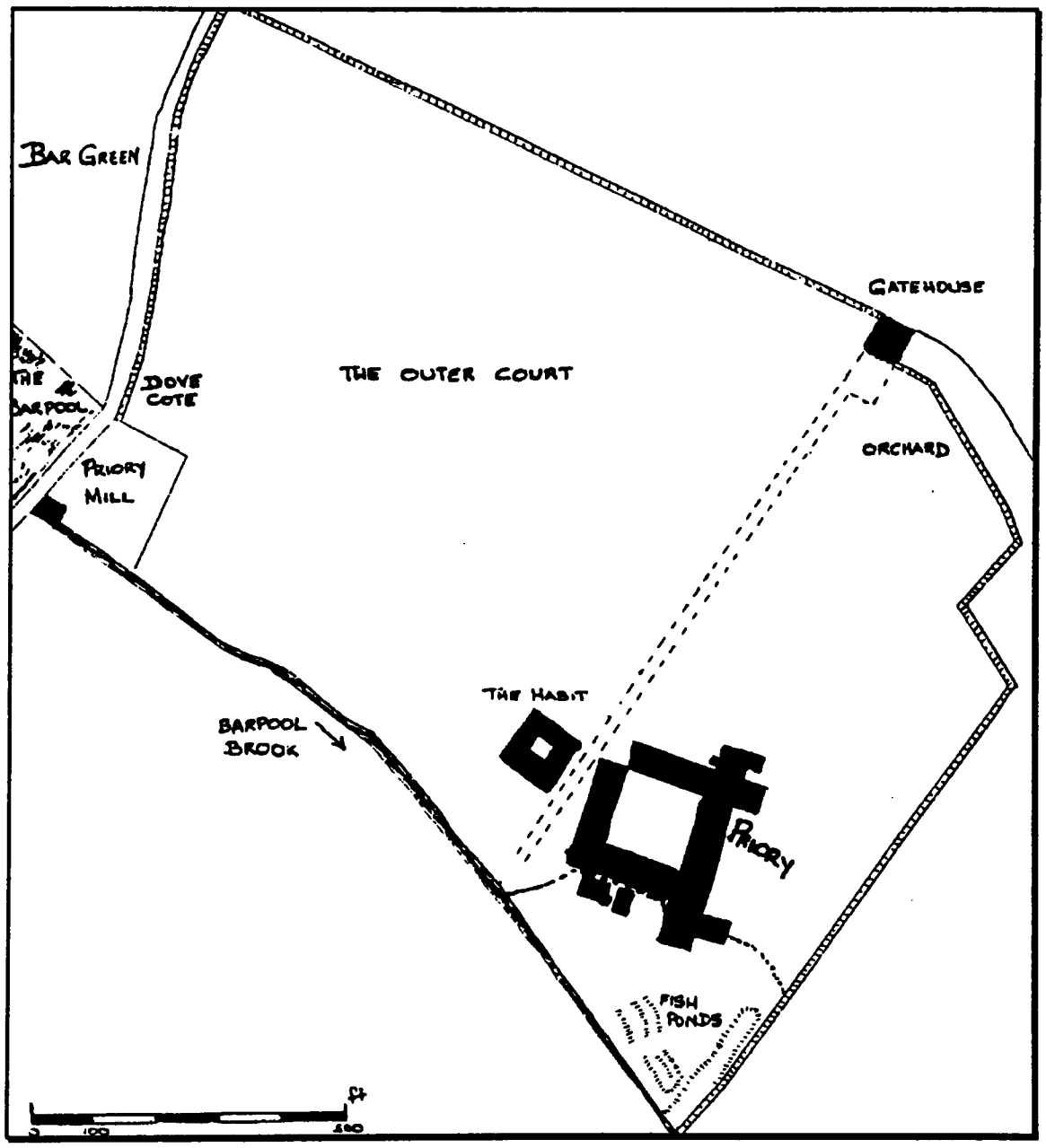
1 R. Gilchrist, *Gender and Material Culture: The Archaeology of Religious Women* (London, 1994), pp. 66, 86, 131.

2 C.J. Bond, 'Water Management in the Rural Monastery', *BAR 203*, pp. 85-91 and *id.*, 'Water Management in the Urban Monastery', *BAR 227*, pp. 64-73

3 G. Coppack, *Abbeys and Priories* (English Heritage, London, 1993), p. 81. For an aerial view of Roche and Fountains, showing the use made of the landscape, see L. Butler & C. Given-Wilson, *Medieval Monasteries of Great Britain* (London 1979), pp. 238, 325.

At Nuneaton the priory met its needs by taking this step. The main stream which flowed through the site, the Barpool, was dammed to provide a source of power for the priory mill, thus taking up the flow of the subsidiary stream, Hollystitches Brook.[1] The eastern flow of the combined streams became the main source of water for the priory. Culverts were constructed to ensure a supply to both *The Habit*, where the brothers lived, and to the south range of priory buildings.[2]

FIGURE 1: PRIORY PRECINCT, NUNEATON[3]



1 See Figure 1, this page.

2 E.A.Veasey, 'Priory and Town: The Medieval Topography of Nuneaton' in D. Andrews *et al.*, 'The Archaeology and Topography of Nuneaton Priory', *Transactions of the Birmingham and Warwickshire Archaeological Society*, xci (1981), p. 58. The stream flowing to *The Habit* is mentioned in BL Add. Chart. 48813 and PRO E. 303/17/376. I am indebted to Mr. Veasey for these two references.

3 After E.A. Veasey, unpublished notes.

Excavation at Nuneaton revealed the main drain running parallel to the south range, close to the kitchen and malting house, whence it flowed under the east range to service the reredorter.[1] Remains of the reredorter are visible at the southern end of the eastern range and in earthworks to the east of this point. Ultimately the drain would have rejoined the brook and flowed back into the river. As *The Habit* was probably to the west of the priory it would have had its own separate drainage system. At Nuneaton, then, as far as we can judge, sanitation was well-managed, waste disposal efficiently organised and the diversion of the watercourse to serve the priory's needs indicates a level of control over the natural environment which one normally associates with Cistercian monks.[2]

We do not know the dimensions of the reredorter at Nuneaton, though, by comparison with other sections of the priory buildings, we can infer that it was adequate. With regard to Amesbury, Sir Harold Brakspear, arguing from the specifications of the various buildings, identified the reredorter as being the *jesse* listed in the demolition documents of 1541.[3] If this were indeed the case, while it is not quite to the scale of the 'third dormitory' at Christ Church Canterbury, which measured 145 x 25 feet (44.2m. x 7.6m.) and, in the later Middle Ages, had 50 cubicles, at 110 x 16 feet (33.5m. x 4.9m.) the reredorter at Amesbury would have been adequate for the needs of a large community. Of Westwood's arrangements we must remain in ignorance. The expensive engineering projects required for the construction of flushed sewers were beyond the resources of smaller houses but general archaeological opinion holds that even poor nuns and friars usually had a supply of clean water and an efficient drainage system, and this at a time when secular dwellings were not so well equipped.[4]

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1 See Figure 2, p. 114. See also H.E. Brown, 'Nuneaton Priory A Record of Excavation of the Eastern Range of Conventual Buildings During 1949 and 1950', *Transactions of the Birmingham and Warwickshire Archaeological Society*, lxix, (1951), *passim*, especially pp. 41, 42, plate 7.

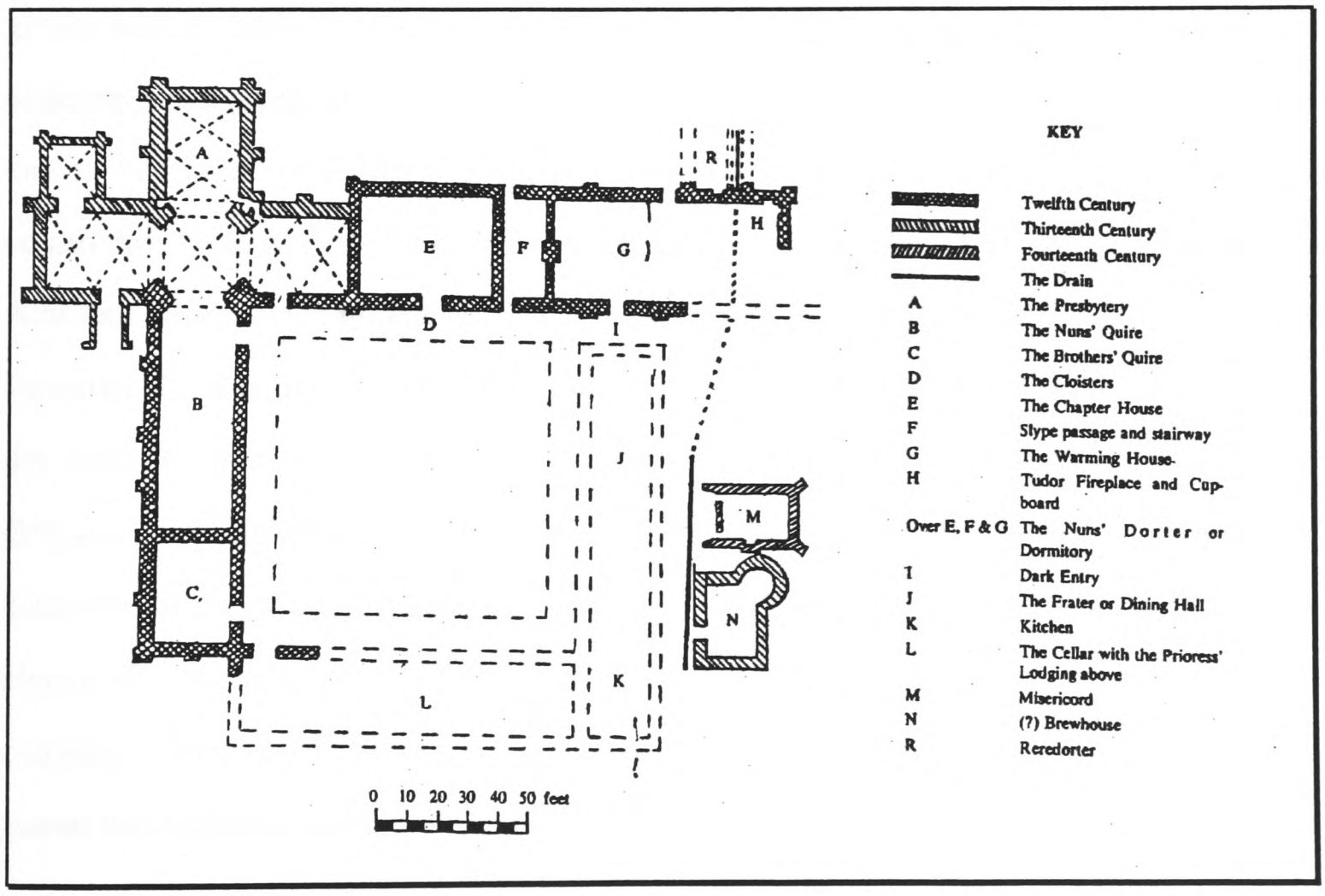
2 For a description of how the Cistercians diverted the course of the river Arrow, see G. Astill, 'Monastic Research Designs: Bordesley Abbey and the Arrow Valley' *BAR 203*, pp. 280, 281, 285.

3 H. Brakspear, 'On the Jessye at Amesbury', *WNQ* iii, (1900), pp. 366-68; Jackson, *op.cit*, p. 74.

4 Coppack, *op.cit.*, pp. 81-99; cf. Gilchrist, *op.cit.*, pp. 113-114.

Extant sources enable us to estimate the dimensions and some of the detail of other conventual buildings at both Amesbury and Nuneaton, thus permitting some comparison.[1] In general Nuneaton appears to have been more spacious than Amesbury. This is perhaps a reflection of the circumstances of the foundation of the two priories and an illustration of the plan of the respective founders. The monastic precinct at Nuneaton was in excess of 25 acres.[2] The monastery which Robert of Leicester built was in keeping with his rank among the wealthiest and most powerful in England. Figure 2 shows the original buildings. His planning may have been influenced by his wife, Amice, who, at the time of building, may already have made her decision to retire there and required a house befitting her status.[3]

FIGURE 2. PLAN OF PRIORY BUILDINGS, NUNEATON[4]



1 Jackson, *loc.cit.*; A. V. Jenkinson, *Some Account of St. Mary's Priory, Nuneaton and the Restored Church*, (London, 1922), pp. 30, 31. The section describing the buildings was written by Brakspear. For a diagram of the Nuneaton remains, drawn to scale, see Veasey, 'Priory and Town. . .' , *op.cit.*, p. 60.

2 See Figure 1, p. 112.

3 Amice, countess of Leicester, took the veil at Nuneaton c.1168. See above p. 99 & Appendix, p. 258.

4 Reproduced with permission from E. A. Veasey, *A Short History of the Abbey Church of St Mary the Virgin Nuneaton* (Nuneaton, n.d.).

We do not know what population earl Robert had in mind for his foundation but if he was conversant with the rapid increase in numbers at the mother house in the first half-century of the order's existence, he could reasonably have anticipated at least 100.[1] Population figures do not abound, but we know that in 1234 there were 93 nuns at Nuneaton; in 1256, 87 and in 1328, 89.[2] Thus, while numbers may have been greater at one time or another, during the thirteenth century, the number of nuns at Nuneaton priory probably averaged about 90. The original buildings could easily have accommodated this number.

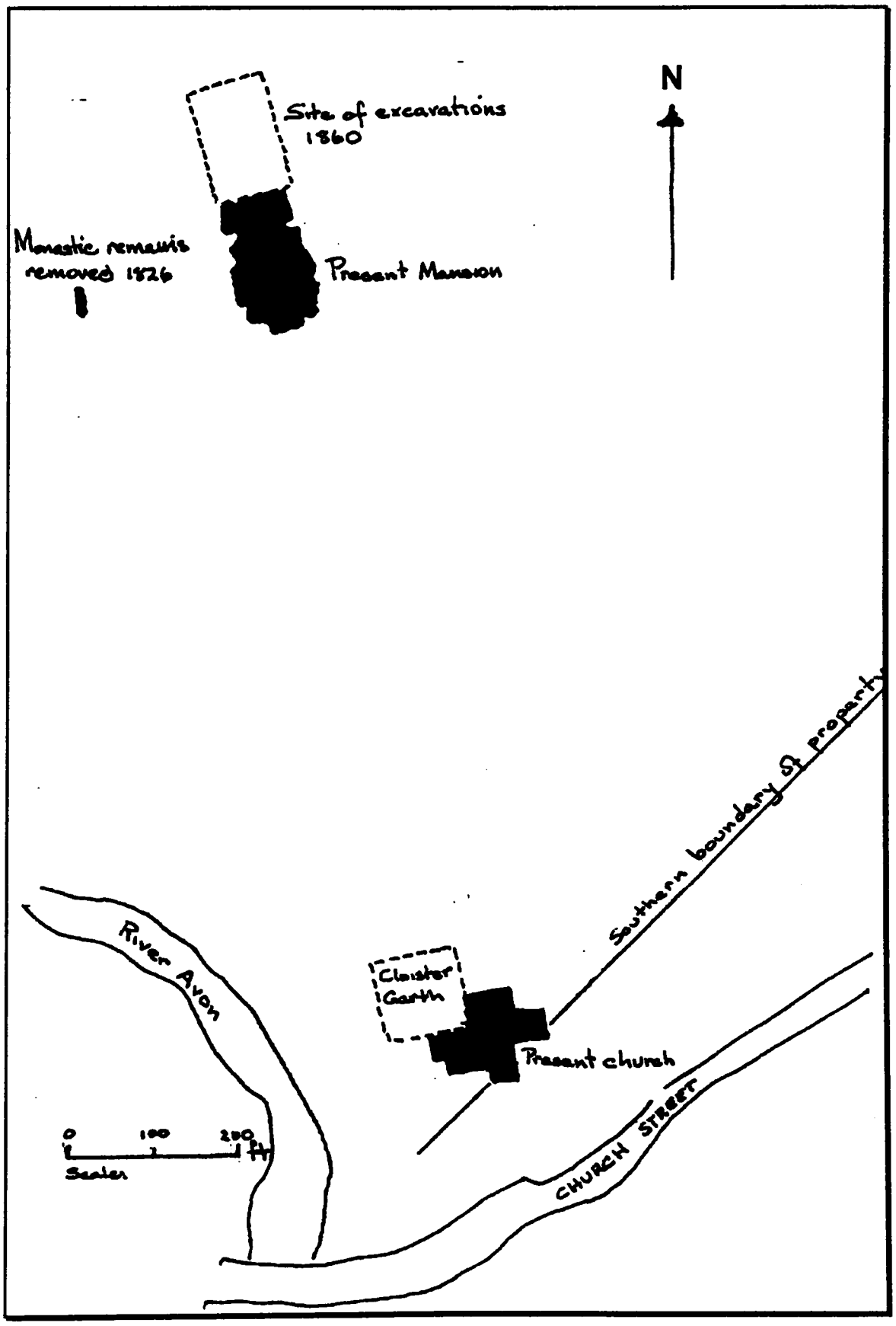
Amesbury, we remember, was built on a previously-occupied site, about 12 acres in area.[3] At the time of the expulsion of abbess Beatrice and her convent, there were about thirty nuns living there.[4] All we know of the former conventual buildings is that before the Fontevraud group was formally installed in 1186 they were refurbished by Henry II at considerable expense.[5] The group of nuns who came from France to Amesbury were about 24 in number, and in this case, as at Nuneaton, we have no idea of the projected optimum size of the community.[6] During the thirteenth century, for a number of social and political reasons, Amesbury assumed an importance for the Angevin kings and their families which hitherto only Fontevraud had enjoyed, despite the fact that the mother house had become the mausoleum of the Angevin dynasty. The process was accelerated by the burial at Amesbury of Eleanor of Brittany (daughter of Geoffrey Plantagenet) and the fact that Eleanor of Provence and her two grand-daughters, Mary (daughter of Edward I) and Eleanor (daughter of John of Brittany and Henry III's daughter, Beatrice) took the veil there.[7] Amesbury became the fashionable convent to which noble women retired. Isabel of Lancaster, great-granddaughter of Henry III, joined the Amesbury community even though her father, Henry of Lancaster, was patron in

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1 For numbers at Fontevraud see above p. 68.
2 BL Add. Chart. 47398; Lardier, *op.cit.*, fo. 746.
3 *VCH Wilts*, iii, p. 256. See Figure 3, below.
4 *Cal. Ch. Rolls, iii, 1257-1300*, pp. 157-9.
5 In excess of £800; H.M. Colvin, (ed.), *The History of the King's Works, i, the Middle Ages* (London 1963), p. 89.
6 For original numbers see *Gesta Henrici*, i, p. 165.
7 *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1232-47, p. 261; *VCH Wilts*, iii, p. 247. See Appendix, pp. 255-56.

chief of Nuneaton.[1] The presence of such illustrious women in this community no doubt attracted others to join them - thirteen young women of high rank were veiled with Mary, Edward I's daughter, in 1285.[2] It can be argued that the population probably was in excess of what was originally intended and that as a result, some strain was put on available space.

FIGURE 3: GROUND PLAN OF PRIORY BUILDINGS, AMESBURY.[3]



1 Account, Isabel of Lancaster, p. 493, Appendix, p. 258.

2 *Annales Monastici*, iv, p. 491; *VCH Wilts.*, iii, p. 247.

3 after E. Kite, 'Amesbury Monastery, with an account of some Discoveries on the Site in 1960', *WNQ* iii (1898-1901), facing p. 440 and Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, *The Churches of South-east Wiltshire* (London, HMSO, 1987), p. 233.

To illustrate: From the initial 24 nuns, numbers at Amesbury expanded to 77 in 1256, an increase of 220 % over 80 years.[1] If all these were living in a common dormitory, space would have averaged at c.47 square feet (4.3 sq. m.) per head.[2] At the same time there were 87 nuns in Nuneaton. Under the same conditions they would have enjoyed c.51 square feet (4.7 sq. m.) per head of space. By the beginning of the fourteenth century, however, if all 117 nuns resident at Amesbury were requiring space in the dorter, each would have had a mere 32 square feet (2.9 sq. m.). Socially-superior Amesbury may have been; it may also have been overcrowded. It is more than likely, however, that, at some time, measures had been adopted to ease the congestion. In 1539 there were several private 'chambers' among the buildings at Amesbury and it is quite possible that some of these originated in the conditions which prevailed at the beginning of the fourteenth century.[3] The impetus could have come from one of two directions. One is the stress in monastic custom on the preservation of modesty, on the need to avoid physical contact. Cramped conditions in dormitories could be detrimental to virtuous living.[4] It is clear that by 1300 the Black Monks were striving for a greater degree of privacy, wanting cubicles in their dormitories.[5] The other incentive would have been social. Eleanor of Provence, Mary, daughter of Edward I, and Isabel of Lancaster had their own lodgings and others of high rank may also had private chambers.[6] Over the same period, as we have seen, Nuneaton's numbers had remained fairly static so there would have been ample space available for the women living there. This is not to say that similar arrangements were not adopted at Nuneaton. We have seen that wives and daughters of the aristocracy were among those who joined the convent there. Some of these may have been provided with separate quarters. We do not know.

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1 AML 243 H1 13.

2 The dorter at Amesbury measured 200 x 18 feet (61 x 5.5.m), that at Nuneaton 140 x 32 feet (42.5 x 10 m). Jackson, *loc.cit.*

3 For private chambers at Amesbury see *ibid.*

4 *The Customary of the Benedictine Monasteries of St Augustine, Canterbury and St Peter Westminster* (2 vols, HBS xxiii, xxviii, 1902, 1904), ii, pp. 138-156. Written specifically for men, its principles would apply universally.

5 *Black Monks*, ii, p. 89.

6 See *Cal. Cl. Rolls, 1272-79*, p. 524; *ibid., 1279-88*, pp. 14, 96; *Cal Pat. Rolls, 1292-1301*, p. 188; Account, Isabel of Lancaster, *passim*, especially pp. 494-5.

Yet both Amesbury and Nuneaton were, in comparison with other monasteries, reasonably spacious; the proportions of their cloisters bear witness to this. The average area of cloisters in male houses has been given as 900-1080 square yards (752.5-903 sq.m.).[1] Women's houses, by contrast, are said to have had much smaller cloisters, averaging in area between 225-400 sq. yards (c.188-334 sq.m.), though it must be noted that the sample on which this observation is based contained only thirteen houses.[2] Nuneaton's cloister, with an area of 2025 sq. yards (1693 sq.m.) was larger than that of Amesbury, the area of which was c.1200 sq. yards (1003 sq.m.).[3] This can be appreciated more when it is noted that the cloister of Rievaulx measured 2178 sq. yards (1821 sq.m); that of Fountains 1936 sq. yards (1618 sq.m.).[4] While cloister size may indicate to a certain extent the status of a particular religious house, it cannot be denied that it also indicates the optimum number of inhabitants in the monastery or priory.[5] Houses for women, founded to accommodate fewer than twenty, naturally would have had small cloisters.[6] A larger population meant more space was necessary to accommodate them; this meant, among other arrangements, larger cloisters. Amesbury and Nuneaton were certainly high status priories but they had large numbers of inmates for whom they had to provide living space. Recent discussion on the orientation of cloisters in women's houses is neither supported nor negated by what we know of the three Fontevraud houses.[7] The cloister at Nuneaton was south-facing; we do not know about the other two.

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1 J. Anstey, *Anstey's Abbeys* (London1987), p. 30.
2 cf. Gilchrist, *op.cit.*, p. 44.
3 See Figure 3, p. 116.
4 Area of Rievaulx: 2177 sq. yards/1828 sq. m.; Fountains: 1936 sq. yards/1618 sq. m. Anstey, *loc.cit*; Given-Wilson, *op.cit.*, pp. 238, 318.
5 cf. Gilchrist, *op.cit.*, p. 44. See also *id.*, 'The Archaeology of Medieval English Nunneries: A Research Design', *BAR*, *203*, p. 253.
6 The average population of the houses on which Gilchrist bases her conclusions is 17. See *id.*, *Gender and Material Culture*, *op.cit.*, pp. 129, 130.
7 *ibid.*, pp. 128-41, 148-9; P. Greene, *Medieval Monasteries* (Leicester, 1992), pp. 6, 57.

Chapter houses, where most of the daily business of the monastery was conducted, can also be compared. Nuneaton's chapter house was a spacious 42.5 x 32.5 feet (c.13 x 10 m.). At Amesbury the foundations and tiled floor of a room which may have been the chapter house were uncovered during excavations in 1859-60.[1] The argument in favour of this being the chapter house is supported by its being surrounded on the interior by a stone seat about 21 inches (53 cm.) wide and the discovery on the site of a stone coffin and slab. That it was part of the main claustral buildings which adjoined the church and which were demolished in 1541 is further suggested by the discovery of fragments of stained glass, window lead and molten lead nearby.[2] Assuming that this was the chapter house, we can state its dimensions as c.29 x 21 feet (9 x 6.5 m.) - smaller than Nuneaton's chapter house. Indications are that it was elaborately decorated. The floor tiles dated from the thirteenth century and some featured the coats of arms of the patrons of Amesbury priory.[3] The chapter house of Romsey with 91 nuns in 1333 was 59 x 29 feet (18 x 8.5 m.), that at Lacock with 22 nuns in 1395 and presumably more before the Black Death, measured 42 x 26.5 feet (12 x 8 m.).[4] Amesbury's chapter house, if indeed it was the chapter house, was smaller than these.[5]

It is clear from the documentary evidence that the priory church at Amesbury was demolished in 1541, the lead from its roof was melted, the spire destroyed and the building materials sold.[6] The Norman church which the present parish church incorporates most likely was that which served the parish of Amesbury before the Fontevraud community was installed. This was probably modified in the latter part of the twelfth century to suit the needs of the Fontevraud chaplains. By the middle of the thirteenth century the chaplains definitely had a

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1 Kite, *op.cit.*, pp. 439, 440.
2 *ibid.*, p. 445.
3 *ibid.*, and plates I and II; Among those represented were the Plantagenet kings, Eleanor of Castille and the house of Clare.
4 H. Brakspear 'Lacock Abbey, Wiltshire', *Archaeologia*, lvii, i (1900), pp. 142-145, 149; Power, *op.cit.*, p. 4.
5 See Gilchrist, *op.cit.*, pp. 111, 112, 119 for plans of some of the smaller houses.
6 *The Churches of South-east Wiltshire*, *op.cit.*, p. 235; Talbot, *op.cit.*, pp. 9-28.

church separate from that of the main priory.[1] Traces of a cloister to the north of the present church indicate that there were conventual buildings there and its position at the edge of the precinct could indicate that it was part of *The Habit*.[2] The location of the main priory buildings at the north of the precinct would make it almost impossible for the present church to have been used as the priory church.[3]

Although the priory churches of Amesbury and Nuneaton were both cruciform in shape, there seem to have been significant differences between them.[4] The length of the nave in Nuneaton church was 132.5 feet (40.3 metres) while that of Amesbury was 120 feet (36.5 metres). Nuneaton's chancel was smaller than Amesbury's, however, so the overall length of the two churches was roughly the same (c.180 feet/ c.55 metres).[5] The vestry and chapels of Our Lady and St John at Amesbury may have meant that its design was quite different from that of Nuneaton.[6] We know there was a chantry chapel in Amesbury in honour of Eleanor of Provence. Whether this altered the overall design, we cannot tell. (On Eleanor's death in 1291 Edward I had requested that a chantry be built and despite promises of money, in 1327 the nuns were still trying to extract some payment from Edward III.[7]) Externally the two may have been quite different. The spire on the Amesbury church was octagonal and 61 feet high; the square tower depicted on the model of the priory which is now housed in the Nuneaton museum may be an accurate representation of the tower of that church but we cannot be sure. From the structural remains of the priory church it is evident that the tower at the crossing in Nuneaton collapsed early in the thirteenth century and had to be rebuilt.[8] As Lateran II

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1 *Cal. Lib. Rolls*, 1245-51, p. 63.

2 Talbot, *op.cit.*, p. 12; *The Churches of South-east Wiltshire*, *op.cit.*, p. 235.

3 See Figure 3, p. 116.

4 Proposals of a 'filial' type of architecture based on the similarity of design between Nuneaton and Fontevraud do not seem justified. cf. Gilchrist *op.cit.*, p. 53; Jenkinson, *op.cit.*, p. 26. Plans of the two churches indicate quite a deal of difference between them, Fontevraud's domed nave and chapels radiating from the chevet being the most obvious. See Figure 3, p. 45.

5 cf. Gilchrist *op.cit.*, p. 45, where the length of Nuneaton church is given as 70.5 metres.

6 Jackson, *op.cit.*, p. 74, refers to these chapels which may have been part of the original design or may have been later additions.

7 *Cal. Inq. Misc.* ii, p. 249 (1002).

8 *VCH War.*, *iv*, p. 170.

had forbidden nuns and chaplains to sing the offices in the same choir some provision had to be made to separate them.[1] The Gilbertine answer was to divide the church laterally by a median wall.[2] Amesbury choir was partitioned by a north-south wall.[3] A similar arrangement apparently existed at Nuneaton with the canons occupying the two extreme western bays, and the nuns the three bays immediately west of the crossing.[4] The north transept of Nuneaton church with its separate entrance was thus accessible to visitors or to resident laity without the nuns' enclosure being violated.

There was a wide variety in the religious houses built for women. Some were spacious and well-equipped, others less so, others were small and poor. The wealth and status of the founder, the potential size of the community and the social status of the clientele were all factors which interacted to influence the scale and the design of the houses which in turn were modified, expanded or extended over time. The Fontevraud foundations were among those founded by the aristocracy and they catered for the needs of women from this social milieu. The buildings at Amesbury and Nuneaton indicate that both priories were built on a scale and to a standard which reflected the status of their respective founders, the expectations of the women who joined the communities and also the large number of nuns which each priory housed and supported. They were not the wealthiest priories in England, nor were they small and ill-equipped. Amesbury in particular may have had its capacity tested by the number of nuns living there in the early fourteenth century but it does not seem to have been forced to limit its numbers in the way that Shaftesbury abbey was.[5] Both furnish an example of the domestic arrangements provided for the social elite who chose to live a religious life.

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1 Lateran II, Canon,xxvii in *Sacrorum Conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, ed. J.D. Mansi, (reprinted in 53 vol., Paris 1901-1927), xxi, p. 526 (xxvii).

2 *The Book of St Gilbert*, *op.cit.*, pp. 128-31; Graham, 'Excavations on the Site of Sempringham Priory', *op.cit.*, p. 91.

3 The wall was removed in 1543. *Item, to take downe the gret wall that was partición of the Mydquere, to have outh the leed that ther was cast.* Jackson, *op.cit.*, p. 79.

4 See Figure 2, p. 114.

5 C. Platt, *The Abbeys and Priories of Medieval England* (London, 1984), pp. 96-98.

The implications of a monastery's keeping noble women whether they were nuns or corrodians or *conversae ad succurrendum* need to be considered. Certainly their presence lent prestige to any monastery but this prestige was bought at a price. We have already examined the possibility that monasteries were required to provide separate lodgings for some of these women.[1] Despite her styling herself a humble nun of the order of Fontevraud, Eleanor of Provence was a queen and we can be sure that while living at Amesbury she would have insisted on being kept in the manner to which she was accustomed.[2] The gifts and privileges she secured for the priory from her son were, without doubt, beneficial, but there was another side to the picture.[3] Like her grand-daughter, Mary, who was also a nun at Amesbury, she most likely would have received a double allowance.[4] Mary had private sources of income but she received a double clothing allowance, an allowance of wine from the priory stores, sent Henry the clerk to London on her affairs and charged this to the priory account and in 1316 borrowed a total of £2 3s. 4d. from the priory funds.[5] Much has been written about Mary and her seeming disregard for the conventions of religious life and we might be inclined to excuse her seeing that she had been taken into the monastery at the age of seven on the insistence of her grandmother.[6] However, her lifestyle was not altogether different from that of other noblewomen who either joined or retired to live in monasteries. And it cannot be denied that their presence must have caused some strain on the monastic economy as well as disturbing the regular living of the other nuns.

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1 See above pp. 116-17.

2 *Cal. Roy. Lett.*, 1106, 1411.

3 *Cal. Cl. Rolls*, *1279-88*, pp. 14, 96; *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, *1272-81*, p. 450.

4 *Cal. Chart. Rolls*, *1257-1300*, p. 331, 336.

5 *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1301-07, p. 52; AML 244 H1 3. As the accounts for the next half-year are missing we do not know if this was repaid.

6 Thomas of Walsingham, *Historia Anglicana*, *op.cit.*, i, p. 26; *Annales Monastici*, iv, p. 491; L. Guilloreau, 'Marie de Woodstock, une fille d'Edouard Ier, moniale à Amesbury. 1285-1332', *RM* xxxvi (1914), pp. 341-359; M.A.E. Green, *Lives of the Princesses of England from the Norman Conquest* (6 vols,1849-55), ii, pp. 404-442. See Appendix, p. 255.

At the beginning of the fourteenth century, the bull *Periculoso* enjoined nuns to stay within their monasteries; Simon of Ghent formally recited its provisions at Amesbury in 1303.[1] Despite the bull, bishops complained, for example, that the nuns of Wroxall went on foot to Coventry or Warwick, those of Polsloe caused scandal by their behaviour in Exeter and those of Romsey were frequent visitors to houses of laymen and even clerics.[2] The statutes of Fontevraud had provided for the fact that it would be necessary from time to time for nuns to go outside of the cloister on business, but it seems that in the English houses, at least among the nuns from noble families, both the statutes and the papal exhortations were interpreted fairly liberally.[3] We know, for example, that Mary, daughter of Edward I, went on pilgrimage to Canterbury and, in the company of her retinue and five other nuns, went to dine with the king.[4]

The lifestyle of aristocratic women living in the cloister is vividly illustrated in the accounts of Isabel of Lancaster who was a nun at Amesbury in the first half of the fourteenth century. The surviving fragment of Isabel's accounts for 1333-34 contains little to suggest she was a consecrated religious, yet within ten years of the time these accounts were compiled, Isabel was prioress of that monastery.[5] Moreover, we have no reason to surmise that either her secular pursuits or her lavish expenditure ceased when she assumed office. Isabel had a private income from manors given to her by her father and her range of interests reflects the pursuits of aristocratic women in the first half of the fourteenth century.[6] Her clothing and bed coverings were of expensive materials, she had her private chambers and kept her own personal staff - a cook, a laundress and a gardener and two personal servants, Peter Coleswein and Philip Lambrist.[7] She kept greyhounds, entertained the magnates of the area, gave and

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1 *Registrum Simon de Gandavo*, ed. C.T. Fowler & M.C.B. Dawes (2 vols, Canterbury & York Society, xl, xli, 1914, 1934), i, p. 109.

2 Power, *op.cit.*, pp. 385, 386 and sources cited there.

3 *Regulae Sanctimonialium Fontis Ebraldi*, § I (PL clxii, 1079).

4 *Issues of the Exchequer . . . from King Henry III to King Henry VI*, ed. F. Devon (HMSO, 1837), pp. 110, 133-4.

5 BCL MS Hampton 310. See Account, Isabel of Lancaster, *loc.cit.*

6 *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1327-30* p. 474.

7 These may have been members of the Order, assigned to her. Peter later became Isabel's chaplain. *Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1343-5* p. 225.

received expensive gifts such as purses, girdles, caskets, spices and sweetmeats. To be fair it must be said that often these gifts went to members of the convent - to some of the brothers, to the cook, to the cellarist for pittances or to Brother William le Noble when he was ordained - but to her family she was equally generous; her sister Mary received a cup and ewer on two separate occasions, as well as a jewelled clasp and a cameo. Isabel was frequently away from Amesbury visiting her relatives and, although she is but one example, one cannot help wondering to what extent the presence of the other noble women who lived at Amesbury or, for that matter in either of the other two priories militated against religious spirit.[1]

Religious Life

This prompts us to question how much we know of the 'religious life' of the Fontevraud nuns. When Penelope Johnson researched the 'ordinary medieval nun' of northern France, she based her investigations to a large extent on the reports of visitations to monasteries by the thirteenth century Norman archbishop Eudes Rigaud.[2] Unfortunately for us the houses of Fontevraud were exempt from episcopal jurisdiction and consequently there are only passing references to them in contemporary bishops' registers.[3] An all-encompassing report on the internal life of the monasteries of Nuneaton, Westwood and Amesbury is thus impossible and a profile of the 'ordinary nun' living in one of the houses of the Fontevraud order is quite beyond our reach. There are in existence some reports of visitations to the English houses by representatives of the abbess but the information they contain concerns mainly economic matters.[4] Still, a study of religious life would be rather unbalanced were we not to pursue the

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1 Although Isabel's father was patron of Nuneaton she preferred to join Amesbury, no doubt because of the higher social status of its clientele. It is unlikely that Westwood attracted members of the nobility - probably daughters of lesser barons and richer landowners.

2 P. D. Johnson, *Equal in Monastic Profession: Religious Women in Medieval France* (Chicago & London, 1991), pp. 7-8.

3 Fontevraud was granted the status of being subject to Rome *nullo mediante* by Innocent IV in 1244. *Les Registres d'Innocent IV, ed. E. Berger* (4 vols, Paris 1884), i, 498. See above pp. 66-67. This privilege was frequently invoked: AML 246 H2 11 3; *Cal. Close Rolls, 1354-60*, p. 669.

4 These are discussed above pp. 13-14.

spiritual dimension in some way. By definition this is difficult to assess, material evidence on the more mundane areas of life being much more likely to have survived. Yet it is legitimate to question what went on in a Fontevraud monastery, what prayers the nuns said, what saints they prayed to, what feasts they celebrated . . . and to hope to find some answers.[1]

SOURCES

While available source material does not permit an extensive investigation, some insight into what went on behind the monastery walls and particularly in the choir of the monastery church is possible. Three psalters and a fragment of a breviary associated with the Amesbury priory survive, and from Nuneaton there survives a manuscript containing mainly devotional and semi-secular items and two folios of Marian anthems set to music.

Oxford, Bodleian MS Liturg. 407 was produced in Winchester in the first decade of the thirteenth century.[2] Oxford, All Souls MS 6 is about half a century later than this and while its provenance from Amesbury has been disputed, there is strong evidence of some links with this priory.[3] It was commissioned by a person of high rank but since many noblewomen were members of the Amesbury community it would be difficult to assign it specifically to any one person.[4] Cambridge University Library MS Ee.vi.16 dates from the fourteenth century.[5] Entitled *Horae Beatae Virginis Mariae,* it contains offices of Advent, the Holy Trinity, the Passion, and John the Baptist, and, as well as the psalter, a calendar, a litany, extracts from the Gospels, prayers, antiphons and anthems. The calendar in this manuscript can be regarded

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1 For answers on these questions in relation to nuns in medieval France, see Johnson, *op.cit.*, pp. 105-165.

2 N. Morgan, *Early Gothic Manuscripts, i, 1190-1250* (London & Oxford, 1982), p. 26. Later adaptations for Franciscan use are evident, *ibid.* See also D.N. Bell, *What Nuns Read: Books and Libraries in Medieval English Nunneries* (Kalamazoo, 1995), p. 104.

3 Commonly referred to as 'The Amesbury Psalter'. Morgan, *op cit.*, ii 1250-1285, pp. 60-61. A.G. Watson, *Catalogue of MS in All Souls College Oxford*, (Draft), p. 16. I am indebted to Professor Watson for his advice on the manuscript and for making available the draft of his catalogue.

4 W. Smith, 'The Calendar of the Amesbury Psalter', *WAM* lxxviii, 1984, pp. 118-119. For nuns at Amesbury see Appendix, pp. 255-58.

5 *Catalogue of the Manuscripts reserved in the Library of Cambridge University*, Item 1108, pp. 262-3. See also Bell, *op.cit.*, p. 103.

as accurate for the Amesbury sanctorale.[1] Spanning between them over a century of liturgical practice at Amesbury priory they tell us what feasts were celebrated, how important they were and what saints were venerated. The fragment of a breviary currently in a private collection does not contain any new liturgical material but reinforces what is found in the Cambridge manuscript.[2]

The date at which *The Nuneaton Book* assumed its present form is uncertain.[3] The French/Latin version of the Apocalypse, which it currently incorporates, was possibly originally a separate volume.[4] More valuable for our present purposes are the prayers, devotional treatises and the music for the anthems sung after Compline, all of which seem to have been associated with the Nuneaton priory.[5]

CALENDARS

Tracing the development of liturgical calendars in the high Middle Ages, determining the accuracy of one as opposed to another, ascertaining when particular feasts were introduced and from what source, are specialist skills.[6] As sources, calendars can be unreliable: often they have been imperfectly copied or have been adapted from an original belonging to another institution. This is particularly true of those which appear in high-status manuscripts such as

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1 N. Morgan, 'Notes on the Post-Conquest Calendar, Litany and Martyrology of the Cathedral Priory of Winchester with a consideration of Winchester Diocese Calendars of the Pre-Sarum Period' in A. Borg (ed.), *The Vanishing Past: Medieval Studies Presented to Christopher Hohler* (Oxford, 1981), p. 170, n. 110.

2 This manuscript, at present in the possession of Dr. C. de Hamel of Sotheby's, is described in Quaritch catalogue 1036, *Bookhands of the Middle Ages*, (1984), item 20; I am indebted to Dr. de Hamel for his having sent me copies of the fragments and information on them. Four folios of a breviary currently held at Windsor Castle (Jackson Collection, 3), contain the office of St Melor and a prayer to St Edith. See Bell, *op.cit.*, p. 105. Unfortunately I was unable to consult this manuscript.

3 *The Nuneaton Book*: Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum MS McClean 123. See Bell, *op.cit.*, p. 158.

4 This and others like it have been critically examined by L. Delisle & P. Meyer, *L'Apocalypse en français au XIIIe siècle,'*(Paris, 1901), pp. i, cxxxiii, and P. Meyer, 'Version Anglo-Normande en vers de L'Apocalypse', *Romania*, xv, (1896), pp. 174-257, especially pp. 180-181.

5 For details of the contents of this manuscript see M.R. James, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the McClean Collection of Manuscripts in the Fitzwilliam Museum*, (Cambridge, 1912), p. 263-266.

6 Authoritative works on liturgical practice and calendars include *English Benedictine Kalendars after AD 1100*, ed. F. Wormald (2 vols, HBS lxxvii, lxxxi, 1939-46), and R.W. Pfaff, *New Liturgical Feasts in Later Medieval England* (Oxford, 1970).

the Amesbury Psalter.[1] This study does not presume to offer an exhaustive investigation into medieval calendars. Instead it makes use of three of them as tools which permit a general impression of the sanctorale at Amesbury rather than a detailed reconstruction of it.

We begin with what we know. The earliest of the calendars originated at Winchester and can therefore be expected to contain evidence of influence from that source.[2] The All Souls manuscript was probably produced in Salisbury and should thus show signs of what was common Sarum use in the mid thirteenth century.[3] The calendar in the most recent manuscript, the *Horae Beatae Virginis Mariae* indicates actual practice at Amesbury at the beginning of the fourteenth century.[4] It is this calendar which provides the bulk of our evidence but this evidence is often supported by material from the earlier sources .

The listing of a feast in a calendar is not incontestable proof of its celebration in a given locality. In the absence of corroborative evidence, however, let us assume that the feasts listed in this calendar actually were celebrated at Amesbury. We can take for granted that the major dominical and Marian feasts were an integral part of the liturgical cycle. Among other feasts celebrated at Amesbury are many which betray a definite Sarum influence. Foremost among these is the feast of the relics of the cathedral celebrated on 18 September.[5] Others are the feasts of Saints Edith (16 September), Swithun (15 July) and Winifrede (3 November) and of other 'Sarum' saints such as Cuthbert (20 March), Dunstan (14 May), Alban (10 June), Oswald (5 August), and the translation of Cuthbert and Birinus (4 September). This is to be

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1 N. Morgan, 'Notes on the Post-Conquest Calendar . . .' *op.cit.*, p. 154.
2 p. 125 n. 2.
3 *ibid.*, n. 3
4 p. 126 n. 1.
5 'The Amesbury Psalter' has this feast on 15 September where it coincides with the octave of the nativity of the Virgin; perhaps it was later moved to avoid the conflict. Oxford, All Souls MS 6, fo. 9. For detail on the relics and the ceremonial attached to them, see *Ceremonies and Processions of the Cathedral Church of Salisbury*, ed. C. Wordsworth (Cambridge, 1901), pp. 33-43.

expected and is evident in each of the calendars. What is of greater interest to us, however, is evidence for feasts not influenced by Sarum, saints which are peculiar to Amesbury. The most obvious of these is that of St Melor, the boy-saint whose relics were preserved in the pre-Conquest abbey.[1] The local cult of St Melor is obvious in his having two feasts - 6 May (probably his translation) and 1 October.[2] Within the breviary itself is a full office of St Melor with prayers and antiphons and his name is included in the Litany of Saints.[3] While Melor's connection with Amesbury stems from the priory's Anglo-Saxon associations, there are feasts in this calendar whose presence can only be explained by influence from the West of France, most probably from Fontevraud. The saints are French in origin, some from the Angevin-Poitouvin-Touraine regions, others from areas where there were Fontevraud foundations. Saints Maurelus (13 September) and Albinus (1 March) were Angevin saints; two bishops of Tours, St Lupus (17 October) and St Gratianus (18 December) appear, as well as Saints Donatian and Rogatian (24 May) whose cult was associated with Nantes. Saint Mariolus (10 May) was abbot of Cluny and the cult of St Austregesilius (20 May) was centred at Bourges. French influence is also evident in the high status given to St Denis with two feasts (22 May and 9 October) and in the celebration of the feasts of Saints Florentinus (25 October),Vivianus (29 April) and Lazarus (17 December).[4] Without a calendar from Fontevraud it is impossible to assess the extent to which observance at the mother house directly inspired the Amesbury calendar at any time but some influence from France can be assumed.

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1 For details of the life of St Melor see G.H. Doble, *The Saints of Cornwall*, iii, (Oxford, 1964), pp. 20-52. and *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, ed. D. Farmer (Oxford 1982), p. 288. Various versions of his life and the legitimacy of Amesbury' claim to his relics are discussed in A.H. Diverres, 'An Anglo-Norman Life of St Melor,' *Journal of the National Library of Wales*, xv (1967), pp. 167-176 and *id.*, 'St Melor: What is the Truth behind the Legend?', in *The Amesbury Millennium Lectures*, ed. J. Chandler, (Amesbury Society, 1979), pp. 9-19.

2 The May feast is not in the earliest calendar, but it appears in both of the others.

3 CUL MS Ee. vi. 16, fo. 123v - 128. Part of this office is to be found among the de Hamel fragments. For the litany see Oxford, All Souls MS 6, fo. 173-176 (Melor appears on fo. 174); CUL MS Ee. vi. 16, fo. 64v-67. (Melor is on fo. 65).

4 For a discussion of the 'localities' to which various saints may be assigned see M.R. James, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Fitzwilliam Museum* (Cambridge, 1895), pp. xxxii-xxxv, and P. Morison, 'The Miraculous and French Society, c.950-1100' (unpublished D.Phil. thesis, Oxford, 1983), pp. 57-60.

This influence is also apparent in the litanies where French saints, for example Symphorian, Quintin, Vedastus, Columba (virgin) and Avia, appear in the company of Edmund, Thecla and Frideswide. Saint Melor appears in the litany as does a St Robert among the monks and hermits.[1] The latter is almost certainly the founder of the order, Robert of Arbrisssel. The fact that he had not been formally canonised obviously mattered little. There appears elsewhere in this manuscript the following prayer:

> *Ave noster sanctissime Roberte sacerdos Dei electe, fundator et constitutor totius ordinis Fontis Ebraldi. Sis pro nobis intercessor apud Christum tuum dilectum et esto noster bellator fortis contra inimicum in hora mortis. Ne dimittas nos perire sed fac nos in terram viventium introire. Sancte Roberte Christi dilector hic et ante Deum esto nostrum adiutorium.*
>
> *Intercessio nos domine pater, beati Roberti piissimi patri nostri tibi conveniendum et ire ab omni culpa liberemur et purificante nos tua gratia tecum in celesti terra gloriemur, per Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum.*[2]

This prayer was evidently not part of formal ritual. Its position in the manuscript in a different hand from that of the surrounding sections suggests that it might have been intended for private recitation or, at the most, as an informal community prayer. Still, its existence has important implications, not the least among which is the evidence it brings to bear on the opinion of some historians that the order neglected the memory of the founder and discouraged his cult.[3]

From our knowledge of ritual at Amesbury can we legitimately infer similar practice at Westwood and Nuneaton? Only in the most general of terms. We could, for instance, assume a similar French influence on the liturgical calendars of these priories; we could surmise that Robert of Arbrissel would have been invoked in their litanies and we could suppose that in all three priories the prayer to the founder was said. Beyond this anything is mere conjecture.

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1 CUL MS Ee. vi. 16, fo. 65v
2 *ibid.*, fo. 9v.
3 See above, pp. 52-53.

While this may be the extent to which we can enquire into the sanctorale of the monasteries, it is not impossible from our knowledge of Benedictine custom to reconstruct to some extent the daily life of the nuns.

The Monastic Day

Nuns who lived according to the Benedictine Rule ordered their day along the same lines as the monks of that order, namely around the liturgical hours of the Divine Office.[1] Benedict had made provision for seasonal variations in the programme - night offices were shorter in the summer months when the nights were shorter - and the solemnity or otherwise of the feast also determined the length of the office - solemn feasts were celebrated with a much more elaborate ritual than ordinary ferial days. In general, however, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the monastic day began with Matins at about 2 am. and ended at about 7 or 8 p m. with Compline.[2] In between Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, None and Vespers and two Masses provided the backbone around which other monastic activities were set.

The recitation of the Office, the *Opus Dei*, was governed by legislation and custom which had evolved over many centuries and bore the mark of reformers such as St Ethelwold and Lanfranc. Yet, over the years, a vast amount of extraneous material - prayers, readings, psalmody and other liturgical observance - had been grafted onto the main stem. Anthems, memoriae, daily offices of the dead, of All Saints and of the Blessed Virgin were commonplace. Introduced initially to occupy in a worthwhile manner the monks who had progressively withdrawn from their involvement in manual labour, the additions eventually became burdensome and a cause of fatigue and distaste for the offices.[3] The reformed orders such as the Cistercians made a point of abolishing many of these accretions in their quest to

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1 RB § viii - xix, pp. 48-68. *Breviary, Hyde Abbey*, vi, p. 7.

2 There is insufficient evidence to decide whether or not these nuns adopted midnight as the hour for matins as did many of the men's houses. See Knowles, *Religious Orders*, i, p. 280.

3 *Black Monks*, i, p. 64; *Breviary, Hyde Abbey*, vi, pp. 46-47.

return to the pure form of monastic life.[1] During the thirteenth century the Benedictines, through their general chapters, also made an effort to get rid of repetitious and lengthy practices. By the end of the century the main additions which were still in vogue were the office of the Blessed Virgin, suffrages for the recently deceased and special devotions for Lent.[2]

Details of liturgical practice of the houses of Fontevraud are insufficient to permit anything other than generalisations. Indications are that some women's monasteries, having accepted the additions to the office, were slow to shed them. One reason given by the male orders for removing some of the accretions was to allow their members to engage in study, a pursuit evidently not considered necessary for nuns.[3] We may thus surmise that the office for nuns continued to be cluttered with extraneous devotions. For instance, the daily recitation of the office of All Saints was abolished by the monks in 1255; it remained part of the liturgy at Barking until at least the early fifteenth century.[4] Its recitation seems also to have been common at Fontevraud though we do not know for how long.[5] An early fourteenth century breviary belonging to Amesbury contained the offices of the Virgin, the Holy Trinity, the Passion and St John the Baptist though there is no indication whether these were for daily or occasional recitation.[6] The office of St Melor, which is also contained in this breviary, would almost certainly have been recited only on his feast days.[7]

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1 Knowles, *Religious Orders*, i, p. 21.
2 *ibid.*, p. 23.
3 See *Black Monks*, i, p. 65.
4 *ibid.*, p. 55; *Customary, Barking Abbey*, i, p. 16.
5 Nicquet, *op.cit.*, p. 299. Nicquet claims that the practice was inaugurated by Robert of Arbrissel but there is no way of verifying this.
6 CUL MS Ee. vi. 16. fo. 18 ff., 94 ff., 109v ff., 182 ff.
7 *ibid.*, fo. 123v -128.

What we know of rules for observance at Fontevraud itself may shed light on practice at Amesbury, Nuneaton and Westwood especially as in this highly-centralised order the various foundations would probably have held to traditions established at the mother house. At Fontevraud on Ash Wednesday, for example, following the singing of Sext, the nuns, barefooted, prostrated themselves in choir and sang the seven penitential psalms before being sprinkled with ashes and receiving general absolution.[1] In English monasteries, for example, at Barking, a similar practice of reciting the *psalmi prostrati* was followed.[2] Each day in Lent at Fontevraud the seven penitential psalms were said; at Barking this practice was observed with one penitential psalm and one of the gradual psalms being recited after each of the regular hours except Matins.[3] On Good Friday at Fontevraud the entire psalter was recited, a custom followed generally in England on each of the days of the Sacred Triduum.[4] It appears also that the nuns of Fontevraud followed the custom, common in English priories, of feeding the poor on Good Friday but eating only bread, water and a few herbs themselves.[5] We are justified in assuming, then, that the observances discussed above were integrated into practice at Amesbury, Westwood and Nuneaton.

A reference to a Christmas observance at the mother house - during chapter when the birth of the Saviour was announced, the nuns were to prostrate and continue in prayer until directed by he abbess to rise - indicates another additional observance, that of capitular office into which most houses incorporated reading from the Gospels or *lectio divina* and chapter of faults. [6] Rubrics in the *Horae Beatae Virginis Mariae* indicate that certain antiphons were for use in the capitular office; obviously the practice was followed at Amesbury.[7]

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1 On practice at Fontevraud see Nicquet, *op.cit.*, p. 302.

2 *Customary, Barking Abbey*, i, p. 72. On the *psalmi prostrati* see *Breviary, Hyde Abbey*, vi, pp. 93-101 and *Black Monks*, i, p. 68.

3 Nicquet, *loc.cit.*; *Breviary, Hyde Abbey*, vi, p. 93; *Customary, Barking Abbey, loc.cit.*

4 Nicquet, *op.cit.*, p. 299; *Breviary, Hyde Abbey*, vi, p. 214.

5 Nicquet, *op.cit.*, p. 303; *Customary, Barking Abbey*, i, p. 101. Amice of Leicester provided for alms to be given at Nuneaton on Good Friday, see below, p. 191. It was the custom at Fontevraud for the nuns to have a pittance of wine after Compline on Good Friday. This custom seems to have been followed at Amesbury as well. See below p. 176.

6 Nicquet, *op.cit.*, p. 302; *Breviary, Hyde Abbey*, vi, pp. 50-54.

7 CUL MS Ee vi. 16, fo. 43.

In the statutes of Fontevraud there are various references to processions. The nuns were to hold the Palm Sunday procession and make veneration of the cross in their own cloister, for example; the brothers were not to wear surplices in a procession, only the officiating priest; and the brothers were not permitted to take part in processions outside the cloister except on specific solemn occasions.[1] The custom of making solemn processions within the cloister was thus followed at Fontevraud. Though we have no direct evidence of this practice in the English houses, it was sufficiently common for us to assume that it was part of normal liturgical celebration.[2] The solemnity of the procession varied according to the importance of the feast and often it concluded with prayers at a certain shrine or altar within the church. We can imagine, for example, a solemn procession at Amesbury on the feast of St Melor, culminating with prayers at the shrine of his relics.

Liturgical practice of the nuns at Westwood, Amesbury and Nuneaton was in all probability little different from what we know of most nuns at the time. There is evidence, however, of a certain French influence in their ritual though, in view of the overall influence of France on English life, we would not be justified in claiming that this was a direct and definite carry-over from Fontevraud, though undoubtedly some influence can be assumed. The most significant indicator of devotional ties with Fontevraud is the invocation of St Robert in the litany of the saints and the special prayer to him as founder and protector of the order.[3]

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1 *Regulae Sanctimonialium Fontis Ebraldi*, § XXXVIII, (PL clxii, 1082); *Praecepta Recte Vivendi*, § XV, XVI (*ibid.*, 1083).

2 *Customary Barking Abbey*, i, pp. 14, 27.

3 See above p 129.

Non-Liturgical Reading

The fact that our sources include non-liturgical material leads us to speculate on the reading habits of the nuns. There was, in the statutes approved in 1119, a precept forbidding the nuns to lend to seculars books belonging to the house or to receive books into the house without the permission of the abbess.[1] From the earliest times, therefore, books were an integral part of their monastic life. This is in keeping with the Benedictine tradition which encouraged the monks to spend time in sacred reading, the *lectio divina.*[2] Nicquet, in his list of various statutes observed at the mother house, refers to one which enjoins the nuns to assemble in the cloister before entering the choir for office; while waiting they were not to be idle but were to read either their books or the psalter.[3] At Barking each nun was issued with a book at the beginning of Lent, a common practice in Benedictine houses as well.[4] It is likely that the Fontevraud nuns received their reading matter at this time. If so, we can assume that the library of each house contained sufficient volumes for each person to receive one. This points to a sizeable collection of books at Nuneaton and Amesbury.[5] The contents of their libraries are not known to us. Indeed the only records we have of reading matter from any of their libraries is *The Nuneaton Book* and a manuscript currently in the municipal library at Douai. [6] The first contains a mixture of sacred and recreational reading as in the case of many medieval codices: the *Chasteau d'Amours* of Robert Grosseteste, two prose expositions of the *Pater Noster*, a version of the Apocalypse, the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus, a moral poem in English and a bestiary intended for secular or recreational reading.[7] This Book was intended

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1 *Regulae Sanctimonialium Fontis Ebraldi*, § XXI, (PL clxii, 1080).

2 RB § xlviii, p. 110.

3 Nicquet, *op.cit.*, p. 301.

4 *Customary, Barking Abbey*, i, p. 67-68; see also RB § xlviii, p. 112, and T.R Gambier-Parry, 'Lending Books in a Medieval Nunnery', *Bodleian Quarterly Record*, v (1927), pp. 188-90.

5 For a discussion of the size of medieval libraries see Bell, *op.cit.*, pp. 40-46. For information on books in Hampshire houses of women see D. Coldicott, *Hampshire Nunneries* (Chichester, 1989), Appendix 4, pp. 188-91.

6 Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum MS McClean 123. This manuscript and its possible readers are discussed by Chibnall, *op.cit.*, p. 46; Douai, Bibl. mun., 887, is discussed in Bell, *op.cit.*, p.158.

7 For the *Chasteau d'Amours* see R.W. Southern, *Robert Grosseteste and the Growth of an English Mind in Medieval Europe* (Oxford, 2nd edn, 1992), pp. 225-30. The moral poem has been edited by A.C. Paues, 'A Newly Discovered Manuscript of the Poema morale', *Anglia*, xxx, (1907), pp. 217-237.

for the 'disciples' of Margaret Sylemon, one of the nuns.[1] Her disciples or pupils were most probably daughters of nobles sent to Nuneaton for an education or it could be they were novices or lay sisters.[2] However, we may safely infer that the nuns too would have read the material of which this is a sample, that they would have been inspired by the devotional works and amused by the bestiary. The other volume contains two sermons, a collection of the letters of Alan of Tewkesbury and works by Gerald of Wales.[3] When this actually came into the possession of Nuneaton is uncertain. There are two other references to reading material from the Fontevraud houses, both to Amesbury, but both inconclusive. The Dominican Nicholas Trevet dedicated his chronicle *gestes des apostioles, emperours et rois tanque lapostoil Johan vintisme second*, to Mary, daughter of Edward I who was a nun at Amesbury, though the terms of the dedication suggest that it was more in her capacity of a member of the royal family than as a nun that she was accorded the honour.[4] His intention was to provide her with a short, amusing history of the world. The other reference is to the fact that Isabel of Lancaster, also a nun at Amesbury, sold Edward III a book of romances for 100 marks.[5] These isolated instances cannot be used as the basis for any firm conclusions, in fact we cannot even assume that the Trevet chronicle ever found its way to the Amesbury shelves or that Isabel, or anyone else at Amesbury, read the book she sold to the king. It is almost certain that it was not copied by one of the Amesbury nuns - we have no evidence at all of these nuns being engaged in copying manuscripts. Since Isabel had many worldly contacts it would be safer to infer that it had little to do with the priory itself.[6]

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1 *Ister liber constat domine Margarete Sylemon et discipulas suas*, Cambridge Fitzwilliam Museum MS McClean 123, fo. 9.

2 There is evidence that Hawise, the daughter of the earl of Leicester, spent some time at Nuneaton monastery, not as a nun, and both Mary, daughter of Edward I and Isabel of Lancaster had young people staying with them at Amesbury. Green, *op.cit.*, iii, pp. 60-64; Account, Isabel of Lancaster, pp. 495, 497. See also Chibnall, *loc.cit.*

3 On Alan of Tewkesbury see M.A. Harris, 'Alan of Tewkesbury and his Letters', *Studia Monastica*, xviii (1976), pp. 77-108, 299-351.

4 Oxford, Bodleian MS Rawlinson B 178 fo. 1; See: M.D. Legge, *Anglo-Norman in the Cloister*, (Edinburgh, 1950), pp. 120, 123; A. Gransden, *Historical Writing in England c.550-1307* (London, 1974), pp. 503-4; J. Taylor, *English Historical Literature in the Fourteenth Century* (Oxford, 1987), pp. 94-5.

5 *Issues of the Exchequer. . .*, *op.cit.*, p. 144; Power, *op.cit.*, p. 240.

6 See above, pp. 123-4.

Our sources, however, allow us to offer some preliminary observations on the extent to which French was used at the beginning of the fourteenth century, in non-liturgical prayer and in devotional and other reading. Trevet's chronicle was written in Anglo-Norman for the benefit of his patron; the book of romance which Isabel of Lancaster sold to the king, probably so. The *Horae Beatae Virginis Mariae* contains prayers and hymns to St Anne, St Francis and the Holy Spirit in both Latin and French and a large proportion of *The Nuneaton Book* is French.[1] One Latin prayer is accompanied by an exhortation in French to say it as a protection from harm, from sudden death and from death by drowning or in fire.[2]

It would be unwise to generalise on the basis of such scant evidence. However, the preface of the Nuneaton book states that it was written so that lay people could read in French what the clerics were reading in Latin.[3] Nuns technically were laity and in the twelfth century we could suppose that choir nuns had a working knowledge of Latin in order for them to perform the offices meaningfully; Latin had been the language of both learning and liturgy before and after the Conquest. By the thirteenth century, however, French, originally the preserve of the aristocracy, was almost universally understood.[4] Bishops in the thirteenth century frequently used French to communicate with nuns as, coming largely from the upper class, they would have been proficient in this language, and unless they had been formally educated, would not have known Latin.[5] The spread of university education made the learning of Latin less accessible to women and by the fourteenth century nuns normally were using Anglo-Norman

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1 CUL MS Ee. vi. 16, fo. 9v, 17, 206v; Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum MS McClean 123, *passim*. For an edition of the hymn to the Holy Spirit in the former, see S.H. Thompson, 'Three Anglo-Norman Translations of the *Veni Creator Spiritus*', *Medium Aevum*, viii (1939), pp. 33-39. For the contents of *The Nuneaton Book*, see above p. 126.

2 Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum MS McClean, 123, fo. 109.

3 ibid., fo. 1.

4 M.D. Legge, 'The French Language and the English Cloister' in V. Ruffer & A.J. Taylor (edd.), *Medieval Studies Presented to Rose Graham* (Oxford, 1950), pp. 147-149.

5 See Coldicott, *op.cit.*, p. 70.

as a medium for everyday reading and writing, their knowledge of Latin probably reduced to a minimum.[1] At the beginning of the fifteenth century the nuns of Barking were using an Anglo-Norman copy of their Rule.[2] Thus, while our knowledge of the contents of the libraries of the Fontevraud houses is slight, what we do know typifies the gradual movement towards the vernacular, especially at informal levels.

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1 Legge, *Anglo-Norman in the Cloister*, *op.cit.*, p. 49.
2 *Customary*, *Barking Abbey*, i, p. 69.

CHAPTER 4. MAKING ENDS MEET: THE DOMESTIC ECONOMY

Monastic revenue came largely from the land, appropriated churches and various commercial activities. A superficial assessment would suggest that this income was used solely for the support of monastic personnel and to provide alms for the poor. This, however, was not the case. As well as providing for their members, monasteries had also to keep their buildings in good repair, pay civil and religious taxes, offer hospitality to visitors, support corrodians, maintain their servants and workers and all this in an economic climate that was often far from favourable. Some of the larger establishments and many of the smaller ones were involved in a daily struggle to make ends meet. This statement is not as dire as it may seem, however. Lurid stories of monastic debt abound, and some of them are true to a point, but the main economic problem affecting medieval monasteries was not so much debt as liquidity. The bulk of monastic wealth was tied up in land, this being the only secure form of investment. This brought its own particular set of problems. Many monasteries, rich in assets, lacked the cash with which to defray daily and immediate expenses. Alienating property to pay debts was as unthinkable as it was uncanonical.[1] Thus debts multiplied and discharging them was often a long-term project.

Keeping on the right side of the ledger was certainly a preoccupation with Nuneaton, Westwood and Amesbury; there were many demands on their cash income. A major and frequently unavoidable expense was building. A prosperous foundation which attracted novices, more often than not was required to extend its initial buildings. Dormitories as well as the chapel, refectory and other common areas frequently needed extending. Furthermore, as the community grew older, it was necessary to provide increased facilities in the infirmary. Not all building programmes, however, can be justified as being necessary; there was a certain monastic fashion to be followed, and buildings were often altered to make them more

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1 M. Cheney, 'Inalienability in Mid-Twelfth Century England: enforcement and consequences', *Monumenta Juris Canonici* , Series C, *Subsidia*, vii, pp. 467-478.

commodious.[1] Amesbury, as we have seen, was endowed at its foundation with the refurbished Benedictine monastery.[2] In the first part of the thirteenth century the prioress and convent at Amesbury began improvements including a chapel for the infirmary, construction of choir stalls and repairs to the cloister.[3] Despite the king's assistance, by 1230 the prioress was in debt and asking for help.[4] Later, in 1255, all the knights and free tenants of the prioress were requested to make her an aid for the discharge of her debts.[5]

The collapse of the central tower of the Nuneaton priory church early in the thirteenth century meant not only rebuilding the tower but probably the presbytery and north transept as well.[6] The prioress received gifts from the royal forest in 1237 and 1238, specifically to help with the rebuilding.[7] However, a fire in 1244 meant that more extensive repairs had to be carried out and this time the bishop of Lichfield and Coventry gave the nuns sixty oak trees.[8] Debts persisted, however. Towards the middle of the thirteenth century, Walter Suffield, bishop of Norwich, in view of the nuns' poverty and their consequent shortage of clothing, allowed them to appropriate £6 3s. 4d. annually from the church at Sudbury.[9] Problems were compounded by an unscrupulous clerk, who, claiming to be the proctor of Nuneaton, amassed debts of 200 marks on the priory's behalf in Rome, debts which it was obliged to honour. Thus it was that in 1256, because of 'the burning of their houses and other unforeseen accidents', the tenants of Nuneaton were requested to make an aid for the nuns' relief.[10] The king, recognising no doubt the problems the convent was currently experiencing, pardoned the prioress two separate debts amounting to more than £8.[11] But this was not the end of Nuneaton's economic problems. In 1292 John of Pontoise, bishop of Winchester, permitted

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1 R. Gilyard-Beer, *Abbeys, An Illustrated Guide to the Abbeys of England and Wales* (HMSO, 1976), pp. 54-57.
2 For the foundation endowment see above pp. 83-84; for numbers see Table 1, p. 154.
3 *Rot. Litt. Claus.* ii, 120 a; *Cal. Cl. Rolls, 1227-31*, p. 486; *ibid., 1237-42*, p. 159.
4 *Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1225-32*, p. 337.
5 *ibid., 1247-58*, p. 437.
6 *VCH War.*, iv, p. 170.
7 *Cal. Cl. Rolls, 1234-37*, p. 502; *ibid., 1237-42*, p. 103.
8 *ibid., 1242-47*, p. 177.
9 *. . . defectusque in vestimentis patiuntur.* BL Add. Chart. 47959
10 *Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1247-58*, p. 511.
11 *Cal. Cl. Rolls, 1242-47*, pp. 507, 521.

the prioress and convent to appropriate the church of Catherington on the grounds that priory finances were so depleted that the nuns were reduced to eating hard bread (*durus panis*) several times a week.[1] While there was probably a factual foundation to this situation, it might well have been exaggerated to excite the sympathy of the bishop and justify the appropriation. It seems to have been a common enough ploy; the abbess of the wealthy abbey of Lacock made use of it as well.[2]

Westwood priory, we know, in comparison to the other two, began life much less well-endowed and can hardly have been expected to have escaped the poverty which seems to have been endemic during the thirteenth century.[3] It certainly did not. In 1233 the prioress of Westwood was granted an aid to help pay her debts and in 1291 the priory escaped the rigours of Pope Nicholas IV's taxation on the grounds that they were among the religious houses who had to beg.[4]

How was it that these priories, initially well-established, were reduced to apparent penury? Let us hasten to state that the three Fontevraud priories were far from being atypical. In 1275 Bishop Godfrey Giffard wrote to the collectors of the tithe on behalf of the Cistercian nuns at Whitstones, pleading their inability to sustain the burden of taxation.[5] About thirty years later the sub-prioress of these nuns wrote to Walter Reynolds, bishop-elect of Worcester, concerning *the smallness of* [their] *possessions . . . which compelled* [them] *formerly to beg to the scandal of womanhood and the discredit of religion,* and John, the prior of Worcester

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1 BL Add. Chart. 47398.
2 *VCH Wilts, iii*, p. 313.
3 For Westwood's endowment, see p. 80.
4 *Cal. Cl. Rolls, 1231-34*, p. 29; *TPN* p. 217; R Graham, 'The Taxation of Pope Nicholas IV', *English Ecclesiastical Studies* (London, 1929), p. 298. With regard to exemptions the Bull stated: *Moniales etiam, aliaeque regulares personae, quarum redditus et proventus ecclesiastici adeo sunt tenues et exiles, quod de illis sustenari non possunt, sed pro habenda vitae suae sustentatione necesse habent publice mendicare et elemosinas publice petere, dictam decimam non persolvent.* Bartholomew de Cotton, *Historia Anglicana*, ed. H.R. Luard (RS xvi, 1859), pp. 191, 192.
5 *Register of Bishop Godfrey Giffard, 1268-1301*, ed. J. W. Bund (2 vols, Worcestershire Historical Society, 1902), ii, p. 78.

also refers to the extreme poverty of these nuns.[1] The nuns at Cookhill, like those of Westwood, were exempt from the 1291 taxation because of their poverty, and early in the fourteenth century the king pardoned them a debt of £15 on this account.[2] Wilton abbey, the wealthiest of the pre-conquest women's houses, in 1229 requested an aid from its tenants to defray its debts; in 1252 it requested another and in 1276 a third.[3] There were instances when, through poverty and lack of food, members of a monastery were dispersed to other houses. This was the case at Woburn in 1234, at Chicksands in 1257 and at Bolton in 1320.[4] The Fontevraud priories were, therefore, no exception to what seemed to be a fact of life in thirteenth century religious houses, but while the fact remains, reasons must be advanced to explain it.[5] We have already discussed the cash flow problem. Another possibility which immediately presents itself is inept management of resources. Let us examine more closely the situation at Westwood, Amesbury and Nuneaton, bearing in mind that we need to know who determined how resources should be expended and who, ultimately, was accountable. It must be remembered, nevertheless, as subsequent discussion will show, that debts and lack of liquidity notwithstanding, the standard of living of religious in most thirteenth century monasteries remained at its worst, comfortable.[6]

CENTRALISED GOVERNMENT

Fundamental to our study of the finances of the houses is an understanding of the extent to which the priories depended on the mother house. The relationship between Fontevraud and any dependent priory can be summarised in the statement that there was only one abbess and she controlled all things, both spiritual and temporal.[7] It stands to reason that she must have delegated some of her authority, and indeed the statutes made provision for this.[8] The

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1 *Register of the Diocese of Worcester, Registrum Sede Vacante*, ed. J. W. Bund (2 vols, Worcestershire Historical Society, 1894), ii, p. 112

2 *TPN* pp. 217, 218, 239. As with Westwood initial entries are erased. For pardon of debts see *Cal. Cl. Rolls, 1333-7*, p. 694.

3 *Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1225-32*, p. 271; *ibid., 1247-58*, p. 224; *ibid., 1272-81*, p. 172.

4 *Annales Monastici*, iii, pp. 140, 205; Kershaw, *Bolton Priory*, p. 17.

5 On debt in women's houses: Power, *op.cit.*, pp. 178-201.

6 On the quality of life in medieval monasteries see R.H. Snape, *English Monastic Finances in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1926), p. 170.

7 § 5, (PL. clxii, 1083, 84). See above pp. 50, 51.

8 *ibid.*

material direction of each house was managed by the prioress, whose election the abbess ratified.[1] In practice the situation was sometimes different. A strong abbess, conscious of her position and wanting to enforce her authority, or wishing to ensure strict observance, might chose to appoint a prioress rather than simply to approve of an election, however canonically the latter may have been performed. Eleanor of Brittany, grand-daughter of Henry III, was one such abbess and her administration in the early fourteenth century illustrates the absolute nature of the abbess' rule.[2] In 1293 one section of the community at Amesbury had challenged Fontevraud's right to appoint their prioress. The king intervened in the ensuing dispute and ultimately the abbess' authority was preserved intact.[3] Eleanor, educated and veiled at Amesbury, would have lived through this period of turmoil.[4] When she became abbess in 1304 she apparently was determined to assert her authority. In 1309, when a vacancy occurred at Amesbury, she appointed as prioress a French nun of her own choosing and it was only after the king formally requested her to ratify the appointment of the local candidate that she acquiesced.[5]

Ten years later events at Nuneaton provided a severe challenge to Eleanor's authority. Sometime during 1317-18, while prioress Joan de Bristol was still alive, though ailing, Isabel de Sudley, with the backing of Walter Langton, bishop of Lichfield and Thomas of Lancaster, patron of the priory, took over the position of prioress and appointed her own office bearers.[6] As far as we can judge, Fontevraud was not informed of these events until Joan's death when Isabel's occupancy was presented as a *fait accompli.* Instead of accepting the status quo, Eleanor appointed Katherine de Stafford to the position. Isabel and her faction were not prepared to surrender, however. Katherine was prevented from assuming office and was expelled from the priory. Eleanor's reaction was decisive. In November 1318 she sent two

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1 Fontette, *op.cit.*, p. 72.
2 Eleanor was wont to style herself: *Soror Alienordis de Britannia, Dei gratia Fontis Ebraudi abbatissa.* See AML 246 H2 7.
3 *Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1292-1301*, pp. 18-19; *Cal. Cl. Rolls, 1288-96*, p. 317.
4 She was born in 1275. Lardier, *op.cit.*, fo. 510.
5 *Cal. Chanc. War., pp. 286-7.*
6 See Appendix, pp. 259-60. The rebellion is documented in AML 246 H2 6-11.

brothers invested with plenipotentiary powers to perform an official, and it seems, extraordinary, visitation of the house.[1] Isabel was deposed and, in public chapter, obliged to recant.[2] It was made clear to the convent that it was not theirs either by right or custom to appoint a prioress.[3] One might have thought that with the abbess' authority re-asserted and her nominee installed, right order would have prevailed.[4] Not so. A bull of John XXII dated November 1320, appointing the bishops of Salisbury and Hereford to investigate events at Nuneaton, indicates that the affair was far from settled and that Fontevraud had had recourse to papal authority.[5] In fact, emissaries of the abbess had been threatened with death and prevented from landing in England and the men of the earl of Lancaster had occupied the priory.[6] The report of the two bishops has not survived but it was perhaps at their suggestion that Eleanor, in a gesture of conciliation, deposed Katherine de Stafford and appointed another prioress, Théophanie La Fourrière. She, too, was deposed and expelled by Isabel and her supporters. In 1322 the priory was pillaged.[7] A second appeal to the Holy See in 1327 again requested papal intervention.[8] Katherine de Stafford seems to have surrendered her post and the fate of Isabel de Sudley is left to our imagination. An official visitation of the priory in 1328 is evidence that the authority of the abbess had been restored. The prioress on this occasion is named as Agatha de Averham.[9] A candidate acceptable to all parties had obvio usly been installed. The lesson of this affair was clear: cost what it may, the abbess of Fontevraud was not prepared to countenance any movements towards independence in her subjects nor to tolerate challenges to her authority by bishops or magnates.[10]

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1 *Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1317-21*, p. 227.

2 Her personal statement beginning *Ego vero Isabellis de Sudlee scio me erasse . . .* is recorded in AML 246 H2 6. One of the witnesses to the document recording these events is Richard de Greneburgh, prior of Amesbury, *ad hec vocatis specialiter.* His presence here may account in part for his subsequent visit to Fontevraud. See below p. 152 and n. 5.

3 *non . . . licet nobis aliquam ad petitionem seu mandatum alicuius in priorissam seu ad officium priorisse nostre assumere eligere vel recipere nec competit nobis habere de jure vel consuetudine nisi ad voluntatem et mandatum . . . reverende domine abbatisse cum illi soli competat institutio et destitutio priorissam et priorum in prioratu isto et aliis prioratibus tocius ordinis.* AML 246 H2 6.

4 *. . . in virtute sancte obedientie precipimus et mandamus quatinus officium sibi comissum in hiis que ab antiquo incumbunt officio priorisse et que pro alias priorissas in dicto prioratu fiere hactenus consuetum ad honorem dei et secundum statuta ordinis honeste et fideliter exequatur.* AML 246 H2 7.

5 AML 246 H2 9; *Cal. Pap. Let.* ii, p. 209.

6 AML 246 H2 11 3.

7 *Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1321-24*, p. 147.

8 AML 246 H2 11 3.

9 BL Add. Chart 47398. See Appendix, p. 260.

10 For a similar situation at Westminster see *Walter de Wenlok*, pp. 17-24.

As well as illustrating the abbess' authority over her dependent priories this affair reveals one of the means the abbess used to maintain centralised control in her distant houses, namely canonical visitation. Another was the general chapter. We do not know how often general chapters were held nor indeed when the practice began. One may have been held as early as 1129, but we cannot be certain if this was a general chapter in the modern sense of the term.[1] According to tradition, one was called in 1149, just before Petronilla's death, and was presided over by Hugh de Fosse, abbot of Prémontré. It is said to have concerned itself mainly with matters of internal discipline.[2] Another was held c.1189.[3] We cannot tell from the surviving fragments of statutes whether or not Robert and/or Petronilla envisaged frequent and regular chapters, but we can conclude that by the last decade of the twelfth century chapters were occurring regularly. The abbess of the time, probably Matilda of Flanders, daughter of Sibyl of Anjou and Thierry of Flanders, wrote to the various priories informing them that the planned chapter had to be delayed until Pentecost because of the war and famine which was ravaging the country.[4] Representatives from the English houses no doubt attended this and other chapters but we have no evidence of their having done so before 1344 when Brothers John, prior of Nuneaton, and Robert, prior of Westwood, were granted permission, with certain restrictions because of the war between England and France, to travel to Fontevraud.[5]

During the two-and-a-half centuries of the order's previous existence there must have been many other general chapters and delegates both male and female must have attended them. Consequently we might question why only brothers went to the chapter of 1344. In September 1343, prior Robert of Westwood was forbidden to leave England without the king's special licence because, according to report, the king had learned that he proposed to go

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1 See J. de la Martinière, *op. cit.*, p. 41.
2 Niderst, *op.cit.*, p. 84. Factual evidence of this chapter is scarce.
3 Nicquet, *op. cit.*, p. 51.
4 *ibid.*, p. 422.
5 *Cal. Cl. Rolls, 1343-46*, p. 383. Previously it was not necessary to obtain permission to leave the country.

to France and reveal the secrets of the king and the realm.[1] In a climate of such suspicion it almost certainly would have been considered too dangerous for women to travel abroad. Another reason proposed for only men attending this chapter is that by this time they exercised the bulk of control over temporal matters.[2] This may have been the case but it does not exclude women from attending the general chapters. Since the matter for discussion at chapters would have included affairs other than temporal, there must have been serious reasons behind the prioresses' seeming abandonment of their rights to determine the policy of the order by not attending the 1344 chapter. The dangers of travel would be one such reason. It is contrary to reason to suggest that policy would have been decided by the male element of what was incontestably a women's order. We do not know if any representative from Amesbury, male or female, attended this particular chapter.

Canonical visitations are better documented. To our knowledge visitors representing the abbess came to England each year from 1255-1257, in 1305 and 1306; in 1315, 1318, 1321 and 1328.[3] While this can scarcely be termed a representative sample for a period of two centuries, there are grounds for believing that visitation was a frequent, if not an annual event.[4] The visitors, *decani*, were sent with a mandate from the abbess (*de mandato abbatisse*).[5] In a formula dating from the origins of the order, they were given plenipotentiary powers to reform, correct, repair, transfer, establish, dissolve, audit the accounts and report to the abbess on those matters which they judged she ought to be informed.[6]

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1 *ibid.*, p. 232.

2 Thompson, *op.cit.*, p. 128.

3 1255: Lardier, *op.cit.*, fol. 476; 1256: *ibid.*; 1257: AML 244 H1 2; 1305: BCL MS Hampton 307; 1306: *ibid.* ; 1315: *Cal. Pat Rolls, 1313-17*, p. 281; 1318: *Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1317-21*, p. 227, AML 246 H2 6; 1321: BL Add. Chart. 47398; 1328: *ibid.*

4 It has been stated that the visitor was appointed for a three-year period during which he had to visit the houses under his jurisdiction twice. This refers to the situation after 1653 and it need not necessarily have been the case in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Fontette, *op.cit.*, p. 72. See E Rayet et A. Lecler, *Bourbon: Monographie d'un Monastère de Fontevraud au diocèse de Limoges* (Limoges, 1903), pp. 44-46.

5 Fontette, *loc.cit.* The reports all contain the *de mandato* or a similar phrase: e.g. AML 243 H1 2, 13; Lardier, *op.cit.*, fo. 476.

6 *. . . visitatores . . . in spiritualibus et temporalibus et in super universis locis et personis nobis et monasterio nostro Fontis Ebraudi subjectis. . . .* [were given]. . *plenam potestatem et speciale mandatum visitandi pro nobis et loco nostro in omnibus locis nostris . . . reformandi, corrigendi, emendandi, personis de loco ad locum transferandi, instituendi, destituendi, statum et compotos locorum audiendi, referendi et reportandi nobis signa nobis viderint referendi.* AML 246 H2 6; Fontette, *loc.cit.*

Towards the end of the thirteenth century Mary, daughter of Edward I, a nun at Amesbury was acting as the vicegerent of the abbess and performing the role of visitor.[1] In 1301 she authorised Joan de Bristol to move from Westwood to Nuneaton and was still acting on the abbess' behalf in 1313.[2] However, sometime early in the rule of Eleanor of Brittany (1304-1342), the commission lapsed and in 1317 Edward II, prompted no doubt by Mary who was possibly vexed at losing her position of prestige and slighted by the presence of Fontevraud brothers as official visitors in 1315, wrote to Eleanor, asking her to reinstate Mary. The reasons given were that Eleanor had not been in the habit of making visitations herself and that there was no one better suited to the task than the king's sister.[3] The request was not granted. We do not know why but a few possibilities present themselves: Eleanor of Brittany knew Mary. She was her cousin and the two had been nuns in Amesbury together. It could have been a case of family rivalry, or it could have been that Eleanor did not approve of Mary's extravagant lifestyle. In 1318 in what could be interpreted as a rebuff, Mary was not called upon to act for Eleanor in the Nuneaton affair. Instead, Eleanor sent two brothers from Fontevraud to perform this visitation.[4] Mary, however, was not so easily put off. A papal mandate directed Eleanor to restore her commission.[5] We have no reason to believe that Eleanor disobeyed this mandate but we have no evidence that Mary acted on her behalf either as visitor or as her representative after this date. Mary's victory appears to have been hollow. Brothers from Fontevraud were the official visitors to Nuneaton in 1321 and 1328, and at no time during the dispute at Nuneaton, a time when Eleanor would have made use of Mary's talents had she been inclined to do so, is there any reference to her being employed in any capacity. Weak abbesses there may have been in the history of Fontevraud. Eleanor of Brittany was certainly not one of them. She was not prepared to have her authority or her decisions challenged; what is more she seems to have known how to manage her royal cousin.

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1 AML 246 H2 5. These four documents give permission for people to be received into the order and attest to their entry being free from any charges of simony.
2 *ibid.*
3 *Cal. Cl. Rolls, 1313-18*, p. 470.
4 *Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1317-21*, p. 227; AML 246 H2 6.
5 *Cal. Pap. Let., ii*, p. 427.

While the abbess may not have assumed personally the responsibility of visitation, various abbesses did visit England on which occasions they certainly would have been in a position to examine the state of affairs in their English dependencies. The abbess was present when a grant was made to Nuneaton by a certain Alieva late in the reign of Henry II; this may have coincided with the formal installation of the Amesbury community in the refurbished buildings in 1186.[1] The abbess ratified a document at Amesbury in 1221 and another in Nuneaton in 1227.[2] In 1265 the abbess was in England and abbess Marguerite de Posey received the heart of Henry III in 1291.[3] Joan de Dreux (abbess 1265-76) may have retired to Amesbury because she was experiencing problems at Fontevraud but this is not certain.[4]

THE OBEDIENTIARY SYSTEM

Although the relationship between Fontevraud and the dependent priories was highly structured and centralised, within each priory a certain amount of decentralisation prevailed and the prioress could exercise a measure of autonomy. In the early years of the history of Nuneaton (between 1155 and 1168) Abbess Audeberga issued an authorisation for the prioress of that monastery to exercise autonomy in financial matters as well as in the reception of candidates.[5] The tone of the charter, issued at the request of the founder and patron, Robert, earl of Leicester, suggests that this was an extraordinary permission and we do not know that the prioress of Amesbury or Westwood ever received similar privileges. It is possible that this autonomy developed into the attitude which provoked the challenge to Fontevraud's authority in the early fourteenth century.

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1 BL Add. Chart. 47601(*Danelaw Docs.*, p. 247). See *Gesta Henrici*, i, p. 354

2 BL Stowe MS 882, fo. 39; BL Add. Chart. 48490.

3 *Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1258-66*, p. 458; *ibid., 1281-92.*, 463.

4 *Dictionnaire d'histoire et de géographie écclesiastiques*, xvii (Paris, 1971), 963 This story is also reported in Les Religieuses de Sainte Marie de Fontevraud de Boulaur, *Histoire de L'Ordre de Fontevrauld de 1110 à 1908* (Auch, 1911), ii, p. 119-22. The information in the latter is not reliable, particularly with regard to the English foundations. See Appendix p. 255.

5 *. . . concessimus quatinus in congregationem vestram tot moniales et fratres et sorores quot volueritis et locus vester convenientur sustinere poterit, sine conscientia et licentia nostra recipiatis, Praeterea quicquid in auro vel argento sive in alia pecunia loco vestro et vobis fuerit in elemosinam collatum, apud vos vobis remanere.* BL Add. Chart. 53108, printed in *Mon. Ang.*, 1st edn., i, p. 520.

It is evident in the Amesbury receiver's accounts that the prioress of that monastery had her own expense account and possibly her own sources of income from particular lands or rents.[1] This was probably the case in the other two houses as well. The prioress presented her schedules to the receiver for payment and her clerk maintained her own account roll. In the Amesbury account rolls there is passing reference to rent due on lands of the prioress but we have no idea which particular lands are being referred to.[2] In many Benedictine establishments the situation existed in which specific lands, and hence the revenue from them, were designated as belonging to the abbess or abbot and regarded as being totally separate from the revenue of the convent. This was a measure taken mainly to prevent the king receiving too great a share of the monastic finances during a vacancy.[3] This may have been the case at Amesbury. Alternatively, the revenue from certain monastic estates may have been earmarked for the prioress. She thus received a fixed amount each year. In view of the highly-centralised Fontevraud system of government, the latter is more likely to have been the case at Westwood, Nuneaton and Amesbury.

The prioress represented the abbess in each monastery, but in matters spiritual she had no jurisdiction. To each priory the abbess appointed a confessor who was also prior and superior of the brothers.[4] In theory his mandate was strictly spiritual and he was answerable to the abbess alone; in practice much of the administration of the priory estates devolved to him and as this involved control of finances, his was a position of considerable influence.[5] The prior was nevertheless subordinate to the prioress and could command or advise nothing contrary to her purposes, a situation established in the original statutes of the order.[6] The relationship between the prioress and prior is illustrated in the way in which they are referred to in contemporary documents: almost without exception the style is 'prioress and prior'.

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1 See Snape, *op.cit.*, p. 33.
2 AML 244 H1 3.
3 M. Howell, *Regalian Right in Medieval England* (London, 1962), pp. 14-15 and sources cited there.
4 Fontette, *loc.cit.*
5 *ibid.*
6 . . . *obligation aussi ancienne que la première institution de Fontevraud.* Nicquet, *op.cit.*, p. 381.

As monastic life became increasingly more complex, it had become established practice for superiors to delegate authority, dividing the labour among other religious who were called obedientiaries. In Benedictine monasteries there tended to be a large number of these officials some of whom, but not all, administered finances.[1] The Statutes of Fontevraud refer to a claustral prioress who was in charge of the choir nuns, to a chambress, in charge of clothing, and a cellaress in charge of the food supplies as well as to a sub-prioress, a sacristan and a mistress of novices.[2] We know that in the English houses a similar division of labour occurred. Documents refer to the sub-prioress, claustral prioress, cellarist, receiver, sacrist, infirmarian and brother in charge of the lay brothers.[3] We can assume that where there were lay sisters, a sister had charge of them. Suitable personnel would have been in charge of the education and training of the novices, though there is no direct reference to any particular person holding this position. Sister Elisabeth Deverell, infirmarian at Amesbury, at the beginning of the fourteenth century, was given £20 each half year for the expenses incurred in carrying out her office.[4] In some monasteries it was common to have particular sources of income set aside to provide revenue for one or other of the obedientiaries, in the same way as we have suggested was true for the prioress.[5] The sacristan of Durham, for example, received revenue from one particular manor.[6] With funds derived from this manor he was required to provide items necessary for the celebration of the offices - oil, wine, wax and to maintain the glass in the chapel windows.

Obedientiaries at Westwood, Nuneaton and Amesbury probably were in a similar position. Accounts attest to oil, wine and wax being bought for the chapels of Westwood and Nuneaton but it is not specified if the funds were assigned from any particular source nor if the sacristan

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1 Knowles, *Religious Orders*, ii, pp. 309, 328; Power, *op.cit.*, pp. 131-35. See also Knowles, *Monastic Order*, Appendix xvi, p. 713.

2 *Regulae Sanctimonialium Fontis Ebraldi*, § XXII, XXIII, XXIV, XXV, XXIX, XLIII, XLIV (*PL* clxii, 1080-82); § 16 (*ibid.*, 1086).

3 AML 244 H1 3; BCL MS Hampton 307; BL Add. Chart. 47398; See Table 1, p. 154.

4 AML 244 H1 3.

5 Knowles, *Religious Orders*, ii, p. 309, Snape *op.cit.*, p. 33.

6 *Extracts from the Account Rolls of the Abbey of Durham*, ed. J.T. Fowler (3 vols, Surtees Society, xcix, c, ciii, 1898-1900), ii, p. 374.

was given a set amount from which he or she had to buy all supplies.[1] At Westwood in 1338 the sacristan received a gift from priory funds and at Amesbury it was the custom to assign 18d. per term from the rents of Barford to the chaplain of the house for saying masses of the Blessed Virgin.[2] A similar arrangement with regard to masses in honour of the Virgin existed at Nuneaton.[3] Those chaplains who were able to do so were to celebrate this mass daily and were to receive a share of 30s. per annum which was derived from several different rents. What exactly was to be done with these payments, whether they were over and above the allocations for food and clothing, is not clear. More explicit is the information in one of the Nuneaton charters which states that the rent paid by Peter the Baker for his use of the monastery oven was to be divided so that 5s. went to the priory kitchen and 8s.4d. was to be used to purchase pepper for the use of the nuns.[4] Another document from this house describes the allocation of a rent of 2s. per annum to be received by the claustral prioress and distributed among the chaplains of the house.[5] In the dissolution accounts for Nuneaton there are references to special receipts of the claustral prioress, receipts which pertained to the office of Robert Green, a clerk and brother, and evidence that demesne land was set aside *ad usum hospicii*.[6] When these particular arrangements were made, when sources of revenue were assigned and by whom, we do not know, nor do we know the terms under which the obedientiaries administered the revenue. We can be sure that obedientiaries in the Fontevraud houses received money to administer, money for which they rendered account. Sometimes, however, problems arose because the money was not forthcoming. The sacristan of Durham complained that he was supposed to receive 21 marks from the church at Edlingham and had not received anything from that source for five years.[7] There is no evidence of this having

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1 BCL MS Hampton, 308, 309; BL Add. Chart. 49727.
2 BCL MS Hampton, 308; AML 244 H1 3.
3 BL Add. Chart. 48521.
4 *ibid.*, 48499.
5 *ibid.*, 48549.
6 *VE* iii, p. 76.
7 *Extracts from the Account Rolls of the Abbey of Durham, loc.cit.*

occurred at Nuneaton, Westwood or Amesbury though in times of economic hardship it is not unlikely that funds may have been diverted from one purpose to some other more pressing need. Reference in the Nuneaton visitation report of 1328 to various persons in the house being owed money could indicate that some had not received their allotted amount to administer.[1]

The obedientiary in charge of the central treasury was the receiver. By the beginning of the fourteenth century the Fontevraud priories had appointed receivers or bursars to deal with income and expenditure. This had become common practice in most orders as result of increased papal and episcopal pressure for more accountability in monastic administration.[2] Efficient as the obedientiary system may seem, it was not without its problems. A large number of obedientiaries, each in receipt of his or her own income could mean that financial strength was depleted and abuses could creep in. The centralisation of accounts was an effort to combat possible misuse of funds. Some monasteries had an extremely intricate accounting system. At Winchester there was a central auditing system operating as early as 1248; at Glastonbury, by 1281, all revenues went to a treasury and all dispersals were accounted for to three treasurers who acted as receivers; at Ely, by 1304, obedientiaries and manorial officials were required to present bi-annual accounts to an auditing committee, and the system operating at Canterbury cathedral from as early as 1186 was modelled on the royal exchequer.[3] As far as we can judge, Amesbury's system, with a central treasury from which obedientiaries received a yearly or half-yearly allowance, resembled that of Glastonbury, though on a much smaller scale. The receiver of Amesbury collected the rents from the various manors and tenants of the monastery and each half-year drew up an account showing cash received and expended.[4] He allocated the funds to the various officers and received a schedule from them

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1 BL Add. Chart. 47398.

2 See C.R. Cheney 'The Papal Legate and English Monasteries, 1206', EHR xlvi (1931), pp. 443-52; also Knowles, *Religious Orders*, i, pp. 55, 56 and Snape, *op.cit.*, p. 66.

3 R.A.L. Smith, 'The *Regimen Scaccarii* in English Monasteries', *TRHS* 4th ser., xxiv, 1942, pp. 80-86, and *id.*, 'The Central Financial System of Christ Church, Canterbury, 1186-1512', *EHR* ccxix, 1940, pp. 353-357. (Reprinted in *id.*, *Collected Papers* [London, 1947] pp. 54-73 and 23-41.

4 In 1268 the Legatine Council of London had decreed that administrators must give a public account of their stewardship. *Councils and Synods, II*, ii, p. 788, (50).

detailing their expenditure. It would be interesting to know when Amesbury adopted this method of accounting and whether it developed as a response to directives from Fontevraud or as an initiative in the English house. It certainly predated the reorganisation of finances at St Mary's Winchester, ordered by Bishop Stratford in 1326.[1] It seems, in any case, that Amesbury, while not in the vanguard of monastic financial reform, was ready to adopt new methods of accounting and to centralise its treasury. Our evidence does not permit a conclusion as to whether Nuneaton and Westwood adopted similar methods at the same time. The former was definitely operating along similar lines to Amesbury by 1332 but we know nothing of earlier practices except that at the time of visitation, accounts were audited by the visitors and those officials of the house who were concerned.[2] At other times the abbess could request to see them.

At times superiors assumed one or other of the offices of obedientiaries, to implement a specific programme, to rectify problems or simply to accrue more power to themselves.[3] Richard de Greneburgh held the offices of receiver and prior at Amesbury in 1318. As there were thirteen brothers at Amesbury at this time, scarcity of personnel can hardly be advanced as a reason for this concentration of fiscal power in the hands of one person. A measure of accountability was ensured by his having to present bi-annual accounts for internal audit and to the official visitors whenever they came; nevertheless he was in a position where he had a great deal of control over the priory funds and could easily have engaged in malpractice. Such behaviour was not uncommon.[4] Brother Richard made a visit to Fontevraud in 1318 and we may well question why. It is possible that he was called to account in person for his administration.[5] Accounts were taken to the mother house the same year but not by him;

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1 Coldicott, *op.cit.*, p.126.
2 BL Add. Chart 47398; AML 244 H1 3. For Nuneaton in 1332 see below, p. 165.
3 Knowles, *Religious Orders*, ii. pp. 328, 329.
4 *ibid.*
5 This is a distinct possibility. However, Richard's name also appears as a witness on the document describing the temporary settlement of the dispute over the prioress of Nuneaton in 1318 following visitation by the abbess' representatives. He may have gone to Fontevraud to give an account of this. The two, of course, are not mutually exclusive. See AML 246 H2 6 and above p. 143.

priory records show that Hugh the clerk took them.[1] A possible outcome of this visit was that the Abbess recognised his capabilities as an administrator. In fact it seems that this man gained a reputation. In 1328, when order had been restored after the rebellion in Nuneaton and finances seem to have been in a sorry state, Richard appears as prior of that house.[2] Later, in 1342, he appears at Westwood in the same role.[3] We can be sure that Eleanor of Brittany would not have appointed him to another position of responsibility had he been guilty of misconduct. It is possible that he showed himself so adept at financial management that he was sent to rescue each of these houses when it was in economic difficulties.

We see operating within these Fontevraud foundations an interesting ebb and flow. The centralised power of Fontevraud was balanced by a certain degree of local autonomy, albeit an autonomy which at any given time might be called to accountability. Achieving this balance must have been difficult at times. The natural desire of convents would have been to manage their own affairs in their own way, especially once political ties with Anjou were severed. Problems caused by the changing political and economic situation in England would have been exacerbated by the difficulty of communicating with a distant authority. These were only too real and were in part responsible for the challenges to the abbess' authority which occurred during the early fourteenth century. Travel was dangerous, the threat of shipwreck ever present and when England and France were at war, a frequent state of affairs as the strength of the Angevin empire progressively waned, the difficulties and dangers increased. Nevertheless, Fontevraud, at least during the abbacy of Eleanor of Brittany, seemed loath to relinquish any control over the English foundations and continued in its visitation and supervision to the fullest extent possible.

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1 Hence their survival as part of the Fontevraud material.
2 BL Add. Chart. 47398, 47794, 48539.
3 BCL MS Hampton 457.

THE DOMESTIC ECONOMY

Population

A discussion of monastic income and expenditure is meaningless without reference to the size of the household. Where monasteries are concerned, this is particularly important because the population of monasteries is not a figure easily arrived at. As well as monks and/or nuns, every monastery housed a host of 'invisible' people who depended on it for their livelihood.

Let us first examine those whose presence is documented. The accompanying table illustrates the numbers of inmates of Westwood, Nuneaton and Amesbury in those years for which we have figures. It is not clear whether the eleven nuns in the Amesbury infirmary in the early fourteenth century are included in the 101 nuns listed elsewhere or are counted separately. The number of nuns is given in the context of their clothing allowance and it is not clear whether the sisters in the infirmary are included in this. It seems that the 12d. per week allotted to the infirmarian for her charges would be for food but it could indicate that the infirmary operated on a budget of its own. If this were the case the total number of nuns was 118 but this is by no means certain. Nuneaton has four lay sisters (*conversae*).[3] We know that in the early days of the foundation of the order many mature women, thus described, joined the community at Fontevraud. By the middle of the thirteenth century the term had been extended to mean those engaged in manual work who, because of their ignorance of Latin were excused from choir duties.[4] Lay brothers at

TABLE 1: POPULATION OF THE ENGLISH HOUSES.[1]

	NUNS	CHAPLAINS	LAY BROTHERS /SISTERS	OTHERS
AMESBURY 1256	77	7	16	1
AMESBURY 1315-16	101 + 11?	11	6	8
AMESBURY 1316	105 + 11?	12	2	6
AMESBURY 1318-19	117 + 11?	13	6	12
NUNEATON 1234	93	-	-	-
NUNEATON 1256	87	4	11/ 4	2
NUNEATON 1328	89	7	-	2
WESTWOOD 1306	38	3[2]	-	-

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1 Figures are taken from the following documents: Amesbury: AML 243 H1 13; AML 244 H1 3. Nuneaton: BL Add. Chart. 47398; Lardier, *op.cit.*, fo. 746; Westwood: BCL MS Hampton 308.

2 The number is obscured by a stain.

3 The script is not easy to read. However, I am reasonably certain that this is correct.

4 For a discussion of the development of the role of *conversi/ae* see above, p. 46, n. 2.

Amesbury certainly fit into this category and the lay sisters at Nuneaton presumably do so as well. This is the only positive evidence we have for the existence of lay sisters in the English foundations although they probably formed part of the community at each house.

Among those classified as 'others' in the table are clerks where numbers of these are given and other people whom it is impossible to classify. These include a certain *domicella* living at Nuneaton in 1256, the sister and niece of Lady Clementia Blonnay who received an allowance of 10s. per half-year from Amesbury, (Lady Clementia presumably being one of the Amesbury nuns) Matilda of Vorgis and the *domicella* of Valers each of whom also received an allowance from Amesbury, the former 13s. 4d., the latter 6s. 8d.[1] These may or may not have been resident at the monastery but a strong possibility is that they were corrodians. Another possibility for some of them is that they were *conversae ad succurrendum,* those who had retired to religious life at the end of their days.[2] This would not have been the first time that the Fontevraud communities welcomed retired women. Eleanor of Aquitaine ended her days at Fontevraud, eventually taking the veil there, and Amice countess of Leicester, wife of the founder of Nuneaton, retired to that priory on the death of her husband in 1168. The dowager queen Eleanor of Provence died as a nun at Amesbury.[3]

Also classified as 'others' are the ten at Amesbury who were definitely corrodians and the one or two at Nuneaton who probably were. These were people who, in return for having paid a lump sum to the monastery, were entitled to a daily ration of food and drink. Monasteries often sold corrodies as a short-term solution to the cash-flow problem. Sometimes it was a successful venture; at other times it proved burdensome.[4] Three corrodies were purchased at

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1 For the title *domicella,* see D. Crouch, *The Image of the Aristocracy in Britain, 1000-1300* (London, 1992), pp. 150-52.

2 On *conversae ad succurrendum* see Lynch, *op.cit.*, pp. 27-31. Lady Clementia's niece would probably not have been old enough to be received *ad succurrendum*, but may have accompanied her mother who was.

3 Appendix pp. 255, 258.

4 See Richard Harper, 'A Note on Corrodies in the Fourteenth Century,' *Albion*, xv (1983), pp. 95-101.

Amesbury in 1318, two at 35 marks (£23 6s 8d.) each, and another at £22. In the Amesbury accounts it is recorded that over a 27-week period, the corrodies for ten people, four of whom received double (probably a servant's ration as well as their own), cost the priory £8 4s. 8d., an average of 5d. per corrody per week. The standard corrody, for example that purchased by Walter Burgers and his wife, was bread and ale, but there were variations.[1] Accommodation at the monastery may have been included but it would not, of course, be quantified on the receiver's accounts. In some cases corrodians received clothing. Richard, son of Walter the Taylor purchased a corrody from Nuneaton in 1318 which entitled him to the annual livery of a robe as well as food for the rest of his life at the table of free servants, either at the priory itself or on any of its manors.[2] When he was no longer capable of work he was to have board and lodging at the priory and a food allowance of 8s. William of Melbourn, who in 1330 ceded to Nuneaton a room in the priory which he had built at his own expense, may have been a corrodian.[3] John le Porter, who was owed his clothing allowance at Nuneaton in 1328 may have been in a similar position; this man was still receiving a livery for a robe in 1331-32.[4] On the other hand, he may simply have been a priory official.

There were some at Amesbury whose status is ambiguous. Classified as members of the convent to whom payments were allotted in the accounts of Michaelmas 1315-Easter 1316, Walter Lovel and William Marshall received three times a lay brother's allowance.[5] Walter la Calewe received the equivalent of a lay brother's allowance and Thomas Bruton one mark. Walter Flour received 34s. 4d.- five times this amount. In the accounts for the following six-monthly period Walter Flour received an allowance for capes, shoes and his rent, while Pounce de Florak received four times the amount allotted to a chaplain for his capes. What position these men held in the monastery is unclear. It could be that they were employees who were given an allowance for clothing. It seems more likely, however, that they too were

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1 Harvey, *Living and Dying*, p. 178-209.
2 BL Add. Chart. 48534. This too was purchased at a time of financial difficulty though other corrodies may have been purchased at other times.
3 *ibid.*, 48540.
4 BL Add. Chart. 47398, 49727.
5 AML 244 H1 3.

corrodians, whose the allowance is classified as part of convent expenses. Walter Lovel's name appears in the account roll of Michaelmas 1315-Easter 1316 when he and his wife negotiated a sale of land to the priory.[1] They may have subsequently purchased corrodies but there is no mention of the wife anywhere in the allowance. Still, three times a lay brother's allowance may have been sufficient to keep Walter, his wife and a servant. They both may have joined the order as *conversi* but this is less likely.

In addition to these documented people, every monastery housed and fed a large staff, the numbers of which are extremely difficult to calculate. One estimate puts the ratio of religious to dependants at about 1:3.2 in men's orders and 1:1.9 in women's.[2] On the basis of these figures we can calculate that, at the beginning of the fourteenth century, there would have been more than two hundred extra dependants at Amesbury, almost the same number at Nuneaton and over seventy at Westwood. These would have included domestic servants, artisans, labourers and workers on the home farm, as well as guests and paupers, all gaining a living from the monastery and living in or around the precincts.

INCOME

With so many persons claiming a share in the monastic income we might well ask how priories obtained the funds to support and employ such a large number of dependants. It would seem that a large income was necessary to keep a monastery economically viable. The exploitation of priory assets will be dealt with specifically in another chapter. For our present purposes it is sufficient to remember that income was derived mainly from lands, rents, commercial ventures, revenue from appropriated churches and from miscellaneous sources such as offerings at shrines, heriots and burial dues. Furthermore, cash income was only one

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1 *Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1307-13* p. 203. See below, p. 218. Walter Lovel later stood as mainpernor to the prior of Elyngham, which priory was taken in charge by Amesbury. *Cal. Fine Rolls, 1347-56* p. 74.

2 Knowles, *Religious Orders*, iii, pp. 261-2. These figures apply to the eve of the Dissolution but Ian Kershaw has demonstrated that the men's figures are fairly accurate for Bolton priory at the beginning of the fourteenth century. Kershaw, *op.cit.*, p. 137. In the absence of other figures I have used them to estimate numbers in the Fontevraud houses.

type of revenue. A significant proportion of monastic income was in kind. Tenants often paid part of their rent in grain and other produce, and a large percentage of the foodstuffs for the monastery came from the home farm. Even with detail from receivers' accounts it is, however, impossible to determine with any exactitude, the extent to which any of their manors contributed in kind to the income of Amesbury, Nuneaton or Westwood. Figures from 1344 illustrate the amount of grain eight of the Nuneaton manors contributed to that priory and the use to which it was put, but similar information for the other two is lacking.[1] The information we have on cash income, moreover, must be viewed with caution. Net cash income for the three priories, derived from rents and tithes and from the sale of produce, for example, grain, vegetables and wool, is illustrated in the histograms below. In some cases, for example in the three Nuneaton accounts from 1331-1334, some income from spiritualities is included; in other cases, this is missing.[2] Also represented in the histograms, where figures are available, is monastic expenditure, and, in one or two cases, the extent of a priory's debt.[3]

As has already been explained, these figures are piece-meal. This means that we cannot define what is the 'normal' state of affairs in any of the priories, and, as a consequence, what is abnormal. The Amesbury accounts of March 1315 to September 1316 are the closest we can come to a continuous record - a period of eighteen months. Between this eighteen months and the next account there is a two-year gap. Thus it is impossible to detect any overall patterns, observe trends or assume continuity of policy. Neither can we surmise that measures have been taken to achieve greater efficiency, to effect economies or to remedy problems, much less estimate their effectiveness. This is not to suggest that the documents are without value. Far from it. They provide a cameo view of each priory at various stages of its history. We have, as it were, close-up snap shots taken at random intervals. We can study the monasteries and their economies at these points and make certain observations but events of the intervening years and their effect on the monasteries' economies are unknown to us.

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1 BL Add. Chart. 49467.
2 BL Add. Chart. 49727, 49709.
3 For example Westwood in 1306 (BCL MS Hampton 307), and Nuneaton in 1328 (BL Add. Chart. 47398).

i) Amesbury

This monastery appears to be in a reasonably healthy state, and to be realising sufficient cash income to meet its commitments. The causes of the £40 deficit in 1256 are unknown but we know that in 1255 the prioress was permitted to raise an aid among her knights and free tenants, so whatever the cause may have been, remedies were taken which may or may not have put the priory's balance back into credit.[1] For the rest, the fluctuations which are discernible in the income and expenditure would seem to be normal for any enterprise.

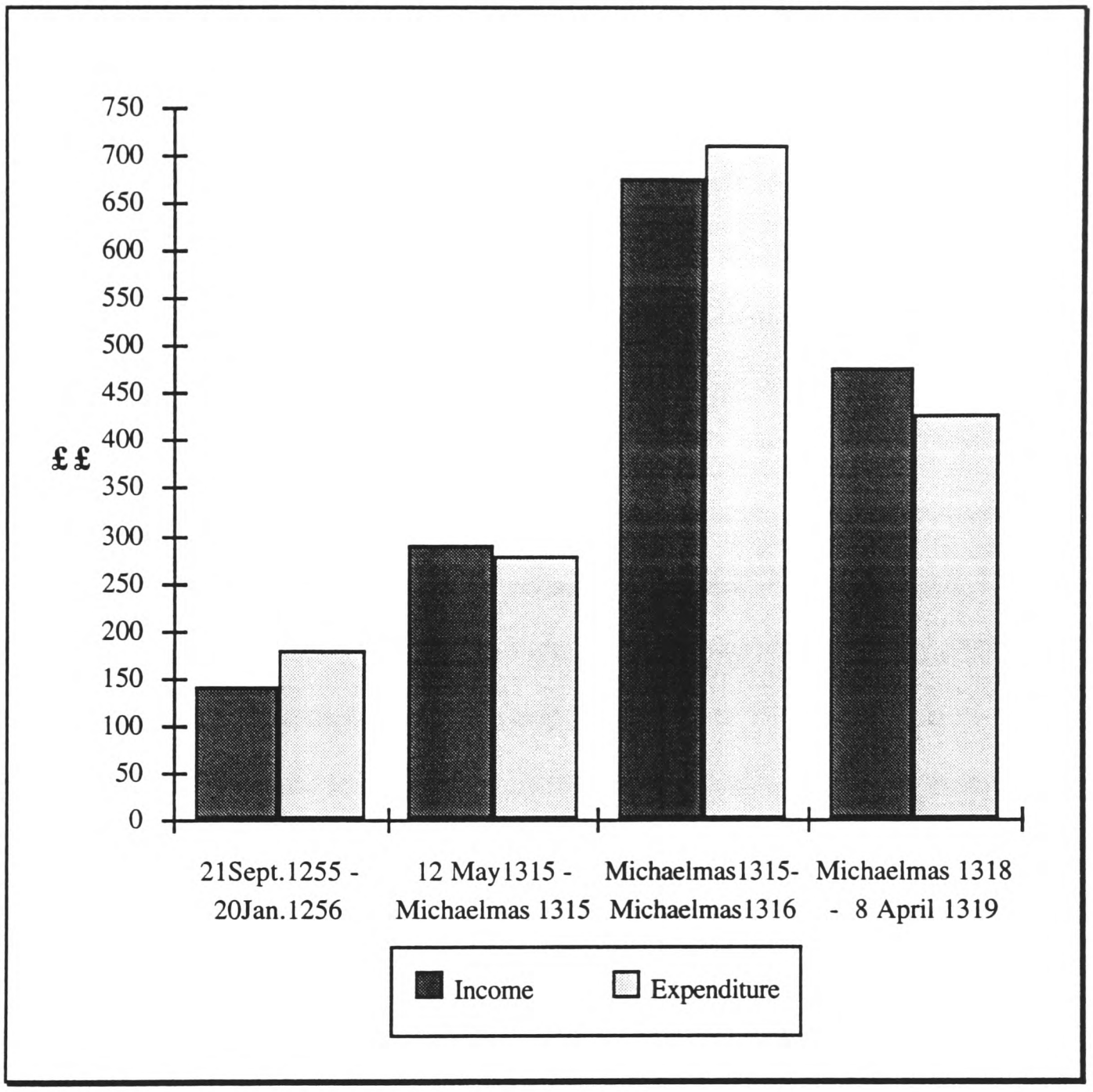
Receivers' accounts - information collected by the bailiffs of the various manors and passed on to the receiver - of their nature detail the income from the manors which belong to the priory's demesne. From these we can estimate how much, in any one period covered by the accounts, each manor brought to the priory by way of rents, perquisites of court, fines or sale of produce. Some manors were more profitable than others. During the eighteen months beginning May 1315, Melksham and Wallop made a far greater contribution to the economy of Amesbury than did any of the other manors, bringing in £73 12s. and £62 19s. respectively. Beyond the numbers recorded for the 1256 visitation we do not have any idea how well the Amesbury manors were stocked.[2]

The average increase in income between 1315 and 1318 reflects the inflated prices caused by the agricultural crisis which beset England and Europe in the summer of 1315.[3] Precipitated by poor harvests, which in turn were caused by almost continuous rain throughout 1315, scarcity of grain caused prices to rise to an unprecedented level with consequent hunger and pestilence.[4] The situation was exacerbated by diseases among livestock, sheep at first, then

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1 *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1247-58*, p. 437.
2 See Table 2, p. 171 for stock numbers.
3 Note that on the histogram the graph for Michaelmas 1315-16 is for an entire financial year while the other three graphs each represent shorter periods.
4 I. Kershaw, 'Agrarian Crisis', pp. 7-14; H.S. Lucas 'The Great European Famine of 1315, 1316 and 1317', *Speculum*, v (1930), pp. 345, 346, 351 and sources cited by these.

FIGURE 1: NET CASH INCOME AND EXPENDITURE, AMESBURY.[1]



cattle and oxen, and while the first two years were the worst, there was no sign of general recovery until 1322.[2] Overall there was an increase of 127% in grain prices between 1314-15 and 1315-16, though by 1318 there was a slight decrease.[3] Some of the Amesbury manors - Ludgershall, Melksham and Letcombe - had sufficient reserves to be able to profit from the high prices and sell wheat in 1316; Letcombe and Challow sold beans and the bailiff of Amesbury sold beef carcasses and sheep skins. By 1318 many manors were disposing of sick lambs and yearling sheep, as well as selling the skins and hides of animals which had died. Grain sales in 1318, however, showed a decline, indicating that by then the crisis had

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1 AML 243 H1 13; 244 H1 3.
2 Kershaw, 'Agrarian Crisis', pp. 15, 24.
3 All figures for prices are taken from D.L. Farmer, 'Prices and Wages', *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, II, 1042-1350* ed. H.E. Hallam (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 791, 815, 805.

made its mark on these manors which initially were able to cope. Even manors which could sell their produce at high prices and maximise their profits would have been forced to buy at an equally high price when purchases became necessary - hence the high level of expenses.[1] If manors had grain to sell, unless they were close to the home farm, there was little economic advantage in the priory buying from them if this meant a significant outlay in freight costs. In reality only very large enterprises could derive some benefit from the price increases without this being offset by the rise in costs.[2] Not only grain prices rose. Purchase prices of stock, which had been high from the beginning of the fourteenth century, peaked in 1317-18 so that replenishing herds hit by the murrain was costly. Since Amesbury relied so heavily on the wool industry, we could predict that the economy of this priory would have been adversely affected. While the revenue from wool sales certainly increased - £80 in the six months from May 1315, £119 for the financial year of 1316 and £156 between Michaelmas 1318 and Easter 1319 - this is probably an indication of inflated prices rather than of increased production. Average wool prices in 1316, for example, showed a 34% increase on the base price and in 1318 a 44% increase.[3] The extent to which the murrain affected the Amesbury flocks is unknown. One of the Amesbury manors at Kintbury in Berkshire was in the same region as a manor of Bolton Priory where the flock was reduced by 71% in four years.[4] We could infer that diseases which spread so quickly would not have left neighbouring flocks unaffected, but we have no direct evidence that the Amesbury flocks suffered a comparable loss.

A major effect of the agricultural crisis was that cash was in short supply. Monasteries frequently sought to remedy this problem by selling corrodies. Bolton priory, for example, tried this solution during the worst of the crisis.[5] Amesbury sold three corrodies in 1318. An immediate injection of over £68 into the Amesbury cash economy must indeed have been welcome and at that time the burden on the priory of ten extra dependants was not great; in the

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1 See M. Mate, 'High Prices in Early Fourteenth-Century England: Causes and Consequences', *EcHR*, 2nd ser., xxviii (1975), p. 15.
2 A.R. Bridbury, 'Before the Black Death', *EcHR*, 2nd series, xxx (1977), p. 404.
3 Farmer, *op.cit.*, p. 809.
4 Kershaw, 'Agrarian Crisis', pp. 20-21. Between 1313 and 1317 the flock decreased from 468 to 137.
5 *id.*, *Bolton Priory*, p. 135.

subsequent 27 weeks 10 corrodians, four of whom were on double rations, cost the priory a mere £8, that is, on average, 5d. per head per week. By contrast more than twice this amount was spent per week on food supplies for each brother.[1] Nuneaton also sold one corrody that we know of in 1318, though since we do not know the purchase price, we are unable to estimate the effect that it might have had on the cash flow of this priory.[2]

These figures suggest that at the point where we leave Amesbury, 1318, this priory was sufficiently strong to ride out the agricultural crisis. A note at the end of the account roll for the six months beginning Michaelmas 1318 informs us that the net income for the two previous years was £1600. In general, from 1315-19 Amesbury had maintained a fairly constant average income of c.£800 per annum. Despite the vicissitudes of climate, pestilence and high prices, the economy of this monastery appears to have remained relatively stable. Factors contributing to this would probably have been the value of its assets, good management and localised factors such as its geographical position.[3] But to make any categorical statements on this head, we would need access to more detailed sources which would document the priory's economic history over a more extensive period. These we do not have.

ii) Nuneaton

The lack of information on Nuneaton makes it impossible to volunteer anything but the most general of observations on the state of this priory's economy. The 1256 visitation report, a summary of the original document, provides no detail on financial matters, and the report of a visitation some seventy years later covers a period of seven years (1321-28), a period in which the priory had experienced severe internal dissension caused by rival claimants for the position of prioress.[4] Efforts by Fontevraud to impose the abbess' authority had been

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1 For expenditure on food see below, p. 173.
2 BL Add. Chart. 48534.
3 Ian Kershaw makes the point that the murrain affected the northern and eastern areas more adversely than it did the southern. Kershaw, 'Agrarian Crisis', p. 23.
4 Lardier, fo. 476; BL Add. Chart. 47398. See above p. 142, 43.

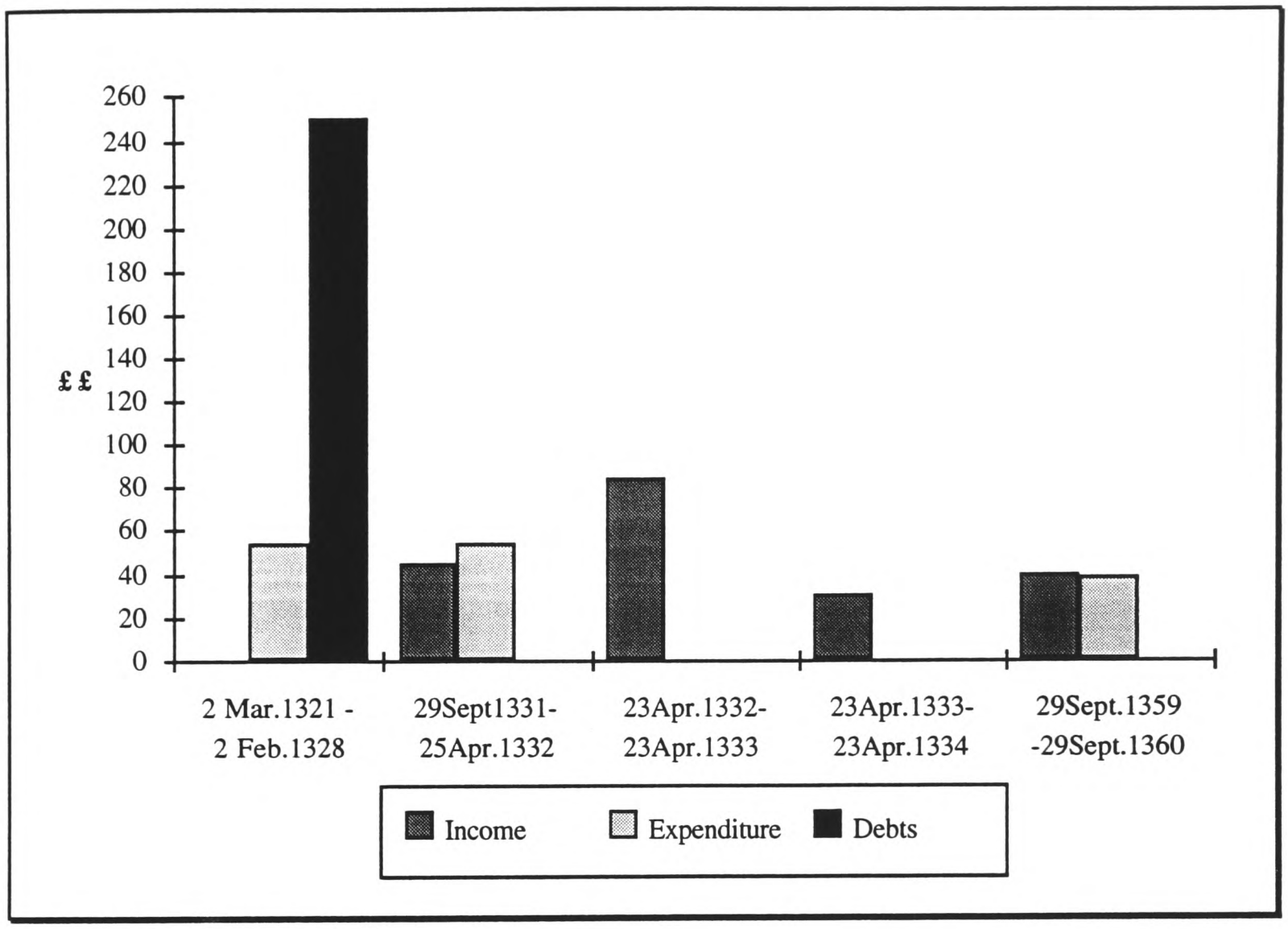
thwarted by the rebellious faction preventing her representatives from landing in England. Nor was the political situation in England certain. Thomas of Lancaster, patron-in-chief of the priory and supporter of Isabel de Sudley, the unlawful prioress, had been executed and the king himself was ultimately deposed and murdered. The extent to which these problems affected life at Nuneaton is hinted at in a letter to the abbess by the legitimate prioress Katherine de Stafford.[1] In a guarded manner she wrote of the difficulties the priory was experiencing and begged for her understanding and support. By 1328 the political situation had eased. Edward III was on the English throne. In the monastery, order was restored. Eleanor probably deemed it both safe and opportune to resume normal relations with Nuneaton.

The new administration at Nuneaton in 1328 was faced with the difficult task of restoring economic stability and re-establishing right order. As the histogram indicates, the economy of the house was far from healthy.[2] Creditors were owed almost £150, and within the convent the nuns and chaplains were £53 in arrears in their food allowance. Total debt was in the region of £250. Add to this the debt which the priory would have incurred with the purchasing of the grain necessary for food, ale and liveries to the servants - at current prices more than £90 - and the situation appears serious indeed.[3] Not only were the nuns and chaplains owed money. The prior of Ware was £53 in arrears of his pension for the tithes and assarts of Ratby and Groby.[4] John Devery was £13 in arrears of his pension; servants were owed £10 for their stipends and John Le Porter and Walter the clerk had not been given their clothing allowance.[5]

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1 AML 246 H2 11 2.
2 *ibid.*, 47398.
3 200 quarters of wheat would have cost about £66; oats and barley in equal quantities to make up 168 quarters, £30. Prices are for 1328/29 and are taken from Farmer, *op.cit.*, p. 791.
4 See BL Add. Chart 47612. In 1246 these were farmed to Nuneaton by the priory of St Evroult for an annual payment to the prior of Ware of £3 8s.6d. Arrears of this magnitude mean that he had not been paid for fifteen years.
5 See above p. 156 for John le Porter's status.

FIGURE 2: NET CASH INCOME AND EXPENDITURE, NUNEATON [1]



The £53 deficit in the food allowance need not necessarily mean that the nuns and chaplains went hungry. That they did practise some 'belt tightening' is indicated by their having made use of wheat for furmity - certainly not a dish for the gentry but a refinement of the coarser oaten porridge which was traditionally food for the poor. To ensure that the convent did not starve, cash necessary for the purchase of food may have been diverted from another source. We do not know what sources of income were assigned for sustenance but if these were not profitable during a period of crisis, funds could be re-allocated from a different source. This would still have appeared in accounts as a deficit. A stronger possibility is that, because economies had been practised, money had been saved. What normally would have been spent on food was not spent. According to the rules governing what money went where, the difference was still owed to the convent.

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[1] BL Add Chart. 47398, 49709, 49727, 49728.

The picture certainly appears bleak but it could be that the priory directed its resources into replenishing its stock so that it had the wherewithal to recover from the agricultural crisis; it could be that it had taken over some properties, presently encumbered, which would eventually become profitable.[1] Furthermore, knowledge of what the priory was owed might put a totally different complexion on the figures. Unfortunately we do not know this. It is more than likely, however, that the dissension caused by the rebellion of Isabel de Sudley and the seemingly sorry state of the priory's finances were not unrelated.

By 1331-32, some measure of stability seems to have been restored to Nuneaton's economy.[2] While expenditure exceeds income, this is not by a marked amount and, as this account is for seven months only, the winter months, we might presume that in the second half of the year things would improve even more. Rent had been collected and produce sold. The cloister was being repaired, stipends were paid, farm equipment purchased, and the business of the priory seems to have been attended to. It is unfortunate that we have no other record of income and expenditure until 1359-60 when, despite the fact that these were more or less equal, the priory once more seems to be in difficulties (the total annual income recorded here is less than for seven months in 1331-32 and the accounting procedures are rather spurious). Figures for 1332-1333 and 1333-1334 show receipts of rents only and do not give total cash income.

It has already been noted that Brother Richard de Greneburgh, formerly prior of Amesbury, was appointed prior of Nuneaton in 1328. While there is no previous receiver's account with which to compare that of Roger de Lalleford compiled in 1331-2, this account, in its manner of presentation, its attention to detail, its accuracy of accounting procedures, is similar to the accounts presented at Amesbury in 1316 and 1318-19 when Richard was both prior and

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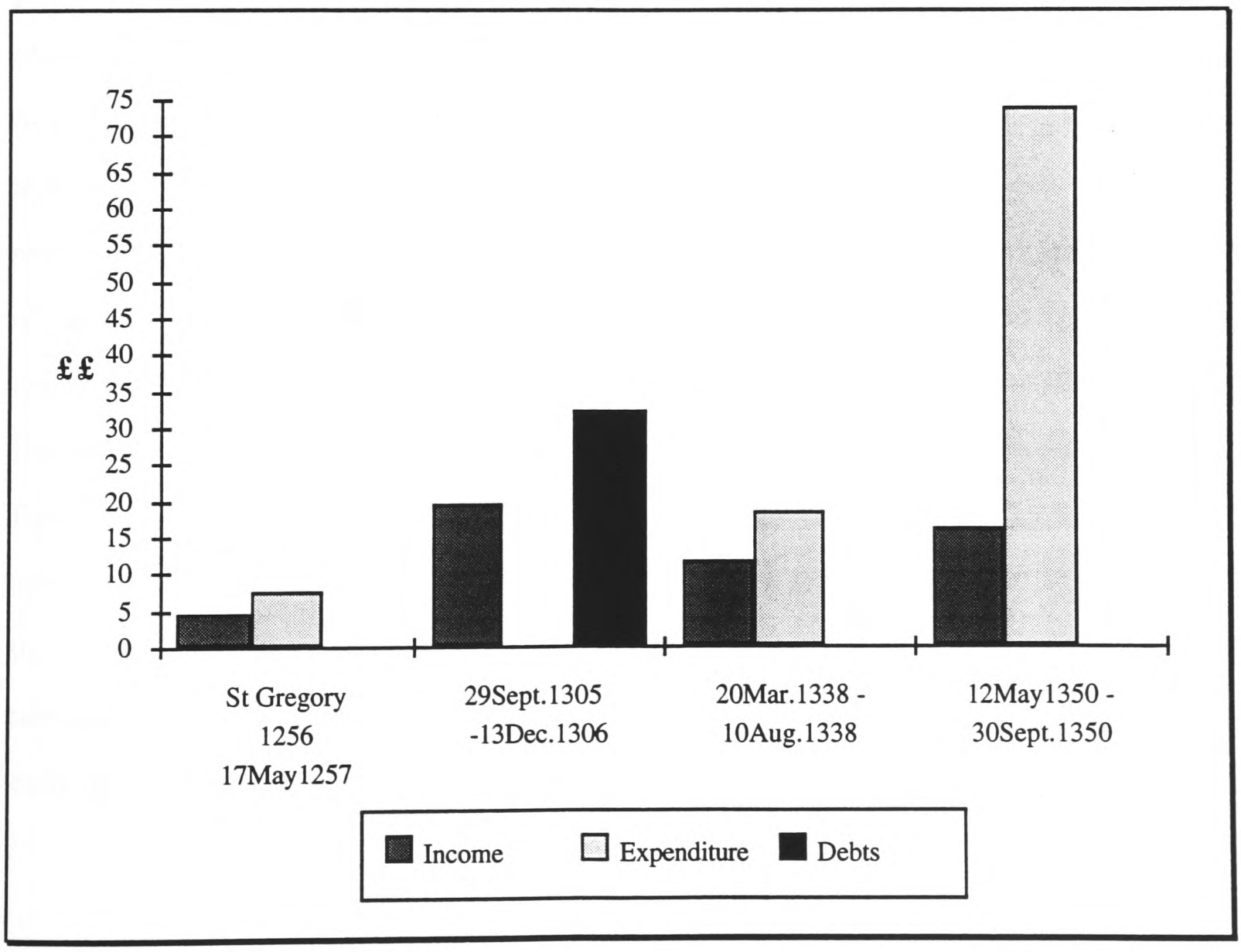
1 This did happen from time to time. J.R.H. Moorman, *Church Life in England in the Thirteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1936), p. 312.

2 BL Add. Chart. 49727

receiver. It is, admittedly, impossible to prove that Richard de Greneburgh was responsible for the manner in which these accounts were kept and presented. Nonetheless there is a similarity between the Nuneaton and the Amesbury accounts. We cannot say the same for the 1359-60 account.[1] If we apply the same criteria of presentation, detail and accuracy we must conclude that the person who compiled it was less than competent. However, we cannot be certain that Richard de Caldecote was the priory receiver, or, for that matter, a member of the order. He may have been the bailiff or another priory official. Even so, it must be noted that his accounting skills are inferior.

iii) Westwood

FIGURE 3: NET CASH INCOME AND EXPENDITURE, WESTWOOD.[2]



1 *ibid.*, 49728.
2 AML 244 H1 2; BCL MS Hampton 307-309.

The Westwood figures present a totally different set of uncertainties. In 1257 expenses seemingly exceeded income by 66%. However, these figures are open to question as the document from which they are taken is difficult to interpret.[1] The report of the 1306 visitation is also problematic in so far as it does not adequately illustrate the state of the economy. It covers at least fifteen months and the only information on income is that £19 9s. was received annually from rents.[2] No figure for expenditure is proffered but we must question how an enterprise with such a small cash income could possibly support 41 nuns and chaplains, not to mention the various other monastic dependants.

There are evident signs of mismanagement. We learn that under the current administration the priory was owed £52. Not only is this more than two-and-a-half times the cash income, but of this more than £9 was owed from the time of two previous priors. Who was to blame for this - priors or bailiffs - is not clear. The priory in its charity may have given credit to its tenants and risked its own financial ruin as a result. Whatever the circumstances, collection of rents could not have been too onerous a task - the properties were all within a ten-mile radius of the home farm and a diligent prior could surely have seen to it that those responsible carried out their duties. Westwood had begun life much less richly endowed than the other two foundations but it must have been able to support itself. The scenario presented by these figures would indicate otherwise. The house owed money - £32 in all - to the prior, to other creditors, to the convent for its food allowance. But if the arrears could have been collected, the amount which was owed could have been paid with some to spare. Furthermore, grain needed to see the convent through to the new harvest would have cost at least £17.[3] With no cash, the priory seems to have been destined to rely on credit.

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1 AML 244 H1 2. This report is copied in a hand difficult to read and parts of it are quite illegible.
2 BCL MS Hampton 307.
3 Prices are for 1306-7. Farmer, *op.cit.*, p. 790.

The evidence we have suggests that the priory was in receipt of income which is not accounted for. Why the visitation report does not give a more comprehensive picture cannot be resolved, especially as the situation it describes seems to demand some clarification. The two later accounts indicate that Westwood received some income from sources other than rents. Some was derived from the salt pans at Droitwich as well as from the sale of produce and stock and from miscellanea such as fines and oblations. Even so, this cannot be the full picture. This priory, as well as three manors in Westwood Park (Westwood, Crutch and Clerhall), had other manors in Cotheridge, Droitwich, Cold Aston, and two in Rock.[1] In none of the documents is there any reference to any substantial income from these (4s. from hay sold at Crutch in 1338 and 5s. from hay from an unspecified manor in 1350 are scarcely worthy of mention). Even if these manors did not produce for the market they must have contributed something to the home farm. Yet from what appears in these accounts, it seems as if these five manors are making no contribution whatsoever to Westwood's economy. The problem stems partly from the nature of our evidence. We have only fragments of the picture in each case. The two documents from 1338 and 1350, while they resemble receiver's accounts, lack the precise information provided in the Amesbury accounts and concentrate more on farm expenditure, with details of corn and stock.[2] One was compiled by the prior, the other by a brother whose role is not specified. They record income but only part of the total priory income either in cash or kind. This is evident from the figures presented for domestic consumption of stock. Over a twenty-week period in 1338, it was recorded that two pigs and three calves were used by the convent; in a similar period in 1350, four pigs and two calves. The amount of wheat allotted to the convent and *The Habit* in liveries in 1338 was 4.75 bushels. Clearly this is insufficient to support a community of more than fifty people. Some vital information is lacking. The convent and *The Habit* must have received produce from the other priory manors. This would have been recorded in the accounts of the manors in question, and possibly somewhere else, but no supplementary account has survived. We are forced to conclude that Westwood community, no matter which way we look at it, must have

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1 BCL MS Hampton, 321, 323, 324.

2 *ibid.*, 308, 309. For an examination of various types of accounts see *Household Accounts from Medieval England*, ed. C. M. Woolgar (2 vols, Oxford, 1992), i. pp. 18-54

had sources of income both in cash and in kind other than those which appear on the documents we have. It is also highly likely that the priory was running on prolonged credit.

Whatever the explanation, it will be useful to estimate, very roughly, the approximate cash income needed by Westwood at this date to survive. We have already examined figures showing how much it cost to keep a monk in basic food and clothing at the beginning of the fourteenth century - somewhere between 2d. and 6d. per day, depending on the resources of the priory.[1] Unfortunately there are no such figures for nuns. Let us take the figures for monks, then, and use the lower limit. At the rate of 2d. per head per day the 38 nuns and 3 chaplains resident at Westwood in 1306 would have needed £125 per annum for their maintenance.[2] Allowing for natural attrition but also for the fact that in 1337 as many as eighteen young women were professed at Westwood, we can estimate the total population in 1340 at c.50. These would need £150 per annum. What if, instead of 2d. per day, we calculated on an average of the three figures given for the upkeep of monks? After all, the nuns at Westwood, for the most part daughters of the gentry, would have maintained a standard of living somewhere between that of a poor, dispersed Augustinian canon of Bolton and that of a comfortable monk of Abingdon abbey. At that rate the priory would have needed £208 per annum at the beginning of the fourteenth century and £253 per annum by 1340. It is, of course, arguable that such conjecture is not justified. Admittedly, there are few constants, but we are not proposing absolutes here, simply proposing how much cash, or its equivalent value in kind, a monastery the size of Westwood would need to survive.

Let us postulate, then, that at the beginning of the fourteenth century Westwood priory, to keep its nuns and chaplains in the basics of food and clothing, would need c.£200 per annum. By the middle of the century it would need c.£250 per annum. But these amounts apply only

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1 See above, pp. 109-110.

2 Separate calculations to include the few chaplains who were resident at Westwood would not affect significantly the overall figure proposed.

to the needs of the nuns and chaplains. We know that servants, artisans, labourers and others depended on the monastery for their livelihood. At Westwood these would have numbered about 70. If the cost of their maintenance were calculated at the rate of 1d. per head per day we would need to add c.£100 per annum at least to both of the above figures. Nowhere is there any indication of where the priory would find this money.

We lack vital information on the extent to which the priory was supported by its manors and demesne land - in other words the ratio of cash to kind in its income. At the beginning of the fourteenth century the demesnes and rectories of Westminster Abbey supplied almost 40% of the value of the grain consumed by the abbey and its dependencies.[1] A smaller, less-affluent monastery may possibly have depended more on its demesne lands for its income. The Westwood estates were all close to the home farm, making delivery of grain and other produce relatively simple. However, if the Westwood demesnes supplied 50% or even 55% of the value of its grain, the cash income indicated here is still grossly inadequate. How this priory managed to survive is mystifying. There is no evidence of its having received a loan as did the canons at Bolton; there is no evidence of the convent being dispersed for a time as were others including the canons at Bolton.[2] Nor is there evidence of limiting recruitment.[3] On the contrary. In 1337 at Westwood, eighteen young women were consecrated nuns by Thomas Hempnall, Bishop of Worcester, thus testifying that in the eyes of the abbess, the convent and the community at large, this was a viable institution.[4] The probable solution is that what could not be paid for in cash was bought on credit and that, year after year, the monastery continued to live on credit.[5]

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1 Harvey, *Westminster Abbey*, p. 145
2 Kershaw, *Bolton Priory*, pp. 191-2.
3 On limiting numbers in monasteries see Dyer, *Standards of Living*, p. 98.
4 Register, Thomas Hempnall, p. 17. See Appendix, p. 261. See also T.R. Nash, *Collections for the History of Worcestershire* (2 vols, Oxford, 1781-2), ii, p. 353.
5 This was a common solution. See Postan, *op.cit.*, pp. 4-11.

To obtain credit monasteries would have been required to provide some security. In general, with their fine buildings, numerous personnel, shrines and elaborate ritual, monasteries gave the appearance of having great reserves of wealth. Often their real wealth was tied up in land but the land, the plant, the stock and the treasure which every monastery possessed to a greater or less degree, would have been sufficient to secure credit. Some monasteries secured loans on the contents of their libraries.[1] Accounts frequently listed the amount of stock a priory possessed. The figures we have for stock on the three priories are tabulated below.

TABLE 2: STOCK ON PRIORY MANORS [2]

	AMESBURY 1256	NUNEATON 1256	NUNEATON 1321-28	NUNEATON 1344	WESTWOOD 1306*	WESTWOOD 1338	WESTWOOD 1350
horses			6	47	?	8	3
affers	23	43	75	94	7	8	5
mares			6		6	7	2
foals				18	3	8	1
oxen	200	94	80	135	58	56	44
bulls		3	6	7		1	1
cows	7	62	31	89		20	2
steers			25	15		7	11
calves	4	72	21	68		12	2
wethers	4000	200	53	281	50	29	
rams				10	2	3	
lambs				402	40	40	2
ewes	200	counted with wethers	62	337	60	28	5
hoggetts	30		49			30	37
boars			4	6	2	4**	
sows			16	21	9	8**	
pigs		60	78	97	10*	78	
piglets		60	20	60	11	63	6

* the manuscript is badly stained and some figures/categories are illegible.
** the categories of stock are missing from the manuscript as it is torn; these seem to be the obvious places to put the numbers

These figures refer sometimes to stock on the home farm, at other times to the whole monastic enterprise; at times it is difficult to determine which is meant. Amesbury's flock of 4,000 sheep would, for example, have been dispersed over several manors, though we do not know which ones, while Westwood's stock was probably that on demesne land. Nuneaton's figures for 1344 are the result of a comprehensive survey of eight priory manors conducted for the

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1 Bell, *op.cit*, p. 20.
2 The documents from which this information is taken are as follows: Amesbury: AML 243 H13; Nuneaton: Lardier, *op.cit.*, fo. 476; (There is one category which is illegible. It is with the pigs and there are 312 of them); BL Add. Chart. 47398, 49467; Westwood: BCL MS Hampton 307, 308, 309.

advent of a new prior. They indicate total stock on all eight manors. Inventories were compiled at different seasons of the year. If, for example, we were to compare stock at Amesbury and Nuneaton in 1256, we must take into account that Amesbury's figures were calculated at a winter visitation, Nuneaton's in June. The latter's superiority in calf production might, therefore, be illusory. By June calves may have been born on Amesbury manors, thus adding to this priory's stock. Figures for the individual manors at Nuneaton in 1344 reveal that Hodnell and Nuneaton concentrated on sheep raising, Hodnell had the largest herd of cattle and that Burton and Stockingford did not engage at all in pig production.

Treasure is a more elusive commodity to evaluate. Amesbury's treasure was listed at the 1256 visitation: four gilt chalices, two silver cups, two silver crosses and two silver censers as well as some fifty nine charters.[1] We have this type of information for Amesbury only. No doubt both Nuneaton and Westwood would have possessed some treasure but probably in this, as in other areas, neither could have measured up to the better-endowed Amesbury. There was obviously sufficient security of some kind in Westwood at the beginning of the fourteenth century for that monastery to have been granted credit.

EXPENDITURE

While some questions concerning the income of the three monasteries must remain unanswered, expenditure is much better documented and lends itself more readily to analysis. The Amesbury accounts compiled by William de Preston and Richard de Greneburgh demonstrate a systematic method of accounting according to tallies and schedules.[2] It is evident that all obedientiaries in this monastery kept an account of receipts and expenditure which was passed on to and summarised by the receiver. Where expenses were authorised by a voucher from the prioress this was noted and where expenses were to be paid from a particular source, for example from the prioress' funds - as, for example, when the emissary

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1 AML 243 H 13.
2 AML 244 H1 3.

of the Fontevraud arrived in 1315 - this also was noted. As a result we can establish a fairly accurate picture of how the finances of this particular priory were administered in the early part of the fourteenth century, a picture with which we can compare what we know of the other two priories. Closer analysis of the accounts will reveal the main items of expenditure on both the domestic and wider levels.

i) Food and Drink

One major item of expenditure was naturally food. With convents the size of those at Nuneaton and Amesbury we can imagine that a significant proportion of the cash income was spent on provisions. The prior's inventory of the Nuneaton manors describes the extent to which some manors subsidised the home farm; no such details are available for Amesbury but we can assume that some produce at least came to the priory from its manors. Unfortunately from the surviving documents we cannot determine how much money was spent on food, nor what exactly was eaten, nor in what quantities. Details are patchy. We know, for example, that herrings were bought at Southampton for the Amesbury community for Lent and Advent. Ale was bought for Amesbury and we know that bread was a staple food in even the wealthiest establishments.[1] Salt too was purchased - probably both as a preservative and a condiment - salt cellars were standard items on the refectory tables at Westminster abbey and no doubt salt was used at table in Amesbury and the other houses.[2] Supplies of fish, both fresh and preserved, would have been bought, because, as we shall see, the demand for this essential item could not be met by the ponds kept by any one house.[3]

To find out what the nuns and brothers in the Fontevraud houses might have eaten we can extrapolate information from other contemporary sources.[4] Not far from Amesbury was the

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1 Conventual loaves varied in size. The loaf at Westminster in the late Middle Ages weighed about 2 pounds when cooked. Monks were allotted one loaf a day. Harvey, *Living and Dying*, p. 59. The ration designated for the nuns in the Fontevraud dependencies is not known.

2 See *Customary of the Benedictine Monasteries of St Augustine Canterbury and St Peter Westminster*, ed. E.M. Thompson (2 vols, HBS xxiii, xxviii, 1902, 1904), ii, p. 100.

3 See below pp. 229-30.

4 Monastic food and drink is discussed in D. Coldicott, *Hampshire Nunneries* (Chichester, 1989), pp. 75-80.

Benedictine abbey of Wilton whose nuns were, like many at Amesbury, women of high estate. Wilton was a pre-conquest Abbey with a rich patrimony - in fact, at the time of the Domesday survey, it was the richest of the women's monasteries, having five times Amesbury's income.[1] Wilton is, nevertheless, a suitable subject for comparison with Amesbury, being in the same area, following basically the same Rule and, while Amesbury's wealth had increased with its re-foundation, during the thirteenth century Wilton had suffered some financial setbacks.[2] A fragment of a cellarist's account details the food eaten at this abbey during the period from Pentecost to Michaelmas 1299.[3] An analysis of three 'ordinary' entries in the account presents an outline of the diet of the nuns and though we lack the information to determine how much of any one item was consumed per person per day, we can see that these nuns ate most frequently beef, chicken and bacon; less frequently, mutton, pork, veal, capon, goose and pigeon.[4] On abstinence days - Wednesday, Friday and Saturday - cod, mackerel, bream, mullet, plaice, salmon, pilchard, herring both fresh and salted, eels and small fish referred to as *menusa* were served. Eggs were used; fat (*gressia*) is referred to on a couple of occasions but there is no mention of the milk, butter or cheese which would have been produced on the home farm and almost certainly served. We would not be straying too far into the realms of improbability if we concluded that the fare provided for the Amesbury community would have been analogous to this. The diet of the canons at Bolton priory was practically the same, the main difference being a variation in types of fish, more than likely a result of geography.[5] Analysis of bones of mammals, birds and fish on the site of Leicester priory shows that the canons there ate beef, mutton, pork, poultry, cod, haddock, ling and plaice.[6] Evidence thus points to a basic similarity in the monastic diet. Inhabitants of Westwood and Nuneaton would undoubtedly have conformed to this pattern. If so, theirs

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1 *VCH Wilts.*, iii, pp. 231-242; D. Knowles, *Monastic Order*, p. 702.
2 *VCH Wilts.*, iii, pp. 233, 234.
3 *Fragment of an Account of the Cellaress of Wilton Abbey, 1299*, ed. E. Crittal, (Wiltshire Record Society, xii, 1956), p. 142-156.
4 7-13 June, 2-8 August, 20-26 September. The weeks when the new Abbess was installed or when the steward and escheator visited were avoided as being atypical. Mutton would have been eaten less frequently because, like Amesbury, these nuns raised their sheep for wool.
5 Kershaw, *Bolton Priory*, pp. 151-58.
6 C.R. Thawley, 'The mammal, bird, and fish bones' *The Austin Friars Leicester*, ed. J.E. Mellors & T. Pearce (CBA Research Report xxxv,1981), pp. 173-175. It is possible, of course, that they ate other mammals, birds and fish, the bones of which did not survive.

was a diet high in protein and low in the vitamins gained from fruit and vegetables, especially vitamin C.[1] Cereals would have figured prominently. In 1307 the convent at Westwood needed to buy wheat for furmity; so did Nuneaton in 1328.[2] There is no indication that this was eaten at Amesbury, but we would not be justified in assuming that it was not.

What is certain, however, is that meat was eaten. The Rule of St Benedict forbade monks except those who were ill, to eat the flesh of quadrupeds.[3] Robert of Arbrissel, in a stricter interpretation, had initially enjoined total abstinence on his order.[4] This statute appears to have been modified rather early in the order's history and we are not sure to what extent.[5] By the end of the thirteenth century most Benedictine communities had devised various ways of circumventing the prescriptions of the Rule and it is more than likely that by this time the order of Fontevraud had also relaxed its prohibition.[6] In 1318, for example, a payment was made to Br Stephen of Bultford, a lay brother of Amesbury community, *pro carnibus . . . ad opus conventus.*[7] From the 1338 accounts of Westwood we have evidence that a calf was used in the convent on the feast of Trinity and two animals, probably young pigs, at Easter; in 1350, during the 20 weeks covered by the account, four young pigs were eaten.[8] In 1344 Isabel of Lancaster, prioress of Amesbury, received a formal dispensation from the prohibition against eating meat for that house. This, in effect, must have been sanctioning a *fait accompli.*[9]

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1 For conclusions about the diet of the monks at Westminster and the canons at Bolton, see Harvey, *Living and Dying*, pp. 60, 62-67 and Kershaw, *Bolton Priory*, pp. 157-8.
2 *pro furmenta.* BL Add. Chart. 47398; BCL MS Hampton, 307.
3 *RB* § xxxix, p. 96.
4 § 4 (*PL.* clxii, 1083).
5 See above p. 57.
6 In the first half of the twelfth century Peter the Venerable could attest to all types of meat being served on the table at Cluny. Peter the Venerable, *Epistola clxi*, in *The Letters of Peter the Venerable*, ed. G. Constable (2 vols., Cambridge, Mass., 1967), i, pp. 388-9. For a discussion of the casuistry involved in avoiding the prescription, see Harvey, *Living and Dying*, pp. 39-40.
7 AML 244 H1 3.
8 From the context of the 1338 accounts it appears that the animals are young pigs; the manuscript is torn.
9 *Cal. Pap. Pet. 1342-1419*, p. 78; *Cal. Pap. Let. iii, 1342-62*, p. 75.

In her garden at Amesbury Isabel of Lancaster grew leeks and onions.[1] These and possibly spices were used as flavourings. The last were luxury items and their use depended on whether a house was sufficiently financial to purchase them.[2] On various feasts - All Saints, St Edward, Christmas, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday - and perhaps on others as well, a pittance of wine, also a luxury item, was served to the Amesbury community.[3] Wine and other pittances were often provided by benefactors to mark the celebration of a feast or an anniversary. We might well question the criteria by which these particular feasts were singled out for the pittance. Curiously, the feasts of the patron saints of Amesbury, Mary the Virgin, St Melor and St John the patron of the Brothers' house, are not among them. One explanation is that these pittances date from the time of the foundation of Amesbury and it is not entirely improbable that Henry II provided for them. The cult of St Edward, strengthened by the translation of his relics to the new shrine in Westminster in 1269 had been, however, popular under Henry II.[4] He, stressing his blood relationship to Edward, had secured his canonisation. The inclusion of Good Friday, one of the strictest fast days in the liturgical year, requires further explanation. A custom at Fontevraud, said to date from the time of the founder, was that on this day, having fasted on bread and water, the nuns were to assemble before Compline for a pittance of wine.[5] It was further stipulated that no one was to exempt herself from this pittance lest she succumb to vain glory. The custom had apparently been transferred from the mother house to Amesbury and possibly to the other English houses, though we have no evidence of its being observed at Westwood or Nuneaton.

Pittances were sometimes given to commemorate anniversaries. Isabel of Lancaster's account shows that she had provided a pittance of meat to be served on the anniversary of the death of her cousin, Mary, daughter of Edward I - and this before the nuns at Amesbury had received

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1 Account, Isabel of Lancaster, p. 498.
2 Dyer, *Standards of Living*, pp. 62, 63.
3 AML 244 H1 3. On the amount of aristocratic income spent on wine see Dyer, 'English Diet', p. 194.
4 *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, ed. D. H. Farmer (Oxford, 1982), p. 124.
5 Nicquet, *op.cit.*, p. 303.

permission to eat meat.[1] On the anniversary of the death of a person referred to as 'C. Mar' the nuns were offered sweetmeats by Isabel.[2] No doubt the enjoyment of these special delicacies encouraged the community to offer prayers for those on whose behalf they were given. Isabel herself arranged for one of the chaplains at Amesbury to say Mass for her cousin on the anniversary of her death.[3] She also bought three gallons of grape juice (*mustus*) for the celebration of Queen Eleanor's anniversary, though it is not stated whether this was for the entire convent or a more select gathering.[4] There is record of the nuns at Nuneaton having a pittance on the feast of St Cuthbert from 4s. annual rent in Wardley. [5] Another document from this priory relates a joint decision, taken c.1260 by the prioress and prior to allot 18d. annual rent in the vill of Nuneaton for pittances on the anniversary of Brother William, a former prior of the house.[6]

When Robert of Arbrissel composed the statutes of Fontevraud he envisaged that the brothers would be dependent on the nuns for food as well as for everything else.[7] By the early fourteenth century a certain sum was being apportioned to the brothers at Amesbury as their food allowance, and at Westwood and Nuneaton this practice seems to have been followed as well. The brothers evidently had their own kitchen and kept their own accounts. The Amesbury accounts of 1318-19 indicate that in the previous year Brother Nicholas of Figheldean had spent £29 10s on food for the brothers.[8] At that time there were thirteen chaplains at Amesbury. This means that approximately $10^1/_2$d. was spent per head per week on food. This amount refers to expenses for food over and above the produce from the home farm, the usual food items which were consumed in both the nuns' convent and *The Habit* without any trace of them appearing on any account. While it is conceivable that the prior

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1 Account, Isabel of Lancaster, p. 496. Mary's death is recorded in *Cal. Cl. Rolls 1330-33*, p. 511.
2 Account, Isabel of Lancaster, pp. 494, 498. The identity of this person is not known.
3 *ibid.*, p. 498.
4 *ibid.*, p. 494. 'Queen Eleanor' is Eleanor of Castille.
5 BL Add. Chart. 47811.
6 *ibid.*, 48500. Brother William de Verny was prior 1256-60. See Appendix, p. 264.
7 *Praecepta Recte Vivendi*, § II, § VIII (*PL* clxii, 1081, 1083).
8 AML 244 H1 3.

may have received a higher than normal allotment, this is nowhere specified. In 1318 lay brothers at Nuneaton were allotted 8s. per head per annum for food.[1] This is less than 2d. per head per week and must refer to food items over and above what was normally served. At Westwood, between 20 March and 10 August 1338, the expenses of the table in *The Habit* averaged 11d. weekly.[2] This means that the cost for all the chaplains at Westwood, and admittedly there would not have been many, was about the same as the weekly *per capita* cost at Amesbury. Obviously, the standard of living at Westwood was lower.

Living apart from the community, following a more lavish life style as befitted her office and keeping her own table, at which she would have entertained important guests, was the prioress.[3] There is no question that the prioress, in the manner of most of her counterparts, invited members of the community to her table from time to time to share her bounty. The prioress of Amesbury received £8 per year for the expenses of her table. This would cover those items not included in the normal allocation.[4] In 1316 one item of her expenditure was *jocularia* - entertainers - either for herself and her guests or for the entire convent. The future prioress of Amesbury, Isabel of Lancaster entertained on a grand scale. During 1333 the magnates of the area, Sir John de Maudit and Sir Robert Selyman, and the proctor of the Abbess of Fontevraud were among her guests.[5] As well as having a separate food allowance, the prioress of Amesbury regularly bought wine and some of the nuns, among them Mary, daughter of Edward I, received a special allowance of wine from the house.[6] Nuneaton accounts for September 1331- April 1332 show that three gallons of wine were bought for the nuns for Easter.[7] Westwood accounts record similar expenditure at Easter and Pentecost.[8] Here we have evidence that social trends within religious life reflected those in the world at

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1 BL Add. Chart. 48534.
2 BCL MS Hampton 308.
3 See RB, § liii., p. 120. For this occurring in men's orders see Harvey, *Living and Dying*, p. 36.
4 Power, *op.cit.*, p. 61.
5 Account, Isabel of Lancaster, p. 494.
6 AML 244 H1 3. Both Mary and her cousin Isabel of Lancaster regularly received an allowance of wine from the king. *Cal. Cl. Rolls,1341-43*, pp. 75, 615, *ibid.*, *1343-44*, p. 285; *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, *1281-92*, p. 464; *ibid.*, *1292-1301*, p. 88; *ibid.*, *1301-07*, pp. 19, 28, 52, 327.
7 BL Add. Chart. 49727.
8 BCL MS Hampton 308.

large; there was a high correlation between social class and wine consumption.[1] Those lower on the social scale tended to drink ale. At Amesbury, it seems, the prioress and prior, and members of the nobility drank wine, as befitted their status. Yet since the Fontevraud order catered for the social elite, the other members were served wine on special feasts. However, in the main, at ordinary times the 'ordinary' nuns and brothers would have drunk ale.

The amount of ale drunk in the monasteries is difficult to estimate. Bolton priory required approximately 50,000 gallons per annum for 170 persons in the early fourteenth century.[2] This might seem a prodigious amount, but it tallies with the average consumption in those monasteries for which we have figures. Nuneaton in 1328 needed 168 quarters of grain to brew sufficient ale for what could not have been more than twenty-eight weeks.[3] Using the standard that 1 quarter of grain produced 60 gallons of first grade ale, this 168 quarters of grain would have produced 10,080 gallons of ale, that is, 360 gallons per week.[4] After the first, there was always a second brewing, providing inferior ale. This raises the issue of how much ale and of what quality was allotted per person. The monks at Bolton, the corrodians, esquires and clerks were allotted a gallon of ale each day; servants and menials received less.[5] What nuns were allotted is not clear; it was probably slightly less than a monk's ration. Since the Fontevraud nuns were not engaged in the outside work which the brothers performed, their ration may have been less. The Westminster monks were allotted a gallon of conventual ale - the best ale - while many servants received the inferior brew; at Beaulieu the monks received a gallon of the best ale; lay brothers and servants lesser amounts of second rate.[6] The nuns at Kilburn, corrodians of Westminster Abbey in the early twelfth century, were given ale of an inferior quality referred to as *nuns' ale*.[7] While there is no firm evidence one way or the other, it seems reasonable to suggest that the ale consumed by the Fontevraud nuns would

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1 On the correlation between social class and wine consumption see Dyer, *Standards of Living*, p. 62.
2 Kershaw, *Bolton Priory*, p. 133.
3 BL Add. Chart. 47398.
4 See *Walter de Wenlok*, p. 248. There would, of course, have been variations but this provides some standard.
5 Kershaw, *Bolton Priory*, p. 133.
6 *ibid.*
7 Harvey, *Living and Dying*, p. 239 n.

have been of the first grade. That purchased for the Amesbury nuns in 1318 was conventual ale.[1] There were at Nuneaton in 1328, 89 nuns and 7 chaplains.[2] Assuming that the brothers received a daily ration of one gallon, there would have remained sufficient first-grade ale for the nuns to receive half that amount.

Westwood's consumption of ale was roughly comparable to that of Nuneaton. Between 20 March and 10 August 1338, 2.75 quarters of first grade (barley) malt were used for brewing.[3] This would have produced about 165 gallons of first grade ale to be used on special occasions and probably at the prioress' table, when ale was served there. Others would have been given ale made from a mixture of grains - approximately 2,760 gallons from the first brewing. This would have provided the priory with a weekly supply of about 138 gallons for about 50 nuns and 2 or 3 brothers - the nuns' ration averaging less than that at Nuneaton.

We have no consumption figures for Amesbury. In 1318 £20 was spent on ale for the nuns. We do not know how much was purchased, nor do we know how long it was supposed to last, nor if the supply was to supplement already-existing stocks. It was not uncommon for some establishments to buy ready-brewed ale, especially when commercial ale was of a fairly high quality, but since monasteries were accustomed to do their own brewing and had all the necessary equipment, we could infer that this purchase was to supply for a deficiency, perhaps caused by crop failure during the agricultural crisis.[4] In 1320 first grade ale could be purchased for 1d. per gallon.[5] For £20, Amesbury could have obtained 4,800 gallons. If the nuns received one gallon of ale per day, they would have needed at least 819 gallons per week. Assuming the ration was a little less than this, we could put the figure at c.545 gallons

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1 AML 244 H1 3.
2 BL Add. Chart. 47398.
3 BCL MS Hampton 308.
4 For brewing see Dyer, *Standards of Living*, p. 57 For the sale of bread, ale, etc. in rural communities see R.H. Britnell, 'Commercialisation and Economic Development in England 1000-1300' in R.H. Britnell & B.M.S. Campbell, edd., *A Commercialising Economy: England 1086-c.1300* (Manchester 1995), p. 22.
5 Inferior ale cost $^3/_4$d. per gallon. Dyer, *Standards of Living*, p. 58.

per week. At that rate of consumption the ale purchased in 1318 would have lasted about nine weeks.

ii) Clothing

Clothing was also a recurrent item of expenditure. By the thirteenth century it was common practice for religious to be given a fixed amount as a clothing allowance.[1] The Amesbury accounts of Easter-Michaelmas 1316 show that the allowance for the nuns was 13s. 4d. per head per annum.[2] Chaplains received 7s. $0^{1}/_{2}$d. plus 5s. per annum for shoes. Office bearers, both nuns and brothers, received a double allowance as did a former prior and Mary, Edward I's daughter. Lay brothers received 8s. $0^{1}/_{2}$d. per annum but no shoe allowance. Others received an allowance for capes, though these were different people from those who received the basic clothing allowance. These may not have been members of the community, but servants or corrodians in receipt of an allowance for clothing; there is no way of telling.[3] On occasion special items were bought for clothing. One of the Amesbury accounts, for example, records the purchase of pilches for the nuns because supplies were depleted.[4]

iii) Miscellaneous Expenses

But monasteries had expenses other than the feeding and clothing of their dependants. Those in office, the prioress and prior, incurred a certain amount of expense in the performance of their duties. The Amesbury accounts contain several entries for the works of the prioress, for the travel expenses of the prioress, for other business as was deemed appropriate by the prioress and for her purchases such as parchment, red wax and linen cloth.[5] One important duty was to render hospitality, and to bestow gifts on various benefactors. The emissary of the abbess was made welcome, fed, clothed and looked after in his illness; grooms of

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1 Knowles, *Religious Orders*, i, p. 288.
2 AML 244 H1 3.
3 See above p. 156, where the status and role of these people are discussed..
4 *pro defectu pellicum.*
5 AML 244 H1 3.

magnates such as the earl of Lancaster who came to the priory on business, received their reward; various people were given gifts by the prioress *pro valitate ecclesie.* To reward services, to guarantee the continued protection and patronage of the great, these 'gifts' were necessary.[1] The canons at Bolton gave money and jewels to their patrons and benefactors, as well as smaller gifts to royal officials and others whom it was deemed necessary to reward.[2] The greater the dignity of the person concerned, the more expensive the gift. Westwood priory sent bread, wine, ale and chickens to Sir John Talbot and Juliana his wife in 1338. The Talbots, descendants of the founders of Westwood priory, were the owners of Richard's Castle.[3] Isabel of Lancaster's accounts show the type and number of gifts she gave: purses, girdles and gloves; doubtless this practice continued when she assumed office.[4] Both the prioress and prior offered gifts to the two brothers who were ordained in 1315: William Coleswain received Mass offerings, Samson a new girdle. When the new bishop of Sarum was consecrated in 1315 the prioress of Amesbury arranged for him to be given a corporal valued at 13s. 4d.[5] The prior of Amesbury also gave gifts to people who were deemed *amici ecclesie*, though not on as grand a scale as did the prioress - £2 recorded in the accounts of Michaelmas 1318-Easter 1319 as against £14 spent by the prioress. He offered gifts at Christmas time to the servants at *The Habit* and others. Gifts to servants and others are recorded in the Nuneaton and Westwood accounts but in neither case is the donor specified.[6] As the representative of the priory in many of its business affairs, the prior was often absent from the house. The prior of Amesbury travelled to Pontefract to confer with the earl of Lancaster; he took the prior of St Lazarus at Sarum to London, presumably on business; each year he and his retinue travelled to Winchester for St Giles' fair, to buy, among other things,

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1 Reciprocal gift-giving was important in medieval society. For gift-giving in the later Middle Ages, much of which applies to the fourteenth century, see F. Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1990). See also Power *op.cit.*, p. 122.
2 Kershaw, *Bolton Priory*, p. 141.
3 *Cal. Cl. Rolls, 1330-33*, p. 124.
4 Account, Isabel of Lancaster, pp. 495-6.
5 Roger Martival was consecrated 28 September 1315.
6 BCL MS Hampton 308; BL Add. Chart. 49727.

supplies for the following year.[1] When the prior of Nuneaton came to Westwood in 1337, he brought eleven horses with him and his sojourn there cost the host priory 2s.6d.[2]

Another constant item of expenditure was the payment of various servants and retainers. None of the accounts makes it clear exactly how much servants were paid. We know, for example, that many of them received liveries of corn but there are also entries specifying cash payments. Stipends to the servants at Amesbury - the *famuli* - are stated to be £12 per annum.[3] In 1318 for the Michaelmas period they amount to £11 8s 4d. This is not helpful, however, as we do not know how many servants were employed. In 1315 between Easter and June 24th, the servants at Amesbury, in addition to their liveries, were given an accompaniment to their meals (companage) to the value of £5.10s. For the harvest of 1315-16 servants in the house at Amesbury were paid £3.10s while those at Letcombe and Falleye received a total 6s. 10d. It is difficult to decide whether the agricultural crisis had any impact on wages. At Bolton priory, for example, in order to introduce economies, not only were the servants' wages lowered but the total number of servants was reduced by half.[4] At Amesbury there is definitely a fluctuation in the amount paid in stipends to *famuli* but there is no constant factor by which we can assess with any accuracy whether this was in response to the worsening agricultural conditions.

The situation of the servants at Westwood is less clear. In 1350 the cook at Westwood received 5s. for 20 weeks' work; the bailiff received the same.[5] The baker and brewer (this seems to have been the same person) was paid 6s. for the same period. These workers probably received liveries of grain as well but this is not stated specifically. At Westwood in

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1 This was one of the more celebrated of the medieval fairs. *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, *op.cit.*, p. 173; D. Keene, 'Survey of Medieval Winchester', *Winchester Studies*, ii (2 vols, Oxford, 1985), ii, pp. 1113-1122.

2 BCL MS Hampton 308.

3 AML 244 H1 3.

4 Kershaw, *Bolton Priory*, pp. 58, 137.

5 BCL MS Hampton 309.

1338, liveries to farm workers averaged half a bushel of grain per week. Other workers received a third or two thirds of a bushel depending it seems, on the level of their work and responsibility. The bailiff of Cotheridge, for example, received two bushels per week. Seasonal workers such as harvesters and carriage drivers at harvest time also had to be paid as did workers on the home farm where, in addition to the harvest, threshing, mowing, weeding and hoeing were necessary. Similar expenses on the priory manors would have been accounted for on manorial accounts, though for some reason the Amesbury accounts include the expenses of the harvest at West Amesbury and Durrington. Bailiffs would have been employed on the manors. We can identify a few of them. The bailiff of Kintbury was Walter Gauteron, of Chesleton, Roger of Chaddleworth and of Boscombe, John Steven.[1] Walter Page was bailiff of Cotheridge, one of the Westwood manors, in the middle of the thirteenth century.[2] In the fourteenth century the bailiff, presumably of the Westwood home farm, was named Thomas.[3]

Lay brothers, some of whom were entrusted with a great deal of responsibility, were employed on monastic estates. Br Robert de Wallop figures prominently in the Amesbury accounts, having bought, on the prioress' orders, such diverse items as millstones, hayforks and herrings.[4] It was still necessary to have an overseer or reeve on each property to look after the priory's interests. Generally the identity of these employees is not known but at Melksham between 1316 and 1318 the reeve was Thomas le Flour. He may have been related to Walter Flour who received an allowance from the priory in 1316.[5] Flour appears to have been a local name. In 1281 a Nicholas Flor was among those who objected to the way in which the prioress of Amesbury, who had recently become lord of Melksham, was administering her estates.[6] The fine detail of how Thomas le Flour administered Melksham on her behalf is not known to us, nor can we calculate how much he or his counterparts received

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1 AML 244 H1 3.
2 BCL MS Hampton 520.
3 *ibid.*, 309.
4 AML 244 H1 3.
5 See above p. 156.
6 *Cal. Cl. Rolls, 1279-1288*, p. 118

for their services. The wages of the bailiffs of Chesleton, Boscombe and Kintbury are recorded in the Amesbury accounts of 1316 but in each case some other item, for example, payments to servants or stipends for a horseman or a stacker, is included in the stated amount. It seems that each bailiff was paid a wage which varied according to the size of the property he managed and the amount of responsibility he exercised. The produce of the manor both in cash and in kind, was administered by him but belonged to the priory.

Other employees included the personal clerks of the prior and prioress. We know that at Amesbury in 1316 the prioress' clerk was John de Pyrebrook, while the prior's was Hugh.[1] Amesbury employed a steward or seneschal, John de Bradley, at 66s.8d. per annum and two men, William Ward and Richard of Eastwood who, for a retaining fee of 13s. 4d. per annum, guarded the liberties of the priory in Wiltshire and Berkshire respectively. William Ward in 1318 arranged a sale of corn to Brother William, the preceptor, but nothing is known of the other man. Employees at Westwood included William of Aston, the prior's preceptor, John the seneschal, Nicholas le Brekar and Richard le Butler. Of these nothing else is known.

In legal matters Amesbury called upon the services of William de Saxton and his associates of London who negotiated for both the house at Amesbury and for the abbess. Richard of Nottingham and Robert Sancery were retained respectively as Amesbury's attorney and clerk at the exchequer.[2] The former was paid 40s. per annum; the latter's annuity is not specified. In a dispute over the tithes of Tidworth, an advocate had to be employed at Sarum, another, or perhaps the same one, when the case moved to London and later Richard Ward defended the plea at the Hundred Court. This entailed extra expenditure, in excess of £3.[3]

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1 See Appendix, p. 258 for Margery of Pyrebrook.
2 Westminster Abbey c.1300 retained at least 35 annuitants, many of them for their legal expertise. *Walter de Wenlok*, pp. 30-33.
3 AML 244 H1 3.

iv) Care of Buildings and Plant

Upkeep of monastery buildings and plant also made demands on the finances. The Amesbury accounts of the first half of 1315 note that necessary repairs had to be done at a cost of £85.[1] The Westwood and Nuneaton documents contain more detail of the expenses of repairing the cloister, thatching the roofs, replacing equipment and mending breaches in the walls. At Nuneaton in 1331-32, for example, repairs to the cloister totalled £4. 8s.[2] At Westwood in 1338, work was done in the convent kitchen, a salt pit at Crutch was repaired, barns and sties were thatched. Wages and materials for this work cost 23s.8d. The 1350 account records that scythes, hoes, spades and axes, material for whitewashing as well as wire, rope, and several grades of nails were bought.[3] All this was necessary if the establishment was to function smoothly but it all made inroads into the cash reserves of the monastery.

It is impossible to know whether Amesbury ever ploughed any of its surplus into its estates to bring about improvements and from the information we have on Westwood and Nuneaton, it is difficult to estimate the extent to which this happened. Work on the Nuneaton cloister in 1331-32, for example, would be classed as domestic improvements, not manorial. Before advancing the argument too far, it is necessary to clarify a few points. These documents and indeed most medieval accounts, fail to distinguish between what has been termed gross investment - repairs and replacements - and net investment - improvements.[4] Which ever way we look at it, one thing is certain, investment did occur and acknowledgement of this alters to some extent our understanding of profit and loss in medieval accounts.[5] Expenditure on such items as pasture improvement, on combating disease in animals, on replacing old and worn out equipment as well as the purchase of new equipment and stock can all be seen as investment in improved productivity and illustrate the fact that these priories were managing their demesnes efficiently.[6] Westwood's accounts for March to August 1338 show that

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1 *ibid.*
2 BL Add. Chart. 49727.
3 BCL MS Hampton 309.
4 See Kershaw, *Bolton Priory*, p. 118.
5 For profit and loss, *ibid.*, p. 113, n. 2.
6 Investment is discussed in J.Z. Titow, *English Rural Society 1200-1350* (London 1969), pp. 49-51.

during twenty weeks this priory spent 25s. on upkeep of equipment, 23s. on repairs to the house and buildings, and that its total investment on repairs and improvements amounted to 14% of all cash expenditure. The figures for May to October 1350 indicate that 10% of cash expenditure can be accounted for under the same heading. If we include the £6 12s. spent on the purchase of new stock then the percentage rises to almost 25%. Furthermore there is evidence that this priory invested in pasture improvement. In the late thirteenth century the prioress and convent obtained portion of a marl pit, expensive though this form of husbandry might have been.[1] Westwood was not alone in reinvesting profits in the upkeep and improvement of its resources. Nuneaton invested in improved methods of sheep husbandry, for example the application of tar and grease to combat disease.[2] Seed corn was bought from external sources to improve the quality of Nuneaton's crops - between September 1331 and April 1332 almost 10% of expenditure was on new seed corn, a further indication of the overall efforts at improving the efficiency of its agrarian economy during the 1330s. New boilers for the furnace, equipment for a new windmill, even a new money table (*tabula de cambio*) for the reeve indicate that at this point Nuneaton priory was serious about improving its performance and investing in the future.

We are justified in assuming then, based on a modicum of evidence, that during the early fourteenth century both Nuneaton and Westwood were re-investing their profits in improvements to stock and plant. Given the smallness of scale of the Westwood enterprise and the limited scope for any re-investment, these did not amount to a great deal but proportionally they were on a par with common practice and show that at this stage both priories were spending the necessary amounts on their estates and certainly not allowing them to run down.[3] Noteworthy, if only because it reinforces previous conclusions about the condition of Nuneaton Priory in 1359-60, is the fact that the accounts we have of that year record nothing which could be classified as re-investment.

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1 BCL MS Hampton 531; See Titow, *op.cit*, p. 49.
2 BL Add. Chart. 49727. See also C. Dyer, 'Documentary Evidence: Problems and Enquiries' in G. Astill and A. Grant edd., *The Countryside of Medieval England* (Oxford, 1988), p. 29.
3 For common practice see Titow, *loc.cit.*

v) Taxation

By this stage the proportions of the monastic enterprise are becoming evident. A monastery was truly a business operation with its own subsidiaries and like any business, as well as collecting dues it had to pay them. The pope, the king, the diocesan, the exchequer all demanded their payments. Papal and royal taxation under Edward I and his son is a complicated business. Entries in the Amesbury accounts for the period 1315-19, however, allow us an insight into the burden of taxation imposed on monasteries during this period when the agricultural and pastoral economy on which they depended so heavily was in a state of crisis.[1] Between May and Michaelmas 1315, for instance, Amesbury paid out £8 15s. in taxes for the king's Scottish campaigns. As well, two payments, each of £78. 3s. were for papal taxes for the Holy Land.[2] The first tax would undoubtedly be payment of the subsidy granted to the king in 1315 by the clergy of Canterbury province; the other, the tenth imposed by pope Clement V at the Council of Vienne in 1311 to finance the Crusade.[3] In the account of Michaelmas 1318-Easter 1319 other payments are tabled: taxes on temporalities and spiritualities in the dioceses of Berkshire and Wiltshire (two payments, each of £5 2s.), Sarum (two payments, each of £ 8 16s.) and in Winchester (£1 19s.). These are records of the tenth granted to Edward II by John XXII in 1317 to relieve his debts and promote the Crusade.[4] Another tax, paid at the beginning of Lent to the Archdeacons of Sarum, Wiltshire and Berkshire, was evidently the 4d.-in-the-mark tax imposed on spiritualities in the province of Canterbury in 1313.[5]

Not only did the taxes have to be paid but clerks had to take the money to the various collection points, and letters of acquittal had to be obtained and paid for. Emissaries travelled

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1 Taxation, both papal and royal, is discussed in W.E. Lunt, *Financial Relations of the Papacy with England to 1327* (Cambridge, Mass., 1939), pp. 366-418 and *id.*, 'Clerical Tenths levied in England by Papal Authority during the reign of Edward II', in *Anniversary Essays in Medieval History by students of Charles Homer Haskins*, ed. C.H. Taylor (Boston/N.Y., 1929), pp. 157-182.

2 AML 244 H1 3

3 Lunt, *Financial Relations*, *op.cit.*, p. 395; *id.*, 'Clerical Tenths' *op.cit.*, pp. 180-81. The king appropriated a substantial proportion of the papal tax to pay his own debts.

4 Lunt, *Financial Relations*, *op.cit.*, p. 404.

5 Lunt, 'Clerical Tenths', *op.cit.*, p. 181.

from Amesbury to Emmet in Yorkshire, to Shaftesbury, Cerne and Abingdon. Between May and Michaelmas 1315 a total of £172 11s. was paid in taxes by Amesbury priory. This, plus the expense involved in making the payment amounted to 62% of the priory's total expenditure during that period. The picture in 1318-19 is a little brighter since by that time payment of the heavy papal tenth had been suspended.[1] During the period from Michaelmas 1318 to Easter 1319, taxes accounted for only 9% of Amesbury's expenditure.

We have no records of the taxes Westwood and Nuneaton were required to pay at this time. Presumably, since Westwood had been exempted from the 1291 taxation, one of the bases of subsequent papal levies, this priory escaped some of the burden.[2] Nuneaton, in a better financial position, probably did not escape and was most likely levied to the same degree, proportionally, as Amesbury.

Other fees and pensions had to be paid: from Amesbury an annual payment of 52s. went to the exchequer for the farm of Melksham; fees and portions of tithe went to the Abbess of Lacock, the Abbot of Hyde and the lords of Ratfyn, Ormington and Durrington.[3] Nuneaton paid 66s. 8d. to William Talbet for his fee, and £5 to Thomas de Blaston for his, as well as tithes of appropriated churches such as Aston, Hodnell and Burton.[4] Westwood paid tithes on the churches of Cotheridge and Droitwich and a fee to the Lord of Cotheridge.[5] Westwood accounts of 1350 show that in that year synodal dues were paid and a total of £5 8s. 4d. rendered in tithes.[6]

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1 Payment of this tax was suspended throughout England on the death of Clement V and the suspension made permanent under his successor John XXII.
2 See Lunt 'Clerical Tenths', *loc.cit.*, for the bases of papal taxes.
3 AML 244 H1 3.
4 BL Add. Chart. 49727.
5 BCL MS Hampton 308.
6 *ibid.*, 309.

Amesbury had the additional burden of attending to the business affairs of the abbess. During the thirteenth century monks from Grovebury priory had performed this task, but early in the fourteenth century Grovebury was confiscated by Edward I and put into the hands of his daughter Mary.[1] Amesbury thus became the centre of the abbess' business negotiations, for collecting the money from the abbess' farms and paying it to Fontevraud. When Maunger, the abbess' emissary, and his assistant came to England in 1315, their travelling expenses were met by the prioress of Amesbury. Negotiations in London on the abbess' behalf meant that a certain William de Saxton had to be paid 20s. Gifts were also made to Fontevraud: a *tabula* costing 33s. 4d was made for the abbess by Henry Mason of Sarum and paid for by Amesbury. It is possible that Amesbury was reimbursed for these expenses. There is, however, no record of it in the priory accounts.

That this caused some hardship to the monastery is evident. By 1341 the situation was such that the king complained to the abbess that her practice of granting corrodies and liveries, of sending nuns as well as chaplains, lay brethren and others from Fontevraud to live at Amesbury was causing a burden. She was asked to desist. The king conceded that visitation could continue but stipulated that the retinue of the officials was to be modest and their business concluded as quickly as possible. Amesbury in turn was forbidden to admit any nuns sent by the mother house.[2] How much this complaint was fact, and how much a grievance against an abbess from the country with which England was officially at war, is a matter of conjecture. It is probably not a coincidence that in 1343 Brother Robert of Westwood was required to apply for a special licence to attend the general chapter at Fontevraud because it was feared that he might reveal secrets of the realm. Anti-French feeling was obviously high.

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1 See above p. 78 and *VCH Bedford*, i, pp. 403,404. Fontevraud had possessions in England since the time of Henry I (BN MS lat. 5480, fo. 267). For confiscation see *Cal. Cl. Rolls, 1302-7*, p. 269.

2 See, for example, *Cal. Cl. Rolls, 1341-43* p. 131.

vi) Almsgiving

Finally in our analysis of the expenditure of Westwood, Nuneaton and Amesbury let us consider how much income was devoted to the traditional activity of monasteries - almsgiving.[1] The evidence we have suggests that only a small proportion of funds was spent on almsgiving but our evidence is scant. The Statutes of Fontevraud stated that leftovers from meals were to be given to the poor.[2] Whether, by the fourteenth century, this precept was still being observed is questionable. At Westminster, for example, this source of food for the poor was unpredictable, varying with the liturgical season, the feast, and the number of anniversaries being commemorated.[3] Furthermore, leftovers which should have been distributed at the monastery gate were often directed to feeding lesser servants.[4] It follows that we are not at liberty to assume that the poor continued to be fed by the leftovers from the tables at Amesbury, Westwood and Nuneaton. What we do know is that alms were distributed by the prior and prioress of Amesbury on Maundy Thursday. The cost of this bread was 2s. 2d. - certainly not a great deal.[5] Isabel of Lancaster distributed money on Maundy Thursday and gave three cloaks from Cornwall to the poor.[6] This gesture could be as much a donation from a noble woman as from a nun at Amesbury. Nuneaton in 1535 allotted 92s. annually in weekly alms of corn, herrings, bread and ale, and a further 45s. for special provisions for Maundy Thursday.[7] The latter was funded by a bequest from Amice, countess of Leicester and must have been in place since the early days of the foundation. Amesbury at the time of the dissolution was distributing alms to the value of 45s. funded by bequests from Henry II.[8] These consisted, in part, of red and white herrings and were to be distributed during Lent, and on Sundays in honour of Henry I. A further allocation of 28s. from an unspecified source was for distribution on the feast of St Thomas Becket for the soul of Henry II.[9] As with Nuneaton, these alms date from the earliest times. Westwood has no record of alms

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1 On charity in medieval monasteries see Harvey, *Living and Dying*, ch. 1, *passim.*
2 *Praecepta Recte Vivendi* § VIII (PL clxii, 1083).
3 Harvey, *Living and Dying*, pp. 13-15.
4 *Black Monks*, i, pp. 37, 79; *ibid.*, ii, p. 47, cited in Harvey, *Living and Dying*, p. 174.
5 AML 244 H1 3.
6 Account, Isabel of Lancaster, p. 498.
7 *VE* iii. p. 77.
8 *ibid.*, ii. p. 95.
9 *ibid.*

distribution, even though the income of this priory in 1535 was in excess of the £50 below which monasteries were excused from practising charity.[1] This does not mean that Westwood priory did not distribute alms, simply that we have no record of it. Overall, almsgiving at any of the three monasteries does not amount to much but it could be that the picture we have is inaccurate. The nuns and chaplains of Westwood, Amesbury and Nuneaton may have given alms individually, from their own private resources, but we have no record of this.

CONCLUSIONS

Our examination of the internal affairs of the three priories leads us to conclude that generally each responded to changing times in a constructive manner. The centralised system of government which was characteristic of the order of Fontevraud overall was advantageous to the priories allowing them to utilise the resources of the order and to deploy personnel where they were most needed. There were, of course, some problems and this is to be expected, but in the fourteenth century, under the strong leadership of Eleanor of Brittany the order in England seems to have prospered and weathered the setbacks of an agricultural crisis, internal dissension at Nuneaton and chronic poverty at Westwood. Whatever else, all three seem to have presented a picture of success to the outside world. Not only did their numbers remain constant in the early fourteenth century, but in each house a large contingent of nuns was consecrated during the decade between 1327 and 1337.[2] The criteria by which success is measured are often questionable. Nevertheless, it is evident that women opting to join a religious order at this time saw the priories of Amesbury, Westwood and Nuneaton as places where their aspirations could be fulfilled.

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1 Savine, *op.cit.*, p. 239.
2 See Appendix pp. 256-8, 260, 261.

CHAPTER 5: EXPLOITATION OF ASSETS I: LAND AND PRODUCE

The pattern of property exploitation by twelfth and thirteenth century landlords was a move away from demesne farming towards direct management. In the fourteenth century, particularly after the Black Death, the pattern changed again, with a return to demesne leasing and its assured profits. Given that monastic estates usually mirrored their lay counterparts, one could expect this pattern to prevail in religious foundations and generally speaking this was the case. Ecclesiastical landlords such as the Bishop of Winchester and the Abbot of Westminster directed their enterprises in a manner little different from the great secular landlords and both secular and ecclesiastical landlords aimed to produce marketable surpluses as well as grain and livestock for consumption in the household. But it is a moot point whether women religious participated in economic affairs with the same intention. Some modern writers appear anxious to assign to nuns an inferior role. Statements such as: *on the whole commercial enterprise on the part of nunneries appears limited and may reflect the passive economic role deemed appropriate for religious women*,[1] suggest that an investigation into the way in which the English houses of Fontevraud exploited their resources will yield, at best, disappointing results. If we follow these interpretations we cannot expect these priories to continue acquiring lands after their initial endowments; production on their estates is likely to be solely for consumption and not for cash surpluses, management will be in the hands of lessees rather than bailiffs and reeves and we might search in vain for signs of any commercial activity. Yet the reverse is true. Evidence indicates that the women who lived in the Amesbury, Westwood and Nuneaton monasteries exploited their assets vigorously and while they may not have geared their agricultural economy for market production, they managed their affairs with a creditable degree of success. What is more, they were responsible for far-sighted and imaginative policies of expansion and exploitation, some of which had long-term effects not only on the priory lands but on the history and character of the entire region.

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1 R. Gilchrist, *Gender and Material Culture: The Archaeology of Religious Women* (London, 1994), p. 86.

Moreover, the exploitation of assets, though subject to the ultimate and absolute authority of the abbess of Fontevraud, was directed locally by the prioress and convent of the house in question. Documents referring to the English houses indicate that in almost all instances grants of land or other assets were made to the prioress and nuns of a particular location; occasionally the prior is mentioned; rarely the other brethren. Policies were enunciated in charters issued on the authority of the prioress, prior and the convent of which the chaplains were but a small minority.[1] This is not to suggest that the prior and more frequently the receiver did not take an active role in administration. They, together with lay officers, certainly did. We know, for example that Amesbury employed a seneschal by the name of John de Bradley; Westwood also had a steward to manage its affairs.[2] But in the Fontevraud scheme of things the prior and chaplains as well as the priory officials, were subject to the authority of the abbess, and in each local house, to her representative the prioress.[3] We have no grounds for believing that the engagement of lay and religious administrators meant that the nuns were not in ultimate control. Even if the nuns were not all fluent in the language of administration they would nevertheless have kept well informed of the state of affairs both on demesne land and on the manors and other holdings. We can assume that practice in each priory was the result of policy formulated by women many of whom were economically competent and actively involved in managing their patrimony.

This chapter and the next are devoted to an examination of the resources these women administered and an assessment of their success in exploiting them. Property was basically in the form of spiritualities or temporalities. The former included tithes, alms, offerings, mortuaries and legacies. Strictly speaking they were not subject to direct exploitation though the appropriation of churches during the thirteenth century in order to obtain the greater tithe, and the renting of the glebe may fall into this category.[4] Exploitation is more evident in the income derived from temporalities - rents from customary tenants, the utilisation of agricultural

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1 Note the figures in Table 1, p. 154.
2 See above p. 185.
3 See above pp. 62-64.
4 Coldicott, *op.cit.*, pp. 106-108.

and pastoral lands and of capital resources such as mills, and industrial processes. This topic will be considered first. It is not intended to provide a detailed study of the economy of all or of any of the priory manors. Individual manors and their economies are important to this study only to the degree that they contributed to the economy of each priory. They will not be considered in any other context. The focus will be the first half of the fourteenth century where, for each of the priories, there is documentation which serves to emphasise the energetic participation of the nuns in the world of commerce and/or industry thus providing a picture of religious women who obviously did not deem it appropriate to assume a passive role.

ESTATES

The main resource possessed by any monastery was its land. Those who founded monasteries endowed them with land; much of the income of monasteries in cash and in kind, came from tenants who paid rent for their tenure of land and a significant proportion of the remaining income, both cash and grain, derived from agricultural and pastoral exploitation of the land. As monasteries accumulated wealth they invested it in more land since at the time this was the only secure form of long term investment.

The unit of land exploitation was the manor. Sometimes this was geographically close to the monastery; sometimes it was at a considerable distance from it. Manors which were close to the monastery and especially the manorial demesnes, generally constituted the home farm and were supervised directly.[1] The home farm of Nuneaton, for example, comprised the manors of Eton, Attleborough and Stockingford - that which before the foundation of the priory had been the lordship of Eton. More distant manors such as Hodnell and Harbury functioned as independent units, under the direction of representatives of the priory, visited from time to time by priory officials and rendering an account to the prioress or an obedientiary at set times of the year. Westwood home farm comprised the manors of Westwood, Clerhall and Crutch while other manors such as Cotheridge operated independently.

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[1] *ibid.*, p. 110; also P.D.A. Harvey, *op.cit.*, pp. 1,2.

All manors, even the most distant, would have made some contribution to the priory income either with rents or with liveries of produce. However, it is impossible to determine the extent to which any of the manors of Westwood, Nuneaton and Amesbury supported the central enterprise. Cellarers' accounts, no doubt, recorded the amount of stock and produce from the home farm and manors which the monastery consumed, but extant material provides little evidence of what actually passed from field to larder. For instance, the Amesbury accounts of Michaelmas 1315 to Easter 1316 tell us that some of the rent from Bultford manor was paid in sheep and mutton for the priory.[1] A similar entry can be found in the accounts for 1318-19 and may indicate a permanent arrangement between this manor and the priory.[2] We do not know, however, what quantity of mutton was delivered. Westwood accounts record occasional stock and small amounts of grain expended as liveries to the convent or the Habit and give detail of grain used in brewing.[3] Once again, however, the figures are inconclusive. One Nuneaton document gives precise detail of grain liveries which eight manors made to this priory.[4] Unfortunately we do not know what other contributions these manors made. Distant manors often were controlled by a representative of the priory, a bailiff or reeve, sometimes a lay brother, who managed the estates in the priory's interest. At the beginning of the fourteenth century, the Amesbury manors of Kintbury and Boscombe were respectively managed by the bailiffs Walter Gauteron and John Steven, while that of Wallop was the charge of Brother Robert, a lay brother.[5] Lay brothers supervised the Nuneaton manors of Horeston and Burton, bailiffs the others.[6] Although as a rule the purpose of the manor was to support the central monastic enterprise, manors did not always end up with a cash surplus. In the accounting year of 1315-16 for example, Amesbury monastery had to pay out 66s. to the bailiff of Boscombe in wages for servants, for work on the barn and the wages of a dairy hand as that manor did not have enough cash to cover these expenses.[7] A similar problem existed in Chaddleworth and Kintbury the following year; the bailiffs needed assistance from Amesbury to pay their staff. This may be an illustration of the difficulty of some manors,

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1 AML 244 H1 3.
2 *ibid.*
3 BCL MS Hampton 308-9.
4 BL Add. Chart. 49467. See below p. 214.
5 AML 244 H1 3.
6 BL Add. Chart. 49467.
7 AML 244 H1 3.

especially those which sent the bulk of their produce to the centre, in maintaining a cash flow. On the other hand these payments may have been exceptional because of the agricultural crisis. Whichever is the case, they do indicate that commerce between the home farm and the satellite manors was not entirely one-way.

RENTS

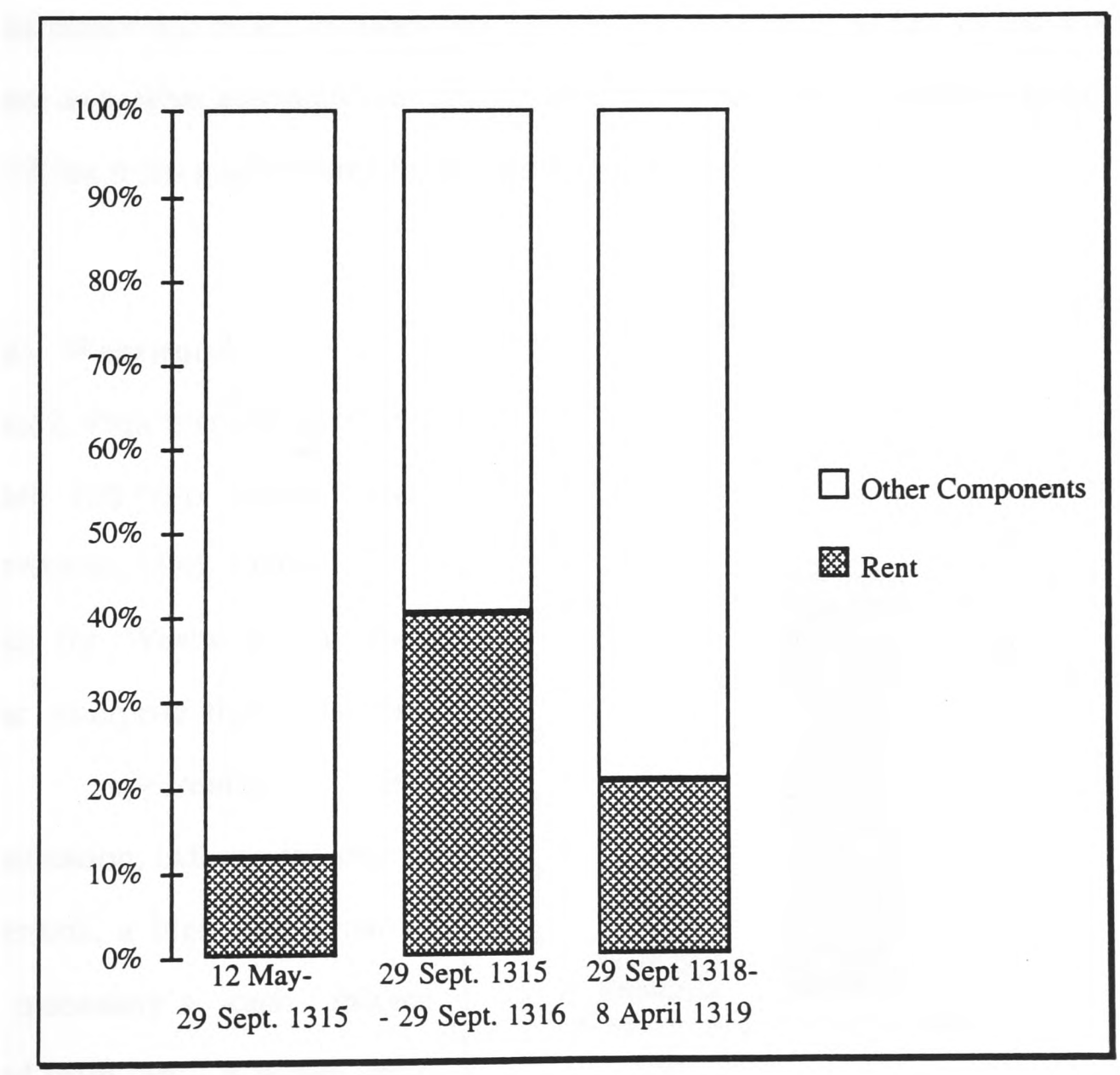
Since produce not consumed by the monastery could be sold for cash, land was the source of income both in cash and in kind. Of the three Fontevraud foundations, Amesbury seems to have had the highest cash income; the other two apparently depended more on income in kind from their manors. With the growth of the market economy during the thirteenth century, cash became increasingly important. Priories such as Nuneaton and Westwood which consumed the greater part of their corn income were dependent on other sources of cash income, in particular on rent. In the analysis of priory income which follows, to achieve a realistic picture of the importance of rental income for each of the priories, rent will be considered as a discrete element - that is, distinct from entry fines, tallage, compulsory levies, heriots or any other payments made to the priories by their tenants. This is necessary to achieve parity among the houses. Amesbury records provide consistent details of entry fines but of the three priories this one derived a considerable amount of cash income from the sale of produce and was thus the least reliant on rent. Records of the other two priories contain only sketchy details of entry fines and rent-related income. Later in the discussion, when all components of cash income are analysed, entry fines will be considered together with rent. At this point, however, to avoid skewing the figures, for each of the priories, rents are taken in isolation from any other source of income.

i) Amesbury

From 1315 to 1319 cash income from rents accounted for between 12% and 30% of Amesbury's total cash income as is illustrated in Figure 1. The actual amount collected in the three periods represented was respectively, £33 16s., £273, and £97 4s., the largest amount being for the complete accounting year. Theoretically, rents exclusive of entry fines should

have produced a rather consistent and reliable income but as these figures suggest, and as the repeated inclusion of arrears in the accounts indicates, this was not always so. Since, however, this period corresponds to the agricultural crisis, some inconsistencies can be expected. It is also possible that rental income came in unequally over the year as a whole, thus affecting the percentages recorded in 1315 and 1318-19. While in money terms the amount collected in rents increased, the value of other components in the cash income did not remain constant so, when expressed as a percentage of the total cash income, the rental figures vary.

FIGURE 1: PERCENTAGE OF CASH INCOME DERIVED FROM RENT, AMESBURY 1315-1319.[1]



One item which distorts the importance of the 1315-1316 returns is a 'one off' receipt of £73 for the farming of Chaddleworth manor. This manor is problematic. Originally presented to Eleanor of Brittany by her grandmother, Eleanor of Provence, its chief purpose was to provide

1 *ibid.*

a living for the former during her lifetime as a nun at Amesbury after which it was to be possessed in free alms by that monastery.[1] Soon after the death of her grandmother, Eleanor of Brittany moved to Fontevraud and in 1304 was elected abbess. During the final decade of the thirteenth century an arrangement was entered into by which the manor was farmed for three years in order to pay Amesbury's debts.[2] The actual status of the manor in 1315-19 is uncertain. In three of the four receivers' accounts there is no return for its farming. On the other hand, produce from the manor, the value of multure, fines and perquisites of the manorial court are listed as income. If profits from Chaddleworth were technically the property of Eleanor of Brittany, they would, no doubt, have been passed on to her at some point, although there is no extant record of this having happened. It is possible that at some time the manor was ceded to Amesbury but we have no record of this. In the absence of any evidence as to what ultimately was done with the £73 it has been included in rental income for 1315-16 but it has made returns for this year disproportionately large.

ii) Westwood.

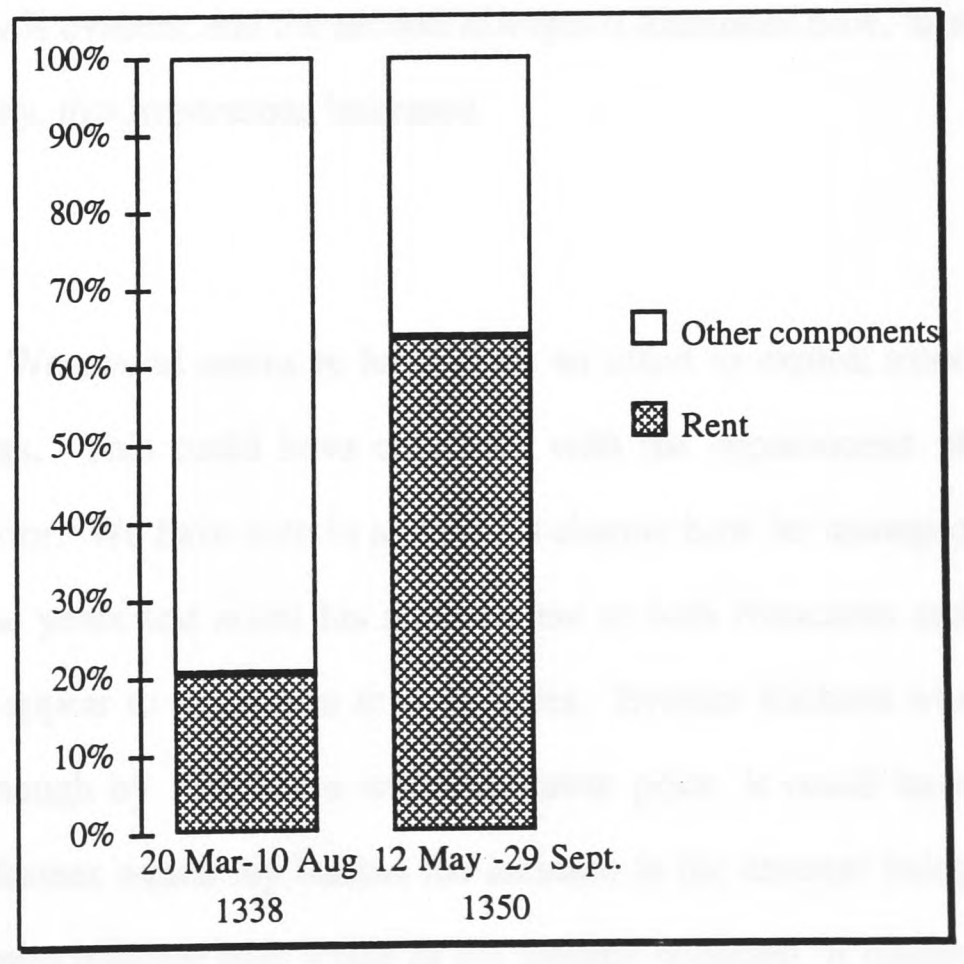


FIGURE 2: PERCENTAGE OF CASH INCOME DERIVED FROM RENT, WESTWOOD, 1338, 1350.[3]

Figures for Westwood, a much smaller enterprise than Amesbury with, apparently, less diversification, indicate for one of the periods, a high proportion of that monastery's cash income derived from rent. It would seem that for cash income Westwood relied more heavily on rents than did Amesbury. These figures, taken from accounts which

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1 See above p. 105.
2 *Mon. Ang.* ii, p. 338 (IX), .
3 BCL MS Hampton 308, 309. See above pp. 168-69.

are less detailed than those of the Amesbury prior/receiver, in all probability refer specifically to the Westwood home farm. For the most part they exclude reference to any of the other priory manors. As they stand they draw attention to the importance of sources of cash income which are not mentioned. To illustrate: in 1338 the actual amount taken in rents over a twenty-week period was £2 8s.; in 1350 over a similar period it was £9 19s. If this was the total cash income, it would have been far below that needed to maintain a community of more than forty nuns and chaplains. We must conclude that Westwood had sources of cash income of which we are ignorant.[1] Comparisons between these two sets of data are legitimate provided that we keep in mind that the first amount included rents received on the two rent days of the Annunciation and St John the Baptist, the second, that received on St John the Baptist, St Giles, the Assumption and Michaelmas. This explains, in part, why the second figure is higher. A two-month variation between March and May as the beginning of the accounting should not make a vast difference to the value of other sources of cash income. Even though the amount received in each case is in itself quite small, the importance of rents in the overall cash income of this priory is evident, and the second histogram illustrates how, in a social climate of increasing uncertainty, that importance increased.

Between 1338 and 1350 someone at Westwood seems to have made an effort to exploit more fully the potential of priory holdings. This could have coincided with the appointment of Brother Richard of Greneburgh as prior. We have seen in a previous chapter how he managed Amesbury finances during the famine years and noted his appointment to both Nuneaton and Westwood when these monasteries appear to have been in difficulties. Brother Richard was prior of Westwood in 1342 and although by 1350 there was a different prior, it could have been the administrative skills of the former which lay behind the increase in the amount being collected in that year.[2] The 1350 figures indicate both a rise in the amount collected in money terms and an increase in the proportion of rents in the total income, the other components of the cash income not having varied significantly. This was a time when, with the effects of the

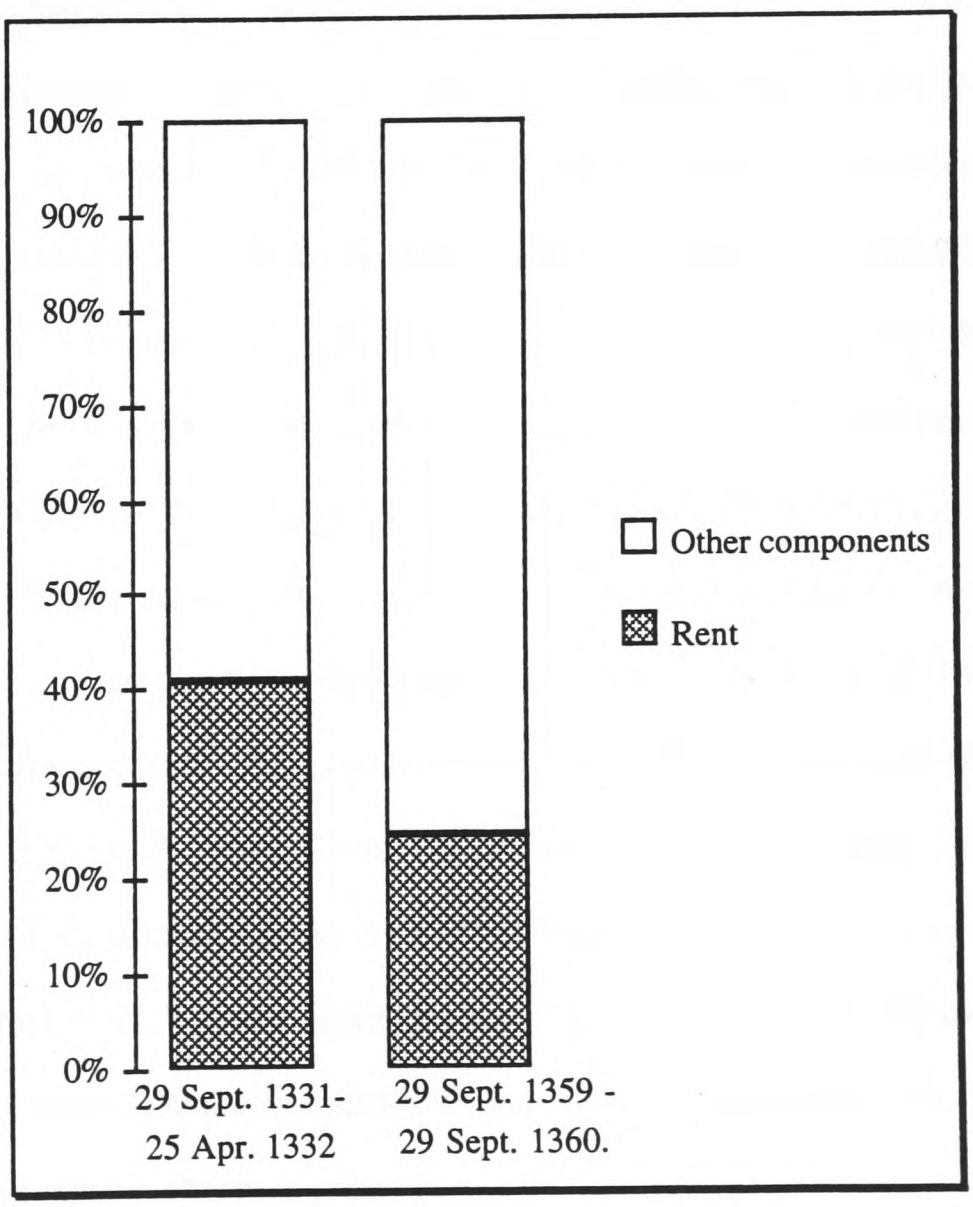
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1 See above pp. 167-70.
2 See BCL MS Hampton 457.

Black Death beginning to be manifest, we might reasonably expect rental income to show a decline, yet the opposite is evident. It is conceivable that these figures may include entry fines not explicitly mentioned as such. The fact that they are not mentioned elsewhere supports this explanation, especially since, after the Black Death, one would expect them to increase. One heriot, recorded separately, is not included in these figures. Representatives of the priory may have been anxious to get what returns they could before the situation worsened. They may have been taking a hard line, or less inclined to give credit, or to accept delays in payment.

iii) Nuneaton

FIGURE 3. PERCENTAGE OF CASH INCOME DERIVED FROM RENT, NUNEATON, 1331-2; 1359-60.[1]



Nuneaton's figures suggest the reverse of trends at Westwood, but need to be examined in a broader context. Overall the picture presented by these graphs is misleading; there is much supplementary information which illustrates more clearly the importance of rents to this priory. Unfortunately, there are the only two instances in which we can calculate rental in come as a proportion of total cash income: these are illustrated in the histogram. A rental of 1326-27 had assessed the annual rental value of the burgage development in Nuneaton (*Eton citra aquam*) at £6 11s.[2] Holdings on the far side of the river Anker (*Eton ultra aquam*) were worth £2 2s. 3d. annually and miscellaneous holdings in the town £1 16s. 3d. Thus rents in the

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1 BL Add. Chart. 49727, 49728.

2 *ibid.*, 49465. The manuscript gives no date other than the regnal year - 20 Edward II.

town of Nuneaton itself, exclusive of other holdings at Stockingford and Attleborough or any of the other possessions, had the potential to bring the priory c.£11 per annum. Whether or not the potential of these holdings was fully exploited during the 1320's is uncertain. These were, as we have seen, troubled years at Nuneaton.[1] It is possible that, with the main energies of those in administration elsewhere engaged, economic affairs were not given due importance. From a visitation report we know that by 1328 the priory was £250 in debt.[2] Within six years, however, things had improved dramatically. While we have no idea if, in the early 1330's, the priory was solvent, rental income was certainly higher than it had previously been. In twenty weeks from Michaelmas 1331 to 25 April 1332, £18 8s. was collected from rents in the vill of Nuneaton and on various manors but there is no way of knowing what the annual total might have been.[3] Rents received by prior Richard of Etinton during the twelve month period beginning 23 April 1332 from the vill itself and Nuneaton-beyond-the-river totalled £14 11s. - an increase of 41% on what could normally have been expected according to the 1326-27 valuation.[4] What is more, when we add to this amount rent received from properties outside Nuneaton, the total received in rent for 1332-33 was in excess of £40, and the inclusion of rent-related income such as compulsory levies on tenants, the farming of the market place in Nuneaton and of land at Waltham, brings the total to £55. Yet while this amount appears quite healthy, there is no standard with which to compare it, and we have no idea of total cash income for the priory for that year. The verso of the 1332-33 roll was drawn up to receive the figures for the following year but few of them have been entered. The total rental income registered is £30 but the annual total cannot be calculated. Taking this material at its face value and aware of its imperfections, it is nevertheless feasible to conclude that the situation in Nuneaton had improved from the years of debt which followed the famine and the period of dissension and that rents in the town itself, in the monastic demesnes and in properties further afield were being successfully exploited. The prior's account of rent received during 1332-3 is the only document which gives a clear exposition of the contribution from some of the more distant properties, and according to this account the situation appears

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1 See above pp. 142-43.
2 BL Add. Chart. 47398.
3 *ibid.*, 49727.
4 *ibid.*, 49709.

quite healthy.[1] On the basis of this and other documents we can conclude that following the troubled years of the 1320's the priory was on its feet again and exploiting its assets to full advantage.

The increase in returns from rents in Nuneaton vill needs some explanation. It could be the work of Brother Richard of Greneburgh, prior from 1328, who seems to have been an expert on restoring to equilibrium the finances of the Fontevraud monasteries.[2] It is tempting to see his hand behind an extensive and very detailed rental of Nuneaton, Attleborough, Stockingford and Wyken prepared by priory officials in May 1335 and a companion rental of other priory manors dated a month later which together point to the implementation of a policy of increasing rental returns, but this may be taking speculation too far.[3] The two documents do suggest that by 1335 some reorganisation of the priory rental records either was in process or already had taken place. They are more detailed than the rental of 1326-27 and list in meticulous detail free tenants, serfs, and tenants at will, with a record of the terms of rent of each. Tenants who were obliged to pay pannage or suit of court or a heriot (in an urban setting some particular chattel) or a payment in lieu of heriot were listed, as were those had taken leases at an agreed rent with the understanding that if buildings were placed on the property they would have to pay an increase.[4] Within the vill, holders of burgage plots had their terms of lease recorded. Tenants with a shop (*selda*) on their block were charged a minimum of 1½d. *incrementum* on their initial rent of 15d., in accordance with an improvement in the value of their property; those with access, possibly from a back street or lane, paid extra for this as did those who, in addition to their burgage block, made use of nearby enclosed wasteland.[5] No item was omitted.

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1 *ibid.*
2 *ibid.*, 47794, 48539. See above pp. 165-6.
3 *ibid.*, 49466, 49468.
4 On payment of heriot: Hemmeon, *op.cit.*, p. 22.
5 This is discussed below, p. 237.

Evidently, by 1335, tenants were being more strictly scrutinised than they had been previously and whether John de Wappenbury, then prior, was responsible for the change, or whether he and others in the house had been coached in administration by Richard de Greneburgh can only be guessed at. The documents are certainly the product of the organised mind of a capable administrator. Prior Richard had a good record in both departments. It is, of course, possible that several documents of similar quality had been produced between 1327 and 1335 and that these are the only ones to have survived. However, it is not unrealistic to suggest that there is a thread of causality connecting the state of the priory finances in 1328, the appointment of Brother Richard as prior, the increase in revenue received during the 1330s, and these very detailed rentals of 1335.

The rentals allow us to assess the value of rents in 1335 at c.£44 per annum, exclusive of any levies on tenants, of any rent-related income, of escheats or arrears. This applies to the home farm, to Nuneaton vill, and seven manors. It represents an increase of 10% on the amount received in 1332-33 by prior Richard de Etinton but we do not know if this potential was ever realised. Unfortunately no records have survived which might tell us how much rent was collected in the years immediately following the compilation of these documents.

The next document which contains figures for cash income for Nuneaton priory is dated 1359-60, an account of income from rents, tolls, market dues and pannage in the vill of Nuneaton, compiled by Richard de Caldecote.[1] As the histogram illustrates, by this time the relative importance of rent in the total cash income had dropped from 40% to 25%. What it does not tell us is that for this particular year the total recorded cash income was less than £40, of which rental income accounted for £7 4s. Clearly, something was gravely wrong in Nuneaton at this time. The less than accurate accounting procedures evident in the document and the question of Richard de Caledcote's status have already been discussed. In the present context some

[1] BL Add. Chart. 49728.

explanation of such a remarkable decrease in rental income must be tendered. This account refers specifically to the vill of Nuneaton where, in 1335, the potential annual income from rents was in excess of £22.[1] The obvious explanation is that, following the Black Death, tenants were scarce and many holdings were vacant. Another is that once more the priory was torn by internal strife. In the years following the Plague, discipline, it seems, had become lax. A report on discipline at Nuneaton by a canon of York in 1366 contained the extraordinary charge that the prioress was not a Christian.[2] The same report revealed that the prior was illiterate and that the convent was suspected of various crimes. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to investigate this matter but if this situation had already developed by 1359 the state of the priory's economy is hardly surprising.

Other Sources of Cash Income

Sale of manorial produce was the other chief source of cash income from land. Those goods produced on priory manors which were not consumed domestically could subsequently be sold for cash. As far as we can see, Westwood and Nuneaton consumed the bulk of their produce and so had little left over for sale, but the Amesbury accounts point to the fact that this priory was able to sell some of its produce to supplement its cash income. Wool was an important item, but carcasses, skins and horns of stock, livestock, grain and vegetables such as beans all contributed to the total. Services such as pannage rendered on the manor are not classed as manorial produce but in the following analysis of components of cash income, are grouped as 'other'. Additional income gained, for example, from the sale of corrodies or from sources which are ambiguous such as £20 received at Amesbury in alms from Agnes of La Folie, are also accounted for as 'other'. In this analysis, as distinct from in the earlier investigations, entry fines, an integral part of the tenurial system, have been added to rental income to denote a single component of the priory's cash income. The proportion of rent in the overall cash income is, therefore, likely to vary slightly from that presented earlier in the discussion, but in most cases the variation is minimal.

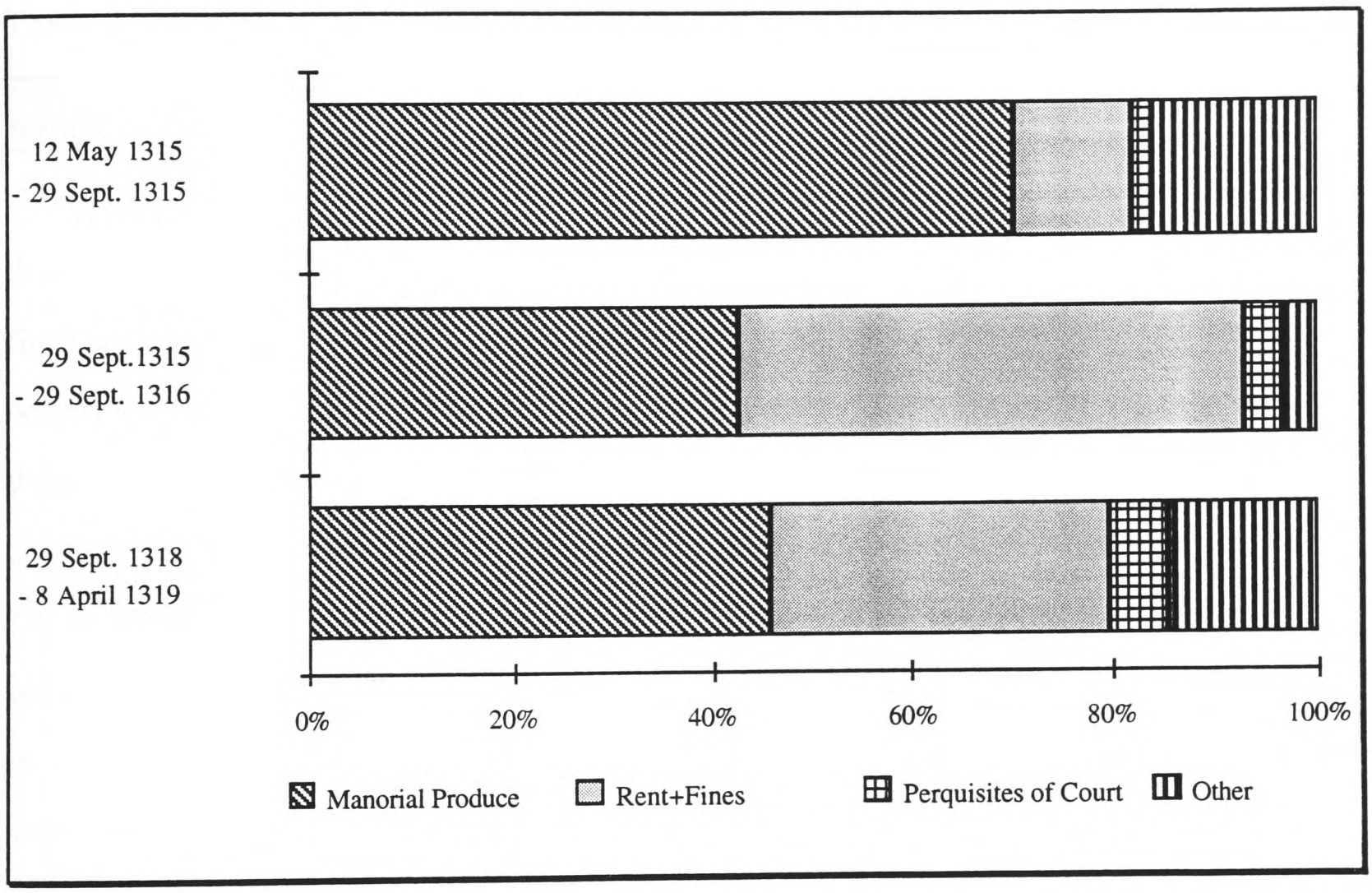
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1 *ibid.*, 49466.
2 AML 245 H2 12-14.

i) Amesbury

The accompanying graph illustrates the value of other components of Amesbury's cash income between 1315 and 1319. We do not know if the records for the twenty weeks between May and September 1315 were typical of Amesbury's economy. Other evidence would suggest the contrary.

FIGURE 4. COMPONENTS OF CASH INCOME, AMESBURY, 1315-1319.[1]



However, using returns from this period as a baseline we can explain the low return from manorial produce in 1316 by the agricultural crisis, and the higher return for the period beginning September 1318 by the gradual lessening of the effects of this crisis. During the years from 1315 to 1319 Amesbury made at least £87 from the sale of wheat at Letcombe, £43 from the sale of beans at Letcombe and Challow, £80 from the sale of horns, hides and carcasses, and £30 from the sale of livestock. At Amesbury, as at Bolton priory in Yorkshire, it was the old and weak stock, the *debilitates,* that were generally sold and as the years of the agricultural crisis continued, this item appears with increasing frequency in the accounts.[2]

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1 As indicated in receiver's accounts, AML 244 H1 3.
2 For sale of stock at Bolton: Kershaw, *Bolton Priory,* p. 83.

An important ingredient in Amesbury's cash income was entry fines. For the accounting year 1315-16, twenty eight fines were recorded as the accompanying table illustrates. Fines ranged in value from 2s. to £10 with the most frequently occurring fine being either 10s. or £1. Some of the larger fines were paid in instalments. At Wallop Robert le Eyr paid £8 in three instalments; at Kintbury John Hachard paid £10 in three instalments. The average fine paid at Amesbury that year was c.£2.8s.

TABLE 1: ENTRY FINES LEVIED ON AMESBURY MANORS, 1315-1316.[1]

FINE	2s.	5s.	6s. 8d.	10s.	13s.4d.	£1	£1 6s. 8d.	£2	£3 6s. 8d.	£5	£6 13s 4d.	£8	£10
FREQUENCY	1	1	2	5	3	5	1	2	2	2	1	1	2

A similar pattern is evident in the fines levied in the first half of 1318-1319. The nineteen fines from this period ranged in value from 3s. 4d to 13 marks with 6s. 8d., £1 and £2 occurring most frequently. Analysis of practices on other manors has led to the calculation that in the Midlands at the beginning of the fourteenth century, on a customary virgate the annual rental value of which was £1, an entry fine varying from £5 to £10 might be imposed.[2] Those imposed by the canons at Bolton Priory in Yorkshire at the beginning of the fourteenth century ranged between 10s. and £2.[3] On the Amesbury manors as well as at Bolton, the size of the actual holdings in question is unknown but it does seem that entry fines at Amesbury were proportionately higher than those at Bolton. Since these entry fines for Amesbury were imposed during the famine years they might be giving a false picture; in less difficult times they might have been higher still. This probably reflects the fact that the demand for land in the south of England was greater than in the north. On the estates of Glastonbury Abbey and on those of the Bishop of Winchester the entry fines were much higher than average, reflecting the large areas of pasture associated with these holdings and, clearly, anyone capable of paying these fines was not a 'peasant' in the ordinary sense of the word.[4]

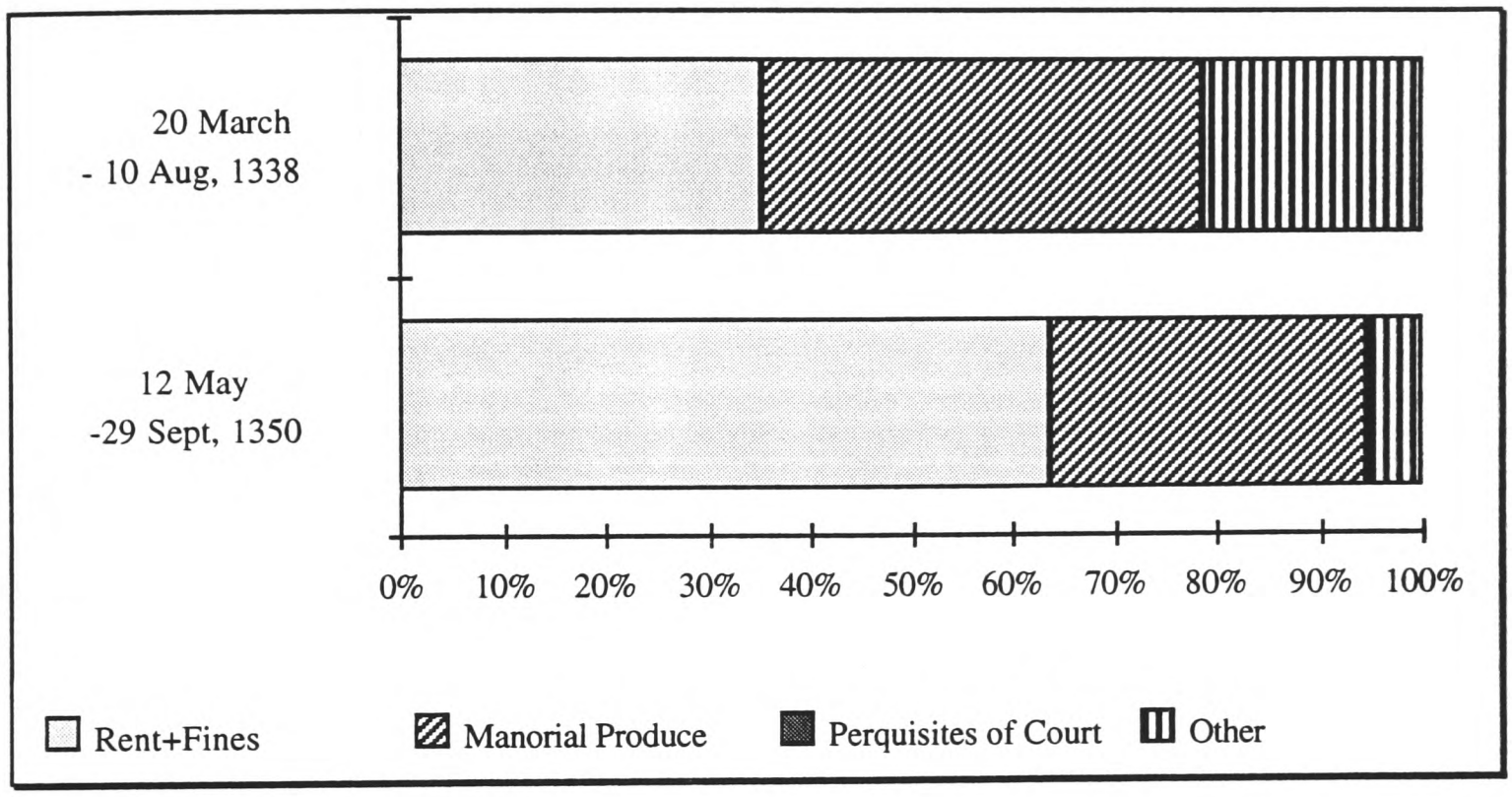
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1 AML 244 H1 3.
2 C. Dyer, 'Documentary Evidence: Problems and Enquiries', *op.cit.*, p. 32.
3 Kershaw, *Bolton Priory*, p. 28.
4 *ibid.* Glastonbury Abbey fines are discussed in J.Z. Titow, 'Some Differences Between Manors and their Effects on the Condition of the Peasant in the Thirteenth Century', *Agricultural History Review*, x (1962), pp. 1-13.

ii) Westwood

Figures we have for Westwood show a different picture, as is to be expected, Westwood being smaller and with fewer resources than Amesbury.

FIGURE 5. COMPONENTS OF CASH INCOME, WESTWOOD, 1338, 1350.[1]



The nature of the Westwood documents prevents any detailed examination of the elements in the income of this priory. It is evident, however, that manorial produce did not make as significant a contribution to overall cash income in the period from May to September 1350 as it had done in the six months of 1338 for which we have returns. This could be due to a number of factors. As well as the obvious explanation of the Plague, the bailiff could have been holding grain until prices were higher, the wool buyers may not have arrived, stock may have been in better condition and therefore not have been sold. Manorial produce was generally consumed at Westwood and therefore the contribution it made to overall cash income was not great in actual money terms. As we have already noted, the figures for 1350 show an increase in the proportion of income derived from rents. Westwood material contains no record of perquisites of court, although the prioress or her representatives certainly held court and thus there would have been some income from this source.[2] However, the documents which we are using for reference do not indicate it.

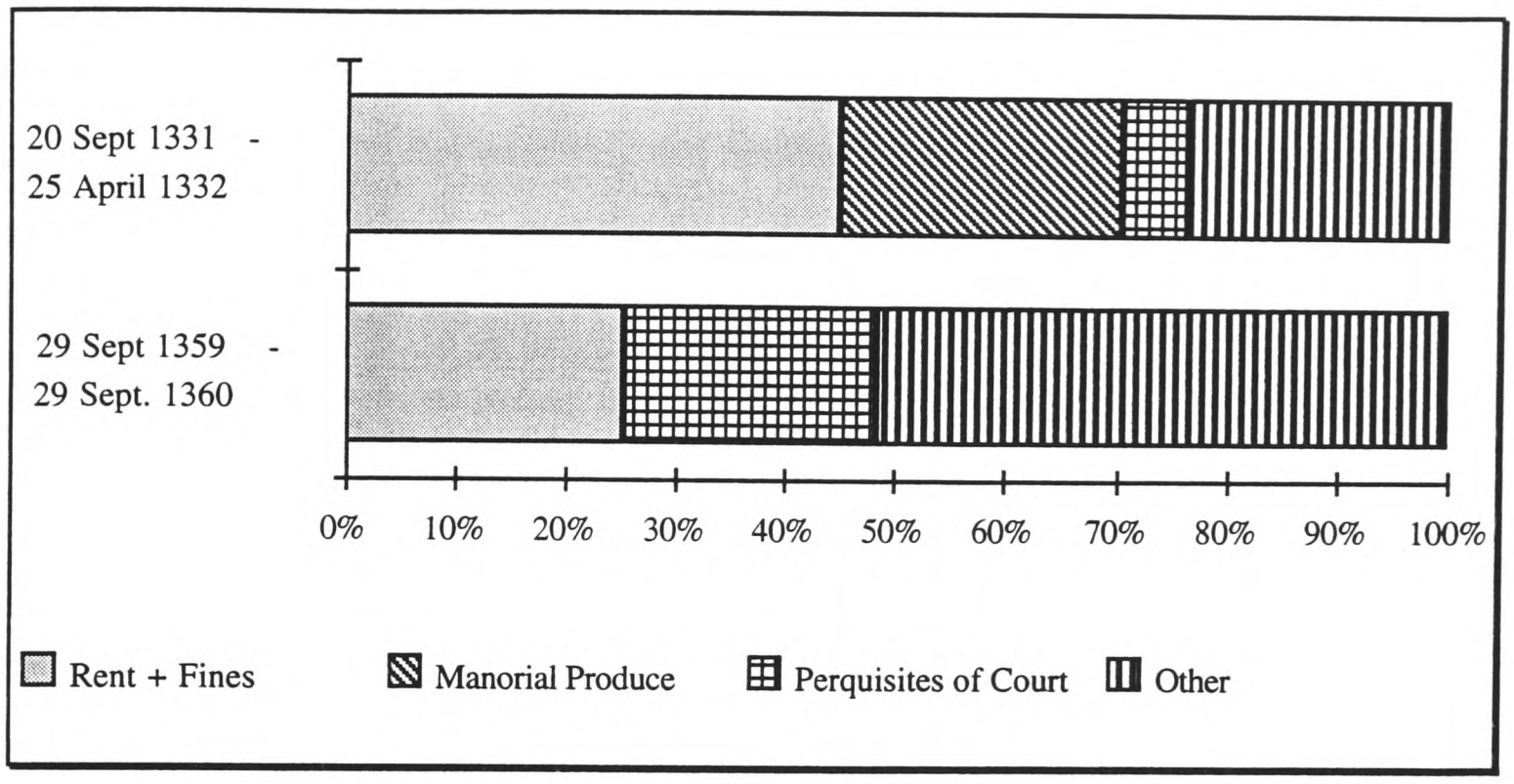
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1 BCL MS Hampton 308, 309.

2 BCL MS Hampton 320, for example, is a roll of courts held in 1302 on the manors of Westwood, Droitwich, Cold Aston, Stildon and Hollin.

iii) Nuneaton

FIGURE 6. COMPONENTS OF CASH INCOME, NUNEATON, 1331-32; 1359-60.[1]



Because we have only two accounts which give total cash income for Nuneaton, the importance of the various components may be misrepresented in these graphs. The importance of rents in the cash income of this priory has already been discussed and it could be that manorial produce was more important than is immediately evident. For instance, we know that in 1344 more than 20% of the corn sent to the priory from eight of its manors could have been sold for cash.[2] It is thus with a *caveat* in mind that we note the absence of any income from the sale of manorial produce for the year 1359-60. It seems improbable that no income at all derived from sale of wood or stock but this information was obviously recorded in documents which have not survived. The earlier account records income from sale of stock, skins and horns, and from underwood. Included in 'other' in the 1359-60 account is £5 gained from the mining of coal.[3] The graph seems to verify the former conclusions concerning the sorry state of the Nuneaton economy in 1359-60. The total cash income was £39, of which £15 was received as arrears (accounted for as 'other'), £9 17s. from rents, tolls and pannage and £8 19s. from the manorial court and the two sittings of the court leet.

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1 BL Add. Chart. 49727, 49728.
2 See below p. 216.
3 On coal mining at Nuneaton which in general took place after our period see *VCH War.*, ii, pp. 219-20 and J. Hatcher, *The History of the British Coal Industry, i, Before 1700* (Oxford 1993), p. 156.

WOOL

No discussion of monastic income during the Middle Ages is complete without reference to wool production.[1] Each of the three Fontevraud foundations possessed flocks of sheep, but the only one for which we have figures which allow us to estimate the value of its wool economy is Amesbury. Between May and September 1315, wool sales at Amesbury totalled £100, 34% of the total cash income for the twenty-week period which the account covers. In the year beginning Michaelmas 1315, sales came to £159, but since our figures cover an entire year, the percentage of cash income derived from wool sales is lower in comparison with the 1315 figure. It rises once more between Michaelmas 1318 and Easter 1319 when we are again considering a twenty-week span. A more accurate assessment of the importance of wool sales can be made by reducing the time span to half-yearly periods, as is evident from the following table and graph.

TABLE 2. AMESBURY WOOL SALES 1315-1319.[2]

DATE	a INCOME FROM WOOL SALES	b TOTAL INCOME	% a/b VALUE
May - October 1315	£99 16s. 4d.	£289 17s. 6d.	34%
October - April 1315-16	£20. 0s. 0d.	£200 7s. 3d.	10%
April - October 1316 [3]	£139 2s. 4d.	£477 7s. 4d.	26%
October - April 1318/19	£156 6s. 8d.	£470 5s. 3d.	33%

Wool sales varied from 15 sacks between May and October 1315, to 23 sacks in the first half of 1318-19, and the wool was produced on several manors, some of the larger ones perhaps buying and selling the produce of those with a smaller output. Wool was normally sold in the summer, within a few weeks of its being clipped, but during these years, possibly because of the crisis, sales obviously took place whenever a buyer could be found.[4] The small return for the period Michaelmas 1315 - Easter 1316 is understandable as this was one of the worst years of the famine when murrain caused severe losses among sheep. The fact that the receiver thought it worthwhile to note that this wool was sold before Michaelmas indicates that it was

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1 For discussion of medieval wool production see E. Power, *The Wool Trade in English Medieval History* (Oxford, 1941), pp. 20-40.

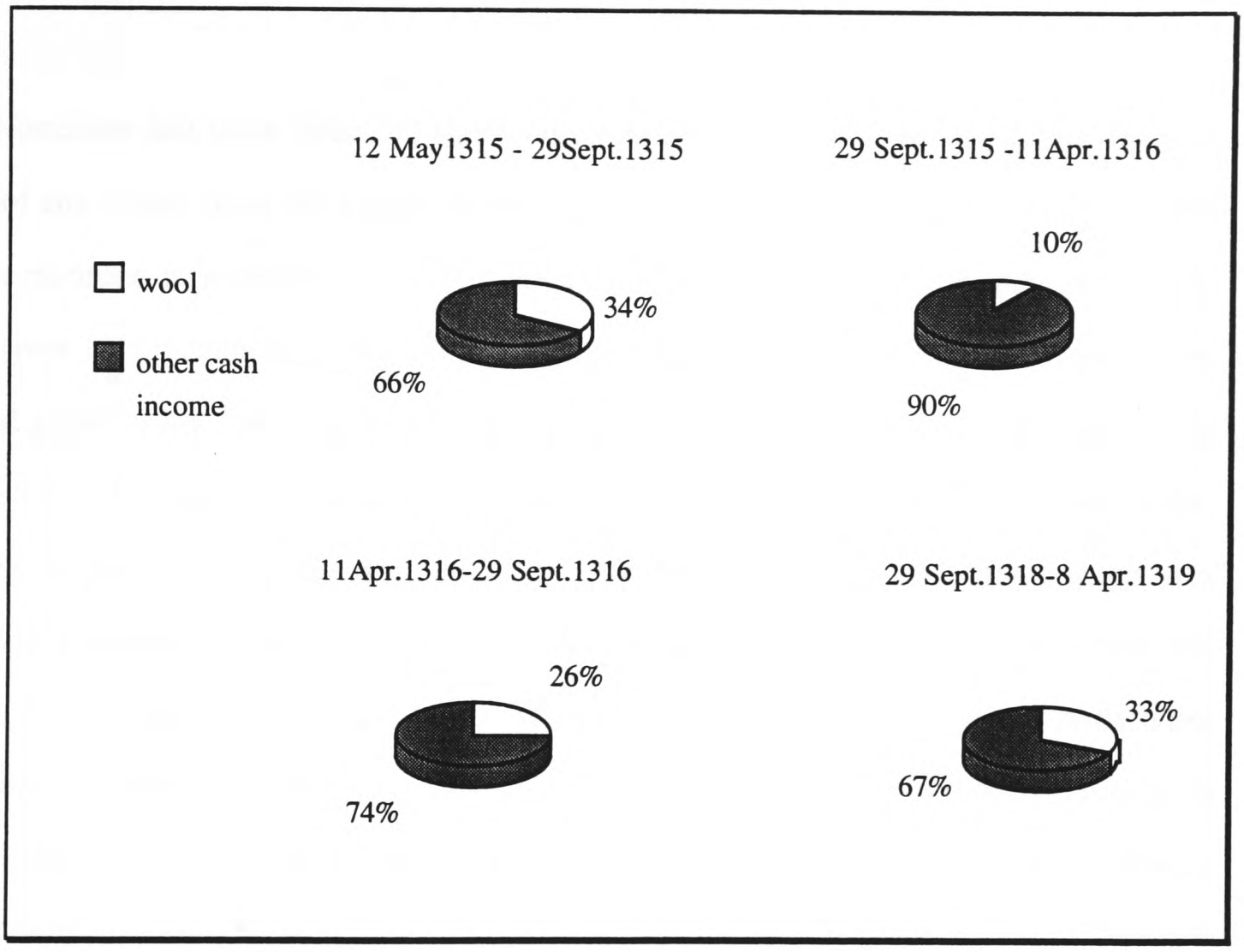
2 AML 244 H1 3.

3 Income figures for this year and for 1318-19 have been adjusted since in both cases there has been a miscalculation on the receiver's roll

4 T.H. Lloyd, 'The Movement of Wool Prices in Medieval England', *EcHR* Supplement vi (Cambridge, 1973), p. 5.

in all probability left over from the previous year's clip - it may even have been of inferior quality. If this is so, technically there was no income from sale of wool for that half-year.

FIGURE 7: WOOL SALES AS PERCENTAGE OF NET CASH INCOME, AMESBURY 1315-1319.[1]



Bolton priory flock was reduced by two thirds at this time and the average wool production fell from fifteen sacks to four.[2] There is the possibility that flocks on some of the Amesbury manors were completely destroyed; we do not know. There was wool to be sold in the second half of the year - from which manors we do not know but it is evident that it fetched a substantial return, more than a quarter of the cash income for that half year. A recovery is apparent in the first half of 1318-19 and it would be helpful to know if this was sustained. We can make a guess at the size of Amesbury's flocks. If we use the figure given by E. Carus-Wilson that one sack of wool was the produce of 260 sheep, we could calculate that there were c.3900 sheep in 1315 and c.6000 in 1318.[3] While this gives an idea of what

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1 AML 244 H1 3.

2 Kershaw, *Bolton Priory*, p. 83-4.

3 E.M. Carus-Wilson and O. Coleman, *England's Export Trade, 1275-1545* (Oxford, 1963), p. 13, cf. M. M. Postan, *Medieval Trade and Finance* (Cambridge, 1978), p. 345; where the number suggested is 240 sheep per sack of wool.

might have been the case, it is not wholly reliable, because we know, for one thing, that the wool was not of uniform quality. We can see, however, that wool was certainly an important element in the economy of Amesbury, one which the priory exploited to maximum advantage.

Though Nuneaton had more than 750 sheep on its manors in 1344, there is no record in its accounts of any return from the sale of wool.[1] The most obvious explanation for this is that sales were recorded in a receiver's account which has not survived. It is highly improbable that they were all for mutton or that all the wool produced was used for domestic purposes. Westwood gained some of its income from wool sales. In the summer of 1338 this priory sold 12 stone of wool, for which it received 29s. This averages at 2s 5d. per stone, comparable to the average prices for that year.[2] Westwood, a small producer and perhaps with wool of a quality inferior to that of those who could afford to buy better stock, would not have been in a position to negotiate higher-than-average prices. With wool as with other commodities, priories with large amounts of produce were in a much stronger position to obtain a high price than the small producers.[3] The Amesbury accounts refer to a Henry Burry either a middleman or an agent who sold their wool, but Amesbury generally had substantial amounts to sell.[4]

We do not know what type of sheep were on any of the priory manors. The Midlands in the later middle ages were known for their sheep with long wool, coarser than that found on the Welsh border where fleeces fetched the highest prices, but nevertheless sought after.[5] Amesbury monastery sold both fleece from adult sheep (*lana grossa*) and lambs' wool (*agnellus*) and also gained income from selling refuse wool (*lana sordida et repulsa*).

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1 BL Add. Chart 49467.
2 Lloyd, *op.cit.*, Table I, p. 40. cf. Farmer, *op.cit.*, p. 810 where the price quoted for 1338-39 is 3.026s. per stone.
3 Lloyd, *op.cit.* p. 5.
4 AML 244 H1 3.
5 M.L. Ryder, 'Medieval Sheep and Wool Types', in D.W. Crosley, ed., *Medieval Industry* (CBA Research Report, xl, 1981), p. 24.

THE CORN ECONOMY

Analysis of income leads us to consider if the priories were producing for profit or mainly for domestic consumption. Our research is bedevilled by lack of information which would enable us to come to any clear conclusions, but a few suggestions can be made.[1] Before all else it must be noted that with the members of the convent to be supported, with monastic servants and workers to be fed, some of them to be paid a stipend, with buildings to be kept in repair and stock to be cared for and replenished, simply to keep going on a daily basis the monastic enterprise required a consistent and plentiful return in both cash and kind from its manors. Certainly some religious houses made profits, some of them huge, but whether or not profit-making was the aim of the Fontevraud foundations is difficult to establish. The small scale of their enterprises would suggest that it was not their main concern. The corn and stock accounts of Nuneaton and Westwood imply that crops grown on the manors were mainly for domestic consumption and while evidence from Amesbury is more elusive, indications are that none of the three monasteries had invested in agricultural production to the extent that large profits might have been an option. During the 1330's and 1340's Nuneaton may have had a surplus from time to time which it could have sold for cash but in no case can we infer that the aim of production was for selling.[2] Other accounts, no longer in existence, might indicate otherwise. To illustrate this we can take the case of Nuneaton, where grain returns are well-documented for one year. The fact that our source is an inventory of stock and grain, prepared for an incoming prior allows us to extrapolate the norm.[3] Some of the figures are based on estimation, some are not filled in, and at least three manors, Harbury, Kintbury and Holt, are not included in the survey. Nevertheless we can see how eight manors contributed to Nuneaton's grain economy. Figure 8 illustrates that of all grain harvested on the Nuneaton manors in 1344, 27% - 492 quarters - were consumed on the individual manors in liveries to servants and farm hands and in fodder or reserved as seed for the following year. By far the greater part, 1318 quarters - 73% - was sent to the monastery to be used there. This is vividly illustrated in the sector graph.

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1 See the discussion above, p. 15, on medieval accounts.

2 See D.L. Farmer, 'Woodland and Pasture sales on the Winchester Manors in the Thirteenth Century: disposing of a surplus or producing for the market?', in R.H. Britnell & M.S. Campbell, edd., *A Commercialising Economy: England 1086-c.1300* (Manchester, 1995), pp. 102-131.

3 BL Add. Chart. 49467.

FIGURE 8: USE OF GRAIN BY SOME NUNEATON MANORS, 1344.[1]

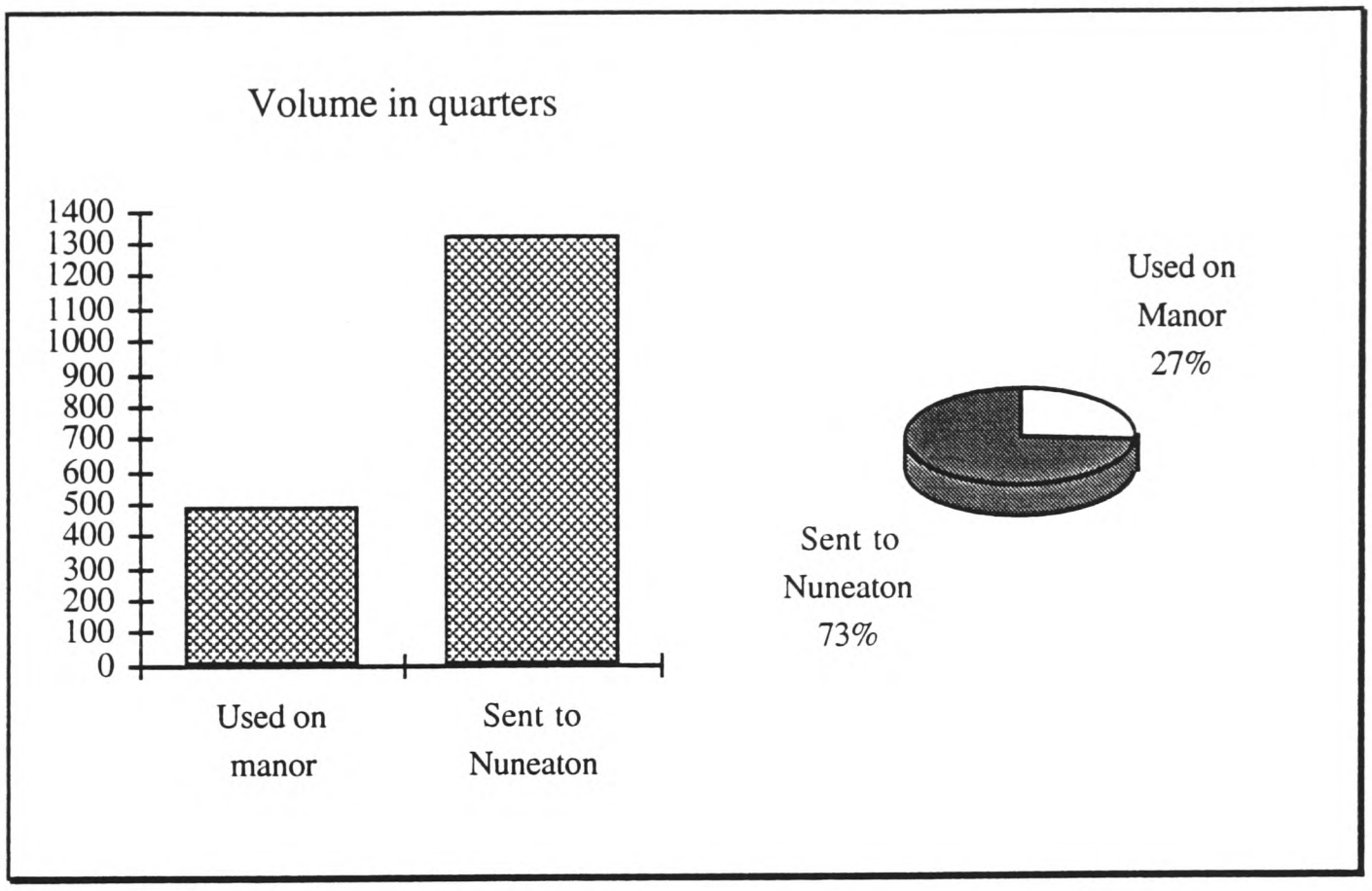


TABLE 3: GRAIN (IN QRS.) SUPPLIED TO NUNEATON, 1344.[2]

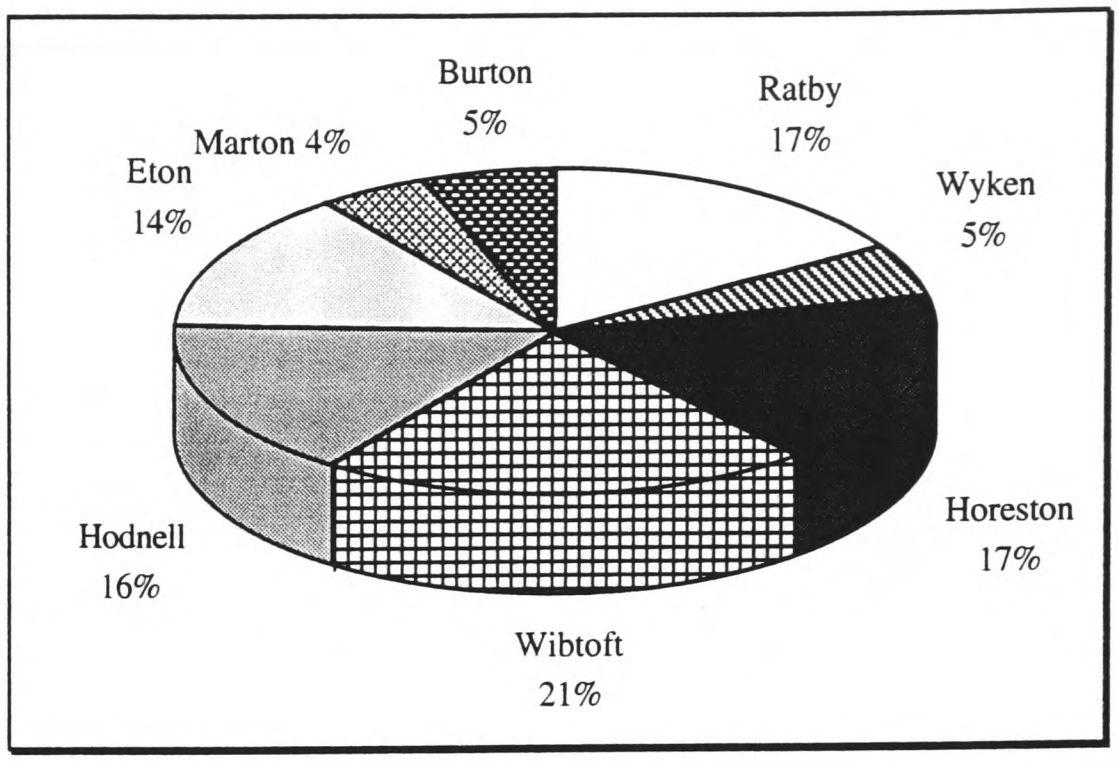
Manor	Wheat	Rye	Dredge	Oats	Peas	Total
Ratby	31.625	3.875	94.125	88.875	0	218.5
Wyken	10	7.75	42	6.5	0.625	66.875
Horeston	127.5	0	30	33	36.875	227.375
Wibtoft	13.5	2	162	0	104	281.5
Hodnell	133.5		68	8	0	209.5
Eton	90	0	40	0	52.125	182.125
Marton	14	4.5	43	0	0	61.5
Burton	3	22.5	34	8	3.5	71
Total	423.125	40.625	513.125	144.375	197.125	1318.375

Certain features of Nuneaton's corn economy are evident: Hodnell and Horeston supplied most of the wheat to the monastery; Wibtoft supplied most dredge and peas, Ratby the bulk of the oats and Burton most of the rye. Specialisation in these areas was perhaps indicative of different soil types favouring the production of one crop over another; the physical geography of one manor may have been better suited to growing one particular crop, or production may have been deliberately organised in this way. All properties were within 40 miles of one another so variations in climate would have been minimal. Examination of the evidence shows that Wibtoft, Horeston and Ratby were the chief sources of the monastery's grain supply. Marton's contribution is small because this manor was at farm.

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1 *ibid.*
2 *ibid.*

FIGURE 9: GRAIN SUPPLIED TO NUNEATON PRIORY, 1344.[1]



The grain supplied by Marton (13 qrs. wheat, 4.5 qrs. rye, 44 qrs. dredge and 30 qrs. peas) was probably part of the rent. Eton manor, the chief manor of the home farm, possibly produced more than is indicated: the figures for its rye and oats production are not filled in. It is also possible that these crops were not grown on the manor farm. We do know that of the total corn produced on this manor, 90 quarters of wheat (the entire crop), 40 quarters of dredge and 67 quarters of barley were used in the monastery. At the end of the period covered by the survey (11 January 1345), prior John de Wappenbury could register that there were in the monastery granaries 373.25 quarters of wheat, 246.5 quarters of peas, 91.5 quarters of oats, 145.25 quarters of rye and 280 quarters of dredge.

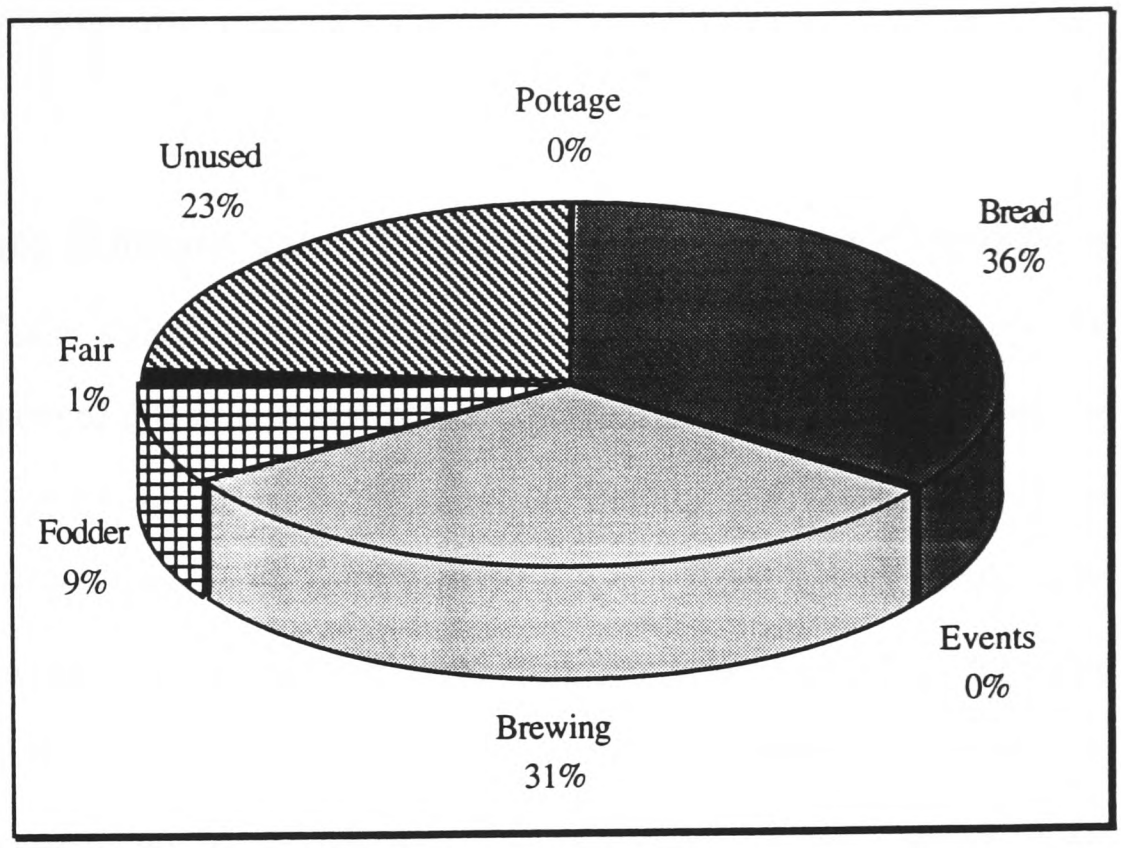
77% of this grain was consumed by the monastery - in bread and gruel for the poor and sick, in brewing ale, in pottage for the servants and fodder for the stock.[2] (Liveries to servants and workers, some fodder for stock and food for the house had already been provided for by grain from Eton manor.) Special allowances were set aside, for example for events such as Easter and for the Nuneaton fair, and more than one fifth - 23% - was for use as the authorities at the house saw fit. We do not know what this ultimately meant.

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1 *ibid.*

2 Nuneaton may have had a hospital for the poor; see BL Add. Chart. 47398 and below p. 246.

FIGURE 10. USE OF GRAIN BY NUNEATON PRIORY[1]



It may have been sold. If so, at current prices it would have realised £57 12s.[2] This would have meant a profit for that particular year but it would be unsound to assume that similar profits would have been made every year. Harvests are unpredictable and the receiver may have stored the grain or at least some of it, as a buffer for leaner times. The use to which the surplus was put would have depended on the need the monastery had for cash, the contribution made by other sources of cash income and the current grain prices. It is evident, however, that Nuneaton was not exploiting its agricultural assets specifically for markets. That it could normally manage to cater for all its needs and have some corn to spare is evidence of an efficiently-run, productive, agricultural enterprise.

Our sources show that in its corn economy, Nuneaton priory was almost totally supported by its manors. According to the 1344 survey the only deficiency was in dredge - an extra 24 quarters were needed. A document giving similar information for another year would provide an interesting and helpful comparison. Unfortunately this is not available. Nor do we know the extent to which Amesbury and Westwood were supported by their manors. For Amesbury we have no figures which would permit calculation; those we have for Westwood suggest that

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1 *ibid.*
2 Farmer, *op.cit.*, p. 791.

the priory regularly had to buy grain to make up for deficiencies in manorial contributions, but as the Westwood documents are not clear on this issue, the question must remain open.[1]

FOREST[2]

Another land-associated source of income which all three priories appear to have exploited to some extent, was forest. There is little direct evidence of Amesbury having done so but we know that the initial endowment of this monastery included permission to take five cartloads of wood daily from the forests of Chute, Grovely, Winterslow, Bentley and Wallop woods, as well as pannage in Barroc and Bentley woods and Chute Forest.[3] There are no details as to whether the priory used the wood itself or whether some of it was sold: evidently a house as large as Amesbury would need a great deal of wood for fuel. Income from pannage is recorded in the receivers' accounts of the early fourteenth century, but the information is far from specific. Westwood priory definitely had a wood and, according to the terms of the foundation grant, it could have been cleared and a park made had the prioress and convent so desired.[4] There is no evidence of this having been done. What use the priory made of the wood before 1350 is not known. We can expect that some of it would have been used as fuel for the salt works at Droitwich but this is not explicitly stated in any of our sources.[5] The 1350 account records that between May and Michaelmas the priory collected 30s. for the sale of underwood and records of payments for pannage in this account and that of March to August 1338 could well refer to exploitation of this same resource.[6] Nuneaton too exploited its woodland. In the account roll of 1331-32 Brother Roger recorded receipt of £9 15s. for sale of wood and forest products - amounting to 20% of the cash income recorded for that year- and the rent rolls make frequent reference to assarting and the rent gained from assarted land.[7] Though none of this would have made a major contribution to the income of any of the

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1 See BCL MS Hampton 307-309.
2 For a discussion on woodland and forest as a resource see O. Rackham, *Ancient Woodland, its History, Vegetation and Uses in England* (London, 1980), pp. 127, 133, 137-56.
3 *Rotuli Chartarum, i,* pt i, pp. 13-14.
4 *Cal. Chart. Rolls, 1257-1300*, p. 320.
5 See below, pp. 232-34 for Westwood's involvement in salt production.
6 BCL MS Hampton 308, 309.
7 BCL Add. Chart. 49727.

priories, it indicates a spirit of enterprise and a preparedness to maximise the return from whatever resources were available to them.[1]

Purchase of Land

The fact that from the time of its foundation each priory continued to acquire property in the form of lands and rents, and to consolidate and extend their existing estates, is another sign that the priories actively exploited their resources. Expansion up to the end of the thirteenth century has already been discussed in the chapter on endowments and early fourteenth century purchases by each monastery illustrate that, despite the difficulty in acquiring property at this time, each was assiduous in increasing the value of its landed assets. Joyce, prioress of Westwood, obtained rents and land in Cotheridge in 1342; Margaret de Shireford, prioress of Nuneaton, bought £5 worth of land and rents from Robert de Herle in 1345; and the prioress of Amesbury bought twelve acres in Chaddleworth in 1312 and also enlarged the holding in West Amesbury about the same time.[2] This last transaction bears closer scrutiny as an example of the complicated and expensive procedures which land purchase entailed.

As early as 1309 an inquisition *ad quod dampnum* had determined that Walter Aleyn was permitted to alienate a messuage and 6 bovates of land in West Amesbury which he held of Walter Lovel.[3] Between Michaelmas 1315 and Easter 1316 a final concord was made between the prioress and Walter Lovel, the mortmain licence obtained, the clerk of the court and the judge 'rewarded' for their pains, Walter Lovel's expenses taken care of, and a premium of £100 paid for the property.[4] Subsequently a further payment of £2 had to be made at the exchequer, for what reason we do not know, and, following the farming of the land the expenses of a certain Henry Curteis were paid. The ultimate cost of the property is not

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1 See R.H. Britnell, 'Commercialisation and Economic Development in England 1000-1300' in R.H. Britnell & M.S. Campbell, edd., *A Commercialising Economy: England 1086-c.1300* (Manchester, 1995), pp. 7-26. The author shows that the Bishop of Winchester sold wood and pasture from his estates, exploiting them commercially in the early fourteenth century.

2 BCL MS Hampton 534; BL Add. Chart. 48551; See *Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1343-45*, p. 454; *ibid., 1307-13*, p. 180.

3 *Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1307-13*, p. 203.

4 AML 244 H1 3, *Feet of Fines, Wiltshire*, p. 92

recorded but it must have been well in excess of the £100 paid as a lump sum. Unfortunately we cannot determine what return Amesbury received from the investment. Between Michaelmas 1318 and Easter 1319 property at West Amesbury brought in 42s. in rent but, as we have noted, priory land in that part of the town comprised more than that recently purchased. Since details of the purchase of the property appear in the accounts of Michaelmas to Easter 1315-16 it is reasonable to suppose that by this date the process was complete, that all but the final niceties had been attended to. There is no new tenant for West Amesbury listed in existing accounts. While we cannot tell for sure what return the investment brought, we can surmise. If the land prices of Henry III's time were still applicable, that is that land was normally sold at 10 years' purchase, the £100 premium suggests that the annual income from the land was £10.[1] We cannot be certain of this but it is a reasonable supposition. Another factor which we do not know is whether the agricultural crisis influenced the final purchase price. Negotiations had commenced before the famine years and the fact that Amesbury could expend more than £100 in this, the worst year of the famine, shows that at this point its finances had not been too adversely affected.

What all these purchases do indicate is that the prioresses and their convents were willing to invest their profits in ways normal for medieval landlords. Banks being non-existent, land was one sure means of securing wealth and each priory during the fourteenth century continued to exploit the property market and to make what ever gains it could within the limits of its resources.

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1 See *Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1266-72*, pp. 140-41. For purchase prices see Harvey,*Westminster Abbey,* pp. 194-198.

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Stemming from the lordship over the land and underpinning the entire feudal structure was another resource requiring, if not exploitation, certainly an investment of time and personnel. This was the manorial court system in which various kinds of jurisdiction were exercised over tenants and others who lived on the priory manors. It provided a source of incidental income.

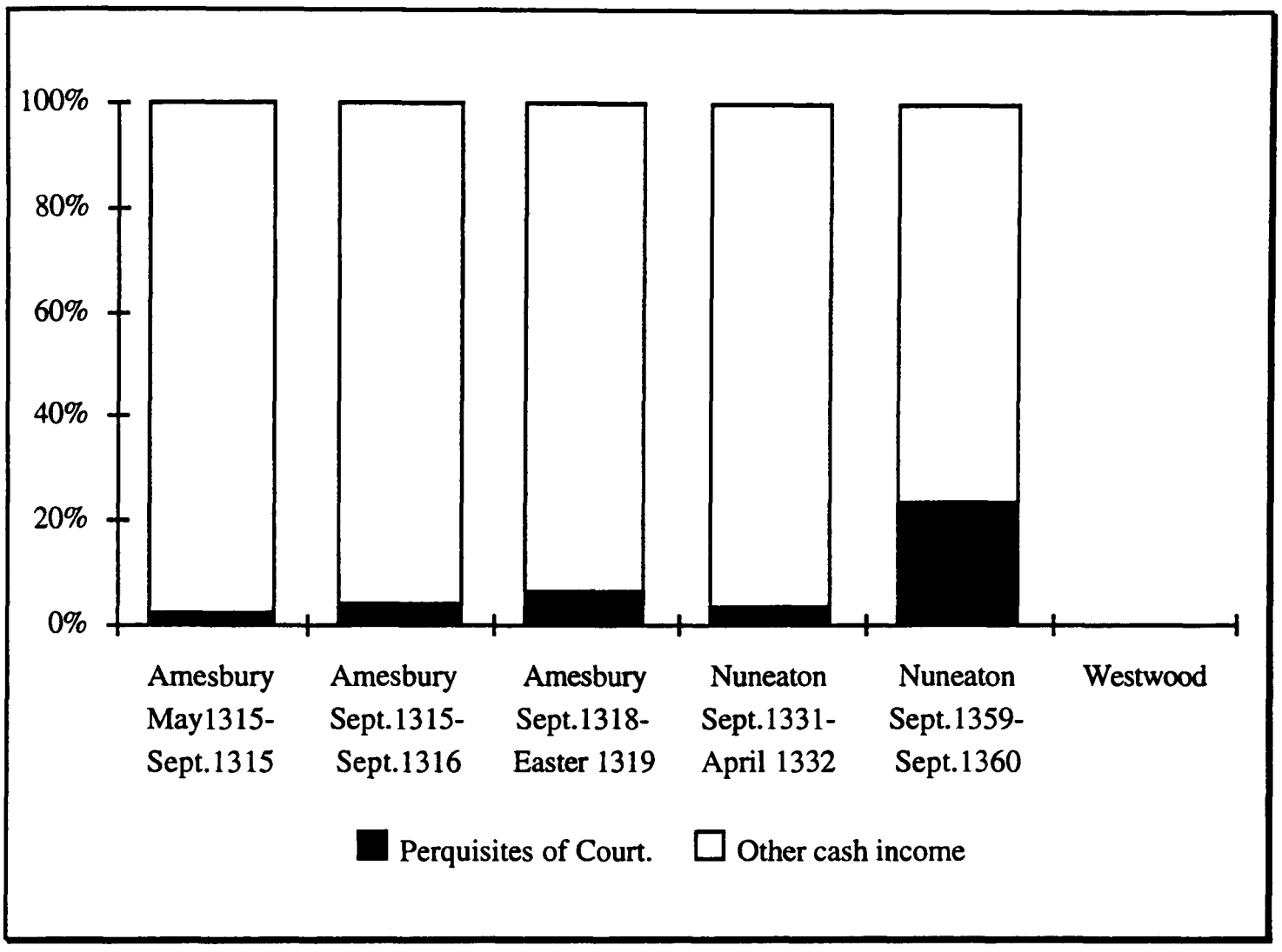
The right to hold court stemmed from the feudal lord-tenant relationship and required that those who owed suit of court - be they free or villein - attend at a specified time and perform this duty. At Amesbury, Nuneaton and Westwood a representative of the prioress, either the prior or an appointed official, administered courts and beyond the fact that they were held and that some tenants were required to attend, little is known of them.[1] From the Nuneaton charters we know that Agnes, widow of John Pierisson, Richard Cours and William Whiting, among the other requirements of their lease of a burgage in the vill, owed suit of court every three weeks as did John Stot, a tenant of assarted land, and several others.[2] However, although three-weekly suit of court was the ancient rule, manorial courts at the beginning of the fourteenth century tended to meet less frequently and this is probably true of the priory courts as well.

Courts baron, as they were termed, generally treated matters of tenure of customary tenants or villeins. The entries in the receivers' accounts at Amesbury illustrate this.[3] In the year 1315-1316 for example, at Bultford manor 6s. 8d. was paid by John le Bole as an entry fine. Other entry fines were paid by Walter Millward from North Winterbourne (2s.), two tenants of Melksham (£1 each); Thomas of Burbich and William Hykedon of Wallop (5 marks each).

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1 Manorial courts are discussed in P.D.A. Harvey, *op.cit.*, pp. 44-48.
2 BL Add. Chart. 49466.
3 AML 244 H1 3.

FIGURE 11. INCOME FROM PERQUISITES OF COURT EXPRESSED AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL CASH INCOME.[1]



At Falleye, William the Hayward paid a heriot of half a mark and a 12s. heriot was paid at Biddesden by Richard of Stoke. These are examples of two of the main functions of a manorial court: the imposition and collection of entry fines - levies for admission onto holdings - and the collection of death duties or heriots. Entry fines represented the major source of income from the courts baron.[2] Minor payments - amercements for allowing pigs to stray, payments for permission for a daughter to marry or for a man to take orders or marry outside the confines of the manor - were summarised as perquisites of court which the presiding official rendered to the priory.[3] On the Amesbury manors from Easter to Michaelmas 1316 typical returns from perquisites of court were 33s at Wallop, 10s. at Wiggley and 10s. at Falleye.[4] From April 1333 to April 1334 Nuneaton priory took 41s. in perquisites of court;

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1 AML 244 H1 3, BL Add. Chart. 49727, 49728.
2 See R.H. Hilton, *A Medieval Society. The West Midlands at the end of the Thirteenth Century* (London, 1966), p. 147. Entry fines are discussed above p. 207.
3 BL Add. Chart. 49507, 49392, 49466.
4 AML 244 H1 3.

at the court held at Michaelmas 1334, perquisites totalled 23s.[1] In one sense these returns, inextricably linked to the tenurial system, can be regarded as rents. However, to appreciate the value of the discrete components in monastic cash income it is necessary to consider them separately. As is clear from the accompanying graphs, Amesbury's income from this source remained relatively constant and the figures for Nuneaton for 1331-32 are roughly comparable. Because almost £9 was collected from courts in 1359-60, this source has assumed unrealistic proportions for the figures for this particular year. However, since we have already discussed the problems associated with this account we need not explore this matter any further. The importance of this item in Westwood's economy cannot be calculated; there are no figures available.

On some of the Amesbury manors courts which came to be called courts leet were held. Melksham was one such. As lord of Melksham manor and Melksham hundred, the prioress of Amesbury had the right of return of writs, amercements under the assize of bread and ale, a pillory, a tumbril, view of frankpledge and several other liberties.[2] In 1286 similar liberties were granted to all the Amesbury manors.[3] The view of frankpledge - a pre-Conquest method of maintaining law and order - gave its name to the entire proceedings of these courts, or alternatively they were called tourn and tithingpenny.[4] Though their chief purpose was the maintenance of law and order in minor matters - the public courts dealt with serious affairs - some remuneration came to the manors from the view of frankpledge. In 1315-1316 for example, Melksham collected 30s. in the tourn and tithingpenny of St Martin (11 November) and 30s. in that of hockday (the second or third Tuesday after Easter); in 1318-19, the amounts were 30s. and 50s. respectively.[5] Nuneaton also held this type of court on its manors. In 1331-32 the court held at Michaelmas brought in 32s.; the following year 58s.[6]

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1 BL. Add. Chart. 49709 verso, 49466.
2 *Cal. Chart. Rolls, 1257-1300,* p. 286.
3 On the occasion of Edward I's daughter, Mary, taking the veil at Amesbury. *ibid.*, p. 331.
4 Referring to the same process as view of frankpledge.
5 AML 244 H1 3.
6 BL Add. Chart. 49709, 49727.

Courts held in Nuneaton on the 1 October 1359 and 24 April, 1360 brought £3 9s and £3 13s. respectively from the *visum.*[1]

The exercise of franchisal jurisdiction and also of that associated with tenure was hardly a profitable business given the cost of travel and the related expenses such as payment of clerks. Profit making was not the main purpose of courts, however. They were the means of maintaining law and order, of overseeing events on the manors and if more serious matters did arise, they provided the machinery to deal with them. The visit of the priory official was an opportunity to examine the functioning of a particular manor, to scrutinise the behaviour of the manorial officials and tenants, to enquire into anomalies in returns made to the priory, to supervise agricultural, pastoral and tenurial affairs. A reports could then be made to the prioress and convent. Courts were thus indispensable elements in manorial administration.

More importantly, the maintenance of the court system underpinned the entire fabric of medieval society, reinforcing the positions of both landlord and tenant, reaffirming their mutual obligations. Amesbury guarded these rights jealously and in 1281 needed to defend them against some of the men of Melksham who brought a suit against the prioress.[2] Their complaint was that she was too severe a landlord, insisting on customs and services beyond those which were required when the manor was held by the Countess of Devon. She may indeed have been an exacting lord; on the other hand, the countess may have been lax in her administration. Whatever the result of the hearing at the king's bench, the prioress was ultimately vindicated. A few years later an inquisition taken by Salomon de Raffa and his fellows, justices in eyre in Wiltshire, and an extent of the manor taken by the dean of Salisbury and the keeper of the king's forest, resulted in the prioress' liberties being enshrined in a charter which spelt out clearly that she possessed all her liberties and customs without impediment.[3]

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1 *ibid.*, 49728.
2 *Cal. Cl. Rolls, 1279-88*, p. 118.
3 *Cal. Chart. Rolls, 1257-1300*, p. 286.

In summary, manorial courts were not matters of exploitation for commercial gain, but since the entire social system and some small areas of the judicial system depended on their efficient management, they formed an integral part of monastic administration. For this reason they merit our consideration. Equally meritorious and stemming from monastic ownership of land is the exploitation of utilities such as mills, involvement in industrial processes such as salt making or the initiation of commercial enterprises such as burgage development. The following chapter examines the role which the Fontevraud houses played in these areas and illustrates the extent to which the nuns were actively engaged in ventures which demanded both daring and business acumen.

Chapter 6. Exploitation of Assets II. Other Assets

Traditionally religious houses, both male and female, were endowed with utilities such as mills and fisheries, as much for domestic as for commercial exploitation. The Fontevraud houses were no exception. However, investigation into the affairs of the three English foundations reveals that the nuns went beyond the bounds of tradition and turned their attention to enterprises which, while they were a development of their initial endowment, nevertheless illustrate their readiness to venture into new areas and initiate new undertakings.

Mills

Mills were a traditional source of monastic revenue. Water mills were common in pre-Conquest England and were among the assets of the great Anglo-Saxon houses such as Nunnaminster.[1] Windmills, a later invention, appeared c.1125, supplementing the former and being especially useful in areas where water mills were impracticable.[2] As well as being subject to tithe and exacting a proportion of all grain ground, mills provided for the material needs of a monastery by grinding its corn for bread, crushing barley for malt and preparing flour for altar bread.[3] Frequently they were included in the group of buildings, such as the malthouse and bakery, separate from the inner monastic precinct but enclosed within its outer boundaries.[4] Many monasteries, however, the three Fontevraud houses among them, owned or part-owned mills which were situated at some distance from the administrative centre. There is charter evidence of Nuneaton priory owning or having an interest in, at one time or another, mills at Sapecote, Harringworth, Street Aston, Charlford, Inkpen and Nutford.[5] A mill at Stockingford and a windmill at Hodnell are numbered among Nuneaton's assets in the

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1 R. Holt, *The Mills of Medieval England* (Oxford, 1988) p. 13. Coldicott, *op.cit.*, p. 11.

2 Holt, *op.cit.*, p. 20.

3 On tithe see *Councils and Synods II*, pp. 161, n. 1, 162-3.

4 A.H. Graham, 'The Old Malthouse, Abbotsbury, Dorset: The Medieval Watermill of the Benedictine Abbey', *Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society*, cviii (1986), pp. 117,118; D. Luckhurst, 'Monastic Watermills', *Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, Wind and Watermill Section*, viii (1964), p. 2.

5 BL Add. Chart. 47615, 47742, 53103, 47428, 47424, 47517.

Taxatio Ecclesiastica of 1291. the latter was leased to William Fryday in 1321 for a rent of 12 quarters of corn per annum; the former for a period of ten years to Thomas of Cleydon for 13s. per annum in 1308.[1] Also in 1308 another of Nuneaton's mills, that at Burton, was leased for ten years to Nicholas Burdon at 16s per annum.[2] Closer to home, Brother Henry, referred to as *confrater noster* and evidently a member of the convent, though his actual role in the monastery is unknown, had a mill built at Nuneaton at his own expense and in 1247 was granted ten years' multure on all the corn from the parish except that from the home farm.[3] Westwood priory, in the early years of its foundation was granted mills at Middlemill, at Westwood itself, and at Droitwich, and there is subsequent mention of a water mill at Pudford/Martley.[4] While there seems to be no surviving reference to grants of mills to Amesbury, we know that this monastery possessed some, because those at West Amesbury, Kentford, Letcombe and Ludgershall are referred to in the receiver's accounts of 1315-19.[5] These same documents reveal that Thomas le Tonker had a fulling mill at Amesbury for which between Michaelmas 1315 and Easter 1316 he paid 21s. in arrears. During 1316 the priory received 1 mark in rent from *the Countess' mill* and about the same time Brother Robert de Wallop was commissioned by the prioress to buy two millstones at Southampton at a total cost of £4 17s.[6]

Most of the monastic revenue came not from directly working the mills but from leasing them.[7] The records of Amesbury, Nuneaton and Westwood illustrate this fact. In 1216, for example, Amicia of Grafton granted half the mill at Sapecote and its tithes to Nuneaton priory. This mill was handed over to William Bassett, Amicia's son, to be held of the priory for an annual sum of 10s., thus assuring William of an income and the priory of a regular profit. The Amesbury receiver's account from Michaelmas to Easter 1318-19 indicates that this

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1 *TPN* pp. 256-257; BL Add. Chart. 49392.
2 *ibid.*, 48051.
3 *ibid.*, 48497.
4 BL MS Cotton. Vespas. E. ix, fo. 2v; BCL MS Hampton 48; *VE* ii. p. 276.
5 AML 244 H1 3.
6 The Countess' Mill cannot be identified.
7 S. Moorhouse, 'Monastic Estates: their Composition and Development', *BAR 203*, p. 54.

priory had farmed a mill at Kentford for 13s. 4d. per annum; evidence from Nuneaton shows that between Michaelmas and Easter 1331-32 the farming of the mill at Stockingford brought a return of 4s. 4d., the mill at Burton returned 5s. 4d and that at Wyken 6s. 8d. For the year beginning April 23 1332 the amounts were 13s. 4d from Stockingford, 16s. from Burton and £1 from Wyken.[1] In 1335 a water mill at Nuneaton which was at farm was bringing in 20s. per annum.[2]

Profits to be gained from the farming of mills were such that in 1342 Glastonbury abbey paid out £11 13s. to build a windmill on its estates at Walton strictly as a commercial venture.[3] This was slightly above the average cost of mills in the early fourteenth century, but by this stage the cost of labour and materials was probably higher.[4] The terms of the agreement between the abbey representatives and the miller were that the abbey was to receive an entry fine of £1 plus an annual rent of £3. In the first year - an incomplete financial year - the abbey collected the entry fine and £2 7s. 4d. as the proportion of the rent for that year. It would have taken only four years before profits accrued from the initial investment. There is no evidence of Westwood, Nuneaton or Amesbury being involved in exploitation to this extent. However, an agreement by which William of Winetone leased Briarmill and Middlemill at Droitwich from Westwood priory in 1270 illustrates the terms by which the prioress and convent hoped to make a profit from two of their existing mills.[5] William was to pay his rent not in cash but in kind: 12 quarters of wheat and 21 quarters of toll corn. Grain prices for 1270 put the value of the wheat for that year at more than £4;[6] equal amounts of the other grains, presumably rye, oats and barley, totalling 21 quarters would increase the total value to c.£8 per annum though, since we are ignorant of the exact proportions of the mixed grain, we can give no more than a rough estimate.[7] If the mill continued to be leased on the same terms,

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1 BL Add. Chart. 49727, 49709.
2 *ibid.*, 49468.
3 I. Keil, 'Building a Post Windmill in 1342', *Transactions of the Newcomen Society*, xxxiv (1961-62), pp. 151-2.
4 For the cost of building a windmill see Holt, *op.cit.*, pp. 176-7.
5 BCL MS Hampton 350.
6 Farmer, *op.cit.*, p.789.
7 *ibid.*, p. 791. Prices are averaged for the decades 1315-25; 1340-50.

fifty years later the rent in kind would have been worth c.£15 5s. per annum. By 1350, however, prices had fallen and, in money terms, the return would have been less than that agreed in the original lease. In all probability the convent would have used the grain themselves so variations in its value would not have affected them to any great extent. There would have been some costs, of course, but these were not great. The provision of millstones was generally the responsibility of the owner, irrespective of whether the mill was at farm or not, but the care and maintenance of the mill was usually, and certainly in this particular contract, to be undertaken by the farmer.[1] The priory allotted him an acre in Broadmeadow for grazing his horses and gave him customary pasture rights and twelve bales of hay annually from their granges. On one day between All Saints and Christmas his groom could collect a pile of wood from the priory woods and he could use without distraint trees near the mill for its maintenance.

In addition to the rent, Westwood received other benefits. Three days per week were to be set aside for grinding priory grain and if William for some reason could not comply, he was to arrange to have it done at another mill and bear the brunt of the expense. In return he received the profits of multure from the priory manors of Westwood, Clerehall, Crutch and Wychbold. The proportion he demanded as a toll is not known. Despite the *Statutum de Pistoribus* which regulated the rate of toll to one twentieth or one twenty-fourth of the volume of pre-ground corn, in practice there was considerable variation in the amount which millers exacted.[2]

As it stands this seems to have been a suitable arrangement. William and the priory appear to have had their separate interests catered for. Grain prices did fluctuate, but prices were high in 1270 and remained relatively high until the 1330s and 1340s so the first few decades of lease would have provided worthwhile remuneration. Furthermore, in a period of marked fluctuations in grain prices the monastery was guaranteed a steady and reliable supply of grain,

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1 On farming mills see Holt, *op.cit.*, p. 99.

2 *ibid.*, pp. 49, 50. See *Statutes of the Realm, i* (Record Commissioners, London, 1810) pp. 202-4.

which otherwise it might have had to purchase.[1] The nature of the agreement raises the issue of whether it marked a change from customary (hereditary) tenure of mills to occupancy for a fixed term with reversion at the end of that term. Having no previous leases with which to compare it, we cannot tell if this was a new departure for the priory. In fact, reversion occurred much sooner than William or the priory representatives probably anticipated. William's death, or another unknown factor, caused the lease to be renewed with a different tenant within two years. In 1272 Guy of Blackmore was party to the lease of the two mills on exactly the same terms as those granted previously to William of Winetone.[2]

Available evidence suggests then, that milling was definitely a profitable venture for Westwood priory and probably for the others. We can assume that mills functioned as an integral part of the monastic estates, not bringing a huge income but a satisfactory yearly revenue. There is no evidence to suggest that these monasteries built mills for commercial purposes nor that they exploited their mills on a level similar to that of Glastonbury.[3] With another common medieval monastic resource, fisheries, circumstances were different. Here, as we shall see, almost all endeavour was directed towards domestic consumption.

Fish Ponds & Fisheries

Fish being such an important ingredient in the medieval diet, particularly that of religious, maintaining the supply to a monastery was a factor of supreme importance. On average, consumption of fish in monasteries probably exceeded 35 Kg per person per year.[4] This means that a house the size of Amesbury would have needed at least 4,000 Kg. of fish per year for the nuns and chaplains, Nuneaton 3000 Kg.; Westwood c.1,500 Kg. Even if a

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1 Farmer *op.cit.*, pp. 789-791.

2 BCL MS Hampton 351.

3 R. Holt, 'Whose Were the Profits of Cornmilling? An Aspect of the changing relationship between the Abbots of Glastonbury and their tenants 1086-1350', *P&P*, cxiv (1987), pp. 14-17.

4 Harvey, *Living and Dying*, p. 46; C.K. Currie. 'The Role of Fishponds in the Monastic Economy', *BAR 203*, p. 154; J.P. Greene, *Medieval Monasteries* (Leicester, 1992), p. 124. It must be noted, however, that these figures apply to men's houses; women ate less than men.

large proportion of this were preserved, it is obvious that no monastery, large or small, could hope to supply its needs from its domestic ponds. Much of the fish used in medieval monasteries must have been bought at markets.[1]

By the beginning of the fourteenth century fish markets were widespread, despite the difficulties inherent in the transportation of fresh fish. Cambridge was an important fish-marketing centre for the fens; Lichfield was also important and, definitely by the end of the end of the fourteenth century but probably much earlier, a good variety of both sea and river fish was available at Coventry.[2] In the south, Winchester was an important regional fish marketing centre.[3] Studies have shown that in some well-documented households a minimum of 40% of fish supplies was obtained from markets.[4] Coventry would have been easily accessible to Nuneaton; Winchester to Amesbury. Frequently fish was dried or salted to preserve it. Some monasteries ensured a constant supply of processed fish by building fish houses specifically for this purpose. A case in point is that which the abbot of Glastonbury had built at Mere in Somerset.[5] We know that the Amesbury community bought supplies of salted fish; Brother Robert bought herrings at Southampton in 1316 and Brother William, the receiver, bought preserved fish for Advent 1318 and Lent 1319.[6]

Most monasteries also had their own fish ponds. These were not necessarily large, and only had to be sufficiently deep as to prevent total freezing in winter.[7] Some were more complex than others: Halesowen, for example, had ponds in the valleys on either side of the main buildings; Bordesley had two ranges of ponds within the monastic precinct which had been

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1 At Westminster at the end of the fifteenth century about 50% of the fish served was preserved. Harvey, *Living and Dying*, p. 47; Currie, *loc.cit.* See also *Accounts of the Cellarers of Battle Abbey, 1275-1513*, ed. E. Searle & B. Ross (Sydney 1967), pp.49-51, where it is shown that purchase of fish accounted for 41% of the total expenditure on food.

2 Dyer, *Freshwater Fish*, p. 30.

3 Coldicott, *op.cit.*, p. 78.

4 Dyer, *Freshwater Fish*, p. 32.

5 Greene, *op.cit.*, p. 145.

6 AML 244 H1 3.

7 R.A. Chambers and M. Gray, 'The Excavation of Fishponds', *BAR 182*, i, p. 115

especially extended to accommodate them and Cookhill had a complex arrangement of ponds in a moat-like formation.[1] The Fontevraud Brothers at Grove Priory may have canalised the river Ouzel to accommodate large fishponds on the old valley floor though we cannot be certain that this occurred during the period of their occupation of this site.[2] There is both documentary and archaeological evidence of fish ponds at Nuneaton. For Amesbury and Westwood no evidence has survived. In 1291 the manor of Nuneaton had among its possessions fishponds (*vivaria)* valued at 6s. 8d. per annum. Archaeological evidence points to the possible existence of at least one pond and probably more on the south east extremity of the Nuneaton monastic precinct.[3]

Some monasteries held rights in river fisheries.[4] In the fens, for example, on the Nene River, by 1291 at least sixteen religious houses held rights in fisheries, Nuneaton priory being one.[5] At its foundation in the mid-twelfth century, Robert, earl of Leicester had granted the priory lands and fisheries at Upwell and Outwell with an annual production of 200,000 standard eels and 5,000 large.[6] The grant safeguarded the right of the canons of St Mary's Leicester to a tithe of these eels, this having been granted them previously, but towards the end of the twelfth century the canons granted the tithe, by then rendered in cash, to the priory.[7] Additional supplies of fish were obtained from Groby, where, during the second half of the twelfth century, Robert Blanchemains had granted them a tithe of the produce of his ponds.[8] Millponds too were a source of fish, particularly eels: the Luttrell Psalter illustrates both fish and eels being trapped in wicker eel traps set in a mill stream.[9] In about 1180 Nuneaton was

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1 M. Aston and C.J. Bond, 'Worcestershire Fishponds', *BAR 182*, ii, p. 444 and sources cited there.
2 C.J. Bond, 'Water Management in the Rural Monastery', *BAR 203*, p. 100.
3 *TPN* p. 256; E.A. Veasey, 'Priory and Town: The Medieval Topography of Nuneaton' in D. Andrews *et al.*, 'The Archaeology and Topography of Nuneaton Priory', *Transactions of the Birmingham and Warwickshire Archaeological Society*, xci (1981), pp. 60-62.
4 C. Dyer, *Freshwater Fish* , p. 31.
5 *TPN* p. 101; Some of these had been granted in the time of King Edgar. *The Early Charters of Eastern England*, ed. C.R. Hart (Leicester, 1966), pp. 42, 63, 79.
6 AML 246 H1 1.
7 BL Add. Chart. 47398, 47492.
8 *ibid.*, 47582 (*Danelaw Docs*, p. 244).
9 *The Luttrell Psalter*, ed. E.G. Millar (London, 1932), plate 114.

receiving a tithe of the fish from the mill at Inkpen.[1] In the early thirteenth century when Thomas of Eastly took possession of a piece of land which he had assarted and enclosed, he had to pledge that if he sowed crops or made a fishpond on the land, he would grant the priory a tithe of the produce.[2]

The annual render of eels from Robert of Leicester's endowment was probably in excess of what the monastery could use and the surplus may have been marketed, though there is no direct evidence of this having occurred.[3] Since, in the 1291 valuation, Nuneaton's fisheries at Upwell and Outwell were reckoned at only £2. 11s. per annum, it is extremely doubtful if, other than the eels, their produce was of marketable quantity. It is more likely that it was used for domestic consumption.[4] This does not mean that fishponds and tithes of fish did not make a contribution to Nuneaton's economy. Their importance lay not so much in providing a means of income but a source of high-status food to be used on special occasions or as gifts which would have been expensively procured elsewhere.[5]

SALT

A resource whose commercial value is more readily apparent is salt. Westwood priory counted among its assets several salt pits or shares in pits at Droitwich, an area second in importance only to Cheshire in the commercial exploitation of salt.[6] There is evidence of salt production here from the Iron Age and the brine springs were exploited extensively by the

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1 BL Add. Chart. 47425.

2 *ibid.*, 48491. The payment of tithes on produce of the land had been prescribed by Innocent III. See M. Cheney, 'The Decretal of Pope Celestine III on tithes of Windmills, JL 17620', *Bulletin of Medieval Canon Law*, N.S. i (1971), p. 64.

3 See Bond, *op.cit.*, p. 81.

4 *TPN* p. 101.

5 Dyer, *Freshwater Fish*, p. 33.

6 M. Rochester, *Salt in Cheshire*, (3 vols, Cheshire County Council, 1975), ii, p. 1. On the salt industry at Droitwich see *VCH Wor.*, iii, pp. 72-76; D. Hooke, 'The Droitwich Salt Industry: an Examination of the West-Midland Charter Evidence', *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History*, edd. D. Brown, S. Campbell, S. Chadwick Hawkes (*BAR*, British Series, 92, 1981) pp. 123-169.

Romans.[1] In the Domesday Survey at least 301 salt pans are listed for Worcestershire with 159 for Droitwich, the majority being held by the king.[2]

The source of the brine at Droitwich is a band of Mercian Mudstone. Under artesian pressure the saliferous beds it contains rise up as brine springs in and around the Salwarpe river.[3] The brine was extracted into pits formed by digging down to the layer of talc through which it seeped. It was then stored in vats or sedimentation tanks. Dues were assessed according to the number of vats or portions of vats to which a person had rights. At Droitwich the vats were called *boileries* or *bulleries*.[4] Each boilery contained 6,912 gallons of brine which produced about 4 tons (160 bushels) of salt. In 1086 between 310 and 320 vats were being drawn from the pits each year; by c.1400 the total was c.377.[5] Salt making took place between June and December when the brine was at its strongest.[6] Everyone who owned brine rights had his own boiling-house (*salina*). These were structures with timber sides and thatched roofs situated around a common pit.[7] Inside them the brine was heated in lead pans to evaporation point, dried to prevent caking and stored in a hot-house.[8] The main fuel used was wood, the supply of which was the salt maker's responsibility.

When Westwood priory was founded in the early 1150s the prioress and nuns were endowed with a salt pit and appurtenances at Droitwich, and it is evident that they invested further in property and rents associated with the pits.[9] Part of the foundation endowment of Westwood

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1 J. Sawle, 'Excavation of the Old Bowling Green, Ricketts Lane, Droitwich, Interim Report', *Worcestershire Archaeology and Local History Newsletter*, xxii (1979), p. 1; Rochester, *op.cit.*, p. 12.

2 *DB* 172b, 177, 176b, 174b. Darby & Terrett, *op.cit.*, p. 251.

3 S. Woodiwiss, *Iron age and Roman Salt Production and the Medieval Town of Droitwich* (CBA Research Report, lxxxi, 1992), p. 1.

4 E.K. Berry, 'The Borough of Droitwich and its Salt Industry, 1215-1700' *University of Birmingham Historical Journal*, vi (1957-8), p. 43.

5 *ibid.*, pp. 43, 51.

6 *ibid.*, p. 48. The pans measured 5 x 3 feet.

7 Rochester, *op.cit.*, i, p. 46. See R. McNeil, 'Two Twelfth Century Wich Houses in Nantwich, Cheshire', *Medieval Archaeology*, xxvii (1983), pp. 40-88.

8 Berry *op.cit.*, p. 48.

9 BCL MS Hampton 48, (*EEA II*, p.196). See above p. 86 on endowments.

was a *salinarium* - probably an actual salt works.[1] Among the early acquisitions were rents derived from the boiling houses.[2] One grant in particular clarifies the extent to which salt was economically important to the priory. At the beginning of the thirteenth century, Ralph Hacket sold for 1 mark *una dala salsae cum salina et loco lignario*, for the annual rendering of 3s. and 1 *mitta* of salt.[3] *Salsae* were the salt dues payable originally to the king and later to the burgesses of Droitwich who, by a royal charter of 1215, were granted control of the town and the pits.[4] Ralph Hacket, undoubtedly one of these burgesses, sold the priory a share of his salt dues, a boiling house and a source of fuel.[5] We can estimate the value of this grant. Assuming that one vat of brine was purchased, the average annual yield would have been 20 quarters of salt. In 1220 its gross value would have been c.43s., its net value c.38s. (3s. rent had to be deducted and a quarter of salt had to be rendered to the donor).[6] Thus, from its foundation Westwood was part of the highly-complex industrialised scene at Droitwich. We do not know whether the monastery exploited its holdings directly or by leasing, but it is clear that it continued to exploit them in one way or another until the Dissolution. In 1535 its holdings were 4 boileries which were at farm for 5 marks (£3 6s. 8d.); and 1 *sela* at farm for 3s.4d. (This word is ambiguous: it may refer to a pit or a pan; alternatively it may mean the building in which the salt was boiled.[7]) The priory also received annually 4 quarters (32 bushels) of salt, valued in 1535 at 16s. per annum.[8] Given that at the Dissolution the total value of Westwood's assets at farm was £19 9s., the assets in the salt industry, valued at £4 6s., accounted for 22%. The importance of this industry to the priory economy should not therefore, be underestimated.

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1 *Cal. Chart. Rolls 1257-1300*, p. 320.
2 BCL MS Hampton 340; BL MS Cotton Vespas. E. ix., fo. 6v, 7v, 8v.
3 *ibid.*, fo. 9.
4 *Cal. Chart. Rolls 1199-1216*, p. 216; Berry, *op.cit.*, pp. 39-49.
5 One cartload of wood was necessary for every *mitta* of salt produced. Hooke, *op.cit.*, pp. 140-41.
6 Farmer, *op.cit.*, p. 808.
7 Hooke, *op.cit.*, p. 146; F.F.S. Houghton, 'Saltways', *Transactions of the Birmingham and Warwickshire Archaeological Society*, liv (1929-30), p. 5.
8 *VE* ii, p. 276.

Markets and Fairs.

Fairs and markets were old features of economic life by the twelfth century and association with both was a Benedictine tradition. From what we can gather Westwood monastery had no involvement in either the weekly market or the annual fair at Droitwich but Nuneaton and Amesbury both had market privileges and the former was able to use them to launch a daring entrepreneurial venture. In the late twelfth century and the thirteenth, many new markets were founded, some in towns that were already in existence, some in new towns built by lords as an economic enterprise.[1] Eventually many markets were licensed by the king or by a lord and the grant of the charter tends to be the first certain date in the history of the market in question.[2] In many cases these charters legitimised already existing markets, but for development to be successful, it needed crown approval to protect it from competition by markets in neighbouring towns.[3] The development of the fair at Amesbury and of Nuneaton as a market town belongs in this wider context.[4]

The charter granting a fair at Amesbury for three days up to and including the feast of St. Melor (1 October) occurs quite late in the history of the monastery (1317), but the actual fair may have predated by many decades its legitimisation.[5] Since Amesbury was one of the pre-Conquest abbeys around which a town gradually grew, we can presume that the weekly market which the abbey controlled would have passed with its other assets to the Fontevraud foundation.[6] This is one area of Amesbury's history about which we know nothing more.

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1 See T.R. Slater, 'Urban Genesis and Medieval Town Plans in Warwickshire', in T. R. Slater and P.J. Jarvis, (edd.) *Field and Forest: An Historical Geography of Warwickshire and Worcestershire* (Norwich, 1982), pp. 183,184; E.M. Carus-Wilson, 'The First Half-Century of the Borough of Stratford-upon-Avon', *EcHR*, 2nd Ser., xviii, (1965), pp. 46-63 and *VCH Oxon.*, vii, p. 178. For a gazetteer of new towns in the Middle Ages see M. Beresford, *The New Towns of Medieval England* (London, 1967), pp. 386-526.

2 Slater, *op.cit.*, p. 186. For a table of markets founded in England before 1349 see R.H. Britnell, 'The Proliferation of Markets in England, 1200-1349', *EcHR*, 2nd ser, xxxiv (1981), p. 210.

3 *ibid.*, p. 211.

4 See also R.H. Britnell, 'Commercialisation and Economic Development in England 1000-1300' in R.H. Britnell & B.M.S. Campbell, edd., *A Commercialising Economy: England 1086-c.1300* (Manchester 1995), pp. 7-26, especially p.18.

5 *Cal. Chart. Rolls, 1300-26*, p. 333.

6 L. Butler, 'Medieval Urban Religious Houses', in J. Schofield and R. Leech, edd., *Urban Archaeology in Britain* (CBA Research Report, lxi, 1987), p. 168.

Nuneaton's involvement with markets is well-documented. The success of the market there seems to have been a determining factor in a project initiated by the monastery, by which Nuneaton developed from an agricultural settlement to a relatively prosperous town.

Using the grant of a market charter to Nuneaton as our point of departure we can trace the burgage development from 1226. Henry II had granted a yearly fair to the priory c.1163 but there seems to be no foundation for assuming that he granted a market at the same time.[1] It would not be wise to assume that there was definitely no market beforehand. However, the request for a market charter in 1226 indicates that from this time there was a definite strategy of urban speculation inaugurated by the prioress and her convent.[2]

One factor determining the success of any market was the day of the week on which it was held. Markets within c.13 miles (21 km) of each other were likely to cause a nuisance.[3] Tuesday markets in neighbouring vills could have been the reason for Nuneaton's change of market day from Tuesday to Saturday in 1233, although both Atherstone and Sutton Coldfield (at a distance of c.5 and c.16 miles respectively), whose Tuesday markets may have interfered with that of Nuneaton, did not receive their charters until the fourteenth century.[4] Tamworth and Kenilworth, both major centres, had Saturday markets but these were probably judged to be sufficiently distant from Nuneaton not to affect adversely its clientele.[5] Another aspect of market day was its convenience for traders. Towns relatively close which held markets on sequential days, benefited the traders who could 'do the circuit' of markets. A study of the market days in Warwickshire shows that it was possible for a trader in a certain commodity to have sold at Southam on Monday, Kenilworth on Tuesday, Solihull Wednesday, Coventry

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1 BL Add. Chart. 47398 (3) See also Veasey, *op.cit.*, p. 56.
2 *Rot. Litt. Claus.*, ii, p. 121.
3 Carus-Wilson, *op.cit.*, p. 54. See also R.H. Britnell, *Commercialisation of English Society, 1000-1500*, (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 22-3, 84.
4 BL Add. Chart. 48494. *VCH War.* ii, p. 76, iv, p. 235.
5 For market days in medieval Warwickshire and Worcestershire: Slater, *op.cit.*, p. 184.

Friday and Nuneaton on Saturday.[1] Merchants buying produce from local dealers could similarly take advantage of the consecutive days.

Burgage Development

The chronology of events from 1226 leaves no doubt about the plans of the prioress and convent of Nuneaton. Once the charter was granted, burgage plots were defined and made available to prospective tenants. A charter of 1227 stated that the conditions of tenure would be the same as those by which the burgesses of Coventry held their plots of the prior of that town.[2] The serious nature of the venture is evident in the counter-seal of Bertha, abbess of Fontevraud. Such a course of action was not within the ordinary mandate of a prioress, not even of the prioress of Nuneaton who may have had more autonomy than most.[3] This plan had evidently been discussed, counsel sought, prospects weighed, the final decision taken and subsequently ratified. Nuneaton was thus set on its course for expansion as a market town, built on the foundations of the former Anglo-Saxon town. Plots of 3 x 9 perches (16.5 x 49.5 yards; 15 x c.45 metres) were made available for rent at 15d. per annum, free of all services. The plots, more or less rectangular, were situated on the western side of the river, along Abbey Street, with Burgage Walk marking their rear boundary on the north side. Once laid out, they were subject to division both lengthways and widthways. Buildings would have been concentrated on the plot frontage and, if the general pattern prevailed, would have been arranged cross-ways on the plot with a narrow passage giving access to the rear where barns or sheds would have been placed.[4] On the northern side of the plots were enclosed fields called *The Burgages*. These probably provided small parcels of arable or pastoral land for the town dwellers and would have been linked tenurially to the burgages on the same principle as the toft and croft.[5]

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1 *ibid.*
2 BL Add. Chart. 48490.
3 *ibid.*, 53108.
4 Slater, *Burgages*, p. 1.
5 For similar arrangements in Pershore: *ibid.*, p. 10.

Details of the first 60 years of burgage development are unknown. We have no idea how rapidly the scheme progressed nor who took advantage of its terms. The earliest surviving record of a rental dates from 1287 when William le Fossour rented a burgage for the statutory 15d.[1] Three years later, Matilda de Verni obtained a burgage at the same rate.[2] Earlier records certainly refer to business activity in the vill. There was a great deal of buying, selling and exchanging of land within and beyond the town which was not confined to the actual burgage plots. About 1230 William Miller acquired for 11s. premium and 3s. annual rent a messuage with a toft in Nuneaton.[3] If William's surname is an indication of his trade, then his attention could have been drawn by an area of land south of the marketplace on a loop of the river. This is marked on later maps as the site of a corn mill; the road north of the site is called *Mill Walk* and at its south-east extremity a sluice, a weir and a dam are indicated.[4] It is not implausible that William Miller acquired this land in the hope that he could prosper in the developing town. The advantages associated with the position of this holding and its greater area would explain the high rent he paid.

Burgages would in general have conformed to the standard specifications but it is reasonable to suppose that from the beginning, limitations imposed by the site and other complications would have resulted in plots which were not rectangular, whose area was above or below the norm or whose specifications meant that they were leased for a sum different from that laid down in the 1227 charter. Urban historians warn against equating modern concepts of precision and medieval standardisation. The plots of Stratford, for example, were not simple rectangles; in fact the grid plan was distorted into the form of a parallelogram to fit the town onto the gravel stratum and avoid building on the flood plain.[5] The 1335 rental roll of Nuneaton priory shows that of a total of 61 plots, a third were being rented at a rate higher than the norm.[6] John the cook, for example, was paying 2s.8d. for his holding, Geoffrey

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1 BL Add. Chart. 48509.
2 *ibid.*, 48516.
3 *ibid.*, 48492.
4 Ordinance Survey Map 1888.
5 Slater, *Burgages*, p. 4.
6 BL Add. Chart. 49466.

Chapman and his partners 7s.3d., and Thomas Bosenile 9s.10d. We can assume that advantageous position, large dimensions or other unspecified factors accounted for these variations. By 1335 many of the burgesses were paying an *incrementum* of $1^1/_2$d. for a *solarium* - an upper room - or for access to upper rooms/storeys - in other words for any development they had undertaken which would have increased the commercial value of the holding. John of Overton, a tailor, was granted a messuage and garden for an annual rent of $10^1/_2$d: this may have been a half-burgage with a 3d. *incrementum*;[1] Hamond of Eton, a mason, rented a tenement with buildings and appurtenances for 2s.6d: this may have been for two standard holdings;[2] Fortuitously, a record has survived of the grant to Hugh de Bosenile, a smith, as well as the details of his lease.[3] The lease was for 60 years and consisted of half a burgage, land and a watercourse for which he and his wife Letitia paid 12d. per annum, with an additional 12d. per annum for the lease of his forge.

As can be expected, people with entrepreneurial skill sub-let their plots. Elias the wheelwright, for instance, granted his son part of a messuage in the vill for which he charged him 16d. per annum.[4] Other lessors were William, son of William Henry, who leased a messuage and curtilage to Robert Raulot and his wife for 4s. per annum and John son of Richard de Radecleve and his wife who leased part of their messuage.[5] No price is recorded for the latter.

As more land and property came on the market, the priory did its best to acquire it. In 1297 park land was bought from a local knight, Andrew of Eastley in a transaction which ultimately proved costly. Differences which arose between the priory and the knight had to be settled by

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1 *ibid.*, 48533.
2 *ibid.*, 48538.
3 *ibid.*, 48542, 49466.
4 *ibid.*, 48522. This land is described as extending to the river which came from the abbey (*sic*) mill. It is fairly certain that the river mentioned is not the Anker but possibly one of the streams or brooks closer to the priory which had been diverted for use as a mill stream. The citizens of Nuneaton apparently had difficulty with the canonical status of the priory. Vestiges of the 'abbey' nomenclature still remain in the town today.
5 *ibid.*, 48532, 48543

an arbitration process for which the priory had to make an pledge of £100.[1] In 1345 what was probably a general licence in mortmain was granted to the prioress to acquire 100s. worth of lands and rents in the town as well as a messuage from Robert de Herle.[2] In view of the small rents paid in the town, this represents a substantial amount of property.

The year 1335, a year for which we have a detailed rental of the Nuneaton properties, is an appropriate point to stop and review Nuneaton's involvement in urban speculation and consider its success or otherwise.[3] We need to determine, if we can, whether in the century and more of its operation, the burgage development scheme brought substantial revenue to the priory, more, for example, than would have accrued from agricultural and pastoral exploitation and to ascertain if, overall, the town increased in prosperity.

If a criterion of success is maximum occupancy of burgages, the scheme seems to have been quite successful. There would have been about 66 burgage plots in the original design.[4] In 1335, 61 plots were occupied, two thirds of them at the standard rent, a third at higher rates. If a criterion of success is monetary return, the scheme was successful. A yearly yield in rent of between £5 10s. and £6 for the burgage development alone plus all the attendant benefits of pontage, pavage and market tolls is certainly significant; in 1314, for example, the prioress was granted pavage on all wares brought into the town for sale over a period of five years.[5] What is more, many of the holders of burgage plots held other property of the priory, paying in some cases quite substantial rents.[6] Agnes, widow of John Pierisson, for example, as well as her burgage, held a messuage in fee on the far side of the Anker river (*ultra aquam*) for 4s.

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1 *ibid.*, 48517, 48519.
2 *ibid.*, 48551, 48552. For general licences in mortmain, see S. Raban, *Mortmain Legislation and the Medieval Church 1279-1500* (Cambridge, 1982), p. 156.
3 Information for the following comparisons is taken from BL Add. Chart 49466.
4 Veasey, *op.cit.*, p. 56.
5 *Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1313-17*, p. 110.
6 BL. Add. Chart. 49466.

per annum and she and her son Henry had other tenements in freehold. William Wayte, besides his burgage, had several holdings worth over 11s. per annum and one of John Passer's holdings beyond the river was held for 13s. 4d. A further advantage was that the new town tended to develop westwards towards the priory: the former Anglo-Saxon vill on the far side of the river, centred on the parish church of St Nicholas, diminished in importance.[1] If an increase in population is a sign of success, the scheme seems to have been successful. In 1086 the manor of Eton, situated on the eastern side of the river Anker, comprising the vill itself and the settlements of Stockingford and Attleborough, had an estimated population of 63 households, some 250-300 inhabitants.[2] By 1332 there were probably 200 households in the vill, putting the population at c.900, exclusive of at least 100 nuns and chaplains in the priory. This indicates a population increase of at least 200% on the Domesday figures. Immigration, a means of swelling numbers in towns where death rates were higher than in the country, is an important factor in determining the success of any urban development. At least 24% of the names in listings from 1327-44 indicate possible migration from outside the region.[3] Many of these surnames denote a trade or craft, for example Taylor, Miller, Couper, Wheelwright.[4]

Relatively speaking, however, Nuneaton's expansion and prosperity were not as great as those of neighbouring Stratford. While Nuneaton's population increased by 200% over two centuries, Stratford's increased by 600% in fifty years and a comparison of relative wealth using the 1327 Lay Subsidy as an index, points to the average burgess being taxed 50d. in Stratford but only 22d. in Nuneaton.[5] The high rental of the Nuneaton plots is puzzling. The norm for urban rentals in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was 10d. or 12d. per annum.[6] We have no idea what prompted the prioress and her convent to charge 15d. per annum for the

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1 Veasey, *op.cit.*, p. 58.
2 DB 239, 241. See also Veasey, *op.cit.*, p. 58.
3 E.A. Veasey, unpublished notes. I am indebted to Mr Veasey for his having made this information available.
4 Veasey, 'Priory and Town . . .' , *op.cit.*, pp. 57,58.
5 Carus-Wilson, *op.cit.*, pp.49-52; *Subsidy Roll, War, 1327*, pp. 34, 44.
6 Slater, *Burgages*, p. 3.

burgages in Nuneaton while in Stratford, plots greater in area could be had for 12d. per annum.[1] The scheme may have been too ambitious; the prioress and her convent may have been ill-advised. If Nuneaton's rents had been lower, the town may have attracted more settlers and prosperity may have been greater, but we cannot say this for certain. The development scheme brought a measure of prosperity to the town of Nuneaton. Ultimately it changed its aspect; what was formerly an agricultural centre took on a commercial character. A new market town took its place beside the old Anglo-Saxon vill. Had the priory maintained the status quo and concentrated solely on agricultural and pastoral development, this would not have occurred. That others elsewhere did it more successfully is, in the final analysis, not the point. Prioresses of Nuneaton may not have been the equals of the most successful founders of markets in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries but the fact that they embarked on this scheme at all is evidence of considerable daring and enterprise.

SPIRITUALITIES

As well as sources of wealth vested in land, medieval monasteries had spiritual resources which sometimes rivalled the temporal in their potential for exploitation. As part of its initial endowment, each of the three Fontevraud monasteries had received churches - as much a reflection of the tendency of laymen to regard churches as their personal property as of the influence of the Gregorian Reform movement which, during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, sought gradually to wrest control of churches and their appurtenances from the laity and to bring them under ecclesiastical jurisdiction.[2] At the time of its foundation, Westwood had two churches, two chapels and shares of tithes; Nuneaton had three churches and Amesbury six churches with tithes from eight others. By 1350 Amesbury and Nuneaton had increased their spiritualities indicating that for them, possessing either the right of presentation to a benefice (advowson) or the right to all or part of the tithes appropriate to a church, (appropriation) was both desirable and potentially lucrative.

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1 Plots at Stratford measured 3.5 x 12 perches (19.25 x 66 yards/17.6 x c.60 metres); at Nuneaton 3 x 9 perches (16.5 x 49.5 yards/15 x c.45 metres).

2 See above pp. 80, 82, 84.

The ruling of the Council of Westminster in 1102 that monasteries could accept churches only from bishops, meant that grants were generally made in one of three ways.[1] The first is exemplified in Henry II's donation of the church of Chalton to Nuneaton priory, a grant which was immediately ratified by Theobald, the archbishop of Canterbury.[2] Similarly, Richard fitz Nigel's donation of Mursely church to the same priory c.1155-66 was confirmed at once by Robert de Chesney, bishop of Lincoln.[3] A donor could thus make a gift of a church and have the bishop confirm this gift. An alternative to this was for the layman to grant a church directly to the bishop on the understanding that he would grant it to a religious house. About 1180, for example, David of Armentiers granted the church of Burley to Richard, bishop of Winchester, for presentation to some religious house.[4] Nuneaton was the recipient.[5] Out of deference to the local bishop, his confirmation was sometimes sought. The bequest of the church of Burley was subsequently confirmed and re-granted by Walter bishop-elect of Lincoln.[6] The third method occurred after the event and resembled an all-inclusive insurance policy. Bishops in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries were not necessarily bound to honour the acts of their predecessors. Monasteries thus were obliged to obtain frequent and explicit confirmations of their possessions in the various dioceses in order to keep them secure. Baldwin, archbishop of Canterbury, confirmed in 1185-6, the grants of nine separate churches to Nuneaton; two years later Hugh of Lincoln confirmed all churches possessed by this priory, and a similar confirmation was issued in 1292 by John of Pontoise, bishop of Winchester.[7]

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1 *Councils and Synods I*, ii, p. 749. See also B.R. Kemp 'Monastic Possession of Parish Churches in England in the Twelfth Century', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, xxxi (1980), pp. 137-39.
2 BL Add. Chart. 47398, 47390 (*EEA II*, p. 152, *EEA VIII*, p. 122).
3 *ibid.*, 47482 (*EEA I*, p. 129).
4 *ibid.*, 47573, i (*EEA IV*, p. 201).
5 *ibid.*, 47789, 47573, ii (*EEA IV*, p. 202).
6 *ibid.*, 47573, iv.
7 *ibid.*, 47398 (*EEA II*, p. 251); 47573, xx (*EEA IV*, p. 93).

TABLE 1. CHURCHES POSSESSED BY FONTEVRAUD PRIORIES, 1350.[1]

AMESBURY		NUNEATON		WESTWOOD	
Church	**Value 1291**	**Church**	**Value 1291**	**Church**	**Value 1291**
Amesbury	}	Kintbury	£26 13s. 4d.	Westwood	N/A
Ludgershall	} £40	Burton	£5.	Droitwich	N/A
Bultford	}	Merton	£4 13s. 4d.	Cotheridge	N/A
Durrington	}	Hodnell	£3 6s. 8d.		
Challow	£4 6s. 8d.	Catherington	£21 6s. 8d.		
Newton Tony	£6.	Burley	?		
Allington	?	Ratby	£2 13s 4d.		
Boscombe	£4.6s. 8d.	Claybrooke	£6 13s 4d.		
Falleye	£2 10.	Stretton	£5 6s. 8d.		
Clyffe Pypard	£2.	Chalton	£20		
Tidworth	?	Clanfield	£8		
Ratfyn	?	Blendworth	£10 13s. 4d.		
Letcombe	?	Mursley	£10		
Wanborough	N/A	Caldwell	N/A		
Aldbourne	N/A	Waltham	£20		
East Garston	N/A				

By 1350, Westwood Amesbury and Nuneaton possessed between them more than 30 churches, as this table illustrates. Many of the Amesbury churches had been originally the property of the Anglo-Saxon abbey, a factor contributing to the overall importance of spiritualities in this priory's cash income. To this 'inherited' wealth Amesbury was able to add new spiritual possessions. Nuneaton was endowed with some churches at its foundation but it, too, enlarged its initial spiritual endowment. Westwood, on the other hand, maintained its initial endowment but did not procure any additional churches. In the 1291 taxation there are no returns for Westwood - in fact it is stated that the nuns were too poor to be taxed - and in 1312, the prior of Worcester, temporarily in charge of the diocese during a vacancy in the see, instructed his emissary to *spare the poverty* of the nuns at Westwood when collecting the tithes due to him.[2]

Possession of the right of advowson did not necessarily secure an income for a particular priory: ordinarily the pastor or rector enjoyed the income from tithes and offerings. In some cases a dispute over tithe meant that an annual pension or payment was allotted to the priory but this was small in relation to the potential wealth of a church. Robert the priest held the

1 *TPN* pp. 180, 185, 187, 188-9, 211, 217, 241-2.
2 *ibid.*, p. 217. *Register of the Diocese of Worcester, Registrum Sede Vacante, op.cit.*, ii, p.62.

church at Mursley of Nuneaton priory c.1160-70 for an annual payment of 3s.[1] In the time of King John, another Robert held the same church for an annual payment of 5 marks.[2] During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, parallels could be found in Sudbury where Peter of Spikeworth was installed as rector, paying 20s. per annum to Nuneaton, in Stretton where the parson paid 10s. per annum and in Catherington where Peter the clerk paid 7 marks per annum.[3] Disputes over the possession of advowsons were not uncommon. The church of Claybrooke, granted to Nuneaton by Isabel de Vattville, and confirmed by her son Ernald de Bosco in the time of Henry II is a typical example.[4] In 1224 Hugh of Lincoln installed Master Laurence as parson of Claybrooke, noting that Nuneaton priory had the right of presentation at the next vacancy.[5] By the middle of the century, however, the dean and chapter of Lincoln were arbitrating in a dispute concerning the right of presentation between the priory and Ernald de Bosco, obviously a descendant of the donor, and it was not until 1282, and at a cost of 100 marks (£66 13s. 4d.), that the advowson was formally renounced by John de Bosco, son of Ernald.[6] In 1220, despite charters and confirmations which seemed to support Nuneaton's claim to the advowson of Stretton Baskerville, the judgement went the other way and the prioress Ida had to surrender it in return for a virgate of land and a pension of 15 marks (£10).[7] Moreover, disputes were not always with the laity. Disputed claims concerning Waltham-on-the-Wolds involving Nuneaton priory, the nuns of St Paul lès Beauvais and Stephen of Eaton began as early as 1158 when Isabel of Northampton, daughter of the earl of Leicester, gave the church to Richard, a relative of this Stephen. They continued for thirty two years.[8] By the late twelfth century Nuneaton was receiving 10 marks per annum from this church.[9]

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1 BL Add. Chart. 47483.
2 *ibid.*, 47484.
3 *ibid.*, 47954 (*EEA VI*, p. 215); 53112.
4 *ibid.*, 47556, 47557, 47558 (*Danelaw Docs*, pp. 238, 239); 47398 (*EEA VIII*, p. 60).
5 *ibid.*, 47561-62.
6 *ibid.*, 47563-66
7 *ibid.*, 49121. See also *Curia Regis Roll*, vi, p. 71; vii, p. 260; *Feet of Fines, Warwick*, i, p. 46 (225).
8 BL. Add. Chart. 47634-47640 (*Danelaw Docs*, pp. 252-257).
9 *ibid.*, 47644.

By far the greatest value from a church came from possession of its greater tithe. As early as 1182-5 Nuneaton obtained from Pope Lucius III the right to appropriate rents of various churches in its patronage during vacancies as they had been interfered with by outside persons.[1] Throughout the thirteenth century, whenever an opportunity presented itself, Nuneaton assumed control of the income from the churches under its patronage. In February 1234, seeing the nuns could not support themselves *propter sterilitatem loci*, Gregory IX granted them permission to appropriate the church of Chalton provided a suitable pastor was appointed;[2] in 1244 Walter Suffield, bishop of Norwich, permitted the nuns to take an extra 10 marks per annum from the church at Sudbury, in view of their poverty;[3] in 1255 Alexander IV permitted them, in consideration of their hospitality and service of the poor to appropriate the church of Claybrooke without the consent of the bishop, on the condition that they reserved a portion for a perpetual vicar;[4] in 1292, because the revenues of the monastery were depleted, because the nuns were supporting a hospice for the poor and infirm and were themselves living on hard bread, the bishop of Winchester allowed them to appropriate the church of Catherington on the resignation of the rector.[5] The particulars of appropriation can be observed in the last two cases. From Claybrooke in 1261 Nuneaton priory was receiving 6 marks per annum plus tithes from Wibtoft, Little Wigston, Bittersby and Ullesthorpe; the vicar was receiving the tithes of Magna and Parva Claybrooke, Sharnford and Frolsworth as well as the lesser tithes and the altar dues.[6] The arrangements for Catherington were that Nuneaton was to receive the great tithes, the vicar the lesser tithes. The priory allowed the vicar four marks per annum for the repair of his dwelling opposite the church and undertook to be responsible for the repair of the chancel and other appurtenances. The vicar was to pay the archdeacon's fee and ordinary charges and a proportion of the extraordinary charges.[7]

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1 *ibid.*, 47398.
2 *ibid.*, 47398. See also *Cal. Pap. Let.*, *i*, p. 138.
3 *ibid.*, 47959. Nuneaton would have been rebuilding after the fire. See *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1247-58, p. 511. See above, p. 139.
4 *Cal. Pap. Let.*, i, p. 315.
5 BL. Add. Chart. 47398. This is the only direct reference to Nuneaton's having a hospital for the poor.
6 *ibid.*, 47563; See Kemp, *op.cit.*, p. 144.
7 BL Add. Chart. 47398.

Where it could be justified, appropriation was clearly more economically advantageous than possession of the advowson alone, but appropriation had to be founded on good reason and permission had to be granted by the bishop or the pope - in fact it was probably more difficult to appropriate a church in the fourteenth century than it was to obtain a licence to acquire land in mortmain. Episcopal and papal permissions did not come cheaply and documents attesting to an appropriation would have been procured at a cost. Nevertheless by 1535, Nuneaton had found reason (and the means) to appropriate seven of its churches and was receiving pensions from five others.[1] Amesbury, having appropriated Ludgershall in 1228 and East Garston in 1344, had by the Dissolution, appropriated eleven churches.[2] However, the inherent profitability of tithes led to disputes for their possession. In the time of King John, the prior of Leicester and one of the canons of Hereford were called upon to arbitrate between Nuneaton and the representatives of the abbey of Lyre in Normandy concerning the tithes and obventions in Wyken in Hinckley. Finally the priory was released of all suits but it had to pay 3s. per annum to Lyre in order to keep the tithes.[3] In 1283 after a judgement by Oliver, bishop of Lincoln, William of Grafton bound himself as rector of the church of Mursley to pay Nuneaton priory a pension of 40s, per annum.[4] Westwood priory was involved in a dispute with the monks of Worcester, who in 1178 had conceded to the priory the tithes of Westwood, Clerehall, and Crutch, all part of the parish of Dodderhill.[5] However, the rector of the church at Dodderhill brought a case against the priory concerning Peter's Pence and the tithes of the mill at Wychbold. The latter were granted to Westwood and the former were to be divided between each party.[6]

If tithes were commuted into money payments, as often they were, in the long-term their value declined. Accordingly, from the twelfth century onwards, monasteries sought to remedy the deficiency by investing in additional tithes in much the same way as they invested in land or

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1 *VE* iii, p. 76.
2 *Cal. Chart. Rolls*, 1226-57, p. 80; *Cal. Cl. Rolls*, 1343-44 p. 354; *VE* ii, p. 93.
3 BL Add. Chart. 47590, (*Danelaw Docs*, p. 258).
4 *ibid.*, 47486.
5 BCL MS Hampton 281, (*Worcester Cartulary*, p. 89).
6 *ibid.*, 447.

other utilities, receiving payment in cash rather than in kind. Tithes and assarts at Ratby, for example, the grain tithe from the domain in Ratby and Groby and those on the mill in Groby were purchased by Nuneaton from St Evroult through the prior of Ware in 1246 for 68s. 6d.[1] No investment in spiritualities by Nuneaton or Amesbury, however, could rival that of Bolton priory early in the fourteenth century. The appropriation of the church of Long Preston cost the canons of Bolton about £300; after five years the investment was bringing in a tidy profit.[2] In contrast, in 1291 the total value of Nuneaton's churches was c.£146 per annum, of Amesbury's slightly under £60 per annum and Westwood's spiritual assets were so meagre that they were not taxed at all.[3] While it must be admitted that not all the churches of Nuneaton and Amesbury were valued, none of the Fontevraud foundations had an investment, either in 1291 or later, comparable to that of Bolton.[4] This could be interpreted as a sign that the nuns were more cautious than the Augustinian canons when it came to investing money and it could be true that they were less inclined to take risks; it could be equally true that opportunities for investment of this type did not present themselves to them.

Of all the Nuneaton churches, Catherington seems to have been the most profitable. By 1332-33 the priory had farmed this church £20 per annum.[5] The value of this investment is highlighted by the fact that other churches - Sudbury, Mursley and Chalton - though listed in the priory register as sources of revenue, showed nil returns in the rents received by the prior of Nuneaton for the year beginning April 1332 and the following year.[6] No income was registered for the church at Burley, despite its being put to farm in 1329 for five years at 20 marks per annum, but another church, hitherto unmentioned, at Caldwell, brought in 13s. 4d.[7] During the twelve months from April 1332, 28% of Nuneaton's income derived from spiritualities.[8] This seems significant. In the early fourteenth century Bolton priory despite the

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1 BL Add. Chart. 47612. In 1328 the prior of Ware was owed £53. See above p. 163, n. 4.
2 Kershaw, *Bolton Priory*, pp. 63, 115.
3 See Table I, p. 244.
4 *TPN* pp. 180, 185-189, 241.
5 BL Add. Chart. 49709.
6 *ibid.*, 49727, 49709. This church is not listed among Nuneaton's possessions in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus.*
7 *ibid.*, 49727, 49709. For the farming of Burley see *ibid.*, 47794.
8 *ibid.*, 49709 verso.

investment in Long Preston was receiving from 20% to 25% of its total income from its spiritualities but the incompleteness of the Nuneaton data and a number of variables do not permit closer comparison.[1]

Comparison of the spiritualities of the three priories during their first two hundred years is rather difficult. A comparison is possible, however, at a later date, when there are some common data.

TABLE 2. CHURCHES POSSESSED BY FONTEVRAUD PRIORIES, 1535[2]

AMESBURY		NUNEATON		WESTWOOD	
Church	**Value 1535**	**Church**	**Value 1535**	**Church**	**Value 1535**
Amesbury	£26.	Catherington	}	Westwood	52s.
Bultford	£13 6s. 8d	Burley	}	Cotheridge	£10
Tidworth	£2	Ratby	}		
Ludgershall	£4	Claybrooke	}		
Durrington	£20	Burton	}		
Wanborough	£20	Merton	}		
Aldbourne	£27	Hodnell	} £56 6s.		
Ratfyn	£1 6s. 8d.	Stretton	}		
Allington	6s. 8d.	Chalton	}		
Kintbury	£18	Clanfield	}		
Falleye	£8	Blendworth	}		
Letcombe	£13	Mursley	}		
Challow	£12				
East Garston	£13 6s. 8d.				
TOTAL SPIRITUALITIES £178 6s. 8d.		**TOTAL SPIRITUALITIES** £56 6s.		**TOTAL SPIRITUALITIES** £12.12s.	

While the inevitable changes of another two centuries must be taken into account, these figures allow us to see how the three priories exploited their respective spiritual resources. The figures presented by the commissioners in 1535 and illustrated in Figure 1 indicate that Westwood with only two churches, obtained almost the same proportion of its income from spiritual sources as did Nuneaton with seven appropriated churches and pensions from five others. Amesbury drew approximately 33% of its income from spiritualities.

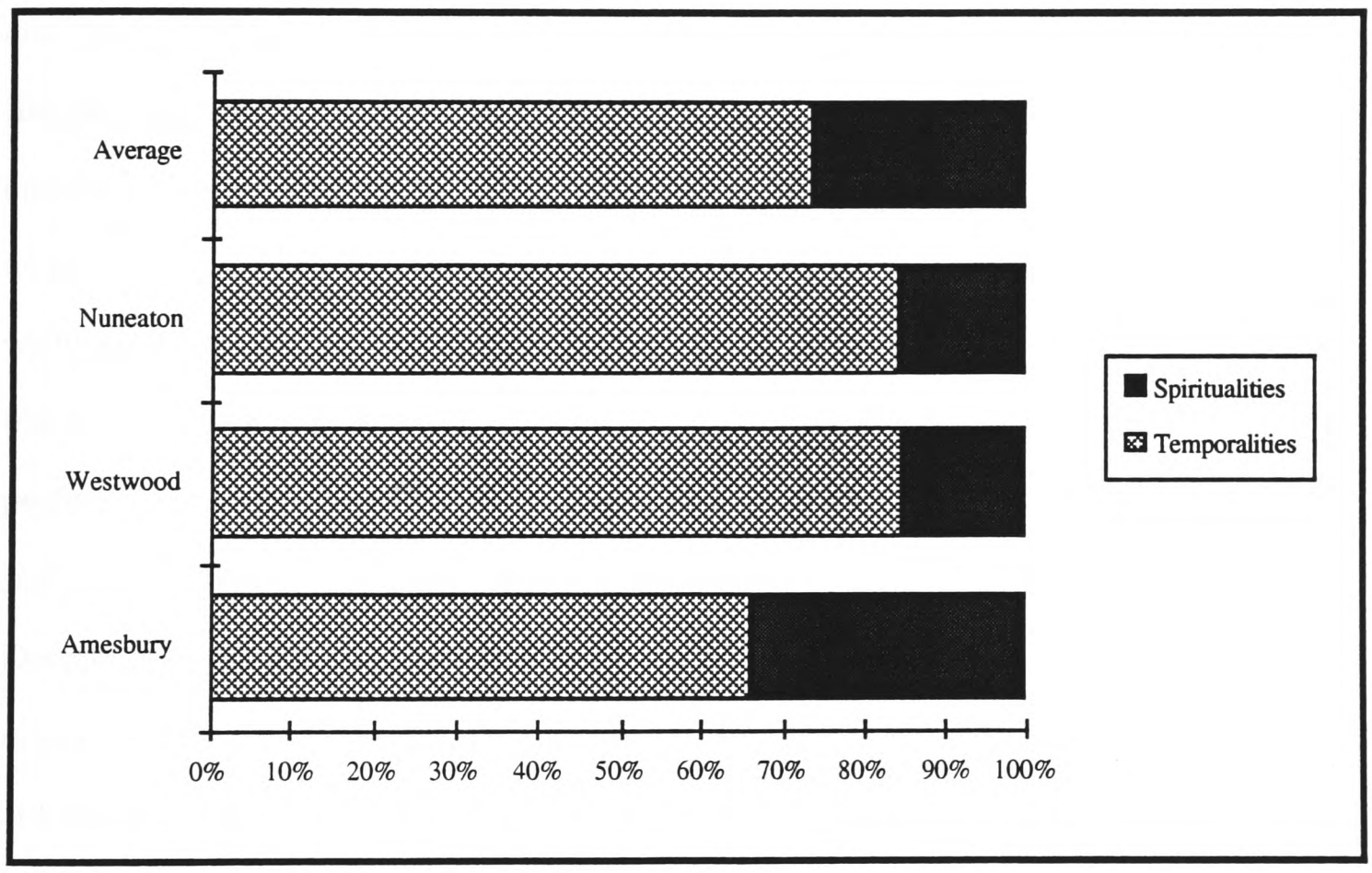
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1 Kershaw, *Bolton Priory*, p. 70.

2 *VE* ii, pp. 93, 276; iii, p. 76.

Westwood gained the bulk of its spiritual income from Cotheridge, worth £10 per annum in 1535.[1] Amesbury's spiritual revenue came chiefly from churches re-granted from the possessions of the Anglo-Saxon abbey. In the high proportion of spiritual to temporal income Amesbury appears to have been atypical of religious houses, at least of those in Wiltshire. Generally speaking monasteries with the highest revenue were less dependent on spiritual sources.[2] This is especially true of the older foundations which had extensive lands. Newer foundations had to rely more on spiritualities simply because lords became increasingly reluctant to grant land.

FIGURE 1: PROPORTION OF TEMPORALITIES TO SPIRITUALITIES IN PRIORIES' CASH INCOME, 1535.



CONCLUSIONS

There is little to suggest that the three foundations of Fontevraud adopted a passive role when it came to exploiting the resources with which they had been endowed and which they subsequently obtained. In almost every area - agricultural, pastoral, commercial and

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1 *ibid.*, p.276.
2 *VCH Wilts.*, iii, p.2.

industrial - they can be seen to have taken advantage of what was available and managed their assets with a considerable degree of efficiency. All three increased their initial endowment and there is evidence that, within the limits imposed on them, they reinvested profits in order to increase the value of their properties. They became involved in industry and, more unexpectedly for a group of women religious, initiated a scheme of urban development which had permanent social and economic consequences. Some of their resources - mills, churches, even the market place at Nuneaton - were put to farm during the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries in what may have amounted to sound investments, but with the exception of Nuneaton's manor of Marton and Amesbury's manor of Chaddleworth, the monastic estates themselves, judging from accounts of income and expenditure, were exploited directly and managed by reeves or members of the order. Their commercial ventures were neither flamboyant nor extravagant and they certainly could not be numbered among the great entrepreneurs of the period, either monastic or lay. They manifest, however, a degree of ambition, an interest in productivity, a desire to maximise returns from their investments, a willingness to try new undertakings and to be involved in a certain amount of risk - indications of a reasonable level of active involvement in economic affairs. All was not perfect, however: mistakes were made; the priories overspent; internal problems arose; scandals occurred; but these are common factors in the history of any religious house. Despite the deficiencies, the prevailing view of the three foundations in the utilisation of their assets must be of active engagement, and if they did not actually dominate their environment, at least they made an impact on it.

CONCLUSION

The year 1350 marks the end of our study of the three English Fontevraud foundations. In many ways the middle of the fourteenth century was a watershed. Two strong links between England and Fontevraud had already been severed by the death of Abbess Eleanor of Brittany in 1342. Eleanor had been a nun at Amesbury before moving to France and she therefore had a particular affinity with the English houses. Furthermore, she represented a strong Fontevraud-Plantagenet blood tie. Since the time of Fulk of Anjou, friend of Robert of Arbrissel and patron of the order, associations between Fontevraud and the Angevin house had been strong. So many of its members had been buried in the abbey. Now, six generations later, the ties were visibly weakened.

On the wider scene, by 1350, Pope Clement VI had purchased the seigneurial rights to Avignon, thus setting the scene for the eventual schism within the church when the English houses and Fontevraud each supported rival claimants to the papacy, thus widening the rift between them. Signs of the rift were already evident, however. Even in Eleanor of Brittany's time there had been attempts in Nuneaton to be independent of the control of a foreign abbey. As the strength of the Angevin empire waned so did the importance of Fontevraud. Continued war between England and France had involved the English priories in a conflict of loyalties in which their sympathies increasingly lay with the English side. In 1347 Isabel of Lancaster gave Edward III wool from Amesbury and loaned him money to assist in his campaigns against France.[1] When she died in 1349 the final blood tie between Fontevraud and the Plantagenets was dissolved. Also by 1350 the Black Death had struck, dealing English monastic life a blow from which it never fully recovered.

From this date, then, we turn and look back over two centuries of Fontevraud presence in England. We see an order robust, prestigious, patronised by the wealthy and catering to the

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1 *Cal. Cl. Rolls, 1346-49*, pp. 268, 384.

needs of the upper classes. Its aristocratic leanings are no cause for reproach. The aristocracy needed opportunities to serve God in religious life and the Fontevraud Order provided them. This had been so from the beginning when Robert of Arbrissel confided the direction of his foundation to two noblewomen and put noblewomen in charge of new priories. To the upper classes the Fontevraud order offered an alternative to traditional Benedictine life. It was autonomous, independent and had a reputation for strict observance and prayerfulness. As well, it had the social advantage of connections with the ruling house. We have no evidence that during the two centuries which we have studied, religious spirit in the houses on the whole weakened. True, there are documented cases of nuns whose lives were less than exemplary, but compared to the 30,000 or more women who would have lived in these houses over the period these must be a minority. There must have been many who lived lives of dedication, singing the Office, attending Mass, praying for their benefactors, educating young children in their care, ministering to the poor. That these women exercised a positive force in medieval society cannot be questioned.

In the eyes of contemporaries there may have been little to distinguish the Fontevraud houses from their Benedictine sisters, yet there were fundamental differences, the main one being the structure of the order. Linked by a common Rule and statutes, the three houses were bound by filial ties to Fontevraud. Dependence on the mother house may at times have been burdensome and a source of tension. However the system did have advantages not the least among which was independence of the local episcopal authority and direct reliance on that of the pope. The system of regular visitation provided for an overseer to scrutinise accounts thus providing checks and balances against possible abuses. It is also possible that the central authority supervised the deployment of personnel so that in cases of necessity, effective administrators could be sent to one or other of the monasteries to restore stability or improve efficiency. Some nuns from Westwood joined the Amesbury foundation and early in the fourteenth century a nun from Westwood was moved to Nuneaton to become prioress. It could be argued that without the central organisation of Fontevraud a small house such as Westwood may not have survived.

Our study of these houses has led us to question some of the conventional stereotypes of medieval nuns. Far from being dependent non-productive women living in isolated places these were dynamic, resourceful and positive, actively engaged in exploiting their resources, both spiritual and temporal. We would be doing them a disservice if we were to attribute this involvement simply to the fact that the order incorporated chaplains and brothers who served the nuns' spiritual and material needs. In the Fontevraud houses the prioress and convent in conjunction with the prior formulated policy, made decisions and controlled direction.

Centralisation did not mean homogeneity. Each house responded to the circumstances of its own foundation in its own individual way. Amesbury benefited from its royal associations and came to assume an importance for the Angevins comparable to that of Fontevraud; Nuneaton, rich and influential tried at one stage to divest itself of its ties to the mother house; Westwood, small and relatively poor nevertheless was an active participant in the economic life of the region and developed the resources it received in its initial endowment . That women in some religious orders experienced life differently goes without saying. However, those choosing to live religious life at Westwood, Amesbury or Nuneaton had the opportunity to live lives of prayer, and to practice charity in an order which was ruled by a woman, tailored to meet the needs of women, where women were in control of their own destiny to an extent that was rare outside the cloister.

PERSONNEL IN THE ENGLISH FOUNDATIONS OF FONTEVRAUD

WOMEN.

AMESBURY

1177	**Joan d'Osmont** occurs as first prioress.[1]
1192	**Amicia Pantulf**, lady-in-waiting to Eleanor of Aquitaine, occurs as donor and *conversa ad succurrendum.*[2]
1208, 1221	**Emeline** occurs as prioress.[3]
1227, 31, 37	**Felicia** occurs as prioress.[4]
1233	**Alpesia**, cousin of Henry III, admitted as nun.[5]
1256, 1271-3	**Ida** occurs as prioress.[6]
c.1279	**Eleanor of Provence**, widow of Henry III, retired to Amesbury, c. 1279; undertook building works; veiled 1286-7; died 1291; buried at Amesbury in king's presence.[7]
c.1270	**Jeanne de Dreux**, abbess of Fontevraud came to Amesbury to escape criticism of her rigorous discipline.[8]
1285	**Mary** (1278-1332), daughter of Edward I and Eleanor of Castille; veiled on feast of Assumption, 1285, with thirteen daughters of nobility; Amesbury given special privileges; acted as vicegerent and visitatrix for abbess 1300-1313; managed property of Grove Priory confiscated during wars with France; obit instituted Amesbury, 1332.[9]
1290	**Alice** occurs as prioress; accompanied Blanche of Navarre overseas.[10]

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1 BL Add. Chart. 47601 (*Danelaw Docs*, p. 247); Lardier, *La Saincte Famille* . . fo. 349, 350.

2 AML 243 H1 17, 17b; *Cal. Docs. Fr.*, 1901.

3 *Pedes Finium . . . A.D. 1195-A.D. 1214*, ed. J. Hunter (PRO 1835), p. 145; BL MS Stowe 882, fo. 39; *The Cartulary of Osney Abbey*, ed. H.E. Salter, (3 vols, Oxford, 1929-31), i, pp. 246-7.

4 *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1225-32*, pp. 237, 452; *Cal. Chart. Rolls, 1226-57*, p. 80.

5 *Cal. Lib. Rolls, 1226-40*, p. 195.

6 AML 243 H1 13; *Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1461-67*, p. 313; *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries* (2nd ser., ix, 1881-3), p. 366.

7 *Cal. Cl. Rolls 1272-79*, p. 524; *id., 1279-88*, pp. 14, 96; *Cal. Roy. Let.*, 1106, 1411; John de Oxenedes,*Chronica* ed. H. Ellis (RS xiii, 1859), p. 268; Bartholomew de Cotton, *Historia Anglicana* (RS xvi, 1859), p. 429; Thomas of Walsingham, *Historia Anglicana* (RS xxviii, 2 vols, 1863), i, pp. 28, 38; *Annales Monastici*, ii, p. 410; *id.*, iv, pp. 307, 410.

8 *Dictionnaire d'histoire et de géographie écclésiastiques*, xvii (Paris, 1971), 963.

9 AML 246 H2 5; Thomas of Walsingham, *Historia Anglicana, op.cit*, i, p. 26; *Annales Monastici*, iv, p. 491; *Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1281-92*, p. 190; *Cal. Chart. Rolls, 1257-1300*, pp. 331, 336-7; *Cal. Cl. Rolls, 1288-96*, p. 25; *id., 1302-07*, p. 280; *id., 1313-18*, p. 470; *id.*, 1330-33, p. 511; *Cal. Roy. Let.*, 1645, 1646, 1647; Account, I of Lancaster, p. 496; L. Guilloreau, 'Marie de Woodstock, une fille d'Edouard Ier, moniale à Amesbury. 1285-1332', *RM* xxxvi (1914), pp. 341-359; M.A.E. Green, *Lives of the Princesses of England from the Norman Conquest* , ii, (London, 1849), pp. 404-442.

10 *Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1281-92*, pp. 393, 409.

1286-c.1291	**Eleanor of Brittany** (1275-1342) daughter of John of Brittany and Beatrice, daughter of Henry III; veiled 1286; professed 1291; moved to Fontevraud; elected abbess 1304.[1]
1293	**Margaret** occurs as prioress, elected locally; election opposed by abbess, Mary daughter of Edward I and prior.[2]
1294, 1306, 09	**Joan de Gennes** (Jaynes) occurs as prioress, appointed by abbess.[3]
1309-17	**Isabel de Greville** occurs as prioress.[4]
c.1310	**Eleanor**, (1306-1311) daughter of Edward I and Margaret of France; lived at Amesbury with her half-sister, Mary.[5]
1316	**Matilda de Vorgis** occurs.[6]
1316 - 1319	**Elisabeth Deverell** occurs as infirmarian.[7]
1317	**Clementia Blonnay** occurs.[8]
1325	**Joan**, daughter of Piers Gaveston, occurs as having died, aged 15, at Amesbury; probably not a community member.[9]
21 May 1327	The following consecrated by John Droxford, Bishop of Bath and Wells.[10]
	Margaret Archur
	Joan Aucher
	Elena de Babynton

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1 Lardier, *op.cit.*, fo. 510.

2 *Cal. Cl. Rolls, 1288-96*, pp. 317-18; *Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1292-1301*, p. 71; *Wiltshire Feet of Fines*, p. 42.

3 *Registrum Simon de Gandavo, 1297-1315,* ed. C.T. Fowler & M.C.B. Dawes (2 vols, Caterbury & York Society, xl, 1934), ii, pp. 683, 705; *Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1292-1301*, pp. 71, 82, 241; *Cal. Cl. Rolls, 1296-1302*, pp. 16. 45; *Cal. Chanc. War.*, pp. 286-7; Guilloreau, *op.cit.*, p. 352.

4 AML 244 H1 3; *Cal. Chanc. War.*, pp. 286-7.

5 Green, *op.cit,* iii, (1851), pp. 60-64.

6 AML 244 H1 3.

7 *ibid.*

8 *ibid.*

9 *Cal. Inq. Misc.*, ii, pp. 325-6.

10 *Calendar of the Register of John de Drokensford, Bishop of Bath and Wells, (AD 1309-1329)*, ed. E. Hobhouse, (Somerset Record Society, i, 1887), p. 269; see also J. Jackson, 'Consecration of Nuns at Amesbury AD 1327' (*WAM* xviii, 1879), pp. 286-8, where names are listed. Until well into the fourteenth century it was common for male religious to adopt locative surnames on their entry into religion. Surnames occurring in this list and in the list of those professed at Westwood (see below), suggest a similar tendancy among women. On the other hand surnames may reflect the settled surname of a family. Thus Umania and Alice de Sombourne may have come from (King's) Sombourne in Hampshire, although it is equally possible that theirs is the surname of a family who had left Hampshire some time previously. Names such as Lucy de Oxenford or Elisabeth de Winchester are clearly locative; even so we do not know if these were family names or chosen on entry. On locative surnames see P. McClure, 'Patterns of Migration in the late Middle Ages: the evidence of English place-name surnames', *EcHR* 2nd ser., xxxii (1979), pp. 167-82. Many of these surnames occur in *The Wiltshire Tax List of 1332*, ed. D.A.Crowley, (WRS xlv, 1989), but no definite family links can be established.

Alice Baudich

Edith Bisshop

Margaret de Bottenham

Margery de Burton

Margaret de Cranlee

Alice de Depeford

Margery de Donestaple

Margaret Florack possibly a relative of Nicholas Florack who appears in priory accounts, 1316. Thomas Florack appears in Amesbury hundred in 1332 Tax List.[1]

Agnes de la Folye

Mary Fitz Walter (Gautier)

Katherine Galruge

Alice Groucet

Agnes de Horncastel

Amisia Knouel

Alice Kytewyne; possibly relative of John Kitewine, tenant of priory 1315; Richard Kitewine appears in 1332 Tax list.[2]

Agnes de Kyngesle

Christina de la More

Mary Mautravers; also appears in Accounts of Isabel of Lancaster.[3]

Katherine de Oxenford

Lucy de Oxenford

Joan Pauncefot

Sibyl Pycot

Joan le Rous

Agnes de Seynte Lieger

Umania de Sombourne

Alice de Sombourne

Clarice Sylveyn

Hawisia le Veel

Elisabeth de Winchester

Joan de Wrotham

Agnes de Wynkenholte

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1 AML 244 H1 3; *Wiltshire Tax List, op.cit,* p. 109.
2 AML 244 H1 3; *Wiltshire Tax List, op.cit,* p. 7.
3 Account, I. of Lancaster, pp. 495, 497.

1327, 1343-49	**Isabel of Lancaster** daughter of Henry, earl of Lancaster; great-granddaughter of Henry III; consecrated 21 May, 1327; prioress 1343-49; died 1349.[1]
1327	**Margery de Pyrebroke**, consecrated 21 May, 1327; prioress 1349; possibly relative of John de Pyrebroke, prioress' clerk 1316.[2]

NUNEATON

c.1160	**Emma de Turville** second wife of Geoffrey I of Turville, honorial baron of Robert I of Meulan; mother of Ralph de Turville; donor; occurs as nun, probably *conversa ad succurrendum*.[3]
c.1160	**Agnes** occurs as prioress.[4]
c.1160	**Margaret**, mother of Marcus, son of Edwin occurs.[5]
1163-75	**Alice** occurs as prioress.[6]
c.1168	**Amice**, countess of Leicester, occurs as *conversa ad succurrendum*.[7]
c.1180	**Aileva de Kerleton** occurs as donor and *conversa ad succurrendum*.[8]
c. 1180	**Eva** daughter of Richard the Burgher occurs.[9]
1180-3	**Juliana** occurs as prioress.[10]
1180-c.83	**Cecilia** occurs as cellarist.[11]
1186, 98	**Alice** occurs as prioress; possibly same as Alice above.[12]
1202, 1213-14	**Mabel** occurs as prioress; possibly refers to two different people.[13]

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1 Jackson, *loc.cit.* ; Account I. of Lancaster, pp. 487-498; *Cal. Cl. Rolls, 1341-1343*, p. 75; *id., 1343-44*, p. 285; *id., 1346-49*, p. 434; *id., 1349-54*, p. 5; *Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1348-50*, p. 369; *Cal. Chart. Rolls, 1341-1417*, p. 20; *Cal. Pap. Let., iii, 1342-62*, p. 175.

2 AML 244 H1 3; Jackson, *loc.cit.*

3 BL Add. Chart. 47398; D. Crouch, *The Beaumont Twins* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 101, 218.

4 BL Add. Chart. 47854, 47631 (*Danelaw Docs*, p. 248).

5 *ibid.*, 47519.

6 *ibid.*, 47398, (iv, v), 47483, 47559 (*Danelaw Docs*, p. 240).

7 G.W. Watson, ' The Ancient Earls of Leicester', *The Genealogist* , NS, x (1893), p. 6.

8 BL Add. Chart. 47601 (*Danelaw Docs*, p. 247).

9 *ibid.*, 47524.

10 *ibid.*, 47601 (*Danelaw Docs*, p. 247).

11 *ibid.*

12 BL Add. Chart. 47638 (*Danelaw Docs*, p. 255), 47954, 49117-49118. See also *HRH*, p. 217.

13 *ibid.*, 48145; *Feet of Fines, Warwick*, p. 42. See also *HRH*, p. 217. The dating is uncertain, *ibid.*.

1206-8	**Emma** occurs as prioress.[1]
c.1210	**Matilda** occurs as prioress.[2]
1214-26	**Ida** occurs as prioress.[3]
1227, 32	**Sibyl** occurs as prioress.[4]
1240, 47	**Ida** occurs as prioress; possibly same as Ida above.[5]
c.1256	**Cecilia de Lexington** occurs as prioress.[6]
c.1257, c.1272	**Cecilia de Sutton** occurs as prioress.[7]
1284-87	**Agnes de Sutton** occurs as prioress.[8]
1290-97	**Agatha de Sutton** occurs as prioress.[9]
1298-1300	**Hawise de Sancto Mauro** occurs as prioress.[10]
c.1300	**Margaret Sylemon** occurs as owner of breviary; prioress 1367-86.[11]
1300	**Joan de Bristol** occurs; moved from Westwood 1300 to become prioress; died 1318.[12]
1301	**Alesia de la Mare** occurs; permission for entry given by Mary, daughter of Edward I, acting as vicegerent for abbess.[13]
1313	**Agatha de Druys** occurs; permission for entry given by Mary, daughter of Edward I, nun at Amesbury acting as vicegerent for abbess; prioress 1350.[14]
1317	**Isabel de Sudley** occurs; installed as prioress, supported by earl of Lancaster and bishop Walter Langton (Coventry and Lichfield) in opposition to abbess' wishes; deposed after a process 1320; led faction against abbess until 1327.[15]
1318	**Amice de Osenille** occurs as claustral prioress, appointed by Isabel de Sudley.[16]
1318	**Adelma Danzee** occurs as cellaress, appointed by Isabel de Sudley.[17]

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1 BL Add. Chart. 47646, 47976, 67973.
2 *ibid.*, 48491.
3 *ibid.*, 47958, 47997-98, 48497-98, 49068.
4 *ibid.*, 48490, 48052.
5 *ibid.*, 47997, 48497.
6 *ibid.*, 48498 48499.
7 *ibid.*, 47961-2, 48335, 48500-02.
8 *ibid.*, 47550, 48509-10.
9 *ibid.*, 48005, 48097.
10 *ibid.*, 48519-48521, 48355-6.
11 Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum MS McClean 123, fo. 8; BL Add. Chart. 49072, 48611, 48097.
12 AML 246 H2 5, 6; BL Add. Chart. 47793, 48357, 48534.
13 AML 246 H2 5.
14 BL Add. Chart. 47793, 48357, 48534, 47604, 48578.
15 AML 246 H2 6-10; BL Add. Chart. 48535; *Cal. Pap. Let.*, ii, p. 209.
16 AML 246 H2 6.
17 *ibid.*

1318	**Alice de Northampton** occurs as subprioress, appointed by Isabel de Sudley.[1]
1320, 23	**Katherine de Stafford** occurs as prioress appointed by abbess; expelled by Isabel de Sudley. Deposed in favour of Theophanie La Fourrière.[2]
1320?	**Theophanie la Fourriere**, named prioress after investigation into expulsion of Katherine de Stafford; also expelled.[3]
1320-27	**Matilda de Abblebury** occurs.[4]
1320-27	**Edwinde de Florent** occurs.[5]
1320-27	**Elisabeth de Huggeford** occurs.[6]
1320-27,1342-5	**Margaret de Shireford** occurs as nun, later prioress.[7]
1328, 29	**Agatha de Averham** occurs as prioress.[8]
1338	**30 nuns** solemnly professed by bishop of Coventry and Lichfield; no names recorded.[9]

WESTWOOD

n.d.	**Juliana Gerverd** occurs.[10]
n.d.	**Daughter** of Reginald Benhall received as condition of a grant.[11]
n.d.	**Amabilia Bray** occurs.[12]
c.1155-c.1200	**de Say/Mortimer** family had right to have a nun in convent.[13]
1239	**Avice** occurs as prioress.[14]
1268, 72	**Benedicta de Clifford** occurs as prioress; probably descendant of Walter de Clifford, one of initial donors.[15]
1301	**Beatrice** occurs as prioress.[16]

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1 *ibid.*
2 AML 246 H2 6-11; BL Add. Chart. 47861(v), 49145; *Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1321-24*, p. 147; *Cal. Pap. Let..*, ii, p. 209.
3 AML 246 H2 11 3.
4 *ibid.*
5 *ibid.*
6 *ibid.*
7 *ibid.*; BL Add. Chart. 48006, 48548-49, 48554.
8 *ibid.*, 47794, 48538-39, 48542.
9 Register, Roger of Northborough, fo. 145b; see also E. Hobhouse, 'The Register of Roger de Norbury, Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry from AD 1322 to AD 1358', in *Collections for a history of Staffordshire* (William Salt Archaelogical Society, i, 1880), pp. 241-88.
10 BCL MS Hampton, 570.
11 BL MS Cotton. Vespas. E. ix. fo. 6.
12 *ibid.*, fo. 3.
13 *ibid.*, fo. 5.
14 BCL MS Hampton, 86.
15 *ibid.*, 530, 531.
16 *ibid.*, 354.

1337 The following professed by Thomas Hempnall, December, 1337.[1]

Eleanor de Acton

Margaret de Acton

Matilda de Acton

Joan Billebury

Isabella Cassy

Agnes Cassy; possibly relative of John Cassy, witness to fourteenth-century priory documents.[2]

Agnes Dragoun

Alice de Feckenham

Gunnora Gros

Isabella Gros.[3]

Margaret Gros

Margery Page; possibly descendant of Walter Page, bailiff of Cotheridge in mid-twelfth century.[4]

Alice de Pershore

Alice Rodbourne

Joan Towne

Juliana Wilton

Joan Wyfeld

Margery Wyfeld

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1 Register of Thomas Hempnall, p. 17 (the original foliation has been superseded by pagination). On the surnames in this list see above, n. 10 p. 256.

2 BCL MS Hampton, 354, 455.

3 The view that Isabella Gros was prioress during the thirteenth century cannot be substantiated. cf. *VCH Wor, ii,* p. 151. There was an Isabella prioress after 1350 but it need not have been this person. See Nash, *op.cit.*, ii, p. 353.

4 BCL MS Hampton, 520.

AMESBURY

c 1192	**Walter**, chaplain, occurs.[1]
1194	**John** occurs as prior.[2]
1198	**Robert** occurs as prior.[3]
1215-21	**John** occurs as prior.[4]
1227	**John de Vinci** occurs as prior.[5]
1227	**Richard**, brother, occurs.[6]
1227	**William**, brother, occurs.[7]
1255	**Th.** occurs as prior.[8]
1293	**Peter** occurs as prior.[9]
c.1300	**Theobald Barre**, priest; name occurs in breviary.[10]
c.1300	**Peter Hardmit**, brother; name occurs in breviary.[11]
c.1300	**Andrew**, brother; name occurs in breviary.[12]
1311, 15, 16.	**Samson de Bradele**, brother; took orders 1315. Possibly relative of steward of Amesbury.[13]
1315	**William Coleswain**, brother, occurs taking orders.[14]
1315	**John de Tresfontes** occurs as receiver.[15]
1315-16	**William Preston** occurs as receiver.[16]
1315-16	**John de Figheldean** occurs as former prior.[17]
1315-16	**Robert de Wallop**, brother, occurs .[18]
1316-1319	**Richard de Greneburgh** occurs as prior and receiver.[19]

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1 *Cal. Docs. Fr.*, 1091.
2 *Rolls of King's Court, in the reign of Richard I*, ed. F.W. Maitland (PRS xiv, 1891), p. 24.
3 *Cur Reg. Roll*, i, p. 144.
4 *Cartulary of Osney Abbey, op.cit*, i, pp. 246-7; *Charters and Documents illustrating the History of the Cathedral City and Diocese of Salisbury in the twelfth and thirteenth century*, ed. W.R. Jones & W. Dunn Macray (RS xcvii, 1891), p. 114.
5 T.F. Kirby, 'Records of the Manor of Durrington, Wiltshire', *Archaeologia* lix (1904), i, p. 77.
6 *ibid.*
7 *ibid.*
8 AML 243 H1 13.
9 *Cal. Cl. Rolls 1288-96* pp. 317-8.
10 CUL Ee. vi. 16, fo.17v.
11 *ibid.*
12 *ibid.*
13 AML 244 H1 3; *Register, Simon de Gandavo, op. cit*, ii, p. 901. See above p. 185.
14 AML 244 H1 3.
15 *ibid.*
16 *ibid.*
17 *ibid.*
18 *ibid.*
19 *ibid.*

1316	**Thomas Wills** (Wilks) occurs as former receiver in charge of lay brothers.[1]
1316	**Robert Peters**, chaplain, occurs.[2]
1316-19	**Nicholas de Figheldean** occurs as chaplain and cellarist.[3]
1316	**John Bules**, chaplain, occurs.[4]
1316	**John de Madinton**, chaplain, occurs. [5]
1316	**Hugh de Eton**, chaplain, occurs.[6]
1318-19	**William Dernes**, brother, occurs. [7]
1333	**William le Nobel** occurs celebrating first Mass.[8]
1333	**Thomas de Brac'**, brother, occurs.[9]
1333	**Nicholas Sifrewast**, brother, occurs.[10]
1333	**Peter Coleswain** occurs as servant of, later chaplain to Isabel of Lancaster; possibly member of order.[11]

NUNEATON

c.1155	**Roger the chaplain** occurs; possibly member of order. [12]
1160	**William** occurs as priest.[13]
c.1160	**Bertram**, brother, occurs.[14]
c.1160	**William** occurs as prior - may be same person as William the priest.[15]
c.1180-83	**Eudes de Hinkley** occurs as receiver.[16]
c.1160	**Robert**, brother, occurs; named 'the bearded'.[17]
c.1160	**Humfrey**, brother, occurs.[18]
c.1160	**Hugh**, brother, occurs.[19]
c.1160	**Fromond** occurs as prior.[20]
c.1160	**Vital** occurs as priest; possibly same person as Vitalis, prior.[21]

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1 *ibid.*
2 *ibid.*
3 *ibid.*
4 *ibid.*
5 *ibid..*
6 *ibid.*
7 *ibid.*
8 Account I. of Lancaster, p. 495.
9 *ibid.*
10 *ibid.*
11 *ibid.*, p. 493; *Cal. Pat Rolls, 1343-5*, p. 474.
12 BL Add. Chart. 47602 (*Danelaw Docs*, p. 248).
13 *ibid.*, 47854.
14 *ibid.*
15 *ibid.*, 47631 (*Danelaw Docs*, p. 252).
16 *ibid.*, 47601 (*Danelaw Docs*, p. 247).
17 *ibid.*, 47854.
18 *ibid.*
19 *ibid.*
20 *ibid.*
21 *ibid.*, 47854.

c.1160-75	**Hugh** occurs as prior.[1]
c.1170	**Gregory** occurs as priest.[2]
c.1180	**Berengar** occurs as chaplain and prior.[3]
c.1180	**Wibert** occurs as chaplain; possibly member of order.[4]
c.1180	**Walter** occurs as chaplain; possibly member of order.[5]
c.1180-83	**Vitalis** occurs as prior; possibly also prior of Grovebury.[6]
c.1180-83	**Hugh** occurs as chaplain.[7]
c.1180-83	**Garnerius** occurs; possibly member of order.[8]
c.1180-83	**Alo** occurs as chaplain.[9]
c.1200	**G.** occurs as prior.[10]
c.1202	**A.** occurs as prior.[11]
1206	**Simon** occurs as prior.[12]
1208, 1221	**Nicholas** occurs as prior.[13]
1227	**Richard** occurs as prior.[14]
c.1228, c.1245	**Robert** occurs as prior.[15]
1247, 1249-50	**Gilbert** occurs as prior; joined Dominicans at Oxford.[16]
c.1250	**Peter de Palerne** occurs as prior.[17]
1256-60	**William de Verny** occurs as prior.[18]
c.1272	**Henry** occurs as prior.[19]
1279-80	**William**, prior, accused of homicide.[20]
1287-92	**Roger de Verny** occurs as prior.[21]

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1 *ibid.*, 47854, 47483.
2 *ibid.*, 53093 (*Danelaw Docs*, p. 249).
3 *ibid.*, 47559, 47602, 47633, 47634 (*Danelaw Docs*, pp. 240, 248, 252, 253).
4 *ibid.*, 47643 (*Danelaw Docs*, p. 259-60).
5 *ibid.*
6 *ibid.*, 47601 (*Danelaw Docs*, p. 247), 47854.
7 *ibid.*, 47601 (*Danelaw Docs*, p. 247).
8 *ibid.*
9 *ibid.*
10 *ibid.*, 47484.
11 *ibid.*, 47645, 48145.
12 *Curia Regis Rolls*, iv, pp. 139-40, 172.
13 *ibid*, x, p. 247; BL. Add. Chart. 47646.
14 *ibid.*, 48490.
15 *ibid.*, 47742, 48088.
16 *Annales Monastici*, iv, pp. 99, 101; BL. Add. Chart. 48497.
17 *ibid.*, 48151.
18 *ibid.*, 47594, 48498, 48502; AML 244 H1 2.
19 BL Add.Chart. 48335, 48506.
20 *Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1272-81*, pp. 349, 409.
21 *ibid.*, 48509, 48521.

1294	**Walter** occurs as prior.[1]
1298-1300	**Hugh** occurs as prior.[2]
1304	**Walcinus de Munsterton** occurs; permission for entry given by Mary, daughter of Edward I, acting as vicegerent of abbess.[3]
1308-28	**Robert de Radbourne** occurs as prior.[4]
1329	**Richard de Greneburgh** occurs as prior.[5]
1330	**Robert de Radbury** occurs as prior; possibly same person as Robert de Radbourne.[6]
1331	**Thomas de Draycote** occurs as chaplain.[7]
1331-32	**John Bosse**, brother, occurs.[8]
1331-32	**Roger de Lalleford** occurs as receiver.[9]
1332, 34	**Richard de Etinton** occurs as prior.[10]
1340	**Abel le Waite**, chaplain, imprisoned in Tower of London, suspected of death of Simon of Shirford.[11]
c.1342	**Richard de Overton** occurs as prior.[12]
1342-44	**John de Wappenbury** occurs as prior;.[13]
1345-62	**John Rodene** occurs as prior.[14]

WESTWOOD

n.d.	**N de A.** occurs as prior.[15]
c.1160	**Henry**, brother, occurs.[16]
1207	**Elias** occurs as prior.[17]
c.1239	**Nicholas** occurs as prior; accused of homicide; at Grovebury 1259-61.[18]
c.1239	**Aldred** occurs as prior, probably of Westwood.[19]

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1 *ibid.*, 48515.
2 *ibid.*, 48355, 48521.
3 AML 246 H2 5.
4 *ibid.*, BL Add.Ch. 47641 (5), 48051, 48534.
5 *ibid.*, 47794, 48539; see also Amesbury and Westwood.
6 *ibid.*, 47398 (21).
7 *ibid.*. 49727.
8 *ibid.*
9 *ibid.*
10 *ibid.*
11 *Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1272-81*, pp. 349-401.
12 BL Add. Chart. 47657.
13 *ibid.*, 48425, 48549. *Cal. Cl. Rolls, 1343-46*, p. 383.
14 BL Add. Chart. 48554, 48572.
15 BL MS Cotton. Vespas. E ix, fo. 6v, 8v. See *Mon. Ang.* vi, pt 2, p. 1009.
16 BCL MS Hampton, 282.
17 *Curia Regis Roll*, v, p. 58.
18 BCL MS Hampton 86; *Cal Cl. Rolls, 1259-61*, p. 212.
19 BCL MS Hampton, 454.

1257	**R.** occurs as prior.[1]
1257	**Henry** occurs as chaplain.[2]
1268	**Richard Normaud** occurs as prior.[3]
1272	**Robert Douet** occurs as prior.[4]
1305	**Thomas** occurs as prior.[5]
1306	**Walter**, brother, occurs.[6]
1306	**Albert**, brother, occurs.[7]
1306	**Roger** occurs as lay brother.[8]
1306	**Richard** occurs as former prior.[9]
1306	**Robert** occurs as former prior.[10]
1316	**Richard** occurs as prior.[11]
1338	**Robert Etindon** occurs as receiver.[12]
1342	**Richard de Greneburgh** occurs as prior.[13]
1350	**John Sumlot** occurs as chaplain.[14]
1343, 44, 50.	**Robert de Sothery** occurs as prior.[15]

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1 AML 244 H1 2.
2 *ibid.*
3 BCL MS Hampton, 332.
4 *ibid.*, 350, 351.
5 *ibid.*, 307.
6 *ibid.*
7 *ibid.*
8 *ibid.*
9 *ibid.*
10 *ibid.*
11 *Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1313-17*, p. 600.
12 BCL MS Hampton, 308.
13 *ibid.*, 457; see Nuneaton and Amesbury.
14 *ibid.*, 309.
15 *ibid.*; *Cal. Cl. Rolls*, 1343-46, pp. 232, 383.

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1 mi 74. Lardier, J., La Saincte Famille de Fontevrault, t.iii. MS xvii[e] siècle, consulted on microfilm. Original is MS 12 in the Bibliothèque municipale de Châteaugontier.

242 H Dons, confirmations, etc., par les rois d'Angleterre, les seigneures, etc., à Fontevrault.

243 H Prieuré d'Amesbury.

244 H Prieuré de Westwood.

245 H Prieuré de Gravebery (sic).

246 H Prieuré d'Eton.

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