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THE GRANT OF EASTCHURCH TO THE ABBEY OF DUNES BY RICHARD I*

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The Abbey of Notre-Dame des Dunes at Coxyde (now Koksijde) on the Belgian coast between Newport and Dunkirk, near Furnes, was the most important Cistercian community in Flanders at the end of the twelfth century.¹ Its first contacts with England appear to date from 1165 or a little earlier: a confirmation by the Pope, given in 1165, mentions an exemption from toll granted by Henry II.² Similar exemptions and privileges were again granted by Henry II in 1187 and renewed under Richard I, King John and Henry III.³

An unsuspected account of the release of King Richard I has been preserved in the chronicles of the abbey. According to these chronicles, Elias, abbot of the monastery from 1189 to 1203, played an important part in the efforts aimed at the release of the King, held prisoner by the Emperor of Germany, and the abbey was granted the church of Eastchurch, Isle of Sheppey, by the King himself in appreciation for this intercession.

The grant of the church of Eastchurch is attested by a charter of Richard I and dates effectively from April 1194, shortly after the King's return to England. On the other hand, the abbot's participation in the negotiations, although well known and often mentioned in most notes, papers or studies relating to the abbey, has had a mixed

* For a fuller French version of this paper, see *Cîteaux, Commentarii cistercienses*, xxxiv (1983), 20–52.

¹ On the Abbey of Dunes in general, see A. Dubois and N. Huyghebaert, 'Abbaye des Dunes', in *Monasticon belge, Flandre occidentale*, II, Liège, 1966, 353–445.

² *Cronica et Cartularium Monasterii de Dunis*, (Ed.) F. van de Putte, Bruges, 1864, 260–1, where the document is published after the cartulary 169/34 of the *Grand Séminaire de Bruges*; for the date, transcribed after the original (Inv. no. 3), see J. de Cuyper, *Idesbald van der Gracht*, Bruges-Brussels, 1946, 191 n. 65; Jaffe-Löwenfeld, *Regesta Pont. Rom.*, II, no. 11155.

³ *Cronica et Cartularium*, 167, 176–7, 197; see also below p. 38.

reception, being at times accepted, merely reported or met with reservations, even scepticism.⁴ Indeed, modern Belgian historians have not really attempted to test the credibility of this tradition by an examination of the charters. J. de Cuyper, the only author to make a special study of the relations of the abbey with England, has little to say about the text in his commentary on the charters – before passing very rapidly on to the economic history and considering Eastchurch as a convenient *entrepôt* for the Abbey in the trade of English wool.⁵ In England, although it is known that Eastchurch belonged to the Abbey of Dunes,⁶ King Richard I's grant in 1194 appears to have passed unnoticed in spite of the publication of the charters by Round in his *Calendar of Documents preserved in France*.⁷

The medieval narrative accounts, originating from the abbey and relating to the question under examination, are preserved in three different works written by the two historiographers of the monastery, John Brandon's (*d.* 1428) unpublished *Chronodromon seu cursus temporum*, a chronicle beginning with the Creation to the year 1414,⁸ in the *Chronica abbatum monasterii de Dunis* and the *Epistola*, both by Adrien de But (*d.* 1488) and published in the nineteenth century. This information can be augmented by a sentence in the *Annales Breves*, another manuscript connected with de But,⁹ and by notes concerning the inscription on the high altar of the abbey church inserted by Meyerus in his annals of Flanders published in 1561.¹⁰

⁴ See bibliography in Dubois and Huyghebaert, *op. cit.*, 361–3.

⁵ J. de Cuyper, 'De Abdij van de Duinen en Engeland gedurende de XIIe, XIIIe en XIVe eeuw' in *Annales de la Société d'Émulation de Bruges*, lxxxviii (1951), 97–108; *id.*, 'Elias van Koksijde, zesde cistercienser Abt van Duinen (1189–1203)', in *Cîteaux in de Nederlanden*, vii (1956), 39–41.

⁶ E. Hasted, *The History and topographical Survey of the County of Kent*, ii, Canterbury, 1782, 665; Canon Scott Robertson, 'The Church of All Saints, Eastchurch in Shepey', *Arch. Cant.*, xiv (1882), 374–88; *VCH (Kent)*, ii, 1926, 153.

⁷ *Calendar of Documents preserved in France*, (Ed.) J.H. Round, London, 1899, 497–9, nos. 1366–70.

⁸ Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale, MS II 1169 (complete version in 3 vols.) and MSS 18179–80 (vols. I and III of an incomplete version whose text is clearly better than that of the preceding manuscript, *a.* 1194 and 1203). On J. Brandon, see Dubois and Huyghebaert, *op. cit.*, 366.

⁹ *Cronica Abbatum Monasterii de Dunis*, (Ed.) C.L. Carton, Bruges, 1839, 9 (*Cronica*), 41–2 (*Epistola*); *Cronica et Cartularium*, 8 (*Cronica*), 34–5 (*Epistola*), published after MS 132/116 of the *Grand Séminaire de Bruges*. On Adrien de But, see Dubois and Huyghebaert, *op. cit.*, 353–5. *Annales breves*, Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale, MS IV 688 (formerly at the Archives Générales, MS divers, 899, f.162v (*a.*) 1194.

¹⁰ J. Meyerus, *Commentarii sive Annales Rerum flandricarum*, Antwerp, 1561, 59.

All these different texts mention Abbot Elias and the release of King Richard. If, however, the Dunes monks apparently knew that Abbot Elias had played an effective rôle in the release of Richard I, they were unaware of the precise part he had played: the words used in the different chronicles to describe his intervention, 'liberavit', 'agente', 'redimere iuvit',¹¹ and 'multum expedierat ad liberationem' (*Chronodromon*), lack precision. It is undoubtedly for this reason that, seeking an explanation and forgetting the close relations between England and Flanders in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the monks later imagined an unlikely connection with the Duke of Austria, mentioned in the *Chronodromon* and romantically expanded in Adrien de But's *Epistola*.¹²

In the examination of the charters, apart from the references already mentioned in the *Cronica*, the *Annales breves* and the work of Meyerus, several elements drawn from the *Chronodromon* of John Brandon must be borne in mind, such as the abbot's participation in a mission to Germany, his invitation to England after the king's return, his mention as royal councillor and the eventual request of the queen.¹³

¹¹ 'De quo legitur quod Richardum regem Anglie a captivitate ducis Austrie liberavit', (*Cronica et Cartularium*, 8 = *Cronica Abbatum*, 9). 'Helia abbate de Dunis agente, Richardus rex Anglie liberatur a captivitate (*Annales breves*, f.162v, a. 1194). 'Eum (Richardum Rex) Helias abbas Dunensis redimere iuvit, donatus postea ab eo praeter amplas in Anglia decimas visendo illo marmore quod ad aram maximum eo in monasterio cernitur' (Mayerus, 59)

¹² On the evidence of the various chronicles and their development, see Cîteaux, *Commentarii cistercienses*, xxxiv (1983), 22-9, 49-52.

¹³ Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale, MS 18180.

a. 1194 (f.101r)

Domino etiam Helye abbati de Dunis qui iam notus et familiaris factus fuerat magnifice regraciatu ecclesiam de Esthierche que est in Scapeya per manum Humberti cantuariensis archiepiscopi ecclesie de Dunis in perpetuam elemosinam tradidit et consiliarium eius eum fecit. Nam hic notus duci Austrie, cum optimatibus Anglie ad imperatorem profectus, multum ad regis liberationem expedierat.

a. 1203 (f.106v)

Dompnus Helyas de Coxide Vitus (sextus) ecclesie de Dunis abbas post XIII sui regiminis annos in pace quievit XVII^o kalendas septembres.

Iste cum legatis Anglie, ad instanciam regine, pergens ad ducem Austrie pro redemptione regis Anglorum Richardi qui ab eodem duce sub imperatore tenebatur captivus, eum, mediante magna summa pecunie, redemptum ad Angliam commeavit et ab eodem rege vocatus in Angliam, honorifice susceptus est et cum decima de Scaepheye ditatus, consiliarius eius effectus, ab episcopis, baronibus, exeniis et donis sepissime honoratus.

THE CHARTERS

The charters relating to the grant of Eastchurch – a royal act, two acts of the Archbishop of Canterbury, a pontifical confirmation and a few other documents – are all copies, mostly transcribed in one of the Dunes cartularies, preserved in the archives of the Bruges *Grand Séminaire*.¹⁴ The original documents, no doubt transferred to Boxley Abbey at the beginning of the fourteenth century, when the abbey acquired the English possessions of Dunes, were apparently lost after the Dissolution.

THE ROYAL CHARTER OF 1194

The royal charter, as preserved in the cartulary, is actually two documents in one. It reproduces the text, without introduction, of the original charter of 1194, with its list of witnesses, the place and date incomplete. Then after the renewal formula due to the change in the royal seal, follows a new list of witnesses and the date 17th January, 1199, given at La Roche d'Andely (Normandy).¹⁵ The cartulary contains only this version of the two charters, the original one having been probably destroyed after the drafting of the second.

According to the 1194 charter, King Richard grants of his charity, for the salvation of his soul and that of his forebears, to the Monastery of Dunes, in perpetuity, the church called Eastchurch, which is vacant, with all its appurtenances, to be held freely for ever. Given at Winchester, on 21st April, by the hand of the chancellor. Although the year is not indicated, the document may easily be dated; as King Richard only spent part of April at Winchester in 1194,¹⁶ it follows that the grant of Eastchurch to the Abbey of Dunes took place on 21st April, 1194.

¹⁴ *Cartulaire* 169/34. On the evidence of the transcribed acts, this cartulary dates either from the beginning of the fourteenth century or from the end of the thirteenth and was completed at the very beginning of the following century.

¹⁵ *Cart.* 169/34, f.185r; *Cronica et Cartularium*, 421–2 (= *Cronica Abbatum*, 145, with the incorrect date of 1197); Round, *op. cit.*, 497–8, no. 1366. On the renewal of this charter in 1199, see note 64. The witnesses were: Hubert Walter, Archbishop of Canterbury and Chief Justiciar, William de Longchamp, Bishop of Ely and Chancellor, Gilbert de Glanville, Bishop of Rochester, William of Sainte-Mère-Église, one of the justices and future Bishop of London, Roger Bigod, Earl of Norfolk, the well known William Marshall, and Geoffrey FitzPeter, Justiciar and future Earl of Essex.

¹⁶ Roger of Hoveden, (Ed.) W. Stubbs, *Rolls Series*, iii, 238–50.

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THE FIRST CHARTER OF THE ARCHBISHOP

The first charter of Hubert Walter, Archbishop of Canterbury, is comparatively more detailed than the royal document; it gives additional information on the church's transfer from the former incumbent to the new one.¹⁷

The archbishop gives notice that William of Sainte-Mère-Église has relinquished, into his hands and by his own will (*'spontanea voluntate sua'*), the church at Eastchurch, and that the king has granted this church to the Abbey of Dunes, in perpetuity and has presented Abbot Elias. He also says that he has admitted the abbot (described as *'Dilectum amicum nostrum'*) in the name of his monastery, that he has instituted him as rector (*'persona'*) in accordance with canon law and caused him to be introduced into corporal possession of the church by his officials. He wishes the abbey to possess Eastchurch freely and with all its appurtenances, saving what is due to the church of Canterbury; he reserves to himself the fitting arrangements for the vicarage.

Although the charter bears no indication of day, year or place, it can also be easily dated. The context clearly indicates that the charter post-dates the royal document. Moreover, Herbert Poore, one of the witnesses, is still mentioned as Archdeacon of Canterbury, but almost at the same time, he was elected bishop by the canons of Salisbury, his election being confirmed by Hubert Walter on 29th April.^{17a} The archbishop's charter was therefore drafted between the 21st and 29th April. Nevertheless, it is more likely that the two charters were granted at the same time, on 21st April, at Winchester: the church falling vacant, the king grants it to the abbey and

¹⁷ *Cart.* 169/34, f.188v; *Cronica et Cartularium*, 424-5; Round, *op. cit.*, 498, no. 1368. The *'vidimus'* of this charter given in 1232 (Bruges, *Grand Séminaire*, Inv. no. 487, published in part in *Cronica et Cartularium*, 476-7) antedates the cartulary copy and is the only original document surviving relating to Eastchurch; it remained in the Dunes archives no doubt because, issued by the ecclesiastical authorities of Furnes, it was of no interest to Boxley Abbey. The witnesses were: Hebert Poore, Archdeacon of Canterbury, Walter of Ghent, Augustinian, Abbot of Waltham, Abbot William of Stratford Langthorne, Henry de Chastillon, a royal clerk, Walter, Precentor of London, Master William of 'Lechinton', Master William of Scaldis, Master William of Sumercote, Master William of Calna, members of Hubert Walter's *entourage*, Simon of Camera, another royal clerk (here named Simon Camerario) and Richard of Ely. On this charter and the following, and their lists of witnesses, see *English Episcopal Acta*, iii, *Canterbury, 1193-1205*, (Ed.) C.R. Cheney, nos. 449 and 450 (in the press).

^{17a} *H. archidiacono Cantuarie = Herberto archidiacono Cantuarie* since his successor H(enry) de Chastillon is named later without title (note 17). Herbert Poore (*d.* 1217): Canon of Lincoln and Salisbury, Archdeacon of Canterbury from 1175 to April 1194 and Bishop of Salisbury from 1194 until his death in 1217.

introduces the abbot, the archbishop then confirms the royal grant and accepts the new rector.

THE SECOND CHARTER OF THE ARCHBISHOP

Hubert Walter's second charter is very similar to the first one. But this new document clarifies the rights of each and shares the revenues of Eastchurch between the abbey and the vicar. The king is mentioned as patron of the church.¹⁸ Undated, the charter is placed between April 1195 and February 1198. Hubert Walter's title is given as Legate of the Apostolic See, conferred upon him by Pope Celestine III in letters dated from March 1195;¹⁹ Hubert Walter's legation ended with the death of Pope Celestine in 1198 and was not renewed on the election of Pope Innocent III.²⁰

THE PAPAL CONFIRMATION

A papal document, issued by Pope Celestine III, on 21st December, 1196, confirms the possession of the church of Eastchurch by the Abbey of Dunes.²¹ As Cistercian abbeys were unauthorised in principle to receive churches, altars or tithes, this charter may be interpreted as a dispensation. The text is drafted in very general terms, and, although issued in 1196, it cannot unfortunately be used to settle the date of Hubert Walter's second charter more precisely.

¹⁸ *Cart.* 169/34, f.187v; *Cronica et Cartularium*, 423; Round, *op. cit.*, 498, no. 1367. The witnesses were: Ranulf, Treasurer of Salisbury, Geoffrey of Bocland, Master Simon of Sywell, Master William of Calna, Simon of Camera, Master Adam of Walsingham and Robert of Bristou, members of Hubert Walter's *entourage*. The text of this charter is reproduced in a confirmation given by John of Sittingbourne, Prior of Christchurch, Canterbury, from 1222 to 1232 (J. Le Neve, *Fasti Ecclesiae anglicanae 1066-1300*, (Ed. D.E. Greenway), ii, Monastic Cathedrals, London, 1971, 11), which can be attributed to one of the periods, following the death of Stephen Langdon (*d.* 1227), when the archiepiscopal see was vacant (*Cart.* 169/34, f.188r; *Cronica et Cartularium*, 424; Round, *op. cit.*, 499, no. 1369). A copy of John of Sittingbourne's confirmation is in the register of Henry of Eastry, Prior of Christchurch from 1285 to 1331 (Cambridge University Library, MS Ee 5 31, f.7r); this copy preserves the correct spelling of the three witnesses, Geoffrey of Bocland, Adam of Walsingham and Robert of Bristou.

¹⁹ Roger of Hoveden, iii, 290-1; Le Neve, *op. cit.*, ii, 5.

²⁰ C.R. Cheney, 'The Deaths of Popes and the Expiry of Legations', in *Revue du Droit canonique*, 28 (1978), 84-96.

²¹ *Cart.* 169/34, f.17v and f.190v; *Cronica et Cartularium*, 275-6; Round, *op. cit.*, 499, no. 1370; Jaffe-Löwenfeld, *op. cit.*, ii, no. 17466.

This papal confirmation is the only twelfth-century document mentioned by Hasted and Canon Scott Robertson.²²

According to the royal document and the archbishop's two charters, the Abbey of Dunes was granted by Richard I in April 1194 a village church belonging to the royal domain whose incumbent was normally presented by the king as patron of the church. The preceding rector was William of Sainte-Mère Église, a well known royal official. As he was clerk of the exchequer under Henry II and as another clerk of the exchequer appears among the witnesses in the two archiepiscopal charters, it might be supposed that, before the grant, the Eastchurch church was reserved to reward certain clerks of the exchequer.

The resignation of William of Sainte-Mère-Église allowed King Richard to grant Eastchurch to Notre-Dame of Dunes. The church was given to the Flemish abbey, with all its dependencies. The king presented Abbot Elias and the archbishop admitted the latter as rector (*'persona'*) in the name of his monastery.

As was customary when the rectory of a parish was appropriated to an abbey, the institution of a vicarage was required by the archbishop. The ordinance of this vicarage, which chiefly meant the division of the church's income between abbey and vicar, was recorded in Hubert Walter's second charter. The abbey as rector received the greater tithes, as well as the buildings next to the church, apparently for the storage of wheat and vegetables received as tithe. The lesser tithes, offerings, glebeland and its income went to the vicar, but also to the support of the church. The glebe mentioned was probably the land of 11½ acres with a yearly rent of 8*d.*, later leased for rent from the vicar by the abbey itself.²³

According to the context of Hubert Walter's first charter, Abbot Elias visited England in order to accept the grant and was present at Winchester when the archbishop transferred to him the possession of the church of Eastchurch.

It has already been seen above that the chronicles of Dunes establish a connection between the grant of the Eastchurch church and the rôle the chronicles attribute to the abbot in the release of the king. The study of the charters does not provide clear evidence of the account put forward by the narrative sources. The chronicles and the charters agree on two points only: on the grant itself and on the abbot's presence in England at the time the grant took place. However, the date of the grant about a month after Richard I's return

²² See note 6.

²³ *Cronica et Cartularium*, 425.

to England, the personality and the rôle of Hubert Walter and William of Sainte-Mère-Église argue in favour of the abbey tradition as it has survived and stripped of its unlikely embellishments. It is no matter of great surprise that English chronicles make no mention of Abbot Elias when they refer to the captivity and release of the king as they do not, in fact, relate all the events on the Continent.²⁴

THE DATE

The grant of Eastchurch took place on 21st April, 1194, during the brief stay of Richard I at Winchester from 15th to 22nd April; the king was visiting Winchester for a new coronation in the cathedral by the archbishop of Canterbury.²⁵

The grant of the church at Eastchurch to the Abbey of Dunes is dated four days after the coronation. The witnesses to the two 1194 charters were no doubt at Winchester for the ceremony. The Archbishop Hubert Walter and the Chancellor William de Longchamp, the Bishop of Rochester and the Earl of Norfolk are cited as participants in the ceremony by Roger of Hoveden. The other witnesses are abbots, clerks and members of the nobility generally mentioned.²⁶ It is fairly probable that Abbot Elias, who was to be granted the church of Eastchurch a few days later, was also present at the second coronation of the King of England.

ARCHBISHOP HUBERT WALTER (*d.* 1205)

Hubert Walter is an important figure of the end of the twelfth century. Archbishop of Canterbury and Chief Justiciar, he ruled England on behalf of the king from the autumn of 1193 until the end of the reign.²⁷ He went with the king to Palestine and, on the death of Archbishop Baldwin, became the spiritual leader of the English crusaders. After Richard's departure, he brought the army back to Sicily and, following the king's capture, left for Germany; he returned to England at the end of April 1193. His visit to the king is

²⁴ For instance, Roger of Hoveden does not explain that King Richard was detained successively in different castles, though this can be inferred by the dates and places mentioned in the royal correspondence which the chronicler has transcribed. Details on William of Sainte-Mère-Église, the Duke of Brabant or the king's itinerary on his return to England are provided by incidental references.

²⁵ Roger of Hoveden, 238–50.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 247–8.

²⁷ C.R. Cheney, *Hubert Walter*, London, 1967; *DNB*, x, 137–40.

reported in a letter from the imprisoned Richard I to Eleanor, the Queen Mother.²⁸ King Richard, during his captivity, supported Hubert Walter's election as Archbishop of Canterbury in May 1193 and appointed him chief justiciar; he took part in collecting the king's ransom, becoming one of its keepers. In December 1193, Richard I wrote to him personally and informed him of the date of his imminent release. Early in 1194, the archbishop took an active part as justiciar in the submission of the last castles still occupied by John, the king's brother.²⁹

WILLIAM OF SAINTE-MÈRE-ÉGLISE

William of Sainte-Mère-Église, both a witness on the royal charter and incumbent of the church of Eastchurch before the grant, first appeared as a royal clerk during the last years of Henry II's reign.³⁰ Under Richard I, his career seems very like that of Hubert Walter. In 1189, he received from the king Hubert Walter's prebend at York and, when Hubert became Bishop of Salisbury, William became Archdeacon of Wiltshire. A little later, when Hubert became Chief Justiciar, William appeared as judge as early as the spring of 1194 and was mentioned as protonotary by the king himself in April 1193.³¹ In 1190, William participated in the crusade, as attested by a letter of Chancellor William de Longchamp to the Bishop of Bath.³² At the very beginning of 1193, he was already for some time, perhaps, back in England and it was from here, in conflict with Geraldus Cambrensis about the church of Chesterton, that he visited the imprisoned king;³³ his visit to Germany was reported both by Geraldus Cambrensis in his letter to Hugh, Bishop of Lincoln, on the subject of Chesterton, and by the king himself in a letter to Queen Eleanor.³⁴

²⁸ William of Newbury (Willelmus Neuburgensis), in *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard I*, (Ed.) R. Howlett, *Rolls Series*, i, 392; *Gervase of Canterbury*, (Ed.) W. Stubbs, *Rolls Series*, i, 516; Roger of Hoveden, iii, 209.

²⁹ Roger of Hoveden, iii, 212 (ransom); 226-7 (the king's letter); 237-8 (submission of the last castles).

³⁰ *DNB*, xxi, 364-7; L. Delisle, *Recueil des Actes d'Henri II*, I, Introduction, Paris, 1909, 496-500.

³¹ Roger of Hoveden, iii, 16; *Gesta Henrici II . . .*, (Ed.) W. Stubbs, ii, 86; Round, *op. cit.*, 387, no. 1090; *Pleas before the King*, Seldon Society, vol. 83, p. xcv; Roger of Hoveden, iii, 209.

³² *Epistulae Cantuarienses*, (Ed.) W. Stubbs, 343, no. CCCLXIX (*Rolls Series*, ii, London, 1865).

³³ Geraldus Cambrensis, i, 260, 263.

³⁴ Roger of Hoveden, iii, 209.

On the evidence of two other royal letters sent from Germany and dated 30th March, 1193, it is known that William was entrusted with the organisation of Hubert Walter's election to the See of Canterbury.³⁵ In his letter to Hugh of Lincoln, Giraldus Cambrensis, who disapproved of the intrusion of royal clerks into Church affairs, was opposed to the '*curiales*' and William of Sainte-Mère-Église, described as '*curiae sequela et familiaris regis*'.³⁶ In spite of Giraldus Cambrensis' animosity against William because of their personal quarrel, his evidence is valuable as it reveals William of Sainte-Mère-Église's importance at that time. In November 1193, he was with the king at Speier and, at the beginning of 1194, he was with the English mission, led by Queen Eleanor, which went to Mainz for the king's release; his presence is not mentioned in any chronicle, but he was amongst the witnesses to two royal documents given at Cologne on 12th February and at Louvain on 16th February during the return journey to England.³⁷

ABBOT ELIAS

It is rather unusual for a Flemish abbot to be known for his rôle in the negotiations leading to the release of the King of England, for receiving a church in rural Kent and acquiring English materials, wood, stone and altar stone, for the new buildings of his abbey; this postulates connections between Abbot Elias and people across Channel. Nevertheless, except for his contacts with England, there are few biographical details about him to be found in the chronicles.

Elias was prior of the monastery before he was elected abbot in 1189 and ruled the abbey for fourteen years until his death on 16th August, 1203.³⁸ At the very end of his abbacy, Elias was entrusted with a diplomatic mission, of which the abbey chronicles are unaware; a letter from Pope Innocent III to the King of France in May 1203 reveals that he was chosen by the pope to negotiate peace between France and England, accompanied by Gerald, Abbot of

³⁵ *Epistulae Cantuarienses*, 362-4, nos. CCCXCIX and CCCCI; 364-6, nos. CCCIII-IV.

³⁶ Giraldus Cambrensis, i, 260, 263.

³⁷ L. Landon, 'The Itinerary of Richard I', Pipe Roll Society, n.s., xiii (1935), 80, 84; *Hansisches Urkundenbuch*, (Eds.) K. Hohlbaum, K. Kunze and W. Stein, Halle, 1876, i, 22, no. 40.

³⁸ *Cronica et Cartularium*, 8, 34; Brandon, *op. cit.*, a. 1203; Dubois and Huyghebaert, *op. cit.*, 380-2.

Casamari, and the Abbot of Trois-Fontaines.³⁹ As two of the envoys, Elias and Guy of Trois-Fontaines, died in the course of the year, perhaps the mission came to nothing. Anyway, the evidence is interesting in that it appears to confirm the abbot's reputation in diplomatic affairs. Additionally, a curious lapse on the part of the Abbot of Dunes is to be noted. In September 1193, Abbot Elias was not present, as in previous years, at the General Chapter of the Cistercian Order, and was blamed for his absence.⁴⁰ It is, however, interesting to note that this absence corresponds exactly with the year spent in negotiating the release of Richard I. Is it mere coincidence or evidence for exceptional diplomatic activity in the autumn of 1193?

The question is: what might the Abbot of Dunes have done in 1193–94 to secure the release of the King of England? In fact, there are several possible hypotheses. For about thirty years, Notre-Dame of Dunes had connections with England. A few years earlier, in 1187, the monastery had been granted by Henry II the right of free passage across his land, exemption from toll, passage and pontage, as well as authorisation to have new ships built, old ones to be repaired or improved (*emendare*) and to purchase wood for its own use.⁴¹ It has been suggested that, in view of these privileges, the Abbey of Dunes would perhaps have had to make a financial contribution to King Richard's ransom.⁴² But, if so, that does not explain the additional gift of a rural church with its greater tithes.

THE SHIPS AND EXEMPTIONS OF THE ABBEY

At that time the ships of Dunes were in service: at the General Chapter of the Order, at Cîteaux, in 1190, the Flemish abbey was reminded that it could not use these ships as merchant vessels 'for the transport of goods in return for payment.'⁴³

When news of Richard I's capture reached England in February 1193, thanks to a copied letter from the Emperor to Philip Augustus,⁴⁴ the king had no more friends on the Continent. The

³⁹ *Selected Letters of Pope Innocent III concerning England*. (Eds.) C.R. Cheney and W.H. Semple, *Nelson's Medieval Texts*, London, 1953, 56–9.

⁴⁰ *Statuta Capitulum Generalium Ordinis Cisterciensis*, (Ed.) J.M. Canivez, Louvain, 1933, i, 166–7; *ad annum* 1193, 48.

⁴¹ *Cronica et Cartularium*, 167; see also note 61.

⁴² J. de Cuyper, *Elias van Koksijde*, *op. cit.*, 40; Dubois and Huyghebaert, *op. cit.*, 381.

⁴³ *Statuta Capitulum Generalium Ordinis Cisterciensis*, i, 130; *ad annum* 1190, 63.

⁴⁴ Roger of Hoveden, iii, 195–7.

Emperor, though interested in a ransom, was clearly hostile to him. The King of France, his rival, was also an enemy with unknown intentions, but the release of the King of England was of no advantage to him. The Count of Flanders was neither an ally, nor a relative: Philip of Alsace, a cousin of King Henry II, had died at St. John of Acre in 1190 and his brother-in-law, Baldwin of Hainaut, had succeeded him; the new count's daughter had married the king of France and, though she died before the crusade, her father had remained subject to Philip Augustus.

It is perhaps for this reason that Walter of Coutances, Archbishop of Rouen, and the other justiciars chose, at the time of the assembly held at Oxford on 28th February, 1193, two Cistercian abbots as first emissaries to Germany,⁴⁵ relying on the international nature of the Cistercian Order to ease their passage through 'inimical' regions. In this context, the ships of the Abbey of Dunes could have been useful, just as the contacts of the abbey with Cologne, where the monks enjoyed exemptions granted almost at the same time by Archbishops Philip of Heinsberg (1167-91), Brunon (1191-93) and Adolph of Altena (1193-1205),⁴⁶ in order to convey, discreetly and safely, English envoys or messengers bearing letters or even, later, portions of the ransom which had to be brought to the imperial frontier at the risk and peril of the King of England.⁴⁷ A similar service was requested twenty years later, in 1213, of Ter Doest, the daughter-abbey of Dunes, when King John renewed the privileges and exemptions granted by his father, Henry II, in 1187.⁴⁸ This happened at Temple Ewell (Dover) on 16th May, 1213, in the aftermath of the king's submission to the papal legate Pandulf, putting an end to the long quarrel between King John and Pope Innocent III; one of the intermediaries between pope and king was William of Sainte-Mère-Église, who had meanwhile become Bishop of London in 1198. In exchange for the renewal of privileges, the monks of Ter Doest undertook to facilitate (*promovere*) the passage of the royal envoys and all persons visiting the king. A little later, the Count of Flanders became an ally of the King of England and the pope cancelled the interdict.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 197-8.

⁴⁶ D.R. Knipping, *Die Regesten der Erzbischöfe von Köln im Mittelalter*, Bonn, 1901, ii, 277, no. 1384; 292, no. 145; and 346, no. 1680; *Cronica et Cartularium*, 163, 170, 179.

⁴⁷ Roger of Hoveden, iii, 215-6, 225.

⁴⁸ *Chronique de l'Abbaye de Ter Doest*, (Eds.) F.V(an de Putte) and C.C(arton), Bruges, 1845, 41, no. XI (charter of Henry II) and 42, no. XII (charter of King John, with inaccurate date).

Royal officials could equally seek to obtain the co-operation of the abbot of Dunes, in view of the exemptions and privileges granted by Henry II a few years earlier. In this respect, it may be interesting to note an odd coincidence. Elias was no doubt already Prior of Dunes when these privileges were granted in February 1187 at Hesdin. At that time, William of Sainte-Mère-Église, rector of Eastchurch in 1194, then clerk of the exchequer, had followed the king on the Continent, coming from Southampton with the royal 'baggage'.⁴⁹ A meeting could have taken place between the Prior of Dunes and the royal clerk, if William, like his master, were to land at Wissant and if Elias were present at Hesdin.

THE CISTERCIAN ENVOYS

Let us now turn again to the first English envoys sent to Germany. They were the Abbots of Boxley and Robertsbridge. Boxley (Kent) and its daughter-abbey Robertsbridge (East Sussex) were the only two Cistercian monasteries in south-eastern England.

The meeting of Cistercian abbots at the General Chapter of the Order, held annually at Cîteaux, afforded an opportunity for meetings between English abbots and their colleagues on the Continent. Moreover, those of the English abbots, who had to cross the North of France on their way to Burgundy, could travel with their Flemish colleagues for the major part of their journey. It is therefore possible that there was contact between the two English abbots and the Cistercians of Dunes. The monastery of Coxyde being nearest to the coast in the direction of Dunkirk, it is not impossible that the emissaries may have sought assistance at the monastery and that the connections of the Flemish abbey with Cologne may have been useful to them, both for the journey towards Germany and for the objective of their mission.

Only three weeks elapsed between the decision to dispatch the emissaries and their arrival to meet the king at Ochsenfurt shortly before 20th April. It is almost certain, in view of the short lapse of time, that once in Germany the two abbots received comparatively precise hints – the surrender of the prisoner to the emperor had been decided since 14th February – which allowed them to meet the Austrian convoy bringing Richard I to Henry VI.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ R.W. Eyton, *Court, Household and Itinerary of Henry II*, London and Dorchester, 1878, 277–8.

⁵⁰ Roger of Hoveden, iii, 198; Ansbert, *Historia de Expeditione Frederici Imperatoris*, 115–9, in Roger of Hoveden, iii, Introduction, pp. cxli–cxliii.

Hoveden mentions only the two Cistercian abbots, but it is very likely that William of Sainte-Mère-Église accompanied them. On 30th March, the king sent a letter to Eleanor, the Queen Mother from Speier in which he recommended Hubert Walter's election to the See of Canterbury. A brief post-script sentence in this letter indicates that William was with the king and that he was entrusted to convey orally instructions which the queen was especially enjoined to trust.⁵¹ This date, 30th March, coincides with the journey to Germany by William de Sainte-Mère-Église with the first embassy. In fact, the Abbots of Boxley and Robertsbridge arrived and met the king at Ochsenfurt about 21st March (Palm Sunday), accompanied to Speier the convoy bringing Richard I prisoner to the Emperor, and were still in the town on 25th March (Maundy Thursday) when Henry VI and his prisoner first met. The chronicles do not mention when the emissaries left Germany, though their departure was not immediate as they were aware of the arrival of envoys from Philip Augustus following the agreement reached between Richard I and Henry VI.⁵² Hubert Walter, for his part, was probably also at Speier, coming from Italy on 30th March. It is indeed very unlikely that the king would have recommended the election of someone from whom he would have had no news since the beginning of October in the previous year.

DUKE HENRY I OF BRABANT

The chroniclers of Dunes, as mentioned above, have surmised an impossible connection between Abbot Elias and Duke Leopold of Austria. However, there was another duke of the German Empire, much nearer to and more directly connected with England, with whom Elias was likely to come in contact in order to negotiate the release of the King of England: Henry I, Duke of Brabant, who in fact played a part in the release of the king. At Dunes, a rather vague recollection of negotiations with a duke of the Holy Empire may have later identified this duke simply with Leopold of Austria.

Duke Henry I was at Mainz when Richard I was freed; the day

⁵¹ *Epistulae Cantuarienses*, 363, no. CCCXCIX. The date of 30th March allows to reconcile the evidence of Giraldus who places William's journey fairly early in the year (*Opera*, i, 263) with the king's letter of 19th April, associating Hubert Walter with Sainte-Mère-Église (Roger of Hoveden, iii, 209) and Hubert Walter's return to England on 20th April (*Gervase of Canterbury*, i, 516). Gervase of Canterbury and William of Newbury, see note 28.

⁵² Roger of Hoveden, iii, 198, 205-6.

before, he was one of the princes who forced the Emperor to carry out his promises to the King. Likewise, he was at the imperial court at Worms at the time of the first agreement, relating to the amount of the ransom, which took place in June 1193.⁵³ Immediately after his release, King Richard granted a fief-rent to the duke, at the same time as to other German princes, mostly those who opposed Henry VI.⁵⁴ A few months later, Duke Henry I received additionally, probably in the name of his wife Matilda of Boulogne, granddaughter of King Stephen, a portion of the revenues of the '*honor bolonie*', i.e. of the fief of Eye which belonged to the heirs of the Counts of Boulogne and which had already been claimed, apparently unsuccessfully, by Matilda's father.⁵⁵ Furthermore, Duke Henry I was Richard I's host during part of his return journey to England. After his release (4th February, 1194), the King went from Mainz to Cologne where he was received by the archbishop before going to Antwerp on the way to England.⁵⁶ The King travelled by land from Cologne to Antwerp, was at Louvain on 16th February, granting there privileges to the inhabitants of Cologne; in Brussels on 25th February, he granted protection and exemption from toll to Ter Doest, the daughter-abbey of Dunes.⁵⁷ Following the dates of the two charters, the King of England spent more than two weeks in Brabant before boarding a ship at Antwerp on 3rd March.⁵⁸ Oddly, the only contemporary English chronicler to mention the passage of the king and his retinue through the estates of the Duke of Brabant is the Cistercian Ralph of Coggeshall.⁵⁹

The charter of 25th February in favour of Ter Doest, still closely related at that time to its mother-abbey of Dunes, attests without doubt the presence on that day in Brussels of representatives of Ter Doest, of Dunes or both. As for William of Sainte-Mère-Église, he was also in Brussels as a member of the English mission sent to meet the king, since he signed the charters given to Cologne and Louvain

⁵³ *Ibid.*, iii, 232, 214-5; G. Smets, *Henri Ier, Duc de Brabant*, Brussels, 1908, 51-66.

⁵⁴ Roger of Hoveden, iii, 234.

⁵⁵ For the Eye estate, see *Pipe Roll 6 Richard I*, 7; J. de Sturler, *Les Relations politiques et les Échanges commerciaux entre le Duché de Brabant et l'Angleterre au Moyen-Age*, Paris, 1936, 97; I.J. Sanders, *English Baronies*, Oxford, 1960, 43-4.

⁵⁶ Roger of Hoveden, iii, 235; Gervase of Canterbury, i, 523-4; Ralph of Coggeshall, (Ed.) J. Stevenson, 62; Ralph of Diceto, (Ed.) W. Stubbs, ii, 106.

⁵⁷ *Hansisches Urkundenbuch*, i, 22, no. 40; *Chronique de l'Abbaye de Ter Doest*, op. cit., 40, no. IX (incorrectly dated to 1192).

⁵⁸ Following Roger of Hoveden, iii, 235.

⁵⁹ Monk, then Abbot of Coggeshall, from 1207 to 1218. D. Knowles, C.N.L. Brooke and V. London, *The Heads of religious Houses*, Cambridge, 1972, 130.

on 12th and 16th February.⁶⁰ The meeting in Brabant of the King of England, Duke Henry I, the Cistercian envoys and one of the king's trusted men, reinforces the idea that the Abbot of Dunes had a part in the release of Richard I and the eventual contacts with the Duke of Brabant. Finally, John Brandon was perhaps right in his way when he wrote of Abbot Elias accompanying an English embassy and bringing back King Richard; the drafting in Brussels of the act for Ter Doest makes likely the participation of the Abbot of Dunes in the English mission which went to Germany for the release of the king.

At the time of Abbot Elias, the successive grants of privileges and exemptions to Dunes and Ter Doest by the kings of England, as well as the renewal of the Eastchurch grant, took place during important times in the international politics of the period.

The exemptions and privileges of 18th–19th February, 1187, were granted at Hesdin when Henry II was the host of his cousin Philip of Alsace, Count of Flanders, soon after his landing at Wissant.⁶¹ The charter of protection for Ter Doest of 25th February, 1194, was granted in Brabant by Richard I on his return journey to England, after his release at Mainz.⁶² The identical charter, given to the Abbey of Dunes on 18th January at Verneuil and dated to 1196 by Landon, took place after the death of Count Baldwin VIII, Philippe-Auguste's ally.⁶³ The renewal of the Eastchurch grant was drafted at La Roche d'Andely ('*apud rupem Andellam*') on 17th January, 1199, at the time of the alliance of the King of England with the Counts of Flanders and Boulogne; Baldwin IX and Renaud de Dammartin were amongst the witnesses, implying that the Abbot of Dunes accompanied the count at the Andely meeting.⁶⁴ The charter of protection of

⁶⁰ See note 37.

⁶¹ Henry II at Hesdin: Ralph of Diceto, ii, 47; *Cronica et Cartularium*, 167 (= *Cronica Abbatum*, 151, where the document is attributed to Henry III); Round, *op. cit.*, 497, no. 1364; Delisle, *op. cit.*, ii, 279. A charter, in all respects similar, was drafted at the same time for Ter Doest (*Chronique de l'Abbaye de Ter Doest*, 41, inaccurately dated). These two documents are originals; the information in Delisle, *op. cit.*, 279, on a lost original charter is inaccurate.

⁶² *Chronique de l'Abbaye de Ter Doest*, 40, no. 9.

⁶³ *Cronica et Cartularium*, 176 (= *Cronica Abbatum*, 145); Round, *op. cit.*, 497–8, no. 1365 (where the charter is dated ?1190); Landon, *op. cit.*, 110.

⁶⁴ *Cronica et Cartularium*, 421–2 (= *Cronica Abbatum*, 14); Round, *op. cit.*, 497, no. 1366. The witnesses, apart from the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of Rochester and William Marshall already present in 1194, were the Counts of Flanders and Boulogne and William of Stagno, the new chancellor, Eustace of Ely, sanctioned the document. J. De Cuyper (*Ann. Soc. Emulation de Bruges*, lxxxviii, 1951, 107–8), suggests that, because of the change of seal, the '*innovatio*' of the grant was solely intended for the benefit of the royal exchequer though, in view of the circumstances of this renewal, this is not certain (see L. Landon, *Itinerary of Richard I*, 173–82).

THE GRANT OF EASTCHURCH TO DUNES ABBEY

King John⁶⁵ was given on 24th August, 1199, at Rouen, a few days after the treaty of alliance agreed on 18th August with the Count of Flanders, Baldwin IX.⁶⁶ Constant contacts with the Kings of England were apparently characteristic of the period of Abbot Elias; acknowledgment of this fact adds perhaps a certain weight to the portrayal of the abbot by John Brandon in his *Chronodromon* as a familiar and royal councillor.

In conclusion, it can be put forward that, although only the chronicles of the Flemish abbey speak of the rôle of their abbot in the release of Richard I, the entire context of the grant of April 1194 argues for this tradition. Furthermore, considering the importance and the activities of Hubert Walter and William of Sainte-Mère-Église at that time and the fact that they were two men trusted by the king, who contributed much in re-establishing the situation in England during the latter's captivity, either of them could have been the initiator of the royal grant to the Abbey of Dunes, as much as the king himself. It is not very likely that the grant of Eastchurch had at that time an economic aspect: the Abbey of Dunes simply received a tithe, i.e. a revenue in the form of corn and vegetables, abandoned in its favour by William of Saint-Mère-Église, a high-ranking royal clerk. Later, however, the abbey was to exploit a farm at Eastchurch and to own a house at Dover.⁶⁷

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⁶⁵ *Cronica Abbatum*, 147 (original); *Cronica et Cartularium*, 177 (after a copy); Round, *op. cit.*, 499, no. 1371.

⁶⁶ W. Prevenier, *De Oorkonden der Graven van Vlaanderen*, Brussels, 1964, i, no. 115; Round, *op. cit.*, 495, no. 1363.

⁶⁷ The few relevant documents of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries will form the subject of a further study.

