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978-1-108-04896-5 - Official Correspondence of Thomas Bekynton: Secretary to King Henry VI, and Bishop of Bath and Wells: Volume 1

Edited by George Williams

Frontmatter

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Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores, or The Chronicles and Memorials of Great Britain and Ireland during the Middle Ages, usually referred to as the 'Rolls Series', was an ambitious project first proposed to the British Treasury in 1857 by Sir John Romilly, the Master of the Rolls, and quickly approved for public funding. Its purpose was to publish historical source material covering the period from the arrival of the Romans to the reign of Henry VIII, 'without mutilation or abridgement', starting with the 'most scarce and valuable' texts. A 'correct text' of each work would be established by collating 'the best manuscripts', and information was to be included in every case about the manuscripts used, the life and times of the author, and the work's 'historical credibility', but there would be no additional annotation. The first books were published in 1858, and by the time it was completed in 1896 the series contained 99 titles and 255 volumes. Although many of the works have since been re-edited by modern scholars, the enterprise as a whole stands as a testament to the Victorian revival of interest in the middle ages.

Official Correspondence of Thomas Bekynton

Thomas Beckington (c.1390–1465), bishop of Bath and Wells, was hugely influential in church affairs and government during the reign of Henry VI. He had become the king's secretary by 1438 and played an important role in an embassy appointed to negotiate peace with France in 1443. His intimacy with the king undoubtedly aided his compiling of the vast array of documents and letters – many from Beckington himself – presented in this two-volume work. It was edited for the Rolls Series in 1872 by George Williams (1814–78), a Church of England clergyman and fellow of King's College, Cambridge, who, like Beckington, had close links to Eton College. The collection as a whole, presented in the original Latin, illuminates the foreign, diplomatic and domestic affairs of fifteenth-century England. Volume 1 contains a chronological table of all the material included, as well as an extensive introduction.

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Official Correspondence of Thomas Bekynton

*Secretary to King Henry VI,
and Bishop of Bath and Wells*

VOLUME 1

EDITED BY GEORGE WILLIAMS



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Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town,
Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi, Mexico City

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108048965

© in this compilation Cambridge University Press 2012

This edition first published 1872
This digitally printed version 2012

ISBN 978-1-108-04896-5 Paperback

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RERUM BRITANNICARUM MEDII ÆVI
SCRIPTORES,
OR
CHRONICLES AND MEMORIALS OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND IRELAND
DURING
THE MIDDLE AGES.

3239. a

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THE CHRONICLES AND MEMORIALS
OF
GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND
DURING THE MIDDLE AGES.

PUBLISHED BY THE AUTHORITY OF HER MAJESTY'S TREASURY, UNDER
THE DIRECTION OF THE MASTER OF THE ROLLS.

ON the 26th of January 1857, the Master of the Rolls submitted to the Treasury a proposal for the publication of materials for the History of this Country from the Invasion of the Romans to the reign of Henry VIII.

The Master of the Rolls suggested that these materials should be selected for publication under competent editors without reference to periodical or chronological arrangement, without mutilation or abridgment, preference being given, in the first instance, to such materials as were most scarce and valuable.

He proposed that each chronicle or historical document to be edited should be treated in the same way as if the editor were engaged on an *Editio Princeps*; and for this purpose the most correct text should be formed from an accurate collation of the best MSS.

To render the work more generally useful, the Master of the Rolls suggested that the editor should give an account of the MSS. employed by him, of their age and their peculiarities; that he should add to the work a brief account of the life and times of the author, and any remarks necessary to explain the chronology; but no other note or comment was to be allowed, except what might be necessary to establish the correctness of the text.

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The works to be published in octavo, separately, as they were finished ; the whole responsibility of the task resting upon the editors, who were to be chosen by the Master of the Rolls with the sanction of the Treasury.

The Lords of Her Majesty's Treasury, after a careful consideration of the subject, expressed their opinion in a Treasury Minute, dated February 9, 1857, that the plan recommended by the Master of the Rolls "was well calculated for the accomplishment of this important national object, in an effectual and satisfactory manner, within a reasonable time, and provided proper attention be paid to economy, in making the detailed arrangements, without unnecessary expense."

They expressed their approbation of the proposal that each Chronicle and historical document should be edited in such a manner as to represent with all possible correctness the text of each writer, derived from a collation of the best MSS., and that no notes should be added, except such as were illustrative of the various readings. They suggested, however, that the preface to each work should contain, in addition to the particulars proposed by the Master of the Rolls, a biographical account of the author, so far as authentic materials existed for that purpose, and an estimate of his historical credibility and value.

*Rolls House,
December 1857.*

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THOMAS BEKYNTON.

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MEMORIALS OF THE REIGN OF KING HENRY VI.

OFFICIAL CORRESPONDENCE

OF

THOMAS BEKYNTON,

SECRETARY TO KING HENRY VI., AND BISHOP
OF BATH AND WELLS.

VOLUME I.

EDITED,

FROM A MS. IN THE ARCHIEPISCOPAL LIBRARY AT LAMBETH,

WITH AN APPENDIX OF ILLUSTRATIVE DOCUMENTS,

BY

GEORGE WILLIAMS, B.D.,

VICAR OF RINGWOOD; LATE FELLOW OF KING'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

PUBLISHED BY THE AUTHORITY OF THE LORDS COMMISSIONERS OF HER MAJESTY'S
TREASURY, UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE MASTER OF THE ROLLS.

LONDON:

LONGMAN & Co., AND TRÜBNER & Co., PATERNOSTER ROW;

ALSO BY PARKER & Co., OXFORD;

MACMILLAN & Co., CAMBRIDGE;

A. & C. BLACK, EDINBURGH; AND A. THOM, DUBLIN.

1872.

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Printed by
Eyre and Spottiswoode, Her Majesty's Printers.
For Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

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CORRIGENDA.

VOL. I.

- Page xcviii, note 1, *for* "Navarre" *read* "Novara."
 „ 21, line 10, *a calce, for* "diœcesa" *read* "diœcesi."
 „ 23, note 1, *for* "letter" *read* "chapter."
 „ 23, note 5 } *for* "Gallia Sacra" *read* "Gallia Christiana."
 „ 27, note 2 }
 „ 27, line 6, *for* "consiliarum" *read* "consiliariorum."
 „ 28, line 9, *for* "antiste" *read* "antistite."
 „ 49, line 16, *for* "ob" *read* "ab."
 „ 62, note 1, *for* "1441" *read* "1449."
 „ 103, note 1, *for* "Appendix" *read* "Introduction pp. xxii.-xxiv."
 „ 104, line 19 (*rubric*), *for* "certificat" *read* "certificatoria."
 „ 180, *margin, for* "5000 marks" *read* "5000 nobles."
 „ 251, *for* "Franciske Camzane" *read* "Francis de Canizano."

VOL. II.

- Page 53, *for* "Henry VII." *read* "Henry VI."
 „ 66, Note 7, *for* "Sigismund" *read* "Albert II."
 „ 131, *for* "postscriptionibus" *read* "proscriptionibus."
 „ 141, *margin* } *for* "August 24" *read* "July 26."
 „ 142, " }
 „ 143, line 23, *for* "them" *read* "then."
 „ 144, line 7, *for* "unsitting" *read* "unfitting."
 „ 156, line 1, *for* "fugierunt" *read* "fugerunt."
 „ 179, line 2, *for* "Cobyorn" *read* "Cobthorn."
 „ 202, line 19 } *for* "Jamecot" *read* "Janicot."
 „ 203, line 1 }
 „ 204, line 27, *for* "reseraverunt" *read* "referaverunt."
 „ 210, line 27, *for* "accessiva" *read* "accessura."
 „ 222, line 2, *for* "accusibilis sumus" *read* "accusibiles simus."
 „ 235, line 18, *for* "deportatæ" *read* "deportata."
 „ 246, lines 4, 8, *for* "Angerot" *read* "Augerot."

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# INTRODUCTION.

I. § 1. THE MS. which has supplied the principal part of the documents contained in these volumes is numbered ccxi. in the catalogue of the Lambeth Library. It is a quarto volume written on vellum in an uniform hand, about the middle of the 15th century, and is in excellent preservation. It was probably compiled under the immediate direction of Bekynton himself, and was apparently commenced before his promotion to the Episcopate, as, in the title prefixed to the volume, he is described only by the style proper to the inferior dignity of Archdeacon. It is certain, however, that he had attained the higher dignity some years before the completion of the volume, as his correspondence with the Abbat of Glastonbury (clxxxviii.-cxc.), with Thomas Chaundler (exccxcvii.), and with William Millington (cclxxii.-cclxxv.), though undated, obviously belongs to a period subsequent to his appointment to the bishopric of Bath and Wells.

Account of  
the Lam-  
beth MS.

Date of its  
compila-  
tion.

§ 2. The contents of the volume are of the most miscellaneous kind, and are well described by Wharton as comprising "very many letters of the bishop himself, " written in his own or in the king's name, and of others " sent to him or to the king during the time that he " was his Secretary ; besides other distinguished monuments of his age, which had fallen into his hands, " brought together without any order or arrangement."<sup>1</sup>

Its con-  
tents.

§ 3. As the unmethodical sequence of the documents detracts seriously from the practical utility of the volume, an attempt has been made to obviate this inconvenience by prefixing to this edition a chronological

Chrono-  
logical

<sup>1</sup> Wharton, *Anglia Sacra*, pars 1<sup>ma</sup>, p. 573.

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calendar of the documents. calendar of the documents, with a summary of their contents. From this it will be seen that the Letters extend over a period of more than half a century, from the reign of Richard II. to the latter part of the reign of Henry VI., although the great majority belong to a period ranging from the middle of the fourth to the middle of the fifth decade of the fifteenth century.

Their historical value. § 4. The historical value of such a collection of documents must necessarily be very unequal when they are compared among themselves; but as a whole they will be found of great interest and importance in illustrating the foreign relations and the domestic condition of England, as well as in throwing light on the private life and character of one of the most able and active ecclesiastics of the time; whose memoirs, thus revealed in the most artless and unconscious manner, may be taken as a fair sample of the life and policy of an ambitious churchman of the middle ages;—a type not confined to England, but, as we shall find reason to believe, common to the whole continent of Europe, well understood and fully appreciated in the Roman court. The autobiography of Thomas Bekynton, which may be extracted from these pages, forms indeed an interesting supplement to the Memoir prefixed to the translation of the journal of his embassy to Bordeaux, edited by Sir N. H. Nicolas, the original of which will be found in the second volume. London, 1828.

Documentary illustrations of the Lambeth volume. § 5. Before, however, proceeding to the Memoir, it is necessary to state that several very curious and valuable documents drawn from various sources, in illustration of the Lambeth collection of letters, will be found in the Appendix. Of these a full account will be given in the course of this Introduction, when we come to speak of the subjects to which those documents severally relate; but this will be the proper place to notice two of the most important Manuscripts which have contributed materials for the elucidation of the work.

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§ 6. Among the indubitable evidences of the incredible diligence and industry of Bishop Bekynton, adduced by Wharton, he mentions three remarkable collections of letters, instructions, speeches, treaties, and other monuments relating to the affairs, not of England only, but of the whole Christian world, which he had himself seen. The first is this Lambeth volume, his accurate description of which has been already given. The second, one in the Cottonian Library, which, he says, was not unlike the former, except that it seems to have been compiled for the purpose of serving as a formulary. This he describes as containing "almost innumerable" instruments, letters, speeches, treaties, and other formalæ of transactions in England and France from "A.D. 1417." This volume has been unhappily so much damaged by fire as to be scarcely legible; but from the account of its contents given in Smith's catalogue of the Cottonian Library, and from the fragments that remain, it would appear that these documents belonged mostly to the reign of Henry V., and had nothing in common with the Lambeth volume; nor is there anything in Smith's notice, or in the volume as it now exists, which can in any way identify it with Bishop Bekynton. The third volume seen by Wharton in the same collection,<sup>1</sup> and which is still preserved, is a laborious compilation of historical documents commencing in the reign of Edward III. and continued to the middle of the reign of Henry VI., relating to the rightful title of the latter king to the crown of France.<sup>2</sup> This volume

Oxford,  
 1696, p. 23.

Wharton's  
 testimony  
 to Bekyn-  
 ton.

The first  
 Cotton MS.  
 Tib. B. vi.

The second  
 Cotton MS.  
 Tib. B. xii.

<sup>1</sup> There is a duplicate in the Harleian, No. 4763.

<sup>2</sup> Shortly, by Leland, Collect., Vol. iii., p. 155. 'Liber Thomæ Bekingtoni, de jure Regis Angliæ ad regnum Franciæ.' The full title is, "Opus collectum et compilatum per ven. patrem Thomam Bathon. et

"Wellens. episcopum, ex literis, allegationibus, conclusionibus, conventionibus, et tractatibus, nonnullisque aliis negotiis et materiis concernentibus jus et titulum Regis Angliæ ad regnum et coronam Franciæ, cum aliis multis quæ ea occasione secuta sunt."

comprises “very prolix narratives or diaries of two  
“ public embassies sent to France by Henry VI.,” one  
to Arras in 1435, the other to Calais in 1439, in both  
which Bekynton is supposed to have taken part, and  
of which, therefore, more will be said in the sequel.

§ 7. But Wharton had apparently not himself seen  
a volume, of which much use has been made in the  
Appendix, or he could scarcely have failed to adduce  
it as a fourth specimen of the industry of the compiler.  
He does indeed refer to the diary of Bekynton’s third  
embassy—viz., that to Gascony in 1442—as extant in  
the Register of Charles Booth, Bishop of Hereford ; but  
since he speaks of this diary as written by Bekynton him-  
self, which it obviously was not, and is silent as to the  
other contents of the volume, it may safely be concluded  
that he knew of it only by report.

§ 8. Indeed it may be questioned whether the volume  
here referred to was then any longer in Booth’s Register,  
as it is unquestionably the same which is now found  
in the Ashmolean collection, and had probably been  
acquired by Ashmole before the publication of the “An-  
glia Sacra.”<sup>1</sup> This volume is generally described in  
Black’s catalogue of the Ashmolean MSS., No. 789, as  
“ a thick and wide folio, all except the fourth portion  
“ written in the 15th century.” The sixth portion it is  
which contains Bishop Bekynton’s Private Register,  
answering precisely to the description given by Wharton  
of the Cottonian volume now partially destroyed, to  
which this may have been a sequel. Black gives only  
the general title of this compilation (col. 412), and  
excuses himself from inserting the Index on the ground  
that the contents are so numerous that they cannot  
be enumerated (col. 415), — an inconvenient omission,

<sup>1</sup> Wharton’s Dedication is dated iv. Cal. Augusti, mdcLxxxix. Ash- books to the University during his  
mole died in 1692, but gave his life-time.

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—the more so as he has added another note, well calculated to mislead the unwary student. “It must be observed,” he says, “that this MS. differs wholly from that ‘compilation’ by Bishop Bekington, of which MSS. are in the British Museum and at Lambeth,” obviously presuming that the contents of the Lambeth volume are the same with those in the British Museum, with which, in fact, it has nothing in common; while the Ashmolean Register is so far from differing wholly from the Lambeth compilation here published, that a very large proportion of the letters are common to the two; as will be seen from the Chronological Table of Contents, where reference is made to such of the documents in the Ashmole volume as are found in the two collections.

Erroneous statement in Black’s catalogue.

No. cclxxxv. Vol. ii., p. 321.

§ 9. The other manuscript to be here noticed, as having contributed to the contents of these volumes, is one in the library of New College, Oxford, containing notices of the life of Bishop Bekynton, mixed up in a very confused and confusing manner with the Praises of William of Wykeham (which is the proper subject of the volume) and with prolix philosophical disquisitions in the form of dialogues, which have no bearing whatever on the subject. This volume is unquestionably the third of those mentioned by Leland as seen by him at Wells, the authorship of which he ascribes to “John” (it should be Thomas) “Chaundler, Chancellor of Wells.”<sup>1</sup> The inside of the cover bears still the original inscription,<sup>2</sup> which proves it to have been presented by Bekynton

New College MS. Its contents and history.

<sup>1</sup> Lelandi Collectanea, Tom. iii., p. 156. Thus described by him, “Ejusdem [i.e. Johannis Chaundelarii] aliquot opuscula, continentia laudes et celebra facta Gulielmi Wychem, episcopi Winton.”

<sup>2</sup> “Ex dono reverendi in Christo patris domini Thomæ de Bekyn-

tona, Bathon. et Wellensis episcopi, et labore magistri Thome Chaundelarii, hujus Ecclesie Cancellarii. Oretis pro animabus utriusque.” See a full description of this interesting MS. in Mr. Cox’s Catalogue, Codd. MSS. Collegii Novi, No. cclxxxviii., pp. 102, 103.

himself to the Chapter Library, and to have been the work of Thomas Chaundler, Chancellor of the Cathedral Church; and in the fourth of the very curious and interesting drawings prefixed to the volume,—in the third of which are given portraits of Bekynton himself, of Archbishop Chichely, and of other eminent Wykehamists of the time,—is depicted the interior of the episcopal palace at Wells, and Chaundler presenting this identical volume to the bishop.

§ 10. An early transcript of part of this volume is found in the Cottonian collection, and from this it was that Wharton made his extracts for the life of Bekynton. But here again he has fallen into two errors, Pars 2, p. 357, see præfatio p. xvii. calculated to occasion great perplexity to those who have not the opportunity of referring to the originals. Misused by Wharton. For first, he has ascribed the volume wholly to Chaundler, although the extract which he has given from Chaundler's dedicatory letter to Bekynton ought to have corrected this error; and then, as a consequence of this inadvertence, he has applied to Bekynton words which really belong to Chaundler, so making the former to be a native both of Bekynton and Wells, to have been Warden first of Winchester and afterwards of New College, chancellor of the University of Oxford and afterward of the cathedral of Wells, with other absurdities. There is this, however, to be said in excuse for Wharton, that the biographical notices of the bishop and chancellor are so mixed up with the philosophical disquisitions that it is not easy to disentangle them; and as he has brought together in a continuous narrative the passages relating to both, without any intimation of the lacunæ, the consequence of the omission of only a few words has been to fuse the two biographies into one.

§ 11. The truth is, as Chaundler explains in his letter to Bekynton, he was not himself so much the author of these colloquies as the editor. They were the juvenile productions of a scholar of Winchester or New

Not the work of Chaundler. Its history.

¶ Pref. p. xviii., see Vol. ii., p. 320.

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College, a former pupil of Chaundler's, originally compiled for their private amusement and entertainment, and collected in a book for his tutor's gratification. They were afterwards transcribed by Chaundler himself, with considerable omissions and corrections, for Bekynton. This at once accounts for the laudatory terms in which Chaundler is spoken of—which he could hardly have penned himself—as well as for a certain want of unity in the composition of the volume; for if, as Chaundler says, the colloquies were first composed when he was warden of Winchester (1450–1453), and not reduced to their present form—as it is obvious they were not—until after he had been succeeded in the chancellorship of the University of Oxford by George Nevill, Bishop of Exeter (1461),<sup>1</sup> after having been manipulated to suit the altered circumstances of the editor, it was almost unavoidable that the suture of the new pieces in the old garment should be more or less visible.

No.  
celxxxv.  
Vol. ii., pp.  
321–326.

§ 12. In the extracts from the first of these colloquies, given in the Appendix, an attempt has been made to avoid—while indicating—the error of Whar-ton; for if the passages given by him, there placed within brackets, are read continuously, it will be easily seen how much confusion his clumsy method involved.

Correction  
of Whar-  
ton's  
errors.

II. § 13. We may now proceed to a brief biography of Bishop Bekynton, passing lightly over such passages in it as have been more fully illustrated by Sir Nicholas Harris Nicolas, and bringing into greater prominence

Biography  
of Thomas  
Bekynton.

<sup>1</sup> See the commencement of the Dedicatory Epistle, Vol. ii., p. 315, and the Hexameters, p. 326.

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such new facts and traits of character as may be discovered in the documents now first made public.

His birth generally antedated. § 14. No record has yet been found of the date of Bekynton's birth ; but that the year assigned to it conjecturally by Sir H. Nicolas (*viz.*, A.D. 1385) is much too early will be evident from the following considerations. He is said to have been sent to Winchester for education at a tender age, and there to have attracted the favourable notice of the founder, who placed him on the foundation. The date of his admission to Winchester is still extant in the contemporaneous Register, *viz.*, the fifth year of Henry IV.,<sup>1</sup> which was the last year of the life of William of Wykeham (A.D. 1404). He was removed to New College, Oxford, in the seventh year of the same reign (A.D. 1406). But if he was born in 1385 he would have been 19 years of age at the time of his admission at Winchester (when he could scarcely have been described as of tender age), and 21 at his admission to New College, which ages were severally above the limit for admission at either College. The year 1390 may therefore be assumed with greater probability as the date of his birth.

His birth place. § 15. The place of his birth—as is ascertained beyond all doubt both by his surname and by the college Register—was the village of Beckington, situated three miles north of Frome, in Somersetshire. He does not, however, appear to have felt any strong attachment to his native place, as the only notice of it in his letters or journals is that of his dining there on his way from Devizes to Wells, when setting out on his embassy to Guienne in 1442.

Vol. ii.,  
p. 178.

<sup>1</sup> The extract from the Winchester Register is given in the Appendix to this Introduction. The fifth year of Henry IV. ran from Sept. 30, 1403, to Sept. 29, 1404. William of Wykeham deceased Sept. 27, 1404. The election at Winchester was by Statute, between the 7th of July and the 1st of October ; Stat. 7 of New College.

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§ 16. Nothing is known either of his parentage,<sup>1</sup> or of his family; though it is natural to conclude that John Bekenton, admitted scholar of Winchester in 1417, and another of the same name, admitted in 1427, who afterwards became Fellow of Winchester,<sup>2</sup> both natives of the same place, were related to their more distinguished namesake. One T. Waryng, alluded to by Chaundler, when Warden of Winchester, as a commoner of the college, was a relative of the bishop; as was perhaps the bishop's lad, referred to at the beginning of the same letter as a youth of no small virtue, who had apparently lately left the college, much to the Warden's regret, as his residence there had involved more frequent intercourse with the bishop than he would otherwise have enjoyed.

Reg. Winton, p. 15.  
*Ibid.* p. 20.

p. 271.  
 "pusillum  
 tuum."  
 p. 270.

§ 17. Admitted Fellow of New College in 1408, he retained his fellowship 12 years, and was therefore resident in the University during the memorable controversy between Archbishop Arundel and the University in 1411, of which more will be said in the sequel. He was, however, too young at that time to take any prominent part in the proceedings; but the preservation in this collect on of one letter connected with the case may be taken as an indication of the interest he felt in the dispute.

No. excevi.  
 Vol. i.,  
 p. 276.

§ 18. It is indeed somewhat remarkable that a man of his industry and activity of mind did not rise to greater eminence in the University; for however the partiality of Chaundler and his pupil may represent his academic course as one of great distinction, yet his name only once occurs in the annals of the University during his personal connexion with it, and the fact of his

not distinguished.

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<sup>1</sup> Richardson (apud Godwin de Præsul. Angl., p. 380, n. \*) quotes William of Worcester for his being "a weaver's son."  
<sup>2</sup> Mentioned in Chaundler's letter to Bekynton, Vol. i., p. 271, but only as "patriota" and "conciuis" of the bishop. He was buried in the cloisters at Winchester.

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having been Chancellor, as he is represented by some authorities to have been,<sup>1</sup> is more than questionable, as the fasti of University officers during this period is complete, and his name nowhere occurs in that or in any other capacity, except as one of the delegates of the University to Archbishop Chicheley.<sup>2</sup>

Chancellor  
of Duke  
Humphrey  
of Gloucester.

§ 19. Yet it was probably during his residence at Oxford that he first attracted the notice of Duke Humphrey of Gloucester, the great patron of learning at that time; for he vacated his fellowship on transferring himself to that Prince's service about A.D. 1420; and it was doubtless he who was sent to Oxford as Chancellor of the Protector to investigate the complaints of the abbat and convent of Glastonbury against the prior of the monkish students in that University. And now promotion and preferments began to flow in thick and fast upon him; for that he was "presented to the rectory of St. Leonard's " near Hastings in Sussex, and to the vicarage of Sutton " Courtenay in Berks," during the time that he retained his fellowship, is highly improbable on statutable grounds, and (as regards the former preferment) would seem to be negatived by a letter in this collection, in which he thanks the Bishop of Chichester for preferment, apparently in his diocese; which could be none other than the rectory of St. Leonard's. It is true there is no year to this letter, but as it is dated Eltham, the King's residence, and the writer declares that he has informed his royal master of his patron's kindness, it is clear that

Nos.  
cclxxi.,  
cclxxii.,  
Vol. ii.,  
pp. 256-  
258.

Various  
prefer-  
ments.

So Nicolas,  
l. c., p. liii.

No. cli.

<sup>1</sup> Wharton, *Anglia Sacra*, pt. 1., p. 573. "*Academæ Cancellarius creatus est.*" He refers to Wood, "*Antiq. Oxon.*," p. 134, who says nothing of the kind. Wharton seems to have applied to him what Wood writes, on the same page, of Chaundler. The statement that he was Warden of New College (*Godwin de Præsul. Ang.*, p. 381, note <sup>e</sup>)

is equally untrue. For this, however, Richardson, the editor, is responsible, as it does not occur in the original English edition of Godwin.

<sup>2</sup> See Vol. ii., p. 255. The date is uncertain, except that it was subsequent to 1414, the date of Chicheley's translation.

it must belong to a period subsequent to his transference to the King's household.

§ 20. There seems to be a fatality about the dates connected with Bekynton. The date of his appointment to the archdeaconry of Bucks is given by Le Neve as October 1, 1424, that of his admission as the 15th of the same month.<sup>1</sup> But a letter in the Appendix from the Ashmolean volume obliges us to date his preferment to this dignity at least two years earlier. It is evidently a royal letter to the Pope; and although neither date, nor name, either of king or pope, is given, yet it is indisputably fixed to the reign of Henry V., for Bekynton is described as "my beloved clerk, Doctor of Laws, Arch-deacon of Bucks, and Chancellor of my dearest brother "Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester." Now as Henry V. deceased August 31, 1422, it is clear that this letter must have been written previous to that date. How much earlier it is impossible to determine from existing data. The purport of the letter is to back an application of the archdeacon himself, praying the Pope to dispense him from personally holding annual visitations, in consideration of the arduous occupations, both of a public and private nature, in which he was engaged, and which occasionally required his absence from his archdeaconry, and in remote parts.

§ 21. On August 23, 1423, he was, according to Le Neve,<sup>2</sup> collated to the prebend of Warthill in the church of York, having before held that of Bilton in the same cathedral for four months, since April 19 of the same year.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Le Neve, *Fasti*, ed. Hardy, Vol. ii., p. 69, perhaps copied from Browne Willis, Vol. ii., p. 121. Sir N. H. Nicolas dates his appointment to the Archdeaconry "about 1435." p. liv.

<sup>2</sup> l. c. Vol. iii., p. 221. Comp. Browne Willis, *Survey*, Vol. i., p. 174.

<sup>3</sup> Browne Willis, *ibid*, p. 118.

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Dean of  
the Court  
of Arches.      § 22. At the beginning of that year<sup>1</sup> we find him as Dean of the Court of Arches (William Lyndewood being then official of the court) assisting at the trial of William Tailour; consenting to the conclusions against him drawn up by the official;<sup>2</sup> present at his final examination by Archbishop Chicheley in the chapel of Lambeth Palace, on the following day; perhaps a witness, as was his patron Duke Humphrey, of his degradation in St. Paul's Cathedral,<sup>3</sup> where he was delivered over to the secular court; but, it may be hoped, not of his public execution, when he was "brent to ashes in " Smythfeld," on the same day.<sup>4</sup>

§ 23. In November 1428 he was appointed, jointly with William Lyndewood, receiver of the subsidy granted by the Lower House of Convocation, for the expenses of the prosecution of William Russell, another suspected heretic;<sup>5</sup> and from an incidental notice of the business of this subsidy being hindered<sup>6</sup> by the absence of the two receivers in the Court of Arches, we may conclude that they continued at that date to hold their respective offices in that court.

Prolocutor  
of Convo-  
cation.      § 24. In what year he was first elected Prolocutor of Convocation does not appear; but we find him acting in that capacity in November 1433,<sup>7</sup> and again in the hurried session of October 1434, held while a heavy pestilence was raging in London; on which last occasion he was instructed by Archbishop Chicheley to draw up, in conjunction with others of the clergy, in as brief a form as possible, and in the mother tongue, certain comminatory

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<sup>1</sup> 11th of February 1422 (*i.e.* 1423 N.S.), Wilkins, *Concilia*, Vol. iii., pp. 407, 409.  
<sup>2</sup> February 25, *ibid.*, p. 410.  
<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 412, March 1st. Bekynton's name does not occur in the account of the passing of the sentence, or of the degradation; but he is doubtless included in the doctors of law present at the former, and the numerous multitude at the latter.  
<sup>4</sup> Fabyan, p. 592.  
<sup>5</sup> Wilkins, l. c., p. 496.  
<sup>6</sup> November 22, 1428, *ibid.*  
<sup>7</sup> Wilkins, pp. 522, 3.