

# THE CISTERCIAN ABBEY OF KIRKSTEAD, LINCOLNSHIRE: RETHINKING A TWELFTH-CENTURY FOUNDATION AND ITS THIRTEENTH-CENTURY CARTULARY<sup>1</sup>

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The Cistercian abbey of Kirkstead, Lincolnshire, was founded as a daughter-house of Fountains abbey in 1139. It was, in many respects, a ‘typical’ Cistercian house. Sited at what the foundation charter calls ‘the place which is called kirkstead’ (*locum qui dicitur kirkestede*), several decades later the house moved to a nearby location larger and more convenient for the monks.<sup>2</sup> The thirteenth-century account of the history of Fountains abbey (*Narratio de foundationis Fontanis monasterii*) casts Kirkstead in a well-known Cistercian pioneer mould, the first tendril of the order’s growing vine in Lincolnshire.<sup>3</sup> The fifteenth-century *Register of the Lords of Tattershall (Evidentiae dominorum de Tateshale)* recounts Kirkstead’s foundation by the dynasty’s progenitor, Hugh son of Eudo, and draws upon a very familiar Cistercian topos in doing so, describing Kirkstead’s original site as:

a place of horror and vast solitude, which was anciently called by that name. This contained within itself a certain tract of level ground, which was nevertheless surrounded on all sides by thorns, brambles and bogs, that was long called by the

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<sup>2</sup> BL Cotton MS Vespasian E. xviii (hereafter referred to as Kirkstead Cartulary), fol. 2<sup>r</sup>, no. i, printed in translation in G. Coppack and S. Harrison, ‘Reconstructing Kirkstead Abbey, Lincoln: The Charters, Earthworks and Architecture of a Lost Cistercian House’, *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 167 (2014), pp. 1–50, at p. 1; BL Harley Charter 56 H 10, printed in F. M. Stenton, ed., *Documents Illustrative of the Social and Economic History of the Danelaw*, Records of the Social and Economic History of England and Wales (London and Oxford, 1920), pp. 122–3, no. 180 (subsequently *Danelaw Charters*).

<sup>3</sup> J. R. Walbran, ed., *Memorials of the History of the Abbey of St Mary of Fountains I*, Surtees Society 42 (Durham, 1862), p. 61.

local populace ‘kirkstead’ – that is, ‘the church site’ – presaging a future religious community.<sup>4</sup>

In common with many other Cistercian houses, Kirkstead went through more than one site in its early years and, like many other early Cistercian communities, the relocation of this pioneer group of monks was framed by toil in the spiritual desert, represented in Kirkstead’s case by the boggy, thorny and desolate moorland of the Witham valley.

Kirkstead, however, is not nearly as prominent in historiography as the Yorkshire Cistercian houses – especially Fountains, Rievaulx and Byland – which have the benefit of extant chronicle material as well as nineteenth- and twentieth-century editions of their muniments. These sources have yielded a detailed understanding of the Cistercians in Yorkshire through studies of both their fabric, resources and communities and their archival practices.<sup>5</sup> Recent work, however, has shown Kirkstead to have been built on a scale comparable to Fountains and that it was the centrepiece of Charles Brandon’s Lincolnshire estates accrued in the wake of the Dissolution, reconstructed as a stylized ruin and stud farm.<sup>6</sup> Kirkstead’s position within a striking cluster of monastic foundations along the east bank of the River Witham also firmly places it within an ancient forested landscape of sacrality and ritual.<sup>7</sup> Limited study has also been made of a handful of sites which were part

<sup>4</sup> BL Cotton MS Tiberius C.viii, fol. 49<sup>v</sup>, cap. 66: ‘fundatur domus de Kirkstede [...] a loco horris et vastae solitudinis, qui sic dicitur antiquitus, quendam in se planitiem continens, quam nihilominus fructibus [*recte* fruticibus], vepribus, et paluris [*recte* paludis] undique cingebatur, qui ab anno antiquis in futurae religionis praesagium Kirksted, id est, locus ecclesiae ab incolis vocabatur’. Cf. the translation in Coppack and Harrison, ‘Reconstructing Kirkstead’, p. 2, citing the transcription in Dugdale, *Monasticon*, V, p. 418.

<sup>5</sup> A large number of article-length studies exist for Fountains but the classic study remains J. Wardrop, *Fountains Abbey and its Benefactors, 1132–1300* (Kalamazoo, 1987), recently supplemented by an important full-length study of its successive cartularies and registers: M. Spence, *The Late Medieval Cistercian Monastery of Fountains Abbey, Yorkshire: Monastic Administration, Economy, and Archival Memory*, *Medieval Monastic Studies* 5 (Turnhout, 2020). For Byland, see J. Burton, *The Monastic Orders in Yorkshire, 1069–1215* (Cambridge, 1999); and J. Burton, *The Cartulary of Byland Abbey*, *Surtees Society* 208 (Woodbridge, 2004). For Rievaulx, see J. C. Atkinson, ed., *Cartularium abbatiae de Rievallae, ordinis Cisterciensis fundatae anno MCXXXII*, *Surtees Society* 83 (Durham, 1887); G. Coppack, ‘Some Descriptions of Rievaulx Abbey in 1538–9: the Disposition of a Major Cistercian Precinct in the Early Sixteenth Century’, *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 139 (1986), pp. 100–33; E. Jamroziak, *Rievaulx Abbey and its Social Context 1132–1300: Memory, Locality, and Networks* (Turnhout, 2005); F. Horsfield, ‘Cistercian Rievaulx Abbey and the ‘Transformation’ of Henry II’s Wasteland’, *Ecclesiastical Landscapes in Medieval Europe: An Archaeological Perspective*, ed. J. C. Sánchez-Pardo, E. H. Marron and M. Crîngaci Tiplic (Oxford, 2020), pp. 148–66.

<sup>6</sup> Coppack and Harrison, ‘Reconstructing Kirkstead’, pp. 31–2; P. Everson and D. Stocker, ‘The Archaeology of Vice-Regality: Charles Brandon’s Brief Rule in Lincolnshire’, *The Archaeology of Reformation 1480–1580*, ed. D. Gaimster and R. Gilchrist (London, 2003), pp. 145–58; P. Everson and D. Stocker, ‘Masters of Kirkstead: Hunting for Salvation’, *King’s Lynn and the Fens: Medieval Art, Architecture and Archaeology*, ed. J. McNeill, *The British Archaeological Association Conference Transactions XXXI* (London and New York, 2008), pp. 83–111.

<sup>7</sup> P. Everson and D. Stocker, ‘The Witham Valley: a Landscape with Monasteries?’, *Church Archaeology* 13 (2009), pp. 1–15; P. Everson and D. Stocker, *Custodians of Continuity. The*

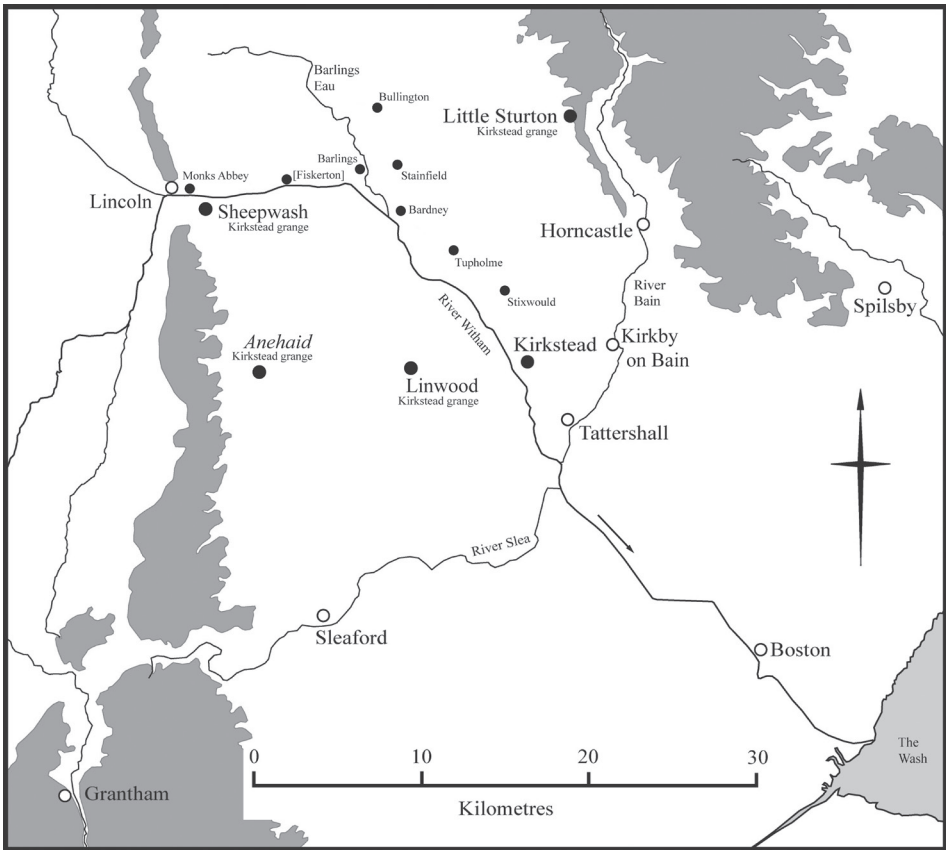


Fig. 1. Kirkstead and the monastic landscape of the Witham valley.

of Kirkstead's extensive network of granges in Lincolnshire and South Yorkshire.<sup>8</sup> More generally, Kirkstead's activities in fenland and coastal contexts are discussed as part of several studies.<sup>9</sup>

*Premonstratensian Abbey at Barlings and the Landscape of Ritual*, Lincolnshire Archaeology and Heritage Reports Series 11 (Sleaford, 2011); P. Everson and D. Stocker, 'Saucepans and Saints? The Sacred and Mundane in Forest Landscapes', *Landscapes* 19 (2018), pp. 25–42. Cf. Mark Gardiner, 'A Landscape of Common Peat Fens: the Witham Valley and Wildmoor, Lincolnshire', *Landscapes* 22 (2021), pp. 173–90.

<sup>8</sup> J. and D. Mills, 'A Case Study at Canwick of the Enduring Influence of Monastic Houses', *Lincolnshire History and Archaeology* 33 (1998), pp. 47–54; P. Everson and D. Stocker, 'Little Sturton Rediscovered. Part 1: The Grange of Kirkstead Abbey', *Lincolnshire History and Archaeology* 40 (2005), pp. 7–14; D. Hey, *A History of the South Yorkshire Countryside* (Barnsley, 2015), p. 33.

<sup>9</sup> H. C. Darby, *The Medieval Fenland* (Cambridge, 1940); H. E. Hallam, *Settlement and Society: A Study of the Early Agrarian History of South Lincolnshire* (Cambridge, 1965); Gardiner, 'A Landscape of Common Peat Fens'; I. G. Simmons, *Fen and Sea: The Landscapes of South-East Lincolnshire AD 500–1700* (Oxford, 2022).

The most prominent aspect of scholarly treatment of Kirkstead, however, concerns the location of its first site, in no small part because of the survival of an unusual ‘licence’ issued by Robert, son of Kirkstead’s founder Hugh son of Eudo, permitting the monks to relocate.<sup>10</sup> Three locations have been suggested. Over a century ago, Frank Stenton argued that the monks settled first at Great Sturton near Horncastle, before relocating in 1187, a date seemingly drawn from the account of the abbey’s development enshrined in the Lincolnshire *Victoria County History*.<sup>11</sup> This location has been firmly discredited: Little (not Great) Sturton was in fact the site of a grange, established early in Kirkstead’s history.<sup>12</sup> Having dispensed with Stenton’s suggestion, Paul Everson and David Stocker argued that Hugh son of Eudo had established the Cistercians at Tattershall itself, a few miles south of Kirkstead’s permanent location, on a site apparently occupied by a chapel and which later came to be occupied by Tattershall Castle.<sup>13</sup> In the mid-twelfth century Tattershall was a small settlement, ripe for development through the twelfth and thirteenth centuries as the *caput* of Hugh and his successors’ lordship, which was we can now see predicated at least in part on Hugh’s position as sheriff of Lincolnshire in the mid-1130s.<sup>14</sup> The suggestion that Tattershall was Kirkstead’s original site, however, proves to be problematic for a number of reasons. Quite apart from the topographical evidence provided by the cartulary itself and outlined in detail below, the putative chapel at Tattershall is revealed by hitherto untranscribed evidence not to be an early institution that preceded the creation of the parish of Tattershall, but rather a chapel of the late twelfth century attached to the parish church and created by the dynasty itself.<sup>15</sup>

In 2014, Glyn Coppack and Stuart Harrison argued that Kirkstead was first established a stone’s throw from the abbey itself, on the site of the extant thirteenth-century chapel of St Leonard.<sup>16</sup> Building on studies of St Leonard’s as Kirkstead’s gatehouse chapel (*capella ante portas*), Coppack and Harrison marshalled evidence from the cartulary and corresponding original single-sheet charters to reconstruct a large abbey and home grange complex. Their interpretation suggested that the monks had been granted an entirely discrete second site immediately north of their first, by a different donor, Hugh son of Pinceon. Again, however, this argument is problematic. Coppack and Harrison incorrectly interpreted several important elements of their charter material. These include documents relating to Kirkstead’s

<sup>10</sup> Stenton, ed., *Danelaw Charters*, no. 180.

<sup>11</sup> Stenton, ed., *Danelaw Charters*, pp. 103–4; *VCH Lincolnshire*, II, pp.135–8.

<sup>12</sup> Everson and Stocker, ‘Little Sturton Rediscovered’.

<sup>13</sup> D. Stocker and P. Everson, ‘The Straight and Narrow Way: Fenland Causeways and the Conversion of the Landscape in the Witham Valley, Lincolnshire’, *The Cross Goes North: Processes of Conversion in Northern Europe, AD 300–1300*, ed. M. Carver (York, 2003), pp. 271–88; Everson and Stocker, ‘Masters of Kirkstead’, pp. 83–111.

<sup>14</sup> *Regesta*, III, no. 463, is a writ of King Stephen to Hugh son of Eudo as sheriff to complete the conveyance of land to Alexander, bishop of Lincoln, for the construction of his episcopal palace c. 1137.

<sup>15</sup> Maidstone, Kent History and Library Centre MS U1475/T150/1. This document is briefly described in C. L. Kingsford, ed., *Historical Manuscripts Commission Report on the Manuscripts of Lord de L’Isle & Dudley Preserved at Penshurst Place*, 6 vols (London, 1925–66), I, pp. 171–2, which was the basis for discussion of the chapel in D. M. Owen, ‘Medieval chapels in Lincolnshire’, *Lincolnshire History and Archaeology* 10 (1975), pp. 15–22 at p. 21, which subsequently informed Everson and Stocker, ‘Masters of Kirkstead’, pp. 87–8.

<sup>16</sup> Coppack and Harrison, ‘Reconstructing Kirkstead’.

quarrying rights, an essential part of understanding how and when the monks began to build in stone,<sup>17</sup> evidence for the relationship between Hugh son of Pinceon and the lords of Tattershall, and the broader tenurial and landscape context of their respective grants, which further evidence from the cartulary shows to have been one of overlapping lordships and common rights shared by local free peasants. They also were not aware of a corpus of published and unpublished material relating to St Leonard's, which as outlined below proves beyond doubt that this chapel was designed neither as Kirkstead's gatehouse nor, as argued by Everson and Stocker, as an early example of a detached chantry chapel founded by the lords of Tattershall.<sup>18</sup>

The present essay focuses on Kirkstead's first site and its treatment after the monks' relocation. It argues that Coppack and Harrison were correct to conclude that Kirkstead was initially founded at the later site of St Leonard's, but that the monks had moved by 1164 to lands they had held since the time of foundation, within which common rights were handed over to the monks by several parties, not just the lords of Tattershall. The chapel of St Leonard's was developed in the 1220s not as a *capella ante portas* nor as a chantry, but instead as an architecturally ambitious chapel to mark the abbey's original eremitic and anchoritic site, which itself was probably deeply rooted in an ancient sacred landscape. This new chapel was designed to deal with commemoration for a variety of donors – though, significantly, not the lords of Tattershall – before assuming new functions in the fourteenth century and beyond.

The framework for these findings is closely bound to a new understanding of the abbey's cartulary, the constituent parts of which were begun in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, but whose construction as a codex only occurred in 1260. This in turn facilitates an entirely new understanding of Kirkstead's 'licence' to relocate which, along with Hugh son of Pinceon's grant – already identified by Coppack and Harrison as key to the monks' move to their new site, though misinterpreted – is understood here as a product of forgery in the mid- to late thirteenth century. Together, these findings reveal strategies of archival manipulation designed to protect the monks' secure possession of both their old and new sites and to maintain patronal relationships during a period of important change. They also accord with other work on how Cistercian precincts and buildings evolved over time to meet the changing needs of monastic communities.<sup>19</sup> In this, they speak to the

<sup>17</sup> Coppack and Harrison, 'Reconstructing Kirkstead', pp. 4, 8, 33, which argues that Cartulary, fol. 43<sup>f</sup>, no. i\* (printed in W. Farrer and C. T. Clay, ed., *Early Yorkshire Charters*, 13 vols (Cambridge, 1914–65), IV, part 1, no. 56a) is a confirmation made by Henry II's chamberlain Warin Fitz Gerold of a quarry grant made by Duke Conan III of Brittany before 1148, when the original grant must in fact be dated to the reign of Conan IV (1156–66). This grant was complemented by a similar grant (Cartulary, fol. 43<sup>f</sup>, no. i) made by William of Canwick before 1184, likely in the 1160s, discussed in Mills and Mills, 'A Case Study at Canwick', *passim*.

<sup>18</sup> P. Everson and D. Stocker, 'St Leonard's at Kirkstead, Lincolnshire: The Landscape of the Cistercian Monastic Precinct', *Medieval Landscapes*, ed. M. Gardiner and S. Rippon, *Landscape History After Hoskins 2* (Macclesfield, 2007), pp. 215–30; Everson and Stocker, 'Masters of Kirkstead'.

<sup>19</sup> See, e.g., M. Cassidy-Welch, *Monastic Spaces and Their Meanings: Thirteenth-Century English Cistercian Monasteries* (Turnhout, 2001); E. Jamrozak, 'Spaces of Lay-Religious Interaction in Cistercian Houses of Northern Europe', *Parergon* 27:2 (2010), pp. 37–58; J. Burton and J. Kerr, *The Cistercians in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 2011), pp. 64–6, 71–5.

strength of Kirkstead's large and varied community of donors, broadening existing Tattershall-centric narratives of how the community was supported and how it interacted with the external world.

In outlining this argument, the present article describes some of the findings of two consecutive research projects in relation to Kirkstead, the first of which saw the transcription of the abbey's cartulary for use within a wider study of monastic landscapes and the second of which has refined this transcription and will produce a critical edition of the cartulary. This material, along with an extensive corpus of royal, episcopal and local records dating from the twelfth to the nineteenth centuries, allows us to produce a rich and detailed picture of Kirkstead's history from the time of foundation to the thirteenth century. It also makes an important contribution to current understandings of cartularies, building in particular on Joanna Tucker's work on multi-scribe manuscripts.<sup>20</sup> Consequently, much of this material – including the layout of the abbey precinct, Kirkstead's landscape context and its history to the Dissolution and beyond – is to be expanded within the forthcoming Lincoln Record Society edition of the Kirkstead cartulary. A brief overview of source material and the cartulary is provided below, prefatory to discussion of Kirkstead's sites.

### *The Kirkstead Cartulary and Other Sources*

The Kirkstead cartulary (BL Cotton MS Vespasian E xviii), though known to scholars since the seventeenth century – and photographed, partially transcribed and studied by Canon C. W. Foster and his staff in the early twentieth century and later catalogued by G. R. C. Davis – has never been edited for publication.<sup>21</sup> Kirkstead material, however, makes up a substantial proportion (78 items in total) of Stenton's collection of Danelaw charters based on single-sheet originals largely held in the British Library's Harley collection, many of which were included in the cartulary.<sup>22</sup> Kirkstead charters are scattered across several other publications, which make available material relevant to the abbey's holdings in Lincolnshire and Yorkshire and the community's dealings with Anglo-Norman and Angevin kings, local and regional lords and royal justice, amongst other areas of interest.<sup>23</sup> To

<sup>20</sup> J. Tucker, *Reading and Shaping Medieval Cartularies: Multi-Scribe Manuscripts and Their Patterns of Growth. A Study of the Earliest Cartularies of Glasgow Cathedral and Lindores Abbey* (Woodbridge, 2020). The Kirkstead cartulary's compilation is the subject of K. Dutton, 'The Cartulary of the Cistercian Abbey of Kirkstead, Lincolnshire: The Landscape Realities and Documentary Defences of an Abbey Site in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries', *Journal of Medieval Monastic Studies* 12 (2023), pp. 77–122.

<sup>21</sup> Foster's transcriptions are held at Lincoln Archives Office (hereafter LAO), FL/TRANSCRIPTS/P/15–27 and 28–30. G. R. C. Davis, *Medieval Cartularies of Great Britain and Ireland*, rev. C. Breay, J. Harrison, and D. M. Smith (London, 2010), provides a brief description of the manuscript and its provenance, pp. 104–5, no. 519; p. 105, nos. 520, 520.1, and 521, draws attention to three thirteenth-century rolls relating to individual sections of the cartulary (BL Harley Rolls G 21, L 20, O 5), discussed further in Dutton 'Cartulary', which also forms the basis for this section of the present study.

<sup>22</sup> Stenton, ed., *Danelaw Charters*, pp. 103–65.

<sup>23</sup> These include Dugdale, *Monasticon*, V, pp. 418–22; *Regesta*, III, no. 427; N. Vincent, ed., *The Letters and Charters of Henry II, King of England 1154–1189*, 6 vols (Oxford, 2020), III, nos. 1426–32; Farrer and Clay, ed., *Early Yorkshire Charters*, III nos. 1266, 1267, 1269, 1273–6, 1279–94, 1296–8, 1798–1806; IV, part I, nos. 28, 30b, 46, 56a, 64; IV, part II, no.

this material, archival research at the British Library, Lincoln Archives Office and elsewhere adds a number of other single-sheet charters, largely from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries but reaching as far as the sixteenth. The National Archives also holds a considerable amount of Dissolution material which augments Dorothy Owen's partial publication of an important valuation of the abbey made in 1537, in the immediate aftermath of Abbot Richard Harrison's execution.<sup>24</sup> This material is substantially complemented by the records of royal government, the papacy, the bishops of Lincoln, the bishop and chapter of Durham – who exercised some lordship locally and controlled the parish of Kirkby-on-Bain, which abutted Kirkstead – and the later medieval lords of Tattershall.

The Kirkstead cartulary is extensive: together, the published charters outlined above account for only around a tenth of its content. The codex contains 231 folios which organize the abbey's archival holdings topographically and temporally. Its fifteen topographical sections begin with the abbey itself ('Abbatia') before moving on to individual granges, including the home grange directly adjacent to the abbey ('Molendinum'). Each section usually begins with the earliest relevant documents and moves through subsequent grants. This material occupies the first 216 folios, which were in situ by mid-1260, a little after Davis's suggested date of 1259.<sup>25</sup> The remaining folios consist of a seven-folio run of coherent additions (folios 221–8) apparently made in 1310, sandwiched between piecemeal additions made between the mid-thirteenth and mid-fourteenth centuries, with a handful of later additions scattered through the codex as a whole.

The most striking feature of the codex is the sheer number of scribes who participated in its production. Folios 1–216 contain over eighty different scribal profiles, making it a truly sprawling multi-scribe manuscript. The earliest scribes worked either side of the turn of the thirteenth century and their work was continued through the next sixty years, as other scribes interacted with the contents of each individual section and added fresh material. One hand recurs throughout the main part of the cartulary and analysis of this scribe's activity indicates that it was his work in 1259–60 which saw hitherto disparate dossiers of material brought together as a codex. This compiler-scribe was the driving force behind the cartularization process and appears to have had a large corpus of scribes contributing to this initiative, building on work begun several decades earlier. The compiler's activity is extensive and highly organized, bringing together material which had already been transcribed and providing many transcriptions himself as well as a sophisticated paratextual apparatus which allowed readers to navigate the cartulary.

To achieve his aims, the compiler engaged in complex organizational practices evident in the construction of the codex. He did not simply extend the individual sections of the codex, but effectively made each individual dossier the 'kernel' of a topographical section, wrapping it in additional bifolia in order to make his multifarious additions. Contents pages and later texts were thus incorporated and turned

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80; VI, no. 51; XI, nos. 53, 54, 176–80; A. E. B. Owen, ed., *The Medieval Lindsey Marsh: Select Documents*, Publications of the Lincoln Record Society 85 (1996), no. 52; T. Foulds, ed., *The Thurgarton Cartulary* (Stamford, 1994), Appendix, nos. 9–19; G. Barraclough, ed., *Charters of the Anglo-Norman Earls of Chester; c. 1071–1237*, Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire 126 (Chester 1988), nos. 103, 291–3.

<sup>24</sup> D. M. Owen, ed., 'A Kirkstead Abbey Valuation of 1537', *Lincolnshire History and Archaeology* 24 (1989), pp. 41–5.

<sup>25</sup> Davis, *Medieval Cartularies*, pp. 104–5.

the abbey's various topographical dossiers into a clear, coherent and useable whole, complete with cross-references to the abbey's complex archive. These booklets are fitted together like a jigsaw and the compiler's work accords with practices detected in contemporary literary and commonplace contexts.<sup>26</sup> The compiler laid a particular stress on a category of documents designated 'perpetual chirographs' (*chirographa perpetua*), consisting of key agreements made between the abbey and lay benefactors, many of which were concluded in the royal court in the form of final concords. The first of these is a settlement made in 1259 with Robert III of Tattershall over hunting and Kirkstead's boundary.<sup>27</sup> The arrangement of the cartulary makes it clear that this agreement provided the impetus for the compiler's work, within the wider framework of agreements in the mid-thirteenth century.

Like Tucker's Scottish examples, Kirkstead indicates how cartularization could be a process which did not happen at the beginning of the life of what came to be a cartulary: in Kirkstead's case, each component was begun by different scribes at different times and several decades passed before the compiler's initiative. In common with Tucker's material, the earliest part of the Kirkstead codex cannot therefore be privileged as the most important. The particular process of the cartulary's compilation has important consequences for understanding the relationship between single-sheet documents from the abbey's archive and corresponding entries in the cartulary. The cartulary's development through many different stages afforded the monks repeated opportunities to include or update material as it entered the archive. The compiler was exceptionally assiduous in integrating material, correcting errors and providing cross-references to the cartulary and wider archive. Consequently, the manuscript invites us to be highly attuned to differences between surviving single-sheet charters and the cartulary entries, as well as to omissions.

*Kirkstead's Sites: The vetus locus From Before 1139 to 1402*

Kirkstead's foundation charter reveals little directly of its first site. Everson and Stocker have already drawn attention, however, to the place-name evidence of the *locus qui dicitur kirkestede* – coupled with witnesses to the foundation charter – as indicating a modest pre-existing religious site. They also emphasize the eremitical connotations of the dedication to St Leonard of the chapel built south of the permanent abbey site in the thirteenth century.<sup>28</sup> Coppack and Harrison explicitly argue that '[t]he involvement of hermits as witnesses to the foundation suggests that the site was already in their occupation and that the Cistercians were invited to make this initial occupation a more permanent abbey'.<sup>29</sup> Certainly, such a site accords with evidence relating to the foundation of other Cistercian houses.<sup>30</sup>

The foundation charter and some additional material in fact allows us to make more precise observations than those offered above. It is clear that the site played

<sup>26</sup> P. Robinson, 'The "Booklet": a Self-Contained Unit in Composite Manuscripts', *Codicologica* 3 (1980), pp. 49–69; E. Kwakkel, 'Towards a Terminology for the Analysis of Composite Manuscripts', *Gazette du livre médiéval* 41 (2002), pp. 12–19; K. Rudy, *Piety in Pieces: How Medieval Readers Customized Their Manuscripts* (Cambridge, 2016), p. 223.

<sup>27</sup> Cartulary, fols 7<sup>v</sup> and 9<sup>f</sup>, printed in C. W. Foster, ed., *Final Concords of the County of Lincoln, 1244–1272* (Horncastle, 1920), pp. 171–2.

<sup>28</sup> Everson and Stocker, 'Masters of Kirkstead', pp. 86, 96–7.

<sup>29</sup> Coppack and Harrison, 'Reconstructing Kirkstead', p. 2.

<sup>30</sup> Burton and Kerr, *Cistercians in the Middle Ages*, p. 61.

host to both a hermit named Outi and an anchorite (*inclusus*) named Richard, both of whom were present at the foundation. Outi makes no further appearances, suggesting perhaps that he joined the community as a monk. By contrast, the evidence of subsequent years indicates that Richard remained in his anchorhold at Kirkstead after the Cistercians arrived, featuring in four charters issued during the fifteen to twenty years after the abbey's foundation.<sup>31</sup> The nature of the charters in which he appears is suggestive both of his seniority at Kirkstead as well as of his place within influential wider networks of eremitical innovation locally. Twice he witnessed alongside the abbot, and usually together with senior monastic officials from either Kirkstead or elsewhere within the order, including Fountains; on one significant occasion, he witnessed a grant made by Gilbert of Sempringham's brother Roger, alongside Gilbert himself. The Cistercian order's attachment to anchorites is well documented in England from the 1160s onwards in several texts, including Aelred of Rievaulx's *De institutione inclusarum* and Reginald of Durham's *Life of Godric of Finchale*.<sup>32</sup> Richard's appearance at Kirkstead between 1139 and the mid- to late-1150s is therefore a valuable non-hagiographical example of how the Cistercians could adapt long-standing eremitic and anchoritic sacred sites and weave their solitary inhabitants into new communities.

Until now, suggestions for the location of this site have been based on scant evidence. Research in the cartulary and elsewhere, however, brings to light several valuable references to the abbey's 'old place' (*vetus locus*). Usage of the term *locus* to denote abbey sites and sacred places is well-attested, including amongst the Cistercians.<sup>33</sup> *Locus* was not a neutral term and, in relation to an abbey, could act as an encapsulation of sacrality.<sup>34</sup> Significantly, *vetus locus* is a term evidenced elsewhere as designating an original monastic site, most notably at Nostell, a hermitage turned priory which moved to a new site subsequently.<sup>35</sup> As the evidence outlined below shows, Kirkstead's *vetus locus* can confidently be identified as the abbey's

<sup>31</sup> Cartulary, fols 34<sup>r</sup>, Linwood no. xxii (grant of William son of Ivo), 73<sup>r</sup>, Anehaid no. xviii (grant of Roger son of Joscelin, brother of Gilbert of Sempringham) and 78<sup>v</sup>, Gayton no. i (a major grant by Abbot Omnisius of Bégard transferring land for a grange at Gayton-le-Wold to Kirkstead, printed in Stenton, ed., *Danelaw Charters*, no. 161), all dating to the mid-1150s; LAO, 5-ANC/1/1/1 (a grant of Ralph Fitz Gilbert to his brother Ralph the villein), dated there to 1150x1160.

<sup>32</sup> And see especially T. Licence, 'The Benedictines, the Cistercians and the Acquisition of a Hermitage in Twelfth-Century Durham', *JMH* 29 (2003), pp. 315–29; and E. Freeman, 'Ælred of Rievaulx's Pastoral Care of Religious Women, with Special Reference to *De institutione inclusarum*', *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 46 (2011), pp. 13–26.

<sup>33</sup> M.-A. Dimier, 'Le mot *locus* dans le sens de monastère', *Revue Mabillon* 58 (1972), pp. 133–54; G. Besson, '*Locus* et *conuentus*: un état des "lieux" franciscains chez Salimbene de Adam', *Médiévales* 48 (2005), pp. 123–40; D. Panfili, '*Domus, grangia, honor* et les autres. Désigner les poles cisterciens en Languedoc et Gascogne orientale (1130–1220)', *Le Moyen Age* 123 (2017/2), pp. 311–38.

<sup>34</sup> D. Mehu, '*Locus, transitus, peregrination*: remarques sur la spatialité des rapports sociaux dans l'Occident medieval (XI<sup>e</sup>–XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle)', *Construction de l'espace au Moyen Âge: pratiques et représentations*, Société des historiens médiévistes de l'Enseignement supérieur public (Paris, 2007), pp. 275–93.

<sup>35</sup> Burton, *Monastic Order in Yorkshire*, p. 75; Farrer and Clay, ed., *Early Yorkshire Charters*, III, pp. 133–6.

first site and its long-term development following the monks' move to their permanent site in the 1160s traced.

The first occurrence of the term is in a quitclaim made *c.* 1200 by Henry Bek, the pre-eminent local subtenant of the bishop of Durham and a member of an important family of patrons to the abbey descended from Hugh son of Pinceon. This document outlines the course of an old road from Kirkby-on-Bain to the 'old place of the abbey' (*vetus locus abbatie*) as the southern and eastern boundary of a quitclaim he made to the monks.<sup>36</sup> Such a road accords with the detail of the foundation endowment, as well as confirming that the eremitical 'kirk stead' was sited on a significant route from Kirkby to the Witham and its crossings to the west. Such a situation undoubtedly provided the ideal conditions for an eremitical site and would go on to yield important benefits for Cistercian development on both banks of the Witham.<sup>37</sup> It was already an old road before 1139 and in the decades after the abbey's establishment, it was clearly superseded by a route corresponding to the modern Kirkby Lane, which served access points north and east of the abbey.

The second occurrence of *vetus locus* in relation to Kirkstead comes later but accords with this quitclaim, allowing us to postulate a precise topography for the site. A memorandum of Bishop Henry Burghersh of Lincoln indicates that in 1322, the bishop provided indulgences to anyone who visited the chapel of St Leonard 'of the old place outside Kirkstead' (*capellam sancti Leonardi veteris loci extra monasterium de Kyrksted[e]*) to pray.<sup>38</sup> Bishop Richard de Kellawe of Durham issued a similar indulgence ten years prior, making no mention of the *vetus locus* but identifying the chapel as within or, topographically more likely, below Kirkstead (*capella Sancti Leonardi Confessoris, infra abbatiam de Kyrksted[e]*).<sup>39</sup>

For the monks of Kirkstead, the term may well have had a deeper resonance given both the wider landscape context of the Witham valley, whose sacred sites elsewhere in this period demonstrably had pre-Christian roots, and the presence in Kirkstead's immediate vicinity of prehistoric landscape features.<sup>40</sup> Yet the precision with which the term is deployed in Henry Bek's charter bounds indicates it was, very specifically, the old place of the abbey (*vetus locus abbatie*), a terminal point deployed in a boundary clause. The road specified in that clause led southwards and westwards from Kirkby, bounding the moor which lay between the abbey and the settlement, leading to a terminus at the *vetus locus*.

Together, this evidence strongly indicates that we must identify the *vetus locus* of 1322 with that of 1200, and both of these with the *locus qui dicitur kirkestede* of 1139. The topographical evidence provided in these sources therefore allows us to

<sup>36</sup> Cartulary, fol. 149<sup>v</sup>, Molendinum no. lv.

<sup>37</sup> The early granges of Linwood (established by 1140) and Anehaid (*c.* 1146) both lay on the western bank of the river and gave the monks oversight of a large swathe of fenland, which was a vital source of fuel for the abbey, attested especially in Cartulary, fols 33<sup>r-v</sup>, Linwood nos. xii–xiv.

<sup>38</sup> LAO, DIOC/REG/5, fol. 319<sup>v</sup>, no. 812.

<sup>39</sup> T. D. Hardy, ed., *Registrum Palatinum Dunelmense: The Register of Richard de Kellawe, Lord Palatine and Bishop of Durham, 1311–1316*, RS, 4 vols (London, 1873–8), I, p. 265.

<sup>40</sup> Everson and Stocker, 'The Straight and Narrow Way'; Everson and Stocker, 'The Witham Valley'; Everson and Stocker, 'Saucepans and Saints'; S. M. Norton, 'Assessing Iron Age Marsh-Forts', unpublished PhD thesis, 2 vols (University of Birmingham, 2019) I, p. 84 and II, Appendix I, provides a brief account of Iron Age fort structures at Kirkstead and nearby Tattershall Thorpe.

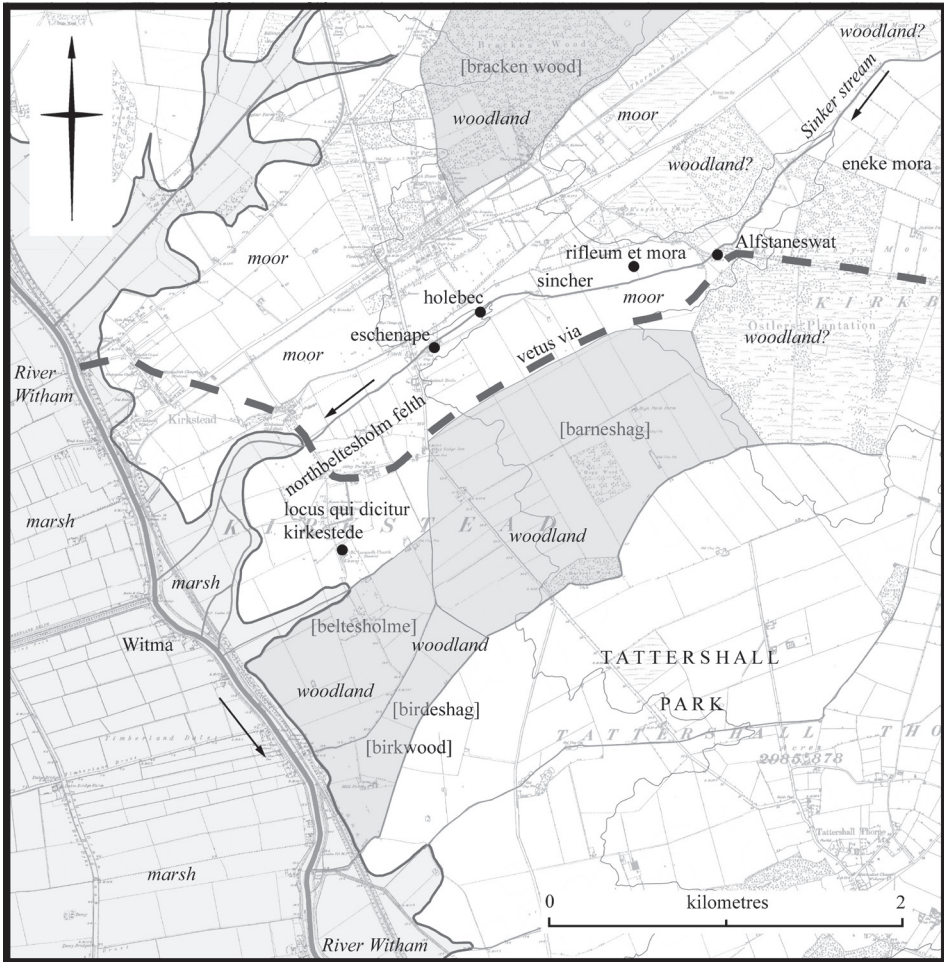


Fig. 2. Kirkstead's foundation endowment.

locate Kirkstead's first site at the extant chapel of St Leonard, immediately south of the permanent abbey site and on the edge of the monastic estate as we understand it from mid-thirteenth-century evidence.<sup>41</sup> It was this site which was occupied by Outi the hermit and Richard the anchorite prior to the arrival of the Cistercians and which, upon being granted by Hugh son of Eudo, acted as the foothold for the rapid development of the wider monastic complex of abbey and grange to the north and outlying granges directly across the Witham to the west.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>41</sup> As outlined in Dutton, 'Cartulary'.

<sup>42</sup> The grange and its buildings appear in a confirmation of Kirkstead's foundation issued by Hugh's son Robert sometime after Hugh's death c. 1155: Cartulary, fol. 2<sup>v</sup>, Abbatia no. v, printed in Dugdale, *Monasticon*, V, pp. 418–19, no. 5. For Kirkstead's early granges west of the abbey site, see above p. 170, n.37.

On the basis of a dating clause in the cartulary, Coppack and Harrison argue that the chapel of St Leonard was functioning in 1162 but this is an incorrect transcription of an abbreviated reference to the monks' chapterhouse (*in cap[itu]lo monachorum*).<sup>43</sup> There is no evidence of a dedication of the *vetus locus* chapel to Leonard; the first dedication only came at the time of the construction of the extant chapel. Architecturally, St Leonard's has been dated to the 1220s or 1230s and is of an exceptionally high standard.<sup>44</sup> It is prominent in architectural historiography and has posed some considerable challenges to scholars for a number of years. The most pertinent to the present discussion is whether St Leonard's served as the abbey's *capella ante portas*, its gatehouse chapel at the transition from the secular to the sacred and a key way laypeople could access Cistercian spiritual benefits, particularly from the thirteenth century onwards.<sup>45</sup> Several scholars have argued that this was the case, including Jackie Hall in her important study of English Cistercian gatehouses, and this understanding of St Leonard's is widely accepted.<sup>46</sup> By contrast, Everson and Stocker suggested that St Leonard's is instead an early example of a chantry chapel, instituted by the lords of Tattershall in the first half of the thirteenth century and which, on the evidence of a knightly effigy, served to commemorate a particular lord of the period.<sup>47</sup> None of these accounts, however, is easily reconciled with the new evidence presented above for understanding St Leonard's as the site of Kirkstead's *vetus locus* and close inspection of the cartulary provides important new evidence for the chapel's original purpose and subsequent development.

Entered into the cartulary are three grants made expressly for the purpose of provisioning St Leonard's. All date to the 1220s or thereabouts, which closely accords with the date of the chapel's construction. The varied nature of the benefactors (which, significantly, do not include the lords of Tattershall) indicates that the chapel was provisioned by different families and was not a Tattershall foundation, while the tenor of some of these grants and associated material suggests a commemorative function for the chapel.

The first appearance of St Leonard's is in an undated grant issued by Robert son of Helto of Snelland, of revenue derived from a toft in Snelland, where the monks maintained a grange.<sup>48</sup> This grant must date to after Robert's father Helto's death sometime between 1209 and 1219.<sup>49</sup> Palaeographical analysis indicates that it was entered into the *Abbatia* section by a scribe working immediately before the

<sup>43</sup> Cartulary, fol. 2<sup>v</sup>, Abbatia no. vi, which is discussed further below, pp. 176–80. This document is also dated 1167 rather than 1162.

<sup>44</sup> J. H. Parker, *An Architectural Description of Saint Leonard's Church, Kirkstead, published under the superintendence of the Lincolnshire Architectural Society* (Oxford, 1846); A. Hartshorne, 'On Kirkstead Abbey, Lincolnshire, Kirkstead Chapel, and a remarkable effigy there preserved', *Archaeological Journal* 40 (1883), pp. 296–302.

<sup>45</sup> Cassidy-Welch, *Monastic Spaces*, pp. 25–32.

<sup>46</sup> J. Hall, 'English Cistercian Gatehouse Chapels', *Cîteaux* 52 (2001), pp. 61–92, and see Everson and Stocker, 'Masters of Kirkstead', n. 41 for the wide array of citations to St Leonard's as a *capella ante portas*.

<sup>47</sup> Everson and Stocker, 'St. Leonard's at Kirkstead'; Everson and Stocker, 'Masters of Kirkstead'. This conclusion strongly informed J. McNeill, 'A Prehistory of the Chantry', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 164 (2011), pp. 1–38, esp. pp. 16–18.

<sup>48</sup> Cartulary, fol. 4<sup>v</sup>, Abbatia no. xxvi.

<sup>49</sup> J. O. Massingberd, ed., *Abstracts of Final Concords Temp. Richard I, John, and Henry III, Vol. I* (London, 1896), p. 97; K. Major, ed., *The Registrum Antiquissimum of the Cathedral*

compiler undertook his work in 1259–60. The grant contains a unique dispositive clause: Robert made this gift not only to God, St Mary, and the abbey (all standard recipients) but specifically to the chapel of St Leonard. The revenues, moreover, were explicitly channelled to the chapel so that they could be used by the monks on the saint's feast day (*predictum redditum ita attornavi predictae capella sancti Leonardi ut in die ipsius sancti pro vero prior disposuerit in usum conventus expendatur*). This function is paralleled in a further classification in Kirkstead's archive, for the grant is also listed in the compiler's summary of grants made as pittance (*carte refectorii*).<sup>50</sup>

Significantly, this entry contains a cross-reference to an entry in the cartulary's section devoted to the grange at Snelland, consisting of a variant of the text which differs in some important respects to that entered into the *Abbatia* section.<sup>51</sup> The Snelland variant does not mention St Leonard's, simply presenting a grant at a location close to one of Kirkstead's granges, a format which accounts for the bulk of the benefactions received by the abbey. The cartulary's complex codicology, however, allow us to discern how this represents Robert's initial gift and was entered into what became the cartulary by a scribe working before the mid-thirteenth-century scribe who entered the *Abbatia* variant. We can interpret the *Abbatia* variant, therefore, as the record of an agreement made between the monks and Robert to amend his grant, channelling its revenues towards provisioning the new chapel of St Leonard. The repurposed text's prominence in the cartulary's *Abbatia* section, along with its unique dispositive clause, suggest that it was the inaugural lay grant to the chapel.

The second grant is known only through a summary entry made by the compiler in his list titled *Carte infirmitorii monachorum et seculorum et sancti Leonardi*, which bundles together grants for the monks' monastic and lay infirmaries and includes a grant issued by Robert son of Alan of Martin for the chapel of St Leonard of a toft in Martin by Horncastle.<sup>52</sup> Although Robert is elusive in the historical record, his father Alan is attested numerous times in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries.<sup>53</sup> Significantly, Alan had been bailiff to Philip of Tattershall during his tenure as sheriff of Lincolnshire at the end of the twelfth century.<sup>54</sup> Although difficult to date more precisely, this is a charter of the first few decades of the thirteenth century and resembles Robert son of Helto's in using a toft to support the chapel.

In a third grant, John son of James the Fleming (d. 1231) granted the monks the site of a windmill near Bardney, and specified that the mill's revenues were to be used to provision the chapel with lights (*specialiter ad luminare capelle sancti Leonardi de kirkestede*).<sup>55</sup> The donor's identity is particularly significant. The cartu-

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*Church of Lincoln, Volume V*, Lincoln Record Society Publications 34 (Hereford, 1940), no. 1524.

<sup>50</sup> Cartulary, fol. 210<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>51</sup> Cartulary, fol. 121<sup>v</sup>, Snelland no. lxxx.

<sup>52</sup> Cartulary, fol. 212<sup>r</sup>. BL Add. MS 88905 (Psalter of Kirkstead Abbey), fol. 12<sup>r</sup>, indicates that one of these infirmaries was dedicated to St Saviour.

<sup>53</sup> E.g., Stenton, ed., *Danelaw Charters*, nos. 174, 175, 177–9, 189–91, 228 (and see Everson and Stocker, *Barlings*, p. 340), 528, 529.

<sup>54</sup> D. M. Stenton, ed., *The Earliest Lincolnshire Assize Rolls A.D. 1202–1209*, Publications of the Lincoln Record Society 22 (1926), p. xliii and nos. 27, 187, 266, 544, 555, 585, 1020, 1027, 1075.

<sup>55</sup> LAO RA/1/KIRKSTEAD/1/12, unknown to Stenton and entered into the cartulary at fol. 166<sup>r</sup>, Sturton no. xlxx (in error for xlix, correctly endorsed on the single-sheet by the compiler).

lary incorporates a considerable number of documents relating to James's uncle and former mayor of Lincoln, Adam son of Reginald. This material indicates that Adam had, apparently after his ejection from the mayoralty in 1216, purchased an assortment of properties and rights in Lincoln and nearby Branston from his kinsmen and associates, with the express aim of granting them to a religious house; two grants bundle these assets together and convey them to Kirkstead, for the purpose of supporting a chaplain to say masses for the dead (*ad sustentacionem unius cappellani qui perpetuum ibidem celebrabit pro defunctiis*).<sup>56</sup> The charters make it clear that this chaplain, who is not specified as a monk, was to be established at Kirkstead, a description which is suggestive of installation at St Leonard's, even though the chapel is not named.

This new material stands at odds with the argument that St Leonard's functioned as a Tattershall chantry chapel. Indeed, the lords of Tattershall had by the 1220s already made several grants to provision the operation of their own private chapel within Tattershall.<sup>57</sup> The more detailed Tattershall evidence indicates that revenues drawn from milling and jurisdiction were the basis of the chapel's revenues, while a toft and livestock were provided to sustain a chaplain and accompanying cleric, along with extra provision for meals and necessary items such as candles. This evidence presents strong parallels with the operation of St Leonard's, where the patrons, however, were not the lords of Tattershall but members of a number of different families who had already provided benefactions to Kirkstead. Robert son of Helto may have had a particularly strong connection with Kirkstead, owing to his father's extensive patronage of the abbey.<sup>58</sup> In exchange, they may have received prayers or commemoration in the chapel itself, an arrangement strongly suggested by Adam son of Reginald's suite of grants. If so, St Leonard's was perhaps in part Kirkstead's response to increasing requests for prayer during the early thirteenth century, as well as a spectacular architectural assertion of the sacrality of the abbey's *vetus locus*.<sup>59</sup>

The indulgences granted by the bishops of Durham and Lincoln ninety years later secured for Kirkstead the means to attract paying visitors to the chapel, which took on a new outward-facing function, where laypeople could come and pray. It cannot be a coincidence that this shift occurred at exactly the time Kirkstead suffered the triple blow of the extinction of the direct male Tattershall and Bek lines and the ravages of the economic downturn of the early fourteenth century.<sup>60</sup> The chapel may have continued to be an important place for laypeople to access Kirkstead several decades later, for in 1405 Bishop Philip Repingdon ratified letters of the recently deceased Pope Boniface IV, granting the indulgence of the Portiuncula to anyone who visited Kirkstead on 1–2 August each

<sup>56</sup> Cartulary, fols 59<sup>r-v</sup> and 61<sup>r</sup>, Sheepwash nos. cvii and cxiii. For Adam and his kin-group, see Sir F. Hill, *Medieval Lincoln* (1948; repr. With new introduction, Stamford, 1990), pp. 195–200, 385–90.

<sup>57</sup> Maidstone, Kent History and Library Centre, U1475/T150/1, fifteenth-century inspeximus of Maud Cromwell.

<sup>58</sup> Cartulary, fols 110<sup>v</sup>–120<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>59</sup> For prayer requests over time, see E. L. Jordan, 'Gender Concerns: Nuns, Monks, and Patronage of the Cistercian Order in Thirteenth-Century Flanders and Hainaut', *Speculum* 87 (2021), pp. 62–94, esp. pp. 83–4.

<sup>60</sup> For which, see Dutton, 'Cartulary', pp. 109–13.

year, though the chapel itself is not named.<sup>61</sup> Repingdon's register records that the bishop had to investigate the validity of Boniface's grant given his annulment of all indulgences of this type in 1402, but being satisfied with its date of issue superseding this decision, the privilege stood.<sup>62</sup>

What lies beyond the scope of detailed investigation here is whether St Leonard's is the 'chapel at the abbey gate' mentioned in a dispute with the parish church of Kirkby-on-Bain in 1526, in which an abbot of the early sixteenth century had installed a font and used as a chapel of ease for Kirkby's parishioners who lived within the abbey and grange's secularized areas.<sup>63</sup> After Kirkstead's dissolution, St Leonard's undoubtedly performed important functions for local laypeople, who specified in their wills a desire to be buried there, though this may well have come about as a consequence of the chapel's private use under Kirkstead's lay owners from 1539 onwards.<sup>64</sup> It is clear from mid-thirteenth-century and later evidence that the abbey had a gate (White Cross Gate), no longer extant, at the north-eastern extremity of its home estate, an unusual location which must have been dictated by the siting of the home grange in the north-eastern corner of the large complex outlined here.<sup>65</sup> Topographical evidence suggests that it also had a gate directed towards the abbey proper on the northern side of the complex, alongside the mill which gave the home grange its name.<sup>66</sup> Certainly, in the third quarter of the thirteenth century, a number of donors made grants for the purpose of supporting the poor who gathered at the abbey gate, in documents however which make no reference to the chapel of St Leonard.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>61</sup> M. Archer, ed., *The Register of Philip Repingdon, 1405–1419, Volume I, Memoranda 1405–1411*, Lincoln Record Society 57 (Hereford, 1963), pp. 13–14.

<sup>62</sup> Another Cistercian house in Lincolnshire, Swineshead, received the same indulgence in 1401: D. Webb, 'Pardons and Pilgrims', *Promissory Notes on the Treasury of Merits: Indulgences in Late Medieval Europe*, ed. R. Swanson (Leiden, 2006), pp. 241–75 at p. 257, as did the Premonstratensian house of Newbo (*VCH Lincoln*, II, pp. 207–9). On the history of this type of indulgence and the wider context of the mass sale of such privileges in the 1390s and early 1400s, see W. E. Lunt, *Financial Relations of the Papacy with England, 1327–1534* (Cambridge MA, 1939), p. 489; and J. Hrdina, 'Papal Indulgences During the Era of the Great Western Schism (1378–1417) and the Cultural Foundation of Their Reception in Central Europe', *Processes of Cultural Exchange in Central Europe, 1200–1800*, ed. V. Čapská et al. (Opava, 2014), pp. 345–87, at pp. 348–9.

<sup>63</sup> Durham Cathedral Archive MS 3.3.Ebor.46, copied into Muniments Register V, fols 232<sup>r</sup>–233<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>64</sup> A number of the wills catalogued in C. W. Foster, ed., *Calendar of Lincoln Wills, Vol. I, 1320–1600* (London, 1902) specify burial within the chapel yard of St Leonard (pp. 47, 102, 123, 310, 325, 333, including that of John Barker, the abbot's former servant (LAO, LCC/WILLS/1551–2/327, no.12). In his will, Kirkstead's later owner Henry Fynes Clinton (d.1647) specified that he was to be 'buried in my Chappell at Kirkested by my ffirst [...] wife' (TNA, PROB 11/200/333, 15 May 1647).

<sup>65</sup> M. Archer, ed., *The Register of Philip Repingdon, 1405–1419, Volume II, Memoranda 1411–1419*, Lincoln Record Society 58 (Hereford, 1963), p. 304.

<sup>66</sup> Everson and Stocker, 'Masters of Kirkstead', p. 91, place the gate at this location though further analysis and some revision is provided in the forthcoming edition of the cartulary.

<sup>67</sup> LAO, RA/1/KIRKSTEAD/1/17, 22, 23, all made *ad usum pauperum ad portam de Kyrkested*.

*Kirkstead's nova sedes: Understanding the Evidence*

Evidence from the charters shows that Kirkstead's community moved in fairly short order by Cistercian standards. A large gathering of Cistercian abbots is recorded at Kirkstead in 1164, the only known occasion on which the abbot of Clairvaux – the head of Kirkstead's filiation – is recorded as visiting the abbey.<sup>68</sup> The cartulary indicates that the chapterhouse was in use by 1167,<sup>69</sup> while many charters entered into the cartulary attest to the intense consolidation of rights and privileges around the permanent site between the 1160s and 1180s.

As outlined above, two key charters have formed the basis of successive interpretations of the documentary basis of Kirkstead's relocation. Robert son of Hugh's well-known 'licence' appears to grant the monks permission to occupy their new site, with no claim from the lords of Tattershall.<sup>70</sup> Robert's contemporary Hugh son of Pinceon's grant of various assets, including the 'new site of the abbey' (*nova sedes abbatie*) has been interpreted to have conveyed an entirely new parcel of land which the monks occupied as their permanent site, and which warranted Robert's licence at a later date, for the monks' protection.<sup>71</sup>

Re-examination of both the cartulary and surviving single-sheet charters, however, leads to an entirely different set of conclusions, some of which can only be dealt with very briefly here. First, when he founded Kirkstead, Hugh son of Eudo granted the monks a very extensive swathe of land which in fact included the future site of the permanent establishment.<sup>72</sup> Second, the foundation charter itself makes it clear that Hugh did not possess exclusive lordship over some elements of what he granted, which are qualified with the phrase 'as much as pertains to my fee' (*quantum pertinet ad feudum meum*). The same observation can be made about his son Robert's confirmation of the monks' abbey and grange sites.<sup>73</sup> For the monks to fully occupy what became their permanent site, they also required the share other lords and individuals had in the rights and privileges attached to the land to be granted to them. Such grants were made both by Hugh son of Pinceon in a very significant variant of the charter Coppack and Harrison identify as key,<sup>74</sup> which is discussed in greater detail below, and by the free peasant community associated with nearby Roughton who, along with the lords of Woodhall, made similar grants around the abbey site which allowed the monks to create a sophisticated water system serving abbey and grange.<sup>75</sup> In other words, Kirkstead's core endowment

<sup>68</sup> *Cartularium Rievallense*, pp. 181–3, no. cclxvi, a settlement with the Gilbertines made in the presence of the abbots of Kirkstead, Rievaulx, Fountains, Revesby, Louth Park and Vaudey.

<sup>69</sup> Cartulary, fol. 2<sup>v</sup>, Abbatia no.vi, discussed (with errors) by Coppack and Harrison, 'Reconstructing Kirkstead', p. 3.

<sup>70</sup> Stenton, ed., *Danelaw Charters*, no. 180.

<sup>71</sup> Coppack and Harrison, 'Reconstructing Kirkstead', pp. 4–8, citing Stenton, ed., *Danelaw Charters*, no. 176 (BL Harl. Ch. 50 B 18).

<sup>72</sup> The extensive basis for the mapping provided here is discussed in detail in the forthcoming edition of the cartulary.

<sup>73</sup> Cartulary, fol. 2<sup>v</sup>, Abbatia no. v, printed Dugdale, *Monasticon*, V, pp. 418–19, no. 5.

<sup>74</sup> Cartulary, fol. 141<sup>v</sup>, Molendinum no. x.

<sup>75</sup> Cartulary, fols 3<sup>v</sup>–4<sup>r</sup>, Abbatia nos. xiv (William son of Ketel and his nephew William son of Alan, of Woodhall) and xv (assorted men of Roughton, corresponding closely with those granting and witnessing Stenton, ed., *Danelaw Charters*, no. 192); fol. 140<sup>v</sup>, Molend-

was in fact always situated in an area of overlapping lordships and common rights. Such a division is attested in Domesday Book, which clearly shows that Kirkstead's founders and the family of Hugh son of Pinceon – who held his lands of his tenant-in-chief the bishop of Durham – held common rights independently of one another, essentially as neighbours, which sometimes brought them into conflict.<sup>76</sup> Kirkstead's relocation thus differs significantly from other examples of Cistercian site moves, particularly the well-known stories of the troubles afflicting communities such as Byland as well as less well-known examples such as the community who left Radmore for Stoneleigh.<sup>77</sup>

Serious concerns also arise in connection with Robert's 'licence' and Hugh's grant of the new site. Examining these two documents closely and in tandem with the cartulary indicates that neither was an authentic product of their purported donors; instead, both appear to be thirteenth-century creations. Consequently, their content and intentions require close examination. Suspicions arise in several areas. The first relates to the differences between the extant single-sheet grants and their cartulary counterparts. Stenton noted that Robert's 'licence' has an endorsement (*VI*) which tallies with the cartulary, but stated simply that it 'does not correspond accurately' with the sixth entry in the *Abbatia* section. The cartulary entry in fact contains only the section of the licence confirming an acre of land granted by Geoffrey Iugan, a Tattershall man, which is seemingly unrelated to the licence itself. The abbey's relocation is only mentioned in a short annotation that inserts some of the phrasing of the single-sheet charter into the left-hand margin, but this is in a hand of the second half of the thirteenth century. By the same token, Hugh son of Pinceon's apparent original grant makes explicit mention of a grant of the new site of the abbey. Stenton observed that the cartulary version of Hugh's grant (*Molendinum*, no. x) was 'probably an abbreviation' of the single-sheet charter (endorsed *X*). In fact, the single-sheet contains reference to the grant of the new site, but the cartulary copy – made towards the end of the twelfth century, well after Hugh's death – does not, referring instead only to the moorland between the topographical features of Holbeck and *Escanape*, one of the places where the foundation charter indicates Hugh son of Eudo did not have exclusive lordship.

Second, the single-sheet documents contain similarities of content, phrasing and orthography which diverge from their cartulary counterparts and mark them out as interrelated with one another. Clauses specifying Tattershall, Thorpe and Kirkby-on-Bain as the site of common pasture and outlining free passage of wagons as well as chase and rechase are identical, while similar warranty clauses occur

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inum unnumbered chirograph, recording an agreement between Kirkstead and Godric son of Gymppe at the time of his father's entry to the abbey in anticipation of his death, at which time Godric and his associates granted to the monks whatever was of their right in and between two ditches to the north and south of the abbey, all the way to the Witham; fol. 145<sup>f-v</sup>, *Molendinum* no. xix (Godric's son Walter of Roughton). These individuals are noted in F. M. Stenton, *The Free Peasantry of the Northern Danelaw* (Oxford, 1969), pp. 39, 47.

<sup>76</sup> A. Williams, trans., *Domesday Book: A Complete Translation* (London, 2003), pp. 932–3, 959–60; P. Wormald, *Papers Preparatory to The Making of English Law: King Alfred to the Twelfth Century: Volume II, From God's Law to Common Law*, ed. S. Baxter and J. Hudson (London, 2014), pp. 226–7.

<sup>77</sup> J. E. Burton, ed., *The Foundation History of the Abbeys of Byland and Jervaulx*, Borthwick Texts and Studies 35 (York, 2006); W. Page, ed., *A History of the Country of Warwick: Volume 2* (London, 1908), p. 79; Burton and Kerr, *Cistercians in the Middle Ages*, pp. 63–4.

in both documents. The orthography of important names (*Withma/m*, *Belthesholm*, *abbathia/e*) consistently deploys a *-th-* digraph in the single-sheet variants, in place of the *-t-* common to twelfth-century Kirkstead documents surviving both in the original and in the cartulary.

These commonalities, moreover, appear anachronistic in the context of the mid-twelfth century. Both documents' inclusion of the right of chase and rechase (*ad caciandum et recaciandum*), which would have allowed the monks to herd their livestock, is suspect. Of the known corpus of occurrences of this phrase, these two documents are the only twelfth-century examples.<sup>78</sup> A similar observation can be made about the terminology of Robert's unusual concession, which deploys the rarely used language of licensing (*licenciassse*). In common with clauses outlining chase and rechase, the Kirkstead example is by far the earliest traced in medieval English charters.<sup>79</sup>

The third point of suspicion relates to sealing, though here we are on less certain ground. The fragmentary equestrian seal attached to Hugh son of Pinceon's grant differs significantly from another surviving example of his seal, attached to a Durham document of the 1140s.<sup>80</sup> Robert's seal closely resembles the design of his father Hugh son of Eudo's seal.<sup>81</sup> Walter de Gray Birch, however, commented on the irregularity of the stirrup on the impression of the seal attached to Robert's licence, where we can further note that the legend is destroyed and the impression has a cleanly-cut defect on the obverse, where the seal is attached to the parchment tail.<sup>82</sup> These aspects of both seals are sufficient to raise the possibility of forgery. In the twelfth century the practice was not uncommon, with fake matrices easily made using lead.<sup>83</sup> This method of seal forgery was also paralleled by the use in some cases of a genuine seal belonging to someone other than the purported donor of a forged charter.<sup>84</sup> Yet identifying forged seals – especially non-royal examples – is difficult and this period was a time of transition for ideas and standards of authenticity.<sup>85</sup>

<sup>78</sup> DMLBS, 'recaciare'.

<sup>79</sup> DMLBS, 'licentiare'.

<sup>80</sup> Durham Cathedral Archive, 3.3.Ebor.31. The seal is catalogued in J. Greenwell and C. H. Hunter Blair, 'Catalogue of Seals in the Treasury of the Dean and Chapter of Durham', *Archaeologia Aeliana* 3rd series, vii–xvii (1911–21), no. 1993. The Kirkstead example is described in W. de Gray Birch, ed., *Catalogue of Seals in the Department of Manuscripts in the British Museum*, 6 vols (London, 1887–1900), II, no. 5990.

<sup>81</sup> Extant impression on BL Harl. Ch. 56 H 9; Birch, ed., *Catalogue of Seals*, II, no. 5953.

<sup>82</sup> Birch, ed., *Catalogue of Seals*, II, no. 5951.

<sup>83</sup> B. M. Bedos-Rezak, 'In Search of a Semiotic Paradigm: The Matter of Sealing in Medieval Thought and Praxis (1050–1400)', *Good Impressions: Image and Authority in Medieval Seals*, ed. N. Adams, J. Cherry and J. Robinson (London, 2008), pp. 1–7.

<sup>84</sup> As outlined in, e.g., the introductory remarks of the catalogue of medieval seals in Durham: <https://n2t.durham.ac.uk/ark:/32150/s1vh53wv76d.xml> (accessed 9/2/2024).

<sup>85</sup> See O. D. Harris, 'Fragments of the Past: The Early Antiquarian Perception and Study of Seals in England', *A Companion to Seals in the Middle Ages*, ed. L. J. Whatley, Reading Medieval Sources Volume 2 (Leiden and Boston, 2019), pp. 129–54, esp. pp. 130–1. For specific medieval conceptions of seal forgeries and contemporary difficulties, see B. M. Bedos-Rezak, *When Ego Was Imago: Signs of Identity in the Middle Ages* (Leiden and Boston, 2010), pp. 202–3.

Palaeographical analysis provides surer ground for suspicion, at least in the case of Robert's licence. Though the documents – drawn up by two different scribes – would each pass as products of the mid- to late twelfth century, small variations in the consistency of the script accord with the possibility that they were produced by scribes who consciously archaized their output for the purposes of forgery.<sup>86</sup> Robert's licence contains some unusual majuscule letters (R, N), a wide variety of letter forms in certain cases (most especially that of g) and an abbreviated form of *et* consistent with thirteenth-century Anglicana. Significantly, it is almost certain that the scribe who produced this licence also produced a charter in the name of Walter Bek, Hugh son of Pinceon's son-in-law.<sup>87</sup> This charter is one of those identified by Stenton as a variant of another cartulary entry.<sup>88</sup> In common with Hugh's single-sheet charter granting the new site of the abbey, Walter's apparent original outlines more detailed and favourable terms than those given in the cartulary version, relating to the grant of an annual sum of 20s. of revenue from his mill in Tattershall.

The fifth area giving rise to suspicions relates directly to the understanding already outlined of the cartulary's compilation. The omission of these documents from the cartulary signals that they were unknown both to the scribes who compiled the kernels of the *Abbatia* and *Molendinum* sections at the turn of the thirteenth century and in the late twelfth century respectively, as well as to the extremely assiduous compiler in 1259–60. Moreover, the cartulary's marginal additions and annotations point towards post-1260 knowledge of these texts and mixed efforts to incorporate them into the codex. As shown above, Robert's licence was partially incorporated by a scribe after the compiler had completed his work. The same scribe made what is now a very faint interlineation above the item's entry in the compiler's *Abbatia* contents page to reflect his addition to the main body of the text, confirming that his intervention was made after 1260. Hugh's grant was not added at all, but instead was signalled by a scribe whose hand can be seen to have made a series of brief annotations in the cartulary and in its additions of c. 1310. This scribe used the phrase *hec carta est melior in cera* to signal cartulary entries which had 'better' versions in the archive of single-sheet charters held in strongboxes in the abbey's muniments room.<sup>89</sup> It is striking that the annotations overwhelmingly refer to Pinceon/Bek and Tattershall grants and that one which still survives as a single-sheet charter – that issued in the name of Walter Bek, apparently in the same hand as Robert's licence, as outlined above – is evidently the superior version referred to in this annotation. Clearly, the annotator who worked after 1310 was ignorant of the reasons for these

<sup>86</sup> And see M. Parkes, 'Archaizing Hands in English Manuscripts', *Books and Collectors 1200–1700: Essays Presented to Andrew Watson*, ed. J. P. Carley and C. G. C. Tite (London, 1997), pp. 101–41, repr. in M. Parkes, *Pages from the Past: Medieval Writing Skills and Manuscript Books*, ed. P. R. Robinson and R. Zim (London, 2012), ch. 4.

<sup>87</sup> BL Harl. Ch. 45 H 8, published as Stenton, ed., *Danelaw Charters*, no. 175.

<sup>88</sup> Cartulary, fol. 143, Molendinum no. xiii.

<sup>89</sup> The bulk of the examples occur in the section of the codex relating to the home grange and outlying local area (Molendinum): fols 143<sup>v</sup>, nos. ix, x, xiii; 149<sup>v</sup>, nos. liii, liv; 152<sup>v</sup>, no. lxxiii. A single example can be found in the additions of 1310, on fol. 221<sup>v</sup>. On fol. 139<sup>v</sup>, the compiler has added a note relating to Molendinum no. liv, to explain that the single-sheet counterpart is 'in the strongbox in the corner [of the muniments room]' (*in theca in angulo*), indicating that not all of these documents were post-1260 forgeries. For further discussion, see Dutton, 'Cartulary', pp. 91–2.

more favourable variants but made efforts to cross-reference them with the cartulary, which was still in use in the period.

Together, these discrepancies signal the production of Robert's licence and Hugh's grant not in the mid- to late twelfth century, but *after* the compiler's production of the cartulary a century later. They were modelled on authentic but now-lost single-sheet charters entered into the codex's constituent booklets in the earliest phases of pre-cartulary production. The result of this is that it is the cartulary, not the purported originals, which provides an accurate view of what Kirkstead's key donors did and did not formally grant or agree in relation to their new site. Documents hitherto understood to be the basis for the monks' relocation and title to their 'new site' are, in fact, thirteenth-century creations.

### Conclusions

It ought not to surprise us that Kirkstead, like other monastic institutions, tampered with documents. Their extant archive also contains a suspect charter of Henry II which significantly augments the monks' rights in the fenland of Wildmoor and continued examination would doubtless yield further evidence of forgery practices.<sup>90</sup> By way of conclusion, it is necessary to consider the reasons for Kirkstead's forgeries in relation to their move from old to new sites. Ostensibly, both Robert's licence and Hugh's grant could act as proof of Kirkstead's undisputed rights at their new site. Both attest to the abbey's ability to function within the complex wider landscape of the lordships within which Kirkstead was situated, as well as to the monks' secure control of their site. Such documents accord with some of the concerns encapsulated in the establishment of the boundary in 1259 and a similar document dated 1299.<sup>91</sup> Why, though, would the monks of the later thirteenth century alter the documentary record to inflate the basis of their occupation of a site already within the monastic estate and especially after a boundary had already been agreed with the lords of Tattershall?

The wording of Robert's licence offers us an important clue. The grant licences the monks 'to move the seat of their abbey to a certain larger site close by and better suited for habitation, without claim by me or my heirs in perpetuity'.<sup>92</sup> This ostensibly means that the charter attests to Robert dropping any claim to the monks' permanent site. But equally, we could interpret it as referring to the *vetus locus* which was, by the time of the forgery, the site of a brand-new chapel of exceptional workmanship, built on a monastic initiative and provisioned by a number of other prominent patrons. St Leonard's overtly marked Kirkstead's sacred site and eremitical origins, but it was also located in a liminal space south of the abbey, on the periphery of the wider abbey complex as agreed with the lords of Tattershall in 1259. These bounds delineated a compact rectangular area for the monastic 'Close', defined by watercourses and bounded by woodlands, and are mapped below. An area of prime hunting ground (Beltesholm) lying immediately to the south was the focus of negotiations with the lords of Tattershall during subsequent decades, a situ-

<sup>90</sup> Keele University Library, Hatton Wood MS M72/46/6 (i), printed as Vincent, ed., *Letters and Charters of Henry II*, III, no. 1431.

<sup>91</sup> Dutton, 'Cartulary', pp. 96–100, 104–8.

<sup>92</sup> This translation differs significantly from Coppack and Harrison, 'Reconstructing Kirkstead', p. 1, which instead of noting the clause on a claim translates it as 'without *disturbance to me* or my heirs'.



Fig. 3. Kirkstead in 1259.

ation only resolved by the creation in 1299 of an abbatial deerpark at Beltesholm, which was turned over to the use of the Tattershalls.<sup>93</sup>

This interpretation has important consequences for our understanding of the knightly effigy within St Leonard's, widely considered to represent one of the lords of Tattershall. David Stocker has refined the dating of this monument to 1240–70 and suggested that it is closely related to the effigy of Bishop Robert Grosseteste at Lincoln, produced c. 1255.<sup>94</sup> If the Tattershall effigy was modelled on the Grosseteste effigy, it could plausibly date from the period of Kirkstead's forgery of Robert son of Hugh's licence. It is a tantalizing possibility that the monks produced this document as part of wider negotiations with his descendants not just concerning hunting

<sup>93</sup> Dutton, 'Cartulary', pp. 96–100, 104–8.

<sup>94</sup> D. Stocker, 'The Effigy of the Thirteenth-Century Knight at Kirkstead Chapel, Lincolnshire', forthcoming.

rights and the monastic boundary, but also the relationship between the dynasty and St Leonard's. Though not patrons initially, the dynasty now made a grand statement about their ties to Kirkstead's impressive chapel. In subsequent decades and centuries, the licence may have continued to serve as a stimulus for patronage by the lords of Tattershall, including the new Cromwell dynasty of later centuries, who included a copy of the licence in their dynastic and seigneurial register in the early fifteenth century.<sup>95</sup> Such an interpretation presents a possibility never before considered in relation to St Leonard's, which brings together new documentary, architectural and topographical evidence.

In a different way, the monks' forged charter of Hugh son of Pinceon was probably also designed to stimulate an existing relationship. Hugh's immediate twelfth-century successors had been avid patrons of Kirkstead and his daughter Agnes, wife of Walter Bek, sought burial at the abbey.<sup>96</sup> The monks' forgery appears to have preceded an important agreement for the monks to say masses for his direct descendant, the long-lived John Bek of Eresby (d. 1303), who was buried within his own chapel in the abbey church, alongside other members of the Bek family.<sup>97</sup> It is only in this period that Bek confirmations refer to 'the new site of the abbey', strongly suggesting the presentation of Hugh's forged charter to the dynasty at the turn of the fourteenth century.<sup>98</sup> The traces of this association of the Beks with Kirkstead's relocation can be detected as far distant as 1632, when their descendant Robert, earl of Lindsey, petitioned Charles I in relation to Wildmoor Fen and claimed that his ancestor Antony Bek 'granted to the Abbot of Kirkstead the soil whereon the abbey was built'.<sup>99</sup>

Together, these conclusions – and the approach to the cartulary underlying them – signify a radically revised understanding of Kirkstead's development. By reading the charter material together with a wide variety of later evidence, it has been possible to locate the abbey's first, eremitical site and to demonstrate that this sacred *vetus locus* continued to play an important part in Kirkstead's life throughout the abbey's existence. It was the monks, together with their community of patrons rather than their founders, who were the driving force behind the chapel of St Leonard, which was not a *capella ante portas* but instead a new expression of an old sacrality and which came to fulfil several functions over subsequent centuries. The lords of Tattershall, widely regarded as founding patrons of St Leonard's and memorialized there in an effigy, only came to the project later, likely as a result of their very complex ongoing negotiations with Kirkstead through the later thirteenth century. Charters were forged as part of this

<sup>95</sup> BL Cotton MS Tiberius C. viii, fol. 52<sup>r</sup>, cap. lxxiii.

<sup>96</sup> The cartulary contains numerous entries attesting to this relationship, and see Stenton, ed., *Danelaw Charters*, nos. 174, 175, 177–9.

<sup>97</sup> BL Harl. Ch. 45 H 15a; A. Collins, ed., *The Peerage of England*, 5 vols (London, 1756), IV, pp. 239–40, citing the lost Black Book of Eresby, fol. 57<sup>v</sup>, noted that John Bek 'bequeathed his body to be buried in the chapel of St Maurice, within the abbey of Kirstede, whereunto he gave his coat of mail, his gantlets, his harness of iron, his lance, and target'. Bek is also one of the few laypeople noted in the calendar of the Kirkstead Psalter (BL Add. MS 88905, fols 9<sup>r</sup>, 12<sup>r</sup>).

<sup>98</sup> Cartulary, fol. 222<sup>v</sup>, Abbatia no. lxii (Antony Bek, bishop of Durham) and Molendinum no. cv (John Bek).

<sup>99</sup> J. Bruce, ed., *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Charles I, 1631–3* (London, 1862), p. 475.

process and need to be understood within that context, even though their substance would in many ways have reflected contemporary understandings of the change of site they purport to provide for. Understanding Kirkstead in this way should give us pause, therefore. Not only is the monks' cartulary not a simple record of their rights and holdings, their old and new abbey sites are no simple manifestation of a Cistercian pattern of relocation.

