

5 Under the Hammer

On conclusion of the Peace of Prague (1635) the opportunity arose to recover from the disruption and devastation of the war. The Scots were again free to take possession of their property but were poorly placed to do so. The monasteries were almost deserted. Abbot Ogilvie and Prior Maxwell had died leaving only Thomas Duff in occupation of Würzburg and Alexander Baillie in Regensburg. It was imperative that the refugee monks should return to their abbeys as soon as possible but as they were scattered throughout Europe – Rome, Switzerland, Scotland, Ireland as well as Austria and southern Germany – this would take some time. On Ogilvie's death the auxiliary bishop of Würzburg wrote to Baillie asking him to recall the monks of Würzburg to elect a new abbot for St. James' monastery in that city.¹ At once Baillie sent letters to all the monks of the *Schottenklöster*. Within four months six brothers had returned and proceeded to elect Robert Forbes (r. 1635–37) as their abbot in Würzburg. Forbes was one of the monks who had fled to St. Galen in Switzerland. By the following year more monks had returned to St. James' in Regensburg. Abbot Algeo had still not resigned his position and John Sylvanus Mayne was appointed administrator. They also elected Alexander Baillie as abbot of Erfurt in place of the late Hugh Wallace. At that point all of the abbeys had Scottish principals thereby avoiding for the time being the danger of the sequestration of their properties by the Germans. To hold the view that their trials were over, however, would be mistaken.

They faced monumental difficulties. Abbot Baillie argued with the city council in Erfurt for the return of his abbey. Despite the declaration of peace the Swedish garrison still occupied the city and Baillie was forced to go to Würzburg until the situation improved. Abbot Forbes' community in Würzburg numbered fewer than a handful and in 1637, only a year after his election, he died. Audomarus Asloan (r. 1638–61) was recalled from his mission in Scotland

¹ Dilworth, *Franconia*, 72.

to replace him. He was elected abbot in 1638. The community was, by Asloan's own account, very poor.² The Bishop of Würzburg, Francis von Hatzfeld und Gleichen (r. 1631–42), who had overall responsibility for the Scots monastery was sympathetic but despite the abbot's appeal for financial help the bishop offered only moral support.³ Nevertheless, this was of value in October of the following year when John Mayne, the administrator in Regensburg died. The community had already received the news of Abbot Algeo's death in an Austrian monastery in May and the absence of leadership which this presented was the opportunity that the bishop of Regensburg had been waiting for to try again to take control of the *Schottenkloster*. Only one young monk, Gilbert Macarius Chambers of Durn, remained in Regensburg. Alarmed by the danger threatened Asloan acted and armed with a letter of recommendation from Francis von Hatzfeld to Albrecht von Törring in Regensburg he immediately set off with two monks to defend the Scottish position in St. James. The small community of Scottish monks which he had thus managed to gather in Regensburg postulated (proposed) Asloan as abbot of Regensburg as well as Würzburg. An ordinary election was not possible since anti-pluralism rules drawn up by the Council of Trent forbade anyone from holding more than one abbacy at the same time unless given express permission by the pope. The Scots duly applied to Urban VIII to approve the postulation of Asloan for his second abbey. The pope rejected their submission but he still had affection for the Scottish nation of which he had been cardinal protector. His response consisted of informing the Regensburg Scots that since they had not elected a suitable abbot within the required time, the appointment of a successor to Algeo fell to him, as Regensburg was a consistorial abbey. He then appointed

² *Ibid.*, 78.

³ The war had rendered almost every community and institution destitute. No doubt the bishop had many calls on whatever resources still remained to him. However, the greatest expense came with the decision to build new city walls. The trauma of the Swedish occupation of the city during the war was such that it was decided that greater resistance to attack would be shown in future. The plan for the new walls was not simply to strengthen the old ones. The prince-bishop decided to enclose the city and take the new fortifications across the river to the west bank encompassing the monastery of St. James and linking it to the citadel of Marienburg and returning to the river upstream. The project was massive and resulted in an enclosed area approximately twice the size of that defended by the old city walls. Bishop Francis appears to have gone no further than discussions of the plan. It was left to his great successor, Prince-archbishop John Philip von Schönborn (r. 1642–73), to carry out the major part of the work. Its new defences were never put to the test and secure behind the new walls the commercial life of Würzburg was able to prosper.

Audomarus Asloan as abbot (r.1638–46), thereby giving the Scots what they had asked for.

The pope's generosity did not remove the difficulties facing them. They were met with two further problems. First Bishop Francis of Würzburg instructed Asloan to return to his duties there. He did so but appointed as administrator of Regensburg Abbot Baillie of Erfurt who otherwise had no monastery and no community. Another danger for the Scots arose in the summer of 1640 when Emperor Ferdinand III (r.1636–57) held a diet in Regensburg to deal with a number of pressing issues arising from the war. A subsidiary issue was that of the *Schottenkloster*. He personally requested that the pope merge the Scottish Benedictine community of Regensburg with that of Würzburg so that the vacated property could be given over to the Spanish Discalced Carmelites. In doing this there is little doubt that he was acting at the behest of Bishop von Törring. The bishop of Regensburg was a major force in the continuing counter-Reformation in Southern Germany and he sought to gain every support possible in this work. The Spanish Carmelites under his direction had been helping greatly in the diocese for more than five years. On the other hand, the Scots who were not under his control had presented nothing but problems. They had brought disgrace on the Catholic community through the actions of Algeo and others. Furthermore they had turned to the Lutheran city council for loans rather than submit to his authority as bishop. Von Törring wanted, at no expense to himself, to reward one group of clergy, the Spanish, and chastise another, the Scots. The pope was slow in responding to the emperor's letter and in December the bishop wrote to Urban saying that he supported the emperor's request and explained, in his opinion, why the Scots should be dispossessed. In his turn Abbot Asloan wrote two letters: one to Francesco Barberini, the pope's nephew and cardinal protector of Scotland, asking for his support and the other to the emperor pleading that the Scots be given the chance to rebuild their communities. The pope and his nephew stood firm, the emperor withdrew his request and once again Bishop von Törring was frustrated in his efforts to evict the Scots. The following year he built suitable accommodation for the Carmelites elsewhere in his diocese but he did not give up his ambition of taking possession of St. James'.

The Scots remained vulnerable and needed time to rebuild their communities. In a letter written home to Scotland from Vienna in 1641, Boniface Strachan, a monk from Würzburg, described the condition of the monasteries. Regensburg had an income sufficient to support only one or two monks, Erfurt could not support even one monk and although Würzburg

was the best placed of the three, the monastery's revenues were very small and had been severely diminished by the ongoing war. The buildings were in a poor state and there was no money to carry out repairs such as mending the roof of the church of St. James in Regensburg.⁴ Their lack of resources was compensated to some extent by the determination to survive shown by the Scots. With Asloan as abbot of both Würzburg and Regensburg the Scots were united in a way that they had never been before.⁵ They were prepared not only to defend their monastic houses but to add to them. To this end Strachan had been sent to Vienna in yet another attempt to gain control of its *Schottenkloster*. The German abbot had died but Strachan's efforts were unsuccessful in part because the Scots could not support themselves financially but also because they had insufficient brothers to form a new community in Vienna.

The Scots were not alone in suffering from a shortage of novices. Most German monasteries were in a similar state due to the effects of the war which had been in progress for a quarter of a century. Various religious communities such as the Spanish Discalced Carmelites in Regensburg were intent on gaining monastic premises by ejecting incumbent communities which had been reduced in numbers and fallen on hard times. To protect themselves monasteries tried to revitalise larger groupings (congregations) whose members could provide mutual support. One such was the Bursfelde Congregation, a German Benedictine grouping, which, several centuries earlier, had been large and important and it was from this quarter that the Scots faced their next challenge. Prior to St. James' in Würzburg being taken over by the Scots in 1595 all of that city's monasteries had belonged to the Bursfelde Congregation.⁶ In 1642 the president of the congregation demanded that they return. The German communities were not against such a move in principle but Abbot Asloan could see the danger for the Scots of being absorbed into a large and otherwise entirely German congregation. Fearing a gradual expropriation of the monastery by the Germans he refused. The argument continued for two years and the threat passed only when the new prince-bishop, Johann

⁴ Dilworth, *Franconia*, 84.

⁵ The archbishop of Mainz also recognised that the monastery of Erfurt was a daughter house of the Regensburg abbey and that Asloan therefore had authority over all three *Schottenklöster*. Dilworth, *Franconia*, 149.

⁶ The Bursfelde Congregation at its height consisted of 136 Benedictine monasteries in Germany and the Low Countries. At the Reformation its headquarters, the monastery of Bursfelde in Lower Saxony, was taken over along with forty others by Lutherans. However, the congregation survived in a weakened form. For further details see Heutger, Nicholas, *Bursfelde und seine Reformklöster* (2nd rev. edn, Hildesheim, 1975).

Philipp von Schönborn (r. 1642–73), exerted his authority and forbade any of his monasteries in Würzburg joining the congregation. The bishop's decision had been influenced by Audomar Asloan who had been able to cultivate a friendship with the new bishop as he had done with his predecessor. This friendship became even more important when in 1645 Von Schönborn was appointed archbishop and elector of Mainz as well as prince-bishop of Würzburg making him one of the most important men in the empire. Asloan gained an increased importance in the city and among other preferments in 1646 he was elected rector of the university.

That same year he decided that the governments of the *Schottenklöster* should revert to their old form with each being controlled by its own abbot. Asloan remained at Würzburg while Alexander Baillie (r. 1646–57) was elected abbot of Regensburg.⁷ Gilbert Macarius Chambers, the young monk who had been left in sole occupation in Regensburg after the death of John Mayne, was appointed abbot of Erfurt. This appeared to strengthen the Scots' position but it disguised the poor quality of candidates which again they had to choose from. Baillie tried to employ Chambers as his assistant at Regensburg but the young man was incompetent and he was encouraged to go to Erfurt to attempt to regain this abbey for the Scots. The city council was still ignoring the Scots' claims to their property but with the end of the war in 1648 it could no longer place obstacles in the way of repossession.⁸ Asloan and Baillie were both anxious to strengthen the position of their monasteries by attracting new members to their order. In 1647 Baillie attempted to recruit Scots from the Scots College in Paris. Although he was successful the two novices were forced to enrol in Würzburg due to the fact that Bavaria was again embroiled in war and it was unsafe to travel to Regensburg. The numbers of monks in the Würzburg community began to reach a healthy level but Regensburg

⁷ Baillie's election in 1646 was confirmed by the bishop of Regensburg although he had no authority over a consistorial abbey. This was a dangerous precedent which von Törring later sought to exploit. Dilworth, *Franconia*, 93.

⁸ Chambers reoccupied the buildings which were largely in ruin but lived in a state of near penury. He was reliant on charity, some of which came from Abbot Asloan in Würzburg. Dilworth, *Franconia*, 93. The attitude of the city council changed after 1664 when Johann Philip Schönborn annexed Erfurt into his principality of Mainz. As subjects of the principal Catholic Prince-archbishopric of the empire the Lutheran council were forced to take a more relaxed approach to their relationships with Catholic authorities. Even so the situation had not improved by the 1670s when William Ephraim Reid was in occupation. He could afford to eat in the monastery only two days each week. On the other five he was required to seek a *mensam ambulatorium* among his friends. Humphries, "Abbot Placid", 318.

remained seriously depleted despite the fact that Baillie was slowly improving the monastery's finances.

The limited number of monks in the Scottish communities continued to cause concern and, although they did not want to be a small part of the German congregation of Bursfelde, the Scots could see the additional security that belonging to a larger congregation would bring. This caused them to turn instead for mutual support to the English monastery of Lamspringe near Hanover. It was the only one of its kind in Germany and, therefore, did not present the same threat to the independence of the Scots that Bursfelde did. Abbot Baillie especially hoped that in forming an association some of the monks from Lamspringe could be lodged in Regensburg allowing it to conduct the full range of monastic observances required of a viable community.⁹ The English abbot, Placid Gascoigne (r.1651–81),¹⁰ viewed the approach favourably and even sent some monks to Regensburg to assess the practicality of the proposal. The English, however, decided not to throw in their lot with the Scots and for the time being remained a separate community.¹¹

The shortage of monks in Regensburg was a weakness which others could exploit. No sooner had Asloan fended off the danger from the Bursfelde Congregation and while he was still in discussion with the English Benedictines of Lamspringe, the Scots came under a surreptitious attack from a new quarter. The Spanish ambassador to the Imperial court, Juan Caramuel y Lobkowitz (1606–82), approached Alexander Baillie to suggest that he would be able to help supply some Irish monks to Regensburg to augment his community. Caramuel had a personal interest in Britain. He was a Cistercian monk who in 1634 had persuaded his order to appoint him as abbot of Melrose in Scotland, a property which the order had lost in the Reformation nearly a

⁹ It would appear that the community was unable to observe the full eight canonical hours of the *Horarium*.

¹⁰ John Gascoigne was the president of the English Benedictine Congregation when Asloan first raised the suggestion of cooperation between the Scots and the English. He was elected abbot of Lamspringe in 1651.

¹¹ The English Benedictines later changed their minds. By 1660 a working agreement had been arrived at such that some English monks resided at Würzburg and Scottish novices were trained at Lamspringe. The missionary faculties held by the English abbot were extended to the Scots and their missionaries were under the authority and to a certain extent the direction of the English. As a result two Scots worked on the mission in England in the late 1660s. At that point the abbot of Würzburg tried to obtain missionary faculties from Rome separate from the English. This was not achieved until the late 1670s (see Chapter Seven), Dilworth, *Franconia*, 107.

century earlier.¹² This decision was taken at a time when it was believed that the more lenient policy towards Catholics shown by King Charles I (1600–49) might lead to his re-instating monasteries in his kingdoms. After events in Britain had removed this hope completely, Caramuel was appointed in 1645 as Spanish ambassador to the imperial court. In making his offer to Abbot Baillie Caramuel's true intention was to arrange that the *Schottenkloster* should be taken over by the Irish. He sent Columbanus Duffy, an Irish monk from a monastery in Vienna, to Regensburg and when Baillie offered Duffy the hospitality required to be shown to any visitor Caramuel wrote telling him that he should keep Duffy as his coadjutor. Although Duffy stayed for two years Baillie did not cooperate with Caramuel's plan. The Irishman returned to his monastery in Vienna without having gained control of St. James'. But the threat had not disappeared. The good relationship between Baillie and Asloan had been strained by Baillie's support of some of the Würzburg monks who had laid formal complaints against their abbot. The complaints had been taken to the bishop of Würzburg who viewed them as being without substance and he dismissed them. The issues involved may have been trivial but the outcome was not. Alienated from his fellow abbot Baillie fell victim to another approach from Juan Caramuel. In 1652 Baillie agreed to his suggestion that Duffy be made coadjutor provided that the arrangement was kept secret from his brother monks. Baillie was in failing health and sought to have the matter of succession arranged while he was still able. This was outside his powers, however, since his successor required to be elected by the abbey community. Nevertheless, Baillie had placed the Scots in a dangerous position. In 1653 Duffy made it known that he was coadjutor. Baillie regretted his earlier compliance with Caramuel's wishes and appealed to von Törring to declare the appointment invalid. The bishop was as anxious as the abbot to see off the Irishman and he succeeded by enlisting the support of the emperor and the Church authorities in Rome. The Irish then launched a formal request to both Rome and the emperor for the return of their monasteries on the basis that they had been the original founders.¹³ Asloan and Baillie were actively engaged

¹² The general chapter of the order also appointed him vicar-general of the Cistercians in England, Scotland and Ireland. Dilworth, *Franconia*, 90.

¹³ This was part of a wider initiative by Irish Benedictines planned in Spain. The claim covered not just the Germany monasteries but also those in Ireland which had originally been priories of the *Schottenklöster*. As part of this process Duffy took to describing himself as prior of St. John's in Waterford. Dilworth, *Franconia*, 94. Abbot Placid Fleming later wrote a history of the dispute which survives in manuscript: *On the dispute of Irish and Scote Benedictines for the Ratisbon Abbey in 1653–1655*, National

in refuting these claims as well as fending off an attempt by von Törring to set up a college for German seminarians in St. James' in Regensburg.¹⁴ These matters were settled in favour of the Scots in the Diet of Ratisbon in 1654 but Baillie died later that year and was replaced as abbot by the incompetent Macarius Chambers who retained his position as abbot of Erfurt.¹⁵

There was little alternative to appointing Chambers since the numbers of monks had dropped even further. Abbot Asloan was in no doubt that with the appointment of Chambers the position of the Scots continued to be weak. He resolved to draw up proposals which would reunite the three monasteries formally as a discrete Scottish congregation with himself as abbot general and Chambers, as abbot of Regensburg and Erfurt, under his direct control. To succeed, the proposal required the agreement of the pope, as superior of Regensburg, and the prince-archbishops of Würzburg and Mainz, as superiors of Würzburg and Erfurt respectively. Despite being a friend of Asloan, Johann Philipp von Schönbrun, who held the archbishoprics of both Würzburg and Mainz, did not give his consent and the proposal was abandoned. When Abbot Asloan died in 1661 there appeared to be little prospect of a settled future for the Scots in Germany. It is of interest, therefore, to read an account in the journal of James Fraser of his visit to St. James' in Regensburg in 1659 in which he describes the monastery buildings, the residents and his dealings with "Good Abbot Chamber and our other Country Scotsmen".¹⁶ James Fraser of Kirkhill (1634–1709) was a graduate of King's College Aberdeen and a Calvinist. As a young man after graduation he undertook a tour of Europe. He was particularly interested in meeting with fellow "countrymen"¹⁷ on his travels. After a stay at the Scots College in Douai where he was received hospitably but not allowed close access to the residents¹⁸ he travelled to Rome

Library of Scotland, Ms. 29. 7. 1. (A. 5. 35).

¹⁴ St. James in Regensburg today houses a major German seminary established in the late nineteenth century after the Scots were finally dispossessed.

¹⁵ This was by special permission of the archbishop of Mainz who saw Erfurt abbey as no more than a priory – a position it retained for the rest of the Scots occupation of the monastery.

¹⁶ Unpublished manuscript. MS 2538, Special Collections, University of Aberdeen.

¹⁷ He referred to the English and Irish he met as countrymen. He was travelling during Cromwellian rule when the kingdoms of England, Scotland and Ireland had been abolished and replaced with a single Commonwealth of Britain. His inclusion of all the nationalities of Britain in his term "countrymen" may have been no more than a precaution in case his journal fell into the hands of government agents.

¹⁸ He listed the names of the students who were resident there at the time of his visit. These names, however, do not correspond with those in the college records; neither the correct ones nor the aliases which the students used while at college. These

where among others he met William Leslie, the agent for the Scottish Mission and future archivist of *Propaganda Fide*. Leslie provided him with a letter of introduction to the abbot in Regensburg and armed with this he arrived at the monastery in May. Initially his reception was very guarded. Abbot Chambers wanted to be sure that Fraser and his travelling companion, an Englishman named Godfrey Hartley, were not Irish. Leslie's letter and the fact that one of the monks, William Reed from Tain in Ross, had been a fellow student of Fraser's at Aberdeen in 1653 ensured that any suspicion was removed. The description of the community which Fraser gives would lead one to believe that it was relatively sound. Apart from Abbot Chambers there was a prior, John Alexander from Aberdeen, and seven monks.¹⁹ In addition there was a lay brother, John Robertson who is described as porter and miller: there was also a number of Scots acting as servants – a carpenter and a shoemaker who lived outwith the monastery – and two boys who may have been novices but acted as errand boys for the community. The monastery grounds had a large orchard with wall-trained fruit trees, a vegetable garden and a fish pond. It had a horse mill with which the monks ground their own corn as well as providing that service to others on a commercial basis. There was also a brew-house and Fraser was at pains to make the point that with these facilities the Scots were largely self-sufficient.

Fraser's description is in many ways diplomatically couched. He is conscious of the old Scottish Highland tradition of hospitality whereby any visitor is welcomed no matter how straitened the circumstances of the host and in return the guest lavishes praise. The abbey set "a well furnished table". They were served beer in silver tankards and invited to eat heartily.²⁰ The main course was, however, "the Cale towered up high in a dish or large platter Curiously sauced" and although Fraser was served meat the abbot and monks ate only of the kale. The monks rationed their beer to one tankard each although their guests were served more. A nuanced reading of Fraser's account tells a story of a community which was struggling to support itself. The abbot confided in him that the monastery revenues were greatly reduced

precautions were taken for the protection of their families in Scotland and it is clear that the staff and students colluded in keeping important personal information from Fraser.

¹⁹ Thomas Jenson (Johnstoun) from Aberdeen, George Wedderburn from Montrose, Alexander Gordon from Aberdeenshire, James Sanderson from Perth, Patrick Blair from Dundee, William Jamison from Strathbogy (Huntly) and William Reed. MS 2538, 10v, Special Collections, University of Aberdeen.

²⁰ MS 2538, 9r, Special Collections, University of Aberdeen.

from the 3,000 crowns per annum due. Almost 1,000 crowns were alienated for the repayment of debts. Nor was this the only problem which beset the community. The prior, John Alexander, sought out Fraser's company to complain to him that the monastic community was corrupt and in need of reform. He and Thomas Johnstoun were making plans to accomplish this.²¹ The impression which his journal gives is one of a community which on the surface was well ordered but in reality suffered from internal divisions. In a number of respects Prior Alexander was correct in his assessment of the community. Despite the privations endured by the monastic community the abbey was getting deeper into debt. Chambers through bad husbandry had squandered much of the good work done by his predecessor, Abbot Baillie. He had achieved this through pandering to his own vanities. Fraser describes how Chambers entered the refectory accompanied by "his litle spanniell Doggs wt their gingling bells" and that when he went about the city he was accompanied by one of the young boys as his page dressed in livery. The silver tankards used at table were most likely another of the abbot's extravagances. For an abbey already saddled with debt, which had been built up over more than thirty years, Chambers' lifestyle was unaffordable.

The prior had another reason to be concerned about the monastic life of St. James. Alexander Gordon was not what he purported to be. He had arrived the previous year asking to be accepted as a member of the community. He came from Scotland where he had been the Calvinist minister in the Cabbrach in Aberdeenshire before apparently converting to Catholicism and travelling to Europe. With recommendations from Jesuits in Scotland he attempted to enrol at the Scots College in Douai. Its principal was suspicious and refused to accept him. From there he travelled to the Scots colleges in Paris and Rome and was again rejected by both institutions. He presented himself at the *Schottenkloster* in Würzburg where Abbot Asloan also refused him entry. When he arrived in Regensburg Abbot Chambers believed his story and accepted Gordon into the community. Shortly after Fraser left Regensburg in June of 1659 Alexander Gordon removed himself from the monastery and returned to Scotland boasting that he had gone to Europe in order to spy on the Catholic colleges and monasteries.²²

Although Fraser dutifully praised Chambers as his host the abbot was clearly naive, vain and incompetent. By 1666 the situation in the monastery had

²¹ Fraser expressed the view in his journal that they were acting without the knowledge of the abbot. MS 2538. 10 v.

²² Halloran, *The Scots College Paris 1603–1792* (Edinburgh, 2003), 41.

deteriorated to such an extent that Chambers abandoned his charge and left to join the household of the archbishop of Bologna.²³ After this dereliction of duty Bishop von Törring of Regensburg again tried to evict the Scots from St. James'. They were saved by the death of the bishop and Abbot Dixon (r. 1661–79)²⁴ of Würzburg was appointed administrator of Regensburg placing him in control of all three of the Scots monasteries. But they had largely exhausted the patience and goodwill of their host community. The weak position of the Scots was such that it could only have been a matter of time before their luck ran out and one of the many attempts to dispossess them succeeded. Salvation was possible only with a stroke of extreme good fortune. It came in the arrival in Würzburg of a most remarkable man. That man was Thomas Fleming.

²³ The chronicle records that “the buildings going to ruin, the church pervious to the rain in a hundred places, all things in such a condition that ... Macarius Chamers, ‘*re desperata*’, had fled to Italy. *Catalogus Abbatum Monasterii ad Sanctum Jacobum Ratisbonae*, manuscript in Scottish Catholic Archives, as quoted in Humphries, “Abbot Placid”, 316.

²⁴ Abbot Asloan had died in 1661.