

Lodgers at Bayham Abbey

The most numerous lodgers in a monastery were the corrodians. A corrody was an annuity which a layman could buy from a monastery with an outright grant of land or money. For the monastery it was a way of adding to its wealth; for the corrodian it guaranteed a secure and comfortable standard of living in old age, with his wife and members of his family often included.

A corrody might be very detailed in its terms: Bayham Abbey sold a corrody to a man and his crippled invalid son, and guaranteed to make good provision for his daughters, teach his younger sons a trade, pay all his debts, and send his lawyer an annual fee.

An imprudent abbot or prior might saddle his house with too many corrodies, gambling on the early (or not too long delayed) death of the corrodians. The letter-books of the bishops of the day show them as deeply concerned to restrain monasteries from mortgaging the future to too many corrodians.

John Evans 4/1/16

(Source: Medieval Monasteries in Great Britain, Butler and Given-Wilson, 1979)