The King and the Monks: John of England (1199–1216) and the Cistercians

Janet Burton

University of Wales: Trinity Saint David (Lampeter); Visiting Professor, University of Reading

The year is 1215, some time during the third week in September. The place is the renowned French abbey of Cîteaux near Dijon, the mother house of the Cistercian Order. The occasion is the Annual General Chapter which all abbots of the order are expected to attend in person or by proxy. We do not know precisely how many abbots are here, but potentially well over three hundred – the order has spread from its heartlands in Burgundy to other parts of France, to Italy, the Empire, the British Isles, Scandinavia, Poland, Spain, and as far as Cyprus and the Holy Land. In England and Wales alone, there are now over sixty houses. One English abbot who is apparently not present at this Chapter of 1215 is Hugh of Beaulieu. Beaulieu, founded by King John (1199–1216) at Faringdon (Berkshire) and relocated to the New Forest in 1204, is, in 1215, one of the latest additions to the Cistercian Order in England, and unique in being the only English house ever to be founded from Cîteaux itself. It may, therefore, be with some dismay (but perhaps with no small surprise) that the abbot of Cîteaux, Beaulieu's father immediate (father abbot), hears various charges laid against Hugh.

> The abbot of Beaulieu in England who conducted himself inappropriately at table by drinking wassail with three earls and forty knights, and who has a dog with a silver chain to guard his bed, and who took about with him secular servants mounted on horseback who minister to him on bended knee and who by custom cause him to be served with silver vessels – and about whom many other things are said – is to present himself at Cîteaux, at the next Chapter, with no excuse allowed, to answer to

> these charges and to other charges that may be brought. Let him know that otherwise he will be deposed. The abbot of Quarr is to announce this to him.[1]

The phrase 'about whom many other things are said' has also appeared in relation to Hugh in chapter records seven years earlier, in 1208, when the abbot of Cîteaux himself was to investigate his behaviour.[2] Abbot Hugh of Beaulieu is getting himself noticed at headquarters, but not for the right reasons. His behaviour cannot seem to have been in keeping with a monastic order whose own ideology and self-image is one of seclusion and austerity. But consider Hugh's position. He is a Cistercian abbot, to be sure, a member of this international order, closely bound together through its lines of affiliation like one big monastic family. He is, however, also the head of a monastery of the king's foundation, a royal abbot, and the complaints heard by the Chapter suggest that he is perhaps more royal abbot than Cistercian abbot.

This snapshot of the General Chapter of 1215 highlights the tensions between the different worlds that might be inhabited by Cistercian monks and abbots, as they were torn between conflicting demands that were not easily resolved or reconciled. Founders and patrons might make requests, for instance for the privilege of being accorded burial within a Cistercian monastery, a practice that was, in the early years at least, at odds with the expectations of the order. Moreover, to see Cistercians as withdrawing totally into the 'desert' of their cloisters is misleading and ignores their quite conscious engagement with society and its concerns: their notion of *caritas* spread beyond their own congregation and into the wider world.[3] Competing demands and pressures were not new in King John's reign, however. His royal predecessors could have told of occasions when the White Monks mounted – or seemed to mount – effective intervention in royal affairs to the detriment of the king. King Stephen (1135–54) had experienced the resolve of the northern Cistercians to challenge the election of William fitz Herbert, his favoured candidate for the archbishopric of York, in the 1140s. He had witnessed how the support they garnered among their continental colleagues, notably Bernard, abbot of Clairvaux, and the Cistercian pope, Eugenius III, had led to the

deposition of Archbishop William and his replacement by a Cistercian.[4] John's father, King Henry II had been driven to threaten all Cistercian houses in England with confiscation of their lands should his exiled archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Becket, continue to receive hospitality at a French house of the order, Pontigny.[5] King John, accordingly, knew well that the Cistercian abbeys of his domains were not just powerhouses of prayer: they were also part of an international force capable of corporate action. He would also have been aware that by now some of them, despite their ideologies of poverty and seclusion, were very rich; they had become part of the establishment and as such targets for satirists such as Walter Map and Gerald of Wales.[6] It is a combination of these two factors, the ability of the Cistercians to see themselves as, and to act as, a corporate body, and their wealth, that forms the backdrop to this brief discussion of relations between John and the Cistercians. This paper considers three themes: first, the clashes between king and monks, specifically over taxation; second, the activities of the Cistercians during the interdict placed on England by Pope Innocent III in 1208 which lasted several years, and finally routine interactions of the English White Monks with the king and with the order.

Money, Money, Money

The aspect of John's relations with the Cistercians that most caught the attention of contemporary chroniclers was the king's demand for money from them and this has dominated historical scholarship. In traditional monastic historiography John has suffered badly for his treatment of the monks. David Knowles, for instance, suggested that 'for the Cistercians the reign of John was one of almost continuous material misfortunes'.[7] The word 'continuous' is, however, hard to sustain. In reality, there are two separate occasions on which king and the Cistercian abbots clashed. The first was right at the beginning of John's reign when he was faced with a need for money to pay the relief of 20,000 marks demanded by King Philip Augustus of France under the Treaty of Le Goulet (May 1200) to allow John to succeed to his continental lands. The second was when John was preparing an expedition to Ireland in the spring of 1210.

The fullest source for the implications, for the White Monks, of the Treaty of Le Goulet, is the chronicle of Ralph, abbot of the Cistercian monastery of Coggeshall (Essex), and as this account originated in a Cistercian house we may expect the author to be at one and the same time well informed and eager to present a version of events favourable to the White Monks.[8] Ralph's account of the early years of John's reign was probably completed in 1201 when events were still a recent experience.[9] He records how after his return from France after making peace with Philip Augustus, John went to the province of York where he demanded financial aid from a number of Cistercian abbots who had come to greet him, determined on help from the order which, Ralph tells us, 'hitherto had been held to be free from customs of this kind'.[10] Ralph is here emphasizing the distinctiveness of his order: the Cistercians, within England, he claims, enjoyed immunity from royal demands. But he was not strictly accurate. Indeed, the phrase he uses echoes one employed by a number of chroniclers in their description some years earlier (1193) of the Cistercian reaction to the demand for contributions towards the ransom for King Richard I from the churches and monasteries of the realm. When the Cistercians claimed that they could not give the gold and silver required of them because they did not have such things, they were obliged instead to give one year's wool clip, an exercise that Richard himself attempted to repeat the following year.[11] William of Newburgh, a Yorkshire Augustinian canon who enjoyed close connections with the White Monks, commented that 'the monks of the Cistercian Order, who hitherto had been exempt from every royal demand, were then burdened the more because they had before felt less of the public burden',[12] and Roger of Wendover told how the Cistercian Order 'which had hitherto been free of any exaction gave all its wool in order to redeem the king'.[13] There was, therefore a precedent for King John's financial demands on the Cistercians, and it is highly likely that John had the confiscation of the wool clip in 1193 in his mind when he met with the northern Cistercians early in his reign.

So, how did the White Monks respond to John's confrontation with the Yorkshire abbots? It seems that the northern Cistercians had to do some quick thinking. According to Ralph of Coggeshall, not having had chance to consult their fellow abbots, and anxious that by complying with the royal demand they would commit their order to

punishing customs in the future, they gave what was, in years to come, to be a standard Cistercian response: they were not able to offer the king any money without consent from the General Chapter.[14] Here we see an appeal to the ruling body of their order, the Cistercian corporation, loyalty to which they implicitly placed above what John undoubtedly saw as their duty to the king. This was no longer simply about money, for this refusal could have undermined John's authority, and the king's response was to order his sheriffs to harass the Cistercians and to remove his protection for them.

The White Monks then appealed to Hubert Walter, archbishop of Canterbury and royal chancellor, for his support. The archbishop pointed out to the king the way in which the Cistercians were venerated by the whole church for their piety and austerity, and by kings and rulers who had given lands and possessions to them and had protected them. He further attempted to mollify the king by offering 1000 marks on behalf of the order, on condition that John confirm all charters of liberty granted to the Cistercians by King Richard I.[15] The king was not to be appeased, however, and more than once in the coming months the archbishop attempted to broker an agreement, summoning all the abbots to meet the king in Lincoln in November 1200, and promising to do all he could to help. The massed Cistercian abbots who congregated outside Lincoln before going to meet the king must have been quite a sight. The Cistercians themselves seem to have been divided, some wishing to placate the king by paying, others unwilling to compromise the 'ancient liberty of the order' or – by precedent – to see the 'order little by little subjected to the secular power'.[16] We can see a very real tension here, as the Cistercians tried to negotiate their way through the paths of a dual existence.

It is noticeable – and probably quite deliberate – that Ralph as a Cistercian chronicler has so far spoken of the abbots collectively; this emphasizes the corporate nature of the order. It is at this point in the narrative that one – and only one – Cistercian abbot is mentioned by title if not by name. This is the abbot of Meaux in Yorkshire, whom Ralph tells us was a former notary of Hubert Walter and therefore well known to him ('quondam domni archiepiscopi notarius, et idcirco ei semper valde familiaris'). The abbot makes a brief appearance in Ralph's narrative, producing a transcript of letters sent to the archbishop

from the General Chapter, giving thanks for his previous support for the order, and asking him for his continued assistance and protection.[17] This had the effect of strengthening Cistercian resolve not to submit to the king's demands or indeed to meet with him in person. After delays and discussions and with the mediation of the archbishop, the king eventually relented and agreed not to harm the order and indeed asked the abbots to intercede for him at the General Chapter, so that he might be taken into confraternity with the order. He promised to be a protector of the Cistercians and further to build a Cistercian abbey in England where, God willing, he would in due course be buried.[18] In a later passage Ralph noted the foundation of Beaulieu in 1204 for thirty monks from Cîteaux;[19] this was to be the only English daughter house of the head of the order.

This is the fullest account of the dispute over taxation at the beginning of John's reign. Indeed, other sources barely mention it. The annals of another Cistercian abbey, the Welsh house of Margam, record only that in 1199 the abbots of the Cistercian Order came to the king at Lincoln on the advice of the archbishop of Canterbury and received his grace, the king indeed falling to his knees to beg their pardon 'because he had injured them'; the annalist further notes John's promise to build a Cistercian house, which was begun in 1202 when the abbot of La Ferté and other Cistercians came to England and received seisin of Faringdon for the construction of an abbey; this process was completed in 1204 with the establishment of Beaulieu.[20]

It may well be that the first clash between John and the Cistercians received comparatively little attention from the chroniclers – as indeed it has from modern historians – because of the way it seems to have fizzled out following the intervention of Hubert Walter. But, fast forward a decade and it was a different story. Both the Coggeshall chronicle and the Margam annals touch on a second flashpoint, again sparked by John's need for money, this time in 1210, when John demanded an aid from the Cistercians for an expedition to Ireland. This second attempt to raise money from the White Monks had longer term implications. Ralph does not record a response, but the Margam annalist has the Cistercians refusing the royal demand and arguing that they could not make such a grant of their own will because to do so would have been against the *libertas* of their order.[21] So incensed was

John that he violently extorted 27,000 marks, exempting only two houses. The first was Margam (the origin of this account) because the monks had provided hospitality for the king on his journeys to and from Ireland that year.[22] Margam is indeed on the route across south Wales towards the west coast, and a likely place of hospitality. There was, however, another possible reason for John's favour, for through marriage to his first wife, Isabel, daughter and co-heiress of Earl William of Gloucester (d. 1183), John had become earl of Gloucester and therefore patron of Margam. Even though, when he succeeded to the throne, he relinquished the earldom, he retained the lordship of Glamorgan in which Margam was located.[23] The second house exempted was Beaulieu 'which was of the alms of the king himself' – his own foundation.[24]

The continuation of William of Newburgh by a monk of Furness, dating from the late thirteenth century, credits the Cistercians with an even more robust response to John's demand than that recorded in the Margam annals:

> But they, with one voice, responded that they did not have any money in their own control, nor did they wish to have any, but they were guardians and stewards of the alms of the faithful.[25]

This source goes on to explain the responsibility of the White Monks to use these alms for monks and religious men, the poor and the weak, orphans and widows and 'not for the revenues of the kingdom nor the pay of soldiers' – but this seems to represent a later refinement of Cistercian arguments and does not appear in contemporary sources. John's response was to revoke all the charters of liberty that had been granted by his predecessors to the Cistercians. The Coggeshall chronicle only alludes to the severe fine placed by John in 1210 on the religious houses of the land, which, it claims, fell particularly heavily on the Cistercians; the chronicle further records that the abbots were not allowed to go to the General Chapter that year.[26] Matthew Paris draws attention to John's oppression of the White Monks in 1210, noting the sum of 40,000 marks demanded of them, and also confirming the king's refusal to allow the abbots to attend the General Chapter that year.[27] The annals of Cistercian Waverley note that the king's violent extortion

of money led to the dispersal of a number of abbeys, including his own.[28] Such devastation was noted by a number of non-Cistercians. The annals of Cluniac Bermondsey (Surrey), for instance, also recorded the destruction and dispersal of a number of houses of White Monks.[29]

It is in respect to this second attempt by the king to collect money from the White Monks that we return to the only abbot so far singled out and identified, the abbot of Meaux in the East Riding of Yorkshire, and to the chronicle of the house, compiled by Abbot Thomas Burton, nearly two centuries later, which enables us to put a name to him. The abbot in question was the fourth abbot of Meaux, Alexander, a former monk of Forde (Dorset), who governed the abbey from 1197 to 1210. His promotion is an example of how monks could be moved across the different Cistercian lines of direct affiliation, which must have reinforced the sense of belonging to a global family.[30] Alexander is described in the Meaux Chronicle as 'a good man, well-educated but unknown to all in that monastery [Meaux]';[31] he was, in other words, an outsider. However, he was well known to his father abbot of Fountains (Ralph Haget), who was evidently responsible for his promotion. Ralph's reason for moving Alexander to Meaux is of great interest and provides a clue to his prominence in the Cistercians' dealing with John. Having received the resignation of Abbot Thomas of Meaux in 1197 the father abbot reckoned that Alexander could sustain the dangers that had threatened his predecessor 'for this Alexander was well known to, and a *familiaris* of the said Hubert Walter, archbishop of Canterbury' – he was an abbot with friends in high places.[32] This confirms the link made by Ralph of Coggeshall between Abbot Alexander and Hubert Walter, who may well have been behind Alexander's promotion to the Yorkshire abbey. Furthermore, we know from Gerald of Wales that Alexander, whom he describes as a member of the archbishop's household and his chamberlain (*commensalis et cubicularius*), was one of the candidates put forward by his patron as a candidate for the see of St Davids so hotly contested and desired by Gerald of Wales, who himself found an enemy in Hubert Walter.[33] In Alexander of Meaux we see the calibre of men being recruited into the Cistercian Order by the late twelfth century, and one whose background and career would enable him to consider opposing royal demands. We can see how the

Cistercians slotted into the ecclesiastical and political world under the Angevin kings.

Once elected Alexander proved to be energetic in his pursuit of the interests of his abbey, making use of his contacts (his first act was to seek out Archbishop Hubert to request his assistance in the recovery of the abbey grange of Wharram), and acquiring powerful enemies, notably Archbishop Geoffrey Plantagenet of York, illegitimate brother of Kings Richard I and John.[34] Turning to more general events, but ones that nevertheless affected his monastery closely, the Meaux chronicler noted, as one cause of the Interdict of 1208-14, 'new and unheard of exactions' placed by King John on the religious houses of the land. These, he claimed, Abbot Alexander alone had withstood, and his resistance led to the heavy fine of 1000 marks being placed on Meaux.[35]

Now the chronology of Thomas Burton's account is not clear. Although there is no explicit mention in his chronicle of the role played by Alexander in the first resistance of the Cistercians to taxation, noted by Coggeshall, it seems that the compiler has compressed into one the two disputes. Moreover, tensions between the king and the abbot were not limited to financial matters. The king's anger over Alexander's refusal to pay the fine demanded was exacerbated by the abbot's opposition to Geoffrey Plantagenet, archbishop of York, and royal wrath seems to have been implacable.[36] Alexander offered his resignation to his father abbot of Fountains, but it was refused, and he was persuaded that he could not alone resist the king's demands. Nevertheless, Alexander persisted in his refusal to pay the fine, and it was not until royal servants had confiscated all the goods of his house and the monks and *conversi* had been dispersed, that he resigned and returned to Forde. The cellarer of Meaux reached an agreement with the king, although there was no relaxation in the demand for 1000 marks. That Alexander resigned in 1210 and died two years later it would appear that he was resistant to the king's demands both in 1200 and again in 1210.[37] This is corroborated by a later passage in which the Meaux Chronicle relates how before John went to crush the Irish rebellion he demanded money from all the English Cistercians towards a fine of 20,000 marks, and they replied that they could not give this without the consent of the abbot of Cîteaux, the *capitalis abbas ordinis.*[38] The king was angry and on his return squeezed the Cistercians so

severely – over 30,000 marks from the order – that some members left and others dispersed to other houses or went overseas.[39] The enormity of the king's financial exactions of the White Monks is revealed in the 'Red Book of the Exchequer', which under 'recepta a rege Johanne de episcopatibus, abbatiis, et aliis clericis Angliae tempore interdicti pro Stephano archiepiscopo Cantuariensi' (i.e. between 1208 and 1214) recorded receipts from the 'albi monachi' of nearly 25,000 marks.[40]

The reign of King John was in many ways a turning point in relations between the English king and the White Monks. The precedent set by the demand for taxation from the Cistercians in 1193 and followed by John would be stepped up by Henry III. The various responses devised by the Cistercians: that they could not pay without permission from the General Chapter, would become refined, as they came to describe themselves as the body and the General Chapter as the head.[41] For the king's part withholding safe conduct for abbots to journey to the chapter also became a weapon.

England Under Interdict

In between these two royal demands that caused confrontation between the White Monks and the king came the papal interdict laid on England in March 1208, which was to last until July 1214, its cause the king's refusal to accept the pope's nominee, Stephen Langton, as archbishop of Canterbury. During this period, churches were closed, the administration of the sacraments was forbidden, and churchyards were closed for the burial of the dead. The Cistercian response to this extraordinary episode again highlights their propensity to appeal to the privileges of their order, which had the potential to pit them against the king. Matthew Paris notes in his account of the year 1208 that at the beginning of the interdict the Cistercians complied with the papal sentence by ceasing to celebrate the divine office, but later they 'presumed' to do so at the command of their 'principal abbot', that is, the abbot of Cîteaux.[42] In other words, the Cistercians began to follow the rulings of their order rather than papal commands. The Cistercian stance would appear to be based on *Sacrosancta romana ecclesia*, the confirmation of the *Carta caritatis* by Pope Eugenius III (1152), by which Cistercian houses were exempt from episcopal interdicts; this was

reiterated in four later versions of the bull.[43] As a result of this 'presumption' the English Cistercians were suspended by the pope 'to their great confusion'.[44] Their punishment continued, for in 1209, when the English conventual churches were allowed by Pope Innocent III to celebrate mass once a week behind closed doors, the Cistercians were not included in this relaxation because of their previous suspension.[45] The dilemma for the Cistercians, now caught not between the king and the order but between the order and the papacy, is also manifest in the records of the General Chapter, which in 1208 doled out a penalty of three days on light penance to the English abbots who, against the immunities of the order, kept the sentence of interdict, in other words refused to celebrate mass.[46] Less easy to interpret is the proviso that three abbots alone were absolved from this penance because they had stood for the liberties of the order. In other words, there were three abbots who celebrated mass in contravention of pope's sentence of excommunication. These were the abbots of the Welsh house of Margam – which would later offer hospitality to the king on his Irish expedition, Alexander of Meaux, who had fiercely opposed the king, and Hugh of Beaulieu, the royal abbot.[47] Of these three, Alexander is the surprise element. In 1209, and again in 1211, the Chapter ordered money to be collected from the English abbeys which had been expended on the interdict.[48] The Cistercians' maintenance of their rights to rise above the interdict imposed by the pope meant that they – implicitly – supported the king.

Day to Day, Year to Year

In accounts of King John and the Cistercian Order there has been a tendency to concentrate on points of conflict, notably about taxation, and of conflict resolved, as John the 'oppressor' of the order became John, founder of a Cistercian house first at Faringdon (Berkshire) and better known on its second site of Beaulieu in the New Forest, which became the head of a small number of foundations, dependent on royal patronage, in the first half of the thirteenth century.[49] A more balanced picture of routine instances of interaction between the king and the Cistercians emerges from investigation of the administrative records of the English crown. The patent, close, and charter rolls reveal the

dominance of just one Cistercian monastery, Beaulieu. While this is not surprising in itself, it is certainly revealing about the mutual interdependence of founder and abbey through the person of Abbot Hugh.[50] A number of routine orders from John relate to the foundation of the house, the provision of 30 marks' worth of wheat to stock their abbey, a gold chalice, 100 marks for building work, and twenty cows and two bulls for the porter of the monastery.[51] He further commanded the payment of 250 marks from the will of the bishop of Winchester;[52] requested all Cistercian abbots, for love of God and him, to help the abbey of Beaulieu of their order which he has begun;[53] and authorized the expenditure of 500 marks for building the church.[54] The king's attention was rewarded by Abbot Hugh. In 1206 he received forty marks in expenses incurred on the king's business at the papal curia and in 1213 he is again recorded on the king's business.[55] In 1214 and 1215, in the aftermath of the interdict the abbot was one of a number of churchmen charged with the filling of vacant benefices.[56] Here we see Hugh the royal abbot in action, and the king's demands go a long way to explaining his absence from the chapter: he was on his royal master's business.

Other records are routine and non-contentious in nature. The king issued confirmations of lands to houses in England: to Bruern, to Boxley, to Forde and others.[57] To Woburn he granted licence to construct a new daughter house at Medmenham, and to William Briwere's foundation at Dunkeswell he granted royal protection.[58] Even Meaux – under its trenchant Abbot Alexander – received a confirmation of lands and royal protection.[59] Other documents show the king making a statement about his authority in Wales by issuing charters of protection and confirmation not only to abbeys like Margam and Neath in *Marchia Wallia* but also to those in *Pura Wallia*: to Strata Marcella and Strata Florida he granted exemption from tolls (1200) and he issued general confirmations to Whitland and Cwmhir in 1215.[60] The records reveal John prepared to be generous to the White Monks. It was while he was staying at Bindon in 1213 that he ordered the abbot and convent to have three cartloads of lead from the issue of mines and tiles of oak for the monastery.[61] Some give us a glimpse of the hinterland of the royal Cistercian foundation. On 2 February 1201, after being reconciled with the Cistercians, he wrote to the Cistercian Order in Yorkshire stating

that he was sending W. abbot of Rievaulx (William de Punchardon) whom he had enjoined to explain something to them about 'a certain abbey of the order that he proposes to build'.[62] Cistercian houses were among those to whom the king entrusted his treasures (24-25 June 1215); we have record of some of these being returned: on 3 July from Bindon came a staff with 19 sapphires and another with 10 sapphires which the king had entrusted to the abbot and convent for safe keeping, and on 5 July from Forde came precious objects, minutely described, by the hand of Brother Thomas and Brother Richard, their monks.[63]

As English abbots, the heads of Cistercian houses enjoyed routine relations with the king, despite and indeed through periods of conflict. As Cistercian abbots they were embraced in the administrative structures of the order, that is, the system of annual visitation of daughter houses by their father abbot, and the General Chapter. They were the twin mechanisms that provided the uniformity and cohesion that so distinguished the order. This paper began with the Cistercian General Chapter and to the General Chapter it now briefly returns.

From about 1180 the records of the General Chapter, giving evidence of how the order operated, start to become much fuller. The period covered by John's reign shows over ninety rulings related to England and Wales. They mostly relate to the routine business of disciplining abbots, appointing judges to resolve conflicts, inspection of sites for new foundations, hearing petitions, and demanding attendance. There was some business relating to English and Welsh houses each year, and the range is between two and eight cases. The variation is slight. In one year, 1207, there were only two recorded incidents relating to English abbeys, the issue of the brothers of Pipewell who had allegedly furtively taken in (*tulerunt clandestine* – for burial?) a man who had been killed, which was referred for investigation to the abbots of Fountains and Rievaulx; and the complaint of William 'Bergensis / Burgensis de Area' against the abbot of Furness, which was committed to the father abbot of Savigny.[64] Four cases relating to England and Wales appear in the Chapter records for 1200, 1201, 1205, and 1208; five are recorded in 1210, 1211, 1212, and 1215; six in 1202 and 1213;

seven in 1204, 1206, 1209, and 1214; eight in 1199 and again in 1216; and ten in 1203.[65] No year therefore appears to be exceptional.[66]

At first sight, it would even appear to have been 'business as usual' in 1210 when John forbad the English abbots to attend.[67] A note of caution should be sounded, however: the appearance of a routine number of cases relating to England should not be taken to suggest that abbots attended despite the royal ban. Indeed, although the 1210 chapter delegated several English abbots as judges in complaints relating to English houses, the task of announcing their duties to them fell to continental abbots, those of Clairvaux, Savigny, and L'Aumône, all of whom had daughter houses in England and / or Wales. Accordingly, the abbot of L'Aumône was to inform the abbot of Waverley, his daughter house, and the abbot of Forde, a daughter house of Waverley, of their delegation to investigate the complaint of Revesby against Cleeve; and the abbot of Savigny was to pass on the order to the abbots of Forde and Beaulieu to look into the complaint of the dean and chapter of York Minster against the abbots of the archdiocese.[68]

Like many rulers John saw the advantage – both spiritual and material – in supporting the monastic orders of his realm, but at the same time was wary of their potential to undermine royal authority. His fallout with the Cistercians in 1200 and again in 1210 does not seem to have been aimed at the White Monks per se; his attack was on what he perceived as a wealthy and privileged group which claimed immunity from the financial demands made of other sectors of the realm. So where did these claims come from? Unlike tithes from which papal concessions had freed the Cistercians, the question of taxation was less well defined, although a number of statutes of the General Chapter in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries reprimanded abbots for paying local exactions.[69] However, it was custom – the liberties and freedoms granted by previous kings of England – on which the Cistercian case seems to have rested. John had no wish to persecute the Cistercians for persecution's sake: he was generous to Beaulieu and found in Abbot Hugh a loyal servant. Despite disputes with the Cistercians royal alms to the order were paid throughout the reign, and John took two Cistercian abbots, John of Forde and Henry of Bindon as his

confessors. Perhaps the ambiguity, or shifting ground, is nowhere more apparent than in the case of the Welsh monastery of Strata Florida. In the first year of his reign, he confirmed the abbey in its possessions and granted freedom from tolls in transporting their goods. In 1212, he ordered the destruction of the abbey which, he claimed maintained or supported (*sustentat*) his enemies. Even then financial considerations seem to have overridden the king's enmity: the abbey was not destroyed, but the monks were paying off a crippling fine imposed by the king for another forty years.[70]

Notes

1 'Abbas Belli loci in Anglia qui coram tribus comitibus et quadraginta militibus inordinate se habuit in mensa, scilicet bibendo ad garsacil, et qui habet canem cum catena argentea ad custodiendum lectum suum, et qui adduxit secum servientes saeculares in equis qui ei, flexis genibus, ministrant, et qui in vasis argenteis de consuetudine facit sibi ministrari, et de quo multa alia dicuntur, sequenti Capitulo, omni occasione remota, Cistercio se praesentet, obiectis et obiiciendis responsurus; alioquin sciat se esse depositum. Abbas de Quarreria hoc ei denuntiet': *Statuta capitulorum generalium ordinis Cisterciensis ab anno 1116 usque ad annum 1786*, ed. by J.-M Canivez, 8 vols (Louvain: Bibliothèque de la Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique, 1933–41), I (1933), 445 (1215/48). Quarr, on the Isle of Wight, was, geographically, the nearest Cistercian house to Beaulieu.

2 'De abbate Belli loci in Anglia de quo multa dicuntur, committitur domino Cistercii, ut ista diligenter inquirat et corrigat': *Statuta*, I (1933), 354 (1208/41).

3 On Cistercian engagement with society and politics, see Martha G. Newman, *The Boundaries of Charity: Cistercian Culture and Ecclesiastical Reform, 1098–1180* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996).

4 The disputed York election has been discussed many times. For one such treatment, with an emphasis on the part played by the Cistercians, see Janet Burton, 'English Monasteries and the Continent in the Reign of King Stephen', in *King Stephen's Reign (1135–1154)*, ed. by Paul Dalton and Graeme J. White (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2008), pp. 98-114 (pp. 107-13) and Christopher Norton, *St William of York* (York: York Medieval Press, 2006).

5 The Winchester annals record under 1166 the threat made by Henry II to the General Chapter should any Cistercian house provide shelter for the

archbishop: *Annales Monasterii de Wintonia*, in *Annales Monastici*, ed. by H. R. Luard, 5 vols, Rolls Series (London: Longman), 1864-69), II (1865), 59. Edward Grim in his life of St Thomas mentions Pontigny specifically: *Materials for the History of Thomas Becket*, ed. by J. C. Robertson and J. B. Sheppard, 7 vols, Rolls Series (London, 1875-85), II (1876), 413-4.

6 Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium Courtiers' Trifles*, ed. and trans. by M. R. James, rev. by C. N. L. Brooke and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983), pp. 85–113; for comments by Gerald of Wales see for instance *Giraldi Cambrensis Opera*, ed. by J. S. Brewer, J. F. Dimock and G. F. Warner, 8 vols, RS (London, 1861-91), IV (1873), 129-78 (*Speculum Ecclesie*).

7 David Knowles, *The Monastic Order in England*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), p. 369.

8 *Radulphi de Coggeshall, Chronicon Anglicanum*, ed. by J. Stephenson, Rolls Series (London, 1875), pp. 102–10. On Ralph and the composition of the chronicle see Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England c.550 to c. 1307* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974), pp. 322–31. See also Harriett Webster, 'The *Chronicon Anglicanum*: the Composition and Reception of a Thirteenth-Century Chronicle at Coggeshall', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Bristol, 2015.

9 See David Carpenter, 'Abbot Ralph of Coggeshall's Account of the Last Years of King Richard and the First Years of King John', *English Historical Review,* 113 (1998), 1210–30; John Gillingham, 'Historians without Hindsight: Coggeshall, Diceto and Howden on the Early Years of John's Reign', in *King John: New Interpretations*, ed. by S. D. Church (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1999), pp. 1-26 (pp. 5-9).

10 'Dominus autem rex in Eboracensem deveniens provinciam, a quibusdam abbatibus ordinis Cisterciensis sibi occurrentibus exegit pecuniam, sicut a caeteris; volens ordinem exactionis servitute deprimere, qui hactenus liber ab hujusmodi consuetudinibus habebatur': Coggeshall, *Chronicon Anglicanum*, p. 102.

11 *Annales de Waverelei*, in *Annales Monastici*, II (1865), p. 248; William of Newburgh, *Historia Rerum Anglicarum*, in *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II, and Richard I*, ed. by R. Howlett, 4 vols, Rolls Series (London, 1884-89), vols 1-2, II (1885), 416, notes that Richard later demanded a further wool clip.

12 'Cisterciensis quoque ordinis monachi, qui ab omni exactione regia hactenus immunes exstiterant, tanto magis tunc onerati sunt, quanto minus antea publici oneris senserant': William of Newburgh, *Historia rerum Anglicarum*, I (1884), 399. Ralph does not mention the Cistercians by name

in his account of the raising of the ransom: Coggeshall, *Chronicon Anglicanum*, p. 60.

13 'Ordo Cisterciensis, qui hactenus liber ab omni exactione exstiterat, lanam suam universam ad regis redemptionem dedit': *Rogeris de Wendover liber qui dicitur Flores Historiarum*, ed. by Henry G. Hewlett, 3 vols, Rolls Series (London, 1886-89), I (1886), 225; see also *Matthaei Parisiensis monachi Sancti Albani Chronica Majora*, ed. by H. R. Luard, 7 vols, Rolls Series (London, 1872-83), II (1874), 399. On Wendover as a source for the reign of King John, see Gransden, *Historical Writing*, pp. 359-60.

14 'Abbates vero illi, nondum communicato caeterorum coabbatum suorum consilio, et timentes, si regiae favissent exactioni, ordinem postmodum in serviles consuetudines redigi, simpliciter responderunt regi se nullatenus aliquam exactoriam praestare pecuniam, nisi communi consilio et assensu generalis capituli': Coggeshall, *Chronicon Anglicanum*, p. 102.

15 Coggeshall, *Chronicon Anglicanum*, p. 103.

16 'diverso modo de instanti negotio tractabant, cum nonnulli eorum animum regis contra eos exacerbatum pecuniarum oblatione placare censerent; alii vero e contra pecuniam aliquam solvere dissuaderent, ne hujusmodi dationis occasione antiqua ordinis libertas deinceps exactionis servitute premeretur, atque in hunc modum saeculari potestati paulatim ordo subjiceretur': Coggeshall, *Chronicon Anglicanum*, p. 105.

17 In a Chapter record of 1200 Hubert Walter is described as 'Ordini nostro gratum et acceptum': *Statuta*, I (1933), 259 (1200/55).

18 Coggeshall, *Chronicon Anglicanum*, pp. 106-9.

19 Coggeshall, *Chronicon Anglicanum*, p. 147.

20 'pro eo quod eos vexasset': *Annales de Margan*, in *Annales Monastici*, I (1864), 1-40 (pp. 25-26). Roger of Howden merely records the reconciliation of John and the Cistercians at Lincoln in 1200, and the king's promise to build an abbey where he would be buried: *Chronica Magistri Rogeri de Houedene*, ed. by W. Stubbs, 4 vols, Rolls Series (London, 1868-71), IV (1871), 144.

21 *Annales de Margan*, pp. 29-30.

22 On the expedition, see Ralph V. Turner, *King John* (London: Longman, 1994), p. 42.

23 *Earldom of Gloucester Charters: The Charters and Scribes of the Earls and Countesses of Glamorgan to A. D. 1217*, ed. by Robert B. Patterson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), pp. 5-6. As Count John in 1194 John issued a confirmation for Margam (see no. 138, pp. 227-28).

24 *Annales de Margan*, pp. 30.

25 'At illi omnes una voce responderunt, se pecuniam non habere in propria potestate, nec velle habere, sed custodes et dispensatores esse

eleemsynarum fidelium, quas illi pro salute animarum suarum et omnium antecessorum suorum et liberorum Deo omnipotenti ac beatae Virgini Mariae largiti sunt in usus monachorum et religiosorum, pauperumque ac debilium, pupillorum et orphanorum atque viduarum, et non in redditus regum vel stipendia militum': Newburgh, *Historia rerum Anglicarum*, II (1885), 510-11.

26 'Anno MCCX, rex Johannes gravissimam imponit mulctam generaliter super omnes domos religiosorum totius Angliae; sed maxime Cisterciense oppressit, nec ad annuum capitulum Cistercii abbates ire permisit' (In the year 1210 King John imposed a general and very grievous fine on all the religious houses throughout England. but he oppressed the Cistercians most severely, nor would he allow the abbots to go to the General Chapter at Cîteaux): Coggeshall, *Chronicon Anglicanum*, p. 163.

27 Paris, *Chronica Majora*, II (1874), 530-31.

28 *Annales Monasterii de Waverleia*, in *Annales Monastici*, II (1865), 265.

29 *Annales Monasterii Bermundeseia*, in *Annales Monastici*, III (1861), pp. 451-52, noted in Knowles, *Monastic Order*, p. 369.

30 Forde was a daughter house of Waverley, itself a daughter of L'Aumône (diocese of Chartres). Meaux was a daughter house of Fountains Abbey and thus a 'granddaughter' of Clairvaux.

31 'vir utique bonus et bene litteratus, sed omnibus hujus monasterii tunc incognitus': *Chronica monasterii de Melsa*, ed. by E. A. Bond, 3 vols, Rolls Series (London, 1866-68), I (1866), 289.

32 'Existimabat autem idem pater abbas praefatum Alexandrum periculis quae nuper Thomae abbati 3, et praecipue de ablatione grangiae de Wharroma, imminebant, succurrere posse. Ipse namque Alexander bene notus et satis familiaris fuerat praescripto Huberto Cantuariensi archiepiscopo.': *Chronica de Melsa*, I (1866), 289. The abbot of Forde in 1197, when Alexander moved to Meaux, was John, previously abbot of Bindon, who was to be King John's confessor: *Heads of Religious Houses: England and Wales*, i, 940-1216, ed. by David Knowles, C. N. L. Brooke, and V. C. M. London, second edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 132.

33 *Giraldi Cambrensis Opera*, I (1861), 103.

34 *Chronica de Melsa*, I (1866), 289-96.

35 *Chronica de Melsa*, I (1866), 326-7.

36 *Chronica de Melsa*, I (1866), 327.

37 *Chronica de Melsa*, I (1866), 328-29.

38 *Chronica de Melsa*, I (1866), 345-46.

39 The chronicler again mentions the 1000 marks demanded from his abbey: *Chronica de Melsa*, I (1866), 346.

40 *The Red Book of the Exchequer*, ed. by Hubert Hall, 3 vols, Rolls Series (London, 1896), II (1896), 772-73.

41 See, for instance, Janet Burton, 'The Monastic World', in *England and Europe in the Reign of Henry III*, ed. by B. K. U. Weiler and I. W. Rowlands (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), pp. 121-36, especially 127-32 for discussion of the English Cistercians and the General Chapter in the thirteenth century.

42 'Eodem anno albi monachi, in principio interdicti cessantes, postea ad mandatum abbatis sui principalis divina celebrare praesumpserunt': Paris, *Chronica Majora*, II (1874), 524.

43 'Sanximus etiam ut propter communia interdicta episcoporum nulla ecclesiarum ordinis uestri a diuinis compellatur offitiis abstinere, sed liceat omnibus de ordine uestro, excommunicatis et interdictis eiectis, clausis ianuis, summissa uoce diuina celebrare sollempnia' (We also affirm that none of the churches of your order should be compelled to abstain from performance of divine offices on account of common interdicts of bishops, but it should all be permitted to all of your order, having barred all excommunicates and those under interdict, to celebrate mass behind locked doors in subdued tones): *Narrative and Legislative Texts from Early Cîteaux*, ed. and trans. by Chrysogonus Waddell (Cîteaux: Commentarii Cistercienses, 1999), pp. 389-94 (p. 393).

44 'sed haec praesumptio cum ad summi pontificis notitiam pervenisset, ad majorem sui confusionem denuo sunt suspensi': Paris, *Chronica Majora*, II (1874), 524.

45 Paris, *Chronica Majora,* II (1874), 524.

46 'Abbates de Anglia, qui contra immunitates Ordinis interdicti sententiam servaverunt, tribus diebus sint in levi culpa, uno eorum in pane et aqua': *Statuta*, I (1933), 351 (1208/28).

47 'exceptis abbatibus de Margan et de Melsa et de Bello loco, qui, quoniam steterunt pro libertate Ordinis, praedictam poenam non sustineant, sed penitus absolvuntur': *Statuta,* I (1933), 351 (1208/28).

48 'Abbatibus de Rivals [Rievaulx], de Gardone [Garendon] et de Varvelia [Waverley] committitur et 25 marchas et 8 sol. et 4 stellingos qui pro interdicto Angliae expensi sunt per abbatias Angliae colligant, et infra Pascha Claramvallem reportentur, Cistercio unde sumpti sunt usque ad sequens Capitulum generale persolvendi': *Statuta*, I (1933), 367 (1209/48). In 1211 it was noted that the three abbots had collected the specified amount of money and the matter was referred by the Chapter to the abbot of Margam 'ut eis suggerat quatenus usque ad Pascha mittant easdem marchas Cistercium unde sumpti sunt': *Statuta,* I (1933), 386 (1211/38).

49 Christopher Holdsworth, 'Royal Cistercians: Beaulieu, her Daughters, and Rewley', in *Thirteenth-Century England*, IV, ed. by P. R. Coss and S. D. Lloyd (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1994), pp. 139-50.
50 For a discussion of John's gifts to monasteries and other charitable and devotional activities, see Paul Webster, *King John and Religion* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2015), pp. 110-30.
51 *Rotuli Litterarum Clausarum in Turri Londinensi Asservati, 1204-27*, ed. by T. Hardy, 2 vols (London: Record Commission, 1833–44, I (1833), 2b, 3b, 12b, 18.
52 *Rotuli Litterarum Clausarum*, I (1833), 26.
53 *Rotuli Litterarum Clausarum*, I (1833), 32b.
54 *Rotuli Litterarum Clausarum*, I (1833), 101.
55 *Rotuli Litterarum Clausarum*, I (1833), 66; *Rotuli Litterarum Patentium in Turri Londinensi Asservati 1201–16*, ed. by T. D. Hardy (London: Record Commission, 1835), p. 67; *Rotuli Litterarum Clausarum*, I (1833), 148b, 149.
56 *Rotuli Litterarum Patentium*, pp. 107, 109, 110b, 113.
57 *Rotuli Chartarum in Turro Londinensi Asservati*, ed. by T. D. Hardy (London: Record Commission, 1837), pp. 130, 146, 153, 163b.
58 *Rotuli Chartarum*, pp. 83, 164b.
59 *Rotuli Chartarum*, pp. 120b, 145b; *Rotuli Litterarum Clausarum*, I, 150.
60 *Rotuli Chartarum*, pp. 44b, 149b, 167b, 168, 174, 206. For Strata Marcella see *The Charters of the Abbey of Ystrad Marchell*, ed. by Graham C. G. Thomas (Aberystwyth: National Library of Wales, 1997), nos 24-25 (pp. 167-8).
61 *Rotuli Litterarum Clausarum*, I (1833), 148, 150.
62 *Rotuli Chartarum*, p. 101.
63 *Rotuli Litterarum Patentium*, pp. 146b, 147b.
64 *Statuta*, I (1933), 340–41 (1207/38), 345 (1207/62).
65 *Statuta*, I (1933), 232–465.
66 The range of cases relating to English houses is demonstrated by the record of the General Chapter for 1199: the foundation of Cleeve Abbey by the abbot of Revesby, without the consent of the General Chapter (*Statuta*, I (1933), 235-36 (1199/17) [*Twelfth-Century Statutes*, p. 427 (16)]; concerning a book belonging to the abbot of 'de Voto' (identified by Canivez and Waddell as La Valasse in Normandy) which had been kept – possibly without permission or for longer than agreed – by the abbot of Stratford Langthorne, committed to the abbot of Savigny (*Statuta*, I (1933), 236 (1199/18) [*Twelfth-Century Statutes*, pp. 427-28 (17)]; the petition of 'Griffin', prince of north Wales, to build an abbey, which was referred for enquiry by the abbots of Margam, Whitland, and Buildwas (*Statuta*, I

(1933), 236, 1199/21 [*Twelfth-Century Statutes*, pp. 428-79 (20); a dispute between the abbeys of Cymer and Aberconwy, referred to the abbots of Buildwas, Dore, and Croxden (*Statuta*, I (1933), 237 (1199/22) [*Twelfth-Century Statutes*, p. 429 (21); punishment of the abbot of Quarr, no reason given, conveyed to him by the abbot of Forde ; order to the abbot of Fountains to seek reconciliation with the archbishop of York (*Statuta*, I (1933), 238 (1199/31) [*Twelfth-Century Statutes*, p. 432 (30); order to the abbot of Fountains to seek reconciliation with the archbishop of York 1199/55 or 57: *Statuta*, I (1933), 244 (1199/57) [*Twelfth-Century Statutes*, pp. 440-41 (55).

67 See above.

68 *Statuta*, I (1933), 374 (1210/30), 377 (1210/42). For the role of the abbot of Clairvaux, informing the abbots of Rievaulx, Garendon, and Waverley, of their commission, and the abbot of Fountains of the need to present himself at the next Chapter to seek pardon for neglect of visitation of his daughter house of Lysa in Norway, see *Statuta*, I (1933), 375 (1210/32, 33)); he also was to announce their penances to the abbots of Fountains and Kirkstead for similar failures (*Statuta*, I (1933), 376 (1210/35).

69 See, for instance, Waddell, ed., *Narrative and Legislative Texts*, p. 262 (1193/16), p. 269 (1193/38,39), p. 413 (1198/32).

70 *Rotuli Chartarum*, p. 44b; *Rotuli Litterarum Clausarum,* I (1833), 122. How the order for destruction of the abbey relates to the debt of 1200 marks recorded in the pipe rolls is unclear, but it is certain that this amount was owing by the abbot from 1211 (The Great *Roll of the Pipe for the Thirteenth Year of King John, Michaelmas 1211*, ed. by Doris M. Stenton (Pipe Roll Society, 1953), p. 235) through 1212 (*The Great Roll of the Pipe for the Fourteenth Year of King John, Michaelmas 1212*, ed. by Margaret S. Walker (Pipe Roll Society, 1954), p. 160) and 1214 (*The Great Roll of the Pipe for the Sixteenth Year of King John, Michaelmas* 1212, ed. by Patricia M. Barnes (Pipe Roll Society, 1955), p. 136), and well into the reign of Henry III. In 1253 the king remitted the final 300 marks owing from the debt of 1200 marks: *Close Rolls of the Reign of Henry III Preserved in the Public Record Office*, 14 vols (1902-38), VII (1927), p. 398.