

Derbyshire Archaeological and Natural History Society.

Dale Abbey—its Foundation.

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THE foundation of Dale Abbey came about through the repeated attempts of an Anglo-Norman family to establish a religious house on its lands.¹ When Serlo de Grendon, the lord of Bradley and Sturston, “ a knight intrepid in battle, great in riches, and illustrious in descent ” married Margery, daughter of Ralph f. Geremund, a Norman who held lands in south Derbyshire amounting to two and a half knights’ fees, he received as dowry a moiety of the vill of Ockbrook. This included Depedale,² a place already sanctified by the cell of a hermit, and here he endeavoured successively to establish a small priory, first of Augustinian, and then of Premonstratensian canons, both of which met with failure, the first because the canons hunted in the surrounding royal forest³ and so incurred the displeasure of King Henry II,

¹ The main narrative is derived from the thirteenth-century Chronicle of the Foundation of Dale, written by Thomas de Muskham, canon of the abbey, and now in the British Museum (Cott. MS. Vesp. E. xxvi).

² What is now called ‘ Dale ’ was in the twelfth century known as ‘ Depedale,’ and includes also part of the medieval ‘ Stanley Park.’ Thus the hermit’s cell and Dale church were in Depedale, the abbey in Stanley Park. It has been suggested by Mr. Ward (*Dale and its Abbey*, p. 26) that the Sow Brook which runs through Dale was the boundary between the two.

³ The country from Derby to the Erewash was then *afforesta*, as the Chronicler explains, and other events in the early history of Dale make it clear that this was so:—the second priory was “ much burdened by the frequent visits of foresters and others ”; the ‘ Park ’ of Stanley upon which the abbey was eventually founded is an example of the technical term in forest law for an enclosure *within a forest* for the strict preservation of game (cf. Breadsall Park nearby); and there is a reference to “ the passage of those coming and going between

the second because Serlo failed to provide it with adequate endowments. After Serlo's death his son William, who had studied at Paris and was called 'the clerk,' made a last attempt to revive his father's priory, bringing over five Premonstratensian canons from Welbeck Abbey, but this too met with failure. The detailed history of these priories, like the picturesque story of the baker-hermit of Depedale, does not require repetition in these pages,¹ but it will be convenient to indicate their sequence in the form of a table:—

<i>Order</i>	<i>Mother-House</i>	<i>Date of Foundation</i>	<i>Date of Dissolution</i>	<i>Duration</i>
1. Augustinian	Calke Priory, Derby.	between 1149 and 1158 ²	?	?
2. Premonstratensian	Tupholme Abbey, Lincs.	after 1175 ³	?	7 years ⁴
3. Premonstratensian	Welbeck Abbey, Notts.	in or after 1194 ⁵	before 1196 ⁵	?

Nottingham and Derby through the forest." That it was forest land in the full technical sense of the word is made clear by the dissolution of Depedale Priory by the King, and it is tempting to identify it with that 'Harestan Forest' which is referred to in a patent of 1217 enjoining "the verderers and foresters of the forest of Harestan" to obey Robert de Ferrars, to whom had been committed "the forest of Harestan with all its appurtenances" (*Cal. Pat. Rolls* 1216-1225, p. 82). It seems probable that this Harestan Forest was an extension of Duffield Frith—Harestan Castle was a few miles north of Depedale, and stood on the borders of Duffield Frith—and if the identification here suggested is correct, it was doubtless among the new forests made by Henry II which were condemned by the Forest Charter of 1217 and disafforested in 1225, since the Chronicler makes it clear that by the time he was writing (c. 1240-50) it no longer existed, and there is no other published record of 'Harestan Forest.' I have to thank Mr. R. K. J. Grant, B.A., Ph.D. for information about forest history, and Mr. F. Williamson, F.R.H.S. for saving me from some rash topographical speculations.

¹ In addition to Sir W. Hope's translation of the chronicle describing these events (*D.A.J.* v, 1883), there are narratives based on it by the Rev. S. Fox, "Dale Abbey, Derbyshire," in *The Reliquary*, viii (1867-8), by the Rev. Chas. Kerry, "Depedale and its Chronicle," in *The Reliquary*, xxiv (1884), by Mr. J. Ward, *Dale and its Abbey* (1891), pp. 16-33, and by the Rev. Dr. Cox in the *Victoria County History*, II (1907).

² The chronicler states that the priory was founded "at the time when the house of Calke was the mother church of Repton," referring to the period when the canons of Calke were being transferred to Repton by Matilda, Countess of Chester. Her grant was made during the lifetime of Walter Durdent, Bishop of Coventry (1149-1161), and the transference was not completed until ca. 1172. This gives 1149 as the *terminus a quo* for Depedale Priory. The *terminus ad quem* is provided by an entry in the Pipe Roll of 1158—*Et in Perdonis per breve Regis Canonicis de Depedala lx solida* (*The Great Roll of the*

Meanwhile Ralph f. Geremund had died, leaving as his son and heir William f. Ralph, who first occurs in the Pipe Roll for 1165/6. From 1168 to 1180 he was sheriff of Nottingham and Derby, Serlo de Grendon, his brother-in-law, acting as his deputy from 1177 to 1180. He was, indeed, an important royal official, going on circuit as justice itinerant in 1174 and the two following years, and frequently attending upon the king, many of whose charters he attests during the years 1170-1180. In 1178 he succeeded Richard, Bishop of Worcester, as seneschal of Normandy, a post he retained for the next ten years.¹

William f. Ralph had purchased the vill and park of Stanley from its tenant Nicholas Child by rendering him the fourth part of a knight's fee in current scutage,² and when his daughter Matilda married her second husband Geoffrey de Salicosa Mara, he intended, according to the chronicler, to make this acquisition her dowry. But it was not until seven years after their union that Stanley passed to Geoffrey and his wife, and then it was for the very considerable sum of £100.³ No English antecedents of Geoffrey have been traced, and Mr. Statham suggests

Pipe of Henry II (Rec. Comm. 1844). Albinus, first abbot of Darley (1154-1176) was a benefactor to this priory.

² Tupholme Abbey itself was not founded until ca. 1175.

⁴ So stated in the chronicle.

⁵ The third priory was founded from Welbeck during the abbacy of Richard de Southwell (ca. 1194-ca. 1224), but as the preliminaries for the foundation of Dale Abbey itself were taking place before 1196, this priory must have been founded in or very shortly after 1194, and it cannot have lasted long. It is sometimes stated (e.g. by Sir W. Hope, *D.A.J.* 1 (1879), p. 101) that this priory existed for five years, but the chronicler does not state this, and it would appear that there has been some confusion between the number of its canons (5) and their powers of endurance.

¹ See the Rev. S. P. H. Statham, "Later Descendants of Domesday Holders of Land in Derbyshire," in *D.A.J.* n.s. 11 (i) (1926), pp. 58-9.

² According to Ward (*Dale and its Abbey*, p. 92) the Pipe Roll for 1178 records that William f. Ralph has accounted 8s. 2d. for the goods of Ralph Child, who is said to hold Stanley and to be an outlaw, but I cannot find this entry in the *Calendar of Pipe Rolls*.

³ Dale Chartulary (Cott. MS. Vesp. E. xxvi—edited by Dr. Cox in *D.A.J.*, xxiv (1902)), f. 12^b: given in full by Dugdale and Dodsworth, *Monasticon*, vi (ii) (1846 ed.), p. 896, no. 2.

that he was a Norman, perhaps introduced into England by his father-in-law.¹ He had owned land in Normandy, for he exchanged it with John de Wyburville for six bovates in Ockbrook.² William de Tilly, Matilda's first husband, had died without issue before 1194,³ and her second marriage had likewise proved childless. So it was, that when the time came for them to take possession of Stanley and its Park, Geoffrey and his wife decided to devote it to the service of God, in the hope that in return they would be blessed with the offspring they so much desired. With this pious end in view they approached f. Ralph and asked him to use the land for the foundation of a Premonstratensian abbey on their behalf. To this he readily agreed, and obtained from William de Grendon a grant in free alms of the adjoining Depedale and its buildings, together with an annual rent of 6s.,⁴ on condition that bread and beer should be provided for the poor in the refectory of the new abbey, and that masses should be said for William and his family in "the chapel of Depedale."⁵ His brother Serlo de Grendon II later granted to the abbey all his lands in Ockbrook, including Boyhag, where the canons were to have their grange on the site of the Grendons' *mansio*.⁶ Geoffrey de Salicosa Mara himself added the six bovates in Ockbrook which he had exchanged with John de Wyburville, and other lands in Sandiacre and Alvaston,

¹ "Later Descendants etc.," *D.A.J.*, n.s. II (ii) (1926), p. 60.

² Chartulary, f. 15.

³ "Later Descendants, etc.," *loc. cit.*

⁴ Chartulary, ff. 13^b and 14 (*Monasticon* VI (ii), p. 896, No. 6).

⁵ There had been a "chapel of Depedale" in which Serlo de Grendon's aunt and godmother, called "the Gome of the Dale," used to worship, and this may have been used as the priory church. The new abbey in Stanley Park was not built on the site of the priory, for that was in Depedale. The chapel now became the Grendon chantry, and survives as the present church of Dale. The chronicler says that "the brethren serving God at Depedale" (*i.e.* the chantry-priests) were supported by the tithe of the revenues of Borrowash mill which Ralph f. Gereumund had given to the hermit.

⁶ Chartulary, ff. 13 (*Monasticon* VI (ii), p. 895, No. 4), 14^b (*Monasticon*, VI (ii) p. 896, No. 9).

together with a moiety of the mill of Borrowash.¹ After her husband's death Matilda granted the remainder of her lands in Alvaston to the abbey.²

As William f. Ralph was "occupied as well on this side of the sea as on the other on the King's business," the actual foundation of the monastery was entrusted to Geoffrey and Matilda. But before any canons could take possession of the site it was necessary to obtain royal assent to the foundation. There is record of the royal charter of privileges, for when, in 1331, the abbot's attorney appeared before a commission of *quo warranto*, he produced a charter of 1 April, 1196, 7 Richard I, giving Dale "all the liberties and free rights which the other abbeys of the Premonstratensian Order have in England."³

Geoffrey and his wife repaired to the oldest and most prolific of all the Premonstratensian abbeys in England, Newhouse in Lincolnshire, where they conferred with Abbot Lambert, who granted them eight canons under Walter de Senteney, after consultation with his brethren, Walter de Senteney, first abbot of Dale, whom the chronicler Thomas de Muskham describes as "a man of the highest religion," had previously gone out to found St. Agatha's Abbey, Easby, as early as 1152.⁴ His abbacy at Dale seems to have begun in January, 1199/1200.⁵ Only four of his canons are mentioned by name—John de

¹ Chartulary ff. 15, 22^b, 23.

² Chartulary ff. 22 (*Monasticon*, vi (ii), p. 896, No. 10), 23.

³ *Plac. de Quo Warranto* (Rec. Comm.), p. 146.

⁴ So stated in the chronicle: the date itself is known from other sources.

⁵ The list of the abbots of Dale bound up with the chronicle (edited by Sir W. Hope in *D.A.J.*, v (1883)) gives Senteney a rule of 31½ years. Calculating from his successor William's translation to Prémontré in October, 1233, after a rule at Dale of 2 years, 6 months, we therefore arrive at the date Jan., 1199/1200 for the beginning of Walter's abbacy. This is consistent with the date of Abbot Lambert of Newhouse, who occurs in 1203 (*Collectanea Anglo-Premonstratensia*, ed. F. A. Gasquet, III, p. 66), and whose predecessor Adam is last mentioned in 1190 (*C.A.-P.* No. 593). The list of abbots is trustworthy, for it gives the total length of the ten abbacies between the documented dates of William's transference in 1233 and William de Horsley's election in 1332 with absolute accuracy—to the very week.

Byford, whose father Baldwin was the friend of Peter de Gausela, the founder of Newhouse, Hugh de Grimsby, Roger de Alesby and William le Sores. "These, O Dale," enthusiastically concludes the chronicler, "are thy living stones, thy chosen stones, the stones precious in the foundation of thy [? sacred] church, united at last by the [? strength] of their corner-stone [? Jesus Christ] without whom"

The final stage came on August 15, 1204, the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the date of foundation recorded¹ by Bishop Redman, Vicar-General of the Abbot of Prémontré in the fifteenth century, which must have been the day when the new church was either founded or consecrated, and when the foundation of the abbey of Dale was at last completed after so many vicissitudes and delays. Formally it was known as the Church of St. Mary² of Stanley Park,³ but this soon gave way to the more simple Dale Abbey.

William f. Ralph, Geoffrey de Salicosa Mara and his wife Matilda, all appear to have received the honour of founders, for f. Ralph is called such in the Deed of Surrender of 1538,⁴ and in f. 13⁶ of the Dale Chartulary, while in answer to the questions of the Vicar-General in 1478 the abbot replied that Dale "was founded by Geoffrey de Salicosa Mara and Matilda his wife,"⁵ and the Beauchief obituary roll⁶ has an entry commemorating "Galfrid' de Sauce' mara, founder of St. Mary of Stanley Park." It is, therefore, impossible to identify the occupant of the fine founder's tomb whose remains were discovered in 1878 at the east end of St. Margaret's chapel in the abbey

¹ *C.A.-P.*, Nos. 357, 359.

² In dedicating many of their houses to St. Mary, the Premonstratensians followed the Cistercian practice.

³ Not to be confused with Stanley Abbey, Wilts., or with Stoneleigh Abbey, sometimes called Stanley-in-Arden, Warwicks., both of the Order of Cîteaux.

⁴ Ashmole MS. 839.

⁵ *C.A.-P.*, No. 357.

⁶ Printed by S. O. Addy, *Beauchief Abbey* (1878), chap. iii.

church,¹ and which was guarded by "a grate of iron" at the time of the dissolution, but no doubt all three were buried in the church. The date of William f. Ralph's death is uncertain, but it cannot have been long after the foundation of the abbey.² His nephew William de Grendon, who became the *advocatus* or patron of the abbey,³ and whose name appears in several deeds dated between 1190 and 1203, died before Michaelmas in the latter year, when his wife Ermentrude Talbot married her third husband Henry f. Gould.⁴ In addition to Depedale, he granted the abbey his lands in Ockbrook, together with his body and that of Bertram his brother, who became a canon of Dale in company with William de Hagnaby, formerly one of the Depedale canons.⁵ Of Geoffrey de Salicosa Mara there are several records after the foundation of Dale Abbey. In 1205 the sheriff of Dorset was ordered to give him 50 marcs of land in that county in exchange for 50 marcs of land which Ralph de Tilly had warranted to him. He also held extensive lands in Lincolnshire. He apparently sided against King John, for on 5 January, 1216 he had letters of safe-conduct for three weeks. On the 31st of the same month the sheriff of York had orders to give the lands of Geoffrey de Salicosa Mara in Rodenham, Dorset, to Simon de Campo Remigii.

¹ See Sir W. Hope, "Excavations on the site of Dale Abbey," in *D.A.J.*, I (1879), p. 105. The bones "were those of a powerful man" (Ward, p. 101, n).

² Mr. Statham thinks that he died in 1189, when he ceased to be seneschal (*D.A.J.* n.s. II (i), p. 59), but he must have lived until about 1194 to have taken part in the foundation of Dale Abbey; he was however, certainly dead by 1195 when the family estates were divided among his three daughters on the death of their brother Robert, Bishop of Worcester (*op. cit.*, p. 60).

³ So stated in the chronicle. Of the patrons or advocates of Dale Abbey there are few records. William la Zouche of Harringworth is called such in 1395 (*Inquisitiones post Mortem* (Rec. Comm.) IV, p. 203); Richard Kyffton or Kurston (? Curzon), *armiger*, in 1478 (*C.A.-P.*, Nos. 357, 359); Gervase Kyngeston, *a:miger*, in 1536 ("Black Book" of Drs. Legh and Layton, *D.A.J.*, v (1883), p. 98).

⁴ Rev. S. P. H. Statham, "Later Descendants, etc.," in *D.A.J.*, n.s. III. (1928-9), p. 54.

⁵ Chartulary, f. 13^b (*Monasticon* VI (ii), p. 876, No. 5).

On 30 May, 1218, a mandate was issued to the sheriff of Lincolnshire to give him full seisin of his lands in Gayton in that county, notwithstanding a previous order to take into the King's hands all the demesne of the count of Brittany.¹ He must have died before 1229, when his widow came to an agreement with Abbot Walter de Senteney whereby she was to be received into his monastery and provided with food and lodging, or its monetary equivalent, until her death.² According to the chronicler, however, it was only when "old and full of days" and "knowing the time of her summons from this world to be fast approaching," that she returned to Dale from Lincolnshire. John Grauncorth was then abbot,³ and Thomas de Muskham a canon of some four years' profession. It was to the Lady Matilda that he owed much of the material for the earlier part of his chronicle, and he relates how "one day the holy convent was summoned before her for discourse, when some mention was made of the first inhabitants of the place, and she began the following narrative before them all"; here follows the story of the hermit. Her piety had been rewarded, for she left two sons and two daughters. Roger granted two bovates in Stanton to the abbey in the reign of Henry III; he died without issue. John (oc. 1242) also died without issue, and his two sisters Avice and Johanna became coheiresses. Avice married William de Benniworth, Johanna William de Poynton.⁴ Both made benefactions to Dale in their widowhood.⁵

A William de Saumara gave the abbey lands near Brassington,⁶ and it was to Geoffrey de Musters, first

¹ For Geoffrey's career see the Rev. S. P. H. Statham, "Later Descendants, etc.," in *D.A.J.*, n.s. II (i) (1926), p. 61.

² Trueman, *History of Ilkeston*, p. 324 (Feet of Fines 13 Henry III, No. 19).

³ Abbot from 1233 to 1253.

⁴ See the Rev. S. P. H. Statham, "Later Descendants, etc.," in *D.A.J.*, n.s. II (i) (1926), pp. 61-2; III (1928-9), p. 55.

⁵ Chartulary ff. 12, 24, 40^b.

⁶ Ward, *Dale and its Abbey*, p. 99.

husband of Matilda's younger sister Avice, and to Almaric de Gasci, knight, Avice's son by her second marriage, that the abbot and convent owed one of their first ecclesiastical charges, for each granted them their patronage of a moiety of Egginton church."¹ Although this gift did not include the tithes, the abbot continued to present to the double rectory until 1344-5, when he acquired half the great tithes but lost his right of patronage.²

It was not long after their foundation that the canons acquired the right of patronage of the church of Kirk Hallam, near their monastery, which was given them by Sir Richard de Sandiacre together with the site for a quarry,³ some adjoining lands,⁴ and a mill.⁵ The gift was confirmed to the abbey by his son John,⁶ and the de Sandiacre family also made considerable grants of land from its native manor.⁷ Though it was again only the advowson which the canons had been given "it seems that they speedily obtained leave to appropriate the great tithes and ordain a vicarage," and as there is no mention of the church in the Papal Taxation Roll of 1291 it has been suggested that they had procured its exemption from papal tenths and first fruits.⁸ Its profits were attached to the chapel of St. Margaret within the abbey church.⁹

A third church at an early date in possession of the abbot and convent was that of Stanton-by-Dale, but there are no charters recording its gift, and it is not improbable that it was first built by the canons themselves. So completely was it within their jurisdiction that it did not

¹ Chartulary, f. 169^b.

² J. C. Cox, *The Churches of Derbyshire* (1879), IV, pp. 183-5.

³ Chartulary, f. 48.

⁴ Chartulary, ff. 49-62^b *passim*.

⁵ Chartulary, f. 61^b.

⁶ Chartulary, f. 48^b.

⁷ Chartulary, ff. 90-1, 95^b, 99^b; Jeayes, *Derbyshire Charters*, Nos. 933, 936, 940, 941.

⁸ Cox., *op. cit.*, p. 212.

⁹ *Valor Ecclesiasticus* (Rec. Comm. 1817), III, p. 156. It was then (1535) valued at £5. 19s. 11d., out of which 40s. was due to the vicar, and 7s. 7d. to the archdeacon of Derby.

rank as a vicarage, and all the tithes were appropriated to the abbey.¹ Hence there is no mention of the church in the Papal Taxation Roll, in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* of 1535, or in the Lichfield episcopal registers, and the canon serving it was known as *presbiter* or *capellanus*, but not usually as *vicarius*.² His stipend was provided for by a corrody of 26s. 8d. a year out of the convent's revenues from Derby, Elvaston, Thulston and Alvaston.³

Thoroton states that William de Trowell gave the abbey a moiety of the patronage of Trowell church, Notts., some time during the thirteenth century,⁴ but this does not seem to have included the tithes, and the spiritualities of the abbey were not further increased until 1345, when Bishop Norbury granted the abbot and convent the half rectory—that is, half the great tithes—of Egginton free of all patronage,⁵ while their acquisition of the rectories of Ilkeston and Heanor dates from 1385-6 and 1473 respectively.

¹ Cox, p. 415.

² *C.A.-P.*, Nos. 356, 359, 361, 364, 366, 369, 371. The one instance of *vicarius* occurs in No. 370, probably a slip.

³ *Val. Eccles.*

⁴ *History of Notts.* II, p. 198. In 1316 the abbot of Dale was certified as one of the lords of the township of Trowell (*Parl. Writs.* II (iii), p. 751). See Chartulary ff. 20-21^b.

⁵ Cox, pp. 184-5 (Lichfield Episcopal Registers, III, f. 147^b).

TREE SHOWING RELATIONSHIP OF THE FOUNDERS AND BENEFACTORS OF DEPEDALE PRIORY AND DALE ABBEY.

NOTE: No attempt is made in this tree to show members of the Fitz Ralph and Grendon families unconnected with the history of Dale Abbey.

