

## 1643

The siege of Corfe Castle (an hour's walk to SSW), from 23<sup>rd</sup> June until 4<sup>th</sup> August.

*Lady Mary Bankes and a tiny garrison defied 600 Parliamentarians. The siege was raised by Prince Maurice for the King. Captain Lay and a small Roundhead force (thought to number about 200) attacked Wareham upriver from Poole. Battle was joined from Redcliffe to Wareham Quay, The Priory grounds must have seen action yet the house survived. Captain Lay captured the town, 200 prisoners and a large quantity of arms and ammunition.*

## 1644

April 12<sup>th</sup>, Wareham taken by the Royalists in a dawn raid. 6 officers, 150 men, 6 ordinance and 200 muskets captured. August 8<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> Assault by 1200 Parliamentarian troops, the outworks fell and the town surrendered.

## April 1646

The second siege of Corfe Castle.

*Lady Mary again resisted the Parliamentarian forces for eight days until the castle fell through treachery. The castle was slighted.*

## 1762

The Fire of Wareham. Being on the edge of town and close to the river the structure of The Priory survived relatively unharmed. The main part of the town was destroyed.

*See the note on **John Hutchins** in the bibliography.*

## 1850

Sir William Pitt sold The Priory to the Earl of Eldon, Squire of Encombe.

## 1900

At this time The Priory was the home of Annie Beale who let apartments.

## 1952

Mr. John Greenwood late vice-chairman of Boots the Chemist bought The Priory.

*He laid out much of the modern garden.*

## 16<sup>th</sup> June 1976

The Priory was acquired by the present owners to begin a new life as an hotel.

## The Priors

Not all the Priors are known, a fairly complete list from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> century can be assembled as follows:

Roger	Undated	During the reign of Richard I (1189-99)
William	Mentioned	1216
Nicholas Bynet	Mentioned	1297
Peter de Deserto	Presented	1302
John Mabere	Presented	1311
Ralph de Coudray	Presented	1323
William de Bally	Presented	1329
John de Bediers	Presented	1332
Michael de Molis	Presented	1334
William de Barly	Presented	1343
William de Noys	Presented	1349
Robert de Gascur	Presented	1354
Ludovicus de Goulaffe	Presented	1362
Peter Ultra Aqua	Presented	1362
William de Minquet	Presented	1364
Stephin de Barron		Died 1412
John Kyngeston	Presented	1412
Walter Eton	Presented	1416
		Also spelled Eston, Elton & Eltone

## Bibliography

*The Victoria History of the County of Dorset. V2*

*Hutchins's History of Dorset*

John Hutchins was Rector of Wareham from 1743-1773. His tomb is in The Church of Lady St. Mary where he preached. His great history, his life's work, was saved from the 1762 fire of Wareham by the prompt action of his wife.

*Royal Commission on Historical Monuments in the County of Dorset* See especially V2 Pt.2 p317

*Cressy Church History of Britain*

*Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society: Proceedings* XIX p82 Article by **George Bennett**

**Robert Douch** *Handbook of Local History: Dorset*

*Country Life* March 4th 1976 Article on The Priory Garden by **A.G.L. Hellyer**

*Dorset Life* July 1990 Article 'an historic site' on the history of The Priory by **Paul Randall**.

**Lillian Ladle** *Wareham, A Pictorial History*. Phillimore Press 1994  
Some useful ephemera are stored in The Dorset County Library's "Wareham" file in Dorchester.

A condensed history of:

# Lady St.Mary Priory

(Now The Priory Hotel)

Compiled by Derek Moody



## The Priory Hotel

Church Green  
Wareham  
Dorset  
BH20 4ND  
UK

**Telephone:** +44 (0) 1929 551666

**Facsimile:** +44 (0) 1929 554519

**Email:** [reception@theprioryhotel.co.uk](mailto:reception@theprioryhotel.co.uk)

**WWW:** <http://www.theprioryhotel.co.uk/>

## Late 7<sup>th</sup> or early 8<sup>th</sup> century

The priory is reputed to have been founded about this time by Saint Aldhelm.

*St. Aldhelm was Bishop of Sherborne. He held estates in the area. He is known to have visited the locality in AD700 and to have founded a religious house. There is no proof that this was The Priory but no alternative has been found.*

**709**

Death of St. Aldhelm

**800 or 802**

Saxon King Beothric was buried either in the nunnery or the adjacent minster, presumably he is still there. He was the last king of the West Saxons. His name may also be spelled Brictric or Brithric.

**876**

Bishop Asser recorded a convent of nuns in the town. Danish invaders sacked the town at this time and skeletons found just outside The Priory's walls are thought to be the remains of many of these nuns.

*Cressy mentions "...a noble monasterie of religious virgins seated in the same town [Wareham]." This was certainly on the present site. At various times large numbers of skeletons have been excavated in and adjacent to The Priory. Hutchins tells of a 'cartload of bones' being removed when a cellar was dug, some of them from between two stone slabs. One of these, a broken thighbone, was unusually large.*

**About 900**

Alfreda, daughter of Alfred the Great rebuilt the nunnery.

**978**

King Edward the Martyr was murdered at Corfe. His bones were kept at Wareham for two years. About this time the prioress was Wulfwynn, she was of Royal blood.

**1015**

The Danes again sacked Wareham and destroyed the minster and nunnery.

**1017 - 1035**

King Canute (Cnut). He rebuilt many ecclesiastical institutions, it appears that the priory was one of them.

**1042 - 1066**

King Edward the Confessor. He granted the priory to the Norman Abbey of St. Wandrille. Monks replace nuns in the priory.

**1066 - 1087**

King William the Conqueror. After the battle of Senlac Field (Hastings) he subdued many Saxon boroughs including Wareham destroying in the process about a third of the town including the properties of the Abbey of St. Wandrille.

**About 1100**

Robert de Beaumont, Count of Mellent (Later the Earl of Leicester) built Wareham Castle and refounded the priory. He arranged the transfer of the priory to the Benedictine Abbey of Lire.

*Also called Lira. The Abbey was founded by William Fitz Osborn, a kinsman of William the Conqueror*

**1160**

The Earl of Leicester made a grant of fishing rights to the priory.

*This action separated the rights from much of the adjoining land forming a several fishery (Several - severed from other rights). In consequence, long after the dissolution of the monasteries these rights became the subject of protracted legal action. At one time the then holder of the rights attempted to claim the entire river to its source, for a while he was allotted the river as far upstream as Holme Bridge but eventually it was found that rights only existed as far up as Wareham Pool. Curiously the Priory Hotel does hold some fishing rights so the entire fishery does not fall under the severance.*

**1291**

The total income of the priory is listed as being £20 3/5<sup>d</sup> of which £12 2/9<sup>d</sup> was contributed by dependent chapels at Church Knowle, East Stoke, Shapwick, Wareham and Winfrith. Connections with French monasteries have long been broken by war.

*Presumably the temporalities (non religious income) included the tithes of grain ground by the North Mill on the River Piddle which was known to be owned by the priory in 1150.*

**1337**

King Edward III confiscated the priory's lands. The prior was required to pay to the Royal Treasury £2 per year.

**1387**

The priory had fallen on hard times. The Monday before Easter an inquisition was held in Wareham. The priory's properties were found to be worth, after all deductions and charges, about £10.

**1398**

Ownership of The priory transferred to the Carthusian house, Mount Grace in Yorkshire.

**1419**

King Henry V required prior Walter Elton to transfer allegiance to his Carthusian foundation of Sheen in Middlesex.

**1535**

The Dissolution of the Monasteries by King Henry VIII.

**1536**

The priory closed. Its annual income was estimated at £43 16/8<sup>d</sup>.  
*Some ruins of this building still remain.*

**1554**

The Priory was sold to the Reeves and Cotton families. Much of the existing building dates from this period when it was a farm house.