

Durham Monks at Oxford c.1286–1381: a House of Studies and its Inmates

By MERYL R. FOSTER

SUMMARY

In the late 13th century, the Benedictine community of Durham cathedral priory established for its members a house of studies at Oxford. Durham's contacts with Oxford, evident in the 1270s, were consolidated c.1286 by the acquisition of ten acres of land outside the North Gate of the city to provide a permanent residence for student monks. Constitutionally the house of studies was organised neither as a hall, nor as one of Durham's dependent cells, although it shared elements of both. The priory allowed little independence to those residing at the house of studies, whose head held, initially, only the most basic disciplinary powers and administrative responsibilities. Financially, the house remained largely dependent on Durham, subsisting on small pensions and donations from the monastic officials and the heads of the cells, supplemented by leasing most of the ten acres acquired in 1286, and letting rooms to secular scholars otherwise unconnected with Durham. The number of monks studying at any time was small (between two and eight), but as many as one in nine of the community may have enjoyed some university education between 1286 and 1381. Many were sent simply to acquire academic and preaching skills, in accordance with the requirements of the Benedictine General Chapters; a few, however, undertook the full course of study required for the baccalaureate and doctorate of theology. Most returned to a career in monastic administration at the mother house and the cells, but no office was monopolised by university monks, despite a marked tendency to appoint such men to the subpriorate. In 1381, a combination of the need to set the house on a firmer financial footing, and the desire of Bishop Thomas Hatfield of Durham to provide for himself a university-based chantry, led to the refoundation of the house of studies as Durham College.

Durham cathedral priory's long connection with the University of Oxford is a familiar aspect of the as yet incompletely explored history of the Benedictine presence at the universities of medieval England.¹ Yet neither the house of studies which the monks of Durham established at Oxford c.1286, nor Durham College, its immediate although constitutionally distinct successor, founded on the same premises in 1381, has been studied in detail. The pre-1381 period, with which the present article is concerned, is best known for the career of Uthred of Boldon, whose unorthodox theological views brought

¹ A brief history of the house of studies and its successor Durham College was given by H.E.D. Blakiston, 'Some Durham College Rolls', in *Collectanea* iii (Oxf. Hist. Soc. xxxii, 1896), 1–76. A more recent account, concentrating on Durham College in the early fifteenth century, appears in R.B. Dobson, *Durham Priory 1400–1450* (1973), 343–59.

him considerable notoriety among his 14th-century contemporaries.² Such a figure, however, does not provide a picture of the lives and careers of the majority of Durham's 'university monks': the purpose of the present article is to draw together the surviving evidence concerning the institutional history of the house of studies, and to show the framework within which, over the years, Durham's students pursued their academic activities.

Durham priory was not the first English Benedictine house to respond in the 13th century to the passing of the initiative in theological studies from the cloister to the schools, particularly those which had matured into universities, and, within these institutions, increasingly to members of the mendicant orders. It seems likely that isolated individual Benedictines had been sent to study at Oxford even before 1277, when the General Chapter of the Benedictines in the province of Canterbury ordained that a site and suitable buildings be obtained in Oxford, whither monks from houses throughout the province should be sent to study, that learning might flourish again in the Order.³ Gloucester College, which grew out of this initiative, provided university education for members of the majority of English Benedictine houses until its dissolution in 1539 or 1540,⁴ but two English cathedral priories, Durham and Canterbury, undertook independent ventures at Oxford.

Durham entered the field in the late 13th century. An interest in university learning and the Oxford schools was not a completely new departure for the priory; from its foundation in 1083, the community had shown a continuous concern for intellectual endeavour, emphasis shifting gradually from claustral study towards interest and eventual participation in the learning of the schools. At the turn of the 12th century, Durham's contact with the schools and universities was largely at one remove: active pursuit of theological and legal studies was undertaken by the clerks and masters employed by the prior and convent rather than by the monks themselves, although numerous donations to the priory library by such men enabled the monks to draw on recent learning from Paris and Oxford.⁵ By the mid-13th century, however, monastic scholarship was more in evidence. Bertram of Middleton, prior of Durham from 1244 to 1258, purchased for the house several volumes of the *postille* of Hugh of St Cher, within a few years of their composition.⁶ At around the same time, an anonymous annotator – almost certainly a Durham monk – worked his way through a collection of tracts by Robert Grosseteste (another of Middleton's gifts to Durham's library), and through three volumes of the *glossa ordinaria* which had come to the priory from other sources. The annotator's style reflected an interest in the forms of spiritual exposition popular in the

² For references to Uthred in the context of Durham monks at Oxford, see, for example: M.D. Knowles, *The Religious Orders in England*, ii (1961), 19, 48–54; Dobson, *Durham Priory*, 345–6; Sheehan, 'The Religious Orders, 1220–1370' in *[The] History of the University of Oxford*, i, *The Early Oxford Schools*, ed. J.I. Catto (1984), 216, 218; W.J. Courtenay, *Schools and Scholars in Fourteenth-century England* (Princeton, 1987), 80.

³ Sheehan, 'The Religious Orders', 213; *[Documents Illustrating the Activities of the General and Provincial Chapters of the English Black Monks 1215–1540]*, ed. W.A. Pantin (3 vols., Camden Soc., 3rd ser., xlv, xlvii, liv, 1931–7), i, 75. For much later moves at Cambridge, see *ibid.* ii, 76; *[Victoria County History]* *Cambs.* ii, 207; iii, 450.

⁴ W.A. Pantin, 'Gloucester College', *Oxoniensia*, xi/xii (1946–7), 65–74.

⁵ See R.A.B. Mynors, *Durham Cathedral Manuscripts to the end of the Twelfth Century* (1939), nos. 135–42 (books of Robert of Haddington) and nos. 143–5 (books of John of Rana); M.R. Foster, 'Durham Cathedral Priory 1229–1333: Aspects of the Ecclesiastical History and Interests of the Monastic Community' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Cambridge, 1979), 312–16 and refs.

⁶ *[Historiae Dunelmensis Scriptores Tres]*, ed. J. Raine (Surtees Soc. ix, 1839), 44. See also Foster, 'Durham Cathedral Priory', 316–17.

schools of Paris in the early 13th century.⁷ Another Durham monk, William of Masham, sought opportunities for study at Durham's cell in Stamford (Lincs.) in the 1260s; although nothing is known of his progress, by 1277 he bore the academic title of master.⁸

A direct Oxford connection is visible from the 1270s. The General Chapter of the Benedictines of the province of York is not known to have pronounced on the need for university education; nonetheless, Durham priory, the largest and richest of the four northern Benedictine houses, took steps towards establishing a settlement at Oxford. In 1278–9, the first extant account of the Durham bursar recorded a payment of 6s. 8d. 'to the servant taking to Oxford the allowance for the brothers'.⁹ Thomas of Westoe, a monk of the community since c.1270, almost certainly attended philosophical lectures in Oxford in 1283.¹⁰ There is, however, no evidence for the manner in which such monastic students lived, although residence in hired rooms seems most likely, for Durham as yet neither owned nor rented any property in or near Oxford.

The first acquisition of land there was made by Hugh of Darlington, prior of Durham, in 1286, the year from which later generations of monks dated the foundation of their house of studies. The exact circumstances of the decision to establish a formal settlement at the university remain obscure. By the 1330s, priory tradition related that the move was somehow prompted by the violent personal dislike which the elderly Darlington had conceived for Richard de Hoton, who had held the subpriorate in 1284–5 under the previous prior.¹¹ Having despatched Hoton successively to Durham's remotest cells at Lytham (Lancs.) and Coldingham (Berwicks.), Darlington then, apparently as a final malevolent gesture:

out of hatred for Richard of Hoton, who was a fine young man, sent monks to Oxford to study, and provided very generously for them, thus by an evil act bringing about good, just as the sin of Judas occasioned our redemption.¹²

The implication may be that the former subprior had himself nursed academic ambitions, which were thus vindictively thwarted. Since, however, other evidence suggests that Durham monks had already begun to look to Oxford before 1286, it appears that Darlington can have only encouraged, or at the most formalised, an existing trend within the priory. Paradoxically, not until Hoton himself had succeeded Darlington as prior of Durham in 1290 were further lands acquired in Oxford, and work undertaken on buildings to house the student monks.¹³

⁷ Durham, D[ean] and C[hapter] Lib[rary], MS A.III.12. For details of the contents of this volume, and the hand of the principal annotator, see Foster, 'Durham Cathedral Priory', 317–19 and refs.

⁸ *Durham Annals and Documents of the Thirteenth Century*, ed. F. Barlow (Surtees Soc. clv, 1945), no. 57, p. 124; Durham D[ean] and C[hapter] Mun[iments], Department of Palaeography and Diplomatic, University of Durham, 4.1.Archiep.15.

⁹ Durham D. & C. Mun., Bursar's acc[ount] 1278. Although this and a number of other accounts of Durham's monastic officials and heads of dependent cells have been printed in whole or in part in various volumes of the Surtees Society, the present article is based on the original documents, and only exceptionally will reference be made to any printed version.

¹⁰ See below, p. 109.

¹¹ HDST, 72; cf. *Durham Annals and Documents*, pp. 16–46, 64–84.

¹² *Odio Ricardi de Hoton, qui iuvenis graciosus erat, monachos misit Oxoniam ad studendum, et eis satis laute expensas ministrabat, malo occasionem administrante bono, sicut peccatum Iude fuit occasio redemptionis nostre: HDST, 72–3.* Raine's reading, ... sicut peccatum. Inde fuit ... , reflected the carelessly transcribed manuscript on which he based his text: D. & C. York, MS XVI I 12, fol. 199v. Blakiston's conjectural reading of *unde* for *inde* was without manuscript authority: 'Durham College rolls', 7, n.12. The correct reading *Iude* (of Judas) is clear from an earlier and more accurately written manuscript of the chronicle: Bodl. MS Fairfax 6, fols. 267v–268r.

¹³ HDST, 73.

Darlington's initial acquisition was a substantial block of ten acres of arable land just outside the North Gate of Oxford, on 'Beaumont' (now Parks Road), which was leased to the prior and convent of Durham for an annual rent of 10s. by the abbess and convent of Godstow in 1286.¹⁴ From 1290, Hoton extended and consolidated this holding, taking care to ensure that Godstow and other grantors were licensed to alienate their grants in mortmain. By the later 1290s, Durham's Oxford estate had taken the shape which it was to retain until the Dissolution: lands in Beaumont, fringed by various entries along Horsemonger (now Broad) Street, where the buildings of the *studium* were situated.¹⁵

The buildings on the site in the late 13th and 14th centuries are mentioned only incidentally in the surviving records. Deeds relating to a grant made in the 1290s show that a stone house stood on one of the plots acquired by the monks,¹⁶ but there is nothing to indicate whether Hoton's building programme provided for the replacement, or merely the extension, of this. By c.1302 the settlement boasted a two-storey residence, with a dormitory and a cellar.¹⁷ The head of the establishment in 1319 described the dwelling as 'a hall with separate chambers', which suggests a building along the lines typical of an academic hall.¹⁸ Later evidence confirms that the building had a large main hall (*aula*), suitable for business gatherings, with various smaller chambers attached.¹⁹ Although there may have been an oratory, no chapel is recorded on the site at this period. During the 1320s, the monks sought licence to construct a chapel from both the abbot and convent of Osney, appropriators of the church of St Mary Magdalene, in whose parish the house of studies lay, and from the bishop of Lincoln, the local ordinary.²⁰ It is not known, however, when the chapel was constructed; it certainly existed in 1381, but may have been built many years earlier.²¹ There is no evidence for the existence of a purpose-built library during the period of the house of studies, nor was one built in Durham College until 1417.²² Intermittently during the 14th century the bursar of Durham priory accounted for expenses on repairs to the Oxford house, but without any detail which would illuminate the history of the building.²³

The precise nature of the establishment prior to 1381 is no easier to define. The priory community, the university, and other authorities, ecclesiastical or secular, who dealt with the house of studies during the century of its existence, were apparently content to define it by its function: surviving records speak variously of the *mansio*, *locus* or, most commonly, *domus* of the Durham monks at Oxford. Despite the possible collegiate implications of the term *domus*,²⁴ it was not regarded as a college; no surviving documentation so

¹⁴ Durham D. & C. Mun., 1.5.Ebor.8, 1.5.Ebor.9; cf. Blakiston, 'Durham College Rolls', 7.

¹⁵ The complex history of these land grants cannot be elucidated completely from the surviving documents, most of which are in Durham D. & C. Mun., 1.5.Ebor. (various). The bulk of the estate is indicated, although not fully discussed, in H.E. Salter, *Survey of Oxford*, ii (Oxf. Hist. Soc., n.s. xx, 1969), maps N I and N II, and pp. 187-9.

¹⁶ Durham D. & C. Mun., 1.5.Ebor.28; cf. 1.5.Ebor.23.

¹⁷ *Records of Antony Bek, Bishop and Patriarch, 1283-1311*, ed. C.M. Fraser (Surtees Soc. clxii, 1953), p. 145.

¹⁸ Blakiston, 'Durham College rolls', 75; J.I. Catto, 'Citizens, scholars and masters', *Hist. Univ. Oxf.*, i, 177.

¹⁹ Durham D. & C. Mun., 3.4.Ebor.16 (1367).

²⁰ Blakiston, 'Durham College Rolls', 10-11, 36; Durham D. & C. Mun., 1.5.Ebor.11.

²¹ It is mentioned in the final draft of the foundation statutes of Durham College: Durham D. & C. Mun., 2.5.Ebor.15.

²² Blakiston, 'Durham College Rolls', 10, 20.

²³ Durham D. & C. Mun., Bursar's accs. 1343-4(A) *expense necessarie*; 1347-8(A) *expense fratrum*; 1353-4 *expense fratrum*; 1365-6 *dona et exennia prioris*; 1379-80 *dona et exennia prioris*.

²⁴ A.B. Emden, *An Oxford Hall in Medieval Times* (1927), 43-4.

denominates it, nor did it have the landed endowment which is seen as the essential difference between the early colleges and other forms of scholastic residence in medieval Oxford.²⁵ It combined, at times uneasily, certain features typical of Durham's dependent cells and of Oxford's academic halls. The priory community, however, apparently regarded the house of studies as different in character from Durham's eight other cells; indeed, only once, in a document emanating from Durham's dependency at Stamford, was it described specifically as a cell.²⁶ Similarly, although on one occasion it was described as an *aula*, by the Chancellor of Oxford, who had particular reasons for wishing so to define it,²⁷ the house of studies was never, strictly speaking, one of Oxford's numerous academic halls. Constitutionally, the lack of detailed planning implied in the priory chronicler's account of Darlington's action in 1286 characterised the house of studies down to 1381, but although its status remained ill-defined, its function was clear: it was a residence to which Durham monks could be sent to pursue studies for the general benefit of their community.

The number of student monks resident at the house of studies was never large. Once at least the prior of Durham was obliged to provide a companion for a monk at Oxford, to ensure compliance with the canonical prohibition on monks living alone: ordering the despatch of one of the brethren from the cell at Stamford to the house of studies in Oxford, between 1316 and 1320, Prior Burdon lamented that the difficulties of the times prevented the community from supporting more monks at the university.²⁸ The next extant statement of numbers dates from around the early 1320s, when the prior and convent of Durham alleged that there were 'sometimes ten, at other times eight, and on occasion six' monks studying there.²⁹ But these figures were quoted in the course of an attempt to secure the appropriation of a church, and may have been exaggerated, to underline the need for additional revenues. In 1367, witnesses in a lawsuit over another church were agreed that they had never seen fewer than two or more than five monks studying there over the previous decade.³⁰ A reduction in numbers, perhaps as a result of mid-century waves of plague, cannot be ruled out, but figures in this lower range correspond more closely with the evidence available from non-tendentious records antedating the Black Death. Accounts, charters and caution-notes in priory library books all point to small numbers of students.

The total size of the Durham community is difficult to chart, but it seems to have declined from a maximum of around 100 in 1300 to around 80 in the mid-1340s, and to perhaps 70 or a little over by the last quarter of the century, of whom, at any time, approximately 30 would have been at the various cells.³¹ A complement of five at Oxford would, therefore, have fulfilled amply the requirement laid down in Pope Benedict XII's Constitutions of 1336, and reiterated by the English General Chapter, that Benedictine communities should send one monk in every twenty to a university.³² A complement of two, however, would have fallen short of the required number. Looked at another way,

²⁵ See J.R.L. Highfield, 'The Early Colleges', in *Hist. Univ. Oxf.*, i, 227.

²⁶ Durham D. & C. Mun., 3.4.Ebor.14a.

²⁷ Blakiston, 'Durham College Rolls', 75; below, p.104.

²⁸ B.L. MS Cotton Faustina A.VI, fol. 7r-v.

²⁹ Durham D. & C. Mun., 1.3.Ebor.26.

³⁰ Durham D. & C. Mun., 3.4.Ebor.16.

³¹ See Dobson, *Durham Priory*, 52-5. The figures for the 13th and early 14th cents. should be larger: Foster, 'Durham Cathedral Priory', app. 2, table C, p. 390.

³² *Concilia Magnae Britanniae et Hiberniae*, ed. D. Wilkins (London, 1737), ii, 595; *Charters*, ii, 77, 79.

with a known intake of 287 into Durham Priory between the 1280s and the 1380s, the total of thirty-eight Durham monks known to have spent time at Oxford prior to the foundation of Durham College in 1381 suggests that up to one in nine of the community gained university experience.³³ This is a minimum figure, which can take no account of the indeterminable, although probably not large, number of unnamed students covered by recurrent references in priory accounts to 'the brethren studying at Oxford'.

The head of the house of studies before 1381 was designated prior or warden indifferently, as was the case with the heads of most of Durham's dependencies.³⁴ It may be assumed that as head of the *studium* he was deemed to hold and expected to exercise spiritual and disciplinary authority over his brethren residing at the house of studies, but the evidence suggests that his position gave him little real scope for administrative action, particularly in the early part of the 14th century. That problems might arise was illustrated most forcefully c.1319, when Gilbert of Elwick fell foul of the chancellor of the university, some of whose entourage were renting rooms in the house of studies.³⁵ When Elwick attempted to extract contributions from these tenants towards the upkeep of the fabric, they moved out indignantly, claiming that it was a hall, and that Elwick himself was responsible for the upkeep of the fabric. The chancellor sought to reclaim the rooms, and attempted to assert the right to dispose of the accommodation as if for a vacant hall, on the grounds that the 'principal' (i.e. the prior of Durham) was non-resident, and that Gilbert of Elwick was not the principal; the chancellor even went so far as to offer his pledge (*caucio*) to his own commissary.³⁶ Elwick offered a compromise, then sought advice from Durham; the immediate outcome is not recorded, but the prior and convent accepted the need to grant the head of the house of studies some specific powers.

The stages in this development cannot be charted in detail from the surviving evidence. Certainly, by 1340, the warden was a figure of sufficient stature on the Oxford scene to be included in his own right on the visitatorial board for Balliol College provided as part of the benefaction of Sir Philip Somerville.³⁷ The earliest extant text of a warden's appointment records that in 1343 Robert of Hallington was granted full powers to administer the affairs of the house of studies, to let out and collect rents from the *gardinum* and other plots, and to hear the confessions of fellow student monks and enjoin suitable

³³ Only 10 of these were recorded by Emden: *BRUO*, i, 10–11, 183, 194, 212–13, 307, 637; ii, 814, 893, 1171, 1178. A further 21 appear in the surviving muniments and library books of Durham Cathedral Priory in contexts which suggest academic activity; in 7 cases, monks named as having been in Oxford in the course of a year were almost certainly there on the priory's non-academic business. I am grateful to Mr A.J. Piper of the Department of Palaeography and Diplomatic of the University of Durham for permission to quote the figure for the total intake to Durham Priory in these years, which is derived from his calculations.

³⁴ Warden (*custos*): Durham D. & C. Mun., Loc. XXVII.31, art. 2 (reference to 1302); Durham D. & C. Mun., Reg. II, fol. 117v. (1343); Misc. ch. 2636 (1345). Prior: Durham D. & C. Mun., Misc. ch. 5644 (1316); *HDST*, 120 (1333); Durham D. & C. Mun., Bursar's acc. 1353–4 *expense fratrum*; I.3.Reg.11 (1362); Blakiston, 'Durham College Rolls', 29 (1345 x 1364, on which see below, 105). The head of the house was described in one surviving document as 'prior or warden': Durham D. & C. Mun., 3.4.Ebor.26 (1364).

³⁵ Blakiston, 'Durham College Rolls', 74–6. The episode must have occurred in 1319–20, during John Luttrell's controversial tenure of the chancellorship; it is dateable by Elwick's references to his inception, which took place in 1319, and to 'the archbishop's visitation', i.e. the metropolitan visitation by Archbishop Reynolds of Canterbury, in 1319–20: Durham D. & C. Mun., Reg. II, fol. 59v; I.J. Churchill, *Canterbury Administration* (1933), i, 311–14.

³⁶ For the regulations *de domibus et scolis* on which the chancellor's arguments were based, see *Statuta Antiqua Universitatis Oxoniensis*, ed. S. Gibson (Oxford, 1931), 79 (*quandiu durat principalitas*), 80 (*quandiu perseuerat principalitas, de hospitibus premuniendis*). See also Emden, *An Oxford Hall*, 25, 27, 38–9.

³⁷ Blakiston, 'Durham College Rolls', 28–9.

penances upon them. In view of the troubles of 1319, it is significant that he was authorised also to admit at his own discretion (secular) masters and scholars who wished to reside in the house.³⁸ At some date between 1345 and 1364, R[obert] of C[laxton] was appointed warden, with full power to administer the internal and external affairs of the house of studies and to hear the confessions of his fellow-students; no reference was made to the admission of secular scholars, but the duties of a visitor at Balliol were rehearsed in detail.³⁹ Alongside this extension and definition of the powers of the head of the house a sense of corporate identity emerged in the mid-century: in 1338 Pope Innocent VI's grant of a licence to appropriate Appleby church was addressed direct to 'the scholars of Durham's house in the University of Oxford',⁴⁰ and in 1367 'the prior and scholars of Durham in the University of Oxford' appointed a proctor to act on their behalf in the same protracted business.⁴¹ Nonetheless, the head of the house did not have the use of a common seal; for the appointment of the proctor, the prior and scholars utilised the seal of the chancellor, but in most instances where a seal was needed, they employed that of Durham Priory itself. This serves to emphasise that the warden's freedom of action remained closely circumscribed by the mother-house down to 1381.

Despite the fact that the house of studies had been established for a specific academic purpose, and was not simply a dependency which happened to be situated in a university town, the priory community was evidently reluctant before 1381 to allocate any formal endowment to it from the lands and revenues of the mother-house. This was not mere thrift, for although Durham's Benedictines were prone to consider their house to be perpetually on the brink of financial disaster, they were ready to provide funds, however meagre, for their educational establishment. The community may, however, have entertained some doubts about the wisdom of allowing too great a degree of self-sufficiency to those residing in a place abounding in temptations, not only the worldly distractions which by tradition assailed the student populace, but also the more insidious opportunities for intellectual independence. Throughout the century prior to 1381 the house of studies remained more closely dependent financially on the mother house than any other of Durham's cells, however distantly situated.

The student monks subsisted on an irregular income composed of small sums from a diversity of sources. The bulk of the contributions towards the upkeep of the house of studies came from the mother house, some in the form of payments made by or channelled through the bursar's office, others as regular pensions or occasional donations from other monastic office-holders with revenues in their charge. In the years after 1278, surviving accounts of the Durham bursar record payments to *socii* or *scholares* at Oxford in 1292-3, 1298-9, 1300-1, 1302-3, 1306-7, 1308-9, 1310-11, 1313-14, 1316-17 and 1317-18.⁴² These varied widely, from a maximum of £24 3s. 11d. in 1292-3 (perhaps in support of land purchases) to a mere £3 in 1302-3. By the second decade of the 14th century, chronicle evidence indicates that the various monastic officials would normally contribute towards the support of Durham's scholars, although the absence of any

³⁸ Durham, D. & C. Mun., Reg. II, fol. 117v.

³⁹ Blakiston, 'Durham College Rolls', 29-30; cf. Highfield, 'The Early Colleges', 243. The later end of the date-range is the more probable, as Claxton was in Oxford in 1365-6, when he received money from Durham for repairs to the walls of the Oxford house: Durham, D. & C. Mun., Bursar's acc. 1365-6 *donat et exennia prioris*.

⁴⁰ Durham D. & C. Mun., Reg. II, fol. 159v.

⁴¹ Durham D. & C. Mun., 3.4.Ebor.25.

⁴² Durham D. & C. Mun., Bursar's accs., s.a.

surviving accounts for such office-holders at this period denies the possibility of determining when this practice began.⁴³

The first record of a regular grant to the student-monks dates from 1328-9, when the surviving series of bursar's accounts resumes after a ten-year break. By then, an annual pension of £20 from the church of Northallerton (Yorks., N.R.) paid hitherto to the prior of Durham, had been allocated to the Oxford house.⁴⁴ The bursar's accounts show that payments continued at the full rate until 1347-8, then stopped for a few years, to be resumed at a lower rate, which settled from 1358-9 at £13 6s. 8d., remaining stable until the 1380s. Evidence from surviving account rolls shows that by the mid-century, payments were made regularly not only by the hostiller, chamberlain, sacrist and almoner of Durham,⁴⁵ but also by some of Durham's cells: Lytham and Monkwearmouth first, followed by Coldingham (both the prior and the sacrist), then Finchale, Jarrow, and Holy Island.⁴⁶ It is impossible to gain any very accurate picture of the annual income derived by the students from these sources: first, there are numerous gaps in all the surviving series of accounts, and, secondly, the recorded payments were often lumped together in the accounts with other pensions or items of charitable expenditure for which the accounting officer was responsible, the precise sums in each case being unspecified.⁴⁷ Nonetheless, the general impression is that the students would have been lucky to receive more than £20 p.a. from this multiplicity of sources.

The 14th century saw three unsuccessful attempts to improve the financial provision of the house of studies by the appropriation to Durham priory itself of a wealthy church, from whose revenues the annual allocations to the student-monks could be boosted. The first candidate was Brantingham (Yorks., E.R.), of which the prior and convent had long held the advowson, and which they sought papal permission to appropriate to themselves, probably in the early 1320s, for the specific purpose of supporting the house at Oxford.⁴⁸ Their petition was fruitless; the church had fallen liable to papal provision and proved too attractive as a benefice for cardinals and royal clerks for the monks' pleas to carry weight.⁴⁹ In 1358, the prior and convent obtained royal licence to appropriate Blyborough (Lincs.), another church long in their patronage, and to use the revenues to support an extra two students at Oxford.⁵⁰ Again, this came to nothing. At around the same date, the priory initiated a campaign to appropriate the church of Appleby (Leics.)

⁴³ *HDST*, 113.

⁴⁴ Durham D. & C. Mun., Bursar's acc. 1328-9 *recepte*; see also *Durham Cathedral Priory Rentals*, i, *Bursar's rentals*, ed. R.A. Lomas and A.J. Piper (Surtees Soc. cxviii, 1989), 222-3.

⁴⁵ The earliest surviving accounts to record such payments are: Durham D. & C. Mun., Hostiller's acc. 1331-2; Chamberlain's acc. 1342-3; Sacrist's acc. 1346-7; Almoner's acc. 1351-2.

⁴⁶ Durham D. & C. Mun., Lytham acc. 1343-4(A); Monkwearmouth acc. 1345-6; Misc. ch. 1379, Coldingham Sacrist's acc. 1354-5; Finchale acc. 1356-7; Jarrow acc. 1356-7; Holy Island acc. 1360-1; Misc. ch. 1397, Coldingham Prior's acc. 1365-6.

⁴⁷ For examples, see *The priory of Finchale*, ed. J. Raine (Surtees Soc. ii, 1837), p. lxiv (1363-4), p. lxvii (1364-5); *The inventories and account rolls . . . of Jarrow and Monkwearmouth*, ed. J. Raine (Surtees Soc. xxix, 1854), 43 (1350-1, 1351-2), 147 (1345-6).

⁴⁸ Durham D. & C. Mun., 1.3.Ebor.26. This undated petition was for permission to appropriate the church on the death or resignation of 'the venerable father B. now rector', who is probably to be identified as Cardinal Bertrand of Sta. Maria in Aquiro, rector from 1320 to 1342: *Calendar of Entries in the Papal Registers relating to England: Papal Letters*, ii (H.M.S.O., 1895), 198; iii (H.M.S.O., 1897), 75. Refs. in the petition to the combined effects of Scottish depredations on Durham's lands and of nationwide murrain and dearth suggest a date earlier rather than later in Bertrand's time as rector.

⁴⁹ The church was eventually appropriated to Durham College in 1458: Dobson, *Durham Priory*, 351.

⁵⁰ Durham D. & C. Mun., 1.4.Reg.9.

to the house of studies itself. Here, Durham's patronage was precarious and subject to recurrent challenge;⁵¹ despite obtaining licence to appropriate from Pope Innocent VI in 1358, and from King Edward III in 1362,⁵² and conducting long and costly legal proceedings,⁵³ the monks were unable to achieve even this appropriation.

The house of studies was not wholly devoid of means of self-support, although these were meagre. The practice of renting rooms in the building to scholars who had no connection with Durham, first noted c.1319,⁵⁴ continued to provide revenue in the 1360s. One witness in the Appleby lawsuit explained that 'there are various chambers within [the house of studies] which [the monks] let out to scholars who wish to reside there', and another emphasised that such lodgers were not Durham's own students, but *extraneis scholaribus*. In addition, the ten acres of arable land adjacent to the house, normally described as the *gardinum*, were leased out. But the witnesses' statements indicated also that the combined income from these sources never exceeded £5 p.a.⁵⁵ A total of around £25 p.a. was, therefore, the most that the residents of the *studium* could expect.⁵⁶

The most significant difference between the house of studies and Durham's other eight cells was that whereas even the humblest of the latter enjoyed either endowments in lands and revenues or established provision from the main estate of Durham priory, for which the cell's appointed head was obliged to render annual account to the Durham chapter, no such account was required from the warden of the Oxford settlement for the small cash hand-outs on which he and his fellows lived. Likewise, the communities of the cells, led by their priors or wardens (*custodes*), were usually given discretion to handle the administrative and legal business connected with their lands, whereas, until well into the 14th century, all business connected with the lands surrounding the house of studies was conducted by or in the name of the prior and convent of Durham.⁵⁷

The prior of Durham bore responsibility also for the major decisions concerning the students at the house. First, he selected those who would be sent, and appointed their warden, probably with advice from other senior members of the community. Once only is a prior known to have allowed the community's view to override his own, when Prior Cowton sent John of Crepping to Oxford, against his own better judgment, with unhappy results.⁵⁸ Further, it would have been the prior and his advisers who decided the length of time for which any student would remain at Oxford, and the extent of the studies which each student might undertake. A monk's sojourn at Oxford was an investment for the good of the whole community, and successive priors would have been anxious to ensure that in each case the time was wisely spent. Most were destined for careers in monastic administration; their training was not intended to set them apart from their brethren in

⁵¹ J. Tait, 'The Priory of Lytham', *V.C.H. Lancs.* ii, 107-8.

⁵² Durham D. & C. Mun., Reg. II, fol. 159r; 1.3.Reg.11; cf. Reg. II, fol. 171r.

⁵³ The proceedings are recorded in Durham D. & C. Mun., 3.4.Ebor.; the expenses are illustrated in the Bursar's acc. 1366-7. The church was never appropriated to the Oxford house.

⁵⁴ See above, p.104.

⁵⁵ Durham D. & C. Mun., 3.4.Ebor.16; see also below, p.112, and nn. 95-7.

⁵⁶ This relatively modest sum was considerably lower than, for instance, those available to the two monks at the cell of Jarrow in the 14th century, or the monks at the cell at Stamford in 1380-1: A.J. Piper, *The Durham Monks at Jarrow* (Jarrow Lecture, 1986), 6, and 'St. Leonard's Priory, Stamford', *The Stamford Historian*, no. 5 (1980), 13-14. In Oxford, it would have placed the house of studies on a level with the most poorly-endowed colleges: T.H. Aston and R. Faith, 'The endowments of the university and colleges to c.1348', *Hist. Univ. Oxf.*, i, 308.

⁵⁷ See, for example, Durham D. & C. Mun., 1.5.Ebor.41 (1307); 1.5.Ebor.47 (1324); 1.5.Ebor.1 (1325); 1.5.Ebor.3 (1327).

⁵⁸ *HDST*, 113.

the mother house and the cells, but was, it appears, to be harnessed to the common good.

In the 14th century, as later, some stayed at Oxford for a short while only, not aiming to gain a degree, but, in accordance with the requirements of their General Chapters, to derive from a brief period of study in a university milieu some academic skills or some preaching experience useful to their house.⁵⁹ Of the Durham monks known to have spent time in Oxford before the establishment of Durham College in 1381, several are recorded on only a single occasion as being there; most, although not all, of these will have been students who were not expected to seek any formal academic qualification. A small number of student monks stayed for longer periods, usually with the intention of proceeding to a degree. In common with other students from their order, Durham's monks concentrated principally on theology; none in this period is known to have studied canon law, and none to have obtained an arts degree. Few, however, proceeded to degrees in theology: of the 31 clearly identifiable student monks before 1381, only nine are known to have taken degrees, two reaching the baccalaureate in theology and seven advancing to the doctorate.⁶⁰

Various reasons may be suggested for the restricted numbers who attained academic honours. First, not all would have possessed the requisite intellectual capacity. Second, the priory community might not wish to spare many of its ablest young members for the ten or more years needed (even with graces) for the doctorate,⁶¹ although it is clear that some of those whose sojourns at Oxford extended over many years went initially to the house of studies well before making their monastic profession, and thus before their absence could affect adversely community life and administration.⁶² Thirdly, Durham priory may have shared the feeling of many southern English houses that the costly ceremony of inception as a doctor was not acceptable as a regular item of expenditure.⁶³ In 1372, for example, John of Aycliffe was licensed by the prior and convent to proceed through all the stages of the theological course, except inception.⁶⁴ Certainly, the patchy surviving records suggest that the extra payments made to those who incepted were a burden to be spread as widely as possible among the officers and heads of cells who contributed to the upkeep of the student-monks in general.⁶⁵

⁵⁹ *Chapters*, ii, 55-7 (1343), 74-6 (1363); cf. Durham College after 1381: Dobson, *Durham Priory*, 352-3.

⁶⁰ Geof. of Haxby, D.Th. by 1311: *Registrum Palatinum Dunelmense*, ed. T.D. Hardy (4 vols., Rolls Series, London, 1873-8), i, 45-6. Gilbert of Elwick, incepted as D.Th. 1319: Durham D. & C. Mun., Reg. II, fol. 59v. Rob. of Graystones, B.Th. by (?) 1315, D.Th. by 1333: Blakiston, 'Durham College Rolls', 36, 38 n. 10; *HDST*, 120; see also Foster, 'Durham Cathedral Priory', 337. Thos. of Lund: incepted as D.Th. 1329-30: Durham D. & C. Mun., Bursar's acc. 1329-30(B), *expense fratrum*. John of Beverley, B.Th. by 1333, incepted as D.Th. 1333-4: *HDST*, 120; Durham D. & C. Mun., Bursar's acc. 1333-4, *dona prioris et conventus*. Uthred of Boldon, B.Th. c.1354-5, D.Th. 1358-9: C.H. Williams (ed.), 'A Medieval Biography', *Bull. of the Institute of Historical Research*, iii (1925-6), 46; Durham D. & C. Mun., Bursar's accs. 1357-8, 1358-9(A), *expense fratrum*. John of Bishopton, B.Th. 1362-3, still in 1381: Durham D. & C. Mun., Bursar's acc. 1362-3(A), *expense fratrum*; Reg. II, fol. 201r. John of Aycliffe, D.Th. 1377-8: Durham D. & C. Mun., Almoner's acc., Feretrar's acc., Hostillar's acc., all 1377-8. Rob. of Blacklaw: B.Th. by 1381, D.Th. by 1393: Durham D. & C. Mun., Reg. II, fol. 201v; *Chapters*, ii, 94.

⁶¹ *Statuta Antiqua*, pp. cxiii-cxv; Courtenay, *Schools and Scholars*, 42.

⁶² E.g. John of Beverley, who pledged a volume in Oxford loan-chests in 1313, 1315, 1318, 1319, 1320 and 1321, was a member of the first group of monks professed after the election of Will. of Cowton as prior of Durham in 1321: Durham D. & C. Lib., MS C.I.20, fol. 215v; *Liber Vitae Ecclesiae Dunelmensis*, ed. A. Hamilton Thompson (Surtess Soc. cxxxvi, 1923), fol. 71r, col. 2; cf. Durham D. & C. Mun., Loc.XIII.3(a).

⁶³ *Chapters*, ii, 56.

⁶⁴ Durham D. & C. Mun., Misc. ch. 421, fol. 10r. He proceeded later, however, to both the baccalaureate and the doctorate.

⁶⁵ Durham D. & C. Lib., MS C.IV.25, fol. 61v; but cf. contributions by the prior of Durham to Benedictines from other houses incepting in theology: Durham D. & C. Mun., Bursar's accs. 1352-3 (two monks, house not named), 1354-5(A) (one monk from Bury St Edmunds), *dona et exennia prioris*.

Of the system of study and instruction at the house of studies, almost no details are known. No statutes are recorded from the Benedictine Provincial Chapters making provision for the northern house parallel to those which provided for lectures in divinity and subsequently philosophy at Gloucester College.⁶⁶ Those sent to Durham's *studium* would initially have devoted some time to advanced philosophical studies, although with theological ends in view. Nicholas of Lusby, Durham's sole recorded Master of Arts, was the exception which proved this rule, for he had attained the degree and had held a fellowship at Balliol College during the 1320s, before entering Durham priory c.1330.⁶⁷ In general, young monks received basic instruction in grammar and arts in the mother-house; Thomas of Westoe, for instance, who had displayed an interest in natural philosophy in the 1270s, appears subsequently to have attended lectures on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* in Oxford in 1283, and is known to have purchased theological works there some years later.⁶⁸ Robert of Greystones acquired a number of philosophical texts and commentaries, some of which he gave to the library of the house of studies, as he proceeded with his studies for the doctorate in theology.⁶⁹ The level of Durham's domestic scholarship, like that of the Friars, sufficed to secure from the university graces permitting aspiring student-monks to proceed direct to the higher degrees of bachelor and doctor of theology.

The 1363 statutes of the Benedictine Provincial Chapter assumed the presence of a resident lecturer in theology in Durham's house, but the records are too scanty to show how far, if at all, Durham complied with this requirement;⁷⁰ only Uthred of Boldon and John of Aycliffe in this period are known for certain to have continued at Oxford after obtaining their doctorates. Nonetheless, those who reached the degree of Bachelor or Doctor of Theology must, by definition, have lectured on the *Sentences* and, for the doctorate, on the Bible as well; indeed, the *Sentence-commentary* of Robert of Graystones is believed to survive, possibly in the author's autograph.⁷¹ But the earliest surviving references to lectures by Durham monks date from the 1360s: Uthred of Boldon lectured in theology at Oxford in 1360–61, two years after incepting as a doctor,⁷² while John of Bishopton lectured on the *Sentences*, presumably as a bachelor, in 1362–3.⁷³ The academic life of Durham's students was closely similar to that of their counterparts, secular, mendicant and monastic; there is no reason to suppose that the house of studies differed significantly from – in the words of a recent scholar – other 'fully recognized teaching units within the university corporation and theological faculty'.⁷⁴

The evidence of the books available to and used by the students at the settlement offers

⁶⁶ *Chapters*, ii, 55–6, 75.

⁶⁷ *BRUO*, ii, 1171; for his first recorded appearance in Durham, see Durham, D. & C. Mun., Bursar's account 1330–1, *expense fratrum versus cellas*.

⁶⁸ Foster, 'Durham Cathedral Priory', 331–6, 346–7, 395–402; see also A. J. Piper and M. R. Foster, 'Evidence of the Oxford Book Trade about 1300', *Viator* 20 (1989), 156.

⁶⁹ Blakiston, 'Durham College Rolls', 37; Durham, D. & C. Lib, MS C.I.18 (Averroes, Commentaries on Aristotle, *De Caelo et Mundo*, *Metaphysica* and *Meteora*, book IV). See further Foster, 'Durham Cathedral Priory', 347.

⁷⁰ *Chapters*, ii, 81. This statement appears to have been part of a not very subtle, and indeed unsuccessful, effort to extend the control of the *prior studencium* over Durham's monks.

⁷¹ Westminster Abbey, MS 13; see Courtenay, *Schools and Scholars*, 266–7 and n.32. The attribution at the head of the manuscript is, however, in a 15th-century hand, and thus not beyond doubt.

⁷² Durham, D. & C. Mun., Monkwearmouth acc. 1360–1: *The Inventories and Account Rolls . . . of Jarrow and Monkwearmouth*, 155.

⁷³ Durham, D. & C. Mun., Bursar's acc. 1362–3(A), *expense fratrum*.

⁷⁴ Courtenay, *Schools and scholars*, 57.

a more comprehensive picture of academic activities within the house, although space does not permit detailed discussion of this here.⁷⁵ Some, at least, of the students' needs were catered for within the house, which, according to a list initially compiled in 1315, and expanded by the end of the first quarter of the 14th century, contained a somewhat haphazard collection of 39 volumes of theological and philosophical texts.⁷⁶ At the end of the century (shortly after the foundation of Durham College), a much larger and more systematic collection of 115 volumes was held (31 or 32 of which had figured in the earlier list), catalogued under theology, philosophy, logic, medicine, and miscellaneous works, this last headed 'difficult terms', from Brito's work, which it included.⁷⁷ But the library lists alone offer only a partial picture of the books handled by Durham's student monks in the 14th century. Inscriptions in surviving books, and entries in both the Oxford library-lists and the catalogues of the libraries of the mother-house,⁷⁸ show that throughout this period and beyond numerous works both theological and philosophical were acquired, used, and sometimes pawned in the Oxford loan-chests by individual student monks, before eventually passing into the common library collections.

The place which university learning held in the life of the priory as a whole is not easy to determine. Time in Oxford came, for most of the student monks, early in their life in the community, as an extension of their claustral education, before they had spent time anywhere other than the mother-house, and before they had held any posts there or at the cells. A few spent time at Stamford before being sent to Oxford; this cell had a tradition of study, and may have been in some sense a preparatory school for would-be university monks.⁷⁹ But whereas only a handful of those who are known to have studied at Oxford – 3 out of 31 – went to the university after holding office within the community, the vast majority – 29 out of 31 – including Durham's most notable scholars, held at least one office in the cathedral priory or the dependent cells after returning from the university.⁸⁰ University study, however, does not appear to have been regarded as an automatic qualification for a substantial administrative career, for no post, either within the cathedral priory or at any of the cells, was monopolised by former student monks, nor indeed did they provide the majority of recorded holders of any post in the 14th century. Only four held the office of bursar, the most demanding administrative and financial post in the Durham hierarchy.⁸¹ One office alone was apparently seen as especially appropriate for those with university experience. Of 25 known holders of the subpriorate between the mid-1280s and 1381, 12 had been students, among them all seven of Durham's doctors of theology and one of the two bachelors of theology.⁸² This post carried numerous responsibilities, including the maintenance of claustral discipline and

⁷⁵ I hope to discuss the Durham student-monks and their books in detail elsewhere. Much of the evidence for the first half of the 14th century is given in Foster, 'Durham Cathedral Priory', 329–56.

⁷⁶ Blakiston, 'Durham College Rolls', 35–8.

⁷⁷ W.A. Pantin, 'Catalogue of the Books of Durham College, c.1390–1400' in *Oxford Formularies* (Oxf. Hist. Soc., n.s. iv, 1942), i, 240–5.

⁷⁸ *Catalogi Veteres Librorum Ecclesiae Cathedralis Dunelmensis*, ed. B. Botfield (Surtees Soc. vii, 1838), 10–39, 85–116 (Spendedment, 1392, 1417), 46–79 (Cloister, 1395).

⁷⁹ Foster, 'Durham Cathedral Priory', app. 3, pp. 392–4; cf. Dobson, *Durham Priory*, 316.

⁸⁰ E.g. Uthred of Boldon and John of Aycliffe: *BRUO*, i, 10–11 (Aycliffe), 212–13. The overall figures are derived from unpublished lists of Durham priory's office holders compiled by Mr A.J. Piper, who kindly allowed me access to them.

⁸¹ For this office, see Foster, 'Durham Cathedral Priory', 170–3; Dobson, *Durham Priory*, 258–65.

⁸² Rob. of Blacklaw, who obtained his baccalaureate before 1381, and his doctorate 1381×93 (above, n. 64), was subprior between 1382 and 1387.

deputizing for the prior in that prelate's absence, and possibly, since Durham priory did not appoint a novice-master, overall supervision of the training and education of novices.⁸³ It is possible that theological training was seen as a valuable qualification for senior disciplinary duties, but it was clearly not a prerequisite for the priorate. Only one pre-1381 student (Geoffrey of Burdon) became prior of Durham, although a substantial minority of the known heads of the cells of Finchale, Holy Island, Jarrow, Monkwearmouth and, not surprisingly, Stamford, had been at the university.

Monks with university experience might also come into contact with the Benedictine Provincial Chapters. This was primarily a domestic matter: on every occasion in the 14th century when the prior of Durham is known to have appointed a proxy to attend a Chapter, the person chosen was a university monk. Three such proxies were also priors of Stamford at the time of their appointment,⁸⁴ but the duty was not specifically attached to that post, for John of Beverley was so employed when subprior,⁸⁵ and John of Aycliffe in the year in which he was promoted to the subpriorate.⁸⁶ Uthred of Boldon attended the Chapter on several occasions while he was head of the Oxford house, but it is not certain that he was acting as his prior's proxy.⁸⁷ The Chapters themselves also selected monks for various duties. John of Beverley (twice) and Uthred were both appointed as diffinitors,⁸⁸ Uthred participated in visitations, usually as a commissary,⁸⁹ and John of Aycliffe was ordered by the Chapter to undertake 'scholastic acts' against the opinions of John Wyclif.⁹⁰ This last was something for which a theologian would be essential. The other activities, however, suggest that here also theological study was thought to give a particularly useful grounding for work with a disciplinary element.

The prior and convent did not, however, utilise the house of studies for the education of secular students, either for the community's own direct benefit, or as a means of granting favours to members of the house and to local notables. Durham, like other large houses, had since the 12th century retained secular clerks, many of whom were graduates, to assist with its business, particularly the conduct of legal affairs. Most such graduate clerks had taken degrees in arts, or civil or canon law, which explains why none of those who were employed by Durham in the century immediately before 1381 had studied at the priory's settlement in Oxford, where these subjects were not on offer. It might be expected, however, that at least some of those who later worked for the priory would have been among those who lodged in the house of studies, whilst studying with masters elsewhere, but no single example can be given with any confidence.⁹¹ Similarly, it might seem likely that the secular students whom the prior and convent are known to have assisted during the 14th century would have resided in the house of studies;⁹² some may

⁸³ Foster, 'Durham Cathedral Priory', 164-9; Dobson, *Durham Priory*, 63.

⁸⁴ *Chapters*, iii, 210-11.

⁸⁵ *Chapters*, iii, 22.

⁸⁶ Durham, D. & C. Mun., Misc. ch. 421, fol. 7r-v; cf. Bursar's acc. 1378-9, which shows him at Oxford (*expense fratrum*) and as subprior (*empcio equorum*) in the course of the year.

⁸⁷ Durham D. & C. Mun., Bursar's acc. 1359-60 *expense fratrum*, Hostillar's acc. 1360-1; Coldingham acc. 1364-5, printed in *The Priory of Coldingham*, ed. J. Raine (Surtees Soc. xii, 1841), p. xlvii; Finchale acc. 1366-7.

⁸⁸ *Chapters*, ii, 9, 20 and n; iii, 33.

⁸⁹ *Chapters*, iii, 277-8, 298 (1366); 248-9 (1378, 1381).

⁹⁰ W.A. Pantin, 'A Benedictine Opponent of John Wyclif', *Eng. Hist. Rev.* xliii (1928), 73-7.

⁹¹ Emden's suggestion that Simon of Staines, D.Cn.L., was residing in the house of studies when he supported Gilbert of Elwick against Chancellor Luttrell c.1319 is not borne out by the evidence: *BRUO*, iii, 1758-9; cf. Blakiston, 'Durham College Rolls', 75.

⁹² The scanty evidence suggests that most such students were relatives either of those employed by the priory in a professional capacity, e.g. as notaries, or of monks of Durham. Examples in the former category

have done so, but the sparse surviving evidence suggests that it was more common for them to be boarded out in academic halls, under the sponsorship of one of Durham's student-monks.⁹³ Fellowships for secular graduates were obviously not available at the priory's *studium*; possibly some informal agreement was made at one time with Merton College for the advancement of masters of northern English origin, but this, if it ever existed, was moribund by the third quarter of the 14th century.⁹⁴ Of systematic efforts by the prior and convent of Durham to organise educational opportunities for secular students within their orbit, there is no sign. Down to 1381, the house of studies was intended to cater strictly for members of the monastic community.

Thus, by c.1380, the house of studies was firmly established within the life of the Benedictines of Durham. An attempt by Bishop Richard Bury in 1338 to replace it with a college housing a prior and twelve Durham monks had come to nothing,⁹⁵ and it might well have continued to operate in the same way throughout the existence of the cathedral priory. Nonetheless, in 1381, a complete constitutional change was effected, by which the *studium* was replaced (on the same premises) by a college whose membership comprised not only eight monks of Durham priory but also eight secular scholars from the bishopric of Durham. The surviving evidence is patchy, but the foundation appears to have sprung partly from renewed efforts by the prior of Durham to obtain adequate funding for the house of studies, and partly from the desire of the terminally-ill Bishop Hatfield to provide for himself a university-based chantry, a not uncommon motive among founders of colleges.⁹⁶ Initially, presumably in response to requests from Prior Robert Berrington of Walworth (who took office in December 1374), the bishop suggested appropriation of a church for the support of the monks at Oxford; Walworth, perhaps mindful of earlier failures, rejected this as difficult and expensive, and told the bishop that friends of his had given advice about investing money in the city of London to produce a steady annual revenue.⁹⁷

Surviving evidence does not show when Hatfield's notion of founding a college for monks and seculars was conceived, but it was well advanced when the bishop wrote to the

include: the sons of Master Wm. of Kelloe, who received 3s. 4d. each when 'going to the schools': Durham D. & C. Mun., Bursar's acc. 1335-6, *dona prioris*; the notary Hugh of Corbridge, who received payments for his son, who was going to Oxford: Hostillar's accs. 1344-5, 1346-7; and Thos., a relative of Wm. of Ribton, who received money when a student at Oxford: Hostillar's accs. 1345-6, 1346-7. Among relatives of monks were: Walter, brother of Dom Wm. Vavasour, and Wm., a relative of Dom Rob. of Kelloe, both of whom received money when heading for Oxford: Hostillar's accs. 1357-8, 1358-9. On numerous occasions payments were made to anonymous 'relatives of the monks' for study at Oxford in the 1360s: Hostillar's accs. 1363-4, 1364-5, 1365-6, 1366-7, 1367-8; Almoner's accs. 1367-8(A), 1368-9, 1369-70, 1370-1.

⁹³ Pantin, 'Some Oxford Documents from Durham', in *Oxford Formularies*, i, 223-4, 233-4 (no. 9), 235-9 (nos. 12-15, 17).

⁹⁴ Ibid. 220-1, 227-31 (nos. 1-4), Walter Vavasour M.A. (see n. 92, above) was a fellow of Merton from 1362 to 1369; in 1367, he gave evidence on behalf of Durham priory in the lawsuit over Appleby, and was promptly rewarded with the rectory of the church when the attempt at appropriation failed: *BRUO*, iii, 1943; Durham D. & C. Mun., 3.4.Ebor.16.

⁹⁵ Blakiston, 'Durham College Rolls', 9.

⁹⁶ *HDST*, 138. On the chantry element in collegiate foundations, see Cobban, *The Medieval English Universities: Oxford and Cambridge to c.1500* (Aldershot, 1988), 112-13; Highfield, 'The Early Colleges', 251.

⁹⁷ Durham D. & C. Mun., Misc. ch. 421, fol. 11r; also Durham D. & C. Lib., MS C.IV.25, fol. 66v. This letter is quoted in part in Blakiston, 'Durham College Rolls', 12-13. The opening passage of the letter contains, however, only a fulsome expression of gratitude by the prior for the bishop's gracious proposal to assist in the appropriation of a church for the support of Durham's monks at Oxford, who would celebrate in perpetuity for the bishop's soul. The prior's suggestion to which Blakiston alludes (p. 12) as if it formed part of this letter, belongs to a document of later date: see below and n. 102.

prior and convent, apparently in December 1380, commending to them the detailed plans which he had drawn up in consultation with their representative, the monk John of Berrington.⁹⁸ It is impossible to know how far the inclusion of secular students in the proposed foundation was Hatfield's design, and how far, if at all, it reflected a wish on the part of the prior and convent to increase their opportunities for educational patronage.⁹⁹ They were apparently happy with the proposals, for in an undated letter, which seems to date from around this time, the community urged the ailing bishop to make the financial provision which he had promised for the college, assuring him of their unceasing prayers on his behalf.¹⁰⁰ By 1 March 1381, the statutes for the new college had been drafted, and were embodied in a lengthy document sealed by the bishop and the community. This spoke in detail, firstly, of the eight student monks who were to devote themselves to philosophy and theology, and to prayers for the soul of the founder, Bishop Hatfield; secondly, of the eight young seculars who were to concentrate on grammar and philosophy; and, thirdly, of the security arrangements for the revenues which would be derived from investment of the cash endowment given by Hatfield.¹⁰¹ The first students were to be in residence by 20 March 1381.

The statutes were, however, not accompanied by any firm decisions as to how best to invest Hatfield's money, and within weeks Prior Walworth suffered the embarrassment of having to beg the bishop to support four of the eight monks until the priory community had managed to make proper use of the funds which he had already supplied.¹⁰² Certainly eight monks were in place by early May, for their warden notified the prior of Durham that he and his seven brethren would obey the summons to return to Durham to participate in the episcopal election following Hatfield's death.¹⁰³ The full history of the college from 1381 remains to be written; here it must suffice to say that the foundation envisaged by Bishop Hatfield continued as a place of education for monks and seculars selected by the prior and convent of Durham until its dissolution in December 1539.

The pre-1381 house of studies, however, had allowed the cathedral priory community to consolidate links with the university and to exploit the opportunities for learning which the Oxford schools offered. The evidence suggests that the Durham monks who resided there applied themselves with reasonable diligence to their studies. As early as the late 1280s, the Oxford-based monks enjoyed a good reputation: the Dean of St Paul's, London, wrote to Prior Hugh praising the manner of life and behaviour of the Durham monks at Oxford, and their diligent application to study, which he had seen for himself in the schools.¹⁰⁴ Few instances of bad behaviour are recorded in the ensuing century. Only once is a monk at the *studium* known to have been accused of sexual misconduct.¹⁰⁵ Two others received rebukes for improper or careless dealings involving library books, among the most valuable resources of the house.¹⁰⁶ Most lived apparently unremarkable lives

⁹⁸ *HDST*, app. no. cxxviii.

⁹⁹ Cf. Dobson, *Durham Priory*, 171.

¹⁰⁰ Durham D. & C. Lib., MS C.IV.25, fol. 70r.

¹⁰¹ Durham D. & C. Mun., 2.5.Ebor.15. *HDST*, 140–41, gives the text of the document in part, but omits the chantry requirements, the security arrangements for the endowment fund, and the starting-date for the monk-scholars of the new college.

¹⁰² Durham D. & C. Lib., MS C.IV.25, fol. 33r. This letter Blakiston mistakenly conflated with an earlier letter from Walworth to Hatfield: see above, n. 97.

¹⁰³ Durham D. & C. Mun., Reg. II, fol. 200v.

¹⁰⁴ *Durham Annals and Documents*, no. 68, p. 130.

¹⁰⁵ *Records of Antony Bek*, p. 145.

¹⁰⁶ Durham D. & C. Mun., Misc. ch. 2645; Durham D. & C. Lib., MS C.IV.25, fol. 57v.

while at Oxford. High academic achievements were confined to only a handful of the students, including such notable figures as John of Beverley, whose commentary on the Rule of St Benedict was still regarded with respect in the Order almost a century after it was written,¹⁰⁷ Uthred of Boldon, who, despite flirtations with heterodox notions, enjoyed a reputation in both ecclesiastical and secular circles for considerable intellectual ability,¹⁰⁸ and John of Aycliffe, who was thought suitable by some senior Benedictine prelates to challenge the ideas of John Wyclif.¹⁰⁹ The work of these, and of their lesser-known brethren, indicates that the community of Durham cathedral priory sought to make its own contribution to the fulfilment of the oft-repeated, if not always clearly-defined, Benedictine aim of participation in the universities *ut nostra religione refloreat studium*.¹¹⁰ The period between 1286 and 1381 was decisive in effecting the transition from old-style claustral learning to new-style university study, and enabling the late medieval community of Durham priory to be among the best-educated in England.

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¹⁰⁷ *Chapters*, ii, 118–9; Foster, 'Durham Cathedral Priory', 343–4.

¹⁰⁸ See Knowles, *The Religious Orders*, ii, 51–2.

¹⁰⁹ See above, p.111 and n. 90.

¹¹⁰ *Chapters*, i, 75 (1277).