From the *Transactions* of the
Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society

The Monks of the Monastery of S. Mary at Tewkesbury

by E. R. Dowdeswell
1902, Vol. 25, 77-93

© The Society and the Author(s)

THE MONKS OF THE MONASTERY OF ST. MARY, AT TEWKESBURY.

By the Rev. E. R. DOWDESWELL,
President of the Society.

I HAVE been warned by the Secretary that I must be brief, and I find myself obliged to condense some 800 years of the history of the monks of Tewkesbury into half-an-hour's lecture. I must therefore plunge *in medias res.* We learn from the "Tewkesbury Chronicle," which is a mediæval MS. (1252–62) in the British Museum, that the first nucleus of a monastery here grew up round the cell and chapel of a hermit named Theoc in the latter part of the 7th century. It must be remembered that S. Augustine only landed in England in 596, and found the country a heathen land—the ancient British Church having been driven into the mountains of Wales and the west. He lived only to see the conversion of Kent, the foundation of the See of Rochester, and a flourishing mission in London. But the Irish monks had begun the work of evangelization from the north, and Mercia is said to have been converted in 655, and S. Chad established himself at Lichfield in 666. The method of the work was naturally to send out individual missionaries, of whom Theoc was one. His name, like Guthlac and Caradoc, is clearly British. It is therefore probable that he came from the British Church, just over the Severn in Wales, rather than from the north. The next step was naturally that the lone missionary should be joined by other clergy, and by the most promising of his converts. They would build a chapel of wood, and live in mud or wooden huts round the chapel, surrounded by a stockade. The director of the mission would be the spiritual father of the little community, and

they would live under a rule. They would till the land and earn their own living by manual labour, until by the conversion of some chieftain they had secured a patron who could endow them with lands for their maintenance.

The first mention of a monastery at Tewkesbury is 715, and this is probably the actual date of its foundation, as the neighbouring monasteries of Gloucester, Pershore, Evesham, Malmesbury, and Bath were all founded about the same time, the earliest being Malmesbury in 675, the latest Evesham in 706. The Monkish Chronicle has preserved for us what I must call the Legend of the Earliest Founders of Tewkesbury Monastery. The Chronicle relates that in the time of the Mercian Princes Ethelred and Ethelbald (A.D. 675–755) there were two noble dukes, named Oddo and Dodo, members of an illustrious family, and eminent in themselves for their great virtues. They are made to appear as brothers; and Leland, the antiquary of the 16th century, makes them both die in the same year. The chronicler honestly owns that he may be mistaken, and hopes that if some future historian has better information, he will correct his mistakes. The scientific researches of the present day have enabled the late Rev. J. H. Blunt and Mr. J. Round to prove that these two benefactors lived at least 300 years apart. It is true that Duke Dodo has not been absolutely identified with any known personage; but there *was* a Duke Dodo in the 9th century, and it is conjectured that the hundred in which Gloucester is situated (Dudeston) derives its name from him; and I personally like to think that the parish of Dowdeswell, near Cheltenham, from which my family takes its name, was originally Dodo's Wold, situated as it is on the Cotteswold Hills. Duke Oddo has been identified beyond doubt with that Oddo who built the chapel at Deerhurst, which we shall see to-morrow, of whom I will speak presently; the date of the chapel is 1054–6.

Let us take it then, that a Saxon noble named Dodo was the first to endow the monks here with lands. The first lands given to them were Stanway, Toddington, Prescote and

Didcote. We may imagine that this access of riches enabled the monks to greatly improve their buildings. We know that S. Wilfred of York, and his friend Benedict Biscop at Wearmouth and Jarrow, had imported the art of building in stone in the 7th century, and it is not unreasonable to suppose that Tewkesbury followed their example in the 8th. At least we know that the church was of sufficient importance in the year 800 to be made the burial place of a king; for Berthric, King of the West Saxons, was buried in the chapel of S. Faith, in the Church of Tewkesbury, in that year, by Hugo, a Mercian earl, who afterwards chose the same church for his own burial. The 7th and 8th centuries were the golden age of the Anglo-Saxon Church. Then England acquired the title of the Island of Saints. Then she bred S. Wilfred of York; Benedict Biscop, the founder of monasteries; the Venerable Bede, the father of English prose; and Cœdmon, the poet.

But while the English system encouraged the growth of great independent characters, it lacked cohesion and central authority. What it wanted above all things was consolidation and co-ordination. This was to be supplied in the Church at large by the formation of dioceses and parishes by the great Archbishop Theodore (A.D. 668–690), and among the monks by the rule of S. Benedict. Scholars are not agreed as to the actual date of the introduction of the Benedictine rule into England. S. Wilfred claims the honour in the 7th century, and S. Dunstan, of Glastonbury, in the 10th (A.D. 940–988). It seems to me that both claims may in a sense be true; but whatever S. Wilfrid and Benedict Biscop accomplished in the north was absolutely wiped out and destroyed by the terrible devastation caused by the incursion of the Danes in the 9th century (A.D. 836–878). It is stated by most historians that the Danes did not leave a single monastery standing in the whole of England—and scarcely a monk alive.

I see that this is thought to be an exaggeration by the latest historian of the Black Monks in England, Father

Taunton, who believes that it was only absolutely true of the north. But we know that the country between Gloucester and Bath was the great battle ground between Alfred and the Danes. His last victory over them was gained at Bodington. We know that the Danes wintered at Gloucester in 878. We, therefore, are not surprised to hear that Tewkesbury was often pillaged, and twice burnt down in the 200 years between 800 and 1000. And, moreover, we know that when Alfred founded his monastery at Athelney in A.D. 880, he was obliged to import monks from abroad, as there were none in England fit for his purpose. It is clear, therefore, that S. Dunstan (who, with the co-operation of his disciples, S. Oswald, our great Bishop of Worcester (A.D. 962), and Ethelward, Bishop of Winchester, 963, founded at least forty monasteries, all under the strict Benedictine rule) was the second, if not the first, founder of that rule in England, and thus we get to the period when our historical records become more clear and definite. After the devastation caused by the Danes, those monasteries which survived or were restored were probably tenanted by only a few monks. There were only four or five at Tewkesbury at the end of the 10th century. A Duke of Mercia, named Haylward Snow, was patron of the Abbey of Cranbourn in the 10th century. They had adopted the Benedictine rule, probably under the auspices of Bishop Ethelwold, and were greatly enriched by their patron Haylward, or Ethelward. He was also the patron of Tewkesbury, and subjected Tewkesbury with its few monks, as a priory, or cell, attached to the more flourishing Abbey of Cranbourn. He was killed at the battle of Assendune in 1016. He was succeeded by his son Algar, and in due course his grandson, Brictric Fitz Algar, whose romantic story is so well known to my hearers.

But we must go back now to Duke Odda, who was associated by the monkish chronicler with Dodda of 300 years before. The Chronicle relates that these noblemen were buried at Pershore, which they had enriched with many possessions, and where *Odda* had put on the monastic habit

before he died. It says they had a certain brother named Almeric, whose body was buried at Deerhurst, in a little chapel over against the gate of the Priory, which had an inscription over the gate (*in situ* in his day), "that Duke *Dodo* caused this Royal Hall to be consecrated as a church to the honour of the Virgin Mary, on account of the love he bore to his brother Almeric." Now it so happens that this stone was dug up by Judge Powell, in his garden at Deerhurst, in 1675, and was deposited by him at the Bodleian Library in Oxford, a copy of which you will see on Thursday. But we find that it was not Duke Dodda, but Dux *Odda*, who built that chapel, and most important of all the chronicler omitted the date, which is clearly given on the stone, namely, the 14th year of King Edward, *i.e.* 1056. His brother Alfric died (according to the Saxon Chronicle) in 1053, and he himself in 1056, a few months after his chapel was dedicated by Ealdred, Bishop of Worcester. His baptismal name was Ethelwin, or Agelwin, and he probably took the name of Odo on joining the Norman party at the Court of S. Edward. He was the successor of Earl Delfer (described by the monks as "that wicked Earl"), who had despoiled the church of vast tracts of land, which Odda to a great extent restored during his life. It is said that he lived unmarried in order that he might have no heirs to claim succession to the church property. It was from these estates, when they came to the crown on Duke Odda's death, that Edward the Confessor endowed his great Monastery of Westminster. Duke Odda is described as the "Cherisher of Churches, the Entertainer of the Poor, the Defender of Widows and Orphans, the Overthrower of Tyrants, and the Guardian of Virginity," and Mr. Round adds, "We may well be proud to enroll his name among our Worcestershire worthies." If Stanway, Toddington, Prescote, and Didcote were given by Duke Dodo, the other estates mentioned in *Domesday* (1087) as belonging to the Church of S. Mary at Tewkesbury may well have been given by Duke Oddo.

Brictric Fitz Algar having died miserably in prison at the

instigation of Matilda, the Queen of William the Conqueror, all his vast estates were granted to her for her life. On the death of the Queen in 1083 they were vested in the crown, and after William's death in 1087 his son, William Rufus, conferred them, together with the patronage of Cranbourn and Tewkesbury, on the great Norman nobleman Robert Fitz Hamon.

At this period Cranbourn was a flourishing Abbey, Tewkesbury a small Priory; but for various reasons Fitz Hamon and Gerald, the Abbot of Cranbourn, decided to make Tewkesbury the Mother House, and bring the monks there. The site on two rivers was certainly more convenient; it was also a residence of the Noble Patron. Mr. Willis Bund believes that it was part of the Norman scheme for subjugating the country, to have a line of Norman Monasteries along the Welsh border. In any case, the Abbot took up the plan warmly, and went with some of his monks to reside at Tewkesbury about 1099. Fitz Hamon had already begun to build the magnificent church, which to this day strikes all beholders with reverence and awe. These old builders built for the glory of God. Neither time nor money were considered. The church rose slowly from its foundations, and the monastic buildings became habitable in 1102, when Abbot Gerald and fifty-seven monks took possession of them. And still the church grew as the Earl and the Abbot watched it. It is difficult to estimate the cost of such a building; but an anecdote told by the historian, Matthew Paris, may give us some idea. He says that Richard, Duke of Cornwall, the founder of Hayles Abbey (not far distant), told him that the church alone of Hayles had cost him 30,000 marks, which Mr. Blunt estimates to be equal to £100,000 of our money. We know that the stones for the tower were imported from Caen, in Normandy. Neither Fitz Hamon nor the Abbot lived to see the church consecrated. Fitz Hamon was wounded at the siege of Falaise in 1107, and died there. He was brought home to be buried in the Chapter House at Tewkesbury, the church not yet being ready to receive his

honoured body. And after his patron's death, the Abbot (as we are told in the Chronicle) resigned his Abbey and fled to Winchester, where he had been brought up, because he was neither able nor willing to satisfy the King's avarice with gifts. And there he died a simple monk in 1110.

It is commonly thought that these great founders were actuated by unworthy and superstitious motives, hoping to buy the mercy of God for their many crimes by munificent gifts to the church. No doubt there were some such men in those days, as in these; but it is comforting to know that it was not so with the founders of Tewkesbury. We have already heard of the genuine piety of the Dukes Dodda and Odda; and it is recorded of Fitz Hamon, that after he had begun to build he decided to make the work an act of reparation, not for any sin of his own, but for the ruthless destruction of the church and city of Bayeaux by King Henry I. in 1105. Besides building the church and (we may suppose) the conventual buildings, Fitz Hamon enriched his monastery with magnificent endowments in land. He had in 1091 subjugated Glamorganshire and other parts of Wales, and after having rewarded his knights, he gave many churches and large estates to Tewkesbury from his Welsh conquests. The church was not finished and consecrated till November 20th, 1123. William of Malmesbury, a contemporary chronicler, says: "It is not easy to relate how much Robert enriched by his favour the Monastery of Tewkesbury, where the splendour of the edifice, and the hospitality of the monks, attract the eyes and captivate the minds of the visitors."

Now that we have got the monks into their monastery, it will be well to consider their mode of life. The life of a monk in the middle ages was not an easy one. They rose at midnight for the service called nocturns, which lasted for two hours. They then went back to bed till 6 a.m., when they went again to the church for Prime. After Terce, at about 9 a.m., the principal mass of the day was sung; after which they spent the morning in the cloisters at various kinds of

work. The officers of the house had to attend to their departments, the rest were either reading or writing, copying MSS., or teaching the young. No one was allowed to be idle. At about 11 they dined, but on a fast day not till after Nones, about 2 p.m. It was then that they first broke their fast. They ate in silence while one read. After dinner work began again till Vespers at 6, after which they had a spare meal called a collation—a piece of bread and a drink of small beer—and so after compline at 8 to bed. They slept in their clothes, a second set being allowed to each for night-wear. There was no going out without leave. There was a garden for exercise, and generally a bowling green. There was a common room called the Frayter, with a fire, where brethren might meet to converse; and every day, after the High Mass, the whole Convent met in the Chapter House, were faults against the rule were confessed publicly, and penance enjoined. There are black sheep, of course, in every flock; but it is surprising how very little there was to find fault with in the greater monasteries. Discipline was carefully maintained by Visitors appointed at a general meeting of the Abbots of the Order every three years, consisting of three neighbouring Abbots, whose duty it was to enquire strictly into the way in which the rule was observed in every house. But besides that the Bishop of the Diocese was the recognised Visitor of each Benedictine House, with the exception of five that were specially exempted by the Pope. It is true that in the earlier times the Bishop's claim to visit was often disputed, as it was at Tewkesbury. But the question was settled once for all in the 13th century, on appeal to Rome, in the case of Archbishop Edmund Rich, of Canterbury, against his own monks of S. Augustine's. In 1252 Bishop Walter de Canteloup visited Tewkesbury officially. It is recorded that his scrutiny was extreme, each monk being examined separately. As a result we read that the Bishop compelled the monks to keep their rule strictly. The chief officers of the house, after the Abbot, were the Prior and his Sub-Priors, who were responsible for the discipline of the

house; the Cellerer, who provided the food for all; the Sacrist, who had charge of the church; the Cantor of the services; the Guest-Master; and the Almoner. The monks were great landowners and farmers. At Tewkesbury they had an important tannery. This and other business must have taken their ablest men often from the cloisters into the world to see to the interests of the community. But the great body of monks lived simple, quiet lives, divided between prayer and praise, and study and rest.

The importance as well as the wealth of a great monastery was enhanced by the Priories or smaller houses that were subject to it. Of these, the first in order of time and endowments was Cranbourn, to which Tewkesbury had, as we know, been originally affiliated. Cranbourn remained as a Priory attached to Tewkesbury till the dissolution, a Prior and a few monks residing there. The next was the Priory of S. James, Bristol, which was founded by Robert, the Count who married Fitz Hamon's heiress. This also remained attached to Tewkesbury till the end. The Earl gave every tenth stone of the castle he built at Bristol towards the building of St. James' Church. His successor, WIlliam Fitz Count, founded the Abbey of Keynsham, but I do not know that it was affiliated to Tewkesbury. Robert de Chandos founded the Church of Goldcliff for secular canons. He gave the patronage to the King. It remained in the King's hand for 318 years, when Henry VI. gave it to Tewkesbury with all its endowments. About the same time Deerhurst was disendowed, and her lands divided between Tewkesbury and Eton College. Much litigation arising about this division, a compromise was effected, Tewkesbury giving Goldcliff to Eton in exchange for the other half of Deerhurst. Henceforth till the dissolution, Deerhurst became a Priory of Tewkesbury, and the Prior of Deerhurst is one of the pensioners provided for then.

It may well be asked, what use had these poor monks for the enormous revenues with which they were endowed? First, to estimate the revenue. I have neither the time nor

the scholarship, even if the means are available, for estimating the value of the possessions of Tewkesbury in the middle ages. The land and churches granted to the monks by their successive patrons and benefactors are set forth in the wonderful array of charters still extant in the British Museum, but in very many cases the places cannot now be identified, and in any case their annual value is not given. But we have the account rendered by Henry VIII.'s Commissioners of the value of the possessions of the Abbey in 1539. "The total annual value of all the possessions of the said late monastery" is entered as £1,595 15s. 9d. This represents rent and tithes, &c., accruing annually, but no account was taken or could be taken of the fines which were paid periodically as lives fell in—on such property as was held by copyhold—which was a common tenure of church property, nor of the amounts paid when a lease was granted for a term of years. For example, Edward Tyndale, brother of William Tyndale, the translator of the Bible, bought the lease for 99 years of Pull and Pull Court from the monks in the year 1534. Whatever he paid for it went into the year's revenue. Bishop Ridley when Bishop of London, sold the lease of Bushley Park to George Carr for 99 years; the money paid went into the treasury of the See, and his last request when at the stake was that either his poor tenants might remain on their farms, or the money they had paid be refunded to them out of his private fortune. But these fines were coming in every day, and were in addition to the annual rents on their rent roll. It has been estimated that these fines, together with their profits on farming (the wool alone was a most valuable asset), on their tannery, and the proceeds of their industry in other ways, must have been at least equal if it did not exceed their annual rents. If so, the total of £1,500 must be doubled and amounts to £3,000; and if we allow for the difference in the value of money between then and now, we must multiply by ten at least, which gives us a total revenue of at least £30,000 a year. Now, how did they spend it? For this I can find no actual figures in the records. So our inquiry must be,

what did they spend it on? (1) On cost of the food and clothing of say 60 monks, and some 150 servants and dependents, a nice little family of more than 200 men and boys. (2) On the Abbot and his household. He lived apart in his own lodgings, and was served with the same state as a great Feudal Baron. He had two country houses, Forthampton and Stanway, to keep up. He had a Chamberlain and Seneschal, a Master of the Horse, two chaplains, a cellarer and cook, a house steward, a valet, a carver, a messenger, and a porter, and a whole retinue of servants to wait on the more highly placed officers. The Chamberlain had a companion, a Squire and two boys to wait upon him, with horses at his disposal, and so with the others in less degress down to the cook, who was allowed only "one honest and knowing boy," but no horse. When the Abbot was out in state he had a train of twenty horses. He was limited to twenty by Papal Bull. (3) There was the up-keep on the monastic buildings and all the necessary repairs of a landowner on a very large estate. (4) In all the parishes from which they received the tithes they had to provide of course a vicar, who was never a monk, and keep his parsonage and church in repair, and provide schooling for the children. At Evesham the monks paid a secular schoolmaster about £100 a year, and one monk in twenty was sent to Oxford. (5) Then the monks are accused of being litigious, at any rate they had to defend themselves against the encroachments of greedy Barons. Their law costs must have been heavy. At the death of every patron and each of the Kings it was necessary to obtain from the successors a confirmation of the titles by which their land was held. They were usually granted as a matter of course, but no doubt at great cost. As a matter of fact Gilbert de Clare II. deprived the monks of all his predecessors had given them. But the whole of these possessions were restored by his son. (6) Sometimes they had to fight their Bishop, as Abbot Peter did in 1221. The dispute began about some relics. The Bishop accused the Abbot recklessly (we do not know of what) and excommunicated him. The Abbot appealed to

the Pope, and went himself to Rome to plead his cause. He borrowed £50 to pay his expenses (equal to about £500 now). He won his cause, and got home again in 1226. The Bishop withdrew the excommunication, but we are not told that he paid the cost of the journey, or the fees paid to the officers of the Papal Curia. (7) There were rates and taxes sometimes levied lawfully by King and Parliament, sometimes extorted by needy Kings. As we have seen, it drove Abbot Gerald from his office altogether, because he could not satisfy the King's demands. (8) The monks were a fruitful source of income to the Pope. In 1230 the monks of Tewkesbury paid to him 109 marks, or about £350, as a tithe of their goods. (9) But over and above all this, the monks were always great builders. If Fitz Hamon and the de Clares and Despencers built and added to the great church, and adorned it with their chapels and tombs, still the monks found much also to do. In 1178 there was a great fire, which destroyed the whole of the monastic buildings. Of course they had to be restored. In 1219 the dormitory collapsed just as the monks had left it; the Prior, who had remained behind, was saved as by a miracle. This had to be rebuilt. In 1334 another fire consumed two great stables and other buildings, besides the principal gateway of the Abbey. In 1237 Hervey de Sipton, the Prior, built the chapel of S. Nicholas; in 1390 Abbot Parker built the beautiful chapel over the tomb of the founder, and so on. And who can tell what was spent on painting and glass, on vestments and ornaments of divine service? And besides all these, the useful and necessary adjuncts of such a community, the great Abbey Mill, the stables, the dairy, the slaughter-house, and such like, all of which had to be built and kept in repair out of the income. (10) And lastly, we must not forget one of the chief glories of every monastery, the crowds of poor that were fed and ministered to daily.

In those days there was no fine old English gentleman, who had a fair estate, and never forgot the poor man at his gate. The monks were the only organised relievers of the

poor, and Tewkesbury being on the direct road between the north and south of England, the demands upon their hospitality were enormous. Moreover, their houses were the only hotels, and kings and nobles, as well as poorer folk, came to lodge there, and the king found it convenient to pension off old servants and favourites with an order to some monastery to support them. At the dissolution Tewkesbury was spending £139 (or £1,390 in our money) annually on such pensioners.

We may conclude this part of our subject in the words of Father Taunton. "If the monks had vast possessions, they had also vast responsibilities. They looked upon their wealth as so much entrusted to them for others. Their vast hospitalities, the exaction of kings, social changes, and disasters such as fire or disease, often crippled them and reduced them to the verge of destruction." This was the case at Tewkesbury when the monks having represented to the Bishop of Worcester that they were so impoverished that they could not maintain their ancient hospitality, he granted them the Church of St. Philip, Bristol, to enable them to do so. We have an interesting ordinance drawn up by Abbot Gerald when he first brought his fifty-seven monks to Tewkesbury, in 1102, apportioning the profits accruing from their various estates to particular uses. Thus to provide the monks' table the following rents and tithes were allotted: Two mills in Tewkesbury and the fishing there, the tithes of the town and lordship, and of certain villages, a third of the alms given in church, the Church of S. Peter, Bristol, certain lands in Wales and Hereford, the lands in Washbourne, Stanley Pontlarge, Amney, Stanway, Toddintgon, Lemington, Fiddington, &c., and the Abbot gave the Manor of Tarent, at the request of Fitz Hamon, to improve the living of the monks to the extent of 12 pence a day. For their clothing, the Church of Fairford, the land at Middleland, certain churches that had belonged to Robert the Chaplain, and 100 shillings per annum from the Abbot; but not till the monastic buildings were finished. To the Secretary—The parochial

dues, except tithes, and one-third of the alms in church, and for parchment alone, the tithes of Robert de Baskerville. For hospitality and the poor—Chettle in Dorset, land at Pequeminton, an enclosure at Winchcombe, and a tenth part of all the monks' victuals. All other revenue was to go towards buying land, and ornaments for the church, and supplying any deficit on the above accounts.

The Abbots of Benedictine Monasteries were elected in chapter freely. They might be one of their own brethren, or one from another Benedictine house. They had to obtain a *conge d'elire* from the Patron, and the Abbot-elect was confirmed and blessed by the Bishop of the Diocese. The Abbots of Tewkesbury do not seem to have been distinguished men, at least outside their own sphere. Abbot Gerald, the first of Fitz Hamon's foundation, must have been a good organiser, a man of great influence with his Patron, a great builder, and a humble God-fearing man, as his flight to Winchester, and renouncing his great office to become a simple monk again proves. Abbot Alan (A.D. 1187—1202) had been a monk at Canterbury, and as Prior there had been in close relation with S. Thomas à Becket, and was chosen to be one of his biographers. He seems to have heen the only notable scholar among them Abbot Robert of Forthampton, known as Robert III., had the reputation of being a saint. He re-roofed the dormitory out of money set apart for his own household. It is related that miracles were wrought here in his time. A dumb man of Forthampton, a blind girl of Beckford, a boy of Ripple, and many others to the number of forty, were healed in 1232, and again other miracles took place at his tomb when he died in 1254. But I have not found anything specially interesting about the others till we come to the period of the Dissolution. But from its wealth and its connection with the great Earls of Gloucester, Tewkesbury held a high place among the Abbeys of England. One of the seven copies of Magna Charta was laid up here. But the Abbot does not invariably appear among the Mitred Abbots who were summoned to Parliament. His name appears once

in the reign of Henry III., twice in the reigns of Edward I. and II., and generally in the reigns of Edward III. and Richard II. The honour, however, was far from being desired by the greater Abbots as being a costly burthen, and as taking them from their proper duties. Henry Beoly, the last Abbot but two, signed the declaration in the House of Lords in favour of Henry VIII.'s divorce from Queen Catharine, and Wakeman, the last Abbot, was invariably summoned. During the middle ages, as Feudal Barons, the Abbots had to find Knights for war when called upon in certain proportion to their holdings. Mr. Willis Bund says that the church in the Diocese of Worcester was of great political importance because of its possessions. The Bishop of Worcester could probably have put a larger army in the field than the lay Barons of the county. But while the Benedictines would generally side with the Bishop, Tewkesbury would follow the de Clares. During the Barons' wars in the 13th century, de Clare fought now on one side, now on the other, while Godfrey Giffarde, Bishop of Worcester, was consistently royalist.

We come now to the last scene of all, the Dissolution of the Monasteries, by Henry VIII. It would be foreign to the immediate subject of this paper to discuss Henry's motives in his ruthless work of destruction. Suffice it to say that in 1536 he extorted from Parliament the grant of the property of all religious houses having an income of less than £200 a year, with the distinct proviso that the dispossessed monks should be drafted into the larger houses "where religion is right well kept and observed." But at the same time they allowed the larger houses to be dissolved *if they were willing to surrender.* But not content with this, Henry determined that all monasteries, large or small, voluntarily or against their will, should submit. With this object the King's Commissioners relied upon three methods to gain their end: (1) They tried persuasion coupled with promises and bribery If that failed (2) they used threats and where possible deposed the Abbot and secured as his successor one favourable to the Dissolution. (3 and lastly)

For those who firmly refused there was an act of attainder for treason, and certain death. Our Tewkesbury monks I am afraid succumbed to the first method, and verily they had their reward. Abbot Henry Beoly, 1509–29, as we have seen, voted for the King's divorce in the House of Lords, which may perhaps be taken for a sign that the monastery generally was on the King's side. But he died before the actual crisis. His successor was consecrated in 1531, and died within the year. The last Abbot was John Wakeman. He was constant in his attendance in Parliament, and when the fateful decision had to be made, he seems to have surrendered his trust without remonstrance. The surrender was made on January 9th, 1539, and his house was one of the very last to be dissolved. The reward for his subserviency was a pension of £239 per annum, or about £2,390 of our money, with the use of his country house at Forthampton and other privileges, and on the foundation of the See of Gloucester a few years later he became the first Bishop of that Diocese, with, of course, a great addition of income. His Prior, John Beoly, received £16 a year (or £160). The other officers £13 6s. 8d., and the ordinary monks from £10 to £6 13s. 4d. It may be thought that these pensions are exceedingly small, but perhaps an income of from £60 to £100 a year was not too small for men who were vowed to a life of poverty. The goods and ornaments and chattels that were sold fetched £1,940 of our money. The silver plate reserved for the King amounted to 1,100 ounces, of which more than half was silver gilt. The Commissioners decided that the Abbots' lodging, the buttery, cellar, kitchen, and larder, the stable and the great barn next to Avon, and the Abbey gateway, might remain, but the church, the chapels, the cloisters, the misericord, the kitchen and the library, were deemed to be superfluous. It is one of the curious ironies of fate, that while the conventual buildings, the barns, and kitchens, and stables, which were intended to remain undefaced, have been utterly destroyed, the church and the chapels and the misericord, which were deemed to be

superfluous, remain to gladden our hearts and eyes to this day. The parishioners, to their everlasting credit, raised a sum of nearly £5,000 of our money to purchase from the King that part of the sacred building which had served as the church of the monks, namely, the choir, the chapels, the transepts, and the tower, the nave having been used as a parish church probably since its foundation.

My task is now completed. I have tried to set before you very briefly the fortunes of this great monastery, from its humble beginnings in the 8th century, through its sufferings under the Danes, through its glories during the middle ages, when it rose to such importance and magnificence under the patronage of the princely Earls of Gloucester, till at last the day came when, under the despotic rule of Henry VIII., the monks were dispersed, their revenues divided amongst greedy courtiers, their poor dependents left to starve, till, fifty years after, Elizabeth and her ministers had to devise the cold comfort of the Poor Law to supply in some degree the lavish charity of the monks. We may thank God that the Church was left to continue to supply the means of grace, though shorn of much magnificence.