

THE CATHEDRAL PRIORY OF ST. ANDREW, ROCHESTER

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THE church of St. Andrew the Apostle, Rochester, was founded by Ethelbert, King of Kent, as a college for a small number of secular canons under Justus, Bishop of Rochester, in A.D. 604. Very little is known about the history of this house. It never seems to have had much influence outside its own walls, and though it possessed considerable landed estates, seems to have been relatively small and poor. It also suffered at the hands of the Danes. Bishops Justus, Romanus, Paulinus and Ithamar were all remarkable men, but after Bishop Putta's translation to Hereford in 676, very little is heard of Rochester. Their bishop, Siward, is not mentioned as having been at Hastings with King Harold as were many of the Saxon bishops and abbots, and the house put up no opposition to William I when he seized their lands and gave them to his half brother Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, whom he had created Earl of Kent. The chroniclers say that the house was destitute, and that, when Siward died in 1075, it was barely able to support the five canons on the establishment.<sup>1</sup>

Four years after his conquest of England, William I invited his friend Lanfranc, Prior of Caen and a former monk of Bec in Normandy, to be his archbishop at Canterbury. Lanfranc's task was specific: to reorganize English monasticism on the pattern of Bec; to develop a strict cloistered monasticism, but one of a kind that was not entirely cut off by physical barriers from the life of the rest of the church. He drew unsparingly on Bec for his ideas, his bishops and his monks. Four bishops of Rochester hailed from Bec, several priors and many monks. Among the bishops, by far the most important was Gundulf, his friend,

<sup>1</sup> For other accounts of the cathedral priory of St. Andrew the Apostle, Rochester, see *V.C.H.*, ii, 121-125; E. Hasted, *History of Kent*, ii, 22-26; F. F. Smith, *History of Rochester*, London, 1928, 273-335; W. H. St. John Hope, 'The Architectural History of the Cathedral Church and Monastery of St. Andrew at Rochester', *Arch. Cant.*, xxiii (1898), 194-328, and xxiv (1900), 1-85; and H. Wharton, *Anglia Sacra*, i, London, 1691, 329-394. Part of King Ethelbert's endowment included the land from the river Medway to the Eastgate of the city of Rochester on the south part and practically all the land on the south side of the High Street, all within the city walls. The priory property was extended on the same site in 1225 and again in 1344 making necessary the construction of new walls and ditches on both occasions. See *Arch. Cant.* lxxxiii (1968), 55-104, and DRc/T62, T280. A detailed catalogue of the priory and capitular records has been compiled by the author. The original records are now housed in the Kent Archives Office, Maidstone. References to these records are prefixed by the letters DRc/.

pupil and chamberlain whom he brought over with him to England in 1070.<sup>2</sup>

Siweard, Bishop of Rochester died in 1075, and to replace him Lanfranc brought over a monk from Bec, Arnost, as Bishop. He died within the year, and at Lanfranc's instigation, William I agreed to the appointment of Gundulf as bishop. This proved ultimately the turning point in the history of Rochester.<sup>3</sup> William showed no reluctance nor lack of effort in assisting Lanfranc to recover the former properties of the church now that his relations with his half-brother had become strained and difficult, and in 1076, therefore, Lanfranc successfully repossessed himself of a major part of the lands which had once belonged to St. Andrew's church at the great assembly held on Penenden Heath. Some of this property formed the principal re-endowment of the house in 1077 and was given by Lanfranc to Gundulf when he enthroned him as Bishop of Rochester in that year.

Edmund de Hadenham, the thirteenth-century chronicler, says that Lanfranc made it a condition of his friend's establishment at Rochester that the canons should be replaced by monks, but, as no other establishment was made until 1083, it would appear that Gundulf bided his time. No-one knows now what really happened. There is a brief mention in the *Textus Roffensis* of one Aegelric, priest of Chatham, and a former canon of Rochester who made a gift to the new house to secure the honourable burial of his wife there, but not a word more.

In 1083, Lanfranc visited Rochester and himself instituted twenty-two monks of the Benedictine order in the house, some from Bec,<sup>4</sup> probably some from the two houses at Canterbury, Christchurch and St. Augustine, and possibly some from Caen. He endowed the house with property making careful and distinct provision for the bishop and the monks. Some of the lands he gave them were his own, others he purchased and some he had acquired in 1076. Gundulf also purchased and acquired a great deal of property for his house which rapidly found favour with the Norman kings. Together with Archbishop Lanfranc he began the rebuilding of the church and monastic buildings. In the rebuilding of his church, Gundulf followed the usual practice of starting his new building to the east of the existing church so that there would be no interruption in the services of the church. He also appears to have incorporated part of the city wall into his building as the tower known as Gundulf's tower was one of the watch towers.<sup>5</sup> Substantial parts of his work remain today, particularly in the crypt.

<sup>2</sup> D. Knowles, *The Monastic Order in England*, 2nd ed., Cambridge, 83-134.

<sup>3</sup> *Life of Gundulf*, translated by the nuns of St. Mary's Abbey, West Malling, 1968.

<sup>4</sup> Knowles, *op. cit.*, 112.

<sup>5</sup> DRo/Emf 77.

No distinction was made in the early years of the re-foundation between the episcopal and prioral possessions. The reason for this was simply that there was no need for any such distinction. The bishop of Rochester was titular abbot of St. Andrew's and the prior was directly subject to him. At least until the first quarter of the twelfth century the bishop actually lived in the house with the monks as one of the family.<sup>6</sup> John of Seez was probably the first bishop to set up a separate establishment, but Bishop Gundulf himself made some division of the properties between himself and the monks before his death in 1108.<sup>7</sup> Until the thirteenth century, gifts were made to the bishop or to the bishop and the monks of St. Andrew's church, Rochester, but very rarely to the prior although it is more than probable that the office was in existence from the re-foundation.<sup>8</sup> During the thirteenth century benefactors addressed their charters to the prior by name and the monks of St. Andrew's church, Rochester, or just to the prior and monks of that place. It was not until about 1260 that the term prior and convent became at all common. The *inspeximus* of Henry III is addressed to the prior and convent of Rochester, and this was the first occasion on which a royal charter had been so addressed.<sup>9</sup>

When Lanfranc established the house at Rochester under the ministry of Gundulf, he is said to have realized that difficulties would arise over communally held property and, therefore, made careful division between the bishop and the monks. At first sight, this might seem a good idea, but the greatest difficulty of all lay in the fact that most of Lanfranc's re-endowment was made up of properties, which had belonged to the church before the conquest of 1066. Properties involved included the manors and churches of St. Margaret, Rochester, Stoke, Wouldham, Frindsbury, East Wickham, Halling, Trottiscliffe, Borstal, Snodland, Cuxton, Malling, Denton, Longfield, Darent, Southfleet and Fawkham. They were given to the church by Saxon kings and nobles, but they were entrusted to the bishop. In Lanfranc's time there was no difficulty, nor could he foresee any, for while the bishop was a monk and lived in harmony with his monks no difficulty would present itself. Gundulf may have foreseen difficulties. Before he died he made further provision for the monks. As well as considerable

<sup>6</sup> This was also true at Christ Church, Canterbury. It was, in any case, the natural thing to do, and exactly what one would have expected of Gundulf who thought of himself primarily as a monk. Lanfranc himself explicitly equated the offices of bishop and abbot. Knowles, *op. cit.*, 622.

<sup>7</sup> DRc/T47 and T57/5, a charter of Gundulf confirmed by Theobald, Archbishop of Canterbury in 1145. It was not until about 1125 that the influence of the black monks ceased to predominate. The canonical organization of chapters tended to separate the bishop from the monastery and give the prior and community various rights and obligations foreign to true monastic life. Knowles, *op. cit.*, 133.

<sup>8</sup> DRc/T47-59.

<sup>9</sup> DRc/T60.

pensions, tithes and rents, he gave them the manors of Stoke, Wouldham, Frindsbury, Denton, Southfleet, Lambeth and Haddenham. Henry I confirmed all these and also his gifts of the churches of Wouldham, Dartford, Woolwich, Sutton-at-Hone, Wilmington, Chislehurst, Aylesford, St. Margaret, Rochester, St. Nicholas altar in Rochester cathedral, Rotherfield and Stourmouth; he added Boxley church and Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, added Norton church.<sup>10</sup>

The house was wealthy, but when Ernulf of Bec died in 1124 it was the end of an era for the monks. Henry I nominated John of Seez, Archdeacon of Canterbury, to the vacant see and though they elected him as their bishop, the monks viewed him with suspicion. He was not a monk. During his short episcopate, the prior became the effective head of the house. The bishop's duties changed and he became more a patron than a father, making occasional visits only and barely known to his monks. He had his own household, separate from theirs, and this separation of revenues and interests combined to make him and his successors a stranger to his monks and more often than not an opponent. The chronicler Edmund de Hadenham offers John of Seez no compliments. He says he made lavish gifts, began great things and did much good, but that it did not last.<sup>11</sup> He took advantage of a great fire that ravaged the house in 1137, dispersed many of the monks to other houses, and stole from them the churches of Aylesford, Southfleet, Boxley, St. Margaret, Rochester and the altar of St. Nicholas in Rochester cathedral, thus plunging the house into years of expensive litigation which ended only in 1144 when Pope Celestine decreed that the new bishop, Ascelin, should return them unconditionally to the monks to whom they rightfully belonged.<sup>12</sup>

John's argument is obvious. The reason even more so. The revenues of the priory were far larger than those of the bishopric. On this occasion the monks were successful, but far more serious contentions broke out under Bishop Gilbert Glanville fifty years later which reverberated through the centuries.

Gilbert Glanville was Archdeacon of Lisieux in France. He was a great friend of Archbishop Baldwin of Canterbury and his successor there Archbishop Hubert Walter, and much in favour at court. He became bishop of Rochester in 1184. His predecessor Waleran had proposed to seek papal permission to expel the monks from the cathedral, as he had a low opinion of the regular orders, but had died before he could implement the idea. Unfortunately for the monks, the plan was not uncountenanced by Henry II who wished to curb the power of the regular orders, in so many ways exempt from the royal prerogative.

<sup>10</sup> DRc/T47-51.

<sup>11</sup> Wharton, *op. cit.*, i, 347.

<sup>12</sup> DRc/L1.

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Rochester, for instance, had the right to elect its own prior without royal interference, and had also enormous privileges within the city of Rochester. Henry II, therefore, chose his friend Gilbert Glanville, together with Baldwin, Archbishop of Canterbury and Hugh Nonant, Bishop of Coventry to use Rochester as an experiment. They were to set up a college of secular canons who 'were not, in general, infected with principles dangerous to civil government', and who as friends of the national clergy, would form a powerful barrier against the encroachments of the Roman pontiffs. Except at Coventry where force was used to set up a college of Vicars Choral, nothing came of the idea as the King's death put an end to all hopes of success, but disastrous failure though it was, it did nothing to ease relations between the bishop and his monks.<sup>13</sup>

Gilbert Glanville remained in favour with the new king, Richard I, and when the king was captured in the Holy Land and later imprisoned in Germany, worked with a will to secure his release. His principal contribution was the establishment of the hospital of the New Work of St. Mary in Strood.<sup>14</sup> This was a small house whose purpose was to pray for the restoration of christianity in the kingdom of Jerusalem and for the king's release from captivity, and to provide for the poor and travellers. It was a cause worthy of the monks' support but, without consulting them, the bishop appropriated two of their churches for the support of his new foundation, and further bribed their prior, Ralph de Ros, to give a piece of meadowland in Strood to the hospital in return for money to finish the stonework of the cathedral cloister and for a new pair of organs.<sup>15</sup> Matters were made worse by the fact that the churches the bishop appropriated were Aylesford and St. Margaret's, Rochester, only recently won back at great expense.

The monks complained. They petitioned the Pope to intervene and he did in fact do so, but to no purpose. The bishop forced the monks into an agreement to maintain the house as he had founded it together with the lands and churches he had given to it.<sup>16</sup> The agreement remained more or less in force until 1239, then in 1256 the Pope declared that the churches should be returned to the monks. Gilbert was long since dead, buried in haste and deprived of the last rites, during the Interdict, but his successor refused to comply. The quarrel finally came to the test in the reign of Edward I when the monks were ambushed and beaten up by the monks at Strood while they were attempting to pass in procession

<sup>13</sup> John Denne, *The History and Antiquities of Rochester and its Environs*, ed. T. Fisher, 1817, 112-115.

<sup>14</sup> A. C. Harrison, 'Excavations on the Site of St. Mary's Hospital, Strood', *Arch. Cant.*, lxxxiv (1969), 139-160.

<sup>15</sup> DRc/T572/1-15.

<sup>16</sup> DRc/L3.

through the hospital grounds.<sup>17</sup> After this debacle, the monks of Rochester gave up what was obviously an unequal struggle.

The monks' quarrel with Gilbert Glanville stretched far beyond Strood hospital to other problems which caused proportionate dissension: rights of presentation; the bishop's *xenium*; and the disposition of servants in the priory.

On the first problem, the monks claimed rights of presentation to churches in their possession both within and outside the diocese of Rochester. In 1207, they possessed at least eleven within and seven outside the diocese, but they laid claim to others that belonged to the bishop. On his part, the bishop made no claim to any. He merely stated that when John was bishop *he* had never asked the monks for authority. He had always presented and instituted incumbents to all vacant livings both inside and outside the diocese, but had secured to them their rightful pensions, which was all they were entitled to. Further, Gilbert Glanville added that he proposed to do likewise, with the sole concession that those he instituted should do fealty to the monks as well as himself.<sup>18</sup> This was a meaningless concession. Although the monks gave way on the bishop's right of institution, they always denied that he had any right to present to priory livings inside the diocese. They did, however, reach agreement over presentations to livings outside the diocese of Rochester. The bishop here claimed joint right of presentation with the monks, and though they knew he had none, they allowed his claim; and as witness that they did so and kept their agreement at least in part, there is a document surviving among the archives showing the strictness with which it was adhered to in the cases of Norton, Boxley and Stourmouth in the diocese of Canterbury for over 150 years.<sup>19</sup> The problem was not so much one of fees but of influence and authority. It emphasizes the bishop's ultimate authority over the priory and the monks' refusal to accept it. Gilbert Glanville's interpretations of their charters were often wrong, but the monks found that there was little they could do in defence of their rights.

The disagreement over the bishop's *xenium* is an interesting one. The income from the bishop's estates was fairly small, and the *xenium* was a recognized method of providing for hospitality at his table. The word itself signifies a gift made in token of hospitality. This was a particularly lavish one consisting of 16 suckling pigs, 30 geese, 300 hens, 1,000 lampreys, 1,000 eggs, four salmon and other items from each of the five principal priory manors of Frindsbury, Stoke, Wouldham, Denton and Southfleet, and further gifts of fish from Lambeth and

<sup>17</sup> William Lambard gives a spirited account of this incident, which despite his motive, is most graphic in *Perambulation of Kent*, 1570, 1826 edition, 328-331.

<sup>18</sup> DRc/L3.

<sup>19</sup> DRc/L10.

Haddenham. It was Bishop Gundulf who had ordained in 1107 that the *xenium* should be given to the Bishop on St. Andrew's day but with the important and, in this case, significant proviso that if the bishop was away from Rochester on that day, it should be given to the poor.<sup>20</sup> The monks appear to have resented making the gift, and refused to bring it when the bishop was away. They argued that it was an imposition and that it was contrary to the ordinance that the bishop should have it if he were away. Gundulf had never imagined a time when the bishop would not be present in his church at the patronal festival, and Gilbert Glanville argued in his defence that he was forced to travel and could not always arrange to be there. He, therefore, fiercely opposed the monks and claimed the *xenium* as his right wherever he might be on that day.<sup>21</sup> In the end, the monks were forced to surrender. This was a major victory for Bishop Gilbert and one of which he and his successors took full advantage. In 1329, the monks accused Bishop Hamo de Hethe of abusing the system. They claimed he ought by ancient custom to celebrate St. Andrew's day in the cathedral and in the hall adjoining, and there receive a present of ten pounds from the Prior and Chapter towards his expenses, but that each year he had received the present without performing the ceremony, had left the prior and chapter to do it, and to pay for it as well.<sup>22</sup> The bishop's answer has not survived. Suffice to say that the *xenium* survived even the dissolution and was still being paid in the eighteenth century.<sup>23</sup>

According to Edmund de Hadenham, Ascelin was the first bishop to interfere in the appointment of priory servants.<sup>24</sup> When Bishop Gundulf had lived with the monks there was one set of servants and officials to look after both the bishop and the monks, but after the fire of 1137 and the almost total destruction of the conventual buildings, the bishop set up a separate household. The priory servants apparently joined him and the monks appointed others. There were over twenty of these servants and officials, all essential to the smooth running of a Benedictine house and all equally indispensable. Their number included the master baker, the second baker, three other bakers, brewers, cooks, a steward, janitor, guestmaster, granger, infirmarer, tailors and launderers to name only a few. Each official's work was carefully laid down but, more important than this, also were his salary and perquisites.<sup>25</sup> It was these perquisites, often free food and drink, which made these offices so popular. Many of the servants and officials were

<sup>20</sup> DRc/T47.

<sup>21</sup> DRc/L3.

<sup>22</sup> *Registrum Hamonis de Hethe Diocesis Roffensis A.D. 1319-1352*, transcribed and edited by Charles Johnson, Oxford, 1948, 424-431 and Introduction.

<sup>23</sup> DRc/FTv 34.

<sup>24</sup> Wharton, *op. cit.*, 343.

<sup>25</sup> *Custumale Roffense*, 53-60.

related to monks in the priory. Nepotism was rife. It appears that Ascelin withdrew the priory servants for this reason, but a visiting legate reproved him saying it was not his business to interfere. Ascelin relented, and the legate attempted to improve matters by making the posts annual appointments rather than permanent ones, but to no purpose. The sons of master bakers still succeeded their fathers, and one of them even found favour by marrying the cellarer's sister.

The legate Hincmar's suggestions did not solve the problem. The monks were still complaining under Bishop Gilbert Glanville that he had interfered too much in this sphere.<sup>26</sup> Gilbert Glanville doubtless had many relatives he wished to provide for, but he cannot have had more than Bishop Hamo de Hethe who was one of the chief offenders on this score. When Simon de Meopham made his archiepiscopal visitation of the priory in 1329 the monks made twenty-five complaints against their bishop, four of which related to this problem. They complained that he appointed to twenty or more offices in the priory when he was entitled to only four or five; that he appointed his own kinsmen and others to priory offices who did their work by deputy and at half wages, too ill-paid to be honest; that the officers and their deputies took no notice when reprimanded, and said that they like the monks were irremovable; and, specifically, that he had appointed a brewer who was inefficient and of ill fame. Most of the charges against Hamo de Hethe were dismissed but the monks' claims were not unfounded on their first charge. The bishop's family name was Noble and there are many appointments of persons of this name in his register.<sup>27</sup>

Apart from their endless conflict with the bishops in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, there were three other problems of conflict which affected the priory, all of them outside the walls: the position of the priory in relation to the Crown and the castle; relations with the citizens of Rochester; and relations with the archdiocese of Canterbury.

The first stone keep is said to have been built at Rochester for William II by Bishop Gundulf for the then enormous sum of sixty pounds, in return for a gift of land in Haddenham, Bucks. The priory buildings lay in the shadow of the castle and suffered somewhat in the wars in which it featured. Kings did not, however, neglect the priory. Some visited it, and there is a series of charters of privileges to prove their interest and concern. Many charters repeat the fact that William Rufus was eternally grateful to the monks and their bishop for supporting him when his uncle, Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, rebelled against him and besieged Rochester and its castle. The monks lost a good deal in the battle of 1088. Much of their house was destroyed, but the manor of

<sup>26</sup> DRo/L3.

<sup>27</sup> *Registrum Hamonis*, 425 and Introduction.



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Haddenham rectory proved a lucrative present and, moreover, gave them a link with the past. It had belonged to the Countess Goda, sister of Edward the Confessor, a fact which several charters also repeat.<sup>28</sup>

There were many skirmishes involving the castle over the years but no further sieges until 1216 when the priory was pillaged by King John and his followers. But the most spectacular siege and the one which the monks turned most to their advantage was that of 1264. In that year, says Rishanger, the chronicler, Simon de Montfort and the rebel barons brought great siege-engines and fire-ships to Rochester and prosecuted the siege with great violence. Some of the priory buildings were very badly damaged and Simon and his soldiers broke in and carried off the priory muniments. The story is told on the dorse of one small deed.<sup>29</sup> It tells how the charter and many others were stolen from the prior's chapel where they were kept and carried off to Winchester, and how John de Renham, the prior got them back from the robbers but with the seals all broken and many of the charters torn and damaged. He was appalled at the danger in which this might place his house, and at great labour and personal expense persuaded Henry III to reconfirm all the damaged charters by a new one.<sup>30</sup> This the King did. The charter embodies most of the charters granted to the priory since the conquest by kings, archbishops, bishops and other persons. And there is no doubt that this is, in fact, the charter concerned because, its contents apart, there is attached to the seal-strings another cord woven into it, to which is attached a small fragment of very heavily cross-stitched parchment, all that remains of one of the earlier charters.

A great many of the charters in the possession of the priory were damaged in this incident. Therefore, to supply the deficiencies not remedied by the new royal charter, and also to circumvent some of the problems of the division of property between themselves and their bishop, the monks resorted to forgery. This was not so much a crime as it is now. Rather, it was a necessity. Once forged documents had been used to prove title they acquired the force of the genuine article. It is, of course, unnecessary to remark that documents were conveniently lost and suppressed if their contents proved a nuisance.

There are at least two forged charters among these archives, both charters of Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, life-long friend of Bishop Gundulf and a great benefactor to Rochester. The first charter refers to Northfleet church which Anselm gave to the monks. The monks had the presentation but Hubert Walter and successive archbishops attempted to wrest it from them. Probably in 1264 (or possibly before) the seal was lost from the document, and to give it more force

<sup>28</sup> DRc/T48, T60 (1), T65 (1).

<sup>29</sup> DRc/T53 and F. F. Smith, *History of Rochester*, London, 1928, 17.

<sup>30</sup> DRc/T60.

a new seal has been made from a cast. It is quite easy to spot. Firstly, it has been attached upside down, and secondly, there is a shallow depression in the middle of the figure of the archbishop caused by an air bubble.<sup>31</sup> This document is genuine enough. The second is not. It relates to the great quarrels with the bishops over property. It has no seal and purports to be a charter of Anselm making over to the priory many churches and manors most of which belonged to the bishop of Rochester.<sup>32</sup> The handwriting very closely resembles that of the new charter of 1265.<sup>33</sup> It may even have been written by the same scribe. It has, however, one fault. The charter is dated 1101 by which year four at least of the twelve witnesses were dead and had been dead for several years before Anselm became Archbishop of Canterbury. There are five bishops included among the witnesses: Maurice of London, Osmund of Salisbury, Walkelin of Rochester, Stigand of Chichester and Herbert of Thetford. Only Maurice was alive in 1101. Herbert died in 1085, Stigand in 1087, Walkelin in 1098 and Osmund in 1099. Anselm became Archbishop in 1093.

There was constant disagreement between the monks and the people of the city of Rochester. The people had no parish church of their own and worshipped at the altar of St. Nicholas which stood before the rood screen in the nave of the cathedral church.<sup>34</sup> The monks appear to have disliked this system since it brought them into close contact with the populace from whom they wished to remain apart; it disturbed their peace and meant their church was not their own. Admittedly, it was the common custom for the local people to worship in the nave of a monastic church and is the reason why many have survived as parish churches, but it was a sore bone of contention at Rochester. The Benedictine order had moved away from Gundulf's ideal of a monastic church not entirely cut off by physical barriers from the life of the rest of the church. It sought to be entirely enclosed. The monks tried by every means to prevent the people using the church. They shut the doors at night and refused the sacrament to the sick; they denied services; and, in 1327, they locked the doors of the nave and took away the key. The bishop forced the monks to come to an agreement with the citizens, and on 14th June, 1327, it was accordingly agreed that the monks should build an oratory for the citizens in the corner of the nave near the north door with a door and window on the outside of the church for the sacrament for the sick during the night, to which the people should have free entry and exit. They were also guaranteed all

<sup>31</sup> DRc/T49.

<sup>32</sup> DRc/T48.

<sup>33</sup> DRc/T60.

<sup>34</sup> DRc/Emf77.

the usual daily services.<sup>35</sup> The bishop was sympathetic to their cause and successive bishops of Rochester tried hard to have a church built for the citizens, but it was not until almost a hundred years after this agreement that this became a reality, and St. Nicholas' church was built beside the cathedral.<sup>36</sup>

Relations with Canterbury were equally bad. Lanfranc's refoundation at Rochester was modelled on Canterbury. He appointed the first bishop of Rochester, and the see was thereafter recognized as being in the free gift of the archbishop of Canterbury. It was thus peculiarly dependent on Canterbury, and as a mark of this dependence, it was customary on the death of their bishop for the monks of Rochester to take the deceased bishop's pastoral staff to Canterbury where it was laid on the altar in Christchurch priory, and from where the newly-elected bishop took it after his consecration. Not all the bishops of Rochester were consecrated at Canterbury. Arnost was consecrated at St. Paul's in London, but his immediate successors Gundulf, Ralph and Ernulf at Canterbury. Ascelin also may have been; his successor Walter, brother of Archbishop Theobald, certainly was. It appears that the monks of Rochester objected not to the act of consecration by the archbishop, or indeed that it took place at Canterbury, but to the claims of the prior of Christchurch that he represented the church of Canterbury. This was a strange argument for the monks to put forward. They persistently and continually opposed their own diocesan and ought by right to have supported the claim of the prior of Christchurch.

Rivalry between the two houses grew, and in order to avoid the humiliating ceremony after the death of Bishop Waleran in 1183, the monks buried the bishop's pastoral staff with him in the grave. The monks of Christchurch protested. The rights of the mother church, they declared, must be maintained at all costs and the episcopal staff delivered to the prior. Negotiations were begun. They dragged on for years and years, but for the moment a compromise was reached. The monks of Rochester agreed to deliver the staff, not to the prior but instead to the archbishop who would deliver it for them. Gilbert Glanville was consecrated by Archbishop Baldwin in 1184 at Canterbury, and as usual in the absence of the archbishop, took over the administration of his see while he was in the Holy Land. Benedict of Sawston was consecrated at Oxford—a belated attempt to escape from the overlordship of Canterbury; and later Lawrence of St. Martin one of the king's clerks who became bishop of Rochester in 1251 instituted litigation to try and secure some measure of independence for Rochester. This he did in the face of royal disapproval, for both Henry III and his queen favoured the primate, and if the negotiations did not have the required results

<sup>35</sup> DRc/L7.

<sup>36</sup> *Rochester Episcopal Register*, iii, 16v.-18v.

as far as independence was concerned, at least they improved relations between the bishop and his monks.<sup>37</sup>

In comparison with the slender revenues of the bishopric, Rochester priory was comparatively wealthy. In 1291, the temporalities of the monks in the diocese of Rochester alone were valued at £95 7s. 4d. whereas the bishop in 1256 had barely £40 with which to maintain his estate.<sup>38</sup> The monks also owned property in Canterbury, throughout Kent, in the city of London, and in Middlesex, Buckinghamshire and Surrey worth a further £39 5s. 2d. Altogether this amounted to an income of £134 12s. 6d. a year from property, lands and rents. In 1535, the total net income of the priory was £486 11s. 5d.

Gifts of property, lands and rents to St. Andrew's priory, Rochester were numerous, particularly in the early years, and again in the thirteenth century. The reason for the first upsurge of giving is obvious; the second probably coincided with the murder of William of Perth in 1201 and his subsequent canonization in 1256. It mattered little who he was or why he was murdered. Every religious house at some time or other needed an impetus to improve its finances and its worth in the eyes of the world, and the possession of the shrine of a saint to which pilgrims could come and worship was as good a way as any other. Canterbury profited richly from the tomb and shrine of Thomas Becket but, until 1256, Rochester had nothing similar to offer would-be pilgrims and benefactors. Despite this, however, there is no evidence to suggest that any special officer was appointed to deal with the moneys and gifts offered at the tomb. The only reference to it is in the deed relating to John de Sheppey's chantry which was nearby.<sup>39</sup>

Many of the deeds belonging to Rochester priory are not only endorsed with the name of the place and the donor of the property, but also with a note as to which particular section of the monastic establishment the rent was finally paid. Some are endorsed with the words '*Ista pertinet ad Eleemosinariam*'; others with just the single word '*Eleemosinaria*', often heavily abbreviated. By far the largest number of deeds bear endorsements as above indicating that the rents pertained to the almoner, but others are marked to indicate that the rents were paid to the sacrist, cellarer, chamberlain, precentor and the warden of St. Mary's chapel in the infirmary. The presence of these endorsements implies that the obedientiary system, whereby particular rents were administered by specially appointed officers for specific purposes, was in use at Rochester. Knowles says that this system was early abandoned

<sup>37</sup> DRc/L2; See Wharton, *op. cit.*, 343-351; C. E. Woodruff and W. Danks, *Memorials of Canterbury Cathedral*, London, 1912, 104. Hasted, *op. cit.*, 2nd ed., iv, 124 says the Archbishops did not interfere after 1238.

<sup>38</sup> DRc/L2v.; *V.C.H.*, ii, 122-125.

<sup>39</sup> DRc/T321.

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at Rochester,<sup>40</sup> though on the face of it, there seems little evidence for this statement. Indeed, there is a memorandum in the Episcopal register for the year 1432 stating that the principal priory officers were the sub-prior, the cellarer, the precentor, the sacrist and the chamberlain whose appointments were confirmed by the bishop of Rochester after their elections, but that the other officers, the almoner, the sub-cellarer, the three sub-sacrists, the sub-chamberlain and the master of the guesthouse were elected by the prior and convent themselves.<sup>41</sup> Rents were still being administered by specific officials in 1526,<sup>42</sup> and even in 1535 when the total value of the priory possessions was calculated, it was based on the rents allocated to the various officers.<sup>43</sup>

Despite fires, battles, sieges, and subsequent losses over the years, and there have obviously been many, what remains of the foundation and confirmation charters, title deeds and leases gives a very impressive picture of the extent of the priory possessions. There is no actual foundation charter for St. Andrew's priory but the fine series of royal, archiepiscopal and episcopal charters dating from the twelfth century onwards more than compensates for this. W. H. St. John Hope says that when Thorpe compiled the *Registrum Roffense*, twelve of the original Anglo-Saxon charters were still in existence, and moreover in the hands of the Dean and Chapter of Rochester, but that by 1898 every single one had disappeared and none has since been found.<sup>44</sup>

The cathedral priory of St. Andrew the Apostle, Rochester, was technically surrendered into the hands of the Crown on 20th March, 1539/40, but no actual surrender was made until the commissioners had surveyed the lands and written up the deeds of surrender. This was not finished until 16th April, 1540.<sup>45</sup> The new dotation charter of 20th June, 1541, set up a cathedral church which was to be run by a dean and six canons regular of the new established religion. They were a formidable group. The new dean was Walter Phillips, who was professed in 1514 at Rochester and who had been prior of Rochester since 1538. The six canons were Hugh Aprice, a Welshman and former treasurer of St. David's; John Wilbore, last Master of Strood hospital; Robert Johnson, Master of Cobham College, 1532-1533, Vicar-General of Rochester, 1534-1540 and a prebendary of Worcester, 1541; John Sympkins, last prior of St. Gregory, Canterbury; Richard Engest,

<sup>40</sup> Knowles, *op. cit.*, 330. See also DRc/F9-17. DRc/F17 includes a sub-sacrist's account.

<sup>41</sup> *Rochester Episcopal Register*, iii, 33v.

<sup>42</sup> DRc/E1b 1A, 10v.-11, 12.

<sup>43</sup> *V.C.H.*, ii, 124.

<sup>44</sup> *Arch. Cant.*, xxiii (1898), 196.

<sup>45</sup> *Calendar of Letters and Papers Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII*, vol. xiv, 1540-1541, 356 no. 745/36, 38, 40. Payments by warrant of the Council were made to Sir Richard Riche, Chancellor, William Henley and William Peter for expenses incurred at the dissolution of Canterbury and Rochester, 4th-16th April, 1540.

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Principal of Magdalen College, Oxford, 1537–1541; and Robert Salisbury.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> DRo/Ad 1, 2. See also C. H. Fielding, *Records of Rochester Diocese* for biographical notes on these men.