

LAYMEN AND MONASTERIES IN HAMPSHIRE, 1530-1558

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PROLOGUE: THE HAMPSHIRE MONASTIC SCENE (Fig. 27)

ALTOGETHER, there were 15 houses of monks, canons and nuns in sixteenth century Hampshire.¹ No less than five of these dated from pre-Norman times, tracing back to the Wessex Kingdom. Of these, three were in or near to Winchester, namely the Benedictine Priory of St. Swithun, the Benedictine Abbey of Hyde and the Benedictine Abbey (for nuns) of St. Mary's; the other two were Benedictine nunneries, Romsey Abbey and Wherwell Abbey, both in the valley of the Test.

The Cistercians had four houses in Hampshire, three for men and one for women. The monks were at Quarr, near Ryde in the Isle of Wight, and at Beaulieu and Netley on both sides of Southampton Water; the nuns were at Hartley Wintney in north-east Hampshire, with lands draining into the Thames valley.

There were five houses of Augustinian canons, all priories dating from the twelfth century. Three of these had sites adjacent to the south coast, at Christchurch, St. Denys (Southampton), and Southwick, near Portsmouth. The other two were in river valley settings, at Breamore on the Hampshire Avon and at Mottisfont on the Test.

Finally, there was a Premonstratensian Abbey at Titchfield in the lower Meon valley. This abbey, like the Cistercian abbeys, had been founded in the high age of monastic foundations which fell roughly between the beginning of the twelfth century and the middle of the thirteenth. The rule at Titchfield was similar to that of Cîteaux in many respects but it laid more stress upon apostolic activity as against the Cistercian tendency to seclusion. Premonstratensian canons, for instance, frequently served parish churches, especially those appropriated to their houses.²

In Hampshire, as elsewhere, the numbers of monks and nuns were, by the time of the Dissolution, well below the peak figures of the high Middle Ages. St. Swithun's Priory, with 37 monks was the largest single community. St. Mary's, Wherwell, Romsey, Christchurch, Hyde and Beaulieu each counted between 20 and 30 in religion. For the other eight houses, 10 or 12 monks or nuns would be an average figure.³

In terms of the wealth of its monastic property, Hampshire was about the eighth richest county in the country.⁴ The great bulk of the income of the Hampshire houses came from landed estates and town properties in the county itself but smaller sums came from scattered properties in adjoining counties and in other parts of the country. At one end of the economic scale stood the great Benedictine Priory of St. Swithun with an annual income of over £1,500, nearly a third of the total for the whole county. At the other end stood the little Cistercian priory of Hartley Wintney which was trying to make ends meet on an annual income which barely reached 50 pounds.

¹ A general survey can be drawn from *VCH Hants*, vol. II, pp. 1-103, and D. Knowles, *The Religious Houses of Medieval England*, pp. 104-231. Friaries, hospitals and chantries are not included in the scope of this essay.

² See A. H. Thompson, *The Premonstratensian Abbey of Welbeck*, p. 100.

³ Among other sources of evidence, visitation records of 1501 can in some cases be compared with *Suppression Certificates* of 1536 and 1539.

⁴ See *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, vol. II, pp. 2-26, and A. Savine, *English Monasteries on the Eve of the Dissolution*, p. 98.



Fig. 27. The Hampshire Monasteries in 1530.

The Cistercian abbeys of Beaulieu and Netley had once been famed for their sheep-flocks and, in the fourteenth century, St. Swithun's had possessed 20,000 sheep.⁵ By Tudor times, however, monastic high-farming was a thing of the past and a very great deal of land, and sometimes of stock also, had been leased out. With the exception of the city abbey of St. Mary's, all the Hampshire houses had, however, managed to retain a home farm and two or three of these were still quite large.⁶

⁵ E. Power, *The Wool Trade in English Medieval History*, pp. 23, 34. *St. Swithun's Enrolment Register*, vol. III, f. 63.

⁶ Christchurch had 700 acres and St. Swithun's 400 acres, mainly pastures in both cases.

In the early years of the sixteenth century, about one quarter of the manorial property in the county was owned by the Hampshire monasteries; King and Church (other than the local monasteries) owned another quarter and the remaining half was in ordinary lay hands.⁷

Among the lay landowners no single family predominated. The Plantagenets (or Lisles) and the Poles held eight or nine manors each and the West family, Lords de la Warr, held seven. Three Hampshire manors were held by the aristocratic Courtenays of Devon. A few country gentry families, like the Sandys, Wallops, Nortons, and Tichbornes held three or four manors each and the Crown had strong landed interests in the Isle of Wight.

Hampshire society was by no means static, in any sense of the word. Crown appointments, especially through the Admiralty, brought important newcomers into the county. In Southampton and Winchester there was a small class of prospering merchants with social aspirations. The governorship of the Isle of Wight had a strong link with King and Court.

Lying relatively near to London and with no great geographical obstacles of its own other than woodland and areas of coastal marsh,⁸ Hampshire was, well before Tudor times, a county of comings and goings. Its population lay mainly on or near to the estuaries of its rivers in the south of the county and 11 of its 15 monasteries were also in this southern region.⁹ Portsmouth was a naval base and Southampton a main port for continental Europe but, by the sixteenth century, both were suffering to some extent from the concentration of interests in London. Cloth from the Hampshire hinterland was going to the London market and London shipyards at Woolwich and Deptford were causing Portsmouth to lose ground as a shipbuilding centre.¹⁰

In Winchester the cloth industry was, in the expression of the times, 'decayed', but small market towns like Basingstoke, Alton, Whitchurch, Petersfield and Andover became new cloth centres for the chalklands of north Hampshire. With the water-power of fast-running streams near at hand they were able to make woollen cloth and sell it to clothiers who operated outside the jurisdiction of the old city guilds.¹¹

Fishing and cloth-making featured in the economy of Tudor Hampshire. Fishing was a very localised industry along the Channel coast and especially at the river estuaries. In north Hampshire and in the hilly areas of the Isle of Wight lay the sheep-walks where the wool was grown for cloth-making. Cattle and horses were pastured in the river meadows of the Avon, Test and Itchen. On the clay of the extreme north-west and on the heavier soils of south Hampshire, the land was generally suitable for grain crops where it had been cleared and drained. There were still large wooded areas in the county as well as stretches of coastal moor and marsh.¹² Foreign trade at Southampton, cloth-making in north Hampshire, pack-routes to London and a county society with connections at Court – all were part of the social and economic scene in the county in the years which immediately preceded the closing of the monasteries.

⁷ A rough calculation based mainly on manorial descents in the *VCH Hants*, vols. II-V.

⁸ The New Forest area and the adjacent coastline in the south-west of the county were the most remote regions.

⁹ This number includes Quarr Abbey on the north

coast of the Isle of Wight.

¹⁰ See A. A. Ruddock, 'London Capitalists and the Decline of Southampton', *VCH Hants*, vol. V, pp. 370, 372.

¹¹ *VCH Hants*, vol. V, p. 484.

¹² *VCH Hants*, vol. V, p. 493. *L and P*, XIII (1), 117.

I. LAY INFLUENCES

By the sixteenth century, the influence of laymen on the English monasteries was apparent at many levels. The list of lay-officials attached to each house was quite a long one. At the top of this list was the chief steward, normally a man of rank and substance, influential in the neighbourhood where the monastery was situated. His precise duties would not always have been easy to define, but, in general, he was intended to represent the house in its more important relationships with secular bodies. As a man of the world he might be thought competent and influential to serve the interests of the monastery in ways which would be less open, say, to the head of the monastic community. For his value to the institution, the chief steward was paid an annual fee and received a number of perquisites.

Hampshire provides examples of the kind of men who were holding the office of chief steward. Some were important Crown officials, others were county gentry or town merchants.

Sir William Paulet of Basing was chief steward of St. Swithun's, Wherwell and Wintney;¹³ James Worsley, Governor of the Isle of Wight, of Quarr Abbey;¹⁴ William Fitzwilliam, Vice-Admiral of the Fleet, of Christchurch Priory.¹⁵ Thomas Wriothesley, foreign ambassador and attorney, held the chief stewardships of Titchfield Abbey, Hyde Abbey and Southwick Priory.¹⁶ The remaining chief stewardships were held by county gentry or merchant families from Southampton. Among the gentry may be noted John Kingsmill at Mottisfont Priory, and John Shelley at St. Mary's Abbey, Winchester.¹⁷ Southampton merchants, John and George Mill, father and son, held joint office at Beaulieu Abbey,¹⁸ while George Mill also shared the chief stewardship of Breamore Priory with another merchant, Thomas Pace.¹⁹ It will be noted that pluralism in office holding was not entirely a clerical monopoly. What is most evident is that a cross-section of important local laymen was associated with monastic affairs at the highest level.

Every religious house had a 'founder', a title claimed by the Crown, by a bishopric or by the head of a family whose medieval ancestor had first endowed the institution. Of the 15 Hampshire houses, nine were of royal foundation and two others (Mottisfont and Wintney) had, before the sixteenth century, been taken over in this respect by the Crown. The Courtenays of Devon were founders of Quarr Abbey, Christchurch Priory and Breamore Priory. The Bishop of Winchester was heir to the title of founder of Titchfield Abbey, but the King was also inclined to avail himself of founder's privileges there.²⁰

The founder gave formal permission for the holding of an election for a new head of the house and sometimes sought to obtain the appointment for a protégé. In addition, he had the right to billet on the monastery a kinsman or assignee for an indefinite

¹³ *DNB*, Paulet, William (1485?-1572). Among other titles, he was a Privy Councillor and Master of the King's Wards. Other evidence of his links with the monasteries is in *St. Swithun's Enrolment Register*, vol. III, f. 82, and *Suppression Certificate* E/315/94, f. 19.

¹⁴ *Minister's Account*, SC6/H VIII, 3326.

¹⁵ *DNB*, Fitzwilliam, William (?-1542), E/315/94, f. 135.

¹⁶ *DNB*, Wriothesley, Thomas (1505-1550), E/315/94, f. 239b.

¹⁷ E/315/241, f. 14. E/315/95, f. 62.

¹⁸ E/315/239, ff. 79-80.

¹⁹ *SC*, 6/H VIII, 3329.

²⁰ See H. M. Colvin, *The White Canons of England*, p. 313.

period of time and one can find in Hampshire cases of Crown pensioners enjoying 'corrodies' of this kind at the expense of the abbeys.²¹ The chief stewards also had perquisites of this kind in some houses,²² but the steward's position, like that of the founder, was likely to be important to him rather for the opportunities which it offered than for any precise emoluments in terms of fees²³ or board. The religious houses were still employing laymen of all kinds and were landlords on a big scale. In an age of patronage, the founder and the chief steward were both well placed to find, through the monasteries, rewards for those who had served them or who might serve them well in the future. Alternatively, founders or stewards might use their position to gain royal favour for themselves. In lesser degree, the same might perhaps be said for the many other lay officials of the monasteries – under-stewards, clerks of manors, receivers, auditors, and the like. The titles of these lay office-holders carried some social prestige and they offered opportunities of those personal approaches for favours which were so very characteristic of Tudor times.

Henry Courtenay, Marquis of Exeter, would appear to have had no official connection with the little Cistercian nunnery at Hartley Wintney. This, however, did not deter him from writing to Thomas Cromwell, in April 1534, asking that a relative of his wife might be appointed as the new abbess.²⁴

Harry Huttoft, Customs-officer at Southampton, was also on terms of personal correspondence with Thomas Cromwell. Huttoft's son, John, was auditor at Romsey Abbey and general receiver at Beaulieu Abbey while Huttoft himself seems to have had some personal links with Mottisfont Priory. About the time when Courtenay was writing about the election at Wintney, Huttoft and Admiral Fitzwilliam, steward of Christchurch Priory, were both writing to Cromwell proposing a candidate for the vacant post of Abbot of Beaulieu.²⁵

Thomas Cromwell²⁶ himself was particularly active in relation to the Hampshire monasteries in the 1530's. He wrote several letters to abbots, seeking favourable leaseholds for Crown servants or his own nominees.²⁷ He received from the abbeys gifts and annuities which increased as their end drew near.²⁸ Cromwell's gains, however, arose from his position as representing the King and, in some ways, it was the Crown which exerted the greatest lay influence on the Hampshire monasteries in the years immediately before their suppression.

Some of the larger abbeys owed feudal obligations to the Crown. At Romsey and

²¹ e.g. Thomas Annesley, who held a corrody from Southwick Priory for 16 years (1514-1530), after which the corrody was regranted to Robert Wenham, master of the children in the collegiate church at Windsor (*VCH Hants*, vol. II, p. 168, *L and P* I 5552, *L and P* VI 1751).

²² John and George Mill had the 'old Abbot's Lodging' at Beaulieu. Thomas Wriothesley and John Wintreshull had Stewards' Chambers and stabling at Hyde (*E*/315/239, ff. 79-80, *E*/315/240, f. 81).

²³ The usual steward's fee in Hampshire in the sixteenth century seems to have been £10 per annum. This and other payments by the monasteries can usually be traced in *Ministers' Accounts*.

²⁴ *Original Letter*, B. M. Cotton MS, Vesp. F xiii 97.

²⁵ *L and P* VI, 1001, 1006, 1074. *L and P* X 557. Their nominee was duly appointed.

²⁶ Henry VIII's Minister from 1530: Vicar-General, 1535.

²⁷ e.g. *L and P* IX 925, seeking lands on the Isle of Wight from the Abbot of Quarr. An earlier example is calendared in *L and P* Addenda 1 (1) 734, May 1531.

²⁸ From the Priors of St. Swithun and Breamore and the Abbey of Hyde, e.g. Cromwell was receiving annuities totalling £30. An example of a personal deal between Cromwell and a new abbot is given later (p. 71).

Wherwell, the Crown held the temporalities during elections.²⁹ The Prior of St. Swithun's was called upon to provide men for the King's wars; in 1536, Prior Kingsmill was expected to find 50 men to take the field against the northern rebels of the Pilgrimage of Grace.³⁰ 'War loans' were another form of taxation³¹ and, from 1534 onwards, newly elected heads of houses had to compound with the Crown concerning the payment of First-Fruits. John Salisbury, made Abbot of Titchfield in 1536, agreed to pay to the Crown the equivalent of a year's monastic income in three equal annual instalments; the sum outstanding at the surrender of the abbey was passed on, as a Crown debt, to the new landowner.³²

Tenancies of land were requested by the King, or Cromwell writing on his behalf, and a refusal to meet such requests could well incur the royal displeasure.

Elizabeth Ryprose, Abbess of Romsey, complained that, having granted a lease, 'according to the King's letter to her', her new tenant was in arrears with the payment of his fine. A little later on, the same abbess was asked by Cromwell for a similar favour for a 'royal client'.³³

Anne Colte, Abbess of Wherwell, offended Cromwell by declining to grant a lease to John Cooke, an Admiralty agent, but Abbot Stephens of Netley obliged by granting Cooke a new lease, at the old rent, of a 'farm' called Roydon, which, lying near the seaside, was thought 'convenient' for Cooke to serve the King in his office of the Admiralty in those parts.³⁴

Cromwell also wrote to the Abbot of Quarr requesting 'farms' for a Master Lee. Abbot Ripon replied that the desired 'farms' were the demesnes of the monastery which supported 50 people, 'besides such as resort thither from the country'. He asked that Lee might be content with the reversion of any other 'farms' which might become available and promised to pay the fine to Cromwell or his nephew.³⁵

The Prior of St. Swithun's was asked by the King to transfer four Wiltshire manors to the Earl of Hertford whose estates they adjoined. In return, he was given a rather vague promise of exchange and compensation. The Prior replied, with great courtesy, that he and his monks wished nothing but 'to keep the old state and ancient possessions of your monastery', and added, with a little exaggeration, that the four manors represented a great proportion of the monastic income.³⁶ In March, 1536, within a year of this refusal of a royal request, the Prior's resignation was secured by a Cromwellian commission.³⁷

The most significant of all Crown methods of interference in the Hampshire monasteries concerned the matter of elections of heads of houses. A monastic election could be effected by the individual votes of the community, by the choice of a person or group of persons outside the monastery, to whom the election had been 'committed' or by a simple declaration of the general wish of the whole monastic community.³⁸

²⁹ *L and P* IV (3) 5838. *L and P* IV (1) 66.

³⁰ *L and P* XI 580.

³¹ Beaulieu and Breamore each paid £66.13.4d. towards the King's expenses in France in 1522 (*VCH Hants*, vol. II, pp. 145, 172. *L and P* III 2483).

³² *L and P* V 1052. *L and P* XII (11) 1245, XIII (1) 19, 20.

³³ *L and P* VII 1494, 1546.

³⁴ *L and P* VI 1361, 1502.

³⁵ *L and P* IX 925.

³⁶ *St. Swithun's Enrolment Register*, vol. III, f. 27b.

³⁷ See p. 73.

³⁸ Sec F. A. Gasquet, *English Monastic Life*, pp. 44-47.

In 1530, the monks of Hyde Abbey compromised the election of a new abbot to three people, Dr. John Bell, Bishop of Worcester; Dr. John Oliver, Dean of Christchurch, Oxford, and Dr. John Incent, Vicar-General in the diocese of Winchester. These three were authorised to nominate any professed member of the Order of St. Benedict on whom they could jointly agree. After a month, they decided on John Salcot, Abbot of St. Bennet of Hulme in Norfolk. Salcot, alias Capon, had already come to the notice of the abbey's royal founder, the King. Henry had been pleased by Salcot's preaching at Court, but even more by his exertions to obtain from the University of Cambridge a declaration in favour of the royal divorce. Henry had described Salcot as 'a great clerk and singularly learned in divinity.' The new Abbot of Hyde was very much a King's man.³⁹

The election of an abbess of Wintney, in 1534, was apparently compromised to the King or Cromwell, to whom Henry Courtenay wrote on behalf of a relative of his wife. Courtenay assured Cromwell that the lady concerned would be able to execute the office and would 'fully content the King of all the duties appertaining to him'.⁴⁰

At Wherwell, Anne Colte had lost royal favour by declining a lease of land to Admiralty agent, John Cooke. Cromwell attacked her through a commission of enquiry which brought her moral conduct into question. Nothing was proved but the abbess was induced to resign shortly afterwards, making way for a more amenable successor, Morpheta Kingsmill.⁴¹

The same kind of pressure was put on Henry Broke, Prior of St. Swithun's, in 1536. Cromwell's commissioners charged him with 'dilapidations' and threatened to remove him from office unless he resigned. Broke gave way and resigned on a pension. He was succeeded in office by William Kingsmill,⁴² who had promised to pay Cromwell the large sum of £500 if he secured his election. He soon despatched £100 to his patron and began to pay off the remainder at £50 every six months. Additionally, he granted to Cromwell and his son, Gregory, a life annuity from the manors of Husbourne and Crondall.⁴³

John Salcot (or Capon), last Abbot of Hyde, was also Bishop of Bangor.⁴⁴ John Maxey, Abbot of Titchfield until his death in 1536, was also Abbot of Welbeck and Bishop of Elphin in Ireland. A John Simpson then held the abbey of Titchfield for a few months before resigning to make way for John Salisbury, a suffragan bishop from Norfolk.⁴⁵ It is more than likely that Salisbury was a Crown nominee. John Draper, last Prior of Christchurch was a suffragan bishop in the Winchester diocese and a chaplain to the King.

Absenteeism and pluralism were thus features of the higher monastic posts in Hampshire shortly before the Dissolution. There was a large proportion of newly-elected heads who were Crown nominees and the Crown had shown its hand quite clearly in cases where royal requests had not been promptly met. It is therefore not

³⁹ E. Edwards, *Liber Monasterii de Hyda*, Introduction, lxiii-lxviii. *DNB*, Capon, John, alias Salcot.

⁴⁰ *Original letter*. B. M. Cotton MS, Vesp. F iii 97. Elizabeth Martyn, elected at the age of 22, was probably the nun concerned.

⁴¹ *L and P* VII 527-529, 907. *L and P* IX 344. *L and P* X 439.

⁴² A nephew of the new Abbess of Wherwell.

⁴³ *L and P* X 588. *L and P* XIV (2) 782.

⁴⁴ *DNB*, Capon, John. *L and P* VI 1067, 1396.

⁴⁵ A. H. Thompson, *The Premonstratensian Abbey of Welbeck*, pp. 98-99. *L and P* XII (2) 1245. *L and P* XII (1) 1108. *L and P* XII (2) 1270, 1274. *L and P* XIII (1) 867.

surprising to find that when the abbeys were called on to surrender, whatever elements of resistance there might have been had already melted away. There were no hangings of abbots at their own gateways in Hampshire. One abbot, in fact, achieved the distinction of surrendering two separate houses.⁴⁶ The use of founders' rights and the diplomatic skill of Thomas Cromwell left little room at the top for men with independence of spirit. So far as Hampshire was concerned, the Crown had very largely taken over the heads of the houses before it took over the houses themselves.

2. LAY ATTITUDES

The procedures by which the English monasteries were suppressed are well known and need only the briefest mention here.

The Act relating to First Fruits and Tithes⁴⁷ was followed by a valuation of all Church possessions. A few months after this, a visitation of the monasteries was undertaken by commissioners of Thomas Cromwell, the new Vicar-General. Both the valuation and the visitation provided a basis for the Act of Suppression, passed in February or March, 1536.⁴⁸ This Act authorised the suppression of all religious houses which had a clear yearly income of less than £200. The financial situation was revealed by the valuation, while the reports of Cromwell's visitors were often loaded against the monasteries in such a way as to provide the government with a *casus belli* against them. Financial gain to the Crown and a further assurance of anti-papalism were among the main motives of the suppression.

Following the Act of 1536, a new financial assessment was made of those houses which had been shown in the previous year to be worth less than £200 per year.⁴⁹ This assessment was a prelude to suppression and it brought to the monasteries concerned their third set of unwelcome lay visitors within a period of about 12 months.

Hampshire laymen participated in the work of the valuation of 1535 and of the new assessment of the smaller monasteries in 1536. The valuation was left entirely to a Hampshire commission under the nominal leadership of the Bishop of Winchester; the new assessment was carried out by a mixed commission in which representatives of the Crown and the newly created Court of Augmentations outnumbered the Hampshire men.⁵⁰

The mixed commission was required to record the numbers of monks and nuns, to report on their conversation and lives and to distinguish between those who wished to remain in religion and those who wished to come out into the world. The Hampshire records show no evidence of real hostility to the monasteries.

At Wintney, St. Denys and Breamore, the religious were said to have a good reputation. Netley Abbey was described as 'a large building situate upon the ryvage of the seas. To the King's subjects and strangers travelling the same seas, great relief and comfort.' Quarr Abbey was also a place of refuge for the inhabitants of the Isle of

⁴⁶ Thomas Stephens who surrendered Netley in 1536 and then became Abbot of Beaulieu which he surrendered in 1538.

⁴⁷ Statutes 26 Henry VIII, c. 3.

⁴⁸ Statutes 27 Henry VIII, c. 28. The exact circumstances of the passing of the Act are obscure. March 11

may have been the date on which the Bill came before the Commons.

⁴⁹ *L and P X* 721.

⁵⁰ *Valor Ecclesiasticus* II, pp. 1-26. *L and P VIII* 654. *L and P IX* 1070 n. 3. *Suppression Certificate* SC 12, Port. 33, no. 27.

Wight and strangers travelling the seas. The Mayor and Commonalty of Winchester spoke favourably of St. Mary's Abbey in Winchester and it was recorded that 'the most worshipful and honest persons of the county adjoining thereunto have daily made a continual sute unto the said commissioners . . . for toleration of the said monasterie . . .'. It was urged further that the abbey was surrounded by many poor households dependent upon it, that it supported over a hundred people and purchased all its supplies locally.⁵¹

In 1535, Cromwell's own commissioners visited at least some of the Hampshire monasteries but their reports appear to have been fragmentary.⁵² A canon of Southwick wrote to Cromwell with a complaint against his Prior in accordance with the injunctions left by Dr. Layton.⁵³ At St. Swithun's, Dr. Leigh successfully pressed Prior Broke to resign.⁵⁴ At Hyde, a stricter discipline was prescribed for the monks, but Abbot Salcot who was high in royal favour was allowed fairly wide travelling facilities.⁵⁵

Seven of the Hampshire monasteries came within the category of houses to be suppressed in 1536 and their reassessment took place in May of that year. By the end of July all but one had been closed down. The exception was St. Mary's Abbey, Winchester, which was reassessed at an annual income of over £300.⁵⁶ The continued existence of the abbey had to be purchased at a high price. A cash payment of £333 6s. 8d. was demanded in return for new letters patent from the Crown which established the abbey as a new foundation. The valuable Wiltshire manors of All Cannings and Urchfont were excluded from this new foundation and granted by the King to Edward Seymour.⁵⁷

Whether the suppression of all religious houses was intended from the first is debatable but once the machinery of suppression had been set up it was not difficult to increase the sphere of its operations. The fate of the greater monasteries was hastened by the northern rising of 1536, the Pilgrimage of Grace. The plea of the rebels to save the monasteries was part of a general conservative policy against the increasing powers of the monarchy. In so far as the northern monasteries – however indirectly and reluctantly – were associated with this movement, they provided the King and his Minister with an obvious motive for putting a complete end to monasticism in England.⁵⁸ To this end also, the Crown had a continued financial motive as expenditure on defence was called for by an ominous continental peace between the Empire and France in 1537.⁵⁹

Although there was no parliamentary sanction for further suppressions before 1539, Crown influence was used to effect 'surrenders' and commissioners were appointed to sanction them in the name of the King. The official version was that the monasteries were giving themselves up to the King of their own accord; they were

⁵¹ *Suppression Certificate* SC 12, 33, no. 27.

⁵² Dr. Layton, Dr. Leigh and John Ap Rice were in Hampshire. For references to their reports from other areas, see e.g., *L and P X*, Preface xl-xlvi, *L and P X* 364, *L and P IX* 42, 472; Thomas Wright (ed.) *Three Chapters of Letters relating to the Suppression of the Monasteries*.

⁵³ *L and P X* 138.

⁵⁴ *L and P X* 511, 588.

⁵⁵ BM MS Cleop. E iv, f. 29, f. 49.

⁵⁶ SC 12 Portf. 33, no. 27.

⁵⁷ *L and P XI* 385 (20).

⁵⁸ See M. H. and R. Dodds, *The Pilgrimage of Grace, 1536-7 and the Exeter Conspiracy, 1538*. (Conclusions, vol. II, pp. 329-334, and vol. II, pp. 156-157.)

⁵⁹ See F. C. Dietz, *English Government Finance, 1485-1558*, pp. 130-131.

warned that they should not previously diminish the value of the properties in any way.⁶⁰

Crown propaganda of this kind can hardly have deceived anybody for very long and the word 'suppression' was used in Hampshire when official documents still had 'surrender'. Moreover, heads of monasteries, seeing the future plainly, granted many new leases of land for long periods to people whom they knew.⁶¹

Titchfield was the first of the greater Hampshire abbeys to surrender and this was in December 1537. The absentee head was a suffragen bishop in Norfolk; the chief steward, Thomas Wriothesley, was a man rising in importance in Crown circles to whom most of the abbey's possessions had been promised.⁶² Beaulieu and Southwick surrendered in April 1538, and about a year later it was the turn of Hyde and Romsey to submit to the Crown. In November 1539, the last four Hampshire monasteries surrendered.⁶³ The Act of 1539⁶⁴ gave Parliamentary sanction to the surrenders.

The whole business of suppression in Hampshire passed off without any very alarming incidents. The Prior of Christchurch petitioned the King for the continued existence of his house, pointing out that the countryside was barren for many miles around, with 'no place of refuge for honest men'. He also claimed that the poor were fed daily, that there was a master to teach grammar to the children and a daily lecture in divinity.⁶⁵ At a late date, the Abbess of Romsey sought and obtained from the Crown a confirmation of the charters of her house.⁶⁶ Christchurch and Romsey, however, went the way of the rest. The citizens of Winchester and the country gentry, who, three years earlier had petitioned against the threatened closure of St. Mary's Abbey, now apparently accepted it without open protest or petition.

Written records cannot be wholly reliable as a guide to local feeling in Tudor times, nor, for that matter, in any times. The recorded evidence for Hampshire shows some murmurings against the royal policy and an embryo conspiracy which never quite came to life.

In April 1537, two Cornish fishermen discussed the Pilgrimage of Grace with local men at Hamble, a few miles to the east of Southampton. The Cornishmen talked, allegedly, of providing 200 jerkins and a Banner with the Five Wounds for the beginnings of a similar movement in the south and west. A report reached Cromwell and he ordered the arrest of the two men, at the same time asking for a list of disaffected people living near Southampton to be sent to him.⁶⁷

In March of the following year, a priest of Freshwater, Isle of Wight, was accused of speaking against the pulling down of abbeys.⁶⁸ Another clergyman, John Fisher, Rector of Wickham, spoke in the same vein and provoked another Cromwellian investigation.⁶⁹

⁶⁰ BM, Cotton Cleop. E iv, f. 86, f. 221.

⁶¹ Hyde Abbey, e.g. leased out the demesnes of eight manors for periods ranging between thirty-five and ninety-nine years. It is both significant and typical that one of the ninety-nine year leases went to Thomas Wriothesley, the chief steward (SC 6/H VIII, 3341).

⁶² *L and P XII* (11) 1245, 1270, 1275.

⁶³ Christchurch, St. Mary's, St. Swithun's and Wherwell. *L and P XIII* (1) 668, 698. *L and P XIV* (1)

862. *Suppression Certificate E/315/494*. The exact date for Romsey is uncertain.

⁶⁴ Statutes. 31H VIII. c. 13.

⁶⁵ *L and P XIII* (1) 1117.

⁶⁶ *L and P XII* (11) 1150 (5).

⁶⁷ F. Rose Troup, *The Western Rebellion of 1549*, p. 29.

⁶⁸ *L and P XIII* (1) 493.

⁶⁹ *L and P XI* 1265.

In higher circles, William Sandys, Lord Chamberlain, who had a fine country house near Basingstoke, was writing dangerous letters to the Imperial ambassador as early as 1535.

Sandys suggested that the Emperor would find little resistance in England as the people were so alienated from the King and the country was in such great disorder. On pretence of being ill, Sandys retired from the Court for a time, but, in the following year, he took the field against the northern Pilgrims.⁷⁰

The chief possibilities of resistance to the Crown in Hampshire rested with two families, the Poles and the Courtenays.⁷¹ The Poles lived at Warblington on the Sussex border but had lands also at Christchurch and a chapel in the priory there. The Courtenays, powerful in Devonshire, held three Hampshire manors and were founders of three Hampshire monasteries. Both families were linked with the royal line of succession. Margaret Pole, Countess of Salisbury, was a daughter of the Duke of Clarence; she was also a close friend of Katharine of Aragon and at one time acted as governess to the princess Mary. Henry Courtenay, Marquis of Exeter, was a grandson of Edward IV, and had a good claim to the throne in default of a male heir of Henry VIII. His wife was friendly towards Katharine of Aragon and godmother of Mary.

The Poles and the Courtenays formed the nucleus of a White Rose party. They, if anyone, represented the old aristocracy, which smarted during the Cromwellian decade.⁷² Two other titled Hampshire landowners, Thomas West, Earl de la Warr, and Arthur Plantagenet, Lord Lisle, had associations with the Poles and Courtenays. It may be asked what attitudes were shown by this group towards the royal policy of suppressing the monasteries.

Lord Lisle was mostly out of the country, as deputy of Calais from 1533 to 1540.⁷³ His daughter, Bridget, was at the convent boarding school at St. Mary's Abbey, Winchester, and his son, George, was in the care of the Abbot of Hyde.⁷⁴ Lord Lisle and his wife knew the last Prior of Southwick from whom Lisle had sought a tenancy for one of his servants.⁷⁵ They were also on friendly terms with the Prior of Christchurch with whom Lord Lisle exchanged gifts across the sea from Calais.⁷⁶

Lisle's attitude at the time of the suppressions seems to have been one of seeking personal gain rather than of expressing any regrets for the abbeys with which he had been connected.⁷⁷ One of his servants wrote to Calais to inform him that the abbeys were 'going down' and to add a pious wish that 'God might send one among them to your part'. Lisle needed no such encouraging letters. No sooner had the first confused reports of the suppressions reached Calais in the summer of 1536 than Lisle was writing to Cromwell asking for the possessions of Beaulieu Abbey. He was informed rather drily that Beaulieu was not to be dissolved, but that he might try for St. Mary's or for Waverley Abbey, which was 'a pretty thing'.⁷⁸ Subsequently, Lisle tried to secure for himself the possessions of Netley or Quarr.⁷⁹

⁷⁰ *L and P VIII*, 48, 121, 272.

⁷¹ M. H. and R. Dodds, *The Pilgrimage of Grace*, vol. 1, pp. 14-15, and chapter XII. F. Rose Troup, *The Western Rebellion*, p. 26 *et seq.*

⁷² M. H. and R. Dodds, vol. II, p. 291.

⁷³ *DNB*, Plantagenet, Arthur, and letters calendared for these years in *L and P*, vols. VI-XV.

⁷⁴ G. Baskerville, *English Monks and the Suppression of the Monasteries*, p. 37. *L and P X* 1148. *L and P XI* 478.

⁷⁵ *L and P VI* 618.

⁷⁶ *L and P IX* 266.

⁷⁷ *L and P XIII* (1) 235.

⁷⁸ *L and P X* 339, 1058.

⁷⁹ *L and P X* 1156.

Henry Courtenay was quickly granted the possessions of Breamore Priory. For his acceptance of abbey lands, Courtenay was reproached by Geoffrey Pole, the youngest of Margaret Pole's sons, to whom he replied, rather enigmatically, 'Yea, good enough for a time, they must have all again one day.'⁸⁰ When the Pilgrims rose in rebellion in the north, Courtenay mustered men and rode to join Norfolk, ostensibly in defence of established authority.⁸¹

Thomas West, Earl de la Warr, declared himself against the policy of closing the monasteries, but he saw no elements of a cause common to his own in the Pilgrimage of Grace.⁸² Like Courtenay, he was involved – and in this case clearly against his own wishes – in an exchange of lands with the Crown which endowed him with abbey property. He had to surrender his own estates in Sussex in exchange for the site and possessions of Wherwell Abbey.⁸³

The Poles were in disfavour with the King on account of the chidings which Henry received from the second son, Reginald, Cardinal Pole, who was overseas and beyond the range of Tudor justice. The Pole home at Warblington was regarded by the King and Cromwell as a possible centre of plots and intrigues. Hugh Holland, a merchant formerly in the service of the Poles, acted as messenger between Geoffrey and his brother, Reginald, in Flanders. John Helliard, Rector of Warblington, fled overseas and the Bishop of Winchester was ordered to enquire into the reason and method of his departure.⁸⁴

The story of the 'Exeter Conspiracy' has been written. It seems to have been little more than careless talk and wishful thinking. If the old nobility of Hampshire, Sussex and Devon wanted to be rid of Thomas Cromwell and to curb the growing powers of the King in Church and State, it missed the opportunity of taking action concurrently with that of the Pilgrims. Rebellions in Tudor England were regional in setting and inspiration, and the northern rising was a long way removed from the south and south-west. Within two years, the King had Henry Courtenay and Henry Pole executed on rather flimsy treason charges. Their deaths were followed by the judicial killing of the elderly Countess, Margaret Pole. Both Thomas West and Lord Lisle were imprisoned in the Tower because of their association with Poles and Courtenays.

It may fairly be asked why in a county like Hampshire, with its strong monastic traditions, and where men of conviction later stood the test of Elizabethan penal laws,⁸⁵ there was so little open opposition to the suppression of the monasteries. A number of factors may help to explain this situation.

Several influential Hampshire laymen already, as we have seen, held important offices under the Crown and were on that account less likely to feel the urge to rebel. The heavy penalties which followed the break-up of the northern rising of 1536 must have acted as a deterrent elsewhere. The heads of the Hampshire monasteries were, for the most part, already indebted to the Crown for their positions and they were generally so quick to surrender as to have left little opportunity for laymen to protest

⁸⁰ *M. H. and R. Dodds*, vol. II, p. 291.

⁸¹ Before he had travelled far northwards, he was apparently recalled to the West Country (*F. Rose Troup*, p. 20).

⁸² *DNB*, *L and P XIII* (11) 822.

⁸³ *L and P XIV* (11) 481, 544, 547. West at this time had recently been in the Tower on suspicion of treason.

⁸⁴ *M. H. and R. Dodds*, vol. II, p. 284.

⁸⁵ See e.g. J. E. Paul, *Hampshire Recusants in the time of Elizabeth I*.

on their behalf. Potential rebel leaders like the Courtenays and Poles and their friends were carefully watched and quickly associated with the monastic spoils. The Bishop of Winchester, Stephen Gardiner, who was personally hostile to Cromwell, was kept out of the way, as ambassador to France, during the crucial years of the suppressions.

There are one or two indications of popular feeling, no more than straws in the wind. John Aske, brother of Robert who led the Pilgrimage of Grace, was a Hampshire landowner at Empshott. He accompanied the Duke of Norfolk at his brother's execution and showed himself 'a right honest man to the King'. Subsequently, his Hampshire tenants withheld their rents and Norfolk himself intervened by writing to Cromwell asking him to direct that these rents be paid.⁸⁶

When the shrine of St. Swithun was despoiled at the suppression of the Winchester Priory, Thomas Wriothesley and his fellow commissioners thought it wise to choose the middle of the night for their activities, for fear of the citizens' disapproval.⁸⁷

Whatever popular feelings may, however, have existed, the attitudes of influential laymen in Hampshire were characterised by a tendency to face both ways. Little or no evil was spoken about the monasteries, but as Crown policy directed complete suppression, there were few voices speaking in opposition. The majority of Hampshire landowners and merchants would appear to have bowed philosophically before the royal will. Like William Paulet of Basing,⁸⁸ they took the willow as their emblem rather than the oak. If some of them did sigh with regret at what had come to pass, they also looked forward with keen anticipation to what the future might hold. Many already had interests in the monastic estates and were soon to show an eye for the main chance in the great new land market which developed.

A letter from Harry Huttoft, Customs-officer at Southampton, to Thomas Cromwell, written on the very eve of the first suppressions, is perhaps not untypical of a general attitude. After discussing matters concerning the port, Huttoft continued, in the phraseology of his times, . . . 'Further to ascertain your mastership in these parts is much speaking of the suppressing of religious houses wherein it may please your mastership of your accustomed goodness to give me licence to be a beseecher and suitor for one house in these parts being the house of Mottisfont where is a very good friend of mine and a house of as much honesty and good rule as is within all this country. Beseeching your mastership to be so good master as in case any way may be taken for the safeguard of the house by any way to be had that he may be one of the number to be redeemed and for the same such order as your mastership shall command shall be obeyed. And if no such direction may be but that they must pass all one way that yet it will please your good mastership to have me in your gentle remembrance. So if by your help only I may have it in such like manner towards my poor living as the others shall be determined. Wherein I trust to do presently my duty accordingly and thus the Holy Ghost ever preserve your mastership to long and peaceful life. Written the twenty-sixth day of March (1536).

By your faithful servant,
Harry Huttoft.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ *L and P XII* (11) 261.

⁸⁷ *L and P XIII* (11) 401.

⁸⁸ Speaking later of himself (*DNB*).

⁸⁹ *Original letter SP I*, vol. 103, f. 28, calendared *L and P X* 557. It has been given a little modernisation of spelling and punctuation.

There would seem to have been several Huttofts in Hampshire, and perhaps in England.

3. LAY REWARDS

As the monasteries were gradually closed down, the main gains open to laymen were centred in the disposal of the former monastic estates. The Act of 1536 declared that the King might 'lawfully give, grant or dispose of' the suppressed monasteries 'at his will and pleasure to the honour of God and the wealth of this realm.'⁹⁰ The lands which the Crown disposed of between the suppression of the smaller houses and March 1539 were not very extensive and were mostly in the form of gifts to men in the service of the Crown or of part-exchanges which helped the Crown to consolidate its estates.⁹¹

In Hampshire,⁹² the main beneficiaries for this period were William Sandys, William Paulet, William Fitzwilliam and Thomas Wriothesley, all holding offices under the Crown and all but one former chief stewards of Hampshire monasteries.

Sandys received the site and possessions of Mottisfont Priory in exchange for lands of his own in the London area.⁹³ Financially, this exchange would seem to have been to Sandys' advantage. King Henry had been a visitor to the Hampshire home of the family at the Vyne near Basingstoke as recently as October 1535, when he was accompanied by Anne Boleyn. He may have been concerned by the absence of Sandys from Court and interested to win back his warm friendship.⁹⁴

Henry Courtenay was granted the site and possessions of Breamore Priory,⁹⁵ in exchange for the wardenship of Windsor Castle and the payment of an annual rental. Allowing for some priory debts to be paid off by the grantee, Courtenay, like Sandys, seemed to have some gain in the transaction, but he stated that it had been forced upon him,⁹⁶ and probably for political reasons.

Thomas Wriothesley was granted the site and most of the possessions of Titchfield Abbey;⁹⁷ his immediate commitments were heavy as he took over a pension list and debts of the late abbey.⁹⁸ Wriothesley was also granted the site and some closes and meadows of Beaulieu Abbey.⁹⁹ William Paulet was granted the site and part of the lands of Netley Abbey, together with some of the estates of Wintney Priory.¹⁰⁰ William Fitzwilliam received the site of Waverley Abbey in Surrey and other lands of this abbey which included three Hampshire manors.¹⁰¹

Other grantees of this period included Richard Hill, Sergeant of the King's Cellar, who received the site and some of the lands of Wintney Priory, and Francis Dawtry, Sheriff of Somerset and Dorset, who received a similar grant of the site and part of the possessions of St. Denys Priory near Southampton.¹⁰²

⁹⁰ Statutes 27/Henry VIII c. 28 (Clause 7).

⁹¹ See e.g. *F. C. Dietz*, pp. 148-149.

⁹² Most, but not all, of the properties of St. Swithun's Priory, Winchester, were assigned to a new Cathedral Dean and Chapter, established in 1541 (*C. W. Kitchin, Documents relating to the foundation of the Dean and Chapter of Winchester*, pp. 37-43).

⁹³ Patent Roll 66/C 668 m. 9-10.

⁹⁴ *DNB. L and P VIII* 48, 121, 172.

⁹⁵ *L and P XI* 1217 (6).

⁹⁶ *M. H. and R. Dodds*, p. 291.

⁹⁷ Patent Roll C 66/673 m. 4.

⁹⁸ A similar example of a Tudor 'gift' loaded with immediate financial commitments is given by H. P. R. Finberg in relation to John Russell at Tavistock Abbey (*Tavistock Abbey*, p. 270).

⁹⁹ *L and P XXIII* (1) 1519-67.

¹⁰⁰ *L and P XI* 385 (3).

¹⁰¹ *L and P XI* 202 (37).

¹⁰² *L and P IX* 914 (22).

This, for Hampshire, was the sum of Henry VIII's extravagance in disposing of abbey lands about which much used to be written. These were indeed gifts of a kind but many of them involved compulsory exchanges or were saddled with heavy immediate financial burdens. They could hardly be called carefree or haphazard gifts. Men like Paulet, Wriothesley and Fitzwilliam gave the kind of unquestioning service which was essential to the Tudor monarch; men like Courtenay and Sandys were to be won by diplomacy or ensnared by guile.

A great need for ready money impelled the Crown to sell monastic lands.¹⁰³ From February and March 1539, onwards, sales of monastic lands are recorded in the accounts of the Treasurer of the Court of Augmentations.¹⁰⁴ For Hampshire, sales¹⁰⁵ of monastic property built up from a fairly slow start in 1539 to a peak period in 1544-46 and then descended to very little by the end of the reign of Edward VI and during that of Mary.¹⁰⁶

Both the Acts of 1536 and 1539 contained clauses reserving on all lands disposed of a tenure by knight-service *in capite* and a yearly rent of one tenth of the value of the lands.¹⁰⁷ This policy of selling lands to be held on military tenure and subject to feudal incidents such as the threat of prerogative wardship continued until March 1544.¹⁰⁸ A modification of the instructions to commissioners for sales in that month allowed for the sale of tenements without land or of single properties worth less than 40 shillings a year to be held in free socage or burgage.¹⁰⁹ During the reign of Edward VI, the value of parcels of land which could be sold free of military tenure was increased to include lands worth four pounds a year and by the end of Mary's reign this figure had risen to 10 pounds. Eventually the limit rose further to 20 pounds under Elizabeth.¹¹⁰ The relaxation of military tenure on these smaller properties brought the dealers and speculators into the market, but it must be emphasised that sales subject to tenure by knight service continued to predominate throughout the reigns of Edward VI and Mary.¹¹¹

The reservation of the rent of a tenth began to disappear from 1546 onwards, and especially from 1548. By the end of Mary's reign, the Crown had ceased to distinguish in its terms of sales between former monastic lands, chantry lands, attainted lands and other Crown property.¹¹²

In general, monastic land was sold in Hampshire, as elsewhere, at a price which represented 20 times its assessed annual value and town property was sold at 10 to 15 times its annual value. There were modifying factors such as the state of repair

¹⁰³ In particular, the cost of the suppression of rebellion in the north of England and in Ireland (the Geraldine rebellion) and the new fortifications at Calais and along the south coast of England; eventually the cost of war with France and Scotland. (See e.g. *F. C. Dietz*, pp. 142-147). Additionally, there was heavy expenditure on royal palaces and parks.

¹⁰⁴ e.g. As calendared in *L and P XIV* (1) 651, XIV (11) 236.

¹⁰⁵ Which are confusingly termed 'grants'.

¹⁰⁶ *L and P. Calendar of Patent Rolls Edward VI. Calendar of Patent Rolls Philip and Mary*. The debasement of the coinage and sales of chantry property were

other new sources of Crown income during this period.

¹⁰⁷ Statutes 27/Henry VIII, c. 28, para. 8. Statutes 31/Henry VIII, c. 13, para. 3.

¹⁰⁸ J. Hurstfield, *The Greenwich Tenures in the reign of Edward VI*, p. 74 *et seq.*

¹⁰⁹ *L and P XIX* (1) 278 (5).

¹¹⁰ *J. Hurstfield*, pp. 74-81.

¹¹¹ e.g. *L and P XXI* (1) 970 (14). *Calendar of Patent Rolls Edward VI* (2), p. 57; (5) p. 184. *Calendar of Patent Rolls Philip and Mary* (3), pp. 554-555.

¹¹² *L and P XXI* (1) 970 (14). See also e.g. *Calendar of Patent Rolls Philip and Mary* (3) pp. 554-555.

in the case of town properties, but the general principles of price-fixing were still being adhered to until Mary's reign.¹¹³ In an age of inflation, the profitability of their purchases to the new landlords might well depend on the extent to which they could raise rents or other charges.

Those who purchased Hampshire monastic lands directly from the Crown during the period 1536–1558 included nobles, gentry, merchants, clothiers and, in due course, speculators, who were often in syndicates, buying in order to resell. Although there was a gradual widening, in the 1540's, of the range of men who bought abbey lands in Hampshire, this feature should not be overstressed. Wriothesley and Paulet who were among the first grantees were purchasing further lands from the Crown in 1547 and 1550. Nor was there, before 1558, any widespread transfer or break-up of manorial properties from one landlord to another. Some three-quarters of the former monastic manors in Hampshire were still in the hands of the original grantees at the end of Mary's reign.¹¹⁴ Those manors which had changed hands had mainly done so for two reasons. Either they had been granted to someone outside the county who sold to a Hampshire man, or they were resold by men like Wriothesley to associates or 'servants' on whose behalf they may sometimes have been acting in the first place.¹¹⁵

The greatest individual beneficiary from the disposal of monastic lands in Hampshire was Thomas Wriothesley. Wriothesley was in Cromwell's service as early as February 1524.¹¹⁶ His first official appointment was as a clerk of the Signet in May 1530,¹¹⁷ a position which he apparently held until April 1540, when he was made a joint Principal Secretary to the King together with Ralph Sadler.¹¹⁸ In the meantime he had served on foreign embassies (1532–1534), had been admitted a student of Grays Inn (1534) and granted in reversion the office of coroner and attorney in the King's Bench (1536).¹¹⁹ Throughout the 1530's, Wriothesley was very closely associated with Cromwell in the work of the Secretaryship and he received his final promotion in this department when Cromwell surrendered the office.¹²⁰

Wriothesley survived Cromwell's downfall and continued to enjoy royal favour. He was one of the commissioners who negotiated an alliance with Charles V in 1543; early in the following year, he was created Baron Wriothesley of Titchfield and, in 1544 also, he was appointed Lord Chancellor. He was lavishly rewarded by the terms of Henry VIII's will but he was much less favoured by both Somerset and Warwick and ceased to be a public figure for the last few months of his life, in 1550.¹²¹

Wriothesley had a house at Micheldever, north of Winchester, possibly in 1534 and certainly by 1537.¹²² He does not appear, however, to have been a county free-

¹¹³ For some general observations, see D. Knowles, *The Religious Orders in England*, vol. III, pp. 395–397. Transactions can be checked through a series of documents, such as Particulars for Grants (E/318), Deeds of Purchase and Exchange (E/305), Patent Rolls (C/66), Treasurer's Accounts of the Court of Augmentations (E/313).

¹¹⁴ Based on an analysis of grants and licences to alienate in *L and P* and *Calendar of Patent Rolls*, Edward VI, Philip and Mary. W. G. Hoskins in *Leicestershire Farmer in the 16th Century* has traced the splitting-up of large estates in Leicestershire.

¹¹⁵ e.g. Sales of estates formerly of Southwick Priory by Thomas Wriothesley to his protégé, John White (*L and P* XXI (1) 1166 (29).

¹¹⁶ *DNB*.

¹¹⁷ *L and P* IV 6600 (11).

¹¹⁸ *L and P* XV 437.

¹¹⁹ *DNB*.

¹²⁰ G. R. Elton, *England under the Tudors*, pp. 182–183.

¹²¹ *DNB*.

¹²² *L and P* IX. App. 14, XII (1) 1322.

holder in Hampshire at any time before the Dissolution and he did not serve on any county commissions. The beginnings of his influence in Hampshire seem traceable to a friendship with Abbot Capon, alias Salcot, of Hyde.

In September 1533, Wriothesley delivered to Capon a letter from Cromwell nominating the abbot to the vacant bishopric of Bangor;¹²³ shortly afterwards, he sought, without success, to obtain Papal bulls confirming Capon's appointment.¹²⁴ Already, from July 1533, Wriothesley was joint steward of Hyde Abbey which granted him fees, annuities and, at a late date, leases of the rectory of Micheldever and the manor of Northstoneham.¹²⁵ His Hampshire residence, his links with Hyde and his close association with Thomas Cromwell brought Wriothesley other payments and perquisites from St. Swithun's, Christchurch, Southwick, Wherwell and Titchfield.¹²⁶

Wriothesley's increasing prestige and wealth stemmed from many sources. In addition to his main appointments under the Crown, he became Constable of both Southampton and Porchester Castles and steward of most of the attainted Pole lands.¹²⁷ His manner of living changed with the prosperity of the times. He moved with his family from Micheldever to the imposing stone mansion which he built from the ruins of Titchfield Abbey, complete with towers and battlements.¹²⁸ He obtained licence to maintain in his livery '40 persons, gentlemen and yeomen' over and above his usual household.¹²⁹ Altogether, Wriothesley acquired 27 former monastic manors in Hampshire. About half of these were in some form of gift in recognition for his services; for the others, he paid on the usual terms. Of the 27, he retained 16 in his own hands, mainly the Titchfield block of estates, together with Northstoneham and Micheldever. Whilst allowing for the vagueness of the term manor, there can be little doubt that the grants of monastic estates alone¹³⁰ made Wriothesley a bigger land magnate in Hampshire than any other layman had been in the years immediately before the Dissolution. Of the Hampshire monastic manorial properties given or sold by the Crown in the years 1536-1558, roughly one quarter went to Wriothesley.¹³¹

Wriothesley seems to personify the 'new man' of the Tudor period. He acquired a powerful group of Hampshire estates and indeed a Hampshire title.¹³² He set up in style at Titchfield, within a few miles of Southampton Water.¹³³ Yet he was a newcomer to the county with no family tradition there, no long-standing local loyalties. He stood or fell with the Crown.

Hampshire's second greatest gainer by the disposal of monastic property was William Paulet of Basing. Paulet, like Wriothesley, had associations with several Hampshire abbeys before the Dissolution;¹³⁴ unlike Wriothesley, he had been a leading

¹²³ *L and P* VI 1067.

¹²⁴ *DNB*.

¹²⁵ *Decrees and Orders*. E/315/94, f. 239b, E/315/99, ff. 55-57. SC 6/Henry VIII 3341.

¹²⁶ *Decrees and Orders*. E/315/99, ff. 55-57. *L and P* XIII (1) 748. *L and P* Addenda, vol. 1 (1) 1279.

¹²⁷ *L and P* XVI 503 (12), XVII 1154 (6), (7).

¹²⁸ *L and P* XVII 137 (54). Additional stone, for facing, was brought from Caen in Normandy and windows were transferred from Southwick Priory.

¹²⁹ *L and P* XVII 714 (24).

¹³⁰ Wriothesley acquired other estates which had

not belonged to the monasteries.

¹³¹ Among other sources, the *Inquisition Post Mortem*, taken at Winchester, 12th September 1551, reveals Wriothesley's estates at the time of his death. A transcript is in BM. Harl. MS 863, ff. 119-125.

¹³² He became Earl of Southampton at the beginning of the reign of Edward VI; earlier he was Baron Wriothesley of Titchfield.

¹³³ His effigy can be seen on his tomb in Titchfield church.

¹³⁴ He was steward of Wherwell Abbey and the Priors of St. Swithun and Wintney.

figure in Hampshire for several years.¹³⁵ By 1527, he had been four times sheriff and he was Knight of the shire in the Reformation Parliament. He came to have a number of connections with Cromwell and the King. With Cromwell, he became joint-Master of the Royal Woods; on behalf of the King he took part in a fruitless embassy to Rome, in 1533, concerned with the royal divorce and he subsequently undertook the unpleasant duty of conveying Henry's orders to the abandoned Katharine. He was one of the judges of Fisher and More and of the Boleyn 'accomplices' in 1536.¹³⁶ Paulet trimmed his sails to the current winds and continued to gain titles and rewards into the reigns of Edward VI and Mary.¹³⁷ He acquired 12 former monastic manors in Hampshire, some by 'gift' and others by purchase. He had an abbey site at Netley but did not embark on new house building as he already possessed in a handsome park at Basing an imposing manor house which he had been allowed to fortify and surround with walls and towers.¹³⁸ More than a third of the monastic estates disposed of in Hampshire before 1558 went to Wriothsley and Paulet.

William, Lord Sandys, of the Vyne, near Basingstoke was another important grantee, gaining the site and possessions of Mottisfont Priory in exchange for lands of his own in Middlesex. The Sandys were an old Hampshire family. William, who built the early Tudor brick mansion known as the Vyne, became Lord Chamberlain and remained, in Henry VIII's time, generally close to the royal circle.¹³⁹ Despite the spaciousness of the Vyne, Sandys built a secondary residence on the Mottisfont site.¹⁴⁰ He would not, however, appear to have been primarily a seeker after abbey lands.

The rest of the Hampshire monastic properties was parcelled out among many laymen, both Hampshire men¹⁴¹ and outsiders, and, of these, one case – that of John and George Mill, father and son, of Southampton, is worthy of note. Mill was a younger son of a Sussex family who engaged in trade at Southampton and became a leading burgess there.¹⁴² By April 1533, Mill was on friendly terms with Thomas Cromwell, acting, on one occasion, as Cromwell's messenger to the Earl of Arundel.¹⁴³ He seems to have acted as steward of Wriothsley's Titchfield estates after the suppression of the abbey there,¹⁴⁴ and also to have been in the service of Admiral William Fitzwilliam.¹⁴⁵ Between 1540 and 1544, Mill was paymaster for the defence works along the Hampshire coast and also a commissioner for the purchase of victuals for the army and the fleet.¹⁴⁶

¹³⁵ The Paulets, a branch of a Somerset family, had been in Hampshire for about a century by William Paulet's time.

¹³⁶ *DNB*, Paulet, William.

¹³⁷ e.g. Master of the Court of Liveries and Wards (1540), Lord President of the Council (1546), Earl of Wiltshire (1550), Marquis of Winchester (1551), Lord Treasurer (1550), Lord Privy Seal (1551). *DNB*, *The Life and Death of William Pauley*, by Rowlande Broughton, gent, 1572.

¹³⁸ *L and P V* 80 (36). Basing House was a royalist stronghold in the Civil War.

¹³⁹ A period of uncertainty about his loyalties is mentioned above.

¹⁴⁰ Strictly, this was a legal requirement, though

often ignored. Both Sandys and Wriothsley built their new houses in the framework of the former abbey churches.

¹⁴¹ They included county gentry like the Kingsmills and Tichbornes.

¹⁴² W. Berry, *Pedigrees of Hampshire*, p. 27. A. A. Ruddock, *Italian Merchants and Shipping in Southampton*, pp. 247–249. Mill became Town Clerk and Recorder of Southampton.

¹⁴³ *L and P VI* 386, 582.

¹⁴⁴ *L and P XIII* (1) 1196.

¹⁴⁵ H. Ellis, *Original Letters illustrative of English History*, Series 2, vol. II, 112.

¹⁴⁶ *L and P XVII* 258, f. 50, XVIII (1) 436, ff. 84, 88. *L and P XIX* (1) 368, f. 51.

Mill later attributed his 'chief thrift and worldly beginning' to Thomas Skeffington, Abbot of Beaulieu, who died in 1533.¹⁴⁷ Mill and his eldest son, George, were stewards of Beaulieu and George was also steward of Breamore Priory and St. Denys Priory. When the monasteries were suppressed, the Mills soon began to set themselves up as land magnates. They purchased estates mainly in the Isle of Wight and in the vicinity of Southampton Water. In addition to buying monastic land directly from the Crown, through the Court of Augmentations, the Mills made purchases also from other grantees. By the 1550's they were among the leading landowning families in south Hampshire.¹⁴⁸

The pattern of relationships and of social change at this period is a complex and confusing one, but a number of similar themes recur often enough to suggest that they are no coincidence. Those laymen who held office in the monasteries were well represented in the redistribution of lands which followed the Dissolution. Those who served the Crown well or who, in the 1530's, were favourably known to the King's Minister, Thomas Cromwell, were not forgotten in the new order of things. Very few of the heads of houses and equally few prominent laymen seem to have had scruples of conscience in their dealings with land which, in an earlier age, had been given to the monasteries to hold for ever under the terms of a donor's endowment.¹⁴⁹ The implication by the Crown that monastic property, like that of a private estate, was a matter for the head of the house was a convenient fiction to which all the relevant parties to some extent subscribed.

The secularisation of the monasteries had gone a long way before 1536; its completion was symbolised in due course by crumbling ruins as at Netley and by pretentious and castellated new manor houses as at nearby Titchfield. History provides strange ironies and Wriothesley's Place House at Titchfield also, in time, became a ruin, an empty shell. Its façade, however, is still bold and it stands as a clear token of the new landscape of Hampshire after the abbeys had been 'pulled down'.

ABBREVIATIONS

BM	British Museum.
DNB	Dictionary of National Biography.
L and P	Letters and Papers Foreign and Domestic in the reign of Henry VIII.
VCH Hants	<i>Victoria County History, Hampshire and Isle of Wight.</i>

Note

For many reasons of links between them, the Isle of Wight is included with Hampshire in this study.

¹⁴⁷ Will of John Mill, PCC 15 Burke proved 15th June 1551. It was alleged (*L and P* XIII 11 1222) that Mill and an associate had extracted a will favourable to themselves from the dying abbot.

¹⁴⁸ *The Inquisition Post Mortem* (Chancery Inq. PMC/142/94 no. 47) held on Mill's possessions at Romsey in July 1551 shows four manorial estates and other lands purchased from the Crown and six manorial estates from other grantees. All of this was for-

merly monastic property. On John Mill, see also S. F. Hockey, *Quarr Abbey and its Lands*, ch. XIV, pp. 219-238; ch. XV, pp. 247-248.

¹⁴⁹ The new owners of abbey lands did not, however, necessarily accept the doctrinal changes which followed the death of Henry VIII. Henry, only surviving son of Thomas Wriothesley, was a notable Hampshire recusant. This situation had its counterparts elsewhere in England.

PROCEEDINGS FOR THE YEAR 1970

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