

STABILITY OR MOBILITY? MOVEMENT BETWEEN CISTERCIAN HOUSES IN LATE MEDIEVAL AND EARLY TUDOR ENGLAND AND WALES

David E. THORNTON

The movement or “transfer” by members of monastic orders between religious houses has generally been discouraged by ecclesiastical authorities.¹ In the case of monks, transfer to another monastery technically contravenes the vow of stability made at profession and thereby requires not only the formal permission of the current superior but also a second profession at the new house (“change of stability”). However, there survives abundant evidence that monks and regular canons in medieval England and Wales did indeed move between houses. This paper will examine the question of movement between Cistercian monasteries in late medieval England and Wales, based upon an ongoing prosopographical study of English and Welsh Cistercians between c. 1300 to c. 1540, and in particular the suggestion, made by a number of historians, that Cistercian monks who bore a surname (or, what will hereafter be termed *monastic byname*)² that was also the name of another Cistercian abbey had some previous association with that other abbey. In addition, the paper will also consider the related topic of the promotion of monks as abbots of other monasteries.

ABBREVIATIONS

BIA	Borthwick Institute for Archives, York
BL	British Library, London
CPR	<i>Calendar of Papal Registers Relating To Great Britain and Ireland</i> , ed. W. H. BLISS et al., London 1893 -
LP	J. S. Brewer et al., <i>Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII</i> , 36 vols., London 1862-1932
SMITH et al., Heads	David KNOWLES, Christopher BROOKE, Vera C. M. LONDON, and David M. SMITH, <i>Heads of Religious Houses: England & Wales</i> , 3 vols., Cambridge 2001-2008
TNA	The National Archives, London, Kew
WRO	Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service, Worcester, The Hive

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² In this paper, names will be modernised or standardised where possible. In cases where the modern form is uncertain or the original manuscript form is significant, the original form, *in italics*, will be used.

I. MONASTIC STABILITY IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

Such movement of monks from one monastery to another has been frowned upon since the earliest days of western monasticism. Indeed, the concept of stability itself can be traced to the Rule of St Benedict. At the beginning of his Rule, St Benedict complained of those gyrating monks, “always on the move, with no stability [*et numquam stabiles*]” (Ch. 1).³ Later, the Rule states that a new monk who has completed the period of the noviciate should understand that henceforth “he may not leave the monastery” and, in order to be professed, he should “make promise of stability [*promittat de stabilitate*], and of conversion of life, and of obedience” (Ch. 58). St Benedict does permit the *temporary* habitation of a monk of another house as a guest (*pro hospite*), and even allows for the admission of such a monk, if afterwards he should wish to be strengthened by stability (*Si vero postea voluerit stabilitatem suam firmare*) and has the permission of his current abbot and the necessary documentation (Ch. 61). The early Cistercians were eager to enforce the vow of stability. Indeed, the *Summa Cartae Caritatis* stipulated that monks who flee to another abbey should be compelled to return to their house of profession: “If a monk, or lay-brother, secretly flees from one of our monasteries and comes to another, let him be persuaded to return. If he refuses, he shall not be permitted to stay in that place for more than one night”.⁴ Furthermore, Bernard of Clairvaux argued that, although a monk may move to another house under certain circumstances, with change of stability, the vow itself prescribes “any feeble relapse, angry departure, aimless or curious wandering, and every vagary of fickleness.”⁵

Despite the stipulations of the Rule, there is plenty of evidence that members of monastic orders could and did relocate or “transfer”, both permanently and temporarily, to other houses (*migratio*) and even, though more rarely, to other orders (*transitus*). Indeed, Donald Logan has gone so far as to state that “[t]he presence, then, of a transferred religious in a religious house was probably a fairly common occurrence.”⁶ As we have seen, for the Benedictines, Cluniacs and Cistercians, who followed the Rule of St Benedict, such movement between houses involved breaking one’s vow of stability and required the consent of the relevant superiors. Even so, such movement was not unknown. For example, the registers of Worcester Cathedral Priory for the period 1521-1530 record that at least five monks were permitted by their prior to transfer to another house, that is an average of one transfer every two years.⁷ Other monastic orders, with their own regulations, also

³ For the text and translation of the Rule, I have used the online versions archived or linked on the website of the Benedictine Order: <http://archive.osb.org/rb/index.html> [accessed 26 June 2019].

⁴ Louis J. LEKAL, *The Cistercians. Ideals and Reality*, Kent OH 1977, p. 447.

⁵ *De Praecepto et Dispensatione*, Ch. 16.44: see, Mette B. BRUN, *Parables: Bernard of Clairvaux’s Mapping of Spiritual Topography*, Leiden and Boston 2007, p. 178.

⁶ F. Donald LOGAN, *Runaway Religious in Medieval England, c. 1240-1540*, Cambridge 1996, p. 43.

⁷ David E. THORNTON, “The Last Monks of Worcester Cathedral Priory,” *Midland History*, 43 (2018), p. 3-21 (p. 16).

allowed movement between monasteries. Even the semi-eremitical Carthusians could find themselves, at times and for various reasons, resident at a different priory. For the sixteenth century at least, the obits of English Carthusians recorded in the *chartae* annually by the General Chapter note on occasion when a monk had been professed at more than one charterhouse.⁸ Alternatively, the Carthusians allowed monks to be temporarily resident as a “guest” (*hospes*), at another priory without the need for a new profession.⁹ Turning to the regular canons, there is also some evidence of similar movement between houses. Indeed, it has been suggested that among the last generation of Gilbertines at least, the canons “were not confined to one particular house” and that such movement was not uncommon, especially during the earlier years of a canon’s career.¹⁰ These piecemeal examples would suggest that, despite the theory, in practice monks and canons did move between religious houses in England during the late Middle Ages.

The research presented in this paper is the result of an ongoing prosopographical study of Cistercian monks in England and Wales for the period *circa* 1300 until the Dissolution. A database of English and Welsh Cistercians of over 16,600 entries has been compiled, covering an estimated 6000 individual monks and abbots.¹¹ Sources used include ordination lists preserved in episcopal registers,¹² late fourteenth-century taxation records,¹³ and documents from the 1530s,¹⁴ as well as existing studies published by Claire Cross, David Smith, and David H. Williams, among

⁸ For example, Dom Nicholas Hopkins, who died in 1521/22, is said to have been first professed at St Anne’s Coventry and then later at Hinton. Carol B. ROWNTREE, *Studies in Carthusian History in Later Medieval England: With Special Reference to the Order’s Relations with Secular Society* (manuscript D.Phil. thesis University of York, 1981), p. 513. Ordination lists would seem to confirm this, as he is recorded being ordained as a monk of Coventry in 1487-88.

⁹ For example, another Coventry Carthusian, Dom Richard Gresley, ordained around 1504, was described in the *chartae* as professed monk of Coventry but *hospes* at Sheen charterhouse when he died in 1509: ROWNTREE, “Studies in Carthusian History,” p. 509.

¹⁰ F. M. STEPHENSON, *The Decline and Dissolution of the Gilbertine Order* (manuscript Ph.D. thesis University of Worcester, 2011), p. 101-104. For example, John Calverley, canon of Watton in 1522 (subdeacon, deacon), moved to St Andrew’s priory, York, by the following year: BIA, Archbishops Register 27 (Wolsey), fol. 193r, 195v, 200r. Similarly, Richard Symson was canon of Watton in (1525 (subdeacon) but of Ellerton by 1526 (deacon, 1528 priest) and was still there at the dissolution: BIA, Archbishops Register 27 (Wolsey), fol. 205v, 210v, 215v; TNA E101/76.

¹¹ The obvious discrepancy between the number of entries and the number of individual monks is a product of the fact that many monks are named more than once, in different sources.

¹² Ordination lists from most English dioceses have been consulted (both published and unpublished), with the exception of those for Norwich and the later unpublished registers for Exeter: on the registers, see David M. SMITH, *Guide to Bishops’ Registers of England and Wales: A Survey from the Middle Ages to the Abolition of Episcopacy in 1646*, London 1981. For a discussion of ordination lists, see David E. THORNTON, “How Useful are Episcopal Ordination Lists as a Source for Medieval English Monastic History?” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 69 (2018), p. 493-530; for ordination of Cistercians, see David H. WILLIAMS, *The Tudor Cistercians*, Leominster 2014, p. 42-46.

¹³ Clerical subsidy lists for the period 1379-81 are preserved in TNA series E179. Lists for most, but not all, Cistercian houses occur, though some lack the names of monks: for example, TNA E179/15/6A records subsidies for Combermere, Vale Royal and Whalley abbeys but only gives the monks’ forenames.

¹⁴ These include brief certificates of the 1536 visitation (on which, see below, p. 110-111), deeds of surrender (1537-40), and various documents recording pensions assigned to former religious (1538 and later). For a discussion of these sources, see David E. THORNTON, “The Prosopography of English

others.¹⁵ In addition, a few detailed records of personnel are preserved for individual monasteries.¹⁶ There were 75 Cistercian abbeys in England and Wales for the period under consideration (excluding Rushen Abbey on Isle of Man), though the total number of medieval Cistercian houses would be larger if we include those early foundations whose communities were moved to a different site. In addition, there were a number of dependent cells, such as that at Scarborough, and some larger granges, that may have had very small resident monastic communities, at times. The earliest Cistercian foundation in the British Isles was Waverley, Surrey, founded in 1129, and the first monastery in Wales was Whitland (1140). The majority of Cistercian houses were founded relatively early, most during the 1130s and '40s, though there were some later foundations, including Whalley Abbey, moved from Stanlow in 1296, and the last, St Mary Graces, London, founded in 1350. The size and value of the 75 Cistercian monasteries in late medieval England and Wales varied considerably, many housing fewer than the canonical thirteen monks including the abbot. As will be noted below, the relative size and wealth of individual monasteries does appear have had some effect on their prosopographical character.

There is abundant evidence, scattered in various sources to indicate that, like their Benedictine and Carthusian counterparts cited above, many White Monks in late medieval and early Tudor England and Wales did move between abbeys. For example, the admission lists of monks of Croxden preserved in BL, Cotton MS. Faustina B.VI, state explicitly that at least ten monks of that abbey had previously been professed as members of other monasteries – eight of Cistercian houses, and two of different orders.¹⁷ The Croxden lists do not indicate why these ten men had changed their houses, but individual cases recorded in other documents suggest that there was a variety of reasons why monks might move to another house: some voluntary, others less so. Voluntary reasons could include a desire to leave a relatively lax house or due to desire to escape a dispute. Less voluntary were those exiled, whether temporarily or permanently, for purposes of punishment and penance. Most extant accounts deal with involuntary exile due to alleged crimes or with apostates who had left their houses without the permission of their abbot.

White monks might occasionally request transfer to another house voluntarily, for personal and practical reasons. The Cartulary of Hailes Abbey, for example,

Monastic Orders at the Dissolution: Evidence from The National Archives Assessed”, *Archives: Journal of the British Records Association*, 54 (2019), p. 33-58.

¹⁵ SMITH et al., *Heads*, II-III; WILLIAMS, *Tudor Cistercians*, p. 415-545; David H. WILLIAMS, “Fasti Cistercienses Cambrenses,” *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 24 (1970-1972), p. 181-229; Claire CROSS and Noreen VICKERS, *Monks, Friars and Nuns in Sixteenth Century Yorkshire*, (Yorkshire Archaeological Society Record Series, 150), 1995.

¹⁶ For instance, there are admission lists of monks of Croxden Abbey in BL, Cotton MS. Faustina B.VI, and list of monks of Whalley Abbey in Manchester Archives, L1/47/2/1: see Charles LYNAM, *The Abbey of St Mary Croxden, Staffordshire*, London 1911, p. xvi-xx; and Thomas Dunham WHITAKER, *An History of the Original Parish of Whalley, and Honor of Clitheroe, to which is Subjoined an Account of the Parish of Cartmell*, London 1872-1876, 2 vols, I. p. 112-114.

¹⁷ LYNAM, *The Abbey*, p. xvi-xx.

records the transfer of Henry Tutbury, monk of Hailes, to Dore Abbey in September 1516.¹⁸ The letter of demission by the abbot of Hailes, requesting the transfer, and that of reception by the abbot of Dore, accepting the request, are both preserved in the cartulary, and there is no explicit indication of any ill will or dispute: the reasons for the transfer are said to be brother Henry's peace of mind (*pro serenitate conscientie sue*) and his advanced years.¹⁹ More frequently, however, surviving sources record cases where monks had transferred to other houses, not always voluntarily, as a result of some sort of misdemeanour or conflict. Exile (*emissio* or *exsilium*) from one's house to another, whether temporarily or permanently, could be for purposes of discipline and penance (*pro culpa*), usually in cases of very serious crimes.²⁰ Such exiled Cistercians were normally to be sent to houses relatively remote from their house of profession and preferably to one of the same filiation,²¹ though this does not always appear to have been the case in practice. Examples of temporary exile include Stephen Hythe (*Hethe*), monk of Boxley, who claimed to have been "cast out of the monastery by certain of his rivals" and in 1353 he was sent to Margam Abbey to be penance, but was subsequently back at Boxley.²² Similarly, John Ivinghoe monk of Wardon, was accused of attempting to poison his abbot in 1493, and was consequently detained at Stratford Langthorne Abbey for a year as penance.²³ Gawain Borrowdale, monk of Holm Cultram, was accused in 1531/2 of actually having poisoned abbot Matthew Devyas, and during the investigation into the case he was sent first to Furness Abbey and thence to Byland.²⁴ In this instance, brother Gawain would appear to have been exonerated, for by 1536/7, he was himself abbot of Holm Cultram and, in that capacity, surrendered the abbey on 6 March 1538. The period of temporary exile could vary according to the nature and seriousness of the crime, though the Cistercians did also allow for transfer *sine spe reversionis* ("without hope of return") for certain crimes.²⁵ Thus, in 1448-1449 William Downom, a monk at Fountains since the

¹⁸ Stratford on Avon, Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, MS. DR18/31/5, fol. 17r-v; David N. BELL, "The Cartulary of Hailes Abbey: 1469-1539, *Cîteaux – Commentarii cistercienses*, 60 (2009), p. 79-138 (p. 104). I am grateful to Prof. Bell for his help with this manuscript.

¹⁹ Henry Tutbury, as monk of Hailes, had been ordained in 1498-99 and so, unless he had been admitted to Hailes in middle age, would not have been very old in 1516.

²⁰ Élisabeth LUSSET, *Crime, châtement et grâce dans les monastères au moyen âge (XII^e-XV^e siècle)*, Turnhout 2017, p. 245-259; Élisabeth LUSSET, "Les transferts *pro culpa* des moines et des chanoines réguliers criminels en Occident (XII^e-XV^e siècle)," in *Des sociétés en mouvement. Migrations et mobilité au moyen âge, XL^e Congrès de la SHMESP (Nice, 4-7 juin 2009)*, Paris 2010, p. 177-182.

²¹ LUSSET, *Crime, châtement et grâce*, p. 249-250.

²² *Calendar of Papal Registers Relating To Great Britain and Ireland*, ed. W. H. BLISS et al., London 1893-, vol. III, p. 489; WILLIAMS, "Fasti", p. 213; TNA E179/8/2b.

²³ C. H. TALBOT, *Letters from the English Abbots to the Chapter at Cîteaux, 1442-1521*, (Camden Society, fourth series, vol. 4), London 1967, p. 162-164: the monk's name is given as *Ivinge* and *Yvinge* in the relevant documents, but he was presumably the John *Ivingho* / *Yynggho* ordained in 1473-1475: Lincoln, Lincolnshire Archives, Episcopal Register XXI.

²⁴ G. E. GILBANKS, *Some Records of a Cistercian Abbey: Holm Cultram, Cumberland*, London 1899, p. 91-97; SMITH, *Heads III*, p. 300-301; WILLIAMS, *Tudor Cistercians*, p. 429.

²⁵ LUSSET, *Crime, châtement et grâce*, p. 251.

early 1420s, was expelled, also for trying to poison his abbot, and was subsequently professed at Kirkstead Abbey instead.²⁶ Similarly, John Hollingbourne, monk of Robertsbridge, Sussex, accused of sexual relations with an unmarried woman (he claimed to have been “seduced” by her), was beaten by his abbot and then exiled (“relegated”) to Coggeshall Abbey, “an oath being extorted from him not to approach Robertsbridge”.²⁷ However, brother John was apparently not happy with the new arrangements at Coggeshall, for “after long leading a miserable life” there, he did indeed request readmission to his previous monastery. In some cases, the monk in question had not been formally exiled but rather had fled his monastery, on account of an alleged crime or ongoing dispute, and despite being apostate, subsequently sought admission at another house. For instance, one monk of Swineshead Abbey, Lincolnshire, variously called Ralph *de Byker* and Ranulph *Bikere* or *Biber*, was accused in 1401/2 of attacking his abbot, as well as of theft and holding property contrary to the rule, and, fearing imprisonment, fled his monastery (“left his order and habit”) but subsequently entered St Mary Graces, London, where he made a second profession and requested to remain there.²⁸ Brother Ralph does not appear to have learnt the error of his ways however, for he was shortly thereafter accused of a similar violent altercation with his new abbot.²⁹ In 1485, a monk of Rievaulx Abbey, Yorkshire, William Easingwold, alias *Smithson*, sought absolution and dispensation from the papal curia: having been imprisoned by his abbot for disobedience, he had escaped and fled the house, apostate, but now, if absolved, requested to transfer to another monastery of the Order.³⁰

There are also cases where a monk or group of monks were “dispersed” to another house, not on account of any request or alleged misdemeanour on the part of the monk(s) in question, but due to circumstances beyond their control, notably relating to their monastery. In the twelfth century, a number of recently established Cistercian communities were temporarily dispersed and/or relocated to a new site due to financial problems or local physical difficulties. Such dispersal was less common for the period after 1300 covered by this study, though individual cases are known. For example, William de Bromfield, monk of Holm Cultram Abbey, was sent by the King to Tintern in 1319, as the repeated Scottish raids in the North of England had made it difficult for the abbey to maintain its community.³¹ Brother William was to be treated “as one of their brethren” at Tintern and remain there

²⁶ TALBOT, *Letters*, p. 22-40; LOGAN, *Runaway Religious*, p. 213.

²⁷ *CPR*, V, p. 553.

²⁸ *CPR*, V, p. 346-347.

²⁹ *CPR*, V, p. 603.

³⁰ Peter D. CLARKE and Patrick N. R. ZUTSHI, *Supplications from England and Wales in the Registers of the Apostolic Penitentiary, 1410-1503*, (Canterbury & York Society, vol. 103-105), 3 vols, Woodbridge 2013-2015), III, p. 328-329 (no. 2988). Brother William had probably been admitted to Rievaulx not long before 1475, for he was ordained acolyte and subdeacon in 1476: BIA, Archbishops Register 22 (Neville and Booth), fol. 239v, 363r.

³¹ *Calendar of the Close Rolls preserved in the Public Record Office prepared under the Superintendence of the Deputy Keeper of the Records. Edward II. A.D. 1318-1323*, London 1895, p. 208.

until the situation at Holm Cultram improved. Conversely, David Williams has suggested that a number of English Cistercians may have found their way to certain Welsh houses as low recruitment at the latter made it necessary to bring in personnel from larger, more popular houses.³² Similarly, as will be discussed in detail below, a not insignificant number of late medieval English and Welsh Cistercian abbots appear to have been promoted from other houses: in cases when smaller abbeys were unable to offer a suitable abbatial candidate, or when there was serious disagreement at an election, the presiding father-abbot may have decided to promote an external candidate instead. Finally, it is the policy of the Cistercian Order, when founding a new house, to send out a colony of monks from an existing monastery to establish the new house and to form the core of the new conventual community. These monks therefore will have moved from their house of profession to the new, daughter house. For the later period covered by this study, only one Cistercian abbey was founded in England and Wales, St Mary Graces, London (1350), whose mother-house was Beaulieu. However, the recruitment of new monks would seem to have been undertaken relatively soon thereafter, for there are records of the ordination of a number of monks of the abbey as deacon by 1357.³³

II. ABBATIAL BYNAMES AS EVIDENCE OF TRANSFER?

In addition to references in episcopal and papal registers and other documents to monks moving or being transferred to other abbeys, a number of historians have drawn attention to the fact that some late medieval and early Tudor Cistercians seem to have borne surnames that were also the names of other Cistercian monasteries and that may therefore reflect some sort of prior association or even membership of that house. For example, in his monograph *The Welsh Cistercians*, David Williams refers to “a limited movement from one abbey to another (possibly on expulsion or dispersal or promotion), and from the sphere of influence of one monastery to membership of another”,³⁴ and goes on to cite, on the one hand, instances of monks of Tintern Abbey who bore toponymic surnames that were also the names of other Cistercian houses, and, on the other, a couple of Cistercian abbots (of Stanley and Buildwas) who were themselves surnamed *Tintern*. In addition, Williams gives one example of a monk of Grace Dieu Abbey, Philip Kingstone, whose surname was the name of a grange of Dore, its mother house. Although he does not state so explicitly here, the clear implication is that these surnames were in some way derived from the relevant Cistercian abbeys and reflect a prior connection with (or even membership of) them. Elsewhere however, Williams had previously dis-

³² WILLIAMS, *Tudor Cistercians*, p. 57.

³³ Maidstone, Kent History and Library Centre, DRc/R4 (Register Sheppey); Winchester, Hampshire Record Office, A1/9 (Register Edenton).

³⁴ David H. WILLIAMS, *The Welsh Cistercians*, Leominster 2001, p. 129 (1984 edition = vol. I, p. 153).

cussed the same topic and stated that some surnames “also suggest a movement from one house to another”.³⁵ More recently, David Bell has drawn attention to a number of monks of Hailes Abbey, Gloucestershire, during the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries who bore the surnames Kirkstall, Sawley and Whalley that were also the names of Cistercian houses in Lancashire and Yorkshire³⁶ and to which we may add two cases of the name Fountains.³⁷ Bell suggests that these monks had started their monastic careers at the relevant northern monasteries, adding that “the taking of the name of one’s abbey of profession as surname ... was common at the time”.³⁸ How widespread was this apparent practice among the Cistercians of assuming a surname that was the name of another house, and to what extent can this onomastic pattern indicate movement or transfer by monks between houses?

The basis for answering these questions rests on the *indirect* evidence that many monks and canons regular in late medieval and Tudor England and Wales appear, on admission to a house, to have dropped their hereditary family surnames and assumed instead what have been variously termed “religious names”, “community names” and “names in religion”.³⁹ Thus, as David Knowles stated: “The modern practice of taking a new name from a patron saint on entering religion had not begun in the true medieval period. The monk was known by his Christian name, and as the number of these in common use was extremely limited, the toponymic or surname of provenance was by no means superfluous.”⁴⁰ To distinguish these apparently adopted names from surnames proper, the former will be referred to hereafter as monastic *bynames*, and the latter as family *surnames*. As Knowles noted, the vast majority of these new bynames were also place-names, and therefore they have been termed toponyms or place surnames. By way of example, Table 1 below lists a handful of Cistercian monks who bore such toponymic bynames.

³⁵ WILLIAMS, “Fasti,” p. 184; also David H. WILLIAMS, *The Cistercians in the Early Middle Ages*, Leominster 1998, p. 55; and D. H. WILLIAMS, “The Abbey of Dore,” in *A Definitive History of Dore Abbey*, ed. Ron SHOESMITH and Ruth E. RICHARDSON, Little Logaston 1977, p. 15-36, 218-221 (p. 17-18).

³⁶ BELL, “Cartulary”, p. 85-86; David N. BELL, “A Tudor Chameleon: The Life and Times of Stephen Sagar, Last Abbot of Hailes,” *Citeaux: Commentarii Cistercienses*, 62 (2011), p. 283-319 (p. 283-284, 286).

³⁷ Thomas Fountains (*Ffontaignes*), ord. 1492-3, and James Fountains (*Jacob Fontene*), ord. 1512: see WILLIAMS, *Tudor Cistercians*, p. 458.

³⁸ BELL, “A Tudor Chameleon”, p. 284.

³⁹ I hope to explore the question of late medieval English monastic naming in detail elsewhere. Female religious do not seem to have followed the same onomastic practice, though this subject deserves further investigation.

⁴⁰ David KNOWLES, *The Religious Orders in England*, Cambridge 1955, p. 231. Also, Joan GREATREX, *The English Benedictine Cathedral Priories: Rule and Practice, c. 1270-1420*, Oxford 2011, p. 42; and, with reference to Cistercians specifically, see CROSS and VICKERS, *Monks*, p. 3.

Monk	Abbey	Dates
Ralph de Appletree	Bordesley	1322
William de Dover	Boxley	1335
William Padstow	Buckfast	1389-91
Stephen Dymock	Flaxley	1399-1400
John Sunningwell	Bruern	1407-12
Richard Salisbury	Beaulieu	1448
Robert Witham	Coggeshall	1495-7
John Heslington	Fountains	1491-5
John Melton	Hailes	1512-15
Edward Sandall	Kirkstall	1539

Table 1. Cistercian monks who bore toponymic bynames.

However, by the late fifteenth century, a relatively small number of religious alternatively adopted names of saints (hagionyms) and an even smaller group had started to take monastic bynames that were Christian virtues, such as Faith, Hope and Charity.

Monk	Abbey	Dates
Robert Cuthbert	Meaux	1488-9
John Lucas	Calder	1497
Christopher Patrick	Louth Park	1498-1500
William Ambrose	Furness	1516-17
John Benet	Pipewell	1538
Thomas Meekness	Revesby	1498-1500
John Grace	Stoneleigh	1529-37

Table 2. Cistercian monks who bore hagionymic or virtue by-names.

Generally, English and Welsh white monks are recorded in the documentation by means of these toponymic or hagionymic bynames, though in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries especially they are also occasionally given an *alias* which, presumably, was their family surname.⁴¹ However, by the time of the dissolution of the monasteries in England and Wales in 1537-1540, it would seem that the Cistercians in particular opted to resume using their family surnames and many are recorded as such in the deeds of surrender and pension lists (see below), though a few use both names.⁴² It has been generally assumed by historians that toponymic

⁴¹ For example: William *Worthy* alias *Chaunflour*, monk of Quarr in 1327; Thurstan *Lofthouse* alias *Watson*, monk of Kirkstall in 1489-1490; and William *Herwet* alias *Hatfield* monk of Coggeshall in 1511.

⁴² For example, Thomas *Ponntefrete* (Pontefract), ordained monk of Kirkstall, Yorkshire, between 1505-1507, in his will of 1558 refers to himself as *Edward Heptonstall otherwise called Sir Edward*

monastic bynames were not chosen at random but served to indicate some sort of prior association of the bearer with the place in question, either place of birth or of recent origin. Thus, brother William de Dover, one of the brethren of Boxley Abbey during the second quarter of the fourteenth century, presumably came from Dover, Kent, and John Heslington, monk of Fountains in the 1490s, hailed from Heslington, near York. If this were indeed the case, then what can be said about those toponymic bynames that appear to refer to other Cistercian abbeys and which may accordingly be designated as “abbatial bynames”?

Table 3 lists a handful of examples of monks with such abbatial bynames, ranging from the early fourteenth century down to the Dissolution.

Monk	Abbey	Dates
Matthew de Newenham	Forde	1309
Ralph de Biddlesden	Bordesley	1321-22
Richard Swineshead	Abbey Dore	1353
Gilbert de Melrose	Rievaulx	1358-63
John <i>de Fontibus</i>	Furness	1368-79
William Rewley	Stratford Langthorne	1396
Richard Whitland	Dunkeswell	1409-11
John Kingswood	Stoneleigh	1449-66
Richard Roche	Dieulaeres	1478-81
Nicholas Buckland	Cleeve	1509-11
John Hulton	Croxden	1531
John Jervaulx	Byland	1532-38

Table 3. Cistercian monks who bore abbatial/abbey bynames.

Of the 6000 or so Cistercian monks databased to-date, there are up to 301 who, with varying degrees of certainty, seem to have borne abbatial bynames – that is, only about 5% of the estimated total of monks. Clearly, David Williams was correct when he described the pattern of movement between houses as “limited”. However, it should be remembered that Williams mentioned not only the use of the names of *other* Cistercian monasteries as monastic bynames, but also the names of property of other houses (“the sphere of influence”, as he put it) – to which we shall return in due course below.

These 301 monks bore one of 55 different English and Welsh abbatial bynames, and one (Melrose) from Scotland. However, not all of these 55 names necessarily refer to a Cistercian abbey. For instance, in a number of cases (including some of

Pomfret priest, and makes a bequest to Edmund Heptonstall “my brother Thomas’ son”: BIA, Archbishop Register 25 (Savage), fol. 131r, 133r, 141r; BIA, Probate Register 15/3, fol. 59v. Heptonstall was evidently his family surname, and he occurs with only that surname in the pension list for Kirkstall Abbey: *LP*, XIV/2, no. 567. Without the evidence of the will, the identification of this monk would be at best uncertain.

the more frequently occurring names), the byname may indicate the general location of an abbey rather than its specific name. Thus, it is far from certain that all the instances of the bynames *London* and *Oxford*, for example, were necessarily references to the abbeys of St Mary Graces and Rewley respectively. They might simply refer to those two cities in general. Furthermore, there are a number of abbatial bynames that may derive from another place with the same name: do all fourteen examples of *Stratford* or *Stretford* necessarily refer to the abbey at Stratford Langthorne, Essex? Similarly ambiguous names include *Clive* (for Cleeve Abbey?), Ford and Stanley. The same applies to *Dean*, which was the alternative name for Flaxley Abbey but which may even be an occupational surname in some cases: Dean occurs fourteen times, but Flaxley only twice.

Furthermore, not all Cistercian monasteries are represented by these 55 abbatial bynames, and some houses would seem to occur far more frequently than others, as demonstrated in Table 4.

Byname	Number	Byname	Number	Byname	Number
London	41	Flaxley	4	Vaudey	2
Whalley	22	Furness	4	Biddlesden	1
Combe	16	Louth	4	Bindon	1
Forde	16	Stoneleigh	4	Boxley	1
Dean	15	Wardon	4	Buckfast	1
Sallay/Sawley	15	Coggeshall	3	Buildwas	1
Stratford	14	Hailes	3	Calder	1
Buckland	13	Thame	3	Combermere	1
Hulton/Hilton	12	Whitland	3	Conway	1
Holm	10	Woburn	3	Garendon	1
Oxford	10	Beaulieu	2	Jervaulx	1
Stanley	10	Croxden	2	Kirkstall	1
Fountains	6	Kingswood	2	Newminster	1
Newenham	6	Merevale	2	Pipewell	1
Cleeve	5	Netley	2	Rievaulx	1
Dore	5	Roche	2	Rufford	1
Bordesley	4	Swineshead	2	Sawtry	1
Byland	4	Tintern	2	Sibton	1

Table 4. Frequency of “abbatial” bynames (by byname).

By far the most common abbatial byname is *London* (with 41 bearers) which is, as already stated, somewhat problematic. The second most common abbatial byname – with 22 bearers – is Whalley which less ambiguously probably does refer in some way to Whalley Abbey or its locality. On the other hand, following Whalley there is a group of names, with between fourteen and sixteen bearers, that include other uncertain bynames noted above: Combe, Dean, Forde and Stratford.

Most attested abbatial bynames occur only five times or less. It seems likely therefore that some, if not all, of the occurrences of the ambiguous bynames may not necessarily have been “abbatial” in origin.

If the data is arranged according to the Cistercian abbeys of which these monks were members, then some interesting points emerge.

Abbey	Number	Abbey	Number	Abbey	Number
Hailes	28	Sallay	5	Robertsbridge	2
Beaulieu	16	Stanley	5	Sawtry	2
Kingswood	14	Stoneleigh	5	Thame	2
Quarr	11	Vale Royal	5	Vaudey	2
Furness	11	Bindon	4	Bruern	1
Croxden	10	Coggeshall	4	Buckland	1
Dore	10	Garendon	4	Byland	1
Combermere	10	Kirkstead	4	Calder	1
Tilty	9	Boxley	3	Combe	1
Dunkeswell	8	Buildwas	3	Cymmer	1
St Mary Graces	8	Waverley	3	Grace Dieu	1
Tintern	8	Buckfast	2	Holm Cultram	1
Stratford	7	Cleeve	2	Llantarnam	1
Wardon	7	Dieulacres	2	Margam	1
Whalley	7	Flaxley	2	Meaux	1
Bordesley	6	Forde	2	Medenham	1
Jervaulx	6	Louth Park	2	Netley	1
Kirkstall	6	Merevale	2	Strata Marcella	1
Woburn	6	Newenham	2	Swineshead	1
Fountains	5	Revesby	2	Valle Crucis	1
Rufford	5	Rievaulx	2	Whitland	1

Table 5. Frequency of “abbatial” bynames (by abbey of bearer).

Firstly, while most monasteries had at least *some* resident monks who bore abbatial bynames, there is significant variation. Thus, over ten houses have not yet rendered a single such monk; but on the other hand, a few had *many* monks with abbatial bynames. Hailes is the clear front-runner, with 28 such brothers, followed way behind by Beaulieu (with 16), Kingswood (14) and then Furness and Quarr both with eleven. The relative size of the monastic community does *not* necessarily appear to have been important in determining these figures, though it must have had some influence. Hailes was indeed a reasonably sized community (boasting 25 monks at the Dissolution); and of the larger northern Cistercian monasteries, Furness makes an appearance in joint fourth place with eleven monks, yet the great Kirkstall and Fountains abbeys contribute only six and five respectively. On the other hand, we find Croxden and Dore, both relatively small and poor abbeys, with ten abbatial bynames apiece.

How far had these monks with abbatial bynames apparently moved? The distances between the relevant two abbeys have been calculated very roughly for 289 (of the 301) monks, and the overall average comes out at about 78.4 miles. (Removing those with the byname *London* does not change the average significantly). There is however again significant variation: some monks would only have moved a few miles (such as from Sibton to Wardon, and from Sawley to Whalley), whereas others appear to have travelled hundreds of miles: brother William Furness, monk of Dore in the 1430s, would have had to cover over 200 miles if he had indeed originated at Furness Abbey, and Thomas London, monk of Holm Cultram at the dissolution, would have travelled up to 300 miles if he had been indeed associated previously with St Mary Graces Abbey, London. Calculating averages for monks of *individual* houses similarly produces variation: some houses are well below the overall average, such as Bordesley, Combermere and Kingswood (with 41, 50 and 53 miles respectively), whereas others exceed the overall average: the fourteen monks of Beaulieu travelled an average of 95.5 miles, and the 28 brethren of Hailes about 103 miles. Clearly, monks with abbatial bynames had not simply moved to the nearest Cistercian house.

To understand the origin of these so-called abbatial bynames, it is necessary to explore monastic bynames among Cistercians more thoroughly. Table 6 lists the numbers of Cistercian monks recorded to-date whose abbatial bynames would seem to refer not to another abbey, but to their own abbey.

Abbey/Byname	Number	Abbey/Byname	Number
Swineshead	9	Combe	2
Bordesley	7	Combermere	2
Croxden	6	Dore	2
Sallay	6	Flaxley	2
Tintern	6	Hailes	2
Boxley	5	Merevale	2
Coggeshall	5	Rufford	2
Woburn	5	Stoneleigh	2
Graces (=London)	4	Cwmhir	1 (?)
Kingswood	4	Dieulacres	1
Rewley (=Oxford)	4	Forde	1
Flaxley (=Dean)	3	Furness	1
Louth	3	Hulton	1
Netley	3	Kirkstall	1
Sawtry	3	Sibton	1
Wardon	3	Stanley	1
Whalley	3	Strata Marcella	1 (?)
Biddlesden	2	Stratford	1
Buildwas	2	Vale Royal	1
Cleeve	2	Waverley	1

Table 6. Monks whose toponymic byname was also their own abbey.

For example, the five monks of Woburn were: William *Woburn*' (1424), William *Wobourn* (1509-1511), Ralph *Wobourn* (1519-1522), Robert *Wooborn* (1532-1537), and Edward *Wooborn*' (1533-1537).⁴³ Did these five men assume this byname in order to indicate an association with Woburn Abbey? Indeed, would any young postulant take the byname of the abbey at which he had been admitted? The point of reference seems rather circular, and of course all members of the conventual community were technically "of" the abbey. Something else must surely be happening.

Historians who have considered the toponymic bynames of late medieval religious have occasionally noted that many of the toponyms in question were also the names of property (temporal and/or spiritual) of the relevant monastery.⁴⁴ For example, the last abbot of Bordesley, John Day, had the monastic toponym *Beeley*, which may be derived from Beoley, in Pershore hundred, Worcestershire, where the abbey held property. There were monks of Bordesley called Bidford, Binton, and Norton – all locations of granges – and as many as seven with the byname Bordesley, the location of property as well as the abbey itself. Such a pattern may seem reasonable enough: a monastery recruited via places where it had existing interests and contacts, what Williams terms its "sphere of influence", and this could include the immediate environs of the abbey itself. Indeed, despite the ideal location of monasteries of white monks "far from the dwellings of men", this was not always possible, and most English monasteries held property at, or very close to, the abbey. Indeed, they all held the spiritualities of the abbey and its church, but many also held the local manors which in many cases had the same name as the abbey itself. In this sense, any young man who was inspired to join the local Cistercian house and was himself from the eponymous manor or village might be expected to assume a toponymic byname that was *the same* as the abbey where he wished to pursue his vocation. Thus, the examples of the byname Woburn cited above may not refer to the abbey as such, but rather to the manor of Woburn, which was held by the abbey. The same would be true for the seven monks of Bordesley who had the byname Bordesley.

Furthermore, as David Williams noted, the onomastic evidence would suggest that Cistercian abbeys occasionally recruited not only from within their own spheres of influence, but also from those of *other* houses. He cites the case of one monk of Grace Dieu, Philip Kingstone, whose byname was the name of a grange of Abbey Dore. Similar examples may be readily supplied, such as nine Cistercian monks who bore the toponymic byname Atherstone. The town of Atherstone in Warwickshire is located less than two miles from the site of Merevale Abbey, and the abbey came to have property in Atherstone during the fourteenth century.

⁴³ To these may be added Nicholas *de Woubourne* (1358).

⁴⁴ For example, David KNOWLES, *Religious Orders*, II, p. 229; Joan GREATREX, "St Swithun's Priory in the Later Middle Ages," in *Winchester Cathedral. Nine Hundred Years 1093-1993*, ed. John CROOK, Winchester & Chichester 1993, p. 139-166 (p. 156); Ian KERSHAW, *Bolton Priory. The Economy of a Northern Monastery 1286-1325*, Oxford 1973, p. 12-13.

Names	House	Dates
Thomas de Atherstone	<i>Merevale</i>	1335
Robert Atherstone	Stoneleigh	1338-52 [ABB 1349-52, ABB Combe 1352-]
William Atherstone	<i>Merevale</i>	1361-66
Robert Atherstone	<i>Merevale</i>	1376
Richard Atherstone	Combe	1408-51 [ABB 1431-51]
John Atherstone	<i>Merevale</i>	1415
Henry Atherstone	Combe	1431
Richard Atherstone	<i>Merevale</i>	1472-77
John Atherstone	Combe	1524-25

Table 7. Cistercian monks with the toponymic byname “Atherstone”.

Five of the Cistercians who had the byname Atherstone were indeed monks of Merevale, as shown in Table 7. Four, however, were brethren of Combe and Stoneleigh, both local insofar as they were located relatively close to Merevale. Neither abbey had interests in Atherstone, so we must assume that it was the connection with Merevale that in some way led these five men to end up at other, neighbouring Cistercian houses. Similarly, up to sixteen white monks have been recorded who bore the toponymic byname Clitheroe (Table 8). Whalley Abbey held both the manor and church in Clitheroe, Lancashire, and accordingly at least four monks of Whalley bore the byname.

Names	House	Dates
Richard de Clitheroe	Whalley	1365-72
Richard de Clitheroe	Sallay	1373-1405 [ABB 1398-1405]
Miles de Clitheroe	Kirkstall	1379-81
<i>Ed'us</i> de Clitheroe	Sallay	1394
John Clitheroe	Sallay	1405-6
Ralph Clitheroe	<i>Whalley</i>	1416-70 [ABB 1455-70]
Christopher Clitheroe	Sallay	1452-7
John Clitheroe	<i>Whalley</i>	1464
Ralph Clitheroe	<i>Sallay</i>	1465
John Clitheroe	Croxden	1474-75
Richard Clitheroe	Sallay	1486-90
Elias Clitheroe	Combermere	1487-89
John Clitheroe	<i>Whalley</i> , Hailes	late 15th cent. [later “ABB Hailes” =John Crombock?] ⁴⁵
Richard Clitheroe	Sallay	1504-6
Robert Clitheroe	Hailes	1501-5
William Clitheroe	Hailes	1516-17

Table 8. Cistercians monks with the toponymic byname “Clitheroe”.

⁴⁵ On this possible identification, see below, p. 103.

However, twelve monks of *other* Cistercian houses were also called Clitheroe. The seven monks of Sallay Abbey who bore the byname Clitheroe may be explained by geographical proximity, but those of the other houses – especially the very distant Hailes Abbey – would suggest that something else was afoot!

If the recorded toponymic bynames suggest that a Cistercian house might recruit some of its members from nearby settlements – including places where it had property and other interests (the sphere of influence), and if this sphere could include the village where the abbey itself was located – then, in cases where a house recruited from within the sphere of influence of another house, by extension “abbatial bynames” may in fact refer not to the relevant monastery, but to the village where that other monastery was located and where it probably had property interests. It could therefore be argued that in many, if not all, cases where Cistercian monks bore toponymic bynames that were also the names of other Cistercian houses, the point of reference was not necessarily the abbey but the settlement of that name.

What factors might lead a monastery to admit men who neither lived nearby nor came from places within its sphere of influence, but instead would appear to have been associated, in terms of distance or influence, with another Cistercian house? David Williams has pointed out with reference to recruitment that a balance “had to be struck between the resources of an abbey and the number of religious it could support.”⁴⁶ Indeed, as mentioned above, the size of monastic communities varied considerably between abbeys, as the lists of brethren recorded for the clerical taxation *circa* 1380 and those at the dissolution both indicate. Some houses were significantly larger and, usually, wealthier than others throughout the late Middle Ages. In cases where a particular Cistercian abbey had reached its “optimum” size, in terms of the number of monks its resources would allow it to support, it is perfectly possible that any local postulants who wished to join that house might either be required to wait or could be encouraged to seek admission at another, more distant house. Conversely, a monastery that had fallen well below its optimum size and needed to increase its recruitment, might find it necessary to cast its net more widely, as Williams has suggested for some Welsh houses (above).

There is evidence to suggest that, on some occasions when a monk of one Cistercian house was promoted as abbot of another, the resulting connection between the two abbeys could be followed by movement of recruits from the abbot’s first house, or more likely its sphere of influence, to the house where he was now abbot. This suggestion can be illustrated using Hailes Abbey which, as we have seen above, provided the largest number of “abbatial bynames”, including those of Lancashire and Yorkshire origin noted by David Bell for the sixteenth century. Table 9 expands Bell’s list of monks of Hailes of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries whose bynames might imply a northern provenance.

⁴⁶ WILLIAMS, *Tudor Cistercians*, p. 42.

Monk	First date		Monk	First date
Richard Whalley	1483		Stephen Whalley	1512
William Billington	1489		William Clitheroe	1516
Thomas Sawley	1489		Philip Acton ⁴⁷	1526/7
Thomas Fountains	1492		Richard Bolton	1528
Thomas Harwood (Horewood)	1498		Roger Whalley	1529
Robert Clitheroe	1501		Thomas Crombok	1532
John Rampton	1504		William Sallay/Sawley	1532
James Fountains	1512		Robert Kirkstall (<i>Cristall</i>)	1537/8

Table 9. The “northern” monks of Hailes, 1480-1538.

It is perhaps notable that the admission of these northerners to Hailes Abbey began during the abbacy of John Crombock (*Cromboke*), 1479/80-1483.⁴⁸ The earliest northern monk at Hailes, Richard Whalley, was ordained subdeacon in 1483 and had presumably been admitted a year or two earlier.⁴⁹ Brother Richard’s byname is significant, for a number of these northerners at Hailes may also be linked, in various ways, to Whalley, Lancashire, and Whalley Abbey in particular. As well as the byname Whalley itself – borne by three monks of Hailes –, four other bynames may be associated with Whalley Abbey properties.⁵⁰ Also, a number of monks of Whalley bore the same bynames as the northerners at Hailes;⁵¹ and in addition, some of the family *surnames* of Hailes monks at the Dissolution are seemingly northern and have associations with Whalley.⁵² Close connections between Hailes and Whalley would seem to have been maintained during the abbacy of Stephen Whalley, alias Sagar, himself a native of Whalley, whose relatives are named in the Hailes Cartulary more than once.⁵³ Furthermore, the name Crombock (*Cromboke*, *Crombroke*, *Crammoke*) is also associated with Whalley: as the monastic byname of at least one monk there, but also as a family surname of laymen connected to the abbey, and as a place-name (*Le Crombroke* in Towneley).⁵⁴ The Hailes Cartulary contains an indenture relating to the lease of the “principal inn” at Hailes and its enclosure by one Ralph

⁴⁷ The place-name Acton is, of course, quite common throughout England, but see n. 50 below for specific Hailes connection.

⁴⁸ SMITH, *Heads III*, p. 299. Crombock is first recorded as abbot of Hailes in 1479/80 and, since his predecessor Richard Wotton is attested once, in 1479, he must have been elected around that time. He is last recorded as abbot in September 1483, and his successor Thomas Stafford was blessed and professed obedience in December of the same year.

⁴⁹ WRO, MS. b706.093-BA2648/7(i), p. 273.

⁵⁰ Acton (grange), Billington, Clitheroe (2), and Harwood.

⁵¹ Billington, Clitheroe, Crombock, Fountains, Harwood, and Sallay.

⁵² William Choo (Chew), Elias Dugdale, and Roger and Thomas Rede.

⁵³ BELL, “Cartulary,” p. 110, 116, 125; BELL, “Chameleon”.

⁵⁴ BIA, Archbishops Register 28 (Lee), fol. 190r, 192v; CROSS and VICKERS, *Monks*, p. 104; WHITAKER, *A History*, II, p. 12, 18, 189; OWEN ASHMORE, “The Whalley Abbey Bursar’s Account for 1520,” *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 114 (1962), p. 49-72 (p. 65).

Cromboke and his wife Matilda in 1498.⁵⁵ Interestingly, this Ralph Cromboke would seem to have been connected with Whalley: in his will, dated 1515, he wished to be buried in church of Hailes Abbey and made bequests to the abbot and monks, but he also bequeathed to the parish church of Whalley and requested that a priest of Whalley sing for him, his father and mother, as well as his two wives Matilda (presumably deceased) and Agnes.⁵⁶ Finally, it may be significant that his witnesses included two of the monks of Hailes – William Billington and Thomas Harwood – whose bynames may be connected to Whalley Abbey. According to a list of monks of Whalley Abbey, there was a John Clitheroe, monk of Whalley, who went on to become abbot of Hailes.⁵⁷ The vaguely chronological order of entries in the list would suggest that this John Clitheroe lived during the last decades of the fifteenth century or very early sixteenth, and he was probably the John Clitheroe monk of Whalley ordained deacon in 1464. In the list of abbots of Hailes in *Heads of Religious Houses III*, David Smith has no record of this abbot of Hailes⁵⁸ and it is possible that he was in fact John Crombock. Whether or not, there is strong evidence to associate the name Crombock and therefore the abbot of that name with Whalley and Whalley Abbey in particular. In this case, it is perhaps not surprising that the first northern monk at Hailes was probably admitted during the abbacy of John Crombock. Following his promotion to Hailes, Abbot John probably maintained contact with his previous abbey, as well as with his family and friends in Whalley, and may even have encouraged the sons of his former neighbours to join his new abbey as monks. A similar arrangement would appear to have prevailed during the abbacy of Stephen Whalley, for we note as many as six monks with “northern” bynames seem to have been admitted to Hailes Abbey during his time.

III. CISTERCIAN ABBOTS APPOINTED FROM OTHER HOUSES

If, as suggested for Hailes, the election of an abbot from another Cistercian house could result in a certain amount of recruitment of monks from that abbot’s previous house and its so-called sphere of influence, then how frequently were Cistercian monks promoted to the abbacies of other houses? The study of Cistercian abbots and abbatial elections is rendered somewhat difficult by the exempt status of the Order. Consequently, we lack detailed accounts of elections comparable with those often preserved in episcopal registers for Benedictine houses that normally indicate whether the candidate(s) was a member of the house or an outsider. Records of the blessings of, and professions of obedience by, Cistercian abbots are occasionally found in bishops’ registers, but these are relatively short and uninformative by comparison. Although abbatial lists survive for a few Cistercian monasteries, and detailed

⁵⁵ BELL, “Cartulary,” p. 99, 129.

⁵⁶ TNA PROB 11/18/199.

⁵⁷ WHITAKER, p. 114; Manchester Archives, MS. L1/47/2/1.

⁵⁸ SMITH et al., *Heads*, III, p. 298-299.

chronicles from others are sometimes arranged according to the sequence of abbots, for the most part abbatial succession among the English and Welsh white monks must be reconstructed, often imperfectly, by means of individual surviving documents. We are fortunate therefore that much of this work has been undertaken for us already by David Smith *et alii* in the three volumes of *Heads of Religious Houses*. What will be offered here is a comparison of the evidence summarised in volumes II and III with the testimony of the surviving ordination lists. For the period covered by this study, 1300 to 1540, up to 1291 abbots are catalogued in *Heads II* and *III*, for the 75 Cistercian monasteries in England and Wales. However, because most records of ordination in episcopal registers are not preserved before 1300, the following discussion will be restricted to those abbots elected by or after 1340 whose ordinations when monks may therefore survive.

For the 200-year period 1340 to 1539, *Heads II* and *III* contain 1036 entries, though in 39 cases the individual is known to have been previously abbot of another abbey, leaving a maximum 997 possible abbots. Of these, 303 occur with their forenames only and in some cases were probably the same as the preceding or succeeding abbot who had the same forename. For example, the William who is recorded as abbot of Sawtry variously between 1351 and 1359 is perhaps to be identified with William de Ramsey abbot in 1361. Similarly, for Netley Abbey, Smith documents an abbot called Thomas between 1432/3 and 1438, and another Abbot Thomas between 1449 and 1463, but notes a Thomas *Wyndsore* as abbot *circa* 1447. Smith suggests that these three entries may in fact be a single person.⁵⁹ Many such examples would reduce the total number of abbots significantly. On the other hand, for some, less well documented Cistercian houses, there are relatively large gaps in the abbatial record. Thus, for Hulton Abbey, Smith cites records of abbot Richard Billington (fl. 1395×1416), then Nicholas (1432), Richard (1450) and Henry (1502): it is not impossible that a number of unrecorded abbots are missing from this sequence. How incomplete therefore is the record of Cistercian abbots? Based on data supplied in *Heads* vol. III for those *Benedictine* houses for which we have a complete and fully dated sequence of abbots, it may be estimated that the average number of years for an abbacy was 15.4 years, with a few being a lot less and others of course longer. If we apply this “Benedictine” average of 15.4 years for an abbacy to the 200-year period 1340-1539 we would expect about thirteen abbots per house ($200 / 15.4 = 12.98$). For the 75 Cistercian houses, we might therefore expect about 975 abbots in total ($=13 \times 75$). That number is not too far below the 997 entries in *Heads II* and *III* (1036 minus the 39 who had previously been abbot elsewhere).

What evidence do we have for the origins, as monks, of these abbots? Tables 10a and 10b provide summaries and provisional data based upon *Heads II* and *III*, plus evidence from the ordination lists especially.

⁵⁹ SMITH *et al.*, *Heads*, III, p. 315.

<i>Forename only</i>	303
<i>Byname UNID</i>	238
<i>Byname ID</i>	495
TOTAL	1036

Table 10a. Cistercian abbots in England and Wales, 1340-1539.

Of the 1036 entries, 733 are recorded with a byname, either in *Heads of Religious Houses* or occasionally from additional evidence, and the remaining 303 with a forename only. To-date 495 of these 733 men have been identified, in the ordination lists or elsewhere – it should be admitted, to varying degrees of certainty.

<i>Prev. abbot</i>	39
<i>Other house</i>	105
<i>Own house</i>	351
TOTAL	495

Table 10b. Background of Cistercian abbots in England and Wales.

Of these 495 men, as noted above, 39 were previously abbots at *other* houses. Examples include William de Cumnor, abbot of Forde Abbey in 1350-1351, who may be identified with the abbot of Bindon of the same name between 1338 and 1348.⁶⁰ Similarly, Simon Pakenham, abbot of Coggeshall, 1448×1453, seems to have previously been abbot of Tilty (1438×1446).⁶¹ In neither of these cases has it been possible to trace the individual in question as a monk. On the other hand, up to 105 of the 495 abbots – again, to varying degrees of certainty – seem to have been monks at a *different* house, prior to their promotion to the abbacy. Thus, the list of monks of Whalley records four monks of that house who went on to be abbots elsewhere: both Roger *Lyndlay* and Thomas *Rigley* went on to become abbot of Combermere (1339-44/8 and 1430x40+? respectively); Denis *Carleton* was appointed abbot of Hulton (1398); and, the John Clitheroe discussed above was abbot of Hailes (n.d.).⁶² In many cases, it is the correspondence of the names and suitable dates that at least suggests the possible house of origin of an abbot. For instance, it seems highly likely that Elias Limington, abbot of Forde Abbey in 1465, can be identified as *Elizeus Lymmyngton* monk of nearby Newenham, ordained in 1431-1432.⁶³ Not all identifications are quite so certain however, and in some cases there is more than one possible candidate.⁶⁴ Far more abbots – up to 351 in

⁶⁰ SMITH et al., *Heads*, II, p. 263, 279.

⁶¹ SMITH et al., *Heads*, III, p. 280, 340.

⁶² WHITAKER, *An History*, p. 112-114; SMITH and LONDON, *Heads*, II, p. 274; and SMITH et al., *Heads*, III, p. 282, 301.

⁶³ SMITH et al., *Heads*, III, p. 291; *The Register of Edmund Lacy, Bishop of Exeter, 1420-1455*, ed. G.R. DUNSTAN, 5 vols, London 1909-1915, vol. IV, p. 139-141.

⁶⁴ For example, for John (de) Coventry abbot of Pipewell 1405-1418, I have no reference to a suitably dated namesake as monk of Pipewell, but there were at least three monks called John *de Couentre*: of Stratford Langthorne (ord. 1373), Combe (ord. 1380-1382) and Stoneleigh (ord. 1382-1384).

fact – can be identified in the ordination and other records as monks at the *same* house where they subsequently became abbot. Thus, Thomas Nind (*Nende*), recorded as abbot of Kingswood in 1468-1470 and who went on to become abbot of Beau-lieu (1475x1484), had been ordained in 1462-1463 while a monk of Kingswood.⁶⁵ His contemporary John Lilley, abbot of Rufford between at least 1462 and 1471, had himself been ordained as monk of Rufford in 1448-1451.⁶⁶ These provisional statistics indicate that it was more likely (over 70%) for an English or Welsh Cistercian abbot in the late Middle Ages or early Tudor period to have been promoted to the abbacy of his own house, but conversely as many as 29% of the abbots were appointed from other houses, which is not an insignificant figure.

The formal mechanics of Cistercian abbatial election may have contributed in part to this pattern of external appointments. The abbot of the mother house (father-abbot) would normally preside over an abbatial election at a daughter house, with the help of other abbots, usually of the daughter-houses of the vacant abbey.⁶⁷ This might partly explain why a number of external abbots were previously monks of the mother house. Thus, we have evidence that monks of Fountains were elected as abbots of its daughter houses at Louth Park, Meaux, Newminster, Vaudey (four), and Woburn; similarly monks of Furness became abbots of Calder (four) and Swineshead; also monks of Bordesley Abbey went to its daughter houses at Flaxley and Stoneleigh, as well as to Garendon, its mother-house. On the other hand, of the 39 abbots who had previously also been abbot elsewhere, at least eight (about 21%) had been abbot of the second monastery's daughter-house. The William de Cumnor, cited above as abbot of Forde in 1350-1351, had previously been abbot at Forde's daughter-house Bindon Abbey, and the same move was undertaken by Robert Lulworth about a century later: monk of Bindon (1412-1415), then abbot there (1433), and finally abbot of Forde (1442-1454). In addition, there are only two instances where an abbot of the mother house was elected abbot of a daughter, and both relate to abbots of Abbey Dore becoming superior at Grace Dieu.

The decision to promote as abbot a monk of another house may have been done for various reasons. In the case of smaller or poorer monasteries, where suitable internal candidates may have not always been available, the father-abbot may have been required to promote an external candidate. Thus, of the 105 abbots appointed to houses other than where they had been monks, as many as 71 (=67.6%) were appointed to monasteries that would be valued at less than £200 per annum in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* of 1535. In contrast, these lesser monasteries account for under 40% (n=134) of the 351 abbots appointed to their *own* houses. On occasions when an abbey was experiencing financial difficulties, it may have been necessary to appoint a candidate from outside who was known for his administrative skills. Thus, John Crombock discussed above complained of the dilapidated state at

⁶⁵ SMITH et al., *Heads*, III, p. 267, 303; WRO, b706.093-BA2648/4(iv) (Carpenter I), p. 556, 559.

⁶⁶ SMITH et al., *Heads*, III, p. 328; BIA, Archbishops Registers 19 (Kempe), fol. 298v, 291v, 292v, 300r.

⁶⁷ LEKAI, *The Cistercians*, p. 447, 464.

Hailes under his predecessor and he was himself shortly thereafter chosen as reformator.⁶⁸ If, as suggested, he had indeed be promoted from Whalley Abbey, then it may well have been for his administrative abilities. Ongoing internal disputes among the brethren of a vacant abbey may also have necessitated the appointment of a monk of another house.⁶⁹

The evidence of the ordination lists suggests that, for Cistercian houses, there were more external appointees than Smith's data – which admittedly makes no claim to completeness – would suggest. Furthermore, there is no clear pattern, which may be illustrated by examining two contrasting examples. Table 11 summarizes the abbots of Bordesley Abbey, Worcestershire, from 1350 until the surrender of that house in 1538.⁷⁰ The first two columns give the names and dates of the abbots, as far as can be reconstructed from the documentation; the third column states at which Cistercian house the relevant abbot of Bordesley had previously been a monk, and the fourth records dates for his pre-abbatial career, in most cases dates of ordination.

ABBOT	DATES	AS MONK	DATES
William de Estone	1350-55	Bordesley	1320-29
John de Acton	1361-82	Bordesley	1335-40
John de Stoke	1366	Bordesley	1334-43
John Broadridge	1384-1414	Bordesley	1367-79
John Abyndon	1415-23	<i>Bruern</i> (?)	1402-7
Richard Feckenham	1424-38+	Bordesley	1410-14
John Wyking	1446-52	Bordesley	1427
William Halford	1452-91+	Bordesley	1436
Richard Barbour	1501-25	Bordesley	1471-74
John Beoley al. Day	1520-38	Bordesley	1488-90

Table 11. The abbots of Bordesley Abbey, 1350-1538.

Of the ten⁷¹ abbots of Bordesley who held office between c. 1350 and 1538, all except one can be found in the ordination lists as monks of Bordesley. The exception is John *Abyndon*, abbot between 1415 and 1423, though there is record of a monk of Bruern of the same name ordained around 1407 who could, at a stretch, be the same individual.

⁶⁸ WILLIAMS, *Tudor Cistercians*, p. 76.

⁶⁹ Martin HEALE, *The Abbots and Priors of Late Medieval and Reformation England*, Oxford 2016, p. 29-30.

⁷⁰ SMITH et al., *Heads*, II, p. 264-265; SMITH et al., *Heads*, III, p. 270-271; David E. THORNTON, "The Abbots of Bordesley: A Provisional List," *Studia Monastica*, 43/2 (2001), p. 233-267.

⁷¹ There is some confusion concerning the abbots John de Acton and John de Stoke. Smith suggests that they may have been the same individual (SMITH et al., *Heads*, III, p. 270), whereas I have argued that they were two different men, with John de Stoke being briefly made abbot during internal conflict at the abbey *circa* 1366-7: THORNTON, "The Abbots," p. 246-247, 258-259.

In contrast, the pattern for Beaulieu Abbey, Hampshire, is very different, as illustrated by Table 12.⁷²

ABBOT	DATES	AS MONK	DATES
John Petrus/Piers	1350-72	<i>Beaulieu</i>	1326
Walter Herynge	1372-92	<i>Beaulieu</i>	
Tideman de Winchcombe	1392-94	Hailes	1365-67
Richard de Middleton	1394-1410	<i>Beaulieu</i>	1373-76
John Gloucester	1397-1403	Hailes	1360-64, ABB 1368-97
William	1409		
Richard	1411-13		
Richard Bartholomew	1414-19	Quarr	1393-95, ABB 1399-1411
William Woburn	1419	Furness (?)	1406
William	1423-25		
William Sulbury	1425-30		
Richard	1431-42		
Richard Feckenham	1449-60	Bordesley	1410-14, ABB 1428-38+
John Chiselborough	1462-73		
Thomas Nind	1475-84	Kingswood	1462-63, ABB 1468-70
Humphrey Quicke	1488-90	Cleeve	1456-61, ABB 1479-88
John	1495		
Thomas Skevington al. Pace	1508-33	Merevale [Waverley]	monk Merevale 1482-83 [ABB Waverley 1477-95 (Smith III)] ⁷³
John Browning	1533-36	Waverley	1508, ABB 1526-33
Thomas Stevens	1536-38	Netley	1509-10, ABB 1529-36

Table 12. The Abbots of Beaulieu Abbey, 1350-1538.

David Smith lists 20 abbots of Beaulieu between 1350 and 1538. Ignoring the five for whom no byname is recorded and who may, in three cases, be duplicates, only three of the remaining fifteen abbots of Beaulieu can be shown to have been monks of that house. Ten may have been promoted from other Cistercian abbeys, and two are as yet otherwise unidentified. Seven out of these ten external appointees had themselves previously been abbots of other houses, in three cases of daughter houses of Beaulieu (Hailes and Netley). Beaulieu was not a lesser monastery as such, though being valued at £326.13s.2³/₄d. in the *Valor*, but it certainly was not in the same league as Fountains or Furness. This fact alone should not necessarily account for the relatively high percentage of external abbatial appointments at Beaulieu however.

⁷² SMITH et al., *Heads*, II, p. 260-261, III, p. 265-267.

⁷³ The chronology of Abbot Skevington's career is clearly in need of fresh study.

The election as abbot of a monk from another house appears therefore to have been not too uncommon at Cistercian abbeys in late medieval and early Tudor England and Wales. In addition to the supervisory role of the father-abbot in abbatial elections, the relative size and wealth of vacant monasteries would seem to have been important, as well as the internal situation within the conventual community itself. The arrival of an external abbot could, as argued in the case of Hailes Abbey in the 1480s and later, have created a context for the subsequent movement of recruits from the sphere of influence of the abbot's former house to his new one. This suggestion is certainly supported by the evidence presented above: for example, of the Cistercian abbeys listed in Table 5 with ten or more abbatial surnames, Beaulieu – the second in terms of frequency – also had a high number of externally appointed abbots, as demonstrated in Table 12. Similarly, Quarr Abbey, with up to eleven abbatial bynames, may have been ruled by as many as five abbots elected from other houses – though the identifications are not certain in some cases. In addition, at Abbey Dore, Combermere and Croxden, all with up to ten abbatial bynames, we find a number of abbots seemingly appointed from outside. The question of the connection between “external” abbots and patterns of recruitment is worthy of further investigation, and not only for the Cistercian order.⁷⁴

IV. TRANSFER BETWEEN HOUSES, 1536-1537

This paper will conclude by briefly examining another set of circumstances that certainly did lead to the transfer of monks from one Cistercian monastery to another house of the Order. During the very final years of medieval English monasticism, we do find a not insignificant number of religious being resident at houses other than that of their profession, but this was for reasons different from those outlined above. Following the survey recorded in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, the government determined to suppress those monasteries worth less than £200 per annum, as noted above. Thirty-nine Cistercian abbeys were valued as lesser monasteries, though as it turned out, not all of them were accordingly suppressed. However, these lesser monasteries were yet again visited between May and September 1536, and so-called “brief certificates” drawn up recording the situation at the relevant houses.⁷⁵ Superiors would be offered pensions, but the other members of the religious communities were expected either to remain in religion by transferring to another house of the same order, or to request a dispensation or “capacity” to become secular clerks. Of the lesser Cistercian houses surveyed by the commissioners for which the certificates survive, the vast majority – often all – of the inmates stated

⁷⁴ For example, among the Benedictines in England, the appointment in 1504 of William Compton, monk of Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire, as abbot of Pershore in Worcestershire, was followed by the admission of a number of monks of Pershore with the toponymic byname Compton. Significantly, Tewkesbury Abbey held land in Compton Parva, Gloucestershire.

⁷⁵ THORNTON, “The Prosopography of English Monastic Orders”; WILLIAMS, *Tudor Cistercians*, p. 295-296; KNOWLES, *Religious Orders*, vol. III, p. 304-319.

that they desired to continue in religion, thus requiring relocation to another monastery. However, evidence from the Faculty Office Register, kept at Lambeth Palace Library, shows that relatively soon thereafter, many monks of these same houses requested dispensations to become seculars. Thus, for example, according to the certificate for Garendon Abbey, there were fourteen monks 'with' the abbot and the prior of *Bondon*, who all wished to remain in religion, as did the eleven monks, with the abbot and the *quondam*, at Stoneleigh.⁷⁶ However, between 31 July 1536 and 10 January 1537, eleven monks of Garendon received dispensations, as did at least seven of Stoneleigh on 1 March 1537.⁷⁷ Similarly, the certificate for Waverley Abbey is rather explicit in expressing the conviction of the thirteen monks there that they "neither desire capacities nor will by no means depart their house, and be very obstinate and wilful", but as early as August 1536, six monks of that house had indeed been granted dispensations.⁷⁸ Similar patterns can be found for Sawtry, Quarr and Biddlesden.⁷⁹ It is therefore difficult to determine exactly how many monks of lesser Cistercian monasteries actually moved to other houses and how many "left" religious life during this period. David Williams has been able to identify "some three dozen" monks who moved to another house.⁸⁰ However, the total number was probably higher than this, despite the evidence cited above. Furthermore, the various popular risings in the north of England between October 1536 and the early months of 1537, partly in reaction to the suppression of the lesser monasteries, involved the participation and support of a number of Cistercian houses, though how willingly in all cases is open to debate. As a result, the abbeys of Jervaulx, Kirkstead and Whalley fell to the Crown "by attainder" on account of their alleged treason in 1537 and their monks were offered dispensations or the chance to transfer to another house.

The task of identifying monks who had moved to other houses during this period is complicated by the fact that Cistercians generally seem to have chosen to resume using their hereditary family surnames on leaving their monasteries in 1538-1540. Consequently, many of the Cistercian monks named in the extant deeds of surrender and/or pension lists from the final phase of the Dissolution cannot be readily identified in earlier documents in which they had used their monastic bynames.⁸¹ At Bordesley Abbey, of the twenty monks named in various records at, and following, the surrender of the abbey in July 1538, only a maximum of five may be readily identified in the earlier ordination lists with the same "surname". The majority of

⁷⁶ TNA E36/154, p. 110-11, 146-47; *LP*, X, p. 496, 498 (no. 1191).

⁷⁷ D.S. CHAMBERS, *Faculty Office Register 1534-1549*, Oxford 1966, p. 74, 76, 88.

⁷⁸ TNA SC 12/33/30; F. A. GASQUET, "Overlooked Testimonies to the Character of the English Monasteries on the Eve of their Suppression," *Dublin Review*, 114 (1894), p. 245-277 (p. 254-255); CHAMBERS, *Faculty Office Register*, p. 67-68.

⁷⁹ BL, Cotton MS. Cleopatra E.IV, fol. 338; TNA SC 12/4/38; TNA SC 12/33/27; GASQUET, "Overlooked Testimonies," p. 155-156, 269-270; CHAMBERS, *Faculty Office Register*, p. 66, 87, 110, 116, 179.

⁸⁰ WILLIAMS, *Tudor Cistercians*, p. 305.

⁸¹ For a discussion of this problem, see THORNTON, "The Prosopography of English Monastic Orders".

those otherwise unaccounted for are recorded in 1538 and later with non-toponymic and non-hagionymic names. Was, for example, the interestingly surnamed Roger Shakespeare, monk of Bordesley at the dissolution, the same as brother Roger Hanley (*Henley*) who had been ordained acolyte and subdeacon in 1532⁸² and who, despite his relatively recent admission, is otherwise missing from the later lists for Bordesley? Turning to nearby Kingswood Abbey, we find only two (William Wotton and John Sodbury) of the twelve monks at the surrender in February 1538 had previously been recorded in the ordination lists as monks of Kingswood.⁸³ The abbot, William Bewdley, had been promoted from Flaxley by 1533 and in addition Edward Erlingham, alias Fryer, had been transferred from that same abbey following its suppression in 1536. At least two other monks at Kingswood had probably been moved from elsewhere: John Gethin from Tintern, and Thomas Orchard from Cleeve.⁸⁴ This would leave six monks of Kingswood unaccounted for at the Dissolution. Further, detailed study of the prosopography of English and Welsh Cistercians at the Dissolution would no doubt serve to suggest more clearly the extent to which the white monks of houses dissolved in 1536-1537 chose to remain in religion.

Despite regulations concerning the importance of the vow of stability, as far back as the Rule of St Benedict, it is apparent that Cistercian monks in late medieval and early Tudor England and Wales were able, under certain circumstances, to move or “transfer” from one monastery to another. The reasons for transfer varied from case to case, and some monks moved less voluntarily than others. However, one category of evidence which arguably does not indicate such movement between houses is the toponymic surnames or *bynames* borne by a small number of Cistercians which, on first glance, appear to refer to the name of another abbey. Rather, these abbatial bynames should be regarded as a product of the tendency for Cistercian abbeys to recruit their monks not only from within their own areas of economic and spiritual interests – their spheres of influence – but also from within the spheres of influence of other Cistercian houses. One of the factors that may have led to this tendency was the election of an abbot who had been a monk at a different abbey – sometimes, though not always, the mother-house. The arrival of an external abbot would thus establish a connection between the two monasteries, which may have extended beyond his abbacy, and in turn encouraged postulant monks of one house to seek admission to the other.

Department of History
Bilkent University
06800 Ankara
Turkey

David E. THORNTON

⁸² WRO, MS. b706.093-BA2648/7(ii), p. 171.

⁸³ WRO, MSS. b706.093-BA2648/7(i), p. 263-264, and b706.093-BA2648/8(i), p. 307.

⁸⁴ WILLIAMS, *Tudor Cistercians*, p. 305.

Stabilité ou mobilité ? Les mouvements entre les maisons cisterciennes en Angleterre et au Pays de Galles au Moyen Âge tardif

Cet article aborde la question des déplacements ou des transferts de moines cisterciens entre les monastères d'Angleterre et du Pays de Galles entre 1300 et 1560, en examinant spécialement le cas des moines blancs qui portaient un nom de famille ou un surnom toponymique évoquant une autre maison cistercienne, un « surnom monastique », et les nominations de moines d'une abbaye comme abbé d'une autre maison. L'article montre que contrairement à ce qu'ont proposé précédemment certains historiens, les moines pourvus d'un « surnom monastique » n'avaient pas été admis auparavant dans la communauté à laquelle leur nom semblait faire allusion, mais pourraient plutôt avoir été recrutés dans la zone d'influence de cette abbaye. Il est suggéré que la nomination d'un abbé provenant d'une autre maison peut avoir contribué, au moins partiellement, au recrutement de moines issus d'autres monastères.

Stability or Mobility? Movement between Cistercian Houses in Late Medieval England and Wales

This paper examines the question of the movement or transfer of Cistercian monks between monasteries in England and Wales between 1300 and 1540, with special reference to those White Monks who bore a toponymic surname (or byname) that was itself the name of another Cistercian house (“abbatial byname”) and the appointment of a monk of one house as abbot of another. Contrary to what some previous historians have suggested, the paper argues that monks with an “abbatial byname” had not previously been admitted at the abbey to which the name apparently referred, but rather may have been recruited from within the environs or sphere of interest of that other abbey. It is suggested that the appointment of an abbot from another house may have contributed, at least partly, to this recruitment of monks from other monasteries.

Stabilität oder Mobilität? Bewegung zwischen zisterziensischen Häusern in England und Wales im späten Mittelalter

Diese Abhandlung untersucht die Frage der Verschiebung oder des Transfers zisterziensischer Mönche zwischen Klöstern in England und Wales in der Zeit von 1300 bis 1540; insbesondere im Hinblick auf diejenigen Weißen Mönche, die einen toponymischen Nachnamen (oder Beinamen) trugen, der seinerseits der Name eines anderen zisterziensischen Hauses („abtliche Beinamen“) war, sowie hinsichtlich der Berufung eines Mönches aus einem Haus zum Abt eines anderen. Im Gegensatz zu dem, was frühere Historiker vermuteten, argumentiert diese Abhandlung, dass Mönche mit einem „abtlichen Beinamen“ zuvor nicht der Abtei, auf die sich der Name offensichtlich bezieht, zugehörig waren, sondern wohl vielmehr in der Umgebung oder der Interessenssphäre dieser anderen Abtei rekrutiert worden sein könnten. Es ist naheliegend, dass die Ernennung eines Abtes aus einem anderen Haus – zumindest teilweise – zu dieser Rekrutierung von Mönchen aus anderen Klöstern beigetragen hat.

