

Abstract of thesis submitted for the degree of PhD in History at the University of Kent at Canterbury by Paul Lee, in September 1998:

Monastic and secular religion and devotional reading in late medieval Dartford and west Kent

Topics addressed in this thesis include the dynamic monastic religion characteristic of certain orders right up to the Dissolution; the relationship between monasticism and secular religion in local society; orthodox parish religion in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; the generation of robust Catholic parish religion through reciprocal action of local clergy and laity; and the education and devotional reading of nuns, laity and parish clergy. Dartford Priory, founded by Edward III, was pre-Reformation England's only Dominican nunnery, founded at the high point of the continental Dominican second order. It was one of the seven largest and wealthiest English nunneries at the Dissolution, and was one of only six monasteries refounded in Mary's reign. It was a place of learning and contemplative spirituality, drawing on the influence of the continental Dominican nunneries as well as its literary and kinship connections with the English Carthusians and Syon Abbey. The nunnery also developed close links with the religion of the local parish, through the activities of the prioress, the granting to laity and secular clergy of access to the conventual church and the sending out of its friar chaplains. Secular religion in pre-Reformation Dartford, and west Kent (the diocese of Rochester) in general, was a vigorous traditional Catholicism expressed through the local structures of the parish. This thesis contributes to knowledge of the active role of the laity in pre-Reformation parish religion, and of the parish clergy who assisted them in developing this, many of which priests served in the areas in which they had grown up as children. It also contributes to knowledge of education and book-ownership by clergy and laity in local society in late medieval England. In west Kent education and reading largely served to reinforce the orthodoxy of both the laity and the parish clergy, both graduates and non-graduates.

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by Paul Lee

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Supervised by Andrew Butcher

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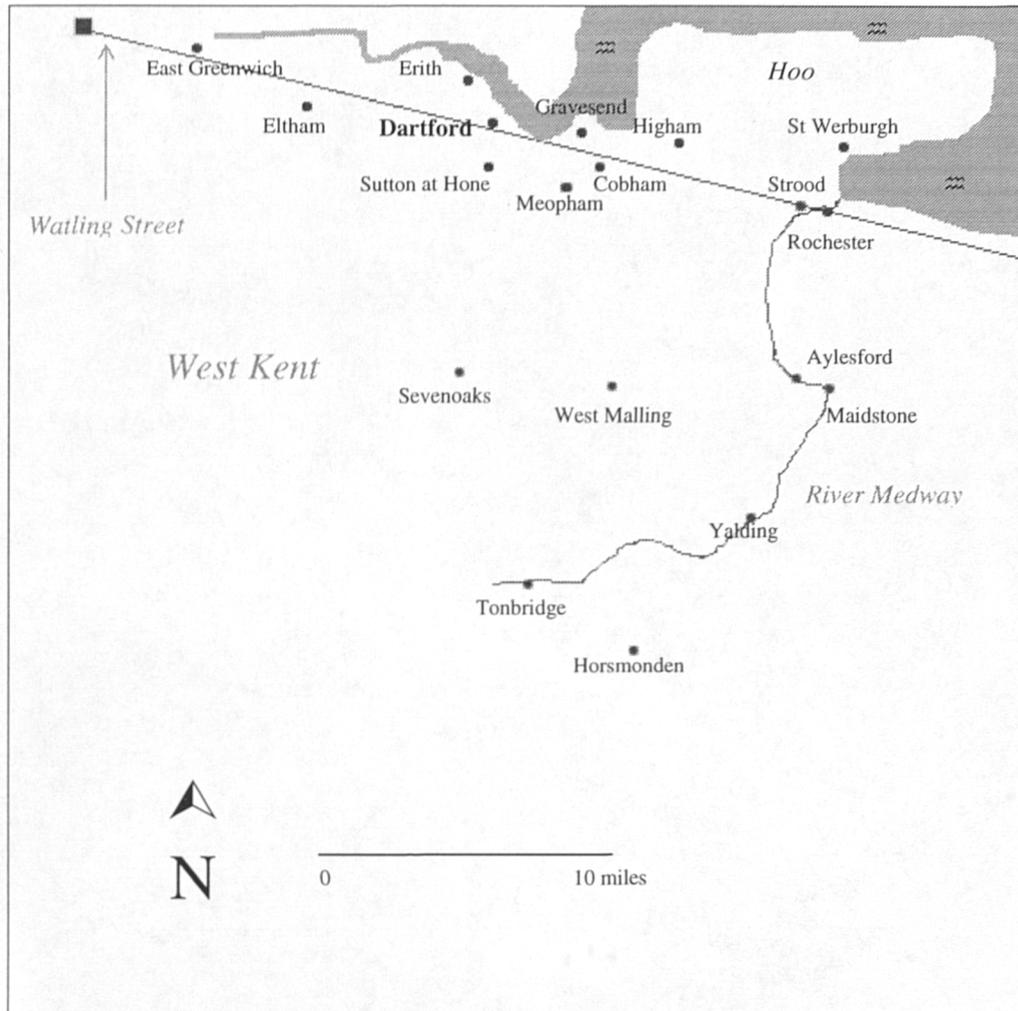
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Acknowledgements

I am very grateful to Mrs. Susan Pittman for suggesting Dartford Priory to me as a topic for research, and for her continued interest shown in this project. My supervisor Mr. Andrew Butcher has given vital instruction, information, advice and encouragement in its execution and development, for which I am ever grateful. Mr. N. Geirnaert, archivist at the Brugge Stadsarchief, and the staff of the Archives du Département du Nord in Lille, have kindly sent me information and photocopies. I am also grateful to Mr. Mark Neighbour of Antwerp for all the materials from Belgian libraries which he gathered on my behalf. The librarians of the London Society of Antiquarians and Trinity College Dublin, and the Conservateur of Poitiers Municipal Library, all generously allowed me to see manuscripts in their care. I would like to thank Dom. Michael Rees, librarian of Downside Abbey, and the abbot, guestmaster and convent of that place, for kindly extending their hospitality to me during a very pleasant visit to the monastery and its library. My fellow students at the University of Kent, Miss Sheila Sweetinburgh, Mr. Mark Merry and Dr. Rob Lutton, have generously shared some of their own data with me, and Mr. Miles Banbery, now the UKC Web Editor, has helped and encouraged in many other ways. I am also very grateful to Mark Merry for drawing the map which appears in this thesis on p.vi. My mother has kindly identified scriptural quotations for me. I acknowledge with pleasure the good-humoured assistance given me by Dr. Stephen Morrison of the English Department of the University of Poitiers during an enjoyable ERASMUS-funded term of study there, in 1995, and in his subsequent communications on the subject of medieval books. Finally, I am grateful for the grants and awards I have received from the British Academy, the Humanities Faculty of the University of Kent and ERASMUS.

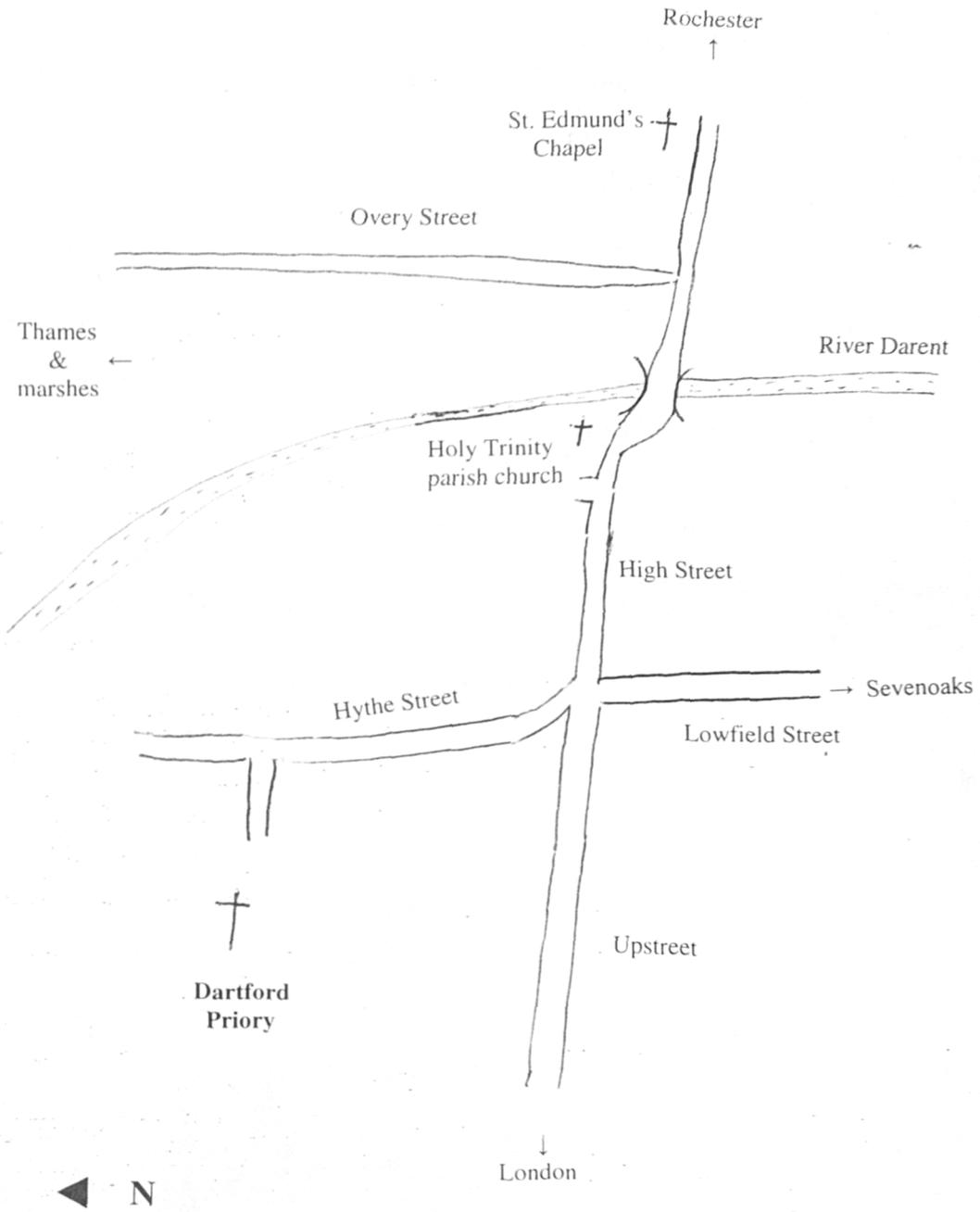
Abbreviations

AC:	<i>Archaeologia Cantiana</i>
BL:	British Library
BRUC:	A.B. Emden, <i>A Biographical Register of the University of Cambridge to 1500</i> (Cambridge, 1963).
BRUO:	A.B. Emden, <i>A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford, to AD 1500</i> (Oxford, 1957), 3 vols.
Cal. Charter Rolls	<i>Calendar of Charter Rolls preserved in the Public Record Office, 5, 1341-1417</i> (London, 1916).
Cal. Close Rolls	<i>Calendar of Close Rolls preserved in the Public Record Office</i> (London, 1892-).
Cal. Pap. Lets	W. Bliss, C. Johnston, J. Twemlow et al., eds, <i>Entries in the Papal Registers relating to Great Britain and Ireland, Papal Letters</i> (1894-).
Cal. Pap. Pet.	W. Bliss, ed., <i>Entries in the Papal Registers relating to Great Britain and Ireland, Petitions to the Pope, i, 1342-1419</i> (1897).
Cal. Pat. Rolls	<i>Calendar of Patent Rolls</i> (London, 1891-).
CCA:	Canterbury Cathedral Archives
CKS:	Centre for Kentish Studies (Kent Archives Office at Maidstone)
CWCH:	<i>Calendar of Wills Proved and Enrolled in the Court of Hustings, London, AD 1258-AD 1688</i> , ed. Reginald R. Sharpe, 2 vols (London, 1889-1890).
DNB:	Leslie Stephen & Sidney Lee, eds, <i>Dictionary of National Biography</i> , 63 vols (London, 1885-1908).
EHR:	<i>English Historical Review</i>
IMEP:	<i>Index of Middle English Prose</i> (see Bibliography).
Latham:	R.E. Latham, <i>Revised Medieval Latin Word-list from British and Irish Sources</i> (London, 1965).
L.&P. Hen. VIII	J.S. Brewer, J. Gairdner, R.H. Brodie, eds, <i>Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the reign of Henry VIII</i> , 21 vols & 2 addenda (London, 1862-1910, 1929, 1932).
JEH:	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
PRO:	Public Record Office
TRHS:	<i>Transactions of the Royal Historical Society</i>
Valor:	<i>Valor Ecclesiasticus</i> , ed. J. Caley and J. Hunter, 6 vols (London, 1810-33).
VCH:	Victoria County History



Some vills in west Kent

Late medieval Dartford



Chapter One

Introduction

The intention in this thesis is to investigate orthodox Catholic religion in late medieval local society by combining study of individual groups within that society and also the ways in which they interacted and reflected on each other. The local focus is motivated by a desire to study the ways in which trends and interactions were manifested 'on the ground' affecting the lives of real people in specific contexts. The context chosen for this study is Dartford (a small town in west Kent), the Dominican nunnery in that town, and the region in which Dartford existed. The specific topics addressed by the thesis are suggested both by recent secondary work on late medieval secular and monastic religion, but also (and primarily) by the findings of primary research into Dartford and the diocese of Rochester.¹ Thus, the specific topics addressed in the following chapters include the dynamic monastic religion that was characteristic of certain orders right up to the Dissolution; the relationship between monasticism and secular religion; the existence of a robust traditional Catholicism in parish religion in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; the generation of this religion through reciprocal action of local clergy and laity; and the education and devotional reading of nuns, laity and parish clergy.

Catherine Paxton comments, in the introduction to her recent thesis on the medieval London nunneries, that, since the publication of Eileen Power's book on the medieval English nunneries in 1922, 'the nuns of late medieval England have rested, if not in peace, at least substantially undisturbed.'² With the exception of some theses and local historical society publications, says Paxton, the decades following brought forth no 'deluge of further work which Power's work might have been expected to inspire.'³ Knowles famously virtually ignored female religious in his three volume work on *The Religious Orders in England*, other than to treat old English nunneries 1066-1100 and the origins of the Gilbertine order, citing lack of adequate sources.⁴ Paxton and Oliva suspect some element of male bias. Medieval nuns on the continent have also been largely neglected.⁵ Many of the earlier publications were architectural or

¹ 'West Kent' and the 'diocese of Rochester' are terms used interchangeably in this thesis because the diocese consisted of the western end of the county from a line roughly extending south from Gillingham, but skirting round Maidstone. It makes sense to treat the inhabitants as inhabitants of a diocese, in the context of a study of religion. The diocese governed many aspects of life affecting ordinary parishioners, and this is reflected by records.

² Catherine Paxton, 'The nunneries of London and its environs in the later middle ages' (Oxford DPhil, 1993), p.1; Eileen Power, *Medieval English Nunneries c.1275 to 1535* (Cambridge, 1922). Power, herself, took over the baton handed on by Lina Eckenstein's extraordinary *Women under Monasticism: Chapters on Saint-Lore and Convent Life between AD 500 and AD 1500* (Cambridge, 1896).

³ Paxton cites as examples: R.B. Dobson & S. Donaghey, 'The History of Clementhorpe Nunnery' (*The Archaeology of York*, ii, fasc. 1 (1984)); W. Sturman, 'Barking Abbey: A study of its external and internal administration from the Conquest to the Dissolution' (University of London, PhD thesis, 1961); J. Wake & W.A. Pantin, 'Delapré Abbey. Northampton: Its History and Architecture,' *Northamptonshire Past and Present*, ii (1958), pp.225-41 (Paxton, 'The nunneries of London', p.1 n.2). To these Sally Thompson adds: W.M. Sturman, 'History of the Nunnery of St. Mary and St. Michael outside Stamford', MA dissertation, University of London, 1946; J.A. Nichols, 'The History and Cartulary of the Cistercian Nuns of Marham Abbey, 1249-1536', PhD dissertation, 1974 (Sally Thompson, *Women Religious: The Founding of English Nunneries after the Norman Conquest* (Oxford, 1991), p.1 n.5). On this neglect, see M. Oliva, 'The Convent and Community in the Diocese of Norwich from 1350 to 1540', PhD dissertation, Fordham University, 1991, Introduction, *passim.*; cited Paxton (reference as above). In addition, A.F.C. Bourdillon, *The Order of Minoreesses in England* (Manchester, 1926) was published just four years after Power's work. Other secondary literature on nunneries from the 1960s and 70s includes: J. Paul, 'Dame Elizabeth Shelley, last abbess of St. Mary's Abbey, Winchester', *Hampshire Field Club Proceedings*, 23 (1965), pp.60-71; and, Coburn V. Graves, 'English Cistercian nuns in Lincolnshire', *Speculum*, 54 (1979), pp.492-9.

⁴ Points most recently made by, for example, Sally Thompson, *Women Religious*, p.1; Catherine Paxton, 'The nunneries on London', p.1; Janet Burton, *Monastic and Religious Orders in Britain 1000-1300* (Cambridge, 1994), p.85; all citing David Knowles, *The Religious Orders in England*, 3 vols (Cambridge, 1948-59), ii, p.viii.

⁵ A point made by Michel Parisse, *Les Nonnes au Moyen Age* (Le Puy, 1983), p.7; cited Catherine Paxton, 'The nunneries of London', p.1 n.3.

archaeological in focus, or were antiquarian in nature, doing valuable spadework in every sense. Two theses in the 1960s dealt with nuns in relation to canon law.⁶ In very recent years, however, there has been an increasing level of attention paid to medieval nuns and nunneries, reflected by a host of theses, articles and monographs, covering many different aspects. There were, for example, papers published in the 27th volume of *Studies in Church History*, in 1990, which volume concerned *Women in the Church*.⁷ Sally Thompson's book (one of the first devoted to the subject of nuns since Power's study), published in 1991, concerns the English nunneries founded after 1066.⁸ Some other recent works, such as David N. Bell's book, published in 1995, have focused on what nuns read, reflecting the current general interest in the literary activities of medieval women, and there have been a number of publications concentrating on the literary activities of the Syon Abbey nuns and brethren.⁹ Burton comments, however, that there is still no modern study of medieval British monasticism placing the contribution of women fully within the context of both male and female religious life.¹⁰ Indeed, she devotes one out of nine chapters in her textbook to women, as does C.H. Lawrence in his textbook on medieval European monasticism.¹¹ Until such a work appears, it is necessary to rely on those publications which bring light exclusively on nuns and nunneries to correct the imbalance institutionalised by Knowles.

Recent studies of certain nunneries and other monastic orders have sought to counter old assumptions that monastic religion was in a state of decay in the years before the Dissolution. There were, for example, some large houses of Benedictine nuns in Hampshire which continued to attract a regular flow of recruits right up to the end.¹² A number of monastic studies in recent years, including some concerning nunneries, have dealt with the subject of what happened to monastic communities after the Dissolution, arguing the survival of communal solidarity where former nuns continued to live together.¹³ Furthermore, the Carthusian monks and Brigittine nuns of Syon Abbey constituted dynamic monastic communities, on the eve of the Dissolution, which were at the fore-front of English literate spirituality and

⁶ Micheline de Fontette, *Les Religieuses à l'âge classique du droit canon: recherches sur les structures juridiques des branches féminines des ordres*, Bibliothèque de la Société d'Histoire Ecclésiastique de la France (Paris, 1967); Z.M. Proctor, 'Religious life for women in twelfth century Canon Law, with special reference to English houses', MPhil dissertation, University of London, 1967.

⁷ W.J. Sheils & Diana Wood, eds, *Studies in Church History, 27: Women in the Church* (Oxford, 1990). Papers published here include Claire Cross, 'The religious life of women in sixteenth-century Yorkshire', pp.307-24; Joan Greatrex, 'On ministering to "certayne devoute and religiouse women": Bishop Fox and the Benedictine nuns of Winchester diocese on the eve of the Dissolution', pp.223-35; Marilyn Oliva, 'Aristocracy or mentocracy? Office-holding patterns in late medieval English nunneries', pp.197-208. Other miscellaneous recent published work on nuns includes: Marjorie Chibnall, 'L'ordre de Fontevraud en Angleterre au XII^e siècle', *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale*, 29 (1986), pp.41-7; Diana Coldicott, *Hampshire Nunneries* (London, 1989); Roberta Gilchrist & Marilyn Oliva, *Religious Women in Medieval East Anglia. History and Archaeology c.1100-1540* (Norwich, 1993); Roberta Gilchrist, *Gender and Material Culture, the Archaeology of Religious Women* (London, 1994); Michael Hicks, 'The English Minoreesses and their early benefactors 1281-1367', *Monastic Studies*, I: *The Continuity of Tradition*, ed. J. Loades (Bangor, 1990), pp.158-70; Michel Parisse, *Les Nonnes au Moyen Age* (Le Puy, 1983); Michel Parisse, 'Les Prieurés de femmes', *Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes IV^e Section v: Hautes Etudes Médiévales et Modernes*, IX: *Prieurs et Prieurés dans l'Occident Médiéval* (Geneva, 1987), pp.115-26; Michel Parisse, ed., *Les Religieuses en France au XIII^e siècle* (Nancy, 1989) (articles by various writers); Yvonne Parrey, "'Devoted disciples of Christ": early sixteenth-century religious life in the nunnery at Amesbury', *Historical Research*, 67 (1994), pp.240-48; John Tillotson, *Marrick Priory: A Nunnery in Late Medieval Yorkshire*, Borthwick Paper no.75 (York, 1989); John Tillotson, 'Visitation and reform of the Yorkshire nunneries in the fourteenth century', *Northern History*, 30 (1994), pp.1-21.

⁸ Sally Thompson, *Women Religious*.

⁹ David N. Bell, *What Nuns Read: Books and Libraries in Medieval English Nunneries*, Cistercian Studies Series 158 (Kalamazoo, 1995); recent writings on Syon Abbey include A.J. Collins, ed., *The Bridgettine Breviary of Syon Abbey* (1969); Christopher de Hamel, *Syon Abbey: The Library of the Bridgettine Nuns and their Peregrinations after the Reformation*, The Roxburghe Club 1991 (Otley, 1993); Ann M. Hutchinson, 'What nuns read: literary evidence from the English Bridgettine house, Syon Abbey', *Medieval Studies*, 57 (1995), pp.240-48.

¹⁰ Janet Burton, *Monastic and Religious Orders in Britain*, p.85.

¹¹ C.H. Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism: Forms of Religious Life in Western Europe in the Middle Ages*, 2nd edn (London, 1989), Chapter 11: 'Sisters or Handmaids'.

¹² See Diana Coldicott, *Hampshire Nunneries*. The subject of recruits is dealt with in chapter three of this thesis.

¹³ See bibliography in n.1 of chapter three, and a full consideration of this topic in that chapter.

forged relations with literate laity and other monasteries.¹⁴ As far as nunneries relations with the secular world, in the area of religion, are concerned, this subject is usually approached from the perspective of the laity, in studies of regional or urban popular religion.¹⁵ The study of nuns' enclosure is also relevant.¹⁶ The consensus is that nunneries were not generally as strictly enclosed as they were supposed to be, and that a significant minority of laypeople and clergy valued the prayers and religious lives of religious in general, including enclosed nuns.

The vibrancy of secular Catholic religion up to the Reformation has been argued in recent years by historians who differ in their interpretation of the English Reformation from that most notably advocated by A.G. Dickens.¹⁷ R.N. Swanson feels, however, that this has gone too far and 'too rosy a picture is constructed of complete harmony' in the pre-Reformation Church.¹⁸ He argues against the notion of a unified monolithic English pre-Reformation spirituality.¹⁹ Late medieval religion was indeed characterised by variety in its forms of expression. Regional studies and studies of cities such as Bristol, London and Norwich have found evidence of flourishing secular religion at the end of the middle ages, sometimes with marked regional differences.²⁰ These forms of expression included seeking the sacraments, gifts to churches of money, ornaments, vestments and other goods, gifts to church fabric and church-building, maintenance of lights and images, devotion to the saints, membership of guilds and fraternities, endowment of prayers and masses for the soul after death, high levels of recruitment to the priesthood and staffing of parish churches.²¹ A minority of laypeople also sought the prayers of friars and enclosed religious, and gave their support to hospitals, or founded almshouses. Haigh concludes from this: 'There is a very wide range of such evidence to suggest that the ordinary religion of English parishes was in a healthy and vigorous state in the early sixteenth century'.²²

Swanson argues that pre-Reformation Catholicism was in many ways a 'demand-led' religion in which the leaders were to some extent forced to respond the changes in popular 'religiosity'.²³ A distinction has to be made between the upper hierarchy and institution of the Church and the parish clergy. Much attention has in the past been given to the matter of anticlericalism in pre-Reformation society, as a

¹⁴ These orders and this point are treated in detail in chapters three and five below.

¹⁵ See, for example, the relevant chapters on monastic support amongst laity in Andrew D. Brown, *Popular Piety in late medieval England the Diocese of Salisbury 1250-1550* (Oxford, 1995), and Norman P. Tanner, *The Church in late medieval Norwich 1370-1532* (Toronto, 1984).

¹⁶ For example, in John Tillotson, 'Visitation and reform of the Yorkshire nunneries in the fourteenth century'. This subject is investigated in detail in chapter five.

¹⁷ See, for example, Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: traditional religion in England, c.1400-c.1580* (New Haven, 1992); Christopher Haigh, ed., *The English Reformation Revised* (Cambridge, 1987), Introduction; J.J. Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English People: Popular religion and the English Reformation* (Oxford, 1984). See A.G. Dickens, *The English Reformation*, 2nd edn (London, 1989).

¹⁸ R.N. Swanson, *Catholic England: Faith, religion and observance before the Reformation* (Manchester, 1993), p.xi.

¹⁹ R.N. Swanson, *Catholic England: Faith, religion and observance before the Reformation*, Introduction, for example p.32.

²⁰ For examples of town studies see Clive Burgess, "'By Quick and by Dead": wills and pious provision in late medieval Bristol', *EHR*, 102 (1987), pp.837-58; Norman P. Tanner, *The Church in late medieval Norwich 1370-1532*; John A. Thomson, 'Piety and charity in late medieval London', *JEH*, 16 (1965), pp.178-95. On regionalism within religion see R.N. Swanson, *Catholic England: Faith, religion and observance before the Reformation*, p.7; Norman P. Tanner, 'The Reformation and Regionalism: further reflections on the Church in late medieval Norwich', in John A.F. Thomson, ed., *Towns and Townspeople in the Fifteenth Century* (Gloucester, 1988), pp.129-47. For examples of regional studies see Andrew D. Brown, *Popular Piety in late medieval England: the Diocese of Salisbury 1250-1550*; Gail Gibson, *The Theatre of Devotion: East Anglian drama and society in the late middle ages* (Chicago, 1989).

²¹ Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations: Religion, Politics, and Society under the Tudors* (Oxford, 1993), pp.25-39.

²² Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations*, p.39.

²³ R.N. Swanson, *Catholic England: Faith, religion and observance before the Reformation*, p.2.

possible root of popular acceptance of the Reformation.²⁴ Swanson finds the term to be a meaningless generalisation, and points out that action against misbehaving clerics came from both laity and clergy, in the pre-Reformation period. Furthermore, complaints from laity imply that they had an ideal notion of priesthood against which they measured bad clergy, rather than that they were opposed to priests in general.²⁵ Haigh reports his own findings, and those of other recent historians in regional studies, which suggest that the pre-Reformation laity were generally satisfied with the standards of education, morality and pastoral care of their parish clergy.²⁶ He notes that the high levels of clerical recruitment and benefactions to clergy in this period point to high levels of approval, and that these were actually increasing before the Reformation. He argues that this is not surprising, since the parish clergy exercised such a vital role in community life amongst laity, dispensing the sacraments, carrying out their pastoral ministry, helping to settle quarrels, and acting as clerks in local legal business. Indeed, they may have become less popular after the Reformation, when they had to impose the single orthodoxy of late Tudor England.²⁷ Heal and O'Day argue that the identity of the priest, as mediator between laity and God, owing loyalty to the Church authorities, set the clergy apart from the laity.²⁸ This point can be over-emphasised, however. Against it must be set the fact that many of the stipendiary clergy who carried out parish work had grown up in the localities in which they served, and this gave them a strong bond with the laity to whom they ministered.²⁹ This sets the context for the argument made in this thesis for the close interaction of local clergy and laity that contributed to the flourishing of Catholic parish religion.

Much has been written on the subject of late medieval education and literacy. These subjects are studied in this thesis in so far as they relate to the possession and use of religious books by nuns, clergy and laity. Recent research on nuns was mentioned above. On the education of the laity, much has been written by Nicholas Orme, but also by others.³⁰ These studies demonstrate that different levels of education from reading English to learning Latin and grammar could be obtained in formal elementary and grammar schools, and cathedral and collegiate song schools, and informally from many parish clergy. Many laypeople were able to benefit from use of the English primers, from the fourteenth century.³¹ A few of yeoman, gentry or merchant class background had the opportunity, from the fifteenth century, to achieve an advanced state of learning, sometimes going on to university and/or entering the priesthood.³² Doubt

²⁴ R.N. Swanson, *Catholic England: Faith, religion and observance before the Reformation*, pp.33-4. See recent works taking differing points of view cited by Swanson in *ibid.*, p.33 n.97. Christopher Haigh, 'Anticlericalism in the English Reformation', in Christopher Haigh, ed., *The English Reformation Revised*, pp.56-74.

²⁵ R.N. Swanson, *Catholic England: Faith, religion and observance before the Reformation*, p.34. Peter Marshall also argues, from a study of sixteenth-century wills, that laity looked for such qualities as 'honesty' in the priests whose prayers and celebrations they sought: Peter Marshall, *The Catholic Priesthood and the English Reformation* (Oxford, 1994).

²⁶ Christopher Haigh, 'Anticlericalism in the English Reformation', pp.57-8.

²⁷ Christopher Haigh, 'Anticlericalism in the English Reformation', pp.70-73.

²⁸ Introduction in Felicity Heal and Rosemary O'Day, eds, *Church and Society in England: Henry VIII to James I* (London, 1977), pp.1-14 at p.11. Duffy points out: 'The prestige of the Sacrament as the centre and source of the whole symbolic system of late medieval Catholicism implied an enormously high doctrine of priesthood'. Laymen and women were not allowed to touch the sacred vessels that the priest used with their bare hands (Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: traditional religion in England*, p.110).

²⁹ Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations*, p.44; Peter Marshall, *The Catholic Priesthood and the English Reformation*, pp.127, 194-6. Haigh considers that 'The vast majority of conscientious priests fitted easily into parish society'; they enjoyed considerable prestige, but they were not a race apart (*idem.*).

³⁰ Most recent is Nicholas Orme, *Education and Society in medieval and Renaissance England* (London, 1989). See also Jo Ann Hoepfner Moran, *The Growth of English Schooling, 1340-1548: learning, literacy, and laicization in pre-Reformation York diocese* (Princeton, 1985).

³¹ Charles C. Butterworth, *The English Primers (1529-1545): their publication and connection with the English Bible and the Reformation in England* (Philadelphia, 1953), pp.2-3. See chapter seven.

³² Moran reports findings of various studies that suggest that there was an increase in the number of laity with a working knowledge of Latin from the early fifteenth century. She finds that the proportion of Latin-literate laity in the diocese of York further increased in the early sixteenth century, for example among the more well-to-do in rural areas, and there was a rise in bequests by laity for

has been cast on the standards of learning and knowledge of the Scriptures of a large proportion of the parish clergy of late medieval and early Tudor England.³³ This has implications for the sort of religious reading they undertook.³⁴

Sources and method

West Kent is not one of the best documented areas in late medieval England, and the records of its monasteries are also sparse. The challenge this poses for research probably accounts for the fact that Dartford Priory and pre-Reformation secular religion in the diocese of Rochester are neglected subjects.³⁵ The evidence that does survive, however, is of sufficient interest to make the challenge worth tackling. Dartford Priory, for example, was pre-Reformation England's only house of Dominican nuns, and was amongst the ten largest and wealthiest nunneries in the country. It was a royal foundation, of Edward III, founded late in his life, and was eventually one of only six monasteries refounded in the reign of Mary Tudor. Several devotional and literary manuscripts survive from its library. Much attention has been paid to fifteenth and early sixteenth-century secular religion in East Anglia, but at least parts of Kent were open to the same cultural influences from the continent and London.³⁶ That these did not result in a Kentish religion the same as that in East Anglia is of interest.

The most important source utilised throughout this study is the last will and testament (or 'will' for short). Much has been written on the inadequacies and possibilities of this source, and the methods for their use.³⁷ The nature of their survival, and the unrepresentative nature of the cross-section of society who made them, makes them potentially misleading. Most of the wills used in this investigation were made by male members of the laity below gentry class but with sufficient means to rent or own at least a little land and property. Further, wills do not necessarily give an accurate picture of the testator in terms of his/her actual wealth, number of children, property, level of charity relative to wealth, occupation, and pious works. Bequests made at death, or a lack of them, may or may not be representative of a person's sympathies and values during life. It is possible to be too circumspect, however; wills are virtually the only

grammar and university education (Jo Ann Hoepfner Moran, 'Literacy and education in Northern England, 1350-1550', *Northern History*, 17 (1981), pp.1-23 at pp 2-3, 22-3). Helen Jewell argues that access to elementary and grammar schools, and informal educational opportunities in the north of England provided wider access to education than has sometimes been acknowledged (Helen M. Jewell, "'The bringing-up of children in good learning and manners": a survey of secular educational provision in the north of England, c.1350-1550', *Northern History*, 18 (1982), pp.1-25).

³³ This is reported, for example, by Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations*, p.40; Peter Heath, *The English Parish Clergy on the Eve of the Reformation* (London & Toronto, 1969), pp.70-75; Nicholas Orme, *English Schools in the Middle Ages* (London, 1973), pp.13-14.

³⁴ Felicity Heal and Rosemary O'Day conclude that 'many (pre-Reformation) clergy had a very limited knowledge of the Bible and the basic theological assumptions of the Christian faith' (Introduction in Felicity Heal and Rosemary O'Day, eds, *Church and Society in England: Henry VIII to James I*, p.4).

³⁵ No serious study has been made of Dartford Priory since A.G. Little's entry in the Victoria County History of Kent, of 1926: A.G. Little, 'The Dominican nuns of Dartford', *VCH Kent*, ii (1926), pp.181-90. Little drew heavily but not exclusively on an earlier and fuller account: C.F.R. Palmer, 'History of the Priory of Dartford', *Archaeological Journal*, 36 (1879), pp.241-71. Between them, these two articles present most of the known facts of Dartford Priory's history, but they make little attempt to analyse its monastic identity and local relations. Most notably they do not utilise local testamentary evidence.

³⁶ For studies of religion in East Anglia see R.B. Dinn, 'Popular religion in late medieval Bury St. Edmund's', PhD dissertation, University of Manchester, 2 vols, 1990; Gail Gibson, *The Theatre of Devotion: East Anglian drama and society in the late middle ages*; L.M.A. Higgs, 'Lay piety in the borough of Colchester, 1485-1558', PhD dissertation, University of Michigan, 1983; N. P. Tanner, *The Church in Late Medieval Norwich*.

³⁷ For examples of discussions of the use and interpretation of wills, and of their possibilities and limitations, see C. Burgess, "'By Quick and by Dead": wills and pious provision in late medieval Bristol'; a comprehensive survey in Robert G.A. Lutton, 'Heterodox and Orthodox Piety in Tenterden, c.1420-c.1540', PhD dissertation, University of Kent, 1997, pp.3ff.; a pessimistic view in C. Marsh, 'In the Name of God? Will-making and Faith in early Modern England', in G.H. Martin & Peter Spufford, eds, *The Records of the Nation* (Woodbridge, 1990), pp.215-49; and R.N. Swanson, *Catholic England: Faith, religion and observance before the Reformation*, pp.30-31.

source for making any judgement of the extent to which late medieval and pre-Reformation laity and secular clergy in west Kent valued the religious life of their local monasteries, parish churches and chapels. At best, they give an impression of the truth, which would otherwise be virtually hidden from view.

Wills made by late medieval inhabitants of the diocese of Rochester were proved in the consistory and archdeaconry courts of Rochester or the Prerogative Court of Canterbury.³⁸ In addition, wills made by inhabitants of parishes contained within the geographically dispersed peculiar deanery of Shoreham were proved within that deanery. Unfortunately, none of the pre-Reformation Shoreham deanery or archdeaconry court probate registers survive. Those of the consistory court have survived, however, and contain wills made from 1438.³⁹ The nine registers which cover the period up to the Reformation are bulky volumes, which have been rebound in modern times. They overlap each other chronologically, some are internally disordered, and certain parishes seem under-represented in certain periods. The overlapping jurisdiction of the archdeaconry and consistory courts in all three deaneries of the diocese (for example, both courts held sessions in Dartford parish church) means that the consistory court probate registers probably give an incomplete picture of the will-makers in any parish.⁴⁰ They allow at least something to be said about the diocese, however. For this study, all 4, 716 wills in these registers made between 1438 and 1537 have been read.⁴¹ In addition, wills have been studied which were made in the 1540s and 1550s by inhabitants of a few communities including Dartford, its local villages, Gravesend and Rochester. Those made by inhabitants of Dartford and a few other parishes in north-west Kent which were proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury have also been studied. These were generally made by wealthier parishioners, and they are used to supply more comprehensive statistics for the individual parish of Dartford, and generally to supply further detail and exemplification.⁴²

Other ecclesiastical records of the diocese of Rochester have survived in a more haphazard way and, therefore, do not lend themselves to a strictly empirical method of study. They do, however, provide valuable glimpses into matters which would otherwise be lost to the researcher. Rochester consistory court act books survive for the period 1436-1534.⁴³ These *acta* are of limited use because of the limited nature of the information they give. However, from the early sixteenth century other items have found their way into these books and thus survived, including some depositions (some in English), clerical subsidy material, episcopal detection and visitation evidence and petitions to the bishop's court. In addition, a deposition book from this court survives covering the years 1541-71, and contains various interesting cases.⁴⁴ Archdeaconry visitation evidence has survived only from the sixteenth century, and is very incomplete,

³⁸ There are also a few wills entered in the archiepiscopal registers. There was a single archdeaconry of Rochester in the medieval period.

³⁹ The consistory court probate registers are held at the Centre for Kentish Studies (CKS) at Maidstone where they are classified amongst the diocesan records as DRb/Pwr. The typescript catalogue held at Maidstone describes the contents of the volumes, which often overlap chronologically, and the earliest two of which were compiled much later in the fifteenth century from looser records. Throughout this thesis any documents with the prefix DRb or DRa should be understood to be located at the Centre for Kentish Studies. With the mode of reference adopted here, DRb/Pwr1/1 means fo.1 of the first probate register.

⁴⁰ The three deaneries were those of Dartford, Rochester and West Malling.

⁴¹ To these has been added an original will of 1456, dated by Geoffrey Cristian of Wilmington in April 1456, which is not preserved amongst other probate materials and is not registered, but which is typical of the kind of wills proved in the consistory court and contains a bequest to the friars of Dartford (CKS U451 T54).

⁴² These wills are classified London, PRO PROB 11, but all references in this thesis are abbreviated to PROB 11. With the mode of reference adopted here, PROB 11/1/1 means fo.1 of the first volume, rather than the quarto numbers used in the older method of referring to PCC wills.

⁴³ DRb/Pa vols 1-9.

⁴⁴ DRb/Jd 1.

although valuable and informative, covering the years 1504 and 1523-35.⁴⁵ The extensive lists of clergy in the diocese of Rochester for each year covered by these books may profitably be linked with evidence of the Rochester clerical subsidy book covering the 1520s and 30s. Together, these provide much evidence of individual clerical careers.⁴⁶

Secular records relating to Dartford survive even more patchily, and have not been greatly utilised in this thesis. They include property deeds, a very little manorial rental material (but no manor court records), a single marsh rental of 1416 and tax lists (utilised below). A social and economic study of Dartford would find some scope here for identifying the prominent Dartford landowners and families, and assessing their wealth, sometimes in combination with wills where they survive. Much greater use has been made of the published calendars of royal records, including the Patent and Close Rolls and letters and papers of the reign of Henry VIII.

Study of Dartford Priory is also hampered by lack of evidence. No records of the pre-Reformation English province of the Dominican order have survived. This means that there are no visitation records, because all Dominican priories were exempt from episcopal control and were visited by their provincial. Of Dartford's own administrative material there survives just three incomplete rentals of the early sixteenth century, one of them very limited in scope.⁴⁷ Other material is, however, contained within the royal records mentioned above, the calendars of charter rolls, the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* and the calendars of material extracted from papal registers. In addition, an entry in the *Archaeological Journal* of 1882 presents all the references to Dartford Priory that C.F.R. Palmer could find in registers of the master-generals of the Dominican order, in Rome, which survive only from the 1480s and thereafter (with gaps).⁴⁸ There are also a few letters by various parties, printed in various places, which provide more evidence. Finally, the wills and testaments of local people contain several references to Dartford Priory, some more extensive than others, all of which have something to reveal about activities and perceptions of the nuns and friars there.

The sparse and uneven nature of surviving evidence for Dartford Priory and late medieval west Kent sets up an interesting challenge of how to recover what can be known. The most fruitful approach is the comparative one, using the findings of other studies to fill the gaps and illuminate what does survive in order to come to a better understanding of it. This new understanding of the particular, in turn, adds to the knowledge of the general. For example, little direct evidence survives of how the nuns of Dartford spent their time and related to the world around them, but what is known of Dominican nuns on the continent may reasonably be applied to Dartford. The evidence that does survive about Dartford, however, adds human flesh to these bones, suggesting how rules on enclosure were being observed in practice by the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in the English province.

Secondly, it is necessary to examine movements within religion in regional contexts, so that comparisons may be made with what is known of other areas, and to qualify and add to the evidence that survives of Dartford in particular, its monastery and its locality. Thus, such topics as the co-operation of

⁴⁵ Material for 1504, 1527-35 and for the 1560s is contained within DRa/Vb 4. Archdeaconry visitation evidence for 1523-6 has been wrongly bound with consistory court *acta* for the same years: DRb/Pa 8 pt 1 ff.1-166.

⁴⁶ DRb/Az 1.

⁴⁷ These are investigated in chapter two.

clergy and laity in parish religion, and the relationship between monasticism and secular religion are best studied, where evidence is incomplete, through an interplay of evidence of the local and the regional. Each reflects on the other, combining detailed results and knowledge of larger trends. Dartford's locality is defined as that area in which parishes were named by Dartford testators in connection with kin, acquaintances and property. This includes parishes along the Thames shore from Greenwich to Chatham, and down the Darent valley, but they were mostly within about seven miles of Dartford.

Thirdly, in this thesis, monastic, lay and clerical religion and reading are studied separately, in order to come to some understanding of each group, but also in their interactions, because they inhabited the same late medieval world and reflected on each other. Lay parishioners interacted with each other, they interacted with their local clergy, and both groups had dealings with local monasteries where they existed. In the context of nunneries, the secular world encountered two groups of people, the nuns and their chaplains. The interaction of nuns and their chaplains provides another focus of study.

Structure and dates

The middle chapter of this thesis deals with the interconnections between monastic religion and the secular world. Chapters 2-4 precede this by studying the monastic community, religion, reading and learning of Dartford Priory. Chapters 6-7 focus on lay and secular clerical religion and reading in Dartford and the diocese of Rochester.

The period covered by this thesis has two starting points and two finishing points, because of the nature and availability of documentation and purposes of investigation. The sparse survival of wills from the diocese of Rochester from before 1438 makes investigation of parish religion before that date almost impossible. The significance of the origins of Dartford Priory to its later identity as a community, and the availability of royal and ecclesiastical documentation, however, make it essential to begin any study of that nunnery and its religious life with its foundation in the fourteenth century and its contemporary continental context. The focus of this thesis is on the study of late medieval (pre-Reformation) religion. Any consideration of the Reformation period has not been undertaken with any intention of gaining a full understanding of the effect or process of the Reformation for its own sake, but only insofar as it casts light on the secular and monastic religion which came before and which was challenged by it. Indeed, the nature of survival of evidence makes the study of religion on the eve of the Reformation the most fruitful area of the period under investigation. Secular religion in the diocese of Rochester during the 1550s is not investigated in this thesis, interesting though this would be, because of limitations of time, length, and the relatively less informative nature of wills on religious matters in that decade. The investigation of the monastic community of Dartford Priory is, however, continued up to its end, in 1585, with the death of the last nun in exile, partly for the sake of completeness, but also because what happened to the community after both its suppressions casts light on the nature of its religious life and communal identity before 1539.

⁴⁸ C.F.R. Palmer, 'Notes on the priory of Dartford, in Kent', *Archaeological Journal*, 39 (1882), pp.177-9.

Dartford and west Kent

Throughout this thesis attention is given in passing to social and economic matters when this is necessary in order to inform our understanding of religion in the society under investigation. For example, the existence of social connections with London in north-west Kent and the localism characteristic of other parts of the county had implications for religion. A detailed social and economic study of late medieval west Kent could be carried out, and would add an extra dimension to this thesis, but this is not possible in the space available. Thus, there now follows a sketch of Dartford and its region in the late medieval and pre-Reformation period, making brief reference to features of topography and human geography.

Dartford was a market town in north-west Kent on the Watling Street at the point where it crossed the River Darent, adjacent to the Thames marshes. The north Kent marshes, stretching from Deptford to the Isle of Grain, were being reclaimed throughout the early Tudor period, and were of great economic and strategic importance, for coastal defence and supporting mixed husbandry.⁴⁹ They stretched up to two miles in-land, and many late medieval will-making inhabitants of communities such as Erith, Dartford and in the hundred of Hoo mentioned lands and sheep in these areas. Inland, the soils on lowland and downland west and north of the Medway were of poor quality, in the late middle ages, consisting mostly of chalk, sand, and layers of clay and gravel. Many will-makers in the diocese of Rochester owned sheep, besides cattle, and the marshlands provided important pasturage. The most frequently mentioned crops in wills were barley and wheat, especially the former, but this was not an area of highly profitable grain production. In general, the industries and trades found in north-west Kent in the late medieval and early Tudor period were mixed farming, and some cloth and wool production.⁵⁰

Towns were small, in west Kent, and their inhabitants were highly mobile, in the sixteenth century, moving between parishes and around the county.⁵¹ Dartford's population was roughly eight hundred in 1301, and there were 182 houses in 1566, which points to a similar figure.⁵² Gravesend had 1,200 inhabitants at the end of the sixteenth century. As late as the 1660s, after a century of fast national population growth, Sevenoaks, Westerham, Tonbridge and West Malling each had populations of no more than between eight and six hundred people.⁵³ In the second half of the seventeenth century, fifty per cent of Kent parishes housed fewer than forty or fifty families, or roughly two hundred people, and half of the

⁴⁹ Terence Raoul Murphy, 'The Maintenance of Order in Early Tudor Kent, 1509-1558', PhD dissertation, Northwestern University, Illinois, 1975, p.60.

⁵⁰ Ann Brown, 'London and north-west Kent in the later middle ages: the development of a land market', *AC*, 92 (1976), pp.145-55 at pp.145, 152. The soil of the foothills, west of Dartford, south of the Thames marshes and north of the Downs were more fertile, however, and good for corn. In east Kent, on the foothills between Sittingbourne and Blean Forest, a 'roundtill land' system was operated, whereby fields never lay fallow but barley, beans and wheat were rotated (Alan Everitt, *Continuity and Colonisation: the evolution of Kentish settlement* (Leicester, 1986), p.46). In wool production, in the early fourteenth century, Kent was only surpassed by Norfolk (Alan Everitt, *Continuity and Colonisation: the evolution of Kentish settlement*, p.34). See also geological descriptions of west Kent in Alan Everitt, *Continuity and Colonisation: the evolution of Kentish settlement*, pt 1, especially p.45; Gordon Mingay, 'Agriculture', in Alan Armstrong, *The Economy of Kent, 1640-1914* (Woodbridge, 1995), pp.51-83 at pp.51-3.

⁵¹ Terence Raoul Murphy, 'The Maintenance of Order in Early Tudor Kent, 1509-1558', p.70.

⁵² The figure of eight hundred for 1301 is deduced by Geoff Porteus from a tax assessment of that year in which 218 persons in Dartford were assessed: Geoff Porteus, *The Book of Dartford: town on the Dover Road and gateway to Kent* (Buckingham, 1979), p.37. The assessment is printed in abstract form in R.P. Coates, 'Valuation of the town of Dartford, 29 Ed. I', *AC*, 9 (1874), pp.285-98. Porteus also reports the figure for 1566 (*ibid.*, p.37).

⁵³ C.W. Chalklin, *Seventeenth-century Kent* (London, 1965), pp.31-2.

county population lived in parishes of fewer than five hundred residents.⁵⁴ Kentish settlement was dispersed.⁵⁵

Despite the proximity of London to north-west Kent, particularly affecting an area from Deptford and Greenwich to Woolwich and Dartford, most of the county was relatively isolated, before the modern era. The Watling Street traversed the northern edge of the county, and its hinterland on the Downs and beyond was left relatively untouched by the contacts and influences it brought.⁵⁶ Only a twelfth of Kent gentry were married to Londoners, as late as the seventeenth century, and in the sixteenth century, the Kentish dialect was alive and well.⁵⁷ Most Dutch immigrants in west Kent were found in towns along the Thames shore (see below). Most of the more important market towns in Kent were in the eastern and southern two thirds of the county. Most parishes in the diocese of Rochester were rural and their inhabitants were largely agricultural labourers and husbandmen. The relatively few surviving wills from such parishes shows their religion to have been traditional and unflamboyant. This localism in the Kentish mentality, and the lack of enthusiasm for institutions such as monasteries and hospitals, which are characteristics also found in studies of east Kent, suggest that Kent had a distinct regional character.⁵⁸

Dartford was one of those places in north-west Kent which was affected by proximity to London, in this period. A number of wealthy London merchants and administrative officials took advantage of the flexible Kentish property and land market and bought themselves country residences in this area.⁵⁹ There are many indications of this in wills made by inhabitants of parishes in north-west Kent which mentioned London connections, and in London wills mentioning lands in north-west Kent. In Dartford, Robert Bikenore, who owned the advowson of St. Edmund's chapel and lived in the parish, in the mid fourteenth century, was a London merchant.⁶⁰ In the fifteenth century, gentleman residents of Dartford included London lawyers and Exchequer officials, from the Appelton and Martin families.⁶¹ These were people whose business regularly took them to the capital. In addition, some London merchants sent their daughters to Dartford Priory to be professed as nuns, in the fifteenth century.⁶² It is hard to assess the impact on religion and society in north-west Kent of connections with London. Combined with the effects of proximity to the Watling Street and Thames, it might have made this area more open to new ideas but also to the latest trends in intellectual and religious orthodoxies.

⁵⁴ Mary Dobson, 'Population', in Alan Armstrong, ed., *The Economy of Kent, 1640-1914* (Woodbridge, 1995), pp.5-49 at p.7.

⁵⁵ Alan Everitt, *Continuity and Colonisation: the evolution of Kentish settlement*, p.39.

⁵⁶ Alan Everitt, *Continuity and Colonisation: the evolution of Kentish settlement*, p.21.

⁵⁷ Terence Raoul Murphy, 'The Maintenance of Order in Early Tudor Kent, 1509-1558', pp.45-52.

⁵⁸ See, for example, the figures for monastic support in east Kent cited in chapter five. This regionalism will particularly be alluded to in chapters five and six, which concern support by laity for monasteries and parish religion.

⁵⁹ Ann Brown, 'London and north-west Kent in the later middle ages: the development of a land market', pp.146-7, 150-2.

⁶⁰ Ann Brown, 'London and north-west Kent in the later middle ages: the development of a land market', p.153, and see chapter six on St. Edmund's chapel.

⁶¹ John Martin, formerly of Horton, a chief justice on the King's Bench, founded the permanent Martin chantry in the parish church, in the reign of Henry VI (John Dunkin, *The History and Antiquities of Dartford* (1844), p.78). The wealthy land-owning gentry Appelton family, who lived in Dartford from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries, were educated; three generations from the late fourteenth to the mid fifteenth centuries supplied auditors to the Exchequer. John Appelton of Dartford (d.1392-3), his son Richard (d.1432), son-in-law William Hesill, and grandson Roger (retired by 1447) were all auditors of the Exchequer (R.L. Storey, 'Gentleman bureaucrats', in C.H. Clough, ed., *Profession, Vocation and Culture in later medieval England* (Liverpool, 1982), pp.90-129 at p.111). Members of this gentry family of Dartford and Southbenfleet in Essex continued to live in Dartford until the sixteenth century.

⁶² For example, Dame Johanna Stokton, mentioned in wills in 1470, 1478 and 1497, was the daughter of Thomas Stokton, citizen and fishmonger of the parish of St. Nicholas Coldabbey, London, whose family was also resident in Dartford (see appendix one).

Sixteen miles from London, Dartford was a natural stopping-off point on the Watling Street, the main routeway from London to the Channel ports and for pilgrims making their way to the shrines of St. William of Perth, at Rochester, and St. Thomas of Canterbury. This meant that the town was engaged in providing services to travellers; there were reported to be good inns in the town, in 1675, and this was perhaps true in the pre-Reformation period. The Dartford Priory rental of 1507-8 mentioned a number of inns in the high street. On 6th August 1416, John Catrik, bishop of Lichfield and Coventry, dated his will at the George Inn in Dartford, whilst on his way to the Council of Constance.⁶³ This demonstrates the contact with important distant events that the road brought. For trade the town was also dependent on the river; wharves are mentioned in the Patent Rolls, one of which belonged to the priory (and the priory was also given a barge, in the fourteenth century). Dartford was an important market town which came to be the most important assembly point for grain grown in north-west Kent destined for London, in the seventeenth century.⁶⁴ Most Dartford wills made between 1438-1560 do not state occupation or status of the testators or beneficiaries, but those which do name innkeepers, a priory baker, tanners, a dyer, chandlers, carpenters, tailors, fishmongers, butchers,⁶⁵ barbers, a haberdasher (in 1551), smiths, a 'wheler', bricklayers, shipmen, a 'waterman', labourers, husbandmen, a 'sherman', servants, yeomen of the king's guard, farming yeomen and gentry, clerks, clergy and a hermit. In the vicinity of Dartford, there were mariners and shipwrights in Erith, and numerous boat and barge-owners in Gravesend. Other sources indicate that there were also weavers and basket-makers in Dartford.

Between 1438 and 1537, 158 parishioners of Dartford made wills which were proved in the Rochester consistory court and the Prerogative Court of Canterbury. This included eighteen women, most of whom were widows. This can not be called a representative sample of the late medieval and early Tudor population, but it is the only surviving source giving any insight into the things these people valued.

Dartford was and is set between and on two steep hills (east and west). Holy Trinity parish church was on the north side of the Watling Street on the west bank of the River Darent, adjacent to the bridge, ford and hermitage.⁶⁶ An almshouse was built on the east bank just south of the bridge, in the fifteenth

⁶³ Ernest F. Jacob, ed., *The Register of Henry Chichele, Archbishop of Canterbury, 1414-1443*, 4 vols (Oxford, 1938-47), ii, p.179. Catrik later became bishop of Exeter, and died in 1419.

⁶⁴ Christopher Chalklin, 'The towns', in Alan Armstrong, ed., *The Economy of Kent, 1640-1914* (Woodbridge, 1995), pp.205-34 at pp.208-9. See chapter two below on these Patent Roll entries. Alan Everitt feels that Dartford, at the entrance to the Darent valley, must always have been a market centre, since Jutish times; there was a Saxon minster church here and these were almost always placed at Jutish estate centres (Alan Everitt, *Continuity and Colonisation: the evolution of Kentish settlement*, pp.15, 72). In 1321, the farm of the royalty of the manor and the market of Dartford were valued at £30 yearly (*Cal. Close Rolls 1318-23*, p.412). In 1442, John Sherborne of Dartford bequeathed money for the setting up of a market cross and house in the market place of Dartford, to be in the form of the cross of Sevenoaks (Centre for Kentish Studies DRb/Pwr1/8v). This was replaced by a Corn market house, c.1576, having been defaced in Edward VI's reign (John Dunkin, *The History and Antiquities of Dartford*, p.250).

⁶⁵ In particular, the Auditors were involved in butchery as a family business, in the early sixteenth century: both Andrew Auditor (a one-time churchwarden) and his son William Auditor, who made their wills in 1528 and 1529, were butchers, and possessed a tenement in the high street (DRb/Pwr8 ff.191, 233).

⁶⁶ Dartford church was a Saxon minster churches, like Crayford, Northfleet and Eynsford nearby. It was one of only three ancient churches in the county dedicated to the Holy Trinity, along with Canterbury Cathedral and Milton Regis, all three of which were minsters. This suggests that Dartford was ecclesiastically of some significance in this early period (Alan Everitt, *Continuity and Colonization: the evolution of Kentish settlement*, pp.194, 241). Dartford was one of a number of ancient settlement sites in the Darent valley going back to at least the Roman period; Everitt comments that the churches in Dartford, Darent, Horton Kirby, Eynsford and Lullingstone are all situated very close to the river and speculates that these sites were associated with pagan water-spirit cults (pp.295-6). The Domesday Book mentioned three churches in Dartford, which must have included Holy Trinity church, St. Edmund's chapel and one other. The rectory of Dartford belonged to the bishop of Rochester, and was valued at between £25 and £40 a year, in the medieval period (John Dunkin, *The History and Antiquities of Dartford*, pp.79-80). The *Valor Ecclesiasticus* valued the rectory and its associated rents at £25 (*Valor*, i, p.99). The bishop provided perpetual vicars, who owed the monastery at Rochester an annual pension of 10 marks. In clerical subsidies assessed in the 1520s, the vicarage was valued at £26 in 1523, £20 in 1525, £24 in 1526, etc (DRb/Az 1 ff.34v, 42v, 53). The *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, which had a tendency to undervalue, gave the figure of £18 11s 2d (*Valor*, i, p.117).

century, and there were mills further to the south.⁶⁷ On the east bank, running due north from the Watling Street, was 'The Overey' also called Overy Street, where a number of the vill's more wealthy citizens owned property. Immediately above, on the steep east hill and on the edge of the Brent heath stretching eastwards, overlooking the town, was the burial ground and chapel of St. Edmund King and Martyr. Running west through the town, on the other side of the river, the highway was called the high street, becoming Spital Street then Upstreet as it climbed the west hill towards Crayford (Earde). Running due south from the high street towards Wilmington was Lowfield Street or 'Loffeld', onto which fields and buildings abutted. The market place was situated at the junction of Lowfield and the high street.⁶⁸ Indirectly opposite, just to the west, Hithe Street ran northwards from this market place. Down the centre of Hithe Street ran a stream called the Cranpit or Cranford. The Dominican Priory of the Blessed Virgins Margaret and Mary was situated immediately to the north of the town, on the west side of Hithe Street. On the south side of Upstreet/Spital Street, just out of the town, was the old leper hospital of St. Mary Magdalene, the site of which was owned by the Knights Hospitallers of St. John of Jerusalem at Sutton-at-Hone.⁶⁹ The town was surrounded by large fields divided into numerous small holdings.⁷⁰ Dartford parish contained a number of manors, including Dartford manor, Temple manor, Portbridge alias Bignors, Aleyns and Charles.⁷¹ The manor of Charles was attached to the manor of Dartford Rectory, also called the Bishop's Liberty, which extended over much of the High Street.⁷²

Continental connections

The continent of Europe was an economic, cultural and religious influence in west Kent, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, because of the county's proximity to northern France and the Low Countries. This influence was brought by the London to Dover road passing through Dartford and Rochester, and by sea and river. The existence of links established through trade and immigration may be demonstrated by reference to licences to inhabit the realm, tax lists and some wills.

In 1436, royal government issued mandates to bailiffs and others to permit aliens who had taken oaths of fealty to inhabit the realm peaceably and enjoy their goods. The lists of names, recorded in the Patent Rolls, give the individuals' places of origin, their birthplace, the English towns in which they lived, and their trade (when this was involved with cloth). Most of those in Kent, including in and around Dartford, came from the Netherlands or Brabant, with a few from northern France.⁷³

⁶⁷ Archaeological evidence reported in Dartford District Archaeological Group, *Under your feet: the archaeology of the Dartford District* (Dartford, 1993).

⁶⁸ See the reference to the market cross in footnote 64 above.

⁶⁹ The medieval street names are preserved in the present-day Hithe Street, Spital Street, High Street, Lowfield Street and Overy Street. Also there is Bullace Lane running north from the High Street close to the church, between the surviving house of John Grovehurst (abutting the churchyard) on the right, and an inn now called The Watt Tyler. Attached to the left side of this inn was a shop, demolished in the 1950s, in whose roof beams the 1416 Marsh Roll was discovered.

⁷⁰ This is clear from the Dartford Priory rental of 1507-8 (BL Arundel Ms 61, *passim*).

⁷¹ Edward Hasted, *The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent* (Canterbury, 1797-1801), ii, pp.295, 301, 308, 309. A rental survives of Dartford manor, dated 1450, naming as tenants many names recognisable from other documents (CKS U2958 no.30). Aleyns manor is only mentioned in the 1507-8 priory rental (BL Arundel Ms 61 fo.28).

⁷² John Dunkin, *The History and Antiquities of Dartford*, pp.81-2.

⁷³ For example, there were four men living in Dartford who took the oath: Nicholas Symond of Monykedam, born in 'Holond'; John Marke of Balyngam, born in Picardy; Richard Gerardson of Wesill on 'le Ryne', born in Almain; and William de Lire, weaver, born in Brabant (*Cal. Pat. Rolls 1429-36*, pp.544, 547, 548, 555). Near to Dartford, there were also seven men from Holland or Brabant in Rochester, John Godehous from Almain in Southfleet, a Dutchman in Northfleet, three men from Holland and Brabant in Gravesend, one from Gilderland in Eynesford, one from Delf in Orpington, one from Zeeland in St. Mary Cray, and others in Hoo, Sevenoaks,

Alien and lay subsidy lists have been studied for the north Kent Thames corridor area from Erith to Gravesend (the hundreds of Little and Lesnes, Axtane, Toltingtrowe and Shamela, and Dartford with Wilmington which were usually assessed together as a single vill separate from Axtane hundred). These further demonstrate the presence of Dutch, Flemish and French aliens in many communities throughout the period, usually working as servants who were assessed at the lowest rates.⁷⁴ For example, an undated alien subsidy assessment list ascribed to Henry VI or Edward IV's reign names eighteen aliens in Dartford and Wilmington, not specifying their origins. Nine were assessed to pay 16d, of whom the occupation of only one was given (a basket-maker). The other nine were assessed to pay 6d, and included two labourers and seven working as servants in Dartford households (four were servants of Nicholas Symond, himself one of the aliens assessed at the higher rate, and one of the four aliens in Dartford who took the oath of fealty in 1436).⁷⁵ Two wills from north-west Kent further demonstrate that Dutch immigrants settled in the area, practised their trades and became established members of their communities, in the fifteenth century.⁷⁶

The most comprehensive lay subsidy assessments for this area, which survive, are from the sixteenth century, in Henry VIII's reign, for 1541, 1543 and 1544.⁷⁷ For example, in the first of these lists, fifty-five men in Dartford and Wilmington were assessed to pay between 52s and 4d, including twenty-four of alien origin most of whom were servants paying 4d. This list appears to include only wealthier indigenous inhabitants but probably all aliens, since there are no non-alien servants or labourers assessed. Not all the aliens were servants, however. One Derek Rowland had goods valued at £12, and two of the three men assessed to pay the highest amounts were foreign musicians in the king's service; Cenedie Crowne, sergeant of the king's trumpeters, had lands and annuities worth £26, and Peter Fraunces, another of the king's trumpeters, had fees and annuities worth £24.⁷⁸ The two alien trumpeters were perhaps employed at the palace at Greenwich where there was a fine musical establishment. The subsidy of 1543 was more comprehensive, assessing 154 men and women in Dartford and twenty-five in Wilmington, to pay subsidies of between 33s 4d and 2d. There were eleven men and two widows in Dartford of alien origin. Most were servants, but one, Wylmyn Syryk, widow, had goods valued at £6 on which she was assessed to pay 4s.

Besides French and Dutch people residing in north-west Kent, a few native residents had kinship and economic connections with France and the Low Countries, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. These included residents of Rochester, Gravesend, Dartford and Erith, all of which communities were associated with river and sea trade. The sixteenth-century examples mostly involved connections with northern France, including Calais.⁷⁹

Bromley, Tonbridge, Wrotham and Westerham (*Cal. Pat. Rolls 1429-36*, pp.541, 545, 547, 548, 552, 554-7, 561-2, 568, 573, 575, 579, 584, ., 586).

⁷⁴ For the first relevant alien subsidy list, in the fifteenth century, see PRO E179/124/107 mm.1-5 (1439-40).

⁷⁵ PRO E179/124/138 m.3.

⁷⁶ A John Utryght was named as one of the executors of John Berbrugere of Gravesend, in his will of 19th April 1468 (DRb/Pwr3/2). One John Vancurle, a beer brewer of the city of Rochester, whose wife was called Garterede, made his will in July 1489 (DRb/Pwr5/128v).

⁷⁷ PRO E179/124/247, E179/124/255 and E179/125/271.

⁷⁸ Peter Frawnces was named as still resident in Dartford in the assessment reliefs for 1551 (PRO E179/126/340 m.4).

⁷⁹ Andrew Trayll, a chaplain in Rochester, mentioned his sister living in Bruges, in his will of 1464, and left a breviary to the altar of St. Ninian kept by the Scottish wool merchants in that city (DRb/Pwr2/284v; see chapter seven). Otwell Butler, esquire and Burgess of Calais, whose will, dated 5th August 1508, was proved in the Rochester consistory court, had a house in Farningham, near Dartford, which he bequeathed to his son (PROB 11/16/67v). Butler was born and baptised in Calais, and owned lands and housing there, but he was also a boat-owner, and perhaps kept a house in Farningham for its proximity to London. In 1529, William Ade, who had

Whilst exploring the vibrant traditional Catholicism characteristic of late medieval west Kent one becomes aware of a society informed by economic change and growing prosperity. This religion was also informed by a continuity of contact between Kent and London, and Kent and the continent, throughout this period. Whilst the emphasis of this thesis on the nature of the religion, these and other social and economic factors are borne in mind.

formerly lived in Gravesend and Rochester, died in Calais, and his will was proved in the Rochester consistory court (DRb/Pwr9/9). Nicholas Codde of Gravesend, a one-time warden of the guild of St. Barbara of that town, included a bequest of £12, in his will of September 1531, to his sister Katherine, wife of Gyllame dwelling in Rouen ('Rone') (DRb/Pwr8/300v; on the St. Barbara guild, see chapter six). Two decades later, with Catholicism restored, Ingleburt Retrode of Dartford made his will in August 1555, leaving property in Sussex, £30 in money and a dagger to his son, William Ingleburt; if William died before the age of twenty this bequest was to go to Retrode's sister Katherine and her heirs dwelling in the Dukedom of Berry one mile from 'Solvingin' (DRb/Pwr12/7v: Katherine was daughter of one Henry Cokynsbury, and therefore English). Two other testators, both parishioners of Erith involved in boat trades, had connections with France. John Skodder, shipwright, in his will of August 1554, left to his sister his house in Picardy with cherry garden, orchard, three acres of marsh and half an acre of marsh then under water (DRb/Pwr11/299b). Making his will in November 1554, William Goodwyn, a mariner in Erith, left to his brother Thomas £20 at the age of twenty-three, and £5 'toward his keeping at scole in Fraunce' for a year (DRb/Pwr11/344).

Chapter Two

The monastic foundation in Dartford

The order of Dominican nuns in Europe

Dartford Priory was pre-Reformation England's only Dominican nunnery, founded in the mid-fourteenth century, long after the main period of monastic foundations in this country had come to an end. The only possible models for its constitution and religious life were to be found in the nunneries of the order on the continent of Europe. One or more of these continental convents sent nuns to England to establish Dominican conventual life at Dartford, and to instruct English novices in the ways of Dominican regular life. It is necessary to set the foundation and religious life of Dartford Priory within the context of the development of the continental Dominican second order.

The Dominican order, incorporating friars, nuns, lay brethren, lay sisters and oblates, had its roots in St. Dominic's mission to fight heresy and strengthen orthodox Catholicism in southern France, Spain and Italy, in the early thirteenth century. The first monastery founded by Dominic, then an Augustinian canon, before his order of friars was instituted, was a community of female Albigensian converts at Prouille, near Fanjeaux in south-west France. Many men and women in the south of France, who sought a more spiritual life, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, were attracted to Albigensianism, as Catharism was known in the Languedoc. The most dedicated were admitted to the rank of 'perfect'. Women perfects lived in communities, also containing women, young girls and children, and these acted as centres for the propagation of the heresy. A number were located around Fanjeaux. Dominic and his companion, Diego, placed great importance on tackling the heresy by attempting to convert these women, meeting with some success during 1206 and 1207. It was not possible to return the converts to a less austere life than the one they had been leading as 'perfects', or to return them to their heretical families and villages. Dominic's answer was to provide them with a refuge for prayer and sanctification in a monastery established by him at Prouille by March 1206-7. Nearby he established a house of his companion priests, who procured alms and provided spiritual care for these women, and used it as a base for their preaching missions. Dominic apparently had no thoughts of establishing a new monastic order, at this point, but was simply responding to practical need. As the Albigensian crusade became increasingly successful, Dominic was able to attract sufficient donations to build the enclosure at Prouille, and a full monastic regime was instituted in 1212, with some kind of rule.¹ This may have been based on the Cistercian rule, since there is evidence to suggest that the religious women of Prouille at first wore the Cistercian habit.²

¹ Micheline de Fontette, 'Les Dominicaines en France au xiii^e siècle' in Michel Parisse, ed., *Les Religieuses en France au xiii^e siècle* (Nancy, 1989), pp.97-106 at pp.97-9; William Hinnebusch, *The History of the Dominican Order*, i (New York, 1965), pp.96-8.

² Micheline de Fontette, *Les religieuses à l'âge classique du droit canon: recherches sur les structures juridiques des branches féminines des ordres mendiants* (Paris, 1967), p.94.

In 1216, a formative chapter of Dominic and his brother priests met at Toulouse, to discuss the foundation of a new monastic order which would have the specific purpose of preaching to laity. The Lateran council required that a rule be chosen for any new order, and this opened the way to confirmation by the pope. The chapter chose the rule of St. Augustine, which was that followed by canons, because of its emphasis on the Apostolic life, on personal poverty and fraternal charity, obedience and chastity, its reference to the common life lived by early Christians, and because of its flexibility. This flexibility of the Rule allowed for the addition of constitutions designed to achieve the special ends of the new order. The chapter based the new constitutions on a strict form of observance used by Augustinian canons of the order of Prémontré. These customs placed emphasis on contemplation, which was also to be at the heart of Dominican life, and ruled on food, fasting, sleeping arrangements, care of the sick, reception of novices, silence, woollen clothing, the tonsure, the monastic office, and a variety of faults and their penalties.³ Dominic removed the emphasis on work from the customary of Prémontré, to make room for study, and made a number of other changes in line with his vision for his preaching order. The chapter, finally, turned its attention to poverty, and resolved that the new order should not own property, for income, in order that friars' time and energy should not be diverted to mundane matters from the business of preaching, and preparation for preaching through study and contemplation.⁴

On 22nd December 1216, Pope Honorius III issued a bull confirming Dominic, 'prior of St. Romanus of Toulouse' (a church that had been granted to him) and his community of priests as a canonical and clerical order. Micheline de Fontette, a legal historian, points out that this bull confirmed only this priory and not the Dominican order, but Hinnebusch notes that the right to make new foundations was implied. Prouille was cited as a dependent house of St. Romanus, and it must have been at this point, if not before, that the religious women there were given the rule of St. Augustine and a version of the new constitutions.⁵ A second bull, of January 1216-17, completed the confirmation of the order, according to Hinnebusch; it brought out the distinctive nature of the new order, naming it the Order of Preachers, calling Dominic and his fellow canons 'brothers (hence 'friars') preachers', and commissioned them to undertake missionary work.⁶ In 1215, Innocent III had taken the monastery of Prouille under the protection of the Holy See. In 1218, Honorius III issued a bull confirming this and amplifying the privileges of the brothers there. This bull attached the sisters and their monastery to the Order of Preachers through its community of priests, which was designated a community of friars preachers and received the privileges of the order, and yet established Prouille's independence in relation to St. Romanus. Thereby, the community of Prouille became a legally constituted order which would continue even if St. Romanus failed, and the Dominican second order was born.⁷

By the time of Dominic's death, in 1221, two more nunneries were founded within the Dominican order, at San Sisto in Rome and Madrid. A fourth nunnery was established in Bologna, in 1225, but was not incorporated into the order until 1227, as doubts had already started to arise, amongst some friars, including the

³ William Hinnebusch, *The History of the Dominican Order*, i, pp.44-5.

⁴ William Hinnebusch, *The History of the Dominican Order*, i, pp.46-7.

⁵ Micheline de Fontette, 'Les dominicaines en France au xiii^e siècle', pp.99-100; William Hinnebusch, *The History of the Dominican Order*, i, pp.48, 98.

⁶ William Hinnebusch, *The History of the Dominican Order*, i, pp.48-9.

⁷ Micheline de Fontette, 'Les dominicaines en France au xiii^e siècle', p.100.

master general Jordan of Saxony, about devoting time and energy to the apostolate among religious women.⁸ The second order grew quickly, nevertheless, in spite of these objections. In France, Dominican nunneries were established at Montargis, in 1245; Rouen, in 1263; Lille, after 1265; at Lyon, in the late thirteenth century; and Prouille established daughter houses at Pontvert, in 1283; Montpellier, in 1288; Aix, in 1290; and Saint-Pardoux, in 1292. By the end of the thirteenth century, there were also seventy-four Dominican nunneries in Germany, forty-two in Italy, eight in Spain, six in Bohemia, three in Hungary and three in Poland.⁹ Many of the nunneries in the German province were pre-existing communities of women, such as groups of béguines, incorporated into the order, following friars' work amongst them. Many of these nunneries were known in the fourteenth century as centres of female learning and mystical spirituality.¹⁰ By 1358, there were 157 nunneries under the care of the Dominican order. The number declined from around that time, partly as a result of the Black Death and a decline in religious discipline.¹¹

The foundation and construction of Dartford Priory

Dartford Priory was, therefore, founded at the very high point of the second order. It may have been the dynamic growth and renowned contemplative spirituality of this continental order that recommended it to the founder, Edward III. Edward was also continuing a tradition of patronage of the Dominican order practised by the French and English royalty, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. English royalty had been associated with the foundation of eight Dominican priories in the thirteenth century. Henry III, who had a great respect for Dominicans as ministers of Christ and the Gospel, provided sites for the friaries in five towns, including Canterbury and York, aided the construction of the Canterbury and London priories, and encouraged two further foundations. His wife, Eleanor of Provence, also gave assistance to the English order. Edward I founded Salisbury's Dominican priory. In the fourteenth century, Edward II took over the foundation of the friary at Kings Langley in Hertfordshire, and Edward III founded Dartford Priory.¹² In addition, Edward II and Edward III had Dominican friars for their confessors, as did the French kings of the period.

In France, King Louis IX, who was one of the order's most loyal and generous supporters, learnt his love of the order from his mother, Blanche of Castille, who chose a Dominican friar to tutor him in his youth. Blanche rewarded the order by giving significant support of alms to the important priory of Saint Jacques, in Paris, and to the struggling new foundation at Chartres, which might not otherwise have survived. Louis continued his mother's support for the priory of Saint Jacques, providing alms and new accommodation sufficient for three hundred friars. He also founded the Dominican priories at Caen and Compiègne, where he attended lectures with the friars, and he encouraged the foundation of Evreux Priory. Louis's grandson Philip the Fair gave support to all the houses of the French province and founded a magnificent new monastery of

⁸ William Hinnebusch, *The History of the Dominican Order*, i, pp.99-104.

⁹ Micheline de Fontette, 'Les dominicaines en France au xiii^e siècle', p.97.

¹⁰ D.L. Stoudt, 'The production and preservation of letters by fourteenth-century Dominican nuns', *Medieval Studies*, 53 (1991), pp. 309-26.

¹¹ William Hinnebusch, *The History of the Dominican Order*, i, pp.377-9.

¹² Hinnebusch, *The History of the Dominican Order*, i, pp.257-8. Edward II's foundation at Kings Langley was motivated by his personal devotion to St. Dominic, a vow that he had made in a time of sudden danger to establish a house of perpetual prayer for his Plantagenet ancestors, and because he chose this priory for the burial of his favourite, Piers Gaveston (p.258).

Dominican nuns at Poissy, near Paris.¹³ This monastery was founded for political and religious reasons, in honour of St. Louis, the canonised Louis IX, who was born in the royal chateau in that town in 1215. Philip made it a Dominican nunnery in recognition of Louis's devotion to the order, and of the order's instrumental role in bringing about this canonisation. In May 1398, less than a year after the bull of Louis IX's canonisation was promulgated, Philip the Fair suggested to the master general of the order that Dominican nuns should be installed in the monastery, which he had already started to build. He ensured that the buildings were of the highest quality and on a magnificent scale (the church was 82.5m in length and the nave was 30m wide), so that progress was slow (and the priory church was only dedicated in 1331). The richness of the architecture and sculpture surpassed that of any house in the Order of Preachers then in existence, contravening the spirit of poverty of the order. Philip gave the monastery relics of St. Louis and provided large endowments.¹⁴

As Philip the Fair's grandson, and in direct descent from St. Louis himself, Edward III had good reasons for wishing to establish his own royal house. Dartford was not on the same scale as Poissy, being more in proportion with monastic foundations in this country, but he planned for it to be a large nunnery, by English standards, of forty nuns, with rich endowments.¹⁵ Edward was building on steps taken by his progenitors. The establishment of a house of Dominican nuns in England was first contemplated by Queen Eleanor of Castille, who died, in 1290, before she was able to put this plan into effect.¹⁶ Her son, Edward II, felt obliged to carry out his mother's plan, and formulated a scheme whereby he could simultaneously satisfy this obligation and set on a sound footing the finances of Kings Langley friary.¹⁷ He gave the latter an annual pension of five hundred marks, sufficient for one hundred friars, to pay for the upkeep of the community and for masses for Piers Gaveston, who was buried there.¹⁸ This pension was necessary because, as a mendicant house, Kings Langley was not allowed to own property. Edward hoped, however, to provide a permanent endowment indirectly, by founding a house of Dominican nuns which could hold possessions for the benefit of the friary. On 22nd April 1318 he petitioned the Pope to sanction the scheme, seeking the support of three Dominican cardinal-bishops (of Ostia and Velletri, St. Eusebius, and St. Sabina), and he asked the master general of the Dominican order to have seven sisters made ready.¹⁹ On 1st November 1321, following further communications, Pope John XXII at Avignon granted licence to Edward II to found a monastery of Dominican nuns in pursuance of the purpose of his mother Queen Eleanor of Castille, the monastery to enjoy the same privileges as those of the Dominican nunnery of Beaumont in Valenciennes.²⁰ Therefore, on 9th March 1322-3, Edward II addressed a request to Hervey, the master general, to cause four devout sisters of the order to be chosen from the nunnery of Montargis, Rouen or Poissy, in the French province, to be ready to come to England at the King's pleasure. Edward required that these nuns were to be devoted to God and the Church, most honest in all ways, and mature in thought and conversation, for they were to instruct the English women to be placed in the new house

¹³ William Hinnebusch, *The History of the Dominican Order*, i, pp.256-7.

¹⁴ Alain Erlande-Brandenburg, 'La priorale Saint-Louis de Poissy', *Bulletin Monumental*, 129 (1971), pp.85-112 at pp.89, 94, 98; Alain Erlande-Brandenburg, 'Art et politique sous Philippe le Bel: la priorale Saint-Louis de Poissy', *Comptes Rendus des Séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* (1987), pp.507-18 at pp.507-8.

¹⁵ These details will be referenced below in context.

¹⁶ C.F.R. Palmer, 'History of the Priory of Dartford', *Archaeological Journal*, 36 (1879), pp.241-71 at p.242.

¹⁷ Minnie Reddan, 'Kings Langley Priory', *VCH Hertfordshire*, iv (London, 1914), pp.446-51 at p.447.

¹⁸ William Hinnebusch, *The History of the Dominican Order*, p.258.

¹⁹ C.F.R. Palmer, 'History of the Priory of Dartford', p.242.

in good precedents concerning the observance of regular discipline, to be clean living ('salubrius vivant'), and to edify by good example. The new house was to be constructed to the honour of God and for the augmentation of divine religion.²¹ Edward was dethroned in January 1326-7, by which time the proposed foundation had not come about.

Edward III did not take up this plan of his father and grandfather until he had been on the throne for two decades. The idea of founding a Dominican nunnery in England was revived in 1344, by Thomas Lord Wake of Liddell, a royal kinsman; on 20th August that year, Wake was granted licence by the king to bring over four or six nuns of the Dominican order from Brabant, in the Low Countries, in order to found a new house in the realm.²² Nunneries in the Low Countries came under the German province of the order, and it may have been their distinctive spirituality that attracted Wake's attention. No more is heard of Thomas Wake but the idea was taken up by Edward III the following year; on 8th October 1345 the king addressed a letter to the bishop of Rochester in which he sought permission to found a Dominican nunnery with church and conventual buildings at Dartford. On 3rd November 1345, the bishop transmitted this letter, with a supporting letter from the archbishop dated 21st October, to the Benedictine prior and chapter of Rochester Cathedral Priory, asking whether he could consent without prejudice to the rights of the cathedral priory. Dartford parish church was appropriated to the bishop and the vicar paid a heavy annual pension to the chapter; the bishop pointed out that the new foundation was likely to affect the income of the church and this might reduce the vicar's payments to the convent. The same day, the bishop sent to the vicar of Dartford, enclosing copies of the king's and archbishop's letters, asking for information as to the likely damage to the vicarage, and for the vicar's consent. On 13th November, the prior and chapter replied that the king's request could not decently be refused, but asked that the bishop stipulate that no damage should result to the rectory, vicarage or pension. The bishop delayed in making a reply to the king, perhaps in order to investigate further the financial implications, so that Edward III became impatient, sending a letter on 28th January 1345-6 to remind the bishop of his request, and asking for an immediate reply by the same messenger. The messenger must have been lodged in Rochester or Trottisccliffe, for the bishop did not reply until 3rd February, when he granted permission for the foundation, subject to necessary safeguards, as he said he had explained to the friars preachers who had approached him on the matter.²³

The choice of Dartford was, probably, dictated by the availability there of land and a willing donor; on 27th April 1346, the king noted that William Clapitus 'in the fervour of his devotion' had paid out large sums for the foundation of the new monastery at Dartford, and he granted him exemptions from taxes and other dues imposed on citizens of London to enable him to bear these charges.²⁴ Clapitus was a vintner of the city of London, who became sheriff in 1347.²⁵ He also owned property in Dartford, and witnessed land transactions in

²⁰ *Cal. Pap. lets*, ii, p.217.

²¹ T. Rymer, *Foedera, conventiones, literae et cuiuscunque genesis acta publica* ... (London, 1727-32), ii, p.510 (quoting Close Roll 16 Edw. III m.12d – calendared at *Cal. Close Rolls 1318-23*, p.701).

²² *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1343-5*, p.359.

²³ Charles Johnson, ed., *Registrum Hamonis Hethe Diocesis Roffensis A.D. 1319-1352* (Oxford, 1948), pp.756-9, 763-5.

²⁴ *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1345-48*, p.77.

²⁵ A.G. Little, 'The Dominican nuns of Dartford', *VCH Kent*, ii (1926), pp.181-90 at p.181.

the town, on occasions.²⁶ He apparently volunteered to act on the king's behalf when he heard of the plans to establish a monastery there. He was described as warden and overseer of the newly founded house, on 12th March 1348-9, when the king granted him wood from manors in Sussex, indicating that construction had commenced.²⁷ On 29th June 1349, Edward III granted Clapitus licence for the alienation in mortmain of two messuages and ten acres of land in Dartford to the newly founded house of sister of the order of Preachers, and these were perhaps used as the site for the monastery.²⁸ Clapitus provided other lands for the new foundation; a list of the priory's endowments drawn up in 1372 refers to lands and tenements in Dartford, besides the site, and in nearby vills granted by one John Brond, chaplain, formerly belonging to William Clapitus and his wife Jane.²⁹

Edward III followed his father in linking Dartford Priory with Kings Langley friary; in November 1349 he petitioned the pope to confirm his foundation at Dartford, saying that the two houses together would possess one hundred nuns and friars.³⁰ In the charter he granted in 1356 Edward stated that there were to be sixty friars at Langley and forty nuns at Dartford.³¹ Further, in December 1356, the king licensed the prioress and sisters of Dartford to acquire in mortmain £300 yearly of lands, rents and advowsons, and to appropriate these churches, for the sustenance of the prioress and thirty-nine sisters, and of the prior and fifty-nine friars at Kings Langley.³² In 1374, Edward III granted to the prior of Kings Langley, Friar Thomas Walsh, successor and former colleague of John de Woderove, a yearly pension of ten marks out of the issues of lands of Dartford Priory, for his necessities and labours in his office.³³

It was common practice for an optimum number of religious to be set, in Dominican and other nunneries, to stop them expanding beyond their means. The average community size, in medieval Dominican nunneries, was fifty, although Humbert of Romans authorised Prouille to admit one hundred, and John of Vercelli raised that number to 160, because finances were sufficient. In 1286, it was found that many of the German convents had exceeded their quotas, and in 1486 the nunneries in Lombardy were all in debt for the same reason.³⁴ It is unlikely that Dartford Priory ever attained its quota of thirty-nine nuns; there were twenty nuns there, in 1381, a quarter of a century after the first nuns arrived, and twenty-six nuns and lay sisters, by the Dissolution.³⁵

Building work on the new monastery at Dartford went on throughout the 1350s and into the early 1360s, and so must have been quite substantial, although no traces or descriptions survive.³⁶ In October 1349, an order was issued for twenty masons and twenty carpenters of Kent to be employed on the king's work in Dartford.³⁷ Edward made the work one of his priorities, paying the craftsmen and diverting large numbers of

²⁶ See, for example, one such charter: *Cal. Close Rolls 1349-54*, p.83.

²⁷ *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1348-50*, p.271.

²⁸ *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1348-50*, p.340; A.G. Little, 'The Dominican nuns of Dartford', p.181.

²⁹ A.G. Little, 'The Dominican nuns of Dartford', p.183.

³⁰ *Cal. Pap. Pet.*, i, p.187.

³¹ See below regarding this charter.

³² *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1354-8*, p.486.

³³ *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1370-74*, p.370. Thomas Walsh and Woderove were described as former colleagues in 1381, when Walsh was granted 100s per annum (*Cal. Close Rolls 1377-81*, p.427).

³⁴ William Hinnebusch, *The History of the Dominican Order*, i, p.383.

³⁵ Josiah Cox Russell, 'The clerical population of medieval England', *Traditio*, ii (1944), pp.177-212 at p.182; *L.&P. Hen. VIII*, xiv pt 1 no.650.

³⁶ There are a few floor tiles in Dartford Borough museum which have been attributed to the priory.

³⁷ *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1348-50*, p.449.

men from his other works.³⁸ One of the first buildings to be completed was the priory church; in late December 1352, John de Geddyng was appointed to purvey glass sufficient for the church of the nunnery of Dartford, and as many glaziers as were required for this work.³⁹ Two friars acted as supervisors of the building works, in the 1350s, including the king's Dominican confessor, Friar John de Woderove, who was also prior of Kings Langley with responsibility for Dartford by 1356. Friar John of Northampton succeeded Woderove as supervisor of the work, in March 1353-4.⁴⁰ Simon de Kegworth and two others were given the same appointment in May 1362.⁴¹ Building work continued into the early 1380s, a newly built infirmary with chapel being mentioned in 1384.⁴²

The monastic buildings of Dartford Priory

At Prouille, the 1340 visitation found that the nuns and friars had separate churches. The nunnery contained kitchens, infirmary, *locutorium* (speaking-room), a heated room, a dormitory, and a guest house where nuns' parents were permitted to eat meals but not to sleep overnight. Other rooms, such as cloisters and chapter house may be assumed. The friars' house, constituting a separate monastery, contained a common dormitory, a refectory, an infirmary, and various buildings intended for the benefit of the whole priory, such as barns, stables and cellar.⁴³

Many of these rooms and buildings were also found at Dartford. In 1352, Edward III paid £192 13s 4d towards the building of the friars' dwelling house in Dartford Priory.⁴⁴ It was sufficiently separate to be seen by some as a second monastery; a bequest from Agnes Lynsey, a widow of Dartford, in her will dated June 1464, is unique in that it refers to the prioress and convent of the two monasteries ('duorum monasterii') of

³⁸ In April 1350, the king ordered the surveyor of his works at Windsor Castle to take stonemasons, carpenters and other workmen from other projects, excepting his works at Westminster, the Tower of London and Dartford (*Cal. Pat. Rolls 1348-50*, p.486). A carpenter employed at Dartford, in December 1352, came from Kings Langley; it was ordered that Thomas le Carpenter of Langley should not be compelled to leave the work at Dartford, but select three or four other carpenters for the same works, to stay there until the works were finished (*Cal. Pat. Rolls 1350-54*, p.390). On 2nd March 1357-8, the king appointed John Onle to take as many workmen as were necessary for the finishing of the work and for carrying timber and stone, and to put them to work at the king's wages (*Cal. Pat. Rolls 1358-61*, p.21). In April 1361, Simon de Kegworth, Robert Baroun and John Beer, all of Dartford, were appointed to find Kentish carpenters, masons and other workmen to work on the king's works there, at his wages, staying there at his pleasure; they were also to arrange carriage of stone, timber, tiles and other things necessary, at the king's charge (*Cal. Pat. Rolls 1358-61*, p.569). Amongst sources of finance granted by the king for the construction of the nuns' house, in 1355-6, were the profits of all the lands of Roger Bavent, which had escheated to the crown, and the profits of some property in London formerly belonging to Matilda Waleys (A.G. Little, 'The Dominican nuns of Dartford', p.182). William de Keyes was to have the keeping of Bavent's lands, laying out the issues and profits by the advice of William de Thorpe, who had previous experience of Dartford Priory's endowments, through investigation of escheated lands directed to the Priory before the Black Death (*Cal. Pat. Rolls 1350-4*, p.280; *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1354-8*, p.248). Keyes was succeeded as keeper of these lands by William de Nessefield, in July 1356 (*Cal. Pat. Rolls 1354-8*, pp.423-4). In April 1357, the king granted Bavent's lands in Suffolk and Surrey to John de Wynewyk, William de Thorpe and William de Pek, with remainder to Dartford Priory (*Cal. Pat. Rolls 1354-8*, p.521).

³⁹ *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1350-54*, p.391.

⁴⁰ A.G. Little, 'The Dominican nuns of Dartford', p.182. Friar John de Northampton was still surveyor of the king's works at Dartford in April 1358, when he was granted ten marks a year for life, by the king, for his maintenance (*Cal. Pat. Rolls 1358-61*, p.30).

⁴¹ *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1361-4*, p.194.

⁴² On 3rd September 1384, Richard II granted to the prioress and convent the reversion, a year after the death of one of the nuns, Katherine Breouse, of the manors of West Wrotham, East Wrotham and Elryngton in Norfolk, to find a chaplain to celebrate divine service daily in a chapel in the infirmary newly built in the monastery, to support their infirm sisters and brethren, and to pray for the souls of the founders and benefactors (*Cal. Pat. Rolls 1381-5*, p.457). Katherine Breouse became a nun of Dartford in 1378 (A.G. Little, 'The Dominican nuns of Dartford', p.187 n.111).

⁴³ Micheline de Fontette, *Les religieuses à l'âge classique du droit canon*, pp.108-9.

⁴⁴ *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1350-54*, p.104; A.G. Little, 'The Dominican nuns of Dartford', p.182.

Dartford.⁴⁵ Other rooms and buildings mentioned in documents included the cloister,⁴⁶ chapter house,⁴⁷ *locutorium*,⁴⁸ the infirmary and its chapel of Our Lady,⁴⁹ a brewing house,⁵⁰ and a lodging house.⁵¹

The charters and privileges of Dartford Priory

Information about Dartford Priory's privileges, duties and rule of life, are to be found in the royal foundation charters and papal documents, and various other indirect sources. Further more detailed information on the likely nature of life in the monastery may be inferred from what is known of the continental order, its rule and constitutions.

On 1st November 1321, following communications with Edward II, Pope John XXII at Avignon granted licence for the foundation of a monastery of Dominican nuns in England, and granted the projected English convent the same privileges as those

granted to the prioress and sisters of Beaumont in Valenciennes to be free from all tithes, toll and other exactions levied on the possessions given them by the king, unless special mention of these indulgences be made in the papal letters. Also that they should be exempt from archiepiscopal and diocesan jurisdiction, and that they shall enjoy all privileges granted to the Order of Friars Preachers.

Any sentences of suspension and excommunication issued against them were to be declared void.⁵² This grant was confirmed, and applied to Dartford Priory, in the papal grant to the Dartford nuns dated November 1395

on the model of his (the pope's) similar privileges to the prioress and sisters of the monastery of Beaumont ('de Bellomonte') in Valenciennes, of freedom from tithes from their possessions, from annual rent or cess there from to the diocesan bishops, from tenths, etc.; exemption from jurisdiction of patriarchs, archbishops, diocesan bishops and others; and enjoyment of the privileges of the Friars Preachers.⁵³

The 'Couvent des Dames de Beaumont' was a Dominican nunnery within the ramparts of the town of Valenciennes in the county of Hainaut adjacent to Flanders. It was founded some time after November 1308, when Beatrice d'Avesnes, Countess of Luxembourg, decided to install nuns in her palatial home, the Hôtel de Beaumont, on hearing that her son Henry had been elected Holy Roman Emperor, in Frankfurt.⁵⁴ The

⁴⁵ PROB 11/5/46 (John Sedley); PROB 11/37/269 (William Sedley).

⁴⁶ The cloister of Dartford Priory was first mentioned in the priory charter of 1356, which said that the monastery consisted of houses, cloister and enclosures (*Cal. Charter Rolls 1341-1417*, p.152-3).

⁴⁷ This building, which always came off the cloisters, in Dominican priories, was used for all chapter meetings of the nuns, for the correction of faults, discussion of priory business, transaction of business with officials present, and the election of new prioresses. It is first mentioned in a patent roll entry of 1358 (*Cal. Pat. Rolls 1358-61*, p.187 - original document reference: PRO C66/256 m.14). This entry refers to a charter of the prioress and convent of Dartford, dated in their chapter house on 14th February 1358-9, confirming a grant of land with reversion to themselves.

⁴⁸ This room is mentioned in entries in the register of the master general relating to Dartford Priory, allowing individual nuns to receive visitors and an instructor there (C.F.R. Palmer, 'Notes on the priory of Dartford, in Kent', *Archaeological Journal*, 39 (1882), pp.177-9 at p.177).

⁴⁹ See note 42 above. John Sedley of Southfleet, the priory auditor, in his will of February 1530-31, asked for his deeds and books to be placed in a great chest to stand within the 'abbey' of Dartford in the chapel of Our Lady 'next the Fermery' (PROB 11/24/149). If both nuns and friars were able to make use of the infirmary, it must have been divided into at least two rooms, besides the chapel.

⁵⁰ The friars' brewing house adjacent to the nunnery is mentioned in the priory rental of 1507-8 (BL Arundel Ms. 61 fo.47).

⁵¹ The 1521-2 rental refers to a 'hospicium infra monasterium' called 'Nedeham Loggyng', formerly in the tenure of Margaret le Vere, and then occupied to the use of the monastery, perhaps as a guest house (London Society of Antiquaries Ms 564 m.10).

⁵² *Cal. Pap. Lets*, ii, p.217.

⁵³ *Cal. Pap. Lets*, iv, p.501.

⁵⁴ Alain Hardy and Philippe Beaussart, 'Peintures et sculptures gothiques du couvent des Dames de Beaumont à Valenciennes', *Revue du Nord*, 62 (1980), pp.903-14 at p.903. See also Philippe Beaussart, 'Valenciennes: première évaluation du patrimoine archéologique urbain', *Revue de Nord*, 67 (1985), pp.103-19; the 1677 map of this town printed on p.106 shows that within the same sector of the town, in close proximity to the Dominicans, were communities of Augustinians, béguines and Brigittines. The town also possessed

confirmation of 1395 was addressed to 'the Augustinian monastery of Derteforde living according to the institutions and under the care of the order of Friars Preachers'. The royal charters, described below, and many references in the Patent and Close Rolls, and elsewhere, make it clear that Dartford Priory, like all Dominican nunneries, was a house of nuns following the rule of St. Augustine and in the care of the Dominican order, with Dominican friars as their chaplains. One Close Roll entry, indeed, refers to the 'monialium predicatorum' of Dartford.⁵⁵ It is not clear from these summaries what was peculiar to the privileges granted to the Dominican nuns of Valenciennes, since it was normal for monasteries in the mendicant orders to be exempt from episcopal control and taxation. Beaumont may simply have been the most recent model of a Dominican nunnery to copy, in 1321.

Further details of the privileges enjoyed by Beaumont, as a Dominican convent, are to be found in three grants confirmed to that priory by Pope John XXII in 1316 and 1320. These describe Beaumont as a monastery of the order of St. Augustine living under the institutes and care of the friars of the order of Preachers. As with Dartford, this does not mean that Beaumont was not a Dominican nunnery, for one of these grants also refers to the first Dominican nunnery, at Prouille, as being of the order of St. Augustine. In his grant dated at Avignon 31st October 1316, Pope John XXII stated his wish to assist these ladies who had voluntarily rejected worldly vanities and consecrated themselves to divine service, in accordance with the purposes of the founder, Beatrice d'Avesnes. He had received a request from the countess and the convent for confirmation of their privileges (the prioress was the countess's daughter, Marguerite de Luxembourg).⁵⁶ He confirmed that Beaumont enjoyed the same privileges, liberties, immunities, graces and apostolic indulgences as Prouille and every other convent of the order.⁵⁷ On 28th November 1316, Pope John confirmed earlier letters of Benedict XI (pope from October 1303 to July 1304) which exempted all Dominican convents from all tithes and taxes, and from any episcopal or secular jurisdictions.⁵⁸ These, therefore, were the privileges given to Dartford Priory.

Dartford Priory was granted its charter of foundation by Edward III on 19th November 1356, shortly after the first nuns arrived from France.⁵⁹ This charter confirms that the king had founded on his land at Dartford a monastery of sisters of the order of preachers living under the rule and habit of St. Augustine. It said that the monastery consisted of houses, cloister and enclosures, and, as stated above, that the community was intended to be constituted of a prioress and thirty-nine sisters. The charter states that these nuns were to live in obedience to the prior of Kings Langley, and the prior or his vicars were to travel to Dartford, periodically, hence the fact that John de Woderove was described concurrently as prior of Kings Langley and warden of the house of nuns of Dartford, in 1356.⁶⁰ There was also to be a number of friars from Kings Langley abiding at Dartford Priory, who were to minister to the prioress and nuns in divine services. The charter goes on to explain that the king had

Franciscan, Carmelite and Dominican friars, the friars preachers having arrived in the thirteenth century (p.112). No trace remains above ground of the nunnery and church of the Dames de Beaumont.

⁵⁵ *Cal. Close Rolls 1354-60*, p.278.

⁵⁶ Simon le Boucq, *Histoire Ecclésiastique de la ville et comté de Valenciennes* (manuscript of 1650, printed Valenciennes, 1844), p.165.

⁵⁷ France, Archives du Département du Nord (Lille), 132 H 3, piece 7, item 1.

⁵⁸ Archives du Département du Nord (Lille), 132 H 3, piece 7, item 2. The grant of 8th August 1320 again confirmed that Pope Benedict's earlier confirmation of exemptions applied to the monastery of sisters of Beaumont in Valenciennes (Archives du Département du Nord (Lille), 132 H 3, piece 9).

⁵⁹ *Cal. Charter Rolls 1341-1417*, p.152-3. See below on these French nuns.

⁶⁰ Woderove was named as prior of Kings Langley in a commission of June 1356, dealing with some delinquent Dominican friars (*Cal. Pat. Rolls 1354-8*, p.444). He was called warden of the house of nuns of Dartford in October 1356, when the king commissioned him to keep the lands and property of the late Maud Waleys, in London, to use about the building of the house and church of the said nuns (*Cal. Pat. Rolls 1354-8*, p.466).

founded the monastery of Dartford in honour of St. Mary and St. Margaret the Virgins, and for the health of his own soul and those of Edward II, Eleanor of Castille, and all their ancestors, and the souls of all the faithful departed, thus remembering his father and grandfather who had previously tried to found such a house. The charter deals with financial matters; it records that the king had granted to the prioress and convent the site and buildings of the monastery, in frank almain, together with £100 per annum, to be paid at Michaelmas and Easter, until such time as the king or his heirs had provided them with lands and rents to that value. The forty nuns and sixty friars of Kings Langley were to be maintained in victuals, clothing and all other necessaries, out of this £100 and all other lands, tenements and rents which might be given by the king and other donors, and from the fruits of any churches which the convent might have licence to appropriate, according to the direction of the prior of Langley. This income of £100 was less than was necessary to maintain a hundred religious, so the king clearly anticipated that his religious foundation would attract support from other pious benefactors. The purposes for which Dartford Priory existed were, therefore, threefold; like all Dominican nunneries its prime concern was the work of prayer entered into by the religious women, as a complement to the missionary work of the friars preachers; as a royal perpetual chantry; and to provide income for that other royal chantry, Kings Langley.

Edward III issued a further charter, on 12th August 1372.⁶¹ This dealt with other practical matters designed to increase the income of the monastery. If any of the nunnery's tenants or employees became felons or fugitives, their chattels and lands were to be confiscated and awarded to the priory. If any of the monastery's tenants or employees were murdered, or subject to any other offence, all fines, amercements, redemptions and forfeitures, which would normally go to the king, were to be awarded to the priory. The monastery, its clergy and its men were to be exempt from all taxation levied by the king, the pope or for the defence of the realm (the many forms being listed), thus confirming the pope's grant of the privileges enjoyed by the nunnery at Valenciennes. The prioress and convent were to keep all animals that strayed onto their lands, unless anybody followed and could prove ownership within a proper time according to the custom of the country. They were to possess their own house and monastery and not be subject to any livery of stewards, marshalls or ministers of the king, or any other magnate. Furthermore, no such person was to stay at the monastery against the wishes of the prioress and convent, and they were not to be compelled to provide pensions, corrodies or maintenance for anyone, out of their house and possessions, against their will, at the request of the king. The king thus protected the strict enclosure to which Dominican nunneries were subject. He also ruled that no royal steward or any magnate could enter the priory or its lands and carry away corn, hay, horses, carts, carriages, victuals or any other goods and chattels, for the use of the king, or any other. Finally, he granted the convent free warren in all its demesne lands granted in past or future.

Richard II continued the tradition established by his ancestors. In the third year of his reign, on 20th April 1380, he issued a charter confirming Edward III's charter of 1372 and Edward's grants, of 1373, to the prioress and convent, of the advowson of Kings Langley parish church, and licence to appropriate the church of

⁶¹ *Cal. Charter Rolls 1341-1417*, pp.225-7.

Norton Scudamore,⁶² Richard's confirmation was itself confirmed in a charter of Henry IV, dated 11th February 1400.⁶³ That charter was, in turn, confirmed by Henry V, on 18th July 1413, along with confirmation of various individual grants of property and other sources of income made in Edward III's and Richard II's reigns.⁶⁴ Henry VI confirmed Henry V's confirmation, on 18th February 1423, and confirmed Edward III's original charter, in October 1424.⁶⁵

The endowment and administration of Dartford Priory: temporalities and spiritualities

This important subject will only be dealt with in summary, because the focus of this thesis is on religious life and practice. Nevertheless, economic matters were of obvious importance, since the nuns were only able to live in monastic seclusion, devoting themselves to prayer, because the monastery's endowments freed them from the necessity of earning or begging a living in the world. Administration of Dartford and Kings Langley's endowments occupied the successive prioresses with their lay officials.

The sources which tell us about the possessions of Dartford Priory include the Patent and Close Rolls, deeds, wills, three surviving rentals from the sixteenth century, the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* and the post-Dissolution ministers' accounts. The Patent and Close Rolls provide information about the initial endowments; the same rolls, with deeds and wills detail subsequent additions to the endowment from various sources, leasings out, and disputes with rival parties; the sixteenth-century rentals, *Valor* and ministers' accounts show how the endowments had developed over one and a half centuries from the foundation. The rentals of 1507-8 and 1521-2 provide detailed information about lands, houses and tenements in Dartford, and lands in Kent and elsewhere, about tenants, and income, and also give indications as to the officials employed by the prioress for the administration of these possessions.⁶⁶ The third rental is a translated transcription, made in 1592, of a rental of c.1535 of the priory's properties in the manor of Massingham Magna in Norfolk.⁶⁷

Useful summaries of these matters appear in A.G. Little's and C.F.R. Palmer's studies of Dartford Priory.⁶⁸ Edward III initially granted cash annuities to the convent until such time as it was possible to accumulate lands and tenements to provide an annual income sufficient for the needs of both Dartford and Kings Langley Priors.⁶⁹ In 1349, before the nuns arrived, he had granted the future sisters of the monastery licence to acquire in mortmain lands and rents, not held in chief of the crown, to the value of one hundred marks per annum.⁷⁰ In December 1356, he granted licence to the prioress and sisters to acquire in mortmain £3000

⁶² *Cal. Charter Rolls 1341-1417*, p.269. The full text is not reproduced in the calendar, as it mostly reproduces the earlier charter, but a translation is printed in S.K. Keyes, *Dartford: Further Historical Notes* (Dartford, 1938), pp.278-83.

⁶³ *Cal. Charter Rolls 1341-1417*, p.393.

⁶⁴ *Cal. Charter Rolls 1341-1417*, p.459.

⁶⁵ *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1422-9*, pp.126-7; *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1422-9*, p.260.

⁶⁶ BL Arundel Ms 61 (1507-8); London Society of Antiquaries Ms 564 (1521-2).

⁶⁷ PRO SC 12/23/48.

⁶⁸ C.F.R. Palmer, 'History of the Priory of Dartford, in Kent', pp.248-52, 254, 255-6, 260-1, 264, 268-9; A.G. Little, 'The Dominican nuns of Dartford', pp.182-4, 185-6.

⁶⁹ Thus, Edward III granted a pension of two hundred marks for the fourteen sisters and six friars at Dartford, in 1358, until otherwise provided for, increasing an earlier grant of one hundred marks made in the foundation charter of 1356 (*Cal. Pat. Rolls 1358-61*, p.87; *Cal. Charter Rolls 1341-1417*, p.152-3).

⁷⁰ *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1350-54*, p.9.

per annum in lands, tenements and advowsons, and to appropriate those churches, for the sustenance of the planned forty nuns of Dartford and sixty friars of Kings Langley.⁷¹ In July 1357, the priory was granted the advowson of Whitley in Surrey, with licence to appropriate the church.⁷² The king granted various lands and houses locally and in London, which had come into his possession, and then, in 1367, he gave the priory one thousand marks for the buying of further land and tenements for the endowment of their house.⁷³ Various further grants were made, adding to the already significant endowment. To secure these disparate grants, Edward III made a formal grant of the priory and all its possessions to the community, to hold in free alms, on 20th July 1372. This charter lists all the lands, tenements, manors and rents that belonged to the priory, in Dartford and Kent, London, Surrey, East Anglia, Wiltshire, Dorset, Glamorgan and Herefordshire. Advowsons included those of the chantry chapel of St. Edmund, in Dartford, Witley church and the chapel of Thursley in Surrey; Washbrook church and the annexed chapel of Velechurch, and Appleton church, in Suffolk; and Norton, Fyfield and St. Michael in West Street, Wilton, in Wiltshire.⁷⁴ In July 1373, the king granted the advowson of Kings Langley parish church and licence to appropriate it.⁷⁵ The advowsons of Norton Bavent and Boxworth in Cambridgeshire were added in the same month.⁷⁶ Nevertheless, in spite of all these endowments, in the same year, the prioress complained that the means of the sisters were slender, and that they were not able fully to maintain themselves.⁷⁷ It should be remembered that these endowments were intended for the support of Kings Langley as well as the convent of Dartford. Richard II added further manors in Norfolk and lands and tenements in London and Dartford, endowing a perpetual chantry for his soul.⁷⁸ He gave other lands and advowsons in east Kent and Hertfordshire specifically for the use and benefit of the friars of Kings Langley.⁷⁹ Over the next one hundred and fifty years, possessions were added by purchase and legacies given for chantry foundations and other services.

Apart from gifts of property, money and goods were given in the form of an annual supply of casks of wine initially granted by Edward III,⁸⁰ income from charges for boarders and children received for education, profession fees (although no evidence survives of these at Dartford), legacies for fabric repairs, and miscellaneous items. The latter category included a boat (a crayer) with all its gear that was granted to the prioress and convent, in 1358, by Edward III, it having been forfeited into his hands by John Godman of Dartford.⁸¹

The rentals, accounts and surveys of the sixteenth century provide more detail of the temporal endowments as they stood then, and also of the prioress's lay officials. The rental of 1507-8 is incomplete, lacking details of most priory holdings outside of Kent and East Anglia. It gives the location, size and names of

⁷¹ *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1354-8*, p.486.

⁷² *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1354-8*, p.588. A papal document of 1395 confirms that the parish churches of Whitley and Norton Bavent in Wiltshire, subsequently obtained by Dartford Priory, both belonged to the priory, and were worth 60 marks, with the vicars' portions reserved. (*Cal. Pap. lets*, iv, p.517).

⁷³ C.F.R. Palmer, 'History of the Priory of Dartford, in Kent', p.249.

⁷⁴ *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1370-4*, p.191. For details of this charter see A.G. Little, 'The Dominican nuns of Dartford', p.183.

⁷⁵ *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1370-4*, p.324.

⁷⁶ *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1370-4*, pp.327, 331.

⁷⁷ A.G. Little, 'The Dominican nuns of Dartford', p.184.

⁷⁸ A.G. Little, 'The Dominican nuns of Dartford', p.184.

⁷⁹ *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1391-6*, p.377; *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1396-9*, pp.563-4. For example, on 24th December 1420, the prioress and convent of Dartford presented Thomas Brown, chaplain, to the rectory of Elmerston, in the diocese of Canterbury, the advowson of which Dartford Priory held for the benefit of Kings Langley (E.F. Jacob, ed., *Register of Henry Chichele* (Oxford, 1943), i, p.197).

⁸⁰ The wine was granted by Edward III (*Cal. Pat. Rolls 1354-8*, p.607); in 1516 Prioress Cressener exchanged this wine for an annuity of £16 (A.G. Little, 'The Dominican nuns of Dartford', p.187).

⁸¹ *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1358-61*, p.62 (Godman's boat); for details of legacies and income from boarders see chapter five.

holdings and the names of tenants, but only gives rental values for properties in Dartford. Most of the holdings in Kent outside of Dartford were located nearby in Crockenhill near Eynsford, Sutton at Hone, Wilmington, Stone, Bexley, Crayford and North Cray, and were dealt with separately under those headings. The holdings in the parish of Dartford were extensive, being located in every main street of the town and throughout the parish, including two whole manors, listed under High Street, Overy Street, Lowfield Street and Hythe Street, and by area around the town. Property in the town included most of the north side of the high street, houses, four inns, gardens, barns, shops, cattlesheds and stables. Outside of the town possessions included sections of fields, orchard, marsh, meadow, gardens, cottages, a wharf and a dovecote. The headings of each section state that they were drawn up for Prioress Elizabeth Cressener and the convent of Dartford by William Wiggan, priory clerk and supervisor, and another official called William Sprever, partly utilising information supplied by local priory farmers.⁸²

The heading of the priory property account roll for 1521-2 states that this document consists of the accounts drawn up for Prioress Elizabeth Cressener of Dartford Priory by William Wiggan, clerk and supervisor of the monastery and receiver general of all manors, lands and tenements in Kent, Wiltshire, Surrey, Sussex and Norfolk, for the year from Michaelmas 1521 to Michaelmas 1522. As an account roll it is a

⁸² BL Arundel Ms 61. This book consists of sixty folios, measuring 315mm. x 220mm.. Ff. 1-11 contain a list of tenants and holdings in Dartford, but it does not appear to be part of the priory rental, as the prioress is named as a tenant. Fo. 12 is blank. The priory rental proper follows, on ff.13-60. In detail, the heading on fo.13 states that this first section presents details of the lands and tenements of Dame Elizabeth Cressener, prioress of the monastery of the Blessed Mary and St. Margaret the Virgin of Dartford, and the convent of the same place, lying in Crockenhill in the parish of Eynsford, in Kent, dated 20th November 1507. This section was drawn up jointly by William Wiggan, clerk and supervisor of Dartford Priory, and William Sprever, from information of William Notte, farmer of these lands and tenements, and William Marshall alias Cooke of Eynsford. Holdings there amounted to a total of 233 ½ acres and 1 yard, with a few others not measured, including two gardens. Holdings in Gildenhill, in the parish of Sutton at Hone (ff.17-19), were examined by William Sprever from information of Robert Dey and Richard Scudder, farmers there, on 1st February 1507-8. Some details are added in annotations by a different hand. Here, there were one tenement, 184 ½ acres and one yard of land. Holdings in Wilmington, next Dartford (ff.20-23), were examined by William Sprever from information of John Gudbour senior, Geoffrey Crowshawe, Thomas Stanley and John Gudbour junior, on 1st July 1508. These amounted to 236 acres, 6 yards, 3 virgates, 119 dayworks and 7 rods of land. Holdings in Dartford parish were listed under street or areas of land around the settlement. Names of tenants were given, with rental income of properties in the town. The original donors of some properties are named, such as William Clapitus. In Hythe Street (ff.24-5v), the road adjacent to the priory running north from the High Street, the prioress received £3 5s 8d rent on her eleven tenements, eleven gardens, three parts of gardens, one cottage and one dovecote. In the High Street (ff.26-7), £17 6s 0d was received from tenants of the priory's four inns (Le Kynges Inne alias Le Crown, Le Bulhede, Le Boll, Le Holl Bull), eleven other tenements, twelve gardens, two shops and the small manor of Aleyns, which consisted of a hall with kitchen, barns, cattleshed, stable, granary and two gardens, consisting of 2 ½ acres and 13 ½ dayworks of land. One of the tenements, which normally brought in an extra 20s rent, was vacant. In Overy Street (fo.28r), running north from the main highway, parallel to the River Darent, opposite the parish church, the priory had two tenements, two gardens, one apple orchard called Essex and three acres and one rod of land, all of which brought in 12s 8d in rent. The manor of Bicknors, which included the chantry chapel of St. Edmund, and other lands on the east of the town, south of the highway to Singlewell, amounted to 319 acres, 1 yard, 8 virgates, 25 ½ dayworks and 1 rood, and were farmed by William Mason, who paid £7 6s 8d in rent every year (ff.28v-30r). Lands on the north-east of the town consisted of 49 ½ acres, 1 virgate and 33 dayworks of arable and pasture (ff.30v-31v). Meadows, friths (newly cultivated land) and pasture held to the north of Dartford amounted to 53 acres, 17 virgates, 49 dayworks, 7 rods and pasture for three cows. The priory held many small parcels of land in Dartford salt marsh, amounting to 53 acres, by the rental's reckoning (ff.37-41). There were many small holdings owned by various land-holders, in the Dartford marshes. A rent roll of the salt marsh dating from 1416 was discovered in 1955, and lists the many tenants, including local religious houses, and their rent payments; this uncatalogued manuscript is on display in Dartford Borough Museum: see a brief description in Peter Boreham & Chris Baker, *Medieval Dartford* (Dartford, 1994). On the south side of the town, west of the stream called Le Cramford, the priory had 357 ½ acres of land, 10 virgates, 47 dayworks and 7 rods of land (ff.42-6). On the north-west side of the town, the priory possessed one wharf, four tenements, and 259 ½ acres, 29 virgates, 18 dayworks and 1 rod of gardens, meadow, pasture and hopes (pieces of enclosed marsh), with six unmeasured parcels, some of which were called pightalls (small pieces of land) (ff.47-50). Beyond Dartford, in the parish of Stone next Dartford, the priory possessed 24 acres, 2 ½ dayworks and three rods of land (fo.51); in Bexley, to the west of Dartford, the priory had two tenements, one orchard and 217 acres, 2 virgates and 1 ½ dayworks of land (ff.52-54v); in Crayford, next Dartford, there were holdings of 20 ½ acres, 3 dayworks and 1 rod (fo.55r); in North Cray, there was one tenement, one garden and 5 ½ acres of land (fo.55v); the priory's manor of Isborowe, elsewhere in Kent, consisted of 48 acres, 3 yards and 5 dayworks of land (fo.56v). The rest of the rental is fragmentary and gives details of priory lands in East Anglia. There were nine acres in a manor near Lavenham in Suffolk (fo.57v); the manor of Thorphall in West and East Wrotham in Norfolk, consisting of 14 ½ acres, 3 dayworks and 22 rods (fo.58); and the manor of Massingham in Norfolk (ff.59v-60). The latter fragment, relating to Massingham, is dated 1500-1501, is incomplete, and records that the value of land in that manor was 2d per acre.

different sort of document to the rental of 1507-8, which is simply a record of priory property. These accounts, in the form of a roll, set out details of actual expenditure relating to priory property, including fees, purchase of land and other costs; the expected rental income from the same, with arrears; and income from sale of land, in the year 1521-2. Deaths of tenants are also recorded. Information for Dartford is listed by tenant rather than by property, but elsewhere by property. Adding together the figures in these accounts gives a gross priory income from temporalities of roughly £500 per annum, but there were high levels of arrears. The accounts for the priory's London properties were drawn up by William Wiggan, and Richard Weller drew up those for all manors, lands and tenements in Dartford and the local parishes of Wilmington, Sutton at Hone, Crayford, Bexley, North Cray and Southfleet.⁸³ The accounts were audited by John Sedley, auditor to Dartford Priory, as is indicated by a note with his signature on the first membrane.⁸⁴

By 1535, when the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* was drawn up, Dartford Priory had the seventh largest gross income of any nunnery in England (£495 15s 5d), and the seventh largest net income (£361 5s 5½d).⁸⁵ As one of the larger nunneries, Dartford was not dissolved until 1539, soon after 1st April in that year.⁸⁶ The first list of pensions, paid at Michaelmas, indicates that there were then at least twenty-six nuns, including six lay sisters, almost double the number of nuns soon after the convent's foundation, in 1358.⁸⁷ Thus, in the late 1530s, Dartford Priory was one of eleven English nunneries containing twenty or more nuns (Syon Abbey and

⁸³ London Society of Antiquaries Ms. 564. This document consists of ten membranes each of which is ten inches wide and up to two feet in length, sewn together at the top. The total arrears amounted to £38 17s 0d (m.1). The grand total, after arrears, given for income from manors and lands in sundry places in Kent, was £297 12s 4d, 143 quarters of wheat and 59 quarters of barley (m.4). For London properties, after arrears and fees were taken into account, as well as rent paid by the prioress herself, the money paid to the prioress was £37, but was expected to be £56 12s 3d, three torches and one pound of paper, when fully paid (m.5). For manors, lands and tenements in Dartford, Wilmington, Sutton at Hone, Crayford, Bexley, North Cray and Southfleet, arrears amounted to £36 14s 6 ½ d, 52 hens and five quarters of barley. The rent received from properties in Hythe Street in Dartford amounted to 102s, in High Street to £29 6s 4d, 27s 10d from Bullets lane, 32s from Overy Street, 54s 4d from Lowfield Street, 20d and 2 bushels of barley for property in Upstreet, £47 for Stonham land, £8 16s for the manor of Bicknors, £6 6s 10d from Wilmington possessions, 30s from Crayford, 46s from North Cray, £4 from Gildenhill in Sutton at Hone, 7s 4d from Southfleet, and 10s from Fletewalk in Dartford (mm.7-9). Also received was 26s 8d from the tenant of the lime kiln in Dartford and 23s from the sale of meadows. A lodging house (*hospicium*) within the monastery itself, called Nedeham Loggyng, formerly in the tenure of Margaret le Vere at 40d per annum, was now occupied to the use of the monastery (m.10). The *Valor* of 1535 records that an obit was celebrated in the priory for John Nedam, amounting to £4 a year (*Valor*, i, p.119). The total for all these holdings in and around Dartford was £158 2s 9d, 61 hens, five quarters and two bushels of barley.

⁸⁴ John Sedley's will of 1531 tells us that he was an auditor of the king's exchequer, a citizen and stationer of London, and the late warden of the 'Crafte' of stationers, now known as the Stationers' Company (PROB 11/24/149). He was also a stipendiary auditor appointed by the Rochester Bridge wardens, in 1500 (Nigel Yates & James M. Gibson, eds, *Traffic and Politics: the construction and management of Rochester Bridge, AD 43-1993* (Woodbridge, 1994), p.103). He worked for one other local monastery, which he mentioned in his will; in 1504 he was appointed one of the two auditors for Rochester Cathedral Priory (Anne Oakley, 'Rochester Priory, 1185-1540', in Nigel Yates, ed., *Faith and Fabric: a history of Rochester Cathedral 604-1994* (Woodbridge & Rochester, 1996), p.46).

⁸⁵ Eileen Power calculated Dartford's position by gross income (Eileen Power, *Medieval English Nunneries c.1275 to 1535* (Cambridge, 1922), p.2). A.G. Little points out that the charges allowed amounted to £134 9s 11½d, resulting in a net annual income of £361 5s 5½d, rather than the figure of £380 9s ½d actually given in the *Valor* (A.G. Little, 'The Dominican nuns of Dartford', p.188). Kathleen Cooke lists the wealthiest pre-Reformation nunneries by net income in 1535; she quotes the incorrect total of £380 for Dartford Priory, placing it seventh overall, but this position would be unchanged were the correct figure substituted, since Whatton comes eighth with £360, assuming that all other figures are correct. (Kathleen Cooke, 'The English nuns and the Dissolution', in John Blair & Brian Golding, eds, *The cloister and the world: essays in honour of Barbara Harvey* (Oxford, 1996), pp.287-301 at p.289). A more significant figure to find is, perhaps, the net income per nun, but Cooke quotes an incorrect figure for the number of nuns at Dartford (nineteen instead of twenty-six), and figures available for other nunneries may be similarly unreliable (for example, Cooke also differs from VCH in the number of nuns at Syon (VCH *Middlesex*, i, p.189). It should also be noted that *Valor* valuations are sometimes low estimates.

⁸⁶ *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xiv (1), no. 661.

⁸⁷ *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xiv (1), no. 650. The number is a minimum; two of the 26 names are added at the bottom of the list by William Petre, so there may have been further omissions.

Shaftesbury both had over fifty nuns), from a total of one hundred and ten female houses.⁸⁸ It was, therefore, one of the larger and more wealthy nunneries of England in the late 1530s.⁸⁹

David N. Bell points out, however, that most nunneries were poor, and even the largest claimed to be poor. The picture revealed by the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* may not tell the whole truth. The net income of a nunnery had to pay for such things as food and clothing for the nuns (of which Dartford had a large number), boarding of novices, corrodians and schoolchildren (where they existed), alms for the poor (some annual payments of alms by Dartford Priory are recorded in the *Valor*), visitation expenses, repair of buildings, wages for servants and officials, and the cost of litigation because of monasteries' constant need to defend their lands at law.⁹⁰ The three friars at Dartford Priory, in 1535, were paid annuities amounting to £15 for their daily celebrations in the monastery.⁹¹ Dartford Priory was at least exempt from all taxation, by virtue of its royal charter and papal dispensation. Attorneys were continuously employed by the prioress, from the 1370s to the early fifteenth century.⁹² The prioress was involved in a long and costly action, defending the priory's right to the lease of the lordship, manor and parsonage of Dartford, held from the bishop of Rochester, as late as the 1530s, not long before the Dissolution.⁹³ Furthermore, the arrears recorded in the property accounts suggest that the actual priory income may have been lower than that assessed in the *Valor*. Prioresses of Dartford may not have been exaggerating when they complained of the poverty of their house.

As has been indicated, the prioress and convent of Dartford, like all nunneries, employed lay officials to administer their possessions for them. Chief of these was the steward. In early times this post was occupied by men who actively undertook the supervision of the priory lands; John de Berland was appointed steward and surveyor in November 1358.⁹⁴ Michael Skillyng was appointed steward, surveyor and auditor, in May 1364. He was a king's attorney, who served on commissions in Hampshire and Wiltshire.⁹⁵ William de Nessefield was appointed to the same three jobs, in February 1365-6.⁹⁶ In later times, the offices of steward and supervisor were split, and it was the supervisor who carried out the work, as manifested by the rentals which were drawn up by William Wiggan and his assistants, including William Sprever and Richard Weller. The supervisor possessed a chamber within the monastery, mentioned by Wiggan in his will of September 1526.⁹⁷ The stewardship became more of a prestige title given to significant national figures to gain the priory friends in high places. This was also true of the London nunneries, in the sixteenth century.⁹⁸ In a letter to Cromwell, of 1534, Prioress Elizabeth Cressener objected to his appointment of his servant Mr. Palmer as steward of Dartford, as she said this office had always been filled by members of the King's Council. She named, as

⁸⁸ Eileen Power, *Medieval English Nunneries c.1275 to 1535*, p.3. Kathleen Cooke says that Shaftesbury had 57 nuns ('The English nuns and the Dissolution', p.289).

⁸⁹ Various post-Dissolution ministers' accounts record details of the demesne of Dartford Priory before it was dispersed to gentry landowners. See, for example, PRO SP 5/1 fo.81 (1541); William Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, ed. J. Caley, H. Ellis, B. Bandinel, 6 vols (London, 1817-1830), 6, p.539 (1542); and PRO E 315/406 ff.14-15 (mutilated).

⁹⁰ David N. Bell, *What Nuns Read: Books and Libraries in Medieval English Nunneries* (Kalamazoo, 1995), pp.7-9.

⁹¹ *Valor*, i, p.120.

⁹² See appendix two.

⁹³ A.G. Little, 'The Dominican nuns of Dartford', p.187.

⁹⁴ *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1358-61*, p.125.

⁹⁵ *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1361-4*, p.494.

⁹⁶ *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1364-7*, pp.225, 237. He also served on commissions with Skillyng.

⁹⁷ PROB 11/22/78.

⁹⁸ Catherine Paxton, 'The nunneries of London and its environs in the later middle ages', unpubl. DPhil diss., Oxford, 1993, pp.73ff.

examples, the most recent stewards, Sir Reginald Bray (d.1503),⁹⁹ Sir John Shaw, Hugh Denys, Sir John Heron and Sir Robert Dymmock.¹⁰⁰ Dymmock, named as high steward in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, in 1535, had evidently recently resigned.¹⁰¹ The prioress asked Cromwell to accept the post, which he did, taking an inflated fee of twenty marks per annum.¹⁰² Various other officials of Dartford Priory are mentioned in documents at different times, including auditors, attorneys, rent collectors, clerks and the receiver general.¹⁰³ In addition, there were officials employed in individual manors, including farmers and manorial court stewards. Sometimes offices were filled by members of local gentry families whose close female relatives were nuns in the monastery. There was, for example, a strong connection between Dartford Priory and the Roper family of Eltham and Canterbury, in the sixteenth century, which additionally provided the monastery with a friend at the heart of the royal court. William Roper received an annuity of 40s as steward of the priory's manorial court of Colwinston, in 1529.¹⁰⁴ He was a feoffee of his fellow priory official William Sprever, in 1525, with William Wiggan, William Sedley and Martin Sedley, all of whom were also priory officials (see immediately below for the Sedleys).¹⁰⁵ Agnes Roper, the daughter of John Roper, Henry VIII's attorney general, was a nun of Dartford from the 1520s to the Dissolution, and her aunt, Anne Fyneux, John Roper's sister-in-law, from another east Kent gentry family, was sub-prioress in the 1520s.¹⁰⁶ John Roper, himself, made bequests to Sister Agnes, his sister-in-law and the priory, in his will of 1523.¹⁰⁷ Also in the sixteenth century, the father and brother of Sister Dorothy Sedley, John and William Sedley, of Southfleet near Dartford, were both priory auditors, and her other brother Martin was a priory surveyor.¹⁰⁸ Many of these local men and other local gentry, including kin of Prioress Johanna Vane, and of the Cresseners, received annuities, corrodies and lodging for horses, from the priory, in the couple of years before the Dissolution, and the same happened at the London nunneries.¹⁰⁹

French origins of the first nuns at Dartford

Building work was sufficiently far advanced in late 1356 for the community of nuns to be established at Dartford. The Exchequer Issue Roll for Michaelmas 1357 records the payment of £20 made on the previous Friday 7th October (1356) to Friar John de Woderove, the king's confessor, prior of Kings Langley and warden of the house of nuns of Dartford, for the expenses of some sisters in coming over from France to Dartford.¹¹⁰

⁹⁹ *DNB*.

¹⁰⁰ *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, vii, 1634.

¹⁰¹ *Valor*, i, p.120.

¹⁰² A.G. Little, 'The Dominican nuns of Dartford', p.186.

¹⁰³ See appendix two. See Paxton, 'The nunneries of London and its environs in the later middle ages', pp.73-93 on the officials of the London nunneries.

¹⁰⁴ A.G. Little, 'The Dominican nuns of Dartford', p.186.

¹⁰⁵ PROB 11/21/272.

¹⁰⁶ See appendix one.

¹⁰⁷ Anon., 'Archbishop Warham's Letters', *AC*, 2 (1859), pp.149-74 at p.169.

¹⁰⁸ See appendix two.

¹⁰⁹ See further details in C.F.R. Palmer, 'History of the Priory of Dartford, in Kent', p.266. The evidence that Elizabeth Cressener granted a kinsman an annuity is found in the 1556 pension list of former religious; here, John Hastings was named as receiving a pension 'during the life of Elizabeth Cressener' (W. E. Flaherty, 'A help toward a Kentish monasticon', *AC*, ii (1859), pp.49-64 at p.56). Hastings was son in law of the younger Elizabeth's Cressener's mother, Eleanor Cressener of Norfolk, named in Eleanor's will (Norwich Record Office NCC 193, 194 Hyll). Paxton found similar evidence of the London nunneries hiving off their resources when they saw that suppression was looming (Catherine Paxton, 'The nunneries of London and its environs in the later middle ages', chapter 6): Cromwell was a beneficiary of the London nunneries, too (p.283); and there is evidence of family and friends of nuns being benefited at St. Helen's Bishopsgate (p.274).

¹¹⁰ PRO E403/382 m.2: Exchequer Issue Rolls (Pells) Mich. 31 Edw. III pt I m.2. Although Palmer and A.G. Little say the payment was made on 7th October 1356, I cannot see that date on this issue roll of 29th September 1357.

That the considerable sum of £20 was spent in conveying the four nuns, presumably with some escort, suggests that they did not travel light. They may have brought with them many items necessary for the setting up of a new convent, such as devotional and liturgical books, copies of the Rule and Constitutions of the order, sacred vessels, statues, banners, clothing and personal objects. Palmer suggests that these four sisters came from Poissy Priory, although he does not justify this statement.¹¹¹ This suggestion seems very reasonable, in the light of what has already been said about Poissy, remembering that Edward II proposed Poissy as one of three French nunneries from which nuns might be drawn, in 1323. Furthermore, in 1346, six months after he had obtained permission from the bishop of Rochester to found the monastery at Dartford, Edward III sacked the town of Poissy with its royal chateau and held court in the evacuated priory there, for five days from 12th August. Only the monastery escaped destruction, by express order of the king, according to Froissart, because it had been founded by his grandfather Philip the Fair, whose heart was buried in the quire.¹¹² This visit may have confirmed Edward in a desire to follow in the tradition of patronage of his ancestors, St. Louis and Philip. Taking nuns from Poissy would have firmly set his own foundation at Dartford within this tradition. Moreover, Poissy was still in English occupied territory, in 1356, when the battle of Poitiers was won.

It is less likely that the nuns came from Valenciennes in Hainaut, with which there was a legal connection. As stated above, a papal indult of 1321 granted the projected English convent the same privileges as those enjoyed by the Dominican nuns of Beaumont in Valenciennes, and these were confirmed to Dartford Priory in a papal grant of November 1395.¹¹³ Further, Agnes Fagge of Dartford, in her will of 23rd January 1458-9, asked to be buried in the cemetery of the Blessed Mary and Margaret the Virgins 'de Bellomonte' in Dartford.¹¹⁴ This must be seen as a reference to the cemetery of Dartford Priory, which was dedicated to those saints. A.W. Clapham infers from those words 'de Bellomonte' 'that Beaumont in Valenciennes ... was the mother house' of Dartford.¹¹⁵ However, 'Bellomonte' here more likely refers to the prioress of that time, Margaret Beaumont, whose name was latinised in documents.¹¹⁶ It is also doubtful whether nuns from Hainaut would have been described as French, in 1356.

One of the four French nuns became the first prioress of Dartford; on 14th July 1358, Edward III granted these four sisters an annual income at his expense:

[Grant] for the sincere affection which the King has for the present prioress and three sisters who first came with her from beyond seas to England to dwell in the said house, of 20 marks ... to wit to each of them 5 marks yearly to be taken at the Exchequer as a gift from the King¹¹⁷

Prioress Johanna d'Aspèremont was first named in a Patent Roll entry recording a writing of the prioress and convent dated in their chapter house, in her presence, on 14th February 1358-9.¹¹⁸ She probably came from a

¹¹¹ C.F.R. Palmer, 'History of the Priory of Dartford', p.246.

¹¹² S. Moreau-Rendu, *Le Prieuré Royal de Saint-Louis de Poissy* (Colmar, 1968), pp.105-6.

¹¹³ See above.

¹¹⁴ Drb/Pwr2/127v. Clapham copies Palmer's error of dating this will to 1451-2 (see C.F.R. Palmer, 'History of the Priory of Dartford', p.258).

¹¹⁵ A.W. Clapham, 'The Priory of Dartford and the manor house of Henry VIII', *Archaeological Journal* (1929), pp.67-86 at p.68.

¹¹⁶ For example, a papal indult of 1st July 1451 to 'Margaret de Bellomonte', prioress, and other nuns and sisters at Dartford Priory, allowed them to choose their own confessors regular or secular (*Cal. Pap. Lets*, x, p.526). This prioress was English; Weever records that she was daughter of Lord Beaumont and Palmer further identifies her as daughter of Henry Lord Beaumont and Elizabeth, daughter of William Lord Willoughby. Her brother, John, was created Earl of Boulogne in July 1436 (J. Weever, *Ancient Funerall Monuments* (London, 1631), p.335; C.F.R. Palmer, 'History of the Priory of Dartford', p.258).

family in the south-east corner of France; there are two small communes called Aspèremont, one near Nice (then in the Duchy of Savoy) and the other further inland near Gap (then in the Dauphiné), both in the sub-Alpine region.¹¹⁹ She may first have entered one of the Dominican nunneries close to home, in Montpellier, Lyon or Aix (or, indeed Prouille itself, further to the west), before transferring to Poissy, perhaps to occupy senior office. Even as large a house as Poissy did not generate all of its own prioresses and sub-prioresses; in the mid fourteenth century, at least two prioresses came from the nunnery at Montargis, perhaps for reasons of aristocratic prestige.¹²⁰ If the four French nuns did not come from Poissy, they might have been hand picked by the prior provincial or master general from different houses. To have lost four experienced nuns at once would have been a significant sacrifice for a single house, unless it was the large community of Poissy. Friar John de Woderove, who undertook diplomatic missions to Avignon for Edward III, may have stayed at one of the southern French Dominican priories, and heard of Johanna d'Aspèremont. He made one such trip to Avignon in 1354.¹²¹ It was probably better, however, to send four nuns who already knew each other.

To be entrusted with the establishment of monastic life in the first nunnery of the English province, Johanna d'Aspèremont and her three French sisters must have been mature and experienced. In 1356, the nunnery was still a building site, and the six English friar chaplains were presumably inexperienced in dealing with nuns. Edward II's petition addressed to the master general, in 1323, gives us some indication of what was expected; he required four devout sisters of the order who were devoted to God and the Church, most honest in all ways, and mature in thought and conversation, for they were to instruct women to be placed in the new house in good precedents concerning the observance of regular discipline, edifying by their clean living ('salubrius vivant') and good example. That Johanna d'Aspèremont was dead by April 1363, when Matilda was first mentioned as prioress, suggests that she possibly was a mature woman when she came from France.¹²² Edward III planned for the introduction of ten English novices, in the first instance; on 14th July 1358, he granted 200 marks per annum to the prioress and all the convent of Dartford, in addition to the twenty marks he granted to the four French sisters the same day, for the sustenance of fourteen sisters, six friars and servants 'to

¹¹⁷ *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1358-61*, p.87.

¹¹⁸ *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1358-61*, p.187 (original document reference: PRO C66/256 m.14). This charter confirmed a grant of land, dated 32 Edward II with reversion to the sisters of Dartford, itself dated 1358. The Patent Roll gives the Prioress's name in a Latin form – 'de Aspero Monte'. Palmer says that the French nun who became prioress was Matilda (C.F.R. Palmer, 'History of the Priory of Dartford', p.246). Little repeats this assertion but wrongly infers from Palmer that the exchequer issue roll of 1357, which records payment of the nuns' travelling expenses to John de Woderove, was Palmer's source (VCH, *Kent*, ii, p.189, n.153). In fact, that document does not name the four nuns. Palmer, not having the benefit of the calendars of the Patent Rolls, missed the entry of 1359. There is no reference to Maud/Matilda as prioress before a document of 1363.

¹¹⁹ More precisely, one Aspèremont is 10 km. north of Nice, approximately 200 km. in a straight line from Avignon (the seat of the papacy), and 280 km. from Montpellier where there was a Dominican nunnery. The other Aspèremont is 30 km. west of Gap, 77 km over the hills east of Montélimar, approximately 100 km. north-east of Avignon over the hills, 155 km. south-east of Lyon (where there was a Dominican nunnery), and 180 km. from Montpellier. It is on the Grenoble to Marseille routeway. Another Dominican nunnery existed at Aix, but Micheline de Fontette (Micheline de Fontette, 'Les dominicaines en France au xiiiè siècle', p.97) does not clarify which of the several French settlements of that name this was. If it was Aix-en-Provence, as seems likely as the order started in south France, that also would have been in proximity to both Aspèremonts (110 km from Nice's Aspèremont, and 135 km. from Gap's). Aix, itself, is 66 km. from Avignon.

¹²⁰ *Gallia Christiana*, viii (Paris, 1744), coll. 1339-40.

¹²¹ *Cal. Pap. Lets*, iii, pp.615, 620.

¹²² In that month, John Foxcote and his wife Margaret conveyed the manor of Braundeston Halle in Magna Waldyngfeld in Suffolk to Matilda 'prioress of the new works at Dartford and her church of St. Margaret in return for their admittance to all the benefits and prayers in the church for the future' (C.F.R. Palmer, 'History of the Priory of Dartford', p.249). Matilda must have been one of the French nuns, for none of the English women can have been ready for this responsibility by 1363. She can have been no more than middle-aged, in 1356, because she was still prioress in 1375 (*Cal. Pat. Rolls 1374-7*, p.42).

wit 10 marks for each sister and friar' forever.¹²³ It was perhaps Johanna d'Aspèremont's death, by April 1363, which moved the king to give ten marks to Friar John de Woderove, prior of Kings Langley and Dartford, received on 12th July 1363, with which to pay the debts of the four French sisters, and for four marble slabs for their tombs.¹²⁴ This does not mean that all four women were already dead. The richness of these marble tomb slabs suggests that the French ladies were of noble birth, which is most likely if they came from the royal priory of Poissy. They may even have been from French noble families known to Edward III, in view of the 'sincere affection' he had for them, mentioned in his grant of 1358.

Monastic life in Dartford Priory

Much can be inferred about the lives of the nuns and friars in Dartford Priory from the rule and constitutions of the Dominican order, filling the gaps left by surviving primary evidence relating directly to Dartford. In 1216-17, the nuns of Prouille were given the rule of St. Augustine, as were all subsequent nuns and friars of the order, and numerous references in charters and letters patent confirm that this was the rule followed at Dartford. One of the surviving manuscripts that belonged to Dartford Priory was, indeed, a copy of this rule.¹²⁵ The Rule of St. Augustine detailed a strict life of poverty, chastity, communal charity and obedience. Dominic sent the sisters at Madrid a letter in which he stipulated an austere observance of the rule, especially stressing silence, enclosure, obedience and fasting.¹²⁶ To this basic rule were added the Dominican constitutions, an early version of which were given to the nuns of Prouille, in 1216. These emphasised that the life of the monastery was to be strictly contemplative.¹²⁷ Dominic reserved a special role for the nuns – prayer – which would aid the apostolic mission of the friars. At the time that the nunnery of Bologna was first planned, Dominic said that it was necessary to build a house of sisters, even if that meant holding up the building of a friars' house.¹²⁸ There was, then, a great stress placed on prayer and contemplation, in Dominican life, and for this strict enclosure was necessary.¹²⁹

The Constitutions in force for Dominican nunneries, throughout the existence of the monastic community of Dartford Priory, from 1356 to the sixteenth century, were those promulgated at the general chapter at Valenciennes in 1259. These were made compulsory for all Dominican nuns. Previously, a number of different legal codes were followed by nuns of the order, including versions of the rule of the nunnery of San Sisto in Rome, and local statutes imposed by Dominican superiors in Germany.¹³⁰ Humbert of Romans, master general of the order from 1254 to 1263, was dissatisfied with this multiplicity and was charged with setting the nuns a uniform rule by Pope Alexander IV, in 1257. His new set of Constitutions were based on those drawn up in 1250, when he was provincial of the French Dominican province, for the nunnery at Montargis (one of those

¹²³ *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1358-61*, p.87. The 200 marks were to be taken yearly out of the customs and subsidies in the port of London.

¹²⁴ C.F.R. Palmer, 'History of the Priory of Dartford', p.244.

¹²⁵ Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodl. Ms. 255. See chapter four for more details.

¹²⁶ William Hinnebusch, *The History of the Dominican Order*, i, p.99.

¹²⁷ William Hinnebusch, *The History of the Dominican Order*, i, p.98.

¹²⁸ Micheline de Fontette, 'Les dominicaines en France au xiiiè siècle', p101.

¹²⁹ On enclosure at Dartford Priory see below and, in detail, in chapter five.

¹³⁰ William Hinnebusch, *The History of the Dominican Order*, i, pp.380-81. Micheline de Fontette says that the rule of San Sisto became in effect an official form of life in the feminine monasteries in the thirteenth century. It drew heavily on the rule of Prouille, and also bore similarities to the rule of the order of Sempringham (Micheline de Fontette, *Les religieuses à l'âge classique du droit canon*, pp.96-7).

nunneries named as a possible source of nuns for the new English convent, in 1323), which was incorporated into the order in 1245. Those were modeled on the Constitutions of the friars of that time. Thus, the nuns of the Dominican order gained a uniform rule that was closely linked to that of the friars.¹³¹ To these Constitutions of 1259 further regulations could be added by master generals, provincials and priors, to suit local circumstances.¹³² Thus, aspects of daily monastic life in Dartford Priory may be ascertained from the constitutions of the nuns and friars of the order, whilst remembering that there may have been local variations peculiar to Dartford.

The nuns and friars of the Dominican order used the full monastic office. Great emphasis was placed on ensuring that the same liturgy was used in every part of the order and its use may therefore be assumed at Dartford. Revisions of the Dominican liturgy throughout the 1240s and 1250s resulted in a final version produced by Humbert of Romans, approved by the general chapter in 1256, which was contained within fourteen volumes: the ordinary, antiphony, lectionary, psalter, book of collects, martyrology, processional, gradual, the missal for high altars, the missal for side altars, book of gospels, book of epistles, pulpitary and the portable breviary. In 1259, and again in 1265, conventual priors were urged to obtain these books for their priories, copied from the master copy kept at Paris, and, in 1267, Pope Clement IV formally approved the liturgy of the friars preachers, forbidding alterations without papal permission. That was amended in 1285 to allow additions to the calendar.¹³³

William Hinnebusch has used Humbert's liturgy and other sources to ascertain the daily schedule of the Dominican friars, and says that this applied also to the nuns.¹³⁴ Copying the canons regular, Dominicans followed winter and summer schedules, changing on the feast of the Holy Cross (14th September) and Easter Day, with minor changes to the timetable in lent. Matins and lauds opened the day, and were not separated, as in traditional monasteries, but sung together, at midnight (in summer) or two o'clock in the morning (in winter). Humbert of Romans himself acknowledged that this monastic austerity, breaking the night's sleep, was very difficult. These and all other offices were announced by the ringing of the church bell. Humbert wanted every priory to possess an inexpensive but accurate clock in the dormitory; when this struck at the appropriate time, the sacristan was to hurry to church and ring the bell there, in two bursts, the second of which lasted until all the community was assembled. Until 1423, on hearing the bell for matins, or any other office, the friars or nuns were bound to rise from sleep or work, and begin reciting the appropriate section of the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary, except before compline, when they followed compline of the Divine Office. After 1423, all the Little Office, except matins, was recited in the quire. On entering the church, the friars or nuns bowed before the altar, took their places in the stalls and waited for the signal to commence, once all were assembled. The chapter of faults followed either matins and lauds, or the later morning office of prime. By the fourteenth century, chapter was held weekly or even fortnightly, rather than every day. It began with a recitation of *pretiosa*, a prayer for the sanctification of the works of the coming day, and prayers for the benefactors, which, in Dartford's case, included the royal family. Then the prior or prioress instructed the community and made

¹³¹ Micheline de Fontette, *Les religieuses à l'âge classique du droit canon*, pp.101-3.

¹³² William Hinnebusch, *The History of the Dominican Order*, i, p.381.

¹³³ William Hinnebusch, *The History of the Dominican Order*, i, pp.347-9.

corrections where religious had broken the rule. Although not mentioned in the Constitutions, other sources, apparently, demonstrate that, if lauds was not followed by chapter, members of the community remained in church (although not necessarily in the quire, unless they were novices), for a time of personal prayer, using whatever method or subject matter they preferred. Individual friars could remain in prayer until prime, if they wished, but, otherwise, the community went back to bed. Prime was chanted at about half past six, in winter, and earlier, but in daylight, in summer. Terce and sext took place during the rest of the morning. None was chanted at about two o'clock in the afternoon, or earlier in lent, when it was followed by community mass or vespers. Otherwise, mass was celebrated after sext, about noon, and followed by dinner. In winter, except in lent, the community chanted vespers late in the afternoon, or at about half past six in summer. In summer, a light meal was then eaten, and compline followed on from vespers, after only a short pause, at about five o'clock, in winter, or about a quarter to eight in summer. All these times were, naturally, subject to variation, according to locality, light conditions and the time of year. Humbert directed that compline should take place in summer when it was still possible to read by the last of daylight. Compline was the most solemn hour of the day, in the Dominican rite, and was enriched with antiphons, responses and hymns. It was chanted with particular solemnity and closed with the *Salve regina*, a devotion to the Virgin Mary. As the cantor intoned the *Salve regina* antiphon, the gate in the screen separating quire and nave was opened, and the community processed down into the nave chanting the antiphon. On reaching the words 'Turn then most gracious advocate' (in Latin) they turned to face the altar, knelt and received a blessing. The antiphon ended, the community filed back into the quire and recited the closing prayers of the office. On ferial days, discipline was administered to the community, and there was a time of personal prayer, which Humbert said was to last for as long as it took to recite the seven penitential psalms and the litany of the saints, although these prayers were not prescribed. Encouraged by the rattle of keys, according to Humbert's advice, the religious then retired to bed.¹³⁵

Besides this Divine Office, the Constitutions bound the friars (and, therefore, the nuns) to sing the Office of the Dead, called the 'vigil of the nine lessons' weekly, either in private or in quire. This office consisted of vespers, matins and lauds, and was followed, on Mondays, by a mass for the dead. A second office of the dead, called the 'vigil of three lessons', had also to be recited, but not sung, every week. These offices were omitted on higher feasts and during various seasons.¹³⁶

The Constitutions also stated how the offices and mass were to be chanted by Dominicans. This was to be done crisply, not slowly and drawn out with long pauses as in traditional monasteries, so that attention might not wander or the work of study be held up for too long (although advanced students could be dispensed from quire and recite the office alone). Nuns did not have the friars' duty of study, but it may be assumed that they adopted the same method of chanting. Attempts by some friars to embellish the chant by singing in octaves, or with descants, were resisted by general chapter, in the thirteenth century.¹³⁷

¹³⁴ William Hinnebusch, *The History of the Dominican Order*, i, p.382.

¹³⁵ William Hinnebusch, *The History of the Dominican Order*, i, pp.349-54.

¹³⁶ William Hinnebusch, *The History of the Dominican Order*, i, p.352.

¹³⁷ William Hinnebusch, *The History of the Dominican Order*, i, p.352.

It was possible for nuns at Dartford to be exempted from offices for reasons of sickness. On 19th June 1481, the mater general granted that Sister Jane Tyrellis in time of sickness might be exempted from the service of the quire.¹³⁸

The nuns' habit, described in chapter ten of the Constitutions, consisted of a white tunic and scapular, a leather belt, black mantle, and a black veil. This habit was made of unfinished and undyed wool (hence the colours), expressing the penance, purity and poverty that the Dominican Order observed. In the friars' order, not even the sick were allowed to wear linen.¹³⁹ There was more room for flexibility in individual cases in the second order, however; an entry in the register of the master general dated 27th June 1474 records the granting of licence to Prioress Beatrice Eland of Dartford to use linen because she was debilitated and elderly (*debilitatem et antiquitatem*).¹⁴⁰ In 1500, William Milet of Dartford founded an obit in Dartford Priory specifying that 'every lady or suster weryng a white Scapulary and beyng att Dirige have vj d'.¹⁴¹ This suggests that, at Dartford, the wearing of the correct habit at mass and offices was still required, in the sixteenth century. Observance of the regulation stipulating unfinished cloth may, however, have been relaxed, as not all the nuns wore habits of the same coarse quality. In his will of 16th August 1530, Sir John Rudstone, citizen and alderman of London, bequeathed habits of white cloth worth 5s a yard to three nuns, a habit of white cloth worth 6s 8d a yard to Elizabeth Cressener, junior, and one of white cloth worth 7s a yard to the prioress, Elizabeth Cressener senior.¹⁴²

The constitutions of Montargis, on which the Constitutions of 1259 were based, allowed the admission of girls into a nunnery at the age of seven years, but stated that they could not be professed until the age of twelve, and required a year's noviciate. The 1259 Constitutions merely stated that monasteries were not to receive anyone notably young, required a year's noviciate and did not allow profession before thirteen years of age.¹⁴³ The best evidence with regard to Dartford Priory relates to Edward IV's youngest daughter, Bridget, who was sent to this nunnery at the age of ten, in 1490, when her mother, Elizabeth Woodville, entered the nunnery of Bermondsey, and was later professed.¹⁴⁴ The formula for profession set out in the Montargis constitutions was as follows:

Ego N. facio professionem et promitto obedientiam Deo et beate Marie et tibi N. priorisse sancti Dominici vice magistri fratrum predicatorum secundam regulam Beati Augustini et institutiones sororum quod ero obediens tibi tuisque successoribus usque ad mortem.¹⁴⁵

Candidates for profession were examined to ascertain whether they were married women separated from their husbands, and on their intellectual capabilities. All that was required was that a woman or girl should be able to read, or be capable of learning to read, and thus to be able to master the Divine Office. A German provincial added guidance to the effect that novice mistresses should only teach those who were slow to learn how to read

¹³⁸ C.F.R. Palmer, 'Notes on the priory of Dartford, in Kent', p.178.

¹³⁹ William Hinnebusch, *The History of the Dominican Order*, i, pp.339-40.

¹⁴⁰ C.F.R. Palmer, 'Notes on the Priory of Dartford, in Kent', p.177.

¹⁴¹ PROB 11/12/138.

¹⁴² BL Harley Ms 1231 ff.1-4. Rudstone also left £20 to the repair of the monastery wall, asking the convent to pray for him.

¹⁴³ Micheline de Fontette, *Les religieuses à l'âge classique du droit canon*, pp.106, 110; William Hinnebusch, *The History of the Dominican Order*, i, pp.382-3.

¹⁴⁴ C.F.R. Palmer, 'History of the Priory of Dartford, in Kent', pp.261-2.

¹⁴⁵ Micheline de Fontette, *Les religieuses à l'âge classique du droit canon*, p.106.

and sing the chant.¹⁴⁶ The Constitutions also set out the roles of the sub-prioress, novice mistress, *circatrix* (inspector) and cellarer in each nunnery.¹⁴⁷ Only the titles of prioress and sub-prioress are mentioned in any surviving documentation relating to Dartford Priory, but there was probably also a nun designated schoolmistress, as at Romsey Abbey, a large Benedictine nunnery, in the early sixteenth century.¹⁴⁸

A minority of the nuns at Dartford were lay sisters, rather than quire nuns. There is no record of lay brethren being present, as there were at Poissy and other Dominican nunneries, and their role was undertaken by servants.¹⁴⁹ The first post-Dissolution pension list for Dartford, dated Michaelmas 1539, lists twenty six nuns in total, including the prioress, of whom five were lay sisters. They received lower pensions than the other nuns (40s per annum, rather than 53s 4d or above).¹⁵⁰ Four out of the five joined the refounded monastery, in Mary's reign, although none of them did so straight away, constituting just under half the refounded community, and all of these four went into exile in Flanders, in 1559. It seems unlikely, therefore, that their daily schedule as lay sisters did not include religious as well as practical duties. Indeed, they may have been juniors awaiting full profession, in view of their greater proportionate longevity, as compared with the quire nuns of 1539. The only mention of lay sisters in the Constitutions stipulated that they were to be received in limited numbers, depending on the needs of the community.¹⁵¹

Enclosure of the nuns of Dartford is treated in detail in chapter five, in the context of priory relations with the secular world, but some comment should be made here, as it was a vital aspect of monastic life in any Dominican nunnery. The papal bull *Periculoso*, promulgated by Boniface VIII in 1299, stipulated the strict enclosure of all nunneries of any order.¹⁵² A report based on the visitation of the nunnery of Prouille, in 1340, provides details that may be applied to other Dominican nunneries. This describes the separation of the quire from the rest of the nuns' church, by some sort of screen, to protect the nuns' enclosure.¹⁵³ There was a similar arrangement at Poissy Priory, where the church was divided up into the sections used by the nuns, friars, lay brothers and laity, so as to protect the enclosure of the nuns, whilst preserving access for laity.¹⁵⁴ The Constitutions of 1259 included detailed regulations, such as that the outer door of a nunnery was to be locked with a double key system. They restricted entrance into a nunnery to such persons as kings and queens, bishops, legates, cardinals, popes and the founders. Only the prioress could speak to them, accompanied by three sisters of respectable age. The Dominican general chapters of 1327 and 1349 added further measures to strengthen the enclosure of the nuns. In 1402, Pope Boniface IX prescribed excommunication for those who entered the cloister of Dominican nunneries without good reason, and, in 1478, confessors stationed at monasteries were told to bring this to the attention of visitors.¹⁵⁵

¹⁴⁶ William Hinnebusch, *The History of the Dominican Order*, i, p.383.

¹⁴⁷ Micheline de Fontette, *Les religieuses à l'âge classique du droit canon*, p.107.

¹⁴⁸ Diana Coldicott, *Hampshire Nunneries* (Chichester, 1989), p.92; see appendix one for sub-prioresses at Dartford.

¹⁴⁹ Alain Erlande-Brandenburg, 'Art et politique sous Philippe le Bel: la priorale Saint-Louis de Poissy', p.509; Raymond Creytens, 'Les convers des moniales dominicaines au Moyen Age', *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum*, 19 (1949), pp.5-46.

¹⁵⁰ *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xiv pt 1 no.650.

¹⁵¹ Micheline de Fontette, *Les religieuses à l'âge classique du droit canon*, p.111.

¹⁵² Eileen Power, *Medieval English Nunneries c.1275 to 1535*, p.344-5.

¹⁵³ Micheline de Fontette, *Les religieuses à l'âge classique du droit canon*, p.108.

¹⁵⁴ Alain Erlande-Brandenburg, 'Art et politique sous Philippe le Bel: la priorale Saint-Louis de Poissy', pp.511-14.

¹⁵⁵ Micheline de Fontette, *Les religieuses à l'âge classique du droit canon*, pp.112, 114-15; William Hinnebusch, *The History of the Dominican Order*, i, pp.398-9.

The first nuns of Dartford were principally absorbed with establishing conventual life, although the writing dated in the chapter house in 1359 indicates the active involvement of the prioress in the administration of land endowments. As a recluse she communicated with the world through officials and attorneys. These first four nuns were probably further isolated from their immediate neighbours in the secular world, by being French. The language spoken in Dartford Priory, in its first years, must of necessity have been French. It is unlikely that the four French sisters spoke any English, whereas the English recruits were probably drawn from the nobility and gentry and thus, in the mid fourteenth century, spoke at least some French. At that time, French was still used for conversation in some Oxford and Cambridge colleges, and in certain monasteries, especially nunneries where it was known better than Latin. Many of the devotional and instructional books owned by late medieval English nunneries were thus written in French.¹⁵⁶ By the sixteenth century, enclosure was probably still being strictly observed by the majority of nuns at Dartford. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Dominican nuns communicated with visitors and received communion from their chaplains through grills.¹⁵⁷ In 1500, one Sister Jane of Dartford was absolved of unspecified misdemeanours, by the master general, and granted permission to 'speak at the grill with relatives and friends being persons of no blame', implying that this was a normal privilege in the convent withdrawn as punishment.¹⁵⁸ By this time, the prioress, however, evidently had much contact with certain town laymen and clergy.¹⁵⁹

Dominican nuns shared a common dormitory, as did the friars. The Constitutions of 1259 laid down that they were to sleep fully dressed.¹⁶⁰ The refectory in a Dominican monastery was normally situated on the cloister quadrangle, close to church and dormitory. Dominican meals were meagre, with the same food served to everyone, except for those who were sick. The Constitutions for nuns and friars alike prescribed perpetual abstinence from meat. There were two meals a day, in summer, both cooked, with only one such meal in winter. Sometimes benefactors provided extra treats such as pastries, preserves and fruits. There were several fast days, on Fridays and other days, when bread and water were consumed, although a more lenient regime was operated for novices. The beverage consumed depended on the country; in England, in general, wine was only used on special occasions.¹⁶¹ Large quantities of wine were available at Dartford, however; on 1st September 1357, Edward III granted four tuns per annum of his and his heirs' wine to Dartford Priory, for the celebration of masses and in aid of the maintenance of the prioress and sisters, to be delivered from the port of London, a tun at each of Christmas, Easter, midsummer and Michaelmas.¹⁶² Mention of the friars' brewing house adjacent to the nunnery, in Dartford Priory's rental of 1507-8, suggests that beer was also much drunk.¹⁶³ The Constitutions demanded that nuns eat in silence in refectory, and this was done listening to edifying reading. This was designed to inform nuns how to conduct themselves at work and in life. First, two or three verses of Scripture

¹⁵⁶ M. Dominica Legge, 'The French language and the English cloister', Veronica Ruffer & A.J. Taylor, eds, *Medieval Studies Presented to Rose Graham* (Oxford, 1950), pp.146-62; see pp.151ff, 158, 160.

¹⁵⁷ William Hinnebusch, *The History of the Dominican Order*, i, pp.397, 399.

¹⁵⁸ C.F.R. Palmer, 'Notes on the Priory of Dartford, in Kent', p.178.

¹⁵⁹ See chapter five.

¹⁶⁰ Micheline de Fontette, *Les religieuses à l'âge classique du droit canon*, pp.108, 110.

¹⁶¹ Micheline de Fontette, *Les religieuses à l'âge classique du droit canon*, p.110; William Hinnebusch, *History of the Dominican Order*, i, pp.358-9.

¹⁶² *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1354-8*, p.607. In February 1400, Henry IV ordered John Payn, his chief butler, to deliver arrears of this wine (*Cal. Close Rolls 1399-1402*, p.459).

¹⁶³ BL Arundel Ms. 61 fo.47.

were recited, followed by a short pause for the sisters to be seated. Then the reading began and the servants brought in the food. The reader was expected to prepare herself by careful perusal and to read without extremes of expression. The function was to be carried out by a 'capable, intelligent, well-trained sister'. The reading prescribed for this context included the Constitutions (once a year), the lives of the Fathers, histories, the dialogues of Gregory, sermons, and appropriate scriptural and other texts on particular feast days.¹⁶⁴

The 1259 Constitutions did not allow nuns to possess personal property, or any object that was locked with a key, save those required for any office they held.¹⁶⁵ There are a number of examples of legacies to nuns at Dartford from relatives, consisting of money, candles, books and clothing. Such things must have been held in common, unless observance of this particular regulation had been relaxed by the fifteenth century.

An important aspect of monastic life was silence, to aid prayer and contemplation. The Constitutions ruled that Dominican nuns were to maintain silence in places of prayer, the cloister, the dormitory and refectory, unless the prioress granted an exception for a particular reason. Conversation on serious matters was allowed in the common parlour, but was subject to strict guidelines, and the prioress, sub-prioress or other senior nuns had to be present.¹⁶⁶ The Constitutions directed that one nun should be designated 'circatrix'. It was her job to make periodic and unexpected tours of the nunnery, and to report back to the prioress any infringements of silence.¹⁶⁷ The granting of special exemptions implies that these rules were observed at Dartford; for example, on 19th June 1481, the master general granted special permission for Sister Jane Tyrellis to talk with friends of honourable fame in the common speaking place of the nunnery of Dartford, without companion.¹⁶⁸

Nuns did not share the preaching friars' obligation to study, although they were expected to engage in some form of intellectual activity, and manual work was prescribed to combat idleness.¹⁶⁹ For nuns, work was consecrated labour, complementing the prayer performed in choir. The 1259 Constitutions stated that Dominican novice mistresses were to teach novices a skill. Sisters were to carry out sewing and embroidery together in a workroom. They were to maintain silence whilst working, but one of them might read aloud from the Constitutions, the Rule, or some spiritual work.¹⁷⁰ It is possible that needlework and embroidery were occupations of English nuns, in general, and that work was carried out for paying clients; Bourdillon suggests that this was an occupation of the Minoresses.¹⁷¹ This may also have been true of Dartford Priory. The nineteenth-century antiquarian of Dartford, John Dunkin, reported that the fifteenth-century tenement adjacent to Holy Trinity parish churchyard had formerly possessed a tapestry reputed to have been woven by the nuns of Dartford.¹⁷² A hanging of tapestry work bequeathed to Dartford parish church, by the servant and baker to the

¹⁶⁴ Ernest W. McDonnell, *The Béguines and Béghards in Medieval Culture: with special emphasis on the Belgian scene* (Rutgers, 1954), pp.384-5.

¹⁶⁵ Micheline de Fontette, *Les religieuses à l'âge classique du droit canon*, p.111.

¹⁶⁶ Micheline de Fontette, *Les religieuses à l'âge classique du droit canon*, p.111.

¹⁶⁷ Micheline de Fontette, *Les religieuses à l'âge classique du droit canon*, p.112; William Hinnebusch, *History of the Dominican Order*, i, p.361.

¹⁶⁸ C.F.R. Palmer, 'Notes on the priory of Dartford, in Kent', pp.177-8.

¹⁶⁹ Micheline de Fontette, *Les religieuses à l'âge classique du droit canon*, p.112.

¹⁷⁰ William Hinnebusch, *History of the Dominican Order*, i, pp.384-5; William Hinnebusch, *History of the Dominican Order*, ii:

Intellectual and Cultural Life to 1500 (New York, 1974), p.210.

¹⁷¹ A.F.C. Bourdillon, *The Order of Minoresses in England* (Manchester, 1926), p.74.

¹⁷² John Dunkin, *The History and Antiquities of Dartford* (Dartford, 1844), pp.13, 130.

prioress of Dartford, Robert Hakest alias Hawes, in April 1530, was perhaps another example of the nunnery's work.¹⁷³

Social origins of nuns at Dartford

Dugdale described Dartford Priory as being an aristocratic house, but the reality was more in accord with what is known of late medieval English nunneries in general. Women drawn from aristocratic families made up a small minority of English nuns, and they may have been increasingly outnumbered by daughters of local gentry and merchant tradesmen, from the fifteenth century. A much higher proportion came from the ranks of the minor and county gentry, and these connected nunneries with local secular society.¹⁷⁴

Hinnebusch reports that medieval and early modern Dominican nunneries recruited their nuns almost exclusively from women of nobility and well-to-do middle classes, whilst lay sisters came from the lower strata of society.¹⁷⁵ The Rule of St. Augustine, observed by Dominican friars and nuns, anticipated a social mix in monasteries; it ruled that religious of high birth should not disdain those who came from a state of poverty but should glory in their company especially. They were not to think well of themselves for having contributed to the common life of the monastery from their wealth. Friars and sisters of lower birth were themselves exhorted not to be filled with pride because they mixed with persons whom they would not have dared approach in the world.¹⁷⁶

The surviving evidence of Dartford nuns only allows for an impressionistic account of the social mix in that monastery. The identity and origins of most sisters, throughout the priory's existence, are totally unknown, which obscurity suggests that they were not of high birth. The social origins of the prioresses who have been identified are generally obscure, and only two can be positively identified as having been aristocratic (Margaret Beaumont and Joan Scrope), both in the fifteenth century. Other prioresses at Dartford came from gentry families in Kent and East Anglia (Jane Vane and both Elizabeth Cresseners).¹⁷⁷ The two French prioresses, Johanna d'Aspèremont and Matilda, may also have been of high French birth, if they came from the

¹⁷³ DRb/Pwr8/238v.

¹⁷⁴ Marilyn Oliva found that sixty-four per cent of nuns and sixty-four per cent of office-holding nuns in the diocese of Norwich, 1350-1540, came from lower parish gentry families, and that their kin patronised the convents their female relatives entered. Just seventeen per cent of Norwich diocese abbesses, prioresses and obedientiaris in this period came from the upper gentry, and none came from the titled aristocracy. She concludes that parish gentry were a mainstay for these female monasteries: Marilyn Oliva, 'Autocracy or meritocracy? Office-holding patterns in late medieval English nunneries', *Studies in Church History 27: Women in the Church*, ed. W.J. Sheils & D. Wood (Oxford, 1990), pp.192-208 at pp.199-201. Yvonne Parrey, writing about the large nunnery of the order of Fontevault at Amesbury, finds that many nuns there, in the earlier centuries, were women of wealth and property. However, by the sixteenth century it is doubtful that nuns were of aristocratic background: Yvonne Parrey, "'Devoted disciples of Christ': early sixteenth-century religious life in the nunnery at Amesbury', *Historical Research*, 67 (1994), pp.240-48 at p.248. Coldicott found that most nuns in the four Hampshire nunneries came from locally prominent families, in the fifteenth century, including those of the emerging prosperous middle class (Diana Coldicott, *Hampshire Nunneries*, p.40). Paxton found that only 2.4 per cent of 291 pre-Dissolution London nuns identified were of noble birth, and most came from merchant and other London families, rather than gentry (Catherine Paxton, 'The nunneries of London and its environs in the later middle ages', pp.20, 32, 311). Cross and Vickers, like Coldicott, report that recruitment to Yorkshire monasteries was generally local, in the sixteenth century, and the majority of Yorkshire religious stemmed from the middle ranks of urban and rural society. The nunneries were socially more select than male religious, but they were not aristocratic preserves: Claire Cross & Noreen Vickers, *Monks, Friars and Nuns in sixteenth-century Yorkshire*, Yorkshire Archaeological Society Record Series, 150 (1995), pp.3-4. In west Kent, at least one of the three remaining nuns in Higham Priory, at the time of its early suppression in 1521, was daughter of a merchant boat-owning family in nearby Milton-next-Gravesend (this was indicated in her mother's will made in 1530 (DRb/Pwr8/268v), by which time she had transferred to a nunnery in London). Wills in West Malling, in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, reveal that the Benedictine abbey there contained a number of daughters of local families, of varying social rank (see chapter five).

¹⁷⁵ William Hinnebusch, *The History of the Dominican Order*, i, p.287.

¹⁷⁶ Rule, chapter 1, v-vii: George Lawless, *Augustine of Hippo and his Monastic Rule* (Oxford, 1987), pp.80-83, 110-111.

royal and aristocratic Poissy Priory.¹⁷⁸ Only two sub-prioresses of Dartford may be identified from records, from the early sixteenth century, and both were from the upper gentry. Anne Fyneux, sister-in-law of John Roper, mentioned above, held this office in 1523 and 1525, when she was named in the wills of Roper and her father, Sir John Fyneux, one time Lord Chief Justice of the King's Bench and a landowner in east Kent.¹⁷⁹ The junior Elizabeth Cressener, perhaps a niece of the first Prioress Cressener, belonging to an East Anglian gentry family, was named as sub-prioress in 1537 and at the Dissolution.¹⁸⁰ This Elizabeth was named as Dame Elizabeth Cressener in the will of her mother, Eleanor Cressener of Norfolk, dated December 1540, after the suppression.¹⁸¹ This will demonstrates that the Cresseners moved in gentry circles and were acquainted with aristocracy in East Anglia.¹⁸²

The names of other Dartford nuns survive in records because of their noble or even royal background. Edward IV's daughter Bridget has already been mentioned. Catherine Breouse, daughter of Sir Thomas de Norwich, widow of a Breouse or Brews of Salle in Norfolk, resigned the lordship of Sculthorpe, on entering Dartford Priory and taking the veil on 18th May 1378.¹⁸³ In 1413, Elizabeth Botraus, a nun of Dartford who was the illegitimate daughter of noble parents, was given dispensation to hold all dignities, such as of prioress or other offices.¹⁸⁴ Jane Tyrellis, the nun given special permission by the master general to speak with visiting friends in the *locutorium*, in 1481, may have been granted this exception because of noble connections. It was a common practice for nobility to procure papal indulgences allowing them to visit monasteries. Sister Jane may have

¹⁷⁷ See appendix one.

¹⁷⁸ Poissy was known as a royal and aristocratic house; apart from there having been a royal founder, secular aristocratic and royal ladies dwelt in the monastery, and nuns were, apparently, particularly recruited amongst noble ladies (Alain Erlande-Brandenburg, 'La priorale Saint-Louis de Poissy', p.94). The list of prioresses of Poissy certainly includes a number of aristocratic women: Matthée de la Roche (1304-33); Marie de Clermont, daughter of Robert, count of Clermont (1333-44); Alix I de Sauqueville (abdicated 1374); Johanna I de Sauqueville (1375-80); Marie II de Bourbon (d.1401); and two daughters of the house of Amboise were prioress in the fifteenth century (*Gallia Christiana* viii (Paris, 1744), coll. 1339-40). In addition, Isabelle de Valois, daughter of Charles de Valois, brother of Philippe le Bel, became a nun at the Priory of St. Louis Poissy in 1315 (S. Moreau-Rendu, *Le Prieuré Royal de Saint-Louis de Poissy*, p.97); she later became a prioress of the great house of Fontevault (*Gallia Christiana* viii, col. 1339). Other royal nuns included Isabelle d'Artois, grand-daughter of St. Louis; Isabelle d'Alençon, great-niece of Philippe le Hardi; Marie de Bretagne daughter of Arthur Duke of Bretagne and Yolande Queen of Scotland. There were, however, also nuns from more humble roots, such as the prioress Pamel Pelletot (1344-51) (S. Moreau-Rendu, *Le Prieuré Royal de Saint-Louis de Poissy*, p.104; citing *L'Année Dominicaine*). Indeed, the aristocratic reputation of the monastery may have been belied by the social origins of the mass of quire and lay sisters.

¹⁷⁹ Roper's will is printed in Anon., 'Archbishop Warham's Letters', AC, ii (1859), pp.149-74 at pp.153-73, and the reference to his daughter Agnes is at p.169; Fyneux's will is at PROB 11/22/5; see M. Sparks, 'Sir John Fyneux: a Herne worthy', in K.H. McIntosh & H.E. Gough, eds, *Hoath and Herne* (Ramsgate, 1984), pp.40-50 at pp.43, 48.

¹⁸⁰ C.F.R. Palmer, 'History of the Priory of Dartford, in Kent', pp.265, 267.

¹⁸¹ Norfolk Record Office NCC 193, 194 Hyll.

¹⁸² The sub-prioress's mother, Eleanor Cressener, was a member of the Woodhouse family, for she bequeathed her brother John Woodhouse a hoop of gold, and had inherited land in Elsyng and Kimberly in Norfolk. Several sons of the Woodhouse family, who lived in Kimberley from at least the fifteenth century, were knighted for their various endeavours for kings of England from the fourteenth century (J.B. Burke, *Burke's Peerage, Baronetage, and Knightage*, 103rd edn, ed. P. Townend (1963), pp.1360-61; *DNB*, xxi, p.747). Her daughter Anne, Elizabeth's sister, was married to a Calthorpe, and another daughter was married to John Hastings, who was related to the Lords Hastings, and whose branch of that family held the lordship of Elsyng (Francis Blomefield, *An Essay towards a topographical history of the county of Norfolk*, viii (London, 1808), p.201; *DNB*, ix, pp.112, 129). One of Eleanor Cressener's executors was Sir Roger Townshende, knight, who was sheriff of Norfolk three times and represented Norfolk in Parliament in 1529 and 1541-2 (*DNB*, xix, p.1057). A Sir Thomas Wodehouse of Kimberley married Thomasine, daughter of Sir Roger Townsend's father, so the two families were connected (*DNB*, xxi, p.747). Another interesting connection, springing from the dense networks of connections between county gentry, was that Sir Roger Townsend's mother was Anne, daughter and heir of Sir William Braose of Norfolk. Catherine Breouse, an earlier member of that family, was a nun of Dartford Priory in the late fifteenth century (*DNB*, xix, p.1057).

¹⁸³ Francis Blomefield, *An Essay towards a topographical history of the county of Norfolk*, vii, pp.173-4. Richard III's grant to Dartford Priory, in 1384, of the reversion of the manor of Thorpe Hall near Norwich, which Katherine had inherited from her father's family, was mentioned above.

¹⁸⁴ *Cal. Pap. lets.*, vi, p.392. The Dominican order considered illegitimates a bad risk, especially from the early fourteenth century, when chapters made rulings making their reception more difficult (William Hinnebusch, *The History of the Dominican Order*, i, p.286).

been a member of the Tyrells family of knights and esquires in Glamorgan, where the priory had property.¹⁸⁵ Jane Fisher, given special permission to have a preceptor in Latin and grammar, in the same entry in the master general's register, was described as 'nobilis et generosa'. Her social background was, presumably, the reason for the advanced state of her learning.¹⁸⁶

These aristocratic nuns were, probably, in the minority, however. The trend detected elsewhere of a decreasing proportion of aristocratic women may also be reflected at Dartford; no nuns at Dartford at the time of the Dissolution, can be identified as being of noble origin, whilst some can be identified as coming from local minor gentry families and having local relatives or acquaintances. In the fifteenth century, there were also nuns who were daughters of the London merchant class. Sometimes these nuns had both gentry and mercantile family connections. Anne Bamme, a nun of Dartford left a silver goblet in the will of her father, Richard Bamme of Gillingham in Kent, in May 1442, was a grand-daughter of Adam Bamme, a lord mayor of London.¹⁸⁷ In February 1445-6, Sister Beatrice Knolles was bequeathed ten marks in the will of her father, Thomas Knolles, who was a citizen and grocer of the city of London, and owner of North Mimms manor in Hertfordshire.¹⁸⁸ Her brother in law, William Baron, one of her father's executors, was a receiver at the Exchequer, and a gentleman of Berkshire. At some point in the last quarter of the fifteenth century, Baron gave the devotional manuscript now known as Oxford Bodleian Ms Douce 322 to his grand-daughter, Parnel Wrattisley, who was a nun of Dartford from that time until at least 1512. Parnel's father was Sir Walter Wrottesley, a former sheriff of Staffordshire, governor of Calais and merchant of the staple, who died in 1473; her brother, William Wrottesley of Reading, who inherited Baron's estates and who bequeathed Parnel money and prayer beads, in 1512, was a wealthy gentleman with a residence in London.¹⁸⁹ The father of Johanna Stokton, a nun of Dartford mentioned in wills dated 1470, 1478 and 1497, was Thomas Stokton, citizen and fishmonger of St. Nicholas Coldabbey, London. There were also members of the Stokton family resident in Dartford, during this time, and Johanna's step-mother, Beatrice, was born and baptised in Dartford, and owned land there.¹⁹⁰ Rose Pittes, a widow of Dartford, knew the Stokton family; the nun's probable father, Thomas Stokton senior, fishmonger of London, was given a house in her will dated July 1470, and his son Thomas, the nun's brother, was one of her witnesses and feoffees. It was no doubt because of this, as well as her support for the priory itself, that Rose was acquainted with 'Dame Jane Stokton' and made her a personal gift of 20s.¹⁹¹ Katherine Lessy, a nun of Dartford in 1498, came from a family which was evidently well-to-do, with access to a good standard of education; in that year, she was bequeathed £5 by her uncle, Richard Lessy, 'cubicular' to the pope, and a lay brother of numerous monasteries, including Kings Langley. Richard Lessy bequeathed to Sister Katherine's brother, his nephew, Sir William Lessy, £5 in money and two books - a little portuos and his journal.¹⁹² Sister Agnes Roper, daughter of

¹⁸⁵ C.F.R. Palmer, 'Notes on the Priory of Dartford, in Kent', p.178; the Tyrells family is mentioned *passim* in the Patent Rolls, in the 1470s and 80s.

¹⁸⁶ C.F.R. Palmer, 'Notes on the Priory of Dartford, in Kent', p.178.

¹⁸⁷ PROB 11/1/132. Her grandmother became a vowess, in 1397: Mary C. Erler, 'English vowed women at the end of the Middle Ages', *Medieval Studies*, 57 (1995), pp.155-203 at Appendix, p.190.

¹⁸⁸ PROB 11/3/236.

¹⁸⁹ For full details see appendix one and chapter four.

¹⁹⁰ Thomas Stokton's will, 1478 (PROB 11/7/23); Beatrice Stoughton's will, 1497 (PROB 11/11/273).

¹⁹¹ DRb/Pwr3/64v.

¹⁹² PROB 11/11/199v; cited in Lionel M. Munby, ed., *Life and Death in Kings Langley: Wills and Inventories 1498-1659* (Kings Langley, 1981), pp.1-3.

John Roper of Eltham, Henry VIII's attorney general, and niece of the sub-prioress, Lady Anne Fyneux, who was a nun at Dartford between the 1520s and the Dissolution, has already been mentioned.¹⁹³ Sir John Rudstone, citizen and alderman of London bequeathed Dominican habits to Margaret Mountenay, a woman called Felyce, and Beatrice Marshall, all of them nuns of Dartford, in his will of 16th August 1530, saying that they were former gentlewomen of the Countess of Salisbury.¹⁹⁴ The father and brother of Sister Dorothy Sedley, John and William Sedley, minor gentry of Southfleet, near Dartford, both remembered Dorothy and the Dartford nuns, in their wills. John Sedley, priory auditor, made Prioress Cressener one of his executors, in 1530-31, and founded a chantry in the priory.¹⁹⁵ Sir Thomas Exmewe, goldsmith and merchant adventurer of the city of London, and lord mayor in 1517, mentioned his daughter Elizabeth, a nun of Dartford, in his will of 1529, bequeathing her a matins book and the large land endowment for his obit in the priory.¹⁹⁶ A daughter of the Hertfordshire Newdigate gentry family was a Dominican nun, and therefore at Dartford Priory, in the early sixteenth century.¹⁹⁷

At least four Dartford nuns appearing in the post-Dissolution pension lists were from local families, including just one, Dorothy Sedley, who was definitely minor gentry. Of the others, Ellen Bostocke was one of the five lay sisters, in 1539, and Dominican lay sisters tended to be drawn from lower social ranks.¹⁹⁸ The families of most of the nuns named on the pension lists cannot be identified, and were probably of no more than minor gentry or mercantile middle class status. Little evidence survives from before these lists of Dartford nuns of less than gentry birth. That they were present is confirmed by one or two possible exceptions to this rule. Hugh Pagnam, who was in the service of Sir William Plomton of Yorkshire, in the mid fifteenth century, referred to the profession of his daughter Agnes Pagnam as a nun of Dartford on Saturday 15th June 1465.¹⁹⁹ A second nun bequeathed money by Rose Pittes, in 1470 – Joan Mores – may have been known to her because, like Johanna Stokton, she may have come from a local family.²⁰⁰

The evidence for Dartford Priory does not lend itself to statistical analysis, because of the small number of nuns who can be identified before the Dissolution, but the above account suggests that the conclusions that have been drawn with regard to other English nunneries apply also to Dartford. There were aristocratic nuns and prioresses there – indeed, the monastery might not have attracted noble girls for education, and pious noble widows to board there, had this not been the case – but the majority of nuns, especially as the fifteenth century progressed, probably came from local, minor gentry and London families.

¹⁹³ See appendix one.

¹⁹⁴ BL Harley Ms 1231 ff.1-4. Rudstone also bequeathed habits to both Elizabeth Cresseners, and £20 to the repair of the monastery wall, to be prayed for. Beatrice Marshall was the only one of the three former gentlewomen of the Countess of Salisbury still alive at the Dissolution.

¹⁹⁵ PROB 11/24/149.

¹⁹⁶ Lewis Pryce, 'Sir Thomas Exmewe', *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, 6th ser. vol. 19 (1919), pp.233-75 at pp. 253, 269-70 (quoting Thomas Exmewe's will: PRO PCC will 3 Jankyn - 1528/9). Thomas came to London as a goldsmith by 1487 and prospered. He was a sheriff in 1508; alderman in 1510; served on various commissions, of the Peace and for collection of the subsidy, in London, Middlesex or Surrey into the 1520s; was Lord Mayor in 1517; and was knighted in 1518. He died early in 1529.

¹⁹⁷ David Knowles, *The Religious Orders in England*, iii (1959), p.227.

¹⁹⁸ The four nuns were Katheryn Clofflyd, Dorothy Sedley, Margaret Cooke and Ellen Bostock (John Dunkin, *The History and Antiquities of Dartford*, pp. 160-1). For details of these nuns see appendix one.

¹⁹⁹ T. Stapleton, ed., *Plumpton Correspondence Edward IV - Henry VIII* (Camden Society, London, 1839), pp.14-15 (letter x).

²⁰⁰ DRb/Pwr3/64v.

The same social mix was found in those English nunneries closest to Dartford Priory (the Minoresses).²⁰¹ Proximity to London was important for Dartford Priory. Power found that the mix of merchant with other noble classes was particularly felt in houses in or near large towns, such as Carrow Abbey at Norwich.²⁰² This proximity also brought Dartford Priory much financial support from London citizens, in their wills.

Internal arrangements in Dartford Priory: the nuns and the friar chaplains

The sisters of Dartford Priory came under the protection of the order of friars preachers, as their charters stated. The English nunneries most akin to Dartford Priory were those of the Franciscan order, the Minoresses, whose pastoral care was provided by friars of their order.²⁰³ The most important function of such chaplains was to celebrate mass, which the nuns could not do for themselves, and Dominican nuns were supposed to be confessed once a month.²⁰⁴ Dominican nunneries were not alone amongst nunneries in having resident chaplains, of course. Joseph Avril studies the communities of priests attached to nunneries in the diocese of Angers from the 11th to 13th centuries. Sometimes this amounted to a double monastery, as at Fontevault, but most often some priests (four in the examples cited) were placed under the authority of an abbess and served the monastery.²⁰⁵ In England, the larger nunneries sometimes had resident chaplains; Syon Abbey had its community of brothers, and the Benedictine abbey of St. Mary in Winchester had five resident chaplains, including the confessor, who lived in common, separate from the nuns.²⁰⁶ The pastoral care of Dominican nuns was reserved to the friars of the order, however, and this gave rise to the need for special arrangements.

The existence of six resident friars at Dartford reflected Dominic's original model, established at Prouille and San Sisto. By no means all nunneries attached to the Dominican order benefited from having resident friars to serve as their chaplains, in the fourteenth century. The pastoral care of the nuns by the order had only been assured after a dispute, in the previous century, lasting four decades, in which the nuns sought to maintain such provision and the friars sought to rid themselves of the burden altogether. The unexpected scale of the popularity of female houses led to a similar move in the Cistercian order. The Dominican dispute began almost immediately after Dominic's death, over the new nunnery at Bologna. Dominic had not foreseen the rapid growth of the second order. To provide resident friar chaplains attached to every nunnery, as at Prouille and San Sisto, would have been an impossible burden for the friars to carry, distracting them from their preaching ministry. The lowest point for the nunneries was reached in 1253, when Pope Innocent IV issued a bull discharging the order of the *cura monialis*, except only at Prouille and San Sisto. The popes recognised the burden the *cura* imposed on the friars, but also the necessity of securing the pastoral care of nuns. Eventually, a compromise was reached, by Pope Clement IV, in his bull of 6th February 1266-7, which placed the care of the nuns back in the hands of the friars preachers, but no longer required residence. The friars were charged with

²⁰¹ A.F.C. Bourdillon, *The Order of Minoresses in England*, pp.52-4.

²⁰² Eileen Power, *Medieval English Nunneries*, pp.12-13.

²⁰³ See A.F.C. Bourdillon, *The Order of Minoresses in England*; Michael Hicks, 'The English Minoresses and their early benefactors 1281-1367' in J. Loades, ed., *Monastic Studies*, i: *The Continuity of Tradition* (Bangor, 1990), pp.158-70.

²⁰⁴ Micheline de Fontette, *Les religieuses à l'âge classique du droit canon*, p.107.

²⁰⁵ Joseph Avril, 'Les fondations, l'organisation et l'évolution des établissements de moniales dans le diocèse d'Angers (du xi^e au xiii^e siècle)' in M. Parisse, *Les Religieuses en France au xiii^e siècle* (Nancy, 1989), pp.27-67.

²⁰⁶ John Paul, 'Dame Elizabeth Shelley, last abbess of St. Mary's Abbey, Winchester', *Hampshire Field Club Proceedings*, 23 (1965), pp.60-71 at p.61.

the duty of visiting female convents assigned to them, with the right of correction and reform of sisters and their superiors, and the right of institution or removal. The friars were also allowed to appoint secular chaplains to act as their auxiliaries. This was far from Dominic's ideal of resident friars in each house but was inevitable in the light of the proliferation of female houses in the order. An identical solution was reached in the Franciscan order. Significantly for Dartford, although residence was no longer required, it was still permitted for this to be the case where the friars were willing and permission was obtained from the order.²⁰⁷ Once this matter was settled, the order showed itself anxious to regulate its work amongst the nuns; provincials manifested a great concern for the spiritual progress and well-being of sisters, and clearly defined the duties of friars and priors towards them.²⁰⁸

The *cura monialis* in the nunneries which exercised an influence on Dartford demonstrated the wide variety of arrangements which were permitted by the bull of 1267. When the master general of the Dominican order visited the nunnery of Beaumont in Valenciennes, in 1646, the sisters informed him that they had been served by two secular chaplains since their foundation in the early fourteenth century. These were called a 'Pater' and 'Noster' and were paid salaries by the nuns, of one hundred florins and thirty florins respectively. They resided in the enclosure of the convent. In 1646, in time of war, the nuns claimed they could no longer afford to pay these chaplains, and asked that the Dominican friary in the town send two friars every day to celebrate mass, hear confessions and carry out other offices.²⁰⁹ At Poissy, Philip the Fair provided for a house of thirteen friars preachers to act as confessors and chaplains, in his foundation charter of July 1304. He envisaged that there would initially be 120 nuns for these friars to care for, rising to two hundred, if certain conditions were met. These friars were intended to shield the nuns from all secular jurisdiction, and their prior was charged with responsibility for the buildings.²¹⁰

Edward III may have been consciously influenced by his grandfather's arrangements at Poissy when he planned a house of resident friar chaplains at Dartford. In the foundation charter of 1356, it was stated that certain friars of Kings Langley were to be resident at Dartford, to celebrate divine offices for the nuns, and that the prior of Langley was to make occasional visits. Edward granted these friars an annual pension of £20 for their maintenance, in 1351, and provided over £192 for the construction of their dwelling house, in 1352.²¹¹ His grant to the monastery, in 1358, of two hundred marks for the maintenance of the religious there, tells us that there were six friars.²¹² No objections were raised within the order to the provision of friars for this purpose. Since Dartford Priory was the only nunnery in the English province, in which there were over fifty houses of friars, the *cura monialis* did not pose a great problem. The burden fell solely on Kings Langley Priory, but the prior was perhaps content because the nunnery administered his endowments. It was, nevertheless, a significant commitment, not least because the friary may have suffered badly as a result of the Black Death and subsequent

²⁰⁷ Micheline de Fontette, *Les religieuses à l'âge classique du droit canon*, pp.115-27; Micheline de Fontette, 'Les Dominicaines en France au xiii^e siècle', pp.102-6.

²⁰⁸ William Hinnebusch, *History of the Dominican Order*, i., p.396.

²⁰⁹ Simon le Boucq, *Histoire ecclésiastique de la ville et comté de Valenciennes*, p.167.

²¹⁰ Alain Erlande-Brandenburg, 'La priorale Saint-Louis de Poissy', pp.94-5; S. Moreau-Rendu, *Le Prieuré Royal de Saint-Louis de Poissy*, p.87. Moreau-Rendu doubts that the number of two hundred nuns was ever achieved.

²¹¹ *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1350-54*, p.104; A.G. Little, 'The Dominican nuns of Dartford', p.182.

²¹² *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1358-61*, p.87.

outbreaks of plague. By 1377 there were only a third of the sixty friars at Kings Langley envisaged in Dartford's charter of 1356, and this optimum number had been revised down to forty.²¹³

The internal arrangements of Dominican nunneries with resident friar chaplains has been analysed by Micheline de Fontette, from what is known of Prouille, San Sisto in Rome, certain other houses, and legislation within the order. Normally, where such arrangements existed, the friars elected a prior as their superior. The prior exercised direct authority over them, took charge of the temporal affairs of the monastery (as at Poissy), and also governed the female house, if only in an advisory capacity. He conducted an annual visitation of the nunnery, presiding at the nuns' conventual chapter; he oversaw the spiritual direction of the nuns; and he verified the strictness of their enclosure; but, he could not make any decisions affecting the nunnery without the prioress's consent. Dominican prioresses did not enjoy the same autonomy as Cistercian abbesses, who attended chapters in their own right, but, within their nunneries, they exercised direct day-to-day authority, overseeing claustral discipline, the observance of the rule and the sisters' work. For example, the Constitutions of 1259 made the appointment of a sub-prioress a matter for the prioress alone. Thus, on 19th June 1481, the master general ruled that sub-prioresses at Dartford might be absolved and deposed without reference to any other authority than the prioress. Dominican nuns were subject to the direct authority of the master general, and secondarily to that of the prior provincial, who had the right of visitation, but a resident prior acted by their consent.²¹⁴

What is known of Dartford Priory demonstrates that there were variations on the model described, between places and over time. In the first decades, the prior of Kings Langley had the authority of a resident prior, in Dartford Priory, according to the model outlined above. Dartford's foundation charter of 1356 stated that the prior of Langley or his vicars were to make visitations of the nunnery. Friar John de Woderove was the prior of Kings Langley, in that year, and was also described as warden of the house of nuns at Dartford.²¹⁵ However, the distance between the two monasteries must have given the prioress far more independence than would have been the case with a resident prior. The six friars who were resident were only responsible for providing pastoral care and celebrating mass. Thus, unlike at Poissy, from the very beginning, the prioress herself took charge of the monastery's temporal affairs, including those governing Kings Langley's endowments; it was Prioress Johanna d'Aspèremont, and not Prior John de Woderove, or any of the resident friar chaplains, who was named in the deed dated in her presence in the chapter house, in 1359.²¹⁶ The names of very few priors of Langley or friars of Dartford are known, but prioresses of Dartford are named in numerous property deeds and other documents. Attorneys, clerks, stewards, supervisors and other officials of Dartford Priory were always appointed by, or on behalf of, the prioress, and not the friars. The headings in the early sixteenth century priory rental and account roll manifest Prioress Cressener's active role in the administration of the convent's temporalities, through her supervisor and stewards.²¹⁷ She herself corresponded with Cromwell

²¹³ In April 1377, there were only twenty friars at Langley, and the king planned to raise this to forty, for the celebration of masses for himself and his progenitors, for which he granted two hundred marks per annum (*Cal. Pat. Rolls 1374-7*, p.447).

²¹⁴ Micheline de Fontette, *Les religieuses à l'âge classique du droit canon*, pp.103-8, 111; C.F.R. Palmer, 'Notes on the Prior of Dartford, in Kent', p.177.

²¹⁵ *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1354-8*, pp. 444, 466.

²¹⁶ *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1358-61*, p.187 (original document reference: PRO C66/256 m.14). See note 118 above.

²¹⁷ BL Arundel Ms. 61 (1508-9); London Society of Antiquaries Ms. 564 (1521-2).

on priory business, in the 1530s. The resident friars may have undertaken practical duties for the prioress; Friar Walter Durant, perhaps resident at Dartford, was employed as an attorney by the prioress and convent in most years between 1370 and 1401.²¹⁸ When William Peerson, a citizen and dyer of London, made a bequest to Dartford Priory, in his will of January 1504-5, he asked the friars for prayers, bequeathing them ten shillings, but indicated that it was with the prioress that he settled business matters; his only reference to the prioress was in connection with a bargain of exchange of property made between them previously.²¹⁹ Similarly, will-makers asking for obits at Dartford Priory involving both the nuns and the friars put the prioress in charge of the arrangements. Thus, for example, William Smyth of Dartford, in 1521, willed that the prioress was to have the keeping of the house he inhabited, if both his wife and daughter died without heirs, for her and the convent to do a yearly obit of dirige with masses to the value of five shillings a year for ever, for his and all his friends' souls. The masses involved the friars, but Smyth willed that the prioress was always to keep the house in repair and that the surplus of the income was to be spent as she decided.²²⁰

The independence to which the prioresses became used might have been a motivation for the nunnery's attempt to throw off the authority of Kings Langley, in the early fifteenth century. On 20th July 1415, Master John Aylmere and Master Richard Alkyrton were commissioned by the King to assist the prior of the English Dominican province in his proposed visitation of the nunnery of Dartford. Certain lapses had, evidently, come to light; the visitors were charged to carry out their work in augmentation of lapsed religion, reformation of due obedience and strengthening of the foundation. They were granted full power to make enquiries and punish any defects, excesses or trespasses in these matters, and to reduce all the sisters to obedience, according to the form of apostolic bulls and letters patent of 1356, when the foundation charter was granted.²²¹ Apparently, within the next three years the sisters openly rebelled against the Hertfordshire convent as the matter was referred to Pope Martin V, who, on 16 July 1418, decided wholly in favour of the Langley friars, to whose obedience the sisters were enforced by ecclesiastical censure.²²² Henry VI confirmed the priory's original charter, in October 1424, thus confirming the provision of friar chaplains by Kings Langley.²²³

Nevertheless, at some point after 1424, Kings Langley ceased to provide the friar chaplains, although Dartford Priory continued to administer its endowments up to the Dissolution. The prior of Langley may voluntarily have given up this burden, or there may have been a further dispute with a particularly dynamic prioress of Dartford of which no record survives. Whatever was the cause, a papal indult of 1st July 1451, addressed to Margaret Beaumont, prioress, and the other nuns and lay sisters of Dartford Priory, gave each of them permission individually to choose a priest, religious or secular, as her confessor, who might give her plenary remission of her sins, at the hour of death.²²⁴ This liberal attitude on the part of the order was later sharpened up, probably in response to practicalities, for subsequent entries in the registers of the master general in Rome indicate that the prioress alone chose the nunnery's confessors, subject to confirmation. An entry dated 19th June 1481,

²¹⁸ See appendix two. These licences are mentioned in the Patent Rolls. It is usually stated that the prioress was a recluse and could not labour about pleas in courts on her own behalf.

²¹⁹ PROB 11/14/211v.

²²⁰ DRb/Pwr7/212v.

²²¹ *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1413-16*, p.359.

²²² C.F.R. Palmer, 'History of the Priory of Dartford in Kent', pp. 256-7.

²²³ *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1422-9*, pp.126-7; *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1422-9*, p.260.

records that Prioress Anne Barn of Dartford was granted permission by the master general to make this choice.²²⁵ On 6th June 1501, the master general granted Prioress Elizabeth Cressener permission to choose a confessor of the order, and to be absolved once a year, 'et si placuerit pluries'.²²⁶ Prioress Cressener exercised this right; in one of the letters to Cromwell cited above, she wrote of 'my ghostly father, an ancient doctor, obtained by my great instance and labour for my soul's health'.²²⁷ It made best sense for one confessor to be chosen by the prioress for all the nuns and for this to be a friar resident in Dartford's friars' house. Indeed, the master general, in 1481, foresaw the possibility that the prioress of Dartford might attempt to secure this provision of a confessor for the nuns by combining the office with that of principal resident friar. When he granted Prioress Anne Barn permission to choose the confessor for her monastery, he stipulated that this confessor could not be forced to a priorship and allowed the prior provincial to appoint a 'president' with the nuns' consent. It may have been the nunnery's appropriation of the responsibility for providing for its own pastoral care that led to a reduction in the number of friars resident at Dartford, for there were only three when the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* was drawn up, in 1535.²²⁸

The direct authority of Kings Langley having been removed by 1451, the head of the friar's house at Dartford was, therefore, autonomous, except in so far as he was subject to the prior provincial. This friar was called president, as the master general's grant just mentioned indicates, and was chosen by the prior provincial in consultation with the prioress. The president of Dartford is referred to in local wills made from the 1450s.²²⁹ Letters of the prioress of the mid 1530s also refer to the president.²³⁰ This title was borrowed from the English Franciscan province in which it was given to the chief friar chaplain at the Minories of Aldgate.²³¹ There may, however, have been a deliberate purpose in not calling the head friar at Dartford prior, as was usual in nunneries on the continent. As reported above, the master general stipulated, in 1481, that the confessor of Dartford Priory was not to be forced to a priorship. It indicates that the house of friars of Dartford did not constitute a distinct priory in its own right, as at Prouille, so that the monastery remained more directly dependent on the prior provincial. Agnes Lynsey's unique reference to the prioress and convent of the two monasteries ('duorum monasterii') of Dartford, in 1464, was cited above.²³² This reflected the local laity's perception of the distinct vocations of the nuns and friars within the monastery, rather than the actual legal status of the two houses within the monastery. It does, however, confirm that the prioress was perceived to have authority over both houses, the president not being a prior.

It was, therefore, in the prioresses' interests that the president should not be forced to a priorship, if they wished to exercise full authority over their priory. However, in the mid 1530s, the situation changed. The master general's ruling of 1481 was made void when Henry VIII took over Rome's authority over the English Church,

²²⁴ *Cal. Pap. Lets.*, x, p.526.

²²⁵ C.F.R. Palmer, 'Notes on the priory of Dartford, in Kent', p.177.

²²⁶ C.F.R. Palmer, 'Notes on the priory of Dartford, in Kent', p.178.

²²⁷ M.A.E. Wood, ed., *Letters of Royal and Illustrious Ladies* (London, 1846), ii, pp.265-6.

²²⁸ *Valor*, i, p.120. It should be noted, however, that there is no record of the number of friars at Dartford between 1358, when there were six, and 1535.

²²⁹ The first such reference occurs in the will of Richard Bolton of Dartford, dated February 1456-7, in which he left 2s to the president and 12d to each friar in the priory, to pray on his anniversary and month's days (DRb/Pwr2/101v). Similarly, Richard Bagshaugh of Dartford, in his will of July 1467, left 6s 8d to the president of Dartford and 3s 4d to each friar (DRb/Pwr2/386v).

²³⁰ PRO SP 1/112 ff.210-12.

²³¹ Catherine Paxton, 'The nunneries of London and its environs in the later middle ages', p.64.

²³² PROB 11/5/46.

and the English Dominican province was made independent of the continental order. The Dominican friar and agent of the king John Hilsey, who administered the oath of obedience to the king as supreme head of the Church in England in Dominican priories, in 1534, including at Dartford on 14th May, was rewarded by being made prior provincial, and, soon after, master general of the Dominican order in England, as well as bishop of Rochester in September 1535. Hilsey also took for himself the priorship of the Blackfriars in London, usurping the previous incumbent, Doctor Robert Stroddel.²³³ Stroddel had been the London prior since before 1526, making the declaration of obedience to the king on behalf of the convent, to Hilsey, on 17th May 1534.²³⁴ Hilsey rid himself of Stroddel by sending him to Dartford, where he in turn caused trouble by usurping the existing president. In two letters to general secretary Cromwell, both dating from mid December 1536, Prioress Elizabeth Cressener complained that 'my ghostly father that was president'²³⁵ had been dispossessed by dishonest means by 'master doctor Struddell'.²³⁶ In her first letter, Dame Elizabeth explained that when Bishop Hilsey took up his quarters at the London Blackfriars:

he perceived that he could not quietly live with Master Stroddel then being there, therefore he sent him to me for a time. And as soon as he came he took upon him to be president, contrary to my mind, but only that he said he had the king's grace's authority, the which I now perceive he never had, till this time, of your good lordship, and he took no manner of pains belonging to the said office.²³⁷

The falsity of Stroddel's claims had only recently come to light. Dartford Priory thus had a confessor thrust upon it, the master general in Rome no longer able to ensure that consultation with the prioress took place, as the 1481 ruling required. Furthermore, contravening the ruling that the president of Dartford should not be a prior, Stroddel claimed this authority; Cromwell's accounts show that the 'prior' of Dartford paid £4 for his confirmation in office, in May 1537.²³⁸ It was, perhaps, Stroddel's application for this confirmation that brought the falsity of his earlier claims to Prioress Cressener's attention. He evidently sought compensation for the indignity he had suffered at the Blackfriars. This threatened the prioress's autonomy.

Having dealt with the source of the friars at Dartford, the connection with Kings Langley and the end of that connection, it is possible to examine the implications for how the monastery was run, and how the friars and nunnery interacted. Before and even during the unhappy state of affairs of the late 1530s, the election of prioresses was a matter for the nuns alone, subject to confirmation by the prior provincial and master general (whether in Rome or England).²³⁹ Elizabeth Cressener almost resigned on one occasion before the 1530s, being

²³³ C.F.R. Palmer, 'History of the Priory of Dartford, in Kent', pp.263, 265; A.B. Emden, *A survey of Dominicans*, p.458. Stroddel's name is also found spelt as Struddel, Stroudel and Strodyll, but Stroddel will be adhered to for the sake of consistency.

²³⁴ *L. & P. Henry VIII.*, vii, no.665. The 1526 reference is noted by Emden. He was ordained priest in the Cambridge Dominican convent on 22nd December 1509, admitted Bachelor of Theology at Cambridge, 1517-18, and incorporated Doctor of Theology in 1520-21 (A.B. Emden, *A survey of Dominicans in England based on the ordination lists in episcopal registers (1268 to 1538)* (Rome, 1967), p.458).

²³⁵ By this time the offices of president and confessor at Dartford had evidently been combined. This usurped 'ancient doctor', was possibly Friar William Cetner, named as president in a Dartford will of 1519 (DRb/Pwr7/162v).

²³⁶ PRO SP 1/112 ff.210, 211. The letters are undated but are surrounded, in this volume of State Papers, by letters dated 17th and 18th December 1536. The first of these letters is printed in M.A.E. Wood, ed., *Letters of Royal and Illustrious Ladies* (London, 1846), ii, pp.265-6, with modernised spelling and punctuation, and quotations are here taken from that edition. Summaries of both letters are also printed in *L. & P. Henry VIII.*, xi, nos 1322, 1323, but are less complete.

²³⁷ M.A.E. Wood, ed., *Letters of Royal and Illustrious Ladies*, ii, pp.265-6.

²³⁸ *L. & P. Hen. VIII.*, xiv (2), no. 782.

²³⁹ The necessity of gaining confirmation from the provincial prior is seen in two incidents. On 4th July 1489, the master general in Rome confirmed what the English provincial prior had done about the absolution of Sister Alice from the office of prioress of Dartford, and the confirmation of Elizabeth Cressener as new prioress. At the end of May 1502, the master general ruled that Master Nicholas Stremer, the prior provincial in England, might absolve and confirm all priors and prioresses, and especially the prioress of Dartford (C.F.R. Palmer, 'Notes on the Prior of Dartford, in Kent', p.178).

aged; in July 1527, the master general in Rome absolved her from office, at her own request. The temporary government of the convent was undertaken by a vicaress, instituted for this purpose, nominated by Elizabeth Cressener, who held the authority that sub-prioresses normally had on the death or removal of a prioress. The office of sub-prioress was perhaps vacant at that time. The vicaress was not allowed to administer the temporalities of the monastery without the counsel of four consultative mothers, presumably senior nuns, who were also nominated by the retiring prioress. The vicaress and four mothers were to govern the monastery until a new prioress was elected by the nuns and confirmed by the prior provincial, their authority expiring after this confirmation was received.²⁴⁰ Elizabeth Cressener did not retire, however, or was soon after re-installed, and she remained in office until her death, soon after the unhappiness over Stroddel arose, in mid December 1536. In an undated letter to Cromwell from John Hilsey, bishop of Rochester and master general of the English Dominican order, Hilsey informed the general secretary that, very late the previous night, the prioress had sent word to him and the provincial prior (then Friar John Hodgkin²⁴¹), by the other sisters, that she was on her deathbed. Prioress Cressener asked them to come to Dartford so that she might resign her office to one of her sisters, by their advice, or, if, as was likely, she was dead, that the nuns might fall to the election of her successor. Hilsey asked Cromwell to send letters to delay their decision until they knew Cromwell's mind, suggesting one of the sisters, Jane Vane, of whom he said:

I thinke ther is not of them all a more metter for it than she is, both of good virtue and Relygyon, although ther are in the house many elder than she is, yet is ther none beter learned, nor more descreter woman, she being herself above thyrtie²⁴²

In a further letter, written on a subsequent day, the bishop informed Cromwell that Prioress Cressener had died that morning, and again commended Jane Vane to him, as a 'good & vertuous woman' exceeding all others in the nunnery.²⁴³ On 17th December 1536, William Petre sent the 'compromys' for the election of the prioress of Dartford, sealed with the conventual seal, with a covering letter, saying that he had also taken an inventory of the monastery.²⁴⁴ The election of a prioress was still a matter for the nuns, but, in the 1530s, they were sensible not to act contrary to Cromwell's wishes, and Jane Vane was duly elected.

Little evidence – even names - survives of the friars who were at Dartford, other than Stroddel, or of their day to day relations with the nuns, so it is hard to assess the spiritual and intellectual influences that they had on each other. A certain amount can be inferred from evidence of the order on the Continent.²⁴⁵ This shows that older and more experienced friars were normally appointed for the pastoral care of nuns.²⁴⁶ Various general and provincial chapters produced legislation relating to the rapport of nuns and friars. There was a concern that friars should not bother nuns on trifling matters. The Roman province, in 1283, issued injunctions to the effect that they should only enter the nuns' enclosure to preach and hear confessions, and that they should not converse with them on unnecessary matters. The province of Lombardy ruled, in 1293 and 1312, that a nun and a friar were not to speak alone. Only those friars or secular chaplains appointed for the purpose by the prior

²⁴⁰ C.F.R. Palmer, 'Notes on the Prior of Dartford, in Kent', p.178.

²⁴¹ C.F.R. Palmer, 'History of the Priory of Dartford, in Kent', p.265.

²⁴² PRO SP 1/112 fo.212 (a summary is printed in *L. & P. Henry VIII.*, xi, no.1324). Surrounding letters are dated mid December 1536.

²⁴³ PRO SP 1/112 fo.213 (a summary is printed in *L. & P. Henry VIII.*, xi, no.1325).

²⁴⁴ PRO SP 1/112 fo.214 (a summary is printed in *L. & P. Henry VIII.*, xi, no.1326).

²⁴⁵ The role of these friars in the lay communities of Dartford and its hinterland will be explored in chapter four.

provincial were to administer the sacraments, console the dying and bury the dead. As mentioned above, communion was commonly distributed to sisters through a grill. Travelling friars were not allowed to stay overnight at nunneries; this was not a problem at Dartford, on the busy route to the continent, where such friars could stay at the friars' house.²⁴⁷ The friars at Dartford did not possess their own church, as did the friar chaplains at Prouille, although their house might have contained a chapel.²⁴⁸ A papal indult of 1484 granted permission to a vowess at Dartford, Alice Hompton, to attend services with the friars, which suggests that they did not join the nuns for offices.²⁴⁹ They probably occupied a part of the conventual church, separated from the nuns by a screen, as at Poissy Priory in France.²⁵⁰ Despite strict segregation, Dominican friars nevertheless had a tradition of effective ministry amongst women. The circumstances of the establishment of Dominic's nunnery at Prouille should not be forgotten. Furthermore, the large number of béguine communities that sought incorporation into the order, in the German province, is a testament to the success of the friars' work amongst those women.²⁵¹ The existence of the vowess at Dartford indicates that the friars there exercised a similar ministry to devout lay women.

The letters exchanged by certain nuns and their confessors, in convents of the German province, in the fourteenth century, demonstrate that close friendships developed between some of them. In the letters of Elsbeth Stigel of Töss and Henry Suso, Christine Ebner and Konrad of Füssen, Margaretha Ebner and Heinrich of Nördlingen, and others, there is evidence of a high degree of rapport in spiritual and intellectual matters; some confessors derived emotional strength from these relationships and benefited from the spiritual wisdom of the nuns, some of whom were mystics. Elsbeth Stigel was highly literate, and involved in the editing of Suso's *Vita*.²⁵² Dominican nuns were a significant element in the group known as the Friends of God. The Friends, led by the Dominican friars Henry Suso and John Tauler, was a group of men and women of all ranks of society and states of life in Bavaria, Switzerland, the Rhineland, and the Low Countries, who communicated by visits and correspondence. In the face of natural disasters such as the Black Death, and political and religious strife between the pope and emperor, and the perceived scandal of the papal residence at Avignon, they hoped to counteract the evils of the age by exemplary lives marked by interior devotion, intense prayer, austerity and the search for an intimate friendship with God.²⁵³ Stoudt feels that these Dominican nuns of the fourteenth century were searching for a spiritual common ground with their priests. Previously, nuns had venerated their spiritual directors, or confessors had put particular nuns on a pedestal, but certain nuns and their confessors now found a new spiritual equality in their relationships.²⁵⁴

²⁴⁶ William Hinnebusch, *History of the Dominican Order*, i., p.396.

²⁴⁷ William Hinnebusch, *History of the Dominican Order*, i., pp.397-8.

²⁴⁸ The friars' church at Prouille was dedicated to Martin, and that of the nuns to St. Mary (Micheline de Fontette, *Les religieuses à l'âge classique du droit canon*, p.108).

²⁴⁹ *Cal. Papal Letters*, xv, no.60.

²⁵⁰ Alain Erlande-Brandenburg, 'Art et politique sous Philippe le Bel: la priorale Saint-Louis de Poissy', p.511.

²⁵¹ William Hinnebusch, *History of the Dominican Order*, i, pp.378, 388, 395; Ernest W. McDonnell, *The Béguines and Béghards in Medieval Culture*, *passim*, especially pp.187-203 and chapter four: 'The friars preachers and béguine spirituality'.

²⁵² D.L. Stoudt, 'The production and preservation of letters by fourteenth-century Dominican nuns'. On Suso's ministry to nuns see, for example, William Hinnebusch, *History of the Dominican Order*, ii: *Intellectual and Cultural Life to 1500*, pp.312-20; Jeffrey F. Hamburger, 'The use of images in the pastoral care of nuns: the case of Heinrich Suso and the Dominicans', *The Art Bulletin*, 71 (1989), pp.20-46.

²⁵³ William Hinnebusch, *The History of the Dominican Order*, ii: *Intellectual and Cultural Life to 1500*, pp.320-21.

²⁵⁴ D.L. Stoudt, 'The production and preservation of letters by fourteenth-century Dominican nuns', pp.318, 325-6.

In the next chapter it will be seen that the nuns of Dartford were highly conscious of their identity as Dominicans and the links this gave them with houses of the continental provinces. There is no direct evidence of mysticism at Dartford, but a friendship based on intellectual and spiritual equality may have existed, in the sixteenth century, between Prioress Elizabeth Cressener and Stroddel's predecessor. In the letters cited, Dame Elizabeth expressed her distress at the removal of her 'ghostly father, an ancient doctor'.²⁵⁵ She informed Cromwell that Stroddel had claimed the credit for carrying out the office of president well, to support his application for being granted this office for life, when this credit did not belong to him but his predecessor:

... he took no manner of pains belonging to the said office. And now of late I understand he hath purchased letters of your good lordship under our most gracious founder's seal to be president here the term of his life, by feigned and untrue suggestion, forasmuch as he hath governed the office so well, as he himself reporteth. Verily my good lord it was not he but it was God only, and by the help of one that is my ghostly father an ancient doctor, obtained by my great instance and labour for my soul's health and quietness in mine old age, the which I fear never to have, the said Master Stroddel abiding with me – I have too far experience by him. And my ghostly father that was president will go from me to my great pain and desolation without your most gracious help and comfort.²⁵⁶

Elizabeth Cressener said that she had been prioress for almost half a century.²⁵⁷ In order to have been prioress for so long, she must have been at least in her eighties, which means that she had already been in her old age for two or three decades. Indeed, she had tried to retire a decade before these letters were written.²⁵⁸ She and her ghostly father may, therefore, have come to know each other very well, over a period of several years, thus accounting for the 'great pain and desolation' she knew she would feel if he left. Her management of priory affairs demonstrates that she was an intelligent and dynamic woman, so she was probably the aged doctor of divinity's intellectual equal. Her letters to Cromwell are couched in conventionally self-abnegating language, and the phrase quoted above is full of emotional appeal, but this hardly conceals a fiery strength of mind. Dame Elizabeth complained to Cromwell about Bishop Hilsey's unfair treatment of her, referring to

... this great unkind deed my lord of Rochester did, for he knew him (Stroddel) better than I, and to put himself in quietness he hath put me far from it.²⁵⁹

In the second letter she reminded Cromwell of her earlier petition, and asked him to intercede with Hilsey to get him to make amends: 'for I thynke of consyence he can do no les'. She also left the gentleman messenger conveying this second letter in no doubt about what she thought:

Furthermore I beseche yo' good lordship to gyve Credence to this gentleman the berer hereof to whom I was so bolde to shew sum parte of my mynde in this matter.²⁶⁰

She was also concerned about the practical effects of Stroddel's presence at Dartford; she implied that she had lost chaplains because of his coming: in the first letter, she wrote, 'I had a president, an aged doctor of dyvinitie with the hole number of brethern', and in the other letter, 'I had a full good number before his (Stroddel's)

²⁵⁵ M.A.E. Wood, ed., *Letters of Royal and Illustrious Ladies*, ii, pp.265-6 (PRO SP 1/112 fo.210).

²⁵⁶ M.A.E. Wood, ed., *Letters of Royal and Illustrious Ladies*, ii, pp.265-6. Probably, the £4 received by Cromwell from the 'prior' of Dartford, noted in his accounts of May 1537, was for these letters (*L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xiv (2), no. 782.).

²⁵⁷ Elizabeth Cressener says in this letter that she has been 'this forty-nine years unworthy governor of this poor house'. She was confirmed as prioress by the master general on 4th July 1489 (C.F.R. Palmer, 'Notes on the Priory of Dartford, in Kent', p.177).

²⁵⁸ See above.

²⁵⁹ M.A.E. Wood, ed., *Letters of Royal and Illustrious Ladies*, ii, pp.265-6.

²⁶⁰ PRO SP 1/112 fo.211.

coming'.²⁶¹ This friar must have been a particularly able person, himself, to have commanded her respect. This may not have been the first such relationship to have existed in Dartford Priory. The nuns' learning and reading will be examined in chapter four. Furthermore, all prioresses had to be intelligent in order to oversee administrative matters, and they had been choosing their own confessors since 1451.²⁶²

Secular chaplains in Dartford Priory

Besides the friars, there were also secular priests carrying out obit and chantry duties in Dartford Priory. Christopher Martyndale was a secular chaplain in the monastery of Dartford, who also received a stipend of 40s yearly for work in Wilmington parish, in 1513.²⁶³ William English of Dartford, making his will in 1519, asked to be buried in the priory and named Sir Christopher Northynden as a priest there, asking him to sing for his soul for a year, unless he left the monastery.²⁶⁴ In 1535, the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* reported the existence of at least four secular chantry priests in the monastery.²⁶⁵ Other secular priests were found in the monastery for different reasons at different times. In 1484, the vowess Alice Hompton was tended by servants and her own chaplain in her oratory near the nunnery.²⁶⁶ The clerk, receiver general and supervisor to the prioress between 1506 and 1525, William Wygga, who had a chamber in the monastery, was a secular priest holding various benefices including the vicarage of Wilmington.²⁶⁷ One of the priory's surveyors, in the 1530s, was a secular priest, Sir Thomas Maykyn. John Sedley, the priory's auditor, in his will of February 1530-31, said that the prioress, Elizabeth Cressener, had 'sent me worde by the Surveyor to have a Chauntrye in the Abbey of Dertforde'. He asked that the surveyor celebrate mass 'when he is at home', and for one of the friars to do so when he was 'owt'.²⁶⁸ Although the chantry chaplains celebrated in the priory church, the nuns' Constitutions ruled out any contact between them and the nuns.

Conclusion

The middle of the fourteenth century was a difficult time to establish a new monastery. Nunneries declined to one third of their pre-plague membership in the half century following the Black Death.²⁶⁹ If the new nunnery at Dartford had been just another Benedictine monastery, and had it not had the king as its founder, it might not have flourished as it did. However, the establishment of a convent at Dartford was the

²⁶¹ PRO SP 1/112 ff.210, 211. It has been found that there were three friars at Dartford in 1535, when the *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, was drawn up, so any reduction from this number was a serious matter.

²⁶² See note 224 above.

²⁶³ Rochester consistory court act book: DRb/Pa5 pt 2 fo.102. See appendix two for his subsequent career.

²⁶⁴ DRb/Pwr7/162v.

²⁶⁵ *Valor*, i, p.120. One chaplain was paid 100s per annum for celebrating 'divina' in the monastery for the souls of John Chertsey and his parents, paid from lands and tenements in the High Street of Dartford. Another was paid the same amount for celebrating services associated with the chantry founded in the monastery for the soul of William Sedley, a forbear of the auditor John Sedley. Two other chaplains celebrated for the soul of Richard II, and were paid £10 between them, from the income of the manors of Massingham and Thorp Hall, in Norfolk. Other obits were mentioned for the souls of John Raynards, John Nedam and William Milet, although separate priests were not referred to.

²⁶⁶ *Cal. Pap. Lets*, xv, no.60.

²⁶⁷ See appendix two.

²⁶⁸ Sir Thomas Maykyn was named as priory surveyor in the will of John Bruer, vicar of Dartford, of which he was an executor, in January 1534-5 (DRb/Pwr9/175v). Bruer does not specify that Maykyn was a knight, so he was probably a priest. If this was true, he may have been the priested priory surveyor mentioned by John Sedley in 1531 (PROB 11/24/149). See appendix two.

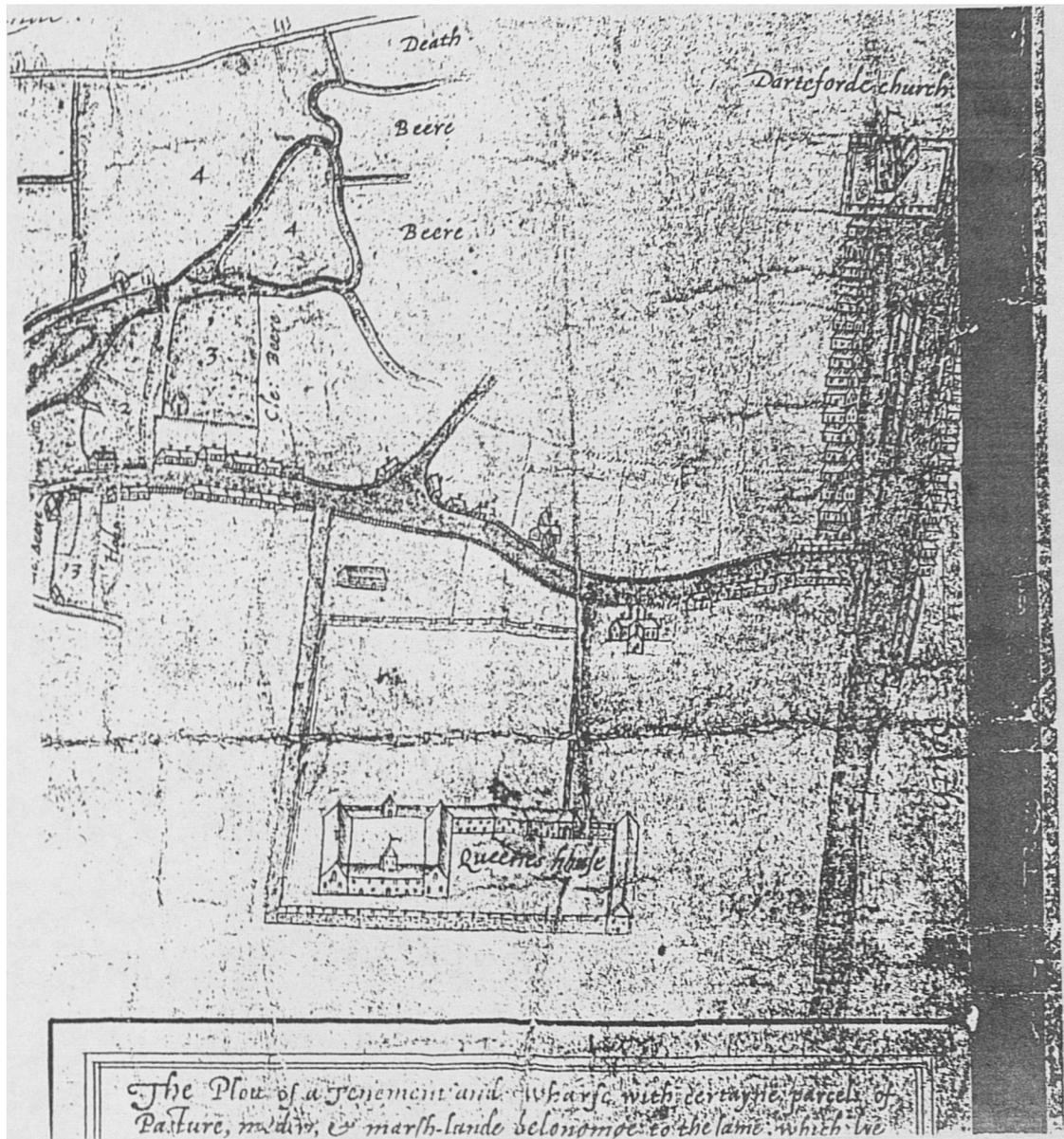
²⁶⁹ Josiah Cox Russell, 'The clerical population of medieval England', p.181; see also David Knowles & R. H. Hadcock, *Medieval religious houses, England and Wales*, 2nd edn (London, 1971), pp.42-3, 47.

culmination of decades of planning and failed attempts specifically to establish a Dominican nunnery in England, something for which there was no precedent. Dartford Priory was the only Dominican nunnery in the English province of the Order of Preachers, before the Reformation. It succeeded in attracting the financial support of wealthy aristocratic and mercantile pious laity across the country, especially in London, in addition to its local support base, competing with over a hundred other English nunneries and other beneficiaries of pious laity, and it maintained a constant flow of recruits right up to the Dissolution.²⁷⁰ In order to appreciate the reasons for choosing to found a Dominican nunnery, and the distinctive character of this nunnery, once established, it is necessary to study Dartford Priory within the context of the continental Dominican second order. The influence of the first four French sisters on the monastic life and religion at Dartford Priory must have outlasted their lifetimes. They brought with them the way of monastic observance they knew in France and trained the ten English nuns in the traditions of the continental Dominican second order. As England's only house of Dominican nuns, Dartford Priory can only have been influenced by continental traditions and developments throughout its existence. Its location, near the London to Dover road, in the south-east of England in close proximity to the Continent, must have been of assistance in this. Friars travelling from the continent to visit the English province passed through Dartford after passing the Blackfriars of Canterbury. The growing autonomy of the prioress in the monastery's affairs (especially after the prior of Kings Langley ceased to provide the friar chaplains), the healthy size of the community at the Dissolution, and the persisting commitment of many of the nuns to the monastic life, after 1539, testify to the effectiveness of the work carried out by the first four French nuns in establishing conventual life. It is the flourishing nature of monastic life in Dartford Priory, and the implications this had for what happened after the Dissolution, to which the next chapter turns.

²⁷⁰ On support in the diocese of Rochester, see chapter five. On the constant flow of recruits see chapter three.

The earliest map of Dartford (1596)

(showing the 'Queenes house' on the site of Dartford Priory)



Rochester Bridge Trust Map 38

Chapter Three

The English Dominican nuns in the sixteenth century: the nature of monastic community and change in the Reformation period

Much attention has been paid, especially in recent years, to the matter of what happened to members of religious communities in the years following the suppression of the monasteries in Henry VIII's reign.¹ Several former religious maintained close contact with each other, some even continuing to live together, and a small number of those still alive and in contact with each other, including some of the nuns formerly of Dartford Priory, took the opportunity provided by Mary's accession to return to the cloistered life, two decades on.² This has been interpreted as providing evidence of persisting community solidarity amongst former religious after the Dissolution.³ In this chapter, the history of the English Dominican nuns from Dartford Priory subsequent to the Dissolution is examined for two purposes. Whilst the evidence of Dartford and many other monasteries is strongly suggestive of the persistence of some form of communal spirit amongst former religious, the characteristics of their surviving communities (if indeed they could still be called communities) must have been different to before. Removed from their enclosure in monasteries, whether that enclosure had been strict or not, the former religious had to relate differently to the world and this must have changed the way they were perceived, including by themselves. The transformations of the community of English Dominican nuns will, therefore, be analysed in order to make a contribution to the knowledge of social and cultural effects of the Reformation. Secondly, it will be suggested that what happened to a monastic community after it was thrown out into the world sometimes casts much light onto the nature of the community's monastic life before that happened. The case of the Dominican nuns demonstrates that dynamic monastic communities, which possessed a strong sense of communal identity and monastic vocation, were more likely to stay together and even seek eventual re-enclosure in Mary's reign. Of the other five monasteries founded in the late 1550s, the Franciscan Observant friars of Greenwich, the religious of Syon Abbey and the Carthusians of Sheen were all known for their dynamic commitment to Catholic and monastic religion, in the early sixteenth century. It will be argued that Dartford Priory should be seen as another of these late medieval monastic foundations which was flourishing at the time that the Reformation arrived.

¹ For example: Claire Cross, 'The religious life of women in sixteenth-century Yorkshire', in W. J. Sheils & Diana Wood, eds, *Studies in Church History*, 27: *Women in the Church* (Oxford, 1990), pp.307-24; Cross, 'Community solidarity amongst Yorkshire religious after the Dissolution', in J. Loades, ed., *Monastic Studies*, i (1990), pp.245-54; Claire Cross & Noreen Vickers, *Monks, friars and nuns in sixteenth-century Yorkshire*, Yorkshire Archaeological Society Record Series, 150 (1995); Christopher de Hamel, *Syon Abbey: The library of the Bridgettine nuns and their peregrinations after the Reformation*, The Roxburghe Club 1991 (Olely, 1993); G. A. Hodgett, 'The unpensioned ex-religious in Tudor England', *JEH*, 13 (1962), pp.195-202. In addition, a database, to be made available over the worldwide web, is being compiled under the direction of Dr. Peter Cunich, at the University of Hong Kong, aimed at producing a *Biographical register of the ex-religious in England and Wales c.1530-1603* (<http://www.hku.hk/history/cunichres.html>).

² Details of the refounded houses may be found in David Knowles, *The Religious Orders in England*, iii: *The Tudor Age* (Cambridge, 1959), pp.421-443. The other five Marian monasteries were Westminster Abbey, Syon Abbey, the Carthusians of Sheen, the Franciscan Observant friars of Greenwich and a new convent of Dominican friars installed in the formerly Augustinian church and priory of St. Bartholomew's in Smithfield, near London.

³ For example: Cross, 'Community Solidarity'.

The two most important sources for finding out about former religious after the Dissolution are wills and pension lists.⁴ Wills are a valuable source for tracing former religious, and the sort of lives they were leading after the Dissolution, and provide evidence of continuing contact between former members of monasteries. A student of Dartford Priory must rely solely on the wills of nuns' kin and neighbours, since no wills have been traced made by former nuns themselves. A major problem with testamentary and pension records, however, is their frequent silence. Paxton, writing about the London nunneries before the Dissolution, comments that religious sometimes received gifts in the lifetime of a testator, and therefore were not always mentioned in wills, even in those of close relatives.⁵ Pensions were usually supposed to be paid at six monthly intervals, but names are often absent from the lists for a few years only to reappear some time later; making conclusions about dates of death unsafe. Furthermore, as Power commented, some religious were never named on these lists at all.⁶ Other sources utilised in this chapter include letters written from the last prioresses of Dartford to Cromwell; and two secondary works which draw on inaccessible primary sources. Godfrey Anstruther, O.P., writing about the fortunes of the Dartford nuns after 1558, used archives in Rome and Brussels; in the early seventeenth century, Henry Clifford based his *Life of Jane Dormer, Duchess of Feria* on the evidence supplied to him orally by the Duchess, whom he served. One of her great-aunts, a member of the Catholic Newdigate family, had been a nun of Dartford in the early sixteenth century.⁷

It is first necessary to define the concept of 'community'. The anthropologist A. P. Cohen's discussion of how communities work provides a useful model. Cohen says that communities are not based on structures, but are primarily experiential phenomena. That is, they are phenomena which give their members a sense of belonging which are based not on forms, such as of bureaucracy, geography or class, but on common 'symbols' which have meaning for them, which they have in common, and which mark them out from others outside the community. In this sense, the symbols, of which Cohen speaks, act as boundaries which define the community - what they are, and what they are not. This provides the members of the community with their sense of identity. The symbols, such as ritual, language or whatever is felt to be held in common, do not themselves generate or express meaning and identity, but allow meaning to be created by those who perceive them. Community, as experienced by its members, exists in their thinking about community.⁸ Thus, individuals within a community may find different meaning and significance in their symbols, and be unaware of this, but what is important is that the unified symbolic boundaries of the community provide a focus for a sense of identity and belonging, and communicate this to the world. They make complex reality appear simple, because they transform the reality of difference into the appearance of similarity.⁹ Particularly relevant to this thesis is Cohen's argument that communities based on symbolic boundaries may come about as a result of attack on structural forms from some sort of social change. As

⁴ Cross and Vickers, however, also have some ecclesiastical and Chancery court cases involving former religious: Cross & Vickers, *Monks, friars and nuns*.

⁵ Catherine Paxton, 'The nunneries of London and its environs in the later middle ages', unpubl. DPhil diss., Oxford, 1993, p.17.

⁶ Eileen Power, *Medieval English Nunneries c.1275 to 1535* (Cambridge, 1922), p.3.

⁷ Godfrey Anstruther, O.P., *A Hundred Homeless Years: English Dominicans 1558-1658* (London, 1958); Henry Clifford, *The Life of Jane Dormer Duchess of Feria*, ed. Joseph Stevenson S.J. (London, 1887), Preface. The Duchess's grandmother, Jane Newdigate, was the sister of a Carthusian martyr, of a nun of Dartford, a prioress of Haliwell, and of an abbess of Syon. Jane Dormer met and married the Duke of Feria in December 1558, the Duke having come to England with Philip II of Spain. For Jane Newdigate's sblings, see pp.19-39.

⁸ A.P. Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community* (Chichester, 1985), editor's introduction; p.15; p.98.

⁹ A.P. Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community*, p.21.

the structural bases of boundary become blurred, communities reassert their boundaries symbolically through ritual, language, or whatever.¹⁰

A monastery contains an easily identifiable form of community, because of the physical enclosure and common rituals, but it shares certain basic characteristics of all communities, as revealed by anthropological research. A monastic community is, in some measure, be defined by the physical walls or boundaries within which the institution is enclosed, but these structural elements are physical manifestations of the symbolic boundaries by which the 'community' of religious actually defines itself to the outside world, and to itself. The 'monastic community' exists in the interactions of the people living and praying together within those confines; it exists in what they do and believe together, in what they feel they have in common and makes them different. Nevertheless, if the community continues to exist, when the institutional structures are removed, and the monks, nuns or friars are cast out into the world, it is changed and expresses itself differently to before in new circumstances in which its boundaries are wholly symbolic.

In order to demonstrate that this was so, in the case of the nuns of Dartford, it is first necessary to attempt an analysis of the nature of the community within the priory before the Dissolution. By 1535, when the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* was drawn up, Dartford Priory had the seventh largest gross and net income of the one hundred and ten English nunneries.¹¹ As one of the larger nunneries, Dartford was not dissolved until 1539.¹² The first pension list, of Michaelmas 1539, indicates that there were at least twenty-six nuns in 1539, including six lay sisters, almost double the number at foundation.¹³ Thus, in the late 1530s, Dartford Priory was one of eleven English nunneries containing twenty or more nuns (Syon Abbey and Shaftesbury both had over fifty nuns).¹⁴ Like a number of other larger nunneries, Dartford was also still attracting novices, in the late 1530s, as will be demonstrated below. It was, therefore, one of the larger and (theoretically) more wealthy nunneries of England in the late 1530s.

The nuns of Dartford Priory, before the Dissolution, constituted a community that was sufficiently meaningful to its members for a large proportion of them to cling to their identity as Dominican nuns after the suppression of their convent. Indeed, it was the uniqueness of this identity, in England, which made it one of the most obvious symbolic boundaries within which the Dartford nuns defined themselves as a community. Their consciousness of this is manifested in a letter written to Cromwell by the prioress, Elizabeth Cressener, in the mid 1530s. This self-consciousness can not have been new, although a perceived threat brought it into focus. The context for this undated letter is the dissolution of the lesser houses in 1536; by the terms of the Act of Suppression of that year, those religious over the age of twenty-

¹⁰ A.P. Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community*, p.44.

¹¹ Eileen Power calculates Dartford's position by gross income (*Medieval English Nunneries*, p.2). Kathleen Cooke lists the wealthiest pre-Reformation nunneries by net income in 1535 (Kathleen Cooke, 'The English nuns and the Dissolution', in John Blair and Brian Golding, eds, *The Cloister and the World: Essays in Honour of Barbara Harvey* (Oxford, 1996), pp.287-301 at p.289). Note the comment at chapter two note 90 qualifying this indication of Dartford Priory's wealth.

¹² *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xiv (1), no. 661.

¹³ See chapter two, note 87.

¹⁴ Eileen Power, *Medieval English Nunneries*, p.3. Kathleen Cooke says that Shaftesbury had 57 nuns ('The English nuns and the Dissolution', p.289).

four not wishing to forsake their vocation were allowed to transfer to larger observant houses not being dissolved.¹⁵ Elizabeth Cressener beseeched Cromwell:

... especially that we may not receive into our monastery none of any other religion, for we be of that profession and habit that none other be of within this realm; and therefore it should be very troublous to us to have any other than we bring up after our own order and fashion as knoweth our merciful Lord ...¹⁶

Every nun within Dartford Priory, from the most junior postulant to the prioress, had been trained, professed, and had served, in no monastery other than Dartford Priory. Indeed, considering that Elizabeth Cressener had been prioress since 1489, and that most of the nuns pensioned in 1539 were still alive in 1556, it is unlikely that there were many nuns at Dartford, in the 1530s, who had not been trained under Prioress Cressener herself. They, therefore, had much in common with each other which made them different from other nuns.

Other matters arising from the fact that Dartford Priory was a Dominican nunnery must have contributed to the nuns' sense of communal identity. As a convent in a mendicant order, Dartford was exempt from episcopal jurisdiction, and visitations were conducted by the prior provincial of the order in England.¹⁷ Also, as was true of the English Franciscan nuns, the Minoresses, only friars of the order acted as the nuns' chaplains and confessors.¹⁸ This was designed to maintain the seclusion of the nuns and, no doubt, to strengthen the special bonds of practical and spiritual mutual dependence that Dominic intended to exist between nuns and friars of his order. The nuns were to aid the mission of the friars through their lives of contemplative prayer.¹⁹ In chapter two above it was demonstrated that the friars of Kings Langley were financially dependent on Dartford Priory, and that Prioress Cressener developed a close friendship with her confessor, the president friar, possibly based on a strong intellectual and spiritual rapport. It was also suggested, that, as England's only Dominican nunnery, established by nuns brought from France, Dartford Priory's only possible spiritual and intellectual influences, besides the learned Friars Preachers who acted as their chaplains, were the Dominican nunneries on the continent, which were characterised by strict enclosure, observance, learning and, especially in the German province in the fourteenth century, a strong mystical spirituality. Poissy Priory, in France, the most likely source of the four nuns who arrived at Dartford in 1356, was a large royal foundation associated with deep learning and piety. Extracts from translations of spiritual writings by two continental Dominican authors are contained within one of the surviving fifteenth-century devotional manuscripts of Dartford Priory, which manuscripts evidence literate piety in the nunnery. Of these translated extracts, one is from the *Horologium Sapientiae* of Henry Suso, a

¹⁵ David Knowles, *The Religious Orders in England*, iii, p.304. It turns out that the threat to Dartford was not great; the general determination of English nuns to continue in the monastic life, in the 1530s, is indicated by the fact that only one hundred out of eight or nine hundred nuns in houses with an annual income of less than £200 applied for the available dispensation from their vows, in 1536-7. To avoid the problem of finding space for such a large number of nuns transferring to the wealthier houses, forty-four nunneries which qualified for early dissolution were granted exemptions (Kathleen Cooke, 'The English nuns and the Dissolution', pp.294-5).

¹⁶ Printed with modernised spelling and punctuation in M.A.E. Wood, ed., *Letters of Royal and Illustrious Ladies* (London, 1846), 3 vols, ii, pp.154-5.

¹⁷ See chapter two.

¹⁸ See A. F. C. Bourdillon, *The Order of Minoresses in England* (Manchester, 1926); Michael Hicks, 'The English Minoresses and their early benefactors 1281-1367', in J. Loades, ed., *Monastic Studies*, i: *The Continuity of Tradition* (Bangor, 1990), pp.158-70. For example, Franciscan friars acted as the nuns' chaplains at the Minories of Aldgate (Catherine Paxton, 'The nunneries of London', p.64).

¹⁹ Micheline de Fontette, 'Les dominicaines en France au XIIIe siècle', in M. Parris, ed., *Les religieuses en France au XIIIe siècle* (Nancy, 1989), pp.97-106.

German who was spiritual director to Dominican nuns; the other is from the French *Somme Le Roy*.²⁰ The nuns' sense of possessing a special communal identity must also have been influenced by knowledge of their royal foundation and endowment, to pray for their founders' souls.

In its spirituality and religious life, the Dominican nuns of Dartford Priory had more in common with Syon Abbey and the Carthusians than with older religious houses. Only the Dominican and Briggitine nuns and Carthusian monks chose to go into exile, in 1559, in order to continue the monastic life. The nuns of Syon and Dartford shared a boat and, once in Flanders, travelled together as far as Termonde.²¹ There were a number of kinship connections between religious of these orders, in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, which suggests that the families concerned associated these houses with the same kind of religion and spirituality. For example, Dame Johanna Stokton, a nun of Dartford in the 1470s, 80s and 90s, born of parents belonging to London and Dartford families, had a sister, Elizabeth, who was a nun of Syon.²² Edward IV's daughter Bridget was a nun at Dartford Priory, from the 1490s, and her cousin, Anne de la Pole, was prioress of Syon Abbey.²³ Armstrong feels that their grandmother may have been responsible for having Bridget professed at Dartford, because of its reputation for strict observance of the Dominican rule and as a centre of mystical spirituality, like Syon but less well known.²⁴ There is no evidence for the existence of mysticism in Dartford Priory, but Armstrong is probably correct to say that Dartford Priory had a reputation for its spirituality, and that the sort of pious laity who were interested in Syon were similar to those who supported Dartford. Another Dartford nun in the early sixteenth century was sister of an abbess of Syon and a Carthusian martyr, being a member of the staunchly Catholic Newdigate family of Hertfordshire. Henry Clifford, in his *The Life of Jane Dormer Duchess of Feria*, written in the early seventeenth century, states that the Duchess's grandmother, Jane Newdigate, was the sister of a nun of Dartford, a Carthusian martyr (Sebastian Newdigate), an abbess of Syon, and also a prioress of Haliwell.²⁵ There were also two brothers who were knights of Malta and another sister whose daughter, Lady Stonor, was a prominent recusant, in Elizabeth's reign.²⁶ That a child of this extraordinary family was sent to Dartford Priory says much for its reputation. Sister Newdigate was not the only sixteenth-century nun of Dartford who had a brother who was a Carthusian martyr. Anstruther states that William Exmewe of the London Charterhouse, hanged in 1535, was Sister Elizabeth Exmewe's brother.²⁷ Sebastian Newdigate, William Exmewe and another Carthusian, Humphrey Middlemore, all monks of the London charterhouse, were imprisoned and executed together for their refusal to take the oath of the royal supremacy, in June 1535. William Exmewe was a scholar of Greek and Latin, under whose direction another Carthusian, Maurice Chauncy, later prior of Sheen, wrote out in English two mystical works bound in one

²⁰ Oxford Bodleian Library, Douce Ms. 322. For details of the other priory manuscripts, see N. Ker, *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain* (2nd edn, London, 1964), and supplement: Andrew G. Watson, *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain: Supplement to the Second Edition* (London, 1987). See chapter four.

²¹ Godfrey Anstruther, *A Hundred Homeless Years*, p.6.

²² See appendix one.

²³ J.G. Nichols & J. Bruce, eds, *Wills from Doctors Commons* Camden Society, no. 83 (1863), p.2 (the will of their grandmother Cicely Duchess of York, dated 1st April 1495).

²⁴ C.A.J. Armstrong, 'The piety of Cicely, Duchess of York', in C.A.J. Armstrong, *England, France and Burgandy in the fifteenth century* (London, 1983), p.151.

²⁵ Henry Clifford, *The Life of Jane Dormer, Duchess of Feria*, pp.19-39.

²⁶ David Knowles, *The Religious Orders in England*, iii: *The Tudor Age*, p.227.

²⁷ Godfrey Anstruther, *A Hundred Homeless Years*, p.8. However, Sister Elizabeth's father, Sir Thomas Exmewe, a mayor of London, made no mention of a Carthusian son, in his will of 1529 (Lewis Pryce, 'Sir Thomas Exmewe', *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, 6th ser. vol. 19 (1919), pp.233-75 at pp. 242, 269-70).

volume – *The Cloud of Unknowing* and *The Epistle of Private Counsel*.²⁸ Elizabeth Exmewe was one of the most resilient nuns of Dartford, the strength of whose religious vocation will be indicated later in this chapter.

Depth of spirituality and religious commitment are indeed characteristics discernible in the pre-Reformation convent at Dartford. Some at least of the women who entered the nunnery did so with a strong sense of vocation. As late as 9th September 1538, Prioress Jane Vane wrote to Cromwell in an attempt to persuade him not to eject a postulant, Bridget Browning, who she said was ‘as yet not professed in the sight of the world but only in the heart to God’ and was ‘fixed’ in her determination to be professed and was willing to stand before Cromwell and declare ‘her heart and mind’ to him to that effect.²⁹ The persistence of commitment to the monastic life on the part of many of the nuns, after the Dissolution, suggests that Bridget’s sense of religious vocation was not unique amongst the sisters; indeed, she probably learnt it from them when she was being educated in the monastery as a girl, sent there by her mother, when Elizabeth Cressener was prioress, as Prioress Vane’s letter says she had been. Prioress Vane’s letter, further, suggests that profession in Dartford Priory was no mere legal formality, but an outward sign of an inward spiritual decision made by the individual nun in the context of her personal relationship with God. A particularly striking example of commitment to the monastic life, on the part of a nun of Dartford, in the early sixteenth century, is provided by Elizabeth Woodford. The manuscript account of the history of a nunnery in Louvain says that Elizabeth was professed at Dartford Priory on 8th December 1519, and, after the Dissolution, in 1540, made her way independently to St Ursula’s convent in Louvain. There she stayed, and died on 25th October, 1572, having been a nun fifty-two years.³⁰ She must have refused to submit, when the commissioners came, in 1539, for her name is not recorded on any pension list.

It is also necessary to consider how the community of Dartford’s nuns was perceived from without. This touches on matters that will be dealt with in more detail in chapter five, but some brief comments are necessary here. Just sixteen per cent of Dartford will-makers made bequests to the monastery in their town between 1438 (the earliest date of wills in the first Rochester probate register) and 1537, a few of these mentioning the friars and not the prioress and sisters.³¹ This indicates that the nuns were sufficiently shut away not to impinge on the religious practice of the majority of inhabitants, but that the same seclusion evoked respect for their spiritual ministry amongst a select group of pious parishioners. There was some local contact between nuns and laity; the priory employed servants, and some of the nuns at the time of the Dissolution were members of local minor gentry families. On the whole, however, the nuns were separated by their physical enclosure, their learning, their religion as contemplatives, and the socially dominant role of the prioress in the parish. The prioress of Dartford was an important local landowner and employer, and, from some point after 1500, was joint master, with the vicar and churchwardens, of the Lowfield Street almshouses founded by William Milet. ³² Laity were allowed access to the conventual church, as at the great Dominican nunnery of Poissy Priory, not least because of the

²⁸ E. Margaret Thompson, *The Carthusian Order in England* (London, 1930), pp.376-7; 404-9.

²⁹ M.A.E. Wood, ed., *Letters of Royal and Illustrious Ladies*, iii, pp.85-7. Bridget does not appear on the 1539 pension list.

³⁰ Cole’s extracts from a manuscript history of the nunnery of St. Monica in Louvain, founded in 1609 (BL Add. Ms. 5813, p.51).

³¹ This figure is roughly comparable with those found for nunneries elsewhere; eighteen per cent of clerical wills and sixteen per cent of lay wills in late medieval Norwich included bequests to Carrow Priory (N. P. Tanner, *The Church in Late Medieval Norwich* (Toronto, 1984), pp.122-3); Paxton found that almost nine per cent of her sample of medieval London wills included bequests to one or more of the London nunneries (Catherine Paxton, ‘The nunneries of London’, pp.97-8). This is a very rough comparison, however, because Dartford was a small vill and the number of wills is small. For more detail, see chapter five.

presence of the friars there, but they would not have occupied the same parts of the building as the nuns.³³ The insight into the life of the priory they thus gained must have intensified their awareness of the special identity and separateness of these professed women. As in all Dominican nunneries, the sisters sang the offices separated from the friars and laity by a screen, entering and leaving the choir through their own door leading to buildings that only they, their servants and workmen entered. The aristocratic, even royal, background of a small number of the nuns, including Bridget, a daughter of Edward IV, further increased their separateness from men and women in the world around the monastery. Local laity, some of whom worked for the priory, must also have been aware that the religious and educational reputation of the nunnery attracted young noble women and girls, and pious widows, to live in the precincts of the convent.³⁴

In the late 1530s, therefore, the nunnery of Dartford Priory was a vibrant monastic community perceived from within and without as constituting a well-defined discrete community. The monastery was suppressed some time after 1st April 1539, ironically by a former prior of Kings Langley, the Bishop of Dover, Richard Ingworth, who undertook the suppression of numerous Dominican houses; on that day he wrote to Cromwell asking to have the 'receiving' of Dartford Priory.³⁵ No record survives of the precise day this occurred or how it was carried out. Thrown out into the world, if the nuns were to survive as a community they had to adapt to new conditions and learn to relate to the world on a different basis to before. Former religious of several monasteries in the country maintained contact with each other after the Dissolution. Motives for continuing to live together perhaps included the precarious financial position in which many former nuns found themselves, having smaller pensions than monks; lack of family support; and psychological inability to cope alone with the changes in circumstance.³⁶ Furthermore, some nuns were aristocratic widows who had sunk their fortunes in their nunneries, on entry, and at the Dissolution they lost everything.³⁷ According to Claire Cross, however, the wills of former inhabitants of some of the many Yorkshire houses 'supply incontrovertible evidence in the north of England of nostalgia for the religious life, and among some bolder souls a desire for its re-institution'.³⁸ Dr. Cross gives numerous Yorkshire examples, drawn principally from testamentary evidence, including of Carthusian monks and Cistercian nuns who demonstrated what she calls a 'shared sense of community'. They variously lived together in private houses, granted legacies to each other, witnessed and executed each other's wills, and asked each other for prayers or masses.³⁹ Joan Greatrex and Diana Coldicott have found that the former abbesses and small numbers of nuns from the large Benedictine houses of St. Mary's, Winchester, and Wherwell, in the diocese of Winchester, which houses were as large or larger than Dartford Priory, continued to live together until they died. Coldicott adds that former abbess Elizabeth Shelley and some of her former sisters were living in the old abbess's lodgings of the dissolved St. Mary's Abbey in

³² PROB 11/12/138. For more detail on the strictness of enclosure of Dartford Priory, and the interaction of the monastery with the lay parish community see chapter five below.

³³ Alain Erlande-Brandenburg, 'La priorale Saint-Louis de Poissy', *Bulletin Monumental* 129 (1971), pp.85-112, at p.97.

³⁴ C.F.R. Palmer, 'Notes on the Priory of Dartford, in Kent', *Arch. Journ.*, 39 (1882), pp.177-9.

³⁵ *L.&P. Hen. VIII*, xiv (1), 661. Reddan describes Ingworth's policy regarding Cromwell as being one of complete subservience. In 1534, when Prior of Langley, he assisted John Hilsey in securing acknowledgement of the king's supremacy from Dominican houses, and was rewarded with the suffragan see of Dover in 1537 (Minnie Reddan, 'Kings Langley Priory', VCH *Hertfordshire*, iv, p.449).

³⁶ Kathleen Cooke, 'The English nuns and the Dissolution', pp.300-301.

³⁷ M.A.E. Wood, ed., *Letters of Royal and Illustrious Ladies*, iii, p.85.

³⁸ Claire Cross, 'Community solidarity', p.245.

³⁹ Claire Cross, 'Community solidarity', pp.246-52. Fuller details of the wills of the religious cited by Cross in this article are available in Claire Cross & Noreen Vickers, *Monks, Friars and nuns* (see Introduction, p.9, on the Kirklees nuns).

Winchester. Greatrex feels that these Benedictine nuns were continuing some form of community life.⁴⁰ Elizabeth Shelley, in her will of 1547, expressed the hope that St. Mary's Abbey would one day be refounded.⁴¹ Others of these women named each other in their wills.⁴² The last abbess of the Minoreesses of Denney Abbey, Elizabeth Throckmorton, similarly continued to live with a few of her sisters, at her house in Coughton, in Warwickshire, until her death in 1547. Two were buried with her, suggesting their belief in the continuity of community beyond death.⁴³ The community of Syon Abbey also stayed together, in groups, in hope of restoration to Syon. The abbess and nine of her community rented a farmhouse together in Buckinghamshire, and another group led by Catherine Palmer went into exile in Flanders, until the restoration.⁴⁴

Similarly, for whatever reasons, and it has been suggested, above, that there was genuine religious fervour amongst nuns at Dartford, before the Dissolution, a number of the English Dominican nuns never parted company after 1539. In his will of 1545, William Provis of Sutton at Hone, a parish two and a half miles from Dartford, up the River Darent, bequeathed to his daughter Anne Howlett his house 'new repaired in which dwellith Mystres Cristner Annes Roper with other gentilwomen'.⁴⁵ Agnes Roper, mentioned in chapter two, and Elizabeth Cressener were both nuns of Dartford, in 1539; indeed, Elizabeth Cressener, the second of that name, was the sub-prioress.⁴⁶ She, Agnes Roper and the prioress, Jane Vane, were awarded the three largest pensions, amongst Dartford nuns, in 1539 and 1556.⁴⁷ Jane Vane, not mentioned by Provis, did not join the refounded monastery in 1557, and had probably gone to live with her family, a Kentish gentry family in the Tonbridge area, in 1539.⁴⁸ The 'other gentlewomen', to whom Provis referred, must have been other of the former nuns, as later local wills confirm. It is not clear from Provis's will how long they had been living in the house he provided, nor on what basis they occupied it. He may have made one of his properties available to them, seeing their predicament, soon after the Dissolution, if he was one of those local laity who had valued their presence in Dartford.

It is not known how many 'gentlewomen' there were living with Elizabeth Cressener, nor whether all of those who are named in wills were with her all the time that she was there. Anne Reddeman of Sutton at Hone, in June 1551, made Elizabeth Cressener her executrice, but did not mention any

⁴⁰ Diana Coldicott, *Hampshire Nunneries* (Chichester, 1989), p.143; Joan Greatrex, 'On ministering to "certayne devoute and religiouse women": Bishop Fox and the Benedictine nuns of Winchester diocese on the eve of the Dissolution', *Studies in Church History*, 27: *Women in the Church* (1990), pp.223-35 at p.235 and n. 61.

⁴¹ Diana Coldicott, *Hampshire Nunneries*, p.144.

⁴² John Paul, 'Dame Elizabeth Shelley, last abbess of St. Mary's Abbey, Winchester', *Hampshire Field Club Proceedings*, 23 (1965), pp.60-71 at p.69.

⁴³ David Knowles & R. H. Hadcock, *Medieval religious houses, England and Wales*, 2nd edn (London, 1971), p.286 (who cite VCH, *Cambridge*, ii, p.302).

⁴⁴ VCH *Middlesex*, i, p.189; Ann M. Hutchinson, 'Three recusant sisters', in Anne Clark Bartlett et al., eds, *Vox Mystica: Essays for Valerie M. Lagorio* (Cambridge, 1995), pp.147-58 at pp.147-8.

⁴⁵ DRb/Pwr10/124.

⁴⁶ The first mention of Elizabeth Cressener junior after the Dissolution is found in the will of her mother; in this document dated December 1540, Eleanor Cressener, widow of Norfolk, with property in Elsyng and Kymmerley, bequeathed to her daughter Dame Elisabeth Cressener (not otherwise identified) a black satin gown, a flat piece of silver, a 'flatt hope of gold with the fyve wondes in yt' and £10 in money (Norwich Record Office NCC 193, 194 Hyll). Eleanor did not state where her daughter was at that time. That she received the £10 is demonstrated by a receipt in the Essex Record Office (Essex Record Office D/DTu no.179).

⁴⁷ See appendix one for details of these nuns. The 1539 pension list is printed in *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xiv (1), no. 650; the Dartford list from 'Cardinal Pole's pension book' of 1556 is printed in W. E. Flaherty, 'A help toward a Kentish monasticon', *AC*, ii (1859), pp.49-64 at p.56.

⁴⁸ Palmer feels she was probably a daughter of Humfrey Fane of Hildon near Tonbridge, and sister of Ralph Fane of Hadlow, who subsequently acquired many former Dartford Priory lands (C.F.R. Palmer, 'History of the Priory of Dartford', *Archaeological Journal*, 36 (1879), pp.241-71 at p.266).

companions.⁴⁹ William Sedley, esquire, of Southfleet, a village not far from Dartford and Sutton at Hone, in his will dated November 1553, made bequests to four or five of the former nuns, including his sister Dorothy, with the largest amount (40s) going to Elizabeth Cressener.⁵⁰ He gave Katharine Effelyn, Elizabeth Cressener, and Mary Bentham the title 'suster'. Sisters Effelyn and Bentham, and one 'Elenor', possibly the former lay sister of Dartford, Eleanor Wood, were to pray for his soul. The grouping in this will, and use of the title 'suster', redundant in 1551, suggests that these women were amongst those gentlewomen living with Elizabeth Cressener in Sutton at Hone. Dorothy Sedley, whom William did not call 'suster', and who was his executrix, had probably returned to the family home in 1539. She evidently remained a spinster, active within the family, and, although still alive in 1556, was not one of those who chose to join the refounded convent after 1557. Nevertheless, Southfleet is within five miles of Sutton at Hone and it is most likely that contact continued between Dorothy and her fellow former nuns there. Her brother probably maintained such contact himself, having formerly been an auditor of Dartford Priory, like his father before him.⁵¹ Katherine Effelyn and Elizabeth Cressener were also both mentioned in the will of Robert 'Stroude', vicar of Sutton at Hone, dated in December 1552; Effelyn was bequeathed 20s for her pains, presumably involving nursing, taken with his god-daughter Elizabeth Nathe.⁵²

Such examples of former religious continuing to live together, after the Dissolution, might demonstrate the survival of their religious communities, but they survived in new forms. It is necessary to attempt to define how community was reconstituted at the time of the Reformation, and how it was expressed and perceived. After the 1st April 1539, the nuns of Dartford Priory found themselves brought out from within their monastic walls and compelled to live openly in the world, within a parish community, their seclusion no longer made possible by the employment of lay officials. They perhaps retained a certain mystique, and most local laity, whether sympathetic or not, must still have been somewhat in awe of them. Diana Coldicott similarly suggests that the former prioresses and abbesses of Hampshire nunneries retained the dignity of their office, in the eyes of their contemporaries, after the Dissolution, even if they had lost the office itself.⁵³ The nuns, themselves, hoping for eventual re-enclosure, might have encouraged this sense, by the way in which they conducted themselves, within and without their house. Nevertheless, the necessities of everyday life must have brought them into regular contact with their new neighbours, through their employment of domestic servants, buying of supplies, attending the parish church, receiving the ministrations of the parochial clergy, themselves visiting the sick (Katherine Effelyn nursed Elizabeth Nathe), and their new dependency on charity, because of their inadequate pensions. It is even doubtful that these women were perceived as constituting a separate community at all, and it might be more helpful to think of them in terms of a household, if an unusual one.

As time passed, the way in which local inhabitants related to these women subtly changed their perception of them. This is suggested by their mode of reference to these women, in wills. Most pre-Reformation wills making bequests to the nuns of Dartford Priory did not refer to particular nuns by name,

⁴⁹ PROB 11/35/224v.

⁵⁰ PROB 11/37/269.

⁵¹ William is named as such in the 1556 pension list. For his father, John Sedley's, tenure of this office, see, for example, his signature at the head of the Priory account roll of 1521-2 (London, Society of Antiquaries MS 564, m.1). John Sedley had been an auditor to the king, and a warden of the Stationers' Company (his will dated 23rd February 1530/31 - PROB 11/24/149). In addition, William and Dorothy's brother, Martin, had been priory overseer in 1535 (*Valor*, i, p.120).

⁵² PROB 11/36/119v.

but collectively to 'the prioress and convent', suggesting that the convent was perceived as a discrete monastic community. The few exceptions to this may usually be explained by kinship or family friendship connection between the testator and a particular nun named. Even William Milet, who had his own chapel in the conventual church, mentioned only the prioress, Elizabeth Cressener (senior), by name, in his will of September 1500. Between 1539 and 1553, probably because of the hostile religious climate, local will-makers making bequests to these women did not refer to them as nuns, or former nuns, but referred to them individually by name. Provis used the collective term 'gentlewomen' but also named Anne Roper and Elizabeth Cressener. This practice was, both, indicative of, and contributory to, a new attitude to these women, by which they were now seen as individual persons within the parish community. As a former priory auditor, and brother of Sister Dorothy Sedley of Dartford, William Sedley probably became personally acquainted with these women at Sutton at Hone, after 1539. As priory auditor his dealing was with the prioress alone, and he can never have had the opportunity to meet the other nuns, when they were strictly enclosed. In his will of 1553, Sedley used the title 'suster', showing that he had never ceased to think of them as nuns, and he thus valued their prayers for his soul. Now, however, he related to them personally and called them by name.

Sir Robert Bacon, the vicar of Wilmington, a parish between Sutton at Hone and Dartford, bequeathed 10s 'to the nonis of Sutton', in his will of May 1555, asking for them to pray for his soul and all his friends.⁵⁴ Like Sedley, Bacon thought of these women as nuns, in spirit if not legally, a full two years before they were re-enclosed, and he assumed that it would be known to whom he was referring. Lacking any kinship link with the women, however, and as a traditionalist Catholic priest who had served in local parishes and chantries since the early 1520s, Bacon's approach was more formal.⁵⁵ As a supporter of these Catholic women, living not far from Sutton, Bacon must, nevertheless, have had contact with them over the years, and the formal wording of his bequest may be attributed to his pleasure at being once more able to call them nuns.

It was more natural to relate to these women as individuals, after 1539, not only because they were no longer enclosed within physical boundaries, but because, in common with other groups of former religious who lived together, they were a smaller, possibly more intimate, group than before. Like the Syon nuns, the original monastic community of Dartford Priory was now a dispersed community; it did not only consist of the gentlewomen living in the house in Sutton at Hone. It has been said that Dorothy Sedley, and probably Jane Vane and others, returned to live with their families. Also, a list of former religious who were resident and receiving pensions in the diocese of Norwich, in 1555, shows that those then living in Walsingham included Elizabeth Exmewe and Elizabeth Seygood, both of them formally nuns at Dartford. They were reported to be living continently, and to be Catholic women of honest conversation.⁵⁶ Their

⁵³ Diana Coldicott, *Hampshire Nunneries*, p. 143.

⁵⁴ CKS DRb/Pwr12/7.

⁵⁵ Robert Bacon was a priest in Milton-next-Gravesend, in c.1523, and curate of Gravesend in the late 1520s; he was named as chaplain of the William Wangford chantry in Northfleet parish church, between Gravesend and Dartford, in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, in 1535, receiving the pension of 13s 4d (*Valor Ecclesiasticus*, ed. J. Caley and J. Hunter, 6 vols (London, 1810-33), i, p.102); he was Stanpit chantry priest in Dartford parish church from at least 1541 until the dissolution of this chantry, in 1548; he served twice as vicar of Wilmington, in the early 1540s and early to mid 1550s, and was mentioned by clerical and lay will-makers of Dartford and Wilmington in the 1540s and 1550s. See appendix two, and chapter seven for references and more details about Bacon and his connections with other traditionalist clergy.

⁵⁶ Geoffrey Baskerville, 'Married clergy and the pensioned religious in Norwich diocese, 1555', *EHR*, 48 (1933), pp.43-64, 199-228 at p.211.

reasons for living in Walsingham are not known, but, as one of the most popular centres of late medieval religious devotion and pilgrimage, it was a most appropriate choice for them. They were evidently still in contact with their former sisters in Sutton at Hone, as both women were amongst those nuns of the refounded community who went into exile with Prioress Cressener, in 1559. There may have been other of the former Dominicanesses living together in pairs or small groups, of whom evidence is lacking; the 1557 refoundation list includes names not mentioned in Sutton at Hone area wills.

However they were perceived from without, these women may have been kept together for a large part by their own persisting sense of constituting a community of formerly monastic Catholic religious women. Such a sense might be expressed by a dispersed group of women, living openly in separate parish communities, through practice of ritual. Anthropologists have found that dispersed communities reinforce their sense of belonging together as a community by repetition of rituals.⁵⁷ For religious, the ritual of the monastic offices and devotions were at the very heart of their identity. The desire of certain of the Dominican nuns to be re-enclosed, in 1557, suggests that these women had never got out of the way of leading a religious life. Claire Cross similarly concludes, from her own studies:

... it is perhaps not straining credulity too far to suggest that, despite the silence of the sources, at least some of these Yorkshire households after the Dissolution may also have been maintaining some sort of corporate spiritual life.⁵⁸

It is inconceivable that the former nuns of Dartford who continued to live together did not continue to join in regular corporate prayer, within the walls of their house, after 1539. The likelihood is all the greater for the evidence of the vigour of religion and monastic devotion in the community of Dartford Priory before 1539 and after 1557. The women possibly had devotional and service books with them, rescued from their dissolved priory.

Sharing in such rituals must also have heightened their awareness of the contrast between their current circumstances and the past. This discontinuity must also have been borne in to them by compulsory attendance at public worship in the parish church, sitting amongst the laity from whom they, previously, had been so carefully segregated. There was, however, no contradiction in the former nuns seeking to maintain the existence of their monastic community, informally, inside their house, and, simultaneously, being active members of a parish community. Anthropologists such as A.P. Cohen and Alan MacFarlane argue for models of society consisting of overlapping communities.⁵⁹ This was a situation that had not existed before 1539, when the community of nuns had physical as well as symbolic definition.

The former nuns' own perception of their community was indeed changed. In one particular matter, this brought about a new way of relating to the former 'president' friar-chaplain, Dr. Robert Stroddel. The unhappy circumstances of Stroddel's arrival at Dartford, and the upset he caused to Prioress Elizabeth Cressener (senior) and others there, was described in chapter two above. Elizabeth Cressener died soon after, and no more is heard of that unhappy situation, but it did not promise well for the nuns' future dealings with their chaplain. However, this Stroddel was the same Robert 'Stroudel', vicar of Sutton at Hone, who made Elizabeth Cressener junior and Katherine Effelyn beneficiaries of his will, in 1552.

⁵⁷ A.P. Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community*, pp.50-51.

⁵⁸ Claire Cross, 'Community solidarity', 252.

After the Dissolution, he had remained in the area, living near his family in North Cray, and at some point, by 1543, secured the benefice of Sutton at Hone.⁶⁰ The nuns' residence in that parish must have been connected in some way with Stroddel's presence, as well as the availability of Provisé's house, despite the earlier difficult relations. They were compelled by circumstances to overcome their earlier differences; as vicar of their parish church, Stroddel was once again responsible for their pastoral care. The common experience of being cast out, in 1539, and the religious climate of the early 1540s may have created some kind of bond. In his will, made towards the very end of Edward VI's reign, having lived through the Henrician and Edwardian Reformations, Stroddel made generous bequests to these women, naming two of them. As well as the bequest of 20s to Katherine Effelyn, Stroddel left to 'mistress Elizabeth Cressener' a long list of household stuff, including such materials as silk, satin and velvet; silver items, including six apostle spoons; his great and best feather bed 'that was mistress Cooks', a possible reference to another former Dartford nun given a pension at the Dissolution, Margaret Cooke;⁶¹ furniture; and the hangings in Mistress Cressener's hall. That Elizabeth Cressener had furnished the hall of the house William Provisé had provided with hangings leant by Stroddel confirms that he had been giving material assistance to the former nuns in his parish, during life as well as at death. He had also given financial assistance, for he bequeathed to Elizabeth Cressener £6 13s 4d of a debt she owed him. Unlike the former nuns, Stroddel was not endeavouring to remain faithful to his monastic vocation, if he had ever done so, since he was evidently living in some luxury. However, he did make charitable bequests, of 40s in money, and 14s in penny loaves, to the poor of Sutton at Hone.

It was made possible for Stroddel and the nuns to identify with each other, after 1539, because of their common experience of monastic suppression. Cohen finds, from his observation of communities, that the symbolic nature of community boundaries, restructured because of the threat of change, allows the glossing over of divisions within them. An appearance of likeness is presented to the world, and to the members of the community, allowing a former problematic element, such as Stroddel, to be absorbed, as the community seeks to reinforce itself against new 'significant others'.⁶² In the hostile religious climate of the 1540s and early 1550s, certain Catholic-minded inhabitants of Sutton at Hone demonstrated that they perceived Stroddel and the former nuns as alike symbolically representative of traditional religion. It may have been for this reason that Provisé provided a house for the nuns; his requests, in his will, for a trental of masses to be said by a named priest, for ten priests to attend his burial, and for fifteen at his month's mind show him to have been a Catholic. Anne Reddeman, perhaps having got to know her well, called

⁵⁹ A.P. Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community*, p.94; Alan MacFarlane, *Reconstructing Historical Communities* (Cambridge, 1977), pp.9-13.

⁶⁰ He belonged to a local family, members of which were living in Sutton at Hone and North Cray, nearby, from at least the late fifteenth century. His name appears in the list of witnesses to the will of Peter Stroddle of North Cray, dated 9th March 1539-40, as 'Robert Stroddle doctor in dyvinyte' (DRb/Pwr9/293). This witnessing, eleven months after the suppression of Dartford Priory, suggests that he had retired to live locally, with or near relations. He was subsequently named in seven surviving Sutton at Hone wills, including his own, usually as witness; five of these, dated between April 1543 and December 1552, refer to him as vicar of Sutton at Hone: Richard Not, 1543 (DRb/Pwr10/22v); William Rawlen, 1544 (DRb/Pwr10/63); Nicholas Nott, 1545 (DRb/Pwr10/102); Anne Reddeman, 1551 (PROB 11/35/224v); his own will, December 1552 (PROB 11/36/119v). John Weller, husbandman of Sutton at Hone, in his will of 1544, referred simply to 'Robert Strowdell' (DRb/Pwr10/69v). William Provisé's will, in 1545, refers to 'Robert Strodill priest' (DRb/Pwr10/124). He had secured a licence to hold a benefice on 7th June 1537 (A.B. Emden, *A survey of Dominicans in England based on the ordination lists in episcopal registers (1268 to 1538)* (Rome, 1967), p.458). That he witnessed local wills throughout his incumbency indicates that he was resident in or near his new benefice, although he did have assistant clergy to undertake duties, as wills indicate.

⁶¹ Margaret Cooke is not named on the 1556 pension list and so may have been dead by the time Stroddel made his will. She was from a local family (John Dunkin, *The History and Antiquities of Dartford*, pp.160-61).

⁶² A.P. Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community*, pp.114-117.

Elizabeth Cressener her 'cousin', in 1551, making her her sole executrice. She, also, was evidently a loyal Catholic; well into Edward VI's reign, after images had been removed from the parish church, Anne Reddeman bequeathed to Robert Stroddel a little silver spoon and an image of Our Lady. Two of the four supervisors of her will were priests, including 'Mr Doctor Struddyll vicar of Sutton at Hone', and Sir Richard Bee, one of Stroddel's assistants and his successor as vicar (who, himself, later made a traditional will, supporting his local nuns). The will of William Sedley, made in the first months of Mary's reign, shows him also to have been Catholic, as he took full advantage of the new religious regime by giving directions for the refoundation of dissolved chantries and obits originally set up by his father.⁶³

In 1557, the community of religious women was once again reconstituted on a new basis, when the English convent of Dominican nuns was refounded, apparently in response to their own petition. As stated, this was one of six monasteries founded or refounded, in Mary's reign.⁶⁴ A grant, dated 25th June 1557, allowed the old priory buildings at Kings Langley to be made into a house of Dominican nuns, to be inhabited by Elizabeth Cressener, as prioress, and six others: Katherine Clovyle, Katherine Efflin, Elizabeth White, Mary Benson, Elizabeth Exmewe and Magdalen Frere.⁶⁵ All of these women had been nuns at Dartford, in 1539. Henry VIII's house built on the site of the demolished priory in Dartford had been occupied by Anne of Cleaves since 1548.⁶⁶ Following the former queen's death, the convent was granted the site of its old home, with all the buildings, gardens and orchards attached, and their contents and utensils, on 8th September 1558.⁶⁷ Apparently, the situation was returned to that which had existed before the Dissolution. Stroddel's successor, as vicar of Sutton at Hone, Sir Richard Bee, priest, bequeathed 10s to 'my lady prioras of Dertford', in his will of 10th September 1558, just two days after the re-enclosed nuns had been granted the site of Dartford Priory by the crown.⁶⁸ Richard Bee was in the locality throughout the period that some of these women were residing in Sutton at Hone.⁶⁹ His bequest indicates clearly that he welcomed their restoration.

All was not the same as of old, however. Firstly, the community did not include all of the former nuns who were still alive, but a select group. Others may have married, although there is no evidence of this up to 1556, or some may have been unwilling or too frail to take the habit again. Of the eight former nuns known to have been living together, in Sutton at Hone or Walsingham, during the period 1539-57 (and there may have been others), five were among those re-enclosed, in 1557, the others perhaps having died. Three other former Dartford nuns, and a new postulant, joined the new convent at some point between 1557 and 1559, including the other nun who had lived in Walsingham - Elizabeth Seygood, Helen Bostocke, Katherine Garrett, and the postulant Joan Courtyse, were named alongside six of the above seven nuns, on a list drawn up by Elizabeth Cressener in a letter to Philip II of Spain, as being present in the Low Countries in June 1560, after their second dissolution.⁷⁰ The three nuns were, perhaps, finally persuaded to

⁶³ This was a reconstitution of the Sedley family community, of those dead and alive, which was a kind of secular parallel of the changes experienced by the monastic community.

⁶⁴ David Knowles, *The Religious Orders in England*, iii, pp.439-440.

⁶⁵ *Cal. Patent Rolls 1555-7*, p.403.

⁶⁶ C.F.R. Palmer, 'History of the Priory of Dartford, in Kent', p.269.

⁶⁷ *Cal. Patent Rolls 1557-8*, p.417.

⁶⁸ DRb/Pwr12/276.

⁶⁹ He has a possible mention in the will of Sir Rayf Tompson, priest of Sutton at Hone, in 1543 (DRb/Pwr10/36). Anne Reddeman named him as a supervisor of her will in 1551.

⁷⁰ Godfrey Anstruther, *A Hundred Homeless Years*, pp.6-7.

re-enter monastic life when the refounded monastery moved from Kings Langley to Dartford.⁷¹ Twenty of the original twenty-six nuns were still drawing pensions in 1556, and ten of these had been re-enclosed by 1559.

Secondly, having maintained their hopes for the possibility of re-enclosure, through two decades in difficult circumstances, and having achieved it, the nuns now constituted a monastic community that was, apparently, even more determined and uncompromising than before in its commitment to Catholicism and the monastic life. When Queen Elizabeth dissolved the new monasteries, in mid 1559, nine months after the Dominicanesses' return to Dartford, not one of them or their two chaplains submitted to the royal visitors, as Elizabeth Cressener and Richard Hargrave, the principal chaplain, both subsequently emphasised in letters written in exile.⁷² They were, therefore, all ejected without pensions. In 1539, only Elizabeth Woodford had refused a pension and remained a nun, in exile.⁷³ After a few days in London, living under the protection of the Duke of Feria alongside the Syon Abbey nuns and Carthusians of Sheen, who had similarly refused to submit, the Dominicanesses left England for exile in Flanders. Their boat, provided by the king of Spain, and shared with the Syon nuns, landed in Antwerp on 1 July, 1559.⁷⁴ The nuns of Dartford and Syon, and the Carthusians, were the only three English monastic communities who went into exile, which must reinforce what has already been said about the strength of religious life and vocation at Dartford.

The conditions of life experienced by a nunnery in exile meant that the community evolved further. The story of the English Dominican nuns' exile has been pieced together by Fr. Anstruther, and does not need to be repeated here in detail. For the first ten years or so they lived in the poor Dutch Dominican nunnery at Leliendael, near Zierikzee on the western shore of the bleak island of Schouwen, in Zeeland. There they endured great poverty, physical hardship, sickness and old age (according to Fr. Hargrave, in 1559, the youngest was fifty, and three of them were eighty years of age). In spite of, or in response to, these harsh conditions, the English nuns maintained a sense of their communal identity, strengthened by the maintenance of ritual and the sense of being in exile in a foreign land. Their thoughts were not of defeat but expansion, and contributing to the restoration of England to Catholicism. In the Summer of 1560, Elizabeth Cressener addressed a lengthy petition on behalf of her community to the new pope, Pius IV. She said that the English nuns were striving to remain faithful to their vows, at Leliendael, dutifully saying the offices with the Dutch sisters there, with whom they were living at peace. She asked the Pope to pray for the return of England to the unity of faith, indicating her expectation that this would happen within nine years. She expected her exiled convent to attract new recruits, and asked for a special licence that, when in God's time errors should cease in England, they might take back with them all such women and receive them into their community.⁷⁵ A papal *breve apertum* of 1 October 1560 granted these

⁷¹ Helen Bostocke, for example, came from a Dartford family (John Dunkin, *History and Antiquities of Dartford*, pp.161-2). She probably lived locally with her family, after the Dissolution, evidently remaining unmarried. Having re-entered conventual life, her dedication to the monastic life was then sufficiently reinvigorated to encourage her to leave home and go into exile with the convent, in 1559.

⁷² Cited and quoted in Godfrey Anstruther, *A Hundred Homeless Years*, pp.6-7.

⁷³ See note 30 above.

⁷⁴ From the letters written by Prioress Cressener and Richard Hargrave (Godfrey Anstruther, *A Hundred Homeless Years*, pp.6-7); and testimony of the Duchess of Feria to her grand-daughter (Henry Clifford, *The Life of Jane Dormer Duchess of Feria*, pp.101-8).

⁷⁵ Godfrey Anstruther, *A Hundred Homeless Years*, pp.8-9.

requests.⁷⁶ An entry in the register of the master general, dated 7th May 1560, records the grant to Elizabeth Cressener of the charge of prioress, in spiritualities and temporalities, as she had in England, over all the sisters exiled with her in Zeeland. They were to be incorporated into either the province of France or Lower Germany, wherever they might find benevolent nuns to take them in. The master general allowed that they might take the government of the convent of Leliendael, where there were only four nuns, if committed to them by the provincial and fathers of the province of Lower Germany, with the consent of that convent.⁷⁷ Prioress Cressener's letter indicates, however, that the English nuns, under her guidance, had no intention of being absorbed into another province, but of maintaining their identity as nuns of the English female province in exile.

Local Dutch inhabitants, and the Dominican order itself, recognised that the English nuns constituted a real distinctive community in themselves, although living and worshipping alongside the Dutch nuns at Leliendael. This is indicated by the local practical and financial support they received, and by their success in attracting a Dutch novice. The register of the master general of the Dominican order records the grant, dated 18th January 1562, for the profession of Alayden Lambriht, formerly a Dominican tertiary, stating that she was to belong entirely to the English province and the convent of English nuns at Leliendael.⁷⁸ They, apparently, had chosen not to absorb the Dutch nuns at Leliendael and become a nunnery of the German province. Their distinctiveness was not reinforced by total seclusion, however, since the convent lacked its former endowments. Apart from a pension paid by the king of Spain, the nuns relied heavily on the goodwill and generosity of sympathetic local Dutch laity, such as the doctor who came out from Zierikzee to see them. They were offered the opportunity of occupying an empty house in the béguinage in Zierikzee, so that they might be closer to those townsmen who would assist them. The nuns were more determined, but older and more directly dependent on those around them than they had been before 1539.

The distinctiveness of the English convent survived, as the elderly nuns died, one by one, until there were only two of the original nuns remaining alive, with another English woman who had, apparently, joined them and been professed. At the end of 1573, when the master-general of the Dominican order himself visited them, Elizabeth Cressener and Elizabeth Exmewe were living in a house in Bruges in the company of one Joan Sackville. No doubt, on the basis of what he had seen of them, on 4th January 1574, the master-general ordered the prioress and mothers of Engelendael, a convent of Flemish Dominican nuns just outside the walls of Bruges, to admit the three English nuns, and ordered the English women to take themselves there.⁷⁹ Fourteen and a half years after the final departure from Dartford, and thirty-five years after the first Dissolution, the remaining nuns were still together. Elizabeth Exmewe must have been at least in her mid sixties;⁸⁰ Elizabeth Cressener, who had been sub-prioress of Dartford as early as 1536, was probably in her seventies. Hopes of the English community surviving in structural terms had clearly been abandoned. The nuns were not allowed to finish their lives in peace. The Calvinists, supported by the Queen of England, were waging civil war in Flanders, and marched on Bruges in 1578. All the nuns

⁷⁶ Godfrey Anstruther, *A Hundred Homeless Years*, p.9.

⁷⁷ C.F.R. Palmer, 'Notes on the Priory of Dartford, in Kent', p.179.

⁷⁸ Godfrey Anstruther, *A Hundred Homeless Years*, p.11.

⁷⁹ C.F.R. Palmer, 'Notes on the Priory of Dartford, in Kent', p.179.

of Engelendael had to abandon the monastery, put on laywomen's clothes and take refuge in private houses in the city. The Calvinists looted the city, and images were destroyed, and Catholic religion was banned, this suppression enduring for six years. Under threat of this situation, an antiquarian source, Souèges, says that Elizabeth Cressener died in April 1577. Joan Sackville died in May 1581, and was secretly buried with the nuns of St. Colette. Elizabeth Exmewe survived to see the arrival of Spanish forces and the restoration of Catholic worship, in 1584, dying the year after, in February 1585, forty-six years after the first Dissolution, probably in her late seventies. She was buried with full ceremonies by the Dominican friars of Bruges.⁸¹

At a time of crisis, after the structural boundaries around the community of religious of Dartford Priory had been dissolved, the community evolved as its remnants developed a new existence, in the outside world. Although no longer really separated from society, these women lived as a sub-culture maintaining what was perceived from within and without as being a distinctive community life. This sense of community, expressed through, and bolstered by, religious practice and a knowledge of their special identity as English Dominican nuns, was manifested in different ways in different circumstances, and sustained the nuns through four decades of poverty and religious upheaval, at home and in exile. Such conditions as dispersal, hardship and exile may even have strengthened their experience of community. The significance of such a study of a monastic community extends to other institutions, such as parish communities and families, which also experienced disruption and survival in changed forms, during the period of the English Reformations. One example of a family community has been hinted at - that of the Sedley's of Southfleet. Dorothy, who had left the family to enter the local nunnery, was unexpectedly returned, in 1539; the refoundation of their father's chantries and obits, by William Sedley, in 1553, was a reconstitution of the family community, including both the living and the dead, as a secular parallel of monastic refoundation. The close study of particular communities, of whatever kind, is a fruitful area through which to attempt to gain a better understanding of the social change brought about by the Reformation. Of particular interest to this thesis, however, is that what happened after 1539 implies that the state of religion within Dartford Priory before the Dissolution was dynamic, and that the nuns possessed a strong sense of vocation and Dominican identity.

⁸⁰ Sister Exmewe was mentioned in her father's will in early 1529 (see appendix one). To have been a Dominican nun then, she must have been born in or before 1516.

⁸¹ All these last details from Godfrey Anstruther, *A Hundred Homeless Years*, pp.11-14.

Chapter Four

Books and learning in Dartford Priory

It was argued, in chapter three, that the spirituality at Dartford Priory was dynamic and that this sustained it through the decades following the Henrician Dissolution. In this, the nunnery had much in common with the Carthusians and the nuns of Syon Abbey. In all these convents there was a contemplative spirituality associated with books and learning. Thus, it will be demonstrated in chapter five, the community of nuns of Dartford Priory attracted much interest and support from pious laity locally and further afield - the monastery was evidently seen by some as a good option when seeking prayers to ease one's soul's passage through purgatory. There are eight surviving manuscripts that belonged to Dartford Priory, and there are documentary references to other books. These permit some comment on the nature of literate spirituality in the nunnery. The evidence of the books may be supplemented by other indications of the intellectual activities of the nuns of Dartford, such as the existence of some kind of school there, to which children and young women were sent, and the active involvement of the prioresses in the management of the monastery's affairs, which has already been commented on. Dartford Priory must also be studied within the contexts of late medieval English nunneries, late medieval vernacular literate piety within and without monasteries, and the continental order of Dominican nuns.

As ever with medieval nunneries, the survival of evidence is not good and what remains could, therefore, be misleading. For example, although all nunneries possessed at least a few service books and other books for refectory reading, manuscripts survive from only forty-six of the approximately 144 pre-Reformation English nunneries, and miscellaneous records of books survive from just nineteen others. The numbers of manuscripts surviving for individual houses does not reflect the importance of that house, except to some extent in the case of Syon Abbey. Just over half of the surviving books are primarily liturgical and forty-five per cent of surviving books are books of hours and Psalters, but there may have been particular reasons for the higher survival rate of these books, after the Dissolution, than non-liturgical literary works.¹

Learning and Latin literacy in English nunneries

Power concluded that nuns were expected to be literate; it is recorded in bishops' registers that bishops sending new inmates to convents occasionally assured their heads that the girls were able to undertake the duties of their new state. Injunctions sent to the Premonstratensian house of Irford indicate the required level of literacy: 'that they be able to read and sing, as is contained in the statute of the order'. Similarly, Bishop Grey's injunctions to Elstow in 1432 charged the abbess not to admit any nun 'unless she be taught in song and reading and the other things requisite herein, unless she may be easily instructed within a short time'. These were the skills essential to take part in the offices in the quire – the ability to read and sing, but it was not necessary to be able to write.² In practice, not all nuns may have possessed

¹ David N. Bell, *What nuns read: books and libraries in medieval English nunneries* (Kalamazoo, 1995), pp.33-6.

² Eileen Power, *Medieval English Nunneries c.1275 to 1535* (Cambridge, 1922), pp.244-5.

these skills. The order of Minoreesses, which, like the Dominican nuns, was attached to a mendicant order of friars and exempt from episcopal jurisdiction, was, on the whole, a literate order. However, the 'Isabella Rule' they followed took it for granted that there would be some nuns who could not read or sing Latin offices; these were to confine themselves to the repetition of the *Pater noster* seventy-two times a day, when the others recited the offices 'after the custome of the ordre of freris menoures'.³

Literacy in English nunneries was mostly vernacular, especially from the end of the thirteenth century.⁴ This lack of knowledge of Latin is indicated in injunctions to nunneries in bishops' registers. The linguistic learning of English nuns at different periods was similar to that of the gentry outside the convents, rather than that of the monks. Power found that nearly all episcopal injunctions to nunneries from the fourteenth century were in French, and sometimes it is specifically mentioned that the nuns did not understand Latin. Nearly all injunctions in the fifteenth century were in English. The bishops were at pains to ensure that the reforms set out in their injunctions should be understood and carried out. The records of Bishop Alnwick's visitations in the diocese of Lincoln demonstrate a complete ignorance of Latin and even a level of general illiteracy in female houses. In 1440, the prioress of Langley in Leicestershire informed the visiting bishop that she was unable to understand the house's foundation charter, which she had in her possession.⁵ This ignorance of Latin is one possible reason for the low preservation rate of nunnery charters in cartularies and registers.⁶ Less than twenty medieval English female houses have left cartularies, there are none for Welsh nunneries and part of one from Coldstream in Scotland.⁷

Translations made for the use of nuns confirm the suggestion that nuns could not all have understood their services, rules or charters. Several translations of the Rule of St. Benedict were made, including one by Bishop Foxe of Winchester for the nuns of his diocese 'unto our moders tonge; comune; playne rounde Englyshe, easy and rely to be understande by the sayde devoute religieuse women', in order that they might understand the rule that they were bound to profess and learn. The abbess of Godstow, Alice Henley, about 1460 caused a translation to be made of that monastery's Latin cartulary. The monk translator's preface refers to the 'women of relygone in redyng bokys of latyn, byn excusyd of grete understandyng, where it is not her modyr tonge', but informs the reader that the convent was 'for the more party in Englyssh bokys well y-lerned'. If nuns were generally ignorant in Latin, this did not mean that they were unlearned in English books; this is indicated by the translations of books made for the nuns of Syon. The *Myroure of oure Ladye*, written by Thomas Gascoigne (1403-58) for these nuns and printed in 1530, contains a devotional treatise on divine service with a translation and explanation of the hours and masses of Our Lady used at Syon. The author explained his purpose:

I have drawen youre legende and all your servyce into Englyshe, that ye shulle se by the understandyng therof, how worthy and holy praysynge of oure Lady is contente therein & the more devoutely and knowingly syng yt & rede yt and say yt to her worshyp

Their ignorance of Latin similarly caused the insertion of English rubrics into the Latin *Processionale* of the house, and Richard Whytford, one of the brothers to translate the *Martyrologium*:

³ A.F.C. Bourdillon, *The Order of Minoreesses in England* (Manchester, 1926), p.78.

⁴ David N. Bell, *What nuns read: books and libraries in medieval English nunneries*, p.64.

⁵ Eileen Power, *Medieval English Nunneries c.1275 to 1535*, pp.246-50.

for the edificacyon of certayn religyous persones unlearned that dayly dyd rede the same martiloge in Latyn, not understandynge what they redde

As far as reading the Bible was concerned, Power found that the best instructed nuns needed to use the English Bible to help them understand the Vulgate, and many of the smaller nunneries may not even have possessed one.⁸ Power concludes, therefore, that the majority of nuns must have sung services by rote.⁹

Latin illiteracy was probably also general in Dartford Priory. Special arrangements were made for Sister Jane Fisher, a nun of noble birth, to learn Latin, in 1481; in that year, the master general of the Order of Preachers granted her permission to have a preceptor in grammar and Latin, in the common parlour. He also allowed that Sister Jane and other 'gentlewomen' might be 'called to learning'.¹⁰ This was obviously exceptional, but demonstrates that a nun from a superior social background with a particular aptitude, who had perhaps benefited from some kind of education by virtue of her high birth, did have the opportunity to learn Latin and otherwise extend her learning. It was normal for male monasteries to have books on grammar, but amongst nuns, Sister Jane must have been particularly learned. Indeed, David N. Bell feels that more nuns than might be supposed may have been able to read Latin with understanding, and some nunneries may even have taught the language, but Bell admits that these may have been individual nuns who had received special tuition, such as Jane Fisher. Furthermore, his examples are mostly from before 1300. Latin literacy probably declined over time, giving way to French and English, from the 1300s.¹¹

Literacy in nunneries probably did not include the ability to write for all nuns. Certain nuns of Syon Abbey, in the sixteenth century, copied their own breviaries but, apparently, wrote them very badly. Inscriptions indicate that a large number of nuns could write their own names, but often in very shaky hands.¹² For example, Dame Alice Branthwayte, prioress of Dartford in the 1460s, inscribed one of the priory's manuscripts with her name, in a rather untidy hand.¹³ Similarly, Sister Emma Wynter of Dartford may have signed her own name in the untidy hand of the inscription in a *Distichia catonis* manuscript.¹⁴

Books and the nature of late medieval English female monastic spirituality

Books that were in the possession of nuns do not necessarily indicate the nuns' level of educational achievement. They do, however, constitute one important source of evidence for nuns' literacy and spirituality. It is not in doubt that nunneries possessed books. The inventory of Minster in Sheppey Priory, of 1536, indicates that there were at least fifty books, apparently of little value to the commissioners, in an old press in the Lady Chapel, as well as a few other books in the church, parlour and vestry. There was nothing special about this Benedictine nunnery, so other nunneries must have possessed equally large numbers of books. Three manuscripts from medieval nunneries – one from Barking and two from Campsey - contain press marks, indicating that they had catalogued libraries, and there is

⁶ Sally Thompson, *Women Religious: the foundation of English nunneries after the Norman Conquest* (Oxford, 1991), p.13.

⁷ Janet Burton, *Monastic and Religious Orders in Britain* (Cambridge, 1994), pp.85-6.

⁸ Eileen Power, *Medieval English Nunneries c.1275 to 1535*, pp.254-7.

⁹ Eileen Power, *Medieval English Nunneries c.1275 to 1535*, p.246.

¹⁰ C.F.R. Palmer, 'Notes on the priory of Dartford, in Kent', *Archaeological Journal*, 39 (1882), pp.177-9 at p.178.

¹¹ David N. Bell, *What nuns read: books and libraries in medieval English nunneries*, pp.63-4.

¹² David N. Bell, *What nuns read: books and libraries in medieval English nunneries*, p.67.

¹³ BL Harley Ms 2254, fo.i verso. There are various spellings of this prioress's name in documents. 'Branthwayte' is adhered to in this thesis for consistency.

¹⁴ Oxford, Bodleian Library, Rawlinson Ms G.59.

documentary evidence at particular times of nuns designated librarian at Barking, Syon and St. Mary's Abbey, Winchester. There was an annual distribution of books to the nuns at Barking, in accordance with the Rule of St. Benedict, carried out by the librarian there. However, no inventories of English nunneries drawn up at the time of the Dissolution mention libraries; the books in most houses probably came under the responsibility of the *precentrix* or chantress, and may have been kept in a single cupboard, or in a variety of places, as at Sheppey.¹⁵

Relatively little evidence has survived of the contents of medieval English nunnery libraries. Those inventories that do survive mostly list service books only. For example, there is a detailed list from the brothers' library at Syon Abbey but no corresponding list for the nuns' library. Evidence of books belonging to nunneries has generally to be inferred from inscriptions in surviving manuscripts and legacies of books in wills. However, less than ten per cent of surviving manuscripts ascribed to nunneries carry inscriptions naming the institution. About a third carry inscriptions naming individual nuns, and in a dozen cases the inscription specifies that the book was to pass to the convent after the named nun's death. Only a quarter of surviving manuscripts contain indications of the source of the volume; 17.5 per cent (twenty-eight books) were gifts or bequests, and three books were bought for the nunnery concerned.¹⁶ Since Margaret Deanesly wrote her article on book bequests in late medieval wills, earlier this century, much more evidence has come to light on this subject.¹⁷ Most books mentioned in lay people's wills were Psalters or service books of one kind or another. Carol Meale points out that individuals did not always itemise all the books that they owned, in their wills. A 'sense of decorum' could account for the preponderance of religious over secular books in wills, and such legacies cannot give a balanced view of the nature and extent of the book-owning population. Meale finds that, amongst women testators, the majority of bequests were made by widows and other independent women, and evidence of book-ownership amongst merchant class women is less easily found.¹⁸ Any conclusions drawn from inscriptions and testamentary evidence must be tempered with knowledge of the incomplete nature of the evidence of these sources.

Both kinds of evidence sometimes manifest literary and religious connections between some devout literate members of the laity and nuns. For example, the presence of a volume from the nunnery of Nuneaton, in the order of Fontevrault, of the kind read at that time by literate laity leads Margery Chibnall to conclude that literary culture in female houses had similarities with that of the lay nobility.¹⁹ It is not surprising that this should have been the case, since many nuns came from gentry, mercantile elite and sometimes noble backgrounds. Lay interest in theology and spirituality in the late medieval period was encouraged, in the thirteenth century, by decrees of the Lateran Council of 1215, and episcopal constitutions, by which the Church in western Europe sought to deepen their religious life through the

¹⁵ David N. Bell, *What nuns read: books and libraries in medieval English nunneries*, pp.41-6; Eileen Power, *Medieval English Nunneries c.1275-1535*, pp.240-1.

¹⁶ David N. Bell, *What nuns read: books and libraries in medieval English nunneries*, pp.33, 38-9, 43.

¹⁷ Margaret Deanesly, 'Vernacular books in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries', *Modern Language Review*, 15 (1920), pp.349-58.

¹⁸ Carol Meale, "'... alle the bookes that I have of latyn, englich, and frensch': laywomen and their books in late medieval England', in Carol Meale, ed., *Women and Literature in England, 1150-1500* (Cambridge, 1993), pp.128-58 at p.131.

¹⁹ Margery Chibnall, 'L'ordre de Fontevrault en Angleterre au xii siècle', *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale*, 29 (1986), pp.41-7 at p.46. This fourteenth-century manuscript contains Grosseteste's *Le Chateau d'Amour*, Chretien's version of *L'Evangile de Nicodeme*, a version of the *Apocalypse*, two expositions on the *Pater noster* and a bestiary of Guillaume le Normand. The preface states that 'les laics' want to read in French what 'les clerics' read in Latin.

liturgy, preaching, mystery plays and other media.²⁰ From the mid-fourteenth century, translations of the *Somme le Roy*, *The Abbey of the Holy Ghost* and subsequent English vernacular books supplied a lay desire for moral and spiritual guidance. Some such books, in the fifteenth century, made the fruits of monastic spirituality available to lay readers.²¹ Women had an important role in the sanctification of the domestic sphere, in noble households, where they were responsible for the religious education of the children and servants. Christine de Pisan wrote advice for townswomen on forging a spirituality among the mundane obligations of life.²² For the laity the problem was to integrate the insights of the monastic contemplative life into the active life in the world. Books of texts translated into or even composed in the vernacular allowed literate laity to share the insights of monastic contemplation, and some texts gave advice on living the mixed life.²³ As English became more widely used in England, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the number of laypeople who could read it soared and the demand for books escalated accordingly. This coincided with a fall in the cost of production. The interest in and demand for English books found amongst laity who had the time, skill and money to benefit from them was also found in the female cloister. Two thirds of all surviving books from medieval English nunneries date from after 1400, and more than two thirds of the non-liturgical volumes (about fifty manuscripts) are in English. Many of the texts found in these manuscripts were new and up to date and a third of these non-liturgical manuscripts in English come from Syon Abbey.²⁴

Nunneries like Syon Abbey and Barking Abbey were in the forefront of the public for English spiritual writings. The author of the *Myroure of Oure Ladye* gave advice to the sisters of Syon Abbey as to the sort of books to read, such as works by Rolle, Mechthild of Hackeborn, St. Bridget's *Revelations* and the English Bible, and the ways in which to profit from them.²⁵ These were all books expressive of an affective contemplative type of spirituality which sought to evoke in the devout reader emotional and spiritual response.²⁶ This was characteristic of a kind of devotional literature widely popular in the late middle ages. The same kind of texts were found in manuscripts owned by nunneries as those obtained by laity. Walter Hilton's *Epistle on the Mixed Life*, the first English treatise to recommend that laity read the Latin gospels for themselves, is found in manuscripts that belonged to Dartford Priory and the Minories at Aldgate. Copies of the popular treatise *The Pore Caitiff* were owned by Dartford Priory, the Minories and Shaftesbury.²⁷ Inscriptions indicate that *The Doctrine of the Heart* (with the wording changed from 'mynchen' to 'menoress' in chapter two) was left by one Minoress to the Aldgate house; Hilton's *Scale of Perfection* was similarly left to this house; Elizabeth Throckmorton, abbess of Denny, another monastery of Minoresses, owned a large manuscript book containing a long poem on the Lord's Prayer and the vices

²⁰ Norman Tanner, *The Church in late medieval Norwich 1370-1532* (Toronto, 1984), p.111.

²¹ George R. Keiser, "'Noght how lang man lifs bot how wele": the laity and the ladder of perfection' in M. Sargent, ed., *De Celle in Seculum: religious and secular life and devotion in late medieval England* (Cambridge, 1989), pp.145-59 at pp.145-6.

²² These points are made by D.M. Webb, 'Woman and home: the domestic setting of late medieval spirituality', *Studies in Church History*, 27 (1990), pp.159-73. See also Felicity Riddy, 'Mother knows best: reading social change in a courtesy text', *Speculum*, 71 (1996), pp.66-86, which concerns a late medieval text ('What the Goodwife Taught Her Daughter') found in clerical compilations which offers advice to women in urban burghess households. The advice included exhortations to piety (*ibid.*, p.69).

²³ David N. Bell, *What nuns read: books and libraries in medieval English nunneries*, pp.72-3.

²⁴ David N. Bell, *What nuns read: books and libraries in medieval English nunneries*, pp.38, 71-2.

²⁵ Ann M. Hutchinson, 'What the nuns read: literary evidence from the English Bridgettine house, Syon Abbey', *Medieval Studies*, 57 (1995), pp.205-22 at pp.209-11.

²⁶ Lina Eckenstein, *Woman under Monasticism* (1896), pp.396-7.

²⁷ David N. Bell, *What nuns read: books and libraries in medieval English nunneries*, pp.72-3.

and virtues, in English rhymed couplets.²⁸ Benedictine nunneries also owned books containing vernacular devotional texts. An inscription records that Alice Champnys, nun of Shaftesbury, bought a Latin breviary from the parish priest Sir Richard Marshall for 10s. The inscription is followed by a prayer for the use of the nun – ‘O swete Jhesu’ – characteristic of the contemporary contemplative devotional practice of affective meditation on Jesus and the Passion.²⁹ A colophon at the end of a manuscript of Bokenham’s thirteen *Legendys of Hooly Wummen*, six of which were commissioned by lay women in East Anglia, says that the whole collection was gathered together to be presented by an Austin friar, Thomas Burgh, to his sister, a nun in Cambridge, in 1447.³⁰

Laity sometimes gave their books to nunneries. For example, in 1399, Eleanor de Bohun, Duchess of Gloucester, took pains in her testament to distribute her books amongst her children in a way that would be appropriate to their callings. She bequeathed to her daughter Isabella, a Minoress and later abbess of Denny, a treasure trove of items including a gold bed cover, tapestries, £40 in cash, a French bible with two gold clasps in two volumes, a book of decretals, a book of lives of the fathers, ‘les pastorels Seint gregoire’, two French Psalters, and a book of ‘meistre histories’.³¹ Eleanor commissioned manuscripts for herself and was part of a family network of pious female literary patrons.³² In 1438, one Alienora Roos left her ‘Maulde buke’ (Mechtild of Hackeborn’s *The Book of Ghostly Grace*) to a nun, Dame Joan Courtenay, as well as a copy of Hilton’s *Scale of Perfection* to a lay kinswoman.³³ The will of Agnes Stapleton, dated 1448, contains a substantial collection of religious texts, and she only gave these to female religious houses, despite making other bequests to male houses. She left to the abbess of Denny a crucifix and a French book; a copy of ‘Bonaventura’ to the nuns of Sinninghwaite; a *Prick of Conscience* to the nuns of Esholt; and a copy of ‘Vice and vertues’ to the nuns of Nun Monkton.³⁴ Margaret Purdans, a widow of Norwich who died in 1484, left *The Doctrine of the Herte* to the Minoresses of Bruisyard and her ‘English book of Saint Bridget’ to the Benedictine nuns of Thetford, as well as a book of Walter Hilton to a laywoman, Alice Barly.³⁵ The Minoresses of Bruisyard also received a copy of the popular *Legenda Aurea*, in English, from Sir Walter Quyntyn of Ipswich, in 1501.³⁶

Also, nuns occasionally gave books to laity. Barking Abbey’s devotional manuscript now known as Harley 1706 came into the hands of a laywoman, before the Dissolution, as will be explained below. Margaret Scrope, a nun of Barking, gave a copy of the *Mirror of the Life of Christ* to mistress Agnes Gowldeywell, in the early sixteenth century.³⁷ Julia Boffey comments that the nuns of Syon played an important role in making continental mystical and devotional texts available to English audiences in translation. Amongst works by women authors, the *Revelations of St. Bridget* appeared in at least seven different English versions, and a translation of the writings of Mechtild of Hackeborn may have been prepared for them. The *Dialogues* of St. Catherine of Siena were made available to them in the form of the

²⁸ A.F.C. Bourdillon, *The Order of Minoresses in England*, pp.78-9.

²⁹ Eileen Power, *Medieval English Nunneries*, p.243.

³⁰ Carol Meale, ‘Laywomen and their books in late medieval England’, p.138.

³¹ A.F.C. Bourdillon, *The Order of Minoresses in England*, p.41.

³² Carol Meale, ‘Laywomen and their books in late medieval England’, pp.136-7.

³³ Felicity Riddy, ‘“Women talking about the things of God”: a late medieval sub-culture’, in Carol Meale, ed., *Women and Literature in England, 1150-1500* (Cambridge, 1993), pp.104-27 at p.108.

³⁴ Carol Meale, ‘Laywomen and their books in late medieval England’, p.143.

³⁵ Felicity Riddy, ‘“Women talking about the things of God”: a late medieval sub-culture’, p.108.

³⁶ A.F.C. Bourdillon, *The Order of Minoresses in England*, pp.79-80.

³⁷ Felicity Riddy, ‘“Women talking about the things of God”: a late medieval sub-culture’, p.108.

early sixteenth-century translation, *Orcherd of Syon*. They also had English versions of the *Meditations* of Elizabeth of Schönau and Margarete Porete's *Mirror of Simple Souls*.³⁸ Carey has also examined the importance of late medieval monasteries such as Syon Abbey and the Charterhouse of Sheen, across the River Thames, in causing to be translated and transmitting spiritual writings to the laity. He gives many examples of these texts, such as those named above, and mentions, in particular, the work of Richard Whytford and other writers connected with Syon who produced translations. He observes that books provided the key to an accessible domestic path of devotion for lay women (and, presumably, also men).³⁹ Similar subject matter is explored by Ann M. Hutchinson who describes relations between the Carthusians of Sheen and Syon, and between Syon and the aristocratic lay world.⁴⁰ Rhodes lists the comprehensive range of works produced especially for the nuns of Syon which were also suitable for devout laity, and which often were printed for the nuns.⁴¹

Books were sometimes at the heart of networks of spiritual and kinship connection between nuns, laity and secular clergy, with the movement of books going in both directions, as has been explored by Carol Meale and others.⁴² This may be observed in specific cases involving nunneries in west Kent. One small group (not quite a network), involving a priest, a nun and a rich noble laywoman, was linked by personal connections, religion and books, and centred on Malling Abbey, a Benedictine nunnery in the diocese of Rochester. Sir John Whytmor, parson of Stone next Dartford, indicated in his will made on 25th April 1498, that he was godfather to the abbess of Malling, Dame Elizabeth Hull.⁴³ His pious devotion to Malling Abbey must have been encouraged by this connection. He demonstrated a close acquaintanceship with the convent, asking to be buried in the chapel of Our Lady before the seat of one Master Alexandre Browne (perhaps a deceased friend who also cultivated connections with the abbey), leaving 6s 8d to the high altar, and making several bequests to the abbess and sisters, some of whom he mentioned by name.⁴⁴ He was a literate book-owning priest, acquainted with the scholarly master of Maidstone College, and although he did not bequeath any of his books to Malling Abbey, it is possible that books may have figured in his close relations with the abbess and convent during his life.⁴⁵ Abbess Elizabeth Hull is associated with the only surviving book which can be identified as having belonged to the pre-Reformation convent.

³⁸ Julia Boffey, 'Women authors and women's literacy in fourteenth and fifteenth century England', in Carol Meale, ed., *Women and Literature in England, 1150-1500* (Cambridge, 1993), pp.159-82 at p.161. On books possessed by the nuns of Syon Abbey, see also Ann M. Hutchinson, 'What the nuns read: literary evidence from the English Bridgettine house, Syon Abbey'. The sources for the latter article are the nuns' rule, the books recommended in *The Myroure of oure Ladye*, existing books, and references in wills and other documents.

³⁹ H.M. Carey, 'Devout literate laypeople and the pursuit of the mixed life in later medieval England', *Journal of Religious History*, 14 (1986), pp.361-81 at p.379.

⁴⁰ Ann M. Hutchinson, 'Devotional reading in the monastery and in the late medieval household', in M.G. Sargent, ed., *De Cella in Seculum: Religious and Secular Life and Devotion in late medieval England* (Cambridge, 1989), pp.215-27.

⁴¹ J.T. Rhodes, 'Syon Abbey and its religious publications in the sixteenth century', *JEH*, 44 (1993), pp.11-25.

⁴² Carol Meale, 'Laywomen and their books in late medieval England', and other articles in Carol Meale, ed., *Women and Literature in England, 1150-1500* (Cambridge, 1993) already cited.

⁴³ PROB 11/11/166v. Elizabeth Hull was elected abbess in 1495, at which time she was prioress, and died in 1524 (VCH Kent, ii, p.148).

⁴⁴ To Abbess Elizabeth, Whytmor left 'a little pece', his best tawny gown, the bed he lay on and its apparel, all the hangings in his chamber and in the parlour, some cushions and benches. All this was to remain in the abbey forever, where Dame Elizabeth thought best. She was also to act as one of the four executors of his will, disposing of the residue of his goods for the profit of his soul and all Christian souls (the other three executors were Master John Camerton of Maidstone College, John Chasey, gentleman, and Whytmor's servant, John Cheyne). Whytmor left his second tawny gown to the prioress. To another nun, Dame Katheryn Marden, Whytmor left his old russet gown, and his other gowns he left to the other nuns of Malling as the Abbess thought best to the profit of his soul. Further, Whytmor left 12d to every professed lady of the monastery, and 6d to every lady unprofessed. To the monastery in general he bequeathed a vestment of white damask 'with branches'.

⁴⁵ Whytmor left his best 'portouse' to the bishop of Rochester and his 'portouse with a red helyng' and 20s cash to his cousin Thomas Whytmor; to the Austin friars of London he left his book 'with a white helyng', which he did not identify; to his executor Master John Camerton, master of the college of priests in Maidstone, he left his 'jornall'; all his other books (unidentified) unbequeathed Whytmor directed to be sold to perform his will.

Two decades after Whytmor's death, towards the end of her life, in 1520, she gave this book of hours to her own god-daughter, Margaret Neville.⁴⁶ This attests to connections between Malling Abbey and the Kentish branch of the Neville family nearby. Thomas Whytmor, parson of Stone, also had connections with this family, as is suggested by his bequest, in 1498, of his best russet gown to Margaret's kinsman Master Thomas Neville, the vicar of West Malling, in which town the abbey was situated. The book of hours contains a verse life of St. Margaret, in the vernacular, which made it an appropriate gift from Dame Elizabeth to a layperson of that name. Dame Elizabeth perhaps hoped thereby to exercise her spiritual role as a god-parent, providing encouragement and material for Margaret's piety when older.⁴⁷

Margaret, wife of Henry V's brother the Duke of Clarence, was a pious literate aristocratic laywoman who was connected by books, her family, and her piety with Syon Abbey, which was founded by Henry in 1415. In 1428-9, Margaret obtained permission from the Pope to live as a vowess in close proximity to the monastery, and to have the brothers act as her chaplains. She formed a particular association with Simon Wynter, at whose request she gave the convent a Bible.⁴⁸ Under her patronage, Wynter wrote a life of St. Jerome, part of which was a translation of the brief life in the *Legenda Aurea*. Wynter announced his spiritual purpose for those who read this work in the prologue, emphasising the need to learn to die – 'to have oure herte & oure soule redy unto god' – and exhorting the Duchess to pass it on to others to read: 'cople hit for ourself & syth to lete oper rede hit & cople hit'.⁴⁹ The Duchess also had contact with Dartford Priory, where she left her daughters for safe keeping, when she went to France, between 1418 and 1421.⁵⁰ Other links between noble and gentry families, Syon Abbey and Dartford Priory, in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries have been explored in chapter three of this thesis, and these may have involved exchange of books, although no evidence survives of this.

Doyle has investigated connections which linked Dartford Priory, Barking Abbey, and certain noble and gentry families, involving the transmission of religious texts in two devotional manuscripts now known as Oxford Bodleian Ms Douce 322 and British Library Ms Harley 1706.⁵¹ These are collections of devotional verse by Lydgate and extracts from treatises by Rolle, Hilton, Adam the Carthusian, and others. As such they were similar to other devotional manuscript compilations owned by certain devout laypeople and some nunneries. The Douce manuscript was compiled for and given to Dame Parnel Wrattisley, a nun of Dartford Priory, by her grandfather, William Baron, a wealthy landowner who worked in the Exchequer, in the late fifteenth century. It was then copied for Barking Abbey, by around 1500, as the first half of Harley 1706.⁵² Before the Dissolution, perhaps around 1507, this copy then came into the possession of

⁴⁶ Blackburn Public Museum and Art Gallery Ms. 091.21040 (inscription on fo.7) (N. Ker, *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries* (Oxford, 1977), pp.109-110). Genealogical details have been inserted into spaces in the Calendar of this book of hours (ff.1-6), in a later sixteenth-century hand. Margaret Neville lived 1520-75, was born at Mereworth, between West Malling and Tonbridge, the only daughter and heir of Sir Thomas Neville, knight, of Mereworth. Sir Thomas was a secretary of state to Henry VIII and was third son of George Neville, Baron of Abergavenny, by Margaret daughter and heiress of Sir Hugh Fenne.

⁴⁷ Margaret must have come under a variety of religious influences when young; her godfather was the abbot of Boxley and her father, Sir Thomas, was a patron of Thomas Becon, the Tudor Protestant writer (*D.N.B.* xiv, p.302). She was married twice, firstly to Robert Southwell, who died in c.1559, and then to William Plumbe, in 1561. Plumbe outlived her and inherited the book of hours (F.J. Furnivall, 'The Neville and Southwell families of Mereworth in Kent', *Notes and Queries* 4th ser., 2 (1868), pp.577-8).

⁴⁸ Now BL Add. Ms 40006.

⁴⁹ George R. Keiser, 'Patronage and piety in fifteenth-century England: Margaret, Duchess of Clarence, Symon Wynter and Beinecke Ms 317', *Yale University Library Gazette* (1985), pp.32-46 at pp.36-41.

⁵⁰ See chapter five of this thesis for more detail on the Duchess of Clarence's daughters in Dartford Priory.

⁵¹ For brevity, these manuscripts will subsequently be referred to as Harley 1706 and Douce 322.

⁵² Doyle comments that there is at least one other manuscript that may have migrated from Dartford Priory to Barking Abbey; the first section of BL Add. Ms 10596, the *Book of the Craft of Dying* (also found in Douce 322 and Harley 1706), was copied by a Dominican, possibly for nuns of the order, therefore for Dartford Priory, of whom he may have been a chaplain (A.I. Doyle, 'Books

Elizabeth Beaumont, later wife of John Vere Earl of Oxford, whose family were patrons of Barking Abbey. Doyle comments on

... the known relations of members of the nunneries of Barking and Dartford with the Countess's immediate circle of family and friends, and the notable inter-communications between these religious houses and certain others in and about London throughout the fifteenth century regarding native devotional literature.⁵³

Elizabeth Beaumont herself had kinship connections with Dartford Priory and Barking Abbey, as Doyle has shown. Margaret Beaumont, prioress of Dartford from around 1442 to at least 1460, was Elizabeth Beaumont's first husband William's aunt. Elizabeth was also connected with Dartford Priory through her own family, since Prioress Joan Scrope (1471-2) was probably one of her father's sisters; Elizabeth's father was Richard, younger son of Henry, 4th Lord Scrope of Bolton, and it is recorded that Prioress Joan Scrope was daughter of one of the Lords Scrope of Bolton, most likely the fourth.⁵⁴ Elizabeth's sister Ann was a nun at Barking Abbey, between 1485 and 1527. Furthermore, in her will of 1537, Elizabeth mentioned her cousin, Margaret Scrope, who was also a nun of Barking Abbey; it was this nun who gave a copy of *The Mirror of the Life of Christ* to Agnes Goldwell.⁵⁵ The family of Dame Parnel Wrattisley of Dartford was also acquainted with the Scropes; her brother, William, included a bequest of a shield of gold and some amber beads to Lady Scrope, in his will of 1512.⁵⁶

The Scrope family also provides a more distant connection between Dartford Priory, Syon Abbey and a circle of devout, literate laywomen in East Anglia. John, 5th Lord Scrope of Bolton, was the third husband (from 1490 until his death in 1498) of Anne Harling, a devout book-owning gentlewoman of East Harling in East Anglia. She was the rich heiress of a knight, and owned and supervised nineteen manors and five advowsons in Norfolk, with a number of estates in Suffolk and Essex. She was thus very active in life. She was also one of a circle of bookish women in East Anglia presided over by Alice Chaucer, Duchess of Suffolk, which has been investigated by Carol Meale. In her will of 1498, Anne Harling made numerous bequests to these women and to monasteries in Norfolk and Suffolk, and to Syon Abbey, and she was a lay sister of five monasteries, including Syon.⁵⁷ The Scrope family had many ties with Syon Abbey, in the fifteenth century.⁵⁸ It seems highly possible that such a literary woman might have benefited from the activities of Syon Abbey, as a lay sister. No doubt she knew her third husband's niece, Elizabeth Beaumont, and through her may then have been linked to the Dartford Priory/Barking Abbey circles of which Doyle writes.

Nunneries and laity, therefore, both benefited from and created a demand for contemporary spiritual writing in English. The importance of books to spiritual development was stressed by

connected with the Vere family and Barking Abbey', *Transactions of the Essex Archeological Society*, ns 25 (1958), pp.222-43 at p.233).

⁵³ A.I. Doyle, 'Books connected with the Vere family and Barking Abbey', pp.232-3. See later in this chapter for a fuller treatment of Douce 322.

⁵⁴ Sources simply say that Joan Scrope was daughter of Lord Scrope of Bolton, but it is impossible that she was daughter of John, the fifth baron, who was born in the late 1430s and was, therefore, only in his early thirties when she was prioress (Geoffrey H. White, ed., *The Complete Peerage*, 11 (London, 1949), p.545).

⁵⁵ A.I. Doyle, 'Books connected with the Vere family and Barking Abbey', p.234. For further kinship connections of Elizabeth Beaumont involving books and connections with monasteries, see *ibid.*, pp.235-9.

⁵⁶ PROB 11/1778v.

⁵⁷ Gail Gibson, *The Theatre of Devotion: East Anglian drama and society in the late middle ages* (Chicago, 1989), pp.96-8; Carol Meale, 'Laywomen and their books in late medieval England', p.135; Geoffrey H. White, ed., *The Complete Peerage*, 11, p.545.

⁵⁸ A.I. Doyle, 'Publication by members of the religious orders' in Jeremy Griffiths & Derek Pearsall, eds, *Book Production and Publishing in Britain 1375-1475* (Cambridge, 1989), pp.109-23 at p.116.

contemporary writers alike to nuns and laity. The author of Syon Abbey's *The Myroure of oure Ladye* wrote:

And therefore thys gostly study to kepe the harte ys youre chyefe labour, thys ys youre moste charge and gretest bonde, this maketh the soule to be vertuous and this causeth all the outwarde beryng to be relygious

Similarly, a letter to the nuns of Syon, of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, urged the nuns to read texts sent with the letter (including extracts from St. Bridget's *Revelations* and Mechthild of Hackeborn) often, and to care for them 'as a chefe tresour for yor sowlys'.⁵⁹ Similar aims of devotional reading are expressed in a rubric near the end of Harley 1706:

We schulde rede and use bokes in to this ende and entente, for formys of presynge and preyng to god, to oure lady seynte marye and to alle the seyntes, that we myghte have by the forseyd use of redyng understondyng of god of hys benyfetyng of hys lawe of hys servyce or sume other goodly and gostely trowthis, or ellys that we myghte have good affeccyon toward god and hys seyntes and hys servyce to be gendryd and geten.

As Doyle comments, this was a notion of reading shared by late medieval monks, nuns, friars, vowesses and solitaries, and emulated by earnest secular clerks and layfolk.⁶⁰

David N. Bell points out that, as English gained a new respectability for religious writing, in the fifteenth century, from this time English spirituality was transmitted in the English language. Whether by choice or necessity, nuns showed greater interest in the vernacular literature than monks, and it was therefore nuns and not monks (with the exception of the Carthusians) who stood at the forefront of English spirituality.⁶¹ In contrast to the figure cited above for the proportion of surviving nunneries' manuscripts dating from the period after 1400, only thirteen per cent of the five thousand books surviving from male houses were written in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Nuns were unencumbered by male houses' greater pretensions to scholarly theology. Whilst many monks were still absorbed in traditional theology, in which they had in any case been superseded by the friars and the universities, many nunneries practised a more vibrant up to date spiritual and devotional life.⁶² This is one possible reason for the generally greater incidence of bequests to nunneries than traditional male monasteries in late medieval laypeople's wills. Investigations into Douce 322 and Harley 1706, and the circles of laity and nuns of Dartford and Barking, often linked by kin, reveal close connections between the worlds of literate pious laity and nuns from the same background.

Books and learning in Dominican nunneries

Within the convents of the Dominican order, both friars and nuns pursued strict monastic regimes dedicated to prayer and contemplation, in order to move closer to God. The friars then went out and preached to the laity drawing on the benefits of their study and contemplation. The nuns aided this mission by their lives of prayer. Dominican nuns did no formal study in the way that the friars did. Nevertheless, in certain nunneries at various times they did achieve high degrees of learning, in Latin as well as the

⁵⁹ Ann M. Hutchinson, 'What the nuns read: literary evidence from the English Bridgettine house, Syon Abbey', pp.221-2.

⁶⁰ A.I. Doyle, 'Books connected with the Vere family and Barking Abbey', p.231. This rubric appears in the half of Harley 1706 not copied from Douce 322.

⁶¹ David N. Bell, *What nuns read: books and libraries in medieval English nunneries*, pp.75-6.

⁶² David N. Bell, *What nuns read: books and libraries in medieval English nunneries*, pp.76-7.

vernacular, but especially the latter. In particular, Dominican nunneries in Germany, which constituted by far the largest section of the order, subscribed to the exalted conception of learning that motivated the friars.⁶³ Jordan of Saxony, the second master general of the Dominican order, exhorted the nuns of Bologna to a virile spirituality founded on the love of God, mutual charity, peace, joy and devotion to Jesus and the Cross.⁶⁴ These came to be enduring characteristics of female contemplative spirituality found in Dominican nunneries, and this was encouraged by the books and teaching the nuns were given.

The exuberant spirituality which developed in the German Dominican nunneries in the fourteenth century came about because, from the late thirteenth century, Dominican lectors and masters of theology visited the nunneries, preaching the same material they used for their university lectures.⁶⁵ Indeed, the intelligence of Dominican nuns was not underestimated; Hermann of Minden, prior of the German province, about 1286, ordered conventual priors to send none but learned friars to preach to the nuns. These friars, including the Dominican lectors of the province, preached doctrinal scholastic sermons to which, apparently, the nuns listened eagerly.⁶⁶ McDonnell finds that many Dominican sermons were a response to demand for sermons in the vernacular from the German and Dutch nuns themselves, and also educated women in *béguinages* of the kind that were frequently incorporated into the order as nunneries.⁶⁷ This resulted from the Friars Preachers' ministry amongst the feminine religious movement in the German province.⁶⁸ Through the preaching of such masters as Henry Suso, John Tauler and Meister Eckhart, who assisted nuns in recording their own mystical visions, these nuns were able to hear scholastic and mystical speculations in their own language.⁶⁹ The nuns of Dartford probably also benefited from preaching and teaching of a high intellectual standard; their pastoral care was undertaken by resident friars preachers, and the outgoing and incoming friar confessors, in 1536, were both doctors of divinity.⁷⁰ Certain Dominican friars additionally took the initiative of writing vernacular devotional literature for nuns, developing this through letter-writing.⁷¹ J.-A. Bizet, investigating Suso and the spiritual direction of Dominican nuns in late medieval Germany and Switzerland, concluded that the *cura monialis* played a determining role in the production of religious literature in the vernacular in the fourteenth century.⁷² This was a trend mirrored throughout Europe, which touched those laity who desired to deepen their spiritual lives.

Most Dominican nuns, like nuns of other orders, were not fluent in Latin, whether for the purposes of reading or listening. Latin literacy was not unknown amongst them, however. There is fragmentary evidence in *vitae* of Cistercian and Dominican nuns, and *béguines*, in the thirteenth century, who could read and memorise such texts as the sermons of St. Bernard. French noblewomen of the time of St. Louis received a Latin education, and if this was still true when Poissy Priory was founded it accounts

⁶³ Ernest McDonnell, *The Béguines and Béghards in Medieval Culture: with special emphasis on the Belgian scene* (Rutgers, 1954), p.374.

⁶⁴ William Hinnebusch, *History of the Dominican Order*, ii: *Intellectual and Cultural Life to 1500* (New York, 1974), p.287.

⁶⁵ William Hinnebusch, *History of the Dominican Order*, ii: *Intellectual and Cultural Life to 1500*, p.298.

⁶⁶ William Hinnebusch, *History of the Dominican Order*, i (New York, 1965), p.384

⁶⁷ Ernest McDonnell, *The Béguines and Béghards in Medieval Culture*, p.341, 344.

⁶⁸ Ernest McDonnell, *The Béguines and Béghards in Medieval Culture*, pp.200-203.

⁶⁹ William Hinnebusch, *History of the Dominican Order*, i, p.384.

⁷⁰ In a letter to Cromwell, Prioress Cressener described the former confessor as 'an aged doctor of dyvinite' and his successor as 'master doctor Struddell' (PRO SP 1/112 fo.211); Robert Stroddel witnessed the will of a relative, Peter Strode of North Cray, near Dartford, on 9th March 1539-40, as 'Robert Strode doctor in dyvinyte' (DRb/Pwr9/293). See chapter two for more detail about these people.

⁷¹ Ernest McDonnell, *The Béguines and Béghards in Medieval Culture*, pp.360, 402.

⁷² J.-A. Bizet, 'Henri Suso', *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, 7 (Paris, 1969), coll. 234-57 at coll. 241-2.

for the devotion to learning Philip the Fair encouraged there.⁷³ An early fifteenth-century prioress of Utrecht was renowned for her understanding of Holy Scripture and use of the Latin Bible.⁷⁴ When Emperor Maximilian visited the Dominican nunnery of St. Margaret in Strasbourg, in 1507, he spoke to the community in Latin for half an hour. This was exceptional, however. The German provincials, who sent their letters to the nunneries in Latin, expected the friar chaplains to translate them for the nuns.⁷⁵ Most Dominican nuns probably picked up no more than a working knowledge of liturgical Latin through frequent repetition of the offices.⁷⁶

Nuns' learning is also demonstrated by their own scholarly and literary activities. Evidence of continental female *scriptoria* in the order was mentioned in chapter two. Additionally, in the thirteenth century abbesses and nuns undertook to preach, although this was frowned on by the Church.⁷⁷ Other nuns wrote biographies in the vernacular of sisters who had been favoured with visions and ecstasies. Elsbeth Stigel, for example, Henry Suso's correspondent, traced the experiences of thirty sisters of Töss, as well as having a significant hand in the writing and editing of Suso's own *vita*.⁷⁸ A number of other examples are given by McDonnell, and they point to a high level of literacy, at least in the vernacular, in many continental Dominican nunneries.

Finally, the ownership of books suggests the importance of literacy and devotional reading in Dominican nunneries. The evidence of surviving books needs to be treated with caution, but there are other sources with which this evidence may be supplemented. Humbert of Romans ordered that every Dominican convent had to reserve a distinct place for books, although this may only have applied to the friars. The conventual prior had charge of these books. They fell into three groups, namely a liturgical collection in the sacristy, possibly a chained reference library, and a general borrowing library. One friar was to be designated librarian, and his duties were set out by Humbert. Friars could also borrow books belonging to the province, or between convents, for a fixed period, or for the life of a particular friar.⁷⁹ It is not clear how much of this was true of the nuns of the order, but the few catalogues of books in Dominican nunneries that survive indicate that many had large collections, and these must have been kept together in one place under the care of one of the sisters. A few nunneries of the order had very large collections. The Dominican nuns of St. Catherine's monastery at St. Gall, in Switzerland, collected a library of about 250 volumes, in the fourteenth century, and doubled this in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. In 1484, they possessed 187 Latin works in their library. The Dominican nuns of St. Catherine's monastery in Nuremberg copied some of their own spiritual reading books, in the fifteenth century, and many novices brought books with them, on entry. The catalogue they drew up of the 370 books which they used for refectory and devotional reading, many of which held a number of works bound together, were listed under fourteen categories. They gathered copies of most books produced in Germany during the fourteenth and

⁷³ Ernest McDonnell, *The Béguines and Béghards in Medieval Culture*, pp.374-5.

⁷⁴ Ernest McDonnell, *The Béguines and Béghards in Medieval Culture*, p.405.

⁷⁵ William Hinnebusch, *History of the Dominican Order*, i, pp.384.

⁷⁶ Ernest McDonnell, *The Béguines and Béghards in Medieval Culture*, p.385.

⁷⁷ Ernest McDonnell, *The Béguines and Béghards in Medieval Culture*, p.343. In the middle of that century Humbert of Romans, the master general of the Dominican order, set out four reasons why women should be excluded from the pulpit – that their knowledge was not broad enough, the inferior role that was assigned to them, that they would provoke luxury, and because of the folly of Eve who upset the whole world by teaching.

⁷⁸ Ernest McDonnell, *The Béguines and Béghards in Medieval Culture*, p.403.

⁷⁹ Kenneth William Humphreys, 'Les bibliothèques des Ordres mendiants', in André Vernet, ed., *Histoire des Bibliothèques Françaises*, i: *Les bibliothèques médiévales du vi^e siècle à 1530* (Promodis, 1989), pp.125-45 at p.126.

fifteenth centuries, especially Bibles, Gospels and Psalters. They had the important works of the German mystics, much hagiographic and homiletic material, the sermons of local Dominicans, probably also some Latin and scholarly German books.⁸⁰ Generally, however, monasteries of nuns had a preponderance of devotional and spiritual books, most of them in the vernacular. McDonnell concludes that Dominican nunnery catalogues were narrow, since they lacked biblical glosses, the Vulgate, and patristic writings, but they possessed more sermons, devotional manuals and a larger proportion of vernacular works that male convents.⁸¹ In addition, it may be assumed that nunneries possessed certain books that were required reading for mealtimes in refectory. These included the Constitutions (to be read once a year), the lives of the Fathers, histories, the dialogues of Gregory, sermons, and appropriate scriptural and other texts on particular feast days.⁸²

As England's only Dominican nunnery, Dartford Priory's only possible monastic influences were the English friar confessors and the Dominican nunneries of the continent, the majority of which, as stated, were in Germany. Any founder of a Dominican nunnery in the mid-fourteenth century must have been aware of their reputation for mystical contemplative spirituality and learning. It is thus of note that the failed attempt to found an English convent, shortly before Edward III took up the plan, involved bringing over nuns from Brabant, in the German province. That scheme failed, but these continental Dominican influences may still have operated on Dartford through the initial link with Poissy Priory, from where Dartford's first nuns were probably drawn, and subsequent contacts with the order on the continent.

Poissy Priory, at the time that Dartford Priory was founded, was known for its intellectual activities and possibly also for its contemplative spirituality, and these traditions may have been established at Dartford. Philip the Fair particularly recommended the study of letters when he founded Poissy Priory, and commissioned four friars to search out and transcribe books to supply the nuns' spiritual and intellectual needs.⁸³ Philip himself enriched the priory with a number of manuscripts.⁸⁴ One of these, which he bequeathed to the priory, was a *Miroir historial* given to him by a monk or friar, Guillaume de Paris.⁸⁵ No doubt, the capacity of this house for learning was related to the aristocratic origins of many of the nuns. J.-B. Feuillet wrote in the seventeenth century that the first prioress of Poissy, Matthée de la Roche, developed the 'interior life' of the monastery, but Moreau-Rendu does not quote his sources, if indeed he gives any. Prioress de la Roche came to Poissy from the house of Dominicaines at Montargis, in 1304, when Poissy Priory was founded, and 'élevait avec grand soin cette troupe élite de vierges dans toutes les pratiques de la vie intérieur' (raised with great care this elite troupe of virgins in all the practices of the interior life).⁸⁶ At the end of the fourteenth century, a daughter of Christine de Pisan was, apparently, so taken up with the "'vie contemplative et grande dévotion'" that she became a nun at Poissy.⁸⁷ That suggests that life in the

⁸⁰ William Hinnebusch, *History of the Dominican Order*, ii: *Intellectual and Cultural Life to 1500*, pp.203-4.

⁸¹ Ernest McDonnell, *The Béguines and Béghards in Medieval Culture*, p.400.

⁸² Ernest McDonnell, *The Béguines and Béghards in Medieval Culture*, pp.384-5.

⁸³ Alain Erlande-Brandenburg, 'La Priorale Saint-Louis de Poissy', *Bulletin Monumental*, 129 (1971), pp.85-112 at p.110; William Hinnebusch, *History of the Dominican Order*, ii: *Intellectual and Cultural Life to 1500*, p.209; S. Moreau-Rendu, *Le Prieuré Royal de Saint-Louis de Poissy* (Colmar, 1968), p.89.

⁸⁴ Erlande-Brandenburg, 'La Priorale Saint-Louis de Poissy', p.110; Erlande-Brandenburg says the manuscripts are listed in Jules Viard, *Les Journaux du Trésor de Philippe IV le Bel* (Paris, 1940).

⁸⁵ Patricia Stimemann, 'Les bibliothèques princières et privées aux xii et xiii siècles' in Pascal Fouché, *Histoire des bibliothèques françaises i: Les bibliothèques médiévales du vi siècle à 1530* (Promodis, 1989), pp.173-91 at p.184.

⁸⁶ J.-B. Feuillet, *L'année dominicaine ou les vies des Saints, des Bienheureux, des Martyrs et des autres personnages ... de l'Ordre des Frères Prêcheurs* (Paris, 1678-9); cited S. Moreau-Rendu, *Le Prieuré Royal de Saint-Louis de Poissy*, p.95.

⁸⁷ Régine Pernoud, *Christine de Pisan* (Paris, 1982), p.99. This quotation is not attributed by Pernoud who does not use footnotes.

nunnery of Poissy was contemplative and filled with devotion. Further, Moreau-Rendu suggests that Poissy Priory was influenced by the mystical spirituality of the Dominican convents in Switzerland, the Rhineland and Alsace, which produced such figures as Eckhart, Tauler and Suso, through books. Her suggestion is based on the inscriptions in Paris Bibliothèque Nationale Latin Ms 5642, one of only two known copies of the 'Lives of Unterlinden', a mystical writing from Colmar in Alsace.⁸⁸ These Lives are poems which manifest a spirituality characterised by an emphasis on poverty, the rigours of the Cross and lowly work, and attainment of a direct relationship with God gained through adoration and austerity rather than abstract theological speculation. The manuscript contains the inscription 'Ce livre est a seurs Guyonne et Michele des Ursins, religieuses de saint Loys de Poissy', and, on the last page, 'A seur Claude Javenel des Ursins'. *L'Année Dominicaine* shows that these three women were nuns at Poissy in the fifteenth century/early sixteenth century. The hand is fifteenth-century. Moreau-Rendu concludes from this that the nuns of Poissy meditated on the works of Töss and Colmar.⁸⁹

This evidence is suggestive but more would obviously be required to prove the existence of such a spirituality at Poissy in the fifteenth century or earlier. This evidence is of interest because what was true of Poissy must also have been true of Dartford. The four nuns who went to Dartford, in 1356, must have established the new nunnery in the image of their old house. The tradition they established, at the beginning, in which the English novices were trained, must have endured and been passed on. It was demonstrated, in chapter three, that the nuns of Dartford were very conscious of their identity as Dominican nuns. In chapter two it was suggested that, in the early sixteenth century, Prioress Elizabeth Cressener enjoyed a friendship with her ghostly father, possibly reminiscent of such relationships in German convents of the order, based on intellectual and spiritual mutuality. It was suggested that the prioress's administrative activities demonstrated their practical intelligence. There are, indeed, indications that individual nuns at Dartford, or the whole convent, demonstrated intellectual achievements. As mentioned, the registers of the master general record that, in 1481, Sister Jane Fisher, was given permission to receive instruction from a preceptor in grammar and Latin, and that she and other gentlewomen were permitted to be 'called to learning'.⁹⁰ A lesser degree of learning was necessary for the instruction of novices by a novice mistress. An entry in the register of the master general, dated 19th June 1481, mentions that Sister Jane Tyrellis of Dartford, who was given permission to speak with friends in the *locutorium*, had been educated by the then sub-prioress.⁹¹ One of the virtues attributed to Sister Jane Vane, in the mid 1530s, when the bishop of Rochester suggested her to be the next prioress, was that there was 'none beter learned' in the convent.⁹² Dartford Priory was, then, a nunnery which contained intelligent and learned nuns.

⁸⁸ Moreau-Rendu, *Le Prieuré Royal de Saint-Louis de Poissy*, pp.101-2; see Jeanne Ancelet-Hustache, *Les 'Vitae sororum' d'Unterlinden* (Paris, 1930). For examples of other German Dominican nunneries in Alsace where mysticism was known, in the fourteenth century, see: Ernest McDonnell, *The Béguines and Béghards in Medieval Culture*, pp.40ff..

⁸⁹ S. Moreau-Rendu, *Le Prieuré Royal de Saint-Louis de Poissy*, pp.102-3.

⁹⁰ C.F.R. Palmer, 'Notes on the Priory of Dartford, in Kent', p.178.

⁹¹ C.F.R. Palmer, 'Notes on the Priory of Dartford, in Kent', p.178.

⁹² PRO SP 1/112 fo.212.

Learning in Dartford Priory: English nunnery schools

Whatever was the extent of learning in English or Latin, in English nunneries, they were considered as suitable places for gentry and nobility to send their children for a basic education. Strictly speaking, the presence of children, whether girls or boys, infringed the ideal of monastic seclusion, but convents found it to be financially beneficial. Forty-nine English nunneries are recorded as having received girls for education at some time or other between 1282-1537, with a greater number in those dioceses for which bishops' registers are more complete. Power estimated that two thirds of medieval nunneries took in children at some point. Sometimes the evidence is of one or two children taken in a single year, but in other cases, such as Godstow, it seems to have been a regular practice.⁹³ The number of children taken in rarely exceeded the number of nuns, not least because of the concern of bishops. The highest number of schoolchildren recorded in a nunnery was twenty-six, at the Benedictine abbey of St. Mary's Winchester, in 1536. This was a large house of twenty-six choir nuns and thirteen lay sisters, at the Dissolution. Others, like Sopwell, had only two children present, in the same period.⁹⁴ The children at St. Mary's Winchester, were described as the offspring of lords, knights and gentry. They included a daughter of Sir Geoffrey Pole, Lady Bridget Plantagenet, grand-daughter of Edward IV, and daughters of distinguished Sussex and Hampshire families, many of them known for their strong Catholic allegiance in later years. John Paul feels that this particular example amounted to more of a formal boarding school than the usual run of small nunnery schools.⁹⁵ There was also a school at Romsey Abbey, another large Benedictine nunnery in Hampshire, in the early sixteenth century, when one of the nuns was called schoolmistress.⁹⁶ A number of Yorkshire nunneries educated gentry children right up to the sixteenth century; a grandchild of Cromwell, for example, was at school in Wilberfoss nunnery, in 1537.⁹⁷ Unlike schools run by some sixteenth-century Yorkshire friars and canons, which were for local children, girls educated in nunneries, like boarders, corrodians and other visitors, always came from noble and county gentry families.⁹⁸ Power similarly concluded that English nunneries never gave schooling to poor girls, but to daughters of the nobility, gentry and rich burgesses.⁹⁹

Hinnebusch has found no evidence of the continental Dominican nunneries being engaged in the education of girls and young women before the late middle ages. There is no sign that this was one of the aims at any of the three original nunneries founded by Dominic. When it was undertaken, it was on a moderate scale.¹⁰⁰ However, if the Constitutions of 1259 permitted girls intended to be nuns to be received into nunneries at an age younger than that at which they could be professed, there must have been some provision made for educating at least these girls. The evidence of schooling at Dartford Priory mostly survives from the sixteenth century. As a Dominican nunnery, Dartford came under the direct jurisdiction of the order, but records of the English Dominican province have not survived, and those of the master

⁹³ Eileen Power, *Medieval English Nunneries*, pp. 260-4.

⁹⁴ Eileen Power, *Medieval English Nunneries*, p.265.

⁹⁵ John Paul, 'Dame Elizabeth Shelley, last abbess of St. Mary's Abbey, Winchester', *Hampshire Field Club Proceedings*, 23 (1965), pp.60-71 at p.64.

⁹⁶ Diane Coldicott, *Hampshire Nunneries*, (Chichester, 1989), p.92.

⁹⁷ Claire Cross & Noreen Vickers, *Monks, Friars and Nuns in sixteenth-century Yorkshire*, Yorkshire Archaeological Society Record Series, 150 (1995), p.7.

⁹⁸ Claire Cross & Noreen Vickers, *Monks, Friars and Nuns*, p.7.

⁹⁹ Eileen Power, *Medieval English Nunneries*, pp.265-6. She cites the case of the miller's wife in Chaucer's *The Reeve's Tale*, who was 'y-comen of noble kin', although the illegitimate daughter of a clergyman, and 'was y-fostred in a nonnerye'.

¹⁰⁰ William Hinnebusch, *History of the Dominican Order*, i, p.386

general in Rome only survive after 1474. Children had probably been educated long before this evidence survives. The wardrobe account of Thomas of Lancaster, Duke of Clarence, c.1418-21, records payments made to Dartford Priory for the lodging of his wife's two daughters in Dartford Priory, in the charge of the prioress, for over a year, whilst he and their mother joined the English army in Normandy. The prioress was paid 6s 8d a week for the two daughters, and 18d a week for their two maidservants.¹⁰¹ This is evidence of Dartford Priory taking in secular boarders, but it may have been understood that these young unmarried girls would be given some education. At some point between 1518 and 1524, Friar Antoninus de Ferrara, the vicar of master general Friar Garcias de Loyssa, conceded that Prioress Elizabeth Cressener of Dartford might receive any well-born matron or widow of good repute, to dwell perpetually in the monastery, with or without the habit, according to the custom of the monastery, and also that she might receive young ladies, and give them a suitable training 'according to the mode heretofore pursued', implying that this was an established practice. This concession was confirmed by the next master general, on 23rd July 1527.¹⁰²

It is not known what these girls were taught by the nuns. Power felt that the education provided in nunneries probably included reading, embroidery, needlework and singing. She finds it doubtful that girls were taught to write as well as read, or that Latin was taught, since most nuns were probably not literate in that language themselves, except insofar as they knew liturgical texts by heart.¹⁰³ In 1500, when William Milet of Dartford made arrangements for his burial in the conventual church, he included a bequest of a few pence 'to every child ryding a lesson' on that occasion.¹⁰⁴ Wills made in the diocese of Rochester occasionally asked for the attendance of children at funerals, to assist the clerk or priest in singing or saying some such text as the Psalm *De profundis*. Milet's request confirms that there were children able to read present within Dartford Priory. They probably also received elementary instruction in the faith from the nuns. This was a role specifically assigned to women in medieval society; women in noble and gentry households often taught their children the basics of the faith using the prayer texts such as the *Credo*, *Pater Noster* and *Ave Maria*.¹⁰⁵

It was not just girls who were sent to nunneries for an elementary education, despite the concern of ecclesiastical authorities. The Cistercian order issued a statute in 1256-7 forbidding the education of boys in nunneries of that order, but this was probably not observed; when Bishop Alnwick of Lincoln conducted his visitations of 1445, five of the convents he found educating boys were of that order. Bishops' injunctions in various other nunneries, forbidding the education of boys, imply that they were present. Boys were recorded at Romsey Abbey, in 1311, in five Yorkshire convents between 1314-17, at three nunneries in the fifteenth century and at Redlingfield in 1514. In several cases, in English nunneries, it was necessary for bishops to issue injunctions forbidding girls or boys to sleep in the dormitory with the nuns, implying that they did.¹⁰⁶ Bishops forbade boys staying with nuns later than their ninth or tenth year, for reasons of decorum, but also (Power feels) because the education nuns could offer was not sufficient

¹⁰¹ C.M. Woolgar, ed., *Household Accounts from Medieval England. Part 2* (Oxford, 1993), pp.604, 671.

¹⁰² C.F.R. Palmer, 'Notes on the Priory of Dartford, in Kent', p.178. Garcias de Loyssa was master general from 1518 to 1524.

¹⁰³ Eileen Power, *Medieval English Nunneries*, pp.276-9.

¹⁰⁴ PROB 11/12/138.

¹⁰⁵ Nicole Bériou, 'Femmes et prédicateurs: la transmission de la foi' in J. Delumeau, ed., *La religion de ma mère: le rôle des femmes dans la transmission de la foi* (Paris, 1992), pp.51-70.

beyond that age.¹⁰⁷ The nuns of Dartford Priory also took in boys for education, at least in the sixteenth century. The evidence for this survives in the form of one letter, of 1534, written to a friar in Cambridge by his mother. Elizabeth George reprimanded her son, John George, in strong terms, for going against his upbringing and the whole tradition of his family by being 'of the new fashion, that is to say, a heretic'. He had evidently been brought up by the nuns of Dartford, who had educated him in the ways of true religion, and he had now insulted them by writing to them on some reformist matter:

I heard also of the letters you sent to the nuns of Detford (Dartford) and another to your bener. I am sorry for it, but you are not, or you would be ashamed to write to such discreet persons, especially to those who have had to bring you up

Elizabeth George told her son that he would be as welcome at her home 'as water in to the schepe', wished God's curse and her own on him, and cut him off from his inheritance rather than maintain him 'in lewdness and heresy'. Finally, she warned him, 'You can do nothing so privily but it is known in Detforde and to your bener.'¹⁰⁸ It is possible that Friar John George had been sent to Dartford Priory for an elementary education, paid for by his benefactor, with the intention that he should become a Dominican friar when old enough. This indicates that the nuns of Dartford must have had an excellent reputation for the upbringing they gave children in their monastery.

Dartford Priory's books

Caution is necessary when drawing conclusions about the religious and intellectual activity in Dartford Priory from the books the nuns were given, because they may never have been used; or from surviving manuscripts, because only one of them was directly commissioned by the nunnery. It is possible, however, that donors consulted the nunnery before having manuscripts compiled, or choosing what to give. Literacy might not have included the ability to write, up to the fifteenth century, but the nuns of Dartford could read, and certain individuals were particularly learned amongst nuns, as the evidence from the registers of the master general of the Dominican order, cited above, demonstrates.¹⁰⁹ No library list survives from Dartford, but there are a few manuscripts, which will be investigated in detail below, which contain mostly devotional works and religious treatises. They also include a copy of the *Brut*, a commentary on the Rule of St. Augustine, and a *Distichia Catonis* with vernacular translation. More manuscripts survive from Dartford Priory than from the other medieval Kentish nunneries, which may be down to chance. Additionally, there are references in various documents to books at Dartford Priory which do not survive.

It is not known how Dartford Priory obtained most of its books. Insufficient evidence of nunneries' books survives to make any assessment of the relative importance of purchase, donation and copying. Donation played a major role in male houses, but it is impossible to say whether or not this was true of nunneries.¹¹⁰ The learned Dominican friar chaplains of Dartford must have brought books with

¹⁰⁶ John Tillotson, 'Visitation and reform of the Yorkshire nunneries in the fourteenth century', *Northern History* 30 (1994), pp.1-21 at p.16.

¹⁰⁷ Eileen Power, *Medieval English Nunneries*, p.263.

¹⁰⁸ *L.&P. Hen. VIII*, vii, no.667.

¹⁰⁹ Inscriptions in some of the fifteenth-century manuscripts and the letters written by both Prioress Cresseners, in the sixteenth century, suggest that many of the nuns could write. This probably increased with time.

¹¹⁰ David N. Bell, *What nuns read: books and libraries in medieval English nunneries*, pp.17-18.

them, and they may have made them available to the nuns, in the same way as the brothers of Syon Abbey supplied the nuns there with reading material. Doyle comments that a copy of the *Book of the Craft of Dying* was made by a Dominican friar possibly for the nuns of Dartford of whom he may have been a chaplain.¹¹¹ The province may also have provided books specifically for the nuns, including those works that were supposed to be read out at mealtimes. Some books came to Dartford Priory as legacies or gifts, as wills and inscriptions in some of the surviving manuscripts suggest. The Douce 322 devotional manuscript was a gift to one particular nun of Dartford from a relative. In 1495, Cecily Duchess of York bequeathed three books to her grand-daughter, Bridget, the late Edward IV's youngest daughter, who was a nun at Dartford. These were a copy of the *Legenda Aurea* in vellum, a 'boke of the life of Saint Kateryn of Sene' and a 'boke of Saint Matilde'.¹¹² A life of St. Catherine of Siena was a very suitable work for nuns of Dartford Priory; St. Catherine was a Dominican nun herself and known for her enthusiastic piety, mysticism, warmth, emphasis on affective spirituality and love, rather than systematic theology.¹¹³ The Duchess also left to another grand-daughter, Bridget's cousin, Anne de la Pole, who she said was the prioress of Syon Abbey, 'a boke of Bonaventure and Hilton in the same in Englishe, and (appropriately) a boke of the Revelacions of Saint Burgitte'.¹¹⁴ Sir Thomas Exmewe, a former mayor of London, in his will of January 1528-9, bequeathed 'to Dame Elizabeth Exmewe nonne at Dertford my doughter a lymned (illuminated) mattens boke coveryd with crymsyn velvet with two claspes of silver and gilte'.¹¹⁵ Further, two of three works written by John Fisher whilst imprisoned in the Tower of London were dedicated to his half-sister Elizabeth White, who was a nun at Dartford Priory. These were entitled *A Spiritual Consolation ... by John Fysher ... to hys Sister Elizabeth, at such tyme as hee was prisoner in the Tower of London*, and *The Wayes to Perfect Religion*. Presumably Elizabeth was given copies of these at Dartford.¹¹⁶

Books varied widely in price, but most nunneries had very low incomes, in the later middle ages, and had little money to spare on even the cheaper books.¹¹⁷ However, either the prioress or the friars of Dartford Priory procured books on occasions. An entry in the Patent Rolls indicates that the convent bought books from passing tradesmen, early on, in order to stock the library. On 27th July 1372, William Wokyng called 'Bedel' of London, a highwayman, came up before the sheriff and a coroner of London. Amongst his crimes, he admitted that, around All Saints' Day in 1365, he and seven others named had ambushed an unnamed rector on Swanscombe Hill (between Dartford and Gravesend) and robbed him of three horses, two girdles harnessed with silver worth eight marks, and £10 worth of books. One of the ambushers, John Torkeseye, sold a large one of these books at the priory of Dartford, for the sum of five marks.¹¹⁸ Unfortunately, the contents of this book are not recorded, but this incident indicates that the convent was interested in books of the kind possessed by secular clergy, which, at this time, were most likely to be

¹¹¹ A.I. Doyle, 'Books connected with the Vere family and Barking Abbey', p.233 (concerning the first section of BL Add. Ms 10596).

¹¹² J.G. Nichols & J. Bruce, eds, *Wills from Doctors Commons* Camden Society, no 83 (1863), p.2.

¹¹³ William Hinnebusch, *History of the Dominican Order, ii: Intellectual and Cultural Life to 1500*, pp.355ff..

¹¹⁴ J.G. Nichols & J. Bruce, eds, *Wills from Doctors Commons*, p.2.

¹¹⁵ PCC will at 3 Jankyn: printed in Lewis Pryce, 'Sir Thomas Exmewe', *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, 6th ser., 19 (1919), pp.233-75 at p. 270.

¹¹⁶ B. Bradshaw & E. Duffy, eds, *Humanism, Reform and the Reformation: The Career of Bishop John Fisher* (Cambridge, 1989), pp.2, 40-1, 212.

¹¹⁷ David N. Bell, *What nuns read: books and libraries in medieval English nunneries*, p.13.

¹¹⁸ *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1370-74*, pp.297-8. Wokyng was imprisoned at Newgate in 1372 (*Cal. Pat. Rolls 1370-74*, pp.291-2).

written in Latin.¹¹⁹ Dartford Priory evidently placed a sufficiently great emphasis on the need to acquire books to be willing to spend over three pounds of its income on one volume.

At least one of Dartford Priory's surviving manuscripts, a book of hours with additional prayers, was actually commissioned by one of the nuns themselves; the Latin inscription states that Sister Emma Wyntyr, who is named in the inscriptions in two other Dartford manuscripts, had it made.¹²⁰ Books continued to be of great importance to the Dartford nuns; when they went into exile in Flanders, in 1559, it was their clothing and their books that they took with them.¹²¹

Dartford Priory's surviving literary and devotional manuscripts¹²²

Less than ten per cent of surviving manuscripts from medieval English nunneries carry inscriptions naming the institution, and the majority of these are in Latin. About a third carry inscriptions naming individual nuns, commonly beginning 'Iste liber constat ...', and in a dozen cases the inscription specifies that the book was to pass to the convent after the named nun's death.¹²³ There are eight manuscripts listed by Ker and Watson that belonged to Dartford Priory.¹²⁴ Four of these can be identified because the inscriptions mention the monastery; three others are associated with Dartford because the inscriptions name women known from external evidence or inscriptions in other books to have been nuns there; the eighth manuscript (Bodley Ms 255) has no inscription but bears the arms of the Cressener family and is taken up with the Rule of St. Augustine. In detail, the inscription in Downside Abbey Ms 26542 states that it was a gift to three women, Beatrice Chaumbire, Sister Emma Wynter and Sister Denise Caston, nuns of Dartford, to abide in the nunnery forever. The inscription in Dublin Trinity College Ms 490 states simply that it belonged to the religious sisters of Dartford. The inscription in Harley 2254 states that this book belonged to Dame Alice Branthwayte, the prioress of Dartford. Douce 322 was a gift to Dame Parnel Wrattisley, sister of Dartford Priory, for ever to remain in that nunnery. The inscriptions in the London Society of Antiquaries Ms 717 and Oxford Bodleian Ms Rawlinson G.59 simply name Sister Emma Wynter, who was identified in the Downside manuscript as a nun of Dartford. The inscription in the book of hours in the Somerset County Record Office in Taunton asks for a Sister 'Alice Brainthawyt' to be prayed for; she was probably the prioress of Dartford of that name as the book contains prayers of Dominican usage.¹²⁵ Untypically of nunneries' manuscripts, half of Dartford's contain inscriptions written in English; the three with Latin inscriptions are the Dublin Trinity College Ms 490, London Society of Antiquaries Ms 717 and the Somerset Record Office book of hours.

A quarter of surviving manuscripts that belonged to late medieval English nunneries contain indications of the source of the volume; 17.5 per cent (twenty-eight books) were gifts or bequests, and three books were bought for the nunnery concerned. Amongst Dartford Priory manuscripts, only Douce 322 states the name of the previous owner/purchaser and donor. The Office of the Dead manuscript (the

¹¹⁹ This may indicate that it was the friars rather than the nuns who bought the book.

¹²⁰ London Society of Antiquaries Ms 717.

¹²¹ C.F.R. Palmer, 'History of the Priory of Dartford, in Kent', p.270. I have entered into correspondence with the university and Dominican library in Ghent, and the archives in Ghent and Bruges, but have been unable to trace these books in Belgium.

¹²² See appendix three for descriptions and detailed lists of contents of these manuscripts.

¹²³ David N. Bell, *What nuns read: books and libraries in medieval English nunneries*, pp.38-9.

¹²⁴ N. Ker, *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain*, 2nd edn (London, 1964), pp.57, 251; Andrew G. Watson, ed., *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain: Supplement to the second edition* (London, 1987), p.15.

Somerset Record Office volume) commissioned by Sister Emma Wynter was one of only three surviving manuscripts from any nunnery which specifically state that they were commissioned by nuns.¹²⁶

A total of seven nuns of Dartford Priory are named in these inscriptions. Prioress Alice Branthwayte and Sister Emma Wynter are the only sisters named in more than one manuscript. The latter must have been particularly bookish amongst nuns at Dartford as she was named in three of the eight surviving manuscripts, one of which she herself commissioned. Besides these two, and Sisters Denise Caston, Beatrice Chaumbire and Parnel Wrattisley, already mentioned, the inscription in Harley 2254 asks for prayers for the souls of Dame Elizabeth Rede and Joanne Newmarche. These manuscripts are now examined in some detail.

Oxford, Bodleian Library Ms Douce 322

This collection of affective devotional verse and extracts from treatises connects Dartford Priory and the religion of devout literate wealthy laity of the late fifteenth century who were interested in the practice of contemplative religious life. The Beaumont family and Barking Abbey connections have already been investigated, but the family connections of the individuals named in the inscription, on fo.i, remain to be explored. The inscription states:

These booke in whome is contente dyvers devoute tretis and specyally the tretis that is callid Ars moriendi ys of the gifte of Wylliam Baron Esquyer to remayne for evyr to the place and nonrye of Detforde and specially to the use of dame Pernelle Wrattisley sister of the same place by licence of her abbas the whiche Pernelle is nece to the forseyde gentyلمان William Baron. .

This indicates that it was necessary for nuns to gain the permission of the prioress to possess books. External evidence provides identification of William Baron and Parnel's family. William Wrottesley of Reading, a wealthy gentleman resident in the parish of St. Olave's Silver Street, London, bequeathed to 'Dame Parnell beyng w^hin the nonry of Dertforde' 13s 4d, his best 'furre' and his best corall beads 'gawded' with silver and gilt, to pray for his soul, in his will of 26th December 1512 (proved 4th February 1512-13).¹²⁷ William does not say that Dame Parnell was related to him, but the Wrottesley family pedigree shows that she was his sister. Their father, Sir Walter Wrottesley (d.1473), was a former sheriff of Staffordshire, governor of Calais, and merchant of the Staple, who was pardoned for his involvement in Fauconbridge's rebellion in 1471. Sir Walter married Jane Baron c.1456; she was daughter and heir of William Baron armiger of Berkshire and one of the four Tellers of the Exchequer. William Baron, who donated this manuscript to Dame Parnel, was therefore her grandfather rather than her uncle, as the inscription implies. Sir Walter's second son, William Wrottesley, Dame Parnel's brother, inherited the Baron estates in Berkshire from his mother, explaining connections with Reading revealed in his will. As fifth daughter with one brother born in 1457, Parnel must have been born after 1462 (six years after their parents' marriage) but before 1473 (their father's death). Since girls could be professed in Dominican nunneries from the age of thirteen, William Baron could have donated this manuscript to Dartford Priory at any time from the mid 1470s, although no reference to him has been found from after 1469. He was active in 1434; if he was in his twenties then, and died as late as his eighties, the last possible decade in which he could have given the

¹²⁵ See appendix one.

¹²⁶ David N. Bell, *What nuns read: books and libraries in medieval English nunneries*, pp.38-9.

¹²⁷ PROB 11/17/78v.

manuscript to Dartford Priory was the 1490s.¹²⁸ Doyle concludes for similar reasons that the manuscript was probably compiled from various sources in a professional scriptorium in London by around 1475. He adds that it is just the sort of manuscript that might have been produced for someone of substance and influence in the metropolitan milieu, both secular and religious, with devout well-to-do women in mind. He also points out that Baron was buried in the London Charterhouse, which is of interest because of the Carthusian texts contained within the manuscript.¹²⁹ The single hand in Douce 322 is dated by Doyle to the middle or second half of the fifteenth century, which supports the above dating from external evidence. He concludes that it was then copied for Barking Abbey at some point by 1500 (now surviving as the first half of Harley 1706).¹³⁰

The manuscript starts with Baron's inscription, on its own parchment sheet, and not with the contents page. This may have been inserted, if William Baron owned the manuscript for some years before passing it to his grand-daughter, perhaps at the time of his death. Alternatively, he may have had it compiled specifically for Parnel Wrattisley and Dartford Priory, bearing their religious and literary tastes in mind. Its contents were suitable both for Dominican nuns practising a contemplative spirituality and for devout literate laity such as Baron himself; it contains instructional material in the form of prayers of confession and a treatise on the Eucharist, texts of Dominican and Carthusian origin, and works associated with the popular fourteenth-century hermit Richard Rolle (whether or not Rolle was actually responsible for them). The anonymous affective verse meditations that follow Lydgate's Calendar were typical examples of much late medieval religious literature that sought to encourage devotion to Christ and the Virgin Mary by dwelling on their respective suffering and grief, and on the sinfulness of humanity. For example, the poem *Quia amore languet* (fo.8), uses a phrase from *Song of Songs* with other language of love-longing to describe the Virgin Mary's relationship to mankind. It was, therefore, an approachable text for laity familiar with the many Marian liturgical texts used in parish churches.¹³¹ The Blessed Virgin, who was the object of great devotion in fifteenth-century Europe, also occupied a special place in the hearts of Dominicans (she had supposedly given them their habit, in a vision), and Dartford Priory was dedicated to her and St. Margaret. Douce 322's texts with Dominican connections are the treatise on the Eucharist (fo.62) attributed to St. Albert the Bishop, and the *ars moriendi* texts (ff.20-39). The most likely identification of St. Albert the Bishop is Albert the Great (1206-80),¹³² who was one of the great Dominican theologians, not officially canonised until 1931, whose disciples included Aquinas himself.¹³³ Attributions in medieval manuscripts are notoriously unreliable, and the treatise in Douce 322 may or may

¹²⁸ These facts about the Baron and Wrottesley family come from George Wrottesley, *A History of the Family of Wrottesley of Wrottesley*, Collections for a History of Staffordshire, William Self Archaeological Society ns, vol. 6 pt 2 (London, 1903), pp. 216-41 (reference to Parnel as nun of Dartford on p.240: the sources for this are the Douce manuscript inscription and an old parchment family pedigree at Wrottesley).

¹²⁹ A.I. Doyle, 'Books connected with the Vere family and Barking Abbey', p.228-9.

¹³⁰ A.I. Doyle, 'Books connected with the Vere family and Barking Abbey', pp.223, 229. Doyle feels that there is a single hand in Douce 322, although in different styles (p.223).

¹³¹ J.E. Cross, 'The Virgin's *Quia Amore Languet*', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 77 (1972), pp.37-44 at pp.38-9.

¹³² This identification is made by L. Braswell, *IMEP*, Handlist iv (Cambridge, 1987), p.74.

¹³³ He joined the Order of Preachers at Padua when it was still young, in 1223, against his family's wishes. He taught at Hildesheim, Ratisbon and Cologne, where Thomas Aquinas was his student, became a master at Paris, prior provincial in 1254-7, and was bishop of Ratisbon from 1260-62. He was unsuccessful as a bishop because his skills were in theology, rather than administration, so he returned to teaching and writing. He took a prominent part at the Council of Lyon, in 1274, and at Paris, in 1277, he staunchly defended the teaching of his disciple Aquinas. He was a pioneer of scholastic theology (David Hugh Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints* (Oxford, 1978), p.9).

not be by Albert the Great. However, in the context of a manuscript compiled for a Dominican nunnery, the fact that it was attributed to him is of greater significance than the matter of who actually wrote it.

The donor's inscription in Douce 322 emphasises the presence of the Dominican *ars moriendi* texts, although they only make up a part of the manuscript. Death, sin and the destination of the soul are common preoccupations of late medieval religious texts. This mentality is particularly apparent in *ars moriendi* texts, which were characteristic of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and were contained in many Latin and vernacular manuscripts from various countries.¹³⁴ The preaching manuscripts and other devotional compendia which appeared in response to the church councils of the thirteenth century, in particular the Lateran Council of 1215, were aimed at instruction of the laity in the basics of orthodox faith. They contained such material as exhortations on the articles of faith, Ten Commandments, Seven Sacraments, Seven Virtues and the Seven Deadly Sins, upon which some of the final confessional material in Douce 322 is based. The spiritual emancipation of the laity (at least, the minority who were affected by books) was accompanied by an increased demand for *ars moriendi* material, and devotional compendia increasingly included tracts and extracts from longer works on this subject.¹³⁵ The French *Somme le Roi* was an example of such a devotional compilation, and was widely transmitted in France and beyond. It was composed in 1279 by Friar Laurent d'Orléans, prior of the Parisian Dominican convent of St. Jacques, at the request of Philippe III whose confessor he was.¹³⁶ Its popularity is suggested by the considerable number of surviving manuscripts of the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries (there are fifty-two in Paris alone). There were also translations into Flemish, Italian and English. For example, a version in Kentish dialect was produced in 1340 by a monk of Christchurch in Canterbury, Dan Michel of Northgate, called the *Ayenbite of Inwit, or Remorse of Conscience*.¹³⁷ There were seven other English translations of all or part of the *Somme le Roy*, including Douce 322's *Toure of all toures*, and *The Book of Vices and Virtues*, a fourteenth-century Midlands translation which was perhaps the most widely known.¹³⁸ The work falls into six parts concerning the Ten Commandments; the twelve Articles of Faith; the seven deadly sins (each sin is considered as one of the seven heads of the Beast of the Apocalypse); the corresponding virtues; a commentary on the *Pater Noster*; and the 'Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit from the seven petitions contained in the *Pater noster*'.¹³⁹ It is formed from six or seven writings of wisdom (sapience) apparently independent in origin, which Friar Laurent adapted and added to pieces of his own composition, such as the final section on the gifts of the Holy Spirit.¹⁴⁰ The *ars moriendi* chapter in this work is entitled, in the French, 'Coment on aprent a bien morir', although it really has more to do with the art of living, the treatise being concerned with the vices and virtues.¹⁴¹ The 'art of dying' text called *Toure of all toures*, in

¹³⁴ Sister Mary Catharine O'Connor, *The Art of Dying Well: the development of the Ars moriendi* (New York, 1942), p.17.

¹³⁵ Avril Henry & D.A. Trotter, eds, *De Quatuordecim Partibus Beatitudinis (The Fourteen Parts of Blessedness)*, Medium Aevum Monographs ns 17 (1994), pp.7-8.

¹³⁶ C-V. Langlois, *La Vie en France au Moyen Age du xii^e au milieu du xiv^e siècle: La Vie Spirituelle: Enseignements, Méditations et Controverses d'après des écrits en Français à l'usage des laïcs* (Paris, 1928), pp. 125-7. For a full bibliography on the *Somme le Roy*, its English translations and its descendants, see Albert Hartung, *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English 1050-1500*, 7 (New Haven, 1986), pp.2258-2261; ix (1993), pp.2475-82.

¹³⁷ C-V. Langlois, *La Vie en France au Moyen Age du xii^e au milieu du xiv^e siècle: La Vie Spirituelle*, pp.124-5; Richard Morris, ed., *Dan Michel's Ayenbite of Inwit, or Remorse of Conscience in the Kentish dialect 1340 A.D.*, EETS os 23 (London, 1866).

¹³⁸ W. Nelson Francis, ed., *The Book of Vices and Virtues: a fourteenth century English translation of the Somme le Roy of Lorenz d'Orléans*, EETS 217 (London, 1942), pp.ix, xxxii

¹³⁹ C-V. Langlois, *La Vie en France au Moyen Age du xii^e au milieu du xiv^e siècle: La Vie Spirituelle*, p.128.

¹⁴⁰ C-V. Langlois, *La Vie en France au Moyen Age du xii^e au milieu du xiv^e siècle: La Vie Spirituelle*, pp.xi, 131-9.

¹⁴¹ Sister Mary Catharine O'Connor, *The Art of Dying Well*, pp.17-18.

Douce 322, which is a translation of this chapter, may derive from a lost translation of the whole *Somme*.¹⁴²

Over time, such chapters in treatises came closer to the actual business of dying; chapter five of book two of Dominican Friar Henry Suso's *Horologium Sapientiae* (dated 1334), and its original German version *Buchlein der ewige Weisheit* (c.1328), describe the spectacle of the unprepared soul overtaken by sudden death. The figure of Sapience (Divine Wisdom) gives to the Disciple a vision of an unrepentant sinner about to die. In a set of long speeches the dying man laments his fear and his irremediable unrepentant state, and Sapience delivers to the Disciple a long moral warning to enable others to escape a similar plight.¹⁴³ There is more to *Horologium Sapientiae* than this chapter; the work is divided into two books with sixteen and eight chapters respectively. The subject matter of the consecutive chapters is the Nativity and Passion of Christ, and Mary's suffering before the Cross; Sin; the beauty of divine Wisdom and God's love; divine judgement (relating a vision from the *Apocalypse*); visions of divine Sapience or Wisdom; the pains of Hell and Purgatory; the joys of Paradise; patience in tribulation; and in Book Two there are chapters on the profitable knowledge of knowing how to die; what Sapience teaches on the art of living well; meditations on the Holy Sacrament; false religion; and the fruits that come from espousing divine Wisdom.¹⁴⁴ Suso's work is characterised by an insistence on love.¹⁴⁵ In his treatises to various Dominican nuns in the Rheinland, to whom he acted as spiritual director, he repeatedly told them that devotion to the crucified Jesus must be the basis of their religion and the centre of their interior life.¹⁴⁶ Like Jean Gerson, he believed that devotion was for anybody and sought to bring it out of the convents.¹⁴⁷ The Disciple in *Horologium* is in many respects an everyman. He is described as a monk in the cloister, but the work was read by some devout literate laity as well as religious, hence its translation into vernaculars (which also benefited nuns, such as the Dartford Dominicans).¹⁴⁸ The chapter in *Horologium Sapientiae* on knowing how to die was also subsequently circulated separately and used in other treatises, in Latin, German, French, Low German and English, demonstrating the fifteenth century demand for death books. It appears thus in the English translation in Dartford Priory's manuscript.¹⁴⁹ Indeed, it has been shown that the late fourteenth-century English translation of *Horologium Sapientiae*, the *Treatise of the Seven Points of True Love and Everlasting Wisdom*, was a substantial revision of the original text that suppressed much of the contemplative matter but translated the death material without change, thus giving it greater prominence than in the original. Lovatt comments that English piety was more sober, practical and moralistic than that of the Rheinland.¹⁵⁰ This chapter, with its sober didacticism uncharacteristic of the

¹⁴² W. Nelson Francis, ed., *The Book of Vices and Virtues*, pp. xxxvi-xxxvii.

¹⁴³ Rosemary Woolf, *The English Religious Lyric in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1968), p.331.

¹⁴⁴ For an edition of the Latin *Horologium Sapientiae* see Pius Künzle, ed., *Heinrich Seuse's Horologium Sapientiae: erste kritische Ausgabe* (Freiburg, 1977).

¹⁴⁵ E.H. Soudek, 'Henry Suso', *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, 11 (New York, 1988), pp.516-7. The major influences on Suso were apparently St. Bernard of Clairvaux and the *Song of Songs*.

¹⁴⁶ Jeanne Ancelet-Hustache, *Le Bienheureux Henri Suso* (Aubier, 1943), p.139.

¹⁴⁷ J.-A. Bizet, 'Henri Suso', *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, vii, col.243.

¹⁴⁸ Monks suggests that the French *L'Horloge de Sapience* may have become popular amongst the relevant group of French laity because of its introduction to the mid-fifteenth-century royal court by the Dominican king's confessor (Peter Rolfe Monks, 'Pictorial programmes in manuscripts of the French version of Suso's *Horologium Sapientiae*', *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum*, 57 (1987), pp.31-43 at p.35).

¹⁴⁹ Also thus in Bodley Ms 789 and Lichfield Cath. 16, besides Harley 1706. On this chapter in England, see Elizabeth Westlake, 'Learn to live and learn to die: Heinrich Suso's *scire mori* in fifteenth-century England', PhD diss, Birmingham, 1993.

¹⁵⁰ Roger Lovatt, 'Henry Suso and the medieval mystical tradition in England', in Marion Glascoe, ed., *The Medieval Mystical tradition in England* (1982), pp.47-62 at pp.56-9. Lovatt's thesis is that the *devotio moderna* did not take root in England, not because of a lack of contact with the continent, but because of a profound conservatism in late medieval English spirituality (see also Roger

complete work, proved popular in England, and was separated off and copied by itself in a number of English manuscripts, and was translated into English three times. The version in Douce 322 is the third translation, extracted from the *Treatise of the Seven Points of True Love and Everlasting Wisdom*.¹⁵¹ Manuscripts of this English translation were owned by nuns and laypeople.¹⁵²

In Douce 322, this translation of a chapter from *Horologium Sapientiae* is followed by the translation of the death chapter from *Le Somme le Roi* (ff.25v-26), and then there is a longer text called the *Booke of the Crafte of Dyeng* (ff.26v-39). The *Booke* is a comprehensive guide to the matter of dying, to be learned when in good health and called to mind at the needful hour. It is divided into six parts. These consist of a compilation of utterances by ecclesiastical writers on the subject; the five temptations with which the devil will put the reader to the test (unbelief, despair, impatience, vainglory, and attachment to relatives and material possessions); a series of questions which must be answered correctly to ensure salvation; rules of conduct to pattern one's dying on that of Christ on the Cross, together with short prayers for personal use; the role of friends around the death-bed; and prayers for the friends' use.¹⁵³ O'Connor suggests that the *Horologium* and *Somme le Roy* chapters were minor sources for this longer text.¹⁵⁴ The *Booke* was the English version of a very common text, found in translations in manuscripts and printed books from the fifteenth century, in Latin, German, Low German, Dutch, Italian, Spanish, French and English.¹⁵⁵ O'Connor argues that this common *Ars moriende* was composed at the Council of Constance (1414-18), or at the very least in that area during that time, using as the main source the Frenchman Jean Gerson's *De arte moriendi*, which he brought to Constance, and which the Council recommended as a valuable aid for reform.¹⁵⁶ The various vernacular versions were then made when the delegates returned to their countries of origin.¹⁵⁷ The Constance area had a dense concentration of Dominican convents, and there was a high attendance of Dominicans at that conference; O'Connor concludes that this *Ars moriende*, from which *The Book of the Craft of Dying* was translated, was composed by a Dominican friar.¹⁵⁸ Thus, all three art of dying texts in Dartford Priory's manuscript were appropriately of Dominican origin and authorship. This strengthens the suggestion that Dartford Priory was subject to the influence of German and French Dominican spirituality, as well as sharing interests of English literate lay vernacular spirituality.

Nearly half of the English manuscripts containing extracts of the *Horologium Sapientiae* also include one or more treatises by Rolle, and its popularity in England may be partly attributable to this fact. Several of the Yorkshire clergy who owned copies of the *Horologium* also possessed works by this northern contemplative, and, on occasions, extracts from Suso's work were falsely attributed to him.¹⁵⁹

Lovatt, 'The *Imitation of Christ* in late medieval England', *TRHS*, 5th ser., 18 (1968), pp.97-121 at p.117. For an edition see K. Horstmann, ed., 'Orologium Sapientiae or The Seven Poyntes of Trewe Wisdom, aus MS. Douce 114', *Anglia: Zeit für Englische Philologie*, 10 (1888), pp.324-389.

¹⁵¹ Roger Lovatt, 'Henry Suso and the medieval mystical tradition in England', pp.56, 59.

¹⁵² Roger Lovatt, 'Henry Suso and the medieval mystical tradition in England', p.52. On the dissemination of the original Latin work in England in the fifteenth century, see Wiltrud Wichgraf, 'Suso's *Horologium Sapientiae* in England nach Handschriften des 15. Jahrhunderts', *Anglia*, 53 (1929), pp.123-33.

¹⁵³ Sister Mary Catharine O'Connor, *The Art of Dying Well*, pp.7-8.

¹⁵⁴ Sister Mary Catharine O'Connor, *The Art of Dying Well*, pp.18-23.

¹⁵⁵ Sister Mary Catharine O'Connor, *The Art of Dying Well*, pp.7-9.

¹⁵⁶ Sister Mary Catharine O'Connor, *The Art of Dying Well*, pp.48-54. The Gerson work was part of his *Opusculum tripartitum* (written before 1410) (p.21).

¹⁵⁷ Sister Mary Catharine O'Connor, *The Art of Dying Well*, p.54.

¹⁵⁸ Sister Mary Catharine O'Connor, *The Art of Dying Well*, p.55.

¹⁵⁹ Roger Lovatt, 'Henry Suso and the medieval mystical tradition in England', p.58.

Indeed, the immense popularity of Rolle's writings lead to almost every religious work in Middle English, and many in Latin, being attributed to him, at some time.¹⁶⁰ Douce 322 reflects this state of affairs, as it contains a number of texts which have at some point been attributed to Rolle, few of them correctly.¹⁶¹ The fifteenth-century audience for works attributed to Rolle included both laypeople and nuns. Indeed, Rolle originally wrote his works for the nuns of Hampole in Yorkshire.¹⁶² The opening of the translation of *De emendatio peccatoris* (fo.78) declares the intention of the treatise to share with the reader the knowledge of the practice of contemplation.

Certain texts in Douce 322 connect Dartford Priory with the spirituality of the Carthusian order.¹⁶³ In the fifteenth century, the Carthusians, with their interest in affective piety, overtook the friars in the transmission to laity of the essentials of monastic contemplative spirituality, not least through the popularity of Nicholas Love's *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Christ*.¹⁶⁴ The Carthusians of Sheen, for example, were active in the dissemination of vernacular devotional material in the metropolitan area.¹⁶⁵ They also had a great influence on the spirituality of nuns, especially the nuns of Syon Abbey who were supplied with books by the Sheen Charterhouse.¹⁶⁶ Through some of the contents of Douce 322 they also touched the Dominican nuns of Dartford. For example, the Carthusian order played a key role in the dissemination of Suso's *Horologium Sapientiae* and its translations in fifteenth-century England.¹⁶⁷ The texts on tribulation and contemplation attributed in Douce 322 to Adam the Carthusian, the second of which is based on an earlier translation by Rolle,¹⁶⁸ are typical contents of fifteenth-century devotional compilations.¹⁶⁹ Treatises on tribulation were ubiquitous, in the fifteenth century, and compilers often extracted or rearranged material from other texts.¹⁷⁰ Their possession by the nuns of Dartford, within Douce 322, thus also connected them with the spirituality of the lay audience. The most interesting Carthusian text in Dartford Priory's manuscript is the *Ladder of four ronyngs*, a middle English translation, sometimes attributed to Adam the Carthusian, of the twelfth-century *Scala Claustralium* of Guigo II, the ninth prior of the Grande Chartreuse.¹⁷¹ This is an introduction to contemplation as practised in cloisters. It begins:

As I was occupyed on A day in bodyly travayle and thought at gostly werkys that were nedefull to goddys servauntes Four gostly werkes came sone to my mynde that ys to say Lesson Meditacion Oryson and Contemplacion. Thys ys the ladder of Cloysterers and of other goddys lovers by the whyche they clymbyn from the erthe unto hevyn (Douce 322 fo.52v)

¹⁶⁰ Sister Mary Catharine O'Connor, *The Art of Dying Well*, p.49.

¹⁶¹ See list of contents in appendix three.

¹⁶² Vincent Gillespie, 'Vernacular books of religion' in Jeremy Griffiths & Derek Pearsall, eds, *Book Production and Publishing in Britain 1375-1475* (Cambridge, 1989), pp.317-44 at p.321.

¹⁶³ See chapter three on other connections between Dartford Priory and this order.

¹⁶⁴ Rosemary Woolf, *The English Religious Lyric in the Middle Ages*, p.378.

¹⁶⁵ George R. Keiser, "'Noght how lang man lifs bot how wele": the laity and the ladder of perfection', p.158. On this subject see also Michael J. Sargent, 'The transmission by the English Carthusians of some late medieval spiritual writings', *JEH*, 27 (1976), pp.225-40.

¹⁶⁶ A. I. Doyle, 'Publication by members of the religious orders', p.116.

¹⁶⁷ Doyle cited in Avril Henry & D.A. Trotter, eds, *De Quatuordecim Partibus Beatitudinis*, p.9.

¹⁶⁸ See appendix three: 'the xij prophetis and euangelistes of tribulacion' (fo.64).

¹⁶⁹ Margaret Thompson concludes that the 'Adam Carthusianus' apparently responsible for these two tribulation texts, as they appear in Dartford's manuscript, was not Adam of Dryburgh, the more famous Adam the Carthusian, who wrote the *Liber de Quadripartito Exercitio Celle* and other works, but Adam, prior of the Hinton Charterhouse from 1377 to 1391 (E. Margaret Thompson, *The Carthusian Order in England* (London, 1930), pp.336, 338). Oxford Bodleian Mss Douce 322, Rawlinson C.894, Oxford Corpus Christi College 220, BL Reg. 17 C XVIII and BL Harley 1706 all contain these two treatises on tribulation as well as the *Book of the Craft of Dying and A Treatise of Ghostly Battle* (John Ayto & Alexandra Barratt, eds, *Aelred of Rievaulx's De Institutione Inclusionum*, EETS os 287 (Oxford, 1984), p.xxv).

¹⁷⁰ Vincent Gillespie, 'Vernacular books of religion', p.326.

¹⁷¹ Philippa Hodgson, ed., *Deonise ad divinite and other treatises on contemplative prayer related to the Cloud of Unknowing*, EETS os 231 (Oxford, 1955), pp.100-117 at p.100; George R. Keiser, "'Noght how lang man lifs bot how wele": the laity and the ladder of perfection', p.147; *IMEP*, iv, p.78. The *Ladder* appears in only one other manuscript other than Harley 1706.

In Douce 322 the words ‘Lesson meditacion Oryson and Contemplacion’ are picked out in red ink. Keiser feels that the author had in mind an audience consisting primarily of clerics, both secular and religious, but also the very pious amongst the laity (as the opening quoted above suggests: ‘other goddys lovers’), reshaping the material accordingly.¹⁷² The original *Scala Claustralium* set out four inter-related steps of a spiritual exercise by which the monk might ascend to an intense experience of God: reading of scripture, reasoned meditation upon its hidden truth, a turning to God in fervent prayer, and a lifting of the mind to God through contemplation. A later version, which is extant in at least twelve English manuscripts, was revised to make the work less schematic and didactic and more suitable for devotional reading. This was the version translated into English, and further adapted for a wider audience, in the late fourteenth century. This English version, in Douce 322 and Barking Abbey’s Harley 1706, occurs in one other manuscript (Cambridge University Library Ms Ff.6.33), which was copied by William Darker, a sixteenth-century Carthusian of Sheen, for the nuns of Syon Abbey. By interpolations such as a lengthy excursus on grace and the Holy Spirit, and an extended tavern metaphor borrowed from a translation of the *Somme le Roy*, the English translator made the original subject more approachable for an unlearned audience, which accounts for the work’s evident circulation amongst nuns, London professionals and aristocratic lay women.¹⁷³

Therefore, Douce 322 was a highly suitable devotional manuscript to give to a Dominican nun at Dartford. It connects that nunnery by books and spirituality with the Carthusian order, Syon Abbey and Barking Abbey, and with certain groups of pious aristocratic and mercantile/professional laity.

Downside Abbey Ms 26542

The inscription which records the gift of this manuscript to Dartford Priory occurs on fo.iii verso:

Ave maria	Jhesu Amen
This book is yove to Betryce chaumbir, and aftir hir	
decese to sustir Emme Wynter, and to [sustir] ¹⁷⁴ denyse Caston	
nonnes of dertforthe, and so to abide in the saam	
hous of the nonnes of dertforthe for evere	
to pr ^y for hem that yeve it.	

Dom Watkin describes the hand of this inscription as being fifty years later than that of the main text, which he dates to the early fifteenth century.¹⁷⁵ It is, therefore, likely that this manuscript came into the possession of Dartford Priory towards the end of the fifteenth-century or in the early sixteenth-century. Beatrice Chaumbir may or may not have been a nun of Dartford. If she was a laywoman then she probably had connections and contact with the nuns and may even have been one of the well-born matrons and widows living in the priory. Denise Caston might similarly have been one of these laywomen and subsequently professed, hence the insertion of the title ‘sustir’ possibly at a later date. The manuscript may then have come into the priory’s hands either in the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century. The women living in Dartford Priory probably shared their reading and passed books to one another, both their own

¹⁷² George R. Keiser, ‘“Noght how lang man lifs bot how wele”: the laity and the ladder of perfection’, p.146. Keiser points out that ‘othere goddys lovers’ is a modification of the Latin original that only refers to monks (p.148).

¹⁷³ George R. Keiser, ‘“Noght how lang man lifs bot how wele”: the laity and the ladder of perfection’, pp.147-51.

¹⁷⁴ Inserted superscript.

¹⁷⁵ Dom. Aelred Watkin, ‘Some manuscripts in the Downside Abbey library’, *Downside Review*, 59 (1941), pp.75-92 at p.82.

books and those which were the common property of the monastery, no matter whether they were nuns or lay boarders.

This is another largely vernacular devotional manuscript of the kind owned by devout literate laity that was felt appropriate to be given to the nuns of Dartford. It is not a compilation of shorter pieces, like Douce 322, but contains two large treatises copied complete, with just three other much shorter texts. The *Prickyng of Love* (ff.1-90) and *Pore Caitiff* (ff.94-168v) were both popular works which survive in several manuscripts. It is not the intention here to repeat all the findings of scholars past and present on these texts, but to draw out points relevant to the literate piety of the nuns of Dartford Priory. *The Prickyng of Love* must have been a work well-known to the nuns of Dartford, from the late fifteenth century, since they owned another copy in Harley 2254. Comments which are relevant to both manuscripts will be addressed here. It is a translation of a thirteenth-century Franciscan work, the *Stimulus amoris*, once erroneously attributed to Bonaventure, which was popular throughout Europe. The original work was a short treatise on the contemplative life including a meditation on the Passion of Christ. In a more common expanded version of the *Stimulus*, this meditation was moved to the beginning and expanded. The late fourteenth-century Middle English translation is an abridgement and reworking of the longer Latin version, and is found complete in eleven manuscripts, including the two which belonged to Dartford Priory at some point in their existence. The English translation is divided into thirty-eight chapters. Four manuscripts, including one which only contains an extract, attribute the translation to Walter Hilton, to whose style of thought and expression the work has been judged to bear some similarity.¹⁷⁶ Harold Kane casts doubt on Hilton's authorship, but acknowledges that the dialect of one of the two best and earliest manuscripts, Dartford Priory's Harley 2254, is of the east Midlands, with some northern features. This dialect supports an attribution to Hilton or some other priest in or around Hilton's community of canons at Thurgarton in Nottinghamshire.¹⁷⁷ Watkin comments on the virile style of the translation in the Downside manuscript.¹⁷⁸ Kane lists ten of the eleven manuscripts containing the full text, and six containing partial copies. He finds that the two Dartford manuscripts came from the same grouping of versions, the Harley 2254 version being the second earliest surviving manuscript. Two of the manuscripts containing fragments of *Prickyng*, both in Cambridge University Library, also contain a number of texts found in Douce 322 and its copy Harley 1706, pointing to the cross-fertilisation between fifteenth-century devotional manuscripts, and confirming that Douce 322 and their *Prickyng* manuscripts would have been of equal value to the nuns of Dartford.¹⁷⁹

Whoever was responsible for the translation, the work was of relevance to the nuns of Dartford because of its concentration on the contemplative life. The first nine chapters of *The Pricking of Love* are affective meditations on Christ's Passion presented as necessary preparation for the contemplative life. Chapters 10-33 deal with the progressive contemplative life, including a discussion of the mixed life, diabolic temptation, and the necessity of obedience to God and one's superiors in religious life (an important aspect of monasticism). Chapters 34-8 contain meditations on 'a complaint of the

¹⁷⁶ Valerie M. Lagorio & Michael G. Sargent, 'English Mystical Writings' in Albert E. Hartung, ed., *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English 1050-1500*, 9 (New Haven, 1993), p.3080-81, with a bibliography on pp.3436-7. For an edition, based on Dartford's Harley Ms 2254, with introduction, notes and bibliography, see Harold Kane, ed., *The Prickyng of Love: Elizabethan and Renaissance Studies*, 92:10, 2 vols (Salzburg, 1983).

¹⁷⁷ Harold Kane, ed., *The Prickyng of Love*, pp.xxi-xxiii.

¹⁷⁸ Dom. Aelred Watkin, 'Some manuscripts in the Downside Abbey library', p.76.

¹⁷⁹ Harold Kane, ed., *The Prickyng of Love*, pp.iv-xiv, xix, xii.

contemplative's mortified flesh to God and His reply, on the Pater Noster, the Ave Maria, and the Salve Regina, and ... on the state of the blessed souls in heaven'.¹⁸⁰ In Dartford Priory's Downside manuscript, the sentences of this final chapter which are underlined in red concentrate on the themes of love and joy, quoting one of the prophets, for example: 'I shal ioye with our Lord and myn herte shal be merye in my God'. Such a vigorous text, concentrating on devotion to Jesus, the contemplative life and the themes of Divine love and heavenly joy, must have been of great value to the nuns of Dartford.

The Pore Caitiff was a popular late fourteenth-century vernacular manual of doctrine and devotion written specifically for the instruction of laity, that is found in thirty complete copies and twenty-four sets of extracts and fragments. It was once attributed to Wyclif but it is an entirely orthodox work that draws on a wide variety of scriptural, patristic and medieval devotional/mystical and didactic sources.¹⁸¹ It is not an entirely original composition but consists of a prologue and fourteen tracts most of which are heavily indebted to various sources, especially Rolle's *Emendatio* (a translation of which is also contained in Douce 322), *Form of Living*, and the 'Oleum effusam' commentary from his Latin *Canticles Commentary*, as well as the *Ancren Riwe* and others.¹⁸² A standard order for these tracts may be established from the majority of the manuscripts containing the complete treatise; indeed, internal evidence confirms the order of the first three tracts on the Apostle's Creed, Ten Commandments and *Pater noster*. Texts such as these contain instruction on the basics of the faith as all parish priests were required by the Lambeth Constitutions of 1281 to teach. There are close relations with similar material in translations of the *Somme le Roy*, the *Speculum Christiani* and *Lay Folk's Catechism*.¹⁸³ Indeed, the Prologue sets out the compiler's intention of supplying the instructional needs of layfolk:

This tretise suffiseth to eche cristen man and womman. This tretise compiled of a pore caityf and nedye of gostly help of al cristen peple by the gret mercy and help of god shal teach simple men & wymmen of gode will the right way to hevne yf thei wille besye them to have in mynde & to worke ther after withouten multiplicacion of many bokes and as a child willing to ben a clerk begynneth first atte grounde that is his A B C, so he that is desiring to spede the betir begynneth atte grounde of helthe that is cristen mennes bileve ...¹⁸⁴

The next ten tracts are shorter sections on such subjects as patience, temptation, meekness, and recommending affective devotion to Jesus, his Passion, and the power of his holy name. The tract called 'Gostly armure or harneys of hevne' in the Downside manuscript is a short allegorical tract which is derived from (or may have been a source for) the longer *Tretise of Gostly Batayle*, found in Douce 322.¹⁸⁵ The last of these, on the active and contemplative life, starts with Martha and Mary and draws on St. Gregory, Bede and Rolle's *Form of Living*. At the end, the author addresses his audience and declares his

¹⁸⁰ Valerie M. Lagorio & Michael G. Sargent, 'English Mystical Writings', p.3081.

¹⁸¹ Valerie M. Lagorio & Michael G. Sargent, 'English Mystical Writings', p.3135. For an edition, see Sister Mary Teresa Brady, 'The Pore Caitiff', edited from Ms. Harley 2336 with Introduction and Notes', unpublished PhD diss. (Fordham, 1954). See Valerie M. Lagorio & Michael G. Sargent, 'English Mystical Writings', pp.3470-71, for a bibliography.

¹⁸² For a listing of these contents with indications of the sources, see Valerie M. Lagorio & Michael G. Sargent, 'English Mystical Writings', p.3136

¹⁸³ Sister Mary Teresa Brady, 'The Pore Caitiff: an introductory study', *Traditio*, 10 (1954), pp.529-48 at pp.535-6; Valerie M. Lagorio & Michael G. Sargent, 'English Mystical Writings', p.3135. Sister M.T. Brady examines evidence of possible Lollard interpolation into the Creed text, in a minority of manuscripts, such interpolations being the cause of former attributions of the whole treatise to Wyclif: Sister Mary Teresa Brady, 'The Apostles and the Creed in manuscripts of *The Pore Caitiff*, *Speculum*, 32 (1957), pp.323-5.

¹⁸⁴ Quoted from the Dartford manuscript by Dom. Aelred Watkin, 'Some manuscripts in the Downside Abbey library', pp.77-8.

¹⁸⁵ Valerie M. Lagorio & Michael G. Sargent, 'English Mystical Writings', p.3136.

desire for them to know God's love. The final longer tract provides a mirror of chastity reflected by holy virgins in Scripture and the saints, for maidens to look into.¹⁸⁶

A basic instructional manual for laity, in the vernacular, may only have been of limited interest to nuns, except perhaps for novices receiving their initial instruction. However, the *Pore Caityf* is not the simple instructional manual the prologue might suggest. Largely because it draws heavily on Rolle, this treatise has much material on the contemplative life, leading Sister Brady to conclude that it does not really give any place to the mixed life.¹⁸⁷ She shows how a number of the tracts in *Pore Caityf* draw on the mystical spirituality of Rolle concerning the degrees of love, love-longing, the fire of love and desire for union with God. In particular, the sections called 'Desiir of Jhesus' and 'Of actif lif and of contemplatif lif' describe the contemplative life and its stages, drawing directly on Rolle's *Form of Living*. The compiler gives the warning 'and no man enforce to passe in to contemplatif liif forto he be long tyme have haunteid this liif, and if he presume to foli it spedith not'. Sister Brady concludes that these tracts are designed to give the reader brief glimpses into the higher realms of the spiritual life.¹⁸⁸ It is to be recalled that Rolle originally wrote *Form of Living* for Margaret de Kirkby, a nun of Hampole, in 1349, not long before his death. For these reasons this text may therefore actually have been of even greater benefit to the Dominican nuns of Dartford than those laity who owned copies of the work, in spite of its relative popularity.

The two short Latin texts at the end of the Downside manuscript cannot have influenced the decision to give it to Dartford Priory. The short vernacular treatise copied between the two longer works may, however, have been of interest to the nuns, not least because it was in English. Its rubric, in red ink, declares its subject matter:

How a man shal knowe whiche is the speche of the flesshe in his hert. and whiche is of the world. and which is of the fende. and also whiche is of god almighty. our lord jhesu cryst ...(ff.90v, 92v, 92r)

The work, attributed to St. Bernard, is typical of the medieval genre recommending rejection of worldly sin and vanities in favour of responding to God's 'stiryng in thyn hert', recommending such virtues as patience, cleanness of body and soul, meekness and holiness of life. It concludes that holiness of life is founded on love and comes from God:

For wyte thou wel . that ony stiryng or wille that thow felist to ony maner vertu . or to do ony goode dede that is sette and grounded in love . and in charyte of thyn everie cristen . and ys tempred with mekenesse . yt is spekyng of god . and not of thy self .(fo.92r)

It finishes by asking Jesus for mercy, and the Virgin Mary for help, as do so many other late medieval affective devotional texts, and the anonymous author asks for the prayers of the readers, in the final couplet. It is found in various manuscripts, including two others containing *The Prickynge of Love*, both of which are in the same group of versions as Dartford's *Prickynge* manuscripts.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁶ Sister Mary Teresa Brady, 'The Pore Caitif: an introductory study', p.542.

¹⁸⁷ Sister Mary Teresa Brady, 'Rolle's 'Form of Living' and 'The Pore Caitif', *Traditio*, 36 (1980), pp.426-35 at p.435.

¹⁸⁸ Sister Mary Teresa Brady, 'Rolle's 'Form of Living' and 'The Pore Caitif', pp.429, 431, 433-5. Sargent explores the compiler's use of Rolle's *Emendatio* and verse 'Oleum effusum nomen tuum' in the sections on contemplation: Michael G. Sargent, 'A source of the *Poor Caitiff* tract "Of man's will"', *Medieval Studies*, 41 (1979), pp.535-9.

¹⁸⁹ Harold Kane, ed., *The Prickynge of Love*, p.ix n.23.

British Library Harley Ms 2254

This manuscript is dated to c.1400, and is the second earliest surviving copy of the Middle English translation of *The Prickyng of Love*.¹⁹⁰ The ownership inscription is in an untidy fifteenth-century hand, possibly that of the prioress of Dartford who is named: 'Thys boyk longyth to Dame Alys Braintwathes the worchypfull prioras of Dartford Jhesu mercy' (fo.i verso). This flyleaf is a parchment sheet at the beginning of the manuscript, possibly part of the original manuscript. Alice Branthwayte or Branthwayte was prioress of Dartford throughout the 1460s, and possibly again in the second half of the following decade. She is named in one other of Dartford Priory's manuscripts – the book of hours now in Somerset Record Office – confirming that she was a nun who valued books. It is impossible to tell whether Dame Alice procured this manuscript for herself and the convent, either by persuading a previous owner to donate it, or by purchase, or whether it was an unsought gift. The Midlands provenance of this copy, mentioned above, suggests that Dartford Priory was not the first owner of this manuscript from new. In any case, Dame Alice demonstrated that she was glad to have this manuscript within the nunnery by adding her inscription.

Two more inscriptions, on the same flyleaf, in a different fifteenth century hand, appear to add the names of two other nuns of Dartford, of whom nothing is known, asking for prayers: 'Orate *pro anima domina* Elizabeth Rede hujus loci' and 'Orate *pro anima* Johanna Newmarche'. The phrase 'huius loci' must refer to Dartford Priory, written in the inscription which appears above, naming Prioress Alice Branthwayte, and this indicates that these two nuns were present after (and possibly during) and not before the time of that prioress. They do not, therefore, counter the possibility that this prioress had the book made or procured it for the monastery. Any attempt to explain why these particular nuns were singled out for such mention would be guesswork, unless the inscriptions were written by the nuns themselves, perhaps as a kind of graffito. If the latter is true, it indicates not only that there were nuns at Dartford who could write, but that the sisters did read the devotional contemplative works contained in their manuscripts.

For other comments on *The Pricking of Love*, relevant to this manuscript, see the above treatment of Dartford Priory's Downside manuscript. Other than rubrics, which are picked out in the text in red ink, just a few sentences are underlined in the black ink of the scribal copier. If this manuscript was originally copied for Dartford Priory this indicates that the scribe was seeking to draw the nuns' attention to these particular points. The first of these underlined sentences come from the chapter entitled 'On wat maner thorowe the passion of crist a mannis herte mai be ensaumpled in love': 'Fadir forgeve hym . thei wote not wat thei doun' (fo.23v); 'Withouten blood no thyngge mai be made clene'; '[the blood of crist]¹⁹¹ shall clense oure conscience fro werkis of deth'; and: '[that I mygte seie with felyngge of herte . with the apostel thus]¹⁹² Forbeden be to me al joyynge but in the crosse of oure lord Jhesu crist' (fo.24v). Two other underlined phrases occur, in the chapter on 'How a man mai most profite & best plese god': 'No man cometh to the fadir but thorowh me' (fo.26v); and in the chapter on 'How a man shal sterve hymself stalworthly to the love of Jhesu crist': 'Asketh and ye shal have' (fo.28).

¹⁹⁰ See description and explanation in appendix three.

¹⁹¹ Not underlined.

¹⁹² Not underlined.



The underlined sentences are concerned with devotion to Jesus and the Passion. The introduction to the last of the three phrases from fo.24v is particularly significant in this treatise on contemplation in a manuscript owned by the nuns of Dartford because of its reference to the interior senses (feeling with the heart), a practice of medieval mystical spirituality. It is, therefore, interesting that the scribe chose to underline that phrase. Use of the 'interior spiritual senses' was recommended in mystical treatises as a way of meditating on the suffering of Christ in a particularly intense way. This is found in similar texts in various languages, originally written for religious, but which came into the hands of devout literate laity who wished to learn from monastic wisdom. For example, an early sixteenth-century French lay couple's compendium of vernacular devotional works, in the municipal library in Poitiers, contains a 'brief meditation on the Passion' (ff. liiii^v-lxv).¹⁹³ This is a work of affective spirituality, in which a monk addresses a particular woman, probably a nun, who desires mystical union with God and has consulted the writer. The meditation he recommends demands that a vivid, concrete picture be built up of Christ, as an aid to devotion. The woman is told to imagine actually washing Christ's feet with her tears:

Ma seur ... quant vous serez en ceste meditacion et pensee. las aie pitie de vostre espoux et le lavez de vos larmes et desirez a lessuyer (fo. lvi)

[My sister ... when you are in this meditation and thought, have pity on your husband and wash him with your tears, and desire to wipe them away]

There is a constant encouragement to visualise, as if the events of the Passion were unfolding before the very eyes of the person in meditation; the words 'regardez piteusement' ('watch pityingly') crop up constantly. Present tense is used to enhance this: 'regardez tres piteusement le doulx Jhesus portant sa croye ... pesante' ('watch very pityingly the sweet Jesus carrying his weighty cross', which is an important physical property of the cross to imagine) (fo. lix^v). It is a vision of the heart that is encouraged; the monk writes: 'Regardez en vostre cuer' ('watch in your heart'), involving an interiorisation of vivid imagining, and to consider 'son precieux sang' ('his precious blood'). It is to be noted that the section of *The Prickyng of Love* just quoted similarly draws the reader's attention to the importance of Christ's blood. Further, in a meditation for compline, within this French treatise, the reader is asked 'sentez en vostre cuer' ('feel in your heart') (fo. lxiii), just as the *Prickyng* text teaches (in the French text, it is the anguish felt by Mary and Mary Magdalene at the burial of Christ that is to be felt) (fo. lxiii).

Jacques Le Goff writes about the importance of the mental universe and 'interior senses' in medieval spirituality and thinking. Investigating the medieval concept of the imagination, he concludes that the effort of medieval Christianity was an enormous undertaking of interiorisation, linking the external sensitivity to the internal. From St. Augustine and Boethius to the mystics of the 12th to 16th centuries there are beyond the external eye and ear 'l'oeil interne, l'oreille interne', and it is these that perceive the Divine vision and eternal truths. It was here that the universe of images operated. Le Goff also concludes that Medieval man found it harder to establish the frontier between material reality and imaginary reality.¹⁹⁴ This helps explain the affective nature of so much late medieval devotional material - the emotions were appealed to in order to stimulate the inner spiritual senses. The concepts here are huge and deep, but it demonstrates what a suitable

¹⁹³ Poitiers Bibliothèque Municipale Ms 95 (350).

¹⁹⁴ Jacques Le Goff, *L'Imaginaire Médiévale* (Paris, 1985), pp. vi-vii.

text *The Pricking of Love* was for the nuns of Dartford to possess, belonging to an order whose nuns were associated with mystical spirituality, and having connections with the Carthusians and Brigettes as they did.

Chapter Sixteen of *The Pricking of Love* is a discussion of the mixed life, although the treatise as a whole has more to say of relevance to lives given over wholly to contemplation, meditation and prayer. The theme connects with this manuscript's other contents, however – another work by Walter Hilton: *The Mixed Life*. This work is preserved in nineteen manuscripts and a number of early printed books, divided up into chapters differently in various manuscripts.¹⁹⁵ Keiser comments that works such as *The Mixed Life* and *Dives and Pauper* demonstrate that both pious laymen and secular clergy were troubled by their inability to combine the carrying out of worldly responsibilities at the same time as undertaking a demanding spiritual discipline. *The Mixed Life*'s attentiveness to such concerns was perhaps the reason for its wide dissemination.¹⁹⁶ In it, Hilton upholds the precedence of the contemplative life, but found that the mixed life was necessary, for one should never fail to turn away from contemplation in order to aid and comfort others in need.¹⁹⁷ A rubric on fo.77 suggests the kind of language used by Rolle when describing divine love: 'How sythen oure blessid lord hath sent in to thyn herte a little sparke of his blessid fire that is himself'. Lagorio and Sargent, however, find that, in general, Hilton disapproved of the emotional excess of the kind of mysticism represented by Rolle, and stressed in his writings that the higher stages of contemplation are both affective and cognitive.¹⁹⁸ That Dartford Priory, and possibly Prioress Alice Branthwayte, acquired a manuscript that contained *The Mixed Life*, suggests that the convent practised a broad and balanced spirituality that did not leave them unaware of the needs of the world. Indeed, the Dominican order, as an order of friars, was an intensely practical one, as well as being contemplative and scholarly. Prioress Branthwayte herself was active in administering the monastery's affairs and was thus named on a property deed dated 1467.¹⁹⁹

Taunton, Somerset Record Office Ms DD/SAS C/1193/68

This mutilated book of hours is identified as having belonged to Dartford Priory because Dame Alice Branthwayte, the prioress of Dartford in the 1460s mentioned in association with Harley 2254, is named in a final prayer text on fo.103v, and because of the contents some of which are of Dominican usage. Ker says this is a book of hours written for Dominican usage in England, preceded by a Sarum calendar. He says the Dominican origin is apparent in the Office of the Dead (ff.54-82) and the antiphons in the hours of the Virgin (ff.9-41).²⁰⁰ Further, the Litany names Dominic twice. The binding is of the early sixteenth-century, but the manuscript is late fifteenth-century (hence the dedicatory prayer), and is in worn condition, indicating heavy usage in the quire of Dartford Priory. The need to have this fifteenth-century manuscript rebound between 1504-30 also indicates this.²⁰¹ Use of the book by the nuns could also be indicated by the illegible marginal annotation on fo.79 and the faces of dragons and men with long noses drawn into the text in certain places. The manuscript can be dated approximately by reference to internal

¹⁹⁵ Valerie M. Lagorio & Michael G. Sargent, 'English Mystical Writings', p.3077.

¹⁹⁶ George R. Keiser, "'Noght how lang man lifs bot how wele': the laity and the ladder of perfection", p.157.

¹⁹⁷ Valerie M. Lagorio & Michael G. Sargent, 'English Mystical Writings', p.3077.

¹⁹⁸ Valerie M. Lagorio & Michael G. Sargent, 'English Mystical Writings', p.3074-5.

¹⁹⁹ CKS U2958 no. 35. Other aspects of the active life of the prioresses of Dartford, the charitable activities of Dartford Priory and the role of the prioress in the local lay community, will be explored in chapter five of this thesis.

²⁰⁰ N. Ker's handwritten notes in the S.C.C.R.O. catalogue, dated March 1952.

and external evidence. Ker points out that the litany to the saints includes a St. Thomas (fo.48), whom he identifies as St. Thomas Aquinas (possibly because of the chronological arrangement of this list).²⁰² Furthermore, one of the texts written on the fly leaves is an 'Oracio de sancto Thoma de Aquino' (ffiiiv-iiiiv). Thomas Aquinas, as Ker points out, was canonised in 1458, which thus provides the earliest likely date for the manuscript (the main body of the hours at least, if not the Calendar). As has been stated, Alice Branthwayte was prioress in the 1460s and late 1470s. It seems likely, then, that the Book of Hours was produced between 1458 and 1479 for the book-owning Dame Alice.

The prayer for Alice Branthwayte (fo.103v) was apparently added after her death, and therefore at some point in the 1480s. Ker comments that the hand (also responsible for the prayer to St. Anne on fo.103) is not much later in date than the main hand of the manuscript.²⁰³ The Latin text is as follows:

Omnipotens domine pro tua pietate miserere anime famule tue & a contagiis mortalitatis exutam. in eterne salvacionis partem restitue.

Orate pro anima sororis Alicie Brainthawyt qui dedit nobis istum librum.

The 'nobis' probably refers to the nuns of Dartford to whom the prioress would have passed on this prayerbook.

The fifteenth-century additions written on the flyleaves were, therefore, made whilst the book was in the priory's possession, at the priory's request. The Latin 'Oracio de sancto Thoma de Aquino',²⁰⁴ is an understandable addition to be made for Dominican nuns. Besides having been written by this Dominican theologian, this prayer is an example of a kind of spiritual exercise copied into compilations intended for contemplative religious, both those strictly enclosed and those leading the mixed life, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. It is found, for example, in a book of hours with appended treatises and prayers that was written out by a Dominican friar in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, in the early fifteenth century.²⁰⁵ The extract from the *Revelations of St. Bridget* (ff.i-iiir), the only English text in this book, further manifests the literary and spiritual connections between Dartford Priory and the Briggettine order, and may manifest a direct literary link with Syon Abbey, although this was a text which was found in devotional manuscripts owned by many nuns and laity.

London Society of Antiquaries Ms 717

Ker describes this mutilated little manuscript as the fragment of a book of hours of Dominican usage.²⁰⁶ As has been stated above, it is one of the few surviving manuscripts of which it can be said that it was made at the instigation of a nun. The inscription on the final folio asks: 'Orate pro *anima* sororis Emme Wyntyr que fieri fecit istum librum'. That a Sister Emma Wynter is named in another two of Dartford Priory's manuscripts, and that the texts contained show indications of being of Dominican use makes the attribution of this book to Dartford Priory certain. One indication of the Dominican usage of the

²⁰¹ See full description in appendix three.

²⁰² Ker's notes, 1952, *cit supra*.

²⁰³ N. Ker, 'Four medieval manuscripts in the Taunton Castle Museum', *Proceedings of the Somersetshire Archaeological and Natural History Society*, 96 (1952), pp.224-8 at p.225.

²⁰⁴ Edited from other manuscripts in English and Latin in A.I. Doyle, 'A prayer attributed to St. Thomas Aquinas', *Dominican Studies*, 1 (1948), pp.229-38.

²⁰⁵ A.I. Doyle, 'A prayer attributed to St. Thomas Aquinas', pp.229, 230.

²⁰⁶ N. Ker's typescript catalogue to manuscripts of the library of the London Society of Antiquaries.

manuscript is the doubling of Dominic in the litany to the saints (fo.9). Since Sister Emma Wyntyr had this book made, she was evidently able to read at least liturgical Latin. She may well have been quite fluent in Latin, for it is her name that is inscribed on the manuscript of the *Distichia Catonis*, which has the Latin text with English translation. In addition, this is the only Dartford Priory manuscript containing musical notation, which indicates that Sister Emma could read notation as well. Indeed, this was an essential skill for singing the monastic offices, although some nuns may have learnt chants by heart. With its lack of colour and decoration, this was clearly a working book for regular use in the quire, which is a good reason for its bad condition. It will be recalled, from chapter two above, that the Dominican constitutions ruled that the Office of the Dead was to be recited in every convent every week. In addition, it was used regularly in the post-obit and chantry services carried out by the convent. The processional and other chants for Holy Week were, presumably used by the nuns of Dartford, and the Penitential Psalms, litanies, collects and suffrages must also have been used regularly.

Some of the most intriguing items in this service book are the Latin prayers with English rubrics on ff.52v-54v, which are interpolated into the Office of the Dead just before the final *Requiem aeternam*: 'This is for on woman', 'This is for many men', 'This is for many wymen', 'This is for on man & for on woman', 'For mony men & on woman', 'For on man & many wymmen', 'For many men & many women'. In each case the prayer addresses God as Lord, judge of souls, and forgiver, and asks him to bring those prayed for into the blessed light of his glory. Sister Emma Wynter must have asked for these prayers to be included. They were perhaps used as intercessions when the convent carried out obit services. This crumpled book is a chance survival of what must have been the most commonly found kind of book at Dartford Priory, the workaday quire books.

Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley Ms 255, ff.1-44

This manuscript, which constitutes half of Bodley Ms 255, a seventeenth-century compilation, is supposed to have belonged to Dartford Priory, and in particular the first Prioress Elizabeth Cressener (prioress from 1489 to 1536).²⁰⁷ The only evidence on which this is based is the dating of the scribal hand to the late fifteenth century, the large and colourful drawing of the Cressener family arms on fo.44, and the text itself. The text is a commentary in English on the Rule of St. Augustine, which would have been of obvious utility to Dartford Priory which, like all Dominican convents, observed this rule. Such a book as this might have been read out in refectory during meals. Its provision confirms that most nuns were not able to understand Latin texts, and needed such a work in the vernacular in order to be taught their rule. In view of the armorial shield, the manuscript must have been a gift to Prioress Cressener from her family, indicating that they were book-owning gentry.

Oxford, Bodleian Library, Rawlinson Ms G.59

This manuscript, containing the pseudonymous *Disticha Catonis* in Latin and English, is the only surviving manuscript from a medieval English nunnery containing a work by a Classical writer. It is also one of only five non-liturgical manuscripts belonging to nunneries which were written in Latin and which

²⁰⁷ See appendix three for description, and appendix one for details of Prioress Cressener.

date from the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries (the other four all belonged to Syon). The other ten or so such manuscripts date from before 1400, before the great burgeoning of vernacular literature. David N. Bell connects Dartford's and Syon's apparently rare acquisition of Latin works, amongst nunneries, after 1400, to the fact that both were centres of learning.²⁰⁸

Although pagan in origin, this anonymous third-century compilation of moral precepts was modified in the course of transmission, rendering its moral advice acceptable to the Christian later middle ages. It came to occupy an important place in the late medieval Latin school curriculum, and was much copied and quoted.²⁰⁹ The text contains the fundamentals of the medieval notion of the vices and virtues, combining classical and Scriptural teaching, quoting Horace, Ovid and Virgil, as well as the Psalms, Gospels and Church Fathers. It teaches contempt of the world, the dubious operation of Fortune in humanity's affairs, patience, inactivity as the source of vices, the risks involved in trying to penetrate the heavenly realm, the primacy of the virtue of holding one's tongue, and treats expansively the perceived faults of womankind.²¹⁰ No doubt the nuns of Dartford were acquainted with misogynistic thinking, although they largely governed their own affairs and were thus used to a degree of autonomy of thought and action. Sister Emma Wynter, whose name is inscribed at the end of the text (thus identifying this as a Dartford Priory manuscript), may have used this book as an aid for learning Latin as much as for moral instruction. Containing a Latin text with versified English translation this was perhaps the kind of book she, Sister Jane Fisher and a few other learned noble women in Dartford Priory used when learning Latin with a preceptor in the *locutorium*, as the master general allowed in 1481.²¹¹

Dublin, Trinity College Ms 490 (E.2.15)

None of the many inscriptions and marks in this manuscript of the *Brut* chronicle indicate how or when it came to Dartford Priory.²¹² There can be no doubt that it did so, however; the inscription on the otherwise blank fo.1 firmly claims it as the property of Dartford Priory: 'Iste Liber constat Religiosis sororibus de Dertford' (fo.1v). There is no indication of date in the manuscript, other than the fifteenth century hand of the text. The chronicle itself is completed by the copyist as far as the siege of Rouen in 1419, on fo.177. Brie thought the manuscript was written in the beginning of the fifteenth century.²¹³ This work of history was an unusual gift to a nunnery. It was perhaps first owned by some Kentish gentleman during that century. Scattergood says the words 'pat was the lorde of Cobham' (fo.175v), in a passage about Sir John Oldcastle the Lollard rebel, have been erased, suggesting local sensitivity.²¹⁴ The manuscript perhaps came into the possession of Dartford Priory when a gentlewoman who inherited it became a nun there, bringing it and other of her possessions with her. This is guesswork, however. That the manuscript was actually read by the nuns is possibly indicated by the 'Ave Maria' design and random

²⁰⁸ David N. Bell, *What nuns read: books and libraries in medieval English nunneries*, p.37.

²⁰⁹ Nicholas Orme, *English Schools in the Middle Ages* (London, 1973), pp.102-3; Nicholas Orme, *Education and Society in medieval and Renaissance England* (London, 1989), p.17.

²¹⁰ Richard Hazelton, 'Chaucer and Cato', *Speculum*, 35 (1960), pp.357-80 at p.360.

²¹¹ See note 10.

²¹² Apparently, TCD Ms 490 is one of the best copies of the Middle English *Brut* chronicle (John Scattergood, 'Two unrecorded poems from TCD Ms 490' in *Review of English Studies*, ns 38 (1987), pp.46-9 at p.46).

²¹³ F.W.D. Brie, ed., *The Brut or the Chronicles of England Part 1*, EETS os 131 (London, 1906), p.x.

²¹⁴ John Scattergood, 'Two unrecorded poems from TCD Ms 490', p.48.

scribblings of an abbreviated form of the name 'Jhesu' on fo.2.²¹⁵ This and all other marks on the manuscript cannot be dated with any accuracy, however. It may have been sold by the priory before the Dissolution, since the verse written in a hand of the first half of the sixteenth century, on fo.179v, does not seem to have been written by a nun, but is a secular ploughwoman's lament. Furthermore, Scattergood identifies as early sixteenth-century the hand of 'Thomas Crondalle of Kent', who wrote the beginning of a charter or letter in rough with the beginning of a religious instructional verse, on fo.180. No record survives of any such man, in connection with Dartford Priory, but the family may have been in the vicinity since there was a Richard Crundall who was a friar of Aylesford Priory in 1534.²¹⁶

Conclusion

All of Dartford Priory's surviving manuscripts were either copied for the nuns in the mid to late fifteenth century, or were given to or acquired by the nunnery in that period. There is a general meagreness of evidence relating to Dartford Priory between its first two decades and the final quarter of the fifteenth century, all of which means that any conclusions on spirituality, learning, literacy and reading in that monastery apply to the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, although they may be indicative of what went on before. Evidence on nunneries is generally more plentiful from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It is to be noted that most surviving vernacular non-liturgical devotional manuscripts that belonged to nunneries date from after 1400. Dartford Priory reflected general patterns, amongst nunneries, although it may particularly have had much in common with an intellectually elite group of houses, partly reflected by evidence of schooling of children, and otherwise by what is known of books and literary activities. Dartford Priory may have benefited from the particularly able and learned prioresses in whose time some of the surviving books were acquired, Prioress Alice Branthwayte and Prioress Elizabeth Cressener.

By the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, most nuns were only able to read English and a certain amount of liturgical Latin. There were exceptional nuns, however, who had tuition and expertise in Latin and other branches of learning, especially in houses like Dartford Priory, Barking Abbey and Syon Abbey, which had reputations as places of learning. Nuns of the Dominican order, especially in the German province, had a reputation for learning and possessing books. This learning and spirituality may have been brought to Dartford Priory by the original nuns from Poissy. The example of Sister Jane Fisher, in 1481, demonstrates that individual nuns at Dartford, who had potential, could receive specialised instruction from preceptors, in Latin and grammar. Thus Dartford Priory possessed not just vernacular religious books but Classical literature in Latin and a copy of the popular historical literary work, the *Brut*. That the nuns did use the books they possessed is indicated by the commissioning of a book of hours with added prayers by a Sister Emma Wynter, who was learned in Latin and associated with two other of Dartford Priory's books (if not others which do not survive). Furthermore, Prioress Alice Branthwayte commissioned or procured the Harley 2254 manuscript for the monastery, and seems to have been responsible for the

²¹⁵ Scattergood comments on the AVE MARIA design (John Scattergood, 'Two unrecorded poems from TCD Ms 490', p.47). His worries about the spelling of Dartford as 'Deptford', in the inscription on fo.1v, are unfounded for two reasons; firstly, the inscription actually says 'Dertford'; secondly, extensive research using medieval documents concerning Dartford reveals a number of spellings, including with a 'p'. In any case, wills show that Deptford was more commonly known as West Greenwich, in the fifteenth century.

production of another book of hours with additional material, now in the Somerset County Record Office. The inscriptions in the Harley manuscript, containing two treatises by Hilton, names two other nuns, and these inscriptions may have been written by the nuns themselves, as they read the book. There are also items of religious graffiti in the *Brut* manuscript for which nuns of Dartford may have been responsible. Sister Emma Wynter's Office of the Dead manuscript, with plainsong chants, which she had made, also demonstrates that she was also able to read musical notation as well as liturgical Latin. The inscriptions indicate that at least some nuns of Dartford could write, as elsewhere, but that their hands were less well formed and more untidy than male scribal hands.

When assessing the literacy and learning of nuns, it is necessary to define not only what sort of literacy, but also what sort of learning is being discussed. Margaret Thompson has written that the learning of the Carthusian order was narrow, because the studies they undertook were exclusively based on the Bible and mystical theology, using a staple of devotional treatises, rather than doctrinal divinity:

Learning was not the object of the Carthusian monk; the learning he needed was such as should help him to devout contemplation, and fit him for the Beatific Vision.²¹⁷

The same can be said of the learning of the nuns of Syon Abbey and Dartford Priory, up to the Dissolution and beyond, although they needed just sufficient Latin literacy to carry out the monastic offices. The importance to both sets of nuns, and also to the Carthusians, of their monastic vocation, after the Dissolution, has been investigated in chapter three. To these religious their learning was as nothing if it did not lead them to an experience and knowledge of the glory and love of God, as witnessed to by the contemplative writings they read.

Being literate in so far as they were able to read in the vernacular, nuns and a special minority of devout literate laity, who included aristocrats, gentry and the mercantile professional elite of London, alike benefited from and created a demand for vernacular spiritual writings. It is not possible precisely to assess the contents of medieval nuns' libraries, because of the lack of surviving inventories, the potentially misleading nature of references to books in wills, and the possibly unrepresentative nature of the survival of books. There is, however, much bibliographical, literary and other documentary evidence to suggest that the nuns of Dartford Priory shared an interest in the insights of contemplative spirituality with the nuns of Syon Abbey and the monks of the Carthusian Order, both of which orders had so much to do with the dissemination of vernacular devotional books, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. These three religious groups were also intimately connected with the laity who also read these works and had them compiled into devotional manuscripts, from which families religious often came. The connections with Syon Abbey may also be evidenced by the extract from the *Revelations of St. Bridget* copied onto one of the fifteenth-century flyleaves in Prioress Alice Branthwayte's Dominican book of hours. There were connections through specific individuals and families between Barking Abbey, Syon Abbey, Dartford Priory and laity of London and the surrounding counties, in this period, as is evidenced, for example, by what is known of the contents, donors and owners of Douce 322 and its copy in Harley 1706. The contents of the Dartford manuscripts demonstrate that the nuns were interested in the contemplative life, possessing texts such as *The Pore Caitif*, drawing on Rolle and others; two copies of *The Pricking of Love*; and the various

²¹⁶ Named in a will (DRb/Pwr9/122).

devotional and contemplative treatises and prayers in the Douce manuscript. They were not totally absorbed in the contemplative life, however, as is demonstrated by their educational and charitable activities, and the prioress's administrative activities. Furthermore, Dame Alice Branthwayte's Hilton manuscript also contained a copy of Hilton's *The Mixed Life*, which further connects the spirituality of the nuns with that of devout literate laity of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Learning, literacy and spirituality in Dartford Priory before the Dissolution, therefore, demonstrates the tripartite influence of the continental order, other English monasteries and the laity from whom the nuns were drawn.

²¹⁷ E. Margaret Thompson, *The Carthusian Order in England*, p.335.

Chapter Five

Monasteries and the secular world in late medieval west Kent

This chapter concentrates on Dartford Priory's connections with the secular world around it. It, therefore, introduces the matter of secular lay and clerical religion, which will itself be the focus of investigation in subsequent chapters. The first part of the chapter consists of an investigation of lay support for and involvement with monasteries in the diocese of Rochester as a whole, based on the evidence of wills, which are the best surviving source.¹ This forms a context for the closer study of Dartford Priory and the support and interest it attracted from local laity and clergy. From this the chapter will move onto a consideration of the connections that existed between the secular communities of Dartford and its locality, and the monastic community within the priory, which connections may have provided the motivation for testamentary support. This will involve an examination of the activities of the friar chaplains of Dartford Priory in the local communities, and a fuller consideration of the strictness of enclosure of the prioress and sisters of the convent than was included in chapter two.

Whilst this chapter considers lay religion only in so far as it connected with monastic religion, it is to be remembered that individuals who valued the religious life of monasteries were always also active in parish religion. It is also to be remembered that Dartford Priory had strong connections with the wider world beyond the diocese of Rochester, to which it had no connection as a Dominican convent exempt from episcopal jurisdiction. The preoccupation of this chapter, however, is with connections between monasteries and local society in west Kent, and the testamentary support Dartford Priory attracted from London citizens and gentry and aristocracy further afield is, therefore, largely ignored. Some literary connections that existed between Dartford Priory and the wider world were dealt with in chapter four.

Monastic support in secular society in the diocese of Rochester, 1438-1537

There were eight monasteries of various orders located in the late medieval diocese of Rochester. Rochester Cathedral Priory was a traditional male Benedictine house. Distinguishing between the cathedral and priory is artificial, for the prior and convent formed the cathedral chapter. Nevertheless, it is necessary to do this, because the small numbers of wills mentioning the convent and 'abbey church' (most of them made by citizens of Rochester) were progressively and significantly outnumbered, during the century under investigation, by the rising number of wills from around the diocese that referred to the cathedral or mother church. Bequests to the cathedral eventually occurred in such numbers that to count them with the overall figures for monastic support would make it appear that this was increasing in the diocese in the decades preceding the Reformation, a conclusion not otherwise supported. There were three houses of friars in the diocese, between 1438-1537, although the house of friar chaplains within Dartford Priory was small and

¹ Testamentary support for hospital institutions, many of which were semi-monastic, will be considered in chapter six.

principally concerned with the *cura monialis*. Furthermore, the house of Observant friars at Greenwich was not founded until the early 1480s. For half of the period under study, the Carmelite Aylesford Priory was, therefore, the only true friary in the diocese. There were two houses of Augustinian canons - Tonbridge Priory and Lesnes Abbey in the parish of Lesnes alias Erith. There were also three nunneries: the Dominican convent of Dartford Priory, a small Benedictine priory at Higham and a larger Benedictine abbey in West Malling. In addition, there was a college of secular priests attached to Cobham Church who sang the offices daily in the chancel of the parish church. Laity who asked for the master and his brethren of Cobham College to participate in their post obit services probably saw it as a kind of monastic institution, and it is included in this study, although with little effect on the overall figures.² Not all these institutions survived until 1537; Higham Priory was dissolved for diverse causes in early 1522, Tonbridge Priory and Lesnes Abbey were both suppressed by Wolsey in 1525, and the Observants of Greenwich were broken up in 1534 because they had refused to accept the king's supremacy.³ Cobham College, Malling Abbey and Aylesford Priory were all suppressed in 1538; Dartford Priory in April 1539; and Rochester Priory in early 1540.⁴

This study is based entirely on the evidence of last wills and testaments, mostly utilising the 4,716 wills proved in the Rochester consistory court 1438 and 1537.⁵ In addition, one original and unregistered Wilmington will of 1456 preserved by itself in the Centre for Kentish Studies has been added to these because it contains a bequest to the friars of Dartford.⁶ Prerogative Court wills exist in usually small numbers for only a few parishes, and represent an economically narrow group in secular society. Only those made by inhabitants of Dartford and other parishes in Dartford's locality have been utilised, in the discussion specifically relating to Dartford Priory. Proportionate figures in this study are calculated from the numbers of testators rather than numbers of bequests. Reversionary bequests, dependent on other beneficiaries dying without heirs, are counted because such mentions still indicate potential support for a monastery, and in any case do not occur in great numbers. The eighty-seven clergy whose wills were proved in the consistory court between 1438-1537 are included in the overall figures because they were a significant grouping in secular society, and yet such a small number does not distort the results obtained for laity.⁷ This study usually refers to 'mentions' of monasteries in wills, rather than simply 'bequests', in order to include wills in which religious are named as executors, supervisors and witnesses but no bequests are made. Not all wills manifesting connections between seculars and monasteries do so in the form of bequests, although financial support and the request for prayers may still be implied.

The great majority of pre-Reformation will-makers in the diocese of Rochester who mentioned monasteries did not look far beyond west Kent. Bequests to Boxley and Bayham Abbeys indicate that laity

² See chapter seven for detailed study of books and learning in Cobham College.

³ They were replaced by a community of Greyfriars, who survived until at least 1538, but no mention has been found of this community in wills.

⁴ See entries for all these monasteries in VCH, *Kent*, ii.

⁵ Only fifty wills from the diocese were proved in the consistory court in 1538-9, and they contain no mention of monasteries. Some original wills proved in this court survive, but these have not been compared with the registered versions.

⁶ CKS U451 T54: the last testament and will of Geoffrey Cristian of Wilmington next Dartford, dated April 1456.

⁷ There are several more wills made by parish clergy in the diocese of Rochester which were proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury.

were influenced by geographical proximity rather than diocesan boundaries. Those who mentioned monasteries in counties further afield usually mentioned family, acquaintances and roots in those areas, strengthening the general conclusion that support for monasteries was encouraged by contact with them. Thus they often attracted particularly high levels of support in the areas in which they were located. This was also true in the diocese of Canterbury, for example of the Carmelite friars in Sandwich and religious houses in Dover and Folkestone.⁸ Ketteringham similarly found that, in Lincolnshire, bequests to enclosed orders were usually made by testators living in the locality, and that bequests to friars were encouraged by contact with them.⁹ Claire Cross links monastic support in the diocese of York, in the sixteenth century, to landlord/tenant relationships and monasteries' appropriation of testators' parish churches.¹⁰ This may have been a factor in the diocese of Rochester, too, but more research on these matters would be necessary to confirm it. Simple presence in the locality may have been as strong a spur as any.

When comparing figures obtained for the diocese of Rochester with those presented in other studies, it must first be acknowledged that like is not being compared with like. Some studies include friars and colleges of secular priests amongst monasteries, in their overall figures, and others do not. Some count clerical testators with laity and others separate them. Some consider wills of wealthier citizens proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury exclusively or in combination with wills proved in local courts, and others use the latter group only. It is also problematic that cities such as London, Norwich, Salisbury and York, each of which had its unique features, are still less comparable with a whole diocese or region most of whose wills came from small rural vills. Even two dioceses such as Salisbury and Rochester, or two geographical areas such as west Kent and Lincolnshire, are not directly comparable because of differences in size, settlement patterns, numbers and size of towns, social structure, industry, proximity to London, and the number and type of monasteries within reach. Such factors, an analysis of which is beyond the scope of this thesis, might explain the generally lower level of interest in monasteries evidenced by wills in the diocese of Rochester as a whole than is found elsewhere in late medieval England, with the exception of the neighbouring diocese of Canterbury. That levels of monastic support were also low in the diocese of Canterbury suggests that there was some element of regionalism.¹¹

The great majority of will-makers in the diocese of Rochester did not value monastic religion sufficiently highly to remember monasteries and religious at their death. There was also a gradual but significant gradual decline in support between 1438 and 1537. Table 2¹² shows that the proportion of wills mentioning monastic institutions was highest in the second decade under consideration (1448-57), at around twenty per cent. This figure halved over the following twenty years, and then remained stable at around ten per

⁸ From personal communication with Miss Sheila Sweetinburgh of the University of Kent, whose PhD thesis on hospitals and charity in late medieval east Kent is in process.

⁹ J.R. Ketteringham, 'Secular piety and religious life in Lincolnshire between 1480 and 1536: practical manifestations of religious piety, the Reformation and early Tudor government', unpublished PhD dissertation, Leicester, 1994, p.155.

¹⁰ Claire Cross, 'Monasticism and society in the diocese of York, 1520-40', *TRHS* 5th ser., 38 (1988), pp.131-45 at p.133.

¹¹ For a discussion of regionalism in the English Church in the late Middle Ages in the context of Norwich, see Norman P. Tanner, 'The Reformation and Regionalism: further reflections on the Church in late medieval Norwich', in John A.F. Thomson, ed., *Towns and Townspeople in the Fifteenth Century* (Gloucester, 1988), pp.129-47 at pp.141-5.

¹² See appendix four for tables.

cent from the 1470s to the early 1500s, before another slow decline set in. It is to be noted that there were very few testators who mentioned monasteries after the early 1530s. Taking the century as a whole, just under twelve per cent of testators in the diocese of Rochester mentioned any kind of religious houses in their wills. The level of testamentary support for enclosed monasteries (that is, excluding bequests to friars) was much lower (between six and seven per cent in any decade between 1448 and 1497, falling to just under five per cent thereafter). This overall decline in support for monasteries was mirrored in wills made exclusively by Kentish gentry; Fleming found that monastic support amongst this group, was declining in the period 1422-1529, especially for the older orders.¹³ All of the figures obtained in non-Kentish studies are at least double those obtained for the diocese of Rochester.¹⁴ Much closer to the latter is the eight per cent proportion of wills from five towns in the neighbouring diocese of Canterbury, between 1440-1539, which included bequests to enclosed monasteries.¹⁵

The proportion of wills including bequests to Rochester Cathedral (often called the 'mother church') rose steadily from 0.2 per cent between 1448 and 1457 to a peak of fifteen per cent between 1518 and 1527.¹⁶ Friars never achieved the latter level of testamentary support from the diocese, even in their best decade (1448-57). Most bequests in the sixteenth century consisted of a few pence, very few of them specifying fabric repairs, prayers or masses. Tanner, who similarly comments on the interconnectedness of cathedral and priory, in Norwich, found that most bequests in Norwich wills to that institution were to the church, often called 'mother church', as at Rochester, rather than to the convent. He also found an increase in bequests to the cathedral, at the latter end of his period, mostly consisting of small bequests of a few pennies, which he interprets as little more than conventional gestures. Unlike in the diocese of Rochester, in Norwich, where testamentary support for friars was at a very high level, the cathedral received fewer bequests than the friars.¹⁷ In Lincolnshire, there were far higher levels of bequests to the cathedral than in Norwich and Rochester

¹³ P.W. Fleming, 'Charity, Faith, and the Gentry of Kent 1422-1529', in T. Pollard, ed., *Property and Politics: Essays in late medieval English History* (Gloucester, 1984), pp.36-58 at pp.48-9.

¹⁴ Andrew Brown, studying late medieval wills made in the diocese of Salisbury, found that the level of bequests to enclosed monasteries was higher in the diocese than in Salisbury itself, although the reverse was true of bequests to friars. In the diocese, excluding Salisbury, sixteen per cent of wills between 1450 and 1499 contained bequests to enclosed monasteries, dropping only to fifteen per cent between 1500 and 1536 (Andrew D. Brown, *Popular Piety in late medieval England: the Diocese of Salisbury 1250-1550* (Oxford, 1995), p.29). In the diocese of York, an eighth of testators gave to enclosed orders, between 1520 and 1540 (Claire Cross, 'Monasticism and society in the diocese of York, 1520-40', p.132). Eleven per cent of Ketteringham's sample of male testators in Lincolnshire gave to enclosed orders, between 1481-1536, with no discernible trend (J.R. Ketteringham, 'Secular piety and religious life in Lincolnshire between 1480 and 1536', pp.154, 160). In towns, thirteen per cent of laity and seventeen per cent of clergy in late medieval Norwich gave to monasteries outside of the city, and the figure would be higher if it included the cathedral priory in Norwich (Norman P. Tanner, *The Church in late medieval Norwich 1370-1532* (Toronto, 1984), p.123). Forty-two per cent of testators whose wills were proved in the Peculiar Court of the Sacrist of Bury St. Edmunds from 1440-89 mentioned monasteries. Fifteen per cent of Bury testators mentioned enclosed male houses (these figures have been supplied by Mr. Mark Merry of the University of Kent, to whom I am most grateful, from his doctoral research on late medieval Bury St. Edmunds). A sixth of J.A.F. Thomson's sample of wealthier late medieval London testators gave to enclosed religious orders (cited by Andrew Brown, *Popular Piety in late medieval England*, p.28 n.13).

¹⁵ I am most grateful to Miss Sheila Sweetinburgh of the University of Kent for providing comparative figures from the diocese of Canterbury. These are drawn from the 3983 wills proved in the Canterbury Consistory and Archdeacon's Courts made by inhabitants of Canterbury, Dover and its locality, Sandwich and its locality, Romney and Hythe.

¹⁶ See table four in appendix four.

¹⁷ Norman P. Tanner, *The Church in late medieval Norwich 1370-1532*, pp.120-121.

diocese, made by a clear majority of testators in most years 1481-1536.¹⁸ Very few testators in the diocese of Canterbury left legacies to Christchurch, whether as priory or cathedral.¹⁹

There may have been a number of factors which accounted for Rochester Cathedral's increasing popularity relative to other monasteries, and as to why this relative popularity was greater than in Norwich, for example. Firstly, there was no competition for bequests from other regular houses in the cathedral city, an almost unique situation. Further, the chapter of Rochester Cathedral was one of the two smallest and least financially secure of the eight English monastic cathedral communities.²⁰ Its proctors may, therefore, have been particularly active around the diocese in whipping up support for the mother church. Andrew Brown suggests that lay support for Salisbury Cathedral, a secular cathedral, was not affected by the level of esteem that the laity had for this institution or its clergy. It was, however, able to exercise much influence around the diocese through its thirty-nine prebends and prebendaries, and by promotion of the cult of St. Osric, whose relics were contained there, amongst laity in the fifteenth century.²¹ Lincoln Cathedral probably attracted testamentary support for its fabric repairs, around Lincolnshire, through the travels of the commissary on probate business, who may have prompted clergy to this.²² Rochester Cathedral must have exercised influence in the diocese in the same way, as the Archdeacon's and consistory courts circulated. Indeed, they regularly sat in the cathedral itself, so that executors of wills, and parishioners involved in other kinds of court business, came there to have these matters settled. Barrie Dobson has spoken of the involvement of some fifteenth-century monastic cathedral priors in diocesan business, for example through the courts. He also finds that monks from monastic cathedrals exercised a spiritual role in their dioceses as confessors and preachers, especially in the cathedral cities themselves.²³ Like Lincoln and other cathedrals, monastic and secular, Rochester Cathedral also attracted the attention of seculars by a popular shrine – that of St. William of Perth – which was a lucrative source of income for the monks.²⁴ It was mentioned in a few wills from the late fifteenth century, suggesting that it was promoted at this time.²⁵ Most bequests to this shrine at any one time came from fellow inhabitants of a particular parish, suggesting that they were following the advice of their parish priest. Of four legacies in the 1500s, three were from inhabitants of the parish of Horton, in the Darent valley, in wills

¹⁸ J.R. Ketteringham, 'Secular piety and religious life in Lincolnshire between 1480 and 1536', p.149 and table 8.

¹⁹ Miss Sheila Sweetinburgh has found that only one will from Dover, Sandwich, Romney or Hythe, between 1440-1539, included a bequest to the 'mother church' of Canterbury, although there were a few bequests to Becket's shrine.

²⁰ Barrie Dobson, 'The English monastic cathedrals in the fifteenth century', *TRHS* 6th ser., 1 (1991), pp.151-172 at p.157.

²¹ Andrew D. Brown, *Popular Piety in late medieval England*, p.49.

²² J.R. Ketteringham, 'Secular piety and religious life in Lincolnshire between 1480 and 1536', pp.149-50.

²³ Barrie Dobson, 'The English monastic cathedrals in the fifteenth century', pp.165-6.

²⁴ On the origins of this shrine, in the early thirteenth century, and the monks' early use of the revenues to fund massive building works and to purchase new lands, see Anne Oakley, 'Rochester Priory, 1185-1540', in Nigel Yates, ed., *Faith and Fabric: a history of Rochester Cathedral 604-1994* (Woodbridge & Rochester, 1996), pp.29-55 at pp.38, 40. The shrine was located in the centre of the north-east transept of the cathedral (W.H. St. John Hope, *The Architectural History of the Cathedral Church and Monastery of St. Andrew at Rochester* (London, 1900), pp.127-8).

²⁵ There was a bequest of 6s 8d to the painting of the shrine in a Rochester will proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury dated 1474 (W.H. St. John Hope, *The Architectural History of the Cathedral Church and Monastery of St. Andrew at Rochester*, p.128). The first bequest to the shrine of St. William of Perth in the consistory court wills occurs in 1491, in the will of John Bamle of Rochester, who lived in the monastery precinct, providing a cow or a quantity of malt to the light of the shrine (DRb/Pwr6/44v). Subsequent bequests occur in Rochester and Strood wills of 1493 (DRb/Pwr5/211) and 1496 (DRb/Pwr5/277v). The other bequests to the shrine in these wills are mentioned or referenced in the next two footnotes, the last occurring in a will dated 1524.

dated 1501 and 1504, and all were addressed to the 'shrine of St. Andrew of Rochester'.²⁶ Similarly, of five bequests made to the shrine in the decade 1518-27, four were from inhabitants of Strood (across the River Medway from Rochester) and dated either 1523 or 1524.²⁷ The vicar of Strood and master of the hospital of St. Mary Newark of Strood, at that time, was Master John Wylbour, a clergyman whose personal acquaintances included diocesan officials and the bishop, John Fisher, himself.²⁸

All this does not explain the progressive increase in testamentary support for the cathedral, however. It perhaps was able to become an alternative to monasteries, as support for the latter slowly declined, because of the relative smallness of its convent. Canterbury and Norwich Cathedral Priors were wealthy and powerful institutions whose large convents may have been identified more closely with the cathedrals than in Rochester. Indeed, Tanner has shown that there were disputes in Norwich between the town and priory. It is interesting to note that the small numbers of bequests to Christchurch Priory (Canterbury) in the Rochester consistory court wills generally did not ask for prayers but were explicitly motivated by tenurial obligation. Most of these came from inhabitants of the parish of Stoke in Hoo, who were tenants of that monastery, and were self-consciously stated to be heriots, in the form of lambs, hens or a few pennies. Testamentary support for Rochester Cathedral continued in Rochester itself after the secularisation of the chapter, in 1540, although it declined around the diocese, a decline which is perhaps attributable to general religious uncertainties.

The single most popular group of religious amongst testators in the diocese of Rochester were friars. The proportion who remembered friars in their wills was, however, significantly lower than those found in non-Kentish studies, which range between thirteen per cent (a diocese) and almost fifty per cent (cities).²⁹ Twenty-seven per cent of Canterbury testators 1440-1539 gave to friars, but the figure for the diocese was much lower.³⁰ In the diocese of Rochester (including the cathedral city) just seven per cent of wills included mention of friaries, including seven per cent of the eighty-seven wills made by priests. These are average

²⁶ DRb/Pwr6 ff 96v, 107v, 109. The cathedral church was dedicated to St. Andrew the Apostle. The fourth bequest in this decade, from John Stace of Cobham, in his will of 1501, was phrased in the same way (DRb/Pwr5/409). All these bequests were of one or two pennies. Another bequest to the shrine from an inhabitant of Horton, of four pence, occurred in 1512 (DRb/Pwr6/334).

²⁷ DRb/Pwr7 ff 288v, 290v, 298v, 316v.

²⁸ He was, for example, one of two executors and a beneficiary (receiving books) of the will of Master Richard Sharpe, rector of Bromley and a chaplain to Bishop John Fisher, in 1528 (DRb/Pwr8/270v). These connections are explored more fully in chapter seven.

²⁹ Tanner found extraordinarily high levels of support for friars in late medieval Norwich, where each of the four houses attracted bequests from between forty-four and forty-seven per cent of both lay and clerical testators. This compares with thirty-six per cent of the wealthy London testators investigated by Dr. Thomson whose wills were proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury (John A. Thomson, 'Piety and charity in late medieval London', *JEH*, 16 (1965), pp.178-95 at p.189). Röhrkasten's larger and socially more comprehensive survey of all the wills proved in the London Husting, Commissary and Archdeaconry Courts between 1373-1483 reveals a lower figure of 13.3 per cent mentioning friars (Jens Röhrkasten, 'Londoners and London mendicants in the late middle ages', *JEH*, 47 (1996), pp.446-77 at p.450). Fifteen per cent of Bury St. Edmunds testators made bequests to friars (my thanks to Mr. Mark Merry of the University of Kent for these figures). Between 1501 and 1538 one in three testators in the city of York gave to one or more of the city's friaries (Norman P. Tanner, *The Church in late medieval Norwich 1370-1532*, p.119. Tanner cites David M. Palliser, *The Reformation in York, 1534-1553*, Borthwick papers, 40 (York, 1971), p.2). Large proportions of late medieval Hull wills contained bequests to the friars in that town, and significantly more than to the local Carthusian monks (Peter Heath, 'Urban piety in the later Middle Ages: the evidence of Hull wills', in Barrie Dobson, ed., *The Church, Politics and Patronage in the Fifteenth Century* (Gloucester, 1984), pp.209-34 at pp.220-221). Andrew Brown also found high levels of bequests to friars in the city of Salisbury; forty-nine per cent of his fifty-three Salisbury wills between 1450-99 contained such bequests, and the proportion sank to thirty-eight per cent between 1500-1536. Across the diocese of Salisbury, excluding the cathedral city, the corresponding proportions of wills were twenty-four and eighteen per cent. (Andrew D. Brown, *Popular Piety in late medieval England*, p.29). A quarter of the five thousand testators in the diocese of York, between 1520 and 1540, left money to friars (Claire Cross, 'Monasticism and society in the diocese of York, 1520-40', p.132). Twenty per cent of Ketteringham's Lincolnshire testators remembered friars (J.R. Ketteringham, 'Secular piety and religious life in Lincolnshire between 1480 and 1536,' p.154).

³⁰ Miss Sheila Sweetinburgh finds that thirteen per cent of the 3983 wills made by inhabitants of Canterbury, Dover, Sandwich, Romney and Hythe, between 1440-1539, mentioned friars.

figures, however, which obscure the changing level of testamentary support over time. Table 2 demonstrates that after a slight rise in the first decade under study to the peak of fifteen per cent achieved 1448-57, there was a steady decline to four per cent in the early sixteenth century, with a slight recovery in the late 1520s and early 1530s. The overall trend of declining support is reflected elsewhere; as has been shown, fewer testators in the diocese of Salisbury remembered friaries in the sixteenth century than had done before; Tanner found the number of bequests dropped significantly in Norwich after 1517.³¹ As in the diocese of Rochester, Thomson found that the proportion in London wills rose just before the Reformation.³²

Röhrkasten found that there was a higher proportion of female than male testators in London who mentioned friars in their wills. He suggests that this was because friars, especially Dominicans and Franciscans, had an effective ministry amongst women, especially widows, who made up the majority of female testators, in London as in urban centres on the continent.³³ There was also a higher proportion of women than men in Bury St. Edmunds who gave to friars, between 1440-89.³⁴ Separate figures for female testators in the diocese of Rochester are available for the sixty years 1438-97. The proportion of women who mentioned friars in their wills fluctuated much more than the overall figures for men, women and priests, but it was generally higher. From 1448 to 1477, between sixteen and twenty per cent of women mentioned friars, as the overall figure decreased from fifteen to seven per cent. Over the next twenty years, however, the proportion of women making bequests to friars sank dramatically, and was not greater than the overall figure for 1488-97.

There were probably two major reasons for the relatively low levels of mentions of friaries in wills made in the diocese of Rochester. Tanner concludes that mendicants depended on townspeople in late medieval Europe, but the only significant urban centre in west Kent was the cathedral city of Rochester, which possessed not a single house of friars.³⁵ The cathedral priory was evidently successful in protecting its local rights. That there was no significant town in the diocese containing even one house of mendicant orders, let alone all or most of them (as at London, Norwich, Bristol, Canterbury, Salisbury, York, and numerous other towns), leads to the second factor. The majority of inhabitants of the diocese of Rochester probably had very little or infrequent contact with friars. Aylesford, where the Carmelite friary was located, was a small vill on the extreme eastern side of the diocese, on the Medway just north of Maidstone. As the only true friary in the diocese before the 1480s it attracted the great majority of bequests to friars from will-makers, and was the single most popular religious house amongst testators throughout the hundred year period 1438-1537, even at the lowest point of its popularity. The house of Observant friars of Greenwich, founded in the early 1480s, never attracted more than between a third and a half of the number of mentions of Aylesford in wills. In the period 1508-17, Aylesford Priory was mentioned in twelve out of 482 wills, its lowest level of support, whilst the Greenwich friars were mentioned in six wills.

³¹ Norman P. Tanner, *The Church in late medieval Norwich 1370-1532*, p.119.

³² Tanner cites John A. Thomson, 'Piety and charity in late medieval London', pp.179, 189-90.

³³ Jens Röhrkasten, 'Londoners and London mendicants in the late middle ages', pp.460-62.

³⁴ Thirty eight per cent of women and thirty four per cent of men (figures from Mr. Mark Merry).

³⁵ Norman P. Tanner, *The Church in late medieval Norwich 1370-1532*, p.119.

Bequests to Aylesford Priory from any parish probably indicate that the Carmelites included it in their itineraries. Without contact with the friars, there was no great reason to favour them over parish clergy or other religious houses, when seeking prayers or masses for one's soul. In Lincolnshire, William Eyre of Saleby, which was sixty miles from the nearest friary in Boston, in 1531, left money to the four orders of friars 'wych visytes the towne of Saleby', indicating that friars travelled large distances and that this contact was the motivation for his bequest.³⁶ Nowhere in the diocese of Rochester was sixty miles from Aylesford, so the friars could have travelled extensively. However, ninety-eight per cent of bequests came from parishes within fifteen miles of Aylesford, as far as Horsmonden at the southern edge of the diocese, the Hoo peninsula to the north, and Seal near Sevenoaks to the west. Beyond this radius, six bequests in the consistory court wills came from Cowden, Edenbridge, Westerham and Dartford, between fifteen and twenty miles to the west, and none from any where further than that. The Carmelites of Aylesford apparently, ventured all over the eastern half of the diocese, but drew their strongest support from settlements up and down the Medway valley, and in the greensand vales south of the North Downs from West Malling and Seal down to Tonbridge, Hadlow, and Horsmonden, at the northern edge of the Weald.³⁷ The level of testamentary support was significantly greater in a few small towns (West Malling, Yalding, Hadlow, the cathedral city of Rochester, and Aylesford itself) than across the area as a whole, and was much closer to the figures produced in other studies. The largest number of mentions from any one parish came from West Malling, a small town within five miles of Aylesford, as table ten demonstrates.³⁸ There, twenty-nine testators (twenty-five per cent) mentioned Aylesford Priory. Twenty-eight wills made by inhabitants of Aylesford itself (representing twenty-nine per cent of wills) mentioned the friars in that parish. Twelve per cent of Rochester will-makers remembered Aylesford Priory.

Very few testators in the diocese of Rochester asked for burial in friary or other monastic churches or churchyards. Andrew Brown finds that, in the diocese of Salisbury, it was friars more often than enclosed orders who received requests for trentals, masses and obits.³⁹ A significant proportion of bequests directed to the Aylesford Carmelites were for trentals and large numbers of between fifty and five hundred masses, most commonly one hundred.⁴⁰ Throughout the hundred year period, trentals cost 10s, otherwise masses cost 8s 4d by the hundred. Votive masses were requested in only one case.⁴¹ Individual friars were specified in some requests for prayers. Walter Canon of Halling asked for Friar John Blak to perform a trental of St. Gregory for him, in 1442.⁴² Friar Richard Walpole was bequeathed 20d by Joan Harrynden of Yalding and John Harysone of West Malling, in 1513 and 1525, Harysone calling Walpole his ghostly father.⁴³ In such cases, testators were

³⁶ J.R. Ketteringham, 'Secular piety and religious life in Lincolnshire between 1480 and 1536', p.155.

³⁷ A study of Canterbury diocese wills would be necessary to show whether they crossed diocesan boundaries and ventured to Maidstone and beyond. Had they done so, they might have trespassed on the limits of the friars of Mottenden and Canterbury.

³⁸ Not only did West Malling contain a medium sized Benedictine abbey of nuns, but it gave its name to one of the three deaneries of the diocese and the parish church was one of the regular locations for the consistory court.

³⁹ Andrew D. Brown, *Popular Piety in late medieval England*, p.44.

⁴⁰ Richard Chaunceler of Trottscliffe, a tiny vill at the bottom of the North Downs escarpment in which the bishop of Rochester's palace was located, asked for five hundred masses, in his will of 1455, for which he left 41s 8d (DRb/Pwr2/32).

⁴¹ In 1527, Thomas Enge of Hadlow left 20d to the friars for the celebration of dirige and five masses for his soul, one of the Nativity of Our Lady, two of the Five Wounds, one of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin and one of Requiem (DRb/Pwr8/114).

⁴² DRb/Pwr1/18v. John Blak was also left 6s 8d, in addition to the 6s 8d left to the convent, in the much later will of John Harrynden of West Malling, in 1459 (DRb/Pwr2/133).

⁴³ DRb/Pwr6/368v, DRb/Pwr8/10.

perhaps remembering friars who were assigned to preach and hear confessions in their parishes. William Ridesdale, a priest of the parish of Aylesford, named at least five and possibly eight of the friars in his will, suggesting that at that time there was good cooperation between the parish clergy and friars.⁴⁴ Some bequests were attracted because friars came from local families. This is indicated explicitly in the case of Friar William Langle, who despite being a mendicant friar, was bequeathed a message or twenty marks in silver by his brother, Thomas Langle of West Malling, in 1469.⁴⁵ Peter Fyscher of Hadlow requested the celebration of a trental of masses by his son, Friar Thomas Fyscher of Aylesford Priory, in his will of 1506.⁴⁶ The place-name surnames of other friars indicate their local origins; Friar Thomas Bredhurst was left sums of ten shillings and one shilling by William Lamberd and Gilbert Ippingbery, both of Yalding, in 1459 and 1462.⁴⁷ The friars named by William Ridesdale, priest, included William Hauling and Henry Aylsford; and Friar Richard Hallyng was bequeathed 12d and 8d in the wills of John Pak of Teston and Nicholas Pakenham of Frindsbury, in 1452 and 1453.⁴⁸ Friars were also called upon to assist with wills; Dan William, the prior, was named as executor of the will of Jane Clarke of Aylesford, in 1514; in 1535, the subprior of Aylesford, Sir Thomas Murray, was listed as one of the witnesses of the will of Sir Robert Blacus, vicar of the parish, suggesting that relations between the friary and parish clergy were still good.⁴⁹ The friary apparently admitted corrodians; Giles Ranchane, a gentleman, was living there when he made his will in 1534. He asked for burial next to the former prior Arnold, and for numerous obits and prayers, leaving money, books and vestments to the convent as a whole and to individual friars.⁵⁰ He named the prior, Friar George Sawyer; the subprior, Sir Thomas Murray; and friars Richard Crundall, Tomas Bewet, Wallsche and Nicholas. He also referred to servants and children living in the priory, suggesting that it was a thriving community of friars and laity right up to the Dissolution. The last two legacies were received in 1536, two years before the house's suppression.⁵¹

Other bequests to friars from testators in the diocese of Rochester demonstrate the proximity and influence of London in west Kent, especially the north-western tip of the diocese; in every ten year period except 1528-37 there were between two and five testators who remembered one or more houses of London friars in their wills. There was a slight decline from the late fifteenth century, leading to the absence of such bequests after 1524. Most testators specified one order of friars, but Thomas Barnarde of Dartford, in 1492, left 12d to each house of the Blackfriars, Austin, Carmelite and Crutched friars, with 10s to the Franciscan friars, for a trental.⁵² Barnarde also made bequests to the Dominican friars of Dartford Priory, to the Greenwich friars and to the London Charterhouse, suggesting that he particularly valued the religious lives of all friars and the strict order of contemplative Carthusian monks. Bequests to the Carmelites of Fleet Street may have been encouraged by contact with the Carmelite friars of Aylesford; for example, Robert Sowe of Snodland and

⁴⁴ DRb/Pwr1/98. One of the five friars he named, John Stretend, was also named in a Burham will in 1450 (DRb/Pwr1/91v). The other three names are not given the title 'fratri' by Ridesdale, but are listed amongst the friary bequests in this will.

⁴⁵ DRb/Pwr2/280v. Friar Langle was also mentioned in the will of Thomas Kyng of Shorn, near Gravesend, in 1473 (DRb/Pwr4/52).

⁴⁶ DRb/Pwr6/176v.

⁴⁷ DRb/Pwr2 ff.170, 224.

⁴⁸ DRb/Pwr1 ff.111, 140v.

⁴⁹ DRb/Pwr7/2; DRb/Pwr9/182v.

⁵⁰ DRb/Pwr9/122. Prior Arnold was asked to celebrate two trentals by Robert Hylton of Higham, in 1523 (DRb/Pwr7/298).

⁵¹ DRb/Pwr9 ff.216v, 228.

⁵² DRb/Pwr6/154.

Thomas Fromond of Hadlow asked for hundreds of masses to be said for them in both the Aylesford and London Carmelite churches, in their wills of 1445 and 1447.⁵³ In the sixteenth century, the Crutched friars, also known as the Friars of the Cross, were more popular than any other order of London friars, amongst the small minority of testators involved. Six out of seven wills made after 1498 including bequests to London friars named the Crutched friars (four of them by women), five of them exclusively. It is to be noted that four of these six testators lived in East Greenwich and one in Woolwich, not far away, and that four of these five also made bequests to the Observants of Greenwich.⁵⁴ Three of the six asked for trentals at or by the Crutched friars.⁵⁵ The Friars of the Cross were the smallest of the London mendicant houses, excluded in any mention of 'the four orders of friars' (only half as many London wills referred to the five orders). The order, which had modeled itself on the Dominicans, was not strictly speaking a mendicant order, and it attracted a smaller proportion of bequests than the other four orders, in London wills. It was reformed after 1410, however, and gained a higher profile in London from the middle of the fifteenth century when closer ties developed between the London convent and the centre of the order in Flanders.⁵⁶ Two other fraternities in the London house, dedicated to the Holy Blood of Jesus and St. Katherine, founded in 1459 and 1495, were both of German origin, suggesting that the priory was popular with the aliens who lived around its precincts. It also gained late popularity with the City, whose patronage it was given in the 1520s, when the priory buildings were extended.⁵⁷ The evidence from Rochester wills suggests that the Crutched Friars' improving spiritual reputation spread out from London and attracted bequests from the sort of pious laity who valued the prayers of stricter orders such as the Observant friars of Greenwich.

The only other house of friars that was consistently named in the Rochester diocese wills, although in very small numbers, were the Trinitarian friars of Mottenden, beyond Maidstone. Receiving sporadic mentions were the various houses of friars in Canterbury. There must have been a common instigation for the legacies to the Canterbury Blackfriars from three testators in St. Mary and Halstow in the hundred of Hoo, in 1473-4.⁵⁸ Various other bequests were made to friaries further afield.⁵⁹ Two legacies to the Dominican friars of Kings Langley in Hertfordshire may be explained by the connection with Dartford Priory, which continued in the matter of endowments beyond the point in the early to mid fifteenth century when that friary ceased to provide Dartford Priory's friar chaplains.⁶⁰ Some members of the laity particularly valued the stricter observant orders,

⁵³ DRb/Pwr1 ff.32v, 52v. Both left 8s 4d for a hundred masses each in the London house; Sowle left 8s 4d for a further hundred masses at Aylesford, and Fromond left 25s for 300 masses there.

⁵⁴ The six were Frances Bone of Woolwich (in 1500), and Alice Newman (1515), Margaret Thacher (1521), John Whelar (1522) and John Style (1524), all of East Greenwich (DRb/Pwr6/46, DRb/Pwr7 ff.101, 210v, 238v, 352), and the wealthy Alice Braye of Chelsfield, in her will of 1509 (DRb/Pwr6/268).

⁵⁵ Alice Newman of Greenwich asked for her trental to be sung at the altar of Scala Celi in Westminster. John Style left a silver dagger and silver spoon with 20s to make a chalice, and 6s 8d to Friar Febert. John Whelar of Greenwich belonged to fraternities in friars' houses; he left sums of money to the brotherhood of St. Barbara in the London Blackfriars and to that of St. James in the Crutched friars.

⁵⁶ Jens Röhrkasten, 'Londoners and London mendicants in the late middle ages', p.473.

⁵⁷ VCH, *London*, i, p.515.

⁵⁸ William Smyth and Johanna Hall of St. Mary in Hoo both left 3s 4d to this house; William Somer of Halstow also left 3s 4d. In March 1471-2 Joan Elbregge of Rochester left 20s to the Austin friars of Canterbury (DRb/Pwr4/8).

⁵⁹ See appendix four table one. Richard Batt of Brenchley left 13s 4d to the friars minor of Lewes, in his will of November 1513 (DRb/Pwr6/371v); Alice Baldwyn, a widow of Lullingstone, left 20s to the Greyfriars of Colchester, in 1533 (DRb/Pwr9/94v).

⁶⁰ Harry Hunt of Rochester left 8s 4d for a trental at Kings Langley, in his will of 1472, as well as making bequests to Aylesford and Rochester Cathedral Priors (DRb/Pwr4/14); William Ladd of Dartford left a basin and ewer of latton to the prior of Kings Langley, in his

in the later fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, as is indicated by the bequests to the Greenwich friars. Further, Robert Grays of Rochester left 6s 8d to the Observant friars of Canterbury, as well as sums to the Greenwich Observants, to the Canterbury Blackfriars, and the Carmelites of Aylesford, in 1526.⁶¹ Benedict Curwen of Rochester left 13s 4d to four orders of Observants, not specifying where, in his will of 1528.⁶² Fleming found that the Observants and Carthusians were generally more popular than older orders, amongst the gentry of Kent.⁶³

Four houses of canons in or just outside the diocese were mentioned in a few wills; Lesnes, Tonbridge and Combwell Priory (south of Maidstone) were Augustinian houses, and Bayham Abbey was Premonstratensian.⁶⁴ The Cistercian monastery of Boxley Abbey, just inside the diocese of Canterbury, to the north of Maidstone, was mentioned in between one and four wills in each ten year period between 1438-1537, except 1458-67, amounting to a total of fifteen bequests. *Three of these testators were fathers of monks there.*⁶⁵ Half of the testators who mentioned Boxley Abbey in wills made after 1498 were motivated by the presence of the famous Rood of Grace, which was a focus of pilgrimage and cause of some scandal at the abbey's suppression.⁶⁶

Nunneries could rely even less than male religious houses for income from legacies, in the late medieval diocese of Rochester. Under two per cent of lay and clerical testators between 1438-1537 mentioned nunneries in their wills (five per cent of clergy). As table 2 shows, the proportion in each decade never exceeded 2.9 per cent (between 1488-97) nor fell below 0.6 per cent (1508-17). Within this narrow range there was a great deal of change over time; a rise over the second half of the fifteenth century was followed by a sharp fall in the early sixteenth century and a recovery before the Dissolution, in spite of the early closure of Higham Priory in 1522. These figures are much lower those found outside Kent, which range from nine to eighteen per cent.⁶⁷ The level of giving in the diocese of Canterbury, between 1440-1539, was much closer to

will of November 1504, which also included bequests to one of the friar chaplains of Dartford Priory, Rochester Cathedral Priory (including his crossbow to the prior), Boxley Abbey and the fellows of Merton College in Oxford (DRb/Pwr6/115v).

⁶¹ DRb/Pwr9/6v.

⁶² DRb/Pwr8/273

⁶³ P.W. Fleming, 'Charity, Faith, and the Gentry of Kent 1422-1529', pp.48-9.

⁶⁴ Bayham Abbey was just over the diocesan boundary not far from inhabitants of Tonbridge, Horsmonden and Lamberhurst. Unusually, most bequests to Lesnes Abbey from laity and clergy of north-west Kent were in wills proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, and are, therefore, not included in this survey. Lesnes Abbey was a member house of the French congregation of Arrouaise, based in Flanders (on this order, in relation to Lesnes Abbey, see: C.H. Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism: Forms of religious life in western Europe in the Middle Ages*, 2nd edn (London, 1989), pp.165-8; Ludo Milis, *L'Ordre des Chanoines Réguliers d'Arrouaise: son histoire et son organisation de la fondation de l'abbaye-mère (vers 1090) à la fin des chapitres annuels (1471)*, 2 vols (Bruges, 1969), i, pp.276-8, 288-90).

⁶⁵ John Dave of Hodsell in Ash near Dartford, in 1452, left 20d to his son William (DRb/Pwr2/37); and Stephen Larke of St. Werburgh in Hoo, in 1457, left 20s to his son William (DRb/Pwr2/99). William Downe, who lived in West Malling but was a citizen and fishmonger of the city of London, in November 1470, left five pounds for prayers to his son John, a monk of Boxley, together with a further reversionary bequest of £6 13s 4d. Downe also left 3s 4d to his godson, William Melles, another monk of Boxley, for prayers (DRb/Pwr3/80).

⁶⁶ William Ladd of Dartford, already mentioned above, left a chest bound with iron to set before the Rood of Grace, in his will of 1504 (DRb/Pwr6/115v); Robert Aslake alias Lorkyn of Strood, in 1511, left a penny's worth of wax to the same (DRb/Pwr6/301v); Alice a Wod of Frindsbury, in 1513, wanted a trental sung before the Rood of Grace, for which she left 10s (DRb/Pwr6/364v); Thomas Shemyng of Rochester, in 1523, left two yards of velvet for a garment for the Rood of Grace, and 20s for repair of the road leading in the direction of Boxley from Rochester (DRb/Pwr7/291); Robert Tesyn of St. Margaret next Rochester, in 1528, left 3d (DRb/Pwr8/174v). On the Rood of Grace see Peter Marshall, 'The Rood of Boxley, the Blood of Hales and the Defence of the Henrician Church', *JEH*, 46 (1995), pp.689-96.

⁶⁷ Sixteen per cent of laity and eighteen per cent of clergy in late medieval Norwich mentioned the single nunnery in that city (Carrow), and these figures do not take into account bequests to the ten other nunneries in the diocese of Norwich (Norman P. Tanner, *The Church in late medieval Norwich 1370-1532*, p.123). Nine per cent of testators in Bury St. Edmunds, between 1440-89, made bequests to nunneries (figures from Mr. Mark Merry). Using a sample of London wills – those proved in the Court of Hustings between 1370 and 1420, a sample

that in the diocese of Rochester, however; 3.7 per cent of testators (forty people) in Canterbury and 1.1 per cent in a selection of towns including Canterbury gave to nunneries.⁶⁸ Catherine Paxton found that many of the London testators giving to nunneries were connected in some way, and where the nunnery shared a parish church, the level of local support tended to be higher.⁶⁹ In the diocese of Rochester, much higher levels of support for nunneries was found in the vills where the three nunneries were located than in the diocese as a whole. Other bequests they attracted came from neighbouring parishes. Nunneries were able to provide masses, because of their chaplains, but beyond their locality they were less able to compete with male houses for bequests.

Malling Abbey, the larger of the two Benedictine nunneries in the diocese, was mentioned in eighteen per cent of wills made by inhabitants of West Malling (twenty-one wills out of 118). The number of wills from each decade is small, and there is no discernible trend, as table 9 shows. A handful of bequests was also received from Wateringbury, Snodland, Halling and Frindsbury, in the Medway valley; and just one from the neighbouring parish of Leybourne.⁷⁰ This is not a high number over a hundred years. Like Dartford Priory, the abbey benefited from the interest of a small special group of laity and secular clergy who valued the prayers and religious lives of the nuns highly.⁷¹ It also received financial support from corrodians and secular people who sought the benefits of confraternity (being called brethren of the chapter house), including burial and prayers.⁷² Some testators gave money because they were related to nuns in the abbey.⁷³ Others left bequests to named nuns, asking for prayers, but giving no indication of whether they were connected by kin, family friendship, or personal acquaintance.⁷⁴ Enclosure should have made personal acquaintanceship impossible, but enclosure rules were frequently bent and broken, by the fifteenth century.⁷⁵ John Crowch of Wateringbury,

which Catherine Paxton acknowledges weights the evidence towards the wealthier freemen of the city - she found that 8.9 per cent of London testators gave legacies to one or more of the London nunneries (Catherine Paxton, 'The nunneries of London and its environs in the later middle ages', unpublished DPhil dissertation, Oxford, 1993, pp.97-8).

⁶⁸ Miss Sheila Sweetinburgh finds that only three testators from Dover, Sandwich, Romney or Hythe mentioned nunneries. One of the forty Canterbury testators made a bequest to Dartford Priory.

⁶⁹ Paxton, 'The nunneries of London', pp.153, 310.

⁷⁰ See table six.

⁷¹ For example, in 1469, Alice Bernys of West Malling asked for the abbey chaplains, Sir Ralph and Sir Robert Selby, and the nuns to celebrate exequies for her in the abbey church, on her burial day. She left 7s to the convent and 2s to the sacristan, Dame Margaret London (DRb/Pwr3/40). William Downe of West Malling, citizen and fishmonger of London, whose son was a Cistercian monk at Boxley Abbey, wanted the monks of Boxley and friars of Aylesford to pray for him, in his will of November 1470, but he also asked for masses and prayers from Malling Abbey, on his burial and month's days. For each day, he left the abbess 3s 4d, 20d to each nun, and 12d to the abbey chaplain for celebrating mass (DRb/Pwr3/80).

⁷² John Lostowe, priest of Malling and former rector of St. Paul's Cray, who made his will in 1452, seems to have retired to Malling Abbey. He asked for burial in the abbey, left 6s 8d for his burial expenses and ten shillings for his month's day services there. To the abbess, Lady Katherine Weston, he left 6s 8d and a silver spoon, to pray for him; 3s 4d to the subprioress Lady Isabell (DRb/Pwr1/104v). William Gurney of West Malling, in his will of 1499, also asked to be buried in the abbey, for which he left 6s 8d, with 6s 8d to the abbey high altar, and £5 to be admitted as a brother of the chapter house, to be prayed for. He left 6s 8d to the abbess, 2s to the prioress, 12d to each nun (some of whom he named), 4d to each novice, 4d to each 'yoman' in the abbey (perhaps lay farm officials), and 2d to each servant (DRb/Pwr5/347).

⁷³ Richard Sondes of West Malling, in 1518, asked for burial in the abbey, and left £5 for the profession of his kinswoman by marriage Julian Whetnall, also making bequests to the abbey servants (DRb/Pwr7/149v). Sondes's widow, Margery Sondes, whose maiden name was Whetnall (she refers to her brother of that name) left a number of items to Dame Julian Whetnall, in 1523, who was evidently professed by then (DRb/Pwr7/279v). William Hull of West Malling, in his will of 1519, left money, masers and bedding to his two kinswomen who were nuns, the abbess Dame Elizabeth Hull and Dame Joan Hull (DRb/Pwr7/175). It was Abbess Elizabeth Hull who gave a book of hours (Blackburn Public Library Ms 091.21040) to her godchild, Margaret Neville, in 1520 (see chapter four above).

⁷⁴ For example, Johanna Bruyn of Frindsbury left 6s 8d to Dame Agnes Chestre, nun of Malling, asking for prayers, in her will of 1462, as well as leaving her gown embroidered with silver and gold to the image of the Blessed Virgin in the monastery (DRb/Pwr2/241v). Male testators did this too; Hugh Mathew of West Malling, who founded an obit in the monastery, also asked Dame Alice Pympe and Dame Agnes Steynston to pray for him (DRb/Pwr5/89v).

⁷⁵ The issue of enclosure of late medieval nunneries is considered in depth below, in the context of Dartford Priory.

whose will was dated in 1463, may have gained access to the monastery through some professional capacity, for he made bequests of 6d each to the butler, cook and brewer of the abbey, as well as 3s 4d to the abbess and 12d to each nun.⁷⁶ Secular clergy had greater access to the nunnery than was true of Dartford Priory, where only friars were allowed to act as chaplains to the nuns. Sir William Mylles, parson of neighbouring Leybourne, who asked for burial within the abbey and founded an eight-year obit there, in 1510, left special gifts to five of the sisters to whom he said he had been ghostly father.⁷⁷

Higham Priory, which was dissolved in 1522, was mentioned in fifteen of the sixty-five wills made by inhabitants of the small vill of Higham between 1438-1522 (23.1 per cent of testators).⁷⁸ All of these fifteen wills were made in the period 1459-1500.⁷⁹ Other bequests came in very small numbers from testators in the nearby parishes of Shorn, Milton next Gravesend, Strood, Rochester, Halling and Snodland. Much of what has been said about Malling Abbey may also have been true of Higham Priory, especially in the fifteenth century, before the number of nuns declined and scandals occurred. Some testators sought masses there.⁸⁰ The benefits of confraternity were available; in 1496, John Wattes of Higham left 16d to the prioress to pray for him, and 12d to each nun, on the condition 'they to take me as broder of ther chapitir howse'.⁸¹ The nuns enjoyed the support of local clergy; the vicar of Higham, William Walshe, in 1459, named Dame Margaret Boteler (prioress 1462-75) and Dame Christine, and left dishes to the refectory, and beads and silver rings to the prioress.⁸² Sir Thomas Codde, the vicar of St. Margaret's next Rochester, in 1465, left 6s 8d to Prioress Boteler (not by name), 3s 4d to Dame Katherine, 3s 4d to Dame Siser, and 10d each to two novices.⁸³ Some bequests came from nuns' families; John Swayne of Higham, in 1494, named five nuns at Higham, including his kinswoman Dame Agnes Swayne, who was later prioress (from 1501 to 1509 at the latest), and not including the prioress Elizabeth Bradforth.⁸⁴

Only ten per cent of the thirty consistory court wills mentioning Higham Priory were made in the sixteenth century. This decline is attributable to the deteriorating state of the nunnery. An inquiry conducted in 1521 found that the nunnery was in a poor state; there had been no more than three of four nuns there for some years, and two of the three then remaining, Elizabeth Penny and Godliff Laurence, were convicted of gross immorality with the vicar of Higham. As a result, the nunnery was closed, in the following year, and the endowments transferred by Bishop John Fisher of Rochester to the new St. John's College in Cambridge.⁸⁵ Godliff Laurence evidently repented, for she applied to be transferred to the Benedictine nunnery of St. Helen's Bishopsgate, in the city of London. Her mother, Joan Laurence, widow of Milton next Gravesend, in

⁷⁶ DRb/Pwr2/253v.

⁷⁷ DRb/Pwr6/272v.

⁷⁸ See table eight.

⁷⁹ The first and last testators were William Walshe, vicar of Higham, who made his will in 1459 (DRb/Pwr2/119); and Thomas Coorteman of Higham, who made his will in 1500 (DRb/Pwr5/364v).

⁸⁰ Thomas Page of Shorn, a neighbouring parish, left 3s 4d to the prioress and 20d to each nun, asking for dirige and masses there, in 1495 (DRb/Pwr5/272).

⁸¹ DRb/Pwr5/275v.

⁸² DRb/Pwr2/119; VCH, *Kent*, ii, p.146.

⁸³ DRb/Pwr2/328.

⁸⁴ DRb/Pwr5/241v; VCH, *Kent*, ii, p.146. The other four nuns named by John Swayne were Dame Margaret Squire, Dame Agnes Water, Dame Anne Alwyn and Dame Ellen Orneston. Agnes Swayne remained a nun after she ceased to be prioress, and was the only one not convicted of immorality at the nunnery's early suppression (VCH, *Kent*, ii, p.145).

her will of January 1529-30, left £4 to her and 4d to each other nun at St. Helen's, for prayers.⁸⁶ Some local people may have regretted the passing of the local monastery, despite the scandals which caused its closure; Sir Thomas Whalley, parish priest of Higham, in his will of 1532, some ten years after the suppression, made bequests to Our Lady light and for post-obit services in the 'monastery of Holande ... havynge no servys'.⁸⁷ It has not proven possible to trace any monastery called Holland, but this may be a name that no longer survives for the flat Thames marshes on which Higham Priory stood.

Few nunneries outside of the diocese received bequests from inhabitants of the diocese of Rochester. Usually these were motivated by family, local or other personal connections. Sir Robert Joysby, vicar of Pembury, in 1532, evidently had strong connections with north Yorkshire; he bequeathed sums of money to the Cistercian prioresses and convents of Rosedale and Baysdale in that county, as well as to the prior and brethren of the large Augustinian house of Guisborough Priory. He asked for their prayers and absolution. He named one of the nuns at Baysdale – Dame Elizabeth Compe – leaving her 6s 8d.⁸⁸ Joysby seems to have shared the relatively high level of interest in nunneries shown by secular clergy in the diocese of York, in the 1520s and 30s.⁸⁹ Apart from one bequest to Barking abbey, no other nunneries benefited from these Rochester diocese wills; there were, for example, no bequests to Syon Abbey.⁹⁰

In conclusion, will-making inhabitants of the diocese of Rochester between 1438-1537 sought the prayers of religious houses less frequently than their contemporaries in London, Norwich, Bury St. Edmunds and the diocese of Salisbury. Low figures have also been found for the diocese of Canterbury, so this may have been a Kentish trait. The diocese of Rochester contained fewer monasteries than many other dioceses, partly because of its small geographical size, and the cathedral city, which was not comparable to large cities like London or Norwich, contained no religious houses or friaries besides the cathedral priory. The diocese was close to London, and wills indicate that many testators had London connections, coming into contact with the diverse religious influences in that city, but there were no large towns, other than Rochester, and most inhabitants in the diocese did not live adjacent to monasteries. The importance of proximity is indicated by the wide variation between levels of monastic support in the diocese as a whole and within certain vills, such as Dartford, West Malling, Aylesford and Rochester. In these, the number of testators who sought the prayers of religious was closer to the levels found elsewhere in the country. The list of parishes whose inhabitants mentioned in their wills the most popular house in the diocese, the Carmelite friary of Aylesford, indicates that

⁸⁵ VCH, *Kent*, ii, p.145.

⁸⁶ DRb/Pwr8/268v. A letter from Bishop Fisher to Richard Pace, then Secretary of State, in 1521, stated that 'one of the nonnes of Heigham wold be at Saint Elyns', and sought Pace's help in this matter. Godliffe's resignation from Higham is dated 3rd January 1520-21, and the document for her acceptance at St. Helen's is dated 28th January, the sum of forty pounds having been paid (G.J. Gray, 'Letters of Bishop Fisher, 1521-3', *The Library*, ser.3 vol.4 (1913), pp.133-45 at pp.139-40).

⁸⁷ DRb/Pwr9/80v.

⁸⁸ DRb/Pwr8/35.

⁸⁹ Claire Cross, 'Monasticism and society in the diocese of York, 1520-40', p.142.

⁹⁰ John Plomer of Eltham had no apparent link with the great house of Barking Abbey, whose abbess, in 1535, he made a conditional bequest of his house and four acres, to do an obit of one trental on mid-lent Sunday forever, if his parish church defaulted on this (DRb/Pwr9/175v). One bequest to Syon Abbey has been found among wills proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury; Robert Wodeford of Crayford (next Dartford) left ten marks to Syon Abbey to prayers for his soul, in his will of 24th April 1486 (PROB 11/8/166v).

many rural parishes, especially to the north-west and west of the diocese, may rarely have experienced the preaching of the friars.

Concerning trends, monastic support was on a slow decline, from the late fifteenth or early sixteenth centuries, as elsewhere, but had not disappeared by the early 1530s. Support for nunneries was generally lower at the end of the period, but Malling and Dartford were still able to command support from a significant minority of local will-makers in the 1520s and 30s. Most notable was the great decline in support for the Aylesford friars, which coincided with a significant rise in small bequests to the cathedral church, in the sixteenth century, as at Norwich. Masses celebrated by friars were not replaced by masses celebrated in the cathedral. An explanation may be found in the next chapter, in which it will be found that the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were a flourishing time for parish church religion in at least certain parishes of west Kent. The widely varying levels of support for the cathedrals in Rochester, Salisbury, Norwich and Lincoln must have been due to local differences in the way and extent to which such bequests were sought, and the relative levels of competition for legacies from friars.

Monastic support in Dartford

Twenty-eight wills proved in the consistory court of Rochester made between 1438-1537 mentioned Dartford Priory. These were distributed evenly over the hundred years, with six bequests in the final decade before the Dissolution. Twenty-two of these twenty-eight testators were from Dartford itself, the other six coming from Wilmington and Stone (neighbouring Dartford), Sutton at Hone (just to the south of Dartford), Eltham, Bromley and Cobham, none of which was more than a few miles away.⁹¹ If the wills proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury made by inhabitants of Dartford are added to those proved in the consistory court, it is found that there are a total of 158 surviving wills made by inhabitants of Dartford between 1438-1537, twenty-eight of them by women. Overall, 16.5 per cent of these testators mentioned Dartford Priory, whether the nuns, the friars, both, or unspecified. The number of wills made by women is probably too small to produce meaningful statistics, so there may not be any significance in the apparently lower level of support for the monastery shown by them.⁹² There is no obvious trend over the hundred year period, as reference to table 11 shows, although a peak of twenty-seven per cent was reached in the decade 1468-77. This dropped to nine per cent between 1528-37.

Of these twenty-six Dartford testators who mentioned their local nunnery in their wills, fifteen referred to the friars, including five who mentioned the friars exclusively. This confirms that the friar chaplains of the nunnery did not confine themselves to the *cura monialis*, so that for some laity, the friars were of greater spiritual importance than the nuns. This popularity did not decrease over time; in the fifteenth century eight of fifteen mentions included the friars, and this increased proportionately to seven out of the eleven mentions in

⁹¹ One of these bequests from outside of Dartford was possibly motivated by a kinship connection with a priory official; Richard Sprever of Cobham, who left 6s 8d to the prioress and convent in 1516 (DRb/Pwr775), was a relative, and possibly father (for he mentioned a son called William) of the William Sprever who helped William Wiggan draw up the Crockenhill section of the priory's rental of 1507-8 (BL Arundel Ms 61 fo.13).

⁹² Eleven per cent of female testators (three women) mentioned the priory, as compared with eighteen per cent of male testators.

wills 1498-1537. Indeed, all of the five wills which refer just to the friars and not to the convent of nuns date from after 1498. The last of these five was one of the last two legacies received by the monastery, in 1534.⁹³ Six parishioners (3.8 per cent of all Dartford testators) sought burial within the monastery, specifying different locations. This was a privilege also sought by certain gentlewomen from beyond Kent.⁹⁴ Other testators sought prayers and services. As with London nunneries, such services included obits, prayers mentioning a person by name, tolling of bells, the burning of lights and other observances.⁹⁵ Seven of the twenty-six testators founded perpetual or fixed term obits or chantries in the priory, involving the prioress, sisters and friars, one of these being a reversionary bequest. Dartford Priory, like the Minories in London, used its own friar chaplains, as well as specially employed secular clergy, for the celebration of the masses of these obits.⁹⁶ Apparently, use of the friars was occasional at the Minories, whereas it was the norm in Dartford, possibly reflecting the friars' activity amongst Dartford laity, attracting bequests in their own right. The most extensive bequests to the priory were made by a few testators in the time of Dame Elizabeth Cressener (senior), who was the only prioress mentioned by name in any wills made by Dartford parishioners between 1392 and 1539.⁹⁷

Only four Dartford testators between 1438-1537 mentioned monasteries other than Dartford Priory in their wills, not counting the mother church of Rochester. All four also made bequests to Dartford Priory. Just two testators made bequests to the Carmelite friars of Aylesford; one of these parishioners, Roger Rotheley, also made bequests to Cobham College, Lesnes Abbey and the chantry hospital of Milton next Gravesend, in his will of 1468.⁹⁸ Thomas Barnarde's bequests to various houses of friars, including those of Dartford, was cited above.⁹⁹ William Ladd, in 1504, gave legacies to the prior of Rochester, the prior of King's Langley, the Rood of Grace in Boxley Abbey and Merton College in Oxford, as well as a friar of Dartford.¹⁰⁰ This small number of testators from a vill of up to eight hundred persons at any one time suggests that Dartford Priory had a strong influence over that section of local secular society that valued monastic piety.¹⁰¹

Nuns and parishioners in orthodox society in late medieval Dartford

It is now intended to explore the connections between the secular and monastic communities of Dartford, in the fundamental area of religion, which encouraged the level of testamentary support just outlined. This investigation must first be set within the context of the theory and practice of the enclosure of late

⁹³ Agnes Parker, widow of Dartford, left 6s to the friars of the 'abbey', in her will of 1534, with no other bequests (DRb/Pwr9/153v).

⁹⁴ For example, Katherine Berkeley, widow of the governor of Calais, asked for burial in the chapel of Our Lady in the monastery, in her will of 1526, leaving £13 6s 8d for the tomb. She also left £8 for a priest to say services for her in the monastery over eight years, and left £20 for a suit of vestments to the priory (PROB 11/22/77v).

⁹⁵ Paxton, 'The nunneries of London', p.120.

⁹⁶ Paxton, 'The nunneries of London', p.122. The presence of secular clergy in Dartford Priory has already been commented on in chapter two.

⁹⁷ See especially the wills of William Milet (made in 1500), William English (1519) and William Sprever (1525), all investigated below.

⁹⁸ DRb/Pwr3/9v. In 1467, Richard Bagshaugh left the friars of Aylesford 20s for prayers, as well as requesting prayers from the prioress, convent, president and friars of Dartford Priory (DRb/Pwr2/386v).

⁹⁹ DRb/Pwr6/134.

¹⁰⁰ DRb/Pwr6/115v.

¹⁰¹ A respect for Rochester Cathedral Priory was also demonstrated by one Dartford man who became a monk there, in this period; a John Dartford was successively monk, precentor and chamberlain at Rochester, between 1496 and 1518 (Joan Greatrex, *Biographical Register of the English Cathedral Priories of the Province of Canterbury, c.1066 to 1540* (Oxford, 1997), p.599).

medieval nuns, and the practical reality of their contact with the secular world.¹⁰² The friars will be dealt with afterwards. The medieval Church frequently stated the opinion that nuns should be strictly enclosed, cut off from what was felt to be the potentially polluting or disruptive influence of the secular world. Attempts to enforce this were often unsuccessful, because nuns tended to stray from their cloisters from time to time, and also because the outside world intruded on nunneries, for various reasons. The topic embraces a wide range of issues that connected nunneries with the secular world – social, cultural, religious and economic.

The Benedictine rule made it clear that the occasions on which any religious went out into the world were to be reduced to a minimum. It was considered to be of vital necessity for nuns to preserve their spiritual and fleshly purity in this way.¹⁰³ The appearance of the new reformed monastic orders, in western Europe, in the twelfth century, was partly a result of an upsurge in enthusiasm for the religious life amongst women. The nuns of Prémontré and Fontevault, and those admitted to the Cistercian and mendicant orders, were all intended to be strictly enclosed.¹⁰⁴ Indeed, Pope Urban IV, in the second rule given to the Poor Clares, in 1263, added enclosure to the three standard monastic vows taken at their profession.¹⁰⁵ In England, the Council of Oxford, in 1222, forbade all religious to leave the convent without licence of the superior for proper reason.¹⁰⁶ English Benedictine nuns had an extremely severe form of enclosure ruled for them by the cardinal legate Ottoban, in his *Constitutions* of 1267. Archbishop Peckham's injunctions issued to Barking Abbey, Godstow, and other nunneries, a decade later, and his own set of constitutions issued in 1281, suggest that these were ignored in practice.¹⁰⁷ The first general regulation on the subject, binding on all orders, was the papal bull *Periculoso*, promulgated by Boniface VIII in 1299. This was subsequently confirmed by popes and councils and was of great importance. It decreed that, henceforth, all nuns were to remain perpetually enclosed within their monasteries, unless gravely ill, and that they were not to receive visitors, except by special licence:

... that so altogether withdrawn from public and mundane sights they may serve God more freely and, all opportunity for wantonness being removed, they may more diligently preserve for Him in all holiness their souls and their bodies.

Nunneries were not to admit more than their optimum number of nuns, for this would result in poverty and the necessity of going out into the world in search of alms; and they were to plead in court through proctors.¹⁰⁸ It has been questioned, however, how long the effects of *Periculoso* lasted.¹⁰⁹ Nuns were frequently reluctant to submit to strict enclosure. Indeed, in one famous incident, the nuns of Markyate, apparently with the consent of their prioress, hurled their copy of *Periculoso* after the bishop of Lincoln, who had just delivered and explained

¹⁰² This subject receives longest, if general, treatment in chapters nine and ten of Eileen Eileen Power's work on medieval English nunneries. Much of what follows is taken from these chapters. All references are given below.

¹⁰³ Eileen Power, *Medieval English Nunneries c. 1275 to 1535* (Cambridge, 1922), p.342.

¹⁰⁴ Eileen Power, *Medieval English Nunneries*, pp.343-4.

¹⁰⁵ Eileen Power, *Medieval English Nunneries*, p.342 n.1.

¹⁰⁶ John Tillotson, 'Visitation and reform of the Yorkshire nunneries in the fourteenth century', *Northern History* 30 (1994), pp.1-21 at p.5.

¹⁰⁷ Eileen Power, *Medieval English Nunneries*, pp. 346-8.

¹⁰⁸ Eileen Power, *Medieval English Nunneries*, pp. 344-5.

¹⁰⁹ Diana Coldicott, *Hampshire Nunneries* (Chichester, 1989), p.91.

it to them.¹¹⁰ Further attempts to enforce enclosure of nuns were made in the sixteenth century, by Bishop Fox, in the diocese of Winchester; by Wolsey, at Wilton Abbey; and by Henry VIII.¹¹¹

Episcopal visitation records and injunctions indicate that, at various times and places, nuns infringed enclosure rules by attending funerals, weddings and feasting, going on pilgrimages, becoming godmothers and attending baptisms, visiting family and friends, and slipping out to take walks.¹¹² At Romsey Abbey, in 1284, it was necessary to legislate against nuns eating with secular men and clerics in their houses. In 1492, the prioress there complained that nuns continually went into the town without leave, sometimes frequenting taverns.¹¹³ No doubt the graver abuses were exceptional, but that there were frequently experienced problems in enforcing the enclosure of reluctant nuns cannot be doubted. Enforcement was complicated in some places, however, where practical necessities dictated that *Periculoso* be infringed; at Nuncoton, the nuns were needed to participate in gathering in the harvest, on the home farm, thus coming into direct contact with the local secular world, so that the sub-prioress, in 1440, complained that 'unbecoming words' were uttered between secular folk and nuns.¹¹⁴

Enclosure was also threatened when the secular world came into the cloister, and injunctions legislated on this matter as well. Some interchange between nuns and seculars was bound to occur, because of the employment of locals as servants, and the obligation to show hospitality to guests.¹¹⁵ Episcopal visitors, therefore, concentrated on limiting the length of stay, and on keeping seculars out of certain parts of the nunnery, such as the dorter, frater, infirmary, chapter house and cloister.¹¹⁶ Injunctions show that such rulings were constantly broken, and there were occasional scandals.¹¹⁷ Sometimes nuns were granted special licence to speak with visitors, but usually in a public place, such as the common parlour, and when accompanied by one or two older nuns, as was ruled for Godstow in 1445. Seculars were never to be received in private chambers, unless they were sick, in which case close family was allowed.¹¹⁸ The problem was not helped by the frequent grant of licences by the pope, and bishops themselves, for specific noble men and women to visit nunneries with company, to eat meals and stay overnight.¹¹⁹

The peace of nunneries was also disturbed by the presence of schoolchildren, long-term boarders, corrodians and servants. Nunnery schools were considered in chapter four. In several cases it was necessary for bishops to issue injunctions forbidding girls or boys to sleep in the dormitory with the nuns.¹²⁰ Some knights leaving the country, during wars, lodged their wives and daughters with their servants in nunneries as

¹¹⁰ Eileen Power, *Medieval English Nunneries*, pp.351-2.

¹¹¹ Eileen Power, *Medieval English Nunneries*, pp.392-3.

¹¹² Eileen Power, *Medieval English Nunneries*, pp.371-86. The example was cited in chapter four of Abbess Elizabeth Hull, who gave a book to her secular goddaughter Margaret Neville.

¹¹³ Eileen Power, *Medieval English Nunneries*, pp.385-6, 389; Diana Coldicott, *Hampshire Nunneries*, p.93.

¹¹⁴ Eileen Power, *Medieval English Nunneries*, pp.382-3.

¹¹⁵ Eileen Power, *Medieval English Nunneries*, p.394; John Tillotson, 'Visitation and reform of the Yorkshire nunneries', p.6.

¹¹⁶ Eileen Power, *Medieval English Nunneries*, pp.402-3.

¹¹⁷ Eileen Power, *Medieval English Nunneries*, pp.404, 395, 399, 400.

¹¹⁸ Eileen Power, *Medieval English Nunneries*, pp.406-8; John Tillotson, 'Visitation and reform of the Yorkshire nunneries', p.6.

¹¹⁹ Eileen Power, *Medieval English Nunneries*, pp.417-18. Michael Hicks, however, writing about the English Franciscan nuns, interprets the necessity of obtaining licences as proof of the strictness of enclosure of Minoreesses (Michael Hicks, 'The English Minoreesses and their early benefactors 1281-1367', in Judith Loades, ed., *Monastic Studies*, i: *The Continuity of Tradition* (Bangor, 1990), pp.158-70 at pp.162-3).

temporary boarders, for which they paid fixed fees. Also found were pious widows and girls too young to be professed. Catherine Paxton finds that secular women stayed in the London nunneries sometimes for practicality, but also because of the appeal of the spirituality, as was most evident in the case of vowesses. She finds that these pious secular women in London nunneries were mostly noble, and did not represent any bond with local society.¹²¹ The Council of Oxford forbade reception of women as boarders in nunneries without the consent of the bishop. Bishops thereafter made frequent attempts to repel all boarders because of the disturbance they caused to conventual discipline.¹²² They were unsuccessful, however, because of nunneries' need to make money and seculars' desire for cheap and secure hostels. At Romsey, for example, orders to remove secular boarders were issued in 1284, 1311, 1346 and 1363.¹²³ Corrodies were objected to by bishops because their provision could lead to long term financial burdens for the sake of short term gain.¹²⁴ They could be advantageous, however, and were never seriously curtailed. There are even instances recorded of male boarders in nunneries, such as at Hampole in Yorkshire, in 1348 and 1411.¹²⁵ Servants existed in nunneries in significant numbers. Some, such as stewards, lawyers and auditors, were well connected gentlemen, but the majority of ordinary servants did provide nunneries with direct contact with local secular society. Minster in Sheppey Priory apparently employed much of the local village, in the 1530s.¹²⁶ The retinue varied in size according to the wealth and size of the convent, but might include cook, baker, maltster, dairy women, laundress, porter, gardener, domestic serving women, farm labourers, and occasionally hired builders and artisans.¹²⁷ The custom of allowing female servants to sleep in the dorter was general, as injunctions against the practice indicate, and this must have made for close relations between nuns and these seculars from the local community.¹²⁸

It is possible to create a false impression by selecting examples from visitations and injunctions from five centuries across the country. However, most nunneries were probably not as tranquil and undisturbed as *Periculoso* intended. The ideal enshrined in this bull was impracticable because of the many links that existed with secular society, resulting from nunneries need for an income and servants to assist them, and the attraction they evidently held for gentle and noble seculars.¹²⁹ The question remains as to whether significant links existed between nunneries and local society in anything beyond strictly practical matters. Improved education of many members of the parish gentry and yeomanry, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, lead them to seek involvement in the religious observances of local monasteries. In a more general way, however, the religious practice of all parishioners in a community where an enclosed nunnery was located may have been affected by this presence.

¹²⁰ John Tillotson, 'Visitation and reform of the Yorkshire nunneries', p.16.

¹²¹ Catherine Paxton, 'The nunneries of London and its environs in the later middle ages', pp.161-8. On lay sojourners and corrodians in nunneries, and nobility paying to stay overnight, see also A.F.C. Bourdillon, *The Order of Minoreesses in England* (Manchester, 1926), chapter 6.

¹²² Eileen Power, *Medieval English Nunneries*, p.415; John Tillotson, 'Visitation and reform of the Yorkshire nunneries', p.7.

¹²³ Eileen Power, *Medieval English Nunneries*, p.416.

¹²⁴ John Tillotson, 'Visitation and reform of the Yorkshire nunneries', p.17.

¹²⁵ John Tillotson, 'Visitation and reform of the Yorkshire nunneries', p.19.

¹²⁶ Eileen Power, *Medieval English Nunneries*, p.158.

¹²⁷ Eileen Power, *Medieval English Nunneries*, pp.150ff..

¹²⁸ Eileen Power, *Medieval English Nunneries*, p.155.

¹²⁹ John Tillotson, 'Visitation and reform of the Yorkshire nunneries', pp.20-21.

Investigation of Dartford and its priory gives insight into these matters. First, the strictness of enclosure of the nuns must be assessed. Nuns in the mendicant orders were intended to be strictly enclosed, and financial measures were designed to facilitate this. Dartford Priory's rich royal endowment and exemption from all taxes were investigated in chapter two. The royal founders also protected the enclosure of the prioress (described as a recluse) and convent by licensing the appointment of attorneys to represent the prioress in court. That evidence comes from the first decades of the monastery's existence, in the late fourteenth century. In the sixteenth century, in the 1530s, Prioress Cressener described herself in letters to Cromwell, as 'your daily oratrice the pore recluse the prioress of Dartford Elizabeth Cressener'.¹³⁰ Whether or not enclosure was strictly observed, that was the intent throughout the priory's existence.

Dartford Priory did, however, admit paying secular boarders. For over a year between c.1418-21 the priory boarded the two daughters of Margaret, wife of Thomas of Lancaster, Duke of Clarence and brother of Henry V. For this, the prioress was paid 6s 8d a week for the two daughters, and 18d a week for their two maidservants.¹³¹ By the end of the fifteenth century, it was, apparently, customary for Dartford Priory to admit pious secular women to board there. An entry in the register of the master general of the Dominican order in Rome, dated 2nd June 1501, records his permission granted to the new prior of the English Dominican province, Master Nicholas Stremer, to allow 'blameless women to enter the convents of Sisters' 'according to custom'. On 8th June 1503, the master general ordered the nuns of England not to retain secular women within their monastery. However, this cannot have been observed and he clearly decided not to press the matter; at some point between 1518 and 1524, Friar Antoninus de Ferraria, the vicar of master general Friar Garcias de Loyssa, conceded that Prioress Elizabeth Cressener of Dartford might receive any well-born matron or widow of good repute, to dwell perpetually in the monastery, with or without the habit, according to the custom of the monastery, and also that she might receive young ladies, and give them a suitable training 'according to the mode heretofore pursued', implying that this was an established practice. This concession was confirmed by the next master general, on 23rd July 1527.¹³²

Arrangements for the reception of non-staying visitors, such as family and friends, were strict.¹³³ The only evidence survives from the late fifteenth century when, it seems, visitors were to be received in the common speaking-room, or *locutorium*, or even spoken to through a grill. There was a concern to ensure that only visitors of good character were admitted. In 1481, Sister Jane Tyrellis was given permission by the master general to 'talk in the common speaking-place with friends of honourable fame, and without a companion', and it was stipulated that she was not to be removed by the sub-prioress. This implies that such a privilege was exceptional, and possibly that Sister Jane had been guilty of some lapse and was having the right restored to her. It also implies that when this privilege was granted, as in other nunneries, it was usual for the nun to be accompanied by one or two senior sisters. In 1500, a Sister Jane was absolved of unspecified misdemeanours,

¹³⁰ PRO SP 1/112 fo.211.

¹³¹ C.M. Woolgar, ed., *Household Accounts from Medieval England. Part 2* (Oxford, 1993), pp.604, 671.

¹³² C.F.R. Palmer, 'Notes on the Priory of Dartford, in Kent', *Archaeological Journal*, 39 (1882), pp.177-9 at p.178.

¹³³ Coldicott finds that enclosure regulations for nuns in the Hampshire nunneries relating to reception of visitors applied to short term visitors only (Diana Coldicott, *Hampshire Nunneries*, p.91).

by the master general, and granted permission to 'speak at the grill with relatives and friends being persons of no blame'.¹³⁴ This may have been the more usual means of communication with visitors at Dartford.

These references imply that enclosure of the Dartford nuns was treated as an important matter, by the royal founder and the order, and that it was maintained to some extent, but that it was not impossible for seculars of pious character to gain access to nuns and the monastery. Indeed, withdrawal of the right to speak with secular visitors seems to have been a method used for punishing nuns for misdemeanours.

Dartford Priory was unavoidably connected with its local parish in the practical business of land and property administration.¹³⁵ The priory's extensive holdings in the parish of Dartford were indicated in chapter two. Administration of holdings, however, only brought the prioress, and possibly one or two other senior nuns, into contact with secular officials. As mentioned in chapter two, some of these officials were drawn from local gentry and yeomanry, such as William Sprever, the Sedleys and Ropers, in the sixteenth century, some of whom were related to nuns there.¹³⁶ Catherine Paxton similarly found that the London nunneries recruited lawyers and auditors from nuns' families, some of whom were local men of repute, including tenants of the nunneries they served, who were often also employed by other monasteries, by bishops or the king. She concludes that such local men helped bind nunneries to the local secular community.¹³⁷

Less information is available about domestic servants within Dartford Priory. Some practical tasks were perhaps carried out by the lay sisters, and the friar chaplains brewed ale.¹³⁸ However, in 1481, the master general in Rome allowed that 'servants and workmen may enter the monastery (of Dartford) without detriment of fame or honour'.¹³⁹ William Sprever referred in passing to the servants of the priory, in his will of 1525, and his feoffees included other priory officials, William and Martin Sedley, and the supervisor of lands and property, William Wyggan.¹⁴⁰ Robert Hakst alias Hawes of Dartford, who dated his last testament and will on 17th April 1530, described himself as servant and baker to the right worshipful lady prioress and convent of the monastery of Dartford.¹⁴¹ No doubt, as in other nunneries, there were a gate-keeper, gardener and a cook. A bequest to Malling Abbey, a Benedictine nunnery, in a will of 1463, refers to the butler, as well as the cook and brewer, so there may have been one at Dartford.¹⁴² William Milett of Dartford included the priory's sexton in his bequests for an obit in the priory church, in 1500: 'And the Sexteyn of the said monastery church for makyng of the herse and fyndyng of the wex .vij d'.¹⁴³ One priory employee who was equally active in parish and priory, in the early to mid sixteenth century, was the prioress's clerk, John Holyngworth. Holyngworth witnessed, executed, supervised and wrote a large proportion of wills made by Dartford inhabitants in the

¹³⁴ C.F.R. Palmer, 'Notes on the Priory of Dartford, in Kent', pp.177, 178.

¹³⁵ Catherine Paxton concluded that the London nunneries were not closely tied to their immediate localities, but this was partly because their holdings of property were dispersed throughout London (Catherine Paxton, 'The nunneries of London', p.310). London was peculiar in this respect.

¹³⁶ See appendices one and two for nuns and officials from these families.

¹³⁷ Catherine Paxton, 'The nunneries of London', pp.84-7.

¹³⁸ Note the reference to the friars' brewing house adjacent to the nunnery, in the rental of 1507-8 (BL Arundel Ms. 61 fo.47).

¹³⁹ C.F.R. Palmer, 'Notes on the Priory of Dartford, in Kent', p.177.

¹⁴⁰ PROB 11/21/272.

¹⁴¹ DRb/Pwr8/238v.

¹⁴² DRb/Pwr2/253v.

¹⁴³ PROB 11/12/138.

1530s and, after the Dissolution, in the 1540s.¹⁴⁴ There were, therefore, laity to be found within the monastery of Dartford, although not within the nuns' enclosure, and a number of economic and practical ties connected the parish and monastery.

According to Saul, the relationship of Gloucestershire gentry with their local religious houses, in the later middle ages, was 'drained of spiritual content ... (and was) largely social and economic'.¹⁴⁵ Catherine Paxton challenged Saul's conclusion in the context of London and its nunneries.¹⁴⁶ Testamentary evidence from such widely varying places as London, Norwich, West Malling and Dartford, indicates that nunneries were valued for their spiritual services by a small but significant proportion of laity who were connected in some way or lived locally. There were a number of factors which might have encouraged the minority of Dartford parishioners who did so to request services in their local nunnery, such as that they had benefited from the pastoral activity of the priory's resident friar chaplains, that they were permitted access to the priory church, and that some had kinship connections with nuns. Taking the last point first, as has been shown, in chapter two, the identity and origins of most Dartford nuns, from its foundation to the dissolution, are totally unknown. Will bequests and pension lists after the Dissolution demonstrate that some nuns were members of local gentry families, including the Bammes, Stoktons, Sedleys and Bostocks, as well as other Kentish gentry families such as the Fanes, Fyneux and Ropers.¹⁴⁷ These nuns must have provided direct channels for religious and social links between their nunneries and local secular society.

Laity in Dartford may also have been influenced in their religious devotions, and encouraged to grant legacies to the convent, because they were allowed access to the conventual church, to pray, hear mass and listen to the nuns sing the offices. Whilst there is no explicit evidence to say that this was so, its likelihood is suggested by various evidences. The sharing of churches by a few nunneries and parishes in England provided a precedent for such access, although the nuns and parishioners were strictly separated. Within the Dominican order, there was a precedent in the arrangements that existed at Poissy Priory in France, from which convent Dartford's first nuns were probably drawn in 1356.¹⁴⁸ Dominican convents, including nunneries such as Poissy and Dartford, were situated in urban centres, in order not to be removed from what Alain Erlande-Brandenburg calls 'la réalité humaine'.¹⁴⁹ Poissy Priory was located within the town walls of Poissy, adjacent to the faubourgs, on a public routeway. The conventual church was orientated to facilitate the townsmen's direct access by the north transept.¹⁵⁰ This large monastery contained separate houses of up to 120 nuns, thirteen friar chaplains, the *conversi*,¹⁵¹ and a royal residence. Each group, and the townspeople, were assigned a different part of the priory church, and entered by their own doors, thus ensuring the enclosure of the nuns

¹⁴⁴ See appendix two.

¹⁴⁵ Cited Catherine Paxton, 'The nunneries of London', p.94.

¹⁴⁶ Catherine Paxton, 'The nunneries of London', p.94.

¹⁴⁷ See chapter two on social origins of nuns at Dartford and elsewhere.

¹⁴⁸ See chapter two.

¹⁴⁹ Alain Erlande-Brandenburg, 'Art et politique sous Philippe le Bel: la priorale Saint-Louis de Poissy', *Comptes Rendus des Séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belle Lettres* (1987), pp.507-18 at p.508.

¹⁵⁰ Alain Erlande-Brandenburg, 'Art et politique sous Philippe le Bel', pp.508-9.

¹⁵¹ Lay brothers who did practical work.

was not threatened.¹⁵² These arrangements were attested to by Christine de Pisan in a description of the monastery which forms part of her poetic account of her visit there, in April 1400, to see her daughter who was a nun. Christine's description of the church refers to the physical separation of priests in the sanctuary from the nuns in the nave and town's laity in their place:

Et le moustier¹⁵³ est en deux desseuvrez
 Afin qu'omme d'elles ne soit navrez,
 N'y entreroit nesun pour dire 'ouvrez',
 Ne d'avanture,
 Car ou milieu il a une closture
 Qui le moustier sépare senz roupture:
 Ceulz qui dient la messe et l'escripture
 De l'Evangile
 Sı sont dehors et les gens de la ville,
 Et en la nef sont les dames, sens guile,
 Qui respondent de haulte voix habile
 A ceulz de hors.¹⁵⁴

Access may similarly have been facilitated in Dartford Priory, following the example of Poissy on a smaller scale. William Milet, a wealthy man possessing extensive lands in and around Dartford, in the hundred of Hoo, and in Dorset, who made his will in 1500, was a pious man intimately associated with the liturgical arrangements of both the parish and priory churches in the town.¹⁵⁵ He made many bequests to the prioress and convent, asked for burial in the tomb he had ordained in the priory church, and, of particular interest, referred to 'my chapell in thabbey'. He willed the sale of ten acres of salt marsh in Stone next Dartford to find a priest to sing for his soul for two years in this chapel. He also willed various crofts and pastures in Dartford to the prioress and her successors for the perpetual foundation of two weekly masses for his soul in his chapel (the mass of Our Lady on Wednesdays, and the Jesus Mass on Fridays). He also provided for doles to poor people at the time of an obit he founded in the priory church, suggesting that these were to be present.¹⁵⁶ It is unclear what the exact arrangements or position for his chapel might have been, nor whether it was only built ready for his post-mortem services. Numerous instances have been recorded of anchorites and vowesses attached to nunneries, as at Carrow in Norwich.¹⁵⁷ Indeed, the example has been cited of the vowess, Alice Hompton, who was living in her own oratory without the nunnery of Dartford in 1484, joining the friars for their offices and mass.¹⁵⁸ That was during Milet's lifetime so she was probably known to him. It cannot have been common for lay men to possess their own chapels within their local nunnery, during lifetime, although Paxton finds that some chantry founders built chapels onto conventual churches in London.¹⁵⁹ Milet was personally acquainted with one of the Dartford friar chaplains; he made a special bequest of 20s to Friar Andrew, over and above the 3s 4d each friar was to receive for his post-obit services. It may, initially, have been contact with the friars that

¹⁵² Alain Erlande-Brandenburg, 'Art et politique sous Philippe le Bel', pp.509-11.

¹⁵³ Monastery church.

¹⁵⁴ Transcribed and printed in Paul Pougin, 'Le Dit de Poissy, de Christine de Pisan: description du Prieuré de Poissy en 1400', *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes*, 4th series vol.3 (1857), pp.535-55 at p.545.

¹⁵⁵ PROB 11/12/138.

¹⁵⁶ This obit was to be done at Lammastide for the souls of the original founders of the morrowmass in Dartford parish church. Milet willed: 'And to xiiij poure men and women in almes every of them jd the same day'.

¹⁵⁷ Norman P. Tanner, *The Church in late medieval Norwich*, p.60.

¹⁵⁸ *Cal. Papal Letters*, xv, p.32.

lead Milett to a closer involvement in the priory. He was of no more than minor gentry or yeomanry stock, but he manifested the same desire to participate in the life and worship of a nunnery as those noble men and women who sought access to nunneries of the order of Minoreesses.¹⁶⁰ Such men and women did not merely seek to benefit from the prayers of enclosed religious after death, but to participate in monastic religion themselves, during life, whilst remaining in the active life.

Milett was probably not alone, although the level of his involvement in the life of the priory was surely unusual amongst parishioners. The other five men and women of Dartford who sought burial within the monastery probably also were familiar with the liturgy of the priory church.¹⁶¹ Bequests in a few Dartford wills to lights and images there imply that laity were familiar with the building and its contents. William Parys, who asked to be buried in the monastery churchyard, on the eastern side of the cross there, in his will of 1456, left a cow to the maintenance of the light of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the priory, as well as 5s 8d to be divided between the prioress and convent in equal parts, and 4d to each friar, to pray for his soul.¹⁶² John Joyner left 4d to the same light, in 1478.¹⁶³ William Sprever, yeoman of Dartford, the priory land-surveyor, in his will of 1525, provided a taper to burn before the Rood in the priory church, when the Jesus mass (presumably that founded by William Milett) was celebrated, every Friday, for as long as 3s 4d endured. He bequeathed 3s 4d to the light of Our Lady 'which the servantes kepe', and 3s 4d for a taper to burn before St. Erasmus every Sunday at mass, as long as the money endured. This reference to the light kept by the priory servants, whom Sprever possibly meant to include himself, confirms both that there were servants in Dartford Priory, and that they were permitted, if not encouraged, to be involved in the devotions and liturgy of the conventual church. Sprever also left 20d to the high altar of the priory, and further demonstrated his familiarity with the layout of the priory church in his request for burial in the south aisle behind William English, or in the cloister, at the prioress's discretion.¹⁶⁴

Evidence of involvement of local laity in the life of the priory church, and contact between the prioress of Dartford and these seculars, is particularly strong for the half century that Dame Elizabeth Cressener was prioress (1489-1537). This may be a consequence of the greater survival of evidence from this period, or a reflection of a genuine increase in contact. In this time there existed a small group of local laymen, including William Milett, William English and William Sprever, who knew each other, at least one of whom (Sprever) was a priory official, who were deeply interested in the liturgical life of the priory church, and who were personally acquainted with the prioress.¹⁶⁵ They also knew each other; Milett made bequests to Sprever; Sprever was a witness of English's will, along with the president of the friars and one other friar of the

¹⁵⁹ Catherine Paxton, 'The nunneries of London', p.122.

¹⁶⁰ Michael Hicks, 'The English Minoreesses and their early benefactors', pp.163-4. Thomas of Woodstock, for example, was granted permission to attend services at the Minories whenever he liked (p.163).

¹⁶¹ On burial in nunneries of the other mendicant order with English nuns, see A.F.C. Bourdillon, *The Order of Minoreesses in England*, p.77.

¹⁶² DRb/Pwr2/52.

¹⁶³ DRb/Pwr3/289. He also left his great brass pot to the prioress and convent.

¹⁶⁴ PROB 11/21/272.

¹⁶⁵ Paxton found that founders of obits and chantries in the London nunneries included nunnery officials, relatives of nuns and those with property connections; these were not necessarily men with local connections (Catherine Paxton, 'The nunneries of London', pp.139-40).

monastery; Sprever also asked to be buried behind English, in the priory church. They all named Prioress Cressener as executor or supervisor of their wills.

The existence within the wider number of Dartford inhabitants who mentioned the priory in their wills of this small special group suggests that there was some sort of lay confraternity based in the conventual church. Monasteries often acknowledged benefactions by lay donors by admitting them to the spiritual benefits enjoyed by the religious. It was not unknown for nunneries to provide homes for lay pious fraternities; there were two fraternities attached to Carrow Priory, in Norwich, in the fifteenth century, and members attended an annual mass there.¹⁶⁶ The availability of confraternity in London nunneries is suggested by stray references in wills.¹⁶⁷ In the diocese of Rochester, certain laymen sought to become brothers of the chapter houses of Higham Priory and Malling Abbey, in the late fifteenth century, as mentioned above. Such a confraternity in Dartford Priory may have existed from the priory's foundation; in April 1363, seven years after nuns first arrived at Dartford, a certain John Foxcote and his wife Margaret conveyed the manor of Braundeston Halle in Magna Waldyngfeld in Suffolk to Matilda 'prioress of the new works at Dartford and her church of St. Margaret', in return for their admittance to 'all the benefits and prayers in the church for the future'.¹⁶⁸ William Milette was a strong candidate for obtaining the benefits of confraternity, possessing his own chapel in the priory church, and being such a generous benefactor. He envisaged that the whole convent would be involved in his burial rituals and month's mind in the priory, leaving bequests for the friars to celebrate masses, and the nuns to sing dirige and attend the masses. William Sprever left a tenement and garden in Overy Street in Dartford to the priory on condition that he was 'accepted and taken among other their good benefactors into their daily suffrages and prayers of their religion, and to be prayed for forever'. Burial in the priory may have been one of the benefits of confraternity enjoyed by Milette, English, Sprever and others. The servants who maintained the light of Our Lady perhaps also belonged to this fraternity.

It should be noted, however, that the direct contact that these secular men had with their local nunnery was with the prioress; there is no evidence of them having access to any other of the nuns, which would have infringed contemporary ordinances from the master-general. Prioress Cressener actively involved herself in priory administration, and, therefore, came into frequent contact with tenants, attorneys and officials. Not even the vowess Alice Hompton had direct access to the nuns' enclosure; her oratory was outside the nunnery and she attended services with the friars. Indeed, it may have been the presence of the friars that assured access for laity into the conventual church. Nevertheless, those seculars who did avail themselves of this opportunity to participate in the monastic devotions of Dartford Priory must have been familiar with the sight and sound of all the nuns as they sang the offices in their choir.

¹⁶⁶ Norman P. Tanner, *The Church in late medieval Norwich*, p.74. Additionally, the Norwich guild of saddlers and spurriers celebrated its annual guild mass there, whereas no guild had its mass in a parish church in the city (pp.69, 207).

¹⁶⁷ Catherine Paxton, 'The nunneries of London', pp.117-19. Paxton comments that there was always a danger that lay confraternity would become a saleable product; the London Carmelites and some hospitals printed handbills, in the sixteenth century, to advertise these benefits.

¹⁶⁸ C.F.R. Palmer, 'History of the Priory of Dartford', p.249.

It is also to be noted that these parishioners did not neglect their commitment and obligations to parish religion. The majority of benefactors of Dartford Priory also made bequests to lights, images, services or the high altar in the parish church. Some were significant local landowners, fully active in the world. Milett, the Dartford will-maker who manifested most extensive support for Dartford Priory, also made the most elaborate bequests for the maintenance of parish religion.¹⁶⁹ Contact with monastic life may even have reinvigorated their devotions in the parish church.

It was also possible for local secular clergy to take part in religious celebrations in the conventual church, in the period when Elizabeth Cressener was prioress, if not before. The nuns were safeguarded from contact with secular clergy by the provision of friar chaplains, but the existence of secular priests and chantry chaplains in the priory has already been noted. Further, the vicar of Dartford was involved in an annual obit founded by William Milett, in 1500, for the souls of the founders of the morrowmass in the parish church, to take place at Lammastide in the priory church. This was to be kept and attended by the prioress and convent with an additional mass of 'Regine' celebrated by the president of the friars. Of interest, is Milett's provision: 'The vicar of Dertford for the tyme beyng if he be there and sey masse and offer at the said masse of Requiem jd. he to have viij d'. Lay parishioners were also drawn into the performance of this obit in the priory through the associated distribution of alms to thirteen poor people, and the going about of 'the bedeman' through the streets of the town ringing his bell during the time of the performance of the obit, encouraging the whole parish to pray for the souls for whom the obit was founded.¹⁷⁰ There were other instances of co-operation between the vicar of Dartford and Prioress Cressener, in parish and testamentary business, of which more below. Such contact between nuns and local secular clergy was usual in Benedictine nunneries; secular parish clergy in Higham and Rochester who were acquainted with the nuns of Higham Priory, for example, were mentioned above. Coldicott finds that the fourteenth-century nuns of the Hampshire Benedictine nunneries would have known the vicars of their local parishes, as well as having their own unbeneficed priests.¹⁷¹ It may be an indication of the stricter enclosure of the Dominican nunnery of Dartford that such contact was apparently limited to the prioress.

Thus far, attention has been concentrated on parishioners who were involved in the life of Dartford Priory. However, the priory was also involved in the spiritual and social life of the parish, especially through the activities of Prioress Cressener. From the late fourteenth century, the convent exercised considerable

¹⁶⁹ More will be said about this in the next chapter.

¹⁷⁰ Milett willed that the prioress and convent 'doo kepe and hold in the church & monastery of ou' blisshed lady and seynt Margaret in Dertford a yerely mynde and obite, at the feste of seynt Peter called *Ad vinculam sancti Petri* otherwise callid lammas for the soules of William Rotheley and Roger Janet and for the soules of all the helpers supporters and maynteners that hath ben, now be & hereafter shalbe, of all the *promysses*. That is to say on the even a dirige by note, of ix lessons, and on the morowe a masse of Requiem, and every lady or suster weryng a white Scapulary and beyng att Dirige have vj d. The priorez for hir goode attendaunce xx d. The supprioiez beyng att the seid Dirige viij d. And every preest saying masse on the morow iiij d. And the president for syngyng of the masse of Regine .viij d. The vicar of Dertford for the tyme beyng if he be ther and sey masse and offer at the said masse of Requiem j d. he to have viij d. And the Sexteyn of the said monastery church for makyng of the herse and fyndyng of the wex .viij d. And to the bedeman for the tyme beyng goyng *wi'h* his bell through owte the towne and strete praying for all the soules aforereherced and all other good doers supporters & maynteners & all cristen soules ij d. And to xiiij poure men and women in almes every of them j d the same day &c.'. Milett was perhaps encouraged in this by his associate, the vicar of Dartford who died in 1477, John Hornley, with whom he served as joint executor of William Rotheley's will; Hornley himself had a relation, Agnes Hornele, in religion, at Malling Abbey, whom he gave 20s and to whose abbess and convent he left 13s 4d in his will (PROB 11/6/233v).

¹⁷¹ Diana Coldicott, *Hampshire Nunneries*, p.55.

influence in parish religion through the appointment of warden chaplains to a chantry chapel which served as a chapel of ease in the parish. The chapel of St. Edmund King and Martyr, with its popular burial ground, stood on the eastern hill overlooking the vill. Wardens of this chantry received bequests from parishioners for their religious services in both the chapel and the parish church, especially during the mid to late fifteenth century. The prioress and convent were granted the advowson of the chapel by Edward III, in May 1366.¹⁷² Nunneries commonly held advowsons of parish churches, as did Dartford Priory, and there were inherent dangers in this system of patronage which meant that the nunnery had the ability to affect parish religion for good or ill. Indeed, in the 1520s, Prioress Cressener appointed to St. Edmund's chapel her own clerk and supervisor, William Wiggan, who was a pluralist with a parish in Cheshire, who seems to have spent little time in chapel duties, and this coincided with a diminution of bequests to the chapel.¹⁷³

One activity of Prioress Cressener, that no previous prioress of Dartford had undertaken, according to surviving evidence, was the execution and supervision of wills. In 1527, the master general in Rome confirmed an earlier undated concession that Dame Elizabeth might execute wills 'provided only it be for the good of religion'.¹⁷⁴ By then, she had already been doing this for at least twenty-seven years. It was a role that brought her into direct contact with local seculars; William Milett appointed Dame Elizabeth his principal executor in 1500, alongside his brother, a secular clerk, and a local knight, Sir Richard Blagge. He envisaged that the prioress would see his wife regularly, for he ruled that she was to hold the £10 he bequeathed his wife, and let her have the money as she needed it. William English made the prioress joint executor with his wife, in April 1519, the will being witnessed by the president and one other friar of the priory.¹⁷⁵ Hugh Serle, in his will of October 1523, appointed the vicar and William Sprever as his executors, and Elizabeth Cressener as their overseer, providing another example of co-operation between the prioress and vicar.¹⁷⁶ William Sprever also made Dame Elizabeth overseer of his secular lay and clerical executors, in 1525.¹⁷⁷ Elizabeth Cressener did not only exercise these functions for Dartford inhabitants; Henry Righley of Bromley made her overseer of his will dated 1520.¹⁷⁸ He stated that he had made his will with the advice of one Master Roper. It was probably on Mr. Roper's advice and with his assistance that he procured the services of the prioress; this Roper was probably the John Roper of Eltham, attorney-general of Henry VIII, whose daughter Agnes was a nun of Dartford by 1523.¹⁷⁹ John Sedley of Southfleet, the priory auditor and father of Sister Dorothy, made Prioress Cressener executor of his will, in 1530-31.¹⁸⁰ The probate details of William English's will confirm that Elizabeth Cressener undertook her duties as executor seriously; one William Sydenham showed the authentic seal of Prioress Elizabeth Cressener and acted on her behalf, as sole surviving executor, in the matter of the administration of English's goods, at a session of the Rochester consistory court held in Dartford Parish

¹⁷² *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1364-67*, p.240.

¹⁷³ The place of this chapel and its chaplain in parish religion will be studied in more detail in chapter six.

¹⁷⁴ C.F.R. Palmer, 'Notes on the Priory of Dartford, in Kent', p.178.

¹⁷⁵ DRb/Pwr7/162v. English named the president as William Cetner/Cetun and the friar as William Seble.

¹⁷⁶ DRb/Pwr7/313v.

¹⁷⁷ PROB 11/21/272.

¹⁷⁸ DRb/Pwr7/200.

¹⁷⁹ See appendix one.

¹⁸⁰ PROB 11/24/149.

Church, on 17th April 1532, thirteen years after English's death.¹⁸¹ Elizabeth Cressener's non-attendance in person may have been due to her age and infirmity by that time, having been prioress since 1489, but more likely was due to her being a recluse. This suggests that fellow executors had to come to her in the priory to discuss matters. Her active role in the administration of the priory's possessions certainly qualified her for the role.

Prioress Cressener was not unique in this amongst nuns. Catherine Paxton notes a few examples, from the London nunneries, of nuns acting as witnesses and executors of wills, and the involvement of one prioress in a testamentary dispute. Marilyn Oliva found a much higher incidence in the diocese of Norwich.¹⁸² The nuns of Dartford were supposed to be strictly enclosed, however, and it is unclear whether Dame Elizabeth's original grant of permission from Rome preceded these activities. She does seem to have followed the injunction that she do this for the good of religion. Four of the five wills in which she was named as an executor or the supervisor included bequests of significant size to her nunnery for post obit services and prayers. The fifth testator, Hugh Serle, did not make any bequests to the priory, but that he had sought the services of the priory official William Sprever and Prioress Cressener to act as executor and supervisor of his will suggests he had close involvements, and he did make extensive pious bequests to St. Edmund's chapel, of which the priory held the advowson, where he asked to be buried, as well as to the parish church.

In the early sixteenth century, the nunnery was drawn into the life of the parish church when William Milette gave the prioress a role in his reformation of the morrowmass there. The prioress of Dartford was to hold in trust the extensive endowment of lands Milette provided, some of which derived from William Rotheley, the original founder of the morrowmass, by his will of 1464. Furthermore, Milette made the prioress responsible for 'the fynding of preestes for the masse whan any nede shall fall', a task that required her to turn her attention from the seclusion of the cloister to the world of the parish and of secular priests. Milette perhaps wanted to share with the rest of the parish the benefits he had discovered of contact with the local monastery, or he simply felt that this was the best way of safeguarding the mass. The arrangements set out in his will must have been preceded by discussion between himself, the prioress and the vicar of Dartford, a particularly notable example of their co-operation in religious matters.¹⁸³

Dartford Priory was also involved in poor relief in the parish, providing alms in accordance with monastic obligations. This was usual for nunneries of other orders; John Tillotson found that Yorkshire nunneries, for example, were connected to local society by the provision of alms.¹⁸⁴ In 1474, Prioress Beatrice

¹⁸¹ This is recorded in the probate register and the consistory court act book: DRb/Pwr7/162v; DRb/Pa 9 pt 2 fo.113. Sydenham was a priory surveyor by 1539 (see appendix two).

¹⁸² Catherine Paxton, 'The nunneries of London', pp.151-2, citing Oliva.

¹⁸³ Milette detailed the newly combined endowment of the almshouses and morrowmass, referring to his own lands and those of William Rotheley bequeathed for this purpose. The endowment consisted of the annual revenues and profits coming from lands, tenements, woods, pastures and meadows in the parishes of Bexley, Crayford, Stone and Swanscombe and the hundred of Hoo, and certain properties in Dartford. These lands were also to fund the obit in the priory at Lammastide for the souls of the original founders of the almshouse and morrow mass. A reference in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* in 1535 to payment by the priory of £6 10d. to five poor people from land in Swanscombe and Bexley 'by gift of William Milette' confirms that the ordinances of his will were carried out, at least with regard to the almshouses (*Valor*, i, p.120).

¹⁸⁴ John Tillotson, 'Visitation and reform of the Yorkshire nunneries', p.14.

Eland of Dartford was licensed by the master general in Rome to give alms.¹⁸⁵ Some of this took the form of overseeing doles at burial days, month's minds and anniversaries, for deceased parishioners who had endowed obits and services in the priory. The *Valor Ecclesiasticus* records that the priory also paid 112s 8d every year to thirteen poor people 'by ancient custom'.¹⁸⁶ The prioress's role in such matters was significantly enlarged by the provisions of William Milet's will, in 1500. His endowment for the morrowmass in the parish church, which he entrusted to the prioress, was a joint endowment for the morrowmass and five new almshouses which he willed to be set up in Lowfield Street, in the town. This was to bring to fruition an earlier foundation by his former employer William Rotheley, and others, which was licensed in 1453 but not accomplished.¹⁸⁷ Association with, or running, hospitals was an accepted role for medieval nunneries. Three of the four Hampshire nunneries founded and maintained hospitals; that attached to St. Mary's Abbey Winchester contained thirteen poor sisters.¹⁸⁸ Milet set out, in great detail, his ordinances for the ruling of these almshouses in Dartford, whose inhabitants were to pray for their benefactors every day in the parish church. Significantly, he made the prioress of Dartford joint master with the vicar and churchwardens of Holy Trinity parish church. This must have come about after direct negotiations between these parties. Together, the prioress and these seculars were to select five poor men and women to inhabit the houses, to distribute weekly alms to them, and were to exercise moral authority over them. Milet also gave to the prioress principal responsibility for the selection of new inmates to replace those who died. No doubt she did this through her officials. She or the vicar were to see that new entrants knew their *Pater noster*, *Ave Maria* and *Credo* and to assign them a day to learn these basic religious texts if they did not. It is thus implied that the prioress would carry out such examinations herself, and therefore that poor laity came before her to be examined. Through the prioress (and Milet particularly had in mind Elizabeth Cressener) the Dominican nunnery was thus involved in the religious instruction of laity in the parish, both men and women. Milet granted the prioress and convent large sums of money (amounting to £27) for the aid, comfort and support of the almspeople, and to defend the endowment of lands and property in court, if necessary.¹⁸⁹

The role of the Dartford friars in local secular religion

The role of the friar chaplains in the life of Dartford Priory was examined in chapter two. The legacies they received from parishioners, five of whom referred exclusively to them and not the nuns, indicate that they also exercised a distinctive role in the lives of the local laity. Mission amongst laity, in all the evangelistic and pastoral senses of that word, was, of course, the friars' reason for existence. Dominic had intended that the friars who served as chaplains for the nuns at Prouille would also use that priory as a base for their continuing missionary work. This dual role of monastic chaplains was not unique to the mendicant orders. It was common, for example, for priests in

¹⁸⁵ C.F.R. Palmer, 'Notes on the Priory of Dartford, in Kent', p.177.

¹⁸⁶ J. Caley and J. Hunter, eds, *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, i, p.120.

¹⁸⁷ *Cal. Patent Rolls 1452-61*, p.114.

¹⁸⁸ Diana Coldicott, *Hampshire Nunneries*, p.123; Eileen Power, *Medieval English Nunneries*, p.151.

¹⁸⁹ It is likely that the prioress of Dartford did, indeed, take up this important role in the parish; bequests to the almshouses from parishioners, in the 1530s, confirm that they were built. Furthermore, the lands bequeathed by Milet to endow the morrowmass and almshouses are mentioned in the priory rental of 1507-8 (BL Arundel Ms 61), and the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* records the payment, by

late medieval Benedictine nunneries to exercise a ministry in local parishes, and this was another way in which enclosed nunneries were involved in parish religion.¹⁹⁰

In England as well as on the continent all the mendicant orders divided up territory amongst the convents of their order and assigned their friars to work in that patch. In the Dominican order, each priory's territory was called its *praedicatio*, and here it carried out its preaching, as the name suggests, sought alms, and recruited new members. Sometimes border disputes arose between convents, especially when new ones were founded, because a smaller territory provided less alms. In 1257, the English province laid down norms for the fixing of geographical limits between houses, at its chapter held at Gloucester. This model, which involved bringing together representatives of the priories in dispute with each other in a commission of arbitration, was copied by some other provinces. As in other mendicant orders, these territories were further divided into smaller districts for the easier organisation of preaching, administration of penance and collection of alms. Each of these districts was entrusted by the priory to a friar who was a talented preacher, and he had the charge of all pastoral activities in that area. The 1421 general chapter ordered that limiters, as they were called, be of good reputation and good preachers, and required that they work their districts personally. Limiters were not allowed to undertake parochial ministries or hold chantry incumbencies without permission. When they did this with permission half of the stipend went to their priory. This system provided a regular ministry and a more certain income for priories, and it allowed the limiter to get to know the people in his district well, although abuses did creep into the system, in places, as time passed.¹⁹¹

The small house of friars within Dartford Priory was probably not formally assigned a *praedicatio* in which to carry out pastoral work, because its reason for existence was the *cura monialis*, but over time it may have established a customary area in and around Dartford in which the friars worked. They did not have a pressing need to collect alms, since they had a guaranteed income by royal endowment of Dartford Priory. It may have been necessary, however, to make some agreement with the single important mendicant house in the diocese, that of the Carmelites of Aylesford. Nevertheless, wills do not suggest that the Aylesford friars made much impact in the Dartford locality, although they may have made occasional visits; they attracted just two bequests from Dartford, and a handful from the rural parishes of Southfleet, Longfield, Ash and Ridley, between 1438-1537, as mentioned above. The friars of Greenwich also impinged little on parishes further down into north-west Kent away from London, and attracted just one bequest from Dartford, in 1492. The friars of Dartford Priory probably did not have any competition from other Dominican convents either, for it is doubtful that Dartford was within the *praedicatio* of either the London or Canterbury Blackfriars. They therefore had a free hand, locally, and probably informally established a local ministry early on, in the fourteenth century. Formal regulations, such as that Dominican friars were supposed to leave the convent only

Dartford Priory, of £6 10d per annum in annuities to five poor people, from the gift of William Milet of the lands in Bexley and Swanscombe with which he endowed the morrowmass and almshouses (*Valor*, i, p.120).

¹⁹⁰ Joseph Avril studies the communities of secular priests attached to Benedictine and other nunneries in the diocese of Angers from the 11th to 13th centuries. Sometimes this amounted to a double monastery, as at Fontevrault, but most often some secular priests (four in the examples cited) were placed under the authority of the abbess and served both the monastery and the parish (Joseph Avril, 'Les fondations, l'organisation et l'évolution des établissements de moniales dans le diocèse d'Angers (du xi^e au xiii^e siècle)' in M. Parisse, *Les Religieuses en France au xiii^e siècle* (Nancy, 1989), pp.27-67).

in pairs, were impractical in Dartford where the number of friars varied between six, at foundation, to three, in 1535.¹⁹²

The friars were not only asked to perform post-mortem masses in the priory church but were to be seen in action in the parish church. It was suggested above that it was contact with Friar Andrew that first drew William Milette into the life of the monastery. Thomas Bolton, in 1463, left 8d to each friar of Dartford and 12d to other priests to say masses and exequies for him at his burial in the parish churchyard.¹⁹³ William Maykins of the parish, who was most likely a kinsman of the priory surveyor at that time, Sir Thomas Makyn priest, in his will of 1530 left 6d to each friar attending his burial in the parish churchyard, as well as other sums to secular parish clergy and clerks.¹⁹⁴ The friars may also have taken part in obits in other local parish churches; the priory auditor, John Sedley, in his will of February 1530-31, left 4d each to as many priests, monks, friars and canons as would come and say a daily mass, during the year after his death, in the Trinity Chapel in Southfleet parish church, where he was to be buried.¹⁹⁵ Parish clergy must have enjoyed good relations with the friars, as with the prioress, for there are no surviving records of dispute. Jean Dunbabin feels that there has been an over-concentration on hostility between secular clergy and friars, for example in Paris in the thirteenth century, so that cooperation between the two groups has been almost forgotten. There was, for example, little tension between the secular clergy and Dominican friars of Lyon, in the thirteenth century. Indeed, the parish clergy there benefited from the practical theology expounded by the Dominicans in cathedral lectures and the preaching manuals they wrote.¹⁹⁶ The resident vicars of Dartford, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, were generally highly educated and, therefore, the intellectual equal of the preaching friars.¹⁹⁷ In this period, parishioners must have enjoyed a generally high standard of preaching from both parish clergy and the friars.

Some of the Dartford friars evidently obtained licences to hold local benefices as means of pursuing their vocation. The identities of all the chaplains of St. Edmund's chantry in Dartford between 1366 and 1539 are not known, but on at least one occasion the prioress, holding the advowson, appointed a Dominican friar. Friar William Crowelond, who was presumably one of the brethren of Dartford Priory, received letters patent ratifying him as 'warden' of the 'free chapel' of St. Edmund, on 28th January 1441-2.¹⁹⁸ If he had a genuine sense of vocation as a friar preacher he must have welcomed this opportunity for ministry outside the monastery walls, and had possibly asked the prioress for it. It was also a good appointment from the parishioners' point of view, providing them with a new preacher and pastor. Crowelond was an elderly and

¹⁹¹ William Hinnebusch, *The History of the Dominican Order*, i (New York, 1965), pp.265-72.

¹⁹² William Hinnebusch, *The History of the Dominican Order*, i, pp.360-65.

¹⁹³ DRb/Pwr2/276.

¹⁹⁴ DRb/Pwr9/23v.

¹⁹⁵ PROB 11/24/149. Sedley was perhaps being a little over-optimistic in hoping to attract canons; the nearest houses, in 1531, were Leeds Abbey and Combwell Priory, both over twenty miles away, in the diocese of Canterbury, Lesnes Abbey, Tonbridge Priory and Bayham Abbey having been suppressed in the 1520s (see VCH *Kent*, ii, 160-65, regarding Leeds and Combwell).

¹⁹⁶ Jean Dunbabin, 'The Lyon Dominicans: a double act', in Judith Loades, ed., *Monastic Studies*, i: *The Continuity of Tradition* (Bangor, 1990), pp.190-95.

¹⁹⁷ For example, Master John Homley, in the fifteenth century, was the founding president of Magdalene Hall in Oxford (see chapter seven and appendix two).

¹⁹⁸ *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1441-6*, p.146.

experienced friar, having been ordained acolyte and subdeacon at the Stamford Dominican convent, in 1401.¹⁹⁹ He remained chaplain until his death, in 1446.²⁰⁰

Some of the friars worked in other local parishes. On 25th September 1479, one Richard Page dated a letter at Horton, five miles south of Dartford in the Darent valley, to his 'ryght synguler good master' Sir William Stonor, knight, who possessed a manor there.²⁰¹ Page's letter indicates that he had the presentation of the vicarage of Sutton at Hone 'by sydes yo' maner', and that he had given it to a priest called Sir William, having witnessed the good service he gave to Stonor as incumbent of a chantry he maintained in Horton parish church.²⁰² Page was therefore writing to Stonor to recommend a priest to be the new chantry chaplain at Horton, and he proposed one of the friars of Dartford: 'Sir ther is a frere prechour off thabbey of Dertford his name is Frere Hugh Ffabri'. Page gave a glowing account of Fabri, indicating that he was well known at least to local gentry, that he was a diligent priest and pastor to them, and that he had thus established a strong local reputation and acquaintanceship:

Ffabri whiche y have allway ought my verry god will²⁰³ & favor onto & so dois Appelton Martyn & all the gentelmen in our partes. I sertefye yo' mastership he is a good prest & a clene, ther is non better to my understandyng unfandy²⁰⁴

The approval of Fabri's purity confirms Marshall's findings about the qualities laity sought in priests saying their post-mortem services.²⁰⁵ Page continued by asking that Sir William write a letter to the master of Cobham College, which was endowed with the rectory of Horton, stating:

... that it wer yo' plesure he (Fabri) shold succede Sir William in yo' chaunterie it wold be to the grete [ples]²⁰⁶ comfort²⁰⁷ of all the gentelmen in thes partes & over that ye shall have the dayly pr³ier of a good prest that was never non suche there syns y knew beter by my trouth

This is also of interest because it confirms that private chantry priests in parish churches performed services for the living as well as the dead.²⁰⁸ Richard Page felt sure that the bishop of Rochester would have granted this friar a benefice, but 'he (Fabri) woll non have'. Benefices were usually sought after by priests; that Fabri was of a mind to refuse them suggests he was particularly committed to his vocation as a wandering friar and perhaps to his role in Dartford Priory. He was evidently persuaded, however, since in a subsequent letter to Sir William Stonor, dated 23rd August 1482, three years later, Page reported that 'Frere Hugh chantre prest at Horton woll no longer occupie the Chauntere ther' and recommended another good 'clene' and honest priest

¹⁹⁹ A.B. Emden, *A survey of Dominicans in England based on the ordination lists in episcopal registers (1268 to 1538)* (Rome, 1967), pp.318, 104

²⁰⁰ Thomas Ingeldew was presented to the perpetual chantry of St. Edmund, made vacant by the death of Friar William Crowland, by Prioress Margaret Beaumont and the convent of Dartford, in October 1446 (DRb/Ar 1/11 fo.10).

²⁰¹ PRO SCI/46 no.194 (printed in Charles Lethbridge Kingsford, ed., *The Stonor Letters and Papers 1290-1483*, ii, Camden Third Series, 30 (London, 1919), no.247). The date on the letter does not include the year, but is supplied by Kingsford from details in other letters.

²⁰² A William Moyser was installed as Vicar of Sutton in 1481 (C.H. Fielding, *The Records of Rochester* (Dartford, 1910), p.274).

²⁰³ Inserted superscript.

²⁰⁴ The Appeltons were a prominent and wealthy gentry family of Dartford and Southbenfleet in Essex. The Martyns were gentry in Dartford and Horton, where they owned the manor of Franks and had a mansion.

²⁰⁵ Peter Marshall, *The Catholic Priesthood and the English Reformation* (Oxford, 1994), *passim*.

²⁰⁶ Deleted.

²⁰⁷ Inserted superscript.

²⁰⁸ See chapter six for more on this, in relation to St. Edmund's chapel and Dartford parish church's chantries.

who would make a good 'bedeman', Sir Robert Tyve.²⁰⁹ That Fabri only retained this position for three years suggests he was unhappy with the restrictions it placed on his ministry.

Fabri continued as a friar chaplain of Dartford Priory working amongst local laity; over twenty years later, William Ladd of Dartford bequeathed him 3s 4d to pray for his soul and those Ladd was bound to pray for, in his will of 1504.²¹⁰ Ladd made no other bequests to Dartford Priory, suggesting that he had a particular friendship with Friar Fabri. He may have enjoyed intellectual debate with Fabri, for his bequest of 40s to the chapel of Merton College Oxford, for the fellows there to pray for him, indicates that he was an Oxford University man. Fabri was evidently a particularly outstanding friar with a high local reputation in Dartford and its immediate hinterland. His name suggests that he was of continental origins, perhaps French.²¹¹ Both documents which refer to him are written in English, so 'Fabri' was not simply a Latinisation of 'Smith'. If Friar Hugh Fabri came from Italy or the south of France he must have made an impact on the spirituality of the convent with the latest continental Dominican influences, through his spiritual direction of nuns.²¹² His cosmopolitan religious and cultural background must also have had an impact on William Ladd's spirituality and intellectual interests.

Other friars of Dartford Priory undertook duties in local parish churches. The will of William Metcalfe of Horton, made in August 1490, was witnessed by the vicar, 'Friar' Thomas Baynton, and the chantry priest, Sir Robert Tyve.²¹³ Baynton was possibly a friar of Dartford Priory licensed to hold a benefice. 'Canon' Thomas Clarke, 'canon of Dartford',²¹⁴ was listed amongst the clergy working in Wilmington parish, in a clerical subsidy list of 1513, as was Sir Christopher Martyndale, a secular chaplain in the monastery. Both priests received 40s stipends for this parish work, and were assessed to pay 4s subsidy.²¹⁵ Furthermore, in September 1524, the archdeacon of Rochester's visitation found that the vicar of Wilmington, William Wiggan, was non-resident and the cure was being undertaken by one of the friars of Dartford ('unus fratrum priorisse deservit cure').²¹⁶ Wiggan, the clerk and supervisor of Dartford Priory, evidently asked his brother priests within the priory to undertake his parish duties when mutually convenient, and employed secular curates in other years. The archdeacon's visitation of Hartley, near Dartford, in 1534, found that for just that year the duties of curate there were being carried out by a 'Frater dertford'.²¹⁷

²⁰⁹ PRO SC1/46 no.192 (printed in Charles Lethbridge Kingsford, ed., *The Stonor Letters and Papers 1290-1483*, ii, no. 321). Kingsford supplies the year of this letter by reference to other letters.

²¹⁰ DRb/Pwr6/115v. Ladd's other monastic bequests, including to the prior of Kings Langley, have been detailed above.

²¹¹ In modern times, 'Fabri' is an Italian form of 'Fèvre' known in Corsica and Italy. The form 'Fabre' is known in Le Rouergue, Languedoc Méridional and Provence (Albert Dauzat, *Dictionnaire étymologique des noms de famille et prénoms de France* (Paris, 1951), p.255). Emden has not found Fabri listed in any English ordination list (A.B. Emden, *A survey of Dominicans in England based on the ordination lists in episcopal registers*).

²¹² Refer to the evidence of Elizabeth Cressener and her 'ghostly father', the president in the 1530s to see the continuation of such a practice.

²¹³ PROB 11/8/346v.

²¹⁴ This must be an inaccurate reference to the friars.

²¹⁵ This assessment list is bound in a Rochester consistory court act book: DRb/Pa5 fo.102.

²¹⁶ DRb/Pa 8 pt 1 fo.61.

²¹⁷ DRa/Vb4 fo.274. The rector of Hartley was Dominus William Cok, just possibly the William Cooke who was Stanpit chantry priest of Dartford two decades earlier.

Conclusion

Andrew Brown finds that, from the thirteenth century, the parish grew in importance in pastoral and spiritual matters, although Hicks and Mertes point out that this was less true for the nobility.²¹⁸ However, the developing doctrine of Purgatory meant that monasteries continued to receive support:

The growing importance of the parish did not mean isolation for monastic houses since they could become involved in parish chantry foundations, funeral services, and sometimes the wider pastoral and charitable needs of parishioners.

Brown says that this was especially true of friars but that links were also established between lay people and religious of closed orders.²¹⁹ Catherine Paxton similarly concludes that, in late medieval society, lay piety could find expression through multiple channels, especially the parish and fraternity, but that a minority also associated themselves with nunneries. They obtained a diversity of spiritual services, for which they offered small cash sums for prayers, to extensive land endowments for more elaborate post obit arrangements. This minority of laity consisted of people who were well placed to observe the nunneries at close hand, including lay officials, nuns' relatives, especially devout women, neighbours and parishioners in joint churches. That those who knew the London nunneries best valued their intercessions suggests that the nuns commanded respect as religious.²²⁰ A smaller minority of inhabitants of the diocese of Rochester than has been found elsewhere, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, valued the religious lives and services of monasteries sufficiently to devote a portion of their worldly goods to obtaining their prayers. This proportion was slowly declining from the late fifteenth century up to the Reformation, although there was an upturn for friars, in the late 1520s and early 30s. This was a broad trend, however, unrelated to the specific events of the 1530s, which brought a sudden falling off of bequests from the middle of the 1530s. This suggests that the proportion of the diocese's willmakers who were normally disposed to support monasteries had mostly not abandoned this of their own volition before it was forced upon them.²²¹ Much higher levels of support did exist in small towns and vills where monasteries were located, and this was particularly noticeable in the case of the nunneries and Aylesford Priory.

The example of Dartford Priory facilitates study of connections between monasteries and secular society before the Reformation, in particular the connections that existed between an enclosed nunnery and the community of the parish in which it stood. Testamentary support from London citizens and nobility further afield, and the attraction that Dartford Priory had for a number of pious widows and young women, suggest that this nunnery had a religious reputation that was widely known. It may have been important to such people that Dartford Priory was the only house of Dominican nuns in England. The religious lives of the nuns were also valued and respected by some of those who lived closest to, were employed by, and paid rent to Dartford Priory. Enclosure of the nuns was strict, in principle, and there is no hint of scandal involving nuns leaving the

²¹⁸ Michael Hicks, 'The English Minoresses and their early benefactors', pp.166-7, citing Mertes. They possessed their own chapels and had little connection with parish churches.

²¹⁹ Andrew Brown, *Popular Piety in late medieval England: the Diocese of Salisbury 1250-1550*, p.47.

²²⁰ Catherine Paxton, 'The nunneries of London', pp.171-2.

²²¹ Claire Cross, 'Monasticism and society in the diocese of York, 1520-40', p.145 notes a similar lack of anticipation of the Reformation in the diocese of York.

monastic confines, in the registers of the master general of the order. Some of the nuns were linked to the parish and locality by kinship and family friendship connections, but most parishioners did not have personal contact with them. Most of those who remembered the priory in their wills directed their bequests to the prioress and convent of nuns, as well as or instead of to the friars of the monastery. It has been suggested that such support was encouraged by the open access to the conventual church allowed to laity, perhaps because of the presence of the friars, as at Poissy Priory in France. A greater number of parishioners than wills indicate may have benefited spiritually from access to the conventual church during life, including the poorest members of the parish. From behind a screen they were able to listen to the nuns' offices, intensifying their awareness of the special identity and separateness of these professed women. It has been found that amongst these laity there was a small special group, in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, some of whom were employed as a priory officials and servants, who became closely associated with the liturgical life of the priory and acquainted with the prioress. This did not conflict with, and may even have strengthened, their commitment to secular parish religion.

All this was true in the long period that Elizabeth Cressener was prioress. She sought or accepted a particularly high level of co-operation between parish and priory in social and religious matters. The dual foundation of the morrowmass in the parish church and of the Lowfield Street almshouses, with the prioress, vicar and churchwardens as joint masters of the latter, suggests that Prioress Cressener's influential role in parish religion was accepted within the parish community. All parishioners were affected by their local nunnery, in religious matters, whether or not they sought its intercessions at death, through the prioress's appointment of wardens of St. Edmund's chapel and, after 1500, of the morrowmass priest in the parish church; her role in the supervision of the almshouses, after 1500; and the pastoral work of the friars in and around Dartford. Furthermore, Dominican nuns were connected to the laity by their vocation given them by Dominic to aid the mission of the friars through prayer and contemplation.

Chapter Six

Parish religion in late medieval Dartford and west Kent

Virtually all testators in the diocese of Rochester who made bequests to monasteries, in the century before the Dissolution, also made bequests to their parish churches and services within them.¹ It was one of a range of options available to conventionally and especially pious laity and secular clergy seeking to provide for the health of their souls, when they made their wills. Catholic parish religion was not generally in a state of decay, on the eve of the Reformation, and was even flourishing in new ways, in some places, despite the existence of pockets of heresy in many communities and regions. Professor Christopher Haigh finds that 'the (medieval) Church was a lively and relevant social institution, and the Reformation was not the product of a long-term decay of medieval religion'. Furthermore, he finds that 'Catholic piety was expanding rather than contracting in the years before the Reformation', and that Henry VIII 'attacked institutions and forms of piety which were growing and vigorous'.² Duffy similarly concludes that late medieval Catholicism exercised a powerful hold on the imagination and loyalty of the people right up to the Reformation. He argues that 'traditional religion' was not in decay but was an expanding tradition well able to meet new needs and conditions, for example through the production of vernacular religious books, adaptations within national and regional cults of saints, growing lay sophistication, and increasing lay activism and power in guild and parish. He concludes that the Reformation was a violent disruption of what was vigorous in late medieval piety and religious practice.³

The evidence of wills, supplemented by some other sources, confirms that orthodox religion was flourishing in north-west Kent in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. In this chapter it is intended to demonstrate this by particular reference to Dartford, as an example of one community, with other examples drawn from villis and parishes in its hinterland and the diocese of Rochester. Here, religion was orthodox and conservative, and was expressed through multiple channels, of which one – support for monasteries – has already been described. Only one case of heresy is known in Dartford, as late as the 1540s. Dartford was thus different from certain towns in the Weald and east Kent, such as Tenterden, where there was a strong tradition of non-conformism and where even orthodox piety was often restrained in its testamentary expression.⁴ This chapter begins with a general sketch of parish church religion in late medieval Dartford, followed by a focus on one individual who demonstrated an unusually dynamic commitment to orthodox pious belief and practices. This is followed by detailed investigation of certain manifestations of orthodoxy and growing lay activism in parish religion in Dartford, Gravesend and elsewhere, including chapels, almshouses, fraternities, pilgrimage, new cults and devotions, complaints against negligent clergy, and parish music. Clergy will largely be dealt with in chapter seven. The main source, as indicated, is the last testament and will, but consistory court and archdeaconry visitation material are also used. The method is mostly non-statistical; the small number of wills that survive for a

¹ Claire Cross makes the same point for the diocese of York between 1520 and 1540 (Claire Cross, 'Monasticism and society in the diocese of York, 1520-40', *TRHS* 5th ser., 38 (1988), pp.131-45 at p.132).

² Christopher Haigh, ed., *The English Reformation Revised* (Cambridge, 1987), Introduction, p.4.

³ Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: traditional religion in England, c.1400-c.1580* (New Haven, 1992), p.4.

community such as Dartford cannot be trusted to be statistically representative of the population over this period.

Parish religion in Dartford

Parish religion in Dartford up to the Reformations was orthodox and traditional. In the diocese of Rochester there were Lollard conventicles at times in the Medway valley, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.⁵ However, wills suggest that traditional religion was dominant in these places as well; for example, it was shown in chapter five that support for the Aylesford friars was at its strongest in the Medway valley. Within ten miles of Dartford, in Gravesend, just two definite cases of heresy, one of Lollardy and one of Lutheranism, were brought, in the 1520s and 30s.⁶ In Dartford and its surrounding villages there are no indications that Lollardy ever had a presence. The only heresy accusation involving a Dartford parishioner of which evidence survives from before Mary's reign, dating from 1542, concerned a doctrine that was characteristic of neither Lollardy nor the new Protestant reformers.

At sessions of the Rochester consistory court held in Dartford parish church on 27th October and in Rochester Cathedral on 3rd November 1542, Thomas Bradshawe, curate of Dartford, James Fullar and Paul Mildred, 'freeman', both of the same parish, accused Peter Connyngham of Dartford of uttering heretical remarks 'as touchyng the ascencion of the bodye of Christ', in the house of Thomas Spakman, taylor of Dartford, on 1st September 1541. Connyngham was accused of having said:

The body of Christ which he recyved in the wombe of the virgyn Mary did not ascend unto heven, nor is not in heven⁷

The outcome of this case is not given. The precise nature of Connyngham's heresy is not clear. The matter is of sufficient interest to warrant investigation, since it is the only known case of religious dissent in Dartford up to that date. Connyngham did not deny that Christ had gone into heaven, but that his mortal body had done so. He was not denying the divinity of Christ, for his reference to Mary as virgin shows that he accepted that Jesus was conceived of the Holy Ghost. In any case, denial of the Ascension is a very indirect way of denying the Resurrection, which is the vindication of Jesus as the Son of God. It is unlikely that a Dartford labourer would openly have expressed atheistic or non-Trinitarian views in the presence of the curate, in 1542, even if he held them.⁸ Since Connyngham believed in Jesus's divinity he was not, therefore, denying that Jesus had returned to the Father and was now in heaven. A remote possibility was that he was positing some kind of disembodied purely spiritual ascension, and therefore, by implication, Resurrection. This hinted at a medieval dualistic heresy earlier held by the Cathars, in twelfth and thirteenth-century southern France, springing from the belief that the immortal soul was trapped in the polluting body. It was a view held by some individuals in the diocese; on 2nd May 1530, John Pilchar of Cuxton, in the Medway valley, stated that he believed that his soul would arise on the day of judgement,

⁴ John F. Davis, *Heresy and Reformation in the south-east of England, 1520-1559* (London, 1983), p.2; Robert G.A. Lutton, 'Orthodox and heterodox piety in Tenterden, c.1420-c.1540', unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Kent, 1997.

⁵ John F. Davis, *Heresy and Reformation in the south-east of England, 1520-1559*, p.3.

⁶ John F. Davis, *Heresy and Reformation in the south-east of England, 1520-1559*, p.43.

⁷ DRb/Jd 1 fo.7r-v. This case and the deposition book it is found in were not utilised by John F. Davis in his *Heresy and Reformation in the south-east of England, 1520-1559*.

⁸ Radical religious views were held by individuals in the diocese; continental influence was felt in the region, such as the Free Spirit movement. For example, John Moress weaver of Rochester attacked Christ's passion and the person of the Virgin, in 1505, according to the episcopal register (John F. Davis, *Heresy and Reformation in the south-east of England, 1520-1559*, p.3).

but not his body. Davis feels that this revealed a speculative kind of Lollardy common in Kent.⁹ Connyngham may have held some such view and believed that Christ's Resurrection was spiritual, and thus that it was a purely spiritual Christ who returned to heaven. If he was suggesting that the Ascension was purely spiritual this would certainly have made belief in the mass impossible for him, and thus rendered him guilty of heresy in 1542, seven years before Edward VI's first prayerbook; Christ's body could not universally be made present in the consecrated bread if it had never left the particularity of Jesus's first century circumstances and gone into heaven. It is not clear where Connyngham or Pilchar might have learnt such an idea, however; Kentish Lollards were distinguished rather by their opposition to sacraments and thus the priesthood, and it was for this that many of them were prosecuted.¹⁰ Cases involving defamation, in the Rochester consistory court, demonstrate that 'Lollard' was a common term of abuse in the early sixteenth century. If it had been suspected that Connyngham was a Lollard he would surely have been accused of this.

It also is unlikely that Connyngham was influenced by the English reformers. The initial impulses of English Reformation Protestantism sprang from Luther, to some extent from Zwingli, and hardly at all from other groups such as Anabaptists, who held a variety of beliefs.¹¹ Denial of the physical 'ascension' of Christ into heaven was not a view held by Lutherans, Calvinists or Zwinglians, no more than it was by Catholics. Zwingli, for example, used the argument that since the Ascension Christ's body had been in heaven, in order to disprove both Catholic transubstantiation and Lutheran consubstantiation.¹² Puritans, as Calvinists came to be called in England, later saw in the Ascension the glorification of Christ.¹³ Nor did Connyngham's statement indicate that he shared with most Anabaptists a belief in the Docetist heresy involving denial of Christ's Incarnation.¹⁴ Anabaptists claimed that if Christ had derived flesh from the Virgin he would have shared the sinfulness of human nature, and so they asserted that he was of a purely spiritual nature.¹⁵ Thus, they believed in a spiritual Ascension. However, Connyngham was no Anabaptist, for he explicitly affirmed his belief in the Incarnation in his statement that Christ received a body in Mary's womb.

Another interpretation of Connyngham's statement actually makes him appear to have been quite orthodox in his theology, both from traditional Catholic and mainstream Protestant perspectives. Bishop Hooper, in his *A Lesson of the Incarnation of Christe*, written in June 1549 as a reply to those such as Anabaptists who denied the Incarnation, responded to the assertion that St. Paul 'attributeth unto Christ a spiritual body', in 1 Corinthians 15. Hooper reiterated the orthodox interpretation of this passage:

St. Paul in that place speaketh not of the incarnation of Christ, whether it be of the Virgin, or from heaven ... but he writeth of the state and condition of the body after the resurrection ... Christ's body was after his resurrection spiritual ... not that it losteth his humanity, or is turned into the nature of spirit; but because it shall lack all mortal qualities. Thus proveth St. Paul, when he saith, 'It is sown a natural body; it shall rise a spiritual body'.¹⁶

⁹ John F. Davis, *Heresy and Reformation in the south-east of England, 1520-1559*, p.44

¹⁰ John F. Davis, *Heresy and Reformation in the south-east of England, 1520-1559*, p.4.

¹¹ A.G. Dickens, *The English Reformation* (London, 1974), p.97.

¹² A.G. Dickens, *The English Reformation*, p.96.

¹³ Horton Davis, *Worship and Theology in England from Cranmer to Hooker 1534-1603* (Princeton, 1970), p.68.

¹⁴ A.G. Dickens, *The English Reformation*, p.326.

¹⁵ A.G. Dickens, *The English Reformation*, p.325.

¹⁶ Charles Nevinson, ed., *Later Writings of Bishop Hooper*, Parker Society (Cambridge, 1852), p.16.

Connyngham may not have been denying the truth of the Ascension at all, if he meant thus that it was Christ's transformed Resurrection body that 'ascended' into heaven. If this was so then he apparently had a better grasp of orthodox theology than his parish priest.

A further possibility, which poses a problem for analysis, is that Connyngham was entering into theological speculation, perhaps drawing on ideas he had heard expressed by Dutch immigrants in the town, who were responsible for spreading heresies in Kent, and that his conversation partners did not understand what he was saying.¹⁷ Fearing that it might be heretical, and thus threatening to the social order, and that it would be the worse for them if they were found not to have reported it, they may have accused Connyngham in the ecclesiastical court, but repeated his statements in garbled fashion. It is equally possible that Connyngham, whose state in life is not given in the record, was an uneducated labourer, had been drinking, and did not know what he was talking about. In either case, analysis of the recorded statement would be pointless.

Whatever he meant, Connyngham probably was a heretic by contemporary standards, in 1542, simply by virtue of speculating. However, if he was denying the physicality of the risen and ascended Christ then he was not typical of mainstream reformed thinking either. Furthermore, by affirming the Incarnation he was not being a typical Anabaptist. It is possible that he had come into contact with Anabaptist or Lollard ideas and misunderstood them, as there were heterodox views being discussed and circulated in north-west Kent, in the early sixteenth century.¹⁸ The case confirms that parishioners were meeting together in private houses and discussing religious matters in Dartford in the early 1540s. It was brought at a time when royal policy had pulled back from reform and orthodox Catholic doctrine was being reaffirmed, after the passing of the Act of Six Articles in 1539, because of the end of negotiations with Lutheran powers and the search for an Imperial alliance.¹⁹ In view of the theological peculiarity of Connyngham's statement, this single case must be treated as exceptional, and not necessarily indicative of the existence of heterodox groups in the parish.

Indeed, the evidence of wills demonstrates that religion in Dartford was orthodox and traditional in belief and expression up to the point in the Reformation when such indications largely disappeared from wills. For example, as in Devon and Cornwall, images and the saints' cults they represented remained a

¹⁷ Davis asserts that ideas from Dutch sectaries reinforced Lollardy in south-east England (John F. Davis, *Heresy and Reformation in the south-east of England, 1520-1559*, pp.44-5). The Dutch and Germans were also responsible for introducing Anabaptism to England, and a number of English converts had joined them, in Kent and Essex, by Edward VI's reign (A.G. Dickens, *The English Reformation*, p.326). Anabaptist doctrines were prefigured, demonstrating earlier Dutch influence in Kent, in 1511, when one Simon Piers of Waldershare made a statement implying that Christ took no flesh of the virgin (John F. Davis, *Heresy and Reformation in the south-east of England, 1520-1559*, p.4). See chapter one on the presence of Dutch immigrants in Dartford.

¹⁸ In addition to cases already cited, Thomas Batman, the prior of St. Bartholomew's hospital next Rochester, was dispossessed and accused in the consistory court, in December 1524, of publicly preaching articles of Lutheran belief, and of espousing these ideas in his house. This demonstrates that religious discussions were going on in public and private. Batman had preached against the veneration of saints, that the saints in heaven were not to be adored, that saints' days were not sanctified nor feast days ordained by God, against monasticism, that images of saints were not to be venerated, that no image should be in church except the image of Christ, that tithes should not be paid, that oblations should not be made in church, that a priest could not bestow absolution, that faith alone was necessary for salvation, that mass should only be celebrated on Sundays, that the mass was not a sacrifice and satisfaction for sins, that every Christian was a priest, and other opinions (DRb/Pa 8 pt 2 ff.53-4). These views were, in fact, variously Lutheran and Wycliffite/Lollard. Batman was not treated too harshly, for he was referred to as late hermit and keeper of St. William's chapel in Rochester when he was again brought before the bishop for propagating his views, in 1525. This second time he was detained in the bishop's palace (John F. Davis, *Heresy and Reformation in the south-east of England, 1520-1559*, pp.41-2). As a larger town on the London to Dover road and a port on the River Medway, Rochester had strong connections with the continent. Further along the north Kent coast, a secular priest, in Gravesend, was found to be in possession of a book of Lutheran heresy, in 1532 (John F. Davis, *Heresy and Reformation in the south-east of England, 1520-1559*, p.43).

¹⁹ Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations: Religion, Politics, and Society under the Tudors* (Oxford, 1993), pp.152-3.

crucial element of lay religion on the eve of the Reformation.²⁰ The importance attached to images in Kent in the sixteenth century is demonstrated by the rapid establishment of the image of the Virgin at Court-at-Street as a focus of pilgrimage after the cure before it of Elizabeth Barton, in 1525, and the popularity of the Rood of Grace at Boxley Abbey which continued until its destruction in 1538.²¹ In Dartford, new cults were founded in the church in the sixteenth century, and St. Sithe, St. Clement and St. Katherine received their first mentions in wills after 1520.²² Bequests to lights, images and saints' altars, which had been included in wills in every decade since the Rochester consistory court registers began, except in the 1480s, were not in decline when they suddenly stopped, in 1534. Of the thirty wills made by Dartford parishioners between 1529 and 1538 nine included bequests to saints' lights and images in the church, and a further one sought burial in the chapel dedicated to St. Mary Magdalene. In Swanscombe, a parish near Dartford, the popular cult of St. Hildevert with its image in the parish church, which had attracted pilgrims from perhaps the twelfth century, was still attracting offerings a year before such images were made illegal by the Injunctions of 1538.²³ These Injunctions ordered the destruction of images that had been objects of pilgrimage and in receipt of offerings, and forbade the burning of lights before all images. Examples cited by Haigh from around the country demonstrate that after these Injunctions were introduced, lights were removed, but surviving churchwardens' accounts suggest that churches did not remove the images. Indeed, parishes continued to repaint them and to maintain their rood-lofts.²⁴ In the diocese of Rochester, the construction of a new rood loft was planned in Ash near Dartford, in 1542.²⁵ The latest reference to an image in a church in the diocese of Rochester is found in the will of John James of West Malling, dated 1546, in which he asked to be buried 'whereas I have used to sytt at service tyme right under the Fete of the ymage of our lady there'.²⁶ Some laity in and around Dartford continued to practice their traditional piety privately after all images had finally been removed from churches, in 1547. This is suggested by the

²⁰ Robert Whiting, 'Abominable idols: images and image-breaking under Henry VIII', *JEH*, 34 (1983), pp.30-47 at pp.42, 44, 33-9.

²¹ Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations*, p.137. Bequests to the Rood of Grace from testators in the diocese of Rochester were investigated in chapter five above.

²² Henry Curle, husbandman, asked to be buried before the image of St. Sithe, in 1527, and required the tenants of his tenements in Upstreet to found a taper of fifty pounds of wax before the image for twenty years (DRb/8/88v); William Skogan, taylor, asked to be buried in St. Katherine's chapel, in 1521, and left 40d to its reparations (DRb/Pwr7/215v); Andrew Auditor, butcher, left 12d to the light of St. Katherine and 4d to the light of St. Clement, in 1528 (DRb/Pwr8/191).

²³ Richard Grose of Swanscombe, in his will of May 1537 (proved April 1539), bequeathed 6d to the altar of St. Hildevert, 6d to the Our Lady altar and 12d to the painting of the cloth of the Rood loft 'if the parish paints it' (DRb/Pwr9/278). As recently as 1532, George Ryder of the same parish bequeathed 3s 4d to the making of a new tabernacle for St. Hildevert, and provided for a priest to sing before the image and tabernacle for a quarter of a year (DRb/Pwr8/302v). Ryder paid great devotion to images and subscribed to the increasingly popularity of the trental; he also asked for three trentals in Swanscombe parish church, and two other trentals to be sung before the images of Our Lady in Northfleet and Stone parish churches nearby. In March 1533-4, William Swan of Southfleet bequeathed a streamer of stained cloth bearing an image of St. Hildevert together with his arms to Swanscombe church (PROB 11/25/106v). St. Hildevert was a seventh-century bishop in Normandy whose relics attracted pilgrimage from around the beginning of the second millenium being associated with the cure of insanity. Swanscombe church may have obtained a relic of this saint when it was granted with other possessions by William the Conqueror to Bishop Odo, and both Lambarde and Hasted state that Swanscombe church attracted pilgrims, including the insane seeking cure (J.A. Sparvel-Bayly, 'St. Hildeferth', *AC*, 11 (1877), pp.405-8). At least in the fifteenth century there was a fraternity of St. Hildevert in the church; Thomas Puswell of the parish bequeathed a quarter of barley to the fraternity, in 1451 (DRb/Pwr1 ff.111v, 112v); in 1465, William Fraunceys left 12d to this fraternity, as well as two tapers to burn before the image (DRb/Pwr2/329v). The home of this cult was the south aisle of the parish church; Andrew Smyth of the parish bequeathed 3s 4d to the works of the 'south yle de Sancto Hildeverto', in 1453 (DRb/Pwr2/15), and Lambarde said that there was a window of this saint in the south aisle (William Lambarde, *A Perambulation of Kent* (London, 1576; reprinted 1826), pp.434-5). The only other images and lights in the church mentioned in pre-Reformation wills were those of the Blessed Virgin, the Rood, and one called the Trendle light which received a bequest in 1530 (DRb/Pwr8/239v).

²⁴ Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations*, pp.156-7.

²⁵ In his will of 1542, John Partryse of Ash left £2 toward the new loft, and 6s 8d toward a canopy and a pix to receive the Blessed Sacrament (DRb/Pwr10/4v).

²⁶ DRb/Pwr11/53.

bequest of an image of Our Lady by Anne Reddeman of Sutton at Hone to her vicar 'Mr Doctor Struddyll', in 1551.²⁷

However, no more bequests were received to any lights, images or altars in Dartford, except the high altar, after 1534, well in anticipation of the 1538 Injunctions and the final removal of all images in 1547. The success of iconoclasm and the local impact of the Henrician Reformation in Devon and Cornwall were marked and in contrast to the immediately preceding vital and flourishing nature of popular religion in that region. Whiting attributes this success to a mixture of loyalty to Henry VIII and fear induced by the high incidence of treason accusations in the south-west in the 1530s. He speculates that the iconoclastic campaign was equally successful in the south-east of England, where government control was more direct.²⁸ There were signs of resistance to religious reforms in Kent as elsewhere in the 1530s; in 1534-5, Abergavenny of Birling was one of a number of nobles and others who were outraged at Henry VIII's treatment of Queen Katherine; St. Paul's Cray was one of a number of churches in the country that refused to erase the pope's name from its service books, in 1535.²⁹ The country's nobility did not unite in rebellion during this decade, however, because they were not united and because they were intimidated by Cromwell and the king.³⁰ The execution of Elizabeth Barton and her publicists in Kent in April 1534 may have contributed to feelings of intimidation in the county. Such intimidation must have been increased by the passing of the Treason Acts in 1534 and 1536. The very real dangers involved were demonstrated to the people of Dartford in May 1539, a month after the suppression of Dartford Priory. At a session of oyer and terminer held at West Greenwich on 12th May Robert Rumwycke alias Miller, labourer of Dartford, was accused of high treason on the evidence of his drinking partners. Fear induced neighbours and friends to inform on each other in this way. Miller's own friend, Thomas Brok, baker of Dartford, reported him for having responded to his proposed toast to the king with the words: 'God save the cuppe of good Ale. For kyng henry shall bee hanged When twentye other shalbe savyd', in a Dartford tavern on 5th May. Whatever he meant by this, Miller was found guilty of treason, and that very day, just seven days after the offence, he was sent to be drawn in a hurdle through the high street to the gallows, hanged, cut open, burnt and mutilated, and then decapitated and quartered. His head and quarters were to be displayed prominently as a warning to the king's subjects.³¹ There was, then, a strong disincentive for Dartford parishioners to put themselves in danger of defying royal will. Furthermore, the events surrounding the suppression of the monasteries, in the late 1530s, including Dartford Priory, and especially the destruction of that famous image, the Rood of Grace of Boxley Abbey, in 1538, must have had a great psychological impact on the people of Dartford and west Kent.³² Therefore, the disappearance of bequests to images and saints' cults in wills in the 1530s cannot be said to have manifested a loss of commitment to traditional religious practice.

²⁷ PROB 11/35/224v. See chapter three.

²⁸ Robert Whiting, 'Abominable idols: images and image-breaking under Henry VIII', pp.46-7. As Murphy points out, however, there was a long tradition of rebelliousness in Kent and the county was in insurrectionary mood in the late 1530s (Terence Raoul Murphy, 'The Maintenance of Order in Early Tudor Kent, 1509-1558', unpublished PhD dissertation, Northwestern University, Illinois, 1975, pp.122 ff.).

²⁹ Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations*, pp.139, 142.

³⁰ Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations*, p.139.

³¹ Terence Raoul Murphy, 'The Maintenance of Order in Early Tudor Kent, 1509-1558', pp.1-3. A Thomas Brok of Dartford was accused with another man, at an archdeacon's visitation in February 1532-3, of 'mysuseng themselves in the tymes of goddes services & com nat to churche' (DRa/Vb4 fo.245v). He had perhaps been drinking again.

³² The psychological impact of this burning in Kent is commented on by Terence Raoul Murphy, 'The Maintenance of Order in Early Tudor Kent, 1509-1558', p.106. See chapter five above for bequests to the Rood of Grace in diocese of Rochester wills, including Dartford.

Burial requests and bequests to altars, images and lights are the two main sources of information as to which saints' cults were honoured in Dartford, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. During this period, fifteen saints were represented in the church. Three side chapels were mentioned – those of the Blessed Virgin, St. Mary Magdalene and St. Katherine, three of the most popular female saints in late medieval Europe, and two of which were included in the dedication of the local nunnery. Burial requests sometimes indicate the location in the church of particular images; William Jhones asked to be buried before the image of St. Anne 'in the Maudelyn chapel', in 1516.³³ Robert Hakest alias Hawes, servant and baker to the prioress of Dartford, also sought burial in this chapel, in 1530.³⁴ Earlier, in the 1500s, some work was undertaken on the chapel, after it had suffered some neglect in the previous decade; in 1505, Richard Burleton left 10s to the finishing 'of the shyngelyng of the maugdelen wek' in the church.³⁵

The most popular chapel and cult in Dartford parish church, however, throughout this period, was that of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Nine parishioners making wills after 1438 sought burial in the chapel, which was on the south side of the chancel and contained an altar, image and light of Our Lady.³⁶ This chapel was the home of the chantry of St. Mary Stanpit, whose priest lived in a chamber within the church overlooking the chapel.³⁷ There were also lights to Our Lady which received bequests in the chancel, near the high altar, and on the rood, where there was another image.³⁸ In addition, the image and light of St. Mary le Pety were popular, being mentioned in seven wills, including six which included requests for burial before the image.³⁹ Another related cult in Dartford parish church was that of the Blessed Mary in childbirth ('in gesien/jeson'); this image, located next to a door in the quire, was mentioned in just two wills in 1467.⁴⁰ According to the evidence of wills proved in the Rochester consistory court from 1438, this cult was found in just three other parishes in the diocese, besides Rochester Cathedral, appearing at around the same time as in Dartford. It proved significantly more popular amongst testators in Snodland and All Hallows in Hoo than in Dartford or West Malling.⁴¹ It is impossible to say what these parishes had

³³ PROB 11/18/142.

³⁴ DRb/Pwr8/238v.

³⁵ PROB 11/14/218v. At the archdeacon's visitation, held 19th October 1496, amongst other signs of decay, it was found that the roof of St. Mary Magdalene's chapel and the chancel ceiling needed repair (DRb/Pa 4 fo.317). The previous year, Sir John, the Stanpit chantry priest was cited for non-residence, for apostasy and living in secular habit (DRb/Pa4 fo.277v).

³⁶ William Milet, in his will of 1500, referred to 'Our Lady awter in the south yle'. The testators requesting burial were: John Blor, who asked to be buried in the chapel before the image of the Blessed Mary, and left 6s 8d to the altar, in 1445 (DRb/Pwr1/65v); Thomas Underdowne, in 1462 (DRb/Pwr2/241); William Rotheley, in 1464 (PROB 11/5/39); Roger Rotheley senior, chandler, who asked to be buried next to his wife Christian's tomb in the chapel, in 1468 (DRb/Pwr3/9v); Richard Marten, in 1485 (PROB 11/8/249v); Thomas Boonde asked to be buried before his seat in the chapel and left 6s 8d for the breaking of the ground, in 1502 (DRb/Pwr6/41); Richard Burleton, gentleman, in 1504 (PROB 11/14/218v); Thomas Stokton, gentleman, in 1528 (DRb/Pwr8/168v); William Kenham, yeoman, wished to be buried against his pew and seat in the chapel, in 1546 (DRb/Pwr10/172v). Roger Appulton, armiger, founded a forty-year obit in this chapel, in 1529 (PROB 11/23/64). Sysley Johnson left a taper of three pounds of wax to burn before the image in the chapel, in 1533 (DRb/Pwr9/93).

³⁷ John Dunkin, *The History and Antiquities of Dartford* (1844), pp.32-3. The priest's chamber was of mid-fifteenth-century construction (G.H. Porteus, *A Guide to Dartford Parish Church of the Holy Trinity* (Dartford, 1962), pp.22-3).

³⁸ For example, John Gulby left 3s 4d to the light of Blessed Mary next the high altar, in 1455 (DRb/Pwr2/20), and Alice Marten, widow, left 6d to Our Lady light in the chancel, in 1505 (DRb/Pwr6/127v); amongst his many pious bequests, Hugh Serle left 12d to Our Lady light under the rood, in 1523 (DRb/Pwr7/313v).

³⁹ The Parkers were mentioned above; Thomas Barnarde, in 1492 (DRb/Pwr6/154); Thomas Mery, in 1502 (DRb/Pwr6/55v); William Blaknall, in 1504 (DRb/Pwr6/218); and Andrew Auditor, butcher, in 1528 (DRb/Pwr8/191). Joone Calvert, widow, bequeathed a taper of three pounds of wax to be set before the image of Our Lady of Pity to be lit every Sunday at high mass, in 1533 (DRb/Pwr9/72).

⁴⁰ Elizabeth, widow of Thomas Maykyn, made a bequest to this image stating that it was next the door/gate of the choir, in her will of March 1466-7 (DRb/Pwr2/371v); Richard Bagshaug asked to be buried before this image, in his will of July 1467 (DRb/Pwr2/386v).

⁴¹ There were roughly comparable numbers of testators in each parish. The light before the image in Snodland church was mentioned by thirteen testators between 1470 and 1512, including one from the nearby parish of Addington (DRb/Pwr3 ff.115v, 131, 167v, 226, 296v, Pwr4 fo.140, Pwr5 ff.77v, 97, 121, 127v, Pwr6 ff.69v, 143v, 315v); Geoffrey Alisaunder, gentleman of Snodland, in 1471, bequeathed 3s 4d to the construction and repair of the tabernacle of the Blessed Virgin Mary incumbent in pregnancy, suggesting that the cult was new (DRb/Pwr3/131). The cult at All Hallows was mentioned in twelve wills, between 1468 and 1504 (DRb/Pwr3 ff.5v,

in common which might have given rise to this cult, except their accessibility by road or river to new ideas. The various images of Mary in Dartford parish church were thus all located in prominent positions. They represented different qualities of Mary which encouraged pious identification with her, as a new mother and as a grieving, suffering mother, and veneration of her as queen of heaven.⁴² They reflected her roles as intermediary and as object of worship which were central to late medieval affective piety and associated with devotion to the human Christ. Her enduring importance to the faithful of Dartford was indicated by the majority of testators leaving money to lights or images, or requesting burial before them, who specified these images of Mary and the Lady chapel, throughout the period under study.⁴³

The positions of other images are indicated in wills; Johanna Wynsore asked to be buried before that of St. John the Baptist next to the altar of St. Thomas Archbishop of Canterbury, in 1466.⁴⁴ The cult of St. Thomas the Martyr was particularly strong in Dartford in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Four other parishioners sought burial before this altar between 1440 and 1527.⁴⁵ There was also a fraternity of that dedication in the parish church, and a painted window in St. Edmund's chapel, of which more below. In the neighbouring parish, further along the pilgrim route, there was a wall-painting of St. Thomas in Stone parish church, further indicating the local popularity of this cult.

One or two bequests were directed to the images and lights of St. Anthony and St. Sithe, the image of St. Nicholas, and each of the lights of St. Christopher, St. Peter, St. James, St. Clement and St. Loye.⁴⁶ The Rood or image of the Holy Cross with its lights also received several bequests, being mentioned in thirteen wills. Worship of the Holy Trinity, to whom the church was dedicated, had one focus in the image of the Trinity; its light received seven bequests between 1492 and 1529. This image was located near the Easter Sepulchre, and was, therefore, in the chancel, at the highpoint of the church; in her will of 1533, Elizabeth Hamond, a single woman of Dartford, left her house and garden to Henry Hopkin, who had helped her in her sickness, requiring that he found a light 'before the Trynite & the sepelster as long as the world shall stand for evermore It to be renuid at the feast of Easter'.⁴⁷ Wax tapers were also bequeathed to the Easter Sepulchre by three other testators in the sixteenth century.⁴⁸ Elizabeth Hamond

76v, 77v, 162, 179, 232, 238, 310v, Pwr4 fo.162v, Pwr5 fo.80, Pwr6 ff.89v, 118v). The light at West Malling was mentioned in two wills, in 1484 and 1522 (DRb/Pwr5/123, DRb/Pwr7/225). In Rochester, Richard Qwyk, surgeon, left a purse of gold and ten coral beads to Our Lady of Jeson, implying that it was in the cathedral, in 1501 (DRb/Pwr5/411v).

⁴² The latter concept of Mary found in much late medieval devotional verse was recognised in Dartford church, as was shown by William Milet's request for masses of the Regina, in his will of 1500 (PROB 11/12/138).

⁴³ Gill Draper has commented, in her east Kent study: 'The events of Mary's life which Kentish testators remembered can be considered in three groups. Firstly, her own conception and nativity, which emphasised her humanity; secondly, the salutation and annunciation, which brought to mind her human and fearful reaction to encounters with God's messengers; and thirdly her assumption into heaven and her coronation there, which stressed her difference from other people, and her power to help.' (Gill Draper, 'The place of Jesus and Mary in Kent churches of the late Middle Ages', unpublished paper, 1996).

⁴⁴ DRb/Pwr2/366, other documents tell us that the altar of St. Thomas was in the chapel to the north of the chancel.

⁴⁵ John Okeherst, in 1440 (DRb/Pwr1/2); Margaret Sherman, in 1460 (DRb/Pwr2/204v); John Freman, in 1474 (DRb/Pwr4/127); and Peter Cotyar, in 1527 (DRb/Pwr8/132). The altar and lights were mentioned in a few other wills: John Gulby left 3s 4d to each of the lights before Blessed Mary next the high altar and St. Thomas, in 1455 (DRb/Pwr2/20). John Dowce of Marsh Street, which street led from Overy Street to the Dartford Thames marshes, left four acres of arable land to the church, in his will of 1465, to provide wax for tapers above the altar of St. Thomas and before the image of the Holy Cross (DRb/Pwr2/325). Thomas Munt left 8d to the light of St. Thomas, in 1498 (DRb/Pwr5 ff. 309v, 338). Thomas Cotyar left 5s to the altar, in 1504, for things most needful (PROB 11/14/116v). Johanna Harte, who belonged to the fraternities of St. Barbara and Holy Trinity also left a diaper towell to the St. Thomas altar, in 1504-5 (DRb/Pwr6/99), and Alice Marten, a widow, left her great chest bound with iron to set before the altar, the following year (DRb/Pwr6/127v). The chest was perhaps for passing pilgrims on their way to the shrine at Canterbury to leave their offerings in.

⁴⁶ Henry Curle's request for burial before the image of St. Sithe, in 1527, was the first reference to this image in wills, and it may have been a new cult in the church (DRb/Pwr8/88v). Similarly, there were no bequests to the light of St. Clement previous to those of Andrew Auditor, in 1528 (DRb/Pwr8/191), and William Lownde, in 1530 (PROB 11/23/207).

⁴⁷ DRb/Pwr9/60v.

⁴⁸ John Knygthe, in 1512 (DRb/Pwr6/262v); William Lownde, in 1530 (PROB 11/23/207); and John Morley, in 1533 (DRb/Pwr9/110v).

paid great devotion to the Trinity, for she also specified that three of the thirty masses that she wanted sung for her at the altar of St. Barbara were to be masses of the Trinity. One other object of veneration in Dartford parish church, which has not been identified, was the 'vernycle' in the south aisle, which was mentioned in a single will.⁴⁹

Some of those testators who mentioned lights and images in their wills mentioned only one or two, suggesting that they paid particular devotion to those saints. Others left various amounts to several lights and images; for example, Thomas Barnarde, who wished to be buried before the image of Our Lady of Pity, in 1492, left 12d to its light; 20d to the Trinity light, 20d to the Rood light, 12d to St. Anthony's light, 8d to each of St. Christopher's and St. Loye's lights and 2d to 'every other light' in the church.⁵⁰ It is tempting to think that a higher bequest indicates a greater devotion but there may have been other reasons why Thomas Barnarde left 12d to St. Anthony's light and only 2d to other lights including that of St. Thomas. His bequests of 20d to each of the Rood and Trinity lights may be explained by the contemporary devotion to the Passion and the dedication of the church; he also bequeathed 20d to the Rood light in Stone parish church, next Dartford.

A more fundamental matter of orthodox practice was disposal of the body after death, as a result of the late medieval orthodox belief in the resurrection of the body. In most late medieval wills this matter was the second item of the document, following the bequest of the soul to God and the saints. Dinn suggests that the dead bore a similar relationship to the living as saints' relics and shrines.⁵¹ Although burial was permitted in any cemetery or church, it was necessary to pay a fee to one's incumbent if one chose to be buried outside of the parish where one lived.⁵² Within the parish there were often various options for burial place the choice of which was influenced by a variety of social and religious factors, although most chose burial in their parish churchyard. Dinn finds that the whole parish or urban community of Bury St. Edmunds was unified by collective burial of all the dead in the religious heart of the town.⁵³ In Dartford the options were Holy Trinity parish church and churchyard, St. Edmund's chapel and cemetery, and the cemetery and conventual church of the Dominican priory. A few testators asked for burial outside the parish, and a small number of others left the decision to their executors asking only for a Christian or ecclesiastical burial.⁵⁴ Burial in the priory was investigated in chapter five. It was requested by priory servants and parishioners who particularly valued the religious lives and liturgy of the nuns and friars. Roughly twenty per cent of Dartford will-makers chose to be buried in St. Edmund's chapel or its cemetery, but it was an alternative rather than a rival to the parish church.⁵⁵

Dinn found that in Bury St. Edmunds certain parts of a church and cemetery were considered socially and spiritually prestigious, demonstrating the social status of the dead to the living, and that there

⁴⁹ In September 1477, Robert Stowe of Dartford asked to be buried before 'le vernycle' in the south aisle (DRb/Pwr3/200v).

⁵⁰ DRb/Pwr6/154.

⁵¹ Robert Dinn, "'Monuments answerable to mens worth': burial patterns, social status and gender in late medieval Bury St. Edmunds', *JEH*, 46 (1995), pp.237-55 at pp.237-8. Dinn cites numerous anthropological and historical studies of death and burial practice.

⁵² Robert Dinn, 'Burial patterns, social status and gender in late medieval Bury St. Edmunds', p.241.

⁵³ Robert Dinn, 'Burial patterns, social status and gender in late medieval Bury St. Edmunds', p.255.

⁵⁴ A slight variation on this was William Frye's direction to his executors, in 1506, that he should be buried where they thought best, on condition that it was a Christian site (DRb/Pwr6/180v).

⁵⁵ There is a detailed investigation of St. Edmund's chapel below.

were gradations within the church itself.⁵⁶ Most Dartford will-makers asked for burial in the parish churchyard, but some wealthier individuals specifically requested burial in the quire of the church.⁵⁷ This reflected their social status and the opportunity it gave them for burial closer to the liturgical focus of the building at the high altar. Indeed, parish incumbents were allowed the privilege of burial in the chancels and sanctuaries of their churches by virtue of their office.⁵⁸ Otherwise, positions within a church might be chosen for reasons of devotion to particular saints or the general popularity of the south side, which had liturgical priority over the north.⁵⁹ Burials before the images of the Blessed Virgin have been mentioned. Some in the sixteenth century asked to be buried near the seat where they had been used to sit in church, reflecting the use of rigid seating plans.⁶⁰ There were crosses in both the north and south sides of the churchyard which attracted some testators.⁶¹ Others sought burial by the yew trees on the north and south sides.⁶² John Bambery asked for burial in the churchyard at the west door near the holy water stoop.⁶³ William Maykins asked for burial at the east end on the other side of the wall from the high altar within.⁶⁴ For others, however, the location of family graves was the deciding factor, either spouses, parents or children.⁶⁵ Requests for burial within the church declined sharply after the Henrician Reformation, and only three of thirty five Dartford testators in the 1550s specifically asked for this.⁶⁶

Requests to the repair and improvement of the church fabric and furnishings are further indicators of loyalty to the parish church, although they might have been encouraged by clerks or priestly scribes at the making of the will. Less specific fabric bequests were more common, often directed to churchworks. Others were responses to particular needs for work specified. Legacies suggest there was work needed on the tower of Dartford parish church in the middle of the fifteenth century, and in the late 1470s.⁶⁷ In 1474, Thomas Revet junior, of Lowfield Street, left 26s 8d towards a new bell planned to be brought to the parish church.⁶⁸ In 1473, John Bokelond of Stone next Dartford, apparently of his freewill, chose to make a bequest for the shingling of the roof and paving of the nave.⁶⁹ Other projects supported by parishioners included the setting up of a cross on the church tower, in 1527-8, and repairs to the church clock, in 1521

⁵⁶ Robert Dinn, 'Burial patterns, social status and gender in late medieval Bury St. Edmunds', pp.247-8.

⁵⁷ For example, Roger Appulton, armiger, a member of the wealthy Dartford family which owned lands and property in Kent and Essex around Southbenfleet, asked for burial in the quire near his mother and father, in 1529 (PROB 11/23/64).

⁵⁸ John Bruer, the vicar of Dartford, for example, chose to be buried in the high chancel of Dartford parish church, in 1534 (DRb/Pwr9/175v).

⁵⁹ Robert Dinn, 'Burial patterns, social status and gender in late medieval Bury St. Edmunds', pp.249-50.

⁶⁰ For example, William Kenham, yeoman, asked for burial next his pew and seat in the Lady chapel, in 1546 (DRb/Pwr10/172v).

⁶¹ For example, William Shugburgh asked to be buried in the southern part of the churchyard next to the cross, where his wife, son and daughter were buried, in 1458 (DRb/Pwr2/126); and Richard Pynden asked to be buried near the cross on the south side of the church, in 1487 (DRb/Pwr6/146). Joan Calvert, a widow, asked to be buried on the north side of the churchyard by another cross there, in 1533 (DRb/Pwr9/72).

⁶² John Gulby sought burial by his children's grave next to the yew on the south side, or the elm, in 1455 (DRb/Pwr2/20). John Hochynson and John Knygthe respectively sought burial by the yews on the south and north sides, in 1506 and 1509 (DRb/Pwr6 ff. 219v, 262v). In 1542 Thomas Chapleyn asked for burial 'within the churchyard of Dertford nere unto the gret Ewe tree there', but did not specify north or south (DRb/Pwr9/402v).

⁶³ DRb/Pwr3/291v.

⁶⁴ DRb/Pwr9/23v.

⁶⁵ For example, John Daniell, a single man of Dartford, originally from Wilmington, asked to be buried next his mother in Wilmington churchyard, in 1467 (DRb/Pwr2/374v).

⁶⁶ Richard Prior, a yeoman, in December 1553 (DRb/Pwr11/263v), Ingleburt Retrode, in 1555 (DRb/Pwr12/7v) and Robert Darby, in 1555 (DRb/Pwr12/31v).

⁶⁷ Bequests to the tower or belfry were received from Richard Rokesley, in 1448 (23s 4d) (DRb/Pwr1/60v); of 8d and the profits of the sale of John Stone's lands, if his heirs died, in 1451 (DRb/Pwr2/291); John Bambery left it to his wife's discretion to make a contribution to the church 'steeple' when it 'be in makyng', in his will of 1478 (DRb/Pwr3/291v); and John Smyth left 12d to the belfry, in 1479 (DRb/Pwr3/229). The fifteenth-century upper section of the tower is visually clearly distinguishable from the lower Norman stages.

⁶⁸ DRb/Pwr4/155v.

⁶⁹ DRb/Pwr4/233v.

and 1546.⁷⁰ Amongst non-cash gifts, in 1504, William Ladd left two pairs of sheets to the church to make surplices, and an altar cloth on which he directed to be sewn the words 'Orate pro anima Willi Ladd et benefactorum eisdem', demonstrating that such bequests of goods were made for the benefit of the soul as much as for that of the church.⁷¹ This scripture on the altar cloth would have been highly visible to the celebrant or congregation at mass, and it suggests that there were enough literate parishioners to make it worthwhile. Fabric and furnishing bequests simultaneously demonstrated piety and loyalty to the parish church community. Parishioners also made bequests to the fabric of other local churches, sometimes significantly increasing the total value of their legacies. In 1475, John Totenham, in addition to his five marks to Dartford parish church, left 6s 8d to the chapel of St. John the Baptist at Western Crosse in the parish, 10s to the windows of St. Edmund's chapel, and five nobles for reparations to Swanscombe Parish Church.⁷² In 1504, William Ladd left 3s 4d to churchworks in Dartford, 6s 8d to Our Lady New-work Chapel in Crayford parish, and coverlets, brass pots and 40s to churches in Rochester and Chatham.⁷³

Central to late medieval religion and culture was the mass, as a function of the increasing Christocentrism evidenced in western Europe since the twelfth century. Cults associated with Jesus and the Virgin flourished. The mass grew in popularity as it encouraged devotion to the suffering Christ, in a period when Christ's humanity was emphasised in affective piety. It was believed to be a re-enactment of Christ's atoning death on the Cross, whose repetition by the priest at the altar was thought beneficial for souls in Purgatory and a source of unity and order in the living community. The proliferation of votive masses manifested the laity's confidence in the efficacy of the mass, and they spent vast resources in endowing them at funerals and subsequent regular occasions.⁷⁴ Some of the largest amounts spent on 'pious' bequests were for masses, other services and prayers for the soul in Purgatory. Duffy feels that the whole 'machinery' of late medieval piety was designed to shield the soul from Christ's doomsday judgement.⁷⁵ This was the climax of all the cycles of Corpus Christi plays and provided the motivation for preparation for death. Medieval parishioners were reminded of the coming eschatological events every Sunday at mass; when they raised their eyes to see the elevation of the Host, up in the chancel, they saw the Rood, with its crucifix, and above that a depiction of the Last Judgement.⁷⁶ The presence of doom paintings in churches, up to the Reformation, is indicated by the bequest of Davy Bedill of St. Werburgh in Hoo, in 1493, of 20s 'to the payntyng of dome over the Rode'.⁷⁷

Those who could afford it founded chantries. There were two permanent chantries founded in Dartford parish church, whose priests, the Stanpit chantry priest and Martin salary priest, with other stipendiary clergy, were employed to carry out post obit services.⁷⁸ Others sought prayers for a finite period of time; for example, in 1474, John Totenham bequeathed 5 marks for an 'honest and suitable

⁷⁰ Henry Curle, husbandman, left 40d to the setting up of a cross on the steeple, in March 1527-8 (DRb/Pwr8/52v); Thomas Stokton, gentleman, left 6s 8d to the same, in June 1528 (DRb/Pwr8/168v); Thomas Kyngissey left 40d to the clock, in 1521 (DRb/Pwr7/220); and Richard Alexander, waterman, left 2s to the same, in 1546 (DRb/Pwr11/5(2)).

⁷¹ DRb/Pwr6/115v.

⁷² DRb/Pwr4/187v.

⁷³ DRb/Pwr6/115v.

⁷⁴ Christopher Harper-Bill, *The Pre-Reformation Church in England 1400-1530* (Harlow, 1989), pp.64-6. Duffy does not doubt that late medieval traditional Catholic orthodoxy urged the believer to trust primarily in Christ for salvation, whilst at the same time giving a subordinate role to the saints (Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, pp.507-8, 517).

⁷⁵ Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, p.309.

⁷⁶ Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, pp.309, 157.

⁷⁷ DRb/Pwr5/206.

⁷⁸ See appendix two for details of these chantries and their priests.

priest' to celebrate divine services for his soul and those of all his benefactors for the space of half a year. Testators sometimes named particular priests they wanted to celebrate for them; Totenham also made bequests to four named priests for their prayers, including John Wellys, the chaplain of St. Edmund's chapel.⁷⁹ Many testators devoted large proportions of their estate to securing prayers; in 1470, Rose Pittes instructed her sister Betrice to spend 6s 8d from her residue for six years on her year's mind in the parish church of Dartford and for the souls of her benefactors. A codicil added that her dwelling place was to be sold to pay an able priest to pray and sing divine services in the parish church for a year for her soul, her parents' souls 'and for all my gode doers'. Additionally, her bequests to Dartford Priory added up to 16s 8d.⁸⁰ More will be said on the subject of the mass later in the chapter, after this general survey of religion in Dartford.

Large numbers of masses, or of priests to say them were still being sought by parishioners in the 1530s and 40s, right up to the point when the mass was abolished. Thomas Rosese asked for a trental, in his will dated 13th November 1530, and for a further eight masses at his burial, seven on his month's mind and fifteen 'in the holly tym of lent' following his death.⁸¹ In 1534, Agnes Parker left 8d to every priest saying mass and dirige for her soul and 6d to every clerk, and left £6 8s 4d to an honest priest to sing Compline in the parish church for her soul and all Christian souls for a year. She also made bequests to the Dartford friars and Lowfield Street almshouses.⁸² In January 1545-6, with liturgical revisions not far off, William Kenham, yeoman, asked for a dirige and ten masses at each of his burial day, month's and year's minds.⁸³ 'Aunchiant' Gyles, yeoman, was another Catholic traditionalist in Dartford who evidently found the reforms hard to accept. In his will dated 25th March 1550, he asked for 'communion' to be said or sung for him in Dartford parish church with the other service appointed 'by the kinges majesty', on his burial day.⁸⁴ This was in spite of the fact that the 1547 Chantries Act denounced the doctrine of masses satisfactory, and that the 1549 prayerbook rejected the late medieval idea of the sacrifice of the mass.⁸⁵

The disparate elements and manifestations of orthodox parish religion in pre-Reformation Dartford may be studied in the context of one parishioner, through William Milet's will of September 1500. Besides his involvements in Dartford Priory he was also active in the parish church. He demonstrated the liturgical sophistication and initiative in religious matters increasingly shown by educated members of the laity from the late fifteenth century. The decades before the Reformation were marked by a liturgical elaboration in many churches in the diocese of Rochester, and this was sought by laity.⁸⁶ Although not typical of Dartford testators in his wealth, the length of his will and its almost exclusively pious nature, and in the elaborate nature of many of his bequests, Milet simply represented in

⁷⁹ 6s 8d to Domino Henry Messingere, 3s 4d to Domino John Wellys (the chaplain of St. Edmund's chapel), 12d to Domino Richard Eddyn and 12d to Domino Richard Tukke (DRb/Pwr4/187v).

⁸⁰ DRb/Pwr3/64v.

⁸¹ DRb/Pwr8/260.

⁸² DRb/Pwr9/153v.

⁸³ DRb/Pwr10/172v. Kenham used a preamble unique amongst Dartford wills which would have been equally acceptable to Protestants and Catholics: 'First and before all other thinges I recommend my soule to god Almightye my maker and creatour trusting by the mirite of his blessed and paynfull passion ...'.

⁸⁴ DRb/Pwr11/108v.

⁸⁵ C. Haigh, *English Reformations*, p.171; Clifford William Dugmore, *The Mass and the English Reformation* (London, 1958), p.160.

⁸⁶ See below for a treatment of trentals, the Jesus mass and mass of Five Wounds in Dartford and the diocese of Rochester.

heightened form the religious belief and practice of the parish community.⁸⁷ His testament and will show him to have been an actively orthodox pious Catholic parishioner who devoted much of his time before death, and a large proportion of his resources, to pious uses. Bequests to personal family and friends take up only a small portion of the will which is much more concerned with public action (the almshouse, other charitable works, and the Dartford market cross⁸⁸), churchworks, support for the prioress, sisters, president and friars of Dartford Priory, and masses/obits/prayers for his and other people's souls when in Purgatory. This important element of his piety and motivation for the charitable and religious provisions of his will is revealed towards the end of the document in a reference to

werkes and deedes of charitie moost pleasing to god releiving and comfortyng of my soule oute of the peynes of Purgatory.⁸⁹

William Milett was orthodox in his adherence to the late medieval cult of the saints. Particular saints, including the Virgin Mary, are mentioned in various contexts in his will. His opening bequest, of his soul, is made as commonly to 'almighty god my maker and to his blisshed moder seint mary ... and to all the holy company of heaven', but also to saints Bridget and Frideswide. The former was popular by 1500 in England because of the Syon nuns and the transmission amongst devout literate laity of such texts as *The Revelations of St. Bridget*. St. Frideswide was more unusual, and Milett's devotion to her may be explained by his connections with Oxford, where there was a monastery of St. Frideswide until the foundation of Wolsey's Cardinal College.⁹⁰ Besides saints, Milett also attached much importance to angels. He indicated that this devotion was as natural a part of his piety as his acceptance of the spiritual assistance of the saints, and that it was possibly even more important to him; he also bequeathed his soul 'in especiall to my goode aungell the whiche shalbe my leder and governor whan I am dede'. He may have learnt this aspect of his piety from William Rotheley, who employed him as a servant in his youth. In his will of 1464, Rotheley bequeathed his soul to Almighty God, the Blessed Lady St. Mary and all the holy company of heaven and 'specially to my good Angel to be my leder and governor under god in all thinges'.⁹¹ These are the only two pre-Reformation Dartford wills to contain such a reference, and the similarity of the wording and other connections between the two documents confirm that Milett was emulating Rotheley. It has been proposed that piety in small towns was transmitted through families, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.⁹² William Rotheley may have been a father-figure to his young servant. Milett indeed had great respect for his former employer's piety, referring to 'the goode and devoute mynde and entent and speciall trust of the foreseid Rotheley' in the section of his will dealing with the morrowmass and almshouses. In the section of his will detailing these ordinances, Milett stated that life is transitory and 'forgetfulness is unfriendly

⁸⁷ Duffy argues against a notion of growing individualism in late medieval Christianity, saying that it was corporate, and that all individuals were connected through membership of the worshipping community (Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, pp.121, 131ff.).

⁸⁸ This market cross, which was a building rather than a simple cross, had been set up under the terms of the will of John Shirborne of Dartford, dated 1442, in which it was stated that it should be a substantial cross in the form of that at Sevenoaks (DRb/Pwr1/8v).

⁸⁹ For a positive interpretation of the late medieval pious motivation founded on belief in Purgatory, as offering a way out of Hell, see Clive Burgess, "'A fond thing vainly invented": an essay on Purgatory and pious motive in later medieval England' in S.J. Wright, *Parish, Church and People: Local Studies in Lay Religion 1350-1750* (London, 1988), pp.56-84.

⁹⁰ VCH, *Oxford*, ii, pp.97-101. William Milett's Oxford connections may be summarised as follows. In his will he named his brothers as 'doctor Milett', presumably an Oxford or Cambridge man, and quite likely Oxford in view of their other brother mentioned in this will, 'Richard Milett of Oxenford'. Furthermore, one of William Milett's fellow executors of William Rotheley's will was the vicar of Dartford in 1464, Master John Hornle, former president of Magdalen Hall in Oxford.

⁹¹ PROB 11/5/39.

⁹² Robert G.A. Lutton, 'Orthodox and heterodox piety in Tenterden, c.1420-c.1540'.

stepmoder to all gentill kyndness', and he thus recalled Rotheley's devout mind and intent, 'entendyng to please god'. Milett's piety was bound up with human relationships.

Milett made several bequests for the saying of masses and prayers which differ from those in all other surviving pre-Reformation Dartford wills in their variety and detail. In the course of the document, Milett asked for several different votive masses and other liturgies, including the popular late medieval devotion to the Name of Jesus.⁹³ In his choice of liturgies and directions for how the priests were to say them Milett demonstrated the new lay confidence in such matters. Duffy finds that 'the late medieval laity were intensely conscious of the liturgical calendar', and often displayed a detailed knowledge of the prayers of the missal and breviary. The masses they chose for their post-obit services demonstrated the importance that they placed on the feasts of the church calendar.⁹⁴ Specific requests for masses and liturgies were not common in Rochester consistory court wills, with the exception of the requiem mass and offices of dirige, placebo and Psalms such as the *De profundis*, but they were made much more frequently in the sixteenth century. In particular, between 1500 and the early 1540s, a few testators asked for three or five masses on their burial day, month's day, or in an obit, specifying some combination of masses of requiem, the Holy Ghost, Holy Trinity, Our Lady, the Five Wounds and the Name of Jesus.⁹⁵ Milett's will opens with a detailed list of instructions for the repetition by five priests of masses of Regina, the Blessed Trinity, St. Peter, Our Lady and All Saints, the Psalm *Miserere mei deus*, the hymn *Veni Creator Spiritus* and an unidentified liturgy called 'memoryes of the blisshed Trynitie' after his death 'for my soule specially and for all Christen soules'. He left instructions on each priest's individual quota of masses and the number of days over which he was to say them.⁹⁶ Milett demonstrated the importance of improving lay literacy to this activity in religion. Text, its meaning, and the way it was read out, were important matters to him, and dictated his choice of liturgies. Thus he referred to the opening lines of the All Saints mass: 'the which begynneth Gaudeamus omnes in domino' (Let all delight in the Lord). That he stated this must have indicated the significance to him of this phrase. Further, he gave detailed instructions on how the priests were to say these masses. He asked of each priest when saying the Psalm *Miserere mei deus*:

whan he begynneth to say it lett hym say thies wordes . misere mei deus . v. tymes with castyng up hart and eyen to Almighty god as hartly as he can, and than lett hym say owte all the psalme, and also lett hym say to thende the ympne of Veni creator spiritus qui paraclitus &c.

Thus, the Latin words for 'Have mercy on me O God' were to be repeated five times at each recitation of the Psalm, a total of eighty times by the five priests over a period of five days. The repetition and hearty

⁹³ See more on this later in this chapter.

⁹⁴ Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, p.43.

⁹⁵ A single testator indicated his enduring Catholicism, in 1555, in Mary's reign, by making such a request; Sir William Welles, parson of Ash, asked for masses of Holy Ghost, Five Wounds, Jesus mass, Trinity and Requiem, to be said on his burial day (DRb/Pwr11/342). Thomas Sprever demonstrated exceptional liturgical awareness in 1452, when he asked for three hundred masses, to include seven of Holy Trinity, seven of the Passion of Christ, seven of the Holy Spirit, five of the Blessed Virgin, nine of de Angels and one of All Saints (DRb/Pwr1/129).

⁹⁶ The first priest was to say three masses of the Regina over three days and to recite the Psalm 'Miserere mei deus' and the Latin hymn 'Veni Creator Spiritus' each day for five days. The second priest was to say three masses of the Blessed Trinity, and to recite the 'Miserere mei' each day for five days and the 'Veni Creator' for four days. The third priest was to say three masses of St. Peter over three days, and the said Psalm and hymn each day for five days. The fourth priest was to say two masses of Our Lady and the said Psalm and hymn for three days. Finally, the fifth priest was to say two masses of All Saints, the 'Miserere mei' and 'Veni Creator' for three days, and three devotions called 'memoryes of the blisshed Trynitie'. The latter devotion and the masses of the Trinity are two of many indications in this will of Milett's particular devotion to the Holy Trinity. These liturgies shared the dedication of Dartford parish church, in which these masses and devotions were to be said, and of the new Dartford almshouses set up in this will (of which more below). The priests were to be paid 12d for each mass.

way in which these words were to be said, with fervent glances up to heaven, the hoped for eventual destination of the soul as well as the abode of God, emphasised the fervour of Milet's penitence and piety.

The same attention to detail is evident in the detailed instructions Milet gave regarding the dawn morrowmass in the church, which expanded on the ordinances of its original founder, his former employer William Rotheley.⁹⁷ He instructed that one or more priests were to receive 40s a year, paid quarterly, to say the morrowmass on ferial days 'excepte such dayes as be excepted by the lawe', at 'O' lady awter in the south yle of the said church of Dertford'. He directed that a bell was to be 'Rowngen and tolled ... with Reasonable pawsis' before the mass started. In the Summer months, between Easter and Michaelmas, the mass was 'to be begon aboute .v. of the klok so hit be doon by vj. atte klok or son upon'; in the Winter months, between Michaelmas and Easter, it was to begin at about 6 o'clock 'so that during the season hit may be doon by vij of the klok or son upon'. Milet thus dictated matters which formally were left to the priest, although he stated a concern not to go against customary practice but to fit in with tradition:

Also I will that this ordein^ance of the morowmasse be not prejudiciall to every olde goode custome usid befor this tyme but that they be kept alwey as before this tyme hath alwey ben usid and accustomed.

After the Offertory, Milet directed that the priest was to wash his hands and say the Psalm *De profundis* with the common suffrages, especially for the souls of William Rotheley and Roger Janet, original founders of the mass, and for all Christian souls. Milet was evidently a layman with a detailed knowledge of liturgy who possessed a feel for its ordering. In his refoundation of the morrowmass in the church he reflected the active concern of pre-Reformation laity to ensure full liturgical provision in their parish churches.⁹⁸

Peter Marshall feels that it is wrong to see the comparatively few late medieval testators, such as Milet, who insisted on special masses or services, as having a particularly mechanistic view of the redemptive function of the mass. Quality was as important as quantity. A contemporary work, the *Interpretacyon and Sygnyfyacyon of the Masse* encouraged the notion that the recitation of seven so-called 'golden masses' could lead to souls 'flying out of Purgatory as thicke as sparks of fire'. However, most bequests in late medieval wills for masses and other services, whether specified or not, required the participation of an 'honest' or devout priest.⁹⁹ Milet's stress laid on hearty delivery and attention to text

⁹⁷ The morrowmass was the one said at dawn each day, for the benefit of labourers whose work began then (Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, p.140). William Rotheley, in the registered version of his will of 1464, had bequeathed 40s from his lands in Bexley near Dartford for 'the Rewle and ordinance and all maner other things that longith to the morowmasse priest'. Milet, who was one of Rotheley's executors, referred to this bequest and added much more detail of his own. His granting of responsibility for choosing the priest to the prioress of Dartford was mentioned in chapter five.

⁹⁸ Duffy detects a great concern amongst late medieval English parishioners around this time to ensure the provision of regular masses in their parish churches. He cites the example of the laity of Kent during Archbishop Warham's visitation of 1511, a decade after Milet's will was made, who lodged a number of complaints against chantry priests who would not assist in parish worship by reading the Gospel, singing the morrowmass or distributing bread on Sundays (Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, p.140). Duffy sees in this expectation that private chantry priests would participate in parish religion the interplay of community religion and the religious individualism manifested in the setting up of chantries for particular souls (Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, p.139). There was probably some element of this interplay in the motivations of Milet and Rotheley. Duffy says that the cult of the commemoration of the dead was inextricably bound up with what he calls 'the late medieval sense of community'. Testators establishing chantries, permanent or temporary, conceived of themselves as providing benefits not only for themselves and the other dead to be prayed for, but the living community of the parish. A chantry founder might specify that his priest was to say the morrowmass. A number of chantry chapels served, and apparently were intended to serve, as parochial chapels of ease for the increase of religion. Such chapels are examined in more detail below. It seems to have been the case in Dartford where St. Edmund's Chapel received widespread support in the parish in the late fifteenth century and the Stanpit chantry priests were asked for prayers in a number of wills.

⁹⁹ Peter Marshall, *The Catholic Priesthood and the English Reformation* (Oxford, 1994), p.55. Marshall finds from his sample of 5,500 English wills drawn from most counties made between 1500-1553, that from 1500 to 1529, 44.1 per cent of wills requested

reflected the same sort of concern. Contemporary vernacular exegeses of the mass written for laity sought to show how 'in the ceremonies of the mass we may find meditations of the holy passion of our Lord Jesu'.¹⁰⁰ The author of the popular fifteenth century work *Dives and Pauper* wrote that 'as oft as the priest singeth his mass he representeth the person of Christ that died for us all upon the tree'.¹⁰¹ This would have been all the more strongly borne in upon the faithful laity of Dartford, including William Milet, by the sights around them in their parish church of the Rood and the image of Our Lady of Pity. William Milet must have had a more profound understanding of the mass than is allowed for by an interpretation that sees only demand for quantity.

The above general survey of parish religion in late medieval and early Tudor Dartford provides a background for the following more detailed focus on particular manifestations of dynamic secular religion in pre-Reformation Dartford and west Kent. Lay activity in all areas, in cooperation with parish clergy, demonstrated the existence of a strong commitment to traditional religion on their part.

Fraternities

Members of the laity were active in communal religion through membership of guilds and fraternities.¹⁰² Guilds were attached to parish churches, although in a city such as Norwich they were also attached to friaries and nunnery churches.¹⁰³ It was suggested in chapter five above that there was a fraternity of Our Lady in Dartford Priory to which servants and officials belonged. Commonly, fraternity membership was open to both clergy and laity, men and women.¹⁰⁴ Fraternities maintained images and lights in the churches where they celebrated their annual mass, attendance at which was usually the chief duty of members.¹⁰⁵ Their primary function was intercessory; they sometimes arranged burials for their members, possibly with the accompaniment of knell, cross and lighted tapers carried by fellow members; many had their own bederoll; and they hired priests and organised obits and masses for deceased brethren.¹⁰⁶ Fraternities also offered alms to members who fell into poverty through no fault of their own. Some dealt with quarrels between members before they took recourse to the courts.¹⁰⁷ Some had annual feasts.¹⁰⁸ As well as hiring stipendiary priests, some hired clerks to assist with services and look after guild ornaments and vestments.¹⁰⁹ Fraternities raised money by collections, gifts of property from benefactors and entry fees.¹¹⁰

Fraternities were less numerous and probably weaker in west Kent than in East Anglia or Cornwall. Only twenty-eight were named in wills made in the diocese of Rochester between 1438 and

masses to be said for the souls of the testators and fifty-eight per cent of testators 1500-1546 who imposed conditions on the type of priest to celebrate for them specified an honest one (p.51). Marshall finds from wills that 'honest' was probably shorthand for a number of virtues, such as chastity, honour, and steadfastness (p.52).

¹⁰⁰ Peter Marshall, *The Catholic Priesthood and the English Reformation*, p.35.

¹⁰¹ Peter Marshall, *The Catholic Priesthood and the English Reformation*, p.37.

¹⁰² The terms 'guild' and 'fraternity' or 'brotherhood' were used in Dartford wills in such a way as to suggest that there was no difference in meaning. They are therefore used interchangeably here.

¹⁰³ Norman P. Tanner, *The Church in late medieval Norwich 1370-1532* (Toronto, 1984), p.74.

¹⁰⁴ Norman P. Tanner, *The Church in late medieval Norwich 1370-1532*, p.75.

¹⁰⁵ Norman P. Tanner, *The Church in late medieval Norwich 1370-1532*, p.74; Robert Whiting, *The Blind Devotion of the People: popular religion and the English Reformation* (Cambridge, 1989), p.105.

¹⁰⁶ Robert Whiting, *The Blind Devotion of the People*, p.106.

¹⁰⁷ Norman P. Tanner, *The Church in late medieval Norwich 1370-1532*, p.74.

¹⁰⁸ Norman P. Tanner, *The Church in late medieval Norwich 1370-1532*, p.74.

¹⁰⁹ Andrew Brown, *Popular Piety in late medieval England: the diocese of Salisbury 1250-1550* (Oxford, 1995), pp.140-1

¹¹⁰ Andrew Brown, *Popular Piety in late medieval England: the diocese of Salisbury 1250-1550*, pp.140-1

1540.¹¹¹ Four of these were in Dartford, three in East Greenwich, two in Lewisham, two in Gravesend, two in St. Werburgh in Hoo, and the others were distributed singly. Out of 206 will-makers in the city of Rochester whose wills were proved in the consistory court between 1438 and 1537, only one mentioned a fraternity.¹¹² This compares with over forty pious guilds that existed between 1364 and 1532 in the much larger cathedral city of Norwich.¹¹³ Guilds in the diocese of Rochester were dedicated to one of eighteen saints or pairs of saints; there were four of the Holy Trinity, three of Our Lady, three of All Saints, two of St. George (and another of St. Anne and St. George), two of St. Barbara (and another of St. Anthony and St. Barbara), and one each of Corpus Christi, St. Margaret, St. Mary Magdalene, St. Clement, St. Christopher, St. Peter, St. John, St. Michael and St. James, St. Thomas, St. Hildevert, St. Anne, St. Werburgh, the Name of Jesus, and one other unspecified. Most fraternities received just one, two or three bequests, usually in close succession, suggesting the short lives of many of these institutions. Most of the forty-four pious fraternities in late medieval Norwich had short lives, and only four are known to have lasted continuously for up to a hundred years.¹¹⁴ Rosser suggests one reason for this transience was over-generosity in handouts to brethren who fell on hard times.¹¹⁵ In west Kent, where most parishes were rural and the towns relatively small, parish frameworks may have been sufficient for devotional needs, and fraternities may simply have been very small and vulnerable to changing devotional fashions and financial circumstances. Indeed, testators were aware of this transience; the first parishioner of rural Birling to mention the fraternity of St. Michael and St. James in the parish church there, in 1473, stated that his bequest of 6s 8d for prayers was to be spent on church repairs if the fraternity failed.¹¹⁶ It was only mentioned in one subsequent will, in the following year, so it may indeed have failed.¹¹⁷

The strongest fraternity by far, within the diocese of Rochester, was that of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in West Malling parish church.¹¹⁸ Its longevity, as manifested by wills proved in the consistory court, exceeded that of any other in the diocese, as did its apparent membership; it received bequests from eighty-two testators between 1444 and 1534. The largest number of bequests received by any other fraternity in the diocese was nine, in the case of the Holy Trinity fraternities of Dartford and Greenwich, and Greenwich's St. Christopher guild, followed by the Holy Trinity guild of Lewisham which received eight bequests. Membership of West Malling's fraternity must have been very high indeed, within the parish, throughout the period; it attracted bequests from an average of 58.4 per cent of West Malling testators between 1438 and 1537, with a peak of ninety-two per cent between 1498 and 1517 (twenty-three of twenty-five will-makers). This compares with just fifteen per cent of late medieval lay will-makers in Norwich who gave to guilds, and eighteen per cent in Lincolnshire.¹¹⁹ Approximately one seventh of these

¹¹¹ See appendix five for a list of fraternities named in wills proved in the consistory court of Rochester. In the absence of any surviving guild returns or fraternity records, wills are virtually the only source. Bequests to fraternities are taken to imply membership.

¹¹² The fraternity of St. Anthony and St. Barbara in St. Nicholas's parish church was mentioned in a will in 1481 (DRb/Pwr3/224).

¹¹³ Norman P. Tanner, *The Church in late medieval Norwich 1370-1532*, pp.208-10.

¹¹⁴ Norman P. Tanner, *The Church in late medieval Norwich 1370-1532*, p.74.

¹¹⁵ Gervase Rosser, 'Communities of parish and guild in the late Middle Ages', in S.J. Wright, ed., *Parish, Church and People: local studies in lay religion 1350-1750* (London, 1988), pp.29-55 at p.39.

¹¹⁶ DRb/Pwr4/165v.

¹¹⁷ DRb/Pwr4/144.

¹¹⁸ Just one will set out the full dedication of the fraternity, in 1499, others simply calling it the fraternity of the Blessed Mary or Our Lady (DRb/Pwr5/347).

¹¹⁹ Norman P. Tanner, *The Church in late medieval Norwich 1370-1532*, p.132; J.R. Ketteringham, 'Secular piety and religious life in Lincolnshire between 1480 and 1536', p.150. The latter figure is more directly comparable with the overall figure of three or four per cent for the whole diocese of Rochester.

testators were women, and just one was a priest; Master William Lawson, the vicar of West Malling, in 1517, left 10s for prayers.¹²⁰ As a large fraternity it was able to employ its own chaplain, who celebrated at the fraternity altar in the parish church, it had a bederoll for members, maintained various lights including a herselight, and possessed a fraternity box (perhaps a chest for relief of poor members).¹²¹ Testators commonly bequeathed sums of money between 4d and 10s for the brothers and sisters and/or the priest to pray for them, although Thomas Ayerste asked the priest to pray for the brothers and sisters, in 1529.¹²² Robert Obell of West Malling left land, in 1480; Hugh Mathew left a black cow, in 1484; and John Burges made a reversionary bequest of the proceeds of the sale of his house, in 1527.¹²³ A few also left land and property. Testators always made other bequests to the lights, images and clergy of the parish church, and the bequest from the vicar, in 1517, confirms that the fraternity was not a rival organisation to that of the parish, but a dynamic mostly lay pious organisation within it. It was of sufficient dynamism also to attract membership from beyond the parochial boundaries, throughout its existence; thirteen testators from the adjacent parishes of Leybourne, Offham, Wateringbury and Ryarsh, the nearby parishes of Teston, West Farleigh and Addington, and from Tonbridge and Cobham, made bequests to this fraternity. Its membership was also socially diverse, including one man of armigerous rank, gentlemen, yeomanry, tailors and other tradesmen including a retired citizen and fishmonger of the city of London living in the parish, and a corrodian of Malling Abbey.¹²⁴ Surviving local records are unfortunately insufficient to provide any explanation for the extraordinary strength of this fraternity.

Fraternities were not greatly significant in Dartford, receiving bequests from just thirteen per cent of testators between 1438 and 1507, although this figure is comparable to Tanner's fifteen per cent of Norwich testators who gave to guilds. They were, nevertheless, stronger in Dartford than in any other parish in the diocese, judging by bequests in consistory court wills, with the notable exception of West Malling, and of East Greenwich and Lewisham which were similar to Dartford. There were four fraternities in Dartford named in wills proved in both the Rochester consistory court and the Prerogative Court of Canterbury.¹²⁵ They were bequeathed sums of money between 4d and 6s 8d with one bequest of land and property. The latter was made by a priest, Thomas Worship, to the guild of St. Thomas of Canterbury, in 1456, to assist it in its provision of beds for the poor in the old leper hospital.¹²⁶ Dartford was an appropriate home for this cult, being situated on the pilgrimage route from London to Canterbury. However, this was the only bequest made to the St. Thomas guild, so it may have been subject to the general transience of these organisations, although the altar and light of St. Thomas in the parish church

¹²⁰ DRb/Pwr7/90.

¹²¹ The chaplain was mentioned in 1444, in seven wills between 1461 and 1472 (Sir William Talden, followed by Sir William Taylour), in 1485, in three wills 1495-7 (again, a Sir William), and Sir Christopher was named in 1525. William Stafford asked for the wardens of the fraternity to put him in the bederoll, in 1493 (DRb/Pwr5/229). Jone Mathew left half a diaper cloth to the fraternity altar, in 1529 (DRb/Pwr8/214). Richard Kennet and Robert Huntwike left sums of money to the fraternity box, in 1525-6 (DRb/Pwr7 ff.360, 379v).

¹²² DRb/Pwr8/212.

¹²³ DRb/Pwr3/253, DRb/Pwr5/89v, DRb/Pwr8/111.

¹²⁴ Robert Watton, armiger of Addington, in 1470 (DRb/Pwr3/65); William Downe, fishmonger of London, in 1470 (DRb/Pwr3/80); William Gurney, a layman living in the abbey, in 1499 (DRb/Pwr5/347); William Longley, tailor of West Malling, in 1518 (DRb/Pwr7/177v).

¹²⁵ There was possibly a fifth guild in Dartford, of the Blessed Virgin, of which there is no mention in wills; Dunkin reports a reference to a tenement in Upstreet called the 'Guild of the Blessed Virgin' in a Dartford rental which he does not identify or date (John Dunkin, *The History and Antiquities of Dartford*, p.35).

¹²⁶ The will of Thomas Worship, chaplain (DRb/Pwr2/46). Worship left lands and tenements for this purpose, after the death of his mother and sister. See below for more on the leper hospital.

continued to receive bequests up to 1527.¹²⁷ The fraternities of All Saints and Holy Trinity were stronger, respectively receiving seven and ten bequests after 1438. In their best decade, according to testamentary evidence, between 1458 and 1467, twenty-six per cent of Dartford will-makers made bequests to either or both of these two fraternities. The All Saints' Guild was evidently at its strongest in the 1450s and 60s, receiving six of its seven bequests between 1458 and 1466.¹²⁸ It was large enough to own a tenement for some of its activities in Overy Street in Dartford, opposite the parish church across the River Darent. Mention of this property in the Dartford Priory account roll for 1521-2, abutting one of the priory's tenements and gardens, suggests the guild was then still in existence.¹²⁹ That the fraternity was wealthy in the fifteenth century is suggested by the brick chimneys incorporating gothic niches that this building possessed.¹³⁰ The Holy Trinity fraternity existed throughout the period, receiving bequests between 1457 and 1504. Further, some of the fraternity's stock was the subject of a court case in 1514.¹³¹ Sharing the dedication of the parish church, this was probably the largest fraternity in the parish. Its membership extended beyond the parish bounds; a bequest of 2s was received from the vicar of Wilmington, John Marshall, in 1457.¹³²

It is significant that most of the nineteen bequests to Dartford fraternities were concentrated in two short periods; thirteen appeared in wills made in the years 1456-66, and four appeared in wills dated between 1501 and 1504.¹³³ Furthermore, a new fraternity of St. Barbara was apparently founded in the parish in the 1500s; Johanna Harte left 4d to this previously unmentioned brotherhood in March 1504-5.¹³⁴ Across the diocese, half of the eighty-seven testators, whose wills were proved in the consistory court, who mentioned fraternities other than that of West Malling, between 1440 and 1540, were concentrated in the quarter-century 1455-79, and a further ten per cent between 1500 and 1504.¹³⁵ Furthermore, new guilds were being founded in the late 1520s and 1530s. A study by Marjory McIntosh similarly shows that lay fraternities peaked in popularity in the later fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, especially in southern counties experiencing increasing polarisation of wealth at that time.¹³⁶ Tanner found that the number of fraternities in Norwich peaked in the early sixteenth century.¹³⁷ Whiting concludes that the numbers of fraternities in churches indicates their popularity on the eve of the Reformation, and that they had continued to play an important role in the religious lives of individuals and of parochial communities.¹³⁸

¹²⁷ The altar was mentioned in eight wills between 1440 and 1527, and the light received bequests in 1454 and 1498.

¹²⁸ DRb/Pwr2/126, DRb/Pwr2/204v, DRb/Pwr2/261v, DRb/Pwr2/276, DRb/Pwr2/366, PROB 11/5/46. The other bequest dated from 1440, when John Okeherst left 6s 8d to the guild's sustenance (DRb/Pwr1/2).

¹²⁹ London Society of Antiquaries Ms 564 m.7.

¹³⁰ John Dunkin reported that this building was still standing in 1844 (John Dunkin, *The History and Antiquities of Dartford*, pp.16-17).

¹³¹ At the consistory court held in Holy Trinity church on 6th May 1514, Andrew Auditor and Thomas Auditor were accused of having in their custody sixty quarters of barley belonging to the fraternity of the Holy Trinity, and of not having restored it to the church (DRb/Pa 6 fo.28).

¹³² DRb/Pwr2/63.

¹³³ No bequests to fraternities in Dartford appeared after 1504.

¹³⁴ DRb/Pwr6/99. The altar of St. Barbara in the parish church was also first mentioned in 1504, receiving a bequest of 3s 4d from William Ladd, and was probably connected with the fraternity (DRb/Pwr6/115v). The fraternity was not mentioned again, but the altar received another bequest in 1533, when Elizabeth Hamond, a single woman of the parish, asked for a trental to be sung there for her and her servant's souls (DRb/Pwr9/60v).

¹³⁵ No bequests were made to any fraternities after 1540.

¹³⁶ Marjory McIntosh, 'Local responses to the poor in late medieval and Tudor England', *Continuity and Change*, 3 (1988), pp.209-45 at p.220. See below, concerning almshouses.

¹³⁷ Norman P. Tanner, *The Church in late medieval Norwich 1370-1532*, p.74.

¹³⁸ Robert Whiting, *The Blind Devotion of the People: Popular religion and the English Reformation*, p.107.

Some fraternities in west Kent reflected the rising popularity of certain saints' cults in late medieval England. St. Barbara attracted new devotion in north-west Kent, in the early sixteenth century; besides the new fraternity in Dartford, Gravesend parish church contained a fraternity, altar and light of St. Barbara from 1500. Johanna Harte of Dartford evidently paid particular devotion to this saint, for she left a diaper towell to Gravesend's altar of St. Barbara, besides 4d to the Dartford fraternity.¹³⁹ St. George was generally a popular patron for fraternities, from the fifteenth century; in Cornwall he was second only to the Blessed Virgin.¹⁴⁰ In Norwich the St. George's guild was prominent and became a part of city government in the fifteenth century.¹⁴¹ The growth of the cult can be discerned in the diocese of Rochester, from the late fifteenth century, in the new chapel of ease dedicated to St. George in Gravesend, a wallpainting of St. George and the dragon in Dartford parish church dating from c.1470, and a proliferation of images, altars and lights.¹⁴² It is not clear how many of these lights and images were maintained by fraternities. There were at least three new fraternities with this dedication founded in the early sixteenth century. The image in St. Alphege's parish church in East Greenwich was first mentioned in 1466, when William Lynde of the parish asked to be buried before 'the glorious martyr St. George'.¹⁴³ In 1520, William Wynnysby of Greenwich asked to be buried before a picture of St. George in the church.¹⁴⁴ The brotherhood of St. Anne, which existed in the church from at least 1475, was refounded or renamed, at some point between 1516 and 1540, as the fraternity of St. Anne and St. George, mentioned in two wills in 1540.¹⁴⁵ In the neighbouring parish of Lewisham a fraternity of Our Lady and St. George was mentioned in two wills in 1527 and 1528.¹⁴⁶ Westerham parish church contained an image of St. George by 1444, and the brotherhood first received bequests in the 1530s.¹⁴⁷

¹³⁹ Johan Harte's legacy can probably be explained by the fact that she had connections with Gravesend, supporting the argument that membership of fraternities beyond the parish reflected contact; her god-daughter Johanna Wales lived in Gravesend, and she possessed lands and tenements in that parish. Furthermore, her full identification, as set out in her will, was Johanna Harte alias Postwell alias Lorkyn, the name Lorkyn was widely known in north-west Kent including Gravesend.

¹⁴⁰ Joanna Mattingley, 'The medieval parish guilds of Cornwall', *Journal of the Royal Institute of Cornwall*, n.s. 10 (1989), pp.290-329 at p 305.

¹⁴¹ Norman P. Tanner, *The Church in late medieval Norwich 1370-1532*, p.81.

¹⁴² The chapel in Gravesend is investigated in detail below. On the wall mural on the east wall of the Lady Chapel, in the south choir aisle of Holy Trinity parish church in Dartford see John Dunkin, *The History and Antiquities of Dartford*, p.32. The painting still exists, although heavily 'restored' in the nineteenth century. Trottescliffe parish church was given 6s 8d to a banner cloth called a 'stremmer' bearing an image of the saint, in 1501 (DRb/Pwr5/412v). An image of St. George in Strood parish church was mentioned in a will of 1493 (DRb/Pwr5/207), and, in 1529, John Aturbury of the parish was required by the consistory court to pay 40s to a new image (DRb/Pa 9 pt 2 fo 8). Peter Horney of Cobham, in his will of 24th December 1512, left his best gown of tawney, his harness and his crossbow to buy a new image of St. George to be set in Cobham's collegiate parish church (DRb/Pwr6/344v); John Bradforth of Cobham left 4d to the light before this image, as well as to other lights in Cobham church, in September 1522 (DRb/Pwr7/253v); and Henry Jerman left 4d to the same light, in July 1523 (DRb/Pwr7/282v). George Bowreg of Capel founded a new taper of one pound wax before the image of this saint in his parish church, in his will dated 17th May 1513 (DRb/Pwr6/352). The lights of St. George in Strood church and St. Nicholas parish church in Rochester received bequests from a number of testators, especially in the 1520s. A light of St. George was also mentioned for the first time in the parish church of St. Margaret next Rochester, at this time, for example by Eleanor Chamber, in 1533 (DRb/Pwr9/75).

¹⁴³ DRb/Pwr2/335.

¹⁴⁴ DRb/Pwr7/198.

¹⁴⁵ John Johnson of Greenwich expected this fraternity to last forever - in the relatively elaborate arrangements for his perpetual obit in the parish church, set out in his will dated June 1540, he included the instruction that six torches of the brethren were to be set about his herse (DRb/Pwr9/300); at the end of August that year, 12d was left to the brotherhood priest of St. Anne and St. George, by Richard Fowler, keeper of the king's manor place in Greenwich (DRb/Pwr9/315). The older fraternity of St. Anne was first mentioned in 1475 (DRb/Pwr4/186v), and in four subsequent consistory court wills up to 1516 (DRb/Pwr5/383v, Pwr6 ff.11v, 134, Pwr7/78).

¹⁴⁶ Richard Edwardes of Lewisham left 40d to this fraternity, in 1527 (DRb/Pwr8/129); John Berepyll of Lewisham left 12d, in April 1528 (DRb/Pwr8/161v). Both parishes - East Greenwich and Lewisham - also possessed fraternities of the Holy Trinity, although Lewisham's became popular as Greenwich's fell from view, in the 1470s; Greenwich's Holy Trinity fraternity was mentioned in nine wills between 1455 and 1482 (with no bequests between 1463 and 1482), and Lewisham's in eight wills between 1471 and 1514.

¹⁴⁷ Margaret atte Welle left 6d to the image, in 1444 (DRb/Pwr1/29); Thomas Pottar left 13s 4d to the brotherhood, every year as long as it continued, in 1531 (DRb/Pwr9/213v); Johan Chapman, widow, bequeathed 8d to the brotherhood, in 1534-5 (DRb/Pwr9/180); John Hobbard, in his will dated July 1537, left 6s to this brotherhood (DRb/Pwr9/242).

Bequests indicate that a number of people belonged to more than one fraternity.¹⁴⁸ This was true of some Dartford parishioners, for example; Johanna Harte gave bequests to both of the Holy Trinity and St. Barbara guilds, in 1504-5, and four parishioners who made their wills between 1458 and 1466 gave to both the All Saints and Holy Trinity brotherhoods.¹⁴⁹ They did not always leave equal amounts to each fraternity they mentioned. Some parishioners also belonged to guilds outside of their parish. Margaret Knyfton, who lived in the parish of Dartford and owned land locally, had connections in Southwark, for she made her will with the assent of her husband in the house of William Norfolk in Southwark, on 26th April 1460. These connections explain her request to the brothers of St. George in Southwark to 'be put & remembered in the boke of the brodirhode and as a suster to be prayd for'. Margaret referred to her executor, who was to see her will fulfilled 'in way of cherite', as 'my welbeloved in God John Damit'.¹⁵⁰ This may have been a formal way of referring to fellow brethren and sisters. This fraternity of St. George was perhaps based in St. George's church in Southwark. Other parishioners of Dartford may have belonged to the important guild of the Blessed Virgin of Boston in Lincolnshire, which also cultivated membership in Norwich.¹⁵¹ They were perhaps attracted by the flourishing Catholic religion of East Anglia that this guild represented. On 7th October 1513, at the consistory court held in Dartford parish church, Robert Gillon, clerk of the 'gild of fraternity' of the Blessed Mary in Boston, accused John Avereve of Dartford of having collected money from fraternity members throughout Kent without any authority. He had, for example, received 8d from the Rector of Footscray near Dartford.¹⁵²

Guilds gave expression to extra-parochial contact and activities of their members, and Rosser contends that they were formed to transcend the limitations, geographical or institutional, of the parish.¹⁵³ They provided services the parish did not, and allowed their members closer control over their religious practice, providing additional means of intercession and of expressing attachment to cults.¹⁵⁴ The existence of guilds demonstrated the attraction that collective forms of religious activity conceived and directed by themselves had for laypeople.¹⁵⁵ However, although independent in some measure, they were not essentially detached from the parish framework; there was, for example, no tug of loyalty between wardenship of guild and parish church.¹⁵⁶ This was true of Dartford, in the early sixteenth century, when Thomas and Andrew Auditor served at different times as churchwardens and also as wardens of the Holy Trinity guild.¹⁵⁷ They were not opposed to parish clergy, whom they needed.¹⁵⁸ Equally, some guilds with their own priests helped in the pastoral work of the parish, and this was probably true in West Malling.¹⁵⁹ They influenced liturgical practice in parish churches by funding additional masses at particular times of

¹⁴⁸ This was true of Norwich: Norman P. Tanner, *The Church in late medieval Norwich 1370-1532*, p.75. Just under half of testators in Salisbury gave to more than one fraternity, indicating multiple membership: Andrew Brown, *Popular Piety in late medieval England: the diocese of Salisbury 1250-1550*, p.142.

¹⁴⁹ DRb/Pwr2/126 (Shugburgh, 1458), DRb/Pwr2/276 (Bolton, 1463), PROB 11/5/46 (Lynsey, 1464), DRb/Pwr2/366 (Wynsore, 1466).

¹⁵⁰ DRb/Pwr2/303.

¹⁵¹ This was also the most popular guild outside of Norwich amongst citizens of that city, who also belonged to guilds as far away as York (Norman P. Tanner, *The Church in late medieval Norwich 1370-1532*, p.75).

¹⁵² DRb/Pa5 pt 2 fo.126v.

¹⁵³ Gervase Rosser, 'Communities of parish and guild in the late Middle Ages', pp.32-3.

¹⁵⁴ Andrew Brown, *Popular Piety in late medieval England: the diocese of Salisbury 1250-1550*, p.157.

¹⁵⁵ Gervase Rosser, 'Communities of parish and guild in the late Middle Ages', p.44.

¹⁵⁶ Andrew Brown, *Popular Piety in late medieval England: the diocese of Salisbury 1250-1550*, p.157.

¹⁵⁷ A consistory court case in 1514 mentioned that Thomas Auditor and Andrew Auditor had both had possession of the stock of the Holy Trinity fraternity of Danford parish church, implying that they held responsible positions in this fraternity, perhaps as wardens (DRb/Pa 6 fo.28). Both also served as churchwardens, at different times (see appendix two).

¹⁵⁸ Norman P. Tanner, *The Church in late medieval Norwich 1370-1532*, p.81.

day, and promoting new late medieval devotions such as Corpus Christi and the Name of Jesus (see below), both of which proliferated in the fifteenth century.¹⁶⁰ They sometimes contributed funds to church building, and there is some evidence that the numbers of fraternities fluctuated with such activity.¹⁶¹

Rosser finds that fraternities were more exclusive than the parish, imposing qualifications for membership such as entry fees and social respectability.¹⁶² They demonstrated a self-conscious desire to distinguish themselves from the wider mass of parishioners through this and the mutual support of charitable alms and spiritual services.¹⁶³ This argument may be too strong, however, in the face of multiple membership of fraternities by some individuals, and the low profile of many such bodies. Tanner concludes that the lack of records for most guilds points to the probability that fraternities' activities were not extensive; in Norwich they were important but secondary features of the religious scenery of the city.¹⁶⁴ Furthermore, guilds may have been less necessary in small towns or rural areas where the parish framework was adequate for devotional concerns.¹⁶⁵ These points may explain the low profile of fraternities in Dartford and west Kent in all but a few exceptional times and cases. In parishes in the diocese of Rochester where they existed they may simply have been one more channel through which the laity could practice their Catholic religion and do so with some measure of autonomy.¹⁶⁶

Chapels

Pre-Reformation England abounded in chapels separate from parish churches.¹⁶⁷ It is estimated that in Kent there were three hundred chapels in five hundred parishes before the Black Death.¹⁶⁸ These were founded for various reasons, some as chantry chapels, some from public subscription, and some were manorial chapels, but all contributed to the 'increase of religion'.¹⁶⁹ The origins and history of many chapels is obscure.¹⁷⁰ Often, they provided a more convenient place of worship in settlements in large parishes where the parish church was distant, or where the settlement had moved away from an old parish church.¹⁷¹ Such chapels proved effective mission bases, maintaining church attendance, especially when they were located far from the parish centre.¹⁷² In the later middle ages many came about as a result of

¹⁵⁹ Andrew Brown, *Popular Piety in late medieval England: the diocese of Salisbury 1250-1550*, p.143.

¹⁶⁰ Gervase Rosser, 'Communities of parish and guild in the late Middle Ages', p.43.

¹⁶¹ Joanna Mattingley, 'The medieval parish guilds of Cornwall', p.309. There was certainly building activity in Dartford parish church in the mid-fifteenth century when the guilds were relatively popular.

¹⁶² Gervase Rosser, 'Communities of parish and guild in the late Middle Ages', pp.35-6. Mattingley interprets entry fees to Cornwall guilds in the same way: Joanna Mattingley, 'The medieval parish guilds of Cornwall', p.297.

¹⁶³ Gervase Rosser, 'Communities of parish and guild in the late Middle Ages', p.37.

¹⁶⁴ Norman P. Tanner, *The Church in late medieval Norwich 1370-1532*, pp.81-2.

¹⁶⁵ Andrew Brown, *Popular Piety in late medieval England: the diocese of Salisbury 1250-1550*, p.143.

¹⁶⁶ Duffy similarly concludes: 'To belong to a guild, indeed, was more often than not simply one of the conventional ways of being an active parishioner' (Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, p.154).

¹⁶⁷ Christopher Kitching, 'Church and chapelry in sixteenth-century England', *The Church in Town and Countryside: Studies in Church History*, 16 (1979), pp.279-90 at p.279.

¹⁶⁸ Gervase Rosser, 'Parochial conformity and voluntary religion in late medieval England', *TRHS* 6th ser., 1 (1991), pp.173-89 at p.175.

¹⁶⁹ Christopher Kitching, 'Church and chapelry in sixteenth-century England', p.281. Everitt lists three main reasons for the proliferation of outlying chapels in Kent up to the fourteenth century; that is, dispersal of settlement in the post-Conquest period, the emergence of the independent manorial gentry who founded chapels as a matter of pride, and a 'wayward individualism' in the religious temperament of the county of those who sought their own oratories: Alan Everitt, *Continuity and Colonisation: the evolution of Kentish settlement* (Leicester, 1986), pp.206-7, 219-22.

¹⁷⁰ G.H. Tupling, 'The pre-Reformation parishes and chapelries of Lancashire', *Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society*, 67 (1957), pp.1-16 at p.8.

¹⁷¹ Christopher Kitching, 'Church and chapelry in sixteenth-century England', p.280.

¹⁷² Christopher Kitching, 'Church and chapelry in sixteenth-century England', pp.289-90.

communal action by laity themselves who sought additional facilities for religious services, demonstrating the vitality of religion in numerous late medieval parishes.¹⁷³

Dartford and its hinterland possessed several chapels.¹⁷⁴ Three chapels are investigated in some detail below; they illustrate different kinds of foundation, all of which played significant roles in lay religion. St. Edmund's chapel in Dartford was a detached chantry chapel staffed by local parish clergy and used by laity; St. George's chapel in Gravesend was built by the parishioners in the main settlement of the parish, which was some distance from the old parish church, for reasons of practicality, piety and communal pride and independence; St. James's chapel in the parish of Ash near Dartford served the inhabitants of the manor of South Ash in which it stood.

The chapel of St. James in the manor of South Ash

Rosser finds that the lack of coincidence of parish with manorial borders, gave some parishioners freedom of manoeuvre, while the lords promoted their own religious initiatives to recruit the support of inhabitants.¹⁷⁵ Such a state of affairs may have resulted in the provision of extra facilities for worship on the parish boundary of Ash near Dartford and Kemsing. The manorial chapel of St. James was not mentioned in wills, most of the inhabitants on the manor perhaps being too poor to make them, and its existence is only recorded in a case heard in the Rochester consistory court in 1564. Inhabitants of the manor were asked to cast their mind back to before the Reformation to produce evidence as to whether the mansion of South Ash, then owned by William Hodssoll, was in Kemsing or Ash parish. The confusion had, in the past, brought about conflicts of parochial loyalty and obligation for some inhabitants of the manor. Deponents agreed that half of the manor was in Kemsing parish and half in Ash, and that the mansion straddled this border, the kitchen and hall being in Kemsing. It was remembered that Burrowe, the former farmer, annually received the sacrament at Easter in Kemsing church. John Fremling, a sixty-year-old yeoman of Kemsing, recalled that the parson of Ash had on one occasion refused to marry a man and a maid from the mansion house and sent them to Kemsing. Fremling also recalled an occasion forty-seven years earlier, c.1517, when he was thirteen, when the clerk of Ash hired him to be the St. Nicholas Bishop for the parish of Ash. It is not explained why no boy in Ash was considered appropriate. The clerk collected him from his father's house in Kemsing and took him to the mansion of South Ash. There, Markeley, then farmer, sat him (Fremlyng) down on the high bench in the hall and told him: 'Remember a nother day That thou sittest nowe in the *parishe* of Kemsing'.

Amongst the other evidences turned up was the matter of the manorial chapel, its staffing and use. Thomas Ketyll, a sixty-two-year-old husbandman of the parish of Ash, testified that a dovehouse in the manor used to be a chapel of St. James, and it was the vicar and clerk of Kemsing who celebrated mass and service there on St. James's Day. Ketyll himself had been used to assist the priest on a number of occasions. Thomas Burrowe, a husbandman of Ash aged forty years, remembered that his father annually

¹⁷³ Gervase Rosser, 'Parochial conformity and voluntary religion in late medieval England', p.176.

¹⁷⁴ There were at least two in Dartford: St. Edmund's chapel and the chapel of St John the Baptist at Western Cross mentioned in a fifteenth-century will (DRb/Pwr4/187v). There were also chapels in Betsham in Southfleet parish, St. Margaret Hilles near Darenth, Swanscombe, Gravesend and Singlewell. Hussey lists a number of examples of late medieval chapels in Kent: Arthur Hussey, 'Chapels in Kent', *AC*, 29 (1911), pp.217-58. Everitt lists other examples, and discusses their origins: Alan Everitt, *Continuity and Colonisation: the evolution of Kentish settlement*, pp.205-6.

¹⁷⁵ Gervase Rosser, 'Parochial conformity and voluntary religion in late medieval England', p.181.

paid 8d to the clerk of Kemsing during matins and mass in the chapel on St. James's day, and he continued to pay 4d to the clerk of Kemsing after services ceased in the chapel.¹⁷⁶ It appears from this that the chapel was staffed by Kemsing parish but that inhabitants of the manor attended its annual service whether they lived in Ash or Kemsing. In this case, manorial influence confused their sense of parochial loyalty to the extent that some did not even know which parish they lived in. These details of festival masses in the chapel and the continuing tradition of the boy bishop, however, suggest a picture of flourishing traditional religion before the Reformation, in this rural area, finding expression in parish churches and manorial chapel, depending on where one lived.

The chantry chapel of St. Edmund King and Martyr in Dartford

Chantry founders sometimes specified that their priests were to administer sacraments to the local population, and many private chantry chapels continued in use as free chapels when the chantries lapsed.¹⁷⁷ The chapel of St. Edmund King and Martyr in Dartford was a chantry of obscure origin which was in existence by the early fourteenth century.¹⁷⁸ It was still called a chantry in diocesan records in the sixteenth century.¹⁷⁹ However, it was also referred to as a 'free chapel', and the priest was called both chantry priest and warden, in the fifteenth century.¹⁸⁰ Free chapels were originally exempt from parochial control, but by the sixteenth century many had become parochial, serving a wider public.¹⁸¹ Most surviving evidence relating to St. Edmund's chapel, in episcopal registers, wills and ecclesiastical court books, concerns the period from the mid-fifteenth century to the Reformation. It shows that for much of this period both the chapel and its priest were important to parish religion, providing additional facilities for services and devotion which were actively sought by the laity.

Not all chapels supported by laity were located in settlements at some distance from their parish centres, or on parochial boundaries. The chantry commissioners of Edward VI's reign questioned the need for those that were built close to parish churches.¹⁸² Elsewhere in west Kent, for example, a chapel of Our

¹⁷⁶ Rochester consistory court depositions: CKS DRb/Jd1 ff.142-143r, 149v-151r.

¹⁷⁷ G H Tupling, 'The pre-Reformation parishes and chapelries of Lancashire', p.8. Sixty per cent of early fourteenth-century perpetual chantries had lapsed long before the Reformation (C. Harper-Bill, *The Pre-Reformation Church in England 1400-1530*, p.69).

¹⁷⁸ The earliest Rochester episcopal register, that of Hamo de Hythe, records the licensing of Ralph Feldthorpe to celebrate in the chapel, on 17th May 1326, and his presentation by John de Bikenore, then patron, for institution as perpetual chaplain on 21st April 1333, when he took an oath of obedience 'in forma communi' (Charles Johnson, *Registrum Hamonis Helthe Diocesis Roffensis A.D. 1319-1352* (Oxford, 1948), pp.167, 514). This apparent raising of the status of the chaplaincy, in 1333, was probably connected with John de Bikenore's refoundation of the chantry, which is pointed to by his endowment of the chaplaincy with an income, at some point before 1342, when Ralph Feldthorpe died. A grant exhibited by John Wellys before the bishop of Rochester, when he was presented as chaplain, in 1463, named John de Bikenore as donor of the lands, Ralph Feldthorpe as recipient of the income (which amounted to five marks per annum from rents), and detailed the endowment. This endowment, reported in the 1463 entry in the bishop's register, consisted of Tannersfield; a tenement and buildings, and meadow in the fresh and salt marshes belonging to that tenement – one containing two and a half acres of land, at Fulleswych, and the other of one acre lying opposite the chapel itself (DRb/Ar 1/11 ff.39v-40r). This grant was given to Wellys by the prioress of Dartford; the chantry chapel, its endowment and the advowson were granted to the prioress and convent by Edward III, by letters patent dated 16th May 1366, having escheated from the Bikenores to the crown (*Cal. Pat. Rolls 1364-67*, p.240; John Dunkin, *The History and Antiquities of Dartford*, p.98). The certificate of a chantry in Dartford, dated 1546, whose heading is worn away, must refer to St. Edmund's chapel. It lists the endowment as consisting of a message and garden at St. Edmund's Hill, seven acres and one virgate of arable in separate places, one acre and one virgate of meadow in the fresh marsh, and half an acre in the salt marsh (Arthur Hussey, *Kent Chantries*, Kent Records, 12 (Ashford, 1932), p.120). At some point the chantry priest was also provided with a chantry house, mentioned by John Wellys, in his will of 1477 (DRb/Pwr3/213). This chantry house must have added significantly to the value of the chantry; the rent income of £3 6s 8d (five marks) was at the lower end of the scale of chantry incomes, significantly below what constituted a living wage for priests (John A.F. Thomson, *The Early Tudor Church and Society, 1485-1529* (London, 1993), p.179).

¹⁷⁹ For example, the Rochester consistory court act book for 1515: DRb/Pa 6 fo.129.

¹⁸⁰ The letters patent ratifying the appointment to the chapel of Friar William Crowelond, probably of Dartford Priory, in 1442, call him warden and refer to the chapel as the 'free chapel' of St. Edmund (*Cal. Pat. Rolls 1441-6*, p.146).

¹⁸¹ Christopher Kitching, 'Church and chapelry in sixteenth-century England', p.281.

¹⁸² Gervase Rosser, 'Parochial conformity and voluntary religion in late medieval England', p.188.

Lady stood in Pembury churchyard.¹⁸³ St. Edmund's chapel stood above Dartford's parish chanel house in a burial ground on the eastern hill immediately above the vill, a very short distance from the parish church, adjacent to the London to Dover road.¹⁸⁴ The burial ground was an ancient one, and this was no doubt the reason for building the chapel there.¹⁸⁵ Many medieval chapels were built on ancient pre-Christian burial sites, reflecting enduring popular belief in their sanctity.¹⁸⁶ Indeed, Nicholas Orme uses literary evidence from medieval romances to demonstrate that chapels and their sites, especially in isolated places, were associated with the supernatural.¹⁸⁷ That St. Edmund's churchyard had such a reputation, in late medieval and early modern times, is suggested by an imaginative work printed a century after the chapel was closed by the chantry commissioners. This reported tales of shadowy forms seen constantly flitting about the deserted walls of the chapel by moonlight. Moans of the dead were nightly heard in the wind so that even the stoutest persons avoided the pathway through the burial ground, which was then still in use.¹⁸⁸ Duffy finds the word 'superstition' meaningless and pejorative when applied to aspects of pre-Reformation lay religion.¹⁸⁹ This local legend may simply have been a fanciful way of expressing a common view of the burial ground as a gateway between the living and the dead, but the late medieval popular Catholic piety that motivated a large proportion of parishioners to seek burial and religious rites there may indeed have incorporated an element of persisting pagan superstition.

St. Edmund's chapel was popular as a burial place and also for its chaplain; most requests for burial and bequests for the chapel's maintenance were received when the chapel was served by diligent chaplains. Eighteen per cent of Dartford testators between 1438-1537 (twenty-eight people) sought burial in the chapel or its cemetery, but almost two thirds of these burials (eighteen) took place before 1480. The chaplain/warden between 1442 and 1446 was a Dominican friar, William Crowelond, which may have ensured good standards of preaching and spiritual counsel for parishioners. In the early to mid-1450s the chapel was rebuilt, indicating the value placed on it, and its continuing use.¹⁹⁰ It was particularly popular in the 1460s and 1470s, when John Wellys, also the vicar of neighbouring Wilmington, was chaplain.¹⁹¹ Seven Dartford testators between 1464 and 1477 left bequests to the repair and reglazing of the great window, which depicted St. Thomas, most likely Thomas of Canterbury.¹⁹² In addition, two legacies were

¹⁸³ In 1533, William Lorkyn of Pembury left 8d to the chapel of Our Lady standing in the churchyard (DRb/Pwr9/116v).

¹⁸⁴ The chanel house below the chapel was mentioned in the wills of Thomas Worship, chaplain, in 1456 (DRb/Pwr2/46), and William Parker in 1534 (DRb/Pwr9/134v).

¹⁸⁵ The chapel ground may have been in use since the ninth century, and Roman burial sites have also been found nearby, in the area of Dartford's east hill (Dartford District Archaeological Group, *Under your feet: the archaeology of the Dartford District* (Dartford, 1993), pp 21, 38).

¹⁸⁶ Robert G.A. Lutton, 'Orthodox and heterodox piety in Tenterden, c.1420-c.1540', p.82; Gervase Rosser, 'Parochial conformity and voluntary religion in late medieval England', pp.183, 189.

¹⁸⁷ Nicholas Orme, 'Church and chapel in medieval England', *TRHS*, 6th ser., 6 (1996), pp.75-102 at p.95.

¹⁸⁸ *Prodigies and Apparitions seen and heard at Darford* (sic.), and other places in Kent, etc. (London, 1646); cited in John Dunkin, *The History and Antiquities of Dartford*, p.105. No existing copy of this book has been traced. Holy Trinity parish church itself was built on an ancient jutish, Roman or earlier burial ground (Alan Everitt, *Continuity and Colonisation: the evolution of Kentish settlement*, p.244).

¹⁸⁹ Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, p.8.

¹⁹⁰ Thomas Worship, a chaplain of Dartford but not of St. Edmund's chapel, by his will dated 31st May 1456, directed his body to be buried at the west door of the chapel, which he said was lately built in the cemetery of St. Edmund above 'le chanel' (DRb/Pwr2/46).

¹⁹¹ Wellys was presented by Prioress Alice Branswhat of Dartford before the bishop, at Lesnes Abbey, on 3rd July 1461, the post being vacant because of the death of Sir Thomas Yngeldew, previous chaplain (DRb/Ar 1/11 fo.35v). However, he was not admitted until 3rd July 1463, at Lesnes, because of legal technicalities (DRb/Ar 1/11 ff.39v-40r). For a list of local wills mentioning Wellys see appendix two. His own will is dated 29th October 1477 (DRb/Pwr3/213).

¹⁹² The subject of the window is learnt from the will of Thomas Revet junior of Dartford, dated 3rd June 1474, who left 3s 4d to its repair (DRb/Pwr4/155v).

received for repair of the fabric, in February 1466-7, a few months before Wellys died in post.¹⁹³ Wellys received more bequests for prayers, usually specifically naming him, than any other chaplain after 1438. These wills indicate that he also served in the parish church; indeed, some parishioners sought his prayers and made no mention of the chapel.¹⁹⁴ The basic duties of a chantry or obit priest did not take long; it was, therefore, mutually beneficial for him to supplement his low income by serving as an auxiliary parish priest, and he was sometimes required to do so by the chantry or obit founder.¹⁹⁵ Thus, Dartford's Stanpit chantry priests also received requests for prayers. These wills also show that other stipendiary priests based in Dartford parish church celebrated at St. Edmund's, under the supervision of John Wellys.¹⁹⁶ All this suggests that there was no rivalry between the chapel and parish church. The chapel services were supplementary rather than alternative to parish church religion, providing additional facilities for worship and devotion.¹⁹⁷ Indeed, one testator in 1474 stipulated that his endowed masses in the chapel were not to be to the detriment of the parish church.¹⁹⁸ Benefactors of the chapel did not all seek burial there, and they did not neglect the images, lights and services of the parish church. Testamentary evidence shows that Wellys was just as much valued in his parish of Wilmington as he was in Dartford. He seems to have found it quite possible to combine pastoral and liturgical duties in two parishes and a chantry to general satisfaction.

By contrast, in the quarter century after Wellys's death in 1477, when no chaplain was appointed, the chapel was neglected. No requests for burial in the cemetery or chapel were made in wills surviving from 1479-94. The deterioration of the fabric over the ten years from John Wellys's death is indicated by Richard Pynden's bequest of 3s 4d 'to the most nedeful reparation of St. Edmunds chapel', in his will dated 27th March 1487.¹⁹⁹ Another decade on, at the bishop of Rochester's visitation of Dartford, held on 19th October 1496, it was noted that the chapel was 'ruinosa'.²⁰⁰ This problem may have been exacerbated by a brief period of neglect of parish religion which evidently seized the local community in the early-to-mid-1490s, which also affected the parish church.²⁰¹ Bad relations with local clergy may have been at the

¹⁹³ John Daniel of Dartford made a bequest to the chapel fabric in his will of 3rd February (DRb/Pwr2/374v); Thomas Neuman of Stonham in Dartford parish left 6s 8d to repairs and the roof, in his will of 24th February (DRb/Pwr2/379v).

¹⁹⁴ For example, Roger Rotheley senior, a chandler of Dartford, by his will dated 6th May 1468, left 6s 8d to the repair of St. Edmund's chapel, and the sum of ten marks to be paid over three years to John Wellys or his successors, for him to celebrate for his soul and all Christian souls, attending at the parish church on feast days (DRb/Pwr3/9v). The only 'pious' bequests Nicholas Baker, smith of Dartford, included in his will of 31st October 1474 were for burial in the parish churchyard, 8d to the high altar, 20d to the fabric of the parish church and 6d to John Wellys, to pray for his soul (DRb/Pwr4/175v).

¹⁹⁵ John A. F. Thomson, *The early Tudor Church and Society, 1485-1529*, pp.183-4.

¹⁹⁶ Johanna Holt alias Sadler, widow, by her will dated 22nd September 1473, asked to be buried next to her husband in the cemetery of the chapel, and left ten marks for an honest priest to celebrate exequies and pray for her soul and the souls of all the faithful departed for three years - three days a week in St. Edmund's chapel and the other days, including feast days, in the parish church. She left the residue of her goods to John Wellys, the chaplain, who was to execute her will with her kinsman John Sadler, a canon of Lesnes Abbey (DRb/Pwr4/58).

¹⁹⁷ See Rosser on chapels, vitality in parish religion and increased choice in religious behaviour: Gervase Rosser, 'Parochial conformity and voluntary religion in late medieval England', p.176.

¹⁹⁸ Thomas Revet junior, in his will dated 3rd June 1474, asked for burial in the chapel cemetery, and for the priest celebrating for him in the parish church for a year to sing two days a week in the chapel, but 'so that it be non prejudice to the vicarye of the parish chirche' (DRb/Pwr4/155v). The pre-Reformation situation at Gravesend was somewhat different, as will be seen below; there, the chapel of ease flourished at the eventual expense of the parish church. The situations were different, however, since the distance of the parish church from the town was an important factor in Gravesend. The chapel at Smallhythe, near Tenterden, provides an even more greatly contrasting picture. There, the local inhabitants of this hamlet built their own chapel, appointed and paid their own chaplain and largely neglected their parish church, preferring the simpler piety of their local place of worship (Robert G.A. Lutton, 'Orthodox and heterodox piety in Tenterden, c.1420-c.1540', pp.82 ff.).

¹⁹⁹ DRb/Pwr6/146.

²⁰⁰ DRb/Pa 4 fo.317. This, of course, did not mean that the chapel was literally in ruins, but that it was in a poor state.

²⁰¹ At the same visitation, in 1496, the bishop found that the gate to the chantry chapel within the parish church was defective, eight vestments were lacking, the roof of St. Mary Magdalene's chapel and the chancel ceiling needed repair, two tombs in the church were not covered, and some debts to the church, including one of a cope worth £10, had not been followed up. Thomas Wylshire,

heart of this problem. Just as the cooperation of assiduous parish clergy with laity encouraged the latter to participate in communal religion at other times, an absence of such encouragement now gave the laity a disincentive to maintain their church and chapel. Indeed, in the early 1490s, not only was St. Edmund's not staffed by a permanent chaplain, but the Stanpit chantry priest of 1493-5 proved to be a charlatan. Fifteen months before the episcopal visitation just mentioned, on 31st July 1495, Dominus John Cokkis was cited for non-residence, apostasy and living in secular habit, and was forced to resign from the chantry.²⁰² These events must have had a demoralising affect on the laity. The episode was, however, followed by religious revival, in the late 1490s and 1500s, in part reflecting developments across the diocese which included the revival of fraternities.²⁰³ Subsequent Stanpit priests evidently proved satisfactory and attracted generous support from certain pious parishioners. In 1497, Richard Clement of Dartford bequeathed the rent of his house in Overy Street to the Stanpit priests, and his will was witnessed by the priest of that time, Thomas Worsle.²⁰⁴ Requests for burial and post-obit services at St. Edmund's also revived in the late 1490s and 1500s, no doubt celebrated by clergy from the parish church.²⁰⁵ Edmund Coke of Dartford bequeathed 3s to the chapel's altar, before which he asked to be buried, in his will of 22nd July 1501, as well as leaving two torches to the image of St. Edmund, asking for a bell to be rung there for his soul, and bequeathing as many tiles taken out of his own stock as would tile the chapel.²⁰⁶

In the early sixteenth century the appointment of a new chaplain may further have encouraged renewed use of the chapel. William Wiggan, the vicar of Wilmington and overseer of Dartford Priory, where he had lodgings, was probably appointed in the mid-1500s; he retained these and other benefices until his death in 1526.²⁰⁷ In this instance, Prioress Elizabeth Cressener's use of the advowson to reward an official was not good for parish religion, and indirectly led to the parish assuming responsibility for the chapel's use and maintenance. Wiggan may have carried out his duties at first, but his pluralism evidently encouraged Edmund Coke's executors to neglect his instructions for repairs to the chapel roof; these were not carried out for almost fifteen years, as repeated visitations discovered, by which time it must have been in a bad state.²⁰⁸ On 10th October 1515 Wiggan was himself cited at the consistory court for the chapel's repair.²⁰⁹ The bishop instructed three senior parishioners to hold an inquisition into the matter, choosing John Stokton, William Haynes and Andrew Auditor (a former churchwarden). Their enquiry involved other parishioners with legal expertise and high local standing, including Master Appleton (a wealthy

gentleman, of Stone next Dartford was six years in arrears with a debt of 24s, and was ordered to arbitration with the vicar (DRb/Pa 4 fo 317). It should, however, be remembered that this document is a chance survival, bound within an act book, so it is hard to assess how unusual or serious such faults were. The damage to the chantry gate, chapel roof and chancel ceiling, for example, may not have been serious.

²⁰² The Rochester consistory court act book records that the priest cited for these offences was one Dominus John, a chantry priest of Dartford (DRb/Pa4 fo.277v). The bishop's register records that John Cokkis, Stanpit chantry chaplain, resigned in that same year (DRb/Ar 1/12 fo.15). These documents must refer to the same man.

²⁰³ It was demonstrated above that the early 1500s was a period in which new fraternities and saints' cults were being founded across the diocese.

²⁰⁴ DRb/Pwr5/301. William Cooke, the Stanpit priest in the 1500s, attracted a bequest of 3s 4d for prayers, in 1504, from William Ladd, the parishioner who struck up a friendship with Friar Hugh Fabri of the priory (see appendix two).

²⁰⁵ There were seven requests for burial in St. Edmund's cemetery between 1494-1503 (DRb/Pwr5 ff.262v, 301, 357v, 415v, 416, DRb/Pwr6 ff.37v, 67v), there having been none between 1479-94

²⁰⁶ DRb/Pwr6/37v.

²⁰⁷ At his death Wiggan held other benefices in Cheshire (see appendix two).

²⁰⁸ At the archdeacon's visitation of October 1504, Thomas Wilshyre, gentleman, was found not to have carried out Edmund Coke's instructions for the repair of the 'hall' of the chapel (DRa/Vb4 fo.23). At the bishop's detentions of the deanery of Dartford, held in Dartford church on 6th May 1514, the wife of one Hudleston (deceased), evidently an executor (the registered version of Coke's will does not record the names of his executors), was accused of not carrying out a provision in the testament of Edmund Coke of Dartford for the repair of the chapel roof. She was ordered to pay 7s and ten measures of some unspecified crop (DRb/Pa 6 fo.28).

²⁰⁹ DRb/Pa 6 fo.129.

lawyer with lands in Dartford and Essex), William Parker, William Stokmede, Richard Feke, Thomas Auditor, William Kenham, William Jones, John Moger, Christopher Todd, John Jenkyn and William Longe. Most of these were landowners with significant holdings in the parish and elsewhere, and were named in local wills. They concluded within a month that Wiggan was liable, because of his receipt of the chapel income.²¹⁰ The enquiry continued, however, and the consistory court made available to the parishioners all legal documents relating to the chapel's repair.²¹¹ Wiggan proved obstinate but probably paid up by July 1517.²¹² The parishioners may also have conceded some responsibility of their own; William Jhones of Dartford, one of the participants in the enquiry, made the substantial bequest of £3 6s 8d to the fabric of the chapel, in his will of 14th May 1516, proved 14th June the same year.²¹³ The parish, aided by the professional expertise of its members, thus established its influence over chapel affairs.

Pre-Reformation laity were actively concerned to see that their chantry priests performed their religious duties.²¹⁴ By 1520, Wiggan was failing to celebrate regular services, and this was brought to the bishop's attention. At the consistory court held 11th May 1520 in Dartford church, it was found: 'Sir William Wiggan is natyd that he takyth upp the profett of seynt Edmond chapell in dertford & doth no servicez ther for it'.²¹⁵ He did not carry out parish duties at Wilmington, either, although he provided curates there.²¹⁶ Services in the chapel continued, in spite of Wiggan's neglect, paid for by parishioners and celebrated by clergy from the parish church. Hugh Serle, whose will was dated 20th October 1523, left money to lights in the parish church, and asked to be buried in the chapel before the image of St. Edmund, founded a thirty year obit to take place on this spot, and asked for a number of other masses there.²¹⁷ For the five masses on each of his burial, month's and year's days Serle left 12d to the vicar of Dartford, Master John Rogers, for each mass; 8d per mass to every other priest attending; 8d per day to the parish clerk; 4d per day to other clerks; and a penny each per day to five children helping at dirige and mass; but

²¹⁰ The parishioners reported at the consistory court held in Dartford church on 7th November 1515 that the vicar of Wilmington, chaplain of the chantry of St. Edmund, was in receipt of the chaplain's emolument and should pay 13s 4d out of this to the chapel repairs (DRb/Pa 6 fo.135v). Copied into the act book under this entry is a papal bull issued by Boniface IX, dated October 1395, which grants permission for or requires the appointment of John Symond to enjoy the fruits of the chantry (DRb/Pa 6 fo.137). This, no doubt, was a document turned up by the enquiry.

²¹¹ William Haynes, Richard Feke and Andrew Auditor appeared at the court, sitting in Sutton at Hone church on 30th December 1516, to make collection of all the legal writings dealing with the repair of the chapel, and the three appeared again on the same matter in January 1516-17 (DRb/Pa 6 ff.208, 215v).

²¹² In November 1516, at the consistory court, the bishop's commissary decreed that six parishioners were to call the incumbent of the chantry to the repair of the chapel, implying that Wiggan was being obstinate in this matter (DRb/Pa 6 fo.201). No mention was made of the chapel in the bishop's visitation of July 1517, so the repairs must have been in hand (DRb/Pa 6 fo.24).

²¹³ PROB 11/18/142.

²¹⁴ John A. F. Thomson, *The early Tudor Church and Society, 1485-1529*, pp.184-5.

²¹⁵ DRb/Pa 7 fo.75. Wiggan was also named as chaplain of St. Edmund's in the Dartford Priory rental of 1521-2 (London Society of Antiquaries Ms. 564); and is named as vicar of Wilmington and chaplain of St. Edmund's Chapel, as well as holding the Priory's benefice of Fiffold in Salisbury diocese, in Rochester diocese clerical subsidy assessment c.1523 (DRb/Az1 fo.21v). The reference to his parish in Cheshire - West Kirby in the Wirral - is found in Wiggan's will dated September 1526 (PROB 11/22/78).

²¹⁶ Indeed, on a number of occasions, Wiggan made use of his contacts within Dartford Priory and procured the services of friars and priests there, when mutually convenient. Thomas Clarke, 'canon of Dartford', which must be an inaccurate reference to the friars, was listed amongst the clergy working in Wilmington parish, in a clerical subsidy list of 1513, as was Sir Christopher Martyndale, a secular chaplain in the monastery of Dartford (DRb/Pa5 fo.102). In September 1524, the archdeacon's visitation found that Wiggan was non-resident and the cure was being undertaken by one of the friars of Dartford ('unus fratrum priorisse deservit cure') (DRb/Pa 8 pt 1 fo.61). Other secular curates are recorded at Wilmington in the archdeacon's visitations.

²¹⁷ Serle's grave was to be covered with a marble stone worth between 10s and 13s 4d. He left 6s 8d for the 'brekyng of the grave in the seyde chapell', and asked for the sexton to deal with grave, herse and bells 'as the custom is in the seyde church and as it hath been used at such maner of doying'. He asked for five masses to be said and sung with a solemn dirige, in the chapel, on his burial day, month's day and twelve month's day. He instructed his wife, Alice, to pay from the profits of two tenements and a barn in Overy Street (below the hill on which St. Edmund's chapel stood) 8d per annum for thirty years for a priest appointed by the vicar to say mass and dirige before the image of St. Edmund, where he was to be buried, on his anniversary, beginning on his first year's mind. Alice Serle was also to pay 12d per annum for thirty years for the maintenance of a taper to burn before this image, to burn every day during mass, for Hugh's soul and all souls. Finally, Serle bequeathed 13s 4d to the repair of the chapel or St. Edmund's cemetery wall, as was most necessary (DRb/Pwr7/313v).

made no mention of Wiggan.²¹⁸ If the instructions of this will were carried out, the chapel's use was assured for the next thirty years. Serle's bequest for a taper to burn every day during mass in the chapel demonstrates that a daily mass was still celebrated there; although unusual in the extent of his legacies, Serle cannot have been the only one of Dartford's seven or eight hundred parishioners who used the chapel in the 1520s.

Encouraged by the bishop, in the enquiries of 1515-17, and perhaps the resident vicar and other parish clergy, the lay parishioners assumed a more active role in running the chapel, for their own spiritual benefit. Surviving records indicate no chaplain was appointed after William Wyggan's death, in 1526, and thereafter the parish took over sole responsibility for its maintenance. It was reported, at the archdeacon's visitation of 18th November 1529, that 'the church walles of Saynt Edmondes be broken down'. This, and other items relating to the parish church, were addressed to the churchwardens of Dartford, Thomas Churche and Richard Alexander. An annotation in Latin states that the repairs were carried out.²¹⁹ Furthermore, at the bishop's visitation of June 1532, it was reported that the chapel roof was ruinous. Again, it was the wardens of the parish church who were told to see to it that the necessary repairs were carried out by Michaelmas.²²⁰ William Parker, yeoman, in his will of 2nd June 1534, left 6s 8d to the repair of St. Edmund's chapel and 10s to the repair of the charnel house below the chapel 'if the paryshe will repair it'.²²¹ To ensure the continued celebration of daily mass and obits in the chapel these lay officers of the parish must have acted in cooperation with the vicar and stipendiary priests in the parish church. Parishioners were possibly reluctant, however, to bear the cost of maintaining the chapel as well as the parish church, especially when traditional religion came under threat. No Dartford will-makers requested burial at St. Edmund's after Philip Okforde in 1535.²²² There were no further legacies to the image of St. Edmund after Serle's will, and the King's injunctions for the removal of images attracting offerings and pilgrimages, in 1538, brought an end to chapel's cult of St. Edmund.²²³ There is no evidence of usage or maintenance of St. Edmund's in the decade before its closure in 1548. In the absence of a regular chaplain, with the priory pocketing the revenue, and without its cult, the chapel lost the important place it had previously occupied in the religious activities of parishioners. This, however, was for reasons of royal iconoclasm and finance rather than a diminution in religious fervour.

The chapel of St. George in Gravesend

The chapel of ease built in the town of Gravesend, a few miles to the east of Dartford, in the mid-fifteenth century, was one of a significant proportion of chapels founded by lay parishioners from the late thirteenth century.²²⁴ Like the chapel of Smallhythe in the parish of Tenterden, it was a physical expression of the collective identity of the community that built it, of its wealth and its piety.²²⁵ Many inhabitants of

²¹⁸ Serle was certainly acquainted with Wiggan, because he had strong personal connections with Dartford Priory; besides his wife and the vicar, he appointed as executor William Sprever, the priory official, and he made the prioress (the patron of St. Edmund's), Dame Elizabeth Cressener, the overseer. This makes his omission of any mention of Wiggan pointed.

²¹⁹ DRa/Vb4 fo.141.

²²⁰ DRb/Pa 9 pt 2 fo.115v.

²²¹ DRb/Pwr9/134v.

²²² DRb/Pwr9/193v. Wills have been examined up to 1560. The only request for burial there between 1508 and 1535 was that of Hugh Serle, in 1523.

²²³ Nicholas Orme, 'Church and chapel in medieval England', p.100.

²²⁴ Dorothy M. Owen, *Church and Society in medieval Lincolnshire* (Lincoln, 1971), p.6; G.H. Tupling, 'The pre-Reformation parishes and chapelries of Lancashire', p.8.

²²⁵ Robert G.A. Lutton, 'Orthodox and heterodox piety in Tenterden, c.1420-c.1540', p.85.

Gravesend experienced rising wealth, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, not least because of the river trade, as is indicated by their ownership of boats. With other factors, such as immigration and improving education, this may have contributed to a rising lay confidence in parish affairs, which in civic matters eventually culminated in the procurement of a charter of incorporation for the town, in 1562.²²⁶ Situated very close to the river, the new church, when built, was highly visible to all vessels sailing up the Thames to London, as a drawing of the town made in 1662 demonstrates. It was thus an important means of communicating civic identity, as well as being much more convenient to get to than the parish church in land.²²⁷ In south-eastern Lancashire many late fifteenth and sixteenth-century chapel foundations were associated with reformist religion, but the chapel in Gravesend in Kent was a manifestation of the orthodox piety of the parishioners.²²⁸ However, these parishioners met with strong resistance from ecclesiastical authorities beyond the parish in their intention that the chapel should become a parish church.

Medieval settlement had a tendency to drift, but this was not the reason for the geographical separation of the town and church in Gravesend.²²⁹ Since at least the Saxon era, Gravesham/Gravesend had possessed both a riverside settlement associated with fishing and river trade (the Domesday book mentions hithes in Gravesend and Milton next Gravesend), and scattered agricultural settlements.²³⁰ The largest single centre of population was that next to the river, straddling the parish boundary with Milton. The economic importance of the river is suggested by Henry IV's confirmation to the men of the 'town' of Gravesend, in 1401, of the right to ferry passengers up the river to London, which they had been accustomed to do from time out of mind.²³¹ Fifteenth-century wills show that settlement was concentrated on West Street, running alongside the river, which existed before the eleventh century and was the routeway into the town from London.²³² No Gravesend wills up to the 1550s specifically mentioned property next to, or near, the parish church. This church, mentioned in the Domesday Book, was probably an old manorial chapel located at the manorial centre.²³³ Thus, the lord of Gravesend held the advowson; in 1376, Edward III granted the manor and advowson to the abbot of St. Mary Graces next the Tower of London.²³⁴ This monastery continued to exercise patronage over the parish church up to the Reformation.²³⁵

²²⁶ Alex J Philip, *A History of Gravesend and its surroundings* (Wraysbury, 1910, rev. 1954), pp. 86, 91.

²²⁷ Contemporary documents consistently refer to the main riverside settlement of the parish as the 'town' or 'vill'.

²²⁸ G.H. Tupling, 'The pre-Reformation parishes and chapelries of Lancashire', p.9.

²²⁹ C. Taylor, *Village and Farmland* (1983) cited in Gervase Rosser, 'Parochial conformity and voluntary religion in late medieval England', p. 179.

²³⁰ I am grateful to Mr Robert Hiscock, past president of the Gravesend Historical Society, for drawing my attention to these and subsequent points.

²³¹ *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1399-1401*, p.542. The ferry service was evidently a good source of income at the end of the fifteenth century; in 1487, Johanna Uscher of Milton next Gravesend made her will, calling herself 'ferryman', and bequeathing to various individuals her ferryboat, two other boats and a barge (DRb/Pwr5/85v).

²³² Alex. J. Philip, *A History of Gravesend and its surroundings*, pp.76, 124.

²³³ Gravesend and Milton chapels had probably earlier come under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Saxon minster church at Northfleet just to the west (Alan Everitt lists Northfleet as a Saxon minster or primary mother church in his *Continuity and Colonization: the evolution of Kentish settlement*, p.188).

²³⁴ R. Pocock, *The History of the Incorporated Town and Parishes of Gravesend and Milton, in the county of Kent* (Gravesend, 1797), p.91.

²³⁵ Previously, St. Mary Graces granted the advowson to one Raphael Marisso, merchant of 'Janna', on 28th March 1515 (the grant was copied into the consistory court act book – CKS DRb/Pa7 fo.112), and again in 1524 (DRb/Ar 1/13 fo.97v). On 22nd December 1527, Marisso presented Master Roger Wylde to be admitted as rector of Gravesend (DRb/Ar 1/13 fo.143).

When the chapel of ease, dedicated to St. George,²³⁶ was licensed for use in 1497, by Thomas Tutfold, vicar general of the bishop of Rochester, he acknowledged that it was arduous for parishioners to go to their parish church *in magnam distanciam*, and stated that it was on account of this that the bishop had decided ‘mercifully’ to provide a proper remedy.²³⁷ Tutfold acknowledged that the people of Gravesend had built the ‘oratory or basilica’ at great expense to themselves.²³⁸ The building and running of the new church, begun by 1452 and substantially complete by 1475, was indeed taken in charge by the parishioners themselves, in cooperation with ecclesiastical authorities. Bequests suggest the scale of the work, the wealth of certain parishioners and their commitment to the project.²³⁹ The supervisors of the building work, who sent a petition to Chancery, in 1476, were Roger Rotheram, the archdeacon of Rochester; Thomas Burston, gentleman of Gravesend; Thomas Clerke, a butcher of Gravesend; and John Elys, yeoman of Gravesend.²⁴⁰ Once in use, lay wardens were elected to govern the chapel’s affairs.²⁴¹ Not only do wills indicate that the chapel’s construction was funded by public subscription, but its day-to-day maintenance, when built, was funded, at least in part, by a levy probably administered by the chapel wardens called St. George money or the Church Money.²⁴²

The 1497 licence suggests that the diocese had never intended that the new chapel should have any status other than that of a chapel of ease, but this ignored its earlier cooperation with the parishioners’ more ambitious ideas. From 1458, wills used a standard formula: ‘Item lego novo operi incepte in gravishend quod deo dante erit ecclesia parochiale’.²⁴³ This intention was also stated in the petition to

²³⁶ The first reference to the dedication of the chapel to St. George occurs in the will of Johanna Purke of Southwark who, in January 1474-5, bequeathed torches to the Carmelite friars of Aylesford and the chapel of St. George in Gravesend (PROB 11/6/160). A petition to Chancery from the overseers of the building work, dated 1475-6, states that it was built to the honour of God, Our Lady and St. George (PRO C1/66/5). This reflected a national trend exemplified by the dedication of the new chapel at Windsor Castle commissioned by Edward IV in 1475 to Our Lady, St. George and St. Edward (Robert Hiscock et al., *St. George’s Church: Pucahontas Memorial* (Gravesend, 1990), p.3).

²³⁷ . *nos inducunt ut remedium circa hoc vobis oportunitate misericorditer provideamus.*

²³⁸ The licence, dated and sealed on 22nd September 1497, is printed in Latin in John Thorpe, *Registrum Roffense* (London, 1769), p. 377. This is quoted with a translation in R. Pocock, *The History of the Incorporated Town and Parishes of Gravesend and Milton, in the County of Kent*, pp 62-3. The chapel consisted of a nave containing the high altar, and a north aisle which contained another altar. William Walworth the elder of Gravesend, a yeoman who leased the parsonage of Denton, in his will of 5th May 1548, asked to be buried ‘in the church of Saynt George in Gravisend in the north Ile beside thaulter’ (DRb/Pwr11/36). It was, presumably, built in Perpendicular Gothic style, and was decorated with battlements between the 1490s and 1530s, but there was no tower (see note 264 below). A porch was completed in 1530, as archdeacon’s visitations show (CKS DRa/Vb4 ff.146v, 157). Access to the chapel from the north was by Chapel Lane, which connected it with West Street.

²³⁹ The building of the new church was first mentioned in three legacies of 1452, from Thomas Grene of Milton (DRb/Pwr1/134v), Thomas Sprever of Milton (DRb/Pwr1/129) and Richard Smyth of Shome near Gravesend (CKS TR 2952/3 p.582 - L.L. Duncan abstract of wills in archbishops’ registers). A total of thirteen testators in Gravesend and Milton between 1452 and 1476 made bequests, ranging in size from 3s 4d to £10 and a reversionary bequest of 100 marks, as well as unspecified amounts from the sale of goods, lands and tenements, and barley (besides Grene and Sprever in 1452: DRb/Pwr2/100; DRb/Pwr2/266v: 10 marks and a reversionary bequest of 100 marks from Laurence Burston of Gravesend, in 1458; DRb/Pwr2/284; DRb/Pwr2/302; DRb/Pwr2/350; DRb/Pwr3/2; DRb/Pwr3/111v; DRb/Pwr4/30; DRb/Pwr4/184v; DRb/Pwr4/205. In addition, in 1468, Roger Rotheley senior of Dartford bequeathed 5 marks to the work: DRb/Pwr3/9v). The chapel was probably substantially complete by 1475; the petition to Chancery from the overseers of the work, dated 1476, refers to the new work ‘which is edified and bilded’ in the town (PRO C1/66/5). Alice Berd, a wealthy barge-owning widow of Gravesend, in her will dated 30th April 1476, left some of her goods to the glazing of a window in the new work *formerly* begun in the parish (‘Item volo quod una fenestra sit vitreata in novo opere nuper incepte in parochiale de Gravisend’) (DRb/Pwr4/205). As recently as 1474, William Aston alias Flowour implied that the work was still in progress (DRb/Pwr4/184v).

²⁴⁰ PRO C1/66/5. Roger Rotheram was archdeacon 1472-86. This petition in English, dated 13th January 1475-6, represented an attempt by the overseers to recover forty marks owed to the chapel work and services by John Baker, the sole surviving executor of Thomas Bailey, yeoman of Gravesend, requesting that he be summoned to appear before the court. I am grateful to Mr. Robert Hiscock for bringing this document to my attention.

²⁴¹ In 1502, Johanna Floure, a pious barge-owning widow of Gravesend, referred to the wardens, whom she had promised £10 for the chapel (DRb/Pwr6/285); Roger Austen, in January 1526/7, instructed his executors to pay his bequests of eight marks for masses and repairs to the ‘rulers of Saynt Georg chapell of Gravisend’ (DRb/Pwr8/77v).

²⁴² In 1545, Rafe Darbishire of the town of Gravesend, left money to the building of a steeple onto St. George’s church on condition that the parson, or any other persons dwelling in Gravesend, did not trouble his son, Edward Darbishire, ‘for the payment of any money used to be called Saynt George money, or the Churche Money’ (DRb/Pwr10/98v).

²⁴³ This was used in translation in Thomas Hardy’s bequest of five marks in 1471: ‘unto the new work begon ther in Gravisend that by the grace of Gode shal be a parich church’ (DRb/Pwr4/30).

Chancery of 1476 from the overseers of the work, including the archdeacon of Rochester, that it 'in tyme to come shalbe a parysche church of the towne'.²⁴⁴ The parishioners of Gravesend, at least officially, did not want to abandon their old church; the standard formula stated that the chapel would be 'a' parish church of Gravesend, and many of its benefactors also made bequests to St. Mary's. Rosser argues that the inhabitants of settlements at some distance from their parish church founded chapels not in opposition to it, but to supplement it.²⁴⁵ A few cases are recorded of late medieval parishes with dual worship centres which shared the role of parish church, such as Combe in Oxfordshire and Withernsea in Holderness.²⁴⁶ Thomas Tutfold acknowledged, in the 1497 license, that Gravesend inhabitants had been moved by religious devotion to seek an 'increase' in divine worship.²⁴⁷

Use of the formula was probably encouraged by the rector of Gravesend, Master John Thorpe, who was named in many of these wills as a witness, in the 1460s and 1470s. The parish clergy, who served in the new church, may have preferred to carry out the *cura pastoralis* of the parish from within the 'town' of Gravesend. The clergy also cooperated with lay townspeople by celebrating mass in the chapel before it was officially licensed. At some point after 1476, the diocesan authorities withdrew their implied support for the dual parish church scheme and delayed licensing the chapel. Thus, when it was finally licensed, in 1497, it may already have been in use for over thirty years, and had certainly been since the early 1470s.²⁴⁸ This licensing was an attempt by the diocese to limit the use of the chapel and protect the rights of the old parish church. Tutfold stipulated that no prejudice was to arise to the rights of the latter, and only permitted the celebration of mass and other divine services in the chapel.²⁴⁹ Generally, parishioners with local chapels were not relieved of their obligations to their parish church, but were expected to attend them on important feast days, and for Easter communion, baptism, marriage and burial. However, chapels tended to build up a church life of their own, especially if access to the parish church was difficult or the chaplain was conscientious, and those who used them often sought baptism and burial rights there.²⁵⁰ The diocese of Rochester and abbot of St. Mary Graces were aware of this danger.

Wills made after 1497 suggest that parishioners, no longer the generation that built the chapel, accepted this state of affairs. Fraternities and saints' cults in St. Mary's parish church continued to receive

²⁴⁴ PRO C1/66/5

²⁴⁵ Gervase Rosser, 'Parochial conformity and voluntary religion in late medieval England', p.182.

²⁴⁶ Gervase Rosser, 'Parochial conformity and voluntary religion in late medieval England', pp.179-80.

²⁴⁷ ... *devotionis affectus quem ad cultus divina augmentum habere.*

²⁴⁸ Thomas Ballyng of Gravesend, in his will of 28th July 1464, left money to the building work, and 20 marks for a suitable priest to celebrate for his soul for two years in the parish church or 'in the chapel edified in the parish' (DRb/Pwr2/284). In January 1474-5, Johanna Purke of Southwark bequeathed a torch to the chapel of St. George in Gravesend, indicating that it was in regular use for mass (PROB 11/6/160). Also, Richard Owldham, a wealthy boat-owner of Gravesend, in his will of 10th July 1490, left 10 marks to the repair and maintenance of the parish church, and willed the sale of his half of a barge called 'The Anne', and its stuff, to pay 'a priest to syng in the chapell of Saynt George' in Gravesend, for the health of his soul. He also left five marks from the sale of his lands and property in the parish of Mcopham 'to helpe to ffynesse the Batyment' of the chapel (DRb/Pwr5/417v - work on the battlement was slow, for, almost thirty years later, Harry Litle of Gravesend left 5s 'towards the batilment of the chapell', in his will dated 12th July 1519 DRb/Pwr7/166). Other requests for masses in the chapel, in the 1490s before 1497, came from Giles Johnson in 1490 (DRb/Pwr5/363v) and Robert Gilmyrn of Milton in 1495 (DRb/Pwr5/257v). William London of Gravesend bequeathed a mass book to the chapel, in 1494 (PROB 11/10/98v). There may have been chaplains specifically attached to St. George's, in the fifteenth century, as there sometimes were in the early sixteenth; this might be implied by the permission given in the 1497 licence for masses to be celebrated by any chaplain positioned there. A list of clerical subsidy assessments of 1513 names Dominus Robert Huchynson as priest of the chapel of Gravesend, for which he received a stipend of nine marks (Rochester consistory court act book DRb/Pa5 fo.100). Wills show he was curate of the parish, in 1530. No other chaplains have been identified. Wills show that the rector and his assistant clergy celebrated in both the parish church and chapel.

²⁴⁹ There was, perhaps, an implicit warning in the tribute Tutfold paid to the past and continuing support of the parishioners for the old parish church (*quotidie sustinetis*). The licence also acknowledged the chapel's use as a communal public building, calling it a *basilicam* as well as *oratorium*.

²⁵⁰ G.H. Tupling, 'The pre-Reformation parishes and chapelries of Lancashire', p.10.

legacies; in 1500, Thomas Coll of Gravesend bequeathed 3s 4d to the fraternity of St. Barbara there, and a pound of wax to its light, as well as 20s of gravel to be expended on 'the comen cause ledyng the waye fro the towne unto the parisch church of Gravisende', if all his heirs died.²⁵¹ When the old church burnt down, at some point between March 1506 and August 1508, parishioners gave their support to its rebuilding.²⁵² John a Foldes of Gravesend, dating his will on 5th August 1508, bequeathed a processional and 3s 4d to the reedification of the parish church 'nuper combuste', but left 6s 8d for the edification of St. George's chapel if the parish decided to make it the parish church instead.²⁵³ This implies that the parishioners now had the authority to make this decision themselves. The old church was rebuilt, perhaps because of pressure from the diocese and St. Mary Graces, but the episcopal register records the consecration of both church and chapel by Bishop John Fisher, on consecutive days in April 1510.²⁵⁴ St. George's chapel must have been used as the parish church since the fire, a period of at least two years, and its consecration was, perhaps, an acknowledgement of this. In practice it meant nothing, however, for it was specifically stated at the time of consecration that the chapel was licensed only for the celebration of mass, and that the parish church had exclusive rights of baptism and burial.²⁵⁵ St. Mary's continued to function as the parish church of Gravesend, and a new high altar table was consecrated with all solemnity.

Parishioners gave support to both church and chapel for the next three decades, maintaining the parish church's fabric and furnishings, and seeking masses in both buildings.²⁵⁶ Bishop Fisher's visitation of Gravesend in 1522 was focused on the parish church. His excommunication of the whole parish for failing to greet him by ringing the bells there, at no fault of the parishioners as it turned out, was a further manifestation of the insensitivity shown to them by the diocesan hierarchy, but also indicates that St. Mary's church tower, bells and ringing mechanism were still in use and maintained at that time.²⁵⁷

Nevertheless, St. George's chapel gradually increased in status in the sixteenth century. The archdeacon of Rochester held parish visitations there from at least 1504, and probate registers demonstrate

²⁵¹ DRb/Pwr5/316v.

²⁵² The will of Richard Borne, dated 1506, obviously predates the fire (DRb/Pwr6/181).

²⁵³ DRb/Pwr6/208v.

²⁵⁴ DRb/Ar 1/13 fo.37: St. George's chapel was consecrated on Tuesday 2nd April, and St. Mary's on 3rd April.

²⁵⁵ ... *et quod non liceret eisdem parochianis aut alicui alio nominibus eorum corpora mortuorum sepelire infantulos baptizare preterquam consecracionem corporis dominici* (DRb/Ar 1/13 fo.37).

²⁵⁶ John Goldehaue left 12d to the regilding of the rood loft, in 1517, and asked for burial by the south door (DRb/Pwr7/147v); in 1519, Harry Little willed a book or vestment to be bought for use there, as well as contributing to the work on the battlement of St. George's chapel (DRb/Pwr7/166). Several wills in the 1520s asked for masses to be said in both the church and chapel. Some testators, such as Christopher Westgarth, in 1526, asked for masses to be said or sung in Milton or Gravesend parish church on Sundays and feast days, and on ferial weekdays in St. George's chapel. This paid recognition to the status of the parish church but suggested the day-to-day use of the chapel. Westgarth also left four marks to the building of an enclosure around the chapel, and £10 to repair a silver cross in the parish church (DRb/Pwr8/33v). At a visitation in 1529, it was found that the walls of the chancel of St. Mary's were in great decay 'in default of the Rector' so that it rained upon the altar (Robert Hiscock, *A History of the Parish Church, Gravesend* (Gloucester, no date), p.12). Parishioners did not neglect the church, however. Alice Herd, a wealthy widow of Gravesend who owned at least £63 worth of property, lands and wharves in Gravesend and Milton, in her will of 1533, made bequests to both the church and chapel, to the 'churche waye' from the town to St. Mary's, and 20 marks for an honest priest to celebrate for her and all Christian souls, for two years, in the chapel, as the parson or his curate allowed, stipulating that this priest was to help to maintain God's services in the parish church as well as in the chapel (DRb/Pwr9/79v).

²⁵⁷ When the people of Gravesend failed to greet the bishop by the ringing of these bells he placed an interdict on the whole parish, thus prohibiting the celebration of divine service there. There were extenuating circumstances, however, as the churchwardens and many of the parishioners had apparently been summoned to appear before the king's commissioners of array, on the day of the bishop's visitation, to hear about the preparation of an army to fight against the Scots and the French. The churchwardens, Christopher Westgerth and William at Wod, humbly petitioned Fisher and he removed the interdict on 27th March 1522-3. Fisher pointed out that the parish had, however, been similarly remiss at his last triennial visitation, and admonished them in future to be more attentive in their duties to him (Rochester consistory court act book: DRb/Pa7 fo.205v; also utilised by R. Pocock, *History of the Incorporated Town and Parishes of Gravesend and Milton*, p.65, which further cites John Thorpe, *Antiquaries*, p.261).

that the consistory court sat there, rather than at St. Mary's, regularly from at least 1513.²⁵⁸ The chapel was the town's public building used for day-to-day religious services and legal business, leaving the detached parish church for Sunday worship and feast days. Saints' cults and liturgical display also flourished in the chapel. The Gravesend fraternity of St. Barbara transferred its home to St. George's at some point after 1500; most likely it left when St. Mary's was destroyed by fire, in 1508, and never went back.²⁵⁹ The chapel's cult of St. George received devotion there from the fifteenth century, with a light and altar, reflecting the widespread popularity of this saint mentioned above.²⁶⁰ The other cult in St. George's chapel, of which there is evidence, was that of Our Lady, whose light there was mentioned by Robert Baltman, in 1532.²⁶¹ The liturgy of the chapel also flourished in the early sixteenth century, reflecting new trends in late medieval Catholic devotion. This was sought by the laity and again implies the cooperation and encouragement of the parish clergy. For example, Richard Asheley of 'Gravesend in the parish of Milton',²⁶² in his will dated 13th September 1508, made detailed requests for masses of the Five Wounds, requiem, Name of Jesus and Our Lady to be said in the chapel.²⁶³ Further, trentals were increasingly popular amongst Gravesend will-makers in this period, as generally in the diocese of Rochester, and were requested in the chapel.²⁶⁴ Furthermore, a scheme for the building of a tower was seriously contemplated by the parish in the 1530s and 40s. Had it gone ahead it would have transformed the chapel's appearance making it an even stronger expression of communal identity.²⁶⁵ Also in the late 1530s, the chapel was apparently finally licensed for burials. Marcel Clarke, a wealthy bachelor of Gravesend, who owned lands and tenements in West Street, asked to be buried there, in his will dated 30th March 1537.²⁶⁶ His life and wealth were associated with the town and he, perhaps, wished to be buried where fellow townsmen would

²⁵⁸ CKS DRa/Vb4 ff 13v, 14, 14v, etc (archdeaconry visitation material). A Gravesend will registered at DRb/Pwr6/365 was proved in the chapel in 1513. Over the next quarter century wills made by inhabitants of several local parishes were proved there.

²⁵⁹ Thus, Thomas Hudshon of Gravesend left 12d to an image of St. Barbara in the chapel, in 1513 (DRb/Pwr6/365). There are two documentary references to the fraternity as being in St. George's chapel in 1517. John Hayton of Milton included a bequest in his will, dated 13th December 1517, to the 'brotherhood of St. Barbara in the chapel of Gravesend' (PROB 11/19/34v). At the consistory court held on 18th November, Bishop John Fisher gave to Nicholas Codd and John Farmer, the wardens of this gild in the chapel, the grant of a forty day indulgence to all benefactors doing honour to God and St. Barbara in the said confraternity (DRb/Pa6 fo. 260v). Codd left a complete vestment of blue satin, a chalice of silver parcel gilt, a corporal and a maser with a band of silver to St. Barbara's chancel in Gravesend chapel, in his will of 15th September 1531 (DRb/Pwr8/300v). He was evidently a man of long-standing devotion to this saint and parish fraternity, and this led him to make lavish provision for celebrations at his death, and most probably also during life. The 'chancel' of St. Barbara, containing the altar and light, thus constituting the 'home' of the fraternity, was probably the north aisle of the chapel.

²⁶⁰ The cult must have begun at some point between 1464, when the chapel is first known to have been in use, and the first reference to this dedication, in the mid-1470s. In 1491, Alice Flower, a boat-owning widow of Gravesend, bequeathed 6s 8d to the light of St. George (DRb/Pwr5/170v). Thomas Hudshon bequeathed 12d to St. George 'in the chapel', in 1513, as well his bequest to the image of St. Barbara just mentioned (DRb/Pwr6/365). The altar of St. George in the chapel was mentioned, and left a white candlestick, in the will of William Wade, brewer of Gravesend, in 1528 (DRb/Pwr8/202v).

²⁶¹ DRb/Pwr9/37.

²⁶² The part of the 'towne of Gravesynde', as he called it, and in which he owned property, fell in Milton parish.

²⁶³ Asheley asked for an honest priest 'beyng of goode name and good fame' to sing and pray for his soul and the souls of his late wife Isabel, his parents, Thomas Candor (a former master of Milton chantry hospital) and all souls 'that I have fare the better fore', for one year in the 'new chapel of Gravesend'. The priest, paid a salary of £6 13s 4d, was to say mass every day 'when he is disposed', as follows: mass of the Five Wounds on Mondays; mass of requiem on Wednesdays; the Jesus mass on Fridays; and the mass of Our Lady on Saturdays. He was also to say dirge and commendations on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, every week. Asheley also asked for a twenty-year obit in the chapel, on All Souls Day, when five poor men were to pray for his soul and all Christian souls 'in the worship of the .v. wounds', receiving a penny each (PROB 11/16/210).

²⁶⁴ William Mores alias Poole, a barge-owner of Milton-next-Gravesend, asked for an honest priest 'that can singe his playn songe singe thre trigintalles of masses' within one year of his death, in 1528, paying 10s for each trental. These were to be sung in Milton parish church on Wednesdays, Fridays, Sundays and holydays, and on other days at St. George's chapel (PROB 11/22/319). Trentals and the devotions to the Name of Jesus and Five Wounds are investigated in more detail below.

²⁶⁵ Bequests for the 'steple' were received from Robert Baltman in 1532 (DRb/Pwr9/37); John Gybson in 1542 (DRb/Pwr9/405); and Rafe Darbishire (40s) in 1545 (DRb/Pwr10/98v). Darbishire stated that the work had not been started. The tower was never built; the church was described as being 'old and without steple', in 1710, when an unsuccessful petition was raised to rectify this (Robert Hiscock et al., *St. George's Church: Pocahontas Memorial*, p.3). Archaeological investigations confirm this lack.

²⁶⁶ DRb/Pwr9/235.

see his grave and remember him in their prayers, when attending the weekday services.²⁶⁷ Five more testators asked for burial in the chapel (never outside) before it became the parish church in 1544.²⁶⁸ Adam Everyngham's request to be buried next the pew of Mistress Davye, in 1541, suggests that there was a seating plan for the chapel, indicating its regular use.²⁶⁹

Seeking burial in the chapel did not necessarily imply that a parishioner did not also value the parish church. Thomas Swaynsland, who had property 'in the town end' of Gravesend, sought this in 1540, but also bequeathed 6s 8d every year for thirty years (£10) from his property to repairs at St. Mary's.²⁷⁰ However, when the monastery of St. Mary Graces was dissolved, in 1538,²⁷¹ the parish no doubt saw the opportunity to rid itself of the burden of maintaining two church buildings, the older of which was possibly revealing serious structural problems. Letters patent enrolled 22nd May 1544 indicate that they had petitioned the king, stating that the distance of their parish church from their habitations was inconvenient to them in their desire to hear divine services and receive the sacraments at 'fitting times'. They supported their case by hyperbole, saying that the infirm, pregnant, and impotent of the town suffered great toil and danger to their bodies in getting there. The king ordered the closure of St. Mary's, instructed that St. George's chapel was to be called the parish church, and ordered that all sacraments and sacramentals were to be administered there.²⁷²

The chapel of Gravesend was built because of the laity's own concern for ecclesiastical provision in their town, and was funded, governed and used by them long before it was officially licensed. The diocesan authorities were slow to respond to the pastoral needs of parishioners, seeking to maintain customary rights of the parish church. The parish clergy, however, cooperated with and encouraged the laity so that the chapel became an important focus of orthodox parish religion, in the late fifteenth century and pre-Reformation period, and eventually achieved its desired status of becoming the parish church.

Almshouses

Investigation of support for and foundation of hospitals and almshouses casts further light on the religious motivations of late medieval people. Almshouses, which were characteristic of fifteenth and sixteenth-century foundations, were typically founded by urban élites and wealthy merchants, individually or through guilds and fraternities.²⁷³ These were motivated by concern for social control and the material welfare of the indigent poor and aged, but also by belief in Purgatory. The twelfth century canonists had taught that charity was one of the seven works of mercy in the penitential process of making satisfaction

²⁶⁷ The importance to many late medieval people of their graves being seen is indicated by the specifications for tombstones by those who could afford them. Thomas Ussher of Snodland, in 1472, provided for a tombstone to cover his and his father's grave, with their names written on 'for a perpetuall remembrance & memory that all men & women that rede or se it pray for us in way of charyte' (DRb/Pwr4/30v).

²⁶⁸ DRb/Pwr9 ff.313, 337v, 279v, 378v, 405.

²⁶⁹ DRb/Pwr9/378v.

²⁷⁰ DRb/Pwr9/313.

²⁷¹ VCH, London, i, p.463.

²⁷² W. Hart, ed., *Records of Gravesend, Milton, Denton, Cobham, Chalk, Northfleet, Nurstead, Southfleet, Shorne and Ifield* (1878), p.68. Cruden prints an inventory, dated 1595, of effects and muniments of the corporation of Gravesend in the town hall, which includes: 'A grant made by King Henry VIII for the Chapell to be made our Parish Church under the greete seale in grene waxe' (Robert Pierce Cruden, *The History of the town of Gravesend in the county of Kent and of the Port of London* (London, 1843), p.405). Burials continued to take place in St. Mary's churchyard until the late sixteenth century, but the church gradually fell into ruin.

²⁷³ P.H. Cullum, *Cremetis and Corrodies: Care of the Poor and Sick at St. Leonard's Hospital, York, in the Middle Ages*, Borthwick Paper 79 (York, 1991), pp.1-5.

for sin. The expected response of the poor was that, in return, they would pray for the souls of their benefactors.²⁷⁴ Tanner calls this the double advantage of helping people in need.²⁷⁵ For those who could afford it, the foundation of an almshouse ensured longer term spiritual benefit than one-off distributions of charitable doles at funerals could provide.²⁷⁶ In this respect, almshouses were not dissimilar to those older hospitals which were double chantry hospital foundations.²⁷⁷

Between the 1440s and 1550s there were three hospital institutions in Dartford, including two almshouses. The leper hospital of St. Mary Magdalene and St. Laudus in Spital Street, on the western edge of the vill, had been in existence since at least the mid-thirteenth century.²⁷⁸ In the fifteenth century it was still run on semi-monastic lines, its prior being mentioned in 1495, and there were a few lepers there. It had also become an institution for the poor of Dartford, but it had difficulty competing with the new almshouses for alms, in the second half of the century, suffering financially in spite of its land endowments.²⁷⁹ Its sending out of a proctor to collect alms all over England, between 1485 and 1487,

²⁷⁴ Andrew Brown, *Popular Piety in late medieval England: the diocese of Salisbury 1250-1550*, p.181; on the twelfth century canonists Brown cites M. Rubin, *Charity and Community*, pp.54-74. A licence to collect alms, issued in 1485 to the proctor of the leper hospital in Dartford, was intended to procure chantable support from 'Chrst's faithful' by exploiting belief in Purgatory, stating that 'in the said hospital are seven works of mercy fulfilled daily for which our Lord Jesus Christ promises eternal life' (see footnote below)

²⁷⁵ Norman P. Tanner, *The Church in late medieval Norwich 1370-1532*, p.132. As Rotha Clay comments, *bede-houses*, as almshouses sometimes were called, testified to a strong belief in the power of intercession (Rotha M. Clay, *The Medieval Hospitals of England*, p.88)

²⁷⁶ Although short-term charity in the form of one-off distributions to the poor was the preponderant expression of charity in late medieval Bristol, among the wealthy repeated doles of cash or bread were not the preferred form of long term almsgiving. Instead, they chose to support a number of poor people in an institution which would be a physical embodiment of their charity (Clive Burgess, "'By Quick and by Dead": wills and pious provision in late medieval Bristol', *EHR*, 405 (1987), pp.837-58 at p.845).

²⁷⁷ For example, St. Giles Hospital in Norwich was primarily a chantry, and secondarily a hospital, according to Tanner (N.P. Tanner, *The Church in late medieval Norwich 1370-1532*, p.122) By the late fourteenth century, the hospital of St. Stephen and St. Thomas at New Romney, in Kent, was no longer used as a leper hospital but had become more like a chantry with two priests celebrating masses for the souls of the founders and benefactors (A F. Butcher, 'The Hospital of St. Stephen and St. Thomas, New Romney: the documentary evidence', *AC*, 96 (1980), pp.17-26 at p.21). The chantry hospital in Milton next Gravesend was probably the same; its master and clergy are named in wills and sixteenth-century clerical subsidy lists, but there are no references or bequests to charitable work

²⁷⁸ This hospital was founded before 1256 as is evident from an entry in the Patent Rolls for that year. Protection with clause *rogamus* was granted for five years, on 11 October 1256, for the master and brethren of the hospital of St. Mary Magdalene (*Cal. Pat. Rolls 1247-58*, p.502). This was renewed on 23 June 1263 (*Cal. Pat. Rolls 1258-66*, p.266).

²⁷⁹ John Robert, called 'prior' of St. Mary Magdalene Hospital in Dartford, witnessed the will of William Quoyf of Speldhurst near Tonbridge, in January 1494-5 (DRb/Pwr5/261). The brothers and sisters were mentioned in a licence to collect alms of 1485 (detailed below), and probably observed the Rule of St. Augustine, as in other older medieval hospitals. Although still referred to as a leper hospital, in the fifteenth century, when leprosy was greatly in decline, it was by then also an institution for the poor; Thomas Worship, a chaplain of Dartford, by his will dated 1456, provided for the maintenance of three beds for the poor of Dartford in the hospital, conditional on his sister dying without heirs (DRb/Pwr2/46). The licence to collect alms, dated 6th September 1485, was given to the newly appointed proctor by the 'Fratres et Sorores hospitalis leprosorum beate Marie Magdalene & sancta Laudi de Derteford Rofffen dioc.', with the approval of Edmund, Bishop of Rochester, whose seal was attached (Dartford Museum Collection, now in CKS (uncatalogued); translated with legible photograph of the original in Sidney Keyes, *Dartford: Further Historical Notes* (1938), pp.276-7). It described the brethren and sisters as being variously weak, lame, infirm, blind or leprous, and having nothing to live on but what they received from the faithful in Christ. They had unanimously appointed one Thomas Gibson as proctor and special messenger to collect and receive alms, offerings and promises from Christian faithful, in the name and honour of God, Mary Magdalene and St. Laudus, throughout England for a period of three years commencing 5th September 1485. Gibson also had the power to plead and prosecute the hospital's causes, and to apprehend fraudulent persons wandering through the countryside in the name of the hospital or its brothers and sisters demanding account, or performing the things of a true proctor. The hospital seemed to rely heavily on indulgences for its income; those senior churchmen who had granted indulgences in the past to benefactors of the hospital were listed in the licence: Popes Celestine III, Urban, Clement, Alexander, Boniface, Innocent, Gregory, Martin, Eugenius, Paul and Sixtus each confirmed an indulgence of one year and forty days to those who sent linen or woollen cloths, rings, brooches or one penny by which the inhabitants might be sustained for one day. Archbishop Thomas of Canterbury granted one indulgence of a hundred days and another of forty; Archbishop Henry of Canterbury and Bishop John of Rochester both granted forty days. Other indulgences had been granted by thirteen other archbishops and bishops resident in Rome, according to bulls and letters granted to the hospital. The sum total of all the indulgences granted to the hospital and its benefactors was forty years, one hundred days and a seventh part of the lesser penance, together constituting what the licence called a merciful remission of divine penalties. Attached to this licence were the common seal of the brothers and sisters of the hospital and that of the bishop of Rochester, at the personal request of the new proctor, for the greater faith, strength and witness of all. The offering of indulgences for alms was a common practice of older hospitals (Rotha M. Clay, *The Medieval Hospitals of England* (London, 1909), pp.152-3). The hospital possessed endowments; in his will dated August 1457, John Martin of Dartford referred to two properties in the vill belonging to the 'hospital', one being an inn called the 'Cok' and the other a house in Lowhill next to the property of one Thomas Revet. Martin held these properties of the hospital (PROB 11/4/95v). The hospital experienced declining testamentary support, however, receiving bequests in

manifested this difficulty in attracting support. All bequests to hospitals from Dartford inhabitants after 1456 were to almshouses. Sources for almshouses often do not survive, because they were usually small (between one and thirteen inmates), and often ill-endowed and short-lived. There are few references to the almshouse built on or next to the bridge over the River Darent in Dartford, near the parish church, and little can be said about it.²⁸⁰ The main sources for the five Holy Trinity almshouses in Lowfield Street are also testamentary, especially the will of William Milett, of September 1500.²⁸¹ There is also a licence for their foundation recorded in the Patent Rolls, dated 1453.²⁸² Milett devoted a long section of his will to the founding and ordering of these almshouses, which had not been built by 1500, and which he gave a common endowment with the morrowmass priest in the parish church. He indicated that the dual foundation was not his own idea but that he was carrying out the instructions given in the will of William Rotheley, his former employer, made over thirty-five years before, in which he was named as an executor and feoffee.²⁸³ He detailed Rotheley's not inconsiderable land endowment, added some property and cash endowments of his own, and entrusted these to the keeping of the prioress and convent of Dartford.²⁸⁴ He provided for the building of the almshouses, in Lowfield Street, and set out the ordinances for their running, which compensates for the lack of surviving statutes. Bequests were made to these almshouses in seven surviving local wills made between 1530 and 1554, suggesting that there may have been a further delay in their construction after 1500.²⁸⁵

A typical combination of motives, a concern to provide for poor of the parish as well as for the souls of the inmates and benefactors, is visible in the foundation of these Lowfield Street almshouses. The 1453 licence said that they were to provide separate dwellings for five poor weak persons of the town who

four wills in the 1440s and 1450s, and none thereafter until 1554. John Okeherst of Dartford left 12d to the 'leper hospital' of the parish, in his will of October 1440 (DRb/Pwr1/2); John Busch of Southfleet near Dartford also left 12d, in 1442 (DRb/Pwr1/11); Thomas Worship's legacy of 1456 has already been mentioned. By December 1554, when John Dampord of Dartford bequeathed 5s to the 'Spytyll house' to buy bedding, the hospital had been refounded as an almshouse (DRb/Pwr11/340v).

²⁸⁰ The only references from before the seventeenth century occur in three wills over a 113 year period, between 1457 and 1570, which manifest no more than its location and that it possessed beds. Richard Martyn senior of Filborowe in the parish of Chalk, near Gravesend, left 2 bushels of barley to the 'domum elimosiner a ponte de dertford', in his will dated 28th March 1456-7, and proved 27th April 1457 (DRb/Pwr2/69v); Edmund Chymbehame of Dartford appeared to make a bequest to this almshouse in c.1468 (the will is undated but its position in the register suggests 1468): 'lego ad reparacionem cuiusdam domus stantes super pontem viij d' (DRb/Pwr3/9); Jeremy Warren, surgeon of Dartford, bequeathed bedding to the poor people of the almshouse standing on Dartford bridge, in his will of December 1570 (DRb/Pw9: original will). Warren also bequeathed a house in Spital Street to the use of the poor of Dartford. The wording of certain wills in the 1530s to 40s suggest there was then only one almshouse in Dartford, when Milett's Holy Trinity almshouses in Lowfield Street were in existence, so the bridge almshouse must have lapsed for some period between 1468 and 1570. Some commentators have confused the Dartford bridge almshouse with these Trinity almshouses, perhaps because of the bridge's close proximity to the church of that dedication. It is to be wondered if there was any connection between this house and the hermitage that is supposed to have stood by Dartford bridge in medieval and early Tudor times, although the two are never mentioned together in documents. The almshouse was perhaps a small foundation with its own endowment, which, therefore, did not receive much mention in wills. Landale's nineteenth-century edition of historical Dartford documents includes a footnote to the effect that it was pulled down when the bridge was enlarged in 1755, but gives no reference (Sidney Keyes, *Dartford Historical Notes* (Dartford, 1933), p.130).

²⁸¹ PROB 11/12/138.

²⁸² *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1452-61*, p.114. By this, in June 1453, Henry VI granted licence to John Bamburg, William Rotheley and Thomas Boost, all of Dartford, to found an almshouse 'of divers dwellings' where five poor weak persons of the town were to be maintained.

²⁸³ In spite of what Milett says, the registered version of the will of William Rotheley, dated 1464, mentions the foundation of the morrowmass, and its endowment with lands in Bexley and Swanscombe, and names William Milett as one of Rotheley's servants, executors and feoffees, but makes no mention of the almshouses (PROB 11/5/39). Rotheley was, however, named in the licence for the foundation of the almshouses dated eleven years before he made his will (see above). Rotheley's co-founders did not mention the almshouses in their wills either: Thomas Booste made his will in 1467 (DRb/Pwr2/283); John Bamburg made his will in 1478 (DRb/Pwr3/291v). Milett was the sole surviving feoffee and executor of William Rotheley, in 1500.

²⁸⁴ The endowment lands in the nearby parishes of Swanscombe, Bexley and elsewhere are mentioned in two surviving Dartford Priory rentals, of 1508 and 1521. The *Valor Ecclesiasticus* of 1535 refers to the sum of £6 10d paid weekly by Dartford Priory to five poor people out of lands in Swanscombe and Bexley left for the purpose by William Milett (*Valor*, i, p.120).

²⁸⁵ The first of these, dated November 1530, was of 50s to buy five beds, from Richard Dobson, who lived in Lowfield Street (DRb/Pwr8/258). Dartford wills have been consulted up to 1570.

were to pray for the good estate of the king and queen, and for their souls after death.²⁸⁶ The religious nature of the foundation was uppermost in Milet's mind; his ordinances should be seen in the context of the complete will and testament, which was an almost entirely religious document, as has been shown. He set them apart in a section of the will beginning:

In the name of the blisshed trinitye and of the gloriose virgyn Mary and all the blisshed company of heven whos helpe and socour I have first besought and callid ...

It was appropriate that Milet should call upon the name of the Holy Trinity as that was the dedication of the parish church, in which the almspeople were to pray, and of the almshouses themselves.²⁸⁷ His first instructions concerned the religious duties of the inhabitants:

everych of the .v. poure men or women for the tyme beyng shall say daily in the church of Dertford withoute a reasonable excuse, for all the soules and all the founders goode doers and maynteners and supporters of the sustentacion of the said massez and the other ordenances aforesid oonys our lady psawter, and De profundis, all tho that can say hit.²⁸⁸

Milet also founded a perpetual obit for the founders of the almshouse and morrowmass to take place in Dartford Priory, and made the prioress a joint master of the almshouses with the vicar and churchwardens.²⁸⁹ Other legacies in his will for 'deedes of charitie moost pleasing to god releiving and comforyng of my soule oute of the peynes of Purgatory' further indicated the pious motivations behind his charitable actions.

Milet and other almshouse founders were also interested in the spiritual state of the almspeople themselves.²⁹⁰ He thus made ordinances on their behaviour.²⁹¹ Poor people entering the almshouses had to accept a loss of autonomy and submit to the moral authority of their masters:

noon of the forseid poure men or women shall goo a beggyng oute of the same towne upon payne of losyng of the seid almes of iiijd.(the weekly pension) Withoute hit be gyven them withoute askyng, and if eny of the seid .v. poure men and women be skolders with there neighbours fighters or chiders or usyng eny othre vices that is sklauderous I will and ordeyne that every of such person or persons beyng of suche condicion they to be warned oonys twyes or thryes by the said prioerz vicar or wardens or elles at the lest, ij of them, and they not leving their evell condicions he or they to be avoyded and no lenger to abyde therin, and fully to be put away and no more to come ther²⁹²

²⁸⁶ *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1452-61*, p.114.

²⁸⁷ This was a common dedication of fifteenth century almshouses (Rotha M. Clay, *The Medieval Hospitals of England*, pp.244-5). The dedication of the Dartford almshouses is given in the 1453 licence.

²⁸⁸ The recitation of Our Lady Psalter was a standard requirement in ordinances of almshouses; the almsmen of St. Bartholomew's Rochester, for example, were to say 'our ladie sawter' at a certain hour morning and evening. It was a standard devotional text for the unlettered (Rotha M. Clay, *The Medieval Hospitals of England*, p.160). These liturgical requirements at Dartford were light in comparison with those in some other almshouses; the almsmen at Ewelme in Oxfordshire, for example, had to attend mass and offices at five specified times of the day between six o'clock in the morning and six in the evening (Rotha M. Clay, *The Medieval Hospitals of England*, p.161).

²⁸⁹ The 1453 licence only mentioned the vicar and wardens.

²⁹⁰ The statutes of Ewelme of c.1450, for example, expressed the intention 'that after the state of this dedely lyf they (the bedesmen) mowe come and inhabit the howse of the kyngdome of heven, the which with oure Lordes mouth is promysed to all men the which bene pore in spirit'. It was partly for this purpose that the founder had his almshouses built as separate tenements, as at Dartford, which was a development of the fifteenth century, so that each poor man might have his own '... lityl howse, a celle or a chamber with a chemeney ... in the whiche any of them may by hymself ete and drynke and rest, and sum tymes among attende to contemplacion and prayoure' (Rotha M. Clay, *The Medieval Hospitals of England*, pp.90, 120). Similarly, the cure of souls went together with temporal charity in the duties of parish clergy (John Henderson, 'The parish and the poor in Florence at the time of the Black Death: the case of S. Frediano', *Continuity and Change*, 3 (1988), pp.247-72 at p.248).

²⁹¹ This was a common concern of almshouse founders. For example, it was required that none of the poor admitted to Margaret Hungerford's almshouse, founded in the diocese of Salisbury in 1472, be lecherous, adulterous or tavern-goers (Andrew Brown, *Popular Piety in late medieval England: the diocese of Salisbury 1250-1550*, p.184).

²⁹² The ordinances at Dartford were more lenient than those of the Croydon almshouse where any almsman caught begging was to be expelled 'at the first warnyng' (Rotha M. Clay, *The Medieval Hospitals of England*, p.140). The penance for quarrelling at the older hospital of St. Mary in Chichester was to fast on bread and water for seven Wednesdays and Fridays, and to sit at the bottom of the

He also required that the poor newly entering the almshouses were to be examined to see if they could say their *Pater noster*, *Ave Maria*, and *Credo*. If they could not, they were to be assigned a day by the masters by which they were to learn these prayers, and if they failed that test they were to be rejected.²⁹³ This also ensured that they were able to fulfil their religious obligations to their benefactors.

The almshouses were also intended to help relieve poverty. As quoted above, Milette was interested in the maintenance of social order and the elimination of the evil of begging. The level of late medieval almshouse foundation did reflect economic need and levels of poverty. There was just one almshouse founded in Dorset, which may not have had a problem with labouring poor, between the mid-fourteenth and mid-sixteenth centuries, whereas Berkshire, with its populous towns and market centres which attracted immigration, saw many almshouses founded from the mid-fifteenth century.²⁹⁴ In Milette's liturgical ordinances evidence is discernible of genuine concern for those in society unable to help themselves. Fifteenth and sixteenth century almshouses were not for the physically sick, and Milette directed that his were to provide for 'v. poure men of good condicion that muche nede have'. He allowed that inmates might be lacking in some of their five senses or their wits; only 'tho that can say hit' were expected to say Our Lady Psalter and De Profundis in the parish church everyday. Also, new entrants were not to be refused entrance for being unable to learn their *Pater*, *Ave* and *Credo* if they 'be a fole a deffe or a dome'. The masters were 'alwey of them (to) have pitie'. Of course, such charitable concern and leniency also produced spiritual benefits.

The almshouse and its provision for the poor of Dartford should also be studied in the context of fifteenth century lay parochial and urban identity. John Henderson, addressing provision for the poor by lay pious fraternities in fourteenth and fifteenth-century Florence, writes of a revived sense of parochial identity in England and Italy, in the mid-fifteenth century, reflected in increased support for fraternities.²⁹⁵ Marjorie McIntosh found that fraternities peaked in popularity in the later fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, and this coincided in the 1460s and 1500s with high numbers of almshouse foundations in certain counties in the south-east and Midlands. The operation of an almshouse was a favourite project of many market town fraternities.²⁹⁶ The fifteenth-century Holy Trinity almshouse in Salisbury was supported by a fraternity of the Holy Trinity. Andrew Brown found that citizens took a communal pride in the fortunes of this and other almshouses founded by fellow townsmen.²⁹⁷ Dartford's Holy Trinity almshouses may similarly have been a manifestation of an emerging pious lay parochial identity amongst leading wealthy parishioners which was also manifested by the parish's adoption of St. Edmund's chapel, in the sixteenth century. The founders were all prominent and wealthy parishioners; William Rotheley, yeoman, possessed much property in the town; Thomas Boost was a merchant of Southwark, London and

table without a napkin (Rotha M. Clay, *The Medieval Hospitals of England*, p.139). The involvement of senior female religious in correction of miscreant almsmen, the prioress of Dartford as one of the joint masters, was not unique to Dartford; the abbess of Barking was, on one occasion, involved in the punishment of a miscreant leper at Ilford (Rotha M. Clay, *The Medieval Hospitals of England*, p.141).

²⁹³ At Heytesbury almshouse, in the diocese of Salisbury, the examination was conducted after entrance, the keeper there was to teach the ignorant, and penance was prescribed for those still found defective in repetition (Rotha M. Clay, *The Medieval Hospitals of England*, p.161).

²⁹⁴ Andrew Brown, *Popular Piety in late medieval England: the diocese of Salisbury 1250-1550*, pp.186-7.

²⁹⁵ John Henderson, 'The parish and the poor in Florence at the time of the Black Death: the case of S. Frediano', p.266.

²⁹⁶ Marjorie McIntosh, 'Local responses to the poor in late medieval and Tudor England', p.220.

²⁹⁷ Andrew Brown, *Popular Piety in late medieval England: the diocese of Salisbury 1250-1550*, pp.187-9, 192.

Dartford;²⁹⁸ William Milett was a wealthy and literate local land and property owner. The licensing of their foundation in 1453, Rotheley's will of 1464, and Milett's of 1500, coincided with the periods in which bequests to Dartford's fraternities were concentrated, in the 1450s, 1460s and 1500s.²⁹⁹ The fraternities receiving most bequests was that of the Holy Trinity. The Holy Trinity almshouses received more bequests than the other two similar institutions in the town, in the sixteenth century. Any connection between this fraternity and almshouse cannot be proven, although it is interesting that Milett began the section of his will detailing the almshouses' foundation with the words 'In the name of the blisshed trinitye'.³⁰⁰ There was also a precedent in Dartford for charitable provision by a fraternity through a hospital; in 1456, Thomas Worship, chaplain, entrusted lands to the Dartford fraternity of St. Thomas of Canterbury to provide for the maintenance of three beds 'sufficient for the poor of Dartford' in the old leper hospital.³⁰¹

As a means of tackling poverty almshouses were ineffective.³⁰² Most pre-Reformation Dartford testators made no charitable provision in their wills, and just four per cent between 1438-1537 gave legacies to hospitals or almshouses.³⁰³ The two most important concerns for will-makers were provision for kin, and the health of one's soul. When charity entered into this business it was for pious reasons. The Holy Trinity almshouses of Dartford were established by William Milett to procure the prayers of five of God's poor for his and the other founders' souls in Purgatory, in return for which they were given shelter and pensions. Rotha Clay commented that the deeds and charters of medieval hospitals and almshouses manifest a three-fold aim in benefactions - of fulfilling one's duty to God, one's neighbour and oneself.³⁰⁴ All three aims were connected within the framework of late medieval religion.

Pilgrimage and shrines

Pilgrimages to shrines in the late medieval period demonstrated orthodox devotion to the saints and belief in the effectiveness of their intercessions. Opposition to pilgrimage was a charge frequently levelled at suspected Lollards.³⁰⁵ Just twenty-six testators in the diocese of Rochester, whose wills were made after 1438, made bequests for pilgrimages to be undertaken for them. None of these came from Dartford, despite the constant encouragement of seeing pilgrims pass through the town on their way to Rochester, Canterbury and abroad. These testators were distributed evenly over time, around two or three

²⁹⁸ He was involved in the victualling of troops in Scotland, in 1436 (*Cal. Pat. Rolls 1429-36*, p.540).

²⁹⁹ See above

³⁰⁰ Neither William Milett nor the three original founders of the Holy Trinity almshouses made bequests to fraternities, and none of the Dartford testators who did make such bequests gave legacies to the almshouses. Another testator left money to the 'work of the Holy Trinity guild' but did not say if that was charitable work.

³⁰¹ DRb/Pwr2/46 In 1440, John Okeherst of Dartford gave money to both institutions - 6s 8d to the All Saints guild and 12d to the leper hospital (DRb/Pwr1/2).

³⁰² John Henderson finds that fraternities and hospitals in late medieval and early modern Europe often provided support for no more than a small number of the indigent so that the poor had to rely on networks of charity at an informal neighbourhood level (John Henderson, 'The parish and the poor in Florence at the time of the Black Death: the case of S. Frediano', p.247 and abstract).

³⁰³ The proportion did not vary over time. A smaller proportion of Dartford testators than has been recorded in larger late medieval towns gave legacies to hospitals or almshouses. Over two fifths of Norwich testators and one fifth of Thomson's sample of wealthy London testators gave to hospitals: Norman P. Tanner, *The Church in late medieval Norwich 1370-1532*, pp.133-4 (two fifths of Tanner's will sample included bequests to all five of the leper hospitals outside five city gates and there were five other hospitals and almshouses in the city also attracting some bequests. Tanner cites Thomson's figure from the article 'Piety and charity'). In Kent, as was found with monastic support, the levels were lower; 14.6 per cent of testators in Strood where there was a hospital of St. Mary Newark, whose wills were proved in the Rochester consistory court, gave to hospitals, between 1438 and 1537, and 14.7 per cent of Rochester testators, in the same period. The figure of fourteen per cent has also been found for Canterbury and Sandwich, in east Kent (this information from Miss Sheila Sweetinburgh). The figures for whole dioceses, taking in rural areas without hospitals, would be far lower than that.

³⁰⁴ Rotha M. Clay, *The Medieval Hospitals of England*, p.85.

³⁰⁵ Norman P. Tanner, *The Church in late medieval Norwich 1370-1532*, p.85.

per decade, but rising to six between 1528 and 1534, none occurring after that date.³⁰⁶ The Injunctions of 1538 brought an end to pilgrimages. In addition, one testator, Giles Johnson of Gravesend, who made his will in 1490, gave departure on a pilgrimage as the reason for making his will, and another, Thomas Usher of Milton next Gravesend, stated that he had intended to make a pilgrimage to Compostella in his lifetime, but had not achieved this.³⁰⁷ A few other testators simply made bequests to shrines which were the object of pilgrimage; these perhaps also constituted requests for pilgrimage, since getting the offering to the shrine necessitated someone going on a journey.

The most popular pilgrimage destination was Our Lady of Walsingham, specified in fifteen wills, and the shrine was left offerings by a further seven testators. Requests for pilgrimages to the shrine of St. Thomas of Canterbury were included in five wills, including two in the 1530s, with two bequests of offerings, indicating that this shrine was not in decline.³⁰⁸ The only other shrine that was specified in more than one request for pilgrimage was that of an English fourteenth-century popular saint, Master John Shorne, moved from its original home at North Marston in Buckinghamshire to St. George's Chapel in Windsor, in 1478.³⁰⁹ This shrine, which was famous for its reported miracles, was specified by three Rochester consistory court testators, of Chelsfield, Brenchley and Ash near Dartford, in 1493, 1504 and 1533.³¹⁰ In addition, William Webster of Shorn near Gravesend left a taper of two pounds of wax to Master John Shorn, in 1530.³¹¹ These bequests all date from after the removal of this shrine to Windsor, suggesting that it was well publicised by St. George's Chapel. Its popularity amongst inhabitants of west Kent is another indication of the traditional nature of religion in the region. Other Kentish destinations for pilgrimage specified in wills were the chapel of Holy Cross at Boxley and the chapel of St. Stephen next Canterbury, both chosen by Thomas Breggman of Stoke in Hoo, in 1474.³¹² Single testators requested pilgrimage to each of 'King Harry', the Blood of Hailes and St. Albans, which were other shrines of national repute.³¹³ Some shrines specified cannot be identified, including 'Tumbam', St. Radegund of Madyngden, 'Our Lady of Wulpitt', 'Our Lady of Crowham', 'Northdor' and 'St. Tilfortes'. No requests were made for pilgrimage overseas. A number of testators requested more than one pilgrimage to be made for them, but Thomas Wylfort of Erith was unique in specifying five pilgrimages, in 1530. The persons

³⁰⁶ This was a net rise, even taking into account the greater number of wills from each year at the end of the period.

³⁰⁷ Johnson made his will 'Intendynge with goddes grace to passe over the see in pylgremage to the Holy Blod of Wylsnake' (DRb/Pwr5/363v); Usher, however, did not ask for anyone to go on pilgrimage for him, to Compostella nor any other shrine (DRb/Pwr4/47).

³⁰⁸ Norman P. Tanner, *The Church in late medieval Norwich 1370-1532*, p.86 reports this suggestion.

³⁰⁹ Master John Shorne was the venerated rector of North Marston, near Aylesbury, who died in 1314, being buried in the parish church. Many miracles were reported at his shrine, on account of which the dean and canons of St. George's Chapel Windsor had it carried off to Windsor, in 1478, when they obtained the rectory and advowson from Dunstable Priory. The extent to which North Marston church had previously benefited from this shrine is suggested by the fine fourteenth-century building. The shrine continued to be popular up to the Reformation. See VCH, *Buckinghamshire*, i, pp.288-9; iv, pp.76, 78. Adair suggests that Windsor may have procured the relics to compete for pilgrims with the shrine of Henry VI at Chertsey, before Richard III authorised the removal of those relics to Windsor, in 1484. The shrine's popularity is suggested by a scathing reference in a sermon by Bishop Latimer to pilgrims 'running hither and thither to Mr. John Schome or to Our Lady of Walsingham'. A fifteenth-century Windsor manuscript contains a hymn beginning: 'Hail, gem of pastors, O John, flower of teachers, rector of Marston': John Adair, *The Pilgrims' Way: shrines and saints in Britain and Ireland* (London, 1978), p.82.

³¹⁰ DRb/Pwr6/136 (Thomas Fryth of Chelsfield); DRb/Pwr6/64v (Richard Ongle of Brenchley); DRb/Pwr9/50v (John Beste of Ash).

³¹¹ DRb/Pwr8/245v.

³¹² DRb/Pwr4/213v.

³¹³ Richard Ongle of Brenchley asked for his son John to go on pilgrimage to Walsingham, King Harry and Master John Shorn, in 1504 (DRb/Pwr6/64v). King Harry was Henry VI, whose body was buried at Chertsey Abbey and then, in 1484, in St. George's Chapel Windsor (Norman P. Tanner, *The Church in late medieval Norwich 1370-1532*, p.86). Thomas Wylfort of Erith specified the Blood of Hailes, in 1530, as well as Walsingham, St. Thomas of Canterbury, the Rood of Dagenham and 'St. Tilfortes' (DRb/Pwr8/201). John Beste of Ash, in 1533, asked for pilgrimages to Walsingham, Canterbury, Master John Shorn and St. Albans (DRb/Pwr9/50v).

asked to undertake the pilgrimages included executors, suitable honest men chosen by the executors, brothers, sisters, a son, a daughter, wives, other named individuals, and a pardoner. Amongst shrines which were not specified for pilgrimages but were bequeathed offerings were St. William of Perth, in Rochester Cathedral, and the Rood of Grace, at Boxley;³¹⁴ the Rood of Rest, with its altar, in West Malling parish church;³¹⁵ St. Richard the Bishop of Chichester;³¹⁶ Our Lady of Rest/Grace, in Rochester Cathedral; Our Lady of Pity, in the hospital of St. Mary Newark in Strood; Our Lady of 'Runcevale';³¹⁷ and Our Lady of Pewe at Westminster.³¹⁸

The sustained level of popularity of pilgrimage amongst inhabitants of the diocese of Rochester throughout the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries up to the Reformation further suggests the traditional nature of lay religion in the region.

Devotion to the Eucharist

The centrality of the mass and church calendar in late medieval religion and culture was manifested in many ways, including explicit devotion to the Eucharist. This Greek word was itself used by one layman in Chiselhurst, in 1471; in his will of that year, John Elys bequeathed 6s 8d for a torch to burn before 'eukaristiani' in the parish church.³¹⁹ The significance popularly attached to the moment of consecration and elevation of the Host is indicated in wills. William Overey, granger of Ash near Dartford, bequeathed 3s 4d for a torch to illuminate the elevation of the host, in 1450, and there were many more such bequests made in the consistory court wills.³²⁰ Since laity only received communion once a year, seeing the Host at the elevation became the high point of lay experience of the mass at other times, and it was an element of Catholic religion banned in 1549.³²¹ The importance of the elevation reflected firm popular belief in the reality of transubstantiation. This was demonstrated by some Rochester consistory court wills that referred to the bread and wine as the body and blood of Christ. For example, Thomas Gylot of Westerham, in 1469, left 40d to the gilding of the pix in which the body of Jesus rested.³²² Robert Symmes of St. Werburgh in Hoo left a silver pix to the parish church, in 1507, to bear the blessed body of God, on Corpus Christi day.³²³ The feast of Corpus Christi, kept on the Thursday after Trinity Sunday, is described by Duffy as the most spectacular late medieval addition to the calendar. It was observed in England from 1318 and won great popular allegiance in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, as was demonstrated by the proliferation of Corpus Christi guilds and their often lavish processions and displays,

³¹⁴ See chapter five above.

³¹⁵ Mentioned in four or five wills between 1452 and 1515 (DRb/Pwr1/113, Pwr4/55v, Pwr5/229, Pwr7/37. John Hawkes of Shorn's bequest of barley to the Rood of Rest, in 1497, did not specify West Malling, but no other rood of this name has been encountered (DRb/Pwr5/335).

³¹⁶ DRb/Pwr5/401v (Thomas Bowreg of Tonbridge, in 1501).

³¹⁷ DRb/Pwr7/128 (William Danyell of Erith, sailor, in 1518, who also gave a bequest to Our Lady of Walsingham).

³¹⁸ DRb/Pwr3/208v (Richard Langford of Rochester, in 1478, who also made a bequest to Walsingham).

³¹⁹ DRb/Pwr3/78v.

³²⁰ DRb/Pwr1/92v.

³²¹ Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, pp.96, 464. The elevation had come to be so closely associated with the actual consecration of the bread and wine that in England the elevation was referred to as the 'sacring', while the second elevation of the consecrated elements, at 'per ipsum et cum ipso et in ipso' at the end of the canon, was known as the 'second sacring'. In the sanctuary a 'sacring bell' was rung to mark the solemnity of the moment, while at the same time the church bells were tolled to enable those out in the fields to be suitably reverential (Peter Marshall, *The Catholic Priesthood and the English Reformation*, p.41; citing T.W. Drury, *The Elevation of the Eucharist* (Cambridge, 1907), p.126).

³²² DRb/Pwr3/41v.

³²³ DRb/Pwr6/227.

especially in urban centres.³²⁴ There was one Corpus Christi guild in the diocese of Rochester evidenced by wills, in Shorne near Gravesend, besides others in Kent, notably that in Maidstone.³²⁵ Shorne's guild received bequests in three wills in 1443, 1452 and 1491.³²⁶ The Corpus Christi light in the church received bequests of money or barley, in 1458 and 1473.³²⁷ As it was a small rural community, Shorne's guild must have been a somewhat less significant organisation in the parish than these guilds commonly were in towns. The feast of Corpus Christi was observed in other places; wills demonstrate the existence of Corpus Christi day processions in Stoke as well as St. Werburgh in Hoo.³²⁸

Trentals

Tanner concluded that late medieval inhabitants of Norwich believed that the merit gained from masses was proportional to the number said, despite the statement of the council of the Canterbury province, held at Lambeth in 1281, that one mass was held to be of infinite value.³²⁹ Testators in the diocese of Rochester also sought multiple masses. The very large numbers requested by a few testators in the mid-fifteenth century were replaced, in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, by a larger and increasing proportion of testators who requested trentals, or groups of thirty masses. No requests for trentals were made in Dartford wills before the 1490s.³³⁰ In the diocese as a whole, there was a small number of requests from the 1450s, rising to around five per cent of testators between 1498 and 1537, followed by a sharp decline in the 1540s. The last request for a trental recorded in the consistory court wills was made by William Kenham of Dartford, who, in January 1545-6, asked for thirty masses and three diriges in the parish church.³³¹ In total, twelve testators in Dartford asked for these non-specific trentals, between 1488 and 1537 (fourteen per cent of testators between those dates). Across the diocese, most trentals were sought in parish churches, some asked for them to be celebrated by the friars at Aylesford Priory, and ten testators in Greenwich, Gravesend, Strood and Rochester, in the sixteenth century, specified the chapel of Scala Celi in Westminster. Masses of Scala Celi were a popular new indulgence, licensed in England at Westminster in 1500, and were requested also in smaller numbers by certain wealthy orthodox laypeople in north-west Kent.³³² No Dartford testators requested trentals or single masses at Scala Celi, further suggesting the more traditional nature of Catholic religion in that parish.

The St. Gregory and Pope trentals were highly specialised devotions which appealed to a small number of testators in the diocese of Rochester. The former was said over thirty days and represented a compressed version of the Pope trental, which extended over a whole year taking in all the major liturgical

³²⁴ Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, pp.43-4.

³²⁵ Peter Clark & Lyn Murfin, *The History of Maidstone: the making of a modern town* (Stroud, 1995), pp.35-7.

³²⁶ DRb/Pwr1/13, DRb/Pwr2/214, DRb/Pwr5/185.

³²⁷ DRb/Pwr2/163, DRb/Pwr4/52, DRb/Pwr4/91v.

³²⁸ In 1488, John Stott of Stoke left 13s 4d to be spent on a canopy to be carried on Corpus Christi day (DRb/Pwr5/95v).

³²⁹ Norman P. Tanner, *The Church in late medieval Norwich 1370-1532*, p.105.

³³⁰ Similarly, no requests for trentals were made in Tenterden wills before 1493 (Robert G.A. Lutton, 'Orthodox and heterodox piety in Tenterden, c.1420-c.1540', p.151). See this reference in Robert Lutton's thesis for a useful synthesis and explanation of the trental and St. Gregory trental.

³³¹ DRb/Pwr10/172v.

³³² Requests for masses at Scala Celi in Westminster were made in twenty consistory court wills between 1508 and 1537, eight of them from Greenwich, Lewisham and Deptford, six from Rochester and Strood, three from Gravesend and Milton, and one from each of Southfleet, Cobham (a clerk of the college – DRb/Pwr7/168) and Bromley. Westminster Abbey was licensed to celebrate the relatively cheap indulgenced masses of Scala Celi in 1500; Duffy describes the Scala Celi indulgence as one of the 'unequivocal manifestations of the full-blown doctrine of Purgatory' found in pre-Reformation wills (Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, pp.364, 375-6).

feasts.³³³ The names St. Gregory trental and Pope trental were used interchangeably, in late medieval wills.³³⁴ Only the former name was used in Rochester diocese wills, but it is possible to discern which celebration was required by the size of bequest, either 10s or £10.³³⁵ For example, John Bischopp, brother of the prior of Rochester Cathedral, in his will of 1497, left £10 for a priest to sing before the image of Our Lady of Grace, in the cathedral, where he was to be buried, one St. Gregory trental for one year. Bischopp specified that, in conjunction with this trental, evidently the longer Pope trental, the priest was to fast every Friday, and was also to do a pilgrimage 'as is appoynted to the seyde Trentall'.³³⁶ Most St. Gregory trentals requested were of the cheaper, shorter kind. A total of eighteen testators in the diocese requested a St. Gregory trental, between 1438 and 1537.³³⁷

New devotions: the Name of Jesus and the Five Wounds

It was reported, above, that a few parishioners of Gravesend and Milton in the early sixteenth century asked for masses of the Name of Jesus and Five Wounds of Christ in St. George's chapel in Gravesend. Devotion to the Name of Jesus, became popular in English parishes from 1450, as a manifestation of increasing Christocentrism and affective devotion to the Passion.³³⁸ The cult reached Bury St. Edmund's in 1456, and the mass or guild were mentioned by nine per cent of testators between 1449 and 1530.³³⁹ The popularity of devotion to the Name of Jesus in the diocese of Salisbury is indicated by the ubiquity of Jesus fraternities in Salisbury churches and in other towns in the diocese from the second half of the fifteenth century.³⁴⁰ It was the most popular of votive and indulgenced masses mentioned by Norwich testators, 1440-1532.³⁴¹ The cult was first found in east Kent in Sandwich and Lydd in the 1460s, reaching the Weald by the 1500s and Tenterden by 1513.³⁴²

Wills suggest that the devotion was only firmly established in the diocese of Rochester in certain pockets, especially around Tonbridge in the Medway valley, and in the hundred of Hoo, probably arriving in Tonbridge around 1470. Tonbridge's fraternity of the Name of Jesus was the only one in the diocese of which there is evidence, and it received just four bequests between 1470 and 1472.³⁴³ It may have been another example of a short-lived late medieval fraternity. The Jesus altar in Tonbridge parish church was, however, in receipt of two bequests in 1475 and 1490.³⁴⁴ The only Dartford testator at any time who asked for Jesus masses to be celebrated for him in the parish church there did so in 1472 and he had strong connections with the Tonbridge area. John Hamond, who owned land and property in Penshurst and

³³³ On these trentals see Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 43, 293-4, 370-76; R.W. Pfaff, 'The English devotion of St. Gregory's trental', *Speculum*, 49 (1974), pp.75-90; Norman P. Tanner, *The Church in late medieval Norwich 1370-1532*, pp.102-3.

³³⁴ Robert G.A. Lutton, 'Orthodox and heterodox piety in Tenterden, c.1420-c.1540', p.151 n.108.

³³⁵ Although, William Dunstable, vicar of Dartford at the beginning of the fifteenth century, left nine marks for his trental of 'St. Gregory' lasting one year, in his will of December 1404 (CKS TR 2952/2 p.283).

³³⁶ DRb/Pwr6/60v. On William Bisshope, B.Cn.L, prior 1494-1509, see Joan Greatrex, *Biographical Register of the English Cathedral Priories of the Province of Canterbury, c.1066 to 1540* (Oxford, 1997), p.592.

³³⁷ DRb/Pwr1 ff.18v, 96, DRb/Pwr2 ff.19, 240, 389, DRb/Pwr3 ff.127, 278, DRb/Pwr5/243, DRb/Pwr6 ff.60v, 176, 363, DRb/Pwr7 ff.76v, 199v, 369, 47v, DRb/Pwr8 ff.53, 90, DRb/Pwr9/142v.

³³⁸ Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, pp.45, 113-6, 370; Robert G.A. Lutton, 'Orthodox and heterodox piety in Tenterden, c.1420-c.1540', pp.205, 215; R.W. Pfaff, *New Liturgical Feasts in later medieval England* (Oxford, 1970), pp.62-83.

³³⁹ Robert Dinn, 'Popular religion in Bury St. Edmunds', PhD dissertation, pp.195-200, cited by Robert G.A. Lutton, 'Orthodox and heterodox piety in Tenterden, c.1420-c.1540', p.206.

³⁴⁰ Andrew Brown, *Popular Piety in late medieval England: the diocese of Salisbury 1250-1550*, p.138ff..

³⁴¹ Norman P. Tanner, *The Church in late medieval Norwich 1370-1532*, pp.102-3, 221.

³⁴² Robert G.A. Lutton, 'Orthodox and heterodox piety in Tenterden, c.1420-c.1540', pp.205 ff..

³⁴³ DRb/Pwr3 ff.119, 137; DRb/Pwr4 ff.9v, 19v.

³⁴⁴ DRb/Pwr4/152; in 1490, Thomas Sever of Tonbridge left ten marks for services at this altar, for a year (DRb/Pwr5/138v).

Chiddingstone near Tonbridge, asked for John Wellys, the chaplain of St. Edmund's chapel in Dartford, and John Shibborne, the Stanpit chantry priest in Dartford parish church, each to celebrate thirty masses of the Name of Jesus for his soul.³⁴⁵ One testator in Lamberhurst near Tonbridge indicated particular devotion to Jesus, and possibly the existence of the Jesus mass, in his parish church, in 1474.³⁴⁶ In 1476, John KEBILLE of Hadlow near Tonbridge bequeathed 10s for a priest to sing a trental of masses 'in nomine Jhesu Christi' for his soul.³⁴⁷ Four of the other seven requests made in pre-Reformation consistory court wills for one-off celebrations of Jesus masses, or obits incorporating them, came from Halling, Yalding, West Malling and Snodland in the Medway valley, respectively in 1499, 1526, 1531 and 1541.³⁴⁸ Further investigation would be necessary to establish any connection with the presence of Lollard conventicles at this time in the Tonbridge and Medway valley area.³⁴⁹ The coincidence may be significant, and it has been noted elsewhere; in the sixteenth century, the Jesus mass became very popular in Tenterden, where there were well-established Lollard families.³⁵⁰

The devotion was also strong in the hundred of Hoo, arriving in St. Werburgh by 1507, in which year Richard Payn of that parish bequeathed a sheep for the maintenance of the regular Jesus mass in the parish church.³⁵¹ Over the next four decades six more bequests were made to the maintenance of this mass, including two from the neighbouring parishes of Cooling and St. Mary, and three to the Jesus altar. The mass was not mentioned in wills after 1535, although it probably continued, and the altar received its last bequest in April 1547, on the brink of the Edwardian Reformation.³⁵² There was also a bequest for a one-off celebration of the mass in Halstow in Hoo, in 1514.³⁵³ Furthermore, one of the complaints about their vicar made by parishioners of All Hallows in Hoo, in their petition to the bishop of 1534, was that he had failed to keep the feast of the Name of Jesus on the correct day.³⁵⁴

The only parish besides Tonbridge and St. Werburgh where a regular Jesus mass was mentioned in a will was East Greenwich, in 1529.³⁵⁵ The devotion was known in the parish several decades before this reference, however. In 1467, Thomas Furneys alias Halle, yeoman of East Greenwich, bequeathed his soul to 'our lord Jhesus Crist oure lady seynt Mary and the company of hevyn'. He left to his son Thomas 'a maser with a prynte of Jhesus' and a coverlet of tapestry-work 'with Jhesus in the myddis and clewdes & sterris be the borderes'. He began the will with a greeting to fellow followers of Christ:

³⁴⁵ DRb/Pwr4/6.

³⁴⁶ In 1474, Henry Fraunceys of Lamberhurst asked for burial before the crucifix of our Lord Jesus Christ, and left five tapers to burn before the image of the Blessed Virgin at all times of the year when divine service of our Lord Jesus Christ was said (DRb/Pwr4/131).

³⁴⁷ DRb/Pwr3/154v.

³⁴⁸ DRb/Pwr5/356, DRb/Pwr8/53, DRb/Pwr9/24v, DRb/Pwr9/362v.

³⁴⁹ John F. Davis, *Heresy and Reformation in the south-east of England, 1520-1559* (London, 1983), p.3.

³⁵⁰ Robert G.A. Lutton, 'Orthodox and heterodox piety in Tenterden, c.1420-c.1540'.

³⁵¹ DRb/Pwr6/225.

³⁵² Bequests of land, sheep or cattle were made for the mass in 1512 (DRb/Pwr6/333), 1524 (DRb/Pwr7/368v), 1528 (DRb/Pwr8/193v), 1532 (DRb/Pwr9/36v), by a St. Mary parishioner in 1533 (DRb/Pwr9/100), and by John Braibroke of Cooling in 1535 (DRb/Pwr9/184v). John Charles of St. Werburgh left a young cow to maintain a light before the cross of the Jesus altar, in 1531 (DRb/Pwr9/112); Thomas Luddisdon and Alice Baker made bequests to priests serving at this altar, in 1545 and 1547 (DRb/Pwr10 ff.169v, 209v).

³⁵³ DRb/Pwr7/16v.

³⁵⁴ DRb/Pa 9 pt 2 ff.195v-97. This case is examined in greater detail below, in the context of complaints about clergy.

³⁵⁵ In his will of that year, Richard Piry of East Greenwich left to poor people 5d of bread in worship of the five wounds of Jesus Christ, to be distributed at the 'Roodes chapell' entrance after the Jesus mass was sung, every Friday for a whole year (DRb/Pwr8/227). Presumably the Friday mass and annual feast day were observed in other parishes, but not singled out for mention by will-makers.

Unto all Cristyn peple to whom this present writyng shall come Thomas Furneys otherwise named Thomas Halle of Estgrenewich in the shire of Kent yeoman sendes all recomendacion in god everlastyng

He referred to one of his feoffees, Thomas Buk of Greenwich, as 'my welbelovid in Crist'.³⁵⁶ Furneys and Buk evidently shared this particular devotion to Jesus, and possibly the term 'wellbeloved' indicates that they were fellow members of a Jesus fraternity in Greenwich of which no evidence survives. Like testators in pre-Reformation Tenterden who paid particular devotion to Jesus and neglected other cults in the parish church, Thomas Furneys made no bequests to lights, images or altars, or masses in Greenwich or elsewhere.³⁵⁷

There is no evidence of a regular Jesus mass in Dartford parish church, possibly because those parishioners who valued this devotion went to the priory church; William Milette founded a Jesus mass to be said every Friday in his chapel in Dartford Priory church, in 1500, and his beneficiary, William Sprever, yeoman and official of Dartford Priory, made a bequest to this mass in his will of 1525.³⁵⁸ The only other references to the devotion in the pre-Reformation consistory court wills were to the Jesus altar in Rochester Cathedral; images or paintings of Jesus in Kingsdown and Nettlestead churches, in the sixteenth century; and one-off requests for masses in North Cray and Southfleet, in 1499 and 1525.³⁵⁹

The greater popularity in the diocese of the mass of the Five Wounds was another new development within orthodox religion in west Kent, from the late fifteenth century, and was found in the same areas where the Jesus mass was popular, around Tonbridge and the Medway valley, the hundred of Hoo and along the Thames shore from East Greenwich to Southfleet, Gravesend and Chatham.³⁶⁰ Like the Jesus mass it was evidence of affective devotion to Christ and his Passion. It first appeared in England in the first half of the fifteenth century, but only really began to appear in English missals and breviaries from the end of that century.³⁶¹ It was known in Norwich from 1490.³⁶² No will in the diocese of Rochester specified this mass before 1496, when Alice Fisher of Greenwich asked for five masses of the Five Wounds, to be said by a poor priest, and for a further twenty-five of these masses to be said over five days before the two 'roods of All Hallows Eve'.³⁶³ It became one of the most popular votive masses specified by testators in the diocese, up to the 1540s.³⁶⁴ No Dartford testator requested masses of the Five Wounds.

³⁵⁶ DRb/Pwr2/395

³⁵⁷ See Robert G.A. Lutton, 'Orthodox and heterodox piety in Tenterden, c.1420-c.1540'.

³⁵⁸ PROB 11/21/272.

³⁵⁹ Agnes Crowche, widow of Rochester, asked to be buried before the Jesus altar in the cathedral, in 1498 (DRb/Pwr5/307), and it was mentioned again in 1501 (DRb/Pwr5/411v). In 1523, Simon Godfrythe, parson of Nettlestead, left 20s 'for a fygure of Jhesu the quantety of a man stayinyd in a clothe and to be nayled upon a borde with my name writyn in hyt', to be set on the left side of the high altar (DRb/Pwr7/270). John Brynkley of Kingsdown left a sum of money to the painting of the image of Jesus in his parish church, in 1532 (DRb/Pwr9/27). The bequests for masses were in DRb/Pwr5/326 (North Cray) and DRb/Pwr7/373v (Southfleet). The only request for Jesus masses after the Marian restoration came from a testator in Ash near Dartford, in 1555 (DRb/Pwr11/342).

³⁶⁰ Bequests for masses of the Five Wounds came from testators of Greenwich, Deptford, Lewisham, Erith, Gravesend, Milton, Southfleet and Chatham (all on the north Kent Thames shore); All Hallows, Halstow and St. Mary in Hoo; and Rochester, Birling, Trottescliffe, Addington, West Malling, Aylesford, Yalding, Waterringbury, Hadlow and Capel in the Medway and Tonbridge corridor).

³⁶¹ R. W. Pfaff, *New Liturgical Feasts in later medieval England*, pp.84-91.

³⁶² Norman P. Tanner, *The Church in late medieval Norwich 1370-1532*, p.103.

³⁶³ DRb/Pwr5/365v.

³⁶⁴ Up to 1501, a further five testators in the diocese requested these masses, in Edenbridge, Greenwich, Birling and Erith, and then there was a pause until 1509. Eighteen testators, representing 1.7 per cent of consistory court wills, between 1508 and 1527, requested masses of the Five Wounds to be said on their burial days, month's minds or in obits. There were just four requests, in the 1530s, one in 1540 and the last request for this mass before the Edwardian Reformation was one by Hugh Mowseherst of Waterringbury, gentleman, in 1544 (DRb/Pwr10/76). Most testators asked for multiples of five masses of the Five Wounds; others specified it as one of five different votive masses.

Devotion to the Passion and the five wounds of Christ was also manifested in other ways. In 1496, John Hillis of Strood left a pound of wax to the light of the Holy Cross in his church, in honour of the blessed wounds of Christ.³⁶⁵ In 1516, John Walsyngham of Ryarsh left 6s 8d to the purchasing of a crucifix with a picture of Our Lord on it, to be set in the midst of the rood beam.³⁶⁶ Henry Riche of Frindsbury, in 1541, asked for five masses in worship of the Passion of Christ.³⁶⁷ Sir Peter Kycwyche, curate of Beckenham, in 1545, asked for five priests to celebrate on his burial day 'in the worship of the fyve wondes of our lorde'.³⁶⁸

The concentration of popularity of the new devotion to the Five Wounds and Name of Jesus and of cases of Lollardy and Lutheran heresy, in late medieval west Kent, in the Medway valley and along the north Kent coastal strip is probably attributable to the fact that these were the areas more open to outside influences, by water and along the Watling Street. The presence of these new devotions further manifested the ability of traditional religion to renew itself in this region. It is not clear why the Name of Jesus cult was less ubiquitous than in other regions such as the diocese of Salisbury. The absence of bequests for masses of these devotions from Dartford testators, to take place in their parish church, like the lack of bequests for masses of *Scala Celi*, further suggests the traditionalism of parish religion there. Those who did value devotion to the Name of Jesus went to the priory church in the town, attracted by the monastic liturgy.

Lay activity in parish religion: complaints about clergy

Whilst the majority of parish clergy no doubt carried out their duties assiduously, the Rochester consistory court and archdeaconry visitation books contain evidence of certain clergy who neglected their offices or abused their parishioners in various ways. The response of the laity in such cases demonstrated their commitment to Catholic religion and the importance they attached to having all its services and sacraments. Furthermore, as R.N. Swanson argues, complaints from laity imply that they had an ideal notion of priesthood against which they measured bad clergy, rather than that they were opposed to priests in general.³⁶⁹

The parishioners of Addington and Ryarsh, adjacent parishes near West Malling, had problems with their respective vicars in the second and third decades of the sixteenth century. The consistory court act book contains a copy of a petition sent to the bishop from the parishioners of Addington in 1517, in which they accused their vicar of neglecting religion; he failed to take services, was guilty of incontinence and general bad behaviour, he supported the vicar of Ryarsh against the bishop, and he set a bad example by his 'abominable' swearing by the blood, arms and spirit of God, and other blasphemies.³⁷⁰ The parishioners of Ryarsh had a long-running dispute with their next vicar, Sir Richard White, in the 1520s. He was guilty of unprovoked violence and slander against parishioners, calling them Lollards, thieves and

³⁶⁵ DRb/Pwr5/297v.

³⁶⁶ DRb/Pwr7/98.

³⁶⁷ DRb/Pwr9/368.

³⁶⁸ DRb/Pwr10/166.

³⁶⁹ R.N. Swanson, *Catholic England: Faith, religion and observance before the Reformation* (Manchester, 1993), p.34. Haigh also argues against the existence of a general 'anti-clericalism' as a cause of the Reformation, and reports that complaints against clergy in Lancashire were lower before the Reformation than in Elizabeth's reign (Christopher Haigh, 'Anticlericalism in the English Reformation', in Christopher Haigh, ed., *The English Reformation Revised* (Cambridge, 1987), pp.56-74 at p.72).

heretics, and refusing to take services and administer sacraments. The churchwardens and other parishioners eventually addressed a petition in English to Master Robert Johnson, the bishop's official, which was reproduced in the archdeacon's visitation book. One of their complaints concerned White's failure to pray for those named in the parish bederoll:

for we giff hym to praye in the bederoll for our fryndes soules and all Cristen sowles and he to kurs us and them we bethynk us that our money is ill bestowed³⁷¹

In 1524, a further document entitled 'The complaynte of *certen* parishoners of the *parishe* of Rayeshe', dated 22nd June, was entered in the consistory court act book. Amongst the many accusations of violence, slander and gross incontinence, were complaints that the previous All Hallows Day the churchwardens and certain other parishioners had come to Richard White and besought him to cease his malice and be in love and charity with them, and that they might have service the next day for all Christian souls. White had answered that he would say no service other than to ask vengeance upon them all. As a result of this, it was claimed, many of the parish took away their devotions and lost many good prayers.³⁷²

The parishioners of Pembury near Tonbridge were unhappy with the neglect of religion by their vicar, Sir Patrick Magdalen, in 1517-18; at the consistory court, John Cotynden and Sir Ralph Hames, priest, said that Magdalen had threatened them with a dagger when they asked him to reform himself. He had failed to visit parishioners when they were sick, so that one William Broke had died without his last rites, and another 'woman straunger' in the parish died without rites and was left by the vicar unburied for so long 'that dogges did ete on of the quarters of hur bodie'. Finally, Magdalen had not conducted Saturday evensong, matins or mass on the Sunday before Candlemass.³⁷³ The situation in Pembury was still causing problems six years on, in 1524; at the consistory court held in West Malling church in June that year, Sir Ralph Hames, by then chantry priest of Pembury, acknowledged that 'it is pity that ever *our* vicar of *Pepinbury* was made prest'. He reported that Magdalen revealed parishioners' confessions, and one layman had said, 'I had lever be shreven at the lyons in the touer of london than be shryven of the vicar'. John a Thorn, a forty-three-year-old *illiteratus* of the parish, reported that diverse parishioners said, 'And yf this be true that is spoken of *our* vicar he shulde be never my gostly fader'.³⁷⁴ Such parishioners were naturally concerned about their neighbours getting to know of the sins they had confessed in private, but these depositions also demonstrate that there was a real concern amongst them that the spiritual duties of their parish priest should be undertaken by a man worthy of the office. In this all-important matter of sin, penitence and absolution laity needed to know that they had been properly shriven. Peter Marshall demonstrates that there was a similar kind of debate, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, as to whether the sacrament of the mass was valid if celebrated by a priest in a state of sin.³⁷⁵

³⁷⁰ DRb/Pa 6 ff.263-8.

³⁷¹ DRa/Vb/4 ff.42-3, 101. Ryarsh was a most unfortunate parish; White's predecessor, William Walkar, had been forced to resign, in 1517, for consorting with a woman in West Malling (DRb/Pa 6 ff.159v, 203v-4, 207).

³⁷² DRb/Pa 7 ff.43-5.

³⁷³ DRb/Pa 7 ff.5v-8v.

³⁷⁴ DRb/Pa 8 pt 2 fo.32. This was a matter of general concern to laity; a small number of other clergy in the diocese were accused of the same offence, in the early sixteenth century. Edward Tuttesham, the vicar of West Peckham, who was guilty of far worse sexual offences, was also accused, in 1530, of having repeated from the pulpit the confession of an eight-year-old boy that he had stolen a pudding and eaten bacon on a Friday. The boy said he would never again be confessed by the vicar. (DRb/Pa 9 pt 2 fo.65v)

³⁷⁵ Peter Marshall, *The Catholic Priesthood and the English Reformation*, pp.44-9. Miri Rubin finds that this was also debated by certain people in the middle ages (Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: the Eucharist in late medieval culture* (Cambridge, 1991), pp.323-4).

A similar desire to have the sacraments of the Church with full assurance of their spiritual validity was behind a series of petitions to the bishop from the parishioners of All Hallows in Hoo, between late 1529 and early 1534. In the first petition, made in late 1529, they reported that, on the first Wednesday in the previous lent, the vicar, Sir Robert Frankyssh, and the parish clerk had had an argument in the church during the course of which the vicar had struck the clerk, and would have murdered him had he not been restrained. The clerk had shed much blood throughout the church, as a result of which it was interdict.³⁷⁶ In spite of this, Frankyssh had continued to minister the sacraments, and had baptised three children there. The parishioners reported that this was a 'grett gruge in our consyence' and called on the bishop to rehallow the church:

That we maye have owr sacramentes and sacramentalles mynstryd accordyng to the lawdabyll custome of holy chyrch. So that we maye as good crystyne pepull be dyschargyd in owr consyence that hytt hath stand soo longe interdyctyd and this att the reverence of God & in the weye of cheryteye & all owr paryshe shall praye to god for the preservacyon of your good lordshype longe to endure³⁷⁷

Four years later, at the consistory court held in the bishop's palace in Rochester, in February 1533-4, Frankyssh was accused of further offences including incontinence, blasphemy, refusing last rites, revealing confessions, buying a cow on Good Friday an hour before the service, and not keeping the feasts of the Transfiguration and the Name of Jesus on the correct days. Somewhat bizarrely, Frankyssh had refused to be proved wrong and defaced the calendar in his service book. The parishioners complained:

Thus he makith us kepe holiday whan we shulde werke, and werke whan we shulde keep holydaye.

These parishioners considered themselves to be spiritually harmed by not keeping the feasts correctly. They tried to appear patient and long-suffering in their petition, concluding that they wished to live charitably with their vicar and had thus delayed in coming to the bishop in the hope that he would reform. Frankyssh was warned to correct his behaviour on pain of excommunication.³⁷⁸

In another case involving a malicious and negligent priest, the vicar of Sutton at Hone, in 1529, the commissary simply suspended him for four weeks and exhorted the parish to be charitable.³⁷⁹ The cases cited suggest that the diocesan authorities were capable of acting decisively, but were often slow to take action, so that abuses flourished where they occurred for a number of years, and were brought to an end only after repeated lobbying from the laity.³⁸⁰ They must qualify John Fisher's reputation as an

³⁷⁶ Murphy discusses the crime of *polluto ecclesiae sanguine effusione*, including this case, which was seen to have been committed whether it was the blood of a parish clerk or the consecrated wine that had been spilt. In all such cases the church had to be reconsecrated: Terence Raoul Murphy, 'The Maintenance of Order in Early Tudor Kent, 1509-1558', pp.156-7.

³⁷⁷ DRb/Pa 9 pt 2 ff 47a-49; Terence Raoul Murphy, 'The Maintenance of Order in Early Tudor Kent, 1509-1558', p.154. After this petition, in the court book, is entered another in which the parish clerk, William Wood, asked the bishop to summons the vicar.

³⁷⁸ DRb/Pa 9 pt 2 ff 195v-97.

³⁷⁹ DRb/Pa 9 pt 2 ff.25-6. At the consistory court held in Sutton at Hone church on 12th August 1529, parishioners accused their vicar of not celebrating mass for three weeks, conducting a marriage service improperly, consorting with one Agnes Lynsey in defiance of a public rebuke from two parishioners, and of calling them all knaves from the pulpit. Furthermore, two laypeople and Sir Ewen Carlton, a stipendiary priest in the parish, confirmed that, on the previous Palm Sunday and Midsummer Day, the vicar had called William Provest (possibly the pious William Provis who gave the former nuns of Dartford a house in the village, in the 1540s – see chapter three) a knave, a cuckold, a common thief and a usurer. The commissary confirmed at this court that the vicar had confessed all these sins. The allotted punishment was suspension from the living until the following Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin (8th September), a total of four weeks, and the parish was exhorted to be charitable.

³⁸⁰ For another example of decisive but delayed judgement, see the case of Sir Edward Tuttesham, the vicar of West Peckham, who was removed from office, in December 1533, for his several perversities committed against his parishioners. His offences had evidently been going on for some time, and he had already been suspended for attempted rape, slander and breaking the confessional in 1530 (DRb/Pa 9 pt 2 ff.184-5, 65-7).

assiduous diocesan bishop, from the point of view of the parishioners.³⁸¹ They also demonstrate that, even without encouragement from their curates, parishioners in the diocese of Rochester in the early sixteenth century took their sacraments and sacramentals seriously. They also show that chantry and other stipendiary priests sometimes took the parishioners' part against a negligent incumbent.

Parish church music: the elaboration of the liturgy

An elaboration of liturgy and music in Europe in the hundred years before the Reformation was also manifested in many English parish churches, especially in prosperous areas such as London, Kent and East Anglia, by the appearance of organs and the existence of church choirs.³⁸² These were developments sought by laity.

In the fifteenth century, organs started to appear not just in cathedrals and monasteries, but in the more important parish churches.³⁸³ In east Kent, St. Mary's church in Sandwich had an organ by 1464.³⁸⁴ Bequests for their repair and construction suggest that organs began to appear in west Kent parish churches from the late fifteenth century.³⁸⁵ St. Nicholas church in Rochester, adjacent to the cathedral, was saving up to buy 'a compecet payre³⁸⁶ off organs to do devyne servyce in the sayde church', in 1470.³⁸⁷ St. Werburgh parish church in Hoo had a new 'pair of organs' in 1470, and Yalding church was intending to install one, in 1479.³⁸⁸ There was an organ in Bromley parish church by 1495.³⁸⁹ Instruments of this time in England were small, with one keyboard and two or three ranks of pipes, although probably quite adequate for accompanying plainsong at the unison, and were often fitted into small spaces such as rood lofts.³⁹⁰ Sometimes there was a secondary 'portative' organ placed in the Lady Chapel, or some other side chapel or the choir, which was capable of accompanying polyphony.³⁹¹ There was, for example, an organ in the Lady Chapel of Lesnes Abbey, in Erith near Dartford, in 1470.³⁹² The organ in Erith parish church, in 1552, was 'in the quere'.³⁹³ In the early sixteenth century, English organs started to become more

³⁸¹ Against this should be set Haigh's conclusion that English dioceses in general were well run, in the early sixteenth century, and that the supervision of parochial care was a high administrative priority (Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations*, p.44).

³⁸² Nicholas Temperley, *The Music of the English Parish Church* (Cambridge, 1979), p.37.

³⁸³ Stephen Bicknell, *The History of the English Organ* (Cambridge, 1996), p.20.

³⁸⁴ CCA U3/11/5/1 p.172. In the same year, the churchwardens' accounts record the payment of 12d to 'lytyll Sir John' for the mending of the organs, and a payment of 12d was made for the playing of the organs on Whitsunday. I am grateful to Miss Sheila Sweetinburgh for directing me to these and other references concerning organs and choir in St. Mary's Sandwich churchwardens' accounts.

³⁸⁵ Although, there is a reference to an organ in Orpington church in the diocese of Rochester in 1340 (Stephen Bicknell, *The History of the English Organ*, p.17).

³⁸⁶ The commonly used term 'pair of organs' denotes a single object, like 'pair of scissors' or 'pair of bellows' (Stephen Bicknell, *The History of the English Organ*, p.17).

³⁸⁷ DRb/Pwr3/57: Robert Doket, citizen of Rochester, left part of his tenements and gardens in the suburb of Eastgate 'to be dysposid for the price of a compecet payre off organs to do devyne servyce in the sayde church of Saynt Nycholas', in his will dated 10th April 1470. This organ, when bought, may have lasted for up to half a century; Thomas Shemyng, draper of Rochester, in his will of September 1523, left £5 to the 'changing of the organes of Saynt Nicholas' (DRb/Pwr7/291). The 1552 inventory of church goods of St. Nicholas, noted the presence of 'a payer of organes lakyng pipes' (MacKenzie E.C. Walcott, R.P. Coates & W.A. Scott Robertson, eds, 'Inventories of parish church goods in Kent, AD 1552', AC, 10 (1876), pp.282-97 at p.294).

³⁸⁸ In her will dated 11th November 1470, Johanna Nebour, a servant of John Pratt of St. Werburgh in Hoo, left 6s 8d to the 'sustenance' of new 'Organs' in the parish church, as well as 6s 8d to the sustenance of a new bell (DRb/Pwr3/69). Her bequests to their sustenance, rather than purchase, suggests that they were both newly installed, in 1470. Declaring herself to be 'in pura virginitate mea', she had no husband or children to inherit her possessions. Richard Ongles of Yalding, on the River Medway, left 13s 4d to the buying of 'unus paris organs ad deservendum in ecclesia de Ealdyng', in his will in October 1479 (DRb/Pwr3/260). He was not certain that this project would succeed, for he stipulated that the 13s 4d was to go to find a fraternity chaplain in the church if the organ was not bought.

³⁸⁹ In that year the organ was left 3s 4d by Robert Shote of Bromley (DRb/Pwr5/248).

³⁹⁰ Stephen Bicknell, *The History of the English Organ*, p.23, 36.

³⁹¹ Nicholas Temperley, *The Music of the English Parish Church*, p.8.

³⁹² Stephen Bicknell, *The History of the English Organ*, p.23, 36.

³⁹³ MacKenzie E.C. Walcott et al., eds, 'Inventories of parish church goods in Kent, AD 1552', AC, 8 (1872), pp.74-163 at p.151.

sophisticated, although still small, with provision of separate stops, allowing for more elaborate accompaniment of the liturgy. Westerham parish church, in west Kent, had one of these; one was 'to be made *with iij stoppis* after the new making' there, in 1511-12.³⁹⁴ The organs whose purchase was being considered in Brenchley, Lewisham and Milton next Gravesend parish churches, in the 1520s, may also have been of this type.³⁹⁵ Dartford parish church already had an organ by 1529.³⁹⁶ The absence of references to organs in consistory court wills after the 1520s may reflect the decline in the organ-building trade which resulted from the closure of the monasteries and eventual loss of the Latin liturgy and its associated music.³⁹⁷

Organs were acquired as much for pious reasons as for the practical purpose of accompanying the singing of the liturgy to plainsong. They were highly expensive items, obtainable only in those parishes where there were sufficient numbers of laity able and disposed to pay for their acquisition and maintenance, and most managed without them.³⁹⁸ As some testators make clear, the cost was undertaken because organs were considered to be an adornment as well as an aid to worship. Abbot Wheathampstead of St. Albans, in c.1450, caused an organ to be made there 'that young men and maidens and old people besides should be able to praise the Lord of Heaven'. William Bradley of Wetheringsett in Suffolk, in 1496-7, left £10 to the church for a pair of organs 'that God's service might be the more solemnly sung'.³⁹⁹

Possibly more common than organs were church choirs. Up to the Reformation, in most smaller churches, only the priest and parish clerk sang, and there is no evidence of congregational participation before 1559.⁴⁰⁰ In such churches the music consisted of bare unadorned plainsong. The endowment of chantries provided for more elaborate music; the priests employed augmented their incomes by singing in the general services of the church, playing the organ (if there was one), copying music and teaching schoolchildren.⁴⁰¹ Indeed, in the diocese of Rochester, obit-founders sometimes required musical skills of their priests.⁴⁰² In 1528, Thomas Hobson, clerk and priest of the parish of St. Nicholas Rochester specified that the priest appointed to carry out his ten-year obit was to be able to sing his plainsong, and

³⁹⁴ Stephen Bicknell, *The History of the English Organ*, p.26.

³⁹⁵ In 1520, legacies of 20d and 12d were left to a new pair of organs in Brenchley church, near the Weald (DRb/Pwr7/192 (John Mepcham), DRb/Pwr7/192v (John Bratyll)). In 1522, Stephen Coleman of Lewisham made a bequest to a pair of organs in the church 'if there be any' (DRb/Pwr7/243v). Margery Goldisbye of Milton left 3s 4d to a pair of organs for the church, in her will dated 10th May 1528 (DRb/Pwr8/207v).

³⁹⁶ The record of the archdeacon's visitation of Dartford parish church, in November 1529, mentions the 'organes' there in passing (DRA/Vb/4 fo 141)

³⁹⁷ Stephen Bicknell, *The History of the English Organ*, p.43. Nevertheless, the Kent church inventories drawn up in November 1552 found organs in about one in eight churches surveyed; in the diocese of Rochester they were found in the parish churches of Bromley, Dartford, East Greenwich, Erith, Lewisham, St. Mary Cray, Woolwich and St. Nicholas Rochester, although half the pipes were 'stollen' at Erith and were lacking at Rochester: MacKenzie E.C. Walcott et al., eds, 'Inventories of parish church goods in Kent, AD 1552', *AC*, 8 (1872), pp.113, 141 (Dartford), 151 (Erith), 163; *AC*, 9 (1874), pp.266-84 at p.280 (Lewisham); *AC*, 10 (1876), pp.282-97 at pp.294, 296; *AC*, 14 (1882), pp.290-312 at p.304. Most of these were amongst the wealthier larger villis of west Kent. This compares with about one in ten churches in the East Riding of Yorkshire whose inventories survive (Nicholas Temperley, *The Music of the English Parish Church*, p.8).

³⁹⁸ Norwich inventories of church goods from the reign of Edward VI show that a 'pair of organs' was then valued at £10 (MacKenzie E.C. Walcott et al., eds, 'Inventories of parish church goods in Kent, AD 1552', *AC*, 8 (1872), p.92). Payments recorded in the churchwardens' accounts of St. Mary's Sandwich, for the repair and maintenance of the organ, and to the organ blower, indicate the continuing expense involved in possessing such an instrument (CCA U3/11/5/1 p.188 and subsequent references dated most years 1500-1514, 1519-21, 1530, 1542, on unnumbered pages). Some of the later references concern a small portable organ in the high chancel made by John Hoo, organ-maker of London, for the sum of £5 18s, paid in 1510-11.

³⁹⁹ Stephen Bicknell, *The History of the English Organ*, pp.21, 25.

⁴⁰⁰ Nicholas Temperley, *The Music of the English Parish Church*, p.37.

⁴⁰¹ Nicholas Temperley, *The Music of the English Parish Church*, p.8.

⁴⁰² In 1528, William Mores alias Poole of Milton next Gravesend asked for an honest priest 'that can singe his playn songe' to sing three trentals for him (PROB 11/22/319).

was to keep the 'quere', which consisted of singing children, on Sundays and holydays, to maintain God's service.⁴⁰³ Such singing children were voluntary and drawn from the parish, and were probably expected to do no more than sing the plainsong (with the assistance of the organ, if available) whilst the trained clerk sang fauxbourdon.⁴⁰⁴ Dartford and Wilmington parish churches possessed choirs by 1466, when each 'puero cantanti' was paid between a penny and 4d for singing at burials and other services.⁴⁰⁵ A choir in Dartford church was again mentioned in 1536, when a mass priest was required to help the 'quire'.⁴⁰⁶ That such local voluntary choirs were permanent and not simply assembled for particular occasions is indicated by a bequest for the repair of surplices belonging to the choir of Southfleet parish church, near Dartford, in 1484.⁴⁰⁷ The existence of a choir in Horsmonden church in 1530 is demonstrated by a consistory court case of that year; John Gawse, the holy-water clerk (*aquabailus*), who acted as choirmaster, was accused of having slapped a choirboy in the face during mass, drawing blood, because the boy repeatedly made fun of him and refused to 'synge right'. Choirboys were amongst the witnesses at court.⁴⁰⁸ The choir in Cobham church, associated with the chantry college there, is investigated in chapter seven. Besides having an up-to-date organ (mentioned above), Westerham parish church also had a choir capable of singing sophisticated music, in the early sixteenth century. The parish enjoyed a high standard of music because some parishioners valued this enhancement of the liturgy. John Potter of that parish, making his will on 30th June 1522 (proved 1530), in which he indicated that he was a servant or official of Westminster Abbey, requested services to be sung for him in both the abbey and his parish church. In his detailed instructions for the anthems, collects and processions he showed himself to be a pious literate layman with a detailed knowledge and appreciation of liturgy who sought an active role in its arrangement.⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰³ DRb/Pwr8/171

⁴⁰⁴ At Faversham, in 1506, the clerks were required to 'set the choir' on an appropriate pitch for beginning the plainsong, then each was to sing his faux bourdon: 'and where plainsong faileth one of them shall leave faburden and keep the plainsong unto the time the choir be set again' (Nicholas Temperley, *The Music of the English Parish Church*, p.10). One such clerk was also employed at Sandwich, in 1497, Henry Pyham of the parish of St. Clement bequeathed a tenement to the maintenance of the cult of St. George in the church. The mass of St. George was to be maintained by note and organised by the parish clerk; Pyham specified that the clerk was to apply himself to teach children pricksong and to keep the mass with them weekly and every appointed day, for the salary of 5s per annum (CKS PRC 17/6/291). Sandwich was evidently well provided for in church music; St. Mary's church possessed a choir by the mid-fifteenth century, before the organs were first mentioned; a payment was recorded in the churchwardens' accounts for surplices for children, in 1445 (CKS U3/11/5/1 p.29).

⁴⁰⁵ John Daniel, a single man of Dartford originally of Wilmington, mentioned singing children in both churches, in his will of February 1466-7. On his month's day, to be celebrated in Wilmington church in whose cemetery he asked to be buried, he left 4d to each 'puero cantanti in choro', besides other amounts to priests and clerks, and 1d to other children saying the Psalm *De Profundis*. His anniversary day was to be celebrated in Dartford church to which he made similar bequests of 2d to each 'puero cantanti in choro' and 1d to other children (DRb/Pwr2/374v). Roger Rotheley senior, chandler of Dartford, making arrangements for his burial and month's days, in his will of May 1468, left 1d to each 'puero cantanti' each day, besides 4d to the parish clerk and 6d to each priest. He also endowed a twenty-year obit on his anniversary, leaving 6s 8d to be spent 'circa chorum et pauperes' (DRb/Pwr3/9v).

⁴⁰⁶ Thomas Auditor alias Barmarde of the parish, in 1536, left five marks to Sir John Buckley priest, or some other honest secular priest, to sing diligently, say mass and other divine services, and to help the 'quire' (DRb/Pwr9/215).

⁴⁰⁷ In April 1484 Robert Yfelde of Southfleet included this bequest in his will: 'lego ad reparacionem superpellicium chori eis dum ecclesie iij s iij d' (DRb/Pwr5/40v).

⁴⁰⁸ DRb/Pa 9 pt 2 ff 53-4; Terence Raoul Murphy, 'The Maintenance of Order in Early Tudor Kent, 1509-1558', p.155.

⁴⁰⁹ PROB 11/23/189. Potter asked that services be sung in the abbey 'by the syngers of our lady masse of the monastrie of Westminster' every Friday for one year, leaving 20d a week to be delivered into the hands of the children singers. He also asked that an anthem and collect be sung weekly before the image of St. Peter in the monastery, to 'playnesonge or other wise'. He stated in his will the full text of the anthem and collect to be used, the anthem beginning: 'Juste index Jhesu christe rex regnum et domine qui cum patris semper regnas ...', and the collect: 'Domine sancte pater qui filium tuum unigenitum sacro flamine operante in virginis ...'. He directed that each singer at his departing was to sing the English words 'Jhesu pardon the soules of John Richard and Alice and all Christen soules'. He directed that his executors were also to cause the same anthem and collect to be sung immediately after his death in Westerham parish church, every Friday after high mass, for a year. He referred to the procession on these occasions which was to be made up by the vicar or his deputy, the parish clerk 'or other syngers there', implying that this was church's own choir. Potter left 4d to the clerk and 4d to each singer.

Conclusion

Religious practice in late medieval Dartford and west Kent witnessed to the strength of belief in Purgatory and the possibility of alleviating the suffering of the soul there through pious action and services. It also witnessed to the variety of expression in orthodox religion. There were many testators who made no or little pious provision, especially in small rural communities, but those who did often committed considerable sums or made it the main purpose of their wills. In the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, the great majority of the laity continued to participate in the Catholic religion in which they had been brought up. As Kieckhefer has recently proposed, the religion practised by the majority of late medieval townsfolk and villagers was more conventional piety than extreme devotionism of the kind earlier demonstrated by Margery Kempe, although it was affected by it in such developments as renewed devotion to the Eucharist. Conventional piety was found meaningful by the majority who practised it because it was common to the community.⁴¹⁰ In Dartford parish church, the single most popular saint was the Virgin Mary, right up to the Reformation, with the great majority of testators wishing to be buried in the church seeking burial before one of her three images. Although some new developments did not gain popularity amongst Dartford will-makers, such as masses of *Scala Celi* or devotion to the Five Wounds, the traditional religion practised in that parish was not stagnant.⁴¹¹

There was a revived sense of parochial identity in England, in the mid-fifteenth century.⁴¹² The parish system depended on the voluntary participation of its members, and in the later middle ages parishioners were not slow to shoulder responsibility.⁴¹³ Some parishioners in west Kent demonstrated a new initiative in their religion, taking responsibility for such matters as almshouse and chapel provision and maintenance, and taking an active interest in the liturgy in their parish churches. In Dartford, the parish took an increasingly active role in the matters relating to St. Edmund's chapel and the charnel house beneath it, in the sixteenth century. Further, almshouses were founded by wealthy townsmen and run in cooperation with the parish clergy and priory. In Gravesend, parishioners built and maintained a chapel of ease in the town for the increase of religion, thereby eventually obtaining for themselves a more convenient parish church.

Duffy finds that 'the late medieval laity were intensely conscious of the liturgical calendar', and 'correct performance of the appropriate liturgy was a matter of some general concern'. Laity sometimes displayed a detailed knowledge of the prayers of the missal and breviary, reflecting clerical instruction and 'a conviction ... that such things mattered greatly'.⁴¹⁴ The will of William Milett gives insight into the active orthodox piety and attraction to a life of prayer and contemplation of one literate wealthy late

⁴¹⁰ Richard Kieckhefer, 'Convention and conversion: patterns in late medieval piety', *Church History: Studies in Christianity and Culture*, 67 (1998), pp.32-51 at pp.32, 51.

⁴¹¹ The traditionalism of piety in Dartford was evidently markedly different from that found in Hull. Peter Heath found that Hull 'testators had no share in the new devotions and displayed no eagerness for change', and that their commitment to the familiar ones was low-key. He argues that they were not tortured by introspection and a fear of Purgatory. He finds that their faith was sincere. However, he concludes that it was also inert and shallow (Peter Heath, 'Urban piety in the later Middle Ages: the evidence of Hull wills', in Barrie Dobson, ed., *The Church, Politics and Patronage in the Fifteenth Century* (Gloucester, 1984), pp.209-34 at pp.228-9). See note 89 above on Burgess's argument that late medieval laity did not so much fear Purgatory as welcome the way out of damnation that it gave them (Clive Burgess, "'A fond thing vainly invented": an essay on Purgatory and pious motive in later medieval England').

⁴¹² John Henderson, 'The parish and the poor in Florence at the time of the Black Death: the case of S. Frediano', p.266, cited above at note 295.

⁴¹³ Gervase Rosser, 'Communities of parish and guild in the late Middle Ages', pp.29-55 at pp.31-2.

⁴¹⁴ Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, p.43.

fifteenth-century layman leading an active life in Dartford. He valued the monastic liturgy of Dartford Priory, but was an active member of his parish community, and contributed to the ordering of the liturgy in the parish church. Milet, John Potter of Westerham and others like them were pious literate laymen with an appreciation for text and liturgy. However, they simply demonstrated in a particularly dynamic way their participation in the religion of the whole parish community. Included in the same worshipping community were those, like the almsmen in Dartford's Holy Trinity almshouses, who only knew their *Pater noster*, *Ave* and *Credo*, and attended prayers in the parish church. Milet's will indicates the various influences affecting lay religion in the parish, including family and employers, parish clergy, nuns and friars.

Harper-Bill found that, 'All over western Europe in the later middle ages laypeople increasingly took the initiative in the direction of religion'; for example, the proliferation of prayer which resulted from the popularity of the mass was not imposed by the clergy. As he also points out, however, increased lay activity did not imply dissatisfaction with the priesthood.⁴¹⁵ Evidence from the diocese of Rochester suggests that, from the mid-fifteenth century, parishioners often worked with their parish clergy for the maintenance and increase of religion, and were patient and long-suffering in the exceptional cases of abuse by bad priests. In Gravesend, experience demonstrates that the laity were assisted in taking greater responsibility in parochial religion by the local clergy, but not necessarily the diocesan authorities and ecclesiastical landowners who felt threatened by a loss of control. The Church was not unresponsive to the needs of the laity, especially in the parishes through its lesser clergy.

⁴¹⁵ Christopher Harper-Bill, *The Pre-Reformation Church in England, 1400-1530*, pp.75, 77.

Chapter Seven

Books, education, priests and laity

In chapter five the books of the nuns of Dartford Priory were investigated. The wills of the diocese of Rochester allow some consideration of religious reading in the secular world of west Kent, especially of the clergy. Doubt has been cast on the standards of learning and knowledge of the Scriptures of a large proportion of the parish clergy of late medieval and early Tudor England.¹ In the early sixteenth century, proportions of beneficed clergy who were graduates ranged from a tenth of incumbents in Surrey, one sixth in Norwich diocese, and a fifth in the diocese of Canterbury to a third in the diocese of London, and these proportions were rising.² However, the number of unbeneficed stipendiary priests, who did much of the parish work, with degrees was much lower.³ A parish priest needed to be able to instruct parishioners according to the canonical injunctions, demonstrate a grammatical understanding of letters and the scriptures, and a knowledge of the articles of faith, the sacraments and the seven deadly sins.⁴ In addition, he needed to be able to repeat daily office, mass and other sacraments of the church. Orme suggests that some knowledge of Latin was necessary 'so that the liturgy should not merely be rattled off parrot-fashion but be said with understanding and devotion'.⁵ However, the requirement of William Milet of Dartford that each priest saying for him the Psalm *Miserere mei deus* was to repeat this phrase 'castyng up hart and eyen to Almighty god as hartly as he can', suggests that rattling off prayers parrot-fashion may have been the usual method.⁶ Thomson suggests that expectations of the priesthood were rising amongst the laity, who were themselves experiencing improving education.⁷

The preliminary or alternative to university education for the majority of parish clergy, beneficed and unbeneficed, was being taught in local schools or by local teachers. By canon law, cathedrals and collegiate churches had to maintain two schools, one a grammar school, which gave a grounding in Latin, and a song school, where boys might acquire a knowledge of singing, spelling, the articles of faith, and a few anthems and Psalms.⁸ There were also other more ephemeral local schools that depended for their survival on individual teachers, founded by laymen and clergy, sometimes as a part of a chantry foundation.⁹ Some parish clergy gave local children free instruction on an informal basis.¹⁰ Parish clerks also had a duty to teach those who wanted to be taught to read the Psalter and sing, although this was often forgotten.¹¹ These more ephemeral schools and informal teachers probably taught their scholars to read in

¹ Felicity Heal and Rosemary O'Day report that 'many (pre-Reformation) clergy had a very limited knowledge of the Bible and the basic theological assumptions of the Christian faith' (Introduction in Felicity Heal and Rosemary O'Day, eds, *Church and Society in England: Henry VIII to James I* (London, 1977), pp.1-14 at p.4). See also, for example, Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations: Religion, Politics, and Society under the Tudors* (Oxford, 1993), p.40; Peter Heath, *The English Parish Clergy on the Eve of the Reformation* (London & Toronto, 1969), pp.70-75; Nicholas Orme, *English Schools in the Middle Ages* (London, 1973), pp.13-14.

² Peter Heath, *The English Parish Clergy on the Eve of the Reformation*, p.81.

³ Peter Heath, *The English Parish Clergy on the Eve of the Reformation*, pp.81-2.

⁴ Peter Heath, *The English Parish Clergy on the Eve of the Reformation*, p.76.

⁵ Nicholas Orme, *English Schools in the Middle Ages*, p.12.

⁶ See chapter six.

⁷ John A.F. Thomson, *The Early Tudor Church and Society, 1485-1529* (London, 1993), p.147.

⁸ Peter Heath, *The English Parish Clergy on the Eve of the Reformation*, pp.82-3.

⁹ Peter Heath, *The English Parish Clergy on the Eve of the Reformation*, p.83.

¹⁰ Peter Heath, *The English Parish Clergy on the Eve of the Reformation*, p.84.

¹¹ Peter Heath, *The English Parish Clergy on the Eve of the Reformation*, pp.84-5.

English, possibly with some Latin familiarity. This gave just sufficient grounding for a priest to be able to read for himself the instructional manuals of practical pastoral theology written for parish priests from the fourteenth century.¹² Books were necessary tools of the parish priest. Wills suggest that the books possessed by the resident parish clergy usually consisted of a narrow range of medieval texts, principally including service books, with some clergy possessing sermon aids, saints' lives and clerical manuals such as *Pupilla Oculi*.¹³ They rarely possessed Bibles, and this was the reason for their frequent unfamiliarity with its contents.¹⁴ This was in spite of attempts by the Church to encourage the regular reading of Scripture, from the thirteenth century to the 1530s.¹⁵ This in turn harmed their ability to direct the laity in a deepening of their religious education and devotion since most of the laity were denied permission to read the Bible for themselves.¹⁶

This chapter commences with a detailed study of a college of secular chantry priests in the diocese of Rochester, with consideration of its schools and library. This is followed by an investigation based on wills of the books owned by clergy in Dartford and the rest of the diocese, and their contacts with one another involving books. This investigation of priests' conservative reading tastes leads to an examination of the enduring religious traditionalism of priests in the Dartford area in the mid-sixteenth century. Some brief consideration is then given to literate laity who owned books and bequeathed them to priests and other laymen, before a brief look at heterodox reading amongst clergy and laity, in the diocese of Rochester, especially in the early sixteenth century.

Chantries, Cobham College, education and books

Chantry priests were often expected by their founders to assist in the celebration of the liturgy in a parish church, including by singing the chant and sometimes directing the choir, if there was one.¹⁷ They were also sometimes asked to give local children some basic free education, and this must have been especially true when they directed church choirs.¹⁸ Joan Simon estimates that under ten per cent of chantries held schools.¹⁹ Arthur Hussey found three examples amongst the Kent chantry certificates of chantries formally associated with schools or arrangements for teaching, at Ospringe, Tenterden and Higham.²⁰ The foundation at Higham, in the diocese of Rochester, was a late one; the certificate, dated 1548, states that the master and brethren of St. John's College in Cambridge had founded a stipend for one priest, to the value of £6 13s 4d, who was to celebrate divine service in a chapel in the parish, living in a lodging above the chapel. The priest was also required to 'teache the childe of thenhabitants frelye'.²¹

¹² Peter Heath, *The English Parish Clergy on the Eve of the Reformation*, pp.85-6. Such manuals are considered in Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: traditional religion in England, c.1400-c.1580* (New Haven & London, 1992), pp.54-63.

¹³ Peter Heath, *The English Parish Clergy on the Eve of the Reformation*, pp.88-9.

¹⁴ Peter Heath, *The English Parish Clergy on the Eve of the Reformation*, p.91.

¹⁵ Nicholas Orme, *English Schools in the Middle Ages*, p.12: in 1530, a decree ordered the clergy of the convocation of Canterbury to spend time studying Holy Scripture or in reading one of the approved doctors of the Church after completing divine office, two or three times a week.

¹⁶ Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, p.80.

¹⁷ See chapter six above.

¹⁸ On chantry schools, and the connection between the two roles, see Nicholas Orme, *English Schools in the Middle Ages*, pp.195ff..

¹⁹ Joan Simon, *Education and Society in Tudor England* (Cambridge, 1966), p.235 n.1.

²⁰ Arthur Hussey, *Kent Chantries*, Kent Records, 12 (Ashford, 1932), p.vii.

²¹ Arthur Hussey, *Kent Chantries*, pp.150-1. St. John's College was founded in 1511 by Bishop Fisher of Rochester and his fellow executors of the will of Lady Margaret Beaufort; the possessions of the recently suppressed Higham Priory were transferred to the new college in 1522 (VCH, *Cambridge*, iii, p.437; VCH, *Kent*, ii, pp.145-6). Like Higham Priory, the maison dieu of Ospringe had also come into the hands of St. John's College, in the early 1520s.

Probably more chantry priests than these three undertook elementary teaching, but on an informal basis. Another potential foundation, in Southfleet near Dartford, may not have come about. William Swanne senior esquire, of Southfleet, in his will dated 22nd March 1533-4, made a reversionary bequest for the foundation of a school for local children, as part of a forty-year obit whose foundation he made conditional on there being no surviving male heirs of his five children. He specified that one of the two honest secular priests who were to carry out the obit in the parish church was to be

... a connyng lernyd man that maye and can teche grammer and Latten and to teache frely as a frescole as meny scholars as well powre children as other as shall resorte and come to hyme and none to be denied *withoute ennye mony takinge* for the teachinge of the same children.²²

The association of chantries with education and musical training was particularly strong in the case of colleges of secular chantry priests founded by lay magnates for the singing of divine office and celebration of masses, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. As was stated above, by canon law, collegiate churches, like cathedrals, were obliged to provide the elementary training in reading and singing of a song school, and also a grammar school education. It is doubtful that this in fact was observed in every place,²³ but where they did exist these schools ensured the provision of skilled singers, both clerks and boy choristers, capable of singing elaborate polyphonic music.²⁴ The colleges cited by Nicholas Orme, in the west of England, possessed between four and twelve boys, who usually received their board and lodging in the establishment, as well as an education. Their education commenced with singing, at the age of seven or eight, and progressed to elementary Latin grammar at nine or ten, followed by the grammar course proper, starting at between ten and twelve years and lasting up to the age of around eighteen.²⁵ Other notable examples of such song schools existed at the collegiate churches of Fotheringay, in East Anglia, and St. Mary's Warwick, in the Midlands.²⁶ Some also provided education for children not on the foundation. At Tong in Shropshire it was the duty of one of the college chaplains to teach reading, music and grammar to the clerks of the college and the children of Tong and neighbouring places.²⁷ The largest collegiate song school and grammar school was Winchester College, founded in 1382, with seventy scholars learning Latin.²⁸

In Kent, the three colleges of Wye, Maidstone and Cobham (near Gravesend) all possessed choristers and provided education. For example, the 1477 statutes of Wye College specified that the master of grammar was to teach both rich and poor children free of charge, and the music master was to instruct all members of the college, and any youths who applied to him, in the rudiments of reading music. They further stated that the choristers were to be skilled in reading and singing.²⁹ Cobham College, in the diocese of Rochester, was founded as a place of learning by Sir John de Cobham, in 1362, and he supplied

²² PROB 11/25/106v.

²³ Jo Ann Hoepfner Moran, *The Growth of English Schooling, 1340-1548: learning, literacy, and laicization in pre-Reformation York diocese* (Princeton, 1985), p.8; Joan Simon, *Education and Society in Tudor England*, p.36. Simon cites a visitation of Newarke College in Leicester, in 1440, which found the choristers 'gadding about and in other unruly deeds, making no progress in virtues', and there was no school of any sort. Clerks and choristers of Mettingham College, in Suffolk, were sent away for education (Nicholas Orme, *English Schools in the Middle Ages*, p.195).

²⁴ Nicholas Orme, *Education in the west of England, 1066-1548* (Exeter, 1976), p.10. Reading meant learning to recognise and pronounce Latin words from liturgical textbooks (Nicholas Orme, *Education and Society in medieval and Renaissance England* (London, 1989), p.192).

²⁵ Nicholas Orme, *Education in the west of England, 1066-1548*, pp.10, 20.

²⁶ Nicholas Temperley, *The Music of the English Parish Church* (Cambridge, 1979), p.8.

²⁷ G.H. Cook, *English Collegiate Churches of the Middle Ages* (London, 1959), pp.4, 136.

²⁸ Nicholas Orme, *Education and Society in medieval and Renaissance England*, pp.13-14.

the church and college liberally with books, ornaments and vestments.³⁰ His college buildings included a separate schoolhouse close to the village street, on the north-east corner of the churchyard, first referred to in 1383.³¹ A papal bull of 1388, reproduced in the bishop's decree of 1389, granted permission for the augmentation of the foundation by the addition of two more chaplains to the original master and four chaplains, and also of two *aquabajuli* (holy water servers) who were to serve in the church as sacrists and 'learn in the schools with the other scholars so far as they are able'.³² These schools were the schools within the college, for it was stipulated that the servers were not to be hindered from divine service or the study of letters by being sent away.³³ The masters were usually *magisters*, and there is a probable reference to a college scholar priest in a consistory court case of 1480.³⁴ Clerks and choristers were part of the foundation of Cobham College throughout its existence. In 1403, Ralph de Cobham, kinsman of the founder, Sir John de Cobham, asked to be buried before the master's stall (in the chancel of the church), and for his burial services left 13s 4d to the master, William Tanner, 6s 8d to each other chaplain of the college, and 6s 8d between the clerks and choristers.³⁵ Peter Horney of Cobham, in his will made on Christmas Eve 1512, asked for dirige to be kept at his burial by note with priests, clerks and 'childern of the colleg of Cobham'.³⁶

To start as a chorister was one route into the Church. At Wells Cathedral song school, from the mid-fifteenth century, money paid for obits and other services in which choristers participated was kept in purses for individual boys, and was used for their expenses or paid over to them if they went to university.³⁷ Some such system perhaps existed at Cobham and other song schools. The education provided for the choristers at Cobham would have provided a good basis from which to go on to university and/or the priesthood. Tanner suggests that the boys and clerks who sang in the choir of the college of St. Mary in the Fields, in Norwich, may have been receiving some form of training for the priesthood. Similarly, the song school attached to Norwich Cathedral was one of the schools where the majority of local prospective clergy who did not study at university may have been sent for an elementary education.³⁸ Will-makers who requested the participation of choristers in their obits and burial services were aware of this; they may not simply have been interested in 'learned' children's ability to assist the priest or clerk with the reading or singing of the texts but saw them as potential future priests. Thus, any requests for the involvement of 'learned' children in masses in parish churches may have been made partly with the intention of assisting these boys on their way to the priesthood. In 1478, John Fichet of the vill of Tonbridge left five marks for a

²⁹ J.M. Russell, *The History of Maidstone* (1881), p.80; W.S. Morris, *The History and Topography of Wye* (Canterbury, 1842), pp.122, 132, 134.

³⁰ *Cal. Pap. Petitions*, i, 1342-1419, p.136; Edwin Harris, *Cobham College* (Rochester, 1909), p.3; citing John Thorpe, *Registrum Roffense* (London, 1769), pp.234-9. Cobham College's books will be dealt with below.

³¹ This was on the other side of the church from the main college buildings. In 1383, Robert atte Pette, a mason of Luddesdown, an adjacent parish, acknowledged receipt of 42s 6d for work done in 'le colegue et skolehous de Cobham': BL Harleian Ch. 48/E/46; cited in P.J. Tester, 'Notes on the medieval chantry college at Cobham', *AC*, 79 (1964), pp.109-20 at p.119. The actual building, which still stands, is identified as the schoolhouse from a terrier of 1572, reproduced in A.A. Arnold, 'Cobham College', *AC*, 27 (1905), pp.64-109 at p.106.

³² *Item statumus quod ipsi adiscant in scolis cum aliis scolariibus prout possunt* (quoted in P.J. Tester, 'Notes on the medieval chantry college at Cobham', p.119, citing J. Thorpe, *Registrum Roffense*, p.237).

³³ Edwin Harris, *Cobham College*, p.3, commenting on the same bull.

³⁴ In this case, heard in Dartford parish church on 31st July 1480, John Peion and John Bokelond, both of Luddesdown near Cobham, and Henry Smyth of Cobham, were cited at the instance of the executor of the will of Alice Sprever of Cobham (deceased). They were accused of impeding the execution of Alice's will, which she had delivered orally to a 'magister scholarus', presumably of Cobham College (DRb/Pa 4 fo.154).

³⁵ PROB 11/2/21.

³⁶ DRb/Pwr6/344v.

³⁷ John A.F. Thomson, *The Early Tudor Church and Society, 1485-1529*, p.148.

chaplain to celebrate in the parish church, at the altar of St. Katherine, for half a year. He left a further 4s for a boy ('puero') or literate man ('homi literato') to respond to the chaplain at his mass each day.³⁹ In 1522, John Hall, burgess of the city of Rochester, left 6d to each of ten priests singing mass and diriges for his soul, on his burial day; 3d to each clerk; 1d to each 'lernyd' boy; and ½d to every poor unlearned boy.⁴⁰ A few wealthy testators made bequests for the schooling of boys explicitly with the purpose of encouraging them to be priests.⁴¹ John Donett of Eynsford, in the peculiar deanery of Shoreham, in his will dated 27th March 1465, bequeathed eight marks to his godson William Sybyle 'to fynd hym with to scole', when he had taken the order of subdeacon. Donett stated that 'if he be not kept to school nor be nat disposid ne willing to be a preest nor take not the order of subdekyn but dispose hymself to other wordeley occupacion' then four of the eight marks were to be taken and delivered to another godson.⁴² Sir Henry Wombewell (knight) of Southfleet left to his godson Henry Giles 'my written porteous if he wilbe a preest', in his will of September 1508. If Henry would not be a priest, the book was to be given by Henry's father to some poor priest to pray for Sir Henry's soul.⁴³

Cobham College possessed a library which included books suitable for a grammar school education. Two inventories survive of the goods, ornaments, vestments and books of the medieval Cobham College, one dated Michaelmas 1397 (and added to early in Henry IV's reign),⁴⁴ and the other drawn up on Christmas Day, 1479.⁴⁵ The first was a general inventory of the possessions on the college farms and in the college rooms and buildings, including the library, but not including private rooms or sleeping chambers, or church goods and service books. The heading of the 1479 inventory, however, says that it was drawn up by the submaster and two college sacristans, and concerned only the college's church goods, including books, which were committed to the sacristans' custody in the sacristy and church. The two documents are not comparable, therefore, and do not allow comments to be made about changing reading habits and scholarly tastes over the fifteenth century. In addition to books belonging to the college, the chaplains owned books themselves; Thomas Stone, the only chaplain for whom a will survives, left a number of books to the college, and other beneficiaries, in 1464.⁴⁶

³⁹ Norman P. Tanner, *The Church in late medieval Norwich 1370-1532* (Toronto, 1984), pp.32-3.

³⁹ DRb/Pwr3 ff 272v, 307.

⁴⁰ DRb/Pwr7/249v.

⁴¹ Tanner records a growth in the number of bequests for priests or candidates for the priesthood to study, in the second half of the fifteenth century; he finds them to be interesting examples of laity encouraging young men, usually their own sons, to become priests and making financial sacrifices to secure a better educated future: Norman P. Tanner, *The Church in late medieval Norwich 1370-1532*, p.31.

⁴² PROB 11/5/69v

⁴³ PROB 11/16/75. The wording of this bequest perhaps implies that Sir Henry also possessed a printed porteous. As with clergy, few laity specifically stated that they owned printed books. The only other possible example is that of William Brown of Rochester, who in his will of 29th August 1525, bequeathed his 'pryntes', perhaps printed books or pamphlets, to one William Rede (DRb/Pwr8/12).

⁴⁴ BL Harley Roll C.18. This is a single membrane paper document measuring 360x292mm and tightly rolled. It is in good condition, although stained, and the hand in brown ink is clearly legible. There are some additions, deletions and insertions in black ink which match an addition to the heading in the same ink, giving a confusing date early in Henry IV's reign. The heading of the inventory (*Inventarium omnium bonorum & catallorum in diversis maneriis & locis Collegii de Cobeham in festivo Sancti Michaelis Archangeli Anno Regni Regis Ricardi Secundi xxj*) makes it clear, as do the subheadings, that the goods listed were not just located in Cobham, but also in the manor of West Chalk and Chalk marsh farm, which belonged to the college. The inventory is divided into sections with headings referring to this manor, the stores in the college's farms, and the bakehouse, buttery, kitchen, hall, home farm, stable and library of the college itself. The text is entirely in Latin and abbreviated. The names of the donors of some items are given.

⁴⁵ The original of the 1479 inventory does not survive but it was printed in John Thorpe, *Registrum Roffense*, pp.239-41. An imperfect eighteenth-century translation of the latter is printed in Aymer Valance, 'Cobham Collegiate Church', *AC*, 43 (1931), pp.133-60: Appendix 1 at pp.147-56. This inventory lists just those possessions of the college for which the sacristans had responsibility, under the headings books, ornaments, vestments and copes, vestments for ordinary wear, gold cloths of silk and linen, sudaries and napkins, ornaments for the altar of St. Mary and ornaments for the altar of the Holy Trinity.

⁴⁶ DRb/Pwr2/285.

The 1397 library list represents the extent of Cobham College's academic library three decades after the chantry was founded, and it must include books donated by the founder Sir John de Cobham. All but one of the twenty-seven books identified were kept in the library, which could have been either a room or a cupboard. The exception, a *Liber de Prophetiis*, apparently containing the prophetic books of the Old Testament, was in the hall, where it was perhaps used for reading aloud.⁴⁷ The list of books reflected the traditional contents of Benedictine monastic and Oxbridge college libraries, encompassing patristic and scholastic theology, books for Marian devotion, Cistercian devotional writing ascribed to St. Bernard, sermons, legal works, saints' lives and history. The grammar reflected the teaching syllabus of the school, and the sermon books and saints' lives were all suitable books for scholarly priests engaged in teaching and preaching. In more detail, the grammar books included a volume identified simply by the initial 'S'; a copy of the most popular advanced school Latin grammar textbook of the middle ages, by Alexander de Villa Dei (c.1200), called *Liber magnorum Doctrinale*;⁴⁸ a copy of the standard late medieval Latin dictionary, also containing a grammar, called *Catholicon*;⁴⁹ and a 'liber Hugut.', possibly the *Derivationes* of Hugutio of Pisa, bishop of Ferrara (d.1210), an etymological dictionary which was a standard tool in the later middle ages.⁵⁰ Biblical texts and glosses included two Bibles, two glossed Psalters and two books of *Sentences* (presumably those of Peter Lombard). Patristic theology was represented by a volume of St. John of Chrysostom. Legal works represented were Gregory's Decretals and the Sixth Book of Decretals, a book of Clement (presumably the glosses), and *Summa Summarum*, a compilation of theology and canon law. Sermon aids included a book of sermons and one called *Liber de Omoliis Gregorii*. Devotional and prayer collections, and other religious works, included a book of *Meditationes Bernardi*, a book called *Mariale* (prayers to Mary), and one called *Liber de Miraculiorum*. Saints' lives found in the library were a *Liber Compostolan*, a *Legenda Sanctorum* and a *Liber beate Marie*. There was one book of history - a copy of Higden's *Polychronicon*. There were four other books hard to identify, not least because of palaeographical problems, one of which seems to have been called 'Johannis Andrew' and another 'Raymund'. This was predominantly an academic, theological and legal library, with little concession to secular trends in pious devotion, the Bernard being one possible exception.

The will of college chaplain Thomas Stone indicates that, by 1464, the college priests owned their own liturgical books and scholarly tools, and books of stories, saints' lives and preaching manuals, all suitable for preaching material, such as were possessed by many parish clergy of the period who left books in their wills. Stone mentioned eleven books in his will, four of which he bequeathed to the college, as well as leaving the college 13s 4d for the repair of books and vestments. These books must previously have been kept in his college chamber, dormitory or study. The four books left to the college were a copy of the sixth-century collection of writings by and about various of the desert fathers called *Vitas Patrum*,⁵¹ a dictionary of 'verborum deficiendum', a processional, and a book which bound together a copy of the ordinal

⁴⁷ This possibly refers to the second major division of the Old Testament after the Pentateuch, known as the Prophets, containing the Former Prophets (Joshua, Judges, I-II Samuel, I-II Kings) and the Latter Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and The Twelve - Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi).

⁴⁸ Nicholas Orme, *English Schools in the Middle Ages*, p.89.

⁴⁹ Tanner says a Norwich priest possessed a copy of this, and that it was a Latin dictionary written about 1285 by John de Balbis, a Dominican friar from Genoa (Norman P. Tanner, *The Church in late medieval Norwich 1370-1532*, p.41). John of Genoa was usually called Januensis. His *Catholicon* reached England by the end of the thirteenth century, and was frequently printed in Europe in the fifteenth century (Nicholas Orme, *English Schools in the Middle Ages*, p.93).

⁵⁰ Nicholas Orme, *English Schools in the Middle Ages*, p.93.

⁵¹ Norman P. Tanner, *The Church in late medieval Norwich 1370-1532*, p.40.

called *Le Pye* with the *Gesta Romanorum*, which was a popular medieval collection of mythical tales with moral or spiritual application. The latter would have been useful as sermon material. Most of Stone's other book bequests indicated his connections with east Kent. He left four books to the parish church of Egerton, in the diocese of Canterbury, where he owned a house: a copy of *Pars Occuli*, a preaching manual found in many clerical wills;⁵² a copy of James da Voragina's *Legenda Aurea*, widely popular amongst book-owning clergy and laity; a *Liber Sermonis*; and a processional. He left 20s and an ordinal to Harbledown church, and a manual to the church of Lower Hardres ('Parva Hardres'), both parishes being near Canterbury. He also left cash to the vicar of Headcorn, to Cranbrook church and to Throwley ('Threwle') church near Canterbury. Finally, Stone left a portiphorium (a notated breviary) to an unidentified individual, William Saundire.⁵³ Stone's possession of these books, and his bequests of them to these parish churches and clergy, suggests that he possessed the same outlook and interests as parish clergy, and that he had wide contacts with them.

The sacristy inventory of 1479 listed mostly service books, except that it included at least two of Thomas Stone's bequests of 1464, which had come to this collection rather than the college's academic library. The list includes the fifteenth-century Latin-English dictionary called *Ortus Vocabulorum*, possession of which indicates that the college's scholars were continuing to update their library;⁵⁴ and the volume containing *una pica* (*Le Pye*) bound with the *Gesta Romanorum*. These stand out from the other fifty-one books listed above these items, all of which were for liturgical use, consisting of ten antiphoners, six notated portiphoria, a book of collects, a book of lessons called *lectrinale*, three Psalters, a book of lessons for the seasons ('Legenda temporal') and a *Legenda Sanctorum*, an ordinal, nine graduals, five missals (including one in Chalk church, whose advowson belonged to the college,⁵⁵ and a small one for St. Mary's altar in Cobham church), two Gospels, one book of the Epistles, eight processionals, one manual containing the *Officium Sacrorum*, a quire containing the seven Penitential Psalms with the Litany, Placebo and Dirige.

In addition to the books listed in these inventories and in Thomas Stone's will, an antiphoner, two mass books and one unidentified book were bequeathed to Cobham College by local laity and parish clergy, in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.⁵⁶

⁵² *Pars Occuli* was the first of three parts that made up the *Oculus Sacerdotis*. The *Oculus Sacerdotis* was an instructional work for parish priests written in the light of the Constitutions of Archbishop Peckham, by a Berkshire priest, William of Pagula, about 1320. The first part (*Pars Oculus*) concerned confession and penance; the *Dextera Pars* concerned such pastoral matters as the education of the laity in dogma and morals; and *Sinistra Pars* concerned the seven sacraments. Confusingly, the complete work was sometimes called *Pars Oculi* (L E Boyle, 'The *Oculus Sacerdotis* and some other works of William of Pagula', *TRHS*, 5th ser., 5 (1955), pp.81-110 at pp 83-92).

⁵³ See below for another mention of this man, identified as a priest, which connects Thomas Stone with a reading circle of parish clergy.

⁵⁴ Attributed to Geoffrey the Grammarian, a fifteenth-century English Dominican (Norman P. Tanner, *The Church in late medieval Norwich 1370-1532*, p.37). It drew on the *Medulla Grammaticae*, a Latin-English dictionary compiled in the first third of the fifteenth century, the *Catholicon* and other collections (Nicholas Orme, *English Schools in the Middle Ages*, p.97).

⁵⁵ VCH, *Kent*, ii, p.231. The college also owned the manor of West Chalk, and rents in the Thames marsh there.

⁵⁶ Dominus Richard Wynseby, vicar of Horton parish church, near Dartford, in his will of July 1420, left an antiphonar either to the parish church or the college of Cobham (PROB 11/3/132v). Horton was an appropriated church of Cobham College, after 1378 (VCH, *Kent*, ii, p.231). William Peper, perpetual vicar of Shorne parish church, bequeathed a 'librum' to Cobham College, in his will dated 27th January 1470/71 (DRb/Pwr4/50). William Hunt of Cobham, in his will of 2nd January 1527-8, left 6s 8d to the buying of a book for the mass of Our Lady, for use in the chapel of Our Lady in Cobham church (DRb/Pwr8/126). John Cokk senior of Frindsbury, in his will of 10th November 1534, willed a mass book price 5s to each of Frindsbury, Strood and West Malling parish churches, and one to Cobham College (DRb/Pwr9/157v).

There are few surviving books or inventories from other late medieval chantry colleges with which to compare Cobham's. One such inventory that does survive is a catalogue of books owned by Winchester College in 1433, three decades after the first Cobham inventory was made. Although a much larger institution and library, its contents were broadly the same as those of Cobham College, consisting of service books, bibles, biblical glosses, Lombard's *Sentences*, patristic theology including St. John of Chrysostom, various works of theology and moral writing, chronicles including Higden's *Polychronicon*, canon law including the Decretals and Clementine glosses, and several books of grammar.⁵⁷ These were typical contents of medieval scholarly libraries. Scholarly chantry colleges also possessed new writings; the fifteenth-century Latin-English dictionary, *Ortus Vocabulorum*, and copy of *Pars Occuli* belonging to Thomas Stone at Cobham have been mentioned. Winchester College possessed a commentary on the Psalms by the fourteenth century hermit Richard Rolle. The college at Fotheringay obtained a printed book of the Meditations of St. Bridget, printed in 1500.⁵⁸ The master of Maidstone College, between 1506 and 1519, William Grocyn, was a respected scholar demonstrating a mixture of conservative and progressive interests, and may have influenced learning there.⁵⁹

From 1438 until Cobham College's suppression in 1538, 28.9 per cent of Cobham parishioners who made wills made bequests for the choristers and clerks to participate at their burial and other services.⁶⁰ Most of these testators also included the master and chaplains of the college in their arrangements. The choir, clerks and chaplains were especially in demand in the mid-to late fifteenth century; forty per cent of Cobham testators between 1448 and 1477 requested the services of the choir. The choir and college were particularly popular for their services amongst a small number of the wealthier families of the parish, over two or more generations, the Staces, Sprevers, Joskyns and Wryghts. These four families accounted for twelve of the twenty-two wills mentioning the choir. This suggests that some of the choristers came from these families and were educated in the college. The local recruitment of boys for the choir and school is also suggested by the will, dated 1491, of John Yerisley of Cobham; Yerisley willed all his books to be delivered by his executors to the master and submaster of Cobham College, according to the terms of an indenture, on condition that his grandsons' books remained to the use of their instructor in grammar and Latin for certain years, and then to remain to the master and submaster. Yerisley's grandsons were the children of his daughter Agnes and her husband Richard Page of Shorne, an

⁵⁷ W H Gunner, 'Catalogue of books belonging to the college of St. Mary, Winchester', *Archaeological Journal*, 15 (1858), pp.59-74.

⁵⁸ N R Ker, *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain*, 2nd edn (London, 1964), p.88.

⁵⁹ He was the first teacher of Greek at Oxford, in the 1480s, and was a friend of Erasmus, although he maintained an interest in scholastic theology and preferred Aristotle to Plato (Peter Clark & Lyn Murfin, *The History of Maidstone: the making of a modern town* (Stroud, 1995), p.26). The three surviving books of Maidstone College include two conventional collections of St. Anselm (N.R. Ker, *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain*, p.128).

⁶⁰ The choir was mentioned in the wills of John Pette in 1447, John Sprever, barber and medical doctor, in 1448, and Robert Stace in 1451 (DRb/Pwr1 ff.45v, 66, 114v); Robert Rowe in 1457, William Sprever in 1458, Henry Stace in 1461, William Sprever in 1461, Thomas Stone, chaplain of the college, in 1464, and John Sprever in 1464 (DRb/Pwr2 ff.90v, 100v, 188v, 212, 285v, 301); John Joskyn, in 1469, and Richard Joskyn in 1470 (DRb/Pwr3 ff.45v, 47); Thomas Wryght in 1471, and Alice Sprever in 1472 (DRb/Pwr4 ff.88v, 31); Roger Chyppe, in 1480 (DRb/Pwr5/8); Robert Holt, in 1503 (DRb/Pwr6/75v); John Sleper, in 1506, founded an annual dirige and mass in the parish church, providing 6s 8d to be paid 'unto the companye of the qwere' (DRb/Pwr6/182v); in 1508, Nicholas Wngthe included bequests to the master, chaplains, clerks and choristers in his will (DRb/Pwr6/203); Alice German, widow, asked that a 'dirige be sunge of the hole quere' at her burial and month's mind, in her will of 6th April 1508 (DRb/Pwr6/209); William Hawke asked the master, priests, clerks and choristers of the college to participate at his burial, in his will of 12th October 1509 (DRb/Pwr6/257); Peter Horney asked for dirige at his burial to be kept by the priests, clerks and 'childern of the colleg of Cobham', in his will of Christmas Eve 1512 (DRb/Pwr6/344v); Roberge Sprever, widow, made a similar request in 1524 (DRb/Pwr7/324); Stephen Devynshire left 10s to the whole 'quere' at his burial, in 1526 (DRb/Pwr8/34v). One of the college clerks, John Harries, made a will in 1519 (DRb/Pwr7/168). Most testators used the English word 'querister' or 'chorister', even in Latin wills, but Thomas Stone, chaplain of the college, was unique in using the Latin word 'paraphonista', in 1464.

adjacent parish.⁶¹ The most obvious place for them to be learning Latin and grammar locally was at Cobham College itself. Further, in 1522, John Mason alias Pett, a pious land-owner of the neighbouring parish of Luddesdown, bequeathed £3 6s 8d, a considerable sum, for his son John 'to be kept to learning with mete drynke and clothing'. Mason required 'my lord bischop of Armichan (Armagh)' to make sure that John kept to his learning.⁶² In 1522, the newly appointed archbishop of Armagh, George Cromer, was also the master of Cobham College.⁶³ It is, therefore, most likely that John Mason went to school there. The bequest implies that choristers boarded in the college.⁶⁴

In order to assess the contribution of Cobham College to intellectual and religious life locally it is helpful to look at one family in particular. The highest number of bequests from a single family to the college, its priests, clerks and choristers, between 1438 and 1538, came from members of the Sprever family.⁶⁵ The Sprevers were one of the wealthier families in north-west Kent, apparently of yeoman rank, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; wills show that most of them resided in Cobham and Milton next Gravesend, but they owned land in Meopham and other local parishes besides. Like members of another locally prominent family, the Sedleys of Southfleet, at least one of the Sprevers served as an official of Dartford Priory, in the sixteenth century; William Sprever, yeoman, who made his will in 1525, has already been investigated in this study.⁶⁶ His kinsman Richard Sprever of Cobham left 6s 8d to the prioress and convent of Dartford Priory to pray for him, in 1516.⁶⁷ A century before William Sprever died, at least two members of the family benefited from a university education, perhaps having begun their education in Cobham College. One of these, John Sprever, barber and medical doctor, also called 'leche', who lived in Cobham, made his will in 1448, and was one of those who left money for the choristers, clerks and priests of the college to sing and pray at his burial and on his month's day.⁶⁸ The other, William Sprever, doctor of laws and a priest, rose to some prominence as a skilful lawyer and international diplomat. Among his many ecclesiastical appointments, many of which he held concurrently, were two archdeaconries, and he held local appointments including the mastership of Milton next Gravesend chantry hospital.⁶⁹ If he did receive

⁶¹ DRb/Pwr5/168

⁶² DRb/Pwr7/255. Appropriately enough, it may have been his ancestor who carried out masonry-work on the college schoolhouse, in 1383 (see note 31 above).

⁶³ Cromer was master of Cobham College 1512-32 (VCH, Kent, ii, p.232), and Archbishop of Armagh 1521-39 (Maurice Powicke & E B Fryde, eds, *Handbook of British Chronology* (London, 1961), p.309).

⁶⁴ Another local boy who may have been sent to school at Cobham College was John Hawke, the nephew of William Hawke of Cobham. In his will of 12th October 1509, William Hawke asked for the master, priests, clerks and choristers of the college to participate at his burial, and instructed his wife to find his nephew John to school until he could read and write (DRb/Pwr6/257).

⁶⁵ John Sprever, barber and medical doctor, in 1448 (DRb/Pwr1/66); William Sprever in 1458, William Sprever in 1461, and John Sprever in 1464 (DRb/Pwr2 ff. 100v, 212, 301); Alice Sprever in 1472 (DRb/Pwr4/31); 'Roberge' Sprever, widow, in 1524 (DRb/Pwr7/324)

⁶⁶ PROB 11/21/272. It is William's will that tells us the family were yeomanry. Like other members of his family he owned land in Meopham, and he founded an obit in Meopham parish church with charitable doles there. His feoffees included John Bogherst of Luddesdown, between Meopham and Cobham, as well as other priory officials, such as William Wiggan, William Roper (see chapter two notes 104-5) and William and Martin Sedley. The Sedleys' father, John Sedley of Southfleet, who was an auditor of the king and Dartford Priory, was closely associated with the production of books; he stated that he was a former warden of the Stationers' Company, in his will of February 1530-31 (PROB 11/24/149). John Sedley may have been associated in some way with a school in London; a note written on the dorso of the 1521-2 Dartford Priory rent roll, which he audited, states: 'Delyver thyse viij skynnes at Tyc Leys house in Limbart Strete besydes the Cardinalles Hatt' (London Society of Antiquaries Ms 564, m.10). The Cardinal's Hat was a school in Lombard Street recorded as being in existence from 1410 (Nicholas Orme, *English Schools in the Middle Ages*, pp.210-12).

⁶⁷ DRb/Pwr7/75.

⁶⁸ DRb/Pwr1/66. John Sprever is not listed in *BRUO*, *BRUC* or J.A. Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses*, pt 1, to 1751 (Cambridge, 1922), but might have been educated at university, as a doctor 'medicus'. He left his message to his servant John Andrewe, on condition that he 'be dyligent to lerne my crafte & he schall have part of every instroment that longgyth to my crafte'.

⁶⁹ William Sprever was a fellow of Merton College Oxford from 1415 to at least 1428, was D.C.L. by 1430 and priested in 1434. He was archdeacon of Bath and Chichester, and canon of St. Paul's and Lincoln. He worked in the Admiralty Court in the 1430s and 40s, and undertook diplomatic missions, for example as a senior ambassador to the Hanseatic League, in the 1430s, helping to draw up a

his early education in Latin, canon law and other subjects at Cobham College it was evidently a good preparation. His education also gave him an interest in literary pursuits and the matter of church councils, as his two surviving manuscript books demonstrate; one is his own compilation of letters, speeches and statutes relating to the councils of Constance (which finished at the time he became a fellow at Merton College, Oxford) and Basel, and the other was a tract written by himself (*Tractatus de summorum pontificum et generalium conciliorum potestate*).⁷⁰

Cobham College was a scholarly institution carrying out its obligation set down in canon law to provide a musical and grammar school education. The books possessed by the college and its chaplains suggest that the full medieval school curriculum was taught, involving study of reading, plainsong, Latin grammar, canon law and theology. A boy kept to school at such colleges for the full term emerged able to read, write and speak Latin with ease and elegance, and with a good grounding in Christian ideas and ethics.⁷¹ Cobham College thus provided a good education for any boy wishing to proceed to university and possibly the priesthood. The chaplains, who read instruction books such as *Pars Occuli* and may have carried out pastoral work in Cobham, may have been able to give practical advice to any boy intended to become a priest without going to university. The college also provided for that increasing number of boys who went to school, in the fifteenth century, without the intention of becoming priests, contributing to increasing lay literacy.⁷² The evidence of the Sprevers of Milton and Cobham suggests that local families who had ambitions for their sons, and sufficient financial means, sent them to the college for their early education. It thus played an important role in the locality until the Reformation, when it was suppressed in 1538. With the loss also of Dartford Priory's school for children of noble birth, in 1539, the only school of significance in this part of Kent after 1540 was the new king's college attached to the cathedral in Rochester.

Clerical reading circles, books and continental connections

Many books are found mentioned in the wills made by pre-Reformation clergy of the diocese of Rochester, both graduates and non-graduates, and they give some indication of what the clergy read.⁷³ Most clergy who made wills were not graduates, and must have received the kind of elementary or grammar school education that has been described. Many of these priests, whether unbeneficed or beneficed, mentioned books from within a narrow range, indicating that their education had prepared them to continue their reading once ordained. It must be remembered, of course, that wills often do not indicate

treaty of commerce and amity, in 1437. Locally, he was rector of Stone next Dartford, 1441-9, and official and vicar general of the bishop of Rochester in 1437 and 1444. He was master of the chantry hospital of Milton next Gravesend between 1436-7 and 1442 until his death, in 1459, executing the will of William Swan of Southfleet, near Gravesend, in 1446, and supervising that of his kinsman, Thomas Sprever of Milton, dated 1452 (DRb/Pwr ff.32v, 129). All other information presented here concerning this William Sprever, except the two local will references, comes from *BRUO*, iii, pp.1745-6, and A.L. Browne, 'The medieval officials-principal of Rochester', *AC*, 53 (1941), pp.29-61 at pp.55-6.

⁷⁰ Paris, Bibl. Nat. Mss Latin 1448, 1449 ff 1-30.

⁷¹ The stages of the medieval school curriculum are set out by Nicholas Orme, *Education in the west of England, 1066-1548*, pp.2, 22.

⁷² These trends are noted by Nicholas Orme, *Education and Society in medieval and Renaissance England*, p.23. See also Jo Ann Hoepfner Moran, *The Growth of English Schooling, 1340-1548*, especially chapter six. Moran (p.225) states that, before the sixteenth century, this arose principally from expanding access to elementary education in reading, song and also writing. Joan Simon points out, however, that writing was rarely taught in elementary schools, being a semi-vocational subject (Joan Simon, *Education and Society in Tudor England*, p.4).

the full extent of ownership of books, as probate inventories from other dioceses sometimes show.⁷⁴ Here, certain groups of clergy in the diocese of Rochester, who were linked by books, are investigated, drawing on wills proved in both the Rochester consistory court and the Prerogative Court of Canterbury.

Inhabitants of the north Kent Thames shore area were subject to continental influences. Trade and migration provided channels for cultural and orthodox religious links between Rochester and the continent, in the late middle ages. This is demonstrated by the will, dated 19th September 1464, of Andrew Trayll, chaplain of St. Clement's parish in Rochester, not apparently university-educated, in which he bequeathed eleven books to laity and clergy in and around Rochester, and to a church in Bruges.⁷⁵ Trayll was probably a Scot whose family was connected with Flanders by the wool trade; in his will he bequeathed a blood gown and 10s to his sister living in Bruges, and he left his best breviary to the altar of St. Ninian in that city. St. Ninian was patron saint of the Scottish wool merchants in Bruges, and the altar in their chapel in the Carmelite church there was dedicated to Our Lady and St. Ninian. The English merchants also had a chapel in this church, dedicated to St. Thomas of Canterbury. It was most likely this altar of St. Ninian to which Andrew Trayll referred.⁷⁶ Trayll's other books show him to have been a scholarly secular priest. Most of the beneficiaries of his will were brother priests in and around Rochester, suggesting that they constituted a fellowship of local clergy who lent each other reading material. To the rector of his own parish Trayll left a copy of the preaching manual *Pupilla Occuli*, and a 'librum de historiis inchoandis qui d. Pica', which he had lent to the vicar of Burham, near Rochester.⁷⁷ To Dominus Thomas Codde, the vicar of St. Margaret's next Rochester, Trayll left a book of the *Apocalypse*. He left a small breviary to Master William Hammond, one of his executors, whom he called 'confratris mei', who was a former vicar of Halling and until recently had been a chaplain of Rochester bridge chapel.⁷⁸ Trayll had a concern for education, and bequeathed a 'librum grammaticalem', which contained an introduction to the rules of grammar, to Andrew, son of one Edmund Chirchsey.⁷⁹ He left a book, perhaps a dictionary, called *Composita Verborum*, to John, the son of one Master William Petyr. To Master Adam Senclere Trayll left a book of Egidius Romanum called 'de Regiminibus principum'.⁸⁰ Finally, to a hermit in Rochester, called

⁷³ Tanner cites an unusual example of an inventory made in 1518 for a Norwich rector, who was not a university graduate but who owned forty-six books, many of which were of canon law (Norman P. Tanner, *The Church in late medieval Norwich 1370-1532*, pp. 35-6)

⁷⁴ Norman P. Tanner, *The Church in late medieval Norwich 1370-1532*, p.37.

⁷⁵ DRb/Pwr2/284v

⁷⁶ The Scottish staple remained in Bruges from 1359 to 1498 with few minor interruptions, and were given ground on which to build their chapel in July 1366, with privileges regarding the celebration of mass and burials. The Carmelites celebrated masses at the altar but there was also a chaplain appointed by the king of Scotland. All this information comes from P. Carson, 'Bruges and the British Isles', in Valentin Vermeersch, ed., *Brugge en Europe* (Antwerp, 1992), p.135, which article is based on J. Marechal, 'De devotie tot Sint-Niniaan, bisschop van Whithorn in Schotland, 1366-1548', *Handelingen van het Genootschap voor Geschiedenis 'Société d'Emulation' te Brugge*, 99 (1962), pp.187-202. There was only one other altar of St. Ninian in Bruges, in the fifteenth century – maintained in St. Giles's church by the city's corn-merchants – but no references to it from before 1474 have previously been found. I am most grateful to Mr. N. Geirnaert, archivist at the Brugge Stadsarchief, for sending me all this information.

⁷⁷ It has not proved possible to identify the latter work. The *Pupilla Occuli*, a revision of *Oculus Sacerdotis* by John de Burgo, rector of Collingham, published in 1385, was one of the most popular instructional works for parish priests, in the fifteenth century, as testified to by the number of surviving manuscripts and mentions in wills (L.E. Boyle, 'The *Oculus Sacerdotis* and some other works of William of Pagula', pp.94-5; F.A. Gasquet, 'The bibliography of some devotional books printed by the earliest English printers', *Transactions of the Bibliographical Society*, 7 (1902-4), pp.163-89 at p.173). See note 52 above concerning the *Oculus Sacerdotis*, also known as *Pars Occuli*.

⁷⁸ C.H. Fielding, *The Records of Rochester* (Dartford, 1910), p.420.

⁷⁹ In full: 'unum librum grammaticalem qui dr. pratum florum & regulas per induccionem modum latinizandi'.

⁸⁰ Egidius (Collonus) Romanus (Giles of Rome), *De Regimine Principum* (after 1285). Giles of Rome was an Augustine friar and theologian who wrote about the power of the pope and the Church in secular affairs. His *De Regimine Principum* (On the rule of princes) was written for Philippe IV le Bel of France (article by Thomas Renna in *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, iv (New York, 1984), p.400). A Middle English translation by Trevisa exists in one surviving (fifteenth century) manuscript – Oxford, Bodleian Library Digby Ms. 233 – and has not been edited (Anthony S.G. Edwards, 'John Trevisa' in A.S.G. Edwards, ed., *Middle English Prose: A Critical Guide to Major Authors and Genres* (New Jersey, 1984), pp.133-46 at pp.133-5, 138; Patrick J. Homer, *The Index*

Robert, Trayll left a book containing the seven Penitential Psalms with other devout prayers bound in the same covers. Another priest who can be included in this reading circle was the vicar of Aylesford, who was left a portiforium and 'unum armicudium' in the will of William Ledys, the vicar of Burham, dated ten days before Trayll's will.⁸¹ This William Ledys was the vicar of Burham to whom Andrew Trayll had lent a book.

Trayll's bequest of a dictionary to the son of Master William Petyr might link this clerical reading group to another in north-west Kent. This Master Petyr was perhaps the Master William Petyr named as executor in the will of a former Rochester bridge chaplain, the vicar of Shorne (itself not far from Rochester), William Peper, in January 1470-1.⁸² Peper, who left 100s for his funeral expenses and for a sermon to be preached, was connected to other local clergy, including those in Cobham College, by books. He bequeathed a copy of the *Pupilla Occuli* to the perpetual use of one Dominus William Saunder, adding that the book was not to be sold but, after Saunder's death, was to be passed on 'hand to hand'. Thomas Stone, the chaplain of Cobham College who made his will in 1464, was also acquainted with Saunder, and left him a portiforium. Peper also bequeathed an unidentified book to Cobham College itself. He left to Master John Thorpe, the rector of Gravesend, a collection of prayers and readings for burial services, which he had borrowed from him: 'librum suum qui incipit cum commendacionem & leccionibus exequiarum cum alii content.'. He left to the vicar of Frindsbury a book which he described as 'Hampull de meditacionibus & iustibus'. This was evidently a devotional work ascribed to Richard Rolle of Hampole, although it is hard to identify which work it might have been. The only known Rolle work that has a comparable title is the meditation on the Passion. Further afield, Peper left a copy of *Summa Summarum* to Sir William Stephen, the rector of St. Mildred's parish church in the city of Canterbury.⁸³ He also bequeathed 'unum librum' to Sir John Sampull, an unidentified cleric. To his own church at Shorn Peper left his processional, and his copy of the *Legenda Aurea*, to the perpetual use of his successors, to remain in the church. Peper's reading reflected the tastes of secular clergy and literate laity from the late fourteenth century; the *Pupilla Occuli* and *Summa Summarum* were owned by a number of contemporary priests, and the *Legenda Aurea* and devotional works by Rolle were owned by clergy and book-owning laity alike. Some other local book-owning clergy must have been known to Peper, Trayll and their beneficiaries; William 'Pepyr', the vicar of Chalk (near Shorne and Rochester), who made his will in 1458, was also connected with local clergy by books.⁸⁴ He left two books, one called 'dixionibus' (perhaps a dictionary) and another called *Speculum*, to Dominus Ralph Rayner, the rector of Denton, the neighbouring parish between Chalk and Milton next Gravesend.⁸⁵

of *Middle English Prose: Handlist III* (Cambridge, 1986), p.64). Acknowledgements to Dr. Stephen Morrison of the University of Poitiers for directing me to this information.

⁸¹ DRb/Pwr2/287v.

⁸² DRb/Pwr4/50. Peper was bridge chaplain between 1446-8 (C.H. Fielding, *The Records of Rochester*, p.233), although it is possible that this chaplain was the William Pepyr who was vicar of Chalk until his death in 1458 (DRb/Pwr2/113v). Peper, the vicar of Shorne, was a supporter of monasteries, leaving bequests to Bermondsey Abbey, Sheen Charterhouse and the local nunnery of Higham Priory; he also left 6s 8d and a silk gown to a girl from a prominent family in the parish with the condition that she entered religion. There were clergy in the Petyr family, too; a William Petyr was appointed vicar of Wouldham, near Rochester, in 1447, vacating by 1453 (C.H. Fielding, *The Records of Rochester*, p.298).

⁸³ This five volume compilation of canon law and theology was designed to provide the answers to any questions that might be put to a priest, whether parish priest or prelate. It is ascribed to the fourteenth century author of *Oculus Sacerdotis*, and was in circulation by 1343 (L.E. Boyle, 'The *Oculus Sacerdotis* and some other works of William of Pagula', pp.97-9, 101, 105).

⁸⁴ DRb/Pwr2/113v.

⁸⁵ The latter book may have been the popular *Speculum Vitae Christi*, or perhaps the *Speculum Christiani* - a work popular in the fifteenth century, designed to help priests instruct parishioners in the faith as required by the thirteenth-century Constitutions of

Another clerical group involving books and priests, at the same time as the above, involved Richard Galon, rector of Ash near Dartford and who also held the living of Fairford, who made his will in his rectory house in Ash on 10th February 1464-5.⁸⁶ Galon was evidently well acquainted with the rector of the neighbouring parish of Hartley, Sir John Bownd, for he left him three of the six books he mentioned in his will, which were his great manual, his processional and his copy of the *Legenda Aurea* in English ('in anglisce scripte'). The two liturgical books were to remain to the parish church of Hartley. Galon was also acquainted with the prior and convent of the hospital of St. John of Clerkenwell in London, to whom he made a number of bequests for the perpetual use of the hospital's chapel. These included silver objects, images adorned with relics and precious stones, vestments, and two books. The books were a book of the Gospel in English ('meum textum cum evangil ingliisus') and a theological book called 'Florarium Bartholomei'.⁸⁷ Galon also left a second copy of *Florarium Bartholomei* to a clerk, one of his executors, Walter Manby.

Another group of book-owning clergy at this time was centred on the vicar of Dartford between 1442 and 1477, Master John Hornley. Hornley connected Dartford with the scholarly world of Oxford University but for most of his time as incumbent he was resident, having retired from active academic and diocesan work. Before acquiring benefices, Hornley was already well established in the field of scholarship and international diplomacy, and a career as an ecclesiastical official; in 1440 he was commissary and proctor for the bishop of Wells and also served on a commission which was empowered, on 24th April that year, to conclude a final peace with France at a convention held at Calais. He graduated at Oxford University as a master of arts and bachelor of theology by 1442, and was collated vicar of Dartford on 20th January 1441-2. He furthered his career as an ecclesiastical official by serving as official-principal of the bishop of Rochester from November 1443 until 1447. He was the founding president of Magdalen Hall in Oxford, appointed with thirteen masters and seventeen bachelors by charter dated 18th August 1448, until 1457, when the Hall was superseded by Magdalen College.⁸⁸ In October 1450 Hornley was granted papal dispensation to hold an additional incompatible benefice to Dartford, in recognition of his many years spent studying at Oxford; he was soon after installed a canon of Chichester and prebendary of Colworth, briefly as rector of Blakeney in Norfolk, and in 1453 as rector of St. Benet's Sherehog in London, which benefice he held with Dartford until his death, in 1477.⁸⁹ Until 1457, Hornley's activities at Oxford or as a diocesan official can not have left him with much time for the parish of Dartford. However, the diocesan job at least assured his presence in the diocese, and he spent some of his time at Dartford to the extent that he was known by parishioners.⁹⁰ He was present when one John Wilkyns, who had been

Archbishop Peckham (F.A. Gasquet, 'The bibliography of some devotional books printed by the earliest English printers', p.183). There were, however, many medieval texts whose title included this Latin word meaning 'mirror'.

⁸⁶ DRb/Pwr2/332v.

⁸⁷ This work by John of Mirfield was theological in subject matter and encyclopaedic in scope. See G.R. Owst, *The Destructorium Viciorum of Alexander Carpenter* (London, 1952), p.3. I am most grateful to Dr. Stephen Morrison of the University of Poitiers for this reference, and for identifying this book in Galon's will. A copy of this work was in the library of Mountgrace Charterhouse, in 1458 (E. Margaret Thompson, *The Carthusian Order in England* (London, 1930), p.330).

⁸⁸ VCH, *Oxford*, iii, p.193. This Magdalen Hall is not to be confused with another of that name in Oxford, in existence by 1487, which was absorbed into Hertford College in the nineteenth century (VCH, *Oxford*, iii, pp.312-14).

⁸⁹ A.L. Browne, 'The medieval officials-principal of Rochester', p.57; *BRUO*, ii, p.996.

⁹⁰ Hornley's presence in the diocese is attested by a King's Bench court case of 1444 which found that John 'Orlee', which must be Hornley, had been involved in the mobbing of an official of Christchurch Priory, Canterbury, at Westerham, along with some other local clergy and laity (PRO KB9/245 m.89).

convicted of high treason, was hanged at Dartford, in 1453.⁹¹ He was named in seven out of approximately twenty wills made by seven Dartford parishioners in the 1440s and 1450s, as witness, executor and/or celebrant.⁹² After he vacated the presidency of Magdalen Hall, in 1457, Hornley held only his London rectory and Chichester prebend besides the vicarage of Dartford and he probably spent much more of his time in the parish from that date. He was named as executor, witness or beneficiary in seven more wills made by parishioners in the 1460s and 1470s. For example, he was fellow executor with William Milette of William Rotheley's will, in 1464, with responsibility for carrying out Rotheley's instructions regarding the founding of the daily morrowmass in Dartford parish church.⁹³ After his own death, Hornley was buried in the chancel of Holy Trinity parish church, in accordance with his will, and the verse inscription on his memorial brass praises him for his contribution to the liberal arts and divinity, his wisdom and generosity to the poor.⁹⁴

John Hornley demonstrated a strong commitment to equipping parish religion, liturgy, pastoral care and clerical learning in his parish in the way he disposed of many of his books. He had evidently become well acquainted with John Wellys, the vicar of Wilmington and chaplain of St. Edmund's chapel, during the 1460s and 1470s; of over twelve books identified by Hornley in his will, he left Wellys a small library of five, including his best copy of *Legenda Aurea*, a copy of *Pupilla Occuli*, a processional, his recently renovated Psalter and a portiphorium. He specified that the first two of these books were to remain to Magdalen College, after Wellys's death. These were all useful books for a parish priest. Wellys named John Hornley as one of his executors, in his will made the same year.⁹⁵ Hornley also bequeathed another copy of the preaching manual *Pupilla Occuli* and his second copy of *Legenda Aurea* to his parish chaplain in Dartford, Richard Eddyn. Hornley also lent books to, and received them from, other clergy in the area around Dartford. He bequeathed another portiphorium to the rector of Ridley and his successors, and to the vicar of Bexley he left a paper book of the ordinal called *Le Pye* with a calendar at the front. Beyond the Dartford locality Hornley maintained his connections with higher clergy and Oxford University; to one Thomas Chichele he left a volume containing the works of St. John of Chrysostom together with another book of his already in Chichele's hands.⁹⁶ He left to a priest called William Clerk all his books then in Clerk's custody. Furthermore, an inscription in a surviving manuscript in the library of Magdalen College, Oxford, which contains Higden's *Polychronicon* and other works, records that it was given to John Hornley by Master John Hornton, in 1454, on the condition that he passed it to Magdalen College at his death.⁹⁷

⁹¹ *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1452-61*, p.95.

⁹² See appendix two.

⁹³ See chapters five and six on William Rotheley, William Milette, the morrowmass and Lowfield Street almshouses.

⁹⁴ PROB 11/6/233v; *BRUO*, ii, p.996, citing John Thorpe, *Registrum Roffense*. The Latin memorial brass inscription in Dartford parish church is quoted in Sidney Keyes, *Dartford Further Historical Notes* (Dartford, 1937), pp.305-6; a translation by Revd. Frank Baker appears in Sidney Keyes, *Dartford Historical Notes* (Dartford, 1933), p.57. For example, the final couplet praises him as 'A man of the highest character, shining with every virtue/For such great merits his soul is tenant of the stars' ('Moribus insignis cuncta virtute refulgens/Pro tantis meritis spiritus astra tenet').

⁹⁵ DRb/Pwr3/213. There is some discrepancy of dates here; Hornley's will, dated 6th June 1477, was proved at the prerogative court of Canterbury on 19th June following, yet Wellys's will was dated in October 1477. One solution, however unlikely, is that John Wellys wrote his will before Hornley's death and dated it on his deathbed, in October 1477, forgetting to amend the list of executors.

⁹⁶ This Thomas Chichele was, no doubt, a kinsman of the former archbishop Chichele and the Thomas Chichele who was archdeacon of Canterbury until his death, in 1467, another Oxford University man and canon of Chichester (*BRUO*, i, p.412).

⁹⁷ Oxford, Magdalen College Ms. Latin 147; cited in *BRUO*, ii, p.996.

Having such a scholarly and cosmopolitan partially-resident vicar, for over three decades, must have had a profound effect on the religious and cultural life of the parish of Dartford. He perhaps lent books such as the *Legenda Aurea* not only to clergy but to educated members of the laity. In 1464, Hornley was principal executor of William Rotheley's will, assisted by Rotheley's servant William Milet and Nicholas Goldwyn.⁹⁸ William Milet was a pious and literate man with Oxford University connections, possibly also acquainted with the Chicheles, and was perhaps influenced by Hornley.⁹⁹ One of Milet's brothers was a clerk, and he owned books, leaving to 'little William Narburgh my godson' a cow, a silver pot and salt cellar, and 'all such my bookes as shal be necessary for him whan he shall goo to his lernyng'. Milet did not specify what his books were. Other parishioners during Hornley's time as vicar, who may have benefitted from contact with him, included John Martin, formerly of Horton, a chief justice on the King's Bench, who founded the permanent Martin chantry in the parish church, in the reign of Henry VI.¹⁰⁰ Members of another local gentry family, the Appeltons, were educated and served as auditors to the Exchequer, from the late fourteenth to the mid-fifteenth centuries.¹⁰¹ Somewhat after Hornley's time there was another Dartford parishioner with Oxford University connections, in the fifteenth century. William Ladd, who made his will in 1504, could have lived in Dartford before 1477, and had connections with Merton College.¹⁰²

Other clergy in Dartford besides those mentioned above passed books between each other or provided them for the maintenance of parish religion, at other times. A fourteenth-century vicar, Sir Thomas Hamergold de Sedgford, was bequeathed a copy of the Sixth Book of Decretals, without the Clementine glosses, by John Sprott, a chaplain in London with whom he was acquainted, in April 1349, the very month he was collated.¹⁰³ A century later, in May 1456, Thomas Worship, a chaplain of Dartford during the first part of John Hornley's time as vicar, who wished to be buried in St. Edmund's chapel, bequeathed a portiphorium to the parish church.¹⁰⁴ In 1526, the vicar, Master John Roger, bequeathed his

⁹⁸ Milet referred to Goldwyn and Hornley in his own will, recalling that he had outlived these co-executors.

⁹⁹ Amongst those saints to whom he bequeathed his soul Milet included St. Frideswide, no doubt because of the monastery of St. Frideswide in Oxford. In his will he identified his brothers as 'doctor Milet', presumably an Oxford or Cambridge University man, and quite likely Oxford in view of their other brother mentioned in this will, 'Richard Milet of Oxenford'. Whilst there were Miletts who graduated from the University of Oxford, in the fifteenth century, none can be identified with certainty as William's brother. A possible identification is one John Milet of All Souls' College, Oxford, was a fellow admitted 1455, vacated 1471, law dean in 1464-5, law bursar 1465-6 and 1472-3. He was BCL and Doctor of Canon Law by 1494 (in time for this will of 1500); ordained acolyte to the title of fellowship 21st December, 1471; subdeacon on 17th December, 1474 (Salisbury Bp. Reg.); admitted Rector of Winterbourne Shickland, Dorset, 21/12/1471 and vacated 1474; Rector of Cattistock, Dorset, admitted 18/4/1474 till death; Rector of Charlwood, Surrey, collated 20/2/1494 till death. He practised as proctor in the court of the archdeacon of Canterbury 1509-1511, and died by April 1522. (*BRUO*, ii, p.1282). The two Dorset livings are of interest since William Milet mentioned lands in his possession in that county, in his will. William Milet mentions another brother in his will, as an executor, calling him Master John Milet, clerk – this could have been Doctor John Milet, or another brother also called John (not a rare phenomenon). The connection with All Souls College is of interest since this college was founded by Archbishop Chichele, in 1438, for the training of lawyers and priests (C.G. Robertson, *All Souls College* (1899), 1-2,24,29-30). The Miletts may have been acquainted with the Chicheles through All Souls College and the vicar of Dartford John Hornley (see note 96 above).

¹⁰⁰ John Dunkin, *The History and Antiquities of Dartford* (1844), p.78; the 1546 chantry certificate is printed in Arthur Hussey, *Kent Chuntries*, p.118.

¹⁰¹ John Appelton of Dartford (d.1392-3), his son Richard (d.1432), son-in-law William Hesill, and grandson Roger (retired by 1447) were all auditors of the Exchequer (R.L. Storey, 'Gentleman bureaucrats', in C.H. Clough, ed., *Profession, Vocation and Culture in later medieval England* (Liverpool, 1982), pp.90-129 at p.111). Their seniority in Dartford is indicated, for example, by the will of Thomas Appleton, gentleman of Southbenfleet and Dartford, dated 1483, in which he asked to be buried in the chancel of Dartford parish church next his father (PROB 117/150v).

¹⁰² DRb/Pwr6/115v. Besides his many bequests to the parish church and clergy, and to various monasteries, including a friar of Dartford Priory and the Rood of Grace at Boxley, Ladd left 40s to the fellows of Merton College in Oxford for them to buy an ornament for their chapel. Ladd also directed that an indenture be drawn up 'to move the felleuys of the place to pray for me & for them I am bownde to pray fore after the discrecion of my lorde of Chichester warden of the same place'.

¹⁰³ *CWCH*, i, pp.606-7. See appendix two.

¹⁰⁴ DRb/Pwr2/46.

portiphorium to the 'Bolton capelle' in the parish church.¹⁰⁵ Thomas Wadlowe (also called Wadeluff), the next vicar, making his will in 1533, bequeathed one book to Edmund Parker, the Martin chantry priest in the parish church.¹⁰⁶ Parker, who spent his whole life in the parish (dying there in 1568), came from a well-connected Dartford family and may already have possessed other books of his own. His family's London and ecclesiastical connections are seen in the will of his father, William Parker yeoman of Dartford, dated 2nd June 1534.¹⁰⁷

A particularly scholarly circle of clergy in the diocese, who owned books, was centred on Bishop John Fisher, in the early sixteenth century, consisting of his chaplains and fellow scholars from Christ's and St. John's Colleges in Cambridge. The two colleges had the same founder. On behalf of Lady Margaret Beaufort, the mother of Henry VII, whose chaplain he was, and in his capacity as chancellor of the University of Cambridge, Bishop Fisher brought about the refoundation of God's house as Christ's College, in 1505, and the foundation of St. John's College, in 1511 (after Lady Margaret's death).¹⁰⁸ Fisher attracted a number of scholarly clerics from these colleges to his diocese. Many of them were pluralists and can have had little to do with their parishioners. The connections between them are manifested in the will of Master Richard Sharpe, rector of Bromley and a chaplain to Bishop John Fisher, dated 28th April 1528 and proved in March 1531.¹⁰⁹ Sharpe knew John Fisher from Cambridge, having been a fellow of both Christ's and St. John's Colleges, before coming to the diocese of Rochester, where he held five livings, some concurrently, between 1517 and his death in 1530.¹¹⁰ He left several books in his will to his fellow college men and bishops' chaplains: 'a boke of one volume or elles to at the moste' to each of his fellow chaplains to the bishop of Rochester, by the assignment of his executors; 'a boke of ij volumes or elles one at his eleccion' to his executor, Master John Wilbour, the vicar and master of St. Mary Newark hospital in Strood, and a fellow chaplain to Bishop John Fisher; 'a boke of ij volumes or elles one at his eleccion' to Doctor John Addeson of Rochester, the vicar of Wouldham and Snodland, and Sharpe's successor at Bromley;¹¹¹ and 'j boke' to Doctor Nicholas Metcalf, a bishop's chaplain, the vicar of St. Werburgh in Hoo and archdeacon of Rochester, who was appointed master of St. John's College, Cambridge, by Fisher, in 1518;¹¹² 'the Bible with the comentarys of Lyre and the comon glose' to Sir George, a fellow chaplain to the bishop of Rochester; a copy of the *'Summa Anglicanum'*, to 'Master Beare', probably Master John Beer, diocesan registrar; a copy of the *Sermones Hugonis de Prato* to the

¹⁰⁵ DRb/Pwr8/52v. There are no other references to this chapel in wills. The Bolton family lived in Dartford (a 'mother Bolton' received a bequest from William Parker yeoman of Dartford, in 1534) but left no wills in the sixteenth century.

¹⁰⁶ PROB 11/25/147. See appendix two.

¹⁰⁷ DRb/Pwr9/134v. This will, in which Edmund was bequeathed £8, six silver spoons and a maser, shows that one of his brothers was also a priest (Sir John), and it was witnessed by a relative, Richard Parker, who was a citizen of London, William Poole, yeoman of the king's crown, other Dartford parishioners, the vicar (Sir John Bruer) and the surveyor of Dartford Priory, Thomas Maykyn, priest. William Parker left a total of 16s 8d to the prioress and convent of Dartford. The overseer of the will was Edward Johnson, yeoman of the king's guard. Edmund Parker's mother Agnes made her will in August 1534 (DRb/Pwr9/153v).

¹⁰⁸ VCH, *Cambridge*, iii, pp.430, 437.

¹⁰⁹ DRb/Pwr8/270v.

¹¹⁰ Richard Sharpe graduated B.A. in 1502-3, M.A. 1507-8, B.D. 1516-17 and D.D. in 1522-3. He was a fellow of Christ's College in 1513 and fellow of St. John's in 1515-16. His five livings in the diocese of Rochester were Kemsing (1517-25), Stone (1521-25), Chiselhurst (1521-2), warden of the free chapel of St. Lawrence in Halling, and Bromley (*BRUC*, p.520).

¹¹¹ C.H. Fielding, *The Records of Rochester*, p.314.

¹¹² Metcalf was archdeacon 1515-37, Richard Sharpe's predecessor as vicar of Kemsing 1509-17, vicar of St. Werburgh 1517-34, master of St. John's College 1518-37 and rector of Southfleet 1531-7 (*BRUC*, p.403). *Letters survive written by Sharpe, as bishop's chaplain, on behalf of Bishop Fisher and Archdeacon Metcalf in his capacity as master of St. John's, in the early 1520s* (G.J. Gray, 'Letters of Bishop Fisher, 1521-3', *The Library*, ser.3, 4 (1913), pp.133-45). Under Metcalfe St. John's became the largest college in Cambridge and the new scholarship flourished there (VCH, *Cambridge*, iii, pp.437-9).

parson of Cuxton, Master John Bodill, a future chaplain to Edward VI;¹¹³ a book called *Sermones Verige Salutes*, in two volumes, to Master Henry Fletcher, vicar of West Malling, another former fellow of Christ's College, Cambridge;¹¹⁴ his book of 'Decretalles', which he left to Master Robert Johnson, his successor as parson of Stone next Dartford; and he willed that 'Sir Richard of Snodland' (not the incumbent) be given a book. Besides books, Sharpe left other items to Bishop John Fisher himself and Doctor Thomas Thomson, master of Christ's College when he was a fellow there.¹¹⁵ These books suggest that Sharpe and his colleagues were conservative and traditional in their reading and biblical scholarship, not demonstrating the new learning. Indeed, Archdeacon Metcalfe did little himself to encourage the new learning which flourished at St. John's College, in his time as master.¹¹⁶

Most non-liturgical books owned by clergy in the diocese of Rochester show them to have had conservative tastes. Only one example of a book containing works by Rolle has been found (cited above), and only one priest who owned a copy of the treatise which became popular amongst Lollards, in the fifteenth century, *Dives and Pauper*. Sir Roger Jakes, a chantry chaplain in Rochester Cathedral, in his will of 8th October 1529, proved in 1533, left to Rochester bridge chapel 'a boke namyd Dyves & Pauper in English', as well as a book of the life of Christ, in English, and a dictionary.¹¹⁷ No examples have been found of clergy owning copies of treatises by Walter Hilton. There is also little evidence of new liturgical developments within orthodoxy, although many books related to these may not have been mentioned specifically. A possible exception was Sir Hewe Hudson, parson of Ditton near Maidstone, who dated his will on 28th August 1501, bequeathing to his successors a portose and to the church 'a quayer conteynng the Story of o' Lady callyd the Visitacion'.¹¹⁸ This narrative book may have been connected with the feast of the Visitation of the Virgin Mary that found popularity in England in the second half of the fifteenth century.¹¹⁹ Clergy owning heretical texts will be investigated below. There were few books of a secular nature mentioned by clergy in their wills, as in late medieval Norwich.

Also as in Norwich, the proportion of clergy bequeathing books did not increase with the introduction of printing, and few printed books were specified.¹²⁰ The only definite example found is that of three unidentified printed books ('libros impressos') bequeathed to Sir Henry Tynney, priest, by Master John Bamborowe, vicar of West Malling, in his will dated 12th October 1524.¹²¹ Sir William Mylles, parson of Leybourne and a confessor of nuns at Malling Abbey, bequeathed 'my writen portuse' to Thomas Mylles, in his will of 24th July 1510, perhaps implying that he had a printed one.¹²² The medieval nature of the theology and instructional manuals these clergy read, the apparently small number of printed books they owned, and the small number of secular works they mentioned, in the early sixteenth century,

¹¹³ C.H. Fielding, *The Records of Rochester*, p.337.

¹¹⁴ Henry Fleccher graduated B.A. 1508-9, M.A. in 1512 and B.D. in 1520-1. He was a fellow of Christ's College 1519-23, vicar of Aylesford 1521-4 and vicar of Town or West Malling from 1524 (J.A. Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses*, pt 1, to 1751, ii, p.149).

¹¹⁵ Doctor Thomson was master of Christ's College 1508-17 (*BRUC*, pp.582-3).

¹¹⁶ VCH, *Cambridge*, iii, pp 437-9.

¹¹⁷ DRb/Pwr9/97.

¹¹⁸ DRb/Pwr5/414.

¹¹⁹ Tanner, for example, found the will of a Norwich priest, dated 1501, which refers to a quire containing 'the new service of the Visitation of Our Lady' (Norman P. Tanner, *The Church in late medieval Norwich 1370-1532*, p.37). See also R.W. Pfaff, *New Liturgical Feasts in later medieval England* (Oxford, 1970).

¹²⁰ Norman P. Tanner, *The Church in late medieval Norwich 1370-1532*, p.42.

¹²¹ DRb/Pwr7/341. This Henry Tynney was probably the chaplain of Rochester bridge chapel of that name who made his will in July 1526, leaving a missal to St. Clement's church, Rochester (DRb/Pwr8/61v).

¹²² DRb/Pwr6/272v.

all suggest that clergy in the diocese of Rochester were mostly conservative in their tastes right up to the Reformation.

Conservatism amongst priests in Dartford and villages in the 1540s and 50s

The conservatism of reading of pre-Reformation parish clergy in the diocese of Rochester reinforced their religious conservatism. This conservatism is suggested by the enduring loyalty of clergy in the Dartford area to traditional Catholic religion during the Reformation period, as revealed by a close study of four priests who died in the 1550s, and their acquaintances. This study suggests the relationships sometimes amounting to friendship that existed between local clergy which may have strengthened them in their religious allegiance through difficult times. It also reveals details of the varied career paths and learning of parish clergy at this time. The evidence is drawn from wills, visitation material, court records and chantry certificates. The priests investigated were successive vicars of Wilmington and Sutton at Hone, neighbouring parishes just south of Dartford, in the 1540s and 50s. William Brodbent was vicar of Wilmington from 1543 to 1552, and made his will on 17th July 1552;¹²³ Robert Bacon was vicar of Wilmington before and after Brodbent, between 1540-3 and 1552-5, and made his will in May 1555;¹²⁴ Dr. Robert Stroddel, the former president friar of Dartford Priory investigated in chapter three above, was vicar of Sutton at Hone by 1543 until his death in 1552 or early 1553, making his will on 6th December 1552;¹²⁵ and Richard Bee was vicar of Sutton at Hone from 1553 until his death in late 1558, having made his will in September 1558.¹²⁶ These men also named other priests in their wills but connections particularly link these four, not least because of the survival of their wills.¹²⁷

Bacon and Brodbent knew each other well, by their deaths, having served alongside each other as chantry and stipendiary priests in the Gravesend and Dartford area since the early 1520s. A synopsis of their career histories demonstrates the route by which a fortunate minority of poor unbeneficed priests obtained livings.¹²⁸ At different times, they both held the posts of curate of Gravesend, chantry priest of Milton, and vicar of Wilmington, and they exchanged livings on more than one occasion. Brodbent was curate of Gravesend in 1517, and Bacon was a priest in Milton-next-Gravesend by 1523.¹²⁹ In 1526-9

¹²³ C H Fielding, *The Records of Rochester*, p.297; DRb/Pwr11/256.

¹²⁴ C H. Fielding, *The Records of Rochester*, p.297; DRb/Pwr12/7. Fielding, working from episcopal registers, says that Robert Bacon was appointed in 1552. However, John Lambe of Wilmington had his will witnessed in October 1553 by 'Richard Graunte vicar' of the parish (DRb/Pwr11/283v). The next Wilmington will in the Rochester court register is Bacon's own in which he says he was vicar. There is no other evidence available to help clear up this matter.

¹²⁵ The will of Richard Not of Sutton at Hone, dated 1543, was the first naming Stroddel as vicar (DRb/Pwr10/22v); Stroddel identified himself as vicar in his own will, which was proved in August 1553 (PROB 11/36/119v).

¹²⁶ C.H. Fielding, *The Records of Rochester*, p.275; DRb/Pwr12/276 (proved 16th December 1558).

¹²⁷ Brodbent named Bacon and Bee, in his will; Bacon named Brodbent (his grave), Bee, the parsons of Crayford and Darenth, and the prioress of Dartford; Stroddel named Bee, the vicar of Darenth and the future prioress of Dartford; and Bee, outliving the other three, named the prioress of Dartford and the parson of Longfield.

¹²⁸ Zell has demonstrated, using evidence from the dioceses of Canterbury and Rochester, that there was a surplus of parish clergy, in the sixteenth century up to the Reformation, and that the majority of these were poor, unbeneficed priests, many of whom had to move frequently from parish to parish to find employment: Michael L. Zell, 'The personnel of the clergy in Kent, in the Reformation period', *EHR*, 89 (1974), pp.513-33 at pp.514-15, 519; Michael L. Zell, 'Economic problems of the parochial clergy in the sixteenth century', in Rosemary O'Day & Felicity Heal, eds, *Princes and Paupers in the English Church, 1500-1800* (Leicester, 1981), pp.19-43 at pp.19-25, 29-30. Zell concludes that most unbeneficed clergy were likely to remain without a permanent living for most or all of their careers (Michael L. Zell, 'Economic problems of the parochial clergy in the sixteenth century', p.29). Robert Stroddel, and other ex-religious, represented extra competition, in the 1540s.

¹²⁹ Brodbent was named as curate of Gravesend, in April 1517, in the will of John Lynch of that parish (PROB 11/18/247). Bacon first appears in the clerical subsidy list, as a priest in Milton, c.1523 (DRb/Az 1 fo.24).

Bacon was curate of Gravesend,¹³⁰ and Brodbent was a chantry and stipendiary priest in Milton from 1527 until at least 1534, with a brief spell as curate, when the opportunity came, in early 1530.¹³¹ Bacon was appointed William Wangford chantry priest, in Northfleet parish church, by 1531, which chantry he occupied until it was dissolved, in 1548.¹³² He held this concurrently with the Stanpit chantry in Dartford, from 1540 to 1548,¹³³ and the vicarage of Wilmington, between 1540 and 1543. In 1543 he gave up the vicarage to his former colleague Brodbent, who had probably continued to serve as an unbeneficed priest in Milton, since the early 1530s.¹³⁴ In 1552, Brodbent died and Bacon recovered his old benefice. Since the dissolution of the chantries, he had been left unbeneficed, although not without income, because he received a pension of £6 as a former chantry incumbent of Dartford.¹³⁵ He continued to be named in Dartford wills in this time.¹³⁶

Not only did Brodbent and Bacon have similar clerical jobs, but they were very close in age to each other, having been born in the early to mid-1480s.¹³⁷ The friendship they built up, over three decades, is suggested in their wills. In 1552, Brodbent called Bacon his brother and bequeathed to him a gown. Robert Bacon, once more vicar of Wilmington, in his will of 1555, similarly asked to be buried in

¹³⁰ Bacon was in receipt of 10 marks per annum, when named as curate of Gravesend in the clerical subsidy lists of February 1525-6 and February 1526-7 (DRb/Az 1 ff 49v, 64v). He was named as curate of Gravesend in the archdeacon of Rochester's visitation material of 1527-9 (DRa/Vb4 ff.53, 83v, 125v). In this capacity, he acted as witness and overseer of the will of Christopher Westegarth of Gravesend, in June 1526 (DRb/Pwr8/33v); he was similarly called curate of Gravesend when he witnessed the will of Thomas Thebolde of that parish, in October 1527 (DRb/Pwr8/122v); and in January 1527-8, when he witnessed the will of Robert Marten of Denton (DRb/Pwr8/130). He was also supervisor of the will of William Wade, brewer of Gravesend, dated simply 1528, although this document does not specify his position (DRb/Pwr8/202v). By 1530, Robert Hochenson had taken over as curate of Gravesend, as wills show, having previously been a stipendiary priest in the parish as early as 1514, when he appeared in a consistory court case (DRb/Pa 6 fo 83v).

¹³¹ Sir William Brodbent, called 'chaplain', was another clerical witness and overseer of Christopher Westegarth's will, in 1526, along with Bacon (see note 129 above). He was named as a stipendiary priest of Milton in the archdeacon of Rochester's visitation material of 1527-32, but as a chantry priest in 1533, and as stipendiary priest 1534-5 (DRa/Vb4 ff.53, 83v, 125v, 211, 238, 256v, 273, 287v). His stipend was 10 marks (DRa/Vb4 fo.256v). Wills suggest that he was a chantry priest for most if not all of this time, being called this when he was named as an overseer of the will of Sir Thomas Newsam, priest of Milton, in 1527-8 (DRb/Pwr8/151); and in October 1528, in the will of William Mores alias Poole (PRO 11/22/319). According to the will of Jone Laurence of Milton, Brodbent was curate of Milton in January 1529-30, when he witnessed that document (DRb/Pwr8/268v), but he served only briefly in that capacity. He was simply called 'priest' in the will of Robert Bromfelde, barge-owner of Milton, dated April 1531, which he supervised, and in which William Barrett, a witness, was identified as curate (DRb/Pwr8/276). He signed the renunciation of papal authority in 1534, as chantry priest of Milton (PRO E36/64 p.78). William Barrett had previously been curate of Milton; he was named as such in a court case at which he and Brodbent gave evidence, in 1526, at which time he was thirty years of age (DRb/Pa9 pt 1 ff 1-2v), and in the archdeacon of Rochester's visitation material of 1527-9 and 1531 (DRa/Vb4 ff.53, 83v, 125v, 211). Brodbent was perhaps standing in for his colleague, as curate, in 1530. In 1532, Barrett swapped positions with William Richardson, the curate of Gravesend, Barrett appears as curate of Gravesend in the archdeacon's visitation material of 1532-35, receiving a stipend of £7 (DRa/Vb4 fo 237v, 256v, 273, 287v); Gravesend wills from Robert Baltman's of 1532 (DRb/Pwr9/37) up to Barrett's death in 1543 named him as curate, and he signed the renunciation of papal authority, in 1534, as curate of Gravesend (PRO E36/64 p.78). William Richardson was named as curate of Milton in the will of Robert Broke of Milton, dated 3rd January 1532-3 (DRb/Pwr9/92), disappearing from 1534 (DRa/Vb4 fo.273). Richardson himself made his first local appearance as Robert Hochenson's (see note 130 above) successor as curate of Gravesend, in 1531 (DRa/Vb4 fo.211).

¹³² Bacon was chantry priest of Northfleet, when he witnessed the will of Alice Davy, widow of Northfleet, in May 1531 (PROB 11/24/154). He was named as chaplain of the 'William Wangford chantry' in Northfleet, in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* of 1535, receiving the pension of 13s 4d (*Valor*, i, p.102). The 1548 chantry certificate shows that he received 100s per annum for this chantry (Arthur Hussey, ed., *Kent Chantries*, pp.116-7).

¹³³ C.H. Fielding, *Records of Rochester*, p.78; the 1546 and 1548 chantry certificates both name him as incumbent of the Dartford Stanpit chantry (Arthur Hussey, ed., *Kent Chantries*, pp.116-7).

¹³⁴ No Rochester archdeaconry visitation material survives for the period 1536-c.1560. Prior to becoming vicar of Wilmington in 1543, in addition to parish duties, Brodbent may have served for an unknown period of time as a deputy of the diocesan official, Master James Goldwyn; the probate paragraph at the end of the will of Elizabeth Marshall, widow of Farnborough, says that it was proved before Master William Brodbent on 16th January 1542-3 (DRb/Pwr10/1v). This may have been a different Brodbent, however, as no other document gives the Brodbent who became vicar of Wilmington the title of 'master'.

¹³⁵ Payments to Bacon were recorded in 1553 (Browne Willis, *The Miurd Abbies* (1718-19), ii, p.104) and 1555-6 (Cardinal Pole's pension book: W. E. Flaherty, 'A help toward a Kentish monasticon', *AC*, 2 (1859), pp.49-64 at p.62).

¹³⁶ Bacon was named in two Dartford wills in 1553, those of William Rogers, husbandman, in February (DRb/Pwr11/235v), and Richard Prior, yeoman, in December (DRb/Pwr11/263v).

¹³⁷ On 16th July 1526, William Brodbent, priest of Milton, gave evidence in a Gravesend matrimonial case heard in the consistory court sitting in St. George's chapel in Gravesend, as did Sir William Barret, the curate of Milton. Brodbent was aged forty-four years, and was, therefore, born c.1482 (DRb/Pa 9 pt 1 ff.1-2v). In the 1548 Northfleet chantry certificate, Bacon was said to be sixty-three years of age, and was thus born c.1485 (Arthur Hussey, ed., *Kent Chantries*, pp.116-7).

Wilmington church 'near my brother Sir William Brodbent'. He knew Brodbent's family well, making bequests of 6s 8d each to Brodbent's brother Richard (also named in William's will) and Richard's son Christopher. Like many parish priests on the eve of the Reformation, Brodbent was a local man remaining in close touch with his family, serving in the area where he had grown up.¹³⁸ His family was indigenous to Gravesend or Milton,¹³⁹ and perhaps became like a second family to Bacon, over the three decades from the early 1520s, since Bacon's own family lived in Lincolnshire, as his will demonstrates.

By the time the Edwardian Reformation arrived these two priests were thus both in their sixties, and they must have found the new dispensation hard to live with. Brodbent made his will five and a half years into Edward VI's reign. The main evidence for his association with traditional religion is to be drawn from his career and friendship with Robert Bacon, and also with the chantry priests of Cobham College. Thomas Webster, submaster of Cobham College 'now suppressid', making his will not long after the surrender, in 1538, directed one of his few bequests to William Brodbent (the sum of 8s).¹⁴⁰ Brodbent, having grown up in Milton next Gravesend, like some of the Sprevers, may have been one of those local boys educated in Cobham College. In any case, he, no doubt, later cultivated connections with the college as a priest in Milton. His religious traditionalism is also suggested by the choice of him as overseer in the will of Sir Thomas Newsam, a fellow priest of Milton, in 1528, who made elaborate Catholic arrangements for his burial.¹⁴¹ Bacon survived two years into Mary's reign, and he manifested his religious traditionalism more openly. He bequeathed 10s to the former nuns of Dartford, 'the nonis of Sutton', who were re-enclosed two years later.¹⁴² When Mary came to the throne and Catholicism was restored it was possible to articulate this perception that these women were nuns, in the eyes of God if not of the law, and to seek their prayers for one's soul.

Bacon and Brodbent were both acquainted with Richard Bee, and Bee was acquainted with Robert Stroddel. Bee was another of those unbeneficed priests who found employment where he could. He acted as a locum and carer for both Brodbent, in Wilmington, and Stroddel, in Sutton at Hone, in their fatal illnesses, in 1552. Brodbent left Bee, who witnessed his will, a cloak and 40s, in July 1552, 'if he tarries with me till the hour of my death'. In December, Stroddel wrote in his will that Sir Richard Bee, priest, who also witnessed this document, should be paid £10 in tithes at Michaelmas next for his whole year's service, and bequeathed him a jacket of russet worsted, his cloth furred gown, and 10s 'for his pains taken for me in my siknes'. Bee came from a local family, like Brodbent and Stroddel,¹⁴³ and Brodbent left 5s to his sister. Employment prospects for clergy were better by the 1550s, because of falling ordinations since

¹³⁸ Peter Marshall, *The Catholic Priesthood and the English Reformation* (Oxford, 1994), pp.127, 194-6.

¹³⁹ There are a few indications of this in wills. William Barrett, 'parish priest' of Gravesend, in his will dated 8th May 1543, in which he asked for masses and the burning of tapers around his body and before the sacrament in St. George's chapel, demonstrated his friendship with Brodbent's family, leaving money and objects to his godson, another William Brodbent (DRb/Pwr10/22). Shortly before Brodbent the priest became vicar of Wilmington, a man of the same name witnessed the will of Thomas Gardyner of Gravesend, with Barrett, in 1542; Gardyner bequeathed this William Brodbent his best gown and 20s for his pains as overseer (DRb/Pwr9/404v). Another William 'Bradvent' of Gravesend made his will, in 1552 (DRb/Pwr11/251v).

¹⁴⁰ DRb/Pwr9/270v.

¹⁴¹ Sir Thomas Newsam, priest of Milton, left instructions for his burial, in his will of 21st March 1527-8, requiring that on his coffin be placed a coverlet of tapestry work; on that, a purple (the colour for penitential seasons) damask vestment; and, on top, a chalice, a corporal and a mass book. These were then to be used by two named priests, his cousin Sir George and Sir Richard Buste, in the singing of masses for his soul, in the chapel of Our Lady in Milton church, for five years. These items were then to be given to Milton chantry chapel for the chantry priests (including Brodbent) to pray for his soul forever (DRb/Pwr8/151).

¹⁴² See chapter three.

¹⁴³ Stroddel was found to have come from a North Cray family, in chapter three.

the Reformation,¹⁴⁴ and Bee succeeded Stroddel as vicar of Sutton at Hone. In 1555, Robert Bacon, vicar of Wilmington again, bequeathed Bee his best gown, best worsted jacket, best cap and best hat. Bacon also named Bee as supervisor of his will, which he witnessed with a local husbandman and John Carr, the vicar of Darenth. Carr was a common acquaintance with Stroddel; he was an executor of Stroddel's will, with Elizabeth Cressener the former sub-prioress of Dartford Priory, and Stroddel left him 20s and a sage furred gown. Richard Bee was vicar of Sutton at Hone for most of Mary's reign; his will was written 10th September 1558 and proved 16th December that year. He did not mention his deceased colleagues, but he left his best short gown to the parson of Longfield, a parish four miles to the east.

Bee's and Stroddel's fellowship with Brodbent and Bacon must have been strengthened by their shared religious traditionalism. The case for Stroddel was made in chapter three, above; after the Dissolution he was reconciled with the former nuns of Dartford, who lived in his parish, and he attracted bequests from local laity who showed themselves in their wills to be Catholics. One of these, Anne Reddeman of Sutton at Hone, who made her will in June 1551,¹⁴⁵ was an unmarried pious Catholic woman. She left 5s to the poor on her burial day, to pray for her and all Christian souls. She appointed Elizabeth Cressener, the former nun, her sole executor, 'Mr. Doctor Struddyll vicar of Sutton' supervisor, and bequeathed him a small silver spoon and her own personal image of Our Lady. Like Bacon and Stroddel, Anne Reddeman was also acquainted with Sir John Carr, clerk and vicar of Darenth; Carr was one of the witnesses of her will, and she left him another silver spoon. The will was also witnessed by Richard Bee. Richard Bee, himself, left 8d to each poor honest priest at his funeral, with 13s 4d to poor people. He also shared Stroddel's and Bacon's support of the Dartford nuns, making a bequest of 10s to the Prioress of Dartford only two days after the refounded convent had been transferred to Dartford from Kings Langley, following the death of Anne of Cleves.¹⁴⁶

The principal non-affective bond between these priests was religious allegiance, and this overcame their differing levels of education. Stroddel was a doctor of divinity, but Brodbent, Bacon and Bee were amongst the majority of clergy who had had no university education.¹⁴⁷ Bee and Brodbent, as local boys, may only have had an elementary or grammar school education, and it has been suggested that Brodbent received this in Cobham College. The 1548 certificate for Bacon's Stanpit chantry in Dartford described him as 'of indifferent learninge and qualities', but the assessors were probably university-educated clergy.¹⁴⁸ Although they were no scholars, such clergy nevertheless valued books within a narrow range, as has been shown. Bacon mentioned books in his will, not identifying them, all of which he left to the parson of Crayford, asking him to pray for his soul. Dr. Stroddel possibly took books with him when he vacated

¹⁴⁴ Michael L. Zell, 'Economic problems of the parochial clergy in the sixteenth century', p.31. The situation was also improved, in 1553, by the deprivations of clergy who had married after 1547.

¹⁴⁵ PROB 11/35/224v.

¹⁴⁶ See chapter three.

¹⁴⁷ Marshall concludes that standards of clerical education may not have been so bad, on the eve of the Reformation; the number of graduates appointed to church livings had been rising, during the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, so that graduates accounted for around 20-25% of all appointments (according to the findings of Marshall's doctoral thesis). Marshall feels that educational opportunities for non-graduates were increasing, through the expansion of grammar and elementary schooling: Peter Marshall, *The Catholic Priesthood and the English Reformation*, pp.96-7. Peter Heath also claims that proportion of graduate clergy in England was rising in the period 1450-1530: Peter Heath, *The English Parish Clergy on the Eve of the Reformation*, p.81. Zell estimates that less than half of the beneficed priests in Kent, in the first half of the sixteenth century, at any time, had a university degree: Michael L. Zell, 'The personnel of the clergy in Kent, in the Reformation period', p.525. Tanner feels that the numbers of unbeneficed priests with degrees may have been under-estimated by scholars, although there were fewer than of beneficed priests: Norman P. Tanner, *The Church in late medieval Norwich 1370-1532*, p.30.

¹⁴⁸ Arthur Hussey, ed., *Kent Chantries*, pp.116-7.

Dartford Priory, in 1539, although he did not mention any in his will. The religious bond between these priests, possibly involving lending books to each other, made them a collective influence on the religion of local laity during the 1540s and 50s. This was particularly true because they were amongst the seventy-five to eighty-five per cent of parish clergy in Kent in the first half of the sixteenth century who were resident.¹⁴⁹

Laity, books and clergy

Some members of the laity supported parish religion and clergy by giving books or money for books. A few testators below gentry rank, from the end of the fifteenth century, owned books themselves and manifested a knowledge of liturgical texts in their testamentary requests for specific votive masses, antiphons, hymns and anthems. The comprehension of written texts by laity was also of religious importance because of memorial inscriptions on tombstones and other goods donated to churches. Thomas Ussher of Snodland, in his will of November 1472, asked for there to be a tombstone to cover his and his father's grave and for their names to be written on it:

For a perpetuall remembrance & memory that all men & women that rede or se it pray for us in way of charyte¹⁵⁰

If passers by, both men and women, could read and understand this inscription Ussher and his father were more likely to be prayed for; otherwise they were dependent on local memory of who was buried there.

Both the literacy evidenced by ownership of books, and the developing lay sensitivity to texts, resulted from daily use of liturgy and improved access to education, in the fifteenth century.¹⁵¹ A very few bequests for the sending of children to school, in the diocese of Rochester, from the late fifteenth century, manifest the existence of grammar and local elementary schools. The latter probably taught reading, singing and elementary Latin grammar.¹⁵² Cobham College and chantry schools have already been investigated in this chapter. An endowed grammar school was founded in Sevenoaks, in 1432.¹⁵³ There was a school dedicated to St. Mary Magdalene in the village of Cowden, in 1456, which was supported by laity.¹⁵⁴ Other local schools included the song schools in Boxley Abbey and Rochester Cathedral, and the school attached to Aylesford Priory, the Carmelite friary.¹⁵⁵ Claire Cross found that friars in sixteenth-century Yorkshire educated local children, as opposed to the nunneries which educated gentry children

¹⁴⁹ Michael L. Zell, 'The personnel of the clergy in Kent, in the Reformation period', p.532.

¹⁵⁰ DRb/Pwr4/30v

¹⁵¹ Jo Ann Hoepfner Moran, *The Growth of English Schooling, 1340-1548*, chapter six and p.225 have already been cited above. Moran argues that lay (presumably meaning boys not intended to be priests) access to elementary education in reading, singing and some writing expanded in the fifteenth century, and access to grammar schools particularly increased in the sixteenth century. Joan Simon and Orme argue against a too rigid distinction between elementary and grammar schools in the fifteenth century (Nicholas Orme, *English Schools in the Middle Ages*, p.69; Joan Simon, *Education and Society in Tudor England*, p.4). Fifteenth-century townsmen probably learnt to read English and to recognise some Latin, for example in service books, which was useful for business purposes, but they were not grammanians (Nicholas Orme, *English Schools in the Middle Ages*, pp.45-6).

¹⁵² Nicholas Orme, *Education in the west of England, 1066-1548*, p.3.

¹⁵³ Nicholas Orme, *Education and Society in medieval and Renaissance England*, p.14.

¹⁵⁴ In 1456, Robert Ludwell of Cowden directed that, after the death of his wife, all his lands and tenements were to revert to Thomas Wygenden forever, on condition that Robert's executors paid £3 6s 8d at the next feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin to the school dedicated to St. Mary Magdalen in Cowden (DRb/Pwr2/67v).

¹⁵⁵ The song school attached to Boxley Abbey in the Tudor period contained around four boys (David H. Williams, 'Layfolk within Cistercian precincts', in Judith Loades, ed., *Monastic Studies*, ii (1991), pp.87-117 at p.110). Giles Ranchawe, gentleman, apparently a corodian of the priory, referred to the presence of children there, in his will of 15th August 1534; he left 2d to each child dwelling in the house that was able to say dirige or *De Profundis* on his burial day, as well as leaving other amounts to the prior, friars, novices and poor people (DRb/Pwr9/122).

from further afield.¹⁵⁶ The education received in local schools not attached to these great churches and monasteries must have been very elementary; William Hawke of Cobham, in 1509, willed his wife to find his nephew John Hawke to school until he could read and write.¹⁵⁷ All the examples found involved boys rather than girls.

Some boys received only a brief taste of education, because of the generosity of a wealthy benefactor; in 1493, Julyan Hyckes, a wealthy 'mayde' of the city of Rochester, provided for Alice Kelsam's son Edmund to be sent to grammar school for a year.¹⁵⁸ Others had longer; in 1528, William Menge of Horsmonden willed his wife to enjoy certain lands for four years in order to find his son Henry to school with books and all other things necessary.¹⁵⁹ Some boys were sent to school until they were sixteen, before learning a trade; in 1475, Henry Stidulf of Tudeley directed that his wife was to use the profits of certain lands to 'kepyng my son Thomas to scole' until he was sixteen years of age.¹⁶⁰ In 1544, Thomas Par, a tanner of Dartford, left £6 8s 4d to his son, part of which was to be used for him to be 'honestlie educated and brought up', and when he reached the age of sixteen for him to be put to some 'honest arte crafte or misterye'.¹⁶¹ Other boys had to choose between going to school and learning a trade; in 1472, Robert Tebold of Seal willed that his grandson by his daughter Johanna was to be placed in the governance of his wife, if his executors and the boy's parents were agreeable, and the boy be 'put to scole or to craft'.¹⁶² Some wealthier yeomen or minor gentry, from the end of the fifteenth century, may have meant university when they said school; in 1511, Thomas Brampton of Northfleet, probably a gentleman, whose overseer was John Roper, left lands for his son to be found to 'school' until he was twenty-one years of age, by the agreement of his wife and Roper.¹⁶³ Some late starters did, however, remain in grammar schools until their early twenties.¹⁶⁴ Later, in Mary's reign, in 1554, William Goodwyn of Erith, a marriner, left £5 for his brother Thomas to be kept 'at scole in Fraunce' for a year.¹⁶⁵

In the diocese of Rochester, before the Reformation, most book bequests made by laity of minor gentry rank or below, were of service books, or money for service books to be bought, for the maintenance of services in their parish church.¹⁶⁶ The books provided by laity in this way included antiphoners, breviaries, grails and gradual books, manuals, missals, ordinals, portiphoria, processional, Psalters, books of hours and other collections of prayers, and open or unspecified bequests. There is no evidence in the Rochester wills of lay ownership of the kind of devotional treatises read by devout literate laity of noble

¹⁵⁶ Claire Cross & Noreen Vickers, *Monks, Friars and Nuns in sixteenth-century Yorkshire*, Yorkshire Archaeological Society Record Series 150 (1995), p 7.

¹⁵⁷ DRb/Pwr6/257.

¹⁵⁸ DRb/Pwr5/211.

¹⁵⁹ DRb/Pwr8/154.

¹⁶⁰ DRb/Pwr3/220

¹⁶¹ DRb/Pwr10/93.

¹⁶² DRb/Pwr4/35.

¹⁶³ PROB 11/17/13v. Helen Jewell comments, however, that most benefactors who showed an interest in university education before the Reformation, in northern England, were ecclesiastics well up the church hierarchy (Helen M. Jewell, "'The bringing-up of children in good learning and manners': a survey of secular educational provision in the north of England, c.1350-1550", *Northern History*, 18 (1982), pp.1-25 at p.14).

¹⁶⁴ Nicholas Orme, *Education in the west of England, 1066-1548*, p.20.

¹⁶⁵ DRb/Pwr11/344. Other references to schooling in these wills are as follows: in 1446, William Herde of St. Werburgh in Hoo bequeathed 10s for the schooling of a neighbour, William Champneys (DRb/Pwr1/39); in 1447, Matthew Mowsherst of Edenbridge left his son John 40s to 'exhibit' him at school (DRb/Pwr1/45); in 1501, Richard Qwyk, surgeon of Rochester, included amongst his many bequests one of a kercher to Benett the schoolmaster's daughter (DRb/Pwr5/411). Benett was perhaps a schoolmaster in the cathedral school. Concerning the religious instruction of children, but not in schools, Richard Barton of Seal, in 1497, left 4d to each of his godchildren to be paid when they were able to say their *Pater noster* and *Ave* (DRb/Pwr5/295).

rank and by nuns, in the fifteenth century.¹⁶⁷ For the most part, the only books other than service books mentioned by laity were saints' lives, grammar text books and professional books (such as the books owned by a Rochester surgeon, or those used by husbandmen for administrative matters).¹⁶⁸ Religious, devotional and philosophical treatises, Bibles, and books of history, literature and sermons were only possessed by educated priests. The same pattern was found by Tanner in his study of late medieval Norwich.¹⁶⁹ There may, of course, have been books not mentioned in wills, and it is not possible to identify unnamed books.

The possession of primers by a small number of laity, which they bequeathed to fellow laypeople, including kin, manifested their literate piety.¹⁷⁰ These books containing the basic prayers of the faith often began with an alphabet, and were used as textbooks for elementary education.¹⁷¹ They, therefore, occupied a central place in the piety of many literate laypeople. There was a concentration of such laypeople in the cathedral city of Rochester, but they were also present amongst the yeomanry and merchant traders of small towns and rural parishes in the diocese. References found manifest the use of primers in daily devotion, sometimes with beads, by individuals and within families. For example, Julyan Hyckes, a wealthy 'mayde' of the parish of St. Nicholas Rochester, in 1493, left to Katherine Aschly a pair of coral beads and 'my premer that I sey my service over everi daye'.¹⁷²

In making bequests of books to parish clergy, laity showed a concern for effective provision of their pastoral and spiritual care, and an interest in the education and equipping of priests for these tasks. This concern was seen also in the court cases cited in chapter six, in which parishioners complained about clergy who did not visit the sick and dying, keep confessions secret, or conduct services when they were supposed to. Thomas Grene of Milton next Gravesend, who dated his will on 21st July 1452, was one of the small number of pious laity with the means and education to benefit from books and their contents. He was probably one of those locally prominent minor townsmen who needed a certain level of literacy to be able to take his turn in local town government, taking part in courts, collecting taxes and negotiating with

¹⁶⁶ See appendix six. Of course, the provision of money in a will for the buying of a book does not mean that the church in question actually received it. Nevertheless, such bequests tell us something about book provision.

¹⁶⁷ See chapter four.

¹⁶⁸ Richard Qwyk of Rochester, an extremely wealthy man who asked for burial in, and made many bequests to Rochester Cathedral Priory, in his will of 18th November 1501, bequeathed to Dominus John Jenkok 'my bokes of Surgery' (DRb/Pwr5/411v). John Shemyng of Rochester, in his will dated 12th November 1523, forgave the debts of all but two of his father's debtors 'as conteyned in his sheppe boke with the bequestes to me' (DRb/Pwr7/292v). Thomas Plane of Tonbridge referred, in his will of 11th July 1467, to a book in which he recorded all the debts owed to him in his lifetime (DRb/Pwr2/388).

¹⁶⁹ Norman P. Tanner, *The Church in late medieval Norwich 1370-1532*, Appendix 6, pp.193-7.

¹⁷⁰ Primers were books of hours, which first appeared in the fourteenth century, containing calendar, the offices, Penitential Psalms, diverse prayers and devotions and extracts from Scripture, generally in Latin (Charles C. Butterworth, *The English Primers (1529-1545): their publication and connection with the English Bible and the Reformation in England* (Philadelphia, 1953), pp.2-3.

¹⁷¹ Nicholas Orme, *English Schools in the Middle Ages*, pp.62-3.

¹⁷² John Cheryman of Southgate in the parish of St. Margaret next Rochester, in his will dated 7th March 1475-6, left a silver salt cellar and his primer to John Cotyng, son of William Cotyng of Rochester, perhaps a schoolboy (DRb/Pwr4/210). The will of John Rede of Gravesend, dated 4th January 1478-9, provides evidence of religious devotion being taught to one generation by the previous, within families, and it also widens the circle of literate laity in Gravesend and Milton investigated below. Rede left to his son, Thomas, various silver and gold items, and a 'librum vocale primer'. The witnesses to his will included the rector, John Thorpe, and one John Dogett, whose kinsman Thomas was bequeathed a book by Thomas Grene of Milton in 1452 (DRb/Pwr3/294). For the Bamles of Rochester, books were also a part of family devotions by the end of the fifteenth century; John Bamle senior of St. Nicholas parish in Rochester, in his will dated 12th February 1490-91, bequeathed his 'masseboke porteus & Grete primer' to his son John, charging him to keep it to his own and his mother's use, and then to his children's (DRb/Pwr6/44v). One pious spinster in Rochester indicated her daily use of her primer, possibly in conjunction with use of rosary beads. Julyan Hyckes, a wealthy 'mayde' of Boley Hill in the parish of St. Nicholas Rochester (next to the castle, opposite the cathedral), in her will dated 9th September 1493, left to Katherine Aschly her best gilt girdle, a pair of coral beads and 'my premer that I sey my service over everi daye'. She also bequeathed a featherbed and a bolster to an Oxford scholar, John White, and provided for Alice Kelsam's son Edmund to be sent to grammar school for a year (DRb/Pwr5/211). William Gurney, possibly a corrodian of Malling Abbey, left his best primer to his godson Matthew, in his will of 6th June 1499. Gurney also referred to a 'presse' in his parlour (DRb/Pwr5/347).

various authorities.¹⁷³ He may have been one of the many boat-owning merchants who lived in Milton and Gravesend in the fifteenth century. Such merchants did not aspire to the Latin learning of certain members of the aristocracy but possessed mainly service books such as missals and breviaries.¹⁷⁴ His own education gave him a concern for the standards of the clergy and their pastoral care. Thus, he bequeathed to the chaplain with the cure of souls in Milton 3s 4d for a book called in English ('vulgariten') *Le Parissheprest*.¹⁷⁵ It is possible that the chaplain had let it be known that he wanted a copy of this book. It is not clear whether the book was itself translated into English, nor which one of the several popular works of practical theology for parish priests it was.¹⁷⁶ Grene's will also provides rare insight into the passing of books between only moderately wealthy laity below gentry rank, in a mostly rural parish, in the mid-fifteenth century. Grene also left books to fellow parishioners prominent in local wills; he bequeathed to Thomas Doggett of Milton 'my book called *Le Saulter*', and 'my best book called *Le Prymer*' to John Doget.

Two parishioners of fifteenth-century Dartford, who made wills, left books to clergy, although in both cases the additional motivation of kinship was involved. These examples further demonstrate the local origins of many members of the parish clergy in late medieval England, and show priests receiving books from their lay relatives. Johanna Wynsore, widow of Thomas Shadde, of Dartford, in her will of May 1466, left to her son Sir William Shadde, priest, two books which can not be identified from the abbreviations, 'duabus libras videlicet G & J', in accordance with the wishes of William's father.¹⁷⁷ This implies that these were two books already in the family's possession which could be easily identified from the abbreviations by those who knew them. Johanna Wynsore was one of only two women, whose wills were proved in the Rochester consistory court between 1438 and 1537, who bequeathed books already in their possession.¹⁷⁸ The second Dartford testator, like Thomas Grene of Milton, provides evidence of inhabitants of a small town possessing their own service books and loaning them to each other, in the fifteenth century. In 1467, Richard Bagshaugh of Dartford left to his kinsman, Geoffrey Bagshaugh chaplain, his portiphorium containing diverse masses, which was in the custody of Richard Boteler, to whom he had also lent money, of which 14s 6d was still owing.¹⁷⁹

There are few examples of books being bequeathed to laity by clergy, in the Rochester consistory court wills, none of them to women. The few examples, including the bequest of a dictionary to John Petyl in Rochester by Andrew Trayll, chaplain, in 1464, have already been cited. In other wills one example has been found of a priest leaving a book to an aristocratic woman; in his will dated at Lammastide 1500 and

¹⁷³ See Nicholas Orme, *English Schools in the Middle Ages*, p.44.

¹⁷⁴ Nicholas Orme, *English Schools in the Middle Ages*, p.46.

¹⁷⁵ DRb/Pwr1/134v

¹⁷⁶ Most popular of all was John Mirk's *Festial*. Mirk also wrote a tract called *Instructions for Parish Priests* (F.A. Gasquet, 'The bibliography of some devotional books printed by the earliest English printers', p.171). Perhaps, Grene felt that his curate was inadequate in carrying out his duties and needed to read a book such as this.

¹⁷⁷ DRb/Pwr2/366. Thomas Shadde made his will in 1461. He must have expressed this wish at some time other than the making of his will, because there is no mention of these books or his son William in this document (DRb/Pwr2/221v).

¹⁷⁸ The other was Julyan Hyckes, a wealthy 'mayde' of Boley Hill in the parish of St. Nicholas Rochester, who left her own primer, in her will dated 9th September 1493 (see above). A few other women, all widows, bequeathed money for service books to be bought for churches. Alice Flower, widow of Gravesend, who was a boat owner in her own right, in her will of 20th July 1491, bequeathed 40s to St. Mary's parish church for the rood loft, or church repairs, or to be spent on buying 'a boke cope or some other ornament to the most honor and lawde of almygthy (sic.) godde' (DRb/Pwr5/170). As a wealthy businesswoman, however, she was literate and must have owned a few books.

¹⁷⁹ DRb/Pwr2/386v. Richard Bagshaugh was a conventionally pious man, who asked to be buried before the image of Our Lady in Childbirth in the parish church, and made bequests to the church fabric, the image of St. Hildevert in Swanscombe, the prioress, nuns and friars of Dartford Priory, and the Aylesford Carmelite friars.

proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, Gilbert Carleton, vicar and clerk of Farningham, near Dartford, left his book of *Legenda Aurea* to Lady Elizabeth Peche, wife of Sir John Peche of Lullingstone.¹⁸⁰ The Church was actively involved in the education of the laity, through chantry and other schools. It sought to facilitate the deepening of their religious life, and the books whose use it encouraged by literate laity were principally service books, other books of devotions and saints' lives. However, until the sixteenth century, the Church did not allow any but the more highly educated aristocracy to read the ultimate source of spiritual nourishment and instruction, the Bible itself, except for extracts in Primers.¹⁸¹ Until then, amongst lesser laity, knowledge of the Bible gained from reading for oneself was exclusive to Lollards. According to Hasenohr, writing about laity of noble rank, reading amongst laity in fifteenth-century France was similarly concentrated on morality and devotion, with no doctrinal theology; she concludes that the laity were not encouraged to think theologically (which was the preserve of the clergy) but to further their individualistic piety. This, she says, left them defenceless against heretical influences and the Reformation.¹⁸² Hasenohr might be underestimating the instructional value of corporate worship, preaching and the theology contained within prayers in the devotional books themselves. As a result of growing up with this prohibition, many of the parish clergy and conservative members of their laity, in Kent and elsewhere, objected to the innovation of installing English Bibles in churches, ordered in 1538. Few churches outside of London or the cathedral cities had carried this out by the end of 1540, and an Act of May 1541 gave churches six months to rectify this omission on pain of a fine of £2.¹⁸³ Only one lay testator in the diocese of Rochester, whose will was proved in the consistory court before the mid-sixteenth century, bequeathed money for a Bible for his church. Robert Dove's bequest of 'one Bible of the gretest volume to be sett upp where as it shall please John Brett & John Kettle' in Dartford parish church, in his will dated 18th November 1541, may indicate that the church had not already installed one and that the churchwardens had asked him for this.¹⁸⁴ This reluctance to install an English Bible in Dartford parish church is one more sign of the traditional nature of religion in the parish.¹⁸⁵ Its persistence was indicated by a bequest of books to the church by a layman, at the beginning of Mary's reign; in his will dated 6th March 1553-4, John Dampord bequeathed 6s 8d to buy books necessary for the service of the parish church.¹⁸⁶ This was in the very month that Queen Mary issued Injunctions for the restoration of processions and all 'laudable and honest ceremonies', the mass having been prescribed in December

¹⁸⁰ PROB 11/12/136v. Lady Peche (d.1522) was a literary woman. She also owned a copy of Lydgate's Troybook which survives as Oxford Bodleian Rawlinson Ms. poet. 144 (Carol Meale, "'... alle the bokes that I have of latyn, english, and frensch": laywomen and their books in late medieval England', in Carol Meale, ed., *Women and Literature in England, 1150-1500* (Cambridge, 1993), pp.128-58 at p 134).

¹⁸¹ Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, p.80.

¹⁸² Geneviève Hasenohr, 'Religious reading amongst the laity in France in the fifteenth century' in Peter Biller & Anne Hudson, eds, *Heresy and Literacy, 1000-1530* (Cambridge, 1994), pp.205-21.

¹⁸³ Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, pp.420-21; Christopher Haigh, ed., *The English Reformation Revised* (Cambridge, 1987), p 13.

¹⁸⁴ DRb/Pwr9/385. This was the only 'pious' bequest in Robert Dove's will, other than of his soul 'to God'. To comply with the Act of May 1541 and install a Bible within six months, the wardens would have had to carry out Dove's legacy soon after the will was written, in November, in advance of its probate in April 1542. This may have been the Bible that was noted in Dartford church, with the obligatory Paraphrase of St. Erasmus, in the church inventory drawn up in Edward IV's reign, in November 1552 (MacKenzie E.C. Walcott, R.P. Coates & W.A. Scott Robertson, eds, 'Inventories of parish church goods in Kent, AD 1552', *AC*, 8 (1872), pp.74-163 at p. 141).

¹⁸⁵ Dartford was by no means alone in this, and many country churches did not obtain their Bibles until 1547 (Christopher Haigh, ed., *The English Reformation Revised*, p.13).

¹⁸⁶ DRb/Pwr1 1/340.

1553.¹⁸⁷ Parishioners in Dartford were as quick as any in England to restore Catholic services in their church.

In the mid-1540s, when Dartford and other parish churches were only reluctantly installing English Bibles, one Margaret Neville of the diocese of Rochester, a member of the Kentish Neville family, demonstrated intimate knowledge of Scripture, in her will. Her education and social rank had given her direct access to the Bible, probably in translation. No doubt with the assistance of a chaplain, this access facilitated the theological reflection on which her faith was founded, which is manifested in her will. Her example justifies, on its own terms, the Church's earlier prohibition on laity reading the Bible for themselves, since her friendship with Katherine Parr, and the preamble of the will, suggest that it had led her into a Protestant mentality. Some attention will be paid to this unusual document, which manifests a sophisticated, pious literate lay mentality.¹⁸⁸

This document sets forth a clear statement of Margaret's Christian belief. Indeed, at one level, this seems to have been her main reason for making the will, as the preamble constitutes half of the whole document, which otherwise contains a small number of bequests of a personal nature. The reason for making a will was to provide directions for the distribution of one's worldly wealth, which itself was a demonstration of piety. In both Catholic and Protestant thinking, disposal of one's worldly goods was a requirement of dying well, so that, for Margaret Neville, even her bequests of pensions to her servants had spiritual overtones.¹⁸⁹ Christopher Marsh, writing about the early modern period, feels that it was in the disposal of their wealth that most testators manifested their piety, rather than in the usually formulaic preambles over which they may have had no personal control.¹⁹⁰ Conventionally pious Catholic testators, in Rochester wills, often abbreviated this item to 'First I bequeath my soul to Almighty God &c.'. Margaret Neville's prime concern was to pass on her faith through her will, and she did not mention the destination of her body at all. The preamble is almost wholly inspired by Scripture and makes frequent direct quotation from it, with one allusion to the liturgical hymn *Te Deum laudamus te*, as may be demonstrated by annotation:

First I bequethe yelde upp and commytt to the handes of my most mercyfull father my soule yet all my hole substaunce as well spirituall as corporall most stedfastlye trustynge unto his mercye that he thorowe the merites of my saviour and onlye medyator Jhesus Crist¹⁹¹ will nowe performe his promys unto me that death maye have no power over me But that thorowe his grace I maye boldlye saye O deathe where is thy victory O hell where is thy styng¹⁹² being above all other thinges most certayne that all that trust in him shall not be confounded¹⁹³ I knowe that thowe wilt

¹⁸⁷ Christopher Haigh, ed., *The English Reformation Revised*, pp.129-30. See pp.128-32 on what Haigh sees as the general enthusiastic revival of Catholic religion in English parish churches.

¹⁸⁸ PROB 11/31/45v. The will is dated 23rd March 'in the 45th year of our lord', which must be a scribal error for the 35th year of Henry VIII's reign (1543-4). It was proved in 1546-7. It is not possible to identify this Margaret from her will, but she was evidently a member of the Neville family of Mereworth or Birling, since it calls her Margaret Neville of the diocese of Rochester.

¹⁸⁹ Christopher Marsh, 'In the name of God? Will-making and faith in early modern England', in G.H. Martin & Peter Spufford, eds, *The Records of the Nation* (Woodbridge, 1990), pp 215-49 at pp.217-20, citing Perneby who said in *A Direction for Death* (London, 1599) that by a godly disposal of goods the testator was working to the glory of his maker.

¹⁹⁰ Christopher Marsh, 'In the name of God? Will-making and faith in early modern England', pp.225ff..

¹⁹¹ 1 Tim. 2 v.5: 'For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus'.

¹⁹² 1 Cor. 15 v.55:

O death, where is thy victory?

O death, where is thy sting?

Compare: *Hosea* 13 v.14:

O Death, where are your plagues?

O Sheol, where is your destruction?

¹⁹³ Compare the final verse of the *Te Deum*: 'O Lord, in thee have I trusted; let me never be confounded'.

See also *Isaiah* 45 v.17:

receyve me under the wynges of thy marcie¹⁹⁴ not for my worthynes But for the worthynes of Criste my saviour in as muche as thowe hast promysed to gloryfie all his membres for whome he prayed here that they myght be gloryfied,¹⁹⁵ and thoughe I be moste vile yet is is (sic) he riche thoughe I most synfull yet is he hollye. Fynally I fynde in my selfe nothinge but damnacion but whar I fynde dwellinge all the treasures of thy mercy goodness graces and vertues I therfore thorowe him whome thowe O Father with all his riches and treasures hast geven unto me doo approche unto the throne of thy mercy¹⁹⁶ besechinge thee to pardon me of all my offences by which I have manny tyme of all my lyffe offended the and that thow wilt blott them out of thy memory¹⁹⁷ and never impute them unto me for then whoo shall laye anny thinge farther to my charge whom thowe hast remytted yea whome thowe hast receyvid for a membre of thy mystycall bodye.¹⁹⁸

Having made this testament of her faith, Margaret Neville prefaced her material bequests in language again drawing directly on Scripture. She used the parable of the talents to refer to her worldly goods entrusted to her by God; she continued from the above, now addressing Christ:

And nowe in (sic) insomuche as I have receyvid {of thy mercyfull father}¹⁹⁹ dyvers and sundry talentes whiche it hath pleased him to commytt unto my handes that I maye not be compted lyke unto the unprofitable servaunte *which* hid the talentes of his Lorde in the earthe, I shall most humblye besече my dere soveraygne mistres the Quenes highnes to take all and singler my saide talentes into her handes to be disposed to the glorye of god as her highnes shall thynke most best.

Margaret Neville appointed as her sole executor the Protestant 'Lady Katherine Parr queen of England Fraunce & Ireland', paying tribute to her

godlye Educacion and tender love and bountifull goodnes whiche I have ever more founde in her highnes and knowinge farthermore that her grace is of suche *perfite* godlynes and wysdome (that she could much better dispose of these goods than Margaret could do for herself).²⁰⁰

She left to Katherine Parr the large sum of £1000 and a manor in Yorkshire.

Margaret Neville's will shows her to have been a pious Protestant woman well conversant with Scripture. This implies that she had undertaken theological reading herself, and had probably received direction from a personal chaplain. At a practical level, the transfer of £1000 and a manor in Yorkshire to Henry VIII's latest wife was the main business of this will, but this was subordinate to the Christian belief

But Israel is saved by the Lord with everlasting salvation;
you shall not be put to shame or confounded to all eternity
and *Isaiah* 54 v 4a:

Fear not, for you will not be ashamed:
be not confounded, for you will not be put to shame

¹⁹⁴ This alludes to the description of the 'mercy seat' on the ark of the covenant made by Bezalel (*Exodus* 37 v.9):

The cherubim spread out their wings above, overshadowing the mercy seat with their wings, with their faces one to another, toward the mercy seat were the faces of the cherubim.

There are many other Old Testament references referring to the seat of mercy, or using the image of protecting wings to describe God's mercy. See Margaret Neville's reference to 'the throne of thy mercy', further on.

¹⁹⁵ This is inspired directly by Christ's prayer after the Last Supper, reported in *John* 17 vv.10 & 22-4:

All mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them. The glory which thou hast given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and thou in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that thou hast sent me and hast loved them even as thou hast loved me. Father, I desire that they also, whom thou hast given me, may be with me where I am, to behold my glory which thou hast given me in thy love for me before the foundation of the world.

¹⁹⁶ See footnote above for 'wings of thy mercy'.

¹⁹⁷ *Isaiah* 43 v.25: 'I, I am He who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins'. Note also *Isaiah* 38 v.17b: '... for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back'.

¹⁹⁸ *Romans* 12, vv. 4 & 5:

For as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

¹⁹⁹ Inserted superscript.

²⁰⁰ The small number of bequests Margaret did specify consisted of life pensions for four people, including £4 per annum to her maid, the others being of 40s. per year; a £20 cash bequest to a friend, Elizabeth Fitzgarrett; and a large bequest to Katherine Parr herself. The bequest to Elizabeth Garrett was made 'for the entyre frendshipe and great gentilnes that I have evermore founde in Misteres Eijizabeth Garrett'. To 'my dere soveraigne mystres the lady Katheryne Parr' Margaret left the large sum of £1000, given to her by her father to her marriage, and 'all that right interest and tytle' which she had in the manor of Tunmounnt (Todmorton?) in Yorkshire.

which informed her attitude to all practical matters and relationships. Margaret was making a testament of her Christian faith, bequeathing it to whomsoever would come to read or hear the text of her will.²⁰¹ Sensitivity to texts was not, however, exclusive to clergy, leisured gentry or nobility, from the later fifteenth century, but was demonstrated also by devout literate yeomanry and townsfolk. To an extent this was encouraged by the Church as an institution through provision of education, and by certain individual clergy who shared books, but it still denied access to the Bible for as long as it could, in an attempt to preserve its interpretative authority. The laity largely colluded with this, with their clergy, because of their commitment to traditional religion.

Books, continental influence and heresy

Circles of clergy or laity who shared reading material and met to discuss its contents, were not all orthodox; this was the very means by which heterodox ideas were spread, on the eve of the Reformation. Much has been written about the importance of literacy in Lollardy. In the diocese of Rochester there were Lollard conventicles at times in the Medway valley, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and a Lollard reading discussion group met in the house of Christopher Payn of Tonbridge, in the early 1490s.²⁰² Many of the heterodox ideas and the books which contained or fuelled them came from the continent. Davis's and Dickens's conclusions about the spread and encouragement of heterodoxy in Kent by Dutch immigrants, in the sixteenth century, were reported in chapter six.²⁰³ As a larger town on the London to Dover road and a port on the River Medway, Rochester had strong connections with the continent. The lay subsidy lists show that Gravesend and other towns along the Thames shore also contained Dutch immigrants, in the 1520s.²⁰⁴ On the eve of the Reformation, Lutheran tracts and English translations of the Bible were circulating and being discussed by a few clerics and the laity who came under their influence in and around Rochester. This small minority of book-owning clergy may have lead some laity astray. A case brought before the consistory court in 1528 manifested the existence of a potentially heretical reading circle within no less a bastion of orthodoxy than the Benedictine cathedral priory in Rochester. This involved the passing of a copy of Tyndale's translation of the Bible, bought by a London student at the university of Louvain, between an instructor of grammar (who bought the Bible from the student), a monk and an adult lay chorister in Rochester Cathedral Priory. As Davis comments, 'This case illustrates how the heretical book trade could flourish even in the most orthodox of circles'. By the time the case came to court, the grammar instructor had moved to Tonbridge School, in an area where there may have been Lollards with whom he could discuss ideas.²⁰⁵ Ironically, just ten years later, reading of the English Bible in church became compulsory.

Further along the north Kent Thames shore, in September 1532, Peter Durr, a priest of Gravesend, was brought before the bishop and accused of being in possession of a book of Lutheran heresy. Amongst

²⁰¹ I am most grateful to my mother for identifying these scriptural references from the preamble for me. All quotations are taken from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

²⁰² John F. Davis, *Heresy and Reformation in the south-east of England, 1520-1559* (London, 1983), p.3.

²⁰³ John F. Davis, *Heresy and Reformation in the south-east of England, 1520-1559*, pp.44-5; A.G. Dickens, *The English Reformation* (London, 1974), p.326. Palliser also finds that 'Since Lutheran books and ideas, and later Zwinglian, Anabaptist, Calvinist and other influences, entered England through London and the east-coast ports, it would be surprising if early Protestantism were not strongest in the south-east' (D.M. Palliser, 'Popular reactions to the Reformation during the years of uncertainty 1530-70', in Christopher Haigh, ed., *The English Reformation Revised*, pp.94-113 at p. 95).

²⁰⁴ See chapter one.

other doctrines, the book stated that the sale of indulgences was the working of papal pride, that Luther's doctrine was of great comfort to the people, that God was the sole source of aid in trouble, that all sin was pardoned through faith, and that to believe all this was more beneficial to the soul than praying to the virgin Mary.²⁰⁶ The case of Thomas Batman, the prior of St. Bartholomew's hospital next Rochester, who was accused, at the consistory court in 1524, of preaching articles of Lutheran belief publicly and in his house, was cited in chapter six. The views Batman publicised were variously Lutheran and Wycliffite/Lollard, and it is likely that he had obtained them from books as well as in discussion with other like-minded individuals, including Dutch and German immigrants.

Conclusion

Pre-Reformation clergy in England had several preaching and instructional manuals available to them, and a proportion of them owned copies of these. Heal and O'Day comment that the edifying stories and moral precepts these books contained belonged to a different concept of the Christian faith than one centred on biblical teaching.²⁰⁷ Books in wills of the diocese of Rochester show that clergy there indeed had generally conservative tastes; only one priest in the period under study mentioned a book of works by Rolle, and they seem to have been unaware of new learning, in spite of proximity to London and the continent, and the local presence of Dutch and other immigrants. A small number of clergy, in the early sixteenth century, did, however, procure books of heretical Lollard and Lutheran ideas. Nevertheless, most books mentioned in clergy wills were liturgical books, saints' lives, books of sermons and medieval works of practical theology. The latter and the sermons reflected a desire to be effective in parish ministry, and were owned by non-graduate clergy, as in Norwich and Exeter.²⁰⁸ With exceptions, books of canon law and theology were generally owned by the more scholarly university-educated clergy, such as the circle around Bishop John Fisher and collectively by those in Cobham College. Cobham College was a semi-monastic centre of learning which possessed a small traditional theological, legal and grammarian library. It contained a school to which some of the wealthier land-owning families sent their sons for elementary and grammar education, and it has been suggested that some of these boys were intended to become priests, whether or not they went on to a university education.

Not all educated laity intended to become priests. The wills of Thomas Grene of Milton next Gravesend, dated 1452, and Johanna Wynsore of Dartford, dated 1466, however, have shown that there were also laity in small towns of yeomanry and merchant classes who owned and read their own books. It was, however, from such stock that many of the unbeneficed stipendiary clergy were drawn, often serving in the locality that they had grown up in, such as Johanna Wynsore's son and William Brodbent of Milton and Wilmington, in the early sixteenth century. The children of such families were able to receive some basic education from chantry priests, in small elementary schools and in Cobham College. All this suggests that there were close connections between the laity and the parish clergy who worked amongst them, in terms of learning and kinship. No doubt, such reasons were behind the cooperation between clergy and

²⁰⁵ John F. Davis, *Heresy and Reformation in the south-east of England, 1520-1559*, p.43: DRb/Pa 9 pt 1 ff.100v-103.

²⁰⁶ John F. Davis, *Heresy and Reformation in the south-east of England, 1520-1559*, pp.43-4.

²⁰⁷ Introduction in Felicity Heal and Rosemary O'Day, eds, *Church and Society in England: Henry VIII to James I*, p.4.

laity in Dartford and Gravesend in the running of the chapels in those parishes, and a continued adherence to traditional religion up to the 1540s and 50s.

²⁰⁸ Norman P. Tanner, *The Church in late medieval Norwich 1370-1532*, p.42. Lesser clergy associated with Exeter Cathedral, between 1404-1506, possessed the same range of books as those cited here (Nicholas Orme, *Education and Society in medieval and Renaissance England*, p.198).

Conclusions

The student of religion in late medieval west Kent is inevitably conscious of lacking sources of evidence available to researchers of some other regions and towns. If the wills proved in the archdeaconry court of Rochester and the peculiar deanery of Shoreham had survived then a more comprehensive statistical analysis of testamentary evidence would have been possible. This would have added to or modified the findings of what is otherwise a mostly qualitative study. The evidence of pre-Reformation churchwardens' accounts, such as survive for parishes in east Kent, London and elsewhere, would have added further dimensions to the investigation. Where Dartford Priory is concerned, the non-survival of the records of the English Dominican province, or indeed of the registers of the master general of the order from before the 1480s, is most regrettable. In the absence of this evidence, more internal administrative documents would also have been useful, and it would have been good to have had more letters from and to the prioresses. In general, it is disappointing but not surprising that less evidence survives relating to the priory in the first century of its existence, especially from the first half of the fifteenth century, and that so little can be said about the friars. Whilst the study of religion and society in pre-Reformation west Kent is hampered by the lack of evidence and the inconsistent nature of its survival, this thesis demonstrates that what does survive, when approached with appropriate methods, is nevertheless of sufficient quality to suggest conclusions which are of wider relevance to the study of late medieval religion in Kent and England.

Firstly, this study reveals the dynamic nature of monastic religion in Dartford Priory. As a Dominican nunnery its foundation was without precedent in England and drew on a continental royal pious tradition. It was founded at the high point of the Dominican second order, in the mid-fourteenth century, modelled in part on the foundation of Edward III's grandfather at Poissy in France. Dominican nunneries on the continent were noted for their strict enclosure, observance, learning and, especially in the German province in the fourteenth century, a strong mystical spirituality. Dartford continued to come under the influence of the continental order of which it was a part into the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, this influence being mediated through friars and religious texts. The nuns remained highly conscious and protective of their unique identity in England as Dominican sisters right up to the sixteenth century. Prioress Elizabeth Cressener (prioress between 1479-1536) and possibly her predecessors enjoyed relations with their friar chaplains based on strong intellectual and spiritual rapport which were possibly comparable to those found in German convents of the order in the fourteenth century.

Possessing a strong religious identity, the nunnery prospered, in spite of the fact that it was founded during the plague years following the Black Death. Besides its royal patronage Dartford Priory attracted support nationally from members of the nobility and aristocracy and the London mercantile elite. This support was expressed through donation and the provision of recruits, who included pious widows and young girls. The priory continued to attract recruits dedicated to the religious life up to the late 1530s, and the number of nuns at the Dissolution was almost twice that with which the monastery was founded. The priory also attracted support in the local community, and a large proportion of nuns may have been drawn from local and county gentry and yeomanry families, as in other English nunneries. This

embeddedness in local society continued even after the Dissolution, when several of the nuns continued to live together in Sutton at Hone, attracting the support of local traditional Catholic priests and laypeople. The nuns' strength of commitment to their monastic vocation and the dynamism of their spirituality before the Dissolution were indicated by this persistence of community solidarity, as with some other monastic communities. Of all the sixteenth-century English religious, it was only the Dominican nuns of Dartford, the Carthusian monks and the Brigittine nuns of Syon Abbey who survived as communities beyond Elizabeth's succession and went into exile, in 1559. This confirms the conclusion suggested by evidence of literary and kinship connections in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries that Dartford Priory had more in common with these two dynamic late medieval communities than with the majority of older traditional monasteries in England.

Secondly, this thesis contributes to knowledge of the connections that existed between monasticism and secular religion in local society in the late middle ages. In west Kent these connections were not extensive, but where they did exist they could be intensive. Lay piety in late medieval society found expression through multiple channels, and a minority valued the prayers of religious, including enclosed nuns. In this region, the impact that monasteries had on secular religion was extremely localised, even in the case of friars although slightly less so than with the enclosed orders. Similarly, although support for the cathedral or 'mother' church in Rochester grew significantly in the half century before the Reformation, it was relatively distant from most parts of the diocese and the bequests it received amounted to tokenism. The lack of enthusiasm for monasteries amongst laity in parishes beyond those in which they were situated has also been found in studies of east Kent, and this suggests that it was a manifestation of a regional mentality.

In particular, this study demonstrates with the example of Dartford Priory that intensive connections could exist between a house of strictly enclosed observant nuns and the religion of the surrounding parish. Investigation of nunneries in west Kent confirms the evidence from London and Norwich that nunneries were generally valued for their spiritual services by a small but significant proportion of laity who were connected in some way or lived locally. Beyond their locality they were unable to compete with male orders and this gave them an additional disadvantage in Kent. The nuns of Dartford were separated from local society by their physical enclosure, their learning, their religion as contemplatives, and the socially dominant role of the prioress in the parish as an important local landowner and employer. Nevertheless, a significant minority of testators from the local area requested services in the priory, some of them because they had kinship connections with nuns. Furthermore, laity and secular clergy were allowed access to parts of the conventual church, probably separated from the nuns by screens, for the maintenance of lights, to hear the monastic liturgy and for masses. There was also a more select group mostly of *ministeriales* drawn from the local yeomanry and minor gentry who were intensively involved with the life of the monastery, in devotional as well as economic activities.

Besides laity coming into the monastery, Prioress Elizabeth Cressener developed a role in parish religion through the execution of wills, appointment of priests to celebrate the morrowmass in the parish church, and the joint mastership of the Lowfield Street almshouses. Furthermore, the nunnery's friar chaplains worked amongst laity outside the monastic confines, in cooperation with the secular clergy, and

some of them served as chantry priests and curates in local parish churches and chapels. The influence of the friars on local religion was probably more extensive than the small quantity of surviving evidence suggests.

Thirdly, this thesis reveals the existence of a robust traditional Catholicism in parish religion in west Kent in the fifteenth and first half of the sixteenth centuries in which the great majority of people participated. It varied in character between different parts of the diocese, being more restrained in isolated rural parishes. With the notable exception of the fraternity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary of West Malling, fraternities were not as significant as some in East Anglia, but they provided one more means of pious and social activity, especially in towns near the River Thames between East Greenwich and Hoo. Similarly, the free-standing chapels in Gravesend and Dartford were popular for the additional facilities they provided for orthodox devotion and communal religion. The cult of the saints was popular in the diocese throughout the period, and the appearance of new images with lights right up to the Reformation demonstrated the ability of Catholic religion in the region to renew itself. The single most popular cult throughout the period from 1438 up to the Reformation was that of the Blessed Virgin Mary, represented in Dartford, for example, by three images in the parish church and one maintained by servants in the priory. In all there were sixteen saints' cults supported by laity in that parish, in the priory, church and chapel, between 1438 and the Reformation, including new cults founded in the sixteenth century. As in east Kent, a lower proportion of testators gave their support to hospitals than in some other regions, but the foundation and maintenance of almshouses by laymen in Dartford and elsewhere were expressions of orthodox belief in Purgatory and the spiritual benefits of prayer. Orthodox devotion to the Passion, and belief in Judgement and Redemption, were manifested in west Kent, as in the rest of Catholic England, by the maintenance and renewal of Roods and Doom paintings right up to the Reformation. Belief in the redemptive value of masses was demonstrated by the endowment of obits, trentals and votive masses and provision of service books for churches. All this testified to the common belief in Purgatory and in the possibility of alleviating the suffering of the soul through pious action and services. The relatively small number of bequests in the diocese of Rochester for votive masses of new devotions, such as the Name of Jesus, Five Wounds or masses at Scala Celi, in most parishes in the diocese including Dartford, was an indication of the traditionalism of parish religion there rather than lack of orthodox piety. This thesis supports the conclusions of some recent studies concerning the importance of lay activity in the conventional piety of late medieval parish religion.

Fourthly, this thesis manifests the importance to this robust Catholic religion of the cooperation of local clergy and laity. Increased lay activity in religion, demonstrated by interest in liturgical matters, foundation and running of chapels and almshouses, and membership of fraternities, did not imply dissatisfaction with the priesthood and in most cases demanded their assistance. Evidence cited in this thesis supports the conclusions of other recent studies that many members of the late medieval parish clergy served in the areas in which they had grown up. In general, the majority of parish clergy lived their lives amongst the laity they served and were in contact with local aspirations. The almshouses built in Dartford were founded by wealthy townsmen and run in co-operation with the vicar of the parish church. St. Edmund's chapel was increasingly run by the parishioners in cooperation with the clergy from the parish church, in the early sixteenth century. In Gravesend the clergy assisted the townsmen in use of their

chapel many years before the ecclesiastical authorities gave it even limited recognition. Unlike in certain other late medieval communities in such diverse places as Lancashire and Smallhythe in east Kent, the religion practised by the laity and clergy in their chapels in west Kent was orthodox. Parishioners in the diocese of Rochester were patient and long-suffering in the exceptional cases of abuse by bad priests. In such disputes they sometimes acted with the support of local chantry and stipendiary priests in the face of diocesan structures that were sometimes exceedingly slow to act in these situations of pastoral breakdown. Parishioners in the diocese of Rochester more often worked with their parish clergy for the maintenance and increase of religion, valuing their pastoral and sacramental ministry. These examples further manifest the strong localism and vibrant orthodoxy within late medieval piety. By contrast the institution and hierarchy of the Church sometimes seemed out of touch and insensitive.

Fifthly, this thesis contributes to knowledge of the education and devotional reading of nuns, laity and parish clergy in late medieval England. Dominican nuns on the continent were sometimes marked by a high level of learning, and its importance to the sisters of Dartford is indicated by their running of a school, commissioning of books and the examples of particular nuns who sought instruction in Latin and grammar. In this Dartford Priory was similar to others of the larger late medieval English nunneries especially Syon Abbey, which ran schools or commissioned books. Dartford Priory's involvement in education and boarding of children and young women was also a further manifestation of the connections it sought with the secular world. This interest in the mixed life, combining a life of prayer with interaction with pious laity, was also indicated by many of the vernacular devotional texts contained within manuscripts owned by the nunnery, from the fifteenth century. Whilst the priory inherited the influence of the mystical spirituality of the continental Dominican second order it modified this tradition and practised a more pragmatic English spirituality. Prioress Elizabeth Cressener herself embodied these traits, being a woman of deep spirituality and great intellect who oversaw the monastery's administration, admitted pious noble widows to dwell in the monastery, some of whom may have brought books with them, and established the contacts with the local parish mentioned above.

Access to chantry, elementary and grammar schools improved the level of education of the laity from the fifteenth century. The evidence of the diocese of Rochester shows that members of the yeomanry owned and used primers and other liturgical books in the middle of the fifteenth century, and lent these books to each other within parishes. They had access to the same basic education in reading, writing, Latin and grammar which enabled some of their sons and brothers to become local priests or go on to university, if their families were sufficiently wealthy. The evidence for this in west Kent particularly comes from such places as Rochester, Gravesend and Dartford, which were open to trade and experiencing rising wealth, and whose inhabitants had access to the schools associated with Cobham College and Rochester Cathedral. Some of these literate laymen supported their parish clergy, including their relatives, and further showed their concern for effective provision of local pastoral and spiritual care by giving them service books and clerical instructional manuals. There is, however, very little evidence of book-ownership by women in the diocese of Rochester, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, although there were far fewer wills made by women than men.

Books mentioned in wills of the diocese of Rochester up to the Reformation show clergy to have had conservative reading tastes. These books mostly contained liturgy, saints' lives, sermons and medieval clerical instruction texts, reflecting a desire to be effective in parish ministry, and they were owned by non-graduate clergy as well as graduates, as in Norwich. Only one priest in the diocese in the fifteenth century mentioned a book of works by Rolle. With exceptions, books of canon law and medieval theology were generally owned by the more scholarly university-educated clergy, including the circle around Bishop John Fisher, collectively by the priests in Cobham College, and by a few parish incumbents. The clergy in the sixteenth century seem to have been unaware of new learning, in spite of proximity to London and the continent, and the local presence of Dutch and other immigrants. Books containing new heterodox thinking were found in small numbers, however. Circles of clergy and laity who possessed heretical books and discussed heterodox ideas were known in the more accessible parts of the diocese, where Dutch immigrants were found and trade gave links with the continent, along the Thames shore and in Rochester and the Medway valley. The cases which are known suggest that Lutheranism may have been a more significant source of heterodox ideas than Lollardy in west Kent in the early sixteenth century.

This thesis adds to and modifies what is known about the relatively neglected subject of religion in late medieval Kent. D.M. Palliser refers to the 'traditional text book picture of a south and east more receptive to Protestantism' during the Reformation period, but points out that almost no area was entirely homogenous in its religious beliefs between the 1530s and 1570s.¹ Indeed, there has been an over-emphasis, in the past, on Kent as a breeding ground of heresy up to and during the Reformation. Heresy and speculation existed side by side with orthodoxy, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, as Robert Lutton found of Tenterden in the eastern half of the county.² Heterodox beliefs were discussed in taverns and parlours, in west Kent, sometimes confusing ill-educated laymen such as Peter Connyngham of Dartford, and occasionally giving rise to court cases. However, the religion in which clergy and laity participated in Dartford, Gravesend, Rochester, Cuxton and Tonbridge, from which parishes alleged heretics came, was strongly orthodox. For example, Lollard conventicles existed in the Medway valley including Tonbridge, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.³ However, the Medway valley was the area in which support for the Aylesford friars was strongest, and the orthodox devotion of the Jesus mass was more popular in the Tonbridge area, in the late fifteenth century, than in any other part of the diocese except the hundred of Hoo. Overwhelmingly, however, religion in pre-Reformation west Kent was orthodox, traditional and vibrant. This thesis confirms the findings of other recent studies that the vitality of pre-Reformation Catholicism in England was that of local society rather than that of the institution of the Church, and that factors such as regional and local identity were important influences on its character and expression.

¹ D.M. Palliser, 'Popular reactions to the Reformation during the years of uncertainty 1530-70', in Christopher Haigh, ed., *The English Reformation Revised* (Cambridge, 1987), pp.94-113 at p.105.

² Robert G.A. Lutton, 'Heterodox and Orthodox Piety in Tenterden, c.1420-c.1540', PhD thesis, University of Kent, 1997.

³ John F. Davis, *Heresy and Reformation in the south-east of England, 1520-1559* (London, 1983), p.3.

Appendix One:

Prioresses and Sisters at Dartford Priory

<i>Name</i>	<i>Office</i>	<i>Dates recorded/Prosopographical</i>	<i>References</i>
Johanna de Aspèremont	Prioress	1359. One of the four French nuns brought to Dartford in 1356.	<i>Cal. Pat. Rolls 1358-61</i> , p.187 (original: PRO C66/256 m.14).
Matilda	Prioress	1363-1375. Probably another of the French sisters. References in the calendared Close and Patent Rolls dated June and December 1363 refer to the prioress as 'Maud' (<i>Cal. Close Rolls 1360-64</i> , p.466; <i>Cal. Pat. Rolls 1361-4</i> , pp.437-8). However, the original Patent Roll entry here actually refers to Prioress 'Matild' (PRO C66/268 m.4).	<i>Cal. Pat. Rolls 1374-7</i> , p.42 (original: PRO C66/268 m.4); <i>Cal. Close Rolls 1360-64</i> , p.466; <i>Cal. Close Rolls 1364-68</i> , p.66; <i>Cal. Pat. Rolls 1367-70</i> , pp.161, 357; <i>Cal. Close Rolls 1369-74</i> , p.344; PRO Anct. Deed A.5280 (45 Edw. III); <i>Cal. Pat. Rolls 1370-4</i> , pp.75, 162-3, 191, 336; <i>Cal. Pat. Rolls 1374-7</i> , p.42.
Joan Barowe	Prioress	1377-1406. Named in a number of licences to hire attorneys, amongst other documents.	<i>Cal. Pat. Rolls 1377-81</i> , p.402; <i>Cal. Pat. Rolls 1381-5</i> , p.370; <i>Cal. Pat. Rolls 1385-9</i> , p.377; <i>Cal. Pat. Rolls 1396-9</i> , p.69; <i>Cal. Close Rolls 1385-9</i> , pp.121, 569-70; <i>Cal. Close Rolls 1389-92</i> , p.241; <i>Cal. Close Rolls 1392-6</i> , p.19; <i>Cal. Pat. Rolls 1399-1401</i> , p.398; <i>Cal. Pat. Rolls 1408-13</i> , p.265; <i>Rot. Parl.</i> (Rec. Com.), iii, p.258.
Catherine de Breous	Nun	1378. Daughter of Sir Thomas de Breous of Norwich. She resigned the lordship of Sculthorpe on entering the priory in 1378.	<i>VCH Kent</i> ii, pp.184, 187 (citing Francis Blomefield, <i>Norfolk</i> (1807), vii, p.173.
Elizabeth Botraus	Nun	1413. Illegitimate daughter of noble parents.	<i>Cal. Pap. Lets</i> , vi, p.392.
Maud	Prioress	1413	<i>VCH Kent</i> , ii, p.189.
Rose	Prioress	1421, 1428, 1432	John Dunkin, <i>The History and Antiquities of Dartford</i> (London, 1844), p.124; <i>VCH Kent</i> , ii,

<i>Name</i>	<i>Office</i>	<i>Dates recorded/Prosopographical</i>	<i>References</i>
Anne Bamme	Nun	1442. Bequeathed a silver goblet in the will of her father, Richard Bamme, Esq., of Gillingham, Kent. Note that Anne's grandmother, Margaret Bamme, became a vowess after the death of her husband Adam Bamme, Richard Bamme's father and a lord mayor of London. She took her vow before Robert Braybrook, bishop of London 26 th August 1397 (London Guildhall 9531/3, fo.246 ^v).	Richard Bamme's will: PROB 11/1/132. On Margaret Bamme: Mary C. Erler, 'English vowed women at the end of the Middle Ages', <i>Medieval Studies</i> , 57 (1995), pp.155-203. Appendix, p.190).
Beatrice Knolles	Nun	1446. Bequeathed 10 marks in the will of her father, Thomas Knolles, citizen and grocer of the city of London, and owner of North Mimms manor in Hertfordshire. Her brother in law, William Baron, one of her father's executors, a receiver at the Exchequer, and a gentleman of Berkshire, gave Bodl. Ms Douce 322 to his grand-daughter, Parnel Wratistley, a nun of Dartford, in the 1480s or 90s.	PROB 11/3/236 (will of Thomas Knolles, February 1445-6; George Wrottesley, <i>A History of the Family of Wrottesley of Wrottesley</i> , Collections for a History of Staffordshire, William Self Archaeological Society ns vol. 6 pt 2 (London, 1903), pp. 216-41 (reference to William Baron on p.239).
Margaret Beaumont	Prioress	1446, 1451, 1460. Daughter of Henry, Lord Beaumont, and Elizabeth, daughter of William, Lord Willoughby. Her brother John Lord Beaumont was created Earl of Boulogne. (C.F.R. Palmer, 'History of the Priory of Dartford', <i>Archaeological Journal</i> , 36 (1879), pp.241-71 at p.258). Doyle says she was prioress from about 1442 (A.I. Doyle, 'Books connected with the Vere family and Barking Abbey', <i>Transactions of the Essex Archaeological Society</i> , ns 25 (1958), pp.222-43 at p.234).	<i>Cal. Pap. Letts</i> , x, p.89 (1451); <i>Cal. Pat. Rolls 1452-61</i> , p.463 (1458); <i>Cal. Close Rolls 1454-61</i> , pp.393-4 (1459); PRO Anct. D. B.2082 (July 1460); VCH, Kent, ii, p.189; John Weever, <i>Funeral Monuments</i> (London, 1631), p.335).
Agnes Pagnam	Nun	Professed Saturday 15 th June 1465. Daughter of Hugh Pagnam in the service of Sir William Plompton (d. 20Edw.IV), Yorkshire.	T. Stapleton, ed., <i>Plumpton Correspondence Edward IV – Henry VIII</i> (Camden Society, London, 1839), pp.14-15 (Letter x).
Alice Branthwayte	Prioress	1461, 1463, 1465 and 1467. Inscription in a <i>The Pricking of Love</i> manuscript, Harley MS 2254, states:	Harley MS 2254, fo.i ^v ; Somerset Record Office Ms. DD/SAS C/1193/68; DRb/Ar 1/11 ff.35v, 39v

<i>Name</i>	<i>Office</i>	<i>Dates recorded/Prosopographical</i>	<i>References</i>
		Thys boyk longyth to Dame Alys braintwath Jhu the Worchypfull prioras of Dartford mercy Her name also appears in a prayer added to the end of a book of hours associated with Dartford Priory (Somerset Record Office (Taunton) Ms. DD/SAS C/1193/68).	(Rochester episcopal register entries re appointment of John Wellys as chantry priest of St. Edmund's chapel, 1461-3); named on a lease of Priory property dated 1467 (CKS U2958 no. 35); John Dunkin, <i>The History and Antiquities of Dartford</i> , p.127; other references in VCH, Kent, ii, p.189.
Elizabeth Rede	Nun	Late fifteenth century. Inscription in Harley MS 2254 (above) continues: Orate pro anima Domine Elizabeth Rede hujus loci	Harley MS 2254, fo.i ^v .
Johanna Newmarche	Nun?	Late fifteenth century. Inscription in Harley MS 2254 continues (from the above): Orate pro anima Johanna Newmarche It seems most likely that she was, therefore, another nun of Dartford Priory.	Harley MS 2254, fo.i ^v .
Joan Stokton	Nun	1470; 1478; 1497: Left 20d in the will of Rose Pittes, sister of John Groverste of Dartford, who also left 1 mark to the convent, in her will of 1470. Rose also mentioned Thomas Stokton, the nun's father. This 'Thomas Stoughton', citizen and fishmonger of St. Nicholas Coldabbey, London, in his will in 1478 left Joan 5 mks to pray for his soul (PROB 11/7/23). 'Dame Johanna Stoktonne' left 6s 8d and a pair of sheets in will of Beatrice Stoughton of St. Nicholas Coldabbey, London, her father's widow, to pray for her soul, in 1497 (PROB 11/11/273). Her sister Elizabeth named as a nun at Syon Abbey in both these wills. There were Stoktons resident in Overy Street from Edward IV to Henry VII (John Dunkin, <i>The History and Antiquities of Dartford</i> , pp.129-30).	DRb/Pwr3/64v (Rose Pittes); PROB 11/7/23; PROB 11/11/273.
Joan Mores	Nun	1470: Left 20d and a candlestick in the will of Rose Pitt.	DRb/Pwr3/64v .
Joan Scrope	Prioress	c.1470, 1471-2. Sources say that Joan Scrope was daughter	John Weever, <i>Funeral Monuments</i> , p.335; various

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		of Lord Scrope of Bolton, but do not say which one. She must have been daughter of Henry, 4 th Lord Scrope (born 1418, married 1435 and died 1458-9), as it is impossible that she was daughter of John, 5 th baron, who was born in the late 1430s and was, therefore, only in his early thirties when she was prioress (Geoffrey H. White, ed., <i>The Complete Peerage</i> , xi (London, 1949), pp.543-5). Note that she was, therefore, aunt of the wife of Prioress Margaret Beaumont's nephew (A.I. Doyle, 'Books connected with the Vere family and Barking Abbey', <i>Transactions of the Essex Archaeological Society</i> , ns 25 (1958), pp.222-43 at p.234).	references cited by VCH Kent, ii, p. 189 and C.F.R. Palmer, 'History of the Priory of Dartford', p.260.
Beatrice Eland	Prioress	1474. In June obtained a licence from the Master-General of the Dominican Order to use linen owing to weakness and old age, to dispose of, and dispense within the Order, the goods conceded to her use by the Order, and to give alms. Still Prioress in July.	Register of the Master-General: C.F.R. Palmer, 'Notes on the Priory of Dartford, in Kent', <i>Arch. Journ.</i> , 39 (1882), pp.177-9 at p.177; named as Prioress on a lease of a shop in Dartford in July 1474 (CKS U2958 no. 36).
Alice Branthwayte	Prioress	1475 and 1479. The same Branthwayte as before?	References in VCH Kent, ii, p.189.
Urswyck ?	Nun ?	1479. A nun is depicted as one of the children of Sir Thomas Urswyck, on his monumental brass of 1479, in Dagenham Church, Essex (see cover of <i>Dartford Historical and Antiquarian Society Newsletter</i> , viii). Sir Thomas, a Yorkist made Chief Baron of the Exchequer by Edward IV, was a benefactor of Dartford Priory; in 1471-2, Urswyck and three other men granted to Prioress Joan Scrope property and lands in Crockenhill, Eynesford, Lullingsford, Frindsbury, Dartford and Linsted (VCH).	VCH Kent ii, p.185.
Anne Barn	Prioress	19 th June, 1481. Given permission by the Master-General to choose the confessor for her monastery.	C.F.R. Palmer, 'Notes on the Priory of Dartford, in Kent', p.177.
Jane Tyrellis	Nun	19 th June, 1481. Given permission to talk in the common	C.F.R. Palmer, 'Notes on the Priory of Dartford, in

<i>Name</i>	<i>Office</i>	<i>Dates recorded/Prosopographical</i>	<i>References</i>
Jane Fisher (Fitzher)	Nun	<p>speaking place with friends of honourable fame, and without a companion, and cannot be removed by her sub-prioress, who educated her; and in time of sickness is exempted from the service of the choir. Of the Tyrells family, knights and esquires of Glamorgan, etc., <i>passim</i> in Patent Rolls 1476-85?</p> <p>19th June, 1481. 'nobilis et generosa'. Allowed by the Master-General to receive instruction from a preceptor in grammar and Latin, in the <i>locutorium</i>. She and other gentlewomen may be called to learn.</p>	<p>Kent', p.177.</p> <p>C.F.R. Palmer, 'Notes on the Priory of Dartford, in Kent', p.178.</p>
Alice	Prioress	<p>The Master-General confirms on 4th July, 1489, all things which the provincial has done about the absolution of Sister Alice from the office of Prioress, and the confirmation of Sister Elizabeth Cressener (see below).</p>	<p>C.F.R. Palmer, 'Notes on the Priory of Dartford, in Kent', p.178.</p>
Elizabeth Cressener	Prioress	<p>1489-1536. She was confirmed as Prioress by the Master-General on 4th July, 1489. The wills of William Milet and William English of Dartford, of 1500 and 1519, both name her as executor, and Milet especially in relation to the Trinity almshouses. The priory rental for 1521-2 names her. In 1527 (23rd July) she received permission to receive any well born, matrons, widows of good repute into the monastery, with or without the veil, and to receive young ladies for education. She was absolved of her office at her own request in this year but clearly remained, as we see by her correspondence with Thomas Cromwell in the years leading up to the Dissolution. In the early 1530s she and the convent were involved in a legal dispute at Chancery with Thomas Derby over their right to hold the manor of Dartford (<i>L.&P. Hen. VIII</i>). In December 1536 she wrote to Cromwell complaining that John Hilsey, provincial prior and Bishop of Rochester, had unkindly sent to them Robert Stroddel, who took upon</p>	<p>C.F.R. Palmer, 'Notes on the Priory of Dartford, in Kent', p.178; <i>L.&P. Hen. VIII</i>, xi, 1322, 1324, 1325; SP 1/112 ff.210-14; DRb/Pwr7/162v (English's will); PROB 11/12/138 (Milet's will); BL Arundel Ms 61 (priory rental, 1507-8); London Soc. Ant. Ms. 564 (priory account roll, 1521-2).</p>

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Bridget	Nun	<p>himself the office of president friar chaplain. She died the same month. Oxford Bodl. Bodley Ms 255 (the Rule of St. Augustine, in English) bears her family's arms.</p> <p>1490-1517. Seventh and youngest daughter of Edward IV and Elizabeth Woodville, Bridget was born 10th November 1480, at Eltham Palace, and was christened the next day, with all the usual pomp, by the bishop of Chichester. She was a sickly child. (Cora L. Scofield. <i>The Life and Reign of Edward IV</i> (London, 1923), ii, pp.299, 300n.) Her mother, Elizabeth Woodville, dedicated her to the cloister, in her infancy, but they remained together until Elizabeth withdrew from the royal court to the nunnery of Bermondsey, in 1490; then, Bridget was placed in Dartford Priory, aged ten. She was probably educated there by the nuns, with other girls of noble families. She attended her mother at her deathbed, at Bermondsey, and was present at her obsequies at Windsor, on 12th June 1492, making her offering at mass. (C.F.R. Palmer, 'History of the Priory of Dartford, in Kent', p.261) She must have taken the veil at some point after 10th November 1493, the minimum age for profession for Dominican nuns being thirteen (1259 Constitutions). Bridget's grandmother, Cecily Duchess of York, bequeathed to her 'the boke of <i>Legenda Aurea</i> in velem, a boke of the life of Saint Kateryn of Sene, a boke of Saint Matilde', in her will of 1st April 1495, not mentioning that she was a nun at Dartford (J.G. Nichols & J. Bruce, eds, <i>Wills from Doctors' Commons 1495-1695</i>, Camden Society os 83 (London, 1863), pp.1-8 at p.2). Her sister, Elizabeth of York, wife of Henry VII, gave her a pension of 20 marks a year out of her privy purse, towards her maintenance. On 28th September 1502, Elizabeth gave a messenger 2s 'for his costes riding</p>	<p>J.G. Nichols & J. Bruce, eds, <i>Wills from Doctors' Commons 1495-1695</i>, Camden Society os 83 (London, 1863), pp.1-8 at p.2; C.F.R. Palmer, 'History of the Priory of Dartford, in Kent', pp.261-2.</p>

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Parnel Wrottesley	Nun	<p>from Windsor to Dartford to my Lady Brigget by the space of two dayes at 12d the day'. She died in about 1517, an ordinary nun, and was buried within the cloister. (C.F.R. Palmer, 'History of the Priory of Dartford, in Kent', pp.261-2).</p> <p>Late 15th century; 1512. Given a fifteenth century devoional manuscript by her maternal grandfather William Baron, by licence of her 'abbess', to remain forever in the possession of the convent (inscription: no date). William Wrottesley of Reading, a wealthy gentleman resident in the parish of St. Olive's Silver Street, London, bequeathed to 'Dame Pernelle beyng w'in the nonry of Dertforde' 13s 4d, his best 'furte' and his best corall beads 'gawded' with silver and gilt, to pray for his soul, in his will of 26th December 1512, proved 4th February 1512-13. William does not say that Dame Parnell was related to him, but we know from the family pedigree that she was his sister. Their father, Sir Walter Wrottesley (d.1473), was a former sheriff of Staffordshire, governor of Calais, and merchant of the staple. He was pardoned for his involvement in Fauconbridge's rebellion in 1471. He married Jane Baron c.1456; she was daughter and heir of William Baron armiger of Berkshire and one of the four Tellers of the Exchequer. Their second son, William Wrottesley, Dame Parnel's brother, inherited the Baron estates in Berkshire from his mother, hence his connection with Reading, revealed in his will. As fifth daughter, Parnel must have been born after 1462 (six years after parents' marriage) but before 1473 (father's death). No mention of her grandfather has been found after 1469, so the dates of the inscription of the manuscript and Parnel's profession are unclear.</p>	<p>Oxford Bodl. Douce Ms 322 (inscription); will of William Wrottesley: PROB 11/1778v; George Wrottesley, <i>A History of the Family of Wrottesley of Wrottesley</i>, Collections for a History of Staffordshire, William Self Archaeological Society ns vol. 6 pt 2 (London, 1903), pp. 216-41 (reference to Parnel as nun of Dartford on p.240; sources for this are the Douce Ms inscription and an old parchment family pedigree at Wrottesley).</p>

<i>Name</i>	<i>Office</i>	<i>Dates recorded/Prosopographical</i>	<i>References</i>
Beatrice Chaumbir?	Nun?	Very end of 15 th century. According to the inscription, a manuscript of the <i>Stimulus Amoris</i> , in English, was given to Chaumbir and, after her death, to two nuns of Dartford Priory. This does not necessarily imply she was herself a nun at Dartford, and the inscription does not label her 'sister'.	Downside Abbey Ms 26542.
Emma Wynter	Nun	Late 15 th century. On Beatrice Chaumbir's death the above manuscript was to pass jointly to Sisters Emma and Denise Caston. Emma may be identified as a nun of Dartford as her name also appears in inscriptions in the priory's <i>Officium mortuorum</i> manuscript, now in London, and a manuscript of Cato's <i>Distichia</i> translated into English, in Oxford.	Downside Abbey Ms 26542; London Soc. of Ant. MS 717; Oxford Bodl. Rawl. G59.
Denise Caston	Nun	Late fifteenth century. See above.	Downside Abbey Ms 26542
Katherine Lessy	Nun	1498. Received £5 in the will of her uncle Richard Lessy, 'cubicular to the Pope', (lay?)-brother of a number of monasteries including King's Langley friary.	PROB 11/11/199v (Lionel Munby, ed., <i>Life and Death in Kings Langley</i> (Kings Langley, 1981), pp.1-2).
Jane	Nun	11 th May, 1500. In the register of the Master-General Sister 'Giana' is allowed to be thrice absolved in all those cases wherein he has power; and she may speak at the grill with relatives and friends being persons of no blame.	C.F.R. Palmer, 'History of the Priory of Dartford', p.178.
Dame Walden	Lay-sister	<i>Temp.</i> Henry VIII. In a private memorandum relating to some commissions received from Lady Cobham in London, found amongst some terriers made by Lord Cobham's steward in Henry VIII's reign, appears this: 'item send to Dertforthe to se a lay sister, my lady Walden'. This must refer to a lay-sister at Dartford Priory.	A.A. Arnold, 'Cobham College', AC, 27 (1905), pp.64-109 at p.68 n.3).
Elizabeth Woodford	Nun	1519-39: Professed at Dartford 8 th December 1519, according to Cole in his extracts from a MS account of the nunnery of St. Monica, founded in 1609 at Louvain (BL Add. Ms. 5813,	BL Add. Ms 5813, p.51; C.F.R. Palmer, 'History of the Priory of Dartford', p.262.

Name	Office	Dates recorded/Prosopographical	References
		<p>p.51). However, he wrongly refers to Dartford as a house of Augustinian canesses regular. He tells us that, after the Dissolution, in 1540 she came to St. Ursula's in Louvain and died there 25th October, 1572, having been a nun 52 years. Palmer comments that no nun of this name appears in the list of pensions drawn up at the dissolution of Dartford Priory. Note that a number of English exiles lived in Louvain. For example, Jane Dormer, née Newdigate, sister of a deceased nun of Dartford, crossed to Flanders with her grand-daughter, the Duchess of Feria, at the end of July 1559. She settled in Louvain where she was noted for her piety, and died in July 1571 (H. Clifford, <i>Life of Jane Dormer</i>, pp.50-54; 110-111).</p>	
<p>Agnes Roper</p>	<p>Nun</p>	<p>1523, 1539, 1545, 1556. She was daughter of John Roper of Eltham, attorney-general of Henry VIII, and Jane daughter and co-heiress of Sir John Fineux, Lord Chief Justice, of Linsted then Herne (from 1494). She was bequeathed £13 6s 8d in her father's will of January 1523, to pray for his soul. In her mother's will, proved 29th January, 1544-5, she was mentioned as 'late nun at Dartford' (Nicholas Harris Nicolas, <i>Testamenta Vetusta</i> (1826), ii, p.712). In 1545 she was sharing a house in Sutton at Hone with Elizabeth Cressener junior and other of the former nuns (will of William Provisse of Sutton - DRb/Pwr10/124). She was awarded a pension of £6 at the Dissolution, still being paid in 1556.</p>	<p>Anon., 'Archbishop Warham's Letters', AC, 2 (1859), pp.149-74 at p.169 (will of John Roper); Cardinal Pole's Pension Book of 1556 (W. E. Flaherty, 'A help toward a Kentish monasticon', AC, ii (1859), pp.49-64 at p.56, citing PRO Misc. Bks of the Exch., vol.32 fo.1); Nicholas Harris Nicolas, <i>Testamenta Vetusta</i> (1826), ii; C.F.R. Palmer, 'History of the Priory of Dartford', p.269.</p>
<p>Anne Fyneux</p>	<p>Sub-prioress</p>	<p>1523 and 1525. Anne was a sister of the Jane Fyneux who married John Roper (and therefore aunt of Sister Agnes Roper). She was bequeathed 40s. by her brother-in-law John Roper in his will of 1523, in which he refers to her as sub-prioress. In the will of her father Sir John Fyneux, dated 1525, he gave his Linsted lands to his daughter Jane Roper, recently widowed, and one of her sons, out of which she was</p>	<p>Roper's will as above; Fyneux's will: PROB 11/22/5 (see M. Sparks, 'Sir John Fyneux: a Herne worthy', <i>Hoath and Herne</i> ed. K.H. McIntosh & H.E. Gough (Ramsgate, 1984), pp.40-50 at pp.43, 48.</p>

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Elizabeth Exmewe	Nun	<p>to pay an allowance to Anne at Dartford and their brother John, a canon at Leeds Priory. He also bequeathed Anne 40s p.a. for life. She does not appear in the post-Dissolution pension lists.</p> <p>1529, 1539, 1555, 1556, 1557, 1560-85. She was daughter of Sir Thomas Exmewe, a Lord Mayor of London (Lewis), and possibly sister of one of the Carthusian martyrs, William Exmewe of the London Charterhouse, hanged in 1535 (Anstruther), although Sir Thomas makes no mention of him or the Carthusians, in his will of 1529. Sir Thomas came from Ruthin in north Wales, where the family had been for more than a century; he came to London as a goldsmith by 1487 and prospered. He was a sheriff in 1508; alderman in 1510; served on various commissions, of the Peace and for collection of the subsidy, in London, Middlesex or Surrey into the 1520s; was Lord Mayor in 1517; and was knighted in 1518. He died early in 1529 and was buried in his own chapel (which contained a Jesus altar) built for the purpose in his London parish church. An orthodoxly pious man, he left money to all the London friars; to five hospitals; to anchorites; was a lay brother of Pappey; possessed matins books (one of which he bequeathed to his daughter Elizabeth, at Dartford Priory); bequeathed vestments, chalices and other 'chapel stuff'; and founded obits, including a perpetual obit of 20s pa at Dartford Priory after the death of his daughter Elizabeth, the nun there, funded by lands and tenements in the city which were to be purchased with £50 which he left to Dame Elizabeth. His wife's son by a previous marriage, John West, was an observant friar and secret agent in the service of Wolsey. (Lewis). Dame Elizabeth is named on the pension list of 1539. In 1555, she was living on her pension of £5 p.a. in Walsingham, diocese of Norwich, with Elizabeth Seygood</p>	<p><i>Cal. Pat. Rolls 1555-7</i>, p.403; Godfrey Anstruther, O.P., <i>A Hundred Homeless Years: English Dominicans 1558-1658</i> (London, 1958), pp.7-14; Geoffrey Baskerville, 'Married clergy and the pensioned religious in Norwich diocese, 1555', <i>EHR</i>, 48 (1933), pp.43-64, 199-228 at p.211; C.F.R. Palmer, 'History of the Priory of Dartford', pp. 267, 269, 270; Lewis Pryce, 'Sir Thomas Exmewe', <i>Archaeologia Cambrensis</i>, 6th ser., 19 (1919), 233-75 at pp. 242, 269-70 (quoting Thomas Exmewe's will: PCC will 3 Jankyn – 1528-9).</p>

<i>Name</i>	<i>Office</i>	<i>Dates recorded/Prosopographical</i>	<i>References</i>
		(Baskerville, <i>EHR</i> (1933), p.211). She was a nun of the refounded community in 1557, and was on Elizabeth Cressener junior's list of the nuns in exile in Flanders, at Leliendael, in 1560 (Anstruther). Living in Bruges in 1571, she and Prioress Cressener were the only surviving nuns; Elizabeth Exmewe died last, in 1585 (Anstruther). Note that a John Exmewe gave a tenement in London to Dartford Priory (<i>Valor</i>) (Dunkin, pp.161-2).	
Margaret Mountenay	Nun	1530. Bequeathed a white habit in the will, dated 16 th August, of Sir John Rudstone, citizen and alderman of London. He also made bequests to other nuns at Dartford (see below), as well as to the monastery as a whole, to pray for his soul and for the reparation of the monastery walls. Sister Margaret was a former gentlewoman of the Countess of Salisbury, according to this will.	BL Harley Ms.1231 ff.1-4.
Felyce	Nun	1530. Another former gentlewoman to the Countess of Salisbury also bequeathed a white habit by Rudstone.	Ditto.
Beatrice Marshall	Nun	1530 and 1539. Similarly bequeathed a white habit in Sir Rudstone's will. Also formerly a gentlewoman to 'my lady of Salysbury'. At the Dissolution she was awarded a pension of 100s.	Ditto; C.F.R. Palmer, 'History of the Priory of Dartford', p.267 (pension details, citing miscellaneous books of the Court of Augmentations).
Elizabeth Cressener	Nun, sub-prioress and prioress	1530, 1537, 1539, 1545, 1551, 1552, 1553, 1556-1560 and 1573. She is referred to in Rudstone's will of 1530 (see above) separately from the prioress, so this is a second nun of the name; Palmer suggests a niece. Rudstone bequeathed to her a habit of white cloth worth 6s 8d a yard. On 22 nd October 1537 an annuity of 5 mks pa out of the manor of Belsted Magnor was granted by the priory to William Hastinge, gent., for the natural life of Elizabeth Cressener, named as sub-prioress, his kinswoman. At the Dissolution	<i>Cal. Pat. Rolls 1555-7</i> , pp.403, 417; VCH, <i>Kent</i> , ii, p.188; Godfrey Anstruther, O.P., <i>A Hundred Homeless Years</i> , pp.7-14; C.F.R. Palmer, 'History of the Priory of Dartford', pp. 263, 265, 267, 269-71 (pension details on p.267); C.F.R. Palmer, 'Notes on the priory in Dartford, in Kent', p.179.

Name	Office	Dates recorded/Prosopographical	References
		<p>she was awarded a pension of 106s. 8d, again recorded as being paid in Cardinal Pole's pension book of 1556. In 1545, 1551 and 1552 she was mentioned in wills as being resident in Sutton at Hone with other of the former nuns (see Anne Roper and Katherine Effelyn) (Provis: DRb/Pwt10/124; Anne Reddeman, her 'cousin': PROB 11/35/224v; Robert Stroddel (December 1552); PROB 11/36/119v). William Sedley of Southfleet, named in the 1556 pension list as former priory auditor, and whose sister, Dorothy, had been a nun of Dartford, left 5s to 'Sister Elizabeth the Cressener', in his will of November 1553 (PROB 11/37/269). She was one of the former nuns of the priory who are recorded in the new foundation under Philip and Mary, being made Prioress, first of all at King's Langley, in 1557, and in Dartford from September 1558. The register of the master-general of the Dominican order, for 7th May 1560, records that she continued to act as prioress to the Dartford nuns in exile in Zeeland as they sought a convent to take them in, in France or lower Germany. In 1571 she was listed in Nicholas Sander's list of exiles for the faith as at Bruges, and died in April 1577 (Godfrey Anstruther, <i>A Hundred Homeless Years</i>).</p>	
Joan Vane	Prioress	<p>1537, 1539 and 1556. Palmer feels she was probably a daughter of Humfrey Fane of Hildon near Tonbridge, and sister of Ralph Fane of Hadlow. The bishop of Rochester recommended Sister Johanna Vane, already a nun in Dartford Priory, to be preferred, on the death of Elizabeth Cressener, in December 1536 (possibly 1537). She was of good virtue and religion, above thirty years of age, and none were better learned or more discreet. At the Dissolution she received a pension of 100 marks, which she was still receiving in 1556. The Fane family gained</p>	C.F.R. Palmer, 'History of the Priory of Dartford', pp. 267, 269.

<i>Name</i>	<i>Office</i>	<i>Dates recorded/Prosopographical</i>	<i>References</i>
Bridget Browning	Postulant	possession of much priory property after the Dissolution. 1538. In a letter to Cromwell of 9 th September 1538, Prioress Jane Vane protested against the giving up of this unprofessed member of the community, declaring that Bridget had been brought to the monastery a long time ago only at the earnest request of her mother to the late Prioress (Cressener), and had not been detained against her friends' wishes, but being fixed in her mind had refused to depart. So the prioress begged Cromwell to allow the same Bridget to present herself to him and declare to him her heart and mind. Bridget does not appear on the pension list of 1539.	C.F.R. Palmer, 'History of the Priory of Dartford', p. 267; M.A.E. Wood, ed., <i>Letters of Royal and Illustrious Ladies</i> , iii (London, 1846), pp.85-7.
Mary Bentham	Nun	1539, 1553, 1556, 1557, 1560. Awarded a pension of 100s. at the Dissolution, and in Cardinal Pole's pension book of 1556. William Sedley of Southfleet, named in the 1556 pension list as former priory auditor, and whose sister, Dorothy, had been a nun of Dartford, left 5s to 'Suster Marie Bentham', in his will of November 1553 (PROB 11/37/269). 'Mary Benson' was a nun of the refounded community in Mary's reign and one of those who was at Leliendael on Cressener's list in June 1560.	<i>Cal. Pat. Rolls 1555-7</i> , p.403; Godfrey Anstruther, O.P., <i>A Hundred Homeless Years</i> , p.7; C.F.R. Palmer, 'History of the Priory of Dartford', pp. 267, 269.
Katherine Clofflyld (Clovell in 1556)	Nun	1539, 1553, 1556, 1557, 1560. One of the nuns of the reformed community under Mary Tudor in 1557. She was at Leliendael in 1560. She was probably of an Essex gentry family with Dartford connections in the mid 16 th century; James Clovill of Dartford, gentleman, in his will of September 1553 made bequests to members of the Appleton family, also of Dartford and Essex, referred to his property in Margetting and Westhavyngfeld in Essex, and made a bequest in the absence of other heirs to Kathryn Clovell, possibly the former nun (PRO PROB 11/36/137v).	<i>Cal. Pat. Rolls 1555-7</i> , p.403; Godfrey Anstruther, O.P., <i>A Hundred Homeless Years</i> , p.7; C.F.R. Palmer, 'History of the Priory of Dartford', pp. 267, 269. She was also recorded as in receipt of pensions in May/Nov. 1540 (<i>L.&P. Henry VIII (L+P)</i> xvi, no.745, ff.18+31); April/Dec. 1541 (<i>L+P (L+P)</i> xvii, no.258 ff.26+35); June/Dec. 1542 (<i>L+P</i> xviii (1), no.436, fo.25); April 1544 (<i>L+P</i> xix (1), no.368 fo.18); Jan. 1545 (<i>L+P</i> xx (1), no.537 fo.15); 1546 (<i>L+P</i> xxi (1), no.643 fo.15); 1547 (<i>L+P</i> xxi (2), no.775 fo.20).

<i>Nickname</i>	<i>Office</i>	<i>Dates recorded/Prosopographical</i>	<i>References</i>
Katherine Effelyn	Nun	1539, 1552, 1553, 1556, 1557, 1560. On the 1539/1556 pension lists. In 1552 Robert Stroddel, vicar of Sutton at Hone and former President of Dartford Priory, in his will bequeathed her 20s for her pains with his god-daughter (see Elizabeth Cressener and Anne Roper) (PROB 11/36/119v). William Sedley of Southfleet, whose sister, Dorothy, had been a nun of Dartford, left 13s 4d to 'Suster Efflyn', in his will of November 1553 (PROB 11/37/269). She was a member of the refounded community, in 1557, was at Leliendael in 1560.	<i>Cal. Pat. Rolls 1555-7</i> , p.403; Godfrey Anstruther, O.P., <i>A Hundred Homeless Years</i> , p.7; C.F.R. Palmer, 'History of the Priory of Dartford', pp. 267, 269.
Alice Davy	Nun	1539, 1556. On these pension lists.	C.F.R. Palmer, 'History of the Priory of Dartford', pp. 267, 269.
Anne Lago	Nun	Ditto.	C.F.R. Palmer, 'History of the Priory of Dartford', pp. 267, 270.
Elizabeth Whyte	Nun	1539, 1556, 1557, 1560. She was half-sister of John Fisher, the bishop of Rochester who was martyred; in the Tower he wrote for and dedicated to her <i>A Spirituall Consolation and The Wayes to Perfect Religion</i> (Bradshaw & Duffy (1989)). She is named on the 1539/1556 pension lists, was a nun of the refounded community under Mary in 1557, and appears in Elizabeth Cressener's list at Leliendael in 1560.	<i>Cal. Pat. Rolls 1555-7</i> , p.403; Godfrey Anstruther, O.P., <i>A Hundred Homeless Years</i> , p.7; C.F.R. Palmer, 'History of the Priory of Dartford', pp. 267, 270.
Dorothy Sedley	Nun	1531, 1539, 1553, 1556. Dorothy was named in the pension lists of 1539 and 1556. She seems to have gone back to live with her family in Southfleet and remained a spinster. John Sedley esquire of Southfleet referred to his daughter Dorothy 'being a Nonne in Dertford Abbey', in his will of February 1530-1 (PROB 11/24/149). He left her the revenues from his lands and tenements in Dartford for life, with reversion to her brothers William and Martin. She was to pray for the souls of her parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, her father's	C.F.R. Palmer, 'History of the Priory of Dartford', pp. 267, 269 (pension lists).

Name	Office	Dates recorded/Prosopographical	References
		brothers and sisters, his friends and benefactors, and all Christian souls. He also left her an annuity of 20s a year for life, out of lands; a sum of 10 marks, to pray for him; and his silver pot with the 'kever that is w' Ryng in the topp'. John Sedley was Priory and King's auditor, and formerly warden of the Stationers' Company in London. She was an executor and beneficiary of her brother William's will, in November 1553 (PROB 11/37/269). He was, by then, a grandfather.	
Margaret Warren (Warner in 1556)	Nun	1539, 1556 (pension lists).	C.F.R. Palmer, 'History of the Priory of Dartford', pp. 267, 270.
Matilda Fryer	Nun	1539, 1556, 1557. Named on the pension lists, 'Magdalen Frere' was a nun of the refounded community in 1557.	C.F.R. Palmer, 'History of the Priory of Dartford', pp. 267, 269-70.
Anne Bowson (Bosome)	Nun	1539, 1556 (pension lists).	C.F.R. Palmer, 'History of the Priory of Dartford', pp. 267, 269.
Margaret Cooke	Nun	1539. She was of a Dartford family previously benefactors of the priory (John Dunkin, <i>History and Antiquities of Dartford</i> , pp.161-2). Awarded a pension of 100s in 1539. Robert Stroddel, former President of the Dartford friars, mentions his great best feather bed that was Mistress Cook's, in the context of Elizabeth Cressener's house in Sutton, in his will of August 1553 (PROB 11/36/119v).	C.F.R. Palmer, 'History of the Priory of Dartford', p. 267.
Jane Drylond	Nun	1539 pension list.	C.F.R. Palmer, 'History of the Priory of Dartford', p. 267.
Margaret Okeley	Nun	1539-47. Appears in pension books of Augmentations Office until at least 1547.	L. & P. Henry VIII (see references for Katherine Cloffylde above); C.F.R. Palmer, 'History of the Priory of Dartford', p. 267.
Mary Blower	Nun	1539 and 1556. Pension of £4. A John Blower was chaplain of the Stanpit chantry at Holy Trinity, Dartford, a few years	C.F.R. Palmer, 'History of the Priory of Dartford', pp. 267, 269.

<i>Name</i>	<i>Office</i>	<i>Dates recorded/Prosopographical</i> before (see Dartford priests appendix).	<i>References</i>
Mary Kitson	Nun	1539. Pension of £4. She continued to appear in pension lists until at least 1547.	<i>L. & P. Henry VIII</i> (see references for Katherine Cloffylde above); C.F.R. Palmer, 'History of the Priory of Dartford', p. 267.
Mary Stoney	Nun	1539. Pension of 53s. 4d.	C.F.R. Palmer, 'History of the Priory of Dartford', p. 267.
Ellen Bostocke (Alice in 1556)	Lay-sister	1539, 1556, 1560. She came from a Dartford family (John Dunkin, <i>History and Antiquities of Dartford</i> , pp. 161-2; and one Thomas Bostock of Dartford was made responsible for the correction of a servant who had debts, at the archdeacon's court in 1523: DRb/Pa 8 pt 1 fo. 18v). One of five members of the convent given pensions of 40s. and styled 'susters' or lay-sisters. Still in receipt of pension in 1556. Named as at Leliendael in 1560.	Godfrey Anstruther, O.P., <i>A Hundred Homeless Years</i> , p. 7; C.F.R. Palmer, 'History of the Priory of Dartford', pp. 267, 269-70.
Elizabeth Saygood	Lay-sister	1539, 1555, 1556, 1560. On the 1539 and 1556 pension lists. In 1555 she was living on her pension in Walsingham (see Exmewe above). Not listed in the refounded community in 1557 but must have joined soon after as she appears on Cressener's list at Leliendael in 1560.	Godfrey Anstruther, O.P., <i>A Hundred Homeless Years</i> , p. 7; Geoffrey Baskerville, 'Married clergy and the pensioned religious in Norwich diocese, 1555', <i>EHR</i> , 48 (1933), pp. 43-64, 199-228 at p. 211; C.F.R. Palmer, 'History of the Priory of Dartford', pp. 267, 269.
Katharine Garrett	Lay-sister	1539, 1556, 1560: On the 1539 and 1556 pension lists. In Leliendael in 1560 (Cressener's list). Joined community after refoundation (as Saygood and Bostocke). Died at Leliendael 30 October 1562, the first to die in exile (Anstruther).	Godfrey Anstruther, O.P., <i>A Hundred Homeless Years</i> , pp. 7, 11; C.F.R. Palmer, 'History of the Priory of Dartford', pp. 267, 269.
Alice Grensmyth	Lay-sister	1539, 1556 (pension lists).	C.F.R. Palmer, 'History of the Priory of Dartford', pp. 267, 269.
Eleanor Woode	Lay-sister	1539, 1556 (pension lists). She may be the 'Elenor' (no surname) bequeathed 5s. to pray for him, in the will of	C.F.R. Palmer, 'History of the Priory of Dartford', pp. 267, 269.

<i>Name</i>	<i>Office</i>	<i>Dates recorded/Prosopographical</i>	<i>References</i>
		William Sedley of Southfleet, in November 1553 (PROB 11/37/269). In the will, this bequest immediately follows two bequests to other former nuns - Mary Bentham and Katherine Efflyn (both called 'sister'). Woode was the only Eleanor in the pension lists.	pp. 267, 269.
Sister Newdigate	Nun	Early sixteenth century. Clifford records that a sister of Jane Newdigate was 'of the order of St. Dominic' (therefore of Dartford). Their brother Sebastian was a Carthusian at Sheen, having previously been a gentleman of the privy council, and was eventually martyred. Another sister was a nun, perhaps abbess at Syon Abbey. Another sister was prioress of Haliwell (Paxton). The Dartford sister does not appear on any pension lists, so was perhaps dead by 1539.	David Knowles, <i>The Religious Orders in England</i> , 3 (1971), p.227 (H. Clifford, <i>Life of Jane Dormer, Duchess of Feria</i> , ed. J. Stevenson (London, 1887), p.39; C. Paxton, 'The nunneries of London', Oxford DPhil, 1993, p.21; L. Whatmore, <i>Sisters of Martyrs: A Sidelight on Dominican history</i> (unknown date), p.106.
Joan Courtyssse	Postulant/ domestic	1560. In 1559, Father Hargrave, the nuns' chaplain, said that the nuns who had fled Dartford included a postulant. This was perhaps Courtyssse, who appears without the title 'sister' on Cressener's Leliendael list of June 1560. She was simply called a domestic servant when she left, in October 1560.	Godfrey Anstruther, O.P., <i>A Hundred Homeless Years</i> , pp.6, 7, 9.
Alayden Lambricht	Nun	1562. A Dutch Dominican tertiary was professed as a member of the English community at Leliendael in 1562.	Godfrey Anstruther, O.P., <i>A Hundred Homeless Years</i> , p.11.
Joan Sackville	Nun	1573-81. Joan Sackville apparently joined the English Dominican nuns in exile, and was first mentioned when she, Elizabeth Cressener and Elizabeth Exnewe, the three surviving nuns, were visited by the master general in their house in Bruges, in late 1573. On 4 th January 1574, he ordered the prioress and mothers of Engelendael, a convent of Flemish Dominican nuns just outside the walls of Bruges, to admit the three surviving English nuns, and ordered the English women to take themselves there. She died in May 1581, during the Calvinist occupation of	Godfrey Anstruther, O.P., <i>A Hundred Homeless Years</i> , pp.11-14; C.F.R. Palmer, 'Notes on the Priory of Dartford, in Kent', p.179.

<i>Name</i>	<i>Office</i>	<i>Dates recorded/Prosopographical</i>	<i>References</i>
		Bruges, when the nuns were cast out of Engelendael, and was secretly buried with the nuns of St. Colette.	
Jaquimine Cornelis	Lay-sister	1574. The only record of this late recruit is of her admittance to Engelendael with Sisters Cressener, Exmewe and Sackville.	Sidney Keyes, <i>Dartford Further Historical Notes</i> (Dartford, 1937), p.291 (citing the Engelendael chronicles, which confusingly give the year as 1572).

Appendix Two:

Priests, clerks, wardens, friars and priory servants in late medieval and early Tudor Dartford

The Parish

Vicars of Dartford (from Thomas Stanpit, founder of the Stanpit chantry)

Thomas atte Stanpette (1324-49)¹

John Stone de Dartford (April 1349)²

Thomas Hamergold de Sedgford (April 1349)³

John (temp. Richard II)⁴

William Page (1390)⁵

Robert Grape (1390-96)⁶

Henry Drayton (1400)⁷

William Dunstable (1400-1404)⁸

Thomas Havercroft (1404)⁹

John (1419)¹⁰

John Worghope (1425-8)¹¹

Andrew Sonders (1428)¹²

John Smyth (1430)¹³

John Warren (1431-7)¹⁴

John Creeke (1438)¹⁵

John Hornley (1442-1477)¹⁶

John Harryes (1477-99)¹⁷

¹ Collated February 1323/4 (Charles Johnson, *Registrum Hamonis Hethe Diocesis Roffensis A.D. 1319-1352* (Oxford, 1948), p.128). He was an officer of the bishop (p.414). He founded a chantry in the church, commencing 1338, for a chaplain to celebrate mass in honour of the Virgin Mary in the parish church, for his soul, his ancestors and the souls of all the faithful departed (p.582). On 20th March 1332-3, he obtained a license to alienate in mortmain four messuages, three gardens, six acres of land, one acre of moor, and pasture for three oxen in Dartford to found this chantry (*Cal. Pat. Rolls 1330-4*, p.417).

² Collated on the death of Thomas de Stonpette, on 5th April (Charles Johnson, *Registrum Hamonis Hethe Diocesis Roffensis A.D. 1319-1352*, p. 859) Previously, briefly, the chaplain of St. Edmund's, and before that, vicar of Sutton at Hone.

³ Collated 29th April, taking an oath of residence (Charles Johnson, *Registrum Hamonis Hethe Diocesis Roffensis A.D. 1319-1352*, p. 865), having been collated resident vicar of Frndsbury in March (p.857).

⁴ Clerical subsidy (no date) (PRO E179/50/4).

⁵ In June 1390, William Page, vicar of Dartford, was presented to the church of Brunstede in the diocese of Norwich, in an exchange of benefices with Robert Grape (*Cal. Pat. Rolls 1388-92*, p.262).

⁶ See note above. He was commissioned with others, by the bishop of Rochester, to appoint a new Stanpit chantry chaplain, in 1396 (John Dunkin, *The History and Antiquities of Dartford* (London, 1844), p.122 note, citing episcopal register Botelsham fo.90).

⁷ Presented by the king, 8th March 1399-1400, because the temporalities of the bishop of Rochester were in the king's hands during a vacancy of see (*Cal. Pat. Rolls 1399-1401*, p.232).

⁸ C H Fielding, *The Records of Rochester* (Dartford, 1910), p.76. Dunstable's will, dated and proved in 1404, is entered in the archiepiscopal register (transcribed by L.L. Duncan: CKS TR 2952/2 p.283).

⁹ C H Fielding, *The Records of Rochester*, p.76.

¹⁰ Clerical subsidy collected Purification BVM 1419 (7 Henry V) (PRO E179/50/34).

¹¹ C.H. Fielding, *The Records of Rochester*, p.76. He exchanged livings with Andrew Sonders, rector of Gravesend, in 1428 (C.H. Fielding, *The Records of Rochester*, pp.76, 118).

¹² See footnote above.

¹³ C H. Fielding, *The Records of Rochester*, p.76.

¹⁴ Proctor in Convocation, 1432-3, a vicar general and official of the bishop of Rochester in 1437, and exchanged Dartford for the rectory of Staplehurst in 1437-8, but his activities were largely centred in Exeter diocese (A.L. Browne, 'The medieval officials-principal of Rochester', *AC*, 53 (1941), pp.29-61 at p.56). He exchanged livings with the rector of Staplehurst, in 1438 (Sidney Keyes, *Dartford Historical Notes* (Dartford, 1933), p.63).

¹⁵ Formerly rector of Staplehurst (see footnote above).

¹⁶ C.H. Fielding, *The Records of Rochester*, p.76; named in these wills: Drb/Pwr1/65v (1445); Drb/Pwr1/91v (1446); Drb/Pwr2/20 (1454-5); vicar of Wilmington: Drb/Pwr2/63 (1456-7); Drb/Pwr2/69 (1456); PROB 11/4/75v (1457); DRb/Pwr2/137 (1459); DRb/Pwr2/241 (1462); DRb/Pwr2/276 (1463); PROB 11/5/39 (1464); DRb/Pwr2/366 (1466); DRb/Pwr3/64v (1470); DRb/Pwr4/127 (1473-4); Dom. John Wellys, priest: DRb/Pwr3/213 (1477); William Milet: PROB 11/12/138 (1500). A King's bench court case of 1444 found that John 'Orlee', which must be Hornley, was involved in the mobbing of an official of Christchurch Priory, Canterbury, at Westerham, along with some other local clergy and laity (PRO KB9/245 m.89). His own will was made and proved in June 1477 (PROB 11/6/233v).

¹⁷ C.H. Fielding, *The Records of Rochester*, p.76; (PROB 11/7/150^v: will of Thomas Appelton of Southbenfleet has a man of this name as a witness in 1483); clerk and witness to will of Richard Pynden of Dartford in March 1487 (DRb/Pwr6/146); a witness to Richard Grenowde of Dartford, in October 1487 (DRb/Pwr6/134v); witness to will of William Meller of Dartford in May 1490

Edward Barnard (1501-1514)¹⁸
 John Rogers (1514-26)¹⁹
 Thomas Wadeluff /Wadlowe (1527-33)²⁰
 Edward Marmalake, parson (1533)²¹
 John Bruer (1533-5)²²
 John Bartelott, vicar and parish priest (1534-42)²³
 William Mote (1535-Oct. 1536)²⁴
 Ralph Byng, parish priest and vicar (1543-5)²⁵
 John Johnson (May 1545)²⁶
 John Pyzaunt (1546)²⁷
 James Goldwell (1547, 1550)²⁸
 Richard Turner (1547)²⁹
 Edmund Brown (1555-7)³⁰
 Nicholas Aspinall (1559)³¹
 Richard Turner, reinstated (1559)³²

(DRb/Pwr6/27); also named in: DRb/Pwr6/154 (1492); DRb/Pwr5/262v (1494); DRb/Pwr5 ff.253v, 280 (1495); DRb/Pwr5/357v (1499)

¹⁸ C H Fielding, *The Records of Rochester*, p.76; 'Master Edward Barnarde sacre Thologie Bac.' was a witness to the will of Thomas Mery of Dartford in August 1502 (DRb/Pwr6/55v); witnessed the will of Johan Cony widow of Dartford 23rd March '1502' (DRb/Pwr6/67v), witnessed will of Thomas Cook of Dartford in May 1504 (DRb/Pwr6/25v); was executor of Johan Harte widow in 1504 (DRb/Pwr6/99), witness for William Gardyner in 1504 (DRb/Pwr6/108v); executor of William Ladd in 1504 (DRb/Pwr6/115v); also named in: DRb/Pwr6/177v (1505); DRb/Pwr6/219 (1505-6); PROB 11/14/218v; DRb/Pwr6/219 (1506); DRb/Pwr6/219v (1506); DRb/Pwr6/208v (1508); DRb/Pwr6/262v (1509); DRb/Pwr6/358v (1512); DRb/Pwr7/20v (1514). He is also named as vicar of Dartford in the archdeacon of Rochester's visitation documents of September 1504 (CKS DRa/Vb4 fo.8). Died 1514 (DRb/Ar 1/13 fo.56).

¹⁹ Collated 19th July 1514, after the death of Master Edward Barnard (DRb/Ar 1/13 fo.56); in wills: PROB 11/18/142 (May 1516); DRb/Pwr7/120 (1518), DRb/Pwr7/197 (1520); DRb/Pwr7/219v (1521); Dartford Priory rental 1521-2 (tenant); Clerical Subsidy assessment c 1523, also says he held the benefice of Compton in diocese Winchester (DRb/Az1 fo. 21v); his living was valued at £26 in subsidy list for 1523 (DRb/Az1 fo.34v); £20 in 1525 (Az1 fo.42v); in wills: DRb/Pwr7/294 (1523); DRb/Pwr7/313v (1523); he was still vicar (£24) in the clerical subsidy list of Feb 1525/6 (DRb/Az1 fo.53); his own will dates from 1526 (burial in the choir): DRb/Pwr8/52v

²⁰ Master Thomas Wadeluff, bachelor of sacred theology, was collated perpetual vicar of Dartford, after the death of Master John Roger (sic), on 16th January 1526-7, it being stipulated, as had been the case with Rogers, that he would be resident (DRb/Ar 1/13 fo.119v) He appears as vicar in the clerical subsidy list for Feb. 1526-7 (DRb/Az1 fo.73); and in the archdeacon of Rochester's visitation material of 1527-32 (DRa/Vb4 ff.53, 84, 128, 163, 205, 240). He is named in these Dartford wills: DRb/Pwr8/88v (1527-8), DRb Pwr8/127 (1527); DRb/Pwr8/168v (1528); DRb/Pwr8/238v (1530); DRb/Pwr9/23v (April 1530); his own will of May 1533, proved December 1534 (PROB 11/25/147). The clerical subsidy of Oct. 1533 indicates that he was dead by then and his executors were William Parker and Robert Johnson (qv.) (DRb/Az1 fo.102v).

²¹ Witnessed will of William Stokmed in June 1533 (DRb/Pwr9/95).

²² C H Fielding, *The Records of Rochester*, p.76 (citing AC, 18, p.395); he first appears in the clerical subsidies as vicar in the list of Oct 1533, also appearing as vicar of Higham (DRb/Az1 fo.102v); the archdeacon's visitation material of 1533 similarly lists him as vicar of Dartford as well as Higham, and shows that he employed a curate at Higham from this year (DRa/Vb4 ff.255v, 257v); he appears as vicar in the visitations of 1534 (DRa/Vb4 fo.274); he signed the acknowledgement of royal supremacy in 1534 as vicar (PRO E36/64 p.76), named in wills: DRb/Pwr9/128 (February 1533-4); DRb/Pwr9/127 (1534); DRb/Pwr9/134v (June 1534); he paid clerical subsidy as vicar in Oct. 1534 (Az1 fo.106); his own will made in January 1534-5: DRb/Pwr9/175v. He was dead by late 1535 when different men held his posts of vicar of Dartford and Higham.

²³ C H Fielding, *The Records of Rochester*, p.76; DRb/Pwr9/359v (1540); DRb/Pwr10/2 (1540); DRb/Pwr9/348 (May 1541); DRb/Pwr9/329 (January 1540-41); DRb/Pwr9/379v (January 1541-2). Not named in the clerical subsidy list of October 1536.

²⁴ Master William Mote was named as vicar of Dartford in the archdeacon's visitation of 1535 (DRa/Vb4 fo.288v); his name heads the list of Dartford clergy for the clerical subsidy of October 1536, paying highest tax (DRb/Az1 fo.112). Unlike his four predecessors, Mote/Mott employed a curate.

²⁵ Named in these wills: DRb/Pwr10/46 (August 1543); DRb/Pwr10/45v (October 1543); DRb/Pwr10/70 (1544); DRb/Pwr10/45v (March 1544-5).

²⁶ C.H. Fielding, *The Records of Rochester*, p.76 (collated 15th May 1545).

²⁷ C.H. Fielding, *The Records of Rochester*, p.76; 167/1546. Note payment of pension on 1st April 1541 to John Pizaunt, formerly of Sheen Charterhouse (Bk. of Augmentations: L.&P. Henry VIII xvii, no.258). The same?

²⁸ C.H. Fielding, *The Records of Rochester*, p.76 (collated 4th January 1546/7); overseer of will of Aunchiant Gyles: DRb/Pwr11/108v (1550); witnessed will of John Edwardes: DRb/Pwr11/129v (November 1550). A James Goldwell acted as diocesan official in the Consistory probate courts. In the 1530s a James Goldwell was rector of Addington (DRb/Az1, eg fo.104: 1533). A James Goldwell, gent., was executor to Margaret Thomson's will in December 1552 (PROB 11/36/3v); was he the same, dispossessed, or a relation?

²⁹ C.H. Fielding, *The Records of Rochester*, p.76. Ejected 1554?

³⁰ C.H. Fielding, *The Records of Rochester*, p.76; witnessed wills of Thomas Mathewe, yeoman, in April 1555 (DRb/Pwr12/3v); John Smythe, beerbrewer, in August 1555 (DRb/Pwr11/350); William Person, in January 1555-6 (DRb/Pwr12/4v); William Jordayne in May 1556 (DRb/Pwr12/38v); and witnessed and wrote the wills of Robert Sperke, butcher, in November 1557 (DRb/Pwr12/151v) and Nicholas Smythe, in November 1557 (DRb/Pwr12/150v).

³¹ C.H. Fielding, *The Records of Rochester*, p.76. Instituted 2nd May 1559, deprived soon after.

Curates and parish chaplains

Thomas (1404)³³
William ap Howell, curate (1501-2)³⁴
William Smyth (1526)³⁵
William Case, curate (1535-Oct. 1536)³⁶
Thomas Bradshawe, curate (1542)³⁷
Edward Parcevall, curate (1545-6)³⁸
Edward Standish, curate (1551)³⁹

Chaplains of the Chantry of St. Mary Stanpits⁴⁰

Ralph de Felthorp (1338)⁴¹
Thomas Master de East Barham (1349)⁴²
Thomas Gurnay (May 1349)⁴³
Henry Primlogie of Canterbury (October 1349)⁴⁴
William Danbourn (1359)⁴⁵
Roger Golden (1367-8)⁴⁶
Richard (temp. Richard II)⁴⁷
John Staundon (resigned 1396)⁴⁸
William Cowpere (1396)⁴⁹
John Drewe (1400)⁵⁰
Thomas Gybbes (1404)⁵¹
John Jewell (1419)⁵²
John Arney (1422-4)⁵³
Thomas Marchant (1424)⁵⁴

³² C H Fielding, *The Records of Rochester*, p.76 (reinstated).

³³ Named as parish chaplain in the will of William Dunstable, vicar of Dartford, dated 11th December 1404 (CKS TR 2952/2 p.283). Possibly Thomas Gybbes, who was Stanpit chantry chaplain (see below).

³⁴ Sir William 'my ghostly father and curate' is bequeathed 5s for prayers for, and witnesses will of, Thomas Boonde of Dartford, 27th January '1501' (DRb/Pwr6/41).

³⁵ Probably the Martin chantry priest by 1523 until early 1526 when the vicar John Rogers died. See under Martin chantry. He was then named as curate in September 1526, the vicarage being vacant, in the archdeacon's visitation (DRb/Pa 8 pt 1 fo.193v).

³⁶ Named as William Mote's curate in the archdeacon's visitation of 1535 (DRa/Vb4 fo.288v); named as a priest in Dartford in the clerical subsidy list of October 1536 (DRb/Az1 fo.112).

³⁷ Thomas Bradshawe, curate of Dartford, is named in a consistory court case in held in Dartford parish church on 27th October 1542, in which he reported the heretical statement of a Dartford man about the Ascension (DRb/Jd 1 fo.7).

³⁸ Witnessed will of Christopher Gyton, barber, in October 1543 (DRb/Pwr10/45v); named in will of Richard Alixander in May 1546 (DRb/Pwr11/5b).

³⁹ Witnessed wills of Alice Toppisfield, widow, in January 1550-1 (DRb/Pwr11/125v); and Thomas Mosse, in March 1550-1 (DRb/Pwr11/125v)

⁴⁰ Founded by the vicar, Thomas Stampet; on 20th March 1332/3, he obtained a license to alienate in mortmain four messuages, three gardens, six acres of land, one acre of moor, and pasture for three oxen in Dartford to found a chantry. A priest was to celebrate divine service every day, in honour of the Virgin Mary, in the parish church, for his soul and the souls of his ancestors and all faithful departed (*Cal Pat Rolls 1330-4*, p.417). The net income in 1546 was £7 14s 6d (Arthur Hussey, ed., *Kent Chantries*, Kent Records, xii (Ashford, 1932), i, p.116).

⁴¹ Charles Johnson, *Registrum Hamonis Hethe Diocesis Roffensis A.D. 1319-1352*, pp.582-3. The chantry was a new foundation in 1338

⁴² Instituted following the death of Felthorp in February 1348/9 (Charles Johnson, *Registrum Hamonis Hethe Diocesis Roffensis A.D. 1319-1352*, p.856).

⁴³ Charles Johnson, *Registrum Hamonis Hethe Diocesis Roffensis A.D. 1319-1352*, p.866. He was instituted as vicar of Wilmington in July the same year, taking an oath of residence, but by September had resigned and was instituted vicar of Teston (pp.883, 887-8).

⁴⁴ Charles Johnson, *Registrum Hamonis Hethe Diocesis Roffensis A.D. 1319-1352*, p.890.

⁴⁵ C.H. Fielding, *The Records of Rochester*, p.77.

⁴⁶ C.H. Fielding, *The Records of Rochester*, p.77.

⁴⁷ Undated fragment of Rochester diocese clerical subsidy list (PRO E179/50/4).

⁴⁸ Arthur Hussey, ed., *Kent Chantries*, p.114. The bishop of Rochester commissioned Friar John Sill of Dartford Priory, Robert Grape (vicar of Dartford), and others, to receive Staundon's resignation and appoint his successor (John Dunkin, *The History and Antiquities of Dartford* (London, 1844), p.122 note – citing episcopal register Botelsham, fo.90).

⁴⁹ C.H. Fielding, *The Records of Rochester*, p.77.

⁵⁰ C.H. Fielding, *The Records of Rochester*, p.77.

⁵¹ C.H. Fielding, *The Records of Rochester*, p.77.

⁵² Clerical subsidy collected Purification BVM 7 Henry V (PRO E179/50/34).

⁵³ C.H. Fielding, *The Records of Rochester*, p.77. See footnote below.

⁵⁴ C.H. Fielding, *The Records of Rochester*, p.77. The archbishop's register records that, on 22nd December 1424, Thomas Marchant, who had been rector of Hever, exchanged benefices with John Arney, chaplain of the chantry of St. Mary of Dartford. Archant was

John Burford (1425)⁵⁵
 John Burford (1428/30)⁵⁶
 John Blore (1433-47)⁵⁷
 John Shirborne, or Shiborn (1447, 1464-90)⁵⁸
 John Elmshall (1458, 1464)⁵⁹
 Unknown (1473)⁶⁰
 John Newman (resigned 1493)⁶¹
 Thomas Vernon (1493)⁶²
 John Cokkis (1495)⁶³
 Simon Aleyn (1494)⁶⁴
 Thomas Worsle (1497)⁶⁵
 William Gawyne (1499)⁶⁶
 William Cooke (1504-1512)⁶⁷
 Thomas Pelton (1512-14)⁶⁸
 Nicholas Hall (1514)⁶⁹
 Robert Johnson (1517-35)⁷⁰

inducted by the dean of Shoreham or his deputy (on certificate of John, bishop of Rochester) (E.F. Jacob, ed., *Register of Henry Chuchele* (Oxford, 1943), i, p. 221).

⁵⁵ C H Fielding, *The Records of Rochester*, p.77.

⁵⁶ Clerical subsidy 7-8 Henry VI (PRO E179/50/41).

⁵⁷ Named as a chaplain of Dartford in the clerical subsidy roll for 7-8 Henry VI (Sept. 1428-Sept. 1430) (PRO E179/50/41); as Stanpit chaplain in the episcopal register in 1433 (C H. Fielding, *The Records of Rochester*, p.77); a feoffee named in will of John Shirborne, father of successor chaplain (doesn't specify Stanpit) in November 1442 (DRb/Pwr1/8v); died in post by 1447 (see next entry), possibly as early as November 1445 when he made his own will, in which he asks for burial before Our Lady altar but doesn't specifically mention the chantry (DRb/Pwr1/65v).

⁵⁸ Sir John Shirborne, chaplain, of Dartford, was presented to be Stanpit chantry chaplain, made vacant by the death of John Blore, observing the statutes and ordinances of the chantry, on 26th December 1447 (DRb/Ar 1/11 ff.16v, 20); his father John Shirborne's will refers to him but not as chaplain DRb/Pwr1/8v (1442); also named in these wills DRb/Pwr2/241 (1462); PROB 11/5/46 (1464); DRb/Pwr4/6 (1472), DRb/Pwr6/27 (1490).

⁵⁹ Will of Agnes Fagge in 1459 (DRb/Pwr2/127v); William Rotheley: PROB 11/5/46 (1464). Elmshall died c.1475, by which time he was vicar of Wilmington; on 10th April 1475, John Straborg, the vicar of Sutton at Hone, Elmshall's executor, was cited to undertake the execution of the will (consistory court act book DRb/Pa4 fo.39v).

⁶⁰ Expenses of 10s were recorded on 17th December 1473 for the institution a new Stanpit chantry chaplain in Dartford parish church by the bishop (Rochester Consistory Court act book DRb/Pa4 fo.22).

⁶¹ DRb/Ar 1/12 fo 14.

⁶² Collated chaplain in 1493 after the resignation of Newman (DRb/Ar 1/12 fo.14).

⁶³ The Rochester consistory court act book records that, on 31st July 1495, Dominus John, a chantry priest of Dartford, was cited for non-residence, apostacy and living in secular habit (DRb/Pa4 fo.277v). The bishop's register records that John Cokkis, Stanpit chantry chaplain, no doubt the same man, resigned in that same year (DRb/Ar 1/12 fo.15).

⁶⁴ Appointed priest of this perpetual chantry after the resignation of Cokkis, collated 18th November 1495 (DRb/Ar 1/12 fo.15).

⁶⁵ Witness to will of Richard Clement who bequeathed the rent of his house in Overy Street to the Stanpit priests, in 1497 (DRb/Pwr5/301).

⁶⁶ C H Fielding, *The Records of Rochester*, p.77.

⁶⁷ He is named as a chantry priest of Dartford in the archdeacon of Rochester's visitation material of September 1504 (DRa/Vb4 fo 8) He was bequeathed 3s 4d for prayers by William Ladd in November 1504 (DRb/Pwr6/115v); DRb/Pwr6/177v (1505). He is mentioned as holding the tenure of a tenement and garden of Dartford Priory in Hithe Street, in the Dartford section of the 1507-8 priory rental, made and examined 1st November 1508 (BL Arundel Ms 61, ff.24-5v). He died in post as Stanpit priest, in 1512 (DRb/Ar 1/13 fo 44v).

⁶⁸ Instituted 1512 because of the death of William Cooke (DRb/Ar 1/13 fo.44v); he received a stipend of nine marks, and was assessed to pay 6s 8d clerical subsidy, in 1513 (Rochester consistory court act book DRb/Pa5 pt 2 fo.102).

⁶⁹ Appointed 13th November 1514, to observe the foundation statutes and institutes of the chantry, after the death of Pelton (DRb/Ar 1/13 fo 55).

⁷⁰ Collated Stanpit chantry chaplain, observing statutes of the foundation of the chantry, 26th May 1517 (DRb/Ar 1/13 fo.58; will PROB 11/18/142 (May 1516) refers to Sir Robert, chantry priest, not specifying Stanpits; Sir Robert, Stanpit chantry priest, was a tenant of the priory named in the 1521-2 accounts (London Society of Antiquaries Ms. 564 m.7); he is named as a chantry priest in Dartford parish church in the archdeacon of Rochester's visitation material of 1527 and 1528, as a stipendiary priest probably meaning chantry priest in 1523-5 (but not 1526) and 1529-33, as a chantry priest in 1534, not named in the 1535 visitation (DRb/Pa 8 pt 1 ff.8v, 61, 113v (1523-6); DRa/Vb4 ff.53, 84, 128, 163, 205, 240, 257v, 274, 288v); the Rochester clerical subsidy assessment lists of c.1523 shows him in receipt of 9 marks pa as chantry chaplain in Dartford with goods valued at 20s. (DRb/Az1 fo.27), and of £6 as a chaplain in 1523, and as a chantry priest there in 1525 and Feb. 1525/6 (ff.34v, 42v, 53); named in the will of Master John Roger, vicar of Dartford, in August 1526 (DRb/Pwr8/52v); paid clerical subsidy as a stipendiary priest in Dartford in Feb. 1526/7 (Az1 fo.73); 120/1527; paid clerical subsidy as Stanpit chantry priest in Feb. 1527/8 (Az1 fo.85); named in wills: DRb/Pwr8/191 (1528); DRb/Pwr8/298 (1530); DRb/Pwr8/259 (1530); witness to William Lownde's will in 1530 (PROB 11/23/207); DRb/Pwr9/70v (1532-3); DRb/Pwr9/72v (1532); executor & beneficiary of Thomas Wadlowe, vicar, in 1533 (PROB 11/25/147); DRb/Pwr9/72 (1533); DRb/Pwr9/93 (1533); paid clerical subsidy as a priest in Dartford in Oct. 1533, Oct. 1534 (DRb/Az1 ff.102v, 106); he signed the acknowledgement of royal supremacy in 1534 as a chantry priest of Dartford (PRO E36/64 p.77); named in wills: DRb/Pwr9/153v (1534); of the vicar John Bruer, dated January 1534-5 (DRb/Pwr9/175v); DRb/Pwr9/192v (1535); DRb/Pwr9/194v (1535). Sir Robert Johnson, chantry priest, was the chief appraiser of the goods of William Stokmede for the inventory dated 4th June

William Halle (1535)⁷¹
John Stace (1537)⁷²
Robert Bacon (1540-8)⁷³

Note also:

John Blowre (temp. Henry VIII)⁷⁴

Chaplains of St. Edmund's Chapel⁷⁵

Ralph Feldthorp (1326, 1333)⁷⁶
John Squier (1342-8)⁷⁷
John de Stone (1349)⁷⁸
Elias de Stapleton (1349)⁷⁹
Nicholas son of John Pistor de Hadleigh (1358)⁸⁰
Ralph Gently (1361)⁸¹

1534 (DRb/Pa 9 pt 2 fo 210) Note that at this time there was another Robert Johnson who was Rector of Stone, a neighbouring parish. He does not appear as such in the 1525 clerical subsidy list (rather, Richard Sharp who then retired there: DRb/Az1 fo.40) but does in Feb. 1526/7, Oct. 1533, Oct. 1534 (ff.65v, 102, 109). In wills a priest of this name was 'parson' of Stone in January 1536/7 (PCC PROB 11/27/21), 1538 (DRb/Pwr9/279); and June 1541 (DRb/Pwr9/386). His signature in the acknowledgement of royal supremacy of 1534 as Mr Robert Johnson, Rector of Stone, is different and additional to the signature of Dominus Robert Johnson, chantry priest of Dartford, proving that they were not the same man (PRO E36/64 p.77). Note there was a diocesan official of the same name

⁷¹ C H Fielding, *The Records of Rochester*, p.78.

⁷² C H Fielding, *The Records of Rochester*, p.78. Named as a former tenant of Dartford Priory in Dartford in a grant to John Beer in 1544 *L.&P. Henry VIII*, xix (2), no.690 (15).

⁷³ C H Fielding, *The Records of Rochester*, p.78. Paid pension of £6 in 1553 as former chantry incumbent of Dartford (Browne Willis, *The Mitred Abbies* (1718-19) ii, 104), and £6 in 1555-6 as a former 'incumbent' (Pole's pension book: Flaherty, 'A help toward a Kentish monasticon', AC, ii, p.62). There was a priest of that name in Milton c.1523 (DRb/Az1 fo.24). This Robert Bacon is shown in receipt of 10 marks pa as curate of Gravesend in the clerical subsidy list of Feb. 1525/6, still curate in Feb. 1526/7 (DRb/Az1 fo 49v, 64v). Sir Robert Bacon, chaplain, was witness and overseer of the will of Christopher Westgarth of Gravesend, in June 1526, with Sir William Brodebent, another later vicar of Wilmington (DRb/Pwr8/33v). He was still curate of Gravesend when he witnessed the will of Thomas Thebolde of that parish, in October 1527 (DRb/Pwr8/122v); and the will of Robert Marten of Denton, in January 1527-8 (DRb/Pwr8/130). He is named as curate of Gravesend in the archdeacon of Rochester's visitation material of 1527-9 (DRA/Vb4 ff 53, 83v, 125v). He was named as chantry priest of Northfleet in the will of Alice Davy, widow of Northfleet, which he witnessed in May 1531 (PROB 11/24/154). He also witnessed the will of Joan Hunt of Northfleet, widow, in August 1531 (PROB 11/24/12v). A Robert Bacon was mentioned in 1533 in the will of William Burwashe of Swanscombe (DRb Pwr9/92v). He was named as chaplain of the William Wangford chantry in Northfleet, in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, in 1535, receiving the pension of 13s 4d (*Valor*, i, p.102). He was also Vicar of Wilmington 1540-3 and 1552-5 (Fielding). Sir Robert Bacon, chantry priest in Dartford parish church, was involved in a defamation case against Agnes Raynold of Strood, heard at the consistory court in Rochester Cathedral on 27th January 1541/2, at which they were agreed (DRb/Jd 1 fo.2). The 1546 and 1548 chantry certificates both name him as incumbent; in 1548 he is said to be sixty-three years of age (thus born c.1485) and 'of indifferent learning and qualities', and was still in possession of the chantry of Northfleet, for which he received a pension of 100s per annum (Arthur Hussey, ed., *Kent Chantryes*, pp.116-7). He was known to Dartford and Wilmington will-makers whether as vicar, chantry priest or unbeneficed local priest: 'Robert Bacon priest' witnessed the will of Thomas Goodborow (280) of Wilmington in March 1547 (DRb/Pwr11/225 (b)). Sir William Brodebent (281), Vicar of Wilmington, and also a priest in Milton in 1523 and 1533-6 (clerical subsidies), bequeathed a gown to 'my brother Sir Robert Bacon' in July 1552 (DRb/Pwr11/256). In February 1552-3, Sir Robert Bacon priest of ('Stone' deleted) Dartford was executor to William Rogers husbandman of Dartford (DRb/Pwr11/235v); in December 1553 he witnessed the will of Richard Prior, yeoman of Dartford (DRb/Pwr11/263v). In May 1554, Sir Robert Bacon 'priest' witnessed the will of Richard Smythe, labourer of Wilmington (DRb/Pwr11/276). He called himself Vicar of Wilmington in his own will of May 1555 in which he asked to be buried in the chancel there (DRb/Pwr12/7).

⁷⁴ 'Chantry chaplain of Our Lady' in Dartford, a tenant in the manor of Dartford in an undated fragment of a rental (BL Add. Ms. 5493, fo 75^v).

⁷⁵ Note there are some other names of chaplains listed by Fielding between 1446-1533 but omitted here. The line of succession from Crowland to Wellys is indisputable as the episcopal register entries recording collations state the name of the previous incumbent. Fielding's references for the names concerned have been checked; it has been found either that the names are not mentioned where he says they are, or that they are mentioned with reference to the Stanpit chantry and not St. Edmund's.

⁷⁶ Feldthorpe was licensed to celebrate in the chapel in May 1326, and presented by the patron John de Bikenore to be perpetual chaplain, in April 1333 (Charles Johnson, *Registrum Hamonis Hethe Diocesis Roffensis A.D. 1319-1352*, pp.167, 514). Note that Feldthorpe was instituted to the new Stanpit chantry in the parish church in May 1338, and was dead by early 1349.

⁷⁷ In early 1348, John Squier, chaplain of St. Edmund by Dartford, proved before the bishop's commissary that he was instituted to the chapel, by the archdeacon, in August 1342, on the presentation of John de Bikenore, but that his letters of institution, induction and orders had since been stolen (Charles Johnson, *Registrum Hamonis Hethe Diocesis Roffensis A.D. 1319-1352*, p.839). He was dead by March 1349 when Stone was appointed (p.858).

⁷⁸ Instituted to the chaplaincy on 15th March 1348/9, presented by Joan, widow of John de Bikenore (Charles Johnson, *Registrum Hamonis Hethe Diocesis Roffensis A.D. 1319-1352*, p.858). Note that John de Stone had been vicar of Sutton at Hone since 1338, now resigned (pp.583, 859). Stone was not long at St. Edmund's as he was collated vicar of Dartford in April 1349 (p.859).

⁷⁹ Instituted 10th May 1349, presented by the patron, Joan, widow of John de Bikenore (Charles Johnson, *Registrum Hamonis Hethe Diocesis Roffensis A.D. 1319-1352*, p.867).

⁸⁰ C.H. Fielding, *The Records of Rochester*, p.78.

⁸¹ C.H. Fielding, *The Records of Rochester*, p.78.

Ralph Kytele (1361-71)⁸²
 Richard de Wylne (1371, 1377)⁸³
 John Symonde (1395, 1400)⁸⁴
 Gilbert Anlaby (1419)⁸⁵
 John Blere (1422)⁸⁶
 Edmund (d.1432)⁸⁷
 John Derby (1432)⁸⁸
 Friar William Crowelond (1442-46)⁸⁹
 Thomas Ingeldewe (1446-62)⁹⁰
 John Wellys (also vicar of Wilmington) (1463-77)⁹¹
 William Wyggan (1515-23; in Dartford 1506-1526)⁹²

Chaplains of the Martin Chantry⁹³

Vacant in 1513⁹⁴

⁸² C H Fielding, *The Records of Rochester*, p.78; died 1371 (Arthur Hussey, ed., *Kent Chantries*, p.119).

⁸³ Arthur Hussey, ed., *Kent Chantries*, p.119 (the first presentation by Dartford Priory). Wylne's appointment was ratified by the king, on 17th February 1376-7 (*Cal. Pat. Rolls 1374-7*, p.426).

⁸⁴ A papal mandate, dated 1st November 1395, sent by Boniface IX to the bishop of Chichester, calls for John Symonde, priest of the diocese of Rochester, and others concerned to be summoned on the matter of the chapel of St. Edmund in Dartford, belonging to Dartford Priory, which chapel had illegally been taken possession of by Symonde (copied into a Rochester consistory court act book under details of an inquisition into repair of the chapel in 1515 - DRb/Pa 6 fo.137, printed in *Cal. Pap. Letts*, iv, p.500).

An undated fragment of a Rochester diocese clerical subsidy list of the reign of Richard II names the chantry chaplain of St. Edmund as John, possibly referring to Symond (PRO E179/50/4). Symond received letters patent from the king, ratifying him as 'warden' of St. Edmund's chapel, on 18th May 1396 (*Cal. Pat. Rolls 1391-6*, p.721); Symond was finally presented as chaplain, by Prioress Joan and her convent of Dartford Priory, on 10th February 1399-1400 (John Dunkin, *The History and Antiquities of Dartford*, p.98 - citing register of W de Bottlesham, fo.142).

⁸⁵ Clerical subsidy collected Pur BVM 7 Henry V. Note, the rough version calls him chaplain of St. Edmund's (PRO E179/50/35) whilst the neat roll calls him simply chantry chaplain (E179/50/34).

⁸⁶ C H Fielding, *The Records of Rochester*, p.78.

⁸⁷ The record John Derby's appointment says the previous chaplain of this chantry, Master Edmund, had died (Arthur Hussey, ed., *Kent Chantries*, p.119).

⁸⁸ C H Fielding, *The Records of Rochester*, p.78 (admitted 10th May, presented by Rose, prioress, and her convent).

⁸⁹ This Dominican friar received letters patent ratifying him as 'warden' of the 'free chapel' of St. Edmund, on 28th January 1441-2 (*Cal. Pat. Rolls 1441-6*, p.146). He was ordained acolyte and subdeacon at the Stamford convent, in 1401 (A.B. Emden, *A survey of Dominicans in England based on the ordination lists in episcopal registers (1268 to 1538)* (Rome, 1967), pp.318, 104). Ingeldewe was appointed on his death, in 1446.

⁹⁰ On 6th October 1446, Ingeldew was presented to the perpetual chantry of St. Edmund, made vacant by the death of Friar William Crowelond, by Prioress Margaret de Bellomonte and the convent of Dartford (DRb/Ar 1/11 fo.10). His own will, in which he asks for burial before the altar in the chapel, is dated 12th June 1462 (DRb/Pwr2/252v). He didn't mention that he was chaplain of St. Edmund's, but asked for burial before the altar there.

⁹¹ Wellys was presented by Prioress Alice Branthwayte of Dartford before the bishop, at Lesnes Abbey, on 3rd July 1461, the post being vacant because of the death of Sir Thomas Yngeldew, previous chaplain (DRb/Ar 1/11 fo.35v). However, he was not admitted until 3rd July 1463, at Lesnes, because of legal technicalities (DRb/Ar 1/11 ff.39v-40r). He is mentioned in the following wills (not necessarily as chaplain of St. Edmund's): DRb/Pwr2/241 (1462); Thomas Ingeldewe, previous chaplain of St. Edmund's, in June 1462 (DRb/Pwr2/252v); PROB 11/5/46 (1464); DRb/Pwr3/9v (1468); DRb/Pwr4/6 (1472); 3/1473; DRb/Pwr4/127 (1473-4); DRb/Pwr4/175v (1474); DRb/Pwr4/187v (1474-5); will of Master John Homley, vicar, in June 1477 (PROB 11/6/233v/1477; DRb/Pwr3/213 (his own will of 29th October 1477).

⁹² The vicar of Wilmington (William Wyggan) was cited for the repair of St. Edmund's chapel by the consistory court, on 10th October 1515 (DRb/Pa 6 fo.129). He may have been chaplain since 1508 when he was appointed vicar of Wilmington. At the consistory court held 11th May 1520 in Dartford church, Wyggan, mentioned by name, was found to be neglecting the duties of a chaplain of St. Edmund's: 'Sir William Wyggan is natyd that he takyth upp the profett of seynt Edmond chapell in dertford & doth no servyce ther for it' (DRb/Pa 7 fo.75). Named as chaplain of St. Edmund's in Priory 1521-2 rental (London Soc. Ant. Ms. 564); named as vicar of Wilmington and chaplain of St. Edmund's Chapel, as well as holding the Priory's benefice of Fiffold in Salisbury diocese, in Rochester diocese clerical subsidy assessment c.1523 (DRb/Az1 fo.21v). He was appointed vicar of Wilmington in 1508 (DRb/Ar 1/13 fo.34), and was in receipt of £9 pa for this living in the assessment for 1523, and £10 in 1525 (DRb/Az1/ff.35, 43v). He was still vicar there in February 1525/6 by which time he had a curate, John Due (DRb/Az1 fo.54), and at his death. He was also vicar or incumbent of a number of parishes, including West Kirby in the Wirral by 1526, as we find in his will of September 1526 (PROB 11/22/78). He was dead by 12th October 1526, when Sir John Halett was instituted vicar of Wilmington in his place (DRb/Ar 1/13 fo.117v). Wyggan, a secular priest, was named as Priory supervisor and clerk in the rental of 1506-7 (BL Arundel Ms.61, fo.13); supervisor of lands in 1512, and priest and receiver to the Prioress in 1516 (*L.&P. Henry VIII Addenda*, i, nos 100, 152); superior clerk and receiver general in the Dartford Priory rental London Soc. Ant. Ms. 564 (1521-2). A list of clerical subsidy assessments, of 1513, recorded in the Rochester consistory court act book, states that Wyggan received an annual stipend of 10 marks as priory surveyor, and was assessed to pay 13s 4d (DRb/Pa5 pt 2 fo.102). The 1521-2 rental also names him as a tenant of the Priory in Dartford. Wyggan's will shows that he had chambers in Dartford Priory, containing household stuff. He asked to be buried at St. Werburgh's (Chester?).

⁹³ Founded by John Martin of Dartford, formerly of Horton, a chief justice on the King's Bench in the reign of Henry VI. The chaplain was known as the Martin's Salary priest (John Dunkin, *The History and Antiquities of Dartford*, p.78; the 1546 chantry certificate - Arthur Hussey, ed., *Kent Chantries*, p.118). The net income, in 1546, was £8 8s (Arthur Hussey, ed., *Kent Chantries*, p.118).

William Smyth (?) (1523-6)⁹⁵
Edmund Parker (1526-1547; died 1568)⁹⁶

Other priests/chaplains in Dartford - positions unspecified⁹⁷

Thomas Scolmaister (temp. Richard II)⁹⁸

William (temp. Richard II)⁹⁹

Robert (temp. Richard II)¹⁰⁰

John Chesterfeld (1428-30)¹⁰¹

Thomas Worship (d.1456)¹⁰²

William Shadde (1466)¹⁰³

John Gosner (1466)¹⁰⁴

Geoffrey Bagshaugh (1467)¹⁰⁵

Richard Tukke (1474)¹⁰⁶

Richard Eddyn (1474, 1477)¹⁰⁷

Richard Dobylday (1477)¹⁰⁸

Ralph Hervy (1477)¹⁰⁹

Henry Messingere (1474-80)¹¹⁰

Sampson Monarell (1494)¹¹¹

⁹⁴ Clerical subsidy list recorded in the Rochester consistory court act book (DRb/Pa5 pt 2 fo.102).

⁹⁵ Named as a chaplain in Dartford in clerical subsidy assessment for 1523, as a chantry priest there in those of 1525 and Feb. 1525/6 (DRb/Az1 ff.34v, 42v, 53); named as a stipendiary priest of Dartford, which could mean chantry priest, in the archdeacon's visitation material of 1523-5, and as curate in September 1526, when the vicarage was vacant (DRb/Pa 8 pt 1 ff.8v, 61, 113v, 193v). As Robert Johnson was Stanpit priest, and William Wyggan was chaplain of St. Edmund's chantry chapel, Smith must have been the Martyn chantry priest. Master John Roger, vicar of Dartford, referred to a priest called Smith, in his will of August 1526, but did not give a Christian name or specify his position (DRb/Pwr8/52v).

⁹⁶ A 1546 chantry certificate names Parker as incumbent (Arthur Hussey, ed., *Kent Chuntries*, pp.117-8). The Kent Chantry Roll 1 Edward VI (104) shows he was chaplain of this private chantry in Dartford (John Dunkin, *The History and Antiquities of Dartford*, pp 77-8) Parker is not named as Martin's Salary priest in any will but simply as 'priest', perhaps a reflection of the private nature of the chantry and his role as a public priest valued in his own right, appearing alongside the vicar in witness lists: a beneficiary of Thomas Wadlowe, vicar, in May 1533 (PROB 11/25/147); DRb/Pwr9/153v (1534); DRb/Pwr9/290 (1540); DRb/Pwr9/329 (January 1540-41), DRb/Pwr9/348 (May 1541); DRb/Pwr9/385 (1541); DRb/Pwr9/379v (1541-2); DRb/Pwr10/20 (1543). He is named as a priest of Dartford, for the first time, in the archdeacon's visitation of September 1526 (DRb/Pa 8 pt 1 fo.143v). He had probably been appointed that year, following the death of the vicar, John Roger, as the previous Martin chantry priest became curate. Parker was named a chantry priest in Dartford parish church in the archdeacon's visitation material of 1527 and 1528, as a stipendiary priest probably meaning chantry priest in 1529-33, as a chantry priest in 1534, and as a stipendiary priest in 1535 (DRa/Vb4 ff.53, 84, 128, 163, 205, 240, 257v, 274, 288v). He first appears in the Rochester clerical subsidy lists in that of Feb. 1527/8 receiving 10 marks pa as a stipendiary priest in Dartford (DRb/Az1 fo.85), also being listed as a priest in Dartford in Oct. 1533 (fo.102v), Oct. 1534, (fo 106), Oct 1536 (fo. 112). He signed the acknowledgement of royal supremacy in 1534 as a stipendiary of Dartford (PRO E36/64 p 76) He was assessed to pay 8d tax on his temporal lands valued at 40s in the lay subsidy roll of October 1543 (PRO E179/124/255, m.2v), and 4d in October 1544 (E179/125/271). He clearly continued to function as a local unbeneficed priest after the dissolution of the chantries, being mentioned in these wills: DRb/Pwr11/288 (1553); DRb/Pwr11/340v (1554). In 1553 he received a pension of £6 as a former Dartford chantry incumbent (Browne Willis (1718-19), ii, p.104), and £6 in 1555-6 (Pole's pension book: Flaherty, 'A help toward a Kentish monasticon', p. 62). An entry in the Dartford parish register records his burial on 8th November 1568. 'Edmund Parker preest in Dartford 42 yeres' (Dartford parish register: Rochester Study Centre P110/1/1). His parents, Agnes and William Parker (gentleman), were Dartford inhabitants, his father a prominent local citizen (DRb/Pwr9 ff.153v, 134v).

⁹⁷ It is possible that some of these were not priests in Dartford wills but simply mentioned in Dartford wills. It does, however, seem more likely that priests outside the parish would be specified as such.

⁹⁸ Undated clerical subsidy list: 'capelle de Dertford' (PRO E179/50/4).

⁹⁹ Undated clerical subsidy list: 'capelle de Dertford' (PRO E179/50/4).

¹⁰⁰ Undated clerical subsidy list: 'capelle de Dertford' (PRO E179/50/4).

¹⁰¹ Named as a chaplain of Dartford in clerical subsidy roll 7-8 Henry VI (PRO E179/50/41).

¹⁰² His will (DRb/Pwr2/46) asks for burial at the west door of St. Edmund's chapel, but doesn't actually say he was chaplain of this chantry.

¹⁰³ Bequeathed six silver spoons and other items in the will of 4th May 1466 of his mother, Johanna Wynsore, widow of Thomas Shadde, of Dartford (DRb/Pwr2/366).

¹⁰⁴ Bequeathed 10 marks by Johanna Wynsore of Dartford, in her will of 4th May 1466, to celebrate divina for one year in Dartford parish church for the soul of her late husband Thomas Shadde (DRb/Pwr2/366).

¹⁰⁵ Beneficiary in will of Richard Bagshaugh, in July 1467 (DRb/Pwr2/386v).

¹⁰⁶ DRb/Pwr4/187v (1474-5).

¹⁰⁷ DRb/Pwr4/187v (1474-5); will of Master John Hornley, vicar, in June 1477 (PROB 11/6/233v).

¹⁰⁸ Dominus Richard Dobylday, not necessarily of Dartford, was a witness of the will of Robert Stowe of Dartford in September 1477 (DRb/Pwr3/200).

¹⁰⁹ Dominus Ralph Hervy was an executor named in the will of John Wells, chaplain of St. Edmund's chapel and vicar of Wylmington, dated 29th October 1477 (DRb/Pwr3/213).

¹¹⁰ DRb/Pwr4/187v (1474-5); DRb/Pwr6/27 (1479); DRb/Pwr3 ff.273v, 270-1, 276 (1480).

¹¹¹ DRb/Pwr5/262v (1494).

David Philip (1494)¹¹²
 John Redhed (1504)¹¹³
 John Whrith (1504)¹¹⁴
 Geoffrey Purser (1509)¹¹⁵
 Henry Holywod (1513)¹¹⁶
 Christopher (1513)¹¹⁷
 John alias Blak (1513)¹¹⁸
 John Crowe (1523)¹¹⁹
 John Blasworth (c.1523)¹²⁰
 John Berper (1526, 1529)¹²¹
 Richard Stamler (1526)¹²²
 Christopher Walter (1526)¹²³
 Richard Bepas (1527)¹²⁴
 Master Kidwelley (notary) (1528)¹²⁵
 John Molle (May-October 1533)¹²⁶
 Master Cresswell (1534)¹²⁷
 Robert Redshawe (1534-5)¹²⁸
 Thomas Makyn (1531-7)¹²⁹
 Dnus ? English, poor priest (October 1534)¹³⁰
 William Hall (October 1536)¹³¹
 John Buckley (1536)¹³²
 Richard Stevenson (1538)¹³³
 Thomas Humfrey (1540)¹³⁴
 John Farrer (1541)¹³⁵

Parish Clerks

John Raynold (1499)¹³⁶

¹¹² DRb/Pwr5/262v (1494).

¹¹³ Dominus John Redhed appears as a stipendiary priest in Dartford in the archdeacon of Rochester's visitation material of September 1504 (DRa/Vb4 fo 8).

¹¹⁴ Dominus John Whrith appears as a stipendiary priest in Dartford in the archdeacon of Rochester's visitation material of September 1504 (DRa/Vb4 fo 8)

¹¹⁵ DRb/Pwr6/262v (1509).

¹¹⁶ Dominus Henry Holywod ('Stanpit chantry' deleted), who received a stipend of one mark pa, was assessed to pay 6s 8d clerical subsidy, in 1513 (Rochester consistory court act book DRb/Pa5 pt 2 fo.102).

¹¹⁷ Dominus Christopher of Dartford was named but not assessed to pay any subsidy in the clerical subsidy list of 1513 (Rochester consistory court act book DRb/Pa5 pt 2 fo.102).

¹¹⁸ Dominus John alias Blak ? (obscure hand) of Dartford was named but not assessed to pay any subsidy in the clerical subsidy list of 1513 (Rochester consistory court act book DRb/Pa5 pt 2 fo.102).

¹¹⁹ Named in the archdeacon's visitation of September 1523 (DRb/Pa 8 pt 1 fo.8v).

¹²⁰ A chaplain in Dartford - Rochester clerical subsidy assessment lists (DRb/Az1 fo.27).

¹²¹ Named in the will of Master John Roger, vicar of Dartford, in August 1526 (DRb/Pwr8/52v). Note John Berper, a celebrating priest in Higham in 1523 (clerical subsidy: DRb/Az1 fo.32v). Sir John Berper and William Haynes, as the executors of the will of Master John Roger, were taken to the consistory court on 20th April 1529 on a charge of dilapidation (DRb/Pa 9 pt 1 fo.131v).

¹²² Named in the will of Master John Roger, vicar of Dartford, in August 1526 (DRb/Pwr8/52v).

¹²³ Named as a priest of Dartford in the archdeacon's visitation of September 1526 (DRb/Pa 8 pt1 fo.143v); named in the will of Master John Roger, vicar of Dartford, in August 1526 (DRb/Pwr8/52v).

¹²⁴ DRb/Pwr8/118 (1527). In 1528, Richard Kepas/Bepas was curate of Wilmington (DRa/Vb4 fo.84v).

¹²⁵ DRb/Pwr8/168v (1528).

¹²⁶ Beneficiary of Thomas Wadlowe, vicar, in May 1533 (PROB 11/25/147). The archdeacon's visitation of 1533 found that he was a stipendiary priest of Dartford in that year (DRa/Vb4 fo.257v). He had perhaps been employed when the vicar fell ill. He was listed as a priest in Dartford for the clerical subsidy of Oct. 1533 (DRb/Az1 fo.102v). In 1535, the archdeacon's visitation found him to be a stipendiary priest of Gravesend (DRa/Vb4 fo.287v). A priest of this name appears in the clerical subsidy for 1536 for the first time as a priest at Cobham College, possibly the same man (Az1 fo.111v).

¹²⁷ DRb/Pwr9/127 (1534).

¹²⁸ Named as a stipendiary priest, distinguished from the two chantry priests, in the archdeacon of Rochester's visitation act book, in 1534; again named in 1535 (DRa/Vb4 fo. 274, 288v).

¹²⁹ This priest was surveyor of Dartford Priory but was also named in local wills. See footnote below.

¹³⁰ Clerical subsidy list (DRb/Az1 fo. 106). First name illegible.

¹³¹ Clerical subsidy (DRb/Az1 fo.112).

¹³² DRb/Pwr9/215 (1536).

¹³³ DRb/Pwr9/28v (1538).

¹³⁴ DRb/Pwr9/290 (1540).

¹³⁵ Dominus John Farrer of Dartford made his will in April 1541.

Richard Preston (1505)¹³⁷
Thomas Palmer, parish clerk (1504-1516)¹³⁸
John Russell (1524-5, 1527)¹³⁹
John Holyngworth (1532-1550)¹⁴⁰
Sir John Yardley, clerk (1556)¹⁴¹

Sacristans

John Hebgoode (1504)¹⁴²
Robert Payn (1525, 1529)¹⁴³
Henry Osmond (1527)¹⁴⁴
John Russell (1529)¹⁴⁵

Church wardens

Richard Hert (1465)¹⁴⁶
William Stokmede (1465)¹⁴⁷
Richard Bagshaw (1465)¹⁴⁸
Andrew Auditor (1504)¹⁴⁹
John Stone (1504)¹⁵⁰
William Jones (1504)¹⁵¹
Richard Barnard (1523)¹⁵²
Anchot Tybot (1523-4)¹⁵³
William Konor (1524)¹⁵⁴
Thomas Auditor (1524-5)¹⁵⁵
Peter Cotyer (1525, 1527)¹⁵⁶
Peter Becker (1526)¹⁵⁷
William Lownde (1526-27)¹⁵⁸
Thomas Churche (1528-9)¹⁵⁹
Richard Alexander (1528-9)¹⁶⁰
John Parykys/Pares (1530-31)¹⁶¹
William Coke (1530-31)¹⁶²

¹³⁶ Witness to will of Katherine Sampson, widow, 19th October 1499 (DRb/Pwr5/357v).

¹³⁷ PROB 11/14/218v)

¹³⁸ Palmer is named as clerk of Dartford in the archdeacon of Rochester's visitation material of September 1504 (DRa/Vb4 fo.8). He is also named in these wills: DRb/Pwr6/219 (1506); DRb/Pwr6/213 (1508); DRb/Pwr6/246 (1508); PROB 11/18/142 (May 1516).

¹³⁹ Russell is named as clerk of Dartford parish church in the archdeacon of Rochester's visitation material of 1524, 1525 and 1527 – no clerk is named in 1526 (DRb/Pa 8 pt 1 ff. 61, 113v; DRa/Vb4 ff.53); he is named in this will: DRb/Pwr8/88v (1527-8).

¹⁴⁰ Also the priory clerk, he was named in these wills: DRb/Pwr9/72v (1532); DRb/Pwr9/60v (1532-3); DRb/Pwr9/93 (1533); DRb/Pwr9/110v (1533); DRb/Pwr9/128 (1533-4); DRb/Pwr10/20 (1540); DRb/Pwr9/192v (1535); DRb/Pwr9/193v (1535); witness to John Roger of Stone in January 1536/7 (PROB 11/27/21); DRb/Pwr9/385 (1541); DRb/Pwr10/20 (1543); DRb/Pwr10/46 (1543); DRb/Pwr11/5b (1546); witness to William Cresswell gent of Sutton at Hone in 1546, his name at the bottom suggests he was also the will writer (PROB 11/31/104); witnessed will of Thomas Stanley of Wilmington, in February 1548-9 (DRb/Pwr11/107); DRb/Pwr11/71v (1549); DRb/Pwr11/108v (1550). Holyngworth acted as a parish clerk before and after the dissolution of the priory.

¹⁴¹ DRb/Pwr12/83 (1556).

¹⁴² Named as sacristan of Dartford in the archdeacon of Rochester's visitation material of September 1504 (DRa/Vb4 fo.8).

¹⁴³ Archdeacon's visitations September 1525 and 1529 (DRb/Pa 8 pt 1 fo.113v; DRa/Vb4 fo. 128).

¹⁴⁴ The archdeacon of Rochester's visitation material of 1527 (DRa/Vb4 fo.53).

¹⁴⁵ The archdeacon of Rochester's visitation act book (DRa/Vb4 fo. 128).

¹⁴⁶ License granting John Groverste permission to build chimney in churchyard (DRb/Ar 1/11 fo.41).

¹⁴⁷ DRb/Ar 1/11 fo.41.

¹⁴⁸ DRb/Ar 1/11 fo.41.

¹⁴⁹ The archdeacon of Rochester's visitation material of September 1504 (DRa/Vb4 fo.8).

¹⁵⁰ The archdeacon of Rochester's visitation material of September 1504 (DRa/Vb4 fo.8).

¹⁵¹ The archdeacon of Rochester's visitation material of September 1504 (DRa/Vb4 fo.8).

¹⁵² Archdeacon's visitations (DRb/Pa 8 pt 1 ff.8v, 61).

¹⁵³ Archdeacon's visitation September 1523 (DRb/Pa 8 pt 1 fo.8v).

¹⁵⁴ Archdeacon's visitation September 1524 (DRb/Pa 8 pt 1 fo.61).

¹⁵⁵ Archdeacon's visitations (DRb/Pa 8 pt 1 ff.61, 113v).

¹⁵⁶ The archdeacon of Rochester's visitations (DRb/Pa pt 1 fo.113v; DRa/Vb4 fo.53).

¹⁵⁷ The archdeacon's visitation (DRb/Pa 8 pt 1 fo.143v).

¹⁵⁸ The archdeacon's visitations (DRb/Pa 8 pt 1 fo.143v; DRa/Vb4 fo.53). Lownde made his will in 1530, asking for burial under the ewe tree in the churchyard (PROB 11/23/207).

¹⁵⁹ The archdeacon of Rochester's visitation act book (DRa/Vb4 ff. 53, 84, 128).

¹⁶⁰ The archdeacon of Rochester's visitation act book (DRa/Vb4 ff. 53, 84, 128).

¹⁶¹ Recorded at a visitation in Dartford parish church on 12th September 1530: Archdeacon of Rochester's visitation act book (DRa/Vb4 fo.163); and in 1531 visitation material (fo.205).

John Bratt (1532)¹⁶³
Richard Forest (1532-4)¹⁶⁴
John Byrde (1533)¹⁶⁵
Robert Derby (1534-5)¹⁶⁶
? Makepese (1535)¹⁶⁷
John Brett (1541)¹⁶⁸
John Kettle (1541)¹⁶⁹

Will writers

Richard Barnard (111) (1518, 1521)¹⁷⁰
Edward Stoughton (1525)¹⁷¹
Mater Kydwelley, notary (1528)¹⁷²
John Holyngworth (1541, 1546)¹⁷³

Priors of St. Mary Magdalene Leper Hospital, Spital Street

John Robert (1495)¹⁷⁴
Richard Frie (1517)¹⁷⁵

Inmates of the Spittlehouse

John Parker (d.1568/9)¹⁷⁶

¹⁶² Recorded at a visitation in Dartford parish church on 12th September 1530: Archdeacon of Rochester's visitation act book (DRa/Vb4 fo.163); and in 1531 visitation material.

¹⁶³ The archdeacon of Rochester's visitation act book (DRa/Vb4 fo. 240).

¹⁶⁴ The archdeacon of Rochester's visitation act book (DRa/Vb4 fo. 240, 257v, 274).

¹⁶⁵ The archdeacon of Rochester's visitation act book (DRa/Vb4 fo. 257v).

¹⁶⁶ The archdeacon of Rochester's visitation act book (DRa/Vb4 fo. 274, 288v); Darbye is named as churchwarden in a list of creditors of William Stokmede drawn up in June 1534 (DRb/Pa 9 pt 2 fo.210).

¹⁶⁷ The archdeacon's visitation (DRa/Vb4 fo.288v). First name illegible.

¹⁶⁸ A bequest of a great Bible to be set up in the church where Brett and Kettle thought best thus implies that they were churchwardens (DRb/Pwr9/385).

¹⁶⁹ See footnote above.

¹⁷⁰ DRb/Pwr7/120 (1518); DRb/Pwr7/220 (1521).

¹⁷¹ Stoughton, 'writer of this will', was the only recorded witness to the will of William Sprever in February 1524-5 (PROB 11/21/272). Sprever also left him 20d to pray for his soul. Edward was probably the son of Thomas Stokton, gentleman of Dartford, who made his will in June 1528 mentioning his son Edward Stokton (DRb/Pwr8/168v). Earlier wills show that the names Stokton and Stoughton were interchangeable; Beatrice Stoughton, widow of Thomas Stoughton of St. Nicholas Coldabbey, London, herself born and baptised in Dartford, in October 1497 made bequests to 'Dame Johanne Stoktonne my husbands daughter being nonne in the nonry of Dertforde' (PROB 11/11/273). [Note that Thomas Stoughton himself, in 1478, and Rose Pittes of Dartford, in 1470, both made bequests to Dame Jone Stokton, Thomas's daughter (PROB 11/7/23; DRb/Pwr3/64v). Rose bequeathed the little house she dwelt in to Thomas Stokton, senior, citizen and fishmonger of London, probably the nun's father. A Thomas Stokton junior was one of her witnesses and feoffees, perhaps Edward Stoughton's father who made his will in 1528. In 1528 Edward was bequeathed by his father all his household stuff, and with his brother Peter lands in Dartford, Wrikelmershe, Kidbrooke, Deptford, Sandwich, and a lease of lands in the London suburb of St. Katherine's. There was another brother, Richard, who was to receive £40 over 10 years from the profits of these lands.

¹⁷² A witness to the will of Thomas Stokton gentleman of Dartford in June 1528 (DRb/Pwr8/168v).

¹⁷³ DRb/Pwr9/385 (1541); in January 1544-5 he seems to have been the witness who wrote the will of William Creswell, gentleman, of Sutton at Hone, as his name appears at the bottom (PROB 11//31/104); DRb/Pwr1 1/5b (1546). See his entry under 'Priory Clerks'.

¹⁷⁴ A witness to the will of William Quoyf of Speldhurst, in January 1494-5 (DRb/Pwr5/261).

¹⁷⁵ Richard Frie 'pater' of the leper hospital of Dartford was accused of absenteeism and consorting with women, at the detections of Dartford deanery held 10th July 1517 by the bishop (DRb/Pa 6 fo. c.240).

¹⁷⁶ 'John Parker one of the Spyttehouse' was buried 6th January 1568/9 (Dartford parish register: Rochester Study Centre P110/1/1).

Dartford Priory

President friars/priors

John Sill (1396)¹⁷⁷
William Cetner (1519)¹⁷⁸
Dr. Robert Stroddel (1536-9)¹⁷⁹

Friars¹⁸⁰

John of Northampton ? (1354-8)¹⁸¹
Walter Durant ? (1370-1401)¹⁸²
William Crowelond ? (1442)¹⁸³
William Enstod (1464)¹⁸⁴
Hugh Fabri (1479, 1482, 1504)¹⁸⁵
Andrew (1500)¹⁸⁶
Thomas Clarke (1513)¹⁸⁷
William Seble (1519)¹⁸⁸

Secular chaplains in Dartford Priory

Christopher Martyndale (1513)¹⁸⁹
Christopher Northynden (1519)¹⁹⁰

Clerks to the prioress

William Wyggan (1506-25)¹⁹¹
John Holyngworth (1532-39?)¹⁹²

¹⁷⁷ Commissioned with Robert Grape, vicar of Dartford, and others, by the bishop of Rochester, to appoint a new Stanpit chantry chaplain (John Dunkin, *The History and Antiquities of Dartford*, p.122 note – citing episcopal register Botelsham, fo.90).

¹⁷⁸ A witness to the will of William English, who sought burial in the priory, in April 1519 (DRb/Pwr7/162v). See A.B. Emden, *A survey of Dominicans in England*, p.466: William Seton (Ceyton) - York convent ordained subdeacon 9th June 1487; deacon 1st March 1488, priest 13th June 1489; prior of Leicester convent in 1505. The same?

¹⁷⁹ *L. & P Hen VIII* xi, 1322, 1323 Formerly prior of the London Blackfriars until John Hilsey removed him in 1536 and sent him to Dartford where he assumed the position of president. He paid Cromwell £4 to be confirmed as president for life (*L. & P.* xiv (2), 782) He received a pension of 100 s. a year at the dissolution, and was still receiving this in 1556, according to Pole's Pension Book His will, dated 1553, indicates that he was by then vicar of Sutton at Hone (PROB 11/36/119v). Other Sutton wills show that he vicar there as early as 1543.

¹⁸⁰ The *Valor Ecclesiasticus* says there were three friars in 1535 but does not name them (*Valor*, i, p.120). A clerical subsidy assessment list of 1513, recorded in the consistory court act book, states that the president and friars of Dartford received an annual stipend, but they were not assessed to pay any tax (DRb/Pa5 pt 2 fo.102).

¹⁸¹ A friar and surveyor of the building works between these dates. Perhaps, he was a Dominican friar.

¹⁸² Durant was a priory attorney for most of these years. Was he was a Dominican friar, and of Dartford?

¹⁸³ This Friar Preacher was ratified as 'warden' of St. Edmund's chapel in 1442. It seems logical that he was also a friar of Dartford Priory

¹⁸⁴ A beneficiary of the will of Agnes Lynsey of Dartford, in June 1464 (PROB 11/5/46). Not in A.B. Emden, *A survey of Dominicans in England*.

¹⁸⁵ In a letter of 25th September 1479 to Sir William Stonor, owner of a manor in Horton and patron of the chantry there, Richard Page, patron of the vicarage of Sutton at Hone, recommended Friar Hugh Fabri of Dartford Priory as the next chantry priest at Horton, praising his virtues as a priest (PRO SC1/46 no.194). A further letter of August 1482 records Hugh Fabri's departure from that living (PRO SC1/46 no.192). William Ladd of Dartford left 3s 4d to the friar Sir Hewe Fabri (not specifying a convent but we may assume it was still Dartford) to pray for him and those Ladd was bound to pray for, in his will of November 1504 (DRb/Pwr6/115v). Not in A.B. Emden, *A survey of Dominicans in England*.

¹⁸⁶ Singled out in the will of William Milett, September 1500 (PROB 11/12/138).

¹⁸⁷ 'Canon' Thomas Clarke, 'canon of Dartford', receiving an annual stipend of 40s. for work in Wilmington parish, was assessed to pay 4s. clerical subsidy, in 1513 (Rochester consistory court act book DRb/Pa5 pt 2 fo.102). Probably a friar of the priory.

¹⁸⁸ With the president friar, witnessed the will of William English of Dartford, who sought burial in the priory, in 1519 (DRb/Pwr7/162v). Not in A.B. Emden, *A survey of Dominicans in England*.

¹⁸⁹ Dominus Christopher Martyndale was a chaplain in the monastery of Dartford, who received a stipend of 40s pa for work in Wilmington parish, on which he was assessed to pay 4s clerical subsidy, in 1513 (Rochester consistory court act book DRb/Pa5 pt 2 fo.102). He was instituted rector of North Cray, in 1521, which post he still held when he signed the renunciation of papal authority in 1534 (PRO E36/64 p.76). He died in 1541, as we learn from the register entry recording the appointment of his successor (L.L. Duncan, 'The renunciation of the papal authority by the clergy of west Kent, 1534', *AC*, 22 (1897), pp.293-309 at p.295).

¹⁹⁰ William English named Sir Christopher Northynden, priest, as a priest at Dartford Priory, asking him to sing for his soul for a year unless he left the monastery, in his will of 1519 (DRb/Pwr7/162v). Northynden may have been a secular chantry priest.

¹⁹¹ See note 92 above.

¹⁹² DRb/Pwr9/72v (1532); DRb/Pwr9/60v (1532-3); DRb/Pwr9/93 (1533); DRb/Pwr9/110v (1533); DRb/Pwr9/128 (1533-4); DRb/Pwr10/20 (1540); DRb/Pwr9/192v (1535); DRb/Pwr9/193v (1535); DRb/Pwr9/385 (1541); DRb/Pwr10/20 (1543); DRb/Pwr10/46 (1543); DRb/Pwr11/5b (1546); DRb/Pwr11/71v (1549); DRb/Pwr11/108v (1550). Holyngworth acted as a parish

John Richardson (c.1539)¹⁹³

Wardens

William Clapitus (warden and overseer of the house founded for habitation by nuns by 1349)¹⁹⁴

Friar John de Woderove (warden of the house of nuns, 1356)¹⁹⁵

Surveyor of building works

Friar John de Woderove (until 1354)¹⁹⁶

Friar John of Northampton (1354-8)¹⁹⁷

Attorneys¹⁹⁸

Michael Skillyng (1368, 1370-71, 1373-5, 1379-82)¹⁹⁹

Walter Perle (1368)²⁰⁰

Friar Walter Durant (1370-71, 1373-5, 1377-82, 1384, 1388-93, 1397-8; 1400-1401)²⁰¹

Roger Digg (1370-71)²⁰²

Nicholas Heryng (1371, 1377-8)²⁰³

John Videlu (1371, 1375)²⁰⁴

Thomas Shardelow (1373-5)²⁰⁵

John Bretton (1384)²⁰⁶

William Makenade (1388-93, 1397-8, 1403-6)²⁰⁷

John Martyn (1400-1401, 1403-13, 1425-7)²⁰⁸

John Deppyng (1406-9; 1425-7)²⁰⁹

John de Yerburgh (1410-13)²¹⁰

Robert Kendale (1415-18)²¹¹

William Gunerby (1415-18)²¹²

clerk before and after the dissolution of the priory. He is named in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* as a rent collector for the priory (*Valor*, i, p.120)

¹⁹³ Received a pension of 60s per annum for having been clerk of the monastery, in 1556 (Cardinal Pole's Pension Book).

¹⁹⁴ *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1348-50*, p.271.

¹⁹⁵ Named as such in October 1356 when commissioned by king to keep certain lands to use about building the house and church of the nuns (*Cal. Pat. Rolls 1354-8*, p.466). He was ordained priest at the Derby Dominican convent in 5/4/1337; D.Th. Cambridge inc. 1349 when Edward III gave £20 for his inception (PRO E403/347 m.2); King's Confessor appointed 1349, vacated July 1376 - he was envoy from Edward III to the Pope in 1354 (*Cal. Pap. Lets*, iii, 615,620); in 1355 he was granted an annuity of 40 marks for life (*Cal. Pat. Rolls 1354-8*, p.241); he was the prior of King's Langley, Hertfordshire, and warden of the house of nuns at Dartford, in 1356 (*Cal. Pat. Rolls 1354-8*, pp. 444, 466) having been superintendent of the building works up to 1353 (VCH, *Kent*, ii, p.182); received a grant for the sustenance of his household from the king in 1360 (*Cal. Pat. Rolls 1358-61*, p. 432); his debts were pardoned in 1376 in which year he died (*Cal. Pat. Rolls 1374-7*, pp.295, 322) (A.B. Emden, *A survey of Dominicans in England*, p.486).

¹⁹⁶ Friar John de Woderove, king's confessor, was succeeded by Friar John of Northampton in March 1353-4 (VCH, *Kent*, ii, p.182).

¹⁹⁷ Succeeded John de Woderove (VCH, *Kent*, ii, p.182. He was still surveyor when granted 10 mks pa for life by the king, in April 1358 (*Cal. Pat. Rolls 1358-61*, p.30).

¹⁹⁸ The entries in the Patent Rolls usually state that the prioress has licence to appoint attorneys to act for her to labour about pleas in any courts, because she was a 'recluse' and could not do so in person. The prioress employed men who are frequently found serving on different kinds of commission, often together. They were hired for one, two or three years at a time, and were often themselves granted licence to appoint attorneys to act in their stead.

¹⁹⁹ *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1367-70*, pp.161, 357; *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1370-4*, pp.75, 336; *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1374-7*, p.42; *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1377-81*, p.402. Dead by June 1385 (*Cal. Pat. Rolls 1381-5*, p.577).

²⁰⁰ *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1367-70*, p.161.

²⁰¹ *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1367-70*, p.357; *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1370-4*, pp.75, 336; *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1374-7*, p.42; *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1377-81*, pp.73, 402; *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1381-5*, p.370; *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1385-9*, p.377; *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1388-92*, p.371; *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1396-9*, p.69; *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1399-1401*, p.398.

²⁰² *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1367-70*, p.357.

²⁰³ *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1370-4*, p.75; *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1377-81*, p.73.

²⁰⁴ *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1370-4*, p.75; *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1374-7*, p.42.

²⁰⁵ *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1370-4*, p.336; *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1374-7*, p.42.

²⁰⁶ *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1381-5*, p.370.

²⁰⁷ *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1385-9*, p.377; *Pat. Rolls 1388-92*, p.371; *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1396-9*, p.69; *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1401-5*, p.312.

²⁰⁸ *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1399-1401*, p.398; *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1401-5*, p.312; *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1405-8*, p.265; *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1408-13*, p.186; *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1422-9*, p.280. He also served as a Kent JP in the decade from 1411 (*Cal. Pat. Rolls 1408-13*, p.481 et passim.).

²⁰⁹ *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1405-8*, p.265; *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1422-9*, p.280. He was a bachelor of laws and a notary.

²¹⁰ *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1408-13*, p.186.

²¹¹ *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1413-16*, p.302.

²¹² *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1413-16*, p.302.

Auditors

Richard Caumbray (1357)²¹³
Michael Skillyng (steward, surveyor and auditor - 1364)²¹⁴
William de Nessefield (steward, surveyor and auditor - 1366)²¹⁵
John Sedley (1521/2-1531)²¹⁶
William Sedley (c.1539)²¹⁷

Stewards (senechsals)

John de Berland (steward and surveyor, 1358)²¹⁸
Michael Skillyng (steward, surveyor and auditor, 1364)²¹⁹
William de Nessefield (steward, surveyor and auditor, 1366)²²⁰
Sir Reginald Bray (d.1503)²²¹
Sir John Shaw
Hugh Denys
Sir John Heron
Sir Robert Dymmoch (resigned c.1534-5)²²²
Thomas Cromwell (1535-9)²²³

Receiver General/Surveyor

John de Berland (steward and surveyor - 1358)²²⁴
Michael Skillyng (steward, surveyor and auditor - 1364)²²⁵
William de Nessefield (steward, surveyor and auditor - 1366)²²⁶
John Martyn (surveyor of all lands and receiver general - 1437)²²⁷
William Wygga (priory clerk, supervisor and receiver general - 1506-26)²²⁸
Thomas Maykyn (surveyor - 1531-7)²²⁹

²¹³ Nessefield and Caumbray were appointed auditors of the issues and profits received from the priory's manors, in February 1356/7 (VCH, *Kent*, ii, p.182)

²¹⁴ Appointed to all three offices May 1364 – *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1361-4*, p.494.

²¹⁵ Appointed to all three offices February 1365-6 – *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1364-7*, pp.225, 237.

²¹⁶ He signed the head of the Priory rental of 1521-2 (London Society of Antiquaries Ms. 564, m.1), in this capacity. The inscription tells us he was also one of the king's auditors (at the Exchequer). He probably still exercised this office in 1531, in which year he made his will, which includes numerous mentions of Dartford Priory. This will also tells us that he was an auditor of the king's exchequer, a citizen and stationer of London, and late warden of the 'Crafte' of stationers. Furthermore, the nun of Dartford, Dorothy Sedley, was his daughter (PROB 11/24/149). He had also been a stipendiary auditor employed by the Rochester Bridge wardens; in the account of 1500, he is named as auditor with responsibility for inspecting the books and drawing up final annual accounts, for which he was paid 15s with expenses (Nigel Yates & James M. Gibson, eds, *Traffic and Politics: the construction and management of Rochester Bridge, AD 43-1993* (Woodbridge, 1994), p.103). He worked for one other local monastery, which he mentioned in his will, in 1504 he was appointed one of the two auditors for Rochester Cathedral Priory (Anne Oakley, 'Rochester Priory, 1185-1540', in Nigel Yates, ed., *Faith and Fabric: a history of Rochester Cathedral 604-1994* (Woodbridge & Rochester, 1996), p.46).

²¹⁷ Received an annuity for having been Priory auditor, in 1556 (Pole's Pension Book). He was son of John Sedley (above) and brother of Martin Sedley and Sister Dorothy Sedley.

²¹⁸ Appointed November 1358 – *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1358-61*, p.125.

²¹⁹ Appointed to all three offices May 1364 – *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1361-4*, p.494. He was a king's attorney, a commissioner and a J.P. in Hants and Wilts.

²²⁰ Appointed to all three offices February 1365-6 – *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1364-7*, pp.225, 237. He also served on commissions with Skillyng.

²²¹ DNB.

²²² These were named by the prioress in a letter to Cromwell in 1534 as past stewards who were members of the King's Council (*L. & P. Hen. VIII*, vii, 1634). Dymmoch was high steward in 1535 (*Valor*, i, p.120).

²²³ At the request of the prioress Elizabeth Cressener and for which he received the fee of £6 13s 4d (VCH, *Kent*, ii, p.186; *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, vii, 1634; xiv(2), 782).

²²⁴ Appointed November 1358 – *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1358-61*, p.125.

²²⁵ Appointed to all three offices May 1364 – *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1361-4*, p.494.

²²⁶ Appointed to all three offices February 1365-6 – *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1364-7*, pp.225, 237. He also served on commissions with Skillyng.

²²⁷ VCH, *Kent*, ii, p.186 (PRO Anct D. A. 3739); a tenant mentioned in undated Dartford rental in Arundel Ms. 61, ff.2-12.

²²⁸ See footnote under St. Edmund's Chapel.

²²⁹ This priest may have been the priory surveyor as early as 1531, when the priory auditor John Sedley asked for the surveyor to perform a chantry in the priory. Sedley indicates that the surveyor was a priest but not one of the friars (PROB 11/24/149). The first named reference to Maykyn in the parish was as a witness to the will of William Parker, yeoman, in 1534, calling him clerk but not priory surveyor (DRb/Pwr9/134v). He was named as priory surveyor in the will of John Bruer, vicar of Dartford, of which he was an executor, in January 1534-5 (DRb/Pwr9/175v). He was named as a priest in Dartford in the clerical subsidy list of October 1536 (DRb/Az1 fo.112). In January 1536-7 Maykyn was granted five marks annually, as overseer, from a 'selda' in West Cheap (VCH, *Kent*, ii, p.186). The office descriptions 'surveyor' and 'overseer' seem sufficiently close to identify the two with each other, unless Maykyn took over from Martin Sedley as overseer after 1535 (note the overlap of dates). Maykyn was also a tenant of Dartford

Martin Sedley (1535)²³⁰
William Sydenham (1539)²³¹

Other officials, surveyors, etc.

William Sprener (1506-25)²³²
Richard Weller (1521-2)²³³
John Holyngworth, rent-collector and clerk (1532-39?)²³⁴

Under stewards

William Roper, esq., steward of the manorial court of Colwinston (1529)²³⁵

Other Priory servants

Henry Foorde (1459)²³⁶
William (1524)²³⁷
Robert Hakest alias Hawes - servant and baker to the Prioress and Convent (1530)²³⁸

Priory, in November 1544 John Beer was granted former priory property in Dartford including that formerly held by Thomas Maykyn, clerk (*L & P Hen VIII*, xix (2), no 690 (15)).

²³⁰ VCH, *Kent*, ii, p 186 *Valor*, i, p.120. He received a fee of £8. He was son of John Sedley, auditor.

²³¹ VCH, *Kent*, ii, p 186 In 1539, he received an annuity of 10 mks, potherbs for himself and his servant, and the usual overseer's chamber within the precincts of the monastery. He was already in the employ of the prioress in the early 1530s; he showed the authentic seal of Prioress Elizabeth Cressener and acted on her behalf, as sole surviving executor of the will of William English of Dartford, at a session of the Rochester consistory court held in Dartford Parish Church, on 17th April 1532 (probate register: DRb/Pwr7/162v, consistory court act book: DRb/Pa 9 pt 2 fo.113).

²³² William Sprever ('yoman' in his will) was a prominent local citizen. He was left a white horse saddle and bridle in the will of William Mylett in 1500 (PROB 11/12/138). Sprever shared the examining of the 1507-8 Dartford Priory rental with William Wyggan, the supervisor of Priory lands, as the headings indicate, so he must have worked in some way for the priory (Arundel Ms.61 ff 13). In 1518 Sprever witnessed the will of John Lambe of Stonehill in the parish of Wilmington, in which Wyggan, who was also the Vicar of Wilmington, acted as overseer (DRb/Pwr7/119). In 1519 William English of Dartford asked for burial in the priory church where it best pleased the lady prioress; his will was witnessed by William Sprever, Friar William Seble and the president of the Dartford friars, William Cetner (DRb/Pwr7/162v). Sprever's dedication to, and involvement in, the life of Dartford Priory is evident in his own will of February 1524/5 (PROB 11/21/272) in which he asked for:

my body to be buried in the south Ile of the church of the monastery of Dartford behynde Willi^am Englysshe yf it so plesse my lady pnoesse and hir susters to graunt me lycence thereto and yf not in sum. other place in the church yerde or Cloyster of the same monastery whereas it shall please them to assign hit.

He left his bequest of 20d for tithes forgotten not to the high altar of the parish church but to that of the monastery in Dartford, and a greater sum of 10s to the prioress of Dartford, Elizabeth Cressener, for her pains as his Overseer. He left sums of 3s 4d to each of the Rood light, the light of Our Lady 'which the servantes kepe' and the light before the image of St. Erasmus, all in the priory church. He was one of the few Dartford willmakers to refer to the Jesus Mass - he asked for the tapers before the Rood and St. Erasmus to burn every Friday during this mass in the priory, which had been set up by Mylett's will in 1500. Sprever left property in Overy Street across the River Darent to the prioress and convent on condition that he 'be taken amonge other their good benefactours into the daily suffrages and prayers of their Religion ... forever', a clear demonstration of the value he placed on the monastic liturgy. Sprever left a further sum of 26s 8d to be distributed at his burial and month's mind at the discretion of the prioress among her sisters, brothers and poor people. He named his senior colleague Wyggan as an executor. Sprever had London contacts, his other two executors being a merchant tailor and a barber of London. He may have been the William Sprever, son of Richard Sprever of Cobham, who bequeathed 6s 8d to the prioress and convent of Dartford Priory to pray for him, in his will of September 1516 (DRb/Pwr7/75).

²³³ Priory rental 1521-2 (London Soc. Ant. Ms. 564). He is named at the top of m.7, the beginning of the long section dealing with priory property in Dartford, Wilmington, Sutton, Crayford, Bexley, North Cray and Southfleet..

²³⁴ DRb/Pwr9/72v (1532); DRb/Pwr9/60v (1532-3); DRb/Pwr9/93 (1533); DRb/Pwr9/110v (1533); DRb/Pwr9/128 (1533-4); DRb/Pwr10/20 (1540); DRb/Pwr9/192v (1535); DRb/Pwr9/193v (1535); DRb/Pwr9/385 (1541); DRb/Pwr10/20 (1543); DRb/Pwr10/46 (1543); DRb/Pwr11/5b (1546); DRb/Pwr11/71v (1549); DRb/Pwr11/108v (1550). Holyngworth acted as a parish clerk before and after the dissolution of the priory. He is named in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* as a rent collector for the priory (*Valor*, i, p.120).

²³⁵ VCH, *Kent*, p.186. He received an annuity of 40s..

²³⁶ Probate of his will, naming him as a servant in the abbey of nuns of Dartford, was granted to his executor John Berford, 15th January 1459-60: DRb/Pa 3 fo.398v.

²³⁷ Petronell, daughter of John Weaver, widower, was accused of committing some sexual misdemeanour with William, servant of the priory, at a session of the archdeaconry court held in January 1523/4 (DRb/Pa 8 pt 1 fo.35v).

²³⁸ His own will: DRb/Pwr8/238v.

Appendix Three

Dartford Priory Manuscripts: Descriptions and contents

Oxford Bodleian Douce Ms 322

Description

This manuscript, now bound in eighteenth-century covers, consists of one hundred and two parchment sheets (foliated i, 1-101) and one end paper (fo.102) of uniform size 275mm x 180mm. These are in good condition with no holes or much sign of wear. As mentioned, there is one hand, although it adopts different styles on ff1v-9, ff.10-17, 18-20r and ff.20v-101v. Illuminations and coloured lettering are uniform throughout. These consist of modest initial capitals in blue, red and gold decorated with flowing lines and delicate flowers and foliage drawn up and down the margin in white, red, green, murray, blue and yellow. Rubrics are in red. There are a few illustrations. A small shield bearing the Baron family arms is drawn at the top of fo.10. The initial capital 'p' of 'Parce michi domine' on fo.10 is a blue letter against a gold background; within the letter itself is drawn a picture of Job 'in hys tribulacion lying on the Donghyll' naked. God appears above him in a red sky as a face within a blue sphere surrounded by gold stars. God has a gold halo and rays of yellow light shine out from this sphere.¹ On fo.15 there is a picture at the head of the text 'By a forest syd walkyng as I went ...' within a box 35mm x 70mm; this shows a man resting in a wood with the woeful bird of the poem delivering him the message: 'Parce michi domine'. On fo.19v is a picture of a death figure within a box 80mm x 60mm. A cadavre/skeleton holding a spear, standing on green grass against a decorated red background, is surrounded by the word 'death' written out nineteen times with various spellings.² This picture is followed by the *ars moriendi* texts in this manuscript. A quartered shield on fo.78 incorporates the arms of Baron and Knollys. William Baron married into the Knollys family of Hertfordshire and was thus related to another nun of Dartford, Beatrice Knolles.³

The text is written in ruled boxes double columned throughout, except for the contents and Calendar. It is neatly done throughout, and there are no marginal annotations. Abbreviation is moderate.

Contents⁴

All the texts are in English, unless otherwise stated.

Folio	Verse/ Prose	Text	Source/Author ⁵	Modern edition ⁶
i		Ownership inscription		
1v		Contents list: 'These bene conteyned in thys Booke'		
2-7v	V	Calendar	Lydgate ('Thys ys a kalendare of englyssh made in Baladys by dan John Lydegat monke of Bury whyche ys a fayre prayer. And hit ys made after the forme of a compote manuell')	Printed from Rawlinson Ms B.408 in H.N. MacCracken, ed., <i>The Minor Poems of John Lydgate Pt 1</i> , EETS es107 (London, 1911), pp.363-76.
8	V	'Jhesu thy swetnesse ...' (Christ's love, Passion, the Redemption)	[Of northern origin, appearing in fourteen other manuscripts (C. Brown, <i>Lyrics of the Fourteenth Century</i> (Oxford, 1924, p.262).]	K. Horstmann, ed., <i>Minor Poems of the Vernon MS. Pt 1</i> , EETS os 98 (London, 1898), pp.45-8.

¹ A photograph of this page is reproduced in H.D. Traill & J.S. Mann, eds, *Social England*, ii (London, 1902), p.126.

² This picture is reproduced in Rosemary Woolf, *The English Religious Lyric in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1968), facing p.328.

³ See chapter two.

⁴ See also *Catalogue of the Printed Books and Manuscripts bequeathed by Francis Douce, Esq. To the Bodleian Library* (Oxford, 1840); *IMEP*, iv (Cambridge, 1987), pp.74-84; David N. Bell, *What nuns read: books and libraries in medieval English nunneries*, pp.132-3; F. Madan, *Summary Catalogue of Western Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library*, iv (Oxford, 1897), pp.593-5.

⁵ In square brackets if not attributed in the manuscript.

⁶ Not necessarily printed from Douce Ms 322.

8v	V	<i>Canticus amoris: Quia amore languet</i> ('In a tabernacle of a toure/As I stode musyng on the mone'). Mary suffers because of man's rebellion; she loves as a mother.	[Of northern origin, appearing in seven other fifteenth-century manuscripts, amongst which Douce 322 is no longer thought to be the superior (as Carleton Brown argued), being southernised (Felicity Riddy, 'The provenance of <i>Quia amore languet</i> ', <i>Review of English Studies</i> , ns 18 (1967), pp.429-33 at p.429 n.4, p.430).]	Printed from Douce 322 in Carleton Brown, ed., <i>Religious Lyrics of the Fourteenth Century</i> (Oxford, 1924), pp.234-7. Versions from three other of the eight manuscripts have also been edited (listed by Felicity Riddy, 'The provenance of <i>Quia amore languet</i> ', <i>Review of English Studies</i> , ns 18 (1967), pp.429-33 at p.429 n.4).
9v	V	'Now now Ihesu for thy circumcisioun ...' (prayer, concentrating on Christ's sufferings for humanity, with emotional effect)	Anon.	This is the final <i>Oracio</i> section of a longer lyric – 'Ihu, that alle this worlde hast wroghte ...' – printed in Carleton Brown, ed., <i>Religious Lyrics of the Fifteenth Century</i> (Oxford, 1939), pp.135-6.
10	V	<i>Pety Job, or Parce mihi Domine</i> ('Here begynneth the nyne lessons of the Dirige whych Job made in hys tribulacion, lying on the Donghyll, and ben declared more opynly to lewde mennes understanding by a solempne, worthy, and discrete clerke, Rychard Hampole, and ys cleped pety Job, and ys full profitable to stere synners to compunccion.'	This is here attributed to Rolle (wrongly, according to Horstmann - C. Horstmann, ed., <i>Yorkshire Writers: Richard Rolle of Hampole and his followers</i> , ii (London, 1896), p.xliiii).	Printed from Douce 322 in J. Kail, ed., <i>Twenty-six Political and other Poems from Oxford Mss Digby 102 & Douce 322 Pt 1</i> , EETS os 124 (London, 1904), pp.120-43.
15	V	'Here begynneth a trefyse of Parce michi domine/ By a forest syde walkyng as I went ...'	See above	Printed from Douce 322 in J. Kail, ed., <i>Twenty-six Political and other Poems</i> , pp.143-9. Printed from Bodley Ms 596 in Carleton Brown, ed., <i>Religious Lyrics of the Fifteenth Century</i> , pp.208-15.
17	P	'These ben the sevyn dedely synnes' (confession based on the sins)	[<i>The Good Confession</i> (Joliffe C.21: David N. Bell, <i>What nuns read</i> , p.132). Attributed Rolle (<i>IMEP</i> , iv, p.74)]	
18	P/V	Latin rubric: 'Hec sex observanda sunt omni Christiani in extremis solutio debiti ...' English verse: 'Every man and women hath grette nede/That be of age or that they deye' (six things to take heed of, such as sin, the importance of prayer, rejecting the things of the world)	Unidentified	
19	P	'A descripcion of feythe hope and Charyte/Feythe ys a knowledge yevyn to us ...' (very brief)	Unattributed	Printed complete in <i>IMEP</i> , iv, p.75.
19v	P	'Thorough two thyns principally may a man knowe whether he be meke or no ...' (very brief)	Unattributed.	Printed complete in <i>IMEP</i> , iv, p.75.
19v	V	'Sythe that ye lyst to be my costes.../O wordely folke averteth and take hede/What vengeaunce and punycioun/God shall take after ye be dede' (verse meditation on mortality, transience, judgement: 'Lerne for to dye ...')	[John Lydgate] A rubric says 'Thyse balades that thus be wreten here be take owe off the book of John Lucas ...'. MacCracken says Lucas was a scribe, who wrote BL Sloane Ms 1212 which	Printed from Douce Ms 322 without the rubric, in H.N. MacCracken, ed., <i>The Minor Poems of John Lydgate Pt 2</i> , EETS os 192 (London, 1934), pp.655-7.

			contains Lydgate's verse. He says that, with the exception of the first stanza, this verse comes from Lydgate's <i>Fall of Princes</i> (H.N. MacCracken, ed., <i>The Minor Poems of John Lydgate Pt 1</i> , p.xiv).	
20	P	'Here seweth the fyfte Chapytre of a tretyse called Orilogium sapiencie in maner of a Dialog and treteth howe we shall lerne to dye. How the Disciple of everlastyng wysdom shall kunne to dye for the love of Jhesu'.	[Extract from <i>Treatise of the Seven Points of True Love and Everlasting Wisdom</i> (English translation and rearrangement of Henry Suso's <i>Horologium Sapientiae</i>)]	The complete English version of <i>Horologium Sapientiae</i> is printed from Douce Ms 114 (incorporating the chapter which appears by itself in Douce Ms 322) in K. Horstmann, ed., 'Orologium Sapientiae or The Seven Poyntes of Trewe Wisdom, aus MS. Douce 114', <i>Anglia: Zeit für Englische Philologie</i> , 10 (1888), pp.324-389 (see pp.357-65)
25v	P	'Here seweth a chapitle taken oute of a book cleped toure of all toures and techeth a man for to dye' (on the 'lerne to dye' theme)	[An extract from an English translation of Friar Lorens d'Orléans's <i>Somme le Roy</i> (IMEP, iv, p.76).]	cf. Another English translation of <i>Somme le Roy</i> : W. Nelson Francis, ed., <i>The Book of Vices and Virtues: a fourteenth century English translation of the Somme le Roy of Lorens d'Orléans</i> , EETS 217 (London, 1942) (relevant chapter on pp.68-71)
26v	P	'Here begynneth the Booke of Crafte of Dying' (a prologue and six chapters, with a table of contents on fo.27)	[Attributed to Rolle by Tanner, but in fact an English version of a Latin tract <i>De arte moriendi</i> (Horstmann, <i>Yorkshire Writers</i> , ii, p.406)]	Edited from various manuscripts (but principally Rawlinson Ms C.894) in C. Horstmann, ed., <i>Yorkshire Writers: Richard Rolle of Hampole and his followers</i> , ii (London, 1896), pp.406-20.
39	P	'Here ... begynneth a tretyse of gostly batayle'	[There are similarities to a shorter tract of the same name which makes up part of <i>The Pore Caitiff</i> , which may amount to a source, along with what Horstmann finds to be 'other ill-connected ingredients' (Horstmann, <i>Yorkshire Writers</i> , ii, p.420).]	Edited from various manuscripts (but principally Harley Ms 1706) in C. Horstmann, ed., <i>Yorkshire Writers: Richard Rolle of Hampole and his followers</i> , ii (London, 1896), pp.420-36.
52v	P	'Here begynneth a laddre of foure rongys by the whyche ladder men mowe wele clymbe to heven'	[A ME translation variously attributed to Adam the Carthusian of the <i>Scala Claustralium</i> of Guigo II, 9 th prior of the Grande Chartreuse, which appears in only one other MS other than Harley 1706 (Hodgson (1955), p.100; IMEP, iv, p.78)]	Edited from CUL Ms Ff. Vi 33, with variants from Douce 322 in P. Hodgson, ed., <i>Deonise ad divinite and other treatises on contemplative prayer related to the Cloud of Unknowing</i> , EETS os 231 (Oxford, 1955), pp.100-117.
62	P	[Treatise on the eucharist] 'Furste when ye Receive oure lorde in fourme of brede ye resceyve .v. partyes ...'	'Seynt Albert the Bysshop seythe these wordes (fo.62)' [a 13 th century Dominican]	Not edited.
62v	P	[Short Latin text]: 'Aromata que erit maria magdalena secundum Magistrum Adonum Carthusiensem ...'	Adam the Carthusian (only known in this and Harley Ms 1706)	Not edited.
62v	P	[Six masters on tribulation] 'Here begynneth a lytell shorte treyse that telleth how there were syx masteres	[Ascribed to Adam the Carthusian by John Bale and Tanner	Note that this and the next two texts also appear together in other manuscripts, including Rawlinson Ms

		assembled togeder and asked what thyngys they myght best speke of that myght please god and were most profitable to the peple. And all they were accorded to speke of tribulacion' (tells what each master said in turn; <i>IMEP</i> , iv, p.79 says it is an exposition of Psalm 26)	(David N. Bell, <i>What nuns read</i> , p.132; Horstmann, <i>Yorkshire Writers: Richard Rolle of Hampole and his followers</i> , ii, p.389)]	C.894, with which Douce 322 shares other material. ⁷ All three are edited successively in C. Horstmann, ed., <i>Yorkshire Writers</i> , ii, pp.389-406.
63v	P	[Short Latin text]: 'Nota de paciencia infirmitatis'	Attributed in text to Adam the Carthusian	See above.
64	P	'Here sueth a prologe upon the xij prophetis and euangelistes of tribulacion' (in 12 chapters)	[A translation of the <i>De XII utilitatibus tribulationis</i> (ascribed to Peter of Blois) derived from an older translation probably by Rolle (Horstmann, <i>Yorkshire Writers: Richard Rolle of Hampole and his followers</i> , ii, p.389); the translation has also sometimes been attributed to Adam the Carthusian (David N. Bell, <i>What nuns read</i> , p.132)]	See above.
78	P	'Here bene the xij Chapitres whyche Richard Hampole the Eremyte made howe that a man shulde lyve in contemplacion and in meditation and in other vertuose lyvyng . And after lyfe to come to the lyfe everlastyng and dwelle with god in lys of hevене'	A translated version of Rolle's <i>De emendatio vitae</i> also known as <i>De emendatio peccatoris</i> (as it is called in Douce 322 (<i>IMEP</i> , iv, p.81).	For an edition of a different translation of Rolle's text, see Ralph Harvey, ed., <i>The Fire of Love and the Mending of Life or The Rule of Living</i> , EETS os 106 (London, 1896), pp.105-131.
94	P	'Meditatio Sancti Augustini: Seynt Austyn the holy doctor techeth thorough declaracion of holy wryte that the synfull man for noo synne falle in despeyre For more ys the mercy of god ...' (a repeated refrain 'Miserere mei' in red ink)	[This is a translation, possibly by Rolle, of a Latin text falsely ascribed to St. Augustine (Horstmann, <i>Yorkshire Writers</i> , ii, p.377)]	Edited from Harley Ms 1706 in C. Horstmann, ed., <i>Yorkshire Writers</i> , ii, pp.377-80.
97	P	'How a man or a woman of sympull kunnyng shall make hys prayer to god almyhty' (the last third of this text is missing from Douce 322 because a folio is missing after fo.97; the missing text is still present in Harley Ms 1706 ff.83v-84r).	Not attributed.	Not edited.
98	P	[Confession of St. Brandon, drawing on the seven deadly sins] (the beginning of this text was on the missing folio after fo.97, but it may be identified from the contents page, and the complete text is found in Harley Ms 1706, ff.84-5).	St. Brandon (perhaps the Irish abbot (d.573) who was a friend of Columba; or St. Brandon the Navigator (c.486-c.575), abbot of Clonfert in western Ireland (David Hugh Farmer, <i>The Oxford Dictionary of Saints</i> (Oxford, 1978), p.54).	It appears in a total of five manuscripts and there are two editions, all listed in R.E. Lewis et al., <i>The Index of Printed Middle English Prose</i> (New York, 1985), no.311.
98v	P	[Confession based on the Ten Commandments]: 'O thow hygh incomprehensyble increate and	Not attributed.	Not edited.

⁷ Douce Ms 322, Harley Ms 1706, Rawlinson Ms C.894, Ms Reg. 17 C XVIII and Oxford Corpus Christi College Ms 220 all contain the two treatises on tribulation, the *Book of the Craft of Dying* and *A Treatise of Ghostly Battle* (J. Ayto & A. Barratt, eds, *Aelred of Rievaulx's De Institutione Inclusarum*, EETS os 287 (Oxford, 1984), p.xxv.

		everlastyng trinite the alone I shulde have worschyped ...'		
98v	P	[Confession drawing on the five senses]: 'Thow hygh excellent lord god lowly to the I knowleche that my fyve wyttes I have myspendyd ...' (possibly incomplete – <i>IMEP</i> , iv, p.83).	Not attributed	Not edited.
100	P	'De carta celestis hereditatis: Every wyseman that cleymeth hys herytage eyther asketh grete pardon kepeth besyly and hath ofte mynde uppon the charter of hys chalenge and therfore yche man lerne to lyve vertuosly and kepe and have mynde uppon the chartre of heven blysse . And stody stedfastly the wytte of hys bull ...' (this is incomplete in Douce 322 as the following folio is missing). Uses the standard medieval allegorisation of the suffering body of Christ and the instruments of his torture and death as the elements of a legal charter, cf. M.C. Spalding, <i>The Middle English Charters of Christ</i> (1914).	[A tract from <i>The Pore Caitiff</i> (<i>IMEP</i> , iv, p.83)]	The complete <i>Pore Caitiff</i> is edited in Sister Mary Teresa Brady, 'The Pore Caitiff, edited from Ms. Harley 2336 with Introduction and Notes', unpublished PhD diss. (Fordham, 1954).
101	P	[Confession based on the seven corporal works of mercy] 'Septem opera misericordie corporalia: Fede the hungry yeve drynke to the thyrsty clothe the naked and nedy comfort the seke ...' (the order of the texts in Harley Ms 1706 show that fo.101 of Douce 322 should precede fo.100).	Not attributed.	Not edited.
101v	P	[Confession based on the seven spiritual works of mercy] 'Septem opera misericordie spiritualia: Teche. Counseyll. Chastyse or reprove. Comfort. Forgeve. Suffre. And preye ...' (incomplete – cf. Harley Ms 1706 ff.87v-88r).	Not attributed.	Not edited.

Downside Abbey Ms 26542

Description

Binding

The binding is modern, perhaps eighteenth-century, and consists of compacted card covered in dark brown unpatterned calf skin. The boards measure 243mm x 177 mm. and the spine is 50 mm. in width. The corners are buffed. A note says the spine was repaired in 1961 by the Bodleian Library. The spine is completely broken between ff. 87 and 88 so that only the badly worn calf skin and a couple of the strands of binding string hold the two halves of the book together.

Manuscript

There are three opening flyleaves (i-iii), 174 folios and one end-paper. The opening flyleaf is paper and contemporary with the binding; the second two are fifteenth century (note the inscription) and are parchment. There is one unfoliated contents page in the original hand and the subsequent leaves are numbered 1-173; all are vellum. The foliation is in ink but is modern. The final end paper is paper. In addition, a torn strip of paper 44mm x 190 mm. is bound in at the front of the book. No other leaves have been inserted into the manuscript. The parchment used for the two main texts is different, that for *The Pore Caitiff* being inferior to that for *The Pricking of Love*, although the hand is the same.⁸ The end papers and opening folios are stained with many small holes and worn edges. Later on, all folios are in perfect condition and near white with square corners. There is a bad stain on ff. 171-2. They measure 233mm x c.170 mm.. There are around twenty-two gatherings in eight, with catchwords on ff. 7v, 15v, 31v, 39v, 47v, 55v, 63v, 71v, 79v, 87v, 101v, 109v, 117v, 125v, 133v, 141v, 149v, 157v, and 165v.

Illumination/Colour

On the contents page (recto) and fo.1r there are large initial capitals (30mm x 31 mm on fo.1) in blue, red, gold, green and white from which blue/gold borders run down the left-hand side of the text with flourishes of red, blue, and gold leaves at the bottom left-hand corners, with blue and red leaves with greenery and gold decorations along the top, bottom and half way down the right-hand side of the text on each page. In the main text there are the characteristic fifteenth-century plain blue/red initial capitals, some with line decoration in red ink up/down the side of the text. There is some original underlining in red. Chapter numbers and headings are in red. In *The Pricking of Love* section the chapter numbers are written at the top centre of each page as headers, in red ink, in the original hand.

Text

The text is written in one column on each side of all folios, with a text space of 169mm x 115 mm. Guide lines and prick holes down the RH edge are often visible. Up to fo.63 there are thirty-one lines per page; thereafter there are thirty lines of text. There is a single neat early fifteenth-century book hand for both texts.⁹ The ink is faded black. The manuscript is very neat in appearance, and there is very little abbreviation, rendering it easy to read.

Inscriptions, etc.

On the strip of paper bound at the front: 'Ald. Metcalfe'.

Fly leaf (i) recto: 'Richard Baxter'(upside down).

(i) verso: 'John Vavasour'

(ii) 'William Richardson' (and random letters)

All the above signatures are in early modern hands.

Fly leaf (iii): four alphabets in different later hands written longwise down the page, and two signatures: 'Ellen Habarlaie est verus possessor', in a sixteenth century hand; 'William Imelaw' in a seventeenth century hand.

(iii) verso: 'Ave maria

Jhesu Amen

This book is yove to Betryce chaumbir, and aftir hir
decese to sustir Emme Wynter, and to [sustir]¹⁰ denyse Caston
nonnes of dertforthe, and so to abide in the saam
hous of the nonnes of dertforthe for evere
to pr^uy for hem that yeve it.

⁸ Dom. Aelred Watkin, 'Some manuscripts in the Downside Abbey library', *Downside Review*, 59 (1941), pp.75-92 at p.77.

⁹ Dom. Aelred Watkin, 'Some manuscripts in the Downside Abbey library', p.82.

¹⁰ Inserted superscript.

David N. Bell thinks that the final line in the above inscription is added in a different hand to the rest, also responsible for the 'Ave maria Jhesu Amen' above.¹¹ I disagree and consider that the whole inscription is in one hand. It is a well-formed neat late fifteenth or early sixteenth century hand. Ker says it is sixteenth century.¹²

Annotations

- fo.3v: 'Roberte' written on the page edge in a post sixteenth century hand.
 fo.26v: 'Rother' written longwise in margin. Sixteenth century?
 fo.39v: 'Maria gloria'. Sixteenth or seventeenth century?
 fo.53v: 'Marye Haburley' (cf. Ellen Habarlaie on the third fly leaf). Perhaps late sixteenth century.
 fo.65: 'This is my hand this is deed he is creme that lity ... kese'¹³ (above the text in the top right-hand corner) in a sixteenth century hand.
 fo.86: A little hand is drawn in the margin pointing to these two lines in the text (*The Pricking of Love*):
 ye blessed be that nede that driveth us fro synne
 and cely is that fallyng that makith us forto ryse

Contents

Fo.	Text	Source/author ¹⁴	Modern edition
1-90	<i>Prickng of Love</i> (in English)	[Walter Hilton]	Harold Kane, ed., <i>The Prickng of Love: Elizabethan and Renaissance Studies</i> , 92:10, 2 vols (Salzburg, 1983) (based on Harley Ms 2254).
90v, 92v, 92r	[English treatise beginning:] How a man shal knowe whiche is the speche of the flesshe in his hert. And whiche is of the world. And which is of the fende. and also whiche is of god almighty our lord jhesu cryst ...	St. Bernard (according to the text)	
94- 168v	<i>Pore Caityf</i> (in English)	Anon.	Sister Mary Teresa Brady, 'The <i>Pore Caitiff</i> , edited from Ms. Harley 2336 with Introduction and Notes', unpublished PhD diss. (Fordham, 1954).
168v- 172	[Extract from Latin treatise beginning:] Quomodo verus cristi discipulus se configurare passionibus eius ...	[<i>Speculum Spiritualium</i> (N. Ker, <i>Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries</i> , i (Oxford, 1977), p.445).]	
172- 173v	[Latin sermon, beginning:] Sermo Augustini notabilis ad parochianos. Rogo vos fratres karissimi ut attentius cogitemus quare cristiani sumus ...	Pseudo-Augustine (David N. Bell, <i>What nuns read</i> , p.130; N. Ker, <i>Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries</i> , p.445).	

There are blank pages on both sides of ff.91 and 93. The second text occupies ff. 90v and 92, but fo.92 is bound upside down and back to front, although foliated as if correctly bound. The contents are in English throughout except for ff.168v-73v.

Transcription of devotional tract (ff.90v, 92v, 92r)

David N. Bell says this text has not been edited. As it is the only other English text in this manuscript, besides the two large and well-known treatises, it is transcribed here in full, following the original spelling, punctuation and capitalisation:

How a man shal knowe whiche is the speche of the flesshe in his hert, and whiche is of the world, and whiche is of the fende, and also whiche is of god almighty our lord Jhesu cryst¹⁵

¹¹ David N. Bell, *What nuns read*, p.130.

¹² N. Ker, *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries*, i (Oxford, 1977), p.445.

¹³ Faded and obscure.

¹⁴ Not given in the manuscript, unless otherwise stated.

¹⁵ Rubric in red ink.

Seynt Bernard techith and seith thus. If thou feele a thought. or a stiryng in thyn hert of mete. or of drynke unskillfully presend upon the and that is eyther in untyme. or elles it lokith after likyng. and lust. and not after nede. wyte thou wel thanne. that this thought and this steryng is of the speche of the flesshe. Also what thought or steryng that thou felist that longith to the likyng of the flesshe whethir it be of glotonye. or of lecherie. or ony fleshly unclennesse. or of softe liggynge of thy body with longe lusty slepyng therto. or ony suche bodely eese unskillfully desyred. as forto feden and resten theryn. with the love of thyn herte. and with lusty usyng of any of thy fyve wyttes in ony creature. suche a thought. or suche a steryng that pressith upon the and styreth. and counseilith the for to don yt. and to fulfille it with thy wille. wyte thou wel that yt is a speche of thy flesshe. and therefore be als wel ware of yt as thow woldest of the counselyng of thyn enemy Folue the counselyng and reede. as reson wyl. and nede. and not after wille nor lust. The speche of the world is this. If thow feele a thought or a stiryng in thyn herte of pryde. or of pompe either favour of the world whethir it be of bodely pryde. and that is of goodes of kynde. or of happe. as forto be shaply. and semly. fayr and white. to syng

[fo.92v]wel. to speke wel. to be wel arrayed. and alle suche othre bodely vertues. Or elles of gostly pryde. and that is of goodes of grace. as of vertues of the soule. and of goode workes. than yf this thought or ony suche othre maner stiryng. lifte up thyn hert into a false preysyng of thy self. that thou wenist thy self better than a nother man. that is not as thou art. or have not as thou hast as to thy semyng. Wyte thou wel than that the world spekith to the thane for alle suche stirynges of pryde and of covetyse of worldly richesse. and of worldly worshipes. of veyn preisynges and false plesynges of the worlde. ben the speche of the worlde in a mannes hert. and therefore be wel war of hem. The speche of the fende is thys. yf thou fele thyn hert gretly stired everie cristen. bodely or gostly. or in his good loos. thorough wicked wordes. or counsailes. eyther wicked workes. or elles thou art stired to bitterness or to malice. eyther to vengauce of thyn everie cristen. but not for love of rightwesnesse. or for heele of hys soule. but for to fulfillen the lust of thyn hert - wyte thow wel that alle suche stirynges of yre and of malyce. and of bitterness. whiche pressen upon thyn hert . for to breke the love and charyte . and the pees of thyn herte the whiche thou owest to have to alle thyn everie cristen . ben the spekyng of the fende . The speche of almighty god is this . If thou fele a thought or a stiryng in thyn hert of knowyng of

[fo.92r] thy self and of thyn owne synnes and wrechednesse . and to beholde noon othre mannes defaultes . but thyn owne . with sorwe . and forthenkyng that thou hast thorough hem greved thy god . This thought and thys stiryng is a spekyng of god in thyn hert . and right nought of thy self . Also if thow fele a thought and a wille in thyn herte that stirith the to mekenesse . and to charite to pacience . and to clenness of body and of soule . or styreth the to ony othir vertue or to do ony good dede . and openith to the . the sight of thy soule . the knowing of that vertu. or of that gode dede . and makith the forto don it and for to fulfille yt . only for the plesance of god . and for help of thyn owne soule . and of thyne everie cristen . Wyte thow wel fully . that this stiryng and this pryve counselyng that thou felist in thy soule on this manere wyse steryng the to vertu . and to alle manere goode dedes . is the speche of our lord god in thy soule . namly if this steryng what that yt be eyther to vertu . or to gode dedes . so yt be alway medled with mekenes and to olynesse of thyn owne hert for therby only thou maight knowe whether yt be the stiryng of goddys speche . or of ony othre . For wyte thou wel . that ony stiryng or wille that thow felist to ony maner vertu . or to do ony goode dede that is sette and grounded in love . and in charyte of thyn everie cristen . and ys tempred with mekenesse . yt is spekyng of god . and not of thy self . Jhesu mercy . lady helpe

To whom I beseche for me specialy pr^aieth for gr^ace
And of my synnes amendement & tyme . wille & space¹⁶

¹⁶ Final couplet in red ink.

British Library Harley Ms 2254

Description

The binding is modern (1965), incorporating brown leather cloth from the former binding which is decorated with gold lines and impressed patterning. The manuscript consists of a flyleaf and eighty-two folios, all of which are of vellum, and in good condition, except for some slight discolouration in places, especially along the right-hand edge of pages, which could indicate usage. These folios measure 285mm x 186mm throughout. These are gathered in eights. They are foliated in modern pencil and there are no sheets inserted.

The first page of text (*The Pricking of Love*) (fo.1) is framed within a decorated box around the two columns of text; the border is old/brown with blue/green fantastic plant-style decoration; flowers grow out of this border, with red, blue and gold petals and berries. At the bottom of the page is an armorial shield, which has not been identified; it is quartered, and the two designs are a rampant gold lion on a blue background surrounded by gold crosses, and gold and blue vertical stripes on a white background with black animals drawn in a box in the top left-hand corner. A later modern hand has annotated this: 'Shirley & Breives, or Breives quartered'. The illuminated capital 'H', at the head of the text, is a blue letter on a gold background; and there are red and blue line fillers in this list of chapters in *Pricking*. The rest of the manuscript is plain, with red rubrics, and new sections beginning with enlarged blue capitals, and red line decoration extending up and down the side of the text. The text is in two columns with thirty-six lines per page throughout.

The page area written on measures 200mm x 135mm throughout, with two columns of text, ruled up in visible red/brown ink. There are thirty-six lines of text per page. The text is neat and clear in the same hand throughout, in slightly faded red ink, with very little abbreviation. This hand is identified as Bastard Anglicana and dated to c.1400 by Professor S. Harrison Thomson, which means that this is the second earliest surviving manuscript of the *Prickynge of Love*.¹⁷ There are a few incidences of doodling, elaborating descenders, but no marginal annotations.

Inscriptions

These occur on the verso of the flyleaf (fo.i) and are all in fifteenth century hands, in black ink and are in English and Latin.

- (i) 'Stimulus amoris/vita *contemplat*.'
- (ii) In another untidy fifteenth-century hand, presumably that of the prioress herself:
'Thys boyk longyth to Dame Alys Braintwathes the worchypfull prioras of Dartford
Jhesu mercy'¹⁸
- (iii) In fifteenth-century textura:
'Orate *pro anima domina* Elizabeth Rede hujus loci'
- (iv) In fifteenth-century textura, possibly the same as (iii), but the 'o' of 'Orate' is different:
'Orate *pro anima* Johanne Newmarche'

Contents

Both texts are in English, although the rubric at the top of *The Pricking of Love* (fo.1) is in Latin ('Incipit tractatus cuius titulue diatrix Stimulus amoris'). Neither is identified in the text as Hilton's work.

- (i) ff.1-72v Walter Hilton, *The Prickynge of Love*¹⁹
- (ii) ff.73-82r Walter Hilton, *Epistle on the Mixed Life*²⁰ (imperfect)
fo.82v is blank

¹⁷ Harold Kane, ed., *The Prickynge of Love: Elizabethan and Renaissance Studies*, 92:10, 2 vols (Salzburg, 1983), p.iv n.3.

¹⁸ Missing off edge of page.

¹⁹ This manuscript is used for the base text in Harold Kane, ed., *The Prickynge of Love*.

²⁰ According to an annotation in the Harley catalogue; David N.Bell, *What nuns read*, p.131; and C. Horstmann, ed., *Yorkshire Writers: Richard Rolle of Hampole and his followers*, i (London, 1895), p.264. For an edition, from the Vernon and Thornton manuscripts see pp.264-92 of Horstmann's work just cited. It is also edited in Dorothy Jones, ed., *Minor Works of Walter Hilton* (London, 1929), pp.3-77.

Both treatises in this manuscript end with the same sentence: 'here endeth *the treetis that is kallid prickynge of love made bi a frere menour bonaventure that was cardynal of the courte of Rome*', which cannot be correct in the second case and is hard to explain. The fragment of the *Mixed Life* lacks the beginning, starting in the middle of a sentence: '... of worldeli good and makan hemself pore and naked unto here ...' (fo.73), so there are folios missing.

Taunton, Somerset County Council Record Office Ms DD/SAS C/1193/68 ²¹

Ker says this is a book of hours written for Dominican usage in England, preceded by a Sarum calendar. He says the Dominican origin is apparent in the Office of the Dead (ff.54-82) and the antiphons in the hours of the Virgin (ff.9-41).²²

Binding

The binding consists of wood boards covered in brown leather measuring 244 mm x 159 mm. Ker says the binding is English, probably of London, of the sixteenth century. He dates the stamped panels on the covers as between 1514-30 ('Oldham AC.8 and QUAD').²³ These panels measure 124mm x 108 mm. Ker describes what these panels depict, although it is hard to discern any recognisable shapes; the panel of the top cover, in very bad condition, contains figures of St. John the Baptist, St. Barbara, St. Katherine and St. Nicholas, in four compartments within a floral border bearing the initials S.G. at the foot. The panel on the back cover has a broad border of acorns enclosing a compartment in which are flowers springing from both sides of a central shaft. Ker says the two panels are no.s 158-9 in Weale's *Rubbings* and are found together on books printed between 1514-30.²⁴ The boards are in solid condition, although there has been some damage from wood worms. The spine is excellent but is not original, having been repaired. The leather covering is worn away at corners and edges and is dried out and cracked on the back. There are the remains of two clasps; the brass attachments are extant on both covers with remnants of the leather straps on the front cover. There is a modern paste-down at the back, but the sixteenth century date of the covers is confirmed by the surviving original pastedown at the front (repaired with a modern fly leaf) which is written on in a sixteenth century cursive hand.

Manuscript

There are four flyleaves, 103 folios and one endpaper. The first flyleaf is modern, but the next three are original and numbered i-iii; the final endpaper similarly is modern and unnumbered. All foliation is modern.

Ff. i-iii and 1-103 are fifteenth-century parchment. Fo.i is in bad condition, missing a section of the bottom right hand corner around 90 x 65 mm square. The other parchment folios are yellow or off-white and stained around the bottom right hand corners indicating heavy usage. They are, nevertheless, in good shape with square corners, although some are somewhat buffed with right hand edges turned up and slightly blunted corners. All this suggests heavy if careful usage. The fragmented nature of the manuscript, with texts incomplete because of missing folios, also points to this.

Most pages measure 234mm x 160mm, including ff.7-8 which Ker says do not belong to the manuscript. The text area on most pages is ruled up with faint red lines into one block of text on both sides, usually with 18 lines per page, and occupying a total area 138mm x 85 mm. Ker says the manuscript is written in various hands and locates its writing to England. The hands are roughly as follows:

A	ff.i-iiir	- 15 th -century cursive
B	ff.iiir-iiiv	- standard 15 th -century liturgical book hand, neat, 3mm bodies.
C	ff.1-6	- (Calendar) smaller 15 th -century book hand, 2.4 mm. bodies.
D	ff.7-45	- standard 15 th -century liturgical book hand, 4.5 mm. bodies, neat.
E	ff.46-52r	- another as above, 4 mm. bodies.
F	ff.52v-53r	- addition in neat 15 th -century secretary hand

²¹ Formerly Taunton Castle Museum Ms.2.

²² N. Ker, 'Four medieval manuscripts in the Taunton Castle Museum', *Proceedings of the Somersetshire Archaeological and Natural History Society*, 96 (1952), pp.224-8 at p.225.

²³ N. Ker, *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries*, p.489.

²⁴ N. Ker's handwritten notes in the S.C.C.R.O. catalogue, dated March 1952.; Ker refers to G.D. Hobson, *Bindings in Cambridge Libraries* (1929), p.58 and *Blindstamped panels in the English book-trade* (1944), p.61.

G	fo.53v	- single line at top: 'Pater noster qui es in ecclesia sanctitietur nomen tuum', in textura with 3 mm. bodies.
H	ff.54-92	- liturgical book hand, 4-4.5 mm. bodies.
I	ff.93-9	- ditto, slightly smaller.
J	ff.100-103r	- ditto, 4.5 mm..
K	fo.103r-v	- ditto, smaller (text added at end).

The inks are mostly black, but A, B and E are browner and K fading from black to brown with some lines difficult to make out. Abbreviation is light.

Inscriptions, etc.

Position	Inscription	Comments
Stuck inside front cover	'Purchased at Mr. Hert's sale in the year 1832 - A relic from the Abbey of Muchelney' (which is not correct)	
Written on inside front paste down	Mother Andrewes ijd Mother Bredge ijd Farrou' ijd Boylande ijd Blynde Allert ijd L mall ijd Tunbrydge ijd father Adims ijd George wodle delyver in the fayry parler vjd Smythe ijd Ambrose Taylo' ijd Rayfe wyt ijd hatche ijd	Written in a sixteenth century cursive. No explanation recommends itself. None of the names are elsewhere recorded in connection with Dartford Priory, although it could be a list of minor servants in view of the small payments. There was a common parlour in the priory but this could also refer to a subsequent sixteenth century owner of the manuscript after the Dissolution. The paste-down dates from the time the book was in the priory's possession but it may have been written on later in the century.
fo.1 (beneath text)	'Elys is dus(?) & mad ___(?)' (obscure)	An ill-formed sixteenth century hand.
fo.43	'lorde (julbry?) me ____ (?) vyl I lyf' (obscure)	A rough sixteenth century hand.
fo.52v	'William Hart Anno Domini 1752'	Note the reference to Hert's sale above.
fo.93	[illegible marginal note]	
fo.103v	[appended prayer]: <i>Omnipotens domne pro tua pietate miserere anime famule tue & a contagis mortalitatis exutam. in eterne salvacionis partem restitue.</i> Orate <i>pro anima</i> sororis Alicie Brainthawyt qui dedit nobis istum librum.	
Note stuck inside the back cover	'Mrs. Strong/The Synch/Somerton/Taunton'	Ker (1952) records that Mrs. Strong gave the manuscript to the Taunton archaeological society in 1906 (hence its possession by Taunton Castle Museum, then the Somerset Record Office).
Ditto	'In dei nomine Amen'	A fifteenth century hand?

Illumination and Colour

Use of colour is typical of the common run of late medieval books of hours in England and on the continent. Initial capitals are in red and blue ink with line decoration up and down the sides of the text and around capitals. Rubrics are in red ink. In addition, there are larger simply illuminated capitals at the beginnings of the different hours, etc., on ff.7, 8v, 25, 28, 30v, 32, 34, 36v, 54 and 83. Typically these measure 39m x 55 mm (the height of 5 lines of text), are blue/red letters, with white decoration, on gold backgrounds with red, blue and green leaves in the middle. In each case a gold, blue, red and green border extends up and down the side of the text and partially along the top and bottom shooting out green foliage and gold fruits. The example on fo.34 also has two shades of red with orange and yellow dots. The gold is particularly bright on fo.36v. On fo. 54 the very elaborate decoration extends all round the text, which is the beginning of the office of the dead. Here, the gold, red and blue border forms a text box 145mm x 98

mm. This border, which is 15 mm. wide at the top and 28 mm. at the bottom, is filled with foliage and leaves. There are also blue ink initial capitals one or two lines of text in height and capitals decorated with red lines within texts. Spaces left for coloured capitals on ff. ii-iii and 103 have not been filled in. Red and blue line-fillers are used in the litany (ff.46v-48v).

Amongst 'doodles' are a dragon's head drawn from the catchword on fo.14v, in black and red with sharp teeth, and, on fo.69v, another dragon's head the back of which becomes a human face with a very long nose.

Collation and contents²⁵

All texts are in Latin except the added instructional text on ff.i-iiir.

Gathering	Notes	Folio nos	Texts
Flyleaves		1-iii	Extract of <i>St. Bridget's Revelations</i> , in English, added to manuscript in a 15 th -century hand. Begins: 'Oure lord Jhesu cryste in his revelacion to seynt Bryde among al other thinges he saide to hir on this wise ...' ²⁶ (ff.i-iiir) 'Ad beatam mariam oracio/O Beata intimerata in eternum benedicta singularis ...' (fo.iiir) 'Oracio de sancto Thoma de Aquino' (ff.iiiv-iiiv) (edited from other manuscripts in English and Latin in A.I. Doyle, 'A prayer attributed to St. Thomas Aquinas', <i>Dominican Studies</i> , I (1948), pp 229-38). 'Oracio luna/Deus propicius est mihi peccatori ...' (fo.iiiv) 'Oracio luna/Anima christi ihesu sanctifica me. Corus ihesu christu salva me ...' (fo.iiiv)
1 ⁶		1-6	Sarum Calendar. N. Ker, <i>Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries</i> , p.488, comments that the following additions have been made in a 15 th or 16 th -century hand: 'decolacio sancte Weneffrede' (21 st June) on fo..3v; 'Translacio sancte Weneffrede' (September) (fo.5); 'Barbare virginio' (December) (fo.6v).
2 ²		7-8	Fragment of offices beginning in the middle of None. Also contains Vespers of Our Lady and part of Compline with Office of the Cross worked in (Ker notes, 1952). N. Ker, <i>Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries</i> , p.488, connects it with ff.100-103 and feels it is inserted, or that they are discarded pages from the middle of the book.
3 ⁶	nb Catchword on no.6 to connect to fo.15. Leaves missing before fo.9 and after fo.13 (Ker's notes, 1952).	9-14	Part of Hours of the BVM (ff.9-45), starting imperfectly (Ker, 1977). All hours have the Office of the Cross worked in (Ker notes, 1952). There are two different primes, the first is of Sarum use (N. Ker, <i>Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries</i> , p.488); the 2nd corresponds to None, both making the Office to a Dominican book of Hours (Ker notes, 1952).
4 ⁸	nb. Catchword on no.8 connecting to fo.23.	15-22	Continuation of hours. After Lauds, on ff.19-24v, there is a long series of commemorations of the Holy Spirit, Trinity, Cross, Saints John the Baptist, John the Evangelist, Andrew, Peter and Paul, Stephen, Laurence, Nicholas, Thomas of Canterbury (later erased), relics, Saints Anne, Mary Magdalene, Katherine, Margaret, All Saints and of peace.
5 ⁸		23-30	Ditto
6 ³		31-33	Ditto
7 ⁸		34-41	Ditto. Gradual psalms from fo.41v, probably Dominican (Ker

²⁵ Analysis of gatherings and collation is from N. Ker, *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries*, p.489.

²⁶ This text, from the sixteenth chapter of book two of the *Revelations*, appears in five other medieval English manuscripts, which versions are compared in: Domenico Pezzini, 'The Twelf Poyntes: Versioni di un trattato brigidino (Rev. ii, 16) nel quattrocenta inglese', *Aevum: Rassegna di scienze storiche linguistiche e filologiche*, 62 (1988), pp.286-301. Pezzini prints the first half of the Taunton version (p.300).

Gathering	Notes	Folio nos	Texts
			notes, 1952)
8 ⁴		42-5	End of Hours with Compline from fo.42v (Ker's notes, 1952).
9 ⁸		46-53	'Deus in auditorium-Confundantur ...' followed by a litany to saints on ff.46v-48v, identified by Ker as Dominican (Ker's notes, 1952). These saints include St. Thomas [Aquinas], St. Vincent [Ferrer], Dominic twice, St. Francis, and the following female saints: Anne, Mary Magdalene, Martha, Felicity, Perpetua, Agatha, Lucy, Agnes, Appolonia, Cecilia, Katherine, Margaret, Winifred, Barbara, Elizabeth, Ursula, Katherine and all holy virgins. The litany ends: 'Omnis sancti orate pro nobis'. Spare space on ff.52v-3r is filled with an added text in another fifteenth century hand: 'Iste oraciones debent ...'.
10 ⁸	nb Catchword on no.8 to connect to fo 62.	54-61	Start of Office of the Dead (ff.54-82v) with illuminated fo.54. Ker's 1952 notes suggest it is the Dominican form.
11 ⁸	nb Catchword on no.8 to connect to fo 70.	62-9	Ditto.
12 ⁸	nb Catchword on 8 to connect to fo 78	70-77	Ditto
13 ⁸	nb Catchword on 8 to connect to fo 84 No.s 6&7 are missing after fo 82.	78-83	Continuation of Office of the Dead, ending imperfectly on fo 82v as nos 6&7 are lacking. No.8 (fo.83) is the beginning of a new text – the Commendations (ff.83-92v).
14 ⁸	nb Catchword on no.7 linking to 8.	84-91	Part of Commendations.
15 ¹	First leaf of a quire (Ker, 1977).	92	Imperfect end of Commendations, presumably because of lack of rest of the quire.
16 ⁸	Wants one before fo.93 (Ker, 1977).	93-9	Penitential Psalms beginning imperfectly, followed by Gradual Psalms, ending imperfectly after six cues (N. Ker, <i>Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries</i> , p.489).
17 ⁴	Catchword from 3-4 (Ker, 1977).	100-103	Remains of another Compline of Our Lady and Salve Regina (ff.100-103r) which Ker (1977) suggests might be linked with the fragments of offices (None, Vespers and part of Compline) on ff.7-8. On fo.103r-v: a Latin prayer to St. Anne added in a fifteenth-century hand, which has the rubric: 'De beata Anna matris marie' and begins: 'Benedicta sit beata Anna que ...'. On fo.103v a collect added for the deceased Sister Alice Braithwayte, the last item in the book.

It will be seen from the above that the manuscript is somewhat mutilated despite the fact that it has not been rebound since the early sixteenth century, perhaps another pointer to its heavy use whilst in the possession of Dartford Priory (and hence the need to be rebound between 1504-30).

Transcription of extract from *Revelations of St. Bridget* (Bk2 ch.16) (ff.i-iiir)

All spelling, punctuation and capitalisation follows that in the original manuscript.

O²⁷ure lord Jhesu cryste in his revelacion to seynt Bryde among al other thinges he saide to hir on this wise . iij thynges y bidde the to do . iij thinges y bydd the nought to do . iij y sufferthe to doe and iij y counelle the to do. The iij first that y bidd the to do . the furst is that thow desire nought but thi god and that is when thou desirest nothing that is ayenn his commaundement. The ij is that thow caste a way al pride ne high nought thi sens of any gyft that hast taken wenyng thow hast taken more then thou hast. The iij is that *tho*^u hate legere evermore & here that y bidde the nought do. Furst *tha*¹ *tho*^u love nought vayne wordes ne wordes of rebardy & dishonest. The ij is that *tho*^u lyf nought owterages of metis and superfluyte of other thynges. The iij is that thou fle the ioy of the world and the lightnesse therof. & here that y suffer the to do. Furst is mesurable slepe acordyng to thi heele, the ij is a temper [Pezzini suggests temperate] wakyng to excersyse of thi body. The iij is mesurable mete to strength of thi body and sustene . & here as y counsel the to do

²⁷ The space for a coloured initial capital is not filled in.

the first that thow travayle in good werkes, fastyng for the whuc²⁸ is the way to the kyndom of heven. The ___²⁹ thos thinges that *tho*^u hast ordeyne to *the* hono[torn] the thridde is y counsel [?]³⁰ to thyn [? (thynk conti...)]³¹ ...nuelly in thy harte furst what ___³² is this world, this thought [faded] stere [torn]

[verso] unto god and thy charyte. The ij is that thow consider my rightwesnesse and the triw dome *tha*¹ is to come, this thoughte shall brynge drede in to thy soule *the* forste and last thai bothe y bidde and counsell and *commaunde tha' tho*^u be obedient as thow ought to be thus y bidde the for y am thy god and *thi* frende and councler. Also he shewed unto hir urr to kyns worthily shee myth knowe the hooly spiryte. The first is that the spirit of god maketh the world to be wile to aman and the worship therof to redde in his herte as the ayre. The ij is that he makys god dere to the soule and kylles the delyte of Flesshly lustes and desires *the* thered that ye inssure(?) passions unto the soule And oonly to tho ioy. The furste that steris thy mynde to leve in compassion of *th'* neyghboroue and also of *th'* neighbors. The furst ___³³ ye insure tyl *almaner* chastyte and to [torn] as steyne so unlawfull thoutys. The urte³⁴ in all trybulacyon he makys to trust in god. ___³⁵ gladde on the vij he gevys to Wille ___³⁶ and bere *wi^th* al Crist more more (sic.) prosperite in the world and *the* with ___³⁷ Other wir worldely shee myght

[fo.iir] know the ille spiryt . The First is that he kakys the world swete to a man into israel *wi^th* hevenly thynges. The seconde is he makys him desire worship and forgete himself. The thrudde is he exotis him unto unpacyens and hate in *the* hert the furst he makys bold ayens god and to be abstinade in his conpaytes. The ___³⁸ he makys him to ___³⁹ and the vj he inspues *the* lyghnesse in the soule and all unclennesse of the flessh. The vij he brynges in hope of longlyf and shame of shryfte.

²⁸ Page is torn

²⁹ Word missing because page is torn.

³⁰ Faded

³¹ The suggestion is from Domenico Pezzini, 'The Twelf Poyntes: Versioni di un trattato brigidino (Rev. ii, 16) nel quattrocenta inglese', p.300.

³² Words missing because page is torn.

³³ Words missing because page is torn.

³⁴ Words missing because page is torn.

³⁵ Words missing because page is torn.

³⁶ Words missing because page is torn.

³⁷ Words missing because page is torn.

³⁸ Words missing because page is torn.

³⁹ Faded.

London Society of Antiquaries Ms 717

Description

This small book has lost any covers it might once have had, leaving the four string knots of the binding exposed on the spine. The book is in mutilated condition, crumpled, very fragile and disintegrating. It is stained and the edges are burnt or blackened, being partly eaten away half way down the right-hand edge. There are twelve gatherings. The sixty-nine folios, numbered in modern pencil, measure 137/145 mm x 80 mm. They are all of paper, except fo.69 which is vellum. Even when in good condition this was not a visually impressive book, the only use of colour being the small blue/red capitals, red rubrics, red stave lines for notation, and very simple line decoration around some capitals in red ink. The text area measures 110 mm x 60 mm and is neatly ruled up with visible red lines. The single neat hand, in faded brown ink, is a typical fifteenth-century book hand as seen in countless other books of hours. There are eighteen lines of text per page in a single column. The only evidence of graffiti are faces drawn in some capital initials.

Inscription

'Orate pro anima sororis Emme Wyntyre que fieri fecit istum librum' (fo.55)

This is written at the foot of the page in red ink in the same hand as the rest of the manuscript, preceding the collection of chants.

Musical notation

Plainsong notation on four-line staves accompanies the text of the Office of the Dead (ff.14v-54). This is followed by a whole section dedicated to chants for Palm Sunday and Holy Week.⁴⁰

Contents

All the contents of this book are in Latin, except for English rubrics to some Latin prayers on ff.52v-54v.

Fo.	Description of text	Comments
1-7v	Penitential Psalms	Begin imperfectly with Psalm 37; includes Psalm 131 <i>De profundis</i> .
8-14	Litany to saints (with suffrage 'miserere nos'; finishing, 'Omnes orate pro nobis')	Starts with persons of the Holy Trinity, then Virgin Mary, Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, all angels and archangels, John the Baptist, Peter, Paul, the disciples, the four evangelists, Barnabas, Holy Innocents, Stephen, Clement, Cornelius, Cyprian, Laurence, Vincent, Celestina, George, all the holy martyrs, Sylvester, Martin, Augustine, Gregory, Nicholas, Dominic (twice together, pointing to Dominican usage - Ker), Francis, Jerome, Benedict, Anthony, Bernard, David, Mary Magdalene, Martha, Agatha, Lucy, Agnes, Cecilia, Katherine, Margaret, Winifred, Christine, Anne, Elizabeth, the Holy Virgins, etc..
14v	Antiphon to St. Christine the Martyr	Begins: 'Veni electa mea ...'
14v-54	Office of the Dead (with interpolated prayers, and finishing with notated <i>Requiem aeternam</i>)	With plainsong notation. Note the Latin prayers with English rubrics on ff.52v-54v: 'This is for on woman', 'This is for many men', 'This is for many wemen', 'This is for on man & for on woman', 'For mony men & on woman', 'For on man & many wymmen', 'For many men & many women' (in each case the prayer addresses God as Lord, judge of souls and forgiver, and asks Him to bring those prayed for into the blessed light of his glory).
55-69v	Notated processional and other plainsong chants for Palm Sunday and Holy Week.	Begins with 'Pueri Hebraeorum' and ends imperfectly with 'Dominus Jesus' (for washing of the feet on Maudy Thursday) (ff.55-69v) (Ker, typescript catalogue).

⁴⁰ Typescript catalogue to manuscripts of the library of the London Society of Antiquaries by N. Ker.

Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley Ms 255, ff.1-44

This volume is made up of two separate manuscripts which have been bound together since they came into the Bodleian Library's possession, between 1620 and 1635.⁴¹ The second manuscript (ff.45-73) is a thirteenth-century exposition on a passage from *Maccabees*, with other pieces, and it is doubtful that it has any connection with Dartford Priory. That manuscript is, therefore, excluded from the comments below.

Description

The volume has a modern binding, and the pre-1986 spine is preserved inside the back cover.

There is one paper flyleaf measuring 370mm x 270mm. The manuscript itself (ff.1-44) is made up of a mixture of paper and parchment: fo.1 is parchment 370mm x 255mm, badly stained on the recto, with a hole and a tear; fo.2 is parchment 370mm x 270mm, in good condition except for one hole; ff.3-21 are paper 370mm x 270mm; ff.22-25 are paper 370mm x 265mm; ff.26-7 are parchment 370mm x 265mm, and in excellent condition; ff.28-31 are paper 370mm x 270mm; ff.32-43 are paper 370mm x 270mm; and fo.44 is parchment 370mm x 270mm, in excellent condition. All paper folios are in excellent condition. The text is continuous, irrespective of material of the pages.

There is one hand with uniform layout throughout, after the illustrated first folio. This is a late fifteenth-century hand in black ink.⁴² Headings within the text are in red ink; these are followed by the first words of each section in blue ink and enlarged textura, although this colour scheme is sometimes reversed. The text is contained within an area c.295mm x c.190mm, ruled up in visible black ink lines. There is a moderate amount of abbreviation. There are marginal annotations by other hands. There is no text on fo.44.

Illumination and illustration

On fo.1v is a large coloured drawing of St. Augustine in the act of blessing, holding a blue crozier, and framed within a gothic archway, coloured red and blue, standing on a red-tiled floor. The detail of the robes is good, with their pleats falling to the floor, the folds of the skin on his hands, and the detail of his hair. The figure is 180/185mm from toe to halo.

On fo.44r is drawn a large coloured armorial shield which fills the page. This is described by Machan and identified as the arms of the gentry Cressener family of East Anglia.⁴³ There are no inscriptions in the manuscript and this shield is the sole basis of its assignment to Dartford Priory, remembering its contents.

Contents

The single text of this manuscript is a commentary in English on the Rule of St. Augustine, with rubrics in Latin.⁴⁴ Fo.1 is a title page, with this heading, in red ink: 'De vita religiosorum. Hec sunt que ut observantibus precipimur in monasterio constituti'. Fo.1v bears the picture of St. Augustine, and the text begins in earnest with a further heading, on fo.2: 'The Commaundementes off Almyghty God be rede unto us to thentent they myght be understanded'. The text finishes on fo.43, with a Latin phrase in blue ink: 'DEO: SIT: GRACIARUM: ACCO'. Fo.44r contains the Cressener shield, and fo.44v is blank. There is no contemporary or modern printed edition, and no indication of the author.

⁴¹ F. Machan, *Summary Catalogue of Western Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library*, vol.2 pt 1 (Oxford, 1922), no.3010.

⁴² The hand is dated by F. Machan, *Summary Catalogue of Western Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library*, no.3010.

⁴³ F. Machan, *Summary Catalogue of Western Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library*, no.3010.

⁴⁴ David N. Bell, *What nuns read*, p.131.

Oxford, Bodleian Library, Rawlinson Ms G.59

Description

The binding post-dates the manuscript, is in very bad condition, and is coming apart. It is a slim manuscript consisting of three opening blank flyleaves, and sixteen folios. The second and third flyleaves, and folios 14 and 15 are all blank parchment, slightly scorched, and the rest are paper. The pages measure 202 mm x 130 mm. Ff.1-13, on which the text is written, are in fair condition, although some pages are scorched, and there is a large tear in fo.13.

The only use of colour is the outlining in red of the initial letter of each line of verse up to fo.6r (the Latin text). The only sign of graffiti are faces with beards drawn onto letters on ff.7r, 8v and 11v, which indicates use of the book at some point.

The text is written both sides and is clearly legible. The single hand is a neat late-fifteenth-century book hand. The text area is ruled up and occupies a space 190 mm x 85 mm

Inscription

At the end of the English translation, at the foot of fo.13r, in a new, less neat hand, perhaps that of the nun herself: 'suster Emme Wynter'.

Contents

ff.1-6r	pseudo-Cato, <i>Distichia Catonis</i> , with a prologue ⁴⁵
ff.6v-13r	English translation in verse, ⁴⁶ beginning: When I avysed me ryght hertely How dyverse men eren grevously
ff.i-iii, 13v-16v	(blank)

Dublin, Trinity College Ms 490 (E.2.15)

Description

Binding

This binding is not original but, perhaps, of the eighteenth century. It consists of wood boards covered in leather, measuring 307mm x 193mm. The spine is 50mm in width. There is an intricate pattern stamped on the front and back. Stamped in gold lettering on the spine is: 'CAXTON'S HISTORY OF ALBION E.2.15.' The base and top of the spine are damaged. The edges and corners of the front and back boards are worn and both boards are completely loose from the book.

Manuscript

This manuscript is now made up of two modern flyleaves, 185 original folios and two modern endpapers. Foliation (ff.1-183 omitting two leaves between 12 & 13) is in pencil and dated 1958, on the end papers. There are no inserted sheets. The material of the original manuscript is vellum, which is badly stained up to fo.4 (especially fo.1) but gets better thereafter. Fo.1 has a few holes, there is a hole on fo.64, and some liquid has been splashed over ff.132v-33r leaving a brown stain. Fo.1 measures 283mm x 173.5 mm, and most others are 290mm x 190 mm.

The text is written in a single column ruled up with faint red guide lines measuring up to 197mm x 115/120mm. There are thirty-six lines per page. The fifteenth century book hand, in faded black ink, is the same throughout, although there are some variations in quills used. There is very light standard abbreviation.

⁴⁵ See M Boas's edition (Amsterdam, 1952), cited by David N. Bell, *What nuns read*, p.133.

⁴⁶ This verse translation, which is of northern origin, is edited from Rawlinson Ms G.59 alongside a parallel edition of the text in Cambridge, Sidney Sussex College Ms IV i, in Max Forster, ed., 'Eine nordenglische Cato-version', *Englische Studien*, 36 (1906), pp.1-55. The Latin text is known in twenty-three manuscripts; these are listed with other editions of the English translations, in Richard Hazelton, 'Chaucer and Cato', *Speculum*, 35 (1960), pp.357-80 at p.359 n.7.

Illustration and colour

On the contents pages (ff.3ff.), there is a faded unelaborate blue and red border design, in the top left-hand corner, with unsophisticated decoration. Chapter numbers are picked out in red. Blue, red, and gold decoration is utilised for the small sentence or paragraph dividers.

The first page of the main text (fo.13r) has a title in red ink. The text is enclosed within a box 220mm x 145mm, which is thickly framed by a gold border 7mm thick, with interweaving stems and fantastical leaves in faded red and gold. The initial capital of the text is 16 mm x 20 mm. on a blue/gold background. Subsequent chapter headings are in red ink, located within the text, with gold/red/blue initial capitals and modest decoration extending up and down the left-hand side of the text. On fo.45, place-names are underlined in red. No gold is used after fo.126.

Inscriptions, armorial designs, etc.:

Folio	Inscriptions, etc.	Comments
1v	'Iste Liber constat Religiosis sororibus de Dertford'	A late fifteenth-century scribal hand. It is followed by something faded and illegible.
1v	A sketched armorial design in black ink occupying a space 90mm x 78 mm. A helm with plume coming from it and a sleeved arm sticking out of the top, hand raised in blessing (note positions of fingers). Below this, at an angle, a shield bearing this design: the cross with nail marks in five places and 'INRI' at top; various objects drawn around this - boxes, a spear, three nails, a sheaf of wheat, and others unidentified.	
2	In enlarged gothic letters: 'Jhi' and to the side in a sixteenth century hand: 'to thys berre belde lever to hym as moch as wyll hym my' [the rest missing off page edge] Two geometric designs incorporating the letters VA and RIA (within M), measuring respectively 24mm x 28 mm. and 29mm x 40 mm.. Scattergood says they spell AVE MARIA and says this reinforces the view that the manuscript belonged to Dartford Priory (John Scattergood, 'Two unrecorded poems from TCD Ms 490' in <i>Review of English Studies</i> , ns 38 (1987), pp.46-9 at p.47). Below in a small hand: 'Jhe'.	
3	'John Sympson pl_ [something deleted] 5s 6d' (above text)	Possibly a sixteenth-century hand.
180	In the margin. '1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9' and 'Nwll' with these texts in a difficult fifteenth or sixteenth century hand (Scattergood (p.47) says early 16th century) is this Kentishman's verse (written out as prose): In my begenyng (sic.) God me spede. In grace & vertu to prosede vyse to leve and vertu to Incece and so to leve and never to seke [Scattergood says: ssese] let evre Ryman take hyede how he doht leve and nat to syne hym self to geve for Sant Paule sayht let not Syne Rayne In yowre mortile body lest ye solde a Be yt [Scattergood suggests a 'known' omitted here] to all men by thys p'esent wrytyng that I Thomas Crondalle in the conte off Kynt daht owe unto Jemes Harys in the same counte vij l. as of good & lawefoull mony of Yngland to payd at Crystmas nexs come to the pay and hys executes and as synys to the payment I the sayde Jaymys do bynde me and my execute my well be ...	Scattergood suggests the 'Ryman' of this verse could be James Ryman, a Franciscan friar of Canterbury, who left a manuscript of poems, dated 1492 (John Scattergood, 'Two unrecorded poems from TCD Ms 490', p.48). Other Middle English religious instructional verses found in various manuscripts begin with similar opening couplets (C. Brown, <i>Index Middle English Verse</i> (Columbia, 1943), 430, 432; R.H. Robbins, <i>Supplement to IMEV</i> (Kentucky, 1965), 430.5).
182	'Unto my wellbeloved' [an initial scribbled over/Scattergood reckons he can read: 'ffrynde Recharde dygnam'].	In a sixteenth century hand(?) A continuation or copy of the end of the text on fo.180?
183		A paragraph written in a hand extremely difficult to decipher, even to say whether it is in Latin or English. Scattergood says it is the same hand as fo.180, and that this is the beginning of a letter an abortive attempt at which is also made on ff.182 and 180r.

Other marks in manuscript

- fo.21 - something erased below the text.
- fo.25 - ditto.
- fo.43v - a red rubric at the bottom has been erased.
- fo.50 - '91' in Roman numerals in another hand to that of the text.
- fo.82v - half way down on the LH a meaningless series of letters, numbers and roman numerals.
- fo.84v - '48' and '49' in Roman numerals, with no apparent relation to the text.
- fo.145 - below the text miscellaneous numerals, shapes, and words: 'the', 'Edward' (twice), and '1557'.

Textual contents

These are in English throughout. There are two original blank folios between ff. 12 + 13, unnumbered in the 1958 foliation (see below for an interpretation of this). In addition, ff.12v, 178v, 179r, 180v, 181v, 182v, 183v are blank.

Folios	Text	Comments
1	Dartford Priory inscription.	
3-12r	Contents of <i>Brut</i>	Only list contents as far as fo.132 (the chronicle up to 1333, where the original French text from which the English <i>Brut</i> was translated stopped). Scattergood suggests that the copyist of TCD Ms 490 knew there was more to come, as the complete text (up to fo.177) goes as far as the siege of Rouen, in 1419, and thus left the two blank unnumbered folios between ff.12-13 for the contents pages to be updated (John Scattergood, 'Two unrecorded poems from TCD Ms 490' in <i>Review of English Studies</i> , ns 38 (1987), pp.46-9 at p.47).
13-177v	The <i>Brut</i> : [Rubric]: 'Her may a man hure how Engelande was ferst callede Albyen and through whome it hade the name'. [The text begins]: In the noble lande of Syrrie ther was a noble kyng and myty and a man of gret renoun that me callede Dyoclician that well and worthely hym governede ...	The text of the <i>Brut</i> chronicle is edited in F.W.D. Brie, ed., <i>The Brut or the Chronicles of England</i> , EETS os 131, 136 (London, 1906, 1908), using Dublin TC Ms 490 and others for variants. Scattergood says the words 'pat was the lorde of Cobham' are erased on fo.175v, in a passage about Sir John Oldcastle the Lollard rebel, indicating local sensitivity.
178	'And this siege dured xx weekis And they of the ton hopid all were to have be Rescued but <i>there</i> come none And so at the laste they kepte so longe the toune that ther dyden many thowsandes wythe in the toune for defawt of mete'	In an early modern hand. This relates to the final section of the <i>Brut</i> on fo.177v concerning the twenty-week siege of Rouen by Henry V, in 1419. Scattergood suggests that the original blank ff.178-83 were included in the manuscript by the original copyist because he felt that the chronicle might later be updated further (John Scattergood, 'Two unrecorded poems from TCD Ms 490', p.47).
179v	I wyll no more go to the plowe I wyll go leame some other thyng my mother knowythe it well enowghe that I had rather play then spynne O westerne wynd whenc wyllt thou blowe & blowe the grene leves from the tree O gentle dethe when wyllt thou coome for off my lyff I am werye My hart is in a prevy place where as my body wold fayne be and I my selff in a wofull case wysshinge for dethe & and cannot dy I aske off yowe no rytche araye nor yet no poynt of prevy playe but to the grownd that I myght go so that I myght se yow once a daye This have I here for an old reward some tyme to call some tyme to crye for nowe I se I may be sparde I will go laye me downe & dye *	This is a five stanza verse, set out as opposite, in a sixteenth century cursive. Scattergood says it is a bold hand of the first half of the 16th century (John Scattergood, 'Two unrecorded poems from TCD Ms 490', p.48). A hand is drawn in the margin and a flower in place of a final full stop.
181	'When kyns edward had myvyd at normandy'	A faint, possibly fifteenth-century hand.

Appendix Four

Tables for Chapter Five:

Mentions of monasteries in Rochester Consistory Court wills 1438-1537

1. Numbers of bequests to monasteries (by decade)

Monastery	1438 -47	1448 -57	1458 -67	1468 -77	1478 -87	1488 -97	1498- 1507	1508 -17	1518 -27	1528 -37
Aylesford Priory	14	62	59	38	22	21	20	12	16	21
Barking Abbey										1
Baysdale Priory										1
Bayham Abbey	1		1	1			1			
Bermondsey Abbey		1		2						
Boxley Abbey	1	3		1	1	1	2	4	1	1
Canterbury, Christchurch Priory		3	5	3	2	2	3	6	2	2
Canterbury, St. Augustine's Abbey					1				1	
Canterbury, Austin friars				1			1			
Canterbury, Blackfriars				3					1	
Canterbury, Greyfriars										1
Canterbury, Observants									1	
Cobham College	1	3	7	9	2	2	1	4		4
Colchester Greyfriars										1
Combwell Priory				1			2			
Dartford Priory		3	3	6	1	2	1	2	4	3
Greenwich Observant friars	-	-	-	-		1	7	6	6	4
Guisborough Priory										1
Higham Priory		1	6	8	4	8	2		1	-
King's Langley Priory				1			1			
Leeds Priory		1	2					1		
Lesnes Abbey		1	2	6		1	1	1	1	-
Lewes, Greyfriars								1		
London, St. Mary Graces Abbey					1		1			
London Charterhouse						1		1		
London, St. Helen's Bishopsgate										1
London, Austin friars	1	2	4	2	1	3	1			
London, Blackfriars	1	2	1	1		1	1		1	
London, Carmelite friars	2	2	2	1		2	1			
London, Crutched friars	1	2	1			1	1	2	3	
London, Friars Minor	1	2	2	3	1	1	1			
Other Observants (not specified)										1
Malling Abbey		3	2	3	4	2	2	1	6	4
Malton Abbey										1
Matersley Abbey										1
Mottenden Trinitarian friars				2		1	1		1	1
Rochester Cathedral Priory	2	4	2	3	5	7	11	8	11	9
Rochester Cathedral/mother church		1	3	12	21	13	32	50	93	83
Rosedale Priory										1
Sandwich, Carmelite friars						1				
Sheen Charterhouse				1						
Thame Abbey			1							
Tonbridge Priory		8	6	4	3	1	1	2	1	-

2. Proportions of all testators mentioning monasteries (not cathedral) in their wills

	1438-47	1448-57	1458-67	1468-77	1478-87	1488-97	1498-1507	1508-17	1518-27	1528-37	1438-1537
Any monasteries ¹	14.4% (16)	19.8% (86)	16% (92)	11.1% (69)	10.4% (41)	11.3% (47)	10.5% (51)	8.9% (43)	7.7% (46)	8.6% (51)	11.8% (558)
Friars	12.6% (14)	15.2% (66)	11% (63)	7.1% (44)	5.8% (23)	6% (25)	6.4% (31)	4.2% (20)	4.2% (25)	5% (30)	7.2% (341)
Nunneries	0% (0)	1.4% (6)	1.9% (11)	2.6% (16)	2.3% (9)	2.9% (12)	1% (5)	0.6% (3)	1.8% (11)	1.9% (11)	1.8% (84)
Total no. testators	111	435	575	623	394	416	487	482	598	596	4717

Numbers in brackets indicate the number of testators.

3. Proportions of clerical testators mentioning monasteries and/or Rochester Cathedral in their wills

	1438-47	1448-57	1458-67	1468-77	1478-87	1488-97	1498-1507	1508-17	1518-27	1528-37	1438-1537
Any monasteries	0% (0)	41.7% (5)	27.8% (5)	30% (1)	33.3% (1)	33.3% (2)	33.3% (1)	44.4% (4)	60% (9)	53.9% (7)	40.2% (35)
Friars	0% (0)	16.7% (2)	5.6% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	11.1% (1)	6.7% (1)	7.7% (1)	6.7% (6)
Nunneries	0% (0)	0% (0)	11.1% (2)	20% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	11.1% (1)	0% (0)	7.7% (1)	5.7% (5)
Total no. testators	3	12	18	5	3	6	3	9	15	13	87

Numbers in brackets indicate the number of testators.

4. Proportions of all testators mentioning Rochester Cathedral/mother church (not convent)

	1438-47	1448-57	1458-67	1468-77	1478-87	1488-97	1498-1507	1508-17	1518-27	1528-37	1438-1537
No. testators	0	1	3	12	21	13	32	50	93	83	308
Total testators	111	435	575	623	394	416	487	482	598	596	4717
% of total	0	0.2	0.5	1.9	5.3	3.1	6.6	10.4	15.5	13.9	6.5

5. Origins of bequests to Higham Priory

	1438-47	1448-57	1458-67	1468-77	1478-87	1488-97	1498-1507	1508-17	1518-22	1438-1522
HIGHAM			4	5	2	3	1			15
Halling		1								1
Milton						1				1
Rochester			1	1	2	1				5
Shorn			1	1		2				4
Snodland				1						1
Strood						1	1		1	3
TOTALS		1	6	8	4	8	2		1	30

¹ Includes friars.

6. **Origins of bequests to Malling Abbey**

	1438-47	1448-57	1458-67	1468-77	1478-87	1488-97	1498-1507	1508-17	1518-27	1528-37	1438-1522
W. MALLING		2		2	4	2	2		6	3	21
Cobham										1	1
Frindsbury			1								1
Halling		1									1
Leybourne								1			1
Snodland				1							1
Wateringbury			1								1
TOTALS		3	2	3	4	2	2	1	6	4	27

7. **Origins of bequests to Dartford Priory (Consistory Ct wills)**

	1438-47	1448-57	1458-67	1468-77	1478-87	1488-97	1498-1507	1508-17	1518-27	1528-37	1438-1522
DARTFORD		2	3	4	1	2	1		3	6	22
Bromley									1		1
Cobham								1			1
Eltham								1			1
Stone				1							1
Sutton at Hone				1							1
Wilmington		1									1
TOTALS		3	3	6	1	2	1	2	4	6	28

8. **Proportions of Higham testators mentioning their local nunnery**

	1438-47	1448-57	1458-67	1468-77	1478-87	1488-97	1498-1507	1508-17	1518-22	1438-1522
No. mentions	0	0	4	5	2	3	1	0	0	15
Total wills	3	10	16	7	6	9	6	7	1	65
%	0	0	25	71.4	33.3	33.3	16.7	0	0	23.1

9. **Proportions of West Malling testators mentioning their local nunnery**

	1438-47	1448-57	1458-67	1468-77	1478-87	1488-97	1498-1507	1508-17	1518-27	1528-37	1438-1522
No. mentions	0	2	0	2	4	2	2	0	6	3	21
Total wills	2	13	13	15	12	9	14	11	17	12	118
%	0	15.4	0	13.3	33.3	22.2	14.3	0	35.3	25	17.8

10. **Origins of bequests to Aylesford Priory (in order of numbers of bequests)**

	1438-47	1448-57	1458-67	1468-77	1478-87	1488-97	1498-1507	1508-17	1518-27	1528-37	1438-1522
W. Malling	1	4	6	5	5	2	3	1	2		29
Aylesford		4	4		1	3	5	3	1	7	28
Rochester			3	3	1	6	1		8	3	25
Hadlow	1	2	3	2		3	2	2	1	2	18
Yalding		6	6	3	1			2			18
Snodland	2	3	2	5						1	13
Hoo St. Werb.		2	5	1			1				9

	1438-47	1448-57	1458-67	1468-77	1478-87	1488-97	1498-1507	1508-17	1518-27	1528-37	1438-1537
Shorn		6		1	3		1				8
Burham		1	1		1	1	1	1	1		7
Cobham		1	1	3		1				1	7
Seal		3		1	1		1				6
Tonbridge		2	4								6
Birling			1	2	1		1				5
Frindsbury	3	1		1							5
Ryarsh		2	1	2							5
Shipbourne		1		1	1	1		1			5
Strood	1	2			1				1		5
Trottscliffe		1	2				1	1			5
W. Farleigh		4	1								5
Wouldham		1	1				1			2	5
Brenchley		2		1	1						4
Stoke in Hoo			2		1				1		4
Addington			2	1							3
Chalk		1	1			1					3
Halling	1	1	1								3
Halstow (Hoo)				1	1					1	3
Higham		1				1			1		3
Horsmonden		1		1				1			3
Pembury		1	1							1	3
St. Mary (Hoo)			1	1	1						3
Tudeley			1	1	1						3
Wateringbury		1	1				1				3
W. Peckham					1					2	3
Capel		1	1								2
Chatham		2									2
Cowden					1		1				2
Cuxton		1	1								2
Dartford			1	1							2
Hartley		1		1							2
Mereworth					1	1					2
Offham	1				1						2
Southfleet	1	1									2
All Hallows (Hoo)							1				1
Ash			1								1
Cooling										1	1
E. Barming			1								1
Edenbridge	1										1
Leybourne			1								1
Longfield			1								1
Luddesdown	1										1
Ridley		1									1
Teston		1									1
Westerham			1								1
TOTALS	14	62	59	38	22	21	20	12	16	21	284

11. **Dartford testators mentioning Dartford Priory in wills (Consistory Ct & PCC wills)**

The figures in brackets are the numbers and proportions of female testators.

	Total no. wills	No. testators mention priory	% of wills mentioning priory	No testators mention friars	No of testators mentioning friars only
1438-47	7 (1)	0	0%	0	-
1448-57	15 (1)	3 (0)	20%	3 (0)	0
1458-67	23 (8)	5 (1)	21.7%	3 (0)	0
1468-77	15 (2)	4 (1)	26.7%	1 (0)	0
1478-87	10 (0)	1 (0)	10%	0	-
1488-97	9 (0)	2 (0)	22.2%	1 (0)	0
1498-1507	18 (6)	3 (0)	16.7%	3 (0)	2 (0)
1508-17	8 (1)	1 (0)	12.5%	1 (0)	1 (0)
1518-27	20 (1)	1 (0)	20%	1 (0)	0
1528-37	33 (8)	2 (1)	9.1%	2 (1)	2 (1)
1438-1537	158 (28)	26 (3)	16.5%	15 (1)	5 (1)

Appendix Five:

Pious fraternities in the diocese of Rochester

(arranged by dedication)

This appendix lists all pious fraternities in the diocese of Rochester mentioned in wills proved in the consistory court of Rochester, from 1438. This excludes the peculiar deanery of Shoreham. The references given are to the earliest and last wills mentioning each fraternity, although there is only one will in many cases. In some cases, other documents not used here, such as PCC wills, demonstrate the existence of fraternities outside the date range given.

Fraternities	Dates	No. refs	First and last will references
All Saints			
Betsham chapel ¹ (Southfleet parish)	1450	1	DRb/Pwr1/110v
Dartford	1440-1466	6	DRb/Pwr1/2, DRb/Pwr2/366 ²
Erith	1465-1500	2	DRb/Pwr2/329, DRb/Pwr5/362
Blessed Virgin Mary			
Erith	1500	1	DRb/Pwr5/362
Strood	1518-24	2	DRb/Pwr7/124v, DRb/Pwr7/310v
West Malling	1444-1534	82	DRb/Pwr1/21, DRb/Pwr9/181
Blessed Virgin and St. George			
Lewisham	1527-8	2	DRb/Pwr8/129, DRb/Pwr8/161v
Corpus Christi			
Shorn	1443-91	3	DRb/Pwr1/13, DRb/Pwr5/185
Holy Trinity			
Dartford	1448-1505	9	DRb/Pwr1/60, DRb/Pwr6/99 ³
East Greenwich	1455-82	9	DRb/Pwr2/28v, DRb/Pwr6/11v
Lewisham	1471-1514	8	DRb/Pwr3/109v, DRb/Pwr7/22v
Gravesend	1442	1	DRb/Pwr1/7
Jesus			
Tonbridge	1470-72	4	DRb/Pwr3/119, DRb/Pwr4/9v
St. Anne			
East Greenwich	1475-1516	5	DRb/Pwr4/186v, DRb/Pwr7/78

¹ This chapel of ease in the hamlet of Betsham was mentioned in a small number of wills. The chapel also possessed an image of Our Lady.

² There is also a reference in a PCC will dated 1464. This fraternity was still in existence in the early sixteenth century (see chapter six).

³ There is also a reference in a PCC will dated 1464. This fraternity continued in existence after 1505 (see chapter six).

St. Anne and St. George			
East Greenwich	1540	2	DRb/Pwr9/300, Drb/Pwr9/315
St. Anthony and St. Barbara			
Rochester (St. Nicholas)	1481	1	DRb/Pwr3/224
St. Barbara			
Dartford	1504-5	1	DRb/Pwr6/99
Gravesend	1500-1522	3	DRb/Pwr5/316v, DRb/Pwr7/256v
St. Christopher			
East Greenwich	1455-82	9	DRb/Pwr2/28v, DRb/Pwr6/11v
St. Clement			
Woolwich	1537	1	DRb/Pwr9/248v
St. George			
Westerham	1531-7	3	DRb/Pwr9/213v, DRb/Pwr9/242
St. Hildevert			
Swanscombe	1451-65	2	DRb/Pwr1/111v, DRb/Pwr2/329v
St. John			
Ridley	1446	1	DRb/Pwr1/38
St. Margaret			
Addington	1500	1	DRb/Pwr6/279
St. Mary Magdalene			
All Hallows (Hoo)	1453	1	DRb/Pwr1/137
St. Michael and St. James			
Birling	1473-4	2	DRb/Pwr4/165v, DRb/Pwr4/144
St. Peter			
Milton next Gravesend	1528-33	2	DRb/Pwr8/173v, DRb/Pwr9/92
St. Thomas the Martyr			
Dartford	1456	1	DRb/Pwr2/4.
St. Werburgh			
St. Werburgh (Hoo)	1496	1	DRb/Pwr5/276v.
Unidentified			
Yalding	1479	1	DRb/Pwr3/260

Appendix Six

Books mentioned in Rochester consistory court wills, 1438-1537¹

	Laity					Clergy				
	1438-57	1458-77	1478-97	1498-1517	1518-37	1438-57	1458-77	1478-97	1498-1517	1518-37
Total no. wills	531	1,175	801	957	1,166	15	23	9	12	28
Total no. testators mentioning books	12	33	23	18	19	6	12	6	7	10
Liturgical books										
Antiphoners*	4	3	7	4	4					
Breviaries/liggers*	1		1				1			
Grails/graduale*	1	2	1		2					
Manuals*			1		1		2			
Missals*	1	10	4	5	5		2			2
Ordinals*							2			
Le Pye*							1			
Portiphona/portuos*	1	1	3	1		3	5	2	3	2
Dinge books*		1								
Primers/books of hours*	1	1	3	1			2			
Book of Service of the Crucifixion of Jesus				1						
Processionals*		2	3	2	2		3		1	
Psalters*	1	1					1			
Unspecified	4	6	4	2	3	1	2			
Bibles, etc										
Bibles*						1				1
Gospels*							1			
Apocalypse							1			
Medieval theological treatises										
Dives and Pauper*										1
Florum Bartholomei							1			
Summa Summarum							1	1		
Rolle, De meditat							1			
'Morall booke'										1
Speculum							1			
Summa Anglicanum										1
Pastoral theology										
Le Parrishprest	1									
Pars Occuli*							1	1		
Pupilla Occuli*						1	2			
Patristic writings										
Vitas Patrum*							1		1	
Philosophy										
Boethius, De consolatione*							1			
Saints' lives										
Legenda Aurea*							3			
'Legenda temporal'*			1							
Legenda Sanctorum*			1	1						
'The Visitation' (life of BVM)									1	
Legent/legendaries			2	3						

¹ The numbers refer to testators mentioning each kind of book (eg. missals), rather than the number of examples found in wills. Included are bequests of actual books, bequests of money for books to be bought and bequests of money for the repair of books already possessed by the beneficiary (only a few examples of the latter). Mentions of non-liturgical books mostly refer to actual books in the testator's possession. Books marked * were also found by Tanner in late medieval Norwich wills (Norman P. Tanner, *The Church in late medieval Norwich 1370-1532* (Toronto, 1984), pp.193-7.

	1438-57	1458-77	1478-97	1498-1517	1518-37	1438-57	1458-77	1478-97	1498-1517	1518-37
'Legent of Seyntez in englishe'										1
Lives of Christ										
Vita Cristi (in English)										1
Sermons										
Sermonis Hugonis de Prato										1
Sermonis Verige Salutis										1
Sermone Discipuli*									1	
Unidentified							1		1	
Canon law										
Decretals*										1
Unidentified										1
Grammar										
Unidentified			1				1			
Dictionaries										
Ortus vocabulorum*										1
Composita Verborum							1			
Lib verborum difcilum							1			
Dixonibus							1			
Political										
Giles of Rome, De Regimine Principum							1			
Surgery										
Unidentified				1						
Story books										
Gesta Romanorum							1			
Historia Inchoandis							1			
Administrative books		1			1					
Unidentifiable named										
Begins 'Qui anucum'						1				
Botrace		1								
'Terlinus in multis cum aliis contentis'		1								
Janvense									1	
Unspecified books					5	1	3		2	3

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