

of Dover on the route to Canterbury, but its proximity to the major channel port of medieval times, would suggest a vital role as a staging post. An incident substantiating such a hypothesis occurred in 1205, when King John made his submission to Pope Innocent III there.⁹¹ Its function does not seem to have been agricultural, since the preceptory possessed no more than 49 acres. This was a relatively small proportion of the 1,000 acres held by the Order in Kent, mainly belonging to the *domus* at Strood.⁹²

In Sussex the most important possession was at Saddlecombe, north-west of Brighton, which was granted by Geoffrey de Say in 1228. Evidence exists of an unexpected use of that preceptory: 'A remarkable document entered amongst the Saddlecombe deeds, and therefore possibly relating to this preceptory, is a letter from a certain Archbishop Azo requesting the master of the Temple in England to receive Joan, the aged wife of Sir Richard Chaldese, who had taken the oath of chastity and wished to submit herself to the rule of the Temple.'⁹³ It is not known whether this extraordinary request was granted by the vehemently misogynistic Order, but it nevertheless represents an interesting insight to the multiple functions of a Templar preceptory—at the very least as this was conceived by contemporaries.

However, the main function remained that of raising and producing cash to sustain military activities. The greatest reserves in England came from Yorkshire, which became so important in later years that a Chief Preceptor or Master was appointed exclusively for that county and its ten houses—including Flaxfleet, perhaps the richest of all English properties.⁹⁴ Elsewhere in the country the bigger preceptories often extended their jurisdiction and influence over county borders: for instance, property in Hampshire and Berkshire was managed from the Oxfordshire preceptory at Sandford-on-Thames in the second part of the thirteenth century.⁹⁵

Manpower for these estates was provided by an army of lay brothers, servants and salaried agricultural workers. At a preceptory with large demesne lands such as Lydley in Shropshire—important as the result of its site near Watling Street—the normal residents consisted in 1273 of the preceptor and two serving brothers. There were no knights present and the preceptor himself was therefore in all likelihood a sergeant, as was often the case.⁹⁶ Other servants and workers were not necessarily recorded. The small numbers of Templars found in other