

THE REGULAR CANONS AND THE USE OF FOOD, c. 1200–1350

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The Augustinian canons were openly much more carnivorous than the Cistercians and much more akin in their diet to the upper levels of secular society.¹

The black canons are regularly assumed to share the attributes of the worldly. The argument seems to follow that because they lived in the world as well as being enclosed, they easily assimilated the customs and practices of the secular society which they theoretically served. It is perhaps not surprising then that some of the definitions at the earliest chapters of the black canons, in 1223, 1237, and 1241, reiterated the rule not to consume meat during Advent.² Yet such reiteration does not necessarily condemn the monks for worldliness. It is possible that the earliest chapters in the 1220s were informed by the general aim of enforcing canonical reform.³ Reiteration, moreover, does not necessarily imply persistent neglect; medieval documents customarily practiced repetition as a method of confirmation to prevent backsliding. However, the canons are, nonetheless, incriminated and the present article examines the extent to which the charge can be maintained.

¹ C. M. Woolgar, 'Group Diets in Late Medieval England', in *Food in Medieval England: Diet and Nutrition*, ed. by C. M. Woolgar, D. Serjeantson, and T. Waldron (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 191–200 (p. 195).

² *Chapters of the Augustinian Canons*, ed. by H. E. Salter, Oxford Historical Society, 74 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1922), pp. 7, 24, 29.

³ M. Gibbs and J. Lang, *Bishops and Reform, 1215–1272 with Special Reference to the Lateran Council of 1215* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1934).

Little substantiated research exists about the ‘foodways’ (the cultural, social, and economic practices relating to the production and consumption of food) of the canons before *c.* 1350.⁴ Perhaps we can make an initial foray here by considering two interrelated aspects of the use of food by the canons: how gifts of food between the canons and secular society assisted in the negotiation of social and spiritual relationships, and concomitantly what can be inferred from those exchanges about the consumption of the canons. The chronology is confined to this period of one hundred and fifty years from 1200 to 1350 for two reasons: firstly, insufficient evidence is available before *c.* 1200, so we have an imposed *terminus a quo*; secondly, the impact of the canons after 1350 was far less than that of the mendicants and others. Both assumptions are intentionally broad but serve to focus our present analysis.

We are greatly handicapped by the lack of material available to us for this period. By and large, household accounts which provide gross details of quotidian diet elude us. However, to recover the everyday diet of the canons, one useful approach is to examine corrodies and study the assumptions there, by way of analogy, with what can be inferred as normal consumption by canons. A corrody was typically a maintenance allowance (in terms of provisions, particularly food) granted, here, by a canonry to an individual or family, in return for acquiring land from the individual. They also allow us to focus on little things which might mean a lot: the significance of fragments of food, liveries, and gifts, small quantities but high in social and symbolic value — high-status foodstuffs. Corrodies furnish some notion of the expected and perceived diet of the canons in the thirteenth and early fourteenth century.

Grants of corrodies only provide cursory detail. For example, in 1234–66, Hamund of Northampton and Isabel de Bluntesmere quitclaimed their land to

⁴ Our understanding of monastic diet was placed on a new footing, at least for a great black monk house, by B. F. Harvey, *Living and Dying in England 1100–1540: The Monastic Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993). For intimations of the diet of the black canons including the meat content, we have the *expense coquine* of Bolton Priory after 1291–92. The difficulty here is uncertainty about supplementary liveries from the house’s manors. The fluctuations in the expenditure from year to year compound the problem, ranging between just over £11 and over £60 (in 1302–03). The purchase of meat usually accounted for about £6, but exceeded £15 in 1298–99. Meat, of course, was a more expensive commodity than other foodstuffs, so expenditure is not an altogether accurate guide. *The Bolton Priory Compotus, 1286–1325*, ed. by I. Kershaw and D. M. Smith, Yorkshire Archaeological Society Record Series, 154 (Woodbridge: Yorkshire Archaeological Society and Boydell, 2000), pp. 44, 49, 54, 59, 68, 79, 91, 104, 117, 128, 146–47.

Southwick Priory in return for two corrodies for canons for their joint lives in the form of bread, cider, and cooked food.⁵ The value of such examples from corrodies is that they intimate what was assumed to be the normal diet of a canon (without, of course, any accessories and delicacies such as pittances, to which we shall return).⁶

Standard fare for a canon is adumbrated in the corrody allowed to a certain Mabel by Stone Priory, an allocation *quale habet unus canonicus*: in bread with relish (*companagium*) except pittances; one and a quarter gallons of ale (a gallon being approximately 4.5 litres); and a bushel of rye every month (a quantity roughly equivalent to 25 kilograms today).⁷ In the mid- to late thirteenth century, the daily allowance for a nun, by implication, comprised in part two white loaves, two gallons of ale, a dish of food, and a supper.⁸ Occasionally, the regular fare of a canon can be glimpsed in other contexts. When one of the canons of Merton Priory stayed with his two grooms at Stubbington, a manor of Southwick Priory, for four days in 1267–68, he was allowed 5 pence (*d.*) in bread, 4 *d.* in ale, and 6 *d.* in relish.⁹

Two additional points can be made about these corrodies. Firstly, they were granted by the canons at this time in an irregular, unsystematic way. They were not a first recourse, rather a final resort; they redeemed substantial acquisitions of land. The beneficiaries of the corrodies clearly must also have preferred a maintenance arrangement of this kind in preference to a cash payment or consideration. Inflation might have made such a maintenance arrangement — if it covered the major requirements of livelihood — a considerable attraction to the receiver of the allowance.¹⁰ The receipt of sustenance in kind obviated the effects

⁵ *The Cartularies of Southwick Priory*, ed. by K. A. Hanna, Hampshire Record Series 9–10, 2 vols (Winchester: Hampshire Record Office, 1988), II, 347, III, 853.

⁶ The best discussion of pittances is B. F. Harvey, 'Monastic Pittances in the Middle Ages', in *Food in Medieval England*, ed. by Woolgar, Serjeantson, and Waldron, pp. 215–27.

⁷ G. Wrottesley, 'The Stone Chartulary', *Collections for a History of Staffordshire*, 6 (1885), 16. A corrody from Blythburgh Priory in the late twelfth century was defined as *prebenda unius canonici*. *Cartulary of Blythburgh Priory*, ed. by C. Harper-Bill, Suffolk Charters, 2–3, 2 vols (Woodbridge: Suffolk Record Society, 1980–81), II, 143 (251 [to what does this number refer?]).

⁸ *Lacock Abbey Charters*, ed. by K. Roger, Wiltshire Record Society, 24 (Devizes: Wiltshire Record Society, 1979), p. 98 (400).

⁹ Winchester College Muniments, Winchester (WCM) 15377d.

¹⁰ P. D. A. Harvey, 'The English Inflation of 1180–1220', *Past and Present*, 61 (1973), 3–30; P. Latimer, 'The English Inflation of 1180–1220 Reconsidered', *Past and Present*, 171 (2001),

of inflation in a way that a discrete, once-for-all consideration in money would not; however it was employed, the value of the money would be eroded quickly at this time. It is equally possible, nonetheless, that the arrangement suited the canons, for cash reserves in their houses were not always strong and many houses around this period suffered some form of financial difficulty.¹¹ In this regard, a corrody was simply a hidden cost, diverting some of the produce from the canons' estate.

An exception to this irregular granting of corrodies seems to be the case of Dunstable Priory which had a seeming alacrity to dispense corrodies in the early thirteenth century. For instance, Ralph de Chaure received a canon's corrody (*unum conredium canonicum [sic]*) for his life. Consequently, his weekly allowance consisted of seven loaves and seven gallons of ale, 2*d.* worth of relish, and thick soup — all from the same food as the canons.¹² Exactly the same content made up the corrody granted to W. de Hetun' for his life (which he had effectively bought for 20 marks and in return for the reversion of half his movable property). Here again, these foodstuffs, and in these quantities, were specified as a canon's corrody (*conredium unius canonici*).¹³ Canons' corrodies of the same composition were allowed to Emma de Kyrkeby in 1234, Hugh de Wadel' in 1236, and Nicholas and Isabel de Tyngrith in 1248x1250.¹⁴ Corrodies dispensed to two women, however, reveal that a canon would additionally receive a daily dish of meat or fish.¹⁵ Another corrody of 1250 included one shilling (*s.*) per week for meat for a

3–29; Latimer, 'Early Thirteenth-Century Prices', in *King John: New Interpretations*, ed. by S. D. Church (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1999), pp. 41–73.

¹¹ Cirencester in particular about this time required the intervention of the Metropolitan and the Ordinary to rearrange its financial organization: *The Cartulary of Cirencester Abbey*, ed. by C. D. Ross, 2 vols (London: Athlone, 1964), I, 295–97 (327/186, 328) (1200–05, 1222–36), II, 365 (405); it had entered exorbitantly into the land market, being rather profligate in its purchases.

¹² *A Digest of the Charters Preserved in the Cartulary of the Priory of Dunstable*, ed. by G. H. Fowler, Bedfordshire Historical Record Society, 10 (s.l.: Bedfordshire Record Society, 1926), p. 92 (275) (1202–27).

¹³ *Digest of Charters of Dunstable*, p. 114 (331–32). The canon's corrody at Selborne Priory also consisted of a white (wheaten) loaf and a gallon of ale or cider each day: *Calendar of the Charters and Documents Relating to Selborne and its Priory, Preserved in the Muniment Rooms of Magdalen College*, ed. by W. D. Macray, 2 vols (London: Hampshire Record Society, 1891–94), I, 82 (1307).

¹⁴ *Digest of Charters of Dunstable*, pp. 148–49 (467, 469).

¹⁵ *Digest of Charters of Dunstable*, pp. 114 (333), 189 (693). The granting of corrodies in exchange for land was not without risk: *Annales monastici*, ed. by H. R. Luard, Rolls Series, 36, 4

married couple.¹⁶ What is fascinating perhaps is that it was precisely about this time that the first disputes between the priory and burgesses arose, no doubt stimulated by both the general political discord of recent times and the nascent civic ambition of the burgesses.¹⁷ It is easy to deduce that Dunstable was not alone in being liberal with corrodies, since the Council of Oxford in 1222 had been particularly concerned to restrict the granting of corrodies, insisting that any new corrodies should have the formal consent of the bishop.¹⁸ The consequences of financial misjudgements could be severe, for in May 1250 Dodnash Priory expended £19 6s. 8d. to buy back a corrody.¹⁹

Canons naturally preferred to avoid such financially demanding arrangements if possible. Social relationships could be cemented at lower cost, either by one-off, final lifetime grants or by liveries in kind (that is, gifts of food in return for the transfer of land or property). In these cases, the quantities granted by the canons were smaller, but the quantity was compensated by higher value produce. One of the methods by which Southwick Priory cemented social relationships with some of the burgesses of Portsmouth was through gifts of food. Some of these associations originated in commercial transactions or through the transfer, that is alienation, of land. One such connection was established between the priory and Hugh Raggy and it became extended to Hugh's family as the priory developed this particular social and kinship network. In c. 1240, Hugh Raggy disposed of a croft in Kingston to the priory for 30 marks. Some seven years later, 5 quarters of barley were delivered to him in liquidation of an old debt owed to him by the priory. In 1249–50, Hugh purchased 30 quarters of beans (1 quarter constituted a dry measure of about 291 litres) and 31 quarters of peas from the priory. The prior ordered gifts of 1 quarter of wheat to Hugh and ½ a quarter of the same grain to each of Nicholas Raggy and Thomas Raggy.

This agreement is notable in two respects. Firstly, these liveries were not the *advantagium* accorded to merchants: they were not based on a proportion of the sale nor were they of the same grain. Second, the liveries consisted of a much

vols (London: Longman, 1864–69), III (1866), 63.

¹⁶ *Calendar of the Charters and Documents Relating to Selborne and its Priory*, I, 34–35.

¹⁷ *Annales monastici*, III, 105–06, 110–11, 118–24.

¹⁸ R. H. Snape, *English Monastic Finances in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1926), p. 145.

¹⁹ *Dodnash Priory Charters*, ed. by C. Harper-Bill, *Suffolk Charters*, 16 (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1998), p. 56 (25).

higher value grain, wheat, the white grain, reserved for consumption by the elite.²⁰ To have a livery of this high-quality grain from this source had the implication that one was eating the same type of food as the regular canons and, not only that, but food which had the same origin as that which the canons were consuming. Wheat, moreover, was not only the bread grain of the elite and of the regular canons but also the pure grain converted into the host and then transmuted into the body of Christ. Bestowing wheat on a livery-holder was far from an automatic part of the transaction of the sale, but was made at the express command of the prior. At the nub of the bestowal, then, was the intention of the prior to cement a social as well as commercial relationship with an important local family, to maintain the commercial relationship, but also to expand it.

In the following year the same amounts of wheat were conferred on Hugh, Nicholas, and Thomas. A further window is opened on the relationship in a subsequent year, when the same allocations were made by the prior's gift to Hugh, Nicholas, and Thomas, for we also discover that the priory had debts to Hugh of 16*s*. 6*d*. and also 15*s*. for wine which he had supplied. Then again in the next year, Hugh, Nicholas, and Thomas received the same allowances of wheat by the prior's gift, but the old debt of 15*s*. to Hugh was outstanding, that is, not acquitted. In this year too, 1252–53, we glean more about the relationship, for the prior had received Hugh on a visit around the time of the Feast of St James for which the prior had commandeered 10*d*. for wine for entertainment. (We shall return to the significance of wine below.) The fact that the livery grants were special can be seen when we realise that also in 1252–53, the priory was obliged under an old debt to Denis de Hampton' for 3*s*. for wine. Yet Denis received no special presents from the prior. Who then was Hugh Raggy besides a general merchant involved in the purchase of grain and the sale of wine and a landholder? A burgess of Portsmouth, the borough adjacent to the property at Stubbington, Hugh ascended to be bailiff and reeve of the borough, the two principal offices. His brother, Thomas, also obtained the freedom of the borough and conferred a benefaction on the house in *c.* 1270, sustaining the relationship between burgess family and priory.²¹ Finally, almost thirty years after these deliberations, in 1280–81, a quarter of barley was delivered to the widow of Hugh Raggy as part of her dower, the recognition of a

²⁰ M. Montanari, *The Culture of Food*, trans. by C. Ipsen (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), pp. 50–51. See, however, the provision by Stephen de Harenhull' that both wheat and barley for bread be distributed to the poor on his anniversary: *Cartulary of Cirencester*, I, 252 (269/126).

²¹ For all the above, see Winchester College Muniments (henceforth WCM) 15376a, c–f; *Cartularies of Southwick Priory*, II, 236, 268–69, 296; III, 625, 696, 751.

long-standing relationship as well as a formal obligation which had no doubt been negotiated between Hugh and the prior.²²

We can infer that there was more than a formal obligation here, for the priory perpetuated relationships with other widows, probably as a consequence of an association with their late husbands. The widow of Richard Eylof received barley and wheat in 1269–70.²³ In 1268–69 the allocation to her had consisted of fourteen and a half quarters of wheat.²⁴ At that time, she had only recently been bereaved, for Richard had himself received half a quarter of wheat as a special gift from the prior in the previous year, as had Stephen Justise, William Bidandehors, and the Vicar of Warblington.²⁵

Sometime around 1265–68, Ralph I de Lighe alienated land to the priory; his son was accorded a quarter of wheat, perhaps as a counter-gift and for surety. Another quarter of wheat was then allocated to Ralph himself by the prior's gift through the manorial account for Stubbington. Finally, the prior afforded a gift of two bushels of wheat to Ralph's widow in 1269–70. We can surmise from this that Ralph's transaction was near the end of his life, that assurance of the transaction was obtained from his son by a livery of the high quality grain (wheat), and that Ralph's widow was remembered with a reduced amount, but still of best-quality grain.²⁶

All these people were of some social consequence to the prior and received the best-quality grain (wheat), whereas the widow of Nicholas *pistor* was merely granted half of a quarter of the poorer grain, oats, by the prior.²⁷ Likewise, liveries by regular canons to their *famuli* rarely contained wheat, merely the lesser grains of barley, maslin, and mixed other grains.²⁸

Commercial relationships such as that with Hugh Raggy were not then simply economic transactions. As befitted the status of the merchant, they involved social

²² WCM 15376a.

²³ WCM 15377a.

²⁴ WCM 15377b-c.

²⁵ WCM 15377d.

²⁶ WCM 15377a, c, d; *Cartularies of Southwick Priory*, II, 235–36, III, 624–27.

²⁷ WCM 15376e. For wheat bread baked for the visits of the Archbishop on some manors and the Lord Percy and J. de Moubray, see the *Bolton Priory Compotus*, p. 222 (1306–07).

²⁸ For small amounts of wheat in the livery to the *famuli*, note the *Bolton Priory Compotus*, e.g. p. 205.

proprieties.²⁹ Something of that etiquette can be recovered from the priory's association with Henry *Longus*, a merchant of Southampton. In a sense, Henry may have indeed succeeded Hugh. In 1267–68, Henry arranged to take 50 quarters of beans and 40 quarters of peas from the priory's manor of Stubbington.³⁰ In 1268–69, Henry purchased 46 quarters of beans and 16 quarters of peas.³¹ In the following year, he contracted for 27 quarters of beans and 30 quarters of peas.³² In 1269–70, the prior ordered a special gift to him of a quarter of wheat, on the same basis as Hugh Raggy's present. As importantly, however, it was imperative to afford Henry the proper comestibles during his regular visits, with his entourage, to the property at Stubbington, allowing not only bread and ale, but also wine and meat.³³ Although the visits undoubtedly involved the negotiation for the crop and its collection, the tariff for entertaining Henry included the higher quality foodstuffs: wine and meat-wine just as the prior had expected when he commandeered white wine when the justices itinerant arrived in Southwick.³⁴ On another occasion, in 1267–68, the prior acquired half a sester of wine (a sester being 15 pints or about 8 litres) for 8*d.* for Luke de Tauntone on the day when Luke made his feast. About this time, Luke had assigned to the priory some small rents, so it is possible that the benefaction was celebrated through dining together (that is, 'commensality').³⁵

Wine constituted the drink for special purposes and the gift for valued people. Likewise, fish was accepted as the appropriate delicacy.³⁶ Herring was excluded because it was considered staple food.³⁷ Not only was it common in the diet of all

²⁹ For the economy 'embedded' in social relationships, see K. Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (New York: Rinehart, 1944); for a recent critique, note C. Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation: The Culture of Credit and Social Relations in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1998).

³⁰ WCM 15377d.

³¹ WCM 15377b.

³² WCM 15377a.

³³ WCM 15377b, 15378.

³⁴ WCM 15376f (1249–50).

³⁵ WCM 15377d; *Cartularies of Southwick Priory*, II, 329 (III, 812). For wine bought (6*s.* 8*d.*) for the visit of the Archbishop's official, see the *Bolton Priory Comptus*, p. 54 (1294–95).

³⁶ For the significance of fish in monastic diet and the varieties, note Harvey, *Living and Dying in England*, pp. 46–51, 57.

³⁷ See, in general, Serjeantson and Woolgar, 'Fish Consumption in Medieval England', in *Food in Medieval England*, ed. by Woolgar, Serjeantson, and Waldron, pp. 102–30.

people, it was preserved, not fresh. Fresh fish was the preserve of the elite, because it was difficult to obtain and because it was perishable. Its consumption denoted rank. Perhaps the possibility of its perishing (and thus being wasted) added to its symbolic value: it represented the food of those who could afford waste.³⁸ The prior constantly received consignments of fresh fish of a diverse variety, both from the sea and fresh from fishponds. The priory's manor of Stubbington, near Portsmouth, acted as a stocking point near to the sea. Its accounts itemize the large quantities of fish dispatched to the priory at Southwick in 1249–51, including goat-fish, salmon, plaice, porpoise, bass, and significant numbers of conger, mackerel, and hake.³⁹ The prior — and this sort of benefaction was in the gift only of the prior — distributed high-value fish with discrimination to people of status. When *Magister* Richard perambulated the royal forest, he received from the prior 2*s* 6*d*. worth of fish, but with an additional consignment of the coveted conger to the value of 3*s*.⁴⁰ Conger and fresh fish, valued at 2*s*., were diverted by the prior to the Abbot of Titchfield.⁴¹ Sir G. de Baseville was privileged with 1*s*. worth of mackerel.⁴² In c. 1247, fish assessed to the value of 4*s*. 4*d*. was furnished at the burial of Sir Geoffrey de Roches, whose widow subsequently alienated an acre of land to the priory.⁴³ Two years later two conger were consigned to William Tregot, a burgess of Portsmouth, another benefactor of the house.⁴⁴

³⁸ 'Not having staples because one cannot afford them means being deprived of something which is almost a right. Having them because one can afford them means living an appropriate, although basic and unembellished, life. Yet, taking them or readily leaving them for something better (or not even considering them as proper food) is exempting oneself from the constraints and standards by which others live.' D. Gewertz and F. Errington, 'The Alimentary Forms of the Global Life: The Pacific Island Trade in Lamb and Mutton Flaps', *American Anthropologist*, 109 (2007), 496–508 (p. 504). P. Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. by R. Nice (London: Routledge, 1984), has the felicitous phrase 'distance from necessity' (p. 177).

³⁹ WCM 15376e, f. For salmon, lamprey, and a barrel of sturgeon at Bolton Priory, see the *Bolton Priory Computus*, p. 196 (1305–06).

⁴⁰ WCM 15376e (1250–51).

⁴¹ WCM 15376e (1250–51).

⁴² WCM 15376e (1250–51).

⁴³ WCM 15376d; *Cartularies of Southwick Priory*, II, 169; III, 465.

⁴⁴ WCM 15376f; *Cartularies of Southwick Priory*, II, 272, 307, 326–27; III, 704, 768, 808.

Such fish had an exoticism which signified difference, Bourdieu's 'distinction'.⁴⁵ Other fish had no such cachet, for they represented mere common fare. Even with those fish, however, the significance might reside in the grantor rather than the food. We might imagine the impact of the grant in 1141x1153 by Ranulf II, Earl of Chester, to the canons of Haughmond Abbey of a boat on the River Dee and the right to acquire six thousand herring free of toll at Chester.⁴⁶ Mundane food in huge quantities it undoubtedly was, but this fish might have been memorialized through the significance of the donor. In this case, the value attached to the donor rather than being inherent in the commodity.

Fish other than herring could hold further significance. Regular canons received 'pittances' but these might be bolstered on special occasions (feasts allowing conspicuous consumption) by fish as a delicacy associated with the elite. The canons of Brinkburn were particularly favoured with fish, for the supposed re-foundation charter of William Bertram appended after the recitation: 'Preterea omni anno eisdem Canonicis viginti pisces de mea piscaria de Coket' (every year to those canons, moreover, twenty fish from my Coket fishery).⁴⁷ Equally beneficent was William de Tamerton who delivered to Guisborough Priory a fishery in Stainsby in Cleveland so that the canons might have thirteen pittances (a significant number, of course) of salmon, seafood, and fresh (not salted) herring on specified feast days.⁴⁸ Four fisheries in the Derwent accrued to Warter Priory

⁴⁵ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, pp. 177–200 (for food culture): the distinction extends not only to the food eaten but how it is prepared and consumed. For eating daintily and dainty dishes, note J. Goody, *Cooking, Cuisine and Class: A Study in Comparative Sociology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 115. The ambiguities and contradictions are exposed in J. Storey, *Cultural Consumption and Everyday Life* (London: Arnold, 1999): alternative discourses of emulation, conflation, appropriation, resistance, interpellation, and so on. For a very interesting analysis of the difference in food consumption in medieval London, see M. Carlin, 'Fast Food and Urban Living Standards in Medieval England', in *Food and Eating in Medieval Europe*, ed. by M. Carlin and J. T. Rosenthal (London: Hambledon, 1998), pp. 27–51.

⁴⁶ *The Cartulary of Haughmond Abbey*, ed. by U. Rees (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1985), p. 60 (215).

⁴⁷ *The Chartulary of Brinkburn Priory*, ed. by W. Page, Surtees Society, 90 (Durham: Andrews, 1893), pp. 1–2 (1).

⁴⁸ *Cartularium Prioratus de Gyseburne*, ed. by W. Brown, Surtees Society, 86, 89, 2 vols (Durham: Andrews, 1889–94), II, 34 (dclxviii). Salmon for a pittance in 1197x1221 was valued at 2s. *The Cartulary of Holy Trinity, Aldgate*, ed. by G. A. J. Hodgett, London Record Society, 7 (London: Record Society, 1971), p. 186 (950).

through the benefaction of Beatrice Darel who elected to be buried in the priory.⁴⁹ Fresh fish was specifically to be provided for the canons of Haughmond through the very substantial endowment of land and mills made by Walter de Clifford II in 1200x1204.⁵⁰ Sea-fish were made liberally available to Blythburgh Priory by the transfer to it of the tithes of fish of Walberswick in 1157x1174.⁵¹

Fish was also associated with liturgically prescribed abstinence at other special times. Harking back then to the chapters' strictures in the 1230s to observe abstention from meat in Advent, fish was allowed. So Hugh de Lelay granted an annual rent of 6s. to Healaugh Priory to substitute fish during Advent.⁵² Fish and meat constituted the foodstuffs in the 'battle' between 'carnival' and 'Lent', between festive commensality and renunciation, in both of which the canons participated. Gifts of fish by the laity to the canons were inherently ambiguous: a desire to provide delicacy and exoticism in their diet and yet to signify a special kind of appropriate, abstemious diet.⁵³ The inverse obtained also. Any gift of food by the canons assumed a high symbolic value.⁵⁴ The food usually already had an inherently high value because of its economic cost and its scarcity, as we have seen above. Additional symbolic value was invested in it because it derived from the canons. In other words, the provenance of the food also instated its value.

Wine, in contrast to common ale, had specific value.⁵⁵ Whilst the normal, daily allowance of the canons consisted of ale, wine was consumed on special occasions.⁵⁶ The arrangements for the obit of John Goudlyne at Lacock Abbey

⁴⁹ Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Fairfax 9, fol. 11^r (*cum corpore meo*).

⁵⁰ *Cartulary of Haughmond Abbey*, p. 62 (232).

⁵¹ *Cartulary of Blythburgh Priory*, 1, 46 (42).

⁵² *The Cartulary of the Augustinian Priory of St John the Evangelist of the Park of Healaugh*, ed. by J. S. Purvis, Yorkshire Archaeological Society Record Series, 92 (Wakefield: West Yorkshire Printing, 1935), p. 21.

⁵³ Montanari, *Culture of Food*, pp. 78–82; Goody, *Cooking, Cuisine and Class* pp. 79–80, 108, 117.

⁵⁴ The idea of 'unblemished' food is an interesting one: note Goody, *Cooking, Cuisine and Class*, p. 110.

⁵⁵ Montanari, *Culture of Food*, pp. 17–21.

⁵⁶ Some idea of the purchase of wine can be elicited from the Bolton Priory account book, although the buying was intermittent, so that wine bought in one year might have been consumed in later years: *Bolton Priory Compotus*, pp. 165 (more than five doles bought in 1300–01 for £16 13s 4d), 213 (at least the same amount for just over £12); two doles were bought in both 1292–93 and 1293–94 (p. 49).

included an allocation of a gallon of wine or 6*d.* to the six nuns attending the obsequy.⁵⁷ Distrain for a sester of wine or 8*d.* was authorized on failure to deliver the 2*s.* rent for the pittance on the anniversary of the lady Clarice de Hidune at Canonsleigh Abbey.⁵⁸

Provision of wine featured constantly in the agreements between Prior Stephen (1170–97) of Holy Trinity, Aldgate, and the grantees and lessees of the London property of the prior and convent. Both priors Ralph (1147–67) and Peter (1197–1221), predecessor and successor of Stephen, generally accepted cash payments for the entry fine (*gersuma*). Stephen, however, had a different preference. Fourteen entry fines consisted either of wine or a small cash sum and wine. In thirteen instances, a full sester of wine was demanded; in the other case, half a sester.⁵⁹

What stimulated this consistent request for wine? The wine was not elicited for the Prior himself: the small cash sums were directed to the Prior, but all the wine to the convent. The canons of Aldgate were the beneficiary of their Prior's *largesse*. Perhaps Stephen was influenced by the dramatic inflation during his prelacy, but the quantity which accrued in this manner would not have appreciably assisted convent finances. Perhaps his generosity permitted the canons extra for special occasions, perhaps some was destined for the celebration of masses.⁶⁰ The principal deficiency of all these notions is that the quality of the wine was not stipulated. A sester deriving from an entry fine might have consisted of the vilest wine. We cannot judge from this distance.

A different perspective is offered if we consider the external relationship between Stephen and the citizens. The idea that the wine would be consumed by the canons or deployed at masses would have been an attractive one to the citizen grantees and lessees. As well as a general joyous sentiment of contributing one of

⁵⁷ *Lacock Abbey Charters*, p. 48 (174).

⁵⁸ *The Cartulary of Canonsleigh Abbey*, ed. by V. C. M. London, Devon, and Cornwall Record Society, n.s. 8 (London: Devonshire Press, 1965), p. 64 (178).

⁵⁹ *Cartulary of Holy Trinity*, pp. 43 (226), 46 (241), 52 (271), 91 (456), 100 (497), 121 (614), 133 (680), 147 (750), 154 (790), 158 (814), 171 (887), 175 (902), 182 (931), 218 (1054). In ten cases, the fine did not involve wine.

⁶⁰ London, BL, MS Additional 40,008, fol. 30^v: Henry Silver of Bridlington transferred two bovates in Sywardby to Bridlington Priory *ad uinum emendum ad missas*. The Silver family was closely associated with the priory, witnessing innumerable charters for the priory, not merely for property in Bridlington, but in several villages in the hinterland: fols 22^v–23^r, 25^v–30^r, 32^v–37^r, 39^r, 43^v–46^r, 58^r, 61^r, 62^r, 66^r, 69^r, 70^r, 76^v–81^r, 84^r, 86^r–88^r, 92^v–93^r, 95^r, 98^v–^v, 103^r–105^r, 111^r, 113^r, 116^v, 120^r, 123^r, 124^r, 127^r, 137^r, 138^r, 140^r–143^r, 146^r–149^r, 151^r–154^v.

the elements of the mass, the citizens might have expected some sort of spiritual benefit from this special relationship with the canons and the blood of Christ.⁶¹ Stephen might also have been perceptive in anticipating that the delivery of wine appealed to the citizens' nascent sense of dignity. The wine, a high-value commodity, but one associated with the City and its citizen-merchants, reflected their self-perception of their civic status and urban civility. The arrangement may thus have induced a closer association between convent and citizenry at a critically difficult time, a period of intense inflation of prices. We should not be inclined to dismiss the Prior's preference simply and purely as an economic strategy. The association was as important.

We can perhaps illustrate the significance of the personal relationship through a few other events and circumstances involving Holy Trinity. One, perhaps rhetorically composed as a brief chronicle, recounts the difficulties confronting the priory in its earliest years, after its foundation by Syred and before the intervention of Queen Matilda to sustain it.⁶² The initial convent was so poorly endowed that its permanence was at risk. Its continuation was secured by some pious women who delivered loaves on Sundays. Food was delivered to the religious representatives of God on earth. The narrative resonates with symbolism. The canons were the poor brethren of God; their poverty was emphatic. The convent struggled against the vicissitudes of an earthly existence. The laity delivered food to the holy. The food was meagre and staple, bread, the staff of life, the staff of Christ, the material foodstuff multiplied by Christ to feed the crowd, the bread broken by Christ at the Last Supper, the very body of Christ. The sustenance was proffered on Sundays, the sabbath and holiest of days — not just any day of the week — thus associating the bread firmly with God's day. The house was rescued by a fond association between it and the citizenry of London. Finally, it was the women, that is, the *pious* women, of the City who took this initiative, preparing the way for the final salvation of the house by the most exalted of secular women, Queen Matilda, her benevolence forever associated with the priory. The relationships through the food are a complicated amalgam of the spiritual and the personal.

We perhaps observe the same sort of process and attitudes in the foundation of Durford Abbey at the end of the twelfth century. The endowment by the founder, Henry Hose (*Hosatus*), was slender. Characteristic of the paucity of the

⁶¹ For giving food as an act of grace in universal, written religions, see Goody, *Cooking, Cuisine and Class*, p. 65. Brahmins, of course, benefit explicitly in this way.

⁶² *Cartulary of Holy Trinity*, p. 2 (10).

first resources was the livery of the tithes of his household whenever he was resident at Durford: a tenth of every quarter for making bread and a tenth of meat from his larder, his confirmation charter including, however, a tithe of fish also.⁶³ The inclusion of food from his household resources is typical of those of knightly status, with insubstantial resources, who attempted to found and endow houses of Austin canons. Indeed, Henry's endowment included the typical return of rights in chapel and parish church into the control of the regular canons, observed as one of those minimal outlays for establishing houses of regular canons. In conferring the advowson (the right to nominate the parish priest or chaplain), nonetheless, he specified fairly elaborate services to be performed there for his soul. We can then consider his proffer of food from his household as establishing a personal association, an intimate relationship, through the gift of food, reinforced by the conferral of the food specifically on those occasions when he was in attendance. The intimacy did not extend much beyond Henry's lifetime, for in 1244 Matthew Hose obtained a quitclaim from the abbot of the tithes of bread, meat, fish, wine, ale, and cider (*sic*) which could be claimed from his household.⁶⁴ Perhaps that episode in itself illustrates the personal nature of the gift of food by his predecessor, Henry.

The personal element in such relationships was important, too, in the negotiations between Ralph May and Aldgate in 1252x1260.⁶⁵ Ralph's benefaction to the priory was, in truth, rather meagre: a quitrent of half a pound of pepper or 4*d*. The prior and convent conferred a consideration or purchase price of 3*s*. in return. The negotiation did not finish there. At Christmas, the prior and convent would be obliged to give the grantor and his heirs at the door of their cellar a canon's loaf if it was requested. For his very modest grant, Ralph had assured a perpetual association with the priory through the medium of food. Again, the loaf was not to be collected at any time of the year, no common quarter day such as Michaelmas, but on the day of Christ's birth. The loaf was specifically not any common loaf, not even a servant's or lay brother's loaf, but one of the loaves consumed by the canons. The loaf should not be delivered to Ralph and his heirs at some secular locus, but at the door of the cellar, like importuning alms.⁶⁶

⁶³ *The Durford Cartulary*, ed. by J. H. Stevenson, Sussex Record Society, 90 (Lewes: Sussex Record Society, 2006), pp. 4, 6 (9, 12).

⁶⁴ *Durford Cartulary*, p. 61 (226).

⁶⁵ *Cartulary of Holy Trinity*, p. 17 (90).

⁶⁶ For monastic almsgiving, the most satisfactory discussion is Harvey, *Living and Dying in England*, pp. 7–33; for leftovers, see Goody, *Cooking, Cuisine and Class*, p. 126.

The mere phrasing in the charter does not adequately reflect the heightened sense of the occasion that would have applied for Ralph and his heirs. One suspects that the prior and convent were concerned to signify through this one simple act their attachment to the citizenry.

The final episode involving Holy Trinity has perhaps a little more ambivalence, because of the status of the grantor, *Magister Gregory medicus*.⁶⁷ In return for the grant to him by Prior Stephen and the convent, Gregory's entry fine (*gersuma*) consisted of providing a meal (*refectio*) for the brethren. Here again we must assume that the desire on both sides was to build a personal relationship, consummated through the medium of food. Perhaps this desire to eat with the canons was not confined to those with a particular occupational status. In the late twelfth century, Godfrey son of Henry de Wisete transferred ('attorned') the service of a tenant of his to Blythburgh Priory and also an acre of land, in consideration of which the canons returned a mark but also a meal with them on the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary.⁶⁸

Before moving to a conclusion, I wish to underline the urban character of what we have been examining. By and large, the material collected here pertains to the black canons. The events and occasions were located almost entirely in urban centres. This emphasizes the connection between the Austin Canons and the towns. What we have observed implies a desire for association between some townfolk and the religious house at least in the initial stages of their mutual development. Exchanges of food played an important role in the interrelationship partly because townfolk often only possessed personal estate. In conferring food on the religious (the canons), they not only deprived themselves in an abstemious way, but the food, through its destination, attained a heightened significance — the food was transformed, not materially, but in the perception of the grantors, symbolically. In giving the food, they not only sustained the religious, but they also partook of the same food. We have a nexus comprising an urban location, Austin canons, food, and citizens — at least in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. In the towns at that date we encounter, therefore, not only a commercial economy but also a symbolic economy, albeit one that did not endure with the black canons.

If we concede then that the social world and sociality can be reconstructed through foodways, we might conceive that people partly construct their identities

⁶⁷ *Cartulary of Holy Trinity*, p. 151 (776).

⁶⁸ *Cartulary of Blythburgh Priory*, II, 191 (366) ('et refectioem cum eis in die nativitatis sancte Marie').

through what and how they consume foodstuffs.⁶⁹ Social roles and positions are defined by what is eaten and how. Food is employed to promote sociality and sociability through commensality and gifts of food.⁷⁰ This consumption is important, but so is the provenance of the food: how it came to people. Abstinence has a proportionate symbolism: the refusal to eat some foods or to consume at all because of abstemiousness or belief defines some part of this fragmented identity.⁷¹

That allowed, we can recapitulate how the regular canons positioned themselves and were placed in this social world of food.⁷² Much of the recent examination of medieval food and its consumption, both by the religious and the laity, has concentrated on diet, the dietary aspects of consumption, morbidity, and mortality, and only tangentially or by implication with the semiotic value of food. Relationships between the regular canons and the laity were partly embedded in and sustained by foodways. The later institutionalization of corrodies gives the (perhaps mistaken) impression of direct and purposive reciprocal exchange of a transactional kind: a form of maintenance agreement in return for the land.⁷³ Earlier and less formalized gifts of food reveal wider meanings. From one

⁶⁹ For 'calculated exchange' and 'semiotic value', see A. Appadurai, 'Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value', in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. by A. Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 19, 38. For how, *The Observances in the Use of the Augustinian Priory of S. Giles and S. Andrew at Barnwell, Cambridge*, ed. by J. W. Clark (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1897), p. 158: 'Temperate, munde, et facete, de hiis que sibi apponuntur debent comedere, et modum in edendo non excedere' (They should eat modestly, delicately, and nicely, and should not be gluttonous). I well remember being somewhat surprised by a member eating a banana with a knife and fork at St John's, Oxford, high table, which probably reflects both on my background and his. We with origins in the working class (used to) refer to the midday meal as dinner not lunch. Breakfast was not one of our meals.

⁷⁰ For the forms and purpose of commensality, note C. Grignon, 'Commensality and Social Morphology: An Essay on Typology', in *Food, Drink and Identity: Cooking, Eating and Drinking in Europe Since the Middle Ages*, ed. by P. Scholliers (Oxford: Berg, 2001), pp. 23–33.

⁷¹ Scholliers, *Food, Drink and Identity*, passim.

⁷² The Ordinary was concerned as much with drink: 'Nullus bibat inordinate set horis statutis et locis regulariter et post completorium diutinam moram nullus faciat inpotacione' (No one may drink irregularly, but only at the prescribed times and places, and, after the usual end, no one may take any drink): *Cartulary of Cirencester Abbey*, II, 366 (405).

⁷³ For corrodies and corrodians, note H. M. Stuckert, *Corrodies in English Monasteries: A Study in English Social History of the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1923); Harvey, *Living and Dying in England*, pp. 179–209.

perspective the conferment of pittance on religious houses permitted the laity to participate in the patronage of the regular canons in particular and in the spiritual benefits which were anticipated, an association with the regular canons otherwise beyond their resources. The laity thus valued small gifts of food in establishing a relationship with the regular canons. The food had a special nature: high-status types of food, if not high in economic value or in terms of the quantities transferred. Its distinctive status was paramount, either as a food reserved to the elite or as a material which had a liturgical significance, imbibed or consumed in tiny quantities for special purposes and with special meaning.

Gifts from the religious to the laity — particularly to officialdom — have sometimes been interpreted as *douceurs*. Even so, in many cases, the endeavour of the religious was to generate and maintain relationships — an associational intention. This desire for association through food operated in both directions. Food intrinsically had cultural value and conformed to a cultural etiquette of giving where money would have seemed crass. In material terms, the gift in kind also satisfied at times some of the needs of houses of regular canons, many of which existed, especially in their earlier incarnation, on slender resources and poor cash flows. For the laity, whilst the later institutionalized corrodies allowed another means of maintenance allowance, the corrody also had a sentimental and spiritual attachment because of its provenance. If one could not become a regular canon, one might eat like one and consume food from the same source.

