

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON



*Seal of Aconbury Priory  
1447.*

**A HEREFORDSHIRE NUNNERY**  
**A Calendar, with Introduction, of the**  
**Aconbury Cartulary**

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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

ABSTRACTFACULTY OF ARTS  
HISTORY

Master of Philosophy (MPhil)

**A HEREFORDSHIRE NUNNERY  
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Mary Elizabeth SCOTT

This is the story of a mediaeval nunnery, Aconbury priory, founded at the beginning of the thirteenth century by the wife of a powerful Marcher lord. This thesis studies a cartulary containing nearly 100 grants to the nuns of land and property. Most of the parcels of land were within a reasonable distance of the priory enabling the nuns' bailiffs to use the roads and rivers to travel around administering these properties. After the Dissolution the cartulary remained among the records of the Augmentation Office, and then in 1843 it was transferred to the Public Record Office where it has remained to this day.

When the nunnery was originally founded it was attached to the Hospitallers of the Order of St John of Jerusalem, but in 1237 it transferred to the Augustinian order.

Apart from the rents that were generated by the grants, the nuns appear to have increased their income by brewing and sheep rearing (albeit on a small scale), and the home farm would have provided food for the convent. Appropriated churches often provided monasteries with a large part of their income, and contemporary bishops' registers provide information about four churches that were appropriated to Aconbury priory at the beginning of the fourteenth century.

Between 1216, when the priory was first founded, and the middle of the fourteenth century most of the prioresses belonged to aristocratic families, many of whom had been generous donors to Aconbury. However, after about 1377 the prioresses nearly always came from merchant and landowning families. The distribution of the grants appears to demonstrate that a close relationship must have existed between Aconbury priory and the local community.

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PREFACE

Nuns, indeed women, have been much neglected in the past, although contemporary historians, many of them women, are beginning at last to look at women's history. Some of the reasons for this neglect have been thoroughly researched by Sally Thompson in her book Women Religious: The Founding of English Nunneries after the Norman Conquest. But there is a remarkable lack of documentary evidence. Thompson attributes this to many factors: e.g. chroniclers did not pay very much attention to nunneries; fire and floods and political troubles were major hazards that destroyed records; but, above all, poverty contributed to the lack of documents because on the whole nunneries, except for a few long-standing Benedictine foundations, were much poorer than their male counterparts. Nuns could not afford payment to scribes, wax and ink were expensive, and the nuns had a lack of learning compared to monks.

Historians are fortunate to have a few extant cartularies of nunneries, of which Aconbury is one. This is held in the Public Record Office, at Kew. As far as can be ascertained this cartulary in MS form has not been previously transcribed or translated. This Calendar is not an entire transcription nor a translation of the charters, but an effort has been made to present the wording of the deeds in language understandable to a modern reader and to avoid the repetition of certain phrases, and also where possible to present details of any grants to the convent which were the chief source for the economy of Aconbury.

At the beginning of the twelfth century there were few opportunities for women to enter the religious life. Berenice Kerr, in her book Religious Life for Women c.1100-c.1350, has stated that at the beginning of the twelfth century there were only fifteen religious houses for

women in England, and all were Benedictine. By the middle of the thirteenth century this number had increased by some three hundred percent, and Aconbury was numbered among these additional houses.

The economic evidence from the cartulary shows that Aconbury, although not as wealthy as some of the other nunneries, did manage to maintain a small establishment and made a considerable impact on the March area.

Apart from the rents that were generated by the grants, the nuns appear to have increased their income by brewing and sheep rearing (albeit on a small scale), and the home farm would have provided food for the convent. There are a few account rolls, mostly in the early fourteenth century which help to fill in the economic picture.

Appropriated churches often provided monasteries with a large part of their income. No details appear in the charters, but contemporary bishops' registers provide information about the four churches that were appropriated to Aconbury at the beginning of the fourteenth century, and there are assessments of value in the *Taxatio Ecclesiastica* and *Valor Ecclesiasticus*.

There are few references to prioresses and nuns in the charters; most of the information that has been gathered comes from contemporary bishops' registers, the Catalogue of Ancient Deeds in the Public Record Office, and the sparse account rolls.

The nuns of Aconbury do not seem to have adopted a passive role. The prioresses organised the nunnery and the women clearly controlled their own lives in a way that mediaeval women outside the convent were unable to do.

In her book The Convent and the Community in Late

Medieval England Female Monasteries in the Diocese of Norwich, 1350-1540) Marilyn Oliva has researched the social hierarchy of nuns in East Anglia, and a study of the prioresses of Aconbury (Table 9, pp.138-143) demonstrates that her findings have wider applicability to other parts of England. The early prioresses appear to have been members of aristocratic families, but then, in about the middle of the fourteenth century, there was a distinct change and thereafter those elected came from merchant or landowning families. Just as the social class of the prioresses changed, so did that of the donors. When Aconbury was first founded, most of the grants of land came from aristocratic families, including the Marcher lords, and then from the latter half of the thirteenth century when some of the Marcher families had lost their estates, most of the donors came from merchant or landowning families.

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Thompson, S.P., Women Religious: The Founding of English Nunneries after the Norman Conquest (Oxford, University Press, 1991)

Kerr, B.M., Religious Life for Women c.1100-c.1350 Fontrevaud in England (Oxford, University Press, 1998)

Oliva, M., The Convent and the Community in Late Medieval England. Female Monasteries in the Diocese of Norwich, 1350-1540 (Woodbridge, Boydell Press, 1998)



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ABBREVIATIONS

<u>BAR</u>	<u>British Archaeological Reports</u>
BCC	<u>Coplestone-Crow, B., Herefordshire Place-Names, (BAR British Series 214, 1989)</u>
<u>Book of Fees</u>	<u>Liber Feodorum, The Book of Fees, 3 vols. (HMSO, London 1920-31)</u>
<u>Cat.Anc.Deeds</u>	<u>A Descriptive Catalogue of Ancient Deeds in the Public Record Office, 6 vols. (HMSO, London, 1890-1915)</u>
<u>Cal.Charter Rolls</u>	<u>Calendar of Charter Rolls preserved in the Public Record Office, 6 vols. (HMSO London, 1903-27)</u>
<u>Cal.Close Rolls</u>	<u>Calendar of Close Rolls preserved in the Public Record Office (HMSO, London, 1902- )</u>
<u>Cal.Heref.Cath.Muns.</u>	<u>Calendar of Hereford Cathedral Muniments</u>
<u>Cal.Papal Reg.</u>	<u>Calendar of Entries in the Papal Registers relating to Great Britain and Ireland, eds. W.H.Bliss, C.Johnson, J.A.Twemlow, M.J.Haren and A.P.Fuller, 17 vols. (London and Dublin, 1894-1989)</u>
<u>Cal.Pat.Rolls</u>	<u>Calendar of Patent Rolls preserved in the Public Record Office (HMSO, London, 1901- )</u>
<u>DNB</u>	<u>Dictionary of National Biography</u>
<u>Feudal Aids</u>	<u>Feudal Aids, AD 1284-1431, 6 vols. (HMSO, London, 1899-1920)</u>
<u>HCA</u>	<u>Hereford Cathedral Archives</u>
<u>L&amp;P F&amp;D H.VIII</u>	<u>Calendar of Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, J.S.Brewer and others (eds), 21 vols. (HMSO, London, 1864-1932)</u>
<u>MA</u>	<u>Monasticon Anglicanum, W.Dugdale (ed), revd.edn., J.Caley, H.Ellis &amp; B.Bandinell (eds), 6 vols. (London, 1817-30, repr.1846)</u>
<u>NLW</u>	<u>National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth</u>

- PRO Public Record Office
- R.Comm.Hist.Mons. Royal Commission on Historical Monuments,  
England. Inventory of the Historical  
Monuments in Herefordshire, (HMSO,  
London, 1931)
- Rot.Lit.Claus. Rotuli Litterarum Clausarum in Turri  
Londinensi asservati, T D Hardy (ed),  
2 vols. (Record Commission, London, 1833-34)
- Rot.Lit.Pat. Rotuli Litterarum Patentium in Turri  
Londinensi asservati 1201-1216, T.D.Hardy (ed),  
(Record Commission, London, 1835)
- Taxatio Taxatio Ecclesiastica Angliae et Walliae  
auctoritate P.Nicholai IV, circa AD 1291,  
T.Astle, S.Ayscough, and J.Caley (eds),  
(Record Commission, London, 1802)
- Trans.Hist.Soc.West Wales Transactions of the Historical  
Society of West Wales
- Valor Valor Ecclesiasticus temp. Henrici VIII,  
auctoritate Regis institutus, J.Caley and  
J.Hunter (eds), 6 vols. (Record Commission,  
London, 1810-34)
- VCH Victoria History of the Counties of England
- Woolhope Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalists'  
Field Club, Herefordshire

UNITS OF MEASUREMENT AND MONEY VALUESArea

Carucate	This term denotes a 'plough-land' i.e. as much land as could be tilled in one year by a single plough drawn by eight oxen. Usually 120 (sometimes 80) acres	e.g. Foundation p.12
Virgate (or yardland)	30 acres	e.g. Cs 3,16,28
Noke (or Nook)	$\frac{1}{4}$ Virgate or $7\frac{1}{2}$ acres This is a Scandinavian word meaning a corner or angle.	e.g. Cs 3,11
Butt	This appears merely to mean any odd piece of land.	e.g. C 11 and f.175

Length

Ulna	45 inches	e.g. Cs 77,81
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Capacity

Tun	a large beer cask usually equal to 252 (English) gallons	e.g. C 67
Sester	a jug or brewing vat, hence:	e.g. C 67
Tolcester	a prise (toll) of ale payable to the lord (about $\frac{1}{4}$ d).	
Thrave (of corn or straw)	24 sheaves	e.g. C 8

Money and Value \*

Money was reckoned and used in two ways in mediaeval England. A silver currency of coins circulated: the pound (libra) was made up of twenty shillings, each shilling (solidus) was worth twelve pennies, and the penny (denarius) - this form of currency (£sd) lasted until 1970 - and in addition there was a common unit of reference, known as a money of account: the Mark, worth two-thirds of a pound sterling or 13s.4d.

Attempts to correlate values expressed in mediaeval units of currency with modern values are bound to be unsatisfactory because of a number of variables. Differences in standards of living, the constant changes in price levels that follow long periods of inflation, and the share of the value of the economic product obtained by modern wage-earners are some of the factors that need to be taken into account before any equivalents can be suggested. A not unreasonable estimate is a ratio of about 50-55 to 1 to arrive at modern day sums of approximately equal value.

\* Graves, C.V., Stixwold in the Market-Place, pp.229-230

\* Stenton, D., English Society in the Early Middle Ages, 2nd ed. pp.27-28

## PART I INTRODUCTION

### 1. THE CARTULARY

#### Description

The Aconbury Cartulary (E 315/55) is contained within a small quarto volume written in cursive script on parchment. The Cartulary was probably bound up in the nineteenth century within plain wooden boards covered with maroon russian leather, tooled in gilt. The volume contains 194 folios in all, some are in a bad condition possibly due to exposure to damp, others are damaged by what is described by the Public Record Office as 'tincture of galls' <sup>1</sup>.

Most of the charters were straightforward records of property deals, but some were quitclaims or confirmations and there were two charters (Cs 44 and 66) that recorded litigation. There are thirteen grants in free alms and quitclaims in the cartulary. A quitclaim formally transferred to another all rights that a person may have had to a property and often there were quitclaims from former transactions (C 64 1288x1326), or a widow might quitclaim property that her husband had granted to the nuns (C 56, C 75 1237x1255), and in this way Aconbury could avoid possible litigation. Sometimes quitclaims had to be bought, particularly if poor widows were involved, or if the donors were less than generous or not very well off. When Richard Riche (C 17 1216x1241) quitclaimed land in Kempsey to the convent the nuns were required to quitclaim rents in exchange. Aconbury paid 80 marks for a grant and quitclaim in Rowlestone (C 53 November 1275). William the Welshman (C 90 c.1274) quitclaimed a field in Kilpeck to the nuns for which they paid 13d.

Towards the end of the thirteenth century there were several charters concerning pieces of land which recorded former transactions before the land passed to the nuns. As donations decreased Aconbury's accounts of previous ownership became increasingly detailed. For example there are three



charters that record Warin de Grendon's grant to the nuns (Cs 87,88,89), and five charters that detail the selling of property in Butchers' Market, Hereford (Cs 74,75,76,77,78).

Donations from the merchant/landowning classes would most likely have been more liable to legal scrutiny than the donations from the nobility. Details of former transactions would have helped Aconbury to maintain its rights to the property and enabled the community to fight legal battles and preserve the community's possessions <sup>2</sup>.

There were eight confirmations in the cartulary which expressed approval of a grant; these were made by Marcher lords and knights which would have increased the security of the nuns in case any legal claims were made by relatives of the donor.

### Contents

The volume contains the following <sup>3</sup>:

(a) A Calendar according to the usages of the English Church (ff.1-12), in which the name of Thomas Becket and the word 'pope' have been carefully erased or defaced wherever they occurred. This Calendar is written in a very careful black and red script.

(b) A Table of Contents of the charters and deeds (ff.13-16). This table is written in a hand of the first half of the fifteenth century. Tables of contents are common, but indexes are rare <sup>4</sup> and there was none for Aconbury. In several of the folios (ff.31,34,58,61,68,124) spaces were left so that additions might be made. Others (ff.30,40,41) were written closely together with no space in between. The cartulary was left unbound until the nineteenth century and this could possibly explain why some charters concerning a particular piece of land were dispersed throughout the cartulary (Cs 11,15,43).

(c) A regnal table of the Kings of England from William the Conqueror to Henry VI in the same handwriting as the Table of Contents, and continued in subsequent hands to Henry VIII.

(d) The cartulary itself: ninety six charters written in two main hands, the first is fairly late thirteenth century, and the second is late thirteenth century/early fourteenth century. The first charter is a royal charter of Henry III confirming a grant of land to Aconbury by his father John.

(e) There are several additions, written in a hand of the first half of the fourteenth century at a time when most grants to the convent had dried up:

- (i) ff.177-192: a list in French of tenants of Aconbury dated the Thursday after the feast of St Agatha (5th February) 1308.
- (ii) f.181 is nearly illegible.
- (iii) f.189: a list of the tenants of Kempley.
- (iv) f.193. a memoranda of the performance of fealty by some tenants (hardly legible).

The cartulary is not arranged in strict chronological order. Most of the deeds for land/properties in particular places are arranged in groups according to the place to which they refer.

Hemming, a monk of Worcester, who was probably one of the earliest archivists and who wrote towards the end of the eleventh century, described the purpose of a cartulary thus:

'I, Hemming, monk and priest, have composed this little book concerning the possessions of this our monastery, so that it may be clear to our posterity which and how many possessions in land pertain to the endowment of this monastery for the sustenance of the monks, the servants of God; or rather which (possessions) ought by right (to be ours), although we have been unjustly dispossessed of them by force and fraud.'<sup>5</sup> It is hard to better his description.

Thompson has discussed the lack of evidence concerning nunneries: 'only nineteen cartularies are extant, of which two are mere fragments and one is badly burnt'<sup>6</sup>.

Most of the nunneries founded after the Norman Conquest were poor and probably unable to afford the payment of scribes, the high cost of vellum and other writing materials which would have inhibited the production of documents. Thompson also makes the point that ignorance of Latin by the



nuns would have presented difficulties and fires and floods were major hazards which contributed to the lack of cartularies <sup>7</sup>.

None of the original deeds from which the Aconbury Cartulary was copied appear to have survived and the scarcity of sources and damage to surviving documents can be attributed to various causes. Aconbury certainly suffered from political troubles that always existed in the March. The nuns were exempted from a tax in 1406 because of 'losses suffered in the war' <sup>8</sup>, and at one point the administration of the delapidated buildings was taken over by the bishop's officials. In 1406 Bishop Mascall (Bishop of Hereford 1404-17) showed concern about the poverty of the Aconbury nuns.

The cartulary, although simply a collection of legal documents, gives valuable information about the various donors; it also in some places provides detailed information about the extent and value of the holdings. Unfortunately the charters provide little information about the prioresses or the nuns within the nunnery.

#### Dating

The dating of a document on the continent was a routine matter where notarial practice was employed, as occurred in many areas of continental Europe. However, in England notaries were not commonly used for drafting and executing deeds and therefore dating was not common practice.

Dating had become more precise and prevalent by the end of the twelfth century, and by the end of the thirteenth century, when there was a plethora of documents, it had become more common. Bishops for example did date their *acta*.

It may well be asked why documents were not commonly dated. Often deeds were executed after the handing over of land or property and the donors/scribes could see little point in dating them. Dates were difficult to compute without Church diaries, although most monks would have been familiar with ecclesiastical chronology <sup>9</sup>.

There are difficulties for the modern researcher with the dating of documents. When the donors or witnesses came from lordly or knightly classes it is often possible to date a charter from details of their lives. For example, Geoffrey de Geneville, with the consent of his wife Matilda de Lacy (C 2), gave half of four mills in Ludlow to the priory. He came to England in 1250, and married Matilda de Lacy; the first witness, sir Robert Walerund, died in 1273, so the charter can be dated between 1250 and 1273.

On the other hand many of the donors in the later charters, towards the end of the thirteenth century, came from a lower social scale and it is difficult to discover any information about them, moreover many witnesses similarly came from a lower social scale. As a result these charters usually remain undated.

Most of the charters with specific dates: (Cs 1,6,11,21a,21b,28,35,44,53,67), are grants of land made by donors belonging to the nobility, whether lords or knights. Two charters were unusual because they were not grants of property/land and were dated: a final concord (C 44) made near Dore Abbey, dated 15 August 1421, recorded a case in the Court of Common Pleas, and so the date and place were carefully recorded. Henry of Lancaster, lord of Monmouth, granted Aconbury a licence for brewing beer (C 67) and this deed was dated 23 February 1314.

Three dated charters were drawn up by members of the merchant/landowning classes: William Wyther was a citizen of Hereford (C 78), William Valet (C 82) was described as a chaplain and, as he granted property in Castle Street near the cathedral, he was probably connected with the cathedral clergy. Finally Roger the Welshman granted five pieces of meadow (C 90b), a particularly valuable gift to the nuns.

The Jewish community recognised the need for signing and dating documents. They preferred to authenticate documents with signatures and not seals. In 1285 the Statute of Merchants made an attempt to authenticate bonds but conveyances of property were rarely signed <sup>10</sup>, and

unfortunately a system similar to notarial practice was never adopted in England.

### Scribes

Very few charters in mediaeval England acknowledged the name of the scribe. The name of the cartulary copyist is unrecorded, and only two of the 96 charters in the Aconbury Cartulary name the scribe. The nuns were granted burgages in Tetbury (Cs 21(a) & (b)), and the list of witnesses included '*Johanne diacono qui hanc carta scripsit*'.

In the list of witnesses for property in Ewyas Harold (C 29 1216x1219) is included '*Herberto, clerico, qui haec carta scripsit*'. There are several charters in the cartulary where donors and witnesses bear the title '*Clericus*' (Cs 46,70,74,76,78,79,80), so this could indicate simply that Herbert was a scholarly person with a reputation for erudition, it does not necessarily signify that he was a member of the clergy. Even Thomas Becket was described as 'clerk and accountant' of the sheriffs of London <sup>11</sup>, and in a charter (C 29) where Sibyl de Ewias granted land to the nuns, one of the witnesses was described as 'S, then clerk of the Hereford constabulary'.

There is also mention of Walter Blund '*scriptore*' in a witness list (C 17) who may have been merely a named witness, as the deed does not state that he wrote the charter. Again he could have been a wandering scholar who earned his living as a scribe and was casually enlisted as a witness.

The two charters (Cs 21(a),29) that state the name of the scribe were charters that described Aconbury as a hospital - presumably the Hospitallers had helped to draw up the deeds (see below p.12) when Margaret de Lacy had first founded Aconbury in 1216 and decided that her nuns should belong to the Order of St John of Jerusalem.

It is difficult to explain why so few charters in England were attributed to a specific scribe. Elsewhere in western Europe, under Roman Law, notaries were commonly used for authenticating documents. They signed and dated the documents thus ensuring that they were legal documents. 'A

notary signed documents with his *signum* in much the same way as a master mason marked the stones he cut before they were built into a permanent fabric' 12.

### Seals

By 1300, despite the objections of some lords, seals and deeds were probably owned by the majority of landowners. A seal would show to the world that an owner of land was a person of some importance, however small the holding. Some of the donors would not have been able to write their names and a seal could have been used in lieu.

Most of the deeds in the Aconbury Cartulary conclude with a phrase stating that the donors had authenticated their deeds 'with a seal', but these are copies and the seals were only attached to the originals. Of the 96 Aconbury charters only eight do not contain a phrase stating they had been authenticated by seal (Cs 10,18,27,49,87,88,89,94). There seems to be no reason why these charters were singled out and it could be due to omissions by the scribe when the cartulary was copied.

### Language

After the Normans invaded England in 1066, Anglo-Norman French gradually took over as the language used at court. By 1150 the English language had vanished in court and legal circles. Latin became the language of written instrument in government but sometimes manuscripts were written in mediaeval French, and a knowledge of French was important for ambitious men and those among the higher echelons of society.

Three charters in the cartulary were written in mediaeval French (Cs 21(b),62 & 67).

Charter 62 refers to the vicar of St Laurence in Ludlow, one John de Vaucolour, who gave land to the nuns (see below p.114). He was almost certainly a scion of the Geneville family, who held property in Ludlow. Geoffrey de Geneville was named Seigneur de Vaucouleurs in 1241, and this may have been one of the reasons why the vicar wrote his charter in French, a language with which he would have been

familiar.

Three charters (21(a),21(b) and 22) record the grant of ten burgages in Tetbury. Charter 21(a) is a confirmation by William V, dated 22 January 1290, of a grant by John de Braose of these properties; charter 21(b), dated 20 January 1290, which is written in mediaeval French, again confirms the grant; charter 22 is a another confirmation of the grant and is identical to 21(a). Charter 21(b) instructs the bailiff to release the nuns from any ameracements that might be incurred by 'their men'. French settlers had established themselves in many urban centres; Domesday Book refers to 43 French burgesses in Shrewsbury <sup>13</sup>, and there may well have been bilingual or even trilingual burgesses in the other main towns of the March region - Abergavenny, Monmouth, Hereford and Ludlow - all places where the nuns held property.

Henry of Lancaster, the lord of Monmouth, gave a licence for brewing ale to the nuns (C 67) (see below p.69). This charter was scribed in French - Henry was the son of Edmund Crouchback by his second marriage to Blanche d'Artois, the queen dowager of Navarre, and it is likely that Henry's mother tongue was French and he may have been more comfortable with that language.

#### Provenance

Before the Dissolution the cartulary was probably kept in a chest in the refectory or the church of the priory, but at the Dissolution the records of all religious houses were surrendered to the Court of Augmentations, and the cartulary remained among the records of the Augmentation Office which were deposited in St Margaret's Lane, New Palace Yard, Westminster. In 1793 all the records of the Office were transferred to the Stone Tower, Westminster, and after the Westminster Fire of 1834, the records underwent a series of moves until they were deposited in the Public Record Office's repository at Carlton Ride in 1843. The cartulary then went to Chancery Lane and is now held at the PRO, Kew.

It is remarkable that it has survived at all even in its present rather damaged condition.

### Editing

The editorial conventions used are, in general, those recommended by R.F.Hunnisett 14.

As most of the charters begin with the words '*sciant presentes et futuri quod ego.....*' and later contain the words '*liberam, puram et perpetuam elemosinam*', this has been shortened to 'a grant in free alms'. Sometimes the latter phrase is omitted or simply the word 'pure' appears, and the nuns are required to make a payment to the donor.

The deeds were commonly addressed to 'God and St Mary and St John the Baptist, and the sisters of Aconbury serving God there'; this phrase has also been omitted from the calendars.

English language forenames (where identifiable) are given in their modern English spelling. Surnames, if clearly a family name, e.g. 'de Lacy', have been standardised. Where they just indicate the place of residence, they have been transcribed to the modern place name, followed (in italics) by the name as it appears in the charter, e.g. 'of Kilpeck (*Kylpec*)' (C 34). Occupational surnames, where identified, have been inserted in brackets after the name.

Place names, where identifiable, are shown in modern English, followed by the name from the charter in italics. In some charters there are detailed references to the grants (C 8 - Nesscliffe); others are so vague that it is often impossible to identify the sites of the properties, in which cases the name is given in italics (C 62 - *margiraweld*).

The Cartulary has been used as a source for understanding the life and environment of the nuns of Aconbury. This cartulary has charters of varying degrees of legibility and literacy and this factor has not been considered here, although reference to Thompson has been made. It might be interesting to speculate on her theory about the literacy of nuns and whether at certain times, when the nunnery was relatively well off the charters were correspondingly well transcribed, but at times of poverty the charters were carelessly written by less well educated and therefore cheaper scribes.

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## 2. FOUNDATION AND BRIEF HISTORY

### Evidence for the Foundation of Aconbury

By royal charter dated 10 October 1216, Margaret de Lacy was granted three carucates of land by King John, to be cleared and cultivated, in the forest of Aconbury, to found a religious house there for the salvation of the souls of her father, Walter de Braose, her mother Matilda, and Walter her brother <sup>1</sup>.

King John had visited Hereford from 24 to 31 July in 1216 and he may have granted the land to Margaret during that week. The charter, dated 10 October 1216, was sealed in Lynn and ten days later the king was dead. Sally Thompson has suggested that this gift 'indicated a sign of royal repentance for his treatment of the Braose family' <sup>2</sup>. Margaret de Lacy was the daughter of William III de Braose (see below p.107) and John's gift of land to found a religious establishment may have salved his conscience over his treatment of her mother and brother <sup>3</sup>. Aconbury benefited from this link between the Lacy and Braose families.

Margaret decided to affiliate her nunnery to the Hospitallers of St John of Jerusalem. The Braose family had no great tradition of crusading but, on the other hand, her husband's family did have such connections: Walter de Lacy's grandfather, Gilbert, had been a patron of the Templars and Henry de Lacy (of the Yorkshire Lacys) died in the Holy Land, and this could have influenced Margaret's choice.

Helen Nicholson has explored the relationship between the Hospitallers and their patrons on the one hand, and the papacy on the other, as exemplified by the Aconbury case. She suggests that Margaret de Lacy's conflict with the Hospitallers was only one phase in the continuing battle between successive popes and the Hospitallers and Templars who were becoming, in the opinion of the papacy, too powerful, and that this was clearly demonstrated by the way the Hospitallers fought to keep possession of Aconbury <sup>4</sup>.



It seems unlikely that the pope (Gregory IX) would have been particularly moved by Margaret's sad story, or impressed by Walter de Lacy's power and wealth.

King John, however, favoured the Hospitallers and 'one of his early acts was to secure the Order in all its endowments by a charter of Confirmation' <sup>5</sup>, and some years later 'we find him prohibiting the sheriff of Hereford from disturbing the brethren or their tenants in the county' <sup>6</sup>. Perhaps Margaret agreed to affiliate her nunnery to the Hospitallers to retain the goodwill of the king, a decision she may have come to regret later because her nuns would have been liable for duty overseas, and also there was the considerable cost of litigation (see below p.104), especially as King John died so soon after.

There are only two charters in the cartulary that refer to the foundation of Aconbury. First, a royal charter (C 1), dated 29 May 1266, confirmed that an enquiry had been held into the foundation of Aconbury, and Henry III now granted to the nuns in free alms the whole of the forest of Aconbury, including Athelstan's Wood. Secondly, Walter de Lacy confirmed the gift by King John to Margaret his wife (C 31). It is difficult to give an exact date to this charter but it may have been at the time when Walter had become involved in litigation relating to the transfer of Aconbury from the rule of the Hospitallers of St John of Jerusalem to the Augustinians (see below pp.16-18).

According to Sally Thompson at least eighteen post-conquest nunneries have unknown or uncertain founders <sup>7</sup>. This could be explained by lack of sources and some of the nunneries may have been founded by groups of people rather than by individuals. However from the extant evidence, it appears that Aconbury had a sole founder, Margaret de Lacy, but she received strong support in the form of grants of land and property from some of the Marcher lords, including the Genevilles, the Cliffords, the Braoses, and the Lestranges, many of whom were interrelated by marriage (see below p.127).

Founders and patrons of religious houses often claimed the right to place their kin in particular houses. Two

members of the Geneville family, Catherine and Maud, became prioresses at the end of the thirteenth century (see below Table 9, pp.138-143), and Beatrice, Maud's sister, was a nun at Aconbury. There may have been other nuns at the convent related to the great Marcher lords and donors in the second half of the thirteenth century, but scarcity of sources makes it difficult to trace them.

A right of burial in the house was often expected by the relations of the founder. In 1260 Margaret de Braose, the widow of sir Walter de Clifford (see family trees below pp.107,109), who was related by marriage to the Lacy family, left her heart for burial at Aconbury; she requested her executors to pay 15 marks to the nuns immediately on her death, and other expenses for the funeral were to be paid in due course <sup>8</sup>.

#### The Link with the Order of St John of Jerusalem

Six charters describe Aconbury as a hospital of St John of Jerusalem (Cs 19,20,29,32,68 & 70). This Order was established in the first half of the eleventh century to provide help for those who were making pilgrimages to the Holy Land. Both men and women joined the Order, and a hospital dedicated to St Mary Magdalene was founded for women at the headquarters of the Order in Jerusalem <sup>9</sup>. In 1113 Pope Paschal II gave official recognition to the Hospitallers and under its master, Raymond de Puy (d.1160), it became a 'powerful militant organisation to uphold the banner of the cross' <sup>10</sup>, and its members could be termed 'militant brethren'. Because the Pope had given his official support to the Hospitallers, and there was also support from the crown, the Order soon became wealthy and special favours were handed out. Paschal II granted them exemption from the payment of tithes; they were allowed their own special courts with the right to administer justice to their tenants; the Order was responsible directly to the pope and was exempt from episcopal visitations; during periods of Interdict, the Hospitallers were allowed to administer the sacraments in their own churches. Even after the fall of Jerusalem in

1187 and the third crusade, the Hospitallers continued to defend Christianity and wealth continued to flow in from all parts of Christendom.

The Hospitallers very likely reached England at about the same time as the Templars and Cistercians, around 1128, but it was not until about 1145 that they were granted the site of their first English priory at Clerkenwell <sup>11</sup> near London. The various estates were merged into bailiwicks under the charge of a Preceptor, and the Preceptory became the local unit of administration. During the period that Aconbury was affiliated to the Hospitallers the convent would have been administered by the Preceptory of Dinmore <sup>12</sup>, assisted by some retired members of the Order. The bailiwick of Dinmore, which was six miles north of Hereford near the River Lugg, extended from south-west Shropshire along the Welsh border as far as the River Severn and then along the plains of Gwent and Glamorgan, incorporating the dioceses of Hereford and Llandaff.

Aconbury was unusual in that nunneries attached to the Hospitallers were rare. There was no other house in Wales or the March for the reception of women members of the Order of St John <sup>13</sup>.

Of the six relevant charters three (Cs 19,20,70) describe the nuns as 'sisters' whereas the remaining three (Cs 29,32,68) call them simply 'nuns'. Two charters (Cs 18,21(a)) refer to the community as 'the nuns of the hospital' at Aconbury. One unnumbered charter, in which the prioress leased a messuage in Hereford to William Amy (ff.82-84), refers to 'Sister Constantia, *magistra* of the hospital of St John of Jerusalem'. This may have been indicative of the confusion that existed over the distinction between nunneries and hospitals, or that female hospitaller houses had to be seen as hospitals.

Charter 41 (1216x1236) refers to the 'brothers and sisters' of Aconbury which suggests that Aconbury may have been a mixed convent in the beginning, and in a papal bull dated 1233 <sup>14</sup> the elder women were to be left to take care of the poor and sick of the hospital and the rest were to be

placed in other monasteries, confirming that there was papal concern over double monasteries; presumably the older women posed no threat to the morals of the convent or they would shortly die.

Double houses had not figured in the monastic revival of the tenth century. It was not until the foundation of the Gilbertine order in the mid-twelfth century that double houses re-emerged in England, but there was increasing unease in the higher echelons of the Church over the association of monastic men and women, and by 1300 the Gilbertine order had reached its maximum extent. But the fact that Aconbury's charter, which is dated sometime between 1216 and 1236, refers to men and women could suggest that double houses were in existence belonging possibly to other orders <sup>15</sup>.

From the time when Norman lords advanced into Wales in the late eleventh century the March lordships were the scene of continual sporadic fighting, and Archenfield was in the midst of a great deal of unrest (see below p.27). There was a lack of hospitals in the Herefordshire area and Margaret de Lacy may have desired to establish a refuge for wounded men and refugees that might be picked up in the area around the convent.

In 1233 there was a papal mandate <sup>16</sup> to the Bishop of Coventry which, among other things, stated that when Margaret de Lacy wished to found a house for religious women, she placed her convent with the Hospitallers believing that 'colleges of women' could be established under their Rule, and this could have been one of the reasons why she originally attached Aconbury to the Hospitallers. But once she had shaken off the Hospitaller yoke, she may have started a tradition that the Aconbury nuns continued, as demonstrated by a plea from Bishop Rowland Lee, the Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, at the time of the Dissolution. He wrote a letter to Thomas Cromwell <sup>17</sup> stating that the gentlemen of Abergavenny, Ewyas Lacy, Talgarth and Brecon and the adjoining parts of Wales sent their women and children to Aconbury to be brought up in virtue and learning.

### The Change to Augustinian Rule

In 1237 the convent transferred to Augustinian rule. When Margaret de Lacy realised that her nuns could be required by the Hospitallers to serve abroad she decided to transfer the house to the Augustinians. It is not clear when the negotiations began, but there are various entries in the Papal Registers which detail progress from 1233 until 1237 when the convent officially transferred from the Hospitallers to Augustinian rule.

The evidence for Margaret's actions comes almost entirely from a letter of Pope Gregory IX (1227-1241), dated 6 April 1233, to the bishop of Coventry explaining the situation <sup>18</sup>. Margaret de Lacy would have had to involve her husband, Walter, because, if she had given the priory to the Hospitallers without consulting him, 'her donation would have been invalid since a married woman could not alienate her land without her husband's consent' <sup>19</sup>. However, possibly without consulting the bishop of the diocese, she had originally placed the foundation with the Hospitallers - 'some women were brought by her into the house'.

She then realised that her nuns, as members of the Order of St John, were bound to go to other places and cross the seas and they would therefore be unable to provide continued spiritual service for her family. She pleaded with the pope and 'in her simplicity stated that the said women had professed the Augustinian rule'. Margaret then obtained letters for the Bishop of Hereford giving her permission to withdraw her convent from the Hospitallers, who did not care to be overruled in this way and used their *indult*, arguing that anyone who had taken the cross was prohibited from joining another order. The Bishop of Coventry together with the Bishop of Worcester was mandated to oversee the transference.

Three months later on 13 July 1233 <sup>20</sup>, it appears that the prior of St Albans became involved in the dispute, because the next papal mandate was addressed to the bishop of Coventry, the prior and the archdeacon of Worcester instructing them to 'inhibit the prior of St Albans' from

supporting the Hospitallers against Aconbury and the Lacy family. The Hospitallers had appealed direct to the pope and Margaret was told to attend a conference 'three or four days journey beyond the diocese' and the Hospitallers attempted to have her fined (see below p.104); Margaret did not wish to appear at the conference and was pronounced 'contumacious' <sup>21</sup>. The Bishop of Coventry was again authorised to investigate the situation and in August 1234 he was mandated to revoke a sentence and process of the Prior of St Albans whereby the Hospitallers were to be allowed to take possession of the nunnery.

It was clear that the pope wanted the matter finalised. On 2 April 1236 <sup>22</sup> there was a mandate to the bishop of St Asaph, the abbot of Dore and the penitentiary of Hereford, ordering both parties to appear personally, or by proctors, for a settlement of the dispute.

Still the legal wrangling continued until on 4 May 1236 there was a papal letter to the bishop of St Asaph, the abbot of Dore and the penitentiary of Hereford, ordering them to summon both sides for another enquiry <sup>23</sup>. The election of a prioress had been delayed for six years and by now the nunnery was split; the Hospitaller chaplain encouraged some of the nuns to take the side of the Order of St John and one of the nuns, Dionisia de Leche, led a group of dissident sisters who refused to obey the sub-prioress.

Finally on 17 August 1237 <sup>24</sup> the Papal Legate was authorised to allow the sisters to free themselves from the Hospitallers and practise the Augustinian rule.

Cardinal Otto was the Papal Legate in England from 1237-41, and he executed many of the pope's mandates; there was considerable papal influence over the smallest of ecclesiastical affairs, and Otto and his clerks appear to have been quite deeply involved in the Aconbury affair. His intervention seems to have settled the long-running dispute.

Otto sent Peter of Bordeaux to question the nuns about the transference to Augustinian rule. As a result of his report on 26 October 1237 <sup>25</sup>, Otto ordered the bishop of Worcester to absolve the nuns from their first profession and

receive them as Augustinians, and this was completed by 4 November. However the prioress expelled all those nuns who wanted to remain Hospitallers and this group now appealed through the Order of Hospitallers to Otto. A document in Prynne's History describes the first hearing of their case *coram legato* and ends with an adjournment of the court for a month <sup>26</sup>.

The economic structure of the Hospitallers seems to have consisted mainly of rentals from properties spread throughout the Christian world; the loss of Aconbury may have had financial implications. There are entries in the Hospitallers' cartulary for small pieces of land in England in various counties, but there is no reference to Herefordshire or Aconbury; once the convent had been allowed to transfer to the Augustinians and the Hospitallers had lost their case, there is no further mention of Aconbury in the historical records of the Hospitallers <sup>27</sup>.

### The Augustinians

Augustinian canons were initially men in holy orders, they lived a life of renunciation of private property and they adopted the rule of St Augustine who had conceived of this idea when he was bishop of Hippo in North Africa between c.396 and 430. Between the sixth and the mid-eleventh century attempts were made to improve clerical discipline, but there appears to be no mention of Augustine or his rule; it was not until the mid-eleventh century during a period of reform that his ideas re-emerged. The Lateran Council of 1059 gave authority to the adoption of a common life by the clergy and by 1100 groups of clerics had begun to live a communal life, following the rule of St Augustine.

The rule of the Augustinian canons was partially based on a letter that St Augustine wrote to his sister when she was leader of a religious community in the fourth century. This letter was later adapted for male communities and became known as the *Regula Tertia* and, together with the *Regula Secunda*, which listed the daily services and disciplinary regulations of the Order, it was incorporated into the

official rule. St Augustine was asked to try and resolve conflict at his sister's nunnery and wrote Letter 211 at the end of his life, perhaps about 423 AD. The manuscript history of this letter is curious. Apparently it was absent from all early collections of monastic rules. None of the known existing copies is earlier than the thirteenth century and there is no trace of its having been employed by any monastic writers of the early Middle Ages <sup>28</sup>. It is tempting to surmise that it may have been suppressed because it was a letter to a woman, but on the other hand ecclesiastical misogynists could have used it to fuel their dislike of women.

There are only two charters (Cs 31 & 36) in the cartulary that refer specifically to the nuns as Augustinians. Most of the later charters simply refer to the prioress and nuns of Aconbury without a label. This was probably because the religious affiliation of Aconbury had been resolved. When grants from the nobility dried up, Aconbury was granted property/land by the merchant/landowning classes who preferred to give their support to the Austin canons/canonesses rather than to richer, older monastic orders. There were various reasons for this popularity of the Order. Papal support helped to encourage donors. The canons and canonesses were infinitely flexible; for instance, the Rule could be adapted to local conditions. Poorer patrons were able to afford donations to the Austin canons, whereas they would have been unwilling to support the richer, larger foundations. Canons/canonesses had a wider social function than monks from other orders, whose vows required them to live inside a cloister; they were more inclined to work in the community, although nuns were of course subject to stricter rules of enclosure. Finally, although it is difficult to assess the spiritual content of monastic life due to lack of sources, Caroline Bynum <sup>29</sup> feels that a canon's life was marked by a sense of vocation and a desire to teach.

How would the community have been affected by this changeover? It would not have made much difference to their



daily lives because it appears that they had already been practising the Augustinian way of life which was similar to the Hospitallers. The nuns would now come under the jurisdiction of the bishop of the diocese and they were free to fulfil Margaret's original purpose. Economically they might even have been better off, because the Hospitallers would probably have absorbed much of their income in their desire to support their Order, although it has been difficult to find any evidence for this.

### The Dissolution

In March 1536 a Bill was passed which led to the suppression of small monasteries, i.e. those with an income of less than £200 per year and fewer than twelve members in their community.

In mid-1535 Thomas Cromwell had despatched his officials to investigate the state of individual monasteries. These officials were laymen with little knowledge or understanding of the monastic life. Cromwell's agent, Richard Layton, was such a one. He wrote from Waverley on 26 September 1535<sup>30</sup>:

'On Friday night I came to an abbey; called Durforde in Sussex. It might better be called Dirtford - the poorest abbey I have seen, as this bearer, the abbot can tell you - far in debt and in great decay .... A priory of nuns and another of canons, close together near Chichester, being of their poverty unable to lodge us, we were compelled to ride to Waverley and lodge there on Saturday night. Of these houses, there are three canons in one and four nuns in the other. We will despatch them on Monday by the way and so on to Chichester Cathedral .... Waverley, this Sunday.'

Layton was well known for the speed and efficiency with which he dissolved monasteries and although he was probably not responsible for the report on Aconbury this does demonstrate the attitude of Cromwell and his men towards the monasteries and nunneries.

The Court of Augmentations was created; a new body formed to administer the land and property of the monasteries. This court took central control of all property. Aconbury belonged to this category of small and poor houses that were to be closed; the value of Aconbury at the Dissolution was assessed at £67 13s.2½d. <sup>31</sup>, when there were eight nuns <sup>32</sup>. Most of the monastery buildings were destroyed so that there could be no possibility of the return of the religious, but the church at Aconbury was spared as it had been shared between the nuns and the parishioners. The chattels and moveables of a dissolved house were often auctioned on the site, and in the Augmentation accounts for Herefordshire there are receipts for jewels, plate, ornaments of shrines and relics delivered by John Scudamore, including a vestment of gold cloth with branches of velvet and an alb and amice belonging to Aconbury <sup>33</sup>.

The last prioress of Aconbury was Joan Skydmore (see below Table 9, p.143). John Vaughan wrote to Cromwell saying he had elected her as prioress and awaited approval for this <sup>34</sup>. The family of Scudamore were involved in the administration of the dissolved priory and John Scudamore of Holme Lacy <sup>35</sup> was granted Athelstan's wood which had been finally granted to the nuns by Henry III (see C 1, p.163).

#### The Priory Church at Aconbury

The church is the only part of the priory buildings still in existence, the rest of the nunnery was demolished in the nineteenth century and the site has sadly since been largely concreted over. The church consists of a nave and chancel and is without a chancel arch. Two particular features might be mentioned: at the western door there is an ancient wooden porch, and at the south side where the convent buildings were attached to the church, near the western end, there is an archway with a 'squint' looking into the church where there is a seat in the thickness of the wall, which tradition says led from the prioresses' room <sup>36</sup>.

In the middle of the eighteenth century extensive restoration was carried out by Gilbert Scott, but the church

Aconbury Priory Church (8th April 1998)



has since been made redundant and is now kept locked and used as a store house for equipment used for diocesan festivals.

### Conclusion

Margaret de Lacy's main reason for founding a nunnery at Aconbury appears to have been a desire to make amends for the suffering endured by her mother and brother.

However, in addition, she may have been aware of the lack of provision for women to enter convents. At the time of the foundation of Aconbury there were few nunneries in Wales and the March; Limebrook and Aconbury were the only houses in Herefordshire. Limebrook may have been founded first, but there is some doubt about the date of its foundation <sup>37</sup>.

The first modern historian to explore nunneries in depth was Eileen Power. She argued that nunneries were places of refuge for some upper class women who wished to avoid marriage or re-marriage or places where fathers and husbands could place their superfluous daughters and wives, although some novices did enter in a spirit of devotion. But Power was primarily a secular historian and she says 'the majority of girls in those days entered the nunneries as a career without any particular spiritual qualification' <sup>38</sup>.

However Marilyn Oliva, who has examined eleven nunneries in the diocese of Norwich, asserts that for the most part the nuns in that area at least lived up to the monastic ideals to which they were vowed. She suggests that although she had only analysed nuns in Norfolk, these spiritual ideals probably also existed in many convents in other parts of England <sup>39</sup>.

There were of course lapses from high moral and spiritual standards but on the whole most of the nunneries founded in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries were peopled with women with high standards, and although there are a few incidents of doubtful behaviour in Aconbury, it seems that most of the nuns entered Margaret's convent for spiritual reasons, and led a peaceful existence with a round of prayer and devotion.

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### 3. THE ECONOMY OF ACONBURY

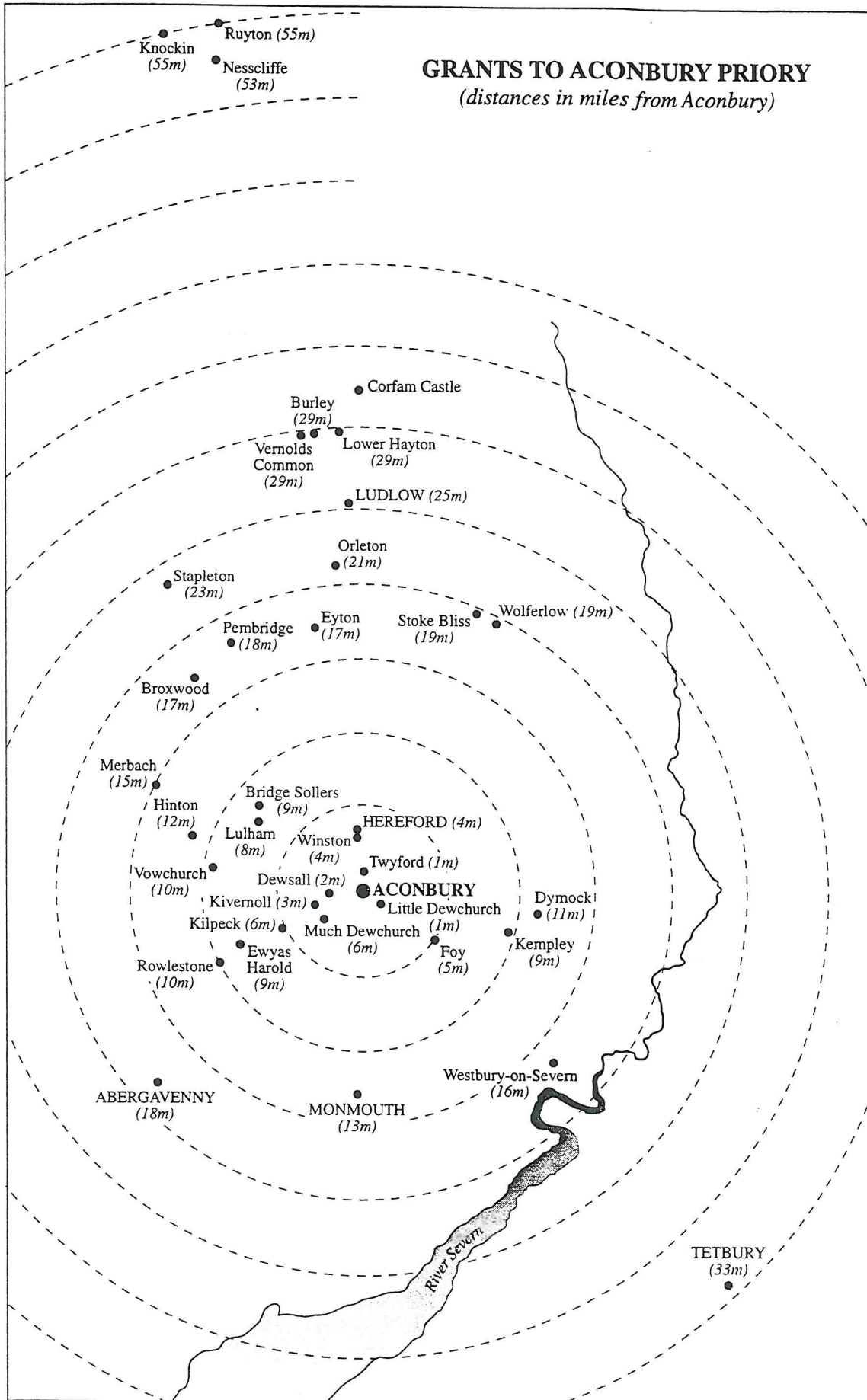
#### Grants of land and property to Aconbury

Aconbury Priory, about four miles south of Hereford was in the lordship of Archenfield, in the plain of Herefordshire which lies between the Malvern Hills and the red sandstone mountains of the Brecon Beacons and the Black Mountains. The parish of Aconbury lay in the Hundred of Wormelow, an area between the River Wye on the east and the Rivers Worme and Monnow on the west, and south-west from Heywood in the north to the boundary of Gwent in the south. The Hundred of Wormelow roughly corresponds to the present Deanery of Archenfield. The principal rivers are the Wye, Lugg, Teme, Arrow, Frome, Leadon, Dore, Monnow and Garron. The soil is rich and red, and dairy cattle and orchards and arable fields are to be seen everywhere. The farm that exists today on the site of the priory is the centre of dairy and cattle farming, in addition to about 600 acres of arable land where wheat, oats and vegetables are grown <sup>1</sup>.

The present day counties of Hereford and Worcester are rural and although they would probably have been more thickly wooded in the mediaeval period, the surrounding countryside shows little change over the 900 years since the priory was first built. Already by 1086, entries in the Domesday Book give indications of assarting <sup>2</sup>. At Much Marcle in Hereford there were 58 acres reclaimed, at Leominster profits from clearance were 17s.4d. and at both Fernhill and Weobley land for one plough had been reclaimed. Charter 3 specifically mentions the grant to Aconbury of a wood, i.e. land that had not been assarted. Katherine de Lacy, the daughter of the founder, granted the nuns a wood called *Veruhales* (now Vernolds Common) in the manor of Corfham. The nuns were also granted woodland by Charter 32 (see below p.35).

Apart from the land given originally by King John for the foundation of Aconbury (see above p.12), the cartulary records various grants of land and property in the counties of Shropshire, Herefordshire and Gloucestershire, as shown in





the map 'Grants to Aconbury Priory' (p.29). The tables of grants of property/land have been divided according to ease of access from Aconbury. Urban properties and mills have been treated separately.

#### Holdings 10 miles or less from Aconbury

There were ten small settlements (see Table 1) within ten miles of the priory where the bailiffs would have been able to collect rents and administer the property because they were within a day's travel of the priory. These grants were mainly for land or rents - sometimes there is a detailed description or a value in the charters, but often few details are given.

Two grants specifically describe the land granted as meadows (*pratum*), 16 acres in all: (a) Kilpeck: Cs 90(a),90(b),91,92,93 - five pieces of meadow; and (b) Kivernoll: Cs 86,87,88,89 - 11 acres of meadow. These meadows within three miles of each other to the south-west of the priory were a valuable asset for Aconbury. There was an increased demand for food as areas under the plough had encroached on valuable pasture land which was essential for grazing livestock used for ploughing, and which also provided meat and dairy produce. Animals also produced manure which together with lime and seaweed was the sole method of fertilising the soil in the middle ages. Meadows were scarce and an acre of meadow could be rented at six to ten times the price of arable land <sup>3</sup>. An assessment in Swinfield's register valued 12 acres at Kilpeck at 13d. an acre, a total of 13s. <sup>4</sup>. These meadows were sited conveniently for both Hereford market and for ease of husbandry by the bailiffs. There would have been little point in Aconbury owning meadows far from the priory as caring for the animals would have been inconvenient and also it was important to be within easy distance of the market, where the buying and selling of livestock, both dead and alive, was conducted.

In the small vill of Foy, situated on high ground overlooking one of the meanders of the River Wye, about five miles south-west of Aconbury, the nuns were granted rents

Table 1. HOLDINGS 10 MILES OR LESS FROM ACONBURY

Place Name	Charter	Description	Grantor to Nuns & Transactions	Value Valor(V)/ Swinfield(S)	Remarks	Date
BRIDGE SOLLERS (414426) 9 miles n.e.Aconbury	27	8s. rents	Roger de Clifford	18d.(V)		1216 x 1227
DEWSALL (486335) (Glowesmore) 2 miles w.Aconbury	94	5 acres of land	Rocelyn Tyrel to Robert, son of Richard de Monte	Robert paid 50s to Rocelyn Tyrel		
	95	5 acres meadow	Henry de Monte		nuns to pay 10d. to feudal lord	1257 x 1263
	96	5 acres meadow	Confirmation of C 95 by Richard de Monte			7 May 1287
FOY (598283) 5 miles s.e.Aconbury	13	rents (4s.2d.)	Richard de Ewias to Juliana de Tregoz	4s.2d.(V)		1268 x 1285
	14	rents (4s.2d.) 20 acres land	Juliana de Tregoz			1268 x 1285
KEMPLEY (Glos) (672296) 9 miles s.e.Aconbury	16	1 virgate land	Geoffrey de Longchamp	Valor valued all holdings at 14s.6d.	nuns rendered annually 11b pepper	1216 x 1241
	18	rents 5s.	- do -			1216 x 1237
	17	1 virgate land	Richard son of Robert le Riche de Gloucester			1216 x 1241
	24	land beyond Kempley wood	William de Gamage			1216 x 1241

Place Name	Charter	Description	Grantor to Nuns & Transactions	Value Valor(V)/ Swinfield(S)	Remarks	Date
KILPECK (445305) (Dewchurch) 6 miles s.w.Aconbury	34	Right of forestry	Hugh de Kilpeck			1216 x 1244
	90(a)	1 field ( <i>monemedowe</i> )	William the Welshman	Swinfield valued	nuns paid 13d. ( <i>premanibus</i> )	c.1274
	90(b)	5 pieces meadow (named)	Roger the Welshman	12 acres meadow in Kilpeck at 13s.		1274
	91	Confirmation of C 90(b)	confirmed by Alan de Plugenet			24 Aug.1275
	92	1 meadow (4 acres) ( <i>brodemedowe</i> )	Roger the Welshman			7 Aug.1267
	93	Confirmation of C 92	confirmed by sir Robert Walerand			1267 x 1273
KIVERNOLL (568324) 3 miles s.w.Aconbury	86	11 acres meadow	Hugh de Kilpeck to Stephen de Ebroic'			1216 x 1244
	87	11 acres meadow	William Devereux to Warin de Grendon			
	88	11 acres meadow	Warin de Grendon to nuns		nuns paid annually ½d. to Warin de Grendon	1216 x 1287
	89	11 acres meadow	confirmation by Alan de Plugenet			x 1298
LULHAM (409413) 8 miles n.w.Aconbury	12	rent (2s.)	Roger de Clifford	10s.(V)	Prioress of Aconbury named (Petronilla Lestrange)	1216 x 1231

Place Name	Charter	Description	Grantor to Nuns & Transactions	Value Valor(V)/ Swinfield(S)	Remarks	Date
ROWLESTONE (374271) 10 miles s.w.Aconbury	52	land (60 marks)	John de Lacy bought from Roger Codauh	133s.4d.(S)		c.1275
	53	land (60 marks)	John de Lacy		nuns paid John de Lacy 80 marks	14 Nov.1275
	54	12 acres (40s.)	granted to Lawrence de Wike			2nd half C13
	55	12 acres (40s.)	Lawrence de Clehungier		nuns gave Lawrence land in Twyford (exchange)	2nd half C13
	56	quitclaim by:	widow Couth to Lawrence de Cornebury			
Twyford (506345) 1 mile n.Aconbury	57	land (25 marks)	Agnes Belot widow of Stephen, son of Richard, to Roger the Roman			1255 x 1274
	58	land	Roger the Roman to Nicholas le Crampe		Nicholas had to render 8 loads wheat and 1 load oats to Roger	1255 x 1274
	59	8 loads wheat and 1 load oats	Roger the Roman		nuns required to offer prayers of penance	1255 x 1274
	60	land (Twyfordfield)	Hugh de Kington		land exchanged with Rowlestone (C 55)	
Vowchurch (362365) 10 miles w.Aconbury	44	land rented out (9s. annual)	between Anna Barry & Eva ap Harry	9s.(V) 36s.(S)	final concord	15 Aug.1421

totalling 4s.2d. for 20 acres. This total value is confirmed in the *Valor* <sup>5</sup>. In the first charter (C 13) Juliana Tregoz bought rents that were paid by Thomas Balle of Foy (3s.) and William Passor of Foy (14d.) and then in C 14 Juliana granted the nuns of Aconbury these rents, but the name of the second tenant was William le Sipward. Neither charter was dated exactly (although both charters were probably drawn up between 1268 and 1285) and in the interval between the two charters the land could have changed hands or Passor and Sipward were the same person acting under an alias because he was in trouble with the law.

The nuns were able to collect these rents for the next hundred years; then there was an entry in the accounts of Aconbury between 30 September 1399 and 3 September 1400 by Philip Godrich, bailiff of Aconbury <sup>6</sup> which stated that the nuns were owed 4s.2d. and the bailiff 'dare not distrain'. The beginning of the fifteenth century was a time of great disturbance in the March. Owen Glendower led a major revolt for Welsh independence from the English. Henry IV retaliated in 1400 and 1401 but his campaigns were ineffectual and Glendower gained control of most of Wales; but in 1405 an English army under Prince Henry (later Henry V) defeated Glendower's forces in three successive battles and although he was pardoned by Henry V, by 1415 his cause was lost. Two entries in Bishop Mascall's register confirm that the nuns were possibly affected by Glendower's rebellion. The first was a return of 6 May 1406 to the Exchequer of benefices 'which owing to losses in the war or the poverty of poor nuns and hospitallers are exempt from paying king's aid'. This referred to the churches of Bridge Sollers, Mansel Lacy and Wolferlow <sup>7</sup>, and the second entry was on 4 November 1406 when the same bishop commissioned 'officials and others to administer for the good of the house, the sequestrated property of Aconbury priory, which is in danger of destruction from dilapidation of the buildings' <sup>8</sup>. Life may have become very difficult for the nuns during the period of the Glendower rebellion; they were unable to collect some of their rents and their poverty had increased owing to the war.

Holdings 11 to 30 miles from Aconbury

Table 2 shows land and property owned by the nuns eleven to thirty miles from Aconbury. These were properties probably within riding distance of Aconbury but the bailiffs would have required shelter overnight. Five vills were further afield. Two specified land in detail and the remaining three were donated for rental income. There was no mention of the grant of any meadows; the distance from Aconbury would have made the care of animals too difficult (see above p.30). It would have been more difficult for the bailiffs to administer these vills; the carrying of wheat, vegetables and firewood by cart along mediaeval roads and by river was a time-consuming task and the men would have needed to spend the night away from the priory, which would have increased their expenses.

The rents in Broxwood (C 26) were paid annually by William de la Barewe. The nuns were granted feudal services by Henry de Pembridge so they were able to collect reliefs and heriots etc., but the fines and fees of the manorial court were retained by Henry, and William still had to attend his court.

Walter de Lacy, no doubt at the instigation of his wife Margaret, granted thirty acres of woodland (Homme Wood) near Merbach (C 32 1216x1232) which could be assarted and the cut wood used for fuel and building, and William de Bathonia, a clerk also granted land in Homme (C 33) which had been given to him by Margaret Lacy; this may have been part of the same land.

Katherine de Lacy, the daughter of the founder, was particularly generous in her gifts of land at Burley and a wood called *Veruhales*, most likely present day Vernolds Common, (Cs 3,4,5 & 7). She required her gift to be used for the maintenance of a chaplain. Burley and Vernolds Common are now small hamlets on high ground which would not have been liable to flooding, but the soil may have been poor.

Table 2. HOLDINGS 11 TO 30 MILES FROM ACONBURY

Place Name	Charter	Description	Grantor to Nuns & Transactions	Value Valor(V)/ Swinfield(S)	Remarks	Date
BROXWOOD (360540) 17 miles n.w.Aconbury	26	Rent (14s.)	Henry, son of Ralph de Penbridge			1216 x 1266
CORFHAM (Salop) (668533) 29 miles n.Aconbury	3	land in Burley and wood (Veruhales) 1 virgate land 3 nokes land	Katherine de Lacy	Burley (V) £2.18s.3½d.	Katherine granted land for maintenance of chaplain at priory	1216 x 1231
	4	- do -	Walter III de Clifford to Katherine			1216 x 1248
	5	- do -	Confirmation of C 3 and C 4			1257 x 1263
	7		Confirmation of above grants by Lady Matilda de Longspée			1257 x 1282
	6	Suit of court	Walter III de Clifford			10 Aug.1262
DYMOCK (700312) 11 miles e.Aconbury	17	land held by William de Gamage	Richard, son of Robert le Riche de Gloucester			1216 x 1241



Place Name	Charter	Description	Grantor to Nuns & Transactions	Value Valor(V)/ Swinfield(S)	Remarks	Date
MERBACH (303454) 15 miles n.w.Aconbury	32	30 acres in Homme wood	Walter de Lacy			1216 x 1231
	33	land in Homme	William de Bathonia			1216 x 1241
ORLETON (Barewe) (494672) 21 miles n.Aconbury	35	rents (12s.3d.)	Hugh le Poer	26s.5d. (V)		1263
HINTON (341387) 12 miles w.Aconbury	46	rents (14d.)	William Bade		including 1s.10d. (commutation)	
	47	rents (2s.6d.)	William Bade		confirmation of C 46 and also an extra 1s.4d. to be paid on the anniversary of sir Matthew de Gamages	
	48	rent (16d.)	William Bade to Laurence de Clehunger		Laurence paid William 1 mark	
	49	rent (16d.)	Laurence de Clehunger		support for the nuns' refectory	
	50	rents (22d.)	Isabel Iagon			
	51	rent for 1 message	John le Leur		nuns required to pay 6d. twice yearly to feudal lord	

The *Valor* assessment for rents in Orleton (*Barewe*) (C 35) was 26s.5d., whereas the value when the nuns acquired these rents was 12s.3d. The nuns had either bought more property in *Barewe*, which is very unlikely as their capital resources were invariably low, or the value of the land had increased due to inflation, but it is always difficult to calculate accurately the value of these grants, particularly as very often there was no mention of a particular vill in the *Taxatio*, Bishop Swinfield's register, or the *Valor*, and also it is difficult to trace the buying and selling of pieces of land.

The nuns were also granted freedom from Walter de Clifford's suit of court in Corfham (C 6), and thus the nuns, together with followers and retainers, were excused attendance at the manorial court of Corfham and thereby saved from harassment and excused from the payment of manorial fines.

#### Holdings in Outlying Villages (or Unknown)

Table 3 gives details of the most distant grant to Aconbury. John Lestrange III generously granted the hospital at Nesscliffe (C 8) to the priory with all its land and appurtenances including sheep, pigs, a wild boar, cows and a bull on the site; 3 oaks and 10 cartloads of wood were to be delivered each year. He also stipulated that the nuns were to be given 24 sheaves of corn from his nearby manors in Salop, Knockin and Ruyton. Pear trees and fishing rights were also included.

The nuns were required to provide a priest for the church of St Mary *de Rocherio* so that prayers could be said for John and the Lestrange family. The brothers of St Mary *de Rocherio* were also given a mill at Wivelcote and common land by John Buteler which was passed on to the nuns (C 10), as it was included with the estate.

Before the nuns were granted the hospital of Nesscliffe and surrounding lands, John Buteler gave the brothers of the hospital of St Mary *de Rocherio* de Ness 12 acres of land that was held by Richard and William Faber (9 acres) and Hugh

Table 3. ACONBURY HOLDINGS IN OUTLYING VILLAGES OR UNKNOWN

Place Name	Charter	Description	Grantor to Nuns & Transactions	Value Valor(V)/ Swinfield(S)	Remarks	Date
NESSCLIFFE (385190) 53 miles n.Aconbury	8	Hospital at Nesscliffe with land, including sheep, pigs, etc.	John Lestrangle III		nuns required to provide a priest for St Mary de Rocherio	1216 x 1240
	9	12 acres land	John Buteler to brethren of St Mary de Rocherio			
	10	land	- do -		brethren also granted a mill at Wivelcote and common land	
'MARGIRAWELD' (mediaeval spelling place not identified)	61	land	Isabel Catur to sir John de Vaucolour rector of St Laurence, Ludlow			1290 x 1305
	62	land (100d.)	sir John de Vaucolour to nuns		nuns agreed to celebrate obit and given ½ mark as gift by prioress	1290 x 1305

Plumarius and Roger Brun (3 acres), and this was included in the final gift (Cs 9,10). The original hospital at Nesscliffe presumably ceased to exist as a separate entity after it had been granted to Aconbury priory in the mid-thirteenth century <sup>9</sup>. It was probably administered as a separate unit of the priory under an experienced bailiff.

John de Vaucolour, parson of the church of St. Lawrence in Ludlow, donated 'all the land which I had in the field which is called *'Margiraweld'* to the nuns of Aconbury (C 62). He had previously bought this land from Isabel Catur for 100d. For this grant he required the nuns to hold an annual obit on the anniversary of his death with music (including a dirge and a mass) and he required the prioress to give the nuns a grant of half a mark, to celebrate the occasion. Apparently there was an early musical tradition at the church, probably fostered by the vicar (C 62 n.ii).

It has not proved possible to locate *'Margiraweld'* with certainty. It could possibly be in the vicinity of Merryvale Farm (OS Ref: 517324) near Aconbury. There are several alternative spellings of Merryvale (*Merevalle*, *Merryvalle*, *Muraule*, *Mury Wale*, *Muryvale*). In 1387 pasture from various plots of land at Mury Wale was sold <sup>10</sup>. One of Aconbury's bailiffs, Philip Godrich, recorded the mowing of meadows at *Muryvale* for 5s. <sup>11</sup>. After the Dissolution, the bailiff, John ap Gwilym, recorded that William Wilcox 'holds 1 messuage with lands called *Meryvalle* at an annual rent of 15s. a year' <sup>12</sup>, and also Hugh ap Harry of Preston and his wife were granted one messuage and lands called *Merevalle* in Aconbury <sup>13</sup>. In 1399 Philip Godrich, bailiff, collected 13s.4d. rent from John Taillour for *Muryvalefeld* <sup>14</sup>.

Although there does not appear to be a close connection between *'Margiraweld'* and *'Merryvale'*, Charter 62 was written in mediaeval French and the scribe may have had difficulty with place names. On the other hand, there seems to be only one reference to land called *Margeryslond* (or *Margiraweld*) when Richard Pennoc, Alice his wife and any future son, were granted 'land called *Margeryslond*' <sup>15</sup>.

### Holdings in Hereford

As well as their rural properties, the nuns were fortunate enough to be granted eight shops, a burgage, several messuages, various rents and pieces of land in Hereford (Table 4), and a meadow and rents in the suburbs. The town was only four miles north of Aconbury and thus convenient for any business activities, particularly in connection with the livestock market. Hereford was situated at the intersection of roads leading west into Wales, north to Ludlow and Shropshire, east to Worcester and south to the River Severn, and was therefore a natural centre for trading (see map p.42).

Hereford Cathedral was rebuilt between 1079 and 1150<sup>16</sup> and there would have been considerable trafficking between clergy and court officials, as well as peasants bringing food and livestock into the town, and the demand for luxury goods increased, thereby increasing the prosperity of the town.

Original Anglo-Saxon defences for Hereford were reinforced by William fitzOsbern after the Conquest and by 1190 there were six stone gatehouses guarding the entrances to the city, Wyebriidge Gate, St Nicholas Gate, Eign Gate, Widemarsh Gate, Byster's Gate and St Owen's Gate, where tolls were levied on goods brought into the market<sup>17</sup>. This payment may have been accepted by the nuns or they may have been granted a special concession, but there is no evidence for the latter.

There was a flourishing Jewish community in the north-eastern part of the town, to the north of Bye Street where Maylord Orchards now stands. This community, with its fine stone houses and a synagogue, had been established by the end of the twelfth century and it housed some of the Jewish families who lent money to the Marcher lords. Although the Jews were expelled during the reign of Edward I in 1290, they were certainly living and flourishing in Hereford when Aconbury was founded as Walter II de Lacy was borrowing money from the Jewish moneylenders there (see below p.104). Between the tenth and thirteenth centuries towns increased considerably in size and number; research suggests that this



Table 4. ACONBURY HOLDINGS IN HEREFORD

Place Name	Charter	Description	Grantor to Nuns & Transactions	Value/ Valor(V) Swinfield(S)	Remarks	Date
Butchers' Market	74	rents (17s.)	Henry, son of Ralph to William Wyther		Wm paid Henry 9 marks ( $\frac{1}{2}$ discharged as debt to Jews)	1237 x 1255
	75	quitclaim for above rents	Dionisia, widow of Henry		William Wyther paid Dionisia 2 marks	1237 x 1255
	76	Hugh Solle's halfland	Richard, son of Dionysius to Henry, son of Christine Solle		Henry Solle required to pay 6s. biannually and Henry paid Richard $6\frac{1}{2}$ marks	before 1255
	77	- do -	William Wyther to Alice, widow of Roce grant and confirmation)		Alice required to pay annually to William 17s. also $\frac{1}{2}$ mark	before 1255
	78	rents (12s.)	William Wyther		nuns required to pay 18d. to Hereford Chapter	1255
High Street (?)	38	2 shops (6d. & 2s.6d.)	Richard son of Emeline of Hereford		1 shop (2s.6d.) situated above river bank	1216 x 1223

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43  
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Place Name	Charter	Description	Grantor to Nuns & Transactions	Value/ Valor(V) Swinfield(S)	Remarks	Date
Castle Street	37	6 messuages (shops)	Geoffrey de Morton & wife, Felicia		nuns required to render one pair gloves or 1d. 12d. to king's bailiffs and 8d. to Wm de Bodenham	1216 x 1223
	69	1 burgage 1 messuage	Robert de Furches to Geoffrey de Morton		frankmarriage between Geoffrey and Felicia	
	70	6 messuages (shops)	confirmation of C 37 by Felicia de Furches, (widow of Geoffrey)		see C 37	1216 x 1223
	82	rent of tenement 4s.6d.	William Valet, chaplain			Tuesday after 13 June 1290
Facing the Cathedral (Great Church of St Ethelbert)	79	land	Hugh, son of Hugh Clericus to his daughter, Christine		Christine required to pay annually 1 pair gloves or 1d. at Easter	
	80	land	Hugh, son of Hugh Clericus		nuns required to pay annually 12d. to the feudal lord & 1 pr. gloves and 1 obit at Easter	



Place Name	Charter	Description	Grantor to Nuns & Transactions	Value/Valor(V) Swinfield(S)	Remarks	Date
Wyebriidge Street	78	rents (18d.)	William Wyther			1255
Above the ditch opposite land of William Romanus	81	land	Richard Rocolf		nuns required to pay 6d. annually to the king	
Cherlescroft (suburb)	39	1 meadow	Gilbert Ashperton to Richard son of Emeline		Richard paid 12 marks, 2 cows & 1 mark for boon service, and also 2d. annually to Gilbert	1216 x 1237
	40 (f.74)	- do -	Agreement by Roger, Rector of Stoke, to the grant made by Richard son of Emeline		nuns required to pay 2d. to Gilbert & 6d. for oil for 1 lamp to Rector	1216 x 1237
	40 (copy)	- do -	- do -		Ref: PRO E326/891	1216 x 1237
Winston (suburb)	28	rents (50s.)	sir John de Turberville		money for the maintenance of chaplain	April 1263
	36	rents (3s.)	Hugh de Furches			1237 x 1263
	68	rents (12d.) (1 acre strip land)	John de Winston			1216 x 1237

Place Name	Charter	Description	Grantor to Nuns & Transactions	Value/ Valor(V) Swinfield(S)	Remarks	Date
Hungreye Street	*	land	William, son of Walter Oldecrist			May 1258
	*	rent from shop	Reginald Monyword			8 March 1393
* The grants in Hungreye Street do not appear in the cartulary, but are found in Cal.Anc.Deeds III B 4017, 4099, 4121						
	83	10s.6d. annual rent for land owned by nuns	no mention of grantor		Johel le Fors paid rent	
(a new street)	71	rent 1 mark (land and 2 curtilages)	Stephen son of Theobald of Hereford, assigned to his son, John			
	72	- do -	Confirmation by John of above grant by his father to nuns			
	73	- do - plus land & messuages (10s.)	John, son of Tyric (?)			

was mainly due to immigration, but it is difficult to find hard evidence for this for Hereford. Susan Reynolds<sup>18</sup> has suggested that surnames derived from place names near to large towns can be used as evidence of immigration and a man with a patronymic surname probably lived in a town where his father had lived before him.

There are a number of charters in the cartulary where surnames can be used to test this immigration theory. Richard, son of Emeline, citizen of Hereford (C 38), Herbert son of Urset (C 38), Stephen son of Theobald and his son John (C 71), and Walter son of Turgrim (C 71) all bear patronymic names, so it can be postulated that these families had been resident in Hereford for several decades although these surnames do not appear to be connected with the names of nearby villages in the area. On the other hand, Richard de Haye, or perhaps his father or grandfather, may have come originally from Urishay Castle (Cs 77 n.iii & 80 n.iii). He may have emigrated to Hereford and bought land near the Cathedral. Gilbert of Overhinton (C 74) probably came from Hinton, twenty two miles south-east of Aconbury and obtained land in Butchers' Market. Gilbert, son of Ralph of Ashperton, bears a toponymic surname, Ashperton, a village about ten miles east of Hereford (C 39).

Many of the people who migrated from the countryside into the towns were probably of a humble social origin. Some may even have been villeins who would have been able to achieve obscurity within a town, and some even managed to acquire land and achieve higher status.

The market became increasingly important both to the town and the nuns and, as the market in High Town developed, valuable frontages were built on to it and gradually the town spread out along the streets away from the market site, giving shopkeepers plots which were long and narrow.

Shops (described as *soldae*) often had undercrofts or cellars which could be used as warehouses; one type of undercroft lay along a street frontage beneath several small shops<sup>19</sup> and solars where the shopowners would have lived. These *soldae* were not movable stalls (*stallae*) which would

have been used by traders coming into town from the countryside and who required somewhere temporarily to set up their goods <sup>20</sup>.

Apart from the rents, these properties would have been very useful for the nuns; they could have used the undercrofts to store grain and wool, and when their stewards and bailiffs came into Hereford to collect rents and sell livestock and other goods the living spaces could be used as lodging houses <sup>21</sup>. In the thirteenth century, when the nuns were collecting rents from these shops the undercrofts were used as shops with customers coming in off the streets, but by the fifteenth century they were probably used solely for storage.

The nuns were granted two messuages occupied by Adam son of Fabrus in Castle Street, Hereford (C 37). This was fairly unusual because smiths mostly carried on their essential work outside the town where they could more easily service horses and carts and where there was less risk of fire.

The Priory was donated the rent for one shop that was occupied by a weaver (C 37). The cloth is not specified but is likely to have been linen which was particularly important; the soaking and preparation of flax could be easily undertaken in businesses that were carrying on another trade, and this was very often done by women. There is evidence in the Aconbury accounts of 'meat bought for the sewers and tailors and for the women who watered our flax, 8d.' <sup>22</sup> which was part of expenses claimed by Dame Joan de Galesch de Bonshull (see below p.156), one of the nuns in the priory, probably the cellaress, who had charge of all the property, rents and revenues of the house and who bought supplies. This production of linen could possibly have been undertaken in the weaver's shop.

There is only one reference to a burgage plot in Hereford in the cartulary and there is no mention of burgage plots or burgage tenure in the Hereford charter of 1215 <sup>23</sup>, but this does not necessarily preclude grants of burgages in Hereford as they were a familiar institution in most towns.

There were two grants of land, Cherlescroft (Cs 39,40) and Winston (Cs 28,36,68) on the outskirts of Hereford. Roger, the vicar of Stoke Edith, agreed to the grant of the meadow, Cherlescroft (see above p.45), and he had a fair copy made of the charter in a careful hand to ensure that he received the payment of 6d for lamp oil for his church from the nuns, as stipulated in the charter.

Most mediaeval towns had fringe developments which included properties of labourers growing garden crops for the town. The poor gathered in the suburbs and the rich often moved out. 'These suburbs were not the quiet havens of respectability that the suburbs of a modern town would be; they were distinctly a fringe development inhabited by people who were marginal' <sup>24</sup>.

The suburbs in Hereford were at first resented by those within the walls and in the thirteenth century the gates of the town were shut in times of war against the poor, as the inhabitants of the walled city objected to the provision of defences for those outside the city gates <sup>25</sup>. Gradually the town's defences were enlarged to include part of the suburbs and many suburbs were probably protected by a ditch and earth bank of which little trace now exists <sup>26</sup>. However, the nuns were granted a piece of land described as 'land that lies opposite the land of William Romanus above the ditch' (C 81), indicating that this part of the town was protected by a ditch and probably an earth bank.

In the cartulary, the words *curtilagium*, *messuagium* and *tenementum* are used to describe property which would probably have included an open space which could have been used for horticulture, albeit on a small scale. Some of the earliest recorded gardens lay in or near towns and the standard burgage was often large enough to grow fruit and vegetables; and even flax and hemp were cultivated on a small scale.

There was a range of crops including onions, leeks, garlic, cabbage, peas and beans and parsley, and on the bigger and wealthier plots apples, pears and cherries, plums and grapes would have been grown <sup>27</sup>. Ownership of fruit trees was considered important enough for mention in two

charters; the nuns were granted three pear trees at Nesscliffe (C 8), and there was a guarantee of produce from the land in Twyford (C 57).

Small plots of pasture, orchards and saffron were common in between and behind the suburban houses. There may even have been small vineyards and hop gardens. There is mention of 'a garden beyond Goodnaves Inn in Hereford' <sup>28</sup> which belonged to Aconbury priory, and although this reference is after the Dissolution it nevertheless indicated that there were small gardens owned by the priory in Hereford.

In 1495 ownership in a tenement and garden in Blakemaston, a suburb of Hereford in the parish of St Martin was released to Isabel Gardiner, the prioress of Aconbury <sup>29</sup> as the outcome of litigation (see below p.142) and in 1506 and 1528 this same prioress leased a garden 'well set with saffron', presumably the same garden, in Blakemaston. This would have been a valuable crop of *crocus sativus*, saffron crocus, which can be used to produce an aromatic cordial and gives a strong yellow colouring to sweetmeats. Saffron cultivation was an area of growth in English horticulture <sup>30</sup>.

From other evidence, apart from the charters, the nuns derived income from two properties in Hungreye Street, Hereford. In May 1258, William, son of Walter Oldecrist donated a yearly rent in frankalmoin from land in Hungreye Street. William specified that the donation was to be given for the upkeep of the infirmary and 'to the sick nuns there'. The transfer to the Augustinians was long past and it is clear that William Oldecrist wanted the money given to the nuns' infirmary and not to the hospital which no longer existed <sup>31</sup>. There is a confirmation dated 8 March 1393, by Reginald Monyword, clerk and son and heir of Richard Monyword once a citizen of Hereford, of a grant to the nuns of rent from a shop in front of a tenement in Hungreye Street <sup>32</sup>. There is no mention in the cartulary of this property, but the original deed may have been lost or not copied for some reason.

The specific value of the nuns' Hereford holdings is not easy to assess, although at the time of the grants the land and property were relatively valuable. The *Taxatio* gives an assessment for the Aconbury holdings in Hereford of £39 1s.0d. <sup>33</sup>, whereas the *Valor* assessment is £4 10s.8d. <sup>34</sup>. The discrepancy between these two figures can probably be accounted for by the fact that the nuns may have sold off properties and rents when they were in financial need. When the nuns were granted their urban properties in the thirteenth century towns were expanding; 1100 to 1300 was a time of rapid population growth, but the fourteenth century was a period of crisis. By 1300 the economy was unable to cope with the imbalance between population and resources, and crises such as bad harvests, tax demands and plague added to the problems. In the thirteenth century the burgages and shops owned by Aconbury would have been valuable assets but by the time of the Black Death in 1348 they would possibly have decreased in value, coupled with the fact that the extra-mural market had become the commercial centre of the town <sup>35</sup>.

#### Holdings in Other Towns

There were seven small towns and large villas (Table 5) where the priory was granted land and property. The most important were Ludlow, Monmouth, Tetbury and Abergavenny and the remaining settlements, Ewyas Harold, Hayton and Stoke Bliss were smaller and of lesser importance.

The nuns were granted rents from burgages and mills in Ludlow. When the charter (C 2) was drawn up between 1250 and 1273, the value of these rents was 6s.8d. and by the time of the Dissolution, due no doubt to inflation, the *Valor* assessed the Aconbury holdings in Ludlow at £4 7s.2d. <sup>36</sup>. Ludlow is situated twelve miles north of Leominster at the confluence of the rivers Corve and Teme. The original site of the town was on a steep sided hill; the castle and the market place occupied the peak of the hill, with streets

Table 5. ACONBURY HOLDINGS IN OTHER TOWNS

Place Name	Charter	Description	Grantor to Nuns & Transactions	Value/ Valor(V) Swinfield(S) Taxatio(T)	Remarks	Date
LUDLOW (515750) 25 miles n.Aconbury	2	7 burgages (80d.)	Geoffrey de Geneville and Matilda de Lacy	£4.7s.2d.(V) £13.7s.2d.(S)	mill also included (see Table 6)	1250 x 1273
MONMOUTH (510130) 13 miles s.Aconbury	65	part of 1 burgage	Roger Baldcath to daughter, Dionisia	29s.4d.(V)	Dionisia required to pay 1d. annually	
	66	1 message	confirmation by Henry of Lancaster of grant to nuns		priory fought court case to retain possession	1297 x 1314
	67	confirmation of exemption from tax on brewing	Henry of Lancaster		nuns also granted toll-free exemption on wheat used in brewing	23 Feb.1314
TETBURY (Glos) (890935) 33 miles s.e.Aconbury	21(a)	10 burgages (12s.4½d.) and 2 furlongs land	John de Braose	12s.3½d (V) 1s.8d.(V)	confirmation of grant by William de Braose	22 Jan.1290
	21(b)	- do -				
	22					1216 x 1232



Place Name	Charter	Description	Grantor to Nuns & Transactions	Value/ Valor(V) Swinfield(S) Taxatio(T)	Remarks	Date
<b>ABERGAVENTNY</b> (300145) 18 miles s.w.Aconbury	23	1 burgage	Reginald de Braose	1s. annual rent (T)		1216 x 1227/28
<b>EWYAS HAROLD</b> (388287) 9 miles w.Aconbury	29	tenements	Sibila de Ewias			1216 x 1236
	30	rents (6s.8d.)	Sibila de Ewias			1216 x 1236
	42	- do -	Sibila de Ewias		identical to C 30	1216 x 1236
<b>HAYTON</b> (Upper/Lower) (505810) 29 miles n.e.Aconbury	63	rents (2 marks)	Elyas de Sutton bought from Maud d'Ebroicis and granted to nuns	26s.6d.(V)	mortmain licence granted 1301	1301
	64	quitclaim to priory of rents	Thomas de Beiscyn			1288 x 1326

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53  
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Place Name	Charter	Description	Grantor to Nuns & Transactions	Value/ Valor(V) Swinfield(S) Taxatio(T)	Remarks	Date
STOKE BLISS (Stoke de Bles) (651629) 19 miles n.e.Aconbury	11	rents (23s.7d.) (land) and rights over Robert Tyle and cattle	Hugh de Bles to Katherine de Lacy	£2.2s.2d.(V)	Katherine paid 20 marks to Hugh de Bles	20 July 1262
	15	rents (2 marks)	Katherine de Lacy to nuns		money designated for special purpose and nuns to pay Hugh 20d.	c.1262
	43	rents (23s.9d.)	Hugh de Bles to Katherine de Lacy		identical to C 11 except for 2d. additional rent	20 July 1262

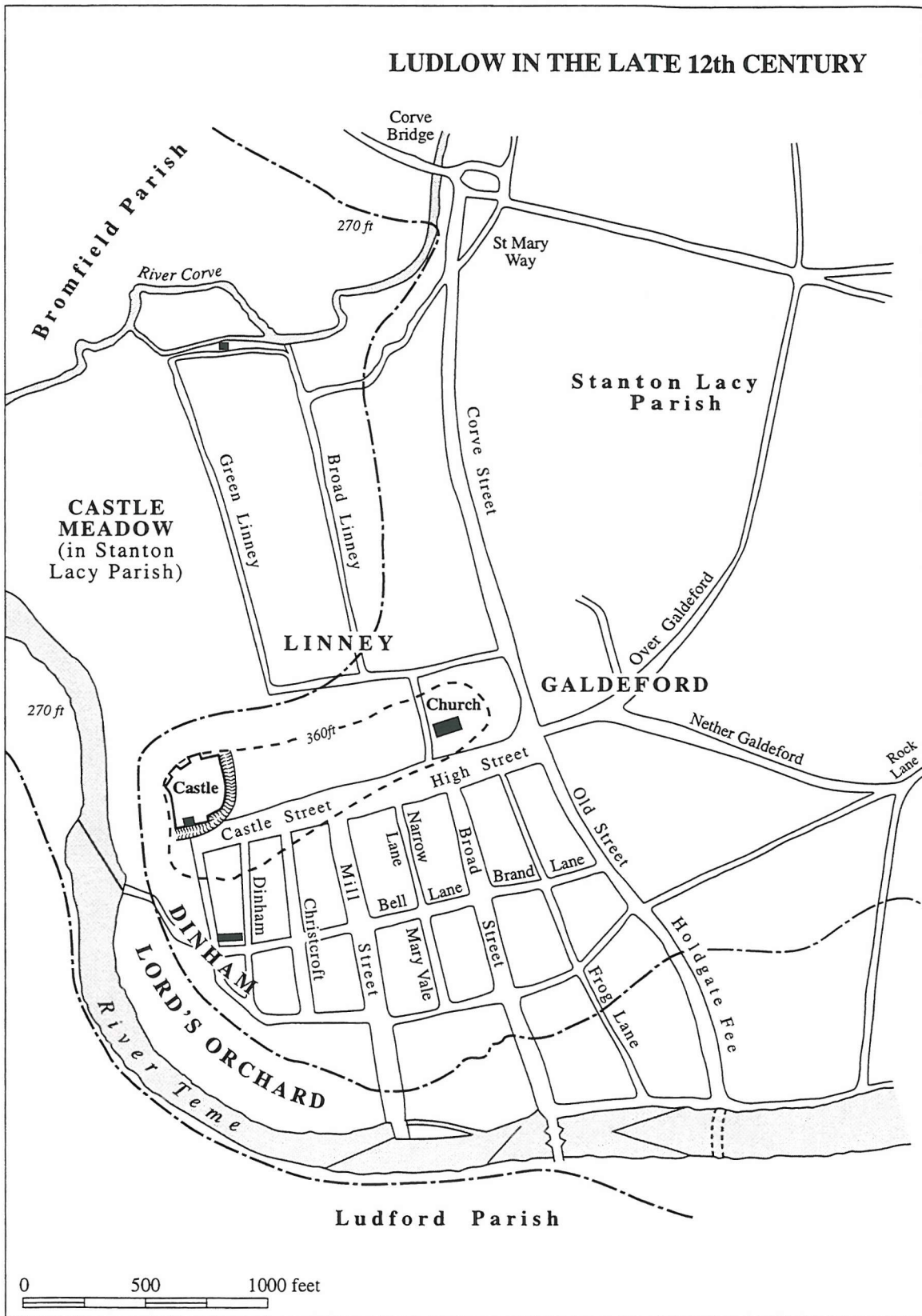
sloping south to the Teme or north to the Corve, a tributary of the Teme which rises in Corvedale (see map p.56).

Originally held by the Lacy family, Ludlow was eventually divided between the families of the husbands of the two Lacy heiresses. The death of Walter de Lacy in 1241 without a surviving male heir created problems for the town. Walter's two granddaughters, Maud and Margery, became the heiresses to his estates and the partition of Ludlow between the Genevilles and the Verduns took place in 1260 <sup>37</sup>. Geoffrey de Geneville and his wife (Maud) gave the nuns seven burgages and half of four mills (C 2) (see below p.112).

Ludlow is an example of a 'planned town' and most of the streets in the centre still conform to the original rectilinear grid. The town gradually spread out from the wide High Street. Settlers were attracted from the surrounding rural manors and in the thirteenth century the town continued to prosper.

Aconbury was granted rents from seven burgages in Ludlow worth 80d. The length and width of these burgages varied in different parts of the town but most of them were 33ft., 49½ft. or 66ft. wide, and the tenants were expected to pay 12d annually. These seven burgages were important assets for the nuns; the names of the tenants are given in the charter (C 2) and the properties were probably occupied among others by a farrier's widow, a blacksmith, a soap maker and a clockmaker. The town had a wide variety of artisans and craftsmen producing goods for local consumption or for sale at outlying markets, and in the mid-fourteenth century there were twelve trade guilds. As well as craftsmen there were influential merchants trading between England and the continent.

When the Aconbury bailiffs visited Ludlow for the collection of rents and trading in goods and livestock, they most probably stayed at one of the many small alehouses and taverns, or possibly could have received hospitality from the friars of an Austin friary founded in 1254 <sup>38</sup>, although there is no evidence for this.



source: Faraday (inside front cover)

In Monmouth <sup>39</sup>, the nuns were granted part of a burgage originally given to Roger Baldcath's daughter Dionysia. It appears that together with Walter and John Wade, Dionysia had tried to repossess the property, but the prioress brought a writ against them in the municipal court and judgement was given in her favour. The lord of Monmouth, Henry of Lancaster, confirmed this grant to the nuns (Cs 65,66). This burgage was probably sited opposite St Mary's church as it is described as being 'near to land that John Everard held opposite the cemetery of St Mary of Monmouth' (Cs 65,66).

The 1230 grant of ten burgages in Tetbury (C 21(a) 22 January 1230) to the nuns was retained until the Dissolution. The town was sited in a very favourable position on the great road from Oxford to Bristol and bounded on the east side by the River Avon and on the south by a small tributary. It may have become an unofficial centre for trade even before William de Braose created a borough and a market town at Tetbury at the beginning of the thirteenth century <sup>40</sup>.

William de Braose created these burgage tenures in Tetbury. He would have had to invest his capital in this, but it eventually paid off because merchants and artisans were attracted to the town and took a lively part in the vigorous economic activities of the region. A tenement held by burgage tenure was not intended to be agricultural land but was held at a fixed rent. The burgage owner was free to do as he/she wished with his/her plot - the whole or part of it could be sold, it could be mortgaged to raise capital and bequeathed to anybody <sup>41</sup>.

Tetbury was the centre of a large agricultural region including wool production, the sale of surplus agricultural crops, cloth making and, by reason of its situation, the townsfolk were able to earn money by providing lodgings for travellers.

Among the residents of the town was a baker, corn-monger, garlic-monger, tailor, skinner, cordwainer, fisherman, and two weavers as cloth manufacturing grew in

importance, and among the burgage holders whose rents were handed over to the nuns, there were some interesting surnames: John Palmer a pilgrim, Richard Hyredmon, William Venatoris whose family may have originally been hunters, John Cooperator who was a partner or fellow labourer, and John Want' a glove maker. When the nuns were granted these burgages, they were a good investment; the annual rents were 148½d.

The nuns were granted one burgage by Reginald de Braose in the town of Abergavenny (C 23) which was the centre of the lordship, which comprised eight seignorial manors and was a profitable lordship. The administration of Aconbury's property was probably fairly easy for the nuns as there is a road between Abergavenny and Hereford, the present day A465 which doubtless follows the old mediaeval road along the valley of the River Morrow between high land, and the property was only 18 miles from Aconbury.

The priory was granted tenements and rents in Ewyas Harold by Sybil de Ewias (Cs 29,30,42). Ewias was an area to the west of Archenfeld and was divided into two lordships by the Normans - Ewyas Lacy and Ewyas Harold. Ewyas Harold was the smaller of the two lordships and its administrative centre was the castle which was built by Robert I de Ewias (c.1120-1150) who established the town as the centre of his lands in England and the March <sup>42</sup>.

The nuns were granted 26s.8d. worth of rents in Lower Hayton, described as a vill (*villam*) in the cartulary (C 63). These rents had been bought by Elias de Sutton who then passed them on to the nuns. He was granted a licence under the terms of the Statute of Mortmain (1279) <sup>43</sup>. These rents were quitclaimed by sir Thomas de Beiscyn (C 64).

As well as granting Katherine Lacy rents in Stoke Bliss, Hugh de Bles also granted her any rights that he might have had over Robert Tyle and his cattle in a message with four houses (C 11).

Leasing, purchases and exchanges made by Aconbury

There is little evidence of the purchase and leasing of land by the Aconbury nuns, but there may have been more property negotiations which are not recorded. There are only three charters in the cartulary that refer to the leasing of land. Soon after the foundation Sister Constantia leased a property in Hereford to William Amy at an annual rent of 3s. (folios 82,83,84, dated 1216x1237). Catherine de Geneville leased a property in Stoke Bliss (folio 175 dated 7 March 1310), and the Aconbury nuns leased land in Hereford to Joel le Fol (C 83).

During the depression of the late-fourteenth and early-fifteenth centuries when the priory was most likely in need of money, three prioresses negotiated the sale and leasing of land: Maud de Grandison sold a meadow in Asperton; Joan Ledbury sold pasture in *Muryvale* and a curtilage was leased in Hereford; and Joan Draper leased a messuage in *Rancia Piscatore* (see below Table 9, pp.138-143).

There is reference to one exchange of land by the nuns. Roger Codauh sold his land in Rowlestone to John Lacy for 60 marks (C 52). The nuns then paid John 80 marks for this land which he had granted and quitclaimed to them (C 53 dated 14 November 1275). Twelve acres of land previously belonging to Roger was granted by Griffin Cutta to Lawrence de Wike for 40s. (C 54) and then Lawrence granted this land to the nuns (C 55), but in exchange for this land in Rowlestone, the convent gave Lawrence land that Roger Romanus had given to them in Twyford (C 59). There was also a quitclaim for this 12 acres by Margery, the widow of Griffin Cutta (C 56).

Agnes Belot sold her land in Twyford to Roger Romanus (C 57), who then sold it to Nicholas le Crampe (C 58) with the proviso that he supply Roger with wheat and oats, which were then passed to the nuns (C 59) by Roger. Hugh de Kingeston granted the nuns a field in Twyford (C 60) which was exchanged for land in Rowlestone - it is difficult to understand why this exchange was effected, particularly as

Twyford was considerably closer to Aconbury than Rowlestone, and therefore easier of access.

In 1495 the prioress, Isabel Gardiner, leased a garden in Blakemaston (see above p.50).

In 1531 the nuns leased part of one of their meadows (*brodemedowe*) to Robert Webbe for 81 years for 5s. annual rent and Robert was covenanted to 'dyke and sufficiently enclose his said part of the pasture, at his cost and charges' <sup>44</sup>. The nuns were probably short of money at this time, five years before the Dissolution. It is possible that the nuns were granted other pieces of grazing land but these are not detailed specifically.

#### Woodland

Hugh de Kilpeck quitclaimed to the nuns any rights he had in respect of the office of forester in lands and other properties which the nuns held in free alms of the lord king near Cornebury (C 34).

Before the Conquest England was thickly forested, but by 1086 most of the villages that we see to-day were in existence, and by the mid-twelfth century England was an old land in terms of settlement. Woodland was a vital reserve of land; large areas of wood, scrub, heath and moor were brought under Forest Law. These laws with their elaborate apparatus of courts, officers, verderers and agisters were developed during the twelfth century. The Assize of Woodstock (1184) forced compulsory attendance at forest courts and by 1215 forests were a symbol of royal tyranny, where the king hunted and agriculture was not permitted without licence. In 1217 the Charter of the Forests tried to set limits to the royal forests. There were also a few private forests in the thirteenth century where a lay nobleman would have similar rights to the king.

Legally or illegally, assarting took place and often the king was prepared to accept a fait accompli in return for a fine, a licence virtually being granted.

Forests were a lucrative source of income. In theory



the king should have been the chief beneficiary but during the thirteenth century, what should have been a rich source of revenue for the crown was appropriated, not just by poachers but by nobility and gentry and ecclesiastics.

Forest law covered a multiplicity of forest usage <sup>45</sup>: game was strictly controlled; the rights of tenants to take timber were controlled; payment for licences was required for workers in the forests; strangers who passed through the forest were required to pay a toll; stray animals were impounded and sold; tenants living in the forest would have had to pay rents or do service; any person who fed their swine in the forest was forced to pay pannage to the courts; all nests of hawks and bees were the property of the lord of the manor and any profits had to be paid to him; charcoal burners had to obtain licences at a price; any profit obtained from the sale of peat, bracken, rushes, etc., had to be declared.

Forest law was strictly applied in theory until about the end of the thirteenth century, but many of the men who were supposed to be guarding the king's interests were largely concerned with their own profits. The enforcement of forest law in Herefordshire was in the hands of the Kilpeck family as described below (see below p.118). The right of forestry in the royal forests near Aconbury, had been passed down from William fitzNorman to Hugh Kilpeck who granted this right to the nuns. Monasteries, such as Aconbury, needed this exemption from forest law. Most monastic charters for houses established within a royal forest contain exemptions that allowed assarting and a slight modification of the strict forest laws. Often there was a right of warren which would have allowed the Aconbury bailiffs to hunt animals other than deer thus supplementing the nuns' diet and increasing their income. When Hugh de Kilpeck quitclaimed to the nuns any rights he had in respect of the office of forester (C 34), the nuns would have been relieved of the burden of forest law and harassment by royal foresters <sup>46</sup>.

### Fish

Freshwater fish, including eels, bream, perch, pike, roach and tench, were considered a great delicacy, fetched a high price, and were often given as presents, as when Katherine de Geneville visited Goodrich Castle (see below p.150). There is some archaeological evidence that Aconbury possessed four fish ponds <sup>47</sup> but there are no extant records. These ponds were expensive to construct and there is no mention of the ponds in the cartulary or other sources. Indeed, the cost of ponds is frequently not mentioned in manorial records, but to give a rough idea of what the nuns might have had to pay - in 1294 merely cleaning Westminster Abbey's pools at Knowle (Warwickshire) cost £7 14s.11d. <sup>48</sup>. The actual construction of a pond required dykers to move the earth and carpenters who constructed sluices and pipes and wooden fittings and the cost of the materials would have been expensive. As well as the cost of building, the process of stocking the ponds with fish was costly <sup>49</sup>. However the construction of these ponds was obviously felt to be worthwhile, in view of the high consumption of fish by the priory.

The nuns required a good supply of both freshwater and sea fish, both for the observance of Lent and for other religious festivals. Meat was not only not allowed during the six weeks of Lent, but was also forbidden on Fridays and Saturday of every week and at certain religious festivals. Table 6 shows that the nuns received some sea fish for the festival of St Dominic on 4 August; the large order for 2 March 1315 could have been for the festival of St Chad, and would have included Lent, and on 24 December and 2 January fish would have been required. They relied on their fishponds and fishing rights for freshwater fish but there is evidence from the accounts of Dame Alice Ate <sup>50</sup> that they also consumed a great deal of salt-water fish which would have been pickled in brine.

Table 6. CONSUMPTION OF FISH BY THE ACONBURY NUNS (1314-15)

Date	Fish	Value	Remarks
4 August 1314	pickled herrings	3s.2d.	
	fish (unspecified)	2s.1d.	probably sea fish
	fresh herrings	3s.7d.	
24 Decr.1314	fish (unspecified)	2s.8d.	
2 January 1315	oysters & fish (unspecified)	3d.	oysters normally available either fresh or pickled without shells in barrels 51
2 March 1315	pickled herrings	10s.	
	500 pickled herrings	6s. 4d.	
	336 fresh herrings	12s. 6d.	bought at Lydney
	50 conger eels	20s.10d.	bought at Penally
	fish (unspecified)	12d.	
	fish (unspecified)	3d.	

The fresh herrings were most likely caught in traps (nets?) in the Severn Estuary.

There was only one charter (Wivelcote C 8) in which the nuns were specifically granted fishing rights. Fishing rights for two mills (Westbury Cs 19,20 and Ludlow C 2) were not specifically stated but the mills were granted with all appurtenances and freedoms. There was litigation over the mill at Ethon (C 41) and the nuns lost their fishing rights. For the mill at Dymock (C 25) the nuns possibly only received the rent and Aconbury would have had the fishing rights for the one mill that they owned at Rowlestone, and evidence from other sources confirms that the nuns held this mill: in

November 1304 'Stephen Wogan answers for Rolvestone mill, which he rents of the lady prioress' <sup>52</sup>. During the period 29 September 1319 to 1 August 1320 in the accounts of Adam, the bailiff at Aconbury, there is an entry where he delivered to David the bailiff of Rolvestone for 'keeping the new mill at Rolveston 4s.' <sup>53</sup>.

### Sheep

There is only one charter (C 8) where a specific flock (200) is mentioned and the only other references to the ownership of sheep are to be found in the accounts of the bailiff of Aconbury, Philip Godrich, at the end of the fourteenth century. Thirty stone of wool were sold at 4s. per stone (£6). Philip was instructed to buy 36 sheep for 56s. and 60 sheep were sold for 17½d. each (£4 7s.6d.) <sup>54</sup>.

Although these figures do not give an exact number of the sheep owned, at least they demonstrate that the nuns were active in managing their sheep. The number of sheep kept by individual religious houses is normally almost impossible to assess as flocks varied in size, and sheep rot and murrain could easily decimate a flock.

In the late-eleventh and early-twelfth centuries Flemish clothiers had an insatiable demand for wool and the export from England and Wales was growing; during the 1270s the price of wool rose rapidly and in the fourteenth century there was a considerable boom in the wool trade. It would be tempting to conclude that Aconbury benefited from this boom. However, in spite of the demand for English wool and the fact that very fine wool was produced in the March, there seems to be very little evidence to show that Aconbury was the centre of a thriving wool industry.

By comparison, at the end of the thirteenth century, Stixwold, a Cistercian nunnery in Lincolnshire, probably had 1,500 sheep yielding 7 or 8 sacks of wool a year, with an estimated price of 14 marks per sack <sup>55</sup>; it was therefore clearly involved in the lucrative wool trade, unlike Aconbury.

Although there is only one charter where the number of sheep is described, there were four charters (Cs 21,39,86,90) in which the nuns were granted valuable grazing rights and they were also granted various meadows (Cs 39,86,90), but there is no mention of the number of sheep, and of course these pastures could have been used for cattle, particularly if they were low lying.

The nunnery would probably have used any profits from the sale of wool for the maintenance of the priory and would have kept most of the wool that was produced for clothing and bedding, and used the ewes' milk for butter and cheese, and some of the sheep would have been slaughtered for their mutton to give a supply of fresh meat.

#### Other livestock

There are occasional references to livestock other than sheep; there is only one charter (C 8) that gives specific details, though there are references in some of the accounts, but it is difficult to assess the value. Oxen were valuable working animals and in the accounts of Adam, the bailiff at Aconbury, there is a record of the part-purchase of one ox for 3s. in 1319/20, and then in 1341 the nuns bought another ox for 13s.4d. <sup>56</sup>, probably as a replacement. Twenty years would have been about the lifespan of an ox. Oxen were sometimes eaten by the wealthier households <sup>57</sup>, but the nuns probably kept theirs for hauling carts and ploughs.

There are several references in the accounts of Philip Godrich, the bailiff at Aconbury <sup>58</sup>, to ownership of pigs. Food was delivered to the under-herdsman to feed the pigs, and 1 boar, 3 sows, 33 pigs and 29 sucking pigs were held by the priory which would eventually have ended up as bacon and pork because pig meat preserved well. Boars were usually eaten fresh, but the flesh of the pigs was often salted in barrels of brine. The period of preservation was probably six months <sup>59</sup>. Nothing was wasted - the entrails were put into barrels of ale to delay deterioration. Joan de Valence bought 104 gallons of ale for this purpose <sup>60</sup>.

In the accounts of Adam the bailiff at Aconbury, the agistment of 21 beasts was recorded; probably either cattle or horses or possibly a mixture <sup>61</sup>. No prices were quoted but horses were valuable, perhaps particularly for the bailiffs who toured the various pieces of land and properties.

In Philip Godrich's accounts <sup>62</sup>, an under-herdsman was instructed to feed 28 bullocks which would later be butchered, 1 bull and 24 store cows, and 12d. was paid to a boy who cared for the cattle.

There is one reference to geese - 6s. was paid to a lad to care for them <sup>63</sup>, so there may have been a considerable flock.

### Mills

The nuns were granted rents from various mills (Table 7) in the vicinity of the convent. It is difficult to identify an exact location as mills were apt to fall into disrepair and disappear; only when there was litigation was a specific site identified by legal deeds.

The Aconbury nuns could have used their mills to grind their own corn, although multure might have become a source of conflict between the peasants and the nuns. Many peasants preferred to grind their corn with a handmill at home where they could use the energy of their wives and daughters, and save the time and expense involved in travelling to and from the mill, and also avoid petty theft by the miller. Even a handful of grain was costly for a peasant <sup>64</sup>.

There is only one charter (C 25) in which the mill and the miller are identified. Henry de Pembridge, who may have built the mill, rented out his mill called *Kedisford* on the River Leadon in the parish of Dymock and although it is not stated categorically, William Kedmor was probably the miller. He paid an annual rent to his lord of the manor of 9s. which was granted to the nuns but Henry still retained some control over William and the mill, and was therefore presumably responsible for any repairs. Millers were notoriously

Table 7. MILLS HELD BY ACONEBURY

Place Name	Charter	Description	Grantor to Nuns & Transactions	Value Valor(V)	Remarks	Date
DYMOCK (700312)	25	Kedisford mill (9s.annual rent)	Henry & Elisabeth Pembridge		rent received from William Kedmor for milling rights	
EYTON (475616)	41	tithes of the toll of a mill	Sybil de Ewias		tithes granted to 'brothers and sisters of Aconbury'	1216 x 1236
LUDLOW (515750)	2	half of 4 mills	Geoffrey de Geneville & Matilda de Lacy	£4.6s.8d.	this charter includes 7 burgages	1250 x 1273
WESTBURY-ON- SEVERN (717139)	19	two parts of a mill	Isabel and Geoffrey de Longchamp			1217 x 1237
	20	- do -	confirmation			1217 x 1237
WIVELCOTE (Nesscliffe 385190)	8	one mill	John Lestrange III		included in gift from John Lestrange	1216 x 1240
ROWLESTONE (374271)	--	one mill			from Court Rolls 30 Nov.1304	1304 x 1347

underpaid, though their reputations as ruffians and thieves was probably undeserved <sup>65</sup>. The nuns may not have had the capital for necessary maintenance and repairs which would have been expensive <sup>66</sup>.

None of the charters that granted mills to the nuns stated specifically who was responsible for repairs. The mill at Ethon (C 41) was not named but it was described as a corn mill and was situated on the River Lugg. It was most probably built originally by Robert II de Ewyas, the father of Sybil, who died in 1196. Sybil only granted the tithes of the toll of the mill, so she remained responsible for maintenance and repairs. She died in 1236, but some years later, in 1281, there was a dispute between St Peter's abbey, Gloucester, and the prior of Ewyas on the one part, and the prioress and convent of Aconbury on the other. The conflict was eventually resolved and the nuns were allowed the toll of the mill, but lost their fishing rights in the mill pool and the prioress had to pay half a mark to the prior of Ewyas <sup>67</sup>. Fishing rights were often one of the benefits of holding a mill.

There were two examples of joint ownership of mills. On the river at Ludlow the nuns were granted one half of four mills which had been shared between the Geneville and the Verdun families (C 2) and at Westbury-on-Severn, the Longchamp family shared a mill with the convent (C 19). This was a grant in free alms and Geoffrey de Longchamp and his wife Isabel may have been responsible for the repairs.

Among the appurtenances of the hospital at Nesscliffe (C 8) there was a water mill at Wivelcote (C 10). Wivelcote is not mentioned in charter 8, but the nuns were granted fishing rights 'above the bank of Pevereye called Stanwere'.

The grants of these mills to Aconbury at the end of the thirteenth century were valuable gifts but after the Black Death which led to a shortage of labour and higher wages, there were long term agricultural changes, and milling became a more hazardous venture with profits more uncertain <sup>68</sup>; by the 1440s, when the price of grain was at an all time low,



there were real difficulties for owners of mills. Repair costs had increased and it is doubtful whether the aristocratic owners had enough money to maintain their mills in good order. So although originally these mills would have been of great value to the nuns it would seem that gradually their profits were slipping away.

### Brewing

Ale, and then beer, were an essential part of the English diet in the middle ages. Water was polluted and often undrinkable, milk was usually made into butter and cheese, and wine was too expensive, so even the rich often consumed vast quantities of ale. Brewing was part of the economy of Aconbury. It was a time-consuming process and the ale did not have good keeping qualities and did not travel well; thus most brewing took place locally <sup>69</sup>.

The nuns were granted a messuage in Monmouth (C 66) where they were required to brew their ale and they were also granted an exemption from the tax on ale called 'tolcester' ('tolcestier') (C 67), as well as a toll-free exemption on the wheat which was used in the brewing. The wheat or barley was kiln dried after it had germinated by soaking in water and the resulting malt was used extensively in brewing.

The accounts for 1399 record that 240 bushels of wheat was delivered to Monmouth <sup>70</sup> probably transported from some of Aconbury's estates. This would have been sold to the local population and the beer brewed at Aconbury would have been solely for domestic consumption. The accounts of Dame Joan de Galesch de Bonshull in 1341 show that she provided food and ale for her servants and that a man was hired to mend a large cask used during brewing <sup>71</sup>.

Brewers were supervised under the Assize of Ale, ensuring that strict rules regulated the brewing of ale, and the Assize was used to punish dishonest or incompetent brewers such as Stephen son of John who appeared at the court of Matilda de Grandison, prioress of Aconbury <sup>72</sup> in October 1437; he was fined for using the same mash to brew twice.

In theory the nuns should have been able to make a considerable profit from their brewing, as they would not have been required to purchase a licence or pay fines, but unfortunately there is a lack of evidence as to the extent of this profit. In the 1480s the brewing of beer was introduced into England by the Dutch traders and settlers. Hops were added, which created a bitter taste, but the keeping qualities were improved and the beer travelled better than ale, but it is doubtful if the nuns transferred to the brewing of beer through a lack of capital necessary to make the change.

### Communications

Transport was important for Aconbury. Most of the nuns' parcels of land and properties were local but roads were essential for the transport of goods, to allow the bailiffs to collect rents, settle disputes and administer Aconbury's holdings. There was also a need for communication between the various market towns in the area and the tenant farmers would have required roads for the movement of cattle and sheep.

When the Romans retreated from Britain they left behind a legacy of well-built roads. By 150 AD they had constructed 10,000 miles<sup>73</sup>, including the four great roads that spanned the country - Watling Street (London to Wroxeter in Shropshire), Ermine Street (London to York), Fosse Way (Exeter to Lincoln) and Icknield Way (East Anglia to Stonehenge). These four roads appear to have been maintained, but many of the smaller ones fell into disrepair.

There was one area to the west of Hereford, relevant to Aconbury, where there was evidence of Roman roads that were used in the Middle Ages; this was known as the Straddle which was a district south and west of the Wye between Clifford (OS ref: 245456) and Dinedor (OS ref: 533367).

There were three Roman roads in this region, the first crossed the plain of the Wye past Madley between Kenchester in the north and Abergavenny in the south; the second was

the road travelling up the Golden Valley through Peterchurch (OS ref: 345385) to the bank of the Wye opposite a fort at Clyro in Radnorshire, (now Powys); and a third road forded the Wye at Hereford and then went south through Archenfield to Monmouth <sup>74</sup>. The nuns owned properties in several places in the Straddle, including Vowchurch, Bridge Sollers, Lulham, Kivernoll, Kilpeck, Much Dewchurch, Ewyas Harold, Rowlestone, Merbach and Monmouth, and Abergavenny to the south, and these Roman roads together with side roads would also have been used by the bailiffs of Aconbury. The road that ran from Hereford to Ludlow and Leominster and on to Shrewsbury, which was in part of Roman origin <sup>75</sup>, would have been used by the bailiffs to travel to Stoke Bliss, Ethon and Ludlow and then on north to Nesscliffe.

Royal itineraries shed some light on roads that the staff of Aconbury may have used. In particular three monarchs, John, Henry III and Edward I, did a great deal of travelling to the Welsh Marches and Wales owing to the disturbances in this region, and the roads that were used by the monarchs would have been kept in good repair.

It would have been possible to plot the routes of the three monarchs by drawing straight lines between the places where they stopped, but it seemed more sensible to follow their journeys from place to place along modern roads which would have been constructed, in the main, along old roads, both Roman and mediaeval, thus indicating a network of roads which would have been in existence at the beginning of the foundation of Aconbury (1216) and would have been used during its lifetime.

King John had been created Earl of Gloucester by his brother Richard, and this brought him the Welsh Marcher lordship of Glamorgan. John was therefore aware of the problems of the area and the continual unrest between the Welsh and the English. He frequently visited Hereford, Worcester and Gloucester <sup>76</sup>, and he used these towns as bases to penetrate into the March and beyond. He and his court probably went by river from Gloucester to Worcester,

Bridgnorth and beyond as the River Severn was navigable as far as Shrewsbury. From Gloucester he went to Flaxley and he must have passed Westbury-on-Severn where the nuns owned part of a mill. John visited Kilpeck on two occasions and then went south to Monmouth; the nuns were granted properties in both these places. When the king wanted to go further into Wales he would have taken the Roman road to Abergavenny which had been built across the district of Straddle. He visited Hereford for the last time from 24 to 27 July 1216 during the few months before his death, and it may well have been that during this period he granted the land at Aconbury to Margaret Lacy. Due to the king's visits to Herefordshire some of the minor roads to the small villis would probably have been well maintained.

King Henry III (1216-1272) <sup>77</sup> travelled by the roads used by his father. He constantly visited Hereford, Worcester and Gloucester <sup>78</sup>, and during his visits to Hereford he travelled to Abergavenny and Ewyas Harold, both places where the nuns held properties, and the bailiffs would have been able to use the well maintained roads.

Trying to assert his supremacy over the Welsh, Edward I (1272-1307) travelled frequently to the northern part of the March, where the nuns held property; they had been granted burgages and a mill in Ludlow; Katherine de Lacy had granted land and property in the manor of Corfham and they were granted a hospital and considerable land at Nesscliffe (see map p.29). He often went from Shrewsbury to Ruddlan castle, which he used as one of his bases, and because the area was travelled by the monarch, the nuns would perhaps have benefited <sup>79</sup>.

The itineraries of these three kings destroy the myth of the bad state of mediaeval roads in winter. King John for example preferred to travel in February, March, July and August. There is less data for Henry III but the itinerary showed that he liked to travel between August and January with low figures for February, April and May. In January 1300 Edward travelled for 360 miles in 25 days, so the roads

could not have been too bad. The minor roads may have become rutted and difficult, but the main roads remained passable and much would have depended on their upkeep.

River transport was used in conjunction with the roads. The River Severn was navigable as far as Shrewsbury, although some landowners did set up weirs to catch fish. The prior of *Wenloke* (Much Wenlock) was accused in 1416 of obstructing the river with weirs, whereas by rights the Severn's course was free for the transport of wine, oil, fruit, pitch and tar and other goods on 'trows and boats' <sup>80</sup>.

The flat bottomed rowing and sailing boats would have carried the court, with its paraphernalia, easily on a flood tide. Edward, for example, could have sailed as far as Shrewsbury, disembarked and then set out by road for North Wales.

Unfortunately there are few accounts of mediaeval travellers but the Fellows and Wardens of Merton College, Oxford, travelled extensively between 1315 and 1470 <sup>81</sup>. The details they gave of their journeys give a picture of mediaeval travel which, although slow, was systematic and regular, and would have enabled the bailiffs and other officials of the priory to go about their business.

#### Conclusions : The Economy of Aconbury

Although the approximate values of the land can be determined it is difficult to assess the quality of the land that was granted to Aconbury. The charters simply describe the location of the grants. Most of the land in the plain of Hereford would have been fertile and productive, although as the area is fed by two major rivers, the Wye and the Severn, there would have always been the danger of flooding. Some of the grants of land by donors might have been inferior - a way of solving consciences cheaply. For example the nuns were granted land in Kempley (Cs 16 & 18), and St Mary's, the old church built on the banks of Kempley Brook in the late-eleventh or early-twelfth century, was certainly standing at the time when the land was granted. Because of

flooding the village slowly migrated to higher ground two miles to the south and a second church was built in the nineteenth century, so the grant of land may have been inferior, although this might not necessarily have been known when the land was granted.

Sometimes it was difficult to disentangle the exact amount of land and property that was originally granted for the foundation of a monastery. However, it is clear that Aconbury was fairly well endowed when it was founded, and there were generous grants of land and property from members of the Marcher families after 1216. Aconbury was particularly favoured by the Lacy family from the time of its foundation until the decline in support from the Marcher families in the mid-thirteenth century.

By comparison with the three carucates of land and later the addition of a wood that was granted to Aconbury by Margaret de Lacy, Nuneaton, an Augustinian house in Warwickshire, was similarly well endowed when it was founded in the middle of the twelfth century by Robert, earl of Leicester, and his countess Amicia. The early endowment of Nuneaton included the manor of Eton and land paying £25 rent in Kintbury, where the nunnery was first founded. Later Robert and Amicia's daughter made generous grants of two carucates of land and pasture for 300 sheep<sup>82</sup>, just as Katherine, the daughter of Aconbury's founder, gave land and a wood in Corfham manor (C 3). On the other hand, Pinley in Warwickshire, founded in the middle of the twelfth century by Robert de Pillarton, a tenant of the earl of Warwick, was only given the site of the house in Pinley and was always rated as poor<sup>83</sup>.

It is not easy to assess the poverty of Aconbury. Although figures from the *Valor* are useful for a quick estimate of the relative value of mediaeval monasteries, they only show the relative wealth of any house at the Dissolution. For an earlier estimate we have to look at the *Taxatio* of 1291, but these figures are not as detailed or reliable and most likely they would also have been set at a

low estimate in order to avoid paying tax. The Valor has therefore been used here for an estimate of the wealth of individual nunneries, as it was previously employed by Knowles.

There were twenty three houses of Augustine canonesses in England and Wales founded in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. All came to an abrupt end at the Dissolution. The value of these houses can be divided into three groups:

- (a) those with a net income at the time of the Dissolution of over £200;
- (b) those with incomes above £100;
- (c) those with incomes below £100.

The three richest priories in category (a) were Buckland (Somerset) (£223)<sup>84</sup>, London Clerkenwell (£262)<sup>85</sup> and London Haliwell (£294)<sup>86</sup>. Buckland possibly prospered because it remained with the Hospitallers, and the two London priories probably increased in value due to grants by devout Londoners.

The three priories with an income above £100 were Canonsleigh (Devon) (£197)<sup>87</sup>, Minster in Sheppey (Kent) (£129)<sup>88</sup> and Campsey Ash (Suffolk) (£182)<sup>89</sup>.

Most of the priories in group (c), those with incomes below £100, ranked as poor and small and Grace Dieu (Leicester) (£92)<sup>90</sup> and Aconbury (£67)<sup>91</sup> headed the list. There was a very small priory at Rothwell (Northamptonshire) (£5)<sup>92</sup> and one at Grimsby (Lincolnshire) (£9)<sup>93</sup>.

There were also three houses, Burnham (Bucks) (£51)<sup>94</sup>, Cornworthy (Devon) (£63)<sup>95</sup> and Goring (Oxford) (£60)<sup>96</sup>, with incomes similar to Aconbury.

By comparison with the twenty three houses of Augustinian nuns, there were approximately 242 houses for men in England and Wales. The value of these priories for canons can be divided into similar groups. In group (a) there were 37 houses with a net income of over £200 compared to 3 nunneries. The richest were Cirencester (£1,051), Leicester (£951), Merton (£960), Plympton (£912), Waltham (£900), and the poorest ranged from Bodmin (£270), Barnwell

(£256), Bolton (£213), Darley (£258), Haughmond (£259) and Lilleshall (£229). In group (b) there were approximately 42 priories with incomes above £100 compared with 3 nunneries, and in group (c) there were 87 priories with incomes below £100. By comparison with the male monasteries, the valuations for the female houses were considerably lower. There were 37 male houses with a net income of over £200; the richest had incomes varying from £1,051 to £900, whereas the women only had three 'rich' priories ranging from incomes valued at £294 to £223.

There were only four Augustinian nunneries in the counties of Herefordshire, Shropshire, Gloucestershire and Worcestershire: Aconbury (£67), Limebrook (£22)<sup>97</sup>, Bristol St Mary Magdalene (£21)<sup>98</sup>, and Brewood White Ladies (Shropshire) (£17)<sup>99</sup>.

These four houses compare with seventeen for men in a similar area of which twelve had incomes well above that of Aconbury, so Aconbury ranked as poor when compared with the men but was affluent compared to its sister houses in the area.

There is little evidence to show that the nuns made a much of a profit from their commercial activities, such as brewing and sheep rearing, but at least they were able to provide wool for their habits and bedding and they probably brewed their own ale on the home farm. Although they were granted exemption from tax for their ale in Monmouth there is no record of any brewing activities that produced profit.

In the first half of the fourteenth century, the appropriation of four churches were granted to Aconbury and in deeds by which the bishops sanctioned the proceedings, the reasons for application for an appropriation were always the same: the house was poor and harassed by debt; the religious could not fulfil their charitable obligations; potential novices might be discouraged.

Towards the mid-fourteenth century monasteries were already beginning to suffer from straightened circumstances. Grants of land or property from the nobility had begun to dry



up by the middle of the thirteenth century (see below p.130), although benefactors from the merchant/landowning classes supported the nunnery until the end of the thirteenth century.

Claims by the nuns of poverty may have been looked upon favourably by the bishops who were willing to grant applications for appropriations of churches. During the fifteenth century there are thirteen entries in various bishop's registers in which the nuns are described as *pauperae moniales* and exempted from various taxes which were levied by the crown for various reasons. Bishop Spofford (1422-48) even found Aconbury guilty of a 'perylouse abusyon' in that they appeared to be only receiving as sisters those who brought money or lands to the convent<sup>100</sup>. The nuns must have been in serious financial difficulties.

Nuns in general have been accused of mishandling their financial affairs which led to debts and poverty. An Augustinian nunnery at Easebourne (Sussex) was under constant criticism from successive bishops for mishandling its accounts (see below p.96 n.6). But it does not appear that Aconbury was accused of this, although this could have been because of lack of records and the bishops' registers for Sussex were far more revealing than those for Herefordshire<sup>101</sup>.

It will be seen (from Appendix A) that before 1250 there were twenty four grants to the nuns, of which sixteen were from Marcher lords and other knightly families and eight from the merchant/landowning families. However after 1250 (Appendix B) there were twenty two grants, of which ten were from the aristocratic families and twelve from the merchants or non-aristocratic landholders. These figures show that the Marcher lords/knights were the principal donors to Aconbury in the first half of the thirteenth century whereas the merchant/landholders gave smaller grants in the second half of the thirteenth century, but were in the majority.

This change in donors was probably caused by the breakup of the great Marcher families, the introduction of

the Statute of Mortmain (see below p.130), and the transfer of Aconbury to the Augustinian rule (see above p.16) which made grants to the priory more acceptable to the lower social classes.

It can also be seen from the Appendices that the grants before 1250 were larger and more valuable. For example, a hospital at Nesscliffe was granted to the nuns and 37½ acres at Corfham was given by Katherine Lacy. Also, before 1250 a suit of court was granted and a quitclaim of forestry rights, whereas after 1250 the only legal rights granted to the nunnery was a licence for brewing from which they do not appear to have reaped much benefit.

Most of the larger grants to Aconbury during the thirteenth century have not been valued in the cartulary and any assessment undertaken now would be inaccurate. So, no attempt has been made to compare the overall value of grants before and after 1250, but they do show that the larger grants had begun to dry up by the end of the thirteenth century.

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88. Minster in Sheppey had originally been an Anglo-Saxon 'double house' and was probably destroyed by the Danes and then refounded about 1130 (Thompson 201 and 226). There was a prioress and 10 nuns at the Dissolution (Knowles 278 and 282)
89. Campsey Ash was founded 1195 and dissolved 1536. In 1492-3 there were 20 nuns, 1514 and 1526 21 nuns and 1532 19 nuns (Knowles 278,279)
90. Grace Dieu was founded 1235x1241 and the number of nuns remained constant at 15 (Knowles 278 and 280)
91. At Aconbury there were 5 nuns in 1379 but this increased to 8 by 1539 (Knowles 278)

92. Rothwell was founded c.1249 (Thompson 228) and dissolved 1537x1538. In 1395 and 1538 there were 8 nuns, but at the Dissolution only 3 or 4 (Knowles 278 and 282)
93. Grimsby was founded 1171x1180 (Thompson 222) and dissolved 1539. One of the poorest of the Augustinian nunneries and probably designed for 13 nuns who had to rely on charity for their support. In 1377 there were 10 nuns, in 1381 5 nuns and at the Dissolution 7 or 8 nuns (Knowles 278 and 280)
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97. Limebrook was founded c.1221 (Thompson 224), in 1291 the value was only £13 and at the Dissolution there were 6 nuns (Knowles 278 and 281)
98. Bristol founded c.1173 (Thompson 219). This nunnery was possibly a hospital linked with St Augustine's Abbey, Bristol (Thompson 45,46). This was a very poor nunnery with only about 5 or 6 nuns at its foundation and by the Dissolution the number had dwindled to a nun and one novice with 2 servants (Knowles 278,279)
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A.T.Bannister (Canterbury & York Society, vol.XXIII, 1919), 223
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#### 4. ACONBURY PRIORY AND ITS CHURCHES

Aconbury was granted four churches between 1315 and 1331, and most of the sources for the appropriations of these churches came from the registers of the various bishops of Hereford who then held office <sup>1</sup>. There is no mention in the cartulary of any of these churches, because the final charter is dated c.1301, before their acquisition. The *Valor* and *Taxatio* provide information about the value of these churches for the nuns (see Table 8).

Religious houses relied on the appropriation of churches for an important part of their income, and most of this income came from tithes. As Christianity spread, the bishops needed more parish churches which were sometimes built by rich and powerful laymen who supplied priests and levied tithes on the parishioners.

The movement of church ownership away from the laity and into ecclesiastical hands had a long history by the time Aconbury had received its churches at the beginning of the fourteenth century; **Penally** in Pembrokeshire (1301), **Bridge Sollers** (1315), **Wolferlow** (1316), and **Mansel Lacy** (1331) in Herefordshire. Three of the four churches were granted by lay persons, the fourth, Wolferlow, was given 'with the consent of the canons of Bromyard' <sup>2</sup>.

This transfer of church ownership was promoted in 1102 by Paschal II who had indicated that he wished all churches to be under episcopal authority <sup>3</sup>, and reforms were instituted to help the bishops monitor the churches in their dioceses, and also encouraged the laity to hand over their ownership of churches. However some monastic orders, such as the Cistercians and Carthusians, did not favour this as they were concerned about the ownership of property and wealth; they believed monks should only be concerned with spiritual and not with financial gain. The Augustinians were somewhat more relaxed about the appropriation of churches.

Poverty appears to have been one of the main reasons

Table 8. ASSESSMENT OF VALUE OF APPROPRIATED CHURCHES

DATE*	CHURCH	TAXATIO (1291)	VALOR (1535)
1315	Bridge Sollers	£8	£2 18s.8d.
1316	Wolferlow	£6	16s.0d.
1327	Penally	£16	£10 13s.4d.
1331	Mansel Lacy	£14	£7 9s.0d.
	Total	£44	£21 17s.0d.

\* Date of Appropriation

for seeking an appropriation, particularly in the case of Aconbury. In the bishops' registers for the Hereford diocese during the fourteenth century the convent was often described as *prioratus pauperum monialium* <sup>4</sup>, usually when collection of taxes was due. On the grounds of poverty the nuns sought exemption from tenths and subsidies. It is clear that some of the claims for appropriation on account of poverty were fraudulent, but Aconbury was a small obscure convent and because grants of money and land had dwindled and the nuns appeared to be selling off land in order to raise money, they could realistically be described as poor, particularly when compared to their male counterparts. The nuns always seemed to be in need of money and this was demonstrated on 4 November 1406 <sup>5</sup>, when the bishop temporarily took over the administration of the priory 'which is in danger of destruction for dilapidation of the buildings.' It appeared that they had no money for the repair of their convent, a common problem with many of the nunneries <sup>6</sup>.

Disapproval of ownership of tithes by lay persons had increased and lay possession of a church as a right or law (*ius proprietatis*) had given way to the simpler rights of a patron of a church (*patronatus*). The lay owners of an advowson would have received little financial benefit and were anxious to pass their churches to ecclesiastical establishments, thus avoiding the costs of administration <sup>7</sup>.

On 13 October 1315 <sup>8</sup>, at the instigation of Walter of Shobdon, whose sister was a nun at Aconbury, a licence for a fee of five marks was granted for the appropriation in mortmain by the prioress and nuns of the church of St Andrew at Bridge Sollers. Three months later, Gilbert de Reigate <sup>9</sup>, rector of Bridge Sollers, gave his formal consent to this appropriation and on 1 January 1316 he granted the prioress, Catherine de Geneville, and the nuns a yearly pension of 12d., until the appropriation of the church was complete. On 4 October 1321 <sup>10</sup> Gilbert resigned his benefice; he may have resigned in protest at his poor treatment by the nuns, because on 18 October 1322 <sup>11</sup> Bishop Orleton commissioned John Rees, rector of Dorstone, to enquire into whether sufficient provision had been made by the prioress of Aconbury for John de Worcester, vicar of Bridge Sollers. The bishop was ensuring that the nuns were treating their vicar fairly. He was obviously concerned that the nuns were being less than generous.

Aconbury was granted the church of St Andrew at Wolferlow. The earliest entry in connection with the advowson of this church is one in Bishop Thomas Cantilupe's Register dated 18 November 1276 which reads 'mandate to the official to induct John of Monmouth who is presented to the church of Wolferlow by the prioress and convent of Aconbury with the consent of the canons of Bromyard' <sup>12</sup>. Bromyard housed priests who observed the canonical hours in the minster and provided for the cure of souls in Bromyard and the surrounding district. A licence was then granted for the appropriation in mortmain of the church of Wolferlow <sup>13</sup> on 27 November 1316. However four years later, on 14 March

1320, Bishop Adam Orleton 'commissions the official to enquire into the proposed appropriation of the church of Wolferlow by the prioress and convent of Aconbury' <sup>14</sup>, and eventually a year later, on 21 January 1321, Bishop Orleton sanctioned the appropriation of the church at Wolferlow.

On 1 March 1301 <sup>15</sup> there was a licence for the alienation in mortmain by John Barry to the prioress and convent of Aconbury of a perch of land in Penally and the advowson of the church there.

The Barry family derived their name from the small island of Barry off the coast of Glamorgan which they formerly held. William Barry I <sup>16</sup>, the son of Odo de Barry (d.before 1131) was twice married; by his first wife he had a son, Walter, and by his second wife three sons, Robert, Philip and Gerald of Wales (c.1145-1223). William I's death is uncertain but it must have occurred before 1166 as Gerald talks of his brother Philip taking over the estates and paying tithes for wool and mills. Philip married the daughter of Richard fitzTancred, lord of Haverford, and left three sons, William II his heir, Robert, and Philip who succeeded his uncle Gerald as archdeacon of Brecon. William II was probably born c.1155 but the following years of the history of the family are confused. William II was still living in 1213 but the next mention of a member of the family is David Barry who held a four knights fee in Pembroke in 1246. His son John (d.1326) married Beatrice and there were no surviving children, and it was he who granted the church at Penally to Aconbury. John was a friend of the prioress, Catherine de Geneville, and there is a reference to their joint visit to Goodrich Castle (see below, p.150); this may explain why Aconbury was granted the appropriation of Penally though it is far from Aconbury. Later one of the Barry family, Anna, was prioress from 1415-1446.

About 1320 the advowson of the church of St Michael and All Angels at Mansel Lacy was granted by Roger IV de Mortimer of Wigmore and his wife Joan. Roger was a powerful Marcher lord who joined with Queen Isabel to dethrone Edward II. He

was later attainted, all his honours were forfeit and he was executed in 1330<sup>17</sup>. Fortunately he had already donated the church to the nuns.

By the beginning of the fourteenth century, the procurement of an advowson had become increasingly difficult. The Statute of Mortmain<sup>18</sup> required a licence to be granted and the grant of an advowson did not necessarily ensure that appropriation would follow.

The appropriation of the church at Bridge Sollers appeared to be fairly straightforward; however, later there were objections. Although the vicar had given his formal consent and granted a pension to the prioress and nuns until the appropriation was complete, he had resigned three months later. The delay of forty years for the granting of the appropriation of Wolferlow seems excessive but episcopal permission had to be sought and the canons of Bromyard might have objected, although there appears to be no record of any conflict.

The case of Penally church seems to have been somewhat more complicated. There was an agreement between John and David Barry on the one hand and Dame Catherine de Geneville, the prioress of Aconbury, on the other, stating that the prioress and convent 'may apply to their own uses the advowson of Penally' but 'they are held to have (the Barry family) chaplain in the said church of Penally to celebrate (masses) for the souls of John and Beatrice, his wife, and of their ancestors and all faithful, and when John and Beatrice die, an obit for them celebrated in the Choir ... and if the prioress and convent don't keep this agreement then they may be dishonoured by *regales* of the Bishop of Hereford. Dated: Cornebury, 13 April 1301'<sup>19</sup>. Twenty six years later, on 26 October 1327 the grant was confirmed by his brother, sir Richard Barry, lord of Manorbier and Penally. The delay was perhaps due to a dispute between Richard Barry and his nephew David over the ownership of the lordship of Manorbier.

On 28 February 1327<sup>20</sup> a licence for the alienation in mortmain by Roger Mortimer of an acre of land in Mansel Lacy

and the advowson of the church was granted to the priory. On 20 October 1331 <sup>21</sup>, one year after Roger Mortimer was executed, the dean of Weobley issued a certificate of induction to the prioress and convent of Aconbury into possession of the church which surely represented an appropriation, particularly as the church at Mansel Lacy was described as an appropriated church in a deed dated 29 May 1340 <sup>22</sup>. Roger Mortimer's estates were forfeit and urgent action must have been taken to obtain the appropriation, although the advowson had already been granted.

How would Aconbury have benefited from the possession of these churches? If the priory had been given the advowson of a church then it could exercise the right to choose an incumbent and present him to the bishop for institution, and the priory would then normally receive a pension from the church and of course could exercise influence in the parish, possibly claim ownership of glebeland, and favour friends and kin.

However appropriations were far more valuable; if a monastery or nunnery could obtain an appropriation with the authority of the bishop, a vicar could be appointed for the cure of souls and Aconbury could be named as the rector and would receive the greater tithes (corn, hay and wood) while the vicar was only entitled to the lesser tithes (milk, calves, eggs and young animals). The priory also received the revenue from the church such as offerings from the parishioners, mortuary fees, etc.

Augustinian priories of both canons and canonesses were particularly successful in obtaining appropriations of churches. As has been described (see above pp.19-21) the Augustinian Order was flexible and modest landowners could support these priories and thus assure themselves of some spiritual security.

The income from the appropriated churches was £21 17s.0d. which represented about one third of the nuns' total income (£67) (see Table 8 above, p.86) and was

therefore an important item in their economy, though on 23 February 1357 permission was granted by Bishop Trillek to farm Wolferlow church for five years <sup>23</sup>. Wolferlow was the poorest church but the nuns probably wanted to keep the higher incomes for themselves.

Although the granting of appropriations was a lucrative source of income for Aconbury there were battles over the payment of tithes. On 29 May 1340 Richard Sydenhale held a tribunal in Hereford Cathedral in the presence of Philip a notary public, Walter Lugwardine, Robert Stretton a lawyer and William Botta a clerk. The plaintiffs were the dean and chapter and the boy choristers represented by Hugh Weston, and Thomas de Troye represented the prioress and nuns of Aconbury. The nuns were accused of withholding 6s.8d. from each of their appropriated churches of Wolferlow and Mansel Lacy. Thomas Troye acknowledged that these payments were owing and he pleaded guilty on behalf of the nuns who were ordered to make these payments on a regular annual basis <sup>24</sup>. The nuns appear to have escaped a harsher penalty, perhaps because they pleaded poverty.

On 21 December 1451 the Bishop of Hereford arbitrated in a dispute between the vicar of Bridge Sollers (Thomas Shipward) and the nuns, and although it was customary for the priory to be entitled to the 'greater tithes', the bishop decided that the vicar should have the 'greater tithes' but should pay to the priory each year 16 bushels of corn. This was clearly an ongoing conflict as on 8 February 1504/5 Walter Waters, rector of the church of Bishopstone, Roger Pawntwell the elder of Mansel Lacy and Thomas Alford of Bownshill entered a bond to Dame Isabella Gardener, the prioress of Aconbury for £20 that Richard Powell, vicar of Bridge Sollers, would not bring any action against the prioress in respect of the vicarage of Bridge Sollers <sup>25</sup>. Finally an indenture was drawn up on 29 June 1504 between the Dean and Chapter of Hereford and the prioress of Aconbury, in which both parties agreed to refer their dispute concerning the apportionment of the tithes of Bridge Sollers to twelve

arbitrators who were required to give their verdict by a firm date. In the interim no tithes were to be collected by either of the disputing parties <sup>26</sup>. There is a possibility that this conflict arose because the clergy were dealing with a priory of women who contested the tithes.

The bishops' registers, which are the main source of information about the institution of incumbents, give little detail of these clergy as men, and it is difficult to assess their social status. The clerics appointed to the appropriated churches were drawn from many strata of society. Although a few had aristocratic lineage - they were usually younger sons - some came from knightly families, but probably the vast majority originated from local landowning families which had been able to afford a smattering of education for their sons. The difficulties faced by the son of a villein were almost insuperable; the chances of upward social mobility were slight but not impossible.

Although the bishops' registers are not comprehensive, few of the men who were presented for ordination or inducted into the priory's churches appear to have had high social status. There were men like Robert Wates, Roger Roke, John Benne, William Helle, Thomas Shipward and Richard Powell who were instituted at **Bridge Sollers** between 1394 and 1504. Only one of these family names, Helle, had any connection with witnesses to the cartulary: Hugh Helle witnessed charter 96 (1287). These may have been local men who belonged to minor landowning families.

Eight incumbents for Wolferlow were recorded in the bishops' registers between 1276 and 1524. These were John of Monmouth, John Madeleye, John ap Brok (who may have been related to John de Broc, a witness for charter 17), John Tyler, Gilbert Leye, Roger Grene, Thomas Parker and Roger Stone, again all most likely from 'middling' families.

There were only six incumbents for Penally church mentioned for the period under review <sup>27</sup>. The first named was William described as 'sir William, vicar of Penally', who in 1363 witnessed a conveyance of land in Penally, and the



remaining five incumbents - John Cook, Lewis William, James Rogers, Galfrid Warburton and, the last before the Dissolution, William Jenyns - do not appear to have had any connection with Aconbury families, which is not surprising considering the distance from Pembrokeshire to the priory.

There were eight named incumbents for Mansel Lacy, none of whom appeared to come from the gentry class. They were instituted between 1331 and 1570 and only two had possible connections with witnesses to the cartulary - John Herbard (inducted 1421) could have been kin to two men in Hereford, Nicholas and William Herbert. Nicholas witnessed charters 71 and 72 and William witnessed charter 69, both concerned with properties in Hereford and John Hunte (inducted 1385) who could have been kin to Thomas of Huntley (*Hunteleye*) who was a witness to charter 66 (1297-1314) - all the other incumbents: Stephen Eggisworth, Roger Morcote, Roger Hykeles, Richard Penandre, Richard Michel and Edmund Farley probably came from small landowning families.

The vicars and rectors also ranked as landowners as they administered the glebeland, often equivalent to one or two yardlands, as well as performing their various parish duties, for example the administration of the sacraments and the burial of the dead. But in spite of all this, the social position of the incumbents of Aconbury's churches was probably nearer to that of the majority of their parishioners rather than that of the local gentry.

The incumbents were in theory appointed for life, but in fact they moved about, as is apparent from even the sparse entries in the registers. There were never any reasons given for these changes except death, although the men could have been dissatisfied with their treatment by the nuns, as perhaps in the case of Bridge Sollers, or they moved up the ecclesiastical scale, as obscure churches in Herefordshire were no places for ambitious men.

As these churches (and the priory church at Aconbury) are a physical link with the period covered by this study, they have been illustrated on the following two pages.

Penally Church from a drawing of 1827



Bridge Sollers Church (7th April 1998)



Wolferlow Church (6th April 1998)



Mansel Lacy Church (7th April 1998)



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## 5. DONORS TO ACONBURY NUNNERY IN THE MARCH REGION

### The Marcher Lords

Aconbury, in the lordship of Archenfield, lay in the eastern borders of the March close to the English border <sup>1</sup>. But it must be stressed that the borders were fluid and blurred, and no distinct line can be drawn between Wales, the Marcher lands and England.

The March fits a variety of descriptions. It was a military frontier and therefore had a reputation for violence; it was a meeting place of people with widely differing customs and languages. There was no common supervisory authority and therefore no unity, and each lordship was a self-contained judicial unit. The lords used a toll system to increase the revenues within their land; they claimed the right to levy lucrative tolls on commercial transactions and, where there was a coastline, they exacted a toll on ships calling at ports with cargoes of luxury goods and wine from the continent.

The March differed from thirteenth-century English society in several important respects. By the thirteenth century, there were very few bondmen in Wales and the native society in the March and Archenfield was predominantly a society of freemen. The dues and obligations of Welsh freemen were similar throughout the March - suit of court, military service and contributions to communal renders <sup>2</sup>.

The people of the March were a mixed group. The March was an area where lowland met highland, a land of fertile rich soils along the rivers contrasting with the barren uplands of the Black Mountains, a land where the Welsh and English intermingled. The most distinctive group of Englishmen were the burgesses of Marcher towns, several of whom appear in the charters. They were usually merchants and skilled artisans with money and land, although the Welsh were excluded from the right to become burgesses in the late

fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, which caused some ill feelings. Eventually of course, there was a blending of the two races, particularly on the borders. The lords, many of whom were Anglo-Norman, generally had good relations with the burgesses - both groups probably recognised that mutual goodwill could breed profit. There were many small market towns in the March - usually with a population of three or four hundred. The Marcher lords were keen to help these towns and would often loan money to improve buildings and increase trade.

The March, unlike much of lowland England, was not a land of manors. The main manorial lordships were Abergavenny with eight manors and Monmouth with five. Originally the farming of the demesnes had been maintained for the personal use of the lord but gradually as a surplus of food increased, production for the market with a profit increased, and by the end of the thirteenth century there was a considerable increase in cereal farming in the lowlands. By the end of the fourteenth century many of the Marcher lords had opted out of personal demesne farming because of labour problems, so the lords leased out their land and became little more than absentee, rent-collecting, landlords. Also there was an increase in pastoral farming, including sheep farming which was less labour intensive and often produced huge profits; wool from the March country was in demand. Meadows and good grazing ground were a profitable source of income and three sets of charters (Cs 39 & 40; 86,87,88 & 89; and 90(a),90(b),91 & 92) named meadows which were granted by lesser donors and not the Marcher lords; but some meadows may of course have been included in grants by the lords and not specifically described.

Many of the Marcher lords regarded themselves as beyond the rule of the king; they were the sole rulers in their own personal kingdoms. On occasion the inhabitants would decide to describe their lordships as March territory because they would gain certain benefits. Archenfield illustrates this well. In 1334 the inhabitants declared that the lordship

was sited in March country and they could then claim exemption from royal taxation, although the Exchequer and the sheriff of Herefordshire disagreed with this. In the fifteenth century Archenfield was still regarded as an area where the king's writ could not be served <sup>3</sup>.

The Marcher lords had a reputation for violence and ambition and greed. Walter de Clifford, one of the donors to Aconbury, behaved with 'extreme arrogance and presumption'. 'In January 1250, a royal messenger was dispatched with a letter to Walter de Clifford, lord of Clifford, Glasbury and Cantreselyf, and one of the most redoubtable barons of the Welsh March. His journey ended in an extraordinary fashion when Clifford, offended by the tone of the letter, compelled him to swallow the royal message, seal and all' <sup>4</sup>.

They often employed authoritarian methods to control their 'subjects'. In the lordship of Oswestry, where the nuns had been granted gifts of cereal by John Lestrangle, eight men of Knockin, though possibly freemen, were each described as the 'man' of a particular lord, rather than inhabitants of a town or vill <sup>5</sup>. As in England, the lords often regarded the 'peasants' as their personal property. Furthermore, the Marcher lords decided that their role as dispensers of the law increased their authority; for instance, a tenant of Caus <sup>6</sup> was fined 20s. for daring to question his obligation to carry timber to the lord's mill. Immediate and harsh punishment was meted out to rebels. The lords controlled the land of their 'subjects', claimed their money in rents and taxes, administered justice in an arbitrary manner and expected service and loyalty. In exchange the peasants did receive some measure of protection from predatory lords, and a certain amount of money might have been doled out, perhaps to help a cleric who wanted to go to university or a merchant who required a loan.

The second half of the thirteenth century saw the building of many castles by the Marcher lords, representing a major development in the defence of the March, and the underpinning of the authority of the lords <sup>7</sup>. Often a



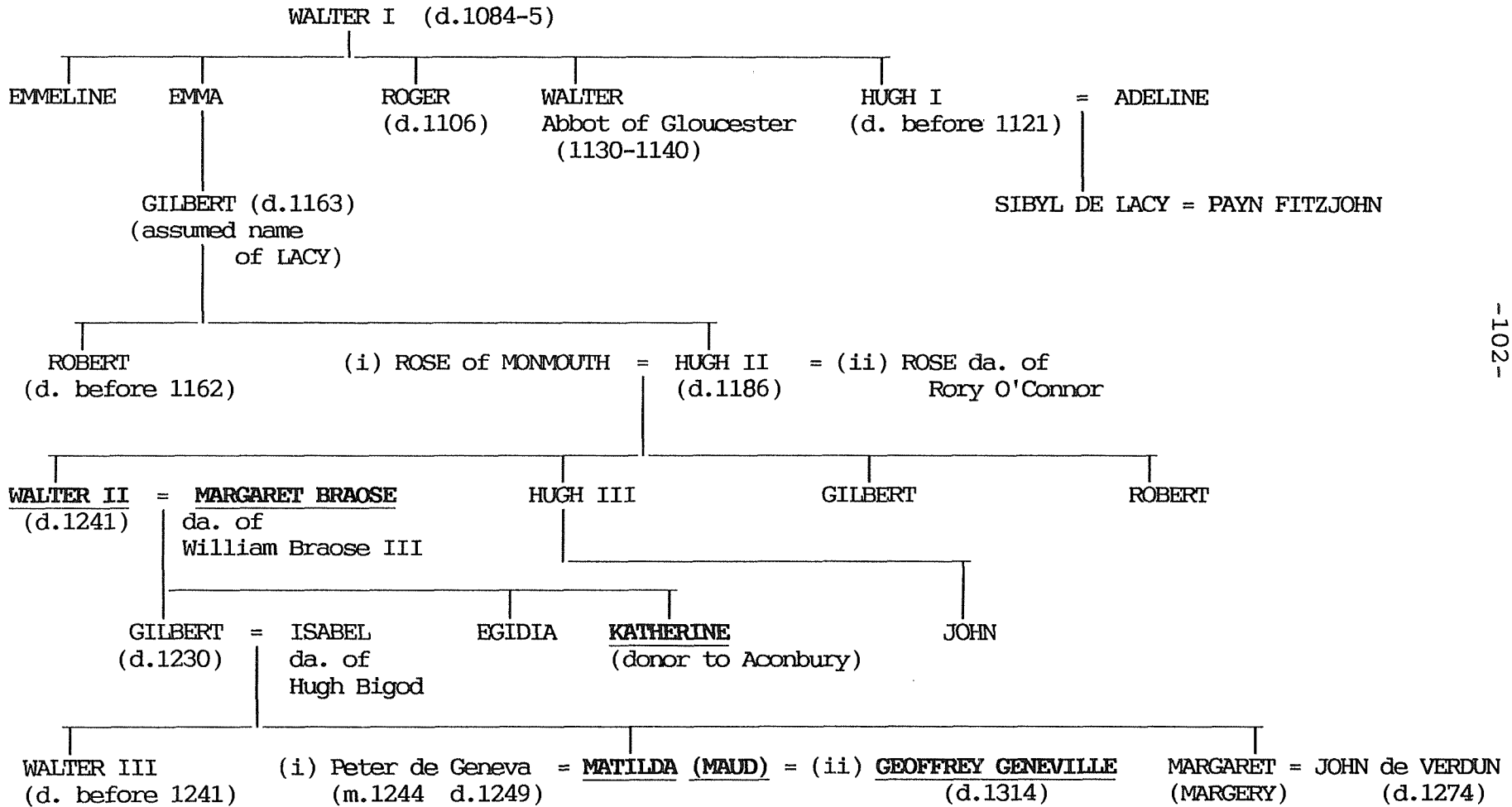
castle was the centre of the administration, and stewards, receivers and constables were responsible for the lordships. Local affairs were handled by reeves and bailiffs. These men were often recruited from those with local knowledge and with administrative skills. John Sergeant of Monmouth <sup>8</sup> had a lifetime of experience as an administrator in the area; he was receiver and deputy steward of the Lancaster lordship of Monmouth, and steward of the Hastings lordship of Abergavenny, both places where the nuns had property; he was also the feoffee of Richard Talbot of Archenfield.

The March was bound up with its major families, and just as Aconbury could claim some of them as patrons of the priory, so the history of the families shape the history of the March <sup>9</sup>. One of the most powerful of the Marcher families and the most generous of donors was the Lacy family whose generosity lay behind the foundation (see above, p.12).

#### The Lacy family (see family tree p.102)

The family's ancestor, Walter I, probably arrived in 1069 from Normandy with William fitzOsbern. William was created an earl with palatine authority with a brief to try and restore order in the border regions where there was much conflict and unrest in the central and southern Welsh Marches. Walter Lacy was rewarded with gifts of land for his assistance to fitzOsbern. It is difficult to establish the extent of his lordship between 1066 and 1071. Certainly he held land in Ewias Harold and the castelleria of Clifford. In 1075 Walter I combined with the Sheriff of Worcester and two powerful ecclesiastics, the Bishop of Worcester and the Abbot of Evesham, against Roger, the rebel son of William fitzOsbern, thus enabling Walter to increase his estates, and by the time he died in 1085 his land lay in a vast triangle from the north of Shropshire to the Severn estuary across to Oxfordshire. The area included the fertile Hereford plain and Shropshire hill country, the Severn valley and the Cotswold valleys and uplands, and the March country where there was continual discord.

The LACY Family



Walter's eldest son Roger (d.1106) had inherited in 1085 the strongest and most important barony in the West Midlands after the palatine earldoms of Chester and Shrewsbury. Most of the principal passes into Wales were sited on land held by the Lacy family. Roger had two brothers, Hugh I and Walter. Hugh I (d.c.1126) inherited the Lacy estates in 1096 when Roger was banished, and Walter entered the monastery of St Peter's, Gloucester.

Hugh I and his wife, Adeline, appear to have had only one surviving child, a daughter, Sibyl, who inherited the estates. Although she was married to Payn fitzJohn, she called herself Sybil de Lacy, reflecting her family's immense power and her personal wealth.

Payn fitzJohn <sup>10</sup> did not inherit the whole of the honour because the king took this opportunity to prevent him from becoming too powerful. After the death of Hugh I, Gilbert de Lacy, the son of Roger's sister Emma (father unknown), assumed the name of Lacy - taking his mother's patronymic - and he inherited part of the Lacy estates, but he had charge of a much reduced honour. Gilbert died in 1163 fighting for the Templars in the Holy Land, and this could reflect Margaret de Lacy's connection with the Hospitallers. Robert de Lacy succeeded Gilbert: little is known about him, and by 1162 Hugh II, his brother, had succeeded him. By now the Lacy family had acquired large estates in Ireland where Hugh II, a restless, lively person, was assassinated in 1186, by which time the Honour of Weobley was much reduced in value. In 1086 the value was approximately £234 (excluding rents from land rented out to tenants instead of being held by knight service). A century later the value was roughly £91 <sup>11</sup>.

Hugh II was married to Rose of Monmouth by whom he had four sons. The eldest Walter II was the husband of Margaret de Braose who donated land given to her by King John for the foundation of the nunnery (see above, p.12). Fairly soon after the foundation, no doubt encouraged by his wife, Walter II gave the nuns 30 acres in Homme Wood near Merbach

(C 32). John de Lacy, the son of Hugh III, also granted the nuns land in Rowlestone (C 53).

Walter II de Lacy became sheriff of Hereford in 1216 and this brought him into contact with the Jewish population of Hereford to whom he gave protection. Walter had visited Narbonne in 1214 and had seen how the important Jewish community there was protected by the Counts of Narbonne, and he realised the benefits that could accrue from a relationship between Christians and Jews. He also wanted to borrow money from a leading Jewish financier, Hamo of Hereford, who was one of the wealthiest Jews in the country. Once King John was succeeded by his son King Henry III, the Jewish community began to flourish.

A document dated 1244 <sup>12</sup> in Hereford records the people who borrowed from Hamo and his family, and this shows that local March lords, including the Lacys and the Cliffords, were the principal borrowers but men from the lower social classes were also involved in supporting the Jewish moneylenders (see C 74).

Although the Lacy estates brought in wealth, there was also the huge financial cost of maintaining castles and manors in Ireland and England. Walter also incurred considerable expenditure over litigation. His wife Margaret had been given land by King John to found the Aconbury convent. Her nuns were at first affiliated to the Knights Hospitallers, but when she realised that they might have to travel overseas she wanted to change to the Augustinian order. There was extensive litigation and eventually Margaret and Walter appealed to the pope (see above, pp.16-19) and won her case, but this lawsuit had extended over six years and had cost Walter a great deal of money and effort.

When Walter II died in 1241, he was badly in debt. The Fine Rolls (FR, 1245, 445-6) show that at this time he owed Jewish moneylenders £955 13s.4d., and larger sums were due to the crown. Henry III acted firmly in order to recover money owed to the crown by Walter. In September

1242 Margaret de Lacy was enabled to claim a third part of her late husband's estate, but the king reserved the right to claim two parts in payment of Walter's debts to the king, thus safeguarding the king's interests before debts to other claimants could be paid.

The Lacy family had come from Normandy as adventurers following William the Conqueror and become one of the most powerful of the Marcher barons but a hundred years after the Conquest, due mainly to debts incurred by Walter II and his involvement with the Jews of Hereford, and the failure of a male heir to secure the main line, the estates dwindled and finally broke up after the death of Walter II in 1241.

Katherine de Lacy, the daughter of Margaret who founded the convent, still continued as one of the most generous of donors, and went on supporting the nunnery until her death in 1267. It was clear that she took a deep interest in the nuns. She bought rents worth 23s.9d. for 20 marks (C 11) from Hugh de Bles which she then passed on to the nuns. Katherine, as a daughter of Walter and Margaret, was most likely deeply involved in her father's struggle to meet his debts and this is reflected in the charter drawn up by Hugh de Bles, in which Katherine guaranteed the rents 'against all men, women and Jews'. Given the family's dealings with Jews, the phrase was probably included in order to safeguard the interests of the nuns.

She also gave land and property in the manor of Corfham (C 3). She was very clear as to how her gift should be used: she wanted a chaplain for Aconbury to celebrate a daily mass for the souls of her mother and father and her brother, and also for those of Walter de Clifford and his wife Margaret, Matilda de Longspée his daughter, and his granddaughter Margaret. She was concerned to make sure that these masses were correctly celebrated and she requested that the Bishop of Hereford should ensure that the mass 'be celebrated with honour, honesty and in full in perpetuity', and if by any chance the service lapsed, she required the bishop to put pressure on the nuns. In 1262 Katherine

granted the nuns rents in Stoke Bliss (Cs 11,15,43) and gave detailed instructions as to the use of the money.

Taken in the context of the history of the Lacy family as a whole, it is clear then, that by the time of the foundation of Aconbury, the fortunes of the Lacy family had begun to deteriorate - perhaps the nuns were lucky to get what they did.

The Braose family (see family tree p.107)

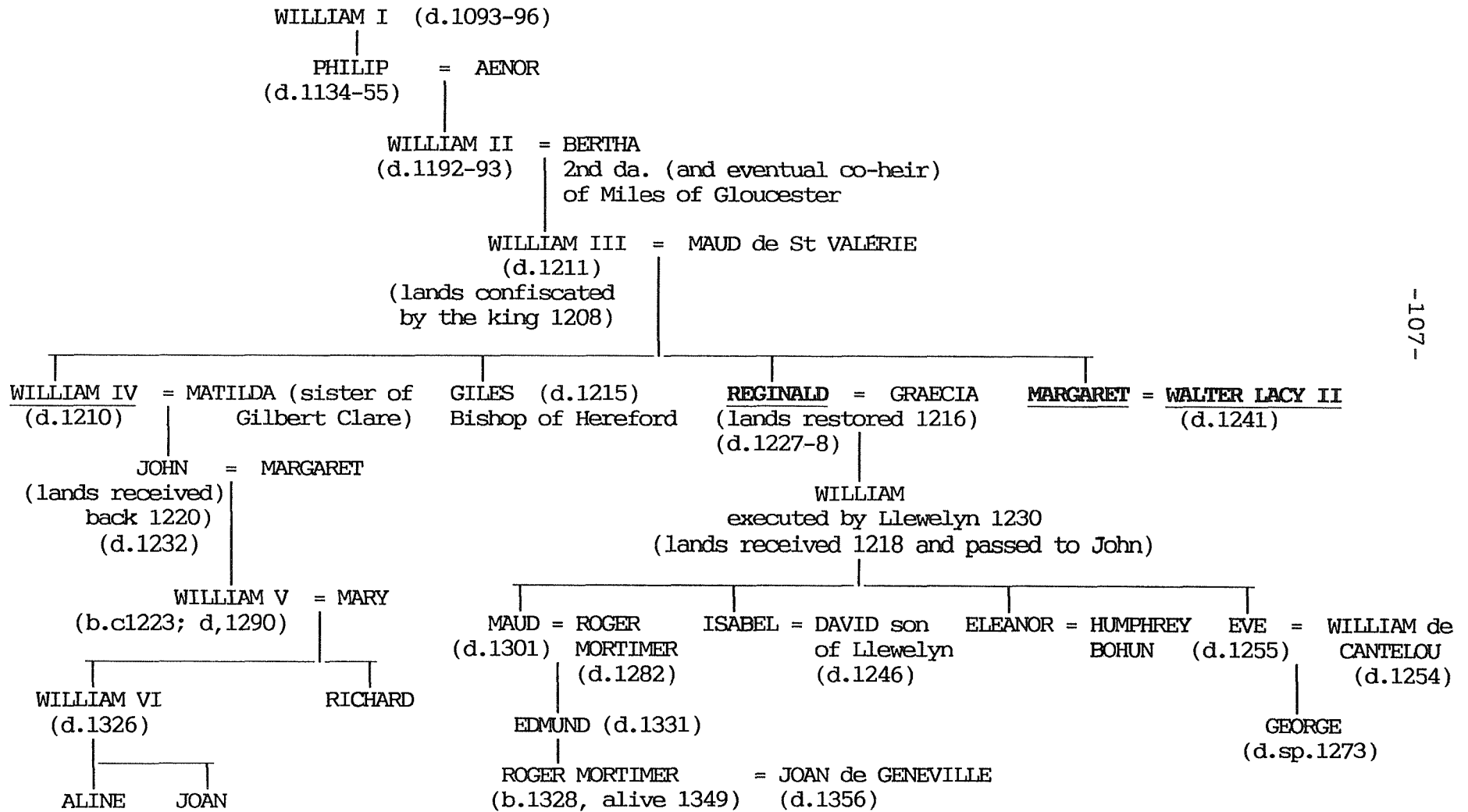
The Braose family<sup>13</sup> originated near Falaise in Normandy. They were granted huge estates at the Conquest and became a powerful baronial family. The family controlled the Welsh lordships of Radnor, Brecon, Abergavenny, Builth and Gower. In the twelfth century these estates came from conquests made by Philip de Braose; he annexed Radnor and Builth about 1095. Philip's heir was William II (d.1192).

About 1200 the estates of William III (d.1211) were enlarged and he became sheriff of Herefordshire in 1206.

William suspected that the king was plotting the death of his nephew, Prince Arthur, so refused to accept responsibility for him, and gradually William's relations with the monarch deteriorated. In 1207 he agreed to surrender his castles of Hay, Brecknock and Radnor as payment for debts. King John was becoming increasingly suspicious of the Braose family, particularly as William's son, Giles, Bishop of Hereford, supported the primate during the Interdict of 1208 and went off to France with him. John demanded hostages which William's wife Maud de St Valérie refused. William was now committed to resistance; he failed in an attempt to retrieve his three castles, but sacked Leominster and then fled with his family to Ireland. The king then seized his estates. William offered 40,000 marks for peace and the restoration of his lands.

William III and his wife, Maud de St Valérie, offered to pay the debt, but they reneged on this and William fled to France, and his wife and son, William IV, were imprisoned at

The BRAOSE Family



Windsor, and rumours circulated that they were starved to death. William IV's sister Margaret de Braose married Walter II de Lacy and managed to avenge the death of her mother and brother <sup>14</sup> by persuading King John to give her land to found a priory of nuns who would pray for their souls. Giles de Braose, the bishop of Hereford and second son of William III, paid a fine of 9,000 marks to the crown, thus increasing the debts of the Braose family; he died in 1215 without issue. The Braose estates were restored in 1216 to his brother Reginald de Braose (d.1227), the eldest surviving son of William III, and transferred in 1220 to John, son of William IV. Reginald granted a burgage in Abergavenny to the nuns (C 23), probably encouraged by his sister.

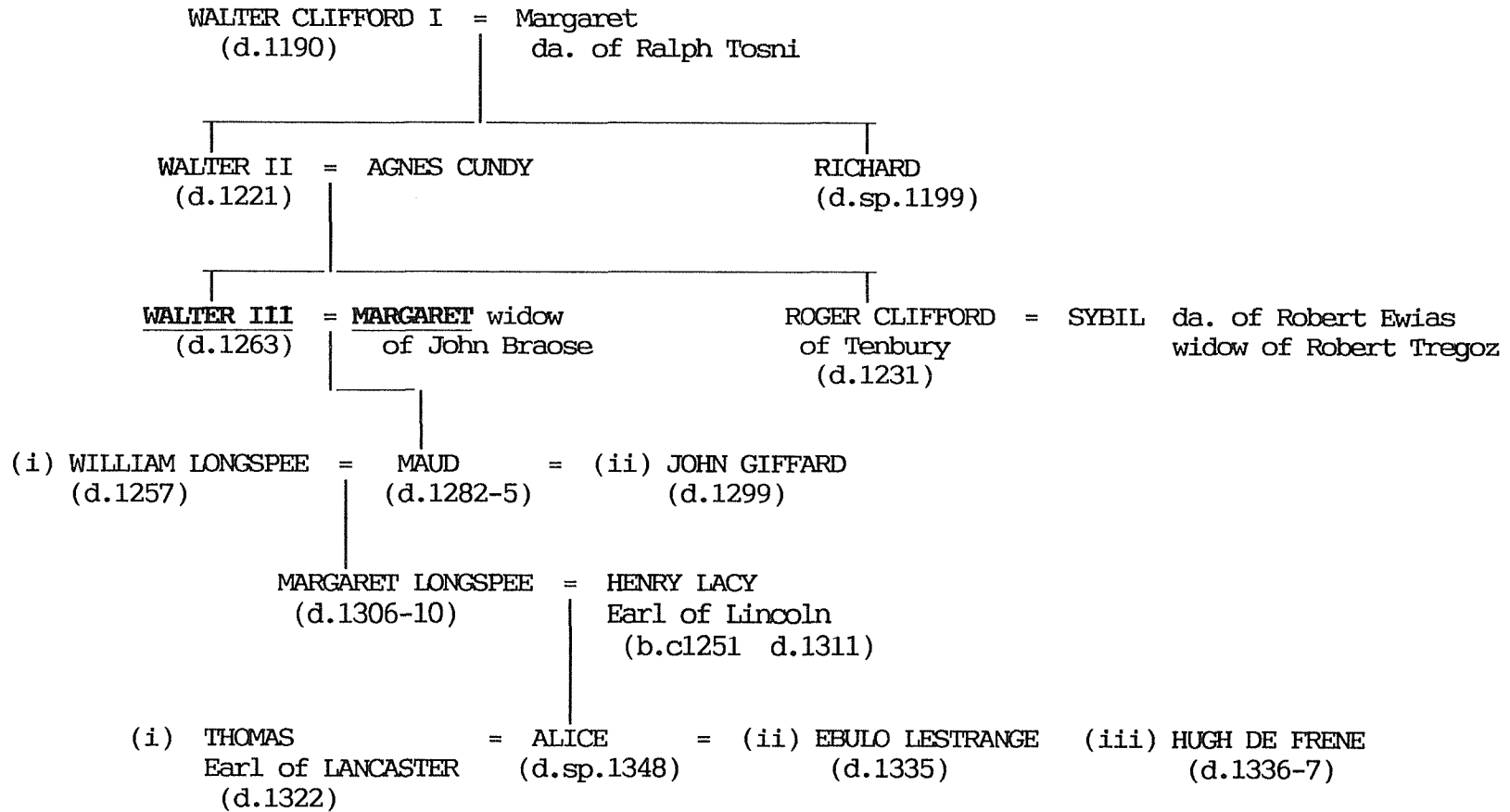
The Clifford family (see family tree p.109)

The lordship of the Clifford family consisted of Clifford, Glasbury and Cantrefselyf and was one of the best examples of a free native Welsh society - that there was an absence of villeinage was commented on by local contemporary officials <sup>15</sup>.

The castle of Clifford was originally built by William fitzOsbern, Earl of Hereford, (d.1071) and held by his brother in law Ralph de Tony. About 1127 the castle and lands passed to Richard fitzPons (d.1138). It is not known how Clifford came to the fitzPons family but the heir appears to have been Walter I de Clifford (d.1190) <sup>16</sup>. Walter I had two sons, Walter II (d.1221) and his younger brother Richard (d.c.1199). When his father died, the younger son Richard offered 300 marks for the estates, hoping to obtain the lands whilst the elder brother Walter was out of the country. Richard evidently succeeded since for a short time his name was linked with Corfham <sup>17</sup>. He was in France with King Richard in 1198, and Walter II, who was married to Agnes de Cundy, may have won back the estates in 1199 due to Richard's death. Walter II was made sheriff of Hereford by King Richard in 1198 and King John confirmed him in the post in



The CLIFFORD Family



1205. During that period he indulged in some 'creative accounting' and was fined 1,000 marks; after this he took no further part in public life but left the financial management of the estates to his son and heir Walter III and his younger son Roger.

The Cliffords, like the Lacys, had trouble over payment of their debts to the Jewish moneylenders and in August 1233 Walter III suddenly rebelled against the king because Henry III had ordered him to pay back his debt of 1,000 marks which he had borrowed from Ursell's father, a prominent moneylender, and also 100 marks plus interest which was due to Aaron of York, so his estates were seized. However, by September 1233 his lands and possessions were restored because King Henry III needed his support; he even managed to get some of his debts pardoned.

Walter III de Clifford had inherited from his father considerable debts to the Jewish moneylenders. He negotiated and was given ten years for repayment, but he was clearly still in need of money because he had to make a deal with Walter Kirkeham, Dean of St Martins, London, who gained possession of one of his manors for thirteen years for a total payment of £226 13s.4d. <sup>18</sup>.

In spite of his debts Walter III gave the nuns and their tenants (in the lordship of Corfham) freedom from his suit of court (C 6 dated 10 August 1262).

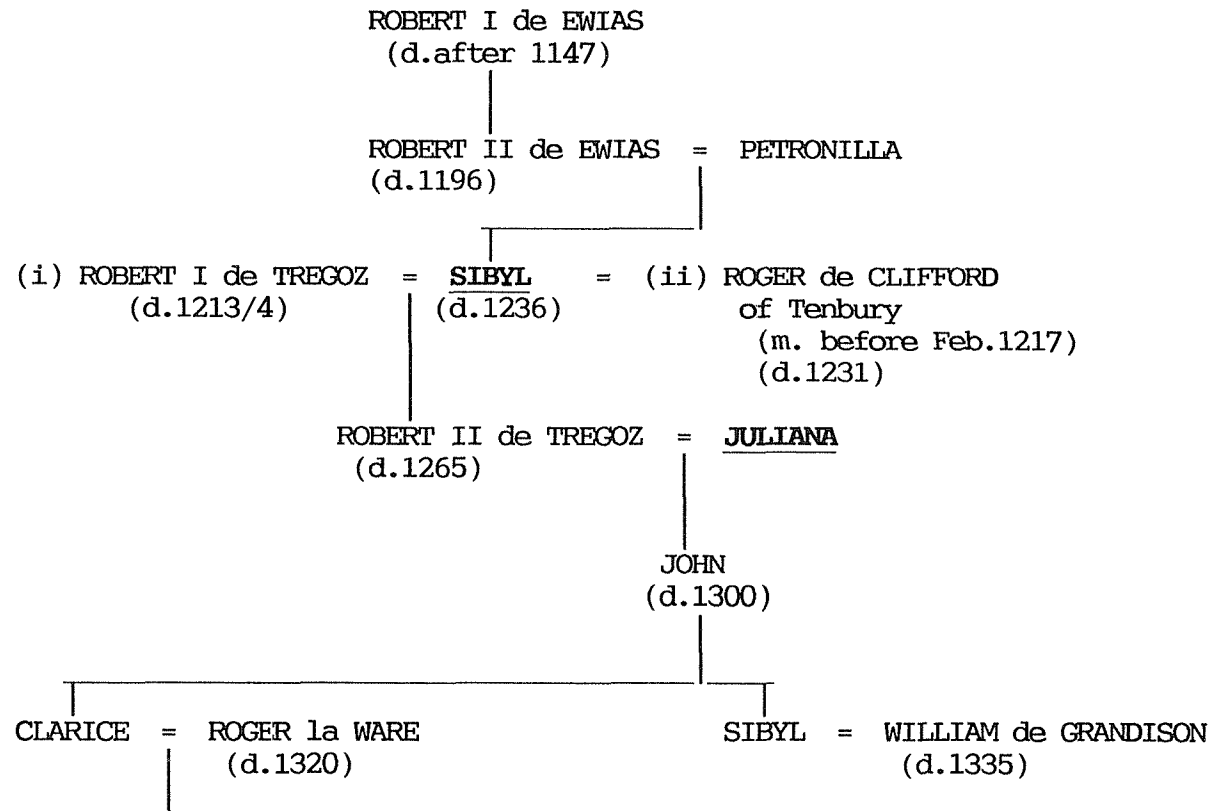
Similarly, in spite of his financial difficulties Roger gave rents in Lulham (C 12) and Bridge Sollers (C 27) to the nuns, thus demonstrating his family's continued support for Aconbury.

Walter III died in 1263 and as there was no male heir the honour passed to his daughter, Maud, and eventually the estates passed to his granddaughter, Margaret de Longspée <sup>19</sup>.

#### The Ewias family (see family tree p.111)

Sibyl de Ewias (d.1236) granted rents between 1216 and 1236 in Ewias Harold (Cs 29,30,42). Ewias was an extensive area to the west of Archenfield which had been divided into

The EWIAS Family



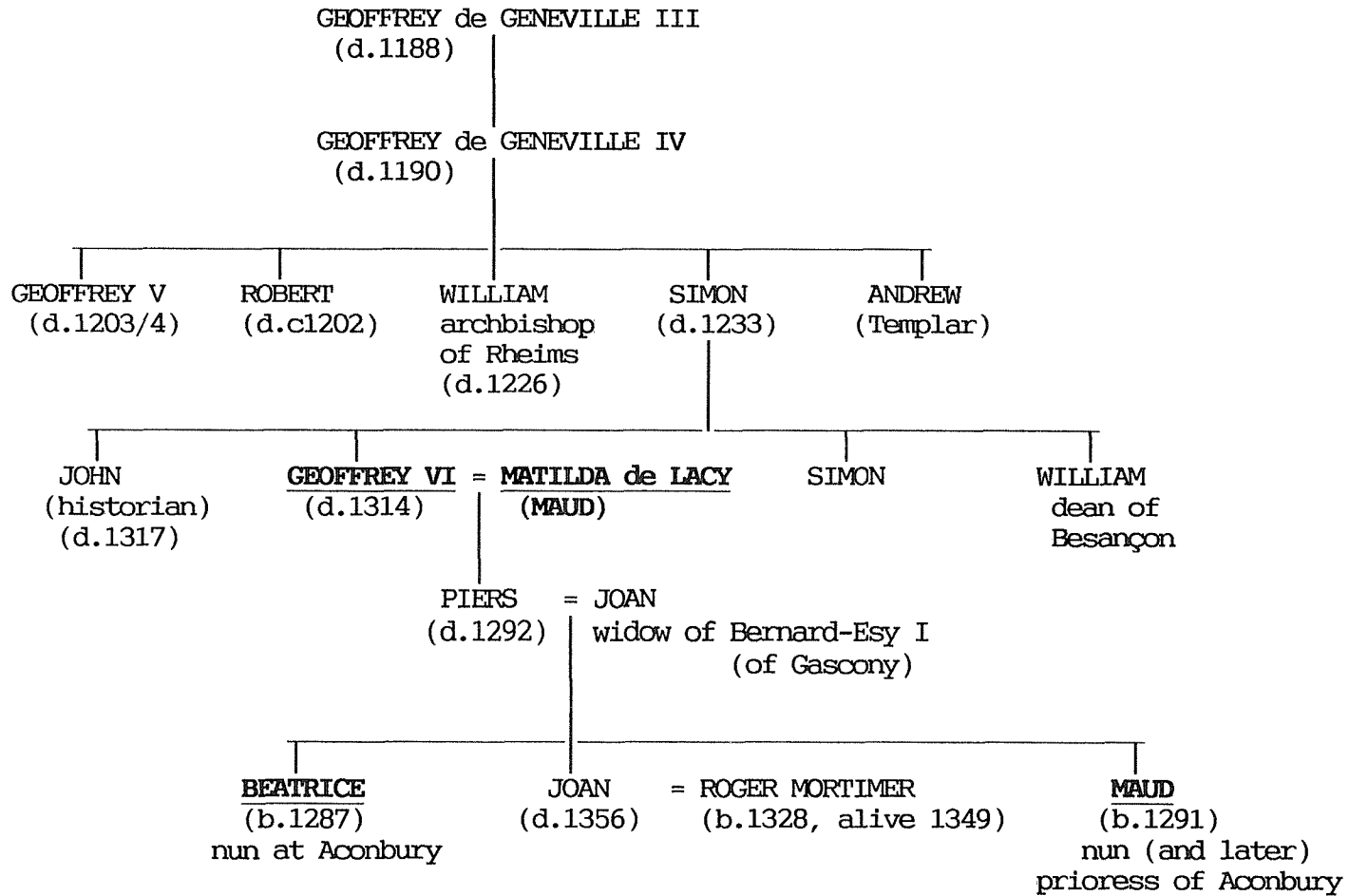
two lordships by the Normans, Ewias Lacy and Ewias Harold. Ewias Harold was always the smaller lordship, and early in the twelfth century several of its parishes were transferred to Ewias Lacy, although the administrative centre for Ewias Harold remained at the castle <sup>20</sup>. The castle and borough of Ewias Harold were the work of Robert I de Ewias (d.post 1147) who founded Dore Abbey in 1147. He established Ewias Harold as the centre of his estates in England and the March <sup>21</sup>. His son and heir was Robert II de Ewias (d.1198) whose heiress was Sibyl, the benefactor of Aconbury. She was married twice; first to Robert I de Tregoz (d.1213/14) and secondly to Roger de Clifford of Tenbury (d.1231), whose father Walter II de Clifford paid £1,000 for the hand and land of Sibyl in 1214 <sup>22</sup>. Sibyl's heir was Robert II de Tregoz (d.1265), her son by her first marriage. Robert was closely associated with Henry III, and in 1257 he was ordered to help the Earl of Hereford protect the Marches. Robert's widow, Juliana, gave rents in Foy between 1268 and 1285 (Cs 13,14) to the nuns and their son John (d.1300) split the estate because there was no male heir, and the lands were divided between his two daughters Clarice and Sibyl <sup>23</sup>.

The Geneville family (see family tree p.113)

Geoffrey de Geneville <sup>24</sup> and his wife Matilda (Maud) de Lacy gave the nuns of Aconbury half of four mills and seven burgages in Ludlow (C 2). This charter can be dated between 1250 and 1273 and the grant was therefore later than those of some of the other Marcher lords. The Geneville estates included the lordship of Ewias Lacy and part of Ludlow, and these were eventually amalgamated into the Mortimer inheritance.

Geoffrey de Geneville belonged to the Joinville family of Champagne, based at their castle on the River Marne. The earliest lord of Joinville was Geoffrey III (d.1188); he imbued his son Geoffrey IV (d.1190) with a crusading spirit and he went on the Third Crusade and died in the Holy Land. Geoffrey V (d.1203-4) carried on the family tradition - he

The GENEVILLE Family



and his brother Robert were both involved in the crusades. Geoffrey IV's heir was Simon who had four sons, the eldest being John (d.1317) who became the biographer of St.Louis; he completed his Histoire de Saint Louis in 1309.

John had a younger brother Geoffrey (d.1314) who went to England in the mid-thirteenth century and married Matilda de Lacy, the granddaughter of Walter II de Lacy (d.1241) between 1249 and 1252, and through this marriage Geoffrey became lord of a great estate in Ireland (Meath) and also inherited some of the Lacy estates in England and Wales <sup>25</sup>.

Throughout his life Geoffrey de Geneville supported the crown. In 1252 he and his wife were granted by the king all liberties and free customs in Meath held by Walter de Lacy II and Geoffrey became justiciar of Ireland; he supported the king in his battles with the Welsh. In 1290 he was sent on a mission to the pope to help regain the Holy Land.

In 1283 Geoffrey and Matilda gave their son Piers the castle at Ludlow and all their land in Ewias with fees in England and Wales, together with the manors of Stanton Lacy, Mansel Lacy and Wolferlow. Piers died in 1292 and his widow obtained the manors of which she and her husband had been jointly enfeoffed. Joan, the daughter of Piers, married sir Roger Mortimer of Wigmore and eventually became sole heir to sir Geoffrey de Geneville for the estates in England and Wales. Joan had two sisters, Beatrice born 1287 and Maud born 1291, who both became nuns at Aconbury (see below, p.156). In 1308 Geoffrey entered the House of the Friars Preachers at Trim, Ireland, where he died in 1314 <sup>26</sup>.

John de Vaucolour, described as parson of the church of St Laurence, Ludlow, granted land in a field called *Margireweld* to the nuns (C 62 1290x1305). John requested an obit with music to include a dirge and a mass and the prioress was to give the nuns half a mark as a gift. John de Vaucolour had fostered a musical tradition in the church (C 62 n.ii). It appears that many of the incumbents of St Laurence church spent little time in Ludlow, but John was commended by the king in 1295 for having resided in his

parish church for seven or more years <sup>27</sup>. John de Vaucolour was a member of the Geneville family and he took his name from one of the Geneville (Joinville) estates in Champagne <sup>28</sup>. He may have spent his early life in France because his charter was written in French.

### The Lestrange family

Between 1216 and 1240 John Lestrange <sup>29</sup> granted the nuns the hospital of Nesscliffe, which was of considerable benefit to them (Cs 8,9,10).

Johannes Extraneus 'tertius' was John Lestrange (d.1269), third in descent from Roland le Strange. He owned estates in Shropshire and Norfolk, including Knockin (Salop) and Hunstanton (Norfolk). He served under King John in Poitou in 1214, and between 1235 and 1236 there are constant references in the Book of Fees and Feudal Aids <sup>30</sup> to property owned by various members of the Lestrange family in all parts of the country. From 1233-1240 he was appointed by Henry III as constable of castles in the Marches (Montgomery, Shrewsbury, Bridgenorth and Chester). He was made sheriff for Shropshire after the reform of the financial administration of the shires in 1236 and he held office for twelve years <sup>31</sup>. He defended the Welsh Border as a Marcher lord and during the rebellion of Simon de Montfort he was loyal to the crown. The Lestranges were one of the smaller families that helped to shape the March, and the gift of Nesscliffe was important to Aconbury because of the generosity of the grant, which included valuable livestock and would have produced lucrative marketable goods, even though the lands were some distance from the nunnery.

It is clear that the Marcher lord families were networked by marriage and this could have benefited Aconbury by encouraging various branches to donate to the convent.

### The Knightly Families

Within the aristocratic hierarchy of the March there were the great Marcher lords, the sub-lords and the knightly families and there appeared to be no rigid division between these groups. The knightly families were well represented amongst the donors to Aconbury.

By the mid-twelfth century, the conferral of knighthood was a social as well as a military distinction, and there was an increase in the social standing of the wealthier landowners. At the same time, because of inflation and increase in taxation, many so called knightly families were experiencing financial difficulties in maintaining the standards that were requisite for knightly status. They were forced to sell off land and many of the families disappeared. Many had assets pledged to Jews and the buyer paid the debt and took possession of the land <sup>32</sup>.

Sources of information about these knightly families are widely dispersed. The names of donors and witness lists of the Aconbury charters often give clues although the term 'miles' rarely occurs and it is difficult to establish whether either the donors or witnesses had knightly status. County records show that the wealthiest of the knights, who held valuable property, were officials engaged in county business. Several knightly families, ranging from the very wealthy, some of whom held minor sub-lordships, to those only a little above a free peasant, made grants to the nuns.

In 1283 John de **Turberville** ('miles') made a generous donation of rents in Straddle and Winston (C 28). The Turberville family held the large sub-lordship of Coety, under the lord of Glamorgan (Clare) <sup>33</sup>. Very little is known about sir John, but he may have been kin to Henry de Turberville (d.1240) who had supported both Kings John and Henry III; he spent a great deal of his life in Gascony. He married Hawise, who survived him, but his daughter Edelina was supposedly illegitimate, and the estates of her father passed out of the Turberville family <sup>34</sup>.



Between 1216 and 1241 William **Gamage** gave the nuns land outside Kempley wood and 9s. rent for his mill, Kedeford, on the river Leadon in the parish of Dymock (C 24). William was the son of Godfrey Gamage, a Norman from Gamaches-en-Vexin between Les Andelys and Gisors. In 1251, Godfrey gave the manor of Mansell Gamage to his son William for the service of two knights. Also, William's brother Matthew received land in Normandy. William Gamage married Elizabeth, the daughter and co-heiress with her sister Isabel of the estates of Henry de Minors. Their son, Godfrey died 1253 without male issue and his widow Alda remarried and her two daughters Euphemia and Elizabeth, the joint heirs, were given in care to Margaret de Lacy, but Henry, lord of Pembridge, paid 100 marks and obtained custody. Euphemia married William Pembridge and Elizabeth, Henry Pembridge. Henry was prepared to buy two wealthy brides for his sons <sup>35</sup>.

Godfrey held a sub-lordship from Hugh de Lacy, and his son William was therefore a 'vassal' of the Lacy family; he may have decided to grant land and the rent of a mill to the nuns because Aconbury was founded by Margaret de Lacy.

In 1263 Hugh **le Poer** donated rents in Barewe in the parish of Orleton (C 35). The family originated in Brittany; Roger le Poer (d.1186) took part in the invasion of Ulster (1177) and during the reign of Henry II (1154-1189) William Poer held lands in Hereford and Gloucester. In 1230 Hugh le Poer answered for two and a half knights fees, that is, one quarter of the barony of Tarrington which he had acquired by his marriage (possibly by October 1217) to Margaret, the daughter of Walter II de Cormeilles and widow of Walter de Stokes (d.1216). Margaret was joint heiress with her four sisters to the barony of Tarrington <sup>36</sup>.

Henry de **Pembridge**, son of Ralph de Pembridge, gave the nuns an annual income from milling rights in Dymock (C 25) and a rent in Broxwood (C 26). An earlier Ralph had held Pembridge as a sub-tenant of the Braose family before 1096;

his son Payn was in possession of Pembridge (1160-70) when his father became a monk. Payn's son, Henry de Pembridge (d.1210), married the sister of Walter de Cormeilles of Tarrington (d.1203) and his heirs were four daughters. Henry then paid £5 for custody of Walter's barony until his daughters and heiresses came of age. In 1205 Henry obtained Newland for half a knights fee and began to build a castle at Pembridge in the manor of Garway <sup>37</sup>. His heir was Ralph de Pembridge whose son was sir Henry de Pembridge (Cs 25,26), donor to the nuns, who is listed (24 November 1295) as one of Edward I's knights <sup>38</sup>.

Intermarriage between the Le Poers, the Gamages and the Pembridges could have been one of the reasons for the donation of gifts to Aconbury (see below p.127).

Between 1216 and 1244, Hugh II de **Kilpeck** (d.1244) granted and quitclaimed to Margaret de Lacy and the prioress and convent of Aconbury the right of forestry in the royal forests near Aconbury (C 34). Kilpeck was held as the centre of a small barony by William fitzNorman (given to him by William fitzOsbern), and valued in 1086 at £4. William fitzNorman obtained revenues from his office of forester within the royal forests of Hereford and Gloucester. William's son, Hugh I fitzNorman (d.1183) succeeded his father between 1115 and 1119, and was then known as Hugh Forester. He took over the responsibilities of the forest, but in 1150 he became known as Hugh de Kilpeck. Hugh's son, Henry, died in 1183 and his heir was John (d.1204) who described himself as a knight and continued with the administration of the forests. John's son and heir, Hugh II (d.1244), Aconbury's benefactor, continued with this responsibility, but during his term of office there was a reduction in the forester's scope of administration, suggesting that Hugh II may have been less than competent <sup>39</sup>. The Kilpecks were a good example of how the daily enforcement of the law of the forest was usually in the hands of

entrenched hereditary foresters <sup>40</sup>.

Hugh II died without male issue; his heirs were two daughters, Isabel and Joan. Isabel (d.1284) married William Walerand and gave Kilpeck to Robert Walerand (d.1273) in exchange for other lands. Robert granted the manor to Alan I de Plugenet (d.1298), his nephew and heir, who passed the land on to Alan II (d.sp.1325) <sup>41</sup>. Alan I de Plugenet is twice described in the cartulary as 'lord of Kilpeck' (Cs 89 & 91 dated 24 August 1275).

John Winston, knight, granted an acre of land in Winston, on the south-western outskirts of Hereford (OS Ref: c.502388) <sup>42</sup> between 1216 and 1237 requesting prayers for himself and his wife Sybil (C 68). One of the witnesses was William, chaplain to the Hospitallers, which would suggest that the priory was still under the authority of the Order of St John of Jerusalem, or he may have been acting as a friend to Aconbury.

Warin, son of John de Grendon granted a meadow in Kivernoll, with right of access, to the nuns (Cs 87,88). It is difficult to discover much about Warin, but a place called Grendon Warren (at Grendon Court OS Ref: 600548) may have been named after a Warin de Grendon who was alive in 1204. There is mention of another Warin de Grendene in 1276/82 <sup>43</sup>, and throughout the charters Warin de Grendon (with alternative spellings of Gredaine, Grendene, Grenden) appears frequently in the witness lists. The early charters (Cs 16, 27,29,87,88,89) probably refer to the Warin de Grendon who was sheriff of Herefordshire in 1219 and 1220 <sup>44</sup>. He also appeared in the Book of Fees <sup>45</sup> where he was described as a collector of the carucage of 1220 for Hereford. The remaining charters, where Warin appears in the witness list (Cs 6,11,14,15,28,35,53,71,72,90,91,92,96), are mainly dated to the last half of the thirteenth century and in one (C 15) Warin is described as 'steward' to Katherine de Lacy.

This suggests another knightly family in service to the Lacys, but the family was probably ascending the social scale because there was a sir Ralph Grendon (d.1331) of Warwickshire and Staffordshire who supported Edward I in the Scottish war <sup>46</sup> and presumably the successors of 'Warin de Grendon' were able to achieve knighthood. It seems that the Warin who granted the meadow to the nuns was a flourishing landowner, buying up land and then granting it to the community for the salvation of his soul.

Geoffrey de Longchamp, together with his wife Isabel (Minors), granted the nuns land (C 16 dated 1216x1241) and rent from property in Kempley (C 18 dated 1217x1237), and Isabel separately granted, with the assent of her husband, two parts of a mill at Westbury (C 19); he later confirmed this grant (C 20). Geoffrey de Longchamp was a scion of the Longchamp family. Henry de Longchamp (d.1211), who was sheriff of Herefordshire in 1219, was responsible for the administration of the barony of Kingston. His brother was William de Longchamp (d.1197) who moved up the social scale and became Bishop of Ely <sup>47</sup>. Geoffrey de Longchamp increased his estates through marriage. His wife Isabel inherited, with her two sisters, Elizabeth and Basile, the estates of her father Henry de Minors (d.1217). Westbury-on-Severn was a large rural parish six miles south-west of Gloucester and Henry II had granted this manor to Roger de Minors <sup>48</sup>, and the lands, which eventually passed to Henry, were split up through lack of a male heir.

Geoffrey (C 18) invoked prayers for one Petronilla de Ewias (d.1262). She may have been the wife of a nephew of the bishop of Ely, although it is difficult to trace her connection with the Ewias family as she was married three times: first to William de Longchamp (d.1205), the nephew of the bishop of Ely; second to Henry de la Mare (d.1211); and her third husband was Oliver de Vaux (d.1238-41) <sup>49</sup>. Perhaps Geoffrey had a high regard for her, or the Longchamps served

the Ewias family in a way that the charter evidence fails to show, and this could have been prayers for a patron.

Richard, son of Robert le Riche of Gloucester, granted the nuns land in Kempsey, probably between 1216 and 1241, which he held from Geoffrey de Longchamp by right of inheritance, and also he granted land that he and his heirs held from William de Gamage in Dymock (C 17). This may have seemed a generous grant, but in exchange the community quitclaimed to Richard 7s. worth of rents. It is difficult to find any specific details of Richard, but, as he had inherited land, he could possibly be a predecessor of sir Richard Riche, Chancellor of the Court of Augmentations, who was petitioned by the dean and chapter of Hereford Cathedral to pay pensions to both Aconbury and Clifford priories at the Dissolution <sup>50</sup> and who was also involved in the downfall of sir Thomas More.

Henry Monte, son of Robert Monte, granted the nuns a meadow in Glowesmore, near Dewsall (C 95 dated 1257x1263) which Henry's father Robert had bought from Rocelin Tyrel (C 94). Dewsall was part of the composite manor of Westwood (Westuode) <sup>51</sup> which was, in 1086, in the hands of four different lords, one of them being Ralph de Tosny; the 'Herefordshire Domesday' (c.1160-1170) identifies his part as Dewsall <sup>52</sup>, which included a wide area around Aconbury. Henry Monte was probably on the borderline between a knightly family and a prosperous landholding freeman as his charter (C 95) was witnessed, amongst others, by Henry, the Abbot of Dore (1257-1263), a respected ecclesiastic, and the vicar of Dewchurch. The Tyrel family were probably sub-lords as Henry's father Robert was required to attend Rocelin Tyrel's court (C 94). Henry's son Richard confirmed this grant (C 96 dated 7 May 1287).

William de Bathonia granted 30 acres of land in Homme Wood near Merbache (303454) (C 33 dated 1216x1241) to the

nuns. This land had been given to him for services by Margaret de Lacy, and her husband Walter de Lacy confirmed this grant (C 32 1216x1231). William was described as a clerk in the charter and he was probably a forebear of members of the Bathonia family who appear in Feudal Aids <sup>53</sup>. William's charter was witnessed by some eminent people, including sir Walter de Lacy, sir Roger le Poer and sir William de Lacy, so he could possibly have been a man of some standing.

#### **Other Donors of Rural Properties**

There were several donors who can probably be described as landholding freemen, one of whom was a parson. They all owned small pieces of land in the countryside round the nunnery which they granted to the nuns.

William **Bade**, son of William Bade of Hinton in Straddle (OS Ref: 341387), granted the nuns 2s.6d. worth of annual rents in Over Hinton <sup>54</sup>. William was probably a fairly eminent free landholder, because his charter was witnessed by Richard, son of Gilbert de Chandos, a member of the Chandos family who held land in Snodhill (OS Ref: 320403) <sup>55</sup>. The nuns were also granted 16d. worth of annual rents by Laurence de **Clehunger**, who had bought these rents from William 'for the comfort of the nuns of Aconbury' (C 49) showing that although Laurence granted the money 'for the health of his soul', he also cared about the needs of the community. Laurence and William probably belonged to the same social class.

Isabel **Yagon** granted 22d. worth of rents (C 50). There is no mention of where these rents were located, but the witnesses were similar to those in the other charters for Hinton, and as Charter 50 appears in the middle of grants in Hinton, probably Isabel, a single woman or widow, was granting rents in the vill at about the same time as William Bade, who appeared amongst her list of witnesses.

John Lur, son of David Lur of Hinton granted the nuns a rent that was paid by Richard Clericus of St Peter's in Straddle (C 51) for one messuage in Hinton. The witness list included two chaplains, John, chaplain of Wygeo, and Henry a chaplain, and also two members of the Chandos family, perhaps indicating that John Lur was an eminent free landholder in the area. William Bade was also among the witnesses.

Elias de Sutton granted the nuns rents worth two marks in Hayton (C 63 dated 1301) which he had bought from Lady Maud d'Evreux (see C 63 n.ii) who was presumably a widow as there is no mention of her husband, William, who died in 1265. The nuns later obtained a licence for the alienation in mortmain by Elias de Sutton (12 February 1301) <sup>56</sup>.

Thomas de Beiscyn quitclaimed to Katherine de Geneville and the convent <sup>57</sup> these same two rents (C 64 1288x1326) and Elias de Sutton was witness to this charter. There is no mention of Thomas de Beiscyn in the Book of Fees, but Adam de Beisin <sup>58</sup> appears - he was a 'sergeant' in Shropshire. The commonest meaning of a 'sergeant' was a soldier below a knight, so the Beiscyn family may have ranked in the hierarchy as a small landholding family.

Hugh Kington granted land that he rented in a field in Twyford (C 60). There are no details of this grant and Hugh, in common with the witnesses, was probably a free landholder.

Roger the Welshman of Dewchurch granted five meadows in his parish (C 90(b) 1274), and his son Roger granted another meadow (four acres) in Kilpeck, '*brodemedowe*' (C 92 7 August 1267). William the Welshman, son of John the Welshman, of Bromiton, granted one field, '*monemedede*', in Kilpeck to the nuns who paid him 13d. (C 90(a) c1274).

### Other Donors of Urban Properties

As well as being granted various rents of urban properties by the Marcher lords (Cs 2,21,22,23), the nuns were also granted properties in other towns by donors of lower social status.

The priory was granted various properties in Hereford; the donors were a motley collection of people of different social standing and occupations. Unfortunately, due to the fact that they often came from lower social backgrounds, there is a singular lack of information about them.

Robert de **Furches** (C 69) gave his daughter Felicia the rents of one burgage and one messuage in Castle Street, Hereford, when she married Geoffrey de **Morton**. Geoffrey and Felicia then granted these two properties together with three other messuages to the nuns (C 37), who had to pay 12d. to the king's bailiffs in Hereford and also 8d. to William de Bodenham. The present Bodenham Moor (OS Ref: 544505) was made up of Bodenham Furches and Bodenham Roger. Bodenham Roger was held by Roger de Bodenham in 1243. The family of Furches were widespread in Herefordshire between 1086 and 1308. Herbert de Furches held part of Bodenham in 1086, and in 1249 his descendant William de Furches held Bodenham Furches <sup>59</sup>. *Magister* Hugh de Furches granted the nuns property in Winston (C 36 dated 1237x1263). This charter was witnessed by a Robert Furches who may have been the donor of the property in Castle Street. When Felicia was widowed she confirmed this grant (C 70 dated 1216x1223).

In 1210-12 an area to the north of Hereford, including Lyde Arundel, Pipe and Lyde and Moreton-on-Lugg (c.510450), was held by Godfrey de Morton <sup>60</sup>, who could possibly have been Felicia's husband. The Mortons were most likely a settler family; these families were often used by the Marcher lords to keep the peace between the Welsh natives and the 'English colonisers', as was Walter Morton, a descendant of Godfrey, who organised resistance to the Welsh rebels in the lordship of Kidwelly in the early fifteenth century <sup>61</sup>.



The family of Furches can be classified as a prominent landholding family which gained knightly status later: sir Thomas Furchs, knight, (1513) was a descendant <sup>62</sup>.

A chaplain, William Valet, son of William Valet of Hereford, granted the nuns a tenement in Castle Street (C 82 dated 1290). It appears that the Valet family had lived in Castle Street for some years as the charter states that William Valet's father and his forbears had been accustomed to pay 4s.6d. for the tenement and the rents had been paid twice yearly.

Richard son of Emeline, a 'citizen of Hereford', and his wife Alice granted the nuns the rents from three shops in Hereford - two in the town and one situated above the river bank outside the Watergate (C 38 1216x1223). The witnesses included eminent members of the community: Thomas, dean of Hereford; master William de Ria, the archdeacon; master Albinus, the chancellor; and the sheriff of Hereford, Thomas de Anes'. Richard also bought a meadow from Gilbert, son of Ralph of Ashperton (C 39 1216x1237) which he later granted to the nuns (C 40 1216x1237) and he appeared as a witness (C 68 1216x1237).

William Wyther bought land in Butchers' Market, Hereford, from Henry son of Ralph (C 74 1237x1255). He paid Henry 9 marks, of which he discharged a debt of 4½ marks direct to the Jewish community. This deal was quitclaimed by Henry's widow Dionisia (C 75 1237x1255). This charter (C 74) indicates that the Jewish element in Hereford was still engaged in lending money, although they had lost their main borrowers among the Marcher lords. Finally William Wyther granted rents in Butchers' Market and also in Wyebridge Street (C 78 dated 1255) to the nuns. William was probably a prominent trader who was able to buy out other landowners who were in debt.

**Stephen son of Theobald** granted the nuns one mark that he was receiving annually from his son John from property in New Street, Hereford (C 71). John Theobald confirmed this transaction (C 72). This property was split and John rented half and paid the rents to the nuns. The other half was retained by John Theobald's sisters, Christine and Isabel (C 73). Stephen son of Theobald was not described as a citizen but this could have been an error; he may have been a free landowner on his way up the social ladder.

**Hugh Clericus** granted land in Hereford, facing the Cathedral (C 80). There is no mention of the extent or value of this plot of land, only a description of where it was sited and 'the nuns were required to render annually 12d. to the lord of the said land'. Hugh had previously granted this land to his daughter Christine (C 79), and if she should die without issue the land would revert to her sister Edith. Hugh Clericus probably belonged to a family with a reputation for learning, which did not necessarily belong in any way to the Church (see above, p.7). In both charters the witnesses appear to be ordinary people and there is no mention of any ecclesiastical or establishment figures; it would appear that Hugh Clericus was not connected with the Church even though he held land opposite the cathedral.

**Richard Rocolf** also granted land in Hereford to the nuns (C 81). There is a description and some measurements, but no street name or value. Richard was probably a burgess and the witnesses to his charter seem to be ordinary townsfolk.

**Roger Romanus**, a clerk of Hereford, granted the nuns 8 loads of wheat and 1 load of oats annually (C 59). Roger had been receiving this as a rent from Nicholas Crumpe of Twyford. Roger had previously bought land in Twyford from Agnes Belot (C 57) which he had then sold on to Nicholas Crumpe (C 58 1255x1274). Roger did not require the nuns to

pay money to him; they were merely asked to offer prayers of penance in their church at Aconbury.

Roger **Baldcath** granted part of one burgage in Monmouth (C 65) to his daughter Dionisia Baldcath for her benefit. There are no Marcher lords or members of knightly families as witnesses but Roger Baldcath was probably a prosperous burgage owner who was prepared to grant one of his burgages to his daughter. However, Henry de Lancaster (1281-1345), who was described as 'Lord of Monmouth' and inherited the castle and lordship of Monmouth in 1297, confirmed possession of this messuage by the nuns (C 66). Apparently Dionisia Baldcath, in league with Walter and John Wade, had tried to repossess this property from the nuns.

### **Intermarriage**

There was a network of intermarriage amongst the Marcher lords and the wealthier knightly families. Some of the wives were heiresses to large estates and the advantages of marrying either a rich widow or an unmarried heiress were considerable, as the original estates could then be consolidated and enlarged.

There was a strong link between the Lacy and the Braose families. William de Braose II one of the most powerful of the Marcher lords acquired the lordships of Brecon and Abergavenny through his wife Bertha, the second daughter of Miles of Gloucester. Eventually his granddaughter, Margaret de Braose, married Walter de Lacy II, although it must also be said that she helped to increase Walter's already considerable debts through litigation in connection with the foundation of Aconbury. Roger Mortimer who died in 1282 married Maud de Braose, one of the four heiresses of William de Braose V who brought with her the lordship of Radnor; this was then absorbed into the Mortimer inheritance, although there were no donations to Aconbury, and contributed to the break up of the Braose estates <sup>63</sup>.

The Lacy family were also connected to the Genevilles through Geoffrey de Geneville's (d.1314) marriage to Matilda de Lacy, who was joint heir with her sister Margaret to Lacy lands. Margaret married John de Verdun and Ludlow was split between the two sisters <sup>64</sup>.

#### **Failure of the Male Line**

Although estates were enlarged by intermarriage, they were reduced in size when there was a serious failure of the male line in many of these families. Often sons died in wars, particularly in the March where sporadic conflicts were ever present. The extinction of a family line sometimes had extreme results. It could affect the distribution of territorial power and political influence; it might also concern the local people because there could be a new overlord; and, most important, a local monastery such as Aconbury lost its rich and powerful patrons, although female heiresses sometimes contributed towards the convent.

Both the heirs of Walter de Lacy II who died in 1241, Gilbert his son and Walter III his grandson, died before him. His daughters, Katherine and Egidia, as far as is known, were unmarried and the Lacy estates were divided between two granddaughters, Matilda, who married Peter Geneva and then Geoffrey de Geneville, and Margaret who married John de Verdun <sup>65</sup>.

William de Braose V was executed by Llewellyn in 1230 and his estates were split up between four daughters: Maud, who married Roger de Mortimer of Wigmore and the lordship of Radnor was thus absorbed into the Mortimer lands, Isabel married Llewellyn's son David and took Builth with her, Eleanor married Humphrey de Bohn and Brecon and Haverford were lost to the Braose family, and finally Eve married William de Canelou and took with her the lordship of Abergavenny <sup>66</sup>.

Maud, the daughter and heiress of Walter de Clifford III and Margaret de Braose, married Willlliam Longspée (d.1257), and their daughter Margaret eventually inherited a

large part of the Clifford estates <sup>67</sup>.

Piers de Geneville, who died in 1292 before his father, the son of Geoffrey de Geneville and Matilda (de Lacy), had only female heirs. Beatrice born in 1287 was a nun at Aconbury who eventually became prioress, and her sister Maud, who was born in 1291, also entered the nunnery. The eldest sister Joan became the sole heir and when she married Roger Mortimer who died in 1330, the Geneville estates in Ireland and the March were absorbed by the Mortimers <sup>68</sup>.

The estates of some of the lesser March lords, probably knightly families, also suffered from the lack of a male heir. When the line failed and the estates were split between daughters this did not always spell trouble for Aconbury. Some of these female heiresses gave land and property to the nuns. For example, Isabel de Longchamp who was married to Geoffrey de Longchamp and was the daughter of Henry Minors, whose estates were split between three daughters, gave land in Kempley (C 16) and also a mill at Westbury (C 19).

The Cormeilles family also failed to produce a male heir. The estates of Walter Cormeilles II, who died 1203/4, were split up between his four daughters, Margaret, Alice, Sibyl and Albreda <sup>69</sup>. Sibyl's daughter, who became Lady Maud d'Evreux, confirmed in her own right a grant to Aconbury.

### **Conclusion**

Of nine grants of property by the Marcher lords, five were given before 1250, only three were granted after that date, and Katherine de Lacy spread her grants over the entire century. John de Lacy, a minor scion of the main line, and Geoffrey de Geneville, who married into the Lacy family, donated property during the latter half of the thirteenth century.

There were ten knightly families who granted land to Aconbury; five before 1250 and five at the latter end of the thirteenth century. William Gamage was linked with the

Longchamps because his wife Elizabeth, together with her two sisters Isabel and Basile, were co-heiresses to the Minors estates.

Twenty-one peasant landowners granted both urban and rural property to Aconbury. Unfortunately it has not been possible to date the charters of six of these, but of the remaining donors six gave grants before the middle of the thirteenth century and nine at the end (see below, Appendices A & B, pp.269-276).

The pattern of these grants shows that donations from the Marcher lords began to decrease by the end of the thirteenth century, due to the break up of the great estates and also debts that were incurred. The Lacy estates began to break up about 1241 with the death of Walter II; the Clifford lordship was dispersed about 1263; the Braose family lands were split up about 1230 and the Geneville line died out at the end of the thirteenth century. The great lords were no longer in a position to contribute. But once the nunnery had transferred to Augustinian rule knightly families and smaller landowners were more attracted to supporting the house. They were more comfortable with the smaller Augustinian houses; they could be honoured as benefactors, whereas they would have been lost amongst the donors to the hospital of St John of Jerusalem; they could request obits or perhaps be buried in the priory grounds, so that their souls would receive recognition.

The Statute of Mortmain (1279) was probably one of the main causes for the decrease in donations to the convent at the end of the thirteenth century. The alienation of land required a licence which could involve the donor in protracted litigation; as this was expensive and complicated, it could deter potential grantors. One free landowner, Elias de Sutton, donated rents and the nuns were granted a licence (C 63 1301). Mortmain may not have been enforced so strictly in the March, but nevertheless it must

have impinged on the flow of donations.

It is difficult to assess accurately the value of the grants to the nuns, because often in the charters there are only vague references to 'land' or 'rents'. On the other hand sometimes there is a detailed list of the tenants with the rents that were paid and handed over to the nuns (C 28), or with a detailed description of the land (Cs 11,21). Although there were more donors from the knightly families than from the nobles, the Marcher lords in most cases gave more extensive and valuable grants, such as the hospital at Nesscliffe granted by John Lestrange. In the lower social classes the urban families granted mainly rents from properties including burgages and shops, and the rural donors granted portions of land that could have included buildings.

Why did any of the donors wish to support Aconbury? Even though nuns could not give direct intercession - as women they were unable to celebrate the eucharist and always required a priest - their prayers were earnestly sought after by the discerning who wanted to shorten their time in purgatory and ensure a smoother passage after death. Often donors desired to be buried in a monastery or they might want to live as lay people in a convent in their old age or even be received as monks and nuns late in life.

Aconbury was fortunate in the generosity of its donors. However, it is difficult to assess whether the nuns also received any practical support, such as protection.

By the 1270s the March was the scene of sporadic fighting. The Marcher barons, sometimes in conflict with the king, were pursuing plans to augment their lands and increase their power. The borders were continually shifting and sometimes the nuns in their small and vulnerable priory must have felt afraid, as there were continual sporadic attacks from the Welsh raiders all along the borders. There is no mention in the cartulary of military attacks but in the Calendar of Patent Rolls on 7 September 1405 there was a 'licence for the prioress and convent of Aconbury, in consideration of the poverty to which they have come on

account of the rebellions of the Welsh, who have burned and destroyed their houses and buildings, to acquire in mortmain, lands, rents and reversions to the value of £10 yearly' <sup>70</sup>.

There is also an entry in Bishop Mascall's Register <sup>71</sup> which helped the nunnery to gain exemption from the king's taxes.

A year later there was another entry in the Register, dated 4 November 1406, in which the bishop instructed his officials to administer 'for the good of the house, the sequestrated property of Aconbury priory which is in danger of destruction from the dilapidation of the buildings'. It appears that some of their burgages and tenements had been damaged by pillaging and burning. There seems little evidence to indicate that Aconbury received much protection from their wealthier patrons, although some of the bishops appeared concerned. Bishop Roland Lee cared enough to assist the nuns when he fearlessly wrote to Cromwell at the time of the Dissolution, pleading that Aconbury should be spared because the house was 'of honest disposition', and the gentlemen of Abergavenny, Ewias Lacy, Talgarth and Brecon and other parts of Wales had relied on the nuns to educate their women and children <sup>72</sup>.

Doubtless the families of the poorer donors would also have relied on the nuns for their religious teaching and support. It was the 'peasants' who would have suffered most when the priory was finally dissolved.

Aconbury Priory was clearly the centre of a local community, confined to Herefordshire and the borders of Gloucester and Shropshire. Apart from the relationships created by intermarriage a few charters indicate other links.

William Gamage (C 24) gave land and the rent from a mill near Kempley. This charter was witnessed by Walter and Gilbert de Lacy, Geoffrey Longchamp, Richard Minors and William Le Poer, all well known March families. There was a link with the Lacy family as William Gamage's father had held a sub-lordship from Hugh de Lacy. Richard Riche (C 17)



granted the nuns land in Dymock that he 'inherited' from William Gamage and also land in Kempley that he had 'inherited' from Geoffrey Longchamp. Thus there was a property owning link between the Gamage, the Riche and the Longchamp families.

Henry Monte (C 95) gave the nuns a meadow called Glowesmore, near Dewsall, and this grant was confirmed by Henry's son Richard (C 96) who agreed to guarantee the nuns against any court decisions, and the lord of Kilpeck could distraint on Richard if the nuns incurred any loss. This would indicate a connection between the Monte family and the Kilpecks.

William Bathonia (C 33), a clerk, granted the nuns all his land in Homme near Merbache; he had been given this land by Margaret de Lacy and was probably a retainer of the Lacy family who was being rewarded for his faithful service.

There were certainly links between those in the lower social ranks. In the witness lists there are constantly recurring names of peasant landowners. In the deeds of the later half of the thirteenth century, there are fewer establishment figures and friends were brought in to witness each other's charters; they seem to have been united in their support of a small nunnery some four miles south of Hereford. A curious choice surely, when there would have been so many religious establishments in Hereford where they could have granted property or land, and which might have been a better investment. The priory was evidently held in high regard.

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## 6. THE PRIORESSES AND THE COMMUNITY

According to Eileen Power: 'it usually happened that the head of a nunnery was a woman of some social standing in her own right' <sup>1</sup>. Only recently has this claim been challenged, although only for the later Middle Ages. Marilyn Oliva has researched office-holding patterns in the eleven female monasteries of the diocese of Norwich. She used the 1377 poll tax returns and late-fifteenth and early-sixteenth century episcopal visitations and various wills. She examined the careers of 542 individual nuns who lived in these convents from 1350 to 1450 <sup>2</sup>. They were small and fairly poor nunneries similar to Aconbury. Oliva claims that many of the prioresses and office holders did not come from aristocratic families but probably belonged to the merchant/landowning class, and their promotion to prioress was by merit rather than by birth. Her findings 'suggest that the assumption made by previous historians about the elevated status of female monastic office-holders is incorrect - at least for the eleven convents of late medieval Norfolk and Suffolk' <sup>3</sup>. Although she confined her research to nunneries in Norfolk, this pattern can most likely be seen in other parts of England.

### Problems of Dating

It has been possible to discover fourteen named prioresses from the foundation of Aconbury until the Dissolution (see Table 9), although there are considerable gaps between their periods of office. The names of only four of these prioresses who were confirmed in office by a bishop appear in the bishops' registers (Catherine de Geneville, Joan Draper, Cecilia Mason and Isabel Gardener). Of these four only one came from the aristocracy (Catherine de Geneville) and she had a special relationship with Richard

Table 9. PRIORESSES OF ACONBURY

Date	Name	Charter	Other Sources	Class	Remarks
1216x 1231	PETRONILLA LESTRANGE	12 1216x1231		noble	named prioress; Roger Clifford (d.1231) granted land in Lulham
1216x 1237	CONSTANTIA	ff82, 83, 84 unnumbered 1216x1237		noble?	chirograph; Constantia described as 'magistra' of the hospital of St John of Jerusalem; she rented property to William Amy in Hereford.
1216x 1240	MARGERIE	8 1216x1240		noble?	No other reference found. This could be Margaret de Lacy, founder of the nunnery.
1258	H-----		Cat.Anc.Deeds Vol.II, B 8696 (1258)	noble?	simply named as H-----
17 Dec. 1281	BEATRICE DE GAMAGES		Register Thomas Cantilupe p.292  Matthews: hundred of Wormelow upper division part I (1912) p.40	knightly family	admitted as prioress 17 December 1281; controversy over election (illegitimacy?)  Sheriff of Hereford demanded £136 for arrears of rent (Aconbury formerly paid rent of 6 marks annually)
11 Oct. 1288 - 1326	CATHERINE DE GENEVILLE		Register Richard Swinfield p.195	noble (da. Geoffrey de Geneville)	election confirmed 11 October 1288

Date	Name	Charter	Other Sources	Class	Remarks
	CATHERINE DE GENEVILLE (continued)		Cal.Heref.Cath. Muns. II p.641, no.478		receipt for two silver gilded cups left in pledge for 5 marks, 12 May 1300
		64 1288x1326			quitclaim by sir Thomas de Beycy for land in Heyford; finally granted by Elias de Sutton (mortmain C 63)
		66 1297x1314			fought and won action for repossession of property in Monmouth
		67 Feb.1314			exemption of tax on ale
		unnumbered f.175 7 Mar. 1310			rented property to William of Stoke Bliss and Hawyse his wife
			Register Richard Swinfield p.506 2 Jan.1316		grant of yearly pension (12d) to Catherine and convent by rector of Bridge Sollers until appropriation of church completed
			Cal.Heref.Cath. Muns. II, p.772		receipt by Catherine to John de Kemeseye, treasurer of Hereford, for 5 marks, left to her by Richard Swinfield, 28 April 1317
			Cal.Heref.Cath. Muns. II p.774, no.1046		receipt for silver cup from executor of Bishop Swinfield's will; her father (Geoffrey) had sent it to him from Ireland, 30 April 1317
					Catherine mentioned in various deeds (Woolhope) until 1326

Date	Name	Charter	Other Sources	Class	Remarks
1330- 1334?	MAUD DE GENEVILLE		Cat.Anc.Deeds II B 8702 (1330-1331) B 8697 (1333) B 8693 (1334)	noble; grandda. Geoffrey	named as prioress  sister to Beatrice, nun at Aconbury
1344- 1358	MAUD DE GRANDISON		Cat.Anc.Deeds II B 2618 (1 May 1344)  Bull in Woolhope 1885, p.302  Cat.Anc.Deeds I, B 159 (2 Sep.1350)  III, D 1220 (25 May 1351)	noble	sister? of sir Otto de Grandison; family held estates Ashperton etc. (Sanders, p.43)  release by William, son of David de Rokeville to Matilda (Maud) de Grandison of his right to a burgage in Monmouth  named as prioress (deeds dated 1346,1348, 1353 & 1358)  named as prioress (sale of meadow in Asperton)  receipt for 5 mantles from executors of Katherine de Montague, Countess of Salisbury, who willed them to Maud
1377- 1399	JOAN LEDBURY		Matthews part I, p.43  Cal.Heref.Cath. Muns. III p.1056, no.479 1 May 1379	merchant/ landholding	John Mauncell fined for twice brewing, at Joan Ledbury's court, 16 Nov.1377  vicars choral at Hereford Cathedral endowed with messuage and lands in Blakemaston, which formerly belonged to John Trillek, Bishop of Hereford; special licence for endowment obtained from the king



Date	Name	Charter	Other Sources	Class	Remarks
	JOAN LEDBURY (continued)		Register John Gilbert, p.119 23 April 1385  Matthews part I, p.43  Bull in Woolhope 1885, p.304		named as prioress at institution of John Hunt as chaplain at Mansel Lacy  at Joan Ledbury's court, 30 Dec.1387, sale of various plots of land at <i>Muryvale</i>  deed of 1399; prioress leased curtilage in the suburbs of Hereford (street called <i>Aboveyeyne</i> )
1415- 1446	ANNA BARRY	44 (15 Aug.1421)	Bull in Woolhope 1885, pp.302-304	noble	final concord negotiated for land at <i>Vowchurch</i>  named as prioress in deeds dated 1415, 1417,1421,1422,1425 (house leased in <i>Vyshams Row, Hereford</i> ), 1426, 1437 (house opposite <i>Goodknaves Inn, Hereford</i> ) & 1446
1452- 1465?	AGNES KING		Bull in Woolhope 1885, p.302	merchant/ landholding	named as prioress in deeds dated 1452 and 1465
14 Aug. 1473 - 1481?	JOAN DRAPER		Register John Stanbury, p.132  Bull in Woolhope 1885, pp.302-304	merchant/ landholding	confirmation of election; she was a nun at <i>Linebrook</i>  named as prioress in deed dated 1474; she leased a messuage in <i>Rangia Piscatore</i> for 80 years

Date	Name	Charter	Other Sources	Class	Remarks
20 Sep. 1481-	CECILIA MASON		Register Thomas Myllyng pp.71-2	merchant/ landholding	certificate to the bishop by his commissioners of confirmation of Cecilia as prioress in place of the late Joan Draper, 20 Sept.1481
17 Mar. 1489/90			Bull in Woolhope 1885, p.302		named as prioress in deed of 1481
			Register Thomas Myllyng, pp.124 & 198		Bishop ratified Isabel Gardener as prioress; vacancy due to resignation of Cecilia Mason (who was given a pension of 5 marks and nuns allowance of food and drink, 17 Mar.1489/90)
17 Mar. 1489/90	ISABEL GARDENER		Register Thomas Myllyng, p.198	merchant/ landholding	Bishop ratified election
			Bull in Woolhope 1885, p.304		named in two deeds dated 1506 & 1528 [leased a garden at Blakemaston (Blackmason)]
			Cal.Anc.Deeds III B 4112		deeds of properties dated 1530
			Cal.Anc.Deeds I B 530		release by Richard Etkyns to Isabel Gardener of tenement and garden in Blakemaston, 24 Mar.1495
					bond by rector of Bishopstone that he will not take action against the prioress in connection with a dispute over the vicarage at Bridge Sollers, 8 February 1504/5

Date	Name	Charter	Other Sources	Class	Remarks
	ISABEL GARDENER (continued)		Cat.Anc.Deeds II B 6637  Register Charles Bothe, pp.133-4  Cat.Anc.Deeds III D 640  Register Charles Bothe, pp.170-1  Cat.Anc.Deeds II B 8410 & 8708		named as prioress (1518-1519)  profession of Sister Joyce, nun of Aconbury; and also lady Cecilia. Prioress named as Lady Elizabeth (form of Isabel), 22 Apr.1522  release of actions by John Wentle, 24 June 1522  consecration of two nuns; Matilda ap Huy and Margery Tomisyne, 18 April 1525 (prioress again named as Elizabeth)  Isabel named as prioress 1535-36
1535- 1536	JOAN SKYDMORE		L&P F&D H.VIII ix (1535), p.396  L&P F&D H.VIII ix (1540), p.731	merchant/ landholding	John Vaughan asks for approval from Cromwell to instal Joan as prioress, 1535  Joan receives pension from crown, 1540 John Scudamore (sic) appears to be involved in making these financial arrangements

Swinfield, the bishop of Hereford, who may have wanted to confirm her election in person. The remaining three all held office in the late fifteenth century; they belonged to the merchant/landowning class and the bishops of the time may have become more meticulous with their registers.

Only five prioresses are named in the cartulary [which has an end date of 1301 (C 63)]: Petronilla Lestrange, Constantia, Margerie, Catherine de Geneville and Anna Barry. Petronilla Lestrange was named personally in Charter 12 when she was granted rents in Lulham for Aconbury. Constantia was described as the head of a hospital in the unnumbered charter dated 1216x1237 (ff.82,83,84 - p.215) which is a chirograph concerning the renting of property in Hereford. Margerie was named as prioress (C 8) when John Extraneus III made a very generous grant of Nesscliffe hospital and other benefits to the nunnery. Catherine de Geneville and Anna Barry fought and won legal actions: Catherine obtained the repossession of a property in Monmouth where the nuns brewed their ale (C 67), and she was also granted an exemption of the tax on ale (see above p.69); Anna Barry gained a final concord (C 44).

The names of those prioresses who do not appear in either the cartulary or the bishops' registers are to be found in other documents including various references in articles to be found in the Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club, Herefordshire, and certain Ancient Deeds held at the Public Record Office. The references in Woolhope only refer to the dates of particular deeds with the name of the prioress; there is no mention of original sources and no details of the properties, but the dates appear during the terms of office of particular prioresses and always refer to deeds of land.

During the twenty-one years that Aconbury was under the administration of the Hospitallers (1216-1237) there were only three named prioresses, Petronilla Lestrange, Constantia and Margerie. There is then a gap for some years until

there is a vague reference in Ancient Deeds to H---<sup>4</sup>. This lack of information could possibly have been due to the fact that Margaret de Lacy was considering a changeover to Augustinian rule once she realised the problems of attachment to the Hospitallers. On the other hand the gaps in the chronology of the terms of office of the prioresses is clearly due to lack of records.

#### The Role of the Prioress

The prioress was to her community of nuns 'like a loving mother'<sup>5</sup>. She was responsible for the spiritual welfare and guidance of her nuns. She would advise and guide the young nuns and perhaps suggest reading matter, and try to sort out any problems that would inevitably arise in an enclosed community, where people were in close contact all the time and small problems could become magnified out of all proportion. At Easebourne in Sussex, for example, there were various visitations by the bishop of the diocese when nuns were encouraged to speak their minds freely, and often petty gossiping could cause problems<sup>6</sup>. Unfortunately the Bishops' Registers for Hereford are not so well documented as those for Chichester and there are no examples of such 'freedom of speech' for the Aconbury nuns, although there was certainly some criticism of the priory in one particular visitation record<sup>7</sup> when Bishop Spofford restricted the number of nuns entering the convent (see below p.153).

The head of the house had considerable authority over her nuns and as in any hierarchical organisation she would have to try to be fair and avoid favouritism. Unfortunately there were examples of this occurring in other parts of the country. Bishop Alnwick visited Gracedieu in 1440/1<sup>8</sup> and there were complaints about their old prioress, and at Heynings the prioress was accused of treating her favourites well 'and those whom she holds not in favour she harshly punishes'<sup>9</sup>. There are no specific examples of this kind of treatment at Aconbury but that may only be because of the

lack of records. The use by the nuns of 'using private rooms' (see below p.154) may have indicated some degree of favouritism by the prioress, Anna Barry, who held office from 1415-1446, or a growing wish for privacy.

Probably one of the most arduous and important functions for a prioress was the administration of the properties of the convent. In general, nunneries were small and poor, and a careful balancing of the accounts was needed to keep the community solvent. After the Black Death the nuns experienced financial difficulties like all landowners, due to declining rents and grain prices and rising wages. The nuns responded to the depression of the late-fourteenth and early-fifteenth centuries by leasing out their lands and property, and there are some examples in extant records of the prioresses being involved in such deals. Maud de Grandison (1344-1358) sold a meadow in Asperton, Joan Ledbury (1377-1399) sold pasture at *Muryvale* (1387) and also leased a curtilage in Hereford (1399) and Joan Draper leased a messuage (1474).

There was a particularly contentious property in Blakemaston, a suburb of Hereford, described as a tenement with a garden. This property (valued in *Valor* at 13s.5½d.) originally belonged to John Trillek, bishop of Hereford, and was left in trust to the nuns who handed over the property for the use of the cathedral, but continued to receive the rent <sup>10</sup>, although a bailiff of Aconbury, Philip Godrich, did have difficulty in collecting rent from the tenants (1399/1400) <sup>11</sup>. Then on 24 March 1495, Richard and Alice Etkyns, with their son Thomas, released to Isabel Gardener, the prioress, their right in the property <sup>12</sup>. In 1518 there was another dispute, which continued for a year <sup>13</sup>. It is difficult to determine the outcome of this litigation conducted mainly by lawyers instructed by Isabel Gardener, as the property had only been left in trust to Aconbury. However the continuing litigation demonstrated the perseverance and ability of Isabel, one of the prioresses who

came from a lower social class and had clearly been elected on grounds of ability and merit rather than birth.

#### Election of the Prioress

Any candidate for election to the post of prioress had to be the child of a legal marriage and if there was a hint of illegitimacy, a special dispensation was required. Her spiritual life had to be strong if she was to encourage others to keep the rule and have faith in God. She had to be honest and of good reputation; and finally she had to be over twenty one.

The process of finding a new prioress for a community was both time consuming and expensive. When a prioress died or retired or was removed from office for some reason, a cong  d' lire, a licence from the crown or the local bishop, was required. The nuns would then announce the date of the election and the whole community would assemble and vote for the new head of the house. Sometimes there were disputes over the election of a prioress and there were delays <sup>14</sup>. Normally elections seem to have proceeded smoothly at Aconbury as when Catherine de Geneville was confirmed as prioress by the Bishop of Hereford, Richard Swinfield, on 11 October 1288 <sup>15</sup>, but in the case of Beatrice de Gamages there was a dispute over her election. Her first election was set aside as irregular but she was finally elected on 17 December 1281 <sup>16</sup>. No reasons appear to have been given for this controversy; possibly she was under age, or there were criticisms of her spiritual life by the nuns or her election could have been originally resisted because she came from a knightly family, although William Gamages (see above p.117) was a generous donor to Aconbury.

The fact that Catherine de Geneville's election proceeded so smoothly may have been because she belonged to the aristocratic Geneville family (see above pp.112-5).

### Social Standing of the Prioresses

Eileen Power assumed that the head of a house always came from an aristocratic household. Otherwise, she argued, how would they have the necessary skills of household and estate management? This may have been the case with some of the richer and larger Benedictine houses, but was certainly not so with the smaller and poorer nunneries as Oliva has demonstrated.

In the case of Aconbury, only three of the prioresses named in the charters, Petronilla Lestrangle, Catherine de Geneville and Anna Barry, can be identified as belonging to a noble family. Of the nine prioresses that have been identified from other sources, only three belonged to the upper gentry, and from about 1377, except for Anna Barry, the prioresses all came from the lower gentry or yeomen farmers, which tends to support Marilyn Oliva's research. After about the beginning of the fourteenth century donations from the noble March families tailed off for various reasons and the convent was supported by families from the landowning/merchant classes and the prioresses came from this social scale.

Three prioresses, Petronilla Lestrangle (1216-1231), Catherine de Geneville (1288-1326) and Maud de Grandison (1344-1358) reflected the material advantages of belonging to aristocratic families.

Petronilla Lestrangle who was granted rents in Lulham by Roger Clifford (C 12) and was most likely kin to the Marcher lord John Lestrangle, a generous donor to Aconbury.

Catherine de Geneville was an active woman clearly used to dealing with litigation and because of her aristocratic status she was able to cultivate successful relations with noble families. It is clear that Catherine was deeply involved both with the Marcher lords and with the bishop of the diocese. On 12 May 1300 there was a receipt for two silver cups which were a bequest to the nunnery<sup>17</sup>. On 30 April 1317 there was a receipt from Catherine to John de



Kemeseye, treasurer of Hereford, for a bequest from Richard, formerly the bishop of Hereford, for one silver cup which Catherine's father, Geoffrey de Geneville, had sent him from Ireland <sup>18</sup>. Also on 28 April 1317 Catherine received a bequest of five marks from Richard Swinfield <sup>19</sup>. Finally Catherine was granted an exemption from the tax on ale by Henry of Lancaster, Lord of Monmouth, and was described by him as 'very dear and much loved in God' (C 67).

Maud de Grandison was clearly on friendly terms with Katherine de Montague 'sometime Countess of Salisbury' as Maud acquired five long mantles for Aconbury in 1351 bequeathed to her by the Countess <sup>20</sup>.

The disadvantage to a priory that was ruled by a woman from a high social class, was that the prioress could be out of touch with the ordinary people who lived in the area surrounding the nunnery and relied on the nuns for their charity and their spiritual education. Possibly also the election of a prioress with so many material advantages could promote envy among the nuns, who mostly came from the lower social orders, although there is no recorded evidence of any such discord at Aconbury.

#### Problems of Enclosure

By the end of the thirteenth century there was increasing concern about prioresses and nuns travelling away from their convents on any small pretext and in 1298 Pope Boniface issued the decree *Periculoso*. In theory this law prevented nuns from leaving their cloisters except under exceptional circumstances. Prioresses were able to leave the nunnery on administrative business and to attend funerals and even weddings of close relations and also to go on pilgrimages, but they always had to obtain the bishop's permission first. The decree was not very well enforced; many nuns refused to obey it because it had not been law when they were professed <sup>21</sup>.

Theoretically, claustration kept nuns inside their

houses and also excluded lay people from entering the convent. There was a considerable distrust of women on the part of the clergy and clausturation was seen as a way of controlling them, and it is clear that it was more strictly imposed on women than men. In the twelfth century even Abelard wrote 'Solitude is indeed all the more necessary for your woman's (Heloise's) frailty, inasmuch as for our part we are less attacked by the conflicts of carnal temptations and less likely to stray towards bodily things through the senses.' <sup>22</sup> In view of his behaviour, it would seem that there was some degree of hypocrisy in his writing! Jacques de Vitry was also enthusiastic about women being sealed away from the world <sup>23</sup>. But it is clear that many nunneries, including Aconbury, did not obey the rules of clausturation.

Penelope Johnson has demonstrated that clausturation by nuns was not strictly adhered to. Her research on nunneries in northern France in the central Middle Ages has revealed that religious women frequently left their houses on all sorts of errands <sup>24</sup>.

This rejection of strict clausturation was demonstrated in the case of Aconbury. Catherine de Geneville, the prioress of Aconbury, made several journeys across Hereford. On two occasions she dined with her friend Joanna de Valence, the Countess of Pembroke, at Goodrich Castle, ten miles south of Aconbury. On the first occasion, on 2 February 1297, the Countess received as her visitors the lady of Bickmore, the lady of Raglan and the prioress of Aconbury, and Catherine left with a gift of salmon, probably taken from the weir on the Wye at Goodrich <sup>25</sup>. On 21 April 1297, Catherine dined at the Castle with the Prior of Monmouth, Richard Symond, John de Hasting and sir John de Barry and this may explain why Aconbury was given the appropriation of Penally church in Pembrokeshire such a long distance from the priory (see above p.89). Very soon after, on 5 May, Catherine again visited her friend <sup>26</sup>. Catherine was on good terms with the bishop of Hereford, Richard Swinfield, and would have had no

difficulty in obtaining permission to leave the convent, and she probably skilfully combined business with pleasure and was able to gather support for her small nunnery. Maud de Grandison (see above p.140) probably travelled from Aconbury to further her relationship with the Countess of Salisbury and so acquire gifts for the convent.

Various lay people very likely wandered in and out of the priory at Aconbury. Bailiffs would have needed to discuss administrative details with the prioress; witnesses would have been required for documents; ordained priests were essential for the celebration of mass; even relatives may have come to visit the nuns. 'Thus cloistering existed in theory, but was modified in practice when nuns bent rules, resisting social control to make their convents more functional for themselves and society at large' 27.

#### Links with other nunneries in the vicinity of Aconbury.

There were few Welsh nunneries; 150 nunneries were recorded in England, 64 in Ireland, 15 in Scotland and only 3 in Wales 28. Welsh women tended to fulfil their spiritual needs within the home and this may have been because nuns were apparently held in low esteem in Wales 29, and there was little opportunity for Welsh women to join religious communities. There was a Benedictine house at Usk about 22 miles SSW of Aconbury, founded in 1135 by Richard de Clare and there may have been contact with Aconbury through the administration of property held in Monmouth and Abergavenny by Aconbury. Two Cistercian houses, Llanllugan and Llanllyr were founded in west Wales. Llanllugan was about 50 miles north-west of Aconbury near Welshpool, founded 1170-1190 by Maredudd ap Rhobert; Llanllyr was about 64 miles WNW of Aconbury, near Lampeter, founded 1197 by Lord Rhys 30.

It is unlikely that there would have been very much contact between Aconbury and either Llanllyr or Llanllugan as it would have been difficult to reach these two Cistercian

convents over wild and mountainous Welsh countryside. Having said that, however, Llanllyr was about 44 miles north of Tenby where the nuns of Aconbury held an appropriated church at Penally (see above p.88) and Llanllugan could possibly have been on the route to Nesscliffe where the Aconbury nuns held valuable property.

There were two nunneries in England within reasonable distance of Aconbury. Westwood, a Benedictine foundation, about 30 miles north-east of Aconbury, which was founded by Eustacia de Say between 1155 and 1158, and Whistones, a Cistercian house, about 26 miles north-east of Aconbury, was founded in 1241 possibly by Bishop Walter de Cantilupe <sup>31</sup>, but the only nunnery where there is extant evidence of a connection with Aconbury was Limebrook.

Limebrook was the only other Augustinian nunnery in Herefordshire. This priory was situated about twenty two miles north-west of Aconbury, in the valley of the Lingen Brook, the boundary between the parishes of Wigmore and Lingen <sup>32</sup>.

According to Thompson <sup>33</sup>, the exact date of the foundation of Limebrook is questionable; it could have been of anchorite origin about 1221. The founder may have been Ralph de Lingen, a member of the Mortimer family <sup>34</sup>. E.J.Dobson <sup>35</sup> has suggested that *Ancrene Wisse* was written between 1190 and 1225 for a group of anchoresses living near Wigmore Abbey in Herefordshire; this group may possibly later have developed into the community of Limebrook priory, although recent work by Bella Millett into the origins of *Ancrene Wisse* suggests that this is unlikely.

Dobson dismisses the suggestion that *Ancrene Wisse* may have been written for the Aconbury nuns because the house was too far away, almost 23 miles to the south-south-east, too recently founded (1216), and it had not developed from a hermitage but had been deliberately founded by Margaret de Lacy to honour her parents and brother. 'It would not be surprising perhaps, if a copy of *Ancrene Wisse* had been sent

to Aconbury' <sup>36</sup>. Aconbury had the benefit of a well documented foundation (see above p.12) and also an extant cartulary; there is no evidence of the existence of a cartulary for Limebrook.

There were three places where both Aconbury and Limebrook were granted property/land. In Broxwood, in the present parish of Pembridge, Henry Pembridge granted rents of 14s. to Aconbury (C 26 1216x1266) and Limebrook acquired land and pasture in 1351 <sup>37</sup>. Compared to Aconbury, which was granted several pieces of property in Hereford (see Table 4, pp.43-46), Limebrook only received one such grant of land, in 1282. Aconbury received generous grants of land/property in Stoke Bliss (Cs 11,15,43) from Katherine Lacy, and Limebrook in 1302 also acquired parcels of land in the same vill. There is no evidence, and one can only surmise, that there might have been co-operation between the two priories, i.e. a joint bailiff may have collected rents and administered property and land.

There is evidence in the mid-fifteenth century of an interchange of nuns between the two houses which could indicate friendly relations between the two nunneries. On 10 April 1432 Alice Opie transferred from Limebrook and was admitted as a nun at Aconbury <sup>38</sup>. On 14 August 1473 the election of Joan Draper as prioress to Aconbury was confirmed by bishop Stanbury <sup>39</sup>. Joan had previously been a nun at Limebrook. On 21 September 1481 two nuns, Isabel Gardener, a nun at Aconbury, and Juliana Barbour, a nun at Limebrook <sup>40</sup>, were consecrated by Bishop Mylling. Both Isabel and Juliana later became prioresses of their respective convents.

Finally the two houses were coupled when on 1 March 1518, bishop Charles Bothe delegated a visitation to both convents to his vicar general <sup>41</sup>, but this may have only occurred for convenience because both convents were in the same diocese.

Criticisms of the Prioresses and the Community

On 17 September 1267, Henry III <sup>42</sup> showed concern at problems of overcrowding at Aconbury: 'he forbids the prioress and convent, on pain of losing everything which they have in the realm, to admit anyone as a nun or sister of their house until they have his licence or special mandate'. There were few nunneries in the immediate vicinity and therefore a lack of places where women could go to pursue the religious life. Aconbury had gained a good reputation and attracted many novices. The prioress would have been tempted to accept new recruits, either incurring debt because of too many mouths to feed or perhaps the postulants may have brought gifts with them, so increasing the wealth of the convent.

After a visitation to Aconbury, Bishop Spofford sent a strongly worded reprimand dated 18 March 1437 <sup>43</sup> to the prioress and the community. He had discovered evidence that simony was being practised and this was strictly forbidden by canon law. He wrote that any sister who had entered the convent through simony was to be expelled from the monastery and any others who were involved were to be punished. Pope Martin, and his successor Eugenius, were concerned that the practice of simony was increasing and had decreed that the rules forbidding simony were to be read aloud four times a year from the pulpits. However, the bishop did not want to discourage any gifts and he did say that 'if any father, mother or any other kin or friend will, without such pact or covenant, give anything of their devotion to the monastery profit, we forbid it not' <sup>44</sup>.

Bishop Spofford was also concerned because he had discovered some of the nuns using private rooms and he decreed that the community should have one refectory and a common dormitory 'and for each day that they offend and eateth in a private place, they are to fast on bread and water as many days' <sup>45</sup>. The sick were excused from such punishment.

### The Nuns

Aconbury was a small nunnery; there were five nuns in 1379 and eight in 1539 <sup>46</sup> and no evidence of the number of nuns before 1379. The Augustinian foundations were generally small and most of the nunneries were about the same size as Aconbury.

The Brewood White Ladies in Shropshire had 9 nuns in 1377, the number reducing by the dissolution to 4. At Limebrook there were 6 nuns at the general suppression and after the surrender there was a prioress and 4 nuns who were granted pensions. Canonsleigh (Devon) was slightly larger and the abbess and 17 nuns were granted pensions in 1539. At Easebourne (Sussex) there were 13 nuns in the thirteenth century, in 1457 there were 8 nuns, by 1521 6 sisters including the prioress and a novice and in 1524 there were 7 sisters and a prioress. Campsey Ash (Suffolk) had 20 nuns in 1492, 21 nuns in 1514 and 1526 and 19 nuns in 1532; their community remained fairly static. At the Dissolution Lacock (Wilts) had 17 nuns including 3 novices. Expectation of a larger community in London was not fulfilled. London Clerkenwell only had 17 nuns in 1383 and 12 at the suppression <sup>47</sup>. Buckland (Somerset) was interesting because unlike Aconbury which transferred from attachment to the Hospitallers to the Augustinians, Buckland reversed this and started as an Augustinian house transferring to the Hospitallers. Buckland was first founded c.1160 for Augustinian canons who were dispersed before c.1180 when possession was granted by Henry II to the Knights Hospitallers for the establishment of a house of sisters of the Hospitallers. The community began with 8 sisters. It was stated in 1338 that the number of sisters was usually 50 which dwindled until the surrender on 10 February 1539 when the prioress and 13 sisters were granted pensions <sup>48</sup>.

There was no mention of any nuns (except prioresses) in the charters and the names of nuns only appeared in certain bishops' registers in the fifteenth and early sixteenth

centuries.

Alice Opi who had transferred from Limebrook was admitted as a sister in the priory of Aconbury on 10 April 1432 by Bishop Spofford <sup>49</sup>. Joanna Blount was admitted as a nun of Aconbury on 22 December 1354, after a dispensation of illegitimacy, by Bishop Trillek <sup>50</sup>. Isabel Gardener (who later became a prioress) was consecrated by the laying on of hands by Bishop Myllyng on 21 September 1481 <sup>51</sup>. At this ceremony a nun from Limebrook, Julian Barbour, was also consecrated. There was a licence issued by Bishop Myllyng to the Bishop of Cloyne to consecrate three professed nuns of Aconbury, Joanna Treggs, Elisabeth Went and Elisabeth Johns <sup>52</sup>. Sister Joyce and lady Cecilia were professed on 22 April 1522 by Bishop Bothe <sup>53</sup>. Matilda ap Hugh and Margery Tomisyne were consecrated by Bishop Bothe on 18 April 1525 <sup>54</sup>.

No obedientary rolls survive from Aconbury, but evidence from nunneries in the diocese of Norwich suggests that even the smaller houses had well developed administrative structures comparable with male houses <sup>55</sup>. There is direct evidence of two cellarers at Aconbury: Dame Alice Ate (see above, p.62) and Dame Joan de Galesch de Bonshull (see above, pp.48 and 69).

There is very little evidence of a geographical origin of the names of the nuns. In fact, Joan Ledbury (prioress 1377-1399) was the only nun with a definite local connection; but that of course does not rule out the fact that Aconbury housed nuns from families living in the area around the nunnery.

There are very few family links in the list of nuns. One nun, Beatrice de Geneville, was the only named nun (apart from the prioresses) in the fourteenth century and this may be because she was the sister of the prioress, Maud de Geneville (see above p.140). There were however, possible connections with witnesses to the cartulary. Joanna Treggs could have been related to the Tregoz family. Juliana



Tregoz granted the nuns rents in Foy worth 14s.2d. (Cs 13 & 14 dated 1268x1285) and although Joanna was consecrated as a nun much later, in 1477, she could possibly have been kin to the Tregoz family (see above p.112) There was also a William Tregoz who was witness to the charter in which Hugh de Kilpeck relinquished his office of forestry to the nuns (C 34 1216x1244) and he also acted as a witness to Walter de Lacy's confirmation of King John's gift of land to his wife (C 31 1237x1241).

Joanna Blunt who was consecrated in 1354 could possibly be kin to Henry le Blunt who was also a witness to Walter de Lacy's confirmation and there was a Walter Blund, scribe, who appears in a witness list (C 17 1216x1241). Again there is a time gap between the charters and the consecration of Joanna.

### Chaplains

Chaplains were important for nuns as the women were not allowed to celebrate mass or hear confessions and had to rely on ordained priests. Sally Thompson<sup>56</sup> and Sharon Elkins<sup>57</sup> have explored this relationship between nunneries and the men upon whom they depended for priestly help. When Aconbury was first founded and attached to the Order of St John of Jerusalem (see above p.14), the nuns would have been able to employ the services of the chaplains at Dinmore, but after Margaret de Lacy had received papal permission to leave the Hospitallers, the nuns would have had to make alternative arrangements. Often the chaplains' duties included acting as witnesses to charters and there were five chaplains of Aconbury in the witness lists of the cartulary: William Bras, chaplain (C 13 1268x1285); Geoffrey, chaplain, then proctor of Aconbury (C 21(a) 22 January 1290); Stephen, chaplain of Aconbury (C 21(a) 22 January 1290); Philip, chaplain (C 46 date uncertain); Henry, chaplain (C 51 date uncertain).

The incumbents of Aconbury who were all presented by

the prioress and community may also have acted as chaplains to the nuns.

There were two charters which specifically granted property/rents for the maintenance of a chaplain: Katherine de Lacy specified that her grant was for the maintenance of a chaplain for Aconbury church (C 3 1216x1231); and in April 1263 sir John de Turberville granted 50s. worth of rents that was to be used for the maintenance of a chaplain (C 28).

#### Stewards and Bailiffs

Stewards and bailiffs were an important part of a nunnery's administration. They were invaluable for rent collection and inspection of properties that were some distance from Aconbury. They were able to move around Herefordshire and the adjoining counties freely unlike the nuns who were somewhat inhibited by clausturation.

Three charters refer to a steward in the witness lists: Thomas de Kenet (C 29 1216x1219) was most probably Sibyl de Ewias' steward at the time of her grant to Aconbury; Walter de Caudecot (C 32 1216x1231) was steward to Walter de Lacy when he granted land near Merbach to Aconbury; John de Wynfranvil (C 21(a) 22 January 1290) was steward to William de Braose when he confirmed his father John's grant of burgages in Tetbury.

As well as acting as witnesses these three stewards may well have handled the administration connected with the grants.

Richard Rocolf who belonged to the merchant/landowning social class granted the nuns land in Hereford (C 81 first half thirteenth century) and William Yugan (?) was described as 'then bailiff'. Richard was the owner of land and may therefore have employed a bailiff. On the other hand he could have been bailiff to the nuns and enlisted as a witness by the donor.

There was a bailiff of Tetbury who is not named (C 21(b) 20 January 1290) who was instructed by William de

Braose to hand over to the nuns' agents any fines incurred by men working for the prioress (see above, p.9).

William de Pipa was described as a reeve (C 38 1216x1223) in the witness list of the charter in which Richard Emeline granted shops in Hereford. Richard was a fairly well to do 'citizen of Hereford' and probably employed a reeve.

There were three bailiffs at Aconbury who were named in the accounts although they do not appear in the charters, Adam the bailiff, Philip Godrich, and Walter Jackesone. Adam was bailiff at Aconbury from 29 September 1319 to 1 August 1320 <sup>58</sup>. Philip Godrich was bailiff from 30 September 1399 to 30 September 1400 <sup>59</sup>. His accounts show that he took responsibility for several business affairs connected with the nunnery. He collected rents, he bought and sold livestock and sold any wool that was produced at Aconbury, and he organised carpenters and builders to effect repairs. Walter Jackesone is named as a bailiff at Aconbury from 30 September 1400 to 30 September 1401 <sup>60</sup>.

### Servants

There are no extant records of any servants, but Aconbury, although a small community, would have needed a significant number of people to maintain it and to supply it with goods and services. The nunnery would have been a good source for employment in the local area. Farm labourers would also have been needed and although none are named, there is mention of a boy who looked after a flock of geese (see above p.66).

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## PART II CALENDAR OF THE CHARTERS

C 1

29 May 1266

Recognition by Henry III, king of England, following the inquest held by William of Englefield (*Englefeud*) and Geoffrey Lewknor (*Leukenore*) of his father, king John's grant to Margaret de Lacy of all the forest of Aconbury, except Athelstan's wood, for the foundation and maintenance of a house of nuns. He also grants in free alms a part of the forest which the nuns held at farm, valued at 6 marks and 5 shillings, and which was afterwards for various reasons taken into royal hands. He further grants the nuns in free alms the forest and Athelstan's wood. Witnesses: W', bishop of Bath and Wells, Philip Basset, Robert Walerand, Robert Aguilun, Nicholas de Lewknor (*Leukenore*), William Belet, Ralph de Bagepuz, Bartholomew le Bigod, Gilbert son of Hugh, and others. Dated 29 May 1266 at Northampton.

- Notes: (i) Transcribed, without names of witnesses, in MA, vi, 489-90, number I (see also number II). See also Cal.Pat.Rolls, 1258-1266 (478).
- (ii) Athelstan's Wood (OS Ref: 520310).  
The wood was in episcopal hands until sometime in the twelfth century when it became crown property. It seems likely that the wood is named after Athelstan, bishop of Hereford, d.1056 (BCC, p.34).
- (iii) Robert Walerand (or Walerund, see C 2) d.1273 (I.J.Sanders, English Baronies. A Study of their Origin and Descent 1086-1327, p.73).

C 2

1250 x 1273

GRANT in free alms by Geoffrey de Geneville (*de Genevill*) with the consent of his wife Matilda de Lacy of half of four mills in Ludlow and rents totalling 6s.8d. that he received from the following burgages: Rose Marescall 12d., John Faber (smith) 12d., Nicholas of Fawleywell (*Falliwelle*) 12d., Mossard 12d., Richard Saponarius (soapmaker) 12d., Walter of Bridge Sollers (*Brugis*) 12d., Robert le Hore 8d. Aconbury will have right of distraint until the rent is paid. These properties are to be held until the donor can provide 20 marks worth of land nearer and more convenient to the priory. Warranty. Sealed with the donors' seal. Witnesses: sir Robert Walerund, John of Balun, Walter of Balun, William de Colville (*Colvill*) knights, Walter prior of Llanthony Prima (*Lanthon' Prime*) and others.

- Notes: (i) Geoffrey de Geneville, is recorded as Seigneur de Vaucouleurs in 1241. Soon after 1250 he came to England and married Matilda de Lacy. In 1283 Geoffrey and his wife gave all their estates to their son John Piers (I.J.Sanders, English Baronies. A Study of their Origin and Descent 1086-1327, p.96).
- (ii) Robert Walerund (*Walerand*) d.1273 (Sanders, p.73).
- (iii) One of the burgages was in Pepper Lane then called the lane leading to the Tailors' Gate. Though intended to be temporary, the rents remained with Aconbury until at least the early fifteenth century (PRO: SC6/1107/5 as cited by M.Faraday, Ludlow 1085-1660, p.15).
- (iv) Henry, the husband of Rose Marescall died before 1267 when rent from their house was granted to Aconbury (Faraday, p.79).



C 3

1216 x 1231

GRANT in free alms by Katherine de Lacy, daughter of Walter de Lacy to Aconbury nunnery of all her holding previously held of sir Walter de Clifford in the manor of Corfham, with all appurtenances, namely Burley and the wood called Vernolds Common (*Veruhales*) and one virgate of land held by Eutropius (*Eytrop*) of Sibton Carwood (*Sibetone*) and three nokes of land held by William Gloyn, for the maintenance of a chaplain for the church at Aconbury, to celebrate a daily mass of the BVM for the souls of the donor, her father and mother and her brother and all her ancestors and descendants and for the salvation of Walter de Clifford and Margaret his wife and Lady Matilda de Longspée (*Longespe*) their daughter, and Margaret her daughter, for ever. If the service at any time was fraudently withheld, she desired the Bishop of Hereford to compel the nuns by whatever means seemed fit, according to God, to celebrate this mass. Each of the nuns freely granted this for themselves and their successors. Katherine granted all this free from secular service and demands, customs, suit of court, and all other demands. She quitclaims to the nuns that warranty of these lands which she once had of sir Walter de Clifford to the nuns and for greater security delivers up that charter to the nuns, in order that sir Walter de Clifford and his heirs might warrant them in all things. Sealed with the donor's seal. Witnesses: sir William of Evreux (*Evereus*), sir Roger de Clifford, sir Richard Tirel, sir Robert de Lacy, William of Rochford (*Rachesford*) vicar of Tenbury (*Temedebiria*), Hugh de Cheyney, Warin de Grendon, William de Wodeton and many others.

Notes: (i) Katherine de Lacy, who was alive in 1267, was the daughter of the nunnery's foundress, Margaret de Lacy, daughter of William de Braose, who was still alive in 1255, and Walter II de Lacy d.1241 (Thompson, Women Religious: The Founding of English Nunneries after the Norman Conquest, p.52n; and DNB xxxi, 390-2, vi, 231).

- (ii) Walter III de Clifford (d.1263) married Margaret, daughter of Llewelyn, prince of Gwynedd. His heir was their daughter Maud, who married first William Longspée (d.1257) and then John Giffard (d.1299). When he died the lordship passed to Margaret, her daughter by her first husband ( (Sanders, English Baronies. A Study of their Origin and Descent 1086-1327, p.36).
- (iii) sir Roger de Clifford d.1231.
- (iv) There is a printed transcription of this charter (MA, vi, 490, number IV)

C 4

1221 x 1263

GRANT in free alms by Walter de Clifford, son of Walter de Clifford and Agnes de Cundy, to Katherine, daughter of Walter de Lacy, all the holding called Burley, with all its appurtenances, that he held in seisin of his feudal lordship in Corfham, with permission to alienate the land to religious men or women or others. Warranty. Sealed with the donor's seal. Witnesses: sir John de Monmouth (*Monem'*), sir Roger de Clifford, sir Simon de Clifford, sir Alexander de Cheyney (*Cheyne*), sir Richard de Middlehope (*Middelhope*), sir John de Ebroicis, sir Robert le Wafre, and many others.

- Notes: (i) Walter II de Clifford d.1221;  
Walter III de Clifford d.1263.
- (ii) John de Monmouth d.1248 (Sanders, English Baronies. A Study of their Origin and Descent 1086-1327, p.96).

C 5

1257 x 1263

CONFIRMATION in free alms, by Walter de Clifford, son of Walter de Clifford and Agnes de Cundy, to Aconbury for the salvation of his soul, and of Margaret his wife, and lady Matilda his daughter and those of his ancestors and descendants of all the land with appurtenances and liberties which he once gave to Katherine, daughter of Walter de Lacy in his fee of Corfham according to the tenor of the charter he granted to her. Warranty. Sealed with the grantor's seal. Witnesses: Henry then abbot of Dore, sir William de Braose (*Brawosa*), sir Roger de Clifford, sir Hugh de Clifford his brother, sir Robert le Bret (*Bert*), William of Rochford (*Rogeford*) then vicar of Tenbury, Richard le Bret, Griffin Wendhont, and many others.

- Notes: (i) Henry, abbot of Dore 1257x1263.
- (ii) William de Braose came of age 1245, d.1290 (I.J.Sanders, English Baronies. A Study of their Origin and Descent 1086-1327, p.108).
- (iii) Lady Matilda, the daughter of Walter de Clifford, later became lady Maud de Longspée (widowed 1257) (Sanders, p.36).
- (iv) There is a printed transcription of this charter (MA, vi, 490, number V)

C 6

10 August 1262

CONFIRMATION in free alms, by Walter de Clifford, to the prioress and nuns of Aconbury and their tenants who they have or will have in the lordship of Corfham. He confirms that if at any time and in any way, before the Lady Katherine de Lacy conveyed to the said prioress and nuns, with his permission, the tenements which they then held in the liberty of Corfham, and even if they had paid the suit of court before the grant was made, their tenants are now to have their freedom granted to them by the said court or hundred. Sealed with the grantor's seal. Dated at Corfham, St Laurence's day 1262. Witnesses: sir John de Balun, sir Walter de Balun his brother, sir Simon de Clifford, William Vaughan then agent (*suffectus*) of Corfham, master Robert *medicus*, Warin de Grendon (*Grendene*), and many others.

Note: Walter III de Clifford d.1263.

C 7

1257 x 1282

CONFIRMATION in free alms by Lady Matilda de Longspée (*Longespee*), daughter of sir Walter de Clifford, for the salvation of her soul, and the souls of her father and mother and all her predecessors and successors, all that land with its appurtenances that the said Walter de Clifford, her father, gave to lady Katherine, daughter of Walter de Lacy, in the lordship of Corfham. Sealed with the donor's seal. Witnesses: sir William de Braose (*Breuse*), sir Roger de Clifford, sir Hugh de Clifford, sir Richard de Braose (*Breuse*), William of Rochford (*Rocheford*) then vicar of Tenbury (*Tenidebir'*), and others.

Note: Lady Matilda de Clifford d.1282-5, daughter of Walter III de Clifford, d.1263, married  
(i) William de Longspée d.1257  
(ii) John Giffard of Elston, Wilts, d.1299  
(I.J.Sanders, English Baronies. A Study of their Origin and Descent 1086-1327, p.36).

GRANT in free alms by John Extraneus III to the prioress, Margerie, and the nuns of Aconbury, for the health of his and his wife's souls and their children and friends, of Nesscliffe hospital with all its land and appurtenances. He also granted 200 sheep for grazing and 24 pigs with one wild boar with right of pannage and also the right to put them in his woods on this side of the bridge of *Moneford* opposite Wales (*Walliam*), and the nuns were also given pasture for ten cows and one bull. They were also granted three oaks for their hearth to be delivered by John Lestrange or his heirs or his foresters. One oak was to be delivered annually at Easter, one at Michaelmas, and one at the Nativity, and also 10 cartloads of wood. In addition the nuns were granted from his demesnes in Salop, and in Knockin (*Knokin*) and Ruyton (*Ruton*) a sheaf of every thrave (24 sheaves) of corn, the right to fish above the bank of *Pevereye* called *Stanwere* and three pear trees in his wood of *Nesse*. In return the prioress and nuns were to provide one priest to minister before God in the church of *St Mary de Rocherio*, Nesscliffe, for the souls of him and his wife and children and friends and for all the faithful both living and dead. Sealed with the donor's seal. Witnesses: sir John son of Alan, sir Robert Tregoz (*Tregauz*), sir Fulgon' fitzWarren, sir Griffin son of (*filio*) Wenonwen', sir Thomas de Rossale, William de Bedleg', John Tregoz (*Tregauz*), John son of Philip, Almaricus of the Park (*Parco*), and many others.

Notes: (i) By the thirteenth century it was difficult to identify the rank of the writer of a particular charter, as there was a general levelling down (F.M.Stenton, Transcripts of Charters relating to the Gilbertine Houses of Sixle, Ormsby, Catley, Bullington and Alvingham, p.xxxiii).

- (ii) John Extraneus III was John Lestrangle (d.1269), third in descent from Roland Lestrangle. He was a Marcher lord with extensive estates in Shropshire. From 1233-1240 John was appointed by Henry III as constable of castles in the March. He was made sheriff for Shropshire after the reform of the financial administration of the shires in 1236 and he held office for 12 years. He retired in the late 1250s and it is possible that during this period after he had retired that he granted the hospital to the nuns (VCH Shropshire, Vol.3, p.15; see also above, p.115)
- (iii) John fitzAlan I (d.1240) was John Lestrangle's overlord and they were both involved in a dispute over markets (I.J.Sanders, English Baronies. A Study of their Origin and Descent 1086-1327, p.71, and VCH Shropshire, Vol.3, p.15).
- (iv) 'the prioress, Margerie,' is named in the charter but it has proved difficult to find details of her term of office (see Table 9 above, p.138).



C 9

GRANT in free alms by John Buteler, son of Hamo Buteler, to the house and brethren of St Mary de Rocherio, Nesscliffe (*de Nesse*), of 12 acres: 9 acres of land adjoining land that Richard Faber (joiner) and William his brother held next to the road that descends from Bromhull towards *Vyuelecot* and 3 acres that Hugh Plumarius (feather merchant) and Roger, son of Richard Brun held. He wished the hospital to hold the land free from all secular debts for the salvation of his and his wife Hilary's souls and for the souls of his predecessors. Sealed with the grantor's seal. Witnesses: Hamo Lestrangle, Ralph de Pichford, Hugh Lestrangle, Wido de Perrepond, Henry la Rube, John de Funtenay, William de Kint, and many others.

- Notes: (i) Hamo Lestrangle, one of John Lestrangle's sons, m.1272 Isabella widow of Hugh II, King of Cyprus.
- (ii) John Buteler was kin to the Butler family. Ralph Butler (d.1281) had the three demesne manors of Wem, Doddington and Hinstock (VCH, Shropshire, vol 3, p.51).

C 10

1216 x 1240

GRANT in free alms by John Buteler to the house and brethren of St Mary de Rocherio, Nesscliffe (*de Nesse*), for the health of his soul and the souls of his father and mother, and the soul of his wife Hilary, and the soul of Robert his brother, and Robert Butler his predecessor and all his other predecessors and successors, of all his land from the cross on *Bromhull* as far as *Holchewalle* ditch. And then as far as *Evediche* and from *Evediche* as far as the boundary between *Cronomos* and the land of *Alretone* and from thence by *Blakelawe* ditch by the boundary between the land of *Felton* and from *Alretone* as far as *Hechemors* by a boundary between the aforesaid land of *Felton* and of *Alretone* and from thence by the *alnetum* from *Litelmor* by a boundary between the land of *Felton* Butler and *Wivelcote* (*Wivelecote*) as far as the road from *Wivelcote* and then by a pond up to the mill and from there by a stream descending from *Neuvebrig* and from thence all his land from the aforesaid stream by a boundary between the land of *Felton* Butler and from *Nesse* as far as *Edmersburinesse* and thence by a boundary between the land of *Felton* and *Nesse* as far as the cross above *Bromhull* which was built near the boundary between them. He also granted common land to the house and brothers of St Mary de Rocherio, and the brothers were required to pay 3s. annually. The rent of a mill at *Wivelcote* was also included. Witnesses: John Lestrangle, John Lestrangle his son, Hamo Lestrangle, William Lestrangle, Hugh Lestrangle, Thomas his son, Roger Sei, John de Fontenei, William de Kynton', Hamo Purtes, John Springhose, Thomas de Coten, and many others.

C 11

20 July 1262

GRANT by Hugh de Bles (*Stoke Bliss*), son of sir William de Bles, to Katherine de Lacy, for 20 marks (*premanibus*) of 23s.9d. annual rents which he was given by sir William his father in Stoke Bliss.

Hugh had been accustomed to receive these rents annually; namely 5s. from Henry de Spina, for one noke with appurtenances and 5s. from Geoffrey Smalfuk for one noke with appurtenances and 3s. from Philip Smalfuk and 2s. from William de Kytekenn for half a noke, and 4s. from Hugh Polte (poulterer) for one noke and 10d. from Christina daughter of Basil, for nine acres and 3s.9d. from Hugh Ranel for half a noke. Also Hugh de Bles granted to Katherine all his right and claim that he had in one messuage with appurtenances which Roisia of Stoke Bliss (*de Stokes*) held in the same vill, that lies between the land of Hugh Ranel and Philip Smalfuk and also his right or claim which he or his heirs had with regard to Robert Tyle and any of his descendants as *nativi* or villeins and all their chattels and services and customs in a messuage with four butts of land belonging to the messuage, situated between the land of William Cruk (?) and the *Longemewe* road which Robert held from Hugh de Bles.

Katherine was required to pay 1d. annually to Hugh de Bles at Michaelmas covering all due and customary services and demands arising from these lands or rents except for royal service in regard to this tenancy in Stoke de Bles which Katherine or her bailiffs may discharge annually when the poll tax occurs for the lords of the said lands and Katherine and her heirs and assigns will warrant against all men, women and Jews with regard to feudal services for the rent of 1d.

Sealed with the donor's seal. Witnesses: sir Richard de Bagingeden', Henry of Bradley (*de Bradeleg'*), John le Moyn (the Monk) knights, Richard de Bagingeden' junior (*iuniore*), Philip le Paum', William de Logis, Warin de Grendon, William of Collington (*de Colintun*), Warin de Muntrith'(?), John de Boklinten, and others. Dated 20 July 1262 at Hereford.

- Notes:
- (i) See also C 43
  - (ii) Katherine de Lacy was the daughter of Margaret de Lacy, the founder of Aconbury (see C 3 n.i).
  - (iii) Hugh de Bles was probably in financial trouble because he required cash from Katherine for the properties and he may have borrowed money from the Jews as Katherine gave a guarantee against men, women and Jews which was unusual in this cartulary.
  - (iv) Stoke Bliss is situated about 10 miles south-east of Ludlow and was part of the fee (half a knight) held in the honour of Radnor (1211-1212) by William de Bles, father of Hugh. Between 1231 and 1234 William was dispossessed but the lands were restored in 1234, and he was succeeded by Hugh (VCH, Worcs., Vol 4, p.350).

C 12

1216 x 1231

GRANT in free alms by Roger de Clifford senior (*senior*), to Petronilla Lestrange, prioress of Aconbury, and the nuns and their successors of 2s. annual rents that was paid to him by Richard, son of (*filius*) Henry of Lulham. Roger de Clifford required that the homage with escheats due from Richard should remain with him and his family. Warranty. Sealed with the donor's seal. Witnesses: sir Hugh de Turberville, sir Thomas de Turberville, sir Henry d'Erdinton, master William de Clifford, Geoffrey de Stokes (Stoke Bliss), Elias chaplain, Reginald clerk, and others.

- Notes: (i) Roger de Clifford d.1231 (I.J.Sanders, English Baronies. A Study of their Origin and Descent 1086-1327, p.43).
- (ii) Hugh and Thomas were scions of the Turbervilles, a knightly family. Henry de Turberville (d.1239) supported John and was employed by Henry III. He fought for the king in the Marches. (Sanders, p.21)

C 13

1268 x 1285

GRANT AND QUITCLAIM by Richard de Ewias, son of John de Ewias, to lady Juliana de Tregoz, widow of sir Robert de Tregoz, of all those rents which he was accustomed to receive annually at Foy with all escheats, from Thomas Balle of Foy, 3s., and William Passor of Foy, 14d. Lady Juliana may give, bequest or assign them to a monastic house or wherever she might wish without any claim from him or his family. Lady Juliana paid Richard 4 marks for these rents (*premanibus*). Sealed with the donor's seal. Witnesses: Geoffrey vicar of Foy, William Bras chaplain, Robert de Chaundos of Strangford (*Strongeford*), William de Calkeberge, Walter of Foy, Robert Francis (*Fraunceys*) of Egeston', Ellis smith of Eton', and many others.

- Notes:
- (i) Richard de Ewias was the son of John de Ewias, who was probably brother of Robert I de Ewias, who founded Dore Abbey in 1147 (I.J.Sanders, English Baronies. A Study of their Origin and Descent 1086-1327, p.43).
  - (ii) Robert II de Tregoz married (1245) Juliana, daughter of William de Cantelou (d.1254) & Eve de Braose d.1255. Robert d.1268 and Juliana was described as 'widow' in the charter, but still living in 1285. (G.E.Cockayne, The Complete Peerage, revised by G.White and R.S.Lea, 1959, p.17, and Sanders, p.8).
  - (iii) Robert de Chandos: the Chandos family in the early 12th century acquired the manor and castle of Snodhill, about 25 miles west of Hereford (OS Ref: 320403). The witness, Robert (probably Robert IV) died 1302 (Sanders, p.79).

C 14

1268 x 1285

GRANT in free alms by Juliana de Tregoz, in widowhood, to God and St Mary and the house of St Cross of Aconbury and the prioress and nuns that serve God there, for the soul of sir Robert de Tregoz, formerly her husband, and for her soul and the souls of her predecessors and successors and all the faithful dead, of 4s.2d. annual rents with appurtenances near Foy that she bought of Richard de Ewias, son of John de Ewias, namely Thomas Balle, 3s. for 8 acres of land and William le Sipward 3s.4d. for 12 acres of land with appurtenances. Warranty. Sealed with the donor's seal. Witnesses: William Comyn(?) (and) Richard Fulke knights, Warin de Grendon, Nicholas de Banketige, John de Overton, Roger Ragun, and many others.

- Notes:
- (i) The left hand side of the second page of charter 14 (folio 38) is in a poor condition and almost illegible.
  - (ii) The nuns were to receive 1s.2d. from William Passor and 3s. from Thomas Balle, total 4s.2d. See above, pp.31 (Table 1) and 34.
  - (iii) Foy church stands on high ground overlooking a meander of the river Wye and the discrepancy in the values of land could have meant that the cheaper land was low-lying and therefore subject to flooding.
  - (iv) Juliana de Tregoz and Richard de Ewias: see C 13.
  - (v) Roger Ragun appears as a witness in five charters (Cs 14,47,48,49,50).

C 15

c.1262

GRANT in free alms by Katherine de Lacy, daughter of sir Walter de Lacy, for her soul and the souls of her ancestors and successors of 2 marks annual rent with appurtenances that she bought from Hugh, son of sir William de Bles, at Stoke Bliss. She specified that 20s. was to be used by the convent for buying fish for Lent, 2s. for buying a pittance for St Margaret's feast day, 2s. for a pittance for St Edith's feast day and 2s.8d. for lights on the feast days of St Mary and St Katherine. The donor granted this free of secular services, customary payment and claims and counterclaims from herself or her heirs, as is set out in the charter of feoffment which she had from Hugh and which she gave to the nuns. The nuns were required to render annually to Hugh de Bles and his heirs 1d. at the feast of St Michael. Sealed with the donor's seal. Witnesses: William rector of Rochford, Roger rector of Grendon, Warin de Grendon, her steward.

Note: Katherine de Lacy and Hugh de Bles, see C 11.



C 16

1216 x 1241

GRANT in free alms, by Geoffrey de Longchamp, with the assent of his wife Isabel and his heirs, of a virgate of land with all appurtenances in Kempley which Gerard *serviens* held.

The nuns were required to pay annually to Geoffrey and his heirs one pound of pepper annually on Christmas Day.

Warranty. Sealed with the donor's seal. Witnesses: sir Walter de Lacy, Gilbert Talebot, Warin de Grendon, Ralph Musard' then sheriff of Gloucester, John de Eston, Richard Pauncefoot (*Pancefot*), Walter Mucegros, Richard Burgh and Maurice Durad' then bailiffs of Gloucester, John Drapereo (draper), (?) Muec, John Rufus, Walter Haket, Hugh de Bosco, Adam Wardeb', Robert chaplain of Kempley, and many others.

- Notes:
- (i) Gerard (or Geoffrey), termed *serviens*: a servant or tenant, under the rank of knight, holding land by virtue of military service.
  - (ii) Walter de Lacy (d.1241).
  - (iii) See above, p.120
  - (iv) Isabel de Longchamp: daughter and coheir of Henry de Minors (d.1217) whose estate was partitioned between his three daughters (VCH, Glos., Vol XI, p.238).
  - (v) There are marginal entries on this charter of rents totalling 17s., paid by six tenants in Aconbury (?); one of the tenants is Thomas of Aconbury. These entries appear to be unrelated to this charter.

GRANT in free alms and quitclaim by Richard, son of Robert le Riche of Gloucester of all his right that he and his heirs had in a virgate of land with its appurtenances, in Kempley, that he held from Geoffrey de Longchamp by right of inheritance and all the land that he and his heirs held from William de Gamage in the manor of Dymock. In return for this quitclaim, the prioress and nuns of Aconbury quitclaimed to Richard and his heirs 5s. rent that Thomas Ulger paid them and 2s. paid by Thomas of Aconbury (*Cornubiensis*), and all the land that lay between the abbot of Gloucester's land and that of Adam Botil', son of Robert Botil', near *Herlon*, that Christine his mother gave to the prioress and sisters in free alms. Chirograph. Both parties sealed. Witnesses: Hugh dean of Baysham (*Baysam*), William Horee of Gloucester clerk, Richard Burg', Maurice son of Durant' then provosts of Gloucester, John Drapario (draper), Richard son of William, Walter Blund scribe, Richard son of Katherine, Henry Burg', Richard Muet, John de Broc, and many others.

- Notes:
- (i) A chirograph recorded an agreement between two parties - each of the parties received a copy of the deed: usually authenticated by the seal of the other party. See M.T.Clanchy, From Memory to Written Record, England 1066-1307, p.87.
  - (ii) The Riche family improved their social position. Richard le Riche may have been a forbear of Sir Richard Riche, Chancellor of the Court of Augmentations (10 October 1538), who was involved in the payment of pensions to the nuns. (L&P F&D H.VIII, vol.13, ii (1538), p.503).
  - (iii) William de Gamage (see Donors, p.116).
  - (iv) Three witnesses, Richard Burg', Maurice Durant' (*Durad'*) and John Drapario (*Drapereo*) appear as witnesses for both charters 16 & 17 - this charter has therefore also been dated 1216x1241.

C 18

1216 x 1237

GRANT in free alms by Geoffrey de Longchamp, with the assent of his wife Isabel, to the nuns of the hospital of Aconbury, 5s. sterling which was owed to him from the land of William, son of Edrich, 2s.6d. to be paid at the annunciation of St Mary, and the remaining 2s.6d. to be paid at the feast of St Michael, for the salvation of his and his wife's souls, the souls of his mother and father, and the soul of Petronilla de Ewias. Warrantly. Witnesses: sir Richard de Minors knight, Robert parson of Kempley, William the chaplain, Gilbert Marshall (*Marescal*), Nicholas Muet of Gloucester (*Glovernia*), William Poer, Peter chaplain of Wellington (*Welinton'*), Walter Pruz, and many others.

- Notes:
- (i) Geoffrey de Longchamp (see Cs 16,17,18).
  - (ii) Robert II de Ewias (d.1198) m. Petronilla; their daughter Sibyl de Ewias (d.1236)  
m. (i) Robert I de Tregoz (d.1213/14); and  
(ii) Roger de Clifford (d.1231).
  - (iii) Place name not stated in charter, but possibly property was in Kempley, as one of the witnesses was the parson of Kempley and the charter appears amongst others concerning Kempley.

C 19

1217 x 1237

GRANT in free alms by Isabel de Longchamp with the assent of her husband Geoffrey de Longchamp to the sisters of the hospital of St John of Jerusalem, for her soul and the souls of her predecessors and successors, all her part of the mill at Westbury, namely two parts with all its appurtenances, without any claims on any dispute that might occur.

Warranty sealed with the donor's seal. Witnesses: Richard de Minors (*Miners*), Richard of Westbury (*Westbur'*), Ralph de Rudleyg', William of Dean (*Dene*), William of Aberhall (*Abbehale*), William de Heliun, and others.

- Note:
- (i) Westbury lies about 6 miles south-west of Gloucester between the River Severn and the hills of the Forest of Dean.
  - (ii) Richard de Minors (*Miners*): kin to Henry de Minors (C 16), father of Isabel de Longchamp.
  - (iii) Isabel de Longchamp was an heiress in her own right (see C 16).
  - (iv) There are 6 mills mentioned in VCH, but it is difficult to distinguish which of these had been donated to the nuns (Cs 19,20). (VCH, Glos., Vol X, p.85.)

C 20

1217 x 1237

CONFIRMATION in free alms by Geoffrey de Longchamp to the sisters of the hospital of St John of Jerusalem of two parts of the mill at Westbury with all its appurtenances, which Isabel, his wife, granted them. Sealed with the donor's seal. Witnesses: Richard de Minors (*Miners*), Richard of Westbury (*Westbur'*), Ralph de Rudleyg', William of Dean (*Dene*), William of Aberhall (*Abbehale*), William de Heliun (*Helian*), and others.

C 21(a)

22 January 1290

Inspeximus and confirmation by William V de Braose of a charter made by his father John de Braose, as follows:

John de Braose, son of William IV de Braose, granted in free alms to the sisters of the hospital at Aconbury, for the health of his soul and his predecessors and successors, ten properties held by burgage tenure in his town of Tetbury, for which he annually received 12s.4½d., namely Reginald Palmer, occupied a burgage at rent of 18½d. in the street leading to the hospital, Richard Hyredmon (hired man) occupied a burgage at rent of 12d., William Venator a burgage at rent of 18d., John Cooperator 12d., William Rufus 12d., the widow of John Godini 12d., Richard de Chemele 16d., Thomas 16d., the widow of Ralph 16d., John le Machun(?) 16d. There were also rents from two pieces of newly reclaimed land (*foreland*), one of John Want' which was in front of church land at a rent of 8d., and the other of Roger Brunig' behind his burgage at a rent of 8d. These rents were to be paid on St Andrew's Day (30th November). The burgages were to be free of all demands and claims according to the privilege of the hospital of St John of Jerusalem. Sealed with the donor's seal.

Witnesses: John de Umfravill then steward, master Richard of Burley, Geoffrey chaplain then proctor of Aconbury, Stephen chaplain of Aconbury, Alan chaplain of Whitbourne (*Witeb'rna*), Roger de Duchtun', Philip of Tetbury, William of Rodmarton (*Rodmertun*), Walter of Upton (*Uptone*), John the deacon who wrote the charter, and many others.

William ratified and confirmed his father's charter with his seal. Dated at London on the feast day of St Vincent of Saragossa (22nd January) 1290.

- Notes: (i) John de Braose was the son of William IV de Braose who was alleged to have been murdered with his mother, Maud de St Valérie, in prison by King John. William IV was the son of the notorious William III who rebelled against King John, had his land confiscated and then died in exile 1211 (I.J.Sanders, English Baronies. A Study of their Origin and Descent 1086-1327, p.108).
- (ii) John de Braose, who made the original grant to the nuns died 1232; his original charter can therefore be dated 1216x1232.
- (iii) See above, p.106
- (iv) There is a printed transcription of this charter (MA, VI, 491, number VIII)

C 21(b)

20 January 1290

William V de Braose confirmed the grant of John de Braose to the nuns and set his seal to the charter.

William V de Braose, son of John de Braose, to the bailiff of Tetbury. He had inspected the charters of his father, confirmed the grant and now instructs his bailiff that when the men of the prioress living in Tetbury are fined in his (William's) court, his bailiff will pay over the fines to the nuns' agent. Dated at London, Sunday 20 January 1290.

Note: This charter is written in mediaeval French (see above, p.8).



C 22

1216 x 1232

GRANT in free alms by John, son of William IV de Braose, to the sisters of Aconbury for the health of his soul and that of his ancestors and successors, ten burgages in his town of Tetbury from which he received 12s.4½d.

Note: This charter, detailing a grant of John de Braose, is almost identical to C 21(a), but the name of John Palmer has been substituted for Reginald Palmer.

GRANT in free alms by Reginald de Braose, for the salvation of the souls of his father and mother and his brother William and all his predecessors, of one burgage in Abergavenny with its appurtenances that Philip Corin held from him, with freedom to sell or buy anything the nuns considered necessary for its use. Sealed with the donor's seal. There were no witnesses listed.

- Notes:
- (i) Reginald de Braose (d.1227/8) was the son of William III de Braose (d.1211) and brother to William IV de Braose (d.1210) who was reputed to have been starved to death (with their mother) in prison by order of King John.
  - (ii) There is no mention of the value in the charter, but *Taxatio* valued the property at 1s. annual rent (*Taxatio Ecclesiastica*, p.283).
  - (iii) At the Dissolution there was a letter from Bishop Roland Lee to Cromwell dated 26 December 1536, asking Henry VIII to spare the convent because 'the gentlemen of Abergavenny, Ewyas Lacy, Talgarthe, Brecknock and the adjoining parts of Wales have had commonly their women and children brought up in virtue and learning.' (L&P F&D H.VIII, vol.11, p.547).
  - (iv) 'liberty belonging to the said burgage' i.e. to sell and buy those things necessary for its use
  - (v) Presumably there were names of witnesses in the original charter, but there are none in the cartulary copy.

C 24

1216 x 1230

GRANT in free alms by William de Gamage for the salvation of the souls of him and his wife, his children and all his predecessors, of land that was once held by Fordric le Bule outside Kempley wood with all its appurtenances and 9s. rent from his mill of Kedeford, in the parish of Dymock (*Dimmock*), to be paid twice yearly. Warranty. Sealed with the donor's seal. Witnesses: Walter de Lacy, Gilbert his son, Geoffrey de Longchamp, Stephen d'Evreux (*Devereus*), Richard de Minors (*Miners*), Robert the parson of Kempley (*Kempel'*), Nichol' Seculer, William chaplain, Gilbert Marshall (*mariscallo*), Geoffrey of Dymock, William le Poer, and many others.

- Notes: (i) William de Gamage; see C 17.
- (ii) Walter II de Lacy (d.1241) and Gilbert his son (d.1230).
- (iii) William le Poer (see above, p.117).

C 25

Second half 13th century

GRANT by Henry, son of Ralph de Pembridge, with the consent of his wife Elizabeth, of an annual rent of 9s., which he received from William Kedmor of Kedeford mill in the manor of Dymock (*Dimmock*) for milling rights, and all rights which he may have had in regard to William and his heirs, whether in dues or anything else attached to the lands of the mill, saving military service to him. If William or his heirs defaulted in any way then Henry and his heirs, by judgment of his court, might distress William until full payment was made to the nuns. Warranty. Sealed with the donor's seal. Witnesses: Henry Haket, Robert Dru, John de Bosco, John of Wilton (*Wiltu'*), Richard de Bosco, John Wain, Roger de Coy(?), Gilbert Farm', Roger clerk, Robert de Trillec, and others.

- Notes:
- (i) Kedeford mill was probably on the River Leadon, the main river of the manor of Dymock. It is difficult to locate mediaeval mills with any certainty unless litigation was involved.
  - (ii) After 1205 William de Braose gave Henry de Pembridge land (Newlands) and Henry began to build a castle at Pembridge which his successors held until 1375. Henry died 1210 and his son and heir was Ralph, father of the donor Henry who was sheriff of Hereford from 23 April 1257 until 6 May 1259. (BCC, p.151, and see above, p.117).

C 26

1216 x 1266

GRANT by Henry, son of Ralph de Pembridge, for the salvation of his soul and his ancestors, of 14s. annual rent paid by William de la Barwe in Broxwood within his manor of Pembridge; Henry also granted to the nuns William his freeman, with all dues saving service due to the king and with the proviso that William and his heirs should attend the court at Pembridge. If William or any of his heirs is amerced for any reason all ameracements will be paid to the nuns. Warranty. Sealed with the donor's seal. Witnesses: sir William de Ebroicis, John le Brui, Walter (Walt') de Ebroicis, Henry of Bradley (*Brudeleg*), Henry de Pembridge (*pennebrige*) lord of Winston (*Wynestan'*), John de Tureles, Thomas de Lenes, John Iwain, Roger Troy, Robert de Trillec.

- Notes: (i) Henry de Pembridge see C 25.
- (ii) sir William de Ebroicis (d.1265/1267) and John I le Brun (d.1266). (I.J.Sanders, English Baronies. A Study of their Origin and Descent 1086-1327, p.87)
- (iii) Robert de Trillec, sheriff of Hereford from Easter 1266 to September 1267. (PRO Lists and Indexes, ix)

C 27

1216 x 1227

GRANT in free alms by Roger de Clifford, with the counsel and advice of his wife, Lady Sibyl de Ewias, for the salvation of his soul and that of his wife and their predecessors of 8s. rent in his manor of Bridge Sollers from Stephen of Lulham, who with his heirs, was bound to pay 10s. annually to Roger, to the nuns. However, the residue of the rent and service that Stephen and his heirs owed was retained by Roger.

Witnesses: sir Walter de Clifford, sir Hugh de Mortimer, Simon de Clifford, Thomas de Kenet, Hugh of Kinnersley (*Kinardesleie*), Richard son of Fulc', Miles Pichard, Henry of More (*la More*), Warin de Grendon, Thomas clerk of Nesscliffe (*Neseie*), Walter Caldicott (*Coldecot*) and many others.

- Notes:
- (i) Bridge Sollers (OS Ref: 414426) is a small vill on the River Wye about ten miles north-west of Aconbury. The nuns were granted the appropriation of the church by Walter of Shobdon in 1315. (see above, p.86)
  - (ii) Roger de Clifford, known as Roger Clifford of Tenbury (d.1231) was the second husband of Sibyl de Ewias (d.1236) who was previously married to Robert I of Tregoz (d.1213-14). (I.J.Sanders, English Baronies. A Study of their Origin and Descent 1086-1327, p.43)
  - (iii) Hugh de Mortimer III (d.1227), descended from Ralph I de Mortimer who held Wigmore from William fitzOsbern. (Sanders p.98)

C 28

April 1263

GRANT in free alms by sir John de Turberville, at the request of his wife Ellen, for the maintenance of one chaplain who was to celebrate mass in Aconbury Church in perpetuity for his soul and that of his wife Ellen and for the souls of his predecessors and successors and for all the faithful dead, of 50s. annual rent with appurtenances at Straddle and Winston (*Stradel et Wineston*): 3s. from Roger Ragun for  $\frac{1}{2}$  virgate of land, 6s. from Nicholas Ragun for 1 virgate, 3s. from William son of Walter of Wycombe (*Wicumbe*) for  $\frac{1}{2}$  virgate and 5s. from William Bade for 1 virgate and 2s.4d. from Ralph de Kinintu' for  $\frac{1}{2}$  virgate and 4s.8d. from William Field (*de Felde*) for 1 virgate, and 4s.8d. from William Ragun for  $\frac{1}{2}$  virgate and 3 acres and 3s.4d. from Richard, son of David, for  $\frac{1}{2}$  virgate less 3 acres, and 4s. from William, son of Ralph, for  $\frac{1}{2}$  virgate and 5s. from the Hereford almshouse for all the tenements that they held from sir John, and 40d. from Walter Osel (osier) for that part of the tenement that he held and 2s.2d. from William, son of Thomas, for 2 acres, and 2d. from Hugh Red for 1 messuage and 8d. from Robert Wendot for 1 messuage and 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. from Thomas, son of Peter for 1 messuage and 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. from Robert Ailward for 1 messuage and 3d. from Suecile Brugare for 1 messuage and 8d. from William le Coliare (charcoal burner) for 2 acres of land with 1 messuage and 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. from Nicholas le Coliare for 1 messuage and 6d. from William Textor for 3 acres of land and 6d. from Henry Pat (?) for 3 acres and 1d. from John Ruling for 1 messuage and  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. from Henry of Clehonger (*Clohungre*) for  $\frac{1}{2}$  a messuage and 4d. from William de Grena for 2 acres and 12d. from Sibyl Siward, for 1 acre and 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. from Nicholas Sutor (cobbler) for 9 acres of land with appurtenances. The nuns were granted the land free from all service, customary payment and claims or counterclaims of John and his heirs save scutage due to the

king, that the said tenants might be held to. John and his heirs guaranteed these rents to the nuns without any future charge. Warranty. Sealed with the donor's seal.

Witnesses: master Guy de Agenebur' treasurer of Hereford, William Rufus canon of Hereford, John de Balun, sir Richard de Bagingeden', sir Robert de Chene, Walter Marshall, Reginald Pauncefoot (*Paunsefot*), William de Wera, Richard de Bagingeden' junior, Warin de Grendon, and others. Dated April 1263.

- Notes:
- (i) This grant of rents at '*Stradel et Wineston*' and the reference elsewhere (BCC, p.18 (map)) '*apud Straddele in Blackmarstone*', sometimes Blackmason or Blakemaston (as p.50 above), seem to locate a place called 'Straddle' in the south-western suburbs of Hereford (c.OS Ref: 505382) (BCC pp.18 (map), 19 and 102).
  - (ii) Sir John de Turberville: Turbervilles held the sub-lordship of Coety within the lordship of Glamorgan (Clare) (Davies p.87). John de Turberville kin to Henry de Turberville (d.1240). (I.J.Sanders, English Baronies. A Study of their Origin and Descent 1086-1327, p.21; and see also above, p.116).



C 29

1216 x 1219

GRANT in free alms by Sibyl de Ewias for the health of her soul and the souls of her predecessors and successors, to the nuns of the hospital of St John of Jerusalem at Aconbury of William Molendinarius of Ewias and all his holdings with appurtenances in the manor of Ewyas. Warranty. Sealed with the donor's seal. Witnesses: Godfrey Scudamore (*de Skedemor'*), Alexander de Ewias, Peter de (?), Thomas de Kenet then steward, Hugh de Kynard, William de la (?), Walter (?), Elias of Mordiford (*Elya de Mordu'*), Warin de Grendon then sheriff (?) of Hereford, S' then clerk of the Hereford constabulary and Herbert, the clerk who wrote this charter and many others.

- Notes:
- (i) Sibyl de Ewias (d.1236) was daughter of Robert II de Ewias (d.1198). She married twice:
    - (a) Robert de Tregoz (d.1213/14); and
    - (b) Roger Clifford of Tenbury (d.1231).(I.J.Sanders, English Baronies. A Study of their Origin and Descent 1086-1327, p.43)
  - (ii) Ewyas was an area in the west of Archenfield which was divided into two lordships after the Conquest, Ewyas Lacy and Ewyas Harold. Robert I de Ewias (1120-1150) was responsible for the castle and borough of Ewyas Harold; he established Ewyas Harold as caput of his lands in England and the March (BCC, pp.6 & 82)
  - (iii) Warin de Grendon was sheriff of Hereford 1219, so date of charter could possibly be 1216x1219 (List of Herefordshire sheriffs: PRO Lists and Indexes, ix).
  - (iv) Joan Skydmore was the last prioress of Aconbury (1535-36) before the Dissolution. (see above, p.143)

C 30

1216 x 1236

GRANT in free alms by lady Sibyl de Ewias, lady of the manor of Ewias Harold, for the salvation of her soul and that of her predecessors and successors, of the rent of Stephen de Plessy of Ewias, namely 6s.8d.; from William Molendinarius (miller) of Ewias, to be paid annually in quarterly instalments and if William and Stephen do not pay these rents they will be demanded through the bailiff of her manor.

Warranty. Sealed with the donor's seal. Witnesses:

Godfrey Scudamore (*de Skydimor*), Alexander de Ewias, P' de (?), Thomas de Kenet then steward, and T. his son, Henry de Kynardesley, W. Bastard, Elias of Mordiford (*Mordu'*), R.Fuke, and many others.

- Notes:
- (i) This charter is identical to C 42, including the witnesses.
  - (ii) Sibyl de Ewias and Ewias Harold:  
see C 29 nn.i,ii.
  - (iii) Sir John Scudamore and John Scudamore junior appear as witnesses in C 44.
  - (iv) Joan Skydmore was the last prioress of Aconbury (1535-36) before the Dissolution.  
(see above, p.143)

C 31

1237 x 1241

CONFIRMATION by Walter de Lacy, for the salvation of his soul and that of his predecessors, of all the land with appurtenances, that Margaret, his wife, had granted to the nuns of Aconbury, who observe the Augustinian rule, and which John, king of England, had earlier given Margaret for the foundation of a religious house at Aconbury. Sealed with the donor's seal. Witnesses: sir William de Lacy, sir Simon de Clifford prior of Craswall (*Crassewalle*), Guy de Clifford, Walter le Petit, Simon de Tilleshop, Henry le Blunt, Master Lawrence, William Tregoz, Walter Caldicott (*Caudecot*), and many others.

- Notes: (i) Walter de Lacy II (d.1241)
- (ii) Simon de Clifford was prior of Craswall, an alien Benedictine monastery, founded 1225, dissolved 1462. (M.D.Knowles and R.Neville Hadcock, Medieval Religious Houses: England and Wales, p.103)
- (iii) The pope had allowed Aconbury to transfer to Augustinian rule after lengthy and expensive litigation (see above pp.16-19 and p.104).
- (iv) There is a printed transcription of this charter (MA, vi, 490, number III)

C 32

1216 x 1231

GRANT in free alms by Walter de Lacy for the salvation of his soul and that of his children and his ancestors, to the nuns of the hospital of St John of Jerusalem of Aconbury, of 30 acres of land with appurtenances from Homme Wood near Merbach extending from Haveghine Hall (*Hale*) to the land of Walter, son of Ralph of Homme. Warranty. Sealed with the donor's seal. Witnesses: sir Walter de Clifford, Roger de Clifford, Simon de Clifford, Hugh of Dudley (*Dudelege*) and Hugh his son, Philip of Colville (*Colevile*), Walter de Dunir'(?), Walter of Caldicott (*Caudecot*) then acting steward, Simon clerk, Vernon of Homme, Gilbert de Siplade and many others.

- Notes:
- (i) Walter de Lacy d.1241, Roger de Clifford (d.1231).
  - (ii) Homme Wood: west of Merbach Hill (303447), the Bach Brook ran through a large wooded area represented now only by the place name Middlewood (OS Ref: 289447) (BCC, p.43). This woodland was probably at Holme Lacy (BCC p.104).
  - (iii) This generous gift was granted during the period of litigation (see above, pp.16-19).

C 33

1216 x 1241

GRANT in free alms by William de Bathonia clerk, for the salvation of his soul and that of his ancestors, of all his land in Homme with its appurtenances, that was held by Peter Undergod and which was given to William for services by Margaret de Lacy, William and Peter paying the same service to the chief lords annually as they were accustomed to do. Sealed with the donor's seal. Witnesses: sir Walter de Lacy, sir Hugh of Kinnersley (*Kinardeley'*), Almaricus of the Park (*Parco*), sir Roger le Poer, sir Miles Pichard, sir William de Lacy knight, Vernon of Homme, William de Stipelad, Walter son of Walter, Henry Crast, John (?), Walter Syward and others.

- Notes: (i) Walter de Lacy (d.1241)
- (ii) William de Bathonia appears in Feudal Aids, II, 1284-1431, p.245, granting land in Homme to the nuns, thereby establishing him as a holder of feudal land, which had been given by Margaret de Lacy (see above, p.121).

C 34

1216 x 1244

Hugh de Kilpeck (*Kylpec*) relinquished and quitclaimed for him and his heirs in perpetuity, to the Lady Margaret de Lacy and the prioress and convent of Aconbury (*Cornebury*) whatever rights he had as forester in lands and other properties which they held in free alms of the lord king at Aconbury (*Cornebury*). Sealed with the donor's seal. Witnesses: sir John of Monmouth, William de Lacy, Richard of Foy, Henry de la Radel, William Tregoz, Robert de Kilpeck (*Kylpec*), David clerk, and many others.

Note: Hugh de Kilpeck died 1244 (see above, p.118).

C 35

1263

GRANT in free alms by Hugh le Poer, son of Otwell le Poer, for the salvation of his soul and that of his wife Gillian and the souls of his ancestors and successors of 12s.3d. annual rent with all appurtenances that he received from Adam, son of William of Barrow (*la Barewe*), for a holding that he held from Hugh in Barrow (*Barewe*) in the parish of Orleton (*Orleslen*) and with all services. Warrantly. Sealed with the donor's seal. Witnesses: sir Henry of Bradley (*Bradeleg'*), Philip de Greta, John of Caldecott (*Caudecok*), Adam de Bosco, Hugh of Brockhill, John of Ford (*Forda*), Warin de Grendon, Hugh Bishop (*Bissop*), and others. Dated 1263.

- Notes: (i) Hugh le Poer married Margaret de Cormeilles (1217) who died 1236, and Hugh answered for 2½ knights fees, i.e. one quarter of the barony of Tarrington which he acquired by his marriage. (I.J.Sanders, English Baronies. A Study of their Origin and Descent 1086-1327, p.86, and see also above, p.117)
- (ii) *Valor Ecclesiasticus* assessed Barrow (*Barewe*) at 26s.5d. (*Valor*, III, pp.17-18)

C 36

1237 x 1263

Charter of master Hugh de Furches

GRANT in free alms by master Hugh de Furches to the nuns of St Augustine of Aconbury for his soul and the souls of John de Furches (*Buche*) and lady Sibyl of Winston and for the souls of his ancestors and all the faithful dead, of 3s. annual rent with appurtenances which he used to receive from Agnes, daughter of Nicholas de Furches, from land with appurtenances in Winston that lies next to a messuage that the lady of Winston once held. Warranty. Sealed with the donor's seal. Witnesses: sir Henry of Bradley (*Bradeleg*), Hugh of Fraxino (*Fraxin'*), Hugh le Poer, Geoffrey de Morton (*Giffr' de Mortu'*), Robert de Furches, Walter Syward, Walter Savage (*Sauage*), and others.

- Notes:
- (i) Hugh de Furches: The family of Furches was widespread in Herefordshire between 1086 and 1308 and could be classified as a prominent landowning family and gained knightly status later; sir Thomas Fuchs, kt., 1513 (W.A.Shaw, The Knights of England, Vols.1 and 2, and also BCC, p.36)
  - (ii) The approximate site of Winston (and Straddle) (c.OS Ref: 505382) was on the south-western outskirts of Hereford. (BCC, pp.18 (map), 19 and 102). See also C 28 n.i.
  - (iii) In 1250 Sir Henry of Bradley (*Bradeleg*) was sheriff of Hereford for two years.



C 37

1216 x 1223

GRANT by Geoffrey de Morton and Felicia de Furches his wife, of all their land in Hereford in Castle Street with all appurtenances, namely one messuage held by Mansellus Cocus and two messuages that Adam son of Robert Faber (smith) held, and one messuage that Wymarca Textrix (female weaver) held and two messuages that Maurice Janitor (door keeper) held. The nuns were required to render annually one pair of gloves at Hereford fair or 1d. whichever they preferred, and they had to pay to the king's bailiffs of Hereford 12d. and to William de Bodenham 8d. for all secular service. Warranty. Sealed with the donor's seal. Witnesses: Thomas de Anes' then sheriff of Hereford, Walter Caldecott (*Kaldecoc*), Nicholas Secular', William de la Pipe, Richard son of Amelia (*Amel'*), John Crast (*Crasti*), William Amy, and many others.

- Notes: (i) Geoffrey de Morton and Felicia de Furches: Geoffrey probably belonged to one of the 'settler' families which resisted the Welsh rebels in Kidwelly in the south-west (4106). Felicia de Furches: see C 36 n.i (R.R.Davies, Lordship and Society in the March of Wales 1282-1400, p.350)
- (ii) Thomas de Anes' was sheriff of Hereford between 1217 and 1223. (PRO Lists and Indexes, ix).

C 38

1216 x 1223

GRANT in perpetual alms by Richard, son of Emeline, citizen of Hereford, with the assent and consent of Alice his wife and his heirs, of two shops in Hereford, namely those that are between the house of Gervase Cressaunt and Herbert, son of Urset, in the High Street, for a rent of 6d. annually, to be paid at Michaelmas; moreover Richard granted the nuns 2s.6d. from one of his shops that was situated on the river bank outside St Audoen's (St Owen's) gate. He granted these shops together with their rents to the nuns for the salvation of his soul and that of his wife and children and all his ancestors. Sealed with the donor's seal. Witnesses: Thomas dean of Hereford, master William de Ria archdeacon, Master Albinus chancellor, Thomas de Anes' then sheriff of Hereford, William de la Pipe (*Pipa*) then provost, Henry Crast, William Seissell', Randolf Tinctor (painter), John Crast, and many others.

- Notes:
- (i) Some of the witnesses were leading people in the town and Richard, son of Emeline, was probably a rising entrepreneur.
  - (ii) Thomas de Anes': sheriff during 1217 when he was succeeded by Warin de Grendon and then took office again 1221 to 1223. (see C 37)

C 39 (PRO E/315/55, Folio 73)

1216 x 1237

GRANT by Gilbert son of Ralph of Ashperton, to Richard, son of Emeline of Hereford, for homage and service, of one meadow called *Cherlescroft* with free right of entry and exit and other appurtenances, to have and to hold from him and his heirs to Richard and his assigns. Richard was to pay annually to Gilbert and his heirs 2d. at the feast of St Ethelbert for all services, customary payments and claims; for this grant Richard paid 12 marks and 2 cows worth 1 mark (*premanibus*). Warranty. Sealed with the donor's seal. Witnesses: Walter of Ashperton, William de Solle, Henry Crast (*Crest*), Roger then parson of Stoke, Simon priest, and many others.

- Notes:
- (i) Ashperton (OS Ref: 642415): about 10 miles east of Hereford.
  - (ii) Richard Emeline: grant of shops in Hereford (C 38)
  - (iii) William de Solle: 'Stoke Edith, Westhide and Ashperton appear in the Domesday Book under headings of Ralph de Tosny's lands and sandwiched between them is a reference to Ralph having given half a hide of land in the vicinity to one of his knights. This knight was almost certainly William de Scolle' (or Solle?) (BCC p.216).
  - (iv) Roger, parson of Stoke: see C 40.
  - (v) St Ethelbert is patron saint of Hereford Cathedral.

C 40 (PRO E/315/55, Folio 74)

1216 x 1237

AGREEMENT by Roger, rector of Stoke, to the grant which was made by Richard son of Emeline, a citizen of Hereford, with the consent of Alice his wife and his heirs, for the salvation of his soul and that of his wife and children and all his ancestors, of a meadow called *Cherlecroft* that he bought from Gilbert son of Ralph of Ashperton for 12 marks and 2 cows worth 1 mark, with free right of entry and other appurtenances. The nuns were required to pay Gilbert and his heirs or his assigns 2d. at the feast of St Ethelbert and to pay to Stoke Church 6d. for oil for one lamp. Sealed with Roger's seal. Witnesses: sir Walter of Hyde, Nicholas Secularius, Walter of Ashperton (*Esperton*), Walter de Lahulle (?), William de Bridge Sollers (*Solle*), Master Moyse (musician), Thomas Servient' (servant) de Stoke, and many others.

- Notes: (i) 'Stoc' can be identified as Stoke Edith (OS Ref: 604406). See C 39 n.iii.
- (ii) Ashperton (OS Ref: 642415): about 10 miles east of Hereford.

C 40 (PRO E/326/891, Folio 74)

1216 x 1237

An almost identical copy of C 40 (PRO E/315/55, Folio 74) but it is in a different and excellent hand. Roger, the rector of Stoke Edith (*Stoc*), probably retained this separate copy of the charter made so that he could prove his claim for 6d. for oil for his church. This copy refers to Aconbury as a hospital of St John of Jerusalem and can be dated 1216 x 1237. The witnesses are identical for both charters.

PRO E/315/55 C 40 does not call Aconbury a hospital, so these two copies of C 40 could have been written during the time of the changeover as this took several years.

C 41

1216 x 1236

GRANT in free alms by Sibyl de Ewias, daughter of Robert de Ewias, for the salvation of her soul and that of her predecessors and successors and moved by divine piety, of the tithes of the toll of her corn mill at *Ethon* to the brothers and sisters of Aconbury. Sealed with the donor's seal. Witnesses: sir Walter de Lacy, sir Roger de Clifford, William de Ewias, Richard son of Fulk, Hugh of Kinnersley (*Kynardesleg'*), Robert Tregoz and his brothers, and many others.

- Notes:
- (i) Sibyl de Ewias d.1236, see C 29.
  - (ii) The mill at *Ethon* located at Eyton (475616) 2 miles north west of Leominster on the river Lugg.
  - (iii) 'brothers and sisters' indicated possibility that Aconbury could have been a 'mixed' house at the time of the foundation. (see above p.15)
  - (iv) This mill was involved in litigation (A Descriptive Catalogue of Ancient Deeds in the Public Record Office, I, B 1427). See also above p.68.
  - (v) There is a printed transcript of this charter in MA, vi, 491, number VII

C 42

1216 x 1236

GRANT in free alms by lady Sibyl of Ewyas Harold, of 6s.8d.  
to be paid by Stephen de Plessy of Ewyas and William  
Molendinarius (miller) of the same manor. Warranty. Sealed  
with the donor's seal.

Note: This charter is identical to C 30 including the  
witnesses.

C 43

20 July 1262

This charter is identical in content, date and witnesses to C 11 with the exception that, despite the total of 23s.9d. given on line 3, the total of the rents in fact adds up to 23s.7d. However, in C 43 there is an additional rent of 2d. for two messuages and six acres of land from Roisia de Walneleg' making a total of 23s.9d. granted to Katherine de Lacy by William de Bles.



C 44

15 August 1421

FINAL CONCORD made between Anna Barry the prioress and the convent of Aconbury on the one part, and Eva ap Rhys, mother of John ap Harry on the other. Eva acknowledged that she held charters, land and holdings that formerly belonged to Roger, Edgar and Nicholas Bagen in the lordship of Vowchurch (*Fowechurch*) and would pay annually 9s. twice a year, namely at Michaelmas and the Annunciation of the BVM. This concord was made at Dore Abbey on 15 August 1421 in the presence of Richard Clifford abbot of Dore, sir John Scudamore and Thomas of Hay (on Wye) (*la Haye*), Rufus ap Harry and Richard Abinhale and John Scudamore junior, Richard de la Haye and Howel ap Howel. Eva was required to pay, at the same time, 20s. to (Redoake ?), and she would not have to release any of the land that William Wycombe is claiming.

- Notes:
- (i) Anna Barry: see above pp.141 (Table 9) and 144.
  - (ii) Final concord: This is the final agreement of a document recording a case in the Court of Common Pleas settling a dispute between two parties. It has proved difficult to identify the meaning of the last few lines of the charter.
  - (iii) Sir John Scudamore and Thomas de la Haye were both supporters of Henry V and they were MPs for Herefordshire 1413 and 1414.
  - (iv) Joan Skydmore was the last prioress of Aconbury (1535-36) before the Dissolution: see above p.143 (Table 9).

C 45

21 March 1258

RELEASE by Joanna, widow of Thomas Albus, sworn in the presence of master Thomas Bluet, rector of St Nicholas, Hereford, and many parishioners of the church, of all right and claim that she had in all the land that she and Thomas her husband granted to Philip Rufus of Stapleton (*Stepulton*) for 4 marks (*premanibus*), saving an annual rent of a pair of gloves, value 1d. She swore to hold to this agreement in the hands of Thomnas Bluet, and, if the pledge is broken, she will give 20s. to the cathedral church. Sealed by the donor and Thomas Bluet.

- Notes:
- (i) There is no list of witnesses (nor would one expect any in this sort of document).
  - (ii) Parts of this charter are badly damaged by tincture of galls (see Cartulary p.1) and are therefore illegible.
  - (iii) See also Cs 84 and 85.

FOLIOS 82, 83, 84 (E/315/55)

1216 x 1237

This charter is not numbered.

Sister Constantia, *magistra* of the hospital of St John of Jerusalem, with the consent of her sisters, granted William Amy a messuage in Hereford with appurtenances that lay between the king's highway and land that belonged to William, son of Ralph; William Amy was required to pay to the nuns 3s. annually, half at Michaelmas, and the other half at the Annunciation of the BVM, for all service and claim and customary payment. William quitclaimed to the nuns any right and claim that he might have had in the messuage and he pledged on oath that he would be faithful to the nuns' church concerning the rent, paying at the statutory periods, and should any loss be incurred by the nuns, William would make compensation. Neither would he alienate the land without their assent and will pay 12d. rent due to the king.

Chirograph. Both parties signed. Witnesses: William de la Pipe (*Pipa*), John son of Seric, Walter son of Edric then provosts of Hereford, Hugh son of Ailwin', Henry Crast, Randolf *Tinctor* (painter), Walter of Flanders (*Flandrensis*), Jordan le Werror, William le Panni (*Panni'*), John Crast, and many others.

- Notes: (i) This charter can be dated to the early days of the foundation: see above, p.138 (Table 9).
- (ii) For information about chirographs see C 17 (i).
- (iii) William Amy was a witness for property in Hereford (C 37), as well as being a tenant of the nuns.

C 46

GRANT in free alms by William Bade, son of William Bade of Hinton in Straddle, for the salvation of his soul and that of his ancestors and successors, 14d worth of annual rents, namely 13d which Robert le Crochur paid him and 1d paid by Thomas de Goshulle and 1s 10d as commutation for heriots and reliefs when they were due. Warranty. Sealed with the donor's seal. Witnesses: Richard son of Gilbert de Chandos, William of Merbach (Manbache), William de la Felde, William son of Richard, Ralph son of Adam, Richard Clericus, Philip chaplain, and many others.

- Notes: (i) Hinton in Straddle (OS Ref: 341387): Straddle was the hundred to the west of Hereford (the Golden Valley) (BCC pp.19 & 163).
- (ii) Richard, son of Gilbert de Chandos: in 1127 Great Malvern Priory exchanged land called *Terra de Strada* in Peterchurch, given by Henry I, for the manor of Hatfield. The Chandos family built the castle of Straddle, at Snodhill (OS Ref: 320403) (BCC p.164).

C 47

GRANT in free alms by William Bade of Hinton, for the salvation of his soul and that of his ancestors and successors, of 2s 6d worth of annual rents in the vill of Overhinton with all appurtenances, namely 13d that was paid by Robert le Crochur, and 1d that was paid by Thomas de Gosulle' and 12d that was paid by Walter Bade and 2d paid by William son of William son of Martin, and 2d paid by David de Pustun'. These rents were to be paid on the anniversary of sir Matthew de Gamages for a pittance. Warranty. Sealed with the donor's seal. Witnesses: Henry of Bridge Sollers (*de Solers*), Walter d'Evreux (*Devereus*), Roger Ragun, Richard son of Gilbert, William de la Felde, and many others.

Note: Walter Devereus: possibly kin to William d'Evreux who held the small manor of Putley under Roger de Lacy (W.H.Cooke, Collections towards the History and Antiquities of the County of Hereford, in continuation of Duncomb's History, iii, pp.54-57).

C 48

GRANT by William Bade of Overhinton to Laurence of Clehonger (*Clehunger*), for 1 mark (*premanibus*) of 16d annual rent that Robert, chaplain of Sparholt (*Srrholte*) and Richard de Chandos paid to William twice yearly, half at Michaelmas and half at the Annunciation of the BVM, with all services. Warranty. Sealed with the donor's seal. Witnesses: Roger Ragon, Roger his son, William de la Felde (*Felda*), William son of Richard, Richard de Wycombe (*Wycumbe*), and many others.

C 49

GRANT and quitclaim by Laurence de Clehunger for the salvation of his soul, all his right and claims in 16d worth of annual rents that he bought of William Bade of Overhinton, for the support of the nuns' refectory. Laurence has given the charter he had from William Bade for greater security of the transaction. Witnesses: Roger Ragun, William de la Felde (*Felda*), William Jago (*Yago*), William son of Richard, Walter son of William, and many others.

Note: William Jago, possibly kin of Isabel Iagon (C 50).

C 50

GRANT and quitclaim in free alms by Isabel Iagon of annual rents worth 22d., namely 8d. from Adam Goch, 8d. from Walter the Welshman (*Walencis*), 6d. from Richard Clericus, with all services. Sealed with the donor's seal. Witnesses: Roger Ragun, Nicholas Ragun, William Bade, William de Campo, Ralph son of Adam, and others.

- Notes: (i) There is no mention from whence these rents were derived but as C 50 comes between land granted in Hinton by William Bade (Cs 46,47,48,49) and rent for a messuage in Hinton (C 51), possibly Isabel's grant of 22d. rents is for property in Hinton. Moreover some of the witnesses are identical for these charters.
- (ii) William de Campo is presumably the same person as William de la Felde (Cs 46,47,48,49).



C 51

GRANT in free alms by John le Lur, son of David Lur of Hinton, of the rent paid by Richard Clericus of St Peter's in Straddle, for 1 messuage in Hinton; the nuns were required to pay 6d to the feudal lord at Michaelmas and the Annunciation of the BVM. Sealed with the donor's seal. Witnesses: John chaplain of Wigau (*Wygeo*), Henry the chaplain, William Bade, Richard de Chandos of Wilmastone (*Wilmeston'*), Richard son of Gilbert de Chandos (*Chand'*), and many others.

- Notes: (i) See above, p.122
- (ii) St Peter's Straddle is Peterchurch (OS Ref: 345385) (BCC p.162).
- (iii) *Wygeo*: present day Old Wigau Farm (OS Ref: 371290) may be *Wygeo* or Old Wigau (BCC pp.75-76).
- (iv) Chandos family: land around Snodhill (OS Ref: 320403) passed in the early years of the 12th century to the family of Chandos, of which Robert I de Chandos, lord of Caerlon, d.1122, was head. Both witnesses, Richard de Chandos de Wilmeston' and Richard son of Gilbert, were probably lesser scions of the family. (I.J.Sanders, English Baronies. A Study of their Origin and Descent 1086-1327, p.79, and see also C 46 n.ii.)
- (v) Richard de Chandos de Wilmeston: present day farm at Wilmastone (OS Ref: 340401).

C 52

c.1275

Charter of Roger Codau of Rowlestone (*Rolveston'*) that he made in the presence of John de Lacy.

GRANT by Roger Codauh, son of Wasteyl Codauh, to John son of Hugh de Lacy all his land with appurtenances in Rowlestone (*Rolveston'*), with the proviso that he granted one clove at Michaelmas to Roger and rendered to the chief lords all services owed. John paid 60 marks (*premanibus*) to Roger Codauh. Warranty sealed with the donor's seal. Witnesses: William de Essa, Thomas le Petit, Philip of Skenfrith (*Skenefrid*), Philip de Abrchal, William son of Owen (*Oweyn*), Hywel son of Run'(?), John son of Maurice, and many others.

Note: For dating, see C 53 which is dated 14 November 1275.

C 53

14 November 1275

Charter of John de Lacy of Rowlestone (*Rolvestone*)

GRANT and quitclaim by John de Lacy, son of Hugh de Lacy, of all his land with all tenements, rights and appurtenances, without any reservation that he held in Rowlestone (*Rolvestone*) by a grant of Roger Codauh, son of Wasteyl; for this grant the prioress and nuns paid John 80 marks.

Warranty sealed with the donor's seal. Witnesses: Thomas le Britun canon of Hereford, Warin de Grendon, William Bot', Roger the Welshman (*le Waleys*), Philip of Skenfrith (*Skenefrid*), Griffin' Daniel, Roger of Bradley (*Bradeleia*), Philip of Aberhall (*Aberhale*), Thomas le Petit, and many others. Dated at Aconbury, 14 November 1275.

Note: John de Lacy delivered the deeds to the nuns of Aconbury and this grant and quitclaim was confirmed. (A Descriptive Catalogue of Ancient Deeds in the Public Record Office, II, B 3102, 19 October 1275).

C 54

c.1275

GRANT by Griffin Cuth of Llanwarne (*Lanwarn*) to Laurence de Wike for 40s. (*premanibus*) of 12 acres of land with appurtenances that Roger son of Wasteyl granted to him in Rowlestone (*Rolvestone*). Laurence and his heirs or assigns were to render to the lord of Rowlestone (*Rolvestone*) 2d. at Michaelmas, 2d. on St Andrew's Day, 2d. at the feast of the Annunciation of the BVM, and 2d. at the nativity of St John the Baptist and three suits of court each year for all customary services and claims. Sealed with the donor's seal. Witnesses: William ap Owen, Philip of Skenfrith (*Skenefrid*), Philip Aberhall (*Abervale*), John Mories, Meredith of Birch (*Burches*), and others.

Note: This charter can probably be dated by comparison with Cs 52 and 53.

C 55

2nd half of the 13th century

Charter of Laurence de Clehunger

GRANT in free alms and quitclaim by Laurence de Clehunger for the salvation of his soul and that of his wife Hawyse and all the faithful dead, of 12 acres of land with appurtenances that Griffin Couth granted to him in Rowlestone (*Rolvestone*). In exchange the nuns gave Laurence during his lifetime land that Roger Romanus gave them in Twyford. Sealed with the donor's seal. Witnesses: William Bot', William ap Owen, Hugh ap Lowerth, Lowerth Marniu'(?), Philip of Skenfrith (*Skenefrid*), Meredith of Birch (*Birches*), Robert of Mansel Lacy (or Gamage) (*Malineshull*), and many others.

- Notes: (i) Clehunger: Clehonger (OS Ref: 465379), about 3 miles south-west of Hereford
- (ii) See C 59 for grant in Twyford.
- (iii) This charter can probably be dated by comparison with Cs 52 and 53.

C 56

Quitclaim of Margery, widow of Griffin Couth

QUITCLAIM by Margery, widow of Griffin Couth in free widowhood, to Laurence de Cornebury for 10s. (*premanibus*) of any right or claim that she had in land in Rowlestone (*Rolveston*) that Laurence bought from her husband. Sealed with the donor's seal. Witnesses: Hugh ap Wogan, Philip ap Morit', Griffin ap Sex', Philip ap Seisyl, Adam ap Seisyl, and many others.

Note: see C 54 Griffin Cuth

C 57

Late 13th century, possibly 1255 to 1274

GRANT by Agnes, widow of Stephen, son of Richard, in free widowhood, to Roger Romanus, clerk, for 25 marks (*premanibus*), all her land with all the appurtenances, that she had in Twyford with the proviso that Roger must render annually to the king three barbed arrows and to Agnes 1d at Easter for all services and customary payments. Agnes and her heirs guaranteed, to Roger and his heirs or assigns, all the said land and all produce from it. Warranty. Sealed with the donor's seal. Witnesses: Roger de Troy, Robert Werlage, Humphrey Clericus, Walter le Want(?), Philip Sagittarius (archer), Stephen of Usk (*Uske*), Reginald le Mercer (weaver), and others.

- Notes:
- (i) Roger Romanus appeared as witness for three charters dated 1255 (C 78), 1274 (C 90) and 1267 (C 92)
  - (ii) Philip Sagittarius, an archer, may just possibly have been included among the witnesses in order to oversee the handing over of three barbed arrows to the king.
  - (iii) Roger de Troy was also a witness to C 78 (dated 1255), so this charter should most likely be dated nearer that date.

C 58

Late 13th century, possibly 1255 to 1274

GRANT by Roger Romanus to Nicholas le Crampe of Twyford, of all his land at Huntley with appurtenances that he bought of Agnes Belot, with the proviso that Nicholas should render annually thereafter to Roger and his heirs 8 loads of hard wheat and 1 load of oats at the feast of All Saints for all secular service and claims. Warranty. Sealed with the donor's seal. Witnesses: sir William vicar of Callow (*Calewe*), Hugh de Newent (*Newe't*), Walter de Newent, William the Frenchman (*le Fraunceys*), Roger of Hinton (*Hineton'*), and others.

- Notes:
- (i) Huntley was probably the present site of Huntless Farm (OS Ref: 513352) near Twyford (OS Ref: 506345) (BCC p.52).
  - (ii) Roger Romanus: see C 57.
  - (iii) Agnes Belot: widow of Stephen, son of Richard (C 57)



C 59

late 13th century possibly 1255 to 1274

GRANT in free alms and quitclaim by Roger Romanus of Hereford, clerk, for the salvation of his soul and that of his ancestors and his successors and all his benefactors and all the faithful dead, of 8 loads of wheat and 1 load of oats, annual rent which Nicholas le Crumpe of Twyford was accustomed to pay annually between the feast of Michaelmas and the feast of All Saints for his holding in Twyford. The nuns gave all spiritual benefit to Roger in their church. Sealed with the donor's seal. Witnesses: Master John de Drunshope, Walter de la Barre, Richard Moniword, Reginald Monyword, John Leyfot, Robert Edrich, citizens of Hereford, Warin de Grendon (*Grenden*), Thomas le Petit, Philip of Skenfrith (*Skenefrith*), Richard son of Gilbert of Clehonger (*Clehangr'*), Laurence of Clehonger (*Clehang'*), William of Callow (*la Calewe*), and others.

- Notes: (i) The grant of wheat and oats held by Roger Romanus and given to the nuns was exchanged for land in Rowlestone (*Rolvestone*) (C 55).
- (ii) Roger Romanus: see C 57.

C 60

Charter of Hugh de Kingeston' of Twyford

GRANT in free alms by Hugh de Kingeston' of Twyford for the salvation of his soul and that of his ancestors of all his land which he had in the field of Twyford with all its appurtenances. Warranty. Sealed with the donor's seal.

Witnesses: John ap Hugh (*Hue*), Edmund the Welshman (*le Waleys*), William ap Owain, Stephen Wogan, ? de la Flagg, and many others.

Note: Kingston: south-west of Hereford in the district of Mawfield (BCC p.15).

C 61

1290 x 1305

GRANT by Isabella Catur (or Catour C 62) to John de Vaucolour, rector of the church of Ludlow, of all her land that was called *margireweld* with all its appurtenances; John was to render annually to the chief lord of the fee service and customary payment. Sealed with the donor's seal.

Witnesses: Edmund le Galey, John son of Hugh, Stephen Wogan, John de Aula, John le Maister de Twyford, and many others.

- Notes:
- (i) John de Vaucolour, rector of Ludlow from 1290 to 1305 (Register of Richard Swinfield 1283-1317, p.528), was a scion of the Geneville family (see above, p.114 and Cs 2 and 62).
  - (ii) It has been difficult to locate '*margireweld*', however, on 19 January 1413 'At a court holden at Acornbury, John ap Meurec surrendered to the lady lands in Caldycote and land called Margeryslond was granted to Richard Pennoc, Alice his wife and a future son of theirs' (J.H.Matthews, Collections towards the History and Antiquities of the County of Hereford, in continuation of Duncumb's History, pp.43-4), but there is no mention of the whereabouts of this land apart from the known fact that '*Caldycote*' was in Aconbury (Caldicott: BCC p.22).

Charter of sir John de Vaucolour, parson of Ludlow

GRANT in free alms by sir John de Vaucolour, parson of the church of St Laurence, Ludlow, of all the land which he had in the field which is called *margiraweld*, and which he bought from Isabella Catour (or Catur C 61) for 100d. (*premanibus*). For this gift the nuns agreed on behalf of themselves and their successors to celebrate his obit annually and on the day of his obit to hold a service with music including a dirge and mass; the resident prioress was to give the nuns  $\frac{1}{2}$  mark as a gift on the day of John's obit. Sealed with the donor's seal. Witnesses: William of Fernilegh (Foleinle) (?), Adonc (?) parson of Mansel Lacy (*Malineshulle*), John de la Sale, Hugh of Kingston (*Kingeston'*), and many others.

- Notes:
- (i) This charter is written in mediaeval French (see above, p.8).
  - (ii) John de Vaucolour, rector of Ludlow from 1290 to 1305 (Register of Richard Swinfield 1283-1317, p.528), was a scion of the Geneville family (see above, p.114 and Cs 2 and 62).
  - (iii) There appears to have been a musical tradition at the church which had a Song School as early as 1200 and in 1304 Agnes Orm left 1d. to each of 60 clerks 'singing psalms for my soul'. Lloyd D., The Parish Church of St Laurence, a History and Guide, Ludlow PCC, (1980) p.4. (no source is cited here).

GRANT in free alms by Elias of Sutton (*Sotton*) of annual rents in Lower Hayton (*Heytone*) worth 2 marks which he had by the grant of Lady Maud de Ebroicis, namely 22s. from William of Hampton (*Hamnon*) for 1 virgate of land and 4s.8d. from Richard son of Robert of Lower Hayton. Warrantly. Sealed with the donor's seal. Witnesses: sir Roger de Baskerville, sir Roger Tyrel (*Tirrel*) knights, William de Clifford, master Richard of Hayton (*Heyton*), master William Andren, and many others.

- Notes: (i) 12th February 1301. Licence in consideration of a fine made before the bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, the treasurer, by the prioress and convent of Aconbury for the alienation in mortmain to them by Elias of Sutton of 2 marks of rent in Hayton (Calendar of Patent Rolls 1292-1301, p.571)
- (ii) Lady Maud de Ebroicis was the daughter of Sibyl de Cormeille d.1256, by her second husband Hugh Giffard and she was the sister of Walter Giffard, archbishop of York, d.1279. Maud married William de Ebroicis, d.1265. She was given land by Thomas of Bridge Sollers (Solers), a descendant of the Cormeille family who had originated from Normandy c.1066. (I.J.Sanders, English Baronies. A Study of their Origin and Descent 1086-1327, pp.86,87).

C 64

1288 x 1326

QUITCLAIM by sir Thomas de Beiscyn to Catherine de Geneville, prioress of Aconbury, and the convent, and their successors of all right and claim he had or could have in 2 marks annual rent with appurtenances in Lower Hayton issuing from lands and holdings that William of Hampton (*Hanman*) and Richard son of Robert of Lower Hayton held from the prioress and convent which had been granted by Lady Maud de Ebroicis. Sealed with Thomas de Beiscyn's seal. Witnesses: Elias de Sutton, John de Aldehinte', John of Bromfield (Shropshire), Reginald de Halghtone, Robert Brown (*Bronn*), William de Sutton (*Suttone*) near Sugwas, and many others.

Notes: (i) See above, p.123

(ii) Catherine de Geneville, prioress 1288-1326  
see above pp.138/9 (Table 9) and 150.

(iii) Lady Maud de Ebroicis: see C 63, n.ii.

C 65

1297 x 1314

Charter of Roger Baldcath

GRANT by Roger Baldcath of Monmouth to his daughter Denise (Dionisia), for her service, part of one burgage with its appurtenances in Monmouth that is near to the land that John Everard held opposite the cemetery of St Mary of Monmouth, 23 feet wide, and reaching from the royal road as far as land that Henry Ball (*Bol*) held. Dionisia was required to pay 1d. annually to Roger and his heirs at Easter for all services. Warranty. Sealed with the donor's seal.

Witnesses: Elias Mael, Robert le Fenr' (hay merchant), Walter Box (*Boite* (?)), Richard Server, Geoffrey Cubbel, David Tissor' (weaver), William Prodefeme, John clerico (clerk), and many others.

Charter of sir Henry of Lancaster

CONFIRMATION by Henry of Lancaster, Lord of Monmouth, stating that Roger Baldcath had granted to the nuns of Aconbury one messuage with appurtenances in Monmouth that was next to Everard's land opposite the cemetery of St Mary, 23 feet wide for an annual rent of 1d. Dionisia Baldcath, Walter Wade and John Wade had disseised the nuns of this property, but the prioress of Aconbury, Catherine, brought a writ against them in the court at Monmouth and, by a jury of 12 men, recovered the messuage. Henry of Lancaster confirmed the prioress and convent in possession of the property in free alms with an annual rent of 1d. to himself. Sealed with Henry of Lancaster's seal. Witnesses: Henry de Pembridge (Penebrugge) knight, John le Rous, Hugh of Preston (Prestone), Thomas the Welshman (le Waleys), Thomas of Huntley (Hunteleye), and many others.

Notes: (i) Henry of Lancaster (1281-1345) was the second son of Edmund Crouchback (son of Henry III) d.1296 and Eleanor of Provence. In 1297 Henry inherited the castles of Monmouth, Kidwelly and Carwathlan. In 1301 he was described as Lord of Monmouth in a letter to Boniface VIII from the barons. (DNB xxvi, and I.J.Sanders, English Baronies. A Study of their Origin and Descent 1086-1327, pp.42,61,65,125,127)

(ii) sir Henry de Pembridge: see C 25 n.ii.



C 67

Saturday 23 February 1314

CONFIRMATION by Henry of Lancaster, lord of Monmouth, that he has granted to his very dear and much loved in god, Dame Catherine de Geneville, prioress of Aconbury and her nuns, forever of an exemption of the tax on ale called 'tolcester' brewed in a tenement which the convent owned in Monmouth. Henry also granted the nuns a toll-free exemption on the wheat which was used in the brewing. The nuns were required to sell their ale from the messuage in perpetuity. Sealed with Henry's seal. Dated Saturday 23 February 1314 at Grosmont.

- Notes: (i) This charter is written in mediaeval French (see above p.8).
- (ii) Henry of Lancaster: see C 66 n.i.
- (iii) The name of the tax 'tolcester' derives from a toll of one sester (on ale), a liquid measure.
- (iv) Dating: 'the Saturday following the day of ashes (Ash Wednesday) the year of the reign of *le roy* Edward (Edward II)'.

C 68

1216 x 1237

GRANT in free alms to the nuns of the hospital of St John of Jerusalem of Aconbury (*Cornebury*) by John de Wyneston' of 12d. rent from his acre of land in Winston (*Wyneston'*) that is in the field next to the Wye between Winston (*Wyneston'*) and the Wye (*Weye*), at *la Sloch*. This rent was to be paid twice yearly in order that his grant should remain valid for the salvation of his soul and that of Sibyl his wife and their ancestors and successors. Warranty. Sealed.

Witnesses: William chaplain of St John's, Hugh and Robert chaplains of St Martin's, William de la Pipe, Richard son of Emeline, Gilbert Waren' (maybe 'son of Warin': see C 76), Ralph of Grafton (*Graston*), John de Furches, Nicholas de Furches his brother, Robert de Furches, Walter Rufus of Winston (*Wynestun'*), and many others.

Notes: (i) Winston: see C 36 n.(ii)

(ii) Furches family: see C 36 (i)

C 69

GRANT by Robert de Furches to Geoffrey de Morton in frank marriage with Felicia, his daughter, one burgage in Castle Street Hereford and one messuage in the same street near the land of Robert Veneswert that Robert de Furches held from him rendering annually 12d. to the king for the burgage and 8d. for the messuage to Robert Veneswert to be paid twice yearly for all services. Sealed with the donor's seal.

Witnesses: Richard de Stokot, Walter his son, Walter de Muchegros (*Muchelgros*), William de Furches (*Furch'*), Walter d'Evreux (*Evre'*), Richard of Loges, Robert of Boclinton, William of Breinton, Nicholas Seculari, William son of Herbert, Adam Tebelin', Philip *Clerico* (clerk), and many others.

Note: Geoffrey de Morton and Felicia de Furches: see C 37.

C 70

1216 x 1223

GRANT by Felicia de Furches, widow of Geoffrey de Morton, to the sisters of the hospital of St John of Jerusalem at Aconbury, all her land in Castle Street, Hereford, namely one messuage held by Mansellus Cocus, two messuages that Adam son of Robert Faber (smith) held and one messuage that Wymark Textrix (weaver) held and two messuages that Maurice Janitor (caretaker) held, to have and hold from her and her heirs freely and quietly, fully and wholly with any reservations. The nuns were required to render annually one pair of gloves for the fair at Hereford or one penny whichever the nuns preferred and they had to pay 12d. to the king's bailiffs at Hereford, and 8d. to William de Bodenham for all secular service. Warranty. Sealed with the donor's seal.

Witnesses: Thomas de Anes then sheriff of Hereford, Walter Caldecott (*Kaldecok*), Nicholas Secular, Simon Clericus (clerk), William de la Pipe, Richard son of *Ameliu'*, John son of Matilda, John Crast (*Cras*), William Amy, Jugano son of Adam, and many others.

Note: Felicia de Furches and Thomas de Anes: see C 37.

C 71

GRANT in free alms by Stephen, son of Theobald, for the salvation of his soul, of 1 mark rent to be paid annually by his son John and from his heirs, for which mark he assigned to him lands in Hereford in the new street, namely, the land that was between the land of Walter Chamberlain (*Camerarii*) and land that was of Walter son of Thurgrim and two small curtilages; one curtilage behind land belonging to the canons of Llanthony and another behind land that Stephen held of Hugh, son of Ailmand; this money was to be paid half at Michaelmas and half at the Annunciation of the BVM in March, saving service due to the chief lord. Sealed with the donor's seal. Witnesses: Warin de Grendon, Walter Caldecott (*Caldecok*), Henry Crast, John Restut, Walter Savage, Hugh Judde, Nicholas son of Herbert, Richard son of Hugh, William son of Stephen, Richard son of Denis, and many others.

C 72

CONFIRMATION by John son of Stephen, son of Theobald, of a grant to the convent by his father of 1 mark to be paid twice yearly. Witnesses: Warin de Grendon, Walter Caldecott (Caldecot), Henry Crast, John Restut, Walter le Savage, Hugh Judde, Nicholas son of Herbert(?), and others.

Note: See C 71.

C 73

OBLIGATION on oath by John, son of Tyric' and his heirs, to pay to the nuns of Aconbury, in perpetuity 10s., half at Michaelmas and half at the Annunciation of the BVM, for half of the land and messuages and curtilages that Stephen son of Theobald granted for the provision of his two daughters, Christine and Isabel. They, with the assent of their brothers and friends, granted to John one half which was between lands held by Walter Chamberlain (*Camerarii*) and Walter Thurgrim and half of one curtilage behind the land of the canons of Llanthony and half of one curtilage behind land that Stephen had from Hugh son of Ailmand and half a messuage between land that was of Austin and land that was of Nicholas Pone and half of a messuage between land that was once held by William Blaund and land of Felix son of Miles, and half the land that Stephen bought from Nicholas Pone. If John or his heirs were negligent in paying the rents to Aconbury, fifteen days after the payment date a penalty of 6d. each week was to be paid. Sealed with the donor's seal.

Witnesses: lord prior of St Leonard's de Ryonia, Henry Crast, Nicholas the Cantor, William Tebaut, John Tebaut, William Tebaut (sic), and many others.

Note: St Leonard's de Ryonia has not been identified; it does not appear in M.D.Knowles and R.Neville Hadcock, Medieval Religious Houses: England and Wales.

C 74

1237 x 1255

Sale and quitclaim by Henry, son of Ralph, with the consent of his heirs, to William Wyther and his heirs or assigns, of all his rent that Roce, son of Maelis, paid him each year with all profits, escheats and suits, for half of the land of Hugh Solle in Hereford, in the street where meat was sold (Butchers' Market) between the land that Peter, son of Peter, son of Thurgrim held and land that Gilbert of Overhinton held, namely 17s. payable at four quarters of the year, 4s.3d. at Michaelmas, Christmas, Annunciation of the BVM and Nativity of St John the Baptist. William gave Henry 9½ marks to clear him from his debt to the Jews. Because Henry wished that this sale and quitclaim should remain firm and stable and permanent he swore on holy relics. Sealed with vendor's seal. Witnesses: John Aldecrist, William de la Stowe, Walter Syward at that time provosts, Henry Crast, John clericus (clerk), Hugh son of Ailmund, Gilbert Werry (Ywerii(?)), Jordan le Worrin, William of St Briavels (*St Briavel*), and many others.

Note: For dating see C 78.



C 75

1237 x 1255

QUITCLAIM with warranty by Dionisia widow of Henry, son of Ralph, to William Wyther and his heirs or his assigns, of all rights by way of dowry to all the rent that her husband sold to William for 9½ marks (as described in C 74). William gave her 2 marks for the quitclaim. She swears on holy relics and in the hand of John, then sub-dean, and pledges the dean of Hereford and his successors on penalty of 10 marks to be distrained from her if any pleas, lay or ecclesiastical, are raised on this payment, and that she should be excommunicated until the payment is made to William. Sealed with Dionisia's seal. Witnesses: John Aldecrist, William de la Stowe, Walter Syward and many others.

- Notes: (i) Walter Syward was witness to C 33 dated 1216x1237 and C 74 dated 1237x1255.
- (ii) For dating see C 78.

C 76

Before 1255

GRANT by Richard, son of Denis (*Dionysius*), with the consent of his wife, Rachel (*Rikilde*), to Henry son of Christine Solle, of the half land which was of Hugh Solle, namely that part beside the land of Leger (*Legard*) Makinus (?). Henry and his heirs were required to render to Richard 6s. twice yearly, 3s. at the Annunciation of the BVM, 3s. at Michaelmas. For this grant Henry paid Richard 6½ marks. Warranty. Sealed with the donors' seals. Witnesses: Thomas son of Theobald, Stephen his brother, Hugh son of Allmand (*Almund'*), Gilbert son of Warin, William his brother, Herbert Hurset', Nicholas nephew (or kinsman) (*nepos*) of the precentor, Robert Poli(?), Osbert Wyhor, Osbert Long, Robert Aurifaber' (goldsmith), William Blisse, Richard Lorimer (harness maker), Henry clericus (clerk), Hugh Brelle, and many others.

- Notes: (i) This charter 76 (folios 138,139) does not appear on the PRO Calendar but it is in the Cartulary; there is a heading 'carta Henrici de Solle', but the charter appears to have been drawn up by Richard, son of Dionysius.
- (ii) For dating see C 78.

C 77

Before 1255

GRANT and confirmation by William Wyther (*Wyper*) to Alice, widow of Roce, son of Michael (*Maelis*), all the half land that was of Hugh Solle that lay between land of Peter son of Peter son of Thurgrim, and land of Gilbert of Overhinton (*Wypintin'*) in the Butchers' Market, Hereford,  $4\frac{1}{2}$  ulnae less 1 inch wide and  $29\frac{1}{4}$  ulnae less 3 inches long, and nearby  $5\frac{1}{2}$  ulnae less 3 inches with all appurtenances; she and her heirs or assigns were to render annually to William 17s. to be paid quarterly, 4s.3d. at Michaelmas, St Andrew's Day, the Annunciation of the BVM and the Nativity of St John the Baptist. Alice paid William  $\frac{1}{2}$  mark (*premanibus*).

Warranty. Sealed with the donor's seal. Witnesses: William Palmer, Adam Seym, John Secular' then provost, Henry Crast, Hugh son of Allmand (*Ailmund'*), Gilbert Ywein, Walter Salvag', Richard of Hay (*la Haye*), Henry Brown (*Brun*), Henry son of Peter, son of Thurgrim, and others.

- Notes: (i) For dating see C 78.
- (ii) 1 ulna = 45 inches  
( $4\frac{1}{2}$  ulnas less 1 inch = 16ft 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ in  
 $29\frac{1}{4}$  ulnas less 3 inches = 109ft 5 $\frac{1}{4}$ in)  
 $5\frac{1}{2}$  ulnas less 3 inches = 20ft 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ in
- (iii) For Hay [Urishay Castle (OS Ref: 322376)], see BCC, p.165

GRANT and quitclaim by William Wyther (*Wyver*), citizen of Hereford of 13s.6d. annual rent in Hereford, namely 12s. from Henry son of Peter from land that lies in *Bocheria* (Butchers' Market) between land held by Gilbert of Overhinton (*Wypinton'*) and land of Peter son of Peter, and 18d. annually which William received from Nicholas le Wayte, for land in Hereford that lies in Wyebridge Street (*Weybrugestret*) between land of Stephen son of Edrich, and Margery daughter of Clamiberd. William had given the relevant charters to the nuns. The nuns were required to render annually 18d. to the chapter of Hereford Cathedral at stated terms. Sealed with the donor's seal. Witnesses: Roger de Troy, Humphrey clericus (clerk), Laurence de (?), Walter de la Pipe (*Pypa*), Walter in La hale, Roger le (?), Richard of Braunford, Richard Vinter' (*Vint'*), Roger Romanus, David le Grant, and others. Dated 1255.

- Notes:
- (i) The nuns were granted two separate pieces of land by this charter, one in Butchers' Market and the other in Wyebridge Street
  - (ii) For dating see Cs 74,75,76,77.
  - (iii) Roger de Troy was witness to C 57 (dated 'possibly 1255 to 1274'), so that charter could be dated c.1255.

C 79

GRANT by Hugh, son of Hugh Clericus (clerk), to Christine his daughter, of all his land with appurtenances, that Gilbert Machary (*Macharii*) (*macillarius* - butcher ?) held from him; Christine was required to render annually 1 pair of gloves worth 1d. at Easter and 12d. to the lord of this land. If Christine should die without an heir, the land would revert to Edith, her sister. Warranty. Sealed with the donor's seal. Witnesses: Walter Aldecrist (*Oldecrist*), Stephen son of Richard, Nicholas de la Punde, William Batte (?), William de la Punde, Adam (?), Hugh de la Sale, Walter de Kerotue clerk, Adam his brother, William (?), and many others.

C 80

mid-13th century (probably before 1250)

GRANT in free alms by Hugh son of Hugh Clericus (clerk), for the salvation of his soul and of his predecessors and all the faithful dead, of all his land with appurtenances that he had in Hereford facing the cathedral of St Ethelbert, that Gilbert Machary (*Macharii*) had, and which was between land that was of William Romanus and land that was of Richard of Hay (*Haye*) one end extending as far as the road opposite the gate of sir Roger de Kankebridge, canon of Hereford, and the other reaching to land of William Romanus and land that belonged to Adam Saym. The nuns were required to render 12d. annually to the lord of the tenement, half at Michaelmas, half at the Annunciation of the BVM and to Hugh, son of Hugh Clericus, one pair of gloves worth one penny at Easter. Warranty. Sealed with the donor's seal.  
Witnesses: John Clericus (clerk), Walter Syward, Nicholas de la Punde, John de la Punde, John Thurgrim, Robert Wyrlyay, William de la Sale, and many others.

- Notes: (i) John Clericus was also a witness to C 74 (1237x1255).
- (ii) Walter Syward was also a witness to C 33 (1216x1241), C 36 (1237x1263), C 74 (1237x1255), C 75 (1237x1255).
- (iii) For Hay [Urishay Castle (OS Ref: 322376)], see BCC, p.165

C 81

first half 13th century

GRANT in free alms by Richard Rocolf of his land with appurtenances in Hereford, namely the land that lies opposite William Romanus' land above the ditch next to land that belonged to Riquier le Nappere, 4 ulnas wide and 10 ulnas long. The nuns were required to render annually to the king 6d. for all services. Sealed with the donor's seal.

Witnesses: Henry Crast, Adam Seym, William le Panni (*Panni'*), William Yugan(?) then bailiff.

- Notes: (i) Henry Crast appeared as a witness 10 times, mainly before 1255 and for property in Hereford.  
John Crast appeared as a witness 3 times before 1237.  
Adam Seym appeared as a witness twice before 1255.  
William le Panni appeared as a witness twice 1216x1237.
- (ii) 1 ulna = 45 inches  
(4 ulnas = 15ft; 10 ulnas = 37ft 6in).

C 82

Tuesday after 13 June 1290

GRANT by William Valet chaplain, son of William Valet of Hereford, of an annual rent payable twice yearly at Michaelmas and the Annunciation of the BVM of 4s.6d. that William Valet his father, and his ancestors, used to pay for his tenement in Castle Street. If payment is not made then the nuns can distrain and do as they will with the holding until satisfaction is made. Sealed with the donor's seal. Witnesses: Reginald Moniword, Walter de la Warr', Roger of Orleton, Roger Penet, William Hamelin, and many others. Dated the Tuesday after 13 June 1290.



C 83

2nd half 13th century

AGREEMENT between Johel (Ithel ?) le Fol and the nuns of Aconbury whereby Johel bound himself to pay to the prioress and convent 10s.6d. annually at Michaelmas, Christmas, the Annunciation of the BVM and the Nativity of St John the Baptist, for all the land in Hereford with appurtenances that they had granted to him and his heirs by a charter of enfeoffment. This land was between his land and land of Adam de Stadul (Straddle?). Sealed with Johel le Fol's seal. Witnesses: sir Richard de Barewe, Thomas vicar of Dewchurch (*Deweschirche*), Philip vicar of Callow (*Kalewa*), Reginald Calvus, Roger Romanus, and others.

Note: Roger Romanus witnessed three other charters dated between 1255 and 1267 (see C 57 dated 1255x1274), and he was also a donor (see C 59).

C 84

GRANT by Alice, daughter of Robert Jurdan to Thomas Albus and Joanna his wife, for 20s. (*premanibus*) of her land in a suburb of Hereford in the street towards the house of the Minor Friars, namely land that lies between the land of Nicholas le Chauntor (singer) on the one part and land that was of Robert Gange on the other part. Thomas and Joan were required to render annually, for all service, customary payment and claims, one pair of gloves valued at one half penny. Warranty. Sealed with the donor's seal.

Witnesses: William Tebaud, John de Camera, Robert the cook (*coke*), William sant de Broil(?), Roger de la Pipe, Gilbert Peny, Elias Trune, Roger de la (?), Nicholas Circaill, and many others.

Note: See also Cs 45 and 85.

C 85

GRANT by Thomas Albus and Joan his wife to Philip Rufus of Stapleton (*Stepelton*) for 4 marks (*premanibus*) for land in the suburb of Hereford in the road that leads to the house of the Minor Friars, namely land that was between the land of Nicholas le Chauntor (singer) and land that was of Robert Gange. Philip was required to render annually one pair of gloves valued at one half penny, and 4d. (2d. at Michaelmas and 2d. at the Annunciation of the BVM) to the lord of the fee. Warranty. Sealed with the donors' seal. Witnesses: William Tebaud, Robert the cook (*coc*), Roger de la Pipe, William de Broil (?), Elias Trune, Robert Gange, and others.

Note: From Cs 84 and 85 it would seem that the nuns did not receive this land, although there may be a link with C 45 (damaged).

C 86

1216 x 1244

GRANT by Hugh de Kilpeck (*Kilpec*) to Stephen de Ebroicis (*Ebroic'*) of 11 acres of meadow in Hugh's meadowland of Kimore(?) and in his moorland (*mora*) of . . . ., with rights of free entry. Warranty. Sealed with Hugh's seal.

- Notes:
- (i) Hugh II de Kilpeck d.1244 (see above, p.118)
  - (ii) There is no list of witnesses on this copy, but '*hiis testibus*' appears so there must have been in the original. See also Cs 87,88.

C 87

1216 x 1237

GRANT by William d'Evreux (*Dever'*) son of William d'Evreux (*Dever'*) to Warin de Grendon for 24s. of all his meadow with right of access in Kivernoll (*Kivernon*). Warin may alienate this land to whomsoever he wishes. Warin was required to render service to the lord and to pay 1d. to William at Michaelmas for all services. Warranty against all people, Christians and Jews.

- Notes:
- (i) There is no list of witnesses to this charter (see Cs 86,88)
  - (ii) Warin de Grendon was sheriff of Hereford in 1219 and he appears frequently as a witness between 1216 and 1237. The name appears again in a list of witnesses between 1237 and 1287 but this was possibly his son.
  - (iii) There is no reference to the sealing of this charter.

C 88

1216 x 1237

GRANT in free alms by Warin de Grendon, sheriff of Hereford, son of John de Grendon, to the nuns of all his meadow in Kivernoll (*Kivernon*), with free access. The nuns were required to render  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. at Michaelmas to Warin de Grendon, and 1lb of cumin to the lord of the tenement on the feast of St Ethelbert.

- Notes:
- (i) There is no list of witnesses to this charter (see Cs 86,87)
  - (ii) Warin de Grendon was sheriff of Hereford in 1219 and he appears frequently as a witness between 1216 and 1237. The name appears again in a list of witnesses between 1237 and 1287 but this was possibly his son.

C 89

before 1298

CONFIRMATION by Alan Plogenet, lord of Kilpeck, of a grant made by Warin de Grendon to the nuns of his meadow in Kivernoll (*Kivernon*).

- Notes: (i) There is no list of witnesses to this charter (see Cs 86,87,88).
- (ii) Alan Plugenet (*Plogenet*) d.1298 (I.J.Sanders, English Baronies. A Study of their Origin and Descent 1086-1327, p.73).

C 90(a)

c.1274

GRANT and quitclaim by William the Welshman (*de Waleys*), son of John the Welshman of Brompton (*Bromiton'*) of one field called *le monemedowe* near Coedmoor (*Coydemor*) in the fief of Kilpeck for 13d. that the nuns paid to him (*premanibus*). Sealed with the donor's seal. Witnesses: John son of Hugh ap Iorath, Robert clerk of Kilpeck, William Mangant, Meurig Lily (*Lilye*), Thomas the Welshman (*le Waleys*), and others.

Note: Coydemor was most likely Coedmoor Farm (OS Ref: 469346). see BCC p.66



C 90(b)

1274

GRANT in free alms by Roger the Welshman (*Walensis*) of Dewchurch (*Dewesechirche*) of five pieces of meadow with appurtenances in the parish of Dewchurch (*Deweschirche*), namely that part which is called *scudemor'* (scudemore) and all that part that is called *lirclescudemore* (little scudemore (?)), and all that part that is called *monemedewe* and those two parts that are called *tuyplockes*. Sealed with the donor's seal. Witnesses: Roger de Bindeleg', Warin de Grendon, Hugh ap Iorath, William of Callow (*la Kalewe*), Walter Marshall (*Marescallo*), Philip of Skenfrith (*Skenefrith*), Henry de la Munede, Roger Romanus, and others. Dated 1274.

Note: This grant was confirmed by C 91.

C 91

24 August 1275

CONFIRMATION and inspeximus by Alan Plokenet, lord of Kilpeck, of the preceding charter of Roger the Welshman, whereby Roger granted in free alms five pieces of meadow with their appurtenances in the parish of Dewchurch (*Deweschurch*), namely all that part which is called *scudemore* and all that part that is called *lirclescudemore* (little scudemore (?)) and that part that is called *monesmedewe* and those two parts that are called *tuyplockes*. Sealed with his seal.

Witnesses: Henry de Badesawe, Warin de Grendon, William Boter, Hugh son of Iowerth (*ap Yoru'*), Hugh the Welshman (*Waleys*) son of Walter the Welshman (*Waleys*), Hugh the Welshman (*Waleys*) of Brompton (*Bromton'*), Richard of Clehonger (*Cleyhung'*), Walter de Rodmerleye canon of Hereford, Richard of Hereford then clerk of the royal exchequer, Thomas Canesey, and others. The nuns received Alan into all benefits and prayers in their church.  
Dated Kilpeck 24 August 1275.

Note: Alan Plugenet (*Plokenet*) d.1298 (I.J.Sanders, English Baronies. A Study of their Origin and Descent 1086-1327, p.73).

C 92

7 August 1267

GRANT in free alms by Roger the Welshman (*Walenc'*), son of Roger the Welshman of Dewchurch (*Deweschirche*), of all the meadow with appurtenances in the fief of Kilpeck called *brodemedowe* that lies along its width between a meadow of sir William de Ebroicis and a meadow of Roger son of Wasenor(?) and extends in length from one headland above the meadow of the lord of Kilpeck and that of the almshouse of Hereford and from the other headland above the meadow of William, son of Hugh de Kilpeck, and above the meadow of John Coggel'.

Warranty against all men and women. Sealed with the donor's seal. Witnesses: sir William de Rathefford, Roger de Bradeleg', Warin de Grendon, Hugh son of Iowerth (*ap Yoru'*), William of Callow (*Kalewe*), John Saym, Roger Romanus, and others.

Dated 7 August 1267.

C 93

1267 x 1273

CONFIRMATION by sir Robert Walerand of the charter of his tenant Roger the Welshman (*Walens*), whereby he has granted the nuns the meadow of four acres called *brodemedowe* which lies below the granary (*granarium*) of Peter Mangant. Sealed with sir Robert Walerand's seal. Witnesses: sir Roger le Rus(s), John de Unddeleigh, William the Welshman (*Waleyis*), Hugh the Welshman (*Waleyis*), Hugh son of Iowerth (*ap Yoru'*), Thomas le Petit, William Buter, and others.

Note: Robert Walerand (or Walerund see C 2) d.1273  
(I.J.Sanders, English Baronies. A Study of their  
Origin and Descent 1086-1327, p.73). See also  
Cs 1 and 2.

C 94

1216 x 1243

GRANT by Rocelin Tyrel to Robert son of Richard de Monte, of 5 acres measured by the perch of  $16\frac{1}{2}$  feet, in Glowesmore as far as the headland leading to Dewsall (*Deweswell*), free of all but royal service for 10d., half at the Annunciation of the BVM and half at Michaelmas. He was also to attend Rocelin's court four times a year on due summons. And if a 20s. scutage should be levied, Robert and his heirs were to pay Rocelin Tyrel 1d. Robert paid 50s. for this grant.

Witnesses: Henry abbot of Gloucester, William de Kilpeck then cellarer of Gloucester, Richard the chaplain, master Edmund (*Admundo*), Roger the Welshman (*Walense*), William of the Park, Hugh dean of Baysham (*Beisham'*), Hugh, Henry and Walter the Welshmen (*Walensibus*), Roger de Bares, Iowerth son of *Keneythur*, Abraham of *Keisham'*, William Calvo, Robert Tyrel, and many others.

- Notes:
- (i) Rocelin Tyrel: this may have been sir Roger Tyrel who was knighted in 1295 (*Complete Peerage* by G.E.Cockayne, revised by G.White and R.S.Lea, London, 1959).
  - (ii) The Monte family - see above, p.121
  - (iii) Deweswell is Dewsall (OS Ref: 486335) which was part of the composite manor of Westwode in 1086. (BCC p.68)
  - (iv) There were two abbots of Gloucester named Henry: Henry Blunt (1205-1223) and Henry Foliot (1228-1243), so the charter could be dated between 1216 and 1243. (VCH Gloucester II, 61)

C 95

1257 x 1263

GRANT in free alms by Henry de Monte, son of Robert de Monte, of the whole of his meadow and appurtenances in Glowesmore which was bought from Rocelin Tyrel by his father Robert, and this meadow lies lengthwise between the meadow of Nicholas *le Seculier* and that of Herbert *le Saucke* on the one hand and the meadow of Philip Bergam on the other and breadthwise between the land of the men of Dewsall (*Deweswalle*) on the one hand, and the land of William Payn on the other. The nuns were required to pay to the feudal lord 10d. twice yearly, half at Michaelmas and half at the Annunciation of the BVM, for all services. Warranty. Sealed with the donor's seal. Witnesses: Henry then abbot of Dore (*Dora*), sir Henry of Bradley (*Bradeleya*), John Turberville (*Turburville*), Thomas vicar of Dewchurch (*Deweschurche*), John de Audeleya, Roger the Welshman (*Wallense*), William the Welshman (*Walense*), Hugh the Welshman (*Walense*), William of Callow (*la Kalewe*), and many others.

Notes: (i) The Monte family - see above, p.121

(ii) Henry was abbot of Dore 1257-1263.

(iii) The Turberville family - see above, p.116

C 96

7 May 1287

CONFIRMATION by Richard de Monte son of Henry, of the grant in free alms by his father Henry de Monte of a meadow at Glowesmore (*Glowesmor*). Richard and his heirs conceded that they would warrant the prioress and nuns of Aconbury against any court decisions, services and other demands and the nuns were required to pay 10d. annually to the feudal lord; and if the nuns should incur any damage or loss through Richard de Monte's default, the lord of Kilpeck (*Kylpec*) would distrain upon him and his heirs and Richard would make good any loss incurred by the nuns, and if the lord of Kilpeck (*Kylpec*) had to distrain Richard would pay  $\frac{1}{2}$  mark from his estate and the lord's bailiffs were to have 2s. for their work. Warranty. Sealed with Richard de Monte's seal. Witnesses: sir Thomas le Petit (*Petyt*), Roger le Russ and John de Kriketot, knights, Warin de Grendon, Richard of Clehonger (*Clehanger*), Philip ap David, Edmund the Welshman (*Walense*), William Maugant, William of Callow (*la Kalewe*), Hugh Helle, Robert the clerk, and others. Dated 7 May 1287.

Note: The Monte family - see above, p.121

FOLIO 175 (E/315/55)

7 March 1310

This charter is not numbered.

Confirmation by Catherine de Geneville, prioress of Aconbury, with the consent of the community to William, son of Desesone (?) of Stoke Bliss and Hawise, his wife, and to one of his sons whom he should choose, of one messuage and three butts of land in Stoke Bliss for 18 shillings to be paid biannually, and suit of court and all services paid by free tenants. After the death of William and Hawise, and whichever of his sons that he assigned this messuage and three butts of land, the property was to revert back to the community. Sealed by the prioress and the community.

Witnesses: Alfred Longo, Hugh de la Halie, William of La Thorne, (?), William of Pembridge (*Penebrigus*) chaplain, and many others. Dated at Stoke Bliss on the nones of March in the third year of the reign of King Edward II.



Appendix A. GRANTS BEFORE 1250

PLACE NAMES AND CHARTERS	G R A N T S						VALUE	DONORS (A Marcher Lords/ Knightly Families M Merchant/ Landholding)
	Land	Messuages Burgages Tenements	Meadows	Mills	Movables and Fixtures	Unspecified rents but value given		
ABERGAVENNY 23		1 burgage						A Reginald Braose
BRIDGE SOLLERS 27						rent for land (8s.)	8s.	A Roger Clifford
BROXWOOD 26						rent for land (14s.)	14s.	A Henry Pembridge
CORFHAM 3,4,5,6*,7 (* C 6 Suit of Court)	37½ acres land & wood							A Katherine Lacy
EITHON 41				tithes of the toll on a mill				A Sibyl Ewias

PLACE NAMES  
AND CHARTERS

## G R A N T S (before 1250)

PLACE NAMES AND CHARTERS	G R A N T S (before 1250)						VALUE	DONORS (A Marcher Lords/ Knightly Families M Merchant/ Landholding)
	Land	Messuages Burgages Tenements	Meadows	Mills	Movables and Fixtures	Unspecified rents but value given		
EWYAS HAROLD 29, 30, 42						rent for feudal holdings (6s.8d.)	6s.8d.	A Sibyl Ewias
HEREFORD 37, 69, 70		6 messuages						M Geoffrey Morton
38		3 shops (3s.)					3s.	Felicia Furches
74, 75, 76, 77, 78						rents for land (13s.6d.)	13s.6d.	M Richard Emeline
80	valuable land but not assessed							M William Wyther
81	valuable land (15'x37½')							M Hugh Clericus
ff.82, 83, 84		1 message rented to William Amy (3s.)					3s.	M Richard Rocolf
(Cherlescroft) 39, 40			1 meadow				£8 + livestock (capital)	M Richard Emeline
			(This meadow was bought by Richard Emeline for 12 marks plus 2 cows worth 1 mark, and then granted to the nuns.)					

PLACE NAMES AND CHARTERS	G R A N T S (before 1250)						VALUE	DONORS (A Marcher Lords/ Knightly Families M Merchant/ Landholding)
	Land	Messuages Burgages Tenements	Meadows	Mills	Movables and Fixtures	Unspecified rents but value given		
KEMPLEY 16,17  18  24	30 acres   land outside Kempley wood (not ass.)			mill at Kedeford (9s.rent)		rents for land (5s.)  land not valued	5s.  9s. + land	A Geoffrey & Isabel Longchamp (Richard Riche) A Geoffrey & Isabel Longchamp  A William Gamage
LULHAM 12						rents (2s.)	2s.	A Roger Clifford
MERBACH 32  (Homme) 33	30 acres (Homme Wood)  land in Homme							A Walter Lacy  M William Bathonia

PLACE NAMES AND CHARTERS	G R A N T S (before 1250)						VALUE	DONORS (A Marcher Lords/ Knightly Families M Merchant/ Landholding)
	Land	Messuages Burgages Tenements	Meadows	Mills	Movables and Fixtures	Unspecified rents but value given		
NESSCLIFFE 8, 9, 10	hospital including 15 acres land			mill at Wivelcote [assessment of value as Kedeford (C 24) 9s.]	200 sheep 24 pigs/1 wild boar 1 bull/10 cows 3 oaks/3 pear trees 10 cartloads wood 24 sheaves corn fishing rights		9s. +	A John Lestrange
TETBURY 21(a), (b) 22, 23		10 burgages (12s. 4½d.)					12s. 4½d.	A John Braose
WESTBURY 19				2/3 of a mill			6s. (assmt.)	A Geoffrey & Isabel Longchamp
WINSTON 36 (Straddle)  68	1 acre strip					rents for land (3s.)  rent for land (1s.)	3s.  1s.	M Hugh Furches  A John Winston
Nr. ACONEBURY 34	Quitclaim of <u>forestry rights</u> to nuns by Hugh de Kilpeck							A Hugh Kilpeck

Appendix B. GRANTS AFTER 1250

PLACE NAMES AND CHARTERS	G R A N T S						VALUE	DONORS (A Marcher Lords/ Knightly Families M Merchant/ Landholding)
	Land	Messuages Burgages Tenements	Meadows	Mills	Movables and Fixtures	Unspecified rents but value given		
DEWSALL (Glowesmore) 94, 95, 96			1 meadow (5 acres)					A Henry Monte
FOY 13, 14	20 acres (4s.2d. rents)						4s.2d.	A Juliana Tregoz
HEREFORD 71, 72, 73	land	2 curtilages					13s.4d.	M John, son of Stephen Theobald
82		1 tenement (4s.6d.)					4s.6d.	M William Valet
83	land (10s.6d.)						10s.6d.	paid to nuns by Johel Foy

PLACE NAMES AND CHARTERS	G R A N T S (after 1250)						VALUE	DONORS (A Marcher Lords/ Knightly Families M Merchant/ Landholding)
	Land	Messuages Burgages Tenements	Meadows	Mills	Movables and Fixtures	Unspecified rents but value given		
HINTON 46, 47  48, 49  50						rents 2s.6d.  rents 1s.4d.  rents 1s.10d.	2s.6d.  1s.4d.  1s.10d.	M William Bade M Laurence Clehungar M Isabel Yagon
HAYTON 63, 64	30 acres					rents £1 2s. rents 4s.8d.	£1 2s. 4s.8d.	M Elyas Sutton
KILPECK 90(a), (b), 91,  92, 93			5 pieces meadow ( <i>monemedede</i> )  1 meadow ( <i>bredemedewe</i> )					M William the Welshman  M Roger the Welshman
KIVERNOLL 86, 87, 88, 89			11 acres meadow					M Warin Grendon
LUDLOW 2		7 burgages (6s.8d.)		½ of 4 mills			£1 4s.8d.	A Geoffrey & Matilda Geneville

PLACE NAMES  
AND CHARTERS

G R A N T S (after 1250)

PLACE NAMES AND CHARTERS	G R A N T S (after 1250)						VALUE	DONORS (A Marcher Lords/ Knightly Families M Merchant/ Landholding)
	Land	Messuages Burgages Tenements	Meadows	Mills	Movables and Fixtures	Unspecified rents but value given		
MARGIRAWELD 61,62	land in (bought for 8s.4d.) field							A John Vaucolour
MONMOUTH 65,66  67		1 burgage (3s.)					M Roger Balcath  A Henry Lancaster	
ORLESTON 35						rent for feudal holding (12s.3d.)	12s.3d.  A Hugh Poer	
ROLVESTON 52,53,54, 55,56	12 acres (in exchange, nuns quitclaimed land in Twyford)							A John Lacy
STOKE BLISS 11,15,43						rents 2 marks	£1 6s.8d.  A Katherine Lacy	

PLACE NAMES AND CHARTERS	G R A N T S (after 1250)						VALUE	DONORS (A Marcher Lords/ Knightly Families M Merchant/ Landholding)
	Land	Messuages Burgages Tenements	Meadows	Mills	Movables and Fixtures	Unspecified rents but value given		
TWYFORD 57, 58, 59  60	land in field (no area or value given)				1 load wheat 1 load oats			M Roger Romanus  M Hugh Kingston
VOWCHURCH 44						rent for land (9s.) (final concord)	9s.	A Eva, mother of John ap Harry
WINSTON (Straddle) 28	204 acres (£2 10s.)	8½ messuages 2 tenements					£2 10s.	A John Turberville



APPENDIX C.                    SPIRITUAL BENEFITS

When land or property was granted to the nuns the donor would expect to receive spiritual benefits. Some of the early charters state that the grant was given for the salvation of the souls of the donor and his kin. Certain charters, as listed below, specifically state a spiritual benefit:

- C 3     Katherine de Lacy gave land for the maintenance of a chaplain and expected a daily mass to be celebrated.
- C 8     The spiritual benefit that was expected by John Lestrangle was the provision of a chaplain to celebrate mass for his soul and the souls of his wife and children.
- C 59    This charter states that 'all spiritual benefit' was to be given to Roger Romanus by the nuns.
- C 62    John de Vaucolour gave a field called *Margiraweld* and expected the nuns to celebrate his obit annually and to hold a service with music.
- C 91    The nuns gave Alan Plugenet (*Plokenet*) 'all benefits and prayers in their church'.

For a discussion about spiritual benefits, see Golding, B., Gilbert of Sempringham and the Gilbertine Order c.1130-c.1300, pp.322-333

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