

The Ecclesiastical Patronage of the Bishops of Winchester, 1282–1530

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The quality and qualities of the late medieval clergy determined how effectively ecclesiastical policy was implemented, and ecclesiastical administration operated, how Christianity was understood and practised by ordinary people. It determined standards of education, healthcare, learning and much else. Appointments to church livings were therefore crucial: they are also particularly well recorded. No-one had more interest in such appointments, or influence over them, than the bishops of England's seventeen dioceses. It is strange, therefore, that no systematic study to date has been made of episcopal appointments for any English diocese in the late middle ages. This paper fills that gap. It takes as its subject the patronage of the bishopric of Winchester, which relates principally to the counties of Hampshire and Surrey.¹ It covers the whole period for which episcopal registers survive up to the death of Cardinal Wolsey, on the eve of the Reformation.

Late medieval clergy held their appointments – livings – for life. Every living had a patron who had the right of presentation. When vacancies occurred, the patron presented his choice to the bishop, who instituted him (the clerk) to the living. Where bishops themselves were the patrons, presentation and institution were combined in a process known as 'collation'.

The primary objective of most appointments was to ensure that services were maintained and the souls of parishioners catered for. Appointments also constituted patronage, and were a way of providing a clerk with an income at no cost to oneself. Almost all significant landowners had both advowsons and clerks in their service on whom to bestow their livings. Bishops, in particular, had a great need for such clerks in their chanceries, law courts and estate administrations, and therefore a great need for livings with which to reward them.

The clergy of the late middle ages have been broadly divided into two groups: the minority who were lucky enough to have a living, and the

unbeneficed majority who made a living as personal or parish chaplains or chantry priests.² All the clergy discussed in this paper were the former type: they were therefore amongst the lucky few. There were far more clergy than there were livings and this meant that there was frequently considerable competition for benefices.

The bishops of Winchester left a considerable archive, most famously in the Winchester pipe rolls, but also a good collection of episcopal registers, the only substantial loss being that of the bulk of Cardinal Beaufort's register. These sources have been supplemented with the published records of royal and papal government, and from these sources a database of *recorded* collations has been constructed, the results of which form the basis of this paper.³ Sometimes the bishops were able to exercise others' patronage. For example, occasionally they acted as chancellor, and as such would have had the right to present to benefices that had fallen in to the king's hands, and were worth less than 20 marks. Until c.1521 Bishop Richard Fox supervised the administration of the diocese of Worcester, while its incumbents were absentee Italians. Difficulties in identification and quantification have meant that such sources have been deliberately excluded from this study, except in the very few cases where they were recorded in the Winchester registers.

I

In 1285 there was a formal division of property between the bishop of Winchester and the cathedral priory of St Swithun's. Under the agreement the bishops established their right to the advowsons of some 101 parochial benefices. Of these 79 were in the diocese of Winchester, fourteen in Salisbury, four in Lincoln, two in Bath and Wells and one each in London and Ely.⁴ There were 96 rectories, where the incumbent held the great and little tithes, and the cure of souls for the parish, and only five vicarages, where the incumbent held the little tithes, and was required to be resident in the parish. This may have been an untypically large number of parochial benefices for an episcopal patron, and was the product of the very large landed estate with which Winchester was endowed. Even after Bishop Pontoise (1282–1304) had formally divided the estate between himself and the priory, the bishopric comprised nearly sixty manors and ten boroughs, spread over the counties of Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hampshire, Oxfordshire, Somerset, Surrey and Wiltshire. In addition to the parochial benefices where the bishops held the advowson, there were also the archdeaconries of Surrey and Winchester, four chaplaincies at the chantry college of Marwell, and six hospitals. However, Winchester was one of a small number of southern

dioceses whose cathedral had a monastic constitution. The others were Canterbury and Rochester. This meant that there were no dignitaries, canonries or prebends, as there were in the secular cathedrals (Bath and Wells, Chichester, Exeter, London and Salisbury). These were particularly valuable types of benefice, because they held no cure of souls, had no requirement of residence, and could be held in plurality.⁵ Moreover in some secular cathedrals they could be numerous: both Bath and Wells, and Salisbury, had over fifty dignities and prebends. The bishops of Winchester were therefore at a disadvantage in trying to attract and reward the most powerful and influential secular clergy.

In this period it was difficult for episcopal lords to increase the number of livings at their disposal. By 1285 bishops and cathedrals had long ceased to be endowed by kings and laymen and could not be granted property by other ecclesiastical corporations that had been endowed in perpetuity. Parishes were no longer being created. The bishops of Winchester were able to make some extension to the livings in their gift – principally through the foundation of perpetual chantries and educational establishments. It should not be thought, however that the extension of rights of ecclesiastical patronage was the prime motivation of the bishops in these foundations; all were designed to provide prayers for the souls of the donors and to speed their passage through purgatory. Additionally, since the donors were bishops, they aimed to advance the Church, through increasing divine worship, providing patronage for future bishops, and advancing charity. All were recognised as good works, as was another concern, enhancing the clergy's education. In 1301 Bishop Pontoise founded St Elizabeth's College, Winchester – a college for a provost, three chaplains and three clerks.⁶ Bishops Stratford (1323-33) and Edington (1346-66) made foundations in other dioceses, but did not retain the advowson of these livings for themselves. Finally in the 1440s Cardinal Beaufort (1404-47) attempted to augment the hospital of St Cross, with his 'Almshouse of Noble Poverty', which was to have two priests, 35 brethren and three sisters, and was designed in part, at least, to cater for ageing retainers. However, Beaufort died before the almshouse was complete, and when Bishop Waynflete put his predecessor's plan into effect, it was on a much reduced scale.⁷

The bishops also founded a number of educational establishments. Wykeham (1366-1404) founded Winchester College and New College, Oxford, Waynflete (1447-86) founded Magdalen College, Oxford, and finally Richard Fox (1501-28) founded Corpus Christi College, also at Oxford. Once again, the extension of ecclesiastical patronage was only one among many reasons for these foundations. Initially the bishops appointed the warden and fellows, but this rapidly gave way to a process

whereby fellows and wardens were elected and the scholars were chosen by the fellows, according to statute. For example in Wykeham's foundation of New College, the bishop appointed the first warden, M Thomas Cranley MA (d.1417) in May 1389.⁸ In 1396, however, Bishop Wykeham decreed that future wardens were to be elected by the fellows of the college.⁹ Thereafter, while the bishops remained powerful, their powers of appointment were strictly limited. It has been shown, however, that Wykeham, at least, wielded some considerable informal influence in his colleges, and could persuade the fellows to accept favoured scholars.¹⁰ It has been suggested that Bishop Waynflete had a similar degree of control over Magdalen.¹¹

Against these slight gains must be balanced the considerable loss of advowsons suffered by the bishops. A small group of quite valuable benefices were alienated voluntarily. In 1336 the advowson of All Hallows the Less in London was sold to Sir John Pulteney (d.1349), to provide for his prebendal church of St. Lawrence, Candlewick Street.¹² In exchange Bishop Orleton and his two immediate successors received the right to present to a stall in St Lawrence's. Most voluntary losses, however, occur in the form of appropriations. It was a legal process whereby the great tithes of a wealthy parish church were diverted to an infant or languishing ecclesiastical corporation. The corporation became the rector, and in turn appointed a vicar who was to be responsible for the cure of souls in the parish. It was also a way of diverting wealth from the bishopric to the private purposes of the bishop and appropriations were often used to fund their chantries or colleges. There were some twelve during the overall period, with four in the first decade of the fourteenth century, namely the churches of St Stephen's Winchester and Hursley (Hampshire) went to St Elizabeth's College, with East Overton and Enford (Wiltshire) going to St Swithun's Priory.¹³ A further spate followed in the 1380s when Bishop Wykeham appropriated Steeple Morden (Cambridgeshire) and Downton (Wiltshire) to Winchester College, and Adderbury (Oxfordshire) to New College Oxford.¹⁴ The church of Haveringdon (Buckinghamshire) was appropriated to Bisham Priory (Buckinghamshire) in 1415.¹⁵ The final spate came in the 1440s, with Cardinal Beaufort respecting Crondall (Hampshire), St Faith's and St James' Winchester to endow his almshouse at St. Cross, along with the suppressed hospital of St John the Baptist, Fordingbridge (Hampshire).¹⁶

The loss of other advowsons was forced on the bishops by circumstances beyond their control. In the face of stiff resistance from Bishop Pontoise, the king established his right to the advowson of God's House Southampton in c.1293.¹⁷ The brethren of St Thomas the Martyr,

Southwark, won the right to elect their warden only a few years later.¹⁸ The most dramatic losses of patronage, however, were caused by changes in the city of Winchester itself. Since the twelfth century the city had been in slow decline, and this process accelerated after the onset of the Black Death. As the population fell the large number of very small parish churches that had grown up in the city could no longer be supported. They fell into disrepair and were unable to support an incumbent. In 1452 the burgesses complained that over the last eighty years some eighteen had become dilapidated. By the end of the period some 21 out of the 37 livings held by the bishops in the city, had disappeared or had been suppressed.¹⁹ This amounted to 21 per cent of the bishop's total stock of parochial benefices, well in excess of the national loss of parishes in this period, estimated at 7 per cent.²⁰ By the end of the Middle Ages episcopal patronage had been reduced to some 83 livings – a considerable decline. The bishop remained, however, the most important patron in the diocese.

II

As important, perhaps, as crude numbers of benefices, is the way that these livings converted into acts of patronage – in this case collations. It is to those collations that we must now turn.

Obviously, the number of collations that a bishop could expect to make partly depended on the length of his episcopate. For example 23 were recorded during Peter Courtenay's five-year episcopate (1487-92), whereas 277 were attributed in William Waynflete's 39-year episcopate (See Table 1). In the early fourteenth century the average appears to have been about eight a year. However, increases came during the middle years of the fourteenth century, when the plague and the practice of exchanging benefices generated a rapid turnover of incumbents. It is estimated that in Winchester diocese some 48.8 per cent of beneficed clergy perished during the first attack of the Black Death, a similar figure to that in Hereford diocese, where the casualty rate is conservatively estimated at 38 to 40 per cent.²¹ Bishop Edington made an average of nineteen collations per year but it should be remembered that the those of plague inflated this figure. The total number for 1349 alone was 82. The figure returned under Wykeham to a yearly nine. By the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, the number was dropping. Waynflete made an average of seven a year, Courtenay five, Langton eight and Fox five. Why should this have been? A number of factors may have been important here, including the loss of benefices, but few of the lost advowsons had many recorded collations; more plausibly it was caused

Table 1: The Winchester Collations, 1282-1530

Episcopate	Total	Pleno Jure	Lapses, custodia, commenda & devolutions	Exchanges	Royal & archiepiscopal grants	Papal provisions	Another patron
Vacancy	14	0	0	0	14	0	0
Pontoise	176	106	661	33	33	3	0
Vacancy	9	0	0	0	9	0	0
Woodlock	94	71	15	1	3	4	0
Vacancy	7	0	0	0	7	0	0
Sandale	24	13	5	4	0	2	0
Vacancy	16	0	0	0	16	0	0
Asser	47	29	7	11	0	0	0
Vacancy	15	0	1	2	12	0	0
Stratford	104	66	14	18	1	4	1
Vacancy	9	0	0	1	8	0	0
Orleton	157	88	8	52	1	2	6
Vacancy	12	0	0	0	11	1	0
Edington	371	176	76	101	2	14	2
Vacancy	11	0	5	1	5	0	0
Wykeham	360	154	51	138	15	2	0
Vacancy	3	1	0	1	1	0	0

Table 1: Continued

Episcopate	Total	Pleno Jure	Lapses, custodia, commenda & devolutions	Exchanges	Royal & archiepiscopal grants	Papal provisions	Another patron
Beaufort	106	56	0	50	0	0	0
Vacancy	1	0	0	0	1	0	0
Waynflete	277	218	27	31	1	0	0
Vacancy	1	0	0	0	1	0	0
Courtenay	23	19	2	2	0	0	0
Vacancy	6	1	0	1	4	0	0
Langton	61	52	8	1	0	0	0
Vacancy	4	0	0	0	4	0	0
Fox	136	101	25	6	0	0	4
Vacancy	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wolsey	10	10	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	2054	1161	305	424	119	32	13

(Sources: The registers of the Bishops of Bath and Wells, Ely, Lincoln, London, Salisbury, and Winchester; the *Calendar of Patent Rolls*, *Calendar of Papal Registers*).

by a decrease in the turnover of incumbents. The very long episcopates of Wykeham (1366–1404), Beaufort (1404–47) and Waynflete (1447–86) almost certainly meant that there was a high degree of continuity throughout this period, and that the disruption caused by the rapid turnover of successive new bishops, each with their own clerks and relatives to reward, was considerably lessened. Tenures certainly appear to have been lengthening and turnover decreasing. In the fourteenth century the length of the average incumbency was approximately six years. However the average was ten years under Waynflete, nine under Courtenay, six under Langton and nine under Fox, which is consistent with Bowker's finding that the incumbencies' average length in Lincoln diocese in the early sixteenth century was ten.²²

From the bishop's point of view, the most valuable collations were those made *pleno jure* to churches within the bishop's gift, on the final decision of the bishop usually without the interference of outside agencies. In the early fourteenth century nearly two-thirds of all collations were *pleno jure*. From the 1330s this proportion began to decrease – mainly because of the popularity of exchanging livings, which denied the bishop the chance to collate for that turn; for example, Bishop Edington made a total of 371 in his troubled 20-year episcopate. Of these only 176 (47 per cent) were *pleno jure*. His successor Bishop Wykeham suffered even more interference. Only 154 out of his 360 collations (43 per cent) were *pleno jure*. (See Table 1). Later, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, while the overall number declined slightly, the proportion made *pleno jure* had increased considerably, with Bishop Richard Fox 101 out of his 136, 74 per cent. The reasons are addressed below.

In addition to these the bishops made some occasional gains. From their position as ordinaries of the diocese, they were able to make collations by lapse, when other patrons failed to provide a suitable candidate, which totalled 117. In addition there were 94 collations that devolved to the bishops for various reasons, for example when the bishop held the advowson as part of his *personal* property. Bishop Edington made three presentations to the church of Timsbury (Somerset) because he was lord of the manor.²³ The reason behind many of these devolutions is not clear. The bishops also made grants of *commenda* and *custodia*. The first allowed them to place a benefice in the care of a clergyman, other than its incumbent, for an indefinite period, while the latter allowed a similar appointment for a limited time only, usually no more than two months. However, such appointments were not frequent. Lapses, *commenda* and *custodia* amounted to only 305 over the period and this number is partly explained by a glut of lapses caused by the plague in the 1340s and 1360s. Moreover the very fact that the patrons

of these benefices had not hurried to present a candidate suggests either that they were dead or that the livings were not wealthy. For example, the vicarage of Ashley (Hampshire), valued at £4 6s. 8d. in 1291, became vacant in December 1361, but it was not until August 1364 that Bishop Edington made a collation *per lapsum temporis*.²⁴

These scattered gains, however, must be balanced against lost opportunities to collate. Winchester suffered from the attentions of the papacy and the crown in this regard. The pope had the right to make provisions to English benefices by general or special reservation, and was often under considerable pressure to provide clergy with wealthy livings. Winchester may have been saved from the worst papal interference, by its lack of wealthy livings without cure. There were some 32 papal provisions to Winchester livings, mainly in the first half of the fourteenth century. These disappeared after the anti-papal legislation of the 1350s. However this total is a probable underestimate. Papal provisions were put into effect by executors, rather than bishops – thus their appearance in episcopal registers is rather scattered. Moreover the *Calendars of Papal Registers* were not based on the most complete papal registers for the second half of the fourteenth century.²⁵ The king was a more active and consistent predator: throughout the period there were 115 royal presentations to Winchester livings. Many of these were concentrated in vacancies when the temporalities were in royal hands. For example, in that between the death of Nicholas of Ely (1280) and the accession of John of Pontoise, Edward I made no less than fourteen presentations to Winchester livings. However, it is not clear how many of these presentations ended in an institution. Bishops could occasionally put up stiff resistance to royal candidates. A particular flashpoint was the hospital of St Cross, valued at 100 marks (£66 13s. 4d.) by Bishop Pontoise.²⁶ Edward II had to make repeated attempts to get Geoffrey de Welleford (d.1322) instituted into St. Cross, in the teeth of determined resistance from Bishop Assier (1319-23) and his candidate, Robert de Maidstone; the king eventually won.²⁷ Royal presentations diminished in number in the fifteenth century. The decline of the king's clerk and the rise of the gentleman-bureaucrat undoubtedly obviated the need for so many royal presentations.²⁸ For the first time, in the late fifteenth century, the archbishop of Canterbury made presentations *sede vacante*, rather than the king himself. For example, in 1487 it was Archbishop Morton (d.1500) who collated M William Smith BCnL (d.1513) to the archdeaconry of Winchester, because the bishopric was vacant.²⁹

Perhaps the most common drain on the bishops' patronage, however, was the exchange. The living was treated as a piece of freehold property and as such could be exchanged for another, subject to the approval of

the diocesan bishops involved. This meant that the bishop was not able to collate for that turn. After pluralism had been condemned in 1317, the exchange became increasingly popular. Clerks could no longer hold several benefices simultaneously, but had to collect them sequentially, and the exchange became an increasingly popular way of obtaining the benefice one wanted. Incumbents may have exchanged for many different reasons, to be near their family, in quest of a richer benefice, or alternatively perhaps because they desired a simoniacal exchange for a poorer benefice and a cash payment. In all there were 424 exchanges in the bishops' patronage – most of them concentrated in the middle and later years of the fourteenth century (see Table 1). Exchanges became an abuse as was demonstrated by the career of Bishop Edington's disreputable nephew, John de Edington (d.1397), who made at least five between 1348 and 1351.³⁰ By the end of the fourteenth century the church hierarchy had become squeamish about abusive exchanges and tighter regulation may have contributed to a decline in their numbers.³¹ While Wykeham allowed 138 exchanges in his long episcopate, Waynflete only had to tolerate 31, and Fox allowed only six.

The number of collations a bishop might be able to make in a year was surprisingly small, usually less than ten. The number of collations *pleno jure*, *per lapsum temporis* and *commenda* and *custodia* came to a grand total of 1466 for the whole period. Exchanges, royal presentations and papal provisions numbered 588, over a third of the 1466. However it is clear that while the number dropped with time, outside interference also declined. The bishops were left with a smaller number of recorded collations overall, but a greater proportion of these were *pleno jure*. Circumstances had given the bishops a rather firmer grip on their diminished stock of patronage.

III

Who were the men who benefited from the patronage of the bishops of Winchester? The beneficed clergy of the late middle ages have been divided into two groups: the ordinary clergy who might hold one or two benefices during their careers and, the privileged clergy who might hold a large number of livings, sometimes consecutively, sometimes in plurality, and who might end their careers as cathedral canons, the deans of collegiate churches or even bishops. The first group I have somewhat arbitrarily termed 'lesser clergy' and the second group 'privileged clergy'.³² While 'lesser' incumbents were likely to reside in, and serve, the living to which they had been collated, 'privileged' clerks were likely to be absent – their literacy and technical expertise meant that they

often had work which took them from their parishes. In effect the first group saw the living as a source of responsibility and reward, while the latter saw it predominantly as a source of income, and chaplains or vicars shouldered their parochial responsibilities.

The difference between 'lesser' and 'privileged' clergy was essentially one of career structure. There are a number of indicators of elite status. In the fourteenth century the number of graduates collated is an important indicator, less so in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, as university education became more widespread. The possession of postgraduate degrees in civil law, canon law or theology is arguably a better indicator, but positions in royal, episcopal or noble administrations or the possession of numerous benefices are undoubtedly the best. The evidence in the Winchester registers has therefore been supplemented by the detailed work of A B Emden in order to identify the members of the 'privileged' clergy. All those not identified as privileged clerks have been classified as 'lesser' clergy. This means that as further evidence comes to light more incumbents are likely cross the line from 'lesser' to 'privileged' status.

For most of the fourteenth century recorded collations in the Winchester registers were divided almost equally between the two groups, despite the fact that the 'privileged' clergy were a minority amongst the clerical population. Later on in the century the numbers of collations to 'privileged' clergy declined – probably owing to the plague. While Bishop Woodlock (1305-16) made 51 out of his 94 collations (54 per cent) to 'privileged' clerks, Bishop Wykeham only made 117 out of 360 (33 per cent) to this group. In the fifteenth century numbers recovered; from the episcopate of Waynflete the proportion to 'privileged' clerks was beginning to increase to fifty per cent and with Richard Fox reached sixty, reflecting a rising monopoly by an elite minority. As the bishops' hold tightened, they preferred to bestow their patronage on the 'privileged'.

'Lesser' clergy were often rather obscure individuals. We know little about their origins, education or careers. It is difficult to judge at what stage in their careers they were. However, it would appear that the majority were mature clerks. In Lincoln diocese there was an average of five years between ordination and first institution.³³ A small majority of collations went to men in major orders and, of the 22 careers that have been traced, three went to men at the beginning and four in mid-career. A further seven went to those holding their sole benefice from the bishop of Winchester.

It is difficult to know to what extent the bishops collated local men to their benefices. In this period toponymics are not a reliable guide,

and episcopal registers only very occasionally record origins. However, it has been possible to use ordination records, which frequently state the candidate's diocese of origin. Most collations to 'lesser' clergy may well have gone to men who came from the same diocese as the benefice to which they were located. The geographical origins of 192 'lesser' incumbents have been identified. Of these 107 (56 per cent) were local to their benefice, while 85 (44 per cent) came from a different diocese. The evidence here is rather too scattered here to identify trends over time.

One of the most important issues in the study of the late medieval clergy is the level of their education. A significant, if rather crude, indicator here is the number of those who attended university. In the fourteenth century very few of the 'lesser' clergy appear to have taken a degree; however, the fifteenth century witnessed an improvement. Waynflete and Fox made more than twenty per cent of their collations to 'lesser' clergy to graduates. This suggests that the bishops' interest in education was beginning to bear fruit, and was part of wider increase in clerical educational achievement.

The 'privileged' clergy were not necessarily of high birth, but had made successful careers for themselves in administration, education or the law. These men, too, were usually in major orders. Out of 377 collations to men whose canonical rank we know, 238 were in major orders, while there were 139 to those in minor orders. Once again the majority made by the bishops of Winchester were to mature men with established careers; out of the careers of 'privileged' clergy who have been traced, the majority, 204, went to men in the latter part, while 135 were to those in the first half of their careers. While some powerful clergy had access to the bishops' patronage early on, for the majority of beneficed clerks there was a long wait before they could expect one from the bishops of Winchester. Under normal circumstances they could afford to wait until clerks had matured and had established careers before bestowing patronage upon them.

The geographical origins of the 'privileged' clergy were rather different from those of their more humble colleagues. Out of 484 collations to incumbents whose origins are known, 198 were to men from the same diocese, while 267 were to clerks from outside. The 'privileged' clergy were more mobile than their local counterparts, and expected to receive benefices from various patrons in different parts of the country.

Not surprisingly, the 'privileged' were the better educated. In the fourteenth century around 40–50 per cent of collations to 'privileged' clerks went to graduates, with a steep rise to 58 per cent during the episcopate of William of Wykeham. Throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centur-

ies the proportion continued to rise. In Waynflete's day 91 per cent of 'privileged' collations went to graduates, while the figure under Richard Fox was even greater, at 93 per cent. As with the 'lesser' clergy, this reflects the overall trends in clerical education and the bishops' use of it as a criterion. Benefices were primarily a source of income for the 'privileged' clergy, and the importance of this group for the bishop lay in their connections or expertise in fields other than pastoral care. Given this, perhaps we should say something about the extra parochial careers of these men. The groups discussed below are not exclusive; a clerk could be a simultaneous member of several groups.

Perhaps the largest group of collations to the 'privileged' clergy were to episcopal clerks. They had a crucial role in helping the bishop govern his diocese, and were responsible for organisational and judicial tasks both large and small.³⁴ It was important to the bishop that they were well rewarded, and in the absence of prebends, they dominated the benefices without cure and the wealthier parochial livings in the bishops' patronage. In the early fourteenth century this category accounted for about half the collations to 'privileged' clerks – except under Bishops Pontoise, who made 66 to his, 63 per cent of his total 'privileged' collations, and Wykeham, who made 26 representing 22 per cent. From the episcopate of Bishop Courtenay the numbers began to recover to between a quarter and a third of collations to 'privileged' clergy. This decline in numbers may be influenced by the fall in exchanges, and the fact of the decreasing number of bishops' clerks. Laymen, rather than clerks increasingly dominated the episcopal estate administration, and under Bishop Fox even the episcopal registrar, John Cooke, was a layman.³⁵ By the end of the fifteenth century there was no longer any need for the chancellor, official and vicar-general to be distinct functionaries, and the vicar-general was becoming the most important officer.³⁶ More collations went to the bishops' relations, and could account for between 10–15 per cent of the 'privileged' category. In the fourteenth century the most considerable nepotist appears to have been Bishop Edington who allowed his nephews John and Thomas Edington considerable freedom in the matter of benefices. In the fifteenth century, some thirty per cent of Bishop Langton's (1492–1501) small total benefited his relatives.

Perhaps the most illustrious group among the 'privileged' clergy were the king's clerks. Bishops themselves occasionally collated kings' clerks – especially when individuals were personally linked to the bishop. The most illustrious were the king's clerks. John de Droxford, the future bishop of Bath and Wells, was collated to Droxford in 1308,³⁷ and in 1313 John de Hothom, the future bishop of Ely, was collated to Steeple

Morden.³⁸ Robert de Wykford was collated to Avington in 1351, Houghton (twice) and Witney in 1359 and the archdeaconry of Winchester in 1361.³⁹ Like the bishop the king was concerned to reward clerks in his service at minimal costs; therefore royal clerks were frequently presented *sede vacante*, when the monarch held the temporalities of the see.

There was also a wide group of collations to 'privileged' clerks who do not appear to have been episcopal or royal clerks. They were important clerics in their own right, usually because of their technical abilities as lawyers or administrators. Some may have been collated because of their illustrious connections. Throughout the period there were a handful of high-born incumbents, for example M Lionel Woodville (d.1484), brother to Edward IV's queen, who was presented to the rich living of Witney (Oxfordshire) in 1475.⁴⁰ Others include Edmund Arundel (d.c.1347), collated to the hospital of St. Nicholas, Portsmouth in 1340, and Richard Clifford (d.1421) presented by the king to Compton (Hampshire) in 1382 and collated by the bishop to Crawley (Hampshire) in the same year.⁴¹ Between 1300 and 1350 there were a handful of cardinals or clerks connected with the papacy, exemplified in 1317 when Lucca, Cardinal of S. Maria Inviolata was provided with the church of Ivinghoe (Buckinghamshire).⁴² Many of these were designated by the pope, but these diminished after the anti-provisors legislation of the 1350s. Throughout, it is likely that lawyers were frequent recipients of the bishops' patronage, and a high number of collations went to 'privileged' clerks with degrees in one or both of the laws; if their degrees beyond magister were rarely recorded in the early fourteenth century, under Bishops Wykeham, Beaufort, Waynflete and Courtenay about a third went to such men. Towards the end of the fifteenth and in the early sixteenth centuries, however, numbers began to rise. Under Bishop Langton nine out of 22 collations (41 per cent) were to lawyers, while under his successor, Richard Fox they rose to 52 per cent, 39 out of 75.

From Wykeham's day the relationship between beneficiaries and educational attainment was more marked. This reflected episcopal interest in men with degrees in theology, a subject often taken by aspiring schoolmen; theologians made up a third of Bishop Waynflete's collations to the 'privileged'. In part this also reflects the success of Wykeham's foundations at Winchester and Oxford, as they were intended to educate parish clergy in theology rather than the law. Certainly a considerable number of beneficiaries were men closely connected with the Winchester foundations. Examples of these collations include M Thomas Cranley, to Havant (Hampshire) in 1391,⁴³ M Thomas Chandler BTh (d.1490) to Millbrook (Hampshire) in 1450, and in 1463 to St Cross and Meonstoke (Hampshire);⁴⁴ M Thomas Linacre (d.1524) received

Freshwater in *commendam* in 1519.⁴⁵ Wykeham made some eight collations to men connected to New College, Oxford. Waynflete generously rewarded men from Wykeham's foundations, not least because they provided the staff and fellows for his own foundation, for example M Richard Mayew DTh (d.1516), presented to Brightwell (Berkshire) in 1480, and received West Meon (Hampshire) on an exchange in 1482.⁴⁶ In all Waynflete made 49 collations to men from New College and some six to Magdalen College men. Finally, Richard Fox did not reward men from Wykeham's foundations quite so generously, only making five collations to former students at New College: however he drew men from Magdalen to set up Corpus Christi College and these were frequently well rewarded by him. A man associated with Magdalen and Corpus was M John Claymond BTh (d.1538), who resigned from St. Cross and was collated to Bishops Cleeve (Gloucestershire) in 1517, Overton (Hampshire) in 1522 and Bishopstone (Wiltshire) in 1524.⁴⁷

IV

Much has been made of the large episcopal estate at Winchester in this period, which provided the bishops with a very considerable number of parochial benefices. However, in terms of ecclesiastical patronage the bishops of Winchester were in a rather difficult position. The fact that the cathedral of St Swithun was a Benedictine foundation, rather than a secular one, left the bishops short of livings without cure – the most useful kind for rewarding their clerks and important friends. This encouraged them to make foundations like St Cross, Marwell and St Elizabeth's. The demographic stagnation which characterised this period brought, in the short term, a glut of collations, but in the longer term deprived the bishops of many of their poorer benefices, while the fashion for appropriation encouraged them to relinquish some of the richer ones. These forces were at work across the country and such difficulties may have been acute for those bishops with monastic cathedrals whose estate was less generously endowed than Winchester. On the other hand the dramatic decline at Winchester is primarily due to a local factor: the decline of the cathedral city itself. In terms of acts of patronage, rather than the ownership of advowsons, temporary gains – the profits of ecclesiastical jurisdiction – were not enough to compensate for temporary losses incurred by the interference of outside agencies, and the popularity of the exchange. The relative undesirability of Winchester's parochial benefices probably meant that it suffered less than dioceses with secular cathedrals, where the disruption could be considerable. Like other patrons the bishops suffered considerably from the fashion for

exchanging benefices, which deprived them of the opportunity to col-late. However, the disruption was largely restricted to the middle and later years of the fourteenth century. The decline in the number of exchanges, papal provisions and royal presentations meant that in the fifteenth century the bishops had greater control over the advowsons in their gift.

The recipients of this patronage were the 'lesser clergy', who were likely to have been mature local men, and the 'privileged clergy' who were likely to be graduates with careers outside the parish. However the number of graduates increased in line with better standards of education. Although there was a small group in the 'privileged' category that owed their preferment to their relationship with the bishop or to their aristocratic connections, the majority were experienced men, who had built successful careers as administrators, lawyers or, increasingly, as educators. The dominance of the bishops' clerks and the lawyers reflected their importance to the bishops in running the diocese, and was a common feature of episcopal patronage. Such men may have been more common among rectors of the parish churches in a diocese that lacked large numbers of benefices without cure. As the bishops gained a firmer grip on their patronage, an increasing proportion it went to members of the 'privileged clergy' who disproportionately dominated the recorded collations of the bishops of Winchester. Among these wealthier parochial benefices the emphasis was on political, administrative or educational patronage, rather than parochial provision. It may be questioned how close an interest these incumbents took in their benefices. Winchester diocese lacks the evidence to conclusively prove that these men did not serve their benefices, however it seems likely that, as elsewhere, the parishes were frequently served by chaplains, while the 'privileged' clergy, with their minds on more than the humdrum cure of parish souls, creamed off most of the profits.

Notes

1. I should like to thank Professor M A Hicks, Professor T B James and Dr A K McHardy for their help with this paper. I should also like to thank Dr V G Davis for allowing me to use her database of the ordination records of Winchester diocese.
2. See A K McHardy, *The Church in London, 1375-1392*, London Record Society, Vol. XIII (1977), pp.xiv-xv; *idem.*, 'The Lincolnshire clergy in the later fourteenth century' in W M Ormrod (ed.), *England in the Fourteenth Century: Proceedings of the 1985 Harlaxton Symposium* (Woodbridge, 1986), p.150; S. Townley, 'Unbeneficed clergy in the thirteenth century: two English dioceses', in D M Smith (ed.) *Studies in Clergy and Ministry in*

- Medieval England*, Borthwick Studies in History, 1 (York, 1991), pp.38-64.
3. For a discussion of the issues surrounding the recording of collations or institutions in episcopal registers, see A K McHardy, 'Some patterns of ecclesiastical patronage in the later middle ages', *ibid.*, p.22.
4. C F Deedes (ed.), *Registrum Johannis de Pontissara, Episcopi Wintoniensis AD MCCLXXXII-MCCCIV*, 2 Vols, Canterbury and York Society, Vols.XIX, XXX, (1915-24), XXX, pp.419-21 [Hereafter *Reg. Pontissara*].
5. D Lepine, *A Brotherhood of Canons Serving God: English Secular Cathedrals in the Later Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 1995), p.18.
6. *VCH Hampshire*, Vol.III, pp.212-3.
7. G Belfield, 'Cardinal Beaufort's Almshouse of Noble Poverty at St Cross, Winchester', *Proceedings of the Hampshire Field Club & Archaeological Society*, XXXVIII (1982), pp.103-11.
8. T F Kirby (ed.), *Wykeham's Register*, 2 Vols, Hampshire Record Society, (1896-9), II, p.415 [Hereafter *Reg. Wykeham*].
9. R L Storey, 'The foundation and the medieval college, 1379-1530', in J. Buxton and P. Williams (eds.), *New College Oxford, 1379-1979* (Oxford, 1979), p.8.
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12. *Reg. Orleton*, I, fos.41, 45v-46v.
13. D Keene, *Survey of Medieval Winchester*, 2 Vols. (Oxford, 1985), II, pp. 975. A W Goodman (ed.), *Chartulary of Winchester Cathedral* (Winchester, 1927), pp.17, 23. *VCH Hampshire*, Vol.III, p.421.
14. *VCH Cambridgeshire*, Vol.VIII, p.121. *VCH Wiltshire*, Vol.XI, p.31. *VCH Oxfordshire*, Vol.IX, p.30.
15. *VCH Buckinghamshire*, Vol.II, p.140.
16. Belfield, *loc. cit.*, p.105.
17. J M Kaye (ed.), *The Cartulary of God's House, Southampton*, Southampton Records Series, Vol.XIX (1976), pp.xli-xlv.
18. *VCH Surrey*, Vol.II, p.121.
19. Keene, *op. cit.*, I, pp.134-5.
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21. W J Dohar, *The Black Death and Pastoral Leadership: The Diocese of Hereford in the Fourteenth Century* (Philadelphia, 1995), p.52.
22. M Bowker, *Secular Clergy in the Diocese of Lincoln, 1495-1520* (Cambridge, 1968), p.68.
23. S F Hockey (ed.), *The Register of William Edington, Bishop of Winchester 1346-1366*, 2 Vols, Hampshire Record Series, VII-VIII, (1986-7), VII, pp. 112, 210 [Hereafter *Reg. Edington*].
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26. *Reg. Pontissara*, II, pp.796.
27. *VCH Hampshire*, Vol.II, p.194.
28. R L Storey, 'Gentlemen-Bureaucrats' in C H Clough (ed.), *Profession, Vocation and Culture in Later Medieval England* (Liverpool, 1982), pp.97-109.
29. C Harper-Bill (ed.), *The Register of John Morton, Archbishop of Canterbury, 1486-1500*, 3 Vols, Canterbury and York Society, LXXV, LXXVIII, LXXXIX (1987-2000), LXXV, p.114.
30. *Reg. Edington*, I, pp. 46, 47, 64, 105, 121, 123, 125, 128-9.
31. McHardy, *loc.cit.*, p.32.
32. For 'privileged clergy' see D Robinson, *Beneficed Clergy in Cleveland and the East Riding, 1306-1340*, Borthwick Papers, Vol.XXXVII (York, 1969), p.16.
33. Bowker, *op. cit.*, pp.72-3.
34. R M Haines, *The Administration of the Diocese of Worcester in the First Half of the Fourteenth Century* (1965), pp.90-147. R L Storey, *Diocesan Administration in the Fifteenth Century*, Borthwick Papers, Vol.XVI (2nd edition, York, 1972), pp.1-33.
35. A B Emden, *A Biographical Register of the University of Cambridge to 1500* (Cambridge, 1963), p.670.
36. Storey, *op.cit.*, p.5.
37. A W Goodman (ed.), *Registrum Henrici Woodlock, Diocesis Wintoniensis, AD 1305-1316*, 2 Vols, Canterbury and York Society, XLIII-XLIV (1940-1), XLIII, p.728.
38. *Ibid.*, XLIV, p.737.
39. *Reg. Edington*, I, pp.125, 177-8, 200.
40. *Reg. Waynflete*, II, f.37v.
41. *Reg. Orleton*, II, f.82; CPR 1381-1385, p.116; *Reg. Wykeham*, I, p.134.
42. *Lincoln Reg.* Dalderby, f.190.
43. *Reg. Wykeham*, I, p.172.
44. *Reg. Waynflete*, I, fos.18v, 59v, 131.
45. *Reg. Fox*, IV, f.4.
46. *Salisbury Reg.* Beauchamp, II, f.36v. *Reg. Waynflete*, II, f.91v.
47. *Salisbury Reg.* Audley f. 100. *Reg. Fox*, IV, f.1v. *Reg. Fox*, V, fos.5v, 68v. Bishop Fox collated Claymond to Bishops Cleeve in his capacity as supervisor of the diocese of Worcester, K Down, 'The administration of the diocese of Worcester under the Italian bishops, 1497-1535', *Midland History*, XX (1995), pp.3-4.