

**A CORRODY
FROM LEICESTER ABBEY**

A.D. 1393-4

WITH SOME NOTES ON CORRODIES

BY

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A Corrody from Leicester Abbey

The interesting record of which a translation follows was discovered by Mr. George Farnham, while engaged in making extracts from the De Banco rolls in the Public Record Office. Apart from its local interest, its details are curious in themselves and deserve some comment. The translation, made from the original roll by Miss Salisbury, has been presented by Mr. Farnham to the Society.

The suit of which the record is given was brought in 1393-4 by the four persons named at the beginning against Philip Repyngdon, abbot of Leicester, ostensibly to recover arrears of a corrody, or allowance of victuals of various kinds, granted to them by indenture made between them and the abbot and convent of Leicester on 7 May 1393. As the story may appear somewhat perplexing to readers in the shape in which it appears in the document, and some reference to other sources is necessary in order to explain the matter fully, it may be told in a slightly extended form.

Early in 1378 William Kereby succeeded the able and genial William Cloune, of whom Knighton has left a vivid character-sketch,¹ as abbot of the monastery of St. Mary of the Meadows at Leicester.² After fifteen years of rule, he resigned in May 1393, and his successor, Philip Repyngdon, afterwards bishop of Lincoln, was elected in the following month.³ It was necessary to make some provision for the livelihood of the retiring abbot, who, though released from all active duty by his resignation, continued to live within the precincts of the abbey, with the dignity which was appropriate to a former head of the house. It appears that, shortly before delivering his formal act of resignation, Kereby, with the consent of the convent, made

¹Knighton [Rolls ser.] II, 125-7.

²Congé d'élire, 28 Jan.; signification of assent, 24 Feb.; temporalities restored, 12 April (*Cal. Pat.* 1377-81, pp. 104, 124, 179.)

³Congé d'él., 18 May; sig. ass. 12 June; temp. rest. 4 July (*Cal. Pat.* 1391-6, pp. 266, 279, 305.)

provision for his own future maintenance by assigning a fixed annual grant of money, dress, food, drink, and fuel for the term of his life to four trustees, in the form of a corrody chargeable upon the revenues and stores of the monastery. Whether this was a common method of procedure, the present writer is unable to say. Records of provision for abbots and priors on similar occasions are numerous, but it was customary to do such business after resignation had been received, and for the new head of the house with his convent to make the grant directly to his predecessor. The present case, at any rate, seems to be exceptional, and it is possible that Kereby was so infirm that a special method of dealing with it was desirable. Of the four persons chosen, William Chiselden was a clerk well known in Leicester, who had been a canon of the Newarke college since 1369, and had become dean in 1390.⁴ The three others were laymen, one of them, Thomas Kereby, being evidently a near relation of the ex-abbot.⁵

It is possible that the grant of the corrody was the last official act of abbot Kereby, and that he resigned on the same day, after having thus made provision for himself. He died within the year. It should be possible, from the statements given in the accompanying document, to calculate the day of his death. We do not know, however, the date from which the corrody was supposed to run, whether from 7 May, 1393, the day on which it was granted, or from the preceding Easter. Moreover, the calculation of certain items in the corrody, as specified, is apparently inaccurate.⁶ It seems, from other items, that, at the time of Kereby's death, it had about four weeks to run before the end of the year. As the suit in the record of which these details appear was brought in Hilary term 1393-4, it is clear that these four weeks cannot be reckoned in a year which started on 7 May, 1393, and it may therefore be surmised that the grant

⁴See *Assoc. Soc. Reports*.

⁵The origin of the name is uncertain, but Careby in Lincolnshire, near Stamford, was probably the home of the family. The name Kereby is quite distinct from Kirkby, although, by confusion between the two, Kereby in Yorkshire, on the Hambleton hills, has assumed the modern form Cold Kirby.

⁶It is very hard, *e.g.*, to understand by what process of arithmetic the total of 3119 loaves in the year was reached. The total ought to be 3536, if the same reckoning is used as in the case of the beer.

was reckoned back to Easter or Ladyday 1393. If this was so, it may fairly be assumed that Kereby died about the middle of February 1394, when there was still approximately four weeks to run before Easter or Ladyday, which in this year fell within three days of one another.

As the grant of the corrody was limited by the duration of Kereby's life, it is obvious that the supply of victuals named in it should have ceased with his death, and as a matter of fact it did. But, as it was stated in terms of money and victuals for a year, some legal means were necessary to exclude the abbot and convent from paying the surplus which was nominally still due. In order to secure them from this obligation and to obtain a formal record of their indemnity, they brought a friendly suit into court, in which the four executors claimed that the corrody was in arrears, and asked for restitution and damages. It is needless to emphasise the purely fictitious nature of the suit, which ended naturally in the complete withdrawal of the executors' claim. They remitted the arrears freely to the abbot and convent and retired from a suit, the real significance of which was that it was brought to insure the monastery against any claim upon it for the amounts mentioned.

Before commenting upon the text of the record, something should be said about the general character of the type of grant which it illustrates. The word corrody, although it survives in the title of certain old-established charities, is practically obsolete and conveys little to a modern intelligence. Its derivation is not without interest. For the varieties of form in which the word and its near relations are found in European languages the *New English Dictionary* may be consulted. It may be said briefly that there is an old French word *conrei*, derived from a Romance source, which has the primary sense of preparation or equipment, the second syllable being equivalent to the similar syllable in our word "array." In later Latin this word appears in the forms *conredum* and *conredium*, which are very close to the Romanic form or type *conredo*, and become modified into *corredium*, *corradium*, *corrodium*, with numerous variations which are unnecessary to name, as in England the last form prevailed to the exclusion of all others, and produced the English word "corrody." The sense, however, was ex-

tended to do duty for several ideas suggested by the primary connotation of equipage, and among others, it was especially applied to the provision made by a feudal vassal for the entertainment of his lord when he made his round. The corrody was the provender or prebend which was the lord's due. By a general extension of this sense, any kind of provision granted as a regular obligation might be called a corrody; but, as words have a habit of settling down into a special groove of which their final choice is little more than an accident, the corrody became first and foremost a grant of money or victuals, or of other means of livelihood, made by a monastery or other religious or charitable corporation to dependents upon its bounty.

There was thus little to mark the distinction between the corrody and other forms of pension or annuity. But, while pensions and annuities, generally speaking, implied grants of money, the corrody bore the implication of a grant of a definite supply of goods, chiefly in the form of provisions, from the common store of a religious house. Further, although the primary idea of all such grants, whether of money or provisions, was no doubt founded upon the obligation of monasteries to extend charity freely, the custom of accepting payment in return for them became general. Corrodies, pensions, and annuities were saleable commodities. Not all, it is true, were sold. The natural way of pensioning off an old servant was to provide him with a lodging in the monastery and with a daily allowance of victuals from the kitchen and buttery. The wages of a lay master-mason or lay cook would be met by a grant of a similar corrody, or this method could be used for the maintenance of a vicar or parish chaplain of a church in the neighbourhood of or appropriated to the convent. Where the corrodium could be made use of in this way, the grantors stood to suffer no loss, assuming that the grantee was a competent person. The unsatisfactory side of the system was seen where the king or a noble patron could exercise the right of forcing the convent to grant corrodies to his own nominees. It was an easy and recognised custom for the king to pension off some deserving person by presenting him to a corrody in his gift in some monastery of which he happened to be a patron; but such grants were of no advantage to the convent and loaded them with expenses for which there was no adequate return.

The sale of corrodies, on the other hand, was also a speculative means of profit.⁷ The difficulties of monastic finance are apparent to any student of documents which throw light upon the internal life of a medieval monastery. The larger its revenues the more exacting were the demands which it had to meet. The indiscriminate exhibition of hospitality to strangers and wayfarers was a serious burden to any religious house. Outgoings were frequently out of proportion to income, and there is evidence that many monasteries were chronically in debt. In the need of ready money, the sale of corrodies proved an easy way of meeting or tiding over a deficit. To the grantee they offered a tempting speculation. For a lump sum he could buy an annuity which included food and lodging for the rest of his life, and the partial continuance of which was assured to his widow, if she survived him. The monastery on the other secured the ready cash of which it stood immediately in need. How far that sum was calculated upon the health and prospects of the applicant, it is impossible to say: if such considerations entered into the grant, they must have been founded upon guess-work. In those days the average life was shorter than it is now, and it does not seem fair to assume that the granting of corrodies at a few years' purchase, especially to persons whose more active days were over, habitually landed a monastery in loss. To do so would be to assume that the corrodinary, in the majority of cases, survived the term for which his payment was reckoned, remaining a standing burden upon the revenues of the convent; and this is not very likely.

Nevertheless the principle involved was unsound. The corrody, in a large number of instances, provided lodging for the grantee within or close to the precincts of the monastery. He was a *perhendinans* or boarder,⁸ and with him came his family. Thus there became attached to many monasteries a body of permanent lodgers who had nothing to do with the special purposes

⁷The most recent discussion of the financial aspect of these grants is by R. H. Snape, *English Monastic Finances in the Later Middle Ages*, Cambridge, 1926, pp. 139-145. Mr. Snape makes full allowance for the arguments in extenuation of the corrody system advanced by Dr. Hunt in his introduction to *Two Cartularies of Bath Priory* (Somerset Record Soc.)

⁸Cf. the language of 9 Edw. II, stat. i, c. 11: *pro corrodüs, pensionibus velprehendinationibus* (sic).

of the establishment, and introduced the distractions of the world into the immediate surroundings of the cloister.⁹ Examples of the danger of admitting boarders may be found in the existing records of monastic visitations, and this doubtless was considered by bishops, when they issued the frequent injunction forbidding the grant of corrodies, pensions, and annuities by the convent without episcopal licence. The financial weakness to the monastery, however, was the main consideration; for the cash received in a single sum for a corrody would naturally be used to meet the pressing needs of the moment, and would be spent before its benefit could be felt. The temptation to grant corrodies was great, and it is obvious that a monastery could burden itself with corrodies which its resources were inadequate to supply.¹⁰

Examples of corrodies are fairly common, and we will confine ourselves here to a few illustrations. The fifteenth-century registers of the abbot and convent of Peterborough, two of which fortunately survive, supply several instances.¹¹ On 28 October, 1411, a corrody was granted by the abbot and convent to John Sutton, esq., for term of life, including a daily allowance of two white loaves and one brown loaf, two gallons of ale from the abbot's cellar, and a whole dish from the abbot's kitchen, with an *intermissum*, i.e., *entremet*, and another half-dish, according to the variety of days and seasons. In addition to this, he had

⁹For the amusing case of Lady Audley, received with her dogs at the nunnery of Langley as a boarder, see *Visitations of Religious Houses* (Lincoln Record Soc.), II, 175.

¹⁰Instances may be taken from the same volume as above. At Langley in 1440 a corrody, which had been running six years, had been sold for twenty marks, obviously not a very profitable transaction (II, 175). At Laund in the same year three corrodies had been running about four years, at a cost to the convent of sixteen to eighteen marks a year. As they had been sold for 87½ marks down, the convent within the next two years would be paying them at a loss (II, 178). *Ibid.* III, 56, shows that the Peterborough corrodies were sold for substantial sums. Underwode, a clothier, mentioned below, bought his for £100, and 100 marks were paid by a man called Perpouente. The corrody of Thomas Mortymer, of which no details survive, was bought for £300, and cost the abbey £20 a year: i.e., it was bought at fifteen years purchase.

¹¹The earlier of these, now in the British Museum (ADD. MS. 25288), is the register of abbots Genge and Depyng (1397-1438). The second in the chapter library at Peterborough, is that of abbots Assheton and Ramsey (1438-1496). These are referred to in the following notes as Depyng and Assheton respectively.

a yearly allowance of twenty shillings in silver, a furred robe of the suit or livery worn by the abbot's esquires or its value from the abbot's wardrobe, and a chamber or lodging, fuel and candles, and hay and fodder for his horse, while he stayed in the abbey. In this particular case the final proviso indicates that the corrody was granted for occasional visits rather than with a view to Sutton's permanent residence within the precincts: at any rate, when he came there, he would always find a room at his disposal and all provisions for his lodging.¹²

In the case of Robert Bulwer, to whom a corrody was granted on 5 May 1414, we have a yeoman living outside the monastery and at a little distance, who has to send to the abbey for the maintenance specified. The victuals included are two "prikkydloves" and one loaf called "comonwhitebred," and two gallons of the better kind of ale daily from the abbot's cellar, to be sent for once or twice a week, on Wednesdays and Saturdays, when the new ale was brewed. He might, however, have threepence a day from the abbot's receiver in lieu of the bread and beer. He was also to have a dish daily from the abbot's kitchen, such as was served to two of the abbot's gentlemen in the abbot's hall at their nine o'clock breakfast only. The grant also gave him a robe of the livery of the abbot's yeomen without fur and a cloth robe of the colour of the same livery yearly for his wife Agnes, three stone of cheese, ten pounds of Paris candles, and six cart-loads of fuel; but instead of the last three items he might take two shillings, fifteen pence, and 6s. 8d. respectively from the abbot's receiver. Further, he received a plot of land called Tanholdwong in the demesne of the manor of Eyebury, extending from Tanholdlane to another plot called Untyme, which he was to enclose at his own expense, the abbot undertaking repairs. After the death of Robert, half the corrody was to be continued to his wife, as long as she remained a widow.¹³

Of a similar nature is the later, but undated corrody of John Underwode of Deeping, who had eight monks' loaves and eight gallons of the better beer from the abbot's pantry and cellar, to be fetched twice a week. As he lived out of convenient reach

¹²Depyng, fo. 55.

¹³Depyng, fo. 60 d.

of the abbey, he was allowed twopence a day for his kitchen, to be paid by the receiver at the end of the week. His yearly robes or suits of clothes were a furred robe of the yeomen's suit when the abbot gave full livery, and one without fur when he gave summer livery, with a cloth robe of the same suit for Isabel his wife. The abbot undertook to send him two stone of cheese, two dozen Paris candles, certain allowances of oatmeal and salt, and four loads of "ballowwood, *i.e.*, logs, at Midsummer. As in the previous corrody, an equivalent for lodging is supplied by the grant of a tenement with a stall in the market-stead, without lands and tenements, lately held by Richard Bracier. He was excused from summons to the hundred court at Castor and the market court at Peterborough. Half the corrody, as in the previous instance, was to be continued to his wife.¹⁴

An instance of a royal corrodiary occurs in April, 1439, when, by the king's request, a corrody granted to John Stokke, serjeant at the gate of the king's hostel, was cancelled in favour of an extended grant to the same John and William Stokke the younger, his son, for life. Precedent for the form of grant is given in the corrody held by John Swan, the details of which still remain¹⁵ and are identical with those of John Sutton's corrody in 1411. In the present case, a clause is added providing that the grantees may freely dispose of the corrody during their lifetimes or that of the survivor.¹⁶

From this and the previous examples it appears that the esquire's or gentleman's corrody takes a fixed form, including a definite provision of certain necessaries and comforts of life, with a lodging within the abbey precinct. The yeoman's corrody follows well marked lines, but the proportions of the allowances included vary. Thus in February 1444-5 there is a grant to John Brenne alias Cook, for term of life, of four white loaves of "prikkidbreed" and fourteen brown loaves of "yomannesbreed" weekly, with seven gallons of beer, mixed from the better and middling sorts, from the abbot's pantry and cellar, a daily dish of flesh or fish according to the day, as is served to one of the

¹⁴Depyng, fo. 142. A hundred pounds was paid for this corrody (*Visitations*, u.s., III, 56).

¹⁵Depyng, fo. 56 d.

¹⁶Assheton, fo. 5 d.

abbot's yeomen in his hall. He is to have a dwelling-house in the town of Peterborough, a yearly robe of the livery of the abbot's yeomen, four cart-loads of fuel and twenty silver shillings. The abbot and convent are to put the house in repair for John, after which all further repairs are to devolve upon him, an arrangement identical with that usually made with regard to the vicarage houses of appropriated churches. The grantee is excluded from leasing the corrody or the house.¹⁷

The corrody granted to Henry Hopkyn of Peterborough in July 1447, is of a mixed type, as is indicated by the nature of his yearly robe, a furred suit of which one half was to be of the livery of the abbot's gentlemen, and the other of that of the abbot's yeomen. It contains no concession of a lodging or house. Otherwise, the provisions consist of a weekly allowance of twelve monk's loaves (*panes monachales*), twelve loaves of "spitel-breed," twelve gallons of the best convent ale and twelve of the middling ale called "howsoldale," from the abbot's pantry and cellar. The yearly grants are six cart-loads of the fuel called "baloughwode," and four of the underwood called "kydes," *i.e.*, faggots, to be felled and carried at the cost of the abbot and convent, a quarter of oats for making flour, four bushels of salt, 37 pounds of Paris candles, and the robe aforesaid, half the corrody is to go in survivorship to Hopkyn's wife Alice, except the robe, for the term of her life.¹⁸

In none of these cases have we any statement of the consideration for which the corrody was granted. In some of them it may be assumed that it was a free reward for service to the monastery, and it is obvious that the king's corrodiary would pay nothing for admission to his privileges. There is, however, one remarkable case from Peterborough in which a grant amounting to a large corrody was made in return for certain services given of another kind.¹⁹ The document has been printed already by the present writer, and only a summary is needed here. On 16 April 1456, an indenture was sealed between the abbot and convent and John Delabere, bishop of St. Davids,

¹⁷Assheton, fo. 14.

¹⁸Assheton, fo. 21 d. From Alnwick's visitation in 1446, it appears that Hopkyn was the woodward of the abbot and convent (*Visitations*, u.s. III, 68.)

¹⁹Assheton, ff. 44 d. 45. See *Assoc. Soc. Reports* XXXV.

a prelate chiefly notorious for the peculiar circumstances of his elevation to the episcopate and his equally peculiar methods of diocesan administration, as narrated by the not unprejudiced Gascoigne.²⁰ In return for his gift of his pontifical insignia to the abbey, the abbot and convent undertook to keep his solemn obit once a year after his death. More than this, they gave him a life occupancy of a chamber called the White chamber adjoining the chapel and wardrobes, and of all housing within "the door at the over end of the cloister stair," with the vaults known respectively as the wine cellar and the Maundy house beneath the said chambers and chapel. These details add something to our knowledge of the topography of the abbey, and it can hardly be doubted that the rooms referred to were in the western range of the cloister, and that the chapel mentioned was the abbot's chapel. His men and servants were given the chamber known as Gyldale's chamber, from a corrodiary of some note who had occupied them some years before,²¹ in the outer court above the prison house, with a stable and hay-house in the same court sufficient for four horses and twelve cart-loads of hay. Similarly he was to have a lodging in the manor house at Eyebury, consisting of a leaded chamber called the prior's chamber with the adjoining passages, chambers, etc., within the door opening against the stairs of the great chamber at the upper end of the hall. Here also he was allowed a stable, hay-house and wood-house sufficient for the same number of horses and amount of hay and for twenty cart-loads of ballow-wood. He was free to use the hall and kitchen, with all the buildings within the manor, the gardens and two of the ponds, and might walk and disport himself freely where he would, hawking, hunting, fishing and fowling anywhere in the properties of the manor that were not leased to others, and keeping two horses in the park. He might also make free use of the moated grange at Singlesholt which belonged to the monastery, with free ingress and egress in all the places aforesaid. The hay and fuel already mentioned were to be supplied by the abbot and convent from their woods and pasture called Eastwood, Westwood, and the New Frith. All

²⁰*Loci e Libro Veritatum*, ed. Rogers, pp. 25, 35.

²¹See *Visitations*, u.s. I, 119, 120. From *Ibid.* III, 57, it appears that Gyldale or Gildhalle was abbot Depyng's brother.

this was for the term of the bishop's life; and, whenever he chose to come to the abbey or Eyebury, he was to have daily meat and drink sufficient for him and suitable to his estate, while like allowances were to be made to his gentlemen and yeomen according to their degree. It was provided that the bishop and his servants must not kill more than two deer yearly in the park of Eyebury, and that any surplus fuel and hay at the end of the year should count towards his next year's allowance. He was further excused from doing repairs.

It should be noted, however, that, while the extensive grant of lodgings involved no rent, the allowance of victuals was paid for by the bishop, at a weekly rate of 6s. 8d. for himself, sixteen pence for each of his gentlemen, and twelve pence for each of his yeomen, to be paid in quarterly instalments. In case that the abbot and convent were to infringe the covenant by letting the premises to someone else, they should forfeit ten pounds to the bishop, which, if in arrear, might be distrained upon their property in Northamptonshire.

This handsome grant differs somewhat from the usual type of corrody, and it was certainly not made merely on account of the bishop's reversionary gift of his mitre and other insignia, though this was no doubt a benefaction which added to the treasure of the house. As a matter of fact, the visitation of the monastery by bishop Alnwick in 1446 shows that, before the promotion of Delabere to the episcopate, the abbot and convent had been engaged in financial transactions with him; and the grant of 1454 was probably a mortgage to cover a loan. How far Delabere took advantage of it does not appear. He continued to exercise his office in his distant see of St. David's, either personally or by deputy until 1460, when he resigned. The register which records this indenture gives us some insight into the circumstances of the grant; for, on 30 March in the same year, the bishop made a general acquittance to the abbot of all dues.²² This was certainly a preliminary to the indenture, and, on the day on which it was sealed, the abbot, by letters patent, conceded him a yearly rent of £32 out of the manor of Kettering, for his immense benefits and for his acquittance of a great and

²²Assheton, fo. 46.

notable sum borrowed from him at diverse times by the abbot.²³ There is a further note on 24 December 1457, of a quit-claim to him by the abbot of all actions and demands, concurrent with a receipt by Delabere of £132 due of the annual rent from Kettering, and of £44 which the abbot owed him.²⁴ From all this it is obvious that his financial relations with the abbey were constant and complicated, though there is not quite enough detail to determine their precise history. Such examples as these might easily be multiplied from the records of other monasteries, and do not exhaust the evidence from Peterborough itself, where we know of other and earlier corrodies, particularly of the corrody known by the strange name of "Daungerousmester," which was apparently a standing corrody which passed from one holder to another chosen by the abbot and convent.²⁵ Those which we have cited are sufficient to illustrate the general nature and varieties of this type of grant, and to show its normal part in the financial condition of the houses which used it, whether for the purpose of pensioning off old servants, or as a method of raising funds at short notice.

So much, then, for the general nature of a corrody. Whether the retiring allowance for an abbot or prior could strictly be called a corrody is doubtful. He was vowed to stability: he might not leave his monastery for another without special cause. If, as often happened, he was elected to the headship of another house, or, like Repyngdon, the successor of Kereby at Leicester, became a bishop, he did not thereby lose his connexion with his old home. It was the natural place to which he returned in his old age, or at which he might eventually desire his body to be

²³Assheton, ff. 46, 47. In 1446 it was stated that the manor of Kettering and, as was said, the manor of Oundle, had been mortgaged to the bishop as security for a heavy loan to the abbot (*Visitations* III, 70, 71.) It looks therefore as if in 1454 the mortgage of Kettering had been renewed under another form, in which a rent was reserved from the manor, and the rest of the security transferred to the premises in the Peterborough indenture. There is no record in the register of the alleged mortgage of Oundle.

²⁴Assheton, fo. 45 d.

²⁵This corrody is mentioned in 1391, in a deed among the miscellaneous documents and memoranda at the beginning of the MS. known as the *Liber Feodorum* of Henry Pyghtesle, a Peterborough book which was acquired for the cathedral library a few years ago by the present dean of Winchester, then archdeacon of Northampton. The title of the corrody seems to imply that it was granted to craftsmen to whose trade there was some danger attached.

buried; and, if he retired from its headship, it was bound to provide for his maintenance. After the visitation of Peterborough by bishop Alnwick at the end of 1437, the abbot, John Depyng, resigned his office, and his successor was ordered by the bishop to ordain a sufficient maintenance for him. This order, however, as the answer to it shows, was regarded in the light of a licence or permission which the abbot and convent were prepared to carry out so far as their resources allowed. It is not definitely stated in which part of the monastery he was lodged, but it is very likely that accommodation was found for him in that portion of the abbot's lodging which was afterwards granted to bishop Delabere. He had his own household, one of the monks as his chaplain, a yeoman and a groom, and two serving-men. Every day he was allowed four white loaves and on fast-days three, while the four servants had four brown loaves daily, which works out at a normal allowance of 54 loaves a week for all. The whole household had twenty gallons of beer a week. The number of dishes of meat and fish is not stated, but their weekly value came to four shillings. Of other commodities he had ten cart-loads of fuel a year, candles and cressets to the value of 13s. 4d., and six shillings worth of table-cloths, towels, and napkins, with two dozen pewter vessels. Each of the servants was given thirty shillings a year for wages and two suits of clothes, with other necessary vesture from the chamberlain's office, from which the abbot received his garments. In addition, "for the solace of his advanced years," he had a grant of five pounds a year.²⁶

This, although a considerable grant, is not as large as that for which abbot Kereby took order, and the allowance in money is much less. When John Assheby, prior of Daventry, resigned in 1420, his household was limited to a single servant, and he had forty shillings for his habit, and another forty for wine, spices, and other luxuries. His allowance of bread was fourteen of the best convent loaves called myches, and of beer ten gallons a week. This ordinance is long and elaborate, and only these outstanding features, which are of value for the sake of comparison, need be noted.²⁷ In this case, too, as in a good many others, the decree was left to the appointment of the bishop, who doubtless kept in mind what the convent could afford. But in any case,

²⁶Assheton, fo. 6.

²⁷*Visitations*, u.s. I, 39-42.

the convent was obliged in honour to make a suitable provision for its former head, who, except in the smallest and poorest houses, could hardly be turned out into the common infirmary of the monks without some damage to his dignity.

The allowance in the present instance is exceptionally large, though the formidable yearly totals give it a somewhat deceptive appearance as compared with cases in which we are left to work out such totals for ourselves, it is to be hoped with greater accuracy. The really exceptional feature, as we have already remarked, is the assignment of the grant as a corrody to trustees, and a possible reason for this has been suggested already. It may, however, be noticed that, as the arrangement was made by Kereby in his own name, he could hardly make the grant to himself; and, as he was perhaps unwilling to leave it to the disposition of the bishop or of his successor, it is probable that he adopted this means to secure his own assessment of his requirements.

Full details of the allowances will be found in the document itself, and we need comment only on certain points. The ex-abbot was to occupy rooms in the abbey, which adjoined the infirmary yard or court, and had previously been occupied as two tenements, one of which was occupied at the time by Henry Kaa, presumably a corrodiary. The other had been the lodging of the prior of Llanthony, whether of the original house of that name or of its namesake and offshoot in the suburbs of Gloucester is not certain. Leicester, in the palmy days of Abbot Cloune, had provided several houses of canons with priors,²⁸ and it seems certain that the prior in question was one of these, who had resigned and returned to the house to which he belonged. Kereby bound his successor, not only to make a new fireplace, but to keep the buildings in repair.

Kereby's household consisted of two serving-men of yeoman status and a groom. What is implied by the "carvers" or *scissorii*, to whom seven loaves of "blakwhyte" bread were given every week, as to the groom, is uncertain. The weekly allowances of food, as far as bread and beer are concerned, were very

²⁸Knighton [Rolls Ser.] II, 126. Nether Llanthony is named among these: little is known of the internal history of both monasteries, and the lists of the priors are defective.

large. We have the distinction between the three kinds of bread, the "prykked loves" or *panes monachales*, the ordinary bread or *panis servientium*, here called "seriaunt bred,"²⁹ and the coarser brown or "blakwhyte" variety. Beer, as usual is of two kinds, the better or convent beer, and the "seriaunt ale." It will be noted that the dishes are reckoned according to the quality and allowance made for the ordinary lay servants of the abbot's household, while the ex-abbot's own allowance of dishes is equivalent to that of two canons in the monastery. The provision of wood, as in the Peterborough corrodies, includes logs (ballow-wood) and faggots (kydes).

If the details of food are handsome, the yearly grant of twenty pounds was enormous. It was to be paid once a quarter in equal instalments to the four trustees at St. Leonard's church or hospital, and it does not seem that it can have been applied wholly to Kereby's benefit. It would appear rather to be an allowance of five pounds to each of the trustees, of which possibly a part was devoted to supplying Kereby with such extra comforts as he needed. In this and other respects he bequeathed a heavy burden to the abbot and convent, and it is not unlikely that his speedy death was as merciful a release to them as it no doubt was to him. Distraint for arrears was charged upon the three convent manors of Ingarsby, Stoughton, and Lockington.

The canon who was told off to attend Kereby as his chaplain, with the option of a change if their temperaments were incompatible, was of course an active member of the convent, and took his meals in the refectory with the rest of the convent. It is just possible that the freedom of the retiring abbot to take a new chaplain, if occasion demanded, was a proviso founded upon his apprehension that means might be taken to make his retreat less comfortable than he wished. We know nothing, however, of the relations which existed between Kereby and his convent, and his contemporary, the continuator of Knighton, paid little or no attention to the affairs of the abbey, and the notices of the years 1393 and 1394, with which his chronicle concludes, are mere jottings. The period of Kereby's rule coincides with a disturbed political epoch, the troubles of which were not without

²⁹Otherwise called *panis militum*. The German equivalent is *Knechtenbrod*.

their influence upon Leicester, and the town had been an active centre of the first manifestations of Lollardy, from which the abbey had not been exempt. Although in 1393 the orthodoxy of the new abbot, Repyngdon, was beyond dispute and his wild oats of heresy had long been sown, it was while Kereby was abbot that he had been notorious as a disciple of Wycliffe, and had spread his novel views in the country between Leicester and Oxford. Whatever part the abbot himself had taken in those days, the old division of opinion may well have left its mark upon the internal life of the monastery, and it is possible that the evident anxiety of Kereby to secure a satisfactory solatium for his old age, and the means which he took to safeguard it, had their foundation in his fear of future dissension.

It is perhaps unwise to dwell upon what, in the absence of direct evidence, must remain to some extent conjectural. Nevertheless, the study of monastic literature of the period—or, rather, of historical documents which deal with monastic life—reveals the fact that the passions which can disturb even celestial minds affected religious houses very frequently. When, in the last clauses of the grant, Kereby made the stipulation for wine from the abbot's table to entertain his guests, and required that, if the abbot had a wholesale stock of wine, it should not be denied him, and when he provided for his freedom in the matter of taking his walks abroad and going to see his friends, it may have been with the suspicion that, without such a guarantee, his liberty and means of entertainment might be curtailed.

This seems to us to be the explanation of the terms of the so-called corrody. Other explanations might be suggested to account for it. It may have been a means by which the four trustees, with a relation of the abbot among them, obtained pensions for themselves upon the security of his life; for, as we have said, twenty pounds a year, with the principal necessities of life all found, was a large sum for the maintenance of a man and his small household, and it is probable that, when Kereby's extra expenses had been met, a dividend remained for the trustees. The fact remains, however, that the record of the suit illustrates an aspect of monastic finance which is generally familiar, but is seldom studied in detail, and the fulness of the grant, the circumstances in which it was made, and the excep-

tional nature of the methods taken to secure its validity, furnish an excuse for a somewhat lengthy commentary upon it.

De Banco Roll, Hillary, 17 Ric. II. 1393-4. m. 484.

LEICESTER. Philip, abbot of the monastery of St. Mary in the meadows of Leicester, was summoned to answer to William de Chiselden, clerk, Thomas Queneby, Thomas Kereby, and John Pakeman of Quenyngbugh' in a plea that he render to them forty shillings, three robes, two hundred and sixty-eight loaves, one hundred and ninety-six gallons of ale, one hundred and ninety-two dishes,³⁰ four cart-loads of wood, two cart-loads of sea-coal and three cart-loads of faggots which are in arrear to them of a yearly rent of twenty pounds, three robes, three thousand one hundred and nineteen loaves, two thousand five hundred and fifty-two gallons of ale, two thousand four hundred and ninety-six dishes, seven cart-loads of wood, seven cart-loads of sea-coal and five cart-loads of faggots which he owes to them, etc. And whereof the same William, by John Pakeman his attorney, and Thomas, Thomas and John, in their own persons, say that whereas one William, late abbot of the monastery of St. Mary in the meadows of Leicester, predecessor of the aforesaid now abbot, by his certain writing indented, the other part whereof they proffer here in the king's court, granted the yearly rent aforesaid to the same William de Chiselden, Thomas, Thomas and John to be received by them and their heirs and assigns during the whole life of the aforesaid William de Kereby, to wit, one hundred shillings at the feast of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist, one hundred shillings at the feast of St. Michael the Archangel, one hundred shillings at the feast of the Nativity of our Lord and one hundred shillings at the feast of Easter and three robes at the feast of the Nativity of our Lord, three thousand one hundred and nineteen loaves, two thousand five hundred fifty and two gallons of ale, two thousand four hundred and ninety-six dishes to be received yearly, every week sixty-eight loaves, forty-nine gallons of ale and forty-eight dishes;

³⁰Dishes [*of meat*].

and also seven cart-loads of wood and three cart-loads of sea-coal and five cart-loads of faggots to be received and carried as far as the abbey of Leicester at the costs of the aforesaid abbot and convent and of their successors to wit five cartloads of faggots before the feast of Pentecost and the residue as well of wood as of coal to be carried yearly before the feast of St. Michael, of which same yearly rent the said William de Chiselden, Thomas, Thomas and John were seised by virtue of the grant aforesaid by the hands of the aforesaid late abbot and likewise of the same now abbot from the Wednesday next after the feast of St. John before the Latin Gate in the sixteenth year of the reign of the lord now king³¹ until the feast of the Nativity of our Lord then next ensuing, when the aforesaid Philip, now abbot, etc., kept back the yearly rent aforesaid from the aforesaid William de Chiselden, Thomas, Thomas and John and refused and yet refuses to render it to them, whereby they say that they are deteriorated and have damage to the value of £40. And therefore they produce suit, etc. And they proffer here in court the aforesaid writing indented, sealed with the common seal of the same late abbot, which witnesses to the yearly rent aforesaid in form aforesaid, the tenor whereof follows in these words. This indenture witnesses that William, abbot of the monastery of St. Mary in the meadows of Leicester, and the convent of the same place, have granted and given to William Chiselden, clerk, Thomas Queneby, Thomas Kereby and John Pakeman of Quenyngburgh', their heirs and assigns, within the abbey of Leicester one messuage with houses built thereupon wherein the prior of Lantone lately dwelt with the house wherein Henry Kaa now dwells with the courtyard adjoining and with free ingress and egress to the garden called Le Fermory-zerd, and to walk about³² in the same with free ingress and egress to the aforesaid tenements, which same tenements the aforesaid abbot and convent and their successors will sustain and repair in all things at their own costs whensoever it shall be necessary. And the aforesaid abbot and convent will make a sufficient *femorale*³³ called a "chymeneye" in the chamber of the aforesaid messuage before the feast of the

³¹Wednesday, 7 May, 1393.

³²*spaciandum*.

³³*unum femorale*: "breeches" or "trousers"; so called because the chimney was of that shape.

Nativity of St. John the Baptist next to come. The aforesaid abbot and convent have also granted to the aforesaid William, Thomas, Thomas and John, their heirs and assigns, during the whole natural life of brother William de Kereby one corrody, to wit, to be received every week twenty-six loaves called "prykked loues" of the better sort whereof every loaf shall weigh fifty shillings by Troy weight, seven loaves called "blakwhyht" to be made for the carvers,³⁴ twenty-eight loaves called "seriaunt bred" and seven loaves called "blakwhyht" for the groom, and twenty-eight gallons of ale of the better sort, and twenty-one gallons of ale called "seriaunt ale" and [some] from the kitchen, as well at dinner as at supper, as is served to two canons, and one dish from the kitchen, as well at dinner as at supper, such as two servants of the lord abbot called "zomen" receive, and one dish from the kitchen as well at dinner as at supper such as a *garcio* in English "a groom" of the lord abbot receives. And the aforesaid abbot and convent and their successors grant to the aforesaid William, Thomas, Thomas and John two coats³⁵ yearly at the feast of the Nativity of our Lord of the suit³⁶ of the servants of the lord abbot called "zomen," and one livery of cloth sufficient for the coat of a *garcio* called a "grom." And the aforesaid abbot and convent grant to the aforesaid William, Thomas, Thomas and John, their heirs and assigns, during the whole natural life of the aforesaid William de Kereby, seven cart-loads of fuel of large wood, and five cart-loads of faggots, and three cart-loads of sea-coal, to be yearly received and carried to the aforesaid tenements at the costs of the aforesaid abbot and convent and their successors, to wit, five cart-loads of faggots before the feast of Pentecost and the residue as well of wood as of coal to be yearly carried before the feast of St. Michael. And the aforesaid abbot and convent grant to the aforesaid William, Thomas, Thomas and John, their heirs and assigns, during the whole natural life of the aforesaid William de Kereby, twenty pounds sterling payable to the same William, Thomas, Thomas and John, their heirs and assigns, during the whole natural life of the aforesaid William de Kereby, yearly at the church of St. Leonard by the north bridge of Leicester

³⁴*pro scissorijs.*

³⁵*duas vesturas.*

³⁶*secta* : suit or livery.

at the four terms of the year, to wit, at the feast of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist, St. Michael, the Nativity of our Lord and Easter by equal portions. And if it happen that the aforesaid rent, or the corrody aforesaid, or any of the premises, be in arrear for fifteen days, in part or in all, at any term aforesaid, that then it shall be lawful for the aforesaid William, Thomas, Thomas and John, their heirs and assigns, during the whole natural life of the aforesaid William de Kereby, to distrain in the manors of Ingwardbye, Stoughton and Lokyngton, and to abduct and retain the distress wheresoever they will until they be fully satisfied of the aforesaid rent and corrody and of all other the premises and of the arrears of the same, together with the damages and expenses. To have and to hold all and singular the abovesaid to the aforesaid William, Thomas, Thomas and John, their heirs and assigns, during the natural life of the aforesaid William de Kereby. The aforesaid abbot and convent also grant that the aforesaid William de Kereby, during all his natural life, shall have one canon of the abbey aforesaid who can say the canonical hours with him and celebrate mass for him; and if the said canon shall be noisy, quarrelsome or displeasing to him, that then he may relinquish him and seek and obtain another more pleasing to be assigned to him, which same canon shall receive of the aforesaid abbey meat and drink, clothing and all necessaries, as others his brethren receive in all things; and that the said William Kereby, when he shall desire to drink wine when any worthy and honest persons visit him, may send for the wine of the lord abbot, and that it will not be denied to him when the abbot has wine in gross;³⁷ and the said William de Kereby during the whole of his life-time shall be exempt from all charges to be undergone by others his brethren, to wit, in choir, cloister, and all other offices and administrations of the said monastery; and if the said William shall desire to visit any one of his friends, or to sojourn for a time by way of recreation in some honest place outside the monastery aforesaid, if he shall seek licence for this, it will not be denied to him. In witness whereof to the part of this indenture remaining with the aforesaid William, Thomas, Thomas and John, the aforesaid abbot and convent have affixed their common seal, and to the part

³⁷*in grosso.*

remaining with the aforesaid abbot and convent the aforesaid William, Thomas, Thomas and John have affixed their seals. Given in the abbey of Leicester on Wednesday after the feast of St. John before the Latin Gate in the sixteenth year of the reign of king Richard the second after the conquest.

And the aforesaid Philip now abbot, etc., by Hugh Bronage his attorney, comes and defends the force and injury when, etc., and says that he cannot deny that he is bound to the aforesaid William de Chiselden, Thomas, Thomas and John in the yearly rent aforesaid according to the force and effect of the writing abovesaid according as the same William de Chiselden, Thomas, Thomas and John above suppose by their writ and narration against him, nor that the aforesaid writing above produced is the deed of the aforesaid late abbot, his predecessor, sealed with the common seal of the same late abbot, and his convent. Therefore it is considered that the aforesaid William de Chiselden, Thomas, Thomas and John recover the yearly rent aforesaid against him, according to the force and effect of the writing abovesaid, and their damages aforesaid, as they have above narrated against him. And nought of the aforesaid now abbot is in mercy, because he came on the first day of the summons, etc. And hereupon the same William de Chiselden, Thomas, Thomas and John freely remit the aforesaid arrears of the yearly rent aforesaid, and likewise their damages abovesaid, etc.