

The Cistercians in West Wales: 2. Ceredigion

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Five religious houses belonging to the Order of Cîteaux were settled, or had interests in, medieval Ceredigion. Foremost was the abbey of Ystrad Fflur which had under its oversight the nunnery of Llanllŷr, whilst in the fourteenth century the Cheshire abbey of Vale Royal gained a valuable foothold in the parish of Llanbadarn Fawr. The Radnorshire monastery of Cwmhir possessed an important pastoral grange at Nant-yr-arian, whilst Whitland Abbey had extensive lands in the south of the county.

STRATA FLORIDA ABBEY (ABATY YSTRAD FFLUR)

The foundation

Within less than two decades of the foundation of Cîteaux Abbey in Burgundy (1098), the eventual mother-house of all abbeys of the Cistercian Order, monks from Cîteaux were sent to settle its ‘elder daughters’ at La Ferté (1113), Pontigny (1114), Clairvaux and Morimond (1115). From all five abbeys many monasteries descended so that, whilst all were Cistercian, ‘families’ developed within the Order. A generation after St Bernard led his band of monks to Clairvaux, that abbey in turn sent monks to found the abbey of Whitland (1140). They were probably mostly French monks, but when Whitland itself established new houses, like Strata Florida another generation on, their founding fathers—like the first abbot, David—will very likely have been Welsh to a man.²

By the close of the twelfth century, seven of the then fourteen Cistercian monasteries in Wales traced their origins back to Whitland, forming a grouping of eight abbeys in the ‘family of Whitland’, of which Strata Florida was one. This priority of Whitland was emphasised even after the Suppression when, in 1549, a former monk of Cwmhir referred to the last abbot of Whitland as having been ‘the head of our religion’.³ Whitland, however, was somewhat removed from the heart of Wales, and lay in a region more subject to Anglo-Norman influence, and therefore did not have the same role in Welsh politics as did Strata Florida and the two monasteries it founded—Llantarnam near Caerleon (1179) and Aberconwy in Gwynedd (1186). Little is known of Strata Florida in those decades, but the ability to settle two new monasteries was certainly a sign of its numerical strength and spiritual vitality in those times. A minimum of a founding abbot and twelve monks were requisite on both occasions.

At Cîteaux Abbey, a table was kept by its precentor which listed all the monasteries of the Order by their official Latin names, and gave the date of their foundation. Several copies of this survive in whole or part, and the majority suggest a foundation date for Strata Florida of 1 June 1164.⁴ Other records suggest a different year, but nearer home the year of foundation is also indicated by the various recensions of the *Brut y Tywysogyon* as being 1164 or, possibly, 1165 (Fig. 1).⁵ Apparent discrepancies may reflect the date of a foundation charter rather than of actual settlement by the monks. Mis-transcriptions of the abbey’s Latin name included de Florio and Vallis Florida (the latter being, confusingly, the official name of Cleeve Abbey in Somerset).⁶

The initial site for the new monastery was given by Robert FitzStephen, the Norman constable of Cardigan Castle, and seemingly holding land in Pennardd, in which lordship Strata Florida was located. One of his nephews, Gerald of Wales, credits Robert with having founded a Cistercian house but does not name it.⁷ In November 1165, Robert was taken prisoner by Rhys ap Gruffydd (‘the Lord Rhys’), who

Sautab hymny ologen rodi todvon adruc vlogen
 duhyn ac gollwg dracheuen. ac viten ac lu avm
 hoelabd dracheuen vloesyn. Yny ulbydyn honno
 vkyrchabd yr arslwyd rys caer aber tenu ac cha
 stell ac vtoures ac vlllofges adruabz anweith a
 duc. ac adnyp castell hilserann aonuc aala ro
 lert vftreyn ac garcharu. Yny ulbydyn honno
 drwy gennat duw ac annoc yr Yspryt Glan y deu
 th cofent o vnych yvstrat flur gynntaf. Ac y
 na vbu uarb ll' ap obem gwyned ysbz a ragries
 mod iubb o deider. ar deides o dechmey. ar wech
 meib o ymadrabd ar ymadrabd o voessen. Yny
 ulbydyn racthvech y deuth vftreinc obeuuro ar
 flemulbyz ymmlad ym gadann achastell hil
 seram. a gbedv llad llaber oe gbyz yd ymhoelassar
 achilserann vnouer hep gael y castell. Yny ul
 dyn honno ydistrybyr dmas bassin y gant by
 ned. ac yny ulbydyn honno ysbz chladbyr dien
 mit uap mbythath. oe gynoeth ac yd aeth hve
 yn normandi ac urenhu lloegr veruuerit idd
 vtab yddi yny gynoeth dracheuen bedy chynab
 vthab. ac yny ulbydyn honno ysbz chladbyr w
 uth goch ap mareud oe gynoeth ymochnant y
 sam y deu ybem. ar deu ybem hymny ar gynnassar
 bodnant yvchynnt. ac ydeeth mochnant vch
 rapadyr yvben kyueilab. a mochnant is rev

Fig. 1. Extract from the *Brut y Tywysogion* (Peniarth MS 20). The passage in lines 7–9 reads: ‘Yn y ulvydyn honno drwy gennat Duw ac annoc yr Yspryt Glan y death cofent o vnych y Ystrad Flur gynntaf’ (‘In that year, through the will of God and the instigation of the Holy Spirit, a community of monks came to the place called Strat Flur’).⁸ By permission of the National Library of Wales.

became the effective founder of the abbey and its principal benefactor. He was certainly seen as such in a contemporaneous papal bull. In a charter of 1884, Rhys noted that he had ‘begun to build the venerable abbey entitled Strat-flur, and when built have loved and cherished it’.⁹ This is confusing, as Rhys died in 1197, long before the monastery was complete. At variance with Henry II, Rhys made his peace with the monarch in 1172, and was appointed his ‘Justice in all South Wales.’ Thereafter, political conditions were ideal for his encouragement of the new house.

The undated bull of Alexander III (1159–81) gave, within a few years of its foundation, the necessary privileges to ensure the new monastery’s extra-diocesan status, in a way seen as desirable by the Cistercians at large. The pope (as for other monasteries of the Order) disallowed the local diocesan from interfering in the election or removal of abbots, and from prohibiting divine worship in the abbey, even in times of excommunication and interdict. The bull also allowed the monks to receive into the community any free and blameless person, enjoined peace in the cloister, and released the monks from payment of tithe on the fruit of their own labours.¹⁰

If there is room for debate regarding the precise date and first founder of the monastery, the same is true as to its location. The abbey ruins seen today, placed by the Teifi stream, were one abbot wrote (in 1442) ‘situated in desolate mountains’.¹¹ John Leland, the travelling antiquary, who visited Strata Florida about 1538, talked of the abbey as ‘set round about with mountains not far distant, except on the west part where Dyffryn Teifi, a great Fenny More, is’—the latter reference being to Tregaron Bog.¹² It was a typical Cistercian site, riverine and remote, but was it the monastery’s first site? (Fig. 2).¹³

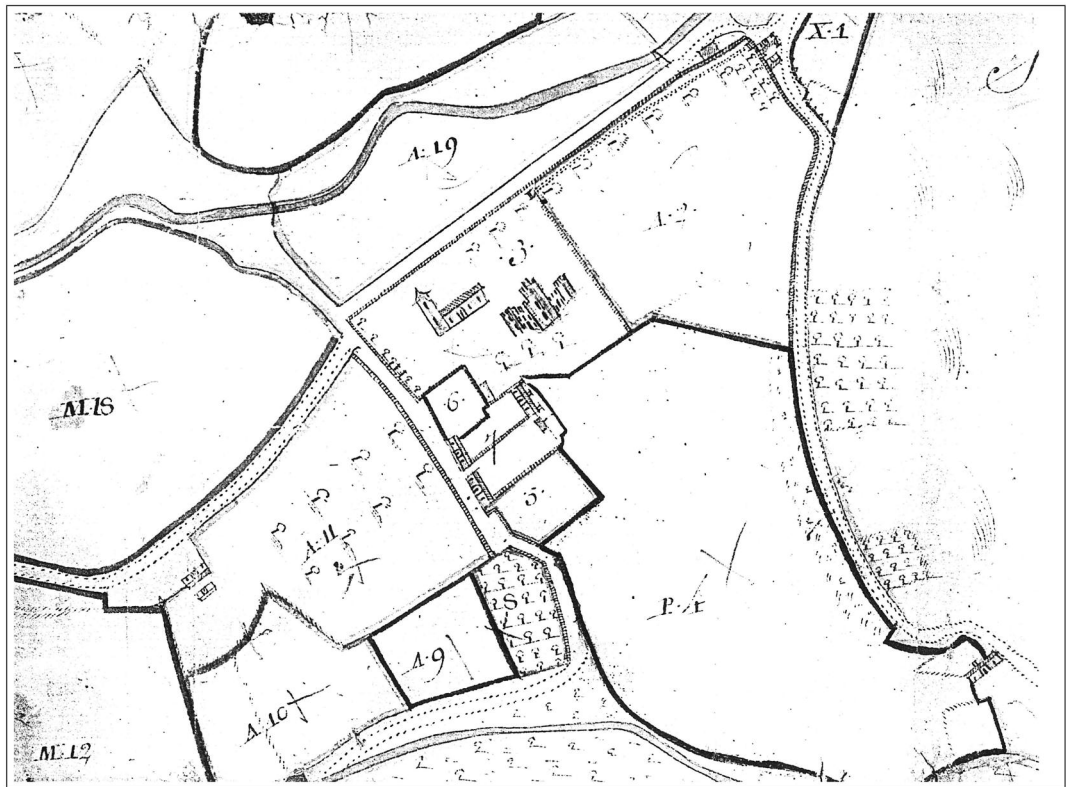


Fig. 2. The site of Strata Florida as in 1765 (Nanteos MS 302).
By permission of the National Library of Wales.

Stephen Williams, the 'father of Cistercian archaeology in Wales' in the nineteenth century, described (partly by personal inspection, partly from local knowledge) the foundations formerly existing at Yr Hen Fynachlog ('the old monastery'), lying by the Fflur brook some three kilometres west-south-west of Strata Florida (Fig. 3).¹⁴ He suggests that at that site stood the Celtic religious house described by John Leland as having been founded by Prince Rhys ap Tewdwr of Deheubarth (1079–93), and by the local farmer as having had a church around forty metres in length.¹⁵ The Cistercians will certainly have inherited this site;¹⁶ could it be that they absorbed the local Welsh monks, and lived there until their new monastery was completed? About a third of all medieval Cistercian abbeys had a change of site, whilst in the twelfth century numerous hermitages and monasteries of other orders were taken over by the Cistercians.¹⁷

It is possible that Leland confused Rhys ap Gruffydd and Rhys ap Tewdwr, but unlikely as he actually conversed with the monks at Strata Florida. If he did later fall into error in writing up his notes, it is possible that there never was a Celtic foundation at Yr Hen Fynachlog, but rather a temporary monastery erected for the Cistercians whilst their new house was being constructed, or a monastery of the early simplicity typical of the order which Rhys ap Gruffydd wanted to improve upon. It may also have been

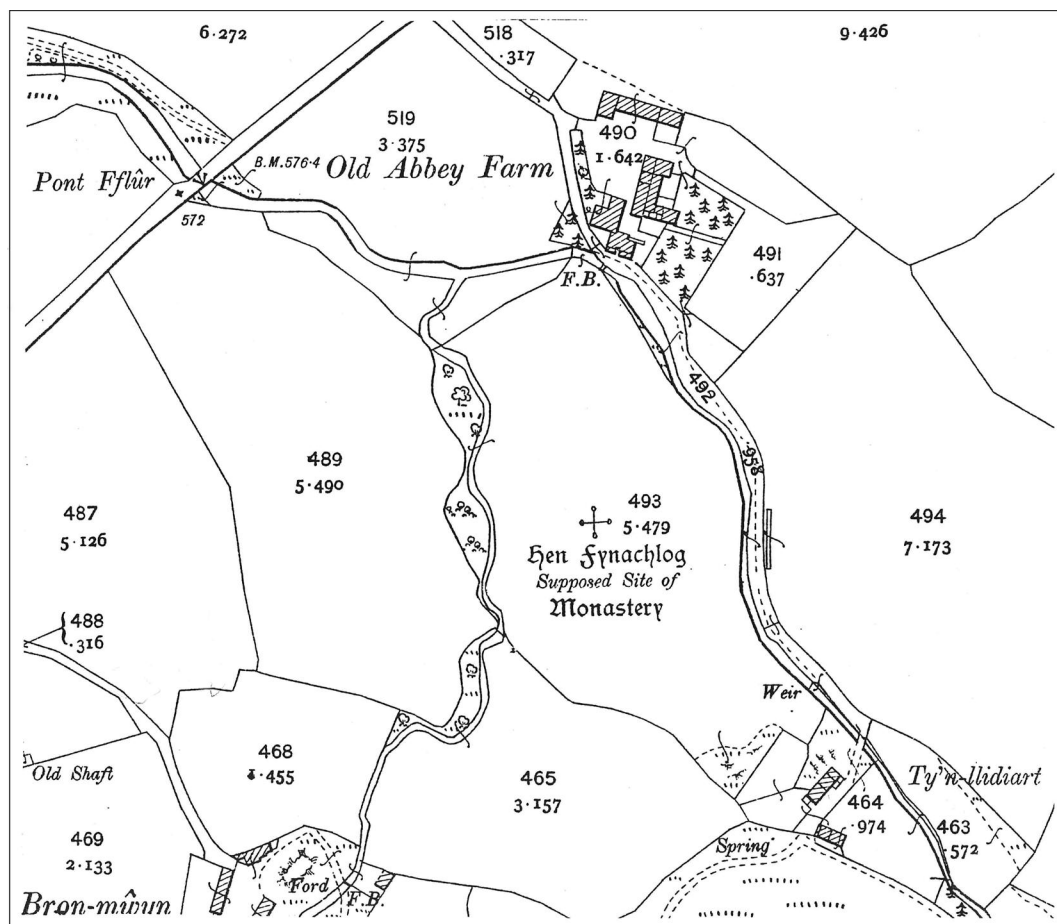


Fig. 3. The supposed site of Strata Florida 1, shown on Ordnance Survey 25-inch map.

that settling first at Yr Hen Fynachlog, the monks found that site too constricted and unsuitable, and sought from the Lord Rhys a better one.

There is plenty of precedence within the settlement of the order for any of these courses. If there was such a site change, however, it is surprising that it was not mentioned in the Welsh chronicles, unless the reference in the *Brut* to the monks 'going to' rather than 'entering' their 'new church of splendid workmanship' on Whitsun Eve in 1201 is any indication.¹⁸ Further, the site as seen today at Yr Hen Fynachlog is not typically Cistercian, though its stream did once work a mill. On the other hand, if the Cistercians did not live there for a time, it is difficult to see why the medieval abbey was named Strata Florida (Ystrad Fflur) after the Fflur brook, rather than after the adjacent river Teifi.¹⁹ Moreover, two field names at 'Old Abbey', 'pen ucha ystrad' and 'yr ystrad', add weight to the view that Yr Hen Fynachlog was indeed the first abbey site.²⁰ When Gerald of Wales visited the area in 1188, he mentioned that 'the Teifi . . . flows . . . not far from the pasturelands of Strata Florida'. If the monks were already there, surely he would have said that 'the Teifi flows *by* the abbey'?²¹

As for the permanent site, John Leland described 'the base Court or Camp afore the Abbey' as 'veri fair and large'.²² It is this area which a team led by Professor David Austin is currently excavating and surveying. Having postulated the sites of the outer gatehouse and the monastic infirmary and having drawn attention to adjacent industrial activity, we await their final conclusions with great expectation.

The close of the twelfth century

One of the basic principles of the Cistercian order was that its monks lived by their own labour. From the early years, as more and more lands were given to the monasteries, some at a distance, this principle could not be achieved without help. The order, therefore, recruited lay-brothers, termed *conversi*, to assist in agriculture, fishing, trade and industry. Some *conversi* lived in their abbey (worshipping in the nave of the church, and living in the west range—where one could be built); others manned an abbey's farms, its *granges*. In some abbeys by the early thirteenth century, the numbers of *conversi* were at least double those of the choir-monks.²³ In the instance of Strata Florida, the names of only eleven such *conversi* are known, ranging in date from 1202 to 1294, by which time the institution was in rapid decline.²⁴ The only visible remains of the west range at Strata Florida appear to be a small portion of the night stairs the *conversi* used to descend from their dormitory into their choir.²⁵

The *conversi* were generally (though not always) unlettered men recruited from the peasant class. Some joined the order in the hope of greater security, but then might chafe at the discipline and lack of former freedom. This perhaps accounts for the 'excesses' of the *conversi* at Strata Florida reported to the annual General Chapter of the order in 1196, and which the father-abbot of Whitland was ordered to correct in person.²⁶ It is clear from similar disturbances at Margam and Cwmhir abbeys that drink was at the root of the problem. In the previous year, some of the *conversi* at Cwmhir had 'made off with the horses of the abbot, because he had refused them beer'. The abbot of Strata Florida, himself in Burgundy at the General Chapter that year, was enjoined to convey the chapter's decision that the guilty brothers were to go on foot to Clairvaux for sentence.²⁷ It is doubtful whether they did!

Life seems to have settled down at Strata Florida for, in 1198, 'monks and *conversi*' mediated in a territorial dispute between the sons of the recently deceased Rhys ap Gruffydd.²⁸ They were almost certainly from Strata Florida, and reflected the fact that a minority of early *conversi* were men of quite wide experience in the world—either in business or in battle. This entry in the *Cronica de Wallia* is also an early indication of the diplomatic prowess which the Welsh Cistercians came to possess.

The foremost personality associated with Strata Florida at this time was the archdeacon of Brecon, Giraldus Cambrensis (Gerald of Wales). In 1188, Giraldus got to know Seisil, the abbot of Strata Florida very well, for he with the abbot of Margam accompanied Gerald and Archbishop Baldwin of Canterbury

whilst the latter preached the Third Crusade in Wales, and the party rested for a time at Strata Florida.²⁹ The two abbots acted both as interpreters and as preachers; Seisil preached at Llanbedr-pont-Steffan (Lampeter) and in Ynys Môn (Anglesey), and Giraldus spoke approvingly of both abbots. He had good reason to, for the monastery at Strata Florida frequently gave him hospitality. He later recalled how he had ‘often betaken himself to the abbey in the hour of violent persecution’, but by this time his attitude to Strata Florida had changed.³⁰

When Giraldus had returned home from Lincoln in 1199 to seek the bishopric of St David’s, he left his ‘treasured books’ at Strata Florida for safe keeping, for many monasteries in those days safeguarded papers and monies for lay-folk. His quest for promotion saw him make three fraught journeys to Rome, and he tells how on the first of those occasions, he hurried from Strata Florida, through the mountains of Maelienydd to Cwmhir abbey—the routeway now called the ‘Monks’ Trod’.³¹ Travelling meant expense, so journeying again to Rome in November 1202, Giraldus asked the monks of Strata Florida to lend him money on the security of his books. At first they agreed, but later declined, saying (so Gerald asserted) that their ‘Book of Usages’ did not allow this. Gerald had no choice but to sell outright his beloved library to Strata Florida, and this rankled with him for a very long time thereafter.³²

In his own monumental writings, he now criticised the Cistercians vigorously, even suggesting an addition to the Litany: ‘From the malice of monks, above all the Cistercians, deliver us, O Lord’.³³ He accused the monks, on a further visit to Strata Florida, of placing him ‘in the public hall among the common guests and the noise of the people’.³⁴ He was not well pleased, and his own writings witnessed that a Cistercian guesthouse was not always a peaceful or safe environment.

The thirteenth century

Until the Conquest, this ‘age of the two Llywelyns’, was a century of difficulty from which the Cistercians could emerge neither uninvolved nor unscathed. In greater or lesser measure, the eight abbeys of the family of Whitland served the Welsh princes well, and looked to them for support. In this loyalty, the White Monks had little option; had they sided with the English Crown local retribution might have been speedy and disastrous. Not for nothing did royal officials note, in 1220, of the abbot of Strata Florida, that he was ‘in the power of Llywelyn’.³⁵ In 1207, Strata Florida had no option but to give lodging at its Aberdihonw grange to the earl of Gloucester, then unsuccessfully attempting to storm nearby Builth Castle,³⁶ but by 1212 King John talked of the abbey as ‘sustaining our enemies’. He unrealistically ordered the constable of Carmarthen, Cardigan and Gower, Falkes de Bréauté, to destroy it, ‘so far as you are able’.³⁷ This was not to be, but in his taxation of Cistercian houses the monarch placed a heavy impost of no less than £800 (perhaps in excess of a quarter of a million pounds in today’s values).³⁸ This burdensome debt outlived several abbots, and was not finally paid off until 1253.³⁹ In 1248, Abbot Gruffydd ‘made peace with the king, in respect of the debt which the monastery had owed for a long time’, and the concord was entered ‘in the register of the monastery’.⁴⁰ Part was remitted, and a further portion excused in 1253. The final payments were made to the keeper of the king’s works at Cardigan, specifically for ‘strengthening the tower of the castle’.⁴¹

In the early years of the thirteenth century, the abbot of Strata Florida played his part in ecclesiastical affairs. In 1200, Gerald of Wales visiting Rome persuaded Innocent III to set up a commission (consisting of the abbots of Strata Florida, St Dogmael’s and Whitland) to look into the mooted canonisation of Caradog the Hermit, who had died nearly eighty years previously. Abbot Peter of Whitland and Abbot Walter of St Dogmael’s had both been unsuccessful contenders with Gerald for the bishopric of St David’s.⁴² They were both opposed to his wishes; Gerald asserted that the two abbots suppressed the papal letters, and so the cause of Caradog at Rome was lost.⁴³ Then, in November 1216, but a month after King John’s death, the abbot of Strata Florida in the name of several Welsh Cistercian superiors, but

without their knowledge, protested to the papal legate in England at the Interdict laid on Wales because of the support given by the nation to a projected invasion by Louis VIII of France. The abbot went unchecked by his father-abbot of Whitland, and the upshot was that the General Chapter (of 1217) ordered the removal from office of both abbots and five priors.⁴⁴

The esteem held by the family of the Lord Rhys for Strata Florida meant that many of its members chose to be buried there. Leaving aside the interments of abbots and monks, of eighteen recorded burials at the monastery between 1175 and 1270, at least fourteen were of the dynasty of Prince Rhys. They included his sons, Gruffydd (1201), Hywel (1204), 'young Rhys' (1222), Maelgwn (1231) and Morgan (1250). Between 1175 and 1254, at least eight of the dying were vested in a Cistercian habit in their closing days or hours; this was a common practice at the time in Welsh Wales, and a sort of spiritual insurance policy! Eight of the burials recorded were specified as taking place, from 1231 onwards, in the monastery's new chapter house, giving a date for its completion.⁴⁵ The problem of a site change is complicated by no mention being made of an earlier site in the pre-1200 burials, like that of Cadell ap Gruffydd in 1175; unless the monks had already moved.⁴⁶

With the death of the Lord Rhys, Prince Llywelyn ab Iorwerth extended his suzerainty over Ceredigion. The opening years of the century saw Strata Florida embroiled in disputes between itself and the abbeys of 'Connier' (Cwmhir perhaps),⁴⁷ Neath (1205)⁴⁸ and Herefordshire's Dore (1209). The nature of these disputes is rarely revealed, but they almost certainly concerned territorial and, especially, pasture rights. It was alleged at the General Chapter in 1209 that Strata Florida had 'infringed the liberties and properties' of Abbey Dore in the Breconshire territory of Cantref-selyf. The arbitration, which saw Strata Florida agreeing to desist, was conducted by several Welsh abbots, and 'other lieges, including Llywelyn'.⁴⁹ The prince clearly, at an early stage, had care for the monastery.

It was to the prince also that, in 1236, two of the grandsons of Rhys went to effect an exchange of lands. Maelgwn ap Maelgwn thus came to possess the territory of Mefenydd and, as the *Annales Cambriae* put it, 'being so possessed, prepared to despoil the monks [of Strata Florida] of the lands of Ystrad Meurig which his ancestors, and he himself, gave to them'.⁵⁰ The monastery did retain a large swathe of Mefenydd, though not the hamlet of Ystrad Meurig itself. It was not only the Crown, but also the Welshry who could make problems for the abbey.⁵¹

Two years later, in 1238, Prince Llywelyn, knowing his earthly days were drawing to their close, convoked at Strata Florida a meeting of 'all the princes of Wales'; in other words, his sometime sparring sons, grandsons and nephews, in order 'to swear fidelity to the lord David, his son'.⁵² The abbey, which Prince Rhys ap Gruffydd had 'loved and cherished', now became the setting for securing the succession after Llywelyn's demise, though the prince himself was two years later buried at Aberconwy. It was a sign of the esteem in which Strata Florida was held within the Welsh nation, and must have been one of the most significant events in the abbey's history.

A decade later, in 1248, the abbot of Strata Florida (probably Gruffydd) was again to the forefront in Welsh affairs when he went, together with his daughter-abbot of Aberconwy, to see Henry III, and 'using pressing solicitation' begged the body of Prince Gruffydd ap Llywelyn who had accidentally died in the Tower of London. That granted, they escorted the prince's remains back to Wales for burial at Aberconwy, where Llywelyn ab Iorwerth had also been interred.⁵³ It was one of the signs of the white habit of the Cistercians allowing them to be successful diplomats and negotiators, and to penetrate, so to speak, enemy lines in safety. This was also true when, in 1250, Giles, a monk of Strata Florida, paid over £34 into the king's treasury on behalf of Owain ap Maredudd, being his dues for the commote of Cedewain.⁵⁴ Strata Florida rendered further assistance to a new prince, Llywelyn ap Gruffydd, when one night, early in Advent 1256, he stayed 'with a large army' at the abbey's Morfa Mawr grange, on the shores of Cardigan Bay. Here came Maredudd ab Owain, Baron of Deheubarth, to swear fealty to the prince, and

in so doing ensured Llywelyn's supremacy in Ceredigion.⁵⁵ Unless compensated, the cost of such a visit (and it is but one further instance of how both English and Welsh troops expected hospitality on Cistercian granges) must have been considerable, in terms of diminution of the grange's food supplies.⁵⁶

A happy and solemn event at Strata Florida was the raising of its 'great bell' in 1255. This was purchased, one chronicle suggests, for 97 marks and two kine—a sign of Celtic barter?⁵⁷ Splendid as this occasion was, with the bishop of Bangor standing in for the bishop of St David's who was terminally ill, it was followed by a decade of troubled years, Henry III's 'great war' in Wales. In 1258, the dispersion of the community was mooted. When leave for this move was sought of the General Chapter, that body hoped it would not be necessary and that, if the community could remain at Strata Florida, it was excused from receiving guests for three years.⁵⁸ In this way, its resources of cash and food would be safeguarded. Then, in 1263, as Prince Llywelyn ap Gruffydd was profiting from baronial opposition to the monarch, English troops took refuge on the barn at the abbey's distant Abermîwl grange sited by the river Severn. The Welsh forces slew them, and in retaliation the Crown bailiff of Montgomery, John Strange, burnt the barn.⁵⁹ In the trying circumstances of war, spiritual life and economic prosperity must have been difficult to maintain.

As the Edwardian conquest approached, as his relations with Prince Llywelyn ap Gruffydd worsened, Bishop Anian II of St Asaph criticised him for continually demanding hospitality and making illegal exactions from the monasteries. There may have been an element of truth in this but, freely or otherwise, all the abbots of the family of Whitland (save Llantarnam) were quick to defend the prince in a joint epistle (written at Strata Florida) to Pope Gregory X, saying that the bishop had 'spoken falsely', and that the prince had shown himself 'protector, not only of our order, but of each and every order in Wales'.⁶⁰

The Conquest

There is no certain knowledge as to the nature of the damage done to the lands and granges of Strata Florida as the forces of Edward I sought to take control of Prince Llywelyn's domains, but when in November 1284 war damage compensation payments were made at Chester, Strata Florida was awarded £78 (£40,000 in today's values).⁶¹ This compared to the £100 given to each of Aberconwy and Valle Crucis, both of those monasteries being nearer to the main battle front. In the run-up to the war, the construction of a royal castle at Llanbadarn Fawr (Aberystwyth) meant that Strata Florida had to cede some land, but again it was compensated.⁶² In November 1278, Abbot Philip commissioned one of his monks, Clement, to seek redress from the king and the royal courts, against those demanding customs and exactions contrary to the liberties of the order.⁶³ In February 1281, the abbot was amongst several persons testifying, at a royal enquiry held in Llanbadarn Fawr, as to Welsh legal processes.⁶⁴ Later that year, the troubled times saw the abbot absent from the General Chapter in Burgundy.⁶⁵

There was some relief in those difficult days when, on St Brigid's Day (1 February) 1282, the new bishop of St David's, Thomas Bek, sang his first Mass in his diocese at Strata Florida whilst en route to his installation.⁶⁶ Problems remained, not least that of food supply. It was perhaps because of the destruction of arable land and grain stored in barns, that saw the monks of Strata Florida obtain royal letters of protection in 1283, from the king then at Caernarfon, aiding them whilst they were 'buying victuals for the maintenance of their house'.⁶⁷

One indication of the extent that warfare impinged on Strata Florida's lands came in the repeated royal commands for the monastery, and other leading landowners, to cut back its woods where they bordered routeways, that 'the passage for traversing them may be safe and open' (1278).⁶⁸ It was 'expedient for the keeping of the peace, and for the security of those passing through' (1280).⁶⁹ Very probably, the Crown had its soldiers in mind; though, in 1278, it was also suggested that the woods were a safe haven for robbers and murderers. The monastic woodland had not only to be cut back, but also brought under

cultivation, so that secondary vegetation did not spring up, and the areas revert to being safe environments for wrongdoers. The command was repeated in 1284, suggesting perhaps the monks had been somewhat tardy in complying.⁷⁰ Very much later, around 1538, John Leland, the travelling antiquary, noted that ‘men destroyed the great woods [of Strata Florida] so that they should not harbour thieves’.⁷¹ They had by then also been ‘sore wasted’ in the search for charcoal to smelt the local lead ores, and regrowth was hampered by the depredations wrought by goats.⁷²

The difficulties of these years were compounded by friction with Cynan ap Maredudd ab Owain (a great-great grandson of the Lord Rhys) and his tenants, regarding the boundaries of the abbey’s Mefenydd grange which, by this time had probably been much enlarged. Agreement was reached in July 1280, after arbitration, and the concord submitted to the Justice of Assize. The choice of arbitrators kept the matter, so to speak, within the family. Gruffydd ap Maredudd took the part of his brother, whilst the abbots of Whitland and Llantarnam, Strata Florida’s mother and daughter house, upheld its interests.⁷³

Then, hardly was the Conquest over when, the *Chronicle of St Werburgh* penned, lightning sparked off (‘within twelve days of Christmas’ in 1284) a severe fire at the abbey, which devoured the belfry, the roofs and the choir books. Only the presbytery was spared, and this mercy was attributed to the presence there of the Reserved Sacrament: ‘the body of Our Lord on the great altar under lock’. (The fire took hold during the night whilst the community was at rest.) Interestingly, the chronicle refers to this form of reservation of the Blessed Sacrament as then being a ‘universal custom’. Centuries later, excavation proved that molten lead had trickled from the church roof into the interstices of the walls.⁷⁴ The fire spread to other parts of the monastery: the *Annales Cambriae* (giving a date of 1286) refers to ‘the burning of houses’ at Strata Florida.⁷⁵ A third edition of the *Brut y Tywysogyon* recorded that ‘in 1280, Einion the Saxon became abbot, in whose time the monastery was burnt by an accidental fire’.⁷⁶

The last decade of the thirteenth century opened with the abbey having to seek redress against the new lord of Cedewain, Edmund Mortimer. The monks had received in frankalmoign their property at Abermîwl from the Welsh lord, Maredudd ap Robert. Mortimer now tried to compel the monks to find all necessary food for him and his household every Friday of the year (perhaps it was his hunting day), and to make suit at his baronial court.⁷⁷ Moreover, Mortimer’s men had removed by way of distraint oxen and beasts from the monastic grange at Abermîwl. Appeal in 1291 to the monarch, then at Y Fenni (Abergavenny), was partly successful, but not completely the end of the matter.⁷⁸

The abbot in these years was still Anian the Saxon. He, in 1295, during the revolt led by Madog ap Llywelyn, ‘foolishly’ promised Edward I that he would bring the Welsh rebels in Ceredigion into submission. His failure to do so caused an irate monarch (who was left waiting needlessly at an agreed venue) to order the countryside to be burnt. A later chronicle described how ‘both abbey and country’ were wrapped in flame.⁷⁹ The abbey buildings and its crops were badly affected, though the king later noted that the monastery had been burnt ‘contrary to our wishes’. The damage must have been considerable for, in 1300, the monks received royal permission ‘to rebuild on its former site their abbey which was burned in the Welsh war’. (The use of ‘former’ rather than ‘same’ is of interest.) The permission, however, was conditional upon further clearance of such woodland, especially around paths and roads, ‘which may become a source of danger in the future’.⁸⁰

Intriguingly, and probably a reflection of the current difficulties, in the spring of 1295 Strata Florida gained papal confirmation of the grant allegedly made to it by Bishop Cadwgan of Bangor (1215–36), himself perhaps a former monk of the abbey, of the church of the large rural parish of Llangurig.⁸¹ The troubles of the times may also have accounted for the indebtedness of Whitland and Strata Florida abbeys, to the tune of £560, to the rector of Llanbadarn Fawr, Walter de Estayaco.⁸² The abbot (perhaps still Anian) had some prestige in the eyes of the Crown, being summoned to Parliament on seven occasions between 1295 and 1307, more times than any other Welsh Cistercian abbot.⁸³ In 1294, Abbot Anian had

been a witness at Cardigan to a charter of Llywelyn, son of Roger Mortimer of west Wales,⁸⁴ in 1299, with the abbot of Whitland, he headed a commission enquiring into complaints of financial exactions against the justice of west Wales and the bailiff of Cardigan.⁸⁵

Literary activity

At a time when the memory of monastic days was still fresh in peoples' minds, Humphrey Lloyd and David Powell in translating and augmenting Caradoc of Llancarfan's *The Historie of Cambria*, published in 1584 after Lloyd's death, told how from 1156: 'The succession and acts of the Brytish Princes were kept and recorded from time to time' by scribes at Strata Florida and Aberconwy with regular consultation between the two abbeys (mother and daughter-house). They were referring to the *Brut y Tywysogyon* ('the Chronicle of the Princes'), which they termed 'the Brytish booke of Stratflur'. They also told how the poet Gutun Owain (d. 1480), presumably when resident at Strata Florida, wrote 'the best and most perfect copy of the same'.⁸⁶

The actual *Brut*, written in Latin, gave valuable details of the history of Strata Florida,⁸⁷ and was perhaps (certainly from 1175 onwards) an abbreviation of lost annals of Strata Florida referred to in the text.⁸⁸ It is no longer extant, but at both Strata Florida and Valle Crucis abbeys copies were made.⁸⁹ The internal evidence suggests that scribes of Strata Florida had a hand in the compilation of the *Brut*, taking this over from the *clas* at Llanbadarn Fawr.⁹⁰ The Strata Florida copy took its final form shortly after the Edwardian Conquest; that of Valle Crucis was written up until the year 1332.⁹¹

One of the monastic scribes involved in preparing Strata Florida's version also appears to have worked in the same years of the early fourteenth century on the preparation of the Hendregadredd Manuscript.⁹² The latter, a collection of the verse of the court poets associated with the Welsh rulers of the previous two centuries, has been described as 'a poetic counterpart' to the *Brut*.⁹³ The supposition is that it, too, emanated from Strata Florida's scriptorium. Its monastic background is also perhaps attested by the near contemporaneous Latin note of approval, *bonum est*, noted in the margin against one of the poems.⁹⁴

The authoritative recent work regarding both the *Brut* and the Hendregadredd Manuscript is that undertaken by Daniel Huws. He also suggests that Strata Florida was 'the midwife, if not the mother of the White Book of Rhydderch'.⁹⁵ In the past other scholars have suggested that Neath may have copied the Red Book of Hergest from a Strata Florida manuscript,⁹⁶ whilst the abbreviated Domesday Book attributed to Strata Florida seems to have been a copy of one at Margam.⁹⁷ One of the Latin texts of the *Annales Cambriae* (an independent version for 1203–86) is written on the Strata Florida copy, the last entry referring to the conflagration at the abbey in 1286.⁹⁸

Literary activity at Strata Florida was not confined to its own scribes; as will be noted below at least one of its abbots played an important role, whilst the poets to whom it afforded hospitality could be lavish in their praise of the monastery and its abbots. Another form of very necessary work for the monastic copyists was the entering of the abbey's charters into registers or cartularies, none of these have survived, nor has the abbey's late twelfth-century copy of the order's Book of Usages, which the monks consulted in 1202 during their dealings with Giraldus Cambrensis.⁹⁹

The fourteenth century

Little is known of the monastery in the first half of the fourteenth century, save that now west Wales was under Crown control, the abbey had to rebuff endeavours to force it to pay suit of court at Cardigan in respect of its properties in Ceredigion. The monks complained to Edward III (in 1336) that the lands had been granted in 'frankalmoign' ('pure and perpetual alms'), that the constable of Cardigan had distrained them, and the monarch allowed them only to be impleaded at Llabadarn.¹⁰⁰ The matter rumbled on, and in 1344 it was alleged before the justices of the Black Prince that Strata Florida, amongst other

monasteries, had not paid its customary suit of court at Cardigan for forty years.¹⁰¹ The defence of the monastery's privileges led to 'considerable expense and labour', and was not entirely successful. The abbot of Strata Florida did, in 1343, pay allegiance at Llanbadarn Fawr, and later at Carmarthen, to the Black Prince's commissioners.

By this time, there were internal problems at the abbey itself. The position of abbot was a privileged and influential one, especially at a period when monastic lands started to be demised; and who became abbot could be a matter which concerned, for whatever reason, local people of power. It would appear, according to his account, that before 1344 one of the monks of Strata Florida, Clement ap Richard, was elected by his fellows to be their abbot, but that another monk, Llywelyn Fychan, 'with no pretence of election',¹⁰² and his accomplices, ousted Clement from his new position. Clement appealed to the General Chapter—who ordered an inquiry by the abbots of Beaulieu and Thame, but this found in Llywelyn's favour, the General Chapter in September 1344 confirming him in the abbacy.¹⁰³ Clement then appealed to his namesake, Pope Clement III—who, in March 1345, deputed the bishop of Hereford and others to act for him. The case dragged on (with different papal deputies) for two years before being apparently decided by them in Clement's favour.¹⁰⁴

The Black Prince (to whom Llywelyn appealed) took the latter's side, ordering the justice of South Wales (July 1346) not to allow Clement's party sustenance at the monastery until they had done obedience to Llywelyn as abbot, and had returned goods (including chalices) they had allegedly removed from the abbey.¹⁰⁵ Llywelyn then (27 April 1347) appealed to the Court of Arches (where Clement was represented by counsel),¹⁰⁶ but (in October 1347) had to have further recourse to the Black Prince who again enjoined the justice to maintain Llywelyn in the abbacy.¹⁰⁷ The Black Prince let slip that the whole matter arose 'because of some persons who are interfering to maintain the party in the wrong'.¹⁰⁸ This was the root of the matter, external—probably secular—forces, to whom the choice of abbot mattered. Was Clement wronged? Was Llywelyn favoured because of his connections—for the poet, Llywelyn Goch ap Meurig Hen praised him as 'a lion of battle, of the line of another Llywelyn, a fortunate and wise father'.¹⁰⁹ The whole affair was extremely detrimental to the economic and spiritual well-being of the abbey.¹¹⁰

Llywelyn remained as abbot of Strata Florida for, it appears, another thirty-three years.¹¹¹ The Celtic poets, finding hospitality in his monastery, not unnaturally spoke highly of him; in particular, Llywelyn Goch wrote of his being 'remarkable in his manner, a good governor, highly respected, a handsome abbot.' He also told how Abbot Llywelyn was once critically ill, but that God was merciful and 'extended the life of one who does not engender hatred, a good abbot'.¹¹² It was in Llywelyn's time that the poet, Dafydd ap Gwilym may have found an eventide home at Strata Florida. The dates given for his death vary, the most recent being as early as 1350.¹¹³ Talley abbey also claims Dafydd's bones, but tradition—and a solitary poetic reference—suggest that he was buried by a yew tree in Strata Florida's large cemetery.¹¹⁴

Abbot Llywelyn also gained in stature in the eyes of the Crown. When, in 1377, Richard II shortly after his accession allowed Strata Florida to appropriate the church of Pencarreg, the monarch said that it was both 'in fulfilment of the late prince's intention, and in consideration of the high place the abbot held with him and now holds with us'.¹¹⁵ In 1380, Llywelyn still ruled at Strata Florida when, in October 1380, the monastery received confirmation of his charters.¹¹⁶ He probably died shortly thereafter, as a new abbot was ordained priest in March 1383.¹¹⁷ It was perhaps Llywelyn Fychan's influence for good in mid-Wales that earned him royal commendation.

It was not always thus. In the early 1350s, Abbot Llywelyn was bound over in the sum of £20 to appear at the next judicial Sessions to be held at Cardigan.¹¹⁸ It was alleged that in 1348 the abbot, together with one of his novices,¹¹⁹ broke into a chest in the abbey gatehouse and took away seven marks; that in 1349 he received for his larder venison as a gift from thieves; that in 1351 he acquiesced when two of the

monks¹²⁰ waylaid¹²¹ and robbed at Claerwen two burgesses of Cardigan journeying on the ‘Monk’s Trod’;¹²² that in 1352, he broke into a chest in the house of Llywelyn the priest in the commote of Pennardd and stole 15 marks; that he appropriated for the abbey no less than sixty of the holdings of Cardigan Priory, and that he had received at Strata Florida his outlawed kinsman, Adda ap Rhys ap Madog, the former beadle of the Cardiganshire commote of Perfedd.

The truth of these matters is not known.¹²³ It could be that the apparent theft of money was a means of obtaining payment of a rent or subsidy due. What is of interest, is the reminder that medieval monasteries received chattels and cash of private individuals in safe keeping. The proceedings also reveal that in 1350 twenty-two pigs belonging to the monastery were stolen in Mefenydd, and that the robbers were placed in the abbey prison: a reflection of the pastoral economy of Mefenydd grange, and a reminder that most large abbeys had two prisons (one for erring monks, the other for wayward laity). The latter was usually sited in or close to the gatehouse.

The Glyn Dŵr revolt

The nationwide uprising which commenced in the autumn of 1400, was a serious challenge to English royal authority in the Principality, and the religious institutions of north and central Wales could not expect to escape unscathed. If monasteries were seen as having good relations with the Crown they might well be a target for Welsh reprisals; if, on the other hand, they harboured the king’s enemies the English forces might exact retribution. It did not perhaps help Strata Florida in Welsh eyes when Henry IV and his army lodged there in the autumn of 1401, but its immediate difficulties on that occasion came from the English troops who, Adam of Usk alleged, ‘converted the church and its choir, even up to the high altar, into a stable, and completely stripped it of its plate’.¹²⁴

Once the monarch had withdrawn, the granges and lands of the monastery were ‘devastated by the aggression of the Welsh rebels, and by divers ridings of the king’s lieges in those parts’. In other words, the barns, crops and stock of the abbey were caught in the crossfire of war, and the dispersion of the monks was feared.¹²⁵ On 1 April 1402, therefore, Henry IV extended his protection to the abbey, and committed it to secular custody.¹²⁶ This meant that laymen of substance (in this instance Thomas Percy, earl of Worcester), and a royal clerk (John Belyng) took over the business administration of the monastery. Pensions and annuities due from the monastery had to be foregone, and all income applied for the needs of the abbot, his monks and possessions. It was a typical procedure followed in troubled times.¹²⁷

The abbey was further used as a military barracks for English troops in 1407 (for 120 men-at-arms and 360 archers) and in 1415 (for 40 men-at-arms and 80 archers).¹²⁸ The excuse given in 1407 for commandeering the abbey was partly ‘to guard and defend it from the malice of the rebels’, but more cogently to have a base from which ‘to ride after and make war with the rebels, as well in south Wales as in north Wales’. Clearly, Strata Florida’s central position was advantageous in this respect. This perhaps unwilling association with the Crown forces probably led to the attacks, which the monks later claimed took place against the abbey itself. The monks may have overstated the facts when, in 1441, they claimed that ‘their house was so spoiled by Owain and the Welsh rebels, the walls of the church excepted, that the same could not be repaired without the king’s aid’.¹²⁹ They were perhaps hoping for compensation to assist a building project. If such damage was done, it probably initiated the disintegration of the refectory and infirmary which John Leland noted (about 1538) as being ‘mere ruins’.¹³⁰

The mid-fifteenth century

The confirmation of the abbey’s charters early in the reign of Henry VI should have heralded a time of peace and prosperity for the abbey, but it was not to be. At mid-Lent in the sixth year of that

monarch's reign (1428), a stormy petrel, John ap Rhys, abbot of Aberconwy, is alleged to have come to Strata Florida (its mother house) 'with a great troop of armed people and archers' to have imprisoned many of the monks, occupied the abbey for forty days (divine service being interrupted), consumed its food, and stolen books, silver, vestments and stock (to the value of 2,000 marks: around £600,000 in modern equivalent).¹³¹ Worse still, ap Rhys used the common seal of Strata Florida to demise granges, and to obtain loans of 'great sums of money'. As a consequence, the community found itself, 'grievously impleaded, to its great ruin and destruction'. At this juncture in time, considering the combined effects of the Rebellion and such wanton large-scale theft, it is a wonder that the monastery survived. The incident also reflected grave shortcomings within the Cistercian order in parts of Wales, and the weakening of control of the member abbeys by its General Chapter.

Worse was to come! Abbots of those monasteries (like Strata Florida) which possessed the income from parish churches were liable to be called upon as sub-collectors by the local diocesan bishop, whenever a subsidy or tenth was granted to pope or king. The collection of such monies was fraught with difficulties in a turbulent Wales, as the clergy might be unable or unwilling to pay. The abbot concerned was responsible for gathering in the monies, and liable to penalties if he failed. In 1416, in the aftermath of the Glyn Dŵr uprising, the then abbot petitioned the Crown to be excused part of the monies due because of the destruction to ecclesiastical property caused by the rebellion.¹³² On four occasions in the 1430s, Abbot Richard of Strata Florida was deputed as a collector in the archdeaconry of Cardigan.¹³³ Unable as he was to raise the cash required, the Crown authorities committed him to Carmarthen prison, and there (around 1439) he died. Property of the abbey were taken by way of distraint 'so that no cloth remained on any table or bed', and after the abbot's death 'divers persons came to the abbey, and took the monies and evidences concerning them.' It was a time of severe difficulty for the monastery; fortunately, in 1442, Henry VI pardoned all the debt and restored those lands taken in distraint.¹³⁴

The chronology of these years at Strata Florida presents problems,¹³⁵ but it appears that this bestowal of royal favour came in the time of Abbot Rhys ap Dafydd ap Llywelyn who ruled the abbey for three or four years. The poet, Guto'r Glyn, showed that Rhys had enemies: 'Rhys, thou hast never been vanquished, no matter what the claims brought against thee by abbots or laymen',¹³⁶ whilst Dafydd Nanmor described 'the four years of Abbot Rhys'.¹³⁷ Guto also told of the monastery in Rhys's day exhibiting bountiful charity to both 'rich and poor', helping 'to feed the people of Deheubarth'. All, he said, were welcome for the monastery's gates were 'unlocked and un-portered', though that should perhaps not be taken literally.¹³⁸ When Rhys died, Guto was overcome. He told how Rhys had given him a position of respect in the monastery, and gave him 'wine and mead in his hall'. Guto lamented, 'the death of my chief, respect for me is dead; the death of our splendid well respected abbot; the death of my soul (great woe has befallen his monks)'.¹³⁹

Abbot Rhys died it appears around 1441, and in his stead was elected one William Morris, who was instituted by Abbot David of Whitland,¹⁴⁰ and John ap Rhys, abbot of Cymer. Morris alleged that early in 1443, after he had been abbot for two years, John ap Rhys, pretending to the king that he, Morris, had been deposed, came and took Strata Florida by force. He expelled William Morris and some of the monks, imprisoning them in Aberystwyth Castle, and there they stayed until released by the justiciar for South Wales, Sir William ap Thomas. The king took the abbey under his protection, and decided that, for the time being, neither John ap Rhys nor William Morris should govern the house.¹⁴¹ The upshot was that neither John nor William remained there as abbot, and a new and happier time came for Strata Florida. In the spring of 1444, Morgan ap Rhys, one of the monks, and said to be the son of a married man and an unmarried woman, received papal dispensation on account of his bastardy, enabling his promotion within the order.¹⁴² He it was who now became abbot.

As for William Morris, he received dispensation from his monastic vow of stability, allowing him to hold for life a benefice, thus providing him an income. The papal letter permitting this showed once again that external secular pressures had affected the outcome of an abbatial election. The pontiff noted that William ‘having incurred the enmity of powerful men of those parts’, and ‘fearing that the monastery might suffer in consequence’, had therefore resigned.¹⁴³ As one hundred years before, the monks had not been allowed the abbot of their choice; and, once again, outside influences and internal division cannot have been to the spiritual welfare and economic good of the abbey. Indeed, once again divine service was for some time suspended, and the monastery was described as being reduced to a state of ‘annihilation and manifest desolation’.

The lengthy abbacy of Morgan ap Rhys (1444 to at least 1486),¹⁴⁴ seemingly quite young when elected, was a period when once again Strata Florida seems to have flourished. The abbot continued the work of fabric restoration which Abbot Rhys had commenced. Dafydd Nanmor, in a *cywydd*, told how Morgan repaired the church choir which had been much damaged: ‘he cut ten complete windows, half the cost of this went in glass’, and he made an oak roof ‘covered with heavy lead’.¹⁴⁵ It is quite apparent that, for some three decades after the Glyn Dŵr revolt, portions of Strata Florida abbey were still in a ruinous state.

Abbot Morgan did much more. He made the monastery into a centre where culture and learning flourished. He himself was no mean scholar. In a marginal note written in a collection of pedigrees of Welsh nobility given in a Mostyn manuscript (of the later sixteenth century), the scribe cites the authority of ‘the great roll written by Morgan, abbot of Ystrad Fflur, a skilful and venerable teacher’.¹⁴⁶ In a Panton manuscript, regarding an enquiry held at Pembroke Castle in August 1460 into the pedigree of the earl of Pembroke, comes mention of ‘Bookys of Remembrans founde in the ancient abbey of Strata Florida . . . the rowls of Morgan Abbot, and many other such books and warrants of authority’.¹⁴⁷ It was probably the climate created at Strata Florida by the abbacy of Morgan ap Rhys which encouraged Gutun Owain (d. 1480) to produce (presumably at the monastery, where the originals will have been) ‘the best and most perfect copy of the successions and acts of the Princes of Wales’: the *Brut y Tywysogyon*. These words were written by Humphrey Llwyd less than a century after the scribe’s death.¹⁴⁸

The close of the fifteenth century

Abbot Morgan was still in office in November 1486,¹⁴⁹ but appears to have died shortly thereafter. The ensuing years were ones where different sources make an assessment of the chronological succession of the abbots very difficult. It does appear that an abbot John succeeded Morgan,¹⁵⁰ but this was a time of sharp division within the Cistercian order as a whole with, from 1484 to 1487, relentless polemic between the senior abbots of Cîteaux and Clairvaux.¹⁵¹ Not unnaturally, Strata Florida and Aberconwy abbeys took the side of Clairvaux, being of its ‘family’, and it seems that a non-Welshman, and a fervent protagonist for Clairvaux, had been (at least technically) made abbot of Strata Florida. Whether he ever saw the monastery is a different matter.

On 12 March 1487, the abbot of Stratford, Middlesex, writing to the abbot of Cîteaux, said that, ‘we were trying to lay hold of a certain monk of Clairvaux come to these parts, but a wary brother, William Marlow, his guide, evaded our hand and seceded to the northern fathers’. Later, he continued, Marlow returned to the royal court in London, ‘to vent his poisonous mind, and we took him and have imprisoned him’. He also told the abbot of Cîteaux that ‘some Welsh fathers are leaning from your rule’.¹⁵² On 6 June, Marlow had apparently been released, and was entrusted by the king with a royal missive to Cîteaux. This referred to Marlow as being the ‘lawful’ abbot of Strata Florida, to ‘perverse abbots of your order’, and to false evidence concerning Marlow who had been placed ‘in a house of correction for no small time’—probably the monastic prison at Stratford. The king also commended Marlow for his negotiations.¹⁵³

Nothing further is known of the matter, but whoever was abbot in 1490 was taken ill whilst riding to institute a new abbot at Aberconwy; returning to Strata Florida to die.¹⁵⁴ The bursar of Fountains Abbey, Marmaduke Huby praised him for his daily recitation of the rosary, and his rapid advancement from the status of secular priest to be abbot of his house.¹⁵⁵ By 1495, another brother John was abbot, promoted from the office of prior; it was recorded of him that he, alone amongst the Cistercian abbots of Wales, refused the payment of tenths to the Holy See.¹⁵⁶ Described by Huby as creating ‘maximum scandal’ to the order, he was ‘publicly excommunicated’ and deposed from office. His offence was the greater since, when the papal collector, Peter de Seranis, together with Huby (now abbot of Fountains) had visited Wales, abbot John had promised to pay, but after they had left he refused.¹⁵⁷

At some stage in these decades, though whether before or after abbot John is uncertain, a notable abbot reigned at Strata Florida. He was Dafydd ab Owain, a native of Meifod in Montgomeryshire, who held from Oxford doctorates in both civil and canon law.¹⁵⁸ Whilst favoured by a noble patron, perhaps John Grey, from 1482 until his death in 1497, first Baron Grey of Powys, Dafydd gave financial support to Henry Tudor prior to 1485. A Denbighshire poet, Ieuan Llwyd Brydydd, telling of this, wrote: ‘Harry was glad to repay you, he has given you an abbacy’.¹⁵⁹ A Mostyn manuscript has a footnote saying of Dafydd: ‘He was advanced from Ystrad fflur to Ystrad marchell abbey and Aberconwy and held the three together.’¹⁶⁰

It is possible, given the instability of Cistercian life in Wales in the latter fifteenth century, that Abbot Dafydd played a supervisory role at some stage abbeys other than his own. He had been ordained deacon and priest, whilst a monk of Strata Marcella, in Lichfield cathedral in 1466,¹⁶¹ and (despite the Mostyn evidence) a possible chronology is that he was abbot of Strata Marcella in the 1480s, abbot of Strata Florida in the later 1490s, before becoming abbot of Aberconwy and also a notable bishop of St Asaph (1503–13).¹⁶² Of Abbot Dafydd’s time at Strata Florida very little is known, but in a *cynydd* written at that time Ieuan Deulwyn addressed him as, ‘The flower of abbots, a living saint from distant Powys, lineage and learning have come down [to us in him].’¹⁶³

The closing years

The names of only forty of Strata Florida’s monks and eleven of its *conversi* have come down to us. Mostly all are Welsh down to the reign of Henry VIII, when the occurrence in its community of Henry Howton (1515), James Whitney (1515), and Richard Smith and Thomas Durham (1534–39),¹⁶⁴ suggest a wider net being cast for vocations. The abbey at its suppression also housed Richard Mayott, who must be the monk of that name who when made subdeacon in 1495 was a religious of Dieulacres Abbey, Staffordshire.¹⁶⁵ There was also Richard Dorston, formerly a monk of Dore (by 1466), who had risen to be abbot at Grace Dieu (1486–88) and then of Dore itself (1496–1500). His appearance next as abbot of Strata Florida (c. 1505–13) is surprising, since he had been effectively deposed at Dore for ‘inordinate rule and governance’.¹⁶⁶

Dorston seems to have been succeeded as abbot of Strata Florida by Richard Talley (perhaps by 1516), an Oxford graduate,¹⁶⁷ whose lengthy abbacy was marred only towards its close when one monk tried to oust him,¹⁶⁸ whilst another (possibly the same one), was imprisoned for coining. On Saturday, 20 June 1534, the monk, Richard Smith and a layman, Ieuan ab Hywel, were discovered using moulds and fire to attempt to forge coins. Arrested by Abbot Talley and put in irons, they spent eleven weeks in Carmarthen prison, and one month in Aberystwyth Castle and prison, before being examined by the King’s Commissioners in the Marches at Shrewsbury on 1 and 2 October. Each then tried to put the blame on the other. The outcome of the case is unknown, but Smith was still a monk of the house at its dissolution five years later. It may be that Talley seized this opportunity to be rid of a rebellious monk. The proceedings mention that before their unsuccessful enterprise, Smith and Ieuan had been drinking

together in the house of one John ap Dyo in the precincts, and had paid for their drinks.¹⁶⁹ Was this a tavern for the abbey's retainers?

Other difficulties, or possibly an awareness of the impending Dissolution, may have presented themselves at this time. In 1533, Strata Florida granted an annuity of £1 (perhaps in excess of £300 in today's values) to its attorney, Maurice ap David.¹⁷⁰ That same year, it also granted a substantial annuity of £4 (about £1200 or more in modern terms) to a clerk, Philip ap John, for 'good counsel, help and advice'. This annuity was by way of compensation. Philip had resigned (16 August) the parish of Cefnlllys, making way for a monk of Strata Florida, Hugh Jones, to hold the living—and thus bring extra income to the abbey. On the previous day (15 August), 'for his further assurance and sure payment', the community had guaranteed the annuity 'out of the coffers of the abbey'.¹⁷¹ More significantly perhaps, and also in 1533, a new steward was appointed; an official who had a great say in the abbey's affairs, and (usually by means of a deputy) presided henceforth over the abbey's manorial courts.¹⁷² He was none less than Lord Ferrers, Chief Justice of South Wales and, amongst other posts, he also held the stewardships of Whitland Abbey¹⁷³ and Llanllŷr nunnery.¹⁷⁴

The Dissolution

At an unknown date, perhaps in the spring of 1536, the commissioners appointed to visit all the religious houses of Wales must have come to Strata Florida and, a little later, the abbey—its annual value less than the £200 the Crown required for continuance—was technically 'dissolved'; in other words, 'taken into the king's hands'. It is not certain that there was an actual break in monastic life at Strata Florida, for on 30 January 1537 (and in common with Neath and Whitland abbeys) Henry VIII, taking into account 'the monastic exercise of piety and hospitality' consented to 'erect and renew the abbey . . . for ever'. Richard Talley, 'lately abbot' was allowed to resume his position, and the estates of the abbey were restored to it.¹⁷⁵ The monarch's graciousness did not come cheaply, the monastery was expected to pay over to the Crown 1,000 marks (£666).

Like Whitland and Neath, Strata Florida endeavoured to raise in part the large sum required by splitting up its estates, renegotiating existing leases and demanding heavy entry fines of new tenants. Its receiver-general (William Devereux, son of Lord Ferrers, and appointed on 12 May 1538 with 'plenary powers') had a hand in the later stages.¹⁷⁶ The properties demised included the granges of Morfa Bychan (for an advance payment of £80)¹⁷⁷ and Nant Bau (for £100 in advance),¹⁷⁸ and the rectorial tithes (for £40 each) of Llangurig¹⁷⁹ and Pencarreg.¹⁸⁰ In each case a substantial sum had been 'beforehand paid'. These leases, part of a succession traceable from 11 December 1536 to 25 November 1538, raised nearly £400 in entry fines.¹⁸¹

Ready cash was also almost certainly obtained when the monastery granted annuities in 1537 to Ieuan Gwyn (£2; for 'aids and services'),¹⁸² and to Richard Greneway and John Dorman (for 'great liberalities shewn'),¹⁸³ and, in 1538, to Gruffydd Leyson, 'doctor of laws'.¹⁸⁴ The abbey also raised loans; the largest being that of £100 lent by its receiver-general, William Devereux (20 August 1538).¹⁸⁵ Despite all this, by 30 September 1538, the abbey had paid the Crown but £66, compared to £400 given up by Whitland.¹⁸⁶

Two incidents of note marked the short extension of conventual life which Strata Florida then enjoyed. The first was the visit there around 1538 of the travelling antiquary, John Leland. He left a full description of the monastery, telling not only of the state of ruin of its refectory and infirmary, but also mentioning the 'cemetery wherein the country about doth bury', as being 'very large, and meanly walled with stone', and noting the extent of its estates, its lead mine, its fishing potential, and the ravages wrought (by men and goats) to the local woodland. Leland also implied bilingualism at the monastery; he wrote that a monk of Strata Florida told him 'for a certainty that Newport in Kemeysland is called Tredraith in Welsh'.¹⁸⁷ Another visitor to Strata Florida during its last months was Edward Waters, the Particular Receiver for the abbeys in south Wales already dissolved. He later wrote and thanked Abbot Talley for the 'good cheer' afforded him there.¹⁸⁸

The other episode worthy of note concerned a 'picture of Jesus' which, when Abbey Cwmhir had earlier closed (on 2 March 1537), Abbot Talley had obtained for Strata Florida from the Crown receiver and auditor at the sale of goods there. Hardly a month had passed when the parishioners of Cwmhir desired its return to adorn a chapel being built for them. Sir Richard Riche (Chancellor of the Court of Augmentations) wrote (10 April) to Abbot Talley: 'We require you, if you have bought the picture to deliver it for as much as you have paid for it, and, if you have it but in keeping, deliver it'.¹⁸⁹ Edward Waters also (14 April) whilst thanking the abbot for his hospitality, mentioned that 'Edward Bewte of Ludlow has made great suit to Master Chancellor (Thomas Cromwell) 'for the picture of Cwmhir which the auditor and I delivered to your monk, Sir John, and they would fain have it again'.¹⁹⁰

Despite the money raised, Strata Florida Abbey (like Neath and Whitland) did not long survive. It was a cruel blow, given all that effort to raise the finance expected, when the Crown on 21 February 1539 finally closed the abbey down, alleging the 'spontaneous' acquiescence of the community.¹⁹¹ The eight monks, who remained in the abbey at the time, shortly afterwards received formal permission to hold a benefice (if granted one) and to wear the dress of a secular priest instead of their Cistercian habit.¹⁹² Each also received a small pension, payable from Lady Day (25 March) that year. The abbot, Richard Talley, was more fortunate, being awarded an annual payment of £40 (at least £12,000 in today's terms).¹⁹³ In addition, he became, successively, vicar of Llangathen (Carms., 1544),¹⁹⁴ rector of Egwlys Gymun (Carms., 1548),¹⁹⁵ and later held the prebendal church of Llandyfrïog (Cards., 1555).¹⁹⁶ The deployment of the remaining monks is unknown for certain, save in two cases. This may be because those who hailed from England had returned there.¹⁹⁷

Under the Crown, Sir Richard Devereux appears to have held the abbey and most of its estates until his death in 1547. The abbey site passed from his family, in 1564, to Walter, Viscount Hereford, who sold it in 1571 to John Stedman.¹⁹⁸ It remained in the hands of the Stedman family (who built the 'Stedman House' on the foundations of the ruined refectory) until the eighteenth century when it passed, by marriage to the Powells of Nanteos. Like other monastic sites, a great deal of the stone was probably robbed for building purposes.¹⁹⁹ The Crown, however, reserved to itself the lead and the bells. After the closure of the abbey, Richard Devereux took the lead to Aberystwyth where, presumably in the castle grounds, there remained of it as late as about 1550, 'Eleven score of sows, every sow containing in weight by estimation one hundred pounds';²⁰⁰ immediately after the Dissolution the estimate of lead had been put at five 'fothers'.²⁰¹ The three bells of the monastery were sold to the parish of Caron, by the Crown grantee's agent, Henry Evered.²⁰²

Any residential abbey servants will have found themselves unemployed as a consequence of the monastery's closure; those working on the granges were hopefully kept on by the Devereuxs. It may be that the monastic employees had their distinct livery to wear, for when in 1528 Richard ap Gruffydd was appointed bailiff of the grange at Nant Bau, he was granted annually 'one tunic like the other servants'.²⁰³ As for the local populace in general, around three hundred (some living up to seven miles from their parish churches) had been accustomed to worship in their own chapel built within the monastery or its precincts. Two priests were paid by the abbey (out of tithe revenues) to minister to them. After 21 February 1539, the Crown Receiver discharged these clerics, but local pressure culminated in the provision of £5 6s 8d, for a chaplain to serve 'in the chapel of Stratflur'. He was John York, one of the ousted monks.²⁰⁴

Economic history

Monasteries of the Cistercian order were intended to be self-supporting, and so agriculture and fishing, mining, industry and trade, were important sectors within their economy. In all this the monks were assisted by numerous hired labourers and, down to the late fourteenth century, by a body of lay-brethren

termed the *conversi*. The principal units of agricultural exploitation were major farms known as granges. On the lands of Strata Florida in Ceredigion, the lands of the proximate Cwmystwyth, Mefenydd and Pennardd granges may have been administered directly from the abbey, and worked at first by the *conversi* living in its west range. It has been suggested that in this ‘heartland’ the monks inherited a quasi-manorial Celtic usage, with semi-free tenants rendering attendant dues and customs, and with but slight traces of demesne cultivation.²⁰⁵ Certainly the pattern in the later Middle Ages, how far this was true in the twelfth/early thirteenth centuries is less certain. Austin and Bezzant argue strongly, and probably very correctly, that the inherited tenancies meant that the granges of Strata Florida did not reflect the more usual Cistercian pattern of grange management. They also dispute previous suggestions that the evidence of local pollen analysis demonstrated an increase of cultivation should be ascribed to the coming to Ceredigion of the white monks.²⁰⁶ Russell points out that by the Dissolution the abbey’s lessees were either tenants-at-will—in practice holding a property from year to year, or leaseholders—for a fixed term of years or a number of lives.²⁰⁷

On the more distant granges there will certainly have been, at least until the close of the thirteenth century, a nucleus (with oratory, barn, and living quarters) manned by *conversi* and hired labourers. The enduring place-names of *mynachty* (on Blaenaeron grange),²⁰⁸ and especially *cwrt* (as on Abermîwl, Celynog and Y Dywarchen granges),²⁰⁹ are indicative of such former grange headquarters. So far as Strata Florida is concerned, only vestigial medieval traces (like mill leats—as at Aberdihonw) are to be found on its former granges, whilst the names of only a dozen of its few lay-brethren are known.²¹⁰ The foundations of Capel Madog, the chapel of Cwmteuddwr grange, are now barely visible,²¹¹ whilst Nantbau grange was served by Capel Peulin.²¹² A chapel is very probably indicated by the place-name, *Broncapel*, on the abbey’s Blaenaeron grange.²¹³ Abbot Morgan, demising Abermîwl grange in 1486 to Meredith ap Rees, insisted that he built a chapel (probably meaning an upgrade on an earlier oratory) and repaired the mill.²¹⁴

The bulk of Strata Florida’s estates were granted to it by the Lord Rhys and members of his family,²¹⁵ though the isolated granges in Powys of Abermîwl and Celynog may have been the gift of Maredudd ap Rhotpert (Lord of Cedewain).²¹⁶ Shortly after Rhys had died (1197), the monastery hastened to obtain confirmatory charters (and new grants) from his sons, Maelgwn and Rhys, and his grandson, Rhys ap Gruffydd.²¹⁷ Soon, too, after the accession of a new monarch the monks found it politic, on payment of a fee, to obtain successive royal approbations of their possessions. The last royal confirmatory charter (that of Henry VII in 1508) listed some eleven previous charters and confirmations.²¹⁸ The charter of Cynan ap Maredudd (1294) in favour of Strata Florida contained a not uncommon imprecatory clause; for anyone who infringed its terms, ‘let not his name be written amongst the just in the Book of Life’.²¹⁹

Strata Florida possessed some fifteen granges, five of them forming a large estate around the abbey, which was probably consolidated by the monks (in typical Cistercian fashion) as the centuries passed by (Fig. 4).²²⁰ Whilst all the holdings within its borders paid rent to the abbey, John Leland pointed out that in the wide open mountainous spaces stretching southwards towards Builth and eastwards to the Elan valley ‘every man thereabouts putteth in beasts as many as they will without paying of money’.²²¹ A portion of individual rents were paid in kind, and these show that the cultivation of oats was everywhere a mainstay of the economy, with wheat coming to the abbey from ‘bread-baskets’ in drier, warmer areas with better soil, notably Morfa Mawr and Anhuniog granges (Fig. 6).²²² The monastery owned at least eleven corn mills; in two instances (at Aberdihonw and Pyran mills) the ‘place of ventilation’ for ‘winnowing’ the corn’ is noted.²²³ Local tenants were obliged to grind their own corn at an abbey mill for a fee; this ‘suit of mill’ was a not inconsiderable source of monastic revenue.²²⁴

Pastoral farming was facilitated by the cool and damp weather of upland granges like Mefenydd (Fig. 7). This facilitated the production of wool and, as early as 1212, King John gave the monks permission



Fig. 4. The Ceredigion homeland of Strata Florida.
 Based on Ordnance Survey mapping, Crown Copyright: all rights reserved.

to ‘sell their wool and send it beyond seas for three years’.²²⁵ It was probably taken to a central location for collection by middlemen, and thus exported to the cloth makers of Flanders.²²⁶ No more is heard of the abbey’s wool trade, perhaps because of the Welsh troubles.

What may have been collective (and later) commuted wool rents (called ‘the custom wool’) were derived from five of the abbey’s central granges,²²⁷ whilst individual wool rents brought in to the monastery yearly 41 topstans (1 topstan = 11 pounds) from Blaenaeron and Hafod-wen granges.²²⁸ Wool allowed the production of cloth and for the early stages of its production the monastery possessed at least

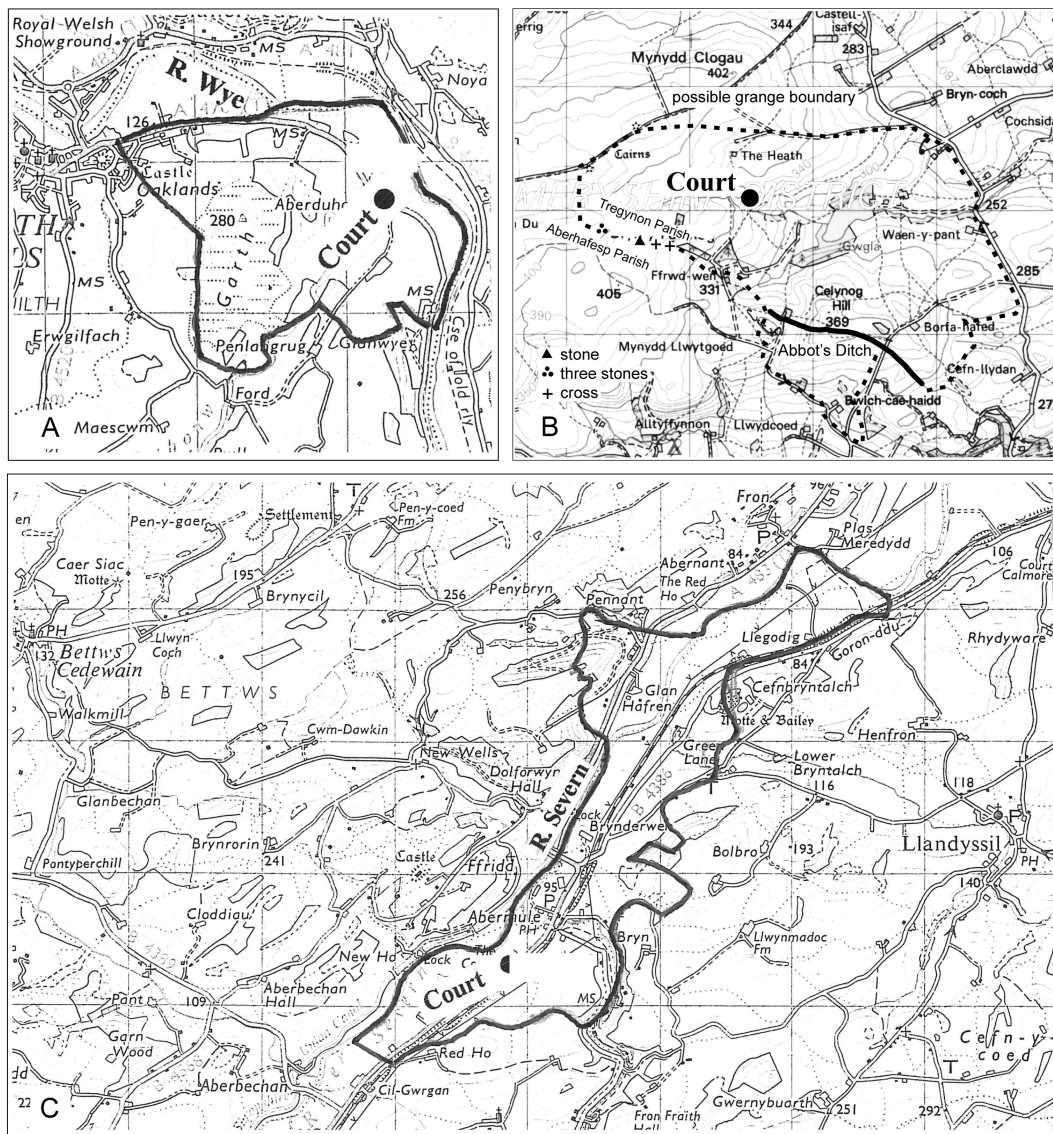


Fig. 5. Detached granges of Strata Florida.

A Aberdihonw grange, by the river Wye. It was here that, in 1207, English troops encamped whilst besieging Builth Castle. **B** Celynog grange. The cross, ditch and stones show the importance attached to boundaries. After Williams, *Atlas of Cistercian Lands in Wales* (1990). **C** Abermwl grange, where the barn was burnt by the bailiff of Montgomery in 1263. Based on Ordnance Survey mapping, Crown Copyright: all rights reserved.

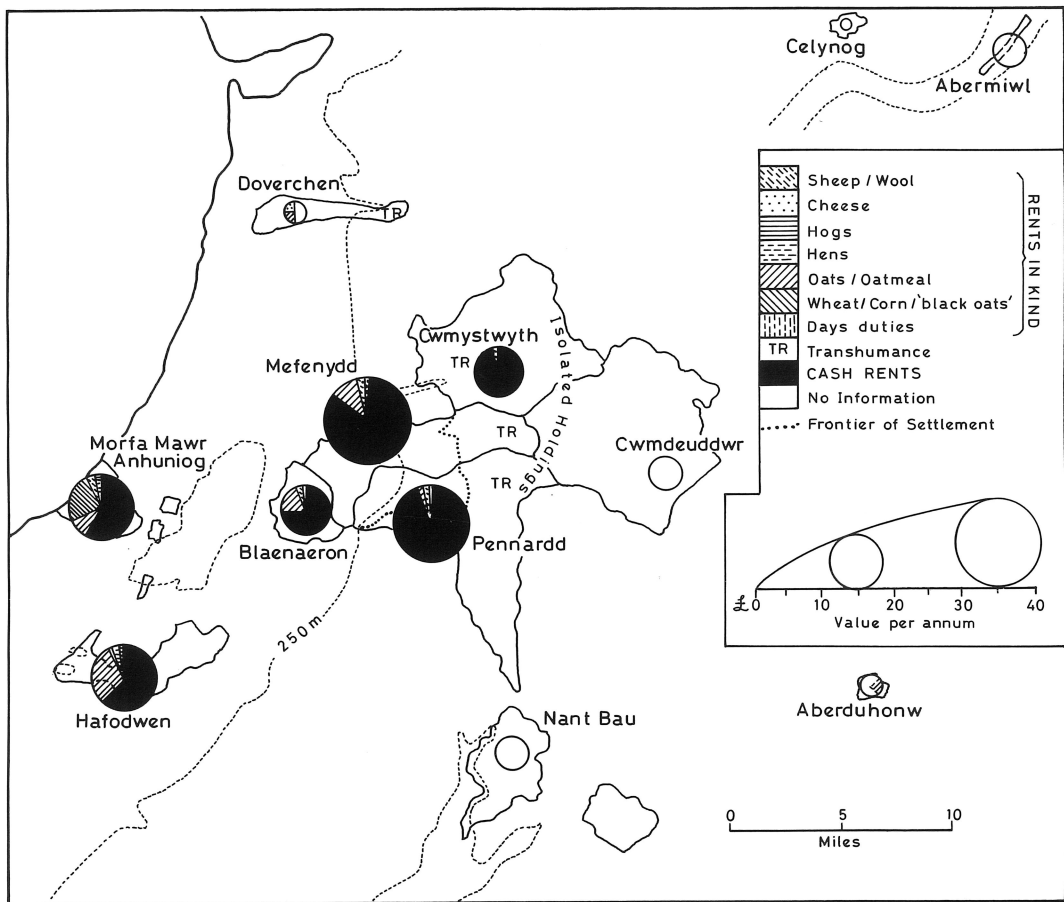


Fig. 6. Economic study of the granges of Strata Florida.

After Williams, *Atlas of Cistercian Lands in Wales* (1990).

four fulling mills, or *tai pandy*.²²⁹ Very often, as at Pontrhydfendigaid, these utilised the same watercourse as the larger corn mill.²³⁰

Recent landscape survey has demonstrated at Troed-y-rhiw and two other sites on the abbey's Pennardd grange a series of earthworks and building platforms suggestive of former permanent centres of monastic farming. It is especially suggested that a sheep-cote stood at Troed-y-rhiw (145 × 50 metres in size) which may have incorporated a shepherd's cottage and store, while at nearby Penlan may have been a station for handling and washing sheep.²³¹

Coastal properties, like Morfa Mawr and Morfa Bychan granges, and the estuary of the Ystwyth, were important sources of fish (notably herrings) for the monastery.²³² Additionally, the monks had a right to a small percentage of the herrings fished at Aberystwyth,²³³ whilst the Teifi Pools (on their own land) were important for eels and trout (Fig. 8).²³⁴ The lessee of the abbey's Y Dywarchen grange had the duty of carting from Aberystwyth to the monastery not only herrings, but imported goods like wine and salt.²³⁵ At Briwnant on Cwmystwyth grange, the monastery for some time actively pursued lead-mining, on no small scale—for (Leland told) its smelting swallowed up a lot of timber.²³⁶ The monks had access to peat for fuel from Tregaron marsh, but its woodlands remained important assets.

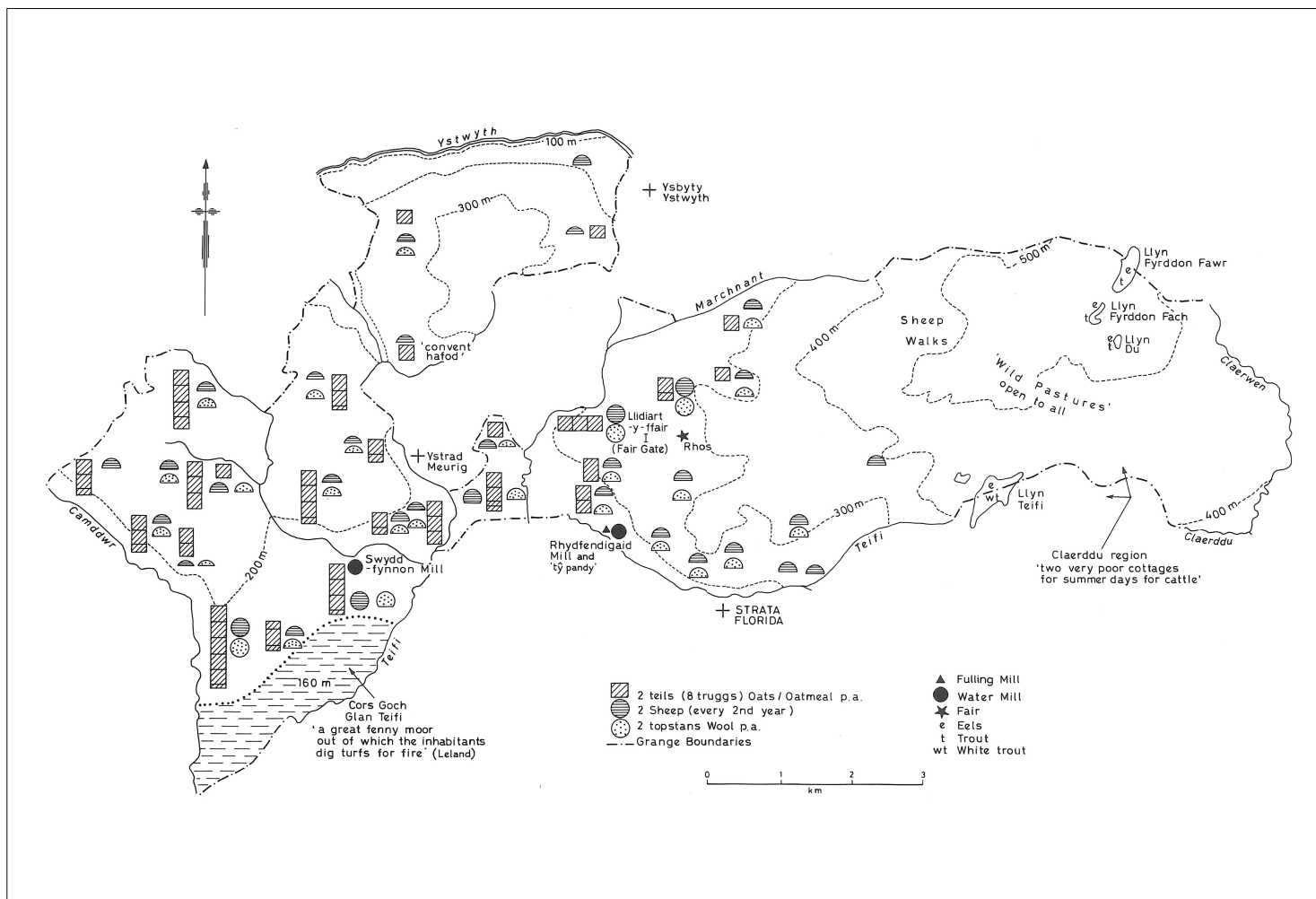


Fig. 7. Economic study of Mefenydd grange. After Williams, *Atlas of Cisterican Lands in Wales* (1990).

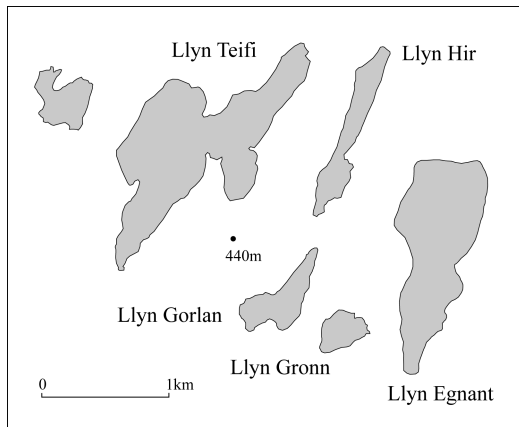


Fig. 8. The Teifi Pools, as described by John Leland (c. 1538). Llyn Teifi 'Distant about a mile from the other iiii . . . hath white Trouttes'. Llyn Hir '*Longus lacus*, iii. quarters of a mile in length, having no great Bredthe, nor Issue of Brok. Owt of hit, but plentiful Trouttes and Elys'. Llyn Egnant 'having no other Fisch but Trouttes and Elys . . . The South Side hath Trouttes as red as Salmon. The West Side hath white. This Pole is seene to be fedde with no Brooke'. Llyn Gorlan 'hath no Issue, but berith Elys and Trouttes'. Llyn Gronn 'hath an Issue, and semid hard yoinid to Llin Gorlan'.

The lessees of a holding on its Aberdihonw grange was instructed (in 1532) to care for both the abbey mill and wood there.²³⁷ At Celynog grange, the 'Abbot's Ditch' enclosing part of the grange has been mapped, and is still clearly visible.²³⁸

The economy of the abbey was accompanied by careful bookkeeping. Of the greatest interest is a slate tally used by the abbey's bailiff for Hafod-wen grange, perhaps dating to around 1470 before much of the grange was demised. It lists all the tenants, and the truggs of oats which each was expected to render as part of their rental (Fig. 9).²³⁹ Not only the charters granted to the abbey, but also demises of land it made, concords and other important transactions, would have been listed in the abbey's cartularies or 'register-books'. These are no longer extant, but some time after the Dissolution, a number of the tenants at Y Dywarchen grange asserted that the abbot 'entered in writing in the register books of the monastery' the terms and conditions of their leases.²⁴⁰ There was a reference concerning Cwmystywth grange, after the Suppression, which referred to 'the Customs in the old Rolls'.²⁴¹

None of the demises of land made by the monastery, nor any agreements entered into, were of any validity unless an abbey seal was attached.²⁴² Cistercian seals were regulated by statute of the General Chapter of the order. Prior to 1335, the abbot's seal was normally used; the only surviving example of this type from Strata Florida shows an abbot vested and holding a book (perhaps for the Rule of St Benedict).²⁴³ A later abbot's seal depicts the Blessed Virgin Mary, but the name of the then abbot has been erased from the silver matrix (Fig. 10, no. 1).²⁴⁴ From 1335, it was imperative to attest major transactions with an abbey's common seal. One such is known for the abbey, and portrays an abbot kneeling before the Blessed Virgin and her Child (Fig. 10, no. 2). The depiction on the reverse of an impression from it made in 1513, shows a small counter-seal bearing a two-headed eagle, and the name of Richard Dorston, abbot at the time (Fig. 10, no. 3).²⁴⁵ After the restitution of the abbey in 1537, there is record that it had a new seal engraved with the royal arms, but no example is known.²⁴⁶

From the late fifteenth century on, there is much evidence as to the terms and conditions by which the many abbey tenants held their lands;²⁴⁷ clearly there was now little demesne land worked directly; though interestingly, in the final years, one of the monks, John York, was the monastery's bailiff supervising the outlying Cwmteuddwr and Abermîwl granges in Powys.²⁴⁸ Apart from the normal occasional payments to the abbey, like entry fines and heriot (often of the best beast), the principal tenants of Strata Florida (as those of Llanllŷr nunnery) rendered an additional cash payment every third year, the *comortha*. In those years when it fell due, it perhaps averaged nearly a third of the income of the abbey from its lands.²⁴⁹

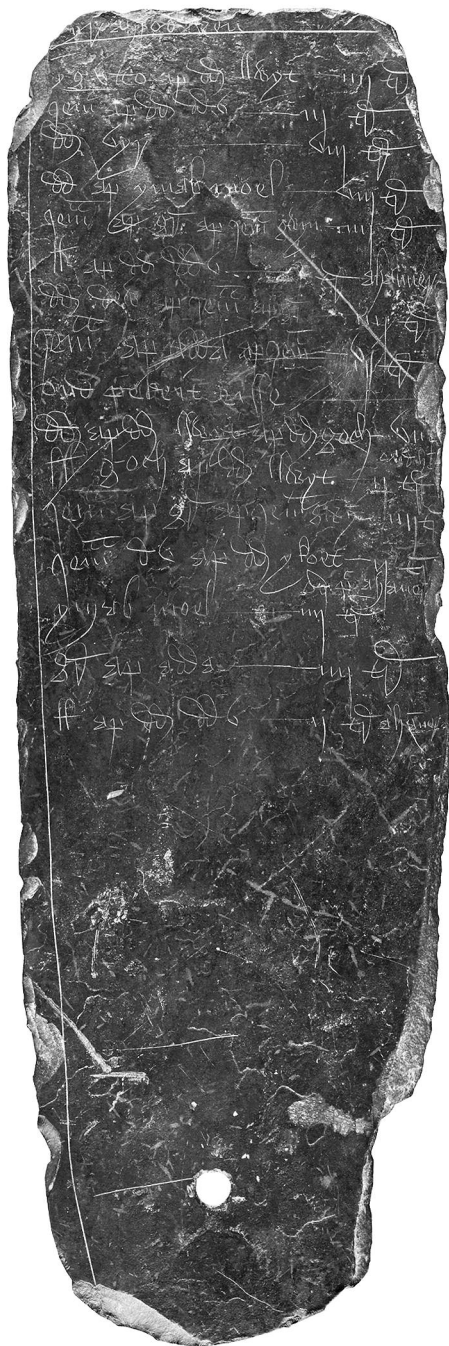


Fig. 9. Hafod-wen grange slate tally.
By permission of the National Library of Wales.

Numerous tenants were expected, as well as paying their annual cash rent, to render goods in kind. In this way, in its closing years, Strata Florida received no less than 90 teils of oats, 300 teils of oatmeal, several hundred truggs of corn, 450 capons and pullets, about 120 topstans of wool and, every second year, 120 sheep. Oats (including horse fodder), bread and eggs were also received.²⁵⁰ Tithes from the abbey's two churches (Llangurig and Pencarreg) formed only a small part of the abbey's annual income but, from 1339, it received *traeanau* ('tryanes'), being a third of the tithes arising from its own lands in parishes not of its appropriation.²⁵¹

The acceleration of the process of demising monastic land, even entire granges, as the Suppression approached, has been noted. In post-monastic years, this led to a series of litigious disputes and allegations of forgery. On five of the abbey's granges tenants refused for a time to pay their rents, customs and services.²⁵² Dywarchen grange was claimed by John Stedman, as the Crown lessee, but opposed by the tenants who appealed to monastic leases granted to their forefathers.²⁵³ Matthew Lewis, of London, claiming Aberdihonw grange, complained that, *after* the dissolution of the monastery, Abbot Talley used a counterfeit seal to demise the property to Hugh ap Lewis. He rejoined (at an inquiry held at Rhaeadr (Rhayader) in 1542), that the lease was made 'long before the Dissolution' in return for £100.²⁵⁴ A lease, allegedly made by the monastery in 1509, was queried about 1580 because the seal appended was the new seal made after the restoration of the abbey in 1537.²⁵⁵ There were other such instances.²⁵⁶

Conclusion

The foregoing pages cannot claim to be an adequate history of one of Wales's premier monasteries. The extant source material is fragmentary, and such as there is often 'bad news'; only on record because of troubles in, or affecting, the abbey. Of the daily round of worship, of the holiness of perhaps numerous of the twelfth- and thirteenth-century monks, next to nothing has



Fig. 10. **1** Fifteenth-century silver seal matrix of the abbot of Strata Florida, with the name of the abbot erased. **2** Common Seal of Strata Florida Abbey on a document dated 1513. **3** Impression of the Privy Seal on the reverse of no. 2, bearing the name of abbot Richard Dorston. **4** Seal matrix of an abbess of Llanllŷr, found at Talsarn. *No. 1, by permission of the Society of Antiquaries, nos 2–3 Carmarthenshire Archives, by permission of the Dowager Countess Cawdor, no. 4 by permission of the National Museum of Wales.*

survived. Any written history of Strata Florida is, therefore, bound to be but a minute fraction of the whole truth. Nonetheless, the monastery is revealed as playing a major role in the political and literary life of thirteenth-century Wales, and carefully administering its large estates. The wonder is, given the pressures laid upon it from external forces (especially by rival claimants to the abbacy, and the ravages of the Glyn Dŵr revolt), that conventual life at Strata Florida survived at all.

LLANLLŶR NUNNERY²⁵⁷

Following hard on the rapid spread of the male houses of the Cistercian order throughout Europe, came a parallel growth of nunneries which came to outnumber them. Somewhat tardy to acknowledge their presence, only in the early thirteenth century did the General Chapter legislate regarding their admission, status and way of life.²⁵⁸ This may explain why Gerald of Wales said of the sisters at Llanllŷr, that they followed the Cistercian way of life so far as it was lawful for women to do so.²⁵⁹

The most decisive statute of the General Chapter to affect the nuns was promulgated in 1213; this insisted on the strict enclosure of the sisters within their precincts. Only an abbess or sister-cellarer might travel abroad on necessary business of their house.²⁶⁰ More significantly, this ruling meant that the nuns could no longer work their own fields and farms; henceforth that had to be done by associated lay-brothers (*conversi*) and hired labour.²⁶¹ Every true Cistercian nunnery was placed under the oversight of the abbot of a neighbouring male house, whose seal had to be attached to any major transactions the sisters might embark upon. In the instance of Llanllŷr, the abbot of Strata Florida had this role of Visitor.²⁶² John Leland (c. 1538) was not too far off the mark when he wrote that Llanllŷr had been ‘a cell of Strata Florida’.²⁶³

It was around 1180 that Prince Rhys ap Gruffydd founded the nunnery at Llanllŷr.²⁶⁴ Leland described its site, almost seventy metres above sea level and on the flood plain of the river Aeron, as being ‘upon the brook of Aeron’ and standing from Strata Florida ‘ten miles in the hy-way to Cairdigan’. Leland also mentioned the ‘village hard by it called Talesarn Green’.²⁶⁵ Henry Owen conjectured that the convent may have been named after a saint, Llyr Forwyn.²⁶⁶ This, taken together with the find at Llanllŷr of a broken Celtic cross of late eighth-/early ninth-century date, suggests that the nunnery was founded at the ‘deserted place’ given by one Ditoc to the hermit Modomnuac.²⁶⁷ This may well indicate that the Cistercian nunnery absorbed a Celtic foundation.²⁶⁸ If this is so, it is surprising that Gerald of Wales did not mention it, but rather emphasised that ‘from the outset’ the nuns followed both the exterior ways and the interior life of the Cistercians.²⁶⁹ No princely charter is extant for the nunnery, but it might well be that Rhys ap Gruffydd founded it to form a home for the wives of married men wishing to embrace the religious life at Strata Florida—including perhaps his widowed sister, Gwladus.²⁷⁰ Many a medieval Cistercian convent admitted only those of gentle birth.²⁷¹

Gerald of Wales referred to Llanllŷr as ‘a small and poor house’, and alleged that Strata Florida oppressed the nuns of Llanllŷr, taking from them their grange at Hafod-wen.²⁷² Hafod-wen first appears as a gift to Strata Florida in its charter from Maelgwn the younger, in the 1220s. If Strata Florida did indeed persuade Maelgwn to overlook an earlier grant of it to the nuns by the Lord Rhys, it could have been a reflection of the fact that by now the nuns were strictly enclosed, and could not manage the grange directly. It is possible that the monks compensated the sisters, and the arrangement may have been beneficial to both parties. The eastern boundary of the Llanllŷr estate dovetails with the north-west boundary of Hafod-wen grange (Fig. 11).

The convent found mention (disguised as ‘Lanter’) in the list of religious houses compiled (perhaps around 1200–10) by the chronicler, Gervase of Canterbury,²⁷³ but thereafter next to nothing is known of

its history. The war damage compensation awarded it in 1284 amounted to 40 marks (roughly £14,000 in today's values),²⁷⁴ so substantial damage must have been incurred on its lands. In 1299, the abbess was acquitted (at the instance of Queen Margaret, Edward I's wife) of a fine of 20 marks imposed on her for causing an oak to be felled in, and removed from, the royal wood of 'Killellewresse'.²⁷⁵ This incident probably reflects building work at the nunnery or on one of its granges.²⁷⁶ At an unknown date in the fifteenth century, one Anne was abbess of Llanllŷr, and in the poetical works of Huw Cae Llwyd (*temp.* 1431–1504) she is revealed as a lady keen on pets. In his *Cywydd I Erch Ab Dros Annes, Abades Llanllŷr*, Huw described her in these words:

There is a white maiden here, the best of the choir,
petitioning you, of Ifor's kind;
an abbess, a good goddess, a full moon there at holy Llanllŷr.
It is Dame Ann, who if she is in your court,
wishes to receive an ape from you.²⁷⁷

The verse reminds us that the nuns wore the white habit of the Cistercians, that they chanted the divine office in choir, and that the nunnery was thought of as a spiritual place. The only other abbess known from this period was Margaret, in charge in 1488.²⁷⁸

When Henry VIII's survey of church income and property, the *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, was drawn up in 1535, the last abbess of Llanllŷr (Elizabeth Baynham) was singularly uncooperative. She refused at first to declare her convent's income, and as a consequence it was arbitrarily assessed at £40 per annum (some £12,000 in modern terms). The nuns afterwards sent in 'a certain schedule', estimating their lands and spiritualities at around £18. The compilers then seem to have added both figures together, giving Llanllŷr the surprisingly high assessment of £57,²⁷⁹ as compared to an average of £25 in the Ministers' Accounts of the immediate post-Suppression years.²⁸⁰ The last lay steward of Llanllŷr, Lord Ferrers, had an annuity of £1 for his duties, whilst prior to 1525, Sir Rhys ap Thomas had the affairs of the nunnery as one of his six monastic stewardships.²⁸¹

The survey of the abbey prior to its suppression came on 29 September 1536, and its actual dissolution on 26 February 1537. In the intervening 21 weeks and 2 days, £6 0s 5d was allowed by the Receiver for the household expenses of the abbess, the sisters (alas, no number is cited), and the servants.²⁸² On 1 July 1537, Abbess Elizabeth was awarded an annual pension of £4 (about £1,250 in today's terms), and she was still in receipt of this in 1539. It was scant compensation for being cast out into the world! Nothing else is known of her, save that at the latter date she was still in arrears to the Crown for £16 4s, the value of grain, stock and other goods, presumably disposed of between the date of survey and the final dissolution.²⁸³

There is no record of any lead remaining at Llanllŷr, but the two bells of the convent (originally valued at 30s) weighed 103 quarters 14 pounds, and in 1538/39 were sold to Sir William Thomas, who also bought the four bells of Carmarthen Priory. In the suppression accounts, there is mention of some white silver plate belonging to the nunnery, and of a silver gilt chalice and paten (of 20½ ounces weight).²⁸⁴ Today, no visible remains of the nunnery remain at the site.²⁸⁵ The matrix of seemingly a seal of an abbess of Llanllŷr has lately been excavated in nearby Talsarn. Somewhat corroded, it depicts an ecclesiastic holding book and pastoral staff (Fig. 10, no. 4).²⁸⁶

Llanllŷr nunnery was not a wealthy landowning house. Its landed property, as detailed in the *Taxatio Ecclesiastica* of 1291,²⁸⁷ consisted of the home demesne and seven small granges—few of them now being identifiable (Fig. 11).²⁸⁸ The value of the convent's land and stock was valued then at but £7 10s 0d (little more than £4,000 in today's values).²⁸⁹ By the time of the problematic entry for the nunnery in

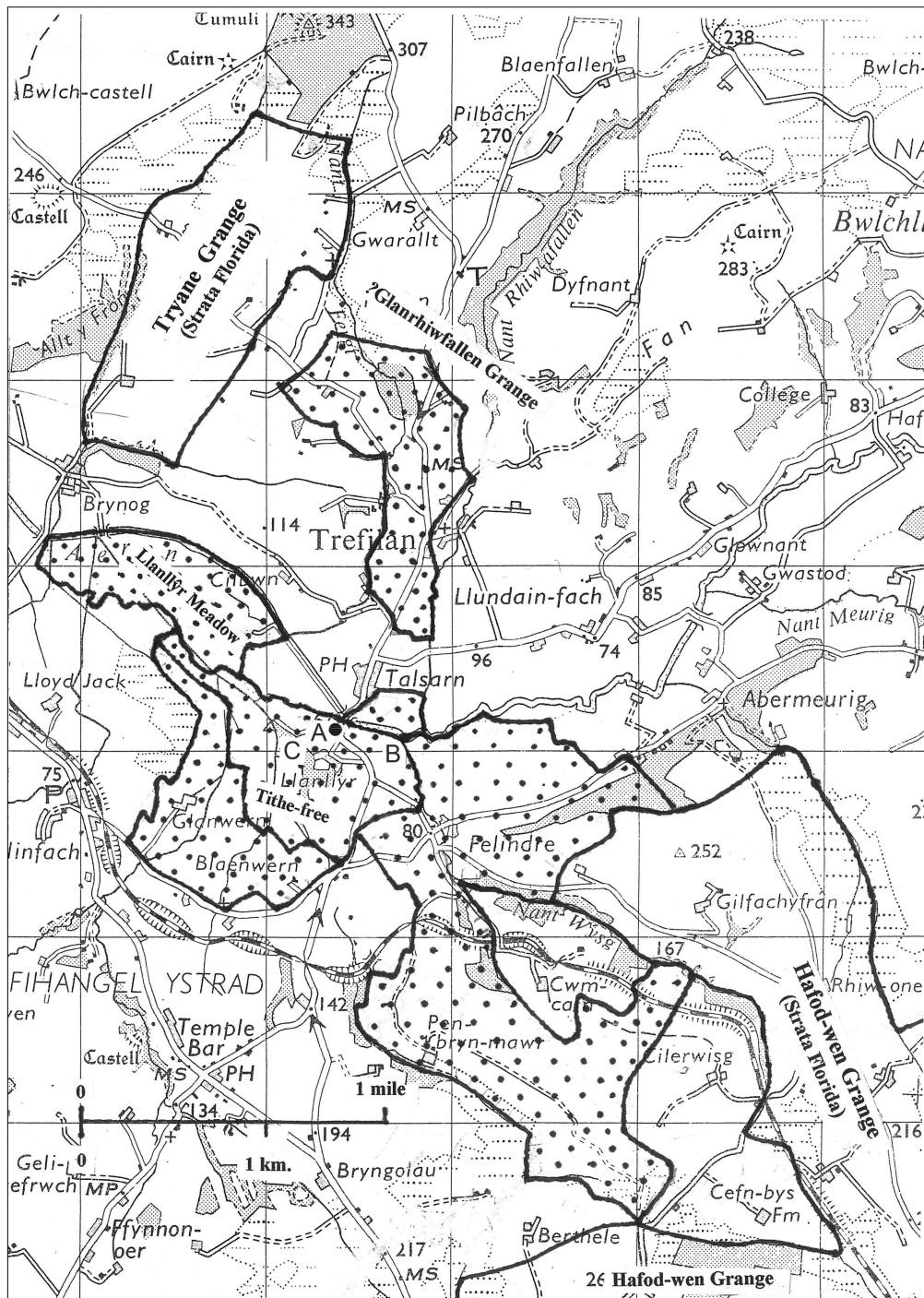


Fig. 11. The home estate of Llanllŷr nunnery (stippled; based upon NLW, Maps 7, Maps of the Llanllŷr Estate, 1796). A mill. B field-name of Park-y-Borth. C nunnery site. Based on Ordnance Survey mapping, Crown Copyright: all rights reserved.

the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* of 1535 little land, if any, was worked directly. Indeed, no less than thirty-three holdings in the home estates of Llanllŷr were demised.²⁹⁰ The post-Suppression Ministers' Accounts show the annual income from rented lands as being around £25 per annum, but every third year rising to about £34—for the tenants paid then the additional customary tax, the *comortha*. In addition, the nunnery was in receipt of rents in kind comprising each year 79½ teils of oatmeal (valued at 1/8d. per teil), and 40 teils of oats called 'horschettes' (valued at only 3d per teil).²⁹¹

At some stage, probably in the fourteenth century, the convent was allowed to appropriate the church of Cenarth, near Newcastle Emlyn. This brought the sisters (primarily by means of the greater tithes) an additional yearly income of £8 (worth today around £2,500); equivalent to over a third of its total assets.²⁹² To serve this church, or indeed the convent church itself, the nunnery presented clerics for ordination and paid them a stipend. These chaplains included Maurice Park and Thomas Doble ordained in 1400,²⁹³ and Griffin ab Hywel ab Ieuan Lloyd in 1402.²⁹⁴

The pastoral nature of the abbey's economy was reflected in the forty cows and sixty sheep attributed to it by the *Taxatio* in 1291. In its last months, the sisters were recorded as possessing at least eight oxen, eighteen cows, and a further fifteen cows 'called the *heyfords*'.²⁹⁵ This suggests perhaps a pedigree herd and good farm management. The convent's mill stood by Talsarn bridge.

In 1553, the Crown sold the nunnery site and the manor of Llanllŷr, together with the church of Cenarth and the *comortha* payment, to William Sackville and John Dudley.²⁹⁶ Shortly afterwards, they received other lands of the former nunnery, including properties in the parishes of Llanbedr-pont-Steffan (Lampeter) and Llanybydder.²⁹⁷ Earlier, in 1537, all the property of the nunnery had been demised by the Crown (*except* the *comortha* payment) to one John Henry ap Rhydderch (alias ap Rudd) of Cedweli. The former tenants of the convent were soon in dispute with him, and litigation ensued.²⁹⁸

VALE ROYAL ABBEY

The Cheshire Cistercian abbey of Vale Royal gained its name since it was of royal foundation, and this undoubtedly helped it gain the appropriation of the large parish of Llanbadarn Fawr, with eventually nine dependent chapeltries covering an area of 240 square miles.²⁹⁹ In the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* of 1535, Vale Royal's assessed annual income was recorded at £518; of this no less than £120, just over a fifth, derived from its possession of Llanbadarn.³⁰⁰ It was a very significant component in the monastery's income. Apart from the tithes and other spiritualities accruing from the parish, Vale Royal owned important property there, including the Parson's Mill at Llanbadarn, and a fishery at Aberystwyth.³⁰¹

The appropriation of the parish to Vale Royal was effectively the gift of the Black Prince, and was made partly because of the monastery's needs to finance building works at Vale Royal after the nave of its church had been destroyed by a great storm on 19 October 1359.³⁰² It was made possible by the voidance of the rectory (27 September 1360) on the preferment of the incumbent, Robert Stretton, to the bishopric of Coventry and Lichfield.³⁰³ The prince had on 24 October 1359 granted the advowson of Llanbadarn to four members of his household, who, in turn and at his wish, conveyed it to Vale Royal on 7 November 1360.³⁰⁴ Episcopal confirmation followed on 28 November,³⁰⁵ and fealty made at Llanbadarn by the church's tenants to the abbot in person on 21 January 1361.³⁰⁶ Then followed the king's approval (18 February 1361),³⁰⁷ and the somewhat delayed but necessary papal confirmation (13 November 1362).³⁰⁸

The appropriation did not go unchallenged. The main, but unsuccessful, contender was St Peter's Abbey, Gloucester, of which the church had until 1246 been a cell.³⁰⁹ The expense incurred by unsuccessful approaches to the monarch,³¹⁰ the justice of west Wales and to Parliament,³¹¹ cost Vale Royal dear, and was one of the bones of contention in a dispute at the monastery amongst the community

in 1392.³¹² Gloucester (whom Frank Lewis argued used forged documentation) did, however, receive a payment of 1,000 marks from Vale Royal in return for surrendering its claim on Llanbadarn.³¹³ The Crown also tried to claw the parish back; Richard II appointing one of his clerks, Guy de Mona, to the living in 1396. Vale Royal appealed to the Court of Arches successfully,³¹⁴ and the appointment the following year of Guy to the bishopric of St David's, paved the way for royal reiteration of Vale Royal's possession of Llanbadarn in 1399.³¹⁵ Lastly, in 1403, Pope Boniface IX on a technicality assumed the patronage of the church of Llanbadarn, but after the Glyn Dŵr rebellion, this once again reverted to the monastery.³¹⁶

Possession of the church was lucrative, forming over a third of the abbey's total income,³¹⁷ but meant certain obligations. As rector of Llanbadarn church, the monastery had the duty of maintaining the fabric of its chancel. That Vale Royal did so, is shown by an inscription, carved in the internal east reveal of the south window of the chancel in Llanbadarn church, bearing a pastoral staff and the initials of the late fifteenth-century of abbot of Vale Royal, William Stratford.³¹⁸ Holding spiritual property in the diocese of St David's rendered the abbot liable to appointment as a sub-collector there of clerical subsidies from time to time. The current abbot was certainly a collector in the archdeaconry of Cardigan in 1401,³¹⁹ 1449³²⁰ and 1489,³²¹ but was excused this duty in 1395 since he was already had the same task in the diocese of Coventry and Lichfield.³²² An early obligation of the abbot (from 1361) had been a four-year stint (obviously delegated) as janitor of Aberystwyth Castle.³²³

Such duties, for the abbot of Vale Royal or his representatives, unless locally based, were fraught with travel problems. In 1442, the abbot complained in Parliament that when, because of a local dispute, he was indicted at the local sessions in Cardiganshire and went in person to answer the summons, he could not safely pass through mid-Wales without being assaulted and beaten.³²⁴ Part of such difficulties (for the monastery's agents also) might have been initiated by Abbot Richard of Strata Florida who, in 1435, had been bound over (in the considerable sum of £500) to keep the peace towards the abbot of Vale Royal and his possessions in Llanbadarn.³²⁵ No wonder that, at least a decade before the Dissolution the monastery had demised the church together with the duties incurred.³²⁶ The last known demise, of 1536, required the lessee to maintain the chancel, pay the accustomed synodals to the bishop and archdeacon of St David's, and provide hospitality for the abbot (and a party of up to fourteen persons!) on his visits to the parish during the ensuing two years. He also had to maintain a house called 'Creklewe', whether as the vicar's manse or the abbot's residence is unknown of which vestiges remain.³²⁷

NANT-YR-ARIAN GRANGE

This outlying grange of Cwmhir abbey was an important pastoral property, now lying astride the A44 trunk road. The *Taxatio Ecclesiastica* survey of 1291 recorded here, not only 300 sheep, 128 cows and 26 mares 'under the care of a keeper', but also two carucates (plough-lands) of uncultivated land. The 'keeper' was undoubtedly a trustworthy lay-brother, and the necessary mixed economy stemming from the isolation of the farm meant the presence of its own corn mill.³²⁸

LANDS OF WHITLAND ABBEY

Strata Florida's mother-house possessed three granges, and other isolated lands, in the south of Ceredigion.³²⁹ At Rhuddlan Deifi grange (in the parish of Llanwenog) there were a corn mill and a fulling mill—in the usual close proximity,³³⁰ and possibly a chapel.³³¹ At Crugerydd grange (in the

parish of Llandysiliogogo) and Tir Newydd grange (also in Llanwenog), the indicative name of *cwrt* ('court') occurs. The mixed economy of Crugerydd was demonstrated by the kind rents, of sheep/wool, oats/oatmeal and of wheat, paid by its tenants to the abbey.³³² At its mill, the tenants had to pay a toll to the lessee of one bushel out of every twelve bushels of their corn ground there.³³³

APPENDIX 1. ABBOTS OF STRATA FLORIDA³³⁴

1164–85 David
 1185–88 Seisil
 1201 Dyniawal (Deiniol)
 –1203 ? Cadwgan
 1225 Cedifor
 1226–27 P . . .
 1248 Gruffydd
 1268 Joab
 1278–80 Philip Goch (13th abbot)
 1280–94 Anian Sais ('the Englishman')
 1299 John
 1336–38 Maredudd Bool
 1344–80 Llywelyn Fychan
 1385 John
 1407 Richard ap Gruffydd
 1428 John
 1435–41 Richard/Rhys
 1439–41 Rhys
 1441–43 William Morris
 (John ap Rhys intrudes)
 1444–86 Morgan ap Rhys
 (1486) John
 1487 William Marlow
 –1495 John
 c. 1495–1500 Dafydd ab Owain
 1501 John
 c. 1509–13 Richard Dorston
 1516–39 Richard Talley

APPENDIX 2. ABBESSES OF LLANLLŶR

1284 E . . .
 c. 1460–1500 Anne
 1488 Margaret
 1532–37 Elizabeth Baynham (Bonham)

NOTES

1. For the first part see D. H. Williams, 'The Cistercians in West Wales: 1. Cymmer Abbey', *Archaeologia Cambrensis* 130 (1981), 36–58.
2. S. W. Williams, *The Cistercian Abbey of Strata Florida* (London, 1889), 69.
3. The National Archives, Public Record Office (TNA: PRO), C 24/29, pt. 2.
4. W. de Gray Birch, 'On the date of foundation of the Cistercian abbeys of Great Britain', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 66 (1870), 286; L. Janauschek, *Originum Cisterciensium* (Vienna, 1877), 151, no. CCCLXXXV.
5. As T. Jones (ed.), *Brut y Tywysogion or The Chronicle of the Princes. Peniarth MS. 20 Version* (Cardiff, 1952), 64, where the *Brut* describes the foundation of the abbey as being 'the will of God and at the instigation of the Holy Spirit'.
6. Janauschek op. cit. (note 4), 151.
7. J. S. Brewer, J. F. Dimmock and G. F. Warner (eds), *Giraldus Cambrensis, Opera*, 8 vols (London, 1861–91), vol. 4, 72.
8. Jones op. cit. (note 5), 64.
9. Williams op. cit. (note 2), Appendix p. x.
10. J. Conway Davies, 'Papal Bull of Privileges', *National Library of Wales Journal* 4 (1945–46), 201–2.
11. *Calendar of Patent Rolls* 1441, 95.
12. L. Toulmin Smith (ed.), *The Itinerary of John Leland in or about the years 1535–1543*, 5 vols (London: Centaur Press, 1964), vol. 3, 118.
13. Remote, but an historic site. Around 1853, a bronze bowl containing sixteen Roman coins of AD 253–93 was ploughed up at Strata Florida: *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 1 (1921–23), 346–47.
14. It appears as 'Henvynatloc' in a charter of 1246: Iwan Wmffre, *The Place-Names of Cardiganshire*, British Archaeological Reports, British Series 379 (2004), vol. 2, 573; Williams op. cit. (note 2), Appendix lxix; and as 'Hen Monachlog' in 1533 (National Library of Wales (NLW), Cwrt Mawr MS 873D, p. 7).
15. Williams op. cit. (note 2), 19–22, 88–89. Earlier, G. Roberts in his *Strata Florida Abbey* (London, 1848) had also postulated an earlier monastic site here, and quoted Lewis Glyn Cothi (fl. 1430/70) as telling of Rhys ap Tewdwr erecting a building on the banks of the river Fluwr.
16. There does appear to be some Celtic antecedent at Strata Florida. Might the inscribed pillar stone of the seventh to ninth century, inscribed with a coarsely cut linear cross, now at Strata Florida, be an indication of this? (V. E. Nash-Williams, *Early Christian Monuments* (1950), 104, no. 131). An eighth/ninth-century incised stone has also been found at Maesmynach (SN 51965061; Royal Commission on Ancient Monuments in Wales, Ancient Monuments Record Field Card).
17. D. H. Williams, *The Cistercians in the Early Middle Ages* (Leominster, 1998), 21–5, 181–4.
18. Jones 1952 op. cit. (note 5), 81; to the following Pentecost is ascribed a vision, related by Ralph of the Cistercian abbey at Coggeshall, seen by a delirious monk of Strata Florida of three angels censuring the altar in its brand new church at Lauds (F. G. Cowley, *Monastic Order in South Wales* (Cardiff, 1977), 97–80). A similar vision is related of Bl. Hermann Joseph, a German Norbertine canon, also in the early thirteenth century: S. Baring-Gould, *The Lives of the Saints, April* (London, 1873), 118.
19. I am grateful to Professor Beverley Smith for discussing this point with me. Stephen Williams felt that a corbel from Yr Hen Fynachlog was used in the building of the new abbey church, but David Robinson suggests that it reflected changes made to the crossing arches and was reused *in situ* (S.

- W. Williams, op. cit. (note 2), 21–3, illus.; D. M. Robinson and C. Platt, *Strata Florida Abbey, Talley Abbey* (Cardiff: Cadw, 3rd edn, 2007), 26. The other possibility is that, like Ystrad Marchell which gave its name to the abbey first called Pola (after Welshpool), Ystrad Fflur was in some sense an administrative name for the area.
20. Wmffre op. cit. (note 14), 573.
 21. L. Thorpe (ed.), *Gerald of Wales: The Journey through Wales and the Description of Wales* (Penguin, 2004 edn.), 227.
 22. Toulmin Smith op. cit. (note 12), 118.
 23. D. H. Williams op. cit. (note 17), 82–3.
 24. D. H. Williams, ‘Fasti Cistercienses Cambrenses I’, *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 24 (1971), 225–8.
 25. Robinson and Platt op. cit. (note 19), 47; S.W. Williams op. cit. (note 2), 225.
 26. J. M. Canivez (ed.), *Statuta Capitulum Generalium Ordinis Cisterciensis* vol. 1 (Louvain, 1933), 199 (1196/8); C. Waddell, *Twelfth-Century Statutes from the Cistercian General Chapter* (Belgium: Brecht, 2002), 354–5 (1196/8).
 27. Canivez, op. cit. (note 26), vol. 1, 191 (1195/66); Waddell op. cit. 340 (1195/62).
 28. T. Jones (ed.), ‘Cronica de Wallia’, *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 12 (1946), 32.
 29. L. Thorpe, *Gerald of Wales* (Penguin, 2004 edn), 178.
 30. H. E. Butler, *Autobiography of Giraldus Cambrensis* (London, 1937), 226.
 31. Brewer *et al.* op. cit. (note 8), vol. 1, 117.
 32. F. G. Cowley, *Monastic Order in South Wales* (Cardiff, 1977), 122.
 33. Brewer *et al.* op. cit. (note 8), vol. 4, 160.
 34. Butler op. cit. (note 30), 226.
 35. TNA, LTR III, m.11d.
 36. Jones 1952 op. cit. (note 5), 33.
 37. *Rotuli Litterarum Clausarum I* (London: Record Commission, 1833), 122; *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 7, 428.
 38. R. W. Hays, *History of the Abbey of Aberconway* (Cardiff, 1963), 43–4.
 39. *Calendar of Close Rolls* 1253, 398.
 40. Jones 1952 op. cit. (note 5), 334.
 41. *Calendar of Patent Rolls* 1248, 27. To trace the history of this debt see: *Calendar of Close Rolls* 1227, 1; 1248, 48; 1250, 338–9; 1253, 98; *Calendar of Patent Rolls* 1249, 35, 45, 57; 1250, 75–6; 1251, 92, 111; 1252, 129, 148; TNA, LTR III 1(2), 11d; V (Memo. R. 7 Hen. III), mm. 8, 13 (2d); XIV, m.8; XX, mm. 2d, 4d, 8, 10; XXI, 21/1; KR 19d.
 42. A. W. Haddan and W. Stubbs (ed.), *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents*, vol. 1 (Oxford, 1869), 412.
 43. Brewer *et al.* op. cit. (note 8), vol. 3, 91.
 44. Cowley op. cit. (note 32), 211–2; Canivez, op. cit. (note 26), vol. 1, 484 (1217/83); N. Vincent (ed.), *Letters and Charters of Cardinal Guala Bicchieri, Papal Legate in England, 1216–1218* (Canterbury and York Society, 1996), 91 (1214). The *Annales Wigornia* (H. E. Luard (ed.), *Annales Monastici*, vol. 4 (London, 1869), 400), record that in 1212 the church of Worcester and the church of Strata Florida entered into a ‘social convention’, perhaps referring to a mutual agreement of spiritual fraternity, whereby both monastic communities undertook to pray for each other.
 45. Jones 1952 op. cit. (note 5), 226, 233, 236, 256–57, 260, 266, 310, 318, 322, 330, 336, 338, 363, 344, 353–5, 357–9; J. Williams (‘ab Ithel’) (ed.), *Annales Cambriae* (London, 1860), 89–90, 96; S. W. Williams, op. cit. (note 2), Appendix I–ii. It was perhaps an earlier, possibly temporary chapter house at the first site, that is alluded to in a charter of 1198 (Appendix lxiii).

46. Jones 1952 op. cit. (note 5), 226.
47. Canivez op. cit. (note 26), vol. 1, 281 (1202, 36).
48. Ibid. 317–8 (1205, 54).
49. *Calendar of Ancient Deeds*, vol. 1, 282 (B. 727).
50. J. Williams op. cit. (note 45), 81.
51. About this time, in 1232, the General Chapter noted that the abbots of the three Cistercian houses in the diocese of St David's were rebelling against the collection of a subsidy there, presumably for the good of the order; though Canivez's edition of the statutes does not mention this (B. Griesser, 'Registrum Epistolarum Stephani de Lexington, II', *Analecta Sacri Ordinis Cisterciensis* 8 (1952), 283.
52. Jones 1946 (op. cit. note 28), 38; J. Williams op. cit. (note 45), 82: the gathering took place 'on the morrow of St Luke', 19 October.
53. Jones 1952 op. cit. (note 5), 335; (1955 edn), 241.
54. *Calendar of Close Rolls* 1250, 335.
55. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* 24, 141.
56. J. Williams op. cit. (note 45), 91.
57. J. Williams ('ab Ithel') (ed.), *Brut y Tywysogion, or The Chronicle of the Princes* (London, 1860), 340; Jones 1952 op. cit. (note 5), 110, gives 5s plus 27 marks and 2 kine; T. Jones (ed.), *Brut y Tywysogion, or the Chronicle of the Princes. Red Book of Hergest Version* (Cardiff, 1955), gives 60d plus 37 marks and 2 cows; S. W. Williams op. cit. (note 2) gives simply 109 marks.
58. Canivez (op. cit. note 26), vol. 2, 444 (1258, 27).
59. S. W. Williams op. cit. (note 2), 143.
60. Haddan and Stubbs op. cit. (note 42), 498–9; J. F. O'Sullivan, *Cistercian Settlements in Wales and Monmouthshire* (New York, 1947), 67–8.
61. J. G. Edwards, *Littere Wallie* (Cardiff, 1940), 80–1, 89–91. Brother John Kaeau of Strata Florida attended to receive the money, and also that awarded to the nunnery of Llanllŷr.
62. *Calendar of Welsh Rolls* 1278, 177.
63. TNA, SC 1/20/189.
64. *Calendar of Welsh Rolls* 1281, 207.
65. Cowley op. cit. (note 32), 115–16.
66. S. W. Williams op. cit. (note 2), Appendix ii.
67. *Calendar of Patent Rolls* 1283, 71 (cf. 1284, 123).
68. *Calendar of Welsh Rolls* 171; *Cal. Patent R.* 1278, 256.
69. *Calendar of Welsh Rolls* 184.
70. *Calendar of Welsh Rolls* 293.
71. S. W. Williams op. cit. (note 2), Appendix iii.
72. Toulmin Smith op. cit. (note 12), *Itinerary* III, 123.
73. *Calendar of Welsh Rolls* 1279, 179; W. Rees (ed.), *Calendar of Ancient Petitions relating to Wales* (Cardiff, 1975), 197–8, 300–1.
74. 'Chronicle of S. Werburgh', *Lancashire and Cheshire Record Society* 14 (1886), 114–6; quoted by S. W. Williams op. cit. (note 2), 153; another fire sparked off by lightning striking a Cistercian bell-tower occurred at Toplica Abbey in Croatia in 1342.
75. Luard op. cit. (note 44), 520.
76. T. Jones (ed.), *Brenhinedd y Saeson* (Cardiff, 1971), 257. The other versions of the *Brut* do not mention the fire as being accidental.
77. S. W. Williams op. cit. (note 2), Appendix xxxii–xxxv.

78. *Calendar of Patent Rolls* 1291, 459.
79. H. Wharton, *Anglia Sacra* I (London, 1641), 516; S. W. Williams op. cit. (note 2), 154.
80. *Calendar of Patent Rolls* 1300, 499.
81. *Calendar of Papal Registers (Letters)*, vol. 1, 558–9. The original grant of the church may have been through the generosity of Hywel ab Ieuan, Lord of Arwystli (d. 1185); in which case Bishop Cadwgan simply gave his assent: S. W. Williams op. cit. (note 2), 111.
82. *Calendar of Close Rolls*, 1295, 448.
83. Cowley (1977), 223.
84. *Calendar of Patent Rolls* 1318, 77.
85. Rees (1975), 367–8, no. 220.
86. Caradoc of Llancarfan, *The Historie of Cambria*, H. Lloyd trans., D. Powel (ed.) (London, 1584), non-paginated reference and pages 206 and 270.
87. Extracted by S. W. Williams op. cit. (note 2), Appendix i–ii.
88. Cowley op. cit. (note 32), 148; Jones 1952 op. cit. (note 5), 108; R. I. Jack, *Medieval Wales* (London, 1972), 30.
89. F. Huws, *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts* (Aberystwyth and Cardiff, 2000), 12, 21 note, 76.
90. Cowley op. cit. (note 32), 148, though Lloyd and Powell say nothing of this.
91. Jones op. cit. (note 5), 1955 and 1952 edns respectively; Huws op. cit. (note 89), 76, 216, note 36.
92. Jack op. cit. (note 88), 15, 53, 76.
93. Ibid. 85.
94. Ibid. 215.
95. Ibid. 253.
96. Cowley op. cit. (note 32), 156 (quoting Professor G. J. Williams).
97. Jack op. cit. (note 88), 86.
98. O’Sullivan op. cit. (note 60), 11; J. Williams 1860 op. cit. (note 45), 109.
99. Cowley op. cit. (note 32), 122.
100. Rees op. cit. (note 73), 117–8; in the same year (1336) the community also had occasion to complain of Robert Clement, a landholder in Pennarodd, who demanded that the monks pay suit at his court (ibid. 105–07, no. 73); previous conflict with Clement had come in 1331 (ibid. 402, no. 240).
101. R. Griffiths, *The Principality of Wales* (Cardiff, 1972), 14.
102. Could he be the John ap Llywelyn Fychan, monk of Aberconwy, who, in January 1344, received papal dispensation (necessary on account of illegitimacy) allowing him to receive promotion in the order?: *Calendar Papal Registers (Petitions)*, vol. 1, 39; (*Letters*), vol. 3, 139.
103. Canivez op. cit. (note 26), vol. 3, 494 (1344, 65).
104. J. H. Parry (ed.), *The Register of John de Trillek* (Hereford, 1910), 112.
105. M. C. B. Dawes (ed.), *Register of Edward, the Black Prince*, 4 vols (HMSO, 1930–33), vol. 1, 2.
106. Parry op. cit. (note 104), 112–3.
107. Dawes op. cit. (note 105), vol. 1, 132.
108. Ibid. 44.
109. Dafydd Johnston, *Gwaith Llywelyn Goch ap Meurig Hen* (Aberystwyth, 1998), 18 (kindly translated by Mrs Mary Burdett Jones).
110. Dawes op. cit. (note 105), vol. 1, 44.
111. One incident in his time was the absconding abroad of one of his monks, Griffin Moil. In 1359 it was reported that he wished to return to the order, and the necessary steps were put in hand: *Calendar of Papal Registers (Letters)*, vol. 3, 605. It is just possible that he was the same Griffin

- Moil who appears as a monk of Cwmhir in 1372, when he was made sub-deacon and deacon: W. W. Capes (ed.), *Registrum Willelmi de Courtenay, episcopi Herefordensis, 1370–1375* (Hereford: Cantilupe Society, 1914), 38–9.
112. D. Johnston (1998), 18 (translation by Mrs Mary Burdett-Jones).
 113. R. Geraint Gruffydd, ‘Dafydd ap Gwilym’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 14 (2004), 897–99.
 114. J. H. Davies, ‘Dafydd ap Gwilym’, *Transactions of the Honourable Society of the Cymmrodorion* 1905–06, 73.
 115. *Calendar of Patent Rolls* 1377, 14.
 116. *Calendar of Patent Rolls* 1380, 551.
 117. J. H. Parry (ed.), *Registrum Johannis Gilbert, episcopi Herefordensis, 1375–1389* (Hereford: Cantilupe Society, 1915), 159. He may have been a youngish monk, Richard Vaughan. Amongst the papal commissions on which succeeding abbots served was that appointed to oversee the provision of in 1395 of Hywel ab Ieuan to the benefice of Llanrhystud: *Calendar of Papal Registers (Letters)*, vol. 4, 513.
 118. TNA, JUST 1/1156; I am grateful to Murray Chapman, FSA, for his assistance in the translation of this document.
 119. Eynon Duy, ‘batchelor monk’.
 120. David (? Edward) ap Gourgone Kudour and, again, Eynon Duy.
 121. *interfecit*, alternatively meaning ‘killed’.
 122. The sum stolen was £20 (around £8,500 in today’s terms).
 123. In 1352 also, the abbot was ordered to be deposed by the General Chapter (the sentence was ineffective) for translating the abbot of Cwmhir to the abbacy of Strata Marcella, without proper authority: Canivez op. cit. (note 26), vol. 3, 525 (1352, 14).
 124. C. Given-Wilson (ed.), *The Chronicle of Adam Usk, 1377–1421* (Oxford, 1997), 144–5. S. W. Williams (op. cit. (note 2), 165), suggests that three spurs, of early fifteenth-century date, which he unearthed during his excavations in 1887/77 might date from these troubled times.
 125. S. W. Williams op. cit. (note 2), Appendix. lv; cf. Rees op. cit. (note 73), 363–4.
 126. *Calendar of Patent Rolls* 1402, 61; Rees op. cit. (note 73), 363–4, no. 216.
 127. At the height of the revolt, on 1 February 1404, royal letters of protection were afforded to Robert Rawe, a Cistercian monk of the Kent abbey of Boxley, who was travelling to Strata Florida ‘for a certain sum of money due to him from the abbot’: *Calendar of Patent Rolls* 1404, 367. The context is unknown, but it might be that the abbot had attended the General Chapter in France the previous autumn, and ran out of cash on his homeward journey. Somewhat later, in 1412, the then abbot was one of a trio appointed by Rome to collate Richard ap Morgan, a Cistercian monk of Savigny, to the priory of Llangennydd in Gower: *Calendar of Patent Rolls*, vol. 6, 395.
 128. S. W. Williams op. cit. (note 2), Appendix lvi.
 129. *Calendar of Patent Rolls* 1441, 95–6.
 130. S. W. Williams op. cit. (note 2), 165.
 131. Rees 1975 op. cit. (note 73), 235, no. 132. The chronology of these years is suspect. William Rees ascribes this undated petition to 1442/43, and the petitioner as being one abbot John, but it seems more likely that Abbot John addressed his complaint to the king in 1429 or 1430. A monk of Strata Florida also called John ap Rhys was ordained priest in St Paul’s Cathedral in 1370, but is hardly likely to be the same person: Canterbury and York Society, vol. 38 (*Register of Simon de Sudbury*), 77, 80, 82.
 132. TNA, E179/21/38.

133. Amongst his other duties was to be in 1433 one of the keepers of the mother abbey at Whitland during a time of difficulty there (*Calendar of Patent Rolls* 1433, 295), and to stand surety for one Maredudd ap Dafydd in 1438 (Griffiths op. cit. (note 101), 143), and (with others) to collate Richard ab Ieuan, to the long vacant parish of Llanfihangel Geneu'r Glyn (*Calendar of Papal Registers (Letters)*, vol. 9, 85). For some unknown reason, Abbot Richard was bound over in 1435 in the sum of £500 to keep the peace towards the abbot of Vale Royal and his church of Llanbadarn Fawr: *Calendar of Close Rolls* 1435, 364). Either Abbot Richard or his predecessor was empowered in 1429 to confer the office of notary on Geoffrey ap Rhys, a clerk of the St David's diocese (*Calendar of Papal Registers (Letters)*, vol. 8, 196).
134. *Cal. Patent Rolls* 1441, 95–6. During the 1430s, the abbey was assessed at £46 towards a 'recognition' of 600 marks placed on the county by the Crown; in 1438, it still owed 68s. This *may* have been separate from the 'tenths' described above: TNA: PRO, E 368/204, m. 13 (this document is now too unfit for production, and I am therefore grateful to Professor Ralph Griffiths for supplying this information).
135. If 'Richard' and 'Rhys' could be equated as the same person, those problems disappear.
136. Glanmor Williams, *The Welsh Church from Conquest to Reformation* (Cardiff, 1962), 260; Guto addressed five extant poems to Abbot Rhys: I. Williams and J. Ll. Williams (eds), *Gwaith Guto'r Glyn* (Cardiff, 1939) 18–31.
137. T. Roberts, *The Poetical Works of Dafydd Nanmor* (Cardiff, 1923), 73–5.
138. Williams and Williams op. cit. (note 136), 26 (kindly translated by Dr Morfydd Owen).
139. *Ibid.* 29–31 (kindly translated by Professor Geraint Gruffydd).
140. Probably the monk of that name, then of Strata Florida ordained in 1423 (*Register of Philip Morgan, Bishop of Worcester*, inserted on folios 198, 200–1, in the *Register of Bishop Richard Clifford* held in Worcestershire Record Office).
141. *Calendar of Patent Rolls* 1443, 151–2; cf. E. Owen (ed.), *A Catalogue of the Manuscripts relating to Wales at the British Museum*, 4 vols (London: Cymmrodorion Record Series, 1900), vol. 3, 551, no. 832; the Crown noted that John ap Rhys still held Strata Florida on 18 February 1443, and his activity meant 'the deterioration of divine worship, and the injury, loss and begging of William Morris' (British Library, Harleian Ch. 75 A. 11). William was abbot by 5 November 1441 when, perhaps in connection with his election, he and Sir William Thomas acknowledged a debt due to the abbot of Buildwas of 20 marks, payable by the ensuing midsummer (Shropshire Archives, Bond 1514/91).
142. *Calendar of Papal Registers (Letters)*, vol. 9, 413.
143. *Ibid.* 424.
144. Abbot Morgan still ruled the monastery on 5 November 1486: Gloucester City Record Office, D2153/71 (Sudeley MS 71). I am grateful to Rebecca Shorter of the Record Office for her helpfulness.
145. T. Roberts and I. Williams (eds.), *Poetical Works of Dafydd Nanmor* (Cardiff, 1923), 73–4. I am grateful for this translation to Mrs E. Beecham, formerly of the National Museum of Wales.
146. NLW, MS 3067b (Mostyn 212b), fo.119; L. Stanley Knight, 'The Welsh monasteries and their claims for doing the education of late medieval Wales', *Archaeologia Cambrensis* 75 (1920), 269; J. Gwenogvryn Evans, *Report on Manuscripts in the Welsh Language*, 2 vols (London, 1898), vol. 1, 288 note.
147. Knight op. cit. (note 146), 269; NLW, MS 2010b (Panton 42), fo. 180.
148. David Powel (ed.), *H. Lhwyd, The Historie of Cambria, 1584* (London, 1811 edn.). Lhwyd himself had died in 1568.

149. Gloucestershire Archives, D2153/71.
150. TNA, SC 8/139/6928; *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1501*, 221; D. M. Smith and V. C. M. London (eds), *The Heads of Religious Houses: England and Wales, Volume II: 1216–1377*.
151. Glanmor Williams op. cit. (note 136), 397.
152. C. H. Talbot, *Letters from the English Abbots to the General Chapter at Cîteaux, 1442–1521* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1967), 97–8, no. 40.
153. Ibid. 98–9, no. 41; cf. ibid. 99–100, no. 42.
154. Ibid. 127, no. 63. The previous abbot of Aberconwy, returning home from the royal court in London, had died after falling off his horse and breaking his neck.
155. Ibid. 129, no. 64.
156. Ibid. 175, no. 87.
157. Ibid. 180–1, no. 88.
158. A. B. Emden, *A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to A.D. 1500*, 3 vols (Oxford, 1957), vol. 1, 532–3, 549.
159. M. Paul Bryant-Quinn (ed.), *Gwaith Ieuan ap Llywelyn Fychan, Ieuan Llwyd Brydydd a Lewys Aled* (Aberystwyth, 2003), 75–6, 87–9, 118–22. I am grateful to Mr Paul Bryant-Quinn for his assistance with this paragraph, taken from our joint entry for the online edition of the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.
160. NLW, Mostyn MS 100, p. 456.
161. *Register of Bishop John Hales of Coventry and Lichfield*, fos 184^f, 185^v (microfilm copy, University Library, Cambridge).
162. D. H. Williams, ‘White Monks in Powys II’, *Cistercian Studies* 11: pt. 3 (1976), 170–1.
163. Ifor Williams (ed.), *Casgliad o Gwaith Ieuan Deulwyn* (Bangor Welsh MSS. Society; vols 3 and 4, Bangor, 1909), 58–9; I am indebted to Professor Geraint Gruffydd for the translation.
164. Williams op. cit. (note 24), 197, 199, 211.
165. *Register of Bishop William Smyth of Coventry and Lichfield*, fo. 188^f (microfilm copy, University Library, Cambridge).
166. T. Blashill, ‘Abbeydore’, *Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalists Field Club* (1883), 9; TNA: PRO, E 315/238, fos 72, 75d.
167. He was ordained sub-deacon, deacon and priest in 1513 (A. T. Bannister, *Registrum Ricardi Mayew, episcopi Herefordensis, 1504–16* (Hereford: Cantilupe Society, 1921), 261–63); resident at St Bernard’s College, Oxford, 1525–28; admitted B. Th., 1526, ‘after ten years study in logic, philosophy and theology’ (A. B. Emden, *A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford, A.D. 1501–1540* (Oxford, 1974), 555). One deed (TNA, E315/103, fo. 158) has Talley as abbot in 1507, but the dating clause in the copy has the omission of 1 January written in; and from its juxtaposition it seems likely that ‘*decimo*’ was also omitted and that the deed dates from 1 January 1517, or even 1527. By this deed, Strata Florida granted an annuity of 20s 8d to David ap Jevan dd Ichan and Margaret, his wife, ‘for good counsel given us before this time’.
168. *Calendar of Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic: Henry VIII*, vol. 7, 487, no. 1264.
169. Ibid. 477, no. 1225 vii–viii; S. W. Williams op. cit. (note 2), Appendix lxxvii–lxxx.
170. TNA, LR 1/228, fo. 59d.
171. TNA, E 315/94, fo. 67. A Hugh Johns was, in 1547, rector of Llanfihangel Penbedw, Pembrokeshire (TNA, E334/4, fo. 115).
172. TNA, E 315/105, fo. 100; E 321/44/169; LR 1/228, fo. 105d. Stewards, being men of consequence, were by no means always subservient to their monastic ‘employers’ (D. H. Williams, *The Welsh Cistercians*, 2 vols (Caldey Island, 1984 edn) vol. 1, 258–60; (Leominster, 2001 edn.), 218.

173. TNA, SC6/HENVIII/4903, fos 32–3.
174. TNA, E 315/104, fo. 122 (2nd nos); 315/210/54; LR 6/152/2.
175. *Calendar of Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic: Henry VIII*, vol. 12: pt. 1, 144 (331–46); S. W. Williams op. cit. (note 2), Appendix lxxx–lxxxix.
176. TNA, E 315/93, fo. 106; he granted himself, for the down payment, the valuable Llangurig rectory.
177. TNA, E 315/103, fos 110–111; LR 1/228, fo. 135.
178. TNA, SC6/HENVIII/4868, mm. 4d–5^f.
179. Ibid. m. 12^f.
180. Ibid. m. 10^f; LR 1/228, fo. 64; E 315/97, fos 25–26.
181. Williams 2001 op. cit. (note 172), 95, note 53; for more detail, see Williams 1984 op. cit. (note 172), vol. 1, 105.
182. TNA, E 315/94, fo. 247d; LR 1/228, fo. 73.
183. TNA, E 315/94, fo. 247. Whitland's grant to the same John Dorman specifically notes 'a certain pecuniary service' he had given that abbey (TNA: PRO, E 315.99, fo. 31d).
184. TNA, E 315/102, fo. 19d. The deeds granting annuities often specified the dates and place of payment: one John Thomas was to receive his yearly £2 13s 4d from Strata Florida in two instalments within a month of the feasts of St James (25 July) and St Luke (18 October) 'at the altar of blessed Mary within the monastery' (TNA: PRO, E 315/99, fos 7d–8); another annuity was payable at St John's Conventual Church, Carmarthen, within one month of St David's Day (TNA: PRO, E 315/94, fo. 24d; LR 1/228, fo. 57d).
185. TNA, E 315/104, fo. 189 (2nd nos).
186. *Calendar of Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic: Henry VIII*, vol. 13, pt. 2, 177, no. 457.
187. Toulmin Smith op. cit. (note 12), vol. 3, 118–23; S. W. Williams op. cit. (note 2), Appendix iii–vii. A demise made by the abbey in 1520 of the holding called Y Fronddu on Hafod-wen grange was to a group of individuals who, apart from paying rent in cash and kind, had to perform carriage duties of salt and iron from Carmarthen to the monastery when required, and carriage of chalk and timber and other things necessary for repairing the monastery. This may suggest renovation works at a time when the refectory and infirmary were falling into ruin (Longleat North Muniment Room, Deed 57; information from Dr Kate Harris, curator).
188. *Calendar of Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic: Henry VIII*, vol. 12, pt. 1, 932.
189. Ibid. vol. 12, pt. 1, 890 (10 April 1537).
190. Ibid. vol. 12, pt. 1, 932. Perhaps unlikely, but could this possibly be the 'puzzle picture' still in Abbey House, described by the late Sir Christopher Davson (*Archaeologia Cambrensis* 149 (2000), 170–1). An old (but probably not so old) picture of Jesus yet reposes in Abbey Cwmhir parish church.
191. *Calendar of Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic: Henry VIII*, vol. 14, 602, no. 457, I (3); NLW, Cwrtmawr MS 873D, fo. 68.
192. D. S. Chambers (ed.), *Faculty Office Registers, 1534–49* (Oxford, 1966), 206.
193. *Calendar of Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic: Henry VIII*, vol. 14: pt. 1, 362, no. 748; vol. 17, 40–1, 258, 694.
194. TNA, E334/2, fo. 68.
195. TNA, E334/2, fo. 165^v.
196. TNA, E334/4, fo. 192; Emden op. cit. (note 167), 555. Foster earlier suggested that in the summer of 1554 Talley also became archdeacon of Cardigan. If so, this appointment was probably a reflection of the Marian restoration of Catholic faith and practice, but there is no apparent documentary evidence of this.

197. The monks were: William Johns (perhaps William Jones, a former abbot of Cwmhir—this would account for his existing annuity of 53s 4d; it appears he died within weeks of the abbey's closure), Thomas Durham, John Becwith, Lewis David al. Llanfadder, Morgan Johns, David Morgan al. Talley, Richard Smyth, John York (of whom see below), and Richard Mayott. Their pensions ranged from £4 in the case of Thomas Durham to £2 in the instance of Lewis David; perhaps calculated on the length of their profession? Former Abbot Johns claimed his monastic pension (40s p.a.) at the Court Augmentations on 6 May 1537, subsequent to the closure of Cwmhir Abbey; he was granted 40s p.a. with three years' arrears (TNA, E315/91, fo. 56v). Morgan Johns may be the cleric of that name who was, in 1554, rector of Aberedw in Radnorshire (TNA, E334/4, 192d). A Morgan ap John was, in 1548, vicar of Llanrhidian, Gower—then in Glamorgan but within the diocese of St David's (TNA, E334/4, fo. 5). Local tradition had it that the seven aged monks remaining at Strata Florida moved to Nanteos when learning they might be evicted, taking with them a mazer cup, later seen as the Cup of the Last Supper (G. Hartwell Jones, 'Celtic Britain and the Pilgrim Movement', *Y Cymmrodor* 23 (1912), 397; G. Eyre Evans, *Cardiganshire . . . its Antiquities* (Aberystwyth (1903), 66–7).
198. NLW, Cwrtmawr MS 873D, p. 15.
199. Cf. *Country Quest*, Dec. 1977, 41 (letter from Mr D. Jones, Abergwesyn).
200. TNA, E 117/10, m. 57; cf. E 117/13/71, m. 22; LR 6/152/4. M. 11^r.
201. E. Owen, 'The spoils of the Welsh religious houses', *Archaeologia Cambrensis* 52 (1897), 286.
202. TNA, E 117/13/70, m. 9^r (for £10 13s 4d).
203. TNA, LR 1/228, fo. 98d.
204. E. A. Lewis and J. C. Davies, *Records of the Court of Augmentations relating to Wales* (Cardiff, 1954), 27–8; TNA, LR 1/228, fo. 65d. York was still alive in 1544 (TNA, E334/2, fo. 68).
205. T. Jones Pierce, 'Strata Florida Abbey', *Ceredigion* 1 (1950), 28–9.
206. Personal communication.
207. C. M. Russell, 'An Analysis and Calendar of an Account of the Receiver . . . of Strata Florida Abbey', unpublished M.Sc (Econ.) thesis, University of Wales, Aberystwyth, 1998, 35.
208. SN 637628.
209. SO 158944, SO 045981, and SN 646846, respectively.
210. They included as late as 1280, brother Madog, charged by Edward I with clearing the monastic woodland adjoining highways (*Calendar of Welsh Rolls*, 293) and, around 1294, brothers Madog ap Gourgenev and Anian Voil, 'masters of the sheep and the cows' (S. W. Williams op. cit. (note 2, Appendix xvii). In many abbeys, in their heyday, there were often two or three times as many lay-brethren as there were choir-monks. At the time of the great survey of 1291, Strata Florida was credited with 1,327 sheep, but such figures must be treated with caution as it was ascribed precisely the same number in a poll tax return of 1379 (Glanmor Williams op. cit. (note 136), 174).
211. SN 939658. A noteworthy holy water stoup was recovered from its site (NLW, MS 13452A, p. 120; Williams 2001 op. cit. (note 172), 199, fig. 92).
212. SN 788471.
213. Personal communication, Professor David Austin.
214. Gloucestershire Record Office, D2153/71 (Sudeley MS 71).
215. In 1184, he 'now again' confirmed, with his three sons, the abbey's possessions at a gathering in Rhaeadr church (S. W. Williams op. cit. (note 2), Appendix xi–xiii).
216. Ibid. 136–37; Maredudd was buried at Strata Florida in 1244, after assuming the habit of a monk (R. Williams, 'Montgomeryshire Worthies', *Montgomeryshire Collections* 14 (1881), 152–3).

- Mapping the extent of the abbey's estates depends largely on rentals and tithe map evidence, but there are problems. All the charters, for example, of the princes record the property of Ffynnon-oer (indubitably that of the name situated close to Hafod-wen grange at SN 531534), but the tithe map for Llanfihangel Ystrad places it outside the bounds of the grange. This may well be because the Cistercians frequently exchanged properties with layfolk in order to build up compact estates.
217. S. W. Williams op. cit. (note 2), Appendix xv–xviii, lxvii
 218. *Calendar of Patent Rolls* 1508, 567.
 219. S. W. Williams op. cit. (note 2), Appendix lxxii.
 220. Williams 2001 op. cit. (note 172), 181, 193–4, 199, 204, 233, 309; D. H. Williams, *Atlas of Cistercian Lands in Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1990), 56–8, 96 (Map 15a) for diagrams of the granges.
 221. S. W. Williams op. cit. (note 2), Appendix vi–vii; Toulmin Smith op. cit. (note 12), 122–3.
 222. Williams 2001 op. cit. (note 172), 182, fig. 77; Williams 1990 op. cit. (note 219), 107, fig. 25. Russell (op. cit. (note 207), 32) draws attention to the occurrence in 1546 of the place-name Y Popty ('the baker's') on Pennardd grange.
 223. NLW, Aberdihonw Deed 2 (of 1532); Cwrtmawr MS 873D, p. 20 (Pyran Mill). For details of the abbey's mills, see also Williams 2001 op. cit. (note 172), 240–2. For lease of Nant-bau mill in 1532, see Longleat North Muniment Room Deed 573 (information from Dr Kate Harris, curator).
 224. Williams 1984 op. cit. (note 172), vol. 2, 289.
 225. S. W. Williams op. cit. (note 2), Appendix xix.
 226. From Flanders may have come a bronze tripod jug, of date probably around 1400, found at the abbey (National Museum of Wales (NMW), 27.319/1; J. M. Lewis and D. H. Williams, *The White Monks in Wales* (Cardiff, 1976), 27, no. 45.
 227. Williams 1984 op. cit. (note 172), vol. 2, 307; Williams 2001 op. cit. (note 172), 253.
 228. Ibid.
 229. Williams 2001 op. cit. (note 172), 254, 310. Dafydd Nanmor (fl. 1450–80) referred to 'weaving on the loom of Strata Florida' (Roberts op. cit. (note 137), 74). The fulling mill (Fulbrook mill) on its Blaenaeron grange was constructed, or reconstructed in the 1480s. In 1533, a new Blaenaeron tenant was directed to build there 'one mill for all kinds of corn, and another for the fulling art' (NLW, Cwrtmawr MS 873D, p. 33).
 230. Williams 1990 op. cit. (note 220), 57; there can be little doubt but that transhumance played a part in the monastery's pastoral economy (Williams 1984 op. cit. (note 172), vol 2, 303); Williams 2001 op. cit. (note 172), 250). The foundations of what may have been a buttery occur at SN 77686398 (Royal Commission of Ancient Monuments, Ancient Monuments Record Field Card).
 231. A. Fleming and L. Barker, 'The late-medieval landscape of Troed y Rhiw, Caron Uwch Clawdd, Ceredigion', *Medieval Archaeology* 52 (2008), 261, 269–72.
 232. S. W. Williams op. cit. (note 2), Appendix xiii, lxxi, lxiii; TNA: PRO, E 315/103, fo. 111. The abbey also had the right to wreck of sea offshore of these coastal granges (S. W. Williams op. cit. (note 2), 147, Appendix lvii–lxxiv).
 233. TNA, E 315/103, fo. 111.
 234. John Leland gave a vivid description of the potential of the Pools (S. W. Williams op. cit. (note 2), Appendix v–vi); Williams 2001 op. cit. (note 172), 267 (where a map); The foundations of what may have been fishermen's huts or fish stores occur at SN 79866500 and SN 80056487 (Royal Commission of Ancient Monuments, Ancient Monuments Record Field Card).
 235. NLW, Cwrtmawr MS 873D, p. 212; TNA: PRO, SC 6 4868, fo. 1^r.

236. Williams 1984 op. cit. (note 172), vol. 2, 327, 329; Williams 2001 op. cit. (note 172), 269.
237. NLW, Aberdihonw Deed 2.
238. S. W. Williams op. cit. (note 2), 139; Royal Commission on Ancient and Historic Monuments in Wales, *Montgomeryshire* (1911), 175, no. 896; E. R. Morris, 'The grange of Gelynog', *Montgomeryshire Collections* 9 (1876), 306–14, 30 (1898), 75–83; NLW, MCC I, 18 (Enclosure Award Schedule (1815) for the parishes of Tregynon and Aberhafesp, Montgomeryshire). For the map, see Williams 2001 op. cit. (note 172), 233, fig. 106, and Map XIII-A; this grange was demised in 1521 to Gruffydd ap Hywel ap Ieuan Blanie (Gloucestershire Record Office D2153/72).
239. Excavated to the east of the abbey chapter house in 1946, it is now preserved in the National Library of Wales (E. D. Jones, 'Ysgriflechi Cymraeg Fflur', *Llên Cymru* 1 (1950–51), 2; Lewis and Williams op. cit. (note 226), 25, illus.).
240. TNA, E 112/59/25 (Cardigan), mm. 1–2; in 1600, the registers were in the hands of John Stedman (E. G. Jones, *Exchequer Proceedings Concerning Wales* (Cardiff, 1939), 95.)
241. NLW, Cwrtmawr MS 873D, p. 17.
242. For the seals of Strata Florida, see D. H. Williams, 'The seals of Strata Florida Abbey', *Ceredigion* 14, no. 3 (2003), 1–6.
243. BL, Harleian Charter 75 A. 37 (Seal 5; of 1256).
244. National Museum of Wales, Seal Die 2; perhaps in order to allow of its use by his successor.
245. Carmarthen Record Office, Lort MS 11/554.
246. NLW, Cwrtmawr MS 873D, p. 25.
247. Especially in NLW, Cwrtmawr MS 873D, and TNA, SC 6 (HEN.VIII), 4868, and in G. D. Owen 'Agricultural Conditions in West Wales', unpublished Ph.D, University of Wales, Aberystwyth, 1935.
248. TNA, LR 1/228, fo. 65; LR 6/152/4. He had also been remunerated for his 'helps and services' to his brethren: TNA, E 315/102, fo. 83; LR 1/228, fo. 19).
249. Williams 1984 op. cit. (note 172), vol. 2, 354; Williams 2001 op. cit. (note 172), 281. For a full discussion of the term 'comortha', see: A. J. Jones, 'The estates of the Welsh abbeys at the Dissolution', *Archaeologia Cambrensis* 92 (1937), 282–5, and Russell op. cit. (note 207), 41–2 and 108 (for Llanllŷr). Amongst the limitations occasionally laid on Strata Florida's tenants was the prescription that they should not 'bring up the offspring of any great man without licence', perhaps limiting them to pasturing their own flocks only?: Williams 1984 op. cit. (note 172), vol. 2, 360; Williams 2001 op. cit. (note 172), 282; e.g. NLW, Cwrtmawr MS 873D, pp. 4, 8, 10 (in leases of 1527–34).
250. Williams 1984 op. cit. (note 172), vol. 2, 354–6; Williams 2001 op. cit. (note 172), 281. 1 *teil* = about 5½ bushels; 1 *trugg* = 2/3 bushel.
251. S. W. Williams op. cit. (note 2), Appendix lii–liv; Williams 1984 op. cit. (note 172), vol. 2, 336; Williams 2001 op. cit. (note 172), 274.
252. Lewis and Davies op. cit. (note 204), 32–3.
253. Jones 1939 op. cit. (note 240), 95–7.
254. TNA, SP 1 (HEN.VIII), XVII/380, fo. 197.
255. Lewis and Davies op. cit. (note 204), 29–31.
256. Williams 1984 op. cit. (note 172), vol. 2, 129–31; Williams 2001 op. cit. (note 172), 93–4.
257. D. H. Williams, 'Cistercian nunneries in medieval Wales', *Cîteaux* 26, pt. 3 (1975), 163–73.
258. Williams 1998 op. cit. (note 17), 401–05.
259. Brewer *et al.* op. cit. (note 8), vol. 4, 153.

260. Canivez op. cit. (note 26), vol. 1, 405 (1213, 3); 517 (1220, 4).
261. Williams 1998 op. cit. (note 17), 407.
262. Brewer *et al.* op. cit. (note 8), vol. 4, 153.
263. Toulmin Smith op. cit. (note 12), vol. 3, 51.
264. Brewer, *Opera* IV, 152.
265. Toulmin Smith op. cit. (note 12), vol. 3, 51. For notes on the site, see National Monument Record files, Cardiganshire (Ecclesiastical) SN55NW.
266. H. Owen, *The Description of Pembrokeshire*, Cymmrodorion Record Series 1, pt. 4 (1892), 458; of note is the spring or well, Ffynnon-Forgan (SN 560569).
267. Nancy Edwards, *A Corpus of Early Medieval Inscribed Stones and Stone Sculpture, Volume II, South-West Wales* (Cardiff, 2007), 166–9 (Llanfihangel Ystrad (Llanllŷr) 1).
268. Wmffre op. cit. (note 14), 426–7, where he also suggests that Forwyn derives from *morwyn* ('sea-farer'), a male saint, and notes that a burial in a leaden coffin was found in the garden at Llanllŷr at the close of the eighteenth century.
269. Brewer *et al.* op. cit. (note 8), vol. 4, 153.
270. L. L. Gee, *A Very Small Corner of Paradise* (Talybont, Ceredigion, 2010), 18. Wmffre tells that Llŷr is a male name, but suggests that the association with the nuns led to the saint being thought of as a female holy person.
271. For parallels see Williams 1998 op. cit. (note 17), 401, 409.
272. Brewer *et al.* op. cit. (note 8), vol. 4, 152–3.
273. W. Stubbs (ed.), *Historical Works of Gervase of Canterbury*, 2 vols (London, 1879–80), vol. 2, 443.
274. Edwards op. cit. (note 61), 89, 132–3.
275. Cilerwisg (SN 554543) which lies immediately east of Llanllŷr's home estate.
276. *Calendar of Close Rolls* 1299, 286.
277. L. Harris, *Gwaith Huw Cae Llwyd* (Cardiff, 1953), 70 (kindly translated some years ago by Mrs Myra Shakespear of Basaleg Grammar School). This poem is the subject of a current study by Dr Jane Cartwright of University of Wales, Trinity St David.
278. Lewis and Davies op. cit. (note 204), 30–1.
279. J. Caley (ed.), *Valor Ecclesiasticus temp. Henry VIII*, 6 vols (London 1810–34), vol. 4, 397.
280. TNA, E 315/201/54; SC.
281. Glanmor Williams op. cit. (note 136), 367; TNA: PRO, LR 6/152/2, SC 6/HEN.VIII/4861; E 315/210/54; Caley op. cit. (note 279), vol. 4, 397.
282. TNA, LR 6/152/1–4.
283. TNA, LR 6/152/3–4; *Calendar of Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic: Henry VIII*, vol. 13, 1,576.
284. TNA, LR 6/152/1–4.
285. A field-name of interest is Park y Borth. See Fig. 14.
286. It could possibly be a reused and adapted seal, as the crook of the staff and the lettering appear to conjoin.
287. On page 276.
288. In part because the post-Dissolution Ministers' Accounts only name two of the thirty-three tenanted holdings outside the tithe-free demesne (TNA, SC6/HENVIII, 4861, 4862, 4863). The *Taxatio Ecclesiastica* of 1291 (p. 276a) lists as granges 'Redwareth' (probably for *Rhydwareth*, its present location unknown; 'Sennonlen'—perhaps a mis-transcription for *Fynnon-neubyn* (its location not known for certain); Molbre (there are several *Moelfre* names in the area); Lanhirmoel

- (probably for *Llanllŷr-moel*—and perhaps the upland site of Moelfre westwards of the nunnery, at SN 501562); ‘Castel’ Heweyn Ceto’—possibly Castell Hywel also westwards of the convent (SN 513569); ‘Crutseyson (for *Crugsaeson*)’—its site also debatable, and ‘Glalnruaelen’—clearly in the valley of the Rhiwafallen stream, and perhaps the complex of lands indicated on the map.
289. *Taxatio Ecclesiastica* 276a; Cowley op. cit. (note 18), 157; J. Hext Lewes, ‘Llanllŷr’, *Ceredigion* (1971), 342. The initial grant of land to the nuns was indicated by its tithe-free nature; the Llanllŷr estate in 1796 comprised of some ten major holdings outside the tithe-free demesne, but whether all these were ever in the nuns’ hands is indeterminable (NLW, Manuscript Maps, vol. 7).
290. NLW, Maps vol. 7 (photostat copy of a 1768 plan of Llanllŷr Estate; tithe map and schedule for the parish of Ystrad Aeron). I am grateful to Mrs Loveday Gee for her helpfulness and interest.
291. TNA, C 1/1381/1–2; E 321/14/6; LR 6/152/1–4; SC6/HENVIII/4861.
292. TNA, E 315/201/54; Caley op. cit. (note 279), 397.
293. W. Capes (ed.), *Registrum Johannis Trefnant, episcopi Herefordensis, 1389–1404* (Hereford: Cantilupe Society, 1916), 226, 228–9.
294. R. F. Isaacson, *Episcopal Registers of St David’s*, Cymmrodorion Record Society 6 (London, 1917), vol. 1, 256, 258.
295. TNA, LR 6/152/1.
296. TNA, E 318/Box 35/1922; C 1/1094/59; *Calendar of Patent Rolls*, Edward VI, vol. 5 (1553), 286.
297. TNA, C 1/1499/66–7.
298. Williams 1975 op. cit. (note 257), 171; Hext Lewes op. cit. (note 289), 342; E. A. Lewis, *Early Chancery Proceedings Concerning Wales* (Cardiff, 1937), 29–31; *Calendar of Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII*, vol. 13 (1538) 1,585; TNA, C 1/1094/59; E 321/14/6.
299. F. R. Lewis, ‘History of Llanbadarn Fawr’, *Transactions of the Cardiganshire Archaeological Society* 13 (1938), 24–32, deals fully with Vale Royal’s possession of Llanbadarn; the chapels were: Aberystwyth, Gwnnws, Llanafan, Llanfihangel-y-Creuddyn, Llanfihangel Genau’r Glyn, Llangwryfon, Llangynfelyn, Llanilar, Llanychaearn. It was perhaps to serve one of these that in 1509 the abbot of Vale Royal presented a clerk of the St David’s diocese, Maurice ap Llywelyn, on letters dimissory, for ordination in the Hereford diocese (Bannister op. cit. (note 167), 251). As Llanbadarn was the mother church of north Ceredigion, it was the scene of a visitation of the deanery of Ultra Aeron in 1504 by Visitors appointed by Archbishop William Warham of Canterbury, the see of St David’s being vacant. The vicar at the time was Maurice Gwynn (Lambeth Palace Library, *Register of William Warham*, fo. 225). See also E. G. Bowen, *A History of Llanbadarn Fawr* (Llandysul, 1979), 52–4, 68, 139.
300. Caley op. cit. (note 279), vol. 5, 209.
301. T. I. Jeffreys Jones, *Exchequer Proceedings Concerning Wales, temp. James I* (Cardiff, 1955), 102.
302. F. R. Lewis op. cit. (note 299), 24–5.
303. *Calendar of Papal Registers (Letters)*, vol. 4, 88.
304. NLW, Crosswood 2 (A) I. 1; Rees op. cit. (note 73), 39.
305. *Calendar of Papal Registers (Letters)*, vol. 4; British Library, Lansdowne MS 828, fos 57–9. The episcopal permission was accorded ‘with consent of the [cathedral] chapter’, the bishop was to receive yearly from Vale Royal an annual payment (synodal) of £4 6s 8d, the chapter 18s, and the archdeacon of Cardigan, 21s, whilst the vicar appointed from time to time was to receive a then princely stipend of £21. Further, on the death of any rector, the bishop was to receive a palfrey as heriot, and the archdeacon 6s 8d on the induction of any new rector. The bishop’s charter further

- stipulated the provision of: 'meat and drink or 2s in money, for two vicars or ministers of St David's Cathedral, who were wont to travel with the relics of the same to the church of Lampadervaure at least once a year to receive offerings of charity' (NLW, Crosswood 2 (A) I. 1); Jeffreys Jones op. cit. (note 301), 103—for the vicar's stipend).
306. F. R. Lewis op. cit. (note 299), 27.
 307. Ibid. 28.
 308. *Calendar of Papal Registers (Letters)*, vol. 4, 88; J. Brownbill (ed.), *The Ledger-Book of Vale Royal Abbey*, Lancashire and Cheshire Record Society 68 (1914), 190.
 309. Rees 1975 op. cit. (note 73), 359–60, no. 1387; the Augustinian canons of Wigmore had also, in 1284, asserted that they too had once served Llanbadarn. In 1442/43, Vale Royal's appropriation of Llanbadarn was challenged by local Welshmen at the time of disturbances (ibid, 39 note).
 310. Ibid. 39; TNA, SC 8/27/1349.
 311. F. R. Lewis op. cit. (note 299), 29–30.
 312. TNA, E 326/B.8648.
 313. F. R. Lewis op. cit. (note 299), 29–30.
 314. E. G. Bowen, *History of Llanbadarn Fawr* (Llanbadarn, 1979), 52.
 315. F. R. Lewis op. cit. (note 299), 29–30.
 316. Bowen, op. cit. (note 314), 53.
 317. Brownbill op. cit. (note 308), 192.
 318. W. Gwyn Thomas, 'Chancel of Llanbadarn Church', *Archaeologia Cambrensis* 127 (1978), 127–9.
 319. Isaacson op. cit. (note 293), 211.
 320. In that year's assessment, the temporalities of Strata Florida in the archdeaconry were valued at £22 15s 4d and its tax in their respect fixed at £2 5s 6d (TNA, E179/21/82, 84).
 321. W. Campbell, *Materials for a History of Henry VII*, 2 vols (London, 1873–77), vol. 2, 428.
 322. F. R. Lewis op. cit. (note 299), 32.
 323. Griffiths op. cit. (note 101), 231.
 324. F. R. Lewis op. cit. (note 299), 33.
 325. *Calendar of Close Rolls* 1435, 364.
 326. TNA, C 1/480/1 and C 1/493/49. An unedifying dispute occurred in these years. Vale Royal, it was alleged in 1522, demised Llanbadarn Fawr to Morgan Herbert for twenty-six years at a rental of £120 annually. Herbert claimed that after three years he made Richard Croft his executor and gave to Croft all his leases 'to his use wholly', and so Croft entered upon the property, but Croft claimed that after three years the abbot 'by persons unknown' evicted him. The abbot rejoined that in 1523 one Lewis ap Dio ap Gogh brought the lease to the abbey whereupon the community cancelled it and awarded Llanbadarn Fawr to Lewis. Herbert continued to hold the property, but after his death Croft was evicted. The judgement is unknown.
 327. TNA, LR 1/228, fos 3^f–4^f; NLW, Powis Castle Deed 12,789; Lewis op. cit. (note 298), 37.
 328. D. H. Williams, 'The White Monks in Powys, I: Cwmhir Abbey', *Cistercian Studies* 11, pt. 2 (1976); Williams 1984 op. cit. (note 172), vol. 2, 269, 288, 299, 306; Williams 2001 op. cit. (note 172), 24, 42, 252, pl. XIV-B; Cowley op. cit. (note 18), 261.
 329. Williams 1990 op. cit. (note 220), 67 (nos 205–9).
 330. Williams 1984 op. cit. (note 172), vol. 2, 288, note 79; Williams 2001 op. cit. (note 172), 314.
 331. D. C. Evans, 'Rhydlan Deifi', *Transactions of the Cardiganshire Antiquarian Society* 7 (1930), 156–71.

332. Williams 1990 op. cit. (note 220), 109, fig. 27; Williams 2001 op. cit. (note 172), 183, fig. 78.
333. G. D. Owen op. cit. (note 247), 225.
334. Revised after D. Knowles *et al.*, *The Heads of Religious Houses, England and Wales, Volume I. 940–1216* (Cambridge, 2nd edn, 2001), 143–4; D. M. Smith and V. C. M. London (eds), *Volume II. 1216–1377* (Cambridge, 2001), 312–3; and D. M. Smith (ed.), *III. 1377–1540* (Cambridge, 2008), 334–6. Williams 1971 op. cit. (note 24) in course of revision.