

THE CHAMBERER OF GLASTONBURY ABBEY IN THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY¹

BY IAN KEIL

Very few archives of Glastonbury Abbey have survived from the fourteenth century which give any idea of the working of its domestic economy and the daily life of the monks. The best documented office is the chamberer's, and it is possible to see how conditions within the abbey changed between the first decade of the century and about sixty years later. The evidence is the more valuable not only because Glastonbury was one of the wealthiest Benedictine houses in England but also because the chamberer had greater financial independence than other major obedientiaries at Glastonbury.

The chamberer, one of the senior monks, originally had the duty of distributing clothes, shoes, knives and other personal necessities to the community from the common store.² The rule of St. Benedict laid emphasis on maintaining the vow of personal poverty so that such an office was probably the most convenient way of providing the brethren with their material needs. Similar offices existed in most of the older houses in England, although some differences in their duties had appeared by the beginning of the fourteenth century. At Glastonbury the chamberer supplied garments, knives, some spices, and arranged laundry and tailoring services. In addition he distributed some money doles according to the terms of various bequests and customs. His responsibilities included the organisation of seynies (blood lettings).

To carry out his duties the chamberer handled considerable sums of money, but his independence from much of the financial administration of the abbey suggests that the office had crucial importance at one stage in the abbey's history. This factor influenced the reforming work of John Pecham, Archbishop of Canterbury, when he conducted a visitation of Glastonbury. Archbishop Pecham issued injunctions for Glastonbury Abbey in 1281 with the aim of centralis-

¹ I am grateful to Dr. C. D. Ross for reading a draft of this article and making some valuable suggestions, but he has no responsibility for errors and omissions. I also wish to express my gratitude to the Marquess of Bath for permission to use his invaluable collection of manuscripts relating to Glastonbury Abbey. Unless otherwise stated manuscripts quoted are all from Longleat. The only chamberer's accounts surviving from the 14th century were: 11276 (1307), 7353 (1309), 11247 (1369) and 10642 (1372). These may be compared with the only other account, that for 1538-9 — Public Rec. Off. S.C.6, Henry VIII, 3118.

² See David Knowles *Monastic Orders in England* (Cambridge, 1940) p. 430 and also his *Religious Orders in England* (Cambridge, 1955) Vol. 1, p. 287-9.

ing and regulating the finances.³ He ordered that all revenues from whatever source should be paid into a treasury with audits of expenditure at fixed frequent intervals. Exception was made of endowment income earmarked for a particular purpose. Thus the chamberer, whose income came under this provision, remained much freer of supervision than many of his fellow obedientiaries. This favoured position had arisen because of the chaos and distress during the vacancy following the death of an abbot. Abbots held the temporalities as tenants-in-chief of the king and so, when they died, the crown received the revenues until a new abbot paid homage to the king. As, on such occasions, this procedure deprived the community of all revenues from its landed estates, the abbey found it necessary to separate some of its property from the abbot's lands to endow the chamberer's office. By this means some provision existed for meeting the essential needs of monks no matter how long the vacancy lasted. The abbey made an agreement in 1343 whereby it paid a fine to the crown so that the temporalities remained within its control.⁴ Thus the disruption of the estates owing to a vacancy was minimized. In spite of the stability now achieved the chamberer remained financially independent. This kind of conservatism is a feature of many corporate institutions in the medieval period.

³ *Registrum Epistolarum Fratris Johannis Peckham, Archiepiscopi Cantuariensis*, ed. C. T. Martin (London, 1882) Vol. 1. No. 213.

⁴ Until 1334 the death of an abbot automatically meant that the escheator took possession of the temporalities on behalf of the crown. Vacancies were of uncertain duration and they led to dilapidation of properties. Negotiations to change to the system of paying a pro-rata fine according to the length of a vacancy began at an unknown date. On 27 October 1328 the abbot petitioned that the estates should be left in the hands of the prior and convent (*Calendar of Close Rolls*, 1327-30, p. 332). The petition was granted on 27 February 1329 (*Calendar of Fine Rolls* 1327-37, p. 123-124). The escheator was reminded of the arrangements in 1332, namely, that a fine of 1,000 marks was payable in a full year of vacancy and that only the knight's fees and advowsons were reserved to the crown. (*Calendar of Close Rolls*, 1330-33, p. 426). The first vacancy occurred on the death of Abbot Sodbury (1323-1334) when a fine of £108 1s. 3d. was paid. (*Calendar of Close Rolls*, 1333-1337 p. 254. p. 272). The privilege was still in question when Abbot Breinton (1334-1342) died and final settlement was made clear only in May 1345 (*Calendar of Close Rolls* 1341-1342 p. 608, and *Calendar of Close Rolls* 1343-46, p. 63). A list of precedents compiled for the Glastonbury petition was recorded in *The Great Chartulary of Glastonbury* (*G. Chart. Glaston. I*) ed. A. Watkin. (Som. Rec. Soc.) Vol. 59 (1944) pp. 199-200.

Three entire manors made over to the chamberer provided much of the income: namely, West Monkton in Somerset, Longbridge Deverill, and Monkton Deverill in Wiltshire. In 1327 a jury swore that Deverill by Warminster "always hitherto from time out of mind both during voidance of the abbey aforesaid and during time of occupancy there, was set apart and assigned for clothing and other necessities pertaining to the chamber of the said monks"⁵ Why these manors were selected for the chamber endowment in preference to other abbey properties can only be surmised. Possibly these manors provided a very steady income because they suited both corn growing and sheep pasture. Their position might have been relatively favourable in bad seasons of extreme wetness or dryness. They lay conveniently close to important markets or trade routes. West Monkton is three miles to the north east of Taunton. The Deverills were near the Bristol and Salisbury route by way of the Wylde Valley, and close to the forest of Selwood where the abbey had hunting rights in the fourteenth century.⁶ Whether the brethren made use of the privilege on holidays is not known.

Other important sources of revenue were customary rents due from certain tenements and holdings in and about Glastonbury.⁷ The chamberer received occasional revenue from sales of heriots and other goods rendered by tenants of his holdings.

Abbot Geoffrey Fromond (1303 - 1322) made a substantial alteration in the chamberer's income in the year before his death. He endowed the office with new revenues of a pension of £22 from tithes and profits taken from the appropriated church at Sturminster Newton in Dorset, of rents in Somerset at Middlezoy worth 60s. 0d. a year, and of rents in Somerset at Godney worth 26s. 8d. a year.⁸ In return the chamberer had to undertake some new duties. Only one further important change in the chamber endowments occurred. In 1393 the church of Longbridge Deverill with its dependent

⁵ H. C. Maxwell-Lyte, "Glastonbury Abbey in 1322" in *Collectanea I* (Som. Rec. Soc. Vol. 39 (1924) p. 14; and *G. Chart. Glaston. II* (Som. Rec. Soc. Vol. 63 (1948) pp. 347-8. The manor of Monkton Deverill was formerly known as East Monkton. Modern spelling of place names has been adopted.

⁶ *G. Chart. Glaston. I.* p. 184.

⁷ *Rentalia et Custumaria* ed. I. Elton (Som. Rec. Soc. Vol. 5) *passim*.

⁸ *G. Chart. Glaston. III.* (Som. Rec. Soc. Vol. 64 (1949-50) pp. 721-2.

chapelry of Monkton Deverill in Wiltshire became abbey property and all profits passed to the chamberer.⁹

Manorial accounts of the two Deverills survive in abundance from the beginning of the century until the first years of Abbot John Chinnock (1375 - 1420), but only one account is available for West Monkton in the century. From these accounts it is possible to see how the disposable surplus from two manorial sources varied during the period covered by existing chamberer's accounts¹⁰ (see Table 2 below).

Principal sources of revenue are set out in Table 1.¹¹

TABLE I
CHAMBERER'S INCOME

Year	Source	1307		1309		1369		1372	
		£	s. d.	£	s. d.	£	s. d.	£	s. d.
West Monkton	48	5 6 $\frac{1}{4}$	72	16 0 $\frac{1}{2}$	51	12 9 $\frac{1}{2}$	58	13 1 $\frac{3}{4}$
Longbridge Deverill	50	14 3 $\frac{1}{4}$	55	16 1 $\frac{3}{4}$	75	2 6	52	8 8 $\frac{1}{2}$
Monkton Deverill	43	18 9 $\frac{1}{4}$	29	2 1 $\frac{1}{2}$	13	0 11 $\frac{1}{8}$	19	18 8 $\frac{1}{8}$
Rents of Assize	12	10 4 $\frac{1}{4}$	11	17 0 $\frac{1}{4}$	14	4 9 $\frac{1}{2}$	14	4 9 $\frac{1}{2}$
1321 Endowments	None		None		26	6 8	26	6 8
Other income	17	14 11 $\frac{1}{2}$	2	1 0	2	19 9 $\frac{1}{4}$	4	10 8 $\frac{1}{4}$
<i>Grand Total</i>	173	3 10 $\frac{3}{4}$	171	12 4	183	17 5 $\frac{8}{8}$	177	2 8 $\frac{8}{8}$
Defects of Rent	None		None		4	7 5	4	9 11
<i>Net Total</i>	173	3 10 $\frac{3}{4}$	171	12 4	179	10 0 $\frac{8}{8}$	172	12 9 $\frac{1}{4}$

⁹ See the present author's "Impropiator and Benefice" in *The Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine* appearing shortly. At this date the abbey also acquired Butleigh church with Baltonsborough chapelry whose revenues were devoted to the community welfare through the activity of the archdeacon of Glastonbury and other obedientiaries. No more changes in the chamberer's endowment occurred until the dissolution as may be seen in the account of 1538-39 (Public Record Office S.C.6. Henry VIII 3118).

¹⁰ The cash paid to the chamberer was not the total profit on the manors after all expenses were met since there were sometimes small payments in kind, although these were not normally worth very much in cash terms and may be ignored without serious chance of error in these examples. The manuscripts used were as follows in chronological order:

Longbridge Deverill: 9638, 9639, 9640, 9646, 4648, 10601, 8081, 8082, 10594, 9632, 8074, 9888, 10690, 8071, 8067, 10605, 9889, 9890, 9897, 8068, 10695, 10696.

Monkton Deverill: 9754, 9761, 10630, 10712, 10618, 10616, 9730, 10617, 9686, 9734, 9735, 8073, 9736, 9912, 9737, 9743, 9744, 9732, 10716, 9751, 9752, 9753.

¹¹ Small fractions of a penny appear in accounts because of divided ownership of property holdings and allocation of monies within the abbey treasury or from shared endowments made by abbots. Thus fractions usually have only a book-keeping significance below a farthing or half farthing.

Comparison of the two early years with the later pair emphasises the importance of the Fromond endowments which kept the income near the earlier levels. The “rents of assize” were the revenues from the Glastonbury holdings or properties acquired before 1321. The fall in revenue (13s. 4d.) in 1309 from the 1307 figure (£12 10s. 4¼d.) occurred because one property remained in the lord’s hands for half a year. If the normal accounting practice of the period had been followed by the Glastonbury chamberer, as it was later on in the 14th century, instead of deducting the 13s. 4d. from the rent of assize item before entry, he would have shown it on the other side of the account as a defect of rent.¹² This explains the apparent stability of both rents of assize and 1321 endowments in Table 1. The “defects of rent” arose from some tenements being in the lord’s hands and from some reductions in rent. Once again the technique of accounting made it obligatory for the rent as it is recorded in the current rental to appear on one side of the account under “rents of assize”, whilst a reduction appears as a defect. ‘Other income’ stood high in 1307 partly because the chamberer sold a horse for £10. This item in all years includes occasional revenue from sales of surplus goods such as ale or from heriots paid in kind. Perquisites (profits of manorial courts) made irregular contributions to the chamberer’s revenues. For example, in 1369 there were none, but in 1372 three entry fines brought in 33s. 4d.

Changes in the income from the three manors had profound significance, although taken together there seems to be little variation: £142 18s. 7d. (1307); £157 14s. 3¾d. (1309); £139 16s. 2⅝d. (1369); and £131 0s. 6⅜d. (1372). The only known payment from West Monkton apart from these four years of the fourteenth century was of £48 19s. 4d. in 1379.¹³ Therefore the evidence from the two

¹² This practice of entering a net figure seems unusually antiquated and might be associated with the traditional minds of the monks at Glastonbury. It implies that the chamberer did not follow the then widespread custom of entering under the “rents of assize” all receipts due according to a rental, but instead he recorded the actual sums paid to him. In the later years of the 14th century the more commonly found technique had been adopted by the chamberer. I am indebted to Mr. I. P. Collis for drawing my attention to this feature of the accounts.

¹³ 9598 (1378-79). The date in the text is the end of a year of account which ran from Michaelmas to Michaelmas. The end of the year is the date always given in the text.

Wiltshire manors must serve to show the downward tendency of profits from the manors. However, there is no reason to suppose that the revenues of West Monkton did not follow this trend. The annual cash render to the chamberer from Longbridge Deverill and Monkton Deverill appears in Table 2.

TABLE 2
PROFITS FROM DEVERILL MANORS

Year	Longbridge			Monkton			Year	Longbridge			Monkton			
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	
1304	—		30	18	9	1343	....	68	8	8½	—		
1305	39	17 3	—			1346	....	—			40	4	1
1306	64	1 2½	—			1347	....	88	18	1¾	?		
1307	50	14 3¼	43	18	9½	1348	....	50	3	7	42	10	6
1308	61	6 6½	—			1349	....	—			33	12	3
1309	55	16 1¾	29	2	1½	1350	....	45	4	6	17	9	5½
1313	—		35	2	8	1351	....	54	0	7½	31	16	0¾
1317	64	9 8	—			1352	....	42	6	11½	—		
1318	31	14 6	—			1353	....	45	0	3½	—		
1319	46	2 2	—			1354	....	38	3	7	—		
1322	—		43	5	5	1360	....	—			22	13	4
1323	50	3 5	49	9	4	1361	....	—			11	9	0½
1328	—		36	3	2½	1362	....	46	3	0	—		
1329	—		34	0	0	1363	....	40	4	5¼	12	18	0
1330	66	7 3¾	—			1368	....	—			16	8	4
1331	61	15 4½	—			1369	....	75	2	6	13	0	11½
1332	—		65	5	1	1370	....	—			7	3	6
1334	—		59	11	9	1372	....	52	8	8½	19	18	8¾
1335	—		40	19	9	1374	....	67	9	1½	16	12	0
1339	80	1 5	—			1375	....	60	13	8	10	3	0
1340	78	7 10	—										

N.B. Blanks indicate no manuscript for comparison.

A general decline in revenue resulted from dwindling rents becoming especially marked after the first onslaught of the Black Death when the population fell substantially. Similarly the market for grain was reduced and a very sharp drop in production occurred on the less fertile or accessible manors. This partially explains the smaller profits from Monkton Deverill on the chalk uplands of South Wiltshire. The state of the Monkton Deverill revenues appears worse than it actually was, because of the administrative convenience of selling the wool clip of Monkton sheep at Longbridge. The sheep flocks of the manors complemented each other and animals and wool

for sale were handled by the reeve of Longbridge Deverill. The trends upon these manors were matched elsewhere upon the estates of Glastonbury Abbey and on estates belonging to other landlords.

During the 14th century the chamberer's accounts were altered in two ways: the arrangement of matter on the expenses (or discharge) side ceased to be by the quarters of the year; and rolls replaced files as a means of preserving the accounts. These changes occurred between 1309 and 1369, but no explicit reason has been found for them. Perhaps they came into being when Abbot Fromond ordered manorial accounts to be sewn into rolls instead of files of membranes, or else soon after the appointment of an archivist in 1340.¹⁴ It is interesting to note that the second quarter, which included Lent, shows much the lowest expenditure by the chamberer in 1307 and 1309. The later chamberer's accounts give the expenditure on a yearly basis item by item. This alteration might have been introduced when he no longer had the burden of supplying many goods and services, but was chiefly pre-occupied with the payment of cash doles and other financial matters. The second change in accounting practice has been noted above, namely in the use of the defect of rent item on the discharge side of the account.

Since personal responsibility had paramount importance, the chamberer's accounts are useless for calculating whether capital was being run down so that current expenses could be met. The accountants did not concern themselves with long term effects. Some idea of capital depreciation can only be gathered from a long continuous series of accounts.

How much money did the chamberer handle? This is not immediately clear from the accounts. In Table 3 the total charge and discharge, deficits or surpluses, and the total expenditure on wages, upkeep, goods, services and cash doles, or the net discharge, are set out.

The condition of the chamberer's finances before and after the Black Death seems markedly different. In the early part of the century there occurred no large surplus charges from previous years (line 2). The large debt of £71 was drastically reduced between 1369 and 1371. Possibly a change of chamberer led to the cancellation of bad debts. The net receipts differed from the net charge because of the "defects of rent", a matter noticed previously (lines 3 and 4).

¹⁴ *G. Chart. Glaston. III*, p. 728.

TABLE 3

No.	Year	Item	Total Revenue and Expenditure															
			1307				1309				1369				1372			
			£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	
1.		TOTAL CHARGE	173	3	10 $\frac{3}{4}$	171	12	4	254	17	5 $\frac{7}{8}$	188	17	2 $\frac{7}{8}$				
2.		Past surplus charge....	None				None				71	0	0	11	14	6 $\frac{3}{4}$		
3.		Net charge	173	3	10 $\frac{3}{4}$	171	12	4	183	17	5 $\frac{7}{8}$	177	2	8 $\frac{1}{8}$				
4.		Net receipts	173	3	10 $\frac{3}{4}$	171	12	4	179	10	0 $\frac{7}{8}$	172	12	9 $\frac{1}{8}$				
5.		TOTAL DISCHARGE	187	2	4 $\frac{1}{4}$	186	19	10 $\frac{1}{4}$	183	1	5 $\frac{1}{2}$	185	2	1 $\frac{1}{2}$				
6.		Past excess discharge	18	1	6	13	18	5 $\frac{1}{2}$	None				None					
7.		Net discharge	169	0	10 $\frac{1}{4}$	173	1	4 $\frac{3}{4}$	178	14	0 $\frac{1}{2}$	180	12	2 $\frac{1}{2}$				
8.		Total Surplus	None				None				71	16	0 $\frac{7}{8}$	3	15	1 $\frac{3}{8}$		
9.		Total excess	13	18	5 $\frac{1}{2}$	15	7	6 $\frac{1}{4}$	None				None					
10.		Expend., allowed	None				None				15	0		12	7	$\frac{1}{2}$		
11.		Net surplus on year....	4	3	0 $\frac{1}{2}$	None				16	0	$\frac{1}{4}$	None					
12.		Net excess on year	None				1	9	0 $\frac{3}{4}$	None				8	12	0 $\frac{7}{8}$		
13.		Surplus forwarded	None				None				71	1	0 $\frac{7}{8}$	3	2	5 $\frac{7}{8}$		
14.		Excess forwarded	13	18	5 $\frac{1}{2}$	15	7	6 $\frac{1}{4}$	None				None					

The past excess of discharge (line 6) resulted from purchases in anticipation of income, as may be seen in 1309 when the net excess on the year's working was £1 9s. 0 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. The size of this item in 1307 might have arisen from meeting the demands on the chamber during the vacancy following the death of Abbot John Kent in 1303. The net discharge (line 7) represented the disposable income. The balance struck was computed by comparing total charge (line 1) with total discharge (line 5) to give a total surplus or excess (lines 8 and 9). Expenditure allowed by the auditors covered (line 10) small losses and this was deducted from the balance struck to give a figure to carry forward (lines 13 and 14). The performance during the year does not appear in the accounts and these figures are derived from a comparison of net receipts with net discharge (lines 4 and 7), and they give the net surplus or excess on the year's working (lines 11 and 12).

Expenses incurred in providing doles, wages, goods, services, and maintenance are shewn in Table 4.

TABLE 4
EXPENDITURE OF THE CHAMBERER

Year	1307				1309				1369				1372			
	£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.	
Net discharge	169	0	10 $\frac{1}{4}$		173	1	4 $\frac{3}{4}$		178	14	0 $\frac{1}{2}$		180	12	2 $\frac{1}{2}$	
Cash doles	115	14	11		122	8	11		158	5	4		151	16	11 $\frac{1}{2}$	
Wages	2	19	2		3	2	8		2	4	4		2	6	6	
Other expenses	50	6	9 $\frac{1}{4}$		47	9	9 $\frac{3}{4}$		18	4	4 $\frac{1}{2}$		26	8	9	

A comparison between the early fourteenth century figures and those of the later years brings out the transformed nature of the chamberer's duties and of the life of the brethren. There existed an almost universal tendency in monasteries during the latter half of the thirteenth century for cash doles to replace issues of clothing and goods from the common store.¹⁵ Successive reformers condemned this phenomenon in efforts to uphold the vows of personal poverty. This process developed slowly at Glastonbury where monks received a generous cash allowance annually in lieu of clothes by 1307. As late as 1372, however, distribution of some spices and wines still came from the chamber, although a cash dole had replaced an annual issue of a knife to each monk. The services performed for the community by the chamberer's staff had also been reduced.

Wages appear to have changed least according to Table 4, but in Table 5 the cost of full-time staff may be seen.

TABLE 5
WAGES OF FULL-TIME STAFF

Year		1307	1309	1369	1372
	<i>Workers</i>	<i>s. d.</i>	<i>s. d.</i>	<i>s. d.</i>	<i>s. d.</i>
Tailor	20 0	20 0	25 0	26 8
Cobbler	12 0	12 0	—	—
Washerwoman	12 1	12 0	16 0	16 6
Page	1 9	2 0	—	—
Keeper of Shrine	6 8	6 8	3 4	3 4
Woodmen	6 8	10 0	—	—

Increased money wages did not lead to any change in the payments in kind to servants, but the growing shortage of labour after 1348 caused a similar rise in the cost of labourers and the messengers hired to do specific tasks. Casual workers' payments were often included with the materials used on a job and so these items appeared under "other expenditure" in Table 4. The total of full-time wage earners is known only for the vacancy between the abbacies of Fromond and Sodbury when the king's escheator allowed pittances for four servants in the chamber.¹⁶ No cobbler was required in later years because the monks provided their own shoes, but the chamber retained a tailor to undertake necessary repairs and alterations. The

¹⁵ Knowles, *Religious Orders*. Vol. I. p. 288.

¹⁶ Maxwell-Lyte, *op. cit.* p. 29.

chamberer bought fuel ready for use in the later years so that a woodman became redundant. Possibly the services of a page had become unnecessary. No economy could be made in the laundry service. The reduction in the wages of the keeper of the shrine probably resulted from a change in his function.

The chamberer could not reduce or transfer the expenses entailed in maintaining his buildings in Glastonbury, both on vacant tenements from which he hoped to draw rents, and within the abbey precinct where various parts of his office were. These maintenance expenses show a meticulous attention to details. At various dates the laundry needed attention, and so a new pavement was laid there, a roof was reconstructed, and new troughs for washing were made. The chamberer had responsibility for some of the fabric of the dormitory, for in 1369 he bought timber to mend seats in the dormitory and a bolt for the door. In 1372 he purchased three ells of linen cloth for towels in the cloister at a cost of 2s. 3 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. Regularly there occurred expenses on thread and other supplies so that clothes could be mended. Even a garden came under a chamberer's eye, although only once, in 1309, during the second quarter of the year did he employ a gardener. This man received 2s. 6d. to tend it and a vineyard. Later accounts have no mention of the vineyard and none of them make any reference to the produce from the garden.

During this period the chamberer continued to distribute spices with no hint of substituting a cash dole. The spice item included some fish and wine although quantities were small and qualities are not known. The greater part of the expenditure met the cost of honey, ginger, cloves, mace and rock sugar. The total sums involved were 31s. 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. (1307), 27s. 0d. (1309), 52s. 1d. (1369), and 48s. 0d. (1372). In addition the chamberer had the obligation to provide ale for supper, wine for the misericord,¹⁷ and wine at the seynies.

The chamberer had various customary distributions to make. He supplied wine and other necessities to the priests for their first High Masses, as for example wine costing 2s. 0d. for Brother Cranborn

¹⁷ "Wine for the misericord" was wine served to monks in the *misericordia*—a dining-room where more sumptuous fare than that prescribed by the Rule of St. Benedict could be eaten by the infirm, by those who had mortified the flesh by letting blood, or by those who wished to avoid the austere food and drink provided in the refectory.

in 1369. When a monk died, the chamberer met the cost of the funeral feast. He also had to buy grain and ale for doles to the poor, on the anniversaries of the deaths of abbots Michael Ambresbury (1252) and Roger Ford (1261).

The accounts offer very little information on the cost of administration. The price of parchment of unspecified size is given as a shilling in 1372, but how much was spent on ink or on other necessities does not emerge. It has been noticed above that the chamberer travelled less in the later years. In 1307 and 1309 the visits to Winchester cost 29s. 3¼d. and 31s. 0d., but for visits to the fair of St. Calixtus at Wells the expenses in 1369 and 1372 were 3s. 0d. and 2s. 3d. respectively. In 1307 he bought two horses — a stallion for 103s. 4d. and a sumpter for 40s. 0d., although the total of animals in the stable does not appear. However, by 1372 he had only two horses, one being newly purchased at a cost of £4 6s. 8d.

Little is revealed of the chamberer's personality in his accounts but some items seem to be personal expenses. In the first appears the cost of medical treatment for a damaged shin. The cost of his treatment, when he was laid up in the infirmary for three weeks, was five shillings. Divers unctions prescribed for the ailment came from London, and these amounted to three shillings. Master John Brown, who was consulted, received a fee of three shillings and his assistant had three pence. Medical care appears to have been expensive. In 1372 he bought himself a cloak worth 20s. 0d. It seems that the chamberer had a suite of rooms since he purchased various necessities but too few in number to be for the convent's use. Among these household goods were a fillet knife, a barrel for storing salt fish, and wine for hospitality. In addition he gave various presents, some of which might have been customary, such as the 48 capons obtained from the reeve of Weston (? West Monkton) to send to the abbot at Christmas and at Easter. More intimate, perhaps, was a mark given to Ovid the scholar at Oxford university in 1307.¹⁸

Cash doles in Table 4 include all gifts of money and wages which can be separately identified. A long list would be tedious but the general picture is clear. The chamberer reduced expenditure on all supplies to the monks and economised on wages of servants where

¹⁸ This is an interesting example of the love of classical authors among monks, and perhaps this was a nickname since the fashion of taking a religious name came two centuries after this time.

the monks might meet the expense of necessary repairs to personal belongings. The monks had most benefit from increased payments of doles.

The size of the community declined during the fourteenth century. This may be seen in Table 6.¹⁹

TABLE 6
MONASTIC NUMBERS AT GLASTONBURY

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number</i>
1307	73
1309	73
1322	80
1342	63
1368	53
1371	52
1408	51
(Excluding abbot from totals)	

The main reasons were the Black Death and the general waning of enthusiasm for the monastic life. However, the private means of some of the brethren seem to have been considerable, and probably they were recruited in fair numbers from the better-off people including the aristocracy. Certainly some could afford expensive litigation although it is doubtful whether the Glastonbury monk, even with his very generous *peculium* (allowances in cash), could sustain pleas to the Papal curia, made on several occasions in the later middle ages, without his having to draw on other income.²⁰

¹⁹ The numbers are derived from the sources as follows:

1307 (11276), 1309 (7353) 1322, (Maxwell-Lyte. *op. cit.*), 1342 (Western Manuscripts, Trinity College, Cambridge, R5/16), 1368 and 1371 (11247 and 10642, the beginning of the year of the chamberer's accounts), and 1408 (*Register of Bishop Bekynton* ed. H. C. Maxwell-Lyte, and M. C. B. Dawes (Som. Rec. Soc.) Vols. 29, 30 (1934-35) p. 551, *et seq.*) These numbers do not allow for the possibility of a few of the community being at the university.

²⁰ The wealth of Glastonbury monks may be clearly seen during the Great Schism. The long drawn out struggle for power between the prior, Thomas Coffyn and the abbot, John Chinnock, shews the funds available to the prior. He took his attempts to have Chinnock's election set aside to royal courts and to the papal courts. (See the present author's, "Profiles of Some Abbots of Glastonbury" in *Downside Review*, appearing shortly). Less spectacular examples of wealth were the papal chaplaincies obtained by Brothers Geoffrey Vaggescombe and John Tabler in 1396 and 1398 (*Calendar of Papal Registers*, 1362-1396, p. 296, 305, and *ibid.* 1396-1404, p. 212).

Supplies of clothes to the monks as an annual dole had ceased by 1307. Then and after, the monks received a generous cash pension of 30s. 0d. a year. In 1309 the expense of fitting out a novice appears in the account. He was named Popham, perhaps a member of the Somerset family whose descendants bought abbey property at the dissolution. The expenses for a priest might have been higher than the figures in Table 7. Priests were seldom novices and would have some expenses for vestments. In 1321 the Fromond endowment authorised that the 50 seniors, "who are priests and are not notably unfit to receive it", should have an increase of 10s. 0d. per annum.

TABLE 7
A NOVICE'S CLOTHES IN 1309

	<i>s. d.</i>
9½ ells of black russet for robes and sleeveless tunic at 20d. per ell	15 10
Hose of black serge	10
Shoes	8
Maniple	9
One fur lining for a supertunica	3 6
Same for a hood	1 2
	<hr/>
TOTAL.	22 9
	<hr/>

Fromond's reforms required that each monk should return old garments worth more than three shillings to the chamberer every year. Failure to comply entailed the deduction of that sum from the monk's allowance, and that this money should go to the almoner for distribution among the poor. In the later years the priest monks received an annual wage from the chamberer of 53s. 4d. and the others 40s. 0d. Novices of some standing in the latter part of the century had 30s. 0d. a year, but first year men only 20s.0d. By this time, it seems that the first year novices bought their own robes. Four new novices are mentioned in the account of 1372 but no clothes were purchased for them. Possibly, the chamberer had some sets in his store. Nevertheless, the position of the Glastonbury monk was undoubtedly highly privileged. Even St. Albans, one of the wealthier Benedictine houses, could find an annual dole of only £1 7s. 8d. for a monk in the early fifteenth century.

In the early fourteenth century the brethren had knives distributed to them of a quality according to status. These cost 13s. 4d. for the abbot, 6s. 0d. for the prior, and 94s. 0d. for the remainder of the community. In the later years the chamberer substituted cash doles at the rate of 20s. 0d. for the abbot, 10s. 0d. for the prior and 1s. 0d. each for the monks, but when this change occurred is not known. Perhaps there is a clue in the fact that a substantial piece of pasture mentioned in 1369 had been leased four years previously, apparently for the first time. Presumably the chamberer had a much smaller stable since he no longer needed to visit the fair of St. Giles at Winchester where he had bought knives among other items.

The chamberer had commitments to help finance some of his fellow obedientiaries besides paying taxes and making oblations. The latter involved small sums since the taxes paid on the Deverill manors and West Monkton amounted to £5 12s. 2½d. in 1307, this being a fifteenth to the king. This burden did not recur every year. The oblations at Easter in the same year came to 12s. 9d. but these varied little, if at all, from year to year. The sums paid out to the other monastic officers had much greater significance. In the early years the abbot had £24 a year but this fell to £2 in the changes made by Abbot Fromond in 1321. The medarer received 13s. 7d. in the early years, but no money in the later ones. The guest master's allowance was halved to one shilling over the same period. Fixed allowances were due to the pittance of £2 1s. 4d., to the sacrist of 1s. 4d., and to the infirmarian of £2 16s. 8d. Under the terms of the arrangements made in 1321 the sub-almoner's allowances included a variable sum from the chamber composed of the residue of the annual dole of deceased brethren: in 1369, £1 6s. 8d., and, in 1372, £1 13s. 4d. However, the cook paid four pence a year to the chamberer in the later years of the century, again a result of Fromond's reforms. Similar cross payments between obedientiaries occurred in most monasteries as a result of reforms such as Fromond's.

The exacting office of chamberer demanded a flair for finance and for attending to a multitude of details. Cash receipts often exceeded £175 in a year, the equivalent of a small monastery's total income, but the task of pleasing about fifty monks expecting benefits was no sinecure