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Houses of Benedictine monks The abbey of Faversham

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5. THE ABBEY OF FAVERSHAM ([fn. 1](#))

King Stephen and his queen Maud founded the abbey of St. Saviour, Faversham; perhaps with the definite idea of making it their burial place. The king in a charter ([fn. 2](#)) dated at Bermondsey states that he has granted the manor of Faversham for making a Cluniac monastery with full liberties, and in exchange for this manor he has granted to William of Ypres the queen's manor of Lillechurch and part of his own manor of Milton. The new abbey was colonized from Bermondsey, and for this permission had to be obtained from the abbot of Cluni and the prior of La Charité sur Loire, as superiors of Bermondsey, who gave licence ([fn. 3](#)) for Prior Clarembald to leave his house and take twelve monks with him to the abbey, which was to be as free and independent as the abbey of Reading, made from monks of their order. These letters were read on 11 November, 1147, when Archbishop Theobald blessed Clarembald as abbot at the altar of Canterbury Cathedral in the presence of the bishops of Worcester, Bath, Exeter, and Chichester. ([fn. 4](#)) The annals of Bermondsey say that Clarembald and his twelve monks left Bermondsey for Faversham in 1148. ([fn. 5](#))

Queen Maud appears to have taken a great interest in the building of the abbey, staying at St. Augustine's, Canterbury, while it was in progress in 1148; and it is recorded that as silence was imposed on the monks of St., Augustine's she summoned monks of Christchurch there to celebrate divine service for her. ([fn. 6](#)) She was buried at Faversham in 1152, as were also the king in 1154 and their son Eustace in 1153. ([fn. 7](#))

The manor of Tring in Hertfordshire was granted to the abbey by the queen and confirmed by the king and their son William, count of Boulogne, who also granted his manor of Bendish (in Radwinter) in Essex. ([fn. 8](#)) Henry II confirmed all these grants and others, and granted a fair of eight days beginning on the feast of St. Peter ad Vincula; ([fn. 9](#)) and by other charters he granted that the men of the manor of Faversham should be quit of toll throughout the realm, and that the monks might take royal fishes in the fisheries of Seasalter for a rent of 20s. yearly to the king. ([fn. 10](#)) John on 19 May, 1205, made another grant to them of the fisheries, ([fn. 11](#)) and on 7 March, 1215, he confirmed their possessions and liberties generally. ([fn. 12](#)) Edward I on 20 August, 1297, granted free warren at the manors of Faversham, Bendish, and Tring; ([fn. 13](#)) and Edward II on 1 September, 1315, granted a market on Tuesday at Tring and a fair there on the vigil, the feast, and the morrow of Sts. Peter and Paul and the seven days following. ([fn. 14](#)) General charters of confirmation were also granted by Henry III in 1227, ([fn. 15](#)) Edward II in 1315, ([fn. 16](#)) and Edward IV in 1465. ([fn. 17](#)) Pope Gregory IX in 1230 confirmed to the abbot and convent the church of Luddenham and all possessions and liberties granted to them by kings, bishops, and others; and this was confirmed by Pope Boniface IX in 1401. ([fn. 18](#))

In the Taxation of 1291 the manor of Faversham was valued at £133 6s. 8d. yearly, and the abbey also owned temporalities worth £21 19s. 7d. in Luddenham, Goodnestone, Graveney, Harty, Hawkridge, and Boughton Malherbe, £1 2s. 7d. in London, £24 7s. 10d. in Radwinter, and £80 18s. 5d. in Tring. The manor of Tring was granted by the abbey to the archbishop of Canterbury in 1340 in exchange for the advowsons of the churches of Boughton under Blean and Preston; and these churches were appropriated in the same year, rents of 5 marks and 33s. 4d. from them being paid to the prior and convent of Christchurch, Canterbury, and 26s. 8d. from the church of Preston to the archdeacon of Canterbury in recompense for this. ([fn. 19](#))

Faversham was still described as Cluniac in the charter of Henry III, but it appears to have joined the main Benedictine order; probably because its liberties and status as an abbey were inconsistent with the discipline required from Cluniac houses. In 1288 Abbot Oswald was cited to attend the Benedictine chapter to be held at Oxford, but refused, and the archbishop wrote a strong letter to the presiding abbots, upholding his action on the ground that by his charters he was under the authority of the archbishop alone. ([fn. 20](#))

Abbot Peter de Rodmersham was formally deposed by the archbishop in public consistory on 9 September, 1275, because in the visitation of the preceding year many faults had been found, both in things spiritual and temporal. ([fn. 21](#)) The abbey had fallen into debt to merchants and others, and on 17 August the king had sequestrated it, appointing Fulk Peyforer and Master Hamo Doges to its custody. ([fn. 22](#)) One of the monks, writing for help to the sacrist of St. Augustine's, Canterbury, says that for three weeks past they had not had a grain of barley to support their household, nor could they make any malt nor sow their lands, for none of the neighbours would let them have any corn on the credit of their words or bonds; and—what was still worse and disgraceful to men of their profession—they were forced to procure drink in ale-houses or such as was to be bought in the town, and even that was in a manner taken by stealth! ([fn. 23](#)) This was no doubt a considerable exaggeration of the bad condition of the house, but in view of its trouble at this time and the

amount of its income at the Dissolution it seems probable that the large income attributed to it in 1291 was somehow miscalculated. Peter appealed to the pope against his deposition, and his case was still proceeding in 1283; (fn. 24) but though he made a good show at Rome, there is no sign that his successor was ever seriously troubled in England. A similar state of things occurred in 1325. Abbot John le Orefreiser was found guilty of dilapidation and simony by the archbishop and forced to resign; (fn. 25) and the king on 28 August appointed Stephen de la Dane to the custody of the abbey, with orders to apply its surplus revenues to its relief with the advice of its more discreet members. (fn. 26) The ex-abbot eventually complained to the pope, who in 1328 simply referred the matter back to the new archbishop, with orders to settle it on the spot. (fn. 27)

A long dispute with the men of Faversham, which appears to have been raging in 1293, (fn. 28) was settled by an agreement dated 13 December, 1310. (fn. 29) The abbot and convent gave up their right to the custom of 'gavelsestre' or 1½*d.* for every brewing exposed for sale, the custom called, 'fenstrage' or ¼*d.* for each window in which wares were exposed for sale on Saturday, and toll payable by merchants and residents of the town and their kinsmen; and in return the men of Faversham granted to the abbot and convent a rent of £10 yearly until land to that value in Kent should be bought by them for the abbey. The right of making any stranger coming to the town with wares free from toll was reserved to the abbot; disputes about any person's freedom from such payment were to be inquired into in the abbot's court by a jury of the town; and disputes about the interpretation of the clauses were to be decided in the king's courts, notwithstanding any liberty of the Cinque Ports. It may be noted here that the mayor of Faversham was appointed by the abbot and convent from three persons elected by the mayor, jurates, and commonalty on the morrow of Michaelmas, and the mayor took an oath to do true service to the king and the monastery. (fn. 30)

Corrodies were claimed by the crown in the abbey. Edward I in 1293 sent Reginald de Staneweie there, requesting the abbot and convent to provide him with the necessaries of life in their house. (fn. 31) Edward II in 1325 claimed a pension for one of his clerks by reason of the new creation of an abbot. (fn. 32)

Pope Boniface IX in 1400 granted indulgence (fn. 33) to penitents visiting the abbey from the first to the second vespers of the Invention of the Cross in May, and the Exaltation of the Cross in September; and in 1401 he exempted the abbot and convent from all payment of tithes on their possessions for which from time immemorial they had not paid tithes. (fn. 34) Pope Innocent VII in 1405 granted relaxation of penance to penitents visiting the abbey church at various specified times. (fn. 35)

Theobalde Evias of Faversham, widow, by her will in 1479 ordered her body to be buried within this monastery, and among other bequests devised 20*s.* to the new making of a window in the chapter-house there, her great cloth of tapestry work to do worship to God in the presbytery and on the sepulchre next the high altar there on high days, and her vestment of green velvet and a chalice, two cruets, a bell and a paxbrede, all of silver, to be used only in her chapel there, the vestment to be embroidered with the words *Orate pro anima Theobalde Evias*. Richard Goore, gentleman, of Faversham, by his will in 1504 ordered his body to be buried here in the chapel of St. Anne Robert Browne by his will in 1509 ordered his body to be buried in the abbey before the rood of pity in the overhand of the church. (fn. 36)

Archbishop Langham gave injunctions after a visitation on 20 April, 1368, in which he referred to the eating of flesh and the failure to observe the rule of silence. The elder monks had 20*s.* yearly where, the younger ones had only necessaries; none showed the abbot what they had; and one monk was quarrelsome and a producer of discord. Moreover the management had been extravagant, wood had been sold, and the house was £12 in debt. The porter was to be removed because he was the cause of access of dishonourable women. (fn. 37)

Archbishop Warham made a visitation of Faversham in the autumn of 1511, when there were thirteen monks besides the abbot. Robert Faversham, prior, said that the alms of victuals and drink were no longer given bountifully to the poor, but distributed at one time or another among friends of the monks; and that women had ingress to the cloister and refectory. William Bidenden, sub-prior, and others complained that the old stipend was no longer paid in money, according to old custom, but in clothes; and he said that some avoided entering religion because of this; though it was admitted that this payment exceeded in value the sum of money paid of old. Moreover, there was nobody deputed to give out clothes; so if they lacked shoes or anything they must go to the abbot, to whom they thought they ought not to go, but rather to an inferior person. One monk, ten years professed, said that he had been punished for an offence according to rule, but besides this the abbot had deprived him of all his money. Several other monks complained that fees and other moneys due to them had been taken away. One complained of insufficient clothing in winter. Two said that the butler, who was not a monk, was hostile and conducted himself rather as a master than a servant, often making complaints against the monks without cause, and once giving to the abbot a letter entrusted to him by a monk. Evidence was given that the number of professed monks had been sixteen and seventeen within memory. The last examined said that the cellarer did not provide good food for the refectory, and the meat there was only half roasted; also that another monk was a fool and illiterate and exempted from returning an account of his rents. The archbishop ordered alms to be distributed in food and drink; women were not to be allowed in the cloister, and no monk was to speak with any woman in the nave of the church; the abbot was to appoint a chamberlain, who should provide the convent with the necessary clothes; proper food and drink and clothes were to be provided; none were to be exempted from rendering accounts; the abbot was to distribute to each monk his share of the money gained from the burials or obits of the dead; a quarrelsome monk was ordered to conduct himself charitably towards the brethren in future; the abbot was to make the butler behave himself better towards the monks; and he was to give an account of the state of his house before Easter next. (fn. 38)

The oath of acknowledgement of the royal supremacy was taken on 10 December, 1534, by John, abbot, Robert Faversham, prior, John Harte, sacrist, Thomas Sellyng, cellarer, John Lynstyd, precentor, Dunstan, sub-prior, and eight other monks. (fn. 39)

In the Valor of 1535 the gross value of the temporalities of the abbey in Kent amounted (fn. 40) to £261 5*s.* 2*d.* and the net value to £200 5*s.* 6¼*d.* yearly, besides a quarter and a half of barley, the deductions including £10 ordained by the founders to be expended in alms yearly for their souls. The net value of the spiritualities, including the parsonages of Boughton, Hernhill, and Preston, and pensions in the churches of Luddenham and Newenham, was £58 3*s.* 4*d.* yearly, and that of the manor of Bendish Hall in Essex £28 3*s.* 8*d.* The whole

net income of the abbey thus amounted to £286 12s. 6³/₄d. besides the barley, and it was rich enough to escape the first dissolution.

Some letters from the abbot to Cromwell are preserved. On 20 February, 1532, he complains ([fn. 41](#)) that he is marvellously annoyed with rooks, crows, choughs, and buzzards, which not only destroy his doves, but the fruit of his orchard, and asks licence for his servants to have handguns and crossbows to destroy 'the said ravenous fowls.' He had lately sent the king a goshawk and two spaniels; there were few better in England for pheasant and partridge. Cromwell wrote to him on 8 March, 1536, suggesting his resignation of the house of which he had so long had the rule, because of his age and debility; and on 16 March he writes a polite refusal in a long and interesting letter. ([fn. 42](#)) He trusts he is not yet so far enfeebled but he can govern as well as ever, though he cannot so well perchance ride and journey abroad; even if an abbot's peculiar office were to survey the possessions of his house, he took such pains in his younger days that he need do less now, and his servants, whom he has brought up from their youth, have such experience in these worldly matters that they can supply this part. He thinks, however, the chief office and profession of an abbot is to live chaste and solitary, to be separate from the intermeddling of worldly things, to serve God quietly, to distribute his faculties in the refreshing of poor indigent persons, and to have a vigilant eye to the good order and rule of his house and the flock committed to him by God. Doubtless it would be, as Cromwell says, more to his ease to resign for a reasonable pension, and he has no doubt of Cromwell's conscience therein, considering the benevolence he has always found in him. For his own part he should be contented, not being ambitious; but, considering the miserable state in which the house would be left, God forbid that he should think his office irksome or tedious. The house is much impoverished, partly by the debts left by his predecessor, who was but a right slender husband to the house, partly by the necessary repairs of the church and other buildings and the 'innyng' of marshes which the sea had won, by lawsuits for the recovery of their rights, and by dismes and subsidies to the king, amounting to more than £2,000. The house was now more than £400 in debt, which he might see repaid if he continued in office six or seven years; but if he should resign, the charges of first-fruits and tenths due to the king, added to the debt, would ruin the house. God forbid that he should so heinously offend against God and the king as to further the ruin of so godly and ancient a foundation, dedicated to St. Saviour by one of the king's progenitors, whose body with those of his queen and son lies buried in honourable sepulture, and are had all three in perpetual memory with continual suffrages and commendations of prayers. Cromwell, no doubt, considered that in view of the abbot's age there was no need to hurry the matter, and on 6 April the abbot wrote to thank him for his loving letters, and sent him a token in consideration of his goodness to the monastery. ([fn. 43](#))

After the dissolution of the smaller monasteries the pressure on Faversham was renewed, and the end came in 1538. The abbot was summoned to appear before the king on 1 July, but wrote ([fn. 44](#)) two days later to Cromwell to say that this was impossible, for he was too lame to go or ride and could scarcely get to the church with two staves. If he came before his majesty he was so weak that he could neither kneel nor stand but for a very little space. He asked Cromwell to obtain leave for him to stay at Faversham, or else it would shorten his time. He would accomplish the king's pleasure cheerfully, as well as if he were present. This of course meant the surrender, which was formally made by the abbot and convent on 8 July. ([fn. 45](#)) The officers of the abbey were the same as in 1534, but the number of monks was five less; the younger ones having probably been released from their vows in the meantime by the royal visitors. Pensions were given to all, the abbot receiving 100 marks yearly.

The site of the monastery was leased to John Wheler on 10 May, 1539; and the reversion was granted on 16 March, 1540, to Sir Thomas Cheyne, warden of the Cinque Ports and treasurer of the household. ([fn. 46](#))

The following list of abbots is probably complete. The great length of rule of the later ones will be noticed.

Abbots Of Faversham

Clarembald, the first abbot, appointed 1147 ([fn. 47](#))
 Gueric, elected 1178 ([fn. 48](#))
 Ailgar, elected 1189, ([fn. 49](#)) occurs 1206 ([fn. 50](#))
 Nicholas, elected 1215, ([fn. 51](#)) resigned 1234 ([fn. 52](#))
 Peter, elected 1234, ([fn. 53](#)) resigned 1267 ([fn. 54](#))
 John de Horeapeldore, elected 1268, ([fn. 55](#)) died 1271 ([fn. 56](#))
 Peter de Herdeslos, elected 1271, ([fn. 57](#)) died 1272 ([fn. 58](#))
 Peter de Rodmersham, elected 1272, ([fn. 59](#)) deposed 1275 ([fn. 60](#))
 Oswald de Estri, appointed 1275, ([fn. 61](#)) died 1292 ([fn. 62](#))
 Geoffrey de Bocton, elected 1292, ([fn. 63](#)) died 1308 ([fn. 64](#))
 Clement de Lodenne, elected 1308, ([fn. 65](#)) died 1318 ([fn. 66](#))
 Thomas de Wyngesham, elected ([fn. 67](#)) and resigned ([fn. 68](#)) 1318
 John le Orefreiser, elected 1318, ([fn. 69](#)) deposed 1325 ([fn. 70](#))
 John Ive, elected 1325, ([fn. 71](#)) died 1356 ([fn. 72](#))
 William de Maydenstan, elected 1356, ([fn. 73](#)) died 1370 ([fn. 74](#))
 Robert de Faversham, elected 1370, ([fn. 75](#)) died 1409 ([fn. 76](#))
 Robert Elham, elected 1409, ([fn. 77](#)) died 1426 ([fn. 78](#))
 John Chartham, elected 1426, ([fn. 79](#)) died 1458 ([fn. 80](#))
 Walter Gore, elected 1458, ([fn. 81](#)) resigned 1498 ([fn. 82](#))
 John Sheppy or Casteloke, elected 1499, ([fn. 83](#)) surrendered 1538 ([fn. 84](#))

The seal ([fn. 85](#)) (thirteenth century) of the abbey measures 2³/₄ inches.

Obverse.—Our Lord seated on a throne with nimbus, in a niche with carved and trefoiled arch, lifting up the right hand in benediction and holding in the left a book. On each side a smaller niche, containing on the left St. Peter seated on a throne with nimbus, holding in the right hand two keys and in the left a book, and on the right St. Paul with nimbus, holding in the right hand a sword and in the left a book. Outside these niches, on each side a narrow buttress with three stories of arcaded work, supported on a bracket. Over the roof of the

central niche, on the left a star, on the right a crescent. In base, two circular panels, each containing a king's head, with arcades at the sides. Legend:—

[S C]JOMMUNE MONASTERII Sci SALVATORIS DE FFAVER

Reverse.—The abbey church with Our Lord standing on a mount under a trefoiled arch below the central tower; under smaller arches, on the left Moses and on the right Elias, the whole thus representing the Transfiguration. In each of the side towers two small openings, the upper quatrefoiled, the lower sixfoiled. Each contains the head of one of the emblems of the four evangelists; on the left an eagle and a lion, on the right a man and a calf. Over the roof of the church between the spires two angels with outspread wings issuing from the heavens and each swinging a censer. In base beneath the plinth of the building three crouching figures. Legend:—

TRANSFIGURATUR VELUT ET SOL CLARIFICATUR.

Footnotes

- 1 Besides the accounts of Faversham in Dugdale, *Mon.* iv, 568, and Hasted, *Hist. and Topog. Surv. of Kent*, ii, 698, detailed information has been given by Thomas Southouse in *Monasticon Favershamiense* (1671) and John Lewis in *History of the Abbey of Faversham* (1727).
- 2 Dugdale, *Mon.* iv, 573.
- 3 *Ibid.* 575.
- 4 Gervase of Canterbury, *Opera* (Rolls Ser.), i, 138.
- 5 *Annales Mon.* (Rolls Ser.), iii, 438.
- 6 Gervase of Canterbury, *Opera* (Rolls Ser.), i, 139.
- 7 *Ibid.* 151, 155, 159.
- 8 Dugdale, *Mon.* ii, 574.
- 9 Dugdale, *Mon.* ii, 573.
- 10 Chart. R. 11 Edw. III, No. 23.
- 11 *Rotuli Chartarum* (Rec. Com.), 150. In 1413 the abbey had long lawsuits with the corporation of London and others about their fisheries of Oare, Luddenham, Faversham, and Harty. [Coram Rege R. Mich. I Hen. V, 90; Early Chan. Proc. bdle. 6, 241.]
- 12 Dugdale, *Mon.* iv, 573.
- 13 Chart. R. 25 Edw. I, No. 4.
- 14 *Ibid.* 9 Edw. II, No. 53.
- 15 *Ibid.* II Hen. III, pt. I, m. 14.
- 16 *Ibid.* 9 Edw. II, No. 48.
- 17 Pat. 4 Edw. IV, pt. 3, m. 6.
- 18 *Cal. Papal Let.* v, 361.
- 19 *Bodleian Charters* (ed. Turner and Coxe), 136; *Lit. Cant.* (Rolls Ser.), ii, 219; Pat. 14 Edw. III, pt. 2, m. ii.
- 20 *Reg. Epist. J. Peckham* (Rolls Ser.), iii, 959.
- 21 Gervase of Canterbury, *Opera* (Rolls Ser.), ii, 280.
- 22 Pat. 3 Edw. I, m. 13.
- 23 Dugdale, *Mon.* iv, 569.
- 24 *Cal. Papal Let.* i, 470.
- 25 Cant. Archiepis. Reg. Reynolds, fol. 136, 139b.
- 26 Pat. 19 Edw. II, pt. i, m. 29.
- 27 *Cal. Papal Let.* ii, 279.
- 28 Pat. 21 Edw. I, m. 8 d.
- 29 Pat. 4 Edw. II, pt. 2, m. 25.
- 30 *L. and P. Hen. VIII*, xiii (2), 274, 290.
- 31 Close, 21 Edw. I, m. 10.
- 32 *Ibid.* 19 Edw. II, m. 20d.
- 33 *Cal. Papal Let.* v, 284.
- 34 *Ibid.* 358.
- 35 *Ibid.* ivi, 29.
- 36 Hasted, loc. cit.
- 37 Cant. Archiepis. Reg. Langharh, fol. 77b.
- 38 Cant. Archiepis. Reg. Warham, fol. 40b.
- 39 *L. and P. Hen. VIII*, vii, 1594 (2).

- 40 *Valor Eccl.* (Rec. Com.), i, 82.
 41 *L. and P. Hen. VIII*, v, 812.
 42 *Ibid*, x, 484.
 43 *Ibid*. 627.
 44 *Ibid*, xiii (1), 1322.
 45 *Ibid*. 1339-40.
 46 *Ibid*, xv, 436 (44).
 47 Gervase of Canterbury, *Opera* (Rolls Ser.), i, 138. He was prior of Bermondsey.
 48 *Ibid*. 277. He too was prior of Bermondsey.
 49 *Ibid*, i, 458; ii, 405.
 50 Feet of Fines, Kent.
 51 Gervase of Canterbury, *Opera*, ii, 109.
 52 Pat. 19 Hen. III, m. 7.
 53 *Ibid*. He was cellarer.
 54 Pat. 52 Hen. III, m. 34.
 55 *Ibid*. m. 29. He was cellarer.
 56 Pat. 55 Hen. III, m. 23.
 57 *Ibid*. m. 20.
 58 *Ibid*, 1 Edw. I, m. 20. The convent paid 100 marks for the temporalities on this occasion.
 59 *Ibid*. m. 19.
 60 Gervase of Canterbury, *Opera*, ii, 280.
 61 *Ibid*. 282; Pat. 3 Edw. I, m. 4; Close, 3 Edw. I, m. 2 *d*. The monks elected John de Romenhale, one of themselves, but the archbishop quashed the election and appointed Oswald, a monk of Christchurch, Canterbury.
 62 Gervase of Canterbury, *Opera*, ii, 300; Pat. 20 Edw. I, m. 12.
 63 Pat. 20 Edw. I, m. 9. He was sub-prior.
 64 *Ibid*. 2 Edw. II, pt. 2, m. 22.
 65 *Ibid*. He was prior.
 66 *Ibid*. 12 Edw. II, pt. 1, m. 20.
 67 *Ibid*. m. 19. The king gave his assent to the election on 19 November.
 68 *Ibid*. m. 7.
 69 *Ibid*. The king gave his assent to the election on 28 December.
 70 Cant. Archiepis. Reg. Reynolds, fol. 139*b*.
 71 *Ibid*. 143*b*. He was sub-prior (Pat. 19 Edw. II, pt. 1, m. 22).
 72 Cant. Archiepis. Reg. Islip, fol. 113.
 73 *Ibid*.
 74 Pat. 44 Edw. III, pt. 2, m. 5.
 75 *Ibid*. m. 2.
 76 Cant. Archiepis. Reg. Arundel, fol. 123.
 77 Pat. 11 Hen. IV, pt. 1, m. 11. He was subprior.
 78 Cant. Archiepis. Reg. Chicheley, fol. 45.
 79 Pat. 5 Hen. VI, pt. 1, m. 21.
 80 Pat. 37 Hen. VI, pt. 1, m. 18.
 81 *Ibid*.
 82 Pat. 14 Hen. VII, pt. 1, m. 11 (12); pt. 3. m. 10 (11).
 83 *Ibid*.
 84 *L. and P. Hen. VIII*, xiii (1), 1339.
 85 B. M. Seals, lxxv, 59, 60.

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