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The Celtic Connections of the Tristan Story (Part Two)

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In the earlier part of this discussion, the Welsh *Tristan* fragments were discussed, together with some brief but essential considerations regarding the context of early Welsh literature. Support was shown to be strong, on the part of the appropriate experts, for the existence of an independent Tristan ('saga') tradition in Wales some time before the continental poets known to us could have composed their versions. There is little to add to the judicious silence observed by such commentators on the vexed question of transmission. One may choose to focus in isolation on the Tristan theme, or to assign the matter to the general consideration of the transmission of Arthurian motifs via the Bretons, the Welsh, or a combination of both.

In this latter context, the Irish contribution to Arthurian romance is regularly invoked. There are no Irish versions of the Tristan story, and, apart from one place-name, Chapelizod, no localisation of the story anywhere in Ireland. There are a number of fairly insignificant characters named Marc or Morc in early Irish texts, but apart from the well-known Drust of the *Tochmarc Emire* incident,¹ no representation of Tristan in any other guise. In the late 12th century and subsequently, 'courtly' themes of continental provenance became popular in Ireland, but there are no really significant wholesale adaptations of Arthurian romances, as there are in Welsh. The reason for this can only be, as Proinsias Mac Cana maintains,² that the indigenous tradition was so strong and healthy that it incorporated and absorbed elements of the 'imported' culture, rather than switching to a wholesale adoption or imitation of foreign models.

Some scholars, oversimplifying or misunderstanding Gertrude Schoepperle, have spoken of the 'Irish origins' of the Tristan story. It becomes clear, upon examination of the arguments, or rather

inferences, that this is to be interpreted diversely. Even Schoepperle herself is open to interpretations which differ in emphasis. As stated at the outset, the intention here is not to retrace the arguments of the various polemicists, but to review again the material advanced as evidence, supplying where possible, a fuller context, and finally, suggesting possible alternative choices as to how the matter should be further pursued. The Irish material falls essentially into two important categories listed in the native typology of tales:³ Wooings and Elopements and incidental features from other classifications. To this latter category belong those traits associated with the Boyhood Deeds of heroes (*macgnímharta*, *mabinogi* etc.). A large number of such instances, relating to the Ulidian hero Cu Chulainn and to Finn mac Cumhaill (and paralleled in the biographies of other heroes, Celtic and non-Celtic) has been assembled by Schoepperle.

One obvious problem associated with such traditions is that while there are some elements more conspicuously represented in Celtic literature than others, many such instances are paralleled in the repertoire of the international *Volksmärchen*⁴ or the literature and mythology of the Indo-European culture-area generally. Moreover, the blend of *märchenhaftliche* and mythological and quasi-historical elements produces a complex situation which defies a simplistic dogmatic approach. In my view this holds as good for the continental Tristan poems as it does for the medieval Irish and Welsh tales and romances.

Let us concentrate for the moment on the Irish Wooing and Elopement Tales which have been cited in connection with the origin or development of the Tristan story.⁵ The so-called 'Pictish' association of the name rests on the linguistic connection between Pictish Drust⁶ and its patronymic Talorcan, found in the Pictish king lists, and the Welsh Drustan (ab Tallwch), and is further enhanced by the similarities between the Dragon-Slayer variant represented twice in Tristan's early career, and the variant found in the *Tochmarc Emire*, where Cu Chulainn rescues a princess from a dragon but is unable to marry her, since he is betrothed to Emer the eponymous heroine of the longer tale. Listed among Cu Chulainn's companions is a certain Drust (son of Serb), who may have been, it is suggested, the original hero of the tale. (Tristan incidentally twice wins a lady by conquering an enemy and twice 'abandons' her, once, reluctantly, to his uncle, secondly, by cheating within marriage.)

This led to one critic, S. Eisner,⁷ to suggest that a parallel story,

located in Brittany, gave rise to the incorporation into the composite story, of the second Isolt.

Alwyn and Brinley Rees have shown the close links between the *Tochmarca* (Wooings) and *Aitheda* (Elopesments): they are in a sense two sides of the same mythological coin, as much in Indian as in Irish tradition. Despite the excesses of an ultra-Loomisite approach, it would be foolish to deny the interaction between strong mythological archetypes and 'creative' literature. MacCana has even shown how subliminal mythology can influence the presentation of historical records in, for instance, the recording of claims to sovereignty in terms of 'seizing the Queen' in annalistic material.⁸

The fullest discussion of the *aitheda* in the Tristan context are to be found in Schoepperle and Carney⁹ - the latter espousing, typically, a distinctive minority view. Not every instance raised by these two scholars is of equal importance, so attention will be restricted to the most important ones.

Longes mac m-Uislenn,¹⁰ or the Story of Deirdre, is one of the prefatory tales (*remscéla*) of the *Táin*, explaining the presence of renegade Ulstermen in the Connaught army. It is a short prose tale with verse inserts probably composed in the 9th century. Unlike almost all the other instances cited, it is 'rootless and relatively isolated' in that the heroine is unknown outside the tale, except in much later poetic references, and Conchobor, the jealous husband-to-be, is portrayed in an anomalous way. The narrative is succinct, somewhat 'pagan' in ethos and not subject to padding or conflation. Deidriu (Deirdre) is a girl whose birth was prophesied as an omen of doom and hence kept in seclusion until the fateful day she spots the irresistible Noisiu and his brothers and puts a compulsion on him to elope with her. After some wanderings, which include a trip to Alba (Scotland) Noisiu is killed and Deirdre returned to Conchobor. One day as they are riding in a chariot, the king asks her whom she hates the most. Predictably she replies 'You and Eogan mac Durthacht' (the traitor who brought about her lover's death). Conchobor decrees that she shall spend a year with each of them. Deirdre jumps out and kills herself. Carney's first belief was that this was the first of the *aitheda* which gave rise to both the North British Tristan saga and the subsequent Irish variants, but later changed his mind. Of the six other *aitheda* discussed by Schoepperle and/or Carney, two are particularly important and warrant further attention.

The first, *Scéla Cano meic Gartnâin*¹¹ (Tales of Cano mac

Gartnáin) is less well-known to Romance scholars than it should be. This is possibly because of its historical and intertextual associations, which are complicated, and the fact that it is a rather unwieldy text, with a number of digressions.

Cano the hero is from Skye, and a descendant of Aedan mac Gabráin, ruler of Scottish Dal Riada. Créd ingen Guaire is also probably based on a historical personage, though not contemporary with the 'historical' Cano.

The story is listed, not under *aitheda*, but under *serca* ('Loves') in Tale List A. The editor, Binchy, suggests that this text represents a rather disjointed compilation (c. 1100) of a number of originally independent tales (hence the plural *Scéla*) about Cano, resulting in a large admixture of literary motifs and a small nucleus of historical fact. The backbone of the tale is a triangular love situation: Cano loves Créd who is married to an elderly ruler Marcán, but the latter's son (her stepson, cf. *Fingal Rónáin*)¹² Colchu is also wooing her. During a feast given by her father Guaire, Créd puts the company to sleep with a magic draught and makes advances to Cano, who promises to come to her when he has fulfilled some military assignments. He gives her his 'stone of life' to keep as a token. In due course he returns but is challenged by Colchu his jealous rival. False reports of his death are conveyed to Créd who drops his stone and kills herself. Mac Cana also points out,¹³ incidentally, the presence of a 'second lady' in the parallel and related story of *Cu Coingelt*.

I turn now to the best known of the *aitheda*, certainly the most frequently invoked either as 'source' or 'analogue' to the Tristan tales, and a tale whose popularity can be seen in both written and oral tradition.

The only full version in existence is the *Toraidheacht Dhiarmada agus Ghráinne*¹⁴ (Pursuit of Diarmuid and Grainne) and is represented in a number of late MSS, none earlier than the mid 17th century. This particular version of the story is thought to go back to at least the 14th, perhaps late 13th century. There are however, traces of an earlier version alluded to in a number of other sources. The Saga Lists note the existence of a tale entitled *Aithed Gráinne ingine Corbmaic hua nDuibni* and references to Gráinne as wife of Finn, to her hatred of Finn and her elopement with Diarmuid occur in early verse and prose sources. The *ITS* edition of the *Toraidheacht* contains a comprehensive discussion of such references, as well as the oral variants found in both Ireland and Scotland, including a version of the

'Separating Sword' incident also found in *Tristan*. While referring readers to the detailed discussions cited above, I should also point out the problems involved in making any judgement about the relationship between this tale (and other *aitheda*) and the continental Tristan versions. Both stories belong to a mixed oral/written transmission, and therefore, as I have noted in another context,¹⁵ it is difficult to speak with any precision about 'influences', 'dependence' or 'priority'.

Two other Irish stories are worth mentioning in this context. One is *Fingal Rónáin* ¹⁶(the Kin-Slaying of Rónán) a short prose tale with verse inserts which has been described as a parallel to the Phaedra-Hippolytus or Potiphar's Wife tale. Rónán, widowed king of Leinster, takes a young (unnamed) wife from Ulster. She makes unrequited advances to Maél Fothartaigh, Rónán's son, and ultimately accuses him of raping her. The king kills his son and repents only when he learns the truth. The woman is then put to death. This is another brief, possibly 'pared-down' tale, pagan in ethos, but containing some interesting notions concerning public profiles, and private behaviour,¹⁷ particularly in respect to Rónán, whose situation parallels that of Mark in many ways: he cannot ignore the public dimension and so is caught in a painful dilemma. This is hardly a love-story, and the woman represents the negative end of the spectrum illustrated in these Irish tales of matrimonial intrigue - totally destructive and alienating.¹⁸

*Serglige Con Chulainn*¹⁹ is a fascinating tale - also rather rambling - of yet another amatory incident in the career of the larger than life Ulster hero. Its 'relevance' in the context of Tristan studies lies in the fact that it presents the 'Man between two Women' situation.²⁰ Cu Chulainn is summoned into the Otherworld (like so many Irish heroes and Arthurian knights after them) by the messenger of a Fairy Woman, Fann, consort of the powerful god Manannan mac Lir. Emer, his wife, comes to force a showdown, with an armed company of female companions. Ultimately Manannan mac Lir separates the couple and shakes his cloak between them to ensure that they forget one another. This tale, which is told largely in Middle Irish with some archaisms, may well have been influenced by courtly love rhetoric and thus be of less interest in establishing a possible connection with the earlier *aitheda*.

How should we approach the relationship between the Welsh Tristan material, the continental Tristan poems and the Irish

analogues? There are three currently held views apart from those of the absolute Bédierists and the proponents of the 'oriental source' theory:

(a) Some scholars appear to believe that the Tristan poems are derived from Irish literary tradition and more specifically on the *Diarmuid/Gráinne* story. Their views appear to be based on Schoepperle; although Schoepperle 'is careful not to claim the Irish tale as a direct source' (Bromwich) the whole thrust of her argument is that Irish literature supplied the basic inspiration for the story of Tristan. Such critics usually refrain from discussing the Welsh material at all.

(b) James Carney believed that a lost, North British Tristan composed in the 8th century precedes and inspires both the Irish *aitheda* (and presumably the Welsh Tristan material) and the continental versions. While Rachel Bromwich occasionally cites Carney's view to refute the arguments advanced in favour of Irish influence, the only critic to have espoused the Carney view is, to my knowledge, Eisner. Eisner's book suffered from the disparity between his largely correct and careful treatment of the Celtic material and his imperfect knowledge and sketchy handling of the continental Tristan tradition, which enabled those reviewers from the mainstream of medieval French literary history to review his book negatively and question his whole thesis.²¹

(c) Rachel Bromwich considers that the Irish material (especially the *aitheda* category) is important largely as evidence for tale types once strongly represented in Wales. The story of Tristan is in her view, a Welsh creation, as regards the 'central characters and some of the central episodes' and the Irish material only analogous.²²

I believe it is possible to look at the material in another way; this is largely dependent on the relatively late dating of the extant continental versions and, needless to say, the abandonment of the exclusive 'archetype' theory of Bédier.

The Welsh material points to the existence of a Tristan 'saga' which locates the central characters in an adulterous love triangle, supplied them with go-betweens and intermediaries, and had them elope to a forest. The Black Book fragment hints at conflict, possibly between or involving March and Drystan, suggests the negative role of a dwarf, contains overtones of regret and remorse, but even allowing for contextual (and intertextual) clarification, does not afford evidence for the existence in the Welsh tradition of the characteristic

nexus between the philtre and the love-death, so dominant in all the continental versions. On the contrary: the humorous, fabliau-style associations of Triad 26 are re-echoed in the *Ystorya*, and recall certain aspects of the continental Tristan, notably in Eilhart and Béroul, but also present even in Thomas and derivatives.

On the other hand, the *aitheda* and related stories described earlier are in the main tragic in outcome, even if they contain burlesque or romantic elements. The initial act of compulsion²³ on the woman's part leads ultimately to the death of both the lovers and this is sometimes explicitly foreshadowed at the start of the tale. Either these elements have been lost in the Welsh material, or the Welsh Tristan story ended happily, as the *Ystorya* suggests. In this latter case, the tragic element was either the pure invention of the continental poets or was suggested to them by contact with another tradition. Although literary contacts between Ireland and the Anglo-Norman and hence continental world were obviously most important after Henry II's invasion in 1172, it would be wrong to infer that no such contact took place prior to that date.²⁴ Contacts between Ireland, Wales, South West England and the Angevin possessions in Southern France had been pursued for some time before 1172 and it is thus theoretically possible that French Occitan or Anglo-Norman speaking poets could have had access to Irish literary traditions in the early 12th century. It is no more than a possibility, but it deserves to be explored.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ALMA	<i>Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages</i>
CCM	<i>Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale</i>
CFMA	Classiques françaises du moyen âge (series)
EC	<i>Etudes Celtiques</i>
FFC	Folklore Fellows Communications (series)
ITS	Irish Texts Society (series)
Med Aev	<i>Medium Aevum</i>
MMIS	Medieval and Modern Irish Series
PRA	<i>Proceedings of the Royal Academy</i>
PRIA	<i>Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy</i>
RC	<i>Revue Celtique</i>
Rom	<i>Romania</i>
RPh	<i>Romance Philology</i>
SATF	Société des Anciens Textes Français (series)
SC	<i>Studia Celtica</i>

THSC	<i>Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion</i>
TLF	Textes Littéraires Français (series)
ZDA	<i>Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum</i>

Notes

- ¹ ed. A. van Hamel, in *Compert Con Culainn and Other Stories*, MMIS III, Dublin 1933.
- ² Mac Cana, *Ériu* 27, 1976, 95-118 (the third of 3 articles on *Immram Brain*).
- ³ On the 'Saga Lists' see R. Thurneysen, *Die Irische Helden- und Königsage bis zum 17ten Jahrhundert I*, Halle 1921, p.21; O'Curry, *Lectures of the Manuscript Materials of Ancient Irish History*, Dublin 1861, and Mac Cana, *Learned Tales of Medieval Ireland*, Dublin 1980, especially pp.33ff., 60ff. List A is found in the *Book of Leinster* (vol. IV, pp.835-37), List B in *Airec Uraird Maic Coisc. Anecdota from Irish MSS*, ed. K. Meyer et al., Halle 1907-13, 5 vols, pp.42-76.
- ⁴ On the relationship between the Märchen, universal mythology and specifically Celtic tradition, see K. Jackson, *The International Popular Tale & Early Welsh Tradition*, Cardiff 1961.
- ⁵ A. & B. Rees, *Celtic Heritage*, London 1961, pp.259-96.
- ⁶ See Bromwich, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, under Drystan. The 'Pictish connection', discovered almost a century ago, is now accepted as part of the consensus.
- ⁷ *The Tristan Legend: A Study in Sources*, Evanston 1969.
- ⁸ 'Aspects of the theme of King and Goddess', *EC*, 7, 1955-56, 76-114, 356-413, and 8, 1958, 59-65. Of the women of royal rank mentioned in the *Banshenchus Erenn*, ed. M. Dobbs, *RC* 47, 1930, 282-339; 48, 1931, 163-234; 49, 1932, 437-89, a significant proportion have 'sovereignty' names: eg: Donnflaith, Orflaith, and, best known of all, Gormflaith. See also, B. O Cuív, 'Literary Creation and Irish Historical Tradition', *PBA*, 49, 1963, 232-62.
- ⁹ *Studies in Irish History and Literature*, Dublin 1955. In this work Carney expresses, on several occasions, strong opposition to what is called the 'nativist' tradition, and stresses the importance of learned, Christian and classical elements in the 12th century manuscript materials. However, in an address to the 6th International Congress of Celtic Studies held in Galway 1979, he expresses a somewhat softened view, giving due weight to the arguments advanced by Mac Cana. See also, S. O Coileáin, 'Oral or

Literary - Some Strands of the Argument', *SH* 17, 1977, 7-35.

- 10 ed. V. Hall, New York 1949.
- 11 ed. D. Binchy, *MMIS* 14, Dublin 1953. On the complex historical and intertextual relationships of this text see Mac Cana, note 8 *supra*, 382ff. Mac Cana again comments on the meshing together of early Irish tales. 'My object throughout was to show that this text (i.e. *Scéla Cano*) could not be judged independently, because it represented but one of a number of inter-related tales, which, if extant, might help to undo alterations or make good omissions in the others.' 411.
- 12 ed. D. Greene, *MMIS* 16, Dublin 1955.
- 13 Mac Cana 382.
- 14 ed. N. Ní Sheághdha, *ITS* 48, Dublin 1968.
- 15 Trindade, 'Tristan and *Wis and Ramin* - the last word?' *Parergon* 1986, forthcoming.
- 16 See note 12 *supra*. This tale is not usually cited as a Tristan analogue, but it has certain affinities with the *aitheda*, especially the triangular situation, the woman who takes the initiative, the hero's initial (and in this case consistent) unwillingness, the tragic ending. In many of the *aitheda*, the male characters are uncle and nephew, but here they are father and son (as, in the Castle Dor inscription, are Drustanus and Cunonorus).
- 17 T.M. Charles-Edwards, 'Honour and Status in Some Irish and Welsh Prose Tales', *Eriu* 29, 1978, 123-41.
- 18 As Mac Cana and others have pointed out, 'Sovereignty' in her various manifestations has both a positive and negative side. This negative side has been likened by the Rees brothers to the destructive aspect of Kali in Indian tradition while Christain J. Guyonvarc'h, *La Souveraineté guerrière de l'Irlande*, Rennes 1983, explores the manifestations of sovereignty as Badb, Macha, Morrigan in Irish tradition. Without wishing to stumble into the ideological and methodological quicksands of Jean Markale's *La Femme Celte*, Paris 1972, one might expect that such powerfully established cultural archetypes could affect the presentation of female characters in a literature which owes much to oral tradition.
- 19 ed. M. Dillon, *MMIS* 14, Dublin 1953.
- 20 'The Man with Two Wives' theme has been frequently discussed in relation to *Tristan*, Marie de France and other 12th century narrative. See Trindade, *R Ph* 27, 1974, 466--78.
- 21 See, for instance, review by E. Kennedy, *Medium Aevum*, 40, 1971, 284-85.
- 22 Strongly expressed in both *THSC* 1955, 32-60 and *SC*, 1979.
- 23 This is, of course, usually expressed in terms of *geis*. The relevance of this to *Tristan* studies is the subject of some controversy. Frappier, in *CCM* 6,

1963, 255-80, 441-45 (articles which are standard reading for Tristan students) does not hesitate to see the philtre as the appropriate substitute for the Irish *geis*, in the Tristan context. Rachel Bromwich in the *THSC* article cited above, describes the love drink in Tristan as 'merely the most recent form given to the externally imposed fatal bond which binds the hero; the bond itself is essential to the structure of the tale but not necessarily in this form'. *Geasa* were originally part of the cluster of interdictions, taboos, injunctions, privileges, surrounding the person of a king (see M. Dillon 'The Taboos of the Kings of Ireland', *PRIA* 54, 1951, and usually negative in form - as in the dramatic tale *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* MMIS 8, ed. E. Knott, Dublin 1936. Later, and in both Irish and Scottish tale-telling, the *geis* degenerates into a mechanical narrative device.

- ²⁴ The only writer to pursue this question at any length, in the Tristan context, was A. Fourrier, *Le courant réaliste dans le roman courtois en France au moyen âge*, Paris 1961. However, the gap which once existed in the field of medieval Irish historical studies no longer exists. The Gill History of Ireland, and the New History of Ireland project (eds. Moody, Martin and Byrne) both provide ample documentation for the period preceding the Norman invasion. See also P.W. Asplin, *Medieval Ireland c. 1170-1495*, Dublin 1971 and larger-scale bibliographies such as *Biblioteca Celtica* published by the National Library of Wales.

The Countess Lucy's Priory? The Early History of Spalding Priory and its Estates

Neal Sumner,
Reading

In the opinion of the twelfth-century chronicler Hugh Candidus the remote islands of the medieval Fenland had been created by God expressly to encourage the development of the monastic life.¹ Monastic cells were first established in the region in the late seventh century at Ely, Crowland and Medeshamstede (Peterborough), but it was only with the tenth-century revival that monasteries came to dominate this potentially rich but inhospitable landscape. Bishop Aethelwold refounded the abbeys at Peterborough and Ely between 966 and 973, when he also founded Thorney Abbey on the site of a former anchorite cell. Bishop Oswald refounded Crowland Abbey in the same period. Previous studies of monastic land tenure and estate organisation in the Fenland have focussed on these Anglo-Saxon foundations.² They emphasise both the importance of their pre-Conquest endowments or their development after 1066 and the depredations they suffered at the hands of the Normans through the confiscation of estates and the imposition of the onerous burden of knight service.

The Benedictine Priory of St. Mary and St. Nicholas at Spalding in the Lincolnshire Fens was not established until the late eleventh century, despite the claims of neighbouring Crowland Abbey to have set up a monastic cell at Spalding before the Conquest. Spalding Priory soon grew to rival the wealth and power of its closest neighbours at Crowland and Thorney, largely because of the beneficence of its mighty patrons. The development of this alien priory - a dependency of the Abbey of St. Nicholas of Angers - from its foundation until it achieved conventual status in 1242 is the

subject of this article.³

The Foundation of the Priory

According to a tradition which survives from the late thirteenth century, when it was recorded by the writer of the *Annals of Peterborough*, Spalding Priory originated as a cell of Crowland Abbey before the Conquest.⁴ This tale was much elaborated upon in a medieval history of Crowland Abbey, known to modern historians as the *Pseudo-Ingulph*. This chronicle purports to be written by Ingulph, who was the abbot of Crowland in the late eleventh century. However the actual author, probably writing in the late fifteenth century, is now recognised as one of the most infamous of monastic forgers and his work needs treating with circumspection.⁵ This *Pseudo-Ingulph* tells how Spalding Priory was refounded in 1074 by Ivo Taillebois, the husband of the great heiress, Countess Lucy. Ingulph's account, which has been accepted with some reservations by most modern historians, suggests that a monastic cell for six monks from Crowland Abbey was first established at Spalding in 1052 by Thorold of Bukenhale, thereby continuing the Anglo-Saxon tradition of settling monks in the Fenland. Ingulph goes on to describe how, after the Conquest, Ivo Taillebois, the chief tenant in Spalding, began to harass and injure the English monks at Crowland's cell in the town, finally driving them out 'at the instigation of the Devil'. Ivo, whom the Peterborough annalist describes as *comes Andegavensis, dominus Spaldyngae et totius Hoylandie*, then brought over three French monks from the abbey of St. Nicholas of Angers to serve in the church at Spalding.⁶

Whilst it may have appealed to the anti-French sentiments of its fifteenth-century readers, Ingulph's simple tale of Norman brutality does not bear close scrutiny. The bitter rivalry which then existed between the two neighbouring monasteries gave Ingulph a ready excuse to present Crowland Abbey as the aggrieved party from the outset of their relationship. Although there were many disputes between the two houses in the intervening centuries, particularly over their respective rights in the rich Fenland pasture, both the evidence of Domesday Book and the Priory of Spalding's own records suggest that Ingulph's story is dubious. Though complex, the subject of the Priory's foundation and the identity of its first patron is worthy of further investigation, not least because of the crucial role the patron's

family played in the subsequent development of the Priory.

Domesday Book informs us that there were three tenurial interests in Spalding before 1066. The chief manor, assessed at nine carucates of land, is described as belonging to Earl Algar, although other evidence suggests that this Mercian Earl died in 1062 or 1063. By 1086 this manor was in the possession of Ivo Taillebois. Alestan held a much smaller manor assessed at eleven bovates in 1066 which had passed on to Guy de Craon by the time of the Survey, and Crowland Abbey held a berewick of two carucates of land in Spalding at both dates.⁷ An early twelfth-century manuscript illustration of benefactors of St. Guthac, Crowland's patron saint, shows that the Abbey's berewick in Spalding had been donated by Earl Algar.⁸ Recent studies of the pre-Conquest tenurial history of Elloe wapentake suggest that the whole of the wapentake was at one time in the possession of Earl Algar or his predecessor.⁹ Thus there is no evidence apart from the Peterborough annalist and Ingulph's history of Crowland Abbey to suggest that Thorold ever held land in Spalding. Moreover, it is not certain from the Domesday evidence that this Thorold was a pre-Conquest tenant in Lincolnshire at all, although the Survey states that he gave Crowland Abbey an estate at Bucknall in Gartree wapentake (see Map 1) before 1086, a gift also commemorated in the aforementioned manuscript illustration.

The later records of Spalding Priory confuse the issue of its foundation still further. The great two-volume cartulary of the Priory, which was written in the 1330's, opens with an account of the foundation written in a fourteenth-century hand.¹⁰ It states that Thorold, described as *Luciae comitisae antecessor*, gave to St. Nicholas and the church of Spalding the tithes of Alkborough, Belchford, Normanby, Scamblesby and Tetney at some time before Ivo Taillebois became the tenant-in-chief in Spalding. Moreover the cartulary also contains a copy of a charter from the reign of Henry I, a charter inspected and confirmed by Edward III in 1330, which grants that the monks of Spalding should hold in peace their woods *quod pertinet manerio sicut melius habuerunt tempore patris mei et fratris mei et tempore Ivonis et Turaldi*.¹¹ Possible confirmation of Thorold's involvement in the establishment of a monastic cell of St. Nicholas of Angers in Spalding is to be found in a little-known seventeenth-century history of the Angevin abbey which is based on the abbey's own records, most of which have since been lost. This states that during the abbacy of Alderadus, who ruled the house in the mid-

eleventh-century, *Turolio* gave a church or churches in *Britannia* to the abbey.¹² If we discount the inherently improbable notion that an Anglo-Saxon named Thorold thus endowed a distant French abbey then some other explanation of Thorold's origin and status must be sought, since the evidence of the Priory's own records cannot easily be ignored.

An ingenious but credible solution to this problem was proposed by R.E.G. Kirk in 1888 when, in an attempt to establish the singularity of the mysterious Countess Lucy, he came to the conclusion that she was the daughter of this very Thorold who appears in the later records of Spalding Priory.¹³ Kirk concluded that while this Thorold may be identical with the Thorold who gave land in Bucknall to Crowland Abbey, a possibility which may have inspired Ingulph's speculations in the first place, he was in reality a Norman lord who, though he became lord of Spalding after the Conquest, died before the Domesday Inquest was made. Spalding, along with other possessions in Lincolnshire, including those places where Thorold had given tithes to the monks thus passed through Lucy, his only daughter and sole heiress, to Ivo Taillebois, her first husband. This marriage took place before 1085 and therefore it is Ivo, and not Thorold, who appears as the successor to Earl Algar as chief tenant in 1086.

This account has the merit of explaining why the lordship of Spalding and other estates in Lincolnshire and elsewhere were held after Ivo's death not by Beatrice, his direct heir and the daughter of his marriage to Lucy, but by the later husbands of Lucy, Roger fitz Gerold and Ranulph Meschines. It is probably no coincidence that, according to Farrer,¹⁴ Ivo succeeded Thorold as Sheriff of Lincolnshire and that one of Lucy's heirs, the Earl of Chester, paid 20 marks in 1165 *pro feodo Turolidi vice comitis*.¹⁵ J.H. Round, too, concluded that Thorold was not 'an English sheriff of the days before the Conquest, but a Norman, as were his fellows, who died before Domesday',¹⁶ also pointing out that the name Thorold was a common Scandinavian personal name and therefore likely to occur in Normandy. It seems that Thorold was still alive in 1075, when William I addressed a writ to him concerning the translation of the see of Dorchester to Lincoln, and Round identifies him with the Thorold of Lincoln (*Lincolniensis Turolidus*) who took part in a judicial eyre at Bury St. Edmunds between 1076 and 1079.¹⁷ Although he may not have founded a monastic cell at Spalding, it seems safe to conclude

that Thorold the Sheriff, a Norman, by his grant of tithes to the monks of St. Nicholas of Angers, began an association which flourished under his successors to the lordship of Spalding.

We are on more certain ground in the history of Spalding Priory with the role of Thorold's immediate successor, Ivo Taillebois. The cartulary of the Priory records that in 1085 Ivo gave to abbot Natalis and the monks of St. Nicholas of Angers the church of Spalding together with one carucate of land there sufficient to support three monks, confirming at the same time the grant of tithes first made by Thorold. He added the proviso that 'if the substance of the church increases the number of monks is to be enlarged and they are to make such charitable contribution as they can to the monks of St. Nicholas (Angers) every year'. This grant, which included Thorold's earlier gifts secured the French monks' foothold in Spalding.¹⁸ There seems no reason to doubt the date or authenticity of this charter, since Ivo was clearly in possession of Spalding and many other estates in Lincolnshire in 1086, despite the claim made recently by the biographer of William Rufus that it was Rufus who gave the Countess Lucy to Ivo in marriage, presumably after 1087.¹⁹

The death of William the Conqueror prompted Ivo to increase significantly the substance of the church himself. In a charter made before 1093 he gave to the monks of St. Nicholas, for the souls of William and Matilda, the tithes of toll, salt and seafish, and a fishery in the Westlode *ad augmentum victus monachorum Sanctae Mariae de Spalding* (St. Mary's was probably the original dedication of the parish church at Spalding, St. Nicholas being added after the French monks arrived.) Furthermore, in memory of William I, his original benefactor, he granted the monks there 2,000 eels annually for their sustenance, while *ad lucernam monasterii et dormitorii monachorum* he allocated five shillings annually of his profits from his manor in Spalding, including the tithe of certain horses there (*decimam pullorum equarum suarum silvestrium*). In addition he gave the tithes of Spalding and the tithes together with a man (*unum rusticum*) in Alkborough, Belchford, Normanby and Tetney, and a sheepfold and pasture in Spalding itself. At the same time he gave to his chaplains there, Laurence and Henry, all the tithes of his lordship in Bolingbroke and Belchford, together with the tithes of Honington with one carucate of land there.²⁰ Present on the occasion of this gift and witness to the charter was Hugo de Brayboef, who granted the monks the tithes of his own manor of Claxby in Walshcroft

wapentake (see Map 2).²¹

This generous gift was not the limit of Ivo's benefaction. In a writ of 1094-95, about the time of Ivo's death, William Rufus notified Robert, Bishop of Lincoln that he confirmed the gift of the whole manor of Spalding which Ivo Taillebois had made to the monks of St. Nicholas of Angers. This document also states that 'the church of that manor and those who serve it there are to have the manor with soc, sac, toll and team and infangthef, their tenure to commence either before or after the death of the said Ivo, as he prefers'.²² The Domesday Commissioners had valued this important manor at £30 in 1086, when it also owed a tallage of £30.²³ Although the precise significance of this latter term is not understood, it was usually only levied at important administrative centres such as Louth (£3), Folkingham, the caput of Gilbert de Gant's Lincolnshire estates (£50) and Bolingbroke, later the chief seat of the Earls of Lincoln (£80). Together with its appurtenant sokeland in Pinchbeck, Weston and Moulton and a berewick in Tydd, the manor of Spalding occupied a commanding position in the western half of the Elloe wapentake. There were several fisheries, salt pans and, most importantly, a market - one of only six mentioned in the Lincolnshire Domesday - attached to this manor, which constituted one of the largest in the Holland division of Lincolnshire. The manor house, which was situated between the two waterways of the Welland and the Westlode and close to the parish church to the south west of the market place, became the site of the Priory building during the next twenty years, and with this endowment the monks of Angers could challenge the hegemony of their English rivals in this already valuable and potentially even wealthier Fenland region.

The circumstances surrounding the Priory's foundation were to prove of lasting significance; its status as an alien house in a region of more venerable Anglo-Saxon foundations gave an edge to the disputes with Crowland Abbey, and none of its Fenland rivals could match the influence and patronage offered by the dynasties established by Ivo's wife Lucy. After Ivo's death she married Roger fitz Gerold by whom she had a son, William de Roumare, who was later created Earl of Lincoln. Kirk speculates that this creation was derived from Lucy's title to one of the towers of Lincoln castle.²⁴ Shortly after Roger's death, which probably occurred in 1116, Lucy took a third husband, Ranulph Meschines, who was created Earl of Chester after the White Ship disaster in 1120. When he died in 1129 Lucy paid the king a

large sum for the restoration of her husband's possessions and she paid a further 500 marks for exemption from being compelled to remarry for a further five years.²⁵ In the event she died without taking a fourth husband, but not before she had confirmed Ivo's gift of the manor of Spalding and its appurtenances to the monks of St. Nicholas to hold in frankalmoign.²⁶

Lucy's marriages and her subsequent confirmation of the manor of Spalding to the monks there suggest that she was indeed an independent heiress, although it does not prove that Thorold was her father and she may, as Ingulph supposed, have been related to Earl Algar. Nevertheless, Ivo Taillebois clearly held the manor of Spalding and his other estates in Lincolnshire by virtue of his marriage to Lucy. At the time of the Dissolution it was Lucy rather than Ivo who was remembered as the founder of the Priory, and gifts were then still distributed on the anniversary of her death.²⁷ Her heirs (she had sons by her second and third marriages) intervened on the Priory's behalf many times during the following centuries, most notably in the long struggle to be free from the direct rule of the Abbey of St. Nicholas of Angers which began in 1230. It was the patronage of Lucy, her husbands and heirs which contributed most to the growth of the Priory and its possessions in Lincolnshire.

The Development of the Priory before 1242

Ivo's gift to the Abbey of St. Nicholas of Angers of the manor of Spalding together with its appurtenances in Elloe wapentake gave the French abbey a commanding position in the northern Fenland. Domesday Book records that a total of 210 villeins, bordars and sokemen lived on Ivo's estates in Elloe which, using a conventional multiplier for the period, suggests an overall population of almost one thousand - a figure that was to increase dramatically during the following century as a result of land reclamation.²⁸ Judged in terms of its recorded value alone (including the tallage of £30) the manor of Spalding matched the value of the several estates held by Crowland and Thorney Abbeys at the time of the Inquest, although of course their precincts were omitted from the Survey.²⁹ Possession of this manor enabled the French monks to establish a Priory which challenged the authority of its more ancient ecclesiastical neighbours, not least in the town of Spalding itself where Crowland Abbey held an important berewick. Moreover these Anglo-Saxon foundations

could not depend on the support of such powerful patrons as those whom Lucy's propitious marriages brought to the aid of Spalding Priory, particularly in the matters of endowments and protection.

Lucy's second husband, Roger fitz Gerold, was soon called upon to act in the Priory's defence for, in a writ addressed to him and Robert, the bishop of Lincoln, dated between 1094 and 1100, William Rufus ordered that the:

*homines de Spald' iuste reddant monachis de Spald' firmam suam et quod iuste illis reddiderunt tempore Yvonis Tailbois et ad illos terminos ad quos suo tempore reddiderunt, et nolo ut Osbernus vicecomes vel Colegrim de eorum rebus se intromittat donec ego ipse inde alias preceperim.*³⁰

Although this charter indicates that Osbern the Sheriff and Colegrim - two local lords - had probably been acting against the Priory's interests, other lords in South Lincolnshire were soon adding to its temporal and spiritual authority in the area.

In 1099 Joscelyn, son of Heppo the Arblaster, the Domesday tenant in Surfleet, gave the church of St. Lawrence of Surfleet to the Priory, together with the salt houses (*aream salinam*) and the land which belonged to the church, together with three bovates of land quit of all but the king's service. Shortly after this Joscelyn and his wife went on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem from which they failed to return, but his gift was reconfirmed by his son-in-law in 1133.³¹ Surfleet was situated in neighbouring Kirton wapentake (see Map 2) where, eventually, the Priory became a significant influence.

The Priory's dominance in Elloe wapentake was extended when, in 1111 at three o'clock in the afternoon on Sunday, 14 May, Picot, son of Colswain, who may have been related to Countess Lucy, granted to the monks of Spalding two parts of the tithes in Sutton and Lutton in the eastern part of the wapentake, an area which was greatly extended by land reclamation during the twelfth century. The witness list of the charter containing this gift also gives some indication of the growth in the number of monks supported by the Priory some twenty years or so after its foundation. The charter, which distinguishes the monks of Spalding from those of adjacent monasteries who were present on the occasion of this gift, lists the following:

Hiis presentibus monachis, Gaufrido Nauecensi, priore, Reginaldo Calvo, Johanne Sancti Gregorii, Ricardo Scocardo, alio Johanne, Galfreido de Camleio, Ernulfo, Bernardo, Reginaldo

*Martel, Thoraldo, Willelmo Virico, Gilberto et aliis pluribus.*³²

Although the precise origin of these monks is uncertain, most of them probably came from the parent abbey in Angers.

After Ivo it was Lucy and her third husband Ranulph, however, who were the chief benefactors of the Priory in its early years. By the time of the Lindsey survey, completed circa 1115-6, the monks of Spalding had received four and a half bovates of land at Ludford from Ranulph.³³ Although not specifically mentioned in this later survey, it is likely that this gift included the church of St. Peter at Ludford, which was certainly in the possession of the Priory before 1177. The survey further records that the Abbot of St. Nicholas of Angers then held two carucates and two bovates of land at Willoughton in Aslacoe wapentake (see Map 2), although it is not made clear who made this gift.³⁴ This estate, like the others in Lincolnshire which were subsequently given directly to the French abbey (including Guy de Craon's small Domesday manor at Spalding), was administered by proctors of the abbot who resided at Spalding Priory. As we have seen, Lucy herself confirmed the tithes first given by Thorold and Ivo, adding the tithes of Donington and Stenigot. She and Ranulph also gave the churches of Belchford, Stenigot and Minting to the Priory, though the church of Belchford was later shared with the Priory and Convent of Trentham.³⁵

With the death of Countess Lucy, which occurred shortly after that of Henry I, the patronage of the Priory passed to William de Roumara, Lucy's son by her second husband, Roger fitz Gerold. He gave the Priory the churches of Bolingbroke, Subsey and Stickney, half the church in East Keal,³⁶ and the church of Alkborough, together with the lands in these places and at Walcote, Miningsby and Hareby.³⁷ These gifts extended the Priory's spiritual and temporal authority in areas where it already had an influence, particularly in Bolingbroke and Gartree wapentakes (see Map 2). Also during William's lifetime Prior Herbert, who ruled the house between circa 1149 and 1156, gained the churches of Spalding, Pinchbeck, Moulton and Holbeach,³⁸ thus further extending the Priory's ecclesiastical authority in Elloe wapentake. The vast majority of these places had been held by Ivo Taillebois at the time of the Domesday Survey and were part of Lucy's original inheritance (see Appendix I).

The Priory seems to have thrived in the politically uncertain period which followed the death of Henry I. The following two charters, issued by King Stephen, confirmed and extended the liberties of the

Priory:

*Stephanus rex Anglorum episcopo Lincolniensi et baronibus et vicecomiti et justitie et omnibus fidelibus suis Francis et Anglis de Lincolnie scira salutem. Sciatis me concessisse priori de Spaldinges et monachis suis ecclesias suas et terras et decimas et homines et omnes res suas tenere ita bene et in pace et quiete in bosco et plano et pratis et pasturis et mariscis, in aquis et extra, in burgo et extra, et in mercato et in omnibus locis cum soca et saca et tol et team et infangentheof et cum omnibus consuetudinibus et libertatibus cum quibus melius tenuerunt tempore regis Henrici et die qua fuit vivus et mortuus.*³⁹

Particularly important to a mercantile centre such as Spalding was the freedom from toll contained in the second charter:

*Stephanus, rex Anglorum justiciis, vice comitibus baronibus et omnibus ministris suis totius Anglie, salutem. Precipio quod totum courodium (sic) et omnes res prioris et conventus Sancte Marie de Spald(inge) quas affidare poterint homines sui esse suas proprias sint quiete de theloneo et passagio et omni consuetudine. Et nemo eos superhoc injuste disturbet super X libras forisfacture. T. etc.*⁴⁰

These charters were later confirmed by Henry II.⁴¹ Between 1133 and 1141, however, Abbot John of St. Nicholas of Angers felt it necessary to obtain a charter from the Empress Mathilda confirming his abbey's possessions in England, perhaps fearing that his abbey's rights were under threat in this troubled period:

Mathildis imperatrix regum (sic) Anglie filia, omnibus fidelibus suis Anglie tam sancte ecclesie quam secularis potestatis, prelati et subjectis Francis et Anglis in burgo et extra burgum, salutem. Sciatis me gratuito concedere et confirmare ut elemosine que in Anglia date sunt ecclesie Sancti Nicolai Andegavensis sint stabiles a quocunque fuerint ei date sive tempore avi mei Willelmi regis Anglie, sive successoris eius filii Willelmi avunculi mei Anglorum regis, seu patris mei Henrici subsequentis regis Anglie. Inter quas elemosinas majores habemus (sic): ecclesia de Spalingua cum elemosinis ei datis, ecclesia de Kirkbeia cum elemosinis et datis, et ecclesia de Guuinuga (Wing in Buckinghamshire) cum elemosinis ei datis, et ecclesia de Guilgetona (Willoughton) cum elemosinis ei datis, et ecclesia de Holbecha (Holbeach) cum elemosinis ei datis et ecclesia de Soffleto (Surfleet) cum suis elemosinis. Volo igitur et constanter precipio ut ita libere et honorifice monachi prefati Sancti Nicolai ecclesie prememoratas elemosinas, et preter istas ceteras omnes ei datas in

*Anglia teneant tempore meo, ut eas unquam liberius et honorabilius et quietius predictorum antecessorum meorum temporibus tenuerunt, et cum eisdem consuetudinibus, presentibus tunc Henrico filio meo, et abbate Johanne quo intercessore istud concessi ... cum multis aliis.*⁴²

In the event Spalding Priory emerged from the Anarchy enriched not only by the gifts of its patron, William de Roumare, but also by the gift of a manor, with lands and men, at Kirkby Laythorpe (see Map 2), which was given by Gilbert de Gant.⁴³

The Priory continued to receive gifts of churches and lands during the years following the accession of Henry II. Roger de Trehampton gave the churches of Gate Burton and Lea, both situated by the river Trent, and Guy de Lavalli gave the church of Addlethorpe in Candelshoe wapentake.⁴⁴ Territorially the Priory established a presence at Whaplode in Elloe wapentake, an area which it developed considerably during the thirteenth century and, by an exchange with the Abbot of Peterborough completed between 1189 and 1191, consolidated its position in Alkborough, strategically situated at the mouth of the river Trent on the Humber estuary.⁴⁵ Other gifts and their donors, where known, which were made at this time are included in the Appendix.

As Raban has pointed out, by the mid-twelfth century 'saturation point for gifts in frankalmoin had been reached in many places', including the Fenland.⁴⁶ In contrast with both Crowland and Thorney Abbeys Spalding Priory was fortunate both in the high status and consequent largesse of its founder's family. Most of the gifts made to Crowland and Thorney during the twelfth century came from benefactors from lower down the social hierarchy, and the bequests made to Spalding Priory easily matched those of its more ancient neighbours.⁴⁷ However, the flow of major gifts to the Priory did dry up towards the end of the twelfth century and thereafter its benefactors, usually local men from Elloe wapentake, were only able to make gifts of a few acres.⁴⁸ Nevertheless the Priory continued to expand its territory during the thirteenth century, both through reclamation and an aggressive policy of purchase and exchange which was introduced once the Priors had achieved a greater degree of independence from the Abbots of St. Nicholas of Angers.⁴⁹

The Role of the Abbey of St. Nicholas of Angers in the Management of Spalding Priory before 1242

The Abbey of St. Nicholas of Angers, which had been founded in 1020 by Fulk Nerra after he narrowly survived a perilous sea crossing, was still a relatively small house with few possessions in 1066, although it was the most popular Angevin house in the eyes of Fulk's successors. As a result of the Norman Conquest it received several estates in England from various benefactors.⁵⁰ Before 1086 the chief among these gifts was part of Geoffrey de la Guerche's manor at Monks Kirby in Warwickshire. The Angevin abbey established a daughter cell here in 1077, though it never rivalled the later foundation at Spalding either in the number of monks it sustained or in the extent of its estates.⁵¹ The Abbey's other English possessions were at Shalcombe (Isle of Wight), Henlow (Bedfordshire), Harting and Arundel (Sussex) and Crafton (Buckinghamshire). Together these estates had a combined value of £18 in 1086. Ivo's subsequent gift of the manor of Spalding to the monks of St. Nicholas, which was valued at £30 in 1086 without the tallage, thus constituted the abbey's single most important acquisition in England. As we have seen, the Angevin abbots soon received other estates in Lincolnshire at Willoughton and Guy de Craon's small Domesday manor at Spalding, which had then been reckoned at eleven bovates. Spalding Priory itself became an increasingly valuable asset as it developed during the twelfth century, both because of its endowments and the great increase in land reclaimed from the sea and fen in Elloe wapentake.

The French abbey's estates in Lincolnshire were administered by proctors of the abbot who resided at Spalding Priory. The Prior himself was appointed by the Abbey and convent of St. Nicholas and was subject to recall at the Abbot's pleasure.⁵² Between 1156 and 1200, when records became more plentiful, there were at least six different priors, most of whom seem to have been in office for a very short period (see Appendix). Once summoned back to Angers these dative priors usually collected all they could from the goods of the Priory and carried them abroad, thereby leaving the house in a state of almost constant dilapidation. According to an instrument in the Spalding cartulary from Prior Herbert's time (c.1149-1156) we learn that the Abbot was entitled to make frequent visits to the Priory, bringing with him an unlimited number of monks (*cum fratribus suis monachis quantum voluit*) and to stay for as long as he liked.⁵³

Moreover novices from the Priory were expected to travel to Angers to make their profession unless the Abbot was present in Spalding.

It is easily understood why the Angevin abbey was resented by the indigenous monks at Spalding, causing them in 1230 to enlist the help of their patron, then Margaret de Lacy and her husband, Walter Marshall, together with the Bishop of Lincoln, to fight in the papal court for the right to elect their own prior rather than accept the nominee sent by the French abbot after the death of Prior Ralph Mansell in 1229.⁵⁴ The litigation dragged on for twelve years, and was finally resolved in favour of Spalding Priory by papal ratification in 1245. Apart from the expense of maintaining an advocate at the papal court in Rome for most of this period, the Spalding monks had to pay a fine of one thousand marks for the privilege of electing their own prior. This expensive composition also limited the visits of the Angevin abbots to no more than one month every three years, and they were to be accompanied by no more than fifteen mounted men. Novices could henceforth make their profession at Spalding, but the Priory still had to maintain four proctors of the Angevin abbey to administer its possession in Lincolnshire and elsewhere, and, most importantly, to ensure that the English monks paid the £40 annually to the Abbey of St. Nicholas which was the price of their greater independence.⁵⁵

The actions of the first prior to be elected at Spalding, Simon of Alkborough, (1229-53) further illustrate why he was prepared to embark on such a long and costly dispute. He was remembered for having considerably enlarged the Priory to accommodate more monks and he began a lengthy process, continued by his successor John the Almoner, of recovering lands which had been alienated by his dative predecessors. Prior Simon, we are told, was born of knightly class and he used his greater authority to some effect; the Peterborough chronicler reports that 'the necks of his proud rustics rising against him he struck down to such an extent by his own strength that by this his freemen might be terrified'.⁵⁶ Called the Munificent, Simon entertained Henry III at the Priory and at lodgings which he purchased in London and his successor John attended the royal councils.

Nevertheless it would be wrong to suggest that the Angevin abbey was totally negligent of the affairs of its daughter house in Spalding. Whilst it may have been self-interest which prompted Prior Nicholas to allow his grange at Weston to be used as a base for the infamous invasion of Crowland Abbey precinct in 1189,⁵⁷ his successor Joolen

(sic), later abbot of St. Nicholas, fiercely upheld the interest of Spalding Priory in the subsequent dispute over seisin of this ill-defined marshland. Prior Nicholas also paid one hundred marks to King Richard in 1189 to free that part of the Priory's demesne which had lain under the onerous forest law since the reign of Henry I.⁵⁸ It was Nicholas again who consolidated the Priory's position in Alkborough, which was an important centre for the administration of its possessions in Lindsey. The Angevin abbots themselves seem to have taken little direct interest in the affairs of the Priory, although when Abbot Hugh visited Spalding between 1199 and 1206 he arranged a grant by the Abbot of Whitby of the toft with land and as much wood as was necessary for drying the Prior's herrings landed at this Yorkshire port.⁵⁹ These acts show that the dative priors and their French superiors were concerned to increase the profitability of Spalding Priory, even if it was usually for their own benefit.

The Economy of the Priory and its Estates before 1242

Although there is little direct evidence concerning the relative value of the Priory's various estates during the twelfth century, both the Domesday valuations and the papal taxation of 1291 confirm the impression that, of all the lands held, the manor of Spalding, together with its appurtenances in Elloe wapentake, provided the major contribution to the Priory's economy throughout the period. It has been estimated that between 1086 and 1205 some five thousand acres of land was reclaimed from the sea and fen in Elloe wapentake, and, by papal dispensation, the Priory enjoyed the privilege of not paying tithe on new land brought into cultivation.⁶⁰ The Priory's estates in Elloe provided a rich and diverse agriculture: in addition to the rights of fish, fowl and turbary from the fen, the Priory had the right to wreck of the sea, which could include the occasional beached whale, for three leagues along the coast.⁶¹ Salt, that vital commodity in the medieval economy, was produced at Spalding, Pinchbeck, Weston and Moulton in Elloe, and at Surfleet in neighbouring Kirton wapentake, which had been given to the Priory by Joscelin, son of Heppo the Arblaster, in 1099. Although evidence of Spalding's role as a fishing port in the twelfth century is scarce, the Priory's fishing fleet clearly sailed as far as Whitby, and, later in the thirteenth century John the Almoner extended the Priory's coastal possessions with purchases at Grimsby, Burnham and Wells.⁶²

Farming on the Priory's home manor in Spalding was predominantly arable, even on reclaimed land.⁶³ Indeed it was the shortage of meadow and pasture there that led Prior Nicholas, together with other men of Holland, to invade the precinct of Crowland Abbey in 1189 because, as the Crowland chronicler states, 'the men of Holland ... had converted it (their own marsh) into good and fertile arable so that they have considerably less than the usual amount of common pasture for their stock, of which they have little'.⁶⁴ The adverse effect that an imbalance between crop and stock could have on yields is well known and in the thirteenth century John the Almoner purchased many acres of pasture and meadow in Kesteven and Lindsey, though it appears that his dative predecessors condoned a more direct, if violent method of acquisition.

Despite the overriding importance of Spalding and the other estates in Holland, the temporal possessions of the Priory elsewhere in Lincolnshire constituted an important source of revenue during the twelfth century. From a list of the services owed by the Priory's sokemen which was issued in circa 1219 we learn that they owed carting services from Belchford, which was the collecting point for the Priory's several estates in Gartree wapentake in Lindsey.⁶⁵ Corn from those estates was ground on the Priory's mills at Asterby and Scamblesby (see map 2) and the area was also an important source of pasture and woodland. Alkborough and Walcote were especially valuable to the Priory's economy. In the thirteenth century the Priory maintained a court at Alkborough, and there is a suspicion that there may have been a daughter cell at the Priory established there in the early part of that century.⁶⁶ The Priory's tenants there owed sixty-five sheep washing days per annum, suggesting plentiful meadow and pasture and, since it was a port, Alkborough also served as a useful collecting point for the produce of the fisheries, and mills sited further along the river at Gate Burton and Lea.⁶⁷ All these estates, together with the Abbot of St. Nicholas' manor at Willoughton, were supervised by a proctor who was entitled to visit the various manors in Lindsey with no more than four mounted attendants once a month, a practice which probably continued after 1242.⁶⁸ The Priory's extensive lands at Kirkby Laythorpe and Obthorpe in Kesteven, being much closer, apparently lacked such an official.

Whilst these temporal possessions stimulated the growth of Spalding as a mercantile centre and entrepôt, causing Prior Simon to ask Henry III to ask for, and receive, a second weekly market in the

town in 1241-2, the spiritual endowments of the Priory were also a valuable source of cash revenue and, especially, renders in kind. In all, some sixteen churches, together with a chapel at Walcote and a mediety of the churches of Belchford and East Keal, had been granted to the Priory before 1200 (see Appendix I). The Papal taxation of 1294 shows that the churches of Pinchbeck (100 marks), Spalding (80 marks), Moulton (80 marks) and Weston (40 marks) were by far the most valuable.⁶⁹ Together with the tithes owed to the Priory the total value of all the churches was £243.6s.0d, which almost matched that of its temporal possessions, valued at £271.3s.0d. in 1294. Although Crowland Abbey had slightly more churches in 1200 (21), including those given before the Conquest, Thorney Abbey, with only thirteen churches, six of which had been given before 1086, had fared less well than Spalding Priory in the matter of such valuable endowments.⁷⁰

Despite the considerable progress made by the conventual priors in increasing the wealth of the Priory after 1242 it is clear that the earlier gifts of the Countess Lucy and her three husbands and heirs were the main source of the Priory's revenue. In common with the other Fenland abbeys in the post-Conquest period, Spalding Priory was never endowed with whole vills, although most of its possessions were clustered in easily manageable groups all within Lincolnshire, unlike its neighbours whose estates were scattered in five counties. Neither Crowland nor Thorney Abbey received such valuable temporal gifts as the manors of Alkborough, Wyham, Kirkby Laythorpe and, especially, Spalding during the twelfth century, and the total amount of land given to the Priory - more than forty carucates - far exceeded that of its neighbours.⁷¹

Conclusion

In his report of the lengthy dispute over seisin of the marsh which lay between Crowland Abbey and Spalding Priory, which preoccupied both houses from 1189 until 1202, the Crowland chronicler complained that 'there is hardly anyone living in the county of Lincoln who is not in some way bound to the house of Spalding or to William de Roumare' (Lucy's great grandson).⁷² Later, when the matter went before King John himself, the chronicler describes how Ranulph, Earl of Chester, 'diligently favoured the Spalding Party as their patron and advocate ... wherefore he urgently prayed the king,

his household and counsellors that they would promote the cause of his monks, for what they did for them, he declared, was done to himself.⁷³ While prejudice and exaggeration probably inform these remarks (although Crowland won the suit), they vividly demonstrate the role of the heirs of Countess Lucy, both as patrons and protectors, in fostering the growth of Spalding Priory.

Once freed from the rapacity of their Angevin superiors, the conventual priors of Spalding presided over a rate of growth on their manors in Elloe wapentake which was unparalleled elsewhere in the kingdom. These estates were, to borrow Hallam's phrase, 'swarming with tiny sokemen'⁷⁴ and the town itself developed as a major east coast port and mercantile centre, until the delicate system of drainage upon which its prosperity depended began to deteriorate in the fourteenth century and the town was eclipsed by Boston. Nevertheless when the Lay Subsidy was taken in 1334 the Priory's manors of Pinchbeck, Weston, Moulton and Spalding had a combined value exceeded only by London and Bristol.⁷⁵ The endowments of the Priory throughout Lincolnshire helped to stimulate the growth of the town, and the Priory itself became one of the most influential ecclesiastical establishments in the region, a position it retained until the Dissolution, when the debt owed to the Countess Lucy was still commemorated by the distribution of 'pardon' beans on the anniversary of her death.

APPENDIX ITHE POSSESSIONS OF SPALDING PRIORY IN 1200

<u>Churches</u>	<u>Lord in 1086</u>	<u>Tithes</u>	<u>Lord in 1086</u>
Spalding	Ivo	Spalding	
Weston	Ivo	Weston	
Moulton	Ivo	Moulton	
Pinchbeck	Ivo	Pinchbeck	
Holbeach	The king	Tetney	Ivo
Surfleet	Heppo	Alkborough	
Sibsey	Ivo	Cabourne	Ivo
Stickney	Ivo	Normanby	Ivo
Bolingbroke	Ivo	Glentham	Ivo
Addlethorpe		Donington	Ivo
Honington	Ivo	Stenigot	Ivo
Lea	Count Alan	Scamelsby	
Gate Burton	Count Alan	Belchford	
Alkborough	Ivo	Wyham	Ivo
Scamelsby	Ivo	Obthorpe	Ivo
Minting	Ivo		
1/2 Church		2 parts of the tithe	
East Keal	Ivo	Sutton	Count Alan
Belchford	Ivo	Lutton	
		Edlington	Ivo
Chapel - Walcote		Claxby	Ivo, Hugh, his man
		Langton	
		Frampton	Count Alan/ Guy de Craon

TEMPORAL ACQUISITIONS

Spalding	9 carucates
Pinchbeck	10 carucates
Weston/Moulton	10 carucates 1 bovat
Tydd	3 carucates 2 bovates
Whaplode	land called Wrangbenethrith
Sutton	2 carucates 2 bovates

Surfleet	3 bovates
Fishtoft	a toft
Hareby	10 bovates
Sibsey	2 carucates 1.1/4 bovates
Miningsby	2 carucates
Bolingbroke	lands, tofts, woods
Belchford	lands
Scamelsby	watermill
Asterby	mill
Honington	1 carucate
Ludford	4.1/2 bovates
Alkborough	1 carucate, a manor
Walcote	1 bovat
Obthorpe & Wilsthorpe	1 carucate & men
Laythorpe & Evedon	a manor, 1 carucate & men
Lea	lands
Normanby	a man and a toft, 1 bovat of land
Wyham	a manor?
Lincoln	buildings in the Castle ditch
Willoughton	a manor

Further information on the donors is to be found in Sumner, op.cit., Tables I and II.

APPENDIX II

THE PRIORS OF SPALDING BEFORE 1274

Gaufrido Nauecensi	occurs 1111
Herbert	c. 1149-56
Reynold	c. 1176
Geoffrey	N.D.
Nicholas	occurs 1189-91
Warin	occurs 1192
Jocelyn	c. 1194-8
Nicholas	occurs 1203-4
John the Spaniard	occurs 1219
Ralf Mansell	1224-1229
Simon of Alkborough	1229-53
John the Almoner	1253-74

The chief source for this list is B.L. Add MSS 35296, fol. 421, though it is not complete and other priors have been included where charter evidence exists.

Notes

- ¹ *The Chronicle of Hugh Candidus, a monk of Peterborough*, ed. W.T. Mellows, pp.4-5, 1949.
- ² These works include: E. King, *Peterborough Abbey 1086-1310*, Cambridge University Press, 1973; E. Miller, *The Abbey and Bishopric of Ely*, C.U.P., 1951; F.M. Page, *The Estates of Crowland Abbey*, C.U.P., 1934; S. Raban, *The Estates of Crowland and Thorney*, Cambridge University Department of Land Economy, Occasional Paper No.7, 1977; and J.A. Raftis, *The Estates of Ramsey Abbey*, Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, Toronto, 1957.
- ³ This study develops part of an M.A. thesis presented at Reading in 1987; N. Sumner, *Spalding, the Origins of a Fenland Community*. (Course History of Agriculture and the English Landscape). I would like to express my thanks to Dr D.R. Roffe and Dr Anne Curry for their help and encouragement during the preparation of this article though they are not of course responsible for its contents. Also I would like to thank my father, Mr A.G. Sumner, for preparing the maps.
- ⁴ *Chronicon Angliae Petroburgense*, ed. J.A. Giles, p.149, 1845.
- ⁵ ed. H.T. Riley, *Ingulph's Chronicle of the Abbey of Crowland*, Bohn's Antiquarians Library, 1873, p.173. On Ingulph's reliability see H.T. Riley, *The history and charters of Ingulph considered*, Archaeological Journal, XIX, 1862, and W.G. Searle, *Ingulph and the Historia Croylandensis*, Cambridge Antiquarian Society, 1894.
- ⁶ H.T. Riley, p.173ff., and Giles.
- ⁷ eds. C.W. Foster and T. Longley, *The Lincolnshire Domesday and the Lindsey Survey*, pp. 60, 89, 184. Lincolnshire Record Society, vol. XIX, 1924. Clearly it is wrong to state, as Darby has recently done, that Spalding as a whole was a berewick of Crowland. See H.C. Darby, 'Domesday Book and the Geographer' in *Domesday Studies*, ed. J.C. Holt (Woodbridge, 1987), p.109.
- ⁸ British Library, Harley MS Y6, reproduced as the frontispiece in F.M. Page.

- ⁹ Sumner, Chapter 3; also D.R. Roffe, 'The Lincolnshire Hundred' in *Landscape History*, vol. 3, p.30.
- ¹⁰ The cartulary is in two volumes; British Library Additional Manuscript 35296 and B.L. Harley 742. This account, entitled *De l'ichoatione sive Fundatione Spaldingensis...* is on folio 2 of the Additional Manuscript. It was probably written in the time of Prior Walter de Hatton who ruled the house in the 1330's. Otherwise the cartulary mostly contains material from earlier centuries, often written to imitate an earlier style of hand writing.
- ¹¹ B.L. Add. MSS 35296 fols 87, 99. Calendar of Charter Rolls, vol. IV, p.162. This charter was made before 1123.
- ¹² C. Ballu, *Historia Abbatiae Sancti Nicolai Andegavensis*, Angers, 1902, p.6. This history was originally written in 1648 by a monk of that Abbey, Dom Petro Leduc.
- ¹³ R.E.G. Kirk, 'The Countess Lucy: Singular or Plural?', *Genealogist*, (New Series); 5, 60-75, 131-44, 153-73; especially 143-44 and 163 ff.
- ¹⁴ W. Farrer, *The Sheriffs of Lincolnshire and Yorkshire, 1066-1130*, *English Historical Review*, 1915, p.272-79.
- ¹⁵ Pipe Roll 2 Henry II, p.37-8.
- ¹⁶ J.H Round, *Feudal England*, London, 1909 reprint, p.329.
- ¹⁷ Farrer, op.cit., p.278.
- ¹⁸ B.L. Add MSS 35296, Fol. 8d. Also H.W.C. Davis ed. *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum*, vol. 1, no. 288a, Oxford, 1913.
- ¹⁹ Frank Barlow, *William Rufus*, Methuen, 1983, p.172.
- ²⁰ B.L. Add MSS 35296, fol. 8d.
- ²¹ *ibid.*
- ²² *ibid.*, fol. 8.
- ²³ Foster and Langley, p.89.
- ²⁴ Kirk.
- ²⁵ Pipe Roll 31. Henry I, p.110.
- ²⁶ B.L. Add MSS 35296, fol. 9.
- ²⁷ Valor Ecclesiasticus, Records Commission, IV, p.98, eds. J. Caley and J. Hunter (1810-34).
- ²⁸ Foster and Langley eds. p.89. For the multiplier see H.E. Hallam, *Some Thirteenth-century Censuses*, *Economic History Review*, 2nd series, vol. 10, No. 3, 1958, p.341.
- ²⁹ S. Raban, *The Estates of Thorney and Crowland*, C.U.P. 1977, Appendix I.
- ³⁰ B.L. Add MSS 35296, fol. 87. Also in *Regesta Regum Anglo-*

Normannorum, No. 386.

- 31 B.L. Add MSS 35296, fol. 360.
- 32 *ibid.*, fol. 412.
- 33 Foster and Langley, p.256.
- 34 *ibid.*, p.240.
- 35 B.L. Add MSS 35296, fols. 87b, 386.
- 36 *ibid.*, fols. 371 and 378.
- 37 *ibid.*, fol. 283, B.L. Harley 742, fols. 281 and 289, Calendar of Charter Rolls, vol. IV, p.162.
- 38 B.L. Add MSS 35296, fol. 283.
- 39 Calendar of Charter Rolls, vol. IV, p.162.
- 40 B.L. Add MSS 35296 fol. 132.
- 41 Calendar of Charter Rolls, vol. IV, p.162.
- 42 Davis and Cronne, *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum*, vol. III, Oxford 1968, No. 20, pp.7-8.
- 43 B.L. Harley 742, fol. 287b. Gilbert also gave the monks 40 shillings rent. A certain Kistegar also gave the monks extensive lands here at this time.
- 44 B.L. Add MSS 35296, fols. 391 and 382.
- 45 B.L. Add MSS 35296 fol. 330. For Whaplode see Calendar of Charter Rolls, vol. IV., p.163, and a confirmation given by Pope Alexander III in 1177, in Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, vol. III, p.219.
- 46 Raban, p.44.
- 47 *ibid.* Chapter 4 and Appendices 2 and 3 pp.94-96.
- 48 The cartulary of the Priory contains a thorough record of these gifts. Some of the most important are given in Calendar of Charter Rolls, p.167ff.
- 49 Sumner, Chapters 5 and 6, also E. Jones, 'Some Economic Dealings of Prior John the Almoner', *Lincolnshire History and Archaeology*, 12, 1977, p.41.
- 50 A recent summary of these possessions is in Jacques Beauroy, 'La conquête cléricale de L'Angleterre; *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale*, 1984, pp.35-48.
- 51 Victoria County History, Warwickshire, vol. II, p.129-31, London, 1908.
- 52 This information, and most of that which follows, is taken from documents concerning the composition between the two houses which I hope to publish shortly. The documents are in B.L. Add MSS 35296, fols. 11-18.
- 53 Dugdale, p.207, note 2.
- 54 Rotuli Hugonis de Welles, pt. III, p.182-85. Lincolnshire Record Society,

vol. 9, 1964.

⁵⁵ See note 52.

⁵⁶ Giles, p.137 ff., also B.L. Add MSS 35296, fols. 10, 421d.

⁵⁷ The best version of this tale is in D.N. Stenton, *English Justice 1066-1215*, The American Philosophical Society, 1964, pp.148-212.

⁵⁸ Pipe Roll 2 Richard I, p.89.

⁵⁹ B.L. Harley 742, fol. 2264d.

⁶⁰ H.E. Hallam, *The New Lands of Elloe*, Leicester University Press, Occasional Paper no. 6, 1954, p.6 ff.

⁶¹ Rotuli Hundredorum, p.271. These rights, together with others pertaining to the lordship of Spalding, were held 'ab antiquo'.

⁶² Sumner, Chapter 6, E. Johns.

⁶³ H.E. Hallam, *Settlement and Society*, C.U.P., 1965, p.176.

⁶⁴ D.M. Stenton, p.155.

⁶⁵ B.L. Add MSS 35296, fol. 144d.

⁶⁶ *ibid* fols. 329-37. B.L. Harley 742, 269-70.

⁶⁷ *ibid*.

⁶⁸ B.L. Harley 742, fol. 262.

⁶⁹ Dugdale, pp.224-6.

⁷⁰ Raban, Appendix II.

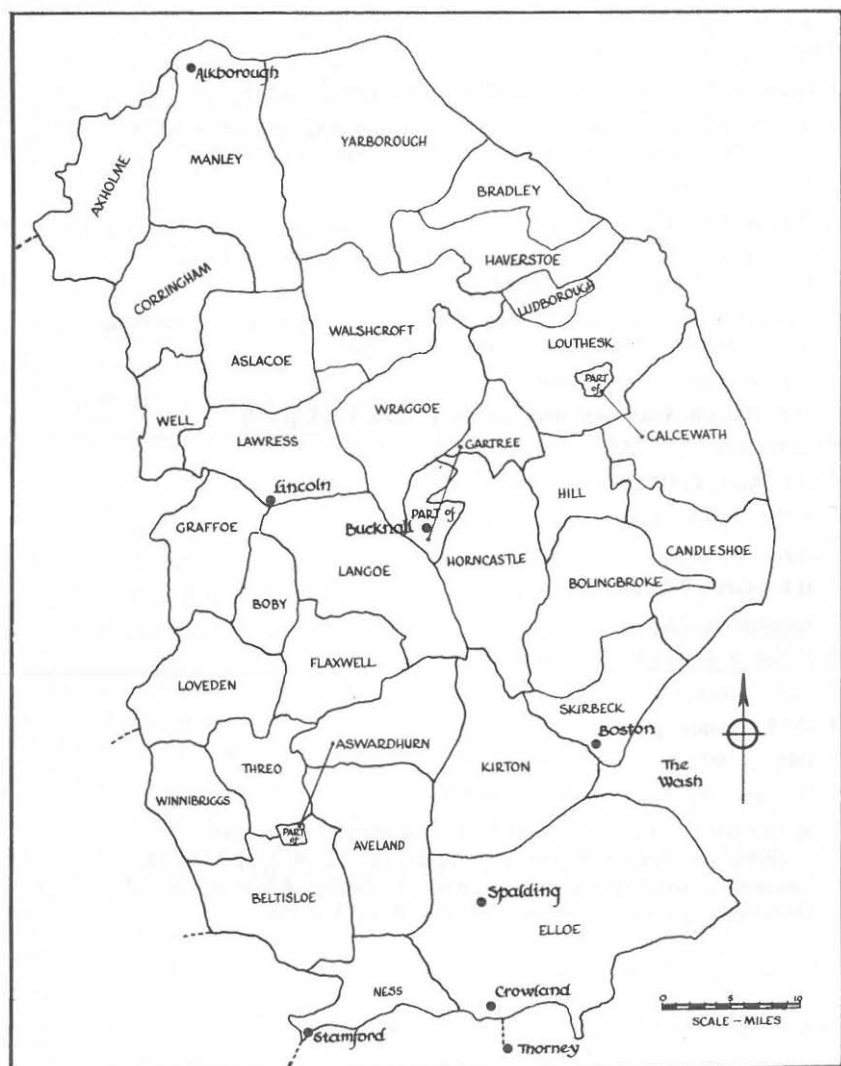
⁷¹ *ibid*. Appendix III.

⁷² D.M. Stenton, p.161.

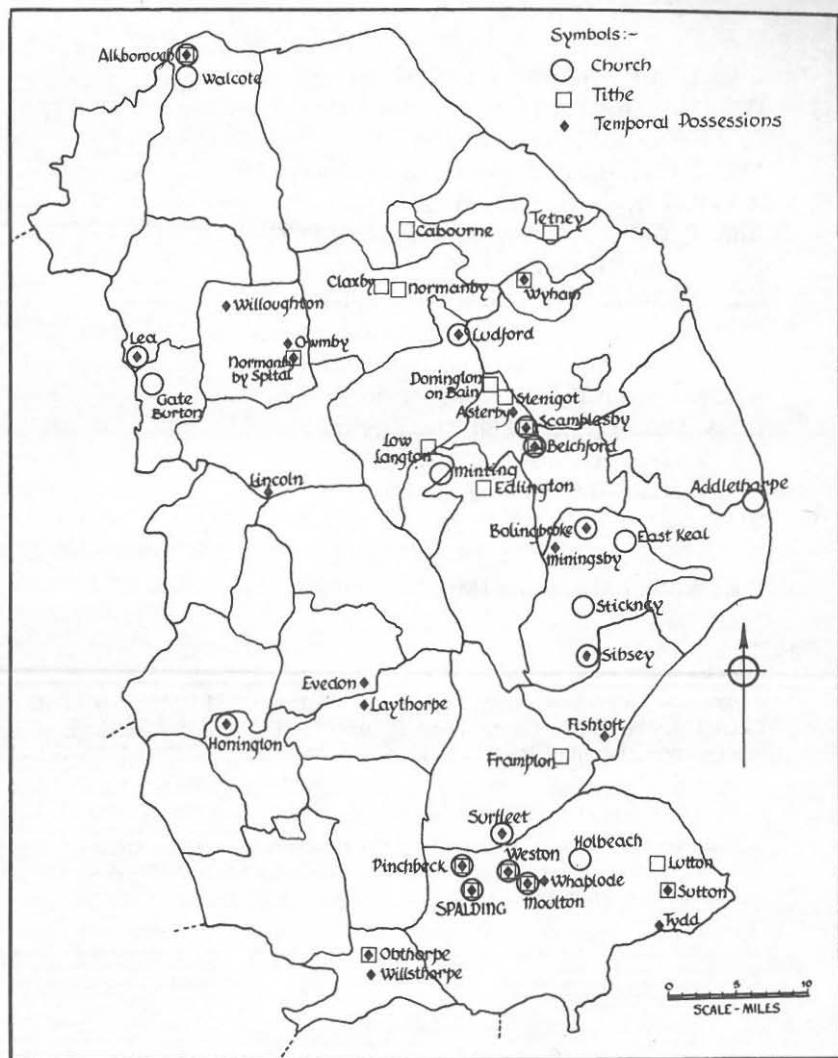
⁷³ *ibid*., p.199.

⁷⁴ Hallam, *Settlement and Society*, p.202.

⁷⁵ R. Glasscock, 'The Lay Subsidy for Lincolnshire', Lincolnshire Architectural Society Reports and Papers, vol. 10, pt. 2, pp.115-133. Calculation based on the table given in H.C. Darby, *A New Historical Geography of England before 1600*, C.U.P. 1973, p.181.



Map 1. Wapentakes of Lincolnshire.



Map 2. The Possessions of Spalding Priory in 1200 A.D.