

The Medieval Town Clerks of Oxford

By GRAHAM POLLARD

| | |
|--|-------|
| I The origin of the office of Town Clerk | p. 44 |
| II Description of the 'Liber Albus Civitatis Oxoniensis' | 53 |
| III Annotated list of town clerks to 1522 | 59 |

ABBREVIATIONS USED

- Balliol* = *The Oxford Deeds of Balliol College*, ed. H. E. Salter, 1913 (O.H.S. LXIV).
Bishop = [MS. Cartulary of Nicholas Bishop, 1432] Cambridge University Library MS. Dd. xiv. 2. Here cited by the pages of a transcript made by H. Hurst in 1906 (Bodleian MS. Top. Oxon. d. 72).
Boase = C. W. Boase, *Registrum Collegii Exoniensis*, a new edition, 1894 (O.H.S. XXVII).
BRUO = A. B. Emden, *A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford*, 3 vols, 1957-59.
Cart. Ch. Ch. = *Cartulary of the Medieval Archives of Christ Church*, ed. N. Denholm Young, 1931 (O.H.S. XCH).
CPR. = *Calendar of Patent Rolls*. H.M. Stationery Office, 1901-.
Feet of Fines = *The Feet of Fines for Oxfordshire, 1195-1291*, ed. H. E. Salter, 1930 (Oxford Record Society, vol. XII).
Frid. = *The Cartulary of the Monastery of St. Frideswide at Oxford*, ed. S. R. Wigram. 2 vols., 1895-96 (O.H.S., XXVIII, XXXI).
Hosp. = *A Cartulary of the Hospital of St. John the Baptist*, ed. H. E. Salter, 3 vols., 1914-17 (O.H.S. LXVI, LXVIII, LXIX).
H.R. = *Rotuli Hundredorum*, 2 vols, 1812-18.
Lib. Alb. = *Liber Albus Civitatis Oxoniensis*, edd. W. P. Ellis and H. E. Salter, Oxford Chronicle Co., 1909.
MCO. = *Munimenta Civitatis Oxonie*, ed. H. E. Salter, 1920 (O.H.S. LXXI).
Med. Arch. = *Medieval Archives of the University of Oxford*, ed. H. E. Salter, 2 vols., 1920-21 (O.H.S. LXX, LXXIII).
Med. Ox. = H. E. Salter, *Medieval Oxford*, 1936 (O.H.S. c).
Merton = *Merton Muniments*, edd. P. S. Allen and H. W. Garrod, 1928 (O.H.S. LXXXVI).
Merton Rolls = *The Early Rolls of Merton College*, ed. J. R. L. Highfield, 1964 (O.H.S. new series XVIII).

This paper is published with the aid of grants from the Marc Fitch Fund and the Oxford City Council.

GRAHAM POLLARD

- NE.*='North East Ward' in H. E. Salter, *Survey of Oxford*, vol. i., 1960 (O.H.S. new series xiv). Cited here by the numbers of the tenements.
- Ogle*=*Royal Letters addressed to Oxford*, ed. Octavius Ogle, 1892.
- O.H.S.=Oxford Historical Society.
- Oriel*=*Oriel College Records*, edd. H. E. Salter and C. L. Shadwell, 1926 (O.H.S. LXXXV).
- Os.*=*Cartulary of Oseney Abbey*, ed. H. E. Salter, 6 vols., 1929-36 (O.H.S. LXXXIX, XC, XCI, XCVII, XCVIII, CI).
- Ox. Ch.*=*Oxford Charters*, ed. H. E. Salter, 1929.
- Reg. Canc.*=*Registrum Cancellarii Oxoniensis*, ed. H. E. Salter, 2 vols., 1932 (O.H.S. XCIII, XCIV).
- St. Michael*=*The Churchwardens' Accounts of St. Michael's Church, Oxford*, ed. H. E. Salter, 1933 (Oxford Archaeological Society, Transaction no. 78).
- Salter's List*=MS. List of the Officers of the town of Oxford by H. E. Salter. Bodleian MS. Top. Oxon. c. 353.
- Salter's Map*=H. E. Salter, *Map of Medieval Oxford*, 1934.
- SE.*='South East Ward' in H. E. Salter, *Survey of Oxford*, vol. i., 1960 (O.H.S. new series xiv). Here cited by the numbers of the tenements.
- Snappe*=*Snappe's Formulary*, ed. H. E. Salter, 1924 (O.H.S. LXXX).
- V.C.H.*=*Victoria County History*.
- Wood's City*=Anthony Wood, *Survey of the Antiquities of Oxford*, ed. Andrew Clark, 3 vols., 1889-99 (O.H.S. xv, xvii, xxxvii).

I: THE ORIGIN OF THE OFFICE OF TOWN CLERK

From before the Norman Conquest the townsmen of Oxford were accustomed to settle local affairs in the Portmoot. It met every Monday morning in the open air in St. Martin's churchyard at Carfax.¹ At the time of Domesday Book the number of houses within the walls was about seven hundred, many of them waste and unoccupied; and it was not too large a community for all the inhabitants to know one another. Changes in the ownership of houses were witnessed in the Portmoot by leading townsmen; and this secured effective possession to the new owner without any written title deeds. So long as the townsmen of Oxford conducted their affairs in this primitive fashion, they had no need of a town clerk.

The memory of the Portmoot may have been enough for local residents; but it was not for monasteries or knights of the shire, whose houses in Oxford were but a small part of their possessions. In looking through the earliest deeds about property in Oxford it is obvious that the development of written

¹ It met there on 20 March 1172 (*Os.* ii. 550), and this is the only known occasion on which its place of meeting is specified. In Oxford documents it is usually called 'Portmannimote'.

THE MEDIEVAL TOWN CLERKS OF OXFORD

records was due to organizations outside the town; and I must mention these, as briefly as may be, before we can distinguish those of the town jurisdiction. The Abbey of Oseney was founded on 29 December 1129, and the hands of its scribes can be traced from the very beginning. Two charters of Henry I to Oseney (*Ox. Ch.* 58 & 64; T.A.M. Bishop, *Scriptores Regis*, nos. 597* and 599*) and two of Stephen (*op. cit.* nos. 600* and 601*) appear to be in the hands of Oseney scribes (*op. cit.* p. 9). About 1200 Symon 'clericus noster' (*Os.* ii. 282) writes several Oseney deeds; and the earliest cartulary of the Abbey begins in the same hand (B.M. MS. Vitellius E. xv: *Os.* i. 112 note). Other monasteries in the neighbourhood: Abingdon about 1170 (B.M. MS. Claudius C. ix); Eynsham about 1196 (Christ Church, Oxford, Chapter Library); and Thame about 1203 (Longleat, MS. 44) started cartularies about the same time.

The archdeacon was unusually prominent in Oxford affairs because the see of Lincoln was vacant from 1166 to 1185. In 1167 when Bernard of St. Walery gave Oseney his share in the advowson of the chapel of St. George in Oxford Castle, three groups of witnesses to the charter (*Ox. Ch.* 80) may be distinguished: Robert the archdeacon with his suite in which Walterus Scriptor comes fourth and last; the followers of Bernard of St. Walery, headed by his dapifer and including one Arnulfus Clericus; and the Oseney officials. Two generations later another Walter is clerk to the archdeacon, Mag. Johannes de Tinemua (1215-c.1221), and was granted a corrody in the Abbey of St. Mary de Pratis at Northampton.²

The amount of administrative work required of the sheriff increased steadily from the reign of Henry II onwards. From 1257 the town of Oxford was responsible to the Exchequer for the payment of its fee farm and the execution of royal writs; but these were still directed to the sheriff, who re-addressed them to the bailiffs and took a receipt for them as late as 1327 (*MCO.* 57). The sheriff must have had secretarial assistance at an early date; but the first evidence that I have found of it is the description of Walter de Tiwa as *clericus comitatus* in 1234 (*Cart. Ch. Ch.* 38).

There were a few Jews in Oxford in the second half of the 12th century who advanced cash on the security of lands and houses. They were the King's chattels; and their written contracts were assets of the Crown. These contracts were liable to be destroyed in pogroms provoked by discontented creditors, as at York in 1190. As a precaution against this chirograph chests for Jewish bonds were established in London and other cities in 1198. The Jewish chirograph chest at Oxford is first mentioned in 1208: there were

² *Rotuli Hugonis de Welles*, ed. W. P. W. Phillimore, ii. 193-4. See also C. R. Cheney, *English Bishops' Chanceries 1100-1250*, 114-19, 144.

four keepers of the chest, two Christians and two Jews.³ In lending money on houses the Jews had to be sure of the borrower's title to the land pledged as security for the loan; and this may explain why the earliest surviving deed about the transfer of a house from one Oxford resident to another came to be written down. About 1175 William son of Siward leased the land which was later St. Edward Hall to William son of Sueting at a rent of 3s. 6d. a year. William son of Siward bequeathed this rent and his rights in the land to Oseney Abbey. Meanwhile William son of Sueting had pledged his lease to the Jew, Moses of Bristol for 14 cows and 12 stone of lard. William son of Sueting died about 1195 without repaying the loan, which by then had increased to £80. So his widow Leviva sold this and her husband's other tenements to John Kepeharm, who paid off Moses of Bristol's sons Isaac and Simon, and gave her £20. Before making the original loan Moses of Bristol had to have some tangible evidence, not merely Portmoot memories, that William son of Sueting had a negotiable lease (*Os.* i. 333-37); and this may be why this particular charter (*Ox. Ch.* 84) was committed to writing.

A more profound influence was the procedure of the Justices in Eyre, because they settled land disputes, whether real or fictitious, by a final concord or fine against which there was no appeal. The earliest surviving fine was made on 29 June 1176, and concerns land in Oxford. It is a small piece of vellum on which the record has been written twice with the word CIROGRAPHUM between them: this has been cut straight across to make two copies.⁴ On 15 July 1195 the Royal justices adopted the tripartite indenture: 'Hoc est primum cyrographum quod factum fuit in curia domini regis in forma trium cyrographorum secundum quod . . . dominum Cantuariensem et alios barones domini regis ad hoc ut per illam formam possit fieri recordum traditum thesaurario ad ponendum in thesaurario . . .' (*Feet of Fines*, Pipe Roll Society, vol. xvii, p. 21.)

The fine was written twice side by side with CIROGRAPHUM in capitals written vertically between them, and a third time across the foot of the same piece of vellum separated from the other two again by the word CIROGRAPHUM. The sheet was then divided into three by zigzag cuts through the two writings of the word CIROGRAPHUM. The two top pieces were given to the parties in the case, and the third copy across the foot of the sheet was filed in the Court of Common Pleas at Westminster.⁵ By 1 March 1238

³ *Curia Regis Roll 1207-09*, p. 246; C. Roth, *The Jews of Medieval Oxford* (O.H.S., new series, IX), 36; J. M. Rigg, *Exchequer of the Jews*, i. 77, 101.

⁴ Reproduced in *Facsimiles of Royal Charters in the British Museum*, edd. G. F. Warner & H. J. Ellis (1903), i. 55. See also J. H. Round, *Feudal England*, 514-16; *Os.* ii. 551.

⁵ For the procedure see M. S. Giuseppi, *Guide to the MSS. in the Public Record Office* (1923), i. 244-5, 248-9.

THE MEDIEVAL TOWN CLERKS OF OXFORD

this procedure was being almost exactly imitated in the Bailiffs' court at Oxford. A final concord about Wileby Hall in High Street on the present site of The Queen's College was made before the Mayor and Bailiffs between the widow Lucia de la Wose and Mag. Willelmus de Lichefeld: '... hoc presens scriptum cyrographatum & tripartitum cuius una pars remanet in archa communi burgensium Oxon', & reliqua pars predicto W. & suis, & tertia pars predictae Lucie & suis, sigillis suis alternatim confirmaverunt & corroboraverunt.' And Mag. William de Lichefeld's copy, indented on the top and left-hand edges, and with Lucia's seal still dangling from it, is now among the Christ Church deeds deposited in the Bodleian (*Os.* i. 291-2, but without mentioning the indenture). There are other instances at *Frid.* i. 169, and at *Frid.* i. 374, which should be dated about 1240. It is clear that by this time Oxford had a writing and filing system in operation.

It is not to be supposed that the registration of deeds about property was the only secretarial function required by the town of Oxford at the beginning of the 13th century. Property deeds have been religiously preserved as evidence of title, so there is some information about this aspect of the work; but practically nothing about the rest of it. The oldest officers of the Borough were the two portreeves or bailiffs. When they first appear in 1050, Godwin is *prepositus civitatis Oxonie*, and Wulfwin is *prepositus comitis* [Algari] (Kemble, *Codex Diplomaticus*, iv. 285). In the 12th century they were the sheriff's officers, responsible to him for the collection of the King's taxes and the execution of royal writs; but they always seem to have been Oxford residents, and were perhaps chosen by the town subject to the sheriff's approval, as, in the next century, the mayor was chosen in the presence of the sheriff, but subject to the King's approval.⁶ The fee farm was chiefly met by dues from the Castle Mills and the market, and rents from certain houses. Its collection may not have involved much writing, but there were many other duties of the bailiffs (Salter, *Med. Ox.* 47-8), keeping law and order, making returns to royal writs, and recording the proceedings of the town courts. That these duties called for secretarial assistance is evident in the title *clericus prepositorum* applied to Jordanus Clericus in 1240 and to Robertus Clericus in 1250 (see below).

The office of coroner was instituted to ensure that the Crown received the profits of justice in cases which had not been delegated to local or private jurisdiction, usually murder, mayhem and treasure trove. The hue and cry had to be raised when a body was found, and the coroner sent for. He viewed the body and held an inquest. If the death was natural or by accident, the

⁶ See Mrs. M. D. Lobel in *Festschrift für Hektor Ammann* (Wiesbaden, 1965), p. 73.

GRAHAM POLLARD

Crown got nothing; but if it was murder or suicide, the felon's goods were forfeit; and if the neighbouring parishes were slow in answering the hue and cry, they were fined. The report of the inquest had to be submitted to the judges at the next Assizes.⁷ The office of coroner was instituted before 1194; but the earliest reference to coroners at Oxford is in 1234 when William de Mildecombe is described as *clericus coronatorum*.⁸

Lastly there was the mayor's court which met on a Friday. The rolls of its proceedings from 1284 onwards still survived in 1624 (*MCO*. p. x.); but we do not know when it began or what its function was. H. E. Salter suggested that it was originally the Court of the Gild Merchant, and this may well be so; but there is no evidence.

At Midsummer 1182 Walerand of Crickelade, whose job was to guard the royal treasure on the King's journeys, bought from Robert, son of Junguin, land in Cornmarket on the present site of 'The Golden Cross' (*NE*. 6):

'Hanc conventionem & saisinam huius terre fecit Rodbertus filius Iunguini Walerano de Crikelade per baculum quendam coram Rodberto de Witefeld, qui tunc fuit vicecomes de Oxenefordsira & coram Amfrido & Lamberto qui tunc fuerunt Aldermani de Oxenefordie, in pleno placito domini regis coram villata eiusdem ville; & idcirco consilio Iohannis Kepeharm, & Thome filio Ailrici, & Hugonis Kepeharm, & Willelmi pretoris & consilio aliorum proborum hominum Oxenefordie qui tunc ibi fuerunt, nos Aldermani per sigilla nostra confirmamus.' (*Ox. Ch.* 89; *Os.* ii. 4-9).

Two aldermen perform the same function in a deed shortly before Michaelmas 1190 about the site of No. 38 Cornmarket (*Ox. Ch.* 90; *Os.* i. 81-2):

'Hec concordia fuit facta in portmannimot de Oxeneford, Laurentio filio Harding, & Henrico filio Segrin tune prepositis, Iohanne Kepeharm & Lamberti filio Thovi, aldermannis qui conventionis testes sunt . . .'

Salter comments on this last deed: 'Probably the town clerk, an officer already in existence with the title *clericus civium*, would draw up the deed at the portmote Court' (*Ox. Ch.* (1929), no. 90, note). Earlier he had written: The Town Clerk is mentioned as early as the end of the reign of Henry II., when he appears in a deed as 'clerk of the citizens'. (*Oxford Millenary 912-1912*. Lectures by R. S. Rait, etc. (Oxford Chronicle Co., 1912) p. 23). But he gives no references, which is unusual; and he does not mention this early *clericus civium* in his *Medieval Oxford* (1936) or in his manuscript list of town officers

⁷ For the procedure see H. E. Salter's introduction to *Oxford Coroners' Inquests* (Oxford Chronicle Co., 1912). The earliest surviving Oxford roll begins on 18 January 1296. Others were printed by J. E. T. Rogers in *Oxford City Documents* (1891), 150-74.

⁸ *Cart. Ch. Ch.* 38. The deed is torn, but not defective. The word is 'coronato' in the plural, not the singular as printed.

THE MEDIEVAL TOWN CLERKS OF OXFORD

(Bodleian MS. Top. Oxon. c. 353). Salter knew more about Oxford deeds than anyone else has ever done; and it is with much diffidence that I suggest that his *clericus civium* of the 12th century is a ghost. No town clerk is known at London as early as this; and the existence of such an officer at this date seems to me inconsistent with the municipal development of Oxford as shown in other records.

Thirteenth-century deeds about land in Oxford often have the mayor and bailiffs as the first three witnesses; and it is reasonable to suppose that the acts which these deeds record were done in the portmoot or hustings court. But a substantial minority of deeds are not witnessed by any town officers; their witnesses may be those present at the Abbot of Oseney's court, or men of the same trade, or merely neighbours and interested parties. The proportion of deeds thus witnessed decreases steadily throughout the century; and this may reflect the growing reputation and authority of the hustings court. For fifty-nine of the sixty-nine years from 1215 to 1284 only five men were Mayors of Oxford, so that the dating of deeds by their witness is necessarily imprecise.

Thirteenth-century Oxford deeds are written in a bewildering variety of hands. Deeds settled in the hustings court about the same time are usually in different hands; and deeds with the same name as the last witness are seldom written by the same scribe. Nevertheless, when several deeds in the same hand have one name common to their lists of witnesses, particularly if it is that of the last witness or the name is *clericus*, the hand can be tentatively identified. Shortly before 1230 we do find an identifiable hand which writes some 15 deeds; and thereafter there are other hands from which we have a dozen or more deeds.

These scribes have to be considered when looking for the origin of the town clerk. Willelmus Clericus wrote 15 deeds and witnessed 63, ranging in date from about 1225 to 1252: he became one of the bailiffs at Michaelmas 1235, and served for one year.⁹ Willelmus de Mildecombe wrote 17 deeds and witnessed 53 from about 1229 to about 1270. He is described as *clericus coronatorum* in 1234, and became bailiff of Bullingdon Hundred about 1247. Jordanus Clericus wrote 13 deeds and witnessed 30, nearly all of them between 1235 and 1244. He is described as *clericus prepositorum* in 1240, and was almost certainly acting as clerk in the hustings court in 1235 and 1238. Robertus Clericus wrote at least 10 deeds and witnessed some 44 from 1244 to 1272. He is described as *clericus prepositorum* in 1250, and as *tunc clericus ville* and *tunc clericus Oxonie* about 1253. Robertus Clericus,

⁹ For fuller details and references, see the list at the end.

GRAHAM POLLARD

then, became town clerk of Oxford between 1250 and 1253. This is the earliest explicit mention of the office, and he is the first known holder of it.

The institution of the office of town clerk at Oxford is only one among several signs of the town's municipal development in the first half of the 13th century. The earliest reference to a chief officer is in 1204 when Laurence Kepeharm is called sheriff (not mayor) (*Liberate Rolls*, ed. T. D. Hardy, 1844, p. 94): he was mayor until about 1210. Thomas son of Edwin was mayor from 1215 to 1226, and John Pady from 1227 to 1231 (*Os.*, iii, pp. xi-xii). On 18 February 1229 the King granted to the townsmen of Oxford the new Gild Hall, where the Town Hall is today, 'ad placita nostra in eadem domo tenenda in perpetuum' (Ogle, pp. 7-8). 'Placita nostra' is what was called 'Portmannimote' until about 1215, and later the hustings court. Before 1229 this court may have met in the old Gild Hall, Nos. 1-3 Queen Street, just across the road from St. Martin's churchyard. But the site of the new Gild Hall is conspicuously larger than that of the old; and some of the additional accommodation may well have provided for the *archa communis burgensium Oxon.*, which was in being within nine years.

It may now be suggested that it was Willelmus Clericus who first organized the registration of deeds at the new Gild Hall between 1229 and his election as bailiff at Michaelmas 1235; he was followed by Jordanus Clericus, who certainly wrote a tripartite chirograph for the bailiffs' court in 1238. The functions of the town clerk may thus have started about 20 years before the title was first used by Robertus Clericus. Two town clerks, Robertus Clericus in 1250 and Thomas de Pirie at the Exchequer in 1316, described themselves as *clericus prepositorum*; and this title, first used by Jordanus Clericus in 1240, seems to be the earliest form of the name for the office of town clerk.

The succession of town clerks in the second half of the 13th century is not at all certain. We know that Philip le Notur was town clerk in 1265 and 1271, Thomas Clericus in 1273, and Ricardus de Waledene in 1300. Galfridus Belewe may have held the office between Robertus Clericus and Philip le Notur; and Ricardus de Eppewelle and Willelmus de Lamburne may have come between Thomas Clericus and Ricardus de Waledene; but these are merely possibilities. The only printed list of the medieval town clerks was inserted by Andrew Clark in his edition of Anthony Wood's *City of Oxford*, iii (1899), p. 56. H. E. Salter made a manuscript list of the town officers from 1138 to 1530 (now Bodleian MS. Top. Oxon. c. 353); but he was chiefly concerned with the mayor and bailiffs as evidence for dating deeds. He did not attempt to establish the succession of town clerks, though his occasional references to them have been very useful. The difficulty about both lists is that they sometimes rely on inadequate evidence. When the

THE MEDIEVAL TOWN CLERKS OF OXFORD

last man in a list of witnesses headed by the mayor and bailiffs is called *clericus*, it may sometimes mean that he is town clerk; but it is not necessarily so. Andrew Clark gives Johannes de Aston in 1307-14, presumably on the evidence of some deeds at Balliol, when we know that Thomas de Pirie was town clerk from 1304 to 1320. Salter says that Johannes de Langrysshe was town clerk on similar evidence in 1330 (*Lib. Alb.* 9) when we know that it was Thomas de Leghe; and in his manuscript list he inserts Willelmus de Lamburne on the same sort of evidence. It is, perhaps, reasonable, if a man is known to be town clerk from other sources, to use this sort of evidence to extend the dates of his tenure of office; but it is not safe to use it without corroboration.

The succession of town clerks is clear enough from 1300 onwards; and the handwriting of most of them can be identified in the 'Liber Albus'. They were formally chosen each year on the Monday after Michaelmas; but they were usually re-elected every year as long as they lived. The only exceptions are Ricardus de Waledene, who became bailiff at Michaelmas 1304, John de Langrysshe, who was not re-elected at Michaelmas 1350 or 1351, William Brugges, who went bankrupt in April 1450, and the two doubtful cases of David Pencaer in 1454 and Ralf Pulton in 1488. Thomas Tanfeld in 1454 is the only town clerk who was elected after he had served as bailiff.

The town clerk sometimes had to go to London on the town's business. The first occasion that I know of was unfortunate. At Easter 1316 Thomas de Pirie went to pay the fee farm for the bailiffs. On examination at the Exchequer he admitted that he was not one of the bailiffs, but their clerk, and for this deception he was put in the Fleet Prison. As the real bailiffs did not appear, the liberty of the town was taken into the King's hand, and the town had to pay a fine to get it back. Thomas de Leghe went to London in 1325 to get a writ about the assize of weights and measures. But in 1357 when the enforcement of the Statute of Labourers was committed to both the Mayor and the Chancellor of the University, the necessary writs were procured in London by John Burton, squire bedel of theology; and the town contributed to his expenses several times, ending up with one shilling for the Mayor and Aldermen drinking wine with him at the Swindlestock.¹⁰ Michael Norton rode to London in 1425 for a case between University College and the churchwardens of All Saints'. In 1461 Thomas Tanfeld, with the Mayor and five aldermen all dressed alike, rode to London for the coronation of Edward IV, and he has left a lively account of what they did.

In the 16th century the town clerk received an annual retaining fee

¹⁰ For Burton's expenses paid by the University, see *Med. Arch.* i. 175-85; for those paid by the Town, see *MCO.* 269-72.

GRAHAM POLLARD

of four marks, i.e. 53s. 4d. (W. H. Turner, *Records of Oxford*, 320), and this may have its origin in early times. He received fees for entering deeds on the Hustings Roll, and more fees for drawing the deeds to be enrolled. The accounts of Exeter College show that John of Northampton got three shillings for making their deeds for Castle Hall in 1358, and Nicholas Norton three shillings and fourpence for doing the same service for Chequer Hall in 1405. It was an ancient custom of Oxford that freeholds could be bequeathed by will: in such cases the bailiffs seised the freehold, and did not give seisin to the heir until the will had been proved before the Mayor in the Hustings Court (*Lib. Alb.* preface). The town clerk was thus the natural resort for the heir anxious to have possession of his inheritance; and the advice and remarkable expedition¹¹ shown on these occasions was a further source of fees for the town clerk.

There is, in fact, abundant evidence that the medieval town clerks were, like their successors down to the 19th century, the leading solicitors of the town. They acted for mayors and other important citizens in their private concerns: Thomas de Leghe was executor of William de Burncestre; John de Langrysshe of Richard Cary; John of Northampton of John de Stodlee; and so on. No town clerk ever became mayor; but they moved in the same family circles. Thomas Clericus was the son of Galfridus Aurifaber, who was bailiff four times. Thomas de Pirie was somehow related to Robert de Wormenhale; John of Northampton married Dionisia one of Richard Cary's daughters; and Michael Norton's daughter or step-daughter married John Cleve who was a bailiff. It should be added that John Norton, son of Nicholas and elder brother of Michael, town clerks in succession, was for a short time in 1439 the chancellor of the University.

Several town clerks had other professions besides their private work as solicitors. The most profitable trade in medieval Oxford was innkeeping. The High Street, St. Aldate's, Cornmarket, and St. Giles were lined with inns with a carriage entrance and stables behind, of which the only example now surviving is 'The Golden Cross'. The scale of hospitality offered may be read in a glowing prospectus written about 1415 by William Kingsmill for his brother's inn, 'The Mill on the Hoop', in Cornmarket (*Romania*, xxxii (Paris, 1903), 50-8). Most of the mayors were innkeepers; and so it is not surprising to find that Nicholas Norton kept 'The Bull' in Cornmarket next to 'The Golden Cross'. His son Michael Norton was a brewer; and Thomas Tanfeld kept 'The Ram' on the south side of High Street opposite Brasenose College.

¹¹ The record time seems to be one week from when the will of William Brown was made on 9 January 1349 to when it was proved on 16 January (*Lib. Alb.* 30). An interval of one month is quite normal.

THE MEDIEVAL TOWN CLERKS OF OXFORD

II: DESCRIPTION OF THE 'LIBER ALBUS CIVITATIS OXONIENSIS'

The 'Liber Albus' of the City of Oxford is a contemporary collection of wills and deeds copied from the hustings rolls which have now perished. It starts in 1320, and the latest document in it is dated 15 June 1667 (f. 263v.). It was translated and edited by W. P. Ellis and H. E. Salter, and published as weekly instalments in *The Oxford Chronicle* during 1907 and 1908: the standing type was used to print off some copies in 1909. This edition is sufficient for most purposes, and is the source of the numbering of the documents used in the following note and the pagination cited in the list. Nonetheless the editors have sometimes altered the order of the documents, do not always mention missing leaves, and say nothing about the handwriting. But the hand of several of the medieval town clerks can be identified in this book; and their extent is sometimes the only evidence to show how long they held office. I have therefore included here some account of the physical appearance of the 'Liber Albus' because it is my authority for some statements in the subsequent list.

The Paper

The 'Liber Albus' now consists of one vellum leaf and 331 paper leaves. They measure approximately 365 by 260 mm. The paper is homogeneous throughout, and has no watermark. The chain lines are vertical, about 1.5 mm. broad, and 45 mm. apart. The wire lines are about one millimetre broad, and about 3 mm. apart. This is the earliest surviving paper used in Oxford. The town of King's Lynn still has a paper register which starts in 1307,¹² and the Book of the Hustings Court at Lyme Regis, also on paper, begins in 1308. Merton College paid one penny for 'papyrus pro registro' in 1310.¹³

Most of the top of the vellum leaf at the beginning of the book has been torn away; but the first two lines begin: 'Iste liber est comunitatis . . . hale burgensis Ox . . .' H. E. Salter conjectured from this that the book was given to the Town by Robert de Wormenhale, who was mayor in 1298 and died in 1324. This is followed by a list of 24 names, which seem to be those of the Town Council about 1395.

The Binding

This book is called a paper book in 1330 (*Lib. Alb.* 9) and 'magnus papyrus' in 1372 (*MCO.* 275); and there is no reference to any binding. About 1430

¹² Hist. MSS. Commission. *11th report*, pt. iii., pp. 152-3. The book lacks some leaves at the beginning, but the first surviving enrolment is of 3 February 1307.

¹³ J. E. T. Rogers, *History of Agriculture and Prices in England*, ii. 569.

GRAHAM POLLARD

it is called 'Liber Rubeus' which probably indicates whittawed leather dyed with kermes over wooden boards which was a usual type of binding at that date. The present cover of white vellum over pasteboard is of the second half of the 16th century; and by the time that Brian Twyne examined the City Records in 1624, it was called the *Liber Albus*.

About 1925 the book was thoroughly overhauled by A. Maltby & Son. They mended each leaf, lined the hinges of the leaves in pairs, and over-sewed the sections before rebinding the book in its old cover so tightly that it is only in the last few sections that you can see what they have done. From the technical point of view it is an excellent piece of work, well calculated to preserve the book from the carelessness of future generations and the curiosity of researchers. But in doing this they have destroyed, or for ever concealed, whatever evidence there may have been of how the book was originally constructed. Messrs. Maltby & Son seem to have followed the pencil foliation of the 1908 editors; but in at least two cases leaves had been reversed because the original foliation is now on the verso (ff. 20 and 21); and some leaves had been transposed because leaves once numbered c and cvij now come between leaves lxxxvj and lxxxvij (ff. 88-91). It is not now possible to say which leaves are conjugate, and thereby establish their original sequence. When a deed is out of its proper chronological place, as is often the case, we cannot now tell whether it is because the scribe entered it on the first blank leaf he could find, or whether it is because the order of the leaves has been altered since he wrote. It is therefore necessary to describe the foliations in detail.

The Order of the Contents

The 'Liber Albus' proceeds in straightforward chronological order as far as f. 24a (Deed no. 72, 9 January 1349), then at the foot of f. 24a and on f. 29 there are entries at various dates from 1356 to 1373 probably by John of Northampton, mixed up with entries by John de Langrysshe in the first six months of 1349. Folios 30-50r were written by John of Northampton's clerk Richard in 1372. Ff. 50v-56r are in the hands of John of Northampton or other clerks of his, with a blank section from f. 51v to f. 53v. This is followed by entries in the time of Nicholas Norton up to 10 May 1392 on f. 60v. F. 61 recto is blank, and on the verso is a deed of 8 December 1419.

From f. 62r to f. 81r are proceedings during the mayoralties of Richard Williams (1571), Ralph Flaxney (1577), and James Almond (1588), interspersed with many blanks, and on f. 75v a will of 8 May 1416. Ff. 81v-87v contain two blocks of entries in Michael Norton's time interspersed with blanks.

THE MEDIEVAL TOWN CLERKS OF OXFORD

Deeds are entered by Thomas Tanfeld on ff. 88r and 91v with blank leaves in between. Folios 94v-97r contain interrogatories administered on behalf of Edmund Yarburie of Waterstock in 1570. Then on f. 98v is a royal writ in favour of Oriel College, 13 May 1442 (printed by Ogle, pp. 102-3). A solid block of Thomas Tanfeld follows on ff. 99r-110; and then a block by Richard Gibbes on ff. 111r-131v.

The rest of the book is taken up with 16th- and 17th-century entries interspersed with many blanks. Nearly a third of the whole book is blank paper. Near the end on ff. 314-21 are deeds about the chantry in St. Martin's Church founded by the will of Richard Cary, probably written in the hands of John of Northampton and two of his clerks.

Foliations

There are four different numberings of the leaves. The fourth and most recent is in arabic figures in pencil. It is the only series which runs consistently throughout the book, and I have therefore used it for reference in this description. One leaf between nos. 24 and 25 was omitted, and is now numbered 24a. This numbering was, I think, made when the *Liber Albus* was edited in 1908. The book starts with one vellum leaf unnumbered, then a blank leaf numbered 279 in the hand of the third foliator, although there is another no. 279 in its proper place later in the book. Then the fourth foliation begins.

The third foliation is also in arabic figures, sometimes in ink, sometimes in pencil. It was probably made in the 19th century. It is not continuous, but seems to have been inserted to show the sequence of the leaves where the next (second) foliation was absent or discontinuous. Thus ff. 36, 37, 38 (fourth foliation) are numbered xlix.a., 49.b, l. The 'a' after xlix and '49.b' are of the third foliation, and were inserted to show that f. 37 comes between ff. 36 and 38 although it was omitted in the roman numerals of the second foliation. The third foliation begins at no. 6 (=No. 1 of the fourth foliation). It continues from where the second foliation stops at clij (=126 in the fourth foliation) to the end.

The second foliation is in neat roman figures, and may be as early as the late 15th century. It has some resemblance to the hand of Thomas Tanfeld. It only goes as far as clij (=126 in the fourth foliation), which is dated 30 Sept. 1502. There is no leaf numbered cxvij, but the text carries straight on from f. cxvj to f. cxviii (=ff. 94, 95 in the fourth foliation) presumably therefore, if there has been no mistake, the leaf numbered cxvij was lost before the text on the adjoining leaves was written in 1570.

There are many gaps in the second foliation, besides those leaves which

GRAHAM POLLARD

are present though not numbered. The missing leaves are: xxix-xxxj. xxxv, xxxvj, xl, xlj (on which see below), lxxxvj, lxxxvij, cxvij, and cxliv. The second foliation is continuous from liij to lvij (ff. 41-2), but the text which was written in 1372, shows that at least one leaf is missing between them. The numbering goes up to lxiv (f. 52), then the next leaf (f. 53) is numbered lvij, and the numbers lvij to lxiv are repeated on ff. 53 to 60. Between lxxxiiij and cxiiij, where there should be twenty leaves, there are now only four, viz. lxxxvj, c, cvij, and lxxxvij in that order, so that there has been some transposition here as well as loss of leaves.

In summary then, five leaves at the beginning have been lost between the dates of the third and fourth foliations; twenty-six between the second and third foliations; and at least one leaf (f. 41/42) before the second foliation was made: a total of thirty-two leaves lost.

The first foliation is contemporary and in the same hand as the text; but only occurs in two small blocks: 20 (fourth foliation) = xxv (second foliation) = xxvj on the verso (first foliation); 21 = xxvj = xxvij on the verso; 24 = xxxij = xxxij; 24a = blank = xxxij; 25 = blank = xxxiiij; 26 = blank = xxxvij; 27 = blank = xxxvij; 28 = blank = xxxix. All these numerals seem to be in John de Langrisshe's hand, but f. 29 is numbered xlij in another hand. By a curious chance there is independent contemporary evidence of the foliation at this point. Deed no. 87 (21 Sept. 1375) is also entered in the St. Frideswide's Cartulary (*Frid.* i. 240); and the rubricator adds: '& feoffatores supranotati petierunt illam [i.e. this deed] recordari et inseri in papiro Gilde Aule Oxon', & ibidem inseritur folio xlj^o'. This deed is now on f. xlij (f. 29 in the fourth foliation), and ff. xl and xlj are missing. If f. xlij was originally numbered xlj, it means that the leaves on either side of it are missing instead of the two leaves preceding it.

The second small block of contemporary foliation is: 54 = lvij = lxxiiij; 55 = lix = lxxiiij; 56 = lx = lxxv. This is in the third hand at work during John of Northampton's time.

The Handwriting

It is clear that in the 16th and 17th centuries entries were made in the 'Liber Albus' by the town clerk. 'Hic incipit Radolfus Radclyffe clericus communitatis civitatis Oxon.' irrotulare omnes evidencias prout decet officio suo supradicto Anno domini 1621.' (f. 240); 'per me Thomam Wadloff' town clerk in 1556 occurs on f. 138; and W. Wayte, also town clerk signs a document of 28 July 1526 on f. 132. Richard Gibbes, his predecessor as town clerk, has a self conscious signature with a large capital R, a small g,

THE MEDIEVAL TOWN CLERKS OF OXFORD

and tall ascenders for the two b's, all within a cartouche. This occurs several times, the latest on 28 July 1518 (f. 131v), and the same hand can be traced back as far as 1493.

Turning now to the beginning of the book where there are no signatures, the three earliest hands can be identified by comparing them with documents elsewhere.

F. 1: No. 1, 19 September 1320 was written by Thomas de Pirie, town clerk from Michaelmas 1304 until his death in 1321. An agreement of 25 November 1315 between the Town of Oxford and Merton College, to which the last witness is *Thomas de Pyrie clericus communitalis eiusdem ville*, is in the same hand (facsimile reproduction in *Merton Muniments*, plate Xb).

Ff. 2-4 (half-way down recto): No. 2, 23 March 1324—No. 6, 16 December 1328 were written by Thomas de Leghe, town clerk from 1321 until his death in 1344. An indented copy of an extract from the Hustings Roll of 19 October 1327 (City Archives D.5.1, printed *MCO*, 61-2) is signed by him and is in the same hand.

Ff. 4r, lower half-24a r: No. 7, 14 September 1330—No. 72, 9 January 1349 are practically all in the hand of John de Langrysshe. He is the last witness to a deed of 20 May 1346 which is in the same hand (City Archives G.4.1.(1)). John de Langrysshe began to act as Thomas de Leghe's deputy in 1329: he became town clerk on the latter's death in March 1344, and remained in office until Michaelmas 1350. Nos. 77, 78 (f. 26r), 80-3, (ff. 27, 28), all of 1349, are also in his hand; and he probably wrote the fourth foliation on ff. 20, 21, 24-8.

So far it has been reasonably easy to distinguish and identify the hands in the *Liber Albus*; but it now becomes more complicated, because at least five different hands were at work during the clerkship of John of Northampton (1350-88). Ff. 30r-50r: No. 88, 30 January 1349—No. 178, 20 August 1372 are written by one scribe, but are not strictly contemporary because the wills for 31 May 1353 to 31 January 1354 (Nos. 153-6) come between those for 22 February 1359 (No. 152) and 12 July 1359 (No. 157), though the writing is continuous. This scribe puts the mayor's name and the regnal year in the headline of the recto of each folio; and at the top of his first page (f. 30r) he puts 'In prima pestilencia' that is the Black Death. This is the hand of John of Northampton's clerk Richard, who at Michaelmas 1372 was given two yards of woollen cloth for a tunic costing 4s. 4d. at the command of the Mayor 'pro labore suo ad omnia testamenta a tempore prime pestilencie coram Maiore Oxonie probata in magno papyro Gilde Aule Oxonie intranda'

GRAHAM POLLARD

(MCO. 274-5). A second scribe, perhaps John of Northampton himself, wrote Nos. 73-6 (ff. 24a, 25r), 79 (f. 26v), 84-6 (f. 29r), 179 to the beginning of 182 (ff. 50v-54r line 4), and in the section at the end of the book about Richard Cary's Chantry in St. Martin's, ff. 314-15, nine lines from the foot, and f. 321. A third scribe, who puts a dot in the middle of his capital N, wrote Nos. 182 (from line 5 onwards) to 191 (ff. 54r to 56v 28 September 1377-1 July 1388), and ff. 317-18r in the section about Cary's Chantry. He is also responsible for the fourth foliation on ff. 54-6. Three other scribes wrote: (a) No. 87, 20 September 1375 (f. 29v); (b) Cary's Chantry f. 315 foot to 316; and (c) Cary's Chantry, ff. 319r to 320v.

A new hand, which uses an upward stroke for the cross bar of majuscule N, begins with No. 192 (20 August 1389; f. 57r) and goes on to No. 196 (10 May 1392; f. 60v). This might be the hand of Nicholas Norton. No. 197 (8 December 1419; f. 61v) is in a different hand, and was in any case written after Nicholas Norton's death on 20 October 1416. No. 198 (8 May 1416; f. 75v) is in a third hand.

The documents entered during the clerkship of Michael Norton, apart from No. 197 just mentioned, seem to be in one hand; but they appear in two chronological blocks: No. 199, 8 June 1425-No. 207, 5 August 1440 on ff. 81v to 84r; then four blank pages (ff. 84v-86r); then No. 208, 27 April 1431-No. 212, 20 December 1432 on ff. 86r to 87v. A royal writ to the Mayor in favour of Oriel College, 13 May 1442 (printed by Ogle, pp. 102-3) is entered in a different hand on f. 98v. There are no surviving entries in the *Liber Albus* during the clerkships of William Brugges (1444-50) or David Pencaer (1450-54).

All the documents entered in the time of Thomas Tanfeld (1454-86) are in the same neat hand using a yellowish ink. I think it must be his own hand. The same hand may have written the second foliation. Four of the documents of this period seem to have been inserted on blank leaves: No. 213, 13 November 1458 on f. 88r; and Nos. 214, 5 May 1461, No. 215, 18 March 1460, and No. 216, 6 August 1464, all three on f. 91v. But the rest are all in one block; No. 217, 20 October 1454, to No. 263, 25 February 1486, on ff. 99r to 110r.

F. 111r contains Nos. 264 and 265: No. 265 is a quitclaim dated 17 December 1489, and No. 264, though dated 5 October 1478, is related to it; but neither were necessarily enrolled in December 1489. The writing is rough and hurried: it is just possible that this is Richard Gibbes's hand; but I am not sure. His certain hand starts on f. 112r and continues to f. 131v (28 July 1518). The first documents therein are Nos. 266 (a will made on 28 July 1488), No. 267 (a deed of 4 November 1478), and No. 268 (a will

THE MEDIEVAL TOWN CLERKS OF OXFORD

made on 6 December 1490). But here again the dates are not necessarily those on which the deeds were enrolled; and it is not until 12 August 1493 (No. 269) that we find proceedings in the Mayor's Court recorded in the hand of Richard Gibbes, who later developed the elaborate signature which has already been described.

III: ANNOTATED LIST OF TOWN CLERKS TO 1522

[WILLELMUS CLERICUS *c.* 1225-1252-]

Possibly bailiffs' clerk *c.* 1229-1235.

He first occurs as a witness about 1225 (*Hosp.* i. 207; ii. 325). His latest appearance is in 1251/2 (*Merton Rolls*, 402). He became bailiff at Michaelmas 1235, and served for one year.

He witnessed at least sixty-five deeds; six of them as 'prepositus' in 1235/6. Fourteen of the sixty-five are in his hand; and one (*Hosp.* i. 229) is in his hand although he is not mentioned as a witness in the text.

His handwriting is reproduced by H. E. Salter in *Hosp.* i, plates III and IV; but the deed at *Os.* ii. 269 witnessed 'Willelmo clerico scriptore presentis scripti' is not in the same hand.

Salter calls him town clerk on several occasions (e.g. *Hosp.* i. xiii), though there seems to be no contemporary evidence for this. I have suggested above (p. 50) that Willelmus Clericus may have been the first to organize the registration of deeds by the town of Oxford.

[WILLELMUS DE MILDECOMBE *c.* 1229-*c.* 1270]

He was the son of Alexander de Mildecombe (*Frid.* i. 211). He first occurs about 1229 (*Oriel*, 349); and was still alive in 1262 (*Os.* i. 283, 285) and about 1270 (*Hosp.* i. 3; *Oriel*, 332).

In 1235 he is described as the coroners' clerk in a deed which he himself wrote (*Cart. Ch. Ch.* 38). He became bailiff of Bullingdon Hundred before 1248 (*Oriel* 111, 334); and was succeeded in that office by Therstone de Merstone between 1250 and 1260.

In 1245 he acquired two messuages in Kepeharm's Lane in St. Aldate's on the present site of the Post Office (*Frid.* i. 211; *Cart. Ch. Ch.* 28).

He witnessed at least fifty-four deeds; but only eight of them are after 1247. Nineteen of these deeds are in his hand, which is reproduced at *Hosp.* i, plates VII and VIII.

Salter speaks of him as town clerk, though again there is no evidence that he was ever so called. Indeed, if there was such an office at that date, a stronger claim to it can be made out for Jordanus Clericus.

Willelmus de Mildecombe was coroners' clerk; and witnessed nearly twice

GRAHAM POLLARD

as many deeds as Jordanus Clericus. These facts suggest that he may have shared with Jordanus the work which was later done by the town clerk.

JORDANUS CLERICUS ?-1235-1257-

Bailiffs' clerk 1235-1244/5.

This name occurs as a witness to at least thirty deeds: twenty-six of them fall within a narrow range of the eight years from 1235/6 to 1243/4. Of the other four, one (*Os.* i, 200) is a grant to Oseney dated 'c. 1220' by H. E. Salter: it is in a style and hand quite different from all the rest, and perhaps refers to a different Jordanus. The other three are all of 1257 and concern land in St. Thomas's parish outside the walls. All three of them seem to have been drafted by the same man; one (*Os.* ii, 368) is in the hand of Willelmus de Mildecombe, the other two (*Os.* ii, 426-7) are in a hand so far unidentified.

A large proportion of the other twenty-six deeds are in one hand, which I assume to be that of Jordanus Clericus; and they include three deeds of exceptional interest for the development of the office of town clerk. The first is a grant to Oseney in 1239/40 of some land opposite Ruskin College in Walton Street, witnessed 'hiis testibus, Willelmo rectore ecclesie sancti Benedicti iuxta Cornulle, Iohanne Sewi, Hugone Herding tunc prepositis Oxonie, Iordano clerico eorundem . . . et multis aliis'. (*Os.* ii, 357). This is in the same hand as the second deed which is the tripartite indenture of 1 March 1238, mentioning the third copy to be deposited in the *archa communis burgensium Oxon.*, mentioned above (p. 47). The third deed is about Ape Hall (*SE.* 126). Thomas le Ape bequeathed this house to Oseney Abbey about 1232/3, and his widow Emma quitclaimed to the Abbey any rights which she had in it by way of dowry (*Os.* i, 342-3). Three years later the bailiffs called Emma into court to acknowledge her quitclaim. This was in later times a customary proceeding of the hustings court in cases of dowry. I cannot identify the hand of the original deed of 1232/3 but it is endorsed, probably in 1235/6: 'Emma, cuius carta hec est, secundo recognovit quod hec carta est sua & fidelis coram hiis subscriptis, videlicet Ricardo Aurifabro, Thoma de Sancto Edwardo tunc prepositis, Mace, Pentecoste, Ricardo de Nortone, Thoma filio Walteri, Philippo Burges, Rogero le Spicir, Iordano Clerico et aliis' in the hand of Jordanus Clericus. It is plain that this recognition was made in the hustings court, and Jordanus was there acting as clerk.

Jordanus Clericus calls himself *clericus prepositorum* in 1240; and in the two earlier deeds just cited he was acting as clerk at the hustings court. The title of town clerk was probably not yet in use; but he certainly performed some of the functions that appertained to it later.

Willelmus Clericus presumably ceased to do this work when he became one of the bailiffs at Michaelmas 1235. Robertus Clericus was *clericus prepositorum* in 1250, and had been active since 1246. Salter thought (*Hosp.* i, p. viii) that Willelmus de Mildecombe was town clerk in the interval, and he certainly witnessed more deeds than Jordanus Clericus. But Mildecombe calls himself *clericus coronatorum* in 1234, and became Bailiff of Bullingdon Hundred about Michaelmas 1247. He may have shared the work with Jordanus Clericus; but, if there was a town clerk at that time, the evidence for Jordanus Clericus is more explicit than that for Willelmus de Mildecombe.

THE MEDIEVAL TOWN CLERKS OF OXFORD

ROBERTUS CLERICUS -1244-1272

? 1246-1250/53-? 1257. The first town clerk to use that title.

He first occurs on 24 June 1244 (*Os.* ii, 112), and was still alive in 1272 (*Os.* ii, 78). He witnesses ten deeds in the hustings court in 1246/7 just when the activities of Jordanus Clericus and Willelmus de Mildecombe stop. In 1250 he is described as *clericus prepositorum* (*Os.* ii, 127). The dating of deeds in the years 1251-53 is uncertain (see *Os.* iii, xvi); but probably in 1253 he witnesses as 'tunc clerico Oxonie' (*Os.* i, 124) and as 'tunc clerico ville' (*Os.* i, 251). Although he appears three times in 1262 and in 1267, he ceases to witness deeds regularly about 1257; and it is possible that he was succeeded as town clerk by Galfridus Belewe about that time.

He witnessed at least forty-nine deeds: six of these are noted by Salter as written in his hand, which is reproduced at *Hosp.* i, plates IX and X. Salter points out that the hand changes in the later deeds where he uses a different minuscule 'g'.

[GALFRIDUS BELEWE (=Galfridus Clericus) -1248/9-1261/2]

Possibly town clerk 1256/7-1261/2

Galfridus Belewe is nowhere called town clerk; but he may have held the office in succession to Robertus Clericus. The dating of deeds in the 1250s is difficult because the sequence of mayors and bailiffs in these years is uncertain. He seems to witness at the Hustings Court four times in 1252/3; then only on three occasions up to 1256/7; then three or four times each year until 1261/2. As Robertus Clericus's regular work seems to stop in 1256/7, Galfridus may have succeeded him about that time. The first mention of Galfridus Belewe is in 1248/9; and the latest in 1261/2. The deed at *Oriel*, 365, assigned to c. 1265, is probably a few years earlier. Philippus Le Notur was town clerk by 1264/5.

Galfridus was probably the son of Radulfus de Belewe and his wife Alice, who lived in the house next the Cherwell on the south side of High Street on the present site of the Botanic Gardens. Gafridus himself lived in the first house in the lane running north from High Street inside the City Wall. Stephen Ligator Librorum, who lived at the corner house facing the East Gate (*NE.* 194 and 195) is described in 1253 as living 'iuxta domum Galfridi Belewe' (*Hosp.* i, 335).

Galfridus Clericus wrote three deeds about land in the parish of St. Thomas (*Os.* xx, ii, 412-14) for Reginaldus Cementarius de Abingdon, who built many houses in this parish between the Castle and the Abbey of Oseney. Reginaldus Cementarius in his will shortly before August 1261 left 'Galfrido clerico pro labore suo xijd'. (*Frid.* i, 276, and for the date, *Os.* ii, 406.)

Galfridus witnessed at least thirty-two deeds, of which four or more are in his handwriting, which is reproduced at *Hosp.* i, Plate XI.

PHILIPPUS CLERICUS (=Philippus Notarius, Philip Le Notur) -1257/8-1283/5

Town clerk 1261/5-1271/3

A deed of 1264/5 about Herburwehall in Cat Street (*NE.* 128) has a list of witnesses beginning with the Mayor and Bailiffs and ending 'Philippo clerico

GRAHAM POLLARD

Oxonie' (*Hosp.* i, 460); and a deed of 1271/2 by which Philippus Clericus quit-claims a house and land on the south side of High Street outside East Gate (present site of the Botanic Gardens) bears his seal inscribed S[igillum] PH[ilippi] I CL[er]ICI OXONIE (*Hosp.* i, 32n). I take this as evidence that Philippus Clericus was town clerk of Oxford at these two dates, despite the fact that in 1266/7 he is described as 'clericus Hospitalis Sancti Johannis' (*Hosp.* i, 25). He may have succeeded Galfridus Belewe between 1261/2 and 1264/5; and had given up the office between 1271/2 and 27 December 1273 when Thomas Clericus was town clerk.

Philippus Clericus was the son of Walter Mercator and his wife Lecia (*Hosp.* i, 27). In 1266 he had a wife Lucia, who survived him, and a son Philip (*Hosp.* i, 126). He first occurs in 1257/8 (*Hosp.* i, 327; ii, 381); and died between 10 July 1283 (*Hosp.* ii, 438) and 1284/5 (*Hosp.* i, 129).

On 20 August 1266 he bought two messuages on the south side of High Street outside East Gate. One of these he sold immediately to the Austin Friars; the other was given to the Hospital of St. John by his widow (*Hosp.* i, 20-33). He also acquired from the Hospital the house on the corner of Rose Lane, and in 1272 exchanged it with the Hospital for a house opposite on the north side of High Street (*Hosp.* i, 69-70). This was an extensive property with a seld and a solar, an oast-house and a garderobe: his widow Lucia let part of the property in 1284/5, and sold the whole of it to the Hospital the next year (*Hosp.* i, 124-33).

He witnessed at least fifteen deeds of which five are noted by H. E. Salter as being in his hand, which is reproduced at *Hosp.* i, plate XIV. Once he is referred to as 'Philippus Clericus Notarius' (*Hosp.* i, 33); and in some deeds from 1273/4 onwards, including three which he himself wrote, he is Philippus Notarius. On 21 April 1281, together with John Fileking, he acted as executor of the will of Agnes, wife of Thomas Pynchard (*Hosp.* i, 321); and on 10 July 1283 together with three others he put his seal to a deed by which Roger Drake renounced his right to enter the Hospital of Saint John (*Hosp.* ii, 438).

THOMAS CLERICUS -1262 - c. 1280

Town Clerk 1271/3- ?

Thomas Clericus was certainly town clerk on 27 December 1273 when, described as 'Thomas clericus de Oxon', he witnessed together with several other town officials a grant by Sir Amari de St. Amand of some land in Bedfordshire (BM. Harleian Charter 50 H.41). Presumably he succeeded Philip le Notur some time after 1271. By whom he was followed and when are both uncertain. If Thomas Clericus gave up the post before 1279, he could have been followed, as Andrew Clark asserts, by Richard de Eppewelle; but there is no certain evidence for it. The next town clerk is William de Lamburne, who may have held the office in 1291 (for references see below). For him Clark gives the dates '1283-1299'.

Thomas Clericus was the son of Galfridus Aurifaber, Town Bailiff in 1247, 1249, 1253, and 1260, who died about 1261. In 1262 Thomas Clericus gave his sister Johanna two shops (*NE.* 16) on the east side of Cornmarket near the North Gate as her dowry when she married John, son of Philip le Burgeys (Bodleian Twyne MS. xxiii, 509). He first occurs as a witness in 1269 (*Balliol.* 144); and witnesses

THE MEDIEVAL TOWN CLERKS OF OXFORD

at least seven more deeds, the latest of which are *Os.* i, 54 (1279/80) and *Oriel*, 82 (c. 1280).

He is recorded in the Hundred Rolls as owning four rents:

(a) *H.R.* ii, 792. The Bishop of Chester holds one messuage with eight shops, two taverns, and a solar, which he bought from Michael de Spana; and it yields yearly to Thomas Clericus in chief eight shillings, and from one of the shops Juliana With receives one mark and forty pence; and they are worth over six marks a year. This is at the south west corner of Carfax, and one of the taverns was the Swyndelstock, where the riot of St. Scholastica's day started in 1355.

(b) *H.R.* ii, 794. Alicia Mercer holds one messuage for her lifetime from Galfridus her husband who inherited it from his father; and it yields to Thomas Clericus *xxs.* whence *xiiiis.* is due to the fee farm of the town; and it is worth *xxs.* This was in the New Drapery on the west side of Cornmarket about 40 yards north of Carfax.

(c) *H.R.* ii, 793. Willelmus Ligator Librorum holds one messuage which he had through Richard Persun and through other heirs, yielding to Thomas Clericus three shillings and fourpence.

(d) *H.R.* ii, 793. Walterus Persun holds one messuage of the Prior of St. Frideswide, who had it through Reginald le Mazun, and Reginald through Alice Viel, and Alice through Milo her father, yielding to Thomas Clericus three shillings and fourpence.

Tenement (c) was on the corner of Bullock's Lane and the north side of the Great Bailey. To the south-west it faced the drawbridge into the Castle and the Castle Moat: to the south was the Newmarket, an open space on the site of the Church of St. Budoc, which Fawkes de Breaute demolished about 1220. In early times as the first house by the city wall north of the Castle drawbridge, it was a position of exceptional military importance. Now it is the site of the triangle formed by Bath Place, Castle Street, and the New Road leading to the Railway Station. Tenement (d) was the land adjoining it on the east. The occupants of both tenements can be traced back to Milo, who had two daughters; Margeria de Bloxham, who inherited tenement (c); and Alice Viel, who inherited tenement (d). In 1279 each tenement is charged with a feudal rent of *3s. 4d.*, and both these rents belonged to Thomas Clericus.

The ownership of these rents [roughly equivalent to modern ground rents] can be traced back to Domesday Book. In 1086 Robert D'Oilli owned 42 houses in Oxford. One of his knights, Peter de Whitfield, had a grandson Geoffrey, who was the father of Robert de Whitfield, a royal justice and sheriff of Oxfordshire 1182-85 (*VCH. Oxon.* viii, 266). He charged tenement (d) with an annual rent of a pound of pepper (*Frid.* i, 271). He died before 1194 leaving a widow Isabella who married Robert de Everesci; but most of his lands, including four marks of rent from houses in Oxford, went to his brother Henry de Whitfield (*Feet of Fines*, 2). Henry's daughter Mabilia married Geoffrey de Childwick, a knight of St. Alban's Abbey mentioned by Matthew Paris and lord of the manor of Bosmer in Fawley, Buckinghamshire. He also owned Vine Hall in St. Edward's parish (*SE.* 118; *Frid.* i, 140-1), and a mural mansion on the site of the Divinity Schools (*NE.* 76): he held his own court in Oxford about 1205 (*Hosp.* ii, 69). His son, Henry de Childwick, owned the *3s. 4d.* rent from tenement (d) about 1260 (*Frid.* i, 275); and probably sold all his Oxford rents to Galfridus Aurifaber shortly afterwards; for

GRAHAM POLLARD

Galfridus Aurifaber, who died before 1262, seems to have owned the quitrent on Vine Hall (*Frid.* i, 140), and his son, Thomas Clericus owned the rents from tenements (c) and (d) in 1279.

[RICARDUS DE EPPEWELLE -1273-1279-]

Andrew Clark says (*Wood's City*, iii, 56) that Ricardus de Eppewelle was town clerk in 1275. This is just possible if Thomas Clericus resigned the office soon after 1273; but I have not found any evidence to support Clark's assertion. As Thomas Clericus acted as last witness in 1279/80 (*Os.* i, 54), and as Ricardus de Eppewelle is not heard of later than this, it seems improbable that he was ever town clerk.

Ricardus de Eppewelle first occurs in 1273 (*Hosp.* ii, 81), his latest appearances are in 1279 (*Hosp.* i, 53 and 294). He witnessed at least fifteen deeds of which eight are noted by Salter as being in his hand. He wrote the Cartulary of the Hospital of St. John (now Magdalen College MS. lat. 275) and a page of it is reproduced at *Hosp.* i, plate XV. He habitually spells 'parochea' with an 'e' instead of an 'i'. A deed written by him is shown as *Hosp.* i, plate XVI.

[WILLELMUS DE LAMBURNE -1291-1307-]

H. E. Salter (Bodleian MS. Top. Oxon. c. 353, p. 48) gives Willelmus de Lamburne as town clerk in April and August 1295 without any references, and at Michaelmas 1298 with a reference to an unprinted deed at Lincoln College. The first of these references is probably to a deed of 19 April 1295 to which the last witness is 'Willelmo de Lamburne clerico' (Bodleian MS. Top. Oxon. c. 397, f. 77). Andrew Clark gives his dates as town clerk 1283-99, but without evidence.

The difficulty is that in all the deeds witnessed by Willelmus de Lamburne from 1291 to 1307, he consistently comes last and is described as 'clericus'. This is the case for those dated 1300 (e.g. *Os.* i, 374) and later, when we know that Ricardus de Waledene or Thomas de Pirie was the town clerk. Consequently it is not safe to accept this description in deeds of 1291-8 as evidence that Willelmus de Lamburne was then town clerk. It is thus quite uncertain who (if anyone) was town clerk between Thomas Clericus and Ricardus de Waledene.

The first certain appearance of Willelmus de Lamburne is on 29 April 1291 (*Os.* ii, 74); and he was still alive on 8 July 1307 (*Os.* i, 10). John Binne of Hertheved Hall on the south side of Merton Street left sixpence to 'Lamburne clerico' in his will of 3 December 1303 (*Balliol*, 166).

RICARDUS DE WALEDENE -1291-1310-

Town Clerk -1298-Michaelmas 1304

He was 'clericus maioris' on 25 June 1298 (Bodleian MS. Twyne, xxiii, 326), and 'clericus ville' in a deed written between 29 September and 20 November 1300 (*Os.* i, 38). 'Clericus maioris' is an unusual term; but presumably means the town clerk. If so, Ricardus de Waledene became town clerk sometime before 25 June 1298; and vacated the office when he became one of the town bailiffs at Michaelmas 1304.

Ricardus de Waledene first occurs in 1291 (*Os.* i, 101). He served as bailiff from Michaelmas 1304 to Michaelmas 1306 (*Wood's City*, iii, 13); and he was still alive on 8 July 1310 (*Balliol*, 16).

THE MEDIEVAL TOWN CLERKS OF OXFORD

A deed in his hand is reproduced at *Hosp.* i, plate XVII. He seems to have been the first town clerk of Oxford to date his deeds regularly by the regnal year.

THOMAS DE PIRIE -1306-1320/21

Town Clerk [Michaelmas 1304]-1320/21

Thomas de Pirie probably succeeded Ricardus de Waledene as town clerk at Michaelmas 1304; but he first occurs as Thomas Clericus on 6 February 1306 (*Balliol*, 183). On 8 July 1310 he witnesses as 'tunc clericus ville' (*Balliol*, 16), and so several times to 27 November 1317 (*Balliol*, 147). He remained town clerk until his death, and was succeeded by Thomas de Leghe. He died between 19 September 1320 and 4 March 1321 (*Balliol*, 181). Andrew Clark in his list of town clerks (*Wood's City*, iii, 56) gives '1307-14 John de Aston occurs'; and this name does occur at the end of lists of witnesses headed by the Mayor and Bailiffs in deeds of 30 November 1314 (*Balliol*, 253); 22 March 1316 (*Oriel*, 181); and 27 February 1317 (*Balliol*, 242); but Thomas de Pirie was certainly town clerk on all these dates.

It was Thomas de Pirie who started the *Liber Albus*, and wrote in it the first document which is the will of Henry de Caumpeden, proved on 19 September 1320. The same hand wrote the agreement between Merton College and the Town of Oxford on 25 November 1315 to which the last witness is 'Thoma Pyrie clerico communitatis eiusdem ville' (facsimile in *Merton Muniments*, plate Xb). Thomas de Pirie proved the will of Joan, daughter of Peter Palmeran on 23 September 1316 (*Os.* i, 158).

[At Easter 1316] 'Thomas de Pirie came to the Exchequer to account there as Bailiff of the Town of Oxford, and took the usual Oath of an Accomptant. Upon examination *Thomas* acknowledged that he was not the Bailiff of the said Town, but a Clerk of the Bailiffs of the Town. For this Deception, he was committed Prisoner to the Fleet. And because the Bailiff of the Town did not appear, to Accompt and to do what appertained to him, the Liberty of the Town was seized into the King's Hands.' (T. Madox, *History and Antiquities of the Exchequer*, 1711, p. 703).

Thomas de Pirie had two sons, Nicholas and Richard, living in 1331 (*Hosp.* ii, 256), and two daughters, Margaret who died about 1345, and Katherine who married an apothecary named Robert de Wetewong (*NE.* 112). In 1324 Robert de Wormenhale bequeathed a rent and the reversion of No. 10 Castle Street to Richard son of Thomas de Pirie (*Lib. Alb.* 4). From this I infer that Thomas de Pirie was a relation, or at least a close friend of Robert de Wormenhale, Mayor of Oxford in 1298.

Thomas de Pirie lived in Cat Street on the present site of the Radcliffe Camera (*NE.* 112); and had some property on the north side of Queen Street west of the church of St. Peter le Bailey (*Balliol*, 181). He may also be the Thomas Clericus who rented four cottages in St. Clements from the Hospital of St. Bartholomew between 1308 and 1314 (*Oriel*, 379).

THOMAS DE LEGHE -1321-1344

Town Clerk 1321-1344

He succeeded Thomas de Pirie as town clerk on the latter's death late in 1320 or early in 1321. He first occurs as town clerk in a list of the town officers on

GRAHAM POLLARD

9 October 1321 (Bodleian MS. Twyne, xxiii, 315). He calls himself 'Thomas de Legh' de Oxon dictus tounclerke' in a deed of 1 February 1340. (*Frid.* i, 342), and retained the office until his death, which took place between 12 and 19 March 1344 (*Oriel*, 415). His successor Johannes de Langrysshe deputized for him at the hustings court [i.e. put his name at the end of a list of witnesses headed by the mayor and bailiffs] on many occasions from 3 August 1329 onwards (*Balliol*, 189).

An original concord in the hustings court on 19 October 1327, signed by him and in his small, neat hand, is preserved in the City Archives (Deed D.5.1: printed in *MCO.* 61-2). The same hand wrote ff. 2-4 (half-way down recto) in the 'Liber Albus' (No. 2, 23 March 1324-No. 6, 16 December 1328).

On 4 March 1325 Thomas de Leghe received his expenses for going to London on the town's business (*MCO.* 262). On 29 January 1328 he proved the will of William, son of Henry de Campeden, and on 4 May 1342 the will of William de Burncestre, who had been twelve times Mayor of Oxford (*Lib. Alb.* 8, 24). In 1332 the town clerk of King's Lynn paid Thomas de Leghe 40s. for permission to copy the statutes of the Town of Oxford, and 6s. 8d. to a scribe for copying them (*MCO.* 85n).

Thomas de Leghe was married twice: his first wife was Alice, by whom he had two sons and a daughter: Geoffrey who seems to have died young; Thomas, who was a tailor and still alive in 1357; and Elizabeth, who married Nicholas de Forsthulle before 1344 (*Lib. Alb.* 27). His second wife, whom he married shortly after 1334, was Joan, daughter of Simon With.

Thomas de Leghe had extensive property, particularly in Grauntpont between Trillmill and Folly Bridge. He seems to have owned more than a third of the tenements on the west side of the street (*Lib. Alb.* 27); and on the east side he had Plomer Hall and the two messuages adjacent to it on the south (*SE.* 163-5); as well as a house which he had given to the Crutched Friars in December 1343 (*SE.* 167). He also owned three tenements on the west side of Grove Street, now part of Oriel College. The northernmost of these (Picard's) he left to his daughter Elizabeth; the two southern ones, which he had bought in 1322 (*Oriel*, 143-4) he gave as an endowment to his chantry. On 20 September 1322 he bought a house in Cat Street on the present site of Hertford College (*NE.* 132) from the executors of John de Chastleton an illuminator. He let it to John Joie, also an illuminator, who was still there in 1344 (*Hosp.* i, 124). Joan, Thomas de Leghe's widow, quit-claimed it to Richard Melton in 1346.

In 1340 Thomas de Leghe founded a chantry at the altar of St. Mary in the church of St. Michael at the South Gate; and the foundation statute is printed at *Oriel*, 415-20. The chaplain is bound to pray for the souls of several large groups of people; but the only Oxford man outside Thomas de Leghe's immediate family circle who is specifically named is Magister Johannes de Astone. Dr. A. B. Emden identified him with a fellow of Oriel College (*BRUO.* i, 66-7); an alternative suggestion is that he was the John de Aston mentioned above under Thomas de Pirie, and perhaps the master scrivener to whom Thomas de Leghe had been apprenticed.

Thomas de Leghe endowed his chantry with two pairs of vestments worth 20s., a chalice worth 20s., a missal worth 20s. and various other ornaments. He gave four tenements: (a) a house on the south side of High Street nearly opposite All Saints' Church, now the shop of the Oxford University Press (*SE.* 18); (b) a

THE MEDIEVAL TOWN CLERKS OF OXFORD

house on the east side of Shidyerd (=Oriell Street) on the present site of Oriell College (*SE.* 86; *Oriel*, 125-7). Both these tenements had belonged to Simon With, the father of Thomas de Leghe's second wife Joan. (c) and (d) two tenements on the west side of Grove Street which, as mentioned above, Thomas de Leghe had purchased in 1322. In May 1340 when Leghe founded his chantry these four tenements yielded ten marks a year; but by 1357 this endowment was not enough to maintain a chaplain, and the obligations and the property were taken over by Oriell College (*Oriel*, 128).

JOHANNES DE LANGRYSSHE -1329-1375/80

Town Clerk 1344-1350/51

Johannes de Langrysshe succeeded Thomas de Leghe as town clerk on the death of the latter in March 1344. He was 'clericus ville' on 12 July 1348 (*Med. Arch.* i, 146); and apparently still on 18 September 1350 (*Balliol*, 175). At Michaelmas 1350 or 1351 he was replaced by Johannes de Norehamtone, who was acting as town clerk on 23 January 1352 (*Hosp.* ii, 83). I do not know why the change was made, for Johannes de Langrysshe lived for another twenty-five years, and on one occasion seems to have again acted as clerk of the hustings court (26 August 1357; *Oriel*, 128).

Johannes de Langrysshe deputized for Thomas de Leghe on many occasions from 3 August 1329 (*Balliol*, 189) to 1344. He wrote most of ff. 9-28 verso of the 'Liber Albus' (No. 7, 14 September 1330 to No. 83, 27 June 1349); Deed G.4.1(1) in the City Archives (20 May 1346) is also in his hand.

On 14 January 1340 he proved the will of John le Saucer (*Balliol*, 60; *Lib. Alb.* 22); on 22 June 1342 he was an executor of the will of Richard le Spicer; on 4 February 1345 he was supervisor of the will of John de Islip; and on 27 March 1349 he proved the will of John de Shrouesbery (*Lib. Alb.* 24, 25-6, 39). On 5 November 1350 he is named as one of the executors of Richard Cary, Mayor of Oxford, who died in 1349 (*CPR. Ed. III*, vol. ix, p. 9).

Johannes de Langrysshe was married twice. His first wife Sarra died between 1358 (*Balliol*, 197) and 1361 (*Hosp.* ii, 223). His second wife was Isabella, daughter of John le Peyntur, son of William Bost. She had been married twice before: (i) to William de Lughteburg before 13 April 1348 (*Oriel*, 323) and still on 30 January 1349 (*Lib. Alb.* 35). He must have died soon after, and is to be distinguished from the man of the same name, alias William le Northern who was bailiff in 1357, mayor in 1370 and 1376, and died on 8 September 1383 (*Wood's City*, iii, 195). (ii) Her second husband was John de Helmsey whom she married before 26 October 1351 (*Balliol*, 254; *Oriel*, 323, note), and who died before 1361. She married Johannes de Langrysshe about 1361: they were both alive in 1375 (*Balliol*, 254-5); but she was a widow by 1380 (*Balliol*, 256). Her sister Agnes was the wife of John Berford, butcher, Mayor of Oxford in 1348-51 and 1354.

Johannes de Langrysshe held at least seven properties in Oxford:

(i) A messuage on the south side of Brewer Street, about half-way along the street. It is marked as the property of the parishioners of St. Aldate's in *Salter's Map* 4 (*Balliol*, 197). At this address he was fined 6d. as a brewer at the Assize of Ale in March 1338 and again in April 1344 (*Med. Arch.* ii, 214, 232).

GRAHAM POLLARD

(ii) He was living on the east side of St. Aldate's in the South-East Ward in October 1349 and May 1350, when his name was put down for a fine as a retailer of ale; but the amount, as with other town officials, has been erased or omitted (*Med. Arch.* ii, 256, 260).

(iii) A cellar and a solar on the south-east corner where Beef Hall Lane used to run into the Little Bailey. This faced a gate into the Grey Friars south of St. Ebbe's Church. Johannes de Langrysshe and his wife Sarra bought this property on 19 December 1350, and he sold it in 1361 (*Hosp.* ii, 222-3).

(iv) Two messuages and four shops on the west side of St. Giles where the Randolph Hotel is now. These were left to Isabella by Henry son of Richard de Haneberge le Peyntour in April 1348 with 13s. 4d. rent due to John son of William Bost (*Oriel*, 323). On 20 July 1370 Johannes de Langrysshe and his wife Isabella sold them to Oriel College (*Oriel*, 324).

(v) A messuage called 'Barettes' on the east side of St. Giles, opposite the Taylorian, and immediately north of the land that became 'The Cardinal's Hat'. This land had been left to Isabella by her father John, son of William Bost le Peyntour in 1348 (*Lib. Alb.* 35); John de Langrysshe and Isabella sold it to John Plomer on 22 April 1362 (Bodleian MS. Top. Oxon. c. 396, f. 157).

(vi) and (vii) Two adjacent tenements with shops in front on the east side of St. Giles on the present site of 'The Lamb and Flag'. John de Helmsey, Isabella's second husband, bought the southern tenement from William de Hellesfeld in 1351. John de Langrysshe and Isabella sold it to Richard de Oxenford in 1370. The northern tenement was acquired by John de Helmsey after 1351, and was owned by John de Langrysshe and Isabella in 1370, but it had passed to John Facherell by 1375 (*Balliol*, 254-8).

Isabella's father left her other property, Oswald Hall, also on the east side of St. Giles, and various pieces of land in the fields north of Oxford; but there is no evidence that John de Langrysshe owned them (*Lib. Alb.* 35).

JOHANNES DE NORHAMPTONE -1349-1387/90

Town Clerk 1350/51-? 1388

He succeeded John de Langrysshe as town clerk at Michaelmas 1350 or 1351. Langrysshe was still acting on 18 September 1350 (*Balliol*, 175); but John de Northampton is last witness on 23 January 1352 (*Hosp.* ii, 83). In 1367 he was described as 'communis clericus gilde aule Oxon'. (Twyne MS. xxiii. f. 225); and he remained town clerk until his death, when he was succeeded by Nicholas Norton. He was alive on 5 April 1387 (*St. Michael*, 255), but had died before 26 January 1390, when Thomas Hokyn is mentioned as his executor (*Hosp.* ii, 220). The addition of Nicholas Norton's name to the list of witnesses on 1 July 1388 in *Lib. Alb.* 66 suggests that he may have been recently elected, and that John de Northampton may have died in June 1388.

John of Northampton employed several clerks. The account of the Town Chamberlains for the year 1371/2 records 'Item liberatum Ricardo clerico Iohannis de Northampton per preceptum Maioris ii ulnas panni lanci pro una tunica pro labore suo ad omnia testamenta a tempore prime pestilentie coram Maiore Oxonie

THE MEDIEVAL TOWN CLERKS OF OXFORD

probata in magno papyro Gilde Aule Oxonie intranda. iijs. iiijd.' (*MCO.* 274-5). Richard's hand in the 'Liber Albus' runs from f. 31 recto to f. 50 recto (No. 88, 30 January 1349 to No. 180, 1 June 1375). His earlier entries are not contemporary but were probably written in 1372. Another hand, which I take to be John of Northampton's, enters deeds on ff. 24a, 25 recto, 26 verso, 29 recto, 50-4 recto (first four lines), and in the section on Cary's Chantry in St. Martin's Church. The earliest of the deeds here is of 1356; the latest of 1377. There are three other hands at work in the 'Liber Albus' during the later years of John de Northampton's clerkship (see above p. 58).

John de Northampton proved the will of William Brown, skinner, 9 January 1349; of Adam de Longe, 13 January 1349; of Robert le Maserer, goldsmith, 10 April 1349; supervised the will of John de Olneye, 30 April 1361; proved the will of Robert Mauncel, 27 August 1361; of Robert de Selton, 3 September 1361; and of John de Stodle, 31 August 1371. In 1377 with Walter de Clyve, the Mayor's sergeant, he drew up the deeds and was one of the trustees of the estate of John de la Wyke (*Lib. Alb.* 30, 38, 42, 57, 58, 59, 62, 64).

The accounts of Exeter College for the winter of 1358 give details, which the deeds do not, of exactly how a tenement was transferred to a new owner and what the town clerk got out of it. 'Circa emcionem tenementi de Castellhall [on the north side of Brasenose Lane about the middle] xi li traditis Johanni ate Wyke [the previous owner], iijs. Johanni Norhamtone pro factura munimentorum eiusdem tenementi, ijs. pro impressione sigilli Maioris ad cartam eiusdem, iijs. pro salario baliorum et Walteri serjeaux [sic], pro vino et speciebus datis Maiori et balivis et aliis qui fuerunt in seysina capienda iijs. vd.' (*Boase*, p. xxi).

In a deed of 14 January 1369 about the Chantry of St. Anne in All Saints' Church which was founded by William de Burncestre and augmented by his son-in-law, Richard Cary, both several times mayor of Oxford, the chaplain of the Chantry is charged to pray for the souls of about a dozen Oxford men and their wives who were friends and relatives of the founders. John de Northampton and his wife Dionisia are named among others: it is possible that Dionisia was Richard Cary's daughter (*Bodleian MS. Top. Oxon. c.* 399, p. 119).

John de Northampton lived at Billyng Hall on the south side of the Great Bailey, where Castle Street joins Queen Street (*Salter's Map*, 4) after the death of John de Bedford in 1365 (*Lib. Alb.* 60, 65). He also owned a vacant plot at 9 Castle Street (*Hosp.* ii, 258); and in 1357 and 1367 he was paying six pence a year to the Hospital of St. John for another vacant site by the churchyard of St. Aldate's (*Hosp.* iii, 109, 152: for its position see *Hosp.* ii, 153). He received an annual rent of 3s. 4d. from two tenements, one on the west side of the Little Bailey, and the other on the north side of Pembroke Street. These two tenements joined each other behind the house at the north west corner of the junction of the two streets. This rent had belonged about 1200 to Henry Simeon, and came to John de Northampton through John de Brehulle (*Hosp.* ii, 212, 216; iii, 22 note).

NICHOLAS NORTON -1380-20 October 1416
Town Clerk 1388-1416

Nicholas Norton succeeded Johannes de Norhamtone as town clerk on the latter's death. He seems to be acting in that capacity as early as 1 July 1388

GRAHAM POLLARD

(*Lib. Alb.* 66). On 17 November 1409 he is listed with the other town officers (Twyne MS. xxiii, 358); and he was still active on 29 September 1416 (New College MS. Cartulary I, 189). He died 'xx die mensis Octobris viz. in crastino die Sancte Frideswide 1416' (Bishop, 122); and was succeeded as town clerk by his younger son Michael Norton.

Nicholas Norton was a public notary, and in the early part of 1387 drew up a deed in the court of the Chancellor of the University whereby Robert Dey and John Saucer promised to pay £120 in ten annual instalments of £12 each to Bartholomew Taverner [=Bishop]. This they did not do: and John Saucer was still in the prison in Oxford Castle in 1391, whence he appealed to the Pope (*MCO.* 169-74). In 1389 Nicholas Norton witnessed the will of Roger Clyfton, yeoman bedel of theology; and on 30 December 1390 he was left ten shillings in the will of John Okele, skinner and brewer, of whom he was one of the executors (*Lib. Alb.* 66, 68). He was also an executor of the will of Bartholomew Bishop on 1 July 1395 (Bishop, 145-7). Willelmus Hannesworth de Blatherwyke was excommunicated in the Chancellor's court at the instance of Gilbert Janyn, chaplain, and Nicholas Norton on 6 March 1392 and again on 17 December 1397 (*Snappes*, 36, 37).

The computus of Exeter College for the winter of 1405 gives particulars of the expenses in buying Chequer Hall at the corner of Brasenose Lane and the Turl: 'iis. iiijd. Thome Hampton [The Mayor's sergeant] quando Maior ville Oxon. sigillavit quoddam statutum mercatorium per quod nobis obligatus dictus Thomas Thyngden [the vendor], iis. iiijd. Nicholao Norton pro consilio suo circa dictam aulam facto et pro factura indenturarum inter nos et predictum Thomam factarum et statuti predicti'. (*Boase*, xxii).

Nicholas Norton promised to leave his property to Nicholas Bishop (who was perhaps his godson) if he died without heirs; but he had two sons, John and Michael, who were his executors (Bishop, 522). The elder son John can be identified with the John Norton of Oxford who entered Winchester College 10 October 1398, went up to New College in November 1402, and was a fellow there from 1404 to 1421. He would have been born about 1387. He was elected Chancellor of the University on 27 February 1439, and resigned between 22 October and 18 December the same year. His career is set out by Dr. A. B. Emden in *BRUO.* ii, 1373-74. Michael the younger son followed his father as town clerk of Oxford.

Nicholas Norton kept 'The Bull' (= 'The Crown' = 'Somenour's Inn'), which was on the south of 'The Golden Cross' on the east side of Cornmarket near Carfax (*NE.* 5). This was the inn kept (1601-22) by John Davenant, father of William Davenant the playwright. On 31 August 1400, Nicholas Norton and his wife Alice had been living there twenty years. They then had a new lease from New College at eight marks a year (Bodleian MS. Top. Oxon. c. 444, f. 32).

On 3 September 1390 Nicholas Norton and his three servants Willelmus, Johannes, and Alicia were indicted for paying and receiving excessive wages under the Statute of Labourers. 'Et predictus Iohannes [Hopkyn] serviens Nicholai Nortone dicit quod est tabernarius dicti Nicolai & quod capit per annum de dicto magistro suo x s., & ponit se in discrecione iusticiarum si excessive &c.' On 11 November 1392 Nicholas Nortone and his servants Willelmus Hosteler and Johannes Taverner were again indicted for giving and taking excessive wages. They pleaded not guilty, but the result is not recorded (*Med. Arch.* ii, 3, 8, 100).

THE MEDIEVAL TOWN CLERKS OF OXFORD

Nicholas Norton had at least three other houses in Oxford:

- (i) He acquired No. 13 Magdalen Street, where Taphouse's the music shop is, from the estate of Bartholomew Bishop in 1395 (Bishop, 149); he was still there in 1397 and 1413 (*Hosp.* ii, 288-9).
- (ii) He had a tenement on the north side of Little Jury Lane in St. Edward's parish (Bishop, 149; *SE.* 231 and note to *SE.* 231).
- (iii) A messuage which is now No. 4 Queen Street (Twyne MS. xxiii, 185).

MICHAEL NORTON c. 1390-1444

Town Clerk 1416-1444

Michael Norton first appears on 3 April 1417; but had probably been appointed town clerk the previous autumn on the death of his father Nicholas Norton 20 October 1416. He was described as town clerk on 1 December 1418 when, together with the mayor and the rest of the corporation, he was summoned for breaking down the Abbot of Oseney's weirs across the Thames at North and South Oseney (*CPR.* 1416-22, p. 207). He was still town clerk, 'clericus dicte ville' on 4 March 1444 (*Hosp.* i, 298), but nothing is heard of him after that. William Brugges was town clerk on 24 September 1444 (*MCO.* 207-8).

In 1425 Michael Norton went to London on the Town's business about University Hall (*MCO.* 285). On 7 August 1430 he was representing Nicholas Bishop in a dispute with Oseney Abbey about the width of Colesburne Lane (Bishop, 77); and it was probably through his hands that Bishop's Cartulary came to the Town Archives, where Brian Twyne made some extracts from it in 1624 (*MCO.* xi). It is now Cambridge University Library MS. Dd. xiv. i. On 11 January Michael Norton proved the will of John Ledbury (*Lib. Alb.* 73); and on 1 November 1440, together with Thomas Goldsmith, he was a trustee of Ducklington's properties (*Hosp.* ii, 182).

He was born about 1390, and his elder brother was John Norton, chancellor of the University in 1439. He married Agnes, widow of Thomas Chaunter before 1 September 1423. Thomas Chaunter who was a brewer was alive in 1420. Agnes made her will on 6 November 1438 and it was proved on 5 August 1440. She had a daughter Isabel married to John Cleve, who was one of the town bailiffs in 1451, but whether this daughter was by her first or second husband is not stated (*Lib. Alb.* 72).

On 1 September 1423 Elena Summerset, wife of William Summerset, who lived in the next house but one to Michael Norton in Brewer Street, appealed to the Archbishop of Canterbury against her excommunication by the Chancellor of the University for saying in public that Agnes, widow of Thomas Chyrcherd or Chaunter, now wife of Michael Norton, conspired with corndealers to keep up the price of grain in the market, and retailed her beer at a lower price than she sold it to other beersellers (*MCO.* 188-90). On 17 August 1434 Michael Norton with 17 other brewers signed the regulations for their trade made by the Chancellor of the University (*Reg. Canc.* i, 9).

On Friday 27 June 1424, William Falmersham, a bailiff of the abbot of Oseney, entered Michael Norton's house in Brewer Street, and took a piece of silver worth six shillings in distraint. Michael Norton thereupon sued the abbot for its return and 100 shillings damages. The case was heard before the town bailiffs on 9

GRAHAM POLLARD

February 1425. Counsel for the Abbot said that the abbey had let the house to one Walter Daundsey at three shillings a year quit rent, and that the rent was in arrears. Michael Norton, who appeared in person, said that Walter Daundsey had let the house long before to Thomas Chauntre and his wife Agnes for their lifetimes. Thomas Chauntre had died, and his widow Agnes had married Michael Norton, who thus held the house for the lifetime of his wife Agnes. He called Walter Daundsey who confirmed what Norton had said about the lease. But the court thought that both Norton and Daundsey were well aware of the quit rent, and so Norton lost his case. At the foot of the record is written: 'Et ego Willelmus Offord, maior ville Oxon', tenorem recordi predicti de rotulo curie predictae transumptum ad requisicionem predicti Abbatis de Osneya nono die Februarii anno r.r. predicti tercio sub sigillo officii mei ad perpetuam rei memoriam duxi exemplificandum.' (*Os.* ii, 170-2.) This house was the last in the parish of St. Ebbe on the south side of Brewer Street and Agnes Norton disposed of it in her will of 1438 (*Lib. Alb.* 72).

Michael Norton owned at least two other properties in Oxford: (a) a tene-ment on the north side of Little Jury Lane, which he inherited from his father (*SE.* 230; Bishop, 149); and (b) a garden by Karol Hall, which was the southern-most plot of ground in the parish of St. Peter le Bailey on the west side of the Little Bailey. He was paying a quit rent for this in 1426 (*Boase*, xv; Bishop, 149). It was in the possession of his son-in-law or stepson-in-law, John Cleve, in 1451 (*Hosp.* ii, 248).

WILLIAM BRUGGES (or BRIGGS) -1444-1454-

Town clerk 1444-1450

He first appears on 24 September 1444 writing and signing in his own hand a grant by the town of Oxford (City Archives Deed H. 14 (1); *MCO.* 207-8). He thus succeeded Michael Norton who was still town clerk on 4 March the same year. On 18 August 1447 he is described as 'clericus communitatis ville predictae' (*St. Michael*, 273): he is still 'townclerk' on 22 February 1450 (*Reg. Canc.* i, 196); but David Pencaer is town clerk on 27 June the same year, so that the change was made for some special reason and not at the annual September election.

On 8 March 1445 he was one of the four feoffees of John Bailly, mason, for Peyntor Hall on the east side of St. Giles (*Boase*, 297). On 18 November 1448 he appointed three proctors: William Cook, Luke Lancok, and John Morton to act for him in the Chancellor's court. On 8 November 1449 in the same court Robert Herte, hosyer, was surety that William Brugges would pay 41s. 8d. to Magister Johannes Ap-howelle by 21 December 1449. On 22 February 1450, described as 'townclerk' William Brugges produced John Cornysche, scynner, as surety that he would pay to Mag. Nicholas Gosse and the Vicar of St. Mary the Virgin 13s. 4d. within two days and 26s. 8d. by next Easter (5 April). At the same time Thomas Tanfyld, the town bailiff, guaranteed William Brugges for the sum of £12 to be paid to the same creditors. On Friday 17 April 1450 in the same court Brugges admitted that he owed £7 4s. to Stephen Braywell, and promised under penalty of £20 to the University that he would find before nine o'clock the next Monday competent and acceptable sureties for the payment of the debt (*Reg. Canc.* i, 169, 193, 196, 197, 199).

It looks as if William Brugges, having fallen hopelessly in debt by April 1450,

THE MEDIEVAL TOWN CLERKS OF OXFORD

had to resign the office of town clerk and leave Oxford. On 25 October 1454 he quitclaimed as feoffee a messuage by the church of St. Michael Southgate. He is then described as 'of Hiworth, gentleman' (*Cart. Ch. Ch.* 76). Highworth is in Wiltshire about 25 miles west of Oxford and half-way between Swindon and Lechlade.

In 1447 Brugges had a house on the west side of the Little Bailey, the second south of Queen Street. By 1451 this house belonged to Thomas Tanfeld (*Hosp.* ii, 246 (notwithstanding Salter's footnote) and 248).

DAVID PENCAER -1428-1457-
Town clerk 1450-1454

David Pencaer is first found¹ as town clerk, 'clericus dicte ville', on 27 June 1450 (*St. Michael*, 272), so that he probably replaced William Brugges in the spring of that year. He was still town clerk on 5 June 1454 (*MS. Top. Oxon.* c. 399, p. 9); but Thomas Tanfeld is town clerk on 10 October 1454 (*Lib. Alb.* 75).

He handled some legal business for Exeter College. The computus for Lent 1443 has: 'xd. Penkeyer pro literis conceptis Fundatori [bp. Lacy] et M. Henrico Webber, et una litera procutoria deliberata Johanni Goodswayn ex parte Collegii'; for Lent 1445: 'iiijd. Pencaer pro litera attornatoria pro M. Radulfo Morewell'; for Autumn 1447: 'iiijd. Pencaer pro una litera concepta domino Norevic. episcopo [Walter Lyhert, formerly fellow of the College]'; for Winter 1447: 'viijd. Pencaer pro literis et bull. conceptis et directis certis dominis pro bonis quibusdam habendis domini cardinalis nuper Winton. episcopi [Beaufort]' (*Boase*, 37, 28, 52, lxx).

In 1430 he is named as executor of John Dolle, stationer, in a formulary of fictitious deeds with real names (Public Record Office, Augmentation Office. *Misc. Books*, 330, f. 52). He witnessed the will of Thomas Elkyne, freemason, on 29 September 1449; acted as an arbitrator on 7 April 1451; and on 31 July 1457 was surety for John Horsepath, a bookbinder who had worked for John Dolle (*Reg. Canc.* i, 191-2, 234, 380).

At Michaelmas 1428 he paid xiis. and viis. quit rent for two cottages in Cat Street on the present site of Hertford College (*NE.* 134). John Pencaer, presumably his father, was there about 1420; Walter Lymner in 1449 (*Os.* iii, 220, 229, 240).

Two law tracts were attributed to David Pencaer by his contemporaries:

(i) 'Brevis tractatus secundem Penkayr de coloribus rhetorice' British Museum MS. Harley 941, ff. 80-97; incipit: 'Duo sunt oratoris officia...' This book was transcribed by John Edwards, squire bedel of law, who died in 1451. Another copy is BM. Harleian MS. 670 ff. 3-10.

(ii) A formulary with a prologue on drafting deeds: the prologue begins: 'Tria sunt que pertinent ad cartas, viz. scriptura, sigillacio, et seisinia per testes aperte liberata...' and ends with a list of the kings of England. The formulary begins with *Carta feodis simplicis* and ends with *Acquietancia facta per ordinarium alicui admini-*

¹ All Souls' College deed no. 138 is dated 9 September 28 Henry VI [i.e. 1449], and is witnessed by, among others, Thomas Tanfeld as bailiff and 'David Pencayre communi clerico eiusdem ville'. The regnal year 28 Henry VI ran from 31 August 1449 to 30 August 1450; but Tanfeld was not elected bailiff until the Monday or the Friday preceding St. Matthew's Day (21 September) 1449; and Pencaer's predecessor William Brugges was, as we have seen, unambiguously described as town clerk on 22 February 1450. The original scribe must therefore have written 28 by mistake for 29 for the regnal year; and the correct date for the deed is 9 September 1450.

GRAHAM POLLARD

stratori bonorum alicuius ab intestato decedentis. Copies are British Museum Harleian MS. 5240 ff. 1-81. This ends: 'Explicit liber presens cartarum & munimentorum secundum institutionem bone memorie David Penkayr per manus Johannis Water olim dicti David discipuli apud Thame in comitatu Oxonie', and the last deed in the book is dated 12 December 1470. Other rather earlier copies are Harleian MS. 3352 (imperfect at the end) and Harleian MS. 773 (imperfect at both ends).

It is unlikely that Pencaer was the real author of either tract. The first, which is about how to plead, is perhaps of 13th-century origin. Adaptations of the second had been made by two earlier Oxford scribes, Thomas Sampson and William Kyngesmill. Thomas Sampson's certain dates are from 1375 (*Lib. Alb.* 63) to 1390 (*Os.* i, 371), and his version is BM. Addit. MS. 17716 ('Explicit cartaria secundum Thomam S.' on f. 87): on him see H. G. Richardson, 'Business Training in Medieval Oxford', *American Historical Review*, xlv, 259-80, and *Oxford Formularies*, vol. ii. (O.H.S. new series, V). William Kyngesmill completed his apprenticeship with a London scrivener before 1402; migrated to Oxford about 1416; and was still alive in 1433 (C. T. Martin, *Archives of All Souls' College*, 153). His version is extant in BM. Royal MS. 12. B. xxiv, 227 ff. and at least five more manuscripts: a carpenter's contract from it has been printed by W. A. Pantin, *The Antiquaries Journal*, xxvii, 133 ff. On Kyngesmill see Paul Meyer in *Romania* (Paris 1903) xxxii, 47-58 and Miss M. D. Legge in *Studies in French Language and Literature presented to M. K. Pope*, Manchester, 1939. Sampson, Kyngesmill, and Pencaer were what would now be called solicitors, who took in pupils and taught them letter writing, accountancy, and conveyancing. As *scriptores* they were subject to the jurisdiction of the University; but they were not grammar masters (who taught Latin grammar), and the subjects which they taught were outside the University curriculum.

THOMAS TANFELD -1439-1486/8

Town clerk 1454-1486/8

Thomas Tanfeld succeeded David Pencaer as town clerk probably at Michaelmas 1454. He was in office by 20 October 1454 (*Lib. Alb.* 75), and was described as 'clericus dicte ville' on 26 January 1476 (*Hosp.* i, 410). He remained town clerk until his death between 5 June 1486 (*St. Michael*, 259) and 13 February 1488 when Ralph Palton had succeeded him (Salter's List, 338). The 'Liber Albus' from f. 99 verso (12 September 1454) to f. 110 (3 March 1486) appears to be written by a single hand, which is almost certainly that of Thomas Tanfeld himself.

He is probably the 'Thomas Stanfeld' who was one of the town chamberlains on 24 September 1444 (*MCO.* 207). He was elected one of the two bailiffs at Michaelmas 1449, because he is thus described on 22 February 1450 when he was surety for William Brugges (*Reg. Canc.* i, 196) and on 27 June 1450 when he witnessed a deed (*St. Michael*, 272). Thomas Tanfeld's is the only case in this list where anyone has been appointed town clerk after serving the higher office of bailiff. On 2 September 1452 he was one of the town's four surveyors of nuisances (Salter's List, 206); and on 9 October 1469 he was elected one of the two fish inspectors, 'scrutatores piscium' (*MCO.* 229). For the year 1458/9 the town paid him an unstated sum for looking after the swans (*MCO.* 287).

The oldest recorded right (from before 1155) to serve at the coronation of an English King is that of the citizens of Oxford to assist the King's Butler at the coro-

THE MEDIEVAL TOWN CLERKS OF OXFORD

nation feast. On 28 June 1461 the Mayor, Thomas Tanfeld, and five other burgesses, all dressed alike, rode to London to perform this service at the coronation of Edward IV. Tanfeld wrote a graphic account of their proceedings in a square book with a calendar and a crucifix which has now vanished from the City Archives; but it was copied by Brian Twyne in 1624, and is printed in *MCO.* 221-3.

In the Chancellor's Register Tanfeld appears several times as a guarantor, and in two different ways: as security for the rent of a hall let to a member of the University, which was by that time a formality; and as security that one of the parties in a law suit would abide by the arbitrators' award. He is surety for H. Sharp, bachelor of laws, for 'Whithall under the walles' [=Great White Hall in Ship Street] on 10 July 1439 (*Reg. Canc.* i, 50); for Mag. Hugo Gerard for Little White Hall [in Market Street backing on to Great White Hall, both on the present site of Jesus College] on 18 April 1444 (i, 98); for Mag. John Portreffe for Pyry Hall [opposite Little White Hall in Market Street] on 9 September 1445 (i, 117); and for Mag. R. Hert for a garden beside it on the same date (i, 123); and for Mag. Wulstanus Bruune for Glasen Hall [in School Street on the site of the Radcliffe Camera] on 8 May 1451 (i, 237). By the other sort of guarantee Tanfeld pledged himself for William Dagville (later Mayor of Oxford five times) on 6 April 1451 (i, 234); and for Gilbert Norris on 16 March 1457, from which he was released on 9 May 1458 (i, 370; i, 409). John Harreys, yeoman bedel of theology, chose him as one of his arbitrators on 12 November 1451 (i, 251).

He had a dispute with Mag. Willelmus Mallam about the ownership of a horse on 8 October 1450 (*Reg. Canc.* i, 233). On 4 November 1467 he witnessed the will of John Tamworth, butcher, and is then described as 'tabilio' (*Lib. Alb.* 78). On 1 October 1451 Tanfeld was left *xxd.* and his wife *xiid.* by the will of John Shyreburn, M.A., fellow of Lincoln College (*Reg. Canc.* i, 292).

Up to 10 April 1466 Thomas Tanfeld held from Lincoln College the lease of the 'Ram Inn' on the south side of High Street nearly opposite to All Saints' Church (*SE.* 20). By 1451 he was in possession of the second tenement south of Queen Street on the west side of the Little Bailey (*Hosp.* ii, 246, 248); but he had sold it to Richard Spragot by 1461 (*Lib. Alb.* 74). In 1447 this tenement had been in the possession of William Brugges, whose debt of £12 to Mag. Nicholas Gosse and the Vicar of St. Mary's had been guaranteed by Tanfeld on 22 February 1450 (*Reg. Canc.* i, 196-7). As Brugges seems to have defaulted shortly afterwards, Tanfeld may have obtained the tenement in recompense for having to pay Brugges's debt.

Thomas Tanfeld the town clerk is to be distinguished from a member of the University of the same name who was in Oxford by 4 November 1445 (*CPR.* 1441-6, p. 411), master of arts by 1454, and fellow of Lincoln College in 1455/6 (*BRUO.* iii, 1848).

RADULFUS PALTON -1488-1493

Town clerk 1486/8-1488/93

He followed Thomas Tanfeld (still alive 5 June 1486), and witnessed deeds on 13 February and 30 August 1488 as town clerk, 'dicte ville clerico' (*St. Michael's*, 253-4). He was succeeded by Richard Gibbes sometime between Michaelmas

GRAHAM POLLARD

1488 and Michaelmas 1492, because Gibbes is writing in the *Liber Albus* on 12 August 1493 and had written some earlier deeds there (see above pp. 58-9).

Ralph Palton acted as attorney for Edward Wodeward, alderman of Oxford, to receive seisin of land at Deddington from John Shelton (*Snappe*, 222: no year given). Edward Wodeward was Mayor of Oxford in 1487 and 1488, which may explain why Palton was appointed town clerk.

Ralph Palton was still alive on 26 November 1493 when with others he proved the will of John Bray (*Lib. Alb.* 89).

RICHARD GIBBES 1488/92-1522/6

Town clerk 1488/92-1522/6

Richard Gibbes succeeded Ralph Palton as town clerk sometime between Michaelmas 1488 and Michaelmas 1492, perhaps nearer the beginning than the end of this gap, because there are deeds in the *Liber Albus* which Gibbes wrote before the first unambiguously dated record in his hand on 12 August 1493 (see above p. 59). He was re-elected town clerk at Michaelmas 1522 (Turner 31); but Walter Wayte was writing in the '*Liber Albus*' by 28 July 1526 (f. 132).

On 23 March 1501 Giles Pulton appointed Richard Gibbes his attorney to give seisin of a garden by the Thames west of Folly Bridge (*Lib. Alb.* 96). Gibbes witnessed deeds of the Provost of the Queen's College on 19 December 1503, 3 July 1508, and 19 June 1522 (*Cart. Ch. Ch.* 47-8; *Os.* iii. 8). He was an executor of the will of Richard Millet, Mayor of Oxford in 1518, who died about February 1519. An autograph draft by Gibbes of an appeal to the Papal Court in a suit about Millet's will has survived in Twyne MS. iv, 264. On 14 March 1520 Gibbes transcribed from the hustings rolls and signed a report from the town's surveyors of nuisances about a wall at 105 High Street (*Oriel*, 224).

Richard Gibbes wrote ff. 112-31 (1493-1518) of the *Liber Albus*, and some of his later entries are signed by him with a large R, g and i in minuscule, and the two b's with very tall ascenders, all within a cartouche (see above pp. 56-7).

The names and dates of the subsequent town clerks of Oxford are available with much less trouble in W. H. Turner, *Selections from the Records of the City of Oxford*, 1880, and the five volumes of *Oxford Council Acts* from 1583 to 1801 edited for the Oxford Historical Society by H. E. Salter and Miss M. G. Hobson.