ROMSEY ABBEY

Benedictine nuns of St Mary and St Ethelfleda

County of Hampshire: Diocese of Winchester
Founded by King Edward the Elder before 924;
refounded as a Benedictine abbey by King Edgar, 967

In origin Romsey was the last of three royal nunneries founded by King Alfred and his son King Edward the Elder. Wilton in Wiltshire was the oldest, refounded by Alfred. Edward established the house at Winchester known as Nunnaminster and some years later founded a nunnery at Romsey for his daughter Ælfflæd, nun of Wilton and first abbess of Romsey. In 967, during the period of Benedictine renewal in King Edgar’s time, Romsey abbey was refounded under the aristocratic abbess Mærwynn (John of Worcester, ii. 416). St Æthelflæd, according to her uit(a), was the daughter of one of King Edgar’s leading men and his wife, a kinswoman of Edgar’s Queen Ælfthryth; when her widowed mother remarried, the king is said to have put Æthelflæd into the care of Abbess Mærwynn at Romsey, where in time she herself became abbess.¹ King Henry granted a fair around the time of her feast-day, though her feast

¹ BL MS Lansdowne 436 (s. xiv, Romsey), fols. 43v–45v, printed in Acta Sanctorum, Oct. xii (1867), 922–3 (BHL 2471), and in English by H. G. D. Liveing, Records of Romsey Abbey (Winchester, 1906), 19–26. In some sources she was named as Ælfflæd, and the evidence for her liturgical cult is sparse. Discussed under Context in relation to {1} below.
was so little known that his act specifies the date by reference to that of St Denis (11). The often stated notion that the abbey flourished as a place for the upbringing of royal daughters rests on no reliable evidence. In particular the idea that Matilda of Scotland, who would marry King Henry in November 1100, was brought up at Romsey arises from confusion. Her aunt Christina, daughter of Edward Ætheling, ‘sought refuge in the convent at Romsey and took the veil’ in 1086, when her brother Edgar Ætheling left England (ASCChr). Queen Margaret of Scotland (d. 1093) was her sister, and Margaret’s daughter Eadgyth, known as Matilda by the time of her marriage to Henry I, told Anselm how, as a girl, she feared the rod of her aunt Christina, who had put a veil on her head, a conversation reported in some detail by Eadmer (HN, 122). On the strength of this Christina has been regarded as abbess of Romsey and the young Matilda as growing up here, but the evidence presented by Eadmer is explicit that Matilda was living in the abbey at Wilton. The fictitious narrative created around misapprehended sources peaked in M. Rule’s Saint Anselm, his life and times (London, 1883), ii. 260–63. It has been dismantled by stages. Books on Romsey abbey have repeated and built on the story. The difficulty was already experienced by William of Malmesbury. He knew that Christina was at Romsey from the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, and he also knew that Matilda was at Wilton from Eadmer; his integrative explanation, that Matilda was brought up ‘among nuns at Wilton and Romsey’ (Gesta regum, V § 418),

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2 R. W. Southern, Saint Anselm and his Biographer (Cambridge, 1963), 185–93, retained much of Rule’s fiction but substituted Wilton for Romsey as the venue. In Councils and Synods, 661n, Martin Brett made the particularly telling point that Archbishop Anselm’s letter about Matilda of Scotland (ep. 177) was written to Bishop Osmund of Salisbury because she was living at Wilton in his diocese. The different strands of evidence for Matilda’s experience at Wilton are examined by R. Sharpe, ‘King Harold’s daughter’, HSJ 19 (2008), 1–27, at pp. 14–16 and n. 68.

3 For example, Liveing, Records of Romsey Abbey, 39, 49, who follows Freeman, Norman Conquest, iv. 695, and v. 169, on Christina and Matilda, conjectures that the rebuilding of the abbey c. 1120 may have been royal patronage in memory of Henry’s deceased queen; repeated from Liveing by Sir R. H. Luce, Pages from the History of Romsey and its Abbey (Winchester, 1948), 13, 15.

4 William’s sources can be inferred, but not every statement is supported. He says, for example, that Christina ‘grew old as a nun at Romsey’ (Gesta regum, II § 228). When she died is unknown, and it is not clear what William knew about her age; Eadmer, reporting Matilda’s conversation with Anselm, has her refer to Christina, ‘quam tu bene nouisti’, ‘whom you knew well’ (HN, 122), suggesting by the past tense that she was already dead in 1100.
is still repeated by several authorities, but it is not well founded. Speculation resting on fiction must be avoided. So, for example, the inclusion of Queen Matilda alongside St Mary of Romsey as the beneficiary of King Henry’s grant of a fair (11) must be explained without any presupposition that the queen had a long-standing affection for her aunt’s abbey.

Two letters of Anselm have given rise to a much more unlikely confusion, namely that the archbishop commanded Abbess Adeliza of Romsey to cease fostering veneration at the grave of Earl Waltheof, who had been executed at Winchester in 1076 for rebellion. In fact, what the letters (epp. 236, 237) actually show is that Adeliza and her nuns were supporting an unknown man who was promoting a saint’s cult at his own father’s grave in Romsey, the kind of fleeting local cult that could spring up anywhere. An early-seventeenth-century editor of Anselm, however, conjectured that the dead man must have been the executed earl, and this idea has been repeated for four hundred years, despite the fact that the source cited relates not to the nuns of Romsey but to the monks of Crowland in Lincolnshire, where the earl’s body was indeed the subject of a cult.

Romsey lies about ten miles from Winchester on the road into the New Forest. King Henry must have passed through countless times, and eight acts are dated there. Several of these may be dated to one occasion early

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5 Monasticon, ii. 506; Heads, i. 295: in ODNB, L. L. Huneycutt’s article on Queen Matilda supposes that Christina was ‘a nun who appears to have spent time at both Romsey and Wilton’, while N. W. Hooper’s article on Christina finds an ‘unresolvable difficulty’ in that Eadmer’s impeccable authority placed Matilda at Wilton under the guardianship of an aunt at Romsey. The solution is not that she must have been in both places, but that Christina could exercise guardianship while living twenty-seven miles away.

6 This error first appears in Anselmi opera omnia, edited by J. Picard (Cologne, 1612), Ep. III 57 (Schmitt’s ep. 236). Picard’s note, given renewed currency in PL 159. 81, seeks to distinguish Ramsey and Romsey, but he identifies Waltheof as the figure of cult here on the testimony of William of Malmesbury, Gesta pontificum, IV § 182, his chapter on Crowland abbey, which has run on without intervening heading from his chapter on Ramesei, that is Ramsey abbey in Huntingdonshire. Waltheof had no son and no connexion with Romsey abbey, but unverified repetition means that this episode at Romsey still forms a paragraph in his life in ODNB (2004). Picard was well aware that in 1102 a major ecclesiastical council at Westminster prohibited cults not recognized by the local bishop (Councils and Synods, ii. 678, § 27), but in itself that does not date the letters. Ep. 236 addresses Stephen, archdeacon of Winchester, while Abbess Adeliza herself is addressed in ep. 237 (IV 10 in the old editions).
in 1105, while others must belong to a different occasion in 1110.\(^7\) The beneficiaries are not from Hampshire. It is perhaps telling that no extant acts of William II or Stephen were dated at Romsey. It is simply too near to Winchester.

At the time of the Domesday survey, the abbey’s estates were five manors in Hampshire, that is Romsey itself and four others scattered in different parts of the county, all of them held since before the Conquest, producing £59 10s 0d (\textit{DB}, i. 43d–44a; Hants § 15), together with two valuable manors in Wiltshire, Edington and Ashton, which provided the church with a further £60 (\textit{DB}, i. 68b; Wilts § 15). Diplomas of King Edgar survive, though they have lost their witness lists. One of them shows Edgar’s taking the estate at Ashton for himself in 964 (S 727), another his giving Edington to the nuns in 968 (S 765). A third diploma of the same king concerning Romsey itself has been the subject of debate (S 812).\(^8\) The three diplomas have survived by a secondary route. The collegiate church at Edington, long dependent on Romsey, became an independent house of Bonshommes in the 1350s, and some documents from Romsey were preserved in an archive there. In Richard II’s time a cartulary was made, now BL MS Lansdowne 442 (Davis 355), which has preserved these diplomas. From the archive of Romsey itself no cartulary survives, and there are no original documents extant and no transcripts by antiquaries. How the nuns acquired their Hampshire lands, therefore, is more obscure than their receiving the Wiltshire estates when their abbey was re-established by King Edgar.

The seven acts of King Henry I printed below were all enrolled in the charter roll following their inspection by King Henry III in 1268 (\textit{CalCh}, ii. 102–6). The circumstances are known: the patent roll notes that on 10 July three nuns of Romsey, Alice, Letice, and Joan, came to the king at Woodstock with letters patent of their chapter, told him of the death of Abbess Amice, and were given licence to elect a new one (\textit{CalPat 1266–1272}, 244). By a second patent, dated 11 July, the prioress and convent were allowed the keeping of their house during the short

\(^7\) \textit{Regesta} 683 for Abingdon abbey, 684, 685 for Ely abbey, and 686 for York minster, early 1105; \textit{Regesta} 956 for Abingdon abbey ‘in anno quando rex dedit filiam suam imperatori’ and 957 for Ramsey abbey, 1110. Liveing, \textit{Records of Romsey Abbey}, 44, had two visits, ‘in 1105, and again in 1110 or 1114, “the year in which his daughter was given to the Emperor”’, which Luce, \textit{Pages from the history of Romsey}, 15, turned into three, ‘in 1105, 1110 and 1114’. There is the possibility of a third occasion at Romsey in the early summer of 1106 (000, \textit{Regesta} 758 for Abingdon abbey).

\(^8\) Kelly, \textit{Abingdon}, vol. i, pp. lxxxiv–cxi, especially at pp. civ–cvi, seeks to rehabilitate a group of diplomas for different beneficiaries, among them S 812.
vacancy in return for a fine of ten marks (ib.). It seems certain that the ‘letters patent of their chapter’ were the twenty-four original charters inspected and enrolled on the charter roll on 10 July 1268. The enrolment fills the entire membrane, beginning with three acts of King Stephen (Ste/722–4), followed by seven acts of Henry I (below), and no fewer than fourteen of Henry II (H2/2234–44, 2246–8). They reveal that early in Henry II’s time Abbess Mary of Blois, King Stephen’s daughter, had requested new documents for various properties and privileges. Eleven acts appear to have been sealed on the same occasion at Salisbury, with almost the same impressive witness list in all of them, 1155 × 1158; ten of these were inspected in 1268 (H2/2235–44), and one, a general writ, only in 1319 (H2/2245). An act for the men of Wilton (H2/2832) shows that the king was at Salisbury in the first months of 1155, but the witnesses in his acts are not sufficiently distinctive to tie this to the same occasion. Another act of Henry I was renewed at a session of the Exchequer in the same period (H2/2234). These acts cite as precedents a charter of King Edward, now lost (attested by H2/2240); a charter of King William, also lost (W2/000, attested by H2/2241); and seven charters of Henry I, of which four survive. No charter of King Stephen for Romsey was renewed at this time, but three of them were inspected in 1268, and two of those attest one of the same lost acts of Henry I. With the loss of the abbey’s muniments, the twenty-four acts enrolled in 1268 and the one writ enrolled in 1319 are all the royal charters still extant for Romsey between the death of King Edgar and the time of King John. The 1268 inspeximus was renewed several times.

The enrolment raises questions concerning the integrity of the texts. While none of them shows any positive sign of forgery, two aspects of their formulation pose problems. Twelve of the twenty-four acts enrolled are writ-charters addressed to the shire courts of Hampshire or Wiltshire, but three fail to specify the shire, which is not the way these acts were drafted. We ought, therefore, to supply ‘de Hantescir’ in 0000, Regesta 802, as a loss from the original, and one may wonder whether this should also be done in H2/2236 and H2/2241. Four of the five writ-charters of Henry I here address bishop and sheriff by name or initial, those of Stephen and Henry II simply by title. This change was probably introduced in the 1120s (which makes the omission of initials from 0000, Regesta 630, anachronism and possible error), but acts without names are harder to date, and the lack of narrow dating for too many such acts makes it impossible to work out exactly when the change occurred (e.g.
0000, Regesta 1828 for Elstow is datable only 1102 × 1133, but it probably belongs to the period 1121 × 1133). It goes against expectation to find such errors in enrolled copies, but the textual transmission in these cases is so restricted that, if we accept them as errors of copying, they must be laid at the door of the chancery clerk in 1268 or, opening another risk in the textual history, of a local clerk in preparing a schedule for enrolment in place of the original documents. Serious errors have crept into these texts. In 0000, Regesta 883, ‘Reginaldi’ for ‘Regine’ is easily corrected, but chancery clerks were not supposed to guess at abbreviations. Another error, replacing ‘terra’ in this act with ‘ecclesia’ in H2/2239, makes nonsense of the substance of the act; this mistake could have been made when the act of Henry I was renewed by Henry II, but it is more likely an error from the time of the inspeximus.

What Henry I’s charters reveal is particularly interesting in relation to religious women. The survival of charters from nunneries in this period is very limited. Three writ-charters affirm King Henry’s consent to the gift of land to the nuns when the donor’s daughter entered religion (2, 3, and 4). In one case the donor held of the king (4), but in another the land was held of the abbess and was restored to the abbey’s control (2), which makes the king’s involvement more surprising. Just two other nunneries have preserved examples of similar grants from the reign of Henry I, 0000, Regesta 791 for Malling, and 0000, Regesta 1654 for Elstow.9 The gift of land with a daughter may be compared with acts in a secular context that confer land in maritagio together with the daughter of a tenant-in-chief (0000, Regesta 1517 for Henry d’Aubigny; 0000, Regesta 1280 for Miles of Gloucester; Ste/312 for Earl Roger of Hereford). From the first years of Henry II the nuns of Godstow sought a similar royal confirmation of land given with the donor’s mother and sister (H2/1182). The three donors to Romsey were not great men, their gifts were not large, but the abbess of Romsey thought it worthwhile to secure the king’s confirmation. In so doing the abbey did not usually send its request over a long distance, since the king was so often nearby. Four of the seven texts were given at Winchester, one at Ludgershall (Wils), another at Portsmouth (Hants), and only one as far away as Westminster. A similar pattern emerges with Henry II’s acts. Eleven of these were issued at Salisbury (Wils), with one each from Romsey itself, Southampton (Hants), Westminster (Middx), and—more surprisingly—Falaise (Calvados).

9 Examples of the same kind from Shaftesbury abbey are probably not authentic acts, W2/000, Regesta 309; 0000, Regesta 1347; and Ste/818.
Most striking is the wording of the disposition in King Henry’s grant of an annual fair, to be held around the time of St Æthelflæd’s feast day, and of a Sunday market. The grant was made to God and the blessed Mary of Romsey and to Queen Matilda, but there is no known reason for the inclusion of the queen as beneficiary. She is not so named in other acts, though she attests one licence for the nuns, given by King Henry at Winchester (6). It seems unlikely that she held the abbey herself, but it is possible that she was regarded as a patron. Evidence relating to Wilton is not so direct, but there is again a possibility that the queen acted as a patron to the nuns. In King Stephen’s time a writ in favour of the abbey was addressed to Queen Adeliza and the king’s officials (quoted under 9 below), but the context there puts the queen on the opposite side as someone obstructing the nuns’ rights.

During King Henry’s reign a major campaign of rebuilding was begun but, as always, the funding of this is obscure. This work is now represented by the choir and transepts, built in the early twelfth century (I. R. Scott, Romsey Abbey: Report on the Excavations 1973–1991, Hampshire Field Club and Archaeological Society (1996), 45). The present nave was added in the third quarter of the twelfth century.

1 Charter granting to the abbey and to Queen Matilda a four-day fair at the feast of St Æthelflæd with special jurisdiction and a Sunday market. November 1100 × 1106, probably 1101 × 1102


CHANCERY ENGROSSMENT: Southampton University Library, MS 62, Broadlands Archives, BR 209, inspeximus of 12 Richard II, dated 10 May 1389.

PRINTED: CalCh, ii. 102 [from B]; H. G. D. Liveing, Records of Romsey Abbey (Winchester, 1906), 44–5 (in English) [from inspeximus of 12 Richard II then at Broadlands].
H(enricus) rex Angl(orum) W(illelmo) episcopo Wyncestre et Henr(ico) de Port et omnibus baronibus suis et ministris et fidelibus suis francis et anglis <de Hantescir'>a salutem. Sciatis me concessisse deo et beate Marie de Romeseye et Matill(di) regine uxori mee unam feriam per annum uidelicet in festiuitate sancte Athelflede virginis, que feria quatuor diebus durabit, et hoc erit in XV die post festum sancti Dionisii. Et concedo ei sacam et socam et toll et team et infangenthef cum omnibus aliis consuetudinibus suis. Et meam firmam pacem concedo euntibus et redeuntibus a feria. Et preter hoc concedo ei mercatum plenarie quaque die dominica cum predictis consuetudinibus. T(estibus) Rob(ert)o comite de Meulend et Eustach(io) comite et Vr(sone) de Abetot. Apud Wyncestram.

Henry king of the English to William bishop of Winchester and Henry de Port and all his barons and officials and sworn men French and English <of Hampshire> greeting. Know that I have granted to God and the blessed Mary of Romsey and to Queen Matilda my wife one fair each year, namely at the feast of St Æthelflaed the virgin, which fair shall last for four days, and this shall be on the fifteenth day after the feast of St Denis. And I grant to it sake and soke and toll and team and infangthief with all its other customs. And I grant my firm peace to those going and returning from the fair. And besides this I grant to it a market fully every Sunday with the foresaid customs. Witness Robert count of Meulan and Count Eustach(io) comite et Vr(sone) de Abetot. At Winchester.

DATE: After the king’s marriage in November 1100; before Urse d’Abetot died in 1108, and before Henry de Port was replaced as sheriff of Hampshire by William of Pont de l’Arche in 1102 × 1106. Eustace is known to have been at Windsor on 3 September 1101 (when he attested diplomas for Bath and Norwich); at Westminster at Whitsun, perhaps in 1102 (0000 below, Regesta 883); and in London on 18 April 1106 (Gibbs, Ch. St Paul’s, 156–8, no. 198). The presence of Count Eustace, especially in an act connected to the queen, probably points to his stay in England in the second half of 1101 and the first half of 1102.

ADDRESS: This appears to have been a shire address, from which the words ‘of Hampshire’ have been omitted. See Context.

WITNESS: Count Robert of Meulan; Count Eustace III of Boulogne; Urse d’Abetot.

PLACE: Winchester (Hants).
CONTEXT: The act states that this grant is made to Queen Matilda as well as to the abbey. It is not clear why this should be so. Inclusion in the disposition can hardly be meant merely to indicate that Queen Matilda was instrumental in obtaining the grant from the king. The most likely possibility is that the queen was seen as having some role as patron to women’s abbeys, for which there is some evidence also from Wilton (see headnote to Henry I’s act for Peter of Saint-Martin).

The grant of judicial privileges to the fair is rarely explicit, but two examples from Ramsey abbey make clear that this was normal: ‘feriam a die mercurii in pascha usque ad octauum diem ita bene et honorifice cum soca et saca et toll et tiem et infangenetoeft et cum omnibus consuetudinibus sicut aliqua feria melius habet in tota Anglia’ (‘a fair from the Wednesday after Easter to the eighth day, as well and honourably with sake and soke and toll and team and infangthieft and with all customs as any fair well has in all England’) (0000, Regesta 953); ‘et habeat feria illa socam suam et sacam et tol et theam et infangenethef et omnes alias libertates et consuetudines suas sicut aliqua feria melius habet in tota Anglia’ (‘and that fair shall have sake and soke and toll and team and infangthieft and all its other liberties and customs just as any fair well has in all England’) (0000, Regesta 1916). Specification of the king’s firm peace to those doing business at the fair is found in a high proportion of grants of fair and in other acts concerned with trade.

King Henry’s writ-charter was renewed almost word for word by Henry II at Salisbury, ‘sicut carta regis H(enrici) aui mei testatur’, 1155 × 1158 (H2/2236). That act, like this one, omits the shire from the address clause, something also visible in H2/2241. This is most unusual in Henry I’s reign, nor is it usual in Henry II’s writ-charters. Other acts given at Salisbury for Romsey abbey on the same occasion include the shire. It may represent omission at the time of copying in 1268, in which case one is justified in restoring the name of the shire.

St Æthelflaed was believed to have been abbess of Romsey around the beginning of the eleventh century (Liveing, Records of Romsey Abbey, xviii). Her vita is known only from BL MS Lansdowne 436 (s. xiv, Romsey), fols. 43v–45v, printed in Acta Sanctorum, Oct. xii (1867), 922–3 (BHL 2471), and in English by H. G. D. Liveing, Records of Romsey Abbey (Winchester, 1906), 19–26. This manuscript, kept, if not made at Romsey, provides many abridged vitae, but no fuller text of this Life is known, and it reads like a hagiographical confection. In the text of the vita the saint is named Æthelflaed, but the fourteenth-century rubrics have Elfleda, and there is other evidence of confusion. Even in 1124, William of Malmesbury, Gesta pontificum, II § 78, wrote: ‘Apud Rumesiam, quod cenobium precellentissimus rex Edgarus instituit, noui iacere duarum uirginum corpora, Merewinnae et Ælfflaed, quarum gesta, quia nescio, non tam pretereo quam ad maiorem scribendi diligentiam reseruo, si forte cognouero’ (‘At Romsey, a house founded by that most excellent King Edgar, I know that the bodies of two virgins, Mærwynn and Ælfflaed lie. As I am ignorant of their story, I am not so much passing it over as reserving it for more careful treatment if I ever learn it’). The source that told him this and no more was surely a version of the eleventh-century text, Secgan be þam Godes sanctum þe on Engla lande ærost reston (ed. F. Liebermann, Die Heiligen Englands (Hannover, 1889), 15, § 34), which names Mærwynn and Æthelflaed as resting at Romsey. According to her vita from Romsey, her feast was 23 October (Acta SS. Oct. xii. 923; Liveing, Records of Romsey Abbey, 25). She appears in just two published calendars, both from Winchester in the eleventh century, of which one has only the main feast, 23 October (F. Wormald, English
Kalendars before AD 1100 (London, 1934), 165), the other only her translation, 27 January (ib. 142). Liveing refers to a fifteenth-century psalter still at Romsey as including three feasts of St Æthelflaed in its calendar, her feast on 23 October, her translation on 27 January, and her *Revelatio* on 10 March (Liveing, *Records of Romsey Abbey*, 27), but despite this liturgical evidence Ker assigns the manuscript to Nunnaminster at Winchester rather than to Romsey (*MLGB*, 164, 202). This obscurity lies behind the unusual feature that the writ-charter defines the patron’s feast by reference to that of another saint, St Denis, whose widely kept feast was 9 October, from which those unfamiliar with the local calendar could work out that of St Æthelflaed.

2 Writ-charter granting to the abbey as demesne the lands which William Escudet held of the abbey and restored to it when his daughter became a nun there. Whitsun 1102, 1104, 1107 or 1108, perhaps 25 May 1102.


PRINTED: *CalCh*, ii. 103 [from B].

CALENDAR: Farrer 173; *Regesta* 883.

H(enricus) rex Angl(orum) episcopo Saresberie et W(altero) uic(ecomiti) et omnibus baronibus et fidelibus suis francis et anglis de Wilteschir’ salutem. Sciatis me concessisse ecclesie sancte Marie de Romeseye et abbatisse eiusdem ecclesie habere in dominico suo terras illas quas Willelmus Escuet de eadem ecclesia tenuit et quas ipse Willelmus predicte ecclesie reddidit et concessit cum filiabus suis. Et quicunque aliud tenet de predicta terra\(^a\), precipio ut ad ecclesiam redeat. T(estibus) Eustach(io) comite et Dauid fratre <regine>\(^b\) et Vr(sone) de Abetot et Waltero Hosato. Apud Westm(onasterium) in Pentec(oste).
Henry king of the English to the bishop of Salisbury and Walter the sheriff and all barons and his sworn men French and English of Wiltshire greeting. Know that I have granted to the church of St Mary of Romsey and the abbess of the same church to have in her demesne those lands which William Escudet held of the same church and which that William restored and granted to the foresaid church with his daughters. And whoever holds anything of the foresaid land I command that he shall restore it to the church. Witness Count Eustace and David brother of <the queen> and Urse d’Abetot and Walter Huse. At Westminster during Whitsun.

DATE: After the king’s marriage in November 1100; before the death of Urse d’Abetot in 1108. King Henry spent Whitsun at Westminster in the years 1102, 1104, 1107, and 1108. The presence of Count Eustace III of Boulogne, however, who witnessed only rarely in England, makes a possible connexion with 0000, Regesta 818 for Westminster abbey, dated at Westminster during Whitsun, and referring to the king’s restoring land to Count Eustace, which cannot be as late as 1108. The attestation of Eustace alongside David of Scotland, the queen’s brother, may point to the occasion of Eustace’s marriage to the queen’s sister, Mary of Scotland, at some time in 1102 (John of Worcester, iii. 102).

ADDRESS: The shire court of Wiltshire. The omission of Bishop Roger’s initial is another minor anomaly in the address clauses of this group of documents.

WITNESS: Count Eustace III of Boulogne, who married Mary the queen’s sister in 1102; David of Scotland, the queen’s brother (accepting the correction by Round, King’s Serjeants, 11); Urse d’Abetot; Walter Huse, who is also addressed as sheriff, here without surname but compare {3} below.

PLACE: Westminster (Middx).

CONTEXT: The writ-charter was renewed word for word by Henry II at Salisbury, 1155 × 1158 (H2/2239). In the phrase ‘quicunque aliquid tenet de predicta terra’ the enrolment of the renewal replaces ‘terra’ with ‘ecclesia’, evidence of careless copying, though whether in Henry II’s time or later is not apparent.

William Escudet was King William I’s cook. At the petition of the king Bishop Walkelin of Winchester made a life grant to him of the land that Wulfward Belgisone had held at Alton Priors (Hants), 1078 × 1085 (W1/341). From the present act, it appears that he had also obtained possession of an estate belonging to Romsey abbey, which he now restored to the abbey in return for his daughters’ entry into the monastic life. As in the next act, the location of the land given is not specified. As J. H. Round pointed out, Domesday Book reveals the presence of William (with no surname) on both of the abbey’s manors in Wiltshire (DB, i. 68b; Wilts § 15); he inferred that that William should be identified as William Escudet (J. H. Round, The King’s Serjeants and Officers of State (London, 1911), 10–11).
Writ-charter granting to the abbey the lands and mills which Ernulf Deschuit gave when his daughter became a nun there. Easter 1103, 1104, or 1108.


PRINTED: CalCh, ii. 103 [from B].

CALENDAR: Farrer 209; Regesta 874.

H(enricus) rex Ang(orum) Rogero episcopo Saresberie et Waltero Hosato et omnibus baronibus de Wilteschir’ salutem. Sciatem me concessisse beate Marie de Romeseye et abbatisse eiusdem loci terras et molendina que Ernulphus Desthuit dedit ibi cum filia sua cum omnibus illis consuetudinibus que molendinis pertinent, uidelicet in silua et in plano, sicut ipse Ernulphus ea unquam melius habuit. Et hanc terram et hec molendina uolo et precipio ut ecclesia et abbatissa ita quiete et pacifice teneat, sicuti tenet totam terram suam, et nullus ei iniuriam faciat. Et precipio tibi Waltere ut tu manuteneas omnes res predicte abbatie et defendas de omnibus iniuriis. T(estibus) W(illelmo) filio Hunf(ridi) et Vr(sone) de Abetot. Apud Wyncestr(iam) in Pasch(a).

Henry king of the English to Roger bishop of Salisbury and Walter Huse and all barons of Wiltshire greeting. Know that I have granted to the blessed Mary of Romsey and the abbess of the same place the lands and mills which Ernulf Deschuit gave there with his daughter with all those customs that pertain to the mills namely in wood and in field just as that Ernulf once well had it. And I will and command that the church and abbess shall hold this land and these mills as quietly and peacefully as she holds all her other land and no one shall do injury to her. And I command you Walter that you shall maintain all the possessions of the foresaid abbey and defend it from all injury. Witness William fitz Humfrey and Urse d’Abetot. At Winchester at Easter.
DATE: After Michaelmas 1102, when Roger was nominated bishop of Salisbury; not after 1108, when Urse died. Within that period, Henry spent Easter at Winchester in 1103, 1104, and 1108.

ADDRESS: The shire court of Wiltshire. Walter Huse was addressed as sheriff of Wiltshire in 0000, Regesta 673 for Gloucester, 1100 × 1110.

WITNESS: William fitz Humfrey; Urse d'Abetot.

PLACE: Winchester (Hants).

CONTEXT: Ernulf Deschuit is not otherwise known. The surname resembles that of William Escuet or Escudet in [2], but that is little on which to build. The absence of any renewal has deprived us of possible clarification. It seems that the lands and mills were held of the abess, but the only indication of where is implied by the address to the shire court of Wiltshire. In 1086 Romsey held two manors in Wiltshire, Edington, where there were two mills, and Ashton, where there were three (DB, i. 68b; § 15).

4 Writ-charter granting to Stephen fitz Arard licence to give twenty shillings’ income in land to the abbey when his daughter became a nun there. Michaelmas 1102 × July 1106


PRINTED: CalCh, ii. 102 [from B].

CALENDAR: Farrer 164; Regesta 630.

H(enricus) rex Angl(orum) episcopo Wynton(iensi) et uic(ecomiti) et omnibus baronibus suis atque fidelibus de Hanteschir’ salutem. Sciat me concessisse Steph(an)o filio Arardi ut ponat uiginti solid(atas) terre cum filia sua in abbatia de Romeseye, uidelicet quartam partem molendini de Todintona et unam uirgatam terre de Ryse cum ipso rustico et duas partes decime de Wyteb(er)ia. T(estibus) Wald(rico) cancell(ario) et Rad(ulfo) dapi(fero et Goffr(ido) camerario. Apud Lotegarsal.
Henry king of the English to the bishop of Winchester and the sheriff and all his barons and sworn men of Hampshire greeting. Know that I have granted to Stephen fitz Arard that he shall put twenty shillings of land with his daughter in the abbey of Romsey, namely the fourth part of the mill of Totton and one virgate of land of Ryse with his peasant and two thirds of the tithe of Whitsbury. Witness Waldric the chancellor and Ralph dapifer and Geoffrey the chamberlain. At Ludgershall.

DATE: After Waldric was made chancellor, Michaelmas 1102; before King Henry crossed to Normandy for the last time while Waldric was chancellor, July 1106.  
ADDRESS: The shire court of Hampshire. It is unusual for such an early act not to include the initials of the bishop and the sheriff. One can easily supply W. for Bishop William, but the undatable handover of the shrievalty from Henry de Port to William of Pont de l’Arche prevents conjecture as to the sheriff’s initial.  
WITNESS: Waldric the chancellor; Ralph dapifer; Geoffrey the chamberlain.  
PLACE: Ludgershall (Wilts), where the king had a hunting lodge.  
CONTEXT: Strictly the beneficiary of this act was Stephen fitz Arard, who was licensed to give land to the abbey along with his daughter. Henry II’s writ-charter, also addressed to the shire court of Hampshire, granted to the church of Romsey the gift of land made by Stephen (H2/2237). Stephen fitz Arard is the subject of a story told by Orderic, which makes clear that William the Conqueror crossed the Channel in 1066 on board a ship made and steered by Stephen; he was presumably dead before 1120, when his son Thomas was a royal shipwright (Orderic, vi. 296; Freeman, Norman Conquest, iii. 400). On this basis Stephen fitz Arard can be identified with ‘Stefanus Stirman’, who was given property in Southampton (DB, i. 51a; Hants § S3). As Stephen fitz Eirard he appears as a tenant in chief in Domesday Book in Berkshire (§ 64), and simply as Stephen in Warwickshire (§ 36), where he also held land under the bishop of Bayeux. E. Van Houts has made a case that in 1066 he was in the service of Duchess Matilda, who, according to the Ship List, provided the duke’s ship (‘The Ship List of William the Conqueror’, ANS 10 (1988), 159–83 (at p. 173)).  
Totton (Hants) is at the head of Southampton Water. One manor there was already held by Romsey abbey at the time of the Domesday survey (DB, i. 44a; § 15. 4). A second was held by Agemund, a king’s thane, who also held a fifth share of the mill at Totton (DB, i. 50c; § 69. 37). It is possible that Stephen had succeeded to Agemund’s manor.  
The editor of the charter roll did not identify Ryse, but assumed from the address of this act and H2/2237 that it lay in Hampshire. The editors of Regesta went for Ridge in Hampshire, two miles south of Romsey. Vincent proposes Ridge near Chilmark in Wiltshire. No clear evidence to support either identification has been found.  
Whitsbury is south of Salisbury, just west of the river Avon. It was transferred from Wiltshire to Hampshire as recently as 1895 (VCH Hants, iv. 294). The present writ-charter does not notify the shire court of Wiltshire, and one may wonder whether there was a second act in similar words addressed to Wiltshire. The manor of Whitsbury is not visible in Domesday Book, but both manor and church are well documented in the cartularies of Reading abbey. The two acts printed here, and Henry II’s confirmation, provide the only evidence for Romsey’s share in the tithes. The church of Whitsbury was given to Breamore priory nearby by Ingelram Apostolicus,
according to a forged confirmation in the name of Henry I (000, Regesta 1810 for Breamore). A charter of Henry I, however, confirms Ingelram’s land at Whitsbury, together with the church, to Reading abbey where he became a monk (0000, Regesta 1862 for Reading abbey, datable 1130 × 1133). In 1274 the monks of Reading thought it had been a royal manor until the time of King Henry I, when it was given to the king’s new foundation at Reading (RHund, ii. 247). This ignores Ingelram as well as Stephen. From the present act it appears the lord’s tithes were in the hands of Stephen fitz Arard some time before Reading was founded in 1121, although when and how they came into his hands is not evidenced.

5 Writ ordering that the abbey shall hold in peace the possessions and tithes which Stephen fitz Arard gave it, in particular the tithe of Whitsbury (Wilts). September 1102 × May 1115


PRINTED: CalCh, ii. 103 [from B].
CALENDAR: Farrer 303; Regesta 811.


Henry king of the English to Roger bishop of Salisbury and Walter the sheriff of Wiltshire greeting. I command that the abbess of Romsey and her nuns shall hold well and in peace the land and things and tithes which Stephen fitz Arard gave to them with his daughter and in particular the tithe of Whitsbury, and they shall not be impleaded about it unless I command it. Witness Gilbert de l’Aigle. At Portsmouth.
DATE: After Roger was nominated bishop of Salisbury, Michaelmas 1102, and after {4}, but perhaps not very long after. The witness Gilbert de l’Aigle attests twenty authentic acts, all of them in England, including several for Ely probably datable to 1114 (000–00, Regesta 1048–50), but before April 1116 his son Richer attests while the king and queen were at Westminster (0000, Regesta 1134 for Robert Achard). Since Gilbert’s obit was remembered on 15 May, he may have died on that date in 1115 (K. Thompson, ‘The lords of Laigle’, ANS 18 (1996), 177–99, at p. 186n, who does not take into account the king’s leaving England in 1116). In the early years of the reign places of embarkation are not attested.

ADDRESS: To Bishop Roger and Walter, the sheriff of Wiltshire, as the king’s executive officers in the county. Walter Huse was followed as sheriff by Walter fitz Edward.

WITNESS: Gilbert de l’Aigle.

PLACE: Portsmouth (Hants). This points to a time when the king was preparing to cross the channel.

CONTEXT: This act relates to the property given in {4}. The writ stayed a suit brought against the abbey and may have been needed as a result of the gift of the church of Whitsbury to Breamore referred to in {4}. As such it was not appropriate to seek a renewal from Henry II, but even so the writ was retained and inspected in 1268.

6 Writ licensing the abbess and nuns to plough their lands in field and wood, wherever they are, provided they make no assart. November 1100 × April 1116


PRINTED: CalCh, ii. 103 [from B].

CALENDAR: Regesta 1160.

H(enricus) rex Anglor(um) omnibus uicecomitibus et omnibus forestariis in quorum uicecomitatibus et forestis abbatissa de Romeseye habet terram salutem. Sciatis me concessisse abbatissae et monialibus de Romeseye ad arand’ omnes terras suas ubicunque sint in plano uel intra nemus, excepto hoc
quod non faciant essartum. T(estibus) M(atilde) regina et Hunfr(ido) de Bohun. Apud Wynton(iam).

Henry king of the English to all sheriffs and all foresters in whose shrivealties and forests the abbess of Romsey has land greeting. Know that I have granted to the abbess and nuns of Romsey all their lands to plough wherever they are in field or wood except that they shall not make assart. Witness Queen Matilda and Humfrey de Bohun. At Winchester.

DATE: After November 1100 when Henry married Matilda, and before April 1116 when Henry left England for the last time before Queen Matilda died in 1118.
ADDRESS: The act is addressed, effectively, to the sheriffs and foresters of Hampshire and Wiltshire. It may be that the address was made more general so as to take into account future donations of land in different counties.
WITNESS: Queen Matilda; Humfrey de Bohun.
PLACE: Winchester (Hants).
CONTEXT: The act was renewed in the same terms by King Stephen, 1136 × 1140 (Ste/724), but there is no evidence of a renewal by King Henry II. We may surmise that the king’s foresters would question or oppose a landholder’s bringing land into cultivation where it lay within the king’s forest. The probition from making assarts presumably stops the abbey from clearing trees and restricts it to ploughing areas that were already pasture or meadow. The document protected the abbey from trouble with the king’s foresters in the New Forest and, perhaps, to judge from its generality, in its Wiltshire lands too. Nothing like it survives from any other archive. The nearest parallel in wording in any Anglo-Norman royal act is found in a forgery from Peterborough (0000, Regesta 1038), in which one clause confirms ‘terram quoque de Driffeld ad arandum ac seminandum fossatisque claudendum’, words presumably taken over from the underlying deed, which licensed enclosure and cultivation.

7 Writ instructing that the abbey’s land on the near side of Bradebrigge (Hants) shall be quit of all things and in particular of murdrum when payable by Somborne hundred. 1106 × 1129

CHANCERY ENROLMENTS: Charter Roll 52 Henry III, C53/57, mem. 4, inspeximus dated 10 July 1268 (CalCh, ii. 102–106) [B]; Charter Roll 2 Edward II, C53/95, mem. 6, inspeximus dated 14 June 1309 (CalCh, iii. 128) [from inspeximus of 52 Henry III]; Charter Roll 11–13 Richard II, C53/162, mem. 4, inspeximus dated 10 May 1389 (CalCh, v. 318–19) [from inspeximus of 2 Edward II]; Patent Roll 2 Edward IV, pt 3, C66/501, mems. 6–5, inspeximus dated 1 July 1462 (CalPat 1461–1467, 240) [from inspeximus of 13 Richard II]; Patent Roll 18 Henry VII, pt 2, C66/592, inspeximus dated 8 February 1503 (CalPat 1494–1509, 310) [from inspeximus of 2 Edward IV];
H(enricus) rex Angl(orum) Willelmo de Pontearc(arum) et ministris suis de Hanteschir’ salutem. Precipio quod tota terra abbatisse de Romesio infra pontem de Bradebrigge ita sit quieta sicut dominica curia sua de omnibus rebus et nominatim de murdro quod requiritur in ea de hundredo de Sumburna sicut unquam melius fuit quieta tempore Willelmi regis patris mei et fratris mei et meo tempore. T(estibus) Willelmo de Tankardeuill(a) et Gaufr(ido) filio Pagani. Apud Wynton(iam).

Henry king of the English to William of Pont de l’Arche and his officials of Hampshire greeting. I command that all the land of the abbess of Romsey on the near side of the bridge of Bradebrigge shall be as quit as her demesne court of all things and in particular of the murdrum which is required from it in the hundred of Somborne just as it was ever well quit in King William my father’s time and my brother’s and in my time. Witness William de Tancarville and Geoffrey fitz Pain. At Winchester.

DATE: After Henry de Port was replaced as sheriff of Hampshire by William of Pont de l’Arche in 1102 × 1106; before William de Tancarville died in 1129. William de Tancarville probably only attests after Henry had taken control of Normandy in 1106, and Geoffrey fitz Pain’s attestations mostly belong to the second half of the reign, but he does attest at Winchester as early as 1107 × 1108 (000, Regesta 893 for Abingdon).

ADDRESS: To William de Pont de l’Arche as sheriff and the king’s officials of Hampshire.

WITNESS: William de Tancarville; Geoffrey fitz Pain.

PLACE: Winchester (Hants).

CONTEXT: This writ was renewed by Henry II at Salisbury, 1155 × 1158 (H2/2238). The wording of the precedent was followed almost word for word except that the renewal shortened the important clause, ‘nominatim de murdro quod requiritur in ea de hundredo de Sumburna’, to merely ‘nominatim de murdro’. The reference to past time substituted proauus for pater with reference to William I and omitted William II, ‘sicut unquam melius fuit quieta tempore regis H(enrici) aui mei et tempore regis Willelmi proaui mei et sicut carta regis H(enrici) aui mei testatur’.

Bradebrigg, or Broad Bridge, has been identified with the later Hundred Bridge, crossing a channel of the Test called the Fishlake or the Holbrook at the eastern edge of the market place. The Fishlake runs approximately north-south, passing about 150 yards east of the abbey at its closest, and formed the boundary between the two
parts of the abbess’s manor of Romsey. Romsey *infra* and Romsey *extra*. In Romsey *infra pontem* the abbess had hundredal privileges, and was exempt from the jurisdiction of Somborne hundred, as this writ recognizes. Romsey *extra* did not have such privileges (I. R. Scott, ‘Romsey Abbey: Benedictine nunnery and parish church’, *Monastic Archeology: Papers on the study of medieval monasteries*, ed. G. Keevill & others (Oxford, 2001), 150–53, 160 n. 2). This act was issued as a result of an attempt to infringe this liberty by demanding that the abbey pay a share of the *murdrum* fine due from the hundred of Somborne.

8  Lost act concerning the assessment for geld of the abbey’s land at Hullasey (Glos). 1100 × 1135


**PRINTED:** *CalCh*, ii. 103 [from B].

. . . Precipio quod terra Marie abbatisse de Romeseya cognate mee de Hunlaueseta geldet pro una hyda et dimid(ia) sicut solebat geldare tempore regis H(enrici) aui mei et sicut carta sua testatur, et quod teneat terram illam ita bene et in pace, libere et honorifice sicut antecessores sue eam unquam melius teneurunt tempore predicti regis H(enrici) aui mei . . .

. . . *I command that the land of Mary abbess of Romsey my kinswoman of Hullasey shall pay geld as one hide and a half just as it used to pay geld in the time of King Henry my grandfather and just as his charter testifies, and that she shall hold that land well and in peace freely and honourably just as her predecessors ever well held it in the time of the foresaid King Henry my grandfather . . .*

**SOURCE:** General writ of Henry II (H2/2246), datable 1156 × 1162, perhaps 1159 × 1162 (as H2/594, 1018, 1767), perhaps 1159 × 1160 (as H2/502, 2317), and in any case before collection of geld ceased in 1162, from Charter Roll 52 Henry III, C53/57, mem. 4, inspeximus dated 10 July 1268 [B]; Charter Roll, 2 Edward II, C53/95, mem. 6, inspeximus dated 14 June 1309 (*CalCh*, iii. 128) [from inspeximus of 52 Henry III]; Charter Roll 11–13, Richard II, C53/162, mem. 4, inspeximus dated 10 May 1389
Precipio uobis quod faciatis ecclesiam de Romeseya tenere terram suam de Hunleueshyd’ bene et in pace libere et iuste et quiete sicut tenuit tempore regis H(enrici) aui mei, et non patiamini quod de illa terra capiat danegeld’ nisi pro una hyda et dimid’ desicat carta H(enrici) regis aui mei et mea testatur, et prohibeo quod nullus eidem ecclesie vel rebus suis aliquam iniuriam vel contumeliam faciat, quia ipsa et omnes res sue sunt in manu mea et custodia et protectione. . . .

I command you that you shall cause the church of Romsey to hold its land of Hullasey well and in peace freely and justly and quietly, just as it held in the time of King Henry my grandfather, and you shall not allow that danegeld shall be taken from that land except for one hide and a half, just as the charter of King Henry my grandfather and mine testifies, and I forbid that anyone shall do any injury or contumely to that church or its property, since it and all its property are in my hand and custody and protection. . . .

DATE: Datable only to King Henry’s reign.
CONTEXT: Romsey abbey did not hold anything in Gloucestershire at the time of the Domesday survey. Hullasey, now a deserted village that comprises part of the parish of Coates (VCH Gloucs, xi. 236), a few miles southwest of Cirencester, was in the king’s hands at that time; it had been held by Aelmar in the time of King Edward and then after the Conquest by Bishop Odo (DB, i. 163b; Gloucs § 1. 23). In 1086 the manor was assessed as three and a half hides, so, assuming that Romsey had been granted the whole manor, the writ affirmed a beneficial assessment for geld, which Henry II’s Exchequer reaffirmed.

9 Lost act granting the abbey the hundred of Whorwellsdown (Wilts). 1100 × 1135

SOURCES: Writ-charter of King Stephen (Ste/722), datable 1136 × 1140, writ of King Stephen (Ste/723), datable 1136 × 1140, and writ-charter of Henry II (H2/2235), datable October 1154 × August 1158, perhaps October 1154 × July 1157, all from Charter Roll 52 Henry III, C53/57, mem. 4, inspeximus dated 10 July 1268 (CalCh, ii. 102–106) [B]; Charter Roll 2 Edward II, C53/95, mem. 6, inspeximus dated 14 June 1309 (CalCh, iii. 128) [from inspeximus of 52 Henry III]; Charter Roll 11–13, Richard II, C53/162, mem. 4, inspeximus dated 10 May 1389 (CalCh, v. 318–19) [from
inspeximus of 2 Edward II]; Patent Roll 2 Edward IV, pt 3, C66/501, mems. 6–5,
inspeximus dated 1 July 1462 (CalPat 1461–1467, 240) [from inspeximus of 13
Richard II]; Patent Roll 18 Henry VII, pt 2, C66/592, inspeximus dated 8 February
1503 (CalPat 1494–1509, 310) [from inspeximus of 2 Edward IV]; Patent Roll 29
VIII, xii, pt 2, 404 (no. 1150.5) [from inspeximus of 18 Henry VII].

PRINTED: CalCh, ii. 102 (Ste/722–3), 103 (H2/2235) [from B]; Regesta, iii. nos. 722,
723 [from B].

CALENDAR: Not in Regesta.

[Ste/722] . . . Sciatis me concessisse ecclesie et monialibus de Romesey
hundredum de Weruesdon et omnia placita ipsi hundredo pertinentia,
reddendo inde per annum quierecomiti quadraginta solidos, sicut rex
Henricus concessit eis per cartam suam . . .

[H2/2235] . . . Sciatis me concessisse ecclesie et monialibus de Romeseye
hundredum de Weruesdon’ et omnia placita illi hundr(edo) pertinentia,
reddendo inde per annum quadraginta solid(os), sicut rex H(enricus)
auus meus eis per cartam suam concessit. . . .

. . . . Know that I have granted to the church and nuns of Romsey the hundred of
Whorwellsdown and all the pleas pertaining to that hundred, rendering from it each
year to the sheriff forty shillings, just as King Henry granted to them by his charter . . .

[Ste/723] Stephanus rex Anglorum Adelize regine et ministris suis de
Wilteshira salutem. Precipio quod abbatissa de Romeseye teneat et
habeat hundredum de Weruesdona et omnia placita ipsi pertinentia, ita
bene et in pace pro quadraginta solidis reddendis inde per annum sicut
rex Henricus concessit ei per cartam suam et ego per meam. Teste
A(berico) de V(ere). Apud Oxenfordiam.

Stephen king of the English to Queen Adeliza and his officials of Wiltshire greeting. I
command that the abbess of Romsey shall hold and have the hundred of
Whorwellsdon and all pleas pertaining to it as well and in peace for forty shillings to
be rendered from it each year, just as King Henry granted it to her by his charter and I

SOURCE: Suit brought by Matilda abbess of Romsey against Ella countess of Salisbury,
in which the abbess claims to hold the hundred of Whorwellsdon at a farm of 40s by
charter of King Henry I, Trinity Term, 17 Henry III, for which term the King’s Bench
roll is missing. The suit was copied into Bracton’s Note Book, BL MS Add. 12269, fol.
112r–v.

CALENDAR: Not in *Regesta*.

... Et abbatissa... profert cartam regis Henrici senis que testatur quod concessit eis monialibus hundredum illud et omnia placita ad hundredum illud pertinencia reddendo inde per annum xl sol(idos). Profert etiam cartam Henrici regis aui domini regis que confirmat eis predictum hundredum pro xl sol(idis) secundum proportum carte Henrici regis aui sui.

...And the abbess... proffers the charter of King Henry the elder, which witnesses that he granted to the nuns that hundred and all the pleas pertaining to that hundred in return for payment therefrom per year of 40s. And she proffers the charter of King Henry grandfather of the lord king which confirms to them the foresaid hundred for 40s according to the purport of the charter of King Henry his grandfather.

SOURCE: Petition by the abbess of Romsey, complaining that the sheriff of Wiltshire has lately distrained her and the men of hundred, against the liberty which she and her predecessors held by charter since the time of King Henry I, SC8/137/6824, datable 1272 × 1307. The endorsement reads, ‘Rex non uult reuocare atterminaciones factas in scaccario’.

Abbatissa de Romesye quer’ quod, cum ipsa teneat hundr’ de Whorwellsdown... per cartas progenitorum domini regis regum Angl’ pro quadraginta sol(idis) tantum per manum uic’ Wiltes’ qui pro tempore fuerit ad scaccarium domini regis annuatim reddend’ ac omnes predecessor’ sui (sic) a tempore reg(is) Angl’ Henrici primi consimili modo hundr’ predictum tenuerunt, quidam uic’ Wyltes’ nuper ante mortem domini Hen(rici) regis patris domini regis nunc per extorcionem cepit de predicto hundr’ pro pulcre placitando xl sol. contra statutum de Merlebergh et contra cartas libertatum predicte abbatisse. Et licet huiusmodi ex acciones per statutum predictum omnino sint inhibite, uic’ Wyltes’ modo distringit predictam abatissam et homines de hundr’ predicto ad reddend’ ei predictos xl solid’ iniuste et contra libertatem suam predictam un(de) petit a domino rege quod de cetero caritatis intuitu ab huiusmodi exaccione exhonetur’.

The abbess of Romsey complains that, whereas she holds the hundred of Whorwellsdown by the charters of the ancestors of the lord king, kings of England, in return for forty shillings only to be rendered annually at the Exchequer of the lord king through the hand of the sheriff of Wiltshire for the time being, and all her predecessors since the time of King Henry I held the foresaid hundred on similar terms, a sheriff of Wiltshire lately before the death of King Henry the father of the present king has taken by extortion from the foresaid hundred forty shillings as beaupledger fine against the
statute of Marlborough and against the charters of the foresaid abbess’s liberties. And although such demands are entirely prohibited by the foresaid statute, the sheriff of Wiltshire now distrains the foresaid abbess and the men of the foresaid hundred, to give him the foresaid 40s unjustly and against her foresaid liberty, wherefore she seeks from the lord king that she should be relieved of this demand hereafter for the sake of charity.

DATE: Datable only to King Henry’s reign.

CONTEXT: Whorwellswdown hundred in Wiltshire is at the western extremity of the county on its border with Somerset (VCH Wilts, viii. 193–7). Although at some distance from the abbey, it was the hundred in which were located the abbey’s two Wiltshire manors of Edington and Ashton. Why Queen Adeliza is addressed in King Stephen’s writ is not apparent; she is addressed in only one other writ, Ste/220, for Colchester abbey, in which she was ordered to pay her tithes from Aston (Herts) to the monks. In 1233 Abbess Matilda brought a case before the king, accusing Countess Ela of Salisbury of depriving her of the pleas of Whorwellswdown hundred. The abbess produced the charters of Henry I and Henry II, and judgment was given in her favour. There was a sequel to the suit a year later, in which the evidence is referred to more briefly, and the abbess remained seised of the hundred (CRR, xv. 240–41, no. 1070). By the end of Henry III’s time the abbey was claiming to have had the hundred by gift of King Edgar (Hund. ii, 235b), but at the inquest held in March 1275 it was clearly specified that Edgar had given the two manors only (ib. 277b). One can only wonder why Henry I’s charter was not inspected along with those of Stephen and Henry II in 1268. In the reign of Edward I the abbess complained that the sheriff had take 40s over and above the 40s due in rent for the hundred since the time of Henry I; her complaint was unsuccessful, however, and the petition is annotated on the dorse to the effect that the king was not willing to annul the terms for payment made by the Exchequer. In 1289, the rent was specified as £4 (VCH, citing Just 1/1006 mem. 52d). The abbey continued to hold the hundred until the Dissolution.

10 Lost general writ granting the abbey reduction in its liability to pay danegeld. 1100 × 1135


PRINTED: CalCh, ii. 105 [from B].

CALENDAR: Not in Regesta.
H(enricus) rex Angl(orum) et dux Norm(annorum) et Aquit(anorum) et comes Andeg(auorum) iustic(iis) et uic(ecomitibus) et ministris suis salutem. Dimittite omnes terras abbatissae de Romes’ omnino esse in pace, nec uos inde intromittatis de danegeld’, sicut H(enricus) rex auus meus precepit per cartam suam. T(estibus) . . .

Henry king of the English and duke of the Normans and Aquitanians and count of the Angevins to his justices and sheriffs and officials greeting. Leave all the lands of the abbess of Romsey to be altogether in peace and do not interfere in the matter of danegeld, just as King Henry my grandfather commanded by his charter. Witness . . .

DATE: Datable only to King Henry’s reign.
CONTEXT: Henry II’s writ is too brief to provide any contextual clues. Other acts given on the same occasion that refer to a precedent of Henry I with which comparison can still be made show that the renewals follow the wording of the precedent very closely, and the same may be assumed here. It does not refer to exemption from geld, and the writ concerning Hullasey (81) shows that the abbey had no general exemption from geld, which makes it hard to deduce what a general writ of this kind provided.