

THE ABBEY OF BURY ST. EDMUNDS IN THE 14TH CENTURY

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5

THE ABBEY OF BURY ST. EDMUNDS IN THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY:
AN ADMINISTRATIVE STUDY

by

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ABSTRACT

This study of developments at Bury St. Edmunds illustrates the problems preventing the abbey from attaining new dimensions of power, prestige or wealth in the fourteenth century. Conservative policies were followed in response to economic and social pressures; a dislike of innovation in internal financial management, in estate exploitation and in dealing with tenant discontent was characteristic. Internally, the abbey's leaders failed to exhibit reforming zeal; in relations with the crown and the papacy they adopted defensive positions in order to maintain secular powers and ecclesiastical independence.

Several factors accounted for these developments. Economic uncertainties of the period, inelastic sources of income, and heavy obligations to king and pope resulted in financial instability; and royal and papal influence frequently circumscribed the abbey's independence. The abbot's numerous public responsibilities and an ingrown leadership also prevented significant reform and contributed to the conservative, defensive direction of administration in the fourteenth century.

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L'Abbaye de "Bury St. Edmunds" au 14^{ème} siècle:
Une étude administrative

L'étude des développements à Bury St. Edmunds démontre les facteurs qui ont empêché l'abbaye d'atteindre le pouvoir, le prestige et la richesse au 14^{ème} siècle. En réponse aux pressions économiques et sociales une attitude conservatrice a été adoptée. Il existait une aversion de l'innovation dans plusieurs domaines administratifs internes; à l'égard du pouvoir royal et celui du pape, les chefs ont adoptée une attitude défensive afin de conserver leur pouvoir séculaire et leur indépendance ecclésiastique.

Il y a plusieurs critères qui expliquent ces développements. Il était difficile d'obtenir de l'argent, et des très grosses obligations envers le roi et le pape ont abouti à une situation financière instable. Les très grandes responsabilités publiques de l'abbé et la qualité inférieure des chefs de l'abbaye ont empêché toute réforme importante et ont abouti à une attitude conservatrice et défensive de l'administration au 14^{ème} siècle.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	v
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Footnotes	12
II. PROBLEMS IN THE INTERNAL ADMINISTRATION OF THE ABBEY IN THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY....	14
Footnotes	46
III. PROBLEMS IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE ABBHEY'S RESOURCES IN THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY	54
The Extent of the Abbey's Resources ...	54
The Economic and Social Trends on the Estates of the Abbey	66
The Expenses of the Abbey in the Fourteenth Century	100
Factors in Financial Management	130
Footnotes	139
IV. THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE ABBEY TO THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT	158
Jurisdictional Rights and Responsibilities	159
The Parliamentary Role of the Abbot	178
The Abbot as Tenant-in-Chief and Feudal Overlord	184
The King as Patron	194
Footnotes	204
V. BURY ST. EDMUNDS AND THE CHURCH	215
The Relationship to the Papacy	215
The Abbey in 14th Century Monasticism; The Challenge of the Friars and the Benedictine Chapters	236
Footnotes	245

VI. CONCLUSION	253
APPENDIXES	264
I. THE ABBOTS OF BURY ST. EDMUNDS IN THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY	264
II. LAND USAGE IN THE LIBERTY OF ST. EDMUND: 1279	266
III. PEASANT HOLDINGS IN 1279	269
BIBLIOGRAPHY	270

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I. INTRODUCTION

"Shrine of the King, Cradle of the Law"

The borough of Bury St. Edmunds owes its present motto, "Shrine of the King, Cradle of the Law," to the existence of the abbey within its gates. Today only the bare outlines of the cloister and the abbey church remain where once stood one of the greatest abbeys in medieval England. Endowed from the eleventh century with extensive civil and ecclesiastical rights, the Benedictine abbey of Bury St. Edmunds in the high Middle Ages succeeded in maintaining its position as a great landholder and as an institution which could not escape its economic, political or religious function in relation to the conditions of medieval society.

Sixty miles north of London in the county of Suffolk lies the shrine of St. Edmund, the martyred East Anglian king slain by the Danes in 870. By 903 a group of secular clergy was guarding the body of the saint, and there they remained until 1020 when King Cnut and Bishop Aelfwin of Elmham introduced twenty Benedictine monks from the nearby houses of Ely and St. Benet of Hulme. By 1213 the abbey had grown from a small stone building with only twenty monks to a large complex of buildings with nearly seventy monks.

The abbot was a tenant-in-chief of the crown and a feudal lord in his own right; as the holder of franchisal jurisdiction over the Liberty of St.

Edmund, the abbot possessed civil powers equalled by very few ecclesiastical figures in the kingdom. It was on the high altar of the abbey church in November of 1214 that a group of barons swore to obtain liberties from King John, and it was here that Henry III and Edward I held parliaments in 1267 and 1296. Like many other Benedictine houses, the abbey of Bury possessed extensive holdings which insured economic power as well. The landed wealth of the abbey brought considerable rewards but also brought with it many responsibilities. In size and influence the abbey's position in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries could match that of Glastonbury, Peterborough or St. Albans, and like these abbeys, Bury was never far removed from the activities of the nation or the king, from Canterbury or Rome.

The well established civil and ecclesiastical privileges and the advantageous economic trends of the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries provided a healthy atmosphere for Bury St. Edmunds. Though not totally free from problems and external pressures, the abbey flourished in this period.. Capable administrators, such as the energetic Abbot Samson (1182-1211) did

much to preserve the abbey's privileges and to extend its resources. But the evident vitality of Bury in the high Middle Ages could not disguise completely the signs of the difficulties to come in the later Middle Ages. The increasing centralization of the English government, particularly under Edward I, brought pressures to bear upon the powers of the abbots; forever defensive of its civil powers and the financial rights such powers implied, the abbey found its position challenged in the later thirteenth century.

The growing burden of taxation and the other payments to the crown also threatened the economic resources of the abbey. While the expanding economy of the thirteenth century continued to support the daily needs of the house, the prospect of heavy and unaccustomed expenses signalled difficulties, particularly if a confluence of unfavorable economic trends should affect the abbey's estates. The centralized character of the papal bureaucracy was another factor in the emerging difficulties of the abbey in the later thirteenth century. Although Bury as an exempt abbey had a special relationship with the papacy, this could be as much a source of difficulty as a benefit. The financial demands of the papacy increased in the thirteenth century: papal income taxes fell on the abbey with increasing regularity and heavy expenses associated

4

with abbatial elections were a new factor with which the monastery had to contend.

A final challenge in the thirteenth century indicated that the abbey's position might undergo change in the next century. Monasticism in general and Bury in particular had witnessed the growth of the new mendicant orders with considerable misgivings. The popularity of the friars and their underlying doctrinal positions threatened the endowed wealth and moral ascendancy of the regular orders. Bury's defense of monastic privilege in response to the Franciscan attempts to settle in the town was, in the end, only partially successful. These challenges were indicative of the changed position and influence of monasticism within society. The period of outstanding cultural contribution of monasticism to society was passing by the end of the thirteenth century;¹ leadership in politics and within the church had begun to pass to bishops and the friars; and the economic situation which was bound to affect any well-endowed institution was beginning to present problems which called for vigorous leadership and firm management on the part of monastic leaders.*

It is the purpose of this study to describe and explain selected administrative problems at the abbey of Bury St. Edmunds in the fourteenth century. Many of the changes and developments in fourteenth century England produced new challenges and problems for the

regular orders. Some of these problems were the result of trends begun in the latter part of the thirteenth century; others were newer developments which produced entirely new situations calling for innovative methods of management. As leaders of one of the most important Benedictine monasteries in England, the abbots of St. Edmunds were confronted with economic, political and religious changes which deeply affected both the abbey's position within society and the internal stability of the house. How the abbey's leaders responded to these new demands and the extent to which trends at Bury reflected the general trends of Benedictine monasticism in this period will serve a useful purpose in the study of medieval ecclesiastical history.

Much of the monastic history of the Middle Ages has been approached from the viewpoint of a criticism or defense of monasticism as a way of life: of chronicling laxity of discipline and explaining reform movements, or of merely exploring the economic impact of the various orders.² These approaches are valid, of course, but they seem to present only a partially explained and isolated view of monastic developments. The recent works of David Knowles,³ however, depend on a balanced, comprehensive and analytical treatment of trends in monastic history and are of inestimable value in the field of medieval ecclesiastical history. Studies of individual monastic houses, studies which concentrate

on examining the internal administration and the external relationship of a single house within a more narrowly defined period of time, can enlarge the impact of David Knowles' works.

Such studies have the advantage of allowing us to isolate the most important historical factors which affected the fortunes of an individual house. By focusing on the particular circumstances of a single monastery, and by adopting a topical rather than a chronological approach, the existence of certain recurring administrative problems becomes apparent. Economic pressures, the relationship of a monastery to the crown, the position of an abbey within the church and patterns in internal leadership are all important features in the administration of a medieval abbey. A detailed analysis of the trends in each of these areas when applied to a single house can reveal more clearly the nature and scope of the problems which were faced by the administrative officials.

This type of integrated analysis of the problems in the administration of a single house has not yet been undertaken on any wide scale. Recent studies of individual abbeys have tended to emphasize only a single factor, such as financial administration or economic difficulties,⁴ or have outlined chronological developments.⁵ Both of these approaches have merit, but they often prevent careful consideration of the variety of

important administrative problems faced by the monastic officials. This present study of Bury St. Edmunds is an attempt to present an integrated and more comprehensive analysis of the abbey's problems within the context of medieval society. By concentrating mainly on the fourteenth century, such an analysis can also illustrate the degree to which the abbey's fortunes were influenced by the particular economic, political and religious developments of the period.

Certain aspects of the history of the abbey of Bury St. Edmunds have received the attention of historians. Albert Goodwin's The Abbey of St. Edmundsbury⁶ is the only recent history of the abbey, treating its development from the foundation to 1539. Though satisfactory in many respects, it is limited by its chronological approach and loses much of its impact by the failure to adequately distinguish the many outside pressures upon the abbey. In addition to his work, articles⁷ by H.W.C. Davis, Vivian Galbraith and Rose Graham on topics concerning the early history of the abbey have proved useful for background to the developments of the fourteenth century. Useful also are the various collections of documents and editorial discussions pertaining to the abbey: D.C. Douglas' Feudal Documents from the Abbey of Bury St. Edmunds, R.H.C. Davis' The Kalendar of Abbot Samson, and Antonia Gransden's edition of The Letter Book of William of Hoo, Sacrist of Bury St. Edmunds

1280-1294,⁸ contain much additional background information and helpful interpretations of source material from the eleventh through the thirteenth centuries.

Although little attention has been directed specifically to developments at the abbey in the fourteenth century, two important studies on particular topics have provided valuable interpretations and information which I have made use of. M.D. Lobel's The Borough of Bury St. Edmunds: A Study in the Government and Development of a Monastic Town⁹ is a detailed and comprehensive analysis of the political and economic conflicts between the abbey and the town, an aspect of Bury's history which had important consequences for the policies of the monastic officials in the fourteenth century. M.R. James'¹⁰ "On the Abbey of St. Edmund at Bury" describes the abbey's library and architectural history from its foundation through the fourteenth century. Both of these topics lie somewhat outside the scope of the present study, but his research, while rather antiquarian in nature, has provided additional information useful for illustrating some trends in monastic development in the later Middle Ages.

As far as possible, this study is based upon primary source material. Unfortunately, I have been unable to examine original manuscript collections which would have been particularly valuable for determining trends on the estates of the abbey. Customals, rentals,

court rolls and manorial extents pertaining to the abbey do exist for the fourteenth century, and can perhaps provide the basis for future, more detailed studies of economic conditions on the lands of the abbey.¹¹ However, a number of printed sources have been particularly useful; a full listing appears in the bibliography, but a few comments on the major sources should be made. In addition to the collections of documents cited above, two sources from periods earlier than the fourteenth century help to illuminate the historical background of the abbey. The Chronicle of Jocelin of Brakelond,¹² edited and translated by H.E. Butler, covers the period at the abbey from 1173 to 1203. Despite his often confused chronology, Jocelin's chronicle is unusual. Personal, lively, amusing, his presentation of the day to day life in a medieval abbey can be matched by few monastic writers, and his description of the problems of the abbot and convent has left us a picture of one of Bury's shrewdest, most vigorous and able administrators: Abbot Samson (1182-1211). Unfortunately, the later works composed at the abbey lack some of the details and the immediacy which Jocelin provided, but The Chronicle of Bury St. Edmunds, 1212-1301,¹³ recently edited and translated by Antonia Gransden, provides much useful first hand information on thirteenth century developments, particularly on taxation and relations with the crown.

The two most valuable collections of material for

the fourteenth century are contained in Thomas Arnold's
Rolls Series edition of Memorials of St. Edmund's Abbey

and in The Pinchbeck Register,¹⁵ edited by Francis Hervey.

The Memorials of St. Edmund's Abbey contains a wide
variety of source material from earlier periods, but is
most useful for accounts of relations between the abbey
and town in 1327 and 1381, election proceedings in 1302
and 1379, and documents pertaining to the dispute with the
Bishop of Norwich from 1345 to 1350. John of Gosford's
account of the Peasant's Revolt at Bury will be familiar
to many concerned with fourteenth century social history;
less familiar but equally useful, is the "Cronica
Buriensis" which covers the early portion of the century.
There are, of course, many areas where we lack important
documentation: the "Cronica Buriensis" breaks off in
1346, and many internal developments at the abbey,
particularly the effects of the Black Death of 1348/49
can only be the object of our historical speculation.

The Pinchbeck Register, on the other hand, contains
much useful information on the financial resources and
expenditures of the abbey in the first third of the
fourteenth century. Compiled at the abbey c. 1334 by
the monk Walter Pinchbeck, the register contains numerous
copies of papal bulls, charters of privileges from the
crown, lists of knights' fees, tenants and tenements, and
records of manorial customs on some of the abbey lands.
Again we might wish for documentation from the latter

part of the fourteenth century. Evidence from the Pinchbeck Register can do no more than suggest the direction of economic changes and managerial techniques in the early fourteenth century, but additional evidence from other sources, particularly the Calendars of the Close and Patent Rolls, confirms that the abbey faced a number of serious problems in the later Middle Ages. New challenges and new demands threatened both the abbey's position in the world and its internal stability. A vigorous defense of monastic privilege and skillful leadership were necessary, but that leadership was often lacking and that defense became increasingly more difficult for Bury St. Edmunds in the fourteenth century.

Footnotes

¹David Knowles, "The Cultural Influence of English Medieval Monasticism," The Cambridge Historical Journal, VII (1943), pp. 146-159.

²Francis A. Gasquet, English Monastic Life (London, 1904); Cuthbert Butler, Benedictine Monachism (London, 1919); and G.G. Coulton, Five Centuries of Religion (4 vols.; Cambridge, 1923-50) are characteristic of this approach.

³David Knowles, The Monastic Order in England (Cambridge, 1941) and The Religious Orders in England (3 vols.; Cambridge, 1948-59).

⁴Useful examples of this type are: Edwin N. Gorsuch, "Mismanagement and Ecclesiastical Visitation of English Monasteries in the Early-Fourteenth Century," Traditio, XXVIII (1972), pp. 473-482; Gabrielle Lambrick, "Abingdon Abbey Administration," Journal of Ecclesiastical History, XVII (1966), pp. 159-183; and R.A.L. Smith, "The Central Financial System of Christ Church, Canterbury, 1182-1512," E.H.R., LV (1940), pp. 353-367.

⁵An example of this approach is L.F. Rushbrook Williams, History of the Abbey of St. Alban (London, 1917).

⁶Albert Goodwin, The Abbey of St. Edmundsbury (Oxford, 1931).

⁷H.W.C. Davis, "The Commune of Bury St. Edmunds, 1264," E.H.R., XXIV (1909), pp. 313-317; *idem*, "The Liberties of Bury St. Edmunds," E.H.R., XXIV (1909), pp. 417-431; Vivian Galbraith, "The East Anglian See and the Abbey of Bury St. Edmunds," E.H.R., XL (1925), pp. 222-228; *idem*, "St. Edmundsbury Chronicle, 1296-1301," E.H.R., LVIII (1943), pp. 51-78; Rose Graham, "A Papal Visitation of Bury St. Edmunds and Westminster in 1234," E.H.R., XXVII (1912), pp. 728-739.

⁸Feudal Documents from the Abbey of Bury St. Edmunds, ed., D.C. Douglas (London, 1932); The Kalendar of Abbot Samson of Bury St. Edmunds and Related Documents, ed. R.H.C. Davis (Camden Society, 3rd Series, LXXXIV, 1954); The Letter Book of William of Hoo, Sacrist of Bury St. Edmunds 1280-1294, ed. Antonia Gransden (Suffolk Records Society, V, 1963).

⁹M.D. Lobel, The Borough of Bury St. Edmunds: A Study in the Government and Development of a Monastic Town (Oxford, 1935). See also her article "The Ecclesiastical Banleuca in England," in Oxford Essays in Medieval History presented to Herbert Edward Salter (Oxford, 1934), pp. 122-140.

¹⁰ M.R. James, "On the Abbey of S. Edmund at Bury," Cambridge Antiquarian Society, 8vo ser., XXVIII (1895); see also his article "Bury St. Edmunds Manuscripts," E.H.R., XLI (1926), pp. 251-260 where he revises his earlier list of Bury manuscripts.

¹¹ Lists and descriptions of manuscripts pertaining to Bury St. Edmunds can be found in William Dugdale, Monasticon Anglicanum, ed. Caley, et. al. (6 vols. in 8; London, 1817-1830), III, pp. 98-176 and in The Victoria History of the Counties of England: Suffolk, ed. William Page (2 vols.; London, 1907-1911), II, pp. 56ff.

¹² The Chronicle of Jocelin of Brakelond, ed. and trans. H.E. Butler (London, 1949).

¹³ The Chronicle of Bury St. Edmunds, 1212-1301, ed. and trans. Antonia Gransden (London, 1964).

¹⁴ Memorials of St. Edmund's Abbey, ed. Thomas Arnold (3 vols.; Rolls Series, London, 1890-96).

¹⁵ The Pinchbeck Register, ed. Francis Hervey (2 vols.; Brighton, 1925).

II. PROBLEMS IN THE INTERNAL ADMINISTRATION OF THE ABBEY IN THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY

An examination of the problems of internal administration and the quality of monastic life at Bury St. Edmunds in the fourteenth century must first consider the nature of abbatial leadership. The smooth functioning of any Benedictine abbey depended very much on the quality of the abbot; this was as true in the fourteenth century as it had been in earlier periods of Benedictine monasticism. Both the original independence and authority of the abbot as legislated by St. Benedict and the growing separation of the abbot from the community of monks so characteristic of the later Middle Ages meant that the abbot's leadership was a critical factor in maintaining internal stability and cohesion as well as external prestige and respectability. In a period when monasticism was increasingly coming under attack for the failure to live up to its ideals and when the external demands from the state and the church threatened its stability and existence, vigorous leadership, both spiritual and temporal, was a necessity.

The theoretical basis for the quasi-absolute powers of the abbot had been simply and clearly set forth in the Benedictine Rule. The ideal envisaged by the order's

founder encompassed a united community of monks led by the spiritual guidance of their abbot, to whom they owed complete obedience. St. Benedict legislated for the monks, "In all things to obey the abbot's commands, even though he himself (which God forbid) should act otherwise."¹ This ideal, of course, placed a great deal of responsibility on the abbot. He was given wide powers of punishment which he himself determined: corporal punishment, excommunication and the right to "use the severing knife," to expel an unworthy monk.² St. Benedict naturally assumed that the abbot would not be a tyrant and carefully explained that the abbot was responsible not only for his own actions but for the actions of those under his care as well. According to the Rule, the abbot also controlled the appointment of all officials. The advice of the community was considered, but he was not bound to act by it:

Whenever any weighty matters have to be transacted in the monastery let the abbot call together all the community and himself propose the matter for discussion. After hearing the advice of the brethren let him consider it in his own mind, and then do what he shall judge most expedient.³

Theoretically the abbot of a Benedictine monastery was to be more concerned with the spiritual oversight of his monks than with problems of temporal administration, for it was a basic requirement of all within the community "to become a stranger to the ways of the world."⁴ The abbot was the father of his monks, and he himself was

bound to follow the Rule along with the rest of the community. The difficulties in respect to keeping an "unworldly" attitude, in exercising authority, and in remaining close to the rest of the monks were clearly evident at Bury St. Edmunds throughout the Middle Ages, as they were for the abbots of other Benedictine houses.

The major change in the organization of a Benedictine house from the sixth to the twelfth century was the gradual isolation of the abbot from the rest of the community. It is true that St. Benedict's abbot, by virtue of his authority, was, in a sense, separated from the convent. Yet, until the twelfth century, the abbot still participated in the common life to the full extent, eating and sleeping with the monks and usually in constant residence at the abbey.⁵ As a result of the feudalization of the abbot's position and the separation of the abbot's revenues from those of the convent, the abbot of a large medieval monastery had his own officials and responsibilities which resulted in an abbot maintaining a private household with his own servants, thus drawing him away from close contact with the rest of the monks. The abbots of Bury were, throughout the Middle Ages, constantly involved in the business of the world, travelling about in their capacities as tenants-in-chief of the king, members of Parliament, agents of the papacy, and manorial administrators. Thus by the twelfth century, the family organization described by

St. Benedict had been replaced by a large organization administered by an absentee or sometimes autocratic ruler, out of touch with the rest of the community. Practices such as the abbot dining with selected monks or with guests apart from the rest of the community were symptomatic of such changes in outlook, and were sources of concern and attempted reform in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries; but to a large extent the separation of the abbot from the community and the autocratic nature of his rule were entrenched features which presented not a few problems in monastic administration.⁶

There is ample evidence to illustrate that the separation of the abbot from the community and the subsequent decline in the common life were features of Bury's history and that the trend probably became more pronounced in the fourteenth century. The maintenance of a separate household and residence within the abbey precincts for the abbots of Bury was already established by the time of Abbot Hugh (1157-1180), and Jocelin de Brakelond fully describes Abbot Samson's administration of his own household and the abbot's frequent absences. The comment by Jocelin that Abbot Samson was often happier away from the convent when he was living on his own estates⁷ reveals one of the trends in monastic leadership in the Middle Ages. The absence of the abbot may, at times, have been necessary in view of the public responsibilities and the necessity for administering the abbot's own

resources, but it could not fail to result in a situation far different from the one desired by the order's founder.

By the end of the thirteenth century it is evident that the abbot's household at Bury had grown steadily. A late thirteenth century document detailing the weekly expenditures of the convent shows that the abbot was supporting a number of servants in addition to his clerical staff employed to aid him in litigation and other temporal business.⁸ The separate household of the abbot was but one symptom of the growing separation of the abbot and community. The tendency for many abbots to spend time away from the abbey and instead to reside on their own estates for periods of time is also indicative of this separation. Abbot Thomas of Totington (1302-1313) was forced to live on his various manors soon after his election in an effort to reduce the expenses of his household,⁹ and both Abbot Richard de Draughton and William de Bernham were frequently absent from the abbey for this reason. Although the kidnapping of the unfortunate Richard de Draughton in 1328 after the disturbance between the abbey and the town the year before could hardly have been foreseen, his absence from the abbey for a period of eight months obviously impaired successful administration and supervision. As David Knowles has pointed out, the profusion of public business consequent upon the abbot's position and the necessity for administering a separate

household placed the abbots of a monastery such as Bury in a position where continuous and careful leadership as originally intended by St. Benedict was difficult to carry out: "Few, under such conditions, can have remained true spiritual fathers of their monks."¹⁰

A parallel development to absenteeism and separation of the abbot from the community was the tendency for the abbots of Benedictine monasteries to become increasingly independent in exercising their authority within the abbey. It is quite true that the Rule provided for the chapter, or in some cases the senior pars of the monks, to act as a consultative body when decisions affecting the administration of the abbey had to be made. But the movement towards the "democratization" of Benedictine houses which had gained strength during the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries had largely finished by the time of the Benedictine Constitutions of 1336.¹¹ In general, we find that the conventual checks exercised by individual chapters were not entirely successful in limiting either autocratic tendencies or preventing mismanagement on the part of the abbot. It was more characteristic in the period of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries to find an abbot being guided by his own council made up of his lawyers and a few monks to aid him in his decisions.¹² Abbot Samson had used a "council" consisting of knights and clerks to oversee temporal matters instead of consulting with the chapter for all decisions; more

often he decided matters affecting temporal administration by himself, not, however, without causing some adverse criticism by his monks.¹³ In 1232 Pope Gregory IX attempted to regulate the monastic handling of temporal affairs. The statutes drawn up in 1234 by the papal visitors empowered to put into effect Pope Gregory's decrees at Bury St. Edmunds provided for a small number of monks chosen by the abbot to act as a council on manorial administration and left only those matters which concerned "the salvation of souls or the great utility of the church" in the hands of the chapter.¹⁴ Although evidence is lacking on the exact composition of the abbot's council in the fourteenth century, the basic system was still maintained. An agreement between the Duke of Lancaster's council and the council of Abbot John de Brinkeley regarding the court-leet of Cowling in Suffolk is recorded for 1369;¹⁵ presumably the abbot's staff of clerks and perhaps a few monks were engaged in the negotiations.

In some respects, the substitution of a council composed of lawyers and a few monks was a realistic and sensible way of administering the abbey's business, for it would certainly have been a cumbersome process to put all technical and temporal matters of administration before the entire chapter meetings. But this effort to increase efficiency and remove temporal affairs from the intrusion into religious life undoubtedly resulted in

isolating what might be important decisions affecting the whole abbey from the consideration of the monks. In short, there was little recourse to be had by the monks in the face of too authoritarian an abbot and little ground for complaint if an abbot acted independently. As R.H. Snape has illustrated:

The only way in which the monastery could thwart an abbot who ignored the Chapter, or took possession of the common seal, or refused to give account of his administration, was by an appeal to the bishop or the visitor of the Order.¹⁶

The virtually autonomous position of the abbot within the convent was to some degree mirrored by the traditionally autonomous character of Benedictine houses in England. Unlike many of the other monastic orders, Benedictine monasticism had, until 1215, maintained a relatively loose organization with the diocesan bishop carrying out visitations, except in the case of exempt abbeys who were under the direct supervision of the papacy. Because Bury St. Edmunds was an exempt abbey, and had fought long and hard against the bishops of Norwich to maintain that privilege, it was therefore necessary that the uninterrupted and vigorous functioning of the General (later Provincial) Chapters of the Black Monks should be sustained. For it was only through the effective use of the triennial visitation system devised by the Chapters that external controls and checks could counteract any tendencies towards autocracy, lack of

supervision, or failure to carry out reforms in monastic discipline and observance. Because the abbots of Bury were virtually independent within the convent and because the exemption from visitation by the diocesan bishop guaranteed a minimum of external interference, the abbot was placed in a highly critical position, and the visitors of the Order were thus the only local and regularly effective body which could deal with the problems arising from internal organization, lack of conventual control, or abbatial misrule.

It is thus apparent that the freedom the abbot enjoyed in the internal administration of the abbey and the independence the monastery itself maintained in relation to outside supervision demanded a man of varied talents to lead it. A.M. Reich has justly commented that

The efficient abbot had to be--besides a pious contemplative--a scholar of encyclopedic knowledge, an able administrator, a diplomat in dealing with or for the royal court, a theologian and canonist, a municipal officer, a judge, an educator, and a social worker.¹⁷

This was as true for the abbots of Bury as for any other important Benedictine house, but, unfortunately, this model of efficiency, wisdom and spiritual leadership was rarely to be found in the abbots of Bury during the fourteenth century. While the tendency towards the loosening of discipline characteristic of the fourteenth century cannot wholly be attributed to the failures of the abbots, they nevertheless bore the main responsibility

for the continued observance of monastic discipline and internal stability of the abbey. In terms of internal administration and the quality of monastic life at Bury, we may examine both the evidence for suggesting that there were periods of laxity in monastic discipline at Bury and also evaluate the quality of abbatial leadership provided to the abbey throughout the period.

One fundamental concept of monasticism--that of stabilitas loci--was often, during the fourteenth century, a difficult one to adhere to. The growth of communities near abbeys and the involvement of monasteries in manorial administration did render it difficult for monks, especially the obedientiaries, to avoid all contact with the secular world. Used as administrators, involved in maintaining and exercising rights over property and tenants, the abbots and monks of Bury did not always stay within the confines of the abbey precincts. Several cases involving both the abbots and a number of monks in the first third of the fourteenth century illustrate this point. In 1310 Abbot Thomas of Totington and Reginald de Denham, "his fellow monk," together with a number of other men, were accused of cutting down and carrying away grass from the meadow of one John de Sancto Philberto in Lackford and of impounding his cattle "without food so that many of them perished."¹⁸ Similar charges against the abbot and monks from Bury were repeated a number of times during the abbacy of

Richard de Draughton (1313-1335): enrolled on the Patent Rolls are six cases between 1314 and 1330 involving Abbot Richard and his fellow monks in cases of alleged assaults, destruction of property and seizure of goods.¹⁹

Two particularly serious charges reveal the extent to which the monks, presumably under the leadership of Abbot Richard, were willing to go to achieve their ends. In 1318 a commission of oyer and terminer was issued to the Earl of Hereford and three others on behalf of John Buteturte and his wife Matilda, who had complained that Abbot Richard together with eight monks and twelve others came to Tivetshale in Norfolk where Matilda and the servants of John were then lodged. The abbot and the monks

maliciously raised a hue and cry against them, expelled the said Matilda and the servants from the inn, carried away the goods of the said John, which were with her in the inn, and assaulted the said servants.²⁰

Three of the eight monks specifically named in the charges and the abbot appear again in a similar case the next year in Norfolk against the same John de Sancto Philbert whose property had been attacked in 1310; assault and the carrying off of goods were again the charges.²¹

The second serious case in 1319 was closer to home and curiously enough finds the forces of the abbey supported by some of the townsmen. Robert de Foxton, a king's clerk who was on royal business at the time, entered the town of Bury for the purpose of stopping off at his house there. But Abbot Richard, nine monks, and forty townsmen

allegedly

called together by ringing the bells of the town of St. Edmunds...plotting the death of the said Robert de Foxton, caused the gates of the town to be shut, he being in the town, and assaulted him, so that with difficulty he escaped from their hands and fled to the church of the abbey, and...the abbot with the rioters surrounded the church and detained him therein, and further... they broke the doors and windows of his house, broke the glass of the windows with stones and assaulted his men.²²

Of the nine monks listed in the charges, six had been involved in previous cases of assault, and one, William de Stowe, later sacrist of the abbey, was to be involved both as an object of the townsmen's hostility in 1327 and in two later cases, one of which involved a murder charge.²³

Whatever the justice of the charges or the provocation leading to this type of action, it cannot be argued that the spectacle of the abbot and a select group of monks ranging as far as Norfolk in their attempts to secure property and becoming involved in assaults was calculated to gain public support or maintain the prestige of the abbey as a religious institution. Abbot Richard de Draughton may have been a "theologus et optimus canonista," as the author of the "Cronica Buriensis" calls him,²⁴ but his actions and the actions of the monks under his care can hardly lead one to conclude that his talents as a spiritual father or as an example of monastic discipline were outstanding. It is therefore not surprising to find that in 1327, just before the outbreak of violence on the

part of the townsmen and tenants of the abbey, thirty-two of the monks were out in the countryside, "enjoying themselves with their friends."²⁵ When the riots broke out, William de Stowe, the sacrist, and some of the vacationing monks sought refuge at St. Benet's of Hulme in Norfolk.²⁶ The actions of the monks who remained at the abbey during the uprising were hardly more praiseworthy; they were accused of imprisoning in the close a group of townspeople, mainly women and children, who were worshipping in the abbey church.²⁷ Monastic discipline and observance were severely disrupted by the events of 1327, and the kidnapping of Abbot Richard in 1328 and his subsequent absence for eight months further hindered normal monastic life.

The charges of monks wandering around the countryside and laxity of discipline in 1327-1328 are paralleled by far more serious ones twenty years later in a long drawn-out dispute between Abbot William de Bernham (1335-1361) and Bishop Bateman of Norwich.²⁸ The initial cause of the dispute, which lasted from 1345 to 1350, was the refusal of Bury St. Edmunds to contribute to a clerical subsidy which had been granted to Bishop Bateman by the pope. The abbey was on legally safe ground in its refusal because the papal bull granting the subsidy specifically excepted all exempt abbeys in the diocese from the payment, but the bishop used this opportunity to attempt to challenge the abbey's long established freedom from

diocesan control. In the process of challenging the exemption, Bishop Bateman's special commissaries handling the case leveled serious charges against the abbey and its abbot. In a letter of 15 July, 1345, to six rectors of the diocese, the bishop's agents charged the monks of Bury with wandering around the countryside, residing on several manors instead of at the convent, committing adultery, fornication, molesting women of the area, and of simony and usury; they furthermore accused Abbot William of complicity in this behavior.²⁹ At issue, according to Bateman, was whether or not an abbey in such a state of discipline could continue to maintain its exempt status. Abbot William's response to the charges and the threatened take-over by the bishop was to appeal to both the papacy and the king.³⁰ Despite all of the bishop's efforts and counteractions, the abbey, in the end, successfully defended itself on the issue of its exempt status,³¹ but the serious charges about the discipline do not appear to have been as successfully answered.

This case calls for closer examination than some writers have given it. Thomas Arnold uses the charges made to illustrate that the abbey had been turned into "a den of cowed ruffians" under the leadership of William de Bernham, who "seems to have been the worst [choice] that the monks ever freely made during the whole existence of the abbey."³² Albert Goodwin in The Abbey of St. Edmundsbury substantially follows this line, arguing that Abbot

William was "debased and hypocritical" in his tolerance of the monks, those "unblushing blackguards [who] divided their time between highway robbery and the systematic abduction of women."³³ To be sure, we cannot wholly accept the self-serving statements of the Bury chronicler when he suggests that the charges and crimes described by the bishop's commissaries were grossly false,³⁴ but it is also evident that the abbey's formidable and skillful opponent in the case was not unmindful of the fact that the charges might help his cause.³⁵ As for the "debased and hypocritical" Abbot William, he did not live up to his earlier promise. He was hastily elected in 1335 because the monks had feared that the election would be reserved to the papacy;³⁶ at that time he was described as a "hominem religiosum, generosum, mediocriter literatum, secularium tamen negotiorum ignarum."³⁷ He certainly proved to be a poor choice to head an abbey in a period when its prestige in the eyes of the townspeople and neighboring district must have seriously declined,³⁸ but some blame for the general state of laxity in the period must also be attached to the failure of leadership on the part of his predecessor, Abbot Richard de Draughton.

Even under the leadership of a capable and respected abbot such as John de Brinkeley (1361-1379)³⁹ life in a medieval monastery was not always placid. Perhaps the tensions induced by seeing the same faces day after day and the petty squabbles within the community were responsible

for the following unusual incident at Bury in 1369:

Whereas lately, as the king has learned, a strife arose between Brothers John de Norton, John de Grafton and William de Blundeston, monks of the abbey of St. Edmund, by night in the dormitory of the abbey while the other brethren slept, and the said John de Grafton, with a knife called a 'thwytel,' suddenly struck John de Norton to the heart in the presence of William but without his consent, so that he straightway died; and afterwards the abbot and other monks, finding the dead body in the dormitory, totally ignorant of the deed and terrified lest scandal should come on the house, thinking the crime could be secretly concealed and, as it were, put out of mind, in ignorance of the law, buried the body in the cemetery of the monks there without view of the coroner or office of other ministers required in such a case; and afterwards, when the said abbot and convent learned the truth of the matter, the abbot with the assent of the convent had the said John de Grafton and William taken and put them in prison forte et dure.... as pertains to him by the rule of the order, to undergo the punishment for their delict according to the said rule, in which prison they are detained; the king, in consideration of the innocence of the said abbot and convent and of the fact that they have humbly submitted themselves to the king as ignorant of the said felony, and willing to provide for their excuse for the avoidance of scandals and damages which might happen to them and the house, has pardoned them his suit for the said death and burial, and for this that the prior and convent received the said John and William after the said felony. Moreover, considering that the said felony was done in hot conflict and not of malice aforethought, and that the said John and William have long sustained the peine forte et dure of the imprisonment; as the king is informed, he has pardoned them in his suit for the said death.

The attempt at concealing the crime reveals that the state of discipline and the administration of an abbey was more than just an internal matter, for the news of such an event could certainly be broadcast outside of the abbey by the numerous servants and travelling monks. It is evident that the public reputé of the abbey was a

consideration in monastic administration. This case together with the examples drawn from the earlier period show that St. Benedict's ideal of isolation and internal stability was not easily achieved at Bury in the fourteenth century.

A final illustration of the problems within the abbey is provided by the events surrounding the election of John of Timworth and the attempted intrusion of the papal provisor Edmund de Bromfield in 1379.⁴¹ Factionalism and conflict within the abbey spilled over into the public arena, and the result was indeed serious for the abbey. In 1379 John of Timworth, the subprior, was elected abbot by the method of compromise with only one dissenting vote;⁴² the canonical election thus held, the consent of the king was sought to allow Timworth to proceed to the Curia to obtain his confirmation. Because the licence to depart was withheld from Timworth, two monks were sent to Rome with the election documents. Before they had arrived there, Pope Urban VI had by provision already appointed to the abbacy Edmund Bromfield, a monk of Bury then in Rome serving as the proctor of the English Benedictines. Bromfield was apparently a highly ambitious and litigious monk,⁴³ one whom the abbey had been glad to be rid of. On his return to England to claim his office, the situation within the abbey grew serious.

Despite the fact that this was a clear violation of

the Statute of Provisors and despite the repeated warnings and protests of the King's Council, seventeen monks supported Bromfield and encouraged him to come to the abbey where they assured him that he would be accepted as their prelate.⁴⁴ Bromfield sent to the convent a number of papal letters dealing with his appointment, and when a party of his supporters among the monks attempted to read the bulls in the chapter, the result was tumultuous. The prior, John de Cambridge, who supported Timworth's election, was allegedly threatened with knives, and the other monks feared for their lives.⁴⁵ Some of the monks of Bromfield's party left the monastery, went around the countryside to churches where they spread rumors to the people alleging that the prior had wanted to kill them. A crowd was led back to the monastery by the dissident monks, and in front of the high altar in the abbey church, the papal bulls were publicly read. Bromfield was fetched from the Carmelite house in Ipswich where he had been residing until then; flourishing his papal letters and yelling threats of excommunication, he then entered the abbey and was "installed" by one of the monks.⁴⁶ There then followed a period when monastic discipline and observance must have been impossible to practice. According to the almoner John Gosford, Bromfield held his own court, deposed monastic officials without the consent of either the prior or the senior pars of the monks, excommunicated

two opposing monks, ate and dined contrary to all custom with the laymen of the town and with a certain "muliere calefurnia," and tyrannized over the forty-two monks who had opposed him.⁴⁷

The situation grew more serious still when the townsmen entered the fray. Two monks of the provisor's party aroused the inhabitants of the town by declaring their fears of retaliation by the Timworth supporters and by implying that Bromfield would be a far more lenient lord of the town.⁴⁸ Brawling in the churchyard between the two parties led to a direct and final appeal by the monks supporting Timworth, and the eventual intervention of the royal government saved the situation from deteriorating any further.⁴⁹ Bromfield and twelve of his supporters were taken under armed escort to answer charges before the King's Council, the provisor was sent to Nottingham Castle for the next three years, and the twelve dissident monks were dispersed to other abbeys throughout the kingdom.⁵⁰

The significance of this case for the history of the abbey lies in the fact that the internal disturbances and disruption of discipline came at a time when discontent among the townsmen and the tenants was growing. Among the laity of the area, those who supported Bromfield saw an opportunity to obtain as abbot one who would be more favorable to their cause. It is therefore not surprising that in the summer of 1381 when the Peasants' Revolt

broke out in the area, the prior, John de Cambridge, was one of those murdered by the rioters.⁵¹ The abbey was technically leaderless during the period from 1379 to 1383 when Timworth was designated "abbot-elect." His final confirmation in 1385 brought the dispute to a close, but the factionalism and disruption of monastic life had significantly affected the prestige of the abbey. It was not until the end of the century that the convent fully recovered its stability, and under the leadership of William Cratfield began a period of reform which continued into the fifteenth century.

It can be seen from these cases that the monastic life and discipline at Bury during the fourteenth century underwent periods of instability, laxity and even corruption. One factor accounting for this was obviously the quality of abbatial leadership.⁵² It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that most of the abbots lacked the reforming zeal or vigorous leadership which might have reversed the abbey's fortunes. All of the abbots from 1302 to 1389 were selected from within the monastery and were not always chosen from the ranks of the more administratively experienced monks.⁵² An ingrown leadership thus might have been one factor contributing to this lack of energy within the convent. While a leader chosen from outside the abbey might have experienced initial difficulties in gaining acceptance by the monks, such an abbot might have been able to inject a fresh

insight and provided a stimulus for reform in monastic discipline.

An additional problem was the interference of the papacy in abbatial appointments. The provision of John de Brinkeley in 1361 would appear to have been a good choice;⁵³ he had an Oxford education, and as president of the Provincial Chapter of the English Benedictines from 1366 to 1375 took an active role in the activities of the Black Monks and in national politics.⁵⁴ His tenure at Bury was not marked by any widespread, detectable signs of instability or laxity. On the other hand, the papal interference produced by the appointment of Bromfield had severely unfortunate results, and the length of time taken to resolve the case only prolonged an unstable situation.

Both the internal administration of an abbey and the numerous public responsibilities of an abbot demanded a person of many talents to successfully meet the challenges of the fourteenth century. The frequent absences of the abbot, whether because of official duties such as attending Parliament or Convocation or whether because of a conscious policy of residing away from the abbey, together with the lack of integration of the abbot's life with that of the convent was another important factor contributing to the decline of discipline during the period. As David Knowles has pointed out, "the constant entanglement with secular business and intrigues must have

been a permanent influence sapping whatever was left of the spiritual conception of an abbot's office."⁵⁵ This was certainly true of the abbots of Bury.

However, important as abbatial leadership was in maintaining the traditional monastic life, it is necessary to examine three other factors which might account for periods of laxity in discipline and internal instability. The first of these is the important question of the effectiveness and frequency of visitation. W.A. Pantin's extensive work on the functioning of the Benedictine Chapters during the period shows that the capitular legislation did provide common guidelines for monastic practice, and while maintaining the independence of each house, did serve to reduce their insularity.⁵⁶ The enforcement of the statutes was left to the visitors from the order, and these visitations were "particularly valuable in controlling the few but very important monasteries exempt from episcopal jurisdiction."⁵⁷ An evaluation of the effectiveness of the triennial visitations carried out by the delegated representatives of the Chapter is, unfortunately, difficult to make. Few comperta survive from the fourteenth century,⁵⁸ and it is also evident that there were periods when the regular functioning of both the Chapter meetings and visitation procedures were interrupted. Until 1320 the meetings of the Chapter in the Province of Canterbury were plagued by apathy and poor attendance, and a number of meetings were

prorogued, thus interrupting any attempts at reform.⁵⁹ The effects of the Black Death of 1348-49 also prevented the normal sequence, and from 1346 until 1360 there were no meetings of the Provincial Chapter; again the pestilence of 1368-69 also interrupted the system.⁶⁰ On the whole, then, however effective the procedure might be for an individual visitation, it would appear that capitular visitation was not frequent enough nor generally efficient enough to answer some of the needs of monasticism in the fourteenth century.⁶¹

There is no record of a capitular visitation being carried out at Bury St. Edmunds until the end of the century. Although it is certainly possible and probable that visitations were carried out previously when the system was in full force, it is not until 1390 that we have any direct evidence of its application to Bury. In that year the prior of Norwich was appointed to visit Bury, and in 1393 the abbot of St. Benet's of Hulme appointed his prior and another monk to carry out his visitation of the abbey.⁶² Despite the apparent lack of regular visitation on the capitular level, a lack at most crucial times, there was one instance when the interference of the king did promote some reform through a similar device. Edward III appointed the famous and capable Abbot Thomas de la Mare of St. Albans to carry out an independent visitation of the monastic houses of royal patronage between 1362 and 1365. Although the

visit to Bury was technically not a formal visitation. Abbot Thomas was received there, and according to the St. Albans chronicler, he ~~encouraged~~ the prior of Bury, Henry Kirkestede, to remain in office and pursue his attempted reforms.⁶³

But the relative freedom from external control enjoyed by the abbey was only one possible factor in the decline of monastic discipline. A second factor of importance was the recruitment and training of the monks at the abbey. While direct evidence is somewhat scanty on this point, it would seem that, in general, because the monasteries of the fourteenth century suffered from a lack of reforming zeal and were also competing with the friars, the attraction of suitable candidates for the monastic life was more limited than in previous centuries. This trend had probably begun before the fourteenth century,⁶⁴ but a growing lack of public confidence in the monasteries during the fourteenth century must have had adverse effects, as J.R.H. Moorman explains:

As long as men believed that the prayers of the monks were helping to save the world, and as long as they were satisfied that the regulars were vicariously relieving them of their obligations to personal discipline and renunciation, so long would they support the monasteries by their gifts, and men of high ideals would be anxious to attach themselves to some community. But once men lost faith in the virtue of regular life, financial support would tend to diminish and the stream of postulants dry up.⁶⁵

Doubtless there were still men who would be attracted to the monastic life at Bury, for possibilities of both

intellectual attainment and business administration existed along with religious devotion as ways of life within the cloister. But the abbey did show some decline in numbers during the fourteenth century,⁶⁶ and it is possible that the public reputation of the monks as shown by their behavior under Richard de Draughton, William de Bernham and in 1379 set little in the way of an example of asceticism and unworldliness which might have attracted the more spiritually motivated candidate.⁶⁷ An abbot, whatever his capabilities, did, after all, have to work with the existing personnel.

A third and final factor of some importance in explaining the decline in the observance of the common life and the erosion of some of the earlier ideals was the practice of the papacy granting certain privileges to abbots and individual monks.⁶⁸ Although some of the personal or spiritual privileges, such as the right to freely choose a confessor or for plenary indulgence at the hour of death, were not in themselves objectionable, the practice was symptomatic of a deeper problem:

...the fault, where it existed, lay in the manner in which they were solicited, for in many cases they would seem to have been given in answer to the unsanctioned initiative of the individual [monk], implemented by his own private funds.⁶⁹

The abbots of Bury frequently received such grants,⁷⁰ as did a number of monks in the latter part of the fourteenth century. The prior, Edmund de Brundissh, received an indult from Clement VI in 1345 allowing him to choose his

own confessor at the hour of death, and in 1397 and 1403 two other monks received this privilege from Pope Boniface IX.⁷¹ But more serious, in view of the common life, were papal privileges which exempted monks from certain canonical rules: an appointment as a papal chaplain, for instance, freed a monk from the regular observance of monastic life. Boniface IX's pontificate saw an increase in the number of such grants,⁷² and included in a long list of other names in 1399 appears that of John Haywode, a monk of Bury, receiving a papal chaplaincy "with privileges."⁷³

Another practice which increased towards the end of the fourteenth century was for a monk to petition for the right to a benefice, with or without cure of souls. Such an appointment was generally contrary to the true monastic vocation and removed those who personally served as residential vicars or rectors from the regular monastic observance. Only rarely did monks actually directly enter into parish life in this fashion,⁷⁴ but there are two such instances involving Bury monks in the fourteenth century. In 1367 the Archbishop of Canterbury appointed Edmund de Bokingham, a monk of Bury who had been serving as a rector, to the deanery of Bocking under the immediate jurisdiction of the Archbishop;⁷⁵ and later in the century another monk, Walter of Totington, served as the parson of Elyngham in the diocese of Norwich.⁷⁶ While there are not a large number of such papal privileges applied to Bury, the practice can be viewed as one which did, to some degree,

influence the regular observance and could subvert the authority of the abbot at many Benedictine houses in the later Middle Ages.⁷⁷

The preceding examples of a breakdown in monastic discipline and the problems of internal administration at the abbey should not be taken as a complete picture of the monastic life at Bury St. Edmunds in the fourteenth century. Surely the problems and scandals would invite more comment from chroniclers and public officials than the more usual and commonplace activities within the abbey. The monks of Bury and their abbot were, after all, involved in the day to day administration of their official duties and in the regular practices of the times. The obedientiaries among the monks continued to exercise their offices, and although we have no fourteenth century Jocelin of Brakelond to vividly illustrate all of their observances, quarrels and activities, we may presume that many practices remained unchanged and that the daily life within the convent reflected a certain amount of continuity with the past. The division between the claustrales and the obedientiaries may have, as was true in the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries, produced tensions and factions within the abbey which interfered with the normal monastic life. There is some evidence to suggest that there was both an element of conservatism among some monks at the abbey and also an active and continuing interest in writing and education during the fourteenth century. These

trends, as well as the evidence relating to the periods of diminished monastic zeal, need to be considered in formulating a general picture of the quality of monastic life at the abbey.

It has already been noted that in the 1360's, during the rule of Abbot John de Brinkeley, the prior, Henry Kirkstede, promoted some reform and was encouraged in his efforts by the abbot of St. Albans.⁷⁸ In addition to this, W.A. Pantin has pointed to the existence of a Bury book illustrating a conservative reaction to certain new monastic practices in the latter part of the fourteenth century.⁷⁹ A compilation containing treatises on monastic history and comments on the legislation of the General Chapters of the thirteenth century produced by a Bury monk c. 1377 shows that one monk at least was opposed to certain new monastic observances such as meat-eating and shortened offices. Even at this late date, the liberalized reforms introduced by the Benedictine Constitutions of 1336 were not universally well received. The monk's statements regarding the growing laxity of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries may not have been typical by any means of the reaction of the entire monastery, but there is additional evidence that the abbey was also engaged in the production of a number of treatises and tracts on monastic history in an effort to defend monastic values, an effort which was increasingly undertaken at a number of other Benedictine abbeys in the fourteenth century.⁸⁰ The

pioneering work by M.R. James on the library of St. Edmunds and the more recent work of W.R. Ker show that the scriptorium at Bury continued to be an active part of the monastery during the period.⁸¹ Some of the monks and a few of the abbots, especially John de Brinkeley and John Timworth, took an active part not only in the intellectual controversies of the day (particularly over the issue of mendicancy) but were also interested in maintaining an intellectual vigor at the abbey.⁸²

In addition to the work done at the monastery, it is also evident that Bury did support the new movement towards the theological training of selected monks and, in accordance with Benedict XII's Constitutions, sent members of the community to study at the monastic colleges at Oxford and Cambridge.⁸³ The sacrist's accounts from the year 1299 show that even at this early date, the abbey supported out of its own funds at least two monks studying at Oxford,⁸⁴ presumably at Gloucester College which had been established in 1279 by the Benedictine Chapter General of the Province of Canterbury.⁸⁵ While it is quite true that the monastic scholars at the universities did not reach the number of scholars from the mendicant orders, the movement was nevertheless important to the Benedictines. Aside from permitting monks to be exposed to the intellectual controversies at the university centers, it also insured a sufficiency of monks who could return to their own cloisters to

instruct their fellow members and novices in theology.⁸⁶

During the latter part of the fourteenth century, monks from Bury studied at both Oxford and Cambridge. John de Brinkley was at Oxford by 1350, obtained the degree of Bachelor of Canon and Civil Law, and was only prevented from his inception due in 1361 because of his provision to the abbacy in that year.⁸⁷ Henry de Hunstanton, who was elected abbot in 1361, but died before he could take office, had also been at Oxford around the same time and had also advanced to the degree of Bachelor of Canon and Civil Law.⁸⁸ At least one scholar from Bury was sent to Cambridge in the 1360's, and three scholars at Oxford were supported by the house in 1369-70.⁸⁹ The prior John Gosford, who wrote the eye-witness account of the uprising of 1381, received a contribution from the Provincial Chapter for his degree of B.D. in 1375-76,⁹⁰ and it is possible that he may have resided in a house in the suburb of Oxford which was maintained jointly by the abbey of Bury St. Edmunds and Falmesbury.⁹¹ The notorious Edmund Bromfield had also received support from the abbey to study at Oxford, where he had incepted in theology in 1373.⁹² One monk from Bury, William Barwe, who was later sacrist of the abbey, was a "prior studentium" at Oxford in 1393 and later served as Chancellor of the University from 1414 until 1418.⁹³ Both Gloucester College at Oxford and Gonville Hall at Cambridge continued to receive students from Bury in the fifteenth century,

and a number of books brought by the monks from the abbey were donated to these colleges.⁹⁴

The involvement of the monks of Bury in the intellectual activities at the universities and in their literary production was as much a reflection of the monastic response to changing intellectual and religious conditions as their involvement in worldly affairs--however scandalous and reprehensible at times--was a response to changing social conditions and economic pressures. That the quality of monastic life at Bury evidenced these two trends simultaneously is but an indication that the abbey reflected the general trend which was so characteristic of the regular orders in the later Middle Ages. The challenges of the fourteenth century on all fronts--social, economic, political and religious--demanded both institutional and individual strength and vision: institutional strength to insure that monasticism served a useful purpose in the society of the fourteenth century, and individual vision on the part of monastic leaders to insure the maintenance of St. Benedict's ideal and internal stability in the face of a changing world.

The task was difficult, and though there were signs of vitality, on the whole, the abbots and monks of Bury did not fully meet that challenge. But this was as true for any other great monastery in medieval England as it was for Bury St. Edmunds, and the manifestations of internal instability coupled with the financial and economic problems

reveal the basic insecurity and difficulty of the institution itself. As Vivian Galbraith so accurately comments,

...As the price of great possessions the Bury monks were cumbered with much serving; condemned in practice to the part of Martha, though in theory dead to the world.⁹⁵

An examination of the abbey's role in this world, particularly its economic function and its financial instability, may further illustrate the nature of the problems of medieval monasticism, problems which were not easily solved, even under the best of conditions.

Footnotes

¹The Rule of Saint Benedict, trans. Francis A. Gasquet (London, 1925), pp. 20-21.

²Ibid., pp. 13, 54-55, 59.

³Ibid., p. 15.

⁴Ibid., p. 18.

⁵David Knowles, The Monastic Order in England (Cambridge, 1941), pp. 404-405.

⁶Ibid., p. 406. Cuthbert Butler in Benedictine Monachism (London, 1919), pp. 197-199, defends the absolute authority of the abbot but does admit that medieval abbots did not generally exercise the personal rule valued by St. Benedict.

⁷The Chronicle of Jocelin of Brakelond, trans. and ed. H.E. Butler (London, 1949), p. 35. (hereafter cited as J.B.)

⁸William Dugdale, Monasticon Anglicanum, ed. J. Caley, et. al. (6 vols. in 8; London, 1817-30), III, pp. 158-159. Jocelin of Brakelond notes that Abbot Samson had 26 horses for his own household and offers further comments on the large size of the abbots establishment: J.B., pp. 26, 41-2.

⁹Memorials of St. Edmund's Abbey, ed. Thomas Arnold (3 vols.; Rolls Series, London, 1890-96), III, p. 37. (Hereafter cited as E.S.E.)

¹⁰Knowles, Monastic Order, p. 410.

¹¹Ibid. vid Knowles, The Religious Orders in England (3 vols. Cambridge, 1948-59), II, pp. 253-54.

¹²Ibid., p. 254.

¹³J.B., pp. 25, 29; A.E. Levett, Studies in Monorial History, ed. H.M. Cam, et. al. (Oxford, 1938), pp. 28-9.

¹⁴Levett, p. 15. See also Rose Graham, "A Papal Visitation of Bury St. Edmunds and Westminster in 1234," E.H.R., XXVII (1912), pp. 728-39 for a general discussion on the other regulations regarding alienation of property, financial organization and matters of internal discipline.

¹⁵Robert Somerville, History of the Duchy of Lancaster, Vol. I: 1265-1603 (London, 1953), p. 129.

¹⁶R.H. Snape, English Monastic Finances in the Later Middle Ages (Cambridge, 1926), p. 59. Snape also points out the disadvantages of the separation of the abbot and the convent, ibid., pp. 28-9, 53. See also Levett, p. 14 and J.B., p. 5 for this problem.

¹⁷A.M. Reich, "The Parliamentary Abbots to 1470," University of California Publications in History, XVII, no. 4 (1938), p. 209.

¹⁸C.P.R. 1307-13, pp. 262-63.

¹⁹See C.P.R. 1313-17, p. 153; C.P.R. 1317-21, pp. 179, 181, 362-63, 409; C.P.R. 1321-24, p. 318; C.P.R. 1340-43, pp. 472-73.

²⁰C.P.R. 1317-21, pp. 179, 181.

²¹Ibid., pp. 362-63.

²²Ibid., p. 469.

²³In 1323 William de Stowe was mentioned along with the abbot in an assault case (C.P.R. 1321-24, p. 318); in 1330 he and Walter Pinchbeck, author of the Pinchbeck Register, were both acquitted of a murder charge (C.P.R. 1340-43, pp. 472-73.)

²⁴M.S.E., III, p. 38.

²⁵Ibid., II, p. xlvi; Ibid., III, p. 39.

²⁶Ibid., III, p. 39. The letter of Abbot Richard to the abbot of St. Benet's thanking him for taking care of the monks is in M.S.E., III, p. 41. There had always been a close association of the two monasteries.

²⁷Calendar of Plea and Memoranda Rolls Preserved among the Archives of the Corporation of the City of London at the Guildhall. Rolls 113-19, A.D. 1323-64, ed. A.H. Thomas (Cambridge, 1926), p. 35.

²⁸Documents pertaining to the case are in M.S.E., III, pp. 56-72; Year Books of the Reign of King Edward the Third. Year XX (First Part), ed. and trans. L.C. Mike (Rolls Series, London, 1906), pp. 214-216, 228-232, and the editor's discussion, pp. xxvi-xxix; Select Cases in the Court of King's Bench under Edward III, VI, ed. G.O. Bayles (London: Selden Society, 1905), pp. 48-9; C.P.R. 1345-48, p. 535; C.P.R. 1348-50, p. 297; C.P.R. 1350-54, p. 100; Calendar of Entries in the Parol Registers Relating to Great Britain and Ireland 1200-1300, Vol. III: A.D. 1342-1362, ed. W.H. Bliss, et. al. (London: H.K.S.O., 1897), pp. 304-5, 388,

391-92. (Hereafter cited as C. Pap. L.). Francis Blomefield, An Essay towards a Topographical History of the County of Norfolk (11 vols., 2nd ed.; London, 1805-10), III, pp. 507-09 discusses the case; Dugdale, III, p. 110 refers to the case though he offers no comment on the discipline problem.

²⁹ Letter in M.S.E., III, p. 66. G.G. Coulton, Five Centuries of Religion (4 vols.; Cambridge, 1923-50), II, pp. 249-51 translates the letter and cites it as one more example in his catalogue of monastic decadence.

³⁰ The case was extremely complicated and involved the issue of whether the case could be settled in the papal courts rather than the royal courts. Abbot William brought suit in the King's Court in 1346, and Bishop Bateman was cited for violation of Præmunire and assessed a fine of £10,000, but he was pardoned by the king and did not pay. See Year Book Ed. III, Year XX (First Part), pp. 214-16, 228-32; King's Bench, Ed. III, VI, pp. 48-9; C.F.R. 1348-50, p. 297.

³¹ Counteractions by the bishop also involved both appeals to the papacy and the king. The final settlement is noted in C.F.R. 1350-54, p. 100.

³² M.S.E., III, pp. xiv, x.

³³ A. Goodwin, The Abbey of St. Edmundsbury (Oxford, 1931), p. 56.

³⁴ M.S.E., III, p. 67. This section of the chronicle was probably composed at Bury itself, not, as others have suggested, at St. Benet's of Hulme. See Antonia Gransden, "The 'Cronica Buriensis' and the Abbey of St. Benet of Hulme," Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research, XXXVI (1963), pp. 77-82.

³⁵ Bishop Bateman was a skilled diplomat, in the service of both the pope and the king. A. Hamilton Thompson, The English Clergy and their Organization in the Later Middle Ages (Oxford, 1947), p. 46. Arnold sketches his background, but he interprets the bishop's motives in a different light: "the brave and vigorous bishop, who aimed at obtaining a control over the exempt houses for the sake of discipline and good morals, far more than at the taxation of their property." M.S.E., III, p. xiii.

³⁶ M.S.E., III, p. 47.

³⁷ Ibid., III, p. 48.

³⁸ Further evidence of Bernham's unsuitability is provided by the fact that during his abbacy an excommunicated

monk of Langley, a Praemonstratensian house in Norfolk, was received by the abbot (M.S.E., III, pp. 48-56). Also, in 1339 Abbot William along with his chaplain and another monk were accused of assault (C.P.R. 1338-40, p. 364.)

³⁹ John de Brinkeley had been provided to the abbey by the pope and was President of the Benedictine Provincial Chapter. See below, p. 34.

⁴⁰ C.P.R. 1367-70, p. 186. K.L. Wood-Legh, Studies in Church Life in England under Edward III (Cambridge, 1934), pp. 155-56 notes this case.

⁴¹ Sources for the events are contained in M.S.E., III, pp. 113-133, written by John Gosford, the almoner. Ranulf Higden's Polychronicon, ed. J.R. Lumby (9 vols.; Rolls Series, London, 1865-86), VII, pp. 399-401 mentions the events, as does Thomas Walsingham in his Historia Anglicana, ed. H.T. Riley (2 vols.; Rolls Series, London, 1863-84), I, pp. 414-18. See also C.C.L.R. 1277-81, pp. 172-73, 176, 209, 272, 276, 278; C.L.R. 1277-81, pp. 296, 317, 391, 418, 420; C.C.L.R. 1331-85, pp. 253-54, 539-40; C.P.R. 1331-85, pp. 13-14, 218, 300, 504, 568, 563-84; C.F.R. 1335-89, pp. 100-101.

⁴² M.S.E., III, p. 114.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 115; Dugdale, III, p. 110.

⁴⁴ M.S.E., III, p. 117.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 118.

⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 118-19.

⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 119-20.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 120.

⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 121-22.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 124; C.F.R. 1377-81, pp. 269, 272, 276, 418, 420. Bromfield was eventually released and in 1385 allowed to leave the kingdom. (C.F.R. 1381-85, p. 583.)

⁵¹ M.S.E., III, p. 127.

⁵² Thomas of Totington (1302-12), William de Bernham (1335-61) and John Timworth (1379-89) had all held the office of subprior immediately before their elections, and Richard de Draughton (1313-35) had been third prior when chosen abbot. Thus, none of these abbots had been in the more important office of sacrist or prior which might have provided more administrative experience.

⁵³He was provided because Henry de Hunstanton, who had been elected by the monks in 1361, died near Avignon before he had received confirmation, thus the pope claimed the right to make the provision. Dugdale, III, p. 110.

⁵⁴A.B. Emden, A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to A.D. 1500 (3 vols.; Oxford, 1957-59), I, p. 267. He had a Bachelor of Canon and Civil Law degree. On Brinkeley's activities as President of the Provincial Chapter and in parliament see Documents Illustrating the Activities of the General and Provincial Chapters of the English Black Monks, 1215-1540, ed. W.A. Pantin (Oxford Society, 3rd Series, XLV, XLVII, LIV: 1931-37), II, p. 4 (Hereafter cited as Chapters) and Vivian Galbraith, "Articles laid before the Parliament of 1371," E.H.R., XXXIV (1919), pp. 579-82.

⁵⁵Knowles, Religious Orders, II, p. 307.

⁵⁶W.A. Pantin, "The General and Provincial Chapters of the English Black Monks, 1215-1540," T.R.H.S., 4th ser., X (1927), pp. 222ff.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 238.

⁵⁸Ibid., pp. 240-42.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 211. Pantin gives a complete list of meetings, ibid., pp. 249-253.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 215; Chapters, III, p. 70.

⁶¹While Pantin says that the individual visitations were effective, Knowles contends that the general result was "comparative inefficiency." Pantin, "General and Provincial Chapters," p. 221; Knowles, Religious Orders, II, p. 205.

⁶²For 1390 a certificate survives; again in 1414 there is evidence that the abbot of St. Benet's visited the abbey. Chapters, III, pp. 236-37, 238-39.

⁶³Knowles, Religious Orders, II, pp. 204-05; Thomas Walsingham, Gesta Abbatum Monasterii Sancti Albani, ed. H.T. Riley (3 vols.; Rolls Series, London, 1867-1869), II, p. 406. It also appears that during the troubles at the abbey in 1379, two monks from Bury went to St. Albans to study and learn discipline under the guidance of Thomas de la Mare. (Ibid., II, p. 407.)

⁶⁴John R.H. Moorman, Church Life in England in the Thirteenth Century (Cambridge, 1946), p. 254.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 351.

⁶⁶See below, pp.102-3. P.G. Mode, The Influence of the Black Death on the English Monasteries (Private edition distributed by the University of Chicago Libraries, 1916), pp. 61-62 and 70-72 sees serious effects of the plague of 1348-49 on both recruitment and discipline, though this is difficult to prove for Bury St. Edmunds.

⁶⁷Perhaps the decline in oblates at most monasteries was a source of further difficulties. Men who entered monastic life at the later ages of eighteen or nineteen might not have been sufficiently prepared for the monastic life. Although there is little evidence to indicate the background and previous training of the monks of Bury, it is possible that the abbey reflected this general trend. See Moorman, Church Life, pp. 261-62.

Two other interesting cases might point to further difficulties in discipline at Bury in the latter part of the century. In 1381 a monk of Bury was outlawed, and in 1398 a papal licence was issued to the monk Nicholas Timworth of St. Edmunds to transfer to another Benedictine monastery "of the like or more strict observance." C.P.R. 1377-81, p. 453; C. Jan. L., V, p. 154.

⁶⁸Knowles, Religious Orders, II, pp. 170-74; W.W. Capes, The English Church in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries (London, 1920), p. 297.

⁶⁹Knowles, Religious Orders, II, p. 171.

⁷⁰For example, in 1334 Abbot William de Bernham received the right to choose his confessor at the hour of death and in 1345 received an indult granting him a portable altar and the right to dispose of his personal property by will. C.P.R., III, pp. 166, 180, 181.

⁷¹Ibid., III, p. 210; 1397 to William Exeter and in 1403 to Henry Methwolde. Ibid., V, pp. 50, 560.

⁷²Knowles, Religious Orders, II, pp. 171-72.

⁷³C.P.R., V, p. 213. The standard fee for such an indult was 20 grossi. Ibid., p. 28.

⁷⁴Egerton Beck, "Regulars and the Parochial System in Medieval England," Dublin Review, CLXXII (1923), 237-38.

⁷⁵Registrum Simonis Langham, ed. A.C. Wood (Canterbury and York Society, LIII, 1956), pp. 112, 146. This might have been the same Edmund who received an annuity from the king. See below, n. 77.

76 C.P.R. 1388-92, p. 180.

77 To be sure, these indults and privileges were used mainly as fiscal devices by the papacy, but they could have the effect of subverting the abbot's authority. See William E. Lunt, Financial Relations of the Papacy with England 1327-1534 (Cambridge, Mass., 1912), pp. 447-57 for the amounts paid for the indults.

In addition to the cases cited above regarding papal privileges, there is also a curious case of a monk of Bury, Edmund de Bokenham, receiving an annuity of £30 a year from the king for services rendered in administering a manor belonging to the alien priory of Toftes. In view of canonical rules regarding individual property of monks, this is interesting. C.P.R. 1350-54, p. 305; C.P.R. 1358-61, p. 89; C.F.R., VII, p. 100.

78 Kirkstede also wrote or caused to be written a number of books for the abbey. See Medieval Libraries of Great Britain, ed. N.R. Ker (2nd ed.; London, 1964), p. 234. R.L. Thomson, "The Library of Bury St. Edmunds Abbey in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries," Speculum, XLVII (1972), pp. 120-21 identifies "Boston of Bury" as Henry Kirkstede.

79 Chapters, I, pp. 22-23. This is Bodley MS 240. Ker, Medieval Libraries, p. 234 gives the date as 1376.

80 W.A. Pantin, The English Church in the Fourteenth Century (Cambridge, 1955), pp. 130ff offers an interesting discussion on this trend which was largely a response to the mendicant orders. It is also interesting to note that "Boston of Bury" (or Henry Kirkstede), compiler of an extensive catalogue of monastic libraries, originally used a list of Franciscan composition but obliterated traces of that origin. See N.R. James, "The List of Libraries prefixed to the Catalogue of John Boston and Kindred Documents," in Collectanea Franciscana, II, ed. C.L. Kingsford (Manchester, 1922), p. 38.

81 N.R. James, "On the Abbey of S. Edmund at Bury," Cambridge Antiquarian Society, 8vo ser., XXVIII (1895); idem, "Bury St. Edmunds Manuscripts," E.H.R., XLI (1926), pp. 251-260; Ker (ed.), Medieval Libraries, pp. 16-22 gives a list of Bury books.

82 Ker (ed.), Medieval Libraries, pp. 231-35 gives a list of donors of books which shows the interest of these two abbots.

83 See Knowles, Religious Orders, II, pp. 16-28 for this development. See also Pantin, The English Church, pp. 166ff and Hastings Rashdall, The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages, ed. F.M. Powicke and A.B. Emden

(3 vols.; Oxford, 1936), III, pp. 184-190. The Constitutions of Pope Benedict XII required that one out of every twenty monks was to be chosen for study at a university, and the Provincial Chapter made a provision for pensions to be paid to monks for post graduate study. See Concilia Pascae Britanniae et Hiberniae, ed. D. Wilkins (4 vols.; London, 1737), II, pp. 595-96.

84 The Manuscripts of Lincoln, Eury St. Edmund's, and Great Grimsby Conventuals, Historical Manuscripts Commission, Fourteenth Report, Appendix, Part VIII (London: H.M.S.O., 1995), p. 123 (Hereafter cited as Hist. Mss. Comm.)

85 Rashdall, III, p. 185.

86 Rashdall's general bias is anti-monastic. See Pantin, The English Church, p. 106 for a better assessment of the importance of this trend to the abbeys. Those trained in law could also serve the abbey in litigation, though matters of this kind would usually be handled by the members of the abbot's council.

87 A.B. Emden, A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to A.D. 1500 (3 vols.; Oxford, 1957-59), I, p. 267.

88 Ibid., II, p. 985.

89 A.B. Emden, A Biographical Register of the University of Cambridge to 1500 (Cambridge, 1963), p. 112; Hist. Mss. Comm., p. 124.

90 Charters, III, p. 320

91 See Durdale, III, p. 120 for the convention between the two houses, dated 1376.

92 Emden, Oxford, I, p. 275; Charters, III, p. 76.

93 Charters, III, pp. 212, 317. Abbot Curteys (1429-46) took an active role, having built a set of rooms and a hall at Oxford. Knowles, Religious Orders, II, p. 19.

94 James, "On the Abbey of S. Edmund," pp. 85-86.

95 Vivian Galbraith, "St. Edmundsbury Chronicle, 1296-1301," E.H.R., LVIII (1943), p. 57.

III. PROBLEMS IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE ABBEY'S RESOURCES IN THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY

I. The Extent of the Abbey's Resources

An examination of the economic and financial history of Bury St. Edmunds in the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries reveals clearly that the abbey could be counted among the most wealthy and influential of the Benedictine houses of medieval England. As a royal foundation, the abbey benefitted from grants of land and economic privileges from its earliest history. By 1086, as recorded in Domesday, the abbey possessed about two hundred manors in Suffolk, Norfolk and other counties, and its holdings were valued at between £639 and £655.¹ The abbot's franchisal jurisdiction in eight and one-half hundreds comprising nearly one-half of Suffolk enabled the abbey to receive certain revenues derived from regalian rights. Hidage, Danegeld, rights of jurisdiction, and exclusive rights over markets, fairs and tolls in various localities within the Liberty of St. Edmund were important sources of revenue for the abbey.²

Our clearest indication of the extent of the abbey's holdings and of the administration of these resources comes mainly from the late twelfth and the

thirteenth centuries. Abbot Baldwin's (1065-1097) "Feudal Book" and the Kalendar of Abbot Samson together with Jocelin of Brakelond's Chronicle illustrate the extent to which the more able abbots and monastic officials energetically preserved, recorded and attempted to expand the economic resources of the abbey.³ Although there was by no means a constant succession of able abbots in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries,⁴ the economic trends of this period worked to the advantage of the abbey; by the end of the thirteenth century, the abbey's revenues had increased at least three times the valuation of 1086.⁵

The two most important sources of information for the purposes of determining the extent of the abbey's holdings and types of revenues are contained in the Pinchbeck Register, composed c. 1334 by the Bury monk Walter Pinchbeck, and The Chronicle of Bury St. Edmunds, 1212-1301, composed at Bury in the late thirteenth century.⁶ The Pinchbeck Register reveals a concern on the part of the abbey in the early fourteenth century to carefully note all rights due the abbey. It contains many copies of papal bulls and letters granting ecclesiastical privileges, charters from the king regarding liberties within the eight and a half hundreds, various listings of knights' fees, and copies of the Domesday entry for the abbey. But the most important section is a survey of the tenants of the abbey in

Suffolk headed "De Itinere Salamonis de Roff' et Sociorum suorum Anno regni regis Edwardi filii Regis Henrici xliij. Incipiente xv."⁷ Although the heading states this to be 1286-87, in fact this has been dated as a copy made in 1280 of the 1279 Hundred Roll survey.⁸

This document is important for two reasons: 1) It forms an important addition to the printed Hundred Roll survey of 1279, which only includes information on Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire, Oxfordshire and parts of Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire,⁹ and 2) although it is concerned in detail only with the free tenants of the abbey, it is valuable for determining rents, sizes of holdings and patterns of land usage on the estates of the abbey in the latter part of the thirteenth century.

The portion of this survey printed in the Pinchbeck Register follows in general the normal structure of the survey for other counties.¹⁰ The survey is made according to villis, not manors, and lists the lord of the vill, the extent of the demesne land (with a listing of arable, meadow, pasture, woodland and mills), and a description of the free holding in the vill, including names of tenants, size of holdings, rents, and stating of whom the land is held. The one serious area where the 1279 survey printed in the register is incomplete is in dealing with the land of the villein tenants of the abbey. When information is given at all, it is

merely a summary statement of how much land is held in villeinage with no indication of either the number of villein tenants or of the size of their individual holdings. Kosminsky in Studies in the Agrarian History of England in the Thirteenth Century has outlined some of the difficulties in dealing with the material from the 1279 Hundred Roll survey, namely the fact that the survey was undertaken with a view to ascertaining tenurial, not economic, relationships, thus failing to show such changes as the commutation of labor services, leaseholds, and freemen holding villein land.¹¹ Nevertheless, the record can provide us with an initial point from which to examine Bury's holdings and revenues from land in the last quarter of the thirteenth century.

The second important source for an estimation of the resources of the abbey in the late thirteenth century is the record of the valuation made for the Taxation of Pope Nicholas IV carried out in 1291-92. The Chronicle of Bury St. Edmunds contains a detailed listing of the assessment made on the temporalities and spiritualities of the convent,¹² but makes no mention of the abbot's portion; the Pinchbeck Register does, however, contain a description of the 1292 re-assessment of the abbot's revenues from both spiritualities and temporalities.¹³ There are, however, a number of serious difficulties in the interpretation of the taxation records; one historian puts all medieval taxation records "in the

realm of make-believe."¹⁴ Indeed, they do reveal a tendency towards undervaluation which severely limits our ability to accurately determine the total revenues of the abbey. Rose Graham's important study of the Taxation of Pope Nicholas as applied to Bury St. Edmunds¹⁵ clearly reveals the disparity between the assessed value and the income received and/or the actual value of the various holdings. She cites two examples from Bury to prove her point: 1) The 1292 re-assessment of the revenues from the abbot's barony totals £766 13s. 4d, yet for a seven month period in 1279 the royal escheator's account showed a total of £839 7s. ½d. 2) Spiritualities and temporalities of the sacrist according to the 1291 valuation totalled £209 1s. 4½d, yet for a six month period in 1299 the sacrist rolls show receipts of £184 14s. 10½d.¹⁶ The reasons for the under-assessment are probably to be found in the manner in which the assessment was carried out. Instead of being based on the manorial account rolls calculated on an average for a number of years, the assessments were made from the extents of the manors; thus the assessments more accurately reflected the rental which would have been received if the manor were farmed out, despite the fact that in the thirteenth century most of the lands of the abbey were farmed at a profit by the monastery itself.¹⁷ In addition to the method of assessment, it should also be noted that the abbey protested parts of the 1291 valuation and in

some cases succeeded in obtaining a lower assessment. In 1291 the abbot's portion was originally valued at £1000 with the tenth to be paid amounting to £100; the protests of Abbot John de Northwold succeeded in obtaining the next year the lower valuation of £766 13s. 4d.¹⁸ The cellarer likewise complained over his valuation, and the Bury chronicler notes "with satisfaction that the temporalities of the convent were re-assessed by the Bishop of Winchester and the Bishop of Lincoln in 1292."¹⁹

Despite the difficulties presented by the nature of the evidence from both the 1279 Hundred Roll survey and the taxation of 1291/92, we can make some general statements about the nature of the revenues and the extent of the holdings of Bury St. Edmunds at the end of the thirteenth century. In the first place, the amount of land from which the abbey received income, whether in the form of rents, services or produce, was extensive. The 1279 survey lists only the holdings of the abbey in part of Suffolk (the hundreds of Hartismere, Babergh, Thedwestrey, Thingoe, Blackbourne and Lackford), but shows the abbot and convent receiving rents from 145 villis; of these, the abbot is listed as the chief lord of 34 villis and the abbot and convent or the convent alone as the lord of 16 villis.²⁰ The major portion of the revenues would be from the actual rents, services and produce of the manors in the villis, but in

addition the abbot possessed a network of jealously guarded manorial and franchisal jurisdictions within this area which contributed to the total revenues of the abbey.

The taxation records of 1291/92 similarly illustrate the extent of land administered by the abbot and obedientiaries in Suffolk, Norfolk, Essex and other counties.²¹ The abbot's barony included revenues from 92 different villis in Suffolk (total assessed value £604 17s. 2½d); 10 villages in Norfolk (assessed value £103 7s.); and 2 villages in the county of Essex (assessed value £58 9s. 1½d.)²² The amounts ranged considerably according to the valuation, but some of the more valuable of the abbot's holdings in Suffolk were from manors in, Fornham All Saints (£45), Redgrave (£41 3s. 2d), Chevington (£40) and Elmswell (£38 17s. 1½d); in Norfolk, Tivetshale (£30 12s. 2½d) and in Essex, Herlawe (£40 9s. 1½d) were particularly valuable.²³

The holdings of the convent were equally extensive. The total assessment in 1291/92 of both temporalities and spiritualities belonging to the convent amounted to £1,408 1s. 7½d.²⁴ The major portion of the assessed revenue was in the hands of the cellarer (1292 re-assessment of temporalities, £735 3d), with income derived from 34 places in Suffolk, 4 villages in Norfolk, and 12 places in other counties.²⁵ The sacrist and the convent's chamberlain also administered and received income from

numerous holdings in Suffolk and Norfolk. The sacrist's total assessment of temporalities amounted to £163 1s. 4¹/₂d from 16 places in Suffolk and 18 places in Norfolk, and the chamberlain's temporal assessment totalled £123 4¹/₂d from 15 places in Suffolk and 9 places in Norfolk.²⁶

Some of the more valuable holdings of the convent were the manors of Mildenhall (assessed value, £99 14s. 10¹/₂d), the cellarer's grange in Bury St. Edmunds (£70 4s. 8d), Pakenham (£62 14s. ¹/₂d), Rougham (£39 3s. 4¹/₂d) and the sacrist's revenues from the town of Bury (£82 5s.)²⁷

Although we cannot take these figures as a totally accurate picture of the actual income received on a yearly basis, it is perhaps possible to make a rough estimate of the revenues of the abbey at the end of the thirteenth century. The total assessed value of both spiritualities and temporalities for the abbot and convent in 1292 amounted to £2,174 14s. 11¹/₂d.²⁸ Allowing for the fact that the assessment represents an undervaluation and that it omits some places for both the abbot and the convent, it would probably be acceptable to estimate the abbot's revenues at somewhere between £766 and £900 per year and those of the convent at somewhere between £1400 and £1600 per year. These figures are at best only rough guidelines for determining the wealth of the abbey. In working from printed sources pertaining to the abbey we have no other comparable survey which might reveal

further discrepancies in the valuation, although a charter of division of the abbot's and convent's goods drawn up in 1281²⁹ and a late thirteenth century document showing the expenses of the abbey³⁰ offer some points of comparison. As R.H. Snape has pointed out in English Monastic Finances in the Later Middle Ages, there are numerous difficulties in attempting to arrive at estimates of the wealth of the English abbeys in the later Middle Ages.³¹ We possess no fourteenth century Valor Ecclesiasticus which might enable us to make comparisons, nor in many cases do we possess a continuous and complete series of records with statements of actual income. With the exception of some sacrist rolls from the fourteenth century and a fifteenth century taxation roll, such is the case for Bury St. Edmunds.³² What we can conclude with certainty is that the holdings of the abbey at the end of the thirteenth century were extensive, that the revenues were drawn from a wide variety of sources, and that the administration of these resources demanded efficient management in the face of the economic and social changes of the later Middle Ages.

The abbey of Bury St. Edmunds, like many of the wealthier Benedictine abbeys,³³ drew its revenues from a wide variety of sources. Manorial rights and production provided the major portion of the income, but there were other equally important financial interests held by both the abbot and the obedientiaries, interests which

became increasingly important and increasingly more difficult to defend in the fourteenth century. One such important source of revenue for the abbot arose from his possession of franchisal jurisdiction within the eight and a half hundreds in western Suffolk. From pre-Conquest times, the abbots of Bury held certain regalian rights within the Liberty of St. Edmund: hidage, foddercorn, and wardpenny were dues leveled on all socage tenants of the abbot. In addition, the abbot obtained the right to levy for his own use the Danegeld within the Liberty. By royal right the abbots also received the profits of the hundred courts within the eight and a half hundreds, a portion of the sheriff's aid went to the abbot, and a common aid was paid to the abbot by all his tenants, servile and free.³⁴ Within the Liberty, the abbot, through his steward, exercised a network of court jurisdiction which brought him profits from fines and amercements. That this was a particularly valuable right which was eagerly defended as late as the fourteenth century is proved by the number of patent and close letters issued to the abbot by the king promising no diminution of these rights held "from time out of mind," and by the minute recording of such liberties contained in the Pinchbeck Register.³⁵ As Bertha Putnam has suggested, "the profits of justice are the essential element in the mediaeval system of law."³⁶ This was no less true for the abbot's interest in maintaining

jurisdictional rights against all erosion than it was for the secular franchise holders of the later Middle Ages.

The abbot also received income derived from his position as a feudal overlord. Escheats, wardships and relief were normally exercised and collected according to custom; that the abbot guarded these rights in the fourteenth century is also evidenced by his vigilance in dealing with the interference of the royal escheator in cases of wardship and escheats of his own tenants who were also tenants-in-chief of the crown.³⁷ The abbot also from "time out of mind" had the right on his installation to collect 100 marks in lieu of homage from the men of the town. This was a payment not always made with alacrity, as evidenced by Abbot John Timworth's suit against the town in 1384 to secure the payment.³⁸

In addition to the rights of jurisdiction within the Liberty of St. Edmunds and the feudal rights held by the abbot, there were several important rights held by the abbey within the town of Bury St. Edmunds, rights which were not only vigorously enforced against the townsmen but also energetically upheld against the agents of the crown.³⁹ The most important one from the point of view of maintaining control over the town and for financial reasons was the exclusive right of the abbot to hear all crown pleas (except those touching the king's person) and to the profits from the courts.⁴⁰ Various royal grants also insured other financial rewards for the monastery.

Edward I in 1285 granted to the abbey the rights to the profits arising from the assize of weights and measures held in the town. In 1296 this right was renewed, and the convent also secured the rights to the profits from the assize of bread and ale.⁴¹ In 1304 Edward I also allowed murage and pavage dues to be levied by the abbey on goods entering the town; this right was renewed in 1330 for a period of seven years.⁴² In both instances, the royal action in favor of the abbey was undertaken at a period when there were serious financial difficulties at the abbey.

The important rights held by the abbot and convent over the town of Bury St. Edmunds were not only symbols of prestige and used as a means of limiting the political aspirations of the townsmen, but they also made up a valuable part of the total resources of the abbey. During the late thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries, the policies of the abbots of Bury and of the two most important obedientiaries holding interests in the town, the cellarer and the sacrist, were, on the whole, repressive and exacting, as illustrated by the attempts made in 1304-05, 1327 and 1381 by the townsmen to enlarge their own political and economic rights.⁴³ From the point of view of the abbey, these policies were necessary in order to maintain long established privileges which were financially rewarding, but which needed to be securely upheld in the face of the economic problems and mounting expenditures

in the fourteenth century.

The extensive holdings and varied resources of the abbey, not only in the town but also throughout Suffolk and Norfolk, demanded more than adequate leadership on the part of the abbot and the obedientiaries responsible for their administration. Unfortunately, most of the evidence of the financial condition of the abbey in the fourteenth century points to an absence of sound leadership, development of long-range policies designed to cope with a changing economic and social situation, or skillful management of receipts and expenditures. Some of the underlying causes for the unstable financial situation of the abbey may be found in an analysis of the economic and social trends on the estates of the abbey, secondly by an examination of the types of expenditures and obligations which burdened the abbey throughout the fourteenth century, and finally by an examination of the internal organization employed to administer the abbey's resources.

II. The Economic and Social Trends on the Estates of the Abbey

Any examination of the economic and social trends on the estates of the abbey of Bury St. Edmunds is severely limited by the lack of printed source material pertaining to the fourteenth century. Many important questions regarding the pattern of estate management,

utilization of land, movement of rents and trends among both the free and villein tenants of the abbey will, unfortunately, have to be left unanswered. The arguments and conclusions presented below must be regarded at this point as being speculative and only indicative of the degree to which the trends on the estates of the abbey conformed to the general pattern of economic and social changes in England in the later Middle Ages.

Generally speaking, the estates of the abbey were managed in the typically conservative fashion characteristic of Benedictine landlords.⁴⁴ We may examine economic and social developments on the estates of the abbey from two points of view: 1) from the standpoint of the abbey as a landlord, with the aim of determining how changes in the availability and utilization of land together with demographic changes affected the abbey's resources and policies, and 2) from the standpoint of the villagers, with the aim of determining how the social and economic situations faced by the free and villein tenants affected their relationship to the abbey in the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

A. The Abbey as Landlord

Land usage at the end of the thirteenth century

The general pattern of "land hunger" of the thirteenth century caused partially by an expanding population and characterized by rising land prices, a high proportion of

land under plough for grain production, and a tendency towards the direct exploitation of the demesne,⁴⁵ is evident on the estates of the abbey in the latter part of the thirteenth century.

Although evidence is lacking for an accurate assessment of the rising land prices on the estates of the abbey, there is evidence of the extent to which the estates of the abbey were given over to the production of grain at the expense of sheep farming or cattle grazing.

Examples can be taken from the 1279 survey contained in the Pinchbeck Register. In the fifty villages where the abbot and/or the convent is listed as the chief lord, the statistics⁴⁶ show that on the demesne land of the abbey 85% of the land is listed as arable and thus presumably under plough, while 10% of the total comprised woodland; meadow and pasture together amounted to only 5% of the total. Land held in villeinage reveals an even more striking pattern of utilization: 98% of the land is referred to as either arable, or simply designated "terra," with the remaining 2% consisting of meadows, pasture and woodland. Land held in free tenure reveals a similar pattern, with over 90% of the land listed as arable.

(See Appendix II)

Other evidence which reflects the scarcity of pasture land can be illustrated by the value of arable land relative to the value of meadow and pasture. In general, the levels for England in the thirteenth

century show that arable land was valued at anywhere from 2d to 6d per acre and that meadow land was valued considerably higher at rates from 2s. to 4s. per acre.⁴⁷

Manorial extents from twelve manors on the estates of the abbey c. 1300 show that rents for arable land let out from the demesne averaged 4d to 6d per acre, while 18d was the average value assigned to meadow land.⁴⁸ Although the area of Suffolk was suitable for sheep farming, in Blackbourne hundred (a hundred within the Liberty and one where the abbey had numerous estates) the total animal population in 1283 was considerably lower than one might expect for a region capable of sustaining mixed farming.⁴⁹ In general, then, the estates of Bury had a low percentage of men who possessed animals.⁵⁰

We can draw three conclusions from the evidence. In the first place, the tendency towards using the land for corn production at the expense of animal husbandry would suggest that there was an expanding population and therefore sufficient labor to work the estates of the abbey in order to furnish both the necessary provisions for the house and to provide a surplus which could then be sold for a cash income. Secondly, it would appear that land reclamation had gone on in the thirteenth century and that after 1279 there was still room for the abbey to continue, at least to a small extent, the reclaiming of some wasteland and woodland.⁵¹ Thirdly, it is also evident that where pasture and meadowland were available,

most of it was under the direct control of the abbey, and very little pasture or meadowland was directly available to the tenants, especially villein tenants. This could be a source of irritation if changing demographic and economic factors resulted in any large scale change-over on the part of the abbey or on the part of the tenants from corn production to sheep farming.

Evidence of expanding population and direct control of the abbey at the end of the thirteenth century.

We do have evidence to conclude that the population expansion characteristic of the thirteenth century was reflected on the estates of the abbey. The familiar signs of population expansion--land hunger, increasing reclamation of land, and the proliferation of small landholders produced by the subdivisions of holdings--are found on the estates of the abbey at the end of the thirteenth century.⁵² From the point of view of the abbey, this expanding population was beneficial. For it insured an ample supply of labor to work the demesne and provided a source of income from rising rents and other payments levied on the tenants of the abbey. In such a situation, the abbey could rely upon the produce of the estates under direct cultivation for the provisions necessary to support the inhabitants of the monastic community. It could also choose between the sale of extra produce or reliance upon rents for the necessary

cash income which was also needed by the abbey. In fact, all of these alternatives were pursued by the abbey in the thirteenth century.

The system of food-farms which provided the necessary grain (oats, malt, barley) to the abbey on a rotating basis was adopted early in the abbey's history and was carried on the the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.⁵³ This enabled the convent and the abbot to generally meet the needs of provisioning the house. In addition, the abbey in the thirteenth century did rely upon demesne land under direct cultivation on numerous other estates which did not have to provide the weekly farms to the abbey. The surviving portion of the 1279 Hundred Roll survey shows that in fifty vills in Suffolk the abbey had nearly 15,000 acres in demesne,⁵⁴ and surviving extents from twelve manors c. 1300 show that in some cases the demesne holdings of the abbey amounted to over one-half the total land of the manor.⁵⁵ However, the abbey did not rely totally upon produce from the demesne land for either its provisioning or cash income. The cellarer did buy and sell produce in Bury St. Edmunds,⁵⁶ and rents in the form of cash (which may have concealed some payments for commuted services) or produce from free tenants and the seignorial dues belonging to the abbot or obedientiaries were important sources of revenues. Mills, market rights, tallages and commuted payments for fold-soke, ploughing and mowing also contributed to the revenues of the abbey.⁵⁷

Changes in the fourteenth century
and their effects

What evidence survives tends to confirm the view that the conditions on the estates of the abbey in the fourteenth century presented several problems for the abbey. There is evidence to suggest that there was a population decline on the estates which sometimes resulted in the abbey adopting a policy of decreasing the demesne farming and replacing traditional structures with leases, either from vacant holdings or from the demesne. Although it is quite true that the monastic pattern of management tended to retain demesne farming, a heavy demand for labor services, and reliance upon traditional patterns of cultivation and provisioning until very late,⁵⁸ we can detect signs of economic and social change. These changes presented significant problems for an abbey which was already suffering under the burden of heavy obligations and showing signs of financial strain.

Decline in population in the
fourteenth century

Evidence for population changes on the Bury estates in the fourteenth century is largely indirect. There are few indications of declining population in the first half of the fourteenth century, though economic problems of the abbey at the very end of the thirteenth century and signs of tenant discontent at the beginning of the fourteenth century might indicate that the abbey was

having difficulty in maintaining traditional labor services and was perhaps suffering from a labor shortage.

The population loss on the abbey's estates due to the Black Death of 1348-49 is difficult to determine with any accuracy, though the areas surrounding Bury St. Edmunds seemed to have been severely affected. As a whole, the death rate in all of East Anglia "was well above the national average."⁵⁹ That the plague affected the abbey itself is evident from a papal bull of 1351 granting Abbot William de Bernham permission to ordain ten monks under the statutory age as priests to compensate for the loss of chaplains because of the plague.⁶⁰ The death rate at the abbey itself has been fixed as high as forty monks,⁶¹ and additional evidence shows that the clerical population in the diocese of Norwich was severely affected by the plague: two-thirds of the benefices in the diocese were vacant in the period between March, 1349 and March, 1350.⁶² The population loss among the clergy in Suffolk was also high. Institutions to vacant benefices averaged only 81 per year in the period from 1344 to 1348, but from March, 1348 until March, 1349, there were 831 institutions in Suffolk.⁶³ Additional evidence shows that the areas near where the abbey possessed estates were also hit: Hunstanton, Croxton and the hundred of ~~Wade~~ ^{Wade} in Suffolk all showed signs of the epidemic in summer and fall of 1349; the cities of Norwich,

Sudbury and Yarmouth also revealed high death rates in the same period.⁶⁴ Jessopp concludes that no town in East Anglia escaped the ravages; and although his estimate that ~~one-half~~ the population of East Anglia died⁶⁵ may be highly speculative, it would nevertheless seem highly probable that the estates of the abbey did suffer a population loss and that this loss might well have been severe.

Although the later outbreaks of the plague in 1360-61,⁶⁶ 1369 and 1375 might have been less severe, there is evidence that some depopulation did occur. A comparison of a 1358 manorial extent of Hawstead, a manor which belonged to the abbey, with the 1377 Poll Tax records shows that of the thirty free tenants existing in 1358, only four appear on the Poll Tax, and of the eleven "nativi," only one name appears on the second list; Powell concludes that the 1361 or 1369 plague might have been ~~one~~ reason for the decline in numbers.⁶⁷

Despite the obvious dangers of relying too heavily on the scanty nature of the evidence, it would seem probable that the population trends on the estates of the abbey followed the general pattern of a fourteenth century decline characteristic of the rest of England.⁶⁸ To what extent this was due to the periodic outbursts of the plague is debatable, but that the demographic changes did have an effect upon the economic picture and did

certainly result in a situation different from the thirteenth century is clearly evident.

Pattern of labor services

One element of this changing economic situation was the extent to which the abbey insisted upon the performance of traditional villein services or adopted policies of commuting services, lightening the tenants' burdens, and leasing out demesne land in order to attract willing tenants and to insure a steady income from the land.

There is evidence of the commutation of some labor services as early as the end of the twelfth century. By 1182 many of the services owed to the abbey by the townsmen had been converted into money payments:

"scarsilver" or "sorpenney," a payment at the rate of 1d per cow freeing the tenant from driving his cattle into the abbot's fold, and "repsilver," payment at the rate of 1d per tenant for reaping service, were early signs of commutation. Abbot Sanson (1182-1213) also converted these two dues into an annual payment of 24s.

to be collected from the townsmen.⁶⁹ Other early commuted services were "warpenney," commutation of guard service owed by socage tenants; "shepsilver," payment of 1d for every six sheep exempting the tenant from driving his animals into the abbot's fold; and "averpenney," for socage tenants who owed carrying service.⁷⁰ By the latter part of the thirteenth century the ploughing service from

the cellarer's tenants on the demesne of the grange had been converted into a money payment at the rate of 1d per acre,⁷¹ and by 1260 the mowing service on eighteen acre of the abbot's meadowland at Broadmeadow owed by the men of Thedwestrey hundred seems to have been at least open to commutation at the will of the abbot.⁷² Manorial extents for twelve manors c. 1300 show that here labor services were valued in money, and thus open to commutation; at Fornham, ten cottagers each with one acre paid 10d as repsilver for reaping service, and at Melford three "works" owed by the villein tenants were valued at 1d.⁷³

Evidence of commutation in the fourteenth century tends to be inconclusive at best. Lacking continuous customs, rentals and extents for the estates it is very difficult to determine whether the abbey followed a consistent policy of lightening servile burdens in order to encourage tenants to take up vacant holdings, or whether labor shortages and the cost of rising wages for agricultural workers forced the abbey to re-impose old services and/or create new services.

A partial extent for Palgrave in 1357 printed in Titow's English Rural Society 1200-1350 provides an interesting example.⁷⁴ Here all of the tenements held by the customary tenants are listed as rendering a certain amount of money per year as rent, with a precise

statement showing what part of that amount is for commuted services. For example, one tenement held by two tenants comprising 23 acres, 1 rood and a messuage is listed as rendering 4s. 10³d per year, of which 18d are for the commutation of services.⁷⁵ It would seem that here, at any rate, the commutation of customary services had been in effect previously and that the abbey, for its own benefit, was allowing or encouraging tenants to substitute money payments for labor dues.

One other piece of evidence drawn from the period after the Peasants' Revolt also serves to illustrate the progress of commutation and the substitution of money rents on the Bury estates. The Rickinghall rental of 1387 shows that though money rents have not taken over completely, both payments in kind and labor services are valued in money and therefore open to commutation. By 1433 at Rickinghall, services and payments in kind practically disappear, and money rents predominate.⁷⁶

The commuted services, or services open to commutation, were most likely undertaken strictly for the convenience of the abbot and the obedientiaries on whose estates they were collected. In the thirteenth century it would seem that the population conditions at the time insured a steady supply of labor and that the abbey could afford to allow its tenants to pay instead of performing services. There is little indication to what degree the abbey was also at this time using hired

labor to perform services, though it would appear from the number of small landholders and cottagers in the district in 1279 that there would be an adequate labor base from which to recruit workers.

The ~~evidence~~ of commutation of labor services drawn from the fourteenth century is admittedly scanty and fails to reveal the existence of a consistent trend. But it does serve to indicate that some of the monastic officials administering the estates at times saw commutation as an alternative to be employed when conditions merited it. This evidence of commutation should not, however, lead us to the conclusion that commutation was by any means widespread on the estates of the abbey either before or after the Black Death of 1348-49. On the contrary, there are strong indications that, like many of the older Benedictine houses, there was an insistence on villein services which lasted into the latter part of the fourteenth century.⁷⁷

Examples of the types of labor services demanded by the abbey at the end of the thirteenth century and the early fourteenth century are furnished by the description in the Pinchbeck Register of the amounts of produce and labor due from the eighteen manors which provided the weekly food-farms to the convent.⁷⁸ The very fact that this description is included in the register is telling. Composed c. 1334 by Walter Pinchbeck, a monk of the abbey.

the record contains every indication that the abbey was anxious to keep a vigilant eye on the rents, dues and obligations of both its free and villein tenants.⁷⁹ The types of uncommuted labor services most frequently demanded were mowing, harvesting and threshing; these were apportioned according to the amount of land held by the tenants. The four customary tenants at Berton owed six week works done by hand; each week work consisted of the tenant threshing three measures of corn and one measure of barley or two measures of oats per week; in addition, they owed ploughing and mowing as team work, and the free tenants as well as villeins paid 4 s. for fold-soke "pro voluntate dominorum."⁸⁰ At Pakenham, Rougham and Newton mowing and ploughing were required of the customary tenants;⁸¹ carrying service and weeding ~~were~~ two other types of labor services also performed on many other manors. Typical burdens of villeinage are also in evidence: at Horningsheath and Werkton licences were required before any customary tenant sold animals, and reliefs and marriage payments were also extracted from the tenants.⁸²

That the abbey did continue, at least periodically, to demand labor services and had difficulty in doing so, is illustrated by two examples from the fourteenth century. A.E. Levett has referred to a manuscript containing abstracts of court rolls from 1259 to 1365

relating to Bury St. Edmunds' manor of Rickinghall.⁸³ The cases in the earlier period dealt mainly with marriages, births, etc., but the cases in the later period concerned questions of villein status, burdens of services on villein lands, notices of tenants who had left the service of the abbey, and "an unparalleled group of cases dealing with folds."⁸⁴ These cases might possibly indicate that the abbey was still insisting on traditional rights and services, particularly the obligation of the tenants to bring their animals to the abbot's fold. A parallel case pointed out by Powell shows that the abbey, even after the Peasants' Revolt of 1381, was continuing to insist on the performance of services and on its long-standing rights.⁸⁵ The manor of Little Barton, belonging to the cellarer of the abbey, was held by Sir John Shardelow by service of fifteen "precariae" to be performed in the autumn. A series of court rolls from 1377 to 1384 show that on the first few rolls, the service was not rendered and that a fine should be taken; but in 1383 and 1384 it is stated that these services had not been performed for thirty years, and the cellarer distrained Shardelow's chattels and held him to answer for twenty-eight years in arrears. The abbey in this case was taking steps to enforce its rights and insisted on services even after a long lapse. The inconsistency on the part of the cellarer must have raised the hackles of the tenants, but the policy might also indicate that

the abbey had been in a position after the Black Death of 1348-49 where it found it inadvisable or unable to insist upon the services and because the abbey was in financial difficulty in the 1380's now found it necessary to re-impose the service.⁸⁶

From all available evidence, and we need much more to be able to state this with certainty, it would appear that the policy of the monastery regarding commutation and labor services was fairly typical of Benedictine administration. The slow rate of commutation on ecclesiastical estates, the necessity for labor to work the demesne in order to provision the house, and the generally conservative, inflexible tradition of estate management have all received the attention of historians,⁸⁷ and it would seem that the abbey of Bury St. Edmunds was little different in this respect.

Changes in tenurial relationships
and in land utilization

There is some evidence, however, that the abbey did adopt a policy of farming out some of its demesne land and leasing out vacant holdings in the fourteenth century in an attempt to deal with labor problems and to meet increasing costs. As early as 1313, it appears that the grange of the sacrist near Risbygate in the town was leased out.⁸⁸ In 1322 the manor of Conyngeston was given on a life lease to Robert Walsham for £26 13s. 4d per year.⁸⁹

and the manors of Berdwell (1324), Watlesfield (1350), and Herlawe (1387) were also let out to farm.⁹⁰ An examination

of the Falgrave extent of 1357 shows that the scattered parcels of demesne land of the abbey consisting of 146 acres arable and 17 acres meadow and pasture, were let out to the men of the vill for £6 4s. 8d.⁹¹ Surviving extents

beginning in 1381 also show that a system of leases was adopted at Mildenhall, one of the more valuable manors of the abbey.⁹² There are several interesting features

to the developments at Mildenhall. The leasing here was not, apparently, the demesne land, but rather it was land which had previously belonged to villeins and had fallen into the abbot's hand and was then let out under new

conditions. This might indicate both a decline in population in the latter part of the fourteenth century, and it might also point to a difficulty experienced by the abbey in finding tenants willing to take the land under old terms. Secondly, some leases were granted for as long a period as forty years, but most ranged from six to ten years, with the short-term leases being the most recent grants. This would indicate that the abbot could re-negotiate the leases and thus perhaps keep up with increasing costs. Finally, the rate at which land was being let out shows a very high rate for villein land:

John Kelsynd had obtained a ten year lease for 22½ acres of land which had once belonged to five different villein

tenants at a rate of 31s. 1d per year. The rent thus worked out to about 16d per acre, a considerable increase from the late thirteenth century rents in Mildenhall.⁹³

It is difficult as well to determine the pattern of rents on the abbey's estates. The fact that the abbey did let some manors out to farm and succeeded in leasing out vacant holdings might indicate that it saw a better chance to maximize its returns by obtaining high rents, using hired labor to work the domesne, and divesting itself of the burden of the day to day administration of the manors. Developments at Mildenhall and in Hawstead would tend to confirm this view. In 1358, the eleven villein tenants on one manor in Hawstead paid high rents at about 8-9d per acre, which represented an increase from the 1279 rents for free land at the average rate of 2-3d per acre.⁹⁴ By 1388 the manorial extent for Hawstead shows few villein tenants left; harvesting was done by hired labor at the rate of 3-4d per day, and the total rents paid had increased nearly 50% from 1358.⁹⁵ But evidence from Palgrave shows that in 1357 the customary tenants there were paying rents, which included payments for commuted services, at a rate of about 3d per acre, not unlike the rates paid by the free tenants there in 1279.⁹⁶

Although it is clear that the abbey did let out some land and was able to demand high rents in some areas, it should not be concluded that the general pattern

was one of rising rents on all the estates of the abbey, nor should it be concluded that this totally resolved the abbey's financial problems in the last quarter of the fourteenth century. George Unwin's article in the Suffolk Victorian County History is therefore slightly misleading when he asserts the "the income of Bury Abbey doubled during the fourteenth century, and it was mainly derived from rent."⁹⁷ While it is evident that a larger proportion of the abbey's income by the fifteenth century was obtained from rents, it is also true that the abbey did retain labor services and indeed insisted upon them throughout the period. Furthermore, the assertion that the income of the abbey doubled during the century rests on a comparison of faulty and inaccurate returns from the taxation of 1291 with a fifteenth century taxation roll.⁹⁸

In addition to adopting a policy of letting out some of the manors and fixing short-term leases on favorable terms, there were two other methods of dealing with economic problems which the abbey might have turned to in the fourteenth century. One was the acquisition of additional property which could then be let out on terms advantageous to the abbey. Although the Statute of Mortmain (1279) had theoretically forbidden the alienation of land or rents to the Church, it could be circumvented by an ecclesiastical

corporation purchasing a royal licence which would permit the acquisition of property. Thus, while the Statute did not prevent the additional acquisition of property by the Church, it did, rather effectively, place the alienation of land to the Church under strict royal control.⁹⁹

Licences enrolled on the Patent Rolls show that Bury St. Edmunds was acquiring in a piecemeal fashion some additional lands and rents, usually by purchase or transfer rather than as the result of a grant by a pious donor.¹⁰⁰ In the period before the Black Death (from 1303 to 1342) the abbey obtained fifteen licences,¹⁰¹ plus a general licence in 1313 which allowed the abbey to obtain land or rents up to the value of £40 a year for the benefit of the chamberlain's office.¹⁰² During this period, only two of the licences obtained show that the land was given to the abbey for pious purposes: one in 1318 with land and rents valued at £7 5s. 6d per year was specifically given for the maintenance of the sacristy, and another in 1323 was given for "the maintenance of certain chaplains to celebrate divine service."¹⁰³ The rest of the grants in this period consisted mainly of transfers of lands and rents of rather small value, though in 1309 Henry de Lacy, Earl of Lincoln, had sold at a low price the manor of East Bradenham to the abbey.¹⁰⁴

In the period from 1389 to 1392, the abbey received thirteen licences, six of which were for pious purposes.¹⁰⁵ In one instance (1328/29), action was taken against the abbey for violating the statute and obtaining land valued at £11 9s. without a licence.¹⁰⁶ Again, the possible revenues accruing to the abbey from the lands and rents during this period appear to be small, and aside from the manor of Wetherhall in Pakenham which was valued at £10 10s. 10d.,¹⁰⁷ the lands were scattered parcels. The general tendency evidenced would thus appear to be that the abbey attempted periodically to buy up some vacant holdings, but it should not be concluded that the property rights thus obtained secured any large scale source of revenue for the abbey.

Another means of dealing with both the shortage of and high price of labor in the fourteenth century might have been for the abbey to have reduced the amount of arable land devoted to crop production and to have instead turned to sheep farming on a larger scale.¹⁰⁸ This would have diversified the sources of income and reduced the necessity of hiring as many agricultural workers whose wages were generally rising during the period. Although the East Anglian region was predominately a wheat growing area in the fourteenth century, it was suitable for sheep farming,¹⁰⁹ and the

growing importance of the cloth industry in Suffolk and the exporting centers of Ipswich and Norwich would have provided an easily accessible market for wool.¹¹⁰

The scarcity of direct evidence again prevents an easy generalization about the response of the abbey to this possible alternative. The relatively low percentage of land given over to pasture and meadow (5%) as revealed in the 1279 survey of the abbey's estates does not tell the full story. Information from the Pinchbeck Register shows that, at the end of the thirteenth century on four manors alone there was enough pasture for a total of 2,000 sheep,¹¹¹ and the writer of the "Gesta Sacristarum" comments that Sacrist William de Luton (1294-?) spent considerable energy restocking his manors and greatly increased the number of sheep on them.¹¹² Evidence of a somewhat more dubious nature is contained on the Patent Rolls for 1327; here it is alleged that during the outbreak of violence against the abbey and the subsequent pillaging of twenty of the convent's manors, the rampaging tenants "carried away a hundred horses, one hundred and twenty oxen, two hundred cows, three hundred bullocks, ten thousand sheep and three hundred swine, worth £6,000."¹¹³ That figure cannot be totally disregarded, but it may be balanced against the fact that there is no mention of Bury St. Edmunds contained in Pegalotti's extensive list of monasteries supplying wool to Flemish and Italian merchants in the early

fourteenth century.¹¹⁴ In view of the fact that wool production from nearby abbeys is detailed on this list and that the exporting center of Ipswich was nearby, the omission may indicate that Bury, unlike other Benedictine monasteries, had not adopted a conscious policy of engaging in large scale sheep farming, at least for purposes of the export trade.¹¹⁵ The absence of direct evidence should not, of course, preclude the possibility that the abbey raised more sheep than it had in the thirteenth century, for there was a tendency to lessen the amount of arable demesne under direct cultivation which might in turn indicate a shift in land utilization, but on the whole, it would not appear that any large scale change-over had been accomplished by the end of the fourteenth century.

That the abbey's position in the fourteenth century was made difficult by a declining population, rising labor costs and increased expenditures is clearly evident. It is also clear that the wide variety of rents, servile dues and other obligations of the tenants tended to be exacted well into the fourteenth century, often with unfortunate results. The disturbance at the abbey in 1327 not only included townsmen opposed to the abbey's political and economic dominance over the town, but it also included villeins and free tenants of the surrounding area. The destruction and attacks

on the twenty manors of the abbey in 1327 and the violence of the attack on the abbey in 1381 furnish additional proof that, like many of its sister houses, the abbey of Bury St. Edmunds coped with economic problems by using traditional methods and applying short-term policies designed only to provide immediate alleviation for its financial difficulties.

B. General Trends among the Villagers
on the Estates of the Abbey

Examined from the standpoint of the abbey, many of these conservative and repressive policies seemed necessary in an era of social and economic pressures. But many of the economic and social trends among the peasants on the abbey's estates led to a situation where, from the tenants' point of view, some of the economic obligations and legal disabilities insisted upon by the abbey seemed unjust and harshly applied. Changes in landholding patterns and the rising economic status of some tenants, both free and villein, resulted in a complex and unstable situation on the abbey estates in the fourteenth century. On the one hand, there were those tenants, some villeins and a large number of freemen with small holdings, who were either living on the edge of subsistence or, in the case of villeins, burdened with marks of legal servility and therefore unable to dispose of the fruits of their labor as they

wished. On the other hand, there were also those tenants who were rising in the social and economic ladder. Villein tenants in this situation might have accumulated enough land to be economically on the level with the larger freeholders, but they were still legally inferior and retained some marks of personal servitude. Some free tenants were also accumulating land and rising in the social and economic structure. The juxtaposition of this new prosperity on the part of some tenants with a significant number of tenants who were unable to rise in the social and economic scale resulted in a situation of instability on the abbey estates. This economic and social dislocation together with the policies of the abbey may explain some of the underlying causes for the frequent outbreaks of hostility against the abbey during the fourteenth century.

Economic and social trends among villein tenants

Detailed information on the proportion of villein tenants to free tenants on the abbey's estates and on the social and economic trends among the villein tenants is rather scarce for the fourteenth century. Although Suffolk had an extraordinarily high proportion of freemen in 1086, the process of depression into servility and the rising number of villeins occurred in the century following the Conquest. ¹¹⁶ Available evidence

would tend to indicate that in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, free tenants probably outnumbered villeins on the abbey estates, but a precise figure is unobtainable.

We have already noticed that the villeins or customary tenants of the abbey owed, even in the latter part of the fourteenth century, considerable labor services on the demesne lands and that there were objections to the performances of such services, even after the Peasants' Revolt.¹¹⁷ Aside from labor services already noted, the villeins on the abbey estates were burdened with obligations to the abbot arising from their personal status: heriots, tallages, gersum (marriage payments) are among the most frequently mentioned obligations. Although there is some evidence that a more prosperous serf might purchase his freedom, it would appear that like many ecclesiastical lords, manumission was not widely practiced by the abbots of Bury St. Edmunds.¹¹⁸

Evidence from Palgrave, Mildenhall and Elmswell does indicate that some villein tenants of the abbey were engaged in the process of estate building by acquiring vacant holdings, but it is also evident that in many cases the abbey retained the servile obligations pertaining to the land thus acquired, and that the villeins were often paying higher rents for their land than free tenants in the same area.¹¹⁹ Although we

have witnessed the process of commutation of labor services into money payments, it must be remembered that because these payments were generally at the will of the abbot, not at the will of the tenant, the freedom from labor services thus acquired was not always permanent. A period of slack demand for services followed by a period of vigorous administration on the part of the lord, as evidenced at Little Barton¹²⁰ in 1383-84, was thus an additional problem which worked to the disadvantage of the villein tenant.

In short, while the conditions of serfdom on the estates of the abbey of Bury St. Edmunds may have been no worse than on any other monastic estate in the fourteenth century, there were several personal and tenurial disabilities which inhibited their social and economic advancement. The villein tenants were thus often placed at the mercy of a corporate landlord which, for its own purposes, sought to restrict their advancement in order to secure and maintain its own financial and economic well-being.

Economic and social trends among free tenants

Social and economic trends among the free tenants on the abbey's estates during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries followed in general the pattern of changes characteristic of the rest of England. The most notable aspect from the point of view of peasant conditions is

the characteristic process of estate building on the part of those tenants who were rising in the social hierarchy and the increasing atomization of holdings, a process which is largely explained by the population expansion of the thirteenth century and the pattern of partible inheritance of freehold land.¹²¹

This process was especially noticeable in East Anglia, where small landholders represented a large percentage of the population. Postan cites figures from Lincolnshire showing that holdings of under five acres represented from 70% to 75% of the total free population there.¹²² Evidence from the Hundred Roll survey of 1279 confirms his view that "the population on some Suffolk manors, e.g. the abbey of Bury St. Edmund's was little different."¹²³ In 1279 the distribution of the size of holdings among the free tenants of the abbey in eleven villages shows that 70% held ten acres or less, 18% were in the middle range with holdings from eleven to twenty-nine acres, and 12% of the population studied held thirty acres or more.¹²⁴ (See Appendix III) J.Z. Titow has suggested that ten acres was a necessary subsistence level for a peasant household,¹²⁵ and although this would depend upon many variable factors within a given region, this figure does serve a useful purpose in analyzing peasant conditions in the later Middle Ages. Taking his figure of ten acres as a base, the distribution

of the size of holdings on the Bury estates in 1279 would tend to indicate that there was a wide level of distress on the part of the peasantry at the end of the thirteenth century.¹²⁶ Those on the lowest end of the scale would be able to hire themselves out as agricultural workers on the demesne land of the abbey or to other more prosperous free tenants, but the prevalence of small holdings coupled with the other financial burdens of the free tenants on the abbey's estates must have created a difficult situation for many of the villagers.¹²⁷

An examination of further evidence from the late thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries shows in more detail the process of estate building, atomization of holdings and sub-letting. An interesting example from the village of Hawstead shows this process of change quite clearly.¹²⁸ In 1086 there were 30 freemen on 500 acres, with holdings of about 17 acres apiece; there were also two larger estates consisting of two carucates and one carucate each, and there were also three villeins, two serfs and twenty-one bordars. By 1279, on 150 acres of the original 500 acres there were many more freemen, but the sizes of the holdings varied considerably: for example, there was one freeman with 20 acres, two with 18 acres each, three with 15 acres, nine with holdings from 3 to 9 acres, twelve free tenants with only 1 or 2 acres, and twelve freemen who held only messuages. The

remainder of the original 500 acres was now in the hands of four men who had accumulated holdings and who had leased out small parcels from the two largest landholders of the village, Thomas Fitz Eustace and William Talmache, possessors of the two large estates found in the Domesday survey. The obvious inequality in the sizes of the holdings among these free tenants was not unique to Hawstead nor to the fourteenth century, for evidence from Elmswell, Rickingham and Mildenhall in the later part of the fourteenth century displays a similar trend towards the aggregation of some holdings and the continued existence of a large number of small landholders.¹²⁹

Evidence of discontent

Not surprisingly, there were signs of discontent among both free and villein tenants of the abbey during the fourteenth century. The economic inequalities amongst the tenants were all too visible, and the continuing demands of the abbey during the period produced a situation hardly beneficial to either the tenant living on the edge of subsistence or to those tenants attempting to rise in the economic scale but who were prevented from doing so by seignorial devices or marks of tenorial and/or personal servility.¹³⁰ In speaking of the Peasants' Revolt of 1381, Powell and Trevelyan concluded that

The abbeys were frequent victims of mob violence during this summer, as the tenure of serfs on the estates of corporate bodies was generally more antiquated than the tenure of serfs on the estates of individual landlords.¹³¹

This conclusion is, I think, equally valid for Bury St. Edmunds, but it was not only among serfs that grievances against the abbey could be found, nor did the abbey have to wait until the summer of 1381 to experience signs of peasant discontent or outbreaks of violence.

Several cases in the first quarter of the fourteenth century illustrate the pattern of tenant discontent and the monastic reaction. In 1304-05 the burgesses of the town were accused by the abbot of not paying fines and tolls, beating up the servants of the monastery and impeding the bailiffs who were carrying out their duties. The sixty-two townsmen who complained about the abbey's rule lost their case before the royal justices and were obliged to pay £200 in damages in addition to their fines.¹³² This was a reflection of the continuing struggle between the abbey and the town, a struggle which contained both economic and political issues, but two further cases illustrate that expressions of discontent were not confined to the town. In 1306 tenants of the abbey entered the abbot's court house at Henhowe, burned his mill at Babwell, and "threw down and cut to pieces his gallows at Westle."¹³³ A year later we find the abbot

complaining that a number of men had ravaged his manor at Southrey, in Norfolk, where they mowed down and carried away his grass from the meadows and pastures.¹³⁴

These actions indicate that the abbey could be viewed as an exacting landlord and as the holder of exclusive judicial and economic privileges which could work to the disadvantage of the tenants. The monastic reaction to the expressions of discontent was hardly more praiseworthy. In addition to court litigation pursued in order to insure performance of services and maintenance of rights,¹³⁵ there were numerous allegations that the abbots and monks, together with their servants, took it upon themselves to attack tenants, seize chattels, and carry off produce.¹³⁶

The most serious indication in the first half of the fourteenth century that relations between the abbey and its tenants were strained was the uprising of the town in 1327/28.¹³⁷ Although the issues were complex and essentially involved long-standing political and economic grievances of the townsmen, it should be emphasized that the uprising did include peasants from the nearby areas. The Bury author of the "Depraedatio Abbatiae Sancti Edmundi"¹³⁸ links the events at Bury with those at Abingdon and St. Albans in the same year and emphasizes the role of men from London in aiding

the revolt,¹³⁹ but he clearly states that both villein and free tenants of the abbey took part under the leadership and at the persuasion of the townsmen:

Promiserunt etiam quod omnes de patria, tam villani quam liberi, qui causam illorum manutenere vellent, essent liberi ab omni theloneo et omni servitio per totam Angliam, virtute cartarum quas penes se dicebant habere, unde plus quam xx mille de patria ad eorum auxilia concurrebant.¹⁴⁰

Despite the characteristic exaggeration and bias, the account would suggest that the situation of the peasants on the abbey estates was such that it could be exploited by the townsmen and turned into a small scale collective action against their corporate landlord. The pillaging and destruction of the goods, houses, livestock and land on twenty of the convent's manors¹⁴¹ in addition to the attack on the abbey itself clearly shows that the abbey's economic and judicial policies towards its tenants were regarded as oppressive and exacting.

Although the uprising of 1327/28 was successfully dispersed with the aid of the king, the years following witnessed some continued expressions of discontent on the part of the abbey's tenants. From 1328 to 1381 there are several examples of localized, individual actions undertaken by men of the Liberty against symbols of the abbey's control which cannot be wholly attributed to the general lawlessness of the period. For example, in 1335 some of the abbot's men were prevented from working his quarry in Northampton, and in 1341 the abbot

alleged that a huge armed force had prevented his bailiffs from carrying out judgments relating to the assize of bread and ale.¹⁴² A similar incident occurred in 1360 when a "conspiracy" of tenants prevented the hearing of cases in the hundred court in Thedwestrey.¹⁴³ The enforcement of the Statute of Laborers in Suffolk must have also contributed to the discontent in the area,¹⁴⁴ and the evidence from the Rickinghall court rolls¹⁴⁵ during this period would also suggest that the abbey was facing difficulties with its tenants and therefore reacted generally with repression rather than leniency.

The events surrounding the Peasants' Revolt in Suffolk and the attack on the abbey in 1381 have been well explored by both Powell and Lobel,¹⁴⁶ but it is important to place the events of 1381 in their proper historical context. Old standing conflicts between the abbey and the town and previous difficulties in landlord-tenant relations illustrate that the events of that year were not, fundamentally, qualitatively different from past expressions of discontent. To be sure, the general causes of the revolt were operative in Suffolk, and the leadership of John Wrawe together with the violence of the collective action provided a different framework for the expression of discontent, but the revolt should not be regarded as a totally isolated or unique event in the history of the abbey.

Bury St. Edmunds was in a serious position in the fourteenth century. Not only were economic trends producing difficulties in estate management and landlord-tenant relations, but the rising costs and heavy expenditures faced by the abbey contributed to periods of financial instability.

III. The Expenses of the Abbey in the Fourteenth Century

Although the abbey of Bury St. Edmunds did have extensive resources, it is also evident that the general economic conditions of the fourteenth century had seriously affected the financial stability of the monastery. In addition to the normal running expenses of a monastery which supported on the average a total of nearly two hundred people, there were many other demands made upon the resources. The two most important were the expenses of both royal and papal taxation, and the heavy expenses associated with vacancies. While the normal running expenses of the abbey would not vary much from year to year, and probably could easily be foreseen by the abbot and obedientiaries, the unpredictable or unexpected expenses obviously necessitated skillful financial management. This is even more evident when one examines the general economic trends of the fourteenth century. Precisely because the monasteries were involved in networks of obligations to both the royal government

and to the papacy and because they were large landholders, they shared all the problems of the economic life of the times. In fact, the economic stability of the possessionate orders in England in the later Middle Ages was, on the whole, undermined by both poor administration and by the unavoidable vicissitudes of the external demands made upon them. We may therefore examine the economic and financial condition of Bury St. Edmunds by analyzing the types of expenditures which often resulted in periods of indebtedness or financial strain, and secondly by looking at the policies of financial administration and management within the monastery.

The most obvious expenditures of the abbey were on the members of the monastic community itself. The population of the monastic community of Bury St. Edmunds included not only the monks but also the numerous servants of the abbot and convent. The ranks of these were also increased by the presence of pensioners and corrodars who lived at the abbey and received varying degrees of support from the abbey's revenues. Although it is difficult to fix with any certainty the exact numbers of those living at the abbey at any given time, there is some evidence relating to the population of the community in the thirteenth century. In 1260 there were 80 monks, 21 chaplains and 111 servants resident

at the abbey.¹⁴⁷ This number appears to have remained relatively constant, for in an account of the weekly expenditures drawn up in the reign of Edward I, there are listed again 80 monks, 11 chaplains and 111 servants.¹⁴⁸ The cellarer alone had forty-eight servants, while the sacrist had twenty-four, all of whom were maintained to some degree out of the funds of the specific obediatory.

Fourteenth century population trends at the abbey reflect the general pattern of declining numbers experienced by the English Benedictines as a whole.¹⁴⁹ It is less clear whether this was due to a voluntary and conscious policy of limiting the number of monastic recruits in an effort to assure sufficiently motivated candidates and to cut down on expenses. Other factors may have contributed to the loss of numbers at Bury as well: competition from other orders, particularly from the friars, may have reduced the number of available candidates, and the periodic outbreaks of the plague also affected the abbey. Direct evidence on the effects of the plagues of 1348-49 and 1361 is lacking, though two papal bulls of 1351 and 1366 show that the abbey sustained some loss.¹⁵⁰ One writer has suggested that the abbey may have lost as many as forty monks in the first plague, but this is a highly speculative figure.¹⁵¹ Figures from later in the century show a definite drop in numbers compared to the thirteenth century: in 1379 there were approximately fifty-five monks, and 1381 Poll

Tax records show forty-seven monks at the abbey.¹⁵² However, the monastery appears to have regained some strength later on, for dissolution records show that there were sixty-two monks in 1535.¹⁵³ Although the monastic population thus shows some decline in the fourteenth century, and it is probable that the number of servants followed suit, it is nevertheless evident that Bury St. Edmunds supported a large establishment which needed a constant supply of food, clothing and many other necessary provisions.

The expenses for keeping such an establishment are difficult to calculate for the fourteenth century. There is, however, some evidence from the end of the thirteenth century which illustrates the types of expenditures which would have remained constant according to the population. An interesting document drawn up in the reign of Edward I itemizes the weekly domestic expenses, including wages to servants, the provisioning of food, fuel and fodder, and the buying of robes and clothing for the monks and their servants.¹⁵⁴ The total expenses per year for 80 monks, 111 servants and 11 chaplains on food, pittances and servants' wages is put at £1,410 13s. 2d.¹⁵⁵ When other expenses for clothing, shoes and robes for the household of the abbot and monks (£158 12s. 10d) are added to the expenses of the pittance and those of the sacrist (£384 14s. 9d), the total expenditure for the convent comes to £2,017 13s. 2d for

one year.¹⁵⁶

Although this document is drawn from an earlier period, it does allow us to make some general observations on the financial health of the monastery. In the first place, comparing the figure for per annum expenditures of £2,017 13s. 2d with the 1291 valuation of the abbey's resources totalling £2,174 14s. 11½d,¹⁵⁷ illustrates that the expenses are running very close to the estimated income. Whether or not the valuation figures represent an under-assessment of the actual income, it is still apparent that the resources of the abbey on a per annum basis do not appear to be geared towards facing unexpected or heavy expenses such as might be occasioned by an excessive demand for taxation or a long vacancy. Secondly, from examining the types of expenditures listed, it is readily apparent that much of the income, whether in the form of cash or provisions from the farms of the manors, was spent for wages and the maintenance of the servants and lay personnel at the abbey. Indeed, servants were now a ubiquitous part of the monastic scene. The carpenters, stable boys, cooks, buyers and attendant personnel insured that repairs were made, livestock tended, and food cooked and provided, but it also raises the question of the degree to which they were actually necessary. Monasticism had reached a point by the Middle Ages when the monks no longer performed much of the manual labor, and there-

fore servants took over these tasks.¹⁵⁸ However, when financial crises arose, it was rarely a monastic policy to attempt to cut expenditures but instead to maintain their accustomed standard of living.¹⁵⁹

These normal running expenses of the abbey must have remained fairly constant in the fourteenth century, varying only according to the number of monks and servants resident at any one time. It is more difficult to form an estimate of the total per annum expenses of the abbey during this period, but the sacrist's registers of the fourteenth century provide illustrative material on the normal expenses for one obediendiary.¹⁶⁰ The sacrist was responsible for the expenses of the churches (the abbey church and the parish churches in the town); he had to provide wine for celebration of masses, wax for candles, and expenses for building and repair to the churches.¹⁶¹ In addition, he had to pay wages to twenty-four servants of the churches and wages to his bailiffs, attorneys and rent collectors.¹⁶² The sacrist was also responsible for the distribution of alms and for the support of the monk scholars at Oxford.¹⁶³ The surviving accounts of the sacrists all have one thing in common: in every case, expenditures outdistance income. The account of John de Snaylwell from September 29, 1299 to April 4, 1300, i.e. a six and a half month period, shows receipts of £184 14s. 10½d and expenses of £203 11s. 2½d, while the later account of Simon de Langham for a six

month period in 1357 shows receipts of £212 3s. 4¹/₂d and expenses amounting to £260 16s. 4d.¹⁶⁴ John de Lavenham's register for the year 1369-70 shows receipts of £387 13s. 7d and expenditures of £402 7s. 2d, and the account of Sacrist William Barwe in 1418 shows yearly expenses of £520 6s. 2¹/₂d matched against receipts of £358 6s. 7d.¹⁶⁵ An analysis of the account rolls reveals that rents remained relatively constant throughout the period as did expenditures on wages, robes and supplies for the churches. Spiritual revenues and income from offerings, on the other hand, show a significant decline.¹⁶⁶

One factor which would account for the variable and often heavy expenses of the sacrists would be those for building and repair operations. At the end of the thirteenth century expenses charged to the sacrist for building and repairs to churches amounted to £20 per year;¹⁶⁷ this would probably be sufficient in normal times, but the physical damage suffered by the abbey in 1327 when the rioters entered the abbey precincts must have necessitated more than ordinary expenses. John de Lavenham's numerous operations for the improvement of the abbey church led to quite an expense over his twenty-nine year tenure as sacrist. For the rebuilding of the central tower of the abbey church he spent a total of £866 13s. 4d; he himself gave the great bell, valued at £133.¹⁶⁸ Although these expenses were out of

the ordinary and would have been partially met with donations, he also undertook the project of repainting the roof of the nave of the abbey church at a cost of £100, painting a canopy over the shrine of St. Edmund at a cost of £12 13s. 4d, and spent £22 for a screen for the Lady Chapel.¹⁶⁹ Not all building expenses were the responsibility of the sacrist,¹⁷⁰ but these projects added heavily to the expenses of the office, and with the income remaining relatively fixed, they presented a situation calling for firm financial management.

In addition to the day to day expenses of the obedientiaries and the abbot, there were other types of expenditures which had to be met in the fourteenth century, some of which were the result of the abbey's particular position as a royal foundation. Because the king was the patron of the monastery, he claimed the right to receive hospitality for himself and the members of his household, and he also possessed and exercised the right to demand corrodies and pensions for his servants from the abbey.¹⁷¹ Both of these demands were difficult for the abbey to refuse, and both partially explain problems of monastic economy in the later Middle Ages.

The burden of hospitality and entertainment entailed by visits from the king and from the nobility had been a problem in monastic expenses in the twelfth

and thirteenth centuries,¹⁷² and these did not escape the notice of the earlier Bury chroniclers. Jocelin of Brakelond complained virulently about King John's visit to the abbey in 1199, and his comments reveal an attitude that might not have significantly changed in the fourteenth century:

But King John after his coronation...came straightway to St. Edmund, led thither by devotion and a vow that he had made. We indeed believed that he would make some great oblation; but he offered nothing save a single silken cloth which his servants had borrowed from our Sacrist-- and they have not yet paid the price. And yet he received the hospitality of St. Edmund at great cost to the Abbey, and when he departed he gave nothing at all to the honour or advantage of the Saint save thirteen pence sterling, which he offered at his mass on the day when he left us.¹⁷³

To protect the monasteries of England against the often excessive demands of noble and high ranking visitors seeking hospitality, the First Statute of Westminster (1275) legislated that only the patron of the monastery could claim the right of hospitality except in cases where the abbot had issued a special invitation.¹⁷⁴ The actual effect of this statute and the subsequent renewals of such legislation¹⁷⁵ was, in fact, negligible for Bury St. Edmunds. These statutes may have brought relief for many monasteries and do show a concern on the part of the government for the financial well-being of monastic houses,¹⁷⁶ yet the evidence shows that the fourteenth century kings of England as patrons of Bury did not cease to take advantage of their privilege.

King Edward I visited Bury six times between 1295 and 1301; on one occasion in 1294, he stayed on a manor of the abbot, thus reducing the expenses to the convent.¹⁷⁷ Although his visits appear to have been received cordially,¹⁷⁸ the visits of Edward II, Edward III and Richard II did not come at a time when the economic condition of the abbey was the best. Edward II and his household spent Christmas of 1325-26 at the abbey,¹⁷⁹ and Edward III made several short visits between 1328 and 1363.¹⁸⁰ We have no record of the total expenses associated with these visits, but Simon de Langham's register does show that the sacrist dispensed money and gifts to the king's servants.¹⁸¹ The visit of the young King Richard II and his bride Anne for ten days in June, 1383, cost the monastery a total of 800 marks.¹⁸² Coming as it did at a time of severe financial strain for the abbey, this visit represented a considerable burden and was the occasion for a dispute between Abbot John Timworth and the convent on the issue of who would bear the responsibility for the expenses. The abbot wanted the convent to assume the total responsibility because of his own heavy election expenses at the time, and the matter was settled when the convent agreed to make a contribution to the over-all debts.¹⁸³ Although this is the only direct reference to the actual cost of a visit by the king and his household, it is evident that the expenses for even a short visit were considerable

and that the abbey had to be prepared for such an event.

Despite what must be regarded as a substantial expense for the abbot and the convent, there is no record of any protest having been registered with the king regarding such visits. It would be to the abbey's advantage to maintain good relations with the kings and indeed, the royal presence was often welcomed. In 1331 Edward III's visit coincided with his confirmation of a charter outlining the monastery's privileges over the town, and Richard II's visit in 1383 helped to settle the convent after the disrupting influence of the provisor Edmund Bromfield. However, there were other royal claims made upon the revenues of the abbey which did provoke reaction and protest, namely the right of the king to ask for corrodies and pensions to reward his faithful servants and retainers.

Monasteries occasionally used the device of selling corrodies or annuities to persons who would then give over a lump sum or a donation of land and receive an annual pension or their living in return.¹⁸⁴ This type of corrody or pension was a calculated risk on the part of the abbey; it might or it might not work out to their financial advantage over the long run. However, the type of corrody demanded by the king brought no financial return and in effect increased the per capita expenses of the monastic community. The unusually large numbers of corrodars found in English

abbeys in the fourteenth century was largely due to the unceasing royal demands.¹⁸⁵ This trend is clearly evidenced at Bury St. Edmunds. Between 1302 and 1337 there are recorded on the Close and Patent Rolls thirteen new corrodiess at the specific request of the king; Edward II alone granted eight different ones between 1309 and 1321. Between 1383 and 1386 Richard II granted three.¹⁸⁶ We cannot estimate with certainty the number of corrodars present at any one time because the king had a free hand whenever the abbey was vacant, and some of the enrollments in the Patent and Close Rolls refer to names of corrodars or pensioners whose actual appointments were not previously recorded. The persons receiving the grants consisted mainly of the king's clerks, though in one instance the king's surgeon received a corrody and in another the king's minstrel was the recipient.¹⁸⁷ The grants usually consisted of "food and clothing and other necessities."¹⁸⁸ In one case it was specified that the recipient should "have a fitting chamber to dwell within the abbey enclosure."¹⁸⁹ Occasionally the abbey was also expected to put up with additional grooms and horses of the appointee. By the end of the thirteenth century it had also become customary for the king, upon the election of a new abbot, to demand a pension for one of his clerks until a suitable benefice in the gift of the abbot should fall vacant.¹⁹⁰ Edward II exercised

this right in 1313 after the election of Abbot Richard de Draughton, as did Edward III in 1336 and Richard II in 1383.¹⁹¹

While the presence of pensioners and corroders did intrude on monastic observance and may have been one factor in the decline of monastic discipline,¹⁹² it is evident that the abbey objected to their presence more on grounds of expense than anything else. Protests were made, but often in vain. In 1303 the abbot and convent were requested by Edward I to admit Roger de Ussher, together with two horses and two grooms, "to find him in food and clothing and other necessities for his life." The convent wrote back saying that they were already burdened with the presence of William de Camera, the king's serjeant, by a similar request. The king responded by remitting the second horse and groom demanded, but nevertheless pursued his claim for the corrody to be granted.¹⁹³ In this case, the unfortunate Roger was apparently sent back and forth between Bury St. Edmunds and Ely until he finally found his place at Ely.¹⁹⁴ The protest thus had some effect. Another request by Edward II in 1317 had apparently led to inaction on the part of the abbot and convent. The abbot was ordered to appear before the king if he could not grant the corrody, and Chancery was directed to initiate proceedings against the abbot for noncompliance.¹⁹⁵ A more successful protest in 1336 brought a grant by the

king that no more corrodies should be asked of the master and brothers of the Hospital of St. Saviour, a dependency of the abbey, because there were insufficient funds to support any additional ones.¹⁹⁶

The amounts of money paid by way of support in addition to the grants of food and clothing varied considerably. One Christiana de Ros had been granted an annual pension of twenty-two shillings by the convent at the request of Queen Philippa; and in 1336 Martin de Ixnyng, a king's clerk awaiting a benefice, had a pension of one hundred shillings a year paid out of the abbot's household.¹⁹⁷ Two other pensions in the mid-fourteenth century were for five marks and forty shillings per year respectively.¹⁹⁸ Although it could be argued that these expenses were not much in terms of the total revenues, we must also consider the fact that in any one year there were probably a number of corrodars and pensioners present. That the abbey did in fact protest is also evidence that they were regarded as sources of financial difficulty and annoyance.

The expenses of running an establishment the size of Bury St. Edmunds in the fourteenth century demanded that the abbot and convent attempt to maintain, at every point they could, their rights to all sources of revenues and that they seek new ways to expand their income. Associated with these efforts, however, came

the necessary outlays to pay for charters from the king, fines for licences to acquire land and rents, and fees to cover the extensive litigation entered into in the furtherance of these aims. The king could frequently make the granting of a charter a profitable business. In 1281 Abbot John de Northwold and the convent obtained a charter confirming their separation of goods at the enormous price of 1,000 marks, and in 1349 £300 was paid directly into the king's camera for the confirmation of a previous charter of liberties.¹⁹⁹ These charges might seem to be out of proportion to the actual grants, but the abbey was obviously conscious of the need to secure and protect their long-established rights and looked upon the expense as a wise investment for the future.²⁰⁰

Of less expense, but of equal necessity, were the fines paid to the king for licences to acquire land alienated to the monastery. Obtaining the licences was not always easy, and an inquisition was made by the royal escheator to determine what loss would be suffered by the king as the result of any alienation of property to the Church. The fines for the licences represented more than just the expenses of the inquisition; they included some compensation, although in some cases no fines were charged in order to show royal good-will towards the Church. One common type of licence was an inclusive one which allowed an abbey

to acquire new land up to a specified value. In such cases, no further fine would be necessary, although the abbey would have to wait for the inquisition to take place before coming into possession of the property.²⁰¹

For Bury St. Edmunds there is evidence of both types of licences. Edward II in 1313 granted a licence for the abbot and convent to acquire in mortmain lands and rents to the value of £40 per year "for the sustenance of the office of the chamberlain."²⁰² There is no fine recorded for this particular licence nor any subsequent fines until the end of the fourteenth century, but between 1380 and 1392, the abbot and convent paid a total of £62 6s. 8d for five separate licences; for one of these in 1391, they were charged £40.²⁰³

The maintenance of old rights and the pursuit of new privileges demanded a staff of clerks who could present petitions, request renewals of charters and obtain the necessary licences. But in addition to these costs were the expenses involved in the constant litigation which the abbot and convent pursued in the various royal and papal courts. Payments had to be made to attorneys and proctors and their staffs. The abbot's steward also spent much time furthering the cause of the monastery at no little expense to the abbot, who was bound to provide him with four horses and travelling expenses when he was engaged on the abbot's business.²⁰⁴ There were expenses of presenting

petitions and obtaining writs from the king: in 1341 the abbot paid 40s. for the right to try a case of assault involving his bailiffs and the townsmen, and in 1360 he paid 30s. to obtain a commission of oyer and terminer to investigate "trespasses, oppressions, extortions and excesses" against his servants.²⁰⁵ The constant expenses of pursuing claims and defending rights was not unusual. Bury St. Edmunds reflects the trend of monastic business in the later Middle Ages; in a period when long-established rights were being threatened, it was only natural that the monasteries should involve themselves in litigation. "Their purse was long and patience great," comments one historian.²⁰⁶ While it could be argued that their purse was not so long, these were necessary expenses if the abbey wished to maintain its position in the changing world of the fourteenth century.

Thus far we have considered the types of expenditures which would be fairly constant from year to year for the abbey: household expenses of the abbot and convent, hospitality, maintenance of pensioners, and payments to the central government for the maintenance or extension of rights and privileges. If a careful administration of the revenues were maintained, it would appear that the normal expenses could be met; it would, of course, demand the close accounting by the important obedientiaries and the general supervision of

the disbursements by the abbot and his advisors. But it is clear that there were periods of great financial stress for Bury St. Edmunds in the fourteenth century, and part of the explanation may lie in the heavy, and not always predictable, demands of the royal government and the papacy. The demands of taxation, particularly during the Hundred Years' War, weighed as heavily upon the clergy as upon the laity,²⁰⁷ despite the attempts of the clergy to lighten their burden, they did pay, and Bury St. Edmunds felt the full effect.

Several examples from Bury St. Edmunds illustrate the fact that the payments of both royal and papal taxes during the later Middle Ages were not always willingly made. Although it can be argued that the demands made on the clergy by the king and the papacy were, to some extent, justified, they were inescapable and constant. During the reign of Edward I the abbey had suffered from two bad experiences. In 1294, the king seized one-half of the spiritual and temporal revenues, and the abbey was forced to contribute £655 11 $\frac{1}{2}$.²⁰⁸ In 1297, as the result of clerical acquiescence to Boniface VIII's Clericis Laicos, "all the goods of the abbot and convent of Bury St. Edmunds were confiscated and all their manors together with St. Edmund's borough."²⁰⁹ Although this was only a temporary measure used to force the church to succumb to royal demands and the goods were restored the same

year.²¹⁰ the action did not sit well with the officials of the abbey. Despite these extraordinary actions, it is interesting to note that in 1298 the royal request for a tenth was more willingly granted--the Bury chronicler's attitude reveals that the clergy was not always unresponsive to the needs of the kingdom:

This grant of the clergy gave rise to comment among certain people because this year they had contributed voluntarily what another year they had refused even under compulsion. To this it may be answered that on this occasion the war undertaken is lawful because it is fought for the safety of the kingdom and common weal, which is greatly damaged by enemy incursions, and it is even more lawful to resist by force of arms threats to overthrow the realm in which the property of everyone is obviously involved, for to covet other people's possessions is quite different from guarding our own.²¹¹

However, the general attitude of the endowed clergy, and of Bury St. Edmunds, during the fourteenth century was more protective of clerical independence and wealth. The taxation occasioned by the Hundred Years' War together with the demands of the Avignonese papacy during this period did not grow any less onerous, and they presented several problems for the abbey. One problem was that of the assessment and a determination of what goods were to be taxed. Although it is quite true that assessments of clerical property show an under-assessment of actual wealth, it should be noted that there were protests on the part of the monasteries. Both the abbot and convent of Bury protested items in the valuation of 1291 and succeeded in reducing their

obligations. According to the final valuation, the tenth payable on the abbot's portion amounted to £76 13s. 4d and on the convent's portion £109 16s. 10½d for temporalities and £26 12s. for spiritualities.²¹² In terms of the annual income of the abbey, it would appear then that the tenths would not present a large problem and that the payment could easily be met. But we must also consider the fact that the abbey often had a dual obligation to both pope and king and that property acquired after the 1291 valuation was also subject to assessment and taxation.²¹³ Confusion over what property was subject to royal taxes was also evident. In 1341 the prior and convent objected to paying the wool tax granted by Parliament on the grounds that their goods were separated from those of the abbot and that they had already paid their tenth on their temporalities annexed to spiritualities which had been acquired since 1291.²¹⁴ The confusion of the collectors was understandable,²¹⁵ but the objection raised illustrates that the prior and convent were anxious to guard all of their rights and saw taxation as a necessary but unwelcome burden.

The demands of taxation, whether they were grants made in Convocation or in Parliament, grants by the pope to the king, or papal income taxes were constant expenditures,²¹⁶ and these fairly regular exactions should have been foreseen and planned for by the responsible monastic officials. But there was an

additional problem here which sometimes made this difficult. Although payment of the tenths on the abbô's portion was excused during a vacancy, the heavy expenses for both the abbot and convent which occurred at this time meant that any demand for a lump sum payment, whether in the form of a tax or a forced loan, in the years immediately following a vacancy would be a serious strain on the resources. In 1313, just three months after the restitution of the newly-elected abbot's temporalities, Edward II requested the abbot and convent to lend him 300 marks in aid of the campaign against the Scots, and in 1315 they were again requested to lend

£200.²¹⁷ These demands came at a time when the abbey was recovering from vacancy expenses which were so great as to require the abbey to mortgage its property.²¹⁸ Forced loans or requests for advance payments of the taxes were also a source of difficulty.²¹⁹ While it is true that the loans to the king were generally repaid in the form of remission from the next tenth, it was nevertheless a practice which could be damaging to the abbey's financial stability if the occurred at an inconvenient time.

That the endowed clergy felt the matter of royal taxation on their possessions to be an issue of great concern is demonstrated by their continued insistence on granting subsidies independently in Convocation and by their reactions to periodic claims of clerical dis-endowment. One small hint suggests that such a concern

was not far removed from the abbey of Bury St. Edmunds.

A manuscript copy of the articles submitted to the Parliament of 1371 by two Austin friars who argued for clerical disendowment and responsibility in financial contributions to the government has been identified as belonging to Bury St. Edmunds.²²⁰ The presence of the copy of the articles at Bury may indicate that Abbot John de Brinkeley, in his capacity as President of the Benedictine Provincial Chapter, was considering writing a reply on behalf of the monastic orders. Whether this was indeed the case, as Vivian Galbraith suggests, may not be ascertainable, but it does indicate that the issue of taxation was an important one for Bury, not only from the standpoint of financial management but also from the standpoint of clerical independence and monastic survival.

But royal taxation was not the only source of financial difficulty for the abbey. A more serious one, in some respects, was the burden of payment at the time of a vacancy in the abbey. Both the convent and the abbot were charged with payments to either the papacy or to the king, and it is precisely at these times that we find the abbey in its most serious financial position.

Prior to 1304, the normal procedure during a vacancy at Bury St. Edmunds was for the king's escheator to take seisin of the abbot's temporalities and to administer the revenues, rendering account to the king

for the abbot's barony. The temporalities were then restored to the abbot soon after papal confirmation had been obtained. There were obvious difficulties associated with this procedure. Unless there were a carefully drawn distinction between the abbot's and convent's revenues, it was entirely possible for the convent's portion to be seized along with the portion belonging to the abbot, resulting in a loss of revenue to the abbey. A further difficulty was the possibility of an extortionate escheator administering the abbey's revenues for his own, or the king's benefit. These difficulties had arisen at Bury St. Edmunds in the past. During the vacancy of 1279, the king had seized the convent's property along with that of the abbot; in the words of the Bury chronicler, "such a thing was unheard of before. The convent's property could not be wrung from his grasp either by prayer or price."²²¹ In order to guard against such an occurrence in the future, the abbey in 1281 obtained a charter from the king detailing the separation of property, but they paid dearly for the privilege: 1,000 marks.²²² The expenses of the charter were probably justifiable in the eyes of the monastic officials, but it represented a considerable outlay which could only have added to the financial burden of the abbey at the end of the thirteenth century. However, the charter did prevent any irregular action during the subsequent vacancies of the abbey; the ten-month vacancy from

November 1, 1301 until August 10, 1302 was apparently handled in a normal and acceptable fashion.²²³

This method of administration during a vacancy was changed at many Benedictine abbeys in the fourteenth century to a system whereby the prior and convent were allowed, in consideration of a fixed sum, the custody of the abbot's barony during the vacancy. From the standpoint of internal administration and managerial convenience, this was probably a preferable procedure. The removal of a possibly extortionate escheator was beneficial, but the price paid each time was high.²²⁴ In 1304, the king granted to the prior and convent of Bury the right to custody of all temporalities of the abbot (except for profits from knights' fees and except for advowsons); a fine of 1,200 marks was to be paid for a vacancy of one year or less, and on a pro rata basis for vacancies exceeding one year.²²⁵ In comparison with other monasteries where this system was introduced, Bury's rate of payment was high: Ramsey abbey paid 600 marks for the first thirty months of a vacancy, St. Albans paid 1,000 marks for the full vacancy, St. Augustine's, Canterbury, paid only 600 marks outright, and Peterborough paid only 400 marks for an entire vacancy.²²⁶ When examining the financial problems of Bury St. Edmunds in the fourteenth century, it is necessary to bear this expense in mind. The abbey was vacant six times between 1301 and 1389, and aside from the four and a half year

vacancy due to the confusion over the legality of Edmund Bromfield's provision between 1379 and 1383, no vacancy lasted more than ten months.²²⁷ Although from the managerial point of view the convent probably felt more secure under this system, it is also evident that the payments to the king represented a burden, especially when the expenses of obtaining papal confirmation for the election of the abbots of Bury were also extremely heavy.

It was, however, possible for the abbey to seek relief from the king when vacancy and confirmation expenses were excessively burdensome. In 1302 the king instructed the sheriff of Essex that the newly elected abbot, Thomas of Totington, was not to be pressed for the payment of an aid for the marriage of the king's daughter. The heavy election expenses were cited as the reason, and the same reason was given in 1304 when the king remitted the mutual debts of the abbey and the crown.²²⁸ The serious difficulties, delays and expenses raised by the confused election of Abbot John Timworth were somewhat relieved when the king in 1380 excused the abbey from paying 700 of the 1,200 marks due.²²⁹ The abbey also had difficulty in meeting the fixed payment for the nine-month vacancy lasting from January 1 until October 8, 1389. In May, 1389 and again in 1390, a postponement was secured, and the abbey was finally allowed to pay at the rate of £100 per year.²³⁰ The problem of such payments

was finally solved in 1396 when the abbey secured the right to substitute an annual payment of £40 to the king for the right to administer the abbot's temporalities during a vacancy. Although securing this right cost the abbot and convent together £249 3s. 4d, the relief thus obtained was well worth the expense.²³¹

The payments made to the king were, however, only one part of the expenses faced by the abbey at the time of an election. Because the abbey of Bury St. Edmunds was one of the five Benedictine houses exempt from episcopal jurisdiction, the abbot was required to obtain his confirmation of election in person at the papal Curia.²³² There were several heavy expenses associated with this venture: travelling expenses, living expenses for himself and his entourage, gratuities, and payments for papal letters were all part of the necessary items. But the most serious expense was the payment of the papal service taxes demanded at the time. The "common service" payment, theoretically amounting to one-third of the gross income of the abbot was, for Bury St. Edmunds, fixed at the rate of 2,500 florins (about £416 13s. 4d sterling) beginning in 1302.²³³ In addition to the common service taxes, the abbots were also obliged to pay the five "petty service" taxes (a variable amount calculated by dividing one-half of the common service payment by the number of Cardinals in the papal court for each petty service) and the "sacra" and the "subdeacon, two lesser

payments.²³⁴ Before the abbot received his bull of confirmation from the papacy, he was required to take an oath that he would fulfill the terms of the payment; usually these payments were to be made in two installments within fourteen to sixteen months after confirmation.

During the fourteenth century the payments were rarely made in person at the Curia; instead, the prelate would employ a proctor, usually drawn from one of the Italian banking firms, to fulfill the terms. The bankers could also be of service by furnishing loans to an abbot in financial difficulties. In such a case, the prelate would obtain a licence from the pope enabling him to offer his goods and the goods of his convent as security.²³⁵

Evidence from Bury St. Edmunds confirms that the abbots followed these practices and that the heavy expenses for papal confirmation were a source of financial difficulty for the abbey. The election expenses for Thomas of Totington in 1302 came at a time of serious financial stress for the abbey. He requested and received permission from the pope to contract a loan of 1,250 marks in July, 1302 to meet the expenses,²³⁶ and again in 1313 Abbot-elect Richard de Draughton was forced to mortgage his possessions to the Bardi in order to cover the 3,000 florins demanded from him.²³⁷ Although in both instances some relief had been obtained from the king regarding taxation, the total expenses resulting from the vacancies were considerable:

the expenses at the papacy amounted to about £500, and the 1,200 mark fine allowing custody of the abbot's barony brought the total obligations of the abbey in 1313 to £1,300. Clearly, these payments burdened the abbey, and they did not become any lighter as the century progressed.

Abbot William de Bernham's obligation for the common service payments was paid in installments in 1336 and 1337 through his proctor Foresius Falconerii, a member of either the Alberti or Bardl banking house, and there is evidence that he had been required to raise loans in order to meet the expenses.²³⁸ Although John de Brinkeley, provided to the abbey August 4, 1361, made his obligation at the Curia for the 2,500 florins in September, 1361, no records of payments have been found.²³⁹ Similarly, no record of either an obligation or payment is found in 1379 when Edmund Bromfield was provided to the abbey; it is probable that he did not pay because of the royal opposition to his election and because of his imprisonment.²⁴⁰ This created a major problem when John Timworth was finally confirmed in 1385, for amounts left unpaid by previous abbots were still demanded by the papacy. Although Abbot Timworth was not required to go to the Curia to make his obligation in person, it is probable that he was required to pay the fees for both John de Brinkeley and Edmund Bromfield in addition to his own expenses.²⁴¹

The confusion caused by the election proceedings at the abbey from 1379 to 1385, the attack on the abbey in 1381, and the royal and papal expenses faced because of the four and a half year vacancy resulted in severe economic problems for the abbey in the latter part of the fourteenth century. It is true that the king remitted 700 of the 1,200 marks due him in 1380, but in 1383 "Abbot-elect" Timworth cited current debts of 1,700 marks and succeeded in persuading the convent to contribute £790 9s. 9d towards this indebtedness.²⁴² That the financial difficulties persisted is evidenced by the fact that William Cratfield's payments to both the king and the papacy were delayed. Cratfield's obligation of 2,500 florins for the common service was made in June, 1389; 800 florins had been paid by August, 1389 and a further payment of 839 florins was made in October, 1390, still leaving at least 861 florins due the papacy.²⁴³ In 1389 the prior and convent did succeed in obtaining a postponement for the 1,200 mark fine due the king. The grant was made

in consideration of their great expense, both in England and at the Roman court, in prosecuting the election of Sir John Tymworth, deceased, as abbot, in saving the king's right, and also the great expense they will incur in the present election of Sir William Cratfield.²⁴⁴

Expenses associated with vacancies and elections were a major cause of financial difficulties at many abbeys, especially the exempt Benedictine houses, during

the fourteenth century. R. H. Snape has calculated the average cost of confirmation payments and expenses at the papacy at £958;²⁴⁵ this estimate would probably not be far off when applied to Bury. The common service tax amounted to £416 13s. 4d. but the additional five petty services and the "sacra" and "subdeacon" would have brought the total in taxes alone to well over £500.²⁴⁶ In addition, there would, of course, be the travelling and living expenses, plus the various fees for letters and licences obtained at the papal court. Evidence from the thirteenth century suggests that the total expenses for the papal confirmation were commensurate with Snape's figure: in 1257 the total expenses for Abbot Simon de Luton's confirmation amounted to £2,000, and in 1279 Abbot John Northwold's expenses for his journey to Rome amounted to 1,675 marks 10s. 9d.²⁴⁷ It is clear that the expenses in the fourteenth century did not by any means lessen, and that the total burden for both the abbot and the convent to the pope and to the king would have amounted to at least £1,250 for each election. In some respects, Bury St. Edmunds was more fortunate than other abbeys. Unlike St. Albans, where there were five vacancies within a fifty year period and where the burdens were similar,²⁴⁸ Bury St. Edmunds was vacant only six times during the century, though a quick succession of vacancies at the end of the century contributed to the financial instability after 1379.

Relief, however, was obtained at the end of the century. Just as the convent in 1396 had converted its custody payment to the king into an annual payment of £40, the abbot of Bury, with the help of the king, obtained a similar grant from Pope Boniface IX in 1398. The abbot was no longer required to seek papal confirmation for election, and an annual payment of 20 marks payable to the papal collector in England was substituted for the service taxes hitherto collected.²⁴⁹ Despite the fact that this privilege cost the abbot £756 1s. 3½d.²⁵⁰ the relief thus obtained, together with the relief obtained on the part of the convent, was significant and was one contributing factor to the improved financial stability of the abbey in the fifteenth century.

IV. Factors in Financial Management

The record of financial and economic administration at Bury St. Edmunds in the fourteenth century is not particularly reassuring, but it was not, by any means, unusual.²⁵¹ The monasteries of the fourteenth century were victims of external circumstances or economic factors often beyond their control as much as they were victims of their own mismanagement and lack of administrative talent. Certainly, these two trends are evident at Bury St. Edmunds, and it would be useful at this point to examine in more detail the underlying causes of financial distress together with an indication of both

the policies actually adopted and the possibilities open to the monastic administrators responsible for the financial stability.

One persistent factor accounting for the financial difficulties was obviously the very heavy vacancy expenses already noted. Although the incidence of vacancy was hardly predictable and therefore presented a factor beyond monastic control, the expenses associated with the vacancy, heavy though they were, remained largely the same throughout the period. It might have been advisable under these conditions for the abbot and the convent to have established a contingency fund in expectation of these expenses. There is little evidence to suggest that this was done and more compelling evidence to suggest that instead, the vacancy payments were difficult to meet and thus led to a situation where each abbot began his period of rule already saddled with financial burdens.

A second factor which was inescapable, and to some degree uncontrollable, was the general economic trend of the period. The abbey faced financial difficulties from the rising cost of labor on its estates, increasing war taxation, and the necessity of maintaining the monastic household. To some degree, the policies of commutation, leases, and farming out the demesne land were positive steps, but they did not deal with the problem completely. The abbey was still relying on a relatively fixed income, not an expanding one, and its policies towards its tenants

as a result of this situation did not contribute to external stability. Although spiritual revenues had never been a very large proportion of the total revenues, the drop in offerings and the evident decline in donations of land and rents to the abbey for pious purposes did affect the abbey's finances and reflected the declining prestige of the monasteries in the later Middle Ages. Far more serious, from the standpoint of solving the problem, was the characteristic tendency for the abbey not to cut down on running expenses to any large degree. Although the monastic population of the house did decline in the fourteenth century, the standard of living enjoyed was evidently maintained, and the number of servants, corrodars and pensioners with their attendant requirements was a source of strain.

The third and perhaps most important factor explaining the underlying causes of financial difficulties was mismanagement stemming from an administrative arrangement unsuitable for dealing with the complexities of economic pressures and from a lack of good administrative talent on the part of monastic officials. The internal arrangement for the administration of the abbey's finances was a serious weakness and had been a source of difficulty in the past. The obedientiary system as it functioned at Bury St. Edmunds left the receipts, expenditures and assigned revenues in the hands of each obedientiary, with

the cellarer (and later the treasurer) responsible for most of the unassigned revenue of the convent. During the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries, this decentralized control of the finances had led to many problems, the most noticeable being the ever present possibility of malfeasance and/or unchecked actions on the part of one obedientiary, which could in turn affect the general financial condition of the house. Earlier in Bury's history Abbot Samson (1182-1211) had made vigorous attempts to deal with this situation by instituting a weekly audit of all the expenditures of the monastic officials, installing his own clerk to oversee a particularly inefficient cellarer and regulating the contracting of loans on the part of the obedientiaries. These steps were necessary and effective, but Samson's high-handed policy aroused considerable opposition within the convent.²⁵² Conventual opposition to financial reform was thus one tendency which was difficult to counteract.

Another problem arising from the departmentalization of monastic finances was the tendency for each monastic official to retain both the deficits and surpluses in his own hand. This could result in a situation where deficits were carried on within each office, loans were contracted independently, and no attempt was made to replenish the empty coffers of one obedientiary from either a common fund or the surpluses of another monastic official. Similarly, surpluses under such a system were

not applied to a general fund for the house but were jealously guarded by each obedientiary.²⁵³

Steps towards correcting the obvious abuses of this decentralized arrangement had been undertaken by the Benedictine chapters and independently by some houses during the thirteenth century. On a general level, both the papacy and the Benedictine General Chapters made serious efforts at solving part of the problem. In 1222 the Council of Oxford under the leadership of Stephen Langton legislated that the abbots and obedientiaries of Benedictine houses should present either bi-annual or quarterly accounts before a body of monks chosen by the convent; the papal visitors at Bury St. Edmunds and Westminster in 1234 stressed this, and presumably this was put into effect at Bury.²⁵⁴ Useful as this legislation was in at least auditing receipts and expenditures, it did not establish a central receiving office which could also disburse the required funds to each obedientiary. This was a later development in some English monasteries and was largely the result of Archbishop Pecham's injunctions to thirteen houses requiring them to establish central treasuries or bursaries for this purpose. This system had the double advantage of establishing a reserve fund for unexpected expenses and insuring adequate control over each obedientiary. Evidence of its suitability is proved by its successful adoption and application at Christ Church, Canterbury, and at Glastonbury, Reading

and Gloucester.²⁵⁵

To what extent such a system was applied at Bury St. Edmunds is open to doubt. The abbey was not a recipient of Pecham's injunctions, and although there certainly was a treasurer at the abbey in the fourteenth century, it is more likely that he fulfilled the role of looking after the objects kept in the treasury, administering the unassigned revenues of the convent, and auditing the accounts of some obedientiaries. In short, he would appear to be simply another obedientiary who could also act in an independent fashion, not as a central receiving and disbursing agent.

This possibility is strengthened by three facts. In the first place, the sacrist and the cellarer, the two most important obedientiaries, kept separate records of receipts and expenditures and each had a staff of clerks and bailiffs to assist in the collection of revenues and dues. Although the treasurer might have audited these accounts, it seems unlikely that he disbursed revenues to the sacrist and cellarer, who both followed rather independent lines in the administration of their rights. Secondly, there is evidence that the treasurer did oversee some receipts and expenditures: a notation in the Pinchbeck Register itemizes obedientiaries' allowances for pittances dispensed to the monks and servants and specifically states that each officer is answerable

to the treasury for the amount.²⁵⁶ Finally, there is a surviving account roll of the "Treasurer or Chamberlain" dating from the period between 1349 and 1353 which shows yearly receipts of £750 19s. 8d and expenses of £542 17s. 1½d.²⁵⁷ From the notations of the types of expenditures (e.g., payment of some hospitality expenses, gifts, and repayment of an outstanding loan contracted by Abbot Richard) it would appear that this official only administered those revenues which were not assigned to any other obedientiary and did not act in the capacity of a general disbursing agent. The amount of income and expenses from this account roll also suggests that the treasury at Bury did not function as a general exchequer and that most obedientiaries retained an independent administration of their revenues. It does not appear, therefore, that the highly centralized system of financial administration so successful at Christ Church, Canterbury, or Gloucester made its appearance at Bury St. Edmunds.

In the absence of such an arrangement, it then fell to the abbot as the leader of the community to insure efficient administration and to oversee the responsible monastic officials. There was an obvious necessity to keep the abbot's revenues separate from those of the convent, but this fact did not necessarily prevent a capable abbot from undertaking an energetic role in the administration of the entire monastery. It could be done:

witness Abbot Samson earlier in Bury's history, or Thomas de la Mare at St. Albans, or Prior Eastry at Christ Church--²⁵⁸but the record of abbatial leadership at Bury St. Edmunds in the fourteenth century is not impressive, to say the least. The weight of custom and precedent, unforeseen external pressures, and the constant involvement of the abbot in business outside the monastery contributed as much to this failure as did the lack of administrative talent or weakness of character. The result, in any case, was unfortunate. Thomas of Totington's rule began under the weight of such heavy expenses that he was obliged to break up his establishment and live for a time on his different manors.²⁵⁹ Both Richard de Draughton (1313-1335) and William de Bernham (1335-1361) were unsuccessful in keeping the abbey free from dissension, attack by the tenants, or internally stable, and the picture was not improved by the conflicts surrounding the intrusion of the provisor Edmund Bromfield and the violence of the attack in 1381.

While it would be manifestly false to state that all of the abbots of Bury in the fourteenth century lacked talent, it would not appear that innovative leadership, constructive re-organization of financial administration, or effective long-range policies made their appearance. The methods employed for meeting immediate financial difficulties were similarly limited.

Contracting loans, the appropriation of churches, selling annuities and pensions, relying on fixed rents, and seeking royal aid were all practiced, and these devices did help to some degree. But the level of business ability was certainly not outstanding, and that deficiency only compounded the problems which already existed.

The financial and economic problems of Bury St. Edmunds illustrate well the position of monasticism in the later Middle Ages. An institution on the defensive, facing competition from other forces within the Church and within the state, it needed leadership capable of dealing with both the spiritual and economic concerns of the age if it was to maintain an influential and beneficial role within society. The underlying wealth of Bury St. Edmunds was enough to insure its continued existence, but it could prevent neither economic difficulties and strain, nor could it prevent the institution from being threatened by other forces within the fourteenth century.

Footnotes

¹ Knowles, Monastic Order, p. 702. According to the Domesday valuation, Bury was the fifth wealthiest Benedictine house in 1086. One Domesday survey for Bury is contained in The Pinchbeck Register, ed. Francis Hervey (2 vols.; Brighton, 1925), I, pp. 410-418. (Hereafter cited as PB. Reg.)

² The Kalendar of Abbot Samson of Bury St. Edmunds and Related Documents, ed. R.H.C. Davis (Camden Society, 3rd Series, LXXXIV, 1954), contains a good discussion of and documents pertaining to these regalian rights.

³ Abbot Baldwin's "Feudal Book" is contained in Feudal Documents from the Abbey of Bury St. Edmunds, ed. D.C. Douglas (London, 1932), pp. 1-9. Abbot Samson's Kalendar was drawn up between 1186 and 1191.

⁴ Witness Abbot Hugh II (1157-1180) who followed a policy of borrowing money and died leaving debts of £3,052. See J.B., pp. 1-3, 30.

⁵ That is, according to the 1291 valuation. See below, pp. 60ff.

⁶ The Chronicle of Bury St. Edmunds 1212-1301, ed. and trans. Antonia Gransden (London, 1964). (Hereafter cited as B.C.) On the composition and authorship of the Chronicle, see Vivian Galbraith, "St. Edmundsbury Chronicle, 1296-1301," E.H.R., LVIII (1943), pp. 51-78.

⁷ PB. Reg., II, p. 30. The survey is contained on pp. 30-282.

⁸ E.A. Kosminsky, Studies in the Agrarian History of England in the Thirteenth Century, ed. R.H. Hilton (Oxford, 1956), pp. 8-9. He cites E. Powell, A Suffolk Hundred in the Year 1283 (Cambridge, 1910).

⁹ Kosminsky, pp. 7-8.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 24-25.

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 26-40. See also Kosminsky, "The Hundred Rolls of 1279-80 as a Source for English Agrarian History," Econ. Hist. Rev., III (1931-32), pp. 16-44, and B. Dodwell, "The Free Tenantry of the Hundred Rolls," Econ. Hist. Rev., XIV (1944-45), pp. 163-171 for a general discussion of the problems presented by the source.

¹²B.C., pp. 104-106, 107-113. The figures given in J.C. Cox's article on Bury St. Edmunds in The Victoria History of the Counties of England: Suffolk, ed. William Page (2 vols.; London, 1907-11), II, p. 68 are incorrect. (Hereafter cited as W.C.H.:Suffolk) See Rose Graham, "The Taxation of Pope Nicholas," E.H.R., XXIII (1908), p. 452.

¹³PB Reg., I, pp. 446-449.

¹⁴J.Z. Titow, English Rural Society 1200-1350 (London, 1969), p. 63.

¹⁵Rose Graham, "The Taxation of Pope Nicholas," E.H.R., XXIII (1908), pp. 434-453.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 450-51.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 448-50.

¹⁸PB Reg., I, p. 445.

¹⁹B.C., p. 107. Further protests were made in 1294. See W.E. Lunt, Financial Relations of the Papacy with England to 1327 (Cambridge, Mass., 1939), p. 352 and Papal Revenues in the Middle Ages, ed. W.E. Lunt (2 vols.; New York, 1934), II, pp. 191-93.

²⁰See Appendix II

²¹Inquisitions post mortem also show knights' fees of the abbot in Bedford, Cumberland and Northampton in addition to those in Suffolk, Norfolk and Essex. See Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem and other Analogous Documents preserved in the Public Record Office (London, H.M.S.O., 1908-1970), V, pp. 231, 249; VI, p. 386; IX, p. 127; X, p. 377; XIV, p. 144.

²²PB Reg., I, p. 449.

²³Ibid., I, pp. 446, 447, 449.

²⁴This is my total. The chronicler gives only the total for Norfolk and Suffolk, B.C., p. 113.

²⁵This is my total. Ibid., pp. 108-109.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 109-110, 110-111.

²⁷Ibid., pp. 107, 108, 109.

²⁸This is my total. But see Graham, "The Taxation of Pope Nicholas," p. 432, where she gives the total for both the abbot's and the convent's holdings as £2,071 12s. 5d.

²⁹Printed in Dugdale, III, pp. 161-62.

³⁰FB. Reg., I, pp. 474-76.

³¹R.H. Snape, English Monastic Finances in the Later Middle Ages (Cambridge, 1926), p. 119.

³²Abstracts of the sacrists' rolls are contained in Hist. Mss. Cossn., pp. 123-25. M.D. Lobel, The Borough of Bury St. Edmunds (Oxford, 1935), Appendix III also prints some extracts of the sacrists' rolls. The fifteenth century taxation roll is alluded to in V.C.H., Suffolk, II, p. 69.

³³A.E. Levett, Studies in Manorial History, p. 56 discusses the wide variety of types of income.

³⁴Kalendar of Abbot Samson, pp. xxxvii ff.

³⁵Some information on amounts due the abbot from fines and amercements is provided in the Pinchbeck Register, I, pp. 308-319. In 1317 the abbot received £23 13s. 4d from fines paid by seven men of the Liberty; in 1324 he received £6 6s. 8d; and in 1326, £22 15s. 2d. FB Reg., I, pp. 313-14, 316.

³⁶Bertha H. Putnam, The Enforcement of the Statutes of Labourers (New York, 1908), p. 98.

³⁷For example, there were four cases between 1308 and 1333 where the abbot obtained an order prohibiting the royal escheator from taking possession of lands and goods of deceased tenants who held by knight service directly from him. C. Cl. R. 1307-13, pp. 25, 197; C. Cl. R. 1330-33, pp. 71, 209.

³⁸C. Cl. R. 1381-85, pp. 486-87; Dugdale, III, p. 120; Lobel, The Borough of Bury St. Edmund, p. 157.

³⁹See M.D. Lobel, The Borough of Bury St. Edmunds and her article "The Ecclesiastical Banleuca in England," in Oxford Essays in Medieval History presented to H.E. Salter (Oxford, 1934), pp. 122-140 for comprehensive treatments of this topic.

⁴⁰Lobel, The Borough of Bury St. Edmunds, p. 113.

⁴¹V.C.H., Suffolk, II, p. 61; B.C., pp. 83-84.

⁴²C.P.R. 1301-07, p. 267. This grant was for three years. C.P.R. 1327-30, p. 526.

⁴³Lobel, The Borough of Bury St. Edmunds, pp. 19-31, 47-59.

⁴⁴The Cambridge Economic History of Europe, Vol. I: The Agrarian Life of the Middle Ages, ed. M.M. Postan (2nd. ed.; Cambridge, 1966), pp. 577-78. (Hereafter cited as C.E.H.)

⁴⁵Ibid., pp. 552-54.

⁴⁶See Appendix II.

⁴⁷C.E.H., I, p. 554.

⁴⁸As noted in V.C.H.: Suffolk, I, pp. 641-42; E. Lipson, The Economic History of England, Vol. I: The Middle Ages (10th ed.; London, 1949), p. 79. The manors were: Melford, Chevington, Hargrave, Saxham, Fornham, Elmswell, Brockford, Worlingworth, Redgrave, Soham, Rickingham, Culford.

⁴⁹C.E.H., I, p. 554. E.g., in 1283 the total animal population was less than one-half the total animal population in 1867, a period of low animal husbandry. Ibid., p. 554.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 555.

⁵¹See the description of Abbot Samson's work of reclamation in J.B., p. 28.

⁵²C.E.H., I, p. 563. See below, pp. 92-94 for a description of the subdivision of holdings.

⁵³Kalendar of Abbot Samson, p. 1. The description of the amounts due and the schedule of rotation is in PB Reg., I, pp. 340-49. The eighteen manors were: Pakenham, Berton, Bradfield, Rougham, Fornham, Newton, Whepstede, Horningsheath, Risby, Heringwell, Werketon, Southwolde, Chebenhal, Southeray, Ingham, Timworth, Elvedene and New Barton.

⁵⁴See Appendix II.

⁵⁵Lipson, p. 34; V.C.H.: Suffolk, I, p. 642.

⁵⁶The cellarer had rights of pre-emption in the town. J.B., pp. 104-105.

⁵⁷Income from water mills and windmills is detailed in the listing of the rents from the 18 manors which provisioned the abbey. Some examples of yearly income from this source are: Pakenham, 10 marks; Horningsheath, 40s.; Risby, 34s.; Herringwell, 20s.; Werketone, 52 marks; Southwolde, 20s. (PB Reg., I, pp. 340, 343-346.) Market rights were also valuable

not only to the abbot and convent but also to the burgesses of Bury St. Edmunds. The abbot, convent and burgesses of Bury were exempt from tolls at all markets and fairs in England (C.P.R. 1330-34, p. 147.) The abbot and convent had the right to collect tolls from markets in Bury, a right set down in a charter of Henry I (C.P.R. 1381-85, p. 528;) and in 1330, because of losses sustained in the 1327 riots, the king granted to the abbot and convent the right to hold an additional weekly market and annual fair in the town of Melford. (C.Ch.R. 1327-41, pp. 189-190.)

⁵⁸ C.E.H., I, pp. 577-78, 597; Kosminsky, Studies, p. 171 notes the "conservative tradition" of Benedictine management.

⁵⁹ Philip Ziegler, The Black Death, Pelican Books (London, 1970), p. 122.

⁶⁰ C.Pap.L., III, p. 383; Carson Ritchie, "The Black Death at St. Edmund's Abbey," Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology, XXVII (1958), pp. 49-50 prints another copy of the papal grant.

⁶¹ Ritchie, p. 50.

⁶² Augustus Jessopp, "The Black Death in East Anglia," in The Coming of the Friars and other Historic Essays (London, 1908), p. 215.

⁶³ P.G. Mode, The Influence of the Black Death, p. 13. This is not to say, however, that the death rate among the clergy was exactly proportional to that among the laity of the area.

⁶⁴ Jessopp, pp. 204, 236; J.C. Russell, British Medieval Population (Albuquerque, 1948), p. 228; Ziegler, pp. 173-77.

⁶⁵ Jessopp, pp. 204, 206.

⁶⁶ The plague of 1360/61 did affect the abbey itself. In 1366 Pope Urban V permitted Abbot John de Brinkeley to ordain monks under the statutory age, "there being a great lack of priests by reason of the recent mortality." Calendar of Entries in the Papal Registers relating to Great Britain and Ireland: Petitions to the Pope, Vol. I: A.D. 1342-1419, ed. W.H. Bliss (London, H.M.S.O.: 1896), p. 513. (Hereafter cited as C.Pap.Reg.: Pet.)

⁶⁷ Edgar Powell, The Rising in East Anglia in 1381 (Cambridge, 1896), p. 74.

⁶⁸ See two important articles discussing this trend: M.M. Postan, "The Chronology of Labour Services," T.R.H.S., 4th series, XX (1937), pp. 169-193 and J. Saltmarsh,

"Plague and Economic Decline in England in the Later Middle Ages." The Cambridge Historical Journal, VII (1941), pp. 23-41.

⁶⁹Kalendar of Abbot Samson, pp. 76-77; PB. Reg., I, p. 357.

⁷⁰Kalendar of Abbot Samson, p. xxxv; PB. Reg., I, pp. 340, 358. A verpenny was paid at the rate of 2d per 30 acres. J.B., p. 102.

⁷¹PB. Reg., I, p. 356.

⁷²Kalendar of Abbot Samson, p. xxxvi; PB. Reg., I, p. 340.

⁷³V.C.H.; Suffolk, I, p. 641. Ploughing service for one acre was valued at 4d.

⁷⁴Titow prints only the partial extent with useful notes, pp. 161-64. It is from British Museum Manuscript Add. 14849.

⁷⁵Ibid., pp. 162-63.

⁷⁶The Rickinghall rental is described in V.C.H.; Suffolk, I, p. 656. This rental is also from British Museum Manuscript Add. 14849.

⁷⁷See the comments of H.L. Gray, "The Commutation of Villein Services in England before the Black Death," E.H.R. XXIX (1914), pp. 625-656. Levett's statement that the older Benedictine houses were "particularly likely to maintain the memory of ... archaic personal services and marks of servitude." would seem to hold for Bury as well. Levett, Studies, p. 56.

⁷⁸PB. Reg., I, pp. 340-49.

⁷⁹Ibid., pp. 57-58 where the monk suggests his concern and reasons for compiling the register.

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 341.

⁸¹Ibid., pp. 340-41, 342, 343.

⁸²Ibid., pp. 344, 346.

⁸³Levett, Studies, p. 81. The manuscript is British Museum Add. 40063.

⁸⁴Ibid., p. 81.

⁸⁵Powell, The Rising in East Anglia, p. 64.

⁸⁶Another case from Littlehaw manor, though not in the hands of the monastery had that time, shows conditions after the Peasants' Revolt. In 1385, 15 villeins protested services still owed and wanted freedom from all but 4d/acre rent. Ibid., pp. 65-66.

⁸⁷ See especially Gray, "The Commutation of Villein Services," Postan in C.E.H., I, pp. 577-78; and Kosminsky, p. 171. L.F. Rushbrook Williams in History of the Abbey of St. Alban (London, 1917), p. 130 asserts that "religious houses were as a rule kindly rather than oppressive landlords." This view is, I think, mistaken; perhaps they were not "oppressive," but more generally "conservative" and unresponsive to tenants' aspirations.

⁸⁸ Dugdale, III, p. 119.

⁸⁹ C.P.R. 1321-24, p. 218.

⁹⁰ Dugdale, III, pp. 129, 130.

⁹¹ Titow, pp. 161-62.

⁹² V.C.H.: Suffolk, pp. 556-57. But see R.H. Hilton, The Decline of Serfdom in Medieval England (London, 1969), p. 46 for cautionary statements on over-emphasizing the trends towards leaseholds. Customary tenure did remain in many areas until the latter part of the fourteenth century.

⁹³ But in 1279 the Mildenhall rents for free tenants showed considerable variations in the rents for arable land: from 2d to 12d per acre. Thus, the area might have been one of higher rents. P.B. Reg., II, 243-55.

⁹⁴ V.C.H.: Suffolk, I, p. 654; P.B. Reg., II, pp. 162-67. This might, however, indicate that villein rents were normally higher than rents for free land.

⁹⁵ V.C.H.: Suffolk, I, p. 654.

⁹⁶ Titow, pp. 161-64; P.B. Reg., II, p. 32. The rents in 1279 varied from 1½d to 5½d per acre, with most at 4d per acre.

⁹⁷ V.C.H.: Suffolk, I, p. 654.

⁹⁸ Unwin in V.C.H.: Suffolk, I, relies on Cox's figures in V.C.H.: Suffolk, II, p. 68 from faulty and inaccurate 1291/92 valuation figures which show a total of only £1,000, and he compares that with a pittance register containing a fifteenth century taxation roll showing £2,030 7s. 11½d income of obedientiaries and £798 18s. 2d to the abbot.

⁹⁹ See K.L. Wood-leigh, Studies in Church Life in England under Edward III (Cambridge, 1934), pp. 61-75 for a full discussion of this topic. See also T.A.M. Bishop, "Monastic Demesnes and the Statute of Mortmain," E.H.R., XLIX (1934), pp. 303-306 for the operation and effect of the Statute.

100 Wood-Legh, p. 71. A licence was also needed for the transfer of land. When the licence records no stated purpose, Wood-Legh assumes that the land was acquired by purchase or was a transfer, rather than the gift of a pious donor.

101 Licences and records of inquisitions for the period from 1303 through 1342 are in: C.P.R.1301-07, pp. 162, 227, 531; C.Ch.R.1300-26, pp. 59, 128; C.F.R.1307-13, pp. 153, 526; C.Cl.R.1313-16, p. 26; C.P.R.1313-17, pp. 42, 296, 305, 381, 632; C.F.R.1317-21, pp. 260, 590; C.F.R.1321-24, p. 287; C.P.R.1324-27, p. 38; C.P.R.1327-30, pp. 370-71; C.P.R.1340-43, pp. 356-57.

102 For January 4, 1313: C.P.R.1307-13, p. 526; For November 17, 1313: C.P.R.1313-17, p. 42 and C.Cl.R.1313-18, p. 26. The general grant is also noted in Dugdale, III, p. 120.

103 C.P.R.1317-21, p. 260; C.P.R.1321-24, p. 287.

104 C.P.R.1307-13, p. 153; C.Ch.R.1300-26, p. 128 which states that the income was for the cellarer. The Bury chronicler in M.S.E., II, pp. 366-67 comments on the low price for which the manor was sold.

105 Licences for the period from 1349 to 1392 are in: C.P.R.1348-50, pp. 401-02, 482; C.P.R.1354-58, p. 319; C.F.R.1361-64, pp. 305, 308, 463; C.P.R.1367-70, pp. 99-100; C.P.R.1377-81, p. 440; C.P.R.1381-85, p. 8; C.P.R.1388-92, pp. 379-80; C.P.R.1391-96, pp. 121, 145, 147.

106 Select Cases in the Court of King's Bench under Edward II, Vol. IV, p. cx; C.P.R.1327-30, pp. 370-71.

107 C.P.R.1361-64, p. 305. (This manor figured in a later case. The abbey sued Ralph Hemenhale for recovery in 1383: C.Cl.R.1381-85, p. 339; PB. Reg., I, p. 327.)

108 See Lipson's discussion of enclosures and sheep farming, pp. 133-34. A.R.H. Baker, "Evidence in the 'Nonarum Inquisitiones' of Contracting Arable Lands in England during the Early Fourteenth Century," Econ. Hist. Rev., XIX (1966), pp. 518-32, does not find a great contraction in Suffolk, but he does not examine ecclesiastical estates.

109 R.A. Pelham, "Fourteenth Century England," Chapter V in An Historical Geography of England before A.D. 1800, ed. H.C. Darby (Cambridge, 1951), pp. 232-37. But he indicates that the quality of the wool grown in the area was lower than that from Yorkshire and Lincolnshire: Ibid., pp. 242-43. H.C. Darby, "The Domesday Geography of Norfolk and Suffolk," The Geographical Journal, LXXXV (1935), p. 443 finds an even distribution of sheep in Suffolk in 1086. He

gives the following relevant figures for sheep on the demesne land of the abbey at that time: Mildenhall, 1,000; Icklingham, 500; Eriswell, 800. Ibid., p. 443. However, as a whole, sheep were fewer in Suffolk than in other areas at the time of the Domesday survey: H.C. Darby, The Domesday Geography of Eastern England (Cambridge, 1952), p. 204.

Even in the sixteenth century, arable farming was the main interest in south-western Suffolk, a region capable of sustaining a mixed sheep-corn economy: The Agrarian History of England and Wales: Vol. IV. 1500-1640, ed. Joan Thirsk (Cambridge, 1967), pp. 41-43.

¹¹⁰R.A. Pelham, pp. 244-55; H.L. Gray, "The Production and Exportation of English Woollens in the Fourteenth Century," E.H.R., XXXIX (1924), pp. 20-22, 31 discusses the Suffolk broadcloth industry.

¹¹¹P.B. Reg., I, pp. 341-44. The figures are: Berton, 700; Rougham, 300; Fornham, 200; and Herringwell, 800.

¹¹²M.S.E., II, p. 296.

¹¹³C.P.R. 1327-30, p. 219 (Italics mine.); but the Bury writer of the "Depraedatio" does not indicate any such figure: M.S.E., II, pp. 340-47. Some comparative figures from other abbeys show that in the early fourteenth century the Priory of St. Swithin's, Winchester, had 20,000 sheep, and Peterborough and Crowland each had around 16,300 sheep. Eileen Power, The Wool Trade in English Mediaeval History (Oxford, 1941), pp. 34-35.

¹¹⁴Pegalotti's list is contained in W. Cunningham, The Growth of English Industry and Commerce (5th ed.; Cambridge, 1927), pp. 628-41.

¹¹⁵For example, Sibton Abbey (Cistercian) in Suffolk and Langley (Praemonstratensian) in Norfolk both provided wool for export. Other Benedictine abbeys of importance were Crowland, Ramsey and Abingdon. Cunningham, pp. 634, 635, 640. But Pelham concludes that "The importance of the wool trade has been rather over-emphasised at the expense of arable farming in the fourteenth century," and on the role of the monasteries, finds their total contribution to wool production "was much smaller than might be expected." Pelham, "Fourteenth Century England," pp. 239, 242. Indeed, Dissolution records for Suffolk have no entries for sheep farming by the monasteries there. Although Savine warns against concluding that it was therefore minimal, he does state that "up to the last the monks tilled almost as much land as they kept for grazing purposes." Alexander Savine, English Monasteries on the Eve of the Dissolution (Oxford, 1909), pp. 187, 178.

116 According to Lipson, the villein population in Suffolk in 1086 was only 14% of the total. Lipson, p. 34. Hilton, Decline of Serfdom, p. 21 says that there was a high proportion (40%) of free tenants in all of East Anglia in 1086.

117 A case from a manor in Mildenhall is of interest in this connection. In 15 Edward III (?) some of the tenants contested their villein status. The abbot's attorney cited customary rights of service and the payment of tallage and merchet as the determining marks of serfdom. P.B. Reg., I, pp. 321-24.

118 It would appear that Abbot Richard had freed some serfs, although no indication of the number is given. Dugdale, III, p. 118. Postan, C.E.H., I, p. 614 does not find many instances of manumission of serfs on the estates of Winchester. See also E.P. Cheyney, "The Disappearance of English Serfdom," E.H.R., XV (1900), pp. 20-37 where he asserts that manumission played only a small role in the eventual decline of serfdom.

119 For example, the 1357 extent for Palgrave lists rents according to the tenement, not according to the individual tenant; thus, the burdens belonged to the land, and in many cases the original parcel of land was divided among many customary tenants. Titow, pp. 162-164. In Mildenhall high rents were charged, and in Elmswell by 1357, the holdings became more split up although the rental still listed the burdens due according to the original tenement. V.C.H., Suffolk, I, pp. 657, 655.

120 See above, p. 80.

121 B. Dodwell, "Holdings and Inheritance in Medieval East Anglia," Econ. Hist. Rev., 2nd ser., XX (1967), pp. 53-66 discusses in detail partible inheritance; she stresses the large number of freeholders and the large number of small holdings as a consequence.

122 C.E.H., I, p. 612.

123 Ibid., p. 612.

124 See Appendix III. The figures I have chosen to represent those tenants in the lower, middle and upper ranges are based partly on those used by Postan in C.E.H., I, pp. 618-21 and by Titow, pp. 79-89.

125 Titow, p. 89.

126 Titow emphasizes this point, pp. 79-89. Also, Postan, C.E.H., I, p. 622 cites figures showing that on a sample of 104 manors, 50% of the population had holdings of

only 10 acres or less. Even if 10 acres is a high figure for subsistence level, the statistics from the Bury estates in 1279 show that there were many tenants with less than 5 acres. See Appendix III.

¹²⁷Additional burdens of the free tenants on the abbey's estates consisted of reliefs, amercements levied and collected in the various courts, obligations of fold-soke, the abbot's common aid, and tolls and market perquisites of the abbey within the town of Bury.

¹²⁸V.C.H.: Suffolk, I, pp. 645-46; PB. Reg., II, pp. 162-67.

¹²⁹V.C.H.: Suffolk, I, pp. 655, 656, 657.

¹³⁰See R.H. Hilton, "Peasant Movements in England before 1381," Econ. Hist. Rev., 2nd ser., II (1949), pp. 117-136; and Hilton, The Decline of Serfdom in Medieval England.

¹³¹E. Powell and G.M. Trevelyan (ed.), The Peasants' Rising and the Lollards (London, 1899), p. ix.

¹³²M.S.E., II, p. xlv1; Lobel, Borough, pp. 137-41.

¹³³C.P.R. 1301-07, p. 472.

¹³⁴C.P.R. 1301-07, p. 549.

¹³⁵For example, in 1314 the abbot was a defendant in a case involving services on the manor of East Bradenham; Year Books of Edward II, Vol. XVIII: 8 Edward II, A.D. 1315, ed. W.C. Bolland (London, Selden Society, 1920), pp. 208-09. In 1315 the abbot was again involved in litigation, claiming the manor of Monks' Bradfield; Year Books of Edward II, Vol. XVII: 8 Edward II, A.D. 1314-1315, ed. W.C. Bolland (London, Selden Society, 1925), pp. 172-74.

¹³⁶See above, pp. 23-25.

¹³⁷The most complete discussion of the issues involved is by Lobel, Borough, pp. 143 ff. For a comparison of the Bury uprising with those of the same year at Abingdon and St. Albans, see N.M. Trenholme, "The Risings in the English Monastic Towns in 1327," American Historical Review, VI (1901), pp. 650-70; V.B. Redstone, "Some Mercenaries of Henry of Lancaster, 1327-1330," T.R.H.S., 3rd ser., VII (1913), pp. 151-166 discusses the kidnapping of the abbot.

In addition to the Bury chronicler's description of the events in M.S.E., III, pp. 38-47, the events are mentioned in Chronicles of the Reigns of Edward I and Edward II, ed. William Stubbs (2 vols.; London, Rolls Series, 1882-83), I, pp. 243-45, 333-34, 344-46.

¹³⁸ Contained in M.S.E., II, pp. 327-354.

¹³⁹ On the activity of the London men capturing and dispatching the abbot see Calendar of Plea and Memoranda Rolls Preserved among the Archives of the Corporation of the City of London at the Guildhall. Rolls A1a-A9, A.D. 1323-1364, ed. A.H. Thomas (Cambridge, 1926), p. 73.

¹⁴⁰ M.S.E., II, p. 334.

¹⁴¹ The author of the "Depraedatio" itemizes the damage and estimated the total loss on the manors at 922 5s. 1d. M.S.E., II, p. 347.

¹⁴² C.P.R. 1334-38, p. 207; C.P.R. 1340-43, pp. 316-17.

¹⁴³ C.P.R. 1358-61, p. 476.

¹⁴⁴ See B.H. Putnam, Enforcement of the Statutes of Labourers and Proceedings before the Justices of the Peace in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries, ed. B.H. Putnam, (London, 1938), pp. 342-377 where she prints a Suffolk roll. Although Putnam mentions no specific cases relating to the abbot or tenants of Bury, she does indicate that Suffolk had a large number of proceedings involving labor.

¹⁴⁵ Levett, Studies, p. 81. See above, p. 80.

¹⁴⁶ Edgar Powell, The Rising in East Anglia (Cambridge, 1896) and his article, "An Account of the Proceedings in Suffolk during the Peasants' Rising in 1381," T.R.H.S., n.s., VIII (1894), pp. 203-249; Lobel, The Borough of Bury St. Edmunds, pp. 150ff.

I cannot agree with Charles Oman's analysis. He suggests that the rising of 1381 at Bury was mainly an expression of civic discontent among the burgesses and states that "manorial grievances had no part in causing the outburst." Charles Oman, The Great Revolt of 1381 (Oxford, 1906), p. 13. On the other hand, Charles Petit-Dutaillis in "Causes and General Characteristics of the Rising of 1381," in Studies and Notes Supplementary to Stubbs' Constitutional History, Vol. II, trans. W.T. Waugh (Manchester, 1915), p. 297 specifically cites the abbot of Bury as pursuing the burden of serfdom on the abbey's estates.

¹⁴⁷ V.C.H.: Suffolk, II, p. 69; D. Knowles and R.N. Hadcock, Medieval Religious Houses: England and Wales (London, 1953), p. 61.

¹⁴⁸ Dugdale, III, p. 117; PB Reg., I, p. 473.

¹⁴⁹See J.C. Russell, "The Clerical Population of Medieval England," Traditio, II (1944), pp. 185-190 for a general discussion of trends within the Order.

¹⁵⁰C.Pap.L., III, p. 383; C.Pap.Reg.:Petitions, I, p. 513.

¹⁵¹Ritchie, "The Black Death at St. Edmund's Abbey," p. 50. But his calculation is rather doubtful, being based on the ratio of chaplains to monks. Using that basis, the 1361 plague would have then been more severe at the abbey.

¹⁵²The figures for 1379 are my calculation based on the number of monks taking sides in the dispute over Edmund Bromfield. M.S.E., III, pp. 117, 120. The figures for 1381 are given in Knowles and Hadcock, p. 61 and J.C. Russell, "Cerical Population," p. 189.

¹⁵³Knowles and Hadcock, p. 61.

¹⁵⁴Document printed in Dugdale, III, pp. 161-62 and PB Reg., I, pp. 474-76.

¹⁵⁵PB. Reg., I, p. 474. The document in Dugdale, III, pp. 161-62 gives £1,407 11s 12d as the total.

¹⁵⁶PB. Reg., I, pp. 475-76.

¹⁵⁷My total. See above, p. 61.

¹⁵⁸See Snape, pp. 12-15. However, attempts had been made in the thirteenth century by both the papacy and the Benedictine Chapters to limit the number of servants. Snape, pp. 16-17.

¹⁵⁹Moorman, Church Life, p. 307.

¹⁶⁰These rolls are now at Bury St. Edmunds. The seven rolls from 1299 to 1538 are described in Hist. Mss. Csn., pp. 123-125; Lobel in Appendix III itemizes some of the receipts and expenditures.

¹⁶¹PB. Reg., I, 475.

¹⁶²Ibid.; Lobel, Appendix III.

¹⁶³PB. Reg., I, 475; Hist. Mss. Csn., p. 123.

¹⁶⁴Hist. Mss. Csn., p. 123.

¹⁶⁵Ibid., pp. 123-24.

¹⁶⁶Ibid., pp. 123-24.

- 167 P.B. Reg., I. p. 475.
- 168 M.R. James, "On the Abbey of S. Edmund at Bury," pp. 167-68.
- 169 Ibid., pp. 133, 143.
- 170 E.g. Prior John Gosford, c. 1380 rebuilt the infirmary cloister. Ibid., p. 147. See also A.B. Whittingham, "Bury St. Edmunds Abbey: The Plan, Design and Development of the Church and Monastic Buildings," The Archaeological Journal, CVII (1951), pp. 168-186 for a complete discussion of the topic.
- 171 Susan Wood, English Monasteries and their Patrons in the Thirteenth Century (Oxford, 1955) for a general discussion of rights and privileges of patrons, especially the king.
- 172 Ibid., p. 102ff.
- 173 J.B., pp. 116-117.
- 174 Statutes of the Realm, ed. A. Luders et. al. (11 vols. in 13; London, 1810-28), I, pp. 26-28.
- 175 Renewals in 1315-16 and 1326-27. Ibid., pp. 173, 256.
- 176 As Wood-Legh, Studies, pp. 8ff suggests.
- 177 B.C., pp. 37, 133; Cal. Chancery Warrants, 1244-1326, p. 40.
- 178 The Bury chronicler commented on the visit of May 8, 1300, "Never had he appeared more gracious to the church and convent," B.C., p. 156.
- 179 Dugdale, III, p. 108; C.Cl.R. 1323-27, pp. 532-35; C.P.R. 1325-27, pp. 200-04, 216, 219, 237, 249.
- 180 In 1328, 1331, 1333, 1334, 1338, 1340, 1344, 1354, 1358, and 1363. The dates are taken from close and patent letters dated at Bury.
- 181 Hist. Mss. Csqn., p. 123.
- 182 Dugdale, III, p. 112. Higden's Polychronicon, IX, p. 20 refers to this event as well.
- 183 M.S.E., III, pp. 133-34.
- 184 For a general discussion of the types of corrodies see H.M. Stuckert, Corrodies in the English Monasteries (Philadelphia, 1923.)

¹⁸⁵ Snape, p. 19; A.M. Reich, "The Parliamentary Abbots to 1470," p. 312 also cites the fact that Edward II in the space of three months granted a total of 34 corrodies to servants of his father.

¹⁸⁶ Corrodies granted at the request of the king are found in: C.P.R.1301-07, p. 33; C.Cl.R.1302-07, p. 104; C.Cl.R.1307-13, pp. 151, 239, 337; C.P.R.1307-13, p. 552; C.Cl.R.1313-18, p. 66; Cal. Chancery Warrants, 1244-1326, p. 465; C.Cl.R.1318-23, pp. 116-117, 369; C.P.R.1330-34, p. 212; C.Cl.R.1333-37, p. 540; C.P.R.1334-38, pp. 265, 573; C.Cl.R.1381-85, p. 386; C.Cl.R.1385-89, p. 256. Four additional corrodies, perhaps of the type sold by the monastery, are listed in Dugdale, III, p. 119.

¹⁸⁷ C.Cl.R.1318-23, p. 369; C.P.R.1334-38, p. 573.

¹⁸⁸ C.Cl.R.1302-07, p. 104.

¹⁸⁹ C.Cl.R.1307-13, p. 239.

¹⁹⁰ Wood, English Monasteries and their Patrons, p. 114.

¹⁹¹ C.Cl.R.1313-18, p. 66; C.Cl.R.1333-37, p. 540; C.Cl.R.1381-85, p. 386.

¹⁹² As Stuckert, Corrodies, p. 44 suggests.

¹⁹³ C.Cl.R.1302-07, p. 104.

¹⁹⁴ Wood, English Monasteries and their Patrons, pp. 109-110.

¹⁹⁵ Cal. Chancery Warrants, 1244-1326, p. 465.

¹⁹⁶ C.P.R.1334-38, p. 265.

¹⁹⁷ Dugdale, III, p. 119.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ B.C., p. 73; P.B. Reg., I, p. 321. Other amounts paid by the abbey for renewals or confirmation of charters during the fourteenth century were lower, though still considerable: in 1314, £120 was paid for an inspeximus (C.Ch.R.1300-26, pp. 272-73); in 1330, £100 for the same (C.Ch.R.1327-41, p. 181); in 1336, £30 for the specific inclusion of the abbot's rights to forfeitures (C.Ch.R.1327-41, p. 358); and in 1383, 20 marks was paid for a confirmation (C.Ch.R.1341-1417, pp. 294-95).

²⁰⁰ See also below, pp. 125, 130 for royal and papal licences at the end of the century which also cost a considerable amount.

²⁰¹Wood-Legh, Studies, pp. 61-65 describes the process. Bishop, "Monastic Demesnes," asserts that the fines paid were a kind of tax to restrict additions to monastic demesnes, p. 306.

²⁰²C.P.R. 1307-13, p. 526.

²⁰³In 1380, 5 marks (C.P.R. 1377-81, p. 440); in 1381, 12 marks (C.P.R. 1381-85, p. 8); in 1391, £40 (C.P.R. 1388-92, p. 379); in 1392, £7 13s. 4d (C.P.R. 1391-96, p. 145); and in 1392, 10 marks (Ibid., p. 121).

²⁰⁴See H.M. Cam, "The King's Government as Administered by the Greater Abbots of East Anglia," in Liberties and Communities in Medieval England (Cambridge, 1944), pp. 190-91.

²⁰⁵C.P.R. 1340-43, pp. 316-17; C.P.R. 1358-61, p. 516.

²⁰⁶W.W. Capes, The English Church in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries (London, 1920), p. 296.

²⁰⁷At least from the point of view of the number of times taxes were demanded of them. See J.H. Ramsay, A History of the Revenues of the Kings of England, 1066 - 1399 (2 vols.; Oxford, 1925) and James F. Willard, Parliamentary Taxes on Personal Property 1290 to 1334 (Cambridge, Mass., 1934).

²⁰⁸B.C., p. 124.

²⁰⁹Ibid., p. 139.

²¹⁰Ibid., p. 141.

²¹¹Ibid., p. 147.

²¹²Abbot: P.B. Reg., I, p. 449; Convent: B.C., pp. 113, 105.

²¹³Ramsay, II, pp. 63-64; Willard, p. 95.

²¹⁴C.Cl.R. 1341-43, pp. 225-26; C.P.R. 1338-40, p. 499; C.P.R. 1340-43, p. 300.

²¹⁵Confusion often arose among collectors. Willard, pp. 95, 98, 108.

²¹⁶For the topic of clerical independence see D.B. Weske, Convocation of the Clergy (London, 1937). Papal income taxes were not collected from 1336 to 1360 because the clergy was paying subsidies to the English crown for the war; it did cause some difficulty when they were re-imposed. W.E. Lunt, Financial Relations of the Papacy with England 1327-1534 (Cambridge, Mass., 1962), pp. 94-95.

²¹⁷The restitution of temporalities occurred on 17 May and the request for the loan came on 13 August, 1313. The 1315 request for a loan also has another writ asking the prior and convent for 500 marks. Parliamentary Writs and Writs of Military Summons, ed. F. Palgrave (2 vols. in 4; London, Record Commission: 1827-34), II, pp. 66, 88.

²¹⁸See below, p. 126.

²¹⁹Other instances of loans or advance payments requested were: 1319, request of a loan from part or all of the tenth owed (Parl. Writs, II, p. 141); 1338, a chalice valued at £115 19s. 4d was given to the king as a loan (C.P.R. 1338-40, p. 122); 1347, £40 was lent by the abbot (C.P.R. 1345-48, p. 339); 1377, a loan of 100 marks was given (C.P.R. 1377-81, p. 30); 1385, loan of 100 marks (C.P.R. 1385-89, p. 480; and in 1397, a loan of 200 marks was requested (C.P.R. 1396-99, p. 178.) Also, Bury acted as a sub-collector on a number of occasions, and the king often sought advance payment out of those funds, some of which had to go to the papacy. The abbey could face difficulties if the sums were not repaid.

²²⁰Vivian Galbraith, "Articles Laid before the Parliament of 1371," E.H.R., XXXIV (1919), pp. 579-82.

²²¹B.C., p. 68.

²²²B.C., p. 73. This was, in fact, a confirmation of an earlier charter.

²²³See Appendix I for dates and instances of vacancies.

²²⁴Williams, History of the Abbey of St. Alban, pp. 136-37 suggests that the heavy price might not really be worth it; the monks were guarding against only a possible loss from the royal custodian which might have been less than the custody fine paid each time.

²²⁵C.P.R. 1301-07, p. 227.

²²⁶Mode, Black Death, pp. 34-35; Williams, History of the Abbey of St. Alban, p. 136.

²²⁷See Appendix I.

²²⁸M.S.E., II, p. 323; P.B. Reg., I, pp. 407-08; C.P.R. 1301-07, p. 226.

²²⁹C.P.R. 1379-81, p. 499.

²³⁰C.P.R. 1388-92, pp. 45, 368.

²³¹C.P.R. 1396-99, p. 21; Dugdale, III, p. 112.

232 The others were: St. Albans, St. Augustine's, Canterbury, Battle, Evesham, Malmesbury, and Westminster. They each paid a small "census" in recognition to the papacy; for Bury this was one mark. The decree of 1215 requiring these abbots to go to Rome was first put into effect in 1257 when Abbot Simon de Luton of Bury received his confirmation there. B.C., pp. 21-22.

233 Lunt, Fin. Rel. 1327-1534, pp. 169, 175. This was a different assessment from the one used for the tenths. I have used Lunt's figure of six florins to the pound as the exchange rate. Ibid., pp. 238, 305.

234 Ibid., pp. 169, 248. The "sacra" equalled one-twentieth of the common service, and the "subdeacon" equalled one-third of the sacra.

235 Ibid., pp. 177, 279; 195-96; 214.

236 C.Pap.L., I, p. 602; M.S.E., III, p. 37. Abbot Thomas gave the heavy confirmation expenses as his reason for declining the invitation to attend the installation of the new abbot of St. Benet's.

237 Lobel, p. 143; Dugdale, III, p. 118 notes a loan of 100 marks from the Bard. The payment of 3,000 fl. in this case was due to 500 marks private service being added. Lunt, Fin. Rel. 1327-1534, p. 175.

238 Lunt, Fin. Rel. 1327-1534, Appendix, pp. 812-13.

239 Ibid.

240 Ibid.

241 Ibid.; Timworth's obligation was made instead to the Bishop of London. Ibid., p. 184.

242 M.S.E., III, p. 134.

243 Lunt, Fin. Rel. 1327-1534, pp. 812-13.

244 C.P.R. 1388-92, p. 45.

245 Snape, p. 104.

246 William Cratfield in 1389/90 paid 89fl 15s 3d for one service payment, 125 florins for the sacra, and 42fl 8s for the subdeacon. Lunt, Fin. Rel. 1327-1534, p. 249.

247 B.C., p. 22, 70.

248 Williams, History of the Abbey of St. Alban, pp. 136-37. In 1302 Abbot John de Maryns of St. Albans' confirmation expenses amounted to 1,250 marks. Ibid., p. 139.

249 C.Pap.L., V, p. 152.

250 Dugdale, III, p. 112. In addition to these two favorable grants, the abbey was allowed to appropriate the churches of Herlawe and Thurston in 1398 for the specific purpose of aiding the abbot and convent's new yearly payments to both the king and the pope. C.Pap.L., V, p. 152; C.P.R. 1396-99, p. 406.

251 In addition to Snape's discussion, see Edwin N. Gorsuch, "Mismanagement and Ecclesiastical Visitation of English Monasteries in the Early Fourteenth Century," Traditio, XXVIII (1972), pp. 473-482.

252 J.B., pp. 67ff.

253 At Abingdon this was the case. See Gabrielle Lambrick, "Abingdon Abbey Administration," Journal of Ecclesiastical History, XVII (1966), pp. 176-77. Evidence of uncontrolled loans and jealous obedientiaries before Samson's efforts is noted (and scorned) by Jocelin of Brakelond. J.B., pp. 1-3.

254 R.A.L. Smith, "The Regimen Scaccarii in English Monasteries," T.R.H.S., 4th ser., XXIV (1942), p. 77; Rose Graham, "A Papal Visitation of Bury St. Edmunds and Westminster in 1234," E.H.R., XXVII (1912), pp. 728-39.

255 R.A.L. Smith, "Regimen Scaccarii," p. 78. See also his article, "The Central Financial System of Christ Church, Canterbury, 1182-1512," E.H.R., LV (1940), pp. 353-67. For Gloucester, see Historia et Cartularium Monasterii Sancti Petri Gloucestriae, ed. W.H. Hart (3 vols.; London, Rolls Series, 1863-67), III, pp. lvii-lxvii for the 1301 injunctions and pp. xciii-xcvi for the management of revenues; it was very well supervised.

256 P.B. Reg., I, pp. 338-89.

257 Hist. Mss. Comm., p. 157.

258 Knowles, Religious Orders, II, pp. 39-43 gives a good discussion of the work of Thomas de la Mare.

259 M.S.E., III, p. 37.

IV. THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE ABBEY TO THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

The relationship of the abbey of Bury St. Edmunds to the central government, and more particularly the relationship of the abbot to the king, was characterized by both interference and protection during the fourteenth century. As a judicial agent, the abbot exercised considerable responsibility in Suffolk, and as one of the important ecclesiastical lords he also had a public role as a member of Parliament and as a tenant-in-chief of the king. All of these secular roles carried with them burdens of service as well as privileges, and the demands which were made upon the abbot's time, energy, and financial resources had serious consequences on the internal administration of the monastery. In many ways, the lapses in discipline and the decline in the common life within the abbey can be traced to the fact that the head of an important abbey such as Bury had to reconcile his role as spiritual father with that of public servant. In addition, the abbey as a royal foundation was affected by the special relationship it had with the king. The rights of patronage exercised by the kings, particularly rights pertaining to vacancies, had important effects upon the financial stability of the abbey, but this relationship could also be a source of

protection for the monastery. Many of the long-established privileges of Bury St. Edmunds continued to be exercised during the fourteenth century, but the maintenance of such privileges frequently called for vigorous action and involvement in external affairs and was often pursued at the expense of internal stability and external prestige.

I. Jurisdictional Rights and Responsibilities

The abbey of Bury St. Edmunds was, by virtue of its numerous holdings in Suffolk, inextricably bound up with the economic and social trends of the fourteenth century, and the capacity of the abbots and important obedientiaries to deal with problems in economic changes and landlord-tenant relationships was a crucial factor in the continued economic success of the abbey. That the difficulties in this sphere were considerable has been pointed out, but there was another area of secular administration which was equally important to the abbey and demanded equal perseverance, time and energy on the part of the abbey's officials. In the important network of jurisdiction maintained by the abbey--feudal, manorial, and franchisal--the abbot, sacrist and cellarer, and the abbot's officials played significant roles in the administration of justice and were constantly faced with pressures from discontented subjects and from the crown.

An examination of some of the trends in the administration of this jurisdictional network reveals

that the abbey continued to regard the judicial rights and privileges as important, not only for financial reasons, but also for reasons of prestige. The gradual trend towards the centralization of justice through royal agents and courts of the king in some cases resulted in conflicts with the long-established rights of the abbey. A description of the judicial rights and responsibilities, an examination of their administration, and some illustrations of specific cases entered into by the abbey or its officials affords us another opportunity to note the unavoidable secular involvement of this particular Benedictine monastery.

A. Description of Judicial Network¹

Feudal and manorial jurisdiction

As a feudal overlord, the abbot of Bury St. Edmunds held the normal rights of feudal jurisdiction over all of his tenants holding by knight service which he administered in his honor court, or the curia abbatis.² This court dealt with tenurial relationships and feudal service: homage, fealty, wardship and knight service. It was important in the sense that the abbot was still in the fourteenth century obliged to render his service to the king in response to the military summons. Although in this period there was a tendency towards weakening the close relationship between the abbot as feudal overlord and his knights,³ the increasing division of knights' fees and the abbot's responsibility to provide service meant that the exercise of these rights had to be maintained.

There is, unfortunately, little evidence during this period on the functioning of this aspect of the judicial competence of the abbot, though it is certain that the abbot continued to exercise many normal feudal rights. It is possible, as W.O. Ault found for Ramsey Abbey,⁴ that this particular court declined in importance, though a detailed analysis has yet to be made in order to discover a similar trend for Bury St. Edmunds.

The abbot also exercised jurisdiction, usually through his steward, under-steward or bailiffs, over the unfree tenants of his manors. This seigneurial jurisdiction compared with that of any other lay landlord. The manor courts were important not only to the abbot, but also to the convent, which, through the cellarer, exercised jurisdiction over the tenants on its manors. The cellarer also administered the manor of Bury within the area of the four crosses,⁵ and his court had the right to hold the view of frankpledge twice a year for everyone living on this fee; he could make arrests, receive the goods of criminals and collect the profits from his court.⁶

Franchisal jurisdiction

The most important jurisdiction of the abbot of Bury St. Edmunds was the franchise of the Liberty of St. Edmund arising from the specific grant of juridical and financial rights over eight and a half hundreds in western Suffolk. In 1044 Edward the Confessor granted to the abbey the Liberty of the eight and a half hundreds

which gave the abbot the right to govern all men of the Liberty by rights which would normally pertain to the crown.⁷ Most of these rights were renewed by successive English kings, who upheld previous grants but rarely added new ones.⁸ The rights of justice were extensive: the six forfeitures of the king, trial of pleas of the crown, imprisonment of criminals, fines from tithings, goods of condemned felons, and the important privilege of return of writ.

The franchise held by the abbot granted to the abbot and to the inhabitants of the abbey lands many fiscal immunities from the crown which were then turned into the abbot's rights. The abbot had the right to all amercements of his men, even if they were given in the king's courts. He also had the right to the forfeiture of the chattels of condemned felons,⁹ the right to the view of frankpledge, the assizes of bread and ale and of weights and measures. The inhabitants of the Liberty owed no suit to the shire court; instead, the central court of the Liberty, the curia Sancti Edmundi, which met at Henhowe, near Bury, every three weeks and was administered by the abbot's steward or under-steward functioned in this capacity.¹⁰ In the eight and a half hundreds the abbot, through his steward, exercised powers similar to those of a sheriff, the sheriff of Suffolk having no rights there unless the abbot failed to do justice. Individual hundred courts to which all free tenants owed suit were

still retained within the Liberty. These were also administered by the abbot's officials, usually the bailiffs in the Liberty, and were courts for minor crimes, debts and trespasses.¹¹

In addition to the central courts within the Liberty, the borough of Bury St. Edmunds was also another enclave of private jurisdiction. M.D. Lobel has given a concise picture of the hold of the abbey over the town in economic matters and has also pointed out the extensive judicial rights of the abbot and other monastic officials there.¹² Within the limits of the four crosses marking the boundary of the town, the abbot had the right to exclude the king's justices and to appoint his own justices, who would exercise such royal powers as the right to hold the view of weights and measures and pleas of the crown in the portman-moot, the court to which the burgesses owed suit since they claimed immunity from suit to the abbot's court.¹³ The sacrist's bailiff, who was also the town reeve, presided over this court, and this control was one of the sources of burghal grievance against the abbey throughout the period. Within the town the sacrist also controlled the market courts, and in addition the sacrist was also the archdeacon of the borough and heard ecclesiastical cases relating to marriages and wills.¹⁴

Two important points relating to this brief survey of jurisdictional rights may be noted. In the first place, the administration of these rights took time, energy and

often a considerable amount of daring (or even extra-legal activity) on the part of the abbots of Bury St. Edmunds.

Because of the existence of so many courts and the constant intrusion of agents of the central government, whether in royal courts or in special commissions of justice, it was a constant and usual feature of the abbey's history to be involved in many jurisdictional disputes. These disputes often turned on issues of guarding privileges for the sake of principle or for the economic right which the jurisdiction implied. Indeed, as both W.O. Ault and Bertha Putnam have pointed out, it was the profits of jurisdiction, not the justice itself, which were the essential concerns in this period.¹⁵ It is therefore not surprising to find that the pursuit of rights was an entrenched feature in the external affairs of the abbey in the later Middle Ages.

Secondly, as H.M. Cam has so effectively and frequently noted,¹⁶ the franchisal jurisdiction of the abbots of great ecclesiastical ~~liberties~~ ^{properties} was a great responsibility. In fact, the rights which the abbot possessed and exercised within the eight and a half hundreds were essentially those of any other chief vassal of the crown. The great franchises were, to be sure, "political islands, whose distinct privileges gave them a unique place in royal administration,"¹⁷ but it is important to stress the fact that these privileges involved many duties. The failure to do justice or to exercise these rights properly could easily lead to the forfeiture of the Liberty.¹⁸ Thus the abbots of Bury were

placed in a public role which they could not avoid; any neglect or failure to exercise due administrative responsibility and control over their officials would mean not only loss of prestige and privilege, but also financial loss as well. The burden of pursuing litigation in defense of these rights against erosion and against rivals in the field of jurisdiction, and the responsibility of adequately meeting the demands of "public jurisdiction in private hands" can be illustrated from several cases in the fourteenth century."

B. Illustrations of the Duties of the Personnel within the Franchise

The abbot's role

Within the Liberty of St. Edmund the abbot was ultimately responsible for the due functioning of this network of jurisdiction. The supervision of his officials was a major responsibility, as was his continuous regard for and defense of the privileges conferred upon the Liberty by the crown. Although much of the day to day business of administration was carried out by the steward, under-steward or bailiffs, there were occasions when the abbot himself with his attorney pursued litigation in the king's courts and petitioned the crown on matters relating to the maintenance of his judicial rights. Three examples from the fourteenth century illustrate the role of the abbot in this capacity.

In 1303, in response to a petition to the king by

Abbot Thomas of Totington, a commission was granted to investigate his complaint that he had been unjustly deprived of the right to receive the goods of a fugitive who had been indicted for homicide and robbery. The petition refers specifically to the ancient charters of the king which had granted to the abbot the right to receive goods of felons and fugitives within the Liberty.¹⁹ Although I can find no record of the disposition of this particular case, it is significant that Abbot Thomas sought to guard this right, which was essentially an economic one, against any interference.

The question of the right of the abbots of Bury to receive forfeitures within the Liberty was, however, again pursued by Abbot Richard de Draughton and Abbot William de Bernham. In 1330 Abbot Richard sought an inspeximus of a previous charter and successfully obtained from the king the specific inclusion of the right to receive the chattels of condemned felons.²⁰ Despite this assurance, interference from royal agents still persisted, for six years later we find that the abbot and convent, "represented that they are impeded by certain of the king's ministers in their receiving of the forfeited issues."²¹ In 1336 Abbot William therefore obtained for himself and the convent the confirmation of all previous liberties,

with further grant that they shall have within the hundreds...as well of the men and tenants of others as of their own, all forfeited issues and other forfeitures and all fines whenever and for whatever cause they may occur in the king's courts.²²

The continuing interest of the abbots of Bury illustrates well the difficulties often faced in exercising and defending long-established and financially rewarding rights.

A second instance in 1344 shows that Abbot William de Bernham, whose activities in other areas were somewhat dubious, continued his vigilance in seeking to maintain previously held rights and anxiously sought any precedents which would be to his advantage. In that year, on two different occasions, he sought and obtained exemplification of a number of writs, privileges and dispositions of previous cases which re-affirmed the abbot's rights to the cognizance of certain pleas and to the amercements arising therefrom.²³ Abbot William was apparently desirous of using as precedents a number of decisions which had previously been made in favor of the abbot's rights of jurisdiction in cases which had been claimed by justices of the King's Bench.²⁴ An important consideration here was the right of the abbot to exclusive jurisdiction within the borough on all pleas save those touching the king's person; in the petition of 1344 the abbot obtained a re-affirmation of his rights both within the Liberty and within the borough.

But this vigilance could encourage excessive claims. In 1345 the franchise of the abbot was taken into the king's hands.²⁵ Abbot William, who at the time was involved in his dispute with Bishop Bateman, had had

presentments made against him for trespasses which he had committed in the town. The abbōt claimed that he was under no obligation to answer the charges before the king's justices, asserting that his ancient privileges gave him full control over the borough and all of its inhabitants and claiming that no one could interfere. The king's attorney claimed that this was tantamount to saying that the abbot could call the king to plead in the abbot's court within the borough! The abbot's proposition was an "unheard of" extension of privilege, and the franchise was therefore seized. Although the franchise was soon restored, the limitations of power had been sufficiently marked, and we find no other abbot suggesting such immunity or extension of rights.

A third and final case during the rule of Abbot John de Brinkeley shows that conflicts over jurisdiction were perhaps increasing as the use of newer judicial officials also increased. In proceedings before the King's Bench, Trinity Term 1364, the abbot of Bury, through his attorney, claimed the jurisdiction over cases of nine brewers and bakers who had been indicted before the keepers of the peace for illegal weights and measures; judgement for the abbot's jurisdiction was finally granted in 1368.²⁶ Despite the length of time between the original suit and the final settlement, the principle was important enough to pursue and serves as a further illustration of the necessity for the abbots of Bury to be aware of an erosion of their franchisal liberties.

These examples, few among the many which could be cited,²⁷ show that the abbots of Bury had to spend time and energy in the pursuit of privilege. Attention which might have been more rightly devoted to the internal administration of the abbey and the role of spiritual leader was, out of necessity, often diverted to secular functions. In addition to this type of activity, the abbots of Bury were frequently used on special commissions from the government. In 1341 Abbot William, along with many other abbots and ecclesiastical lords in other counties, was appointed as a member of a commission of oyer and terminer to investigate complaints regarding the collection of the wool subsidy recently granted the king.²⁸ Again in 1372, Abbot John de Brinkeley was associated with another commission of array and keepers of the peace.²⁹ Despite the fact that the steward or the under-steward might have assisted the abbots in these functions, the abbots of Bury St. Edmunds did bear an ultimate responsibility to the crown in their secular capacity.

Other personnel in the Liberty

The day to day business of the administration of the Liberty of St. Edmund was carried out by the various officials, who were similar to the royal officials commonly found in the shires. It was characteristic of the period for the lords of many of the greater lay and ecclesiastical liberties to develop a system of

administration and use of officials parallel to the royal administration and officials existing outside the franchises.³⁰ Thus within a liberty the stewards exercised functions similar to those of sheriffs in other parts of England, and other responsibilities were delegated to the under-steward, hundred bailiffs, coroners, constables, and, later, the justices of the peace. A brief indication of the officials which can be found within the Liberty of St. Edmund, together with some suggestions as to their duties, will further illustrate the complex responsibilities which ultimately pertained to the abbot.

Since the time of William the Conqueror, the hereditary stewardship of the Liberty of St. Edmunds was in the hands of the Hastings family, who held the office as a serjeanty from the abbot.³¹ A fifteenth century Bury manuscript, cited by H.M. Cam, illustrates the steward's relationship to the abbot:

'The abbot of Bury gave out of his revenues certain manors to a steward, to support the rights of his church and his franchise, so that he and his brethren might quietly praise and serve God. ... If any misdoers should rebel, the steward should deal with them as right and law would, so that the abbot should in no wise be troubled nor vexed with such foreign matters.'³²

Though it is clear that in the fourteenth century the abbots did not regard these matters as "foreign," nevertheless, the steward, or his deputy, certainly relieved the abbot of a great deal of daily administration.

The functions of the stewards were numerous, for he was essentially the connection between the abbot and the crown in all important administrative, judicial and financial matters. He oversaw the work of the various officials within the eight and a half hundreds, and, like a sheriff, went on tours twice a year to the different hundreds. His judicial duties consisted of presiding over the Great Court at Bury, which corresponded to the shire court in other areas, and of holding the central court at Henhowe,³³ just outside Bury, for pleas arising within the eight and a half hundreds. He also acted as the representative of the abbot in other courts of the land, i.e., in the shire court at Ipswich, in the king's court at Westminster, or before the travelling justices. His fiscal duties included the responsibility of levying fines and amercements which would then either be paid to the king or to the abbot. In this way, he was the representative of the abbot at the Exchequer as well.³⁴

It was usual in cases where the stewardship was a hereditary one, as it was at Bury, for the actual work to be done by an under-steward who was appointed by the family but who took his oath of office to the abbot.³⁵ In 1327, because Laurence Hastings was only nine years old, the functions of the steward were carried out by Ralph de Bocking, a man who retained the important position for a number of years and who exercised a number of other important functions in Suffolk.³⁶ Although in 1335 the

king granted to the still under-aged Laurence Hastings "as a special grace," the right to the stewardship and the fees therefrom.³⁷ We still find Ralph de Bocking exercising many of the actual functions of the steward. His duties were essentially those of the chief steward, though he received less money for his services than the chief steward did.³⁸

In this capacity Ralph de Bocking exercised the important privilege of the return of writs, the process whereby the sheriff of Suffolk transferred to the steward of the Liberty the responsibility for answering the royal writs. Although he seems to have carried out this function responsibly, for instance in handling inquisitions post mortem,³⁹ there was one occasion, at least, when he was called to answer before the justices of the Bench for his failure to make the proper returns.⁴⁰ The failure to make proper return of writs could have serious consequences for both the abbot and the steward. The sheriff of Suffolk could receive a writ of non omittas⁴¹ allowing him to enter the Liberty when the steward failed to execute a writ, as was the case in 1359 over a writ of replevy.⁴² Because the abbot and his steward were essentially agents of the royal government in this capacity, the repeated failure to carry out the function could easily lead to either increased royal intervention or the forfeiture of the Liberty. Both the chief steward and the under-steward owed their offices to the abbot of Bury, took their

oaths of office to the abbot, and were in part supported by him for their duties. It was therefore important for the abbots to be aware of their stewards' actions and policies, lest their failure to execute the functions properly should bring unwanted results. Because the franchise was important as a source of financial gain to the abbey,⁴³ it was vital that the abbots and their officials keep the peace, administer the law of the land, and thus be able to retain their Liberty.

In addition to the steward and the under-steward, there were other important officials working within the Liberty of St. Edmund. The hundred bailiffs, appointed by the abbot, executed delegated authority from the steward. They impanelled juries for the hundred courts, presided over these courts, acted as distrainers of goods, certified inquests to the steward, and also collected fines and amercements due the Exchequer and the abbot; for the latter, the hundred bailiffs had to give their accounts to the abbot, the steward and the coroner of the Liberty.⁴⁴ The office was farmed out by the abbot, and the hundred bailiffs paid a specific yearly sum to the abbot for their fee.⁴⁵ an arrangement which often resulted in the bailiffs attempting to increase their sources of income at the expense of the abbot's tenants. Indeed, it was not unusual to find many complaints about their behavior from the residents of the hundreds.⁴⁶ In one case at least a bailiff of the abbot was indicted for numerous felonies committed

from 1384 to 1391.⁴⁷ Although he obtained a pardon "at the instance of the prior and convent of Bury," the actions of such an official who was appointed by the abbot might further explain some of the periodic antagonism and outbreaks of hostility by the residents of the Liberty against the monastery.⁴⁸ In 1396 a bailiff of the abbot, Robert Bardewell, was assaulted as he was executing the order of the steward to take a felon to jail;⁴⁹ it would seem that even at this late date, attacks and other actions by the townsmen and tenants to impede the abbot's officials were not unusual.

Other officials in the Liberty aided the more prominent ones in their tasks. There is evidence that the Liberty of St. Edmund, like those of St. Albans, Ely and Reading,⁵⁰ had their own coroners whose major responsibility was holding inquests into deaths within the eight and a half hundreds. The abbot and convent had apparently held and exercised this right within the borough for some time before the middle of the fourteenth century without the express mention of such right in their charters. In 1353 they did, however, petition the crown and obtained a charter with this specific grant.⁵¹ Two examples illustrate the normal duties of the coroners. In 1357 there is mention of the abbot's coroners indicting a man for murder within the town,⁵² and in the 1369 case of manslaughter in the abbey dormitory, it was charged that the monks, "in ignorance of the law, buried the body in the cemetery, without view of the coroner."⁵³ It is probable that the

coroners within the Liberty carried out other functions similar to those performed by the county coroners, but it is not clear whether he was elected at the court of the Liberty, or whether, as in the Liberty of St. Albans, the abbot nominated the official.⁵⁴ Although no direct evidence has come to light regarding the presence of constables of the hundreds or of the towns, these officials who carried out mainly police and military functions are found in other liberties and were responsible to the steward.⁵⁵

C. The Rivals to the Abbot's Powers within the Liberty

An important consideration in the history of the franchise of the abbey in the fourteenth century is the degree to which the abbot's powers and privileges remained secure and unbreachable, especially from the intrusion of the king's courts, special commissions, and the newer officials of the keepers of the peace and justices of the peace.⁵⁶ It has been noted that the importance and functions of the sheriffs did decline during the fourteenth century in relation to these other officials;⁵⁷ in a somewhat similar fashion, competition from these officials also affected the steward's functions and the unique status of the Liberty. In fact, there are indications that the central government was making some significant gains in asserting power, particularly judicial power, within the franchise of the abbots of Bury.

There are some instances of the abbots of Bury protesting both the presence of and also the judicial competence of the Court of the King's Bench when it sat at Bury. As early as 1314 there is a record on the Close Rolls of an order to the justices of the Bench to permit Abbot Richard

to have cognisance of pleas touching the Liberty of the town of St. Edmunds, as he asserts that he and his predecessors ought to have and have hitherto had such cognisance, so that such pleas ought to be pleaded before his ministers of that liberty.⁵⁸

Later in the century when the Court of the King's Bench sat at Bury in 1346, 1352, 1364 and in 1379,⁵⁹ there were protests on the part of the abbot.⁶⁰ In 1364 the king had ordered the court to stay in East Anglia for the whole of Trinity term,⁶¹ and on this occasion Abbot John de Brinkeley protested the court's competence in at least one case. In 1368 he obtained a favorable judgement on the jurisdiction he claimed,⁶² and in 1369 won a more general re-affirmation of his long-established rights:

Whereas Henry Grene and Thomas de Ingelby, late justices of the King's Bench, held a session in the borough on things pertaining to the rights of the crown and the keeping of the peace in the county of Suffolk for the more speedy expedition of the business; the king, for his affection to the glorious martyr...has granted that the abbot and convent shall not be prejudiced in respect of their said liberty by such session.⁶³

Miss Putnam has suggested that the opposition of the great liberties such as Bury St. Edmunds was one factor in bringing the Court of the King's Bench on a permanent basis to Westminster.⁶⁴ Yet on the whole, it

must be noted that the continued protests of the abbots of Bury towards other commissions from the crown were made after the fact: that is, the government tended to appoint commissions first and then, upon petition by the abbot, issue consoling assurances stating the appointments were not to be considered prejudicial to the liberties. This tendency can be noted in a number of instances regarding commissions of oyer and terminer (in 1305, 1327, 1331, 1341, 1344 and later),⁶⁵ special commissions investigating assays (in 1329),⁶⁶ and commissions for keeping the peace. In the latter instance, it is interesting to note that, on occasion, the steward or under-steward of the abbot was associated with commissions of the peace: in 1329 Ralph de Bocking, along with two others, received such a commission of peace within the Liberty, and he also served as a justice of assize for the Eastern counties in 1330.⁶⁷

In one other important area the Liberty of St. Edmund saw the intrusion of the royal representatives and the loss of judicial profits. The enforcement of the Statute of Laborers in the period after the Black Death was usually entrusted to men receiving a joint commission for the peace and for laborers, or to those receiving a special commission exclusively for the enforcement of the Statute.⁶⁸ Although on two occasions Ralph de Bocking was associated with the commissions for Suffolk,⁶⁹ it is significant that there is no record of the abbot of Bury petitioning the crown or receiving a grant for the rights

to the profits of the enforcement of the legislation.⁷⁰ Generally, the lords of franchises did not receive the penalties collected, although Miss Putnam has found that five abbots did petition to the crown for the revenues,⁷¹ and that in some cases, lords of franchises received special commissions of justices of laborers to work in their liberties alone.⁷² It may have been that the process was too complex, or too costly, but it is perhaps more probable that, as with other lords, the abbot of Bury needed that help which the crown could supply for recovering villeins and securing labor and thus left the task of convicting up to the royal agents.⁷³ In view of the fact that other ecclesiastical lords had taken the initiative to apply to the crown for special privileges in this regard, it does seem unusual that the abbots of Bury, usually so desirous of seizing new sources of income and privilege, failed to do so.

II. The Parliamentary Role of the Abbot

Just as the abbot of Bury had an important role in the administration of justice and acted as a royal agent within the Liberty, so did he also play a role in the national politics through his attendance at Parliament and the Convocations of the clergy. During the fourteenth century it is true that in general the abbots, even the "parliamentary abbots," were of less importance in government than the bishops. Nevertheless, the abbots

who were summoned to Parliament did join with other prelates in asserting clerical independence and were a force to be reckoned with by the king, especially in matters of taxation.

From the point of view of the abbot and the monastery, the parliamentary role of the abbot was more often regarded as a burden than as a right. The abbots of Bury regularly received the summons to attend Parliament, as they regularly received writs of military summons from the crown. A.M. Reich's analysis of the writs of parliamentary summonses received by the heads of religious houses shows that the abbots of Bury were among the most actively involved: from 1295 to 1377, the abbot of Bury received more parliamentary summonses than the abbot of any other Benedictine abbey in the nation.⁷⁴ In the reign of Edward I the abbot received eleven summonses, one more than either St. Augustine's, Canterbury, or Westminster Abbey and only one less than the abbot of Evesham. During Edward II's reign, thirty-three summonses were received by the abbot, and in the reign of Edward III, a total of fifty summonses, one more than Westminster and five more than St. Albans, were received.⁷⁵ Parliamentary summonses were not always issued to abbots, and the basis for the selection appears to have been somewhat inconsistent, though in general it seems that the abbots who owed homage and fealty to the crown were the ones usually called to attend.⁷⁶ After 1341 the number of parliamentary abbots stabilized at twenty-

seven, of whom twenty-three were Benedictines.⁷⁷ The abbots of Bury were thus members of an important element of the ecclesiastical lords.

The difficulties for the abbots thus summoned were obvious. The financial burden on the abbot and his household travelling to Parliaments or Convocations, whether to Westminster or to posts farther afield, and establishing residence there were an obvious drain on his resources.⁷⁸ That the attendance at Parliament was a problem for both the king and for the abbots is evident by the crown's attempts to compel the prelates' presence, and the numerous instances where the abbots attempted to avoid the duty. J.S. Roskell has concluded that "the attendance of the parliamentary abbots was evidently throughout the medieval period even formally deplorable."⁷⁹ Although they were expected to attend in person, proxies were in common use (despite the disapproval of the king), and it would seem the exception rather than the rule for an abbot to attend personally during this period.⁸⁰

Examples from Bury of this tendency further illustrate this point. At the Parliament of Carlisle in 1307, Abbot Thomas sent two proctors to represent him, Johnde Eversdon, a monk of the abbey, and one of his clerks.⁸¹ The pattern was repeated a number of times throughout the century, the most consistent being the period from 1391 to 1397, when Abbot William sent proctors to each of the five parliaments held.⁸² A good example of the reasons why the abbots of

Bury felt that this was more of an obligation and burden than a cherished right is provided by the case of John of Timworth. His difficulties in regard to his election and the financial drain on his resources, which had begun even before he was finally confirmed as abbot, must have been the occasion for his petition to the crown to be relieved of this burden. In 1383 he received the following aid from the king:

Grant to the abbot of Bury, in consideration of the long voidance of the abbey, that for three years after the restitution of temporalities he shall be excused from attending Parliament in person, provided that he appear by sufficient proctor at all Parliaments held during that period.⁸³

The reluctance of some of the abbots to assume a parliamentary role was understandable. In addition to the financial burden consequent on this position, the requirements for attending either Parliament or Convocation meant an absence from the abbey for a period of from five to six weeks.⁸⁴ This could have serious consequences, leaving the administration of conventual affairs in the hands of the prior. On one occasion at least, the absence of the abbot because of attendance at Parliament was a contributing factor in the disturbances at the abbey. In January 1327 Abbot Richard de Draughton was attending Parliament at Westminster when the townsmen and tenants attacked the monastery, imprisoned the prior and thirteen monks, and forced the captured monks to destroy bonds held by the abbey.⁸⁵ The abbot returned to Bury, was

forced to sign a "charter" drawn up by the townsmen and then returned to Parliament. There he obtained the advice of the assembled lords and declared the extorted "charter" null and void.⁸⁶ Support of the abbot's position by the other prelates and lay lords was undoubtedly helpful,⁸⁷ but the fact that Abbot Richard's position as a parliamentary abbot required his attendance in London necessarily meant that less attention was directed towards the peaceful resolution of the long-standing problems between the abbey and the town.

The public role of the abbot of Bury St. Edmunds was an inherent feature of the history of the abbey. Because the abbey could be numbered among the most wealthy of the English ecclesiastical establishments, the abbot was necessarily forced to assume a role as a representative of the endowed clergy on some important issues, particularly on the issue of clerical taxation. The abbot of Bury, along with the other parliamentary abbots and members of the higher clergy summoned to Parliament, would be involved in discussions leading to parliamentary grants which were levied on the temporalities belonging to the clergy, and he would also assume a role in the discussions in Convocations of the Clergy which were called by the Archbishop of Canterbury, regarding the taxation of spiritualities.⁸⁸ Attendance at Parliament and at the independent clerical gatherings was therefore important, no matter how irritating the receipt of a summons might

be, for the decisions reached in these assemblies did have a direct bearing upon the fortunes of the abbey.

Despite the fact that the abbots of Bury frequently sent proctors or were excused from attending these assemblies, the issues thus raised compelled their attention. The suggestion made in the Parliament of 1371 for the partial disendowment of clerical property was of obvious concern to Bury St. Edmunds. Abbot John de Brinkeley, personally present on that occasion, caused the proposed articles to be transcribed at the abbey, apparently with a view towards writing a response on behalf of the Benedictines.⁸⁹ Such an attack on clerical property and independence affected the abbey of Bury no less than any other ecclesiastical establishment. The fact that the abbots of Bury were thus forced to exercise public functions in Parliament and that they had to be aware of the many challenges to their position reveals once again the many difficulties faced by the heads of an important abbey. Important as the parliamentary role may have been, as shown particularly in 1371, it is only too clear that this public responsibility, like the other secular responsibilities, contained the possibility of seriously weakening the abbot's fundamental role as the spiritual leader of the monks of St. Edmunds.

III. The Abbot as Tenant-in-Chief and Feudal Overlord

One aspect of the changing relationship of the abbey of Bury St. Edmunds to the central government in the later Middle Ages is that of the feudal relationship of the abbot to the crown. The "decline of feudalism," particularly the developments under Edward I, has certainly received due attention from historians, not, however, without raising many questions regarding the definition of feudalism.⁹⁰ Without seeking to answer the larger question of the degree of the disintegration of feudalism in general, we can note some important trends in the relationship of the abbot of Bury to the crown which illustrate some changes in that feudal relationship, particularly in regard to the question of military service. Both the military relationship between the abbot as an ecclesiastical tenant-in-chief and the crown and also the relationship between the abbot as a feudal overlord and his own tenants underwent a discernable transformation during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, a process which had some significant results for both the abbot and the king.

The feudalization of the holdings of the abbey of Bury St. Edmunds began soon after the Conquest, as it did for the other important Benedictine abbeys throughout England. The Norman antecedent of a close but subordinate relationship between the ruler and religious institutions was transferred to England by William I;⁹¹ his allocation of knight service was the natural continuation of this

relationship. The allocation of a stipulated amount of knight service was proportioned inequitably among the monasteries: twenty-three of the thirty-five monasteries founded before the Conquest were assessed knight service, not on the basis of the extent or value of their lands, but probably at an amount comparable to the number of quasi-military retainers in the households of the abbots before 1066.⁹² The distribution of this burden was remarkably uneven: the abbots of Bury together with those of Peterborough, Glastonbury and Ely owed a total of two hundred knights, more than the total of the remaining houses assessed.⁹³ The abbot of Bury as a tenant-in-chief was responsible for the service of forty knights. The process of enfeoffment of the forty knights was accomplished fairly rapidly. By 1086 thirty-six knights had been enfeoffed by Abbot Baldwin, and by 1135 the process was completed, with the abbot then having the service of fifty-two and three-fourths knights' fees.⁹⁴

Many problems arose out of the abbot's position as a military tenant of the crown, both towards the king and in relation to his own knights. When after the Conquest many abbots were put on a level with other tenants-in-chief, they thereby assumed a role in government, both as feudal tenants and as feudal overlords. The difficulties and burdens consequent on such a position were apparent in the internal life of the abbey and in the financial and administrative responsibilities which this position now demanded.

The problem of knight service owed to the crown centered around the fact that from the middle of the twelfth century on, the kings were forced to rely on more than just tenure by military service to supply an army; it was the continued effort of the crown to raise military and financial support which posed such a problem for the tenants-in-chief. The imposition of scutages in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries could be, to some degree, a profitable business for the abbot. Since the abbot of Bury was only answerable to the crown for the service of forty knights, yet had enfeoffed fifty-two, he stood to make a profit of £12 each time the normal scutage was collected.⁹⁵ Henry II's effort to demand the full payment of fifty-two fees failed, and by 1166 the abbot of St. Edmunds firmly answered to the crown for only forty knights.⁹⁶ However, there were problems associated with the fact that the enfeoffment exceeded the servitium debitum: Abbot Samson had experienced difficulties in respect to the collection of the full amount from all fifty-two fees for scutages, money for castle ward, and for his own aid.⁹⁷ Another difficulty experienced at this time was the question of providing service for campaigns overseas and the necessity for devising a system of rotating service among his military tenants.⁹⁸

During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, some aspects of military service had changed, but because the abbots of Bury, along with six other abbots, regularly

received writs of military summons from 1244 until 1385.⁹⁹ there were still important burdens owed to the crown. The first major change illustrating the declining role of the purely feudal array was the reduction of the servitium debitum of many religious houses during Edward I's reign.¹⁰⁰ The number of knights' fees owed by the abbot of Bury for military purposes was reduced to six, although forty knights' fees was still recognized by the crown for financial purposes, namely the collection of scutages.¹⁰¹ Despite the fact that this reduction in the servitium debitum would appear to be beneficial, in many cases the effect was more profitable to the crown than to the abbot. The substantial fines charged by the crown were exceedingly heavy, and the attempted collection of scutages in addition presented a major problem for the abbots of Bury.

By the reign of Edward I it was the policy of the crown to allow the ecclesiastical tenants-in-chief to compound for their knight service;¹⁰² this was a fine assessed at a fixed rate on the reduced servitium debitum, i.e. six knights' fees for the abbot of Bury. The advantage to the crown was obvious: a fine of 600 marks at the rate of 100 marks per fee was charged to Bury in 1294;¹⁰³ this far outweighed the possible sum of £80 that the king would obtain if only a scutage on forty knights' fees were collected. The rates for the fines assessed by the crown ranged from 100 marks per fee in 1294 to 20 marks per fee in 1306 and 1314.¹⁰⁴ For Bury the

amounts due then ranged from a high of 600 marks to a low of 120 marks total payment each time a fine was assessed. Fines were not allowed in all cases: in 1311 fines were only allowed to those ecclesiastical tenants-in-chief with less than one-half a knight's fee, and in 1327 only abbots, not bishops, were allowed to compound for their service.¹⁰⁵ In this latter instance, the abbot of Bury was assessed £120 for his six fees.¹⁰⁶

An additional policy of the crown, one which raised considerable opposition and which was not always successful, was the imposition of scutages in addition to the fine. This was assessed on the surplus fees and during the fourteenth century was collected by special commissioners.¹⁰⁷ Scutages were usually levied after the ecclesiastical tenant had made his proffer of service and after the assessment of the fines. The scutages of 1300, 1303, 1306, 1311 and 1327 were all levied in addition to the fines, but their payments were allowed to be postponed.¹⁰⁸ The scutage levied in 1311 was paid by the abbot of Bury in 1319.¹⁰⁹

From the abbot's point of view then this relationship to the crown was a burdensome one. He had the problem of answering the military summons, providing his service through either compounding with the king or obtaining corporal service from his own tenants or their substitutes, and somehow collecting enough money to pay the fines and the additional scutages so often demanded. Two instances from Bury show one device used by the abbot in fulfilling

his service and illustrate some of the changes which had occurred in this military relationship to the king. In 1310, summoned to the muster at Berwick for the campaign against the Scots, the abbot's representative discharged the service of six knights' fees due by proffering instead six "servientes" and three barded horses.¹¹⁰ The use of servientes, or serjeants (two servientes being the equivalent of one knight) was common among many of the ecclesiastical tenants-in-chief and reflects as well the changing requirements of the crown.¹¹¹ In this case, the king remitted the remainder of the service due from the abbot. However, in 1323 Abbot Richard offered two knights, eight servientes, and twelve barded horses in complete fulfillment of his military obligation.¹¹² These two cases illustrate the important fact that the knights owing service to the tenants-in-chief were often no longer personally performing it as had previously been the case.

This breakdown in the relationship of the tenants-in-chief to their own military tenants was not an entirely new factor. H.M. Chew has discovered early signs of this development at Bury:

The Abbot of St. Edmunds, as early as 1235, professed complete ignorance of the location of his fifty-two fees. His declaration may have been designed to throw dust in the eyes of the royal officials; but the fact that from 1228 onwards he consistently compounded for his service suggests that it had at least some foundation. Evidently he was no longer able to exact corporal service from his tenants.¹¹³

It would seem that at Bury, as at Peterborough and at other

abbeys.¹¹⁴ the abbot would simply hire men, not necessarily from his vassals, to fulfill his military obligations to the king. However, it should be noted that at the beginning of the fourteenth century an effort was made at the abbey to keep track of the knights' fees owed to the abbot. The Pinchbeck Register contains a complete survey of the knights' fees together with notations as to the location of the tenements, indications of fractional fees and the amounts owed from the knights for castle ward.¹¹⁵ Drawn up in 1300 at the order of Abbot John de Northwold, the survey was composed, according to Walter Pinchbeck, so that the abbey would have an easily accessible record of the ancient rights pertaining to the abbot. It is possible that the continuous demands from the crown for fines and scutages necessitated so complete a record. It would certainly be to the abbot's advantage to have a record in order to allow him to collect from his military tenants the amounts owing to the crown to offset the required payments for fines, scutages and aids.

However modified, the feudal military obligation of the abbot to the crown still existed in the fourteenth century: the abbots of Bury received writs for service regularly from 1244 to 1385.¹¹⁶ Unfortunately, because of the lack of detailed evidence, it is not clear how often the abbot paid fines or sent a full service contingent in response to the military summons. The only surviving writs for the discharge of service are those for the years

1310 and 1323,¹¹⁷ and the only direct evidence for the obligation and payment of fines is for the years 1294 and 1327.¹¹⁸ Nevertheless, other obligations to the crown were apparently fulfilled. Later in the century the abbots of Bury were called upon to exercise their functions for the defense of the realm. In 1377 Abbot John de Brinkeley received an order

to draw without delay to Walton co. Suffolk there to abide with his household, men at arms, armed men, hobblers and archers so long as need be upon the safe guard of the country, as he and his predecessors of old time used to do in time of war with all their retinue and power...¹¹⁹

John of Timworth received similar orders for coastal defense in 1385 and 1386, but in the former instance (as in 1377) the abbot petitioned the crown to be allowed to reside with his array at his manor at Elmswell instead of withdrawing closer to the coast.¹²⁰ In addition to this requirement, the abbots of Bury were also responsible for providing castle ward at Norwich, a service which had been turned into a money payment in the twelfth century.¹²¹ The fact that the abbey kept records of amounts due from the fifty-two fees for this obligation would indicate that the payments were regularly made.¹²² Although many feudal incidents did not apply to churchmen, the ecclesiastical tenants-in-chief were also liable for the normal feudal aids. The inquisition of 1301-02 taken for the marriage aid for the king's daughter and the 1346 inquisition taken for the knighting of King Edward III's eldest son are both recorded

for the military tenants of the abbot;¹²³ in these cases it would seem that the crown collected individually from the under-tenants of the abbot.

As a tenant-in-chief of the king the abbots of Bury were burdened with numerous responsibilities and requirements, none of which could easily be avoided and all of which demanded time, energy and expense for their acquittance. But as a feudal overlord himself, the abbot of Bury could also expect certain rewards. As has already been noted, the strictly military relationship with his vassals was changing, but the effort witnessed in 1300 to ascertain knights' fees and record the obligations of those holding by knight service does indicate that the abbots continued to regard the normal feudal rights as important. Rights of escheats, wardship, marriage and reliefs continued to be exercised by the abbot, oftentimes requiring considerable vigilance in order to guard against the interference of the royal escheator in cases where a tenant of the abbot was also a tenant of the crown.

Several cases throughout the fourteenth century illustrate these points. In 1308 the royal escheator was ordered not to hold or "further intermeddle" with the lands that one Stephen de Brokedissh held of the abbot by knight service, but to keep in the king's hands only those lands held directly of the king.¹²⁴ Again in 1330, 1331, 1369 and 1376 similar orders were issued;¹²⁵ in the two latter cases, the abbot was protected in his rights of

wardship as well. Complications also developed during a vacancy in the abby when the king as patron of the abbey took custody of the temporalities, including rights to wardship, escheats, marriage and relief. Although the normal procedure was for the king to relinquish these rights when the temporalities were restored to the abbot, there were occasions when the restoration was not immediately made and the abbot would have to petition the crown for the resumption of his rights.¹²⁶ Fealty and homage continued to be rendered to the abbot by his military tenants, and in addition, the inhabitants of the town of Bury were also required to pay 100 marks upon the creation of every new abbot. The latter payment was specifically referred to as an "acknowledgement in lieu of homage,"¹²⁷ and the practice would in some measure seem to mirror what Sidney Painter styles as the "purely financial" relationship¹²⁸ which now existed between tenants-in-chief and their tenants holding by knight service.

On the whole it would seem that despite the considerable changes in the military importance of the feudal relationship to the crown and with the sub-tenants of the abbot, the network of obligations and traditional rights were still considered important, not only by the crown but also by the abbot. Whatever the extent of the disintegration of the "feudal system" in purely military terms, evidence from Bury St. Edmunds does indicate that many outward symbols of the system still remained. The fact that

financial considerations may have replaced the original purpose of service in no way lessened the ultimate responsibilities and administrative complexities incumbent on the abbot of St. Edmunds.

IV. The King as Patron.

Just as the abbot of St. Edmunds was to some degree closely linked to the king as a tenant-in-chief, the monastery was also linked to the crown in another important relationship. As a royal foundation, the king was the patron of the abbey, and the rights of patronage exercised by the crown, together with the benefits that this relationship could also bring were significant factors in the abbey's history in the fourteenth century. Two important aspects to be considered in this light are the degree to which the king's rights of patronage interfered with the life of the abbey and its normal functioning, and secondly, the degree to which the crown's rights over the abbey conflicted with those of the papacy and the effect of this conflict on the monastery.

The two most important rights of the patron of a monastic establishment were: 1) the granting of a licence for and the assent to the election of a new superior, and 2) the right to the custody of the temporalities of the house during a vacancy. Both of these were analogous to the feudal rights of enfeoffing and accepting a new tenant's fealty and to the right of wardship.

the right of the king to oversee, or subtly influence, the election had caused problems in the past. In 1182 Samson had been elected at Court under the influence of Henry II,¹³⁰ and in 1213 the canonical election of Abbot Hugh in the chapter resulted in a lengthy struggle to obtain King John's consent.¹³¹ During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries however, cases of direct royal interference were relatively rare. The usual practice was for the royal licence to be granted with little difficulty and for the assent to the election to be readily given.¹³²

Two cases from Bury St. Edmunds illustrate the role of the king in the election process during the later Middle Ages. A contemporary account of the election of Abbot Thomas of Totington shows the normal procedure.¹³² On the death of Abbot John de Northwold on 29 October, 1301, the monks met in the convent to select messengers to inform the king of the vacancy and to obtain the appropriate licence for the election. Because the king was in Scotland at the time, a sixteen day's journey from the abbey, the three monks bringing news of the vacancy did not secure the royal licence until November 30.¹³³ The canonical election was held at the convent on January 3, 1302, and the new abbot-elect, Thomas of Totington, was then required to personally obtain the king's consent and permission to go to Rome for the papal confirmation. Thomas was equipped with horses and provisions for the journey to Scotland, and bearing letters from the convent signifying a proper

election, reached the king on January 30.¹³⁴ He obtained King Edward's assent and the king's promise to notify the pope of the election and royal consent.¹³⁵ The journey to Rome and papal confirmation followed. After Abbot Thomas had obtained papal confirmation on June 1, 1302, the king received letters from the papacy and then notified the tenants of the new abbot.¹³⁶ Thomas was blessed by the Bishop of Albano before returning to England, and on August 10, 1302, the temporalities were restored to the abbey.¹³⁷

In this case, the election and the custody of the temporalities proceeded normally, but the whole process took a considerable amount of time and involved many expenses. Journeying to Scotland and then to Rome was an obvious inconvenience but an unavoidable requirement, and though the monks were not as yet paying the heavy fines for the right of custody, the lengthy vacancy gave sufficient opportunity for the royal escheator to make the most of the king's rights of patronage. Until 1379 the subsequent elections at the abbey followed a similar pattern. Except for the papal provision of John of Brinkeley in 1361, which did not meet with any royal resistance, the superiors were all elected at the abbey, and the proper licences and assents were freely granted by the king.¹³⁸

A second case which illustrates the role of the king in the election process was that of the attempted provision of Edmund Bromfield in 1379. As has already been described,¹³⁹ the disrupting influence of the proceedings had a severe

effect upon the internal stability of the abbey, but the case can also be examined in the light of illustrating the rights associated with patronage and the use of the Statute of Provisors. The papal provision of John of Brinkeley in 1361 had come at a period in Anglo-Papal relations when the Statute of Provisors of 1351 was not being widely enforced;¹⁴⁰ it is also probable that Brinkeley was perfectly acceptable to Edward III and thus no objection was raised to the appointment. However, the case of 1379 was decidedly different in scope and makes it clear that the crown was vigorously exercising its rights to patronage against the rights of the papacy. The licence for the election had been obtained on January 6, 1379, the assent to John of Timworth's canonical election formally given, and notification of the election and royal assent sent to Pope Urban on January 28.¹⁴¹ In this case, the fact that Abbot-elect Timworth was not allowed out of the kingdom but instead had to send deputies to Rome to obtain his papal confirmation¹⁴² was probably an additional factor in the delay and the attitude of the papacy. But the direct violation of the Statute of Provisors and the direct contradiction of the royal assent to a canonical election were the determining factors in the response of the king. The royal intervention, the arrest of Bromfield and his supporters, and the subsequent negotiations between Richard II and the pope concerning the formalities of a new election all reveal the fundamental desire of the king and council to allow no interference or

diminution of royal rights of patronage.¹⁴³ The case might have been resolved earlier and more satisfactorily had the pope negotiated with or informed the royal patron of the appointment, as he often did in the case of the more publicly important appointments of bishops;¹⁴⁴ but the papal action appeared to be a defiance of one of the most valued rights associated with the patronage of monastic houses.

In some respects a more important right which pertained to the patron of an abbey was the right of custody of the temporalities during a vacancy.¹⁴⁵ Financially rewarding to the patron, this aspect of patronage was definitely exploitive; the abbey suffered serious financial losses because of the king's demands during a voidance. Until 1304 the king as patron continued to exercise the right to the custody over the abbey's temporalities by instituting a royal custodian to administer the revenues for him and to make a complete accounting upon the installation of the new abbot. The Letter Patent of 1304¹⁴⁶ which allowed the prior and convent, for a fine, to administer the revenues of the abbot's barony at least removed the possibility of an extortionate escheator from unduly exploiting the resources, but the subsequent fines of 1,200 marks per vacancy were, as already illustrated, exceedingly burdensome. After 1304 the procedure was modified; the royal escheator was to "take simple seisin within the abbey gates" to symbolize the king's lordship but would immediately leave.¹⁴⁷ The king did, however, reserve certain important

rights to himself despite the general grant to the convent. Edward I's grant specifically reserved to the crown the feudal rights over knights' fees, escheats falling during the vacancy and advowsons. These specific reservations appear on each order to the escheator for every vacancy at the abbey during the fourteenth century.¹⁴⁸ Beginning in 1361 a new condition was added: the king also retained in his hand the temporalities of lands which had been acquired after 1304.¹⁴⁹

The disadvantages to the abbey under this procedure were evident. Coupled with the fact that the monks were paying a heavy fine for the right to retain the administration of most revenues, the king obtained the rents and services of all escheats, wardships, marriages and usually reliefs which fell during the vacancy--rights which would normally pertain to the abbot. As W.O. Ault has pointed out

only constant and unremitting vigilance would avail to restrain the king, his escheators, keepers, and other ministers from pressing without limit their exactions from vacant sees and abbeys.¹⁵⁰

For Bury St. Edmunds there are enough instances of interference on the part of the royal escheators and illustrations of the financial loss to the abbot's barony to substantiate this view. Although the normal procedure was apparently for the king to retain the reserved rights only until the restoration of the abbot's temporalities,¹⁵¹ there were occasions when the rights were not restored promptly, if at all, to the abbot. An interesting example is a case of the rights of wardship which appear

to have been permanently lost to Abbot John of Brinkeley. Although his temporalities were restored on November 12, 1361, the estate of Giles de Neketon, a tenant of the abbot, and the wardship over the under-aged daughter were still retained by the king's keeper until at least 1366,¹⁵² a Letter Close of 1369 to the escheator preventing any further intermeddling in this estate was probably the result of a petition by the abbot.¹⁵³ A similar case is recorded for 1363,¹⁵⁴ and the long ~~vacancy~~ ^{vacancy} brought about by the Timworth/Bromfield controversy provided further opportunities for the crown to exercise rights over the feudal incidents, rights which could otherwise have brought financial rewards to the abbot.¹⁵⁵ While it is difficult to determine precisely the full financial effect of such custody proceedings on the abbey, it is evident that royal rights of patronage were especially important to the crown in the fourteenth century. That the royal actions were on more than one occasion a cause for concern on the part of the monastic officials is also evident and again reminds us that the administration of a medieval abbey was never far removed from the entanglement of secular affairs.

In addition to these rights which were retained during a vacancy, the king also retained the rights to the advowsons of churches in the gift of the abbot and convent. This was also a particularly valuable right for the king, for like the grants of corrodiess, it enabled him to provide his clerks and officials with suitable livings.¹⁵⁶

An analysis of the king's presentations to benefices in the gift of the abbot and convent during the fourteenth century clearly shows that the crown continuously exercised and carefully observed rights of patronage in this respect.

During the vacancy which lasted from November 1, 1301 to August 10, 1302, King Edward I presented three candidates to churches in the abbey's gift,¹⁵⁷ and Edward II filled eight vacant benefices during the voidance of the abbey in 1313.¹⁵⁸

In addition to the presentations made in 1313, Edward II made five presentations dated after the termination of the vacancy in the abbey.¹⁵⁹ This arose because the candidate could not be admitted until it was evident that the promised benefice was actually void, but by the time this occurred, the original vacancy in the abbey under which the claim was exercised was already filled.¹⁶⁰ The expansion of the king's rights was also extended to include the

presentation to benefices which had not been exercised by his predecessor.¹⁶¹ Edward III made a total of seven presentations to vacant benefices in the gift of the abbot and convent in the years 1329, 1331 and 1332 although the abbey was not vacant at the time;¹⁶² this retroactive type of presentation usually included the statement that the designated church was "in the king's gift by reason of the voidance of the abbey of St. Edmunds in the late reign." Edward III's presentations during the vacancy of 1361 numbered thirty-three, with an additional five made after the restoration of the temporalities.¹⁶³

The only clear case of a direct conflict between the royal right of presentation and a papal provision occurred during this period. Pope Innocent VI had provided one John Parker to the vacant church of Harlow in 1361; the provision did not take effect because the king claimed the advowson and successfully presented the living to his candidate, William de Molsse, a deacon of St. Martin's in London.¹⁶⁴ From the point of view of the abbey, the effective use of royal rights in presenting benefices during a vacancy was probably not a serious problem, although the dual demands of the king and pope¹⁶⁵ did reduce the number of advowsons left at the free disposal of the abbot.

The additional claims arising from the king's position as patron--the demand for corrodies and hospitality at the abbey's expense--were, as we have seen, often a source of serious financial concern for both the abbot and the convent. However, despite the fact that certain elements of patronage were financially disabling, the king's relationship to the monastery was not totally one of exploitation. In fact, a balance between demands on the one hand and protection and aid from the crown on the other hand was often maintained. Kathleen Wood-Legh has shown that during Edward III's reign the crown often granted royal protection and gave royal aid to a number of monasteries of royal foundation.¹⁶⁶ Although there is no instance of Bury St. Edmunds being put under direct royal control in an effort to correct financial distress so prevalent in this period, the abbey did receive

both support and help from the crown. The royal demands for hospitality often coincided with special grants to the abbey: the king's presence at the abbey in 1331 helped to settle the outstanding differences between the abbey and the town and was also the occasion for royal permission to appropriate two churches.¹⁶⁷ Although it is often difficult to distinguish the role of the king as patron of the abbey from his role as King of England, the royal support given the abbey was significant, especially in resolving the difficulties at the abbey from 1379 through 1381. The protection of royal rights of patronage against the papal demands on that occasion served the abbey as well as the king, and the royal favor shown in 1380, 1389 and 1396 over the heavy custody fines,¹⁶⁸ the royal grant releasing Abbot John of Timworth from attending Parliament,¹⁶⁹ and the permission to appropriate two churches in 1398¹⁷⁰ are useful reminders that royal patronage could be beneficial. Certainly the claims of patronage were not directed solely against the abbey nor exercised exclusively as assertions of royal power against the plenitudo potestatis of the papacy. As a royal foundation, Bury St. Edmunds did have certain special problems which other monasteries could escape, but it is perhaps significant that the special affection shown to the site of the shrine of the martyred King Edmund by Edward I was, in some measure, continued by his successors in the fourteenth century.

Footnotes

¹ I have used W.O. Ault's categories of jurisdiction. See W.O. Ault, Private Jurisdiction in England (New Haven, 1923), pp. 1-8.

² Levett, Studies, p. 118; A. Goodwin, The Abbey of St. Edmundsbury, p. 11.

³ H.M. Chew, The English Ecclesiastical Tenants-in-Chief and Knight Service (Oxford, 1932), Chapter IV, pp. 113-158 discusses this topic. See below, pp. 189-190.

⁴ Ault, Private Jurisdiction, p. 81.

⁵ The four crosses marked a one mile radius of the town and marked the exempt area of ecclesiastical jurisdiction as well as the limits of the abbot's exclusive jurisdiction within the borough. Thus, this area was an "inner liberty" within the Liberty of St. Edmund, and it was often referred to as the "libertas ville Sancti Edmundi" or the "libertas infra quatuor cruces." See M.D. Lobel, "The Ecclesiastical Banleuca in England," pp. 125, 136.

⁶ For the cellarer's rights see J.B. pp. 101-103 and the description in Lobel, Borough, pp. 19-26.

⁷ Feudal Documents from the Abbey of Bury St. Edmunds, pp. 60-61.

⁸ Ibid., pp. 57-69 for early renewals. King Stephen granted to the abbey the additional hundred of Stow, but this was not confirmed by Henry II. Ibid., p. 85. See also H.W.C. Davis, "The Liberties of Bury St. Edmunds," E.H.R., XXIV (1909), pp. 417-431.

⁹ This right however, was questioned and disputed in 1303, 1330 and 1336. See below, pp. 165-66.

¹⁰ C.P.R. 1301-07, p. 367 records a grant in 1305 for the abbot to move this court to Henhowe from Catteshil where it had previously been held. See H.M. Cam, Liberties and Communities in Medieval England (New York, 1962), pp. 189-190 for a description of this court.

¹¹ Cam, Liberties and Communities, pp. 195-196.

¹² Lobel, "The Ecclesiastical Banleuca in England," pp. 129-134.

¹³ Lobel, Borough, pp. 106, 119, 114.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 31-41. The Letter Book of William of Hoo, Sacrist of Bury St. Edmunds 1280-1294, ed. Antonia Gransden (Suffolk Records Society, V, 1963) contains many documents illustrating the sacrist's duties as archdeacon.

¹⁵Putnam, Enforcement of the Statutes of Labourers, p. 98; Ault, Private Jurisdiction, p. 106.

¹⁶H.M. Cam, Liberties and Communities, pp. 181; Idem, "Shire Officials: Coroners, Constables, and Bailiffs" in The English Government at Work, 1327-1336, Vol. III: Local Administration and Justice, ed. J.F. Willard, et al. (Cambridge, Mass., 1950), pp. 143-183; Idem, "The Evolution of the Mediaeval English Franchise," Speculum, XXXII (1957), pp. 427-442.

¹⁷Erwin T. Meyer, "Boroughs," in The English Government at Work, III, p. 105.

¹⁸The Statute of Winchester of 1285, cap. 2, gave franchise holders forty days to answer for felonies and robberies. Statutes of the Realm, I, p. 96.

¹⁹C.P.R. 1301-07, p. 190

²⁰C.Ch.R. 1327-41, p. 181. This cost the abbot £100.

²¹Ibid., p. 358.

²²Ibid., p. 358. This was at a cost of £30.

²³C.P.R. 1343-45, pp. 218-19; 361-63.

²⁴E.g. C.Ch.R. 1300-26, pp. 487-88 for a 1326 case.

²⁵The case is discussed in Select Cases in the Court of King's Bench under Edward III, Vol. VI, p. xxix.

²⁶B.H. Putnam (ed), Proceedings before the Justices of the Peace, p. 380.

²⁷Other instances of the abbots of Bury petitioning the crown or receiving grants regarding their secular privileges can be found in Cal. Chancery Warrants, 1244-1326, p. 252; C.Cl.R. 1313-18, p. 61; C.P.R. 1327-30, p. 193 in addition to the cases cited below, pp. 175-178.

²⁸C.P.R. 1340-43, pp. 314-15.

²⁹C.P.R. 1370-74, p. 239.

³⁰Cam, "Shire Officials," p. 144.

³¹See Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem, XIV, p. 148 for a text of the arrangement.

³²Cam, Liberties and Communities, p. 188.

³³In 1306 a commission of oyer and terminer was granted to the abbot to investigate allegations that certain men of the Liberty had torn down the abbot's gallows at Westle and vandalized the court house at Henhowe. C.P.R. 1301-07, p. 472.

³⁴Cam, Liberties and Communities, pp. 190-191 gives a very good description of the duties of the steward. No farm was paid by the abbot at the Exchequer for this fee. See H.M. Cam, The Hundred and the Hundred Rolls (London, 1930), p. 162. In 1292 the only money paid by the abbot's steward to the Exchequer from the eight and a half hundreds was for treasure-trove, for some writs and for the amercements of some men within the hundreds who were not the abbot's tenants. In that year 1640 was credited to the abbot at the Exchequer. Ibid., p. 162; B.C., p. 114.

³⁵This was not always the case. In 1290-93 Abbot John Northwold appointed and removed the under-steward. Cam, Liberties and Communities, pp. 189-190.

* ³⁶The king held the office in wardship at this time. Cam, "Shire Officials," p. 145. Ralph de Bocking was at various times a justice of assize, a keeper of the peace, a justice of labor, and a collector of the ninth. See below, p. 177.

³⁷C.P.R. 1374-38, p. 124. In that year because of the voidance of the abbey, the king held the office.

³⁸See Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem, XIV, p. 148 detailing the arrangements between the steward and the under-steward. Hastings got the fees of the Great Court. C.P.R. 1327-30, pp. 188-190.

³⁹Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem, VIII, for 10 Edward III where he made the return of writ for the lands of John Carbonel. H.M. Cam, "Shire Officials," pp. 147-148 cites a manuscript showing a series of thirty-nine royal writs and the returns from the sheriff of Suffolk to the steward of the Liberty for the years 1314 to 1342.

⁴⁰Cam, "Shire Officials," p. 145.

⁴¹N. Neilson, "The Court of Common Pleas," in The English Government at Work, III, p. 265.

⁴²C.P.R. 1354-60, p. 624. William Rushbrook was acting as steward at the time of this incident.

⁴³The financial gain is illustrated by the fact that the abbot received a total of £640 in 1292 from fines, amercements and other perquisites from the Liberty. B.C., p. 114. See also P.B. Reg., I, pp. 304-305 for notes of amercements received from the time of King Richard through Edward III.

⁴⁴See Cam, "Shire Officials," pp. 179-180 for a description of the duties of the hundred bailiffs.

⁴⁵Cam, Hundred and Hundred Rolls, pp. 93, 142, 146. She cites a contract between the abbot and the hundred bailiffs in the reign of Henry VI showing that the farm for Risbridge hundred was £6 13s. 4d. and for Blackbourne, £35. Ibid., p. 146.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 158 where Cam says the complaints were "monotonous and interminable."

⁴⁷C.P.R. 1388-92, p. 92; C.Cl.R. 1389-92, pp. 246, 415.

⁴⁸In addition to the instances cited above, pp. 96-100, there was a case in 1360 when men from Thedwestrey hundred assaulted the abbot's bailiff, Giles de Neketon, and prevented him from holding the hundred court. C.P.R. 1356-61, p. 476.

⁴⁹C.P.R. 1396-99, p. 14.

⁵⁰Cam, "Shire Officials," p. 157; R.F. Hunnisett, The Medieval Coroner (Cambridge, 1961), pp. 138, 162-164 discusses the franchisal coroners.

⁵¹C.Ch.R. 1341-1417, pp. 137-139. Hunnisett, p. 138 states that no specific mention was needed.

⁵²C.P.R. 1354-58, p. 639.

⁵³C.P.R. 1367-70, p. 186.

⁵⁴Cam, "Shire Officials," p. 157. Hunnisett, pp. 162-164 gives no information on the method of choosing the coroners for Bury St. Edmunds.

⁵⁵Cam, "Shire Officials," p. 169.

⁵⁶For these developments see particularly articles by B.H. Putnam, "Shire Officials: Keepers of the Peace and Justices of the Peace," M.M. Taylor, "Justices of Assize," and N. Neilson, "The Court of Common Pleas," all in The English Government at Work, 1327-1336, Vol. III.

⁵⁷William A. Morris, The Medieval English Sheriff to 1300 (Manchester, 1927), p. 239ff discusses this trend.

⁵⁸C.Cl.R. 1313-18, p. 61. An additional case is that of 1326: C.Ch. R. 1300-26, pp. 487-88.

⁵⁹Putnam, ed., Proceedings before the Justices of the Peace, pp. 30-32; King's Bench, Edward III, VI, pp. xi, xvi-xlix, 140 for the dates.

⁶⁰In 1352 the abbot protested that he had been prevented from hearing cases of novel disseisin and mort d'ancestor. C.Ch.R. 1341-1417, p. 125.

⁶¹Putnam, ed., Proceedings before the Justices of the Peace, p. lxiii.

⁶²Ibid., p. 380.

⁶³C.P.R. 1367-70, p. 273.

⁶⁴Putnam, ed., Proceedings before the Justices of the Peace, pp. lxii-lxiii.

⁶⁵Cal. Chancery Warrants, 1244-1326, p. 252; C.P.R. 1327-30, p. 193; C.P.R. 1330-34, pp. 119, 123; C.P.R. 1340-43, p. 163; C.P.R. 1343-45, pp. 218-19, 253-54, 361-63.

⁶⁶C.P.R. 1327-30, p. 411.

⁶⁷C.P.R. 1327-30, p. 355; Taylor, "Justices of Assize," p. 250.

⁶⁸Putnam, Enforcement of the Statutes of Labourers. App., pp. 34-41 lists the dates and types of commissions for Suffolk.

⁶⁹Ibid., App., p. 54.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 148.

⁷¹They were the abbots of Fécamp, Ramsey, Reading, Peterborough and Westminster. Ibid., p. 148.

⁷²Ibid., App. pp. 139-140; 140, 148.

⁷³As Putnam suggests, ibid., pp. 222-223.

⁷⁴A.M. Reich, "Parliamentary Abbots," pp. 363-65.

⁷⁵Ibid., pp. 363-65.

⁷⁶Ibid., pp. 351-57; H.M. Chew, English Ecclesiastical Tenants-in-Chief, pp. 175-179.

⁷⁷Reich, p. 350.

⁷⁸ Especially when meetings lasted from five to six weeks. Knowles, Religious Orders, II, p. 307.

⁷⁹ J.S. Roskell, "The Problem of the Attendance of the Lords in Medieval Parliaments," Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research, XXIX (1956), p. 199.

⁸⁰ Ibid., pp. 198, 174. D.B. Weske, Convocation of the Clergy (London, 1937), pp. 80-82 suggests other reasons besides financial ones for non-attendance: boring discussions, matters not of direct concern, etc.

⁸¹ Parliamentary Writs, I, p. 819.

⁸² Roskell, p. 175. Other instances of the abbots of Bury being represented by proctors are for 1322 and 1325. Parliamentary Writs, II, Part I, pp. 265, 331.

⁸³ C.P.R. 1381-85, p. 321.

⁸⁴ Knowles, Religious Orders, II, p. 307.

⁸⁵ M.S.E., II, p. 333.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 334.

⁸⁷ In the Convocation at St. Paul's on Feb. 10, 1328 the assembled prelates ceremoniously excommunicated those who had harmed the monks and churches of St. Edmunds and Abingdon during the riots of 1327. Chronicles of the Reigns of Edward I and Edward II, I, pp. 344-45.

⁸⁸ Weske, Convocation of the Clergy, *passim* gives a full discussion of the prelates' roles in this matter.

⁸⁹ V. Galbraith, "Articles Laid before the Parliament of 1371," p. 582.

⁹⁰ See particularly H.M. Chew, English Ecclesiastical Tenants-in-Chief, p. 74 and *passim*; Sidney Painter, Studies in the History of the Feudal Barony (Baltimore, 1943), p. 14ff.

⁹¹ Knowles, Monastic Order, p. 93.

⁹² Ibid., pp. 608, 610-11; Feudal Documents from the Abbey of Bury St. Edmunds, pp. cvi-cvii. There were at Bury thirty-four of these pre-Conquest "milites."

⁹³ Knowles, Monastic Order, pp. 610-11.

⁹⁴ Abbot Baldwin's "Feudal Book" in Feudal Documents from the Abbey of Bury St. Edmunds, pp. 1-9 shows that

thirty-six knights had been enfeoffed. The Red Book of the Exchequer, ed. Hubert Hall (3 vols.; London, Rolls Series, 1896), I, p. 394 shows that by 1135 the subinfeudation was complete: "Haec est summa militum Ecclesia Sancti Edmundi, scilicet, lli et dimidium et llii pars i militis; sed Ecclesia non debet nisi servitum xl militum."

⁹⁵That is, at the normal rate of 40s. per knight's fee.

⁹⁶Red Book of the Exchequer, I, p. 37. Chew, English Ecclesiastical Tenants-in-Chief, p. 20 gives a table showing the number of knights the ecclesiastical tenants-in-chief owed to the crown before the reduced quota.

⁹⁷J.B., 28, 66.

⁹⁸For instance in 1197-98 over serving in Normandy. J.B., pp. 85-86.

⁹⁹Chew, "The Ecclesiastical Tenants-in-Chief and Writs of Military Summons," E.H.R., XLI (1926), p. 162. The other five abbots who "received writs with unbroken regularity" were those of St. Augustine's, Canterbury, Evesham, Malmesbury, Winchcombe and Hyde. They were all Benedictine houses. Ibid., p. 163.

¹⁰⁰I.J. Sanders, Feudal Military Service in England (Oxford, 1956) discusses the possible rationale behind the reduced quota, citing various factors including the opposition of tenants-in-chief to sending the full service, ignorance of how much was owed, and the difficulties of keeping track of the knights' fees. He concludes that the assignment of the reduced quota was not the result of a consistent policy, but was rather a "piecemeal growth," with each lord bargaining with the crown for the amount due. Ibid., pp. 68-90.

¹⁰¹Chew, English Ecclesiastical Tenants-in-Chief, p. 33.

¹⁰²Ibid., p. 73.

¹⁰³Ibid., p. 99. This was remitted, C.Cl.R. 1307-13, p. 373.

¹⁰⁴Chew, English Ecclesiastical Tenants-in-Chief, p. 70.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., pp. 53-54, 79.

¹⁰⁶Calendar of Memoranda Rolls (Exchequer) preserved in the Public Record Office: Michaelmas 1326--Michaelmas 1327 (London, H.M.S.O.: 1968), pp. 263-64, 267.

¹⁰⁷Chew, English Ecclesiastical Tenants-in-Chief, p. 110.

- 108 Ibid., p. 107.
- 109 Parliamentary Writs, II, Part I, p. 525.
- 110 Ibid., II, Part I, p. 404.
- 111 Chew, English Ecclesiastical Tenants-in-Chief, p. 91.
- 112 Ibid., p. 94.
- 113 Ibid., p. 155.
- 114 Ibid., p. 155.
- 115 The survey is contained in PB. Reg., I, pp. 271-285.
- 116 Chew, "Ecclesiastical Tenants-in-Chief and Writs of Military Summons," pp. 162-63.
- 117 Parliamentary Writs, II, Part I, pp. 404, 631.
- 118 Chew, English Ecclesiastical Tenants-in-Chief, p. 99
- 119 C.Cl.R. 1377-81, p. 37. The licence for the abbot to stay at Elmswell rather than withdraw to Walton is in C.Cl.R. 1374-77, p. 504. The abbot said that although his manor in Walton was actually closer to the coast, the roads were muddy and it would be just as easy to fulfill his obligation from Elmswell.
- 120 C.Cl.R. 1381-85, pp. 542, 555-56. C.Cl.R. 1385-89, p. 174.
- 121 J.B., p. 67.
- 122 PB. Reg., I, p. 285.
- 123 The 1301-12 inquisition is contained in Inquisitions and Assessments relating to Feudal Aid, with other Analogous Documents preserved in the Public Record Office, A.D. 1284-1431, Vol. V (London, H.M.S.O., 1908), pp. 29-31. It is not complete. The returns for the 1346 inquisition are in Ibid., pp. 48, 55-56, 63-64, 67, 70-75, 78, 80-81.
- 124 C.Cl.R. 1307-13, p. 25.
- 125 C.Cl.R. 1330-33, pp. 71, 209; C.Cl.R. 1369-74, p. 60; C.Cl.R. 1374-77, pp. 393-94.
- 126 See below, pp. 199-200.
- 127 For example, C.Cl.R. 1381-85, pp. 486-87.

¹²⁸ Sidney Painter, Studies in the History of the English Feudal Barony, p. 14.

¹²⁹ Susan Wood, English Monasteries and their Patrons in the Thirteenth Century (Oxford, 1955), p. 11.

¹³⁰ J.B., pp. 11, 15, 16-23.

¹³¹ M.S.E., II, pp. 30-130 contains the account "De Electione Hugonis Abbatis" written at the abbey.

¹³² The account "Electio Thomae de Totyngton" is in M.S.E., II, pp. 299-321.

¹³³ Ibid., p. 301.

¹³⁴ Ibid., pp. 301-07.

¹³⁵ The royal assent is in C.P.R. 1301-07, p. 10.

¹³⁶ Papal confirmation is recorded in C.Pap.L., I, p. 601.

¹³⁷ Restoration of temporalities: C.P.R. 1301-07, p. 52.

¹³⁸ See Appendix I.

¹³⁹ See above, pp. 30-33.

¹⁴⁰ Cecily Davies, "The Statute of Provisors of 1351," History, XXXVIII (1953), p. 126. Although in 1361 John de Brinkeley only gave his fealty "after he had renounced all words prejudicial to the king in the pope's letters." C.P.R. 1361-64, p. 104.

¹⁴¹ C.P.R. 1377-81, pp. 296, 317.

¹⁴² The reasons given for the prohibition against going to Rome were the perils of war and the fear of Timworth's being captured and held for ransom, "to the impoverishment of his...house." C.C.L.R. 1377-81, p. 176.

¹⁴³ Davies, "The Statute of Provisors," p. 128.

¹⁴⁴ On the difference between appointments of bishops and the elections of abbots in the later Middle Ages see Thompson, The English Clergy and their Organization in the Later Middle Ages, pp. 15-17. May McKisack, The Fourteenth Century 1307-1399 (Oxford, 1959), pp. 278-82 deals with the "anti-papal" legislation of the period and cites the 1379 Bury case.

¹⁴⁵ Wood, English Monasteries, p. 75 suggests one reason why it was so valuable a right: "It was the only occasion when land granted away in mortmain could yield appreciable profits."

- 146 C.P.R. 1301-07, p.227.
- 147 C.Cl.R. 1307-13, pp. 507-08.
- 148 C.Cl.R. 1307-13, pp. 507-08; C.Cl.R. 1333-37, p. 394; C.Cl.R. 1360-64, pp. 168-169; C.Cl.R. 1377-81, pp. 172-73.
- 149 C.Cl.R. 1360-64, pp. 168-69.
- 150 W.O. Ault, "Manors and Temporalities," in The English Government at Work, p. 11.
- 151 Ibid., pp. 10-11.
- 152 C.Cl.R. 1360-64, p. 497; C.Cl.R. 1364-68, pp. 72-73; Fine Rolls, VII, pp. 254, 328.
- 153 C.Cl.R. 1369-74, p. 60.
- 154 C.P.R. 1361-64, p. 431.
- 155 E.g. the case of a marriage right: C.P.R. 1377-81, pp. 423, 521.
- 156 Ann Deeley, "Papal Provision and Royal Rights of Patronage in the Early Fourteenth Century," E.H.R., XLIII (1928), p. 508.
- 157 In 1302. C.P.R. 1301-07, pp. 24, 27, 39.
- 158 C.P.R. 1307-13, pp. 523, 525, 528, 561, 564, 566; Fine Rolls, II, p. 167; Cal. Chancery Warrants 1244-1326, p. 387.
- 159 Three in 1315; C.P.R. 1313-17, pp. 334, 337, 340; one in 1317 and one in 1318; C.P.R. 1317-21, pp. 119, 199.
- 160 Deeley, "Papal Provisions," pp. 511-12.
- 161 Ibid., p. 517.
- 162 C.P.R. 1327-30, pp. 365, 371, 374, 376; C.P.R. 1330-34, pp. 107, 153, 359.
- 163 C.P.R. 1361-64, pp. 24, 25, 34, 35, 39, 44, 45, 47, 51, 56, 57, 59, 76, 77, 78, 80, 81, 84, 85, 91, 92, 94, 96, 99, 100, 105, 127, 128, 136, 145, 158, 160, 177.
- 164 Accounts Rendered by Papal Collectors in England, 1317-1378, transcribed with annotations by W.E. Lunt, ed. Edgar B. Graves (Philadelphia, 1968), p. 299.
- 165 See below, pp. 222-7 for papal provisions.

166 Wood-Legh, Studies, pp. 4-7.

167 C.P.R. 1327-30, p. 546.

168 C.P.R. 1379-81, p. 499; C.P.R. 1388-92, pp. 45, 368;
C.P.R. 1396-99, p. 21.

169 C.P.R. 1381-85, p. 321.

170 C.P.R. 1396-99, p. 406.

V. BURY ST. EDMUNDS AND THE CHURCH

I. The Relationship to the Papacy

In many respects the relationship of the abbey of Bury St. Edmunds to the papacy in the fourteenth century was similar to the relationship of the abbey to the crown. Both interference and protection from the Holy See were characteristic of the period. The granting of papal privileges and papal support in the promotion of certain cases were as prevalent as the unremitting imposition of financial burdens and papal interference in such matters as elections and the rights of ecclesiastical patronage. To some degree, the relationship reflected the changes and difficulties in Anglo-Papal relations. The most notable instance of this aspect was the controversy surrounding the provision of Edmund Bromfield in 1379 and the subsequent negotiations between the crown and the papacy regarding a new election. On the whole, developments in the relations between the papacy and the abbey serve to illustrate both the increasing centralization and financial demands of the Avignonese papacy and the often difficult position of the abbey in attempting to resist the demands of not only the king but also the pope.

A. The Special Relationship to the Papacy: Exempt Status

From the late eleventh century Bury St. Edmunds was one of the few monasteries in England to have a special relationship to the papacy as a "protected" and eventually "exempt" abbey. The movement towards the exemption of a monastery from the control of the diocesan bishop in both temporal and spiritual affairs had developed in the latter part of the eleventh century.¹ By 1065 Bury already had extensive civil and ecclesiastical franchises through royal grants and had rights within the borough which implied an exemption from the bishop's powers of excommunication and interdiction in the town. A short while later Pope Alexander II took the abbey under "special protection" and guaranteed its independence from the Bishop of Norwich in both temporal and spiritual matters.² By 1154 Bury was the only Benedictine house in England to have its exemption firmly stated;³ by the end of King John's reign there were six other monasteries which joined Bury in possessing this unique status, and by 1327 a total of twelve abbeys claimed rights of either exemption or protection. The annual census payment to the papacy as a sign of exemption was collected from the abbey beginning in 1236,⁵ and records of the papal collectors in England from 1317 to 1378 show that the abbots of Bury regularly made this payment of one mark per year in the fourteenth century.⁶

The exemption of the abbey from the control of the

Bishop of Norwich was an important privilege which had been challenged at different periods earlier in Bury's history.⁷ That the privilege continued to be important in the fourteenth century is indicated by the fact that Walter Pinchbeck copied into his register a large number of papal bulls upholding these rights.⁸ The interest and concern of the abbey was well founded. Exemption implied not only spiritual authority of the abbot within the town, where the abbot exercised many functions normally performed by a bishop, but it also freed the abbey from many diocesan financial burdens, and, most importantly, freed the abbey from the visitation of the bishop.⁹ Although there were certainly some dangers in the latter privilege,¹⁰ the vigorous defense of the abbey's rights when they came under attack by the energetic Bishop Bateman in 1345 was an indication of the importance with which the monastery regarded its exempt status.

The role of the papacy in this case indicates that protection from the Holy See for the abbey was not always immediately forthcoming, especially when issues were raised which attacked clerical independence. After Bishop Bateman had received papal authority for levying his subsidy within the diocese and had met with the abbey's refusal to pay, he obtained papal support for his cause: Clement VI appointed the Bishop of Trieste to aid the Bishop of Norwich's collection of the tax.¹¹ On July 3, 1345, the sub-executor of the Bishop of Trieste sent a monition to the abbot of Bury warning him of excommunication if the payment were not

made, and on the same date Bishop Bateman's commissaries issued instructions to six clerks in the diocese to examine Bury's claims to exemption.¹² Throughout the proceedings, Abbot William de Bernham steadfastly refused to acknowledge Bateman's authority, and when the bishop's commissaries turned up allegations of moral laxity, the abbot was cited to appear before the bishop to answer charges. The abbot refused to obey the citation, and he then appealed to the papacy for an investigation.¹³ At this point, the abbot also appealed to the king for a decision in the case, and this raised a number of questions regarding the proper provenance of the case. Abbot William sent a knight, Richard Freysal, to the king to obtain from him letters upholding the exemption from episcopal jurisdiction.¹⁴ Bishop Bateman refused to obey the royal writ ordering him to desist from further interference and excommunicated the abbot's clerk, Richard Freysal.¹⁵ At this juncture, the abbot and his clerk brought suit in the king's court against the bishop and his commissaries.¹⁶ The royal justices then ordered the imprisonment of the commissaries after the bishop's agents had referred the case to the Archbishop of Canterbury, and one of the commissaries was put into the abbot's prison. In addition, the king's justices also ordered the seizure of Bishop Bateman's temporalities until he had revoked the excommunication and satisfied the £10,000 damages claimed by the abbot.¹⁷

One of the issues was clearly that of the bishop's

attempt to remove the case to the ecclesiastical courts. The favorable decision of the king's court for the abbot in 1346 rested in part on the violation of praemunire by the bishop, and the subsequent appeals of the bishop claimed unwarranted temporal interference in the case.¹⁸ Although the First Statute of Praemunire was not passed until 1353, from 1343 onwards Edward III had been issuing writs of arrest against persons who pursued in any court matters prejudicial to the king or the realm.¹⁹ It is possible that Bishop Bateman's refusal to abide by the decisions of the lay courts and his attempts to seek settlement in ecclesiastical courts may have been one case which contributed to the adoption of the statute in 1353.

The response of the papacy in this case was somewhat similar, for the papal action was in part determined by the fact that the abbot of Bury had sought help from the king's court. The initial appeal of the abbot to the pope had resulted only in a delaying action, and three papal letters in the next few years indicate that Clement VI's concern was primarily the issue of secular versus ecclesiastical jurisdiction in the matter. In a letter of 1349 the pope ordered the Bishops of Chichester and London to investigate the dispute, and after reciting the abbot's actions in the case, demanded that if they found the charges to be correct, the abbot of Bury and Richard Freysal "are to be cited to appear before the pope within three months to receive what justice requires for their excesses and wickedness."²⁰ A

second letter in 1350 addressed to the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishops of Chichester and Exeter ordered the public excommunication of those hindering the Bishop of Norwich, and in 1351 a similar letter was sent which specifically mentioned Edward III's refusal to allow proceedings in the Roman Court.²¹

In this case then, the abbey of Bury St. Edmunds found more effective support from the king than from the pope. Although the abbot did receive confirmation of the exempt status of the monastery, the proceedings illustrate the extent to which Anglo-Papal relations were a factor in the response obtained from the papacy. The exempt status was not seriously threatened again until the fifteenth century when Bishop Alnwich attempted to visit the abbey,²² but it is clear that despite papal guarantees obtained earlier in her history, the monastery did have to look to the state as well as to the papacy for the protection of ecclesiastical privileges.

B. Papal Provisions

A second source of interference on the part of the papacy in the affairs of the abbey was obviously that of papal provisions, both in regard to provisions to the abbacy and in regard to the issuing of papal provisions and expectatives to benefices in the gift of the abbot and convent. In the first situation, that of papal interference in the selection of an abbot, the effects on the

abbey were serious. An important article by A.H. Sweet detailing the relations between the papacy and English religious houses focuses on monastic rights of free elections.²³ He points out that despite papal guarantees of free elections, neither secular interference nor papal interference were totally prevented in the fourteenth century.²⁴ The claims advanced by successive popes in the fourteenth century regarding the reservation of appointments to benefices and to bishoprics affected abbeys as well, though to a lesser degree, and this process is clearly evidenced at Bury St. Edmunds.

Although the election of William de Bernham in 1335 was freely held, the remark by the Bury chronicler that the abbot was hastily chosen because the monks feared a papal appointment reveals a characteristic concern for monastic independence.²⁵ The first instance of a papal provision to the abbacy occurred in 1361.²⁶ In that year Henry of Hunstanton, canonically elected at Bury, died near Avignon before receiving his papal confirmation; the death of a prelate at or near the curia was grounds for a papal reservation, and the provision of John de Brinkeley to the abbey by Pope Innocent VI was immediately made.²⁷ As noted before, this provision was not the occasion for any adverse reaction on the king's part, nor did it prompt adverse comments by the monks of the abbey.

However, the provision of Edmund Bromfield to the abbey in 1379 showed not only papal interference and the

application of the principle that the pope was the "universal ordinary," but also revealed a vacillating attitude on the part of the papacy. As in 1345, the papal reaction to the problems of the abbey was at first indecisive. The actions of the Holy See in this case again depended on the state of Anglo-Papal relations, particularly with regard to the enforcement of the Statute of Provisors.²⁸ It was only through royal action in the affair that the convent was able to rid itself of the provisor, and in 1383 the pope finally recognized John of Timworth as the legitimate abbot.²⁹ The pope did, however, press for a new election, and the formal process was repeated in 1384. It is worth noting in this case that the monks of Bury who had initially gone to Rome to promote the cause of Timworth met with considerable difficulty. Not only did they find Urban VI and the cardinals contradictory in their positions and advice regarding the provision, but, according to John of Gosford's account, they remarked about the cupidity of the curia.³⁰ The worldliness of the church could be just as much an object of attack on the part of monastic observers as it was for the laity. Monastic reaction to the policies of the Holy See was not always favorable: the instances of papal interference and the failure to respect the independence of the abbey were just as much a source of irritation as were the heavy financial burdens arising out of the abbey's exempt status.

Although somewhat less of a problem, the papal provisions and expectatives issued to clerks for benefices in the gift

of the abbot and convent were also a source of some difficulty. The abbot and convent of Bury held the advowson of between sixty and seventy churches, mainly in the Diocese of Norwich,³¹ and the process of choosing candidates to fill the vacant benefices was open to pressures from both the king and the pope. Jocelin of Brakelond's description of Abbot Samson's difficulties in satisfying the demands made upon him is revealing:

A certain clerk came to him [Samson] bearing letters petitioning that he might be granted some ecclesiastical benefice. And the Abbot drawing from his case seven letters apostolic with their bulls still attached, replied 'Behold these letters apostolic in which divers Popes ask that ecclesiastical benefices should be given to sundry clerks. When I have appeased them, and then only, I will give you a benefice: for he who comes first to the mill ought to have first grind.'³²

Monastic objection to papal provisions were extensive in the thirteenth century. Matthew Paris consistently railed against the usurpation of the rights of ecclesiastical patrons, and he includes in his chronicle a letter of 1244 sent by the abbots of England to Pope Innocent IV saying that the English Church

'...grieves and mourns, and is troubled about the exactions, oppressions, and manifold tribulations which have fallen on her heavily. ... For the nobles and men of rank declare, that if churches bestowed on monasteries by them are conferred on Italian clerks, they will have a just right to recall those churches and other benefices into their own possession.'³³

The issue here was obviously the fear of secular reprisals against the provision of alien clergy, but it is significant that the monastic protests against papal provisions rarely succeeded. The only evidence of Bury St. Edmunds' direct refusal to acknowledge this papal right comes from the

thirteenth century. In 1289 Ralph Walpole, then Bishop of Norwich and a papal agent, ordered the abbot and convent to answer for their refusal to grant John Powiz a benefice "according to the form of the provision given to him by the apostolic see."³⁴ It appears in this case that the abbot and convent were made to grant the request.

Evidence from the fourteenth century does show that the abbot and convent, though usually not in a position to resist papal demands, continued to regard them as a problem. Regulations by the state over papal provisions were designed mainly to defend rights of lay patronage and were directed particularly against alien provisors.³⁵ A copy of a 1344 form used in royal writs directing sheriffs to arrest provisors and those entering the kingdom with papal documents prejudicial to the king is contained in one Bury cartulary of the fourteenth century.³⁶ The presence at Bury of this document, which contained a specific reference to a case in Kent where a papal provisor had intruded into a church in the gift of an abbey, would indicate that the monastery was conscious of the problem and would want the form of the writ to assist them if need be.

An examination of the number and type of papal provisions and expectatives to churches in the gift of the abbot and convent shows that Bury St. Edmunds was frequently called upon to fill benefices in this way. During the period from 1317 to 1375, a total of forty-eight provisions or expectancies were issued; Pope John XXII alone issued eleven

between 1317 and 1333,³⁷ and Clement VI issued a total of fifteen between 1342 and 1351.³⁸ Seven of the expectatives were granted at the request of members of the royal household or to those in the service of the king.³⁹ At least three in the latter part of the century appeared on the rolls of petitions on behalf of university clerks (two from Cambridge and one from Oxford),⁴⁰ and one was actually granted at the request of the abbot of St. Edmunds.⁴¹ In only two cases do collations appear to have taken place or does it appear that an actual vacancy existed.⁴² This latter fact clearly indicates that the expectatives, rather than the actual provisions, were the most serious problem for the abbot to deal with.⁴³

An illustration of the type of problem which might occur is provided by a case in 1341. Pope Benedict XII wrote to the Archbishop of Canterbury concerning one John de Blakenham who had "procured himself to be presented to the bishop of Norwich by the abbot of St. Edmunds" for the church of Semer, against the wishes of the pope, who had already given the provision to John of Ramsey.⁴⁴ It is possible in this case that the abbot had presented the benefice to John of Blakenham without regarding a previously issued papal provision; in any event, this does not appear to be a case of conflict between the papal and royal right to the presentation of vacant benefices in the abbey's gift. The abbot of St. Edmunds was not only confronted with clerks bearing papal documents demanding fulfillment,

but the abbey was also liable to be asked to fill royal demands during a vacancy as well. Although I have only uncovered one case of conflict between royal and papal claims to a specific benefice in such a situation,⁴⁵ the combination of the two forces effectively limited the number of benefices which could be freely conferred by the abbot of St. Edmunds.

In some respects, the interference of the papacy in granting provisions and expectatives could be regarded as simply a further indication of an unhealthy extension of the papal plenitude of power in the fourteenth century. To be sure, the practice did, from the monastic point of view, indicate a usurpation of privileges and independence. Yet the practice did not have entirely negative results. As we have seen, the cases of papal provisions to the abbacy had mixed results: John de Brinkeley's appointment by Innocent VI was a good choice, while that of Edmund de Bromfield certainly reflected poor judgment on the part of Urban VI. In the case of papal provisions and expectatives to the churches in the gift of the abbot and convent, the results may, in fact, have been satisfactory.⁴⁶ They served a definite function in securing benefices for "poor clerks" and university graduates in need of a living,⁴⁷ and in almost all cases for Bury the presentations were made to English clerks, not aliens.⁴⁸ In the case of university clerks, the use of papal petitions enabled those who might not otherwise have come to the attention of the ecclesiastical patron to secure a place;⁴⁹ and in view of the fact that the

monasteries did perhaps make poor choices in their selection of rectors and vicars to serve their churches⁵⁰ (either appropriated or in their gift), papal use of the privilege might not have been as detrimental to either the monastery or to the parishoners as it might at first seem.

C. Papal Privileges and Grants

Appropriations

In addition to the cases in which the papacy inhibited monastic privileges and rights, there were of course areas where the papacy could be of assistance to religious houses. In the appropriation of churches to the abbey the papacy could exercise influence and support the application of licences made before the king. Before 1366 there was no legal reason for obtaining papal assent to a royal licence for appropriation, although there certainly were cases where papal help was sought in promoting the effort to appropriate.⁵¹ In 1366 Pope Urban V annulled all appropriations not yet in effect, and succeeding popes reissued this annulment. In fact, the effect of the papal action did not greatly reduce the number of appropriations, but it significantly increased papal control by requiring papal approval for subsequent appropriations.⁵² Both royal and papal support for the appropriation of churches to Bury St. Edmunds were forthcoming in the fourteenth century.

In 1313 Clement V issued a papal licence to Abbot Richard for the appropriation of the church of Harlow in

the diocese of London, to take effect upon the death or resignation of the incumbent recotr.⁵³ The abbey then obtained the right to appoint the vicar, and generally under such an arrangement, the abbey would receive the entire income and pay the vicar a fixed stipend.⁵⁴ Royal licences only, without papal assent, are found for the appropriation to the abbey of the churches of Rougham and Thurston in 1330 and for the church of Foulmere in 1353.⁵⁵ In the former case, King Edward III issued the grant

...in consideration of the grievous losses sustained by them at the hands of the men of Bury St. Edmunds [in 1327] and because, at the king's request, they have pardoned a great part of the sum recovered by them as damages.⁵⁶

Financial losses, heavy debts, or the poverty of the religious house were reasons frequently given for the appropriation of churches,⁵⁷ and it is significant that the burdens of heavy payments during a vacancy and for election expenses to both the king and the pope, which had affected the abbey so severely in the century, figured in a further licence to appropriate in 1398. In May of that year Pope Boniface IX granted permission for the churches of Harlow and Thurston to be appropriated to the abbot's portion.⁵⁸ The letter patent of Richard II issued in August specifically mentioned that the reason for the appropriation was the burden of yearly payments which were now being made to the king and the pope by the abbot in lieu of the vacancy fines and previously collected service taxes.⁵⁹ In spite of Pope Boniface's general annulment of appropriations in

1402, the pope reconfirmed the grant to Abbot William again in 1404.⁶⁰

Although the abuses produced by the monastic appropriation of parish churches were undoubtedly great and may have been a factor influencing anti-monastic sentiment in the later Middle Ages, it must be remembered that the financial rewards and the freedom from papal provisions in such cases were, from the monastic point of view, important reasons for desiring such arrangements.⁶¹ In any case, Bury St. Edmunds retained only the advowson of many more churches than it possessed fully appropriated ones, and the abbey should not therefore be considered as a major participant in the movement towards appropriation.

Papal privileges to abbots

In one other important respect the continued exercise of papal authority affected the abbey of Bury St. Edmunds. The grants of certain privileges and indulgences of favor to the abbots of many monasteries further bound the heads of religious houses to Rome. These privileges often conferred signs of episcopal dignity on the abbots. The right to use the pontificalia (episcopal vestments and insignia) and the privilege conferred upon abbots allowing them to perform acts customarily reserved to bishops (i.e., to give solemn benediction in the absence of a bishop or papal legate; to confer minor orders; and the right to bless ecclesiastical vestments and ornaments) certainly aroused some episcopal

hostility and jealousy, but these privileges did serve to elevate the "abbatial dignity" to the level of that of a bishop.⁶²

Many of these special privileges had been conferred upon the abbots of St. Edmunds from as early as the eleventh century. Alexander II, Alexander III and Urban III all granted or reconfirmed the early abbots of Bury in their rights to the use of the pontificalia (sandals, dalmatic, ring, mitre and pastoral staff), and Abbot Samson was confirmed in his right of giving solemn episcopal benediction within the town of Bury.⁶³ These rights were subsequently reconfirmed by Martin V in the fifteenth century.⁶⁴ Other faculties granted included the right of the abbots to give public absolution.⁶⁵ In 1398 Boniface IX, a prolific dispenser of such privileges, granted to Abbot William Cratfield a faculty "once only" to hear confessions of monks, grant absolution and enjoin penance, "even in cases reserved to the apostolic see."⁶⁶ The abbots of Bury also obtained the privilege of conferring minor orders on their monks, and the members of the convent also had the right to have any bishop admit them to higher orders.⁶⁷ This right was apparently used regularly, for one Bury manuscript contains a list of names of monks ordained by Abbot Richard de Draughton from 1313 to 1316.⁶⁸ In 1351 and 1366, as a result of the shortages of priests due to the pestilences, Abbots William de Bernham and John de Brinkeley were given additional licences permitting them

to prepare under-aged monks for ordination by any bishop.⁶⁹
 The right of the abbot to bless ecclesiastical vestments for the abbey and the subject churches had been obtained in 1256.⁷⁰

A number of personal indults of favor to the abbots of Bury were also issued in the fourteenth century. Abbot William de Bernham received from Clement VI the right to dispose of his personal property by will, permission to choose his own confessor at the hour of death, and the grant for a portable altar; he was also given permission to dispense an illegitimate candidate to enable him to receive orders and obtain a benefice.⁷¹ This latter grant enlarged the abbot of Bury's right to commission for ordination any fit man within the Liberty who wanted to be a candidate for holy orders.⁷²

The significance of these grants by the papacy was twofold. In the first place, the papal privileges and special grants to the individual abbots maintained a link with Rome. Bury St. Edmunds as an exempt abbey was not subject to the Bishop of Norwich, and the papal confirmation of long established rights with respect to both the exempt status and personal privileges of the abbots served to remind the pope, the abbots of Bury, and perhaps the Bishop of Norwich, of the special relationship of the monastery to the Holy See. Secondly, by conferring upon the abbots many rights traditionally associated with bishops, the abbatial dignity was raised. As A.H. Sweet has commented,

An abbot or prior privileged to wear episcopal vestments showed openly when he made use of the privilege, that he was one whom the pope delighted to honor; the members of his convent and the parishoners of his subject churches saw in the pontificalia evidence that he was a great prelate; the dignity of an abbot seemed akin to that of the episcopate....⁷³

For the mitred abbots of Bury, the prestige thus bestowed upon them in their ecclesiastical role enhanced that which they already had in their secular role. The abbots of Bury were publicly confirmed as important, not only by the king but also by the pope, the highest possible ecclesiastical authority.

Papal appointments of abbots as judges and conservators

One way in which the abbots of Bury continued to be recognized as important ecclesiastical figures by the papacy was through papal appointment of them to serve as judge delegates and conservators of papal privileges. Although the practice of appointing local judge delegates to hear cases which had been referred to the Holy See for judgment did decline during the fourteenth century,⁷⁴ there were numerous instances when the abbots of Bury sat on ecclesiastical courts and received mandates to guarantee papal privileges or provisions which affected other monasteries.⁷⁵

In one case lasting from 1299 to 1303, the abbot of Bury, together with the abbots of Waltham and Westminster, served as conservators of Boniface VIII's bull confirming the privileges of the exempt monastery of St. Augustine's, Canterbury, against the archbishop's attempts to subject

churches appropriated to St. Augustine's to his ordinary jurisdiction. In 1299 the three abbots received a mandate requiring them to make the archbishop appear before the pope in three months if he failed to respect the papal privileges of the abbey.⁷⁶ The next year the three abbots received monitions from Archbishop Winchelsea warning them "to beware of acting in a case to which the exemption does not apply."⁷⁷ The final constitution of 1303 settling questions of patronage and income of churches belonging to St. Augustine's mentioned that the abbots of Bury, Waltham and Westminster

had exceeded the limits of the mandate addressed to them, denying ordinary jurisdiction to the archbishop, not only in churches appropriated to St. Augustine's but in those also of which the abbot and convent had only the patronage.⁷⁸

It would seem that the three abbots, all of whom were heads of exempt houses subject only to the papacy, had indeed sided with the monks of St. Augustine's in their bid to remain independent of the archbishop. The case does illustrate that relations between the secular and regular clergy were particularly important to exempt houses; Bury's past experiences with the Bishop of Norwich might have served as a useful reminder to the abbots hearing the case that monastic independence required constant defense.

In most instances when the abbots of St. Edmunds served as ecclesiastical judges, conservators of papal privileges or were delegated to inquire about various matters for the papacy, they acted together with heads

of other monasteries. In 1308 Clement V appointed Abbot Thomas along with the abbot of St. Albans and the prior of St. Mary's, London, to administer the benefices of secular clergy who had gone on a crusade.⁷⁹ Similar mandates requiring the abbot and his fellow conservators to protect the benefices of clerks who were absent for purposes of study were issued by Boniface IX in 1397 and 1402.⁸⁰ Many concurrent mandates addressed to the abbots of Bury in the fourteenth century were directives requiring them to guarantee papal provisions or expectatives to benefices in the gift of the Bishops of Ely and of Norwich or to act as general conservators for other abbeys.⁸¹ The abbots were also used as papal agents and investigators in other types of cases as well. In 1353 Innocent VI appointed Abbot William de Bernham, the precentor of York and a canon of Lincoln to carry out an investigation regarding an apostate monk who desired to return to his abbey.⁸² In another case in 1367, the prior and convent of Rochester requested the pope to appoint the abbot of Bury to aid them in their efforts to build a new priory at Felixstowe, in the diocese of Norwich. Abbot John de Brinkeley investigated the case, reported to Urban V, and the convent of Rochester was granted the papal licence in 1369.⁸³

The involvement of the abbots of Bury in this type of activity further reinforced the ties with the papacy and also served to indicate the importance of the abbots in ecclesiastical matters. When acting in this capacity, the

abbots of Bury were rarely drawn into direct conflict with the crown. On one occasion in 1328 when the abbots of St. Edmunds, Westminster and Selby were sitting as an ecclesiastical court in a case regarding property acquired by the prior of Wenlock, the king issued a writ which allowed the case to be settled by the judges, over the objections of laymen who had sought a prohibition against ecclesiastical jurisdiction.⁸⁴ In fact, the abbots of Bury often received help from the crown in exercising their ecclesiastical duties. The right of the abbot to obtain from chancery at his signification the writ of excommunicato capiendo to provide secular aid in bringing to justice obdurate excommunicants within his jurisdiction was an important one.⁸⁵ Usually granted only to bishops and archbishops, the abbots of Bury received this right in 1305, 1321, 1325, 1338 and 1353.⁸⁶ The fact that the abbot of Bury St. Edmunds was one of the only four abbots accorded this privilege⁸⁷ is but a further indication of Bury's importance in both secular and ecclesiastical affairs.

While in many respects the relationship of the abbey of Bury St. Edmunds to the papacy in the fourteenth century was characterized by interference and the imposition of financial burdens, it nevertheless did bring some advantages. Papal privileges confirming exemption from the control of the Bishop of Norwich, spiritual privileges and favors conferred upon the abbots, and the papal commissions to the abbots all indicated that the abbey was still to be

numbered among the most important and prestigious English monasteries. That the abbots of St. Edmund often found it necessary to defend their privileges in the face of the expansion of both royal and papal authority is clearly evident. But royal and papal support were, at times, equally important and effective in maintaining the independence, authority and prestige of the abbey in the changing circumstances of the fourteenth century.

II. The Abbey in 14th Century Monasticism: The Challenge of the Friars and the Benedictine Chapters

In considering the role of Bury St. Edmunds in the life of the church in the fourteenth century, it is important to examine the position of the monastery in relation to the other Benedictine houses and towards the mendicant orders. Benedictine monasticism in the fourteenth century was seriously threatened not only by economic and social changes in the secular world, but also by intellectual currents and controversies within the church. The attacks of the mendicant orders on the possessionati, which in the fourteenth century were mainly confined to the intellectual arena, did give an opportunity for monastic response. But this counter-attack depended in part upon the unity of the regular orders. For the English Black Monks, this unity was provided by the triennial chapter meetings which implemented reforming legislation designed to strengthen monasticism and which provided a useful forum for the

discussion of matters affecting the order as a whole. Although the challenge was not completely met, the monks and abbots of Bury St. Edmunds played a role in these developments. They experienced first hand the attacks of the friars, and they were closely involved in the Benedictine response.

A. Relations with the Friars

The relations between Bury St. Edmunds and the mendicants had been strained since the thirteenth century. The first attempt of the Dominicans and Franciscans to settle in the town in 1238 brought forth the characteristic monastic response. In this case, the appeals to the papal legate in England and to Pope Gregory IX favored the monks, and the mendicants were prohibited from settling in the town.⁸⁸ In 1257 the Friars Minor repeated their attempts, and again the monastic reaction was violent. It was only after a seven year struggle, during which both sides armed themselves with papal bulls and royal writs, that the friars succeeded in bringing public pressure to bear on the abbey. The actions of the monks in defending their privileges must have tarnished their image in the eyes of the townspeople, for in 1264 the monks finally granted the Franciscans a place at Babwell, just outside the town gates.⁸⁹ The abbey had retained its important ecclesiastical privileges within the town, but the monastic fears were never quite erased. The dominance of the abbey over the townspeople, both economically and spiritually, had obviously been

threatened by this new competing group, and in the subsequent struggles between the abbey and the town, the friars consistently supported the ambitions of the townsmen. The fears of the monks were borne out in the events of 1327. The Bury chronicler records with much animosity the actions of the friars in that year, accusing them of attempting to regain their place within the town and of helping the leaders of the revolt to escape.⁹⁰ Although there is no indication that the Franciscans played a similar role in the attack on the abbey in the summer of 1381, it would seem unlikely that the antagonism between the two orders in the town ever completely subsided.

One indication of the continuing animosity between the regulars and the mendicants was the proposal for the partial disendowment of the monastic orders made in the Parliament of 1371. Two Austin friars, John Bankyn and Thomas Ashburne, made the proposal to a parliament already discontented because of the clerical refusal to grant subsidies in parliament in 1369, and 1371. The friars argued that the endowments of the church should be used "for the good of the kingdom" and that their possessions ought to be sold for this purpose.⁹¹ This touched a sensitive issue, for the clerical response to taxation rested upon their claims of independence from the dictates of the state: to the endowed clergy, parliamentary demands upon their wealth not only threatened their independence, but also their financial stability. Precisely because the economic

conditions and the declining monastic revenues continued to put the monasteries in what they regarded as a dangerous position, the proposals for disendowment resulted in increased opposition to those advocating it: Wyclif and the mendicants.

A measure of the monastic response to the proposal is found at Bury St. Edmunds. One manuscript with the text of the 1371 articles is contained in a fourteenth century cartulary from the abbey; the text is headed, "Articuli maliciose propositi domino regi et toti consilio per duos fratres Augustinos..."⁹² John de Brinkeley, then abbot of Bury, was at the time serving as president of the Provincial Chapter of the English Benedictines. As a learned canonist and a prelate present at the Parliament of 1371, it is conceivable that he had the articles transcribed at the abbey and made available in order to write a reply to them on behalf of the Order.⁹³ The presence of the articles in the Bury cartulary, together with the fact that the monks of Bury produced a number of treatises upholding the primacy of monasticism and defending monastic observances, demonstrates rather clearly that anti-mendicant sentiment was as pervasive in the fourteenth century as it had been at the abbey a century before.

B. Bury St. Edmunds and the Benedictine Chapters

The role of Abbot John de Brinkeley in the case of 1371 also illustrates the important position which the head of an abbey such as Bury could assume within the Benedictine Order itself. The cohesiveness of the Benedictines was never as great as many other religious orders, but some unity ~~was~~ supplied by the establishment in 1215 of the General Chapter meetings for the Northern and Southern Provinces to carry out reforms and papal decrees. The General Chapters of the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries were, as we have seen, often poorly attended and ineffective in many respects, but the abbots of Bury did play a role in them, serving as presidents in 1218-19, 1250 and 1252.⁹⁴ After 1336, when the separate chapters were united into a single body, the triennial meetings of the Provincial Chapter were somewhat more effective in unifying the Order and implementing Pope Benedict XII's Constitutions and later papal decrees.⁹⁵ There were, to be sure, still problems in the system in the fourteenth century: the attendance of the abbots was occasionally poor, and the effects of the pestilences prohibited a normal sequence of meetings. But the chapter meetings were nevertheless important for purposes of communication on matters affecting the Order as a whole. The importance of university training of selected monks and the challenges raised by the mendicants and later the Lollards must have been some significant issues

requiring the attention of the chapter meetings.

During the fourteenth and early part of the fifteenth century, the abbey of Bury did participate in the functioning of the chapters, and members of the abbey continued to be called upon to fill important roles, both as presidents and as visitors of the Order. Financial support to cover the expenses of the capitular meetings and to support monk-scholars and the proctor of the Benedictines at Rome was obtained by levying an income tax upon the member houses.⁹⁶ Records from the early fifteenth century show the annual contribution from Bury ranged from £4 11s (1414-17) to £9 11s 7d (before 1429), and in 1429 Abbot William Curteys sought and obtained a reduction in Bury's annual contribution.⁹⁷ In addition to this financial contribution, the abbots or their proctors would also have to bear personal expenses for the maintenance of their households and for travelling expenses to Northampton, the site of the meetings after 1336.

Financial considerations and other necessary duties of the abbots may have been factors in the declining attendance of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, a problem which was to some degree solved by the use of proxies in cases of illness or other legitimate excuses.⁹⁸ The abbots of Bury occasionally took advantage of this device: in 1319 Abbot Richard, citing ill-health, appointed three monks from the abbey to serve as his executors at the General Chapter meeting in Oxford,⁹⁹ and again in 1340 and 1343 Abbot William de Bernham was excused

from personally attending the meetings.¹⁰⁰ A memorandum of Abbot William Cratfield in 1390 illustrates the kinds of problems which prevented attendance. He cited the heavy election expenses due to the recent vacancy and alleged that difficulties in recovering expenses and damages from the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 necessitated his presence at the abbey. He therefore appointed as his proctor the prior of the abbey, John Gosford, to attend the meeting called for that year.¹⁰¹ For the chapter meeting of 1411 Abbot William again appointed two proctors, William Barwe, the sacrist, and Robert Wesenham, his chaplain; Cratfield at the time was serving a term as one of the presidents, but his illness prevented him from attending in person.¹⁰²

Two abbots of Bury, John de Brinkeley and William Cratfield served terms as presidents of the Provincial Chapters. As presidents they had the responsibility of implementing legislation, assigning capitular visitors, and acting as spokesmen for the Benedictine Order in England. The presidents delegated some of their responsibilities to other abbots or important and influential members of the Order. During his first term beginning in 1366, when he served along side the abbots of St. Mary's, York, and of St. Albans, John de Brinkeley was represented by Uthred of Boldon in a visitation of the abbey of Whitby, a visitation which uncovered several serious lapses and errors.¹⁰³ Brinkeley seems to have undertaken his role as president seriously and

effectively. He voiced his disapproval to the abbot of Glastonbury over the postponement of the chapter meeting of 1369,¹⁰⁴ and his role in defending monastic status against the mendicant attacks is also indicative of his concern for the Benedictine Order. Abbot William Cratfield also served as sole president in 1408 and in 1411-12 with the abbot of Westminster.¹⁰⁵ In both instances monastic discipline and stability were matters of concern: a letter of 1408 from Cratfield to the abbot of St. Augustine's, Canterbury, directed the abbot to visit Faversham abbey in order to see if previously detected errors had been corrected, and in 1412 the two presidents appointed proctors at Rome to proceed against the abbot of Chester for grave offenses and dilapidation of the house.¹⁰⁶

As presidents of the chapters, visitors to member houses,¹⁰⁷ and representatives of a traditionally prestigious abbey, the abbots of Bury and their deputies played an important, if not effective, role in Benedictine monasticism. Despite the fact that the capitular visitations were infrequent and in the later period highly formalized, the chapter meetings did serve a vital function in periodically bringing together the heads of religious houses to deal with current issues. Just as the problems in the administration of individual houses demanded vigorous leadership, so too did the challenges to monasticism in the later Middle Ages demand unified action and effective control on the part of the entire Order. That general conditions within the Order

were so often marked by worldliness, corruption, lack of zeal and ineffective leadership is only too evident--at Bury as at many other establishments. But the criticisms engendered by these conditions were not left totally unanswered. Men like Uthred of Boldon from Durham,¹⁰⁸ Abbot Thomas de la Mare of St. Albans, or John of Brinkeley of Bury St. Edmunds may not have been characteristic of the period as a whole, but they serve as reminders to us that even within an institution beset with significant problems, we can find men vigorous and talented enough to stand above the rest.

Footnotes

- ¹ Knowles, Monastic Order, p. 575.
- ² This occurred in 1071 because of Bishop Arfast's attempt to move the seat of the diocese from Thetford to Bury. See V. Galbraith, "The East Anglian See and the Abbey of Bury St. Edmunds," E.H.R., XL (1925), pp. 222-228; and M.S.E., I, pp. 345-350.
- ³ W.E. Lunt, Financial Relations of the Papacy with England to 1327 (Cambridge, Mass., 1939), pp. 90-91, 113-115. 117-126 describes the early attempts of Bury to gain exemption.
- ⁴ Knowles, Monastic Order, p. 591; Lunt, Fin. Rel. 1327-1534, p. 55.
- ⁵ Lunt, Fin. Rel. to 1327, pp. 106, 118, 640.
- ⁶ For the records of census payments, see Accounts Rendered by Papal Collectors in England 1317-1378, pp. 27-31, 43-48, 82-83, 120, 173, 186, 215, 227, 256-57, 268, 308, 310, 311, 412, 418, 519, 526.
- ⁷ By Herbert Loisinga in 1101. M.S.E., I, pp. 353-55.
- ⁸ P.B. Reg., I, pp. 8-53 contains many of these early papal bulls.
- ⁹ Snape, p. 102 concludes that the desire of many monasteries to be free of episcopal visitation was due to the expenses involved.
- ¹⁰ When Abbot Hugh (1157-1180) carried the exemption one step further, including exemption from the visitation of the Archbishop of Canterbury or any ecclesiastical official except a legate a latere, Jocelin de Brakelond commented on the dangers: "For if there should arise some Abbot of ours who desired to dilapidate the property of our Church and to treat his Convent ill, there will be no man to whom the Convent will be able to complain of the wrongs done by the Abbot, who will fear neither Bishop or Archbishop or Legate, and his impunity will make him all the bolder to do wrong." (J.B., p. 5) This problem was cured to some degree by the establishment in 1215 of the supervisory powers of the Benedictine General Chapters.
- ¹¹ M.S.E., III, p. 57.
- ¹² Ibid., pp. 59-62, 64-67.
- ¹³ Ibid., p. 67.

¹⁴Year Book Ed. III. Year XX (First Part). pp. 214-16.

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 214-16.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 218-227.

¹⁷Dugdale, m.110; C.P.R. 1345-48, p. 535. The reason for the 10,000 fine (which was never paid by Bishop Bateman) was that under an original charter granted to the abbey by Hardicanute, the king guaranteed the independence of the abbey and assigned a fine of thirty talents of gold to anyone violating the abbey's freedoms. When the case came up in the fourteenth century, the current value of the thirty talents then had to be determined. Dugdale, p. 110.

¹⁸E.g. in 1347 at the Archbishop's Council at St. Paul's, the Bishop complained about the temporal interference and about the seizure of his temporalities. Blomefield, III, p. 508.

¹⁹For these efforts see: McKisack, The Fourteenth Century, pp. 279-80; Lunt, Fin. Rel. 1327-1534, p. 331; Capes, The English Church, pp. 91-92; and Guillaume Mollat, The Popes at Avignon 1305-1378, trans. J. Love (9th ed.; London, 1963), p. 263 for the papal context. W.T. Waugh, "The Great Statute of Praemunire," E.H.R., XXXVII (1922), pp. 173-205 deals mainly with the 1393 statute.

²⁰C.Pap.L., III, pp. 304-05.

²¹Ibid., pp. 391-92; 388.

²²Thompson, English Clergy, p. 5. He notes that attempts at threatening exemption in the later Middle Ages nearly always failed. Ibid., pp. 56-57.

²³A.H. Sweet, "The Apostolic See and the Heads of English Religious Houses," Speculum, XXVIII (1953), pp. 468-84.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 469-76.

²⁵M.S.E., III, p. 47.

²⁶Curiously enough, Sweet, "The Apostolic See," p. 473 makes two errors in discussing papal provisions at Bury St. Edmunds. He contends that in 1302 John de Marino, the prior of St. Albans, was provided to Bury St. Edmunds by Boniface VIII. In fact, John de Marino was duly elected abbot of St. Albans on January 2, 1302 and served as abbot there until 1308. See Williams, History of the Abbey of St. Alban, pp. 138-39 and V. Galbraith, The Abbey of St. Albans from 1300 to the Dissolution of the Monasteries (Oxford, 1911), p. 12. Sweet's confusion may have arisen from the fact that the newly elected Abbot Thomas of Totington of Bury was at the Curia at the

same time as the newly elected abbot of St. Albans; they both obtained licences from Pope Boniface permitting them to contract loans to cover their confirmation expenses.

C. Pap. L., I, p. 602. Secondly, Sweet omits the 1361 provision of John de Brinkeley from his discussion of the Bury cases.

²⁷On the grounds ~~for papal~~ provision in this instance, see Deeley, "Papal Provision and Royal Rights of Patronage," p. 499. For Henry of Hunstanton's death and John de Brinkeley's provision, see Dugdale, p. 110 and C.P.R. 1361-64, p. 104.

²⁸See Davies, "The Statute of Provisors of 1351," pp. 116-133 for a general discussion.

²⁹M.S.E., III, pp. 113-125, 135-137.

³⁰Ibid., p. 116.

³¹Jocelin of Brakelond lists the churches of the abbot and the convent, J.B., pp. 63-64.

³²J.B., p. 56.

³³Matthew Paris's English History, trans. J.A. Giles (3 vols., London, 1852), II, pp. 152-53.

³⁴The Letter Book of William of Hoo, Sacrist of Bury St. Edmunds 1280-1294, pp. 50-51.

³⁵Deeley, "Papal Provision and Royal Rights of Patronage," p. 505.

³⁶Lunt, Fin. Rel. 1327-1534, p. 331.

³⁷For Pope John XXII's provisions see C. Pap. L., II, pp. 163, 277, 314, 317, 324, 334, 343, 345, 353, 362, 364, 377, 391.

³⁸For Clement VI's provisions see C. Pap. L., III, pp. 62, 83, 104, 119, 123, 183; C. Pap. Reg. Pet., I, pp. 9, 41, 54, 61, 71, 80, 95, 108, 148, 150, 160, 212.

³⁹C. Pap. L., II, pp. 343, 364, 377, 391; C. Pap. Reg. Pet., I, p. 71, 253, 301.

⁴⁰C. Pap. Reg. Pet., I, p. 148, 407, 520.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 382.

⁴²Ibid., p. 359; Accounts Rendered by Papal Collectors, p. 445.

⁴³This was usually the case. See Pantin, The English Church, p. 51 and Lunt, Fin. Rel. 1327-1534, pp. 327-28. A further difficulty in dealing with the expectancies to churches in the gift of St. Edmunds is that bishop's registers for the diocese of Norwich have not been printed; thus we cannot determine the collations.

⁴⁴C.Pap.L., II, p. 553.

⁴⁵See above, p. 202.

⁴⁶For this view of papal provisions in general see McKisack, The Fourteenth Century, pp. 273-74 where she discusses the historiography of this subject, and the comprehensive work by Geoffrey Barraclough, Papal Provisions (Oxford, 1935), especially pp. 36-37, 173-177.

⁴⁷E.F. Jacob, "Petitions for Benefices from English Universities during the Great Schism," T.R.H.S., 4th ser., XXVII (1945), pp. 41-59 discusses this aspect of provisions.

⁴⁸In the 1377 return showing aliens holding benefices in England, only one alien is listed for the churches in the gift of Bury St. Edmunds. See Powell and Trevelyan, The Peasant's Rising and the Lollards, p. 61.

⁴⁹Jacob, "Petitions for Benefices," p. 59.

⁵⁰Capes, The English Church, p. 279.

⁵¹Wood-Legh, Studies, pp. 129, 133. See also her article, "The Appropriation of Parish Churches during the Reign of Edward III," Cambridge Historical Journal, III (1929), pp. 15-22.

⁵²Wood-Legh, Studies, p. 133.

⁵³C.Pap.L., II, p. 115.

⁵⁴Thompson, English Clergy, pp. 117-118. In M.S.E., III, pp. 79-112 there is a collection of documents relating to the payment of 20 marks per year by the rector of the church of Woolpit to the convent. The church had been appropriated to the abbey in the 12th century, but in 1325 the incumbent rector refused to pay the sum to the convent, and proceedings were undertaken in the Archbishop of Canterbury's Court to enforce the payment. There is no other evidence pertaining either to the stipends paid by the convent to their vicars or relating to the "pensions" often paid by rectors to the monastery.

⁵⁵C.P.R. 1327-30, p. 546; C.P.R. 1350-54, p. 441.

⁵⁶C.P.R. 1327-30, p. 546.

⁵⁷Thompson, English Clergy, p. 174; Snape, pp. 147-49 suggests that appropriation was a frequent means of coping with monastic debts.

⁵⁸C.Pap.L., V. p. 152.

⁵⁹C.P.R. 1396-99. p. 406.

⁶⁰C.Pap.L., V. pp. 599, 611.

⁶¹For the view that monastic appropriation of churches had extremely harmful effects on parish life see R.A.R. Hartridge, A History of Vicarages in the Middle Ages (Cambridge, 1930), pp. 104-127; Capes, The English Church, p. 296; and Moorman, Church Life, p. 43 where he states: "There is not much doubt in the minds of modern writers that the system of appropriations was thoroughly bad. It was obviously unjust that money which was paid in tithes by hard-working peasants should go to the creature comforts of monks or other ecclesiastics who did nothing in return. The system led also to much spiritual neglect, for the monasteries tended to employ the cheapest hierlings who could be found, with results which were often tragic." This view has been modified by Wood-Legh, "The Appropriation of Parish Churches," pp. 19-22 where she points out that appropriated churches were often served no worse than churches served by rectors, who were often absent and who had hired their own vicars.

W.A. Pantin, The English Church, p. 36, commenting on the situation of parish churches in general in the 14th century, states that it was a "widespread system of sinecurism, absenteeism, and pluralism, with work done by substitutes." On pluralism as it pertained to churches in the gift of St. Edmunds, the return of an investigation of pluralists made in 1366 shows that there were only two pluralists awaiting benefices in the gift of the abbey. See Registrum Simonis Langham, pp. 104, 108; C.J. Godfrey, "Pluralists in the Province of Canterbury in 1366," The Journal of Ecclesiastical History, XI (1960), pp. 23-40.

⁶²Sweet, "The Apostolic See," pp. 476-77.

⁶³PB. Reg., I. pp. 3-4, 9, 27-28; J.B., p. 56.

⁶⁴Sweet, "The Apostolic See," p. 480.

⁶⁵For a grant by Pope Alexander III to Abbot Hugh, PB. Reg., I. p. 9.

⁶⁶C.Pap.L., V. p. 153. He was also given the right to absolve monks from a sentence of excommunication, Ibid., p. 152. On Pope Boniface's frequency of granting such favors, see Sweet, "The Apostolic See," p. 479.

⁶⁷V.C.H., Suffolk, II, p. 70.

⁶⁸Dugdale, III, p. 118.

⁶⁹C.Pap.L., III, p. 383; C.Pap. Reg.: Pet., I, p. 513.

⁷⁰C.Pap.L., I, p. 337.

⁷¹C.Pap.L., IIF, pp. 166, 180, 181, 269. Clement VI was rather extravagant in his bestowal of such privileges and in issuing papal provisions. Mollat, The Popes at Avignon, p. 38.

⁷²V.C.H.: Suffolk, II, p. 70.

⁷³Sweet, "The Apostolic See," p. 481.

⁷⁴Pantin, "The Fourteenth Century," in The English Church and the Papacy in the Middle Ages, ed. C.H. Lawrence (New York, 1965), pp. 177-178.

⁷⁵Papal mandates were issued to see that sentences imposed by ecclesiastical courts were carried out; conservators were appointed to prevent appeals to the Curia. Jane E. Sayers, Papal Judge Delegates in the Province of Canterbury, 1198-1254 (Oxford, 1971), pp. 250-51, 265. Abbot Samson had often served as a judge delegate, and the abbots of the exempt monasteries had frequently been called upon to act in this capacity in the thirteenth century. Ibid., p. 123; J.B., p. 33.

⁷⁶C.Pap.L., I, p. 584.

⁷⁷Registrum Roberti Winchelsey, ed. Rose Graham (Canterbury and York Society, LII, 1956), II, pp. 393-94.

⁷⁸C.Pap.L., I, p. 609.

⁷⁹C.Pap.L., II, p. 43.

⁸⁰C.Pap.L., V, pp. 22, 466, 467, 618.

⁸¹Instances when the abbot of Bury acted as a conservator of provisions in the gift of the Bishop of Ely were in 1342, 1346 and 1347. C.Pap.L., III, pp. 61, 227, 261. The abbot was a conservator of provisions to churches in the gift of the Bishop of Norwich in 1345, 1353 and 1368. C.Pap.L., III, pp. 207, 485; C.Pap.L., IV, p. 74. Similar mandates to the abbots of Bury ordered them to conserve papal provisions to benefices in the gift of the Bishop of London, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Archbishop of York, and other mandates ordered the abbot to protect the privileges of Westminster Abbey and St. Albans. C.Pap.L., II, pp. 6, 13; C.Pap.L., III, pp. 319, 325, 350.

⁸²C.Pap.L., III, p. 488.

⁸³C.Pap.L., IV, pp. 66, 79. This was because the priory of Rochester was not subject to the Bishop of Norwich.

⁸⁴C.Cl.R. 1327-30, p. 391; Early Register of Writs, ed. E. de Haas and G.D.G. Hall (London, 1970), p. cxii notes the consultation writ issued in 1328 to this effect.

⁸⁵For discussion of the respective rights of the crown and the church over such cases see: R.C. Fowler, "Secular Aid for Excommunication," T.R.H.S., 3rd ser., VIII (1914), pp. 113-117 and W.R. Jones, "The Two Laws in England: The Later Middle Ages," Journal of Church and State, xii (1969), pp. 111-131.

⁸⁶C.Cl.R. 1301-07, p. 358; Cal. Chancery Warrants. 1244-1326, p. 526; C.P.R. 1324-27, p. 202; C.P.R. 1338-40, p. 89; C.P.R. 1350-54, p. 470. F. Donald Logan, Excommunication and the Secular Arm in Medieval England (Toronto, 1968), p. 176 gives a different list of dates when this privilege was granted to the abbot of Bury. The privilege was usually given for the tenure of office; in 1391 Richard II revoked all grants to lesser prelates except those of the Abbot of Westminster and the Chancellor of Oxford. Ibid., pp. 35, 182-83.

⁸⁷The other abbots were those of St. Albans, Waltham, and Evesham. Fowler, "Secular Aid," p. 114. Logan, Excommunication, p. 34 adds the abbot of Westminster. They were all abbots of exempt monasteries.

⁸⁸B.C., pp. 9-10.

⁸⁹Ibid., pp. 22-23, 27-28; M.S.E., II, 263-85. A.G. Little, Studies in English Franciscan History (Manchester, 1917), pp. 96-98 discusses this case.

⁹⁰M.S.E., II, pp. 335-36, 349, 352. In 1328 the king issued a letter of protection to the Franciscans in Bury for two years: C.P.R. 1327-30, pp. 237, 258.

⁹¹V. Galbraith, "Articles laid before the Parliament of 1371," pp. 579-82.

⁹²Ibid., p. 580.

⁹³Ibid., p. 580.

⁹⁴Chapters. I, pp. 293-94.

⁹⁵Pantin, "General and Provincial Chapters," pp. 214-15; Knowles, Religious Orders, II, pp. 3-6 discusses the work of the Chapters in carrying out Benedict's Constitutions. Concilia Magnae Britanniae, ed. Wilkins, II, pp. 585-651 prints Benedict XII's Constitutions.

⁹⁶Pantin, "General and Provincial Chapters," pp. 235-36. The English Benedictines had established a proctor at Rome in 1346. Concilia Magnae Britanniae, ed. Wilkins, II, p. 732.

⁹⁷Chapters, III, pp. 152, 157, 166, 179; Pantin, "General and Provincial Chapters," pp. 236-38.

⁹⁸Pantin, "General and Provincial Chapters," pp. 219-20.

⁹⁹Chapters, I, p. 197.

¹⁰⁰Pantin, "General and Provincial Chapters," pp. 261-62.

¹⁰¹Chapters, III, pp. 209-10.

¹⁰²Ibid., pp. 212-13; II, p. 4.

¹⁰³Ibid., III, p. 277.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., III, p. 72.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., III, p. 260.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., III, pp. 92, 93-94.

¹⁰⁷The abbots of Bury served as visitors in 1338, 1340-43, 1366, 1390 and 1399. Chapters, II, pp. 9, 16, 21; Chapters, III, pp. 55-56, 238-39, 248-49.

¹⁰⁸On Uthred of Boldon see W.A. Pantin, The English Church, pp. 165ff and his article "Two Treatises of Uthred of Boldon on the Monastic Life," in Studies in Medieval History presented to Frederick Maurice Powicke, ed. R.W. Hunt, et al. (Oxford, 1948), pp. 363-85.

VI. CONCLUSION

In 1200 Abbot Hugh of Cluny paid a visit to Bury St. Edmunds. On that occasion, Jocelin de Brakelond noted:

...our Abbot refused to yield precedence to him either in the chapter house or in the procession on Sunday, but sat and stood between the Abbot of Cluny and the Abbot of Chertsey; whereof divers persons held divers opinions.

Abbot Samson's refusal to "yield precedence," his desire to maintain honor and prestige, was in many respects symbolic of the history of Bury St. Edmunds in the Middle Ages. Asserting their authority and prominence within the convent and maintaining their independence and freedom in relation to both secular and ecclesiastical powers, the abbots of Bury sought not only to defend but also to enlarge the important privileges which had been conferred upon the abbey from the eleventh century. To insure the success of a medieval abbey, monastic administrators aimed at maintaining vitality and discipline within, securing ecclesiastical prestige and prominence, insuring economic wealth and financial stability, and upholding and executing secular privileges and responsibilities. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the abbots of Bury pursued these aims and, to a large extent, fulfilled them. This was not accomplished without difficulty, nor was it done without sacrificing some of the ideals of St. Benedict. But external conditions were favorable until the latter part of the thirteenth century, and the leadership was on the whole vigorous and responsible.

But the conditions of the fourteenth century were in many

ways decidedly different from those in the previous centuries, and the abbey of Bury St. Edmunds, like many other Benedictine houses, was challenged and threatened on many sides. Uncertain economic conditions--plagues, famines, declining population--affected the abbey's estates and thus the economic survival of the abbey. The resulting social tensions and changing social and economic expectations among both free and unfree tenants were likewise conditions which had to be dealt with by any landholder, and especially by ecclesiastical institutions. The urban riots at Abingdon, St. Albans and Bury St. Edmunds in 1327 and the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 illustrated new directions in political aspirations and social discontent which the monastic houses did not escape. In other areas as well, external conditions and pressures upon the abbey were adverse. The Hundred Years' War occasioned constant demands for taxation and frequent demands for military service from ecclesiastical tenants-in-chief, while the centralized bureaucratic Avignonese papacy left little scope for independent action: financial demands and the growing number of papal provisions increasingly intruded into the abbey's affairs.

With many secular and ecclesiastical privileges also coming under attack and as the object of criticism, sometimes justified, by both laity and the mendicant orders, the monastic houses faced a diverse and complex set of pressures. These pressures produced significant problems for the monks of St. Edmunds, but many of these problems were not easily solved even under the best of conditions; when combined with

the lower quality of leadership evidenced at the abbey in the fourteenth century, the response of Bury St. Edmunds to these problems becomes more understandable. It might be said that the abbey had two alternatives in the later Middle Ages. One possible response to the external pressures brought about by the many changes of the fourteenth century was for the abbey to have taken an aggressive, innovative stance. By vigorously seeking to expand her many privileges and by adopting innovative, perhaps even radically different methods of management, the abbey might have surmounted many of the difficulties confronting it. This approach might have allowed the abbey to grow significantly in influence, prestige and wealth. Dynamic and far-sighted leadership would have been necessary, for many of the problems called for not only immediate solution but the development of long range policies. On the other hand, the abbey could adopt a conservative response, a response which sought to maintain rather than expand privileges and responsibilities. Consolidating the gains of the previous centuries, upholding and defending both secular and ecclesiastical privileges, and retaining traditional methods of economic and financial management might also successfully insure the continued stability and prominence of the abbey. This response required capable leadership as well, for defensive monastic administrators needed to be equally aware of the possible encroachments to their authority and of the diverse pressures affecting religious houses.

It is not difficult to see that Bury St. Edmunds followed

this second alternative. The characteristic response of the abbey to most of the problems of the fourteenth century was conservative and defensive. Rarely did the abbots of Bury seek the expansion of long-established rights and privileges, but rather they usually sought only to maintain and defend them. This was as true in the abbey's relations with the crown as it was in the relations with the papacy, for the royal and papal governments were, for their own reasons, hardly willing to see any derogation of their own power or authority. Stated in the most general terms here perhaps lies one of the reasons why the abbey's leaders did not pursue a policy of aggressively extending and expanding their rights. It was, given the circumstances of both papal and royal strength and demands, simply too difficult, too risky, and potentially too dangerous to do so. Abbot William de Bernham's attempts to claim immunity from prosecution by the King's Bench in 1345 were dismissed as "unheard of" pretensions, and the Liberty was taken into the king's hands. Refusal to accede to the demands of royal patronage, however financially disabling to the monastery, was as unwise as it was virtually impossible; instead, acquiescence at least brought the possibility of royal favor in difficult times. Papal prerogatives and demands as well could not be easily circumvented. As an exempt abbey under the "protection" of the papacy, Bury might theoretically be free from episcopal interference, but there was little possibility of escaping the payment of papal tenths or the very heavy confirmation taxes levied by the

Holy See. Without help from other quarters, the abbey could not, by itself, resist papal demands; the pope was acknowledged the universal ordinary by the ecclesiastical community, and it was only with royal aid that the abbey eventually succeeded in resisting Pope Urban VI's provision to Edmund Bromfield.

Compromise, petitions and legal manoeuvres were the methods used in dealing with king and pope. Not always successful, but often necessary, these methods were defensive, not expansionist in their aims. Bishop Bateman's attack on the abbey's exempt status and the frequent intrusions of royal agents within the Liberty of St. Edmund were only two of the numerous situations which called for this defensive stance. It was a stance which, though neither particularly adventurous nor risky, at least admitted the possibility of success. In the fourteenth century, it was just as important, if not more so, to conserve and maintain secular and ecclesiastical privileges rather than to challenge two powerful forces in an attempt to enlarge privileges which would call for further defense and to acquire new responsibilities which might have been equally difficult to sustain.

The conservative, defensive approach can also be seen in the abbey's response to economic pressures. To be sure, judgments here must be made more cautiously; the evidence is not complete and is only indicative of certain trends. But it would seem that in dealing with both the internal management of monastic finances and with the exploitation of the abbey estates, the abbey did not pursue innovative or radically

different policies. Instead, the abbey tended to retain the traditional, decentralized forms of financial management within the house, a system which left the important obedientiaries with much independence but which was usually not capable of sustaining the unavoidable and heavy financial demands of king and pope. The adoption of a centralized exchequer system handling receipts and disbursements might not have totally solved the abbey's financial problems, for Bury's special relationship to the papacy and the crown subjected the abbey to some extraordinary demands, but a reorganization of the financial system would have left the abbey in a less vulnerable position and permitted more flexibility. Why, then, was a policy which worked with some success at Christ Church, Canterbury, and Glastonbury not adopted at Bury? While the answer cannot be firmly stated, it is perhaps possible to see here a reflection of the natural conservatism of Benedictine administrators, a conservatism which was carried over into other areas as well. Shedding a system of management which had been successful in previous centuries would have called for a clear evaluation of the problems on the part of the abbots of Bury, and the surrender of jealously guarded rights on the part of the most important obedientiaries. Conventual resistance to internal changes had been a feature of much of Bury's earlier history, and this, combined with the rather unimaginative and static character of abbatial leadership in the fourteenth century, resulted in the maintenance of the status quo.

In many respects, this is also the explanation for the failure to deal adequately with the larger economic issues which so affected the abbey in the fourteenth century. The complex nature of the problems confronting the abbey in the later Middle Ages is nowhere better revealed than in this area. The very uncertainty of the economic conditions on the abbey estates tended to prevent both a clear diagnosis of the problems and the formulation of suitable long-range policies. Existing in the midst of economic and social changes which were, after all, only gradually apparent, but vitally important, the abbey's leaders could not always easily detect their importance. Radical departures from traditional methods of estate exploitation and landlord-tenant policies would have entailed a clear perception of the options open to the abbey and would have involved a willingness to take risks, risks which might have brought incalculable results. Hence the abbey tended to rely on proven methods and responded to significant social and economic changes with short term policies designed only for the solution of immediate problems.

There are, of course, indications that the abbey did attempt to adapt to some of the economic pressures, but the available evidence suggests that the measures taken were neither thorough-going nor radically different. The commutation of labor services in favor of money rents was employed, but the policies here were not always consistent--a fact which probably accounts for much of the tenant hostility evidenced during the period. Leasing out of the demesne land or land

once held by servile tenure was also adopted, but this depended very much on the availability of tenants willing and able to take the land on terms favorable to the abbey; and this policy too was not undertaken to the total exclusion of the direct exploitation of the estates. The adoption of other devices the abbey might have employed for expanding her resources is less clear, but on the whole the direction the abbey took in handling economic and financial problems was more conservative than innovative, more defensive than expansive.

In explaining this response of Bury St. Edmunds to the conditions of the fourteenth century it is necessary to examine not only the nature of the external pressures but also to evaluate the character of abbatial leadership. The inter-relationship between these two aspects was the single, most determining factor in the abbey's position in the fourteenth century. Without dynamic leadership to respond with foresight and strength to the numerous external pressures, the abbey could not grow in influence; without responsible leadership, it could not sustain its position in medieval society. The abbots of Bury in the fourteenth century did not, by any means, fail to sustain the abbey's position in many areas, for they frequently defended with vigor established rights and privileges, but they did not lead the abbey to new dimensions of secular power, ecclesiastical prestige or wealth. The internal developments at the monastery reflected many of the general trends of the period: laxity of discipline, periods of

corruption, decline in the common life, all of which indicate a lack of reforming zeal and a significant lack of even moderately responsible leadership. These aspects of Bury's history should not blind us to the more positive signs of vitality, as in literary production or the abbey's role under John of Brinkeley in the defense against the mendicants, but the signs of internal difficulties could not fail to damage the abbey's prestige. Part of the reason for the apparent lack of dynamic and innovative leadership within the monastery lies in the fact that the numerous public responsibilities of the abbots of Bury left little time and energy for internal supervision; the separation of the abbot from the community and frequent absences were not entirely matters of individual inclination, but rather reflected the abbey's involvement in society. Monastic isolation belonged to St. Benedict's day, not to the fourteenth century. The extensive privileges conferred upon the abbots of St. Edmunds brought with them administrative demands and public responsibilities which could not be neglected, and these demands on the abbot's time and energy were especially acute in the fourteenth century. Given the external pressures and the complexity of the problems faced by the abbey in this period, it is therefore not surprising that the abbots of Bury, on the whole, found it necessary to sacrifice spiritual leadership within the monastery to their public roles.

Two other factors influencing the character and direction of abbatial leadership in the fourteenth century were also

important. Both the papacy and the crown circumscribed the abbey's independence and freedom not only in external affairs, but also to some degree in the selection of the abbots. The potential for interference was always there, and most noticeably affected the abbey in 1379. But more serious was the fact that the leadership was ingrown. None of the abbots of the fourteenth century were from outside the abbey. Chosen from within, and not always from the ranks of the administratively experienced obedientiaries, the abbots of Bury, with the exception of John de Brinkeley and William Cratfield, often lacked both experience and the breadth of vision which was particularly necessary in this difficult period. A fresh insight into the problems of the abbey, one which was not bound by the practices of the past, might have given the abbey the necessary dynamism for reform within and aggressive, innovative policies without.

It is clear that the abbey of Bury St. Edmunds in the fourteenth century did not possess this dynamism. The policies adopted were sometimes unwise, often inconsistent, but basically conservative and defensive. Existing in a period of challenge and change, this response was often necessary, for the alternative courses of action were limited and entailed many risks. The policy was not without success; after all, the abbey did maintain many of the long-held and important ecclesiastical and secular rights and economic privileges. In many ways this defensive posture adopted by the abbey reflected all too well the position of the Western Church in the later Middle Ages. Without the vigorous and dynamic

leadership which might have been possible and which was so necessary in the circumstances of the fourteenth century, the abbey of Bury St. Edmunds, like the Church as a whole, was inhibited from pursuing new directions and failed to achieve new dimensions of power and influence in medieval society.

APPENDIX I

THE ABBOTS OF BURY ST. EDMUNDS IN THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY

<u>Abbot and previous position at Bury</u>	<u>Date of licence, election and assent</u> ¹	<u>Length of vacancy</u> ²
Thomas of Totington (Subprior)	Licence: Nov. 30, 1301 Election: Jan. 3, 1302 ³ Assent: Jan. 30, 1302	Nov. 1, 1301--Aug. 10, 1302
Richard de Draughton (Third prior)	Licence: Jan. 18, 1313 Election: ? Assent: Mar. 4, 1313	Jan. 27, 1313--May 17, 1313
William de Bernham (Subprior)	Licence: May 15, 1335 Election: May 25, 1335 ⁴ Assent: May 31, 1335	May 6, 1335--Jan. 22, 1336
Henry of Hunstanton (Monk--at Oxford?)	Licence: Mar. 3, 1361 Election: ? Assent: Mar. 18, 1361 (Died near Avignon before papal confirmation July, 1361) ⁵	Mar. 4, 1361--
John of Brinkeley (Monk--at Oxford?)	Papal provision: Aug. 4, 1361 ⁶	--Nov. 12, 1361

¹Dates are from entries in C.P.R. and C.Cl.R.
unless otherwise stated.

²From the date of seizure of temporalities to
the restitution as given in C.P.R. and C.Cl.R.

³M.S.E., II, p. 303

⁴M.S.E., III, pp. 47-48.

⁵Dugdale, III, p. 110.

⁶Ibid., p. 110.

Abbot and previous
position at Bury

Date of licence, election
and assent

Length of vacancy

John Timworth
(Subprior)

Licence: Jan. 6, 1379
Election: ?
Assent: Jan. 28, 1379

Jan. 6, 1379--June 28, 1385.

(Edmund Bromfield provided Mar. 12, 1379)⁷

New Licence: May 19, 1385
Assent: June 20, 1385

William Cratfield
(Chamberlain)

Licence: Jan. 20, 1389
Election: ?
Assent: Feb. 1, 1389

Jan., 1389--Oct. 8, 1389

⁷M.S.E., III, p. 115

APPENDIX II

LAND USAGE IN THE LIBERTY OF ST. EDMUND: 1279

A. List of the 50 vills in Suffolk belonging to the Abbot
and Convent of Bury St. Edmunds as shown in the 1279
Hundred Roll Survey¹

<u>Name of vill</u>	<u>Acres in demesne</u>	<u>Acres in villeinage</u>
1. Redgrave (A)*	560	690
2. Palegrave (A)	105	490
3. Brockforth (A)	186	120
4. Thweyt (A)	216	80
5. Stoke (A)		33
6. Wortham (A)		163
7. Wiverston (A)		25
8. Finningham (A)		50
9. Ricking Superior (A)		170
10. Geselingham (A)		54
11. Witham (A)		34
12. Rickinghall (A)	515	352
13. Chevington (A)	488	327
14. Elmeswell (A)	323	197
15. Boxford (A)	24	
16. Melford (A)	1,237	600
17. Fornham St. Genevieve (A)		16
18. Woolpit (A)	119	200
19. Fornham All Saints (A)	398	116
20. Little Saxham (A)	107	

*A denotes that the abbot is listed as the chief lord of the vill.

¹All data is taken from The Pinchbeck Register, II, pp. 30-282.

<u>Name of vill</u>	<u>Acres in demesne</u>	<u>Acres in villeinage</u>
21. Great Saxham (A)	466	275
22. Hargrave (A)	177	252
23. Great Ashfield (A)		34
24. Little Ashfield (A)		30
25. Hunterston (A)		8
26. Hilderclie (A)	512	676
27. Conegeston (A)	407	485
28. Hopeton (A)	314	
29. Coleford (A)	323	221
30. Ingham (A)	411	300
31. Thurston (A)		310
32. Hunegheton (A)		155
33. Westowe (A)		10
34. Cokefield (A) in free alms	220	
(A & C)*	892	480
35. Elveden (A & C)	140	280
36. Groton (A & C)	268	155
37. Fornham St. Martin (A)		32
(C)+	210	
38. Dounham (A & C)	77	45
39. Mildenhall (A & C)	1,300	680
40. Little Barton (A & C)	355	210
41. Icklingham (A & C)	204	240
42. Semer (A & C)	497	171
43. Whepsted (C)	591	415
44. Monk's Bradfield (C)	654	140
45. Berton (C)	545	13

* Denotes that the abbot and convent are listed together as the chief lord of the vill.

+ Denotes that the convent is listed as the chief lord of the vill.

<u>Name of vill</u>	<u>Acres in demesne</u>	<u>Acres in villeinage</u>
46. Great Horningsheath (C)	383½	100
47. Neuton (C)	337	228
48. Risby (C)	244	20
49. Westlee (Sacrist)	180	
50. Rougham (C)	414	
(Sacrist)	111	
Total	14,527	9,082

B. Demesne Land of the Abbey in 50 vills in Suffolk

<u>Land</u>	<u>Number of acres</u>	<u>Per Cent</u>
Arable.....	12,108	85%
Meadow.....	377	5%
Pasture.....	493	
Meadow & Pasture.....	94	
Woodland.....	1,455	10%
Total acres in demesne...	14,527	100%

C. Land in Villeinage in 50 vills in Suffolk

<u>Land</u>	<u>Number of acres</u>	<u>Per Cent</u>
Arable.....	8,885	98%
Meadow.....	35	2%
Pasture.....	28	
Meadow & Pasture.....	9	
Woodland.....	12½	
Heath.....	70	
Marsh.....	5	
Total acres in villeinage...	9,082	100%

APPENDIX III

PEASANT HOLDINGS IN 1279

Distribution of size of free tenants' holdings in 11 villis in Suffolk as shown by the Hundred Roll survey of 1279¹.

<u>Name of vill</u>	<u>No. of tenants with 10 acres or less</u>	<u>No. of tenants with 11-29 acres</u>	<u>No. of tenants with 30 or more acres</u>	
1. Redgrave	7	6	2	
2. Palegrave	11	1	0	
3. Thewyt	15	0	0	
4. Stoke	5	1	1	
5. Wortham	5	0	3	
6. Wiverston	4	2	0	
7. Cotton	12	1	2	
8. Rickinghall	3	3	4	
9. Chevington	22	9	4	
10. Elmswell	13	8	5	
11. Wkepstede	45	5	4	
Total	142*	36	25	203
Per Cent	70%	18%	12%	100%

*Of the 142 tenants with 10 acres or less, 109 (54% of the total number of tenants surveyed) had holdings of only 5 acres or less.

¹All data from The Pinchbeck Register. II, 30-282.

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