

Chapter 3. Historical Background

3.1 Brief Historical Background of Easton Royal, Wiltshire.

This report and investigation is concerned primarily with events in the Medieval period, namely the founding of the Trinitarian Priory; however a second strand involves the development of the village and the impact the Priory played.

The Historic Environment Record (HER) has 55 entries (including 2 Post Medieval entries) for the parish of Easton Royal, Wiltshire. There are no entries for the early prehistoric (Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic), 16 sites and find spots for the Bronze Age (2500-800BC), 13 attributed to the Iron Age (800BC–43AD), 6 Romano-British (43-410AD) entries (a relative paucity of finds), a single Early Medieval (AD 410-1066, previously referred to as the Anglo-Saxon) find spot, 9 Later Medieval and Tudor (AD1066-c1600) records; and 8 undated sites and finds.

The relatively high percentages of Bronze Age and Iron Age sites and find spots (30% and 24%) compared with the low numbers of Romano-British (11%) is surprising. Also surprising is the spread of finds (see the maps, figs 16 - 22), early period sites and find spots are almost entirely confined to the higher ground on the chalk, south of the present village, whilst the majority of Later Medieval activity takes place in and around the village in the valley.

The evidence points toward Bronze Age, Iron Age and Romano- British settlement activity around Easton Clump (a north facing slope), why does there appear to be so little activity off the chalk in the valley? Very little modern archaeological investigation has taken place, although a large number of entries were the result of Fieldwalking by the amateur archaeologist Owen Meyrick in the first half of the twentieth century. A watching brief was undertaken when the Esso pipeline was installed (Smith 1986) which added a number of entries to the record.

There is little Early Medieval evidence of activity in the area; this is not unusual as evidence is often ephemeral. During the Medieval period settlement activity moved north into the valley.

The Bronze Age is marked by a barrow cemetery close to Easton Clump. Iron Age settlement is marked by enclosure banks and ditches, linear banks and ditches, field systems, pits and middens. There is relatively little Romano-British activity which is unusual especially given the nearby Roman Road and the villa sites and pottery kilns within a few miles of Easton Royal.

Figure 16. Bronze Age (2500-800 BC) Sites and Find Spots

Eastings and Northings are prefixed with SU

Eastings	Northings	Site/ Find	Description	HER no. Monument no
2108	5927	Disc Barrow	68' dia x 3' high, berm 51' wide Bank 12' x 1' high Ditch 12' wide x 1' deep Almost unique having an external ditch	SU25NW600 MWI 18231
2161	5821	Bowl Barrow	30m dia x 0.6m high Plough damaged	SU25NW603 MWI 18234

Eastings	Northing	Site/ Find	Description	HER no. Monument no
2160	5818	Bowl Barrow	Poorly defined 16m dia x 0.3m high Plough damaged	SU25NW602 MWI 18233
208	580	Pottery	Beaker sherds LBA sherds	SU25NW150 MWI 17898
2098	5775	Bowl Barrow	15m dia x 0.5m high	SU25NW606 MWI 18237
2148	5803	Bowl Barrow	15m dia. X 0.2m high	SU25NW601 MWI 18232
206	583	Pottery	MBA and LBA sherds	SU25NW48 867486
2130	5779	Pottery	Beaker and BA pottery fragments	SU25NW151 MWI17899
2136	5803	Ring Ditch	36m x 36m	SU25NW666 MWI18287
2153	5808	Ring Ditch	23m x 23m	SU25NW676 MWI18295
2155	5811	Ring Ditch	22m x 22m	SU25NW677 MWI 18296
2161	5825	Ring Ditch	27m x 27m	SU25NW678 MWI 18297
2170	5814	Ring Ditch	19m x 7m	SUNW679 MWI 18298
2168	5812	Ring Ditch	26m x 26m	SU25NW680 MWI 18299
2059	5930	Ring Ditch	19m x 19m	SU25NW684 MWI 18303
2045	5873	Ring Ditch	26m x 26m	SU25NW685 MWI 19056
2193	6059	Ring Ditch	21m x 21m	SU26NW629 MWI 19056

Removed from HER

Figure 17. Iron Age (800BC-43AD) Sites and Find Spots

Eastings and Northings are prefixed with SU

Eastings	Northing	Site/ Find	Description	HER no. Monument no.
206	582	Pottery	‘C’ sherds	SU25NW203 MWI 18231
2121	5933	Bank + Ditch Pottery	Bank and ditch 20m long x 1m high (bank) x 1m deep (ditch), possible enclosure ‘A’ sherds	SU25NW623 MWI 18252
2088	6093	Coin	Dubonic gold stater	SU26SW202 MWI 18994

Easting	Northing	Site/ Find	Description	HER no. Monument no.
2080	5909	Pot sherd	Iron Age	SU25NW200 MWI 17902
2121	5937	Pot sherds + animal bones	Iron Age	SU25NW207 MWI 17903
2092	5902	Settlement	Settlement site 246m x 457m, midden, pot sherds	SU25NW207 MWI 18193
2162	5913	Pits	Settlement site, pits, pot sherds	SU25NW209 MWI 18195
2157	5915	Linear ditch	Linear ditch, pottery and pits	SU25NW210 MWI 18196
2159	5917	Settlement	Rectangular feature, 9 sherds, animal bone, flint, stone	SU25NW211 MWI 18197
2158	5917	Pits	Pits containing flint, pottery, stone and animal bone	SU25NW212 MWI18198
2155	5923	Pottery	30 sherds	SU25NW213 MWI 18199
2010	5940	Knife, coin	Bronze pommel from a knife, Dobunni coin	SU25NW9214 MWI 18200
2157	5954	Linear feature	Linear feature SW-NE, IA/R-B pottery, fe and charcoal	SU25NW673 MWI 18292

Figure 18. Romano-British (AD43 -410) Sites and Find Spots

Eastings and Northings prefixed by SU

Easting	Northing	Site/ Find	Description	HER no. Monument no
2116	5861	Pottery	Pottery sherds	SU25NW301 MWI 18202
2010	5940	Pottery Coin Brooches	7 sherds pottery, Republican silver denarius, Marcia 28, 2 brooches	SU25NW314 MW18215
213	579	Pottery	Pottery sherds	SU25NW304 MWI 18205
20617	58301	Pottery	Sherds of Savernake ware, New Forrest and Local wares	SU25NW50 867488
SW Easton Clump		Pottery	Pottery sherds on a possible settlement site	SU25NW310
2080	5799	Pot sherds	R-B	SU25NW300 MWI18201
2079	6050	Coin	Coin of Vespasian	SU26SW300 MWI 18996

Removed from HER

Figure 19. Early Medieval (AD410-1066) Sites and Find Spots

Eastings and Northings prefixed by SU

Eastings	Northings	Site/Find	Description	HER no. Monument no.
211	591	Fe nails, bone comb, fe knife	Burial in wooden coffin with iron nails, double sided bone comb and iron knife with wooden handle	SU25NW38 224333

Figure 20. Later Medieval (AD1066-c1500) Sites and Find Spots

Eastings and Northings are prefixed with SU

Easting	Northing	Site/Find	Description	HER no. Monument no
2075	6040	Priory	1245 hostel with 3 priests 1251 became a Trinitarian Priory 1493 destroyed by fire 1536 dissolved	SU26SW459 MWI 19012
2083	6043	Village	Village known as Estowe, AD1086 Earthworks	SU26SW454 MWI 9007
2023	5956	Strip lynchets	470m x 266m probably Medieval	SU25NW631 MWI 18259
2084	5921	Field system	1154m x 1052m	SU25NW632 MWI 18260
2160	5791	Field system	1985m x 1814m	SU25NW637 MWI 18264
2201	6276	Field system	347m x 353m	SU26SW621 MWI19048
2130	6013	Strip lynchets	545m x 356m probably Medieval	SU26SW624 MWI 19051
2186	6058	Circular earthwork	35m x 35m possibly moated site	SU26SW637 MWI 19064
2211	6066	Field system	472m x 310m	SU26SW622 MWI 19049
Cemeter y Field		Tile	Tile	Devizes museum

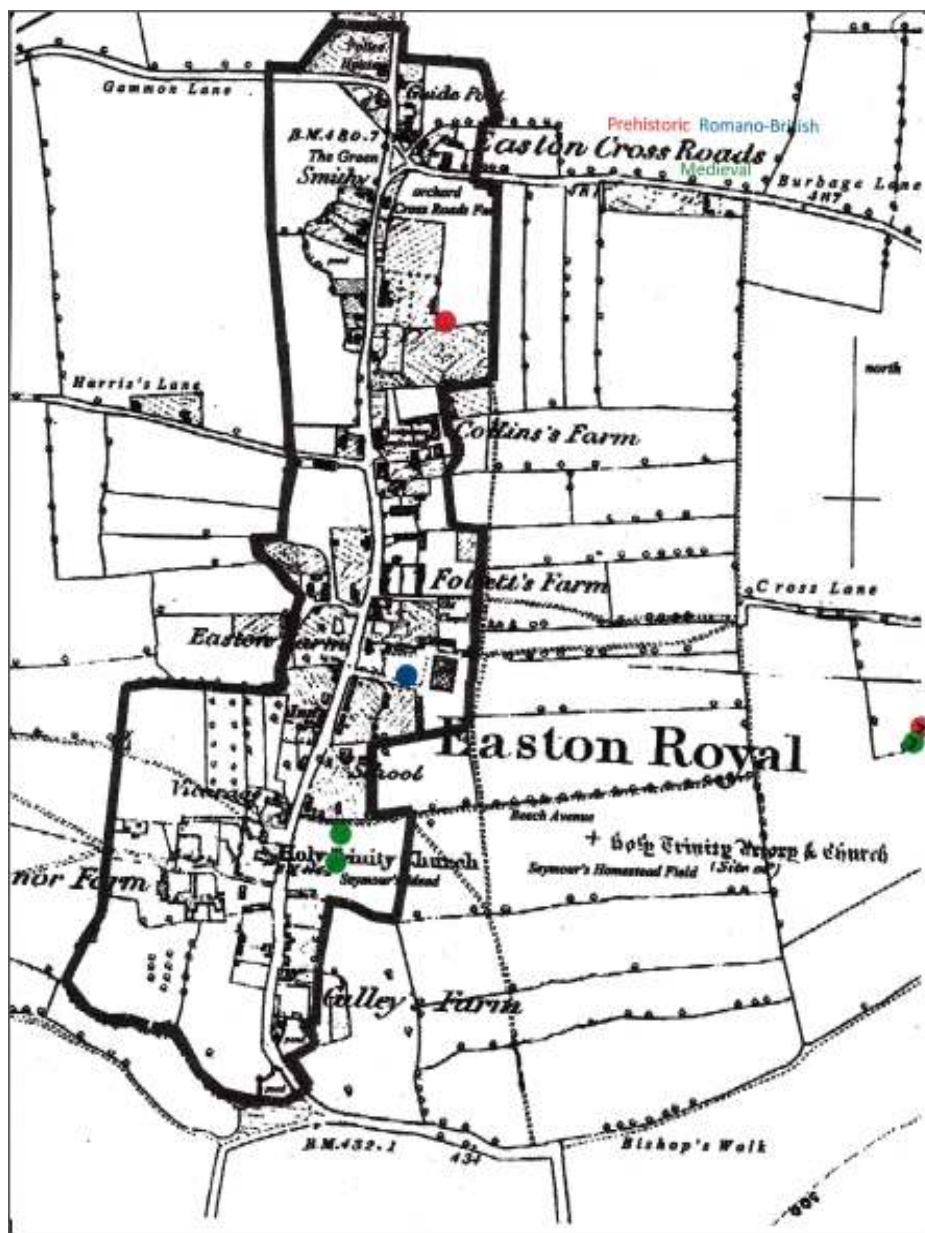
Figure 21. Undated Sites and Find Spots

Eastings and Northings are prefixed with SU

Easting	Northing	Site/Find	Description	HER no. Monument no.
2155	5923	Fe., stone, animal bone, horse shoe	2 flints, 5 fragments foreign stone, 2 fragments animal bone and a horse shoe	SU25NW550 MWI 18229
2163	5940	Bank and ditch	509m x 504m	SU25NW624 MWI 18253

Easting	Northing	Site/Find	Description	HER no. Monument no.
2015	5940	Enclosure	267m x 189m	SU25NW643 MWI 18269
2127	5984			

Figure 22. Map showing Finds Spots from HER.



Bibliography

Smith, R. and Cox, P. 1986. The Past in the Pipeline. Archaeology of the Esso Midline. Wessex Archaeology. W94. 125 (AAA930).

3.2 Historical Background of the Priory and Site

3.2.1 Introduction

The following account of the history of Easton Priory derives from work undertaken in 2013/2015 as part of a Heritage Lottery Project. Although focused on an examination of over 70 original manuscripts, dating from the late 12th to 18th century, this initial section, based partly on secondary sources, provides the initial context for this study.

Easton Priory Hospital, built in c1234 and formally founded in 1246, became one of ten sites of the Trinitarian Order in England. The first had been founded at Mottenden in Kent in 1224. Most secondary sources concerning the Trinitarians are French or continental. A history of the order generally is given in Deslandres (1903). No comprehensive history of their activity in England has been undertaken, although summaries are given in Gray (1993) and Pestell (1977). Information specifically on Easton is given in Chettle (1947), Bashford (1955; 1977), Pugh and Crittall (1956) and Crowley (1999).

The ‘Order of the Most Holy Trinity for the Redemption of Captives’ was founded by John of Matha (1154-1213) and approved by Innocent III on December 17, 1198. It was dedicated to the release and repatriation of Christian captives in pagan lands, by raising ransoms, and arose after the third Crusade and at a time of major advances of Muslim influence in Spain and western Christendom. The first house was at Cerfroid near Paris, which became the mother church (Gray, 1993). It was always a small order. By c1225 there they had 50 religious houses in Europe. Louis IX took Trinitarians with him on crusades and favoured the order. Ransoming grew from concerns of military orders of knights, who were professed monks fighting for God, focused on Jerusalem. The main ones in Britain were the Knights Templar and Knights Hospitaller. Whilst initially escorting pilgrims, they later were dedicated to the defeat of the enemies of Christendom.

In the case of the Trinitarians, the wider charitable dimension of the order grew, and under rules of 1217 and 1267, they were permitted to accept endowments from founders who opposed using funds for the release of captives. Indeed, Jerusalem itself was lost in 1244, two years before Easton Priory had been formally founded. The last Christian stronghold in the Holy Land was lost in 1291, signalling the collapse of the crusades and the closing down of the Knights Templar, who had held 70 preceptories (bases for military monastic orders) in England and Wales (Gilchrist, 1995). Thereafter there were no coherent efforts to recover land, and the Trinitarian Order focused its efforts on recovering captives taken by Muslims in Spain and North Africa (Pestell, 1977). The order used a blue and red cross, with the red vertical bar in front. This is similar to the Augustinian Canons of the Holy Sepulchre, who supplied knights to guard the sepulchre, with a red cross for canons and a blue cross for lay brothers.



Figure 23. Map of Great Britain and Ireland showing the locations of Trinitarian Priors.



The Trinitarian Houses of England (after Pestell, 1997 and Gray, 1993) with the location of the extant above-ground remains of the priory in Adare, Ireland.

Most remains of Trinitarian priories have been lost or destroyed. Hence Easton might be particularly important (if still surviving underground) in terms of understanding the architecture used by the Order. A summary of the sites is given below (after Gray, 1993).

Easton	Possibly intact below ground
Knaresborough	Possibly intact below ground
Thelsford	Partially destroyed
Moatenden	Partially destroyed
Ingham	Partially destroyed
Hounslow	Built over
Oxford	Built over
Totnes	Built over
Hertford	Destroyed
Newcastle upon Tyne	Destroyed

Of the English examples, Ingham in Norfolk, has surviving parts of the cloisters, church and tower, and was visited as part of this project.

Figure 24. Holy Trinity Church, Ingham, part of the Trinitarian Priory founded in 1360



Figure 25. Remains of the cloisters of the Trinitarian Priory at Ingham



Figure 26. The peculiar ‘tower beside the tower’ and a blocked priory doorway at Ingham



The Trinitarian Order divided their property into three equal parts, the first for the redemption of Christian prisoners in pagan hands, the second for hospitality, the third for building their churches and houses and the sustenance of the brethren (WSA 9-15-37). The provision of hospitality was seen as an act of religious charity. The purpose of the priory hospital at Easton was directed primarily at providing accommodation to travellers, rather than tending to the sick, although doubtless sick travellers might visit.

3.2.2 The Concept of Monastic Hospitality

The religious basis for providing monastic hospitality is given in Matthew 25, in which Jesus proclaims that those who care for the needy care also for him: ‘For I was hungry and you gave me food, thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me’. The motivation was not wholly altruistic, as Matthew 25, verses 34-41, make it clear that those who acted charitably were sent to heaven, and those who failed were cursed and thrown into the eternal fire, when Christ separates the blessed from the damned on the dreadful Day of Judgement. Christ would judge people, not only from their own piety, but by their actions towards the poor and weak (Gilchrist, 1995). Charity could hence relieve the burden of sin. This cornerstone of administering hospitality was repeated frequently in 12th and 13th century documents, for example in chapter 53 of the Rule of St Benedict (Kerr, 2007). The celebration of Christ in poor people is similarly seen in the reception of guests and bestowing of alms on Maundy Thursday. Hence the poor were not just seen as worthy of charity, but divine in their own right, as God’s agent on earth. Hospitality was also motivated by worldly, as well as religious

concerns, since its administration could also generate commendation, with the potential for gifts, royal patronage and further charitable endowments.

There were about 800 hospitals in England and Wales at the dissolution, with perhaps 300 more having fallen out of use (Gilchrist, 1995). These included leper colonies, almshouses, hospices for travellers and (in only 8% of cases) places for attending the sick. At hospitals in general illnesses would be addressed largely by religious rather than medical attention, partly because of very limited medical facilities or understanding, but largely because of the widely perceived links between spiritual and physical diseases, and links with sin and, in the case of leprosy, with sexual deviancy. The great majority of hospitals were founded between 1100 and 1250, with 220 founded in England in the 12th century, and 310 in the 13th (Gilchrist, 1995).

Although everyone was ‘welcomed as Christ’, the manner of bestowing hospitality varied both within and between religious orders. We have no means of knowing how guests on the road at Easton might have been received. In Benedictine monasteries travellers would have been greeted at the gate, with thanks offered to God for their delivery, their arrival announced, and they may have had their feet washed in a brief ceremony. They might be taken to the church where the visitor could pray for sins committed, enquiries made concerning refreshment (and the needs of servants and horses), and given a holy reading before being shown to the dormitory and ablution facilities (Kerr, 2007).

An issue of concern to monastic hospitals was how to administer hospitality without such charity becoming exploited, or a burden draining all resources and undermining the wider religious objectives. A strict division of resources three ways (release of captives; hospitality; building and sustenance) should have prevented one object impacting on others. However, it is clear that in 1392 the number of travellers were contributing to the priory *itself* becoming poor so that they could not maintain their seven brethren (WSA 9-15-48). The documents do not reveal whether people were permitted to stay as long as necessary, were urged to move on, or perhaps refused access depending on circumstances.

3.2.3 Who were the travellers?

It is clear from the documentation that the visitors were envisaged as ‘poor travellers’ from the beginning. Prior to construction, sometime between 1229 and 1334 the hospital was described as ‘[yet] to be built by God’s authority in Easton for the purpose of supporting poor travellers’ (WSA 9-15-9; Kemp, 2010, no.29). The economic status of travellers is rarely mentioned thereafter. At the end of the 14th century however there was a multitude of both rich and poor travellers (WSA 9-15-48). The act of providing for poor travellers was in addition to other charitable acts, such as distributing one penny and a half pence loaf to the poor on Maundy Thursday, and washing the feet of the poor (WSA 1300-30). However it is possible that some travellers were given simple sustenance, rather than overnight accommodation.

People were highly mobile in 13th century England, and could move freely over long distances, albeit with certain risks concerning both their security, and the absence of legal support deriving from the sworn surety of people in a community (‘frankpledge’). People might travel in association with their employment as pedlars, tinkers, or entertainers, could look for seasonal work or might survive from alms (Farr, Elrington and Summerson, 2012). Beyond institutions, local people would have been reluctant to accommodate vagrants, whose motives for travel were regarded as highly suspect. Those offering help also ran the risk of being accused of harbouring strangers (ibid.). With the Black Death

in the 14th century and its concomitant poverty, homelessness, and loss of social structure, the number of travellers visiting Easton Hospital might have changed, potentially coupled with a suspicion that, despite an ignorance of pathology, such inter-mixing of travellers could pose some kind of threat.

The Roman Road, or nearby routes along its course, would have facilitated travel from Cunetio near Marlborough to Sarum but from the documentation it is not possible to discern the purpose or destination of travellers. It is also unclear whether some travellers could have been accompanied by carts and horses, oxen or donkeys, or been on horseback, nor what provision there might be to stable and feed animals. It is unknown whether women travellers, alone or accompanied, were accommodated, or whether there were different classes of entertainment depending on the nobility, rank and dignity of visitors at Easton (although that certainly happened elsewhere). It is of course possible that some travellers were visiting shrines or on other pilgrimages. The priory itself was described as holding [unspecified] reliquaries, which could have generated deliberate visits (WSA 9-15-54). Pilgrimage to and within Britain had increased generally from the 12th century, especially following the martyrdom of Thomas Becket at Canterbury (Clay, 1966). It is possible that some people travelling were linked to fighting heathens in the holy lands, or were lame or injured soldiers who had returned. However the documentation does not suggest that pilgrimage was a principle driver for founding the hospital, or explains its location in Easton. All indications are that hospitality was offered as a simple act of charity to ordinary travellers.

3.2.4 Links between Trinitarian Institutions

There were clearly movements of brethren amongst the different priories. At Hertford, a leper hospice of St Mary Magdalene, was taken over by the Trinitarians in 1261 as a hospital for the poor, and was under the control of Easton (Pestell, 1977). In 1287 the prior of Easton was also the prior of Hertford, reflecting a growing practice of ministers serving more than one institution. In 1364, when a dispute arose concerning the absence of Brother Edmund, the prior of Easton, it was he who wrote to the Easton brethren from St Mary Magdalene in Hertford. Hertford was under the direction of Easton until 1448, and after that mentioned with Mottenden (Gray, 1993; Pestell, 1997).

The evidence suggests that he was serving the order there, where he might have been transferred, and could have held ministries in other priories (WSA 9-15-39). From the names of the first minister and sacrist of Ingham Priory in 1360, Richard de Marleburgh and John de Pevesey (= Pewsey), it seems that these were Wiltshire men, probably linked to Easton Priory. A John de Pewsey, friar of Easton, received an indult (licence) to choose a confessor in 1358 (Pestell, 1977). From 1427-37 John Newington, a brother from Easton, served the chapel of the Holy Ghost at Warland, Totnes (Chettle, 1947).

3.2.5 The Family of Stephen, Founder of Easton Priory

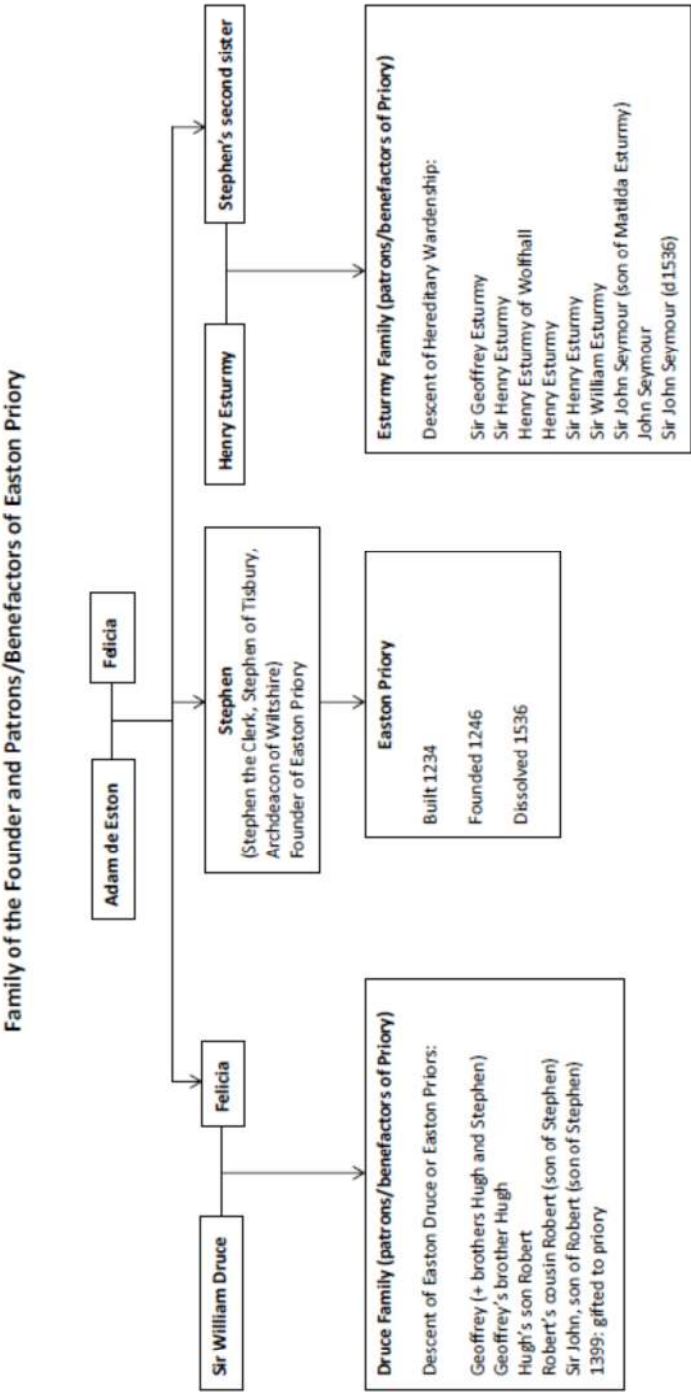
Central to an understanding of Easton Priory is the relationship between its founder, patrons and principal benefactors. Indeed, the priory is essentially centred on a single family from its construction in c1234, through its demise in 1536, and thereafter also until complete demolition in c1763. The founder was the son of Adam of Easton. He was a prominent local figure, sufficiently linked with Easton to be identified by that name. Adam was almost certainly Lord of the Manor, he held land in Easton, some of which was leased from the Priory of Bradenstoke (WSA 9-15-1) (and was confirmed

by the Marshall family who had originally gifted it to Bradenstoke), and some acquired in a transfer with the Bishop of Hereford. Adam apparently concluded the deal with the cathedral at Hereford itself (where it was witnessed by the Dean and Archdeacon there). From the money involved, the land may have been substantial (WSA 9-15-4).

Adam married Felicia (WRSO 1300/30), and they had one son and two daughters. The son was Stephen, who in later life founded the priory. He was vicar of Easton parish church and sometimes called Stephen the Clerk. Because he later became priest and parson of Tisbury, was usually known as Stephen of Tisbury. He also became Archdeacon of Wiltshire. He had sufficient standing with the Crown to obtain special licence to carry timber through Chute royal hunting forest.

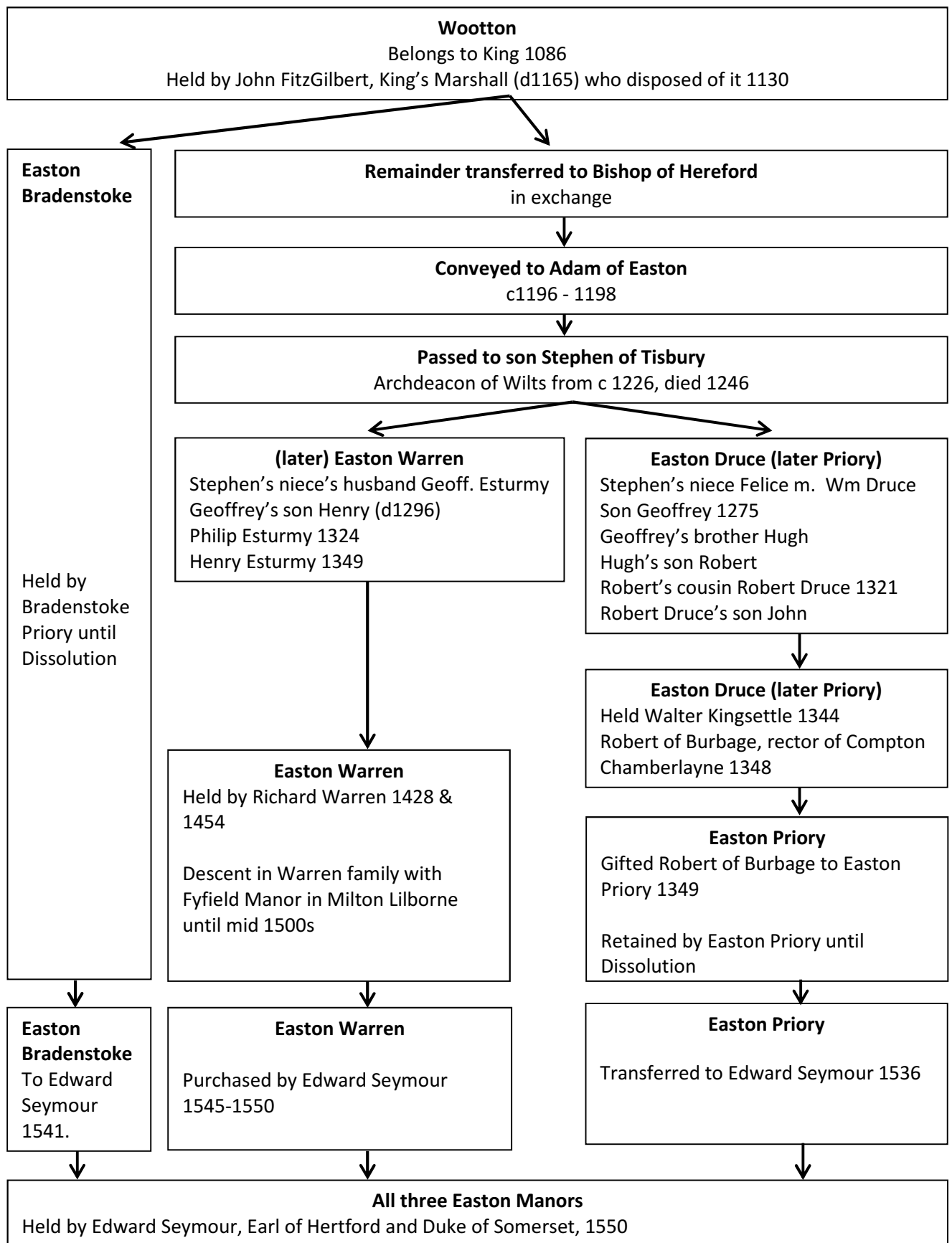
Stephen's two sisters both married prominent local men. One sister, also named Felice or Felicia, married Sir William Druce. On the death of Stephen she inherited part of the estate, and this became the manor of Easton Druce or Easton Priors. Successive generations of the Druce family gifted lands and property to the Priory, and endowed chantries in the parish and priory church, until about 1344 (Crowley, 1999; Brudenell-Bruce, 1949). Stephen's other sister (name uncertain) married Henry Esturmy (or Sturmy), hereditary warden of the royal forest of Savernake. Their son Geoffrey Esturmy inherited the other part of Stephen's estate and this became the manor of Easton Warren. The Esturmy family became principal patrons of the Priory and used it as their place of burial (Crowley, 1999; Brudenell-Bruce, 1949).

Figure 27. The relationships between Stephen as founder, and the patrons and benefactors, and the descent of the Easton Manors, are given below.



From multiple sources, especially WSA 9-15-243 and 1300-6574, Crowley 1999, Brudenell-Bruce 1949

Figure 28. Descent of Easton Manors 1086 – 1550

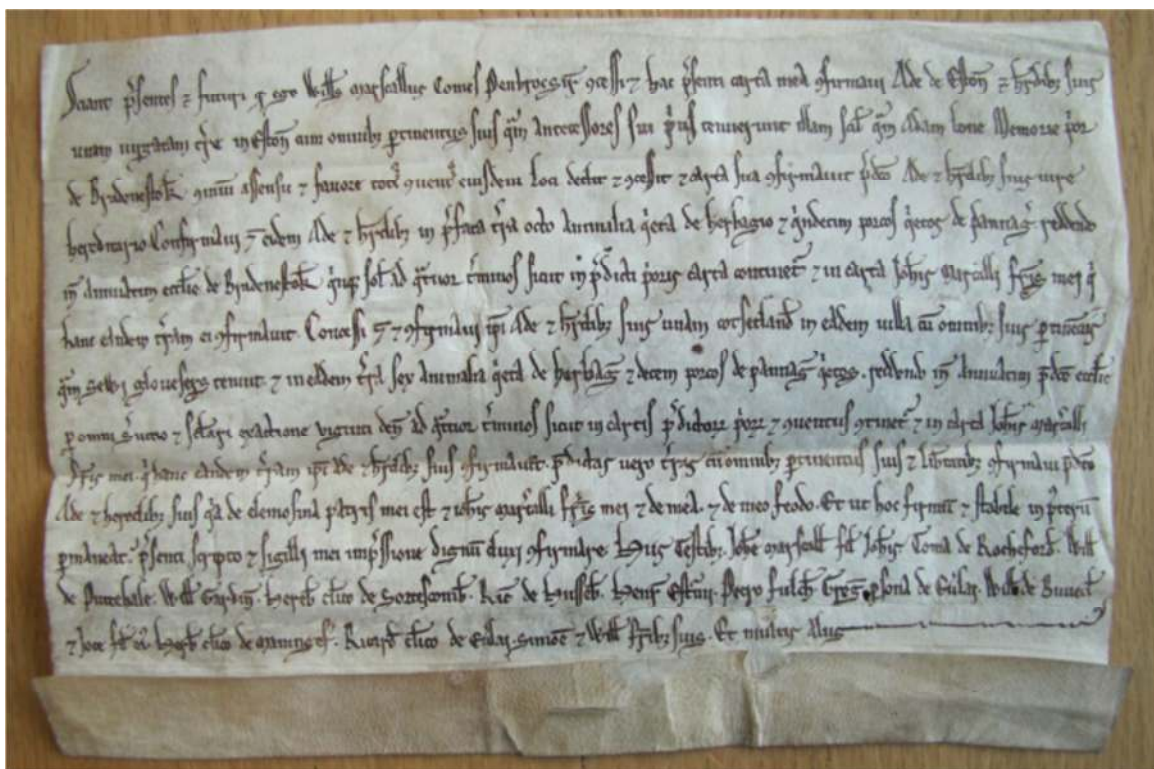


3.2.6 Easton before the Priory

It seems virtually certain that Easton was once a part of a much larger estate, and had close connections with religious institutions long before the priory was established. The very name of Easton (meaning eastern settlement), lying close to Middleton – now Milton Lilbourne (or middle settlement), shows that there must have been a western settlement somewhere in the vicinity of Pewsey. These may have jointly formed the large estate of Wootton, which belonged to the king at the time of Domesday, and of which the current parish of Wootton Rivers may be just one part. One of the two churches in Wootton, possibly the one at Easton, belonged to the Abbey of Mont St Michel (Manche) (Crowley, 1999).

In the 1100s Easton was held by the Marshall of England, often called John Marshall (or John FitzGilbert), a nobleman and warrior who was active in the wars between Stephen and Matilda. He held Marlborough and Ludgershall castles in Wiltshire, and Newbury Castle at Hamstead Marshall. Part of John Marshall's Easton estate was given as a charitable gift to Bradenstoke Priory. The Prior of Bradenstoke, with the consent of the whole convent, in turn leased some of this land to Adam of Easton (WSA 9-15-1, with notes in 9-15-243 and 1300-6574). This comprised one virgate (about 30 acres), with common rights, free of payment, for 8 beasts (cattle or horses) and 10 pigs, together with a small plot or cottage ground (called a 'cotsetland') which had formerly been held by Sewi Glovesers. Adam of Easton had to pay 5 shillings per year for the 30 acres, and 20 pence for the cottage ground. Because the land had initially been given as a charitable gift, the lease to Adam was confirmed by William Marshall in about 1190, and was witnessed by Henry Esturmy (hereditary warden of Savernake).

Figure 29. The document of about 1190 AD, through which William Marshall, Earl of Pembroke, confirmed the transfer of land in Easton from Bradenstoke Priory to Adam of Easton WSA 9-15-1.



Further significant land that had been held by John Marshal was passed to his sons, and later transferred to Hereford Cathedral. This land was also leased to Adam of Easton and his successors by hereditary right (WSA 9-15-2). The land may have been substantial, since it generated payments of £10 in silver per year (forty times the sum payable to Bradenstoke for 30 acres). Adam apparently offered his homage (public acknowledgement of allegiance to the cathedral) at Hereford itself. Witnesses to the transfer included the Dean and Archdeacon of Hereford, Archdeacon of Oxford and other clerics, and more local men including John de Wick and Everard of Everleigh. After the death of the Bishop (William de Ver), the grant was re-issued by his successor, Bishop Giles, who confirmed that the land was held by hereditary right (WSA 9-15-4), and hence it was available to be inherited by his son Stephen, founder of Easton Priory.

Figure 30. The transfer of land Hereford Cathedral to Adam of Easton, 1197 or 1198. It bears the seals of both the Bishop and the Chapter of Hereford. WSA 9-15-2.

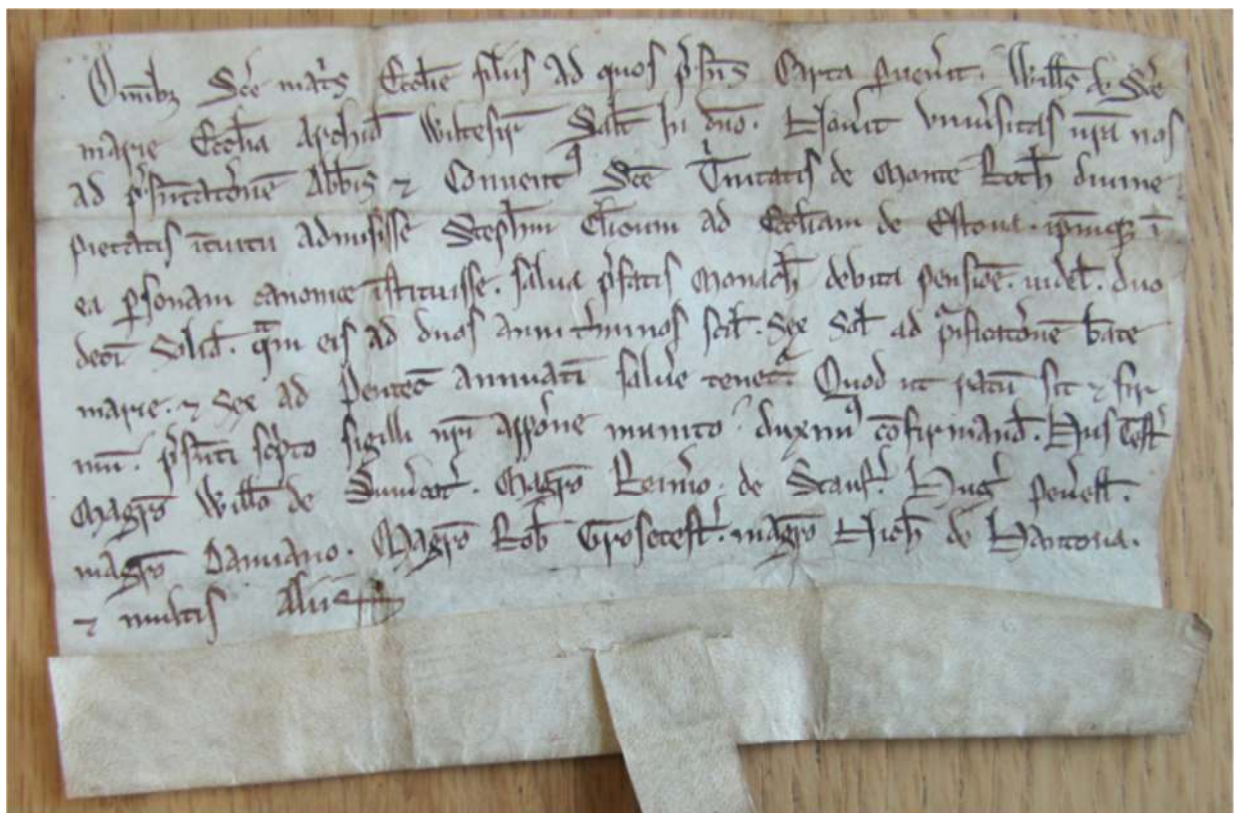


Adam of Easton acquired further land, including a virgate and a half (about 45 acres) in 'Middletuna' (Milton Lilbourne) (WSA 9-15-3) for 4 shillings per year, by hereditary right. In summary therefore,

at the end of the 12th century Adam of Easton was a prominent local person. He was sufficiently linked to Easton to be known by that name. He had been able to negotiate the acquisition of land, including from Hereford Cathedral and the Priory of Bradenstoke, and had travelled to Hereford. As lord of the manor he would have had a substantial house in Easton, and this and his land could be inherited by his son Stephen.

A further religious institution with an interest in Easton was the Abbey of the Holy Trinity of Mount St Catherine's in Rouen (La Trinité du Mont Sainte-Catherine). The abbey had been founded in about 1030. William the Conqueror granted land to the abbey, which became richly endowed. In the early 1200s the Abbey held the parish church of Easton (the location of the church at that time is unclear). The church would have generated a certain income from tithes, part of which was returned to the mother abbey. The Abbey had the right to nominate a religious cleric to serve the church as vicar or rector. In about 1210, the Abbot of Mount St Catherine's presented a cleric to the living of Easton Church, and he was duly admitted by the Archdeacon of Wiltshire (WSA 9-15-5). Two payments of six shillings were to be forwarded to the Abbey from Easton parish church per year, at the Purification and at Pentecost. The vicar nominated and accepted by the Archdeacon was Stephen the Clerk, son and heir of the lord of the manor (Adam of Easton), later known as Stephen of Tisbury, Archdeacon of Wiltshire, and founder of Easton Priory.

Figure 31. The admission of Stephen the Clerk to the church of Easton in c1210. Stephen would become Archdeacon of Wiltshire and founder of Easton Priory. (WSA 9-15-5).



The entitlement of the Abbey of Mount St Catherine's to nominate the vicar was challenged. In about 1219, William Marshall, Earl of Pembroke claimed that his father had held the church, and had given

it to Bradenstoke Abbey (WSA 19-15-6). The dispute arose at a time of turbulence associated with King John's reign, and the French occupation of certain lands, including Marlborough Castle.

Figure 32. The seal of William Marshall, Earl of Pembroke, on a document claiming that his father had granted Easton church to the Priory of Bradenstoke, hence challenging the appointment of Stephen (son of Adam of Easton) as vicar. (WSA 9-15-6)



Figure 33. The Bishop of Salisbury's resolution of a dispute, confirming that Stephen of Tisbury (son of Adam of Easton) lawfully held the church of Easton. (WSA 9-15-7).



Stephen was effectively removed from office, and he complained to Pope Honorius III. From St Peter's in Rome the Pope instructed Bishop Poore of Salisbury to resolve the matter. In about 1220 the parties were summoned for the matter to be heard (WSA 9-15-7). Stephen was then known as 'Stephen, parson of Tisbury', and perhaps had been appointed there after his removal from Easton.

Before the arguments were presented the Prior of Bradenstoke acknowledged Stephen's right to the church of Easton (fig.33). The Bishop imposed 'perpetual silence' on the Prior henceforth concerning Easton church. However Bradenstoke Abbey was granted the tithes of hay, corn and cheese from Easton. (WSA 9-15-8).

3.2.7 The multiplicity of religious institutions at Easton

The number of institutions present in the wake of the Norman conquest invites speculation of a deeper Saxon religious link. At various times four bodies had been involved, namely the Abbey of Mont St Michel, the Abbey of the Holy Trinity of Mount St Catherine's in Rouen, Bradenstoke Priory and the Trinitarian Order (in addition to the parish church). Before 1066, religious institutions moulded and owned vast tracts of the landscape. Thereafter the Norman nobility re-designed political geographies and patronised different institutions (Pestell, 2004). At Easton, no pre-Norman monastic presence has been identified, and it is possible that the four religious orders simply held land there as a consequence of patronage deriving from a major royal estate. However, further investigation in this area is warranted.

3.2.8 Construction and Foundation

Foundation documents for Easton Priory, which re-iterate earlier charters, suggest that plans for Easton Hospital were agreed sometime between 1229, when Robert de Bingham was enthroned as Bishop of Salisbury, and 1334, when the hospital was under construction. The bishop authorised for the parish church of Easton to be 'ceded to the use of a certain hospital which *will be built* [future tense] by God's authority in the aforesaid town of Easton for the purpose of supporting poor travellers, and to sustain three priests there who are to minister to God in perpetuity in a decent manner, of whom one is to celebrate for the dead, another to sing mass for Our Lady, and the third [the mass] for the day'. Stephen the Archdeacon, or his heirs, were to appoint three suitable chaplains to govern the hospital and the whole parish, and also the master and rector of the said hospital. The charter states that by papal authority the church and its lands and income would be held by the hospital, 'founded out of holy piety', quietly and peaceably for its own use, in perpetuity (WSA 9-15-9; Kemp, 2010, no.29).

The first indication that the priory was under construction comes in 1234, in a Close Roll of Henry III. The roll records that the king granted a licence to Stephen, Archdeacon of Wiltshire, to carry timber which had been purchased or obtained by gift, 'for the construction of a certain hospital at Easton,' through the Royal Forest of Chute without having to pay a toll called 'cheminage'. The warden of the forest, Michael de Columbarius, was ordered to allow Stephen and his servants free and safe passage without hindrance (Close R, Henry III 1231-4, 374). The licence was issued through Robert Passelewe, who was Sheriff of Hampshire in 1242 and became both Justice of the Forests, and Archdeacon of Lewes.

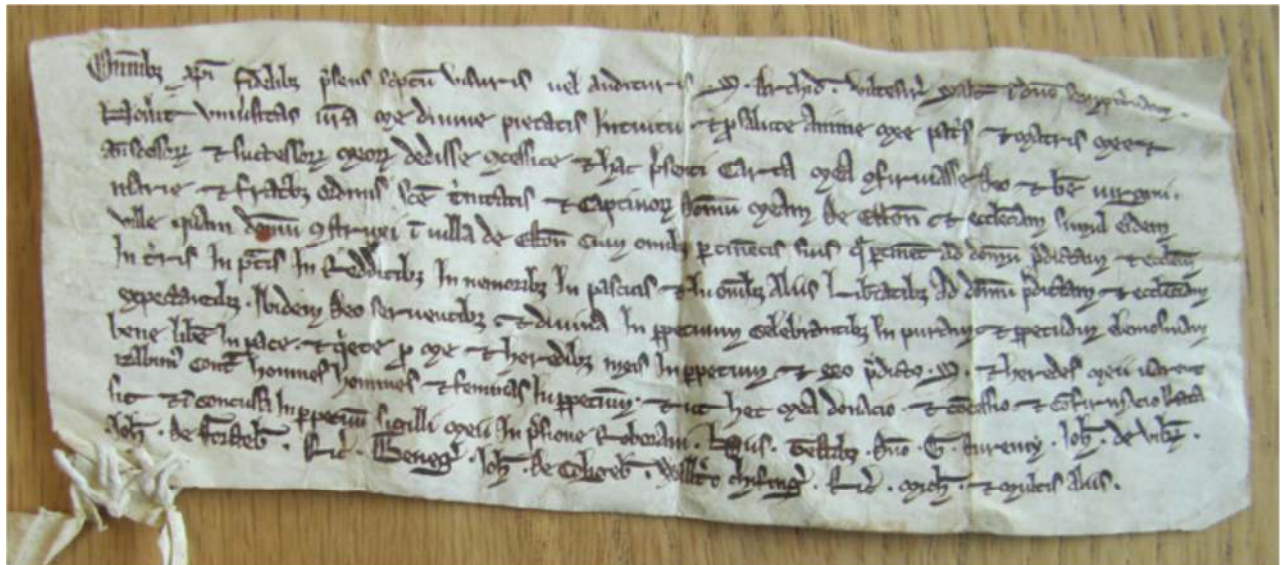
Forests had become dens of extortion, where local officials could molest occupants and travellers and demand monies for routine activities. The roll shows that Stephen was sufficiently eminent to obtain the ear and support of the king on ensuring free passage. It is perhaps strange that the timber was being obtained from Chute, when the bounds of Savernake adjoined Easton itself, and Stephen had family connections to the Savernake wardens. However, Savernake had been devastated in the

turbulent years linked to King John's reign and its aftermath, with tens of thousands of trees removed between 1216 and 1244, especially for works at Marlborough and Ludgershall Castles, and even Caversham Castle in Reading (NA E 146-2-23). It is possible therefore that sufficient timber was unavailable locally, or perhaps there was a benefactor in Chute willing to donate the necessary trees.

The documents prove that Archdeacon Stephen constructed Easton Hospital during his lifetime (rather than through a bequest at the time of his death). This was intended to provide hospitality to poor travellers (rather than attend to the sick). This was seen as an act of charity, to be undertaken by religious clerics in perpetuity (WSA 9-15-9). Initial documentation gives no indication that these priests belonged to any particular monastic order, but the fact that the local priesthood were to 'serve God forever', and that they were specified to be three in number (a recurrent theme for Trinitarians) - suggests that he envisaged the priory would be conveyed to the Brothers of the Order of the Holy Trinity and Captives. The parish church was to be transferred to the hospital as a source of income from its tithes and land, 'for the support of poor travellers in the said hospital, and for the maintenance of the three priests there'. Stephen the Archdeacon and his heirs and assigns were required to present to the Bishop and Chapter one of the three priests to be master and rector of the hospital (for approval) (WSA 9-15-9). The Bishop also confirmed that the tithes of corn, hay and cheese were property of the Prior and Convent of Bradenstoke, and as if to close the controversy, stated that 'no-one can overthrow this our ordinance' (Kemp, 2010, no.29).

The hospital would have needed to undergo a long process of gestation, legal ratification and endowment before its official foundation. Perhaps because of this, or because Stephen chose to retain control during his lifetime, a further ten years elapsed after its construction. However, towards Stephen's death everything was in place for the hospital, church and other lands to be formally transferred to the Trinitarians. He gifted 'the house which he had built in the village of Easton' together with the church of the village, and all the lands attached, to God, the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Brothers of the Order of the Holy Trinity and Captives (WSA 9-15-10). The gift was in 'francalmoign', meaning that it was made on condition that the brethren undertook religious duties in perpetuity. The document also states that the gift was made for the salvation of the benefactor's (Stephen's) soul, and for the soul of his father (Adam de Easton), mother, ancestors and successors. It is likely therefore that the brethren would have a specific duty of offering prayers for Stephen and his family, and to commemorate them on the anniversaries of their deaths.

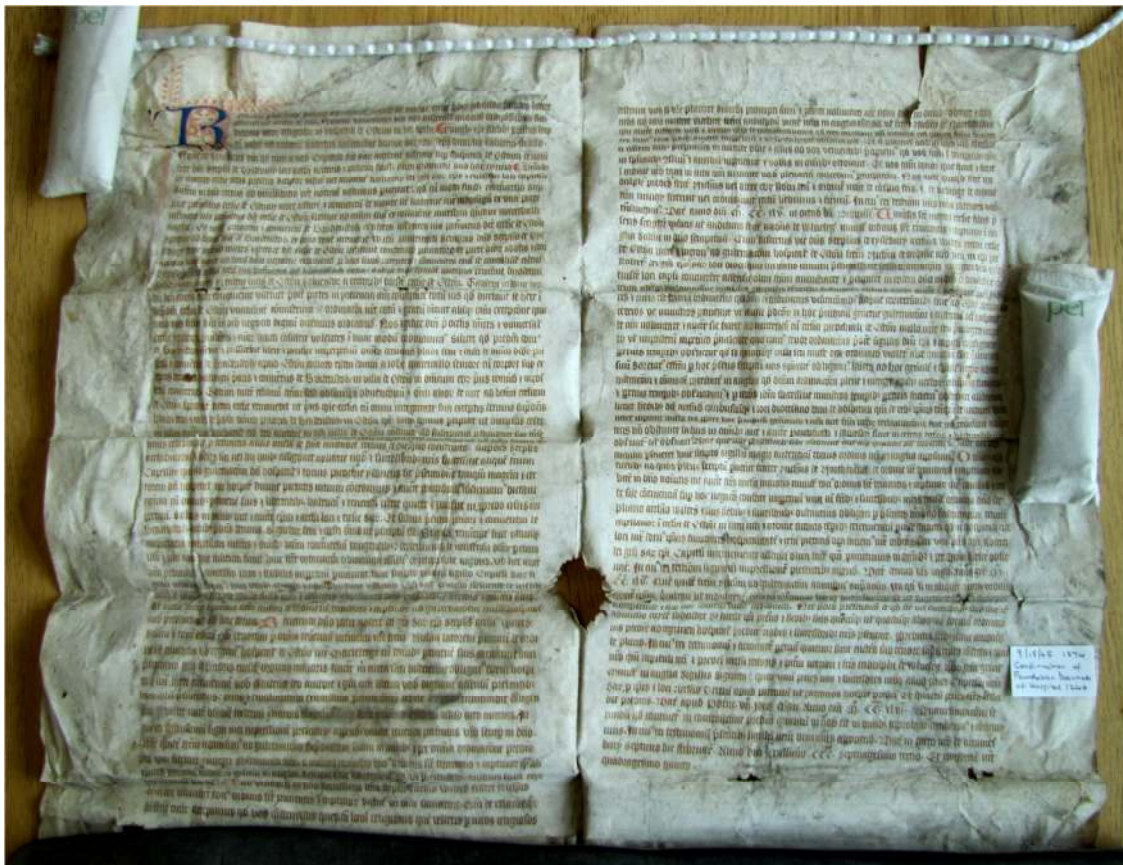
Figure 34. The document through which Stephen, Archdeacon of Wiltshire, formally conveyed his hospital, land and church to the Brothers of the Order of the Holy Trinity and Captives, on condition that they undertake religious duties, including praying for Stephen's soul. (WSA 9-15-10).



The foundation documents effectively establish the relationship between the Pope, Bishop of Salisbury, the general and English heads of the Trinitarian Order, the local Priory or Hospital, and the patron. The Great Minister of the whole Order of Holy Trinity and Captives, wrote to Archdeacon Stephen in 1245, confirming the Order's willingness to assume responsibility for the 'place of religion' constructed by Stephen. The Great Minister offered to send a governor for the hospital, and 'to provide three chaplains of our order [or more subsequently] to serve the house in that place in perpetuity and to serve the hospital'. The Great Minister obliged Stephen and his heirs to sustain the three chaplains 'to serve the church of Easton for all future time, who will provide hospitality at the hospital next to the house in that place. This shows that the hospital and 'house' were separate (but adjacent) buildings. There was a statement that if Stephen wished to be commemorated at Easton in perpetuity, the brothers would obey him in everything. The head of the order in England confirmed that Stephen had appointed Brother Nicholas of Norfolk as governor at Easton, subject to the Bishop's approval, and binding the order in perpetuity to the authority of the Bishop and his ministers, filling vacancies as necessary, and governing the church and hospital in accordance with papal and diocesan law. The parish church at the time was generating income of 60 marks (£40) per year from wheat, with 8 marks (£5) per year from lesser tithes and rents.

Brother Nicholas was duly admitted as governor by the Bishop of Salisbury, and thus the Hospital and Priory of Easton was founded in May 1246 (WSA 9-15-15; 9-15-45; 9-15-46; Kemp, 2010, no.30). The founder Stephen died the same year.

Figure 35. The foundation document of Easton Hospital and Priory of 9 May 1246 was re-issued in 1374, when the original parchments were ‘decaying with age’ (WSA 9-15-45).



3.2.9 Purgatory, Chantries and Prayers for the Dead

A major factor in the growth and endowment of religious institutions in the 12th and 13th centuries, also affecting their architecture and daily functioning, was the increasing importance attached to purgatory. Purgatory was formally recognised by the church as a form of penitential afterlife, a dreadful condition where earthly sins could be expunged through metaphysical ordeal (Roffey, 2008). Anticipation of this excruciating torment in death was enough to terrify those alive, who envisaged prolonged and unrelieved suffering, as their guilty souls were cleansed.

However, the situation was not hopeless. Whilst God's judgement could not be challenged, the prayers of the living, by both the clergy and laity, could influence the soul of the dead, its welfare and passage through purgatory. Hence God-fearing people needed a strategy for the after-life. By endowing religious institutions, promoting the appointment of more clergy, and building chantry chapels, they could ensure that masses would be sung and prayers offered on their behalf. A combination of their good deeds and of prayers said on their behalf, provided hope that their souls might soon be released to Heaven.

Concern for the afterlife is a recurrent feature throughout the history of Easton Priory, and this involved all members of the community ranging from local farmers and lords of the manor, to religious clerics and the King himself. The Priory's very foundation by Archdeacon Stephen in c1246 was specified as being for the salvation of his soul, for the soul of his father (Adam de Easton), mother, ancestors and successors (WSA 9-15-10). Indeed, as a comparatively well-connected religious person, there may have been an expectation upon him that he would take action on behalf of his whole family.

Stephen's brother in law, Geoffrey Esturmy, warden of Savernake, was also concerned about the salvation of his soul and the souls of his ancestors when gifting 50 acres of woodland in Savernake at the time of the foundation. (WSA 1300-1), and for the soul of his wife Matilda when gifting ten shillings of annual rent from the tenement of Roger the Shepherd at Durley (WSA 1300-2).

Archdeacon Stephen's other brother in law, Stephen Druce, and other members of the family also granted land in Easton (a virgate and a half – c45 acres), for the salvation of his (Stephen's) soul, and the souls of his father and mother (WSA 9-15-20). There was a rental of one pound of cumin (spice) per year payable as part of the Druce family bequest (WSA 9-15-21).

A major endowment was linked to a chantry at the *parish* church in 1326. Robert Druce built a chantry chapel to St John the Baptist near the northern end of the parish church. With the approval of King Edward II he gave to the Priory 60 acres of land in Easton, with two houses, and rents payable. Brother John, Minister of the house, and the brethren there, bound themselves to Robert Druce of Easton, in return for his gifts to them, to maintain a priest, at their own expense, for celebrating the divine offices daily in the parish church, at the altar of St. John the Baptist in a chapel which Robert had built. Prayers would be said for the benefit of Robert during his life and after his death to celebrate for the souls of Robert, Sir Stephen his father, Lady Matilda his mother, and Geoffrey and Felicia, and to solemnise Robert's anniversary once a year. Robert had also given to the parishioners for the support of the said church and its lights (windows?), 12 shillings annual rent, and for the lights and ornaments of the chapel, some 200 sheep.

If they failed to pray for the souls of benefactors, as required, then any duly appointed ecclesiastical judge could intervene.

An endowment by Sir Robert of Burbage in 1349, involving, land and over £133 (in addition to legal fees), provided sufficient funds to enable the number of brethren to be raised from three to six, plus the minister. Two of these were to celebrate the soul of Sir Robert and the souls of others of his choosing (WSA 9-15-35).

The most detailed endowment linked to both charitable objectives and praying for the souls of the dead comes from Henry Esturmy's gift of c1371 (as given in his son's confirmation of 1389) (WSA 1300-30). The grant is described as being made by Henry Esturmy as patron, for the honour of the Holy Trinity and for the Blessed Virgin Mary and All Saint's, and for the salvation of his own soul, Margaret his wife's, his father's and mother's, his heirs' and ancestors', benefactors', friends' and of all to whom he is indebted or for whom he is constrained to pray. He conferred his land at Puthall to the prior and brethren 'who are under the rule of St Augustine', on condition that on Maundy Thursday each year the brethren provide 20 pence and 20 good white loaves worth ½d each (such as they give as alms in the priory) to be distributed to 20 poor persons, when the feet of the poor are washed by the grantor in the presence of the brethren. It was specified that if the grantor leaves no heirs or they are not present then the prior should distribute the alms and wash feet as other religious houses do.

Four wax candles were to be provided yearly, each of 2 lbs, which were to be burned around the tombs of his ancestors, on the anniversaries of the deaths of Sir Adam de Estona and Felicia his wife; Master Stephen their son, Archdeacon, the founder of the Priory; Sir Geoffrey Esturmy, nephew of Stephen, and Matilda daughter of Adam Benynges, his wife; Sir Henry Esturmy and Aline his wife; Henry Esturmy their son and Margaret his wife; Henry Esturmy and Matilda his wife, and the grantor Henry Esturmy and Margaret his wife. Hence prayers were to be said for a total of 13 people, lying in seven tombs, which presumably would take up considerable space in the church. The candles were to be lit and burned on every anniversary night of each of the named said men and women at the religious services known as Placebo and Dirige until Vespers and Compline were finished and on the morrow at the Commendation at the Mass of Requiem and on the third day from the Angelus till the ninth hour and till Vespers with Compline of the day be celebrated. These services were to be held and masses sung and solemnly celebrated by the Prior, Brethren and their successors in perpetuity, and also for successors on certain days as their obits occur in the course of the year. An oblation of five shillings would be given yearly to the celebrant in perpetuity. If the grantor should have no heirs then prayers would be offered for all the faithful departed.

Another candle of 1½ lbs would be offered at the festival of the Purification of Blessed Mary if the grantor or his heirs were present, as part of the oblation, or carried in procession by another and offered in his name at High Mass.

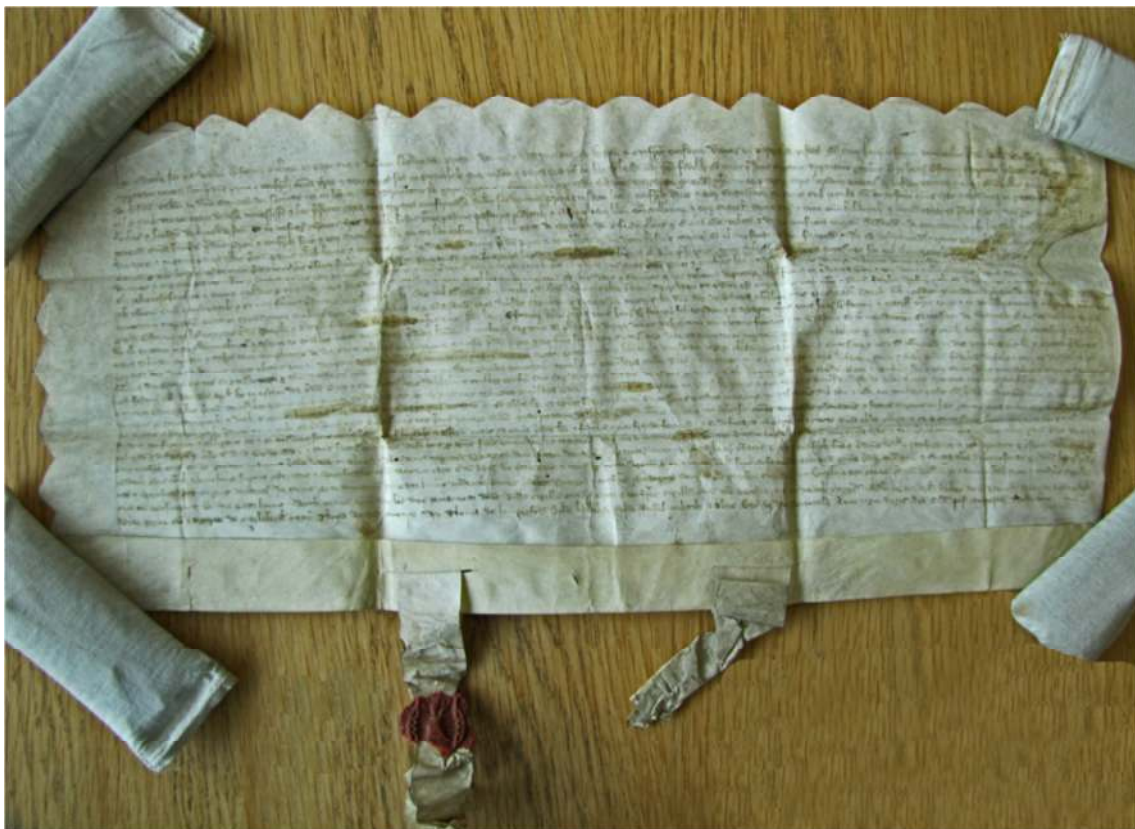
Prayers would also be offered yearly on the anniversaries of Robert Play and Margaret his wife, and his parents, benefactors [of the priory?] and for the souls of all the faithful departed on the Sunday after St Barnabas the Apostle. On same day the Prior and successors were to give each Brother 6d, and also 3d for wine for their souls' sake (WSA 1300-30) The role of Robert Play, who occasionally witnessed Esturmy legal documents, is unclear.

If the prior, brethren and their successors failed to provide the said 20 loaves and undertake other obligations, or failed to keep anniversaries as set forth, which 'God forbid' then the Bishop of Salisbury would punish them according to the gravity of their fault. Prior Robert and the brethren agreed to the ordinances. The document was witnessed by Master Nicholas Wykeham, Archdeacon

of Wiltshire, Richard Botnell prior of Bradenstoke, Walter Prior of St Margaret of Marlborough, Master Thomas Worston, Canon of Salisbury and others (WSA 1300-30).

When granting a licence for land to be given by Henry Esturmy to the priory, as outlined above, the King (Edward III) also claimed that he did this for the benefit of his own family's spiritual benefit, namely for the King's welfare and that of his dearest elder son Edward Prince of Aquitaine and Wales (who was devoted to the Trinity, having been born on Trinity Sunday), while they all shall live and of their souls after death, and for the soul of Philippa late Queen of England his dearest wife, and the souls of his ancestors and all the faithful departed. Prince Edward (the Black Prince) died the following year.

Figure 36. The document through which Henry Esturmy ensured that prayers were said for 13 members of his family, around their tombs in the Easton Priory church, which must have occupied a significant area (WSA 1300-30).



3.2.10 Patronage and Purgatory as keys to understanding Easton Priory

The interests of the founder and subsequent patrons, and the desire to prepare for the afterlife, are central to understanding the presence and role of priories in the landscape (Pestell, 2004). Patronage was a meritorious act bringing about direct spiritual benefits. Building a hospital fulfilled the threefold benefits of fulfilling duties to God, neighbours and self (Clay, 1966). It also conferred prestige and status on founders and patrons, and their families, in perpetuity. The foundation itself was a highly visible act, broadcasting piety amidst eminent people, many of whom might be formal

witnesses to documents (Pestell, 2004). It demonstrated control of the landscape and lordship, signifying the patrons' eminence in the social order. Family tombs displayed their permanent presence.

Easton was chosen as the location for a priory, and the Trinitarian brethren were chosen, not from within the order itself, but by the founder and patrons. In addition to any genuine sentiments of generosity, charity and devoutness, they wanted a permanent display in the landscape, adjacent to their estate and centre of power (and probably close to their manor house), embellishing their status whilst taking care of the tombs and souls of their departed.

3.2.11 Properties and Lands of Easton Priory

Unlike mendicant friars who could not own property or lands, the Trinitarians of Easton needed to generate money for their good works, including sending ransoms for the release of captives in the pagan lands, administering to travellers at their hospital, and maintaining their own premises. They were dependent on gifts and endowments to raise such funds, and probably positively sought them. Such gifts were not necessarily unconditional, and many such endowments obliged the brethren to pray for the souls of benefactors.

3.2.12 The Statute of Mortmain

Under the feudal system, lands were not owned in the modern sense but were held from the king, or an overlord, on condition of providing some form of duty, such as military service. It would also generate taxes or monies when, for example, new licences were issued to heirs and successors as they came of age. Land would frequently revert to the crown upon the death of the land-holder, or if there were no heirs or male heirs, or could be seized following misdemeanours. Hence the king's ability to raise an army or generate money was never compromised. However, land given to the church effectively stripped the monarchy of its interests in perpetuity. Because the church was not a mortal entity, land never reverted to the crown upon death, licence fees were never gathered when heirs came of age, and military service was not applicable. Donating land to the church could also be used as a way of avoiding service, since the land was sometimes let back to the grantor by the church, without such requirement for military duty. Hence the monarchy became weaker as the church landholding increased. The Statute of Mortmain ('dead hand') of 1279 in the reign of Edward I sought to protect the king's interests by ensuring that estates could not be passed to the church without royal assent. Some of our knowledge about the lands held by Easton Priory derives from this need to get royal assent after 1279.

3.2.13 Frankalmoin

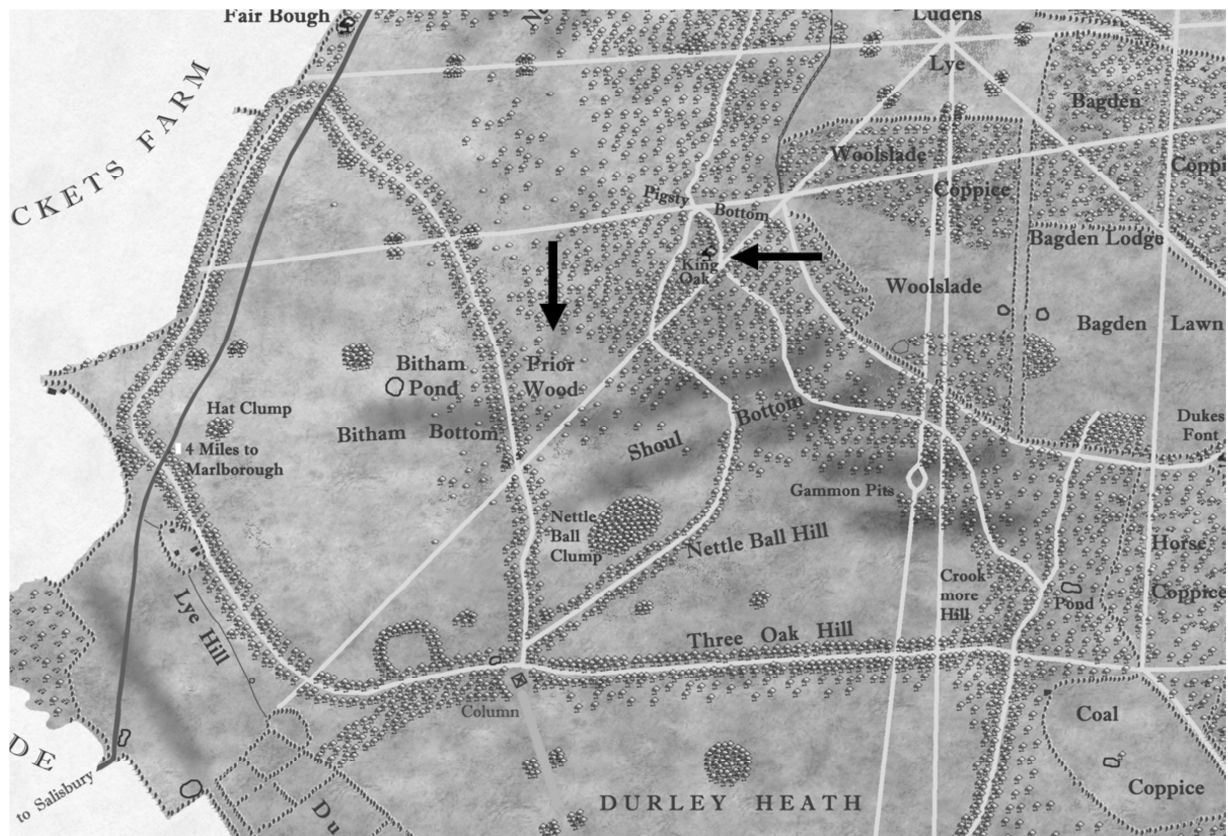
Properties gifted in frankalmoin were intended to be gifts made to God, in free, pure and perpetual alms. The occupants of the land were normally expected to perform religious duties, which might be of a wide, charitable nature, or to provide specific prayers for donors and their families.

An early endowment came from Archdeacon Stephen's brother in law, Geoffrey Esturmy, warden of Savernake Forest. He died whilst on military service in Wales in about 1245 (WSA 9-15-243; 1300-6574), so it seems that this endowment was made alongside the foundation. Geoffrey Esturmy gave to the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Hospital of Easton and the brethren serving God there, for the salvation of his soul and those of his ancestors', 50 acres of wood in Savernake, in a place called Halegodesfolegdene, in frankalmoin for ever (WSA 1300-1). The wood was part of the Royal Forest.

However, the Priory was exempt from having to attend forest courts at Morleigh, and the brothers and their servants were to have free ingress and egress to their wood without being molested by the foresters. They were also given full common of pasture for their beasts of every kind in Savernake.

The wood became known as Priory Wood, and features on a map of 1786.

Figure 37. The Savernake estate map of 1786 (WSA 1300-360) redrawn. It shows Prior or Priory Wood (vertical arrow), as given to Easton priory in c1245. Note also the King Oak (horizontal arrow).



In 1540 Priory Wood was described as ‘The common woods in the Forest of Savernack or the Great Wood: A wood called the Pryors wood contains by estimation 50 acres thin set with great old oaks with any acre estimated to be sold worth 6s8d, which amounts to £16.13.4d’ (Longleat House, Seymour Papers volume 12).

Figure 38. Extract from Rent Roll of 1540 describing The Great Wood, or common wood in Savernake, formerly belonging to Easton Priory.

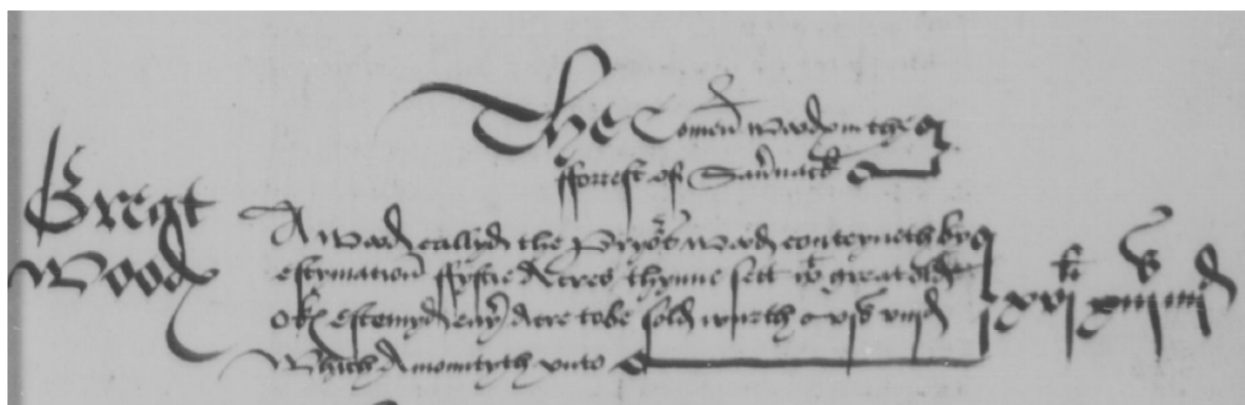


Figure 39, Strutt's 1822 engraving of the King Oak in Savernake, part of Priory Wood, with the great oaks, as they were described in 1540, still present (as they are today).



Geoffrey Esturmy's gift to the Priory was confirmed by his son, Henry Esturmy. He also gifted the rent of ten shilling from a tenement held by Roger the Shepherd of Durley, for the salvation of the soul of his mother, Matilda. Insofar as he had any rights in the land, he also endorsed the gift of 1 ½ virgates (45 acres) of land in Easton given to the Priory by his uncle, Archdeacon Stephen (WSA 1300-2)