

THE OUTFIT FOR THE PROFESSION OF AN
AUSTIN CANONESS AT LACOCK, WILTS. IN THE YEAR 1395,
AND OTHER MEMORANDA.¹

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So little is known of the interior life of the houses of nuns and canonesses in England that the following extracts from the (older) cartulary of Lacock abbey may be of interest.

Lacock was founded in 1229 by Ela, countess of Salisbury in her own right, and widow of William Longespee, natural son of Henry II. The history of the house was absolutely uneventful, but it seems always to have had its full complement of eighteen to twenty religious. Discipline was well kept, and Cromwell's visitors in 1535 reported that they could there "finde no excesses."² The house was exempted from the operation of the act suppressing the smaller monasteries, for which privilege it paid a fine of £300, but was surrendered 21st January, 1539, and the site, etc. granted to William Sharington, page of the king's robes, on 16th July of the next year.

The following memorandum (plate 1, no. 1) is written on a scrap of paper pinned to one of the later leaves of the older of the two cartularies preserved at Lacock :

"Memorandum de expensis factis circa velacionem Johanne filie Nicholai Samborne apud Lacok videlicet anno regni regis Ricardi secundi post conquestum xix^o.

In primis solutum abbatisse pro feodo suo xxs. Item conventui xls. cuilibet earum ijs. Item solutum Johanni Bartelot pro veyles et panno lineo cijs. Item cuidam mulieri pro j veyle xld. Item pro j materas vs. Item pro j cooptorio et j tester xijs. Item pro j mantello xs. Item pro j forura de shankes pro altero mantello xvjs. Item pro panno albo ad duplicandum mantellum primum vjs. viijd. Item pro panno albo pro tunica xs. Item j forrura pro pulche predicta xxs. Item in uno maser xs. Item in uno cocleari argenteo ijs. vjd. Item pro blanketis vjs. viijd. Item in canevas pro lecto ijs. Item in alio mantello empto de Worstede xxs. Item solutum tempore professionis una vice xxs. Item pro uno novo lecto xxs. Item pro aliis necessariis xxs. Solutum per abbatissam de debito michi debito ultra xxli. et xld. adhuc michi debiti. Item solutum dicte Johanne per mandatum abbatisse xls.

¹ Read before the Institute, 5th June, 1912.

² Letters and Papers, Henry VIII, ix, 139.

Translation.—Note of the expenses about the veiling of Joan, daughter of Nicholas Samborne at Lacok: viz. in the 19th year (22nd June, 1395–21st June, 1396) of the reign of Richard II. Inprimis, paid to the abbess¹ for her fee 20s. Item to the convent 40s. to each of them 2s. Item paid to John Bartelot for veils and linen cloth, 102s. Item to a certain woman for a veil 40d. Item for a mattress 5s. Item for a coverlet and a tester 12s. Item for a mantle 10s. Item for a furring of shanks² for another mantle 16s. Item for white cloth for lining the first mantle 6s. 8d. Item for white cloth for a tunic 10s. Item a furring for the pilch³ aforesaid 20s. Item for a mazer⁴ 10s. Item for a silver spoon 2s. 6d. Item for blankets 6s. 8d. Item in canvas for the bed 2s. Item for another mantle of worsted⁵ bought 20s. Item paid at the time of profession at one time 20s. Item for a new bed 20s. Item for other necessities 20s. Item paid by the abbess of the debt due to me besides 20l. and 40d. still due to me. Item paid to the said Joan by order of the abbess 40s.⁶

The first thing that strikes one, on reading this memorandum, is the high price of the various articles. At a time when five pounds a year was considered sufficient endowment for a stipendiary curate, twenty shillings for a bed and ten shillings for a mazer seems an exorbitant figure. Two explanations may be offered, firstly that Lacock,⁷ being now a house of “royal foundation,” and filled as a rule with persons of good family, the cost of admission was specially high; secondly, that requisites provided for the profession of a “religious,” as for funerals in more recent times, were charged for on a higher scale than similar articles when required for ordinary use, and that it was the custom for the relations of those “professed” to pay the expense of their outfit.

The dress of an Austin canoness, as gathered from this memorandum, would consist of (1) a tunic of white cloth,

¹ This would be Agnes de Wick, elected in June, 1380, and in office at least as late as 1399 (P.R.O. *Court of Wards Deeds. etc.* box 94B 127).

² “Shanks” was a cheap sort of fur, made from the underpart of rabbit skin, etc.: Halliwell Philipps.

³ “Pulche” or pilch was the fur lined under garment (*pellicea*) which, in the case of clergy, was covered with the surplice (*superpelliceum*).

⁴ “Maser” was a drinking bowl of maple wood, usually with a rim or band of silver, and a “print” at the bottom of the same material, chased with some religious or other subject.

⁵ “Worsted,” a town in Norfolk, where was manufactured the woollen stuff known

by this name. In this particular case, it seems likely that the material, not the town, is meant.

⁶ As is frequently the case in mediaeval accounts, the foregoing is hard to balance. The items mentioned above, with the exception of the two last entries, come to £17 6s. 2d.

⁷ The hereditary foundresship had passed with the marriage of heiresses to the earls of Lincoln. and from them to the earls and dukes of Lancaster, and though the duchy of Lancaster was not absorbed into the crown till a year or two after the date of this memorandum, the “founder” and patron of Lacock in 1395 was John of Gaunt, uncle of the king.

lined with fur for winter ; (2) a mantle of (black ?) woollen cloth, lined with white, for summer wear, and with fur for winter ; (3) a veil of (black ?) linen, and, though this is not expressed, a wimple of white linen. There remains in the upper part of the fifteenth-century lavatory in Lacock cloister a representation of an abbess thus habited, receiving benediction from a bishop, doubtless St. Augustine, and in the "stone gallery" there is part of a picture in glass of a canonised abbess in similar dress.

Compare the habit prescribed for the Brigittines in the British Museum manuscripts, MS. Arundel 146, MS. Add. 5208.

But it is obvious that the list here presented is far from being a complete enumeration : there is no mention of stockings, of boots, of which one pair at least would be required for day wear and one for nights, or of the girdle, with needle and thread, forming part of the monk's outfit, which we should certainly have expected in a female profession. Possibly the articles not mentioned in this list may have been provided from other sources ; or, since the memorandum relates to the *veiling* of Joan Samborne, they may have been furnished at her admission to the noviciate.

It is not quite clear who the writer of the memorandum is ; but it seems most natural to suppose that it was drawn up by the *cameraria* of the house, whose duty it was to provide necessary garments for the sisters. It would thus be not unreasonable to conjecture that the very large sum of £5 2s. paid to John Bartelot (if that be the right reading) for veils and linen cloth was given for a large supply for the house, not for this canoneSS only ; the linen being obtained in bulk, and made up into wimples and the like, as occasion required.

In the Rule of St. Benedict, c. 55, a short list is given of the necessary outfit for a *monk*, comprising a cowl, gown, hose, boots, a girdle, knife, a pen, needle, handkerchief and tablets. A more elaborate list for a novice at Ely is given in Stewart's *Ely Cathedral* (p. 232) ; and another in the customary of St. Austin's abbey, published by the Henry Bradshaw Society (vol. i. p. 401).¹

The second extract that I give is a note written on f. 88b,

¹ These references I owe to the kindness of Mr. W. H. St. John Hope.

of the same older cartulary of Lacock mentioned above, giving an account of various observances as to alms, pittances, etc. in the convent (plate 1, no. 2). As such entries are not very common, it may be of interest to give a transcript and translation.

Nus deuons pestre le Jour des almes a tant de poueres cum il y unt dames a chescun pouere un payn syche¹ e companage deus harangs ou une leche de fromage : E le couent meme le Jour deus mes.²

Al anniversarye lawoue chescun an Ct. poueres chescun auera un payn de forment e deus harangs seyt ceo Jour de charnage ou nun e le Couent auera a manger symenaus e vin e treis mes e deus a souper.

Al anniversarye sun pere chescun an treze pouers.

Al anniversarye sun baron treze poueres e la couent demi marc a pitance.

Al anniversarye sire Nichol de Hedinton deyuent departir a poueres hut souz e quatre deners on ble qe amunte tant argent ces est a sauer forment orge e feues e le couent un demy mark a pitance.

Le Jour de la sepulture une dame cent poueres a chescun une maille ou un payn syche.

Custume est de auer payn de meyne³ le Jour de Novel paskes penteceste le Jour del Assumption nostre dame e seint Bernard.⁴

Quant le Jour de Nouel vent par mekerdi⁵ le Jour de la Tipheine. Seynt Johan le Baptyst [Seynt pere Seynt paul *inserted*]. Lasomption nostre dame. Seynt Bernard. La Nativite nostre dame e de touz ceynz le couent mangera char.

E quant le Jour de la typhayne vent par mekerdy la meyne mangera la veille pe.

Le jour de la cene⁶ apres le mande dourrunt a chescun pouere un payn del peys del payn a couent e del past de playn payn e demi Jalun de serveyse e deus harangs e un demi bussel de feues a potage.

Translation.—We ought to feed on All Souls' Day as many poor as there are ladies [in the convent] to each poor person a dry loaf and [as a] relish⁷ two herrings or a slice⁸ of cheese, and the convent the same day shall have two courses.

On the anniversary of the foundress,⁹ a hundred poor each shall have

¹ "Payn syche" I suppose to mean "dry" bread.

² "Deus mes" = two messes or courses; *mittere* in late Latin = to place (on the table).

³ "Meyne" = the retinue or household: Shakspeare, *meiny*.

⁴ "Saint Bernard," 21st August. or his translation on 17th May. The abbey was dedicated in honour of St. Mary and St. Bernard.

⁵ "Quant le jour de Nouel," etc. I take this to mean that the usual Wednesday fast would not be observed in the case of Christmas day falling on that day. In the case of the Epiphany falling on a Wednesday, the extra indulgence is to be given on the Tuesday. There follows in the manuscript

"pe," of which I can make nothing: possibly it was the beginning of another word,

⁶ "Le jour de la cene." etc. The *Valor Ecclesiasticus* states that forty-five poor were fed on this day, not thirteen as we might expect. The description of the bread that they are to have is puzzling. Apparently the loaves are to be in weight of the ordinary convent size and in quality "of the dough of full bread," or are we to understand "plain" bread?

⁷ *Companage* = that which goes with bread, Ducange s.v. *companagium*.

⁸ *Leche* = "tranche fort mince de quelque chose a manager." Boyer.

⁹ *Awoue* = *advocata*, patron. The foundress died 24th August, 1261.

a wheaten loaf and two herrings, be it a flesh-day or not, and the convent shall have to eat simnels and wine, and three courses and two at supper.

On the anniversary of her father¹ each year, thirteen poor [shall be fed].

On the anniversary of her husband,² thirteen poor [shall be fed] and the convent [shall have] half a mark for pittance.

On the anniversary of Sir Nicholas Hedinton, they should distribute to the poor eight shillings and fourpence, or corn amounting to as much money. That is to say wheat, barley and beans, and the convent [shall have] half a mark for pittance.

The day of the burial of a lady [of the convent] one hundred poor, to each a mite³ or a dry loaf.

It is the custom to have household bread on Christmas day, Easter, Pentecost, the Assumption of our Lady and St. Bernard.

When Christmas day comes on Wednesday, the day of the Epiphany, St. John Baptist (St. Peter and St. Paul), the Assumption of our Lady, St. Bernard, the Nativity of our Lady, and All Saints, the convent shall eat flesh.

And when the day of the Epiphany comes on a Wednesday, the household shall eat [meat] on the eve.

The day of the Last Supper, after the Maundy, they shall give to each poor person a loaf of the weight of the convent loaf, and of the paste (dough) of full bread, and half a gallon of beer and two herrings, and half a bushel of beans for soup.

The date of the above document must fall later than the death of the foundress, the countess Ela, which took place 24th August, 1261, and since no mention is made of the yearly alms, recorded in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* as distributed on St. Andrew's day, for the soul of Amice, countess of Devon, who gave to the abbey the manor of North Shorewell in the Isle of Wight, it is probable that it must fall earlier than 1296, in which year the countess of Devon died. The character of the handwriting and its position towards the end of the volume, which contains no entries as late as 1300, would lead to the opinion that it is late rather than early in the period of thirty-five years thus marked out. Sir Nicholas Hedington, whose anniversary is the only one recorded, beside that of the foundress, her father, and her husband, is known to us as a contemporary of the countess Ela, and as acting for her on various occasions, being described as *Nicholas de Hedinton, clericus*,⁴ but we have no mention, so far as I know, of him later than 1261.

¹ William, earl of Salisbury, died 17th April, 1196.

² William Longespee, natural son of Henry II, earl of Salisbury *jure uxoris*, died 7th March, 1226.

³ Maille—a small coin.

⁴ See P.R.O. *Calendar of Ancient Deeds*, vol. iv, A. 9387. Lacock Cartulary, newer vol. fol. 51b, older, fol. 31b.

The record is one of yearly doles to the poor, and of little treats or "pittances" to the house on the anniversaries of their benefactors. The simnel cakes and wine provided on the foundress' anniversary may be compared with those distributed at Hereford to the canons, vicars, and incumbents of the city parishes on St. Milburga's day, 23rd February, from the foundation of David de Aqua, one of the canons, circ. 1174,¹ and with the "banquet" in the Common House at Durham: "Also within this howse dyd the Master therof keepe his *O Sapientia*, ones in the yeare, viz. betwixt Martinmes and Christinmes, a sollemne banquet that the Prior and Covent dyd use at that tyme of the yere onely, when ther banquet was of figs and reysinges, aile and caikes, and therof no superflwitie or excesse, but a scholasticall and moderat congratulacion amonges themselves."² It does not throw much light on what we should chiefly like to know, namely the everyday life of the canonesses. Henry VIII's visitors reported that the ladies at Lacock had the rules and institutes of their religion written in the French tongue, and were very perfect in the same, but this has not survived, and we have no rule extant of English Austin canonesses, though we have of reformed Augustinians, called Brigittines.³

Of the observances mentioned above, the yearly alms on the anniversary of the foundress' death was still observed at the date of the surrender of the house, as well as that on Maundy Thursday. Those in memory of her father and husband, of Sir Nicholas Hedington, and on All Souls' day, had been discontinued, perhaps replaced by the daily alms in Lent to three poor persons, and to one throughout the year, which we find mentioned in the *Valor*, while fresh commemorations had naturally been introduced during the two and a half centuries since the memorandum was written. We have the record of the foundation of one of these, the obit of John Goudhyne on 3rd August, in an indenture preserved among the Lacock deeds in the Record Office.⁴

John Goudhyne, or Godhyne, was a man of some

¹ *Charters and Records of Hereford Cathedral*, 1908, p. 24.

² Chapter xlv of the *Rites of Durham*. Surtees Soc. 1842, p. 75.

³ Brit. Mus. MS. Arundel, 146.

⁴ *Court of Wards Deeds* etc.: box 94, B, no. 60.

mark in his day. Through the kindness of Mr. A. Story-Maskelyne, of the Public Record Office, I am able to add some particulars of his career. He was a merchant of Marlborough, and held land at Quidhampton and Elcombe, near Swindon.¹ He endowed a chantry in the priory of St. Margaret's, near Marlborough, in 1318.² He was one of the burgesses in parliament for Marlborough in 1324 and again in 1328. In 1338 he was chosen as one of the four merchants to represent Wiltshire in parliament, and was dead by 1347, in which year it was established by inquisition that he had been customarily assessed to pay one fourth of all taxation laid upon the borough, by which we can gather that his wealth had been great. What led to the establishment of his obit at Lacock is not clear, but Robert Hungerford, who was himself the founder of chantries in the church of Calne,³ in Stanley abbey and Ivy church priory,⁴ and Henry Russel seem to have acted as his executors.

The following is an extended transcript :—

Hec indentura testatur quod conuenit inter abbatissam⁵ de Lacok et eiusdem loci conuentum ex parte una et Robertum de Hungerford et Henricum Russel ex altera quod dicte Religiose pro se et successoribus suis concesserunt et in fide professionis sue promiserunt pro quadam summa pecunie sibi pre manibus soluta ad ardua negocia sua expedienda obitum Johannis Goodhyne singulis annis tercio die Augusti cum pleno seruicio Mortuorum et Missam cum nota solempniter celebrare quod si legitimum impedimentum eodem die contingat tunc alio die infra ebdomadam sequentem celebrent ut predicatur. Quamlibet monialem eiusdem domus intitulado⁶ septem psalmos cum letania dicere penitenciales. Eodemque die singulis sex monialibus eiusdem domus que obsequio illo interfuerint unam lagenam vini vel sex denarios dare pro pitantia. Ac Istam Indenturam in Martilogio suo de verbo in verbum inserere Illam etiam in pleno suo capitulo die supradicto et primo die Lune quadragesime quolibet anno in futurum cum beneficio collato recitare. Animam eiusdem Johannis ceteris diebus inter alios benefactores specialiter commendare Istam similiter

¹ Both between Broad Town and Wroughton. Goudhyne bought Quidhampton from Richard de Hyweye in 1324 (*Wiltshire Archaeological Magazine*, xxxvi, 94), and in 1337 enfeofed Robert Russel of his lands in "Quedhampton iuxta Benk-nolle : " (ibid. 100).

² *Chan. Inq. a.q.d.* file 129, no. 9, also file 233, no. 5.

³ Ibid. p. 111.

⁴ Pp. 77, 90.

⁵ Matilda Montfort, elected 1349, and in office till 1354 at least. *Court of Wards Deeds*, etc : box 94 B, no. 92.

⁶ *Intitulando*. Canon Moriarty, of Shrewsbury, suggests that this word is used in the sense of *intabulando*, i.e. putting on the *tabula*, or list of those charged with the various religious offices of the day. See Ducange s.v. *Intitulatus*. The benefaction received must have been very considerable, as all the canonesses were to be "listed" instead of the customary two or three.

Indenturam in qualibet visitacione loci dyocesani notificare. Ad que omnia facienda obligant se dicte Religiose et successores suos districtioni cuiuscumque Judicis Elemosine loci dyocesani qui pro tempore fuerit pro qualibet defalta alicuius rei premissorum in . . . visitacione comperta quadraginta denarios solvere concedentes. . . . Datum in capitulo Abbathie predicte tercio die Maii, anno domini millesimo ccc^{mo} quinquagesimo secundo.

[Indented: Two seals on one tail, both armorial, the upper bearing three human legs conjoined as in the arms of the Isle of Man, the other what looks like four swords crossed saltire fashion, with an estoile below.]

One is tempted to ask what were the *ardua negocia*, for the expediting of which John Goodhyne's money was bestowed. We know that from the fourteenth century to the middle of the fifteenth the nuns at Lacock were engaged in reconstructing their cloister, and the money may have been used for this purpose, but it is merely a guess.

The obit thus established continued till the dissolution, since we find it set down in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* of 1535, when it was estimated to cost nineteen shillings yearly. The original arrangement was apparently for each group of six nuns to have a bottle of wine or sixpence between them, but this had evidently been increased, till the cost was about one shilling for each of the eighteen to twenty professed canoneses or novices which the house usually contained. There were seventeen, fourteen professed and three novices, at the date of the surrender, 21st January, 1539; but Mary Denys "a faire yong woman of Laycok," had just been appointed prioress of Kington St. Michael.¹

With the arrangement of these obits and other services, the provision of material for the daily alms and yearly pittances and little "extras" like the simnels and wine mentioned above, as well as the daily supplies for a household of forty-two persons, as recorded by Henry VIII's commissioners, and the clothing for all in their various degree, the task of the ladies responsible for the "ordering" of the house of Lacock can have been no light one, and the statement of the commissioners that no debt was owing either to the house or by the house reflects great credit on their business ability and good government.

¹ Letters and Papers, Henry VIII, ix, 160.