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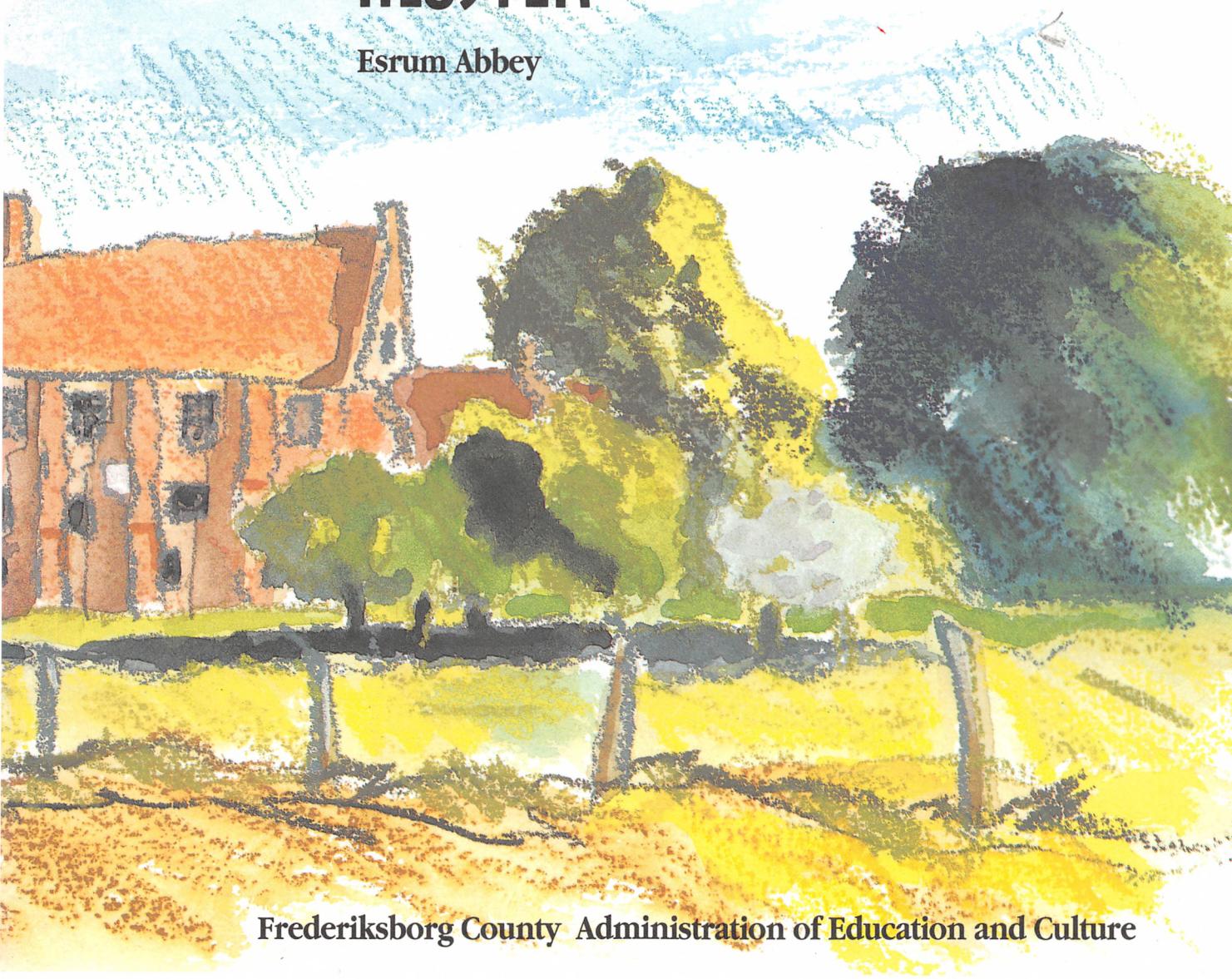
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ESRUM KLOSTER

Esrum Abbey



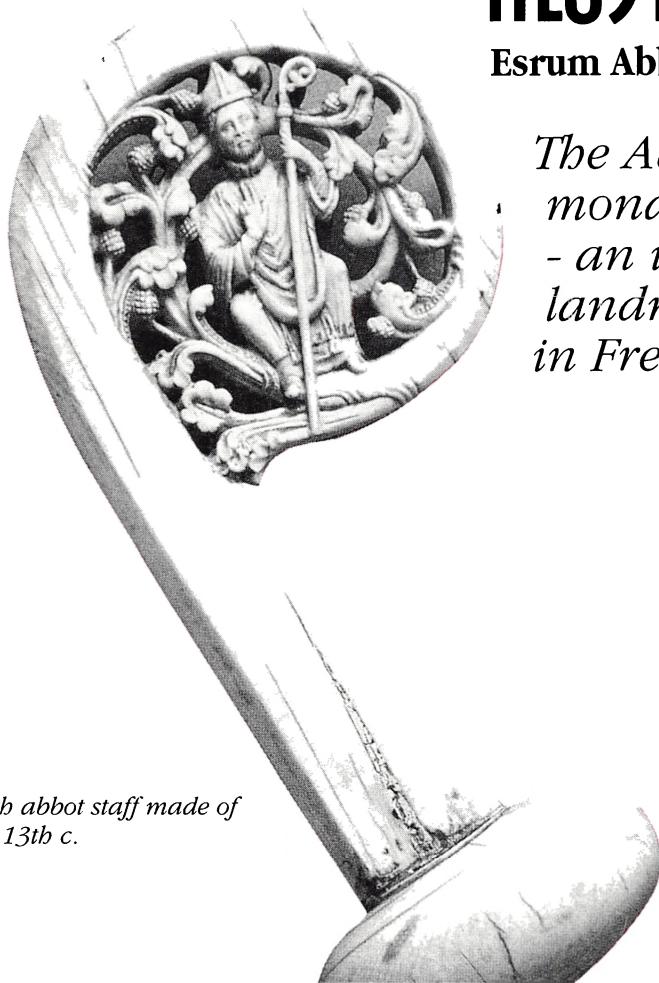
Frederiksborg County Administration of Education and Culture

Marianne Hjortlund,
Jens Anker Jørgensen and
Bente Thomsen

ESRUM KLOSTER

Esrum Abbey

*The Abbey,
monastic life and the Cistercians
- an introduction to a historical
landmark
in Frederiksborg County*



Danish abbot staff made of
ivory, 13th c.

Frederiksborg County

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The Cistercian habit is a white woollen cowl, but for everyday use the white habit is protected by a piece of black cloth, a scapular.

Drawing by Alfred Larsen.

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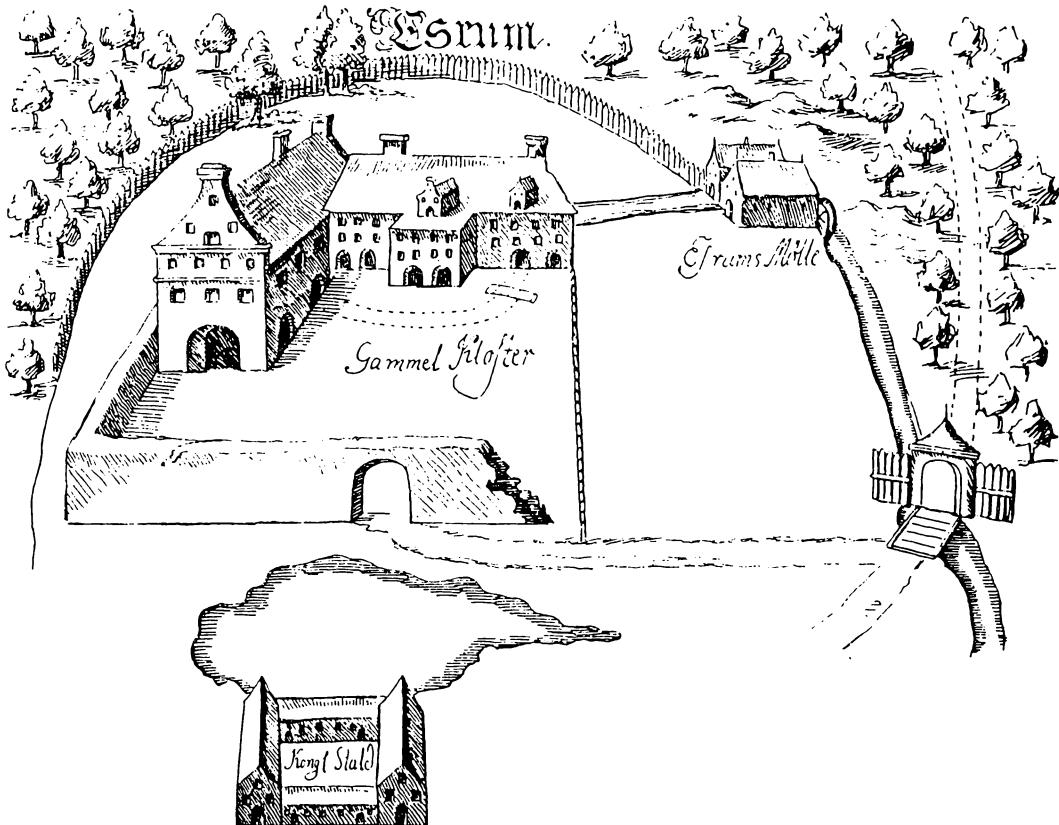
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Esrum Abbey

In the lush valley to the north of Esrum Lake one of the tall redbrick wings of Archbishop Eskil's abbey is situated. Little remains of the original great establishment, and yet for a sensitive visitor the calm but self-assured simplicity of the lengthy building can still evoke a distinctive, sombre medieval atmosphere.

The Cistercian abbey at Esrum was consecrated to the Holy Virgin in the year 1151, and at its zenith it was a powerful centre, spiritually as well as materially. Its buildings consisted of big four-wing constructions with an imposing 70-metre-long church. And the Abbey owned more than 300 villages and farms in the surrounding country.



The oldest extant drawing of Esrum Abbey is in Resen's Atlas from 1677. The building at the centre of the picture is the wing that still survives.

The Cistercian Movement

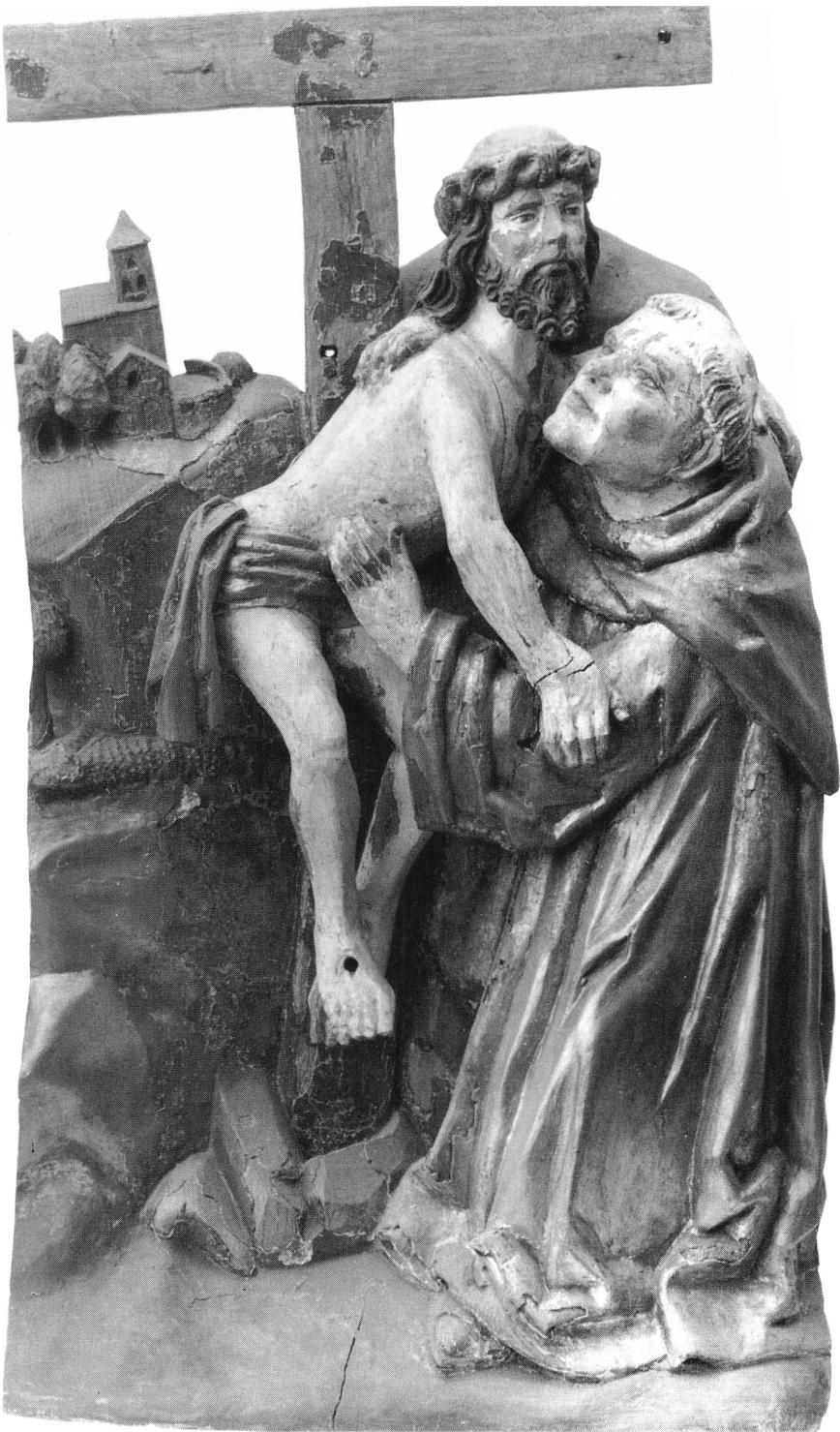
Pious men

As Christianity achieved general recognition and the number of its adherents grew, it became increasingly integrated in the surrounding society and increasingly controlled by the State. The time of the persecution of Christians had ended with their recognition by Emperor Constantine the Great (305-37). Strong Christian communions erected impressive church buildings, and a numerous and wealthy clergy came into existence. But in the wake of this development the church was criticized for its secularisation, and there arose a demand for a life more in accordance with the teachings of Jesus. Pious men chose to live as hermits, or in small communities isolated from others in deserted parts of the world.

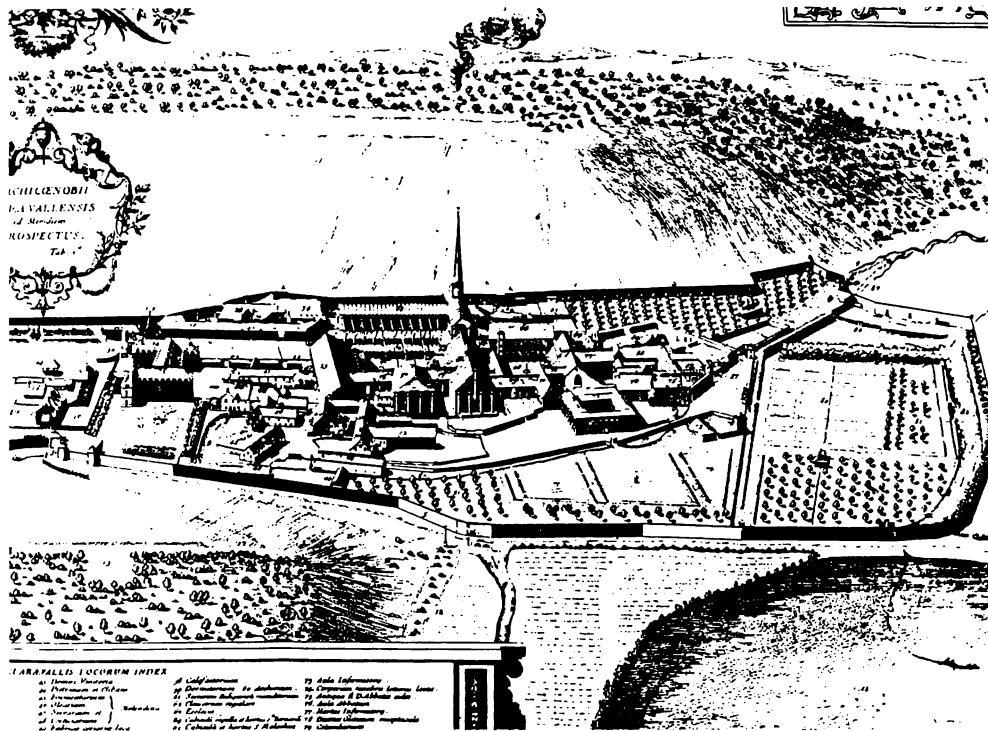
Benedict of Nurcia

The community of the Benedictines was the first organized monastic movement within the Roman Church. The Order was founded in 529 by Benedict of Nurcia (480-543) with the establishment of the monastery of Monte Cassino not far from Rome. Here he drew up the monastic rule, *Regula*, which has throughout the centuries been the basis of Christian monastic life. The

principal idea was the taking of the monastic vow of poverty, obedience and chastity together with confinement to one locality, i.e., remaining in the monastery for life. The Order commanded great respect because of its diligence and efficiency; the laity saw the monks as a kind of intercessors with God, their pious life of prayer and work could prepare the way not just for themselves but for others as well. Therefore the monasteries received rich gifts of money and land, and the observance of the ideal of poverty was deeply compromised. Laxity spread, convents were no longer the bad conscience of Christianity. But then history repeated itself; new reform movements exerted pressure with demands for a return to the original Christian ideals and to a serious and regular way of life. The Cluniacs were the first to tighten up the observance of Benedictine Rule. But they too fell into decay; a life of prayer and work became exclusively a life of prayer; choral prayers and the rituals connected with them were much exaggerated, and there was an increased preoccupation with church buildings. Great display everywhere. The mother house at Cluny in France held the largest church of the time, a five-nave basilica.



*Bernard of Clairvaux's
vision. From the altarpiece in the
church of Esrum Abbey.*



The Cistercian abbey at Clairvaux. The monks came to Esrum in 1153 at the invitation of Archbishop Eskil. He himself spent his old age at Clairvaux, where he died 1181.
Drawing from c. 1700.

The Cistercians

Once again there was a reaction, another monastic reform in France: the Order of the Cistercians.

The Order was founded by Abbot Robert from the abbey of Molesme in Burgundy. He had attempted to reform the Benedictine monasteries he had been attached to, but gave up. In 1098 together with 20 other monks he settled at Citeaux, a desolate area of forest and swamp south of Dijon (Cistercium in Latin, hence the name Cistercians). The beginning of the monastery was hard and difficult, but the order was finally

recognised by the Church of Rome, and in 1112 it saw much-needed new life, when a group of renowned Burgundy noblemen led by Bernard of Fontaine (1090-1153) was received into the monastery. Now the monastery grew famous, novices flocked to it; five daughter houses under Citeaux could be established as early as in the years 1113-15, and Bernard became abbot of one of them: Clairvaux. From these five monasteries the movement developed. Bernard of Clairvaux was a man of strong character, and in his day, from Clairvaux

alone, 68 filial houses were established, among them Esrum Abbey.

Bernard of Clairvaux.

Bernard of Clairvaux was a saintly and dynamic man, whose influence carried far beyond the Cistercian movement, and made itself felt in 12th century European politics as such. He strongly emphasized the sacredness of the Holy See to the temporal princes of Europe, and thus he had a decisive say in disputes between church and royal power in the 12th century: disputes about who was the head of society, and who had the prerogative of appointing whom. He pronounced judgement in matters of papal election and heresy, and in 1146 he was capable of inspiring the princes of Europe to go on a crusade together to deliver the Holy Land. For those involved it ended in disaster and tragedy.



Cistercian monk in white monastic habit - mural in Sorø Abbey, c. 1400

Bernard of Clairvaux's religious teachings are not marked by doctrine, but rather by an inclination towards mysticism. He made the severely ascetic way of life of the Cistercian Order even more rigorous, so that the ideal became a total imitation of Christ in suffering and meekness; by this way of imitating the example set by Christ, penance was done for mankind towards God. His perception of God was based on his experience of divine love, and he made more room for the worship of Mary than before, to whom all Cistercian abbeys were consecrated.

Bernard of Clairvaux died in 1153 and was canonized in 1174.

The organization of the Order.

The Cistercian Order was strictly centralist; *Charta caritatis* - the law of love - laid down the mutual connection between all the monasteries of the Order as one unit, with the Abbot of Citeaux as its head. Every year each monastery had to send its abbot to the mother house in France - to the annual general chapter, and here the problems and the situation of the Order were discussed, and principles established. Contrary to other monastic orders the abbeys were not under the local church authorities, but directly under the protection and authority of the pope.



Louis Moe

Eyrh

BISKOP

ESKILD

The Founding of Esrum Abbey

Archbishop Eskil.

In 1137 Eskil became Archbishop of Lund, and he held this powerful position for 40 years. He had close and important connections to the Holy See, he had studied at the famous cathedral school at Hildesheim and was inspired by the Gregorian ideas of reform concerning the assertion of the position of the Roman Catholic Church in relation to worldly powers.

On journeys through Europe, often as the papal nuncio, he had visited Clairvaux where he had been moved by the devotional life of the Cistercian Order and had made friends with Bernard of Clairvaux. Altogether he visited the abbey four times and decided to end his days there as a monk, when the pope had given him permission to retire from his mission in Denmark.

A letter from Bernard of Clairvaux to Eskil has survived: "Friendly letter to the Archbishop of Lund". It gives the impression of a very cordial relationship between the two church authorities: "I have received your letters and greetings, indeed the expression of your heartfelt love, with a pleasure which is so much greater as I love

you exceptionally and am loved by you in return." As a good Christian Bernard adopts a meek attitude towards his fellow men; he writes to Eskil: "How would I, humble as I am, dare expect such grace from such a high-ranking man?" Written by the man who was capable of dictating his conditions to the German Emperor Frederick Barbarossa (1152-90), or of sending the princes of Europe on a crusade. His personality held many facets, and no doubt he made a sharp distinction between those who shared his views and those who did not.

The task as head of the Danish Church was not an easy position for Eskil; just as in other places in Europe at the time, the relationship between the Church and the royal power had not been clarified, and therefore conflicts about the demarcation of domain arose time and again between the two. Sometimes the disputes developed into warlike conditions with all sorts of harassment: captures, sieges and conquests, or the hard-hitting answer of the Church: papal excommunication of the Danish state with a ban on celebrations of mass and religious ceremonies in the country.

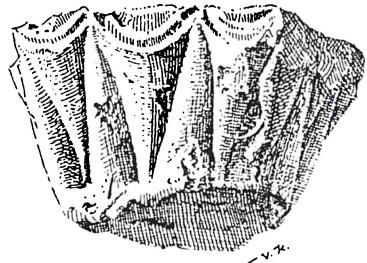
Archbishop Eskil is one of the great figures of Danish history. At the age of almost 70 he took part in an expedition to Rügen together with Valdemar the Great and Absalon, and he impressed everybody with his valour. He had a little difficulty in getting on his horse without help, but once he was in his saddle, he spurred his horse into the fray and backed away like a young man. According to Saxo his contempt for the enemy was such that he went about in the army in his cassock without a coat of mail. Lois Moe's drawing of Eskil was made for the translation of Saxo by Winkel Horn, 1898.

The Church of Rome therefore needed a powerful and authoritative leader in the North, and despite his own wishes Eskil was not allowed to retire until the age of 80 in 1177. As planned he retired to Clairveaux, lived there as a monk until his death four years later. Sources tell us that he was buried in front of the high altar in the abbey church. In the wake of the French Revolution in 1789 followed a clash with the powerful monastic orders in

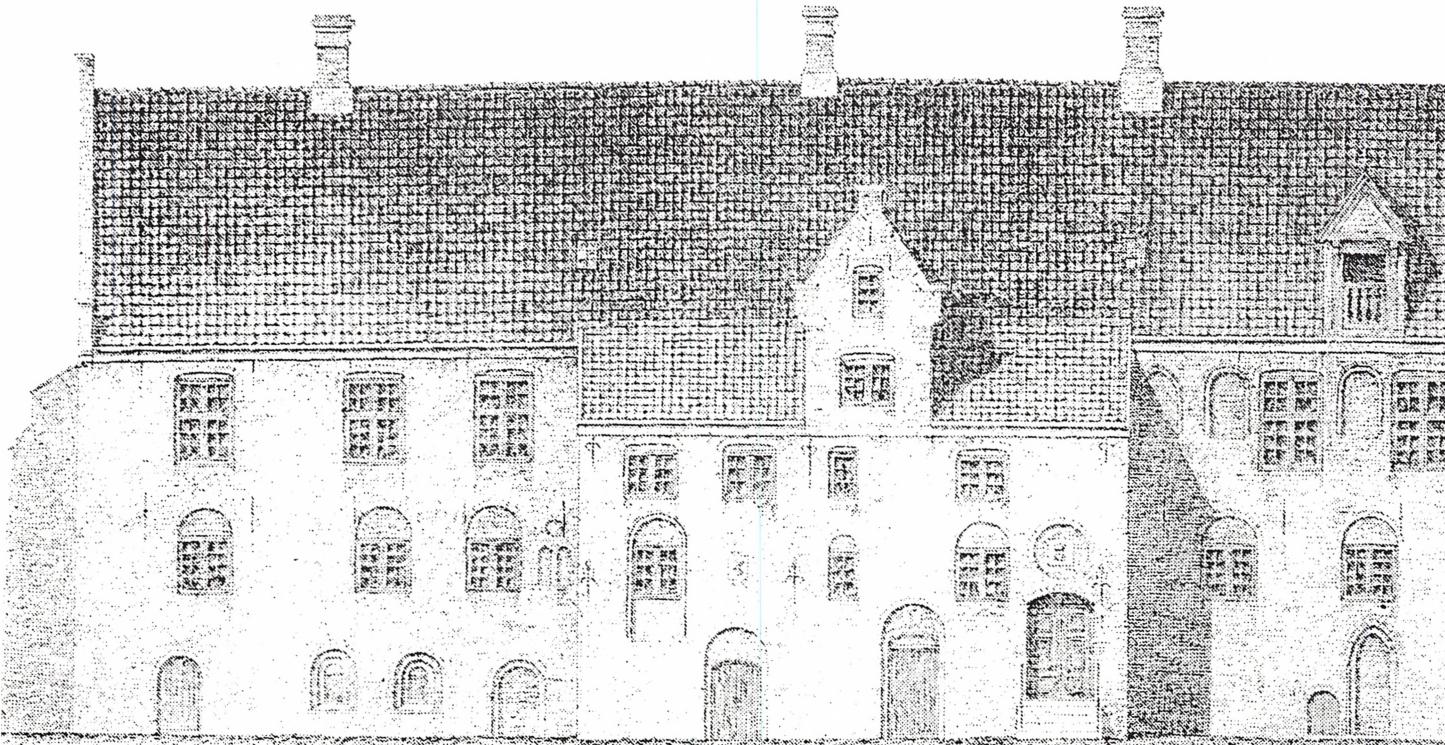
France; the peasants demanded land, and a prohibition was issued on all monastic systems. The Emperor Napoleon transformed Clairveaux into a prison, and it serves as such to this very day. The ecclesiastical buildings have disappeared, and so have the traces of Eskil of Denmark.

Esrum Abbey

Contrary to all other orders the Cistercian Order was not subject to



*Terracotta capital of a column
from Esrum Abbey.
Drawing by Valdemar Koch.*



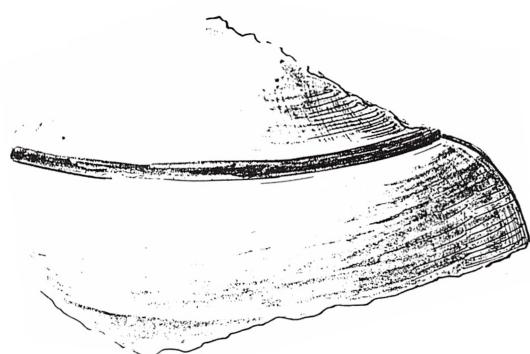
*The only extant building from Esrum Abbey, a wing of the treasury.
Drawing by J.B. Löffler.*

the local ecclesiastical authorities with the inherent possibility of royal influence, but was directly under the Church of Rome and the general chapter at Citeaux; the Order could therefore also be used to further the policies of the Church. Consequently, the Roman Church and its local representatives supported the expansion of the Cistercian Order in particular, and this must also be taken into consideration, when looking at and assessing the steady growth of the Order throughout Europe as well as in the North in this period.

The first Cistercian monastery in Denmark was Herrisvad in Skåne; it

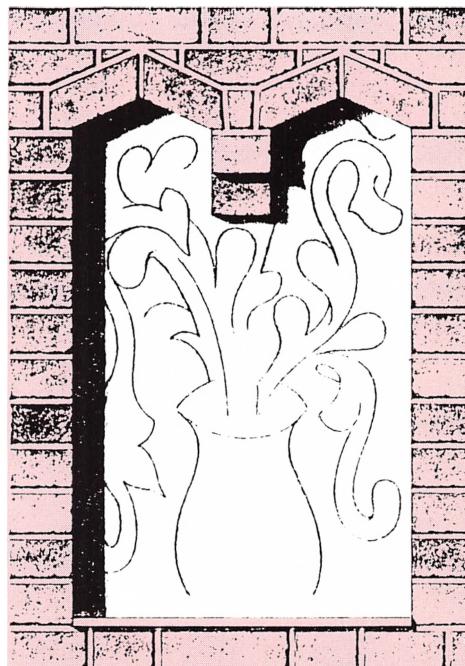
was a daughter house of Citeaux, and it became the originator of several monasteries in Denmark, among others, Løgum.

Another branch of the Cistercian monasteries in Denmark goes back to Clairvaux. At Eskil's personal request, Bernard sent monks to found Esrum Abbey in 1153. Eskil provided the monks with a suitable site and a title to the land, which he had obtained by barter from King Erik Lam. He often stayed at this monastery, which, even though he was behind the founding of several other monasteries, is believed to have held a special significance for him.



*Fragment of circular base of a column made of terracotta with brown glazing, from Esrum Abbey.
Drawing by Peter Linde.*

*A blank window on the south side of the extant wing shows traces of fresco painting.
Drawing by J.B. Löffler.*



The Monastic Community

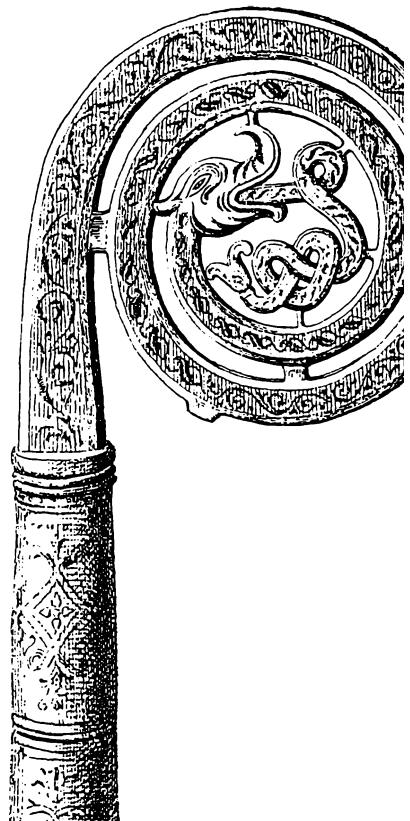
The head of a monastic community was the abbot, elected by the monks of the monastery. The election was supervised by the abbot of the mother house, i.e., the monastery that had founded the new monastery and provided it with the first 12 monks. 'Abbot' comes from 'abbas': father, a leader, a shepherd of his monks and therefore equipped with a staff as a symbol of his dignity. Besides his abbot of the mother house, he had to obey the abbot of Citeaux, the first monastery of the Order, the pope in Rome, and finally the judicial system of the Cistercian Order.

To be received in the monastery a young man had to go through a year's trial period as a novice to prove that he was mentally prepared to give his life (and property) fully to the monastery, and that he had a constitution that could cope with the severe and harsh conditions. At the end of the year the monastic vow was taken of a life of poverty, chastity, obedience, and confinement to one locality. Now he was invested with the cowl and tonsured. Later he might be ordained and receive the right to read mass. Or he might rise further, and possibly become prior, the abbot's closest assistant.

Much of their time was spent on choir service, so that the need for workforce had to be met in other ways. One was the reception of lay brothers from humbler conditions than the monks proper. They were not required to be able to read and write, but also took a vow of a life in obedience to the rule of the monastery. Though they had their appointed place in the church, they did not have to take part in the extensive choir service. Living in a separate part of the abbey, they cultivated the land, worked at milling and fishing, and carried on all sorts of trades.

Another way of having the necessary work done was to admit a sort of day labourers, familiares, who submitted themselves to the monastery, where they worked without pay in return for board and lodging.

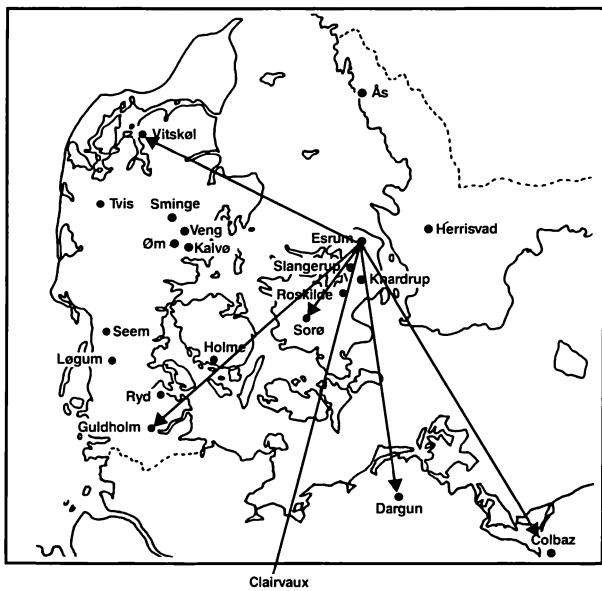
Also other groups had a clear affiliation to the place. Contrary to Benedict's idea of a monastery, Cistercian monasteries were abbeys, that is, land owners, so that outside the walls of the monastery there were farm bailiffs, copyholders, and smallholders with large commitments to the abbey.





*A colony of monks arrive at a
monastery and are received by
the abbot. Coloured miniature
in a calendar from St. Peter's
Abbey at Næstved, c.1265*

*Cistercian Abbeys in Denmark.
Esrum was a daughter abbey of
Clairvaux and became the
mother house of three Danish
and two North German abbeys.*



Monastic Life at Esrum

Ora et Labora, Pray and Work

Benedict's Regula, described in greater detail in the section on the history of the Cistercian Order, was the framework of monastic life; it dictated eight prayers at the canonical hours, which made up the skeleton of the course of a day:

1. Matins (morning) 2 a.m.
Ends before dawn.
- 2 Lauds (song of praise).
3. Prime (the first hour).
4. Terts (the third).
5. Sext (the sixth); the middle of the day
6. Nones (the ninth).
7. Vespers (evening).
8. Completorium (completion).

The names are taken from Roman chronology. The division goes from dawn to dusk in 12 hours of equal length depending on the length of the day, so that the length of the hours varied according to time of year. Sext, when the sun was at its highest, was the fixed point of the day.



The day's first hour, or service, - matins (morning) - began around 2 a.m. It often lasted several hours.

The hours had many elements; songs of praise and hymns with antiphonal singing between lead singer and choir based on the Gregorian chorale were interrupted by prayers and Scripture readings.

Esrum Abbey was a male society, but the avowed purpose of its activities was to serve and pay homage to a woman, the Virgin Mary, to whom Esrum Abbey like all other Cistercian abbeys was consecrated. The high altar of the abbey church represented the the Holy Virgin, until in the late Middle Ages it was replaced by the altarpiece, which Abbot Peder

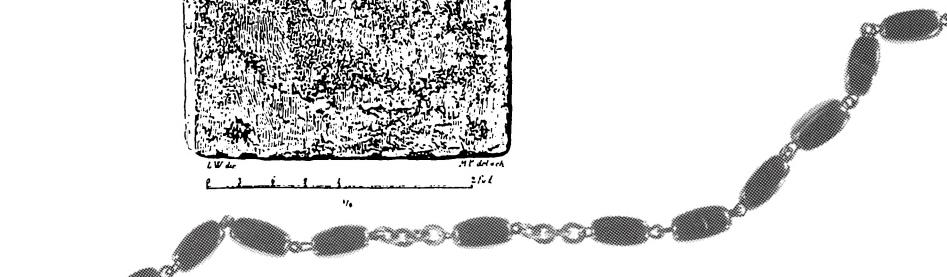
gave to the Abbey. The original altar is no longer known to us, but in the accompanying picture from Søborg Church not far from Esrum, this representation of the Virgin is to be seen. It is from the first half of the 1300s, and shows the central position of the female element in medieval Christianity. To the right the Trinity is seen in a unified composition, that is, God holding the dead Christ, while the dove of the Holy Spirit descends from above, and Mary to the left. She is the gentle mistress of the world and the queen of heaven, standing on the moon with the radiance of the sun about her figure and the stars in her halo. As a peer Mary is placed within the same circle as the Trinity. This is a very deliberately theological representation, which probably originates from the highest ecclesiastical circles. The inspiration for these ideas may well have come from Søborg, the archbishop's palace, which was situated close to Esrum Abbey. The old altarpiece in the abbey church may have been based on similar ideas.

The mural is a reproduction of a watercolour by J. Kornerup.



This runic stone from the 1200s bearing the inscription, *Hail Mary*, shows that the Holy Virgin was a major figure in the worship of God in Søborg Church.

Drawing by J. Magnus Petersen in Ludwig F.A. Wimmers, 'De danske Runemindesmærker' 1905-8.



There was much praying in medieval Denmark. Worship of the Virgin had its specific help in the rosary, whose every single bead represents a prayer. Holding the rosary during prayer the worshipper can move his fingers one bead forward for every prayer, and reach the number of prayers prescribed or wanted without being disturbed by having to keep count. This is a meditation technique based on the experience that continuous repetition of a given formula can clear the mind of the usual flow of confused ideas and create a possibility of real devotion.

The main prayer of the devotion of the rosary is *Hail Mary*, which goes like this:

Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum: benedicta tu in mulieribus, et benedictus fructus ventris tui Jesus Christus.

Sancta Maria, Mater Dei, ora pro nobis peccatoribus nunc et in hora mortis nostræ. Amen.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and in the hour of our death. Amen.

The ordinary rosary shown here consists of 5 times 10 closely-set beads, and for each of them a *Hail Mary* is said. After every 10 beads there is a single bead, and for each of these the worshipper says the Lord's Prayer once.



The time between matins and lauds was spent in meditation and quiet prayer, or reading in the chapter house. It might also be spent in rehearsing the day's religious ceremonies, or reading the 150 Psalms of David, which had to be known by heart in Latin. In addition, masses were celebrated at side altars in the church, where ordained monks each with a server read mass unaccompanied by song and choir, for people who were ill, or for the souls of the deceased (registered in the necrology of the Abbey).

Lay brothers and other inmates of the monastery for example, benefactors who had submitted themselves to the monastery, and day labourers, also attended lauds.

Morning toilet was performed at the well, between lauds and prime. Hands and faces were washed, clothes beaten against the wall to remove dust, and shoes waxed. Shaving and cutting of hair took place at other hours. Washing of feet was performed on Saturdays as a ritual act.

Prime was a short prayer, but was followed by a morning mass, read by the ordained monks in turn, assisted by the choir. After morning mass the monks walked in procession out of the church through the cloister to the chapter house, the most beautiful and important room after the church. Here the abbot 'held chapter'; he read a

chapter of Benedict's rule and said a prayer. The cantor read the names of deceased brothers in the monasteries of the Order from the death rolls and said a prayer for the deceased. Then there were discussions of internal matters within the Order - strictly secret information.

The next point was confessions of sins; if a monk had sinned against his vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, or against the strict rule of the monastery, he here confessed his trespass and asked for forgiveness.

Charges might also be brought against a fellow brother; this was not considered to be talebearing but seen as an act of charity, a help to observe the rule. The defendant then had to state whether the charge was true: 'Mea culpa - it is my trespass'. Sentence was pronounced by an impartial brother and might for instance be additional fasting or flogging - strokes on the naked back with cudgels placed in a corner of the room for this purpose. A major offence was punished with imprisonment on bread and water.

Hop
(*Humulus lupulus*)
A mild sleeping medicine,
for a nervous stomach and a
sedative against agitation.



The newly founded monasteries were the cultural centres of the country, and their importance for the introduction of writing cannot be overestimated. The scribe in the picture is working on the capital I which begins the Gospel according to St. John. Drawn at Dalby Abbey in Skåne, 11th c.

Monastery Plants



Great mullein
(*Verbascum thapsus*)
Against bronchial infections,
earache, thin growth of hair
(invigorates by being rubbed in)

Ground elder
(*Aegopodium podagraria*)
Against rheumatism and
gout - externally as
ointment



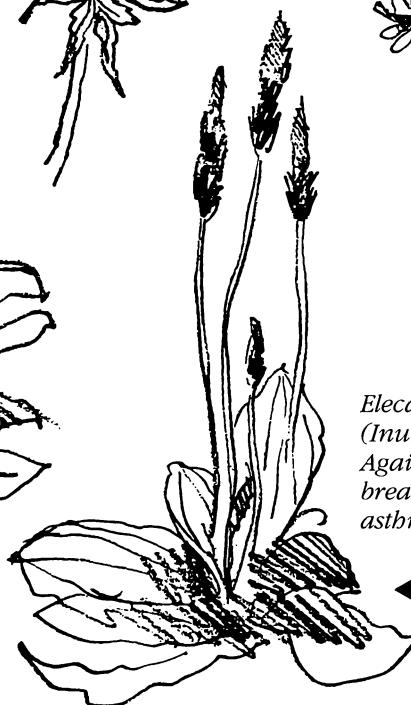
Common sorrel
(*Rumex acetosa*)
Against cholera, scurvy, diseases
of the bladder and the kidneys. A
depurant.

Shepherd's purse
(*Capsella bursa-pastoris*)
Against impotence and mens-
truation. As tea against obesity

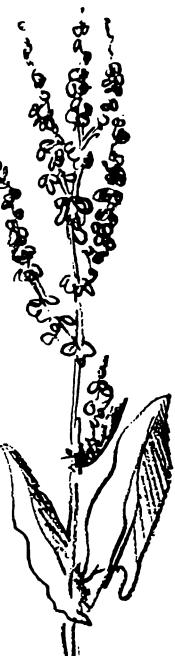
St John's wort
(*Hypericum perforatum*)
Against depression, bed-wetting,
diseases of the intestine and the
gall bladder - externally against
insect bites and lumbago



Elecampane
(*Inula helenium*)
Against gravel, shortness of
breath, whooping cough and
asthma



Common plantain
(*Plantago major*)
Against bed-wetting, earache
and toothache. A laxative



Monastic discipline was strict. No superfluous word might be spoken; inner silence ruled so that the voice of God might be heard. Self-discipline consisting of punishment by lashings or bloodletting four times a year to combat the desires of the flesh was everybody's duty.

The strenuous programme of the day continued, now with manual work as well. Each monk his occupation according to his abilities. The distribution of work took place in the parlatorium - where speaking was allowed. There was fairly light work such as copying as well as

heavy work outdoors in the fields or gardens. As the abbey was self-sufficient there were many functions to fulfil. Lay brothers and day labourers helped the monks with the rough work.

The day's work was temporarily interrupted at terts - another canonical hour of prayer followed by the High Mass of the day.

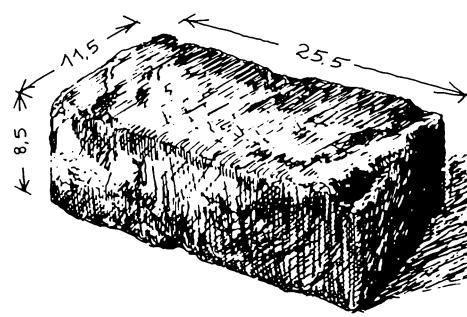
But not until sext was the monks' fast broken; this was the only solid meal of the day (during Lent this meal was postponed until vespers - at about 5 p.m. - the monks would then have fasted for 15 hours). The



*Types of monks from the 15th century.
Mural in Århus Cathedral.*

diet, of course, was Spartan; according to Benedict's rule meat was forbidden, but this was modified to a prohibition of the consumption of meat from quadrupeds only. Dinner consisted of an exact measure of bread, vegetables, and courses made of grits, and water or beer. The meal was taken in the refectory under the supervision of the steward.

After saying grace the monks were allowed an hour's afternoon rest, but otherwise work and the prayers, *nones* and *vespers* continued until the day was well advanced. Then they gathered in the cloister for evening seat - *collatio*, a light evening meal - and listened to readings of the writings of the Church Fathers. After *vespers* it was time for final prayers, the completion - *completorium* - of the day's sacred services. This ended up in a hymn of praise to the glory of the Virgin



Medieval bricks were much bigger than present-day bricks, (measures in centimetres)

Archbishop Eskil's great construction works at Esrum and Søborg made tile burning common in North Zealand, where until recently there were numerous tileworks.

Eskil's initiative was useful to him in many ways. Saxo tells us that Eskil in his old age suffered much from cold feet in the night, so Absalon saw to it that a heated brick in a wooden box with holes in it was placed in his bed. The picture shows a medieval brick kiln from Grønbolt in North Zealand.

Mary - the protectress of the Order.

At 7 or 8 p.m., depending on whether it was winter or summer the monks left the church and went to their sleeping quarters - the dormitory. They slept in their clothes, both because of the cold in the unheated room and for protection against the temptations of the flesh, but also in order to be ready promptly when the bell summoned them to their first prayers in the small hours of the night.

During 24 hours they had 6-7 hours' sleep, 4-6 hours' manual labour, 3-5 hours' reading and spiritual work, and finally 6-7 hours of choir service.



The Altarpiece in Esrum Abbey Church

The church of Esrum Abbey was consecrated to Our Lady, and the church altar was graced with her picture during most of the Middle Ages. But in 1496 Peder, the then abbot of the Abbey, presented the church with a new altar. It was a polyptic with two pairs of movable panels around a central section with reliefs. The wings were painted, but later painted over and are uninteresting. The central piece, however, is intact and is in the National Museum.

The central section consists of a main panel and two tiered side panels. The main panel represents the crucifixion with many people at the foot of the cross, and the side panels depict at the top left, Bernard of Clairvaux's vision, with a painted signature, 'sant bernhardus ora pro n(obis)', i.e., St Bernard pray for us, below, St Julian, the vigorous saint who whipped the Devil with her chains and threw him into a latrine. At the top right is St Ursula and some of the 11,000 virgins who were martyred together with her at Cologne. Below we see St Felicitas, a Christian Roman woman who was made to watch her seven sons martyred, before she herself

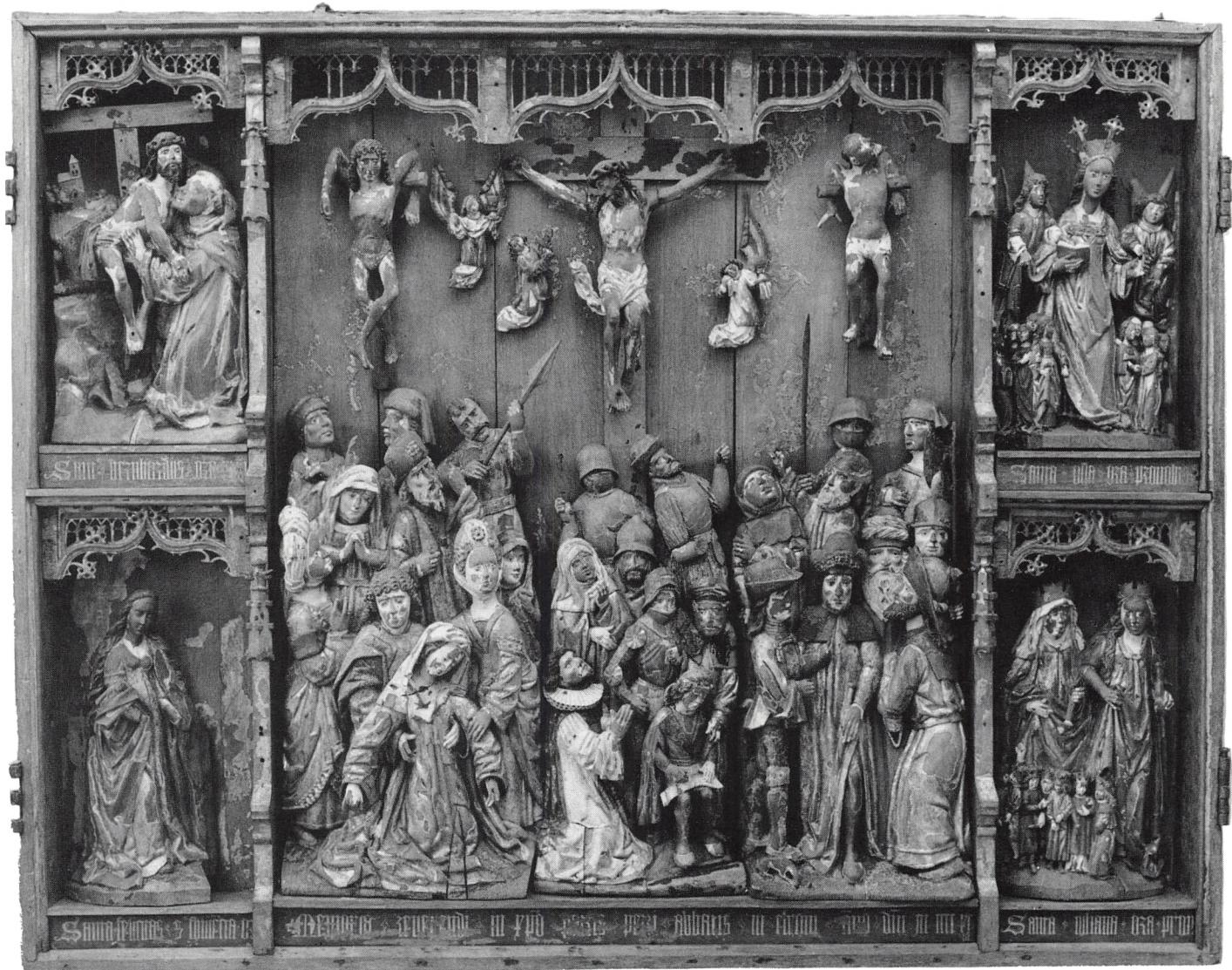
was killed for the sake of her faith. Both she and her seven sons are represented with the martyr's crown. The woman next to St Felicitas is an unidentifiable saint.

In the legend below the panel of the central compartment Abbot Peder inserted a memorial to himself: Memoria reverendi in Chr(ist)o patris Petri abbatis in esrom ano d(omi)ni mcccxcvi, i.e., Memory of the reverend father in Christ Abbot Peder of Esrum. Anno 1496.

Abbot Peder is present himself in the scene of the crucifixion. He is the kneeling foreground figure in the middle, but he no longer looks the way he did in 1496. Originally he was tonsured and wore a cowl like Bernard top left, but after the Reformation, when the altarpiece came to the church of St. Olai in Elsinore, it was not done to have a wretched monk lying at the foot of the cross. He has been changed into a proper Protestant clergyman in a ruff and with hair on his head.



Abbot Peder. Detail of the altarpiece from Esrum Abbey Church, now in the National Museum.



The altarpiece from Esrum Abbey Church. It has had two pairs of movable side panels and could be closed like a cabinet. The hinges for the side panels can still be seen.

The central section, which is seen in the picture, is exhibited in the medieval collection of the National Museum. It is 2,09 x 2.65 m.

Cistercian Rule

The rules were drawn up in France in 1110-20 as an expansion of Benedict's rule

1. Where monasteries may be built

None of our monasteries may be erected in towns or fortifications or on estates, but in places far from human activities.

2. On uniformity in behaviour in ecclesiastical and worldly matters

In order that an indissoluble unity in eternity may be maintained among the abbeys, it has first been decided that all shall interpret St Benedict's rule in one way and live by it in one way, so that the same holy missals, the same fare, and the same habit, and in short the same customs in all affairs shall exist everywhere.

3. That having different books is not legal

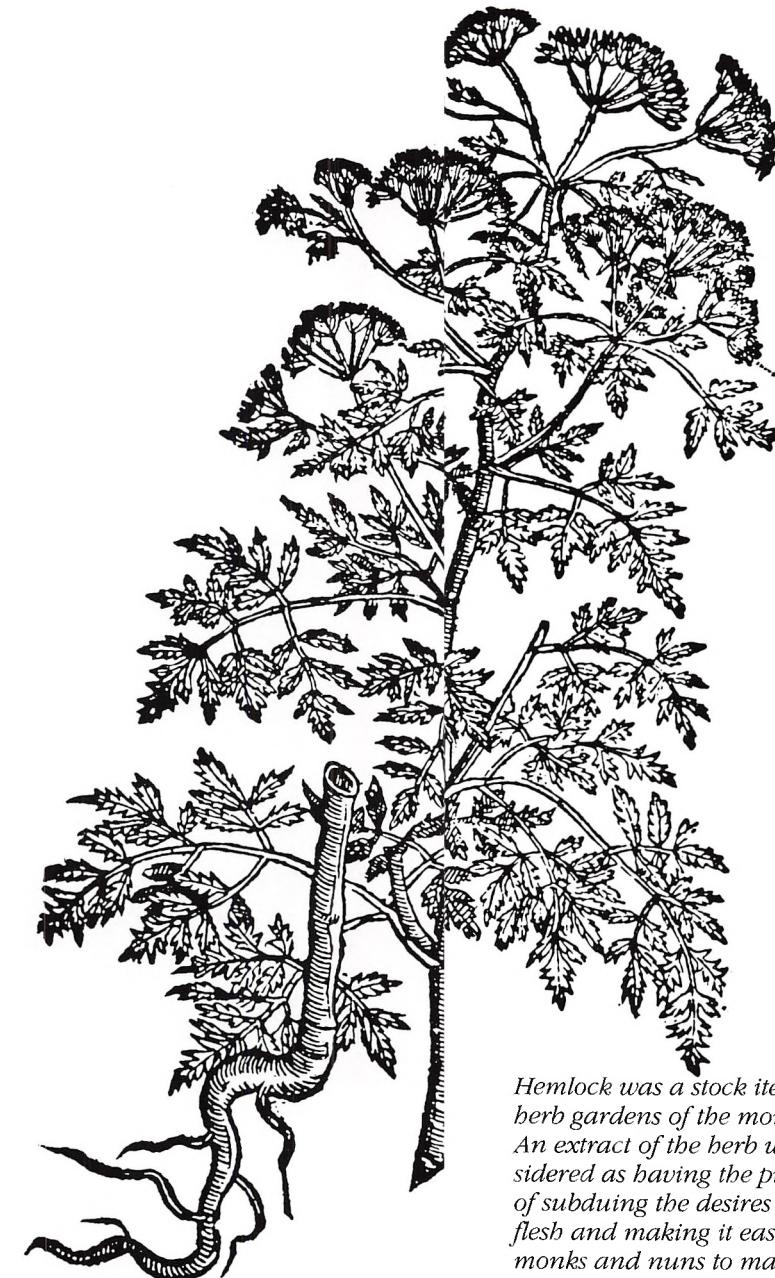
Everywhere they shall use the same missal, letter book, register of donations, book of chants, book of antiphonies, rule, collection of hymns, edition of the Psalms, book of lessons and calendar.

4. Of dress

The habit shall be plain and cheap, without skin, linen or linsey-woolsey, in short, such as the rule dictates.

5. Where fare for the monks shall come from

Fare for the monks of our Order shall come from the labour of their hands, through the cultivation of the land and through the breeding of sheep, and therefore they are allowed for their own use to possess streams and lakes, forests, vineyards, meadows and land far from the habitations of the laity, and likewise animals (other than those, which usually rouse curiosity and distinguish themselves by their own vanity rather than serve a useful purpose, such as deer, cranes and the like). We can own farms, which may be tended by lay brothers with the purpose of using, breeding and keeping these things, either close by or far from the abbeys, but no farther than a day's journey away from them.



Hemlock was a stock item in the herb gardens of the monasteries. An extract of the herb was considered as having the property of subduing the desires of the flesh and making it easier for monks and nuns to maintain the vow of chastity. From the

6. That no monk shall live outside the abbey

A monk, who as the rule prescribes, should live in his house, may visit the farms when he is told to do so, but he shall not stay too long.

7. That in our Order it is forbidden to live together with women, and even access through the gate of the abbey is denied to them

Not under any pretext - whether it be the increase or the maintenance of food or to clean the property of the abbey, as is sometimes necessary, in short, no matter for what reason - may women be allowed to stay with us or our lay brothers. Therefore they may not live within the four walls of our farms, nor pass through the gate of our house.

8. On lay brothers

Work on the home farms shall be executed by lay brothers and day labourers. With the permission of the bishops we receive these lay brothers as indispensable to us and to help us, and we take them under

our protection like monks and consider them no less than monks, as brothers and as sharing our blessings, spiritual as well as worldly.

9. That we may not have incomes

The statute of our name and of our Order forbids us to own churches, alters, tombs, tithes of other people's work or trade, manors, serfs, the renting of land, profits from melting furnaces or mills and other similar things, which are reprehensible to monastic purity.

10. What is legal and what is not legal as regards gold silver, jewels and silk

Altarpieces and clerical gowns may not have silk upon them - apart from the stole and the maniple 1). The chasuble shall be plain. All decoration, vessels and domestic utensils of the monastery shall be without gold, silver and jewels, except the chalice and the fistula 2); we are allowed to have these two things alone of silver and gilt, but not of solid gold.

1) A stole is a white band with embroidered crosses, which hangs across the shoulders. The maniple is a strip of material fastened to the left arm, and is worn by high ranking clericals during mass for wiping the face.

2) The fistula is a tube used to suck up the altar wine.

Source: J. Mentz: *Church and Culture in the High Middle Ages*.

The Cistercian Abbey

Standardized building

A monastic order was, not only in a spiritual context, an international organisation with a fixed framework for the rhythm of the day and the year everywhere within the order.

The fixed guidelines applied just as much to the lay-out of the monastic buildings themselves. There was an established ground-plan, according to which new houses were organized, and only unavoidable local circumstances could result in a deviation from this pattern.

The ground-plan for the monastic buildings was created in the Mediterranean area, where the monastic movement originated, and was of course adapted to the climatic conditions there, where especially in summer it was necessary to find shade and protection against the sharp sun. But even though the climate of Northern Europe called for different requirements, the buildings were not adjusted to them. Also the northern monasteries were organized according to the southern climate.

Of all religious orders the Cistercians carried out the most thorough standardization of their buildings. The abbey of Clairvaux was the great model. It followed the dictates

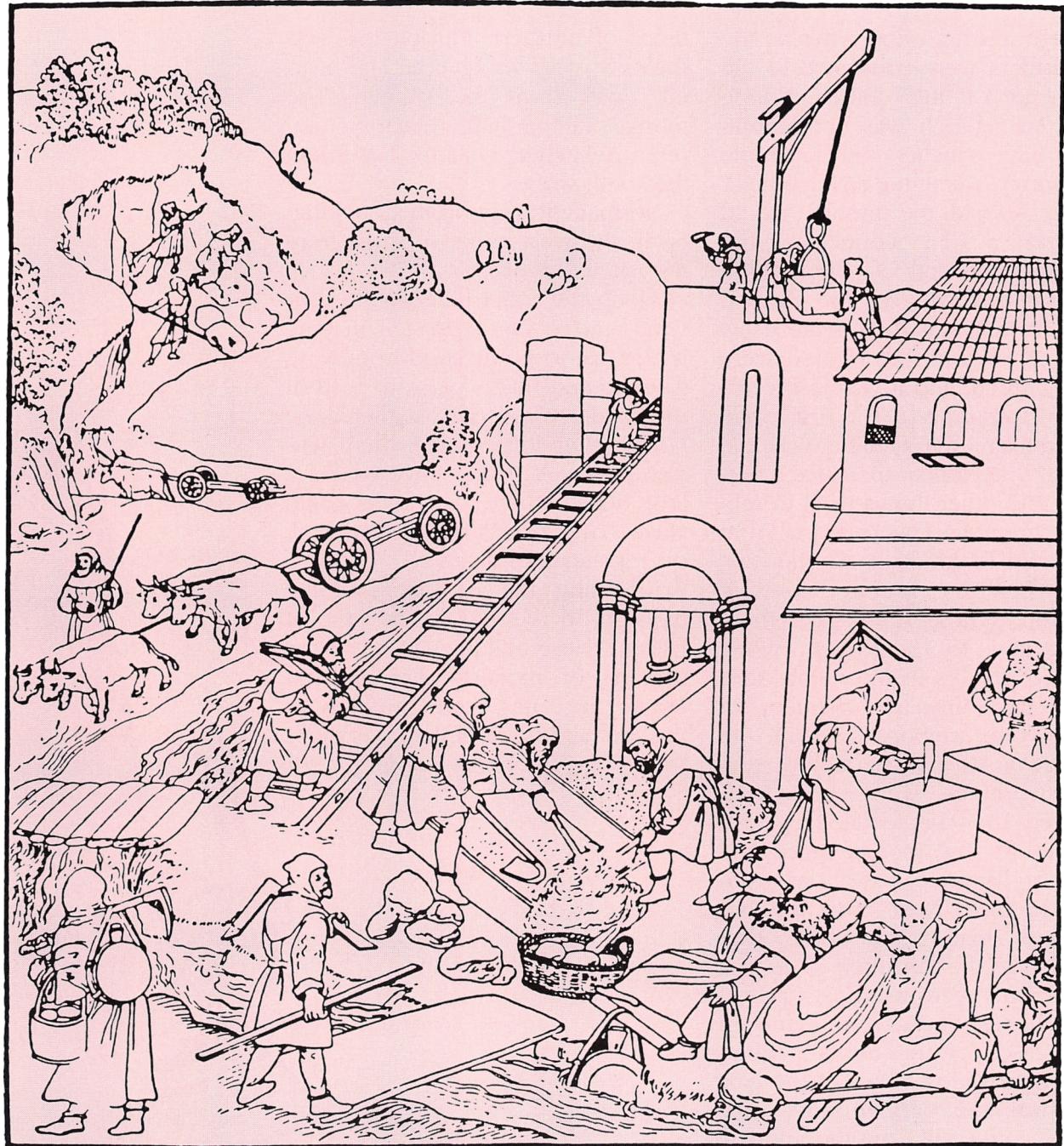
of Bernard of Clairvaux. The abbey was to be situated in a thinly populated area, if possible in a forest or on a stream, which would permit building of mills and laying out of fishing ponds, and ensure the sanitary installations of the monastery. Here the monks could follow Bernard's commands of a simple, ascetic life in hard labour. This is why we can give the Cistercians credit for having turned large areas into fertile farm land.

Church and monastery

Simplicity and asceticism also applied to the building of the abbeys. The typical Cistercian abbey was surrounded by a fence or a wall to cut the building off from its surroundings. It consisted of three main parts: a church, the cloister garth, and a treasury.

The church was almost always situated to the north. It was cruciform, often with a tripartite nave, and with chapels along the east transept. In the early Middle Ages, at any rate, the arrangement of the church was very simple, but in the course of time the commandments of poverty and asceticism were not taken so seriously. The monks' chairs were in the intersection of

A Cistercian abbey under construction. Drawing from the 1500s. From Edw. Ortved: The Cistercian Order and its Houses in the North 1927.



the nave and transept, whereas the lay brothers were consigned to the west end of the church during mass. The church was not permitted to have a belfry, only a simple ridge turret containing a single bell.

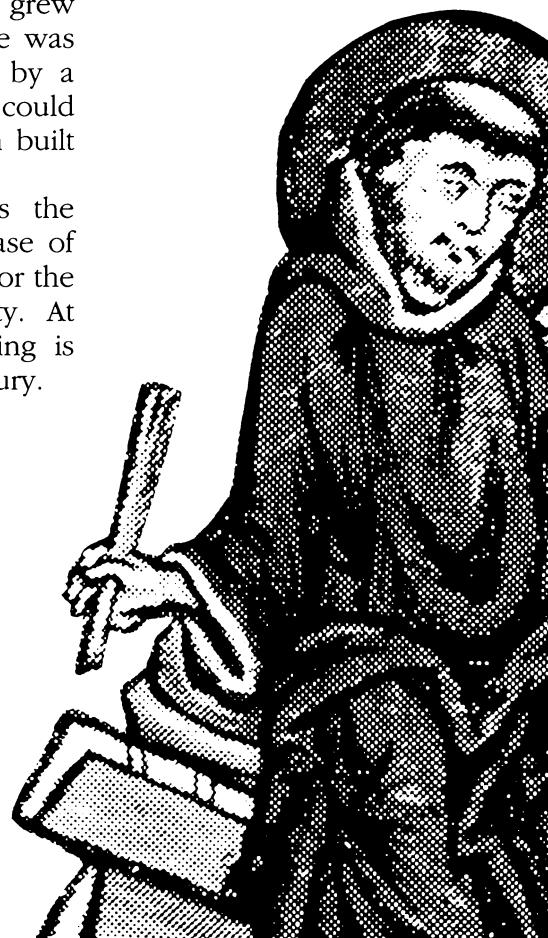
After service the monks would leave by a door connecting the southern transept of the church with the east wing of the cloister. The east wing was the monks' usual place of sojourn when they were not in church, and it was also completely standardized. The first room, coming from the church, was the vestry, where altar treasures, vestments and other things used in religious ceremonies were kept. From this room stairs lead to the first floor where the monks had their dormitory. These stairs gave them easy access to the church when going to prayers in the night. After the vestry came the chamber of books (the armoury), where the spiritual arms of the abbey, the Holy Scriptures, were kept. Then followed the chapter house, with benches for the monks to sit and study or listen to recitations from the Scriptures. Next came another couple of small rooms where other stairs led to the dormitory. The two small rooms were used as a prison and a gatekeeper's room, and in some cases as the abbot's room. The southernmost room of the east wing was the parlour where the monks could talk. In the monas-

teries of northern Europe this was the only room which could be heated, apart from the kitchen. The monks' dining hall, refectory, and often a kitchen next to it were in the south wing.

Normally the lay brothers belonged in the west wing, separate from the proper monks.

Along the inner side of the four wings there was a cloister, making it possible to go dryshod from wing to wing and find a place to read in the shade, when the weather grew hot. In the cloister garth there was also the well, often covered by a little house where the monks could wash. The latrines were often built over a stream or a canal.

Adjoining the cloister was the treasury, to the east in the case of Esrum. These buildings were for the running of monastic property. At Esrum the only extant building is the southern wing of the treasury.



Model for a Cistercian Abbey

NORTH

1. Church
2. Choir
3. Cloister
4. Vestry
5. Library
6. Chapter House
7. Room for conversation, parlatorium
8. Monks' refectory
9. Kitchen
10. Lay brothers' refectory

WEST

SOUTH

2

1

3

4

5

6

7

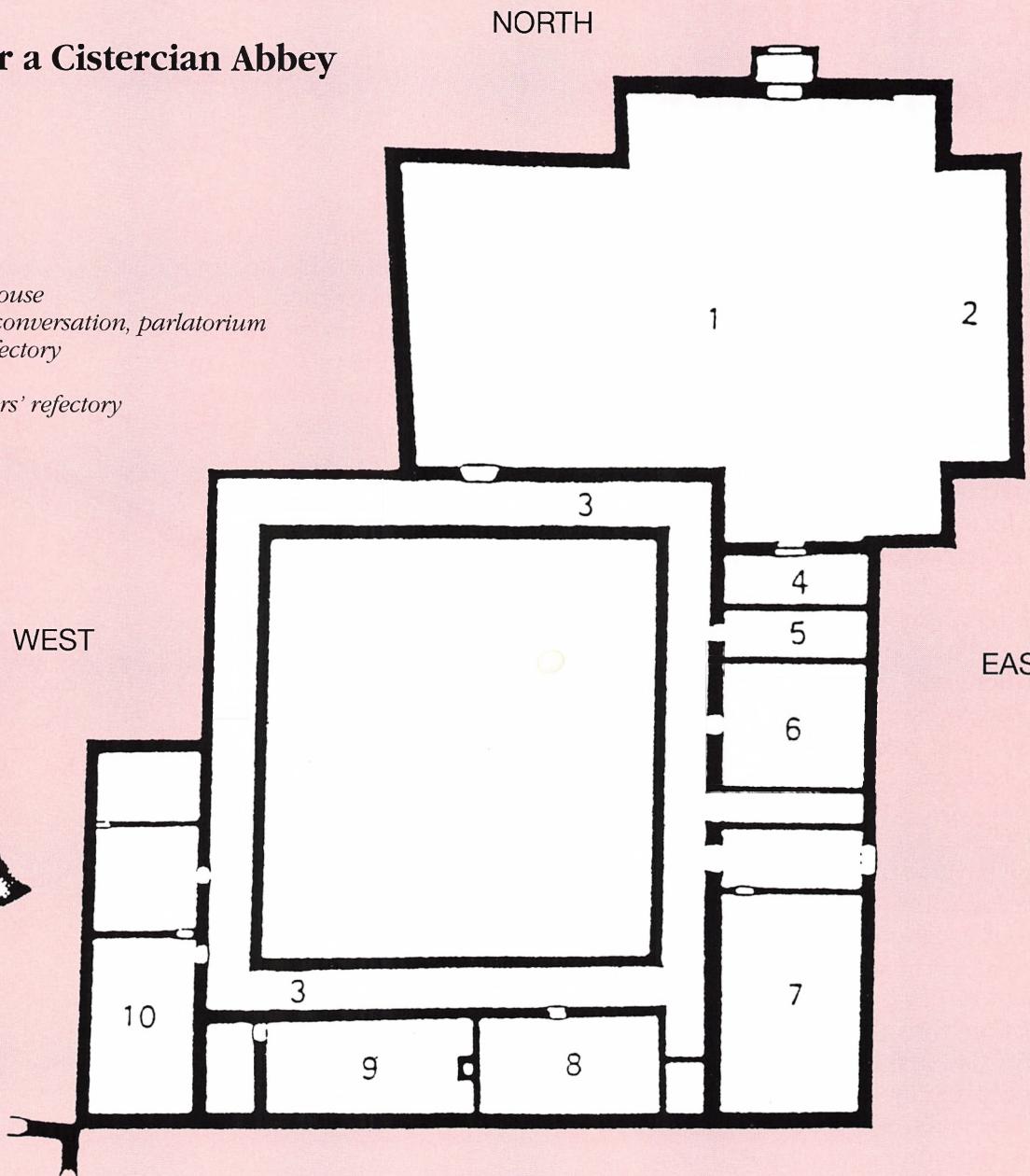
10

3

9

8

EAST



The Building of Esrum Abbey

The history of the building of Esrum Abbey has not been quite established because existing buildings on the old abbey precincts have made a thorough excavation impossible. However, the size of the precincts has in the main been established, and it appears that Esrum at some points differed from the fixed Cistercian model.

The location has suited the traditional pattern well. Archbishop Eskil writes in his charter around 1151-53 that he has 'appointed this place for the use of the poor of Christ, because there was great abundance of fields and forests, water and fishing, meadows and pastures.'

The Cistercian abbey was established in a former Benedictine house, and some of the foundations which have come to light in archaeological research probably go back to this early monastery.

The latest investigations of the layout took place in 1968, when in connection with sewer work at Esrum the National Museum was able to supply earlier excavations from 1927. The latter excavations indicate that the measurements of the abbey church were identical to those of the church of the mother house at

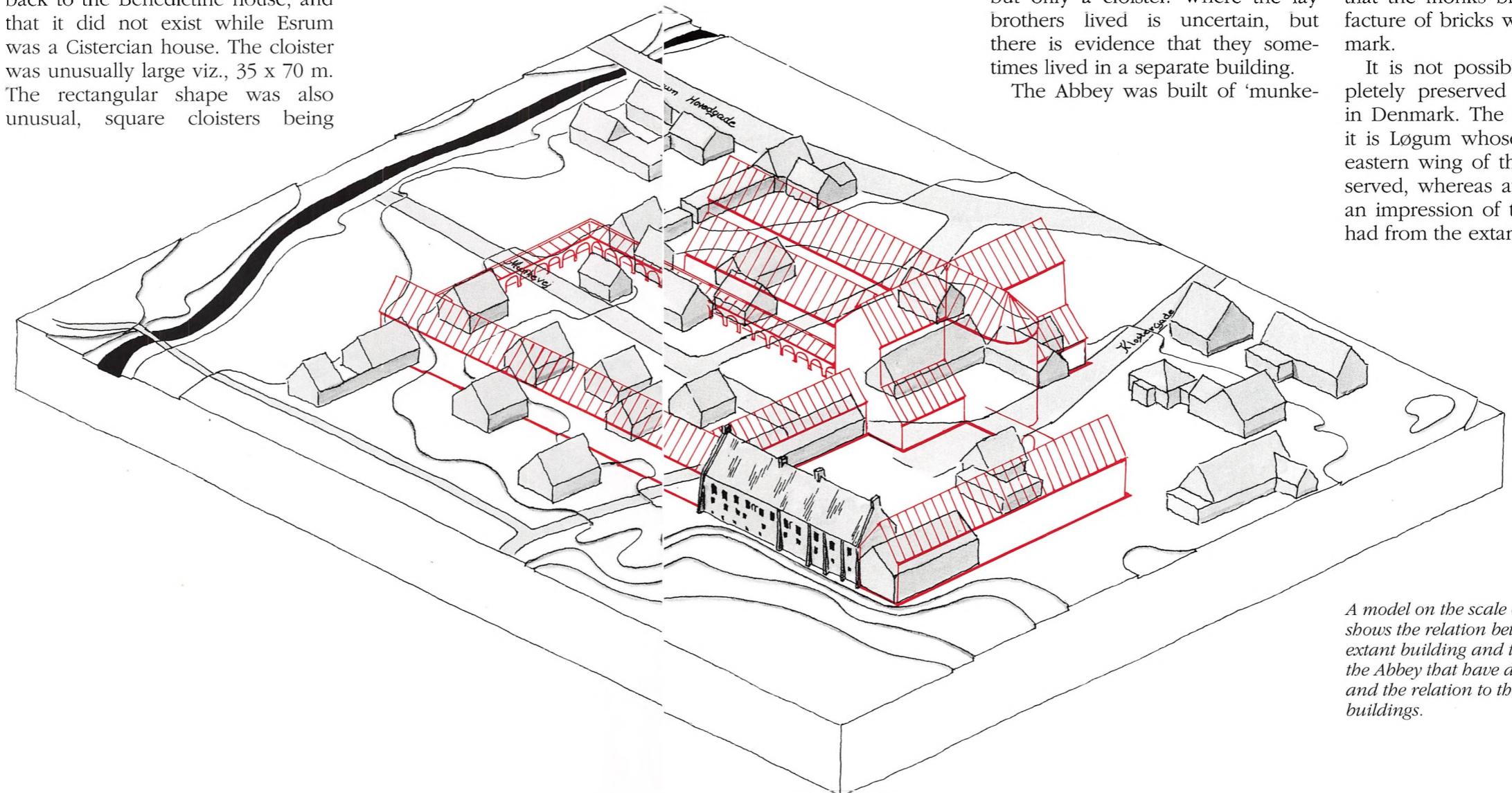
Clairvaux, that the end of the eastern apse found earlier, must go back to the Benedictine house, and that it did not exist while Esrum was a Cistercian house. The cloister was unusually large viz., 35 x 70 m. The rectangular shape was also unusual, square cloisters being

more common. It also seems that there was not a proper west wing, but only a cloister. Where the lay brothers lived is uncertain, but there is evidence that they sometimes lived in a separate building.

The Abbey was built of 'munke-

sten'(the large bricks of the period). And this confirms other evidence that the monks brought the manufacture of bricks with them to Denmark.

It is not possible to see a completely preserved Cistercian abbey in Denmark. The closest we get to it is Løgum whose church and the eastern wing of the abbey are preserved, whereas at Øm and Vitskøl an impression of the layout can be had from the extant foundations.



A model on the scale of 1:200 shows the relation between the extant building and the parts of the Abbey that have disappeared, and the relation to the present buildings.

Esrum Abbey - as Landowner



The Cistercians had great knowledge of agriculture and gardening, and the abbeys played a major role in the introduction of new methods of cultivation. The chalk mural from Elmelunde church, from about 1500, shows Adam ploughing.

His tool is a cross between the old primitive plough, which only scratches a furrow in the ground, and a proper plough, which turns the soil into the preceding open furrow. The axe is needed for roots and tangled weeds, and in front of the mouldboard we see the coulter, which cuts the furrow.

The first acquisitions

In time Esrum Abbey became a great holder of property, and one of the wealthiest abbeys in North Zealand. At the Reformation the Abbey owned more than 300 farms together with a number of churches and mills. No doubt the influence and renown of the Abbey was related to its great wealth.

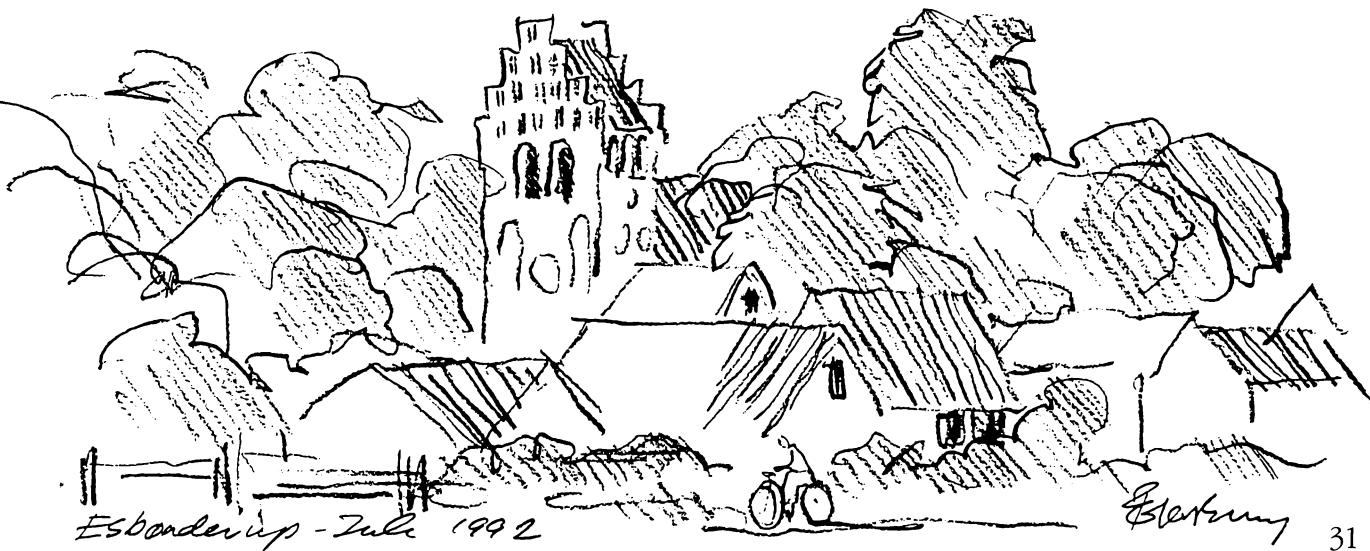
When Esrum became a Cistercian abbey, the new order took over the property which the former Benedictine convent had owned. Up to the middle of the 13th c. there was a quite considerable extension of the property of the Abbey. A long series of letters of donations are extant, which tell us how the expansion of property came about. It was mostly local magnates and high-ranking

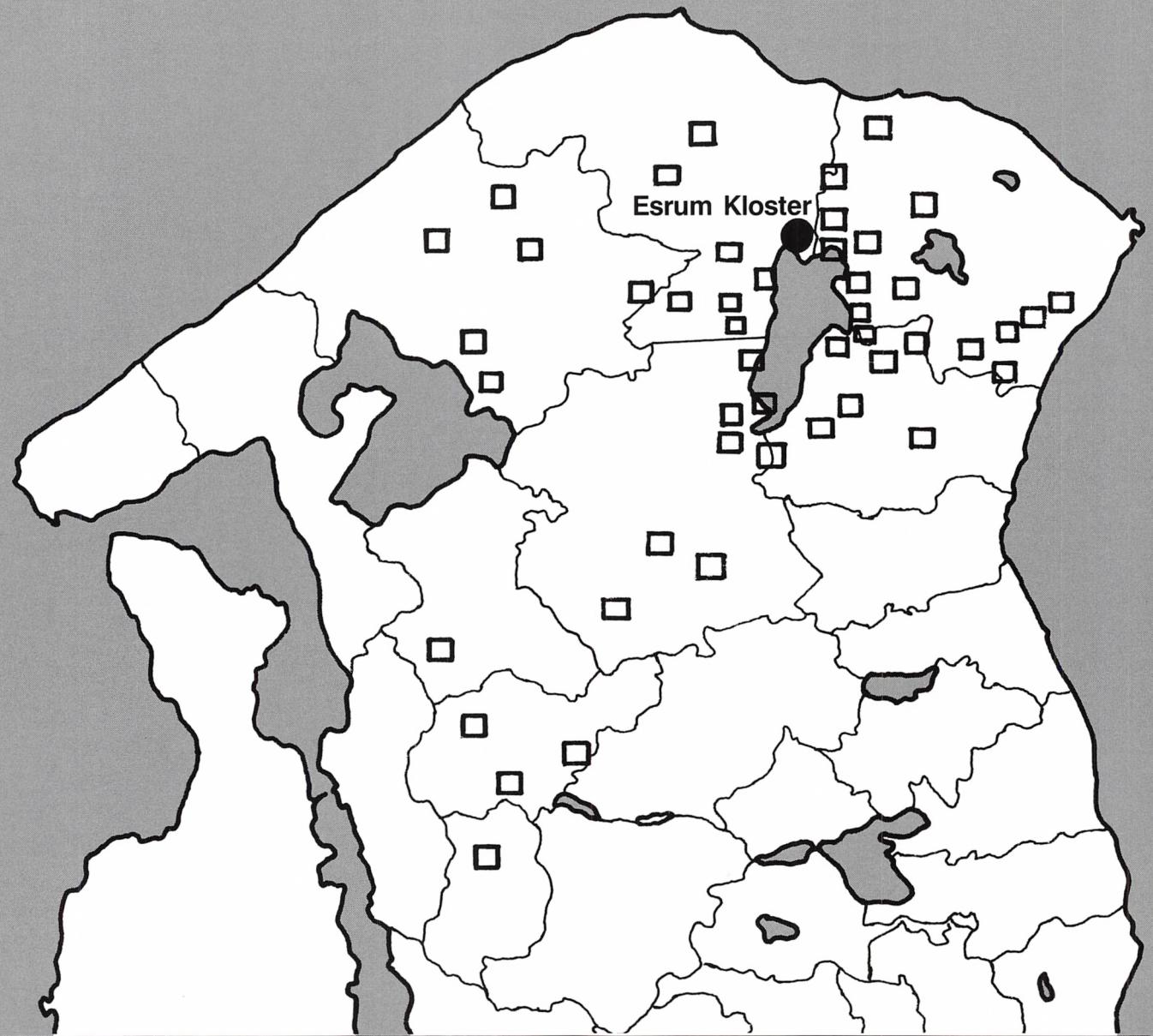
prelates, such as Absalon, who donated property to the Abbey. The gifts were often given as frankalmoign, whereby the monks committed themselves to celebrating mass for the soul of the donator.

The Abbey was much concerned about the administration of its property. It saw to it that the deeds were preserved, and that the property with the appurtenant privileges were frequently certified by Rome or the archbishop, in order that a third party would never have the possibility to question the rights of the Abbey. Several exchanges of property were performed in this period because the Abbey sought to have its farms situated together. It was impractical and uneconomical to have property scattered all over Zealand. Therefore as early as in the 12th century we find Esrum Abbey as the totally predominant holder of property in the

parishes of Esbønderup and Tikøb.

In the early period the Abbey caused many villages to be abolished in order to create large production units, so-called granges, where the land was cultivated by lay brothers and monks, probably assisted by day labourers and serfs. This was the economically most favourable method of cultivation, for the Abbey did not have to pay tithes of land the monks cultivated themselves. But in 1215 a statute was introduced that in the future only land acquired before 1215 and cultivated by the Abbey directly would be free of tithes, and this resulted in a slow reorganization of the work. In time it probably became harder to procure lay brothers, leading to a shortage of manpower obliging the Abbey to reorganize the work and have tenant farmers cultivate the land.





Esrum holdings in the High Middle Ages and in the late Middle Ages.

From the middle of the 1200s there was a decline in the number of gifts, but the Abbey buys property, and the new holdings to a large extent become scattered property. This is probably due to the fact that Esrum completely dominated the nearest villages, and didn't therefore have the same possibilities of exchanging land. The donators were still a mixed crowd: from a priest in the neighbourhood who donates his property in return for reception into the monastery and being cared for in his old age, to Queen Margrethe, whose mother lay buried in the abbey church.

The cultivation of land was reorganized, to a mixture of 'brydegårde' and copyhold farms. 'Brydegårde' were medium-sized farms, headed by a 'bryde' - a kind of tenant. This type of farm was considered as run directly under the Abbey, and could therefore maintain freedom of tithes. However, some of the property was laid out as copyhold, where the peasants would pay their rent to the Abbey, but where there was no freedom of tithes.

The most comprehensive source concerning the holdings of Esrum Abbey is the Esrum Book from 1497. It is an exact account of the property of the Abbey in every lo-



The holdings of Esrum Abbey in 1497. The holdings outside North Zealand are not included. The Abbey's holdings are highly concentrated in the nearest parishes.

ality of Zealand, most often with a statement of the name of the tenant and a specified account of the annual payment he was to make to the Abbey. Here we see the typical medieval mixture of payment in kind, such as grain, butter, lambs, geese etc., commitments to work such as days of ploughing, haymaking, driving and the obligation to stable cattle for fattening, and finally payment in money, but very little of that.

The influence of Esrum Abbey on the locality

Even if it may not be easy to prove directly, there is hardly any doubt that the existence of Esrum Abbey exerted a decisive influence on the locality. In the Middle Ages reading and writing was almost exclusively the prerogative of the clergy, which meant that knowledge and information were spread primarily through ecclesiastical institutions. And not just religious instruction. The Cistercian movement is known as having been pioneers in agriculture, horticulture and building. Often the monasteries were also known for their care for the sick and the poor, although in North Zealand this fame belongs rather to Æbelholt than to Esrum. On the other hand Esrum Abbey has occasioned a good story - the story of Brother Rus, who came to such a fearsome end.

The Esrum Book 1497

The Esrum Book from 1497 contains, among other things, a list of the Abbey's holdings, and an exact

account of the annual rent each tenant or copyholder was to pay.

S l æ t t i l t. Trwels Sighersen j pund siliginis, j pund ordei, j lam, j gas, iiij pullos.

Anders Ascersen ij pund siliginis, ij pund ordei, j lam, j gas, iiij pullos. ij slætte daghe, vj skære daghe.

Jtem hwer v lagenas auene for gestning. Jtem hwer eet nødh ad føde, hwer x læs teyelwetdh.

E y e l s t r o p dabit j pund korn annuatim.

D v n æ w æ l l e. Iep Ienssen j pund siliginis, j pund ordei, ij skilling grot.

Oleff Skrædere j tynde smør.

Jtem hwer ij slætte daghe oc x læs weth.

Jtem then treydie ligger øde.

G r æ s t e. Per Anderssen j pund siliginis, j pund ordei, j lam, j gas, iiij pullos.

Sletelte:

Troels Sigersen one pound of rye, one pound of barley, one lamb one goose, four chickens. Anders Asger-
sen two pounds of rye, two pounds of barley, one lamb, one goose, four chickens. Two days of haymaking, six days of corn harvest. Likewise each of them must give five barrels of oats for banquets (for the inmates of the Abbey) Likewise one head of cattle for fattening, and ten loads of firewood for tile burning.

Ejlstrup gives one pound of grain a year.

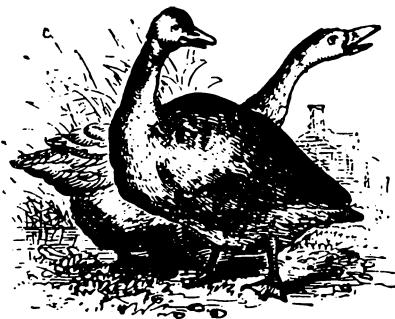
Dønnevælde:

Jep Jepsen one pound of rye, one pound of barley, two shillings.

Oluf Skrædder one barrel of butter. Likewise each two days of haymaking and ten loads of wood. The third (farm) which lies waste likewise.

Græsted:

Per Andersen one pound of rye, one pound of barley, one lamb, one goose, four chickens



I Angoltens bøf i fyrghærre ære.
 i m. ~~bærgmælle~~ hood. Nælbo giftig. +
 Hølstop Ebb. Det er smør. og stort helle. giftig.
 m. Thorpenne. Det er smør. og stort helle. giftig.
 I Hølstop Mansæt Dine. Manesætten er lær.
 bærg i lær. m. de ofte m. tærpærne. og fæ
 i stort og stort vi dækket m. hælper. Lær
 m. hælper. m. bøf. Det er smør. og plætt. verryg
 m. helle. giftig. m. nælboe. +
 Hæmpeholt i stranden m. plætt. og helle. +
 Ofte m. salpæder. +
 Hæmpeholt Morsen Nælbo spæ. Bært. og n. p. +
 Det lær. iger m. salt. og helle. Ofte m. hælper.
 I Mælbygård Nælbo. Matte m. p. m. mæl.
 unatting. +
 I Hælstopfæl. Mansætten. gør. plætt. app. tæren. off
 tæren. spæ. spæ. m. lær. iger. m. salt. app. tæren. off
 og tæren. m. hælper. app. tæren. Det er
 m. spæ. Bært. m. lær. hælper. ell. gæd. Hælper.
 Fæl. fæl. i mælby. m. tænke. for. hælper. Hælper
 landbo. + græs. labo. Det er spæ. Det er. fæl. m. tænke
 m. hælper. Det er plætt. Det er. Hælper. Hælper.
 laster. til. tænker. m. tænker. Det er. laster.
 Landstært. Det er. hælper. Landstært. Det er. laster.
 Det er. hælper. Det er. hælper. Det er. laster.

*A page in
the Esrum Book
showing property
holdings and the
list of rents.*

B a n n æ b i e r g h. Oleff
Anderssen j pund ordei, som han
gyffuer hwært aar aff closters
iordh, som han i leye hauer, som
ær een fiære part aff alt then iordh,
som ligger til Bænnebiergh, kyrkæ
iorden
vden taghen.

L v t z h ø w e. Eenwold j pund
siliginis, j pund ordei, ij lagenas
auene, j lam, j gas, iiiij pullos.
Niels Staffenssen j pund siliginis, j
pund ordei, ij lagenas auene, j lam,
j gas, iiiij pullos.
Velates j pund siliginis, j pund
ordei, ij lagenas auenen, j lam, j
gas, iiiij pullos.
Jtem hwer j foder nødh.
Sommerschat j skæppe smør.
Winterskat iiiij skilling grot eller j
fedh koo. ij slætte daghe, vj skære
daghe.

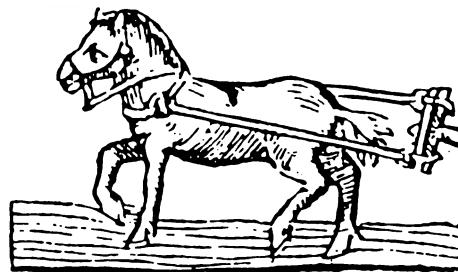
S a l t e r o p. Lasse Mattisen ij
pund siliginis, ij pund ordei, iiiij
tønner auene, ij slætte dage, ij
pløye dage, j foder nødh at føde:
Jtem harffwe oc age korn oc høø,
swo tiidh som tilsiges.
Areld Jacobsen vij skæppe siliginis,
xiiij skæppe auenen, j lubesk marc
oc xj skilling lubesk, j lam, j gas, iiiij
pullos, ij slætte dage, iiiij skære
dage, ij pløye dage, xx læss wedh.
Trwels Hagensen j pund siliginis, j
pund ordei, eet fedh foer oc
æynkhet meer.

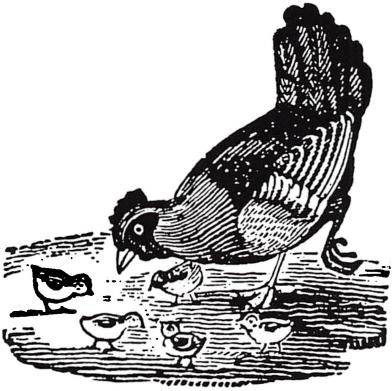
Bannebjerg:
Oluf Andersen one pound of barley,
which he gives every year for the
land of the Abbey which he leases,
which is one fourth of all the land
that belongs to Bannebjerg, apart
from the church land.

Ludshøj:
Enevold one pound of rye, one
pound of barley, two barrels of oats,
one lamb, one goose, four chickens.
Niels Steffensen one pound of rye,
one pound of barley, two barrels of
oats, one lamb, one goose, four
chickens.
Likewise (shall) each (deliver) a fat-
tened cow. Two days of haymaking
and six days of corn harvesting.



Saltrup:
Lasse Mathisen two pounds of rye,
two pounds of barley, four barrels of
oats, two days of haymaking, three
days of ploughing, one head of
cattle to feed. Likewise (he shall)
harrow and gather in the grain and
the hay at the time he is summoned.
Arild Jacobsen seven bushels of rye,
fourteen bushels of barley, one
Lübeck Mark, and eleven Lübeck
shillings, one lamb, one goose, four
chickens, two days of haymaking,
four days of corn harvest, three days
of ploughing, twenty loads of wood.
Troels Hagensen one pound of rye,
one pound of barley, one fat sheep
and nothing more.





E s m æ n d r o p. Lasse
Marquorden, bryden, giffuer iij
pund siliginis oc v skæpper
siliginis, iij pund ordei oc vj
skæpper ordei.

Oleff Dyægn xv siliginis, xvij
ordei.

Hænrick Diægn xxij skæppe
siliginis, xxvij ordei, vij skæpper
haffre, j lam, j gas, iij pullos, ij
slætte dage, iiij skære daghe, iij
pløye daghe, agher xx læs wedh.

Iens Marqwordsen xxij skæppe
siliginis, xxvij skæpper ordei, vij
skæpper auene, j lam, j gas, iiij
höns, ij slætte daghe, iiij skære
daghe, iij pløye dage, xx læs wedh.

Per Man xxij siliginis, xxvij skæp-
per ordei, vij skæpper haffre, j lam,
j gas, iiij pullos, ij slætte dage, iiij
skære dage, iij pløye dage oc xx
læs wedh.



Iep Hæwensen ij pund siliginis, ij
pund ordei, vij skæpper auene, j
lam, j gas, iiij pullos, ij slætte dage,
iiijskære daghe, iij pløye dage, xx
læs wedh.

Iens Ysacksen xxij skæppe siligi-
nis, xxvij ordei, vij auene, j lam, j
gas, iiij pullos, ij slætte dage, iiij
skære dage, iij pløye dage, xx læs
wedh.

Jtem hwert annet aar j fedh oxe oc
hwert annet j fedh koo, oc hwert
aar alle een fedh galt oc eet fedh
foer.

Esbønderup (?):
Lasse Marqvardsen, the 'bryde' gives
three pounds of rye and five bushels
of rye, three pounds of barley and
six bushels of barley.

Oluf Degrn fifteen rye, eighteen
barley.

Henrik Degrn twenty-three bushels of
rye, twenty-seven barley, seven bus-
hels of oats, one lamb, one goose,
four chickens, two days of hay-
making, four days of corn harvest,
three days of ploughing, brings
twenty loads of wood.

Jens Markvardsen twenty-three bus-
hels of barley, seven bushels of oats,
one lamb, one goose, four hens, two
days of haymaking, four days of
corn harvest, three days of plough-
ing, twenty loads of wood.

Per Mand twenty-three rye, twenty-
seven bushels of barley, seven bus-
hels of oats, one lamb, one goose,
four chickens, two days of hayma-
king, four days of corn harvest, three
days of ploughing, and twenty loads
of wood.

Jep Hagensen two pounds of rye,
two pounds of barley, seven bushels
of oats, one lamb, one goose, four
chickens, two days of haymaking,
four days of corn harvest, three days
of ploughing, twenty loads of wood.

Jens Isaksen twenty-three bushels of
rye, twenty-seven barley, seven oats,
one lamb, one goose, four chickens,
two days of haymaking, four days of
corn harvest, three days of plough-
ing, twenty loads of wood. Likewise
every two years a fat ox and
every two years a fat cow and every
year a fat hog and a fat sheep.

S o d e r o p. Iep Mattissen iiiij skilling grot hwert aar.
Anders Pe(thersen) iiiij skilling grot,
iij pløye dage oc harffwe, soo tiidh som til siges, oc age høø oc korn,
item een slætte dagh. Jtem hwer iiiij lagenas auene for gestning.

N æ l l e r ø t h. Herlugh vij skilling
grot oc holle gestningh.

T y n k e r op. Anders Gregorsen
vij skilling grot oc gestning.

P o r o p. Ysyk xv skæpper siliginis,
xvijj ordei oc holle gestning.

Soderup:
Jep Mathisen four shillings every year. Anders Petersen four shillings, three days of ploughing and harrow when he is summoned, and bring in hay and grain. Likewise a day of haymaking. Likewise each four barrels of oats for progress (i.e. shelter and food for visitors to the Abbey).

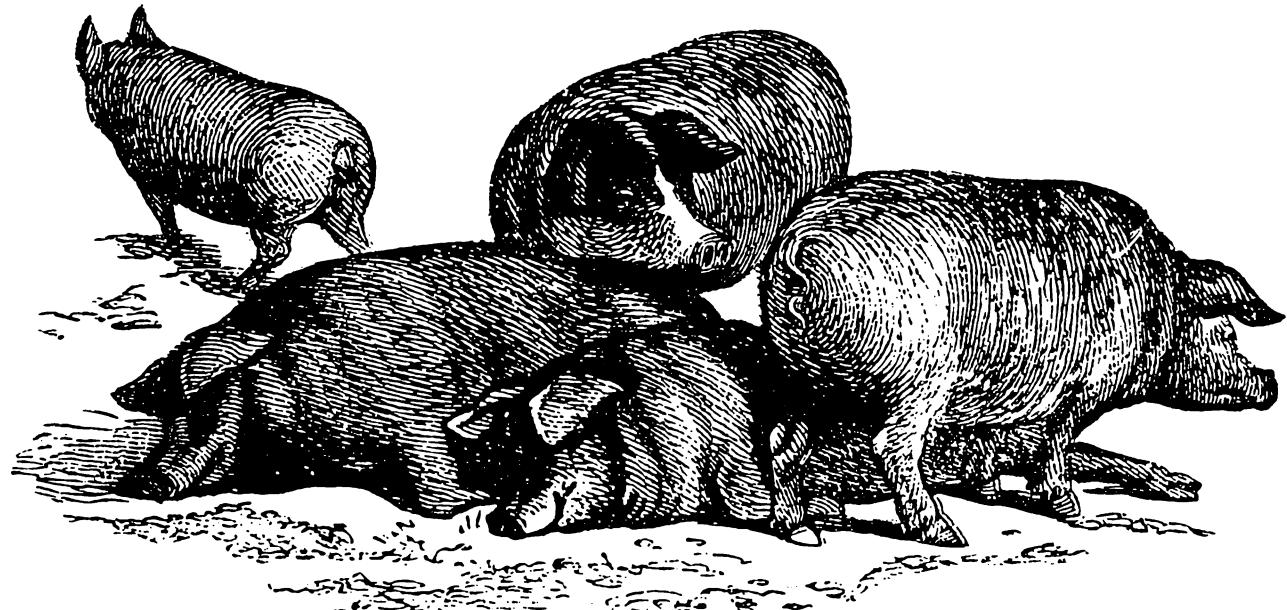
Nellerød:
Herlyk seven shillings and progress.

Tinkerup:
Anders Gregorsen six shillings and progress.

Pårup:
Isak (?) fifteen bushels of rye, eighteen barley and progress.

From:
Codex Esromensis - Esrom Abbey
Letter Book.

Published by Oluf Nielsen 1880.
Photographic reprint 1973.



The Will from 1300 of Niels Attesen, priest in Blistrup

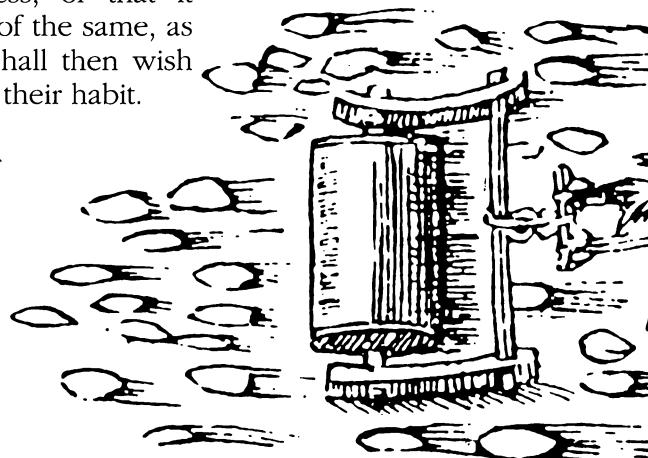
The property of Esrum Abbey increased year by year up through the Middle Ages. The illustration shows one of the ways this could happen. Around 1300, when the parish priest of Blistrup felt old and ill, he arranged to be received in the monastery, and at the same time gave to it everything he owned. His letter of donation or will is an exact account of all his property, and in 1497 the will was copied in the Esrum Book, which is still extant. The narrative begins a little above the middle: In nomine patris et filii ... On the next page the narrative is rendered in English.

Voboratis intelligimus, qualiter possello que de
Huspebo et plecterent cum oibis attinentibus
suis, p[ro]m donatione, pacem in isto emp[re]t[er]m
pretio. Deuenient i manu fratre d[omi]ni Eustachio
Nos esdem fratribus q[uod] n[ost]rum est, no[n] volo
teb denegare, posse solum illam, imp[er]t[er]io[n]es
dei et ecclesie, non et n[ost]ram sustinuerit ille
n[ost]rus sub anathemate, ne quis predictos fratres
sup meiorat[er] possessoribus molestia p[ro]sumat.
Q[ui]p bonis lucis. Venerabilis. D[omi]n[u]s et D[omi]n[us]
n[ost]r[us]. per H. columnu[m] actu p[ro] de blystorpho.
Il Nōme patris et filii et p[ro]p[ter]e sancti Ameri.
Ego Nicolaus atti p[er]sona ecclie de blystorpho
corpe q[ui]ndam infirmus et debil mente validus
considerans nichil aliud venturum tuas huic q[ui]ndam
iudicium placard posse nisi vita religiosa ac de
sua terra exhibita p[ro]p[ter]e locis opa pretatis, an
annos triginta et amplius devotum cumq[ue] geno
erga monasteriu[m] s[an]cte marie de Eustachio
ordines exempli meret am[er]icani p[ro]fessoris quoy
ibidem corpa requiescenti fraternitate recepta
disposui me ac sua mea bona mobilia et m[er]ita
mobilea, entris p[ro]p[ter]e pastus, plus domibus
altris pecoribus, ac supp[er]cellenti vniqua dicto
loco, tradid[er] ac confidid[er] q[uod] et iam imp[er]i i[n]fir
mitate corruptus, iuramento ac p[ro]missione factis

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, amen. I Niels Attesen, parish priest of Blistrup, though weak and frail in body, however, sound of soul, mindful that nothing can placate Him, who will come and judge all mankind, but a pious life and pious acts of worldly property bequeathed to the convents, having for more than 30 years had feelings of affection towards The Abbey of Our Lady at Esrum of the Cistercian Order following the example of all my forefathers, whose bodies were laid to rest there, have had myself received into the brotherhood and decided to give to the said Abbey: myself and all my holdings, personal property and real property, in lands, meadows, pastures, forests, houses, fields, cattle, and with all domestic utensils, the which resolve now that I am inflicted with disease I have fulfilled in deed by taking an oath and a vow on the Body of the Lord, which was laid in my hands, and by, on the day of the Holy Martyrs Nereus and Achilleus anno Domine 1300 on the ground of the said church and in its building, having made my will in this way: I submit myself to the said Esrum Abbey in order always to live with the brothers in the same place, according to what the Abbot and the lay convent for the said place might decide for me regarding the habit I might wear as well as food, and together

with this letter I hand over and surrender to the said Abbot and lay convent all my above mentioned property, whether acquired through inheritance or other title: first at Ludshøj land assessed at 12 'øre'¹⁾ with fields, meadows, pastures, copses, houses, cattle, all domestic utensils with all appurtenances and all rights; at Unnerup land assessed at 2 'øre' with all there is on it as mentioned immediately above; at Dønnevælde land assessed at 22 pennies less than 5 'ørtug'²⁾ with all above-mentioned appurtenances and all there is on it; at Ørby what is my due through inheritance from Jens Ingesen, my sister's son. Furthermore what I have of cattle, studs, and divers other movables on the land of my church, where I have had my abode, and I confirm with this letter and authorize the entire aforesaid gift for Esrum Abbey, the Abbot and the lay community, which serve God there forever, whether I can live with them, recovering from this illness, or that it shall befall that I die of the same, as with all my heart I shall then wish to leave this world in their habit.

¹⁾⁺²⁾ Danish units of value.
'Ørtug' now obsolete.



Brother Rus

In the basement of Esrum Abbey there is an old grid for baking or cooking, which is called Brother Rus' grid. A legend attached to this grid tells us how badly things can turn out once the Devil gets inside a monastery.

This was about to happen at Esrum, not through the Devil in person, but through an accomplice. A young man by the name of Rus is employed in the kitchen of the monastery, and shortly after he quietly manages to tip the cook into a pot of boiling water. Rus himself replaces the cook, and now he prepares such rich and delicious meals that the monks quite forget their fast and prayers and only think of what is for dinner. Things go from bad to worse and Rus also procures wine and women for the monks, and the monastery becomes increasingly disorganized.

Change sets in when a peasant witnesses a nocturnal meeting between Rus and Old Nick, who wants to hear about the develop-

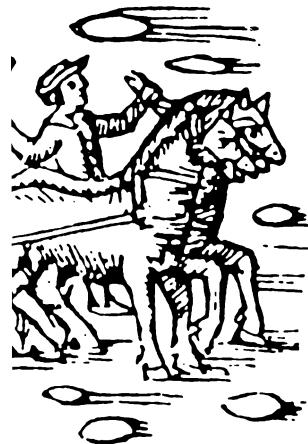
ments in the demoralization of the monastery. The peasant reveals the true state of affairs to the Abbot of the monastery, and all ends well. Rus, however, has not been put completely out of action. The moment he is going to be punished he transforms himself into a red horse and flees to England, where he continues his outrages.

The monks preserved the grid on which he had prepared the excellent food as a warning, and moreover a hole can be seen in the

Broder Russes Histoarie



Title page of the oldest Danish edition of Brother Rus' Story, printed in Copenhagen 1555.





*Brother Rus' grid in Esrum
Abbey.*



basement, Brother Rus' hole, which won't let itself be walled up.

The story of Brother Rus was very popular in the 1500s in Protestant countries, where it was used in the campaign of the Age of the Reformation against the Catholic Church.

The oldest source of the legend in Danish is a short rhyming novel from 1555. The illustration is taken from this work. There exists only one extant copy, which is now in the Royal Library, and it emerged in a characteristic way.

A librarian noticed that the binding of an old edition of Homer had gone to pieces. The cardboard of the binding consisted of paper which had been pasted together, but the glue had evaporated and the single sheets fell apart. He saw that they had been printed in an easily recognizable type, which Christian Pedersen, the humanist from Helsingør, had brought with him from Paris, and on closer inspection it appeared that a complete edition of Brother Rus' story had been used as binding.

A variant of the legend about Brother Rus says that after his unmasking he stole some of the Abbey's relics and fled along the shore of Esrum Lake. At Nødebo he had to rest awhile, but the monks caught up with him and he had to run away without taking the relics. Where they lay a spring took its rise, whose water had healing powers. The spring was dedicated to the holy Magdalene, and Nødebo Church was built close by.

Esrum Abbey Becomes the King's Property

At the Reformation in 1536 the Crown took over the former holdings of the clergy, but this took place in a fairly mild way as far as the abbeys were concerned. In 1538 Esrum Abbey was placed under the abbey at Sorø, but the monks were allowed to live there for another number of years, and the farming of the Abbey holdings was continued. Not until 1559, when there remained only the Abbot and 11 monks, was the Abbey finally closed down

with the removal of the monks to other houses, and the transfer of the holdings that had not been sold earlier or mortgaged to citizens in Elsinore, to the Lord Lieutenant at Kronborg. The furniture was removed, and later began the demolition of the church and the Abbey as building material was needed elsewhere. St Olai's Church in Elsinore was partly built of materials from Esrum Abbey.

Christian IV and Esrum

The kings began to use Esrum, mostly because the hunting there was so excellent. In 1585 the then 8-year-old crown prince Christian (later Christian IV) was sent on a trip up there, and he wrote about it in his exercise book (the first part in Latin and Danish, the last part only in Latin): *I was at Esrum Abbey this past week there to divert myself somewhat however did I not see anything particular there but only (did I get the impression that there had been a magnificent temple, when it was still flourishing. Now it is not easy to get an impression of what it was, for it has been nearly completely pulled down).*





The last monks left Esrum Abbey in 1559, and the main part of the furnishings of the abbey church was transferred to St.Olai's Church in Elsinore. Among other things this beautiful late Gothic abbot's seat from the 1400s, which is now in the National Museum.

Esrum - Royal Farm

The Subsequent Fate of the Abbey

For several hundred years the Abbey has been a ruin providing building materials, and in time the work and influence of the Abbey seems to have disappeared completely from the minds of common men.

J. Magnus Petersen, the archaeologist, a young man at the time, went on a walking tour in North Zealand. He writes about his stay at Esrum Inn in 1847: 'As I wanted information about the site of the old Abbey, he (Teisner, the innkeeper at Esrum Inn) told me that the big prison building immediately opposite the inn was thought to be the famous Abbey, otherwise it was said

that the building of the inn where we were sitting was situated in the former garden of the Abbey. While staying at Teisner's I made enquiries about where to find the famous grid - upon which Brother Rus was burnt; my host believed it was somewhere in the courthouse. I told him that the legend also had it that Brother Rus had used the same grid to prepare the delicious meat dishes that beguiled the monks of the monastery into self-indulgence and gluttony; but my host knew only that it had been used to roast the rascal himself; however, he said it might well be the reason why this particular punishment had been chosen, to make him see the enormity of his crime'.

Esrum Inn as it appeared around 1855. There has been innkeeping at Esrum since the establishment of the Abbey.



After the Reformation the property was converted into a farm and run by the Lord Lieutenant at Kronborg, assisted by villein service of copy-holders. From the letters of enfeoffment it can be seen how many men the lord lieutenant had to keep at Esrum. In 1598 it was specified: 1 farm bailiff, 1 potman, 1 field keeper in summer who may tend foals in winter, 1 herdsman of oxen, 1 cowman in summer who may tend them in winter, 1 herdsman of swine, 1 herdboy of young cattle, 1 milkmaid, 3 maids and 1 maker of malt. On the other hand, people from all the neighbouring villages were called out when the farm land needed to be tended, villeinage consisting of having to present oneself for the various sorts of farm work. It appears from the accounts that 300-400 men and women turned up on a work day, for instance for hay-making or corn harvesting.

Dragoons left their mark on town life at Esrum in the 1700s.
Drawings by K. Hansen-Reistrup.



Esrum - royal stud farm

From the reign of Frederik II until 1716 Esrum occupied a highly significant position as the centre of The Royal Frederiksborg Stud Farm, where intensive and specialized horse-breeding took place, which was to ensure the royal family the best and the most beautiful horses for any purpose. The land was laid out to grass and the production of fodder. The names of fields that are still known today go back, to a large extent, to this period, when the single fields were laid out to pasture for specific flocks of horses.

In 1716 Esrum Abbey came under Frederik IV's system of cavalry property, and barracks and stables were built there for three companies of dragoons. At the same time the central part of the stud farm was moved to Hillerød. The dragoons stayed only until 1732, when the regimental clerk of the Kronborg region was seated there. In 1796 Esrum was transformed into the district tax office under Kronborg County, and remained so until 1878 when Kronborg County was subordinated to Frederiksborg County.

The Subsequent Fate of Esrum

In 1931 the buildings still extant came under the Ministry of the Interior, which let them to private people, and to the National Museum, which has used them as storehouses.

In 1992 Frederiksborg County in co-operation with the Board for the Preservation of Forest and Nature established the School for the Environment and the School for Nature at the Mill Farm; the old water mill

has been restored, and other cultural activities have been made possible, so that Esrum is recovering its former position as a centre of nature and culture in North Zealand.

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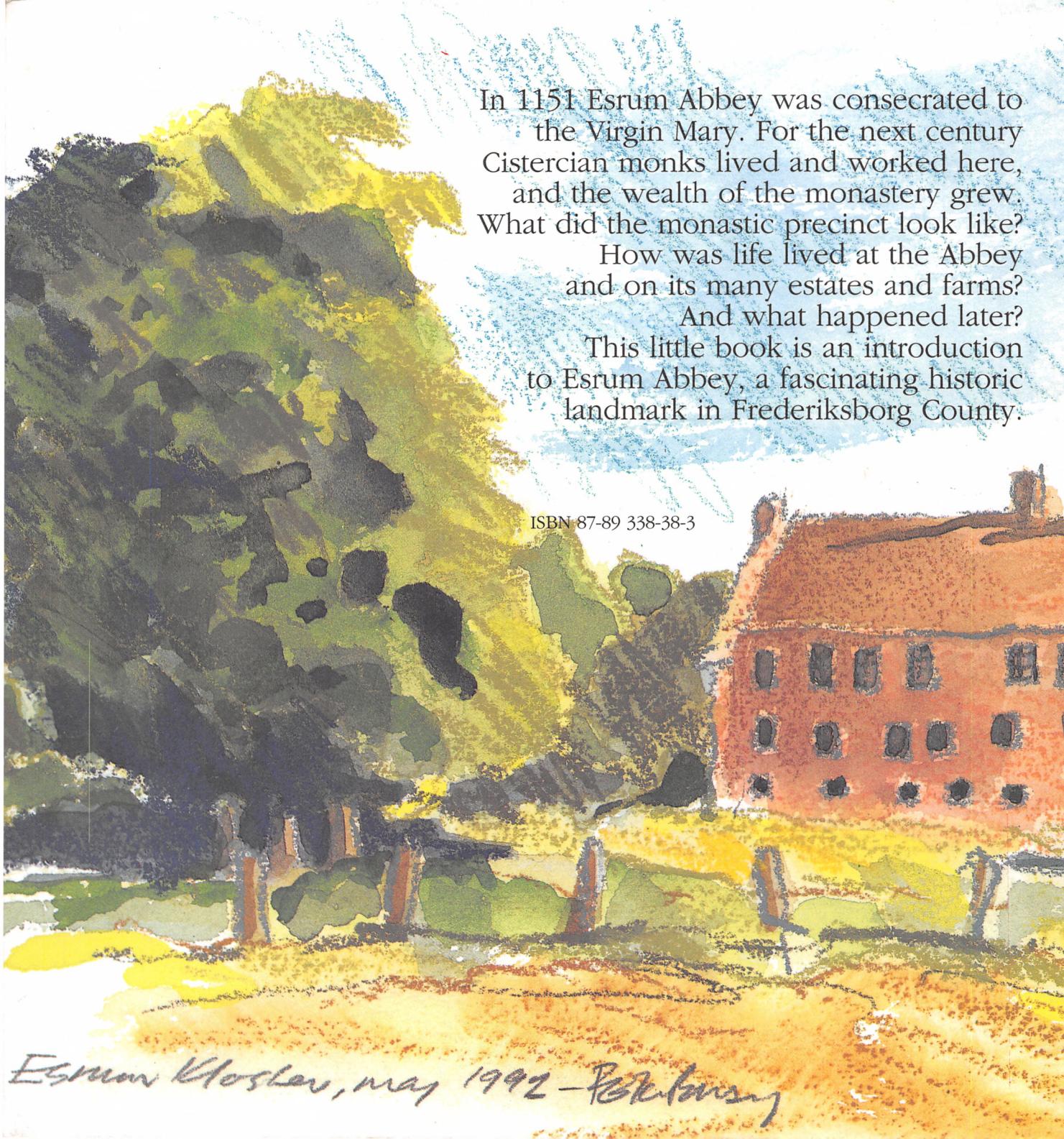
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The Mill Farm was an important part of a Cistercian monastery, as the following text from the abbey at Clairveaux indicates:

'A stream running through the many workshops of the abbey is everywhere blessed for the services it renders. First it uses its power in the mill, then it rapidly runs inside and surrenders itself to the fire, which heats it up for the brewing of the monks' beer. And other tasks are in store for it. It never refuses what it is asked to do'.

Esrum Møllegaard - 92



In 1151 Esrum Abbey was consecrated to the Virgin Mary. For the next century Cistercian monks lived and worked here, and the wealth of the monastery grew. What did the monastic precinct look like?

How was life lived at the Abbey and on its many estates and farms?

And what happened later?

This little book is an introduction to Esrum Abbey, a fascinating historic landmark in Frederiksborg County.

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