

GENERAL HISTORY OF LEWES PRIORY IN THE TWELFTH AND THIRTEENTH CENTURIES

BY B. M. CROOK

THE Cluniac Priory of St. Pancras at Lewes was founded in 1077 by William de Warenne and his wife Gundrada. During the course of the next century it was richly endowed by them and their tenants and became very wealthy. A magnificent church was built during the twelfth century and enlarged in the thirteenth century. This was the first Cluniac foundation in England and was always considered the chief house in this province.

Nevertheless, it seems never to have taken a full part as a member of the Order, nor to have been fully under the control of the abbot, as indeed its distance from Cluny forbade. When annual general chapters were instituted, the priors of the English province were permitted to attend only once in two years and, even so, were frequently absent. Therefore, in the Order, the priory at Lewes was not a very important member and was not greatly influenced by Cluniac policy. Since it was formed a century and a half after the foundation of the mother house, it escaped the reforming drive of the new order, and the Cluniac houses in England seem to have lacked the vigour which characterizes new movements.

Indeed, the priory seems from the first to have been more a Warenne than a Cluniac foundation. All its chief possessions were granted by this family or by its tenants, and the house held no land in chief of the Crown. There is even strong evidence to suggest that the Warennes appointed the priors.

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN FOOTNOTES: *S.A.C.* = *Sussex Archaeological Collections*; *S.R.S.* = *Sussex Record Society*; *D. C.* = Duckett, *Charters and Records of Cluny*; *D. V.* = Duckett, *Visitation Reports*; *V.C.H.* = *Victoria County History*; *M.C.* = *Millénaire de Cluny*; Bruel = Bernard and Bruel, *Recueil des Chartes de Cluny*; *E.H.R.* = *English Historical Review*; *D.N.B.* = *Dictionary of National Biography*.

This predominating influence prevented the house from taking an important part in public life. References to it in the public records and in contemporary chronicles are very few; and the same reasons which caused this probably prevented the writing of any full and valuable chronicle at the priory itself. This means that the fine collection of charters belonging to the priory is by far the most valuable part of the material for its history. In particular the twelfth-century charters, of which about 150 survive, are useful to the study of early charter forms, especially that of the private charter.

However, it is the purpose of this paper to show the early history of the priory as it can be gleaned from records other than the charters: the public records, the reports of visitations, its own inadequate annals and other sources. There is more evidence for the thirteenth than for the twelfth century, since the records are so much fuller.

The date of foundation can be named, with fair confidence, as 1077; the names and dates of the first four priors are clear. After this, for a century, there is obscurity as to the personnel; the great periods of building about the middle of each century are known from various references, and there is much evidence of the financial crisis through which the monastery passed at the end of the thirteenth century, which was perhaps partly due to this. Something of the relations of the mother house with subordinate priories is learnt from documents in the archives of Cluny or from disputes which found their way into the public records: the reports of visitations in the thirteenth century are also valuable for this, and for revealing conditions inside the monastery itself. Some reflection of public events is found in the annals; but the direct relations with the King were chiefly financial. On the whole, the history of the priory is lacking in full personal and human interest. The existing twelfth- and thirteenth-century annals are only a bare record of events, inferior in imaginative detail to the narrative charters found on the early folios of the cartulary.

There are three separate 'Annales' of the priory, one very brief belonging to the twelfth century, another longer and of the thirteenth century. The third belongs to the fifteenth century. In addition, there is a twelfth-century chronicle bound up with the *Liber de Hyda* which may belong to Lewes Priory.¹ The first are in the Vatican Library and were edited in 1902 by Liebermann in the *English Historical Review*.² He dates their actual writing, on internal evidence, in 1164. Their connection with the annals of Battle and Chichester can be traced through the relationship of all three to a lost transcriber of annals current in Normandy and England in the eleventh century, whose work forms their basis. These Lewes Annals and the *Annales Cicestrenses*³ are our sole authority for the second prior of St. Pancras, Eustace, 1107-20. They also tell us of the death of Prior William in 1159 and thus clear up some of the confusion as to the succession of priors in the mid-twelfth century.

The longest annals belong to the thirteenth century and are among the Cotton MSS. in the British Museum,⁴ bound up with the Dunstable Annals. In the main, they give a bare outline of current events. On two points, however, they give original information. On the one hand they are the chief source of information about the appointment of priors;⁵ on the other they contain many references to the Warenne family. Thus, under the year 1085 they record the death of Gundrada, and, in 1088, of 'Willelmus primus fundator'.⁶ Under 1242, three years out, they record the death of William Earl Warenne and the succession of his son John.⁷ They record two expeditions into France of this earl, one in 1252 and one in 1255, on each occasion with the Earl of Gloucester and William de Valence. Also in 1255 is recorded the death of the Countess Alice, who

¹ Rolls Series, ed. Edwards, p. 284 et seq.

² *E.H.R.*, 1902, pp. 83-9. Vatican Library, Queen Christina, no. 147, ff. 61-9.

³ F. Liebermann, *Ungedruckte anglo-normannische Geschichtsquellen*, p. 84.

⁴ Tiberius A. X. ⁵ See below for a discussion of this.

⁶ Transcript in *S.A.C.* II. 23-4.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

was buried before the great altar in the presence of her brother Adelimar, Bishop-elect of Winchester.¹

For the rest, the annals record the personal history of the Warennes:

1284. Willelmus de Warena desponsavit filiam comitis Oxonie.

1285. Dominus Willelmus de Warene primogenitus Domini Johannis de Warene apud Wintonam factus est miles.

Under the year 1286 there is a longer and more eloquent account of the birth of the heir, John, followed by lamentations for the death of his father six months earlier:

baptizatus et vocatus nomine Johannes . . . immensa leticia, sed heus propheta testante, 'extincta gaudia scilicet set occupat luctus', nam eodem anno . . . predicti pueri de quo nobis fuit letitia pater expiravit . . .

The last entry concerning the Warennes is the notice of the death of Earl John in 1304,² at Kennington near London.

The other annals belong to the fifteenth century and are in the Royal Library at Copenhagen. For the early period, they seem to have been copied from the cartulary and from the other annals: their information concerning the Warennes corresponds with that in the cartulary.³ For the rest, they give the names of priors also to be found in the other annals: like the twelfth-century annals, they mention the death of the second prior Eustace in 1120,⁴ whose name does not appear in the Cotton Annals.

There is various evidence for fixing the date of the priory's foundation, about which little doubt exists. Horsfield⁵ states, incorrectly, that Wendover and Malmesbury give 1072 as the date of foundation. Leland made an error in addition,⁶ in saying that the priory was founded the twelfth year after the Conquest, that is 1072. William of Malmesbury records the foundation of the priory in both *Gesta Regum*⁷ and *Gesta Pontificum*,⁸ but without date. We have also the evidence of the

¹ *S.A.C.* II. 26.

² *Ibid.* 29-32.

³ *S.R.S.* XL. 16-20.

⁴ *Deputy Keeper's Report*, 46, App. 2: 'Annales Lewenses, 1076-1485.'

⁵ Horsfield, *Hist. of Lewes*, I. 233.

⁶ Leland, *Collectanea*, I. 238.

⁷ *Rolls ed.* II. 513.

⁸ *Rolls ed.*, p. 207.

twelfth-century Lewes Annals, which give 1078 for the arrival of Lanzo in England.¹

The passage in the cartulary² referring to the foundation may have been written as late as the fifteenth century; but the monks ought to know, and must have had some record or tradition, and here again, the date is 1077 or 1078. The first Earl of Warenne is said to have died 4 June 'in the year of grace 1088, and of the foundation of the church the 11th'.³ Thus, it is fairly clear that the priory was founded in 1077 or 1078, probably in the winter between the two.

Until the thirteenth century the chief evidence for building is provided by charters of which the originals have not survived. Thus the so-called 'charter of William the second founder',⁴ which is dated 1091-8 from the bishops mentioned in it, speaks of the dedication of the church:

When the church of S. Pancras had been completed, I was invited by Prior Lanzo and by all the brethren of the same church and requested by them to cause it to be dedicated, to which I gladly and joyfully assented, and I called together the bishop of that diocese, Lord Ralph,⁵ and bishops Walkelin of Winchester⁶ and Gundulph of Rochester⁷ to dedicate it.⁸

The valuable charter Cott. XI. 56⁹ of 1145-6 implies that some rebuilding had recently been completed, since the chief witnesses are 'Theobald Archbishop of Canterbury, Henry Bishop of Winchester, Robert Bishop of Bath, and Ascelin Bishop of Rochester, who dedicated the same church'.¹⁰ However, building operations seem to have been almost continuous, for towards the end of the century¹¹ Adam de Puninges, in making a grant of the tithe of cheeses from his sheep-runs, assigned it to the work on the church for as long as this should go on.¹²

¹ *E.H.R.*, 1902, p. 86.

² MS. Cott. Vespasian F. XV. The Sussex portions of the cartulary have been printed in translation by the Sussex Record Society, vols. xxxviii and xl.

³ *S.R.S.* xl. 15, Cartulary, f. 104v.

⁴ *Ibid.* xxxviii. 9, f. 12.

⁵ 1091-1123.

⁶ 1070-98.

⁷ 1077-1108.

⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 16, f. 14.

⁹ Warner and Ellis, no. 25 of *Facsimiles of Charters in the British Museum*.

¹⁰ *S.R.S.* xxxviii, p. 24, f. 16v.

¹¹ 1163-99: charter witnessed by Hamelin and Isabel.

¹² *S.R.S.* xl. 125, f. 310.

To the thirteenth-century building there are many references in the annals, the only difficulty being the occasional doubt whether the annalist is speaking of Lewes or of some other house. Thus, for 1218, he records 'Magna infirmaria facta est', without saying definitely that it is at Lewes: and for 1219: 'Due domus infirmarii versus norht facte sunt post pascham a Willelmo de Buchelin.'¹ In 1229 the annals again record building—the reconstruction of the chapel of St. Mary.¹ A reason for assuming that these references are to Lewes Priory is that we know building was in progress in 1225 from an entry on the Close Rolls: in this year a ship was detained at Seaford, but its release was ordered as it belonged to the Prior of Lewes, and was on its way to Caen for stone.²

For the year 1243 we have this entry:¹ 'In die anniversarii d. W. comitis positum est fundamentum in novo opere ecclesie nostre.' It is probable that the anniversary is that on which prayers were said for the soul of Earl William de Warenne who died in 1239. In 1247 there is a reference to John *magister operum ecclesie*,³ and we know that certain properties were assigned to the *magister operum* towards the end of the thirteenth century.⁴ In 1268 William Foville, the prior, left 200 marks in his will for finishing the two towers in the front of the church.⁵

The account of the excavations given in vols. XXXIV and XLIX of the *Sussex Archaeological Collections*⁶ bears out this written evidence. The church was found to be very long for its width, 420 ft. by 69½ ft., as we know from the report of Portinari, who destroyed it in 1537:⁷ and this may perhaps be ascribed to the retention of the body of the original Norman church. This has, unfortunately, never been excavated, but, from the number of pillars it is calculated to have had from what is known of the choir and of the west wall, these must have been very thick and probably Norman. After

¹ S.A.C. II. 24.

² Close Roll, 9 Hen. III, m. 13.

³ S.A.C. XXXIV. 75.

⁴ S.R.S. XL. 117-33, Cartulary, ff. 307-13.

⁵ Annals, f. 170b.

⁶ By W. St. J. Hope, xxxiv. 74-107; xlix. 66-89.

⁷ *Letters and Papers Hen. VIII*, I. 554, 590.

examination of the two ends, Hope suggested that the church had been extended both eastward and westward. It had two transepts, and the position of the high altar seemed to have been moved eastward at some time. All this suggested that it was twice rebuilt and one transept had been made at the first rebuilding and the eastern transept, with the apsidal end and corona of five chapels, at the second.

However, the plan, as far as it can be reconstructed, seems to be uniform in style and closely resembles the plan of the church at Cluny. It is therefore probable that the actual church was planned as a whole and built during the twelfth century, and that the additions of the thirteenth century took the form of embellishments to the chapels and the construction of a western tower. Additional evidence of the extension to the west is found in the oblong shape of the cloister. This is most unusual, and Hope suggests that it was originally square, but that it was necessary to enlarge it at the same time as the church was being enlarged: probably the length of the western arm of the church and the cloister was the same at first, and both were extended together, probably in the twelfth century. The cloister was not extended southward at the same time, Hope suggests, owing to the narrowness of the ridge of land or 'island'¹ on which the monastery stood. It had already been necessary to build out an undercroft to support the refectory to the south of the cloister (as also for the rere-dorter), and the labour of moving this building southward would have been too great. The fact that the rere-dorter was actually reconstructed in order to extend the dorter, suggests that the two extensions were made at different times. Hope thinks that the cloister was enlarged about the middle of the twelfth century. The other work may therefore have been done in the thirteenth century.²

With regard to the two towers for which William Foville made his bequest in 1268, the excavators are

¹ So called in Cartulary, *S.R.S.* xxxviii. 4, 10.

² See plan appended to this article.

reported to have found only one tower in the centre of the west end, and Hope suggests that by the 'front' Foville may mean the east. However, this is directly contradicted by the evidence of Portinari, who refers to 'the steeple which is set upon a corner of the fore-front', showing that two towers were intended at the western end, and that only one was completed.¹

Practically nothing of the church and buildings now remains, the railway line passing right through the site of the choir, chapter-house, and cloisters, and the rest of the site being in private hands. Most of the fabric was sold at the time of the Dissolution;² one or two of the columns of Purbeck marble and some capitals and pieces of moulding from the arches are preserved in museums or in churches near the priory.³ The people digging to make the railway in 1845 are said to have discovered 'a room . . . with a semi-circular apsis', probably one of the apsidal chapels, which bore traces of painting on the walls.⁴

We know the number of monks in the priory only from the thirteenth century.⁵ A papal mandate of 1240 says there were 100 monks at Lewes then. In 1288 there were 39,⁶ in 1279 50,⁷ in 1306 33;⁷ at the time of the dissolution the number had fallen to 24.⁸

Three of the first priors of St. Pancras drew more attention to themselves than most of their successors during the next century. Lanzo, as the first prior, naturally stands out. William of Malmesbury, in

¹ The description of the church from Portinari:

'The said church has in length	420 ft.
The breadth from the entrance as far as the middle	69½ ft.
" " in the middle of the church	150 ft.
The height is 63 ft. . . . The thickness of the wall	5 ft.

There are in the said church 32 pillars in all on both sides, they are all detached from the walls; among which are 8 very big of which set 4 support a very high vault in manner of a steeple and other 4 one like it a little higher than the other where are 5 bells. } i.e. at the transepts.

Hope, 'The Cluniac Priory of S. Pancras at Lewes' (*S.A.C.* XLIX. 81).

² *S.A.C.* XLIX. 85.

³ At Lewes Barbican: one capital in B.M.: in churches, e.g. Rodmell.

⁴ *S.A.C.* xxxiv. 77, quoting M. A. Lower.

⁵ *Calendar of Papal Letters*, p. 186.

⁶ Duckett, *Visitations and Chapters General*, 239.

⁷ *Ibid.* 279.

⁸ *S.A.C.* XLIX. 73, Hope; *Letters and Papers, Hen. VIII*, XII. ii, No. 1101.

recording his death in 1107, wrote or incorporated a long eulogy of him.¹ Liebermann believed this to be part of a lost Lewes account.² According to the charter evidence, Lanzo was a good man of business, as he is said to have asked the Earl Warenne to grant a second charter, the original foundation charter being at Cluny and therefore inaccessible.³

Lanzo was succeeded by Eustace, who died in 1120.⁴ The prior who followed Eustace, Hugh of Amiens, was the most eminent man who ever held the position. He had been educated at Laon, his birth-place, in the school of Anselm and Ralph;⁵ soon after he became a Cluniac monk he was Prior of Limoges. He came to England, and was then appointed Prior of Lewes.⁶ He found favour with the king, who made him the first abbot of his monastery at Reading in 1123.⁷ Some of his theological works seem to have been written while he was here.⁶ In 1129 or 1130 he was promoted to the Archbishopric of Rouen, a position which he held until his death in 1164.⁶

The next Prior of Lewes, Anker or Aucher, also became Abbot of Reading, succeeding Hugh in 1130.⁸

After 1130 it is only possible to ascertain the succession approximately, from chance references to the prior. Thus, the Vatican Annals record the death of Hugh de Sancta Margareta in 1293.⁹ The Cotton Annals record the death of Prior Arnold in 1139,¹⁰ but whether of Lewes or not we do not know: a Prior William occurs in 1147 as witness to the confirmation to the town of Lewes of its fair by Rainald de Warenne in the absence of his brother the earl on Crusade.¹¹ The Vatican Annals record the death of a Prior William in 1159.¹² The Prior William mentioned in the agreement of 1170-1 with Adelia Malduit and her sons about some land

¹ Malmesbury, *Gesta Pontificum* (Rolls Series), p. 207.

² *E.H.R.* 1902, p. 83.

³ *S.R.S.* xxxviii. 3.

⁴ *E.H.R.* 1902, pp. 85, 87.

⁵ *Orderic Vitalis* (Bohn), iv. 107.

⁶ *D.N.B.* xxviii. 163-4.

⁷ *Flores Historiarum* (Rolls Series), ii. 49.

⁸ Bracton, *De Legibus Anglie* (Rolls Series), 248; *Walter of Coventry* (Rolls Series), i. 153.

⁹ *E.H.R.* 1902, p. 87.

¹⁰ *S.A.C.* ii. 24.

¹¹ Cott. MS. Nero C iii, f. 190; Warner and Ellis, *Facsimiles of Charters in British Museum*, 31.

¹² *E.H.R.* 1902, p. 88.

in London¹ must be another of the same name, but whether he succeeded in 1159 it is impossible to tell.

At some time between 1174 and 1181 there was a Prior Osbert at Lewes, as we learn in charter A. 15466, in which Richard, Archbishop of Canterbury (1174–84), records the settlement of the dispute with Lamport Church about burials at Faxton (Northants.), which dispute had been referred to Pope Alexander III (d. 1181).²

Prior Hugh of Lewes, who was Abbot of Cluny in 1199–1201 at the time of the dispute with Earl Hamelin about the election of priors, resigned from Lewes in 1186 and became Abbot of Reading.³

Another William occurs in 1195, in the Feet of Fines,⁴ and also is mentioned in charters of about this time.⁵ The records of the 1200 dispute show that a Prior Alexander was appointed in 1201.⁶

The Feet of Fines show that Humbert was prior c. 1202–7,⁷ and Humbert is mentioned in one of the charters belonging to the *Magister operum* of about 1205.⁸

Between c. 1207 and c. 1217, no prior can be traced at all. The next reference that we have is to Prior Stephen, who was summoned to Cluny in 1220 during a suit and forced to resign.⁹ His name appears in the Feet of Fines for 1217.¹⁰

The term of office of Hugh, the next prior, was from c. 1220 to c. 1234. In 1224 we know he was prior from the Feet of Fines;¹¹ and he appears in the Patent Rolls for 1226 and 1230.¹² Bracton mentions him in 1227.¹³

Prior Albert occurs 1236,¹⁴ and died 1244. In 1239

¹ *S.R.S.* xxxviii. 85; Cartulary, f. 139v.

² Charter A. 15466. Also *S.R.S.* xxxviii. 127. Cartulary, f. 71. ii/L.

³ *Annales Monastici* (Rolls Series), II. 244 [252].

⁴ *S.R.S.* II, No. 2.

⁵ *S.R.S.* xxxviii, 123, f. 70: iii/M; XL. 8, f. 136, and Dugdale, *Monasticon*, v. 69.

⁶ *D. C.* I. 99.

⁷ *S.R.S.* II. 60.

⁸ *S.R.S.* XL. 117, f. 307.

⁹ Bracton, *De Legibus Anglie* (Rolls Series), 1395.

¹⁰ *S.R.S.* II. 140–4.

¹¹ *Ibid.* 189.

¹² Pat. Roll, 11 Hen. III, m. 18 d., p. 154; 14 Hen. III, m. 5 d., p. 356. Appointment of justices for darrein presentment *re* Tefford and Gretham.

¹³ Farrer, *Honors and Knights' Fees*, III. 417.

¹⁴ *S.R.S.* XL. 110, f. 154, xv/Z: agreement with Hugh Sanzaver *re* Bignor.

he received a grant of a vill in Norfolk from Reiner, son of Peter de Hecham.¹ From this time until his death he frequently excused himself from attendance at the general chapter at Cluny. In 1240 he had to remain in England in order to be present when the justices visited Lewes.² In 'c. 1240' (according to Bruel), perhaps two years later, he was again unable to attend the general chapter, this time through illness.³ It is clear from this document that S., the sub-prior, was acting as prior during the illness of Albert; it may have been the same sub-prior in 1244, who was attempting to carry on the work of prior as he had done before, when the king forbade him to present to livings during the vacancy.⁴ We have further evidence from the Close Rolls to support 1244 as the date of Albert's death, in a mandate issued in favour of the monks in that year;⁵ they are not to be evicted from the possession of Manton Church *vi laica*, while they are without a prior.

Guichard de la Osaye succeeded in 1244,⁶ and died at some time after 28 June in 1248, as he appeared on that date before brother John de S. Laurenti, cardinal priest, to explain why he refused to pay tithes to Cluny;⁷ while the annals report the succession of William Russhelin in the same year.⁸ This William made a journey to Rome in 1255, from which he returned; in the same year, or the next, he set off again, apparently for the Holy Land, and from this journey he never returned.⁹

His successor, William Foville, who 'came to Lewes' in 1257,¹⁰ was promoted from the Priory of St. Andrew at Northampton, also a Cluniac house. The king had assumed St. Andrew's to be vacant and had seized its lands, but this had called forth a protest from the Abbot of Cluny, who asserted that William retained control of it until a new prior was appointed, and Henry was forced to restore possession to him.¹¹ Appa-

¹ A. 3136.² Bruel, 4772.³ Ibid. 4780.⁴ Close Roll, 29 Hen. III, m. 15, p. 285.⁵ Ibid., m. 19, p. 267.⁶ S.A.C. II. 24.⁷ Bruel, 4986.⁸ S.A.C. II. 25.⁹ Ibid. 26: 'Transfretavit W. de R. de Lewes irrediturus, et cum eo A. Kukefeld capellanus terre sancte.'¹⁰ S.A.C. II. 27.¹¹ Patent Roll, 41 Hen. III, m. 1, p. 582.

rently he was still administering both houses two years later.¹ He was a good administrator, for the annals say 'domum dimisit in bono statu et sine debitis'.² He also left gifts to the priory from his private property: 'Assignavit conventui unum calicem aureum cum quinque gemmis preciosis, et cuppam deauratam ad eucharistiam.'² He also left four copes, a silver pall, £100 to be spent on tunics for the monks every second year 'when they do not receive fur tunics from the chamber', £100 to the treasury and 200 marks for completing the two south-west towers of the church.³

It is obvious that the thirteenth-century annals must have been kept regularly from about 1250, and from this point onwards, to the end of our period, they give us the dates of appointment and a few other scraps of information about the priors. We have also the evidence of the visitations for the tremendous debt in which the house was involved from about 1279. The annals make no reference to this, apart from the statement that Foville left the priory without debt, and we are perhaps intended to assume that the mismanagement began after his death.

The next three priors⁴ all secured promotion to other houses. Of Milo de Columbers (1268-74)⁴ the annalist records a journey to Cluny in 1270⁵ (without stating the reason) and his promotion to Vézelay as abbot.⁶ His successor, Peter de Viliaco, was prior for only nine months, moving on to St. Martin's Priory in Paris in November 1275.⁶ John of Thyenges was appointed prior in 1275, arriving at Lewes in May of the following year *ubique receptus cum magno honore*.⁶ This prior paid a visit to Rome from 1280 to 1282.⁶ In 1284⁷ he again left England, this time to attend the general chapter at Cluny. After this he did not return, as he was appointed prior of Sancta Maria ad Montes in Auvergne.

Already in 1279 the visitors found the priory considerably in debt, as the result of Milo's administration: he

¹ Close Roll, 43 Hen. III, m. 15, p. 335.

³ *S.A.C.* LXV. 196-205.

⁵ *Ibid.* 30.

² *S.A.C.* II. 27.

⁴ *S.A.C.* II. 29.

⁶ *Ibid.* 31.

⁷ *Ibid.* 35.

had also involved Castle Acre and Prittlewell at the same time. Lewes was encumbered with debt which the Visitors considered would take 'upward of 20 years to liquidate'.¹ Before this debt could have been cleared off, therefore, John of Avignon was appointed prior (1285),² and his reckless administration had brought the house, by 1290, to a very serious condition indeed.³ Before coming to Lewes he had already involved Bermondsey Priory in debt during his headship of that house.⁴ After his death in 1297 John of Newcastle (1298-1301),⁵ sacristan of the priory,⁶ was appointed as Prior of Lewes, it seems with the purpose of attempting to clear off the debt, but by 1351 the house was still heavily encumbered.³

The account of the election⁶ of John of Newcastle is interesting in illustrating the ceremonial of an appointment. He appeared at La Charité before a large Cluniac assembly, where he took the oath, and was confirmed in his appointment by Bertrand, Abbot of Cluny. At the same time the breviary, cope, and palfrey of the late John of Avignon were given to the abbot by Robert, precentor of the priory, and Walter a monk.

It is interesting to notice⁷ that he was chosen by the representatives of Earl Warenne from two monks. (Henry, Prior of Wenlock, being the other), according to the arrangement laid down in 1201. In this year was settled the long process at Cluny begun in 1199 in which the earl and abbot contested the right to appoint the Prior of Lewes.

The first prior, Lanzo, was sent from Cluny at the request of the earl; the third and fourth priors, Hugh and Aucher (1120-3 and 1123-30), were also appointed by the Abbot of Cluny. But from this date until 1244 there is the greatest uncertainty as to the dates, and even the names, of the priors of Lewes. The probable explanation of this obscurity is that the appointments were managed privately by the earls and never found

¹ D. V. 35.² S.A.C. II. 35.³ See *infra*.⁴ D. V. 249, 267.⁵ S.A.C. II. 37.⁶ Bruel, 5470; Bibl. Nat. Or. 366.⁷ Bruel, 5470.

their way into any records. Cluny was always reluctant to send monks to England, and in a period of internal weakness this reluctance may have extended even to the appointment of priors. The facts disclosed by the dispute in 1199–1201 provide strong evidence in favour of the Warenne influence on the appointment of priors. At the end of 1199 a dispute seems to have arisen concerning the appointment of a prior by the Abbot of Cluny;¹ a certain priest, G., arrived in Rome to protest on behalf of the Earl of Warenne, and to request that the election be made by the house itself. The sub-prior of St. Pancras, H., however, supported brothers B. and S., procurators of Cluny, in defending the election, since Lewes appertained to Cluny *nullo mediante*. They complain of the behaviour of the earl in seizing Coningsburgh Church in Yorkshire and forbidding the servants of the monastery at Heacham, Carleton, and Walton manors in Norfolk to pay their dues to Lewes. Moreover, he has withheld the tenth of his income, which he owes to the priory,² for almost five years, and also refuses to release the *litteras sigillatas* of the church, which they owe the Jews as security for a loan. He sends representatives to the chapter of the priory, threatening the prior and those who favour him with personal injury if they do not leave the property within four days. He threatens to cause them to die of hunger if they observe the interdict under which the abbot has placed the church of Lewes on account of his (the earl's) violent actions. When the office of prior has been vacant, he has often placed guards at the gate of the priory, who prevented the entrance of any representatives of Cluny; even pilgrims and guests were denied admission until they had sworn that they had no concern with Cluny.

The procurators of Cluny, on the other hand, declare that it is the custom for the abbot to appoint and depose priors, even without consulting the monks, and beg for

¹ Report of proceedings in Rome contained in letter of Hubert Walter, Archbishop of Canterbury to Eustace, Bishop of Ely (papal delegates for further litigation), containing letter of Innocent III: D. C. i. 87: 3 May 1200.

² Granted in charter AA. 463.

the confirmation of the Holy See and that the earl may be compelled to make restitution. S. and W., monks and messengers of the priory, agree in part with the requests of the abbot, but uphold their own interests by suggesting that the prior should be chosen by the chapter, with the consent of the earl as patron; and that the abbot cannot remove him, once elected, without due cause. They also request that the abbot be content with 100*s.* a year, more than which he cannot legally exact from Lewes. The judgement given by Cardinals J. (priest of St. Prisca) and P. (deacon of St. Mary in Via Lata) is that the monks exceed their powers in choosing a prior, since the Abbot of Cluny has the right to nominate him: but Cluny must not exact money except in cases of great urgency. The earl is ordered to restore all offerings and quiet possession, and then the Pope will hear him if he wishes.

This did not settle the case, however; the earl refused to recognize the judgement, protesting that G. was not his properly authorized representative, and the dispute lasted for another year until 10 June 1201. Another hearing was had before Hubert, Archbishop of Canterbury, and Eustace, Bishop of Ely; Abbot Hugh of Cluny himself appeared, at Happeham, and the final decision reached¹ was much more in favour of the Earl of Warenne. At a vacancy the earl was to send representatives to Cluny with the monks who went from St. Pancras. There the abbot was to nominate two of the best men of the Order (the Prior of La Charité and the Grand Prior of Cluny excepted), of whom the earl's representatives should choose one. It is this settlement which is recorded by Ralph de Diceto in his *Imagines Historiarum*.² The monks themselves were so far successful as to obtain the insertion of the stipulation that the prior should only be removed for just cause.

The fact that this concession to the Earl of Warenne was made only after the breakdown of the agreement more favourable to Cluny, may point to its being merely a temporary expedient. Hamelin, the earl in 1199, was

¹ D. C. I. 92.

² (Rolls Series), II. 173.

the half-brother of Henry II and seems to have shared his aggressive temper. Moreover, as early as 1228, we have a papal mandate to the Abbot of Cluny to make ordinance for the election of the Prior of St. Pancras, 'notwithstanding the composition made between the Earl of Warren, its patron, and one of the abbot's predecessors'.¹ Bruel prints a document which seems to belong to about 1207, which shows the sub-prior, H., applying independently to Cluny even so early.² Later in the century two Privileges of Clement IV (1265)³ and Gregory X (1272)⁴ announce that the abbot only is to appoint priors. By 1298, as a digest of visitation reports made perhaps in 1405 shows, the right of the abbot was so well established that Bertrand de Columbiers was able to enforce an elaborate pledge, in which the prior undertook many obligations.⁵

Against this, however, must be set definite evidence of the enduring influence of the Warennes. Thus, in 1240, in spite of Gregory IX's cancellation of the 1201 arrangement, the sub-prior, S., sent to Cluny with the representatives of the priory, representatives also *illustris viri domini W. comitis Warenn*.⁶ As late as 1285 Archbishop Pecham, giving advice to the Abbot of Cluny concerning the election of a prior of St. Pancras, exhorted him to gain the favour of the Earl of Warenne, the descendant of the ancient benefactors of the priory.⁷ Pecham had known the priory well in his boyhood, and had been taught by its teachers: 'Quo in ipsius vicinia coaluimus a puero et ab eiusdem professoribus solatia recepimus et honores.' He knew the conditions under which the monks actually lived, and we must accept his stipulation as valid evidence.

Moreover, we have definite evidence from the year 1182 that the 1201 concession was not entirely an innovation. In this year an earlier disputed election

¹ *Calendar of Papal Letters*, 8 Kal Nov. Perugia, p. 119.

² Bruel, 4392: refers to death of Prior H.—Hugh 1186, resigned not died, next Hugh c. 1220 to c. 1234: Humbert occurs 1202-7.

³ Bruel, 5095 (*Bull. Clun.* 133. 1).

⁴ Bruel, 5184 (*Bull. Clun.* 138. 1, 2).

⁵ D. V. 37.

⁶ Bruel, 4779.

⁷ *Register of Archbishop Pecham* (Rolls Series), III. 902.

had taken place, and all the circumstances, considered together, point to the fact that the Abbot of Cluny was the aggressor in 1199, and not the Earl of Warenne. A *Charta pacis*¹ of 1182 records the agreement between Abbot Theobald and Earl Hamelin concerning the election of priors. The Earl was to send representatives to Cluny as well as the monastery, and the abbot was to name a suitable prior. This, however, was only a temporary arrangement, and if the earl 'infra subsequens quinquennium, de dignitate quam sibi vindicat in praefato monasterio, agere voluit abbas super hoc stabit iudicio'. The vagueness of the document is unfortunate, but it does at any rate prove that the earl had some claims, traditional if not documentary, to control the election of the prior. Moreover, there can be little doubt that the prior actually elected in this year was Hugh, who, after moving to Reading in 1186, became Abbot of Cluny in 1199, and was actually abbot during the dispute of 1199–1201. It even seems that his first action on becoming abbot was to attempt to correct the irregularity of election to the headship of the house, of which he had had personal experience.

Although the priory seems to have had certain financial difficulties earlier in the thirteenth century, it is clear that the crisis in the last decade was of an extremely acute nature. For instance, already by 1200 the priory had received loans from the Jews, as we know by the complaint during the dispute of that year, that the earl is holding the priory's *litteras sigillatas*, whereby it is prevented from honouring its debt to them.² In addition to this, the earl sequestered the priory estates, not only at Lewes, but also in Norfolk,³ and the loss of this revenue must have caused temporary difficulties. Again in 1234 the priory was in debt, for in this year letters were obtained from the king, ordering the 'men' of the prior to pay 'a reasonable aid to acquit him of his debts'.⁴

¹ Marrier, *Bibliotheca Cluniacensis*, 1446.

² Bruel, 4381. Letter to 'servants of monastery' on estates in Walton, Heacham, Carleton.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Pat. Rolls, 18 Hen. III, m. 16, p. 40.

It is clear that the chief cause of the financial crisis was personal mismanagement; but management may have become more difficult towards the end of the thirteenth century. In the first place, by the middle of the century, and even earlier, the priory's estates had ceased to increase,¹ since by now all important gifts had been made; with the continual decline in the value of money, the income might well be less at the end than at the beginning of the thirteenth century. On the other hand, we know that a considerable amount of rebuilding of the church and probably of the conventual buildings was done in the middle of the century. Foville's gift in 1268² for completing the south-west towers shows that there was some difficulty in raising the money, and this is borne out by the fact that only one tower was ever completed.³

We have evidence that these circumstances did not in fact account for the virtual bankruptcy to which the house was brought. Thus the visitation of 1262 showed that: 'in respect of its indebtedness, there is more owing to the house than the house itself may be said to owe.'⁴ At this same time, other priories, such as Wenlock, Bermondsey, and Thetford, were heavily in debt.⁵ The expense of entertaining the king's army, after this, was not sufficient seriously to upset the finances, if we accept the evidence of the annals that William Foville left the house *in bono statu et sine debitis*.⁶

The priory's financial straits seem to have been caused by the mismanagement of two priors, Milo (1268-74), who first encumbered the house with debt, and John of Avignon (1285-98), who brought to an end the slight improvement that had shown itself under John of Thyenges, and brought the house to a very serious position.

We first hear, then, of serious debts in the visitation of 1279.⁷ The Priors of Montdidier and Lenton found

¹ See cartulary and discussion of wealth, *infra*. ² See *supra*, p. 79.

³ Portinari, note 1, p. 75, *supra*.

⁴ D. V. 11.

⁵ D. C. II. 123, 124.

⁶ S.A.C. II. 27.

⁷ D. V. 35.

that the priory now had an unsecured debt of 2,800 marks; when the ruling prior had taken over the house, however (1276), this had been 4,000 marks, and he had succeeded in reducing it. In addition to this, there were two debts of 250 marks, one for building and one for the stocking of manors; for these the silver vessels had been pledged. The balance on the sale of wool was wrong, since the priory had received 100 marks from merchants for wool which the monks had never delivered;¹ and there was a deficit in grain and stock. The priory also owed 100 marks for 25 casks of wine which had been purchased, and the 100s. due to Cluny had not been paid. The position was serious enough to threaten a deficiency of necessities. The visitors left no doubt as to the cause of this condition. They pointed out that the two subordinate houses of Castle Acre and Prittlewell were in debt 'in respect of Milo when he was prior of Lewes'. Then, after enumerating the debts at Lewes, they write:

'It will be very difficult to relieve the priory's liabilities . . . at best it will take upwards of 20 years to liquidate its debts . . . and how it has come to this condition, by whose misrule caused and from what other circumstances arising, is a matter . . . full well known.'²

In such circumstances it is difficult to understand the appointment of John of Avignon as prior in 1285. It must have been known from his rule at Bermondsey that he was not to be entrusted with the finances of any house, much less of one already encumbered with debt. For he had got the house of Bermondsey into the hands of Adam de Stratton, the money-lender, apparently as the result of unsuccessful speculation in land.³ Apparently he continued the same methods on coming to Lewes, for from 1288 onwards we find continual records of his borrowing on the Close and Patent Rolls. In 1288 the Close Roll records his acknowledgement of a debt of 300 marks to the Italian bankers, 'Baroncinus Walteri and Brunettus and Richard his sons, and to Opisus Malesardi, merchants of Lucca';

¹ *V.C.H.* II. 66; *D. C.* II. 144.

² *D. V.* 35.

³ *D.N.B.* LV. 37.

this debt he managed to pay.¹ In the year 18 Edw. I there was a long list of debts:

John, Prior of Lewes—

June 5: to Baroncinus Galterii, Brunettus, his son, Oppissus Malysardi, Donus de Podist, Aldebrand Oyschelle, merchants of Lucca, 4,200 m. to be levied, in default of payment, on his lands and chattels in the counties of Surrey and Sussex.²

This debt, too, was paid off and the bond cancelled, as was one for 130 marks made in February to Hugh de Vienna, clerk.³ After this, however, several were unpaid:

Dec. 2: to Bonaventurus Hugelin and his fellows, merchants of Siena, £30. 9. 7½.⁴

Nov. 30: to Barincinus Walteri 300 m.⁵

„ „ to Donus de Podio 600 m.⁶

and

Feb. 6: to Hubert Dogii and fellows, of the society of the Pulci and Rembertini of Florence, 40 m.⁷

In 1292 he was out of England, and intended to stay 'beyond seas' for two years, as we know from his appointing attorneys at the priory to act during his absence.⁸ This neglect of his house called forth a letter of protest from the Abbot of Cluny, who complained that the debt was not being cleared off quickly enough.⁹ After the end of John of Avignon's rule, strenuous efforts were made to reduce the debts he had incurred; but even in 1351 the priory still had a debt of 2,000 marks.¹⁰

However, the publicity of these financial difficulties did not exempt the priory from the royal exactions, to which, as an alien priory, it had only just become liable. Its possessions were assessed in 1291 for the Taxation of Pope Nicholas,¹¹ and in 1294 the priory

¹ Close Roll, 16 Edw. I, m. 9 d., p. 527.

² Ibid. 18 Edw. I, m. 9 d., p. 133.

³ Ibid., p. 149.

⁴ Ibid., p. 246.

⁵ Ibid. 18 Edw. I, m. 13 d., p. 245.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid. 18 Edw. I, m. 9 d., p. 255.

⁸ Pat. Roll, 20 Edw. I, m. 3, pp. 508, 509.

⁹ D. C. II. 249; *V.C.H. Sussex*, II. 66.

¹⁰ *V.C.H. Sussex*, II. 67; D. C. II. 267.

¹¹ Pub. by Record Commission, 1802.

paid the moiety which was then demanded on the same assessment.¹

In 1271 Henry III seems to have tried to force the priory to pay the 20th levied in that year, but they paid a fine of 20 marks and received acquittance.² Before this time the only taxes paid by the priory were danegeld³ and carucage,⁴ since the nature of their tenure exempted them from all else;⁵ and other aids paid seem to have had the character of a 'voluntary' gift. An example of this is the 50 marks paid in 1241 by Lewes *contra transfretacionem nostram* to Poitou.⁶

By about 1154 the priory of St. Pancras had six subordinate houses. The Warennes fulfilled their promise, and founded a cell of Lewes at Castle Acre in Norfolk in about 1090, and this remained the most important; it had considerable properties in Norfolk, and came to possess four daughter-houses of its own: of these the most important was Bromholme, which became famous and prosperous after 1223, when a piece of the True Cross was brought there from Constantinople.⁷ The next foundation in order of time was at Prittlewell in Essex: founded about 1106 by Robert Fitz-Sweyn and given to Lewes, it possessed only two manors and about a dozen churches, and always remained a small house.⁸ In about 1121 Stanesgate⁹ Priory was founded by Ralph FitzBrien and given later to Lewes. This, again, was a small house; it was dissolved in 1525 to provide for the endowment of Cardinal College, Oxford.¹⁰ After Castle Acre, the most important of the subordinate houses was Farleigh in Wiltshire which was started in 1125, after the gift of the manor to Lewes by Humphrey de Bohun.¹¹ As well as these, there were two very small cells, at Monks Horton in Kent and at Clifford in Hereford, and monks¹¹

¹ Pat. Roll, 22 Edw. I, m. 7, p. 91; 24 Edw. I, m. 21, p. 176.

² Ibid. 55 Hen. III, m. 12, p. 547.

³ *Pipe Roll*, 1130, pp. 70, 72; 6 Hen. II, p. 5; 22 Hen. II, p. 205.

⁴ Pat. Roll, 9 Hen. III, m. 2, p. 546; 1 m. 7, p. 506.

⁵ See charters *passim*.

⁶ Close Roll, 26 Hen. III, i, m. 3, p. 421; Pat. Roll, 26 Hen. III, m. 5, p. 282.

⁷ *M.C.* i. 327.

⁸ Ibid. i. 318.

⁹ Ibid. i. 327.

¹⁰ Ibid. i. 372.

¹¹ Ibid. i. 319.

from the priory seem also to have been planted out at the hospitals of St. Nicholas and St. James in Lewes, which belonged to the priory.¹

Except at Castle Acre, where there were about 35, the number of monks at all these houses between 1270 and 1280² was under 20. At Farleigh, in 1275, there were 18 monks and 2 lay brothers; the number at Prittlewell was 14 or 15, at Bromholme 16, and at Monks Horton 13 or 14. At the time of the dissolution the cells of Lewes, among houses of under £200 value dissolved in 1536, were Farleigh (which must have declined in importance), Monks Horton, Prittlewell, and Bromholme.³

The priory of Montacute, in Somerset, was founded about 1102, immediately subject to Cluny.⁴ An entry in the annals⁵ for the year 1250, implies that the writer of the annals was a member of the convent at Montacute at that time: 'd. Henreicus rex Anglie . . . fuit . . . apud Montem Acutem . . . et dedit nobis. . . .'⁶ It is this entry which has led to the uncertainty of many of the references to priors, as it is not clear to which priory they belong.

Lewes Priory seems to have maintained its right to appoint and control priors in its cells. Early in the thirteenth century there were one or two disputes, but the end of the century finds the prior in undisturbed possession of his functions. Rawlinson has preserved a charter of Prior Stephen, dated 1218,⁷ embodying an agreement with Henry, Earl of Hereford, concerning the election of the Prior of Farley. This election is to be on the same lines as the election of the Prior of Lewes; that is to say, both the earl and the priory, when a vacancy occurs, shall send representatives to Lewes to ask for a prior; the Prior of Lewes then is to nominate two, 'quos idoneos ad hoc esse crediderimus, de nostra domo de Lewes vel de Farleya vel de aliis

¹ Leland, *op. cit.* i. 86.

³ *M.C.* i. 372.

⁵ *MS. Cotton Tiberius, A. x.*

⁷ Rawlinson *MS. C. 168, f. 158.* This agreement is entered in the Cartulary (*Cott. MS. Vesp. F. xv*) in the section relating to Wiltshire (ff. 158-71), which is being printed by the Sussex Record Society.

² *D. V.* 14-19, 34-6.

⁴ *Ibid.* i. 307.

⁶ *S.A.C.* II. 25.

domibus Cluniacensibus'. From these the earl and his heir are to choose the one whom they consider the more suitable. After election, this prior is to show proper obedience to the Prior of Lewes and Abbot of Cluny; the Prior of Lewes retains the right to visit the priory of Farleigh, and can depose the prior, but only *ex justa et rationabili causa*; Farleigh shall pay $\frac{1}{2}$ mark yearly *pro omni exactione et consuetudine*, as has been previously agreed.

Between 1235 and 1242 the prior seems to have had some difficulty in upholding his powers. In 1235 he found it necessary to obtain a royal guarantee of his right, as an entry on the Close Roll declares him to have the right to appoint and remove priors, cellarers, and other obedientiaries of houses belonging to Lewes.¹ From 1239 to 1242 there was a great dispute carried on at Cluny between Castle Acre and Lewes concerning the election of the Prior of Bromholme. Bruel has recorded the appointments of procurators by Castle Acre in 1239,² and by Bromholme in 1240³ and (?) 1242,⁴ to represent them at the General Chapter in the course of this dispute. It was decided in favour of Castle Acre, for in c. 1300 its prior 'was accustomed' to fill up 'the vacant priorship'.⁵

After 1260 no further opposition to the right of the Prior of Lewes seems to have been offered. In 1260 he appointed to the priory of Prittlewell, apparently without question,⁶ in 1265 to Castle Acre,⁷ and again to Prittlewell in 1281 and 1290.⁸ In 1283 he deposed William of Shoreham from Castle Acre; the said William defended himself with military aid from the Earl of Warenne, but was forced to submit to the prior's judgement.⁹ Contrary to custom, the Prior of Lewes appointed the Prior of Crehk¹⁰ in 1282, since the Prior of Castle Acre, of which the house was a cell, was away at that time, 'ita quod nemo quo fuerit vel qua parte

¹ Close Roll, 19 Hen. III, m. 5 d., p. 193.

³ 4760.

⁴ 4783.

² 4747.

⁵ D. V. 25.

⁶ Close Roll, 44 Hen. III, m. 14, p. 43.

⁷ S.A.C. II. 29.

⁸ Pat. Rolls, 9 Edw. I, m. 19, p. 437; 18 Edw. I, m. 4, p. 391.

⁹ M.C. i. 351.

¹⁰ Creake in Norfolk.

se verteret de illo vera aliqua inferre valeret'.¹ In 1300 the Prior of Lewes exercised unopposed his right to depose unsuitable priors, when he visited Farleigh and removed the prior:

'priorem . . . per preceptum Dom. Abbatis et officio sue visitationis degradavit qui dictam domum in multimodis placitatis et aliis oppressuris reliquerat.'²

For conditions of life within the priory we are dependent upon the reports of visitations. Of these we have full accounts only from 1262 and later. No formal visitation was ever conducted by the abbot in person in England, and it is possible that the English houses were not visited regularly until after the custom of appointing delegates was established for the whole Order: The earliest record we have of any visitation at Lewes belongs to *c.* 1242, in which year the Priors of Wenlock and Lenton, in begging the abbot to excuse the absence because of illness of Prior Albert from the General Chapter, refer to their recent visitation of the house.³

Other visitations, of which the records have been published by Duckett, took place in 1262, 1275-6, 1279, 1298 [1390, 1405].⁴ Specific references to Lewes Priory are few; besides the descriptions of financial chaos, quoted above,⁵ we have only the report of John, Prior of Gassicourt, and Henry, Prior of Bermondsey, made in 1262,⁶ which showed that the house was in good order, with all religious observances being properly carried out.

General conditions in the English houses are described in visitations of other houses. The usual customs in houses may be inferred from the failings of Monks Horton, Farleigh, and Montacute in 1275-6. These were the dispensing with proper leggings when on horseback, the eating of flesh in the presence of seculars, the omission of reading during meals, and neglect of religious observance.⁷ There were very occasional instances of incontinence and immorality, as in the Prior

¹ *S.A.C.* II. 34.

² *Ibid.*, p. 37.

³ Bruel, 4780.

⁴ *D. V.* 10.

⁵ pp. 85-87.

⁶ *D. V.* 11

⁷ *D. V.* 16-19.

of Farleigh in 1279.¹ On the whole, the visitations show that the monks were leading good lives, conscientiously carrying out the rules and services of the Order, and carrying on, with varying success, the struggle against debt.² The Priory of Thetford in 1279 was heavily handicapped by the residence there 'of the professed brother of the Earl Marshal, who costs the house more than the whole religious community and the prior together'. The Priory of Lenton was faced with a costly lawsuit against 'rich and influential persons' in a dispute concerning its possessions in the Peak.³

The evidence from the later visitations emphasizes particularly the importance of religious ceremonial in the Cluniac houses.⁴ Thus, at Castle Acre seven masses are held daily, three of them sung, at Prittlewell four daily, three sung, at Farleigh six daily, three sung. Duckett publishes, without date, an order of John, Prior of Cluny, that the Priory of Longville is to be responsible for sending information of deaths to the English monasteries, so that prayers may be offered.⁵

The annals, which were being written from about 1250 to 1312,⁶ tell us very little of the internal life at the monastery. The most dramatic incident recorded is the miracle which took place in 1250 before the 'holy cross', when a certain 'infirmus quasi contractus de brachio et amobus genibus, sanabatur'.⁷ In the entries for the years 1245 and 1255 we have perhaps a clue as to the author; they speak of a certain P., who received priesthood in 1245 and who became a monk in 1255.⁸

The entry for 1297 mentions an official of the priory, of whom we should not otherwise know, in recording the death of Nicholas the *cirsarius*—probably for *cur-sarius*, the cursitor.⁹

We have certain evidence to show that the priory was regarded as a trustworthy guardian of property. Thus, among its own charters, there are occasionally charters making gifts to individuals; it is natural to

¹ D.V. 27-8.² Ibid. 14-19, 34-6.³ Ibid. 31.⁴ Ibid. 39-40.⁵ Ibid. 51.⁶ See the note on cover of MS.⁷ f. 169a. S.A.C. II. 25.⁸ S.A.C. II. 25.⁹ Ibid. 36.

suppose that these refer to lands subsequently granted to the priory before they came into its hands; but if this is so, no trace of the gift to the priory has survived. Thus, at folio 48v¹ of the cartulary, is entered the gift of Asshurst by William, son of Walter, to William de Waux; although Asshurst is mentioned among the boundaries in two Lewes charters,² the priory had no property inside it, and it seems clear that it was acting as trustee for this charter. In 1277 the house was definitely made responsible for the marriage portions of Godfrey de Waleys's four daughters; as the result of a dispute over the manor of Tarring, 'the Archbishop (of Canterbury) has given £80 to my four daughters to marry them, and the portions . . . will be placed in the house of St. Pancras, until, with the consent of their friends, they are provided for in marriage'.³

Although the school in Lewes was quite separate from the priory, there seems to have been some connection between the two. Thus, in 1248, Luke, *magister scholarum de Lewes*,⁴ was appointed procurator for the priory; and Pecham's reference to his upbringing at Lewes School, 'under the walls of the priory and under the teaching of its monks',⁵ suggests this connection again.

Both as an alien priory and as a priory very much dependent upon a noble family, the house at Lewes had little cause to play a part in public affairs. During the period when representatives of the clergy were being summoned to parliament, the Prior of Lewes was several times summoned during the later part of the thirteenth century. In 1295 it is clear that he was not.⁶ But the most frequent summonses came in the early years of the fourteenth century.⁷ After this, priors do not seem to have been summoned to parliament, except for those of the Hospital of St. John.⁶ There are very few references to the priory in the public records, apart

¹ *S.R.S.* xxxviii. 83. xvii/3.

² *Ibid.* 86, 87.

³ *Pat. Roll*, 5 Edw. I, m. 16, p. 205.

⁴ Bruel, 4986.

⁵ *Register of Archbishop Pecham* (Rolls Series), III. 903.

⁶ Prynne, *Parliamentary Writs*, passim.

⁷ Record Commission, *Parliamentary Writs* (ed. F. Palgrave), xxiv. 194-5.

from those concerning routine business, such as summonses to appear before the justices,¹ the remission or deferment of fines,² or the record of appointment of attorneys.³ In 1278⁴ and 1299⁵ thefts were made from the priory church—in 1299 ‘a gold chalice and paten worth 100s.’—and attempts to recover the goods were made in the King’s court. In 1295 at the seizure of the alien priories in England, the Prior of Lewes found ‘sufficient mainprize’ and proved that he ‘was not born of the power or lordship of the King of France’, and had his goods restored to him.⁶ In 1290 the Prior of Lewes took part, with the Abbot of Battle and others, in a complaint that the surveyors of banks and sea-dykes at Pevensey had not taken sufficient precautions against the inundations of the sea, so that their lands were in danger.⁷

There is some indication of visits of Henry III to Lewes. In 1217 he seems to have been there;⁸ in 1240 he was there from 23 to 25 July:⁹ it is possible that he stayed at the priory. We know that he was entertained there in 1264, from the annals and other sources. The royalists apparently spent a riotous night at the priory before the battle.¹⁰ After the battle, the priory again suffered by being set on fire by the victorious barons, although the damage seems not to have extended to the destruction of the actual buildings.¹¹ The annals give quite a full account of the Battle of Lewes.¹²

The annalist of the priory himself took an interest in affairs in his own locality. Thus he records the visits of itinerant justices to Lewes and Chichester;¹³ for the year 1243 he records the consecration of ‘b. Ricardus’

¹ Close Roll, 14 Hen. III, m. 23 d.; Pat. Roll, 6 Edw. I, m. 12, p. 268.

² Close Roll, 21 Hen. III, m. 17, p. 411; 41 Hen. III, m. 13, p. 173.

³ Pat. Roll, 54 Hen. III, m. 2, p. 466, 467; Close Roll, 3 Edw. I, m. 3 d., p. 252.

⁴ Pat. Roll, 6 Edw. I, m. 13, p. 267.

⁵ Ibid., 27 Edw. I, m. 31 d., p. 465.

⁶ Close Roll, 23 Edw. I, m. 4 d., p. 460.

⁷ Pat. Roll, 18 Edw. I, m. 16 d., p. 404.

⁸ Ibid., 1 Hen. III, m. 11, p. 54.

⁹ Close Roll, 24 Hen. III, m. 11, pp. 208–9.

¹⁰ Blaaw, *The Barons' War*, 165–6.

¹¹ Ibid., 208.

¹² *S.A.C.* II, 27–8.

¹³ Ibid. 25, 26, 27. *Annis* 1248, 1255, 1260, 1262, 1271.

as Bishop of Chichester 'contra voluntatem R. Henrici',¹ his acceptance in 1245, his death in 1253, and the translation of his body in 1276.¹ There are other references to the Bishops of Chichester in 1262,² 1266, and 1273;³ and to the succession of Edward I in 1272;⁴ Edward visited the priory in 1281.⁵

Reports of the attack upon the Jews in England *propter retonsiorem moneti*, and even upon many Christians, reached the annalist in 1279; he also records the issue of new money, of which many 'imitations' were in circulation.⁵

The event perhaps of greatest interest to the annalist was the promotion of John Pecham, who had known the priory in his youth, as Archbishop of Canterbury.⁶ In 1282 the archbishop paid a ceremonial visit to the priory, for which he put on his full pontifical robes *ut conventui sue dilectionis affectum ostenderet*, and, after a grand procession of the many prelates in his train, preached in the priory church before the people; after the service he went into the refectory, 'ubi cum conventu comedit ut sui amoris desiderium versus eundem conventum apertius et clarius demonstraret'.⁷

The Cluniac Order enjoyed exemption from episcopal jurisdiction and the favour of the Pope; thus, in 1283, the Pope issued a general bull recommending the Order to the king.⁸ But, on the other hand, Cluny's obligations to Rome were increased, and the houses in England did not escape the encroachment of papal provisions. Thus, in 1263, the prior and convent were ordered 'to make provision of some benefice usually assigned to secular clerks' to Simon of Rygate.⁹ In 1309 the Bishop of Chichester, Abbot of Westminster, and Dean of St. Martins le Grand were granted a mandate to appoint 'a fit person nominated by Queen Isabelle', to a benefice in the gift of Lewes.¹⁰ Many more instances of this papal interference occur during the fourteenth

¹ Ibid. 24.

² Ibid. 27.

³ Ibid. 29.

⁴ S.A.C. II. 30.

⁵ Ibid. 32.

⁶ 1278, 1279. S.A.C. II. 32.

⁷ Ibid. 33.

⁸ Rymer, *Foedera* (1745), II. 217.

⁹ *Cal. of Papal Letters*, 1263, 7 Kal. June.

¹⁰ Ibid. 1309, 6 Kal. June.

century, when the practice of 'provision' was at its height.¹ On the other hand, the priory was not free from royal interference, since in 1303 the king gained permission from the Abbot of Cluny for the appointment of his chaplain, Arnald de Pinoliis, as prior of a Cluniac house in England, and consequently demanded that he should be given Castle Acre (to which the Prior of Clifford had already been promoted) or, at any rate, Clifford Priory.²

It is therefore clear that the priory took an interest in public events chiefly as an onlooker. Its chief concern was with internal development and with the management of its estates and patronage. A study of its lands and the charters relating to them is therefore of the greatest interest in the history of the priory and of the period.

¹ *Cal. of Papal Letters, passim.*

² Close Roll, 1303, m. 18, p. 6.