HOUSE OF CISTERCIAN MONKS - THE ABBEY OF GARENDON

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Garendon Abbey was founded in 1133 by Robert, Earl of Leicester. (fn. 1) It was in all probability a daughter house of Waverley, the earliest Cistercian monastery to be established in England. (fn. 2) The founder endowed the abbey with 5 carucates and 3 virgates of land at Garendon, a burgage tenement at Leicester, and other lands at Dishley, Shepshed, and **Ringolthorp**. (fn. 3) During the 12th century various benefactors were granted to the abbeylands at Eastwell, (fn. 4) Ibstock, (fn. 5) Welby, (fn. 6) Burton on the Wolds, (fn. 7) and Stanton under Bardon, (fn. 8) inLeicestershire, at Costock (fn. 9) (Notts.), and at Heathcote (fn. 10) (Derbys.). The wild country of Charnwood Forest, in which Garendon lay, gave the monks opportunities for agricultural development of the type accomplished by many other Cistercian houses. Before the end of the 12thcentury granges had been established in the vicinity of the abbey at Garendon itself, Stanton, Dishley, and Ibstock, and farther afield at Burton on the Wolds, **Ringolthorp**, (fn. 11) Goadby, and Welby, (fn. 12) in eastern Leicestershire, the Peak, (fn. 13) and at Costock and Rempstone (Notts.). (fn. 14) The abbey seems to have carried on sheep farming on a considerable scale; in 1225 the abbot obtained permission to export wool to Flanders or elsewhere, (fn. 15) and there are references to sheep-folds at the granges. (fn. 16) So far as can be discovered from the extant cartulary of the house, (fn. 17) Garendon did not in the 12th century acquire such property as tithe, rents, and advowsons. (fn. 18) About the middle of the 13th century, however, the abbey was granted rents at Anstey. (fn. 19) In 1296 the grange at Rempstone was let out to farm, (fn. 20) and Swannington grange was farmed out in 1343. (fn. 21) In 1341 the abbey was granted the royal chapel or hermitage of Cripplegate, at London, and in 1343 the abbey had licence to acquire 4 messuages in London. (fn. 22) The advowson of Dishley was obtained in 1458, and the church was appropriated in the same year. (fn. 23)

Two daughter houses were founded from Garendon—Bordesley (1138) and Bittlesden(1147). (fn. 24) There are indications, however, that in the late 12th century the Cistercians of Garendon failed to live up to the highest standards of their Order. One of the abbots, Geoffrey, seems to have been a married man, (fn. 25) and one of the monks is said to have become a Jew. (fn. 26) The resignation of Abbot William in 1195 (fn. 27) was perhaps due to the displeasure of the general chapter of the Order at the Garendon lay brothers' habit of drinking beer. (fn. 28) A serious incident occurred in 1196, when the new abbot, Reynold, was attacked in the infirmary, and gravely wounded, by a lay brother. In consequence the general chapter of Citeaux ordered all the abbey's lay brothers to be dispersed. (fn. 29) The command was not carried out at once, and in 1197 the abbots of two other Cistercian houses were instructed to proceed to Garendon and enforce the will of the general chapter. (fn. 30) The abbey continued to contain lay brothers after this incident. (fn. 31) In 1219 the conventual church was dedicated by the Bishop of St. Asaph. (fn. 32) At the end of the 13thcentury the finances of the house seem to have been in an unsound condition; in 1295 the king, at the request of the abbot and convent, appointed a special keeper to apply the revenues of the abbey to the relief of its debts, providing reasonable maintenance for the abbot and monks meanwhile, (fn. 33) and two years later the abbot acknowledged that the house owed debts totalling £160. (fn. 34) The depredations of a powerful neighbour, John Cornyn, Earl of Buchan, may have contributed to the abbey's difficulties at this period. (fn. 35) In the middle of the 14th-century matters seem to have improved under the rule of Abbot Walter SeintCroys, an especial favourite of Edward III. (fn. 36) Nevertheless in 1360 the abbey was in need of reform, and the king appointed several laymen as guardians. (fn. 37) In 1368 a monk of the house was said to have harboured

robbers and to have assisted them in the commission of various offences, (fn. 38) while in 1382 the conventual church was polluted by two monks. (fn. 39)

In the 16th century, if not earlier, the Holy Cross at Garendon was an object of pilgrimage locally. (fn. 40) In 1535 the clear yearly value of the abbey's revenues was assessed at less than £160. (fn. 41) Cromwell's investigators, visiting Garendon in the following year, alleged that five of the monks were guilty of unnatural vice, and that three sought release from religion. (fn. 42) The county commissioners, who visited the house in June of the same year, gave a much more favourable report, stating that all the fourteen monks of the house desired to continue in religion, and that twelve of them were priests, of good conversation. Divine service was well maintained, though the large old monastery was partly ruinous. Five children and five impotent persons were maintained by the monks' charity, (fn. 43) and there were also two corrodiaries. (fn. 44) The abbey, however, was listed amongst the smaller monasteries dissolved in 1536. (fn. 45) The abbot obtained a pension of £30. (fn. 46) The First Minister's Account shows a net income of £100. 18s. 10½d. (fn. 47)

Abbots of Garendon

Robert, occurs 1144-5. (fn. 48)
Geoffrey, occurs 1147. (fn. 49)
Thurstan, occurs between 1155 and 1164. (fn. 50) Died 1189. (fn. 51)
William, elected 1189, (fn. 52) resigned 1195. (fn. 53)
Reynold, elected 1195, (fn. 54) occurs 1196. (fn. 55)
Adam, resigned 1219. (fn. 56)
William, resigned 1226. (fn. 57)
Reynold, elected 1226, (fn. 58) resigned 1234. (fn. 59)
Andrew, elected 1234. (fn. 60)
Simon, occurs 1251. (fn. 6l)
Robert, occurs 1275. (fn. 62)
Roger, occurs before 1281, (fn. 63)
Eustace, occurs 1290 (fn. 64) and 1294. (fn. 65)
John, occurs from 1299 (fn. 66) to 1330. (fn. 67)
Walter Seynt Croys, occurs 1340, (fn. 68) resignedin, or shortly before, 1350. (fn. 69)
John, occurs 1360. (fn. 70)
Thomas of Lughtburgh, (fn. 71) elected 1361, (fn. 72) occurs 1382. (fn. 73)
John, occurs 1406. (fn. 74)
Richard, occurs early 15th century. (fn. 75)
John Scarburghe, occurs 1418. (fn. 76)
John of London, occurs 1439. (fn. 77)
John Clareborough, occurs 1487. (fn. 78)
William Leycestre, occurs 1490. (fn. 79)
Thomas, occurs 1513. (fn. 80)
Thomas Siston, occurs 1535. (fn. 81)
Randolph Arnold, last abbot. (fn. 82)

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