

CORRODIES

The earliest reference to corrodies at Bermondsey dates to 1247–8, in a fine between Ernald Geraudon and Prior Imbert concerning the grant of a one (*Fines relating to Surrey*, 1159–1509, ed F B Lewis, 1894, 32). Not long after, on 7 October 1253, Mabel the convert received from the pr of B one mark for two years from 2 February next for her maintenance in the said house (*pro exhibicione sua in domo predicta*) (*Cal Close Rolls*, 1251–53, 509). This clearly implies accommodation within the precinct: Adam Russel's release to John de la Bare of London of his right in a curtilage in the parish of St Mary Magdalene, Bermondsey 'next the curtilage of the chapel of St Mary in the church of the priory of St Saviour' in 1310–11 (*Cat Anc Deeds*, v.A11652) plainly does so, though there is no specific mention of a corrody. In these cases probably, and certainly in others later, private persons of means had come to an arrangement with the house by which, usually in their old age, they would be accommodated, clothed, fed and given a fixed pension there in exchange for the down payment of a sum of money.

A detailed description of what was involved is provided by the text of a priory charter of 11 March 1321 preserved in a royal inspeximus and confirmation of 28 June 1324:

Peter prior of St Saviour Bermondsey and the convent of that house grant to Nicholas de Tunstal a corrody there to be received in their house for life in the following form: viz each day of his life a white monastery loaf of the price of ½ d, a brown loaf (*bissum*) of price ½d; a gallon of monastery ale of price 1d, a half gallon of the second ale price ½d from their cellar at Bermondsey; two dishes of meat (*fercula*) on each one of the four flesh days every week and of the price of 1½d a day from their kitchen, and for the other three days fish or other things in the same way as one of the monks, of the price of 1½d; and every day two dishes of pottage of the price of ¼d from the kitchen; and every year one robe of fur of the suit of their clerks or esquires, as he pleases, of the price of 20s, to be received yearly from their chamber at Christmas; also a house within their close of Bermondsey to dwell in, with a plot of the court lying near the said house and adjoining the wall of John le Mazeliner, between the priory kitchen and brewhouse and 66 ft long by 20 ft wide at each end, and a pond and curtilage between the brewhouse and the new garden, of the prior and convent one end of which abuts on the lane leading to the granges and the other on the highway leading to Rotherhithe, with free ingress and egress whenever he chooses; also every year four cart loads of wood, and two of straw to be carried at their expense to his house at Bermondsey; and also two acres of meadow in their meadow under *Danieleswalle* for the maintenance of his horses, as it is enclosed with ditches; to hold to him for life, and to carry, take away, or assign, wherever, whenever and to whomsoever he will, as well without the said house of Bermondsey as within it. And they or their successors may pay the said corrody and the above price as they prefer (*Cal Patent Rolls*, 1321–1324, 441; *Cal Close Rolls*, 1327–30, 380–1).

This was supplemented by a charter of 11 June 1322 in which Nicholas was additionally granted for life part of the new garden which adjoined his existing plot:

part of the new garden with the apple trees and other trees in it lying between the court of the said Nicholas on one side and the said new garden on the other, of the

length of 26½ perches, whereof one end abuts on the lane leading from their court to their granges and is of the width of 2½ perches and the other end abuts on the highway leading to Rotherhithe of the width of 3½ perches, with its vines, hedges and ditches, free ingress and egress and all other appertinances (ibid).

This was confirmed on 6 May 1328, following Nicholas's surrender of all his rights in the premises 'and all his actions against the priory by reason of the corrody' in return for the payment of £40 3s 4d by the prior (ibid, 380–1). For the topographical aspects of these arrangements see the *Gazetteer*.

Less informative references to this category of corrody also occur at about this date, a low point in the priory's fortunes. In 1320 Isabel de Bramellang petitioned parliament for a remedy in that the corrody she and her son shared there had been 'detained' (*detinetur*) in the house (*domo*) of Bermondsey, then in the king's hands; to which petition the response was that the keeper of the house to do her justice (*Rotuli Parliamentorum*, i.372 no 15). In the same year John de Besevile, tailor of London, likewise sought remedy in that 7m pa which the prior & convent of Bermondsey were bound to pay for a corrody in the house were being withheld from him: again the response was that the keepers should do justice (ibid, no 16).

There are numerous other examples. On 16 October 1355 was confirmed the priory's grant for life to William Turk fishmonger of London of a yearly pension of £20 in their house, a robe of the suit of their esquires or 20s every Christmas, and two cartloads of good hay in their meadow of Bermondsey (*Cal Patent Rolls*, 1353–1358, 288). These provisions, in certain respects reminiscent of those for Nicholas de Tunstall, do not appear to have involved accommodation on the priory premises but, like John de Besevile's corrody, involved an annual cash payment and goods in kind. It is an indication of the priory's financial straits that, if payments fell into arrears, the money could be distrained upon the priory's estate at Waddon. In a further case Surrey officials were instructed on 30 March 1395 to enquire by jury whether Walter Dautre, who lately lived in the priory of Bermondsey, died there, as the king was informed, and if so on what day and how (*Cal Patent Rolls*, 1392–1396, 590).

From the later 14th century a more elevated class of corrodian becomes evident. The earls of Gloucester claimed right of maintenance when at Bermondsey (VCH Surrey, ii.75), perhaps because they were former owners of some of the priory's estates. Earl Ralph died seized of a lodging within the priory in 1372 (ibid). Sometime between 1386 and 1399 John of Gaunt, as king of Castile and Leon, was in correspondence with the prior and 'chaplains' of Bermondsey about the granting of corrodies by alien houses for a life term in exchange for a sum of money (PRO Ancient Petitions, SC8/93/4628). It was probably also as a corrodian that Henry V's queen, Katharine, died, and was buried, at Bermondsey in February 1437 (Kingsford, C L (ed) *Chronicles of London* (Oxford 1905), 142). In June 1498 was proved the will of Ann, Lady Audley 'of the close of the monastery of St Saviour Bermondsey.', who, like Queen Katharine, desired to be buried in the Lady Chapel (PRO PROB11/11).

Royal corrodies

The basis of each of these cases was a simple commercial transaction: in exchange for a lump sum the priory would provide on its premises a salubrious retirement home (or sometimes a cash pension) for those who could afford it. From 1313, however, there first occurs the record of a somewhat different arrangement, evidently already well established, that was to recur frequently in subsequent years. On 4 May that year the king sent 1313 William de Topclyve, who had served him 'long and usefully,' to the prior and convent of Bermondsey to receive the necessaries of life in food and clothing in place of Thomas le Long (*Cal Close Rolls*, 1307–13, 579). Though the accommodation and hospitality at the priory was no doubt comparable, arrangements of this kind differed in that if the king ever made any payment to the priory towards the maintenance of his superannuated retainers, his communications on the subject only rarely condescend to mention the fact.

Topclyve was replaced in March 1323 by William Bale, who was to receive the same maintenance for life (*Cal Close Rolls*, 1318–23, 699).

Inserted by a later hand in the margin of the Bermondsey *Annals* under the year 1329 is the statement: 'and in this year was the first grant of corrody of the lord king' (*Et hoc anno fuit prima concessio corrodii domini regis*) (*Annals*, 472). This was certainly untrue in a general sense and unintelligible in any other, unless it marks a discontinuation of the royal prohibition on lodgings within the priory in July 1327 (see below). On 14 January 1347 Robert le Chaundeler was presented to the prior to receive maintenance for life 'as Nicholaa sometime wardress of Queen Isabel had of them at the king's request' by reason of good service to Queen Philippa (*Cal Close Rolls*, 1346–49, 178); as was John Romeseye on 30 June 1361 (*Cal Close Rolls*, 1360–64, 290).

On 9 March 1400 the king instructed Bermondsey to admit a clerk of his chapel, Peryn de Archemont, issuing him with letters patent under the common seal of the house specifying 'what he shall take and what the priory will do,' and himself undertaking to provide for Peryn's maintenance 'for which no provision is yet made' (*Cal Close Rolls*, 1399–1402, 125). On 21 October 1403 Thomas Fermour was sent to the abbot and convent to replace Peryn, who had since died (*ibid*, 1402–05, 279). Fermour survived Bermondsey's hospitality much longer than most of his colleagues, volunteering as late as June 1415 to make way for Reynold Pope, the king's serjeant (*Cal Close Rolls*, 1413–19, 290). Eighteen months later, after Pope's death, Thomas Tunbrigge, yeoman of the king's kitchen, was sent to receive his maintenance on 28 January 1417 (*Cal Close Rolls*, 1413–19, 380). On 6 March 1439 the abbot was ordered to cancel his letters under the common seal concerning Thomas Frank's maintenance as successor to Tunbrigge and instead to admit both him and his wife Elizabeth as Thomas was 'minded to surrender his said letters to the end that he and his said wife may have that corrody for their lives' (*Cal Close Rolls*, 1435–41, 254).

In the last of this series of royal preferments, on 12 December 1461, William Philpot, groom of the king's cellar, was sent 'to take such corrody as any other person had therein' (*Cal Close Rolls*, 1461–68, 99), and on 26 June 1462 John Kendall, the king's servant, and Margaret his wife were sent to take such corrody or maintenance as William Philpot groom of the cellar or any other person had (*Cal Close Rolls*, 1461–68, 165). A final reference to a corrody occurs in February 1519 when John Treis, yeoman of the jewelhouse, was granted for life the corrody in the monastery of Bermondsey, in place of William Redde and Alice his wife, deceased (*L&P Henry VIII*, 3.i. 102 (18)).

It is notable that in almost all these cases the latest royal corrodian was clearly the replacement of another who had either died or given up his place there, and whose own earlier 'appointment' is also recorded. In the years 1400–39 a long succession of occupants of the same corrody can be traced in this way. All this might suggest that the number of royal corrodies in existence at one time was quite limited, and it is possible that there was only one. On the other hand, the king must have had innumerable servants to provide for in this way, and even if fairly shared out among other religious houses in the London area the number at any one house could well have been somewhat larger than one or two. A couple of cases (Peryn de Archemont in 1400 and William Philpot in 1461) do not appear to have been replacements, and so may have been additions to the existing complement. There were also lengthy periods (as in the years 1361 to 1400) when the close rolls make no mention of corrodies at Bermondsey, and which are difficult to interpret: it seems unlikely however that they had ceased to operate at these dates.

General

At three points in the priory's history corrodies, apparently both private and royal, were prohibited, though the evidence is sometimes contradictory and policies declared in the king's letters patent were not always adhered to in his day-to-day letters close. The first of these prohibitions, on 8 July 1327, followed Edward III's taking of the priory into his protection on account of its impoverishment and the dispute between Walter de Duluyd and John de Cusancia: all persons were forbidden to lodge there and to carry anything away without the keepers' consent (*Cal Patent Rolls*, 1327–1330, 136). This was quite possibly the reason for Nicholas de Tunstall's redemption of his corrody early in 1328.

In March 1399 the abbey was described as 'so burdened with corrodies and debt that the possessions and means thereof avail not to support needful charges' (*Cal Close Rolls*, 1399–1402, 82), by which was presumably meant that the lump sums paid by the private corrodians no longer sufficed to support their maintenance. On 21 November 1401 the king announced that because the abbey was charged with many pensions and corrodies and with great debts, many of its properties having been 'indiscreetly' leased, he had taken it into his hand and appointed keepers to ensure that all issues beyond the necessary maintenance of abbot, monks and servants should be applied to the relief of the abbey, the pensions, corrodies and leases ceasing until the abbey be cleared of debt (*Cal Patent Rolls*, 1401–1405, 23).

Finally in March 1475 Edward IV compensated Bermondsey for extinguishing its 18s annual rent from the Steelyard, when granting the latter to the Hansa in perpetuity, by undertaking to discharge the abbey of all manner of corrodies and sustentations granted at the king's prayer, desire, denomination or writing (*Rotuli Parliamentorum*, vi (1472–1503), 124; *Cal Patent Rolls*, 1467–1477, 509–10). Both Henry V's queen, Katharine, who died in 1437 and Edward IV's widow, Elizabeth Woodville, who died in 1492 had lived at the priory before their deaths (Graham 1926, 183).