

Durham Priory – Durham College, Oxford Accounts

Introduction

1389-1537, but there is relevant material in only two accounts, between 1399 and 1402; relevant rolls are one membrane each, length 604-837 mm., width 275-283 mm. Single-column, with undivided expenses and a separate line for each item. The terminal date in this period is usually the Monday after Ascension, but the account for 1399-1400 runs from the Translation of St. Thomas (3rd or 7th July, see Textual Note) to the day after Ascension.

Durham Priory began to send monks to study at Oxford in the late thirteenth century, but did not found its own college there until 1381, when the initiators of the foundation were Prior Robert Walworth and the dying Bishop Thomas Hatfield. Durham College prospered both academically and financially and became the forerunner of the present Trinity College; Dobson estimates that nearly half of all Durham monks studied there in the last 150 years of the priory's history, and while this is an exaggeration, its educational importance to the Priory was clearly very great.¹ Because Durham College had no land, derived its income only from appropriated churches and was expected to maintain eight monks and eight secular scholars, together with all the buildings, books etc. that they needed, it was usual to keep the mother-house's financial demands on it to a minimum. It is therefore surprising that its only two contributions to the Almonry Bishop of Durham date from the brief period when it was in financial difficulty.²

Texts

1399-1400 (3rd or 7th July – 28th May)

Durham College Oxford Account DUL

Expense: . . .

Oxonie Item *Episcopo Elimosinarie* ij s.

. . .

1401-2 (13th May – 5th May)

Durham College Oxford Account DUL

Expense facte: . . .

Apud Oxoniam Item *Episcopo Elimosinarie* xx d.

Textual Notes

1399-1400: Text from A; B substantially identical. The opening date is 'the Translation of Thomas', but it is unclear whether this refers to Thomas the Apostle (3rd July) or to Archbishop Thomas Becket (7th July); the closing day is 'the sixth weekday after Ascension' (i.e. Friday after Ascension).

¹ Dobson, *Durham Priory* 343-359. We are grateful to Alan Piper for access to his unpublished detailed figures for each decade, which show that between 22 and 34 percent of all Durham monks who were alive at any one time had studied or were studying at Durham College..

² Dobson, *Durham Priory* 348-49.

1401-2: Text from A; B substantially identical. Terminal dates are the Friday after Ascension.

End Note

1399-1400: Despite the subsection headings here and in the 1401-2 account, this is almost certainly a payment for the Boy Bishop of Durham. There is no evidence for a separate Boy Bishop ceremony within Durham College, which jealously maintained its independence of other institutions in Oxford (Dobson, *Durham Priory* 349, 354).