

Cistercian Abbots as Patrons of Art and Architecture: Northern England in the Late Middle Ages

Michael Carter

The patronage of Cistercian abbots in the late Middle Ages has often been judged harshly by scholars. Nikolaus Pevsner famously damned the lodging built by Abbot Thomas Chard (c. 1505–39) at Forde Abbey, Dorset, as being on a scale ‘to justify the Reformation and Dissolution’.¹ His comments are reflective of a wider English historiographical tradition that has tended to disparage the monastic life in the late Middle Ages, with patronage of art and architecture often interpreted as evidence of the decline and spiritual malaise into which the religious orders, especially the Cistercians, had fallen.² There can be no doubting that the late Middle Ages was a period of change for the Cistercians and other religious orders. Whether it was also one of decline has been questioned by a recent generation of scholars, who have found evidence of reform, renewal and vibrancy.³

¹ J. Newman and N. Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Dorset* (Harmondsworth, 1972), p. 210.

² The great monastic historian, Dom David Knowles, asserted that the scale of ‘corporate magnificence’ at late medieval monasteries was ‘neither necessary for, nor consistent with, the fashion of life indicated by their rule and early institutions’: Knowles, *RO*, III, 256. Similarly, ‘material preoccupations’ at English Cistercian abbeys in the late medieval period were cited by Charles Talbot as evidence of the order’s ‘low ebb’ and ‘languid spirit’ in the late Middle Ages: see C. H. Talbot, ‘Marmaduke Huby, Abbot of Fountains (1495–1526)’, *Analecta Sacri Ordinis Cisterciensis* 20 (1964), 165–84 (p. 165).

³ There is a burgeoning ‘revisionist’ literature on the monastic and religious orders in late medieval England, exemplified by the editor’s introduction to *Monasticism in Late Medieval England*, c. 1300–1540, ed. M. Heale (Manchester, 2009), pp. 1–74. Other important publications include K. Stöber, *Late Medieval Monasteries and their Patrons: England and Wales, c. 1300–1540* (Woodbridge, 2007) and the editors’ introductions and collections of essays in *The Religious Orders in Pre-Reformation England*, ed. J. G. Clark (Woodbridge, 2002); *The Culture of Medieval English Monasticism*, ed. J. G. Clark (Woodbridge, 2007); and *Monasteries and Society in*

Cistercian monasteries in the late Middle Ages were quite unlike those of the twelfth century.⁴ Their architecture and material and visual cultures lacked the austerity which so defined the order's art and architecture in its early days. However, it is important to recognize that the order's attitude towards its material and visual cultures evolved considerably over the course of the Middle Ages.⁵ Indeed, by c. 1300 earlier prohibitions on matters artistic such as bell towers, images, coloured and pictorial window glass and the possession of sumptuous vestments and altar plate had largely ceased to apply.⁶ For some scholars this is evidence of the order's adaptation to the realities of late medieval society and religious belief and practice.⁷ Glyn Coppack has suggested that the extensive re-planning of many English Cistercian monasteries between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries was undertaken by monks who 'were very aware of their identity and religion, something which their buildings were shaped to reflect'.⁸

Julian Luxford concluded that the scale and focus of patronage at Benedictine monasteries in the two centuries before the Suppression was an excellent indication of that order's strength, solvency and pride, reflecting the 'widespread and self-conscious pious commitment' of Benedictine monks and nuns at the end of the medieval period.⁹ Luxford showed that Benedictine superiors were by far the most important patrons of their monasteries' art and architecture. Taking a lead from Luxford, this article will examine the extent of patronage attributable to Cistercian abbots, focusing on the order's fourteen abbeys in northern England (fig. 1) in the period c. 1300–1540. However, it must be acknowledged from the outset that the material and documentary evidence does not match the richness of that available to Luxford, whose sample of forty-five

the British Isles in the Later Middle Ages, ed. J. Burton and K. Stöber (Woodbridge, 2008).

⁴ For an analysis of the planning of the order's monasteries in this period, see G. Coppack, 'The Planning of Cistercian Monasteries in the Late Middle Ages: The Evidence from Fountains, Rievaulx, Sawley and Rushen', in *The Religious Orders in Pre-Reformation England*, ed. Clark, pp. 197–209.

⁵ T. N. Kinder, *Cistercian Europe: The Architecture of Contemplation* (Grand Rapids, 2002), p. 37.

⁶ For a discussion of the evolution of Cistercian legislation on art and architecture, see C. Norton and D. Park, 'Introduction', in *Cistercian Art and Architecture in the British Isles*, ed. C. Norton and D. Park (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 1–10 (pp. 4–8).

⁷ Kinder, *Cistercian Europe*, p. 25.

⁸ Coppack, 'The Planning of Cistercian Monasteries', p. 209.

⁹ J. M. Luxford, *The Art and Architecture of English Benedictine Monasteries, 1300–1540: A Patronage History* (Woodbridge, 2005), pp. 206–7.



Fig. 1 Map showing the location of Cistercian abbeys in northern England. Drawn by Steve Edwards.

monasteries provided enough material for a book-length study.¹⁰ Nevertheless, almost all the northern Cistercian abbeys offer some evidence of abbatial patronage dating from the late medieval period, and much of this evidence has either largely been overlooked or is capable of reinterpretation. Gaps in the material can also be filled by calling upon evidence from abbeys elsewhere in England and Wales.

¹⁰ Luxford, *Art and Architecture of English Benedictine Monasteries*, pp. 4–27.

Whose patronage?

All male Cistercian communities had an abbot at their head, whose responsibilities were detailed in the Rule of St Benedict. These included caring for the material wellbeing of his brethren.¹¹ It was abbots as the leaders and personifications of their communities who, at first sight, appear to have been the most energetic patrons of the art and architecture of Cistercian monasteries in the later Middle Ages, thus paralleling the situation at Benedictine monasteries as revealed in Luxford's study.¹²

However, can all internal patronage at northern Cistercian abbeys indicated by heraldry or described in chronicles safely be attributed to abbots? Luxford's examination of Benedictine patronage showed that many of the works credited to monastic superiors were in fact the fruit of more communal enterprises, funded by contributions from general monastic incomes.¹³ It is likely that this was true to an even greater extent for the Cistercians. The order did not adopt the Benedictine practice of allocating specific manors for the support of the abbot and his household.¹⁴ Moreover, by the late Middle Ages the financial independence of Cistercian abbots was, in theory, severely curtailed. The constitution of the order issued by Pope Benedict XII in 1335 (*Fulgens sicut stella*, usually referred to as the *Benedictina*) placed firm restrictions on abbatial control of finances.¹⁵ Supervisory rights were vested to monastic communities, and the consent of the General Chapter was required for loans. Two *bursarii* were to be appointed for each house, who were to receive and distribute all revenues. The bursars allocated funds for the use of abbots, who were required to account annually to the bursars and other senior office holders within their monastery for their expenditure. Any funds given directly to an abbot were to be handed to the bursars on pain of suspension.¹⁶ The *Benedictina* also mandated that all houses were

¹¹ *Rule of St Benedict*, ch. 2, 64.

¹² Luxford, *Art and Architecture of English Benedictine Monasteries*, pp. 51–82.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 56–60.

¹⁴ For the Benedictine practice, see Knowles, *RO*, II, 240–4. The earliest Cistercian evidence for accounting practices relates to Kingswood Abbey, Gloucestershire, where in 1240 all expenditure was under the control of the bursar and cellarer: see Knowles, *RO*, I, 76.

¹⁵ The full text of the constitution is given in *Magnum Bullarium Romanum, a Beato Leone Magno usque ad S. D. N. Benedictum XIII. Tome primus, ad A. B. Leone Magno ad Paulum IV*, ed. L. and A. Cherubini, A. Auda and J. Paulus (Luxemburg, 1727), pp. 209–17.

¹⁶ *Magnum Bullarium Romanum*, pp. 209–11. For discussions of its financial provisions, see P. McDonald, 'The Papacy and Monastic Observance in the Later Middle Ages: The *Benedictina* in England', *Journal of Religious Studies* 14 (1986), 117–32 (p. 121); L. J. Lekai, *The Cistercians: Ideals and Reality* (Kent OH, 1977), pp. 72–3; Kinder, *Cistercian Europe*, p. 75.

to obtain a conventual seal, thereby further securing communal control of finances. This had been the situation in England since the Statute of Carlisle of 1307, which required all Cistercian abbeys to possess a conventual seal which was to be deposited in the custody of the prior and four 'worthier' and more discreet members of the community. The abbot could no longer commit his house to a debt or obligation by means of a personal seal.¹⁷

The surviving accounts of English Cistercian monasteries show that the abbot was allocated a sum for his expenses, but that it was the convent which funded expenditure on liturgical furnishings, fixtures and equipment, as well as the maintenance and renovations of the church and conventual buildings. The accounts of Meaux for 1393–4 allocated a mere 10s. to the abbot for his expenses,¹⁸ hardly enough to fund the ambitious building programmes and the provision of the sumptuous altar furnishings lovingly described in the abbey's chronicle. The annual allowance allotted to the abbot of Fountains in 1457–8 was more generous at £30.¹⁹ Nevertheless, this would have been a woefully insufficient amount to pay for the extensive works conducted at the monastery during the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Evidence that the monastery funded these is provided by the bursar's accounts for 1457–8, which record payments to glaziers and masons.²⁰ Similarly the accounts of Sawley Abbey for 1481 detail payments to carpenters, glaziers, masons, plumbers and tilers.²¹ Building works at Whalley were also funded from the general monastic income. The accounts for 1478 record that £10 14s. was spent on the fabric of the church, which increased to £22 in 1520 and £23 in 1521.²²

¹⁷ T. A. Heslop, 'Cistercian Seals in England and Wales', in *Cistercian Art and Architecture in the British Isles*, pp. 266–83 (pp. 273–4, 278). For the clauses in the Statute of Carlisle and the *Benedictina* regarding conventual seals, see Heslop, 'Cistercian Seals', pp. 282–3.

¹⁸ *Chronica monasterii de Melsa: a fundatione usque ad annum 1396, auctore Thoma de Burton, abbate. Accedit continuatio ad annum 1406 a monacho quodam ipsius domus*, ed. E. A. Bond, 3 vols., Rolls Series 43 (London, 1866–8), III, lxvi.

¹⁹ *Memorials of the Abbey of St Mary of Fountains*, ed. J. R. Walbran and J. T. Fowler, 3 vols., Surtees Society 42, 67, 130 (Durham, 1863–1918), III, 12.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, III, 52, 56, 57, 85.

²¹ The accounts are printed (but incorrectly attributed to 1381) in T. D. Whitaker, *The History and Antiquities of the Deanery of Craven in the County of York* (London, 1805) pp. 63–9, an error corrected in G. Coppack, C. Hayfield and R. Williams, 'Sawley Abbey: The Architecture and Archaeology of a Smaller Cistercian House', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 155 (2002), 22–114 (p. 25).

²² T. D. Whitaker, *An History of the Parish of Whalley and Honor of Clitheroe in the Counties of Lancaster and York* (Blackburn, 1801), p. 100 (1478 and 1521); O. Ashmore, 'The Whalley Abbey Bursars' Accounts for 1520', *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire* 114 (1962), 49–72 (p. 72) (1520). Evidence from Cistercian abbeys outside the geographical scope of this study also underlines the point

It seems unlikely that abbots were able to call upon personal or familial wealth to fund their patronage. Few late medieval Cistercian abbots originated from elite families. Instead, the majority seem to have belonged to families of non-gentry, or at most minor gentry status, which often had long-standing connections with the monastery that their offspring entered. An example is Abbot William Marshall of Kirkstall (1509–28) who raised the height of his abbey's crossing tower. The Marshall family of Allerton, near Leeds, where Kirkstall had a grange, are documented as connected with the abbey from the thirteenth century.²³ Marshall's local origins are indicated by his appointment in 1519 as supervisor of the will of his brother, Christopher Marshall of Potternewton, a village in close proximity to Allerton.²⁴ Similarly, the family of Abbot Robert Chamber of Holm Cultram (1507–c. 1530) were tenants of the monastery's grange at Raby Cote from the fifteenth century.²⁵ The research of Claire Cross has shown that Yorkshire's Cistercian abbots, like the superiors of religious houses in other orders, performed valuable services for the local community until the very end of the Middle Ages.²⁶ In 1511 Abbot Marshall of Kirkstall witnessed the will of Richard Baines of Leeds, and in 1519 Brian Palmes, serjeant-at-law, appointed Marshall his executor.²⁷ Cistercian abbots also undertook services for the State, for example Abbot Robert Thornton of Jervaulx (1511–33) was appointed to a royal commission to gather corn in northern England.²⁸

The secular status and influence of these Cistercian abbots was nothing compared to the position of authority which they enjoyed within their abbeys, where they lived apart from their convent in separate lodgings,

that the monastery itself funded expenditure on art and architecture. The cost of decorating the church at Beaulieu Abbey, Hampshire, at the end of the thirteenth century is itemized in the bursar's accounts: see *The Account Book of Beaulieu Abbey*, ed. S. F. Hockey, Camden 4th s. 16 (London, 1975), pp. 34, 242. The construction of the abbot's 'nova aula' at Sibton Abbey, Suffolk, in 1368 was funded to the tune of £24 6s. 4d. from the monastery's general income, and from the same source Geoffrey le Glaswryth was paid 31s. 7d. for its glazing: see *Sibton Abbey Estates*, ed. A. H. Denney, Suffolk Records Society 2 (Ipswich, 1960), p. 29.

²³ G. D. Barnes, *Kirkstall Abbey, 1147–1539: An Historical Study*, Thoresby Society 58 (Leeds, 1984), pp. 16, 30–31.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

²⁵ F. Grainger, 'The Chambers Family of Raby Cote', *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society* n.s. 1 (1901), 194–232 (pp. 194–6).

²⁶ C. Cross, 'Monasticism and Society in the Diocese of York, 1520–1540', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 5th s. 38 (1988), 131–45.

²⁷ *Testamenta Eboracensia. A Selection of Wills from the Registry at York*, ed. J. Raine and J. W. Clay, 6 vols., Surtees Society 4, 30, 45, 53, 79, 106 (Durham, 1832–1902), IV, 24–5, 107.

²⁸ *LP*, IV(2), no. 3822.

attended by retainers and servants which, in the case of the abbots of Fountains, included members of the local gentry community.²⁹ As will be seen shortly, inscriptional and heraldic evidence repeatedly suggests that Cistercian abbots were active patrons. However, this patronage was only possible because of the participation of the convent and the use of the often substantial income derived from the monastery's estates. Indeed, in the late Middle Ages, the Cistercians were maximising the feudal income obtained from this source.³⁰

The importance of the contribution of the entire community is suggested by the heraldry that adorns the greatest Cistercian building in northern England of the late Middle Ages, the tower of Abbot Marmaduke Huby (1495–1526) at Fountains. Huby's patronage is indicated by his monogram and motto, 'Soli Deo honor et gloria' ('to God alone be honour and glory'). The tower is also decorated with the arms of the abbey's historic and current ecclesiastical and lay benefactors. However, it is the arms of the abbey, *azure, three horseshoes, or*,³¹ which appear most often, on no less than six occasions within the inscriptions surrounding its upper storeys, and the shields also held by many of the angels which support and surmount the image niches.³² Fountains was a rich monastery. At the Suppression, its annual income was over £1000, wealth that was comparable to some Benedictine cathedral priories.³³ Huby spent this income lavishly. In a letter to the General Chapter at Cîteaux written in April 1517 he stated that during his tenure of office he had spent 1000 marks in defence of his order,³⁴ money which would have been appropriated from the general income of his monastery. However, such lavish expenditure could lead to conflict between abbots and their monks. Abbot John Paslew (1507–37) undertook extensive building work at Whalley, including the construction of a Lady Chapel and the rebuilding of his own lodging, and in 1520 his total expenditure amounted to £500 out of the abbey's annual income of £900.³⁵ He

²⁹ For details of the household, see *Fountains Abbey Lease Book*, ed. D. J. H. Michelmores, Yorkshire Archaeological Society Record Series 140 (Leeds, 1981), pp. xxviii–xxix.

³⁰ For a discussion of the ways in which this was achieved, see *ibid.*, pp. xlv–xlvi.

³¹ *Heraldic Visitation of the Northern Counties in 1530 by Thomas Tonge*, ed. W. H. D. Longstaffe, Surtees Society 61 (Durham, 1862), p. 51. The source of these arms is unclear and cannot be connected to any of the monastery's abbots or benefactors.

³² W. H. St John Hope, 'Fountains Abbey', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* 15 (1900) 269–402 (pp. 315–16).

³³ Knowles, *RO*, III, 473.

³⁴ *Letters from the English Abbots to the Chapter at Cîteaux: 1442–1521*, ed. C. H. Talbot, Camden 4th s. 4 (London, 1967), pp. 242–6.

³⁵ O. Ashmore, *A Guide to Whalley Abbey*, 6th edn (Blackburn, 2003), pp. 7–9.

also secured the right to use the mitre and other *pontificalia* in 1516.³⁶ His community clearly resented the expense involved in obtaining this privilege. After the suppression of Whalley in 1537, several of its former monks complained to the royal authorities that Paslew had for six or seven years continually diminished the plate of the house 'since he took it upon himself to be a mitred abbot'.³⁷

Mindful perhaps of the ill ease of their brethren about their expenditure, some Cistercian abbots were taking steps to obtain an income which was independent and distinct from their convents by securing papal permission to acquire benefices normally reserved for the secular clergy. One such abbot was John Burton (1489–1510) of Rievaulx. The abbot converted the monastic infirmary at Rievaulx into an abbatial lodging after receiving the authorization of Pope Alexander VI in 1497 to hold a lay benefice 'to enable him to be maintained in abbatial dignity'.³⁸ Abbot Robert Thornton of Jervaulx (1510–33), whose artistic patronage will be discussed presently, was granted a similar privilege in 1516.³⁹ It is also of note that Abbot Thomas Chard of Forde in Dorset and Abbot Robert King of Thame (c. 1527–39) in Oxfordshire, both of whom built palatial lodgings, also successfully appealed to the papacy for permission to hold multiple livings.⁴⁰

The extent of abbatial patronage

The use of conventual incomes and independent sources of funding allowed generations of Cistercian abbots to be energetic and at times prolific patrons. The surviving material evidence for this is abundant. Heraldic and inscriptional evidence shows that the monastic churches at Fountains, Holm Cultram and Kirkstall were renovated or rebuilt under the auspices of their respective abbots. John Darnton (1479–95)

³⁶ CPL, XIX, 492–3.

³⁷ LP, XII(1), no. 621.

³⁸ CPL, XX, 530–1. For the lodging, see P. Fergusson and S. Harrison, *Rievaulx Abbey: Community, Architecture and Memory* (New Haven, 1999), pp. 132–5.

³⁹ CPL, XX, 387–8.

⁴⁰ Rome, Archivio Segreto Vaticano, Lateran Reg. 1463, fols. 334r–335r, 14 Kal Jan 1524 (19 December 1524), permission for Abbot Chard to hold incompatible benefices: Rome, Archivio Segreto Vaticano, Lateran Reg. 1477, fols. 164r–169r, permission for Abbot King to hold suffragan bishopric, and grant of indult to retain abbey of Thame and to hold a third benefice. All dated 7 Id Jan 4 Clement VII (7 January 1527). I am extremely grateful to Dr Martin Heale for these references. For Chard's lodging, see A. Emery, *Greater Medieval Houses of England and Wales 1300–1500, III: Southern England* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 560–5. Abbot King's house at Thame is considered by Emery, *ibid.*, pp. 180–3.

remodelled the east end of the church at Fountains, work which involved taking down the vaults of the chapel of the Nine Altars and its partial refenestration, an inscription dating this work to 1483. The abbot recorded his patronage with his rebus (the eagle of St John, the letters *dern* and a *tun*), together with the motto *Benedicite fontes Domino*, which punned on the name of the abbey ('Oh you fountains, bless the Lord'). The abbot also renovated the nave, inserting a great west window, again advertising his patronage with his rebus, which is accompanied by the date 1494.⁴¹ Rebuilding at Fountains continued under Abbot Huby, notably the great bell tower attached to the north transept, which is ornamented with liturgical inscriptions as well as Huby's motto and monogram.⁴² At Holm Cultram, Abbot Chamber added a porch to the west front of the abbey, recording his patronage with an inscription and heraldry (fig. 2),⁴³ and an *ex situ* fragmentary sculpture records that the abbot covered it, or some other building, with lead.⁴⁴ Abbot Marshall of Kirkstall had his initials inscribed on the buttresses of the storeys he added to the church's crossing tower.⁴⁵ Abbots were also patrons of the bells which hung in such towers, and a surviving example can be found at the parish church of St Peter, Kirkthorpe, near Wakefield, which is inscribed with the name of one of Marshall's predecessors, Abbot John Bardsey (1392–1410),⁴⁶ while a bell inscribed with the name of Abbot Thomas York (c. 1450–c. 1470) still hangs at Holm Cultram.⁴⁷

⁴¹ Hope, 'Fountains Abbey', pp. 296, 312.

⁴² Ibid., pp. 314–16; M. Carter, 'The Tower of Abbot Marmaduke Huby of Fountains Abbey: Hubris or Piety?', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* 82 (2010), 269–85.

⁴³ The architecture of Holm Cultram, including Chamber's porch, is discussed by S. Harrison, 'The Architecture of Holm Cultram', in *Carlisle and Cumbria: Roman and Medieval Architecture, Art and Archaeology*, ed. M. McCarthy and D. Weston, British Archaeological Association Conference Transactions 27 (Leeds, 2004), pp. 239–56. Also see the description in G. E. Gilbanks, *Some Records of a Cistercian Abbey: Holm Cultram, Cumberland* (London, 1899), pp. 120–1.

⁴⁴ The much abbreviated inscription, which is now *ex situ* inside the abbey porch, reads: 'Chab' ltruxit op' h° plubog° textit'. Gilbanks, *Some Records of a Cistercian Abbey*, p. 121, gives this translation: 'Chamber erected this building, and covered it with lead.'

⁴⁵ W. H. St John Hope, 'Kirkstall Abbey', in *Architectural Description of Kirkstall Abbey*, ed. W. H. St John Hope and J. Bilson, Thoresby Society 16 (Leeds, 1907), pp. 1–72 (p. 16); P. Leach and N. Pevsner, *The Buildings of England. Yorkshire, West Riding: Leeds, Bradford and the North* (London 2009), p. 505; M. Carter, 'Abbot William Marshall and the Architectural Development of Kirkstall Abbey, Yorkshire, in the Later Middle Ages', *Journal of Medieval Monastic Studies* 1 (2012), pp. 115–42.

⁴⁶ J. Wardell, *An Historical Account of Kirkstall Abbey* (Leeds, 1890), p. 34.

⁴⁷ *The Register and Records of Holm Cultram*, ed. F. Grainger and W. G. Collingwood, Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society Record Series 7 (Kendal, 1929), p. 149.



Fig. 2 Holm Cultram Abbey, porch built by Abbot Robert Chamber in 1507.
Photo: author.

Some of the furnishings provided by abbots for their monastic churches also survive, notably the choir-stalls from Whalley Abbey which were removed at the Dissolution to the nearby parish church. The initials WW on one of the misericords suggest that the stalls were commissioned during the abbacy of William of Whalley (1418–34),⁴⁸ a conclusion supported by a reference to the induction of Abbot John Eccles in 1438 ‘in nova stalla’.⁴⁹ Bench-ends and screens from Jervaulx Abbey survive at St Andrew’s, Aysgarth, Yorkshire. The initials HM or HW of an unidentified abbot decorate one of the bench-ends (fig. 3) and an intact screen. A second bench-end is carved with the rebus of William Heslington, abbot of the monastery from 1475 to 1510. A fragment of another screen has the initials of Adam Sedbar (1533–7), the final abbot of Jervaulx, and the date 1536,⁵⁰ just one year before the

⁴⁸ C. Tracy, *English Gothic Choir-Stalls, 1400–1540* (Woodbridge, 1990), p. 1.

⁴⁹ BL MS Harley 1830, fol. 24r.

⁵⁰ The intact screen and bench-ends were formerly attributed to the workshop of the Ripon carver William Bromfeld: see J. S. Purvis, ‘The Ripon School of Carvers



Fig. 3 St Andrew's, Aysgarth, bench-end carved with the monogram of an unidentified abbot of Jervaulx. Photo: author.

abbot was executed and the monastery brutally suppressed following the Pilgrimage of Grace.

A black mourning vestment from Jervaulx decorated with Last Judgement imagery and the rebus of Abbot Robert Thornton also survives.⁵¹ Illuminated books showing evidence of abbatial patronage are also extant, including the richly decorated two-volume chartulary from Furness Abbey which has an introductory verse recording that the work was undertaken by John Stell, a monk of the house, in 1412 at the order of Abbot William Dalton (1406–18),⁵² who also donated a decorated manuscript comprising a collection of theological works to his monastery.⁵³ Books were also acquired by abbots for their personal use. The most striking example is the breviary of Abbot Huby now in the library of Christ Church, Oxford. It has added illuminated borders and initials in the Renaissance style, and the shield in the base of the opening page of the psalter is illuminated with Huby's monogram and motto (fig. 4).⁵⁴

An enamelled roundel from Rievaulx Abbey with the arms of Abbot John Inkeley (1449–63) demonstrates that northern Cistercian abbots were patrons of luxury metalwork.⁵⁵ The quality of liturgical metalwork in Cistercian abbeys is suggested by the morsers from Warden Abbey, Bedfordshire, which are decorated with the monogram of Abbot Walter Clifton (c. 1377–97).⁵⁶ Abbot Clifton was also a patron of stained glass, panels in the parish church at Old Warden depicting both himself and St Martha.⁵⁷ Although no significant stained glass has survived from a

and the Lost Choir-Stalls of Bridlington Priory', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* 29 (1929), 157–201 (pp. 165–7). This attribution has been challenged and re-assessed: see Tracy, *English Gothic Choir-Stalls*, pp. 25, 72.

⁵¹ London, V&A, 697–1902, discussed by M. Carter, 'Remembrance, Liturgy and Status in a Late Medieval English Cistercian Abbey: The Mourning Vestment of Abbot Robert Thornton of Jervaulx (1510–33)', *Textile History* 41 (2010), 145–60.

⁵² The first part of the chartulary is TNA, DL 42/3, the second, BL MS Add. 33244. The inscription appears in BL MS Add. 33244, fol. 2r. For illustrations and a description of the manuscript, see K. L. Scott, *Later Gothic Manuscripts, 1390–1490*, 2 vols., Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles 6 (London, 1996), I, fig. 145–9, II, 121–3.

⁵³ Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Jones 48.

⁵⁴ Oxford, Christ Church College, e. 8. 29. It is discussed in M. Carter, 'The Breviary of Abbot Marmaduke Huby: Renaissance Design and Religious Change in Early Sixteenth-Century Yorkshire', *Bodleian Library Record* 21 (2009), 17–34.

⁵⁵ G. C. Dunning, 'Heraldic and Decorated Metalwork and Other Finds from Rievaulx Abbey, Yorkshire', *Antiquaries Journal* 45 (1965), 53–63.

⁵⁶ M. Carter, 'Cracking the Code: The Warden Abbey Morsers, Luxury Metalwork and Patronage at a Cistercian Abbey in the Late Middle Ages', *Antiquaries Journal* 91 (2011), 175–93.

⁵⁷ For discussions of the panels, see R. Marks, 'Cistercian Window Glass in England and Wales', in *Cistercian Art and Architecture in the British Isles*, pp. 211–27

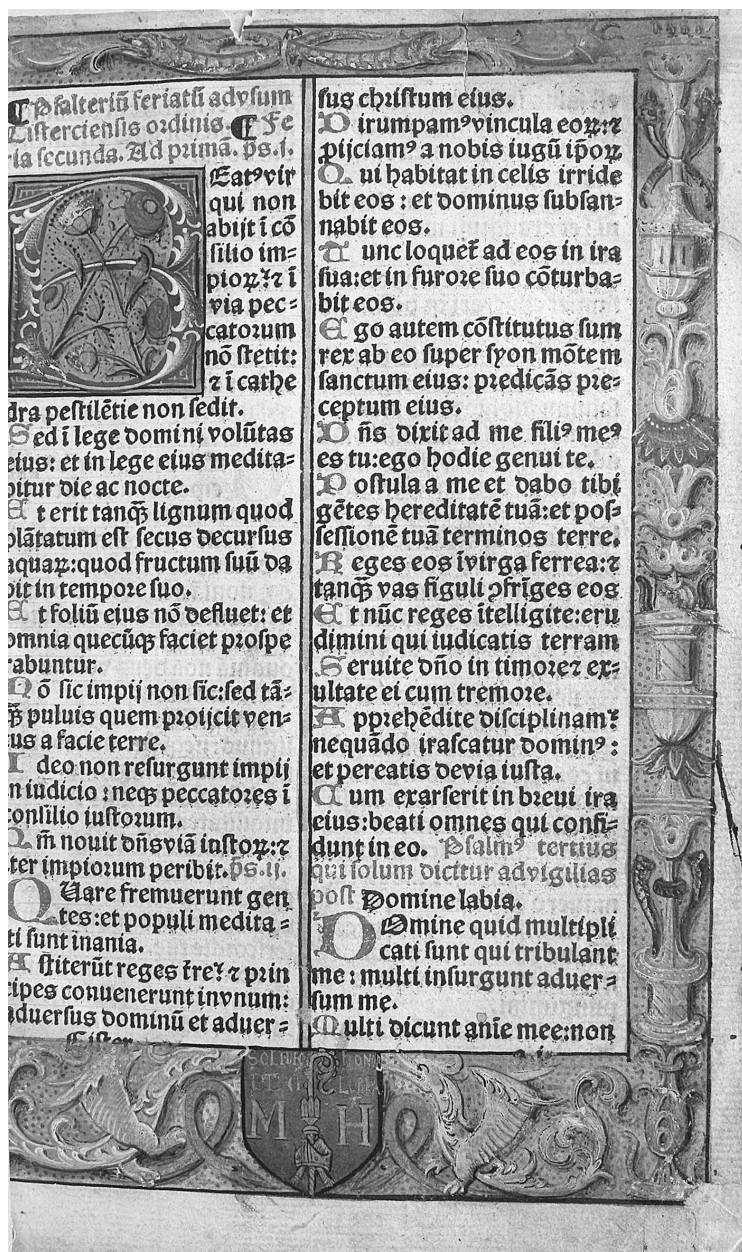


Fig. 4 Breviary of Abbot Marmaduke Huby, the first page of the Psalter with Huby's monogram and motto illuminated in the base. Reproduced with the kind permission of the Governing Body of Christ Church, Oxford.

Cistercian house in the northern counties, it must be the case that the abbots of these houses both commissioned, and were depicted in, similar panels.

Abbots were also patrons of domestic architecture, improving both their own accommodation and that of their community. Cistercian abbots had always occupied a room or lodging apart from the rest of the community, and by the early thirteenth century the order's abbeys in England were being equipped with separate houses for the abbot.⁵⁸ In the later Middle Ages these houses were renovated and completely rebuilt at several abbeys, including Fountains. There are now only scanty remains of the abbot's house, which was situated to the east of the main monastic nucleus. However, excavations in this area in the mid nineteenth century uncovered evidence of its rebuilding by Huby, including 'stones bearing the well-known initials MH'.⁵⁹ Abbots were also concerned with the comfort of their communities, which included the provision of misericords, or meat refectories. Cistercian monks originally had a strictly vegetarian diet. This was relaxed by the *Benedictina* in 1335, and by c. 1480 it had become the practice to eat meat on Sundays, Tuesdays and Thursdays.⁶⁰ Abbot Darnton provided the community at Fountains with a misericord adjoining his own residence at approximately the same time, its floor tiles inscribed with the abbot's initials.⁶¹

Evidence of patronage can be found outside monastic precincts, for example at the granges of Fountains, several of which were rebuilt during Huby's abbacy. These include Bewerley Grange where the abbot's initials and motto appear on the east end of the chapel.⁶² Fragments of similar inscriptions occur at Brimham Grange,⁶³ the monastery's accounts for 1457–8 recording the expenses incurred by the abbot during his visits there.⁶⁴ At the Dissolution silver plate for the abbot's use at Brimham included a chalice, a goblet and salt of silver

(pp. 225–6) and R. Marks, *Stained Glass in England During the Middle Ages* (London, 1993), pp. 11, 19, 169, 174, 180.

⁵⁸ For discussion of the lodgings of Cistercian abbots and their development, see T. Coomans, *L'abbaye de Villers-en-Brabant: Construction, configuration et signification d'une abbaye cistercienne gothique*, Cîteaux: Studia et Documenta 11 (Brussels, 2000), p. 455.

⁵⁹ *Memorials of Fountains*, II, 143. For a description of Huby's development of the abbot's lodging, see Hope, 'Fountains Abbey', 335–9 and G. Coppack, *Fountains Abbey: The Cistercians in Northern England*, 2nd edn (Stroud, 2004), p. 102.

⁶⁰ Lekai, *Cistercians: Ideals and Reality*, pp. 73, 371.

⁶¹ Coppack, *Fountains Abbey*, p. 97.

⁶² N. Pevsner and E. Radcliffe, *The Buildings of England. Yorkshire: West Riding*, 2nd edn (Harmondsworth, 1967), p. 100; C. Platt, *The Monastic Grange in Medieval England: A Reassessment* (London, 1969), p. 189.

⁶³ Platt, *The Monastic Grange*, p. 192.

⁶⁴ *Memorials of Fountains*, III, 25, 52, 67.

and seven silver spoons.⁶⁵ Several of the granges of Newminster Abbey were also rebuilt, but here the architecture appears to have been concerned with defence rather than luxury. Abbot John Butler (c. 1453–79) erected a tower at Rothley,⁶⁶ and by the Suppression the granges at West Ritton and Nunnykirk had also been fortified.⁶⁷

There is also evidence of conventual or abbatial patronage at appropriated churches. The bursar's account of Fountains Abbey for 1457–8 records the purchase of a retable for the church at Crosthwaite costing 26s. 8d.⁶⁸ In the nineteenth century there was 'ancient stall work' with the arms of Kirkstall Abbey at the church of St Mary, Barnoldswick, the original site of the abbey.⁶⁹ In 1620 Roger Dodsworth recorded the arms of Byland Abbey glazed into the east window of Bubwith church, accompanied by the inscriptions 'Orate Pro Abbate de Biland, qui fieri fecit medietatem hujus finestre' ('pray for the abbot of Byland, who made half this window') and 'Arma domus de Biland' ('arms of the house of Byland').⁷⁰ There are also instances of abbots contributing to buildings in which their monasteries had no direct interest. During his short tenure as abbot of Kirkstall, Robert Killingbeck (1499–1501) contributed to the rebuilding of nearby Leeds parish church, a now lost inscription from its east end recording that he donated stone for the construction of 'Our Lady's service', or Lady Chapel.⁷¹ The abbot's toponym suggests that he was from a hamlet within the parish of Leeds.

Sepulchral monuments of abbots also provide interesting evidence of patronage, ranging from the humble cross slab in the nave of Rievaulx Abbey of Abbot Henry Burton (1423–9),⁷² to the chest tomb of Abbot Chamber at Holm Cultram, which is sculpted with the abbot's rebus and depicts the abbot and his entire community (fig. 5).⁷³

⁶⁵ Ibid., I, 293–4.

⁶⁶ *Chartularium abbathiae de Novo Monasterio ordinis Cisterciensis fundatae anno MCXXXVII*, ed. J. T. Fowler, Surtees Society 66 (Durham, 1878), p. 262.

⁶⁷ C. J. Bates, 'The Border Holds of Northumberland', *Archaeologia Aeliana* 2nd s. 14 (1891), 1–465 (p. 21).

⁶⁸ *Memorials of Fountains*, III, 52.

⁶⁹ J. C. Cox, *Bench-Ends in English Churches* (London, 1916), p. 179. The bench-end is no longer there, but the arms of the abbey are sculpted in *ex situ* stonework which is now incorporated into the east wall of the chancel. For the grange, see Platt, *The Monastic Grange*, p. 189.

⁷⁰ *Yorkshire Church Notes, 1619–1631 by Roger Dodsworth*, ed. W. Clay, Yorkshire Archaeological Society Record Series 34 (Leeds, 1904), p. 247.

⁷¹ T. D. Whitaker, *Loidis and Elmete* (Leeds, 1816), p. 50.

⁷² P. Fergusson, G. Coppack and S. Harrison, *Rievaulx Abbey, North Yorkshire* (London, 2006), p. 9.

⁷³ M. Carter, 'hys . . . days here liven was. The Monument of Abbot Robert Chamber at Holm Cultram', *Church Monuments* 27 (2012), 38–52.



Fig. 5 Holm Cultram Abbey, monument of Abbot Chamber. Photo: Pat Bull.

Cistercian attitudes towards internal patronage

The surviving material evidence can be augmented by documentary sources, especially the chronicle of Meaux Abbey. The author, Abbot Thomas Burton (ruled 1396–9; died, 1437), stated in its preface that his intention was the glorification of his predecessors (a further indication that patronage could be over-attributed to abbots). Burton was concerned that ‘the memory of the illustrious men, the abbots of Meaux, is almost lost on account of sloth and neglect, and I grieve that their light is obscured’.⁷⁴ He describes how almost all his predecessors added to or improved the buildings and furnishings of their monastery in some way. The abbey’s church was rebuilt under successive abbots between c. 1200 and the consecration of the high altar in 1247.⁷⁵ At the same time, Meaux’s abbots devoted resources to the construction and equipping of the claustral and domestic buildings to serve the needs of the choir monks and lay brethren. This work is described in as much detail as grander architectural projects, an indication that the paternal responsibility of an abbot was to focus his building activities on the physical needs of his community.

The chronicle also describes the furnishings which individual abbots commissioned for the church. These included the stalls for the choir

⁷⁴ *Chronica monasterii de Melsa*, I, 71.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, I, 326.

monks provided by Abbot Michael Brun (1235–49).⁷⁶ Abbot Roger of Driffeld (1286–1310) placed two retables decorated with pictures on the high altar,⁷⁷ which Abbot Adam de Skyrne (1310–39) further decorated with an altarpiece painted with the evangelists, prophets and apostles.⁷⁸ Abbot Hugh of Leven (1339–49) commissioned a remarkable figure of the crucified Christ for the rood.⁷⁹ The altars of St Benedict and St Peter were embellished with painted retables by Abbot William de Scarborough (1372–96), who also installed the Jesus bell in the abbey's campanile.⁸⁰ The continuation of the chronicle details Burton's own contributions to the art and architecture of Meaux, which included the provision of three more bells for the tower, the repair of the cloister, the construction of a mill and the fitting out of a chamber for his predecessor.⁸¹

Burton's comments about the patronage of Abbot William (1249–69) provide important insights into the attitudes of late medieval Cistercian abbots towards patronage. Burton describes how the abbot built a bell tower and placed within it a great bell called Benedict.⁸² The General Chapter at Cîteaux decreed in 1157: 'let stone towers with bells not be built'.⁸³ This prohibition was expanded upon in a codification of Cistercian legislation in 1237 to state: 'let stone towers with bells not be built nor [wooden] towers of extravagant height [be built]'.⁸⁴ This decree was repeated in the codification of the order's legislation issued in 1257, approximately the time when the tower was built at Meaux.⁸⁵ However, this regulation was replaced in 1289 with a general decree prohibiting 'novelty' and 'superfluity' in the order's buildings. This clause was again ratified in 1316 and was so vague that it could be interpreted as allowing towers.⁸⁶ Burton was therefore writing his chronicle at a time when the order's legislation on towers no longer applied. Indeed, it is clear that he saw nothing wrong in the building of the

⁷⁶ Ibid., II, 63.

⁷⁷ Ibid., II, 237.

⁷⁸ Ibid., II, 312.

⁷⁹ Ibid., III, xi, 35.

⁸⁰ Ibid., III, 224.

⁸¹ Ibid., III, 240–2.

⁸² Ibid., II, 119.

⁸³ 'Turres lapideae ad campanas non fiant': C. Norton, 'Table of Cistercian Legislation on Art and Architecture', in *Cistercian Art and Architecture in the British Isles*, pp. 315–93 (p. 328).

⁸⁴ 'Turres lapideae ad campanas non fiant, nec lignee altitudinis immoderate': ibid., p. 368.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 378.

⁸⁶ Norton and Park, 'Introduction', p. 8; Norton, 'Table of Cistercian Legislation', p. 384.

bell tower by his thirteenth-century predecessor. Far from admonishing Abbot William for contravening the order's legislation, he praised his sanctity, virtue and maintenance of discipline within his monastery. Moreover, he records that Abbot William was buried in a prestigious location, before the lectern in the chapter house, and that miracles were attributed to him.⁸⁷

The so-called 'President Book' of Fountains Abbey provides further insights into the attitudes of late medieval Cistercian abbots towards patronage. A *gesta abbatum* written in the mid fifteenth century, it records the election, death and burial of the monastery's abbots from its foundation in 1132 to 1442.⁸⁸ It is possible that its author was the scholarly Abbot John Greenwell (1442–71), who himself initiated a programme of repair and renovation of the abbey church.⁸⁹ Only very brief details of the deeds of individual abbots are provided in the 'President Book', but the abbacy of John of Kent (1219–47) is described in unusual detail, the author recording that 'he built and finished the Nine Altars, the cloister, the infirmary, the pavement, and guesthouse, to receive Christ's poor as well as the great ones of the world.'⁹⁰

Patronage was still considered estimable by Cistercian abbots at the very end of the Middle Ages. In 1517 Abbot William Helmsley of Rievaulx (1513–30) wrote to the abbot of Cîteaux asking to be allowed to join Marmaduke Huby as one of the reformers of the northern province, noting the 'many good things' Huby had undertaken at Fountains, where he was 'the cultivator of discipline, the planter of piety . . . and the new repairer of his church'. The abbot of Rievaulx also commented favourably on Huby's patronage of St Bernard's, the Cistercian college at Oxford, writing:

We can say for sure, he built a hall, a very beautiful chapel with glass in the windows, and he erected the walls of the fourth and last part of the forementioned college until the roof . . . because the forementioned abbot of Fountains had a strong love and desire to build and raise this college, and to provide it with vestments, ornaments and the foretold

⁸⁷ *Chronica monasterii de Melsa*, II, p. 119.

⁸⁸ *Memorials of Fountains*, I, 170–95; translated in A. W. Oxford, *The Ruins of Fountains Abbey* (Oxford, 1926), pp. 127–41.

⁸⁹ Archaeological excavations at Fountains have unearthed stratified numismatic evidence dating the tiling of the south transept floor to Greenwell's abbacy: see R. Gilyard-Beer and G. Coppack, 'Excavations at Fountains Abbey, North Yorkshire, 1979–80: The Early Development of the Monastery', *Archaeologia* 108 (1986), 147–88 (p. 160). The payments to glaziers and masons recorded in the bursar's accounts for 1457–8 also date to Greenwell's abbacy: see *Memorials of Fountains*, III, 56, 57, 85.

⁹⁰ Oxford, *Ruins of Fountains Abbey*, p. 134.

necessities, and above all other things for books from a charitable collection among the fathers of the Kingdom to establish a library for the use of the students there.⁹¹

The purposes of patronage: memory, commemoration and status

The comments of Abbot Helmsley can leave little doubt that patronage was seen as a pious act, a component of the competent and fatherly administration of his house by an abbot. The chronicles from these northern houses also suggest that Cistercian communities had an awareness of the architectural and artistic development of their monasteries, and the specific contributions of individual abbots. Their patronage provided a visual reminder of the history of Fountains, Meaux and doubtless other houses. Grateful generations of monks no doubt rewarded the generosity and diligence of deceased abbots with prayers for their eternal rest. Although it is outside the geographical parameters set for this study, an inscription on the west front of the church at the Cistercian abbey of Valle Crucis, Denbighshire, provides explicit evidence of the commemorative purpose of patronage, recording as it does the benefaction of Abbot Adam (c. 1330–40) with a request that his soul may rest in peace.⁹²

Abbots appear to have been eager to make a distinct contribution to their monastery's art and architecture. Burton records that several of his predecessors at Meaux discontinued work commenced by a predecessor, instead focusing their attention and resources on a project of their choosing. For instance, Abbot Adam of Skyrne (1310–39) started work on a chapel above the monastery's great gate, but work on the structure was discontinued and removed by Abbot Hugh of Leven (1339–49), whose own patronage included the commissioning of the crucifix for the rood and the covering of the monks' dormitory with lead.⁹³

⁹¹ *Letters to Cîteaux*, pp. 239–41. In 1503, Huby entered into an agreement with the architect William Orchard for 'the structure of the building of Bernard College': see W. H. Stevenson and H. E. Salter, *Early History of St John's College, Oxford*, Oxford Historical Society 1 (Oxford, 1939), p. 28. Orchard (fl. 1468–1505) was a prominent Oxford architect, who also worked at Balliol and Magdalen: see J. Harvey, *English Mediaeval Architects: A Biographical Dictionary Down to 1550*, rev. edn (Gloucester, 1984), pp. 220–2.

⁹² +ADAM.ABBAS FECIT.HOC.OPVS:N.PACE/QVIESCAT:AME': D. M. Robinson, *The Cistercians in Wales: Architecture and Archaeology, 1130–1540* (London, 2006), pp. 141, 290.

⁹³ *Chronica monasterii de Melsa*, III, 35–6.

Patronage of a new project appears to have been a rite of passage for a Cistercian abbot and a way of announcing his election to office.⁹⁴ Robert Chamber was elected to the abbacy of Holm Cultram in 1507.⁹⁵ He commemorated the start of his abbacy by constructing a porch at the west front of his monastery's church.⁹⁶ An inscription on the doorway arch (fig. 2) records that it was the product of Chamber's patronage and dates the work to 1507: 'Robertus Chamber fecit fieri hoc opus, A^o. Dⁿⁱ. M'D'VII' ('Robert Chamber caused this work to be made, A[nn]o D[omi]ni 1507'). The abbot also recorded his patronage by placing his rebus, a chained bear, punning on his first name and surname, beneath a crozier with his initials to the side, on a corbel to the south of the door.⁹⁷

The use of inscriptions and heraldry by monastic superiors to advertise their status and patronage was common in the late Middle Ages.⁹⁸ The earliest surviving evidence of inscriptional or heraldic evidence to record the patronage of a Cistercian abbot in England and Wales is the inscription at the west front of Valle Crucis noted above.⁹⁹ The use of both personal and institutional heraldry appears to have emerged shortly after. The seal used by Abbot John Lindley of Whalley in 1362 was decorated with the arms of his abbey,¹⁰⁰ and the early fifteenth century seal of Abbot Robert Gower of Jervaulx (1399–1425) features both the arms of the abbey and those of his family, and in 1417 the abbot was using a signet ring inscribed with his personal arms.¹⁰¹

This heraldry not only advertised patronage, but also asserted ecclesiastical status. In the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, abbots of several northern Cistercian abbeys acquired the right to the mitre and other ornaments and privileges normally reserved for bishops. Benedictine abbots had been mitred since the eleventh century, and by the end of the late Middle Ages the superiors of many of the richer

⁹⁴ For comparable Benedictine evidence, see Luxford, *Art and Architecture of English Benedictine Monasteries*, p. 55.

⁹⁵ H. Summerson, *Medieval Carlisle: The City and the Borders from the Late Eleventh Century to the Mid-Sixteenth Century*, 2 vols., Cumberland and Westmorland Archaeological and Antiquarian Society Extra S. 25 (Kendal, 1993), II, 471.

⁹⁶ For a description, see Harrison, 'The Architecture of Holm Cultram', pp. 244–5.

⁹⁷ Gilbanks, 'Some Records of a Cistercian Abbey', pp. 120–1.

⁹⁸ For discussions of the use of heraldry by late medieval abbots and priors, see M. Heale, 'Mitres and Arms: Aspects of the Self-Representation of the Monastic Superior in Late Medieval England', in *Self-Representation of Medieval Religious Communities: The British Isles in Context*, ed. A. Müller and K Stöber (Berlin, 2009), pp. 99–124.

⁹⁹ Robinson, *The Cistercians in Wales*, pp. 141, 290.

¹⁰⁰ R. H. Ellis, *Catalogue of Seals in the Public Records Office. Monastic Seals* (London, 1986), p. 97.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

Benedictine monasteries in Britain had the right to use the episcopal insignia.¹⁰² However, it was not until the early fifteenth century that any Cistercian abbots in England were granted the *pontificalia*. The first appears to have been Abbot Gower of Jervaulx who received the privilege when attending the Council of Pisa in 1409,¹⁰³ and soon after he was depicted wearing the mitre on his seal. In c. 1413, the anti-pope John XXIII granted similar rights to Abbot John Ripon (1410–34) of Fountains. However, Pope Martin V revoked these privileges in 1429.¹⁰⁴ It was not until 1459 that Abbot Greenwell once again secured the right to the episcopal insignia for the abbots of Fountains.¹⁰⁵ One side of a sculpted late fifteenth century window head in the chapel of the Nine Altars at Fountains depicts a cleric wearing a mitre. This is probably Abbot Darnton as the other side is carved with the abbot's rebus.¹⁰⁶

Huby's monogram also incorporated a mitre, and symbols of his status and office feature prominently on a stone carved with his rebus. The letters of his name are composed of a twisting dragon-like creature and the 'h' incorporates a bird, probably a hobby, punning on the abbot's surname. In the centre is a crosier fitted with a *sudarium*, a cloth attached near the knop to protect the metal of the staff from tarnishing and the abbot's hand from its cold touch. It is also notable that the mitre depicted on Huby's rebus, like that of an unidentified abbot of Jervaulx on a bench end at Aysgarth, is a jewel-encrusted *mitra pretiosa* (jewelled mitre). Papal grants for abbatial use of the *pontificalia* became more generous in the later Middle Ages, and often, as in the case of Abbot John Paslew of Whalley, gave permission for the use of the jewelled mitre.¹⁰⁷ Such mitres, with edges of silver and gilt, set with pearls, stones and silver, are listed in inventories from both Fountains and Whalley, as are silver crosiers.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰² For a discussion of the acquisition of the *pontificalia* by monastic superiors in the British Isles, see Heale, 'Mitres and Arms', pp. 99–109.

¹⁰³ CPL, VI, 159.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., VII, 144.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., XII, 34. Ripon possibly received this grant when eliciting the anti-pope's support in his disputed election as abbot of Fountains in c. 1413–14, for which, see E. F. Jacob, 'One of Swan's Cases: the Disputed Election at Fountains Abbey, 1410–16', in *Essays in Later Medieval History*, ed. E. F. Jacob (Manchester, 1968), pp. 79–97.

¹⁰⁶ Hope, 'Fountains Abbey', p. 296; J. France, *The Cistercians in Medieval Art* (Stroud, 1998), pp. 119–21.

¹⁰⁷ CPL, XX, 492–3. For a discussion of grants for use of the jewelled mitre, see Heale, 'Mitres and Arms', p. 103.

¹⁰⁸ *Memorials of Fountains*, I, 289–90; M. E. C. Walcott, 'Inventory of Whalley Abbey', *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire* 19 (1867), 103–10 (p. 107).

Much as Cistercian abbots used patronage to proclaim their status, their patronage was also an act of piety. Huby's motto was 'Soli Deo honor et gloria' ('to God alone be honour and glory'), the biblical source of which is 1 Timothy 1.17. The motto appears on all Huby's extant architectural projects, such as the tower at Fountains, the chapel at Beverley, as well as on floor tiles from Fountains,¹⁰⁹ and is also illuminated with his monogram in his breviary. The motto had a dual purpose, not only recording the abbot's patronage, but also dedicating the object to the praise and glory of God. Huby is well known as a reformer and for his dedication to his order.¹¹⁰ He asserted these qualities by placing his motto and lengthy liturgical inscriptions around the upper storeys of his great bell tower at Fountains. The inscriptions have their source in the offices sung at a Cistercian monastery on a Sunday and all can be found in the order's breviary. Their position on the tower follows the structure of the monastic day.¹¹¹ It is notable that reforming Cistercian abbots such as Huby placed great emphasis on the correct observation of the offices and following the rhythm of the monastic bells.¹¹²

The abbot also directed his patronage towards saints to whom he was devoted. The feasts of several English saints, including St Oswald on 5 August and St Wilfrid on 12 August, have been added in manuscript to the calendar of Huby's printed breviary.¹¹³ St Oswald (d. 642) was king of Northumbria and before his death in battle did much to promote Christianity within his kingdom. He soon became the focus of a cult that achieved international fame, his head and other relics being enshrined in Durham Cathedral Priory. His cult remained popular after the Norman Conquest and was enthusiastically promoted by the twelfth-century archbishop of York, Henry Murdac, who had been abbot of Fountains.¹¹⁴ Huby and the community at Fountains appear to have had a special devotion to this saint. In the early fifteenth century, the abbey was even using the saint's fictional arms (four rampant lions between a cross) on

¹⁰⁹ J. Stopford, *Medieval Floor Tiles of Northern England. Pattern and Purpose: Production Between the 13th and 16th Century* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 54, 236–8.

¹¹⁰ Talbot, 'Marmaduke Huby'; D. Baker, 'Old Wine in New Bottles: Attitudes to Reform in Fifteenth-Century England', in *Renaissance and Renewal in Church History*, ed. D. Baker, *Studies in Church History* 14 (Oxford, 1977), pp. 193–211.

¹¹¹ For a discussion of the inscriptions and their relationship with the liturgy of the Cistercians, see Carter, 'The Tower of Abbot Marmaduke Huby', 274–9.

¹¹² G. G. Perry, 'Visitation of the Monastery of Thame, 1526', *EHR* 3 (1888), 704–22 (p. 713).

¹¹³ Carter, 'The Breviary of Abbot Marmaduke Huby', p. 27.

¹¹⁴ D. Rollason, 'St Oswald in Post-Conquest England', in *Oswald: Northumbrian King to European Saint*, ed. C. Stancliffe and E. Cambridge (Stamford, 1995) pp. 164–74.

its seal.¹¹⁵ The abbey possessed a relic of St Oswald, and Huby obtained official permission from the Cistercian General Chapter in 1495 for the liturgical celebration of his feast at Fountains; a year later he sought authorization for the observation of the feast at the daughter houses of Fountains and all Cistercian monasteries in the province of York.¹¹⁶ Huby rebuilt the chapel at Winksley, a grange of the monastery, which was dedicated to SS Oswald and Cuthbert, and as usual he recorded his patronage by inscribing his initials and motto, which was adapted to express his devotion to the two saints: 'MH, In Honore Dei et Sancti Cuthberti et Oswaldi'.¹¹⁷

There is also evidence of Cistercian devotion to St Wilfrid (c. 633–709). Wilfrid was an appropriate focus for such devotion as he introduced Benedictine monasticism to northern England at the monastery he founded in Ripon. The medieval minster in the town was jointly dedicated to St Peter and St Wilfrid, and was extensively rebuilt in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.¹¹⁸ In 1457, Abbot Greenwell incurred expenses of 8d during his journey to Ripon to celebrate St Wilfrid's day and also spent 7d. on a *signum*,¹¹⁹ the 'sign' or pilgrim badge of the saint.¹²⁰ Huby even attempted to appropriate St Wilfrid's cult for his abbey. The antiquary John Leland visited Ripon in c. 1538 and recorded in his *Itinerary* that Huby had taken steps to establish a cell of monks from Fountains on the site of Wilfrid's monastery, based around its former chapel, writing:

One Marmaduke . . . abbate of Fountaines, a man familiar with Salvage Archebisshop of York, obtainid this chapelle of hym and prebendaries of Ripon: and having it gyven onto hym and to his abbay pullid down the est end of it, a pece of exceeding auncient wark, and buildid a fair pece of new werk with squarid stones for it, leving the west ende of very old werk standing.

Leland also records the presence of some inscriptions on the new wall of the chapel built by Huby naming Anglo-Saxon saints,¹²¹ perhaps

¹¹⁵ C. T. Clay, 'The Seals of the Religious Houses of Yorkshire', *Archaeologia* 78 (1928), 1–36 (p. 17), illustrated pl. III.2.

¹¹⁶ Rollason, 'St Oswald', pp. 164, 177.

¹¹⁷ *Memorials of Fountains*, I, 152.

¹¹⁸ P. Leach and N. Pevsner, *The Buildings of England. Yorkshire, West Riding: Leeds, Bradford and the North* (London, 2009), pp. 645–6, 655–8.

¹¹⁹ *Memorials of Fountains*, III, 103, 246.

¹²⁰ For pilgrimage to Ripon and the relics of St Wilfrid, see D. Webb, *Pilgrimage in Medieval England* (London, 2000), pp. 83–4.

¹²¹ *The Itinerary of John Leland in or About the Years 1535–1543*, ed. L. Toulmin Smith, 5 vols. (London, 1907–10), I, 80; *Memorials of Fountains*, I, 152.

suggesting that the abbot recorded his patronage with an inscription similar to that found at Winksley.¹²²

Monastic patrons were frequently buried in close proximity to the work they had commissioned.¹²³ In 1349 Abbot Hugh of Leven was buried before the crucifix he had caused to be made for the rood screen at Meaux.¹²⁴ The abbey's chronicle records that pilgrims flocked to the monastery to see this miracle-working image, and doubtless Abbot Hugh hoped to benefit from their prayers.¹²⁵ Burial before the rood was an especially desirable location. Referring to the location of the crucifixion above the entrance of rood screens, the German Carthusian Ludolphus of Saxony (c. 1300–78) stated in his *Vita Christi* 'no one can enter from the Church militant into the Church triumphant except by means of the cross'.¹²⁶ The fragments of the Romanesque wooden figure of Christ crucified from South Cerney, Gloucestershire, represent a rare survival of a rood from medieval England. In his recent analysis of this sculpture Richard Marks argued that it was an example of a *Triumphkreuz*.¹²⁷ The iconography of continental *Triumphkreuze*, such as that at Halberstadt (c. 1215–20), with its resurrecting figure of Adam at the base, provides a further explanation of why Abbot Hugh would have thought that burial before the rood was desirable: the redemption provided by Christ's sacrifice on the cross, and the hope that the soul lying at its foot would, like Adam, be saved and resurrected.¹²⁸

Conclusion

Cistercian abbots dominated their communities, lavishly spending the resources of their abbeys on their patronage of art and architecture.

¹²² *Memorials of Fountains*, I, 152. Huby's work on the site of Wilfrid's monastery is discussed by R. A. Hall, 'Antiquaries and Archaeologists in and Around Ripon Minster', in *Yorkshire Monasticism: Archaeology, Art and Architecture from the 7th to the 16th Centuries*, ed. R. L. Hoey, British Archaeological Association Conference Transactions 16 (Leeds, 1995), pp. 12–30 (pp. 14–15).

¹²³ For Benedictine examples, see Luxford, *Art and Architecture of English Benedictine Monasteries*, pp. 80–1.

¹²⁴ *Chronica monasterii de Melsa*, III, 37.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, III, 35–6.

¹²⁶ Quoted in J. E. Jung, 'Beyond the Barrier: The Unifying Role of the Choir Screen in Gothic Churches', *Art Bulletin* 82 (2000), 622–57 (p. 633).

¹²⁷ R. Marks, 'From Langford to South Cerney: The Rood in Anglo-Norman England', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 165 (2012), 172–210.

¹²⁸ For a discussion of the significance of burial before the rood, see D. Park, 'Medieval Burials and Monuments', in *The Temple Church in London: History, Architecture and Art*, ed. R. Griffith-Jones and D. Park (Woodbridge, 2010), pp. 67–91 (pp. 77–8).

Indeed, the scale and focus of their patronage was little different from that seen elsewhere in the contemporary English Church. Although some abbots secured a separate income that enabled them to be maintained in a dignity befitting their office, it was by and large the general income of the monastery that funded this patronage, and accordingly it was often directed to the material comforts and needs of their communities.

Thus, the rebuilding of conventual churches and the provision of vestments, stalls and luxury altar plate were rewarded with the prayers of the grateful monks for the repose of the souls of their father abbots. Late medieval Cistercian abbots themselves certainly believed this patronage to be a responsibility of their office and worthy of esteem. Therefore, they proudly advertised their contribution to their convents' art and architecture with inscriptions, mottos and heraldry. Yet, crucially, their patronage was more than simple self-aggrandisement, and abbots such as Clifton at Warden, Chamber at Holm Cultram and Huby at Fountains used patronage to express their piety and devotions in the quest for the everlasting salvation of their souls.