

The Remuneration of the Medieval Proctors of The University of Oxford

By A. B. EMDEN

THERE is preserved among the muniments of Barnstaple in Devon, of all unlikely places, the logic note-book of John Arundel, fellow of Exeter College and principal of Great Black Hall, subsequently Bishop of Chichester (1459-77) and physician to Henry VI.¹ Arundel entered on the blank pages or parts of pages of this little volume a rough record of his account during the time that he was principal of Great Black Hall. For the most part these entries are concerned with his money matters as principal. Dr. H. E. Salter was quick to appreciate the interest which these 'few scribblings' have for the history of Oxford halls and reckoned that they 'doubled our knowledge'. The contents of these accounts in so far as they relate to Arundel's administration of his hall formed the subject of an essay entitled, 'An Oxford Hall in 1424', which Salter contributed to *Essays in History presented to Reginald Lane Poole*.²

But these accounts have another interest for University history. From April 1426 to April 1427 John Arundel was Junior or Southern Proctor of the University. On one of the blank pages in his logic note-book (fo. 13v) he set down a series of payments that had been made to him in his capacity as Proctor. These form the earliest personal accounts of an Oxford Proctor relating to his tenure of office that are known to have survived and furnish the evidence needed to solve the problem of the sources from which a medieval Proctor derived his remuneration.

The two Proctors were required by statute to keep accounts of their official receipts and expenditure and to submit them for audit at the conclusion of their year of office.³ As, among other duties, they were the chief

¹ Barnstaple, North Devon Athenaeum, Doct. no. 3960: the note-book contains 42 fos. and measures 6 in. by 4½ in.

² Oxford 1927, pp. 421-35. Salter suggested that Arundel's hall was St. Mildred Hall in Turl Street (*ibid.* p. 425); but it was more probably Great Black Hall, abutting on which was a messuage owned by Arundel, see H. E. Salter, *Survey of Oxford* (O.H.S.N.S.), i. 96; *Reg. Cancell. Oxon.*, ed. H. E. Salter (O.H.S.), i. 191. Great Black Hall was a capacious hall situate on the south side of New College Lane (now in the site of Hertford College); it was the property of the University (*ibid.* ii. 360).

³ *Statuta Antiqua Universitatis Oxon.*, ed. Strickland Gibson (cited hereafter as *S.A.U.O.*), pp. 207-8.

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financial officers of the University, their official accounts were mainly concerned with the moneys that were received and expended on behalf of the University.

Only fifteen sets of Proctors' accounts, ranging from 1464 to 1496, have survived for the whole of the medieval period. Dr. Salter printed the text of all these accounts in full and prefaced them with a very informative explanatory article.⁴ They make no mention of the Proctors' remuneration. In the paragraph of his preface in which he discusses this subject Salter makes it plain that information concerning the main sources from which the Proctors derived their remuneration must be sought elsewhere.⁵ He is only able to point out three items in the Proctors' accounts which may have contributed to their salary. They are the items set down each year by the Proctors under the headings: 'pro custodia pacis in nocturnis vigiliis', 'pro reparatione et conductione armorum', and 'pro minutis expensis super diversos ad decorem et honestatem Universitatis'. The sums entered in respect of these items in the fifteen surviving accounts varied from year to year: the first from £2 to £4; the second from 10s. 6d. to £3; and the third from £2 to £3 6s. 8d. The amounts allowed were fixed by the auditors appointed by Congregation and were entered on the account roll after its submission by the outgoing Proctors.

The first two of these items were regulated by University statute. In respect of breaches of the peace it was laid down by the *Statuta de pace* of c. 1410 that the fines levied should be allocated in the proportion of one-third to the Chancellor, one-third to the Proctors, and one-third to the University, if the auditors deemed that the Chancellor and the Proctors had been diligent in the apprehension of offenders; but, if not, then the respective shares allocated to the Chancellor and to the Proctors might be forfeited and assigned to the University.⁶ The night-watches furnished by the Chancellor and the Proctors needed to be armed, and, apparently it was customary for these arms to be hired and the broken staves and truncheons to be repaired and made good as might be necessary. There would seem to be some connexion between the payments made by the Proctors under this heading and the sum obtained from the confiscation of arms carried by delinquents. Under a University statute of 1322 one half of the 'pecunie de armis levate' was allocated to the Chancellor, if he had been diligent in the punishment of disturbers of the peace, and one half to the University; but if the auditors of the Proctors' accounts were unimpressed by the Chancellor's diligence then 'integra

⁴ *Medieval Archives of the University of Oxford*, ed. H. E. Salter (O.H.S.), ii. 272-358.

⁵ *Ibid.* ii. 282-3.

⁶ *S.A.U.O.*, pp. 206-7. Dr. Salter states 'each Proctor was to receive "one-eighth of the fines inflicted", probably a typing error for "one sixth" '.

summa pecunie de armis levate' was to be assigned to the University.⁷ These two items relating to the disciplinary action of the Chancellor and the Proctors cannot have produced, as Salter remarks, more than £1 for each Proctor even 'in the most turbulent years'.⁸ Nor does there appear to be room for proctorial profit in the third item subject to the judication of the auditors, that is, the payments incurred by the Proctors, as stated in their accounts for 1496-97, 'cum diversis dominis, abbatibus, prioribus, et generosis'. On the contrary, the Proctors evidently rendered themselves liable in respect of these disbursements 'pro expensis diminutis' to have some of them disallowed on the score of extravagance.

There is one piece of evidence that Salter knew of that indicates the sum total that a 15th century Proctor might collect by way of salary during his year of office. Richard Bradley, fellow of Exeter College, Senior or Southern Proctor for 1474-75, paid to Lincoln College, as rector of St. Michael's at Northgate, the sum of 11*s.* 8½*d.* by way of tithe on the profits of his proctorship, which implies a total remuneration of £5 17*s.* 1*d.* Besides the allowances already noted, Salter mentions degree fees as a possible contributory source to such a sum.

It is at this point that John Arundel's jottings of his proctorial receipts furnish welcome evidence.⁹ It appears that, in addition to ten pairs of gloves and three pilions,¹⁰ two girdles, one purse, and three small knives, he received in money at least £10 6*s.* 3*d.* The first two items in his account are expressly stated to have been received 'in inceptione', in point of fact, on the occasion of the inception of two Doctors of Civil Law. Another item, amounting to 2 nobles (13*s.* 4*d.*), is stated to be 'pro gracia'. The majority of the items are for *wyne-sylver* ('pro vino') at the rate of 16*d.* each. Probably all these payments were received in respect either of the conferment of a degree or of the grant of a grace concerning qualification for a degree. Even if allowance be made for the possibility that for some of the receipts Arundel may have been accountable to the University, there can be no doubt that the greater number ranked as the normal perquisites of the proctorship.

There are evidently disclosed here the two most lucrative sources from which the Proctors derived their remuneration: gifts from degree candidates and gifts from recipients of dispensations and other graces. Dr. Thomas Gascoigne, a most stringent critic of abuses, considered dispensations to be a too lucrative source of proctorial income. He inveighed against the practice

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

⁸ *Medieval Archives of the University of Oxford*, ii. 283.

⁹ For full text, see Appendix to this article.

¹⁰ 'pilei', i.e. the round hats worn by doctors.

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of granting graces in dispensation of statutes. 'The power of dispensing with good statutes', he wrote, 'should be curtailed by the regents and the proctors of the University who grant them very improperly for the money obtained for them from graduates and graduands.'¹¹

The medieval statutes of the University do not appear to have contained any schedules relating to the fees due on the granting of graces for degrees. Detailed schedules of fees were added to the statutes on 11 Dec. 1601 and 22 Jan. 1602.¹² It is clear from these that, in addition to the Proctors, the officials to be remunerated at the conferment of degrees comprise the Vice-Chancellor, the father of the Act, the presenter, the Registrar, the Bedells, the Vicar of St. Mary's, and the University and the parish clerks. They are formidable schedules. There can be no doubt that they were based upon practices that had grown up and had become systematized during the medieval period. In addition to the *wyne-sylver*, the Elizabethan schedules made provision for dinners, gifts of livery, gloves, and pilions to the Vice-Chancellor, the Proctors, and others. These, too, it appears from John Arundel's accounts had their medieval precedent. Corroboration of this conclusion is found in an entry in the oldest surviving Chancellor's register, *Registrum Aa*, which records that the Vicar of Kendal, Westmorland, paid off in January 1458, ten years after proceeding to a degree, his indebtedness for livery due to a deceased Proctor, a deceased Bedell, the University Chaplain, and the University Stationer.¹³

The office of Proctor was the most responsible and the most laborious of all University offices held by regent masters. It is to be expected that its remuneration should have been considered adequate. It may be inferred from John Arundel's personal accounts relating to his proctorship that he at least had no reason to grumble.

APPENDIX

John Arundel's Logic Note-book (Barnstaple, North Devon Athenaeum, doct. no. 3960), fo. 13v.

Recepi a Kerleton¹⁴ xvjd pro vino in incepcione, sirothecas [et j] nobile. Item a Maderwe¹⁵ xvjd pro vino et cirothecas cum nobili [in] incepcione. Item ab

¹¹ Th. Gascoigne, *Loci e Libro Veritatum*, ed. J. E. T. Rogers, p. 3, where read 'proveniente' for 'perveniente'.

¹² *S.A.U.O.*, pp. 470-74, 508-9; *Hearne's Collections* (O.H.S.), vi. 273, 274; Bodl. Libr., Bodley MS. 918 (S.C. 2910); *Ibid.* MS. 8° Rawlinson 662 (S.C. 15411).

¹³ *Registrum Cancellarii Oxon.*, ed. H. E. Salter (O.H.S.), i. 393-4. For the eligibility of the University Stationer to receive livery ('secta valetorum') from every graduand, see *S.A.U.O.*, p. 211. He is no longer included with the University officers named in the Elizabethan schedules of degree fees.

¹⁴ Jo. Carleton, canon and prebendary of York, on incepting as D.C.L.; see A. B. Emden, *Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to 1500*, i. 357.

¹⁵ Reg. Mertherderwa, rector of St. Creed, Cornwall, on incepting as D.C.L.; see *Ibid.* ii. 1267.

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Epchester¹⁶ xvjd pro vino; item pro vino Marchall¹⁷ xvjd; item a Bangor xvjd pro vino; item de Radulpho Hachys pro vino xvjd; item de Thoma Durham xvjd; item a Silvestro xvjd; item 2^o nobilia pro gracia Sclatton; item ab Helya doctore¹⁸ xld; item a monacho ex dono xxd; item a Nevelle xld pro vino &c.; item a Roderam¹⁹ pro vino xvjd; item a Babylthorpe²⁰ xvjd; item a Pope²¹ xvjd; item Durham xxd; item a Sylvester xxd; item a Praty²² xvjd pro vino; item ab Alano Kyrton²³ xxd pro vino; item ab eodem iii^jor nobilia; item Burham xxs et pro vino nichil; item a monacho de Durham iii^jor nobilia; item cirothecas et pilleum; item a Lovecok²⁴ vjs viijd; item Roderam viijd et vjs et cirothecas cum pilleo; item a fratre Commothe ij nobilia cum zona et pare cultellorum; item a Thoma Cornysman xijd; item a sophistai iijd; item a Bayle viijd; item pro vino die uno ij nobilia; item xvjd alia die; item xvjd alia die item a Prentys²⁵ xld; item ab Egidio xxs; item a canonico cirothecas; item ab Hals²⁶ cirothecas et j nobile; item a Frome xld; item xvijd; item a fratre xld; item a monacho j no[bi]le, pilleum et bursam, pilleum alium; item a domino Hugone xld; item a monacho xxd; item ab eodem xxd; item ab alio monacho xxd; item a balcallario (*sic*) xvjd; item a fratre alio xld; item a alio baccallario xvjd; item a Frome xvjd pro vino; item a fratre albo vjs viijd, sirothecas et zonam cum cultello; item a Cheyney xld; ab Hyndrynham viijd; item [ends] . . .

¹⁶ Wm. Ebchester, O.S.B., warden of Durham Coll.; see *Ibid.* i. 622.

¹⁷ Possibly Jo. Marschall, M.A. by 1438, or Jo. Marshall, B. Cn. & C.L. by 1428; see *Ibid.* ii. 1225, 1228.

¹⁸ Possibly Jo. Elys, D.M., fellow of Merton; see *Ibid.* i. 639-40.

¹⁹ Ric. Rotherham, D.Th., by 1422; see *Ibid.* iii. 1593.

²⁰ Ric. Babthorpe, M.A.; see *Ibid.* i. 86.

²¹ Walt. Pope, fellow of New Coll.; see *Ibid.* iii. 1500.

²² Ric. Praty, B.Th. by 1426, later bp. of Chichester; see *Ibid.* iii. 1514.

²³ Alan Kirketon, B.C.L. by 1423; M.A. by 1427; canon and prebendary of St. George's Windsor, and holder of several other benefices in England and France; see *Ibid.* ii. 1055-56.

²⁴ Th. Lovecok, fellow of Balliol, M.A., Sch. Th. by 1423; possibly admitted B.Th. in 1426; see *Ibid.* ii. 1165-66.

²⁵ Wm. Prentys, fellow of Exeter; see *Ibid.* iii. 1516-17.

²⁶ Jo. Halse, fellow of Exeter, later of Oriel, subsequently bp. of Coventry and Lichfield; see *Ibid.* ii. 856-7.