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# Disaster Response and Ecclesiastical Privilege in the Late Middle Ages: The Liberty of Durham After the Black Death

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**Disaster Response and Ecclesiastical Privilege in the Late Middle Ages: The Liberty of  
Durham After the Black Death**

By

**John Keewatin Mennell**

A Major Research Paper  
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies  
through the Department of History  
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for  
the Degree of Master of Arts  
at the University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

2020

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Disaster Response and Ecclesiastical Privilege in the Late Middle Ages: The Liberty of Durham  
After the Black Death

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August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020

## DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

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## ABSTRACT

This paper examines the estate incomes of three large ecclesiastical corporations in medieval England to analyse the impact local autonomy has upon economic recovery following a medieval disaster scenario. It utilizes manorial records, assessments, and tax farms for the bishop of Durham, Durham Priory, and the archbishop of York to pursue this goal. Data is compiled and presented, building off the methodology of a series of articles in the twentieth century on the changing distribution of wealth in medieval England to allow additional comparison with the wider kingdom. The character of the four truly autonomous bishops of Durham is analysed and placed into this economic context. Findings demonstrated that traditional crown-directed appointment traditions in Durham ensured a surprising resilience to sudden economic change, stymying damage caused by a disaster scenario. Once these appointment traditions ceased to be followed Durham's economy experienced sharp negative growth until the return of traditional appointment methods returned skilled leadership to Durham. The experience presented by Durham in comparison to its contemporaries indicates that local autonomy provides a mixed boon. It yielded great benefits in the form of protection from sudden economic disaster but also great banes as once bishops lacked the skill or character to properly manage the diverse powers of the said autonomy, the economy immediately and continually suffered the extremes of disaster it had previously proven resilient to.

## DEDICATION

To my mother, whose infinite love is matched only by her patience.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Lazure, for his guidance during the course of this undertaking in the form of a multitude of emails, revisions, and encouragement. I would also like to thank my second reader, Dr. Pole, for his own insights and revisions. I want to thank my friends and family for their emotional assistance in this endeavour that allowed me to keep my mind whole while in isolation.

Lastly, I want to thank each and every front-line worker battling COVID-19 and the associated global health crisis as well as the essential service workers who support them and us. Much of this paper was written while in isolation from the pandemic; it was the first entirely remote defense in the Department of History at the University of Windsor. It thus owes its completion to these people who enabled this strange distinction. While the subject matter of plague was decided years before the outbreak and its focus remains economic and medieval, I hope it can still provide perhaps a small contribution towards our eventual return to normality; in whatever form that may be.

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## **Introduction**

What power ought to be given to local government to best utilize the resources within its territory and best respond to an economic crisis? Medieval England provides for a dichotomy of both highly autonomous and highly centralized territory with which to explore this question. The most autonomous territory in medieval England was County Durham, a jurisdiction in north-east England between Northumberland and Yorkshire where the powers of the crown were delegated to private hands. Durham held an exemption from taxation and military service, operated its own separate court system, and wielded the fiscal and legal power of the Catholic Church.<sup>1</sup> The significant amalgamation of power under the bishop of Durham provided him with the physical, political, legal, and fiscal resources to allow for an effective response to the economic crisis presented by the Black Death, but only when this power was wielded by experienced crown-appointed fiscal officers, not locals.

Durham and its autonomy were a significant outlier in medieval England, which was an uncharacteristically centralized realm traditionally considered one of the “most prosperous, orderly, and astutely governed” states in the medieval period.<sup>2</sup> The prevailing narrative credits this result on the mass reorganization of England’s landed class Norman kings implemented immediately following their conquest.<sup>3</sup> The Normans exploited English “assets and [extracted] the profits more effectively than the previous owners.” Whether they wholly invented the new regime’s organization or simply more efficiently operated “the governmental system of their

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<sup>1</sup> For an overview of the bishop of Durham’s powers see: Jean Scammell, “The Origin and Limitations of the Liberty of Durham,” *The English Historical Review* 81, no. 320 (1966): 449-73.

<sup>2</sup> W.L. Warren, “The Myth of Norman Administrative Efficiency: The Prothero Lecture,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 34 (1984): 113-132 (here at 113).

<sup>3</sup> Weldon R. Finn, *The Norman Conquest and Its Effects on the Economy: 1066-86* (London: Longman, 1971), esp. 198-200; Kelly DeVries, *The Norwegian Invasion of England in 1066* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1999), 114-115; cf. Warren, “The Myth of Norman Administrative Efficiency.”

Anglo-Saxon predecessors” is subject to debate.<sup>4</sup> Durham however strangely retained its pre-Norman autonomy and held the distinction of being the only county in England ruled not by an earl but instead a bishop who, similar to prince-bishops of the Holy Roman Empire prior to the Investiture Controversy, were crown-appointed officials tasked with the temporal administration of a county on behalf of the king, allowing him to appoint only desirable and competent officers to the position of bishop.

The bishop of Durham rapidly became a valuable piece of Norman administration through investiture of trusted and skilled administrators shortly after the conquest. These formative officials were Bishop William of St. Calais (1081-96), considered to have been the Domesday Book’s head architect, and Bishop Ranulf Flambard (1099-1128), chief organizer of the highly efficient tax systems of both post-conquest England and later County Durham.<sup>5</sup> Bishop Flambard in particular “brought to his see the brisk efficiency and administrative developments to which he had been accustomed in Rufus’ service [by] applying familiar officials to a chaotic situation, [such as when] he appointed a sheriff of Durham (his son Osbert).”<sup>6</sup> Their skill and the trust the king had in them began the custom by which bishops of Durham first served as competent and trusted crown clerks with a background in taxation. However, as much as former clerks may have wished to serve the king, they became fierce defenders of the autonomy of their episcopate once they came to power, quite possibly out of self-interest.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Warren, “The Myth of Norman Administrative Efficiency,” 113.

<sup>5</sup> R. W. Southern, “Ranulf Flambard and Early Anglo-Norman Administration,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 16 (1933): 95-128; David Rollason, Margaret Harvey, and Michael Prestwich eds., *Anglo-Norman Durham: 1093-1193* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1994), esp. Chapter 18: John Oswald Prestwich, “The Career of Ranulf Flambard,” 303-4.

<sup>6</sup> Scammell, “The Origin and Limitations of the Liberty of Durham,” 454.

<sup>7</sup> Such was the case of Bishop Thomas de Hatfield (1345-1381) who served as Receiver of the Chamber and Lord Privy Seal to King Edward III, prior to his promotion to the see of Durham. Afterwards, he feuded with the king and worked to retain the autonomy of Durham, whereas before his accession such autonomy doubtless frustrated his fundraising efforts on behalf of the crown. See Nicholas Andrew Barker, “If the king had asked for an ass, he would

Regardless of the quality of its leadership the county was still at the mercy of greater economic trends in the later Middle Ages created by the Black Death (1348-51), which saw the English north fall behind the south in wealth.<sup>8</sup> The bishop of Durham's income was not negatively impacted by the Black Death but did collapse in the late fifteenth century, a bizarre development considering that the neighbouring estates of Durham priory and the archbishop of York, as well as York Diocese as a whole, all suffered a precipitous drop in income as a result of the plague, then steadily raised their incomes over the course of the next century. They did so, however, at lower rates than in the English south, which was a common trend across the country.<sup>9</sup> Durham experienced several additional outbreaks of plague in the fifteenth century, but coterminous Durham Priory seems not to have had its income affected by them.<sup>10</sup> As nearby contemporary estates were little impacted, we can surmise that the drop in episcopal income resulted from poor management, rather than from Durham following economic trends, or solely from the new economic disaster in the recession of the fifteenth century. The episcopate of Bishop Robert Neville (1438-57) began this period of poor management when Durham was ruled by sycophants without experience in taxation. These bishops placed the resources and power of the county not towards good government, but instead towards the Yorkist cause in the Wars of the Roses in general and the local Neville family in particular, especially Bishop Neville's brother the earl of Salisbury.<sup>11</sup> This period coincided with the plummet in the bishop's income, which came to a halt when the see returned to the control of skilled financial officers during the

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have received his wish, this time': A Study of the Career of Thomas de Hatfield, Bishop of Durham (1345-1381), as a Royal Servant, 1336-1357," (M.A. thesis, Durham University, 2003), esp. 138.

<sup>8</sup> See the following tables for summaries and values of these changes.

<sup>9</sup> Roger S. Schofield, "The Geographical Distribution of Wealth in England, 1334-1649," *The Economic History Review*, New Series, 18, no. 3 (1965): 509.

<sup>10</sup> Richard B. Dobson, *Durham Priory 1400-1450* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 45.

<sup>11</sup> Anthony J. Pollard, "Neville, Robert (1404-1457), Bishop of Durham," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/19962>.

late fifteenth century. Durham's autonomy was thus a valuable tool in the hands of skilled administrators to prevent a loss of income from the Black Death. However, it only delayed economic change until a later point when it lacked a talented financial official capable of using the bishop's powers to maintain its economy and revenue in the face of a later recession.

### **Historiography**

Significant scholarship has been dedicated to the nuances of County Durham's relationship to the royal government. This scholarship began with the less focussed early constitutional historians, of which Edward Freeman and William Stubbs were the most notable. Freeman likened Durham's role in medieval England to that of prince-bishops in the Holy Roman Empire, going so far as to use the same title.<sup>12</sup> While such a term was never used historically, it has picked up some limited use academically and popularly as a result of Freeman's comparison.<sup>13</sup> Stubbs only referenced Durham in a limited capacity simply as part of the Scottish marches.<sup>14</sup> While Durham was "central to modern discussions of liberties and their place in the medieval 'state'"<sup>15</sup> these Whig histories cared little for experiences unique to Durham. Instead, they sought to create a grand narrative of the medieval origins of England and its development into a nation-state.

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<sup>12</sup> Edward A. Freeman, *The History of the Norman Conquest of England: Its Causes and Its Results*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1867-79), vol. 1, 291.

<sup>13</sup> The title *comes palatinus* (count palatine or sometimes earl palatine) was preferred by contemporaries when the bishop's temporal power was referenced. It was more useful and prestigious to reference special temporal power than temporal power alone. For contemporary use of the title see: James Raine, ed. *Historiae Dunelmensis Scriptores Tres: Gaufridus de Coldingham, Robertus de Graystones et Willemelmus de Chambre*, vol. 9 (London: Surtees Society, 1839), cxliii. For some academic use of the title see: Richard B. Dobson, *Church and Society in the Medieval North of England* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1996), 189; Dobson, *Durham Priory*, 218; Holford and Stringer, *Border Liberties and Loyalties*, 17. For use of the title Prince-Bishop see for example: Alisdair Dobie, *Accounting at Durham Cathedral Priory: Management and Control of a Major Ecclesiastical Corporation, 1083–1539* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 37. More popularly see: "The Prince Bishops of Durham," Durham World Heritage Site, accessed May 19, 2019, <https://www.durhamworldheritagesite.com/history/prince-bishops>.

<sup>14</sup> William Stubbs, *The Constitutional History of England in its Origin and Development*, 3 vols, 6th edn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, [1874-78] 1903), vol. I, 294-5, 392-3.

<sup>15</sup> Holford and Stringer, *Border Liberties and Loyalties*, 17.

This neglect ended in 1900 when modern research began to focus on Durham and its peculiarities.<sup>16</sup> Gaillard Lapsley initiated the general debate on what Durham and its autonomy represented not just to constitutional historians, but also to any historian of the county, town, or bishopric of Durham. He agreed with Stubbs that Durham was an extension of the Scottish Marches as he believed that, at least by the fourteenth century, “the bishop of Durham enjoyed his franchise at the service of defending the borders.”<sup>17</sup> Lapsley’s work began a discussion on whether or not the bishop’s Liberty was derived from a central royal source, typically considered service on the borders, or a local one as later authors of local history disagreed with his top-down approach to Durham’s institutional development. The narrative he created of Durham as “a story of the steady decline of this once highly autonomous jurisdiction” has “been retold by virtually all those who have written on the subject since” and “has stood almost unchallenged for one hundred years.”<sup>18</sup>

Helen Cam and her contemporary Noël Denholm-Young echoed Lapsley’s sentiments four decades after by agreeing that the Liberties were royal in origin and the king viewed the bishops as private individuals exercising a public duty.<sup>19</sup> Cam emphasized the crown’s perception and used royal charters of Edward I to outline the king’s view that autonomy granted to palatine authorities in Durham and Chester was ultimately both royal in origin and given in

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<sup>16</sup> Some constitutional history focused on Durham can be found in William Hutchinson, *The History and Antiquities of the County Palatine of Durham*, (London: S. Hodgson & Robinsons, 1785-1794), vol. 1, 477–549. The work is primarily a narrative and predates academic history. As such its constitutional elements were limited to how episcopal administration changed under each successive bishop rather than raising arguments on their nature.

<sup>17</sup> Gaillard T. Lapsley, *The County Palatine of Durham: A Study in Constitutional History* (New York: Longmans Green, 1900), 305.

<sup>18</sup> Tim Thornton, “Fifteenth-Century Durham and the Problem of Provincial Liberties in England and the Wider territories of the English Crown,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 6th series 11, (January 2001): 83.

<sup>19</sup> Helen M. Cam, “The Decline and Fall of English Feudalism,” *History* 25, no. 99 (December 1940): 216-33; Noël Denholm-Young, *Seignorial Administration in England* (London: Oxford University Press, 1937), 88. For a modern version of the argument, see Steven G. Ellis, *Tudor Frontiers and Noble Power: The Making of the British State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 16, 34-5.

exchange for service to the government through border defense.<sup>20</sup> Cam reinforced Lapsley's conclusions that Durham and other palatinates were autonomous thanks to the border and the king by providing a different source than Lapsley had used.

This relationship between the crown and its palatinates has been more recently explored and reinforced by scholars such as Richard Dobson and Anthony Pollard. Both have argued that it was impossible to have complete political independence due to the subservient, if autonomous, relationship of the palatinates to the crown. Both have written that, despite the bishop of Durham's regalian privileges, he was, practically speaking, an officer appointed by the crown who obtained his position due to favour with the monarch.<sup>21</sup> Pollard even argued that it was precisely because of this autonomy that the crown had a vested interest in how this freedom to operate manifested itself and was utilized. As a result, the crown concerned itself with aligning the bishop's autonomy with their own agenda.<sup>22</sup> The tradition of serving the crown as high-ranking royal clerks prior to episcopacy began as early as the first bishops after the Norman Conquest, and Pollard especially emphasized that every bishop from 1333 to 1406, and many beyond, was previously Keeper of the Privy Seal. To him the bishopric provided "an important extension of royal authority into the far north-east of the realm."<sup>23</sup> Pollard argued that Durham only gained true autonomy when it lay out of the hands of a bishop loyal to the English crown, which occurred in the late fifteenth century and placed revenues of the palatinate in the hands of

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<sup>20</sup> Helen M. Cam, "The Evolution of the Mediaeval English Franchise," *Speculum* 32, no. 3 (July 1957): 427-42; Cam, "The Decline and Fall of English Feudalism," 219.

<sup>21</sup> Richard B. Dobson, "The Church of Durham and the Scottish Borders, 1378-88," in *War and Border Societies in the Middle Ages*, ed. Anthony Goodman and Anthony Tuck (London: Routledge, 1992), 130-1; Anthony J. Pollard, "The Crown and the County Palatinate of Durham, 1437-94," in *The North of England in the Age of Richard III*, ed. Anthony J. Pollard (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996), 71-2.

<sup>22</sup> Anthony J. Pollard, "Provincial Politics in Lancastrian England: The Challenge to Bishop Langley's Liberty in 1433," in *People, Places and Perspectives: Essays on Later Medieval and Early Tudor England in honour of Ralph A. Griffiths*, ed. Keith Dockray and Peter Fleming (Brimcombe Port, UK: Nonsuch, 2005), 70.

<sup>23</sup> Pollard, "The Crown and the County Palatine," 72.

already overmighty vassals in the Neville family. This removed Durham from London's orbit until it was returned to central authority when Richard Foxe (1494-1501) was made bishop and resumed the Durhamite tradition of a former Keeper of the Privy Seal serving as prelate.<sup>24</sup>

Pollard and Dobson both concluded that the palatinate's independence was an illusion. Instead it was managed by appointed officials who pursued policy which aligned with the crown and placed the palatinate's resources under royal, rather than episcopal, control.

This conclusion was refined by other scholars using different approaches, such as Robert C. Palmer and Christopher Kitching who both viewed Durham through the lens of royal justice, which was itself a powerful political tool for Durham's bishops to maintain the order they were charged with protecting. Palmer analyzed county courts and liberty courts, their relationships, as well as their jurisdictions. He treated the courts within the framework of a medieval version of a national justice system and argued for the traditional top-down approach pioneered by Lapsley but using courts rather than solely royal power.<sup>25</sup> Five years later, Kitching explained the creation of Durham's palatinate status by the local community's desire for less overbearing central courts.<sup>26</sup> Tim Thornton argued that palatine authority in both Chester and Durham was used by the crown to impart effective government in whatever form this could be manifested in, such as the courts, as a devolution of powers which was ultimately pragmatic in nature.<sup>27</sup> He considered that the crown recognized the usefulness of local powers and so allowed them to

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<sup>24</sup> Pollard, "The Crown and the County Palatine," 87.

<sup>25</sup> Robert C. Palmer "County, Courts, and Country," in *The County Courts of Medieval England, 1150-1350*, Robert C. Palmer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 263-296.

<sup>26</sup> Christopher Kitching, "The Durham Palatinate and the Courts of Westminster Under the Tudors," in *The Last Principality: Politics, Religion and Society in the Bishopric of Durham, 1494-1660*, ed. David Marcombe (Nottingham: University of Nottingham Press, 1987), 49-70.

<sup>27</sup> Tim Thornton, "The Integration of Chester into the Tudor State in the Early Sixteenth Century," *Northern History* 29, no. 1 (June 1993): 63.

continue autonomously rather than seeking to impose uniformity.<sup>28</sup> Matthew Holford believes Thornton's research on royal equity courts demonstrated that "the liberty's inhabitants were satisfied with the justice available there and that by the fifteenth century the liberty had developed an equitable jurisdiction in line with that of the crown."<sup>29</sup> Thornton's research disagreed with Lapsley, who saw the borders as central to palatinate autonomy, but he did not attempt to disprove Lapsley's assertion that Durham was held at the behest of the crown, and neither did Palmer or Kitching. Each asserted that Durham's autonomy stemmed from a pragmatic desire for effective local governance, which the palatinate was able to accomplish through courts that also served as a valuable tool to wield in reaction to economic crisis.

Jean Scammell has perhaps been one of the most cited and argued against voices in the historiography of the Liberty of Durham. Her definitive 1966 article "The Origin and Limitations of the Liberty of Durham," which came to define much of twentieth-century scholarship on medieval Durham, began with the oft-quoted statement:

Durham was the greatest liberty long-established in private hands in medieval England. Its history therefore offers the clearest evidence of what rights and powers English franchises might acquire, and the nature and effectiveness of the means whereby they were controlled.<sup>30</sup>

Scammell has had a resounding impact on scholarship of English Liberties. She emphasized the realistic limits of the privileges claimed by Liberties, especially Durham, and opposed Lapsley by claiming he had placed too great an emphasis on "theoretical claims," while she would in turn focus on the practical manifestations of Durham's privileges.<sup>31</sup> Scammell was the first to claim

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<sup>28</sup> Tim Thornton, *Cheshire and the Tudor State, 1480-1560* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2000), 243-4; Thornton, "Fifteenth-Century Durham," 83-100.

<sup>29</sup> Matthew L. Holford, "Feet of Fines for the Palatinate of Durham, 1228-1457: Liberties, Law and the Local Community," *English Historical Review* 125, no. 515 (August, 2010): 834.

<sup>30</sup> Scammell, "The Origin and Limitations of the Liberty of Durham," 449.

<sup>31</sup> Scammell, "The Origin and Limitations of the Liberty of Durham," 449.



that Durham and other English liberties were simply one element of royal government and lacked real legal power despite their own claims to the contrary, a position that would still be debated in late twentieth-century scholarship. Before her, scholars like Lapsley and Cam focused on perceptions, titles, and claims while she emphasized the practical limitations rather than the prestigious claims. She argued that the title of ‘palatinate’ was meaningless and bore no actual distinction in the English peerage. It served as “a term of pretension not of definition.”<sup>32</sup> She explained that the creation of the palatinate earl of Lancaster for John of Gaunt in 1377 was soon followed by a desire to clarify what ‘palatine rights’ actually were. What he obtained, however, did not include exemption from taxation or royal justice, privileges which were then enjoyed by Durham and considered to be the definition of a palatinate.<sup>33</sup> She recognized Durham’s exemptions from taxation and royal justice but argued that its payment in service on the border was more valuable than lost tax revenue.<sup>34</sup> The privileges were inherently limited, she argued, as the king could theoretically revoke them. Rather, it was the political skill of the bishop appointed by the king which upheld the Liberty more than the local community.<sup>35</sup> In her view, the autonomy Durham enjoyed was at the mercy of the crown’s whims, and an incompetent bishop who failed to accomplish his directive of office could be removed from rulership, unlike Lapsley’s argument which emphasized the freedom to act the bishop theoretically, rather than practically, enjoyed.

Scammell’s ideas proved powerful and enduring, with only recent research into the *Haliwerfolk* seriously disputing them. Twenty-first century historians such as Christian Liddy, Tim Thornton, and others who disagreed with her assessment, have argued that Durham’s rights

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<sup>32</sup> Scammell, “The Origin and Limitations of the Liberty of Durham,” 451.

<sup>33</sup> Scammell, “The Origin and Limitations of the Liberty of Durham,” 450-1.

<sup>34</sup> Scammell, “The Origin and Limitations of the Liberty of Durham,” 452.

<sup>35</sup> Scammell, “The Origin and Limitations of the Liberty of Durham,” 472-3.

and political structure remained unique and independent of London.<sup>36</sup> Modern debate on disproving Scammell focused more on what the Liberty meant to the people of the palatinate.<sup>37</sup> Holford especially argued against Scammell's conclusion by seeking to prove that the bishop's court was heavily used and ultimately "as important in the liberty as the king's court was in the southerly counties of England", contrary to Scammell's assertion.<sup>38</sup> He believed "the bishop's court offered a tangible benefit for the liberty's inhabitants, quite possibly as significant in its way as Durham's exemption from royal taxation."<sup>39</sup> In his clearest disagreement with Scammell and earlier authors, Holford stated that "liberties, and most especially 'royal liberties,' had a legitimacy and authority that was not simply a delegation of royal power; their institutions might well loom larger than the king's in local society."<sup>40</sup> Scammell had stated the average resident of a palatinate had no real stake in the continued upkeep of its autonomy, for it was simply a piece of noble prestige, yet Holford's analysis of the courts demonstrated that indeed Durham's Liberty maintained itself through the activities of the common people who enjoyed access to expedient justice. This local study of history through a specific lens, in this case legal history using court records, is emblematic of the attempt to dispel commonly-held notions of centrally-imposed power which solely controlled the destiny of Durham and other English counties. Twenty-first century scholarship rejects the idea of uniformity of medieval English culture and experience, and instead embraces the local experience to inform a more complex understanding of Durham, its franchise, and its use of the said franchise.

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<sup>36</sup> Tim Thornton, "Fifteenth-Century Durham and the Problem of Provincial Liberties in England and the Wider Territories of the English Crown," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th series 11 (2001), 83-100; ; Christian D. Liddy, *The Bishopric of Durham in the Late Middle Ages: Lordship, Community, and the Cult of St Cuthbert* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2008).

<sup>37</sup> See for example: Holford, "Feet of Fines for the Palatinate of Durham," 818-843, esp. 821.

<sup>38</sup> Holford, "Feet of Fines for the Palatinate of Durham," 837.

<sup>39</sup> Holford, "Feet of Fines for the Palatinate of Durham," 841.

<sup>40</sup> Holford, "Feet of Fines for the Palatinate of Durham," 843.

Many authors like Thornton and Holford have written in some way against Lapsley's argument of royally-imposed uniformity and the origins and continuation of both Liberty and palatinate powers. Holford and Stringer for example agree with Lapsley that Durham, but not other Liberties, operated generally as a facet of central administration. However, they, like other scholars, place its origins in a different context, not just from what Lapsley argued but also from those who focused on the court system. They argue for an organic local tradition and community situated around St. Cuthbert, the *Haliwerfolk*.<sup>41</sup> This community was exploited by central authority and expanded upon as much by later bishops as it was by the commons and minor nobility.<sup>42</sup> This community came to refuse the authority of the royal writ and acknowledged only that of the bishop's palatinate seal instead.<sup>43</sup> Such a development provided for the foundation of all later episcopal privilege and, therefore, forged a separate community identity at Durham. The community formation in Durham until the outbreak of the Black Death was quite remarkable, as it was perhaps one of the only places in England where not only the large and typically selfish magnates railed against the king's authority, but also the commons, ecclesiastics, and gentry in unison. All social classes to some extent rallied beneath the banner of the Liberty's patron, St. Cuthbert. He served as a unifying figure of their rights and was central to identity formation distinct from greater England, whose representative, the bishop, wielded tremendous respect as successor to the saint and custodian of his body.<sup>44</sup> Holford and Stringer claim that as this community was convenient for English kings to co-opt in order to ensure the defense of the

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<sup>41</sup> The *Haliwerfolk*, or 'people of the saint,' (in this case St. Cuthbert) served as an expression of local identity and community self-identification in Durham distinct from English, Anglo-Saxon, or Norman. During the course of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the term also came to be an expression of territory co-terminus with County Durham similar to other formal terms for the territory such as the 'Liberty of St. Cuthbert's Land' or 'The lands of St. Cuthbert between Tyne and Tees.' (Holford and Stringer, *Border Liberties and Loyalties*, 39.)

<sup>42</sup> Holford and Stringer, *Border Liberties and Loyalties*, 21.

<sup>43</sup> Holford and Stringer, *Border Liberties and Loyalties*, 22.

<sup>44</sup> Holford and Stringer, *Border Liberties and Loyalties*, 22; Liddy, *The Bishopric of Durham*, 177.

border with Scotland, Durham was granted a continuation of its Liberty from the Anglo-Saxon period in order to align the *Haliwerfolk* with the royal agenda. This is similar to Lapsley's argument which focused on the border, but to Holford and Stringer the community and autonomy existed long before the Normans and was preserved by the crown, rather than granted and created by it, which in either case was to be used as a tool for border defense.

Durham's use as an after-office appointment for the Keeper of the Privy Seal is the primary piece of evidence which, from Lapsley onwards, informs all scholars' claims that English kings treated Durham as an extension of their own temporal authority. Medieval English bishops were chosen for office not by elections from a cathedral chapter common in the pre-Norman period but instead by de facto crown appointment. The king would support a candidate for election to episcopacy and by extolling their virtues to both Pope and chapter to gain their assent for the candidate.<sup>45</sup> The king's support almost always resulted in the given candidate's election. While ultimate authority rested with the Pope, who would issue bulls of confirmation, it was highly irregular for the king's chosen candidate to not be granted the office. By the fifteenth century the chapter's election process was itself "meaningless" in selecting the candidate for the Pope to confirm. Bishop Neville received Papal confirmation even before the election and was also its only candidate, during the election the chapter practiced great care to ensure "the royal candidate met with not the slightest show of opposition."<sup>46</sup> Less wealthy or politically powerful bishops did not experience this royal meddling in election and preserved local right to select their bishops, but Durham did not lack for wealth or power. As a result, the bishopric of Durham was effectively a uniquely-situated appointed governorship within the inheritance-based society of English feudalism. It served as a counterbalance to powerful landed marcher families who could

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<sup>45</sup> Raine, *Historiae Dunelmensis Scriptores Tres*, 98.

<sup>46</sup> Dobson, *Durham Priory*, 226.

oppose central rule, both because feudal inheritance tended to create regional power blocs but also because as part of border Liberties these marcher families shared Durham's lessened tax burden and were disproportionately more powerful than other similarly-sized noble families and thus a potential threat to royal power. Unlike Lapsley's border-centric argument, Holford and Stringer have grounded the continuance of Durham's liberty in local conditions, community, and identity formation, wherein the border was only a single element which informed their actions.

Studies of Durham tend to conflate it with the wider regional identity defined by the shared experiences of the Anglo-Scottish border. The Scottish Marches boasted autonomy that royally-governed and parliamentary-represented counties did not. Direct comparisons between Durham and the rest of England are thus comparatively rare and limited in scope.<sup>47</sup> Economic historians of England tend to ignore Durham for lack of evidence in nationwide primary sources. This is a casualty of Durham's autonomy, especially in relation to taxation, as it stands apart from fiscal records of a national scope which have allowed for relatively easy comparisons between counties within those sources. Twentieth-century studies on wealth distribution in medieval England were made using such resources. Each successive study refined those previous, yet each one retained a scope limited to only include those covered by royal taxation, thus excluding Durham and the rest of the Scottish and Welsh marches.<sup>48</sup> This is an understandable limitation of the sources used and reflects the issues which arise when situating the relationship of an autonomous border zone with the central power structure of a medieval

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<sup>47</sup> See for example Dobson, *Church and Society in the Medieval North of England*, esp. chapter 1: Dobson, "Cathedral Chapters and Cathedral Cities: York, Durham and Carlisle in the Fifteenth Century," 1-27; chapter 4: Dobson, "The Church of Durham and the Scottish Borders, 1378-88," 83-107; and chapter 13: "Contrasting Chronicles: Historical Writing at York and Durham at the Close of the Middle Ages," 285-301.

<sup>48</sup> Buckatzsch, "The Geographical Distribution of Wealth in England, 1086-1843," 180-202; Schofield, "The Geographical Distribution of Wealth in England, 1334-1649," 483-510; H.C. Darby, R.E. Glasscock, J. Sheail, G.R. Versey, "The Changing Geographical Distribution of Wealth in England: 1086-1334-1525," *Journal of Historical Geography* 5, no. 3 (1979): 247-262.

kingdom. This paper finds some inspiration in the efforts of these historians as it seeks to compare Durham, despite its autonomy and differences in records, with other English counties scholars have already endeavoured to categorize and order.

On estates across England, the most commonly used tool for the economic historian of the Black Death was and remains the estate surveys. Be it from the turn of the twentieth century to the turn of the twenty-first the manorial records and aggregate data derived from them remain the primary source of choice.<sup>49</sup> One of the earliest modern single estate analyses focused on the Black Death presented an attitude common in early twentieth century scholarship when it concluded that the plague was less impactful on the bishop of Winchester's estate than William of Wykeham's building projects.<sup>50</sup> Efforts were being made in this period to 'debunk' late nineteenth century scholarship which argued the Black Death was revolutionary, an opinion originating with Frederic Seebohm in 1865 and elaborated by Thorold Rogers who insisted the Black Death brought a revolution on land organization in England.<sup>51</sup> Twentieth century scholarship instead began to treat the plague as only an event which accelerated existing trends in the economy and social structure of medieval England.

The difference was subtle, as the plague being the either the cause for, or an accelerant of, change still acknowledged it as playing a decisive role. The most famous of these changing

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<sup>49</sup> See for example: Henry L. Gray, "The Commutation of Villein Services in England before the Black Death," *The English Historical Review* 29, no. 116 (1914): 625-56; Bruce M. S. Campbell, Kenneth C. Bartley, and John P. Power, "The Demesne-Farming Systems of Post-Black Death England: A Classification," *The Agricultural History Review* 44, no. 2 (1996): 131-79.

<sup>50</sup> Ada E. Levett, "The Black Death on the Estates of the See of Winchester," in *Oxford Studies in Social and Legal History*, vol. v, *The Black Death*, ed. Paul Vinogradoff (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1916), 160.

<sup>51</sup> Frederic Seebohm, "The Black Death, and its Place in English History," *Fortnightly Review*, 2, (1865): 149-160. For a review of Rogers' work on this subject see: Nils Hybel, *Crisis or Change: The Concept of Crisis in the Light of Agrarian Structural Reorganisation in Late Medieval England* (Århus: Århus University Press, 1989), 9-19. For a twentieth century perspective on the Black Death as revolutionary see: Helen Robbins, "A Comparison of the Effects of the Black Death on the Economic Organization of France and England," *Journal of Political Economy*, 36, no.4 (1928): 447-79.

voices was Eileen Power, who characterised the Black Death as only “a slight push” rather than a revolution.<sup>52</sup> She founded the *Economic History Review* in 1927 where her husband Michael Postan served as one of its earliest editors. During the 1930s Postan wrote similarly on the plague and these ideas proved attractive to pre-existing constitutional historians “who were loath to grant much significance to a demographic phenomenon.”<sup>53</sup> This cohort of academic agreement was broadly labelled Malthusian or neo-Malthusian and persisted during the lives of Eileen (1889-1940) and Postan (1899-1981), who led the discourse on interpretation of the Black Death. Dissenting opinions from some Marxist historians persisted. They believed that history was primarily driven by material conditions and criticized the alternative view as “to admit a prime role to autonomous disease is to threaten to reduce the aspiring scientific historian to a mere chronicler of the random and the bizarre.”<sup>54</sup> This disagreement over the extent of the Black Death persists and remains the primary focus of scholarship on the plague, as later twentieth century writers continue to debate just how impactful the Black Death was.

### **Administration of Durham in the Middle Ages**

The Bishop of Durham became an important office in crown administration after the Norman Conquest when the bishop’s autonomy was co-opted to serve royal interests. This appropriation ensured the unusual resilience of the bishop’s estate as well as good management of the county, as the crown now desired both. The episcopacy of William of St. Calais (1081-96) began this period when he overhauled county administration.<sup>55</sup> He and Bishop Ranulf Flambard (1099-

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<sup>52</sup> Eileen E. Power, “The Effects of the Black Death on Rural Organisation in England,” *History New Series* 3, no. 10 (1918): 116.

<sup>53</sup> John Hatcher, “England in the Aftermath of the Black Death,” *Past & Present*, no.144 (1994): 4-5. Most of Postan’s essays were later published in: Michael M. Postan, *Essays on Medieval Agriculture and General Problems of the Medieval Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973).

<sup>54</sup> Hatcher, “England in the Aftermath of the Black Death,” 6.

<sup>55</sup> William M. Aird, “An absent friend: the career of Bishop William of St Calais,” in *Anglo-Norman Durham: 1093-1193*, ed. David Rollason, Margaret Harvey, and Michael Prestwich (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1994), 283.

1128) implemented offices in Durham which they had become accustomed to while royal clerks.<sup>56</sup> Endowing royal clerks with episcopacy was commonplace in early Norman England, with three-quarters of English bishoprics filled by royal clerks in the time of Henry I.<sup>57</sup> However Durham was different as bishops were only ever appointed after serving first as Keeper of the Privy Seal, the highest financial office in medieval England.<sup>58</sup> The sustained presence on Durham's episcopal throne of such officials with backgrounds in taxation ensured succeeding bishops were able to govern and extract revenues effectively through methods developed while in the king's service and nurtured over many years.<sup>59</sup> The incubation of talent in the king's service ensured consistently good management of Durham through a succession of competent and experienced administrators.

Bishops of Durham were uniquely qualified as men whom the king could trust to keep Durham working both productively and for the crown. Only trusted individuals, personal friends, or family members could be given an appointment to such high office as Keeper of the Privy Seal.<sup>60</sup> The king effectively groomed men for the episcopacy and delegated rule over the county to his most trusted and skilled officers. In doing so, he ensured that Durham's bishops would not be negligent lords but active ones, with an expectation to work as a "king's minister."<sup>61</sup> Since Durham's bishops were always the king's men who supposedly held their office at the king's pleasure, they were generally willing to acquiesce to demands of the crown and so maintained a

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<sup>56</sup> Prestwich, "The Career of Ranulf Flambard," 303; Margaret Harvey, *Lay Religious Life in Late Medieval Durham* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2006), 26; Scammell, "The Origin and Limitations of the Liberty of Durham," 454.

<sup>57</sup> Prestwich, "The Career of Ranulf Flambard," 300.

<sup>58</sup> Dobson, *Durham Priory*, 224. Bishop Neville was the sole exception, although his election was unique as it marked the beginning of a departure from precedent.

<sup>59</sup> Barker, "Thomas de Hatfield," 99, 102.

<sup>60</sup> Barker, "Thomas de Hatfield," 27-30.

<sup>61</sup> Fraser, *A History of Antony Bek*, 198.



harmonious relationship with him.<sup>62</sup> The close ties between the offices of Keeper of the Privy Seal and bishop of Durham demonstrate with each election a royal effort to keep Durham and its autonomy working for the crown, co-opting both for its own purposes.

### **The Autonomy and Limitations of Durham**

#### **Regalian and Judicial Privilege**

The special status which Durham used to prevent economic collapse from the Black Death and which required skilled appointees was justified by Durham's holding of regality. Regality were privileges traditionally only granted to the English king and its fundamental form was the supremacy of the lord's seal or writ. The superiority of Durham's seal over the king's within the county was well recognized by the start of the thirteenth century.<sup>63</sup> The bishop's seal was used to issue law and served as a foundation to justify future privileges. It was affixed to confiscation orders both for forfeited land and the goods of outlaws.<sup>64</sup> It was applied to all manner of prerogative writs, such as minting and its associate seignorage, as well as to warrants of arrest, summons to court, alienation licences, enfeoffment of tenants, and other mechanisms of government which elsewhere in England could only be used by the crown.<sup>65</sup> The bishop's seal represented the king's inability to enforce rule and gave Durham other myriad rights such as initiation of legal pleas but was most valuable for "freedom from almost all lay taxation."<sup>66</sup> When Durham was taxed by parliament in the 1371 Parish Subsidy, the bishop's strong relationship with the king and Durham's traditional independence from taxation likely combined

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<sup>62</sup> Richard H. Britnell, "Feudal Reaction after the Black Death in the Palatinate of Durham," *Past & Present* 128, (August, 1990): 29.

<sup>63</sup> Holford and Stringer, *Border Liberties and Loyalties*, 17.

<sup>64</sup> Holford and Stringer, *Border Liberties and Loyalties*, 26.

<sup>65</sup> Holford and Stringer, *Border Liberties and Loyalties*, 58; Martin R. Allen, "The Durham Mint Before Boldon Book," in *Anglo-Norman Durham: 1093-1193*, ed. David Rollason, Margaret Harvey, and Michael Prestwich (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1994), 382; Liddy, *The Bishopric of Durham*, 26.

<sup>66</sup> Scammell, "The Origin and Limitations of the Liberty of Durham," 460; Holford and Stringer, *Border Liberties and Loyalties*, 21, 26, 40, 46-52.

to create a unique concession. Rather than pay tax to the king for crown use, “Bishop Hatfield was allowed to collect and spend the tax on the king’s behalf.”<sup>67</sup> The king could expect the trusted Hatfield to use funds to further royal policy, but trust only went so far, as the subsidy was followed by letters patent to ensure it would not be used as precedent for future taxation on Durham.<sup>68</sup> The parish subsidy was an episode where Durham’s freedom from parliamentary taxation was infringed upon but also a reminder of its unique legal privileges by the compromise which emerged after legal dispute. Law was indeed a valuable privilege of Durham, and the autonomy of the bishop’s court provided “a tangible benefit for the liberty’s inhabitants,” as it provided an expedient local alternative to royal justice.<sup>69</sup> The exclusion of the royal writ effectively made Durham a different kingdom as far as criminal law was concerned, complete with flight from and to his jurisdiction to escape court summons or legal punishment which resulted in an extradition treaty with the King of England ratified in 1341.<sup>70</sup> This power, as well as control of ecclesiastical courts, provided the Bishop with a wealth of legal tools with which to administer his territory to a degree unparalleled in England.<sup>71</sup>

Such powers meant that their lordship as a whole was never negligible. It might touch on every aspect of their subjects’ lives, and it thereby gave the bishops the potential to exercise a decisive influence on the liberty’s social and political order. It was a potential that was rarely realized to its fullest extent; but the effects, for good or ill, could be dramatic.<sup>72</sup>

The exclusion of the royal writ diversified the bishop’s income to include more than just his estate. It gave him valuable alternative sources of revenue which were tremendously useful in

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<sup>67</sup> William M. Ormrod, “An Experiment in Taxation: The English Parish Subsidy of 1371,” *Speculum* 63, no. 1 (1988): 78.

<sup>68</sup> *Rot. Parl.* II, 461.

<sup>69</sup> Holford, “Feet of Fines,” 841.

<sup>70</sup> Cynthia J. Neville, “The Courts of the Prior and the Bishop of Durham in the Later Middle Ages,” *History* 85, no. 278 (April 2000): 217.

<sup>71</sup> Scammell, “The Origin and Limitations of the Liberty of Durham,” 472.

<sup>72</sup> Holford and Stringer, *Border Liberties and Loyalties*, 137.

maintaining his profitability after the Black Death. One of these income sources was the bishop's mint which, while it minted English coins, did so with some peculiarities. The bishop's mint operated from the pre-Norman period until the reign of Henry VIII and his rights to have one originated as ecclesiastic privilege but came to be used and enhanced by his temporal authority.<sup>73</sup> The bishop's mint never closed when a period of recoinage ended and was a semi-constant source of profit.<sup>74</sup> It continued operation when other mints were ordered to close because it operated at the bishop's will, not the king's, as was the case with every other English mint.

By the end of the thirteenth century, the bishop of Durham's powers were increasingly defined and expanded as more substantial privileges slowly came under episcopal authority, which could be used to optimize his use of labour from his tenants.<sup>75</sup> Accumulation of regalian privileges led to Durham being "accorded by 1293 the exalted, if ill-defined, style of 'earl palatine'".<sup>76</sup> The bishop was no longer an ecclesiastical landlord with a privileged estate, but a count in his own right without any obligation of fealty, as the Earls of Northumberland claimed he had to them. As his own earl, the bishop had a freedom to act other ecclesiastics lacked. He had free reign to exploit his land and resources as optimally as he could manage, a task easily accomplished when skilled administrators were appointed to the episcopal throne.

## **Expectations**

Durham was not defined solely by its privileges, as they existed on the condition of good government in the territory and defense of the border. This expectation forced bishops to keep Durham profitable and internally harmonious, rather than be exploited for personal, familial, or factional profit. Scammell argued Durham had to provide for the crown a service which was

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<sup>73</sup> Allen, *Mints and Money in Medieval England*, 24, 96-7.

<sup>74</sup> Peter Spufford, *Money and its Use in Medieval Europe* (Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 193.

<sup>75</sup> Holford and Stringer, *Border Liberties and Loyalties*, 17.

<sup>76</sup> Holford and Stringer, *Border Liberties and Loyalties*, 17.

equal to or greater than what the crown lost by allowing Durham its Liberty.<sup>77</sup> Should the Liberty fail to provide such a service, be it Durham or any other Liberty, the territory, its privileges, or both could be divested:

The ultimate and most dramatic expression of royal supremacy were the seizures of the bishopric which followed too florid an expression of episcopal arrogance. Here is the true measure of Durham's autonomy and its theoretical privileges, and it should supply the last word in any discussion of Durham's rights. In the last resort the franchise's privileges were as long as the king's temper.<sup>78</sup>

Durham was provided its liberty on a conditional status to defend the borders, provide judicial expediency, and effectively administer the territory.<sup>79</sup> From the crown's perspective, the bishop's policies had to align with its agenda, and it would act to ensure this remained the case.<sup>80</sup> Should the bishop fail to accomplish his duty, Durham's privileges would be tested, as they were during the seizures of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.<sup>81</sup>

The crown's desire to keep Durham under its control is why bishops were always trusted royal appointees from the English south with no previous tie to the county which could create conflicting interests, favouritism, or corruption. The crown took great care to place Durham in the hands of a loyal minister who would labour to use its resources effectively without the nepotism which characterized feudalism, though appointees would not always live up to these expectations. Despite filling all criteria for the position, Bishop Bek (1283-1311) was a contentious figure who failed to maintain internal harmony and created discontent through excessive use of his legal power in ecclesiastical, common, and halmote courts.<sup>82</sup> This brought

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<sup>77</sup> Scammell, "The Origin and Limitations of the Liberty of Durham," 452.

<sup>78</sup> Scammell, "The Origin and Limitations of the Liberty of Durham," 472.

<sup>79</sup> Holford, "Feet of Fines," 834, 837; Cam, "The Evolution of the Mediaeval English Franchise," 442.

<sup>80</sup> Pollard, "Provincial Politics in Lancastrian England: The Challenge to Bishop Langley's Liberty in 1433," 70.

<sup>81</sup> "Rufus took William of St. Calais' revenues and castle. Henry I imprisoned Flambard and confiscated his lands. Puiset had his castles seized twice (1174, 1182). Naturally the most formal seizures were those of Edward I from Bek (1302, 1305)." (Scammell, "The Origin and Limitations of the Liberty of Durham," 472.)

<sup>82</sup> Holford and Stringer, *Border Liberties and Loyalties*, 139-40.

him the king's disappointment but not his fury. The impetus for confiscation arose when Bek sided with the Church when forced to prioritize between the demands of his king to act as a military leader and his role as bishop.<sup>83</sup> The bishop was supposed to be a "wall against the Scots" to protect the faithful of England.<sup>84</sup> Edward I considered Durham held "delegated regalian rights" to service this goal and that they were of a royal origin, which could thus be revoked.<sup>85</sup> To him "the bishop of Durham was a 'king's minister'." He held "powers derived from royal grant and he was... responsible for the preservation of royal power."<sup>86</sup> When in royal favour in 1293, Bek secured from the archbishop of York acknowledgement before king and parliament that Durham held a 'double status' as both bishop in his diocese and earl palatine in his county, so the archbishop had no right to interfere in Durham's temporal administration.<sup>87</sup> Yet when Bek was out of royal favour his estate was seized and he was forced to both acknowledge the royal origins of his power and pay an £840 fine.<sup>88</sup> Bek's failure to uphold royal power, different perception on the origins of his regality, and failure to keep local peace resulted in this dispute, seizure, and legal expenses. His example demonstrates "that the Durham franchise owed its greatest variations in fortune not to its own theoretical privileges, status or merits, but to the political vicissitudes of its then bishop."<sup>89</sup> Other bishops certainly skirted the edges of acceptable conduct, as Bishop Hatfield (1345-1381) did at several times between 1340 and 1350.<sup>90</sup>

However, they did not elicit extreme royal reprisal, thanks to a certain political skill which either

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<sup>83</sup> Holford and Stringer, *Border Liberties and Loyalties*, 58; Fraser, *A History of Antony Bek*, 184, 192.

<sup>84</sup> Raine, *Historiae Dunelmensis Scriptores Tres*, 98.

<sup>85</sup> Cam, "The Evolution of the Mediaeval English Franchise," 442; Constance M. Fraser, "Edward I of England and the Regalian Franchise of Durham," *Speculum* 31, no. 2 (April 1956): 337, 340; Constance M. Fraser, *A History of Antony Bek, Bishop of Durham, 1283-1311* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), 182.

<sup>86</sup> Fraser, *A History of Antony Bek*, 198; Fraser, "Edward I of England and the Regalian Franchise of Durham," 340.

<sup>87</sup> Fraser, *A History of Antony Bek*, 95-6.

<sup>88</sup> Fraser, "Edward I of England and the Regalian Franchise of Durham," 340; Fraser, *A History of Antony Bek*, 182-3.

<sup>89</sup> Scammell, "The Origin and Limitations of the Liberty of Durham," 472-3.

<sup>90</sup> Barker, "Thomas de Hatfield," 131-2, 136.

disguised attempts at expansion of the liberty, or maintained the agreement between king and bishop that Durham was obliged to a particular set of duties (and Hatfield upheld his military commitment in both France and Scotland). These expectations the bishop worked within kept Durham's economy and resources working well and, above all, working for the king. This constant royal oversight and promotion of non-local bishops helped ensure the continuous care bishops placed towards the county's economic wellbeing that allowed it to weather the damages of economic recession, as in the Black Death, until the ascension of Bishop Neville when both royal expectation and non-local appointment ceased.

The crown expected the bishop to maintain an orderly realm which could remain productive, especially in the face of disaster such as those presented by Scottish raids and, later, the Black Death. To fulfill this expectation, the bishop wielded both common and canon law as a tool for both county administration and land productivity.<sup>91</sup> He additionally held a halmote court for tenants of both the priory's estate and his own.<sup>92</sup> These three legal tools exemplify the blurred jurisdiction in Durham, as the bishop acted simultaneously, to varying degrees, and at different times as an earl, ecclesiastic, and landlord within County Durham. The three forms of law available to the bishop provided for a flexible and robust method of delivering justice to Durhamites who found themselves in court, and a powerful tool to organize the county to his benefit. Bishop Hatfield's enforcement of the Statute of Labourers to fix the wages of the commons after the Black Death to rates from before the plague demonstrates this power's economic potential and also the king's expectation of its use as the bishop wielded all three forms of legal authority to enforce wage regulations passed by a parliament which did not

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<sup>91</sup> Holford and Stringer, *Border Liberties and Loyalties*, 137.

<sup>92</sup> Neville, "The Courts of the Prior and the Bishop of Durham in the Later Middle Ages," 228.

represent his county.<sup>93</sup> These legal tools were also heavily used after the Black Death to reorder tenantry and work vacant land, which ensured agricultural resources of Durham were being used rather than left fallow. Since the Black Death killed much of the population, labour became suddenly more valuable than land, and so bishops were able to use their legal power to exploit and maintain the labour they already had. This ensured Durham's continued productivity following the disaster and was a different manifestation of legal power than that experienced elsewhere in England, as it was created by a mixture of diverse and autonomous legal power with crown expectations of its use. Legal autonomy was a jealously-guarded privilege in Durham and elsewhere given the considerable profits that could be derived from its fines.<sup>94</sup> However in Durham these fines were rarely exploited and instead given fairly, likely because bishops were trusted appointees charged with maintaining order in the county, not pursuing personal profit.

### **The Episcopate of Robert Neville and Durham in the Wars of the Roses**

Bishop Robert Neville (1438-57) demonstrates the value of the competent and trusted administrators who came before him through his own lack of such qualities. The king's traditional endowment criteria were not followed for Bishop Neville, who was

the only clear example in the later middle ages of a clerk who secured the bishopric of Durham because of his aristocratic origins rather than for administrative or diplomatic work on behalf of the royal government. More precisely still, he was the only holder of the northern see between 1333 and 1476 who did not serve, at some time of his life, as Keeper of the Privy Seal.<sup>95</sup>

Bishop Neville was not one of the 'good lords' of Durham that the monks often wrote of, but one who instead prioritized his family's power, wealth, and prestige over good government. The bishop made efforts to align the power and wealth of his bishopric with the goals of his great

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<sup>93</sup> Britnell, "Feudal Reaction," 29.

<sup>94</sup> Neville, "The Courts of the Prior and the Bishop of Durham in the Later Middle Ages," 227-8.

<sup>95</sup> Dobson, *Durham Priory 1400-1450*, 224.

family, especially his brother the Earl of Salisbury, rather than the crown or local people.<sup>96</sup> This came at the time when good leadership was most needed, as Neville's episcopate coincided with the preamble to, and outbreak of, the longest succession crisis in English history, the Wars of the Roses. Bishop Neville's inability to rule the county effectively demonstrated the damage caused by appointing an aristocrat through nepotism rather than a royal official for his service.

Bishop Neville was also one of the only medieval bishops who was native to the county, as he was born at Raby castle in Durham. Bishops before him were exclusively from further south and as a result were impartial outsiders without vested interests in one part of Durham over another. This trait ensured fairness in government and the courts rather than local favouritism, which aided in maintaining harmonious government in Durham and respect for the office of bishop through recognition of his unbiased nature. However the Nevilles of Raby were well entrenched in both local and national politics, having held both secular and ecclesiastic offices for the bishop, and so could hardly be considered impartial.<sup>97</sup> The bishop of Durham was supposed to be a neutral and mediating force between competing border families with a directive to promote the crown's interests, but Bishop Neville shattered those conceptions and inexorably entangled Durham in the Wars of the Roses to the detriment of episcopal income.

The subordination of Durham to the Nevilles and the resulting mismanagement, especially through nepotism, continued with bishops in Lawrence Booth (1457-76) and William Dudley (1476-83). Bishop Booth ascended through politics and the church by favour of his half-brother, William Booth, archbishop of York, (1452-64) and alliance with the Lancastrian cause

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<sup>96</sup> Pollard, "Neville, Robert (1404–1457), Bishop of Durham."

<sup>97</sup> Charles Robert Young, *The Making of the Neville Family in England, 1166-1400* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1996), 100. For some offices, see the 1322 Commissioner of Array Ralph de Neville and archdeacons of Durham Thomas de Neville (1334-61), Alexander Neville (1371-3), and George Neville (1452-6). The later two of which would later become archbishops of York.



rather than through royal service, as he only served as Keeper of the Privy Seal for a single year before being appointed bishop of Durham. His provision to both was politically motivated by Queen Margaret of Anjou to remove Yorkists from prominent positions. Booth's episcopate saw his temporalities divested from 1462-4 and afterwards the new Neville earl of Northumberland forcibly made his lay steward.<sup>98</sup> Nepotistic appointments remained as prominent during Booth's tenure as they were under Bishop Neville, where his nephew George Neville served as archdeacon. Bishop Booth promoted his own nephew, Ralph Booth, to the archdeaconry and chancellorship. He also promoted two other nephews to prominent benefices when he was made archbishop of York.<sup>99</sup> Nepotism in the office of archdeacon appears to have been commonplace during the period of Neville and Yorkist lordship, demonstrating the mismanagement at play in this period of Durham's history. As the archdeacon was a senior official for the bishop the choice of archdeacon necessitated someone capable of handling its duties, an interesting parallel to the role of the bishop of Durham as an important office to crown administration.

The two bishops who followed Bishop Booth were no better at managing the palatinate and continued the trend of poor administration of the bishop's financial apparatus during the Wars of the Roses. Bishop Dudley held a "lack of administrative experience" upon promotion and was selected instead for his close relationship with Edward IV.<sup>100</sup> He was a "pliant" bishop who gave over palatinate powers to royal office and eventually came "so completely under the sway of the king's brother" that palatinate offices, fees, and councillors were dominated by the

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<sup>98</sup> Anthony J. Pollard, "Booth [Bothe], Laurence (c. 1420–1480), Bishop of Durham and Archbishop of York," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/2888>.

<sup>99</sup> John A. F. Thomson, *The Early Tudor Church and Society, 1485-1529* (New York: Taylor and Francis, 1993), 110; Pollard, "Booth [Bothe], Laurence (c. 1420–1480)."

<sup>100</sup> Anthony J. Pollard, "Dudley, William (d. 1483), Bishop of Durham," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/8163>.

duke of Gloucester's men rather than the bishop's "in a manner and to a degree remarkably similar to Bishop Robert Neville in his dealings with the earl of Salisbury three decades earlier."<sup>101</sup> Bishop Dudley was replaced by John Sherwood (1484-94), who had filled for Archbishop Neville a roll markedly similar to that Ralph Booth did for his uncle. Sherwood left the archbishop's service upon promotion to ambassador to Rome by Edward IV, a role he would serve for the rest of his life. While ambassador he was promoted to bishop of Durham and as a result was an absentee lord who only spent two of his ten years in residence. While distinct from the nepotism and mismanagement which preceded him, bishop Sherwood's absenteeism offered Durham little administrative oversight from an official with government experience. Management established under the past several decades of Neville control remained, for Sherwood served the king as a diplomat in Rome rather than as an administrator in Durham.<sup>102</sup> The tenure of the three bishops which followed Bishop Neville shows that despite the lack of a Neville on the episcopal throne, the bishop of Durham had quickly become aligned not with good management and border defense on behalf of the crown, but instead, the internal politics of England, a previously unprecedented development.

The direction of the bishopric's resources towards internal politics during the Wars of the Roses, rather than defense against the Scots, should have provoked royal reprisal as it did for Bishop Bek (1283-1311) when he failed to fill the perceived directive of office. However, the weakness of royal government during the minority and mental instability of Henry VI (1422-61) and the following civil conflict ensured the crown was too politically weak to punish a bishop who did not live up to the expectations of his position. Familial ties to the Nevilles in the mid to

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<sup>101</sup> Pollard, "Dudley, William (d. 1483), Bishop of Durham."

<sup>102</sup> Anthony J. Pollard, "Shirwood, John (d. 1493), Bishop of Durham," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/25447>.

late fifteenth century and service to the Yorkists would have made even a strong king hesitate to punish the bishop, as the Nevilles had by then become one of the most powerful families in the country. As the Yorkists held the throne for much of the Wars of the Roses, it could be interpreted that Durham was fulfilling its role as a king's minister, just in a significantly different manner than which it had served in the preceding centuries. However, even if the bishop was still considered a king's minister, the lack of bishops with the traditional appointment prerequisites ensured poor management of Durham. The Nevilles and Yorkists had free reign to siphon as much wealth, power, and offices from Durham as they wished to further their political goals and usurp the throne from the Lancastrians, a goal which Neville and succeeding bishops of Durham in the fifteenth century were willing to pursue.

### **Estate Income Over Time**

#### **The Estate Sources**

To see if Durham's autonomy produced tangible impacts on the income of the bishop his income over time ought to be measured and compared with the incomes of the ecclesiastical estates of Durham Priory and the archbishop of York in order to isolate the impact of the bishop's autonomy on economic recovery following the Black Death. The *Taxatio Ecclesiastica* is the most significant primary source for pre plague data and is extraordinarily valuable to determine just how economically devastating the Black Death was to ecclesiastical income. It recorded the expected income, and some expenses, of all ecclesiastical offices in 1291 England. This included both temporal estates and spiritual incomes from tithes and was an assessment for clerical taxation in England used over the next two and a half centuries. A new national assessment was not made until, the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* of 1535, which is the most significant

post-plague source. It is identical in form to the *Taxatio* both in goal and intent so it is the easiest value to compare directly, which the following tables will emphasize.

Aside from these national surveys each ecclesiastical estate has different sources to learn their income and compare with others. The bishop of Durham's income is the most important to measure the impact of the Black Death on his estate. The earliest point for comparison is in 1183, when the bishop of Durham commissioned his great survey Boldon Buke to record payments due to him by his tenants. Boldon Buke did not record real income, as it was an estate survey, and much of its income is in agricultural produce and labour. The provided income in the table is thus expected income, rather than the real income, gained by applying the bishop's expected agricultural yields to medieval price data provided by Thorold Rogers.<sup>103</sup> The exception is woodlade, which does not have a measurement, and so is instead sourced from 1307 in the bishop's earliest receiver-general roll which itself is also used on the table in its own right.<sup>104</sup>

To find the bishop's post-plague income and how it changed over time after this economic disaster other historians have also been consulted, for not all the bishop's income is so well preserved in rolls and surveys. Peter Grainger has calculated the average estate incomes of the bishop for the length of the fifteenth century using receiver-general sources, manor valors, and a 1463-4 account book for Edward IV.<sup>105</sup> Anthony Pollard has provided an estimate for the bishop's total income upon the death of bishop Neville in 1457.<sup>106</sup> And Robin Storey estimated the same, but for Bishop Langley at the end of the fourteenth century using the 1392 receiver-

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<sup>103</sup> James Edwin Thorold Rogers, *A History of Agriculture and Prices in England: from the year after the Oxford parliament (1259) to the commencement of the continental war (1793)*, vol iii (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1866), 245, 247, 361, 363, 452. For more information on Boldon Buke incomes and methodology, see table 4 in the appendix.

<sup>104</sup> Greenwell, *Boldon Buke*, xxvi.

<sup>105</sup> Peter N. Grainger, "The Revenues and Financial Administration of the Bishopric of Durham 1457-79" (M.A. thesis, Durham University, 1975), 216.

<sup>106</sup> Anthony J. Pollard, *North-Eastern England During the Wars of the Roses: Lay Society, War, and Politics, 1450-1500* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 49.

general's account as his base.<sup>107</sup> Storey also provided an estimate for the first four decades of the fifteenth century from more disparate sources which is oft repeated by other historians.<sup>108</sup> Since much of the post-plague sources are ranges of income rather than single values, all later applications of them for per-acre yield and percentage change use the lowest value in the range, as this is a confirmed quantity rather than a theoretical, if likely, one.

The territorially coterminous estate of Durham Priory provides valuable comparison of economic disaster. Due to the close geographical proximity, the monks reflected in their estate a similar drop or rise in income to that of the bishop should a recession or boom affect the county. In effect, the priory provides a control variable since, unlike the bishop, they did not have the same freedom to act nor the tools available to him, yet also strove to make the most effective use of their land. The priory's bursar rolls are consulted and represent "nearly three-quarters of the priory's total income."<sup>109</sup> Bursar and priory totals in the priorate of Wessington (1416-46) are provided by Dobson and supported by Storey, as well as the monks themselves.<sup>110</sup> The revenues of the monks of Durham priory are the simplest to consult as a result of the sophistication and preservation of their financial records. They offer a valuable source of data for a large Durham ecclesiastical estate which lacked the myriad powers of the bishop.

The archbishop of York's estate plays a similar role to the priory as a large ecclesiastical estate, whose addition for comparison provides greater breadth and insight into the English north outside of Durham and inside the centrally administered area of northern England represented by parliament. His estate was the most challenging of incomes to tabulate for comparison with an autonomous Durham as the see's financial records are poor, fragmented, or non-extant. Its

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<sup>107</sup> Storey, *Thomas Langley*, 68.

<sup>108</sup> See for example: Brown, "Estate Management and Institutional Constraints in Pre-Industrial England," 703.

<sup>109</sup> Miranda Threlfall-Holmes, *Monks and Markets* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 18.

<sup>110</sup> Dobson, *Durham Priory*, 253; Storey, *Thomas Langley*, 30-1; Raine, *Historiae Dunelmensis Scriptores Tres*, ccli.

income in 1183 and after the Black Death in 1406 are both derived from crown sources when the archbishop was in vacancy. York Minster too suffers from poor record keeping, as the chapter “independently administered” prebendal estates rather than consolidated them as Durham priory did under the bursar, and as such they “are inadequately documented within the chapter’s own archives.”<sup>111</sup> That Yorkshire’s largest ecclesiastical estates are so poorly recorded financially immediately informs the character of the bishop of Durham. As the bishop was almost exclusively a former financial officer, it is unsurprising his records are much better. The bishop had estate surveys, a receiver-general who kept regular records of his total income, and other offices such as the Master of Forests and Mines who too provided regular account. York provides another large ecclesiastical estate which, unlike Durham, was not operated by former financial officers who brought skilled management to the land. Unlike Durham Priory, it is not adjacent and thus less influenced by economic issues within Durham. This is a desirable trait in order to divorce from the bishop’s estate both local conditions, represented by the priory who should reasonably also suffer from them, and administrative skill of an ecclesiastical estate, which both archbishop and prior can provide. With all three estates compared in per-acre value it can be understood when Durham was astutely managed at various points in the Middle Ages, as these comparable estates allow for an elimination of all alternative reasons for the bishop’s economic fortunes other than his autonomy and skilled government. The style of lordship present at Durham from both the bishop and prior indicates a degree of sophistication and care towards finance that is not found in York and is almost certainly related to local culture. Durham was organized with sophisticated taxation in mind after the Norman conquest, but this financial and

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<sup>111</sup> Richard B. Dobson, “The later Middle Ages 1215-1500,” in *A History of York Minster*, eds. Gerald E. Aylmer and Reginald Cant (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 58.

record-keeping tradition would not have persisted over the Middle Ages without the consistent presence on Durham's episcopal throne of bishops experienced in high finance.

### **Typical Estate Outcomes from the Plague**

Human activity on estates did occur in such a random event as the plague. People had to react, and larger estates were better situated to take advantage of the outbreak of plague. Large estates had greater resources at their disposal than smallholders to weather the troubled times. Inflated food and labour prices also disproportionately benefited larger estates who consumed a lower percentage of their produce than smallholders. Before the plague hit, having land rather than labour was the deciding factor of estate profit, afterwards access to labour was more valuable.<sup>112</sup> Indeed, the value of land plummeted some 20% immediately following the Black Death, a value which further dropped by an additional 50% over the next seventy years and remained low for the next century.<sup>113</sup> From these factors, income inequality expanded in England immediately after the plague. An estate with high size, wealth, and diversity of income could rebound comparatively easily from destruction brought by the Black Death compared to their smaller peers.

Estates in England regardless of size generally transitioned away from arable agriculture after the plague. Animal husbandry became more profitable when labour grew in price, as less wages had to be paid per acre of land. Use of land changed to facilitate this development, as fields that were once used to grow less desired grains such as oats and rye which favoured marginal soils gave way to fodder crops and legumes to feed the growing herds of cattle or barley to brew ale and thence provide the enriched peasant with meat, dairy, wool, and

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<sup>112</sup> Hatcher, "England in the Aftermath of the Black Death," 6-8, 30-1.

<sup>113</sup> Helen Robbins, "A Comparison of the Effects of the Black Death on the Economic Organization of France and England," 461.

alcohol.<sup>114</sup> This altered land use was common across England, and integrated well into an economy which had urbanized over the previous century to feed the now constant demand for finished goods by the newly enriched urban and rural peasantry.

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<sup>114</sup> Campbell, "The Demesne-Farming Systems of Post-Black Death England," 133-4, 155.



Table 1: Durham and York Incomes

	1183	1291-4	1306-7	1330-4	1390-2	Early 15 <sup>th</sup> Century	Late 15 <sup>th</sup> Century	Early 16 <sup>th</sup> Century
Bishop of Durham Estate Income	£1236 5s. 0.75d.		£2107 19s. 6.5d.		£2721 14s. 5d.	£2970	£2160	£1897 13s. 11.5d.
Bishop of Durham Total Income		£2,666 13s. 4d.	£3918 5s.		£3000- £4000	£4000	£2500- £3000	£3041 4s. 4.75d.
Durham Priory Bursar Income		£2373 8s. 2d.		£2200	£1732 11s. 2d.	£1500~	£1372 17s. 3.5d.	
Durham Priory Total Income		£1320				£2053~ 6s. 8d.		£1804 10s. 3d.
Durham Diocese Income		£10,917 4s. 9.25d.						£9545 5s. 11.75d.
Archbishop of York Estate Income	£1813 14s. 8d.	£1333 6s. 8d.				£1333 6s. 8d.		£1609 19s. 2d.
York Diocese Income		£27,535 3s. 5.5d.						£31,012 13s. 6.5d.
Yorkshire Lay & Cleric Movables			£113,139 7s. 8.5d.	£72,064 10s.				£126,513 4s.

Sources. *Census of England and Wales. 1901*, 3; *Census of Great Britain 1851*, lxxv; William Greenwell, ed. *Boldon Buke, a Survey of the Possessions of the See of Durham*, (Durham: Surtees Society vol. xxv, 1852), 73-75, appendix xxv-xxxix; Peter N. Grainger, "The Revenues and Financial Administration of the Bishopric of Durham 1457-79" M.A. thesis, Durham University, 1975), 231; Caley and Hunter, *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, 1-200, 299-330; *Taxatio Ecclesiastica*, 297-318, 320-25, 329-32; Stubbs, *The Constitutional History of England*, Vol. II, 581; Storey, *Thomas Langley*, 30-1, 68; Dobson, *Durham Priory*, 253, 292; Fowler, *Extracts from the account rolls of the Abbey of Durham*, Vol. II, 490-3, 576, 640; Pipe Roll Society, *The Great Roll of the Pipe for the Twenty-Ninth Year of the Reign of King Henry II A.D. 1182-1183*, (London: Pipe Roll Society vol. xxxii, 1911), 59; Public Record Office, *Calendar of the Patent Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office: Henry IV A.D. 1405-1408*, (London: H.M.S.O. vol. iii, 1907), 110; Schofield, "The Geographical Distribution of Wealth in England," 504; Jenks, "The Lay Subsidies and the State of the English Economy (1275-1334)," 31-9; Anthony J. Pollard, *North-Eastern England During the Wars of the Roses: Lay Society, War, and Politics, 1450-1500* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 49.

Table 2: Durham and York £ per thousand Acres

	1183	1291-4	1306-7	1330-4	1390-2	Early 15 <sup>th</sup> Century	Late 15 <sup>th</sup> Century	Early 16 <sup>th</sup> Century
Bishop of Durham Estate Income	22.62		38.58		49.81	54.35	39.53	34.73
Bishop of Durham Total Income		48.8	71.71		54.9	73.2	45.75	55.66
Durham Priory Bursar Income		143.84		133.33	105	90.91	83.2	
Durham Priory Total Income		80				124.44		109.36
Durham Diocese Income		5.63						4.92
Archbishop of York Estate Income	18.72	13.76				13.76		16.62
York Diocese Income		4.89						5.511
Yorkshire Lay & Cleric Movables			29.16	18.57				32.61

Table 3: Durham and York £ per thousand Acres, Percentage Change

	1183	1291-4	1306-7	1330-4	1390-2	Early 15 <sup>th</sup> Century	Late 15 <sup>th</sup> Century	Early 16 <sup>th</sup> Century
Bishop of Durham Estate Income	£22.62		+70.51%		+29.12%	+9.12%	-27.27%	-12.14%
Bishop of Durham Total Income		£48.8	+46.94%		-23.44%	+33.3%	-37.5%	+21.65% +14.04%
Durham Priory Bursar Income		£143.84		-7.3%	-21.25%	-13.42%	-8.48%	
Durham Priory Total Income		£80				+55.55%		-12.12% +36.7%
Durham Diocese Income		£5.63						-12.56%
Archbishop of York Estate Income	£18.72	-26.49%				+0%		+20.75% +20.75%
York Diocese Income		£4.89						+12.63%
Yorkshire Lay & Cleric Movables			£29.16	-36.31%				+11.82%

Note: Each split cell uses its top half to represent change from the previous data point in the chronology. The bottom half represents change since 1291-4.

## **Pounds per Thousand Acres Data and Geographic Distribution of Wealth**

Pounds per thousand-acre data and its change over time informs the relative positioning of these three ecclesiastical estates when ranked by efficient use of their territory and thus can show where and when Durham's autonomy and episcopal skill at taxation provided economic aid. The priory was evidently the most efficient at rental extractions, since in both *Taxatio* assessment and its own consolidated financial records of the bursar the priory drew more wealth from its land than either the bishop of Durham or archbishop of York. Of those two great ecclesiastical lords, the bishop yielded more than the archbishop at all points. This ranged from a low difference of only about £4 in 1183 to nearly four times the efficiency in the early fifteenth century. Of course, the nature of the archbishop's source places doubt upon the certainty of the most excessive difference between their two incomes. 1406's data is from a tax farm during a vacancy in York rather than a record of revenue or an assessment, and was the same value as 1291. Despite this, the easily comparable *Valor* data indicates the archbishop's yields were still significantly lower than bishop's after the plague. The priory at first appears to be the most astutely governed of the ecclesiastical estates. This is a fair conclusion, for the priory placed great emphasis upon management of their land and extraction of rent. However, the rate of difference is misleading. For the same reason that county-wide surveys provide low wealth density, the priory's estate suffers from inflated values. It represents only productive agricultural land and did not include the significant waste territory like the bishop of Durham held in the form of extensive forests and hills in western Durham, and the archbishop of York held in the Pennines. It should not be concluded that the priory was the most astutely governed of the estates, but the fortunes of their estate over time are still of value for they present a valuable comparison as a control variable for the bishop of Durham, whose estate increased its income dramatically after the Black Death.

## **The Bishop's Forms of Power and Their Support of His Estate after the Black Death**

That the Bishop was able to outpace economic trends in the dioceses of Durham and York speaks to the economic value of his palatine powers in the face of arresting disaster. Despite economic trends favouring cities, the bishop's rural estate continued to have high enough yields to remain ahead of the rest of his diocese; the reason for its profitability was not solely his estate's fertility but also how it was used. The bishop of Durham was able to react to the Black Death quickly and efficiently by using his powers for his gain. There were large amounts of land left as waste during the 1350s and such properties made vacant by the Black Death were desperate to be filled.<sup>115</sup> Settling this land became the main focus of English landlords following the plague, as their wealth lay in the amount of land cultivated rather than the number of tenants. Forcing his tenants to provide labour on these vacant plots became a goal for Bishop Hatfield as it did for all English landowners. However, "the bishop of Durham had powers not available to most English landlords." This included "the geographical concentration of his estates" and "his palatine authority" which allowed him "to employ the officers of local government to support his estate policy."<sup>116</sup> Immediately after the Black Death, this use of local government had a visible impact in the county by preventing a collapse in the estate's profits.

Durham's unique combination of exceptionally powerful lordship through a mixture of seigniorial, legal, and ecclesiastical authority offered the bishop an array of tools to use in the event of an economic crisis, such as in the wake of the Black Death. This manifested in one manner by the coroners being tasked to arrest and return fleeing tenants from the bishop's

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<sup>115</sup> Britnell, "Feudal Reaction," 31-2.

<sup>116</sup> Britnell, "Feudal Reaction," 32.

estate.<sup>117</sup> The mobilization of one form of the bishop's power to support another one, namely his palatinate's support of his estate, demonstrates the unique tools available to the bishop.

Even before the plague, the bishop's halmote court had leveraged his diverse powers to create legal precedent which favoured him and which could be enforced by his officers. Halmote courts were the predominant element of manorial courts, which held jurisdiction over tenants on a manor. It was primarily associated with enforcement and negotiation of contracts of tenantry and minor civil disputes. Priory records indicate the sort of confiscation and reordering of land Bishop Hatfield enforced after the Black Death was practiced in Durham at least as early as the late thirteenth century.<sup>118</sup> This legal precedent that these rulings were within a halmote court's jurisdiction, insofar as they dealt with terms of tenantry, were unique to Durham. The bishop was a proactive landlord who would, in one case, confiscate land from the elderly or infirm rather than, as custom elsewhere in England, wait for the tenant to surrender or alter their tenantry voluntarily.<sup>119</sup> These traditional powers arose via the authority of the bishop as he, unlike regular landlords, could regularly enforce such rulings with officers from his other courts, such as coroners. They were not a sudden creation of the plague but instead an older tradition formed through Durham's autonomy and the organizational skill of its bishops which came to greater use after mass death and vacation of arable land.

Legally-enforced land management of this sort would be imposed upon unwilling tenants as confiscated land was often forcibly committed to someone already under contract to farm a certain acreage.<sup>120</sup> During the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, it would be incredibly

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<sup>117</sup> Britnell, "Feudal Reaction," 32-3.

<sup>118</sup> W. H. D. Longstaffe and John Booth, ed., *Halmota Prioratus Dunelmensis* (Durham: Surtees Society, 1889), 9, 12. The priory had conceded their halmote court operations, and half of its revenue, to the bishop in 1229's *Le Conventit*. (Neville, "The Courts of the Prior and the Bishop of Durham in the Later Middle Ages," 228.)

<sup>119</sup> Britnell, "Feudal Reaction," 33.

<sup>120</sup> Britnell, "Feudal Reaction," 35-6, 38.

difficult to find someone who needed to be forced into taking land to farm as a result of the overpopulation and land scarcity of the period. After the Black Death and resultant labour shortage, the courts deemed this a necessary procedure. They were additionally tasked by the bishop to enforce high pre-plague rents outlined in the Statute and Ordinance of Labourers during this period of dramatically rising wages and no land scarcity.<sup>121</sup> While the ordinance failed on most manors and indeed across England, the bishop of Durham could enforce these rulings with threat of excommunication in severe cases. At the very least the bishop's ecclesiastical position and patronage in church politics ensured local priests were less willing to preach resistance to enforcement of the ordinance, as they did in southern England, among other places, in 1381.<sup>122</sup> Threatened by fines and imprisonment, there was little the English commons could do but acquiesce, flee their county, or revolt. However, even during the 1381 Peasants' Revolt against the ordinance, Durham's peasants did not rise up, quite unlike in neighbouring Yorkshire where the Archbishop Alexander Neville (1373-88) faced "widespread riots on the part of his tenants in and around Ripon, Beverly and Sherburn-in-Elmet" as well as Kingston-upon-Hull.<sup>123</sup> This level of social and legal control the bishop of Durham held over his county and estate was thus as impactful as it was unique, for it allowed Durham to overcome the peasant violence of the late fourteenth century without serious damages.

These powers the bishop held, while heavily used in the short term and which found success, were not enough to fully stop the tide of economic change and required skilled leadership which was absent during the period of Yorkist rule. The powers helped to weather the

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<sup>121</sup> Britnell, "Feudal Reaction," 34-5.

<sup>122</sup> Britnell, "Feudal Reaction," 39; Dobson, *Durham Priory*, 145-50.

<sup>123</sup> Dobson, *Church and Society in the Medieval North of England*, 188. See also: S.W. Calkin, "Alexander Neville, Archbishop of York (1373-1388): A Study of His Career with Emphasis on the Crisis at Beverly in 1381," (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1976) and R.G. Davis, "Alexander Neville, Archbishop of York, 1374-1388," *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* 47 (1975): 87-101.

storm on the Bishop's estate, but forms of tenure and rental rates were still at the sway of tenants with newfound leverage, as

...economic events of the third quarter of the fourteenth century, especially those resulting from a sudden decline in population, gave tenants an irresistible bargaining position. The resolution of estates officers that none of the bishop's rights should be lost was no doubt a good position from which to open negotiations, since it had shades of tradition on its side and could be given a fine ideological ring. But in the end feudal reaction was only an opening position, and by the 1380s it had largely collapsed before tenant resistance and economic realism.<sup>124</sup>

And so, the bishop of Durham's estate labour changed with the times until the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* of 1535. However, his increased ability to use land due to his diverse powers, rather than enforce rental rates upon tenants, ensured that the bishop's estate maintained its profitability while other ecclesiastical estates in his diocese had not yet recovered from demographic collapse.

### **Economic Recovery Rates After the Black Death**

This information at first glance runs contrary to economic developments in England following the plague. Trends towards urbanization and manufacturing up to *Valor* should have seen per-acre rent yields increase disproportionately in favour of the archbishop of York's more urban estate. Instead, the largely agrarian estates of the priory and bishop of Durham grew more quickly. It appears that after 1183 the archbishop's estate never became more effectively managed. The archbishop remained one of the richest landowners in England from the size of his estate, but it appears that he had little impetus to improve rental extraction. This dichotomy demonstrates the different goals of the three estates and the skill of their management. The archbishop's land was to upkeep his person as well as manors and staff to allow him a means to fulfill his duty as a high ecclesiastic. The bishop of Durham, however, ran a government with a

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<sup>124</sup> Britnell, "Feudal Reaction," 46-7.

near constant demand for funds. Everything the archbishop had to spend income on, the bishop did so too but with additional drains on his finances. The bishop had to pay for his temporal court system spread across four wards, officers of his secular government such as the Master of Forests and the Durham exchequer, the yearly political expense of the great hunt in western Durham at the bishop's forest, and most assuredly the largest expense, military upkeep of Durham castle, the city walls, and especially Norham castle, just across the Scottish border, where the bishop spent considerable time.<sup>125</sup> This constant drive to procure funds combined with the continued presence of bishops with experience in high financial office as former Keepers of the Privy Seal ensured that, unlike the archbishop of York, there was a motive to increase the bishop of Durham's income and the skill needed to do so was always present. Unlike the priory, whose income plummeted from the Black Death, and the archbishop, whose income appears to have remained unchanged, the precipitous decline in the bishop of Durham's income only occurred in the late fifteenth century when the bishop and his temporalities were controlled by the Neville family. During this period, bishops held none of the personal qualities or skills which characterized earlier ones, leading us to believe that indeed its profits were tied intrinsically to the financial skill of the bishop, for neither Durham Priory's bursar nor the estate of the archbishop suffered such a sudden extreme reversal of trends.

The archbishop of York's value in 1406 is from when it was put to farm during vacancy, yet the value is identical to that of the 1291 *Taxatio* assessment. It is reasonable to assume the estates in 1406 were perceived to be about as profitable as they were in 1291. This indicates crown clerks were not overly concerned with widespread death by plague in Yorkshire and that

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<sup>125</sup> Liddy, *The Bishopric of Durham*, 12, 180; Constance M. Fraser, "Langley, Thomas (c. 1360-1437), Administrator and Bishop of Durham," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/16027>.



the county, or at least the archbishop's estate, had economically recovered from the Black Death by 1406. Thus, York had almost certainly recovered from the Black Death, though to what degree is not entirely evident and so must be treated with some caution.

However, while York had returned exactly to the value provided in 1291, Durham had over the century increased its estate's profitability by 12.5% since 1291, despite collapse from the Black Death. This immediately informs a resilience of Durham's estate in the face of economic disaster. This increase in income was not replicated on the bishop's non-estate sources of revenue, such as mining, minting, or the courts. Since only the bishop of Durham's estate income increased bishop Hatfield must have placed most of his focus in the years following the Black Death on his estate. Indeed, as the single largest revenue source for the bishop of Durham this would be a reasonable assumption to make, but additionally the bishop held a greater ability to reorient his estate rather than his supplementary income immediately following the Black Death. He could use legal powers to simply order tenants to fill vacant lots and use the land he ruled effectively. Negotiation was also cheap, and relatively easy for the bishop, as he only needed to send agents to the various villages of his estate to renegotiate contracts. Meanwhile non-estate revenue, the single largest after the Black Death being coal mining followed by the halmote court, required people the bishop could not easily access. He could not force miners to mine more, as they were not tenants, and with less people in Durham there were less miners as well as less people who would appear in court to pay fines. The bishop's myriad court powers allowed him to reorder his estate to make best use of the land he ruled quickly after disaster. Acreage contractions would be limited to less viable marginal land, as was the case all over England and indeed western Europe as a whole. Unlike the case of other large estates in the priory and the archbishop of York, the bishop of Durham's tenants renegotiated early and despite

population loss the majority of the bishop's land was being worked, or at the very least was 29% more profitable than it was in 1306.

Durham thus left the plague years stronger than when they entered, in part thanks to the skilled use of their autonomy and power during a time of crisis. This is highlighted by priory values, as the bursar's income dropped by 27% from its 1291 income. Given the often coterminous nature of the estate of bishop and priory, a different amount of devastation from the plague is an unlikely cause for this discrepancy in profit. Both estates also held high motivation to keep their income high to maintain the people in their service, be that government for the bishop or the monks and servants for the prior, and both were stocked with skilled officers from Oxford. Thus, the bishop of Durham's greater autonomy and legal power which granted him greater flexibility and ability to act allowed his estate to quickly recover its profitability after the Black Death, as these factors were the only significant differences in management between these two large and astutely governed ecclesiastical estates.

The estates of bishop, archbishop, and prior in the decades following the Black Death thus seem to have had diverging experiences despite their similarities, with a drop in income for the priory, stagnation for the archbishop of York, and increased profit for the bishop of Durham. As a result, the most significant explanation for their divergent growth must be the considerable legal power and autonomy wielded by bishops of Durham which granted them the tools to adequately respond to a disaster scenario.

### **Economic Trends in the English North After the Black Death**

Trends in the economy would understandably impact the profitability of ecclesiastical estates. It is important thus to rule out the changes to the broader English economy which followed the plague as a source of divergent experiences in ecclesiastical income. Urbanization and the

growth of the wool industry in this period favoured growth in cities, where wool was weaved and traded, and more southerly regions of England, where it was grown. Durham and its bishop did not benefit significantly from the growth in this industry, as income was siphoned to the crown and the Earls of Northumberland who profited from its trade out of neighbouring Newcastle.

With the partial exception of Hartlepool, which occasionally had its own collectors of wool customs, Newcastle had a monopoly of the export of wool, hides and wool-fells for the four northern counties and Richmondshire. It ranked in quantity as the sixth most important port in the country, but at a respectful distance after such major centres as London, Boston, Hull and Southampton.<sup>126</sup>

Urbanization after the Black Death and into the fifteenth century also did not seriously impact Durham or the estate of bishop and prior. The city of Durham did not even obtain a charter until 1565. The bishop held some land, homes, and mills within the city of Durham but most of his estate was concentrated in the rich agricultural land of the county's southeast around Bishop Auckland, which included most of Durham's markets.<sup>127</sup> On the other hand, the archbishop of York's urban income increased where he held significant property thanks to the general increase in both size and wealth of centres of trade and manufacturing following the Black Death, which Durham did not benefit from showing instead a "relative poverty in industry and trade."<sup>128</sup> This was due in no small part to the peculiar military geography of Durham which made it difficult to seize by force but stymied trade as travel, especially by water, was not convenient. Despite his diverse powers as Earl-Palatinate, and use of them after the Black Death, the bishop's estate was unable to keep pace with the rate of growth in urban estates as represented by the archbishop of York. Despite this difference in estate land the bishop of

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<sup>126</sup> Constance M. Fraser, "The Pattern of Trade in the North-East of England, 1265-1350" *Northern History* 4, no. 1, (1969): 55.

<sup>127</sup> William Illingworth, ed. *Placita de quo warranto, temporibus Edw. I. II. & III. In curia receptae saccharij Westm. asservata* (London: Record Commission, 1818), 587-604.

<sup>128</sup> Sarah Rees Jones, *York: The Making of a City 1068-1350* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 26; Bonney, *Lordship and the Urban Community*, 103.

Durham's income still grew, and at a rate greater than the archbishop of York's estate, at least until Durham lost its skilled management in the fifteenth century. However, the bishop of Durham's total income from all sources grew at a total rate of around 20% between *Taxatio* and *Valor*, similar to that of the archbishop of York. Despite economic trends which favoured urban estates like those of the archbishop of York, the bishop of Durham, once the office returned to competent fiscal hands upon the election of Bishop Richard Foxe in 1494, had increased its incomes at the same rate since 1291, which demonstrates that despite economic trends which did not favour him, the bishop of Durham he was still able to act to ensure his income kept pace with one that did benefit from urbanization in the fifteenth century.

It is not just that urban estates grew following the Black Death, but agricultural profits also shrank. Yet despite the reduction in profits on average of the largest part of his estate, the bishop of Durham was able to maintain profitability until effective administration of his palatinate was removed during the period of Neville control from 1437 to 1494. The monks of Durham Priory themselves noticed reduced yields of agriculture during the fifteenth century and blamed the Black Death for low garbal tithes.<sup>129</sup> This reduction was not confined to Durham, but part of broader economic trends which removed the previous centuries' emphasis on arable agriculture.<sup>130</sup> Economic changes brought by the Black Death collapsed the price of grain and shifted the English economy towards animal husbandry, manufacturing, and trade as consumption, especially of meat, increased.<sup>131</sup> As subsequent outbreaks of plague throughout the fifteenth century kept the population low, it became increasingly difficult to find rural tenants to

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<sup>129</sup> Dobson, *Durham Priory*, 269.

<sup>130</sup> Dobson, *Durham Priory*, 270.

<sup>131</sup> Dobson, *Durham Priory*, 268, 276; Campbell, "The Demesne-Farming Systems of Post-Black Death England," 131.

grow the less profitable wheat.<sup>132</sup> Indeed these fifteenth century outbreaks of plague led Pollard to conclude this “was a bleak era” of economic crisis in the English north-east.<sup>133</sup> With less land under cultivation and more land turned into pasture, alongside a shift in settlement pattern towards higher yield land often near urban zones, grain yields were lower in both quantity and price, and so the associated garbal tithes were reduced significantly.<sup>134</sup> As ecclesiastical corporations with appropriated garbal tithes only benefited from grain production in an appropriated parish they were forced to turn to their temporal estate more and more for profit.<sup>135</sup> Ecclesiastical corporations with temporal lands located in high yield agricultural zones rather than marginal ones, such as the bishop of Durham, or ones situated in urban zones, such as the archbishop of York, were better equipped to weather the changes in their surrounding economic conditions after the Black Death. Yet the archbishop’s income did not grow as much as the bishop’s in the years following the Black Death, which demonstrates that even though both estates were positioned to profit off of economic trends in different ways, and were highly motivated to improve temporal yields due to the crash in the garbal tithe, only the bishop of Durham with his judicial powers and financial skills was able to use his land to effectively adapt to the new economic realities.

The bishop, as a result of his palatinate, held a diverse variety of income in the county which can also help explain its resilience in the face of disaster. The bishop benefited significantly from economic trends between the *Taxatio* and the *Valor*; while his rents

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<sup>132</sup> Dobson, *Durham Priory*, 45; John H. Munro, “Wage-Stickiness, Monetary Changes, and Real Incomes in Late-Medieval England and the Low Countries, 1300-1500: Did Money Matter?” *Research in Economic History* 21, no. 1 (2003): 191; Jean Gimpel, *The Medieval Machine: The Industrial Revolution of the Middle Ages* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1976), 213-4.

<sup>133</sup> Pollard, *North-Eastern England During the Wars of the Roses*, 78.

<sup>134</sup> Munro, “Did Money Matter?,” 191.

<sup>135</sup> All other produce was a lesser tithes, which would be left to an appointed vicar to provide upkeep for the church in the parish whose garbal tithe had been appropriated for an ecclesiastic corporation (Dodds, “Durham Priory Tithes,” 5; Dobie, *Accounting at Durham Cathedral Priory*, 24.)

plummeted during the fifteenth century “by some £400”, they were generally replaced by incomes from the Master of Forests and Mines whose income rose by £400.<sup>136</sup> The sole cause of this growth was increased demand for coal in the fifteenth century, a direct result of the Black Death and repeated outbreaks of plague which followed and kept the population in England low and thus increased labour costs. This made labour-saving devices more viable alternatives to manual labour, and coal provided a cheap viable alternative to timber to power them.<sup>137</sup> Increased demand for fuel, especially coal, after the plague thus directly benefited the economic value of vast quantities of forestland under the bishop of Durham’s authority only due to his palatinate status. Control over minerals, hunting, salt, and fishing was the sole prerogative of an English monarch and were leased out for profit to landowners. In Durham, the bishop held the said control as a regalian privilege which ensured that profits from local mineral resources remained in local hands. With these local resources the bishop was able to make up for reduced profits on his agricultural estate which provided for him a better position to bargain with his tenants after the plague, as he was not as beholden to their agricultural labour as other landlords were.

### **Conclusion**

The post-plague economic trend on the bishop’s estate indicates that Durham proved more able to resist sudden economic stress than York as a result of the character of its bishops and the power and resources available to them. The bishop of Durham recovered quickly from depopulation by using his labour resources efficiently on land he held which, unlike his number of his tenants, was not reduced by plague. His ability to utilize labour resources in a speedy and efficient manner was inherently tied to his mixed power as both earl-palatine and bishop as well

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<sup>136</sup> Brown, “Estate Management and Institutional Constraints in Pre-Industrial England,” 715-6.

<sup>137</sup> Gimpel, *The Medieval Machine*, 230.

as historical precedent of meritocratic appointment to the office of bishop of Durham. However, when prices and the nature of the English economy shifted towards trade, manufacturing, and urbanization in the later fifteenth century, the present character of Durham bishops as Neville puppets failed to adapt to “economic forces largely outside their own control.”<sup>138</sup> The competence of Durham’s bishops in the previous centuries was then absent. Without such management and taxation experience the growing trade in wool, manufacturing of textiles, and urban consumption of meat, alcohol, and finer clothes was not exploited by bishops of Durham. Had another Bishop Hatfield chosen for competence rather than politics been present in the late fifteenth century it is likely Durham could have better handled shifting economic conditions in late medieval England.

Schofield concluded that England between 1334 and 1535 represented a shift in wealth to the south, especially in the southwest and southeast in booming urban merchant, manufacturing, and mining regions. Durham’s estates seem to align with his findings as their incomes fell during the later fifteenth century.<sup>139</sup> Expansion in arable acreage was the only notable practiced means by which to raise revenue on these ecclesiastical estates, and such efforts could only be pursued through intensive use of existing land, particularly through colonization of waste, and “an expensive policy of buying out interests.”<sup>140</sup> Such limitations of ecclesiastic estates served to restrict the methods by which the estate could grow and become more profitable, as marriage and inheritance lay outside of their ability to exploit. The bishop of Durham, however, held large quantities of waste and forest into the fifteenth century while the population pressures of the fourteenth century had made the prior of Durham, archbishop of

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<sup>138</sup> Dobson, *Church and Society in the Medieval North of England*, 8.

<sup>139</sup> Schofield, “The Geographical Distribution of Wealth in England, 1334-1649,” 509.

<sup>140</sup> Dunsford and Harris, “Colonization of the Wasteland in County Durham,” 51.

York, and many more lords both temporal and ecclesiastic long since fill their waste with farms. It is thus notable that despite differences between the bishop of Durham and both the prior of Durham and the archbishop of York in temporal power, contiguousness of estate land, favour from the king, and directive of office, the latter two saw their per-acre yield from their estates increase at a greater rate than their diocese, while the bishop's short-term resilience to economic disaster was promptly ruined by a series of non-financially responsible bishops. This development prevented the bishop's estate from following the trends set by the prior and archbishop despite his greater power and quantity of available waste with which to expand his revenues. Despite the tremendous potential held by the bishop of Durham as the county entered the fifteenth century his estate did not live up to the precedent for competent management set by his fourteenth century predecessors.

The late fifteenth century saw poor economic leadership in a time of transition when such skills were most needed; the result was a serious negative impact on Durham's revenues. From Bishop Neville in 1437 until the death of Bishop Sherwood in 1494, prelates of Durham were churchmen, and/or diplomats, rather than financial officers, and each one was appointed through political machinations rather than experience. Pollard has argued that this period represented the only point when Durham was truly autonomous in its entire medieval history; if that is the case, then it seems that Durham's autonomy worked against it.<sup>141</sup> The rate of reduction in incomes was less between the late fifteenth century and the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* in the early sixteenth century, the period which coincided with the return of a strong monarch and skilled bishop of Durham after the Wars of the Roses, than it was between the early and late fifteenth century when bishops of Durham were puppets of the Yorkist cause. As Durham gained its skilled managers thanks to

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<sup>141</sup> Pollard, "The Crown and the County Palatine," 87.



the crown's desire to align the bishopric's autonomy with its own agenda, this development speaks in favour of central management of local resources after disaster rather than an autonomous one. High local control of resources by locals with local interests did not result in competent fiscal management during a time of economic transition but instead a direction of profits to fight a civil war without care for the long-term recovery or sustainability of demographic and administrative resources within the estate. The bishop of Durham required a higher authority like the crown to impose an impartial official to the episcopate, one selected with care and with skill as a deciding factor rather than the politics and nepotism which defined the Yorkist period, in order to ensure that the high degree of local power present in the county was used effectively and not squandered or mismanaged by those ill prepared to handle such affairs.

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## APPENDIX

### **Methodology of Boldon Buke and Agricultural Prices**

The earliest source for the potential income of the bishop of Durham is his great survey Boldon Buke, which recorded the territorial extent and rental revenue of the bishop's estate as of 1183. It is not possible to know for certain the value of the bishop's produce or his total income in 1183, as the general-receivers' roll which would record such information does not survive until the fourteenth century. Most payment by tenants is recorded in grain, livestock, wood, and other non-monetary units of income. The value of these payments can be tabulated using data provided by Thorold Rogers, although his price listings do not begin until 1259. Agricultural "prices were generally stable" from the tenth, eleventh, and "most of the twelfth" centuries.<sup>142</sup> However, prices inflated markedly in the early thirteenth century and steadily rose until the outbreak of the Black Death. As a result, the bishop's produce will be overvalued. While this is an issue, no source matches Rogers' comprehensiveness and so he must be consulted despite the potential deficiency of an inflated 1183 episcopal income.

The earliest date for grain prices provided by Rogers with an average he believes can "be depended on" are for 1266. As a result the decennial averages from 1261-1270 have been consulted for most produce for closeness to Boldon Buke, uniformity of date, and accuracy, as it is the earliest data which Rogers claims has not been influenced significantly by either problematic yearly fluctuations of grain prices or lack of sources.<sup>143</sup> The exception is the price of meal, which is derived from the earliest provided data in 1297, as Rogers was not as comprehensive with this foodstuff as he was others.

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<sup>142</sup> David L. Farmer, "Prices and Wages," in *The Agrarian History of England and Wales Volume II 1042-1350*, ed. H. E. Hallam (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 716.

<sup>143</sup> Rogers, *A History of Agriculture and Prices in England*: 188.

The Boldon Buke contains provision for 2,067 cartloads of fuel wood as well as the tenants to cart it. This woodlade was used for warmth and cooking at Durham Castle, the Bishop's manors, and at his great hunt. Some must have invariably been sold, as later general-receivers rolls record, but this wood is impossible to tabulate as a source of income. Cartloads are not standard measurements nor is there a provision within the Boldon Buke to a weight or measure to which a cartload can be applied to such as the fagot, fardel, tallwood, billet, or kiddle used by Rogers. The general-receiver roll of 1307 provides some respite, as the earliest such roll for the bishopric. It provides for the income of woodlades at £13 3s. 11d. but does not list how much was sold or if the woodlades listed are a payment in cash or in kind.<sup>144</sup> It is, however, the earliest possible source to provide for fuel wood a cash value and so, must be used.

Payment impossible to value is worth brief mention. The peculiarity of three turners in Wolsingham occurs in only a single instance. Its omission from income totals does not provide a significant impact upon the total value as a result.<sup>145</sup> Likewise, Cumin and Pepper are treated similarly by omission from Table 4. Like trenchers they are small, at only half a pound and two pounds respectively, but unlike the trenchers can be valued at "a little more than 2d. [to] the pound" for cumin and 11&1/4d. per pound of pepper between 1259 and 1270 for about 2s. of income.<sup>146</sup> The 1307 general-receivers roll provides income from pepper and cumin at 5s. 3.5d., but the quantity is larger at seven pounds of each spice, with pepper valued at 8d. and cumin at 1d..<sup>147</sup> The general-receivers roll includes non-estate sources of income, which is a possible source of the increase in spices. However, the value to the bishop remained small indeed.

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<sup>144</sup> Greenwell, *Boldon Buke*, xxvi.

<sup>145</sup> Trencher is the provided translation of *scutellas* which, given the occupation provided of *tornatores*, a lathe-worker or turner, indicates the likely payment of a trencher was in the form of a bowl or plate made of wood rather than the tableware's origins as a medieval breadbowl. (Greenwell, *Boldon Buke*, 64.)

<sup>146</sup> Rogers, *A History of Agriculture and Prices in England*, 631, 641.

<sup>147</sup> Greenwell, *Boldon Buke*, xxix.

Much of Boldon Buke's payment by tenants came in the form of labour, the vast majority paid weekly one to three days per week. However, the amount of days tenants worked for the bishop markedly increased during harvest season. Some tenants also provide their rental obligation in labour tasks rather than labour time, such as those who go upon the bishop's errands, support castlemen, mow meadows, make hay, or plough and harrow a number of acres of the bishop's land. These values which, while important to the revenue of the bishop by providing labour upon his demesne, were effectively an operations costs and do not need to have their value calculated.<sup>148</sup>

Table 4 provides the forms of payment from the Boldon Buke in a standardized format, the price each unit of the good sold for, the year that price data originated from, and the totals of each good. Grain was measured in the Boldon Buke using chalders equal to 36 bushels.<sup>149</sup> Wheat featured two values in Boldon Buke, chalders and skeps, of which a skeps was equivalent to a quarter, which was 8 bushels.<sup>150</sup> Grain in Table 4 is listed in quarters while cows, hens, and eggs are rendered per head. With this data the Bishop of Durham's total estimated income in 1183 is £1223 1s. 1.75d., increased to £1236 5s. 0.75d. with the addition of woodlades using the value from 1307. Roughly one quarter of this total value was derived from non-cash rents.

### **Methodology of *Taxatio Ecclesiastica* and *Valor Ecclesiasticus***

Aside from Boldon Buke, only the national assessments of clerical income required, in the words of William Stubbs, "painful calculation."<sup>151</sup> He had thankfully already undergone such labour in calculation of Episcopal and diocesan income from *Taxatio* and so his values were used. In

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<sup>148</sup> The forms of labour paid to the bishop were: 1.65 knight's fees (40 days of war per fee), 67,897 days of labour, 255.5 acres of ploughed and harrowed, and the service of 12 castlemen (also called yolwayting).

<sup>149</sup> Greenwell, *Boldon Buke*, lv; Rogers, *A History of Agriculture and Prices in England*, 168.

<sup>150</sup> Rogers, *A History of Agriculture and Prices in England*, 166, 168.

<sup>151</sup> Stubbs, *The Constitutional History of England*, Vol. II, 581

mimicry of Stubbs the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* was painfully compiled. Sources of income derived by grants from other ecclesiastics were removed, such as funding from bishops for hospitals, to prevent double-counting and restrict income to only that within the specific diocese and prevent cases where ecclesiastic funds crossed diocesan borders.

Income was divided by its source as temporal, ecclesiastic, or unknown/unclear in nature. Income which could not be provided as either temporal or ecclesiastic were found primarily in the County of Northumberland within the Diocese of Durham, as well as the Deaneries of Craven and Rydal, and the returns for the Archbishop of York. These originate from gaps in the surviving documents of *Valor* which were filled by the editors of its print version with the *Liber Valorum*, which records the income and taxes as of 1562, and offers “the only Means of Remedy.”<sup>152</sup> The *Liber Valorum* does not provide detailed description of income and deductions, only the total taxable income and due tax. The Diocese of York is large enough that missing entries and its less detailed substitute are not as proportionally problematic as the lack of information on Northumberland, which provides 21% of the total calculated income for the Diocese of Durham while income of undetermined origin provides 13% of the totals for the Diocese of York. As a result of the lack of detail from the *Liber Valorum*, spiritual and temporal incomes for the Dioceses of York and Durham in the 1535 column of Table 5 only feature income which can be determined to have spiritual or temporal origin, and the total income is the sum of those two values as well as the substituted *Liber Valorum* returns.

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<sup>152</sup> Greenwell, *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, 1.

Table 4: Rents of the Bishop of Durham's Estate in the Boldon Buke and Estimated Value

	Currency	Barley	Oats	Malt	Meal	Oat-malt	Wheat	Hens	Eggs	Cows
Quantity	£924 11s. 7.5d.	306	2,170.125	699.75	699.75	2,358	650	2,963	19,300	34.5
Price per unit		3s. 5&5/8d. (1261-70)	1s. 11&5/8d. (1261-70)	3s. 7&5/8d. (1261-70)	7s. 0&5/8d. (1297)	3s. 4d. (1261-70)	4s. 8&5/8d. (1261-70)	1&1/8d. (1261-70)	3.5d. per 120 (1260-70)	10s. 3d. (1261-70)
Total value	£924 11s. 7.5d.	£10 19s. 11.25d.	£114 3s. 1.75d.	£30 6.75d.	£22 4s. 7.5d.	£68 15s. 6d.	£34 3s. 10d.	£13 17s. 9.5d.	£2 6s. 9d.	£1 17s. 4.5d.

Sources. Greenwell, *Boldon Buke*; James Edwin Thorold Rogers, *A History of Agriculture and Prices in England: from the year after the Oxford parliament (1259) to the commencement of the continental war (1793)*, vol iii (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1866), 245, 247, 361, 363, 452.

Table 5: Diocesan Income from National Assessments

	Taxatio Ecclesiastica 1291	Nova Taxatio 1318	Valor Ecclesiasticus 1535
Durham Diocese - Spiritualities	£6723 19s. 3.75d.	£1281 0s. 8d.	£2092 12s. 11.5d.
Durham Diocese - Temporalities	£4193 5s. 6d.	£936 13s. 4d.	£5392 10s. 5.75d.
Durham Diocese - Total	£10,917 4s. 9.25d.	£2217 14s. 0d.	£9545 5s. 11.75d.
York Diocese - Spiritualities	£18,816 13s. 6.5d.	£15,229 15s. 8.5d.	£14,388 9s. 9.25d.
York Diocese - Temporalities	£8718 9s. 11d.	£4953 17s. 10d.	£11,955 6s. 10.25d.
York Diocese - Total	£27,535 3s. 5.5d.	£20,183 13s. 6.5d.	£31,012 13s. 6.5d.

Sources. Stubbs, *The Constitutional History of England*, Vol. II, 581; *Taxatio Ecclesiastica*, 297-318, 320-25, 329-32; Caley and Hunter, *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, 1-200, 299-330.

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