

THE ALIEN BENEDICTINE PRIORY OF MONK SHERBORNE, HAMPSHIRE FROM THE TWELFTH TO THE FIFTEENTH CENTURIES

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ABSTRACT

The Priory Church, Pamber End, Hampshire, is all that remains of the alien Benedictine priory of West or Monk Sherborne founded in the early twelfth century. At the height of its prosperity at the end of the thirteenth century it was the second wealthiest alien priory in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. This was partly due to charitable gifts by Henry III to the priory that included timber from the nearby royal forest of Pamber, towards building works at the priory in the mid-thirteenth century. The king and his household were fairly frequent visitors to the priory and had wine cellars here. Conversely, the fourteenth century saw a steady decline in the priory's fortunes, largely due to systematic Crown exploitation for revenue during hostilities with France. However, Monk Sherborne priory survived the general suppression of alien priories in 1414 because it was fully conventual. After a period of recovery in the first half of the fifteenth century, the priory was abruptly suppressed in 1452, when the new owners, Eton College, came into possession. The community was quickly evicted and most of the priory's buildings were destroyed. Religious life was not re-established until 1475 when provision was made for a resident chantry priest. Ownership of the priory was disputed between Queen's College, Oxford, and Eton College in the later fifteenth century. Queen's College, Oxford, is the present owner of the estate.

INTRODUCTION

The Priory Church, Pamber End, is situated in the north of the parish of Monk Sherborne about five miles north of Basingstoke and west of the A340, which runs from Basingstoke to Tadley and Aldermaston. Not itself a parish church, it is one of three churches in the united benefice of the Sherbornes with Pamber, the others being the par-

ish churches of All Saints, Monk Sherborne, and St Andrews, Sherborne St John. The chancel, crossing, tower, stair turret, and ruined south nave wall are all that remain of the Benedictine priory of West or Monk Sherborne, founded in the early twelfth century by Henry de Port as a cell of St Vigor, Cerisy, in Normandy, and suppressed in the fifteenth century (*Victoria History of the County of Hampshire*, iv, 231). It was the largest of the alien priories in Hampshire. As well as being fully conventual, Monk Sherborne priory enjoyed a degree of independence from its parent house. The Bishops of Winchester accepted the prior and convent of Monk Sherborne as patrons of the livings of Bramley and Church Oakley, and the Bishops instituted later priors. However, Monk Sherborne was regarded as an alien priory by the civil authorities (*VHCH*, ii, 226). There were ten alien priories in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight: six of them Benedictine (Monk Sherborne, Hayling, Andover, Appuldurcombe I.O.W., Carisbrooke I.O.W., and Ellingham); one Cluniac (St Helen's I.O.W.); three Order of Tiron (Andwell, Hamble and St Cross I.O.W.) (Knowles and Hadcock, 1971, 83–4, 98, 106). Of all the counties in England, Hampshire had the largest number of alien priories, possibly due to the easy accessibility of the county to the Normans (*VHCH*, ii, 105).

THE FOUNDATION OF MONK SHERBORNE PRIORY

At Domesday, Hugh de Port held fifty-five manors or estates in Hampshire directly from the king, and thirteen others from Odo, Bishop of Bayeux and half-brother to King William. (Odo was im-

prisoned in 1082 and Hugh de Port held all his lands in Hampshire at Domesday). Hugh held Sherborne (St John) including a church directly from the king and (Monk) Sherborne from Odo. No church is mentioned in Domesday as being part of Hugh's holding in Monk Sherborne (Munby, 1982, 23.4, 23.57).

At Hugh de Port's death his son Henry inherited most of his father's holdings in Hampshire, including West and East Sherborne. Henry, a baron of the exchequer under Henry I, founded a priory in West Sherborne in the early twelfth century as a dependency of the Benedictine abbey of St Vigor, Cerisy, close to Bayeux and Port-en-Bassin, the de Port family home in Normandy. This foundation cannot be dated with any great precision, but the church was dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary and John the Baptist (Binns, 1989, 102).

The early charters relating to Monk Sherborne priory are in the possession of Queen's College, Oxford, and are reproduced in Salter's *Oxford Charters*. The first one is Henry de Port's foundation charter, undated but assigned a date of 1120–1130. (None of the witnesses appear in Domesday, neither do they appear in the *carta* of 1166, hence the assigned date for the charter halfway between 1086 and 1166). In it, Henry granted to God and St Vigor of Cerisy, for the salvation of the souls of his lord King Henry and his father William, and of himself, his father, mother, wife, children, friends and dependants, the whole of Sherborne on the west side, its woods, church and all tithes, and everything else except for the lands of Gervase Hwastehose and Crespt. Also given were the meadow of Longbridge and the mill next to the fishpond and the meadow of the other Sherborne (Sherborne St John), and the churches of Newnham, Bramley and Upton Grey with tithes, and the tithes of Basing. Other lands and tithes were listed. Henry had given these gifts so that the abbot of St Vigor could establish a convent of monks at Sherborne to serve God. Finally, he gave his own body to be buried there (Salter, 1929, no. 14). The *Complete Peerage* (Cockayne, 1949, xi, 318) states that the contents of this charter suggest that the charter itself is of a later date than the actual foundation of the priory, but without a fuller explanation this is not helpful. The ref-

erence by Henry de Port to his lord King Henry in the charter suggests a date of 1100–1135. At present it is unfortunately not possible to be more precise.

In the third Monk Sherborne charter John de Port, Henry's son, confirmed to the monks of Sherborne the gifts of Henry his father, and of Adhewisa his mother (which was land in Great Shefford, Berkshire). However, the church of Newnham and lands in Newnham and Mapledewell are omitted. Although mentioned by Henry in his foundation charter, he did not confirm them. They belonged to the fee of one Adam de Port, a kinsman, not to the fee of John, Henry's son. A date of 1150–1170 has been assigned to this charter, but a date nearer 1150 is more likely, as a witness, Herbertus, rector of Sherborne, is only *clericus* here, and in charters nos. 24 and 25, both dated to before 1162, he is *decanus* (Salter, 1929, no. 16). However, as *Complete Peerage* gives a date of 1168 (not 1170) for the death of John de Port (Cockayne, 1949, xi, 319) the date of this charter could be revised. (The above Adam de Port confirmed to the monks of Cerisy the chapel of Newnham and the tithes of Newnham and Mapledewell between 1154 and 1172 (Salter, 1929, no. 21)).

In the fourth Monk Sherborne charter, Henry Bishop of Winchester confirmed to the church of Sherborne the gifts within the diocese of Winchester of Henry de Port as confirmed by his son John de Port, about 1150–1170. The land at Great Shefford is not mentioned as it was in the diocese of Salisbury (Salter, 1929, no. 18). However, details of the twelfth-century archdeacons of the Bishops of Winchester have been revised, with Robert de Inglesham, archdeacon of Surrey, succeeding in about 1154 (Franklin, 1993, lvii). As Robert was a witness to this charter, the date of this charter could also be revised.

This foundation by Henry de Port was primarily for the establishment of a religious house for the spiritual wellbeing of the de Port family, friends and neighbours, and as a family burial place. The de Port family was responsible for one other alien foundation in Hampshire. Early in the twelfth century, Adam de Port of Mapledewell founded a small priory in Andwell, as a dependency of the Benedictine abbey of Tiron (*VHCH*, ii, 223).

THE PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRIORY

The choice of site for the priory

Davidson (1909, 7) suggests that the parish church of All Saints, Monk Sherborne (in the south of the parish) may have been the original choice of family burial place of the de Port family. The remains of an eastern apse beyond the present chancel indicate that this church was once much larger. More recently, Hubbuck (pers. comm.) reports the view that All Saints might have been the first priory church; in original extent and form it was a very substantial building, but the roof was lowered and the eastern apse removed probably in the fourteenth century. The foundation date of the priory appears to predate the oldest extant parts of the Priory church, in the twelfth-century tower, (*VHCH*, iv, 236). Also the fabric of All Saints predates that of the Priory church, as demonstrated by the herringbone pattern of the flint. This is an early Norman feature (Pevsner and Lloyd, 1967, 339) not found at the Priory church. It is possible therefore that the first priory church was All Saints in the south of the parish and the priory later moved to its present (and more suitable) site in the north of the parish. Alternatively there could of course have been an earlier church on the latter site (for which some evidence possibly exists and is discussed below).

Knowles and Hadcock (1971, 90) comment that the priory at Monk Sherborne was very possibly for a full colony of a prior and twelve monks. This suggests that the priory occupied a large site to accommodate the church and other necessary buildings. A good water supply was an essential basic requirement for a monastic foundation. Ideally, two separate supplies were needed, one for drinking and one for cleansing and drainage. Their availability influenced the siting of the precinct and the orientation of the buildings within. Water was also required to drive any mills and feed fishponds (Aston, 1993, 20–2). Monk Sherborne priory was built on an outcropping of low-level terrace deposits (formerly valley gravel), almost surrounded by London clay, in an area just behind the convergence of two streams, one running west to east on the north of the site, the

other running south-west to north-east on the east. (GS sheet 284, 1980). Water from these streams could have supplied the priory's needs. Food was either produced on the priory's estates or bought from nearby markets. A local supply of building materials was also needed for the construction and maintenance of buildings within the precinct (Aston, 1993, 22). Flint, chalk and clay were readily available nearby, as was timber.

Such a good location is unlikely to have been unexploited before the twelfth century. There is some evidence of previous occupation of the site. Excavations in 1975 prior to the construction of a new surface water drainage scheme around the outside of the church revealed evidence of the partially robbed footings of an earlier building over which the existing south nave wall and south transept have been built. The early footings appeared to run under the east end of the existing nave wall and under the south transept west wall and were possibly also visible under the doorway jamb on the east side of the south transept west buttress. Here the footing might have been a contemporary support to the doorjamb but it was out of line with the remainder of the transept footings. Also found in the early footings in the south side of the eastern nave doorway was a piece of well-worn stone, possibly forming part of an edge, which may be evidence of an early doorway. Unfortunately no evidence was found with which to date these footings. Finds from the site generally include re-used Roman tiles (also seen in the church wall fabric) and oyster shells (Hughes, 1975). Therefore, it cannot be concluded with certainty that the footings of the earlier building are those of an earlier church, although it remains a possibility. There was probably a Romano-British phase for this site, raising the possibility that the footings might be the remains of a Roman building.

There are earthworks still extant around part of the priory today which indicate the site was once at least partly moated (Fig. 1). The earthworks on the approximate north, west and south of the site, together with the stream to the east, probably delimit the extent of the priory's precinct. The precinct boundary was more likely a bank and ditch, maybe with a timber palisade, rather than stone walls with gatehouses, a feature of larger, wealthier monastic foundations (Aston, 1993,

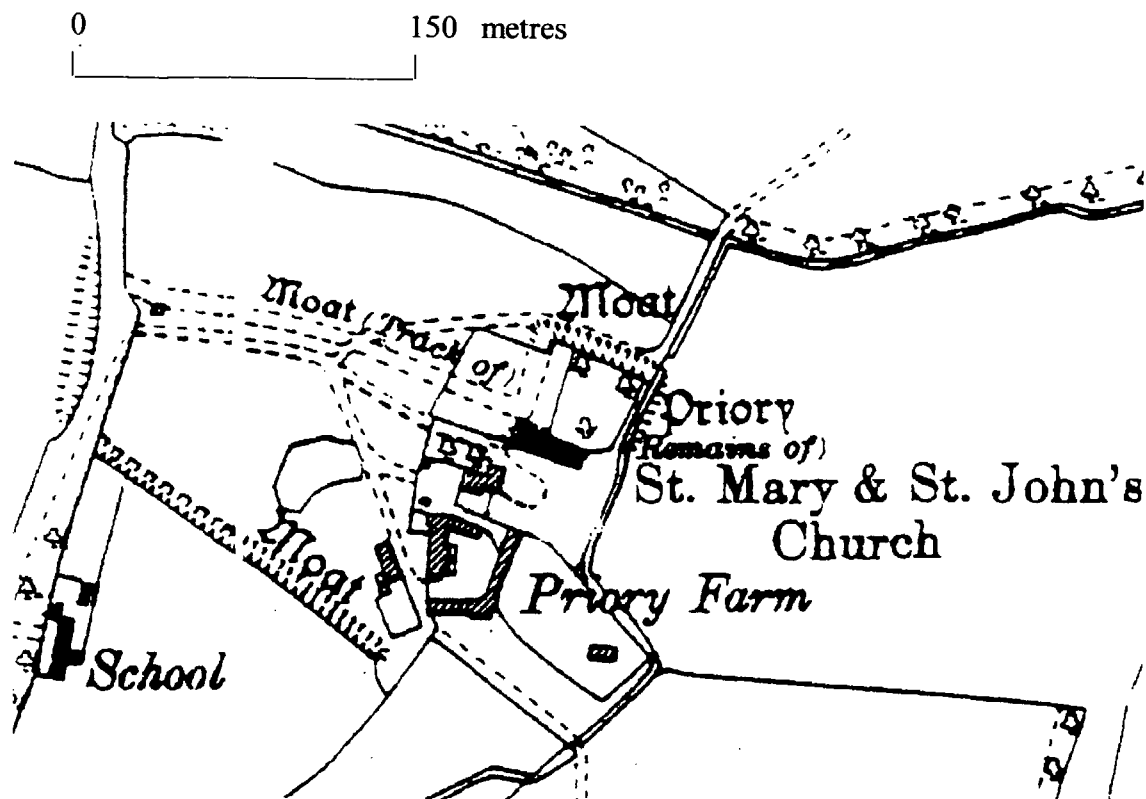


Fig. 1 The precinct of Monk Sherborne priory c. 1912

110). Within the precinct, the only standing remains are those of the church. However, much can be learned about the development of the priory from close consideration of the exterior and interior of the present Priory church. Detailed architectural descriptions of the Priory church can be found elsewhere (Pevsner and Lloyd, 1967, 369–70; *VHCH*, iv, 236–8; *Hampshire Field Club Proceedings*, 8, 171–190), and so will not be repeated here.

The exterior of the Priory church

Any visitor to the Priory church today can see that the present church was once part of a much larger building (Figs 2 & 3). On the approach to the church are the flint ruins of the south nave

wall in which the two processional doors to the cloister are seen (Davidson, 1914, 108). The south nave wall continues for twenty metres up to and including its junction with the west nave wall (a small portion of which remains). Beyond this junction the wall continues westward for another 7.7 metres; this latter portion formed the north end of the western range of claustral buildings (*VHCH*, iv, 237). The tower is typically Norman; originally centrally positioned, broad and heavy and raised on piers and arches (Smith, Hutton and Cook, 1976, 37). Hubbuck (pers. comm.) comments that the tower walls may have been refaced as there are no traces of weather mouldings to the lost nave and transept roofs. There are two round-headed windows in each face of the tower. The round-headed western crossing arch is blocked

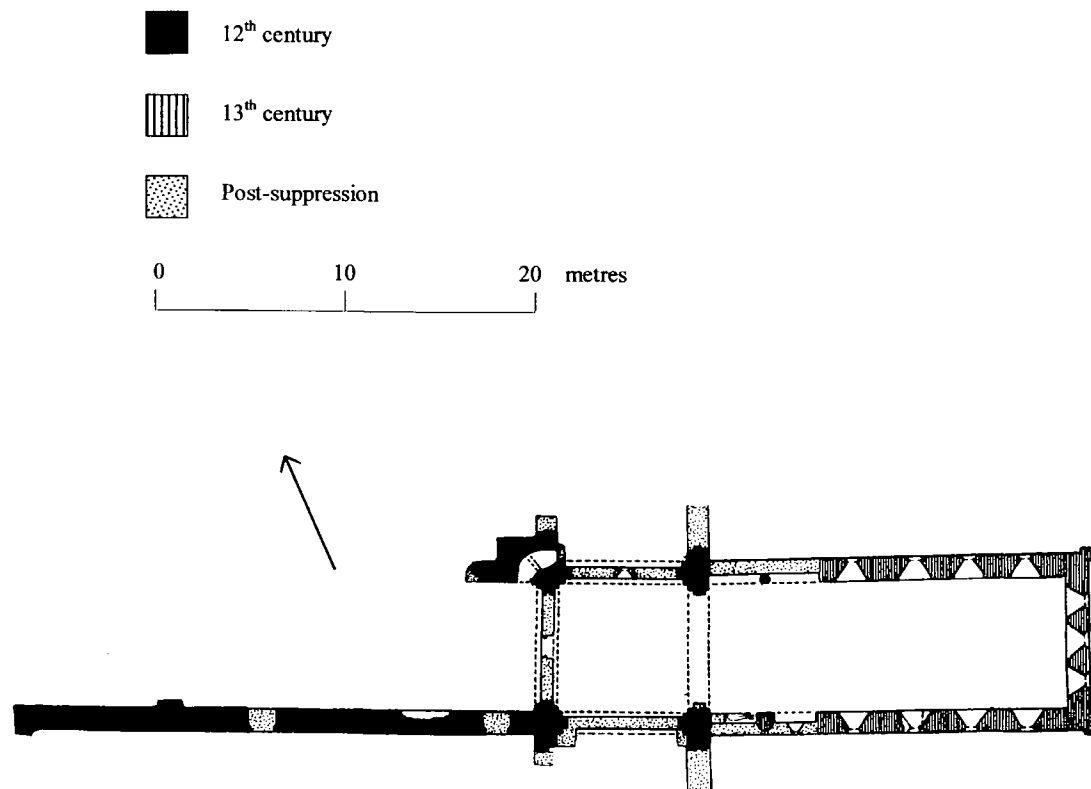


Fig. 2 Plan of the Priory church, early 20th century. Based on a plan at *Victoria History of Hampshire*, iv, 235, by permission of the General Editor

with flints, ashlar blocks and rubble and contains the west door, probably of recent date, and evidence of a window inserted post-suppression, now blocked. The stair turret is at the northwest corner of the tower, and is made of flint masonry with ashlar dressings and patched with modern brick. Its windows are small and narrow and typically Norman. The lower doorway led from the nave to the north transept via a curved passage, thus avoiding passing through the choir, probably originally under the tower. The upper doorway is the entrance to the stair turret. This was probably reached from a raised gallery or passage; the original pulpitum at the end of the twelfth-century choir. The walled-up door about seven feet up within the blocked western arch probably allowed access to the stair turret entrance which is on a

similar level, after the nave was destroyed. (*VHCH*, iv, 236, 238). The height of the nave wall can be determined from the projections still visible in the south turret wall: it was approximately nine metres.

On the north side of the church is the blocked-up northern crossing arch, containing a Norman window obviously relocated from elsewhere, with the vestry and boiler-house built onto it. Two buttresses mark the position of the east and west walls of the north transept. According to Andrews (1891, 137), in 1891 the ground on the north side of the church was levelled in order to enlarge the graveyard, uncovering some of the foundations of the north transept. A flint and rubble wall about three feet nine inches thick was estimated to extend about seventeen feet from the buttress, giving



Fig. 3 The Priory church, west end, from the north-west

an overall internal length of the north transept of about twenty-five feet. The width of the transept, as shown by the opening of the arch, was twenty feet.

The chancel is built of flint and rubble, including re-used Roman tiles. Davidson (1914, 107) states that the two circular windows high in the west end of the north chancel wall are exactly like some which survive in the monastery of St Vigor, Cerisy, the priory's parent house in Normandy (Fig. 4). Hubbuck (*pers. comm.*) dates those at Monk Sherborne to about 1150–1200. This type of window is almost unique in Hampshire. Warnford church tower has similar pairs of circular bell-openings in each face. It may be no coincidence that Warnford shares this feature with Monk Sherborne, as Warnford church was renovated by Adam de Port, who held the manor of Warnford from 1171 to 1213. The tower at

Warnford, earlier than the rest of the church, may date from about 1175, and the rest from about 1210 (Pevsner and Lloyd, 1967, 369, 642). The circular windows at the priory are high up so as to clear the rectangular chapel, which formerly occupied the angle between the chancel and north transept. Horizontal projections approximately 4.5 metres high are still visible below the circular windows, indicating the position of the chapel. This suggests that the chancel and chapel are contemporary. The chancel wall fabric below the projections contains the remains of a central column that once supported two arches, possibly relocated from inside the chapel.

The excavations in 1975 on the north side of the chancel revealed the eastern and northern flint chapel footings, which appeared to have been inserted later into the north chancel wall. Also found was the hard chalk floor of the chapel over-



Fig. 4 The Priory church chancel, north side, from the east



Fig. 5 The Priory church east end, from the south

laying a dark brown sandy base, though much disturbed in places. Part of a fallen painted wall was uncovered in the area of the inside north wall. No evidence was found for the north transept footings; these were probably destroyed when the vestry and boiler house was built in the 1930s. However, footings of a wall similar to those of the chapel were found to extend northwards from the chapel. Its purpose was not determined due to the limit of the excavations (Hughes, 1975). Four lancet windows pierce the north chancel wall. Their style and size indicate they date from the thirteenth century.

The eastern and southern sides of the Priory church are accessible only from the garden of the adjacent Old Priory Farm, with permission of the owners. The east chancel wall contains a group of

three lancet windows, again of thirteenth century date (Fig. 5). A sketch of the priory probably predating the restoration work of 1847, shows the east end of the chancel with the stepped triple lancets plus a fourth much smaller lancet above the central one near the apex of the roof (Hubbuck, pers. comm.). If this sketch was an accurate representation, this fourth lancet probably disappeared at the time of the Victorian restorations.

The south chancel wall is partly screened by flowerbeds and shrubs, but is accessible with care. As in the north chancel wall, there are four lancet windows towards the eastern end. There is a door under one of the lancet windows which is recent, but the step is well-worn, suggesting that a doorway has existed in this position since the thirteenth century. Further west, there are two



Fig. 6 The Priory church chancel, south side

circular windows high up over horizontal projections, which mark the position of the rectangular south chapel, which stood in the angle between the south transept and chancel (Fig. 6). The relative positions of the circular windows in the chancel and the chapel again suggest they are contemporary. However, also visible within the chancel wall fabric are the two slightly pointed arches of the two-bay arcade by which the chapel connected with the chancel. The blocked eastern bay contains a blocked-up window, once described as a leper window (H[ampshire] R[ecord] O[ffice], 39M48/9). A buttress marks the position of the east wall of the south transept. The stump of the west wall remains, and incorporates the remains of the doorway that connected the south transept with the cloister. The excavations on this side of the church in 1975 were less extensive than on the north side, being limited by the farm gar-

den. They revealed the flint footings of the east wall of a chapel, which appeared to be contemporary with the chancel wall footings at their junction, but no evidence of the chapel floor was found. A portion of the robbed footings of the south transept west wall was also revealed, but no transept floor remained. Possible evidence for a stone cist grave set in the choir/south transept was found. The footings of the earlier building found under part of the nave wall and south transept have been discussed above (Hughes, 1975). There are some features in the south chancel wall, which might be indicative of lost windows. Between the windows just below the roofline are several almost circular dark flint patches spaced at regular intervals. This may suggest there were more circular windows on this, the sunny side of the chancel, which may have been removed at the time of the Victorian restorations. The chancel roof has been

raised at some time in the past as the present roof partly covers the windows in the east side of the tower, probably during the thirteenth century when the east end was rebuilt.

The interior of the Priory church

Standing under the chancel arch and looking back toward the west door, the blocked crossing arches that led to the nave and south and north transepts can be seen. Looking up, the tower is open up to the floor of the belfry. There are two small round-headed windows in each face; each splaying out to a large semi-circular stilted Norman arch. In between each pair is a similarly arched recess; except on the east face where there is a partially blocked window instead. The crossed tie beams supporting the belfry abut the walls in the three recesses and partially blocked window suggesting that the tower was planned to be higher. Whether it was ever built beyond its present height is impossible to say (*VHCH*, iv, 237). The precarious wooden stairs leading from the stair turret to the belfry can be seen high in the northwest corner. Under the tower stands the font dating from the fifteenth century and on the floor is a stone bowl or mortar (*VHCH*, iv, 237). Keyser thought this bowl was possibly the original Norman font (Keyser, 1918, 182), but this is unlikely, as All Saints was the parish church of Monk Sherborne. Also on the floor are some Purbeck marble sepulchral slabs dating from the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. They have been described in detail by Andrews (1891, 135–9) and Keyser (1918, 182–5), although they have subsequently been repositioned. Their existence is important as they indicate the wealth of the priory's former benefactors. It is likely that they are the sepulchral slabs of the de Port family and their descendants, as one reason for the foundation of the priory by the de Port's was as a family burial place. Keyser's suggestion that some covered the remains of the monks or priors within the church (Keyser, 1918, 183, 185) can be discounted.

At the east end of the rectangular chancel are three well-proportioned thirteenth-century lancet windows, and to either side in the north and south chancel walls are four similar lancets. The north

chancel wall at the east end has a plain square aumbry showing traces of red paint, and further west there is a medieval mural painting. This depicts five angels and a consecration cross, mainly coloured red, and traces of an inscription in black but now unreadable, all unfortunately in poor condition. Keyser (1918, 181–2) dates the cross as early thirteenth century and the angels later; *VHCH* (iv, 238) states the whole painting is fifteenth century. Nevertheless, the painting itself is an indication of the former wealth of the priory and its estates. At the west end of the north wall are two recesses, each having a sepulchral slab within. These are the blocked-up archways of the entrance to the two-bay north chapel. Hughes (1975) reports that the north chapel arches are unaltered and have paint traces on them, and that the central column is probably original. This column is free of the outside wall and there is evidence of a third arch going off from the north side of the column, which suggests that the chapel was vaulted.

Similar recesses are to be found opposite in the south chancel wall, beyond which another two-bay chapel once existed. Hughes (1975) comments that the south chapel arches have been completely removed and replaced, shortening their span and creating a wider central column, although there is evidence of an earlier capital on a circular column to be seen. In the western recess is an oak effigy of a knight on a slab, traditionally said to commemorate John de Port, son of the founder. Although sources do not agree on the date for the effigy, none of them are early enough for it to be convincingly that of John de Port. Keyser states that the effigy dates from the early fourteenth century (Keyser, 1918, 185–6). *VHCH* (iv, 237) gives a later thirteenth century date for the effigy. A more recent opinion also reports a late thirteenth century date (Hubbuck, pers. comm.). The eastern recess has a blocked window within it and the rim of a twelfth century holy water stoop sits on a slab. This is probably the original stoop, which stood outside or inside the eastern cloister doorway (Gilyard-Beer, 1966, 20). Further east along the south chancel wall is the small doorway with the well-worn step, and at the end is a trefoiled piscina, dating from the thirteenth century. Like the aumbry, it has traces of

red paint on it. Taken altogether, the traces of paint still remaining on the aumbry, piscina, north chapel arches, and the mural painting and the painted plaster excavated from the site of the north chapel all give a tantalizing glimpse of what the interior of the priory church once looked like. It was warm and vibrant with colour and spectacle, very different from the cool, calm, uniformly colourless interior of today.

The fittings within the church today are post-suppression in date. Nothing seems to have survived of the original monastic fittings (*VHCH*, iv, 237). The present chancel screen is of Victorian construction, made out of both new and old wood and originally set in position between the second and third chancel windows, as part of the programme of restoration undertaken in the 1840s. The door in the south chancel wall, the west door and the pulpit also date from this time (Queen's C[ollege Oxford] 2 L 23). The screen was relocated to its present position during the 1936 restoration of the church. Other improvements undertaken in 1936 included provision of a new vestry, lectern and organ, alterations to pews and the regrouping of the coffin slabs, now set in the floor under the tower. Seats either side of the chancel near the altar incorporating the remains of ancient choir stalls, were altered (QC File FB/512). Therefore the organisation of the interior of the church today dates largely from the 1936 restoration.

The phases of development of the church

The main architectural features of the priory church fall broadly within two periods, the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries, indicating at least two phases of development (Fig. 7). (Also it is possible that the twelfth century church was not the first one on this site). The twelfth century cruciform church probably consisted of a nave, central tower, stair turret, north and south transepts, choir and presbytery. It was not aisled. Keyser (1918, 180) thought the church probably had a small apsidal east end, although to date there is no evidence for this. Increasing wealth and prosperity of the priory and its estates enabled the building of a large square-ended presbytery, which may or may not have replaced an earlier

presbytery. Building works at the priory may have progressed such that the east end of the church was not started until the thirteenth century. At about the same time two-bay rectangular chapels to the north and south of the presbytery adjacent to the transepts were added. Inside the church, the Purbeck marble sepulchral slabs, oak effigy, and internal decoration are also indications of the priory's increasing prosperity. It should be noted that Brakspear suggested a different interpretation in his plan of the priory, whereby two side-chapels at either side of the presbytery are of twelfth-century date and the thirteenth-century building or rebuilding of the east end was consequently not so extensive (*Archaeological Journal*, 81, 364). Future investigation may determine which interpretation is the more likely.

There is documentary evidence for building works at Monk Sherborne priory during the thirteenth century. Henry III was a generous benefactor to religious orders, and gifts were often of building materials, particularly timber from the royal forests (Brown, Colvin and Taylor, 1963, 157). There are a series of entries in the Close Rolls from 1247 to 1271 and one in the Liberate Rolls in 1257, detailing the king's gifts to Monk Sherborne, mainly in the form of timber from nearby Pamber forest. In December 1255, three oaks were ordered to be given 'for the timber of the chapel which is being made'. In May 1256, four oaks for timber were given 'towards the fabric of the church of St Edmund which is being shaped out at Sherborne'. Later the same year in November, a further six oaks were given 'towards the fabric of his church one for timber and five for making shingles' (*CCR* 1254-6, 249, 307; 1256-9, 6). Then in January 1257, a gift of four marks 'to make three altars in the ... new work at Sherborne' was made (*CLR* 1251-60, 349). Gifts of timber from Pamber forest continued: four oaks towards the repair of the church in July 1257; four oaks to make shingles for the church in June 1258; three oaks as timber 'to the building of the church' in March 1259. Then in May 1259, four oaks from Alice Holt forest were given towards perfecting or completing the works at Sherborne (*CCR* 1256-9, 27, 233, 367, 383).

In the summer of 1259 three oaks of timber were given 'for the works of the almonry of the

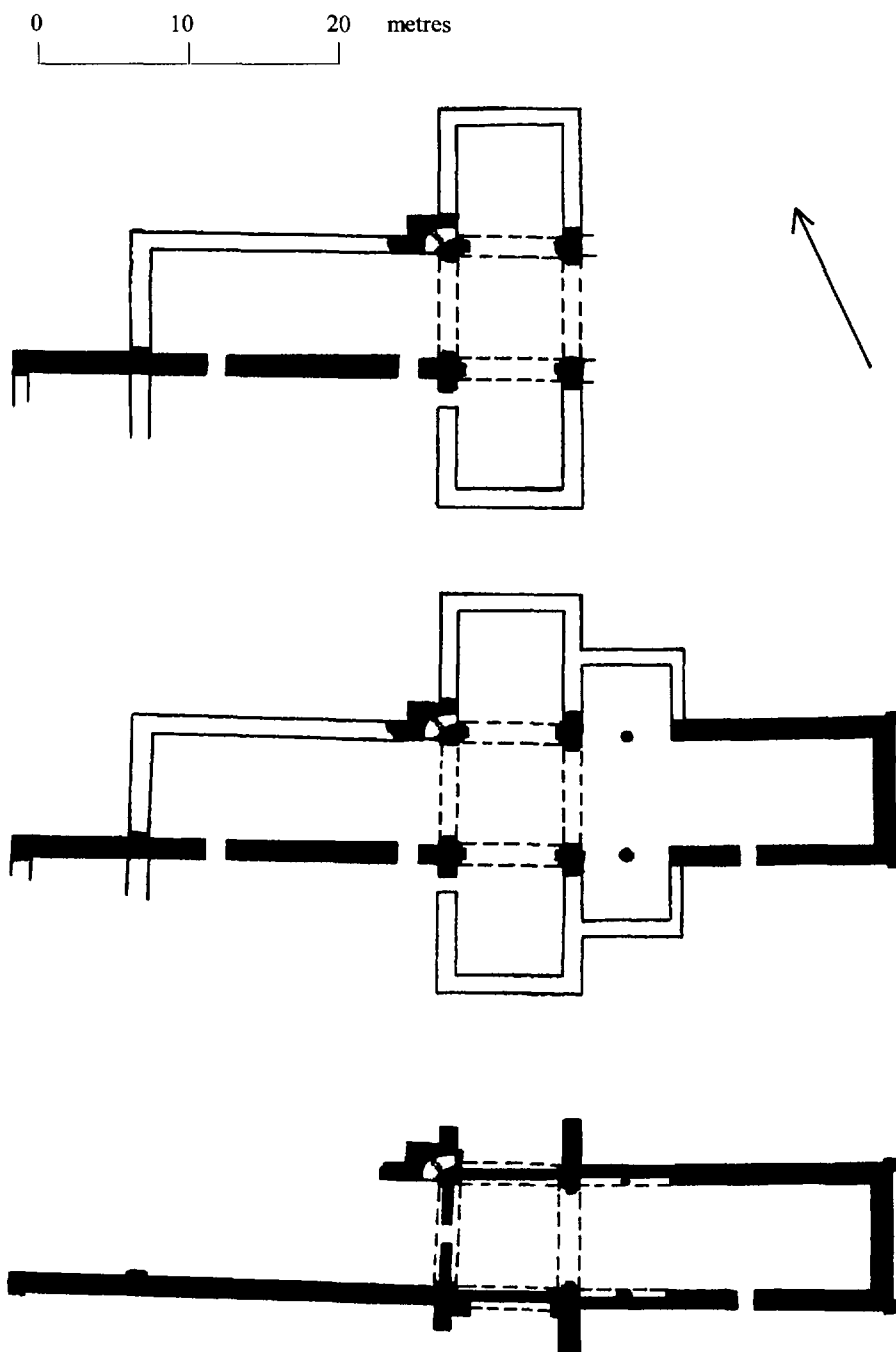


Fig. 7 The phases of development of the priory's church: 12th century, 13th century and early 20th century. Based on a plan at *Victoria History of Hampshire*, iv, 235, by permission of the General Editor

same priory'. The almoner had received a personal gift of two oaks of timber in 1253 but their purpose was not specified (*CCR* 1256-9; 395, 404; 1251-3, 385). Further gifts each of several oaks for shingles were made for roofing the church in August 1260, April 1261, September 1265 and May 1267. The final recorded gift of oaks to the priory was in January 1271 (*CCR* 1259-61, 102, 374; 1264-8, 72, 307; 1268-72, 314).

It is obvious that the period from about 1255 to 1260 saw considerable building activity at Monk Sherborne priory, and it may be that this relates to the building or rebuilding of the east end of the priory church that occurred in the thirteenth century. However the accepted date for this of 1220, plus Hubbuck's latest date of about 1200 for the high circular windows in the chancel, do not concur with the documentary evidence above, unless the latter relates to the final stages of the building works, the roofing of the east end. Another possibility is that some of the activity outlined above may relate to the building of a separate chapel dedicated to St Edmund, within the precinct, possibly for royal use. The almonry was also undergoing building works at this time.

The layout of the precinct

Lack of visible remains therefore will not allow the exact determination of the whereabouts of the other buildings that were within the precinct. However, enough of the church remains to allow the position of the cloister to be determined, and from that other deductions can be made.

As stated above, in the ruined flint south nave wall the positions of the western and eastern cloister doorways can be made out, and the position of a second eastern cloister doorway is visible in the stump of the west wall of the south transept. Access to the cloister from the nave was via two doorways in the nave wall opposite the cloister's west and east alleys. On Sundays, when the priory's community visited the altars in the church and made the ceremonial round of the claustral buildings, in procession, entry to the cloister was by the eastern door and re-entry to the church was by the western door. The procession ended at the nave altar. In aisled churches, the aisle next to the cloister acted as a communicating passage be-

tween the cloister and the presbytery via the transept (thus avoiding the nave altar). Where there was no such aisle, as appears to be the case at Monk Sherborne, a second eastern doorway from the cloister to the transept allowed the monks access to the presbytery without passing the nave altar, or going through the choir. The position of the cloister on the south side of the nave is where it is expected, so that it might catch the sun and not be in the shadow of the church roofs (Gilyard-Beer, 1966, 20-1, 23). The ruined south nave wall continues westward beyond the junction of the south and west nave walls for nearly eight metres. This portion of wall formed the north end of the western claustral range of buildings (*VHCH*, iv, 237). The western range housed the cellar or storehouse. It was positioned on the west side of the cloister to allow easy access from the outer court, usually to the west, enabling provisions to be brought in from outside via the outer court directly to the cellar (Gilyard-Beer, 1966, 31).

The plan of Monk Sherborne priory, as far as it can be determined, is very similar to the standard Benedictine plan, which enables a likely layout to be elucidated. Having established that the cloister was on the south side, with a western claustral range, the dorter range was probably on the eastern side of the cloister, and the frater range to the south (Gilyard-Beer, 1966, 25, 29).

Other buildings must have existed at Monk Sherborne and some are mentioned in contemporary documents, although their locations cannot be determined exactly. That there was an almonry in the mid-thirteenth century has been established above. Other buildings hinted at are guest lodgings for Henry III and his household. In October 1248, the custodian of the king's wines in Southampton was ordered to give one cask of wine '... to the queen at Sherborne towards the expenses of her household ...' A more specific reference is that of May 1249, when an oak from Pamber forest was given by the king to the prior of Sherborne '... for making the windows in the queen's chamber there ...' (*CCR* 1247-51, 90-1, 164).

The king had cellars here too. In February 1252, the takers of the king's wine at Southampton were to deliver the following tuns of wine to

Guildford (10), Chawton (4), Winchester (10), Wherwell (4), Ludgershall (4), Marlborough (10), Clarendon (10), Sandleford (4), Reading (10), Sherborne (4), Wallingford (4), Abingdon (2), Woodstock (10), and Oxford (4), to place in the king's cellars. Similar orders followed: in September 1254, two tuns were sent to the king's cellars at Sherborne; in November 1255, two tuns; and in December 1257, two tuns (*CLR 1251-60*, 29, 178, 256, 414).

Several writs were issued at Sherborne, suggesting that Henry III was a fairly frequent visitor to the priory. Writs were issued here on 28 May and 15 July 1251, 19 June 1252, 13 and 14 June 1253, and 24 January 1261. In these examples Monk Sherborne was the place that the king and his entourage broke the journey between Reading or Windsor and Winchester or Marwell, and the length of stay in each case was only one or two days (*CLR 1245-51*, 356; *CCR 1247-51*, 451, 552; *CPR 1247-58*, 143, 198; *CLR 1251-60*, 136-7; *CLR 1260-67*, 19).

An indenture of 1350 now in the archive of Queen's College, Oxford, was sealed in the chapter house. In it Denis the prior granted to John atte Moure for life, a robe every year worth 13s 4d and an annual pension of 40s (Denholm-Young, 1931, 94, no. 214).

The only other features whose presence within the precinct that can be assumed with any certainty are fishponds. The present-day pond in front of the farm is probably not a medieval survival. It does not appear on the Monk Sherborne tithe map, but what is shown is a large pool in the stream to the east of the priory, in the extreme south-east corner of the precinct (HRO, 21M65/F7/161/2). This has since been filled in, but may have dated from the medieval period. Possible evidence exists of several medieval fishponds at various locations within the precinct, both in the vicinity of the present pond and elsewhere (Hughes, 1975). This suggests that fish played a significant role in the priory's economy, as might be expected. The monks were almost certainly exploiting the stream to the north of the site for fish. Field names near this stream on the Pamber tithe map include 'Fish Wire Gully' and 'Fish Wire Meadow' (HRO, 21M65/F7/185/2). 'Fishwire's Coppice'

appears on the Monk Sherborne tithe map (HRO, 21M65/F7/161/2).

Wyefords Farm, not far to the northwest of the priory, is the site of a medieval water management complex, which includes amongst other features, a moated site and a series of fishponds (SMR SU 55 NE 19-22). In 1392, Robert atte Moure of Wyeford and Isobel his mother, released to the prior of Sherborne lands in Sherborne, and land in West Sherborne and Pamber called Wyeford and half a stock pond, that were held by his father, John (Denholm-Young, 1931, 52).

The priory's home farm

It is possible to determine the minimum extent of the priory's farm (Fig. 8). The earliest map of Monk Sherborne priory is in the possession of Queen's College, Oxford, and is dated to about 1610. It shows all the named arable fields, pastures and meadows that belonged to the farm at that time (QC, 5 B 232). They are almost exactly coterminous with those of the Priory Farm of about 178 acres being farmed by a Joseph Coxon, a tenant of Queen's College, Oxford, in the late 1830s (HRO, 21M65/F7/185/1-2; 21M65/F7/161/1-2). It is very likely that the Priory Farm of the 1830s does represent the minimum extent of the home farm of the medieval priory before its suppression in the fifteenth century. Queen's College owns other land in Monk Sherborne and the surrounding parishes, some of which undoubtedly was also part of the priory's medieval estates.

THE ECONOMIC FORTUNES OF THE PRIORY

Endowment and prosperity: the twelfth and thirteenth centuries

As detailed above, Henry de Port had founded Monk Sherborne priory with generous endowments that were confirmed and enlarged by his son, John de Port. John's son Adam granted to the monks of Sherborne the tithes of all his mills at Sherborne in exchange for possession of the mill

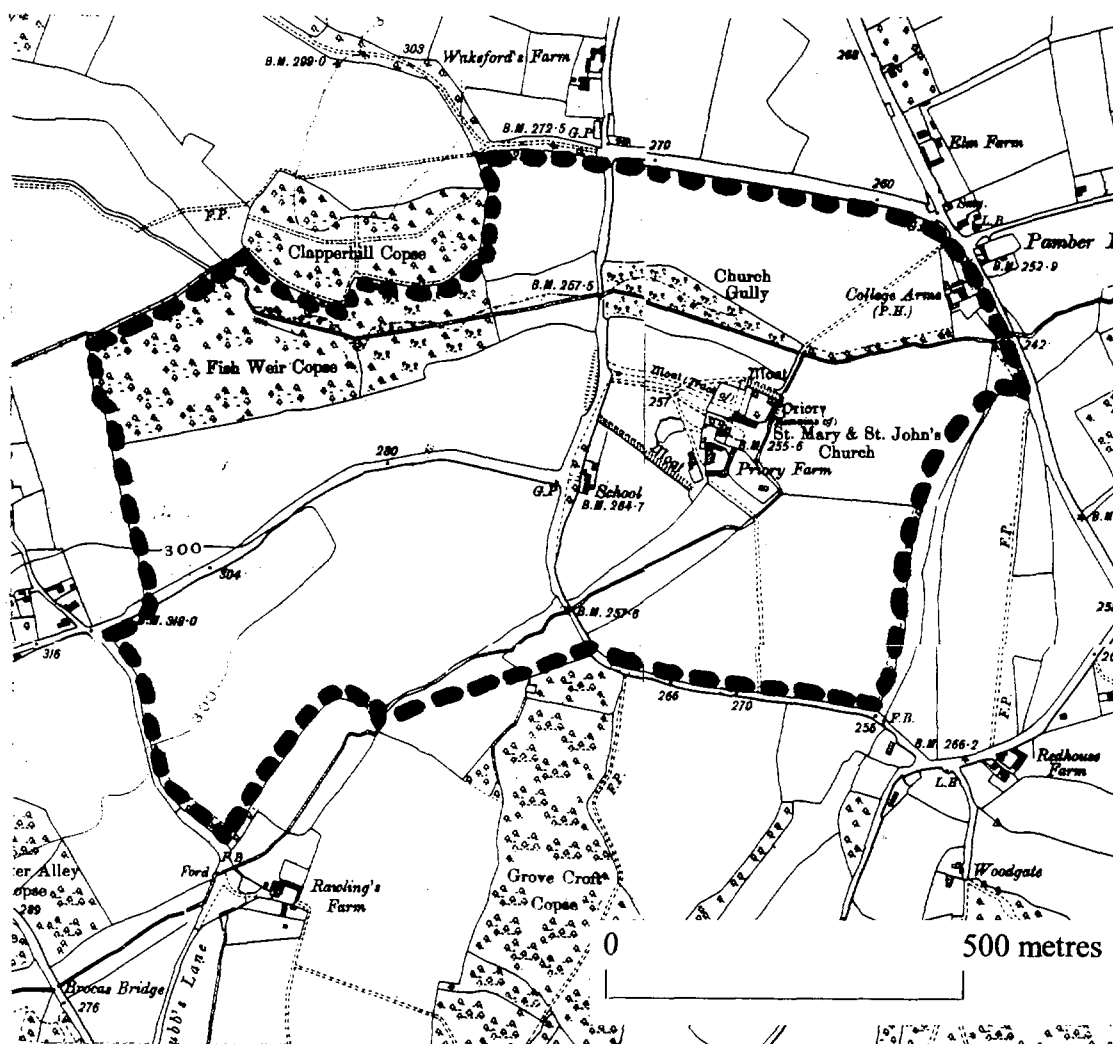


Fig. 8 The minimum extent of the priory's farm

that had been granted by Henry de Port (*VHCH*, ii, 226). The family and other benefactors continued their gifts to the priory up until the Statute of Mortmain in 1279.

Charters relating to some of the early endowments are reproduced in Salter's *Oxford Charters*. For example, Mathew de Scures confirmed his father Roger's gift to the monks of Sherborne of a hide of land at Ramsdell sometime before 1170. Between 1154 and 1171 the following gifts were

granted or confirmed: the church of Acleia (Church Oakley), by Roelandus de Mattingley, and a virgate of land at Fratton together with the two men occupying it, by Baldwin de Portsey. Before 1162, the chapel of Sotwell and the churches of Padworth and St Lucian, Wallingford, were granted by Robert son of Fulcred, to be held for life by Robert de Port. However, the churches of Sotwell and St Lucian, Wallingford did not become the property of Monk Sherborne priory.

The monks received a portion of tithe instead (Salter, 1929, nos. 15, 17, 20, 24).

As above, the dates of some of these charters could be revised. The date of charter number 15, that of Mathew de Scures, could be amended from not after 1170 to not after 1168, the date of death of John de Port, a witness, given in *Complete Peerage* (Cockayne, 1949, xi, 319). Similarly, the latest date of charter number 20, that of Baldwin de Portsey, could be adjusted from 1170 to 1168 for the same reason. The date of charter number 17, Henry Bishop of Winchester's confirmation to the monks of Sherborne of the church of Acleia, was determined by the succession of Ralf, archdeacon of Winchester (a witness) in about 1154, and the death of Henry Bishop of Winchester in 1171 (Salter, 1929, no. 17). However, Ralph, archdeacon of Winchester, is now thought to have succeeded in 1142 (Franklin, 1993, lvii), and another witness, John de Port, died in 1168 (Cockayne, 1949, xi, 319), giving a suggested date for this charter of 1142–1168.

Allen (1992, 47–56) has researched the known properties of Monk Sherborne priory and noted all the known tithes, pensions, rents and other income of the priory. It is an extensive list and details sources of income in Hampshire, Berkshire, Wiltshire, Oxfordshire, Surrey and Lincolnshire.

Monk Sherborne priory also received various benefits that contributed to the prosperity of the community there. Between 1154 and 1170, a writ of Henry II allowed for the goods of the monks of Cerisy to be quit of toll, passage money and custom (Salter, 1929, no. 19). Royal patronage by Henry III contributed significantly to the development and wealth of the priory. In addition to the king's charitable gifts of timber for the thirteenth-century building works, the priory received a variety of gifts and benefits. Five marks were given in May 1242 to the prior to '... buy a cup to reserve the Eucharist', and in April 1244 the prior and convent were given four quarters of wheat and six quarters of barley and oats. Both these gifts were made out of the issues of the Bishopric of Winchester (CLR 1240–5, 126, 228). In February 1246, the monks were granted permission during pleasure to take from Pamber forest two cartloads of dead wood for their hearth once a week (CPR 1232–47, 475). Three dead trees

from Pamber forest were given as firewood to the prior in June 1251 (CCR 1247–51, 453). A cask of wine was given on several occasions, sometimes for celebrating mass, in December 1247, February 1252, January 1256, January 1258, August 1260 and September 1261 (CCR 1247–51, 21; 1251–3, 49; 1254–6, 262; CLR 1251–60, 421; CCR 1259–61, 103, 442).

In July 1251, Edward of Westminster was ordered to make a silver incense censer weighing forty shillings for the prior and convent. Later in October, fifty shillings were given to the prior to buy a censer, the gift of the king, presumably from Edward of Westminster (CCR 1247–51, 481; CLR 1245–51, 380). In May 1251, a baldachin, sent to Adam de Basing by the king to give to the monks for repair, and a wide gold fringe price fifty shillings to be attached to a chasuble, were both to be given to the monks of Sherborne. Later in November, fifty shillings for a chasuble made of a gold-wrought baldachin, and an orphrey for the chasuble were given to the monks (CCR 1247–51, 451; CLR 1251–60, 9). Also in 1251, the sheriff of Surrey and Sussex had to give the prior and convent ten pounds (CLR 1245–51, 367).

The turning point: the late thirteenth century

There is no evidence to suggest that up to the middle of the second half of the thirteenth century Monk Sherborne was not an economically viable foundation. However, the death of Henry III in 1272 and subsequent events during the reign of Edward I were to mark a turning point in the fortunes of the priory. Royal patronage probably ceased entirely; no further royal gifts and visits are documented in contemporary sources. In 1279 the Statute of Mortmain effectively stopped outright gifts of land to the priory; very few new acquisitions are recorded after this date. An example is that of 1318, when John de St John obtained a licence to demise at fee-farm, land worth 100s a year in Basing, to the prior and convent of Sherborne, for a term of eight years (CPR 1317–21, 157). Therefore two significant sources of wealth of the priory, charitable gifts from the Crown and endowments of land by benefactors, had ceased by 1280. From that time on the priory's economic viability was probably almost

entirely dependent on the successful exploitation of its existing estates. It is doubtful whether the priory could expect much help from its parent house if Monk Sherborne got into difficulties. Matthew (1962, 49) describes the connection between St Vigor, Cerisy and Monk Sherborne as 'slender'.

In 1294, war broke out with Philip IV of France over Gascony. Edward I ordered a national survey of the alien property and movables (Matthew, 1962, 82). The details of the inventory taken of Monk Sherborne priory in 1294 are as follows. It names 300 acres of land, annual value 65s, twenty acres on the hill 3s 4d, ten acres of meadow 10s, six acres of moor 3s, pasture 2s 6d, common pasture 6s 8d, and pannage 23s 4d; an annual total of £6 3s 10d. Twenty-four tenants paid rents totalling £22 19s; labour for their lord was estimated at 20s. Pensions, spiritual dues and portions were £57 12s, giving a total annual income of £87 14s 10d. Livestock was valued at £27 14s 6d. There was plenty of corn-seed: wheat for forty-three acres and oats for eighty-six acres. Hay was valued at only 13s 4d, the rest was spoiled. The dependent churches paid £42 annually: Upton, nine marks, Chineham, ten marks, Sherborne, 106s, and Bramley, thirty-six marks. The church at Aldermaston was farmed out (*VHCH*, ii, 227). Of the alien houses in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, the income of £130 of Monk Sherborne in 1294 was second only to that of Hayling, at £144 (Knowles and Hadcock, 1971, 83-4, 98, 106).

This inventory is a 'snapshot' of Monk Sherborne priory and its estates at a time when it was probably at or just past the peak of its wealth and prosperity, and will serve as a useful baseline against which to chart the fortunes of the priory in the fourteenth century.

Decline: the fourteenth century

In addition to their spiritual obligations, an important function of the alien priories was the administration of their English properties, whose profits were valuable to the parent houses. Annual money payment or apport was sent by each alien foundation out of England to the parent house in Normandy. It was the loss of Normandy in 1204 that first made aliens of the Norman monks,

whose sympathies with their homeland now lay with the enemy. King John redirected the apports to the treasury to prevent wealth from leaving the country (Matthew, 1962, 43, 65-6; *VHCH*, ii, 106). According to Matthew (1962, 75), the foreign monks were not seen as potentially dangerous, although later there appeared to be serious fears regarding the monks' possible connivance with the enemy whilst England was at war with France.

The confiscation of alien property following the outbreak of war in 1294 set a precedent for repeated exploitation by future monarchs. The alien foundations were seen as a useful source of revenue (Platt, 1984, 173-4). Priors recovered the custody of their houses by paying a fine for the privilege and promising to answer for the revenues due at the Exchequer (Matthew, 1962, 82). Protection with clause *nolumus*, was given to the prior of Sherborne for one year in September 1294, and again in December 1295, as in both cases the prior had paid the required fine (*CPR* 1292-1301, 91, 174). In 1306, the prior of Sherborne paid 102s 8d to the abbot and convent of Hyde, collectors of the triennial tenth in the diocese of Winchester (*CPR* 1301-7, 451). The advowsons of the priory's churches were in the king's hands in July 1326, when the king presented the two priests involved in the exchange of the benefices of the churches of Church Oakley and Newnham (*CPR* 1324-7, 297). Following the confiscation of Monk Sherborne priory by Edward II because of the war with France in the duchy of Aquitaine, the prior was granted livery of lands etc. and quittance of arrears of the farm of the priory in 1327 (*CMR* 1326-7, 51; *CCR* 1327-30, 18-9).

The first hint of real financial difficulty is in 1329, when Thomas, prior of Sherborne, owed £26 to Thomas de Combe, clerk. This debt (probably for part of the farm) was to be levied, if unpaid, out of the priory's possessions in the county of Southampton (*CCR* 1327-30, 575). However, the prior presumably paid the subsidy requested in 1332 by the king towards the cost of the marriage of the king's sister Eleanor to Reginald, count of Guelders (*CCR* 1330-3, 587-91).

Following the outbreak of the Hundred Years War in 1337, Monk Sherborne priory suffered

several years of close financial scrutiny by the Crown. In July 1337 following confiscation, the custody of the priory was returned to the prior at an annual rent of £80 and two mainpernors were appointed. The prior was responsible for the everyday expenses of the priory but knight's fees and advowsons of churches were saved to the king. Revenue or tribute was not to be sent to foreign parts i.e. to the parent house of Cerisy (*CFR* 1337-47, 27-9). In early August 1337, the prior was ordered to pay £40 of the farm and 100s for the custody of the priory, due at the feast of St Laurence next, and the rest of the farm at Easter. The prior did not pay the first instalment, as later that same month, the Sheriff of Southampton was ordered to go the prior to order him to pay the money owed, or levy it out of his possessions. Also the sheriff was to have the prior and his mainpernors in London on the Wednesday after St Matthew next, to answer for the unpaid debt, and to pay the £45 owed (*CCR* 1337-9, 161-3, 175-6).

In March 1338, the collectors in the bishoprics of Salisbury and Winchester were ordered to cease exacting the tenth from Monk Sherborne priory, which was bound to pay £80 yearly farm. (The whole tenth was due only from those pardoned from the yearly farm). Later in June 1338, the prior was ordered to pay £53 '... of a certain surplus of his account at the Exchequer' owed for the Easter term last, to Menaudas Brocaz, one of the keepers of the king's great horses. In December 1338, following an appeal to the king by the prior, the keepers of the maritime land in the county of Southampton were also ordered not to distrain the prior to find a man-at-arms, as after paying the yearly farm the prior and monks had nothing left to live on (*CCR* 1337-9, 334-7, 443, 580).

An inquisition was taken of Monk Sherborne priory and its possessions in 1339. In Berkshire the prior and convent had 106s 2d rent of assize from various tenants. They received from Aldermaston church, extended at £6 13s 4d (farmed out for seven years), yearly pensions of 26s 8d from Padworth church and 2s from Sulhamstead church, and 10s from the Bishop of Salisbury for a portion in Lavington. The annual total was £13 18s 2d. In Hampshire, the valuation

included pensions of 40s from Newnham church and 6s 8d from Church Oakley church. Tithe of the court of Lydeshute was 6s 8d, from the churches of West Sherborne extended at £11 13s 4d, Bramley £23 6s 8d and Upton £8 16s 5d. The chapel at Chineham yielded 66s 8d after a pension of £4 was given to the prior of Selborne. The sum total of the priory's possessions was £88 12s 7d (*CIM*, ii, 1307-49, 405). This is considerably less than the valuation of £130 in 1294, and not much in excess of the £80 annual farm due to the king for the custody of the priory. What is not clear is why there was such a reduction in the priory's income in the intervening years.

In August 1339, the prior petitioned the king for some mitigation of the farm, or for the king to take the priory back into his hands, as after expenses, the lands and possessions of the priory were less than £60 as found by the above extent. The king ordered a respite until quinzane of Michaelmas next of the £80 arrears due for the custody of the priory, '... so the king may cause what is reasonable to be done ...' In October, respite was extended to the feast of St Andrew, and in November extended again, this time to the octaves of Hilary. By July 1340 the priory was in the king's hands, as the sheriff of Southampton was ordered to pay one Thomas Symeon the arrears of wages due to him from the prior, as he had been granted a livery for life from the prior and convent (*CCR* 1339-41, 240, 259, 268, 330, 437).

Later that same July, protection with clause *nolumus* was granted to the priory '... now grievously burdened with debt ...' Nicholas de la Beche and James de Wodestok were appointed overseers and chief keepers of the priory (*CPR* 1340-3, 12). In early August 1340, the keeper of the king's forest of Pamber was ordered to release Bramley Frith wood, within the bounds of Pamber forest and belonging to the prior of Sherborne, which had been taken into the king's hands because of trespass of vert (*CCR* 1339-41, 507). Later in August 1340, following advice to the king by his council, the priory was restored to the prior, having been taken into the king's hands in January 1340, when the arrears stood at £120. The farm was reduced to £60 backdated to January 1340, and respite of the £20 residue and the arrears were granted until a month from

Michaelmas, with possible further extensions, as long as the farm was paid promptly. Knight's fees and advowsons of churches were saved to the king. The king had learned that the priory's income was no longer sufficient to pay the arrears, the £80 farm and for the upkeep of the monks and other expenses (*CFR* 1337-47, 189).

In March 1342, keeping of the priory was committed to the king's clerk William de Cusance, Prior Thomas Galouber, and John de Drayton, for £60 annual farm. Three mainpernors were named. Commitment was also granted in March 1344 to Thomas Galouber, John de Drayton and a different king's clerk, Roger de Cloune (*CFR* 1337-47, 262, 371). Orders for the payment of the farm were issued in December 1341, July 1345 and again in May 1347 (*CCR* 1341-3, 358-62; 1333-6, 636; 1346-9, 284-6). Half the farm, £30, of Monk Sherborne priory was granted yearly to brother William Hamon, prior of Coges, the king's surgeon in January 1347 while the priory remained in the king's hands due to war with France. However, two years later, in lieu of this grant, William Hamon was instead granted for life the yearly farm of the town of Appleby, Westmoreland, which was 20 marks (*CPR* 1345-8, 447; 1348-50, 394), possibly a more financially sound arrangement in the circumstances. In January 1348, the priory was committed to brother Robert Corbel, prior following the death of Thomas Galouber, and others, still at £60 annual farm, with exemption from tenths etc (*CFR* 1347-56, 83). The priory owed £10 13s 4d to Roger de Cloune, clerk, (one of the keepers of the priory) in May 1348, to be levied out of the priory's possessions in the county of Southampton if unpaid (*CCR* 1346-9, 512).

The arrival of the Black Death in 1348 added to the priory's problems. In June 1350, an appeal was made to the abbot and convent of St Vigor Cerisy by the Bishop of Winchester, because the priory had '... reached such desolation and spiritual decline, with sterility of its lands, that the place is now destitute ...' The reason for this was '... the negligence of superiors and of farmers or guardians during the wars with France ...' The solution proposed by the Bishop of Winchester was to reduce the size of the community to eight with the prior, and to send four monks back to

Cerisy. However, the prior of Monk Sherborne was ordered to send four monks to Cerisy, leaving three monks with the prior. The others were to leave with the Bishop's authority, for the duration of the war (*The Register of William Edington*, 1987, ii, 32, nos. 237, 238). This is somewhat confusing as it is not clear whether there were eight or twelve brethren to start with. What is in no doubt is the state of the priory and its estates.

From the 1350s onwards Monk Sherborne priory is less frequently documented in contemporary government sources, possibly because the priory was now of much less interest to the Crown as a source of revenue than before, when there was still the possibility of extracting something from the priory and its estates. In February 1361, following peace with France, the priory was restored to the prior, without payment of farm. The prior and his mainpernors were discharged of any arrears of the farm due (*CPR* 1358-61, 558). The discharging of debt during peacetime did not however mean the slate was wiped clean. In June 1361, letters of protection for two years were issued for the prior and convent of Sherborne, who were still in debt to the king for the arrears of the farm (*CPR* 1361-4, 30; Denholm-Young, 1931, 64, no. 138). However, in October 1364, an exemplification of a pardon was issued to the priory for debt totaling £1,306 9s 8d, mostly of arrears of the farm (Denholm-Young, 1931, 64, no. 139). Hope of recovering the arrears had finally been abandoned. A few years later the priory was no longer paying any farm for the custody of the priory during wartime. In October 1369, (following the outbreak of war again with France) the keeping of the priory was committed to the prior, brother William, for the duration of the war (with knights fees and advowsons of churches being saved to the king) '... without rendering anything therefor ...' as the '... manors, granges, and lands of the priory, and their houses and other buildings are so wasted and destroyed ...' that there was hardly enough to keep the monks and servants, and meet other expenses. Two mainpernors were named (*CFR* 1368-77, 29).

In Easter week 1374, an inquisition showed that the prior and convent at Monk Sherborne had the parish church of Monk Sherborne called

'Whitecherche', worth 60s annually, Upton parish church worth 66s 8d annually, Bramley parish church worth £10 13s 4d annually and the chapel of Chineham worth 10s yearly. (*CIM* iii, 1348-77, 341).

In 1378 parliament met and demanded the expulsion of all aliens during wartime. A large number of foreign monks did leave the country in February 1378. Four monks from Monk Sherborne were granted permission to leave at this time (Matthew, 1962, 110, 154), and presumably returned to Cerisy.

Following the death of William the prior, in April 1380 the custody of the priory (again in the king's hands because of the war with France) was granted to his successor, Ingelram, again by mainprize and without rent (*CPR* 1377-81, 489). However, nearly three years later in January 1383 an attempt was made to commit the priory and its estates etc to a John Slegh by mainprize of John Joly of the county of Southampton and William Lygard of the county of Northampton, from Michaelmas last for the duration of the war. Rent was set at 100s annually, and the keepers were to provide for the prior and monks, pay tenths and other quotas, and maintain the houses and buildings of the priory. A few months later this commitment was revoked following advice from Chancery, and the priory was restored to the prior (*CPR* 1377-83, 345; *CPR* 1381-5, 272).

The fortunes of Monk Sherborne priory were probably at their lowest by the 1380s. According to Davidson (1909, 14-5) the value of the priory in 1385 was only £23 3s 3d. The sorry state of the priory's finances in the late fourteenth century was not entirely due to years of direct exploitation by the Crown. An indenture of 1395 and a writ of 1409 reveal that the rector of Padworth, Berkshire, had run up a considerable debt by not paying the prior of Monk Sherborne the annual rent due for years, and that the prior experienced some difficulty recovering the arrears (Denholm-Young, 1931, 10, no. 18; 11, no. 19). An early fifteenth-century document (unfortunately not more closely dated) comprises two petitions to Thomas Poynings, Lord St John, from the prior of Sherborne, for the arrears of rents granted by his ancestors, the patrons and founders of the priory (Denholm-Young, 1931, 67, no. 148). These ex-

amples may reflect years of bad financial management by Monk Sherborne priory, in the failure to ensure the collection of rents due, but may also illustrate the difficulty of individuals and institutions in paying rents due in the years following the Black Death.

The accession of Henry IV in 1399 heralded a period of respite for foreign monks. Henry IV rescinded the earlier order of expulsion in 1378, and conventual priories began to recover. They were exempted from the call by the Commons for the seizure of alien lands in February 1401 (Matthew, 1962, 120-1). This may explain why Monk Sherborne does not appear on the list of institutions to alien priories that Bishop Wykeham drew up for the Crown in 1401 (*VHCH*, ii, 226): Monk Sherborne was conventual.

The suppression of Monk Sherborne priory in the fifteenth century

Knowles and Hadcock (1971, 84) report the expected date of 1414 for the suppression of Monk Sherborne priory. The *Victoria County History* is vague in implying that the suppression was in line with the general suppression of alien houses in the fifteenth century, but quotes no date (*VHCH*, ii, 228; iv, 231). Actually Monk Sherborne priory, by virtue of it being conventual, survived the final suppression of the alien priories in 1414. By this time all but the conventual priories suffered expulsion of their monks, and their lands taken into the king's hands before being turned over to lay farmers (Matthew, 1962, 126-7).

There is evidence that the prior and monks were still at Monk Sherborne priory well into the fifteenth century. The archive of Queen's College, Oxford, contains several documents detailing the leasing out of lands, tenements and tithes by the prior during the first half of the fifteenth century. For example, in June 1439, Benedict the prior leased to Richard Myryvale of Langley, Berkshire, three shops on Newbury Bridge for ninety-nine years. Richard had to rebuild the shops. On 25 December 1451, Benedict the prior leased to Thomas Carter of Sherborne, lands in Aldermaston, Berkshire, which included nine acres called Prioriesmede, and tithes of hay in Aldermaston (Denholm-Young, 1931, 6, no.

12; 1, no. 1). During the first half of the fifteenth century the priory was recovering from its low-point of the 1380s. At the time of the priory's suppression in the mid-fifteenth century it was valued at £58 7s 4d (Davidson, 1914, 105), a considerable improvement on the 1385 valuation above.

The date of the final expulsion of the prior and monks can be established with some precision. Davidson states that the prior and monks were not evicted until Eton College obtained possession of the priory from Henry VI, although no date is quoted for this (Davidson, 1914, 105). Allen proposes a date of 1446 for Eton's possession of the priory, with the prior and monks being turned out a few years later (Allen, 1992, 38–40). However, there are two documents that pinpoint the expulsion of the brethren to about 1452.

The first is an enactment of 1475 that details the obligations of the owner of Monk Sherborne priory with regard to the priory. This is reproduced in Shadwell's *Enactments in Parliament*. In it, it states that Henry VI granted Monk Sherborne priory to the Provost and College of Eton in the thirty-first year of his reign (i.e. 1452–3). Up until then, the prior and monks daily said five masses or more and undertook all other divine services, hospitality and other deeds of alms. Very soon after Eton took possession, in the same regnal year, the prior and all the monks, ministers and servants of the priory were put out. The priory's possessions were taken away, and most of the buildings were taken down, carried away and destroyed. Afterwards horses and carts went over the graves of those buried in the priory church. All services ceased, including the masses said for the founder etc, contrary to Henry de Port's wishes. (Under the act, from 1475 the owner of the priory was to provide a resident priest to perform divine service and all other duties, and keep an annual obit of a dirge and five masses. The priory church was to be repaired and maintained, and the cemetery closed) (Shadwell, 1912, 293–8).

The second document is in the archive of Queen's College, Oxford. Dated 17 January 1452, in it Benedict Patricii, prior of Sherborne, gave notice by notarial instrument of his appeal to the court of Rome (Denholm-Young, 1931,

68, no. 152), presumably against the eviction of himself and the monks from Monk Sherborne priory. It is therefore clear that the prior and monks were thrown out of the priory very quickly after Eton took possession in 1452, and the priory probably remained empty until 1475 when provision was made for a resident chantry priest.

Queen's College, Oxford, finally came to possess the priory and its estates by the end of the fifteenth century, but there is some confusion as to how this finally came about. As stated above, Eton College was granted the priory in 1452 by Henry VI. In 1462, Edward IV granted the priory and its estates to Master John Pereson the warden, and the chaplains and brethren of the hospital of St Julian in Southampton, known as God's House (*CPR* 1461–7, 116). However, God's House had been granted to Queen's College, Oxford in 1343 by Edward III (*VHCH*, ii, 203; iv, 231). Then in 1473, the priory was granted to William Westbury the provost, and the college of Eton, by Edward IV (*CPR* 1467–77, 394). This latter grant to Eton College was apparently vacated because of the previous grant to God's House in 1462, as Queen's College emerged as the owners of the priory and its estates (*VHCH*, iv, 231).

In 1547, Edward VI dissolved the chantry, but this was not the end for the priory. In 1564, the local inhabitants of Pamber, having had a long tradition of attending services at the priory, brought a suit into Chancery against Queen's College for failing to provide a priest for the Priory church. The eventual result was that the inhabitants of Pamber were to keep their tithes etc to provide for a priest, and that Queen's College were to let the inhabitants use the Priory church (*VHCH*, iv, 238, 435). Today services are still held at the Priory church, now part of the united benefice of the Sherbornes with Pamber.

CONCLUSION

This paper has established that following its foundation in the early twelfth century, Monk Sherborne priory enjoyed almost two hundred prosperous years as one of the most successful alien priories, including royal patronage and new

building works in the mid-thirteenth century. The fourteenth century was a period of steady decline, ironically mainly due to the exploitation of the priory's revenues by the Crown. Mismanagement of the priory's estates was also a factor and the situation was probably exacerbated by the Black Death and its aftermath. Other factors not explored here e.g. the state of the fourteenth-century economy may also have contributed. Surviving the suppression of alien houses in 1414, the priory made some recovery during the fifteenth century, only to be abruptly suppressed in 1452, when the community was evicted and most of the buildings were destroyed. Not until 1475 was provision made for a resident chantry priest and the repair of the church, by this time extensively damaged, as today only the chancel, crossing, tower, stair turret and ruined south nave wall survive. Following the dissolution of the chantry in 1547, the suit brought into Chancery by the local inhabitants of Pamber in 1564 resulted in services again being provided, right up until the present.

This paper has also sought to explore other aspects of Monk Sherborne priory such as the siting and layout of the precinct, phases of development

of the church (including the possibility of an earlier church on the site) and the extent of the priory's home farm. Inevitably this has raised further questions which future research could address. Monk Sherborne priory has still much to be revealed.

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