

# Oseney Abbey Studies

Dave Postles

Leicester, 2008

<http://www.le.ac.uk/ee/pot/intro.html>

Copies of this publication may be freely downloaded as a .pdf file from  
<http://www.le.ac.uk/ee/pot/publish.html>

Dave Postles is University Fellow in the Department of English, University  
of Leicester

<i>Contents</i>	
Acknowledgements and introductory comment	5
Abbreviations	7
1. The foundation of Oseney Abbey	8
2. <i>Patronus et advocatus noster</i> : Oseney Abbey and the Oilly family	11
3. The learning of Austin Canons: the case of Oseney Abbey	15
4. Securing the gift in Oxfordshire in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries	25
5. Oseney Abbey and parish churches	34
6. The bursary of Oseney Abbey	44
7. The manorial accounts of Oseney Abbey: 1274-1348	47
8. The <i>excessus</i> balance in manorial accounts	53
9. The estate stewards of Oseney Abbey, c.1245-1340	64
10. Problems in the administration of small properties: three Oxfordshire glebe-demesnes, 1278-1345	67
11. Grain issues from some properties of Oseney Abbey, 1274-1348	74
12. Estimates of harvest on Oseney Abbey properties	83
13. The Oseney Abbey flock	89
14. Some differences between seigniorial demesnes in medieval Oxfordshire	108
15. Markets for rural produce in Oxfordshire, 1086-1350	124

The chapters were originally published as follows.

- Chapter 1 *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* 53 (1980), 242-4
- Chapter 2 *Historical Research* 60 (1987), 100-2.
- Chapter 3 *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 29 (1985), 32-43
- Chapter 4 *Archives* 19 (1990), 183-91
- Chapter 5 *Oxoniensia* 51 (1986), 69-77
- Chapter 6 *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 6 (1978), 28-30
- Chapter 7 *Archives* 14 (1979), 75-80
- Chapter 8 *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* 54 (1981), 105-10
- Chapter 9 *Oxoniensia* 40 (1976 for 1975), 326-8
- Chapter 10 *Midland History* 4 (1977), 1-14
- Chapter 11 *Oxoniensia* 44 (1979), 30-7
- Chapter 12 *Oxoniensia* 64 (2000 for 1999), 301-5
- Chapter 13 *Oxoniensia* 49 (1985 for 1984), 141-52
- Chapter 14 *Oxoniensia* 58 (1993), 219-32
- Chapter 15 *Midland History* 12 (1987), 14-26

## Acknowledgements and introductory comment

These papers have been produced over a number of years since 1975. During that time, the context of many of the themes has changed dramatically. It would be impossible to revise all the material to incorporate this more recent research. Much of the progress in the contexts of the articles can be followed through B. M. S. Campbell, *Seigniorial Agriculture in England* (Cambridge, 2000), B. F. Harvey, *Living and Dying in England 1100-1540. The Monastic Experience* (Oxford, 1993), and J. Burton, *Monastic and Religious Orders in Britain, 1000-1300* (Cambridge, 1994).

Over those years, of course, numerous debts have been incurred. John Blair was a helpful, friendly and sympathetic editor of *Oxoniensia*. Joyce Horn improved my contributions to *Historical Research*. My single contribution to *Nottingham Medieval Studies* was facilitated greatly by that journal's editor, Antonia Gransden. Advice and kindness were constantly offered by Barbara Harvey and Paul Harvey, to both of whom a major obligation is owed. Ian Blanchard and Paul Hyams have been constant friends.

The staff of the Bodleian Library were always courteous. John Burgass at Merton College Library was genuinely kind. The staff of the John Rylands University Library Manchester were exceptionally patient as I rummaged about there during my exile in Rochdale. I am grateful to the Students of Christ Church for permission to use, cite and publish the Oseney rolls which they deposited in the Bodleian Library. I spent some enjoyable hours in the library of The Queen's College, Oxford, examining the College's MS. 366, the surveys of the estate of the bishopric of Lincoln. The Hampshire Record Office kindly provided me with microfilm of the Winchester Pipe Rolls. Whilst I made some forays to the muniment room at Westminster Abbey, I also had the great benefit of reading Barbara Harvey's transcriptions.

Whilst I was an archivist at Sheffield City Libraries, I received much help from my colleagues, Richard Childs, Ruth Harman and Margaret Turner, and a succession of archives assistants whose collegiality I much enjoyed (Jean, Mary Chesworth, Mary Warhurst, Karen and Julie).

The demands of being an archivist are so wide-ranging that it is difficult to maintain competence in all aspects. In 1983 and 1986, during those years as an archivist, I attended the Anglo-American Symposia on the Medieval Economy and Society organized by Bruce Campbell, which fortified me immensely. In 1986 also, St John's College, Oxford, allowed me a summer fellowship which enabled considerable research in the Bodleian, although it was truncated by the death of my father. After I moved to the Department of English Local History in 1988, I paradoxically had less time to devote to the matters in this small book. Notwithstanding that, the late Harold Fox was a constantly stimulating colleague. I also wish to extend back the acknowledgements to a much earlier time when I was an undergraduate: Eric Stone (and Barbara Harvey acknowledged above) first stimulated my interest in these matters.

The research for and publication of the original papers was assisted by the British Academy, the Pasold Research Fund, and the W. A. Pantin Trust. I was

fortunate too to have the use of Barbara Harvey's house for a week whilst she was on holiday, for which I am much indebted.

When I was an archive trainee at the Bodleian Library, I mentioned to Pierre Chaplais that Oseney might be a suitable case for treatment by someone. He, with his usual acuity, remarked that Herbert Salter had done so much. Despite his perspicacious advice, I later took to reading the account rolls on late evenings in the Bodleian whilst my wife, Suella, more productively attended a course on local history at Rewley House. Had I joined her, I would have saved myself much trouble and anxiety later. Salter is, of course, an impossible act to follow, but what I have tried to do is to reconstitute a more narrative approach to Oseney and a consideration of the economic basis of its existence. By now, my account will appear very traditional and conservative because of the intervening years, but I hope that something may be found in it which is useful and also of interest to a local audience.

The sequence of the chapters has much exercised me. It is probably still imperfect, partly because the chapters were originally discrete papers. I have attempted to reduce the amount of duplication inherent in their original format. The initial chapters are concerned with the foundation and the relationship to the patronal families, which seems the correct point of departure. The third chapter, on the intellectual context, is placed so early as it is a discrete element. Chapter 4, although not exclusively concerned with Oseney, nonetheless explores the important context for the acquisition of the landed base of the house, specifically through difficult decades. Again, Chapter 5 is a discrete theme, but needs to be considered early in the discussion, since the house regarded its churches to some extent as a part of its estates, although we should be cautious about over-emphasizing that aspect. Following from there, chapters 6 to 10 examine the financial organization of the house: the offices, obedienciaries, organization of the estate, and financial regulation. Then chapters 11 to 13 discuss the management of the house's properties and estate exploitation: issues of investment and productivity. To provide a context, chapters 14 and 15 illuminate the prevailing conditions in Oxfordshire within which the abbey pursued its estate administration: agrarian conditions and seignorial policies; and the markets and marketing structures. It was felt that any consideration of Oseney would be incomplete without the contexts illuminated in chapters 4, 14 and 15.

Dates of account rolls are given by the closing year of the account.

Throughout, the form 'Oseney' is employed. Although the modern form of the place-name is Osney, H. E. Salter made 'Oseney' almost normative for medieval discussions.

The text has been typeset using L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X with the graphical user interface (GUI) L<sub>Y</sub>X. Many years ago, Richard Mobbs introduced me to the quality of this document processing system.

Abbreviations

Places of publication are London unless otherwise stated.

Bodleian	Bodleian Library, Oxford
<i>EHR</i>	<i>English Historical Review</i>
OHS	Oxford Historical Society
ORS	Oxfordshire Record Society
Rylands	John Rylands University Library, Manchester
<i>TRHS</i>	<i>Transactions of the Royal Historical Society</i>

## 1 The foundation of Oseney Abbey

In his magisterial analysis of the foundation of some houses of Austin Canons, Professor Southern did not refer to Oseney Abbey. Superficially, Oseney does not appear to be connected with the *curiales* (close members of the court) of Henry I. An association did exist, however, and this connection is described below.<sup>1</sup>

According to the Oseney Annals, the house was founded as a priory in 1129.<sup>2</sup> There is, however, no extant foundation charter of that date. The only extant charters of the founder, Robert II d'Oilly, are a charter *de incrementis* of uncertain date, and a charter of general confirmation, which is later, and may be assigned to 1140x1142. It must be assumed that the foundation ceremony involved only an oral disposition. The endowment at the foundation constituted only a first instalment and was enlarged by subsequent gifts from the founder. Finally, an effective foundation charter was issued by the founder in 1140x1142, some ten or more years after the actual foundation of the priory. The presumption that the charter of 1140x1142 was the general charter of foundation is affirmed by charters of confirmation of foundation and endowment issued by the Ordinary, 1143x1147, and by Henry of Blois as papal legate, 1142x1143. The sudden need to provide a formal charter of foundation may have been impressed upon Oilly by the volatile political situation, he himself having just transferred his allegiance from Stephen to Matilda. Oilly died soon afterwards at the battle of Winchester. He may, equally, have been influenced by the change in fashion, the increasing tendency to issue foundation charters.<sup>3</sup>

Robert II inherited an established, middling barony. The barony of Hook Norton had been created for Robert I d'Oilly, who had accompanied William I, in the company of his brother, Nigel d'Oilly and the redoubtable Roger d'Ivry.<sup>4</sup> According to Oseney tradition, it was Robert who received the baronies of Hook Norton and Beckley, and invested Ivry with the latter. Oilly and Ivry were frequently associated as joint tenants and as mesne tenants of each other in Domesday Book, and were co-founders of the Castle Chapel of St George's

---

<sup>1</sup>R. W. Southern, 'The place of Henry I in English History', *Proceedings of the British Academy* xlviii (1962), 127-69; J. C. Dickinson, *The Origins of the Austin Canons and their Introduction into England* (1950) made only cursory references to Oseney.

<sup>2</sup>H. R. Luard, ed., *Annales Monastici* (5 vols, Rolls Series, 1864-9) iv, 19. A writ-charter of confirmation by Henry I has been assigned by its place-date to ?1131: C. Johnson and H. A. Cronne, eds, *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum* ii (Oxford, 1956), no, 1726.

<sup>3</sup>H. E. Salter, ed., *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* (6 vols, OHS lxxxix, xc, xci, xcvi, xcvi, ci, 1929-36) iv, 11, 15-17, 18; Salter, ed., *Facsimiles of Early Charters in Oxford Muniment Rooms* (Oxford, 1929), nos 64, 69; V. H. Galbraith, 'Monastic foundation charters of the 11th and 12th centuries', *Cambridge Historical Journal* iv (1932-4), 205-22.

<sup>4</sup>Ivry was already constable of the tower of Rouen and butler, and also tenant-in-chief of the barony of Ivry-la-Bataille: L. C. Loyd, *The Origins of Some Anglo-Norman Families* ed. C. T. Clay and D. C. Douglas (Harleian Society ciii, 1951) s.v. Ivry; J. Sanders, *English Feudal Baronies. A Study of their Origin and Descent, 1086-1327* (Oxford, 1960), 9; the Oillys may have originated from near OUILLY-le-BASSET: W. T. Reedy, 'The first two Bassets of Weldon: *novi barones* of the early and mid twelfth century', *Northamptonshire Past and Present* iv (1966-71), 243.

in Oxford. Undoubtedly, as builder and constable of Oxford castle, Oilly had the greater interest in the private chapel and college of secular canons.<sup>5</sup>

The creation of the barony of Hook Norton had been protracted. The nucleus of the barony was conferred immediately after the Conquest, and Robert I attested as minister to a writ-charter of 1067. The barony did not achieve its ultimate size until a little before Domesday. Robert I was rewarded with one and a half hides in Ledwell after the siege of Sainte-Susanne in 1083, and he acquired two hides in Lea Marston from Alric the Englishman with royal licence. It is also possible that the acquisition of the large part of the barony accompanied the marriage of Robert I to Matilda, daughter of Wigod of Wallingford, the pre-Conquest holder of the barony. The English connection thus had some importance to the Oillys, and this type of alliance was later equally significant for the foundation of Oseney. At its zenith, the barony comprised lands in nine counties, but with a main concentration in Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire. In 1086, Robert I was tenant-in-chief or mesne tenant of 262 fiscal hides in Oxfordshire alone.<sup>6</sup>

Robert I exercised some curial influence, and counted amongst the close baronial advisers of William I. He was constable of the household, constable of Oxford castle, and sheriff of Oxfordshire with Warwickshire. The office of constable of the household was close to the heart of the Anglo-Norman kings. Robert I consequently attested innumerable royal writ-charters, and was the recipient of others.<sup>7</sup> His position was inherited by his brother, Nigel, father of Robert II, and Nigel assumed the offices of constable of the household and constable of Oxford castle.<sup>8</sup>

When Robert II inherited the barony, his position was rather diminished. A substantial part of the barony had been subtracted to the barony of Wallingford, and with it, initially, the constablership of the household, by the marriage of Matilda d'Oilly to Miles Crispin.<sup>9</sup> Despite this contraction of the patrimony, Robert II still belonged to the old baronage. Henry I was now, however, advancing *novi homines*.<sup>10</sup>

Robert II restored his fortunes by the second marriage of the Oillys with an English family. The further significance of the marriage was that it aligned him with these 'new men' of Henry I. His wife, Edith Forne, had been a concubine of Henry I, and had by him an illegitimate son, Robert fitzRoy. Henry I provided

---

<sup>5</sup> *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* iv, 1; *Annales Monastici* iv, 9-10

<sup>6</sup> H. W. C. Davis and R. J. Whitwell, eds, *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum* i (Oxford, 1913), no. 10; Rylands Eng. MS 714 (papers of William Farrer for a continuation of *Honors and Knights' Fees*) (Oilly bundle), 108, 214; E. A. Freeman, *History of the Norman Conquest of England* (6 vols, Oxford, 1867-79) iv, Appendix G; *Book of Fees* (3 vols, 1920-31) i, 116; for the general context, F. M. Stenton, 'English families and the Norman Conquest' in R. W. Southern, ed., *Essays in Medieval History* (1968), 95-105.

<sup>7</sup> *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum* ii, xv-xvi; *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum* i, nos 10, 89-90, 95, 141, 143, 178, 199, 209, 216, 235, 270, 275, 319, 328; Rylands Eng MS 714 (Oilly) 2.

<sup>8</sup> *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum* ii, nos 547, 550, 601-2, 701-5, 758.

<sup>9</sup> *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum* ii, xv-xvi; Rylands Eng MS 714 (Oilly) 9.

<sup>10</sup> Southern, 'The place of Henry I.'

the dower for Edith's marriage to Robert II, the manor of Claydon.<sup>11</sup> Edith was the daughter of Forne son of Sigulf, one of Henry's new men, and one of those Englishmen elevated by Henry I.<sup>12</sup> Forne was a local justiciar, and received from the king in 1120x1121 the barony of Greystoke.<sup>13</sup> The cartulary of Oseney is quite adamant that the priory was founded at the instance of Edith. In her widowhood, Edith gave to Oseney her two hides in Claydon which had been her dower.<sup>14</sup> The connection with the court of Henry I is perhaps also reflected in gifts to Oseney by Geoffrey de Clinton and Alice, widow of Henry I.<sup>15</sup>

The foundation of Oseney priory in 1129 also formed part of the movement to supersede colleges of secular canons by houses of regular canons. Colleges of secular canons had attracted some criticism, although many English cathedral chapters after the Conquest retained secular rather than regular clergy. The castle-chapel of St George's at Oxford was established by Robert I in 1074, before the full tide of reform. St George's no doubt provided an inexpensive means to salvation, as well as perhaps a *scriptorium* or office of clerks.<sup>16</sup> The criticism of secular canons allowed the absorption of the college by Oseney in 1149. A number of other houses of Austin canons were either established in the early twelfth century as refoundations of colleges of secular canons or appropriated one. The refoundation of St Frideswide's in Oxford in 1122 by the king was undoubtedly a precedent fresh in mind. Darley, Barnwell and Leicester (and later Waltham) were all houses of Austin canons established at the expense of colleges of secular canons.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* v, 206.

<sup>12</sup> Stenton, 'English families and the Norman Conquest'.

<sup>13</sup> W. Farrer, ed., *Early Yorkshire Charters* (3 vols, Edinburgh, 1915) ii, 505-8; for Robert II, *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum* ii, nos 1017, 1222, 1241, 1255, 1400-1, 1466, 1477, 1506, 1552, 1641, 1711, 1722, 1737, 1782, 1805, 1850.

<sup>14</sup> *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* iv, 11; v, 206.

<sup>15</sup> *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* iv, 60-1, 107.

<sup>16</sup> K. Edwards, *English Secular Cathedrals in the Middle Ages: A Constitutional Study with Special Reference to the Fourteenth Century* (Manchester, 1949), 7-12, and J. H. Denton, *English Royal Free Chapels, 1100-1300* (Manchester, 1970), 135-6.

<sup>17</sup> For example, R. R. Darlington, ed., *The Cartulary of Darley Abbey* (2 vols, Kendal, 1945), i, ii.

## 2 *Patronus et advocatus noster*: Oseney Abbey and the Oilly family

Patronage of religious houses was theoretically a reciprocal association, involving rights and obligations, and derived partly from a tenurial relationship, albeit one of a specialized nature. During the thirteenth century, patronal relations were defined and regulated, as other tenures and services were, but in the twelfth century they were still inchoate.<sup>18</sup> In some instances, the commitment seems to have been greater on the side of the religious house in the earlier period, whilst the patrons exhibited almost indifference, and this lack of interest may have been more widespread amongst patrons of houses of the new Order of Austin Canons.<sup>19</sup> The connection between Oseney Abbey and its patrons may reflect further on this wider attitude.

The house was founded in 1129 by Robert II d'Oilly and his wife, Edith Forne, who may have been the prime mover, and the substantial endowments were augmented before Robert's death in the cause of the Empress in 1142.<sup>20</sup> Robert, however, spread his spiritual insurance widely. Tithes in Chastleton were given to Gloucester Abbey (Benedictine); burgage property in Oxford to the Templars; and all members of his family, senior and cadet, made considerable benefactions to the priory of St Frideswide (Austin Canon) and Eynsham Abbey (Benedictine).<sup>21</sup> Edith, at whose instigation Oseney was founded, was equally bounteous to other houses, including Eynsham. Principally, however, she endowed Thame Abbey (Cistercian) and her interest in this new foundation was important for its survival. The house was originally founded at Otteley in the parish of Oddington by Roger Gait, c.1137. Edith afforded the foundation in 1137, by consent of her husband, by a gift of thirty-five acres in Weston-on-the-Green. The significance of this gift for the continuance of the house is recorded in Thame's cartulary. Edith, being in the vicinity, ventured to Otteley and sought from her husband thirty acres near the abbey, giving it with great devotion to the new monastery:

Prima itaque die qua conuentus ... uenit Otteleiam Edith filia Forn, uxor uidelicet Roberti de Oilli, quia in proximo commanebat, impetrauit a marito suo xxxv acras terre proximas sancte abbacie & contulit cum magna deuotione nouo illi conuentui

---

<sup>18</sup>S. Wood, *English Monasteries and their Patrons in the 13th Century* (Oxford, 1955); H. M. Colvin, *The White Canons in England* (Oxford, 1951), 302-4; B. D. Hill, *English Cistercian Monasteries and their Patrons in the 12th Century* (Urbana, Ill., 1968); B. Golding, 'Burial and benefactions: an aspect of monastic patronage in 13th-century England' in W. M. Ormrod, ed., *England in the Thirteenth Century* (Nottingham, 1985), 64-75.

<sup>19</sup>For the relationship of the Deyncourts with Thurgarton Priory (Austin Canon), T. Foulds, 'Thurgarton Priory and Nottinghamshire' in N. Mastoris, ed., *History in the Making* (Nottingham, 1985), 7-9.

<sup>20</sup>See Chapter 1 above

<sup>21</sup>W. H. Hart, ed., *Historia et Cartularium Monasterii Sancti Petri Gloucestriae* (3 vols, Rolls Series, 1863-7) i, 70; B. A. Lees, ed., *Records of the Templars in England in the 12th Century* (1935), 180-2; S. R. Wigram, ed., *The Cartulary of the Monastery of St Frideswide at Oxford* (2 vols, OHS xxviii, xxxi, 1895-6) ii, 208; H. E. Salter, ed., *The Cartulary of the Abbey of Eynsham* (2 vols, OHS xlix, li, 1907-8) i, 72-7, amongst other benefactions.

In 1139, the house was refounded by Alexander, bishop of Lincoln, in his park at Thame, and the bishops of Lincoln came to be regarded as the patrons of the house. Edith's interest in Thame had been important for the survival of the nascent house colonized from Waverley.<sup>22</sup>

Benefactions by the Oilly family, including the founders of Oseney, were therefore widespread amongst the older Benedictine houses and the new Orders. To some extent, this commitment had antedated the the foundation of Oseney, an aspect reflected in the burial of Robert II at Eynsham Abbey. A note of disappointment can perhaps be detected in the explanation of the Oseney Annals: *eo quod ante fundationem ecclesiae nostrae illic se sepeliendum devoverat* (because he had promised to be buried there before the foundation of our church).<sup>23</sup> It is unlikely that Robert's successor, Henry I, was buried in Oseney either.<sup>24</sup> The first Oilly patron to be interred in the conventual church at Oseney was Henry II d'Oilly, in 1232. The joy of the regular canons there is intimated in the Oseney Annals: *cum magna veneratione, ut dignum fuit*.<sup>25</sup> Great importance was attached by religious houses to the interment of patrons in the conventual church.<sup>26</sup> In the middle of the twelfth century, however, patrons of houses of the new Orders may still have been attracted by burial in the conventual churches of houses of the established Benedictine Order, since the new Orders had not yet established their spiritual credentials and efficacy.

The greater commitment of the later Oilly patrons to the house coincided with the decline of the fortunes of the barony. The first minority of 1142-54 was followed by a longer one from 1163 to ?1182.<sup>27</sup> In the later twelfth century, the barony was being fragmented through financial difficulty, and further exacerbated by the later policy of John. The Oilly family became heavily indebted to the Jews of Oxford, the debts being assumed into the king's hands. Simultaneously, the Oillys were unable to acquit scutage. Concurrently, Henry II d'Oilly was almost constantly embroiled in litigation.<sup>28</sup> A curious outcome of the financial exigency of the barony was to force Henry into the arms of Oseney, in particular by the sale to the house of the manor of Weston-on-the-Green in 1227.

Et quia dicti canonici neque ingrati neque illiberales erga me patronum  
suum in necessitate mea inveniri voluerunt, dederunt michi .ccc. marcas

---

<sup>22</sup>Rylands Eng. MS 714 (Oilly bundle) 16-18; H. E. Salter, ed., *The Thame Cartulary* (2 vols, ORS xxv-xxvi, 1947-8) i, 2-4.

<sup>23</sup>*Annales Monastici* iv, 24.

<sup>24</sup>*Annales Monastici* iv, 33.

<sup>25</sup>*Annales Monastici* iv, 73; *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* vi, 2.

<sup>26</sup>Golding, 'Burials and benefactions'.

<sup>27</sup>Rylands Eng. MS 714 (Oilly bundle) 20-2; G. Rose and W. Illingworth, eds, *Placitorum in Domo Capitulari Westmonasteriensi Asservatorum Abbreviatio* (Record Commission, 1811), 59. Since, however, the young Henry attested a charter of Margaret de Bohun before 1181, the minority might have been shorter: D. Walker, 'Charters of the earldom of Hereford' in *Camden Miscellany XXII* (Camden 4th series i, 1964), 58-9.

<sup>28</sup>D. M. Stenton, ed., *The Great Roll of the Pipe for the 10th Year of the Reign of King John* (Pipe Roll Society new series xxiii, 1947), 134, 139; *Curia Regis Rolls* viii, 296; ix, 10, 174-5, 334-6; x, 117, 141-3, 145; xi, 7, 65-6; F. W. Maitland, ed., *Bracton's Note Book* (3 vols, 1887) iii, nos 1363, 1589, 1688; *Calendar of Charter Rolls* i, 48.

et de dura manu David judei Oxonie me et terras meas liberaverunt [And since the said canons wanted to be found neither ungrateful nor mean to me, their patron, in my great need, they have given me three hundred marks and rescued me and my lands from the hard hand of David the Jew of Oxford].

The desperate position of Henry is reflected in the warranty clause by which he offered exchange in Hook Norton or Kidlington, the former being the *caput baronie*. Unfortunately for the abbey, Henry's title in Weston was clouded at this time. Firstly, he had granted the manor as the *maritagium* of his daughter, Matilda, on her marriage to Maurice de Gant, but had recovered seisin at Matilda's death in c.1220, though only after some litigation. Secondly, he failed to consult with his mesne tenants, the Amory family, in 1227, and the abbey consequently became involved in litigation which lasted until 1260.<sup>29</sup>

In 1149, Oseney acquired the chapel of St George in the Castle of Oxford and its endowments. The chapel had been founded by Robert I d'Oilly in the late eleventh century, but with the assistance of Roger d'Ivry. Some of the endowments had been derived from Ivry's barony (the honor of Beckley), which had passed in c.1146 to Reginald de St Walery. As a result of the appropriation of St George's, the St Walerys claimed some patronal rights over Oseney, a pretension which was pressed in c.1166-68 and c.1200, with such vigour latterly that Gilbert Foliot inteceded to advise restraint.<sup>30</sup> St Walery was prepared to define the relationship:

Si uero non fuero in Anglia, presentabitur electus abbas senescaldo meo & differet facere fidelitatem usque ad aduentum meum in Angliam, siue heredis mei. Ipse tamen Abbas interim prouidebit quod ipse michi fidelis erit secundum predictam formam [If, however, I will not be in England, the abbot-elect will be presented to my steward and forbear to do fealty until my or my heir's return into England. He the abbot in the meantime will, nevertheless, make sure that he will be faithful to me according to the said form]<sup>31</sup>

Under Oilly patronage, in fact, no vacancy lasted more than months.<sup>32</sup>

The patronal relationship changed in the thirteenth century, both because of the general tendency to increased definition, and because patronage of the house passed to the Crown. Patronal rights might have been assumed by the Crown by 1221. It is possible that the house was temporarily in royal hands during the Interdict in 1208, for Gilbert de Hida withdraw his suit against the abbey *quia abbatia est in manu domini regis* (because the abbacy is in the king's hand). There was no vacancy then, but John had recently assumed the debts of Oilly to

<sup>29</sup> *Calendar of Charter Rolls* i, 48-9; *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* vi, 2, 9; Rylands Eng. MS 714 (Oilly bundle) 190-2, 221-5; For the marriage, Rylands Eng. MS 714 (Oilly bundle) 23d-24; *Curia Regis Rolls* viii, 296; ix, 144, 334-6.

<sup>30</sup> *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* iv, 31-2, 57-8.

<sup>31</sup> *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* iv, 32.

<sup>32</sup> *Annales Monastici* iv, passim; Bodleian Rawlinson MS c.939, fo. 164.

Simon the Jew. The house might have passed permanently into royal patronage when Oilly proclaimed his *diffidatio* in 1215.<sup>33</sup> Initially, the Crown attempted to extend its rights, when, in 1254, Henry III tried to exact a cup and palfrey from the abbot-elect, Richard de Apeltre, as heriot for the late abbot, Adam de Berners, but this effort was successfully resisted.<sup>34</sup> Thereafter the main issue of the right of patronage, vacancies and custody, followed the pattern of other religious houses, with, ultimately, the introduction of fines to avoid custody. By contrast, the attitude of the earlier Oilly patrons, partly because of the inchoate nature of the concept, perhaps, seemed more dilatory and uninterested, rather than disinterested.

---

<sup>33</sup> *Calendar of Patent Rolls* i, 301; T. D. Hardy, ed., *Rotuli Litterarum Clausarum in Turri Londoniensi Asservati* (2 vols, 1833-44) i, 237, 298, 470b; *Curia Regis Rolls* v, 202; Stenton, *Pipe Roll 10 John*, 139; Rylands Eng. MS. 714 (Oilly bundle) 23d.

<sup>34</sup> *Calendar of Close Rolls* ix, 167; *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* iv, 10; *Annales Monastici* iv, 212; Wood, *English Monasteries and their Patrons*, 88n.

### 3 The learning of Austin Canons: the case of Oseney Abbey

Oseney Abbey was founded, as a priory of Austin Canons, in 1129, just outside the walls of Oxford, and was elevated to an abbey in 1154. Like St Frideswide's, the house was adjacent to the nascent schools of Oxford which developed late in the century, the *studium generale ex consuetudine*, a comprehensive school which had arisen organically without charter. From the thirteenth century, Oseney remained the principal lessor of *aule* (halls) and *camere* (chambers) to the scholars.<sup>35</sup> Any discussion of the intellectual activity of Oseney must take this relationship into account. It is equally important to assess the internal resources of the house for study and contemplation. The following discussion therefore examines: the varying connection between Oseney and the schools; the attendance by canons at the schools; the internal resources available through the library and the teaching of grammar; and the implication of some vernacular manuscripts for the level of proficiency in the house. For all these aspects, the sources are disparate and fragmentary; the material is less abundant than for many other houses, such as the large Benedictine abbeys. The attempt may, nonetheless, be worth making because not enough is known of medium-sized houses of Austin Canons, and also because of Oseney's interesting location.

Many commentators on the development of the schools have regarded the influence of Oseney as benign, except for Herbert Salter, who viewed it as inimical and adverse. Salter believed that an incipient school at the castle-chapel of St George was abrogated when Oseney appropriated St George's in 1149. The putative founder of this school was Walter, archdeacon of Oxford, with his acolytes, Robert Chesney and Geoffrey of Monmouth.<sup>36</sup> Although more than one scholar emanated from this college, it is difficult to accept it as an embryonic school.

There is, moreover, sufficient evidence that Oseney was well informed of the academic events in Oxford at this time. The main source for the teaching of Robert Pullan in 1133 is the Oseney Annals.<sup>37</sup> Pullan may have been invited to Oxford by the secular canons of St George's or even by the prior of St Frideswide's, as the first two priors of that house, Gwymundus and Robert Cricklade, were celebrated scholars.<sup>38</sup> The interest of Oseney in Pullan is, nevertheless, confirmed by his inclusion in the martyrology of the house as *Robertus*

<sup>35</sup>Sir H. Maxwell-Lyte, *History of the University of Oxford* (1886), 8-9.

<sup>36</sup>H. E. Salter, 'Geoffrey of Monmouth and Oxford', *EHR* xxxiv (1919), 382-5.

<sup>37</sup>*Annales Monastici* iv, 19. The original MS. was burnt in the Ashburnham House fire. R. L. Poole thought that the reading might have been *Exonia* rather than *Oxoniam*. He was followed by Kathleen Edwards. Poole, 'The early lives of Nicholas Brakespear and Robert Pullan' in *Essays in Medieval History Presented to Thomas Frederick Tout* (Manchester, 1925), 63; Edwards, *English Secular Cathedrals*, 193-4. Stubbs was more cautious: *Lectures on Medieval and Modern History* (3rd edn, Oxford, 1900), 151-3, although Fr Courtenay believed Pullan to have been a canon of Oseney. Beryl Smalley discounts the last idea, but considered Pullan to have taught at Oxford: *The Becket Controversy and the Schools* (Oxford, 1973), 39-40. Salter revisited the issue: 'The medieval university of Oxford', *History* xiv (1929), 57-61.

<sup>38</sup>For Gwymundus, Wigram, *Cartulary of St Frideswide* i, 9.

*Romane ecclesie cancellarius* (Robert, chancellor of the Roman Curia).<sup>39</sup> Unfortunately, little is known about the priors of Oseney at this time: Ralph had been a canon of St Frideswide's; Wigod, however, may have had a reputation as a scholar.<sup>40</sup> No conclusive evidence can be adduced that Oseney would have been antipathetic to a nascent school at St George in the Castle, had it existed.

It was in the last decades of the twelfth century that the significant development of the schools occurred. By 1201, a recognisable organization had appeared: 'an organised school with more than one teacher', and with a head, *magister scholarum*.<sup>41</sup> Although from this time Oseney had a strong tenurial relationship with the schools through its leasing of *aule* and *camere*, its interest remained mainly commercial. The real nature of the relationship was demonstrated by Oseney's adverse reaction to the lowering of rents for the schools by the Taxors after the Legatine sentences in 1214 and 1255. The appointment of Oseney and St Frideswide's, also in 1214, to receive the 52s. to be distributed to poor scholars, was simply a matter of convenience, since these two houses were the only convents close enough to fulfill the terms.<sup>42</sup>

Even so, it was precisely in the late twelfth century that the Austin Canons exhibited an intense interest in learning, in which Oseney fully participated.<sup>43</sup> The prelates of Oseney were interested in theology and maintained connections with some celebrated scholars.<sup>44</sup> Prior Clement addressed a canonical problem to Senatus, prior of Worcester, in c.1189-96. Clement, who became abbot in 1205, questioned Senatus on points of clerical observance, to which Senatus replied ironically that Clement consulted him despite the proximity of Oseney to a city of scholars.<sup>45</sup> It was not so extraordinary for Clement to refer to Senatus, for Senatus was of sound repute, and Oseney may have had a special connection with the chapter of Worcester and the *familia* (household) of the bishop. Oseney was accumulating spiritual property in that diocese. *Magister* William de Tunebrige, a prominent member of the bishop's distinguished *familia*, died in the *Domus Dei* of Oseney in c.1195-96, where he had probably been residing for some time.<sup>46</sup> He donated his theological books to the house. The death of another acclaimed theologian in the house, Adam, bishop of St Asaph, seems to confirm Oseney's interest in exegesis.<sup>47</sup> Shortly afterwards, a constitution on religion compiled at Oseney was commended by Pope Alexander, confirming

---

<sup>39</sup>Bodleian Rawlinson MS. c.939

<sup>40</sup>Salter, 'The medieval university of Oxford'.

<sup>41</sup>H. E. Salter, *Medieval Oxford* (OHS c, 1936), 37, 132; J. C. Russell, 'Alexander Neckham in England', *EHR* xlvii (1932), 261-3, but see also H. G. Richardson, 'The schools of Northampton in the later twelfth century', *EHR* lvi (1941), 603n.; D. Callus, 'The career of Robert Grosseteste', *Oxoniensia* x (1962), 42.

<sup>42</sup>Maxwell-Lyte, *History of the University of Oxford*, 19, 21, 46.

<sup>43</sup>R. W. Hunt, 'English learning in the late twelfth century', *TRHS* 4th series xix (1936), 19ff.

<sup>44</sup>T. E. Holland, ed., *Collectanea* (OHS xvi, 1890), 180-1.

<sup>45</sup>2 Samuel c.20, v.18.

<sup>46</sup>*Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* iii, 78; Salter, *Cartulary of Eynsham Abbey* ii, 325ff.; A. B. Emden, *A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to 1500* (3 vols, Oxford, 1957-9) iii, 1913; Bodleian Rawlinson MS. c.939, fo. 8.

<sup>47</sup>*Annales Monastici* iv, 39, but see also Richardson, 'The schools of Northampton', 600.

the strong interest of Oseney in theology.<sup>48</sup>

Unfortunately, the house seems to have shunned the opportunity of putting its learning into practice. This opportunity arose because Austin Canons were principal amongst those requested to act as Papal judges-delegate in the southern province.<sup>49</sup> It appears, since an Oxford formulary includes letters requesting the abbot's appointment as a Papal judge-delegate, that on one occasion Oseney was selected.<sup>50</sup> Only four commissions, however, were apparently issued to canons of Oseney after 1216, presumably because the convent secured an indult for exemption from service.<sup>51</sup> Oseney also obtained an indult limiting the distance its representatives would have to travel as a litigant before judges-delegate, a common practice of the Order.<sup>52</sup> Oseney's withdrawal from the organization of the judges-delegate may partly have been its reaction to the expense and irritation of the procedure, but it also reflected the predilection of the Austin Canons for convenience and commodious living. The opportunity to apply knowledge to practice was rejected. In the late twelfth century, the house thus had a strong interest in the interpretation of the scriptures and theology, albeit in a conservative vein.

If the attestation of charters is a reliable guide, further light can be shed on the intellectual connections of the house. Innumerable charters, particularly during the prelacy of Abbot Hugh de Buckingham (1184-1205), were witnessed by *magistri*. Many reasons can be evoked for these attestations: *magistri* might attest as neighbours to the property in the disposition; they might have been associated with the other party to the charters (for example, Mr John de Bridport, who attested charters of Reginald de St Walery, was probably a member of Reginald's household);<sup>53</sup> they might also have been requested to act as witnesses because they were respected as men of probity, such as attestations by the incumbent of the parish in which the land was situated (although some ambiguity existed in the case of the vicar of St Mary as the living was also in the gift of Oseney).<sup>54</sup> None of these criteria apply in a significant number of charters, in which the presence of the *magistri* in the list of witnesses emanates from the relationship between Oseney and the *magistri*.<sup>55</sup> The connection may have been encouraged through the *nepos* of Abbot Hugh, Mr Reginald.<sup>56</sup> During the subsequent abbacy of John de Leche, *magistri* provided a considerable number of loans to the convent, although it is impossible to discover the real nature of the loans.<sup>57</sup> By Leche's time also (1235-49), the association between Oseney and the *magistri* was probably centred on a lessor-lessee basis.

---

<sup>48</sup> *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* iii, 348-9.

<sup>49</sup> J. Sayers, *Papal Judges Delegate in the Province of Canterbury* (Oxford, 1971), 63-5.

<sup>50</sup> H. E. Salter, W. A. Pantin and H. G. Richardson, eds, *Oxford Formularies* (OHS new series v, 1942), 217.

<sup>51</sup> Sayers, *Papal Judges Delegate*, 122.

<sup>52</sup> *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* iii, 350-1; Sayers, *Papal Judges Delegate*, 64, 143.

<sup>53</sup> *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* i, 433, 463.

<sup>54</sup> *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* ii, 264, 269, 275-6, 282, 338.

<sup>55</sup> *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* i, 127, 217; iv, 61-2, 100, 241, 339, 375, 378, 405, 422.

<sup>56</sup> *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* iv, 68-9.

<sup>57</sup> *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* iii, 66-71.

The abbey had its own complement of *magistri*, which may reflect more favourably on the attainments of the house. Mr Walter de Gant, a canon from c.1175, was instituted in 1184 as the first abbot of the refoundation at Waltham.<sup>58</sup> Mr William de Meisham, a canon, was presented to the vicarage of Shenstone in c.1205-8.<sup>59</sup> Another canon, Mr Philip de Risendone, was appointed proctor of the house in 1251 and was succeeded in the office by Mr Robert Maynard.<sup>60</sup> Robert was recruited from the schools as a counsel in canon law, entered the house as a canon in 1281, and was finally elected as sub-prior.<sup>61</sup> Richard de Wrthe was a canon of the house who was instituted as abbot of Dorchester in 1236, and he was probably responsible for the production of a copy of the *prima pars maiorum sacramentorum* of Hugh de St Victor.<sup>62</sup> The transcription of this work for Oseney firmly places the abbey in the context of the Victorine influence on the Austin Canons in the late twelfth century.<sup>63</sup> These associations suggest that Oseney might have belonged to a wider intellectual circle at this time.

Attendance by canons at the University is difficult to assess much further than above. Analysis of Emden's biographical material on the medieval alumni of Oxford has afforded some general conclusions on the performance of the religious orders. In general, the regulars were less conscientious than the seculars. The analysis confirms, moreover, H. M. Colvin's indictment of the White Canons. The Black Monks (Benedictines) were the best of the regulars; 681 Black Monks have been identified as alumni. The number for the White Monks (Cistercians) is 178; the Black (Austin) Canons 128; the White (Premonstratensian) Canons thirteen; Carthusians six; Cluniacs five; and Bonshommes one. The Friars were more impressive: 244 Carmelites; 283 Austin Friars; 487 Franciscans; and 542 Dominicans. The regular canons thus comprised only five percent of the identified alumni in religious orders, but the Austin Canons were the least reprehensible. From the available evidence the Austin Canons seem to have been interested not only in theology, but also canon and civil law. Attendance by the religious orders fluctuated: the high of 1220-39 was succeeded by decline until 1279, whereupon numbers increased from 1280 to 1299, continued at a high (but inconstant) level to 1360, attained a peak in 1360-79, but then declined through the fifteenth century to a trough in 1460-79, although recovering somewhat in 1480-99.<sup>64</sup>

In default of early matriculation registers, it is impossible to assess compre-

<sup>58</sup>*Annales Monastici* iv, 40; Emden, *Biographical Register of the University of Oxford* ii, 749; *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* iv, 61, 361.

<sup>59</sup>*Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* v, 64-5.

<sup>60</sup>*Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* v, 403, 405.

<sup>61</sup>Emden, *Biographical Register of the University of Oxford* ii, 1250; *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* i, 295-6; iii, 43-4; iv, 250, 291; F. N. Davis, ed., *Rotuli Roberti Grosseteste* (Lincoln Record Society xi, 1914), 221, 225.

<sup>62</sup>*Annales Monastici* iv, 83; Bodleian Bodley MS 477: at fo. 4 is the inscription *De dono Ricardi de Wrthe canonici nostri*.

<sup>63</sup>Hunt, 'English learning'.

<sup>64</sup>T. H. Aston, 'Oxford's medieval alumni', *Past and Present* lxxiv (1977), 3-40, esp. 16-19; H. M. Colvin, *White Canons in England*, 320-1.

hensively the attendance of canons of Oseney at the schools. Some impressionistic evidence occurs in the exhortations and admonitions of the Chapters General of the Order to negligent houses. The performance of most of the other houses was abysmal. The aim, at least from 1325, was that each house with more than twenty canons ought to maintain one canon at the schools. The Chapter of 1443 discovered that of forty-four eligible houses, only sixteen maintained a canon for the entire triennial period between Chapters, and twenty had not sent a canon at all. The list of defaulting houses in 1511 reveals little improvement. Oseney appears in neither list of defaulters and is known to have maintained two canons simultaneously at the Oxford schools.<sup>65</sup>

The president of the Chapter of 1443 who pronounced against the negligent houses was Thomas Hooknorton, abbot of Oseney. It was during his prelacy (1430-52) that the abbey achieved its greatest affinity with the schools and enjoyed an intellectual interest not equalled since the late twelfth century. He may have been responsible for the restitution of a college at St George's dedicated to learning. With the abbot of Leicester, he was the main advocate for the foundation of the College of St Mary for Austin Canons at Oxford. In 1446, as president of the Chapter again, he audited the account of the *prior studencium* at Oxford.<sup>66</sup> More significantly, he exerted great influence over the drafting of the statutes of the proposed college in 1448: *editu a venerabili patre permissione divina Thoma abbate ... Oseneye* (drafted by the venerable father Thomas, by divine grace abbot ... of Oseney).<sup>67</sup> The extant copy of the statutes is of Oseney provenance and from this it is known that the original statutes were mainly compiled by Hooknorton and written by a canon of Oseney, Robert de Oxunforde. The consequence of the building of the college was to concentrate Austin Canon students at Oxford, since there was no comparable institution at Cambridge. Henceforth, control over the student Black Canons would be exerted by the abbots of Oseney in conjunction with the *prior studencium*, whereas previously this supervision had been the preserve of the prior of St Frideswide's.<sup>68</sup> Hooknorton's profound interest in the welfare of scholars was further revealed by his rebuilding of the Oseney schools which were leased to the University.<sup>69</sup>

One enigmatic aspect of Oseney's relations with the schools is its provision for 'foreign' scholars. The abbey apparently permitted scholars and students who were not of the house or Order to use the facilities of the convent, principally the refectory and cloisters. Mr Geoffrey Gibewin gave land in Lew to the abbey *in sustentacionem [sic] pauperum clericorum in domo dei que sita est infra portam Oseneie* (for the maintenance of poor clerks in the *domus dei*

<sup>65</sup>H. E. Salter, ed., *Triennial Chapters of the Augustinian Canons* (OHS lxxiv, 1920), 13, 18, 56, 62-4, 66-7, 187, 214; Bodleian Oseney Roll 5 (two canons); A. Hamilton Thompson, ed., *Visitations in the Diocese of Lincoln* (3 vols, Lincoln Record Society xxxiii, xxxv, xxxvii, 1940-7) iii, 39 (two canons); B. F. Harvey, 'The monks of Westminster and the University of Oxford' in F. R. H. DuBoulay and C. M. Barron, eds, *The Reign of Richard II. Essays in Honour of May McKisack* (1971), 108-30.

<sup>66</sup>Salter, *Triennial Chapters*, 15.

<sup>67</sup>Bodleian MS. Rawl Statutes 34, fos 12-22, esp. 22.

<sup>68</sup>Salter, *Triennial Chapters*, 69 (1371), 185.

<sup>69</sup>Bodleian Twyne MS. xxi, fo. 264.

situated in Oseney gate).<sup>70</sup> Conceivably he meant the students at the schools in Oxford. An agreement between Oseney and the cathedral chapter of Salisbury in 1254 provided a similar arrangement for the cathedral's secular canons.<sup>71</sup> The abbey agreed to maintain four *clerici* at Oxford *ad tres annos completos* (for three whole years), perhaps for the duration of the *Trivium*. It seems equally probable that these clerks were students at the schools, especially considering the reputation for learning in the cathedral chapter, even before the foundation of De Vaux College in Salisbury in 1262.<sup>72</sup> The granting of this kind of facility by the abbey apparently became commonplace towards the end of the thirteenth century, since the abbey's cartulary contains a formulary for a charter of warranty by inceptors who were permitted to use the refectory and cloisters.<sup>73</sup> Despite the proffer of these facilities, however, the abbey was very vigilant to exclude the jurisdiction of the Chancellor of the University.<sup>74</sup> The motives behind the abbey's extending these privileges are not easily discerned. It is noticeable that the beneficiaries seem to have been basically the secular clergy and secular canons, despite there being as yet no college for the Order of Austin Canons at Oxford. The house may have perceived an opportunity for patronage with long-term benefits, since it had livings to which it could present. Alternatively, the abbey may have regarded the facilities as simply an extension to the leasing of the schools.

The provision for the education of the novices and canons inside the house remained fairly satisfactory before the time of Abbot Barton (1505-24). The education was centred on the library and the grammar master, until the unprecedented foundation of the College of St George in *c.*1429. The composition of the library is obscure, although what little is known shows some of the interests of the house. Unfortunately, no catalogue has survived, in contrast with the exceptionally fine catalogue for Leicester Abbey, a house of the same Order, which lists 940 books.<sup>75</sup> In the case of Oseney, we are dependent on the subjective observations of Leland and on the more critical identifications by the late Neil Ker. The library of a religious house, as Knowles and Haskins have explained, was sometimes compiled in a haphazard, random fashion. 'After the twelfth century, the growth of a library depended almost wholly upon chance: the tastes or needs of an abbot or an individual monk; the demands of teachers or scholars when monks began to frequent the universities; bequests of all kinds; the changing devotional practices of the community ... Consequently, the monastic library, even the greatest, had something of the appearance of a heap

<sup>70</sup> *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* iv, 500-1 (1235).

<sup>71</sup> *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* iii, 82.

<sup>72</sup> Edwards, *English Secular Cathedrals*, 194ff.

<sup>73</sup> *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* iii, 87-8 (*c.*1286).

<sup>74</sup> *Calendar of Close Rolls, 1381-1385*, 306.

<sup>75</sup> M. R. James, 'Catalogue of the library of Leicester Abbey', *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological Society* xix (1936-7), 118-61, 378-440, and xxi (1939-41), 1-88; [see now T. Webber, 'The books of Leicester Abbey' and M. Gullick and T. Webber, 'Summary catalogue of surviving manuscripts from Leicester Abbey' both in J. Story, J. Bourne and R. Buckley, eds, *Leicester Abbey. Medieval History, Archaeology and Manuscript Studies* (Leicester, 2006), 127-46, 173-92.]

even though the nucleus was an ordered whole; at its best, it was the sum of many collections, great and small, rather than a planned, articulate unit.<sup>76</sup>

The library still reflects, however, the intellectual resources available to the canons at particular times. The lists furnished by Leland and Ker reveal the importance of works of the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. The library was then probably at its zenith and most active. The basis of the library was probably the glossed scriptures attributed by Ker to Oseney, now in Magdalen College, Oxford. Service books of this kind constituted the nucleus of monastic libraries of that day. The scriptures were divided into parts for individual study, and glossed. The parts which survive from the Oseney library of the twelfth century are separate books of Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Joshua, Paralipomena, *Libri Sapientales*, Job, Peter Lombard's *Psalterium* and his Epistles of Paul, Prophets, *Evangelia*, and Acts. Leland's cryptic list of books suggests that Anglo-Saxon hagiography was a principal interest, a predominant aspect also of the libraries of Cirencester and Llanthony II, also of the same Order, although Leland's observations were notoriously subjective.<sup>77</sup> If Bede comprised the corpus of these Anglo-Saxon texts, this reflects a wider interest of religious houses in the twelfth century. Cirencester, for example, had six twelfth-century copies of Bede. Antonia Gransden has discerned that thirty-one percent of the surviving texts of Bede derive from the twelfth century, and that Bede's reputation was high at that time, both as an historian and a saint and Father of the Church, venerated for his learning in the scriptures.<sup>78</sup> Such works would also reflect Oseney's interest in theological debate, although of a conservative nature.

In more contemporary vein, the library acquired a copy of a work by Alexander Neckham, who was a major influence on the Order of Austin Canons, to which he was admitted. Neckham (1157-1217) studied at Paris, taught at Dunstable, and became a canon and later abbot of the house of Austin Canons at Cirencester, the largest house of the Order. Neckham fitted into the scientific aspects of the Renaissance of the twelfth century, which were particularly reflected in his interest in lexicography and natural philosophy (*De Natura Rerum*). Unfortunately, Ker has demonstrated conclusively that this copy was almost cer-

---

<sup>76</sup>D. Knowles, *The Religious Orders in England* (3 vols, Cambridge, 1948-59) ii, 331-53, quotation at 332; C. H. Haskins, *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century* (15th edn, New York, 1970), 70-92; N. Ker, *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain* (2nd edn, 1964), 140-1, lists twenty-eight items ascribed to Oseney; R. M. Wilson, 'The contents of the medieval library' in F. Wormald and C. E. Wright, eds, *The English Library before 1700* (1958), 85-111; J. P. Carley and J. F. R. Coughlan, 'An edition of the list of ninety-nine books acquired at Glastonbury Abbey during the abbacy of Walter de Monington', *Mediaeval Studies* xliii (1981), 498-514; R. W. Hunt, 'The library at the Abbey of St Albans' in M. B. Parkes and A. G. Watson, eds, *Medieval Scribes, Manuscripts and Libraries: Essays Presented to N. R. Ker* (1978), 263-8, remarking at 263 on the significant growth in conventual libraries in the late fourteenth century, which Ker associated with the introduction of the *Anglicana* hand; N. Ker, 'Medieval manuscripts from Norwich Cathedral Priory', *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society* 1 (1953), 9.

<sup>77</sup>*Collectanea* iv (1770 edn), 57; Ker, *Medieval Libraries*, 33, 60-2, 78.

<sup>78</sup>A. Gransden, 'Bede's reputation as an historian in medieval England', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* xxxii (1981), 397-425.

tainly presented to the house in the fifteenth century by Abbot Hooknorton, and so presumably represents the interest of this intellectual prelate at a later time.

The copy of Hugh de St Victor, donated to the library by the canon, Richard de Wrthe, more truly reflects the wide influence of the Victorine Order apparent in the twelfth century. This volume was probably compiled before 1236, possibly before 1227.<sup>79</sup> Hugh (1096-1141) had a primary concern for the mystical, hidden meaning of the scriptures and his treatise on the sacraments, which de Wrthe presented, was a forerunner in its arrangement of the *Summe* of the thirteenth century. Such a work represented not only the interests of the individual, de Wrthe, at this time, but also those of the house in theological exegesis, and of the Order as a whole.

Other works of the twelfth century confirm the conservatism of the house: Boethius and, very indicatively, a copy of Isidore, whose *Etymology*, compiled in the seventh century, was by then a very conservative compendium.

This haphazard acquisition of books is well illustrated by the *cautiones*, books given to the house as sureties or warranties for leases of *aule* and *camere*. The *liber Phisicorum* received as a *cautio* of Mr William Renham may not have been very edifying for the canons.<sup>80</sup> Some books may have been accepted as a matter of courtesy, such as the Plato offered by Canon Ralph Bloore. The house did, nonetheless, acquire by gift books of considerable interest to it. Mr William de Tunebrige left his books to the house in c.1195-96 and Mr Adam de Senestan his important collection of theological books in 1268.<sup>81</sup> The obit roll of the house records innumerable gifts of theological works: *Decreta*, *Johannes glossatus*, *Sententiae*, and *Acta Apostolorum*.<sup>82</sup>

The other internal resource, grammar instruction, was an obligation well performed before Barton. The late Richard Hunt considered that grammar studies in Oxford declined in the late fourteenth century with the consequent introduction of a lesser qualification, the *magister in grammatica*. This interpretation has recently been revised by David Thomson, who suggests that the qualification of M.Gramm. had existed previously, but became more popular in the fourteenth century, especially with those intending to teach in the new grammar schools outside Oxford.<sup>83</sup> Oseney continued to employ the Master of Arts until 1495. Whilst it may have been an advance for the laity to resort to M.Gramms., for the extension of literacy, the change from teaching by M.A.s to teaching by M.Gramms. in a religious house would represent a decline in standards of Latinity. When Mr John Cobbow took a lease of Lion Hall from Oseney, he agreed to provide free grammar instruction for one of the canons, an additional resource for Oseney.<sup>84</sup> Cobbow, however, was one of those grammar

<sup>79</sup>Bodleian Bodley MS. 477; Haskins, *Renaissance of the Twelfth Century*, 350-1.

<sup>80</sup>*Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* iii, 164

<sup>81</sup>See above; *Annales Monastici* iv, 215.

<sup>82</sup>Bodleian Rawl MS c.939.

<sup>83</sup>R. W. Hunt, 'Oxford grammar masters in the middle ages' in *Oxford Essays to Daniel Callus* (OHS new series xvi, 1964), 186; D. Thomson, 'The Oxford grammar masters revisited', *Mediaeval Studies* xlv (1983), 298-310.

<sup>84</sup>M. D. Lobel in *Victoria History of the County of Oxfordshire* (London, 1907- ) iii, 43.

instructors who used the vernacular to aid construction. Further assistance was probably provided by Mr Thomas Thurleby, who retired to the house, where he died.<sup>85</sup> In 1495, the abbey retained Roger Fabelle, M.Gramm., who had considerable experience as a grammarian, but his appointment, nonetheless, may reflect a relative decline in standards of Latinity in the house.

This decline in Latin may be detected, moreover, in the production of the English Register of Oseney Abbey. The English Register may have been composed to assist those canons whose Latin was defective. The prologue to the English Register of Godstow nunnery, a Benedictine convent only a few miles to the north of Oseney, signifies the dilemma.<sup>86</sup> A Latin cartulary had been compiled for Godstow in 1404, but only fifty years afterwards it was thought necessary to have a translation, prefaced with a didactic prologue, which explained that ‘women of religion’ were less capable now of reading Latin ‘where it is not her modyr tonge’.

Therfor, how be hyt that they wolde rede her bokys of remembraunce and of her munymentys wryte in Latyn for defaute of undurstondyng they toke ofte tymes grete hurt and hyndraunce ... Hyt wer ryht necessary, as hyt semyth to the undyrstondyng of such relygyous women, that they myght haue out of her latyn bokys, sum wrytynge in her modyr tonge, whereby they myht haue bettyr knowlyge of her munymentys and more clerly yeue informacyon to her seruautys, rent gedurarys, and receyuowrs in the absent of her lernyd councell.

The vernacular register of Godstow is preceded in the volume by vernacular translations of liturgical works, devotional verses and a kalendar, suggesting that the remarks of the ‘welwyller’ were fairly accurate. Similarly, the Oseney register is preceded by a translation into the vernacular of a fragment of Bonaventura’s *Speculum Vitae Christi*, possibly written c.1450. The register is a translation of the second cartulary of Oseney, compiled for Abbot Sutton, c.1280-4. The Oseney register is probably contemporary with the Godstow volume, both being c.1460. Clark suggested that the devotional works were arranged to be read aloud in groups of chapters.<sup>87</sup> The existence of these liturgical works in the vernacular, bound in with registers, and ostensibly meant to be read aloud, seems to confirm the decline in Latinity about which the Godstow prologue remarks. The Godstow translation was performed by the ‘pore brodur’, not a member of the convent, perhaps implying the inability of the nuns to undertake the work. Clark’s analysis of the translation, however, reveals the imperfect knowledge of Latin syntax and grammar of the ‘pore brodur’ himself. His verdict on the Oseney register was that it was better than the Godstow volume, but still left much to be desired in accuracy. The lack of proficiency and the existence of

<sup>85</sup> *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* iii, 251-4; H. E. Salter, ed., *Snappe’s Formulary* (OHS lxxx, 1923), 229; Emden, *Biographical Register of the University of Oxford* iii, 1872.

<sup>86</sup> A. Clark, ed., *The English Register of Oseney Abbey* (Early English Text Society, 1913) and Clark, ed., *The English Register of Godstow Nunnery* (EETS, 1906-11), esp 25; C. E. Wright, *English Vernacular Hands* (Oxford, 1960), 22.

<sup>87</sup> Clark, *English Register of Oseney Abbey*, ix.

the vernacular liturgical works strongly implies the decline of Latinity in these two houses. Their geographical proximity may, however, suggest an element of fashion.

A further vernacular manuscript from Oseney rather complicates the issue of Latinity. A rental for Oseney properties in Kidlington, Hampton, Shipton, Hensington and a few other places, recording the rents and some services of miscellaneous tenants, was written in the vernacular, but in a well-defined *textura* hand. The rental can be assigned from internal evidence and palaeographical criteria to the first half of the fourteenth century, possibly *c.*1340. It is in the usual format of a roll.<sup>88</sup> Surprisingly, it is one of the very few rentals to survive for Oseney properties. This rental is one of the earliest local documents written in the vernacular, displaying the normal features of Oxfordshire Middle English for this period.<sup>89</sup> The reasons for its composition are enigmatic. It was about this time that John of Cornwall introduced the vernacular into the teaching of grammar at Oxford, but the construction in the rental is very slight and elementary. How it fits into any vernacular tradition is problematic.

Unfortunately, little has been written about the intellectual achievement of houses of Austin Canons. The performance of Oseney cannot therefore be fitted into a known context. It would seem, however, that Oseney's attention to study was more positive than most other houses of the Order, if the *dicta* of the Chapters General are indicative. The relationship of Oseney with the schools of Oxford was usually only a commercial one. Oseney participated fully in the zenith of intellectual activity of the Austin Canons in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, and quite possibly forged a reputation then for its study of theology and the scriptures, albeit within a traditional framework. Learning at Oseney received a further stimulus under Abbot Hooknorton, who took a personal interest in the reputation of the Order, and may have been motivated to promote Oseney's own reputation within the Order much as the abbots of Westminster intended to do for their house among the Benedictines.<sup>90</sup> Curiously, immediately after Hooknorton, the English Register may have been symptomatic of the decline of Latinity in the house.<sup>91</sup>

---

<sup>88</sup>Bodleian Oseney Roll 14.

<sup>89</sup>I am grateful for the advice of Michael Benskin, Molly Barrett and Tilly de la Mare.

<sup>90</sup>Harvey, 'The monks of Westminster'.

<sup>91</sup>We are still largely dependent on Dickinson, *Origins of the Austin Canons*. This article was written before the appearance of J. I. Catto, ed., *The History of the University of Oxford: vol. 1. The Early Oxford Schools* (Oxford, 1984).

#### 4 Securing the gift in Oxfordshire charters

In the early thirteenth century, Oseney Abbey composed foundation charters for the collegiate chapel of St George in the Castle and for Oseney Priory, the former having been appropriated to Oseney in 1149. No such charters had originally been issued by the founders, respectively Robert I d'Oilly and Robert II d'Oilly in 1074 and 1129. St George undoubtedly had some form of existence before 1074; Oseney had probably been founded and originally endowed by oral disposition in 1129, but received a general charter of confirmation only in *c.*1140-42.<sup>92</sup> In making intelligent reconstructions of these charters, the *scriptores* (scribes) of Oseney included remarkably similar clauses to express the *laudatio parentum* (kin consent), the corroboration of the gifts by the family:

(to St George's) *volentibus et concedentibus Alditha uxore mea et fratribus meis Nigello et Gilberto (my wife Alditha and brothers Nigel and Gilbert agreeing and consenting);*

(to Oseney Priory) *volentibus et concedentibus Edida uxore mea et filiis meis Henrico et Gilberto (my wife Edith and sons Henry and Gilbert agreeing and consenting).*<sup>93</sup>

Robert I had no sons, his brothers being his presumed heirs (in fact, Nigel succeeded to the barony).<sup>94</sup> There is a further similarity between the clauses in these spurious charters and the same clause in an authentic charter of Robert II relating to three hides in Cutslow and the chapel of Fres. The clauses, indeed, in the spurious charters are almost exactly the same as the clause in the general charter of confirmation by Robert II in *c.*1140-42:

*volentibus et concedentibus Edida uxore mea et filiis meis Henrico et Gilberto*<sup>95</sup>

In compiling its spurious charters, Oseney seems to have imitated directly the *laudatio parentum* in the authentic later charter of confirmation. Other charters from Robert II had a *laudatio* clause, but it varied from the formula above:

*Hanc donationem feci concedentibus filiis meis Henrico et Giselberto et uxore mea et fratre meo Fulcone (I made this gift my sons Henry and Gilbert, wife, and brother Fulk agreeing and consenting)*<sup>96</sup>

Charters of subsequent Oilly patrons had a similar corroboration:

*consensu atque concessu fratris mei Giselberti atque consilio domini Roberti filii Regis fratris mei et matris mee et aliorum amicorum atque hominum*

---

<sup>92</sup> *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* iv, 1-2, 24.

<sup>93</sup> *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* iv, 1-2, 24.

<sup>94</sup> Rylands Eng. MS. 714 (Oilly bundle).

<sup>95</sup> *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* iv, 11, 104.

<sup>96</sup> *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* iv, 18 (*Carta de incrementis*) (charter of additions).

meorum (and with the consent and grant of my brother Gilbert and the advice of Robert fitzRoy, my mother and other kin and my [free] men)<sup>97</sup>

consensu et assensu Roberti fratris mei et consilio liberorum hominum meorum (with the consent and assent of my brother Robert and the advice of my free men)<sup>98</sup>

uolente et concedente Roberto filio Regis fratre meo et aliis amicis et hominibus meis (my brother Robert fitzRoy and other kin and my [free] men assenting and granting)<sup>99</sup>

consensu et assensu Roberti fratris mei et consilio liberorum hominum meorum (with the consent and assent of my brother Robert and advice of my free men)<sup>100</sup>

When Edith, Robert II's wife, gave thirty-five acres to Thame Abbey in 1137, her charter contained the following clause, which assured her benefaction against any claims by her husband and sons and daughters.

consilio et voluntate eiusdem Roberti mariti mei. Quod ut ratum sit nec aliqua temporum uicissitudine aut rerum permutacione aut posterorum successione soluatur mariti mei et filiorum meorum Henrici et Gilberti et filiarum meorum concessione ...<sup>101</sup>

As Robert and Edith spread their spiritual insurance widely, by gifts to Eynsham Abbey by two charters of *c.*1130-35 and *c.*1130-42, members of the family were co-opted as joint donors to assure the benefaction:

ego et uxor mea Edith et filius meus Henricus concessimus ... (I and my wife Edith and son Henry grant ...) <sup>102</sup>

Not satisfied with these soul bequests, Robert gave a mill at Water Eaton to St Frideswide's Priory in *c.*1130-40. In his charter, the *laudatio* assumed the form of an addition after the witness clause, at the very foot. Perhaps this location was more emphatic than standing in the body of the disposition, or perhaps it was merely an earlier omission. Or perhaps we perceive here the actual oral expressions at the *donatio*, the oral disposition, when each member of the nuclear family verbally consented to the alienation. That last interpretation is perhaps reinforced by the present tense of the consenting.

Et ego Editha uxor Roberti hanc donationem confirmo. Ego uero Henricus eorum filius idem facio. Ego autem Gilbertus idem concedo. (And I Edith, Robert's wife, confirm this gift. I, moreover, their son Henry make it. I, indeed, Gilbert grant it.)<sup>103</sup>

<sup>97</sup> *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* iv, 27 (Henry I d'Oilly, 1149)

<sup>98</sup> *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* iv, 32 (Henry II d'Oilly, *c.*1183-85)

<sup>99</sup> *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* iv, 256 (Henry I d'Oilly, *c.*1153-54)

<sup>100</sup> *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* iv, 257 (Henry II d'Oilly, *c.*1182-85)

<sup>101</sup> Salter, *Thame Cartulary* i, 2.

<sup>102</sup> Salter, *Cartulary of Eynsham Abbey* i, 72-3.

<sup>103</sup> Wigram, *Cartulary of St Frideswide* ii, 208.

The inclusion of these clauses (the *laudatio parentum* or consents) ensued from the latent rights of the family in the land. There were some fundamental, unresolved questions about tenures in the twelfth century. These issues concerned the heritability of fees and alienability of ‘inherited’ land. The time at which fees became hereditary in England has been the subject of some controversy.<sup>104</sup> The development of heritability has been assigned to various times during the twelfth century. It is possible that inheritance and heritability may have existed only as a norm in the earlier twelfth century, not as a legal or tenurial doctrine. The question of alienability of inherited land was not resolved until towards the end of the twelfth century. To some extent, the two issues were inter-related. The alienation of land involved the concept of warranty in charters.

It has been imputed that religious houses helped to force these concepts of heritability, alienability in perpetuity, and the development of warranty, since gifts in frankalmoign or free alms were in perpetuity and the religious were keen to establish both their perpetual succession, a concern intensified by the gift being primarily to God and the (patrimony) of the saint of their dedication. Against this process, the religious had to combat the sentiment that inherited land was primarily the family’s land, that ‘heirs’ had presumptive rights in land, and the principle of the *retrait lignager*. The *laudatio parentum*, along with other devices, committed the nearest kin to the alienation.

The *laudatio*, however, was indeed only one amongst several methods of ensuring the gift. In western France, the *laudatio* was in decline during the twelfth century. At about this time, warranty clauses were incipiently occurring in some English charters. The warranty clause may therefore have tended to replace the *laudatio* as the more usual method of assuring the gift. Searching cartularies for religious houses for evidence that the warranty clause was introduced at the instance of the religious perhaps over-emphasizes that origin, but the most substantial accumulations of charters of the twelfth century do derive from that source and so it may well be that the general impetus for charter diplomatics came from that direction.

Besides warranty and the *laudatio*, other methods of assuring the permanence of the gift existed. Amongst these options were symbolic gifts and liveries, confirmation charters, witness lists afforced by the family, and the important pledge of faith, especially in the chapter house or on the altar. Rather than

---

<sup>104</sup>S. E. Thorne, ‘English feudalism and estates in land’ repr. in Thorne, *Essays in Legal History* (1985), 13-30; S. F. C. Milsom, *The Legal Framework of English Feudalism* (Cambridge, 1976), 154-86; J. C. Holt, ‘Politics and property in early medieval England’, E. King, ‘The tenurial crisis of the early twelfth century’, S. D. White, ‘Succession to fiefs in early medieval England’, Holt, ‘Rejoinder’, all repr. in T. H. Aston, ed., *Landlords, Peasants and Politics in Medieval England* (Cambridge, 1987), 65-140; Holt, ‘Feudal society and the family in early medieval England: II, notions of patrimony’, *TRHS* 5th series 33 (1983), 193-220; P. R. Hyams, ‘Warranty and good lordship in twelfth-century England’, *Law and History Review* 5 (1987), 473ff.; E. Z. Tabuteau, *Transfers of Property in Eleventh Century Norman Law* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1988); S. D. White, *Custom, Kinship and Gifts to Saints. The Laudatio Parentum in Western France* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1988). [Since this article was written, two books in particular have approached the issue: S. Reynolds, *Fiefs and Vassals. The Medieval Evidence Reinterpreted* (Oxford, 1994) and J. Hudson, *Land, Law and Lordship in Anglo-Norman England* (Oxford, 1994).

one method replacing another or the others, several may have been deployed concurrently, and some even simultaneously in the same charter as mutual reinforcement. The intermixture of devices may have obtained particularly in the late twelfth century, when there was fluidity and change in the development of the legal framework and devices available. At this juncture, the mechanisms may have been less sequential than simultaneously available.

This process may be illustrated by charters relating to gifts to religious houses in Oxfordshire. The ‘competition’ amongst religious houses to acquire land was intensified in the county by the foundation of houses of the new religious Orders (Oseney and Bicester, new foundations of Austin Canons; St Frideswide’s, a refoundation of a college of secular canons as a house of Austin Canons; Thame, Cistercian; and the Templars; amongst others) alongside the existing houses of Benedictines (principally Eynsham Abbey as an active participant in the local land market). This ‘competition’ for diminishing resources of gifts of land towards the end of the twelfth century may have concentrated the minds of the religious on ways of securing gifts.<sup>105</sup> The *laudatio* and the pledge of faith or sacred oath were earlier forms of assurance. A large proportion of charters favouring religious houses before 1180 included the clause of afforcement by the family. Paradoxically, perhaps, charters for Eynsham contained the *laudatio* to a lesser degree, although the abbey was the oldest foundation. Eynsham may have preferred the pledge of faith or oath to secure its gifts (see below). The *laudatio* clause in the charters to the other houses normally included the wife of the benefactor, to exclude or bar her right of dower. The other participants varied to some degree, but usually within the linear, nuclear or agnatic kinship group.

The use of the *laudatio* extended well beyond the introduction of the assize of mort d’ancestor in 1176, which did not prove an absolute bar to the clause. Although the assize presumed heritability, it did not establish alienability. At least twelve charters to Oseney between c.1180 and c.1200 included a clause associating the heirs with the gift; at least another fifteen between c.1200 and c.1230 contained it. A dozen charters to Thame between c.1180 and c.1200 included the *laudatio*. In the Sandford cartulary (Templars), three of the very few charters for the last two decades of the twelfth century and five between c.1200 and c.1220 contained the *laudatio*. This continued use of the *laudatio* suggests some residual concern on the part of these new religious houses about the enduring nature of gifts in the face of claims by the family, perhaps down to c.1230. Even gifts between the laity, moreover, reflected the same concern in the late twelfth century, an uncertainty illustrated by the alienation by Roger son of Nigel de Stratford to Godwin de Bampton of a virgate, which was concluded *assensu Aloise* (his wife) *et heredum meorum*.<sup>106</sup>

Different methods of effecting the secure gift extended beyond the *laudatio*, comprehending too the warranty clause, confirmation charters by the family, and, specifically, heirs, and the emphatic involvement of heirs by a consideration

<sup>105</sup>For the Templars, A. M. Leys, ed., *The Sandford Cartulary* (2 vols, ORS 19 and 22, 1938 and 1941).

<sup>106</sup>*Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* v, 421.

(sometimes material, sometimes symbolic) paid to them. Although warranty clauses loosely succeeded the *laudatio*, the two were not totally exclusive. For a time, in the late twelfth century, warranty and *laudatio* were concurrent, and, indeed, used as mutual reinforcement. This combined coroboration occurred in an elaborate clause in a charter of Robert Cerueyse to Oseney, by which he gave himself to the house with a virgate, before 1184. The clause intermingled warranty, pledge of faith and *laudatio* in inchoate fashion.

Hanc autem donationem et concessionem et affirmacionem predictus Walterus (the donor's brother) et duo fratres eius Clemens videlicet et Radulfus tactis sacrosanctis euangeliis seruare manutenere warantizare sicuti de sua propria hereditate [performed in the chapter house] ... ita quod hanc donationem predictam et hoc iusiurandum cum bona uoluntate et absque omni coactione Walterus et duo fratres eius concesserunt et fecerunt.<sup>107</sup> [The aforesaid Walter and his two brothers, that is, Clement and Ralph, swore on the holy gospels to uphold and warrant this gift, grant and confirmation as if of their own inheritance ... Such that Walter and his two brothers have granted and made this aforesaid gift and assure it with freewill and without any force]

When James de Bergefeld gave a meadow to Thame (c.1180-1200), his charter included the assent of his wife, Rainilda, and unspecified general heirs, but equally concluded with a warranty clause by James, Rainilda, and those general heirs, with, furthermore, a pledge of faith (*affidauimus imperpetuum warantizandum*; we swear to warrant forever).<sup>108</sup>

The firm commitment of heirs to the gift was also achieved by giving them part of the consideration, at least as a symbolic gesture to commit them to the benefaction. Thus John son of Henry sold a half-virgate to Oseney, the consideration including 2s. to each of his sisters, Juliana, Galiana, and Matilda, who also pledged their faith to observe the charter (c.1230). William de Hampton, in alienating a mill and virgate to the same house, elicited symbolic liveries to his wife (one mark) and his son Stephen, significantly *filius meus primogenitus* (my eldest son) (one besant). In a sale to John, clerk of Weston, Ralph son of William, had his charter afforced by his wife, his son and heir, and his two other sons, but additionally Geoffrey, the heir, received 2s., and the other sons each 1s. 8d. Robert son of Aumeric sold land to Amfred son of Robert, specifically including in his charter the assent of his son and heir, Robert, and brother, Ralph. Robert received part of the consideration, and Ralph a symbolic gift of a gold ring (c.1166). Thus also, when Robert sold land in Chesterton to Thame (c.1151-54) with the assent of his heir, Robert, and his brothers, Ralph and Henry, the consideration comprised 100s. for Robert, the son, and a symbolic countergift of a *fuscotirstum* to Ralph.<sup>109</sup>

This sort of symbolic gift to bind heirs pervaded the several gifts by Robert Gait to Oseney. Robert's charters were afforced by the assent and agreement

<sup>107</sup> *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* iv, 403.

<sup>108</sup> Salter, *Thame Cartulary* i, 119.

<sup>109</sup> Salter, *Thame Cartulary* ii, 218; *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* vi, 31-2, 77-8, 142.

(*voluntas*) of his wife, Matilda, and his son and heir, Philip. To commit these two conclusively, moreover, both were awarded symbolic gifts. In one charter, Philip received a horse and Matilda a besant; in another, both received a besant; in a further conveyance of two virgates in Hampton Gay, Philip acquired another horse and a besant and Matilda another besant. Those gifts were corroborated by a general charter of confirmation by Robert *assensu et voluntate uxoris mee et Philippi filii et heredis mei* (with the assent and desire of my wife and my son and heir Philip) (c.1215). Subsequently, in 1219, Robert alienated his demesne to Oseney in return for a corrody for him and his wife. The exchange was confirmed by the assent and agreement of his wife, Matilda, and his two sons, Philip and Robert, all now deprived of their dower or inheritance. Not content with this security, Oseney (for it was presumably at its instance) elicited further corroboration from Robert and his heirs by a pledge of faith in the chapter house:

Et ne ego Robertus vel aliquis heredum uel successorum meorum posimus in posterum aliquo modo dicte donacioni ... contrarie ad maiorem securitatem predictorum ego ipse Robertus et Philippus primogenitus et Robertus postgenitus filii mei ad eam firmiter et fideliter obseruandum spontanea uoluntate nostra in capitulo Oseneye sacramento nos astrinximus (c.1220). [And so that neither I Robert or any of my heirs or successors may in future in any way challenge the said gift, I Robert, my eldest son Philip and my youngest son Robert bind ourselves by oath by our free will in the chapter house of Oseney to firmly and faithfully observe it]

Simultaneously, both Philip and Robert, the sons, issued their own charters of confirmation, whilst Philip produced a further confirmation which was proclaimed in the county court, for which he received a counter-gift of two and a half marks. In 1223, Robert senior ratified the gift through a final concord. Philip's additional confirmation (c.1235), *post obitum patris* (after his father's death), constituted the final act.<sup>110</sup>

Oseney's concern about this transaction is transparent. The family was being deprived of its patrimony. Although there was no general 'crisis' of the knightly families in Oxfordshire, this event was a particular calamity for one of them. The general climate had, moreover, altered. In 1217, in the reissue of Magna Carta, the barons expressed their concern about some of the effects of alienations, referring implicitly to free alms and mortmain. In this particular case, the *laudatio* was insufficient guarantee for Oseney and a whole battery of insurances was requested. Even the relatively novel procedure of tripartite final concords, introduced in 1195, did not totally alleviate the canons' anxiety.<sup>111</sup>

In cases of smaller gifts, the *laudatio* was still regarded as a sufficient corroboration. The participants in the clause became, however, restricted and more specific towards the end of the twelfth century. Before the middle of the century, the gifts of a baronial donor such as the Oillys, included amongst the afforcement

<sup>110</sup> *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* vi, 42-60.

<sup>111</sup> D. Carpenter, 'Was there a crisis of the knightly class in the thirteenth century? The Oxfordshire evidence', *EHR* 95 (1980), 721-52; E. Miller, 'The state and the landed interests in thirteenth-century France and England', *TRHS* 5th series ii (1952), 124-6.

both wider kin (*amici*) and honorial baronage (*homines mei*). The alienation of baronial land was perceived to be a question which required the counsel of the affinity. Even in c.1183-85, Henry II d'Oilly professed to have consulted his *liberi homines*, although a plausible explanation might be the recent end of his minority in 1182. In 1149, the afforcement of a charter of John de St John to Oseney comprised not only his wife and son, Thomas, but also the counsel of his law-worthy men and wider kin (*probi homines* and *amici*). As late as c.1200, Thomas de St Walery, confirming much earlier gifts from his barony by his predecessors, professedly acted on the advice and instance (*peticio*) of his wife, but also his reliable men (*probi homines*). More exotically, Robert son of Aumaric, giving land to Thame, c.1151-54, afforced his charter with the consent of his son and heir, his brothers, but also Osmund *clericus*, Osmund's son, and even all Robert's villeins, presumably to reflect the interests of the villeins in their lands at a time when villeins were perhaps not conceived as being as absolutely unfree as later legal theory would have them.<sup>112</sup>

By the late twelfth century, however, the *laudatio* had become restricted to potential heirs and wives. In some charters, the heirs were still general and unspecific. More normally the heirs were specified, usually the eldest son, confirming the principle of primogeniture, or, in the case of a donor with no children, brothers. Occasionally, all possible loopholes were covered by including all sons and all brothers. Where the donor had no sons, all daughters were included, reflecting the practice of dividing the inheritance between female heirs. After c.1200, although some instances of general heirs occurred, the *laudatio* was usually restricted to the eldest son. For example, two charters of Robert Foliot, one to Henry de Sandon, clerk, and another to Oseney, both c.1200, were issued with the assent and agreement of his son and heir, William, alone. A charter of Alexander de Schirefelde, of similar date, had the same limited *laudatio*.<sup>113</sup>

The form of words employed in the clause varied, although obviously constrained by its fairly rudimentary nature. In some cases, some consistency of formulae did appear. The similarity in the clauses of Robert II d'Oilly, noted above, implies some common *scriptor*, *scriptorium* or local tradition, not necessarily Oseney's. Some charters in favour of Thame in the 1140s and 1150s had the same formula. These three charters, all from different benefactors, contained the same *incipit* to the clause: *concedentibus et assensum prebentibus*. Since they were heavily attested by local *clerici*, it seems a reasonable assumption that they may have been composed by local *scriptores* rather than the beneficiary.<sup>114</sup>

Charters to Eynsham Abbey many have been more heavily influenced by the monks. Some few charters between c.1130 and c.1170 include the *laudatio*, including further assurance by Robert II d'Oilly. Charters with this clause comprised, nevertheless, only a minority of those produced in favour of Eynsham. Most of the charters for the house exhibited a high degree of development. The full diplomatic form for gifts in free alms was introduced from an early time.

<sup>112</sup>*Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* iv, 27-8, 32, 57, 256-7; Salter, *Thame Cartulary* ii, 128.

<sup>113</sup>*Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* iv, 180, 418.

<sup>114</sup>Salter, *Thame Cartulary* i, 61, 77, 96.

In a number of charters, the principal form of assurance remained the pledge of faith on the high altar of Eynsham, as in the charter from Roger d'Oilly in c.1142-47, when he proffered the meadow of Bullstake with his son as a monk. Charters to Eynsham included, moreover, a warranty clause from an early time. In c.1140-50, a charter of John de St John, ostensibly to his nephew, but with an exception in favour of Eynsham, had a warranty clause with the promise of an exchange. From the 1160s, many charters for Eynsham had a warranty clause, which, in this case, seems to have excluded the *laudatio*.<sup>115</sup>

Charters in the Sandford cartulary provide further evidence of the different methods of attempting to secure gifts to the religious. When Miles, earl of Hereford, gave land in c.1141-43, his charter did not contain a *laudatio*, but was attested by his son, Roger (later earl of Gloucester). A charter of John Marshall, c.1155-56, contained an early warranty clause with the promise of exchange. By the 1170s, charters to the Templars had the full free alms clauses. By this time too, specific warranty had begun to be included in charters in favour of Reading Abbey relating to land in Oxfordshire, although the abbey's charters continued to have pledges of faith into the thirteenth century.

The significance of some land alienated to the Templars nonetheless required the *laudatio*. The gift from William fitz Roger of nine hides in Sibford so diminished the patrimony that the consent of the family was vital (before 1153), as well as a charter of confirmation from his son, William. Similarly, the alienation by Agnes de Sibbeford of one and a half hides in 1153 needed the consent of her potential heirs.<sup>116</sup> By c.1180, the gift of Henry Clement involved a warranty clause and an oath rather than the *laudatio*. Henry sold thirty acres of heath and half a hide in Sibford to the Templars for eight marks. His warranty provided a pledge for the eight marks. Additionally, the consideration of eight marks was to be secured by several pledges or sureties of Henry, each responsible for part of the total amount. The witnesses were moreover explicitly designated *fidejussores* (guarantors).<sup>117</sup> The gifts of John del Esse c.1185-c.1200 (eight in all) seem to chart the decline of the *laudatio* in charters for the Templars. In his earliest instruments, a *laudatio* was present, but was omitted from the later ones. In two charters of William del Esse (c.1209-13), however, the earlier contained the *laudatio*, although the later excluded it.<sup>118</sup>

The role of the Templars in formulating these types of surety is difficult to assess. Many of the charters were composed by local *scriptores* (William decanus, Walter clericus de Tiwe, Thomas clericus and Hugh de Merton scriptor). Despite their compilation by 'independent' *scriptores*, the Master of the Templars may still have influenced the general form of the charters, especially, perhaps, in the case of the purchase from Henry Clement.<sup>119</sup>

Charters to St Frideswide's relating to rural property acquired by the house

<sup>115</sup>Salter, *Cartulary of Eynsham Abbey* i, 73ff., 97, 99, 124, 130, 152.

<sup>116</sup>Lees, *Sandford Cartulary*, 1-2, 255; B. Kemp, ed., *Reading Abbey Cartularies* (2 vols, Camden 4th series 31 and 33, 1986 and 1989), i, 392-3; ii, 239, 245.

<sup>117</sup>Lees, *Sandford Cartulary*, 263-4.

<sup>118</sup>Lees, *Sandford Cartulary*, 290-3.

<sup>119</sup>Lees, *Sandford Cartulary*, 246, 274, 276, 288-9.

add very little to the general pattern, for the house held relatively little land outside the borough. The small number of charters suggests that the *laudatio* was employed until *c.*1190, reappearing in a charter of Thomas de Thumel' *c.*1230-40. Charters of Henry fitzWilliam conveying land in Worminghall (Bucks.) to the house in *c.*1180-90 consistently invoked the *laudatio*:

assensu eciam et voluntate Emme uxoris mee et Willelmi primogeniti mei  
et heredis

Since the clauses varied in other charters to the house, this particular formula was probably derived from a local usage rather than the insistence of the house, although some other charters for the house alluded to the son and heir, but in a different context. A further charter of Henry reinforced the *laudatio* with a combined warranty and oath.<sup>120</sup>

Charters to religious houses in Oxfordshire permit a few observations on the development of methods of securing gifts. In this location, the use of the *laudatio* persisted after the establishment of heritability and alienability of fees, emphatically to *c.*1200, residually to *c.*1230. The reason would seem to reside in the concern of the newer religious houses, founded in the twelfth century, competing for endowments at a time of increasingly diminishing benefactions. The *laudatio* was not immediately replaced by the advent of the warranty clause; instead warranty initially provided an additional security, often incorporating a pledge of faith or oath to observe the charter. Such combinations occurred during a transitional phase at the end of the twelfth century. Although all these charters were influenced strongly by the desire of the religious to secure their gifts, the majority of charters may have been written by local *scriptores* rather than by the beneficiaries, although the notion is difficult to prove from copies in cartularies. Consequently, although the principle behind the clauses was general, the form of expression varied. The convergence of the precise form in some charters suggests production by local *scriptores* rather than by the beneficiaries. The warranty clause may have been introduced in Oxfordshire not solely at the instance of the religious. Religious houses continued to use other methods of securing the gift together with warranty during the late twelfth century and even into the first decades of the thirteenth.

---

<sup>120</sup>Wigram, *Cartulary of St Frideswide* ii, 16-17, 69-72, 146-7, 151, 165, 167, 232, 263.

## 5 Oseney and its parish churches

The advent of the Austin Canons into England coincided with the restitution of spiritualities, which had been appropriated into lay hands, to the religious. Whereas these spiritualities had previously belonged to the secular clergy, however, they were returned in the twelfth century to the new Orders of regular canons, particularly the Augustinians. Parish churches and their temporalities, in the form of advowsons, appropriated livings, and tithes, thus came to comprise a principal form of the endowment of houses of the Black Canons, so that their administration sometimes became a cause of contention.<sup>121</sup>

Spiritual property was an important element in the endowment of Oseney Abbey, although the house was not quite as acquisitive as the two largest houses of the Order, Leicester and Cirencester Abbeys.<sup>122</sup> By 1291, Oseney had appropriated sixteen parish churches and instituted vicarages, a figure which might be compared with the eleven of the relatively minor house of Breedon Priory.<sup>123</sup> Leicester ultimately controlled some fifty livings. The acquisition of advowsons by Oseney mainly occurred before 1200. Most of the churches which consequently appeared in the *Taxatio* of 1291-92 had been enumerated in the *capitula* of the projected cartulary of c.1217-27, only Fulwell and Cornwell being assumed after that date.<sup>124</sup> Indeed, the acquisitions were largely achieved by 1189. The foundation had included the advowsons of seven churches; that of Forest Hill was acquired before 1142 by the gift of an important honorial baron of the founders of Oseney, the Oilly family, Hugh de Tew.<sup>125</sup> The advowsons of the Gloucestershire churches of Bibury, Turkdean and Risington accrued by the middle of the twelfth century through the benefactions of Ralph Basset and the bishops of Worcester.<sup>126</sup> Soon afterwards, Ralph Danvers conferred the advowson of Cowley.<sup>127</sup> The two decades of 1170-90 produced a flurry of gifts of advowsons: Waterperry, Great Barton, Hampton Gay, and Black Bourton.<sup>128</sup> Additional advowsons had been received through the appropriation of the college of secular canons of St George in the Castle in 1149, including the borough church of St Mary Magdalene, whilst another borough church, created in the late twelfth century, St Thomas, also fell in the gift of Oseney. By the end of the twelfth century, therefore, Oseney had accumulated a significant interest in spiritual property.

---

<sup>121</sup> Colvin, *White Canons*, 272-88; Dickinson, *Origins of the Austin Canons*, 229ff.; R. A. R. Hartridge, *A History of Vicarages in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1930), 162-88; B. R. Kemp, 'Monastic possession of parish churches', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* xxxi (1980), 133-60; G. Constable, *Monastic Tithes from their Origins to the 12th Century* (Cambridge, 1964), 153-60.

<sup>122</sup> A. H. Thompson, *The Abbey of St Mary in the Meadows* (Leicester, 1949), 5-8; C. D. Ross, ed., *The Cartulary of Cirencester Abbey* (2 vols, 1964) i, xxv.

<sup>123</sup> Rylands Lat. MS. 222, fo. 7r.

<sup>124</sup> Bodleian Bodley MS. 477, fos 1r-v.

<sup>125</sup> *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* iv, 334-5, 343; Rylands Eng. MS. 714 (Oilly bundle) 161-70.

<sup>126</sup> *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* v, 1-60; vi, 129ff.; *Annales Monastici* iv, 26.

<sup>127</sup> *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* iv, 361.

<sup>128</sup> *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* iv, 152-9, 373, 476-8; vi, 40-7; *Annales Monastici* iv, 43.

The pattern of acquisition conformed to three stages. The original nucleus of benefactions derived from the founders and patrons, the Oilly family, and some of their honorial baronage. The appropriation of St George's in 1149 augmented the interest. Significantly, this transfer signalled the further conveyance of spiritualities away from the secular canons into the control of the regular canons. Finally, in the late twelfth century, the knightly families of Oxfordshire contributed to the control over spiritualities exercised by the house.

This acquisition of spiritual property was not without incident or difficulty, especially in the problem of obtaining seisin through presentation. The emphasis placed on seisin by the assizes of Henry II applied equally to advowsons, for which a new possessory assize was introduced.<sup>129</sup> Although a written *donatio* had been made for the house, the abbot had to await the next vacancy to obtain effective seisin. The introduction of the assize coincided with the concentration of gifts of advowsons by Oxfordshire knights to the house in c.1170-90. The abbey thus had to wait several years after each gift to confirm its possession through seisin. The advowson of Waterperry, for example, was obtained in c.1175-80, but seisin first expressed only in 1189; and Hampton Gay was conferred in 1170, but possession acquired only in c.1185-9. The new assize facilitated the process of confirmation, and Oseney was amongst the first to avail itself of the writ of darrein presentment (*de ultima presentacione*). In 1179-80, Ralph Murdac and Hugh de Burtuna each alienated to Oseney the moiety of the advowson of Black Bourton, whereupon the house sued out a writ of darrein presentment, compromised the action by a final concord, and thus secured its title to the advowson.<sup>130</sup>

The benefits of the new assize may be illustrated by comparing earlier difficulties in securing advowsons. The church of Watlington was included in the endowment at the foundation, but the abbey could make no presentation before the death of Robert II d'Oilly, the founder and donor. Oilly lost the manor of Watlington through his political affiliation to the Empress and defeat at the Battle of Winchester. The abbey only recovered the advowson through the generosity of the intruded mesne tenant at Watlington, Alan de Bidun.<sup>131</sup> The outcome was not always so favourable, as demonstrated by the failure to retain advowsons given by Ralph Basset. Before Oseney could present to the livings, Basset alienated them to other religious houses.<sup>132</sup> Differences between chief lord and mesne tenant might also complicate gifts. Robert II d'Oilly endowed on Oseney the advowson of Shenstone and subsequently enfeoffed a mesne tenant in the manor, Ralph de Brai, whose right descended to his nephew, William de Brai.<sup>133</sup> William professed to have a reserved right in the advowson, as the *dominus fundi*, compelling the institution of his nephew, Hugh de Brai, to the living. Only when Roger de Brai later quitclaimed his right did the abbey

<sup>129</sup>S. E. Thorne, 'Livery of seisin', *Law Quarterly Review* lii (1936), 345ff.

<sup>130</sup>*Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* iv, 475-8; R. C. Van Caenigem, ed., *Royal Writs from the Conquest to Glanvill* (Selden Society lxxvii, 1958-9), 333.

<sup>131</sup>*Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* iv, 405.

<sup>132</sup>*Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* vi, 129ff.

<sup>133</sup>Rylands Eng. MS. 714 (Oilly bundle) 216-19.

finally acquire an unqualified title, upon which a vicarage was instituted.<sup>134</sup> Other gifts of advowsons were ineffective because of the donor's defective title, such as the conferment of Ibstone by Roger II d'Oilly.<sup>135</sup> Unusually, in 1186, the house forewent the assize of darrein presentment, preferring to resort to the Courts Christian to secure an advowson, something of an irregularity, considering that since the compromise of Avranches at least, advowsons had become acknowledged as the province of the royal courts and process in ecclesiastical courts could be abated by the writ of prohibition. The first vacancy at Stone occurred in that year, whereupon the donor's heir came into the synod of the archdeacon of Buckingham at Aylesbury and affirmed the abbey's right and proffered a charter.<sup>136</sup> A final concord was, nonetheless, necessary to confirm the abbey's title. By the end of the twelfth century, the legal interests of the abbey in its parish churches had been completed.

Once its interest was established, the abbey acted quickly to institute vicarages, an action which was facilitated by the imprecision of the diplomatic of the charters, an uncertain attitude towards advowsons, and the laconic approach of the episcopacy before the reforming bishops of the early thirteenth century. In the twelfth century, the concept of, and relationship between, advowsons and vicarages was still undeveloped and inchoate. Charters of donors referred not to the advowson, but to the gift of the church and its fabric: *et istas ecclesias* (and these churches); *ecclesiam de Couleia que in feodo meo sita est* (Cowlsey church which is on my fee); and *ecclesia de Perye* (Waterperry church).<sup>137</sup> Such ambiguity can be compared with the precision being introduced in the early thirteenth century: *quantum ad patronam pertinet* or *cum aduocatione* (in so far as it belongs to a patron; with the advowson), referring to Cornwell in 1215 and Fulwell in 1205.<sup>138</sup> In the mid thirteenth century, Bracton could make a fine distinction between the two, but his judgement proceeded from the reforming attitude of the early thirteenth century, a legal precision unknown at an earlier time. Oseney, as impropiator, thus achieved almost unfettered institution of vicarages in its parish churches. The bishops of Worcester were implicated in this development, their *acta* referring simply to their gifts of the *ecclesia*.<sup>139</sup> Confirmation charters of the bishops of Lincoln and other Ordinaries in the twelfth century also confirmed the *ecclesia*, to be *in* (or *ad*) *proprios usus*.<sup>140</sup> The bishops of Worcester went further, allowing some of the churches in their diocese to be administered as priories with cure (see further below).

The accession of the reforming bishops of the thirteenth century could not

<sup>134</sup> *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* v, 60-74.

<sup>135</sup> *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* iv, 441-3; *Curia Regis Rolls* xii, 313-14; F. W. Maitland, ed., *Bracton's Notebook* (3 vols, 1887) iii, no. 1688.

<sup>136</sup> *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* v, 141, 144-5; F. Pollock and F. W. Maitland, *The History of English Law* (2nd edn, 1968), 125-6; G. B. Flahiff, 'The writ of prohibition to Court Christian in the thirteenth century', *Mediaeval Studies* vi (1944), 261-313; Flahiff, 'The use of prohibition by clerics', *Mediaeval Studies* iii (1941), 101ff.

<sup>137</sup> *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* v, 11, 361, 373.

<sup>138</sup> *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* iv, 332; v, 407.

<sup>139</sup> *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* v, 1-2, for example.

<sup>140</sup> *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* iv, 15, 20, 22, 384-5, 478, for example.

reverse these institutions, although strenuous efforts were made to regulate the vicarages. Hugh de Welles, bishop of Lincoln, grasped the opportunity to regulate many of the vicarages in parish churches in the gift of Oseney when a vacancy occurred at Hook Norton. Vicars would receive a pension of two marks for their clothing, all oblations, a corrody (food at the canons' table when they stayed at the property), a clerk, a groom and a horse. The abbey would be responsible, as rector, for maintaining the fabric and furniture. Welles intervened in a dispute concerning the chapelries of Letwell and Sandford with the mother church of Great Barton to define all these livings, as he did also at Black Bourton. The vicar of Barton would have all oblations, a half-hide of glebe and a manse; the incumbents of the dependent chapelries would have all oblations, the small tithes, four and a half acres of glebe, and a third of the tithes of Grave.<sup>141</sup> In some cases, as at Shenstone, the living was actually augmented. A dispute *sede vacante* between Oseney and the vicar was removed to the metropolitan court of Archbishop Kilwardby in 1296, whose sentence in favour of the incumbent added the tithes of the mill, a larger corrody, and cartloads of straw, hay and forage.<sup>142</sup> Although Grosseteste permitted the appropriation of Fulwell, the tendency was now towards the greater definition of vicarages.<sup>143</sup>

The declining revenues of some religious houses in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries induced further appropriations and vicarages, a recourse precluded to Oseney since it had already instituted vicarages in most of its churches. As an alternative, Oseney resorted to farming out (leasing) some of the rectories. There was a precedent for this action in the farming out of rectories to the relatives of donors who were in orders: John de St John, *clericus*, had received the lease of the rectory of Great Barton c.1186, which had been given to the house by John de St John.<sup>144</sup> Farming out in the fourteenth century, however, was an entirely financial transaction. The rectory of Hook Norton, less the reservation of the rectorial tithes and mortuaries to the abbey, was leased in 1337 to the vicar, Thomas de Bannebury, as it had been leased to his predecessor.<sup>145</sup> Farming out became more prevalent in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the rectory of Stone in 1474 for a lucrative farm of £20, the rectory of Watlington being leased in 1489, and the rectorial tithes of Hook Norton in 1521.<sup>146</sup> The abbey simultaneously supplicated for the consolidation of some vicarages and rectories, on the profession of the poverty of the house. This consolidation was achieved at Chastleton in 1459, Shenstone in 1514, and Hook Norton and Kidlington c.1520.<sup>147</sup>

This consolidation had, in a sense, brought the circle full turn to the abbey's

<sup>141</sup>W. P. Phillimore, ed., *Rotuli Hugonis de Welles* (2 vols, Lincoln Record Society iii, vi, 1912-13), i, 18-19; ii, 21, 81; *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* iv, 158, 495.

<sup>142</sup>*Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* v, 78.

<sup>143</sup>F. N. Davis, ed., *Rotuli Roberti Grosseteste* (Lincoln Record Society xi, 1914), 461.

<sup>144</sup>*Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* iv, 154-5.

<sup>145</sup>*Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* iv, 289-90; for a similar lease by Nostell Priory of its cell of Skewkirk, described as a *manerium*, to the vicar, John Elys, in 1393: Rylands Lat MS. 225, fos 26v.-27r.

<sup>146</sup>*Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* iv, 290-1, 425-6; v, 170-3.

<sup>147</sup>*Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* iii, 356-8; iv, 330-2; v, 79-80.

serving some churches in the late twelfth century through canon-vicars. The canons regular, particularly the Black Canons, had originally been conceived as a preaching Order, with the notion of serving parish churches as well as being under a rule. Oseney, like some other houses of the Order, showed signs initially of intending to serve its parish churches. A papal privilege, obtained in 1147, allowed the institution of canon-vicars and the service of churches as priories with cure (of souls).<sup>148</sup> This dispensation by Eugenius was vague on detail, but a confirmation by Urban III permitted the house to serve four specific churches: Waterperry, Hampton Gay, Stone and Great Barton. These priories with cure should consist of a canon-vicar with three or four resident colleagues (*socii*).<sup>149</sup> The prescription that the canon-vicar be accompanied by colleagues may have persuaded the abbey against persisting with the priory with cure, since it may have made the undertaking more expensive than instituting a secular cleric.

The only churches which may have been served by canon-vicars were Bibury (Glos.) and Kiltenan (Ireland). The papal edict seems to have been evaded, for the canons presented to the livings apparently resided without *socii*. The arrangements also neglected the wishes of the donor of Kiltenan, Roger de Wigornia, who had required the service of that church as a priory with cure by three canons.<sup>150</sup> The decision to service these two churches, for some time at least, by canon-vicars, may have been influenced by their distance from the house, especially in the case of Kiltenan, and by the special need to have a member of the convent there to supervise the abbey's property, as an economic as well as a spiritual consideration.

With the exceptions of those two locations, the abbey had determined on the institution of secular clergy. This approach had, in any case, a number of advantages. The presentation of secular clergy was a valuable source for local patronage; the lists of presentations in the bishops' rolls and registers reveal that the abbey used its vicarages to patronise local families. The toponymic *cognomina* of the clerks presented by Oseney show that the majority came from villis where the abbey held land.<sup>151</sup> Presentations were also used to retain or reward canon lawyers as counsel to the abbey. Ad hoc advice might be anticipated from dignitaries presented to a rectory, which might help to explain the presentation of Alexander Swerford to the rectory of Swerford in 1228.<sup>152</sup> Moreover, the increasing demands of the Crown, at least from the reign of Edward I, for the house to provide livings for some of the King's clerks, was

<sup>148</sup> *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* iii, 371-2; for a similar bull for St Frideswide's, Wigram, *Cartulary of St Frideswide* i, 27.

<sup>149</sup> *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* iii, 374.

<sup>150</sup> *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* v, 9-10, 27-8, 37-8, 123; for presentations of canons to Bibury, J. W. Willis Bund, ed., *Register of Bishop Godfrey Giffard* (Worcs. Historical Society, 1898-1902), 14, 545; Willis Bund and R. A. Wilson, eds, *Register of William de Geynesburgh* (Worcs. Historical Society, 1907-29), 161, 179; Wilson, ed., *Register of Walter Reynolds* (Worcs. Historical Society, 1928), 34, 153.

<sup>151</sup> See also D. Robinson, 'Ordinations of secular clergy in the diocese of Coventry and Lichfield, 1322-1358'. *Archives* xvii (1985), 16-17.

<sup>152</sup> *Rotuli Hugonis de Welles* ii, 39; *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* iii, 61; R. L. Poole, *The Exchequer in the Twelfth Century* (2nd edn, 1973), 14; *Rotuli Normannie* (Record Commission, 1835), 63, 108.

a duty which had to be acquitted by Oseney as well as many other religious houses.

The relationship between Oseney and its secular clergy was generally harmonious, especially after the subsidence of disputes over livings in the early thirteenth century. The vicars were frequently benefactors of the house, making small oblations for personal salvation. John de Weston gave half a virgate, receiving it back as termor for life. Henry, his successor at Weston-on-the-Green, gave rents and four acres of meadow. Richard, vicar of Great Barton, alienated to the abbey a villein and his *sequela*. Many vicars appeared amongst those who loaned money to the abbey's fabric fund in the thirteenth century: Hereward, vicar of Great Barton, five marks; and Thomas, the chaplain of Sandford, 50s. Roger, vicar of Stone, made a loan in consideration of a pension of 10s., the sum to be directed to the maintenance of a chantry after his death. Henry, vicar of Weston, and John, vicar of Watlington, also established chantries at Oseney.<sup>153</sup> Only occasionally were these harmonious relations interrupted by conflict over the detention of tithes.<sup>154</sup>

Some of the incumbents played an additional role in the supervision of husbandry on the abbey's properties, acting as local officials assisting the bailiffs. Henry, vicar of Waterperry, supervised the shearing of sheep.<sup>155</sup> Giles, vicar of Stone, acted in two consecutive years as granger during the harvest period and also supervised the winnowing. He also made loans in cash and grain to the *custos* or canon-warden, John de Poignant. He received a tithe piglet *quia modici valoris* (because of modest value), as an increment to his corrody. Exceptionally, he had some independence of the bailiff. The bailiffs were usually responsible for the finances and maintenance of the parish church, but Giles was allowed to collect the *proventus ecclesie* (church income) and also paid the wages of his clerk and groom. On one occasion, he also collected the *liberatio denariorum* (cash delivery) which was usually delivered to the steward.<sup>156</sup>

Despite these concessions to Giles, in the fourteenth century the parish church was normally the responsibility of the bailiff, whose accounts included paragraphs for the *proventus ecclesie* and *custus ecclesie*. The parish church was administered as simply another part of the abbey's property in the vill. The items of the *custus* were mainly recurrent: the annual procuration of the archdeacon (often 7s. 7d. three-farthings); annual synodals of 3s.; the repetitive payment of 5d. for each clerical proctor sent to Parliament and the expenses of the knights of the shire.<sup>157</sup>

In the fifteenth century, however, the sacristan exercised a more centralized control over the churches. A central account of c.1412 includes the paragraph *Ecclesie*, recording the payment of stipends of the vicars.<sup>158</sup> The sacristans'

<sup>153</sup> *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* iii, 57, 74; iv, 169, 415; vi, 18-21.

<sup>154</sup> Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 62: *et non plus quia vicarius recepit .iiij.s. et iniuste* (and not more because the vicar received 4s.); *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* iv, 199-200.

<sup>155</sup> Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 51.

<sup>156</sup> Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 35-38.

<sup>157</sup> E. C. Lowry, 'Clerical proctors in Parliament and knights of the shire', *EHR* xlviii (1933), 433-55.

<sup>158</sup> Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 46.

rolls of the later fifteenth century include the paragraph *Prouentus ecclesiarum*, comprising mortuaries and oblations.<sup>159</sup> The central roll of the sacristan may have resulted from the leasing out of manors and rectories in the fifteenth century, whilst, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, when demesnes were in hand, the bailiffs may have had an integral responsibility for churches, and the sacristans only for the church at the abbey.

There was undoubtedly a tendency, however, to regard spiritual property as an integral part of temporal property, or, at least, not to differentiate too finely between the two. The appropriated glebes of many parish churches were integrated into the abbey's local demesne, a fairly characteristic response of the Austin Canons.<sup>160</sup>

Equally the receipts from tithes comprised a significant contribution to the abbey's exploitation of its estates. Oseney could not match the spectacular receipts of tithe of Leicester Abbey, Bolton Priory, or Southwick Priory, all houses of the same Order, but the tithes constituted an important element in the economy of some properties of the house.<sup>161</sup> The collection was sometimes determined by local agreement, which became prescriptive custom. According to some customs, it was incumbent on the lord of the manor to arrange for tithes of the seigniorial demesne to be carted to a central barn for the benefit of the abbey. Margaret de Rivers had to build a barn which the canons would be allowed to use for tithes during harvest. The abbey would be permitted use of the barn for threshing and winnowing, although Margaret would keep the straw. Simon de Maidwell gave a curtilage 'to make a building to place their tithes.' Local custom often asserted that the lord should collect the tithes of grain at his or her own cost in a barn where the canons would collect it. John de Cherbourg was constrained to acknowledge the old custom of the lord carrying the tithes of grain in their carts to the door of their granges to be tithed there and kept until the abbey's tithe collector arrived.<sup>162</sup>

The tithes of other parishioners were collected in the fields, almost exclusively by contracted wage labour, hired tithe collectors. The 'villein tithe collector' was an unusual figure on the Oseney estates, although there had almost certainly been one at Haselden in the twelfth century. The demesne tithes of Haselden had been given to the abbey with a half-virgate of land belonging to the tithes, and when the abbey quitclaimed the tithes to Kingswood Abbey, it included a half-virgate associated with the tithe collection at Haselden. The tenant of this holding probably owed a service principally of collection of tithes, a customary service tenure.<sup>163</sup> Elsewhere, the collection of tithes was entrusted

<sup>159</sup>Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 29-30.

<sup>160</sup>T. A. M. Bishop, 'Monastic granges in Yorkshire', *EHR* li (1936), 193-214; R. H. Hilton, *The Economic Development of Some Leicestershire Estates in the XIV and XV Centuries* (Oxford, 1947), 36ff.; I. Kershaw, *Bolton Priory: The Economy of a Northern Monastery, 1286-1325* (Oxford, 1973), 22ff.

<sup>161</sup>Hilton, *Economic Development of Some Leicestershire Estates*, 39; Kershaw, *Bolton Priory*, 63-7; Winchester College Muniments 15376-15387.

<sup>162</sup>*Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* iv, 215-16, 299-300, 502; vi, 28-9.

<sup>163</sup>*Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* v, 38-9; R. V. Lennard, 'Villein tithe collectors', *EHR* lxix (1954), 580-96.

to wage labourers hired during the harvest period. These collectors received a wage which increased from 1s. 6d. in 1279 to 2s. by 1320, and a corrody of one bushel of grain per week. The corrody comprised mixed grain at Forest Hill and Stone, rye or barley at Watlington, but the more valuable wheat at Waterperry. As was normal, the tithes were collected from amongst the sheaves in the fields.<sup>164</sup>

The collection of the tithes was associated with the continuation of direct demesne exploitation. As demesnes and manors were gradually leased in the later middle ages, so it became uneconomic to collect tithes. Demesne tithes, which were less valuable than parochial tithes, were leased first. Demesne tithes were often from vills where the abbey had no other property or did not own the parochial tithes, and were thus burdensome to collect. Moreover, the proscription of demesne tithes as uncanonical in the twelfth century induced numerous disputes with rectors, as did novial tithes from expanding demesnes.<sup>165</sup> Consequently, although their collection was worthwhile whilst the economy was expanding, their value became less clear as contraction set in. In 1395, the demesne tithes of Thenford were farmed out, followed by those of Northbrook in 1413, Shirburn in 1414, Horspath in 1417, Ardington and Betterton in 1435, Barford in 1436, and Stratford, Westbury, Duns Tew, and Heyford Warren in mid century.<sup>166</sup>

Throughout their administration by the abbey, spiritualities and parochial temporalities such as tithes, had not been differentiated from seigniorial property. The acquisition of parochial property had taken place against the backcloth of the expected reform with the introduction of the canons regular. Local church property which had earlier been appropriated into lay hands, was returned to the religious, but to the canons regular, not the secular clergy. Oseney benefited like many other houses of Austin Canons, and, like those other houses, proceeded to disappoint the reformers. Like other houses of the Order, Oseney treated its local church property as an economic asset.

---

<sup>164</sup>Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 32 (*quia stetit in campo per totum diem* - because he [tithe collector] stood in the fields all day]), 35 (*in campis de Ston' et Bishop'*), 52 (*in campis de Thomele et Pur'*).

<sup>165</sup>*Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* iv, 367ff, 443ff; v, 319ff.

<sup>166</sup>*Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* iv, 218, 246-8, 303-4, 370-2, 426-7, 458-9; v, 431; vi, 100.

*Table 1 Issue of fleeces*

Location/date	Demesne fleeces	Tithe issue
Chastleton		
1278		53
1279		45
1333		92
1335		?
1337		54.5 (sic)
1339		73
1340		58
Stone		
c.1280	302	98
1321	28	32
1325	3	25
1326	8	64
1327	145	70
Watlington		
c.1280		158
1328		207
1339		151
1342	20	143
1345	91	228
Forest Hill		
1279	99	37
1304	46	8.5 (sic)
1322	160	33
Bibury		
c.1280	180	65
Hampton Gay		
c.1280	229	7
Weston-on-the-Green		
c.1280	289	25
Water Eaton		
c.1280	511	13
Great Barton		
c.1280	236	77

For c.1280, *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* vi, 184-207.

*Table 2 Tithe collectors*

Place/date	No. of weeks	No. of collectors	Wage*
Forest Hill, 1277-1322	3-6	2 or 3	1s. 6d. to 1318, but 2s. in 1322
Stone, 1320-43	4-5	6 or 7	2s. to 2s. 6d., sometimes higher
Waterperry, 1280-1345	4-6	3 or 4	1. 6s. in 1280, 2s. from 1328
Watlington, 1328-45	5-6	6 or 8	1s. 8d. to 4s.

\* Plus a corrody of 1bs. of grain per week

*Collections:*

Forest Hill: Forest Hill, Woodperry, Stodley, and Beckley

Stone: Stone, Bishop's Stone, Southrop, Southcote, Hertwell

Watlington: Watlington, Shirburn, South Weston, Watcombe, Brightwell

## 6 The bursary of Oseney Abbey

In the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries, some religious houses effected a notable change in their internal financial organization.<sup>167</sup> The ‘assignation’ method of finance was replaced by more centralized control through either a bursary or a treasury. Treasurers, it seems, controlled all the revenues of a house, whilst bursars supervised only a reserve fund and not the revenues assigned at an earlier stage to the other obedientiaries. The ‘assignation’ method had probably been introduced in part to respect the wishes of donors who had made benefactions for specific purposes. It also had administrative simplicity in ensuring that the offices received sufficient cash for their financing without double counting. Thus the manciple (*coquinarius*) of Oseney collected the rents from the house’s burgage property in Oxford to meet the immense demands of the provisioning of the convent. These burgage rents amounted in gross to £151 9s. 11d. in c.1280 and £181 8s. 11d. in 1360.<sup>168</sup>

By the late twelfth century, benefactions for specific purposes involved, in the case of the new Orders such as the Austin Canons, only small rents charge or parcels of land intended for the infirmary, the pittancer or sacristan. On the other hand, the independence of obedientiaries had allowed some abuse of the ‘system’.

Another influence which may have encouraged central organization was the need for houses of the new Orders of the twelfth century to enter into the land market on a larger scale as purchasers, as the benevolence of the laity relatively declined. Stenton commented on the activities of the Gilbertines in acquiring land in Lincolnshire in the late twelfth century.<sup>169</sup> Between 1146 and c.1200, Rufford Abbey (Cistercian) expended about £85, but the purchase of a few key granges meant that most of the consideration was needed immediately within short periods.<sup>170</sup> Oseney itself dispensed at least £848 on the purchase of new rural property between c.1200 and c.1240. The figure is an underestimate for two reasons: first, it is calculated from cash considerations mentioned in charters, and therefore omits concealed purchases; and secondly, it does not take into account the abbey’s substantial acquisition of burgage property in Oxford.<sup>171</sup> Whilst it was quite possible under the ‘assignation’ method for the purchase

---

<sup>167</sup>R. H. Snape, *English Monastic Finances* (Cambridge, 1926), 34ff.; D. Knowles, ed., *Collected Papers of R. A. L. Smith* (Cambridge, 1947), passim. Both cited evidence exclusively from Benedictine houses, thus distorting the significance of the change. They also failed to emphasize the importance of intervention by the Ordinary to impose the central office on houses with ailing finances. See, for example, Ross, *Cartulary of Cirencester Abbey*, i, xii; Rylands Lat. MS. 226 (Norwich Cathedral Priory); W. D. Macray, ed., *Charters of Selborne Priory* (Hampshire Record Society, 1891), 95ff.; for the intervention of the Crown, Dom. A. Watkins, ‘A fragment of a receiver’s roll’, *EHR* lxi (1946), 89ff.

<sup>168</sup>*Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* vi, 195, 289.

<sup>169</sup>F. M. Stenton, ed., *Transcripts of Charters ... Gilbertines* (Lincoln Record Society 18, 1922), xii.

<sup>170</sup>C. J. Holdsworth, ed., *Rufford Charters* (2 vols, Thoroton Society Record Series xxix-xxx, 1972), i, xliii.

<sup>171</sup>The figures are aggregated from *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey*, vols iv-vi.

price of small acquisitions to be paid by an obedientiary, substantial purchases needed much larger reserves, not least when purchase of property was a constant call on liquid capital.<sup>172</sup>

The central office was introduced earliest in Austin Canons houses, it seems, at Waltham Abbey. This house had three treasurers from at least 1191, if not from its refoundation by Henry II in 1174.<sup>173</sup> The institution may have imitated the royal exchequer. Through the intervention of the Ordinary and Metropolitan, and because of the recalcitrance of its principal officers, Cirencester intermittently had treasurers between c.1205 and c.1230.<sup>174</sup> It was only in 1219, however, that the legislators (*diffinitores*) of a Chapter General of the Order attempted to impose the central office on all houses.<sup>175</sup> The central office was thus a recognized institution in theory if not practice in the Order by 1220. During the thirteenth century, several houses of the Order introduced central control of finances in one form or another (dates are the earliest references): Oseney, 1247; Newstead Priory (1261); Leicester Abbey and Bolton Priory (1286); Bicester Priory (1295); and Dunstable Priory (late thirteenth century).<sup>176</sup>

The existence of a bursary at Oseney in the middle of the thirteenth century is only established by incidental references in charters. An undated charter, which can be fairly conclusively assigned to 1247, referred to payment of a rent to Goring Abbey by the hands of the current bursars of Oseney (*per manus Bursariorum Oseney' qui pro tempore fuerint*), a phrase reiterated in a charter of 1262.<sup>177</sup> The testators of the first charter included Laurence Wyth, mayor, and Adam *sub muro*, bailiff, who both held these offices in 1247.

The activity of the bursary can be deduced from a substantial fragment of a centrally-engrossed account of c.1280.<sup>178</sup> There is no extant enrolment of the bursary account, but the balance of the accounts of the other obedientiaries is struck against the bursar: *et sic debet communi bursario* (and thus he owes to the common bursar); *et sic debet ei communis bursarius* (and thus the common bursar owes him).<sup>179</sup> The chamberlain, manciple and infirmarian had also received cash from the bursar ('foreign' receipts in their accounts). It is evident that, although obedientiaries were to account to the bursar, they still collected the revenues which had customarily been assigned to their office. The bursar just controlled a reserve fund. The nature of this fund can be observed in the enrolments of the ministers' accounts for each of the properties. The discharge of each account contained a delivery of cash to the bursar, which in

---

<sup>172</sup>For such minor purchases, G. H. Fowler, ed., *A Digest .. of Charters ... of Dunstable Priory* (Bedfordshire Historical Record Society x, 1926), 216 (*per manus cellerarii*) (by the cellarer's hands) (c.1225), but other purchases were not defrayed by the offices: 186-7 (100s. and twenty-eight marks).

<sup>173</sup>Holtzmann, ed., *Papsturkunden in England* i, 583-4.

<sup>174</sup>Ross, *Cartulary of Cirencester Abbey*, as above.

<sup>175</sup>Salter, *Triennial Chapters*, 22-3.

<sup>176</sup>The National Archives SC6/1257/11-12; T.N.A. SC6/955/11; H. R. Luard, ed., *Annales Monastici* iii (Rolls Series, 1866), 316, 409-10; Kershaw, *Bolton Priory*, 2.

<sup>177</sup>Cambridge University Library MS. Dd xiv 2, fo. 128r.; *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* iv, 39-40.

<sup>178</sup>*Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* vi, 185-207.

<sup>179</sup>*Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* vi, 191, 206-7.

most cases corresponded to the rents of assize in the charge of their accounts. Where there is a difference, as at Hampton, Weston, Great Barton, and Black Bourton, the render in cash was three-quarters of the rents of assize, indicating that, although the full rents were enumerated in the charge, the rents of the final quarter day (Michaelmas) which coincided with the day of the account, had not been collected before the account was struck and the cash delivery due.

This picture of the reserve fund is confirmed in some of the extant original ministers' accounts. The canon-warden (*custos*) of Waterperry accounted in 1279-80: rent of assize sent to the common bursar (*Redditus assise liberatum communi bursario*).<sup>180</sup> Similarly the account of Little Tew for 1281-82 contains a paragraph: Cash delivery (*Liberatio denariorum*): he sent to John de Cudelinton' the Bursar (*Johanni de Cudelinton' Bursario*) 4s. 6d. for rent of the terms of St Thomas the Apostle and St John the Baptist.<sup>181</sup> These rents were removed from the local manorial official by the steward who visited the manors twice each year.

Two fragments of bursary accounts may exist, for 1324-5.<sup>182</sup> The charge of these accounts comprises rents of assize and the perquisites of manorial courts: cash liveries from the manors and properties. The perquisites must have been a recent addition to the bursary fund, for they were designated for the proctor in the enrolled account of c.1280. By the early fourteenth century, the bursary fund thus seems to have consisted of £180, comparable with that of the manciple.

Ultimately, however, it was not the manciple who proved most dangerous to the bursary, but the increasing autocracy of later abbots. A critical conflict over audit procedure occurred between abbot and convent c.1400, in which the antagonists both appealed to the Ordinary and the Curia. The decision of Rome favoured the paternalism of the abbacy.<sup>183</sup> The control of the prelate continued to increase thereafter, culminating in the uninhibited despotism of Abbot William Barton (1505-24) who combined in his own person the offices of steward of the household (*senescallus hospicii*), estate steward (*supervisor omnium terrarum*) and receiver-general (*receptor generalis*).<sup>184</sup>

---

<sup>180</sup>Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 44.

<sup>181</sup>Bodleian Oseney Roll 95.

<sup>182</sup>Bodleian Oseney Rolls 39 and 44.

<sup>183</sup>*Calendar of Papal Letters* v (1904), 329.

<sup>184</sup>Bodleian Oseney Rolls 45-46; Ch. Ch. O. R. 79-81 and 83 cited by Salter, *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* vi, 208ff., but also Ch. Ch. O. R. 78 and 82; Bodleian Oseney Rolls 33-36.

## 7 The manorial accounts of Oseney abbey, 1274-1348

It is now many decades since the late J. S. Drew produced a seminal article on the account rolls of the manors of St Swithun's Cathedral Priory, which remains one of the most sympathetic treatments of manorial accountancy. Fifteen years later, Eric Stone contributed a perceptive explanation of the *proficuum* calculations of Norwich Cathedral Priory, which cast into relief the mental attitudes of the lord and auditors. Another fourteen years thereafter, Paul Harvey committed to print his conclusions on the general development of manorial accountancy.<sup>185</sup> The manorial account may appear to be a rather technical affair, but behind it lay the minds of men (sic) and a business attitude different from our own. The first two major contributions so far have been concerned with two Benedictine (regular) cathedral priories, although Professor Harvey conducted a much wider survey of extant manorial accounts. It may be instructive to add to these expositions the development of accountancy and auditing of a smaller institution, another religious house, but of medium status, Oseney Abbey.

The extant manorial accounts of Oseney all belong to Harvey's 'phase 2', which extended approximately from c.1270 through to the middle of the fourteenth century, when local accounts predominated. Initially, there may have been an attempt to impose the central control redolent of 'phase 1', for there survives a centrally-enrolled account for c.1280 on which are engrossed both obedientiary and manorial accounts in common form. The central account also bears a calculation of the *proficuum manerii* ('profit of the manor') for each of the properties.<sup>186</sup> This centrally-enrolled account, however, was produced from local accounts which were rendered, so, as Harvey has suggested, 'phases' 1 and 2 were not completely distinct, but overlapped and were sometimes complementary.

The earliest of the extant original, locally-produced manorial accounts survives for Little Tew from 1274. One original roll for Waterperry some six years later is so embryonic in form to suggest that accountancy at Oseney in written form was still in its infancy.<sup>187</sup> It seems quite possible therefore that written accounts were introduced at Oseney by Abbot William de Sutton from c.1270, initially also with some degree of central organization. This central supervision seems to have receded, however, perhaps because subsequent prelates had neither the interest nor the ability of Sutton. Sutton had extensive experience of the abbey's estates under abbot Richard de Apeltre.<sup>188</sup> His attempt to impose degrees of central organization does not seem to have persisted. Thereafter, there survive only locally-produced manorial accounts. Between 1274 and 1348,

---

<sup>185</sup>J. S. Drew, 'Manorial accounts of St Swithun's Priory, Winchester', *EHR* lxii (1947), 20-41; E. Stone, 'Profit-and-loss accountancy at Norwich Cathedral Priory', *TRHS* 5th series xii (1962), 25-6; P. D. A. Harvey, *Manorial Records of Cuzham, Oxfordshire, c.1200-1359* (Historical Manuscripts Commission JP23, 1976), 12-57.

<sup>186</sup>*Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* vi, 185-207.

<sup>187</sup>Bodleian MS. Charter Oxon. Oseney 428b; Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 44.

<sup>188</sup>See Chapter 9.

there are about sixty manorial accounts, unfortunately relating to only a few of the abbey's properties and then in broken series.

The abbey's estates were concentrated in Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire with outlying properties in Gloucestershire, Ireland and Staffordshire. The organization of the estates passed through several phases. The variation in the size and compactness of properties and their distribution, made it rational and economical to arrange the properties in groups or bailiwicks, as was frequent seigniorial practice. Such an arrangement must have been implemented empirically from the start. An embryonic arrangement is perceptible in the *capitula* (headings) for a projected cartulary, which may be assigned to c.1217-27. The *capitula* are organized in the common form: first, benefactions by the founders and patrons; then the honorial baronage of the founder; the remainder then following more or less topographically. Some groupings familiar at the end of the century were already established: Bibury with Turkdean and Risington; and Waterperry with Thumley. The organization was, nevertheless, not consistent. There was a tendency to arrange some properties by donor or by criteria other than topography: *Carte de terra Hugonis pauperis in Cleind' et quibusdam aliis* (charters concerning the land of Hugh Pauper and some others in Claydon); *Carte diversorum hominum de diversis terris* (charters of several men concerning several lands); *De cartis quas reddidimus monachis de Tiefford* (about the charters which we returned to the monks of Thetford); and *De decimis ad ecclesiam sancti Georgii pertinentibus et secuntur carte quas monachi de Tiefford reddiderunt nobis* (about the tithes belonging to St George's and charters follow which the monks of Thetford returned to us). The grouping of properties, thus embryonic, had not progressed very far.<sup>189</sup>

From the second quarter of the thirteenth century, the grouping was consolidated around the *custodia* ('bailiwick'). The *custodia* first appeared in association with parochial livings appropriated by the abbey. The living was, in a few cases, served by a resident canon-vicar, and he supervised a group of properties adjacent to the living. The *custos* seems first to have appeared at Bibury in Gloucestershire in c.1234-1237, although there may have been one at Fulwell in 1226.<sup>190</sup> The *custodia* of Hook Norton occurred in a charter of 1254. Although the abbey increasingly presented secular canons to its livings, canon-wardens (*custodes*) were still placed in charge of groups of properties, based by the 1270s on Little Tew, Fulwell, Hook Norton and Chastleton.<sup>191</sup> By the centrally-enrolled account of c.1280, the *custodie* had reached their final form and it is reasonable to presume that the completion of the organization was the work of Sutton, either under Abbot Apeltre or in his own prelacy.<sup>192</sup> Some adjacent bailiwicks had been further consolidated under a single *custos*: Br W.

<sup>189</sup>Bodleian MS. Bodley 477, fo. 1.

<sup>190</sup>*Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* v, 37, 425.

<sup>191</sup>*Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* iv, 320; v, 117, 429; vi, 144; Bodleian MS. Charter Oxon. Oseney 428b, 429, 430; Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 5.

<sup>192</sup>For monk-wardens, R. A. L. Smith, *Canterbury Cathedral Priory: A Study in Monastic Administration* (Cambridge, 1947), 100-10; E. King, *Peterborough Abbey, 1086-1310. A Study in the Land Market* (Cambridge, 1973), 129.

Mersche was responsible for both Stone and Oving; Br Ivo for Water Eaton and Handborough; and Br William for Great Barton and Adderbury.

The activities of the *custodes* in the fourteenth century are more difficult to follow. Some canon-wardens can be perceived through the discharge paragraphs of the manorial accounts. Dom. John Poygnaunt was *custos* of Stone (Buckinghamshire) for at least three years between 1320 and 1326. His *custodia* was not particularly successful and he left debts of over £10. In 1330-31, he accounted for the *custodia* based around the Irish property of Kiltenan, reappearing at Waterperry (Oxfordshire) in 1341 where he supervised haymaking.<sup>193</sup>

The office of *custos* seems to have lapsed into desuetude or confusion towards the middle of the fourteenth century. Brothers Thomas de Comsgraue and John de Cudelinton accounted for Forest Hill and Stone for two years, but were exceptional. One year coincided with plague (1368-69), and the other account comprised only a half-year, from Lady Day to Michaelmas.<sup>194</sup> The term *custos* also lost some of its precision. Geoffrey Baron rendered three accounts for part-years in 1320-21 (Stone), in which he was successively described as reeve, *custos*, and reeve. The designation as reeve must have implied servile status, yet he was also referred to as *custos*. John de Ledecumbe accounted as both bailiff and *custos* between 1327 and 1330, a layman not a canon-warden.<sup>195</sup> The decline of the *custodes* possibly had several causes. The later abbots may not have shared Sutton's enthusiasm for estate administration. Canons may have objected to the obligation to itinerate to supervise the manorial officials. Perhaps the main cause was the decline in number of the regular canons in the house and also in the number of lay brethren. Whereas there had been fifty canons in 1225, the number had diminished to twenty-five by 1377. The demands of the system, devised in more conducive circumstances, may thus later have become a burden. The supervision of manorial officials thus fell increasingly in the late thirteenth and fourteenth century on the estate steward, who was also usually appointed from amongst the canons of the house at this time.<sup>196</sup>

The officials who accounted at manorial level were the bailiff or the reeve, though not conjointly. Reeves were employed only where the abbey had a number of unfree tenants on the property, which was not always the case. Bailiffs were appointed where the abbey had no unfree tenants on the property, particularly to supervise the glebe-demesnes. In manorial accounts of 'phase 2', only one official usually accounted, generally the reeve, in contrast with 'phase 1' accounts where both officials rendered account conjointly.<sup>197</sup> Where, on the Oseney estates, there was a reeve, he accounted alone; where there was a bailiff, as on the glebe-demesnes, the bailiff accounted. It seems very likely, indeed, that on the glebe-demesnes, where there was a bailiff, there was no reeve, for these properties had few, if any, servile tenants.

<sup>193</sup>Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 25, 32-35, 37; Bodleian Oseney Roll 16.

<sup>194</sup>Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 26 and 40.

<sup>195</sup>Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 32-34 and 45-47.

<sup>196</sup>See Chapter 9.

<sup>197</sup>Harvey, *Manorial Accounts of Cuxham*, 33-34, and 'Agricultural treatises and manorial accounting in medieval England', *Agricultural History Review* 20 (1972), 173.

The bailiff was of free condition and often not a tenant on the property which he supervised. The office was that of a free servant of the abbey. Bailiffs moved from property to property, perhaps to prevent that familiarity which might lead to abuse of position. William Alwynt began in 1328 as bailiff of Maids Moreton and subsequently acted for eight weeks in harvest as granger at the tithe barn of Waterperry; he ultimately became bailiff at Forest Hill. John de Aldenestr' on his induction to the bailiwick of Waterperry in 1335 claimed an allowance for 10s. for a robe for last year when he stood in office at Fulwell (*de ultimo anno quo stetit in officio apud Folewell*).<sup>198</sup> Some bailiffs remained no longer than a year at one property, but others, perhaps more reliable, continued in one place for up to three years. A sequence of bailiffs of Waterperry was removed by the stewards. The ostensible reason was indebtedness, although the *debita* may have been caused as much by the financial difficulties of this type of property as any personal shortcomings.<sup>199</sup>

The remuneration of the bailiffs was either exclusively in cash or kind. At Forest Hill, the bailiff received a wage of 10s., with only occasional food, such as six cheeses in summer.<sup>200</sup> Those at Waterperry and Watlington, in contrast, were compensated with a corrody of grain, calculated at the rate of one bushel per week, but excluding the weeks of harvest when the bailiff stood at the common table. In contrast with the *famuli* (the permanent estate labourers), the bailiff had a corrody of wheat, five or six quarters per annum, rather than inferior mixed grain. Standing at the common table did not imply that the bailiff was servile. The bailiff was required, moreover, occasionally to lend a hand in the fields at the hectic time *in Autumpno* (during harvest), or at least to supervise it closely, receiving gloves with the *famuli* as part of the *Expense autumpnales* (harvest costs). From the numerous *vendiciones super compotum* (charges after the account) imposed by the auditors in the paragraphs relating to small livestock, it seems that the bailiffs were also extracting some unofficial perquisites of office, although they did not venture to defraud the abbey of large stock.

The office of reeve was conscript, imputing the servility of the occupant. Reeves were 'elected' by the servile tenantry in the manorial court, corresponding to the precept of Walter of Henley that the vill or homage ought to be collectively responsible for the misdemeanours of the reeve.<sup>201</sup> The servile status of the reeve was also implicit in his remunerations. At Little Tew, the reeve received an acquittance of rent of assize (3s.), an acquittance from customary ploughing service (valued at 4d.), and relief from tallage (2s. 4d. halfpenny). Satisfactory reeves were retained for a number of years: Robert Akerman for more than many years at Stone (1324-43); and John de Santford between 1284 and 1289 at Great Barton and Little Tew.<sup>202</sup> The relative absence of fines for exemption from the office suggests that it was not too arduous.

<sup>198</sup>Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 28, 49, and 53.

<sup>199</sup>See Chapter 8.

<sup>200</sup>Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 26.

<sup>201</sup>Oschinsky, *Walter of Henley*, 316.

<sup>202</sup>Bodleian Oseney Rolls 95 and 97; Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 36-39 and 43.

There was, nevertheless, as on other estates, a constant ‘battle’ over the balance or reckoning of the accounts, the difference between the charge and discharge. The manorial accounts of Oseney, as other lords, were designed primarily to assess the obligations between the accounting official and the lord. The balance of the Oseney accounts, however, differed from those normally encountered on larger estates, consisting in considerable measure of *excessus* balances, by which the lord was theoretically indebted to the local accounting official.<sup>203</sup> The negotiations over the balance continued even in the case of the *excessus*, for it was in the lord’s interest to reduce any obligation to the local official. The auditors therefore attempted to reduce the amount of the *excessus*.

As well as contesting the balance, the auditors revised individual items in the charge and discharge. Disallowances were also invoked from time to time. The auditors disallowed three items in the Waterperry account of 1325-26: *et disallocatur ei xs. quia excessiue expendit* (and he is not permitted 10s. because he spent too much, for the cost of carts); *et disallocatur ei ijs. quia excessiue computat* (and he is not allowed 2s. because he claims for too much, for the cost of horseshoes); and *et disallocatur ei viijs. quia excessiue computat* (and he is not permitted 8s. because he claims too much, for the cost of mowing).<sup>204</sup> The device of the fictitious sale was also employed by the auditors. The bailiff of Forest Hill claimed that there were only eight calves of issue and not more because three cows were sterile (*et non de pluribus quia iij vacce steriles*). The auditors were disinclined to accept this explanation and charged him with two after the account (*ij de exitu super compotum*). They entered the corresponding fictitious sales for 10s. against him: *item in vendicione super compotum ij* (item two sold after the account). As on the estates of St Swithun’s, Winchester, the *venditio super compotum* was deployed rather laconically by the auditors for Oseney in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries.

The auditors became more stringent about 1335-36 when the fictitious sale was connected to the *responsio* or target. This new method occurred embryonically in a Forest Hill account of (?)1322, in which the auditors noted that the yield of barley with dredge and the yield of oats all fell below the expected level: *defic’ de estimatione ix qr.*<sup>205</sup> Thereafter, the accounts were regularly annotated by the auditors’ estimate of the seed-yield ratios of grain. Oats at Waterperry fell two quarters and one bushel below a threefold yield; the auditors added on the dorse that the bailiff owed that amount of grain to answer for a threefold yield and on the face a sale after the account for 3s. 9d. ([dorse] *item oneratur de ij qr ij bs ut respondeat ad tercium granum ...* [face] *Et in vendicione super compotum ij qr ij bs pro iijs. ixd.*). In the following year, when the deficit was one bushel below a threefold yield, the auditors imposed the same procedure: the yield falls one bushel below threefold ... he owes one bushel to answer for a threefold yield ... sold after the account one bushel 3d. (*respondet*

<sup>203</sup>See Chapter 8.

<sup>204</sup>Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 51.

<sup>205</sup>Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 25. It is dated 16 Edward which Denholm-Young interpreted as 16 Edward III, but it is more likely 16 Edward II because of the embryonic *responsio* and the reference to John de Sutton as estate steward.

*j bs minus se iij<sup>o</sup>... Item oneratur de j bs ut respondeat ad iij granum ... In venditione super compotum j bs iijd.*<sup>206</sup> This method of employing the fictitious sale in association with the target was introduced on the manors of St Swithun in 1323-24, Crowland Abbey by 1322-23, and the Merton College manor of Cuxham only in 1358-59.<sup>207</sup> The auditors of Oseney applied it equally to the issue of livestock. Particular attention was paid to dairy produce: *R' suffic' de exitu dayr' videlicet de qualibet vacca iijjs. Et nichil de ouibus matricibus quia non perlact'*; *Memorandum quod R' de qualibet vacca iijjs. sine oneratione* (target is met from the dairy issue, that is, 4s. from each cow. And nothing from the ewes because they did not give milk; Memorandum that the target from each cow [is] 4s. without charge).

Was this introduction of a new system of auditing connected with an attempt to appraise an alternative for exploiting the estate? Although Oseney did not generally turn to the farming out of its estates until later, it did abandon direct cultivation of a few properties in the 1330s, most notably Sibford.<sup>208</sup> The abbey may have come to the conclusion that direct demesne exploitation was not fully successful, so tightening up its procedures against its manorial officials. It was one thing to be fairly lax with officials when it was thought, if erroneously, that agriculture was paying its way, but the abbot and convent might have felt less generous when the idea of direct exploitation was no longer entirely a matter of conviction.

---

<sup>206</sup>Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 52-53 (1336-38).

<sup>207</sup>P. D. A. Harvey, *A Medieval Oxfordshire Village. Cuxham 1240-1400* (Oxford, 1965), 56.

<sup>208</sup>*Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* iv, 322-3.

## 8 The *excessus* balance in Oseney accounts

The balance of manorial accounts, as is well known, was designed to show the obligations between accounting official and lord, or to answer, in Dr Stone's phrase, the question: are we being cheated?<sup>209</sup> Most manorial accounts in print contain a balance to the cash side which is a *quietus* (*et sic quietus est*) (and he is thus quit) or an *arreragium* (*et debet*) (and he owes).<sup>210</sup> In the first case, charge and discharge, *recepta* and *expense* were equal. In the second, the *recepta* exceeded the *expense*. This balance does not seem unusual. More rarely, we encounter the *excessus* balance (*superplusagium*), which presents a somewhat ambiguous picture.

The *excessus* was held to have occurred when the *expense* (discharge) exceeded the *recepta* (charge), which begs the important question: how can the outgoings be held to have exceeded the income? Surely it was impossible for the accounting official to have spent more than he received. The second point of the *excessus* is that it reverses the position of the *arreragium*: no longer is it the official in debt to the lord, but the lord to the official. What we have to decide is if all the items listed in the *expense* were actually paid out before the audit and the striking of the balance.

A series of accounts for properties of Oseney Abbey in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century help to clarify this ambivalence, since a large proportion contain an *excessus* balance.<sup>211</sup> The accounts for Chastleton in particular allow some disentangling of the issues; one of the accounts is printed below.

In the Chastleton account of 1338-39 [printed below], the outgoings exceeded the receipts by about £4. The balance was then struck with the characteristic form of the *excessus*: *St sic excedunt expense recepta .lxxix.s.v.d.ob.qua.* The auditors then elaborated: *Set per propriam recognicionem non debet nisi .lviiiij.s.ij.d. exceptis .xxiiij.s.vjd. de veteri debito set quibus debent inquirari* [But by his own admission he owes only 58s. 2d. except for 23s. 6d. from an old debt but about which they should enquire]. The key to these debts can be found in the hand of the clerk who wrote the account.

Totalis .viiij.li.xix.s.j.d. et sic excedit .iiiiij.li.ob.qua. Nomina debiti videlicet vicario loci .xxiiij.s.x.d. [sic] ... Item pro stipendiis famulorum per totum annum .xj.s.viiij.d. Item de antiquo debito acomodato per Willelmum Bikenhull [the granger] .xxiiij.s.vj.d. [The whole £8 19s. 1d. and thus it is overspent £4 and three-farthings. The specifics of the debt that is to the

<sup>209</sup>Stone, 'Profit-and-loss accountancy', 25-6; Drew, 'Manorial accounts of St Swithun's priory'; Harvey, *Manorial Records of Cuxham*, 12-57.

<sup>210</sup>Harvey, *Manorial Records of Cuxham*; H. Hall, ed., *Pipe Roll of the Bishopric of Winchester for 1208-9* (1903); N. Holt, ed., *Pipe Roll of the Bishopric of Winchester, 1210-11* (Manchester, 1964); L. M. Midgley, ed., *Ministers' Accounts of the Earldom of Cornwall, 1296-7* (Camden 3rd series lvi, 1942); For contemporary comment on balances, see the *Regule Compoti* of Beaulieu Abbey in N. Denholm-Young, *Seigniorial Administration in England* (Oxford, 1937), 170-1.

<sup>211</sup>The properties are considered in more detail in Chapter 7.

vicar 23s. 10d. [sic] ... Item for the wages of the *famuli* for the entire year  
11s. 8d. Item from an old debt loaned by William Bikenhull 23s. 6d.]

As the discharge has exceeded the charge, the bailiff is indebted to certain creditors. These debts are represented in the *excessus*. The obligation is on the abbot to pay the accounting official this money to acquit his debts. The auditors, nonetheless, attempted to reduce the size of the abbot's obligation by beating down the *excessus*. The memoranda by the clerk equate the *excessus* with specific debts: the vicar's stipend and the wages of the *famuli* [the permanent estate labourers]. These very same items had, however, been included in the *expense* in the *Resoluciones* [remittances] and *Stipendia famulorum* [wages of the *famuli*] paragraphs, although there the vicar's stipend was given as 23s. 4d. Although these items had been included in the *expense*, it is evident that they had not really been paid. What the *excessus* therefore represented was items in the discharge which had not actually been paid.

The same story is told by memoranda on a Waterperry account of similar date: *Et sic excedit .xxij.s.vij.d.ob.qua. et totum debet pro stipendiis famulorum* [And thus overspent 23s. 7d. three-farthings and all is owed for the wages of the *famuli*].<sup>212</sup> The *expense* of the same account include a *Stipendia famulorum* paragraph where it is purported that the *famuli* had been paid 26s. A further Waterperry account (29 Sept. to 1 Dec. 1339) records:

Et sic excedunt expense recepta .xxxvj.s.vij.d.ob.qua. Inde debet diversis creditoribus subscriptis .xxij.s.vij.d. et residuum debetur ballivo videlicet .xij.s.v.ob.qua. Et preter hoc petit allocaciones pro servicio suo hoc anno. [And thus the *expense* exceed the *recepta* in 36s. 8d. three-farthings. From which he owes several creditors 23s. 8d. and the rest is owed to the bailiff, that is 12s. 5d. three-farthings. And besides that he claims allowances for his service this year].<sup>213</sup>

In this case, the bailiff had seemingly financed the deficit of the manor from his own cash for this quarter year.

In most cases, the auditors tried to reduce the *excessus*, the obligation of the abbey to its official. The balance struck by the auditors record this tale: *Et sic excedit in .xl.s.ix.d.ob.qua. set recognovit de ore proprio de .xxij.s.vj.d. in quibus tenetur omnia debita sua acquietare comptum suum tangentia* [And thus he is overspent in 40s. 9d. three-farthings but he admits from his own mouth that he can acquit all his debts touching his account with 32s. 6d.]; and *Et sic excedit in expensis recepta .C.ij.s.j.d. set per propriam recognitionem non debet nisi .lxvj.s.* [And thus he is overspent in the *expense* over the *recepta* 103s. 1d. but by his own admission he owes only 66s.]; equally *Et sic excedit in expensis recepta in .iiij.li.v.s.v.d.ob. set per propriam non debet nisi .liij.s.x.d.* [And thus he is overspent in the *expense* over the *recepta* in £4 5s. 5d. halfpenny but by his own [admission] he only owes 54s. 10d.]; or *Et sic excedunt expense*

<sup>212</sup>Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 57.

<sup>213</sup>Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 55.

*recepta .viiij.li.iiiij.s.xj.d.ob. set per propriam recognicionem potest acquietare omnia debita sua per .viij.li.xviiij.s.ix.d.* [And thus the *expense* exceed the *recepta* in £8 4s. 11d. halfpenny but by his own admission he can acquit all his debts by £7 18s. 9d.]; and *Et sic excedunt expense recepta .xxxvij.s.vij.d. set per propriam recognicionem potest acquietare omnia debita sua pro xxv.s.* [And thus the *expense* exceed the *recepta* in 37s. 7d. but by his own admission he can acquit all his debts for 35s.]; and *Et sic excedunt expense recepta .iiiij.li.v.s.j.d.ob.qua. set per propriam recognicionem potest omnia debita acquietare cum .liij.s.* [And thus the *expense* exceed the *recepta* in £4 5s. 1d. three-farthings but by his own admission he can acquit all debts with 53s.]<sup>214</sup>

In a fair proportion of the *excessus* balances then, the auditors successfully beat down the bailiff. Part of this beating down might have been the exercise of arbitrary coercion. There are no overt suggestions that the bailiff had attempted to defraud the abbey, as there are no related cancellations or alterations in the account. One reason why the bailiff might have been so amenable is that the auditors made ‘a sort of cash offer’ as an alternative to money on account.<sup>215</sup> In other cases, the *excessus* was probably carried over to the next account. It is difficult to assess the extent of this carrying forward as the accounts are a broken series. The *excessus* of one Stone account was carried over as well as beaten down. In 1325-26, the auditors concluded the cash side: *Et sic excedit in expensis recepta in .iiiij.li.v.s.v.d.ob. set per propriam non debet nisi .liiiij.s.x.d.* [And thus he overspent in the expense over the *recepta* in £4 5s. 5d. halfpenny but by his own [admission] he owes only 54s. 10d.] In the following year’s account, the *debita acquietata* [debts redeemed] paragraph comprised 54s. 10d. from the last account.<sup>216</sup>

The peculiar *excessus* balance reinforces the argument that manorial accounts were almost exclusively concerned with the question of the obligation between lord and official. Great effort was therefore made to preserve some sort of *pro forma*. The *excessus*, much more than the *quietus* or *arreragium*, compels us to examine the rationale of this accountancy, simply because it begs the fundamental question: how can the official have expended more than he received?

---

<sup>214</sup>In this order: Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 24 (Forest Hill, 1303-4), 25 (Forest Hill, 1321-22), 36 (Stone, 1325-26), 39 (Stone, 1342-43), and 59 (Waterperry, 1344-45).

<sup>215</sup>For this, and many other suggestions, I am grateful to Paul Harvey.

<sup>216</sup>Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 36-37.

Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 8

[Account of the bailiff of Chastleton, Michaelmas 1338 to Michaelmas 1339]<sup>217</sup>

[face]

Chastleton anno xij<sup>o</sup>

Chastleton compotus Johannis le Spencer Ballivi ibidem a festo Sancti Michaelis anno regni regis Edwardi tercii post conquestum xij<sup>o</sup> usque idem festum proxime sequens anno xiiij<sup>o</sup> per annum integrum xj

REDDITUS ASSISE Item de xjs. de redditu assise per annum patet Summa xjs.

VENDITIO BLADI Item respondet de xvjs. ixd. ob. qua. receptis de viij qr vij bus frumenti venditis precium qr ijs.<sup>218</sup> Item de vijs. viijd. de iiij qr et dimidio bus siliginis venditis. Item de xiijs. iiijd. ob. de x qr vj bus drageti venditis precium qr xvd.<sup>219</sup> Item de xs. de viij qr vij bus pisarum venditis precium qr xiijd.<sup>220</sup> Item de iijs. de iiij qr avene venditis.

lijs. ixd. qua. Summa lijs. ixd. qua.<sup>221</sup>

EXITUS MANERII Item de ijd. de plant' ...<sup>222</sup> venditis. Item de ijd. de porottis venditis. Item de viijd. de stipula vendita. Item de ijd. de alba stramine vendita. Et de xiijs. de feno vendito.

xvs. iiijd. Summa xvs. iiijd.

RECEPTA FORINSECA Item de xxs. receptis de senescallo pro expensis autumpni.

xxs. Summa xxs.

Totalis iiij li. xixs. qua. Summa totalis recepti iiij li. xixs. qua.

DEBITA ACQUIETATA ULTERIORIS COMPOTI Idem computat in debitis acquietatis super ultimo compoto lxvjs. viijd. ob. qua.

patet Summa patet

RESOLUTIONES Item resoluti infirmario Oseneye iijs. Item resoluti vicario loci per annum de certo suo xxiijs. iiijd.<sup>223</sup>

xxvijs. viijd. Summa xxvijs. iiijd.

CUSTUS ECCLESIE Item in procuracione visu archidiaconi vijs. vijd. ob. qu. Item in synodalibus solutis per annum ijs. Item in expensis procuratoris euntis ad parliamentum London' pro jd. de marca xd. Item pro expensis procuratoris cardinalis ijd. ob. videlicet quadrans de marca.<sup>224</sup> Item solutis pro expensis cardinal' vd. videlicet ob. de marca.<sup>225</sup>

<sup>217</sup>Contractions and suspensions have been extended wherever possible, except for sums of money (*ob.* and *qua.* denote *obulus* and *quadrans*, halfpenny and farthing) or weights and measures (*pec'*, *bus*, *qr* refer to pecks, bushels and quarters); *rem'* usually indicates *remanenti*.

<sup>218</sup>From *precium* underlined by the auditors.

<sup>219</sup>From *precium* underlined by the auditors.

<sup>220</sup>From *precium* underlined by the auditors.

<sup>221</sup>Throughout the sum of each section is inserted on the left side as well as the right, in the same hand.

<sup>222</sup>One word illegible.

<sup>223</sup>*viijd.* cancelled and *iiijd.* interlined.

<sup>224</sup>From *videlicet* underlined by the auditors.

<sup>225</sup>From *videlicet* underlined by the auditors.

xijs. jd. qua.

Summa xijs. jd. qua.

CUSTUS CARUCARUM Item in ij peciis ferri emptis pro ferramento xiiijd. In j ferro pedali empto ijd. ob. qua. In j clava ijd. In j anula empta jd. Item in stipendio fabri operantis idem et pro ferrura iij affrorum per annum iijs. vjd. Item in ij carucis faciendis et reparandis vd. Item in virgis emptis pro tewes faciendis jd. ob. In j auriculo empto jd. Et in j ploubem empto cum stipendio fabri appositi idem iijd.<sup>226</sup> Et in j vomere empto xjd.

vjs. jd. qua. [sic]

Summa vjs. xjd. qua

CUSTUS CARECTARUM Item in j pari rotarum nudarum empto ijs. Item in frettis ad easdem jd. Item in ix cartclutis emptis vijd. ob. In clutnaylis emptis jd. In j pari bassis vd. ob. In j cella carecte empta ijd. qua. In unctione empto ijd. In cartsoules jd. In albo coreo ijd. In carectis axandis jd. Et in stipendio fabri pro diversis bendis apponendis super rotas cum strakis emptis pro eodem xd.

iiijs. ix. qua.

Summa iiijs. ix. qua.

CUSTUS DOMORUM Item in ij hostiis emendandis ijd. In stipendio j hominis punctandi super grangiam ijd. In calce empto ad eandem jd. In sclattis emptis ijd.

vijd.

Summa vijd.

CUSTUS SARCLACIONIS Item in diversis liberationibus sarclandis [sic] xiiijd. ob.

patet

Summa xiiij.d. ob.

FALCACIO PRATORUM Item in expensis vj hominum falcantium pratum de Langesclade Overmede Nethermede Hildesclade et Grenemor per iij dies iijs. vjd. Et in dicto prato vertando levando et tassando iiijs. vjd. Item in expensis diversorum hominum cariantium fenum de prece xijd. ob. Et in expensis diversorum coadiuuatorum facientium meyas in bercaria viijd. ob.

ixs. ix. d.

Summa ix. s. ix. d.

CUSTUS AUTUMPNI Item in omnimodo blado metendo et ligando ad tascham xvjs. jd. ob. In j carectario locato per vj dies et dimidio ad cibum domini pro blado cariendo ijs. viiijd. ob. capiente per diem vd.<sup>227</sup> In carne empta iijd. In carne empta jd. In cervisia xvd. In caseo vd. In cervisia pro tassis pisarum in berton faciendis vjd. Item in j bus frumenti empto pro pane vd. Item dati metoribus<sup>228</sup> domini vjd. Et in stipendiis ij cobularum iiijs.

xxvjs. iijd.

Summa xxvjs. iijd.

MINUTE ET NECESSARIE Item in ij bus salis emptis viiijd. Item pro marshalsu j affri infirmi iiii. Item in ij cordis pro affris applicandis in pastura ijd.

xiiijd.

Summa xiiijd.

STIPENDIA FAMULORUM Item in stipendio j tentoris caruce per annum vs. In stipendio j fugatoris per annum iiijs. Et in stipendio j coci per annum ijs. viiijd.

<sup>226</sup> *empto* interlined.

<sup>227</sup> From *capiente* underlined by the auditors.

<sup>228</sup> MS. met'

xjs. viijd.

Summa xjs. viijd.

Summa totalis expense et liberationis viij li. xviijs. xd. Et sic excedunt expense recepta lxxixs. vd. ob. qua.

Set per propriam recognicionem non debet nisi lviijs. ijd. exceptis xxiijs. vjd. de veteri debito set quibus debent inquirari.

Totalis viij li. xixs. jd. et sic excedit iiij li. ob. qua. Nomina debiti videlicet vicario loci xxiijs. xd.<sup>229</sup> Item fabro ijs. Item Willelmo Hogies xijs. Item pro expensis autumpnalibus cum stipendio carectarii vjs. viijd. Item pro stipendiis famulorum per totum annum xjs. viijd. Item de antiquo debito acomodato per Willelmum Bikenhull xxiijs. vjd.

[dorse]

Chastelton comptus Johannis le Spencer Ballivi ibidem anno xij<sup>o</sup> per annum integrum

FRUMENTUM Idem respondet de xxij qr ij bus pec receptis de exitu triturationis ad tascham per j talliam contra Willelmum Bykenulle

preceptum est quod cepit recepta decime a dominico Summa patet

De quibus in semine vj qr. Item in certo vicarii soluto per annum vj qr vij bus. In expensis pratorum iiij bus. In expensis autumpni j bus. Et in venditione viij qr vij bus pec.

Summa ut prima. Et nichil remanet

SILIGO Item de xxij qr j bus receptis de exitu triturationis ad tascham per j talliam cum frumento. Et de vj qr receptis ex mutuo.

Summa xxviiij qr j bus

De quibus in semine ij qr j bus. Item liberati vicario de certo suo per annum viij qr v bus. Item in liberatione carectariorum per annum viij qr v bus utrique per xij xij [sic] septimanas j qr. In liberatione j coci a festo Sancti Michaelis usque festum natalis Sancti Johannis Baptiste per xxxviiij septimanas ij qr iiij bus capientis qr ad xvj septimanam. Item in liberatione eiusdem a dicto festo Sancti Johannis usque festum Sancti Michaelis per per [sic] xiiij septimanas j qr j bus dimidius capientis qr ad xij septimanam. Item in liberatione ij cobularum in autumpno j qr. Item in stipendio j mulieris siccande avenam pro farina j bus. Et in venditione iiij qr et dimidius bus.

Summa ut prima. Et nichil remanet.

DRAGETUM Item de xx qr ij bus receptis de exitu triturationis ad tascham per j talliam contra dictum Willelmum.

Summa patet.

De quibus in semine ij qr dimidium. Item in certo vicarii loci per annum vij qr. Et in venditione x qr vj bus.

Summa ut prima. Et nichil remanet.

PISA Item de xij qr dimidio receptis de exitu triturationis ad tascham per j talliam contra dictum Willelmum. Et de xiiij qr dimidio receptis per estimationem in garbis datis ad yemacionem hogerellorum de Hogenorton per talliam.

<sup>229</sup> *xxiijs. ijd.* cancelled and *xxiijs. xd.* interlined.

Summa xxvij qr.

De quibus in semine ij qr. Item liberatum apud Oseneyam j qr per talliam. Item liberati preposito de Hogenorton v bus per talliam. Item in sustentatione hogerellorum de Hogenorton xiiij qr dimidium per estimationem in garbis. Et in venditione viij qr vij bus.

Summa ut prima. Et nichol remanet.

AVENA Item de xliij qr j bus receptis de exitu triturationis ad tascham per j talliam cum drageto. Et de ij qr dimidio receptis de exitu per estimationem in garbis datis ad sustentacionem bovum per j talliam cum pisis.

Summa xlv qr v bus.

De quibus in semine xiiij qr v bus. Item in farina facta xxij qr dimidium. Item liberata vicario de certo suo per annum ij qr. Item in prebenda bovum per estimationem in garbis ij qr dimidium. Et in venditione iiij qr.

Summa ut prima. Et nichil remanet.

AVENARIA Item de vij qr dimidio de exitu xxij qr dimidio avene<sup>230</sup> ut supra. Summa patet.

De quibus liberata Oseneye vij qr per j talliam cum pisis. Item in potagio famulorum per annum iiij bus.

Summa ut prima. Et nichil remanet.

SAL Item de ij bus de emptione. Et expendit in potagio famulorum per annum. Et nichil remanet.

AFFRI Item de iij de rem. feminis. Et remanent iij affri femini.

BOVES Item de vj de rem. Et remanent vj boves.

VACCE Item de j vacca de rem. Et de j de herietto post vitulationem. Summa ij. De quibus liberata senescallo j. Summa j. Et remanet j vacca.

JUVENCA Item de j iuvenca de herietto. Et computat liberata senescallo. Et nichil remanet.

VITULUS DE REM. Item de j vitulo masculino de rem. Et remanet j modo boviculus masculus.

VITULI DE EXITU Item de j vitulo masculino de exitu. Et remanet j vitulus masculus.

AGNI Item de iiij de decima. Et liberati preposito de Hogenorton iiij per j talliam. Et nichil remanet.

VELLERA Item de lxxiiij velleribus receptis de decima ponderantibus viij petras. Et computat liberata apud Eton per j talliam. Et nichil remanet.

PELLES AGNORUM Item de j pelle agni recepta de decima. Et liberata preposito de Hogenorton per j talliam cum agnis. Et nichil remanet.

De exitu lactis j vacce nichil hic quia expendit in expensis famulorum.

---

<sup>230</sup>From *xxij* underlined by auditors.

Chastleton 12th year

Chastelton account of John le Spencer bailiff there from Michaelmas 12 Edward III to the same feast following 13 [Edward III] for a whole year.

RENTS OF ASSIZE Item for 11s rent of assize p.a.

As it appears Total 11s

SALE OF GRAIN He answers for 17s. 9d. three-farthings received from 8 qtrs 7 bs wheat sold @ 2s qtr. Item for 7s. 8d. from 4 qtrs half bs rye sold. Item for 13s. 3d. halfpenny from 10 qtrs 6 bs dredge sold @ 15d qtr. Item for 10s. from 8 qtrs 7 bs peas sold @ 13d. qtr. Item for 4s. from 4 qtrs oats sold.

52s. 9d. farthing. Total 52s. 9d. farthing.

ISSUES OF THE MANOR Item for 2d. from [one word] plants sold. Item for 2d. from leeks sold. Item for 8d. from straw sold. Item for 3d. from white straw sold. And for 14s. from hay sold.

15s. 3d. Total 15s. 3d.

INCOME FROM OUTSIDE Item for 20s. received from the steward for harvest expenses.

20s. Total 20s.

Total £4 19s. farthing. Total of the whole income £4 19s. farthing.

DEBTS FROM THE LAST ACCOUNT LIQUIDATED He accounts in debts liquidated from the last account 66s. 8d. three-farthings.

As it appears. Total as it appears.

PAYMENTS Item sent to Oseney's infirmarer 4s. Item paid to the vicar of the place for his stipend p.a. 23s. 4d.

27s. 8d. Total 27s. 4d.

COST OF THE CHURCH Item in the procuration of the archdeacon's view 7s. 7d. three-farthings. Item in synodals paid p.a. 3s. Item in costs of the proctor going to a London Parliament for the [subsidy of] 1d in the mark 10d. Item for the costs of the cardinal's proctor twopence halfpenny, that is, a farthing in the mark. Item paid for the cardinal's expenses 5d., that is, halfpenny in the mark.

12s. 1d. farthing. Total 12s. 1d. farthing

COSTS OF PLOUGHS Item in 3 pieces of iron bought for horseshoes 14d. In one iron ... bought 2d. three-farthings. In one key 2d. In one ring bought 1d. In the smith's wages working the same and for shoeing of 3 affers p.a. 3s. 6d. Item in making and repairing 2 ploughs 5d. Item in rods bought for making 2 tewes 1d. halfpenny. In one ... bought 1d. In one ploughbeam bought with the smith's wages fixing it 3d. And in one ploughshare bought 11d.

6s. 1d. farthing Total 6s. 11d. farthing.

COSTS OF CARTS Item in one pair of unbound wheels bought 2s. Item in frets for them 1d. Item in 9 cartclouts bought 7d. halfpenny. In cloutnails bought 1d. In one pair of ... 5d. halfpenny. In one cart ... bought 2d. farthing. In grease bought 2d. In cartsouls 1d. In white leather 2d. In ... carts 1d. And in the smith's wage for fixing several bands on the wheels with strakes bought for them 10d.

4s. 9d. farthing Total 4s. 9d. farthing.

COSTS OF BUILDINGS Item in repairing 2 doors 2d. In a man's wages ...ing on the grange 2d. In chalk bought for it 1d. In slates bought 2d.

7d. Total 7d.

COSTS OF WEEDING Item in several weeding payments 14d. halfpenny.

As it appears. Total 14d. halfpenny.

MOWING OF THE MEADOWS Item in 6 men's wages mowing the meadow of Langesclade, Overmede, Nethermede, Hildesclade and Grenemor for 3 days 3s. 6d. And in turning, lifting and stacking 4s. 6d. Item in the costs of several men carrying hay by boon 12d. halfpenny. And in costs of several helpers making stacks in the sheepfold 8d. halfpenny.

9s. 9d. Total 9s. 9d.

HARVEST COSTS Item in reaping and binding all types of grain for cash 6s. 1d. halfpenny. In finding a carter for 6 and a half days at the lord's table for carrying grain ...s. 8d. halfpenny. taking 5d a day. In meat bought 3d. In meat bought 1d. In ale 5d. In cheese 5d. In ale for making stacks of peas in the barton 6d. Item in 1bs. of wheat bought for bread 5d. Item given to the lord's reapers 6d. And in 2 tithe collectors' wages 4s.

26s. 3d. Total 26s. 3d.

SMALL AND NECESSARY ITEMS Item in 2 bs. salt bought 8d. Item for looking after one sick affer 4d. Item in 2 ropes for tethering affers in the pasture 2d.

14d. Total 14d.

WAGES OF THE *FAMULI* Item in one ploughholder's wage p.a. 5s. In one plough driver's wage p.a. 4s. And in one cook's wage p.a. 2s. 8d.

11s. 8d. Total 11s. 8d.

The whole total of costs and payments £8 18s. 10d. And thus the costs surpass the receipts 79s. 5d. three-farthings.

But by his own admission he only owes 58s. 2d. other than 23s. 6d. from an old debt about which they should inquire.

Total £8 19s. 1d. and thus it over-runs £4 three-farthings. Details of the debt, that is, to the vicar of the place 23s. 10d. Item to the smith 2s. Item to William Hogies 12s. Item for harvest costs with the carter's wage 6s. 8d. Item for wages of the *famuli* for the whole year 11s. 8d. Item for an old debt loaned by William Bikenhull 23s. 6d.

[dorse]

Chastleton account of John le Spencer bailiff there for the 12th year for a whole year.

WHEAT He answers for 22 qtrs 2bs. 1 peck received from issue of threshing for cash by one tally against William Bykenhulle.

it is ordered that he separates receipt of tithe from the demesne issue Total as it appears

From which in sowing 6 qtrs. Item in the vicar's allowance p.a. 6 qtrs. 7bs. In costs of the meadows 3bs. In harvest costs 1bs. And in sale 8 qtrs. 7bs. 1 peck.

Total as first [above]. And nothing is left.

RYE Item for 22 qtrs 1bs. received from issue of threshing for cash by 1 tally with wheat. And for 6 qtrs received from a loan.

Total 28 qtrs 1bs.

From which in sowing 2 qtrs 1bs. Item given to the vicar for his allowance p.a. 8 qtrs 5bs. Item in payment of the carters p.a. 8 qtrs 5bs., each 1 qtr for 12 weeks. In payment to one cook from Michaelmas to the nativity of St John the Baptist for 38 weeks 2 qtrs 3bs., taking a qtr for 16 weeks. Item in his payment from St John to Michaelmas for 14 weeks 1 qtr 1 and a half bs., taking a qtr for 12 weeks. Item in payment of 2 tithe collectors in harvest 1 qtr. Item in one woman's wage drying oats for meal 1bs. And in sale 4 qtrs and half a bs.

Total as first [above]. And nothing is left.

DREDGE Item for 20 qtrs 2bs. received from issue of threshing for cash by one tally against the said William.

Total as it appears.

From which in sowing 2 qtrs and a half. Item in the allowance of the vicar of the place p.a. 7 qtrs. And in sale 10 qtrs 6bs.

Total as first [above]. And nothing is left.

PEAS Item for 12 qtrs and a half received from issue of threshing for cash by one tally against the said William. And for 14 qtrs and a half received from issue by estimate in sheaves given for wintering of the hoggs of Hook Norton by tally.

Total 27 qtrs.

From which in sowing 2 qtrs. Item delivered to Oseney 1 qtr by tally. Item delivered to the reeve of Hook Norton 5bs. by tally. Item for feeding of hoggs of Hook Norton 14qtrs and a half by estimate in sheaves. And in sale 8 qtrs 7bs.

Total as first [above]. And nothing is left.

OATS Item for 43 qtrs 1bs. received from issue of threshing for cash by one tally with the dredge. And for 2 qtrs and a half received from issue by estimate in sheaves given for feeding of oxen by one tally with the peas.

Total 45 qtrs 5bs.

From which in sowing 14 qtrs 5bs. Item in oatmeal made 22 qtrs and a half. Item given to the vicar for his allowance p.a. 2 qtrs. Item in fodder of oxen by estimate in sheaves 2 qtrs and a half. And in sale 4 qtrs.

Total as first [above]. And nothing is left.

OATMEAL Item for 7 qtrs and a half of issue of 22 qtrs and a half of oats as above. Total as it appears.

From which delivered to Oseney 7 qtrs by one tally with the peas. Item in thick soup for the *famuli* p.a. 4bs.

Total as first [above]. And nothing is left.

SALT Item for 2bs. of purchase. And he used [it] in thick soup for the *famuli* p.a. And nothing is left.

AFFERS Item for 3 left [from last year], female. And 3 female affers are left.

OXEN Item for 6 left [from last year]. And 6 oxen are left.

COWS Item for one cow left [from last year]. And for one from heriot after it had calved. Total 2. From which sent to the steward 1. Total 1. And one cow is left.

HEIFFER And for one heiffer from heriot. And he accounts for it sent to the steward. And nothing is left.

CALVES LEFT [from last year] Item for one male calf left [from last year]. And it is left, now a steer.

CALVES OF ISSUE And for one male calf of issue. And one male calf is left.

LAMBS Item for 4 from tithe. And sent to the reeve of Hook Norton 4 by one tally. And nothing is left.

FLEECES Item for 73 fleeces received from tithe weighing 8 stone. And he accounts for them sent to Water Eaton by one tally. And nothing is left.

LAMBS' FELLOES Item for one lamb's fell received from tithe. And sent to the reeve of Hook Norton by one tally with the lambs. And nothing is left.

From the issue of one cow's milk nothing here because in the costs of the *famuli*.

## 9 The estate stewards of Oseney Abbey, c.1245-1340

The estate steward of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries is a familiar figure. On lay estates the steward was usually a layman, often a knight holding his own lands, and a ‘careerist’ administrator.<sup>231</sup> Ecclesiastical and religious dignitaries probably appointed this type of man as did the chapters of the large Benedictine houses and cathedrals.<sup>232</sup> Even the English estates of the abbot of Bec were supervised by a steward of knightly status, although at least one of these was not a ‘careerist’.<sup>233</sup>

Management of the estates of Oseney Abbey differed from that pattern, for in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, estate stewards were consistently appointed from amongst the canons of the convent. The estate steward was thus selected from the *maior et sanior pars* (senior and wiser element) of the convent, one of the twelve senior canons. One evident difficulty of appointing canon-stewards was the canonical rule that the religious ought not to travel outside the convent without an accompanying canon. The estate steward, consequently, always itinerated with a *concanonicus* (fellow canon).<sup>234</sup> This procedure had, nevertheless, the compensation that it introduced canons to the stewardship, since the duties of the office were partially learned by experience, but it did deplete the number of canons at the house.

Thos duties did not differ from those expected of stewards of lay and other religious estates. The steward was responsible for the supervision of husbandry and in particular extraordinary sales of produce. He was involved, for example, in the sale of a stack of beans to a butcher for £7 6s. 8d.<sup>235</sup> His warrant was requisite for the sale of a heiffer, presumably a sound one, to acquit the cost of reaping.<sup>236</sup> His principal obligation, however, was to visit each property at least twice each year to remove cash from the hands of the local official. This livery to the steward usually comprised the rents of assize and the perquisites of court, which were delivered to the bursary of the abbey, but occasionally the amount was swollen by incidental receipts from the sale of grain or from an entry fine.<sup>237</sup> The cash was removed from the local official’s hands to prevent fraudulent use by the official for his own purposes.<sup>238</sup> At the second visit to each property,

<sup>231</sup>Denholm-Young, *Seigniorial Administration*, 69-71.

<sup>232</sup>For example, the stewards of the abbot of Westminster, B. F. Harvey, ed., *Documents Illustrating the Rule of Walter de Wenlok, Abbot of Westminster, 1283-1307* (Camden 4th series 2, 1965), 25; the list of stewards of Peterborough Abbey in C. N. L. Brooke and M. M. Postan, eds, *Carte Nativorum. A Peterborough Abbey Cartulary of the Fourteenth Century* (Northamptonshire Record Society xx, 1960), Appx II, 266-7.

<sup>233</sup>M. Morgan, *The English Lands of the Abbey of Bec* (repr., Oxford, 1968), 56-7.

<sup>234</sup>This rule was reiterated by Wykeham in his injunctions to Selborne Priory, also a house of Austin Canons: W. D. Macray, ed., *Charters of Selborne Priory* (Hampshire Record Society, 1891), 99.

<sup>235</sup>Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 34.

<sup>236</sup>Bodleian Oseney Roll 95.

<sup>237</sup>Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 34 (£7 6s. 8d. from the sale above and £3 9s. 8d. from an entry fine); Ch. Ch. O. R. 38 (£7 8s. 5d.); Ch. Ch. O. R. 43 (£7 6s. 8d.); Oseney Roll 97 (£11 0s. 2d.).

<sup>238</sup>Oschinsky, *Walter of Henley*, 340.

at or about Michaelmas (29 Sept.), the steward audited the accounts of the local official.<sup>239</sup> Auditing was a local rather than a centralized procedure, presumably because most of the abbey's property was concentrated in Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire. Nevertheless, the steward's clerk occasionally failed to engross the accounts until Martinmas (11 Nov.).<sup>240</sup>

The stewards intervened in the management of the estate. Successive bailiffs of Waterperry were removed (*amoti*) by the steward, whose clerk compiled an inventory of stock on their dismissal.<sup>241</sup> When it was decided, in 1337, not to retain the demesne of Sibford in hand any longer, it was the steward, William de Abyngdone, who was responsible for the new arrangements. In the event, the demesne was divided into standard virgate holdings and granted out in villeinage.<sup>242</sup> It was the steward, William Pencrich, who journeyed via Watlington to receive land at Iver back into the lord's hands.<sup>243</sup> In this case, Pencrich was acting perhaps as the legal representative of the abbot and it was necessary for stewards to be familiar with common and statute law. Legal representation was generally the business of the house's proctor, but the steward invoked the Statute of Marlborough in 1383 to illustrate why the abbot did not owe suit to the view of frankpledge of Fairford.<sup>244</sup>

The distinguishing characteristic of the estate stewards of Oseney thus resided less in their duties than in their appointment from amongst the canons of the house. Their selection seems to have comprised one part of a policy of self-sufficiency in the administration of the the estate in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, demonstrated also in the deployment of canon-wardens (*custodes*) to supervise groups or bailiwicks of properties.<sup>245</sup> The offices of steward and canon-warden were complementary until the latter was allowed to lapse in the mid fourteenth century, for each provided experience of estate administration. It was customary, therefore, for stewards to have served as canon-wardens. The problem of this method of management was the demand that it made on a convent which in the fourteenth century diminished to about twenty-five canons, but it had no doubt been an attempt to guarantee loyalty amongst administrators.<sup>246</sup>

*William de Sutton* Steward, 1263-67. Proctor to Abbot Richard de Apeltre, 1254-67; became abbot 1267-84; responsible for the cartulary of rural property

<sup>239</sup>Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 50-52: the *expense senescalli* (steward's costs) paragraph includes the cost of the steward's clerk making the account.

<sup>240</sup>Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R.: *ven' ibidem circa festum sancti martini et commorant' per ii. dies pro compoto anni precedentis faciendo* (arriving there about Martinmas and staying two days to make up last year's account).

<sup>241</sup>Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 49-56.

<sup>242</sup>*Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* iv, 322.

<sup>243</sup>Bodleian Oseney Roll 107.

<sup>244</sup>*Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* v, 19; Marlborough, 1267, cc. 2, 9.

<sup>245</sup>For similar use of monk-wardens, Smith, *Canterbury Cathedral Priory*, 100-10; King, *Peterborough Abbey*, 129ff.

<sup>246</sup>Oschinsky, *Walter of Henley*, 264.

c.1280-84; a centrally-enrolled account of c.1280 is extant in which the calculation of *proficuum manerii* is included; perfected the *custodia* organization of the properties when prelate; his ability eulogized by the Oseney annalist. *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* iv, 113, 169, 383, v, 105, vi, 184ff.; Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 74; *Annales Monastici* iv, 107, 112, 126-7, 129-30, 208-11, 302-3.

*William de Pencrich* Steward, between 1276 and 1306; reputed to be sixty years old in 1324; he may have arrived at the abbey through its property at Shenston in Staffs. Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 20; Bodleian Oseney Rolls 95, 97; *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* v, 383-4.

*William de Bruselingham* Steward, 1281-82 (part year). Still a canon in 1314. Bodleian Oseney Roll 95; *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* ii, 237.

*John Poygnaunt* Steward, 1284-85 (part year). Canon-warden at Stone, 1316-21, and at Kiltenan (Ireland), 1330-31. Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 32-35; Bodleian Oseney Roll 16.

*William de Tettuswrthe* Steward, *temp.* Edw II and 1330-31. Canon-warden at Kiltenan; proctor in 1324. Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 47; Bodleian Oseney Roll 41; *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* v, 138, 383-4.

*Thomas de Mamesfeld* Steward, 1325-26, 1333-34. Canon-warden at Bibury in 1348 and one of the *maior et sanior pars* in 1360. Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 35, 48; *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* v, 9, 140.

*John de Sutton* Steward between 1288 and 1326. Reputed to be aged at least sixty in 1324. Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 24-25, 34-35, 43; Bodleian Oseney Roll 43; *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* v, 383-4.

*William de Abyngdone* Steward, 1337-38. Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 52; *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* iv, 322-3.

*John de Waringtone* Steward, 1336-37, 1340. Bodleian Oseney Roll 108; Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 51, 63.

10 Problems in the administration of small properties: three Oxfordshire glebe-demesnes, 1278-1345

The economic organization of small manors probably differed in quality as well as in quantity from the administration of large manors of both lay and religious. The glebe-demesne was a peculiar type of small non-manorial property which was characteristic of the estates of many houses of Austin Canons. Its prevalence in Austin Canon estates was first discerned, for Yorkshire houses of the Order, by T. A. M. Bishop. R. H. Hilton also remarked upon the high proportion of glebe-demesnes in the estates of Leicester and Owston Abbeys in Leicestershire. More recently, Ian Kershaw discussed the glebe-demesnes in the composition of the estates of Bolton Priory, an Austin Canons house in Yorkshire.<sup>247</sup>

The formation and distribution of this type of small property have thus received considerable treatment, but little has been established about the problems of administering such small properties. To some extent, these problems were identical with those confronting the lord of any small manor. The difficulties of the glebe-demesne were, however, exacerbated by its non-manorial quality. The glebe-demesne was essentially a demesne constructed around the glebe of an appropriated parish church. The appropriated glebe was consolidated by purchase and exchange of property. The glebe-demesne, nevertheless, differed from the small manor, since it comprised no tenant land at all or few tenants. The absence of tenant land accentuated the labour problems of the small property, as well as affecting the level of receipts in rents. The principal problems of the glebe-demesne consisted of the complicated financial organization; a dependence on wage labour; and a shortage of cash.

Some indications of the issues confronting the lord, and also his officials, of the glebe-demesne may be derived from an examination of the glebe-demesnes of Oseney Abbey, an Austin Canon house established just outside the walls of Oxford in 1129. In the case of the Oseney glebe-demesnes, the difficulties above were also affected by the abbey's method of exploitation: production was influenced more by the needs of the conventual household (consumption) than the market economy.

The estates of Oseney Abbey were concentrated in Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire. As with the estates of most of the houses of the new Orders of the twelfth century, the estates of Oseney followed closely the tenurial geography of the founder and patrons, the Oilly family.<sup>248</sup> Oxfordshire was situated in the 'manorialized' south and west of England, which was dominated by large seigniories. In 1279-80, the 'classic' manor, where manor and vill were coincidental, was more prevalent in Oxfordshire than in any other county included in

---

<sup>247</sup>Bishop, 'Monastic granges in Yorkshire'; Hilton, *Economic Development of Some Leicestershire Estates*, 36ff.; Kershaw, *Bolton Priory*, 22ff.

<sup>248</sup>The best description of the Oilly barony is Rylands Eng. MS. 714 (Oilly bundle), which consists of a draft manuscript by W. Farrer.

the *Rotuli Hundredorum*.<sup>249</sup>

The estates of Oseney Abbey present a contrast with this general pattern of land tenure in Oxfordshire, despite the abbey's position as one of the largest houses of the Austin Canon Order. In c.1200 the abbey's estates were largely composed of small glebe-demesne properties in vills where the house had been able to appropriate the parish church.<sup>250</sup> The structure of the estates was modified somewhat by the abbey's entrance on a considerable scale into the land market between c.1200 and c.1240. At least £848 was expended on the purchase of rural property, principally on manorial properties bought from lay lords who were presumably in some financial difficulty. In 1279-80, nonetheless, the glebe-demesnes of the house still constituted a considerable portion of the abbey's estates.

Three archetypal glebe-demesnes of the house in Oxfordshire were located in Watlington, Chastleton and Waterperry, for which there are extant bailiffs' accounts.<sup>251</sup> At Chastleton in 1279-80, the abbey held the advowson with three virgates of glebe-demesne; at Waterperry, it held the advowson, three messuages, three cottages and a virgate. In neither vill had the abbey been able to improve its tenurial position since c.1200. The position at Watlington was slightly different, for here the abbey had acquired at least thirty-four acres of land between c.1200 and 1279, which had included at least three explicit purchases costing a total of twenty-three marks. The glebe-demesne at Watlington thus comprised in 1279-80 the advowson, three virgates of glebe, a plot (*placea*), and two unmeasured furlongs.<sup>252</sup> Despite its acquisitions in Watlington, the abbey remained one of the inferior free tenants in the vill which was dominated by the immense manor of the earldom of Cornwall and its principal mesne tenants.<sup>253</sup> The relative position of the abbey in Watlington is perhaps best reflected by its holding the two unmeasured furlongs as one of the seven cottagers (*coterelli*) of William de la Ho.<sup>254</sup> The abbey's property in all three locations consisted of a small demesne constructed around a glebe and little or no tenant land.

The abbey's properties which were glebe-demesnes were managed by resident bailiffs who were free servants of the abbey. Each bailiff was despatched to a

---

<sup>249</sup>P. Vinogradoff, *English Society in the Eleventh Century* (repr. Oxford, 1968), 55-60; F. M. Stenton in *Victoria History of the County of Oxfordshire* i, 374ff.; R. V. Lennard, *Rural England 1086-1135* (Oxford, 1959), 40ff.; E. A. Kosminsky, 'Services and money rents' repr. in E. M. Carus-Wilson, ed., *Essays in Economic History* ii (1962), 36.

<sup>250</sup>The process of appropriation is described by Colvin, *White Canons*, 272ff.; Dickinson, *Origins of the Austin Canons*, 229ff.; and Hartridge, *A History Vicarages in the Middle Ages*, 162ff.

<sup>251</sup>They were deposited by Christ Church, Oxford, in the Bodleian Library and constitute d. d. Ch. Ch. O. R. c. 26 ff. They were listed by N. Denholm-Young, *Medieval Archives of Christ Church* (OHS xcii, 1929), 13ff. (his references were: Ch. Ch. O. R. 2-9, 44-59, and 62-5).

<sup>252</sup>*Rotuli Hundredorum* (2 vols, Record Commission, 1818), ii, 725, 729b, 816; *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* iv, 411-23.

<sup>253</sup>*Rotuli Hundredorum* ii, 816; L. M. Midgley, ed., *Ministers' Accounts of the Earldom of Cornwall, 1296-7* (2 vols, Camden Society 3rd series, 66, 1942), i, 84ff. The activities of some of the earl's mesne tenants are illustrated in Merton College, Oxford, MM 817-18, 830-2, 842-4, and 854-6.

<sup>254</sup>*Rotuli Hundredorum* ii, 816.

glebe-demesne for a limited period, usually not exceeding three years, no doubt to prevent that familiarity which might induce abuse of the position. These bailiffs received a wage of 10s. and an annual corrody of grain, and sat at the common table of the manor in autumn (during harvest time). They rendered account for their bailiwicks at or just after Michaelmas (29 September) before the itinerant steward of the estates and his clerk. This audit occurred on the properties, a local audit as opposed to a central one; because of the time involved in visiting each of the properties for this audit, some of the manorial accounts were not finally audited until Martinmas (11 November).

The bailiffs' accounts were the customary charge-discharge type which were designed to assess the obligations between the accounting official (in this case, the bailiff) and the lord, as it was expressed in the balance of the cash part of the account on the face of the rolls.<sup>255</sup> The balances most frequently encountered in manorial accounts was the *quietus* (clear) and the *arrearagium* (*et debet*) (and he owes); in the latter, the charge (*recepta*) of the account exceeded the discharge (*expense*) so that the official was deemed to owe cash to the lord.<sup>256</sup> In contrast, the balance which occurred almost consistently in the accounts for Watlington, Waterperry and Chastleton was the *excessus* or *superplusagium*, which resulted because the discharge (*expense*) of the account were held to have exceeded the charge (*recepta*). This *excessus* balance was characteristic of the glebe-demesne properties.

The *excessus* was, nonetheless, probably fictitious in the following sense. The main objective of the charge-discharge account was to preserve a pro forma. In practice it would have been almost impossible for the bailiff to dispense more than he received; it seems then that the real definition of the *recepta* and *expense* is what ought to have been received and disbursed in cash for the management of the property, whether that cash was actually so or not. The phenomenon is well illustrated by two Chastleton rolls of 1339 and 1340, in which schedules of debts at the foot of the face of the rolls consist of the costs and wages of autumn (harvest), the wages of the *famuli* (permanent estate labourers) and the vicar's stipend. These items were obviously not paid out in these years. Those very items were, however, included in the discharge of the account, although they were not actually defrayed. It must then be presumed that they were entered merely to maintain the form of the account.<sup>257</sup>

For Waterperry, eight of eleven accounts for 1280 and between 1328 and 1345 contained an *excessus* balance, which ranged between just under 10s. to just over £2 10s. All four accounts for Watlington (1328, 1339, 1342, 1345) conclude with an *excessus* balance of the same order. Six out of seven Chastleton accounts have an *excessus* balance (1278-79, 1335, 1337, 1339, 1340, but with a tiny *et*

<sup>255</sup>Stone, 'Profit and loss accountancy', for the rationale of the procedures of accountancy.

<sup>256</sup>These terms are explained in the treatise for Beaulieu Abbey, the 'Regule compoti', which are printed in Denholm-Young, *Seigniorial Administration*, 170-1; for examples of the *quietus* and *et debet*, Hall, *Pipe Roll of the Bishopric of Winchester, 1208-9*, passim, and Holt, *Pipe Roll of the Bishopric of Winchester, 1210-11*, passim, especially, in this context, for the bishop's large manors in Oxfordshire at Adderbury and Witney which were of an entirely different character to the Oseney properties.

<sup>257</sup>For an explanation in greater detail, see chapter 8 above.

*debet* in 1333). Four of the Chastleton accounts had a *surplusagium/excessus* between just over £2 10s. and just over £4 10s.

The *excessus* may have been aggravated by the abbey's manner of exploitation of its glebe-demesne properties. Production was directed to the provisioning of the convent and manorial costs rather than a market economy. The levels of sales of grain from the glebe-demesnes, with the exception of a few fortuitous years, remained minimal. At Waterperry, the receipt of grain in seven years between 1329 and 1341 ranged from 114 to 194 quarters, a mean of 139 quarters (standard deviation 28.9) and median of 123 quarters. Sales of grain from the property fluctuated, ranging from six quarters (1328) to fifty-seven quarters (1338). The exceptionally low level of sales up to 1337 was succeeded by a period of higher sales: fifteen percent of receipts sold in 1337, fifty percent in 1338 (largely dredge and barley) and twenty-seven percent in 1341 (again mainly dredge and barley). The same pattern can be observed at Chastleton; there sales were insignificant before 1339, but in 1339 and 1340 attained twenty-eight percent and sixteen percent respectively of the grain received.

Perhaps Watlington is most instructive because there is a comparison. The accrual of grain for the abbey at Watlington depended enormously on tithe income, which resulted in large fluctuations. In three years in the early fourteenth century, the grain totals varied startlingly: 135 quarters, 254 quarters and 300 quarters. Considering that most of this income did not require any investment from the abbey as it was tithe receipt, the proportion sold was low: eight percent, twenty-four percent, and thirty percent. Much of the tithe receipt was derived from the demesne in Watlington belonging to the earldom of Cornwall. In 1296-97, the earldom's demesne produced one hundred quarters of wheat, eighty-eight of which were sold; forty of barley, thirty-two of which were sold; and twenty-six of dredge, nineteen being sold. On the adjacent manor of Cuxham, belonging to Merton College, Oxford, 165 quarters of wheat were produced in 1276, 130 of which were sold.<sup>258</sup>

The income from sales of grain thus remained particularly low: in ten years at Waterperry in 1280 and between 1328 and 1345, between 13s. 4d. and £8 16s. 6d., but exceeding £5 in only two years; in three years at Chastleton (1337-40) just over £1, almost £2, and just over £2; at Watlington, somewhat higher, but still not significant, just under £4 in two years, almost £7 in another, and in 1345 over £17 because enlarged by the sale of forty-four quarters of malt.

The actual levels of sales, moreover, were below the raw figures listed above. The *bladum venditum* (grain sold) of some of the bailiff's accounts expressed the reasons for some of the 'sales'. Not all such 'sales' were voluntary nor accrued to clear profit. Innumerable 'sales' were compulsory and appear more in the nature of expenses and costs paid in kind. These sales were effected to raise cash for specific purposes. For example, five quarters of dredge were sold at Waterperry in 1335 to raise cash to defray the archdeacon's procuration. In 1336, a further four quarters of wheat were sold there to find cash to purchase two necessary

<sup>258</sup>Midgley, *Ministers' Accounts of the Earldom of Cornwall* i, 88ff.; Merton College, Oxford, MM 5803, m. 3.

plough-oxen. In the following year, the bailiff there sold twelve quarters of oats to acquit some small costs (*ad solvendum pro minutis expensis*). In five separate years, furthermore, the bailiff there was compelled to sell quantities of wheat and oats to raise cash to acquit the wages of the *famuli*, the permanent estate labourers.<sup>259</sup>

These expediciencies illustrate the cash shortage which was often one of the principal problems in the administration of small properties. This cash deficiency was intensified by the absolute dependence of the glebe-demesnes on wage or contractual labour, since the abbey had no or very few tenants on these properties. The nucleus of the labour force was, as was normal, the *famuli* who were supplemented for specific tasks (reaping and threshing) and seasons (especially Autumn/harvest) by temporarily hired wage labour (*ad tascham*). Both groups required a cash wage, which presented problems to the bailiffs of the glebe-demesnes.

In normal years, the *famuli* received a cash wage with a corrody of grain. In many years, however, when the bailiffs presumably experienced an acute cash shortage, the *famuli* had to accept a second corrody in lieu of a cash wage. At Waterperry in 1337, for example, the second corrody was paid in sheaves in the fields rather than in threshed grain from the granary. Indeed, similar arrangements were occasionally required at another small property of the abbey at Forest Hill: all the other *famuli* took grain in the fields for their summer wage (*omnes alii famuli ceperunt bladum in campis pro stipendio estiuuali*) and all these *famuli* and two dairy assistants took grain in the fields as it is estimated by the village jurors to the value of their wages (*omnes isti famuli et .ij. daye ceperunt bladum in campis prout estimatum est ad valenciam stipendiorum eorum per iuratos ville*).<sup>260</sup> In severe years, the simple solution was to defer the payment of the cash wage altogether. The wages of the *famuli* of Watlington were so detailed by the bailiff there in 1328 and paid in arrears: Item paid for the wages of the *famuli* as is shown by a bill from the time of John Pryngle (the outgoing bailiff) (*Item solut' pro stipendiis famulorum prout patet per dividendam de tempore Johannis Pryngle*). Similarly, the debts of the bailiff of Waterperry constantly included the wages of the *famuli*. In 1339, for example, his debts contained the wages of the shepherd, the dairy assistant, and the swineherd. In the following year, the *excessus* of his balance was qualified: and he owes the whole for the wages of the *famuli* (*et totum debet pro stipendiis famulorum*).

The bailiffs of the glebe-demesnes made efforts equally to avoid cash payments for temporary, hired labour. In the case of the labour required in Autumn (harvest carters, forkers and stackers), it proved impossible to avoid a cash wage. There was, however, a definite tendency to pay threshers and reapers in kind rather than in cash. All reaping and all threshing, except for the minute amount completed by the *famuli*, was accomplished by temporarily-hired wage labour. Reapers were remunerated consistently in kind, receiving a specific portion of

<sup>259</sup>M. M. Postan, *The Famulus*, EconHR Supplement no. 2 (1954).

<sup>260</sup>Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 23-24.

the sheaves which they bound. By the middle of the fourteenth century, this rate was established as the twentieth sheaf, although it had been higher in the late thirteenth century at the seventeenth sheaf: *totum bladum de dominico mest' est ad .xx.am garbam* (all demesne grain was reaped for the 20th sheaf); *omnia genera bladi manerii metentur ad .xx.am garbam* (all kinds of manorial grain were reaped for the 20th sheaf); *in met' diversorum bladorum nichil in denariis quia omnia blada met' ad .xx.am garbam* (in reaping several grains nothing in cash because all grains reaped for the 20th sheaf); *omnia blada met' ad .xx.am garbam ideo nichil hic in denariis* (all grains reaped for the 20th sheaf therefore nothing here in cash); *in met' bladi nichil hic in denariis quia omnia genera bladi met' ad .xx.am garbam* (for reaping grain nothing here in cash because all kinds of grain reaped for the 20th sheaf); *in blada met' nichil computat quia omnia blada met' ad .xx.am garbam* (for reaping grain he accounts for nothing because all grains reaped for the 20th sheaf) (all Waterperry); *nichil computat in messione bladorum pro eo quod mess' pro .xvii.a garba* (he accounts for nothing for reaping grains because they were reaped for the 17th sheaf) (Forest Hill, 1277).<sup>261</sup> Although threshers were still occasionally paid in cash (*bladum ... triturationem ad tascham pro denariis*) (grain ... threshed by contract for cash), they more usually received payment in kind (*bladum ... triturationem ad tascham pro blado*) (grain ... threshed by contract for payment in kind). By such methods the bailiffs were partially successful in reducing their cash obligations.

Their success was only partial, as is indicated by the straits of the bailiff of Chastleton. He was dependent on 'foreign' receipts of cash from the official of the larger manor of Hook Norton and from the steward of the abbey's estates, to acquit some of his obligations. He particularly needed cash from these external sources to defray the costs of Autumn (harvest). He thus received 26s. from Hook Norton *pro expensis Autumpnalibus*, 20s. from the steward *pro expensis Autumpnalibus*, and a further 10s. from the steward *contra Autumpnum*.

A further reflection of the cash deficiency of these glebe-demesnes was the relative understocking of the three properties. Most importantly, the bovine stock fell far short of the necessary level for replenishment of the plough-teams. The plough-teams on these properties were almost certainly mixed teams of oxen and affers (draught horses). Walter of Henley recommended a mixed team which included two horses, by which we might infer four or six oxen with two leading horses.<sup>262</sup> This mixed number was certainly the composition of the Oseney team on these properties. We can elicit the number of ploughs from the wages of the demesne ploughmen (in the *stipendia famulorum*). Cross-reference then to the livestock account allows the reconstitution of the plough-team. The full complement at Watlington was probably four oxen and two affers, at Waterperry six oxen and two affers, but four oxen and two affers in three years, and at Chastleton six oxen.

The complement of oxen, however, quite often failed to meet the requirements of the team size. At Watlington, where there was a single plough, the

<sup>261</sup>Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 20.

<sup>262</sup>Oschinsky, *Walter of Henley*, 318-19 (Walter, c.36).

number of oxen once fell to three (1339). Waterperry required two ploughs, yet the oxen numbered only six in one year. In 1336 when seven oxen died, the stock was only partially replaced, leaving only nine oxen for the two teams. Whilst at Waterperry there had been two teams of two oxen and six oxen until 1335, between 1336 and 1338 the teams were reduced to two oxen and only four oxen. Only in 1341 was the team restored to two oxen and six oxen. This deficiency at Waterperry was exemplified by the necessity of putting cows into the plough-team in two successive years with the disastrous consequence that a calf was lost during pregnancy and the milk yield depleted: *et non de pluribus (sc. vitulis) quia .i. vacca amisit vitulum in labore ad carucam; memorandum quod nichil recept' de lactagio quia .i. vacca fuit continue per tempus compoti ad carucam*. The obvious cause of this measure of understocking was the low number of cows sustained by the abbey on each of its glebe-demesnes. Understocking was not confined to the peasantry in this locality, but sometimes also affected the level of efficiency of the small manor or the glebe-demesne.<sup>263</sup>

At Watlington, between three and five cows were expected to sustain the team of three or four oxen, requiring a hundred percent successful reproduction. At Waterperry, between two and five cows were maintained to support the two teams of oxen; the number of oxen thus fluctuated between eight (two years) and nine (one year) and twelve to fourteen. At Chastleton, where six oxen were supported, a single cow was maintained. Restocking the plough-team was thus always liable to failure and depended on a hundred percent reproduction and survival of calves, a fallible premiss.

The administration of the glebe-demesne thus suffered from a number of distinct problems, which probably all derived in the last resort from the peculiar financial difficulties. The economic exploitation of the glebe-demesnes of Oseney Abbey was directed to the provision of the convent and manorial needs. In c.1280, the abbey attempted to calculate the 'profit-and-loss' account of individual properties, basically by evaluating the liveries in cash and kind to the house. The membrane containing the calculation for the glebe-demesne of Watlington is extant. The *proficuum [manerii]* for Watlington attained £32, consisting principally of the value of the liveries of grain to the abbey.<sup>264</sup> The glebe-demesne thus had an important role in the economy of the house. This type of property suffered, nonetheless, from a dearth of cash, a lack of investment, and the inherent difficulties of a small seigniorial property. The abbey's mode of exploitation of these properties is also a salutary reminder that not all religious houses made a reckless pursuit of profit and intensive agriculture the sole principle of the economic organization of their estates.

---

<sup>263</sup>M. M. Postan, 'Village livestock in the thirteenth century', *EconHR* 2nd series xv (1962), 219ff.

<sup>264</sup>*Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* vi, 201-3.

## 11 Grain issues from some Oseney properties, 1274-1348

One of the indicators of the efficiency of medieval agriculture is the yield of grain. Much research has been concentrated on this aspect of the medieval economy, with particular attention to the estates of religious houses, for which there is usually more complete data than for the estates of lay lords.<sup>265</sup> Statistics of such yields from the estates of houses of Austin Canons are, however, still rather scarce.<sup>266</sup> Although the Oseney estates included some large manors, the extant ministers' accounts largely derive from the abbey's smaller properties. Some of these smaller properties, such as Forest Hill, Waterperry, Chastleton and Watlington, were really glebe-demesnes or demesnes created from or around an appropriated glebe.<sup>267</sup> Unfortunately, there are no surviving complete accounts for the largest manors such as Hook Norton or Water Eaton. The grain statistics are therefore a little fragmented and weighted.

There does remain, however, a substantial portion of a centrally-enrolled account of c.1280 which provides figures for almost all the manors.<sup>268</sup> The evidence from the fourteen properties represented in this roll confirms some of the trends revealed in the original ministers' accounts of the smaller properties. The total income from the sale of grain of the fourteen properties in this year (including the largest manors of Hook Norton, Water Eaton and Weston-on-the-Green) did not exceed £60. This figure is quite derisory when compared, for example, with the £276 received for sales of grain from the fifteen English manors of Abbey of Bec.<sup>269</sup> Bec, of course, was an absentee lord and preferred to sell most of its grain from its English estates. Oseney, in contrast, produced most of its grain for direct consumption, either for self-sufficiency on the manor or delivery to the conventual granary.

The abbey employed the conventional methods to try to increase productivity, but was not necessarily inspired by a commercial motive.<sup>270</sup> The abbey also put into practice the precept that seedcorn should be changed regularly, either through inter-manorial liveries and exchanges or by purchase. The reeve of Little Tew received two and a half quarters of rye for sowing (*ad seminandum*) from the reeve of Great Barton.<sup>271</sup> Rye seed was sent from Hampton Gay to Forest Hill *ad seminandum*.<sup>272</sup> The bailiff of Waterperry sent a quarter of wheat

---

<sup>265</sup>See, for example, the comprehensive analysis of yields on the estates of the bishopric of Winchester: J. Z. Titow, *Winchester Yields. A Study in Medieval Agricultural Productivity* (Cambridge, 1972); and D. L. Farmer, 'Grain yields on the Winchester manors in the later middle ages', *EconHR* 2nd series xxx (1977), 555-66.

<sup>266</sup>The fullest series is Kershaw, *Bolton Priory*, 38; more fragmentary is the material at Hilton, *Economic Development of Some Leicestershire Estates*. The series for Bolton, because of the particularities of the region, is concentrated on oats.

<sup>267</sup>See Chapter 10.

<sup>268</sup>*Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* vi, 184ff.

<sup>269</sup>M. Morgan, *The English Lands of the Abbey of Bec* (Oxford, repr. 1968), 46.

<sup>270</sup>See also E. M. Halcrow, 'The decline of demesne farming on the estates of Durham Cathedral Priory', *EconHR* 2nd series vii (1955), 345ff.

<sup>271</sup>Bodleian Oseney Roll 97.

<sup>272</sup>Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 22.

*ad seminandum apud middele* (Medley) and other seedcorn to other manors.<sup>273</sup> The same bailiff, however, constantly purchased seedcorn for sowing at Waterperry and Thumley.<sup>274</sup> The reeve of Little Barton sowed seed sent from Fulwell, and seed from Watlington was sown at Holcombe.<sup>275</sup> The bailiff of Forest Hill bought three quarters of wheat, two bushels of peas, and two quarters and two bushels of wheat *ad seminandum*, whilst the bailiff of Stone bought five quarters of dredge seed.<sup>276</sup> This changing of seed accorded with the maxim of Walter of Henley.<sup>277</sup> It was certainly not an influx of seed to remedy a deficiency of seedcorn, although the amounts involved were small.

The rate of sowing varied according to the type of grain. Wheat was sown at a rate of two to two and a half bushels per acre, which Walter regarded as the minimum.<sup>278</sup> Oats were sown at a slightly higher rate, usually three bushels, but occasionally four bushels, per acre. Oats were probably more intensively sown as the seed-yield ratio was usually low. Intensive sowing was one method of counteracting the lowness of yields. In the case of oats, however, it proved to be only partially successful; the ultimate result was that oats were replaced on some properties by other grains (see further below). Dredge, barley and pulses were all sown at a higher rate, three or four bushels per acre. These grains were also the highest yielding.<sup>279</sup> Dredge and barley constituted the principal grains sold, but the main reason for the higher rate of sowing was probably the need of the property.

Sales of grain as they appear in the *Bladum venditum* (grain sold) paragraph of the accounts, can be deceptive. The constantly poor yield of oats, for example, made the abbey a purchaser as well as a vendor of grain.<sup>280</sup> The bare statistics of sales should also be qualified. Some sales of grain were necessary to raise cash to acquit obligations. The urgency of these sales is reflected in the amount of grain sold in the sheaf before threshing, rather than being precisely measured. In some cases, this sale may even have been fictitious; this is especially so for grain supposedly sold in sheaves in the field to acquit the wages of the *famuli*. In such cases, the grain was probably given to the *famuli* in lieu of their cash wage. Five quarters and one bushel of wheat were sold as new grain, cut early, for 2s. per qtr, a low price 'in the field by estimate in sheaves given for the wages of the *famuli* for Michaelmas term' (*in campo per estimacionem in garbis datis pro stipendiis famulorum ad terminum sancti michaelis*).<sup>281</sup> Such 'sales' were a frequent occurrence at Waterperry.<sup>282</sup> Other sales were actually made

<sup>273</sup>Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 47, 54.

<sup>274</sup>Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 51 (2 qtrs of oats), 58 (2 qtrs of beans, 5qtrs 6bs of oats), 59 (4 qtrs of oats).

<sup>275</sup>Bodleian Oseney Roll 19; Ch. Ch. O. R. 62.

<sup>276</sup>Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 23-25, 35.

<sup>277</sup>Oschinsky, *Walter of Henley*, 325.

<sup>278</sup>Oschinsky, *Walter of Henley*, 325.

<sup>279</sup>Oschinsky, *Walter of Henley*, 418.

<sup>280</sup>For example, Bodleian Oseney Roll 19: 20 qtrs of oats bought; see also Table 2.

<sup>281</sup>Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 53; additionally, in the same account, twelve qtrs and half a bushel of oats were sold for the same purpose. I am grateful to Paul Harvey for the suggestion about the fictitious nature of the sale.

<sup>282</sup>Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 52, 58, 59.

to raise cash to defray other obligations. Five quarters of dredge, for example, were sold to acquit the archdeacon's procuration; four quarters and a bushel of wheat to raise cash to buy two oxen; and twelve quarters of oats to acquire the funds to pay small costs (*ad soluendum pro minutis necessariis*).<sup>283</sup> Some grain, furthermore, was sold because it was inferior: one and a half quarter of pulses because wet (*quia humidum*) and sixteen quarters of grain because inferior (*quia debilis*).<sup>284</sup>

Figures for issues in the *Exitus Grangie* (grange issues) paragraph are provided in Table 1. Such figures contain some slight inaccuracies. It is not necessary in most instances to allow for tithes taken in the fields, as the abbey was the rector in most cases.<sup>285</sup> It is necessary, however, in the cases of Sibford and Maids Moreton. Reapers were frequently paid in the fields at Forest Hill and Waterperry. At Forest Hill in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, the reapers took the seventeenth sheaf. In the fourteenth century at Waterperry, they acquired the twentieth sheaf.<sup>286</sup> The grange account completely ignored this prior deduction and consequently the figures for yields in the grange accounts for these two properties are underestimates. The same measures were used in both grange and granary, so that no discrepancy resulted between the two locations. It was customary on Oseney manors to use the strike or levelled bushel in the granary. This measure was also employed in the grange for newly-threshed grain. Accounts of grain threshed constantly refer to the *rasa mensura* (struck measure), although it is also occasionally indicated by measuring *sine cumulo* (without heaping). By using the strike in both grange and garner, the abbey obviated any fraudulence by its officials using heaped measures in the grange and struck measures in the garner.<sup>287</sup>

Grain, on the other hand, was constantly consumed in the sheaf for diverse purposes, often as livestock feed; for example, an estimated four quarters and six bushels given to the oxen in sheaves.<sup>288</sup> In most cases, some estimate was made of the amount of grain. There was a rough calculation that sixteen sheaves contained a bushel: in 690 sheaves for fodder for oxen and it is estimated in sixteen sheaves one bushel; in 116 sheaves given to three oxen and it is estimated in sixteen sheaves a bushel.<sup>289</sup> This estimate was duly recorded in the grange account, but it was merely an estimate. When the batches of sheaves amounted to only small quantities, as with livestock feed, the estimate may have been fairly reliable. The accounting official, nevertheless, still might neglect to make

<sup>283</sup>Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 25, 50-52.

<sup>284</sup>Bodleian Oseney Roll 95, Ch. Ch. O. R. 35.

<sup>285</sup>R. V. Lennard, 'Statistics of corn yields in medieval England: some critical questions', *Economic History* iii (1934-7), 173ff.

<sup>286</sup>For example, Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 20, 22, 47.

<sup>287</sup>Oschinsky, *Walter of Henley*, 168, 323, 325; an exception is the granger's use of the heaped bushel in the tithe barn at Waterperry: *de incremento cumulorum de decima* (from the increase of heaped measure of tithes): Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 58.

<sup>288</sup>Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 37: *Et de iiij qr vj bus receptis de cccccxvj garbis per estimationem datis in prebend' bouum*.

<sup>289</sup>Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 51: *in vj<sup>c</sup>iiij<sup>xx</sup> garbis ad prebend' Bouum et estimabatur in xvj garbis j bs.; in cxvj garbis datis ij Bobus et estimabatur in xvj garbis j bs.*

an estimate and the auditors accept it; thus the reeve of Stone claimed: that the rest of the fodder was from pulses in the sheaves and he does not know how much in the sheaves.<sup>290</sup> When the number of sheaves was larger, moreover, the reliability of the estimate may be less certain. Uncertainty may attach to the case of the fifty quarters of beans sold at Stone *per estimacionem ... in uno tasso* (by estimate ... in a stack).<sup>291</sup> The *famuli* were frequently paid in kind (in sheaves) in the fields, especially on smaller properties with a lack of cash: for example, *quia ceteri famuli iste [sic] habuerunt stipendia in campo excepto quod iiij famuli habuerunt de grangia v bs. drag' ... quia insufficientes fuerunt isti [sic] quatuor stipendia in campo* (because the other *famuli* had wages in the field except four had five bushels of dredge from the grange ... because the four wages were defective in the field).<sup>292</sup> When this sort of payment occurred, the grange account took it into consideration, but only as an estimate of quantity.

Estimates of the contents of sheaves were a persistent feature of the grange accounts. The auditors did introduce more precision when the *responsio* ('target') was introduced.<sup>293</sup> The *responsio* first appears in full form as the auditors' marginal addition to the accounts in 1335. It had, however, appeared in embryonic form slightly earlier: *defic' de estimatione ix qr* (it falls 9 qtrs below the estimate).<sup>294</sup> The target was probably set each year when the grain was in the stalk, perhaps by the itinerant steward.<sup>295</sup> When it is recorded, however, the target is simply the threefold yield from seed required by Walter of Henley to break even in any year: *oneratur super comptum quia non respondet ad terciū granum* (he is charged after the account because he did not answer to the third grain); *item oneratur de ij qr ij bus ut respondeat ad terciū granum* (item he is charged for two quarters and two bushels so that he answers to the third grain); and a bailiff was charged for a bushel of barley because the yield fell below threefold.<sup>296</sup> The defect of this blanket method was that it did not eliminate the dishonesty of the accounting official if the yield exceeded this low target which was not appropriate to all grains equally, for some grains produced higher yields than threefold.

Relatively few figures can be extracted for acreages and these are mainly for Stone and Waterperry (Table 4). Although wheat was often sown over a larger acreage than any other grain, the main issue consisted of dredge (barley and oats mixed) and (pure) barley. The reason was no doubt the greater seed-yield ratio of these two grains. Winter grain (wheat and rye) was sown over less than half the total acreage sown, so that spring grain (barley, dredge, oats and

<sup>290</sup>Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 34: *quod resyduum prebend' fuit de howes et puls' in garbis setnessit quantum in garbis.*

<sup>291</sup>Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 34.

<sup>292</sup>Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 34. See also Chapter 10.

<sup>293</sup>Drew, 'Manorial accounts of St Swithun's Cathedral Priory'. The 'target' system was introduced earlier on some lay estates elsewhere; for example, East Carlton (Norfolk) and Beaumanor (Leics.) both in 1277-78: Rylands Phillips MS. 17 and Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland DG9/1954.

<sup>294</sup>Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 25, 49-50.

<sup>295</sup>See Chapter 9.

<sup>296</sup>Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 50, 52, 53.

pulses) combined were sown over a wider area. The spring grains, moreover, were sown more intensively. The high-yielding dredge consisted of more barley than oats, which accounts for the higher yield. On some properties, particularly Little Tew and Stone, oats were in decline, and were being replaced as livestock feed by barley, dredge and pulses. The reason was no doubt that oats were so low-yielding and in some years their yield was so disastrous to require the purchase in of considerable quantities.

Most grain was consumed in manorial obligations or sent to the abbey. Varying amounts of wheat were sold, ranging from a bushel to twenty-three and a half quarters in some years. The wheat sold was usually only a fraction of the issue. The variance of quantities sold from year to year confirms that grain was sold only because it was retrospectively found to be surplus to requirements rather than grown specifically for the market. That regime obtained for barley and dredge which comprised the largest quantities of grain sold. The overall impression is that the grain was produced to meet the needs of consumption. In this, Oseney, a house with a medium-sized estate for a religious house, contrasted quite strongly with those large Benedictine houses which operated 'federated grain factories.'<sup>297</sup>

---

<sup>297</sup>P. F. Brandon, 'Demesne arable farming in coastal Sussex in the later middle ages', *Agricultural History Review* xix (1971), 113.

Table 1 Demesne issue (from the Exitus Grangie) (to the nearest qtr)

Property	Date	Wheat	Rye	Barley (b)/dredge (d)	Oats	Pulses	Other
Little Tew	1273-74	22	9	67(d)	3	9	
	1281-82	22	3	37(d)		3	
	1284-85	23		22(d)	7	5	
	1288-89	23	2	34(d)	7	7	
Watlington	1305-6	34			10		
	1327-28	64		62(b), 81(d)	35	12	
	1341-42	50		43(b)	30	6	1i
	1344-45	82	54	118 (b+d)	35	11	
Forest Hill	1276-77	41	42	58(d)	12	27	11i
	1278-79	50	47*	59*(d)	28*	49*	12i
	1302-3	30	24#	52(d)	22	28*	8i
	1303-4	75	52#	67(d)	23	44*	4i
Stone	1320-21	85	7	155(d)		101	35i
	1324-25	54		57(d)	2	13	91i
	1325-26	83		111(d)		52	
	1326-27	50	21	181(d)		31	
	1331-32	128		206(d)		13	52i
	1342-43	84	19	99(b+d)		51	8i
Sibford	1277-78	1	42	23(d)	6	18	2ii
	1331-32		17#	33(d)	9	4	
Maids Moreton	1328-29	22		10(d)	20		
	1340-41	?	9	6(d)	28	4	
Waterperry	1279-80	90	126#		137		63iii
	1327-28	105		109(b)	30	34	
	1328-29	48		38(b+d)	25	12	14i,47ii
	1329-30	49		44(b+d)	20	45	5i
	1332-33	68		39(b),24(d)	35	28	16i,2ii
	1334-35	31		33(b),15(d)	30	10	12i
	1336-37	35		24(b),20(d)	37	29	
	1337-38	34		36(b)	25	19	29i
	1340-41	55		31(b)	14	21	6i
	1344-45	55		36(d)	16	33	12i
Chastleton	1277-78	24	23	10(d)	47	16	
	1278-79	23	33	17(d)	31	12	
	1331-32	?	26	17(d)	39		
	1334-35	22	40	23(d)	44	21	
	1336-37	26	35#	18(d)	46	25	
	1338-39	22	22	20(d)	46	27	
	1339-40	17	21#	21(d)	34	24	1i

i New grain ii Old grain iii *tramesium*

\* includes tithes since only a composite figure was given

# mixtil of wheat and rye

Stone includes Upton and Hertwell and Waterperry includes Thumley and Ledhale

*Table 2 Sales and purchases of grain (nearest penny)*

Property	Date	Sales	Purchases	
Forest Hill	1276-77	£3 11s. 8d.	6s. 0d.	
	1278-79	£4 13s. 7d.	11s. 2d.	
	1302-3	£2 5s. 0d.	£1 16s. 6d.	
	1303-4	£4 15s. 4d.	9s. 7d.	
Stone	1320-21	£24 11s. 2d.	17s. 0d.	
	1324-25	£15 18s. 10d.	£13 13s. 10d.	
	1325-26	£2 7s. 5d.		
	1326-27	£5 15s. 9d.		
	1331-32	£4 6s. 0d.		
	1340-41	£6 8s. 3d.	£1 0s. 0d.	
	Waterperry	1279-80	£1 3s. 8d.	
		1327-28	15s. 0d.	
1328-29		£2 14s. 6d.		
1332-33		£1 2s. 0d.		
1334-35		13s. 4d.		
1335-36		£1 16s. 1d.	4s. 0d.	
1336-37		£2 10s. 0d.		
1337-38		£5 13s. 7d.	£1 13s. 3d.	
1340-41		£8 16s. 6d.	£2 1s. 8d.	
1344-45		£4 7s. 8d.	8s. 0d.	
Watlington	1305-6	£6 18s. 2d.		
	1327-28	£3 18s. 4d.		
	1341-42	£3 19s. 0d.i		
	1344-45	£17 2s. 6d.ii		

i Includes twenty-two and a half qtrs of malt

ii Includes forty-one qtrs six bs of malt

Table 3 Composition of grain sales (to the nearest half qtr)

Property	Date	Wheat	Rye	Barley (b) and dredge (d)	Oats	Pulses
Forest Hill	1276-77	7		10(d)		3
	1278-79	11	4	9(d)		7
	1302-3	5		10.5(d)		4
	1303-4	10		18(d)		7
Stone	1320-21	14	1	75(d)		70
	1324-25	14.5		75.5(d)		6
	1325-26			13(d)		
	1326-27	22.5		21.5(d)		1.5
	1331-32	2		13(d)		
	1342-43	10		24.5(d)		7
Waterperry	1279-80	6				5*
	1327-28			3(b)	3	
	1328-29	9			1	
	1329-30			4(b+d)	2.5	2.5
	1336-37			10(b+d)	12	
	1337-38	9.5		34.5(b+d)	12	
	1340-41	6		21.5(b)	5.5	
	1344-45	6		20(b)	5.5	
Little Tew	1281-82					0.5
	1284-85	6	7.5			
	1288-89					3
Watlington	1305-6	15.5	6i	9.5(b+d)		
	1327-28	23		54(b+d)		
	1341-42	0.5		9.5(b)		
	1344-45	23.5	8	40(b)		
Chastleton	1277-78					
	1278-79					
	1331-32					
	1334-35		6			
	1336-37	2	3i	4(d)		
	1338-39	8	4.5	11(d)	4	9
	1339-40	0.5		12(d)	3	3
Sibford	1277-78		5.5			
	1331-32					
Maids Moreton	1328-29			2(d)	2	
	1340-41	3.5		3(d)	2.5	

i Mixture of wheat and rye

Table 4 Acreages sown

Property	Date	Wheat	Rye	Pulses	Barley (b) and dredge (d)	Oats	Total
Forest Hill	1302-3	76	16*	16	38(d)	21	167
	1303-4	74.5	53*	?	?	?	?
Stone	1320-21	80.5		29.5	86(d)		196
	1324-25	61.5		22.5	60(d)		144
	1325-26	95.5	7	43	61(d)		206.5
	1326-27	95	6	28	55.5(d)		184.5
	1331-32	?		38	84(d)		?
Waterperry	1327-28	30.5		11	13.5(d)	30.5	85.5
	1329-30	36.5		19.5	18.5(b+d)	37.5	112
	1332-33	44.5		13	21(b+d)	30	108.5
	1334-35	59		9	21.5(b+d)	22.5	112
Watlington	1338-39	20.5	18		20(b+d)	15.5	74

Table 5 Auditors' estimates of yields of grain

Property	Date	Wheat	Rye	Barley (b) and dredge (d)	Pulses	Oats
Stone	1342-43	4	5	3(b+d)	4.5	
Waterperry	1335				4	3
	1336-37	3		5(b),2(d)	8	3
	1337-38	4		3(b+d)	5	3
	1339-40	1		3(b),1(d)	4	1
	1340-41	5			3	1
	1344-45	4		5(d)	5	5
Maids Moreton	1340-41		7	4(d)	2.5	2

## 12 Estimates of harvest on some Oseney Abbey properties

The techniques of management employed by medieval lords in the administration of their estates have been appreciated for some considerable time, not least the methods of accountancy and the scrutiny of manorial offices. One strategy not quite as evident is the estimate of grain before harvest, which had, perhaps, a dual purpose: first, to maintain control over the accounting by the grange officials and reeve; and second, to plan for the requirements of consumption.<sup>298</sup>

Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 132 is a centrally-enrolled account of estimates of harvest on some properties of Oseney Abbey. The manuscript is a roll, written as a fair engrossment on the face only, and measures 56 cm. x 17 cm.

The officials of the abbey (probably the steward and his clerk) visited the properties before Michaelmas (29 September) when the grain had been gathered into the barns or granges, but still largely lay unthreshed, to estimate the size of the harvest before threshing. This timing of the visit is revealed in the entry for Fulwell. The estimates for each property seem then to have been enrolled together, although this document comprises only some, not all, of the abbey's properties. From the size of the stacks of unthreshed grain, the officials could estimate the quantity of the harvest, from the experience of threshing similar stacks in previous years, from rules of thumb, or perhaps even from some trials. This practice accorded with the suggestion of the anonymous author of *The Husbandry*.<sup>299</sup> It was a procedure advocated in another treatise of the mid fourteenth century.

Ad estimacionem grangie. Memorandum quod una meya frumenti in grangia que grangia est latitudinis xxx pedum in uno spacio inter duo [sic] furcos longitudine xv pedum et altitudine parietum x pedum continebit communiter xl quarteria.<sup>300</sup> [For the grange estimate. Note that one stack of wheat in the grange, which grange is 30' wide in one place between two forks, in length 15', and in height up the walls 10', will hold altogether 40 qtrs.]

Although our document is undated, the hand indicates an early-fourteenth century composition, and the inclusion of Sibford further suggests that it was compiled before 1337 when the demesne there was divided up into customary holdings.<sup>301</sup>

---

<sup>298</sup>Drew, 'Manorial accounts of St Swithun's Priory'; Stone, 'Profit-and-loss accountancy'; Harvey, *Manorial Records of Cuxham*, 117 (no. 29), 126 (no. 32) and 136 (no. 38) being examples of pre-harvest estimates.

<sup>299</sup>Oschinsky, *Walter of Henley*, 420-1 (c.5).

<sup>300</sup>Oschinsky, *Walter of Henley*, 475.

<sup>301</sup>*Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* iv, 322-3.

Table 1 Summary of harvest estimates (in qtrs)

Property	Wheat	Rye	Barley	Dredge	Oats	Pulses
Black Bourton	166		160 (a)	16 (b)		40 (c)
Aldsworth	17.5		40	40	20	
Bibury	80		220	200	20	
Turkdean	50		30	30 (d)		
Chastleton		40 (e)		20	24	30
Hook Norton		310 (f)		210	100	106 (g)
Sibford		27 (h)		12	10	16
Fulwell		180 (i)		240	30	48 (j)
Little Barton	43			10	40	23 (k)
Claydon	40	60			160	56 (l)
Stone	60	1		160		108 (m)

(a) 160 qtrs of barley and dredge (the latter a mixture of barley and oats)

(b) 16 qtrs of dredge and oats

(c) 36 qtrs of black pulses and 4 qtrs of pulses

(d) 30 qtrs of dredge and oats

(e) 35 qtrs of wheat and rye and 5 qtrs of wheat seed

(f) 25 qtrs of wheat seed, 185 qtrs of mixed wheat and rye, and 100 qtrs of wheat

(g) In two different stacks

(h) 27 qtrs of wheat and rye

(i) 100 qtrs of wheat, 60 qtrs of wheat and rye, 6 qtrs of wheat, and 14 qtrs of rye already sown

(j) Peas and vetches

(k) Peas and vetches

(l) 50 qtrs peas and 6 qtrs vetches

(m) 100 qtrs peas and 8 qtrs vetches

Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 132

Editorial notes: <> represents superscript material with a caret; [] material interpolated by the editor.

Bourton' In magna grangia ibidem sunt .ij. meye frumenti plene usque ad paruas trabes et medietas tercię meye usque ad magnas trabes cum .j. cantello frumenti antierius continentes per estimacionem in toto .Cxl. quarteria. Item in alio capite eiusdem grangie sunt due meye ordeı et drageti usque ad paruas trabes continentes per estimacionem .Cxx. quarteria. Item in parua grangia seminali est una meya frumenti seminalis continens per estimacionem .xxvj. quarteria. Item in alio capite eiusdem grangie est una meya ordeı et drageti continens per estimacionem .xl. quarteria. Item in parua domo est una porcio drageti et auene continens per estimacionem .xvj. quarteria. Item exterius sunt .ij. tassi quadr' nigri puls' continentes per estimacionem .xxxvj. quarteria. Item iuxta magnam grangiam est .j. tassus de puls' continens per estimacionem .iiij. quarteria.

[Black Bourton. In the great grange there are two stacks of wheat full up to the small [collar] beams and half of a third stack up to the great [tie] beams with one cauntle of wheat in front containing by estimate in all 140 qtrs. Item at the other end of the same grange are two stacks of barley and dredge up to

the small beams containing by estimate 120 qtrs. Item in the small grange for seed is one stack of wheatseed containing by estimate 26 qtrs. Item at the other end of the same grange is one stack of barley and dredge containing by estimate 40 qtrs. Item in the small building is one part of dredge and oats containing by estimate 16 qtrs. Item outside are two and a quarter stacks of black pulses containing by estimate 36 qtrs. Item next to the great grange is one stack of pulses containing by estimate 4 qtrs.]

Aldsworth' In inferiori grangia est dimidia meya frumenti fere usque ad magnas trabes continens per estimacionem .xvj. quarteria. Item ibidem est alia medietatis eiusdem meye de auena continens per estimacionem .xx. quarteria. Item in alio capite est una meya ordeï excedens altitudinem murorum continens per estimacionem .xl. quarteria. Item in grangia superiori est .j. Stak' frumenti continens per estimacionem .xij. bussellos frumenti. Item in eadem grangia sunt due meye drageti excedentes altitudinem murorum continentes per estimacionem .xl. quarteria.

[Aldsworth (Glos.) In the lower grange is half a stack of wheat almost up to the great beams containing by estimate 16 qtrs. Item there is there the other half of the same stack of oats containing by estimate 20 qtrs. Item at the other end is a stack of barley reaching above the height of the walls containing by estimate 40 qtrs. Item in the upper grange is one stack of wheat containing by estimate 12bs. of wheat. Item in the same grange are two stacks of dredge reaching above the height of the walls containing by estimate 40 qtrs.]

Bibury. In magna grangia ibidem in capite orientali est .j. meya frumenti excedens altitudinem murorum cum .ij. cantellis frumenti anterius continentes per estimacionem in toto .iiij.<sup>xx</sup> quarteria frumenti. Item in capite occidentali eiusdem grangie est .j. meya larga ordeï plena cum .ij. magnis cantellis eiusdem grani continentes in toto per estimacionem .CCxx. quarteria. Item in minori grangia sunt .iiij. meye drageti usque ad magnas trabes et medietas tercię meye eiusdem altitudinis et grani continentes in toto per estimacionem .CC. quarteria drageti. Item ibidem est unus cantellus auene continens per estimacionem .xx. quarteria.

[Bibury (Glos.). In the great grange there at the east end is one stack of wheat reaching above the height of the walls with two cauntles of wheat in front containing by estimate in all 80 qtrs of wheat. Item at the west end of the same grange is one wide, full stack of barley with two great cauntles of the same grain containing in all by estimate 220 qtrs. Item in the lesser grange there are three stacks of dredge up to the great beams and half a third stack of the same height and grain containing in all by estimate 200 qtrs dredge. Item there is there a cauntle of oats containing by estimate 20 qtrs.

Turkeden' In superiori grangia sunt .ij. meye frumenti plene continentes per estimacionem .L. quarteria. Item in inferiori grangia est una meya ordeï usque ad magnas trabes continens per estimacionem .xxx. quarteria. Item in eadem est alia meya drageti et auene continens per estimacionem .xxx. quarteria [et] extendit se usque ad paruas trabes.

[Turkdean (Glos.) In the upper grange are two full stacks of wheat containing by estimate 50 qtrs. Item in the lower grange is one stack of barley up to the great beams containing by estimate 30 qtrs. Item in the same is another stack of dredge and oats containing by estimate 30 qtrs [and] it reaches up to the small beams.]

Chastleton' In grangia ibidem in capite boreali est .j. meya usque ad magnas trabes frumenti et Siliginis mixti continens per estimacionem .xxxv. quarteria. Item antierius est .j. cantellus frumenti seminalis continens per estimacionem .v. quarteria. Et in capite occidentali eiusdem grangie est .j. meya usque ad magnas trabes drageti et auene et continens dragetum .xx. quarteria. Et auenam continens .xxiiij. quarteria. Item est .j. meya de puls' fere usque ad paruas trabes cum .j. magno cantello eiusdem grani ante hostium continens in toto per estimacionem .xxx. quarteria.

[Chastleton. In the grange there at the north end is one stack of mixed wheat and rye up to the great beams containing by estimate 35 qtrs. Item in front is one cauntle of wheatseed containing by estimate 5 qtrs. And at the west end of the same grange is one stack of dredge and oats up to the great beams and containing dredge 20 qtrs. And containing oats 24 qtrs. Item there is one stack of pulses almost up to the small beams with one great cauntle of the same grain before the door containing in all by estimate 30 qtrs.]

Hogenorton' In grangia seminali est una meya frumenti seminalis excedens altitudinem murorum continens per estimacionem .xxv. quarteria. Item in alio capite eiusdem grangie sunt .ij. meye usque ad magnas trabes et tercia usque ad altitudinem murorum frumenti et Siliginis mixti continentes in toto per estimacionem .Lv. quarteria. Item in magna grangia ibidem in capite occidentali sunt .ij. meye frumenti quarum una extendit ad paruas trabes et alia excedit altitudinem murorum continentes per estimacionem .C. quarteria. Item in alio capite sunt due meye plene et alia usque ad altitudinem murorum frumenti et Siliginis mixti continentes per estimacionem .Cxxx. quarteria. Item in alia grangia in capite orientali sunt due meye drageti quarum una plena et alia fere usque ad magnas trabes continentes per estimacionem .CCx. quarteria. Item in alio capite sunt .ij. meye excedentes altitudinem murorum quarum medietas est auene que continet per estimacionem .C. quarteria. Et alia medietas est puls' que continet per estimacionem .Lx. quarteria. Item exterius est [sic] unus tassus quadr' et .ij. cantelli de puls' in utraque grangia et continent per estimacionem in toto .xlvj. quarteria.

[Hook Norton. In the grange for seed is one stack of wheatseed reaching above the height of the walls containing by estimate 25 qtrs. Item at the other end of the same grange are two stacks of mixed wheat and rye up to the great beams and a third up to the height of the walls containing in all by estimate 55 qtrs. Item in the great grange there at the west end are two stacks of wheat one of which reaches to the small beams and the other reaches above the height of the walls containing by estimate 100 qtrs. Item at the other end are two full stacks of mixed wheat and rye and another up to the height of the walls containing by estimate 130 qtrs. Item in the other grange at the east end are

two stacks of dredge one of which full and the other almost up to the great beams containing by estimate 210 qtrs. Item at the other end are two stacks reaching above the height of the walls half of which is of oats which contains by estimate 100 qtrs. And the other half is pulses which contains by estimate 60 qtrs. Item on the outside is [sic] one and a quarter stack and 2 cauntles of pulses in each grange and they contain by estimate in all 46 qtrs.]

Sibforde. In grangia ibidem est una meya frumenti et Siliginis fere plena continens cum .j. cantello seminali .xxvij. quarteria. Item in alio capite est .j. meya drageti usque ad paruas trabes et auene <et> continet dragetum .xij. quarteria et continet auenam .x. quarteria. Item sunt ibidem .ij. cantelli de puls' continentes per estimacionem .xvj. quarteria de puls'

[Sibford Gower. In the grange there is one almost full stack of wheat and rye containing with one seed cauntle 27 qtrs. Item at the other end is one stack of dredge up to the small beams and it contains 12 qtrs dredge and it contains 10 qtrs oats. Item there are there two cauntles of pulses containing by estimate 16 qtrs of pulses.]

Folewelle. In superiori grangia ibidem in medio sunt .ij. meye de frumento usque ad magnas trabes continentes .C. quarteria. Item in alio capite versus orientem in eadem grangia est una meya frumenti et Siliginis pro liberacione famulorum fere usque ad magnas trabes continens .Lx. quarteria. Item in eadem grangia in capite occidentali est .j. meya de pisis et vecches continens .xlvij. quarteria et seminantur ibidem ante diem estimacionis .vj. quarteria frumenti et .xiiij. quarteria Siliginis videlicet ante octauas Sancti Michaelis. Item in inferiori grangia sunt .iiij. meye plene drageti excepta tercia parte unius meye que est auene cum paruo cantello antierius continentes .CCxl. quarteria drageti et .xxx. quarteria auene.

[Fulwell. In the upper grange there in the middle are two stacks of wheat up to the great beams containing by estimate 100 qtrs. Item at the other end towards the east in the same grange is a stack of wheat and rye for livery of the *famuli* almost up to the great beams containing 60 qtrs. Item in the same grange at the west end is one stack of peas and vetches containing 48 qtrs and 6 qtrs wheat and 14 qtrs of rye are sown there before the day of the estimate that is before the Octaves of Michaelmas. Item in the lower grange are three full stacks of dredge except the third part of a stack which is of oats with a small cauntle in front containing 240 qtrs dredge and 30 qtrs oats.]

Barton' parua. Ibidem in grangia in medio grangie est .j. meya usque ad magnas trabes continens cum uno paruo cantello anteriori pro semine et frumento seminato ante estimacionem factam .xliij. quarteria. Item in eadem grangia in alio capite est .j. meya et dimidia de drageto et auena unde interior est ad magnas trabes et anterior fere ad magnas [trabes] continens .xl. quarteria auene et .x. quarteria drageti. Item in eadem grangia ex alia parte frumenti est .j. meya de vecches ad magnas trabes continens .xv. quarteria. Item in Bercaria est .j. meya plena de vecches et pisis continens per estimacionem .vij. quarteria.

[Little Barton. In the grange there in the middle of the grange is one stack up to the great beams containing with a small cauntle in front for seed and wheat sown before the estimate [was] made 44 qtrs. Item in the same grange at the other end is one and a half stack of dredge and oats the further of which is to the great beams and the nearer almost to the great [beams] containing 40 qtrs oats and 10 qtrs dredge. Item in the same grange on the other side of the wheat is one stack of vetches to the great beams containing 15 qtrs. Item in the sheepecote is one full stack of vetches and peas containing by estimate 8 qtrs.]

Cleydon'. In magna grangia est .j. meya Siliginis usque ad magnas trabes cum uno cantello ante meyam continens per estimacionem cum blado triturato .Lx. quarteria. Item in media grangia est .j. meya de frumento ad inferiorem partem dil [sic] Brestlace continens per estimacionem cum blado triturato .xl. quarteria. Item in alia parte medie grangie est .j. meya pisarum continens per estimacionem .L. quarteria. Item unus cantellus de vecches continens per estimacionem .vj. quarteria. Item .j. meya auene fere usque ad magnas trabes continens per estimacionem .CLx. quarteria.

[Claydon (Bucks.) In the great grange is one stack of rye up to the great beams with one cauntle in front of the stack containing by estimate with threshed grain 60 qtrs. Item in the middle of the grange is one stack of wheat to the further part of the *Brestlace* containing by estimate with threshed grain 40 qtrs. Item on the other side of the middle of the grange is one stack of peas containing by estimate 50 qtrs. Item one cauntle of vetches containing by estimate 6 qtrs. Item one stack of oats almost to the great beams containing by estimate 160 qtrs.]

Stone. In magna grangia est .j. meya interior plena frumenti continens per estimacionem .xl. quarteria. Item alia meya ad magnas trabes continens per estimacionem cum blado triturato .xx. quarteria. Item in eadem grangia est .j. cantellus Siliginis continens per estimacionem .j. quarterium. Item .j. cantellus de puls' continens per estimacionem .viiij. quarteria. Item in alia grangia sunt .iiiiij. meye continentes per estimacionem .CLx. quarteria drageti. Et sunt ibidem .ij. tassi quadr' cum uno rotundo pisarum continentes per estimacionem .C. quarteria.

[Stone (Bucks.) In the great grange is one full, further stack of wheat containing by estimate 40 qtrs. Item another stack to the great beams containing by estimate with threshed grain 20 qtrs. Item in the same grange is one cauntle of rye containing by estimate 1 quarter. Item one cauntle of pulses containing by estimate 8 qtrs. Item in the other grange are four stacks containing by estimate 160 qtrs dredge. And there are there two and a quarter stacks with one roll of peas containing by estimate 100 qtrs.]

### 13 The Oseney Abbey flock

Flock management on some seigniorial estates altered radically during the late middle ages. On numerous estates, both lay and religious, a policy of centralization gradually replaced the initial local management of the flock. Furthermore, at the same time as arable demesnes were being leased out to *firmarii*, some lords were investing on a greater scale in pastoral husbandry, particularly developing their flocks. Whilst seigniorial arable production thus contracted, interest in sheep and wool production was not abated. The more efficient exploitation of wool growing led to centralization of flock management.<sup>302</sup> The whole effort, of course, was probably directed towards the buoyant export market for English woollen cloth.<sup>303</sup> The changes of management adopted by Oseney Abbey epitomize this general movement.<sup>304</sup>

In the late thirteenth century, the flocks of Oseney were managed locally. Each property of the abbey where there was a flock had its own shepherd who was responsible to the reeve or bailiff, depending on the type of property. (On larger manorial properties with unfree tenants, the lead official was the reeve, an unfree tenant, but on different properties such as glebe-demesnes with few or no unfree tenants, the lead official was the bailiff without a reeve, the bailiff being free).<sup>305</sup> The reeve or bailiff accounted for the flock and the clip. An incomplete centrally-enrolled account of most of the properties of the abbey in c.1280 discloses 2,818 sheep, so the total complement of the manorial flocks in the late thirteenth century may have exceeded 3,000 animals (Table 1). Forest Hill and Waterperry are missing from this central account, but manorial accounts for these two properties at the time reveal some two hundred sheep at each.

The prominence of Water Eaton appears already in the sheep statistics. In c.1280, Water Eaton supported some twenty percent of the total flocks: 633 sheep. Water Eaton probably also emerged as the central location for the collection of fleeces from all properties at this time. Although the profit (*proficuum*) calculation in the central account refers to the fleeces being despatched to Oseney, the extant manorial accounts divulge that the fleeces were actually sent first to Water Eaton. The entries in the *proficuum* may be a fictitious accounting procedure: the fleeces may have been nominally counted as liveries to the house with an artificial value placed on them.

---

<sup>302</sup>E. Power, *The Wool Trade in English Medieval History* (1969 edn), 28; Denholm-Young, *Seigniorial Administration*, 58-9; F. M. Page, 'Bidentes Hoylandie', *Economic History* i (1926-9), 603-13.

<sup>303</sup>G. D. Ramsay, *The English Woollen Industry, 1500-1750* (1982).

<sup>304</sup>A central flock account of 1476-77 is extant and is edited below.

<sup>305</sup>See Chapter 7.

Table 1 The abbey flocks in c.1280

Location	Wethers	Rams	Ewes	Hoggs	Total
Claydon	48	1	63	38	150
Stone	124	3	156	108	391
Hampton Gay	68	4	145	97	314
Oving	-	-	-	-	-
Weston-on-the-Green	91	2	203	126	422
Bibury	41	2	116	157*	450*
Turkdean	46	2	86	*	*
Water Eaton	265	4	230	134	633
Handborough	+	+	+	+	+
Great Barton	120	-	100	81	301
Adderbury	-	-	-	-	-
Little Tew	-	-	-	-	-
Watlington	-	-	-	-	-
Black Bourton	28	1	85	43	157
Shenston	-	-	-	-	-

\* Totals included under Bibury

+ Totals included in Water Eaton

In the fourteenth century, Water Eaton definitely became the central collection point for fleeces. It may have been selected because of its convenient position. In the configuration of the Oseney estates it was as central as possible; wool could be conveniently carried overland to Watlington and then on to Henley for transport by water. So the accounts mention fodder for horses carrying wool from Water Eaton to Henley and the costs of nine men and five carts carrying wool to London.<sup>306</sup> Much of the clip may have been destined for Italian merchants, for Pegolotti's list included Oseney for twenty-five sacks for export, a figure which might be an underestimate as the list was concerned only with the Italian export trade. Oseney certainly came into frequent contact with Italian merchants through acting as sub-collector for Papal and royal taxation.<sup>307</sup>

In the early fourteenth century, the flocks suffered some vicissitudes. The flock at Forest Hill declined seriously; that at Waterperry disappeared from view altogether; the number at Stone collapsed. For example, whereas Stone supported 391 sheep in c.1280, only eleven sheep remained at Michaelmas 1325. At Forest Hill, the flock in 1302-4 comprised less than half the number in c.1280 and appears to have disappeared completely in 1317-18. A critical decision seems to have been taken to restock these properties: Forest Hill, c.1321-22; Stone in 1326-27; and Waterperry in 1329-30. Hitherto, Waterperry had not

<sup>306</sup>Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 19, 63 (*Item in expensis Thome Camerarii senescalli venientis cum ix hominibus et v carectis versus Lond' et pernoctantis cum lana*) (Item the costs of Thomas the steward coming with nine men and five carts towards London and staying overnight with wool).

<sup>307</sup>W. Cunningham, *The Growth of English Industry and Commerce* (5th edn, 1910), 640; W. E. Lunt, *Financial Relations of England with the Papacy to 1327* (Cambridge, MA, 1939), 651-2, 661.

retained its lambs which were received from tithes. There are no Waterperry accounts extant for the period 1279-1328; the account for 1329-30 mentions a shepherd and a sheepcote, but suggests that the stock was negligible. In 1342, however, the abbey decided to maintain a flock there. The restocking of Waterperry anticipated the future road to specialization as its flock consisted mostly of wethers. After restocking, Stone supported between 213 and 317 sheep, Waterperry 125-230 and Watlington about seventy (figures at year-end).

The final transition to a fully centralized method of flock management must have occurred in the fifteenth century. Unfortunately, the fragmentary survival of the manorial accounts allows no more precision. During the fourteenth century, the management continued to be local: reeve or bailiff and shepherd. Signs of central direction, which there must have been at all times, became more emphatic. Water Eaton firmly became the central collection point for fleeces; some manors specialized in wool production, carrying only wethers; and decisions were made to reconstitute the flocks where they had become depleted. We are then suddenly confronted by the account of 1476-77.

The account presented by Robert Howse, *prepositus bidencium* ('sheepreeve' or, more realistically, head shepherd), reflects the apogee of central direction of the abbey's flocks. During the course of the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the abbey had embarked on the policy of leasing its arable demesnes to *firmarii* (lessees) apart from the home farms at the properties nearest to the abbey. Simultaneously, the abbey decided to retain its flocks in hand at selected properties and to concentrate its activities on sheep farming. The retreat from agriculture by the abbey was therefore not comprehensive, but selective. The entire flock of the abbey became entrusted to a head shepherd, Robert Howse, who controlled a team of (under-)shepherds. This alteration of policy accorded well with the precepts of the contemporary treatises such as *Modo qualiter Clericus sive Expensor* with its specimen account of the *Instaurator bidencium* (stock-manager of the sheep). This advice contrasts strongly with the thirteenth-century treatises which allowed local management of reeve and shepherd.<sup>308</sup> Parallel developments took place on other estates. The account reflects not only a high degree of control, but also a high degree of specialization, with different objectives for each property.

The breakdown of the numbers of sheep remaining at the end of the accounting year (Table 2) confirms the specialization which was part of the centralizing policy. Four places were specifically breeding or reproduction centres, where there were only ewes with rams to service them. At Water Eaton the very high number of hogs can be assumed to be for restocking the ewes. Cowley, Arlington, Water Eaton and Weston were all reproduction centres. By contrast, five other places (Bibury, Black Bourton, Fulwell, Hook Norton and Hampton Gay) had only wethers; these properties probably concentrated on wool production. The precise status of Walton in this arrangement is confusing.

---

<sup>308</sup>Rylands Lat. MS. 228, fos 114r-v; Oschinsky, *Walter of Henley*, 276-9, 422-3.

*Table 2 Numbers of sheep at year-end 1477*

Location	Rams	Wethers	Ewes	Hoggs	Total
Arlington	2	24	160	11	197
Water Eaton	2	-	307	250	559
Weston-on-the-Green	2	-	208	-	210
Bibury	-	238	-	-	238
Black Bourton	-	183	-	-	183
Hook Norton	-	171	-	-	171
Walton	-	6	18	150	174
Cowley	-	-	108	5	113
Fulwell	-	253	-	-	253
Hampton Gay	-	78	-	-	78
Totals	6	953	801	416	2176

The arrangement was also reflected in the organization of the shepherds. Howse was the head of the team. Under him, there were shepherds at Arlington, Weston, Cowley, Water Eaton (two), Bibury and Walton. The first four of these places were reproduction centres. It was obviously felt important to have shepherds on the spot in the breeding places, for these accounted for five of the seven shepherds under Howse. Water Eaton had two shepherds, one for the ewes and one for the hogs, which may further emphasize the nodal position of this manor. As it had developed as the central collecting point for fleeces, now it existed as the main breeding centre, the numbers of ewes and hogs far exceeding those at other places. Indeed, it supported twice as many sheep as any other property and its flock comprised more than a quarter of the total flock of the abbey. Another two shepherds were attached to Walton and Bibury. The existence of one at Walton could suggest that this property too was a breeding centre; the ewes may have been depleted in recent years and the hogs intended to restock their complement. The shepherd at Bibury may have been despatched there because this location was an outlying property. Bibury was unusual as it was the only property concentrating on wool production to have a resident shepherd. The other properties with exclusively wethers (Black Bourton, Fulwell, Hook Norton, and Hampton Gay) apparently did not have a resident shepherd. Howse may have been responsible for these flocks. Obviously the abbey believed that a shepherd was necessary on the spot where lambs might be dropped and the number of lambs depended on the welfare of the ewes. Someone, however, must have been employed to care for the wethers elsewhere, even if not a shepherd in the continuous employ of Howse.

Table 3 The organization of shepherds, 1476-77

Head-shepherd	Under-shepherd	Location	Function
Robert Howse	John Wrenne	Arlington	breeding
	William Busshop	Bibury	wool
	Thomas Redhed	Cowley	breeding
	Robert Brice	Water Eaton	breeding (ewes)
	Thomas Piper	Water Eaton	breeding
	John Hycok	Weston	breeding
	Thomas Yvis	Walton	?

A surprising feature of the breeding centres is the low number of rams to service ewes. It has been suggested that a normal ratio consisted of one tup to thirty-five to fifty ewes, although examples of poor tugging rates are known.<sup>309</sup> At Water Eaton, if the account can be believed, a ram was expected to service eighty ewes; a ram at Arlington would need to contend with 150 ewes, and a ram at Weston would have had the slightly less arduous task of acting as sire to a hundred ewes. Perhaps additional rams were hired; otherwise the ewes at Cowley might have become easily frustrated. The abbey may have suffered the repercussions of this unenlightened policy, as the issue of lambs was only 658 although 878 ewes remained from the previous year, augmented by 241 hoggs received during the course of the year (Table 4).

Table 4 Lambs of issue and from tithe, 1476-77

Location	Lambs issue	Lambs died ( <i>in morina</i> )	Tithe lambs
Arlington	47	36	
Cowley	167	98	9
Water Eaton	236	106	27
Weston	208	148	
Bibury			79
Watlington			4

The change to pastoral husbandry was achieved by the conversion of arable to pasture in selected properties.<sup>310</sup> In 1517, the abbey was presented to the enclosure commissioners for converting 107 acres in Water Eaton in 1508. This sort of activity might not have constituted a cause of depopulation, but a response to structural changes in the agrarian economy.<sup>311</sup> Where Oseney is known to have converted to pasture and engage in sheepfarming in deserted or contracted villages, the depopulation was not uniform. Fulwell had been converted to a grange very soon after its acquisition in 1205. Depopulation at Hampton Gay probably commenced before 1428. At Water Eaton, although the abbey converted tillage to pasture, many tenants remained there throughout the six-

<sup>309</sup>R. Trow-Smith, *A History of British Livestock Husbandry to 1700* (1957), 149-50.

<sup>310</sup>For what follows, K. J. Allison, M. W. Beresford and J. G. Hurst, *The Deserted Villages of Oxfordshire* (Leicester, Department of English Local History Occasional Paper 17, 1966), 38 (Fulwell), 39 (Hampton Gay), and 45 (Water Eaton).

<sup>311</sup>C. C. Dyer, 'Deserted medieval villages in the West Midlands', *EconHR* 2nd series xxxv (1982), 19-34.

teenth century until depopulation by Mr Frere in the late sixteenth century. The changes in the abbey's exploitation of its property may have been a reaction rather than an initiative.

*Bodleian Oseney Roll 26*

The account roll of the *prepositus bidencium* comprises a single membrane, written on face and dorse. On the face is the cash account and on the dorse the stock account. It is written in a fair Bastard Secretary hand. At the head of the roll, on the face, the initials of the title are decorated with elaborate strapwork. There is some strapwork on the word *Summa* as it recurs. There are no cancellations, interlineations or alterations. It is clear that it is an engrossed account. This suspicion is confirmed by the *Stipendia* paragraph, which refers to the wage of the clerk for writing the account and for engrossing it. The exception is the very end of the account on the dorse where, almost as an afterthought, there is an account of the fells remaining. The hand of this part seems to be the same as the main account, but this section is written more cursively and hurriedly. The precipitate nature of this part is reflected in the omission of figures in the paragraph for *pelles multonum*. The intention here was to give a breakdown of fells remaining on each property, but only the names of the places were entered, not the number of fells.

The account is printed in full below. All words have been extended, except where the extension could be doubtful. The clerk extended some words in some places, but not in others. Throughout, the clerk's extension has been followed, with a note where the clerk has extended the word. The paragraph headings are given in upper case to differentiate them from the main body of the text. The headings are not, of course, in the upper case in the original MS. The short hundred (100) not the long (120) was used by the accounting official.

Osenye                      De Anno xvij<sup>mo</sup>                      Regis Edwardi iiiij<sup>ti</sup>

Compotus Roberti Howse prepositi Bidencium domini ibidem a Festo sancti michaelis Archangeli Anno regni Regis Edwardi quarti Sextodecimo usque ad eundem<sup>312</sup> festum Anno eiusdem Regis Septimodecimo videlicet per unum Annum integrum

ARRERAGIA nulla quia quietus recessit a compoto suo anni precedentis prout ibi patet

RECEPTUM<sup>313</sup> DENARIORUM Sed respondet de xiijs. iiijd. receptis de domino Abbate apud Watereton pro xx<sup>ti</sup> Agnellis emendis de vicario de Weston hoc anno emptis precium capitis viijd.                      Summa xiijs. iiijd.

VENDICIO { MATRICIUM  
                  AGNELLORUM

Et respondet de ijs. ix. receptis de diversis tenentibus apud Watereton ut pro vij matricibus illis venditis hoc anno ut extra<sup>314</sup> precii capitis vd. minus in toto ijd. Et de xvij. receptis de vicario de Watlington ut in precio iiij<sup>or</sup> agnellorum decimalium dicti domini abbatis ibidem sic sibi venditorum ut extra precium capitis iiij. ob.

<sup>312</sup>MS. sic; *recte idem*.

<sup>313</sup>MS *recept*; as there is only one entry, I have elected for the singular.

<sup>314</sup>*Ut extra* appears on the face and *ut infra* on the dorse; they refer respectively to the other side of the roll. The use of *ut infra* to refer back from the stock account to the cash account suggests that the stock account was audited first so that any items charged against the accounting official by the auditors could be included in the cash account on the face.

Summa iiijs. iijd.

VENDICIO PELLIUM HURTARDORUM Et respondet de iijd. receptis ut in precio trium pellium lanutarum de hurtardis apud Weston mortuis in morina hoc anno ut extra precium pellis jd. sic venditarum in foro apud Wodestoke.

Summa  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \textit{Denariorum} \quad \textit{iijd.} \\ \textit{Hurtardorum} \quad \textit{ii} \end{array} \right.$

VENDICIO PELLIUM MULTONUM Et respondet de vs. viijd. receptis ut in precio xvij pellium lanutarum de grege multonum apud Bybury mortuis in morina hoc anno ut extra precium pellis iijd. sic venditarum Henrico Stodam in foro apud Burford. Et de ijd. ob.<sup>315</sup> receptis ut in precio v pellium statim post tonsionem de eodem grege similiter in morina ut extra precium pellis ob. sic venditarum in dicto foro. Et de vs. receptis ut in precio xx<sup>vi</sup> pellium lanutarum de grege apud Bourton mort<sup>316</sup> in morina ut extra precium pellis iijd. sic venditarum in foro apud Wodestoke. Et de ob. recepto ut in precio unius pellis vocati pellett' de eodem grege necat' ad tonsionem bidencium domini ibidem sic vendite in foro apud Witteney. Et de xvijd. ob. receptis ut in precio vij pellium lanutarum de grege apud Fullewell mort' in morina ut extra precium pellis ijd. ob. sic venditarum Henrico Shover apud Brakley.<sup>317</sup> Et de iijd. receptis ut in precio vj pellium vocatarum pellett' de eodem grege similiter in morina ut extra precium pellis ob. sic venditarum in dicto foro. Et de ijs. viijd. receptis ut in precio xvj pellium lanutarum de grege apud Hokenorton mort' in morina ut extra precium pellis ijd. sic venditarum in foro apud Wodestoke. Et de jd. recepto ut in ij pellibus vocatis pellett' de eodem grege unde j necat' ad tonsionem bidencium domini Abbatis ibidem et alter mort' in morina ut extra precium pellis ob. Et de ijs. jd. receptis ut in precio x pellium lanutarum de grege apud Hampton' mort' in morina ut extra precium pellis ijd. ob. sic venditarum Johanni Hawkyns de Hampton Poyle. Et de xxd. receptis ut pro x pellium<sup>318</sup> de multonibus apud Watereton mortuis in morina ut extra precium pellis ijd. sic vendit' cuidam Cerotecari apud Wodestoke.

Summa  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \textit{denariorum} \quad \textit{xixs.jd.ob.} \\ \textit{multonum} \quad \textit{iiij<sup>xx</sup> xvij.} \end{array} \right.$

VENDICIO PELLIUM MATRICIUM Et respondet de iijs. iijd. receptis ut in precio xj pellium lanutarum de grege matricium apud Alrington<sup>319</sup> mortuarum in morina hoc anno ut extra precium pellis iijd. minus in toto iijd. sic venditarum in foro apud Cirencestr'. Et de ijd. ob. receptis ut in precio vij pellium vocatarum pellett' de eadem grege similiter in morina et pokkis ut extra precium pellis qua. qua minus in toto qua.<sup>320</sup> Et de vs. xd. receptis ut in precio xxiiij<sup>or</sup> pellium lanutarum de grege apud Watereton mort' in morina ut extra precium pellis iijd. minus in toto ijd. sic venditarum Johanni Hawkyns de

<sup>315</sup>ob. interlined.

<sup>316</sup>Here and below, *mort'* should refer to the sheep, not the fells, as also *necat'*.

<sup>317</sup>Brackley, Northants.

<sup>318</sup>MS. *sic; recte pellibus*.

<sup>319</sup>i.e. Arlington with metathesis of lr.

<sup>320</sup>MS. *sic*.

Hampton Poyle. Et de xs. receptis ut in precio xl pellium lanutarum de grege apud Weston mort' in morina ut extra precium pellis iijd. sic venditarum dicto Johanni Hawkyns. Et de jd. ob. recepto ut in precio iij pellium vocatarum pellett' de eadem grege similiter in morina ut extra precium pellis ob. Et de xxiijd. receptis ut in precio xxiiij pellium de grege apud Coveley<sup>321</sup> mort' in morina ut extra precium pellis jd. sic venditarum in foro Abindon.

$$\text{Summa} \begin{cases} \text{denariorum} & \text{xxjs.vd.} \\ \text{matricium} & \text{Cviiij.} \end{cases}$$

VENDICIO PELLIUM HOGERELLORUM Et respondet de iijs. jd. receptis ut in precio xxxij pellium lanutarum de gregibus<sup>322</sup> hogerellorum unde apud Watereton ut extra xxij et apud Walton x precium pellis jd. sic venditarum in foro apud Wodestoke.

$$\text{Summa} \begin{cases} \text{denariorum} & \text{iijs.jd.} \\ \text{hogerellorum} & \text{xxxij.} \end{cases}$$

VENDICIO PELLIUM AGNELLORUM Et respondet de viijs. receptis ut in precio xxxij duodenarum iij pellium videlicet CCC iij<sup>xxx</sup>ix pellium provenientium de agnellis domini in diversis locis mortuis in morina ut extra precium duodene iijd. sic venditarum in Oxon' diversis hominibus.<sup>324</sup>

$$\text{Summa} \begin{cases} \text{denariorum} & \text{viijs.} \\ \text{agnellorum} & \text{CCiij<sup>xxx</sup>ix} \end{cases}$$

$$\text{Summa omnium} \begin{cases} \text{denariorum} & \text{Ljs.xd.ob.} \\ \text{Bidencium} & \text{CCxxxv} \\ \text{Agnellorum} & \text{CCiij<sup>xxx</sup>ix} \end{cases}$$

Summa totalis recepti Lxixs. vd. ob. De quibus

EMPCIO AGNELLORUM Idem computans computat in denariis solutis vicario de Weston pro xx<sup>ti</sup>agnellis ab eo emptis hoc anno precii capitis viijd. xiijs. iijjd.

Summa xiijs. iijjd.

CUSTUS BIDENCIUM Et computat soluti pro tarpic' et reding' emptis pro grege multonum et matricium apud Alrington hoc anno xiiijd. Et in tarpic' et reding' cum unctura emptis pro grege multonum apud Bybury xiiijd. Et in tarpic' et reding' emptis pro grege multonum apud Bourton xiiijd. Et in tarpic' et reding' emptis pro grege multonum apud Fullwell xvjd. Et in tarpic' et reding' emptis pro grege multonum apud Hokenorton xiijd. Et in tarpic' et reding' emptis pro grege multonum apud Hampton ixjd. Et in tarpic' et reding' cum unctura emptis pro grege matricium apud Coveley xijjd. Et in tarpic' <xd.> et reding' <viijd.> emptis pro gregibus matricium et hogerellorum apud Watereton xvijd. Et in tarpic' et reding' emptis pro greg'<sup>325</sup> matricium apud Weston xd.

<sup>321</sup>Cowley.

<sup>322</sup>Throughout, the word is extended in the MS. as *grege*, but occasionally, as here, *gregibus*.

<sup>323</sup>The arithmetic is suspect here; perhaps *v* was omitted.

<sup>324</sup>The short hundred is being used, but the arithmetic is suspect.

<sup>325</sup>MS. unextended here.

Et in tarpic' cum unctura emptis pro grege hogerellorum apud Walton iiijd. Et in tribus lagenis uncture emptis in diversis locis ad mixtiliandum cum tarpic' ut pro gregibus matricium et hogerellorum apud Coveley et Watereton ijs. Et in expensis dicti computantis per totum annum ut in diversis villis mercatis et nundinis ac in fugando bidentes domini de loco ad locum et pellibus supra decimis vendendo ac eciam agnellos et lanas decimales colligendo in diversis locis xs.

Summa xxijs. iijd.

CUSTUS FALDE Et computat soluti pro xl cladibus emptis hoc anno de Johanne Wat' de Stunsfeld<sup>326</sup> pro falda domini apud Coveley precii cladis ijd. vjs. viijd.

Summa vjs. viijd.

EXPENSE NECESSARIE Et computat soluti pro j li. de pakthred empta hoc anno pro pakkyng tempore tonsionis lanarum domini in diversis locis iiijd. Et soluti pro cariagio fenorum decimalium apud Hokenorton iiijs. sic conductorum Thome Halle firmario domini ibidem. Et soluti Ricardo Bowell senescallo et Ricardo Perell de Weston pro cariagio pulceti decimalis eiusdem ville sic conducti in grosso ac pro tassacione eiusdem apud lez Shepehowse domini ibidem vjs. viijd. Et soluti dicto Ricardo Bowell pro culminacione et stipulacione eiusdem tasse ixjd.

Summa xjs. ixjd.

STIPENDIA FAMULORUM Et computat in stipendio Johannis Wrenne bercarii domini apud Alrington hoc anno vs. Et in stipendio Willelmi Busshop bercarii apud Bybury xvijs. Et in stipendio Thome Redhed bercarii apud Coveley xvjs. Et in stipendio Roberti Brice bercarii matricium apud Watereton xvjs. Et in stipendio Thome Piper bercarii hogerellorum ibidem xiijs. iiijd. Et in stipendio Johannis Hycok bercarii apud Weston vjs. viijd. Et in stipendio Thome Yvis bercarii domini apud Walton per dimidium annum vjs. Et in stipendio dicti computantis hoc anno xxvjs. viijd. Et in reward' clericis scribentis hunc comptum cum iiijd. pro papiro et pergamena eundem comptum faciendi et ingrossandi iijs. iiijd.

Summa Cxs.

Summa omnium  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \textit{solutionum} \\ \textit{allocationum} \\ \textit{expensarum} \end{array} \right.$   
viiij li. iiijs. Et  
sic excedunt iiiij. li. xiiijs. vjd. ob.

[Dorse]

De anno xvij Regis Edwardi iiiij<sup>ti</sup>  
Oseneye

Per Robertum Howse prepositum bidencium domini ibidem Anno regni regis Edwardi iiiij<sup>ti</sup> xvij<sup>mo</sup>

---

<sup>326</sup>Stonesfield, Oxon.

Compotus Stauri

HURTARDI Infrascriptus computans respondet de ix receptis de remanenti compoti anni proxime precedentis

Summa ix De quibus

Idem computans computat mortuos in morina de gregibus hoc anno ut infra iij. Unde apud Coveley ij et apud Weston j.

Summa iij  
 Et remanet vj. Unde apud  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \textit{Alrington} \quad \textit{ij} \\ \textit{Watereton} \quad \textit{ij} \\ \textit{Weston} \quad \textit{ij} \end{array} \right.$   
 remanent vj

MULTONES Et respondet de DCCCCxlj receptis de remanenti compoti anni proxime precedentis. Et de CCxxvj receptis de adiunctione ab hogerellis hoc anno ut inferius

Summa M<sup>l</sup>Clxvij. De quibus

Idem computans computat liberatos ad coquinam monasterij Oseneye de gregibus ut testatur per j talliam contra Johannem Catour Cxx unde post festum sancti Michaelis Archangeli ultimo<sup>327</sup> liberatos xx<sup>ti</sup>. Et necati ad tonsionem bidencium domini apud Bourton et Hokenorton quorum pelles venduntur ut infra ij. Et mortui in morina de gregibus ut infra iij<sup>iiij</sup>xij quorum pelles venduntur ut infra. Unde apud Bybury xxij Bourton xx Fullewell xiiij Hokenorton xvij Hampton x et apud Eton x

Summa CCxiiij  
 Et remanent DCCCCliij  
 Unde apud  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \textit{Alrington} \quad \textit{xxij} \\ \textit{Bybury} \quad \textit{Cxxxviiij} \\ \textit{Bourton} \quad \textit{Ciiij}^{\text{xx}}\textit{iiij} \\ \textit{Fullewell} \quad \textit{CCliij} \\ \textit{Hokenorton} \quad \textit{Clxxj} \\ \textit{Hampton} \quad \textit{lxxviiij} \\ \textit{Walton} \quad \textit{vj} \end{array} \right.$   
 remanent DCCCCliij multones

MATRICES Et respondet de DCCCclxxvij receptis de remanenti compoti anni proxime precedentis. Et de CCxlj receptis de adiunctione ab hogerellis ut inferius.

Summa m<sup>l</sup>Cxix. De quibus

Idem computat liberatas ad coquinam monasterij Oseneye de gregibus ut testatur per j talliam contra Johannem Catour iij<sup>xx</sup>xvj. Unde liberate post festum sancti Michaelis ultimo<sup>328</sup> xl. Et necata ad tonsionem bidencium domini

<sup>327</sup>MS. *sic.*

<sup>328</sup>MS. *sic.*

apud Weston j. Et mortue in morina de gregibus ut infra <sup>329</sup> Unde apud Coveley Cxvij Eton xxiiij Weston xliij et apud Alrington <sup>330</sup> Et necate de Canibus de greg' apud Coveley xij quorum<sup>331</sup> pelles nullius valoris. Et in vendicione diversis tenentibus de Eton ut infra v.

Summa CCCxxvij  
Et remanent DCCiiij<sup>xx</sup>xij

Unde apud  $\left\{ \begin{array}{ll} \textit{Alrington} & \textit{Clj} \\ \textit{Coveley} & \textit{Cviiij} \\ \textit{Eton} & \textit{CCCvij} \\ \textit{Weston} & \textit{CCviiij} \\ \textit{Walton} & \textit{xviiij} \end{array} \right.$

remanent DCCiiij<sup>xx</sup>xij

HOGERELLI Et respondet de CCCCl receptis de remanenti compoti anni proxime precedentis. Et de CCCiiij<sup>xx</sup>ix receptis de adiunctione ab agnellis ut inferius.

Summa DCCCxxxix. De quibus

Idem computat in adiunctione cum multonibus ut superius CCxxvj. Et in adiunctione cum matricibus ut superius CCxlj. Et mortui in morina de gregibus quorum pelles venduntur ut infra xxxij. Unde apud Cou[ele] xxij et apud Walton x.

Summa CCCCiij<sup>xx</sup>xix.  
Et remanent CCCCxvj.

Unde apud  $\left\{ \begin{array}{ll} \textit{Alrington} & \textit{xj} \\ \textit{Coveley} & \textit{v} \\ \textit{Eton} & \textit{CCL} \\ \textit{Walton} & \textit{Cl} \end{array} \right.$

remanent CCCCxvj hogerelli

AGNELLI Et respondet de DClviii receptis de toto exitu supradictarum matricium hoc anno. Unde apud Alrington xlvij Coveley Clxvij Eton CCxxxvj et apud Weston CCviiij. Et de Cxix receptis de decimis in diversis locis ut inferius videlicet apud Bybury lxxix Coveley ix Eton xxvij et Watlington iiij. Et de empcone ut infra xx.

Summa DCCiiij<sup>xx</sup>xvij. De quibus

Idem computat liberatos ad coquinam monasterij Oseneye ut testatur per j talliam contra Johannem Catour v. In vendicione ut infra iiij. Et in adiuncione cum hogerellis ut superius CCiiij<sup>xx</sup>ix. Et in reward' dicti computantis ut de greg' apud Eton et Veston ij. Et in reward' Roberti Brise et Johannis Hycok' bercariorum domini apud Eton et Weston predictas videlicet cuilibet eorum j ij. Et mortui in morina hoc anno CCCiiij<sup>xx</sup>viiij. Unde apud Alrington xxxvj

<sup>329</sup>MS. illegible because of an early repair; the figure must be high; the figure may be that stated on the front of the roll in the *Vendicio pellium matricium*.

<sup>330</sup>As the previous note.

<sup>331</sup>MS. *sic*.

Coveley  $iii^{xx}xvii$  Eton Cvj et Weston Cxlviij. Et necati cum vulpis  $iii$ . Et in Casteling'  $ii$ .

Summa que supra. Et eque.

Summa omnium bidencium  $M^1M^1Clxxvj$

Unde apud  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} Alrington \quad ij \\ Eton \quad ij \\ Weston \quad ij \end{array} \right.$

remanent  $vj$  hurtardi

$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} Alrington \quad xxiii \\ Bybury \quad CCxxvii \\ Bourton \quad Ciii^{xx}ii \\ Fullewell \quad CCl ij \\ Hokenorton \quad Clxxj \\ Hampton \quad lxxvii \\ Walton \quad vj \end{array} \right.$

remanent DCCCClij multones

$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} Alrington \quad Clx \\ Coveley \quad Cvii \\ Eton \quad CCCvij \\ Weston \quad CCvij \\ Walton \quad xvii \end{array} \right.$

remanent DCCCj matrices

$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} Alrington \quad xj \\ Coveley \quad v \\ Eton \quad CCl \\ Walton \quad Cl \end{array} \right.$

remanent CCCCxvj hogerelli

Summa que supra. Et eque.

PELLES REMANENTES De remanenti non dum vendito pelles matricium apud Coveley ut supra  $iii^{xx}xiii$ .

Pelles {Hurtardorum. Et respondet de  $ii$  receptis hoc anno ut supra de morina. Que venduntur ut infra. Unde

apud  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} Coveley \quad ij \\ Weston \quad j \end{array} \right.$

{Multonum. Et respondet de  $iii^{xx}xiii$  receptis de morina et necatis ut superius. Que venduntur ut infra. Unde

apud  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \textit{Bybury} \\ \textit{Bourton} \\ \textit{Fullewell} \\ \textit{Hokenort'} \\ \textit{Hampton} \\ \textit{Eton} \end{array} \right.$

{Matricium. Et respondet de CCij receptis de morina et necat' ut superius.

Unde venduntur ut infra Cvijj.

Et remanent iiij<sup>xx</sup>xiiij apud Coveley.

{Hogerellorum. Et respondet de xxxij receptis de morina ut superius ...<sup>332</sup> pelles venduntur ut infra &c.

{Agnellorum. Et respondet de CCCiiij<sup>xx</sup>viiij receptis de morina ut supra. Quorum pelles venduntur ut infra.

Oseney For the 17th year of King Edward IV

The account of Robert Howse, the lord's sheepreeve there, from Michaelmas 16 Edward IV to the same feast 17 Edward IV, that is, for a whole year.

ARREARS none because he finished his account for last year quit as it appears therein.

RECEIPTS OF CASH But he answers for 13s. 4d. received from the lord abbot at Water Eaton for 20 young lambs bought from the vicar of Weston this year @ 8d. each.

Total 13s. 4d.

SALE  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \textit{OF EWES} \\ \textit{OF YOUNGLAMBS} \end{array} \right.$

{ And he answers for 2s. 9d. received from several tenants at Water Eaton as for 7 ewes sold to them this year as over @ 5d. each less 2d. overall. And for 18d. received from the vicar of Watlington as for the cost of 4 of the lord's young tithe lambs there sold to him as over @ 4d halfpenny each.

Total 4s. 3d.

SALE OF RAMS' FELLOES And he answers for 3d. received as the cost of 3 rams' woollfells lost in sickness at Weston this year as over @ 1d. each, sold at Woodstock market.

Total  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \textit{cash} \quad 3d. \\ \textit{rams} \quad 3 \end{array} \right.$

SALE OF WETHERS' FELLOES And he answers for 5s. 8d. received as the cost of 17 woollfells from sickness of wethers lost at Bibury this year as over @ 4d. a fell, thus sold to Henry Stodam at Burford market. And for 2d. halfpenny received as the cost of 5 fells lost from sickness right after shearing as over @

<sup>332</sup>One word illegible.

halfpenny a fell, thus sold in the same market. And for 5s, received as the cost of 20 woolfells lost from sickness at Black Bourton as over @ 3d. a fell, thus sold at Woodstock market. And for halfpenny as the cost of a fell called a little fell killed for the same sickness at shearing of the lord's sheep, thus sold at Witney market. And for 17d. halfpenny received as the cost of 7 woolfells lost in sickness at Fulwell as over @ 2d. halfpenny a fell, thus sold to Henry Shover at Brackley. And for 3d. received as the cost of 6 fells called little fells lost from the same sickness as over @ halfpenny a fell, thus sold in the same market. And for 2s. 8d. received as the cost of 16 woolfells lost from sickness at Hook Norton as over @ 2d. a fell, thus sold at Woodstock market. And for 1d. received as the cost of 2 fells called little fells killed for the same sickness at shearing the lord abbot's sheep and another lost as over @ halfpenny a fell. And for 2s. 1d. received as the cost of 10 woolfells lost from sickness at Hampton as over @ 2d. halfpenny a fell, thus sold to John Hawkyns of Hampton Poyle. And for 20d. received as the cost of 10 wether fells lost at Water Eaton as over @ 2d a fell, thus sold to a certain glover at Woodstock.

Total  $\begin{cases} \text{cash} & 19s.1d.\text{halfpenny} \\ \text{wethers} & 94 \end{cases}$

SALE OF EWES' FELLOES And he answers for 3s. 4d. received as the cost of 11 woolfells lost from the ewes' sickness at Arlington this year as over @ 4d a fell less 4d. overall, thus sold at Cirencester market. And for 2d. halfpenny as the cost of 7 fells called little fells lost from the same sickness and pocks as over @ a farthing a fell less a farthing overall. And for 5s. 10d. received as the cost of 24 woolfells lost from sickness at Water Eaton as over @ 3d. a fell less 2d. overall, thus sold to John Hawkyns of Hampton Poyle. And for 10s. received as the cost of 40 woolfells lost from sickness as over @ 3d. a fell, thus sold to the said John Hawkyns. And for 1d. halfpenny as the cost of 3 fells called little fells also lost from the same sickness as over @ halfpenny a fell. And for 23d. received as the cost of 23 fells lost from sickness at Cowley as over @ 1d. a fell, thus sold in Abingdon market.

Total  $\begin{cases} \text{cash} & 21s.5d. \\ \text{ewes} & 108 \end{cases}$

SALE OF HOGGS' FELLOES And he answers for 3s. 1d. received as the cost of 32 hoggs' woolfells lost from sickness 22 of which at Water Eaton and 10 at Walton as over @ 1d. a fell sold at Woodstock market.<sup>333</sup>

Total  $\begin{cases} \text{cash} & 3s.1d. \\ \text{hoggs} & 32 \end{cases}$

SALE OF YOUNG LAMBS' FELLOES And he answers for 8s. received as the cost of 32 dozen and 3 fells, that is, 389 issuing from the lord's young lambs lost in several places @ 3d. a dozen, thus sold to several men in Oxford.

Total  $\begin{cases} \text{cash} & 8s. \\ \text{younglambs} & 389 \end{cases}$

---

<sup>333</sup>See the note above in the Latin transcription.

Total of all	{	<i>cash</i>	51s.9d.halfpenny
		<i>Sheep</i>	235
		<i>Younglambs</i>	389

Total of the whole receipt 69s. 5d. halfpenny. From which

**PURCHASE OF YOUNG LAMBS** The same accountant accounts for cash paid to the vicar of Weston for 20 young lambs bought from him this year @ 8d. each

13s. 4d.

Total 13s. 4d.

**COST OF THE SHEEP** And he accounts paid for tarpic and redding bought for wethers' and ewes' sickness at Arlington this year 14d. And in tarpic and redding with grease bought for wethers' sickness at Bibury 14d. And in tarpic and redding bought for wethers' sickness at Black Bourton 14d. And in tarpic and redding bought for wethers' sickness at Fulwell 16d. And in tarpic and redding bought for wethers' sickness at Hook Norton 13d. And in tarpic and redding bought for wethers' sickness at Hampton 9d. And in tarpic and redding with grease bought for ewes' sickness at Cowley 12d. And in tarpic <10d.> and redding <6d.> bought for ewes' and hoggs' sickness at Water Eaton 17d. And in tarpic and redding bought for ewes' sickness at Weston 10d. And in tarpic with grease bought for hoggs' sickness at Walton 4d. And in 3 gallons of grease bought in several places to mix in with tarpic for the ewes and hoggs at Cowley and Water Eaton 2s. And in the costs of the said accountant for the whole year as in several vills, markets and fairs, and in driving the lord's sheep from place to place and to sell fells and to collect tithe lambs and wool in several places 10s.

Total 22s. 3d.

**FOLD COST** And he accounts for 40 panels bought this year from John Wat' of Stonesfield for the lord's fold at Cowley @ 2d. a panel 6s. 8d.

Total 6s. 8d.

**NECESSARY COSTS** And he accounts paid for 1lb. of packthread bought this year for packing the lord's wool during shearing in several places 4d. And paid for carriage of tithe hay at Hook Norton 4s., thus taken to the lord's lessee there, Thomas Halle. And paid to the steward Richard Bowell and Richard Perell of Weston for carriage of that vill's tithe pulses in the whole and for stacking it [them] at the lord's Sheephouse there 6s. 8d. And paid to Richard Bowell for the building and covering of that stack 9d.

Total 11s. 9d.

**WAGES OF THE FAMULI** And he accounts in the wage of the lord's shepherd at Arlington, John Wrenne, this year 5s. And in the wage of the shepherd at Bibury, William Busshop, 17s. And in the wage of the shepherd at Cowley, Thomas Redhed, 16s. And in the wage of the ewe shepherd at Watereaton, Robert Brice, 16s. And in the wage of the hogg shepherd there, Thomas Piper, 13s. 4d. And in the wage of the shepherd at Weston, John Hycok, 6s. 8d. And in the wage of the lord's shepherd at Walton, Thomas Yvis, for half a year 6s. And in this accountant's wage this year 26s. 8d. And in the payment to

the clerk writing this account with 4d. for paper and parchment to make this account and engross it 3s. 4d.

Total 110s.

Total of all  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \textit{payments} \\ \textit{allowances} \\ \textit{costs} \end{array} \right.$

£8 4s. And thus he overshoots £4 14s. 6d. halfpenny

[Dorse]

For the 17th year of Edward IV

Oseney

By the sheepreeve there, Robert Howse, in the 17th year of Edward IV

Stock account

RAMS The aforesaid accountant answers for 9 received remaining in last year's account.

Total 9. From which

The same accountant accounts 3 dead from sickness this year as over. Two of which at Cowley and one at Weston.

And 6 remain. Of which at  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \textit{Arlington} \quad 2 \\ \textit{WaterEaton} \quad 2 \\ \textit{Weston} \quad 2 \end{array} \right.$

6 remain

WETHERS And he answers for 941 received remaining from last year's account. And for 226 added from the hogs this year as below.

Total 1,167. From which

The same accountant accounts 120 sent to the kitchen of Oseney convent, 20 of which after last Michaelmas because of sickness as is attested by a tally against John Catour. And 2 killed at the lord's sheep shearing at Black Bourton and Hook Norton, the fells of which were sold. And 92 died from sickness as over, fells of which were sold as over, 22 of which at Bibury, 20 at Bourton, 13 at Fulwell, 17 at Hook Norton, 10 at Hampton and 10 at Water Eaton.

Total 214.

And 953 remain.

Of which at  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \textit{Arlington} \quad 22 \\ \textit{Bibury} \quad 138 \\ \textit{BlackBourton} \quad 183 \\ \textit{Fulwell} \quad 253 \\ \textit{HookNorton} \quad 171 \\ \textit{Hampton} \quad 78 \\ \textit{Walton} \quad 6 \end{array} \right.$

953 wethers remain.

EWES And he answers for 878 received remaining from last year's account. And for 241 added from hoggs as below.

Total 1,119. Of which

He accounts 96 sent to the kitchen of Oseney convent from sickness as is attested by a tally against John Catour, 40 of which sent after Michaelmas. And one killed at the lord's sheep shearing at Weston. And ... died from sickness as over, of which 117 at Cowley, 24 at Water Eaton, 43 at Weston and ... at Arlington.<sup>334</sup> And 12 killed by dogs at Cowley, the fells of which of no value. And 5 in sale to several tenants of Water Eaton.

	Total 327
	And 792 remain
Of which at	{ <i>Arlington</i> 151
	{ <i>Cowley</i> 108
	{ <i>Water Eaton</i> 307
	{ <i>Weston</i> 208
	{ <i>Walton</i> 18
	792 remain

HOGGS And he accounts for 450 received remaining from last year's account. And for 389 added from young lambs as below.

Total 839. Of which

The same accounts for 226 added to the wethers as above. And 241 added to the ewes as above. And 32 died from sickness, the fells of which were sold as over, 22 of which at Cowley and 10 at Walton.

	Total 499
	And 416 remain
Of which at	{ <i>Arlington</i> 11
	{ <i>Cowley</i> 5
	{ <i>Water Eaton</i> 250
	{ <i>Walton</i> 150
	416 hoggs remain

YOUNG LAMBS And he answers for 658 received from the whole issue of the above ewes this year, 47 of which at Arlington, 167 Cowley, 236 Water Eaton, 208 at Weston. And for 119 received from tithes in several places as below, that is, 79 at Bibury, 9 Cowley, 27 Water Eaton, 4 Watlington. And 20 from purchase as over.

Total 797. Of which

The same accounts 5 sent to the kitchen of Oseney convent as is attested by a tally against John Catour. 4 in sale as over. 389 added to the hoggs as above. And 2 at Water Eaton and Weston from sickness in payment to the said accountant. And 2 in payment to Robert Brise and John Hycok, the lord's shepherds at Water Eaton and Weston aforesaid, that is 1 each. And 388 died this year, 36 of which at Arlington, 98 at Cowley, 106 at Water Eaton, 148 at Weston. And 4 killed by wolves. And 3 in casteling'.

<sup>334</sup>See the note above in the Latin transcription.

Total as above. And equal.

Total of all sheep 2,176

Of which at

{	<i>Arlington</i>	2
	<i>WaterEaton</i>	2
	<i>Weston</i>	2
	6 rams remain	
{	<i>Arlington</i>	24
	<i>Bibury</i>	238
	<i>BlackBourton</i>	183
	<i>Fulwell</i>	253
	<i>HookNorton</i>	171
	<i>Hampton</i>	78
	<i>Walton</i>	6
	953 wethers remain	
{	<i>Arlington</i>	160
	<i>Cowley</i>	108
	<i>WaterEaton</i>	307
	<i>Weston</i>	208
	<i>Walton</i>	18
	801 ewes remain	
{	<i>Arlington</i>	11
	<i>Cowley</i>	5
	<i>WaterEaton</i>	250
	<i>Walton</i>	150
	416 hoggs remain	

Total as above. And equal.

FELLS REMAINING 94 ewes' fells remaining at Cowley as above not yet sold

{[Fells] of rams. And he answers for 3 received as above by death this year

Which are all sold as over. Of which at

{	<i>Cowley</i>	2
	<i>Weston</i>	1

{[Fells] of wethers. And he answers for 94 received by death and butchering as above.

Which were all sold as over. Of which at Bibury

{	<i>BlackBourton</i>
	<i>Fulwell</i>
	<i>HookNorton</i>
	<i>Hampton</i>
	<i>WaterEaton</i>

{[Fells] of ewes. And he answers for 203 received by death and butchering  
as above

108 of which were sold as over

And 94 remain at Cowley

{[Fells] of hoggs. And he answers for 32 received by death as above

... fells were sold as over &c.<sup>335</sup>

{[Fells] of young lambs. And he answers for 388 received by death as above

All of which fells were sold as over

---

<sup>335</sup>See the note above in the Latin transcription.

#### 14 Some differences between seigniorial demesnes in medieval Oxfordshire

Many questions concerning medieval agrarian production and productivity have been recently illuminated, although there is still some scope for further regional and local studies.<sup>336</sup> The influence of external variables has received particular attention, with especial emphasis on the impact of the market and transaction costs. Internal variables which have been discussed include the configuration of selions and furlongs, not only as between seigniorial and peasant holdings, but also contrasts between demesnes. Where demesne lands were consolidated, economies of scale could enhance productivity through more intensive practices. Dispersed selions, however, remained a barrier to more efficient husbandry. Higher productivity and production for the market seem, in some regions, to have been parallel developments, stimulated by the growth of markets and commercialization of the economy, perhaps in response to demographic increase and urbanization and the consequent inflation of prices. Production for sale may, nonetheless, not have been an exclusive determinant of agrarian practices on some demesnes, especially those of the religious, one of whose concerns may have continued to be the provision of the conventual household, consumption. At an earlier time, the primary function of the estates of the religious had been to supply the conventual *mensa* ('table', that is household) through food farms. The religious may, indeed, have been conscious that gifts had been made primarily for this purpose by lay people seeking the salvation of their souls. Something of this primary expectation may have persisted, not least pragmatically in the case of those medium-sized and smaller houses of the new religious Orders of the twelfth century, whose estates were, necessarily because of their late advent, piecemeal and fragmentary. In these cases, the fundamental interest may still have been to meet the needs of the convent, with surplus for sale being serendipitous. This paradigm ensued almost entirely from the size and structure of the estates of the religious houses, placing limitations on what could be achieved in response to market conditions. These internal variables, in relation to such an external variable as the market, deserve more attention.

Differences in the size and structure of demesnes were very real in Oxfordshire and affected the performance of land and labour. These variations, combined with the need primarily to furnish the house, led ineluctably to different relationships to the market, with some estates developing a closer involvement whilst others remained primarily geared towards consumption rather than production and distribution for sale. Provisioning religious houses also diverged

---

<sup>336</sup>B. M. S. Campbell, 'Arable productivity in medieval England: some evidence from Norfolk', *Journal of Economic History* xliii (1983), 379-404; Campbell, 'Agricultural progress in medieval England', *EconHR* 2nd series xxxvi (1983), 26-46; M. Mate, 'Medieval agrarian practices: the determining factors', *Agricultural History Review* xxxiii (1985), 22-31; R. C. Stacey, 'Agricultural investment and the management of royal demesne manors, 1236-1240', *Journal of Economic History* xlvi (1986), 979-93; R. H. Britnell, 'Agricultural technology and the margin of cultivation in the fourteenth century', *EconHR* 2nd series xxx (1977), 53-66; Britnell, 'Minor landlords in England and medieval agrarian capitalism', *Past and Present* lxxxix (1980) repr. in T. H. Aston, ed., *Landlords, Peasants and Politics in Medieval England* (Cambridge, 1987), 227-46.

from lay households, for, whilst the former were static, the latter perambulated and so depended less on the product of the estate because of their peripatetic nature.

In a cyclical way, the low level of production for sale (and expectations for that) exacerbated the problems of small demesnes, which, because of their lack of other resources, found it difficult to improve their future productivity through investment. Such small demesnes may thus have experienced a cycle of poverty. By contrast, large seigniorial demesnes, with a naturally recurring surplus product, had the opportunity to benefit from a cycle of affluence, having large reserves of labour services and cash accruals, to finance a greater input of the costs of production. Receipts from both rents and sales of produce could on these larger demesnes, theoretically, be invested in order to sustain further improvement for production for the market. How far large estates achieved this pattern depended on seigniorial attitudes towards productivity and increasing the natural surplus product. Evidence from Oxfordshire suggests that producers reacted in different ways to these opportunities. An interesting comparison with both the small and the great demesnes is the small- to medium-sized one which through a deliberate policy of investment and because of a fortunate location in relation to markets, was able to forge a stronger involvement in commercial production.

These contrasts are explored here for Oxfordshire through the examples of some houses of Austin Canons, at least one of which had slender resources; the large demesnes of great Benedictine houses and a bishopric; and Merton College's manor of Holywell, not especially large, but fortuitously located close to an urban market and able to call on the financial reserves of the college which had wider estates.

Size and structure may have been principally determined at an earlier time, since estates such as those of the bishop of Winchester and Westminster Abbey, founded in the late Anglo-Saxon period, had large consolidated demesnes in Oxfordshire with extensive labour resources, which were, moreover, outliers of vast estates of an absentee lord. Similarly the demesnes of the earl of Cornwall in the county comprised only a part of an immense estate dispersed throughout England. The nature of these last demesnes enabled a naturally recurrent surplus product. Seigniorial attitudes and policies in the thirteenth century were thus affected by the natural endowments and character of the estates, determined from a much earlier time.

The divergent character of demesnes is tabulated below.<sup>337</sup> Although geographically compact, the estates of Oseney Abbey included demesnes of all sizes, from the larger (Hook Norton, Mixbury, Water Eaton), moderately-sized (Cowley), through to quite minor properties where the abbey's holding was little differentiated from those of other free tenants. Even so, another house of Austin Canons, Bicester Priory, was less well endowed. Although the priory held Kidlington (six virgates) and Wretchwick (ten virgates), Stratton Audley

---

<sup>337</sup>See also C. C. Dyer, 'Farming techniques in the West Midlands' in H. E. Hallam, ed., *The Agrarian History of England and Wales* volume III 1042-1350 (Cambridge, 1988), 369-83.

(four and a half virgates) and Nether Arcott (four virgates), the overall size of its estate was small, including such minor ‘demesnes’ as Caversfield. In contrast, the two demesnes of the bishop of Winchester in the county, Adderbury and Witney, were immense with vast reserves of customary labour.

Holywell was similar in structure to some demesnes of Austin Canon houses since it consisted of the appropriated rectory of Holy Cross, had minimal resources of customary labour, and was moderate in size.<sup>338</sup> At Holywell, however, investment in the costs of production forged a higher level of productivity and relationship to the market, which became self-sustaining. In this respect, Holywell had singular advantages, located in the eastern suburbs of Oxford, close to the largest urban market in the county. Other small and moderate demesnes did not enjoy the same privileged position, since they were not within the proximity of urban markets, although within reasonable distance of local ones. Caversfield was very close to Bicester which had some urban characteristics. Cuxham was some distance from significant market centres (its nearest market Watlington being relatively insignificant), but seigniorial policy determined that larger quantities of grain were despatched to Henley.<sup>339</sup> Distance to market was thus one of several variables affecting grain production and distribution, but as important was how well placed lords were to respond to local conditions.

*Table 1 Demesne sizes*

Demesne	Lord	Acreage sown	Total size	Date
Watlington	earl of Cornwall	258		1297
Witney	bp of Winchester	619-835a		1208-32
Witney	same	364-534.5b		1235-96
Witney	same	511-758a		1302-12
Witney	same	164.5-327b		1320-95
Forest Hill	Oseney Abbey	167		1303
Watlington	same	74		1339
Launton	Westminster Abbey	140-181.5		1341-65
Waterperry	Oseney Abbey	85.5-112		1328-35
Adderbury	bp of Winchester	417-458a		1208-31
Adderbury	same	215-292.5b		1232-96
Adderbury	same	303.5-349a		1302-12
Adderbury	same	166.5-268b		1320-82
Ambrosden	earl of Cornwall		360	1300
Islip	abbot of Westminster		485	1300-30
Cuxham	Merton College		300	1300

a. acres *ut iacent* (customary) b. acres *per perticam* (measured, but by a perch of 15' not the standard perch).

The genesis of demesne agriculture in Oxfordshire followed closely the pattern of resumption of demesnes throughout southern England. The Inquest of the Templars' estates in 1185 suggests that parts of the demesnes of Cowley,

<sup>338</sup>Some of the evidence here is extracted from *Rotuli Hundredorum* ii, 689-877.

<sup>339</sup>Harvey, *A Medieval Oxfordshire Village*; Harvey, *Manorial Records of Cuxham*; for the markets, Chapter 15.

# Oxfordshire demesnes and related markets c1350



Figure 1:

Merton and Sibford were in the lord's hands rather than leased out. The *servilia opera* (works of the unfree) at Cowley were, by implication, being exacted; at Merton, one of two hides of demesne was being leased to the tenantry, but the other was apparently in hand; although two hides of demesne at Sibford were leased to the tenantry, part may have been in hand. Some of the demesne of the Crown may have been in hand in 1193-94 at Bensington. The demesne of Newington was being directly exploited by Christ Church, Canterbury, by 1207, taken into royal hands during the Interdict so that by 1211 its value had declined through royal depredations. The bishop of Winchester's demesnes were both in direct production by 1208-9, as also the estates of Eynsham Abbey by 1210-11. When the Crown assumed custody of Begbroke in 1210-11, fifty-six cows were sold for 56s. and grain to the value of £11 9s. 0d. and £3 17s. 8d. In 1225, Whitchurch (formerly Berkshire) was also in demesne production, the Crown making substantial sales of grain as also from Burford and Shipton shortly afterwards. By the early thirteenth century, most major demesnes had thus been resumed in hand for direct exploitation rather than being leased to *firmarii* (lessees). Little is known, however, about the policy of the new religious houses of the twelfth century. The Templars had acquired Cowley in 1139 and Merton in 1152x1153 and they may have farmed these demesnes themselves through the twelfth century. The Austin Canons must have received their lands in the county in the mid and late twelfth century in a particular condition which determined their policy. Those lands acquired from knightly families may have been in hand already. On the glebe-demesnes, moreover, they may well have conducted demesne agriculture from the time of acquisition.<sup>340</sup>

By the late thirteenth century, most large seigniorial estates in the county disposed of their surplus product in the market. Sales of grain from the demesnes of the earl of Cornwall at Watlington in 1296-97 and Ambrosden in 1278-79 brought receipts of about £31 in both cases. Sales from the royal demesne at Hanborough produced from £13 to £17 between 1281 and 1284. At Heyford, in 1291-92, over £40 was received from such sales. After the abbot of Westminster no longer used Islip as a residence, sales from the manor attained very high levels: between 1285 and 1396 sales of grain there accounted for £13 to £62 per annum (exceeding £30 in eighteen years). Sales from the manor of Launton, held by Westminster Abbey, varied more moderately between 11s. and £23 between 1267 and 1373, exceeding £15 in ten years, but the demesne, at only 140-182 acres, was only half the size of Islip's. The levels of sales of grain from

<sup>340</sup>Lees, *Records of the Templars*, 41, 44-5, 55-6; M. M. Postan, 'The chronology of labour services' repr. in his *Essays in Medieval Agriculture and General Problems of the Economy* (Cambridge, 1973), 98; A. R. Bridbury, 'The farming out of manors', *EconHR* 2nd series xxxi (1978), 512-13; A. L. Poole, 'Livestock prices in the twelfth century', *EHR* lv (1940) cited in his *From Domesday Book to Magna Carta* (Oxford, 1958), 52; P. M. Barnes and W. R. Powell, eds, *Interdict Documents* (Pipe Roll Society lxxii), 57-8, 85; *Pipe Roll 12 John* (Pipe Roll Society new series xxvi), 1; *Pipe Roll 13 John* (Pipe Roll Society new series xxviii), 106, 110-11; E. A. Cazel, ed., *Foreign Accounts, Henry III, 1219-34* (Pipe Roll Society new series xlv), 8 and 79; Hall, *Pipe Roll of the Bishopric of Winchester*, 16-20, 57-60; P. D. A. Harvey, 'The English inflation of 1180-1220', *Past and Present* lxi (1973), 4-9; Harvey, 'The Pipe Rolls and the adoption of demesne farming in England', *EconHR* 2nd series xxvii (1974), 345-59.

the bishop of Winchester's manors varied between 1208 and 1405, from over £5 to £65 at both Adderbury and Witney (based on fifty sample years, in thirteen of which sales exceeded £40). Similarly high receipts were received from sales of grain from the two manors of Merton College at Holywell and Cuxham, although the level of real sales is complicated by the 'sales' to the college itself (*in Aula venditi* [sold in the Hall] or 'sold' to a *magister* of the College), as specifically in 1299-1301 at Holywell, but this grain may have been re-sold in the borough.<sup>341</sup> Receipts from sales at Holywell often exceeded £30: in 1304-5 and 1347-48 they surpassed £48, in 1310-11 £49, and in 1350-51 were almost £48, although they sometimes dropped lower, for example totalling only £12 15s. 10d. in 1301-2. A general picture thus emerges of some large demesnes, often outliers of great estates (as in the cases of the earldom of Cornwall, bishopric of Winchester and Westminster Abbey) disgorging their surplus production onto the local market.<sup>342</sup>

Table 2 Grain use on some manors of the earldom of Cornwall (nearest bushel)

Location/date/grain	Net issue	Sown	Sold
AMBROSDEN 1277-78			
wheat	100q2b	20q0b	80q2b
barley	34q0b	12q2b	21q6b
oats	81q2b	42q0b	38q7b
beans	4q0b	4q0b	
ARDINGTON 1278-79			
wheat	96q6b	24q0b	73q2b
rye	46q4b	6q1b	22q0b
barley	101q5b	24q4b	71q6b
oats	100q2b	26q4b	73q6b
WATLINGTON 1296-97			
wheat	100q2b	18q1b	88q3b
mixtil	40q3b	8q4b	
barley	40q2b	8q5b	31q6b
dredge	25q3b	6q4b	19q1b
oats	70q2b	27q7b	2q1b

On the bishop of Winchester's manors, these extensive sales encompassed

<sup>341</sup>T. H. Aston, 'The external administration and resources of Merton College to c.1348' in Catto, *History of the University of Oxford* i, 311-68.

<sup>342</sup>Midgley, *Ministers' Accounts of the Earldom of Cornwall* i, passim; T.N.A. SC6/955/2, 22-24; SC6/957/11-16, 28-29; SC6/959/1; B. F. Harvey, 'The history of the manor of Islip', unpublished B.Litt. thesis, Oxford (Bodleian MS. B. Litt. d 53); Westminster Abbey Munitments 15286-15375 (Launton); Miss Harvey allowed me to consult her transcriptions of Islip and Launton accounts; P. Hyde, 'The Winchester manors of Witney and Adderbury, Oxfordshire, in the later middle ages', unpublished B.Litt. thesis, Oxford (Bodleian MS. B.Litt d 47); Hampshire Record Office Eccles 2/159271-159312; Harvey, *Manorial Records of Cuxham*; Merton College, Oxford, MM 4466-4507; the Osenev items are as Chapter 11 with the addition of Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 96 (Kidlington) and 100-116 (Little Tew). For Holywell, Postles, 'The perception of profit before the leasing of demesnes', *Agricultural History Review* xxxiv (1986), 12-28.

even oats, which were not often a surplus product from estates. Holywell, for example, produced hardly any oats and was a constant purchaser in the market to meet its needs of this grain. On the Oseney Abbey estates, oats were sometimes replaced by dredge and legumes as livestock feed. Oats were correspondingly sown at higher rates of five and six bushels per acre at Adderbury and Witney from c.1278-82, whereas on other Oxfordshire manors they were sown only at four bushels per acre; the difference must also take into account, however, the smaller perch used on the Winchester manors. The surplus product of the Winchester manors is also reflected in the large sales of grain *in grosso* (as a job lot) in some productive years, often sold before precise measurement of the quantity. Equally, in some years, substantial amounts lay unthreshed in the Winchester granges (Table 3).

By contrast, the proportion sold from many small demesnes was derisory and production barely met the needs of consumption: £2 5s. 0d. to 4 15s. 4d. at Forest Hill; 13s. 4d. to £8 16s. 6d. at Waterperry, but in most years less than £3; 9s. 8d. to £3 8s. 0d. at Little Tew, but mostly less than £1. In many years, moreover, a considerable part of the sales was necessary to defray wages or costs (above, Chapters 10 and 11). Sales from Kidlington reached £8 12s. 5d. in 1324-25, but the receipts were needed to acquit the vicar's stipend, undertake repairs, and the costs of harvest. Receipts from sales of grain from many of the small properties of Bicester Priory were similarly negligible: 16s. 9d. to £2 1s. 1d. at Caversfield and Clifton. Most produce was thus consumed in seed, manorial costs, and provisioning the conventual household.<sup>343</sup>

---

<sup>343</sup>Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 119: *in campo per estimacionem pro stipendiis famulorum* (in the fields by estimate for the wages of the *famuli*); *unde v quarteria vj busselli pec novi grani assignati in campo pro stipendiis famulorum* (5qtrs 6bs peck newly-cut grain of which assigned in the field for the wages of the *famuli*); Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 96: *Idem respondet de xvjs. de ij quarteriis frumenti venditis in parte sallarii sui* (The same answers for 16s. from 2qtrs wheat sold in part payment of his salary); *Et de xijs. vjd. de uno quarterio ij bussellis frumenti eidem in parte stipendi sui ...* (And for 12s. 6d. from 1qtr 2bs to him as part of his wage ...); *Et de iij quarteriis dimidio fabarum venditis pro columbario et pro aliis negociis faciendis* (And for three and a half quarters of beans sold for [making the] dovecote and for doing other business); *Et de xxxvs. receptis de vij quarteriis Brasei de molendino venditis pro gurgite faciendo* (And for 35s. received from 7qtrs of malt from the mill sold for making the weir); *Et de xvs. de ij quarteriis dimidio duri bladi venditis pro Autumpno* (And for 15s. from two and a half qtrs of winter grain sold for harvest [costs]. Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 100-116; T.N.A. SC6/957/11-16. The income was thus 'earmarked'.

Table 3 Sales of grain in grosso at Witney and Adderbury

1218-19 Witney	
Wheat: <i>Idem reddit compotum de lxxvij quarteriis ij bussellis frumenti emptis quia totum frumentum manerii venditum fuit in grosso</i> (He accounts for 68qtrs 2bs wheat bought because all the manor's wheat was sold <i>in grosso</i> )	
Barley: <i>Idem reddit compotum de lxxv quarteriis dimidio de exitu ordeii quia residuum uenditum fuit in grosso</i> (He accounts for 75 and a half quarters barley issue because the rest was sold <i>in grosso</i> )	
Oats: <i>Idem reddit compotum de Cxlviij quarteriis j bussello de exitu auene quia residuum uenditum fuit in grosso</i> (He accounts for 146qtrs 1bs oats issue because the rest was sold <i>in grosso</i> )	
1231-32 Adderbury	
Mancorn: <i>quia residuum fuit venditum in grosso</i> (because the rest was sold <i>in grosso</i> )	
1256-57 Adderbury	
£28 <i>de una meya frumenti et j meya siliginis venditis in grosso; totum residuum frumenti venditum in grosso</i> (from a stack of wheat and a stack of rye sold <i>in grosso</i> ; all the rest of the wheat sold <i>in grosso</i> )	
1267-68 Witney	
70qtrs wheat sold <i>in grosso</i> for £9 6s. 8d.	
20qtrs barley ..... ditto ..... £2 3s. 4d.	
25qtrs dredge ..... ditto ..... £1 17s. 6d.	
70qtrs oats ..... ditto ..... £4 13s. 4d.	
1267-68 Adderbury	
24qtrs wheat sold <i>in grosso</i> for £3 12s. 0d.	
76qtrs rye ..... ditto ..... £7 12s. 0d.	
77 qtrs dredge ..... ditto ..... £7 1s. 2d.	
16 qtrs oats ..... ditto ..... £1 1s. 1d.	
2 qtrs peas ..... ditto ..... 3s. 0d.	

The vast differences in the proportion of grain sold from demesnes of various types can be illustrated by comparison of Little Tew (Oseney Abbey), Adderbury (bishop of Winchester) and Holywell (Merton College). At the first, representative of the smaller demesnes of Oseney, only a very small proportion of the issue was sold, by contrast with the much greater level from Adderbury and the other Winchester manor, Witney. The amount of grain sold from Caversfield (as on many properties of Bicester Priory) was minute and occurred only infrequently. The proportion of grain sold from Holywell after 1300 was, however, comparable with Adderbury.

On smaller properties, the low level of sales was determined by and in turn influenced labour as a cost of production, as cash was limited and there were few or no labour services. Inadequate amounts of labour were contracted because of the cash deficit. Weeding on demesnes of Oseney and Bicester was performed by wage labour, but at inadequate levels, so that at Caversfield only 4d. to 11d. was expended each year and at Little Tew only 4d. to 14d. At the latter, between 1350 and 1352, weeding constituted only twenty-two to twenty-seven dayworks, whilst at Hampton Gay in 1274-75 no weeding was undertaken other than implicitly by a small number of *famuli*.<sup>344</sup> As a result of cash deficits, costs of labour were often defrayed in kind, in grain (above, Chapters 10 and 11).

On most of the larger demesnes existed large resources of customary labour services. At both Watlington and Cuxham, customary services accounted for the principal work, supplemented by wage labour. The abbot of Westminster relied on customary services before the Black Death: 'Casual labour, whether at piece or day rates, was rarely hired and was employed only for reaping,

<sup>344</sup>Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 93: *Sarclacio Memorandum quod in sarclacione bladurum nichil computat hoc anno* (Weeding. Note that he accounts for nothing this year for weeding grain).

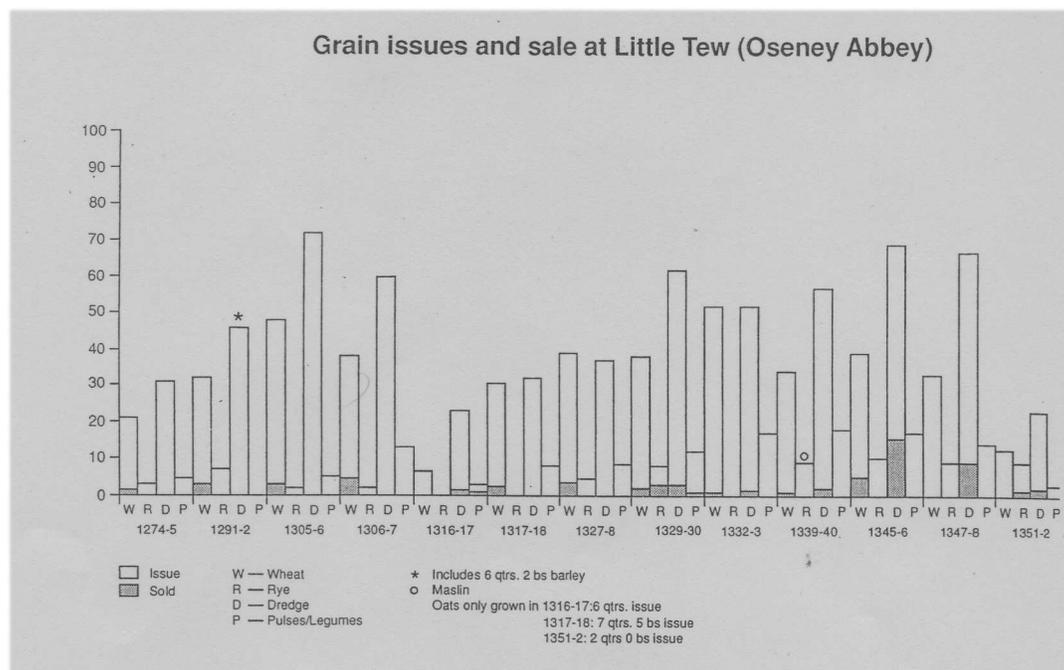


Figure 2:

for driving cattle, and for threshing'.<sup>345</sup> The episcopal manors were oversubscribed with works, especially harvesting, services being sold annually, although the major tasks were performed by customary labour. Both manors were exceptionally endowed with labour services, reflected in an injunction of 1223-24 that at Adderbury all reaping be completed by boonworks, confirmed by subsequent accounts.<sup>346</sup> Later, however, weeding was undertaken by wage labour and threshing *ad tascham* (by contract) as well as by customary services.

<sup>345</sup>B. F. Harvey, 'The history of the manor of Islip'.

<sup>346</sup>Hampshire Record Office Eccles 2/159278: *Decetero non fuerint precaria in autumpno ad costum domini set totum metatur per consuetudines operariorum* (In future there will be no boonworks in harvest at the lord's cost, but all will be reaped by the customary services of the unfree tenants).

Table 4a Grain use on some properties of Bicester Priory (nearest bushel)

Manor/date/grain	Net issue	Sown	Sold	to Bicester
STRATTON AUDLEY 1292-93				
wheat	56q4b	16q1b	4b	26q4b
rye	14q7b	1q1b		
beans/peas	34q6b	5q4b	1q4b	
dredge/barley	144q1b	15q0b	11q6b	92q4b
oats	18q0b	18q4b	1q0b	
CAVERSFIELD 1276-77				
wheat	20q2b	10q4b	2q0b	19q7b
barley	29q0b	8q1b	1q4b	9q0b
dredge	51q3b	21q3b		15q2b
CAVERSFIELD 1278-79				
wheat	28q3b	10q3b		17q5b
barley	31q7b	5q3b		25q0b
dredge	53q3b	22q0b		31q1b
CAVERSFIELD 1286-87				
wheat	46q0b	19q2b	4q0b	13q0b
barley	18q4b	8q0b	2q2b	
dredge	83q6b	37q2b	8q0b	34q0b
beans/vetch	4q2b	6b		
oats	15q4b	12q6b		
CAVERSFIELD 1309-10				
wheat	28q5b	9q7b		12q5b
barley	20q1b	8q3b		7q0b
dredge	51q5b	20q1b		31q0b
CAVERSFIELD 1315-16				
wheat	27q1b+			
curall	9q5b+			
dredge	72q1b+			
CLIFTON 1293-94				
wheat	36q6b	20q1b	1q2b	21q0b
rye	12q2b	3q0b		
beans/peas	22q2b	5q6b	5q6b	3q6b
dredge	67q2b	17q2b	3q1b	46q0b
oats	20q3b	19q3b		4q3b
CLIFTON 1323-24				
wheat	748q0b	15q1b		43q4b
rye	6q6b	2q0b		
peas	29q0b	8q5b		
dredge	99q2b	21q4b		76q3b
oats	14q1b	6q7b		3q0b

\* Gross issue + Figures from winnowing  
 Net issue consists of demesne issue less intermanorial receipts.

Somewhat different from these other Bicester properties was Kirtlington, from where few liveries were directed to the priory. Even there, nonetheless, sales of grain were minimal.

*Table 4b Grain use at Kirtlington.*

Manor/date/grain	Net issue	Sown	Sold	to Bicester
Kirtlington 1291-92				
wheat	37q7b	11q4b	3q4b	
barley	10q1b	2q1b		
dredge	48q4b	18q5b		
peas	1q4b			

*Table 5 Payments in kind for threshing by Osenev Abbey*

Property/date	Grain	Threshed	To threshers	Rate <sup>a</sup>
Hampton Gay 1274-75 <sup>b</sup>	wheat <sup>c</sup>	91q4b	3q2b	1/28
	rye <sup>d</sup>	141q7b	5q0.5b	1/28
	white peas	20q6b	14q4b	*
	beans/peas	38q5b	28q1b	*
Kidlington 1324-25 <sup>e</sup>	wheat	86q3.5b	2q5.5b <sup>f</sup>	1/32
	mixtil	8q4b	2b <sup>g</sup>	1/34
	beans/peas	68q3b	1q6b <sup>h</sup>	1/39
Little Tew 1347-48 <sup>j</sup>	barley/dredge	159q7.5b	4q7.5b <sup>i</sup>	1/30
	wheat	32q6.5b	1q1b <sup>k</sup>	1/29
	rye	8q0b	3b	1/21
	dredge	65q7b	2q2b	1/29
	peas	13q4b	3b	1/36

a. Calculated by writer. b. Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 9.

c. *Et trituratoribus pro trituratione iiiij<sup>xx</sup> quar' dim' ut supra iij quar' ij bus' cap' j bus' pro trituratione iij quar' dim'* (And 3 qtrs 2bs to the threshers for threshing 91.5qtrs as above, receiving 1bs for threshing 3.5 qtrs.)

d. *Et trituratoribus pro trituratione Cxlj quar' vij bus' v quar' dim' bus' cap' ut supra* (And 5qtrs 0.5bs to the threshers for threshing 141qtrs 7bs).

e. Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 96

f. *Et liberati trituratoribus pro iiiij<sup>xx</sup> vj quar' iij bus' dim' triturationis ij quar' v bus' dim' videlicet pro singulis iiiij quar' j bus'* (And 2qtrs 5.5bs given to the threshers for threshing 86qtrs 3.5bs, i.e. 1bs for every 4qtrs.)

g. *Item liberati trituratoribus pro viij quar' dim' triturationis ij bus'* (Item 2bs. given to the threshers for threshing 8.5qtrs.)

h. *Item liberati trituratoribus pro lxxvij quar' iij bus' triturationis j quar' vj bus'* (Item 1qtr 6bs given to the threshers for threshing 68qtrs 3bs.)

i. *Item liberati trituratoribus pro CLix quar' iij bus' dim' et pec triturationis iiiij quar' vij bus' dim' et pec* (Item 4qtrs 7.5bs 1peck given to the threshers for threshing 159qtrs 3.5bs 1peck)

j. Bodleian Ch. Ch. O. R. 113

k. *Et dati pro trituratione* (And given for threshing)

The provision of labour on these different demesnes thus varied considerably. Whereas on the large demesnes the *famuli* provided no more than a small core of labour whilst substantial amounts of customary labour performed most of the tasks, especially by boonworks and the less specialized work, the endeavours of the *famuli* were critical on the smaller demesnes even though their numbers there were inordinately low.<sup>347</sup> Unfortunately, the accounts of neither the large nor the small demesnes itemize how the *famuli* were deployed other than for their specialized work. It is thus impossible to estimate, for example, how much weeding was undertaken by the *famuli*. The accounts of small demesnes remained, moreover, rudimentary, without the detail introduced later into, for example, the Winchester accounts. This brevity renders it impossible to evaluate the relative contributions of the *famuli* and wage labour to the unspecialized tasks. By contrast, the Holywell accounts present a different situation for, although the manor also lacked the reserves of customary labour, large components of wage labour were recruited for cash for a more intensive husbandry. On the smaller demesnes, then, the level of investment was extremely low, epitomised by the failure to undertake any maintenance or improvement to buildings in Caversfield in 1278-79.<sup>348</sup>

On the larger demesnes, the opportunity was therefore available to increase the intensiveness of agrarian practices through the purchase of wage labour to complement the customary services. In the event, nonetheless, the lords of these manors remained content into the early fourteenth century to rely on customary services and not to engage large complements of wage labour. Whilst customary work may have been dilatory, it was sufficient for these lords to produce a surplus product. The prevailing seigniorial attitude was to spurn intensification for increasing commercial production and to rely on a continuously recurring surplus product resulting from existing resources.

The management of the demesne of Holywell contrasted with all the others. In the late thirteenth century, a more intensive husbandry was introduced, increasing the surplus available for sale. When the extant accounts begin, *c.*1296, the management of the demesne seems to have been in some difficulty. Merton College then commenced heavy investment in labour, although production continued to be sluggish until *c.*1300. Thereafter, output expanded rapidly, allowing large sales of grain, which, in course, allowed more investment. The large quantity of wage labour employed seems to have consisted of casual workers from within the borough of Oxford, epitomised by the costs of reaping: in 1299-1300 sixty-two reapers hired *infra iij dies* (for three days), 356 *infra xj dies* (for eleven days), and 184 *infra vij dies* (for seven days); in 1300-1 309 *infra xx dies* (for twenty days), 250 *infra vij dies* (for seven days), and sixty-one each for half a day; in 1301-2 660 *infra vj septimanas* (during six weeks) and 102 *infra iij dimidias dies* (during three half-days); in 1337-38 170 for one day, 120 for another day, 151 for a day, 151 for half a day, seventy-four for a day, twenty-one

<sup>347</sup>M. Mate, 'Labour and labour services on the estates of Canterbury Cathedral Priory in the fourteenth century', *Southern History* vii (1985), 55-68; Postan, 'The famulus'.

<sup>348</sup>T.N.A. SC6/957/12: *Custus domorum nichil hoc anno* (Costs of buildings: nothing this year).

for another day, and nineteen for another day.

Such numbers were representative of the quantities of wage labour contracted for reaping at Holywell in most years in the early fourteenth century. Despite increasing rates of pay, the college continued to invest heavily in wage labour, having no other resources. In the late thirteenth century, reapers were remunerated at the rate of 2d. to 2d. halfpenny per day, which increased to 2d. halfpenny to 3d. by the late 1330s. In 1338, the recompense was altered to piece rates, at variously 6d.-8d. per acre, according to the type of grain reaped. From 1340-42, all grain was reaped at 6d. per acre, but the rate increased to 8d. in 1345-46. In 1349-50, there was a reversion to costing wage labour by the day-rate, at 5d. per day. By that time, the total cost of harvesting had increased to over £11 by comparison with £5 to £10 at the opening of the century and £7 to £9 in the 1330s and 1340s.

Weeding is a potential indicator of intensive labour inputs.<sup>349</sup> At Holywell, all weeding was performed by wage labour, the annual commitment ranging from 2s. 9d. to 16s. 5d. farthing. The greatest level of input was in 1295-96 when the demesne was being restored to higher productivity. In that year, 186 women-days were employed in cleaning the demesne, at a cost of three-farthings each worker per day. In subsequent years, the level varied: in 1310-11, ninety-nine man-days were invested at a cost of more than 7s. and in c.1335 eighty-six man-days for 7s. 2d. Throughout the early fourteenth century, the cost of weeding rarely fell below 4s., but the cost per day-work increased to 1d. after 1310. By 1349-51, the total costs of weeding had increased to between 14s. 2d. and 16s. 5d., although the day-rate had risen commensurately from 2d. to 2d. farthing.

Similarly, all threshing at Holywell involved wage labour at the rate of 2d. per quarter of winter grain (wheat and rye) and 1d. halfpenny per quarter of barley in the 1330s and 1340s, rising to 4d. for wheat, 3d. halfpenny for rye, and at least 2d. for barley in 1349-50. Winnowing, also conducted by wage labour, rose from 1d. for four quarters to 1d. for three quarters.

Large expenditure was also incurred in the costs of mowing at Holywell. In the formative year 1296-97, mowing accounted for £2 8s. 1d. Large numbers of labourers subsequently received casual employment in the valuable meadows of the Cherwell: in 1300-1, ninety-seven men were contracted *infra ix dies* (for nine days), thirty-two *infra iiij dies* (for four days), and eleven men for one day, mowing and stacking hay. In the following year, seventy-one men mowed *infra ix dies* and sixty-two *infra xj dies*. Similar numbers were employed throughout the early fourteenth century at 1d. per day, replaced by a piece-rate of 3d. per acre from 1339-40. From 1345-48, summer meadow (*pratum estiuale*) was assessed at the higher rate of 3d. halfpenny as against the lower rate for rewain. As labour became scarcer in 1349-50, so there was a return to day-rates, but now at the very much higher level of 8d. per day for both rewain and summer meadow, which was augmented again in 1350-51 to 1s.

<sup>349</sup>W. H. Long, 'The low yields of arable in medieval England', *EconHR* 2nd series xxxii (1979), 459-69; Postles, 'Cleaning the medieval arable', *Agricultural History Review* xxxvii (1989), 130-43.

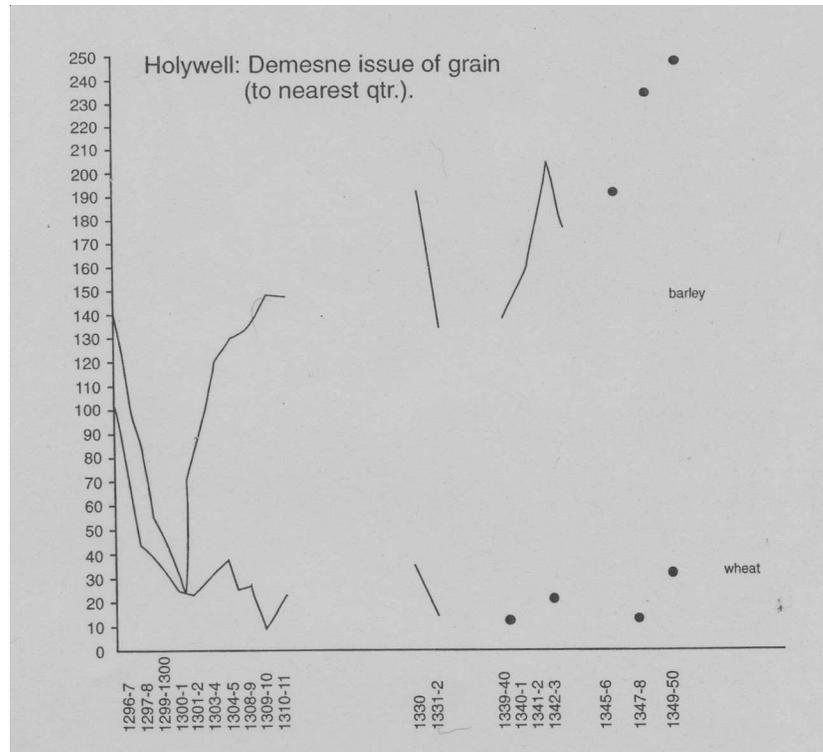


Figure 3:

These details reveal the college's intention to commit cash to wage labour to intensify production. Although the college relied in any case on wage labour, its investment in labour exceeded the minimum requirements. As indicative of the college's investment was its assiduous attention to improvement. Capital investment was periodic, but, when necessary, heavy. In 1296, the critical year, a new grange was completed at a cost of more than £20, followed by the construction of another grange in 1309-10 for more than £6. Although the demesne had no flock of sheep, manure was applied intensively, constantly at a high rate after 1297. In the early fourteenth century, the manuring involved the purchase of muck, possibly nightsoil and rubbish from the borough of Oxford, with the cost of carting and storage, as well as labour for spreading.<sup>350</sup> Marl was also frequently sought for improvement.

The college was able to sustain these high costs from income derived from directing grain to the urban market, but the transition to a more intensive practice was facilitated by the re-direction of resources from other properties. In

<sup>350</sup>Postles, 'Cleaning the medieval arable'; for example: *Et de vijs. vd. receptis de diuersis hominibus ville Oxon' pro carectis domini eis locatis ad finum carandum extra villam* (And for 7s. 5d. received from several men of the town of Oxford for hiring the lord's carts to them for taking muck out of the town).

1296, the demesne issues comprised large quantities of both wheat and barley. From 1300, however, production was concentrated on barley. After a hiccup in 1296-1300, the sale of barley comprised continuously sixty-five percent to ninety percent of its total issue, directed, presumably, to the Oxford market, a pattern replicated in the Southampton brokage books in which malt accounted for about eighty percent of the grain imported into the town by cart.<sup>351</sup> By thus concentrating on a cash crop for the adjacent urban market, the college was able to develop a virtuous cycle.

This cycle of affluence was, nevertheless, achieved without recourse to intensive sowing. Sowing rates in 1336-37, when the size of the demesne was first recorded in the accounts, were similar to those on the college's manor at Cuxham, rather conventional; they were no more intensive than on the Winchester manors. At Holywell, wheat was sown at two to two and a half bushels per acre and barley at three and a half to four, comparable, for example, with the rates at Islip in the 1350s where wheat was sown at three bushels and barley, dredge and oats at four. Rates on some manors in Oxfordshire in the late thirteenth century had been lower: at Checkendon in 1272-81 and especially at Watlington in 1296-97 where wheat was sown at merely 1.85 bushels, maslin at 1.7, barley at 2.2, dredge at 2.7, and oats at the lowly 2.5. By most yardsticks, however, the rates at Holywell were no more than conventional. Nor were seed-yield ratios from Holywell significantly higher than issues on other Oxfordshire demesnes. The important difference thus seems to have been the relationship of Holywell to a proximate urban market and some higher investment in labour resources, but which did not constitute a great movement into radically improved husbandry.

By contrast, some other demesnes, such as the smaller ones of Oseney Abbey and Bicester Priory, seem to have become locked into a cycle of deprivation, unable (or lacking the will) to increase labour inputs and thus unable to expand production for the market. The largest demesnes in the county were, conversely, possibly ensnared in a seigniorial attitude of complacency because of a naturally recurring surplus product. The productivity of Oxfordshire demesnes was thus influenced by a complex interaction of variables, particularly the size and structure of the demesnes, but also the proximity to markets. The small demesnes, partly because of their location closer to smaller markets, but mainly because of their lack of internal cash resources, were never in a position to invest heavily in production. Holywell, fortuitously placed next to a considerable urban market, and with the wider resources of Merton College's estates to draw upon, was allocated the critical investment in 1296-97 to move towards a sustained higher level of productivity. Agriculture in the county remained, however, within a conventional framework. The improvements introduced into some regions of eastern England in response to a demand-led economy were not emulated in Oxfordshire, not even on the largest demesnes nor on the medium-sized ones like Holywell where some movement was made towards satisfying the demands of an urban market.

---

<sup>351</sup>O. Coleman, ed., *Southampton Brokage Book 1443-1444* (2 vols, Southampton Record Society iv and vi).

Table 6a Seed-yield ratios calculated by auditors

Date	Location	Wheat	Rye	Barley	Dredge	Legumes	Oats
1265-66	Adderbury	4+	6+		6.5+		5+
1265-66	Witney	2.5-		3-	3-		2+
1282-83	Hanborough	2+		6-	3	3	
1283-84	Hanborough	2.5+					
1309-10	Combe	2		2+	2+	2+	2-
1336-37	Waterperry	3		5	2	8	3
1337-38	Waterperry	4		3	3	5	3
1339-40	Waterperry	1		3	1	4	1
1339-40	Little Tew	2-	4+		2+	2.5-	
1340-41	Little Tew	5				3	
1342-43	Waterperry	5-		3+	3+	3+	
1344-45	Waterperry	4			5	5	5
1345-46	Little Tew	3+	3+		3+	3+	
1347-48	Little Tew	3-	3-		3+	4-	
1352-53	Little Tew	3-	3		1	3-	
1356-57	Hampton Gay*	1+			4-	2	2

\* *cum decimis* (including tithes) For Adderbury, Witney and Cuxham, C. C. Dyer, 'Farming techniques in the West Midlands' in H. E. Hallam, ed., *The Agrarian History of England and Wales* iii (Cambridge, 1988), 382.

Table 6b Seed-yield ratios for Holywell calculated from raw data

Year	Wheat	Rye	Barley	Beans	Oats	Vetch
1301-2	2.44		3.7	1.7	1.99	4
1310-11	3.02	4.08	4.03			1.25
1337-38		8.75	3.91			
1340-41			4.41			
1341-42			6.05			
1350-51	4.91	7.04	1.82			

## 15 Markets for rural produce in Oxfordshire, 1086-1350

Markets and marketing were an essential component of the rural economy of medieval England, and have in recent years, received much attention from historians and historical geographers. Throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, trade and commerce rapidly expanded in Europe through the development of major urban centres. Such urbanization occurred also in England, but as important was the correlative proliferation of market towns and centres of smaller size, connected with the great expansion in rural trade.<sup>352</sup> Recent research has documented and explained the origins and development of these market towns and vills, which formed a network of trading in every county.<sup>353</sup> The expansion of marketing in Oxfordshire is of considerable interest because of the highly developed rural economy of this county.<sup>354</sup> The pattern of trading is slightly complicated, as no county was a self-contained economy, and traders from Oxfordshire probably frequented the market towns and vills in neighbouring counties. The county, moreover, was not a homogeneous region, but comprised a number of different *pays*. Despite these small caveats, the organization of rural trading in Oxfordshire reflects the wider developments of trade in the agrarian economy of medieval England.

By the second quarter of the thirteenth century, Oxfordshire was amongst the richest counties of England in terms of its rural wealth. In terms of the assessed wealth in the lay subsidy of 1334, Oxfordshire stood second only to Middlesex at £27.2 per square mile. A century earlier, in the lay subsidy for 1225, the county lay in third position, with assessed taxation of 22.6s. per square mile, behind Buckinghamshire (25.6s.) and Northamptonshire (24.6s.). Within the county, there existed, nonetheless, wide differences in the yield of taxation, according to different *pays*. In 1334, central Oxfordshire had assessed wealth of more than £30 per square mile, northern Oxfordshire £20-29, but the south of the county, the region of the Chilterns, merely £10-19. The same diversity was reflected in 1086, in the figures for ploughteams and population derived from Domesday Book, with a greater density in the Redlands and Cotswolds in the north-west, and in central Oxfordshire, compared with the sparser distribution in the south.<sup>355</sup>

---

<sup>352</sup>R. H. Hilton, 'Medieval market towns', *Past and Present* 109 (1985), 2-23; Hilton, 'The small town and urbanisation: Evesham in the middle ages', *Midland History* 7 (1982), 1-8; Hilton, 'Lords, burgesses and hucksters', *Past and Present* 107 (1982); R. H. Britnell, 'The proliferation of markets in England, 1200-1349', *EconHR* 2nd series xxxiv (1981), 209-211.

<sup>353</sup>Compare B. E. Coates, 'The origins of markets and fairs in medieval Derbyshire', *Derbyshire Archaeological Journal* lxxxv (1965), 92-111; for a full list of research on individual counties, Britnell, 'Proliferation of markets', 210; for later marketing in Oxfordshire, W. Thwaites, 'The marketing of agricultural produce in eighteenth century Oxfordshire', University of Birmingham PhD thesis, 1980.

<sup>354</sup>R. V. Lennard, *Rural England, 1086-1135* (Oxford, 1959), 40-73.

<sup>355</sup>H. C. Darby, ed., *A New Historical Geography of England before 1600* (Cambridge, 1976), 46, 48, 78, 141, 181-2; D. Roden, 'Demesne farming on the Chiltern Hills', *Agricultural History Review* xvii (1969), 9-23.

Historical geographers have posited a theoretical framework for the development of markets based on the concept of ‘rank redistribution’, the ‘primate’ market and the ‘periodicity’ of marketing. The primate market appears at the earliest phase, followed by a concentric circle of smaller markets. The smaller markets are held on days preceding the primate market, so that the market traders and itinerant chapmen can perambulate around the smaller markets first, before further exchange at the primate market. As trade is only at a low and infrequent level, the markets are ‘periodic’.<sup>356</sup>

To some extent, the evolution of markets in Oxfordshire conforms to this theoretical model. The market at Oxford, held midweek and at the end of the week, followed markets in the surrounding region. Oxford was the oldest market in Oxfordshire and the adjacent county of Berkshire, a position probably reflected in the disputes with Abingdon Abbey throughout the twelfth century (also involving Wallingford in the later twelfth century). The abbey was concerned to foster its more recently established market at Abingdon, created by Edward the Confessor, whilst the market at Oxford was probably in existence by *c.*900.<sup>357</sup>

The distribution of markets also reflected, to some extent, the relative wealth of the different *pays*. There were also other influences on the development of markets. Bampton was a hundredal manor and a hundredal market of pre-Conquest origin.<sup>358</sup> Several other hundreds, however, never had a market town or vill: Pyrton, Bullingdon, Ewelme, Lewknor, Dorchester and Langtree; whilst Bampton hundred ultimately had several markets. Burford, in Bampton Hundred, for example, had a market from the late eleventh century.<sup>359</sup>

Other than Bampton and Oxford, the Crown promoted markets in two other boroughs in the twelfth century: Woodstock (*c.*1163-64) and Henley (later earldom of Cornwall).<sup>360</sup> The bishops of Lincoln were also involved in the foundation of markets in the twelfth century, establishing markets in their manors of Banbury (by 1138-39, confirmed by charter in 1155) and Thame (*c.*1183-84, confirmed in 1215), but not at Dorchester, the former episcopal see. Eynsham, where the abbey established a market on Sundays in the reign of Stephen, was held by the monks from the bishop of Lincoln.<sup>361</sup> With the constitution of markets at Deddington and Chipping Norton in the late twelfth century, the process of the creation of cardinal markets was almost complete by 1200. Some additional primary markets were introduced in the thirteenth century: the earl of

<sup>356</sup>R. J. Johnston, *City and Society* (Harmondsworth, 1983), 58-61, 78-9; T. Unwin, ‘Rural marketing in medieval Nottinghamshire’, *Journal of Historical Geography* 7 (1981), 231-51.

<sup>357</sup>J. Stevenson, ed., *Chronicon Monasterii de Abingdon* (2 vols, Rolls Series, 1858), ii, 95, 119-20, 227-8; *Victoria History of the County of Oxford* iv, 305.

<sup>358</sup>R. H. Britnell, ‘English markets and royal administration before 1200’, *EconHR* 2nd series xxxi (1978), 184; F. Emery, *The Oxfordshire Landscape* (1974), 193; E. Stone, ed., ‘The hundred of Bampton’ in Stone and P. Hyde, eds, *The Oxfordshire Hundred Rolls of 1279* (ORS 46, 19xx), 17; H. Cam, *Liberties and Communities in Medieval England* (1963), map at 91-2, for hundredal manors; *Chron. Mon. de Abingdon* ii, 163-5, for the market at Abingdon and the hundred of Hormer.

<sup>359</sup>R. E. Gretton, *The Burford Records* (Oxford, 1920).

<sup>360</sup>M. W. Beresford, *New Towns of the Middle Ages* (1967), 476-8.

<sup>361</sup>*VCH Oxon.* vii, 178; x, 18, 58.

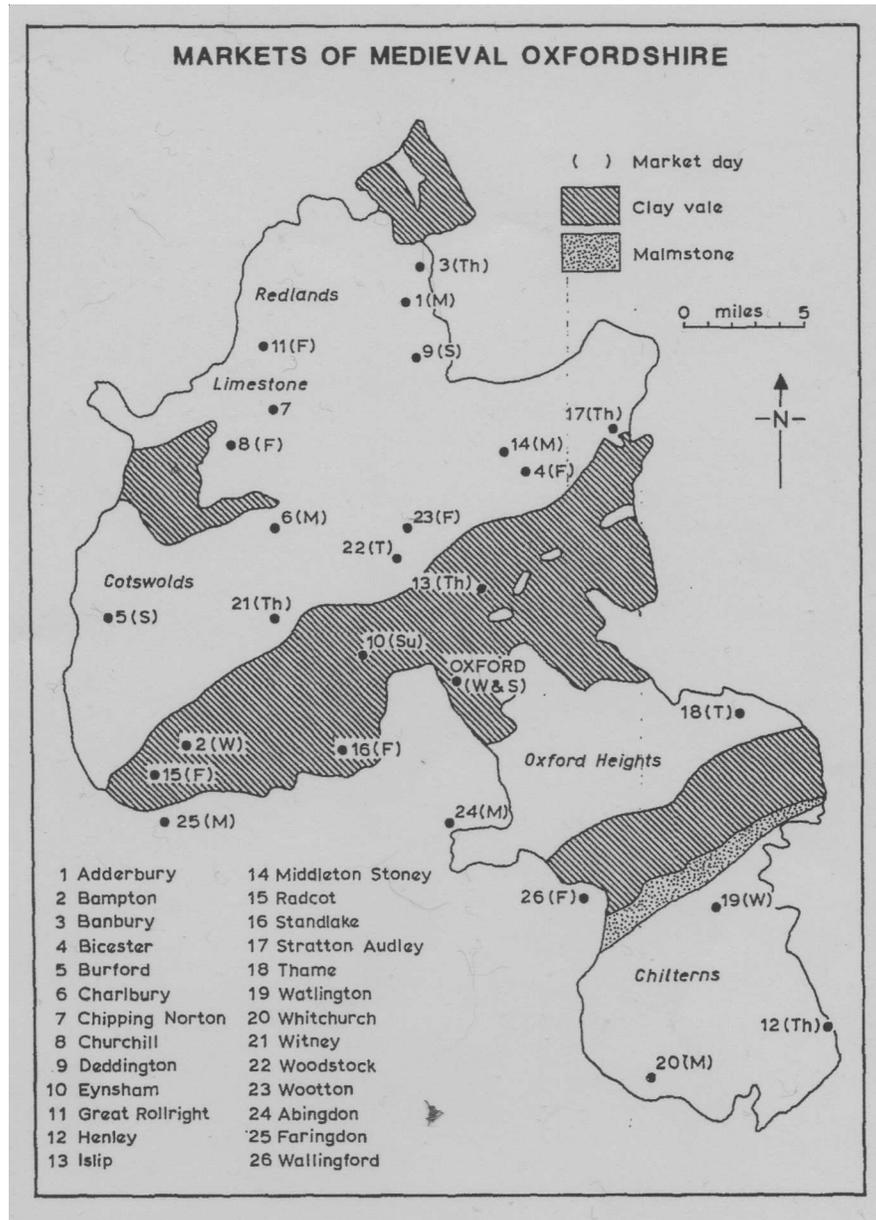


Figure 4:

Salisbury's market at Bicester by royal charter of 1239, as well as the bishop of Winchester's markets at Witney (and Adderbury), and the market at Charlbury too in the middle of the century.<sup>362</sup> The twelfth century as much as the thirteenth seems to have been the formative period for the establishment or confirmation of the main markets in Oxfordshire. Some markets, indeed, existed before the twelfth century, such as Oxford, Bampton and Burford.

A few lords were ostensibly responsible for the foundation of markets in the twelfth century, in particular the Crown and the bishop of Lincoln. These lords may have been reacting to the conditions created informally by their tenants. The villis may have become informal trading places before the lords provided formal recognition. By the early thirteenth century, the markets in the county were few and evenly distributed. It is therefore tempting to attribute this even distribution to the influence exercised by these few dominant lords, the Crown and the bishop. Certainly, the markets created in the twelfth century became the cardinal markets, which lasted (with few exceptions) through the later middle ages, and experienced the revival of fortunes of markets in the sixteenth century. By 1240, these cardinal markets had been established or confirmed.<sup>363</sup>

Table 1 Oxfordshire markets before c.1240<sup>364</sup>

Location	Earliest	Market days	Hundred	Lord/founder
Banbury <sup>i</sup>	1138x1139	Thurs	Banbury	Bishop of Lincoln
Deddington <sup>ii</sup>	bef. 1190	Sat	Wootton	Wm de Chesney
Chipping Norton <sup>iii</sup>	mid 12thc.	several fairs	Chadlington	Wm fitzAlan
Bicester <sup>iv</sup>	1239	Fri	Ploughley	earl of Sallisbury
Woodstock <sup>v</sup>	c.1163-64	Tues	Wootton	Crown
Burford <sup>vi</sup>	1088x1107	Sat	Bampton	earl of Gloucester
Witney <sup>vii</sup>		Thurs	Bampton	bp of Winchester
Bampton <sup>viii</sup>	1086	Wed	Bampton	Crown
Eynsham <sup>ix</sup>	t. Stephen	Sun	Wootton	Eynsham Abbey
OXFORD <sup>x</sup>	c.900	Wed,Sat, Sun (harvest)	Extra-hund	Crown
Thame <sup>xi</sup>	c.1183-84	Tues	Thame	bp of Lincoln
Henley <sup>xii</sup>	late 12thc?	Thurs	Binfield	Crown/earl of Cornwall
Standlake <sup>xiii</sup>	1230	Fri	Bampton	Eva de Gray
Adderbury <sup>xiv</sup>	1218	Mon	Bloxham	bp of Winchester

<sup>362</sup> *VCH Oxon.* ii, 176; vi, 31-3; xi, 84, 105; H. M. Colvin, *A History of Deddington* (1963), 55-7; Emery, *Oxfordshire Landscape*, 202; Salter, *Medieval Oxford*, 77-8.

<sup>363</sup> Lennard, *Rural England*, 40-73; A. Everitt, 'The marketing of agricultural produce' in J. Thirsk, ed., *The Agrarian History of England and Wales iv 1500-1640* (Cambridge, 1967), 473-5.

<sup>364</sup> i. *VCH Oxon.* x, 18, 58 ii. *VCH Oxon.* xi, 84, 105 iii. *Rotuli Chartarum* (Record Commission, 1837), 136b, with reputed market iv. *VCH Oxon.* vi, 31-3 v. Beresford, *New Towns of the Middle Ages*, 478 vi. Gretton, *Burford Records* vii. P. Hyde, 'The borough of Witney' in Stone and Hyde, eds, *Oxfordshire Hundred Rolls*, 89 viii. Britnell, 'English markets and royal administration', 184; *Calendar of Charter Rolls, 1226-1257*, 259 ix. Salter, *Cartulary of Eynsham Abbey*, i, xiii, 51 x. *VCH Oxon.* iv, 305 xi. *VCH Oxon.* vii, 178 xii. Beresford, *New Towns of the Middle Ages*, 476-7 xiii. *Calendar of Charter Rolls, 1226-1257*, 121 xiv. *VCH Oxon.* ix, 24.

During the course of the century after 1240, some ten additional markets were created or confirmed. Some at least of these vills or townships may have entertained informal trading before the formal grant of a market charter and, indeed, may also have had their origins in the twelfth century. None of these markets, however, attained the status or permanence of the cardinal markets which were known to have been established by 1240. Some were, indeed, very transient. The lords who created them may have been motivated by a purely fiscal interest, attempting to create a market with no economic base, or simply to assist the local trading of the villagers. Several of the lords who established these markets were, however, influential: Westminster Abbey, and the earls of Cornwall and Lincoln. Despite the status of their founders, these markets did not have the substance of the cardinal markets, and seigniorial aspirations were not matched by practical achievements.

Table 2 Markets created between 1240 and 1350<sup>365</sup>

Location	Charter	Days	Lord/founder
Charlbury <sup>i</sup>	1256	Mon	Eynsham Abbey
Islip <sup>ii</sup>	1245	Thurs	abbot of Westminster
Whitchurch <sup>iii</sup>	1245	Mon	earl of Oxford
Great Rollright <sup>iv</sup>	1252	Fri	Adam le Despenser
Wootton <sup>v</sup>	1252	Fri	Joan de Berkele
Watlington <sup>vi</sup>	1252	Wed	earl of Cornwall
Radcot <sup>vii</sup>	1272	Fri	Matthias Bezill
Middleton Stoney <sup>viii</sup>	1294	Mon	earl of Lincoln
Stratton Audley <sup>ix</sup>	1318	Thurs	Hugh de Audele
Churchill <sup>x</sup>	1327	Fri	Roger de Nouwers

A natural ranking thus existed amongst the market towns and vills of Oxfordshire by the time of the lay subsidy of 1334. Oxford, ranked ninth of all English towns, had assessed wealth of £914, followed by Banbury at £267. Bampton *cum membris* was an anomaly; although it had assessed wealth of £969, it was a very large composite manor or multiple estate. The position of the remainder of the cardinal markets is reflected by their ranking within their hundreds. Most were assessed at a higher level than the other vills in their hundred, but their assessment was not totally removed from the rest of the vills. Eynsham and Charlbury, however, were hardly distinguishable from other vills in terms of the level of their assessment, nor were many other market vills established after 1240. The *Nonarum Inquisitiones* of 1341-42 included the taxation of merchants' wealth and goods. Only Oxford was assessed for the ninth of the personal estate of its merchants, although there was some dispute as to the level of merchants' wealth in Banbury. The remaining market towns and vills gave no return for merchants' wealth. Although the inhabitants of Henley contributed gildsilver to the earl of Cornwall, no taxation was recorded

<sup>365</sup>i. Salter, *Cartulary of Eynsham Abbey*, 213 ii. *Calendar of Charter Rolls, 1226-1257*, 286 iii. *Ibid.*, 287 iv. *Ibid.*, 414 v. *Ibid.*, 401 vi. *Ibid.*, 393 vii. *Calendar of Charter Rolls, 1257-1300*, 183 viii. *Ibid.*, 436 ix. *Calendar of Charter Rolls, 1300-1325*, 289 x. *Calendar of Charter Rolls, 1327-1341*, 8.

on merchants' wealth there in the assessment of 1341-42. The difference between many of the market towns and vills and other vills in the county probably lay in no more than the concentration of craftspeople and service trades in the former. As Hilton has demonstrated for other regions, market vills tended to have a larger proportion of craftspeople amongst their population than rural vills. This factor alone differentiated market vills from other vills.<sup>366</sup>

By the middle of the fourteenth century, the number of markets in Oxfordshire had more or less reached its apogee. A century earlier, 'Bracton' pronounced his well-known opinion on the proximity of markets and market days. In particular, he remarked, markets established within six and two-thirds miles of an existing market could constitute a tortious nuisance, especially if the market day was very close. 'Bracton' was no doubt not enunciating a hard and fast rule, merely a rule of thumb. In some counties, the difficulty of terrain and topography necessitated markets established within very close proximity as the crow flies, such as in the Peak and Pennines, or the rias and moorlands of Cornwall. In Oxfordshire, the topography was less difficult. Markets established by 1240 were well distributed. By 1350, the distribution had altered. Some of the markets created or confirmed in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries were close to existing markets. Radcot was close to both Faringdon and Bampton; Churchill and Great Rollright within the proximity of Chipping Norton; Middleton hard by Bicester; and Banbury had to contend with Chipping Warden (Northants).<sup>367</sup> Conflicts were avoided by the failure of many of the newer markets to take off or develop. During the later middle ages, many of them failed or became inactive; some were virtually redundant from their inception. By the early sixteenth century, only the cardinal markets remained as active trading centres. Although the map of Oxfordshire markets seems crowded in some locations, many of the later markets were spurious from their beginning or lapsed during the later middle ages.

The map of markets *c.*1350 reveals also a difference in the concentration of markets in different *pays*. Central Oxfordshire was well endowed with markets. The uplands were less well provided: indeed the Oxfordshire Heights and Chilterns had market outlets only on their peripheries, along the Thames and Thame. The distribution can be partly explained by the difficulty of communication in the uplands. There may have been some different arrangements for trading on the uplands. In particular, there may have been direct sale or private trading in wool, a principal commodity, through the system known as the *collecta*, although recent research has suggested a more diversified economy of that *pays*. Grain production may have played a larger role in the agrarian economy of the Chilterns than had previously been assumed.<sup>368</sup>

<sup>366</sup>G. Vanderzee, ed., *Nonarum Inquisitiones in Curia Scaccarii* (Record Commission, 1807), 132-42; R. E. Glasscock, ed., *The Lay Subsidy of 1334* (British Academy Records of Social and Economic History new series 2, 1975), 11-14, 233-45; Midgley, *Ministers' Accounts of the Earldom of Cornwall* i, 91; for the agrarian character of Bampton, *Calendar of Charter Rolls, 1226-57*, 235-6, 246.

<sup>367</sup>*VCH Oxon.* x, 18.

<sup>368</sup>Roden, 'Demesne farming in the Chiltern hills.'

Nule chose ke vendu deit estre dez maners ne seit prise par gent, mes seit a feyres e a marches de plusurs veue e bargeyne ...

The author of the ‘Seneschaucy’, a treatise on estate management of c.1260-76, thus counselled that all demesne produce should be sold through the market rather than by private sale, in an attempt to avoid fraudulence and to obtain the best price.<sup>369</sup> The marketing of demesne produce is an important aspect of the medieval economy, because of the high proportion of grain sold from some of the larger demesnes of both lay and religious lords. For example, substantial receipts for grain sold from demesnes are recorded in 1296-97. Sales of grain from Islip between 1276 and 1374 brought receipts ranging from £20 to £60 per annum. Receipts of sales of grain at Hanborough between 1281 and 1284 amounted to about £16 p.a. In 1210-11, sales of grain from Witney and Adderbury provided income of respectively over £28 and £46.<sup>370</sup>

Table 3 Grain sales from some Oxfordshire manors in 1296-97<sup>371</sup>

Location	Wheat	Curall	Barley	Dredge	Legumes	Oats	Value (nearest 1s.)
Watlington <sup>i</sup>	88q3b		31q5.5b	19q1b		2q1b1p	£31 16s. <sup>ii</sup>
Cuxham <sup>iii</sup>	146.5q	9.5q	7q	6q4.5b	6b	23q	£44 18s. <sup>iv</sup>
Ibstone <sup>v</sup>	15q3b <sup>vi</sup>		22q7b <sup>vi</sup>	10q	2q2b		£10 6s. <sup>vii</sup>
Holywell <sup>viii</sup>	114q6b		88q5b		21q1b		£40 19s.
Launton <sup>ix</sup>							£10 8s.

Manorial accounts are not always specific about outlets for demesne sales, but those for some estates do divulge that seigniorial grain was being directed to the open market. For example, most of the grain sold from the manor of Bourton-on-the-Hill (Glos.) was sold *in foro* (in the [local] market), although in one year four quarters of wheat and one and a half quarters of pulses were despatched for sale in Oxford market. Small quantities of wheat were sold in Oxford by the warden of the confiscated estates of the Templars in Warpsgrave and Easingdon in 1307-8; grain from the baronial manor of Heyford was sold at Oxford in 1291-92. Grain was delivered by cart from Holywell in 1298-99 for sale at Henley.<sup>372</sup> Westminster Abbey sent grain from its manor of Launton

<sup>369</sup>Oschinsky, *Walter of Henley*, 270-3, but see Britnell, ‘Proliferation of markets’, 214.

<sup>370</sup>Westminster Abbey Muniments (WAM) 14776-14809; T.N.A. SC6/958/22-24; Holt, *Pipe Roll of the Bishopric of Winchester*, 68-9; for further details of grain sales from Adderbury and Witney, Hyde, ‘The Winchester manors at Witney and Adderbury’, 327-31 and 339-44.

<sup>371</sup>i Midgley, *Ministers’ Accounts of the Earldom of Cornwall* i, 84-91 ii. Additionally £3 12s. three-farthings from the sale of produce of the mill (multure) iii. Harvey, *Manorial Records of Cuxham*, 267-75 iv. Excluding the sale of 3bs. malt for 1s. 9d. v. Merton College MM 5064; Ibstone was in Bucks., but closely related to Cuxham and S.E. Oxon. vi. *pro dubio domini Regis* (i.e. a forced sale) vii. Excluding the sale of 8qtrs 3bs malt for £1 6s. 7d. viii. Merton College MM 4469 ix. Westminster Abbey Muniments 15307.

<sup>372</sup>Westminster Abbey Muniments 8260; TNA SC6/961/35, SC6/959/1: *De necessariis ... In expensis prepositi et Rogeri messoris uersus Oxon’ cum blado per .xxiiiij. vices* (For necessities ... In the costs of the reeve and Roger the reapreeve 24 times to Oxford with grain); grain from Heyford was sold *per Rogerum messorum* (by Roger the reapreeve): Merton College MM 4474: *Minute expense. In expensis .iij. carectariorum cariancium bladum usque Henle per .viiij. dietas ad vendendum vs. xjd. ob.* (Small costs. In the costs of three carts carrying grain for sale to Henley for eight days 5s. 11d. halfpenny.

for sale in the markets of Oxford, Aylesbury and Thame.<sup>373</sup> In the 1370s, the accounts of the abbot's manor of Islip reveal that grain there was being sold in the market, although only in small quantities. (The previous accounts of this manor divulge only that grain was being sold continuously, but do not specify how or where).<sup>374</sup> The accounts for Cuxham became very specific in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, mentioning the sales of large quantities of grain, especially wheat, at Henley.<sup>375</sup> Oats for Holywell (which did not produce its own in many years) were bought in 1299-1300 in the market at Faringdon.<sup>376</sup> Unfortunately, manorial accounts for Oxfordshire estates are not usually so informative about the method of sales of grain, simply recording the quantity, the price, and the time of year (which affected the price).

Information about customary carrying services may give some indication of marketing of demesne produce, although the critical question is whether the services were still being used. The customary virgaters of the bishop of Lincoln in Stodham near Dorchester had to carry grain to London for sale or deposit in the bishop's granary, but also to visit other [local] markets for the sale of grain. The customary tenants of Cuxham were required to carry grain to Henley, Wallingford and Ibstone, the last an intermanorial livery between Merton College's properties.<sup>377</sup> Grain may have been sent to Wallingford at an earlier time, but seems to have been discontinued. The direction of most of the College's grain from Cuxham, established by the accounts, was to Henley. In the late twelfth century, the customary tenants of the Templars' at Cowley transported grain to market on Saturdays; the destination must have been Oxford market, the only weekend market in the vicinity. The villeins of the priory of Holy Trinity, Canterbury, at its manor of Newington, carried to markets within the county; those of Sir John de Ripariis at Stoke Basset to markets within ten leagues; those of Sir John de Cowdrey at Gatehampton within seven leagues;

<sup>373</sup>Westminster Abbey Muniments 15312 (1300-1): fodder for carthorses *ideo magis hoc anno pro cariagio bladi venditi hoc anno apud Oxon' et Haylesburi* (so much this year because of carrying grain sold at Oxford and Aylesbury); 15319 (1307-8): *ideo magis ... pro cariagio bladi ad vendendum apud Oxon' et apud Tame* (so much ... because of carriage of grain to be sold at Oxford and Thame).

<sup>374</sup>Westminster Abbey Muniments 14809-14819. I owe these Islip references to the kindness of Barbara Harvey who allowed me to consult her transcriptions.

<sup>375</sup>Harvey, *Manorial Records of Cuxham, passim*; *A Medieval Oxfordshire Village*, 103. The reeve of Cuxham spent twenty-two days at Henley in 1318-19 to sell grain: Harvey, *Manorial Records of Cuxham*, 338.

<sup>376</sup>Merton College MM 4476.

<sup>377</sup>Harvey, *Manorial Records of Cuxham*, 107; *A Medieval Oxfordshire Village*, 97. When they renewed fealty in 1329, half-virgaters undertook to carry grain to Henley with a horse. For the College's tenants at Ibstone (Bucks.), Merton College MM 5065 for 1298: *Item averabit per dies dominicales in dictis septimanis quas operabit silicet [sic] per sex locas [sic] si munitus fuerit die sabati prius* (Item he will carry on Sundays in those weeks when he works that is in six places if he is requested on the Saturday before). For the bishop of Lincoln's services, The Queen's College, Oxford, MS 366, fo. xxv: *Et preterea ibit apud london' cum blado ipsius episcopi ad illud ibidem uendendum uel liberandum in granario episcopi ... Ibit eciam ad mercata cum preposito episcopi ad bladum episcopi uendendum et ad denarios inde prouenientes colligendos* (And he will go furthermore to London with the bishop's grain to sell it there or to place it in the bishop's granary ... He will also go to [local] markets with the bishop's reeve to sell grain and to pick up the cash resulting).

those of Laurence Basset at Ipsden and Lewknor simply 'to market'. In 1363-66, the customary tenants of Eynsham Abbey at Woodeaton and the Rollrights carried to Eynsham, from Woodeaton on Sundays, possibly for the Sunday market as well as for the conventual granary. The unfree tenants of Oseney Abbey at Weston-on-the-Green gave 3d. in consideration that they would not be compelled to carry outside the county.<sup>378</sup> Some religious houses were thus maintaining their options of carriage to any market within the county. Carrying services would imply the directing of grain to markets, then, but it is unclear how far the services were being used in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. Descriptions of carrying services may refer back to the establishment of the customs in the twelfth century, possibly reflecting marketing patterns at that earlier time, although some demesnes may have been leased out to *firmaryi* (lessees) until the late twelfth century. Manorial accounts of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries provide an indication (but no more) of the way in which some lords may have been directing their grain to specific markets. Not all accounts give this detail; even in those accounts where such details are specified, the precise nature of the sale of some of the grain is still not recorded. From this imperfect evidence, however, it appears that the lords of larger estates were consigning their grain to the cardinal markets, whereas lesser lords may have been more involved with local ones.

Demesne sales of grain were, of course, only one aspect of rural marketing. Evidence of marketing by peasants is not easily available. Transactions in other commodities such as wool, were not always channelled through conventional markets. Sales of wool were often effected through private trading, through the *collecta*, an arrangement which certainly dominated demesne wool production, although not necessarily peasant sales of wool.<sup>379</sup> The woolclip from the manors of Oseney Abbey was collected together at Water Eaton for central disposal. The clip from the flocks of Eynsham Abbey was committed to Roger Harang, a merchant of Witney, in 1268 for every year until an advance of £160 10s. was acquitted, an arrangement termed an *arra*. The clip was collected together at Eynsham for the purposes of the contract.<sup>380</sup> The practice of private trading in wool begs the question of whether there were similar transactions in grain, avoiding markets, despite the precepts of the 'Seneschaucy'.

The extent of private trading in grain is difficult to assess because manorial accounts do not normally record sufficient detail about sales. Examples can be found, however, which may indicate a more widespread existence of private trade. In 1290-91, the reeve of Cuxham sold half a quarter of wheat to the abbot of Missenden and two quarters of wheat to Thomas le Parker, although

<sup>378</sup>D. Postles, 'Customary carrying services', *Journal of Transport History* 2nd series 5 (1984), 4-6, 12-14; B. A. Lees, ed., *Records of the Templars in England in the Twelfth Century* (British Academy Records of Social and Economic History, 1935), 43-4; *Cartulary of Oseney Abbey* ii, 19, 61.

<sup>379</sup>E. Power, *The Wool Trade in English Medieval History* (Oxford, 1941), 42-5; K. Biddick, 'Medieval English peasants and market involvement', *Journal of Economic History* xiv (1985), 823-31.

<sup>380</sup>Salter, *Cartulary of Eynsham Abbey* i, 18; see also Hyde, 'Winchester manors at Witney and Adderbury', 151-2, 180, and Chapter 13 above.

most grain was despatched to Henley.<sup>381</sup> Private sales are sometimes indicated by the inclusion of additional quantities given as *advantagium* (premium).<sup>382</sup> The description of sales *in grosso* (as a job lot) or *in tasso* (in the stack) must also indicate private trading. The Crown was particularly anxious to dispose of grain from escheated estates in this way. In 1225, the Crown's agents sold a stack *in grosso* for twenty marks from the forfeited manor of Fawkes de Breaute at Whitchurch.<sup>383</sup> A stack of beans was sold by Oseney Abbey from its manor of Stone (Bucks.) to a butcher of Aylesbury (Bucks.), but the manorial accounts of Oseney are normally reticent.<sup>384</sup> Private trading thus existed by the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, but its extent remains uncertain.

Some of the lordships in Oxfordshire were certainly producing large quantities of grain for sale, although, by contrast, some of the smaller manors and properties on estates such as Oseney Abbey's, produced mainly for manorial, household and conventual consumption.<sup>385</sup> According to N. S. B. Gras, the sales were occurring in a low-price area, the Upper Thames, which comprised Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Berkshire, where prices were generally lower than in the Lower Thames area between 1259 and 1500.<sup>386</sup> The grain from some demesnes in southern and even central Oxfordshire was probably, nonetheless, being exported into the Lower Thames through Henley and Reading, as a seigniorial marketing strategy.<sup>387</sup>

During the fourteenth century, some of the market towns and vills in Oxfordshire may have received a relative setback to their prosperity, although Henley survived better than others. It is possible to compare the *Nonarum Inquisitiones* of 1341-42 with the *Taxatio Ecclesiastica* of 1291-92. Indeed, the commissioners of 1341-42 did so at the head of their assessment for each vill or township. The basis of the taxation differed slightly, in that the later assessment included commercial wealth, but such wealth did not feature in the assessment for almost all the Oxfordshire markets. In most cases, there appears to have been a substantial decline in the level of taxation between 1292 and 1342. Bicester stood in 1342 at only fifty-six percent of its level in 1292; Thame at fifty-three percent; Chipping Norton at fifty percent; Charlbury at thirty-six percent; Burford at fifty-five percent; Bampton thirty-nine percent; and Witney sixty-five percent. These figures are a crude indicator of some decline. In Bicester's case,

<sup>381</sup>Harvey, *Manorial Records of Cuxham*, 198, 283-4.

<sup>382</sup>Britnell, 'Advantagium mercatoris', 44; Westminster Abbey Muniments 14815 (Islip, 1378-79): sale of 40qtrs of barley with additionally 2qtrs given *ad dictam vendicionem ex certa convencione* (for that sale by the usual custom) (from transcription by Barbara Harvey). The abbot of Bec sold 16qtrs of wheat from Swyncombe, adding 1qtr 3bs *in avantagio*: M. Chibnall, ed., *Select Documents of the English Lands of the Abbey of Bec* (Camden 3rd series lxxiii, 1951), 138-9 (1288-89).

<sup>383</sup>F. A. Cazel, ed., *Foreign Accounts, Henry III, 1219-34* (Pipe Roll Society new series 44, 1982), 8.

<sup>384</sup>See Chapter 9 above.

<sup>385</sup>See Chapter 11 above.

<sup>386</sup>N. S. B. Gras, *The Evolution of the English Corn Market* (Cambridge, MA, 1926), 41, 47-8.

<sup>387</sup>For the decline of Wallingford, D. M. Stenton, *English Society in the Early Middle Ages* (Harmondsworth, 1967), 189; Harvey, *A Medieval Oxfordshire Village*, 102-3.

part of the explanation of decline was contraction in the agricultural element of the town, with at least one carucate described in 1342 as lying uncultivated (*frisca*). More important, however, was the recession in the agricultural base of the hinterland. In the deanery of Bicester, 1,320 acres lay *frisca* in 1342, and in vills throughout the county there had been some decline, albeit at varying levels.<sup>388</sup>

By the early-modern era, the number of active markets was considerably less than in the middle of the fourteenth century. Many markets created after 1240 were spurious at their inception or withered away during the later middle ages. Their basis may have been unsound from the beginning. Their decline may have been precipitated by changes in patterns of rural trade in the late middle ages, with an increase in private trading. Only the cardinal markets, established before 1240, survived the changes, through their sounder economic base, and through their development of specialized markets.<sup>389</sup>

---

<sup>388</sup> *Nonarum Inquisitiones*, 132-42.

<sup>389</sup> Everitt, 'The marketing of agricultural produce', 473-5; O. Ogle, 'The Oxford market' in M. Burrows, ed., *Collectanea* (OHS xvi, 1890) ii, 13-27.