

Thomas Marshall

Thomas Marshal was elected prior in October 1351 and was admitted to the office on the 21st of that month. He had previously been vicar of Flitwick, so may have been a canon at Dunstable before that.

The priory's finances were none too sound when Marshall took over and it was due to his astute management that things eventually improved. He was able to bring about some re-building at the priory, which may have been financed by local business people.

His biggest problem came in 1381, at the time of the Peasants Revolt. There was widespread discontent across the southern part of England. Some Dunstable merchants had been at St Albans market and seen the mob rise against the abbot. These merchants returned to Dunstable and, lead by Thomas Hobbes, demanded of Prior Thomas the freedom from paying their dues. Marshall gave way under extreme pressure but remained civil in the face of great provocation. After Richard II had put down the revolt, Thomas Marshall petitioned the king for release from his agreement and this was granted. Many people in similar circumstances exacted brutal revenge on those who had terrorised them but Marshall did not and saved the townspeople from the penalties of the law. He was a godly and upright man.

Dunstable had grown steadily over the years, so much so that the St John's aisle was not big enough to hold those who wished to attend divine service. After much discussion and a little argument, Prior Thomas allowed the service to spill over into the nave. The formal agreement was made in 1392 and later on a wooden screen was erected across the building as a demarcation line. This is now the Chancel Screen. It was under Prior Marshall that the parishioners agreed to be responsible for the repair of the nave.

Thomas Marshall died in post 12th October 1414.