STUDIA CELTICA, LV (2021), 29–51, 10.16922/SC.55.2

A Tale of Two (or more) Abbeys: The Welsh Cistercian Abbeys of Valle Crucis and Strata Florida and their Appropriated Churches

JANET BURTON

Aims

The aim of this paper is to reconsider the significance of the relationship between two Cistercian abbeys in Wales and their appropriated churches. Strata Florida (Ceredigion) and Valle Crucis (Denbighshire) are the focus of the Welsh side of the AHRC-funded project 'Sacred Landscapes'.[1] Both belonged to the Cistercian family or affiliation of Whitland (Carmarthenshire), and both were located in *Pura Wallia*, the areas that remained under the control of the native Welsh rulers until 1284. In more ways than one, Strata Florida and Valle Crucis present a striking contrast. Strata Florida was the oldest of the three daughter houses of Whitland; Valle Crucis, founded from Strata Marcella, was of the next generation of Welsh Cistercian abbeys. Strata Florida was established in 1164, though received a major new landed endowment in 1184; conventual life began at Valle Crucis nearly forty years later, the last Cistercian house founded in *Pura Wallia* and – apart from the troubled house of Grace Dieu on the Herefordshire/Monmouthshire border – the last in Wales. In terms of the subject of this paper the contrast lies in the number of churches these two abbeys acquired: Valle Crucis had seven appropriated churches; Strata Florida, just two. At the time of its dissolution 74 per cent of the income (£188 8s.) of Valle Crucis came from *spiritualia*; for Strata Florida the proportion was just over 20 per cent of the clear value of £118 7s. 3d.[2] This paper investigates the processes by which these two abbeys acquired their churches and the significance of their relationships to them, but at the same time, comparisons are made with two other Cistercian houses of medieval Powys, namely Strata Marcella and the nunnery of Llanllugan, which at some points in its existence – if not continuously – enjoyed a relationship with the abbey of Strata Marcella.[3]

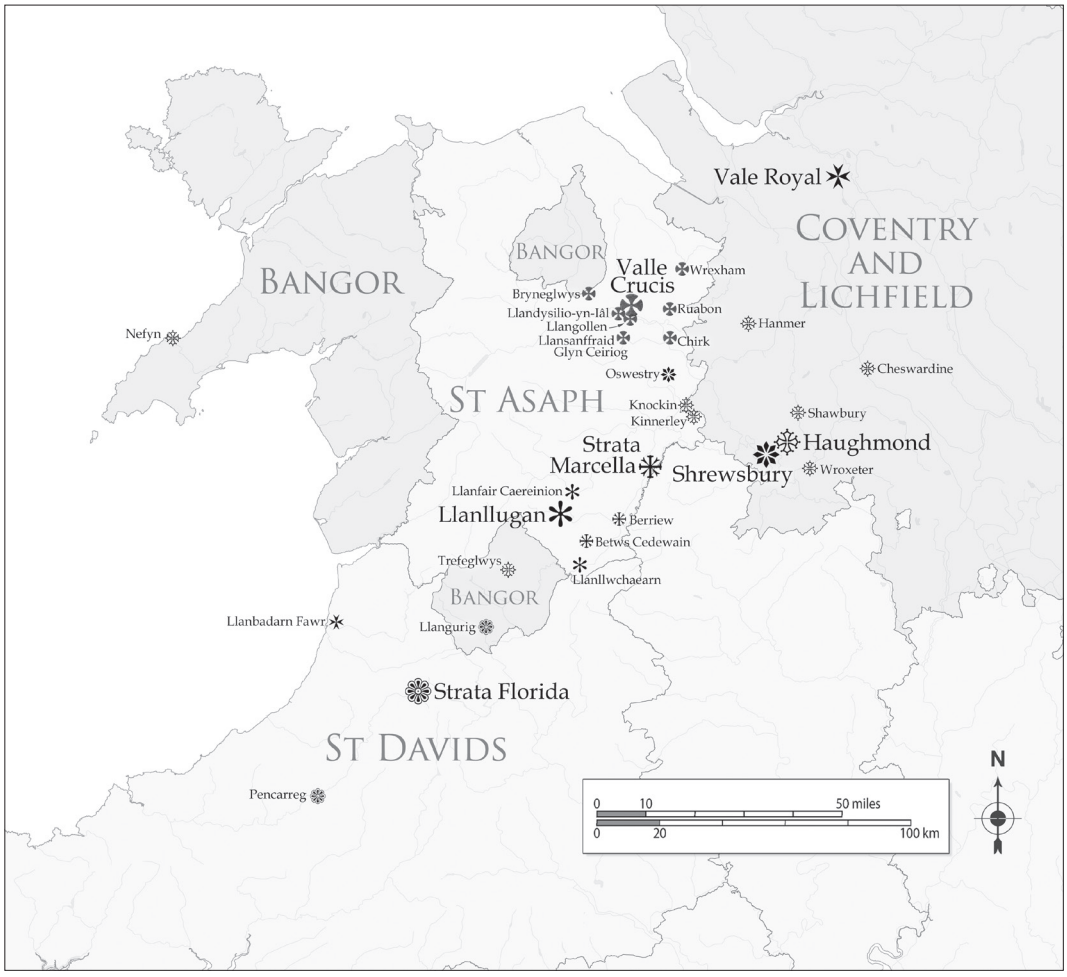
The article challenges the traditional assumption that the Cistercians 'grabbed' parish churches, in contravention of their own statutes, and exploited them ruthlessly in pursuit of financial gain. It argues that the main agents in the creation of a network of appropriated churches around Valle Crucis were successive bishops of St Asaph, and that later waves of appropriation in Wales had their own dynamic. Finally, it argues that the network of appropriated churches should be seen as part of the spiritual landscape of the Cistercians in

[1] AH/R005842/1: Sacred Landscapes of Medieval Monasteries; PI Professor David Austin. I am most grateful to Professor Emilia Jamroziak of the University of Leeds and Dr Jenny Day of the Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, Aberystwyth, for generously reading and commenting on this paper.

[2] John Caley (ed.), *Valor Ecclesiasticus tempore Henr. VIII auctoritate regia institutus*, 6 vols (London: Record Commission, 1810–34), IV, 396 (Strata Florida), 446–7 (Valle Crucis).

[3] For these churches see the Map (kindly produced by Dr Martin Crampin).

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Wales. Before considering the evidence in detail, however, it will be helpful first to clarify the meaning and significance of the appropriation of parish churches by the religious orders and, secondly, to review the Cistercian regulations on the possession of all forms of *spiritualia*.

Definitions

From the eleventh century onwards, it became relatively common for parish churches to form a part of the endowment of monastic houses. In part this has been ascribed to a drive by church authorities, in the era of papal reform, to encourage the transfer of authority over local churches from lay to ecclesiastical hands.[4] Another integral part of this changing

[4] Susan Wood, *The Proprietary Church in the Medieval West* (Oxford: OUP, 2006), 681–7; Julia Barrow, *The Clergy in the Medieval World: Secular Clerics, their Families and Careers in North-Western Europe, c. 800–c. 1200* (Cambridge: CUP, 2015), 322–3. For a local context see, for instance, Janet Burton, *The Monastic Order in Yorkshire 1066–1215* (Cambridge: CUP, 1999), 235–42.

attitude towards the proprietary church, or *eigenkirche*, was that lay people wished to divest themselves of ecclesiastical possessions that were becoming something of an embarrassment.[5] In other words, monasteries were the beneficiaries of changing fashions in patronage and benefaction. Charters are not often specific about the nature of involvement in a church that a donor intended a monastery to enjoy, that is, the level of monastic engagement with the parish. There could be varying degrees of interaction.

1 An initial grant to a monastery included at the very least the right of advowson, which gave the monastery, corporately, the right to select a candidate to be put forward to the bishop for institution. Involvement was thus – and might remain – at the level of being able to influence the appointment of a rector. Church authorities might encourage this in order to prevent abuses such as simony, nepotism and hereditary benefices, all of which were seen as products of the proprietary church. In many cases possession of the advowson was the limit of a monastery's involvement with a church.
2 The monastery as corporate patron of a church might also take a pension from the revenues of the church. In such instances, there was a small financial advantage.[6]
3 Appropriation was a further step.[7] This was a legal process, and permission to appropriate could only be granted by the bishop of the diocese in which the church lay, or the pope. A lay patron might grant a church with the intention (or hope) that it be appropriated but could not him/herself appropriate it to a monastery. Appropriation meant full possession of the church and its revenues for the use of the monastery (*in proprios usus*). Appropriation might be authorized in times of particular financial hardship for a religious house. Charters may also specify a particular use to which the revenue should be put, such as the provision of alms. In return, the monastery as corporate rector had responsibility for ensuring that pastoral care, or 'cure of souls' (*cura animarum*), was provided for the parishioners (see points 4 and 5 below). The monastery also had responsibility for the upkeep of the fabric of the church. From the late thirteenth century in England and Wales permission to appropriate also required the permission of the king under the Statute of Mortmain.[8]
4 Pastoral care in appropriated parishes could be exercised by one of the monks or canons. Scholarship has tended to argue that because regular canons, such as the Augustinians, might also be priests, and because they were more likely to interact with the world outside the cloister than their monastic counterparts, they were particularly likely to be the recipients of such grants.[9] Lack of evidence does not permit us to say

[5] An indication of changing lay attitudes can be found in a charter issued between 1147 and 1153 in which Roger de Mowbray spoke of granting Newburgh Priory 'whatever right' (*quicquid iuris*) he had in three churches and his conveyance of 'whatever a lay person can give [in respect of] churches' (*quicquid laicus potest in ecclesiis conferre*): D. E. Greenway (ed.), *Charters of the Honour of Mowbray 1107–1191* (London: OUP for the British Academy, 1972), 141 no. 199.

[6] Christopher Robert Cheney, *From Becket to Langton: English Church Government, 1170–1213* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1956), 123–4.

[7] This might also be known as 'incorporation'; see Barrow, *Clergy in the Medieval World*, 323–5.

[8] The Statute of Mortmain of 1279 required royal permission for land and other assets to be transferred to the hands of the religious orders: Sandra Raban, *Mortmain Legislation and the English Church 1279–1500* (Cambridge: CUP, 1982).

[9] See, for instance, Janet Burton, 'The Regular Canons and Diocesan Reform', in Janet Burton and Karen Stöber (eds), *The Regular Canons in the Medieval British Isles* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 41–57 (54–7); Nick Nichols, 'The Augustinian Canons and their Parish Churches: A Key to their Identity', in Burton and Stöber, *Regular Canons*, 313–37: 'a central aspect of the identity of the Augustinian canons rested in their possession, exploitation, and protection, of parish churches' (337); Graham St John, 'The Significance of Devotion to the Augustinian Canons', in Burton and Stöber, *Regular Canons*, 339–61 (351–5). For debates on the outward mission of the canons, see Caroline Walker

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with any certainty how often monks or canons served their churches in person, but there were a number of factors against it.[10] One was the geographical distance of the church from the monastery. Another was the perceived danger of lack of discipline that might ensue if a monk/canon left his house even for a short while, and from his possible involvement in parish affairs. It was for this reason that popes might authorize the appointment of a small group of brothers who together would provide pastoral care.[11] A further issue here would have been whether numbers in a particular house would make this sustainable.

For many communities the best solution was the appointment of a stipendiary chaplain or a vicar, paid out of the revenue of the church (thus reducing the financial income of the monastery).[12] In England the process of establishment of vicarages was well underway by the late twelfth century, before the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, in its zeal for improving pastoral care within parishes, ordered that a 'competent' vicarage be assigned to a vicar.[13] This came to be set at one-third of the revenue or five marks.[14] The danger remained, however, that vicarages would be inadequately resourced, with appropriators taking the lion's share of the revenue.

The Cistercians and appropriated churches

Historians have been quick to judge Cistercian possession of churches as a measure of decline – indeed as direct contravention of the Cistercian statutes which forbad abbeys to receive any form of revenue that derived from *spiritualia*. The *Exordium Parvum*, chapter XV, is often quoted:

> And because neither in the Rule nor in the *Life* of Saint Benedict did they read that this same teacher had ever possessed churches or altars, or offerings or burial dues, tithes of other men … they accordingly renounced all these things.[15]

These were part of the 'forbidden revenues' that were suspect either because they derived from the work of others or because they diverted revenues intended for other purposes. There is an ongoing debate about the emergence and evolution of the early statutes but in

Bynum, 'The Spirituality of Regular Canons in the Twelfth Century', in *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982), 22–58, especially 22–40.

[10] Barrow, *Clergy in the Medieval World*, 323–34: 'In the wake of Gregorian Reform, Augustinian foundations made some attempts to exercise pastoral care, but these were not very frequent; on the whole Augustinians and Benedictines preferred to exercise patronage or to incorporate and present vicars.'

[11] For instance, when Pope Lucius III confirmed four churches to the Yorkshire Augustinian house of Warter he allowed the community to place four, or at least three, of its brethren into each as they became vacant 'one of whom shall be presented to the diocesan bishop so that he may commit to him the cure of souls, and that he may answer to the bishop for the spiritualities and to you [the convent] for the temporalities': William Farrer (ed.), *Early Yorkshire Charters*, vols I–III (Edinburgh: Ballantyne and Co., 1914–16); Charles Travis Clay (ed.), *Early Yorkshire Charters*, Yorkshire Archaeological Society Record Series, Extra Series, vols IV–XII (1935–65), X, no. 73.

[12] Cheney, *From Becket to Langton*, 131–6.

[13] Cheney, *From Becket to Langton*, 131–6: 'By about 1184 we find perpetual vicarages in more than half the dioceses of England' (136).

[14] R. A. R. Hartridge, *History of Vicarages in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: CUP, 1930) is the classic treatment; see now Barrow, *Clergy in the Medieval World*, 47–52.

[15] Chysogonus Waddell (ed. and trans.), *Narrative and Legislative Texts from Early Cîteaux*, Studia et Documenta IX (Brecht: Cîteaux, 1999), 434–7; also condemned in *Instituta Generalis Capituli*, IX (460), probably dating in their present form c.1147. See Chrysogonus Waddell (ed. and trans.), *Twelfth-Century Statutes from the Cistercian General Chapter*, Studia et Documenta XII (Brecht: Cîteaux, 2002), 516, 539.

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a Welsh context it need not detain us because they were certainly in place by the time of the Cistercian settlement of *Pura Wallia*. There seems to have been no such ban in the Order of Savigny which (with its two Welsh houses) joined with the Cistercians in 1147.[16] Indeed because of their willingness to accept churches and another form of 'forbidden' revenue, mills, the Savigniacs have been blamed for introducing laxity into the Cistercian Order.[17] There can be no doubt, however, that the 'top-down' ban on the acceptance of churches was honoured more in the breach than in the observance; in many places it was a dead letter, as monks adapted to local circumstances and accepted churches offered to them by their benefactors.

In their discussions of monastic houses and appropriated churches, historians have tended to concentrate on the financial aspect: parish churches were a form of revenue for monasteries, in return for which the religious might do very little. Monastic interaction with churches has therefore often been seen simply in terms of exploitation and as being to the detriment of pastoral care. Such assessment may indeed in itself be a reflection of the nature of the source material which relates more to the grant of churches and disputes over possession rather than the more 'invisible' issues such as pastoral care. Modern critics have also followed in the footsteps of Walter Map who, in his late twelfth-century satirical *De nugis curialium* ('On Courtiers' Trifles'), accused the Cistercians of creating their own desert, in the course of which they accepted gifts of churches merely to destroy them.[18] They have done so without taking full account of Map's anti-monastic (and particularly anti-Cistercian) polemic.[19] Map's was not the only voice raised against the White Monks. When Edward I mooted the idea of relocating the Cistercian abbey of Aberconwy to Maenan – which involved a move from the diocese of Bangor to that of St Asaph – both Archbishop Pecham of Canterbury and Bishop Anian II of St Asaph threw up their hands in horror. Pecham wrote that the plan did not have the assent of the bishop, the chapter and the parson, all of whom – and more –

> have a great horror of the arrival of the foresaid monks. For although they may be wise men, if God please, still they are the hardest neighbours that prelates and parsons can have. For wherever they put down their feet, they destroy vills, take away tithes and curtail by their privileges all the power of the episcopate.[20]

Here again the emphasis is on the stereotype: the polemic that characterized the Cistercians as difficult neighbours, ones in conflict with the secular church. Historians have

[16] For recent comment, see two essays in Brigitte Galbrun and Véronique Gazeau (eds), *'L'Abbaye de Savigny (1112–2012): un Chef d'Ordre Anglo-Normand* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires, 2019): Alexis Grélois, 'Savigny et l'ordre cistercien' (27–54), and Janet Burton, 'L'arrivée de l'ordre savignien en Angleterre et au pays de Galles' (149–62).

[17] See, for example, Bennett D. Hill, *Cistercian Monasteries and their Patrons in the Twelfth Century* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972), 104–15.

[18] Walter Map, *De nugis curialium: Courtiers' Trifles*, ed. and trans. M. R. James, revised by Christopher N. L. Brooke and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford: OUP, 1983), 92–3, 110–11.

[19] See the comments in David Knowles, *The Monastic Order in England 940–1216*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: CUP, 1963), 674–7. For the tradition of anti-monastic polemics of writers such as Walter Map, see Sita Stickel, 'Satirical Depictions of Monastic Life', in Alison I. Beach and Isabelle Cochelin (eds), *The Cambridge History of Medieval Monasticism in the Latin West* (Cambridge: CUP, 2020), 1154–70.

[20] 'graunt horreur del aprochement des avaunt dit moignies. Kar tute soyent il prodes hommes, si Dieu plest, nepurkaunt il sunt les plus durs veysins que prelaz e persones puissant avoyr. Kar la ou il mettent le pie, il destruent viles, tolent dimes et forcloent par lur privileges tut le poer de prelacyun': Charles Trice Martin (ed.), *Registrum epistolarum fratris Johannis Peckham, archiepiscopi Cantuariensis*, 3 vols, Rolls Series (London: Longman, 1882–5), II, 726–7. Pecham goes on to say that as the bishop of St Asaph already has four Cistercian houses in his diocese, the site of Aberconwy should remain within the diocese of Bangor.

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failed to recognize this positioning, however, and have followed these assessments. With particular reference to Valle Crucis, G. Vernon Price, for instance, wrote that

> By the time Valle Crucis Abbey was built all the Welsh monasteries had become entangled in the roots of evil covetousness and for two and a half centuries after, appropriation increased, resulting in a rapid encroachment on the parishes. During the later Middle Ages they were merely a financial expedient for the monasteries and only augmented the worship within the abbey precincts.[21]

Such a dark verdict was also delivered by Glanmor Williams, and even in his nuanced discussion of appropriated churches in the political context of Powys, David Stephenson was able to talk of how 'some established mother churches were unable to avoid the clutches of the incoming Cistercians'.[22] Such criticism is not confined to the Welsh Cistercians.[23]

Cistercian appropriations in Wales

It is clear that the whole issue of Cistercians and their appropriated churches has been mired in these polemical criticisms and has obscured far more important historical questions. This paper offers a regional study that seeks to compare the dynamics behind appropriations in the geographical and cultural context of mid and north Wales, and to offer a more nuanced argument than the blanket treatment generally offered by historians. It addresses the following questions:

- Does evidence survive to suggest the origin of the initiative for the transfer of these churches to the Cistercians?
- What do we know about the previous history of these churches? Were they *clas* churches? Portionary churches? Of special cultural significance?
- Is chronology of appropriation significant? Were churches never appropriated? Appropriated immediately? Appropriated subsequently? A particular issue here might be the length of time between a grant of a church, perhaps with the intention that it be appropriated, and the legal act of appropriation itself.
- Are appropriated churches directly related to Cistercian estates, particularly granges?
- What was the nature of Cistercian engagement with the parish church?

This paper concentrates first on the striking divergence in practice between Valle Crucis and Strata Florida. However, the apparent policies of appropriation by Strata Marcella, sister house of Strata Florida and mother house of Valle Crucis, and one of the two Cistercian nunneries in Wales, Llanllugan in Powys, offer useful comparison. The data collected by David Williams provides a starting point for discussion. In his *Atlas of Cistercian Lands*, he listed over seventy appropriations by the Cistercians in Wales.[24] It is also worth recording that the Herefordshire abbey of Dore appropriated the Welsh church of Gwenddwr, while

[21] G. Vernon Price, *Valle Crucis Abbey* (Liverpool: Brython, 1952), 66.

[22] Glanmor Williams, *The Welsh Church from Conquest to Reformation*, revised edn (Cardiff: UWP, 1976), 164–7, 350–3; David Stephenson, *Medieval Powys: Kingdom, Principality and Lordships, 1132–1293* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2016), 267.

[23] See, for instance, David H. Williams, *The Cistercians in the Early Middle Ages* (Leominster: Gracewing, 1998), 324–30.

[24] David H. Williams, *Atlas of Cistercian Lands in Wales* (Cardiff: UWP, 1990), 34–5, and under individual abbeys in the gazetteer; map on p. 144. See also his discussion of appropriated churches in *The Welsh Cistercians* (Leominster: Gracewing, 2001), 272–8.

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Table 1: Number of churches appropriated by the Welsh Cistercian abbeys

Number of appropriations	Abbeys
12	Whitland
9	Llantarnam
8	Margam
7	Tintern; Valle Crucis
6	Aberconwy (Maenan); Neath
4	Cymer
3	Llanllugan
2	Strata Florida; Strata Marcella; Grace Dieu
1	Basingwerk; Llanllŷr

the royal foundation of Vale Royal (Cheshire) appropriated the important church of Llanbadarn Fawr and its chapels. The number of appropriations to individual Welsh Cistercian monasteries ra[illegible]s is given in Table 1.

Within the affiliation o[illegible]hitland the abbeys with the greatest number of appropriations were Whitland itself, Llantarnam and Valle Crucis. Those at the bottom of the table are the 'sister' houses of Strata Florida and Strata Marcella, and the two nunneries which were associated with them. Alone of the Welsh Cistercians, Abbey Cwmhir had no appropriations.

As mentioned above, from Walter Map onwards the tendency has been to see the acquisition of churches as springing from Cistercian initiative, and a desire to expand an abbey's portfolio of economic assets. This may well be the case, but a complication in this argument, in relation to Valle Crucis, is the prominence of bishops in this process of transfer.

Episcopal agency in the appropriation of churches: the bishops of St Asaph

The charter of Madog ap Gruffudd of Powys Fadog, by which he granted, to Strata Marcella, the township of 'Llynhequestel' for the establishment of its daughter house of Valle Crucis, bears the imprint of Cistercian initiative: the foundation was made at the request of the abbots of Whitland, Strata Florida, Strata Marcella and Cwmhir.[25] David Stephenson suggested that pressure to make a new Cistercian foundation may also have come from the rulers of southern Powys.[26] Madog's charter describes the boundaries of the township, and to this core estate were added other lands in Powys. However, none of the grants and confirmations of Madog and his successors includes churches. David Stephenson has argued cogently that the reason for the prominence of churches in the later and wider endowment of Valle Crucis may lie in its late date of foundation and restricted opportunity in the

[25] Huw Pryce (ed.), with the assistance of Charles Insley, *The Acts of Welsh Rulers 1120–1283* (Cardiff: UWP, 2005) (henceforth *AWR*), 698–700 no. 499.

[26] Stephenson, *Medieval Powys*, 262, 270–1, suggests that the status of Valle Crucis as a daughter house of Strata Marcella may have been intended to symbolize the dominance of southern Powys over northern Powys, but concedes that the choice of Strata Marcella as the mother house may reflect the convenience of its geographical proximity.

thirteenth century for acquiring landed endowments.[27] However, this does not seem to have been a factor in the arrangements that Madog made for his new foundation. Rather, the documentary evidence suggests that the initiative came, not from the rulers of Powys Fadog and their freemen, but from other agents, notably the bishops of St Asaph, Reiner (1186–1224), Abraham (1225–33), Hywel I (1235–40), Hywel (II) ab Ednyfed (1240/2–47) and Anian (Einion) I (1249–66), many of whose acts were transcribed or noted in the late medieval Llyfr Coch Asaph, the 'Red Book of Asaph'.[28]

The first of these bishops to emerge as an agent in the endowment of Valle Crucis is Reiner. In 1220 Reiner granted to the abbot and convent of Valle Crucis half the church of Wrexham.[29] That he specified that the grant was for the construction (*ad fabricam*) of the monastery indicates the financial benefit that was expected. The incumbent is not named, but may possibly have been Alexander, parson of Wrexham, who witnessed a Valle Crucis charter issued somewhere between 1200 and 1207.[30] Reiner's successor Abraham confirmed Reiner's grant and himself transferred the other half of Wrexham church in 1227.[31] Palmer, followed by Price, read this as evidence that Wrexham was a portionary church, that is, its revenues had been divided into two or more parts.[32] The two episcopal grants to Valle Crucis accordingly resulted in the replacement of portions of two non-resident priests to form a single benefice. Certainly, these grants must have been perceived by Bishops Reiner and Abraham to be important, as the first received confirmation of the dean and chapter of St Asaph, then of Stephen Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury (1207–28), and finally of Pope Honorius III (1216–27).[33] The one indication of lay agency in this series of transactions is the quitclaim of the right of patronage of Wrexham church to the abbot and convent, by their founder, Madog ap Gruffudd: 'Renunciatio juris patronatus ad ecclesiam de Wrexham Abbati et Conventui de Valle Crucis per Madocum filium Gruffith.'[34] It is important to reiterate that although at the foundation of Valle Crucis Madog had granted parcels of land in Wrexham to the abbey, there is no mention in any lay charter of the conveyance of the church.[35]

[27] Stephenson, *Medieval Powys*, 271–2, notes that Valle Crucis was not as ambitious a foundation as was its mother house of Strata Marcella, and he implies that, as grants to the Cistercians began to fall away in the thirteenth century, the monks of Valle Crucis were gifted churches rather than lands.

[28] Owen Edward Jones, 'Llyfr Coch Asaph: A Textual and Historical Study', unpublished MA thesis, University of Wales (Aberystwyth), 1968. For a discussion of the complex manuscript tradition, see i–xlvi.

[29] Jones, 'Llyfr Coch Asaph', 111 (fol. 59a): 'Reynerus episcopus Assavensis concedit Abbati et Conventui de Valle Crucis medietatem ecclesie de Wrexham ad fabricam Ecclesie sue' (undated). This is followed by 'Eadem donacio alia forma Dat 3 Cal. Maii [29 April] 1220'.

[30] *AWR* 700–2 no. 500.

[31] Jones, 'Llyfr Coch Asaph', 111 (fol. 60a) 'A. episcopus concedit iisdem Abbati et Conventui medietatem aliam ecclesie de Wrexham anno 1227'. Stephenson, *Medieval Powys*, 272, quoting D. R. Thomas, *The History of the Diocese of St Asaph*, 3 vols (Oswestry, 1908–13), merely notes that in 1220 and 1227 each half of the church was granted to Valle Crucis but not by whom.

[32] Price, *Valle Crucis Abbey*, 68.

[33] Jones, 'Llyfr Coch Asaph', 111–12 (fols 59a, 60a, 60b). There is no indication of the date of Langton's confirmation but that of Honorius III was dated 16 Kal. January (16 December) in the seventh year of his pontificate (1222). Langton's act for Valle Crucis is not noted in Kathleen Major (ed.), *Acta Stephani Langton Cantuariensis Archiepiscopi AD 1207–1228*, Canterbury and York Society 50 (1950).

[34] Jones, 'Llyfr Coch Asaph', 112 (fo. 61a); Price, *Valle Crucis Abbey* (69), states that during the vacancy following the death of Bishop Hywel ab Ednyfed (1247), Madog ap Gruffudd, acting as guardian of the temporalities of the see, granted the advowson, that is, the right to present an incumbent, of Wrexham to Valle Crucis. This must be in error, as Madog died in 1236. This may be confusion with the confirmation, by M[auritius], guardian of the see in 1267, of the churches of Llangollen and Wrexham, as granted by Bishops Reiner, Abraham and Hywel: Jones, 'Llyfr Coch Asaph', 112 (fol. 61a); see below n. 40.

[35] 'de aliis terris particulas quasdam inde de Wrechtessham': *AWR* 698–700 no. 499; see also 706–7 no. 506; confirmed by Gruffudd ap Madog in 1236: *AWR* 712–13 no. 511.

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If ecclesiastical initiative in the transfer of Wrexham began with Bishop Reiner, it was his successor Abraham (who, as noted above, was instrumental in the completion of the grant of Wrexham) who began the process of the gradual appropriation of Llangollen, which lay just south of the abbey itself, with the grant of a portion of the church.[36] This was highly significant, as Llangollen had been an important *monasterium* with a number of dependent chapels that probably included Wrexham.[37] In what must have been one of his first acts as bishop (1236), Bishop Hywel I confirmed the grant, and in 1237 he added another portion, reserving five marks. In a third act of 1238 he confirmed the whole of the church of Llangollen, subject to the institution of a vicarage.[38] More so than in the case of Wrexham it is clear here that the question of pastoral care was intended to be met by the appointment of a vicar. Subsequent episcopal confirmations of Llangollen followed by Bishop Anian (1249, 1261).[39] In the octave of the Holy Innocents (29 December) 1267 the guardian of the see of St Asaph, Maurice, confirmed the donations of Reiner, Abraham, Hywel and Anian, namely, of the churches of Wrexham and Llangollen.[40] This must have been in the vacancy between the death of Anian I (September 1266) and the consecration of the short-lived John II (d. 1267 or 1268). In the context of episcopal activity in relation to Valle Crucis we should also note the conveyance of Bryneglwys. Bishop Anian I (1249–66) confirmed to Madog, abbot of Valle Crucis (occ. 1234, resigned by 1254), two parts of the church of Bryneglwys, reserving, however, the portion of Llandegla, which the monks had, for the use of a vicar.[41]

It would appear, then, that four bishops of St Asaph were instrumental in the conveyance to Valle Crucis of the churches of Wrexham, Llangollen and Bryneglwys. The evidence of Llyfr Coch Asaph makes clear the gradual nature of the consolidation of various portions into the whole. Episcopal activities were not, however, targeted solely at Valle Crucis but benefitted other Cistercian houses: both Strata Marcella and the nunnery of Llanllugan came within the purview of one or more bishops. In 1239 Bishop H(ywel I), with the consent of the chapter of his cathedral church, granted to God and the church of Llanllugan those portions of the church of St Mary of Caereinion (Llanfair Caereinion), that had belonged to the sons of Sulien, and that which had belonged to *Moruran ap Moraoc*. He retained in his own hand that part that belonged to him *per Inglovet et Meyvot*. The remainder of the church was to pass to the nuns when it became vacant.[42] This evokes the gradual process of consolidation of the portions. Included in this concession was the remainder of the church, which would pass to the nuns as soon as it became vacant. This is a complex picture but suggests that the bishop had gathered to himself all the portions of the church that he could before

[36] Jones, 'Llyfr Coch Asaph', 113 (fol. 61b): 'Concessio partis ecclesie de Llangollen … per A(braham) episcopum Assavensem'. 4 Nones October (4 October), repeated.

[37] Stephenson, *Medieval Powys*, 272.

[38] Jones, 'Llyfr Coch Asaph', 113 (fol. 62a): 'Concessio porcionis de Llangollen Monasterio de Valle Crucis per H. Episcopum Assavensem'; 'Concessio alterius portionis de Llangollen eidem Monasterio per H. Episcopum, reservatis 5 marcis solvendis ad Pentecostes et festum sancti Michaelis 1237'; 'Concessio totius ecclesie de Llangollen Domui de Valle Crucis per H. episcopum 14 Kalendas Maii consecrationis tertio reservata institutione vicarii.'

[39] Jones, 'Llyfr Coch Asaph', 114 (fol. 64a).

[40] Jones, 'Llyfr Coch Asaph', 112 (fol. 61a).

[41] Jones, 'Llyfr Coch Asaph', 93 (fol. 44a). The complexity of the situation is demonstrated by the later claim that Llandegla was a chapel of Llangollen. See below.

[42] Jones, 'Llyfr Coch Asaph', 108–9 (fol. 55a); Browne Willis, *A Survey of the Cathedral Church of St Asaph* (London: Robert Gosling, 1720), 136–7; this was witnessed by R. (dean) and G. (precentor) and was dated at Llanelwy, 1239, on the Monday after the feast of St Denis (10 October). The Latin phrase is explained by Stephenson as 'by virtue of the *perigloriaeth* or rectorship of Meifod'; he further notes that the sons of Sulien are to be identified as Einion and Ednyfed, sons of Sulien ap Caradog, archdeacon of Powys. See Stephenson, *Medieval Powys*, 256–7.

transferring the patronage to the nuns. It is another instance of an attempt to modernize a portionary church.

David Stephenson has argued convincingly that the fate of Llanfair Caereinion church is bound up with political divisions in southern Powys. In 1167 Owain Cyfeiliog was expelled from his lands in Caereinion, which were then occupied by Owain Fychan of Mechain, an ally of Gwynedd; Owain also took into his protection the illustrious Powysian church of Meifod. Owain Cyfeiliog soon returned, and Stephenson argues that his foundation of Strata Marcella was a 'determined attack on [Meifod's] pre-eminence as a spiritual centre … by cutting the links between Meifod and those of its daughter-chapels that lay in his territories, and by elevating two new "mother churches" at Llanfair Caereinion and Llandrinio to take Meifod's place'.[43] It is after 1167, Stephenson argues, that Llanfair Caereinion is likely to have been elevated to the status of parish church and became the mother church of a number of dependent chapels.[44] It was not, however, to Owain's monastery of Strata Marcella that Llanfair was to pass but to the small Cistercian nunnery of Llanllugan, founded by Maredudd ap Rhobert, lord of Cedewain (d. 1244). The documentary evidence suggests no other agency than the bishop of St Asaph, but Stephenson, as ever astute to the political context, noted that the appropriation to Llanllugan was effected during a period in which the rulers of Gwynedd were in the ascendant in Cedewain, with Maredudd a vassal of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth. He suggests that pressure was placed by Llywelyn on Hywel, bishop of St Asaph, to appropriate Llanfair to Maredudd's own monastery in order to secure his support.[45] Such a proposition requires that we see Hywel as a compliant ally of Gwynedd – for which we have no support in other sources. There is nothing to suggest that the bishop was acting on any other initiative than his own.

In 1263 another bishop of St Asaph was responsible for a further grant to Llanllugan. Bishop Anian I granted the nuns a moiety of the church of Llanllwchaearn.[46] The nuns' own church of Llanllugan was parochial and appropriated to the abbey.[47] Anian also granted to Strata Marcella the church of Berriew, saving the institution of a vicarage – which means it must have been appropriated.[48] Strata Marcella also received Betws Cedewain of which it was in possession by 1291.[49]

What is striking is how little evidence there is here for any lay initiative, any inkling of secular involvement in the initial grant of a church or portions thereof. This may be in part explicable through the poor survival of records. We may, however, have to dig more deeply for the possible sources of episcopal initiative. Let us look at the first of our bishops who seems to have taken an interest in Valle Crucis. Reiner was an Augustinian canon of Haughmond in Shropshire at the time of his appointment to the bishopric in 1186.[50] We do not know his age either at the time of his profession at Haughmond or his elevation to the bishopric. We can, perhaps, suggest that to have attracted attention as a potential bishop he would have been of some seniority. Certainly, he would have been aware of the growing relationship between Haughmond and parish churches in Shropshire, mostly mediated through the bishops of Coventry. Particularly active was Bishop Richard Peche (1161–82). Bishop Peche

[43] Stephenson, *Medieval Powys*, 65–8, 248.
[44] Stephenson, *Medieval Powys*, 264–5.
[45] Stephenson, *Medieval Powys*, 267.
[46] Jones, 'Llyfr Coch Asaph', 109 (fol. 55a).
[47] See below.
[48] Jones, 'Llyfr Coch Asaph', 109 (fol. 55); Graham C. G. Thomas (ed.), *The Charters of the Abbey of Ystrad Marchell* (Aberystwyth: NLW, 1997), 225 no. 85.
[49] See below. The donor of the church is unknown.
[50] For references to Reiner's consecration, see John le Neve, *Fasti Ecclesiae Anglicanae 1066–1300*, IX, *The Welsh Cathedrals*, compiled by B. [illegible]es (London: Institute of Historical Research, 2003

confirmed advowsons granted to the canons, such as that of Wroxeter.[51] He further confirmed their ecclesiastical possessions within the diocese, including Shawbury church and its chapels, the church of Cheswardine and its chapels, and the church of Wroxeter and its tithes, and granted to them the privilege of installing and removing chaplains in all their churches within his diocese.[52] He then appropriated Shawbury and its chapels, and other churches, and made arrangements for them to be served by one of the canons or a chaplain to be appointed and removed by the abbot.[53] Bishop Richard Peche saw how responsibilities of pastoral care and financial advantage could be combined. In appropriating Shawbury and Cheswardine to the canons he reminded the beneficiaries of their obligation to support the chaplains whom they might appoint but allowed them to use the rest of the revenue for their own purposes, and especially for the maintenance of their guest house.

It is entirely plausible, therefore, that when Reiner left to take up his post in a cathedral church and diocese that were still in the relatively early stages of development, such procedures for regularizing parochial life seemed attractive. It would be consistent with Pearson's argument that Reiner was the bishop who was responsible for the creation and development of the cathedral chapter of St Asaph.[54] He was an active bishop, who preached the third crusade even before the arrival of Archbishop Baldwin in 1188 and was to be found in England consecrating bishops and both conducting and attending the dedication of churches.[55] The first reference to a dean of St Asaph comes in his period of office. The existence of portionary churches may have offered particular challenges, and we may see his grant of Wrexham church as the first step in introducing more rigour into parochial arrangements into his diocese.[56]

Reiner's experience at Haughmond, therefore, may have suggested the use of the religious orders in church reform. Indeed, he was active in the affairs of two religious houses outside his diocese which had been granted churches within it. In 1203 or 1204, for instance, he confirmed to his former home of Haughmond the advowson of the chapel of Knockin, which lay within his diocese, and appropriated it 'ad fratrum et pauperum sustentacionem et hospitium recepcionem' – for the maintenance of the brothers and of poor people, and for the reception of guests. He invested Abbot Ralph on behalf of (*vice*) the convent, saving the payment of an annual pension to the mother church of Kinnerley.[57] In an important series of acts he confirmed to the Benedictines of Shrewsbury the church of Oswestry, also in his diocese, with its chapels, appropriating it to the abbey and instituting a vicarage.[58]

[51] For the grant of Wroxeter by William fitz Alan, see Una Rees (ed.), *The Cartulary of Haughmond Abbey* (Cardiff: Shropshire Archaeological Society and UWP, 1985), 244 no. 1370, dateable to 1155, and, for the confirmation by Bishop Richard Peche, 245 nos 1373, 1374, also printed in M. J. Franklin (ed.), *English Episcopal Acta* (henceforth *EEA*), 16, *Coventry and Lichfield 1160–1182* (Oxford: OUP for the British Academy, 1998), 32–3 nos 36, 37.

[52] *EEA* 16, 34–5 no. 38.

[53] 'Et serviatur ex nunc dictis capellis per unum canonicum de Haghmon', vel per unum capellanum secularem amovendum pro voluntate abbatis de Haghmon qui de manu abbatis curam recipiet pro tempore quo ibi servierit': *EEA* 16, 37–9 no. 42; Rees, *Cartulary of Haughmond*, 142 no. 683.

[54] Matthew J. Pearson, 'The Creation and Development of the St Asaph Cathedral Chapter, 1141–1293', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 40 (Winter 2000), 35–56 (41–3).

[55] See, for instance, Henry Richards Luard (ed.), *Annales Monastici*, 5 vols, Rolls Series (London: Longman, 1864–9), II, 291–2; IV, 406, 409.

[56] For comment on the perceived dangers of the portionary church, see the description, by Gerald of Wales, of the state of Llanbadarn Fawr after the expulsion of the monks of Gloucester after the death of Henry I (1135): J. S. Brewer, James F. Dimock and George F. Warner (eds), *Giraldus Cambrensis Opera*, 8 vols, Rolls Series (London: Longman, 1861–91), VI, 121.

[57] Rees, *Cartulary of Haughmond*, 139–40 nos 666–9.

[58] Una Rees (ed.), *The Cartulary of Shrewsbury Abbey*, 2 vols (Aberystwyth: NLW, 1975), II, 321–3 nos 356–9, 327–8 nos 362b–64.

But why did he choose Valle Crucis as the recipient of the church of Wrexham? As mentioned above, houses of regular canons have been considered particularly suited to pastoral work, and Cistercians, on the other hand, may – given the top-down perspective of the General Chapter – have seemed particularly inappropriate. There were, however, no Augustinian houses within the diocese of St Asaph to which Reiner himself might have turned. Apart from his personal connections, why might Haughmond not have seemed a possibility? The bishop would have been aware that more than one Welsh ruler had shown favour to the Shropshire house. In an early grant Cadwaladr ap Gruffudd, brother of Owain Gwynedd (Owain Magnus) of Gwynedd, granted to Haughmond the church of Nefyn, on the Llŷn Peninsula. The charter was witnessed by Bishop Meurig of Bangor, the bishop's three brothers and the donor's wife.[59] By the last decade of the century some of the canons evidently dwelt at the church, though this does not seem to have been the case at the time of the confirmation by Llywelyn ab Iorwerth.[60] In 1177 Bishop Richard Peche, at the petition of King Henry and Dafydd ab Owain, had appropriated Hanmer parish church (Flintshire), then vacant, which had been granted by Henry II the previous year, to the canons, and installed Abbot William as corporate rector.[61] This was in the particular political circumstances of the marriage of Dafydd to Henry's half-sister, Emma, who brought as her marriage portion the Shropshire manor of Ellesmere.[62] Finally, the initial grant of the church of Trefeglwys in Montgomeryshire was made by Hywel ab Ieuaf of Arwystli (d. 1185). Between 1143 and 1151 he issued a notification to the effect that he had taken the *monasterium* of St Michael at Trefeglwys into his protection, and between that date and 1161 Hywel confirmed specified lands 'to God and the church of St Michael of Trefeglwys which Bleddrws built, which is under the jurisdiction of God and St John the Evangelist of Haughmond'.[63] The rulers of Gwynedd and Arwystli had not shrunk from patronising the English house of Haughmond. Reiner, however, in embarking on monastic reform within his diocese preferred to support a monastery within its bounds.

Reiner's successor, Abraham, is likely to have been the monk of Aberconwy in the diocese of Bangor to whom, on 29 March 1225, the pope granted dispensation to hold ecclesiastical dignity despite being of illegitimate birth.[64] The election of a bishop of St Asaph of that name in the following year suggests that the second bishop to promote the transfer of churches to Valle Crucis was himself a Cistercian.[65] Hywel I was the first Dominican bishop in Wales, while Anian I was former dean of St Asaph. Both might have discerned a keen imperative for increasing regularization within the diocese.

Before we leave this early phase of appropriations and our discussion of episcopal agency mention must be made of the church of Llangurig. In 1295 Pope Boniface VIII confirmed to the Cistercian abbot and convent of Strata Florida the church of Llangurig that had been granted to them by Cadwgan, former bishop of Bangor; the church was at that time void by

[59] *AWR* 329–31 no. 197, where dated between 1140 and 1152 or between 1157 and 1161.

[60] *AWR* 339–40 no. 207: 'Griffin(us) filius Canaan concessi et dedi … ecclesie Sancti Ioh(ann)is Evangeliste de Haghmon' et canonicis ibidem Deo servientibus ad ecclesiam eorum de Neuyn …'; *AWR* 422–3 no. 258.

[61] Rees, *Cartulary of Haughmond*, 109 nos 492, 494; *EEA* 16, 39–40 no. 44.

[62] *AWR* 24.

[63] 'Deo et ecclesie Sancti Mich(ael)is de Treffeglus quam Bletherus edificavit, que est in subiectione Dei et Sancti Ioh(ann)is Evangeliste de Haghmon': *AWR* 144–7 nos 1, 3; see also 752 no. 546 for a confirmation by Gwenwynwyn ab Owain Cyfeiliog of southern Powys to the church of Trefeglwys and the canons of Haughmond. As Pryce points out, this must post-date Gwenwynwyn's conquest of Arwystli.

[64] W. H. Bliss (ed.), *Calendar of the Entries in the Papal Registers relating to Great Britain and Ireland. Papal Letters*, I (London: HMSO, 1893), 102.

[65] Pearson, *Fasti*, 34, does not note that Abraham was a Cistercian.

the resignation of Goronwy and a perpetual vicarage had been instituted.[66] Llangurig lay within a detached portion of the diocese of Bangor, and Cadwgan had, therefore, full authority to grant, or license, appropriation. The connections, however, went even deeper. At the time of his election to Bangor in 1215, Cadwgan was abbot of the Cistercian house of Whitland, and on his resignation in 1236 it was to another Cistercian abbey, Dore in Herefordshire, that he retired.[67] If indeed it was Cadwgan who granted Llangurig to the monks of Whitland's daughter house of Strata Florida, his choice of recipient can be explained by his own background: he was a monk, and possibly briefly abbot of Strata Florida, before his election as abbot of his mother house. Strata Florida was not the closest Cistercian house, geographically, to Llangurig: the female house of Llanllugan was the nearest, followed by Abbey Cwmhir; and Strata Marcella was about the same distance as Strata Florida. Of these four, however, the first three lay in the diocese of St Asaph. The only Cistercian houses in the diocese of Bangor were Aberconwy and Cymer. While these might have been possible recipients, Cadwgan's choice of Strata Florida was likely to have been dictated by familiarity and loyalty. If his grant was the first act in appropriating Llangurig to a Cistercian house, then he may have been motivated in the same way as his colleagues at St Asaph to link the White Monks to parochial reform.

It may be, however, that in contrast to the direct action of the St Asaph bishops at Valle Crucis, Cadwgan, as a Cistercian bishop, acted not to grant but to confirm and indeed appropriate the church of Llangurig to Strata Florida. The language of charters frequently blurs the distinction between grant and confirmation; moreover, no act of Bishop Cadwgan in favour of Strata Florida survives, only the reference in the papal confirmation. Might the origin of the grant have lain with a secular ruler? One possibility, though discounted by Pryce, is Hywel ab Ieuaf of Arwystli.[68] As we have seen, Hywel was the grantor of the church of Trefeglwys to the Augustinians of Haughmond. On his death in 1185 he was buried at Strata Florida – his, indeed, was the first princely burial there. He was clearly closely associated with the abbey, and Stephenson has argued that Hywel's interment there was associated with his acceptance of the overlordship of Rhys ap Gruffudd of Deheubarth, patron of Strata Florida.[69] Even if Hywel was the first donor of Llangurig, however, the part played by Cadwgan furnishes a further example of episcopal initiative to place an ancient church under the care and full control of the Cistercians.

Landscapes of appropriation

Discussion now turns to a closer analysis of the geographical and jurisdictional location of the appropriated churches in the diocese of St Asaph. Two critical sources are both related to clerical taxation, and – although not free from problems of interpretation – provide evidence of appropriation and relative value in terms of income. In 1253 Pope Innocent IV granted the tenth of all ecclesiastical incomes in England and Wales to King Henry III for three years for his proposed crusade to the Holy Land. This was renewed by his successor,

[66] *Cal. Papal Registers*, I, 558–9.

[67] David Knowles, Christopher N. L. Brooke and Vera C. M. London (eds), *The Heads of Religious Houses: England and Wales, I, 940–1216*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: CUP, 2001), 147; David M. Smith and Vera C. M. London (eds), *The Heads of Religious Houses: England and Wales, II, 1216–1377* (Cambridge: CUP, 2001), 323.

[68] See *AWR* 2–3 and n. 12. Pryce argues that the suggestion that Hywel was donor of Llangurig to Strata Florida 'should be disregarded, as the church was granted to the abbey by Cadwgan', but the possibility remains open.

[69] Stephenson, *Medieval Powys*, 62 and n. 28.

Alexander IV, in the following year. The main responsibility for collection within England lay on the shoulders of the bishop of Norwich (after whom the taxation is named), but the king appointed the abbot of Westminster to collect from the four Welsh dioceses.[70] The data relevant to this study can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2: Churches held by Strata Marcella, Llanllugan, Valle Crucis and Strata Florida, valued in 1254[71]

Church/monastery		**Diocese/deanery**	**Value**
Berriew [Strata Marcella]	Ecclesia de Eberrw, videlicet una medietas Alia medietatis que est Cisterciensis ordinis	St Asaph/Pool	3 marks non taxatur
Betws Cedewain [Strata Marcella]	Capella de Bettws	St Asaph/Pool	2 marks
Llanllwchaearn [Llanllugan]	Ecclesia de Llanlocharen	St Asaph/Pool	2 marks
Llanfair Caereinion [Llanllugan]	Ecclesia de Llanveyr	St Asaph/Pool	20s.
Llanllugan	Portio monialium Cisterciensis ordinis non taxatur	St Asaph/Pool	
Ruabon (St Collen) [Valle Crucis]	Ecclesia Sancti Coleyni	St Asaph/Maelor (Llangollen)	3 marks
Llangollen [Valle Crucis]	Ecclesia de Llancallen que est monachorum Cisterciensium	St Asaph/Maelor	6 marks
Wrexham [Valle Crucis]	Ecclesia de Gwrexam que est monachorum eorundem	St Asaph/Maelor	12 marks
Llandysilio-yn-Iâl [Valle Crucis]	Ecclesia de sancto Tessiliao	St Asaph/Mold	3 marks
Llangurig [Strata Florida]	Ecclesia de Lankirik que est monachorum Cisterciensis ordinis	Bangor/Arwystli	2 marks

Of these ten churches, five are explicitly linked with the Cistercians, but no house is named. By 1254 the Cistercians of Valle Crucis had been placed in charge of the ancient mother church of Maelor, namely Llangollen, and its chapels of Wrexham and Ruabon, here designated *ecclesie*, forming a swathe of influence around the abbey on all sides. Wrexham had the highest valuation at 12 marks (£8). Llangollen was assessed at 6 marks (£4) and Ruabon and Llandysilio at 3 marks (£2) each. In contrast, the churches granted to Strata Marcella and

[70] On the making of the valuation, see William E. Lunt (ed.), *The Valuation of Norwich* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1926), 52–95, and D. R. Thomas, 'The Norwich Taxation AD 1253: The Diocese of Bangor', *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, 11 (1894), 25–33 (25).

[71] Lunt (ed.), *Valuation of Norwich*, 190–5 (diocese of Bangor: 191 for the deanery of Arwystli); 467–73 (diocese of St Asaph: 468–9 for the deanery of Pool, 471–2 for the deanery of Maelor, and 472 for the deanery of Mold).

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Llanllugan formed a bloc, in a political sense, within Arwystli and Cedewain. The influence of the religious orders in the region is indeed heightened if we include Trefeglwys, appropriated to Haughmond. Strata Florida, in contrast, controlled only one church and that lay outside its core estates, yet it may be significant that this lay en route to its grange at Abermiwl and its lands in the Severn valley.

Forty-five years later another valuation was made for the purposes of papal taxation: the *Taxatio Pape Nicholai* (1291).[72] Here the entries are much fuller and give valuations for both the rectory and the vicarage. Before we turn to these, however, it will be instructive to consider a lawsuit of the late 1270s between Valle Crucis and the Dominican bishop of St Asaph, Anian (Einion) II ab Ynyr (1268–93), a Dominican friar and former prior of Rhuddlan, and Abbot Madog (occ. 1275, 1276, 1280, 1284). Llyfr Coch Asaph contains transcripts of a number of documents relating to the case.[73] The abbot claimed that Wrexham, Ruabon, Chirk, Llansanffraid (Glyn Ceiriog) and Llandegla were chapels of Llangollen – which, as we have just seen, had begun to be transferred to Valle Crucis by Bishop Abraham.[74] Of these, only Ruabon and Wrexham are included in the 1254 Norwich Valuation. The particular point at issue seems to have been the attempt, by the bishop, to appoint vicars to Llangollen and Wrexham in the face of the abbot's contention that the churches had been acquired *ab antiquo* and *canonice*, and that one vicar was sufficient to serve them both. Bishop Anian had appointed vicars and they joined with him in appealing against the abbot and convent. Siding with them was the abbot of Talley, papal judge delegate. As we have seen, the episcopal grants of Llangollen had stipulated the creation of a vicarage and this had not, apparently, happened. The abbot and convent went to considerable trouble – and doubtless expense – in the matter and would have been anxious to maintain their privilege as well as their income. The bishop's motives are less clear. Although one would expect episcopal concern for the orderly maintenance of his diocese to loom large, Bishop Anian II was, in the assessment of J. Beverly Smith, of an 'adversarial nature', with recorded disputes with Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, the bishops of Hereford and the widow of John III fitz Alan, as well as Valle Crucis.[75] His interest in at least one of the chapels may have been stimulated by his own ambitions. In 1278 he acquired from Gruffudd Fychan ap Gruffudd of Powys Fadog the entire township of Llandegla.[76] His lawsuit of a few years earlier may have been intended to undermine the influence of Valle Crucis in Llandegla.[77] Indeed, the abbey seems to have retained no control over the chapel.

We must now turn to see how, if at all, this court case was reflected in the 1291 *Taxatio Pape Nicholai*, which is fuller in detail than the 'Norwich Taxation'.

[72] Thomas Astle, Samuel Ayscough, John Caley (eds), *Taxatio ecclesiastica Angliae et Walliae auctoritate P. Nicholai IV circa A. D. 1291* (London: Record Commission, 1802) (henceforth *TE*).

[73] Jones, 'Llyfr Coch Asaph', xxxvi, 71–3, 81–2; Price, *Valle Crucis Abbey*, 77–80.

[74] Stephenson, *Medieval Powys*, 272 and n. 138, notes that Williams, *Atlas*, 66, is incorrect in identifying Llansanffraid as Glyndyfrdwy rather than Glyn Ceiriog.

[75] J. B. Smith, 'Anian [Einion ab Ynyr] (d. 1293)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (23 September 2004), *https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/24830*; 'Adversarial' can also be interpreted as resolute in maintaining the rights of his position and his diocese.

[76] *AWR* 732–3 no. 529.

[77] In this he seems to have been successful, for Llandegla is not noted as appropriated in 1291: *TE* 287; 'The Taxatio Database', *dhi.ac.uk/taxatio/* (henceforth *Taxatio*), benkey AS.AS.IA.03. It is, however, noteworthy that in 1508 Abbot Siôn Llwyd is referred to as abbot of Llangwestl 'alias rector of the church of St Tecla': *Cal. Pat. R. 1484–1509*, 586.

Table 3: Appropriated churches of Valle Crucis, 1291

Church	Deanery	Rectory	Vicarage
Llangollen[78]	Nanheudwy	£30 (45 marks)	£6 10s. (9.8 marks)
Chirk[79]	Nanheudwy	£6 (9 marks)	£2 (3 marks) Exempt
Llansanffraid Glyn Ceiriog[80]	Nanheudwy	£2 (3 marks) 'rector est alibi beneficiatus'[81]	£1 6s. 8d. (2 marks) Exempt
Wrexham[82]	Maelor	£24 13s. 4d. (37 marks)	£8 13s. 4d. (13 marks)
Ruabon[83]	Maelor	£12 (18 marks)	£4 6s. 8d. (6.5 marks)
Bryneglwys[84]	Iâl and Ystrad Alun	£2 (3 marks) 'rector est alibi beneficiatus'	£1 6s. 8d. (2 marks) Exempt
Llandysilio yn Iâl[85]	Iâl and Ystrad Alun	£6 (9 marks)	No vicarage recorded[86]

There are a number of points to be raised here. First, the corpus of appropriations to Valle Crucis was complete by 1291. No other churches were added after this date; all had been conveyed in the first ninety years of the abbey's life. Secondly, we may note the concentration in terms of the ecclesiastical geography: seven churches spread over three deaneries.[87] The three in Nanheudwy were the only three benefices recorded in that deanery in 1291, making Valle Crucis dominant there. Thirdly, the amount of money accorded to the vicarages seems in line with the accepted/normal proportion of one-third to the vicar. The only one significantly out of line is Llangollen, where of an overall taxable figure of £30 (45 marks) the vicar took less than one-fifth of the income. In other instances, the vicarage was awarded less than a third of the overall value, but consistent with one-third of the value of the rectory. Three of the seven churches were exempt from taxation on grounds of extreme poverty; one wonders here if this poverty is to be interpreted as effects of the Edwardian campaigns of the previous decade. The quarrel with Bishop Anian seems reflected not only in the omission of Llandegla from the portfolio of Valle Crucis in 1291, but by the apparent retention, by the bishop, of the right of patronage to Llangollen – a highly unusual situation in the case of an appropriated church. In 1293, by reason of a vacancy in the see of St Asaph, the justice of north Wales was granted the power to present a suitable candidate to the vicarage of Llangollen.[88]

It is worth comparing the situation in other deaneries of the diocese, especially those in which Strata Marcella and Llanllugan held appropriations (see Table 4).

[78] *TE* 286; *Taxatio*, benkey AS.AS.NA.01.
[79] *TE* 286; *Taxatio*, benkey AS.AS.NA.02.
[80] *TE* 286; *Taxatio*, benkey AS.AS.NA.03.
[81] 'The rector is beneficed elsewhere' is taken to mean that the church was appropriated, with a religious house taking the role of rector.
[82] *TE* 286; *Taxatio*, benkey AS.AS.ML.03.
[83] *TE* 286; *Taxatio*, benkey AS.AS.ML.05.
[84] *TE* 287; *Taxatio*, benkey AS.AS.IA.05.
[85] *TE* 287; *Taxatio*, benkey AS.AS.IA.04.
[86] The church may have been served by one of the monks or by a stipendiary chaplain. Richard II confirmed the 'estate' of Valle Crucis in the church in 1391: *Cal. Pat. R. 1391–1396*, 314.
[87] The boundaries of the deaneries of St Asaph had changed between 1254 and 1291.
[88] *Cal. Pat. R., 1292–1301*, 8.

Table 4: Churches appropriated to Strata Marcella and Llanllugan

Church/appropriated to	**Deanery**	**Rectory**	**Vicarage**
Berriew[89] [Strata Marcella]	Cedewain	£13 6s. 8d. (20 marks)	£7 (10.5 marks)
Betws Cedewain[90] [Strata Marcella]	Cedewain	£3 (4.5 marks)	£2 (3 marks) Exempt
Llanllwchaearn[91] [Llanllugan]	Cedewain	£3 (4.5 marks) 'rector est alibi beneficiatus'	£1 6s. 8d. (2 marks) Exempt
Llanfair Caereinion[92] [Llanllugan]	Caereinion	£12 (18 marks) 'rector est alibi beneficiatus'	£5 (7.5 marks)

We might also add here Llangurig (see Table 5):

Table 5: Church appropriated to Strata Florida

Llangurig[93]	Arwystli	£16 (24 marks)	None recorded

The kind of geographical clustering that we are able to observe among the churches of Valle Crucis is not as striking in the case of the houses of Powys Wenwynwyn, but it is worth noting that in the southern portion of the diocese of Bangor, the deanery of Arwystli, there were only three benefices, and two, Llangurig and Trefeglwys, were in monastic hands, the latter in the control of the Augustinians of Haughmond. The third, Llandinam, was still in 1291 a portionary church.[94] Yet there seems a strategy here, less dominant in the south of Powys than in the north, of concentrating influence in the hands of the monastic houses in certain areas. This seems likely to have been a result of episcopal initiative rather than lay agency.

Close examination of the documentary evidence leads to a number of conclusions. In terms of chronology all the churches that came under the control of three abbeys within the diocese of St Asaph – Valle Crucis, Llanllugan and Strata Marcella – were made before the *Taxatio ecclesiastica* of 1291; Strata Florida was in possession of one of only two churches it was to acquire. Secondly, there is a striking pattern of geographical concentration. The churches of Valle Crucis all lay in Powys Fadog in terms of political geography, and were concentrated in what was, in 1254, the deanery of Maelor, which by 1291 had been reconfigured to form three deaneries, Maelor, Nanheudwy, and Iâl and Ystrad Alun. All lay within a short distance of the abbey. Llangollen had been a major *monasterium* and its dependent chapels were raised to the status of parish churches in the process of appropriation, thus reducing the income they would yield through the addition of burial rights and other offerings; the portionary church had disappeared. The churches appropriated to Llanllugan and Strata Marcella also formed a cluster, three in the deanery of Cedewain and one in Caereinion. Here a landscape of appropriations formed a coterminous cluster to the west of the river Severn, south-west of Strata Marcella and east and south-east of Llanllugan. Notable is the dominance of early medieval dedications: Berriew and Betws Cedewain were both dedicated to St Beuno, Llanllwchaearn to St Llwchaearn and Llanfair Caereinion to St Mary (Mair). Strata Florida's church of Llangurig (St Curig) lay to the south-west of this block, but what is

[89] *TE* 285; *Taxatio*, benkey AS.AS.CA.01.
[90] *TE* 285; *Taxatio*, benkey AS.AS.CA.02.
[91] *TE* 285; *Taxatio*, benkey AS.AS.CA.07.
[92] *TE* 285; *Taxatio*, benkey AS.AS.CN.01.
[93] *TE* 291; *Taxatio*, benkey BN.ME.AW.01.
[94] *TE* 291; *Taxatio*, benkey BN.ME.AW.02 and 3.

striking, when mapped, is to realize that the parish was adjacent to St Padarn's church at Llanbadarn Fawr, the largest parish in medieval Wales, which, in the thirteenth century was appropriated to the Cistercians of Vale Royal (Cheshire). This gave the Cistercians, collectively, a landscape of ecclesiastical influence that stretched from the west coast at Aberystwyth across central Wales. The dominant agency of the bishops of St Asaph is notable: this was not just a case of appropriation for financial gain for the Cistercians, although that was surely part of it. The process placed a number of the major pre-Norman churches in the hands of the Cistercians. It can be argued that just as the siting of Cistercian monasteries reveals more and more a continuity of spiritual and cultural significance, so too can the Cistercians be seen as guardians of the past in respect to at least some of the major churches of the pre-Norman era.[95]

New financial imperatives? The Black Death and beyond

Glanmor Williams noted a rise in the number of appropriations from the middle of the fourteenth century, as monasteries struggled with the economic aftermath of the Black Death.[96] Indeed, this became, in general, a cause for concern in papal quarters, as Pope Urban V in 1366 banned any further appropriations by monastic houses.[97] In Wales the dynamic behind appropriation shifted from reform of the pre-Norman church to maximizing revenue, by seeking either to acquire new churches or to appropriate those whose advowsons were already held by monastic houses. Cistercians became proactive in this trend. It is in this changed context that we have to see the appropriation of Pencarreg church by Strata Florida and the involvement, in the process, of the English king.

On 22 June 1377 the young Richard II was crowned in succession to his grandfather, King Edward III. Abbot Llywelyn Fychan of Strata Florida lost no time in petitioning the king to license the appropriation of Pencarreg to his monastery, which Richard did on 2 August 1377. In so doing, Richard stated, he fulfilled the intentions of his late father (Edward, prince of Wales, the 'Black Prince') who had held Llywelyn in high regard – as indeed did the king himself.[98] The conditions were that the community of Strata Florida was to pray for the soul of the king's father and the king himself – his welfare during his life and his soul after death. That the abbot and monks were prepared to expend £20 in securing the licence suggests how valuable they perceived the church, after appropriation, to be.[99]

Here again Strata Florida forms a contrast with the Cistercian houses of Powys, all of which had acquired their parish churches by 1291. Although there is insufficient evidence to enable us to date precisely the points at which churches were granted or appropriated to

[95] The desire of some secular rulers also to see the Cistercians as worthy stewards of ancient *monasteria* or greater churches is suggested by two grants: (i) that of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth to Basingwerk Abbey (in the diocese of St Asaph) of the portionary church of Holywell (Flintshire) in the last years of the twelfth or the early years of the thirteenth centuries (*AWR* 346–7 no. 216), confirmed by Dafydd ap Llywelyn in 1240 (*AWR* 460–1 no. 292); (ii) the grant, when they become vacant, to the abbey of Aberconwy (diocese of Bangor) by Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, of the churches of Llanbadrig (the church of the *maerdref* of Cemais) and Llanbeblig: *AWR* 491–2 no. 319.

[96] Williams, *Welsh Church*, 164–7.

[97] David Wilkins (ed.), *Concilia Magnae Britanniae et Hiberniae*, 4 vols (London: Robert Gosling, 1737), III, 65.

[98] Abbot Llywelyn had benefitted from the support of the Black Prince during the disputes surrounding his election: Janet Burton, 'Authority and Conflict at the Cistercian Abbey of Strata Florida', *Welsh History Review*, 29:3 (2019), 377–407 (386–7).

[99] *Cal. Pat. R. 1377–1381*, 14–15. In 1535 the rectory and glebe of Pencarreg was valued at £6 per annum.

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other Cistercian houses, it seems that those most likely to appropriate in the decades just before and after the Black Death were the southern Welsh houses of Margam and Neath. Both sought appropriations in the 1330s and 1340s, and again in the 1370s and 1380s.[100] Between 1377 and 1384, for instance, Abbot John of Margam secured three valuable appropriations, those of St Fagans, Afan and Pen-llin. First came St Fagans, with licence for alienation in mortmain of the advowson of the church and for appropriation, issued on 22 June 1378.[101] This was followed by the acquisition, in 1383 and 1384, of Afan and Pen-llin.[102] Elsewhere monasteries sought confirmation or modification of existing arrangements. In 1386 the abbot and convent of Aberconwy, since 1283 resident at Maenan, claimed that they had always (that is, since the removal of the abbey to its second site by Edward I) been appropriators of the former abbey church of Conwy and had an obligation to provide a vicar and two chaplains. Their plea was now to be relieved of the necessity to appoint chaplains, since the church was worth only ten marks (£6 13s. 4d.) after the vicar's portion had been paid; the bishop of Bangor estimated the slightly lower value of nine marks (£6).[103] In 1391 Basingwerk found itself deprived of its valuable church of Holywell when by writ of *quare impedit* it was recovered by the king against the abbot and the bishop of St Asaph on the grounds that it had been granted without the licence required under the Statute of Mortmain; for payment of 40s. the monks were allowed to retain the church and its chapel of Coleshill.[104] By far the most lucrative acquisition was that by the Cheshire abbey of Vale Royal of Llanbadarn Fawr which, with its chapelries, formed the largest parish in medieval Wales.[105] That monasteries were willing to pay out considerable sums to secure this late wave of appropriations is an indication of their value in a changing economic world. It may well be, in the words of Glanmor Williams, that monasteries were 'niggardly' in their treatment of their vicars – though it should be noted that his finger pointed not at Cistercians but at the Benedictines of Chepstow and Cardigan, and the Augustinians of Carmarthen.[106] However, what has emerged in this review is that appropriation should not be treated as a single phenomenon throughout the period when the Cistercians were a presence in Wales, but as acts which, at different times and in different circumstances, had their own dynamic, with many actors who were not all Cistercian.

Monastic and parochial interaction

How much can we really know of the meaning of monastic appropriation? Historians' judgements, as we have seen, have been universally condemnatory. Even though the evidence is slight and based on assumptions derived from anti-monastic polemic, monastic appropriation was derided as a one-way street of benefit. Here we may return to the questions posed at the beginning of this paper.

[100] Llangynwyd (Margam); Castell-nedd, St Donats (Neath).

[101] *Cal. Pat. R. 1377–1381*, 8.

[102] *Cal. Pat. R. 1381–1385*, 483–4: appropriation of Afan, which the monks say was granted to them by Edward Despenser, in consideration of their poverty caused by destruction of much of their property by sandstorm, though without licence from the king. This was granted at the request of the bishop of Llandaf (28 October 1384).

[103] Other witnesses claimed that they had never known chaplains to be appointed. See *Cal. Pat. R. 1385–1389*, 237.

[104] *Cal. Pat. R. 1388–1392*, 510.

[105] For references, see Janet Burton, 'The Benedictine Priory of Llanbadarn Fawr and the Monks of Gloucester', *Ceredigion*, 18:2 (2018), 1–25 (16–17).

- Does evidence survive to suggest the origin of the initiative for the transfer of these churches to the Cistercians?

Discussion of the churches appropriated to the Powysian houses of Valle Crucis, Strata Marcella and Llanllugan suggests that the initiative for their transfer to the Cistercians lay with successive bishops of St Asaph, though doubtless with the cooperation of the rulers of Powys Fadog and Powys Wenwynwyn. Episcopal initiative can also be detected in the appropriation of Llangurig to Strata Florida. This initiative is likely to be linked to the increasing regularization of the pre-Norman church. Although, in one way, Cistercians were not, perhaps, the most obvious recipients, they were the dominant monastic presence in the diocese of St Asaph.

- What do we know about the previous history of these churches?

The churches granted and appropriated to the Cistercians by the time of the papal taxation of 1291 appear to have been ancient foundations of deep significance. As has been noted, Llangollen was the ancient church of the lordship, and fragments of sculpture, of mid-twelfth-century date, at the shrine of St Collen, suggest something of its status and its part in a network of artistic patronage.[107] Individual church dedications, discussed above, may also be significant. It has been argued that members of the episcopate may have seen, in the White Monks, custodians of some of the pre-eminent churches of early medieval Wales and further embedded them in the local landscape.

- Is chronology of appropriation significant?

The findings of this study suggest that for Valle Crucis and the other Powysian houses appropriations had been completed by 1291, that is, within eighty (Valle Crucis and Llanllugan) or 120 years (Strata Marcella). The appropriation of Llangurig to Strata Florida also fits into this time frame. The appropriation of Pencarreg to Strata Florida belongs to a second period, the fourteenth century, when the dynamics of appropriation were more clearly the products of financial hardship. Although there were early appropriations among the Cistercians of south Wales, several houses, such as Margam, Neath and Whitland, were particularly active in acquisition at this later time. This reinforces the argument that it is not sufficient to talk of appropriation as something consistent: the contexts and motivations were diverse.

- Are appropriated churches directly related to Cistercian estates, particularly granges? In other words, is appropriation part of the creation of one landscape or several?

The word 'grange' does not figure to any great extent in the documentary records of Valle Crucis; it is only recorded in relation to Ceiriog and Gwernfeifod.[108] As in its possession of churches, Valle Crucis operated what is often termed a 'non-classic Cistercian' economy,

[106] Williams, *Welsh Church*, 166.

[107] Stephenson, *Medieval Powys*, 53–4, 246; Malcolm Thurlby, *Romanesque Architecture in Wales* (Little Logaston: Logaston Press, 2006), 278. The sculpture may have come from the shrine of St Collen, in the same way as stones from another shrine, that of St Tysilio, at another of Valle Crucis's churches, Llandysilio-yn-Iâl.

[108] Williams, *Atlas*, 65. Williams suggests that at some sites, granges may have been short-lived.

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with reliance on manors, portions of townships and courts. There is a close correlation between these economic assets and churches, as at Llangollen (portion of township), Tirabad (Llangollen), Hafodyrabad, Buddugre'r Abad, etc. (Llandegla), Wrexham Abbot (Wrexham) and Halghton manor (Chirk).[109] Neither church appropriated to Strata Florida was associated with its granges. Llangurig lay to the north of its extensive core estates; it was also some miles north of the Monks' Trod, the medieval road that ran from Strata Florida to Abbey Cwmhir, with a branch route leading to Strata Marcella.[110] What may be significant, and a factor in the act of appropriation by Bishop Cadwgan, was that Llangurig lay north of the Monks' Trod about 25 miles from the Strata Florida grange at Abermiwl. Was it, perhaps, a convenient staging post? This question would bear wider investigation in relation to the churches of other Welsh abbeys.

- What was the nature of Cistercian engagement with the parish church?

The sparsity of documentary sources makes this difficult to assess. We lack a body of data concerning issues such as the presentation of vicars, and the frequency with which churches were served by monks themselves. The names of the few known incumbents do not indicate pastoral care by members of the Valle Crucis community.[111] Pratt suggested that monks of Valle Crucis served Llandysilio, Bryneglwys and Llansanffraid, based on the lack of a vicar's portion in 1535. The absence of provision for a vicar does indeed point to the use of stipendiary chaplains or provision of pastoral care from the monastery, and the designation of these three as chapels may signal their loss of status from parish churches.[112] The *Valor Ecclesiasticus* records Valle Crucis as in receipt from all its churches, of both the greater tithes of grain which were usually reserved for the appropriator, and the lesser tithes (lambs, hay and wool), which were traditionally the portion of the vicar.[113] Chirk, Wrexham, Ruabon and Llangollen were described as rectories, and provision was made for vicars. Pratt noted the low allowances made by Valle Crucis for its vicars – on average 26 per cent of the overall income – although the proportion did vary from church to church.[114] At Strata Florida the income of the rectory and glebe of Pencarreg was recorded as £6 'ultra partem vicarii'; the vicar, William Morgan, fared rather better in that he received £4, or 40 per cent, of the income.[115]

Ironically, one piece of evidence survives to demonstrate concern for pastoral care by a Cistercian abbey that had no appropriated churches. In 1233 Pope Gregory licensed the abbot and convent of Abbey Cwmhir, which represented itself as situated in the mountains, far from any parish church, to hear the confessions of, and administer the sacraments to, their servants and household.[116] The monks provided the pastoral care that was denied to the laity because of the lack of a local parish church. The monks of Strata Florida also provided for the spiritual life of the laity. In the period after the dissolution of the monasteries those living in the vicinity of the abbey claimed that that they

[109] Williams, *Atlas*, 65 and map at 102.
[110] Andrew Fleming, 'The Making of a Medieval Road: the Monks' Trod Routeway, Mid Wales', *Landscapes*, 10 (2009), 77–100.
[111] Price, *Valle Crucis Abbey*, 76–7.
[112] Derrick Pratt, *The Dissolution of Valle Crucis Abbey* (Wrexham: Bridge Books, 1997), 12; *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, IV, 447.
[113] *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, IV, 447–8; Pratt, *Dissolution of Valle Crucis*, 447–8. For the division of tithes, see, for instance, R. N. Swanson, *Church and Society in Late Medieval England* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), 214–15.
[114] Pratt, *Dissolution of Valle Crucis*, 12.
[115] *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, IV, 396, 411.
[116] *Cal. Papal Registers*, I, 131.

> have always been accustomed to have ministered to them all sacramentals and all other divine service sung and said to them in a certain chapel built for the same purpose within the late monastery at the proper costs and charges of the abbot and convent, because all the said tenants and inhabitants were and are dwelling 7, 8, 9, or 10 miles from their parish churches and are to the number of 300 hous[e]ling people.[117]

Without this provision, they claimed, they would have been in danger 'to depart from this world without housel [receiving communion], shrift [confession] or other sacrament', and begged for the restoration of the two priests appointed after the closure of the abbey who had recently been discharged by the Court of Augmentations. At Cwmhir, too, there was a desire for continuity. On 10 April 1537 a number of individuals requested the abbot of Strata Florida to return the picture of Jesus that he had removed from Abbey Cwmhir for the church they intended to build at 'Myllynygh' because there was no church within 3 miles. On the same day Edward Watur reiterated their plea, adding 'if you will deliver the picture again, they will build a chapel for the maintaining of God's service'.[118] Much as those who benefited from the dissolution welcomed the demise of monastic houses, those at the lower levels of society were left deprived of their pastoral services.

We cannot say how far Valle Crucis or Strata Florida – or indeed Strata Marcella and Llanllugan – invested materially in the churches under their control. Evidence of some concern comes from receipts, dated 1284, for payment for damages incurred in the campaigns of Edward I. Abbot Madog acknowledged that he had received 30s 'ad opus ecclesiae de Langostlan' (for the repair of the church of Llangollen), and the 'Abbas de Lanegustle' £4 'pro ecclesia nostra de Breneglus' (for our church of Bryneglwys), suggesting that they had been active in seeking recompense.[119] As corporate rectors of appropriated churches monasteries had the responsibility to maintain the fabric of the chancel, with upkeep of the nave falling to the parishioners.[120] In the case of Llanllugan the poverty of the house would suggest that substantial investment on the part of the nuns would have been unlikely. Williams considered that the input of Valle Crucis at one of their churches, Wrexham, was negligible, as the ambitious building schemes seem to have been on municipal or parish and 'never monastic' initiative.[121] However, the monks built a chantry dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary; over the north porch there is a surviving statue of the Virgin and Child.[122] At Llangollen there is a carving of the heads of a monk and a nun over a window on the south side of the church: is this again a footprint of a monastic presence?[123] A significant challenge in assessing the input of Valle Crucis, Strata Florida and Strata Marcella in building activities lies in the later remodelling or rebuilding of several of their churches. Llangollen and Wrexham, though retaining medieval features, were remodelled externally in the

[117] E. A. Lewis and J. Conway Davies (ed.), *Records of the Court of Augmentations relating to Wales and Monmouthshire* (Cardiff: UWP, 1954), 27–8. The *capella ante portas* was likely the present parish church of St Mary, which lies to the north of the abbey church.

[118] J. S. Brewer, James Gairdner and R. H. Brodie (eds), *Letters and Papers Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII*, 23 vols in 38 (London: PRO, 1862–1932), 12 (1), 397 no. 890 and 424 no. 932.

[119] J. Goronwy Edwards (ed.), *Littere Wallie* (Cardiff: UWP, 1940), 61, 64.

[120] Richard Morris, *Churches in the Landscape* (London: J. M. Dent, 1989), 321–3. Morris discusses evidence for the neglect of chancels by monastic rectors, but equally by non-resident and pluralist rectors, who might farm their livings to lay persons.

[121] Williams, *Welsh Church*, 353. Williams (455) ascribed the building of the fine tower at Wrexham to Bishop Birkhead of St Asaph (1513–18).

[122] Price, *Valle Crucis Abbey*, 71.

[123] Price, *Valle Crucis Abbey*, 75.

nineteenth century; Llansanffraid Glyn Ceiriog was rebuilt c.1790.[124] There is no medieval fabric at Betws Cedewain and Llanllwchaearn.[125] The traditional narrative of exploitation and neglect has not considered how far monasteries, as appropriators, may have contributed to the material upkeep of their churches.

This paper began by highlighting that possession, and particularly appropriation, of parish churches by Cistercian abbeys has been taken almost universally as an indication of decline or exploitation, as the White Monks sought to profit, financially, from their acquisition. Close examination of the documentary evidence in relation to Valle Crucis and Strata Florida, as well as a more general sensitivity to chronological and regional variation, suggests that we need a more open and nuanced approach to these issues. Appropriated churches were part of the footprint of the Cistercians in Wales: they were part of the sacred landscape, and indeed helped to shape it.

[124] 'Coflein', *coflein.gov.uk* 165271 'St Bridget's Church, Glyn Ceiriog'.

[125] 'Coflein', *coflein.gov.uk* 146266 'St Beuno's Church, Bettws Cedewain', 421135 'St Llwchaiarn's Church, Llanllwchaiarn, Newtown'.

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