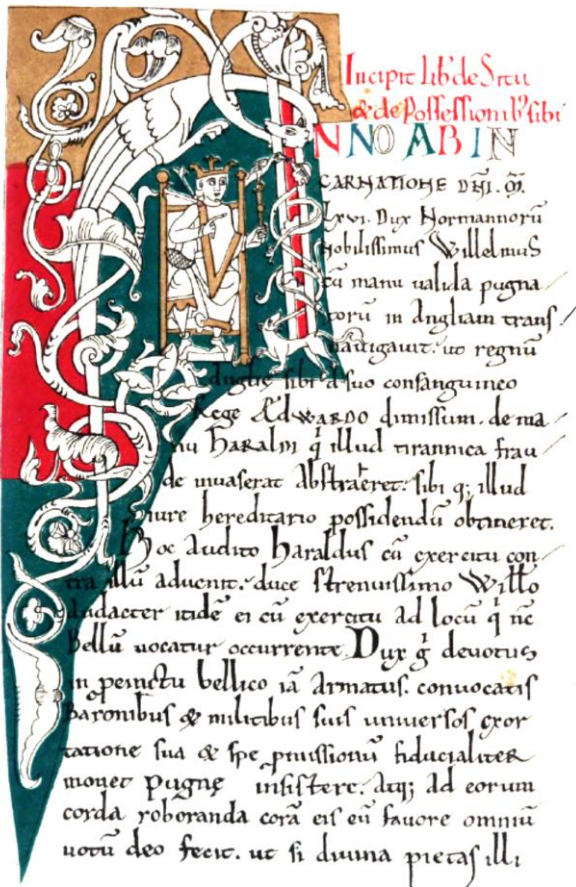


Abbots of Battle 1070-1538



Illuminated page from the frontispiece of Lower's Chronicle of Battle Abbey

Introduction:

There were 29 to 31 abbots of the 'Abbaye de Bello', depending on whether or not we count the very first, named Robert Blancard, who may not have been consecrated abbot, and on whether there was an election or not covering the period 1529-31 before the abbacy of the final abbot, John Hammond.

Clearly not all the abbots have memorable stories and many must have led relatively quiet lives leading the monks in their ecclesiastical duties and rubber stamping various rentals and land deals – not that they were not busy supervising the life of the abbey and leading the management of the wide-ranging abbey estates and even acting as the local lord in legal matters. We have reasonably good information about events in the lives of the first eleven abbots, and these all have an entry in the text. After that those that have some recorded event or events of significance are selected.

The complete list of the abbots and their dates of election or appointment, the reason why each ceased being abbot and some brief introductory notes to each are given below. Many but not all died in post.

1. Robert Blancard, ?designated 1070–1, appointed 1076, drowned same year. *There is a mention in Regesta Regnum Anglo-Normannorum Vol.1 (No.60) about an abbot in 1070–1. Robert Blancard, one of the first monks, may have been*

designated by William I in 1070, not 1076, but maybe it was not possible to be formally appointed until the first part of the abbey church was consecrated in 1076?

2. Gausbert, a monk of Marmoutier, appointed 1076, died 1095. *King William II Rufus then delayed appointing a new abbot for a year in argument with Archbishop Anselm of Canterbury.*
3. Henry of Bec (Normandy), Prior of Christ Church Canterbury, appointed 1096, died 1102 *The custody of the abbey, during the long vacancy which followed Abbot Henry's death, was first held by one of the king's chaplains, named Vivian, then soon afterwards to a monk Gausfrid de Carileph (Calais). He was never abbot, but under his watch the claims of Marmoutier that as the mother abbey they had jurisdiction over and the right to appoint new abbots of Battle were rejected. After Geoffrey's untimely death the Abbot of Thorney 'had care' until Ralph of Caen became abbot. The Abbot of Thorney may have been Gunterus, an ex-monk of Battle, who had previously been Prior of St. Nicholas, Exeter (a cell of Battle). Ref. Monasticon.*
4. Ralph of Caen, former monk of Bec, Prior of Rochester Priory, appointed 1107, died 1124.
5. Warner of Canterbury, appointed 1125, resigned 1138.
6. Walter de Luci (a monk from Lonlé, near Domfront in Normandy), appointed 1139, died 1171. *In the four year period from 1171 to the next abbot's election Richard de Luci, who was chief justiciar of England and Walter's brother, 'presided' over the abbey which was de facto run by Sir Peter Criel and Hugh de Beche.*
7. Odo of Canterbury, Prior of Christ Church, Canterbury, appointed 1175, died 1200.
8. John de Dubra (Dover), appointed 1200, died 1211–4 (see text for discussion). *A person called Hugh was then elected according to 'Monasticon' and 'Willis Mitred Abbeys' but left to become Bishop of Carlisle. This information has been copied into later texts, but must be erroneous and a misperception of old texts where 'de Bello' (of Battle) and 'Bello Loco' (Beaulieu) can be easily confused. British History Online has a record stating that the Bishop of Carlisle was the ex-Abbot Hugh of Beaulieu. Hugh of Beaulieu (Cistercian, Hampshire), who had been deposed (Ann. Waverley p. 291). He was made a bishop by the papal legate Guala before 1 August 1218, when royal assent given. Ref: Fasti Ecclesiae Anglicanae 1066-1300: Volume 2, Monastic Cathedrals (Northern and Southern Provinces), ed. Diana E Greenway (London, 1971), pp. 19-21.*
9. Richard of Horwode (possibly originally from Horwood, Buckinghamshire or Devon), a monk of Battle, elected 1215, died 1235. *John assented to his election on 22 January. The 1215 signing of Magna Carta was witnessed by the Abbot of Battle, who must have been Richard. Royal nomination had ceased and from now onwards the monks of the abbey elected its abbot, submitting his name for formal royal approval. John was not averse to allowing abbeys to remain without an abbot as he then received the abbey profits. This is presumably what happened after the death of Abbot John de Dubra.*

10. Ralph de Covintre (Coventry) elected 1235, last mentioned in 1252.
11. Reginald of Brecon, elected 1261, resigned 1281. *Abbot at the time of the Battle of Lewes (1264) and 'host' to Henry III before and after the battle.*
12. Henry de Aylesford, elected 1281, died 1297.
13. John de Taneto (Thanet), elected 1298, resigned 1307.
14. John de Whatlington, elected 1308, died 1311.
15. John de Nortburne (probably Northbourne, near Deal, Kent), elected 1311, resigned 1318.
16. John de Pevensey (Pevensey), elected 1318, died 1324.
17. Alan de Retlyng (now called Ratling, Retling was a manor near Aylesford, Kent), elected 1324, died 1350 (of the Black Death). *A royal licence to fortify the abbey was received in 1338 and the building of the great gatehouse and walls was begun. In 1340 he complained to the king about papal extortion.*
18. Robert de Bello (of Battle), elected 1351, died 1364. *In 1360 the abbot was one of the landowners made responsible for the defence of the coast. In the Cartulary is a papal bull of 1355, commanding the Prior of Brecon, 'to conduct himself conformably to the accustomed rules of submission to the abbot of the monastery of St. Martin, in Battel.'*
19. Hamo de Offynton (of Offington, Worthing), elected 1364, died 1383. *In 1371 the abbot was again one of the landowners made responsible for the defence of the coast. See his account later for details of a defence of Winchelsea in 1377.*
20. John Crane, elected 1383.
21. John Lydbury, elected 1398, died 1404.
22. William Merssh, monk of Battle, Prior of St. Nicholas, Exeter, elected 1405, died 1417.
23. Thomas de Ludlowe (Ludlow, Shropshire), elected 1417, resigned 1434–5. *It was in this abbot's time that a new Sword of Battle Abbey was made. His initials 't I' can be seen on each side of the coat of arms embossed on its hilt (pp.4&23). He may have become Abbot of Shrewsbury d.1459.*
24. William Waller, elected 1435, died 1437.
25. Richard Dertmouth, elected 1437, last mentioned 1461. *Richard Dertmouth, the abbey and all its servants were pardoned in 1450 for supporting the Cade Rebellion.*
26. John Newton, also a Prior of St. Nicholas, Exeter, elected 1463, died 1490.
27. Richard Tovy, elected 1490, died 1503.
28. William Westfield, another Prior of St. Nicholas, Exeter, elected 1503, died 1508.
29. Lawrence Champion, elected 1508, died 1529.
30. Questionable. *There was a possible further abbot 1529–31 as 'On the Thursday after the feast of St. Laurence in 1529, a proxy from the Prior of Brecon (a cell of*

Battle) was present in the Chapter House in Battle, to elect a new abbot.' This abbot may not have been John Hammond for reasons discussed in the section about his abbacy.

31. John Hammond, elected 1529 or 1531, pensioned off 1538. *The final act of surrender of the abbey was signed by the last abbot and all his monks. The abbey seal was applied in white wax to the front and the abbot's seal in red wax to the reverse of this document. This was the final act of the abbey. The abbot and the monks all received pensions (apart from the novice). The lay staff lost their jobs but also received small pensions.*

Coats of arms of Abbots of Battle:

Ecclesiastical coats of arms were probably not formalised until sometime after the 13th century, maybe later. Distinctive coats of arms had first appeared in the 12th century, being worn by nobles in battle to help distinguish friend from foe and to rally their supporters, later as 'colours' in jousting and for just plain egotism. Before this, military shields might have carried some patterns as seen in the Bayeux tapestry, but this does not appear to have been heraldically formalised. The heraldic arms of the Abbots of Battle varied from their first introduction, and rather than being arms of the abbey itself they were the personal arms of the abbot. Throughout, these arms have used combinations of red (Gules), yellow (Or) and white (Argent). All have carried a large cross, smaller crowns and swords (usually Or and in the quarters), and some had mitres in Argent, Or, or a combination of these, or blue (Azure), and occasionally other embellishments, often in Azure.

English Heritage have quoted that Abbot Hamo of Offyngton (1364–83) was granted papal permission to use the mitre and additional ornaments normally reserved for bishops and that after this time the mitre appeared on the abbey's coat of arms. But the mitres may have appeared before that because Battle was a mitred abbey, with the abbot being summoned to parliament from time to time. This was covered in the directive by William I dated 1070–1, when he mentions the Abbot of Battle. When the abbot was called to attend the king's court he had an allowance of food, wine, and wax candles for himself and two monks. From 1295 he was granted a residence in both London, the 'Inne of Bataille' in Southwark near the present Hays Wharf, and also in Winchester, but perhaps the clearest privilege was that the abbot, when passing through the king's forests, might hunt one or two game animals with his hounds.

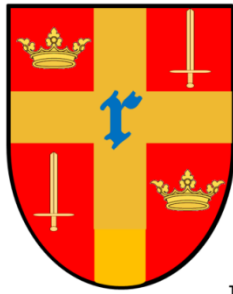
Below are artistic interpretations of coats of arms from descriptions and illustrations that can be found (illustrations are from some stained glass in the Burrell Collection, Glasgow, from the British Library's (BL) Lansdown Collection MS255, from the final seal of the abbey and the hilt of the Sword of Battle, – in the last case there is no evidence of the colours, so possible alternatives are shown –although the field(background), Argent and cross, Gules are most likely if we believe Paton – who thought the cross had been filled with red enamel. Descriptive evidence comes from Fuller's Church History of Britain, Volume 6; Monasticon; Tanner's Notitia Monastica; 'Gleanings, by a Native'; part of the original Cole Collection at the BL now indexed under Additional MS60513; and the text describing the final seal (and a variant of this).



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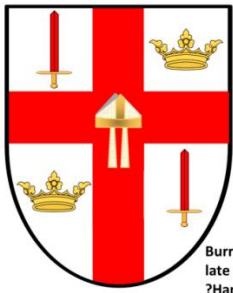
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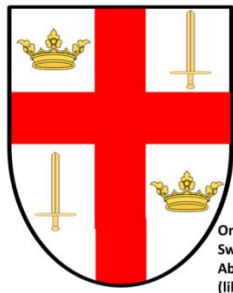
Tanner CLXVII



Tanner CLXVII
modified by
Rayner, Fuller
(Church History
of Britain Vol.6)
and Le Neve



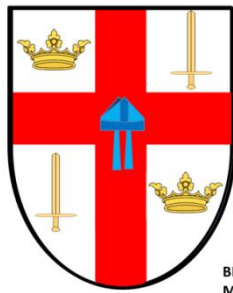
Burrell Collection
late 14th century
?Hamo 1364-83



On Ludlow's
Sword of Battle
Abbey 1417-34
(likely colours)



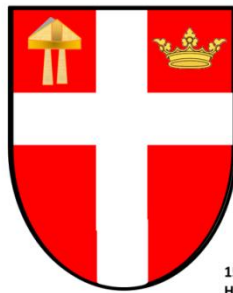
On Ludlow's
Sword of Battle
Abbey (alternate)



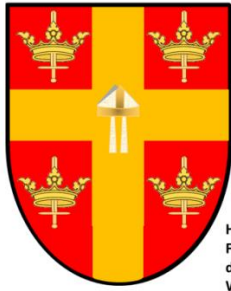
BL Lansdowne
MS255



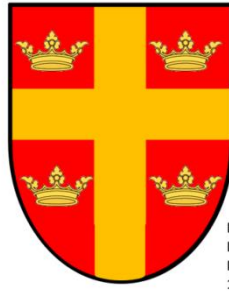
From 'Gleanings'
After Fuller



1515
House of Lords



Hammond,
Final arms
described by
Walcott



Hammond,
Final seal of
Battle Abbey
1538 (alt 1)

All arms interpretations © K Foord

Tanner's descriptions date from 1744, Fuller's from 1655. Only three designs can be definitely ascribed – to one of the Thomas Ludlowe alternatives, probably that with the cross Gules, 1417–34; Lawrence Champion, 1508–29 (by the 1515 date); and Hammond as described on the seal 1538 (see p26). Walcott describes a variation of that on the final seal, with swords piercing the crowns and a mitre in fess, but this is rather over-complex and he cannot be describing it from image of the seal, does not state the colour of the mitre and does not state his source.

The stained glass in the Burrell Collections has been dated to the late 14th century so may probably be ascribed to Hamo de Offynton (1364–83) – the fact that the blades of the swords are red may also be bloody evidence that this shield belongs to Hamo as he was a warrior abbot. The mitres may have first appeared on that which was probably Hamo's, but one cannot be certain. A mitre appears on one shield definitely dated post-Hamo (1515), but does not appear on either Ludlowe's (1417–34) or Hammond's probable seal (1529–38).

The first coat of arms, top left on the previous page, and described by Tanner but which cannot be dated, is the one used on Goss memento ceramics of Battle made between 1858 and 1939.

The shield with the central letter 'r' may be that of one of the abbots with a forename beginning with R from sometime after 1200. Either that or it is a misinterpreted letter 'x'

The first abbot, Robert Blancard (1070–76*):

*In referring to a date range these are the dates of an abbacy.

In the winter of 1069–70 William led the terrible rapine and reprisals of the 'Harrying of the North', which created famine and widespread death in Northumbria. Some rebellion leaders submitted or fled to Scotland. William spent Christmas at York, and in early 1070 he crossed the Pennines from York to Chester in appalling weather. He then returned south, relieving a siege at Shrewsbury, and for the third and final time subduing the troublesome Mercia.

Meanwhile the local population of eastern Sussex would have slowly rebuilt their lives, much of the local area having been 'wasted' around the time of the invasion of 1066.

A papal delegation led by Cardinal Bishop Ermenfrid of Sion (in modern Switzerland), with Peter a cardinal priest and John a cardinal deacon, symbolically re-crowned William and Queen Matilda at Easter 1070 at Winchester. This was not before imposing a rare Penitential Ordinance or Penitentiary on the Normans who had taken part in the Conquest

of England, in atonement for the bloodshed and other sins at the Battle of Hastings and afterwards. The English were exempt from this edict 'as they had suffered enough'.

It is probable that part of the papal legation's conditions was that William should commence the building of Battle Abbey, as he had promised in 1066, as a penance and memorial to the dead of both sides, as per the third paragraph of the Ordinance, which certainly applied to him. *'Anyone who does not know the number of those he wounded or killed must, at the discretion of his bishop, do penance for one day in each week for the remainder of his life, or, if he can, let him redeem his sin by a perpetual alms, either by building or by endowing a church.'*



Extract from Battle Community Tapestry
courtesy of Tina Greene.

This scene shows the papal legates, with their rolled vellum penitentiary, re-crowning King William I and his Queen Matilda at Winchester in 1070

©Tina Greene Photography Peter Greene

To fulfil this papal penance William sent William Faber 'the Smith', a monk in his service, as a messenger to Marmoutier. The Benedictine Monastery of Marmoutier (near Tours in the Loire region of France), was the most important abbey in western France at the time. It was asked to send monks to join Faber in starting to build Battle Abbey. We even know the names of the additional four monks sent – Theobald Vetulum, William Coche, Robert de Bologna, and Robert Blancard.

When the five arrived they found the cairn marking the place at which Harold had been killed and which was to be the site of the high altar, but tried to build the abbey 'further down the hill to the west' nearer water, at a place called Herste. This same location is mentioned later in the 'Chronicle of Battle Abbey' which places 'two acres in Herste next to the orchard adjoining the hostel' (which was on the site of the present Pilgrim's Rest) and would have been at most one league (2.4km, 1.5 miles) away, probably much less, lying north-west of the abbey along the road that formed the north border of what became the abbey's Great Park. Even in this better position they had few resources and probably little lay help so progress would have been minimal. See – 'Foord, K, Where did the monks of Marmoutier first try to build Battle Abbey?'

William eventually received news of this. Led by Robert Blancard the monks explained that *'the place where he had decided to build the abbey was located upon a hill with parched soil, dry and lacking springs... the ground forested for some distance around.'* But William angrily

told the monks to build the abbey where he had commanded, famously saying *'If God spare my life I will so amply provide for this place that wine shall be more abundant than water'*.



Extract from Battle Community Tapestry, courtesy of Tina Greene

In this scene William is telling the monks to build the abbey on top of the hill as he had commanded (there is no evidence that he actually visited the site, but this picture tells a better story!)

©Tina Greene Photography Peter Greene

The abbey was to be 'mitred' which meant that the abbot was required to attend the king's court and parliament when summoned. This is covered in the directive by William I dated 1070-1, when he mentions the Abbot of Battle, from this it is assumed that Blancard was designated to be abbot.

A mitred abbot's mitre was silver gilt and gold, not all gold like a bishop's. An archbishop's was gold and red. See illustration (below). A mitred abbot's crozier had to be held with the crook inward signifying only local influence, whereas a bishop held his crozier's crook outward showing a wider influence over a diocese. Early mitres were quite simple caps, perhaps embroidered but not bejewelled.



Mitres in about 1170: left mitred abbot, centre bishop, right archbishop (after an example in the V&A ascribed to Thomas a Becket) © K Foord

Even after 1070 when resources were found the building progressed slowly and it may not have been until 1076 that the first abbot could be consecrated. Robert Blancard, one of the four monks who had first come over, was formally elected, and went to Marmoutier to inform his superiors of his elevation and of progress, and to possibly be consecrated. Crossing the English Channel was vary hazardous at that time, and not to be undertaken

lightly. Unfortunately he was drowned in the Channel coming back from Marmoutier. So although we are to a degree uncertain it does seem correct that we should call Robert Blancard the first Abbot of Battle.

Second or more probably the first abbot, Gausbert de Marmoutier (1076–95):

When Blanchard died William sent to the Abbey of Marmoutier for another monk capable of taking the abbacy, and Gausbert was despatched with four more monks to join the original brothers. As Graham has pointed out all the monks were sent to oversee the building work 'qui operi preessen' (Chronicle of Battle Abbey (CBA), Serle p69; Graham p191), and would not be expected to build a great church without lay help. De Lasteyrie has clearly stated '*there were a fair number of monks practising architecture ... many bishops and abbots were sufficiently instructed to supervise the skilled craftsmen whom they engaged, but the work was executed by laymen.*' Gausbert must have had these skills.

Gausbert visited Marmoutier and he refused consecration there. After this attempt by Marmoutier to regard Battle as a 'daughter' house, King William disabused the Abbey of Marmoutier of any thoughts that it had any possible residual control over Battle.

William declared that the Church of St. Martin of Battle was to be free and exempted from all episcopal jurisdiction, in the same way as the Church of Canterbury. The charter was witnessed by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, and several other Prelates, Earls, and Barons. But Stigand, the Bishop of Chichester, in whose diocese the Abbey was located, was not a witness and he objected to the grant.

When Gausbert sought consecration from the Archbishop, the latter refused to officiate unless the abbot-elect went to Chichester to receive the benediction. Gausbert appealed to William, who ordained that the Archbishop should perform the ceremony in the monastery, but the benediction was to be given to him by Stigand, before the altar of St. Martin. To remove all pretence of episcopal jurisdiction, William also ordered that the bishop and his train should neither lodge in the monastery nor take a meal there. William to put the matter beyond doubt also issued a writ addressed to Lanfranc, Archbishop of Canterbury, and to Stigand, enacting, that all future Abbots should be consecrated at Battle, like Gausbert.

This was the first time that such an issue was raised and the outcome created a precedent of a 'Royal Peculiar', by royal command, not by charter. As we shall see later the Church would come back to this time and time again over the centuries to try to wrest control of the royal abbey fully back to Chichester.

Gausbert and his monks were now able to draw on the royal treasury for building costs and maintenance. William also endowed the abbey with six manors (Wye in Kent, Alciston in Sussex, Limsfield in Surrey, Brightwalton in Berkshire, Crowmarsh in Oxfordshire, and Hou in Essex) and a wealthy church (at Collumpton, Devon with its dependent church at Exeter) all from his own holdings.

William also gave considerable rights to the abbey such as freedom from tolls during their travels. Importantly, for its upkeep in the future the abbey had also been granted the banlieu (or leuga or lowey) of all lands within a 1½ mile (2.4 km, one league) radius of the abbey, allowing for slight irregularities at the boundaries where lands of neighbours abutted. This land was carved out of land previously granted to the count of Eu and others,

with no compensation. They had no choice and although William said that they should give up the land 'for the love of him' it of course led to grumbling and later difficulties. So not only did Gausbert need to be of architectural mind but also a firm neighbour and land manager. He was starting from virtual scratch on almost undeveloped land that he found was capable of quite rapid development.



Extract from the Battle Community Tapestry, Here is Gausbert as the first abbot, the first part of the abbey is completed and construction of the rest is proceeding. In the lower border we see the drowning Blancard and an illustration of the fox and the crow fable. Likewise at the top there is an illustration of the bat and the weasel fable. These follow a theme in the original Bayeux Tapestry where additional parts of the story and relevant fables are illustrated in the borders. ©Tina Greene
Photography Peter Greene

The Conqueror died in 1086 and during his son William II Rufus's reign the 'royal' status was retained. Rufus seems to have been surprisingly fond of Battle Abbey, mainly as it had little to do with the mainstream Church, for which he apparently had little time. The port at Hastings was still in a good state at that time and was a staging post for his several visits to Normandy. He is said to have visited the abbey regularly, possibly to irritate the new Archbishop of Canterbury, Anselm – who tried to weaken Battle's immunities – and with whom he constantly quarrelled. When staying at Hastings in February 1094 Rufus and his court attended the dedication of the abbey by Archbishop Anselm. William II gave it yet more property, this time the income of nine more churches, and gifts of his father's cloak and a feretory (portable altar), the last believed to have been the feretory on which Harold Godwinson was reputed to have sworn his oath of allegiance to Duke William of Normandy. Gausbert died in 1095 and the monks asked the king to appoint a successor. Rufus was still quarrelling with Anselm and the CBA blames this for the delay of a year before a new abbot was appointed. Eventually and it would seem reluctantly he took Anselm's advice and appointed Henry, the Prior of Christ Church, Canterbury as abbot.

Henry of Bec, the third abbot (1096–1102)

– and the five year vacancy (1102–07):

The monks of Battle were not 'best pleased' with the appointment of Henry, a monk originally from Bec, but now Prior of Canterbury. He was a disciple of Archbishop Anselm of Canterbury, former Abbot of Bec, who was campaigning for clear lines of authority within the Church from the pope downwards, and for the elimination of any role for laymen over the Church hierarchy. He brought in numbers of monks from Canterbury who along with Anselm advised Henry to go to Chichester to be consecrated, as Bishop Reginald was stalling about coming to Battle. This was an early case of gerrymandering and the Battle monks were outvoted. As the CBA says, this 'subtly exposed' the abbey's status. Never again would an abbot be consecrated at Battle. But they did maintain their royal rights, in spite of the lack of written proof, tending to reject what bishops demanded by right but giving in when requested nicely.

In short, for Battle Henry seems to have been a bit of a disaster. Internal strife appears to have led to some neglect and ill fortune for the abbey, as well as some dismemberment of the large and valuable manor of Wye by rapacious neighbours, according to the CBA. He was only in post for six years, eventually and fortunately to be followed by a most able man. There was also a new king after 1100 when Rufus died in the New Forest pierced by a hunting arrow, being succeeded by his younger brother Henry I. When Henry of Bec died the abbatial custody of the abbey was in abeyance for five years. The vacancy which followed Abbot Henry's death was first managed by one of the king's chaplains, named Vivian, then by a monk Geoffrey or Gausfrid of Carileph (Calais). He does not appear to have been appointed abbot, but it was under his watch that a case was taken before the king's court to recover Wye. The resurrected claims of the abbot of Marmoutier, that Marmoutier as the mother abbey had jurisdiction over and the right to appoint new abbots at Battle, were finally dismissed by Henry I. After Geoffrey's untimely death at Battle the Abbot of Thorney had a rather unsatisfactory 'care of' the monastery from a distance until Ralph of Caen became abbot, even though the Abbot of Thorney may have been Gunterus, an ex-monk of Battle, who had previously been Prior of St. Nicholas, Exeter (a cell of Battle). Ref. Monasticon.

From the CBA it appears that it was during the period 1102–7 that the monks commissioned the building of the first part of St. Mary's Church, across the road from the abbey. The population of Battle had increased; the people were crowding the abbey church and interfering with the ability of the monks to undertake their religious duties. If the monks had not done this and retained the abbey church as the parish church the great church would not have been demolished at the reformation.

The fourth abbot, Ralph of Caen (1107-24):

Once Ralph was appointed by King Henry I he hurried to Battle. He had first come to England with Archbishop Lanfranc, Anselm's predecessor. Under Ralph the abbey recovered both spiritually and in prosperity and looked to buy more lands and to recover those which had been lost. The deals are listed in the CBA. Henry I himself exchanged land and a church near Reading for land near Chichester so that Henry could build a new abbey. Below is his notification of this

[1120, Nov.-Dec] Portsmouth. Notification by Henry I to Ralph Bp. of Chichester and William fitz Ansgar and the barons of Sussex: That he has given to St. Martin of Battle in exchange for Reading, the manor of Appledram [co. Sussex], also 40?. which formerly pertained to the said manor, with the ferm of Bosham; and of feeding in the woods of ' Bocfalde' and ' Betlesparrioc', one pig for every three that the King has there; and the fourth penny of pannage, and the fourth of all the oaks that are felled and the fourth penny from the land pertaining to those woods, &c. The monks and their men of Appledram are to be quit of all custom with sac, soc, toll, team and infangthief, geld, scot, hidage, danegeld, work on bridges, castles, parks, and enclosures, host-service, aids, shires, hundreds, wardpenny, lastage, larceny, murder-fine, treasure-trove, warren, and all pleas and complaints.

Henry also gave the abbey several churches in Wales, which by now was under his overlordship. Henry may not have visited Battle, but he certainly stood up for its rights.

Ralph also got on well with the Bishop of Chichester – an old friend also called Ralph and Ralph, Bishop of Chichester, came to Battle and advised and preached. When the relics of the abbey were re-housed in a fine gold and silver feretory set with jewels Bishop Ralph came and blessed it.

Boundary disputes with neighbours were settled via the king and the local barons were ordered to fence the lands adjacent to the banlieu to fix the boundaries.

The leadwork and the encircling wall of the abbey were finished off and the courtyard extended. His spiritual work appears also to have been of the highest quality as the words of the CBA bear witness.

He died at the age of 84 having been a monk for just over 60 years. He was possibly the last of the community of Battle to have some experience of the Norman Conquest. His death, according to Elizabeth van Houts in her paper 'The Memory of 1066 in Oral and Written Traditions', could have been what soon spurred the writing in the Battle Abbey scriptorium of a copy of William the Conqueror's 'Ship List', a copy of the 'Brevis Relatio' (a short Latin prose history of Normandy and England from about 1035 to the battle of Tinchebrai in 1106) and the first version of the abbey's foundation history.

Warner of Canterbury, fifth abbot (1125–38 when he resigned):

Between the death of Ralph and the appointment of Warner, again of Canterbury, as abbot there was a short period of royal administration as Henry I was overseas. Henry published an edict that all churches with no leaders should send a delegate to come to meet him and Battle sent a monk called Hildegard and three other monks. Taking the advice of Archbishop William of Canterbury and Seffrid the new Bishop of Chichester, Henry chose Warner who was obviously with the archbishop – as Warner did not get back to England until after Easter 1125, when the archbishop consecrated him. He arrived in Battle on 24 April and started to sort things out.

Seffrid then summoned Warner to a synod at Chichester and Warner asked the Battle chapter what he should do. They explained the custom that by royal authority he should not be summoned, but that if he wished to go anywhere he had a right to do so. So he went voluntarily and explained Battle's position which the bishop understood, and the matter went no further.

Soon afterwards Battle's church at Carmarthen, which was coveted by the local bishop, was exchanged by the king for some land at Langrish in Hampshire, near the Sussex border. However, also at about this time (1125) the founding community of monks from Battle Abbey arrived at Brecon led by a monk called Walter, who became its first prior. Bernard de Neufmarché, a Norman knight, gave the early church at Brecon to one of his followers, Roger, a monk from Battle Abbey, which then founded Brecon Priory as a daughter house of Battle. In the future Brecon would provide abbots for the mother abbey at Battle, as would the other daughter priory of St. Nicholas, Exeter which was founded a little earlier in about 1089.

The CBA asserts that Warner became somewhat dazzled by his efforts at furnishing the church with new ornaments and vessels for the altar etc. and at the winter feast of St. Martin (after whom Battle Abbey was named) Walter would often 'summons' the Bishop of Chichester! Things got a little out of hand on one occasion and the bishop's retinue 'got bolshie' and started demanding things of the abbey. The abbot spoke with the bishop, but things got further out of hand to the point where the bishop and his retinue were denied food. The bishop then declared that he would exercise lordship over the abbey, with Warner retorting that he governed the abbey as freely as the bishop his diocese.

King Henry I died on 2 December 1135 and his nephew Stephen succeeded. King Stephen did issue a general confirmation of status quo for Battle Abbey in 1137, issued via and witnessed by Robert fitzRichard de Clare (a steward of King Stephen), at Hastings., but at the Christmas court in 1138 political disputations arose somehow involving Warner and one of the king's justiciars, Richard de Luci. Abbot Warner was induced to resign and Walter de Luci, a monk from Lonlé in Normandy, and Richard's brother, was consecrated abbot, at court.

So Battle Abbey, having sent Warner off to court for Christmas 1138, received a new abbot, in the company of Seffrid of Chichester, in the New Year 1139. Warner retired to the Cluniac Priory of St. Pancras at Lewes and lived there until his death.

Sixth abbot, Walter de Luci (1139–71) and (1171–75) the 'presidency' of Richard de Luci:

Walter de Luci, a monk from Lonlé in Normandy, had been staying with a kinsman who was Abbot of St. Albans, but had met the king and other powerful magnates through his brother, Richard. The de Lucis were from a not particularly wealthy but ambitious and able minor Norman family with strong loyalties to each other (West, FJ: *The Justiciarship of England 1066–1215* (1966) pp24,25). The appointment of Walter was a ploy by King Stephen to elevate the de Luci family, but in the end a useful move which protected the abbey from both the worst effects of the Anarchy and the Bishop of Chichester.

Things appeared to be on even keel and remained undefined with Chichester until 1148 when a new bishop was appointed. The relationship between Walter and the new Bishop of Chichester, Hilary, who had spent years in the curia at Rome, was clearly going to be difficult. Hilary was appointed by a pope who was trying to establish canonical reform in England.

Things boiled rapidly to a head when Abbot Walter was summoned to Chichester, to be told that Bishop Hilary now expected Battle to be fully under his jurisdiction and pay episcopal

dues. Abbot Walter re-iterated the abbey's position as a 'Royal Peculiar' and Stephen's reaffirmation of that, referring to the written confirmation of this witnessed by Archbishop Lanfranc and Stigand of Chichester at the time of Abbot Gausbert. Hilary still tried to insist saying that, with papal support, unless he submitted he would place him under an interdict to attend synod and that if he did not he would be excommunicated. He soon tried this and Walter went straight to the royal court. After the case had been heard Stephen commanded that the abbey should remain free of subjection in accordance with previous charters. The matter then rested as such until Stephen's death. As soon as Stephen died, in November 1154, and before Henry II was crowned, Hilary of Chichester, in cahoots with the new Pope Adrian IV (the only English Pope), tried to excommunicate Battle's abbot.

It was now nearly 100 years since Hastings. The royal affinity that William I, and to a degree William II had had for Battle Abbey, and the support at distance given by Henry I, were becoming a faded memories. The new King Henry II, the son of Geoffrey Plantagenet, count of Anjou, and Henry I's daughter Matilda, was of the Angevin house. He was the first Plantagenet king of England.

Bishop Hilary had not fully realised the power of Richard de Luci, Abbot Walter de Luci's brother, who was soon to be one of Henry II's chief justiciars and who could hold the power to maintain the administration of the kingdom even during an interregnum. He had words in the ear of Archbishop Theobald of Canterbury and the threat to Walter was rapidly overturned. The events which followed are essentially a story of the de Lucis versus Bishop Hilary, about the continuing rights of Battle Abbey as a Royal Peculiar, or perhaps more cynically as a temporarily De Luci Peculiar.

In Lent 1155 Henry II held a council to confirm the grants and customs of his predecessors. Abbot Walter attended taking with him some charters. The ecclesiastics were against confirmation, but the barons persuaded the king to accept them. As Searle said, 'First round to the de Lucis'.

The abbey badly needed to sort out the row with Hilary of Chichester. To meet Henry II the Abbot of Battle first travelled to the Loire, finding him at Saumur castle on 29 August 1156. This raised the suspicions of other churchmen who had started to think he might not speak well of them and notably he was followed by Hilary, who stayed with the king until his return to England. This was followed up by Pope Adrian sending Walter a bull to hear his commands at Chichester in mid-Lent, which Walter duly did and attended a court presided over by the Dean of Chichester. The case opened with Walter giving an opening speech. After this the dean asked him to produce the Pope's bull, which Walter did not have with him, but the dean clearly had a copy which was read out. As expected it required the Abbot of Battle to offer subjection to the Bishop of Chichester and was followed up by a request that Walter should write a 'very little' schedule containing his profession of obedience. The abbot then replied with the usual mantra about the abbey's position as a Royal Peculiar and the written confirmation of this witnessed by Archbishop Lanfranc and Stigand of Chichester at the time of Abbot Gausbert. He then asked for an adjournment to consult with the king. This was refused and he was asked once more to sign the schedule. He refused and the dean dissolved the court saying that his refusal would be reported to the bishop. The abbot told his brother what had happened, who told the king who ordered the Bishop of Chichester to leave Walter in peace until he returned to England.

Henry II came back to England just after Easter 1157. He and Walter met at Richard de Luci's castle at Ongar, followed by all attending Henry's court firstly at Bury St Edmunds on 19 May, but because of lack of time it was deferred to Colchester on 23 May 1157. The king asked a council to join him. This contained amongst a number of others the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, Chancellor Thomas a Becket and Richard de Luci, Chief Justiciar.

The case heard on 23 May 1157 is transcribed in detail in Latin, with English notes, over no fewer than 20 pages in 'The Rise and Progress of the English Commonwealth: Anglo-Saxon Period. Containing the Anglo-Saxon Policy and the Institutions arising out of Laws and Usages which prevailed before the Conquest, Volume 2 by Sir Francis Palgrave (1832) pp xliv–lxiv'. The details of the case are also given (from the perspective of Battle Abbey of course) at considerable length in the CBA. The preludes from 1148 are also described by Palgrave between pp xxviii and xliii. The English notes (very slightly updated to modern English, but still with the mixed tenses and spellings etc. of the original!) are given below as they give a fascinating insight into the *modus operandi* of a medieval king's court.

Richard de Luci on behalf of the abbot offers the charters, which are read out by Thomas a Beckett. In turn they are inspected by the king who orders them deposited with those of William Rufus, Henry I and his own. The Chancellor says that Walter must reply to the objections made by the Bishop of Chichester who says that he has made this statement in the cathedral. The king asks for information about this profession. Richard de Luci then opens in favour of Battle Abbey, saying that it should be protected by the king and all Normans as the place where William the Conqueror gained victory, which is why the king wears the crown and we have all been enriched. He is backed up by Robert, Earl of Leicester. There is then a break whilst the king adjudicates on another case, then Richard de Luci resumes, insisting on the nobility of the abbey. He urges the king, on behalf of the Norman nobility to defend Battle Abbey against its adversaries and particularly against the wiles of the English. The abbot then requests that the Conqueror's charter be read. The charter having been read by a clerk, Thomas a Beckett tells the bishop that the reply lies with him.

The bishop replies intimating a wish for an amicable compromise, which proposal is dismissed by the court. He therefore proceeds. He starts by maintaining the supremacy of the pope and that no bishop or other ecclesiastic can be deposed without the permission of the papal see. The king interrupts joking that a bishop could be removed by force. The bishop continues that no layman, not even a king can confer any ecclesiastical dignity or liberty without the pope's consent. The king asks him to desist from attacks on royal authority and other members of the court join in to express their disapprobation. Hilary explains he did not wish to diminish the king's authority, but this is not accepted by the king.

Hilary states how the abbot attended his consecration and how he had been received by the abbey whilst visiting his diocese, to which Henry of Essex says that he makes a bad return for the hospitality he has received. The bishop continues to state that the abbot had not attended his synod and sent his prior and other monks instead, and imputes ill will between him and the abbot over the wish of the abbot to be made bishop of London, as the abbot believed he had been thwarted by Hilary's influence. Henry of Essex and Richard de Luci justify the abbot's position. Hilary continues to say how he had published the conditional sentence of excommunication and that when he had appeared before King Stephen the abbot had defaulted, so he went home and in due course pronounced the sentence of excommunication which he afterwards released at the insistence of the archbishop who also held up the renewal of the Battle charters. He added that all matters contained in the charters contrary to the privileges of the churches of Canterbury and Chichester had been declared to be void.

The king indignantly denied the right therefore assumed by the ecclesiastics of annulling the royal charters, or that decrees made by the king with the advice of his archbishops, bishops and barons should be repealed by the bishops.

The abbot replied that the question of exemption having been disputed between Stigand and Gausbert, the charter of William the Conqueror had been granted to confirm the privileges of the abbey. The charter containing the clause of exemption was produced and read out by a clerk. The bishop protested that he had never been able to obtain a sight of this charter. The abbot attempted to reply but the abbot and bishop were silenced by the king who declares that the determination of the question belongs entirely to him. Richard de Luci asks that his brother may be allowed to take counsel with his friends and this is allowed.

Following this Richard de Luci replies that the voluntary tokens of respect and submission by the abbot did not prejudice the rights granted by the charter. Thomas a Beckett adds that the reception of the bishop was merely an act of hospitality such as might have been shown to a foreign prelate. The abbot disclaims all ill arising from his supposed wish to obtain the see of London. As to the proceedings before King Stephen the abbot asserts that they were mis-stated by the bishop and that the abbot appeared before the king, obtained declaration in his favour and returned home by the king's command, not by default and that any attendance at the synod of Chichester was voluntary.

With respect to the excommunication the Chancellor argues as if he doubted the fact, quoting the occasion when the bishop gave the kiss of peace to the abbot when he did not treat him as an excommunicated person, but as a brother. The bishop seems to confess he did so without consideration.

Thomas a Beckett resumes and argues that the charters do not infringe the dignity either of the archbishop of Canterbury or the see of Chichester, as they have been confirmed by the king, his prelates and barons. This justifies the conduct of the abbot when called before the chapter. He also accuses the bishop of having attempted to infringe the royal authority by his application to the Pope,

The king expresses great indignation at the conduct of the bishop in procuring the papal bull. The bishop denied that the bull was procured with his knowledge or assent and insinuates that it was obtained at the instance of the abbot. The king says that he does not believe this statement to be true. Thomas a Beckett then desires that the bull is read in order to understand its purpose and the Archbishop of Canterbury expresses his astonishment at the bishop's assertion.

Thomas a Beckett inquires in the king's name whether the bishop has obtained any other bulls which were injurious to the abbot. The bishop denies this. At this point the Archbishop of Canterbury requests the king to allow the business to be ended according to canon law, but the king refuses to allow the clergy to determine the case.

The king then withdraws with the court and leaves the bishop and abbot by themselves. The bishop, then the abbot, are admitted to conference with the king. Before the king the bishop renounces all jurisdiction over the abbot and the king demands the bishop acknowledges that his submission was voluntary and not enforced. The archbishop asks the king to pardon any imprudent expressions used by the bishop.

The case was clearly ended. To Bishop Hilary's chagrin he had to write an apology to Battle's abbot. The foundation charters presented at the court were dubious, even if they did describe the situation the Conqueror intended. But the abbey was now securely in the power of the monarchy and the king's favourites and virtually cut off from Rome and the English church hierarchy.

Walter de Luci was a man of considerable talent and in the second half of his abbacy the abbey was able to use the law to recover lost estates and churches and also further expand its estates and income. One particular case has been described in that one Gilbert de Balliol had twenty years before taken over some land at Barnhorn (a little west of Bexhill) during the anarchy. Walter took the case to the king's court and won, regaining the land.



The west walls of the cloister can be clearly seen forming the lower part of the east wall of the post-dissolution manor house at Battle Abbey. Photo: © K Foord

Late in his abbacy Walter pulled down the humble cloister built by Abbot Gausbert and replaced it with a fine cloister with marble slabs. It was finished before his death and the (vertical) remains of this cloister can still be seen at the base of the Tudor manor house built after the reformation.

Thomas a Beckett had become Archbishop of Canterbury after the death of Theobald in 1161. The tale of Henry II and the murder of Beckett on 29 December 1170 is well known. In the tail winds of this there was no Archbishop of Canterbury appointed until 1174 when Richard of Dover took the post. During this time many clerical vacancies occurred and Battle's abbacy was one of them.

Walter died in 1171 and the abbey was formally in the king's hands, but the monks knew that they remained in the hands of a de Luci – Richard, Walter's brother. Richard was custodian until 1175 when a new abbot was appointed. Richard had no hesitation in detaching what was left of Wye and giving it to his son, and operated more openly in his own interests. Little profit found its way into the royal treasury. He placed local Battle knight Peter de Criel and burgess Hugh de Beche, who were well known to the monks, as secular custodians.

Odo of Canterbury (1175–1200), seventh abbot:

The first job of Richard of Dover, the new Archbishop of Canterbury, together with the king was to appoint to bishopric vacancies; then they moved on to the vacant abbacies. They wrote to every vacant abbey ordering their priors and some monks to Woodstock where abbots would be elected. Battle was specifically asked to bring with them the charters of privileges and exemptions granted by William I. The monks of Battle were concerned about

the potential implications of this, but also selected two of those going to Woodstock to be proposed as a 'home grown' abbot – two were selected in case one was unacceptable.

Battle's prior and four monks arrived at Woodstock, met up with all the other deputations and found that they were called first. At first they met Gilbert the Bishop of London and others for an exploratory meeting. There were no problems apart from the fact that they were informed that the king would not accept either of Battle's nominees and asked the monks to name another from a list of many possible ones that were offered. The monks were in a cleft stick. They did not know anyone on the bishop's list and had been instructed by their chapter to elect one of their two nominees. By all accounts things got a little heated and the king came in angrily, asking why they were holding things up.

By chance Prior Odo of Canterbury was there on another matter – concerning the charters of Canterbury which had been lost in a fire – and he wished to model new charters on Battle's (which was why Battle had been asked to bring its charters). The monks of Battle, knowing of Odo's fine reputation, said that they would accept him as their abbot, as they knew something of him, which was more than could be said of anyone else on the proffered list of names. The Bishop of London informed the king and archbishop of this and Odo was sent for, as were the monks of Battle, who made a long speech choosing Odo. Odo then refused indicating that should he be forced he would appeal to the Pope! He was argued with for a long time to make him change his mind. In the end he agreed. The reason Odo gave for accepting was that he had brought to mind the story of Theophilus who had denied Christ, and had realised that the election was the will of God. But he still wished to consult with his brothers at Canterbury who basically blessed the appointment saying that they would still wish to receive his counsel and aid, and clearly he always held his mother church close to his heart.

Odo arrived in Battle on 4 August 1175. Something more needs to be said about Odo's background before he became Abbot of Battle. For this reference has been made to the Catholic Encyclopaedia and its article on Odo by S Anselm Parker.

He had become a monk at Christ Church, Canterbury and a sub prior in 1163. After this he was sent by Archbishop Thomas a Becket to Pope Alexander III as his representative to attend an appeal, fixed for 18 October 1163, against the Archbishop of York who was continuing to act in the southern province of England, the province of Canterbury. In 1167 he became prior and wavered in his allegiance between king and archbishop until the murder of Becket at the end of 1170, after which he favoured the Church. As we have seen above there was no archbishop appointed after Becket's death, and in September 1172 the monks of Christ Church put Odo forward for the archbishopric. The king procrastinated, and there was no decision. Odo and others followed Henry II to Normandy and urged that a monk should be chosen as archbishop. After long negotiations Richard, Prior of Dover, formerly a monk of Canterbury was chosen and Odo wrote to Alexander III on his behalf.

At Battle Odo was received with some apparent rapture by both the monks and people. But he needed to be consecrated abbot and John, Bishop of Chichester was soon on the scene, sending his dean to Battle to discuss the matter. Odo had been well briefed and reiterated the detail of the charters. He sent the clerics away and went to see the king and archbishop. It was suggested that another bishop should bless Odo in the presence of the king, but Archbishop Richard obtained royal permission to bless the abbot elect, which he duly did at

his manor of Malling, near Lewes, which as a peculiar lay outside of the jurisdiction of Chichester.

The CBA records that Odo lived and worked amongst the monks. He was charming and eloquent and fluent in Latin, French and English. He was also a very able administrator. He appears to have had the ear of the king for on his advice Henry appointed an Abbot of St. Augustine's, Canterbury and after the new Prior of Canterbury had upset the king Odo mediated; in due course the same prior was made Abbot of Peterborough. He also showed the king one of the charters of King William I that had deteriorated with age and the king agreed that it needed renewing, but would not agree to have it done except by judgement of his court. He took advice from Richard de Luci, who assured him that there would be no problem with this. In due course the court agreed.

It was normal for such charters, on being copied, to insert something to just refer back to the earlier copy, but in this instance to avoid future challenge, the king wished the wording to be '*Since I have inspected the charter of William my ancestor, in which were contained the aforesaid liberties and exemptions and free customs given the church by him*'. The king explained that if the normal phrase had been used the later charter would confer little without the presence of the earlier, but now this charter alone would be enough even if all the other charters of Battle were lost. The abbot asked for and received three copies of this new charter, each with the king's seal attached to ensure at least one copy was always at the abbey.

Odo tried to retrieve Wye from the de Lucis. He had great problems in finding an advocate as many were fearful of the powers of the de Lucis. Even his old friends refused to help. When an advocate was found at last the case was brought before a legatine (presided over by a legate of the pope) not a royal court. It ended in compromise with Richard de Luci's son left as vicar of Wye church.

In Abbot Odo's time a house was built for pilgrims and other travellers, just outside the abbey gate. It stood behind a courtyard, itself behind some dwellings with a gateway onto Abbey Green. These dwellings were once lived in by Brihtwin the town Beadle and Reinbald de Beche, the abbot's lawyer.

This is where the Chronicle of Battle Abbey ceases and from this point onwards finer detail of the abbots of Battle become harder to find.

In 1184 Odo was put forward for the vacant primacy of Canterbury, but was rejected by the king, who preferred Bishop Baldwin of Worcester, who had a Cistercian background. After this, during a difficult struggle between Archbishop Baldwin and the almost self-governing monks of Canterbury, Odo played a prominent part, acting on the Pope's behalf against the primate. Odo was known as an ardent lover of books and a great theologian. There is some uncertainty as to his writings, owing to confusion with Odo of Cheriton and Odo of Murimund, but a list of thirteen works, chiefly writings on the Old Testament and on sermons can be ascribed to him. Two of his books still remained in the library of Battle Abbey over 300 years later, at the dissolution in 1538.

Henry II died at Chinon on the Loire on 6 July 1189. He was succeeded by King Richard I, who never visited Battle. Nevertheless he did find time to confirm Battle Abbey's charter, but not the sole right of the abbot to dispense justice within the leuga, which now increasingly fell

into a shared remit with the realm's itinerant justices. When Richard I died in 1199 King John once more renewed Battle Abbey's charter, on the same terms as Richard.

Odo died on 20 January 1200, and was buried in the lower part of the church at Battle, 'under a slab of black Lydian marble'. He was later venerated at Battle as a saint, and the relic list at Canterbury Cathedral mentions 'a tooth of the Venerable Odo, Abbot of Battle'.



Odo's tomb? Photo: © K Foord

The eighth abbot, John de Dubra (1200-1211/14):

John of Dover succeeded Odo on 1 May 1200. He was a monk from Canterbury. Professor John Carpenter gave a lecture to the Battle and District Historical Society in 2016 and discussed King John's association with Battle Abbey – which much of which Abbot John of Dover would have dealt with until his death. Some of this section incorporates information from Professor Carpenter's lecture.

It has been suggested that King John (r.1199-1216) rather favoured Battle Abbey, but this is debatable and if so really did not cost John much, just a few visits and gifts. In fact he gained financially in no small way, which was undoubtedly his intent. In 1200 he is reported to have given the abbey 'a small piece of the sepulchre of our lord' brought back from the Holy Land by Richard I, but there is no evidence from his itinerary that he came to Battle to deliver this personally. He may have visited Hastings just after Easter in 1201 to deliver his 'Ordinance of the Sea' but there is no conclusive proof of this, or of an associated visit to Battle Abbey. In 1203 John demanded a gift of 60 marks (£40) from the abbey, but this too did not merit a visit.

The visits by John were in fact very few. His first visit to Battle was noted to be 6 April 1206. He was on a general progress from London to Dorset, by way of the north and south coasts of Kent and the coasts of Sussex and Hampshire. Before Battle he had been at Romney in Kent, and was moving on to Malling near Lewes. He gave a fine cassock at the time of this visit.

On 23 March 1208, English bishops were ordered by Pope Innocent III to lay a general interdict on England and Wales, as King John would not accept the papal appointment of Stephen Langton as Archbishop of Canterbury. Although Langton was English he had served at the French court for many years and John would have been extremely suspicious of him. The sacraments were forbidden; no-one was allowed to attend Mass, receive extreme unction or bury their deceased relatives in consecrated ground. Only the baptism of infants and the confession of the dying were permitted. This state lasted for over six years until the

interdict was lifted, on 2 July 1214. Among other results of the interdict were that many ecclesiastical bodies refused to perform divine services and the dead were buried in unconsecrated graves. Battle Abbey was one of these refusing bodies and John took the property and the income of Battle Abbey and other refusers into his hands. On 9 April 1208 he appointed the Sherriff of Kent, Reginald de Cornhill 'to take care of the abbey and to give Battle Abbey reasonable sustenance'.

Considerable detail of various transactions involving King John can be found in the *Pipe Rolls*, which are being published by the Pipe Roll Society, but unfortunately some of the Close and Fine rolls from this period have been lost. In 1211, during the interdict, John sold to the abbey his royal prerogative and confirmed the ancient liberties for 1500 marks (£1000), to be paid over three years... a massive sum at that time. This was almost certainly because of his need of money for wars, rather than from altruism or any thought of the longer term potential consequences. He issued a charter to Battle Abbey which allowed the monks to run the abbey and appoint their own abbot from amongst themselves if there was a vacancy (which suggests that John de Dubra was still alive and abbot at that time). But curiously in 1212 we still find that there is an account of the revenue of Battle Abbey in the king's hands. This shows that the monks are still being 'looked after', with £146 extracted for the Exchequer funds and another £100 going directly to the king. The full term of the 'custody' is difficult to determine, but from exchequer accounts Searle suggests that control of their lands returned to the abbey sometime late in 1212. It may be that the deal for the royal prerogative was not final until the last instalment had been paid and that it also included an element of a bribe to allow services to be restored.

Although John submitted to Stephen Langton and had his own excommunication lifted in mid-1213 the papal interdict was not finally and fully lifted until July 1214. It was reckoned that John had gained over £100,000 (a ginormous amount of money if converted to present day values) at the expense of the church over this period. Many abbeys had bribed him, some by as much as £1000, to allow them to perform services, and he also took the profits from their lands and property over the whole period, only ever repaying about half of the money he had received as part of the final negotiations in 1213/14.

King John's two visits to Battle in 1213 on 25/26 April and 13 June were gift-less, but it was while there that he '*annulled his previous sentences of outlawry against certain ecclesiastics and undertook never again to outlaw clerks.*' On the first 1213 visit he was moving from Arundel to the Cinque Ports – to Dover, then back to Rye and Winchelsea where he stayed two nights – after which he moved north to Rochester. The second visit of 1213 followed a naval success when the English fleet carrying an army to Flanders had come across the French fleet anchored off Zwin and inflicted severe damage on it. John was moving from Chilham near Canterbury in Kent to Aldingbourne near Chichester, then to Portsmouth (from whence he had intended to strike for Poitou, but he failed to get enough support) and so he went to Corfe, one of his favourite castles. Presumably he was using the coastal route, overnighing at Battle abbey on the way to meet his hoped-for army!

John of Dover clearly had a very difficult abbacy. The date of his death is a somewhat obscure. It was most likely in 1213. Others have suggested 1211 or 1212, and it may have been as late as 1214, as the next abbot would not be elected until January 1215. Whenever he died there must have been some delay in appointing the next abbot, possibly because of the residuum of the interdict still hanging over England until mid-1214. But we can be almost certain the impecunious King John continued to benefit.

The ninth abbot, Richard de Horwode (1215–35) – The first abbot to be elected by the monks of Battle from amongst their own brethren:

Eventually in January 1215 the king allowed an abbot to be appointed. Under their expensive charter of 2011 the monks had requested to appoint a new abbot from amongst their own to which John agreed. They chose Richard, the almoner of the abbey.

King John as was his wont micromanaged the election process issuing edicts such as:

The King to Ws beloved the Prior and Convent of Battle, greeting. Since the persons of your house are wholly unknown to us, we earnestly beg of you to choose by canonical election the best and most fit monk of your house as abbot, and to present him to us, that to his election we may give our assent; and in testimony hereof, &c. Witness ourself at Guildford, on the 17th day of January, in the 16th year of our reign (1214–15, starting on Ascension day 2014, by the modern calendar 17 January 2015)

He also sent William Brewer – an ex-sherriff of many counties, some of whose folk had bribed John to remove him as he was so unpleasant – to supervise the election ‘to speak for the king and preserve the king’s honour’. Abbot Richard was soon elected, so the monks did not have to put up with Brewer for very long.

John confirmed Richard’s election by letter:

‘The King to the Convent of Battle, greeting. In our presence appeared Hugoline, the precentor of your church, and Julian and A. your monks, and presented to us the election of monk Richard, your confrère, according to canonical form, begging us to give the royal assent to such election. We, therefore, in giving our assent to the said election, command you to be obedient and intentive to the same elect henceforth as your abbot ; and in testimony hereof, &c. Witness ourself at Knep, on the 22nd of January, in the 16th year of our reign.’

The new abbot was sent to see the Archbishop of Canterbury, by now the in situ Stephen Langton, by whom he was probably blessed as Abbot of Battle.

The first Magna Carta was signed on 12 June 1215. Amongst many other clauses this allowed free elections in the Church. But the position of the abbey inevitably changed once John had sold off the rights of kings over it. Even towards the end of Odo’s abbacy the abbey had been fishing for the Pope to confirm its founding charter and Pope Alexander III (1159-81) had half done so, studiously ignoring the bit about the interference of bishops. Once John had sold his rights to the abbey Pope Innocent III (1198-1216) again vaguely confirmed the liberties and Pope Honorius III (1216-27) referred to the liberties of ‘William and Stigand’, but not to what they were.

Eventually Pope Gregory IX (1227-41) made some attempt to grasp the nettle of the anomalous Battle Abbey as part of general Church reforms. With a slightly false start he mandated Chichester to appoint delegates for visitations to Battle (to check on how things were run etc.). The Bishop of Chichester controversially (and probably deliberately) appointed the Abbot of Robertsbridge and an archdeacon of Lewes Priory. Not only were these both Cistercians, and Battle was a Benedictine abbey, but also Battle had had a long running legal battle with Robertsbridge, so these appointments were not well received and the monks of Battle refused their visitation – at which point the visitors laid an interdict on the abbey. The monks of Battle Abbey immediately appealed to the Pope.

Gregory IX then proceeded to a series of confirmations, starting at the end of 1233 with a woolly confirmation of the liberties of Battle, much like that of Honorius III, then rapidly confirming the agreement of Bishop Hilary and Abbot Walter concerning protection from outsiders. He also very sensibly removed the appointed Cistercian visitors and replaced them with Benedictines who rapidly lifted the interdict. By 1235 Pope Gregory had finally set up a court of arbitration and this determined how things would work into the future. The final settlement, termed a 'Composition', drawn up by an Archdeacon of Norwich, magister Gentilis, and a Canon of Chichester and then agreed by both the Chichester see and Battle Abbey kept Chichester at arm's length.

The 'Composition' was: Chichester would confirm that any abbatial election had been properly performed, and would bless the new abbot anywhere but Battle. The abbot would be installed by the prior of the abbey. The Bishop of Chichester could request to visit every three years, but have no rights of visitation (i.e. he should be invited). Every three years the abbey was bound to request the bishop to appoint one Benedictine monk from within the diocese of Chichester and one chosen by the monks of Battle from another abbey to be visitors – they would report to the bishop who could order any necessary corrections. If this agreement was contravened by either party a fine of 50 marks (£33.33) would be levied by the Archbishop of Canterbury. Hence the substantial rights of the 'Royal Peculiar' were established and maintained within the Church and these persisted for very many years, translating after the dissolution to the Deanery of Battle. St. Mary's Church kept some special rights and privileges stemming from this time. Even today the incumbent remains a dean, rather than a vicar.

The tenth abbot – Ralph of Coventry (1235–61):

It must have been under the above papal rules that Abbot Ralph of Coventry was elected in 1235.

The Pope had great influence over Henry III. This followed Henry's marriage to Eleanor of Provence in 1237, whose sister Margaret was married to King Louis IX of France. Henry started to grant what was perceived by the barons as excessive favours and appointments to foreigners. Peter des Roches, Bishop of Winchester, introduced Frenchmen from Poitou, and Italians followed through Henry's ties to the papacy. His reign coincided with an expansion of papal power and the church was perceived as excessive in extorting money from England. The English prelates made a protest to the king against the extortion of the pope in 1240. Ralph was one of their spokesmen alongside the Abbot of Bury St. Edmunds.

Ralph of Coventry was clearly a 'moderniser' and moved to run the abbey and its banlieu's business more as a collaboration between the abbey and the town, but orientated towards keeping the abbey's control over tenancies and land deals, with an associated court and charters. This would evolve with time and survive the ravages of the Black Death (1348–9), when the abbey community was reduced from 52 to 34 monks and Abbot Alan de Retlyng died, but would later drift towards a system of oligarchy with much influence in the hands of powerful servants of the abbey.

Searle has described how this all worked in great detail in her book 'Lordship and Community: Battle Abbey and its Banlieu, 1066–1538' and it is impossible to cover the

voluminous subject here or to compete with her scholarship, so the interested reader is directed to this book.

Reginald of Brecon, eleventh abbot (1261–81):

Abbot Reginald, who from at least 1248 had been Prior of Brecon, one of Battle Abbey's cells, was elected abbot in 1261. Only three years later in 1264 he was to find the abbey to be in the path of King Henry III's army.

Henry was on his way to confront his rebellious barons and had decided to focus his forces where they would have the support of the local lords. For this purpose Sussex appeared a good choice. Lewes castle was in the hands of the king's brother-in-law John de Warenne, and Pevensey and Hastings were held by his uncle Peter of Savoy. In early May Henry's army moved southwards from Tonbridge with the aim of securing the Cinque Ports and south coast, having taken Tonbridge castle from the earl of Gloucester on 30 April.

En route they encountered an 'affray' at Combwell near Flimwell on 2 May and one of the king's cooks, 'Master Thomas' is reported to have been murdered. Although it may just have been that the locals did not take kindly to the cook taking their produce to feed the army, John de la Haye, a member of the local gentry, is said to have been involved in this death, as were (allegedly) some of Battle Abbey's tenants. The reprisal was an unusually severe act of terror even for its time. Carpenter says, *'315 archers were beheaded in the Weald in the parish of St Mary, Ticehurst, in the place called Flimwell in the presence of the king, all of whom had been called deceitfully to the king's peace only to then incur that death through the counsel of Richard king of Germany.'*

Moving on to Robertsbridge Abbey, Henry, his son Prince Edward and company were entertained, but obliged the monks to pay a heavy ransom of 500 marks (£333) to Edward to spare their lives. It is doubtful if the monks enjoyed the entertainment.

The next day Abbot Reginald of Brecon and the brothers of Battle Abbey went out in procession (presumably in considerable trepidation) to meet the king and give him a loyal welcome, but Henry was still angry and demanded 100 marks (£66.67) from the abbey as he said that some of its tenants had been at Ticehurst – not that the abbey was in a position to forbid them to go wherever they wished. Prince Edward demanded another 40 marks (£26.67). In addition some damage was inflicted on the abbey's ecclesiastical property. Compared to Robertsbridge they got off relatively lightly.

The king then went on to Winchelsea on 4 May to ensure the support of the Cinque Ports, which was only given grudgingly after threats. After four days Henry returned to Battle, and received news that the barons were assembling near Lewes. He moved out westwards to arrive at Lewes on 10/11 May, no doubt to the great relief of all at Battle Abbey.

At Lewes he faced the barons and the Battle of Lewes took place on 14 May. The barons won the battle and King Henry and Prince Edward were taken prisoners. On 15 May the 'Mise of Lewes' was agreed and the 'Provisions of Oxford' were enacted. Prince Edward was initially sent to Dover castle to be guarded by Henry de Montfort, while Henry was taken back to Battle Abbey by Simon de Montfort, *'no longer with power to extort money from his entertainers as he had done on his last visit less than a fortnight before'*, and thence to London. Reginald would have been pleased to see him gone.

Reginald of Brecon died or resigned in 1281 after 20 years as abbot. If he resigned the reason for this is unknown.

After 1281:

At this point, as we can see from the list in the introduction, 17 or so more abbots were still to be elected after Reginald, until the last abbot, John Hammond, who was pensioned off at the dissolution of the abbey in 1538.

It is difficult to say much about many of the abbots after 1281. Their names appear on charters etc. but little else and for their effects on the temporalities of the abbey great detail can be found in Searle's book. From this point forward many must have lived relatively untroubled lives, although things became rather difficult for the abbots during the 100 Years War. They administered the abbey and its properties without apparent controversy. But some abbots come to attention due to various events that occurred during their abbacies and these will be discussed below.

John of Whatlington, fourteenth abbot (1308–11):

John of Whatlington is an interesting abbot, not so much for his short three year abbacy, but for his long service and his influences on the abbots within the abbey before that. The reigns of Edward I (r.1272–1307) and Edward II (r.1307–27) were a time of crossover between the role of the abbey and the role of the itinerant king's justiciars in the administration of justice. The justiciars, who were experienced in legal technicalities and litigation precedents travelled between areas holding eyre courts (i.e. circuit assizes). At Battle they also had to take into account local charters, particularly Henry III's of 1271 which as a precedent had allowed a special eyre session to the abbey, and so they would sit alongside the abbey's lawyer-monks in special sessions at Battle. Interestingly King Edward I never re-confirmed Battle Abbey's charters although he did uphold the legal franchise, but Edward II did re-confirm the charters, in 1312. The next abbot, John of Northbourne, paid him £50 for doing so ... Later Edward II would issue some specifically detailed confirmations covering various issues.

John of Whatlington was probably of the Harmer family of Whatlington and is first recorded at the abbey in the visitation record of 1283. At the visitation some other monks had complained about him as he was the chaplain to Abbot Henry of Aylesford (1281–97) and was felt to be influencing the abbot into starting to oppress poor tenants. Searle has perceived him to be an able, unlovable, ruthless and ambitious man. John became steward of the abbey by 1290 – a lawyer-monk – and very active in the abbey's court and elsewhere on behalf of the abbey. He held this post until 1304, when he became sacristan. He handed over the stewardship to his pupil, Henry of Rye.

Abbot John of Thanet (1298–1307) issued a charter in 1304 passing management of tithes, rents and rent-charges to the sacristan. This gave John of Whatlington direct access to the management of Battle town and the leuga holdings and by 1305 he drew up a new Battle rental, the first for 60 years. Such a move was probably long overdue, but as ever the idea of such change went down like the proverbial 'lead-balloon'. For some reason connected with this he tried to use the local court to reduce the status of the poorer town and country folk

to 'villeinage'. (Villeinage refers to the legal condition of servitude of a villein. It is the tenure by which a villein held land and tenements from a lord). He was clearly trying to increase the efficiency and value of the abbey's holdings, but he justifiably lost the case, which he should not have brought in the first case. He also probably interfered with the traditional borough customs and the fees paid by the burgesses for the rights that they held were increased.

Abbot John of Thanet resigned in 1307, the reason for this is not known, and John of Whatlington was elected abbot in 1308. Following this the burgesses at first refused to pay their dues or perform the duties that they normally performed for the abbey. However by 1310 the new manor of Marley had been created and some of his measures managed to increase the productivity of local farmland. Also the value of services was for the first time accounted for in monetary values rather than by amounts of work or produce etc. due to the abbey.

John of Whatlington died in 1311 leaving his successor to sort out some of the turmoil he had created. Following the stewardship of John's protégé, Henry of Rye, the legal role in the eyre courts of the monk-steward/lawyer ended and the royal justices and sheriffs had full charge. In retrospect the period of John of Whatlington had been one of significant transition. As with all such periods it left behind in its wake a local storm which presumably took a few years to settle.

Seventeenth abbot – Alan de Retlyng (1324, died in 1350 of the Black Death which also killed another 17 of the 52 monks and many in the town of Battle):

In 1337 the king commanded the abbot, along with other local landowners, that they defend the coast of Sussex. This burden was placed on the abbey for a long time as there were many French raids during the Hundred Years War (1337–1453), and the abbots helped to organise local defences and to provide food and clothing for refugees fleeing the coastal towns. Subsequent to this order a royal licence to fortify the abbey was received just after the start of the long war, and the building of the great gatehouse and the defensive walls that we still see today was begun during Alan's abbacy.

June 9, 1338. - License to krenellate the manse of the Abbey of Battle - The king to all his bailiffs and liegemen, to whom, &c., greeting - Know that of our special grace we have granted and given licence on behalf of ourselves and heirs, as much us in us lies, to the beloved by us in Christ, the Abbot and Convent of Battle, that they may fortify with a wall of stone and lime, and krenellate the site of that Abbey, which is of the foundation of our progenitors, formerly Kings of England, and may hold that site so fortified and krenellated for themselves and successors for ever, without penalty or impediment, from ourselves, or our heirs, justiciaries, eschaetors, sheriffs, or others our bailiffs or officers whosoever. In witness whereof, &c. Witness the King at Lopham, on the 9th day of June. Pat. 12 Edw. III, p2, m.28).

Also in 1338 Alan was excused from finding men from the abbey's manor of Wye to guard the coastline because he had already sent all his available men to patrol the coast near Winchelsea.

In 1340 he complained to the king about papal extortions and several times he petitioned the royal court over usurpations of the manor of Wye in Kent. There is some confusion in

previous texts which suggest that there may have been another abbot called John de Retlying until 1329. The name was also spelled Ketlying. This is unlikely as in the Patent Roll of 7 March 1323 Edward II signifies his assent to the election of Alan de Retlyng. The muddle must be due to errors in reading old documents or simple mistakes.

Robert de Bello, eighteenth abbot (1351–64):

Clearly from his name Robert must have been a local man who had joined the abbey. In 1360 the abbot was one of the landowners again (?still) made responsible for the defence of the coast.

He also had to deal with some disobedience to the mother house by the Prior of Brecon. Brecon, it will be remembered, was the cell from which Reginald was appointed to the abbacy back in 1261. In the cartulary is a bull of Pope Innocent VI, dated 9 June, 1355, commanding John Jose (or Lose), Prior of Brecon, 'to conduct himself conformably to the accustomed rules of submission to the abbot of the monastery of St. Martin, in Battel.' Apparently he had written abusive letters and refused to come to Battle every three years as was required. After this the Priors of Brecon were required to swear a very long and specific oath of allegiance to Battle.

Hamo de Offynton: nineteenth abbot (1364–82): Offington is an area in north central Worthing, but other members of his family lived in the area of Battle.

As agreed, Hamo's election was confirmed by the parsons of Lancing and Selsey deputising for the Bishop of Chichester who was overseas, but he was consecrated by Archbishop Islip of Canterbury at his manor of Charing in Kent. Seemingly one of his first acts with reference to his privileges under Battle Abbey's charter was, on a journey to London, to free a man condemned to death. The king and nobles were apparently not amused by this act.

By 1375 he was appointed visitor of the Benedictine monasteries in the dioceses of Canterbury and Rochester, much as others from elsewhere were appointed to the same role at Battle, but was foiled in his attempt to visit the Cathedral Priory of Canterbury. The prior had appealed to the archbishop, who forbade anyone to make any visitation of the cathedral priory except himself. This appears to have been a matter of ecclesiastical pride, but it was supported by King Edward III.

In 1371 the abbot was still one of the landowners responsible for the defence of the coast. This became acutely necessary in 1377 when he took up arms and he and others successfully defended Winchelsea against the French. This is for what he is usually remembered. Unfortunately the French just turned their attentions elsewhere and burnt Hastings and Rye. In 1380 a Castilian fleet with a French escort turned up and fired Winchelsea. They were turbulent times. In 1368–73 and 1380–4 the almoner of Battle was purchasing extra food to distribute among the large numbers of war-affected needy who had come to the abbey.

English Heritage record that 'the papal grant to abbot Hamo of the mitre and other pontificalia is discussed in various antiquarian sources, though the original document cannot be traced. A late 14th-century stained glass panel of the abbey's coat of arms, now at the Burrell Collection, Glasgow, is charged with the mitre; 'see FS Eden, The arms of Battle

Abbey', *The Connoisseur*, 86: 349 (1930), 174–5'. An interpretation of these arms is seen bottom left on p3 of this paper, with further discussion on p4.

Hamo died suddenly whilst administering mass in 1382. The notice of his death in the Westminster Chronicle stated that '*beneath his monkish habit he was a soldier of mark and a stout defender of home, neighbours, and coast against the attacks of pirates*'. He left a hauberk and crossbow in his will.

Twenty-second abbot, William Mersshe (1405-1417)

Mersshe is not an uncommon name as it is derived from marsh, but it appears that the family of William had lived in Battle, owning a cottage in Middleborough since at least the mid-14th century. The unusual thing about William is that when a monk he absconded from the abbey and lived locally as an apostate, the evidence for which is in the Calendar of Patent Rolls 1396-9. On 16 February 1398 Richard II issued from Westminster 'Appointment of Tomas Edemer, Stephen Sharesell and William Cordelay to arrest William Beket and William Mersshe, apostate monks of the Benedictine monastery at Battle whilst it was lately void and to deliver them to John, prior thereof to be dealt with according to the rule of the order'. Stephen Sharesell was the town Beadle and it is presumed Edemer and Cordelay were constables.

The two Williams were not the first monks to run away, three others had done so earlier and one of those, John Lose, after his return was sent off to be Prior of Brecon. This time after a couple of years William Mersshe would be sent off to be Prior of Exeter St. Nicholas in 1400 and was called to be abbot of Battle in 1405. His fellow escapee William Becket would then take over his role at Exeter which priorship he held until his death in 1414.

Thomas de Ludlowe, twenty-third abbot (1417, resigned in 1434/5):

Thomas was previously cellarer and prior of the abbey. During his abbacy the present 'Pilgrims Rest' replaced the earlier pilgrims' hostel (built in Odo's time) in 1420. It is a Grade II* listed example of a timber framed Wealden house. It was originally tucked away behind other houses and its front courtyard was accessed via passages. Also during Thomas's time a new ceremonial sword was made. This has been described in detail in 'Paton, Sir JN: *Note of the Sword of Battle Abbey* in Proc. Soc. Antiquities of Scotland Vol. X pp463-75 plus plates (1874)'. Paton notes that the fashion of the sword is of a date before the period of Abbot 'Lodelowe', and suggests that it may have been copied from an earlier sword, implying that this earlier weapon may have been the original sword said to have been given to the abbey by William I.



The Sword of Battle Abbey



A magnified view of centre of the pommel of the Sword of Battle Abbey. Paton suggests that the cross on the coat of arms was once filled with red enamel. If so the colours on arms at the bottom right on p3 would be appropriate. Images from Paton's paper

Swords were clearly an important part of the abbey's regalia, and bear witness to its origins. Swords appear on most of the coats of arms that have at some time been ascribed to the abbey.

This sword has passed through various hands but is now in the National Museum of Scotland. The sword from which it may have been copied has been lost.

An interesting event, of fiscal value to the abbey came to light as a result of researches into the Rape of Hastings. The holder of the Rape Sir John Pelham had transferred the ownership of the rape to his son, also John. Because of the way in which he did this he upset King Henry VI and it appears that in 1430 the son was made to restore to the abbey the abbey's lands and tenancies lying in Hastings Rape outside of the banlieu of the abbey

SIR JOHN PELHAM'S RELEASE TO BATTLE ABBEY. (8 Henry VI.)

To all the faithful in Christ to whom this present writing may come. Sir John Pelham, Knight, Lord of the Rape of Hastings, sends greeting. Know ye that I, for the health of my soul and of the soul of Sir John Pelham, my father, and for the souls of all my ancestors, have remitted, released, and in all things quitted claim, and do hereby for myself and my heirs and all other in our names, for ever remit and release unto Thomas, Abbot of the Monastery of St. Martin of Battle, in the county of Sussex, all right, claim, and demand which I have in all lands and tenements held by the said Convent of me within the Rape of Hastings ; together with all rents and services issuing from the same, etc. In witness whereof I have to this present writing put my seal. Witness: Robert Oxebregge, John Thamworth, Robert Arnod, William Arnod, John Penherste, and others. Dated at Battle aforesaid, the 24th of July, 8 Henry VI. (1430)

Thomas Ludlowe resigned in 1434/5 and we find his name in 1425 as the new Abbot of Shrewsbury, whose records show that he may have been there previously as prior, presumably before moving to Battle. He may have been 'going home' as Ludlow is near Shrewsbury.

Richard Dertmouth, the twenty-fifth abbot (1437, last mentioned 1461 – but the next abbot was elected 1463):

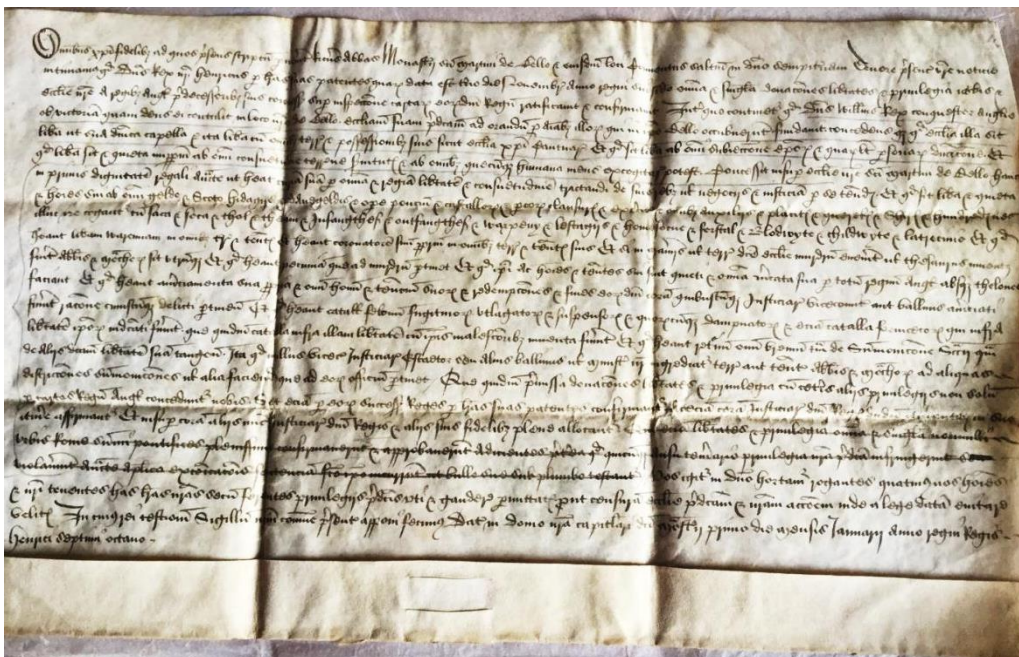
Battle Abbey, Lewes Priory and many local landowners became implicated in supporting Jack Cade's rebellion in June 1450. King Henry VI was unpopular and generally believed to be surrounded by corrupt advisors. The country was in serious debt after the Hundred Years War which was grinding to a close, and Sussex and Kent were being constantly raided by the French, with an invasion feared. Grievances were sent to the king, but in the absence of any

action the rebellion took place based on Kent and Sussex, with a confrontation in London. It failed, but so many were involved in supporting the cause that a general pardon was issued in July. This included 'Richard, Abbot of St. Martin's Monastery, of Battle, in the county of Sussex, and the Convent of the same place, and the servants of the said Abbot and Convent'. Cade was hunted down and is reputed to have been mortally wounded at the place now called Cade Street, near Heathfield.

Richard Tovey, twenty –seventh abbot elected 1490, died 1503

The Tovy family was local and influential both inside and outside the abbey. A John Tovy served as an inquest juror in the early 16th century but the family had been one of those found in such roles from the early 15th century until the dissolution. As always land and property transfer activity continued during Richard Tovey's abbacy – with one particularly large transaction with a 20 year lease of the Manor of Marley to one William Penney confirmed on 25 December 1497.

Of great interest is a document issued and sealed by Tovy on the 1st January in the eighth year of Henry VII (1493). This was found amongst BDHS records early in 2018 and confirmed as genuine by Christopher Whittick of ESRO, in whose vaults it now lies for safe preservation. Quite how it came to rest unrecognised in the Society archives is a mystery. The small parchment, clearly originally folded into nine presumably for portability, requests that the bearer should be allowed all rights and privileges granted to 'us and our church'. This is essentially a travellers passport, giving the holder considerable protections from tolls, taxes and local courts elsewhere and lists the considerable ancient privileges and freedoms of Battle Abbey and 'men of Battle' as reconfirmed 'by our lord king Henry by his letters patent dated 3 November in the second year of his reign.' It is clear that this passport was used right up until the time of the dissolution as later in the documents references to the pope are heavily crossed through, which would have happened after Henry VIII's Act of Supremacy of 1534. The document is described in detail in another paper.

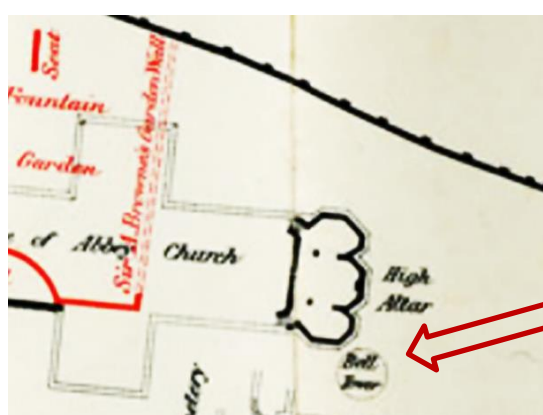


Richard Tovey's 'passport'. The seal has been detached and lost ©BDHS

Twenty-ninth abbot, Lawrence Champion (1508–29):

The coat of arms of 1515 (second row, right on p4) which was paraded at the House of Lords can probably be ascribed to Champion.

It is often overlooked that Battle Abbey church had what appears to have been a detached round bell tower south east of the crypt chapels. It may have had this tower before 1367 and in this respect would have been akin to that of Tewkesbury Abbey. It was reckoned to be 28 feet (8.5 m) in diameter and was described as a grassy mound in the Duchess of Cleveland's Guide (see http://www.battle-abbey.co.uk/Dutchess_Guide.html). In the sacristy accounts for 1516 there are mentioned two bells named 'Mary' and 'Gabriel'. In 1519 is mentioned a further bell called 'le Whyppe', and in 1523 one called 'Jesus'. The mentions may be of new bells or repaired bells but presumably all four would have hung in the campanile or detached bell tower.



This small extract from the Duchess of Cleveland's guide, which copied an early OS map, clearly shows the position of the round bell tower (arrowed)

The thirtieth or thirty-first abbot – John Hammond (1529/31, pensioned off 1538):

John was previously sacristan of the abbey. It is possible that another abbot was elected for 1529 - 31 as there is a record stating that – 'On the Thursday after the feast of St. Laurence in 1529, a proxy from the Prior of Brecon (a cell of Battle), was present in the Chapter House in Battle, to elect a new abbot'. This may not have been John Hammond, as confusingly he was also still recorded as sacristan before 1531 – but it may be that he had retained these duties as well as the abbacy as there were so few monks in the abbey by this time.

Abbot Hammond had only a few years in post before the dissolution of the monasteries caught up with Battle. It has been suggested that he may have 'prepared' the abbey for the end. But in the roll of accounts of John Hammond, sacristan, for 1512, the abbey was still being cared for as there is a statement of expenses for repairs of the abbey church, new vestments for the priest, two new silver candlesticks, two glass lamps to hang before the altars, and for repairs to the clock in the sacristy chamber. Copies of other sacristy accounts are held at the East Sussex Record Office.

The act for dissolving the great monasteries was passed in 1537–8 (years at that time dated from 25 March in one of our calendar years to 24 March the following year).

John Hammond continued to live in Battle across the road from the abbey at 4, Upper Lake until his death in 1546, the same year as King Henry VIII's death. He bequeathed the few

items that he had retained from the abbey to St. Mary's Church, to be used 'in the 'chappell of saynt Kateryn'. These included two chasubles (liturgical overgarments); a gilded chalice with a paten (goblet and plate for Holy Communion); and a scochyn (a depiction of a coat of arms) in silver. He left £6 13s 4d (£6.67) for a priest to sing in the Chapel of St Katherine on 23 July for the next six years from 1547, for his soul and all Christian souls. There was also £40 for requiem masses a month after his death and yearly for six years, with the balance going to the poor and charitable works, and rather curiously 10 shillings (50 pence) each to the next 13 poor maidens to be married.

Keith Foord 2017, updated 2018 ©BDHS

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Other sources

Useful primary sources that have been used are now on-line – such as Close Rolls, Patent Rolls, Pipe Rolls, Lay Subsidy Rolls, and royal Itineraries, a good source for which is <http://www.medievalgenealogy.org.uk/sources/rolls.shtml>. The following major historical websites have also been used in this study: Archaeologydataservice: British History Online: British Library: English Heritage: National Archives.

Archives Online and Google Books give access to many old books.

Unfortunately some useful archive material and images, old enough that the source is well out of copyright, still lie behind expensive paywalls, some of which are owned by public bodies and Universities funded by the state.

ESRO holds microfilms of the Battle Abbey records in the Huntingdon Library in California. These are listed in Brent, JA, *A Catalogue of the Battle Abbey Estate Archives* (Lewes, 1973). Papers in the Huntingdon Library are listed in Robertson, M, *Guide to British Historical Manuscripts in the Huntingdon Library* (San Marino, 1982)