

# Session 4 - THE CHURCH

## THE PRINCE BISHOPS OF DURHAM

The wealth and power of the Prince Bishops of Durham was underpinned by vast estates gifted by Northumbrian kings, nobles and landholders to the Shrine of St. Cuthbert, to which further estates were added in the Middle Ages.

Hugh de Puiset purchased the Wapentake of Sadberge from the Crown in 1189, when Richard the Lionheart was looking for ways of paying for his Crusades in the Holy Land.

After John de Baliol and Robert de Brus declared themselves for Scots independence against Edward I, their lands around Hartlepool and in Teesdale were forfeited and seized by Antony Bek, who claimed to be exercising his rights as Earl Palatine.

Throughout the Middle Ages, the bishops of Durham were among the five wealthiest individuals in the Kingdom.

As well as the income from their estates and farms, the Bishops of Durham enjoyed a surplus of 60 Knights' Fees over and above what they owed in feudal obligation to the Crown. The Knights' Fees were usually commuted to cash payments, which added to the bishop's annual income. In 1189, Hugh de Puiset's paper army was represented by only one Durham knight in the army of King Richard the Lionheart in Normandy.

However the bishop could call upon a substantial armed force if required and in 1296, Antony Bek rode in King Edward I's invasion of Scotland at the head of 140 knights of the bishopric.

### Appointing the Bishop of Durham

Though bishops were elected by the Convent of Durham, the Crown held the power to propose suitable candidates for the episcopal throne.

Sometimes, the monarch took advantage of this privilege by interfering with the succession.

For instance, in 1238, the monks chose their prior, Thomas de Melsonby, to be their bishop, but Henry III refused to allow his election on the grounds that Melsonby had been a feudal subject of the King of Scotland during his time as Prior of Coldingham.

The Crown kept control of the Palatinate during periods of vacancy of the see, and could confiscate estates and revenues when considered necessary. De Puiset and Bek both suffered the loss of their temporal possessions when they appeared to be threatening the supremacy of the Crown.

When the See fell vacant, the King would often delay appointing a successor so that the revenue could be "milked" into the royal treasury, sometimes for several years.

When the King did appoint a new bishop, he would often nominate one of his closest counsellors.

Several lords chancellor were elevated to the bishop of Durham's throne and this resulted in a tendency for the bishopric to develop a form of civil administration and a judicial system that mirrored those of the Crown.

Central to the authority of the Bishop of Durham was the principle that, as the king was subject to the Law of the Land but could not be prosecuted by its courts, so the bishop of Durham could not suffer actions taken against him in his courts and the King's justices could not interfere

### **Conflict with the Crown**

Within the Franchise of Durham, the Bishop exercised almost complete autonomy in economic, administrative and judicial affairs, and exercised a number of prerogatives that were elsewhere reserved solely for the King.

Durham's location adjacent to the Scottish Border and far from central government in London allowed a degree of political freedom, particularly in the arranging of truces, although officially this kind of "singular and particular truce" was forbidden by the English kings.. However, beyond his domain, the Bishop of Durham did not have any authority to conduct foreign relations independent of a royal mandate.

### **Privileges of the Prince Bishops**

Successive monarchs did little to curb the gradual assertion of royal prerogatives by the bishops within their Liberty of Durham.

These privileges were most systematically exercised by Bishop Antony Bek.

In 1293, a jury was appointed from among the men of Northumberland to testify to the extent of the privileges associated with the Liberty of Durham. They came up with an impressive list:

### **SLIDE ONE – THE PRIVILEGES OF THE THE PRINCE BISHOPS**

The powers of the Prince Bishop included:

- **Immunity from taxation**
- **The right to have an Episcopal mint**
- **Chancery for the issue of charters and writs**
- **The right to appoint justices of the peace**
- **The right to outlaw or pardon life and limb of persons convicted in the bishop's courts**
- **The keeping of gallows, tumbrel and pillories**
- **Wardship of the estates of minors after death of tenants**
- **Escheat, which is the acquiring of estates left when tenant dies intestate**
- **Deodand - the right to seize an object that had caused death of a human being**
- **Treasure Trove;**
- **The right to Royal fish and wreck**
- **Free warren**
- **Forest Law, protecting vert and venison for the bishop's use**
- **Control of hunting, mining, timber and fuel in the bishop's forests and on common ground**
- **Proprietorship of all mines, base, precious or coal**
- **The right to seize lands forfeited for treason**

in 1409, Bishop Langley produced an almost identical list before Parliament.

## **The End of the Power of the Prince Bishops**

The King was usually willing to accept the Bishop of Durham's sovereignty within his franchise.

On one occasion, Bishop Antony Bek seized a horse belonging to one of Edward I's messengers while he was passing through the bishopric. It was taken under the law of "deodand" (*see Glossary*) because it had caused the death of a member of the royal household and the King had to appeal to the Bishop to return the horse as a personal favour.

The final control on a potentially dangerous combination of power and wealth was the fact that celibate bishops could not marry and create legitimate hereditary dynasties, so they could not pass on their wealth and power to successive generations.

King Henry VIII took away most of the prerogative powers of the prince bishops by extending the Crown's jurisdiction to include the Palatinate of Durham under his 1536 Act for Resuming Liberties to the Crown.

Although Durham's bishops continued to hold some of their secular powers and they retained their immense wealth, from 1536 the King's writ *did* run and the King's Peace *was* kept in the bishopric, as they were in every other part of the Kingdom.

The title of Prince Bishop of Durham continued until the death of Bishop van Mildert in 1836.

We'll take a brief look at the men who held the title of Prince Bishop of Durham during the heyday of their powers in the Middle Ages.

## **A SUMMARY OF THE LIVES OF THE PRINCE BISHOPS OF DURHAM**

### **1071-80 Walcher of Lorraine**

Walcher of Lorraine, the first Norman bishop of Durham was apparently a tall, imposing figure. A learned man, he had been a canon at the Abbey of Liege.

In 1074, he re-established the monasteries at Jarrow and Wearmouth as Benedictine houses.

He bought the title of earl of Northumbria from William the Conqueror in 1076, after the failure of the rebellion of Waltheof, the last Northumbrian earl. Waltheof.

Walcher came to a sticky end.

He had become very unpopular among the Northumbrians because he had failed to stop the invasion in 1079 by Malcolm, King of Scots, and he was also unable to prevent his own officials from plundering the local inhabitants.

The final straw was his suspected part in the murder of one of his chief advisers, a Northumbrian nobleman called Ligulf. The perpetrator was Gilbert, a relative of Walcher's and the bishop's chaplain, Leobwin was also implicated in the deed.

Walcher had arranged a meeting with Ligulf's supporters at the church in Gateshead but the bishop and Gilbert, the conspirator, were lynched by the mob as they left the church to attend the conference. Leobwin also died when the rioters set fire to the church itself.

### **1081-96 William of St. Calais, or Carileph**

The second Norman bishop of Durham, William of St. Calais, or Carileph, was formerly the abbot of St. Vincent at Le Mans. He was a strict and experienced church administrator and was unimpressed by the poor discipline and unorthodox practices of the secular clergy who served the Shrine of St. Cuthbert in the White Church at Durham. Bishop St. Calais ejected the Community of St. Cuthbert and replaced them with Benedictine monks from Jarrow and Wearmouth.

He then set about building a great new cathedral church at Durham, inspired by the beautiful buildings he was used to in France. The foundation stone was laid on 12th August 1093, in the presence of King Malcolm of Scotland.

When it was proposed that Bishop William should be buried in the church, close by the Shrine of St. Cuthbert, he objected that he was not worthy of being laid so close to such a holy man, and insisted that he should be buried in the monastery Chapter House instead.

### **1099-1128 Rannulph Flambard**

Rannulph Flambard, the next bishop, was the much-hated chancellor for King William Rufus and he used every trick he could to increase the King's coffers. St. Anselm described him as "**that most infamous prince of tax collectors**", adding that he was known as "Flambard" on account of his cruelty, which was like a devouring flame.

It was at Rannulph's suggestion that the See of Durham was left vacant for three years after St. Calais' death, so that the revenues could be milked into the royal treasury.

He was always a lucky man. On one occasion, shortly before he was made bishop of Durham, a ship's crew was bribed to kidnap him, take him out to sea and dump him overboard. However, when a storm sprang up, Flambard took command and brought the ship safely back to shore.

Within a year of being elevated to the bishop's throne in Durham, William Rufus was killed while hunting in the New Forest and one of the first popular acts of the new king, Henry I was to throw his dead brother's hated tax collector into the Tower of London.

But Flambard was not beaten. He arranged for a jar of wine to be smuggled into his cell, with a length of rope concealed inside it. He used the wine to get his gaolers drunk, then escaped through the window, down the rope, taking his pastoral staff with him, although he forgot his gloves and his hands were badly cut. He escaped to France but, within six months, he was reconciled with the King and was back in his diocese of Durham.

In 1104, Flambard was responsible for the impressive ceremony that accompanied the transfer of St. Cuthbert's body into a splendid new shrine in the new cathedral being built in Durham.

In front of a huge gathering of the great and good, dressed in his second best robe because he had lent his finest green cope ornamented with golden griffins to cover Cuthbert's coffin, Flambard embarked on an interminable sermon. To everyone's relief, the proceedings were halted abruptly by a heavy rainstorm. The monks quickly carried the coffin into the magnificent shrine behind the High Altar, at which point the rain suddenly ceased!

Towards the end of his life, Flambard looked to the better defence of the northern frontier by building a mighty fortress beside the River Tweed at Norham, the bishop's most northerly village'..

#### **1133-40      Geoffrey Rufus**

Next came Geoffrey Rufus, a mild and pious man who had been Henry I's Chancellor.

Two years after Rufus came to Durham, England was torn by civil war between the supporters of King Stephen and his cousin Matilda.

The bishop was not a man suited to such dangerous times, and he devoted his attention to the continuing work of construction at Durham.

#### **1143-52      William de St. Barbara**

When Bishop Geoffrey died in 1140, one of his most trusted agents, William Comyn, was at his bedside.

Comyn had been Chancellor of Scotland and was plotting to seize the bishopric of Durham and hold it on behalf of Matilda and ultimately for her uncle, King David of Scotland. There was strong support for Matilda in the north country which helped Comyn to gain control of Durham. Scots soldiers occupied the city and fortified the cathedral.

The prior and monks of Durham resisted the usurpation and escaped to York, where they elected William of St. Barbara as their new bishop.

St. Barbara set off quickly to recover his see but, as he approached Durham, he was set upon by Comyn's men and forced to take shelter in St. Giles's church, before retreating to Lindisfarne for several months to rally support.

During the next two years Comyn terrorised the region and his men carried out terrible atrocities against the Haliwerfolc - St. Cuthbert's people.

A handful of the barons of the bishopric, led by Sir Roger de Conyers, the hereditary Constable of Durham Castle, remained loyal to King Stephen.

Matilda was eventually defeated and Comyn was forced to abandon Durham. He was pardoned by Bishop St. Barbara, despite the atrocities his occupation force had committed.

### **1153-95      Hugh de Puiset**

The next bishop, Hugh de Puiset, was an ostentatious lover of pomp.

He came of baronial stock, and enjoyed a pretty dissolute youth, including the fathering of several illegitimate children.

In 1173, de Puiset supported the rebellion of Henry II's sons and the invasion of England by their ally, William the Lion of Scotland. De Puiset imported 40 knights and 500 archers from Flanders at great expense. Unfortunately, the mercenaries landed at Hartlepool on the same day William the Lion was captured at Alnwick.

As a result, de Puiset forfeited to the Crown 2,000 marks and the castles of Durham and Norham.

In 1183, he ordered the compiling of Boldon Book, which recorded the lands, possessions and revenues of the bishopric. Boldon Book is Durham's equivalent of Domesday Book.

De Puiset attempted to take direct control of the priory's estates and revenues, which began a long-running dispute between successive bishops and priors of Durham.

In 1189, Richard I sold the title of Earl of Northumberland to de Puiset for life, together with the Wapentake of Sadberge.

The King made de Puiset his joint-vice-regent during his long absence on Crusade, but de Puiset's fellow viceroy threw him into the Tower of London soon after the King left the country.

De Puiset was soon released but gained Richard's enmity by keeping for his personal use a substantial part of the ransom money that he had raised from the people of the bishopric to pay for the King's release from imprisonment in Austria.

On his return to England, Richard the Lionheart confiscated the Earldom of Northumberland and summoned de Puiset to answer for his actions. Perhaps fortunately for him, de Puiset died on the way to London.

### **1197-1208      Philip of Poitou**

The next bishop, Philip de Poitou, continued the feud with the Priory of Durham.

He took drastic action by blockading the monastery, diverting its water supply, destroying the Prior's fish reservoirs and killing the cattle in the Priory's parks. The monks held out and a settlement was eventually agreed.

Philip of Poitou died in 1208, mourned by few and excommunicated by the Pope.

There followed a nine year interregnum before a new bishop was appointed.

### **1217-26      Richard Marsh**

King John eventually appointed his dissolute Chancellor, Richard Marsh, who did little to recover the reputation of the title of Bishop of Durham.

Heavily in debt and facing law suits from all sides, Marsh was found dead in bed while en route to London to answer charges of sacrilege and homicide. He may have been a victim of an assassin, or suicide or, as the monks of Durham believed, Divine Retribution!

### **1229-37 Richard le Poor**

Things settled down under the next bishop, Richard le Poor, who was translated to Durham from Salisbury.

He finally settled the feud with the Durham monks by negotiating an agreement known as "Le Conventit", which established the rights and privileges of the Convent, and divided the estates of the bishopric between the Bishop and the Priory.

Le Poor was the first in a succession of worthy and learned Bishops of Durham, under whom the region prospered, despite occasional incursions by the Scots.

### **1241-48 Nicholas Farnham**

After Le Poor's death, the Convent of Durham elected their own prior, Thomas de Melsonby, as bishop, but he was not acceptable to the Crown.

The See remained vacant for four years until the appointment of Nicholas Farnham, about whom there is little to be said other than that he was a worthy and scholarly man.

### **1249-60 Walter Kirkham**

Bishop Farnham was followed by Walter Kirkham, a man who had come from lowly origins.

### **1260-74 Robert Stichill**

The monks of Durham elected Robert Stichill, the Prior of Finchale, as the next bishop.

### **1274-83 Robert of Holy Island**

Robert Stichill was followed by Robert of Holy Island, who was also elected by the monks of Durham after being Prior of Finchale.

### **1284-1310 Antony Bek**

After this succession of good but unremarkable bishops, there came on the scene Antony Bek, the most ostentatious and acquisitive of the prince bishops of Durham.

As Constable of the Tower of London, Bek had been responsible for planning the logistics for King Edward I's campaigns in Wales.

Once he was appointed Bishop of Durham, he remained one of King Edward's great Councillors of State. Because of his strategic location near the Border, King Edward frequently used him to act as envoy during the negotiations concerning the succession to the Scottish throne.

Antony Bek was also a great military leader.

When King Edward invaded Scotland in 1296, Bek rode beside him at the head of his personal army of 140 knights, 500 horse and 1,000 foot soldiers.

Under Bek, the power and wealth of the Prince Bishops reached their greatest extent.

Exercising his rights as Earl Palatine, Bek seized the estates forfeited by the traitors John Baliol and Robert Brus, gaining control of almost all the land between the Tyne and the Tees.

Bek was even granted the Kingdom of Man to add to his other honours.

Bek was reckoned second in wealth in England only to the King himself.

One story tells of his arriving in market-place in France and overhearing a trader claiming some cloth he had was so fine even the King of England could not afford it. Bek immediately purchased the entire stock and loudly ordered it to be cut up to make horse blankets!

Bek's officials employed oppressive methods to exact revenue and prosecute those who dared to impinge on the bishop's privileges.

The Bishop even claimed that the King's Writ did not run within the Franchise of Durham and Bek's Steward once exclaimed that there were two sovereign lords in the land; the Lord King of England and the Lord Bishop of Durham.

On one occasion a merchant, John de Graham, obtained a royal writ to recover some bales of cloth that had been seized wrongly by Bek's bailiffs. When the man presented the documents, the bishop's officers tore them with their teeth and trod them underfoot.

Bek finally came to grief over another argument with the Convent of Durham, this time over his right of visitation of the monastery.

When the Prior refused to allow him to enter with his retinue, Bek was so incensed that he placed guards round the Priory to ensure no one left, cut off the water supply, broke the Prior's mills and seized the priory manors.

The Bishop's men made an attempt to hijack ten cartloads of firewood on their way to the Priory and the Prior himself was almost taken prisoner when he rushed out to protect the carts. He was rescued in the nick of time by a gallant sortie of a group of monks, who engaged in a fist fight with the bishop's soldiers on the Palace Green before dragging their Prior back to the safety of the Cathedral

Next, Bek drafted in a gang of ruffianly foresters from Tynedale and Weardale to break down the Priory doors. The siege was eventually brought to an end and Bek finally made his long-delayed visitation.

However, the matter was still not over. In 1303, Prior Hoton brought his complaints before a session of Parliament, at which Bek's tenants were also petitioning the King for justice.

Edward I dispatched a royal messenger, William de Brometoft, with a letter of protection for the Convent of Durham, but he was arrested by Bek's constable and imprisoned in Durham Castle.

This was too much for the King, who immediately confiscated the temporal revenues of Durham, together with the old Baliol and Brus estates, and made Bek grant a Charter to his tenants, which he was forced to sign in front of the King himself.

The Bishop's Charter included guarantees that;

- No freeman would be imprisoned, except by inquest or if caught red-handed.
- No arbitrary fine or imprisonment by the bishop's foresters would be tolerated.
- No land or goods would be seized without a writ.
- Freeman could build mills and open coal or iron mines on their own land.
- All men of the bishopric would have free entry to St Cuthbert's Shrine.
- The customary rights of hunting and collecting wood would be restored.



Despite this, Bek continued his fight with the Convent. He almost bankrupted himself in the process and was threatened with excommunication.

Bek's fortunes changed when Edward I died and the new king, Edward II, needed Bek's expertise in dealings with the Scots.

The court actions against him were dropped and the administration of the County Palatine and its revenues was returned to Bek's hands, though he never regained the Baliol and Brus lands.

Antony Bek was the first Bishop of Durham to be interred in the Cathedral Church itself, rather than in the chapter house of the priory.

### **1311-16 Richard Kellaw**

After Bek, the monks succeeded in electing their Sub-Prior, Richard Kellaw, who was a fine orator and a distinguished cleric.

However, he was overwhelmed by the turbulent times he lived in and it is said that he died of grief over the destruction wrought in his diocese by marauding Scots after their victory at Bannockburn in 1314.

### **1318-33 Lewis de Beaumont**

On Kellaw's death, the Convent tried to elect their Sacrist, Henry of Stamford, but this met with royal opposition. Instead, the King appointed Lewis de Beaumont, who was described as being a cripple.

De Beaumont was a cousin of King Edward II's Queen Isabella, and it is said that he gained the bishopric through liberal bribes offered to the Pope on his behalf.

His rule in Durham began badly when he was kidnapped as he entered his diocese for the first time.

His captor was Gilbert de Middleton, Lord of Mitford, a prominent member of a notable Northumbrian family who had been driven to banditry by the chaotic conditions in the Border area. Middleton was supported by a number of other local gentry and he became something of a bogey man. Generations later, Durham mothers were still threatening their children that Lord Middleton would come and get them if they didn't go to sleep!

De Beaumont was released on payment of a large ransom.

During his absence, the Convent had elected their Sub-Prior, Robert of Greystones, but he was quickly forced to resign through royal pressure.

### **1333-45 Richard de Bury**

The next bishop, Ricjard de Bury, was a completely different character from de Beaumont.

He came from a knightly family and was a distinguished scholar and an avid collector of books. It is said that visitors to his chambers could scarcely move for fear of treading on the piles of books that were scattered in every available space.

### **1345-81 Thomas Hatfield**

After Richard de Bury came Thomas Hatfield, who also came from gentry stock.

Hatfield was another of the grand Prince Bishops and he was able to bask in the afterglow of the English victory over the Scots at Neville's Cross near Durham in 1346.

During his lifetime, Hatfield had a tomb constructed beneath his magnificent Bishop's Throne. He was apparently so anxious that his throne should be the highest in Christendom that he sent spies to Rome to measure the Pope's throne to ensure that his in Durham was built higher.

### **1382-88 John Fordham**

John Fordham was consecrated Bishop of Durham in 1382 and translated to Ely in 1388.

### **1388-1406 Walter Skirlaw**

Fordham was succeeded by Walter Skirlaw, a distinguished theologian, who had previously been Bishop of Bath and Wells. During his time as Bishop of Durham, he was employed by Richard II and Henry IV on diplomatic missions to Italy, France and Scotland.

Skirlaw was also a great builder and was responsible for the construction of the cloisters at Durham Cathedral and the bridges at Shincliffe. Bishop Auckland and Yarm on Tees.

### **1406-37 Thomas Langley**

Thomas Langley was the last of the great Prince Bishops.

He was one of the five greatest landholders in England and held the position of Lord Chancellor for three kings.

Langley was elevated to cardinal in 1411.

At his funeral, the hearse carrying his coffin was drawn up the nave of the cathedral by four black horses.

Thomas Langley lies buried in an impressive chantry tomb that blocked the original West Door into the Nave, making it necessary to construct two new entrances to north and south.

### **1437-57 Robert Neville**

The next bishop was Robert Neville, the son of Ralph Neville, the First Earl of Westmorland and Joan Beaufort, daughter of John of Gaunt. The Nevilles were one of the foremost families in the region and had a long association with Durham Cathedral. Several members of the family were buried in the Cathedral, including Robert's grandfather, Lord John Neville of Raby, who commissioned the building of a fine alabaster screen behind the Cathedral's High Altar that bears the family name.

### **The Last Prince Bishop**

Many of the Prince Bishops' powers were stripped away during the reign of King Henry VIII and successive sovereigns until the title of Prince Bishop of Durham itself ceased with the death of Bishop William van Mildert in 1836. Van Mildert gifted Durham Castle and a number of buildings on the Palace Green for the foundation of a university, the third oldest in England.

**BREAK**

## **THE CHURCH IN THE NORTH EAST**

### **THE DIOCESE**

As today, the main administrative unit for the Church was the diocese.

The Diocese of Durham covered almost the whole region from the Tees to the Tweed, with the exception of Hexhamshire which was a "peculiar" of the Diocese of York.

The Diocese was divided into two archdeaconries, Durham and Northumberland.

### **PARISHES**

By 1500 there were 65 parishes in Durham and 62 in Northumberland, only 17 of which had boundaries that coincided with township boundaries.

Large parishes predominated in the North East, and some were so large that subsidiary **chapels of ease** were created in outlying areas for the convenience of parishioners attending ordinary services. However, marriages and burials had to be conducted in the parish church.

Some parishes were huge. Chester-le-Street, with its chapelries of Lamely and Tanfield, covered an area of 31,000 acres and contained 32 townships; Simonburn on the North Tyne Valley encompassed 130,000 acres, and the parish of Bamburgh included 26 townships.

On the other hand, a few parishes were tiny, like the 20 acres of St. Mary Magdalene in Durham.

### **PATRONAGE**

In many cases, the bishop himself was the patron of the parish, but other parishes had lay patrons, often the descendants of the landlord who originally endowed the parish church.

The **patron** appointed the parish priest, or **rector**, who received all the parochial income, but could be removed and replaced at any time by his patron.

The patrons and other substantial parishioners were responsible for the building, maintenance and improvement of the main body of the church building, the nave. The parish priest had to bear the cost of building and maintaining the chancel or presbetry housing the High Altar, and also the porch at the south door of the church where marriage ceremonies were performed.

In the late 11th, and throughout the 12th century, there was a struggle between the Church and the lay patrons which resulted in a compromise by which the patron retained most of his privileges and obligations but the right to appoint the parish priest was reduced to **advowson**, or the right to propose a successor on the death of an incumbent. Even then, the bishop had the right to veto the patron's nominee.

In Durham, the Bishop himself owned the advowson of 25 parishes, 18 were held by the Cathedral Priory of Durham, and the remainder were in lay hands. In Northumberland, the Bishop had only 2 advowsons, with 56 being held by lay patrons.

By 1500, the advowsons of only 6 parishes in Durham and 8 in Northumberland remained in the hands of lay patrons. The rest had been transferred to religious corporations, mainly during the 12th century. For example, the advowson of Bamburgh was gifted by the Crown to Nostell Priory in Yorkshire, and Eustace Fitzjohn endowed his new Priory at Alnwick with the parishes of Shilbottle and Lesbury.

## **RECTORY AND VICARAGE**

The parish priest, or rector gained the entire income from the parish, which came from a variety of sources including tithes in kind and/or cash, and payments made by parishioners on particular occasions.

By the end of the 12th century, it had become common for the office of **rector** to be vested in a religious corporation, such as a priory or perhaps a college of either Oxford or Cambridge University.

Under this process, which was called **appropriation**, the religious corporation became entitled to the whole income of the parish.

The parish priest was given security of tenure and income through the creation of a **vicarage**.

An example of this process is the Parish of Ponteland, which was appropriated in 1303 by Merton College, Oxford.

## **SLIDE TWO - REVENUE OF PONTELAND PARISH**

### **Rectory**

In an appropriated parish like Ponteland, the rectory income was retained by the corporation that owned the parish. This usually comprised:

- i. The **garb tithes**, which were the portion of the value of the field crops paid in cash or kind for the upkeep of the parish priest, or rector.
- ii. Income gained from working the **glebe lands**, which were the church equivalent of the demesne lands held by and worked directly for the landlord.

### **Vicarage**

The Vicarage Income went to the parish priest. This comprised:

- i. **Small or lesser tithes** were the impositions on all other produce, including lambs, calves, wool, cheese, hay, flax, and the profits of mills.
- ii. **Altarage** comprised payments made by parishioners for services such as weddings, burials, blessed bread and churchings.
- iii. **Mortuaries** were paid when a death occurred. Payment was usually in the form of an animal or an item of clothing
- iv. **Voluntary oblations** were given at certain feasts, such as Easter.

## Revenue of Ponteland Parish, appropriated by Merton College, Oxford – 1303

### Rectory

Garb tithes of 13 townships	£107 13s 4d
Tithes of lambs and wool	£6 13s 4d
Pension from Newminster Priory ( <i>in lieu of tithes from Horton Grange</i> )	<u>£11 6s 4d</u>
<b>Total income</b>	<b><u>£126 13s 4d</u></b>

*Plus one third of Glebe = 9 acres of arable land*

### Vicarage

Small tithes - Hay	£5 6s 4d
Flax	£1 6s 6d
Mills	£1 6s 4d
Curtilages	10s 0d
Calves	£2 10s 0d
Geese	10s 0d
Hens	6s 0d
Pigs	2s 0d
Swans	15s 6d
Foals	2s 6d
Bees	2s 0d
Doves	1s 0d
Merchants, smiths, weavers & brewers	<u>5s 0d</u>
	<b><u>£13 3s 2d</u></b>
Altarage - Holy Bread	6s 6d
Weddings	3s 4d
Christenings & churchings	4s 4d
Burials & mortuaries	£4 0s 0d
Oblations	<u>£2 14s 4d</u>
	<b><u>£7 8s 6d</u></b>

### Land of Milbourne Chapel

£1 0s 0d

**Total income**      **£21 11s 8d**

*Plus two thirds of Glebe = 18 acres or arable land*

### **Outgoings of the Vicarage**

Parish chaplain	£4 0s 0d
Chaplain of Milbourne	£3 6s 8d
Deacon	£2 0s 0d
Clerk	£1 6s 8d
Synodals	2s 0d
Procurations	13s 4d
Wax, lamps, wine, frankincense	<u>13s 4d</u>
<b>Total outgoings</b>	<b><u>£12 2s 0d</u></b>

**Net Value of Vicarage = £9 9s 8d**

## **RELIGIOUS CORPORATIONS AND CHANTRIES**

There were several forms of religious corporation in the Middle Ages.

### **Colleges**

Some parish churches were converted into collegiate churches with a dean and canons, all of whom were endowed with prebends, or portions of the parochial income. In this way, one parish could support several clergymen.

Usually, an existing church was converted to collegiate status, such as Lanchester in County Durham. However, sometimes a completely new collegiate church was established. In the late 14th century, for instance, Henry Percy, 1st Earl of Northumberland, planned to create a collegiate church in the grounds of Warkworth Castle, the remains of which can still be seen. The project was never completed.

The colleges of the medieval universities of Oxford and Cambridge were founded as religious corporations. The Bishop of Durham established Durham College, Oxford, for example.

### **Monastic Houses**

The great Benedictine Cathedral Abbey of Durham, with its several daughter houses in the region, dominated the monastic scene in the North East.

However, Durham Abbey did not hold a monopoly in the region.

In Northumberland, in particular, a number of barons provided endowments of land and money for religious orders to establish priories, friaries and nunneries on their estates.

### **HANDOUT ONE - LIST OF MONASTIC HOUSES**

The larger religious houses were the focus for their local economy and centres of large-scale business enterprises.

On the other hand, some of the smaller houses, and those belonging to orders that practised strict rules of poverty, received barely sufficient income to survive and had to rely heavily on charitable donations.

Benedictines, Cistercians, Augustinians and others gained their revenue from farms, forests, mineral extraction, fishing and other commercial activities.

As well as large areas of agricultural land, the estates of the Bishop and the Priory of Durham included rich resources in the form of fish, forests and minerals such as coal, lead, iron and even some small deposits of silver.

Coal was being mined for the monks of Durham as early as the 12<sup>th</sup> century and the Dean and Chapter of Durham Cathedral continued to own collieries until nationalisation of the mines in 1947..

### **SLIDE THREE – EARLIEST RECORDS OF COAL MINING BY MONKS**

## **Role of the Church in Welfare**

The monasteries fulfilled a range of important social and welfare functions including alms giving, offering safe board and lodging for travellers and providing hospitals for the care of the sick and the old.

## **Hospitals**

46 hospitals were founded by religious orders in the region, to fulfil a variety of charitable purposes.

Some were very small and short-lived.

A number were founded as isolation hospitals for lepers, such as Sherburn Hospital, near Durham City, which was founded in 1183 by Bishop Hugh le Puiset to care for 65 lepers. In 1434, the provision was altered to accommodate 13 poor people and 2 lepers. Sherburn Hospital continues today, providing residential care for 62 elderly people..

There was a leper hospital at Bamburgh that was supported by the Crown, and another at Bolton near Edlingham, which was endowed in 1225 by Robert de Ros, where 13 lepers were cared for by a master and three chaplains.

St Bartholomew's hospital, established by the Augustinians in about 1239 on the south bank of the Tweed, was the origin of the name of modern "Spittal".

Some hospitals were founded to relieve poverty, like the The Maison Dieu, on the Sandhill in Newcastle, founded in 1412 by Roger Thornton to look after 9 poor men and 4 poor women, while others catered for pilgrims and travellers, such as the West Spital in Newcastle.

## **Schools**

Until the 16th century, The Church held a virtual monopoly over education for all but the children of the richest families who could afford to engage private tutors.

Each parish and most larger townships had "petty" (petit) schools attached to the local church where the priest or a junior cleric acted as schoolmaster. Schooling might begin at the age of 4 or 5 and continue for three or four years.

The boys, because the pupils were all boys, learned their alphabet from letters inscribed on a horn-book, a piece of inscribed wood covered with a sheet of transparent horn to protect the lettering, before they progressed to copying texts from the Bible.

Some of the more able students would then be introduced to simple Latin grammar before going on to a local grammar school.

In the 13<sup>th</sup> century, there was a small grammar school at Norham. The monk Reginald of Durham recorded how, as a young pupil, he tried to avoid lessons one day by locking the schoolroom door and throwing the key into the River Tweed.

The main purpose of the grammar schools was to produce a supply of future priests and clerics and the few boys who progressed from grammar school to university were inevitably destined to enter the clergy.

## **Priory of Durham Schools**

The Priory of Durham stood at the heart of a network of schools.

As well as the petty schools attached to the churches and chapelries throughout the region, the Priory maintained a grammar school a song school and an almonry school where thirty poor boys were taught Latin grammar in a room on the upper floor of the farmery, or infirmary. The boys were provided with bread and beer at the Convent's expense, and were also allowed the "titbits" of meats from the novices' table!

## **Chantries**

Chantries were chapels or religious institutions endowed with lands and revenue to provide income in perpetuity to support priests who would pray for the souls of the founder and his family, past, present and future, to ensure their salvation.

A total of 89 permanent chantries were founded in Northumberland and Durham.

The founder may be a member of the nobility or landed classes, a clergyman from the bishop to a parish rector, or a merchant, such as Roger Thornton, a 15th century wool-merchant who became Mayor of Newcastle and who established a fine chantry in what is now Newcastle Cathedral. Chantry chapels were common in parish churches and great cathedrals, and some had a hospital or a school attached.

For example, the 13<sup>th</sup> century Chantry of Our Lady beside the bridge over the Wansbeck at Morpeth (now a museum) once housed a school to teach grammar and other literature to the children of the inhabitants and in 1448, King Henry VI licensed the Earl of Northumberland to found a chantry in Alnwick with two priests to teach song and grammar.

The Chantries were suppressed by King Edward VI's Chantries Acts in the 1540s, though some of the chantry schools were refounded and continued to be supported by the original endowment, such as the grammar schools at Alnwick and Morpeth.

## **The Dissolution of the monasteries**

With the Dissolution of the Monasteries in Henry VIII's reign, their estates were taken over by the Crown and sold off to lay or ecclesiastical landlords. In most cases, this was effected without resistance from the monks.

In the North East, only the brothers at Hexham and at Newminster near Morpeth attempted to put up a fight.

Hexham Priory played a small part in the 1536 Pilgrimage of Grace against Henry's religious policies. One of the senior canons at Hexham even appeared in the priory gate-tower equipped in full armour. However, when the rebellion collapsed the canons of Hexham quickly surrendered their priory to the King's commissioners.

A mob from Morpeth razed Newminster Abbey to the ground.

The closure of the monasteries created real social problems and left gaps in the provision of education and welfare services.



The old monastery school at Durham continued when the Abbey of Durham was dissolved in 1541 and reconstituted as a cathedral, the old monastic school continued. The almonry school was merged with the grammar and song schools and the new establishment was run by the cathedral Dean and Chapter.

Edward VI swept away the chantry schools in an attempt to amend "superstition and errors in Christian religion". However, the king was concerned that education should not suffer and issued a Royal Injunction that "all chantry priests shall exercise themselves in teaching youth to read and write and bring them up in good manners and other virtuous exercises".

In some cases where it could be shown that a chantry had been founded for specifically educational purposes, a certificate was issued allowing them to continue as secular institutions and their priests were granted a stipend from the Crown to act as teachers.

The Morpeth schoolmaster, Thomas Husband, was found to be "well learned and of honest conversation and qualities" and the school was given the whole of the property of the Chantry of Our Lady for its support. In 1552, the income from rents and leases amounted to £19 10s 8d. Three hundred years later, the value was estimated at £90,000.

The role played by the monasteries was in part taken over by lay benefactors who founded hospitals, almshouses and schools. However, the lack of support for the general poor became a major problem, leading to the necessary introduction of the Elizabethan Poor Laws in the second half of the 16th century.

### **The Bishop's Licence**

Following the Reformation, the State quickly recognised the vital role of schools in ensuring allegiance to the Established Church and the Sovereign.

Almost immediately after she ascended the throne, Elizabeth I ordered that: "**No man shall take upon him to teach but such as shall be allowed by the Bishop's Ordinary, and found meet as well for his learning and dexterity in teaching as for sober and honest conversation, and also for right understanding of God's True Religion**".

Schoolmasters had to obtain a certificate from the Bishop's Ordinary, attesting their moral character, their acceptance of Royal Supremacy over the Church, and their orthodoxy in politics.

The first Statutes of Hexham Grammar School in 1598 required that: "**The Master shall be founded both in the Greek and Latin tongues, fully able to discharge his duty, that shall be both an honest man in conversation and also a zealous and sound Professor of the true Religion, abhorring all Papistry**".

Bishop's licences continued to be issued until 1869.