

Jersey, Guernsey and English Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction under Henry VII

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Papal bulls transferring jurisdiction over the Channel Islands from the bishopric of Coutances (Normandy) first to the diocese of Salisbury and then to Winchester have an important place in the historiography of the allegedly centripetal forces of royal and ecclesiastical authority under Henry VII. This article corrects the chronology, and questions the disruptive impact of international tensions and the role of English bishops' or governors' ambitions. Instead, it points to the influence of Breton clergy. Further, that Henry abandoned the initiative for a financial contribution from the islanders sheds light on his policy towards his rights over the Church and beyond.

The transfer of the Channel Islands from their traditional place in the diocese of Coutances first to be under the authority of the diocese of Salisbury in 1496 and then of Winchester in 1500 has attained a position of some significance in the jurisdictional histories of the Tudor Church. The islands being the only remaining portion of the duchy of Normandy still under the control of the English king after

CPR = Calendar of patent rolls; ODNB = Oxford Dictionary of National Biography; RTGSNS = Report and Transactions of the Guernsey Society of Natural Science and Local Research; RTSG = Report and Transactions of La Société Guernesaise; TNA = The National Archives

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John's loss of continental Normandy in 1204, a continuing obedience to a French diocese appears to modern eyes to be a weak point in what is assumed to be the increasingly assertive alignment of the English king's territorial holdings with a consistent set of English legal, administrative and political structures. Henry VII's initiative to place the islands under the authority of an English diocese and bishop addressed this apparent discrepancy.¹ The episode also allows us to explore the complexities in Henry VII's engagement with the Church's liberties and its spiritual welfare. Recent studies have suggested, for example, the king's concern about simony in the face of its extensive practice by him, and his regime's willingness to use devices such as praemunire to undermine ecclesiastical jurisdiction.² The episode also potentially represents an instance in which Henry was prepared to test his rights (both regarding the Church and in other fields) and then clarify, vary or even waive them in return for sufficiently large financial contributions.³ Further, this passage in the history of the Channel Islands allows for better understanding of the close engagement of Bretons, Islanders and the Islands' governors at Henry's court, where they were prominent both around the king and around his son Arthur.⁴

¹ 'The early Tudor monarchs sought to rationalize developments relating to status that had been quickened by events in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries ... Henry VII attempted to transfer the Channel Islands from the diocese of Coutances to the diocese of Salisbury in 1496 and then, in 1499, to Winchester': R. A. Griffiths, 'The English realm and dominions and the king's subjects in the later Middle Ages', in J. G. Rowe (ed.), *Aspects of late medieval government and society*, Toronto 1986, 83–106 at pp. 86–7, 91–2, 98. There is more recognition of the distinctiveness of the islands' experience in David Cressy, *England's islands in a sea of troubles*, Oxford 2020, esp. pp. 107–9.

² Anthony Goodman, 'Henry VII and Christian renewal', in Keith Robbins (ed.), *Religion and humanism* (Studies in Church History xvii, 1981), 115–25; Steven Gunn, 'Edmund Dudley and the Church', this JOURNAL li (2000), 509–26; P. R. Cavill, 'The enemy of God and his Church': James Hobart, praemunire and the clergy of Norwich diocese', *Journal of Legal History* xxxii (2011), 127–43; Steven Gunn, *Henry VII's new men and the making of Tudor England*, Oxford 2016, 65–6.

³ For example, R. Stewart-Brown, 'The Cheshire writs of quo warranto in 1499', *EHR* xlix (1934), 676–84, and J. Beverley Smith, 'Crown and community in the principality of North Wales in the reign of Henry Tudor', *Welsh History Review* iii (1966), 145–71. In the context of London and other urban communities see Mark R. Horowitz, 'Contrary to the liberties of this city': Henry VII, English towns and the economics of law and order', *Historical Research* lxxxv (2012), 32–56.

⁴ Steven Gunn, 'The courtiers of Henry VII', *EHR* cviii (1993), 36–8, 45–6; John Currin, 'Pierre le Penneç, Henry VII of England, and the Breton plot of 1492: a case study in "diplomatic pathology"', *Albion* xxiii (1991), 1–22 at pp. 3–6; Steven Gunn, 'Prince Arthur's preparation for kingship', in Steven Gunn and Linda Monckton (eds), *Arthur Tudor, prince of Wales: life, death and commemoration*, Woodbridge 2009, 9; Tim Thornton, *The Channel Islands, 1370–1640: between England and Normandy*, Woodbridge 2012, 59; Helen Jeanette Dow, *The sculptural decoration of the Henry VII chapel, Westminster Abbey*, Edinburgh 1992, 9; Madeleine Gray, 'Politics, power and

Despite the apparently clear ambition behind the bulls of 1496 and 1500, the initiative itself is not well understood and has for some time been known to have been abortive in effect. The extensive consideration of the issue by G. E. Lee in the first decade of the twentieth century, which put the two papal bulls that provided for the changes into print, also demonstrated that in spite of their promulgation jurisdiction in practice remained with Coutances.⁵

The bull of 28 October 1496 was in favour of Salisbury. The grounds for the grant, requested by Henry VII, were stated as ‘propter dissensiones que inter Anglos et Gallos sepenumero vigent’; it referenced dangers in the administration of the diocese; and it stated that Salisbury was ‘uicine’ and therefore most convenient to have authority in the islands. The bull also referred to the precedent of Calais being moved in 1379 from the authority of the archdiocese of Tournai to that of Canterbury.⁶ The bull of 20 January 1500 used terms exactly similar to the grant of 1496, other than in stating that Winchester was ‘uicine’ and hence convenient for the islands.⁷ The lack of records at the Vatican (and, perhaps less

piety: the cult of St Armel in early Tudor England and Wales’, in Madeleine Gray (ed.), *Rewriting holiness: reconfiguring vitae, re-signifying cults*, London 2017, 243–61.

⁵ G. E. Lee, ‘Documents concerning the transfer of the ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the Channel Islands from the see of Coutances to those of Salisbury and Winchester, with comments thereon’, *Bulletin annuel: Société Jersiaise* v (1902–5), 251–65.

⁶ This is preserved only in a manuscript of Henry Wharton (d. 1695): Lambeth Palace Library, London, MS 585, p. 779; Lee, ‘Documents’, 253–5; Édouard Perroy, *L’Angleterre et le Grand Schisme d’Occident: étude sur la politique religieuse de l’Angleterre sous Richard II (1378–1399)*, Paris 1933, 103–10; Irene Josephine Churchill, *Canterbury administration: the administrative machinery of the archbishopric of Canterbury, illustrated from original records*, London–New York (1933), i. 508–19. The verbs used in the bull to describe the transaction were ‘dimembrentur et separentur’ and ‘subiciantur’; island writers in particular have been eager to emphasise that this meant transfer to the jurisdiction of Salisbury (and then Winchester) and not incorporation into an English diocese: see, for example, Jonathan Duncan, *The history of Guernsey, with occasional notices of Jersey, Alderney, and Sark*, London 1841, 423.

⁷ TNA, SC 7/4/2 (original); SC 7/4/13 (copies); Lee, ‘Documents’, 251–3; Thomas Rymer, *Foedera*, 3rd edn, Hagae Comitūs 1739–45, v/4, 147. It is recorded in the register of Bishop Langton of Winchester: Hampshire Record Office, Winchester, 21M65/A1/16, fo. 211–v. Lee and others give the date as 20 Jan. 1499, without specifying this is old style dating and that the bull was granted in 1500, new style. See the references in H. M. E. Evans, ‘The religious history of Jersey, 1558–1642’, unpubl. PhD diss. Cambridge 2001, 5–6; Thornton, *Channel Islands, 1370–1640*, 57; C. S. L. Davies, ‘International politics and the establishment of Presbyterianism in the Channel Islands: the Coutances connection’, this JOURNAL 1 (1999), 498–522 at p. 500; G. R. Balleine, *History of Jersey*, 3rd edn, revised and enlarged by Marguerite Syvret and Joan Stevens, Chichester 1998, 69; A. J. Eagleston, *The Channel Islands under Tudor government, 1485–1642: a study in administrative history*, Cambridge 1949, 49.

surprisingly, at Coutances), has raised questions about the authenticity of the bulls.⁸

Both bulls therefore invite us first to consider the threat and disruption in the islands represented by Anglo-French conflict. Henry VII's motivation in both the bull of 1496 and that of 1500, and especially the latter transferring the islands to Winchester, is further evidenced in a letter of 25 October 1500, dated at Langley in Oxfordshire, at the time a royal hunting lodge at the heart of the forest of Wychwood which Henry visited briefly during a period spent mainly at Woodstock.⁹ The letter indicated that the move to Salisbury had been due to the 'verray tendre mynde and right herty affection' which the king bore to the 'honour of this our Reame', as well as to the 'saufgard and suretie' of the islands of Jersey and Guernsey.¹⁰ Henry's language therefore aligns closely to the statement of the bulls themselves, focused on the threat to the islands, presented as part of the king's realm. At the point of the grant of the bulls, the bishop of Coutances was Geoffroy Herbert, whose episcopate extended from 1478 to his death in 1510. An activist bishop with a strong record of work in his diocese, Herbert became president of the *parlement* of Normandy in 1499.¹¹ There was therefore the potential for assertive authority directed from Coutances to cause disruption, especially if the region was also affected by sustained military and naval activity. In Henry VII's reign, conflict with France was initially focused on the contest over the fate of the duchy of Brittany, and, given their position in the Bay of St Malo, the islands' strategic location in this struggle was obvious. English forces intervened to support the independence of the duchy, for example a force of volunteers under Sir Edward Woodville in 1488, and then expeditions led by Robert Willoughby, Lord Willoughby de Broke,

⁸ See the comments in Lee, 'Documents', 251, 253; Darryl Ogier, *The government and law of Guernsey*, 2nd edn, St Peter Port 2012, 20–1; and, most forcefully, Gustave Dupont, *Histoire du Cotentin et de ses îles*, Caen 1870–85, iii. 170–2. This reflects a caution in French historiography touching on the islands. See, for example, Bernard Jacqueline, 'La Jurisdiction épiscopale dans les îles anglo-normandes', in Pierre Andrieu-Guitrancourt (ed.), *Droit privé et institutions régionales: études offertes à Jean Yver*, Mont-Saint-Aignan 2018, 401–6, and E. De Demuin, *Histoire religieuse de l'île de Jersey*, Rennes 1893.

⁹ Lisa L. Ford, 'Conciliar politics and administration in the reign of Henry VII', unpubl. PhD diss. St Andrews 2001, 255; R. Allen Brown, H. M. Colvin and A. J. Taylor (eds), *The history of the king's works*, I: *The Middle Ages*, London 1963, 243–5; Simon Townley (ed.), *Victoria history of the counties of England: a history of the county of Oxford*, Woodbridge 2019, xix. 49–50.

¹⁰ British Library, London, MS Cotton, Cleo. E. III, fo. 151 (Lee, 'Documents', 255–6).

¹¹ Dupont, *Histoire du Cotentin*, iii. 128–34, 139–57, 170–2 (here Dupont is over-sceptical of Henry VII's initiatives regarding the islands and Salisbury/Winchester), 190–1, 195–6.

in 1489 and 1490. There were further raids in Brittany in 1491.¹² 1492 had seen a full-scale invasion of France and the siege of Boulogne, but Henry had accepted the peace treaty of Étapes and a generous payment from Charles VIII.¹³ Although it has rightly been observed that Henry's attitude to this peace was ambiguous, and at times of French weakness he was tempted to consider further intervention, in practice the Treaty of Étapes established peace between England and France for the rest of Henry's reign, as when Charles was succeeded by his cousin (and brother-in-law) Louis XII in 1498 the treaty was renewed.¹⁴ Further confirmation of Henry's lack of serious aggressive intent towards the French is seen in the embassy of 1502, led, as it happened, by Matthew Baker, who knew very well the implications of war for the islands and especially Jersey from his time as governor there a decade earlier.¹⁵

The record of ecclesiastical business from the Channel Islands at Coutances itself suggests there may have been short-lived disruption during some of the most acute conflict of the late 1480s and early 1490s. For example, while there is evidence of business in the spring and summer of 1487, there is then no sign of Jersey or Guernsey activity until October 1489, and that is a relative isolated passage, with further business only in July and December 1490. But from the beginning of 1491 there is regular activity, as there is in the first half of 1492. There is then a further hiatus in the latter half of that year (as Henry VII was invading France) and through most of 1493, but in 1494 there was business in every month from February to August (except June), and again in October. 1495 saw islanders recorded in the diocesan registers in March and September, and

¹² S. B. Chrimes, *Henry VII*, new edn, New Haven 1999, 279–81; R. B. Wernham, *Before the armada: the growth of English foreign policy, 1485–1588*, London 1966, 32–6; John M. Currin, 'Henry VII and the treaty of Redon (1489): Plantagenet ambitions and early Tudor foreign policy', *History* lxxxi (1996), 343–58; 'To play at peace: Henry VII, war against France, and the Chieregato-Flores mediatio of 1490', *Albion* xxxi (1999), 207–37; 'Persuasions to peace: the Luxembourg-Marigny-Gaguin embassy and the state of Anglo-French relations, 1489–90', *EHR* cxiii (1998), 882–904; "'The king's army into the partes of Bretaine": Henry VII and the Breton wars, 1489–1491', *War in History* vii (2000), 379–412; and 'England's international relations 1485–1509: continuities amidst change', in Susan Doran and Glenn Richardson (eds), *Tudor England and its neighbours*, Basingstoke 2005, 14–43 at pp. 15–21.

¹³ Chrimes, *Henry VII*, 281–2; Wernham, *Before the armada*, 36–7; John M. Currin, "'To traffic with war"? Henry VII and the French campaign of 1492', in David Grummitt (ed.), *The English experience in France, c. 1450–1558: war, diplomacy, and cultural exchange*, Aldershot–Burlington, VT 2002, 106–31, and 'England's international relations 1485–1509', 21–2.

¹⁴ John M. Currin, 'Henry VII, France and the Holy League of Venice: the diplomacy of balance', *Historical Research* lxxii (2009), 526–46, and 'England's international relations 1485–1509', 23–4; Wernham, *Before the armada*, 37, 41, 45, 52–61.

¹⁵ *Letters and papers illustrative of the reigns of Richard III and Henry VII*, ed. James Gairdner (Rolls Series xxiv, 1861–3), ii. 340–62.

then in 1496 there was again business from February through to September in every month but June.¹⁶ Therefore, by 1496 it was hard to argue that there was current or even recent experience of the negative impact of conflict on the islands. This was even clearer in 1500, since 1497 was again busy with Channel Island business at Coutances and the bishop's suffragan conducted ordinations in the islands themselves during the month of June, and 1498 saw activity in every month from March to October, and again in December. The months before the issue of the bull of 1500 also saw activity.¹⁷ The wider context of religious belief and practice in the islands fully supported this: for example, just months before the first bull, in his will of July 1495, Jean le Pipet, alias Jambart, of St Clement in Jersey left bequests to the religious houses of Coutances.¹⁸

It is also important to consider the possible interests of bishops of the two English dioceses and their administrations in the new role for Salisbury and Winchester. Here, the impact of local initiative appears most likely in the case of Winchester in 1500 and not in that of Salisbury in 1496, so it is unlikely to have initiated the move to transfer authority away from Coutances. In the case of Salisbury, there is no indication of any effect in the islands or at Salisbury itself in or after 1496. The diocesan bishop, since 1493, was John Blyth, who although he had been prominent in royal administration as Master of the Rolls appears to have given little attention to his diocese itself. It is, therefore, unlikely that the decision to move the islands to Salisbury from Coutances was due to him, in spite of the influence and royal favour he possessed, including the patronage of his uncle, Thomas Rotherham, archbishop of York from 1480 to 1500.¹⁹

¹⁶ G. E. Lee, 'Extraits des registres du secrétariat de l'évêché de Coutances, 1485–1557', *Bulletin annuel: Société Jersiaise* ii (1885–9), 404–55 at pp. 407–13.

¹⁷ Dupont, *Histoire du Cotentin*, iii. 172; Lee, 'Extraits', 414–18 (1499 saw business in March, May and September, and 1500 in January, March and September: pp. 419–21); Bernard Jacqueline, 'Les Évêques suffragants de l'ancien diocèse de Coutances', *Revue du département de la Manche* xiv, fasc. 54 (Apr. 1972). For an analysis of clergy careers in the islands as they intersected with Coutances jurisdiction through this period see Tim Thornton, 'Clergy careers in the Channel Islands, 1480–1570', in Gordon Dawes (ed.), *Paris 1259: studies in the history and law of continental and insular Normandy*, St Peter Port 2016, 41–53.

¹⁸ 'Copies de testaments', *Bulletin annuel: Société Jersiaise* iii (1891–6), 221–37 at p. 225; Thornton, 'Clergy careers', 42–5.

¹⁹ *The register of John Blyth, bishop of Salisbury, 1493–1499*, ed. David Wright (Wiltshire Record Society lxxiii, 2015), esp. pp. ix–xxiii; David Wright, 'John Blyth (c. 1450–1499), bishop of Salisbury', *ODNB* at <<https://www.oxforddnb.com.libaccess.hud.ac.uk/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-2728>>. See the survey of the English bishops at the time of the bulls of 1496 and 1500 in Ogier, *Government and law of Guernsey*, 20–1, which also concludes that it is hard to see evidence for concerted intervention from them.

This initiative of 1496 may have aligned with the shift of the islands' economic connections towards Poole, on the diocese's Channel coast, as well as to Exeter and Dartmouth, which was seen in the second half of the fifteenth century. The subsequent initiative to transfer the islands to Winchester is, however, more easily explicable as reflecting the strong connections between the islands and that diocese's major port at Southampton (albeit perhaps with a sense of the recent decline of those links in favour of Poole), and the considerable wealth and power of the bishop, Thomas Langton, who was both very well experienced in international diplomacy, including a mission to the papacy for Richard III, and distinctively focused on diocesan administration.²⁰ Before his arrival in Winchester in 1493, Langton had been bishop of Salisbury from 1485, and it could be that he observed the abortive move to his former diocese in the years from 1496. Langton was to be promoted further, to Canterbury, early in 1501. His replacement, Richard Fox, was translated to Winchester from Durham in August 1501.²¹ Although Fox cannot therefore be seen as directly interested in the grant of the bull of 1500, he was a powerful force in Henry's Church and politics, with the authority and influence to impact on a matter such as the new jurisdictional arrangements for the islands. And yet there is no sign of this being the case.

The islands' governors were also a possible influence on the decision. In Jersey, Henry VII had appointed Matthew Baker and David Phillips to be joint governors in February 1486, as part of his response to the resistance of Governor Richard Harliston, who held out in Mont Orgueil Castle against the new English king's forces for some weeks. Phillips seems unlikely to have taken any direct interest in the role, but Baker, who had been a very close and trusted servant of Henry during his exile in Brittany and Normandy, became sole governor in 1488, and was resident,

²⁰ See W. Stevenson, 'The Middle Ages', and W. R. Childs, 'Channel Island shipping as recorded in the English customs accounts, 1300–1500', in A. G. Jamieson (ed.), *A people of the sea: the maritime history of the Channel Islands*, London 1986, 19–43 at pp. 28–30, 44–58 at pp. 45–9, and also below n. 23; D. P. Wright, 'Langton, Thomas (c. 1430–1501), bishop of Winchester and archbishop-elect of Canterbury', *ODNB*, at <<https://www.oxforddnb-com.libaccess.hud.ac.uk/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-16045>>; *The register of Thomas Langton, bishop of Salisbury, 1485–93*, ed. D. P. Wright (Canterbury and York Society lxxiv, 1985); and Charles Ross, *Richard III*, new edn, New Haven 1999, 133.

²¹ *Les Chroniques de Jersey*, ed. Bronwyn Matthews, St Helier 2017, ch. xi at pp. 66–7, includes a story about Fox's involvement in the clash between Jersey governor Matthew Baker and the de Carterets of St Ouen, which cannot be precisely correct because of the timing of his translation to Winchester, but may reflect his influence on island affairs around this time. For the reliability of this late sixteenth-century source see A. J. Eagleston, 'The Chroniques de Jersey in the light of contemporary documents', *Bulletin annuel: Société Jersiaise* xiii (1936–9), 37–62.

active and apparently much disliked in the island until 1494.²² He was succeeded in 1496 by Thomas Overay, a merchant and several times mayor of Southampton, who served as governor until 1500. Overay's appointment in December 1496 makes extremely unlikely any influence in the 1496 bull, although he was potentially a factor in that of 1500, given the island's connections to Southampton and therefore to Winchester. But any influence ended with his death in 11 December 1500.²³ His successor was John Lemprière of Rosel, a local man;²⁴ and this succession makes it very unlikely that Jersey's governor was a force in the decisions on jurisdiction of 1496 and 1500. In 1502, however, Hugh Vaughan was appointed governor of the island. Hugh had risen from humble origins in Wales through Henry's service to a position of some influence and a prestigious marriage to Anne Percy, daughter of Henry Percy, 3rd earl of Northumberland, and he was to remain as Jersey's governor until 1531. His active involvement in local affairs was highly controversial, especially given his feuding with leading local families such as the de Carterets of St Ouen.²⁵ Vaughan's influence on the papal grants could only be retrospective, but it will be considered later in this article.

In Guernsey, Henry had seen reasons to act very swiftly after Bosworth, replacing Richard III's governor Thomas Rydley (who had succeeded Edward Brampton in January 1484). Edmund Weston and Thomas Saintmartin were sent urgently to Guernsey on 6 September 1485 and became joint governors in November.²⁶ Weston had first come to the islands as one of the leaders of the expedition which retook Jersey and

²² CPR, 1485–1494, London 1914, 80, 189; *Materials for a history of the reign of Henry VII*, ed. William Campbell (Rolls Series lx, 1873–7), i. 320; Denys Hay, *Polydore Vergil*, Oxford 1952, 198, 206; *Chroniques de Jersey*, chs viii–xiii at pp. 54–85 (note the mistranslation here of Baker's important role as esquire of the body to Henry VII as 'clerk of the court' in ch. viii at pp. 54–5); C. S. L. Davies, 'Richard III, Henry VII and the island of Jersey', *The Ricardian* ix (1991–4), 334–42 at pp. 336–8; BL, MS Add. 45131, fo. 54.

²³ Josiah C. Wedgwood, *History of parliament: biographies of members of the House of Commons, 1439–1509*, London 1936–8, 653; CPR, 1494–1509, London 1916, 88 (December 1496), 150 (1498), 186, 189 (November 1499), 220.

²⁴ CPR, 1494–1509, 313 (12 April 1503, John Lemprière of Rosel as lieutenant and governor).

²⁵ TNA, E 101/414/6, fo. 58r (also at BL, MS Add. 7099, fo. 38); BL, MS Add. 21480, fo. 21v; MS Add. 59899, fos 48r, 77v, 94r; *Materials for a history of the reign of Henry VII*, i. 555, ii. 297; *Chroniques de Jersey*, chs xv–xxi at pp. 90–125; CPR, 1485–1494, 316; *Survey of London*, XIV: *St Margaret, Westminster*, III: *Whitehall II*, ed. Montagu H. Cox and G. Topham Forrest, London 1931, 3–9; *Calendar of close rolls, 1485–1500*, London 1955, nos 731, 733; Michael Hicks, 'Hungerford, Robert, third Baron Hungerford and Baron Moleyns', ODNB, at <<https://www.oxforddnb-com.libaccess.hud.ac.uk/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001/odnb-9780198614128-e-14178>>; Balleine, *History of Jersey*, 67–9; Thornton, *Channel Islands, 1370–1640*, 64, 66–70.

²⁶ CPR, 1476–1485, 318, 413; *Materials for a history of the reign of Henry VII*, i. 186, 316.

Mont Orgueil Castle for Edward IV in 1468, and Saintmartin, from the prominent local family, had not many years before returned from an exile in France consequent on his role in surrendering the island to the French in 1461. Weston soon took on the sole governorship, in February 1486, and survived until 1509, at which point the governorship of the island passed to his son Richard.²⁷ Weston's position was therefore much more stable than his opposite numbers' in Jersey, but it is none the less not immediately clear what from the governor's perspective might have motivated the change in ecclesiastical jurisdiction.

The detail of the grant and transmission of the papal bulls does, however, add perspective to ostensible motivations stated in the bulls and by the king in his letter, and what can be inferred from the interests of others involved. On 24 January 1500, Ralph Leonardi, a Dominican friar, received a royal grant of the priory of Lihou, which was described as lying in Guernsey ('infra Insulam nostrum de Guernesey'), but with no indication of a diocese. Leonardi evidently had concerns about the effectiveness of this grant.²⁸ It may not be a coincidence that it was made just four days after the bull of 20 January 1500 was issued. The first indication of a practical implication of the change of jurisdiction to Winchester came a few months later, on 17 November 1500, when John Brehanh (also spelt Brehanh, and known in other sources as Brehault) received papal command for commendation to the priory of l'Islet, which the papal instruction noted as formerly in Coutances and now Winchester diocese. Brehanh/Brehault was a Cistercian monk of the abbey of Notre-Dame de Boquen in the diocese of St-Brieuc (situated not far from St-Brieuc itself and Lamballe). It was there indicated that Brehanh/Brehault had already had possession for two years or thereabouts.²⁹ In fact, he had

²⁷ Stanford Lehmberg, 'Weston, Sir Richard (c. 1465–1541), courtier', ODNB at <<https://www.oxforddnb-com.libaccess.hud.ac.uk/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-29124>>; S. T. Bindoff (ed.), *The House of Commons, 1509–1558*, London 1982, ii. 590–2; G. R. Balleine, *A biographical dictionary of Jersey*, London 1948, 612–14; Gunn, *Henry VII's new men*, 195, 221, 319.

²⁸ TNA, C 76/181, m. 6 (*Foedera*, V/4, 150). For Leonardi's concerns see n. 32 below.

²⁹ *Calendar of entries in the papal registers relating to Great Britain and Ireland; papal letters, XVII/1: Alexander VI (1492–1503), Lateran registers part two: 1495–1503*, ed. Anne P. Fuller, Dublin 1994, 332–3. This should be compared with the previous mention of Jersey as in the diocese of Coutances in September 1484: *Calendar of entries in the papal registers relating to Great Britain and Ireland, XIV: Papal letters, 1484–1492*, ed. J. A. Twemlow, London 1960, 318; Yves Gallet, 'L'Abbaye cistercienne de Boquen', in Yves Gallet, François Heber-Suffrin and Éliane Vergnolle (eds), *Côtes-d'Armor: 'Le Beau Moyen Âge'* (Congrès Archéologique de France, 173e session, 2015), 341–51 (the monastery was the resting place of Gilles de Britanny, murdered in 1450 at the instance of his brother Duke Francis I, and the recipient of gifts of repentance from Francis).

first received the priory by royal grant on 1 February 1496.³⁰ Then, a little later, Richard le Hagueys was presented to the Jersey parish of St Brelade, the grant by the crown being dated 2 January 1501, specifying Winchester diocese, and this being recorded (as the first islands transaction there) in the Winchester registers against the date 9 January 1501.³¹ And on 7 May 1502, more than two years after his initial royal grant, Ralph Leonardi received papal confirmation of the priory of Lihou, now stated specifically to be in Winchester diocese, and indicating that he feared earlier provision *via* Mont-Saint-Michel would not hold good.³²

Further light can be shed on these transactions thanks to the record of the king's financial transactions for 1500: 'Me[moran]^d[um] that the king[es] g[ra]ce hath deliu[er]ed the bull for the vnyon of Jersey & Garnesay to the bushoprich of Winch[este]r vnto a freer of Brutayn which is p[ri]our in Garnesay for to be deliu[er]ed to the bushop of Winch[este]r forto be executed &c[etera] deliu[er]ed at Wodestok this xxvijⁱⁱ day of Octob[er] Anno xv^{mo} [recte xvj^{mo}].'³³ This aligns with the king's letter of 25 October, dated at nearby Langley, accompanying the bull itself. It therefore appears that the man who carried the bull and letter for the king was a Breton friar who was a prior in Guernsey. The priories of the islands were no longer conventual in the full sense, but they were important local centres for the administration of the rights and property of Norman and other French monasteries.³⁴ Amongst the most important in Jersey was St Helier (or l'Islet)³⁵ and in Guernsey were those of Vale and of Lihou,³⁶ where although documentary evidence

³⁰ *CPR, 1494-1509*, 46. For Diacony see n. 38 below.

³¹ *CPR, 1494-1509*, 220; Hampshire Record Office, 21M65/A1/16, fo. 22 (Lee, 'Documents', 57, gives the date as 1 January, and 1500, i.e. old style).

³² *Calendar of papal letters*, xvii/1, 493-4.

³³ TNA, E 101/415/3, fo. 289v (Memoranda, 1500). The apparent dating of this memorandum to the fifteenth year of the king's reign, and hence to Oct. 1499, is disproved by the king's location at Woodstock, which points instead to 1500, confirmed by the dating of the bull itself to 20 January 1500: Ford, 'Conciliar politics and administration in the reign of Henry VII', 255; 'The chamber books of Henry VII and Henry VIII, 1485-1521', at <https://www.dhi.ac.uk/chamber-books/folio/E101_415_3_fo_289v.xml>, accessed 4 May 2023.

³⁴ Jean Le Patourel, 'Le Monachisme normand dans les Iles de la Manche pendant le Moyen Age', in Lucien Musset (ed.), *Aspects du monachisme en Normandie (IVe- XVIIIe siècles): Actes du Colloque scientifique de l' 'Année des Abbayes Normandes', Caen, 18-20 octobre 1979*, Paris 1982, 109-14. For the categorisation of priories see Chester William New, *History of the alien priories in England to the confiscation of Henry V*, Menasha, WI 1916, 37-44.

³⁵ Christophe Mauduit, 'La Réduction de l'abbaye Saint-Hélier de Jersey en prieuré, une conséquence de l'affrontement entre Arrouaisiens et Victorins en Normandie?', *Annales de Normandie* lxxiii (2013), 53-91; Guy Fortescue Burrell De Gruchy, *Medieval land tenures in Jersey*, [Jersey?] 1957, 102-6, 114, 124, 146, 159.

³⁶ G. E. Lee, 'The Vale church and priory', *RTGSNS* iv/4 (1903), 278-81; T. W. M. Guérin, 'Feudalism in Guernsey', *RTGSNS* vi/1 (1909), 58-82; S. Carey Curtis, 'Some

from the late fifteenth century is thinner than in earlier centuries, in the latter case at least archaeological evidence suggests a degree of activity and prosperity.³⁷ The influence of Bretons in the islands' churches was strong in this period. In Jersey, in January 1486, Henry VII had granted the priory of St Helier to Michel Diacony, a Norman who had been with Henry at Bosworth Field and went on to be Henry's confessor and then bishop of St Asaph.³⁸ After Diacony's promotion to St Asaph, the priory was held by the Breton John Brehanh/Brehault. In spite of a challenge from a man who claimed to be an islander, John Vasse, Brehanh/Brehault continued to hold the priory until he eventually resigned and was succeeded in 1517 by John Carvanell, a royal chaplain first to Margaret, Henry VIII's sister and queen of Scotland, and then to Henry himself.³⁹ Meanwhile, Pierre le Penneec, another Breton, was appointed dean of Jersey in September 1495; he already had a record of involvement in Breton politics, notably the so-called Breton Plot of 1492 which was intended to undermine the French position in the duchy.⁴⁰

Although we cannot identify for certain the Breton friar indicated by the record of Henry's payments, the association with a Guernsey priory suggests it may have been Ralph Leonardi, given the importance of the Lihou priory for Mont-Saint-Michel.⁴¹ While this remains speculative, the

historical and architectural notes on the priory of Lihou', *RTGSNS* vi/4 (1912), 385–90; Edith F. Carey, 'The priory of the Vale', *RTSG* x/3 (1928), 284–9; A. H. Ewen, 'The fiefs of the island of Guernsey', *RTSG* xvii/2 (1961), 172–209.

³⁷ Jean Le Patourel and John Le Patourel, 'Lihou priory: excavations, 1952', *RTSG* xv/3 (1952), 180–5; Heather Sebire, 'The priory of Notre Dame, Lihou Island, Guernsey', *RTSG* xxiv/1 (1996), 153–64; 'Lihou priory archaeological excavations 1997 interim report', *RTSG* xxiv/2 (1997), 300–8; and 'Archaeological section report for 1999: Lihou priory archaeological excavations, 1998 and 1999 seasons', *RTSG* xxiv/4 (2000 for 1999), 542–6; Philip de Jersey, 'Excavations at Vale priory, 2008', *RTSG* xxvi/3 (2008), 375–91.

³⁸ A. B. Emden, *A biographical register of the university of Oxford to A.D. 1500*, Oxford 1957–9, iii. 2170; John Le Neve, *Fasti ecclesiae anglicanae*, XI: *The Welsh dioceses: Bangor, Llandaff, St. Asaph, S. Davids*, rev. B. Jones, London 1965, 39; Bernard André, *Historia regis Henrici Septimi*, ed. James Gairdner (Rolls Series x, 1858), 33; *Materials for a history of the reign of Henry VII*, i. 250 (*CPR*, 1485–1494, 68); *CPR*, 1494–1509, 25 (denization, as a Norman, August 1495). André calls him Francicastratus, which Davies was unable to identify with a town/city of origin: 'Richard III, Henry VII and the island of Jersey', 341 n. 32.

³⁹ *Letters and papers, foreign and domestic, of the reign of Henry VIII, 1509–47*, ed. J. S. Brewer, J. Gairdner and R. H. Brodie, London 1862–1910, *Addenda*, i, London 1929–32, x. 226(10). As the queen's chaplain, Carvanell was being supported by Henry VIII in 1512 in his claim on the archdeaconry of Dunkeld: i. 1296, 1300; ii. 1431, 2763, 2837, 2815.

⁴⁰ *CPR*, 1494–1509, 9, 37; Currin, 'Pierre le Penneec', 1–22.

⁴¹ Donald J. A. Matthew, 'Le Mont St-Michel et l'Angleterre', in J. Laporte (ed.), *Millénaire monastique du Mont St-Michel*, i, Paris 1967, 677–702 at pp. 688–9, 691, 694–6.

evidence suggests that the activists in the transactions with the papacy are likely to have been men like Leonardi and Brehanh/Brehault, from a Breton background but seeing an advantage to their own position in the islands in establishing a connection to English bishoprics and breaking a connection with a Norman/French one during years in which the independent duchy of Brittany was under serious challenge.

Further light on the transactions of 1496 and 1500, and particularly on their very limited consequences, is shed by an entry in the king's book of payments for 1503. Thanks to Lee's work, it has for some time been known that the papal bulls were of limited effect. Le Hagueys, in spite of his presentation under the authority of Winchester, also took the precaution of having the transaction recorded at Coutances, on 20 January 1501.⁴² The Coutances registers continued to record transactions relating to Channel Islands benefices until the end of Henry VIII's reign; meanwhile, in Winchester, there is no further record of an island transaction for several decades. It is therefore significant that on or around 20 April 1503, it was noted that the inhabitants of Jersey owed the king £50 for the right to be subject to the diocese and bishop of Coutances, and that £50 had already been paid by Hugh Vaughan: 'The Inhabitanes of Jersay owe L li to be vndre the Duches of the B[ishop] of Quotance ou[er] L li payd by Hugh Vaghan L li {in margin: ad ma[nus] R[egis] in corum p[er] manus Hugon[is] Vaugh[a]m}.'⁴³

By early in 1503, therefore, it appears that Jersey's community paid a significant sum to the king to return to the obedience of the bishop of Coutances. The involvement in the transaction of Hugh Vaughan, governor of the island since 1502, suggests strongly that he was supportive of the move, if not its initiator. Vaughan's likely role reminds us of the unusually close relationships between the islands' governors and the king himself during Henry's reign. Unlike in previous reigns, the men who represented the crown in the islands – and the islands to the crown – were both relatively humble in background and personally closely connected to Henry. By comparison, the governors under Edward IV (notably Richard Harliston) and Henry VI (such as John Nanfan) were less closely involved at court.⁴⁴ One context for this appears to be Henry VII's unusual preference for Normans and Bretons at his court, reflecting his extended time in Brittany in the decade and more before his successful invasion in 1485. This included the servants of his eldest son Arthur, such as the Islanders Thomas de St Martin and Edward de Carteret, and the (very

⁴² Lee, 'Extraits', 422.

⁴³ BL, MS Add. 21480, fo. 158r.

⁴⁴ Thornton, *Channel Islands*, 39–44, 49–52; Balleine, *History of Jersey*, 55–7, 60–1, 63–6.

well rewarded) dean of his chapel, John Neele.⁴⁵ It has been speculated that this preference had practical foundations, for example in Henry's likely confidence with the French language as spoken in the regions of his exile and the ongoing implications of his activity there, even to the extent of the rumoured status of the prominent Roland de Veville as an illegitimate son by a Breton mistress.⁴⁶ What is worthy of particular note, however, is that in this instance the involvement of one of Henry's 'new men' was associated not with a challenge to existing patterns of rights for the king's benefit, as is undoubtedly the case elsewhere,⁴⁷ but the reassertion of traditional privileges.

Henry's somewhat mercenary character has often attracted comment,⁴⁸ but this transaction sheds important light on his interest in jurisdictional changes in the Church. It provides a very distinctive example of the king's willingness to test his rights and extend them in ways his predecessors chose not to, but then effectively to waive them almost completely, in this case into the hands of a French prelate over whom he was unlikely to exert any control or influence, in exchange for money. The bulls and then Henry's withdrawal from this issue highlight too that Henry's ambitions to exert control over the Church (and those of his close associates) were complex and often equivocal. Whatever Henry's ostensible concern for the security of the Channel Islands and the honour of his realm, he was in the end content to return the islands to the control of the bishop of Coutances in return for a relatively small sum.

⁴⁵ *Materials for a history of the reign of Henry VII*, ii. 45, 80, 141; Emden, *Biographical register of the University of Oxford*, 1340–1; Balleine, *Biographical dictionary of Jersey*, 512–13; Jean de la Croix, *Jersey, ses antiquités, ses institutions, son histoire*, Jersey 1859–61, iii. 174–5; TNA, C 76/174, m. 41; C 76/178, mm. 2, 8.

⁴⁶ Davies, 'Richard III, Henry VII and the island of Jersey', 342 n. 33; Ralph A. Griffiths and Roger S. Thomas, *The making of the Tudor dynasty*, rev. edn, Stroud 2005, repr. 2013, 120, 198–9, 217; W. R. B. Robinson, 'Sir Roland Veville and the Tudor dynasty: a reassessment', *Welsh History Review* xv (1991), 351–67; Gunn, 'Courtiers of Henry VII', 36–7.

⁴⁷ See the cases summarised in Gunn, *Henry VII's new men*, 89–93.

⁴⁸ From Polydore Vergil, *Anglica historia*, ed. Denys Hay (Camden Society 3rd ser. lxxiv, 1950), 145–7, and views summarised in Sydney Anglo, 'Ill of the dead: the posthumous reputation of Henry VII', *Renaissance Studies* i (1987), 27–47; attempts at qualified revision in G. R. Elton, 'Henry VII: rapacity and remorse', *HJ* i (1958), 21–39; to, for example, C. J. Harrison, 'The petition of Edmund Dudley', *EHR* lxxxvii (1972), 82–99, and Dominic A. Luckett, 'Henry VII and the south-western escheators', in Benjamin Thompson (ed.), *The reign of Henry VII: proceedings of the 1993 Harlaxton symposium* (Paul Watkins Medieval Studies xix; Harlaxton Medieval Studies v, 1995), 54–64. Luckett describes Henry as 'avaricious and arbitrary'.