

**THE MANORS OF WARDON
OLD WARDEN, BEDFORDSHIRE**

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Abbreviations

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Anct. D. | Ancient Deed |
| BARS | Bedfordshire Archives |
| Beds | County of Bedfordshire |
| Berks | County of Berkshire |
| BHRS | Bedfordshire Historical Record Society publication |
| Bucks | County of Buckinghamshire |
| <i>Cal. Chart. R.</i> | <i>Calendar of the Charter Rolls</i> |
| <i>Cal. Close R.</i> | <i>Calendar of the Close Rolls</i> |
| <i>Cal. Fine R.</i> | <i>Calendar of the Fine Rolls</i> |
| <i>Cal. Inquis. p.m.</i> | <i>Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem</i> |
| <i>Cal. Pat. R.</i> | <i>Calendar of the Patent Rolls</i> |
| <i>Cur. Reg. R.</i> | <i>Rotuli Curiae Regis, (1 John)</i> |
| <i>Excerpta e Rot. Fin.</i> | <i>Excerpta e Rotulis Finium in Turri Londinensi Asservatis, Henrico Tertio Rege, A.D. 1216-1272</i> |
| Feet of F. | Feet of Fines |
| Hunts | Huntingdonshire (Historic county of England) |
| LP | <i>Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII</i> |
| Northants | County of Northamptonshire |
| Notts | County of Nottinghamshire |
| N. Yorks | County of North Yorkshire |
| Pipe R. | Pipe Roll |
| QW | <i>Placita de quo warranto, temporibus Edw. I. II. & III: In curia receptae saccarij Westm. asservata</i> |
| <i>Red Book Exch.</i> | <i>Liber Rubeus de Scaccario</i> |
| <i>R. Cancel.</i> | <i>Rotulus Cancellarii vel, Antigraphum magni rotuli pipæ de tertio anno regni regis Johannis</i> |
| <i>R. de Oblat.</i> | <i>Rotuli de oblatiis et finibus in Turri Londinensi asservati, tempore regis Johannis</i> |
| <i>R. Lit. Cl.</i> | <i>Rotuli litterarum clausarum, in turri Londinensi asservati</i> |
| S. Yorks | County of South Yorkshire |
| TNA | The National Archives |
| VE | <i>Valor Ecclesiasticus, temp. Henry VIII</i> |
| VCH Beds | <i>Victoria County History: A History of the County of Bedford</i> |
| VCH Bucks | <i>Victoria County History: A History of the County of Buckingham</i> |
| VCH Hunts | <i>Victoria County History: A History of the County of Huntingdon</i> |

1 THE SECULAR MANOR OF WARDON 1086-1343

Introduction

Domesday (1086) records three tenants-in-chief holding land in Wardon from William the Conqueror,¹ and the manor of Wardon evolved directly from the share occupied by Norman lord, **William Spec** [Speke]. His portion, by far the largest, consisted of nine hides and a mill worth 12s which had previously belonged to eight freemen as one manor. The hide (120 notional acres) was used as a fiscal unit rather than a measurement of area, and since the site of his castle, woodland, common pasture, marshland and barren heath were excluded from the calculation, it is clear that the holding far exceeded 1,080 acres.

Lord of Biggleswade, Ralph de Insula [de L'Isle] was tenant-in-chief and lord over the land in Wardon formerly belonging to Stigand, archbishop of Canterbury, but with a taxable value of just 0.4 geld units [48 fiscal acres], it lacked any noteworthy resources. Those lands held by overlord Edric the Bald in 1066 had come into the hands of Azelina, widow of Ralph de Taillebois and comprised sixty fiscal acres of arable, twelve of meadow and sufficient woodland to support forty pigs. Based on 1.5 acres per pig,² the figure implies an area of sixty acres, bringing her taxable holding to 132 acres which were held from Azelina by *Walter monach*'. Although the name is sometimes translated as Walter the monk, he may have been a member of le Moine family which had documented links to Wardon between c.1150 and 1251.³

Thanks to a population of twenty-seven households, Wardon can be placed within the largest forty per cent of settlements recorded in Domesday, and with an average of five individuals per household the general population is estimated to have been around 135 people. The survey failed to mention the castle but suffice to say, the number would have increased dramatically had the lord, his family and members of the household been taken into account.

Almost seventy years after the Norman Conquest, **Walter Espec** (heir of William Spec) granted part of his manor to the Cistercian Order for the foundation of Wardon Abbey. Walter marked his retirement in 1153 with a gift of more land and died without issue in 1155.⁴ The sons of his three [half] sisters (Hawise, Albreda and Adeline) became his heirs and the manor of Wardon passed to **William de Bussei**, eldest son of Hawise.⁵ William and his wife **Roheise de Clare** had four children (Bartholomew, Walter, Cecily and Matilda). Following William's death c. 1164/65 Roheise controlled the Honour of Wardon while Bartholomew was a minor but he died without issue in 1178/79.⁶ With the death of Walter c. 1182, the manor was divided

¹ Images of the primary source are available at '[Old] Warden'. *Open Domesday*, <https://opendomesday.org/place/>.

² For discussion on using swine as the basis for calculating an area of land, see G.H. Fowler, 'Bedfordshire in 1086', *Quarto Memoirs of the Bedfordshire Historical Record Society Volume 1* (Aspley Guise, 1922), 62-63 §66 and A. Wright, *Domesday Book Beyond the Censors* (Troubadour Publishing Ltd, 2017), p. 31.

³ 'The Cartulary of the Cistercian abbey of Old Wardon, Bedfordshire: from the manuscript (Latin 223) (transcribed and edited, with introduction, abstracts and appendices in English)', ed. G.H. Fowler, *BHRS*, 13 (1930), Pedigree 4.

⁴ None of charters issued by Henry I (r. 1100-1 December 1135) are known to have survived, however a reconfirmation charter issued by Henry II (r. 1154-89) verifies that Henry I granted his personal protection to the monks of Wardon. Recited in *Cal. Pat. R., Henry VII*, vol. 2, p. 613 (7); *Cal. Pat. R., Henry VII*, vol. 2, p. 617 (11). The confirmation charter of King Stephen and retirement grant are recorded in *BHRS*, 13, 286-87 (344a) and 242-43 (324).

⁵ Arrangements for dividing the assets were made in 1158. *Pipe R., Hen. II*, 140, 146 and *R. Chart.*, 32b cited by W. Farrer, 'The Honour of Old Wardon', *BHRS*, 11 (1927), 1-46 (p. 6).

⁶ K.S.B. Keats-Rohan, *Domesday Descendants. A Prosopography of Persons Occurring in English Documents 1066-1166 : II Pipe Rolls to Cartae Baronum* (Boydell Press, 2002), p. 190.

between Cecily and Matilda, both of whom were married by 1185.⁷ The portion inherited by Cecily passed to the Vieuxpont family through the marriage of her daughter Idonea, and it is unclear when or on what terms it came into the hands of Matilda's heirs. Matilda married Hugh Wake of Benham (Berks) and after passing through five generations of her family the manor was sold piecemeal to Wardon Abbey in the early 1340s.⁸

Apart from generating a modest rental income, the manor of Wardon would have been of little consequence to its secular masters, all of whom held more lucrative assets elsewhere. The abbey appears to have acquired that part of Wardon held by Azelina, widow of Ralph de Taillebois, no later than the mid-thirteenth century,⁹ and it is likely that virtually all of the lands documented in 1086 had come under monastic control by about 1350. The descent of the manors is illustrated in a wiring diagram at Appendix 1.

CECILY DE BUSSEI AND HER HEIRS

The Builli [Busli, Buili, Buly] family of La Bouille, Normandy

Cecily de Bussei married **John de Builli** (d. 1213), whose father Richard had jointly founded the Cistercian abbey of Roche (S. Yorks) in 1147. John held three fees in the honour of Wardon in 1201,¹⁰ (probably in Wardon and Eyworth [Eyeworth], two of the fourteen villas pertaining to the honour of Wardon in the time of the Spec family) and is returned as holding 1½ fees there in 1210-12.¹¹ Worth noting is that 'a knight's fee did not equate to a fixed or consistent area of land' and therefore says 'little about the reality of the late-medieval manor'.¹² John de Builli served as constable of Scarborough in 1204,¹³ and built the churches of Bawtry and Austerfield (S. Yorks), which were granted to the Benedictine priory of Blyth (Notts) with the assent of Idonea, the couple's only child and sole heiress. **Idonea de Builli** married Westmorland lord **Robert de Vieuxpont** during the reign of King John (1199-1216) and following her death in 1235, the name of de Builli ended in England.¹⁴

The Vieuxpont [Veteri Ponte, Vipont] family

The male line of the Vieuxpont family continued for two more generations. Idonea de Builli's son **John de Vieuxpont** (d. 1242) married Sibyl de Ferrers with whom he had four children. Their elder son John died in 1241, leaving his younger brother **Robert de Vieuxpont**, a minor at the time, as heir.¹⁵ Robert married Isabel, the daughter of John fitz Geoffrey and Isabel Bigod, with whom he had two daughters (Isabel and Idonea) but no male heir.

⁷ *BHRS*, 11, Pedigree 1: Honour of Wardon. *VCH Beds* uses Maud, a variant of Matilda. *The Rotuli de Dominabus* of 1185 records property held by 'Roesia de Bussei...filia Baldewini filii Gilberti, uxor Willelmi de Bussei', adding that she had two daughters 'primogenitam habet Johannes de Builli et alteram Hugo Wake'. *Rotuli Dominabus, Rotuli I, Lincolnscir*, Kalsewath Wapentach, p. 6.

⁸ 'Abstracts of Feet of Fines'. CP 25/1/5/57 number 4, CP 25/1/5/57 number 5, CP 25/1/5/57 number 6, www.medievalgenealogy.org.uk; 'The National Archives'. C 143/257/7, <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>.

⁹ Charter dated 1257 recited in *BHRS*, 13, 249, (335).

¹⁰ *BHRS*, 11, 5, 10; *Rotuli de oblatibus et finibus in Turri Londinensi asservati, tempore regis Johannis*, ed. T. Hardy (London, 1835), p. 155 and *Rotulus Cancellarii vel, Antigraphum magni rotuli pipæ de tertio anno regni regis Johannis* (London, 1833), p. 278.

¹¹ *Liber Rubeus de Scaccario. The Red Book of the Exchequer*, ed. H. Hall, 3 vols. (Rolls Series, 1897), vol. 2, p. 538.

¹² M. Bailey, *The English Manor c.1200-c.1500* (Manchester University Press, 2002), pp. 14, 15, cited as *The English Manor*.

¹³ *Rotuli litterarum clausarum, in turri Londinensi asservati*, ed. T. Hardy, 2 vols. (London, 1833), vol. 1, p. 59.

¹⁴ J. Raine, *The History and Antiquities of the Parish of Blyth* (1860) available online at <http://www.nottshistory.org.uk/monographs/blyth1860/chapter1.htm>.

¹⁵ *Excerpta e Rot. Fin.* (Rec. Com.), i, 171, 389; De Banco R. 39, m. 67 cited in 'Parishes: Buckland', in *VCH Bucks*, vol. 2, ed. W. Page (London, 1908), pp. 327-330. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/bucks/vol2/pp327-330>.

It is likely that Cecily de Bussei's share of Wardon manor descended through the Vieuxpont family, but there is no surviving documentary evidence. However, a parallel can be drawn with Eyworth [Eyeworth] (Beds), which had also been divided between Cecily and her sister Matilda. In 1258, the year in which seven leading barons including Robert de Vipont's father-in-law forced Henry III to agree to the Provisions of Oxford, John de Gravenel (Matilda's grandson) transferred his share of the manor of Eyworth to Robert de Vipont (Cecily's great-grandson).¹⁶ Clearly a time of restructuring, John de Gravenel had granted his share in the manor of Buckland (Bucks) to Robert de Vipont and his heirs in 1257, in return for Robert granting the whole manor back to John, but probably only for his lifetime.¹⁷

Both men supported the barons' cause, but John de Gravenel was captured fighting for Simon de Montfort at Lewes in 1264.¹⁸ Robert de Vipont died from wounds sustained in the same battle and John Fitzjohn was appointed by de Montfort to hold Vieuxpont's castles and lands, together with the wardship of his daughters, Isabel and Idonea.¹⁹ When he died Robert de Vieuxpont was in debt to Henry III and on 5 July 1264 the executors were obliged to pay 200 marks²⁰ to the Crown for the right to administer the estate, a sum that would offset, but not settle the amount payable by Robert's heirs.²¹

Isabel de Vieuxpont married Roger de Clifford who died in 1282. An inquisition post mortem documented lands held from the king in Eyworth 'of the inheritance of his wife Isabel' but 'nothing in chief of his own inheritance'.²² Idonea de Vieuxpont married Roger de Leyburn who died in 1284. At the inquisition following his demise it was established that, thanks to his wife, Roger had held a tenement in Eyworth worth £10 0s 2½d 'in chief of the King by serjeanty and paying yearly through the Sheriff 2s 9d'.²³ In the absence of evidence concerning Wardon, it is concluded that the portion of Wardon manor descending through the Cecily's heirs had passed to the heirs of Matilda no later than the middle of the thirteenth century.

MATILDA DE BUSSEI AND HER HEIRS

The Wake family

Matilda de Bussei married **Hugh Wake of Benham** (Berks) and the couple had three children (Joan, Aline and James). Hugh had died by 1199 and in 1200 Matilda declined an offer of marriage from Roger Fitz-Henry, a decision which cost her 80 marks as she demanded the freedom to marry whomsoever she pleased.²⁴ In 1201 Matilda held three fees in the honour of Wardon,²⁵ and Mattillis de Busseto [*sic*] is returned as holding 1½ fees there in 1210-12.²⁶ Matilda died in summer 1218 and on 26th August Henry III ordered the sheriff of Bedfordshire 'to take into the king's hand without delay the land formerly of Matilda de Bussai' in Eyworth and Warden 'with all its appurtenances, which she held of the king in chief, and to keep them safely to the king's use until he will be ordered otherwise'.²⁷

¹⁶ Cur. Reg. R. 149, m. 21; Feet of F. Div. Cos. 42 Hen. III, No. 34 cited in 'Parishes: Eyworth', in *VCH Beds*, vol. 2, ed. W. Page (London, 1908), pp. 230-233. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/beds/vol2/pp230-233>.

¹⁷ Feet of F. Div. Co. Mich. 42 Hen. III cited in 'Parishes: Buckland', in *VCH Bucks*, vol. 2.

¹⁸ *Cal. Close R., Henry III, 1264-1268*, pp. 435-36.

¹⁹ A. Jobson, *Baronial Reform and Revolution in England, 1258-1267* (Boydell Press, 2016), p. 214.

²⁰ One mark = 13s 4d. The cost therefore ran to £133 6s 8d (just shy of £100,000 in today's money).

²¹ 'Henry III Fine Rolls Project'. *Cal. Fine R.*, 48/125 (05 July 1264), <https://finerollshenry3.org.uk>.

²² 'Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem. No. II', ed. G.H. Fowler, *BHRS*, 19 (1937), 111-70 (pp. 131-32).

²³ *BHRS*, 19, 134-35.

²⁴ *R. de Oblat.*, 35, 94, 99, 100, 316, 339.

²⁵ *BHRS*, 11, 5, 10; *R. de Oblat.*, p. 155 and *R. Cancel.*, p. 278.

²⁶ *Red Book Exch.*, vol. 2, p. 538.

²⁷ *Cal. Fine R.*, 2/197 (26 August 1218).

James Wake married Amy, daughter of Peter de Levington (Suffolk). Amy died in 1243 and on 3rd March arrangements were put in train for Hugh, their only son, to inherit the lands that his late mother had held in demesne in Benham and Boxford.²⁸ Hugh died in 1245 and consequently when his father James died (in or before 1246) the Wake inheritance fell to Hugh's aunts Joan and Aline (both aged over 50),²⁹ subsequent events suggest that Joan received the holdings in Eyworth while Wardon passed to Aline. Joan had taken Alan de Mumby (Lincs) as her first husband, but he died in 1217.³⁰ Her second husband was Thomas de Gravenel [Graveney] (Kent), a supporter of William Marshal, who led the forces that overcame the rebel barons in 1217.³¹ Despite his loyalty, Thomas fell foul of royal protocol by marrying Joan without licence from the king, an error of judgement that cost him 20 marks in 1218.³² Joan died in about 1247, but no further information on Thomas has been traced.

On 27 June 1257 John de Gravenel, son of Thomas and Joan, was granted the protection of Henry III while on the king's service in Wales,³³ and as noted previously, transferred his share of the manor of Eyworth to Robert de Vipont (Cecily's great-grandson) in 1258. John de Gravenel was captured while fighting for Simon de Montfort at Lewes, and the manor of Eyworth taken into the king's hands after the royalists' victory at Evesham in 1265.³⁴ It was in the king's interests to moderate his attitude towards the rebels, and on 13 October 1267 John Gravenel appeared on routine business at Westminster. Eyworth appears to have been granted to him and his wife Isabella on 15 February 1268, and he died on or immediately after 15 January 1272.³⁵ There is nothing to suggest that he ever held any part of the manor of Wardon.

The Stiuecle family

Aline Wake married **Joscelin de Stiuecle**, steward of the Benedictine abbot of Ramsey, and the couple had one son, Walter. Walter de Stiuecle and his wife Alice had four children (Alice, Barnabas, Joan and Mary), but when Walter died in 1253 Aline was still alive and Barnabas had not achieved his majority. A writ dated 27 May 1254 documents **Barnabas, son of Walter de Stiuecle**, aged 17, as the heir of Aliana Wake. A fragment of a document relating to an inquisition, possibly held in Bedford, notes that '[Alina] Wake was dowered of the land of Cravehrust [Gravenhurst in Bedfordshire] for a third part of Stiuecle...' A further entry relating to an inquisition post mortem held at Bedford on 16 June 1254 documents 'Wardon manor (extent given) held of the king in chief for ½ knight's fee by foreign service'.^{36 37}

²⁸ *Cal. Fine R.*, 27/180 (03 March 1243).

²⁹ *Cal. Inquis. p.m.*, vol. 1, pp.19 and 294 (79) and (858).

³⁰ *R. Lit. Cl.*, vol. 1, p. 319. When Eudo de Mumby died (before Michaelmas 1197), his son Alan became the ward of Hugh Wake at a cost of 100 marks. Alan de Mumby came of age in 1200 when he paid 300 marks and a palfrey worth 10 marks to gain possession of his land from the Crown. It is likely that arrangements were made for the marriage of Alan to Hugh's daughter Joan around that time. *Pipe Roll 9 Ric. I*, p. 114 cited in *Early Yorkshire Charters: Volume 5, The Honour of Richmond, Part II*, ed. C.T. Clay and W. Farrer (Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 270 (§ 31. The Mumby Fee).

³¹ *Cal. Pat. R., Henry III 1216-1225*, p. 4, 21, 48, 55, 79.

³² *Cal. Fine R.*, 2/232 (06 September 1218), 3/19 (09 November 1218) and 35/206 (22 March 1219).

³³ *Cal. Pat. R., Henry III, 1247-1258*, p. 595.

³⁴ *Cal. Close R., Henry III, 1264-1268*, pp. 435-36.

³⁵ *Cal. Pat. R., Henry III, 1266-1272*, p. 122; *Cal. Close R., Henry III, 1264-1268*, pp. 435-36; *Cal. Inquis. p.m. Henry III*, vol. 1, p. 270 (802).

³⁶ *Cal. Inquis. p.m.*, vol. 1, p. 76 (292); TNA, C 132/15/7 concerns the 1254 inquisition post mortem for 'Alina alias Alana Wake, Bedfordshire(?): Gravenhurst, Stewkley. Bedfordshire: Wardon manor'.

³⁷ 'Foreign service' refers to service due to some person other than the tenant's immediate lord. The word 'forinsec' is sometimes used instead of 'foreign' to translate the Latin *forinsecus*.

Like many others of the period, the Stiuecle family was driven to borrowing in order to meet tax liabilities, and it appears that the manor of Wardon had been pledged to the Jews. On 17 August 1257 Henry III confirmed a lease whereby Barnabas de Stiuecle let the manor to **Wardon Abbey** for a fixed term of thirteen years from 8 September 1257,³⁸ probably following his twenty-first birthday. Sadly Barnabas died soon afterwards leaving a widow, Margery.³⁹ The king then assigned the Jew debt to his brother Richard, earl of Cornwall, and gave the guardianship of the land and heirs of Barnabas to Queen Eleanor, who redeemed the debt for 300 marks.⁴⁰ Letters patent issued at Westminster on 4 December 1257 show Queen Eleanor granting 'simple protection' to the abbot of Wardon for five years from Christmas [1257].⁴¹ Such letters customarily granted the holder immunity from arrest or legal process when engaged on royal service, and may relate in this instance to the abbot holding the manor of Wardon directly from the Crown.

On 20 April 1258 the queen wrote to the abbot of Wardon on the king's behalf, authorising him to keep 'the whole manor of Wardon, late of Barnabas de Stiuecle' for thirteen years from 29 September 1257. The king confirmed arrangements on 19 June 1258, whereby the queen's bailiffs were to make two views of frankpledge yearly, giving any ameracements or other emoluments to the abbey. Terms called for the abbot to pay her 300 marks, but at the end of the 13 years the manor would become hers until the heirs of Barnabas should pay off the debt. If they did so, she would return to the abbey the difference between what the monks had drawn from the manor and the sum advanced - provided that the manor remained in good order.⁴² Accounts also mention 'the heir of Barnabas, who is in her [the queen's] wardship',⁴³ and although there is no surviving record of a child from the marriage of Barnabas and Margery, it is inferred that Barnabas had a male heir who died before reaching his majority. In the event, Barnabas's three sisters (Alice, Joan and Mary) became his heirs.

The Waleys family

Joan de Stiuecle married **William le Waleys** of whom nothing is currently known, but it is reasonable to suppose that he was of good standing. Richard le Waleys sat on the jury at the inquisition following the death of Simon d'Aubigny in 1273, and on 3 February 1284 Ralph le Waleys testified on oath at Aylesbury as to the age of John de Bouelles.⁴⁴

William le Waleys predeceased his wife and with no surviving children, Joan's death on 12 September 1281 saw her share of the manor of Wardon divided between two nephews: William le Coynte (of full age), son and heir of Alice de Stiuecle, and 19-year old John de Boueles, son of her sister Mary. At the time of her death, Joan paid scutage (tax payable in lieu of military service) and the third part of 9s 4d to the king in return for a messuage worth 2s; 54½ acres of land in demesne, each worth 4d; 16 acres of wood worth 6d per acre of underwood; 4½ acres of meadow, worth 2s the acre; and parcels of pasture worth 9s. Held in villeinage (unfree tenure) were 5 virgates worth 9s 1¼d each [£2 5s 6¼d] or works to that value. With 2½ *cottarii* worth 5s⁴⁵ and 17s 11d cash from free tenants,⁴⁶ the total reached 114s 7¼d.

³⁸ *Cal. Pat. R., Henry III*, vol. 4, p. 575.

³⁹ 'Parishes: Little Stukeley', in *VCH Hunts*, vol. 2, ed. W. Page, G. Proby and S. Inskip Ladds (London, 1932), pp. 234-238. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/hunts/vol2/pp234-238>.

⁴⁰ 'Calendar of inquisitions post mortem, no 2, 1272-1286', ed. G.H. Fowler, *BHRS*, 19 (1937), 111-70 (pp. 153-54).

⁴¹ *Cal. Pat. R., Henry III*, vol. 4, p. 607.

⁴² *BHRS*, 19, 153-54.

⁴³ *Cal. Pat. R., Henry III*, vol. 4, p. 635.

⁴⁴ *BHRS*, 19, 114, 133.

⁴⁵ **cottar**: smallholder occupying a cottage in return for labour services.

⁴⁶ *Cal. Inquis. p.m.*, vol. 2, p. 510 (846); *BHRS*, 19, 126-27.

The Quoynste [Coynte, Cointe] family

Alice de Stiuecle married **William de Lymminge**, 'dictus le Quoynste' [William of Lyminge (Kent), called le Quoynste].⁴⁷ Financial tribulations persisted, and 1259 found Alice and her husband joining with her sister Joan and brother-in-law William le Waleys in selling their two-thirds of a messuage and 3 carucates of land in Stukeley to William de Swyneford and Margery his wife.⁴⁸ In 1261 Alice and her husband quitclaimed (formally renounced) to the abbey all of their rights in the manor of Wardon during the period it was leased to the monastery or until they paid £30 to the king or the abbot.⁴⁹

Having outlived her husband, Alice died in 1280 and a writ dated 20th May called upon the king's steward to undertake an inquisition, which confirmed her 21-year old son William as 'next heir'. The jury listed resources held directly from Edward I (services not specified), namely a messuage in Wardon worth 2s yearly, 60 acres of arable land worth 20s yearly, 20 acres of wood (but nothing could be 'got thence'), 5 acres of meadow worth 9s, and pasture worth 9s yearly. Free tenants 'Rad. Coupol and Andr. Juel' held 3 virgates [90 fiscal acres] by royal service and scutage and suit of court every 3 weeks, and 1 virgate for 2s 8d. Seven virgates [210 fiscal acres] of meadow and pasture held in villeinage were worth 64s 7¼d yearly. There were 10 cottage holdings worth 10s 6d,⁵⁰ bringing the total to 113s 9¼d. Assuming that the manor had been divided equally between Alice, Joan and Mary, the overall value is calculated to have been around £17 in the 1280s (enough to buy twenty horses).⁵¹

William Quoynste, son of William le Quoynste and Alice, married Isabella with whom he had a daughter Joan (b. 1287). The parlous financial situation may have eased slightly, with records for the period 1284-86 documenting cousins William le Coynte and John de Boweles jointly holding one fee in Wardon from the king,⁵² and in 1309 'Willo le Coynte' was required to pay 15¼d in lay subsidy.⁵³ Sadly William's death on 10 April 1317 meant he did not see the birth of his second surviving child Margery on 25 April 1317, and the lands which he had held as tenant-in-chief were seized by the escheator for the Crown.⁵⁴ The new baby was baptized in the parish church at Wardon, and when proof of 14-year old Margery's age was established on 27 June 1331, Henry Gomelot (aged 60) testified that he had lifted her from the sacred font. Henry Sokelyng (aged 66) concurred on the basis that his wife Alice did likewise.⁵⁵

The escheator at Wardon assigned a **dower to Isabella, widow of William le Coynte**, on 15 July 1317. This comprised 'one third of the chief messuage with a parcel of the garden on the east side, and the following houses in the said third – all the long cow-house there with a third of the great grange [granary] towards the gate on the east, with an old sheep-cot and curtilage near the pool called 'le Weier' on the west; which third part and houses etc are of the yearly value of 8d. There are assigned to her a third of le Wodefeld, containing 1 acre and 1½ roods of arable land on the north, with an adjoining ditch, of the yearly value of 9½d; ½ an acre and

⁴⁷ In a charter dated to 1254-67 and witnessed by Nicholas and Peter de Boelles 'Willelmus de Lymminge, dictus le Quoynste, et Alicia' his wife granted 36 acres of land, 4 acres of meadow and 25d rents at Gravenhurst to Ramsey Abbey. *Cartularium Monasterii de Rameseia*, ed. P. Lyons and W. Hart (Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 246-48 (**CCCLXII**).

⁴⁸ *Cal. Feet of F. Hunts.* (Camb. Antiq. Soc.), p. 31 cited by *VCH Hunts*, vol. 2.

⁴⁹ *BHRS*, 19, 153-54.

⁵⁰ *Cal. Inquis. p.m.*, vol. 2, p. 204 (**365**); *BHRS*, 19, 125-26.

⁵¹ 'Currency convertor 1270-2017'. TNA, <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency/#>.

⁵² *Inquisitions and assessments relating to feudal aids, with other analogous documents preserved in the Public record office; A.D. 1284-1431*, ed. A.S. Maskelyne (London, 1899-), p. 6, cited as *Feud. Aids*.

⁵³ *Two Bedfordshire Subsidy Lists. 1309 and 1332*, ed. S.A.H. Hervey, Suffolk Green Books. No. XVIII (Paul & Mathew, 1925), pp. 51-52, cited as *Bedfordshire Subsidy Lists*.

⁵⁴ **escheat**: The reversion of land to the lord or the Crown on the death of a tenant without heirs or by forfeit after committing a felony. It means that property is not left in limbo without ownership.

⁵⁵ *Cal. Inquis. p.m.*, vol. 7, p. 295 (**394**).

a rood of land in le Wodecroft on the west, of the yearly value of 3d; 7 acres and 2 roods in le Inlond [Ireland in Southill], of the yearly value of 2s 6d; 9½ acres and a rood of land in le Westfeld on the east, of the yearly value of 3s 3d; an acre of land in le Garscroft on the south, of the yearly value of 4d; 9½ acres and ½ rood of arable land in the common of le Wardonfeld on the south, as assigned by boundaries, of the yearly value of 3s 2½ d. There are assigned to her a third of the meadow of Wardon, which belonged to the said William, of the yearly value of 2s; a third of all pasture, of the yearly value of 4d; a third of a wood containing 8 acres one and one third roods of wood on the north side, which is not extended because nothing can be levied thence. There are also assigned to her the following free tenants, rendering yearly the following sums: John le Bounde, 4s; John le Feie, 1½d; Roger le Coupere, 2s; Henry Cok, 2s; John Fraunces, 12d; Henry le Coupere, 12d; Henry Sokeling, 1d; Laurence le Carpenter, 2s; Geoffrey the miller, 1d; Robert Neweman, 6d; the tenement [of] Crache, 12d; together with their suits and services. There is also assigned to her William de Sokebourne, a bondman,⁵⁶ who renders yearly 3s 10d, with all his suit and *sequela*,⁵⁷ bringing her annual income to 31s 11½d.

Joan le Quoynte had married **Walter de Shelvestrode**,⁵⁸ who was on the king's service in Ireland with Roger Mortimer of Wigmore⁵⁹ when her father died. On 28 October 1317 an order was given to the Crown escheator graciously allowing her to receive her share of Wardon for her maintenance, probably amounting to the same as the dower granted to her mother. Joan was liable for a lay subsidy of 3s 4d in 1332.⁶⁰

It appears that widow Isabella de Quoynte soon remarried. Supplementary arrangements were made to settle her late husband's affairs on 15 September 1318 with instructions given to Roger de Chevelyngham [Chellington?] and Isabella his wife to deliver the custody of a moiety of the manor of Wardon⁶¹ to [William's cousin] John de Bogheles [Boeles]. This evidently relates to the share earmarked for Margery, baby daughter of William and Isabella. They were to deliver to John the income derived from the holding since 28 November 1317, when the king committed the custody of the moiety to Isabella while Margery was under age. Isabella was to maintain her baby daughter 'in food and clothing and other necessaries', and render to the exchequer 20s, as the king had previously committed the custody of Margery to John [de Boeles] for a yearly sum of 29s.⁶² By 1331 **Margery le Quoynte** was in the wardship of William de Boweles, and John de Boweles objected before the court, complaining that Margery ought not to have her inheritance because she was not of the full age of 15 years. He stated that if by the judgement of the king's court, she was of full age, he would still claim to 'enjoy the issues of the lands, as the king would enjoy them if in his hands'.⁶³

Early in the 1340s the **abbot of Wardon** began taking steps to acquire the secular manor, and on 27 January 1342 the monastery purchased 'two-thirds of one half of the manor of Wardon from Joan and Margery'.⁶⁴ The abbot paid 20 marks of silver (£13 6s 8d) to Margery for one third, with the same to Walter de Shelvestrode and Joan for the other third. The final third was part of the dower of Isabella, who had taken Thomas le Archer as her third husband

⁵⁶ **bondman**: man bound to service without wages.

⁵⁷ **sequēla** (Latin): offspring, issue, descendants; heirs, also (legal) the issue of villeins viewed as a property right.

⁵⁸ Probably the vill of Shelvestrode, Sussex. *Circa* 1322-34 William de Shelvestrode was prior of Michelham, an Augustinian house in East Sussex.

⁵⁹ Roger Mortimer, 3rd baron Mortimer of Wigmore (1287-1330). Appointed Lord Lieutenant of Ireland in 1316; *Cal. Close R.*, Edward II, vol. 2, p. 504.

⁶⁰ *Bedfordshire Subsidy Lists*, p. 136.

⁶¹ **moiety**: half or part.

⁶² *Cal. Close R.*, Edward II, vol. 3, p. 11.

⁶³ *Cal. Inquis. p.m.*, vol. 7, p. 295 (394).

⁶⁴ TNA, C 143/257/7.

by 1342.⁶⁵ By rights the dower should have reverted to Walter Shelvestrode, Joan and Margery after Isabella's death, but the abbot paid them a lump sum of £10 on the proviso that when Isabella died, the abbey would take the land and hold it 'of the lord king and his heirs for ever'. Thomas and Isabella did fealty to the abbot in the court at Westminster.⁶⁶ The terms were updated on 10 July 1346, when the king agreed that, subject to payment, the monks might hold the manor in frankalmoign (a beneficial form of free tenure peculiar to religious houses).⁶⁷ There is no known documentary evidence regarding Isabella's death, but it is assumed that the abbey received her share of the manor no later than about 1350. The Quoynte family was associated with Wardon for no more than 85 years, but it is possible the site of the old castle, known today as Quince [Quoynte's] Hill, provides a lasting reminder (pers. comm. Christine Hill).

The Boeles [Buel, Boweles, Boules, Bowels, Bueles, Bovelles] family

Mary de Stiuecle married **Peter de Boeles** whose family originally hailed from Bouelles in Normandy. John, their son and heir, was born at Gravenhurst on 12 October 1262. In 1263 Peter and Mary gave 'half a mark for taking an assize before Gilbert of Preston',⁶⁸ and Peter de Buel granted land at Shillington (Beds) to the Benedictine abbey of Ramsey (Hunts) c. 1265.⁶⁹ John was just 11 years old when his father died, and on 1 March 1274 Thomas Inge paid 20 marks to the Crown for the custody of the lands of Peter de Boeles, tenant-in-chief in Wardon and Gravenhurst, and for the custody of his [under age] heirs and their marriage. The total value of the lands was assessed as £12 10s 1¼d.⁷⁰

As noted previously, John de Boeles and his cousin William le Quoynte inherited land in Wardon from their aunt Joan in 1281.⁷¹ Being a minor, John was in the king's wardship, but on turning twenty-one in 1283, he would have been in a position not only to recover that portion of Wardon manor held by his late father, but also the inheritance from his aunt. An inquisition held on 3 February 1284 confirmed his age.⁷²

In 1284-86 John de Boweles and his cousin William jointly held one fee from the king in Wardon,⁷³ and on 12 March 1288 John granted land near Sangerel mill in Gravenhurst to Peter de la Mare, the lease being sealed at Wardon in front of witnesses including Adam de Boeles.⁷⁴ On 25 July 1290 John de Boeles granted land in Gravenhurst to Agnes, daughter of Richard Homme of Little Gravenhurst, and again the event took place at Wardon witnessed by Adam de Boules among others.⁷⁵

On 22 May 1308 Edward II confirmed the right of tenant-in-chief John de Bowels and his heirs to hold a weekly charter market on Tuesdays at the manor of Wardon and a yearly fair at the manor on the eve, feast and morrow of St Leonard (5-7 November); there is no indication as

⁶⁵ *Cal. Close R.*, Edward II, vol. 3, p. 11; TNA, C 143/257/7.

⁶⁶ 'Abstracts of Feet of Fines'. CP 25/1/5/57 number 4, CP 25/1/5/57 number 5, CP 25/1/5/57 number 6, www.medievalgenealogy.org.uk.

⁶⁷ *Cal. Pat. R.*, Edward III, vol. 7, p. 148; *Cal. Pat. R.*, Edward III, vol. 6, p. 147.

⁶⁸ *Cal. Fine R.*, 47/380 (10 April 1263).

⁶⁹ Anct. D. (P.R.O.), B. 3316 cited in 'Parishes: Shillington with Lower Stondon and Little Holwell', in *VCH Beds*, vol. 2, pp. 293-299. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/beds/vol2/pp293-299>.

⁷⁰ *Cal. Pat. R.*, Edward I, vol. 1, p. 43.

⁷¹ *Cal. Inquis. p.m.*, vol. 2, p. 510 (846).

⁷² 'John de Boweles alias de Boeles: Bedfordshire (proof of age)', TNA, C 133/37/1; *Cal. Inquis. p.m.*, vol. 2, pp. 300-301 (501).

⁷³ *Inquisitions and assessments relating to feudal aids, with other analogous documents preserved in the Public record office; A.D. 1284-1431*, ed. A.S. Maskelyne (London, 1899-), p. 6, cited as *Feud. Aids*.

⁷⁴ LJeayes386.

⁷⁵ LJeayes388.

to the location. He was also granted right of free warren (permission to kill small game) in all his demesne lands in the manors of Wardon and Gravenhurst.⁷⁶ It was stated in 1330 that it was often the case that nobody came to do business at either market or fair and neither was recorded after the fourteenth century. The downturn corresponds with the aftermath of the Great Famine (1315-17), but might also be attributed to a diminishing population of craftsmen and labourers, as work on the extension to the abbey church neared completion.

When 'Willo le Coynte' paid a lay subsidy on land in Wardon in 1309, nothing was demanded from John de Boeles, which suggests that his holdings had been leased to tenants.⁷⁷ In 1316 John de Bueles was named as one of five lords of Gravenhurst and Eye (part of Gravenhurst),⁷⁸ and held one fee in Wardon jointly with the abbot and William le Cointe.⁷⁹ The mention of the abbot in connection with the secular manor suggests more than a passing interest.

On 25 December 1327 Edward III issued a licence 'for John de Boweles to grant to John de Sancto Amando in fee simple a messuage and lands in Wardon, held in chief'.^{80 81} On 8 May 1328 the king issued a new licence, this time 'for John de Boweles to grant a moiety of the manor of Wardon held in chief, to John de Sancto Amando in fee simple'.⁸² On the following day (9 May 1328) John de Sancto Amando acknowledged that he owed to John de Boweles of Wardon £80; to be levied, in default of payment, of his lands and chattels in Bedfordshire. In return, John de Boweles acknowledged that he owed John de Sancto Amando £200; to be levied, in default of payment, of his lands and chattels in Bedfordshire.⁸³

John de Sancto Amando died early in 1333,⁸⁴ and on 13 February 1334 an order was given to the escheator in the county of Bedford to 'take into the king's hand the lands late of John de Boweles, deceased, tenant in chief'.⁸⁵ John de Boweles was succeeded by his son John,⁸⁶ and the name of Boweles was still remembered in [Old] Warden by 1750, when an estate map illustrated 'Bowell Lane from Warden', the route from the village through or along the north edge of Park Wood towards the present-day Sweetbriar Farm.⁸⁷

The St Amand family

VCH Beds pre-supposes that non-settlement of the 1328 debt resulted in John de Boweles alienating his share of Wardon manor to the Sancto Amando family,⁸⁸ and while this is a reasonable assumption, no documentary evidence has been found. It is clear, however, that the Boweles family had incurred the displeasure of Edward III by alienating arable and pasture in Wardon without a licence from Edward II. The matter rumbled on from 1337 until 1340, and

⁷⁶ *Cal. Chart. R.*, vol. 3, p. 110.

⁷⁷ *Two Bedfordshire Subsidy Lists. 1309 and 1332*, ed. S.A.H. Hervey, Suffolk Green Books. No. XVIII (Paul & Mathew, 1925), pp. 51-52, cited as *Bedfordshire Subsidy Lists*.

⁷⁸ *Feud. Aids*, p. 22.

⁷⁹ *Feud. Aids*, p. 19.

⁸⁰ *Cal. Pat. R., Edward III*, vol. 1, p. 197.

⁸¹ **fee simple**: freehold tenure which allowed the owner to dispose of his property freely.

⁸² *Cal. Pat. R., Edward III*, vol. 1, p. 264.

⁸³ *Cal. Close R., Edward III*, vol. 1, p. 383.

⁸⁴ *Cal. Pat. R., Edward III*, vol. 2, p. 436 includes an entry on 25 May 1333, noting 'John de Sancto Amando, lately deceased'.

⁸⁵ *Cal. Fine R.*, vol. 4, p. 387.

⁸⁶ A grant dated 28 April 1362 refers to lands held 'by leave from John de Bovelles, sen. in Nether Gravenhurst' and in 1379 a grant of Le Hyde manor, Lower Gravenhurst cited an earlier grant made by John Bowell senior. LJeayes414 and LJeayes467 refer.

⁸⁷ BARS, Z1125/1.

⁸⁸ *VCH Beds*, vol. 3, p. 252.

it is not inconceivable that their share in the manor of Wardon was transferred to the Sancto Amando family soon afterwards.⁸⁹

Held by Almaric Sancto Amando directly from the king, the 'moiety of the manor of Wardon' was valued at 40s, and on 3 December 1343 Edward III granted a licence for an exchange to take place whereby the abbot of Wardon would acquire it in return for 320 acres at Millbrook. However, as the monastic lands had been valued at 100s and were held by the monks in frankalmoign, the disparity proved obvious. An entry in the patent roll dated 10 July 1346 suggests that the king had not been properly briefed, and having acknowledged the value of Millbrook to be far in excess of Wardon, he ruled that the monks were to hold their latest acquisition in frankalmoign.⁹⁰

Other landholders in Wardon

It is tempting to regard the abbey as the only other landholder in Wardon, but despite the monastery being the overwhelmingly dominant force, the de Whytton [Whitton] family held small areas directly from the king during the 1340s. An inquisition taken at Caldecote on 15 May 1343 recorded that Roesia de Whytton had a messuage and land in Wardon held of the king in chief by service of a fiftieth part of a knight's fee.⁹¹ Further details emerge from an inquisition at Bedford on 5 August 1343 when it was established that her husband William de Whytton of Wardon had a messuage, 16 acres of land and 1½ acres of meadow, 'held for life, of the king in chief by courtesy of England, as of the right of Rose his wife'.⁹² Almost certainly a member of the same family, an inquisition at Bedford on 25 January 1345 recorded Isabel de Litlyngton (died 22 January 1344) holding messuage at Wardon with close adjacent, 10 acres of arable and 4 acres of pasture held of the king in chief. Service unspecified.⁹³

With the above exception, it appears that the manor of Wardon was finally reunited under one umbrella for the first time since 1135, and although the earliest known reference to 'Old' Wardon does not occur until 1494,⁹⁴ the possibility remains that the description was adopted in or soon after the 1340s to acknowledge a return to the structure that was in place two centuries earlier. Wardon Abbey held the manor until the monastery was suppressed on 4 December 1537.

⁸⁹ *Cal. Close R., Edward III*, vol. 4, p. 21 and vol. 5, pp. 165, 432-33.

⁹⁰ *Cal. Pat. R., Edward III*, vol. 7, p. 148; *Cal. Pat. R., Edward III*, vol. 6, p. 147.

⁹¹ *Cal. Inquis. p.m.*, vol. 8, p. 284 (**428**).

⁹² *Cal. Inquis. p.m.*, vol. 8, p. 285 (**429**).

⁹³ *Cal. Inquis. p.m.*, vol. 8, p. 458 (**615**).

⁹⁴ *Cal. Inquis. p.m., Vol. 1, Henry VII* (1898), p. 471 (**1104**).

2 THE ECCLESIASTICAL MANOR OF WARDON 1135-1537

Grants by Walter Espec and his heirs

Late in the reign of Henry I, probably in 1135, Walter Espec granted land to the Cistercian Order in the parishes of Wardon and Southill. Abutting the western parish margins, the poor-quality site was covered by woodland interspersed with assarts (plots cleared ready for cultivation), and while the king confirmed that the new community held four hides (480 notional acres) in Wardon and two (240 notional acres) in Southill, the endowment probably extended to about 780 acres on the ground.⁹⁵

Monks and lay brothers sent from Rievaulx (N. Yorks) established the abbey on the windswept Greensand Ridge [TL1202 4388] about a mile south-west of Walter Espec's castle [TL1367 4452]. The supporting infrastructure included a demesne or 'home' farm in Wardon called the Abbot's Garden Grange, and a large fishpond which served as the monastery's reservoir or header tank [TL1182 4408].⁹⁶ A second demesne farm, Rowney Grange, was set up on the Southill side of the parish boundary [TL1207 4190].

On retiring to Rievaulx in 1153 Walter Espec made an additional grant of land to the fledgling monastery, probably comprising thirty-seven acres beside the northern edge of the Abbot's Garden [TL1249 4415].⁹⁷ When he died without issue in 1155, the sons of his three [half] sisters (Hawise, Albreda and Adeline) became his heirs,⁹⁸ and in 1158/61 William de Bussei (eldest son of Hawise) gave about 926 acres of park and woodland to the abbey which the monks cleared in favour of a third demesne farm (Park Grange) [TL1248 4440].⁹⁹

Twelfth-century grants from other benefactors in Wardon, Chicksands, Stanford and Southill

The abbey received other gifts in Wardon during the twelfth century including five acres of arable and three rods of meadow from the Lenveise family.¹⁰⁰ William Lenveise and his wife Denise also sold the monks a messuage and a croft with ½ acre of meadow, as well as several acres of arable scattered throughout the common fields.¹⁰¹

Around 1175 Richard le Moine notified that his wife Alice had granted sixty acres of dower land to the monks and rented a virgate (30 notional acres/one quarter of a hide) in Wardon to them for 2s annually. The latter was 'to be held by service to the kg. [king] and its lords as a third of half a hide' (20 acres).¹⁰² It is unclear when the monastery received other lands from the le Moine family. Suffice to say that in 1257 William de Beauchamp, baron of Bedford, claimed service from the monks on one hide in the vill of Wardon '*de terra Fulconis monachi*', a reference to Fulk le Moine who died c. 1246/47.¹⁰³ Given the acreage involved, it is tempting to suggest this as the land held by Walter le Moine from Azelina, widow of Ralph de Taillebois, in 1086.

⁹⁵ *Cal. Pat. R., Henry VII*, vol. 2, p. 613 (7); *Cal. Pat. R., Henry VII*, vol. 2, p. 617 (11).

⁹⁶ W. Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, ed. J. Caley, H. Ellis and B. Bandinel, 6 vols. in 8 (London, 1817-49), vol. 5, p. 370, cited as *Mon.*; *Cal. Pat. R., Henry VII*, vol. 2, pp. 614 (9).

⁹⁷ According to the genealogy of the Ros family, Espec retired to Rievaulx in 1153 and died on 15 March 1155. In her 2001 thesis, *Rievaulx Abbey and its Social Environment*, p. 31, Jamroziak takes as her source *Life of Ailred*, p. xcix, a genealogy of the Ros family produced probably at Kirkham priory; *Mon.*, p. 280; *BHRS*, 13, 242-43 (324).

⁹⁸ *Pipe R., Hen. II*, 140, 146 and *R. Chart.*, 32b cited by W. Farrer, 'The Honour of Old Wardon', *BHRS*, 11 (1927), 1-46 (p. 6).

⁹⁹ *BHRS*, 11, Pedigree 1: Honour of Wardon; *Cal. Pat. R., Henry VII*, vol. 2, p. 614 (9).

¹⁰⁰ *BHRS*, 13, 227-28 (298), 230-31 (301).

¹⁰¹ *BHRS*, 13, 228-29 (299).

¹⁰² *BHRS*, 13, 217 (280) and 216-17 (279).

¹⁰³ '[Old] Warden'. *Open Domesday*, <https://opendomesday.org/place/>; Charter dated 1257 recited in *BHRS*, 13, 249, (335); *BHRS*, 13, Pedigree 4: Le Moine of Wardon.

On 11 November 1198 Richard I issued a charter confirming that the monks held the site on which the abbey was founded with appurtenances (the rights attached to a piece of land) and the granges of Rowney and Park. He also confirmed the abbey's ownership of four more granges in Bedfordshire and six outside the county,¹⁰⁴ each one a self-sufficient monastic farm that would have played its part in sustaining the abbey through the production of crops and/or wool. Furthermore, the royal charter confirmed land in Stanford, Southill and Chicksands, which would have been held in demesne.¹⁰⁵ Prominent benefactors included Bishop Alexander of Lincoln, Geoffrey de Trailli and Robert de Ros (Walter Espec's heirs), Randulf de Caron, Richard Foliot, and Payne de Beauchamp with his wife Countess Rohesia among others.¹⁰⁶

Twelfth-century assets

During the twelfth century the abbey church and claustral buildings, gatehouse and guest facilities lay at the heart of the nascent ecclesiastical manor. Priority was given to provisioning the monastery rather than generating a cash income, and the demesne provided for arable, pasture, meadow and woodland, fishponds, gardens, orchards and vineyards. There were dovecotes, stables, yards, barns, granaries and other outbuildings, as well as a watermill which was probably superseded by a windmill in the thirteenth century.¹⁰⁷ Used for breeding and exploiting rabbits, Wardon warren may have been an early acquisition, although there is no known documentary evidence until the sixteenth century. Farm work was carried out by lay brothers, with the monks contributing during periods of their day designated for physical labour.

Evolution of Wardon Abbey's manor in the thirteenth century

Assuming that the monastery observed Cistercian norms, the abbey held its resources in demesne until at least 1208, when the Order agreed that certain holdings might be leased to secular tenants. Such arrangements were conditional upon half of the tenant's produce being given to the abbey or rent paid 'in some other way'. Restrictions were eased in 1224 'providing the lease be expedient'.¹⁰⁸ From the late 1220s onwards Wardon Abbey's manor evolved as the monastery became deeply ensconced in establishing rental agreements, and scutage or forinsec service was demanded from all free tenants. Furthermore, they were obliged to appear at the abbot's manor court (in person or by deputy) every three weeks.¹⁰⁹ There are no known surviving records detailing individual tenant services on the abbey's demesne, but as the number of lay brothers dwindled, the need for secular labour increased.¹¹⁰

In 1252 Abbot Geoffrey paid Henry III for a charter of liberties granting right of free warren at Park Grange, on twelve other Bedfordshire granges, and at six granges and woodlands

¹⁰⁴ Putnoe, Renhold, Millbrook and Limbersey (Beds) and Midloe (Hunts), West Wardon (Northants), Odsey and Burden (Cambs), Bradfield (Herts) and Livermere (Suffolk).

¹⁰⁵ *BHRS*, 13, 289-91 (**344e**).

¹⁰⁶ *Cal. Pat. R., Henry VII*, vol. 2, p. 615 (**9**).

¹⁰⁷ A charter dated to 1180/1200 refers to 'the road that runs from the abbey to the monk's mill'. See *BHRS*, 13, 34 (**37**). Windmill Hill occurs beside the former monastic farmyard on an estate map of 1750 [*BARS*, Z1125/1].

¹⁰⁸ *Statuta Capitulorum Generalium Ordinis Cisterciensis ab anno 1116 ad annum 1786*, ed. J-M. Canivez, 8 vols. (Louvain, 1933-1941), vol. 1, p. 346 (1208:5), cited as *Statuta*; *Statuta*, vol. 2, p. 31 (1224:10).

¹⁰⁹ *BHRS*, 13, 349-51 (p. 350), (**N/336-339**).

¹¹⁰ Services typical of the period are mentioned in a manorial survey of Hartest (Suffolk), part of a 1251 estate-wide survey of the bishopric of Ely. These included ploughing and harrowing, sowing, weeding, reaping and threshing, mowing meadows and hay making, malt making, sheep shearing, carrying dung, carting, metal working, fencing and hedging, ditching, roofing, and having corn ground at the lord's mill. *The English Manor*, pp. 46-58.

outside the county.¹¹¹ In 1330 Abbot William Helmsley made good his claims to right of free warren on eleven Bedfordshire granges, claiming also for Southill manor and his manor in Wardon including Park Grange.¹¹²

Jurisdictional rights

By 1291 manor courts seem to have been taking place at Park Grange,¹¹³ and in 1330 Abbot William Helmsley claimed view of frankpledge (the right to hold a leet court) from Edward III in eleven vills including Wardon, a privilege which the abbey had held since time immemorial.¹¹⁴ Manor courts were held at Orchard Grange, otherwise known as the Rectory of Wardon in the sixteenth century. The grange, site of the present-day Laundry Farm [TL1339 4362], had been leased on 29 July 1521 to secular tenant, George Barnardiston, who was to 'find food and drink for officers of sd. Abbot and conventual house coming to hold courts there at his own expense'.¹¹⁵ Abbot Henry Emery failed to convene the manor court between Michaelmas (the start of the financial year) and 4 December 1537 when the monastery surrendered to Henry VIII, nor was it held during the rest of the accounting period.¹¹⁶

Rationalisation in the fourteenth century

The country suffered grievously during the Great Famine (1315-17), and completion of the project to extend the abbey church is thought to have been delayed until the 1330s. The abbey had fallen deeply into debt and Abbot William Helmsley embarked on a programme to rationalise the abbey's landholdings by relinquishing more distant, harder to manage assets in favour of local resources. As noted earlier, the first step was formalised in 1342 with the purchase of two thirds of one half of Wardon manor and arrangements made to buy the third portion which would be held as dower land until the death of Isabella, wife of Thomas le Archer. The monastery acquired the other half of the manor in a 1343 business deal between the monks and Almaric Sancto Amando.¹¹⁷ Formal confirmation promulgated in 1346 shows the abbot of Wardon holding one fee in Wardon 'in pure and perpetual alms', a formula releasing him from all service and fealty to the Crown.¹¹⁸

Wardon Abbey's manor in the sixteenth century

By the sixteenth century the abbey had leased all but the Abbot's Garden and Park Grange to secular tenants. As a landlord the abbot had little flexibility to adjust cash rents which were fixed by custom, but canny businessman Abbot Augustine London seized every opportunity to grant fixed-term leases which better reflected the market value of the land.¹¹⁹ When Henry VIII ordered a valuation of the Church's estate in 1535, the abbey declared annual rental income of £27 5s 8d from 'Old Wardon cu' membr' [Old Wardon manor] and £4 from the rabbit warren, which was held on a fixed-term lease effective 1526. 'Indelonds pasture' [Ireland in Southill] was valued at £1. Tithes etc worth £12 were attributed to the 'rectorium de Old Wardon' [the rectory of Old Wardon], although in practice this was a fixed-term lease effective 1521. Woods and underbrush were valued at £23 4s 0d, and although not specified, most of the resources [Abbey Wood and Park Wood] pertained to Wardon Abbey's manor.¹²⁰ The

¹¹¹ Charter dated 25 April 1252 in *Cal. Chart. R., Henry III*, vol. 1, p. 385; reconfirmed by Edward I and recited in *BHRS*, 13, 291-94 (p. 293), (344f).

¹¹² *QW*, pp. 31, 64.

¹¹³ *Mon.*, vol. 5, p. 369.

¹¹⁴ *QW*, p. 31.

¹¹⁵ 'Court of Augmentations Accounts for Bedfordshire – II', ed. Y. Nicholls, *BHRS*, 64 (1985), 149-50 (429).

¹¹⁶ 'Court of Augmentations Accounts for Bedfordshire – I', ed. Y. Nicholls, *BHRS*, 63 (1984), 82 (109).

¹¹⁷ 'Abstracts of Feet of Fines'. CP 25/1/5/57 number 4, CP 25/1/5/57 number 5, CP 25/1/5/57 number 6, www.medievalgenealogy.org.uk; *Cal. Pat. R., Edward III*, vol. 7, p. 148; *Cal. Pat. R., Edward III*, vol. 6, p. 147.

¹¹⁸ *Feud. Aids*, p. 27.

¹¹⁹ For discussion on manorial surveys, extents and rentals, see *The English Manor*, pp. 21-91.

¹²⁰ *Mon.*, p. 373.

earliest known reference to 'Old' Wardon occurs in 1494,¹²¹ and the output from the valuation of the Church's estate, the *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, contains the earliest known documented occurrence of 'Old Wardon manor', a term which might reflect the fusion of those lands held by a single tenant-in-chief during the twelfth century.

The Lordship of Wardon

As soon as the monks handed the abbey and its estates over to the king on 4 December 1537, the manor was redesignated as the 'Lordship of Wardon'.¹²² Accounts prepared by the Court of Augmentations for financial year 1537/38 detail assets in Old Wardon, Wardon Strette (an area near the abbey gate, not the present-day Warden Street) and Hill, with limited holdings in the parishes of Southill, Haynes, Maulden, and Houghton [Conquest].

Cash rents totalling £28 7s 8d were payable on the fifty-five properties formerly held from the abbot by free tenants, copyholders and tenants at will. The fixed-term lease for a farm in Old Wardon (granted by Abbot Henry Emery to his local bailiff on 12 November 1535 at 53s 4d annually) remained extant. The tenant of Wardon warren and lodge had the right to take rabbits from the warren and certain closes in Wardon, and from the close called 'Inlonde' in Southill; rent of 113s 4d included one mark cash payable to the Crown in lieu of rabbits. Rent for the 'farm of le orchard grange otherwise called Rectory of Warden' remained fixed at £12. Nothing was recorded from the sale of wood. The Abbot's Garden (renamed Farm of Demesne Lands) was valued for rental purposes at £13 19s 8d annually including 20s 'for tithes from there', and Park Grange at £27 5s 0d including 60s 'for the tithes yerely as well of the severalls as of the arrable belonging to the said graunge'.¹²³

The Honour of Ampthill

In her introduction to *BHRS* 63 and 64, Yvonne Nicholls observed that 'The Honor [sic] of Ampthill was created around an existing small royal estate by Act of Parliament in 1542, partly from former monastic lands and partly from lands acquired by purchase or exchange'.¹²⁴ The erstwhile manor of Wardon was subsumed into the new Honour, and a letter dated 21 July 1540 documents plans for the profits to be used by Henry VIII to provide for Anne of Cleves.¹²⁵

¹²¹ *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem, Vol. 1, Henry VII* (1898), p. 471 (1104).

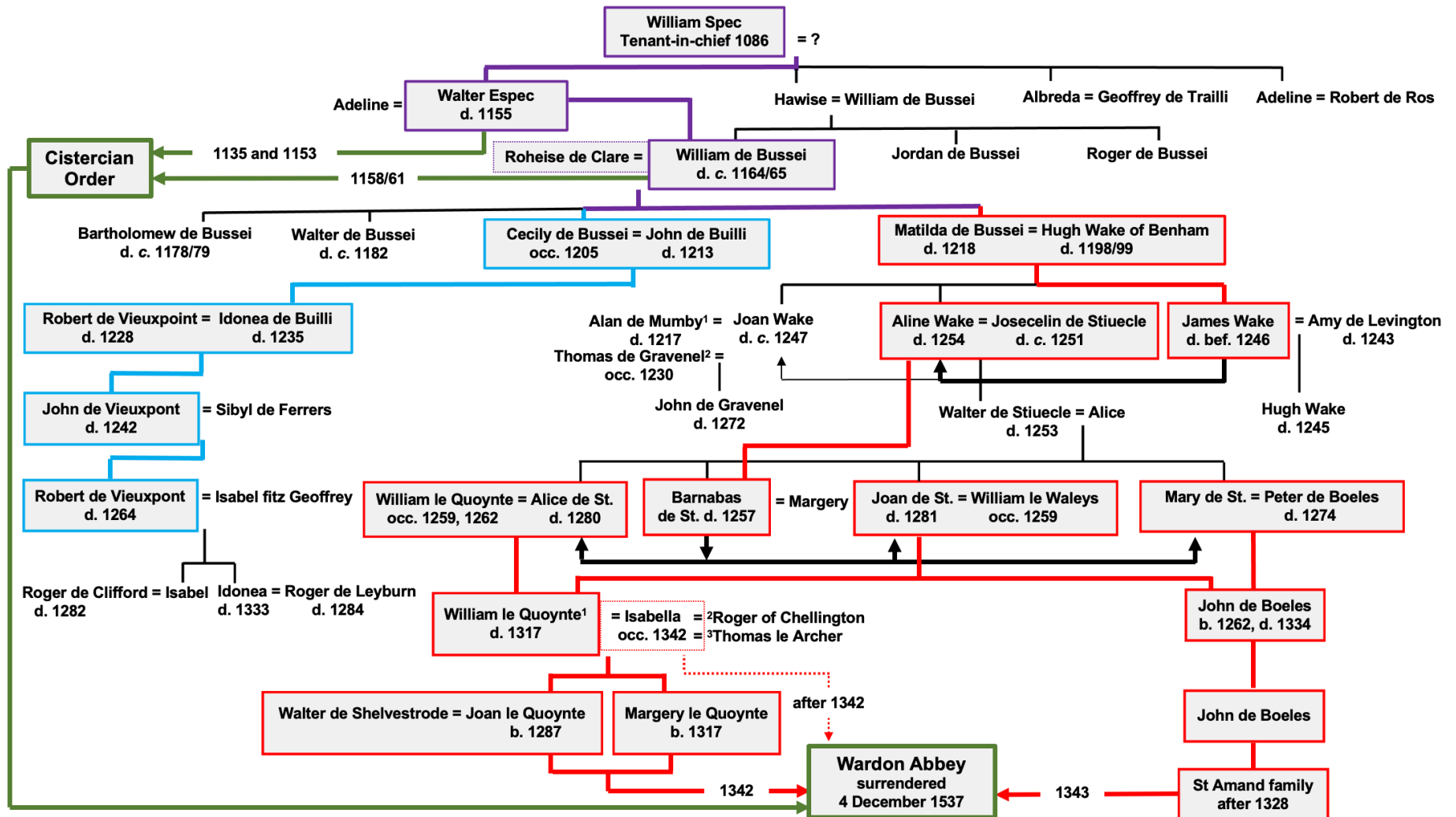
¹²² Deed of Surrender, TNA, E322/253.

¹²³ *BHRS*, 63, 78-84 (104-111).

¹²⁴ *BHRS*, 64, 5.

¹²⁵ *LP*, vol. 15, p. 446 (901).

THE MANORS OF WARDON 1086-1537



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Map of the Estate of Miss Katherine Davis Bovey situate in the Parishes of Old Warden and Northill in the County of Bedford c. 1750 [BARS, Z1125/1]

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