

# The Impact of War on the Economy of Canterbury Cathedral Priory, 1294–1340

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How much did people suffer as a result of the wars between France and England in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries?<sup>1</sup> As in any war, a few fortunate individuals were able to turn the situation to their advantage and make a profit, usually by supplying the government with needed arms, foodstuffs, or other raw materials. Moreover, soldiers had the opportunity to acquire ransoms, booty, or at the very least pardons for past misdeeds.<sup>2</sup> But those who stayed at home were forced to pay additional taxes, feed the armies, and cope with the disruption of trade. If they lived near the coast, their homes might be destroyed by enemy raiders. J. R. Maddicott has recently shown that peasants, with few resources behind them, suffered severely from the repeated royal demands for money and goods. He suggested that between 1335 and 1341 the weight of taxation may have been greater than at any other time in the Middle Ages.<sup>3</sup> To make matters worse, at the same time extensive prises were levied for the army in Scotland, for the garrisons of castles there, and for the provisioning of the south-coast fleet, and they were collected in new and harsher ways. When the tax collector or purveyor deprived peasants of their seed corn or their oxen, many had no alternative but to let their land go out of cultivation. Yet did the great landlords suffer as much, or were they able to escape the worst burdens of these wars? A close look at how one wealthy ecclesiastical house, the cathedral priory of Christ Church, Canterbury, fared during this time can help to answer this question.

When in the 1290s Edward I was faced with war on three fronts, in France, Wales, and Scotland, he taxed both the clergy and the laity harder

<sup>1</sup> A shortened version of this paper was read at the Fifteenth International Congress on Medieval Studies at Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Michigan, in May 1980.

<sup>2</sup> For examples of individual fortunes made during the Hundred Years War see Kenneth Bruce McFarlane, "Investment of Sir John Falstof's Profits of War," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th ser. 7 (1957), 91–116; McFarlane, "England and the Hundred Years War," *Past and Present* 22 (1962), 9–11; McFarlane, *The Nobility of Later Medieval England* (Oxford, 1973), pp. 19–40. Those who supplied building materials and victuals to the workmen building Edward I's Welsh castles also did well for themselves; see Michael Prestwich, *The Three Edwards* (London, 1980), p. 265.

<sup>3</sup> John R. Maddicott, *The English Peasantry and the Demands of the Crown, 1294–1341*, *Past and Present Supplement* 1 (Oxford, 1975), p. 45.

than ever before. In 1294 he demanded from the clergy a half of their income. With the new archbishop, Robert de Winchelsey, still awaiting papal approval and consecration, the clergy submitted under threat of outlawry. Unfortunately the urgency of the king's need forced him to ask for more — a tenth in 1295 and another tenth in 1296. The clergy tried to plead poverty, to no avail. But when Boniface VIII issued *Clericis laicos* early in 1296, their opposition was strengthened. Winchelsey, who had now returned, argued that the papal decree made any grant of taxation impossible. Edward responded that if the clergy failed to meet their obligations, he would consider himself free from responsibility towards them.<sup>4</sup> When, therefore, the clergy refused to grant the tax of 1296, they were outlawed. This was no idle threat. At Canterbury the sheriff of Kent took possession of the monastery, drove the monks out of the house, and by sealing up the granaries and stores deprived the convent of food for many days. Without the help of friends the monks might have starved.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, with no proper care the grain in the granary began to rot.<sup>6</sup> Finally, early in March 1297 the king ordered the permanent forfeiture of the possessions of those who did not submit by Easter. Under such pressure the monks and other clergy capitulated. Winchelsey allowed them to follow their own consciences in the matter, and one by one they agreed to pay a fine, equivalent to a fifth, to redeem their manors. By July, when the king and the archbishop were formally reconciled, the resistance of the clergy had crumbled.

At the same time the wool trade had been badly affected by the government's seizure of wool and the heavy increase in the export duties. Growers everywhere could not readily find buyers. Prices were driven sharply downwards, though it is not clear whether this drop was due to price-cutting by merchants or to the general uncertainties of the market.<sup>7</sup> On a number of estates wool accumulated unsold.<sup>8</sup> Canterbury cathedral priory was no excep-

<sup>4</sup> Herbert S. Deighton, "Clerical Taxation by Consent, 1279-1301," *English History Review* 68 (1953), 169-85; Gerald L. Harriss, *King, Parliament and Public Finance in Medieval England to 1369* (Oxford, 1973), pp. 49-74.

<sup>5</sup> *Bartholomaei de Cotton: Historia Anglicana*, ed. Henry R. Luard, Rolls Series 16 (London, 1859), p. 322. Lambeth Palace Library MS 242, fol. 187r, notes the expenditure of 6s. 10d. on bread and ale bought for the work of the convent at the time of the sequestration of the king.

<sup>6</sup> When an attorney appointed by the monks visited the convent, he climbed into a room at the head of the granary and, by looking in through a window, estimated that about 100 quarters of the grain had spoiled from heating. *Documents Illustrating the Crisis of 1297-8 in England*, ed. Michael Prestwich, Camden Society Publications, 4th ser. 24 (1980), docs. 6 and 9.

<sup>7</sup> Terence Henry Lloyd, *The Movement of Wool Prices in Medieval England* (Cambridge, Eng., 1973), p. 16; Harriss, *King, Parliament*, p. 434.

<sup>8</sup> In 1297 some of the bishop of Winchester's manors still held the accumulated stocks of the previous three years (Lloyd, *Wool Prices*, p. 16). For accumulation on the estates of the earl marshal see Edward Miller, "War, Taxation and the English Economy in the Late 13th and Early 14th Centuries," in J. M. Winter, ed., *War and Economic Development* (Cambridge, Eng., 1975), p. 14. At Bolton priory in 1294/95 the canons bought twenty-eight sacks of wool at the depressed price of three pounds a sack. This, and the demesne wool, was saved, not sold, until the end of the following year. Ian Kershaw, *Bolton Priory: The Economy of a Northern Monastery, 1286-1325* (Oxford, 1973), p. 87.

tion. At the end of 1294 the priory had thirty-six sacks of wool, valued at £144, sitting in its warehouse. The next year some of the new crop was sold locally, but the monks still ended the year with forty-one sacks and nineteen great pounds in store.<sup>9</sup> Whether the prior's officials could not find buyers or whether they were holding back in the hope that prices would improve is impossible to determine. They sold a small amount, £9 10s. 10d., in 1295/96 and finally unloaded most of it in 1296/97 for £143 7s. During the four years from 1293 to 1297 the Christ Church treasurers could have expected to receive about £90 a year from the sale of wool, making a total of £360. Instead they received £152 17s. It seems unlikely that local sales would have made up the whole difference.

How typical was the priory's experience at this time? Some convents with no reserves set aside to pay taxes were forced to make drastic economies. At St. Mary's, York, the bread ration of the monks was reduced in direct response to the half of 1294 and at Dunstable priory not only was the table less well served, but some revenues were anticipated.<sup>10</sup> At Bolton priory, although the general expenditure on taxation from 1287 to 1305 amounted to only 4.4% of its total expenditure, the half of 1294 cut more deeply and accounted for 22% of the cash expenditure in 1294/95.<sup>11</sup> For Christ Church, Canterbury, the problems were compounded by the need to pay for the archiepiscopal election, which had been financed with expensive borrowing from Italian merchants. When the treasurers at the end of 1293/94 took account of debts owing and owed to the convent, including the half and the unpaid loans, their total indebtedness came to £1,252 5s. 3½d.<sup>12</sup> During the next two years, with no income from the sale of wool, they repaid the Italian merchants £553 6s. 8d. and spent £159 on the expense of guarding the coast.<sup>13</sup> In addition they paid the king £706 3s. 9½d. for the half and £122 2s. 8½d. for the tenth granted in 1295. The payment of the half represented 29.7% of their cash expenditures that year, a slightly higher percentage than that of Bolton priory and considerably higher than anything paid by lay lords.<sup>14</sup>

One way to meet these payments was to reduce other expenditures. Here the priory was helped by a drop in the number of monks. In July 1297 there were thirty vacancies, and it is quite possible that these positions had been unfilled for some years before.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore the troubled times may have kept away some of the convent's visitors, since the treasurers were able to cut back on provender bought for the stable as well as on grain bought for the

<sup>9</sup> Cathedral Archives and Library, Canterbury (henceforth C.A.L.C.), MS Miscellaneous Accounts 1, fol. 191v; *Bedels Rolls Ebony, Orgarswick, Lydden*, 22-23 Edward I.

<sup>10</sup> Miller, "War, Taxation," p. 20.

<sup>11</sup> Kershaw, *Bolton Priory*, p. 167.

<sup>12</sup> C.A.L.C. MS Miscellaneous Accounts 1, fol. 192r.

<sup>13</sup> Among their other expenses was £28 10s. 4d. spent by the prior on attending two parliaments. Lambeth Palace Library MS 242, fols. 176r, 182r.

<sup>14</sup> Miller, "War, Taxation," p. 16.

<sup>15</sup> *Litterae Cantuarienses*, ed. Joseph B. Sheppard, *Rolls Series 85* (London, 1887-89) 1:24.

granaries. In addition the expenditure on wine dropped drastically. During the four years from 1290 to 1294 the treasurers had bought an average of sixty-eight and a half casks of wine a year at an annual cost of £127 14s. 6d. With eleven casks left in the cellar at the end of 1294 they bought nine more in 1295, ten in 1296, and one in 1297, for an average annual cost of £20 5s. 9d., a saving of £100 a year. This may have been a deliberate economy measure or it may have been forced on them by necessity: hostilities in Gascony undoubtedly disrupted the wine supplies. Finally the treasurers spent scarcely anything on new building or the purchase of lands and rents.<sup>16</sup>

Unusually high revenues from the manors also helped the convent meet its financial crisis. With scarcely any new barns, granges, or chapels being constructed, more money was available for the treasurers. Even more significantly, any grain that was sold fetched high prices. Historians have generally recognized that the withdrawal of large quantities of grain from the market by purveyance might have raised prices, but they lacked the evidence that it actually did.<sup>17</sup> Purchases by the crown to provision the army in Gascony fell with particular severity on Kent, where the sheriff in 1296 and 1297 collected 2,221 quarters of wheat, 1,542 quarters of oats, and 1,121 quarters of barley. This amounts to the produce of about 4,900 acres.<sup>18</sup> Consequently, even though the harvests were good, prices in Kent stayed high when they dropped in the rest of the country (see Table 1). This explains the anomaly noted by J. R. Strayer, "the king was still buying large quantities of grain in 1296 when prices dropped," but undermines his conclusion, "no-one was getting rich from the sale of grain."<sup>19</sup> Christ Church priory was. By the end of 1296 the priory's total indebtedness had been reduced to £4 16s. 3½d.<sup>20</sup>

The year 1297, despite the temporary closure of the house and the political struggle with the king, was an extremely profitable one. The wool that had been accumulating in the warehouse was finally sold, and much of the new crop was sold locally.<sup>21</sup> Harvests were good and grain prices remained high, so the serjeants, especially on the Weald manors, were able to sell large quantities of grain locally and send substantial amounts of cash to the treasurers. At Ebony, for example, the serjeants received £56 10s. 3¼d.

<sup>16</sup> In 1296 £2 10s. was spent on the purchase of lands and rents, compared with an average of £43 a year in 1285-89 and £58 a year between 1290 and 1294.

<sup>17</sup> Maddicott, *Peasantry*, p. 32; Michael Prestwich, *War Politics and Finance under Edward I* (London, 1972), p. 135.

<sup>18</sup> Prestwich, *War, Politics*, p. 121, and *The Three Edwards*, p. 209.

<sup>19</sup> Joseph R. Strayer, "The Costs and Profits of War: The Anglo-French Conflict of 1294-1303," in *The Medieval City*, ed. Harry A. Miskimin et al. (New Haven, 1977), p. 288. He was following the argument and evidence of Michael Prestwich.

<sup>20</sup> C.A.L.C. MS Miscellaneous Accounts I, fol. 204v.

<sup>21</sup> Lydden recorded the receipt of £5 from the sale of wool (C.A.L.C. MS Bedels Rolls, Lydden, 24-25 Edward I).

TABLE I  
Average Prices of Wheat and Oats, 1295-98

	Wheat		Oats	
	Kent	England	Kent	England
1295	9s.	9s. 2d.	6s.	3s.
1296	8s. 6d.	4s. 10d.	6s.	2s. 4d.
1297	7s. 6d.	6s. 4d.	4s. 10d.	2s. 10d.
1298	9s.	5s. 4d.	7s.	2s. 10d.

Figures for Kent have been taken from the bedels rolls of the Christ Church estates there. (NB: During these years the Kentish oats measure, or seam, was generally larger than the oats measure used in other parts of the country.)

Figures for England have been taken from D. L. Farmer, "Some Grain Price Movements in Thirteenth-Century England," *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser. 10 (1957), 212 (halfpence and farthings have been disregarded).

from the sale of grain and sent £74 to the treasurers, whereas the average amount of cash sent to the treasurers from 1290 to 1294 had been £14 9s. 5d.<sup>22</sup> As a result the priory received a higher cash income from its manors, £1,779 14s. 5d., than it had ever done before.<sup>23</sup> Yet its regular expenses remained very low, with little investment in houses and rents and the purchase of just one cask of wine. The treasurers, therefore, were able with little strain to pay 11% of their income, £284 7s. 5d., on the fine to redeem their manors. That year they received £738 more than they spent, and even when they accounted for all their unpaid debts, they were still in the clear at the end of the year by £444.<sup>24</sup> The priory could not legitimately complain that it had been reduced to poverty.<sup>25</sup>

This analysis supports A. R. Bridbury's assertion that the war did not impose intolerable burdens on the great landlords. The monks could not escape altogether. They had been forced to drink ale instead of wine, to watch grain rot in their granary, and to let wool accumulate in their warehouse before being sold at a loss. But the profits arising from the high grain prices in Kent helped to cushion the impact of the successive taxes. Even so the priory was forced to economize. Bridbury was not altogether correct when he remarked that Edward I's war taxation did *not* devote to "unproductive uses resources which had been better employed hitherto."<sup>26</sup> It is true that in times of peace much of Christ Church's resources were consumed by lawyers, pilgrims, and guests, all of whom ate and drank at the

<sup>22</sup> C.A.L.C. MS Bedels Rolls, Ebony, 24-25 Edward I.

<sup>23</sup> C.A.L.C. MS Miscellaneous Accounts 1, fol. 205v.

<sup>24</sup> C.A.L.C. MS Miscellaneous Accounts 1, fol. 211v.

<sup>25</sup> In the *Monstraunces* the barons complained that they could not make a grant to the king because of the poverty caused by the diverse tallages and prises. John Goronwy Edwards, "Confirmation Cartarum and Baronial Grievances in 1297," *English History Review* 58 (1943), 153-54.

<sup>26</sup> Anthony R. Bridbury, "Before the Black Death," *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser. 30 (1977), 397.

expense of their hosts. But considerable sums of money had been spent purchasing or leasing pasture and woods, buying arable land or houses for rent, and building new granges, barns, and mills. With the need to find money for the war, this productive investment virtually ceased.<sup>27</sup> The strains to which even Canterbury cathedral priory was subject help to explain why the clergy were so willing to back the laity in their struggle against the king in 1297.<sup>28</sup> Yet the situation of Christ Church may well have been atypical. Other monastic houses not situated in Kent and without its resources and opportunities for retrenchment were surely harder hit.

A series of windfall profits over the next three years, 1297–1300, enabled the priory to build up a solid financial base. The circulation of bad money, known as pollards and crockards, coupled with continued expenditure by the government on the Scottish wars, caused many prices to rise.<sup>29</sup> Wool prices, especially, shot up, stimulated by the heavy buying for export.<sup>30</sup> The treasurers, therefore, were able to sell nineteen sacks of wool in 1298/99 for £135 16s., almost double the price per sack of two years before.<sup>31</sup> In addition, grain prices in Kent remained high at a time of exceptionally good harvests (see Table 1). Large amounts of grain were sold locally, bringing substantial cash revenues into the treasury. At Orgarswick, for example, where the average receipts from grain sales for the period 1278–93 had been £12 8s., the serjeant accounted for £53 19s. 5d. from the sale of grain in 1298.<sup>32</sup> Finally, Archbishop Winchelsey contributed £236 towards the expenses of his election.<sup>33</sup> For all these reasons total receipts were very high, reaching £2,589 in 1299. The treasurers were able to spend substantial amounts on legal expenses (£482) and speculative leasing (£250)<sup>34</sup> and increased amounts on wine and grain (£368 a year) and still have something left over. At the end of 1299 they had accumulated a surplus of £2,246. Even

<sup>27</sup> This reinforces the general statement in Edward Miller and John Hatcher, *Medieval England: Rural Society and Economic Change, 1086–1348* (London, 1978), p. 282: "Capital investment usually depended on a combination of exceptionally favorable circumstances; where these circumstances ceased to exist or were undermined, investment was curtailed, sometimes to vanishing point."

<sup>28</sup> For the role of the clergy in the constitutional crisis of 1297 see Deighton, "Clerical Taxation"; Harriss, *King, Parliament*; and Jeffrey H. Denton, "A Worcester Text of the Remonstrances of 1297," *Speculum* 53 (1978), 511–521.

<sup>29</sup> Michael Prestwich, "Edward I's Monetary Policies and Their Consequences," *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser. 22 (1969), 411–13; Mavis Mate, "Monetary Policies in England, 1272–1307," *British Numismatic Journal* 41 (1972), 34–79.

<sup>30</sup> Lloyd, *Wool Prices*, p. 17.

<sup>31</sup> C.A.L.C. MS Miscellaneous Accounts 1, fol. 220r.

<sup>32</sup> C.A.L.C. MS Bedels Rolls. Orgarswick, 25–26 Edward I. In 1298 wheat was selling for 9s. a quarter and barley for 6s. 8d.

<sup>33</sup> C.A.L.C. MS Miscellaneous Accounts 1, fols. 215r, 221v.

<sup>34</sup> In 1298 the prior leased the manor of Pakmanston for five years for £50 and leased the fruits of Chilham for £200 for six years.

taking account of all unpaid debts, the convent was in the clear by £2,017.<sup>35</sup> The treasurers had nearly one year's revenue in hand.

The constitutional crisis of 1297 led to only a temporary respite from taxation before the clergy were forced once more to make annual grants, this time to the pope. In 1294, when the clergy had been burdened with royal demands, the pope had suspended collection of the sexennial tenth imposed three years before, but in 1301 orders were given for the collection of the installments for the fourth year. In addition Boniface VIII ordered the clergy to pay a new tenth for three years. The avowed purpose of this levy was to help the Roman church meet the expenses caused by the situation in Sicily and by rebellion in the states of the church. No one informed the clergy that half the proceeds were to go to the king.<sup>36</sup> The concurrence of the two tenths aroused so much opposition that the collection of the last two years of the earlier levy was quietly dropped. In 1305, however, Clement V followed the policy of his predecessor and imposed a biennial tenth, this time for the Holy Land.<sup>37</sup> Most of the proceeds of this tenth, as in the past, found their way into royal hands and were swallowed up by the mounting expenses of the war with Scotland.

The burden of these papal taxes, however, was lessened by the fact that the valuation made in 1291-93 remained virtually unchanged and did not increase with the priory's rising income. Thus, although the convent paid a total of £2,580 in taxation to both pope and king during the period 1292-1307 (see Table 2), this represented just 8.63% of the money received by the treasurers.<sup>38</sup> Once the crisis of 1294-97 was over, the priory was again able to spend money on the purchase of stock and extensive building, both within the church, with the creation of a new rood-screen, and at the local level.

Among the baronial complaints in 1297 had been the cost of prises, in particular the grain, wool, beef, and cows taken without payment the preceding winter. Although in general the peasant suffered more than either the lay or ecclesiastical lords, Christ Church priory could not escape altogether. At the end of 1296 the treasurers noted that £14 was owing to them for grain seized in the granary by the sheriff of Kent. Yet with few bedels rolls for these years it is impossible to tell precisely how much the convent lost. At Great Chart, in 1295/96, twenty cheeses (half a wey) were seized by men of the king; at Small Chart, in 1296/97, oats and hay worth 49s. 4d. were taken; at Ebony, in 1296/97, ten seams of oats were "sold" to the king at 40d. a

<sup>35</sup> C.A.L.C. MS Miscellaneous Accounts 1, fol. 224v.

<sup>36</sup> William E. Lunt, *Financial Relations of the Papacy with England to 1327* (Cambridge, Mass., 1939), p. 381.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* The king was not required either to pledge himself to depart for Palestine at a definite date or to restore the money if he should not go.

<sup>38</sup> Although the bulk of the priory's income went through the hands of the treasurers, certain rents and dues went directly to the prior and some of the obedientiaries, so it is impossible to say precisely what was the total income.

TABLE 2  
Taxes Paid by Canterbury Cathedral Priory, 1292-1307

	Type of Tax and Its Purpose	Amount Paid
1292	tenth, Holy Land (Year 1)	£143 2d.
	fifteenth	41 13s. 4d.
1293	tenth, Holy Land (2)	142 15s. 6d.
1294	tenth, Holy Land (3)	143 1s. 2d.
1295	half	706 3s. 9d.
1296	tenth, Scottish campaign	122 2s. 8d.
1297	fine	284 7s. 5d.
1298	tenth, Scottish campaign	142 14s.
1301	tenth, Holy Land (4)	143 19s. 8d.
1302	tenth, Boniface VIII (1)	143 19s. 8d.
1303	tenth, Boniface VIII (2)	143 19s. 8d.
1304	tenth, Boniface VIII (3)	143 19s. 8d.
1306	tenth, Clement V (1)	143 19s. 8d.
1307	tenth, Clement V (2)	143 19s. 8d.

Source: C.A.L.C., Miscellaneous Accounts 1, fols. 181v, 186v, 187r, 191v, 196r, 202v, 210r, 217r, 233r, 239r, 253r, 266r, 272v. Halfpence and farthings have been omitted. No taxes were paid in 1299, 1300, and 1305.

seam, considerably less than the going price, and this money was never paid. The priory, however, had resources not available to the average peasant. Substantial bribes could be offered to the royal purveyors to save much of the grain and stock.<sup>39</sup> When this policy did not work, the priory could cut its losses by selling its goods on the market before the purveyors could take them.<sup>40</sup> Thus, at Agney and Orgarswick, in 1295/96, despite a payment of 4s., the ministers of the king captured one bull and thirteen cows. The next year the serjeant sold the whole herd of forty-seven cows. He gave no reason for the sale, whereas usually, if the stock were sick, he noted that they were sold because they were in danger of death. Similarly at Ebony the herd of thirty-two cows was sold, presumably to prevent its seizure by royal officials. Within two years both manors were completely restocked.

Despite its unpopularity, purveyance continued, for there was no other way to provide the large quantities of victuals required by the English forces in Scotland. Yet people who saw their grain and livestock carried away for the king's use had no means of knowing when, if ever, they were going to be repaid in hard cash. This was as true for the lords as the peasants, and dissatisfaction with Edward II's levying of prise was one of the forces behind

<sup>39</sup> The treasurers noted the payment of 60s. 2d. in 1296/97 by different officials "to save our grain" and another 35s. 7d. was given to clerks of the king "to save our wool" (Lambeth Palace Library MS 242, fols. 186v, 187r).

<sup>40</sup> A similar policy was followed by the bishop of Winchester in 1308, when he sold his oxen in expectation of a prise. Maddicott, *Peasantry*, p. 32.



the establishment of the reforming committee of the Ordainers in 1310.<sup>41</sup> Some magnates may have been primarily worried about a peasant uprising, but others surely were acting out of self-interest, having been badly hit themselves. Obviously individual circumstances varied, but at Christ Church, Canterbury, the monks calculated that between 1300 and 1311 they had lost grain and stock to the value of £103 15s. 4d.<sup>42</sup> This was in addition to the 100 seams each of wheat, barley, and oats supplied to the sheriff of Kent.<sup>43</sup> They were promised payment of £65 at Christmas but did not receive the money then. In 1313/14 another £22 10s. 8d. was promised, but not paid, for grain taken. These totals, however, give no idea of the disturbance taking place at the local level. The itemized expenditure of the serjeant at Ham in 1312 shows clearly how much trouble the men of the king caused. On their first coming he spent 18d. providing them with bread, meat, and cheese. When they returned, he supplied them with bread, ale, meat, cheese, and butter valued at 3s. 1d., yet they still seized half a wey of cheese worth 5s. He also had to give them 2s. to avoid damage.<sup>44</sup> Although the total expenditure represented just 1.5% of his cash receipts, his annoyance and frustration must have been considerable. To make matters worse, there was little likelihood of ever securing repayment without some kind of leverage. To provide for this the treasurers stopped paying the king the £10 a year that they owed him for the manor of Borley. When the new king, Edward III, tried in February 1329 to collect this outstanding rent, Prior Henry de Eastry pointed out how much the king owed the convent.<sup>45</sup> Finally, in 1331, the priory and the king undertook a mutual accounting, with the priory technically paying the king for the arrears of Borley and the king repaying three obligatory letters, including the one for the £65 worth of grain supplied in 1311. Even then he did not repay the debt in full; £17 7s. 2d. was still outstanding.<sup>46</sup> It had taken twenty years to receive partial payment. The money for the £103 for grain and stock seized earlier, plus the £22 10s. 8d. for grain taken in 1313/14, was never recovered. If a house as powerful as Canterbury cathedral priory had so much trouble in securing payment, how much harder it must have been for lesser folk.

Yet these losses, although undoubtedly irritating, were only a small fraction of the average income of £2,224 a year that the treasurers had at their disposal. Similarly, the burden of taxation was not truly onerous. Although the priory paid a tenth almost every year, ostensibly to the pope, yet in

<sup>41</sup> John R. Maddicott, *Thomas of Lancaster, 1307-1322: A Study in the Reign of Edward II* (Oxford, 1970), pp. 106-10.

<sup>42</sup> C.A.L.C. MS Miscellaneous Accounts 2, fol. 40v.

<sup>43</sup> C.A.L.C. MS Miscellaneous Accounts 2, fol. 39v. *Calendar of the Patent Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office: Edward II, A.D. 1307-1313* (London, 1894), pp. 381, 484.

<sup>44</sup> C.A.L.C. MS Bedels Roll, Ham, 5-6 Edward II.

<sup>45</sup> *Litterae Cantuarienses*, 1:279.

<sup>46</sup> C.A.L.C. MS Miscellaneous Accounts 2, fol. 202r. The total royal payments were £380 19s. 6d.

reality to the king, the total paid in taxation in the period 1308-15 was £648 19s. 4d. — 4.4% of the treasurers' receipts. There was nothing to compare with the half of the priory's income demanded in 1294. Taken as a whole, the first fifteen years of the fourteenth century were a period of economic health and vitality for the priory. At the end of 1303 the treasurers carried over a surplus of £2,639.<sup>47</sup> A new, sharp burst of inflation, caused in part by an influx of silver into the country, allowed rents to rise and brought increased revenues from the sale of grain and wool.<sup>48</sup> On a number of manors marling and the intensive use of legumes made possible an increase in the area under cultivation, particularly wheat; large purchases maintained the sheep flocks, despite considerable outbreaks of disease; above all, large sums of money were poured into building, with new mills, barns, and halls, many of stone with elaborate tiled roofs, rising on all sides. To take but one example, in 1311 the serjeant at Great Chart tore down the old wooden chapel and spent £58 6d. on a new stone chapel and chamber. The next year a grange and chamber for the serjeant were constructed for £30 5s. 10d., and in 1313 the serjeant built a new stone hall with pantry, buttery, and solar at a total cost of £67 18s. 11d.<sup>49</sup> Thus in three years the priory had spent £156 5s. 3d. on new building in just one manor. This was more than one year's payment in taxation and about the same as the total stock and grain seized by the royal purveyors over an eleven-year period.

This prosperity was shared by many other estates. The estates of Durham cathedral priory saw a similar expansion in grain production. At Bolton priory, where taxation consumed just 3% of expenditures between 1305 and 1315, the canons, like the monks of Christ Church, preferred to spend their money on building.<sup>50</sup> During the same period, on the Oxford manor of Cuxham, all the farm buildings that were newly built or extensively reconstructed were given tiled roofs, whereas earlier all but the granary and the dovecotes had been thatched.<sup>51</sup> Lay lords, of course, followed suit. Thomas of Lancaster, for example, in 1313-14 spent almost £2,000 on the erection of new buildings. A. R. Bridbury, discussing the resources poured into new construction and the widespread changeover from wooden structures to stone buildings, describes the movement as a "colossal and unparalleled achievement" and suggests that "the aggregate economic strength of the country was at its medieval peak."<sup>52</sup> But the new buildings were very costly and dug deeply into resources that were already stretched thin to finance the

<sup>47</sup> C.A.L.C. MS Miscellaneous Accounts 1, fol. 246r.

<sup>48</sup> Mavis Mate, "High Prices in Early Fourteenth-Century England: Causes and Consequences," *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser. 28 (1975), 1-16.

<sup>49</sup> British Library Cotton MS Galba E. IV, fol. 104v; C.A.L.C. MS Bedels Roll Great Chart, 4-7 Edward II.

<sup>50</sup> Kershaw, *Bolton Priory*, p. 161.

<sup>51</sup> Paul D. A. Harvey, *A Medieval Oxfordshire Village: Cuxham 1240-1400* (Oxford, 1965), p. 37.

<sup>52</sup> Bridbury, "Before the Black Death," p. 399.

increased expenses brought about by the inflation.<sup>53</sup> No one seems to have set aside extra income as a reserve fund. In the case of Christ Church priory the surplus of £2,639 had all been used up by 1315. That year the rains struck.

As a result of the bad weather in 1315 and 1316 harvests were poor all over the country, but the wheat crops seem to have suffered the most, often producing half the normal yield or less.<sup>54</sup> Obviously the crops varied from manor to manor, and on the Christ Church estates wheat yields ranged from three-quarters of normal to half to just a quarter. With the general shortage prices soared. Consequently, when in 1316 the Christ Church granarer had to buy 244 quarters of wheat, he paid £199 17s. 8½d. Moreover, although the yields of barley and oats had been virtually unaffected, the prices of these grains had also risen. Consequently, when the treasurers bought 444 quarters of provender, just slightly more than the average, the cost was more than twice as much as before — £213 12s. 1¼d. compared to £96 16s. The convent's difficulties were accentuated by the monks' unwillingness to reduce their standard of living and especially their consumption of wine. In 1316, at the height of the agrarian crisis, the treasurers bought 135 casks of wine for £528 15s. 6d.<sup>55</sup> If they had been ready to serve ale instead of wine to their visitors and guests, as they had been forced to do in 1294–97, their savings would have been considerable. As it was, the treasurers spent substantially more than they received every year from 1315 to 1319, and the priory was restored to solvency only with the aid of substantial gifts from pilgrims.

Repeated outbreaks of sheep and cattle disease also undermined the earlier prosperity. At Christ Church, Canterbury, however, the sheep losses were not as serious as those of northern monasteries such as Bolton priory,<sup>56</sup> and the treasurers did not wait for the natural increase of the herd but devoted considerable sums to the purchase of new stock. By 1332 on many, but not all, manors the total number of sheep and lambs equaled or exceeded the earlier levels, and the priory was able to sell the same amount of wool as before the agrarian crisis. Far more damaging were the losses in cows and oxen in 1319–20. Available money went first to the purchase of oxen, and occasionally stots, so that by 1332 only a few of the cow herds had reached the level of the early fourteenth century. Reduced revenues from dairy products thus added to the priory's economic difficulties. By the 1330s most of the extra land that had been brought under the plow in the early

<sup>53</sup> Mavis Mate, "Coping with Inflation: A Fourteenth Century Example," *Journal of Medieval History* 4 (1978), 95–105.

<sup>54</sup> For the best description of the general distress caused by the agrarian crisis, see Ian Kershaw, "The Great Famine and the Agrarian Crisis in England, 1315–1322," *Past and Present* 59 (1973), 3–50. On the Winchester estates the gross yield of wheat was about 60% of average in 1315 and 55% in 1316 (*ibid.*, p. 17).

<sup>55</sup> C.A.L.C. MS Miscellaneous Accounts 2, fol. 70v.

<sup>56</sup> At Bolton priory the flock was reduced from 3,027 to 1,005 sheep. Kershaw, *Bolton Priory*, p. 80.

fourteenth century had been abandoned. Furthermore, new building on the manors had virtually ceased, as any extra revenues were used for stock purchase, not construction.

This retrenchment cannot be attributed solely to the pressure of taxation.<sup>57</sup> Some years no taxes were paid at all, and the average expenditure on taxes for the period 1320–37 was £109 a year, about 5% of the treasurers' receipts. A more significant factor was the monks' refusal to cut back on their consumption of wine. They found it hard to do so because of their desire to maintain a dignified presence in the community. They knew what was expected of them. This comes out very clearly in a letter written by Richard de Oxenden shortly after he became prior in 1331. He wanted to make a good impression on first assuming office, and the best way to do this, he believed, was to have plentiful supplies of wine, so that "our dignity shall be the more exalted."<sup>58</sup> Thus, during a time of very bad harvests, the years 1332–33, the convent purchased 194 casks of wine, much of it through loans and on credit. Eventually, though, the bill of £551 14s. 8d. had to be paid.<sup>59</sup>

It was easier to save money by cutting back on investment and spending less on building, marling, and replenishing stock. Fortunately the new stone buildings of the early fourteenth century did not need to be replaced with the frequency of the earlier wooden ones, and tiled roofs lasted longer than thatched ones. The fall in grain prices in the 1330s reduced the incentive to produce extra wheat for sale. Another devastating epidemic of both cattle and sheep disease in 1334–35 undid the recent investments in livestock. On a number of manors the sheep flocks were halved and the cow herds almost wiped out. To give but a few examples: the cow herd dropped at Great Church from thirty-five to nine, at Godmersham from twenty-five to three, and at Orgarswick from fifty-four to five. Other parts of the country were also affected, but how widespread the epidemic was is not known.<sup>60</sup> The work of rebuilding the flocks and herds had to be done once more.

Would this restocking have been easier and taken place sooner if the priory had not had to pay the £100 a year in taxes? Monastic officials clearly regarded taxes as a great burden. For example, in 1330, when the prior was negotiating with the Bardi for the sale of the convent's wool, he asked for a ready response, "since we are so charged with various payments and especially the pope's tenth."<sup>61</sup> Later he asked the rent collector in London to send down to Canterbury all the ready money he had, "because we have at the moment diverse and arduous business to be undertaken, especially the tenth of the pope."<sup>62</sup> The problem was that the papal tax collectors required

<sup>57</sup> Edward Miller ("War Taxation," p. 25) felt that taxation was "likely to have influence in the direction of economic change."

<sup>58</sup> *Litterae Cantuarienses*, 1:357.

<sup>59</sup> C.A.L.C. MS Miscellaneous Accounts 2, fols. 212v and 222v.

<sup>60</sup> Oxen died in Oxfordshire (Prestwich, *The Three Edwards*, p. 250).

<sup>61</sup> *Litterae Cantuarienses*, 1:485.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:471–73.

cash in hand, whereas merchants were usually willing to make delivery on credit. Obviously money that *might* have been used on productive investment was diverted to pay taxes, but would it have been used that way if the taxes had not been paid? It was just as likely to have been used to buy more wine. Most years the priory spent enough money to keep its manors in good working order. What was lacking were extensive purchases of new property and elaborate building. Before the outbreak of the Hundred Years War the financial condition of the priory was generally stable, if not exactly prosperous.<sup>63</sup>

To finance the renewed hostilities with France, Edward III began to manipulate the wool trade once again. Merchants, faced with an increase in the export duties, sought to pass on the cost by forcing down the price paid to the suppliers. In addition, the embargo on exports in 1336 and the subsequent establishment of a monopoly to handle the purchase and export of wool restricted the opportunity of landlords to sell their wool competitively.<sup>64</sup> Yet can the low wool prices of the time be attributed solely to the impact of the war? The evidence from Canterbury cathedral priory supports the contention of T. H. Lloyd that a new and lower level of prices had been established before Edward III began to interfere with the wool trade (see Table 3).<sup>65</sup> This downward trend occurred at a time when exports were booming. Given the shortage in supply after the outbreaks of murrain in 1334–35 and increased demand, prices should have risen. That they did not can be attributed in part to the general deflation brought about by the draining away of the stock of silver built up during the reigns of Edward I and II.<sup>66</sup> Another factor was the plan to reestablish home staples, which effectively excluded aliens from buying wool direct from the producers.<sup>67</sup> Thus, although the war clearly played a role in causing prices to fall, it is impossible precisely to weigh its contribution.

So, too, it is difficult to explain exactly why the priory was selling less wool. A major factor was obviously the cutback in the flocks through disease. Were the treasurers also holding some of the wool back in the hope of getting higher prices later? There is no evidence, as there was in 1294–97, of wool accumulating in the warehouse. Was it rather that they could not find buyers with the disruption of the export market? Yet on some manors, such as East

<sup>63</sup> At the end of 1335 the treasurers carried over a remainder of £74 7s. 3d.

<sup>64</sup> Maddicott, "English Peasantry," pp. 45–47; Harriss, *King, Parliament*, pp. 435–38.

<sup>65</sup> Lloyd, *Wool Prices*, p. 18. The new ratio of duty began to be applied only in the autumn of 1337.

<sup>66</sup> Nicholas J. Mayhew, "Numismatic Evidence and Falling Prices in the 14th Century," *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser. 27 (1974), 1–15; Michael Prestwich, "Currency and the Economy of Early Fourteenth Century England," in *Edwardian Monetary Affairs, 1279–1344*, ed. Nicholas J. Mayhew, British Archaeological Reports 36 (Oxford, 1977), pp. 45–58.

<sup>67</sup> Commons in the Parliament of 1334 complained that its profit from the sale of wool had been cut (Harriss, *King, Parliament*, p. 435).

TABLE 3  
Sales of Wool Recorded by the Treasurers, 1331-37

	Total Sacks	Total Price	Price/Sack
1331	16 sacks, 1 wey, 6 lbs.	£ 88 12s.	£5 6s. 8d.
1332	19½	102 13s. 4d.	5 6s. 8d.
1333	16	64	4
1334	12	50	4 3s. 4d.
1335	9	37 10s.	4 3s. 4d.
1336	10	45 10s.	4 6s. 8d.
1337	8 sacks, ½ wey, 7 great lbs.	34 5s. 9d.	4 1s. 8d.

Source: C.A.L.C., Miscellaneous Accounts I, fols. 201v, 209v, 219v, 229v, 239v, 249v, and 253v. Halfpence and farthings have been omitted.

Farleigh, fleece was sold locally in 1333/34 and 1334/35.<sup>68</sup> This suggests that there was no general shortage of buyers and that Canterbury was still a center for the manufacture of cloth.<sup>69</sup> If a significant number of other manors whose accounts have disappeared also sold their wool to local buyers, then the drop in the total receipts from wool sales may not have been as disastrous as appears from the treasurers' accounts.

In 1338-40 the French continually attacked the southern coast of England, causing great panic. Southampton was sacked, serious damage was done elsewhere, and people were convinced of the imminence of a French invasion. To defend the land, local magnates in the coastal counties were appointed as keepers of the maritime lands and entrusted with extensive powers, including the right to commandeer suitable men to form a defense force.<sup>70</sup> Men were also conscripted for service overseas. Yet on the Christ Church estates the rates for mowing, which were very sensitive to changing economic conditions, did not move at all, which suggests that there cannot have been a great drain on the manpower of Kent. The prior, however, constantly protested against any suggestion that the convent should provide men for the war effort. In 1337 he insisted that as the priory held its land in frankalmoin, neither it nor its tenants should be compelled to contribute to the watch by the sea.<sup>71</sup> When one of the convent's serjeants, William Glover, who was in charge of a great deal of its property, was chosen to go abroad

<sup>68</sup> C.A.L.C. MS Bedels Rolls, East Farleigh, 7-8 and 8-9 Edward III. At Ham in 1338/39 all the wool was sold locally.

<sup>69</sup> Under Henry III Canterbury occasionally supplied low-priced cloth to the royal household (Edward Miller, "The Fortunes of the English Textile Industry during the Thirteenth Century," *Economic History Review* 18 [1965], 70). The cloth industry was also beginning to grow in and around Cranbrook in the central Weald (Robin E. Glasscock "The Distribution of Lay Wealth in Kent, Surrey and Sussex in the Early Fourteenth Century," *Archaeologia Cantiana* 80 [1965], 63). For the general expansion of the English cloth industry see Miller and Hatcher, *Rural Society*, p. 247.

<sup>70</sup> Herbert J. Hewitt, *The Organization of War under Edward III, 1338-62* (Manchester, 1966), pp. 2-7.

<sup>71</sup> *Litterae Cantuarienses*, 2:122-23.

with a shipment of wool, Oxenden wrote to one of the keepers of the maritime lands, the earl of Huntingdon, seeking his help to prevent Glover's departure. The prior's appeal was couched in terms of concern for the rights and interests of Glover that he not be "oppressed through his simplicity, nor be charged with so great a responsibility which can only lead to a failure for him and loss and injury for us."<sup>72</sup> One suspects, though, that the concern sprang at least as much from fear of losing a profitable servant. In 1339 the chapter again sought exemption from the duty of furnishing two men for the coast guard, this time on the grounds that no further danger was apparent from the sea.

Large quantities of victuals were required to feed the men who did serve on the defense force, as well as those going overseas. In 1336 Geoffrey de Say had three mounted men buying on his behalf in Hampshire, Sussex, and Kent and nine others driving the cattle thus bought to the port.<sup>73</sup> Similar commissions were appointed in other parts of the country, and the monastic estates in the eastern counties were struck severely. The great fenland abbeys of Ramsey, Thorney, Peterborough, and Crowland all lost a great deal to the purveyors, probably more than they had in 1294-97.<sup>74</sup> Christ Church priory seems to have suffered less. Even though gifts had to be paid to save the grain and the stock, the amounts were generally quite small.<sup>75</sup> The largest sum expended at this time was the £4 7s. 2d. that the serjeant at Ickham paid in 1341 "on gifts and expenses to different men of the king on different comings." In this instance the royal agents must have been very persistent. Finally, despite the gifts, they took away or ate all the fruit from the garden. Lydden, which was close to the sea, also suffered some losses. In 1338 some of the animals using the pasture were captured by royal sailors. The next year milk and cheese were lost, even though 5s. had been spent on gifts; in 1342 ministers of the king seized thirty-three wethers, four acres of hay, and sixty coppers of vetch, with a total value of 57s. 8d.<sup>76</sup> Obviously other manors whose records have disappeared may also have suffered serious losses, but all the available evidence indicates that the burden of purveyance at this time was less than in the first Anglo-French war and considerably below that of the early years of Edward II's reign.

As part of the preparations for the defense of the seacoast, churchmen and laymen in Sussex and Kent were ordered to live with their servants and retainues on manors near the sea.<sup>77</sup> Because of this command, Robert Hathbrand, who had become prior in September 1338, went to live at Eastry. This posed heavy demands on neighboring manors. Not only did

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 196-97.

<sup>73</sup> Hewitt, *Organization of War*, pp. 48-54.

<sup>74</sup> Maddicott, *English Peasantry*, p. 57; Prestwich, *The Three Edwards*, p. 249.

<sup>75</sup> East Farleigh 1342, 10s. 6d.; Great Chart 1342, 18s.; Orgarswick 1337, 40s. 4d. and 1342, £1; Adisham 1338, 15s. 9½d.; Small Chart 1341, 3s. 4d.

<sup>76</sup> C.A.L.C. MS Bedels Rolls, Lydden, 15-16 Edward III.

<sup>77</sup> Hewitt, *Organization of War*, p. 14.

large quantities of grain have to be sent to Eastry, but in 1339 the serjeant at Lydden provided six cartloads of rushes for the floor of the hall. He also had to kill 113 of his ewes "for the hospitality of the prior at Eastry, staying there for the ward of the sea." This was one-third of the total ewes on the manor, and the flocks had not been rebuilt by 1348. Furthermore, to accommodate his household and guests, the prior decided to build a new chamber. The total cost of the new work is not known, but the prior spent £37 7s. 3d. out of his own funds.<sup>78</sup>

If the priory still had the resources to build a new chamber and provide lavish hospitality, many other people clearly had suffered more. The combination of purveyance, heavy direct taxation, and levies in wool often absorbed all available resources. Nothing was left over. Throughout the country landlords complained that tenants could not pay their rents.<sup>79</sup> Although on the Christ Church estates the regular assessed rents for land continued to be levied with no apparent difficulty, serjeants on a few manors could not collect the accustomed rents for such items as houses and fisheries. At Adisham, for example, a house that rented for four shillings throughout the early 1330s was not rented at all from 1338 to 1340 and was finally rented for three shillings in 1341. Similarly, at Chartham the rent for the fishery dropped in 1337 from twelve shillings to four, rising to just five shillings in 1339. These examples suggest that there was widespread poverty in the area and that, although the priory may have escaped the clutches of the purveyors, its tenants did not.

Further proof of the general economic distress can be found in the pattern of prices. Some prices were pushed up with the increased demand. Thus the repair and extension of castles such as Dover, the rebuilding of raided coastal towns, and the improvement of town walls, together with the rebuilding of local manor houses, such as that of Eastry, all added to the normal demand for stone, timber, iron, lead, lime, tiles, etc. On nearly every one of the Christ Church manors in Kent in 1337-39 the serjeants noted that the maintenance of plows cost more because of the dearness of iron. Grain prices, however, did not rise in the way that they had done in the late 1290s (see Table 4). One reason that prices stayed so low was that the royal demand for provisions was not so great as in the earlier Anglo-French war. The scale of the royal armies was far less than in the 1290s, and the evidence of the royal wardrobe books suggests that very little food was bought in England for the army in the Low Countries.<sup>80</sup> Another reason was the continuing deflation as more and more money left the country either illegally or through the crown's heavy expenditure on continental alliances. All

<sup>78</sup> C.A.L.C. MS DE 3, fol. 45v. In 1341 the serjeant at Eastry spent £18 1s. 6d. on the new chambers and a new mill (Eastry Bedels Rolls, 14-15 Edward III).

<sup>79</sup> Maddicott, *English Peasantry*, p. 71; Prestwich, *The Three Edwards*, p. 249.

<sup>80</sup> London, Public Record Office, E 36/303, fol. 204r. I am grateful to Dr. Michael Prestwich for bringing this information to my attention.



TABLE 4  
Average Prices Per Quarter of Wheat and Oats, 1335-40

	Wheat		Oats	
	Kent	Essex/Suffolk	Kent	Essex/Suffolk
1335	4s. 4d.	4s. 6d.	3s. 4d.	3s. 1d.
1336	5s. 2d.	5s. 2d.	3s. 8d.	3s.
1337	5s. 6d.	5s. 2d.	3s. 8d.	2s. 8d.
1338	3s. 9d.	3s. 4d.	2s. 10d.	2s. 2d.
1339	2s. 10d.	3s.	2s. 2d.	1s. 8d.
1340	6s. 4d.	6s.	3s. 4d.	2s.

Source: Bedels rolls of Christ Church estates in Kent and East Anglia. Halfpence and farthings have been omitted. (NB: During this period the oats measure for Kent was the same as that used in the rest of the country; cf. the note to Table 1, above.)

the evidence indicates that there was a real lack of silver money in the country in 1339-40.<sup>81</sup> Finally, the repeated war demands may have consumed so much of the resources of the poor that although the purchase of grain probably remained their first priority, they bought less than in the past. Even the poor harvests of 1339 did not push grain prices very high the following year.

Canterbury cathedral priory, therefore, did not make the substantial profits at the outbreak of the Hundred Years War that it had made during the Anglo-French war of 1294-97. Although the harvests in 1336-38 were generally good, the reduction in the area under the plow meant that less was available for sale, and the lower grain prices meant lower revenues. When the prior was asked to provide a transport for the royal navy, he refused, pleading poverty: "What is still left for me and my convent cannot suffice for maintenance, unless we run deeply into debt."<sup>82</sup> When in the following year the new prior, Hathbrand, was asked to grant a corrody to a royal servant, he, too, stressed the convent's plight, citing the great expenses incurred as a result of his personal watch by the sea.<sup>83</sup> These may have been just routine complaints to avoid unwelcome payments, for there is no evidence that the priory was in serious financial trouble, but they accurately express the general dissatisfaction. The modest surplus of £148 with which the treasurers ended the year 1338/39 was a far cry from the surplus of £2,246 that had been carried over at the end of 1298/99. In the late thirteenth century the economy was still buoyant and able to meet the increased royal demand for money and goods to support the war effort. Forty years later, taxes were not an exceptional event, but almost an annual burden, and the country had been buffeted by a series of bad harvests and outbreaks of cattle and sheep

<sup>81</sup> Mavis Mate, "The Role of Gold Coinage in the English Economy 1338-1400," *Numismatic Chronicle*, 7th ser. 18 (1978), 126-28; Michael Prestwich, "Early Fourteenth Century Exchange Rates," *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser. 32 (1979), 470-82.

<sup>82</sup> *Litterae Cantuarienses*, 2:191 (June 1338).

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:235.

disease. Consequently the seizures of the royal purveyors and tax collectors strained the resources of large and small landowners alike. Unfortunately the Christ Church treasurers' accounts end at this point, so it is not possible to determine whether the priory was forced to economize as the Hundred Years War progressed or whether it continued to take the war impositions in its stride. What evidence there is, however, suggests that its economy continued to be healthy, with sufficient funds available to maintain its estates in good working order, purchase fresh stock, and acquire new houses, lands, and rents. As in the past the impact of war appears to have fallen with greater severity on the poor than on the rich.

How much, indeed, did Canterbury cathedral priory suffer from the wars during this time? Royal purveyors on occasion seized the convent's grain and stock with little likelihood of payment; more often local officials were able to buy them off with small gifts. Purveyance, although undoubtedly exasperating, did not significantly affect the prosperity of the convent. In 1294-98, and again after the outbreak of the Hundred Years War, the wool trade was disrupted and prices and profits slumped. Yet local sales to some extent offset the losses, and wool prices were also affected by factors other than the war. On the other hand taxation in 1295-97 was a burden. During these three years the treasurers paid £1,112 13s. 4d., 15.9% of their receipts, in taxes. To find this money, funds which in the past had been spent for building or the purchase of lands and houses were diverted. Productive investment virtually ceased. The dislocation, however, was temporary. High grain prices in Kent at a time of excellent harvests allowed the treasurers to build up a substantial surplus, which was later used to finance extensive rebuilding at both the central and local level. The convent enjoyed economic health and vitality during the first decade of the fourteenth century. What changed the picture were the losses resulting from the bad harvests of 1315-17 and the repeated outbreaks of cattle and sheep disease that followed. Unwilling to reduce their standard of living, and in particular their consumption of wine, the monks of Christ Church, Canterbury, found it harder to pay the tax collector in the 1330s than twenty years before, but they could still do so without sacrificing either the maintenance of their estates or their way of life. Canterbury cathedral priory enjoyed a very privileged position, however, since it had substantial revenues in alms from the tomb of St. Thomas to buttress faltering revenues from its manors. To what extent its experience paralleled that of other great landlords must be determined by future research. The evidence of Canterbury nevertheless shows that it was possible, at least in Kent, to profit from the wars of the 1290s. By the 1330s that opportunity no longer existed.