

'To Perfect the College . . . ' – the Christ Church Almsmen 1546–1888

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. . . King Henry VIII taking upon him to perfect the college in some sort in its endowment settled here also the number of twenty-four almsmen . . .¹

SUMMARY

When Christ Church was founded in 1546, provision was made for the support of twenty-four almsmen. Their stipend was fixed at £6 each per annum and, although no building was stipulated for their use in the foundation documents, Wolsey's Hospital, now the lodgings of the master of Pembroke College in St. Aldate's, was rapidly accepted as the almsmen's residence. From records in the Christ Church archive it has been possible to compile a nearly complete list of almsmen from 1546 into the 20th century. The men were generally local to Oxford, and had served in either the army or the navy. Detailed regulations for the almsmen were drawn up in the 16th century which suggest that a close connection with the cathedral was envisaged. This paper traces the almsmen's relationship with Christ Church, and their gradual alienation from cathedral and college life. In the late 19th century they were removed from the Almshouse and their link with the foundation of which they had originally been an integral part became limited to the receipt of their pensions.

THE FOUNDATION

Christ Church, with Henry VIII's other cathedral foundations and with its sister college of Trinity in Cambridge, was charged with the support of almsmen. These men, who numbered twenty-four at Christ Church,² were an integral part of both Henry's foundations and of Wolsey's before them. Rarely mentioned in histories of Christ Church, they had a continuous association with the institution until the changes to the constitution in 1867 which established the college in substantially its present form. This paper is based on the extensive records of the almsmen preserved in the archives of Christ Church.

Wolsey's intention to settle almsmen in Cardinal College is demonstrated in a document entitled 'The Yearly Charge of my Lord Cardinal's college when the number therein shall be

¹ A. Clark (ed.), *Anthony Wood's Survey of the Antiquities of the City of Oxford*, i (Oxford, 1889), 193–4. Note on transcriptions throughout the text: abbreviations are extended, monetary units are left (where appropriate) as Roman numerals, and upper case letters, spelling, and punctuation are left as in the original. Names are reported in the form in which they most commonly occur except where forming part of a quotation.

² Christ Church and Trinity College stood out amongst Henry's cathedral foundations in the number of their beadsmen; Bristol and Gloucester, for example, had only four while Chester and Peterborough had six.

fully accomplished according to his most gracious statutes' which provided 20s. per annum, clothes, commons and fuel for thirteen poor men and one woman who was to be their servant.³ Letters Patent, issued for the foundation of King Henry VIII College in July 1532 following the fall of Wolsey, included 'twelve honest paupers'.⁴

At the refoundation of the college as Christ Church in 1546 provision for the support of almsmen is found in the Particular of Lands and Hereditaments (1 October 1546). Also known as the Record of the Court of Augmentations, the Particular is the only source stipulating the pension each of the almsmen was to receive:

And must furdur couenante to fynde there for evere xxiiii poor men such as shalbe frome tyme to tyme to tyme named and appointed by the Kinges majestie his heres and successours or such other as he or thei shall assigne for the same purpose gevinge yerelic unto everie of theyme vi l.⁵

Although none of these provisions were included in statutes,⁶ the financial records of the college show that payments to almsmen were made from the time of the foundation of Christ Church. The Treasurer's Accounts for Michaelmas 1547 record payments to twenty-four almsmen.⁷

WOLSEY'S ALMSHOUSE

The entitlement of the almsmen to receive pensions seems, therefore, never to have been in doubt. The question of their right to reside in the Almshouse in St. Aldate's (now the lodgings of the Master of Pembroke College), however, was always ambiguous.

The Almshouse came to Christ Church as part of Henry VIII's endowment, one of the few possessions of Cardinal College transferred to the new foundation, and is listed in the Deed of Dotation (11 December 1546): 'Ac etiam totum illiad messagium nostrum mansionem sive domum cum pertinentibus vocatum le Almes Howse scituat et existens in dicta parochia sancti Aldati infra dictum Ciuitatem nostram Oxon . . .'.⁸ It is also included in the Particular of Lands and Hereditaments of 1 October: 'A House called ye Almes House with thappurtenances in the parishe of seint Aldate within the said Citie of Oxforde'.⁹ Although from the earliest times up to sixteen of the almsmen resided there, none of the foundation charters specify that the building was to be used for this purpose; evidence from

³ P.R.O., SP1 Henry VIII 35, ff. 88–90. The men were expected to attend church daily.

⁴ V.C.H. Oxon. iii. 235.

⁵ Christ Church Archives (hereafter CCA) MS. Charters &c, f.23 (dated 11 December 1546). The 'Particular' had no legal standing and appears to have been a sketch for the foundation charter yet, in the absence of college statutes, it has been used throughout Christ Church's history as a valuable early source (H.L. Thompson, *Christ Church*, 273–6; CCA, MS. Estates 145, f.100). Draft statutes for Christ Church apparently prepared for discussion in 1546 do not mention the almsmen except in a set of regulations which form the final chapter: CCA, DP vi.b.1, f. 190; J. McConica (ed.), *The Collegiate University* (History of the University of Oxford, vol.iii), 33.

⁶ *Statutes of the Colleges of Oxford* (Oxford, 1853), ii, ch.11, pp. 4–182, 185–210.

⁷ CCA, iii. c. 4, f.31. Four of those listed (Myles, Hynde, Prowde and Beremay) only occur here and in the first Disbursement book. The sources suggest that these men had a slightly different standing from those almsmen appearing consistently in lists in the first Chapter Book (CCA, D&C i.b.1 Registrum ab Anno 1547 and 1619). The first list in the Chapter Book gives only twenty names – possibly being almsmen from King Henry VIII's College.

⁸ CCA, MS. Charters &c, f. 26.

⁹ CCA, MS. Charters &c, f. 16v.

the 16th century shows that many almsmen lived in the town and, by the 19th century, these non-residents had come to be known as 'out-pensioners'.

The history and architecture of the Almshouse is well-documented in the RCHME report on Oxford and in unpublished papers by E.G.W. Bill and A.H. Lawes.¹⁰ The building of the Almshouse in St. Aldate's seems to have been begun by Thomas Wolsey as part of his great work, Cardinal College, and was always known as Wolsey's Almshouse, but it is not known whether it ever fulfilled this function before the foundation of Christ Church. The frame is known to have been built in Kirtlington during the summer of 1529 at a cost of over £21,¹¹ but, as a slatter was working on the roof in March 1546, the Almshouse may not have been completed until that year.¹²

THE MECHANICS OF SELECTION AND ADMISSION

Appointment to one of the twenty-four almsmen's places was in the gift of the Crown (at the recommendation of the dean of Christ Church); this was in common with the other cathedral foundations of Henry VIII.¹³ The importance of the dean in the appointment of almsmen is illustrated in a letter of complaint dated 7 April 1712 and addressed to Dean Atterbury from several of the canons. Atterbury's persistent absenteeism had resulted in the neglect of several aspects of college business one of which was his failure to fill two vacant almsmen's places.¹⁴ No letters of application for a place survive before the mid 19th century; they are addressed either to the dean or directly to the monarch. Once a man's candidature was approved, a patent was drawn up granting the position of almsman of the college. The grant of a patent was recorded at the issuing office, which, from the late 18th century, was the Home Office.¹⁵

Before 1800, applicants commonly received patents before there was a vacancy for them and those holding a grant were added to a waiting list pending the death of one of the twenty-four almsmen in place. The lists for the years 1551–1645 are entered in the sub-dean's books. Elderly or infirm candidates might die before taking their places – many names occurring in the sub-dean's lists do not have corresponding entries in the chapter or disbursement books. However, waiting times rarely exceeded six years – most were three years or less.

The form of the patents, given to each nominated almsman as surety of his place, remained unchanged in the four and a half centuries following Christ Church's foundation. The earliest original is that of John Brassard from December 1622.¹⁶ Each patent was signed by the monarch and by the Principal Secretary of State (to 1782) or the Home Secretary. Very occasionally, the patents were signed by a number of Councillors.¹⁷ Until the mid 19th

¹⁰ RCHME: *Inventory of the Historic Monuments in the City of Oxford* (London, 1939), 95–6; E.G.W. Bill, 'The Christ Church Almshouse', CCA; A.H. Lawes, 'Historical notes on the almshouse', Pembroke College Archives 18/12/15.

¹¹ P.R.O., SP1 Henry VIII 55; cf. *V.C.H. Oxon.* iii. 231 where the figure is given as £14.

¹² *V.C.H. Oxon.* iii. 231; Bodl. MS. Top. Oxon. b.16, f. 19.

¹³ *Cathedral Commission* (1854), p. xxxv.

¹⁴ CCA, DP ii.c.1, f. 120.

¹⁵ P.R.O., HO 118/4 (Almsmen's Warrant Book 1750–1881); HO 118/7 (Almsmen's Warrant Book 1881–1960).

¹⁶ CCA, lxi.a.1; John Brassard appears never to have received a pension.

¹⁷ For example: CCA, lxi.a.10; lxi.a.39; lxi.a.60.

century the patents were handwritten by a deputy or junior Secretary; the first type-written grant appeared in 1896, and a pre-printed form in 1899.

Service in either the army or the navy was the usual qualification for an almsman's place. Although not specified in any foundation document, this appears to have been a rapidly accepted practice; a Chapter Book entry from 1551 records that John Phillips was granted his patent having been wounded in an expedition to Bolonica.¹⁸ The earliest such reference in a patent concerns Jasper Lusted ('a maimed soldier') who was admitted to the Almshouse in 1645 and resided for thirty-three years.¹⁹ Not all the patents specify the reason for the grant; among those that do, Thomas Brickland (1720) had received 'divers wounds' as a corporal in the regiment of Major-General Evans, and John King (1736), after serving in eleven campaigns in Flanders, had 'grown ancient and incapable of further service'. Christopher Taylor (admitted in 1727) had received wounds and 'other misfortunes' in Flanders; Owen Hughes (1736) had been taken prisoner in Spain at Briheuga.²⁰ Letters detailing military service are often folded with 19th-century patents: Charles Lewis, whose patent is dated October 1873, had served twenty years twenty-seven days in the 68th Regiment of Light Infantry and had received, amongst other campaign honours, the Crimean Medal with clasps for the battles at Alma, Balaklava, Inkerman and Sepastopol.²¹ Other forms of royal service may have been accepted as qualifications for an almsman's place – entries in the first sub-dean's book suggest that William Gates and John Bresson had worked in the 'Quenes kitchen',²² and William Granger is recorded in the disbursement book for 1582 as an old minister receiving a gift of alms prior to taking up his almsman's place.²³

During the Interregnum the power of nomination was assumed by the Committee for Public Revenue; Henry Cornish was admitted to an almsman's place on 14 December 1652 on the nomination of that committee, following a recommendation of Colonel Walton, presumably an officer in the parliamentary army.²⁴ At his Restoration in 1660, Charles II directed the dean and chapter to conduct a visitation of the Almshouse to remove those occupants who had been improperly installed and to reinstate those who had been ejected. The royal letter, 2 August 1660, alleged that almsmen's places had been given to men 'that either are noe Souldiers at all, or if they be Souldiers, they are such as never served either the King our Father or us, and are neither impotent or wounded persons; whilst others that have lost their blood and their Limbs in Our Fathers and Our owne service, goe begging up and downe the streets both here and at Oxford'.²⁵ An order was put out on 10 October for all those claiming an almsman's place to attend the audit House in the cathedral on the following Monday (15 October) and to prove their right.²⁶ A report was produced following the audit by the dean and chapter listing those who had been expelled, those who had been restored, and the new almsmen appointed to fill vacant places.²⁷ Sixteen were expelled:

¹⁸ CCA, D&C i.b.1, f. 19.

¹⁹ CCA, lxi.a.5.

²⁰ CCA, lxi.a.11, lxi.a.23; CCA, lxi.a.14, xii.c.170, D&C i.b.5, f. 108; CCA, lxi.a.24 and 24a, xii.c.179.

²¹ CCA, lxi.a.190 and 190a.

²² CCA liii.b.1, f. 58v. Gates was in residence for four years from 1574 but Bresson appears not to have received a pension.

²³ CCA, xii.b.24.

²⁴ CCA, D&C i.b.3, f. 60.

²⁵ CCA, MS. Royal Letters, f. 26.

²⁶ CCA, MS. Estates 142, f. 163.

²⁷ CCA, MS. Estates 142, ff. 163–5. (This report is in a particularly difficult hand – some of the names have been transcribed only by comparison with other related documents.)

Partridge, Hooker, Grove, Cox, Butler, Hands, Brown, Goddard, Partridge, Evesden, Dunch, Southam, Butler, Shepherd, Golledge, and Lath. The remaining eight almsmen in place were allowed to continue on the foundation: Simpkins, Ingram, Lusted, Williams, Hughes, Pierce, Tinkler, and Heath. Six men who had been expelled during the Commonwealth were restored to their rightful places: Handley, Field, Tombs, Ingram jnr., Seaborne, and Fletcher. Finally, eight new almsmen were installed to make up the twenty-four: Thomas, Boardman, Gurden, Prideaux, Stephenson, Allen, Staley, and Crosse.

PATTERNS OF INSTALLATION AND TENURE

It is possible to compile from the Christ Church archives a nearly complete list of men receiving pensions between 1547 and 1900. The earliest 'beadsmen' or 'pauperes eleemosinarii' between 1547 (i.e. the first 'intake') and 1578 are recorded in the chapter books.²⁸ Thereafter, the principal sources comprise the disbursement books²⁹ which provide details of termly expenditure by the college, the sub-dean's books³⁰ which include, amongst other details, lists of all those granted almsmen's patents, and the original patents of which over 350 survive.³¹

Records of the pensions paid to the almsmen are almost continuous. Early payments are recorded in the disbursement books, the earliest of which is dated 1548 and gives the names of just five men.³² Breaks in the sequence of these books occur between 1549-1577, 1631-1641 and 1645-1659. From then until 1865, when account books specifically for the almsmen's pensions were introduced,³³ the sequence is uninterrupted. Each almsman received his £6 per annum in quarterly instalments and, if he were able, signed for his money. On many occasions an almsman's 'mark' is countersigned by the Treasury clerk, or a proxy could be appointed, either a relation or one of the other pensioners.³⁴ Pensions appear to have been paid in arrears with the next of kin benefiting from the final payment. On occasions the disbursement books include annotated details like the date of death and the name of the 'replacement' pensioner.

Between 1547 and 1900 513 men are known to have been admitted to almsmen's places and to have received pensions from Christ Church including an initial intake of twenty. Breaks in the sequence of disbursement books make the figures for the mid 17th century unreliable; without those financial records, it is impossible to tell which of those on the sub-dean's 'waiting lists' actually filled almsmen's places. Nevertheless some useful information about the length of tenure of almsmen over the period can be obtained. As Table 1 shows, tenure during the first century after the foundation was relatively short; two thirds of the almsmen admitted before 1650 held their places for fewer than 15 years. The pattern was reversed from the late 17th century and there are some striking examples of longevity

²⁸ CCA, D&C i.b.1 (Registrum ab Anno 1547 ad 1619).

²⁹ CCA, xii.b.1-119; xii.c.120-309.

³⁰ CCA, liii.b.1-3.

³¹ CCA, lxi.a.1-374.

³² CCA, xxi.b.1, f. 7.

³³ CCA, lxi.c.1 and 2 (include payments up to 1937).

³⁴ For example, Anker Cutler's will, dated 23 July 1577, states 'As concerning the almesmen whose wages I receave namely John Preston William Gates and Thomas Robinson suche money as ys nowe dewe unto them since the last quarter is Remayning in the Treasurers hands as towching the money I have receyved for them heretofore I have acquittances for the discharg thereof': Oxf. Univ. Arch., Hyp A/5/66 (Registrum Curiae Cancellarii).

among the almsmen appointed between 1751 and 1800. The exceptionally high number of long tenures in the late 18th century accounts for the reduction in the numbers of almsmen admitted post-1750.

TABLE 1. TENURE OF ALMSMEN'S PLACES (ROUNDED PERCENTAGES)

Yr. of Adm.	Years of Tenure						Total	No. of men Admitted
	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26+		
1547	20	25	25	5	10	15	100%	20
1551-1600	26	21	21	14	3	14	100%	76
1601-1650	16	24	24	6	10	20	100%	80
1651-1700	26	7	26	13	6	22	100%	69
1701-1750	17	17	13	16	16	21	100%	70
1751-1800	12	17	15	14	10	32	100%	59
1801-1850	13	20	13	19	13	22	100%	54
1851-1900	16	24	27	13	13	7	100%	85
TOTALS	18	19	21	13	10	19	100	513

Of those who were resident for more than 26 years, three held their pensions for over fifty: John Handley, admitted in the late 1640s, was one of those ejected during the Commonwealth but restored to his place in 1660 – he died in 1698;³⁵ John Wilkins, who took Handley's place in 1698, remained resident until 1751;³⁶ John Blundell received his pension from 1749 to 1800.³⁷ Before 1800 there are no indications of the ages of the almsmen, but these instances suggest that some of the almsmen must have received their places at a young age.

THE ALMSMEN

Most men appear to have been local to Oxford or at least to have had Oxford connections. Early evidence is sparse: entries in a sub-dean's book record the granting of patents in 1567 and 1577 to John Evenwoode of Hungerford³⁸ and to John Branne of Woodstock.³⁹ Other than these, only letters of petition and the census returns from 1841 give clues to the origins of the almsmen. The majority of the pensioners listed in the three census returns between 1841 and 1861 were either native to Oxfordshire or Berkshire, or had connections through marriage.

At all periods some of the almsmen were married. Sixteenth-century draft statutes for the college contain regulations (see below) stipulating that the men were only allowed unaccompanied sorties into town if they were permitted by the principal to visit their wives.⁴⁰ It appears that these women lived elsewhere in Oxford, perhaps with their families; the size of the Almshouse would not have permitted whole families to reside together. The 19th-century census returns for the Almshouse do list wives and children, but it would seem that the count was based on the residence of the head of the family: for example, John Taylor's entry in the 1841 return includes Robert and another John (aged fifty-five and fifty

³⁵ CCA, MS. Estates 142, f. 165; CCA, xii.b.103; xii.c.141.

³⁶ CCA, lxi.a.6; xii.c.141; xii.c.194.

³⁷ CCA, lxi.a.47; xii.c.192; xii.c.244.

³⁸ CCA, liii.b.1, f. 58. The record reads 'Jhon Euenwoode of Hungirfoorde'.

³⁹ CCA, liii.b.1, f. 59. 'John Branne of Woodstocke'.

⁴⁰ CCA, DP vi.b.1, f. 190. See also Appendix 2.

respectively), both tailors.⁴¹ William Bartley, a retired soldier and stable labourer from Somerset, was listed in the 1851 census with his Oxford-born wife, Sabina.⁴²

Not all of the almsmen can have been entirely dependent on their stipends. As members of the university they had recourse to the Chancellor's Court when necessary, and a small number of pensioners' wills (and associated documents) dating from the 16th and 17th centuries, proven through the Court, survive in the University Archives. Most appear to be of 'outdoor' almsmen, the inventories listing all those items expected in a house of the period: furniture, linen, kitchen equipment, and tableware. Nicholas Padgett, who was one of the first men admitted to the Almshouse in 1547,⁴³ seems to have been quite substantial. His inventory, taken by Nicholas Wodeson (Bedell of Divinity) and Henry Crosse (Yeoman Bedell), describes in some detail the contents of his hall, parlour, the chambers over the hall and parlour, kitchen and workroom. He even possessed two horses and a cow valued together at 60s.⁴⁴

One almsman was evidently grateful for his time at Christ Church: John Wykyns,⁴⁵ again one of the first 'intake' but apparently a resident, bequeathed his fire irons to the dean and a length of 'new Russett worsted to make a doblett' to one of the clerks, John Scott. The remainder of his property was divided between the other resident almsmen, the 'poor woman dwelling in St. Owles church house', and Christ Church servants, particularly Sylvester Tennante the porter who was Wykyns's executor.⁴⁶

Such evidence as survives indicates that almsmen were carried back to their own parish for interment: Richard Wells requested to be buried in St. Thomas's churchyard, Thomas Hartley at All Saints and Robert Bennet at St. Martin's.⁴⁷ William Hickey, an almsman of Irish origin who had drowned having fallen, while drunk, into a ditch off Holly Bush late on 10 December 1726, was interred at St. Thomas's whilst his wife, who had predeceased him by some years, was buried at St. Peter's in the East.⁴⁸ Only a few men seem to have been buried either in the cathedral or at Osney cemetery.⁴⁹ In the 19th-century rules, almsmen were required to attend and assist at their fellows' funerals.⁵⁰

ADMINISTRATION AND DISCIPLINE

Regulations for the almsmen are found in the final chapter of the draft Henrician Statutes of 1546.⁵¹

Certen decrees and ordinances for the allmes men of the Cathedrall church of Christ in Oxforde of Kyng Henry theightes fundacion

In primis, yt is decreed and ordeyned that ye shall com to the churche all together at the ordre of your principall in your gownes & be at the whole masse, evensonge, processions and Antyme there being godlye

⁴¹ Ages in the 1841 Census were rounded down to the nearest five years. John Taylor was admitted in 1805; CCA, lx.i.a.124; xii.c.249.

⁴² Bartley was admitted to the Almshouse in 1831; CCA, lx.i.a.143; xii.c.275.

⁴³ CCA, D&C i.b.1, f. 3.

⁴⁴ Oxf. Univ. Arch., Hyp B 17/3.

⁴⁵ CCA, D&C i.b.1, f. 3.

⁴⁶ Oxf. Univ. Arch., Hyp A/5/66 (Registrum Curiae Cancellarii), f. 50v.

⁴⁷ Ibid. ff. 206v, 104, 243.

⁴⁸ H.E. Salter (ed.), *Hearne's Collections*, ix (O.H.S. lxx, 1914), 235.

⁴⁹ For example, Anker (Ancour) Cutler and John Wykyns (Wykyng). Oxf. Univ. Arch., Hyp A/5/66 (Registrum Curiae Cancellarii), ff. 229, 50v.

⁵⁰ CCA, MS. Estates 142, f. 251.

⁵¹ CCA, DP vi.b.1, f. 190.

occupied & prayng devoutely as ye shalbe appointed by statuts and ordinances for the same And ye shall retorne Lykewise all together onces ye be otherwise occupied by the Licence ore commandment of the Deane or Subdeane or their deputies

Item ye shalbe obedient to the Deane Subdeane and every officer of the churche and diligently do any suche thinge as they or any of them shall lefully commande you concernyng the same

Item ye shall have one principall emonge you to whom ye shalbe obedient in all Lawfull orders and doinges

Item when ye shall make no outragiouse noyse in your Almes howse but use youe quietly at dyner, supper and at all other tymes and bring in no maner of person or persons whereby at any tyme other honesty or good ordre may be defaced or diminissed nether be owte of your howse after viii of the clocke in the wynter and ix in the Somer

Item when ye goo in to the towne ye shall goo two together except ye goo to your wievis And ye shall goo only to honest places and onely for honest purposes and not with owt the Licence of your principall

Item ye shall at all tymes indeavour youre selves to be well occupied and at no tyme to be ydell

Item the Principall's office and charge shalbe to se that all these and other statutes to be made effectually observed and kept

Within twenty years, however, there were allegations of serious abuses. Elizabeth I, as Visitor of Christ Church, required the dean and chapter to redress abuses of the benefits of residence in the Almshouse.⁵² A royal letter (22 May 1561) charged that some men constantly 'lived out', others had sold their privileges, and some held pensions elsewhere. The dean and chapter were called upon to visit the Almshouse to restore order. Their response was evidently insufficient, for a second letter followed in August commanding prompt attention to the matter in hand. The Principal Secretary (Sir William Cecil) was to be informed once the abuses were resolved. Possible evidence for a subsequent tightening of requirement of residence may be offered by a proviso in the sub-dean's book when Philipp Boxworth was appointed to an almsman's place on 24 October 1576. This stipulated 'that when and after he shalbe placyd he shalbe resident uppon that rome and be present at dyvine service in that churche and shall not be absent saving in case of apparent sycknes . . .'. A reminder to the other almsmen was added that they too were subject to these rules.⁵³ Boxworth never took up his place, probably dying before a vacancy arose. Long delays in the provision of places for men who had received patents seems to have been a growing problem at the end of the 16th century. The case of William Booth, 'a poore maimed soldyer', who received his patent on 20 June 1592 but who had still not been able to take up his place by 1600, being reduced in the meantime to 'great poverty and extremyte',⁵⁴ came before the Privy Council in that year. There were suggestions that 'unmeete persons' were occupying rooms and that there was a lack of 'generall order'. The dean and chapter were required to pay Booth a pension to tide him over until a place became available (he was entered on the list of pensioners in Michaelmas 1603). A report drawn up for the subsequent commission of inquiry (conducted by Sir W. Spencer and Mr W. Fryer⁵⁵) identified several men who had bought their places, were of 'great wealth', or had not served in the military. William Bedell, for example, had paid £10 for his room procured for him by another

⁵² CCA, D&C i.b.2, ff. 291, 292.

⁵³ CCA, liii.b.1, f. 83v.

⁵⁴ J.R. Dasent (ed.), *Acts of the Privy Council 1599-1600* (1905), xxx. 330; William Booth, patent granted 20 June 1592, admitted to an almsman's place 1603, resident until 1607; CCA, xii.b.47; liii.b.1, ff. 61, 62v.

⁵⁵ Sir W. Spencer Kt., possibly William (3rd son of Sir John Spencer of Althorp) 1552-1609, M.P. for Ripon, Auditor for the Exchequer, and prominent in the administration of Oxfordshire. W. Fryer esq., possibly a descendant of William Fryer (or Frere) who was chief purveyor and local agent for Wolsey in 1526 (*K.C.H. Oxon.* iii. 230).

resident, Thomas Moberley.⁵⁶ The Commission, which reported on 6 November 1604, caused the drawing up of a model patent, written into the first sub-dean's book in 1604 'as a patron for all letters for Almesmen hereafter' (see Appendix 1).⁵⁷

Further evidence of renewed vigilance appears in two documents dating from the early 1600s recording an oath which the almsmen were required to swear on admission:

Every Almesman att his admission is to promise

- 1 That he will frequent the Church to pray for the Kinge
- 2 That he be noe raylor nor reviler of any especially his superiors
- 3 That hee live peaceably and quietly cleanly in his chamber.⁵⁸

Other documents about the administration of the Almshouse and its residents are rare. The dean and chapter held ultimate authority but it appears that a level of self-regulation was assumed from the start. There were practical reasons for this; the Almshouse being outside the gates of Christ Church, the pensioners were beyond the continuous watch of college authorities. It may have been that the Principal, provided for in the Henrician regulations, who was selected by the almsmen from among themselves, acted as a supervisor overseeing the pensioners' attendance at cathedral services, visits to town, and observance of the curfew. As late as 1847 there is a reference to a 'Lieutenant Smythe – Staff Officer of Pensioners, Oxford', which is pencilled on the exterior of Edward Terry's patent (dated 30 October 1847);⁵⁹ if this were an almsman then it can only have been J. Smith admitted in 1843 (resident for thirteen years).⁶⁰

Few disciplinary actions are recorded in the archive. In April 1732 the dean and chapter expelled one almsman and reprimanded two more.⁶¹ Charles Pritchard, who had been appointed to the Almshouse in 1718,⁶² was removed after he had 'fraudulently procured his daughter to be married to one Mr Hacker, a Commoner of this House'. At a chapter meeting on 8 April Pritchard was given until the following Monday (Easter Monday) to leave. Robert Hacker soon followed: his caution money was refunded on 19 May.⁶³ In the second case arising in 1732, John Crosier and Christopher Taylor, although escaping expulsion, were admonished to amend their behaviour, having been caught selling strong liquor. Both must have heeded their warning: Crosier (or Crowsheir) was resident for a further thirteen years and Taylor for 33.⁶⁴ In October 1781, John Kimber, admitted in 1777, was expelled by the chapter which ordered 'that Kimber one of the Almsmen of this Church having been convicted of a Felony be removed from his Almsman's place and from all Benefit thereof'.⁶⁵

⁵⁶ Bodl. MS. Top. Oxon. c.23, f. 6.

⁵⁷ CCA, liii.b.1, f. 56v.

⁵⁸ CCA, liii.b.3, f. 113v.; CCA, D&C i.b.2, f. 300; the oath is confirmed in a slightly later document: DP xviii.a.1 (Registrum Decretorum ordine Alphabetica), ff. 86v, 150.

⁵⁹ CCA, lxi.a.153.

⁶⁰ CCA, xii.a.287.

⁶¹ CCA, D&C i.b.5, f. 108.

⁶² CCA, xii.c.161.

⁶³ Robert Hacker, son of a clergyman, matriculated from Christ Church 7 October 1731. His caution money was repaid on 19 May 1732.

⁶⁴ John Crowsheir received his final payment in 1745 (CCA, xii.c.188) and Christopher Taylor in 1765 (CCA, xii.c.209).

⁶⁵ CCA, D&C i.b.5, f. 437.

Except in cases of obvious scandal, however, the dean and chapter exercised little control over the running of the Almshouse. In 1723 the chapter clerk reported that part of the Almshouse had been sub-let by the almsmen themselves as a brewhouse, which was complained of as a 'common nuisance'. The dean and chapter allowed the offending brewer six months to leave and appear to have done little to ensure that their orders were carried out – six years later the same man was still conducting his business from the same rooms.⁶⁶

NINETEENTH-CENTURY CHANGE

By the beginning of the 19th century, and possibly much earlier, the Almshouse had fallen into a state of considerable decay. An engraving of 1830, even allowing for some artistic licence, shows it to have been partially roofless and very dilapidated.⁶⁷ At about this time part of the building was used as a timber yard and apparently provided accommodation for only three or four men.⁶⁸

In the 18th century Pembroke had coveted the site and had unsuccessfully sought to acquire with a view to demolishing the Almshouse and building a new chapel.⁶⁹ The continuing decay of the Almshouse, which the Master and Fellows of Pembroke College alleged in 1831 'so much disfigures the University of Oxford', presented a fresh opportunity for them to revive the proposal to clear the site. On this occasion, they had influential support in the person of Davies Gilbert, an old member of Pembroke, an M.P. and President of the Royal Society, who disclaimed on the part of Pembroke any territorial ambitions.⁷⁰ The aim was aesthetic: to open Pembroke's east frontage and present a more befitting outlook from Christ Church.

The scheme had gained the support of John Bull, the newly appointed treasurer of Christ Church. In December 1831, Bull, who was a local man, considered that the removal of the Almshouse could only be an improvement: not only was the exterior of the building in a state of advanced dilapidation, but inside 'with the exception of two or three apartments all are very filthy, and despite of repeated orders company of a very questionable character are to be often found there'. He questioned whether the almsmen had rights to their rooms and proposed that they be asked to move for an additional £4 per annum to be funded by Pembroke College. Bull doubted the wisdom of constructing a new almshouse – it could become a nuisance equally great. If only the almsmen were young, active and well-conducted then they might be employed, for example, as college watchmen (to guard, perhaps, against a repetition of the 1828 robbery from the Treasury) but old and worn-out soldiers were of 'little use and no ornament'.⁷¹

Pembroke's proposal included the provision of land, or a money grant, for the building of a new almshouse, and an allowance to the almsmen. A meeting of the Commissioners for Mileways in May 1832 set up a subscription to raise £2,500 for the demolition of the four tenements on the condition that Christ Church allowed the demolition of the Almshouse.

⁶⁶ CCA, D&C i.b.5, ff. 54, 96.

⁶⁷ Bodl. MS. Top. Oxon. c. 77, p. 81.

⁶⁸ CCA, MS. Estates 142, ff. 259, 266.

⁶⁹ Ibid. f. 168.

⁷⁰ Ibid. f. 174. The suggestion was originally made in Oct. 1829 by G.W. Hall, the Master of Pembroke: *ibid.* f. 172.

⁷¹ Ibid. f. 176.

Some of the subscribers were Students of Christ Church.⁷² The chapter of Christ Church agreed to the Mileways Commission's proposal and prepared plans for a replacement residence for sixteen almsmen by converting Christ Church's stable block which stood between the track to the Meadow and Trill Mill stream.⁷³

In the event, the Almshouse survived in its existing position, though the tenements were demolished following an agreement between Christ Church and the Mileways Commission.⁷⁴ The demolition of the Almshouse had depended on the assumption that, as the provision for almsmen occurred in no legally binding document, the dean and canons were free to act as they wished. This belief was shaken by legal advice obtained by the chapter which had shown that Christ Church could not sell the Almshouse and that the consent of the Crown was probably necessary to remove the almsmen as they had acquired a constructive right to their rooms, even assuming that they all agreed to go to new premises.⁷⁵ Any change of the sort that was under discussion would involve an Act of Parliament, the likely cost of which made the exercise prohibitive.⁷⁶ G.V. Cox, in his *Recollections*, records a more colourful story of the reprieve of the Almshouse: one of the pensioners, a Scotsman named William Carrick, had resisted a notice to quit issued by the dean and chapter on the irrefutable ground that he held his place 'from the same source and by the same tenure as they held theirs'.⁷⁷

Public attention having been drawn to the dilapidated state of the Almshouse, the dean and canons, who were increasingly vulnerable to the movement to reform wealthy cathedral establishments, undertook to repair and restore the building.⁷⁸ The invoice for work carried out by John Hudson in 1834 totalled £1,346 6s. 11d. including the new north frontage, new plumbing, repairs to the roof, new chimneys and new gables. Fourteen kitchen ranges at a cost of £1 5s. each were installed by D. Stevens, and new regulations placed an obligation upon the almsmen to clean the rooms and staircases (Appendix 2).⁷⁹ The end result, G.V. Cox commented, was 'as respectable a building as some of our Colleges and Halls'.

Rebuilding had done nothing to resolve the larger question of the relation of the almsmen to Christ Church. This had grown more distant over time; since the 16th century the almsmen had become more peripheral to the foundation. Unlike most cathedrals, Christ Church appears not to have found a function for its almsmen except in a minor role as bellringers.⁸⁰ Even the minimal obligations, such as attending cathedral services and receiving Catechism, laid down in the 16th-century regulations for the Christ Church almsmen,⁸¹ had fallen into neglect by the mid 19th century. Nor did they wear the gowns, mentioned in the Henrician regulations, which would have marked them out as members of

⁷² Ibid. f. 199. Christ Church Students: the Revds. Short, Clerk (archdeacon), Ley, Veysey, Hussey, Shouldham, Brown, and Saunders. None were canons in 1832.

⁷³ Ibid. f. 203; CCA, Maps ChCh 8, 9.

⁷⁴ CCA, MS. Estates 142, f. 210.

⁷⁵ CCA, MS. Charters &c, f. 26; *ibid.* MS. Estates 142, ff. 178, 185, 193. (Folio 193: a letter from Henry Hewlett to Robert Morrell in which it was acknowledged that no deed had been found creating an obligation but it was felt that the dean and chapter were bound to provide for 24).

⁷⁶ CCA, MS. Estates 142, ff. 203-5.

⁷⁷ G.V. Cox, *Recollections of Oxford* (London 1868), 167, n.2. Thomas Carrick was admitted to the Almshouse in 1800 and remained in residence until 1841.

⁷⁸ P. Barrett, *Barchester: English Cathedral Life in the Nineteenth Century* (1993), 12-13.

⁷⁹ *RCHME Oxford*, 96; CCA, MS. Estates 142, ff. 208-22, 226-8.

⁸⁰ M.E.C. Walcott, *Cathedrals: A Constitutional History of the Western Church* (1865), 140.

⁸¹ CCA, DP xviii.a.1 (Registrum Decretorum ordine Alphabetica), ff. 67, 86v; CCA, DP i.b.2 (Black Book), f. 223.

the foundation.⁸² Admittedly the decline at Christ Church was not as severe as at Rochester Cathedral where the appointment of almsmen had actually ceased after 1773. But Rochester was the most extreme case.⁸³

The recommendations of the 1852 Cathedral Commission, which sought to revitalize the cathedrals, included provisions aimed at restoring beadsmen to something approaching their original position. They proposed that almsmen should be required to discharge their statutable duties and that their stipends be increased; that they should be removable for gross misconduct; and finally that they be placed under the spiritual charge of one of the canons.⁸⁴

Some cathedrals responded to these suggestions, which had no statutory force, by giving their almsmen a variety of more active roles. At Bristol, for example, two of its beadsmen were appointed to act as precinct constables and all four took it in turns to assist the cathedral doorkeeper; at Worcester, the almsmen had their stipends increased to serve as organ-blowers. Most cathedrals found their almsmen employment in cleaning, lighting and extinguishing candles, and generally assisting the officiating clergy; Gloucester went one stage further in appointing their beadsmen 'general officers' and paying a weekly salary.⁸⁵

At Christ Church, however, in the decade following the Commission, the link between the almsmen and the cathedral was effectively severed. Early in 1867, the canons took the opportunity presented by the imminent changes to the constitution of Christ Church to effect a fundamental change in the position of the almsmen.⁸⁶

In May 1867, Dr. Payne Smith (Treasurer and Regius Professor of Divinity 1865–70) discussed with C.W. Lawrence (Chapter Clerk) the argument for removing the almsmen from the Almshouse and paying them some additional stipend in lieu of their rooms. His reasons suggest that, in the eyes of the canons, the resident almsmen were an unattractive anachronism. Although the installation of extra gas-lighting had resolved the problem of the Almshouse being used for womanizing, drunkenness was still prevalent.⁸⁷ The proposed removal of the almsmen was supported by Dean Liddell, who was unsympathetic to the other charitable aspects of the original foundation (such as servitors).

The immediate difficulty was the amount of compensation which the almsmen would receive in place of their rooms. Payne Smith had pointed out that no decent tenement could be found in Oxford for under £14–16; the new pension needed to be sufficient to provide not only compensation but to meet practical requirements. In June 1867 the chapter offered the almsmen an increase in their pensions from £6 to £10 a year in compensation for their eviction. This was not a generous offer. Although most cathedral beadsmen had received a similar sum in the 16th century, many had had their stipends raised: at Winchester, the almsmen received £18 and a gown; at Gloucester, in addition to

⁸² *Cathedral Commission* (1854), 773.

⁸³ P.R.O., HO 45/8541.

⁸⁴ *Third and Final Report of the Cathedral Commission* (1855), pp. xx–xxi.

⁸⁵ Barrett, *Barchester*, 26, 110–111; *Cathedral Commission* (1883), 147–8, 188, 200, 312; *Cathedral Commission* (1884), 35, 71, 225, 236, 262–3.

⁸⁶ In the Christ Church Oxford Act of 1867, responsibility for the almsmen remained with the Chapter rather than passing to the new Governing Body. After the negotiations between almsmen and Christ Church in 1867–8 setting the new stipend prior to expulsion, the Chapter paid the original £6 pension and the Governing Body the additional £10. This division was confirmed both in 1878 (GB Order Book 1.5.1878) and in 1925 in 'Questions Submitted to the Visitor' (CCA, MS. Estates 142, ff. 407–25).

⁸⁷ CCA, MS. Estates 142, f. 259.

the £14 6s. pension, they were given a gown and the salaries for cathedral work which ranged from 9s. 6d. to 12s. 6d. extra each week. Non-cathedral almspeople within Oxford also received substantially larger amounts: the inhabitants of Tawney's and Parson's Almshouses received £20.⁸⁸

Indignant at what they considered to be a paltry offer, the Christ Church almsmen followed the example of their fictional brethren in Trollope's *The Warden*, and sent a petition to the queen through the duke of Cambridge (commander-in-chief) in June 1867.⁸⁹ Drafted by Samuel Hodge and signed by all the residents, the petition contended that £10 was 'not one half' the value of the rooms to the men, especially as their pension was still at the same level it had been in 1547 – about 4d. per day. The petition seems to have achieved little; the Charity Commission, to whom the almsmen were evidently directed, were uncertain of their rights of jurisdiction over the Almshouse; had Christ Church been solely a college of the university it may have fallen within the Charity Commission's remit, but as a cathedral foundation Christ Church was exempt from Commission investigation.⁹⁰ Certainly the inquiry into Oxford charities undertaken by the commissioners in 1822 had left the Christ Church Almshouse unexamined.⁹¹ Even had the almsmen been able to take their case to the Charity Commission, it is doubtful whether the outcome would have been different. There was no evidence of financial malpractice on the part of Christ Church; the almsmen had no statutory right to reside in the Almshouse which was not in itself endowed. So, unlike Trollope's beadsmen, the case of the Christ Church almsmen did not attract the powerful support of even the local newspapers. In the end, the almsmen were defeated by the peculiarities of the foundation.

The dean and chapter filed a petition to Chancery⁹² on 11 April 1868 and an Order dated 25 April permitted the payment of an increased pension (now agreed at £16) to new almsmen in lieu of a room, and, on the death or resignation of the current residents, freed the dean and chapter from all other rights or interests of the almsmen.⁹³ From December of that year all new appointees 'lived out' and the rooms in the Almshouse were gradually closed up as men died. Five almsmen, apparently all out-pensioners and appointed before December 1868, petitioned the Lord Chancellor in 1873, objecting that they had not been granted a similar increase and that rooms which could be used by the men on the old £6 pension were being shut up.⁹⁴ The appeal – by Henry Berry, George Hall, George Wakelin, Stephen Weston and one other who, at the last moment, had thought better of adding his name – appears to have fallen on deaf ears. Two years later, in May 1875, the remaining resident pensioners negotiated successfully with the dean and chapter for a £16 annual

⁸⁸ *Cathedral Commission* (1884), 35, 236; *V.C.H. Oxon.* iv. 462–3.

⁸⁹ A. Trollope, *The Warden* (first published in 1855); Samuel Hodge was a pensioner from 1861–1907. CCA, lxix.c.2; *ibid.* MS. Estates 142, f. 312; *ibid.* xii.c.305; *ibid.* DP ii.c.2.

⁹⁰ CCA, MS. Estates 142, f. 264–6.

⁹¹ There is no mention of the Christ Church almshouse or almsmen in the 1822 Report to the Charity Commission.

⁹² The Chapter's lawyers had advised applying to Chancery under Sir Samuel Romilly's Act (52 Geo 3 c. 101). Under the Act, application could be made for an order sanctioning the sale of the Almshouse and increasing the annual payment to the pensioners, and a decision could be made summarily thus avoiding the expense of an Act of Parliament. Pembroke College was to be asked to meet at least part of the cost of proceedings.

⁹³ CCA, MS. Estates 142, f. 294.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* f. 306. Although no plans survive of the internal arrangement of the building prior to its late 19th-century alteration, a notebook from 1867 (CCA lxia.1, Christ Church Almshouse 1867) reveals that the rooms were arranged on five staircases with up to four rooms per staircase. The notebook suggests that as lower rooms were vacated, men were moved downstairs and the upper rooms closed.

payment, having shown that a room was actually worth over £26.⁹⁵ The agreement was signed by the five almsmen (John Grey, Robert Jones, Samuel Hodge, Ambrose Biddlecombe and James East) and by C.W. Lawrence for the dean and chapter on the condition that rooms were vacated by March 1876.⁹⁶

After the removal of the almsmen, the Almshouse became the residence of the Treasurer of Christ Church until its eventual sale to Pembroke College on 12 November 1888.⁹⁷ T.V. Bayne, secretary to the Christ Church Governing Body, opposed the sale throughout the deliberations which followed Pembroke's renewed offer in 1883. The Governing Body, faced with a financial crisis as a result of the agricultural depression, were reminded by Vere Bayne on the eve of their final decision to sell that 'the loss of Calais was more deeply felt in England than the loss of Normandy'; every Christ Church man passing through Tom Gate would be reminded of the cession of one of its foundation properties.⁹⁸

The almsmen were now all non-residents, their connection with Christ Church having been reduced solely to the receipt of a pension. In keeping with the wider movement against indiscriminate charity, appointments were carefully selected from deserving cases. Applications were endorsed by clergymen, college dons and their wives, and city functionaries. The application of William Carter (admitted 1888), a former sergeant in the Coldstream Guards, was supported by testimonials of good character from Thomas Mallam, the solicitor, James Jenkins, chairman of the Oxford Board of Guardians, Richard Meux Benson of the Cowley Fathers, and Robert Buckell the mayor.⁹⁹ John Turner, another former soldier admitted in 1888, came with a recommendation from Lavinia Talbot, wife of the warden of Keble College.¹⁰⁰

Maintenance of the almsmen had come to represent only a part of Christ Church's charitable giving. Just as the Henrician and Edwardian measures against chantries, and consequently the medieval hospitals, resulted in a diversion of charity from religious houses to the local poor, so in the 19th century, as historians of almshouses have noted, the trend was away from the support of a few privileged individuals towards types of giving which had a wider benefit.¹⁰¹ At its foundation Christ Church was required 'to distribute yerelie for ever in almes emongest the povertie within the Towne and Universitie of Oxford the some of xx l . . .'.¹⁰² The distribution of 14s. 5d., recorded in the sub-dean's book for 1564, was typical of the pattern in the late 16th century: to 'Gailandes wife iiid, a man by our gate iid, Wood infected vid, the prisoners in the kastle iis vid . . .'.¹⁰³ In the early 17th century donations were still recorded (now in the disbursement books) to 'a poor old man robbed of his money' or to '2 soldiers',¹⁰⁴ but by 1789 larger sums were spent 'for care of the poor in

⁹⁵ CCA, MS. Estates 142, f. 312. The value of a room was calculated as £26 9s. 6d. broken down into: £17 to rent a property in Oxford, £1 1s. 3d. for general rates, £1 1s. 3d. for poor rates, 15s. for water rates, 1s. for bread and beer, 3s. 6d. from the Deanery at Christmas, 7s. 6d. in gifts of coal, plus their £6 pension.

⁹⁶ CCA, MS. Estates 142, f. 315. A pencilled note on this document and entries in the ledgers (CCA, lxix.c. 2, f. 114v.) show that these men were also paid a lump sum of £50.

⁹⁷ CCA, MS. Estates 142, ff. 317-98.

⁹⁸ CCA, MS. Estates 142, f. 350.

⁹⁹ CCA, lxi.a.242.

¹⁰⁰ CCA, lxi.a.211a.

¹⁰¹ E. Prescott, *The English Medieval Hospital 1050-1640* (1992), 105; B. Bailey, *Almshouses* (1988), 183.

¹⁰² CCA, MS. Charters &c., f. 23v. 'Particulars of Lands and Hereditaments . . . with Account of such Covenants as the King expected the Dean and Chapter to enter into therefore'.

¹⁰³ CCA, liii.b.1, f. 78r.

¹⁰⁴ CCA, xii.b.52.

Bridwell' (£2 17s. 6d.), 'for meat for castle prisoners' (£1 6s. 0d.) and 'to the poor of St. Bartholomew's Hospital (5s.).¹⁰⁵ The trend in the 19th century was for Christ Church, like other colleges, to make donations to institutions for educational and other charitable purposes. These were well in excess of the £20 decreed at the foundation. In 1829, beneficiaries of grants from the chapter totalling £160 included schools, a charity for clergymen's widows, and a society providing machinery to 'supersede Climbing Boys'.¹⁰⁶ Such payments had risen to over £1,000 a year in the late 1860s, the main beneficiaries being schools in parishes where Christ Church had property.¹⁰⁷ In the same period donations from cathedral alms favoured missionary societies, diocesan organizations, and various local bodies.¹⁰⁸ The change in emphasis is strikingly illustrated by the decision of Christ Church chapter to construct 'Model Dwellings' for the poor in St. Thomas's parish at the very moment when the canons set about removing the almsmen from the Almshouse.¹⁰⁹

APPENDIX I. PATENTS

1. 1604 Example

'Elizabeth

Trusty and welbeloued we grete you well. And lett you witt that in consideration of the old age and longe service done in the warres by our welbeloued subject Morice Meredith and of his hurtes and maymes receaved ther; we haue giuen and granted, and by these presentes for us our heyres and successors do give and grant unto him the roome of one of our Almesmen within our Cathedrall church called Christes Church in our Uniuersity of Oxford. Wherefore our will and pleasure is, that you shall receave and place the said Morice Meredith into such a roome if any be now voyde or for lacke of present vacation into the same roome, that shall next happen to be voyd ther, after the placing of such as have our former letters for the said roome. And uppon his admission, we will you to pay and to allow unto him such wages, fees, allowances and all other commodities as are belonging and apperteyning to the same yearly during his life, att such times as the same are appoynted and used to be payd and allowed and as other our Almesmen then presently placed have or of right ought to have for the same. Provided that when and after he shalbe placed, he shalbe resident upon that roome and shalbe present at diuine service in that Church and shall not be absent saving in case of apparent sickness or without your licence, and that for some small time, upon payne to fall from the Benefitt of this our grant which we will you to see our other Almesmen ther also to observe upon like payne. Given under our signett att our pallace of Westminster the xii day of Marche in the nyntenth year of our reigne 1576.

To our trusty and welbeloued, the Deane
and Chapter of our Cathedrall Church
called Christ church, in our Vniuersity
of Oxford that now is, our hereafter for
the time shalbe.
Windebanke¹¹⁰

It is uncertain whether this was a genuine patent copied into the sub-dean's book or an invention purely as an example. This style does not re-occur among the surviving patents which place more responsibility on the dean and chapter to fulfil their obligations to the almsman.

¹⁰⁵ CCA, xii.c. 232.

¹⁰⁶ CCA, vii.a.10 (cash book 1825-30).

¹⁰⁷ *Universities Commission* (1874), ii. 683.

¹⁰⁸ CCA, D&C iii.a.1 (cathedral alms account book 1877-84).

¹⁰⁹ CCA, D&C ii.b.10 (chapter minutes 23 Nov. 1865, 10 May 1867).

¹¹⁰ CCA, liii.b.1, f. 56v.

2. *Sample of Actual Patent in Use 16th–20th Centuries*

George R.

'Trusty and Welbeloved Wee Greet you well Letting you weet that Wee minding the Relief of Our Poor Subject Richard Cope have given and Granted and by these Presents for Us Our Heirs and Successors Do Give and Grant unto the said Richard Cope the Room and Place of One of Our Almsmen belonging to Our Cathedral Church of Christ in Oxford for and during his Natural Life if any such Place be there now Void or the next that shall become Void after the Placing of such as have our former Grant for the like Place there Wherefore Wee will and Command you not only to admit and Place the said Richard Cope into the said Almsmans Place belonging to Our Cathedral Church aforesaid but also to pay and Allow unto him from Time to Time after his Admittance all such Wages Fees Dutys and other Allowances as shall be due and incident to the same in as large Ample and Beneficial Manner as any other Our Almsmen there have receive and Enjoy or of Right ought to have receive and Enjoy by the Foundation thereof Provided always that if the said Richard Cope hath any Almsmans Place elsewhere then this Our Present Grant unto him be Void and of None Effect And these Our Letters shall be your Sufficient Warrant. Given under Our Signet at Our Palace of Westminster the Twenty First Day of June in the Nineteenth year of Our Reign

Examined

Richard Shadwell deputy

To Our Trusty and Welbeloved the Dean and Chapter of Our Cathedral Church of Christ in Oxford now and for the Time being and to any others whom it shall or may concern

Signified to be your Majesty's Pleasure by Lord Viscount Weymouth one of your Majesty's Principal Secretaries of State¹¹¹

This style of patent is consistent, with minor alterations in spelling and punctuation, from the earliest in the archive until the 20th century. The only differences occur after the first mention of the new pensioner's name where details of military service etc. can be included briefly. For example, the patent of John Wilkins issued in 1698 adds after his name '... who was blown up at the Bombarding of Diep on the Sixteenth day of July One-Thousand and Six Hundred Ninety four and thereby disabled ...'¹¹² The patent is also consistent with those in use in other almshouses where the places were in the gift of the Crown. Only the forms of address vary.¹¹³

APPENDIX 2. NINETEENTH-CENTURY REGULATIONS FOR THE ALMSMEN

1. *From the Estates Papers*¹¹⁴

'That the door into the Street was be locked every night; in Winter as soon as Tom has done tolling, and in Summer at Ten o'Clock.

That whoever shall leave it open after three hours, shall be fined Two Pence.

That whoever loses his Key of this Door, shall provide a new one at his own expence.

That no Inhabitant of the House shall put down or keep any Ashes, Dust, Dirt, Rubbish, or stale Slops, in their respective Rooms, under penalty of Two Pence for each offence.

That the Stairs be cleaned once a week by the Occupiers of Rooms up stairs. Fine for neglect thereof Two pence.

That no Dirt, Offal or Rubbish be put down in the Yard except in the Dirt Hole provided for that purpose, and that all Slops be emptied in the Sink Holes. Fine Two pence.

That the privies be kept locked; that no one having a right to a key do lend the same; and that the place be cleaned once a week in turns. Fine Two Pence.

¹¹¹ CCA, lx.i.a.101 (patent of Richard Cope dated 21st June 1779).

¹¹² CCA, lx.i.a.6.

¹¹³ P.R.O., HO 118/4 (Almsmen's Warrant Book 1750–1881).

¹¹⁴ CCA, MS. Estates 142, f. 251.

That the ashes from all and each of the Rooms be put down together in the place provided, and the Money arising from the sale of the same be equally divided.

That all surviving Members of the House do attend and assist at Funerals and that the keys of the deceased be delivered to the Bailiff of the College. All Fines to be levied as Stoppages in the Quarterly Payments at the Treasury, and the amount expended for the use and benefit of the whole inhabitants as the Majority may agree.'

2. *From the Chapter Book*

A further set of rules dated 25 March 1835 is recorded in the minutes of a Chapter meeting.¹¹⁵ It is uncertain whether these pre- or post-date the above, or were a draft version, but the minute begins: 'The Dean and Chapter having expended a large sum of money in rebuilding and restoring the ancient Alms House in St. Aldate's have revised the rules and regulations to be observed by the pensioners residing therein and directed the Manciple to read the said rules and regulations to every pensioner upon his appointment to a set of rooms and to the rest occasionally at the discretion of the Dean'. The new rules follow:

'Rules to be observed by all persons admitted into the Almshouse in St Aldates Oxford extracted from the Orders made by the Dean and Chapter.

First Every pensioner is to occupy during good behaviour the Room assigned to him; the Key of which shall be delivered to him by the Manciple or the Beiliff of the Dean and Chapter

Second No lodger or Inmate of any kind not belonging to the Family of the pensioner is to be permitted to abide in such room unless in cases of illness or infirmity upon permission of the Dean and Chapter obtained through the Bailiff.

Third No alterations or partitions are to be made within the rooms without leave obtained as above. No fixtures whatever are to be removed.

Fourth Each occupier to keep his Apartment clean and neat and as much as possible free from Dilapidation. He is to keep the glass in the Windows in repair.

Fifth The Bailiff of the Dean and Chapter or their workmen is to have admission to view the inside of every room and to report the state thereof to the Dean and Chapter every quarter.

Sixth Upon report of any wilful injury and neglect to repair the same after due notice, the Bailiff shall have power to order the necessary repair the expence of which shall be defrayed by a stoppage of the amount out of the quarters Salary payable at the Treasury.

Seventh The Garden allotted to each room is to remain attached to the same and neither be let nor sold.

Eighth On the Death of any pensioner the Key of his Apartment is to be delivered to the Bailiff.

The Society is grateful to Christ Church, Oxford, for a grant towards publication of this paper.

¹¹⁵ CCA, D&C i.b.9, ff. 147-8.